

# Agenda Item 7



## **Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services**

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| Report to: | <b>Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee</b>                   |
| Date:      | <b>15 October 2021</b>  |
| Subject:   | <b>Children's Services Annual Statutory Complaints Report 2020-21</b> |

### **Summary:**

This report introduces the Annual Complaints Report for Children's Services. This is a statutory requirement and serves to update the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the performance of Children's Services in relation to complaints. The report only addresses complaints relating to Children's Social Care in line with the statutory requirement and does not contain any data relating to complaints about the wider Children's Services.

### **Actions Required:**

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is invited to review and comment on the Annual Complaints Report for 2020/21 and note the low numbers of complaints that were upheld or partially upheld.

### **1. Background**

The report attached at Appendix A provides the Committee with information on the complaints received by Children's Social Care for the period of 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

A total of 136 contacts were received in 2020/2021 from individuals wishing to complain about the service. In recent years, Children's Services has introduced a more restorative approach to complaints, where by when people indicate they are unhappy and are considering making a complaint, a manager in the relevant service reaches out and attempts to resolve the issue before a formal complaint is made. As a result of this approach, 45 complaints were resolved informally, outside of the complaints process, accounting for 33% of all contacts received.

With the resolution of 45 complaints outside of the complaints process, to the service users satisfaction, 2020/2021 saw an overall decrease of the complaints entering the formal process of 18%. A total of 91 complaints formally entered the system. Whilst some

of this can be accounted for in the overall drop the Council saw at the beginning of the year due to the global pandemic, Children's Services has continued to try and resolve concerns as early as possible despite the additional pressures seen over the course of the year. 91 complaints is the lowest number of complaints in the last 10 years which is excellent progress, particularly in a year where services have had to adapt to manage Covid-19 which potentially could have meant increased customer dissatisfaction.

Only 10 complaints were fully upheld. Four of these were due to lack of communication, four due to staff conduct and attitude, and two due to a delay in service. Eighteen complaints were partially upheld: eight due to delay in service, seven due to assessment errors and three due to lack of communication.

Any learning from these complaints has been addressed by the managers for the team with the staff concerned. It is really pleasing to note the low numbers of complaints within the context of Covid and the impact that early resolution is having on the numbers.

## **2. Conclusion**

The process of early informal resolution appears to be making a difference in reducing the number of complaints that enter the formal system. Whilst it was an unusual year because of the Covid pandemic, it is hoped this progress can be maintained this year. Compliments are also collated and the plan is to remind staff of this process so that in future we can report on compliments as well as complaints.

## **3. Consultation**

### **a) Risks and Impact Analysis**

Not applicable

## **4. Appendices**

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| These are listed below and attached at the back of the report |   |
| Appendix A  | Children's Service's Annual Complaints Report for 2020-2021 |

## **5. Background Papers**

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Carolyn Knight who can be contacted on 01522 553732 or by e-mail at [Carolyn.knight@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:Carolyn.knight@lincolnshire.gov.uk).