

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Corporate Director for Corporate Services
to
Cabinet
on
17th September 2013

Report prepared by: Sue Hewitt, Information Governance
Officer.

Agenda
Item No.

Annual Report – Comments, Compliments and Complaints
All Scrutiny Committees
Executive Councillors: Councillor Courtenay, Councillor Moring, Councillor Salter
A Part 1 Public Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report is to:

- Discharge the Local Authority's statutory duty to produce an annual report on compliments and complaints received about its Children and Adults' Social Care functions.
- To provide statistical and performance information about compliments, comments and complaints received throughout 2012/13
- To contribute towards the Council's values to be open, honest and transparent.

2. Recommendation

2.1. To note performance in respect of compliments, comments and complaints for 2012/13, which continues to deliver service improvements as a result of effective complaints handling and, where required, to refer each separate report to the respective Scrutiny Committee.

3. Background

3.1. Legislation requires that statutory processes are in place to deal with complaints relating to Children and Adults' Social Care. To advertise that process and produce annual reports.

3.2. As the statutory process requires the Children and Adults' Social Care reports to be shared with the Care Quality Commission and the Department of Health this necessitates three separate reports for the Council; including a separate report on the Council's corporate comments, complaints and compliments process.

3.3. Details of performance are contained in the respective reports under

Appendix A – Compliments, Concerns and Complaints – Adult Social Care Services.
Appendix B – Compliments and Complaints – Children’s Social Care Services.
Appendix C - Corporate Comments, Complaints and Compliments.

3.4. The table below sets out a comparison of the total number of complaints received for the period

Directorate	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
Adult & Community Services (including the statutory process)	238	202	205
CE & Support Services	106	86	76
Children & Learning (including the statutory process)	60	63	74
Enterprise, Tourism & Environment	508	271	170
Grand Total	912	622	525

3.5. Comments and compliments are also received; figures relating to this are shown below.

Directorate	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
Adult & Community Services (including the statutory process)	360	333	520
CE & Support Services	341	2,990	1,653
Children & Learning (including the statutory process)	12	26	41
Enterprise, Tourism & Environment	138	160	135
Grand Total	851	3,509	2,349

4. Lessons Learnt and Service Improvements

4.1. Whilst responding to feedback in a timely manner is important, the reports also concentrate on lessons learnt and outcomes showing service improvements, something recognised by both the Department of Health through their “Making Experiences Count” guidance and the Local Government Ombudsman’s principles of good complaints handling by being customer focused, putting things right and seeking continuous improvement.

4.2. Analysis shows that there have been service improvements throughout the year in how we deal with feedback. These include:

- The adult social care team have introduced a checklist to ensure that the appropriate telecare equipment is transferred when a service user moves.
- Within children’s services robust guidance for all practitioners in relation to case recording has been developed and shared with practitioners.
- A change in the way closing times are advised to visitors of the pier, particularly when they are visiting late in the day and using the pier train.

5. Corporate Implications

5.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

Customer feedback and complaints management is directly relevant to the Council's corporate priorities to deliver strong, relevant and targeted services that meet the needs of our community. This remains important in the coming years as budget constraints continue to impact on service delivery.

5.2 Financial Implications

The commissioning of independent people to deal with children's stage two statutory complaints incurs additional cost. The department continues to seek to provide efficient resolution to complaints at the earliest stage possible as demonstrated by the reduction in stage 2 investigations this year which has achieved a reduction in costs. The introduction of mediation within the corporate process continues to deliver fewer complaints, limiting the amount of time spent by staff on complaints as well as improving the outcome for the customer.

A limited number of compensation payments to customers to acknowledge the time and trouble that they have expended have been made this year.

5.3 Legal Implications

To ensure compliance with the statutory process

5.4 People and Property Implications

Any people and property implications is considered through the Council's normal business management processes.

5.5 Consultation

The Advocacy Services and Representations Procedure (Children) (Amendment) Regulations 2004 confer a duty on local authorities to provide information about advocacy services and offer help to obtain an advocate to a child or young person wishing to make a complaint. The Authority has a contract with the National Youth Advocacy Service. All children and young people wishing to make a complaint in 2012/13 were offered the services of an advocate.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity Implications

All three processes are receiving feedback from customers from Southend communities including minority groups. Similarly, alternative approaches to facilitate complaint resolution are offered including advocacy and meetings.

Corporate equalities considerations continue to be part of the process.

5.7 Risk Assessment

Processes are reviewed periodically and reduce any risk which could adversely affect the Council's reputation in the community and reduce public trust/satisfaction. Whilst the anticipated increase in complaints did not materialise in 2012/2013 early indications suggest that continued pressure on the Council's budget, and therefore on the ability to deliver services, is already reflecting an increase in the current year's number of complaints being recorded. One area already identified is the challenge in meeting the required times when responding to a complaint.

5.8 Value for Money

Early resolution of complaints and learning lessons from this process ensure service improvements and getting things right first time.

5.9 Community Safety and Environmental Impact Implications

The process is implemented to ensure both community safety and effects on the environment are fully considered.

6. Background Papers

6.1. The Council's procedures for:

Compliments, concerns & complaints – Adult Social Care Services
Compliments and complaints – Children's Social Care Services
Corporate comments, complaints and compliments.

7. Appendices

Appendix A - Compliments, Concerns and Complaints – Adult Social Care Services.

Appendix B - Compliments and complaints – Children's Social Care.

Appendix C - Corporate comments, complaints and compliments.