

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE: 28 JANUARY 2021

Customer Feedback Report 2019-20

Adult Statutory Complaint Report 2019-20

Children's Statutory Complaint Report 2019-20

Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2020.

REPORT OF THE DELIVERY MANAGER FOR CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP AND FINANCIAL WELFARE SERVICES

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update members on the Council's response to complaints between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020.
- 1.2 To provide assurance that the Council's response to complaints is effective and continuously improving.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Audit Committee review the Annual complaint and feedback reports for 2019/20 in respect of Adult Statutory Complaints, Child Statutory Complaints and Corporate Customer Feedback and also the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Review Letter 2020.

3 SUMMARY

- 3.1 The terms of reference of the Audit Committee include: *'Recognising that Complaints/Compliments are a Cabinet function, the Committee should Review the Annual Complaints Report and seek assurances that the Council is improving in response to complaints raised.'*
- 3.2 To demonstrate effective complaint handling the Council produces an annual report on complaint handling for Children's Statutory Complaints, Adult Statutory Complaints and Corporate Feedback and complaints. These reports can be found at appendices A, B and C.
- 3.3 **Corporate Feedback Report** (Appendix A)
 - 3.3.1 In the year 2019/20 there were 477 corporate stage one complaints received a 4% reduction on the number of complaints received in 2018/19. This is also the lowest number of complaints received in the previous 6 years.
 - 3.3.2 Of the 477 complaints received, 49 were escalated to Stage two of the procedure. This is a slight increase on the number received in 2018/19.

- 3.3.3 Of the 477 Stage One complaints that have been completed, 43% (201) were upheld, this is where services have acknowledged that we could have done better, this is an improvement on the 48% (239) in 2018/19. 43% (202) of the complaints were not upheld, 14% (68) of the complaints were either withdrawn, out of jurisdiction or resolved by the service.
- 3.3.4 The Council's Corporate Complaints Policy states that Stage 1 Corporate complaints should be responded to within 15 working days. This may be extended in exceptional circumstances by a further 5 days. Overall, the Council is managing to respond to corporate complaints within an average of 11.25 days, which is well within the 15 working day timescale and a significant improvement on the 14.45 days achieved in 2018/19. Adult Social care and Children's safeguarding and family Support each have an average timescale of 20 and 21 working days respectively, which is just on and over the extended timescales as set out in the procedure. It should however be noted that these timescales have improved significantly since 2018/2019 which was 28 and 29 days respectively.
- 3.3.5 Response times was an area that the Customer Relationship Team confirmed would be a focus in 2019/20, both by progress chasing responses in a timely manner and escalating to senior managers within the respective service areas, where needed. Along with services it is evident that these efforts have provided a positive outcome.
- 3.3.6 81% of corporate complaints were responded to within the 15 working day time scale, an improvement on 74% achieved in 2018/19 and 71% achieved in 2017/18.
- 3.3.7 Of the 49 Stage Two complaints 35 resulted in full investigations, this is a 51% increase in the full Stage Two Investigations (17) completed in 2018/19. This can be attributed to an increase in multiple complaints regarding planning decisions and also more complex issues requiring a full investigation to ensure all avenues had been explored. 37% of full investigations were upheld. The average number of days to complete a full investigation was 24 working days. This is within the corporate target to complete investigations within 25 days.
- 3.3.8 All of the 206 complaints, where fault has been found, have been reviewed by the Customer Relationship Team to ascertain what action the relevant department has taken, both in remedying the fault, and any wider learning to avoid such issues occurring in the future.

Of the remedies recorded against Corporate Complaints in 2019/20;

- 21% were to provide an explanation and an apology.
- 28% was to provide an explanation and no remedy was required.
- 12% was to provide an explanation and service was provided
- 14% was to provide an apology and service was provided.

- 3.3.9 Positive improvements resulting for learning from stage one complaints include;

- A review of the Empty Property form has resulted in a new option for the customer to return the review form online, in addition to a paper option, seeing an improvement to the way that customers notify us of changes.
- Where incorrect information had been provided to a customer, this has been fed back to officers and training given.
- Improvements have been made with new bookings for transport. Emergency contact names and numbers will be obtained and the drivers will be familiar with the run and the area.
- Additional training has been given to officers regarding communication over the telephone and how to manage calls effectively.
- The Waste Team have reviewed their processes and going forward they have allocated a report to a specific officer, to avoid error. A change has also been made to the Bulky Waste Collection app and there is now a pop up warning message when you press the 'Make Payment' Button.
- Cleaning rotas and techniques have been reviewed at leisure facilities and continue to be monitored.

3.3.10 The data held in this report highlights that there has been a 6% reduction in the formal customer feedback received in 2019/20. Although there has been an overall reduction in the number of complaints received, the number of compliments and positive feedback has increased.

3.3.11 In 2019/20 there was a 16% increase in the combined number of compliments and Positive Feedback received. Receiving a total of 290 instances of positive feedback and compliments in 2019/20, when compared to 250 in 2018/19.

3.4 **Adult Statutory Complaint Report** (Appendix B)

3.4.1 We received 58 Adult Statutory complaints between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020, a slight increase on 51 received in 2018/19 and the 46 received in 2017/18.

3.4.2 Of the 43 complaints completed, 65% (28) were upheld, 21% (9) were not upheld and 14% (6) were dealt with via another method.

3.4.3 We aim to respond to all Adult Statutory complaints within 25 working days, because of the nature and complexity of some issues it may take longer, and complainants will be informed if this is the case. The time scales may be extended to a maximum of 65 working days. In 2019/20 the average number of days to respond to an Adult Statutory complaint across all portfolios was 51 days this is an improvement on the 56 working days achieved in 2018/19. However, one complaint responded to under cross portfolio exceeded the 65 working day time scale.

3.4.4 However, no complaint exceeded the statutory 6 months in which to respond as outlined in the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) regulations 2009.

3.4.5 Of the remedies recorded against Adult Statutory Complaints in 2019/20;

- 34% were to provide an explanation and an apology.
- 16% was to provide an explanation and no remedy was required.
- 16% was to improved service provision.

3.4.6 Positive improvement that have resulted from learning from complaints include;

- Time scales have been introduced for social workers to complete support plans to ensure that interventions are timely.
- Social workers have been reminded to the importance of offering the opportunity for queries to be discussed and responded to.
- There are ongoing discussions with Social workers in professional development in supervision.
- Introduced a new investigation template and process for Adult Social Services to help with complaints.
- Clarity has been provided to Brokerage and Locality Teams regarding responsibility for keeping in touch with individuals and families.
- Launch of 'zoned' working for domiciliary care providers (move to a place based support model of care delivery in the borough).
- Practitioners are to notify Financial Case Management Team of any billing/invoice address changes so that they can confirm this and update relevant IT systems.
- Review will be completed of Direct Payment processes.
- Review will be completed of current joint working practices across statutory agencies who have responsibility for responding to organisational concerns.
- Workers have been advised to ensure that ongoing services, if required, are provided and in place prior to stopping enablement and that discussions take place with the family.
- Guidance has been issued to ensure best practice in taking messages when workers are not available. Training has been provided on the importance of

Making Every Contact Count, our approach to engaging conversations so that they have positive outcomes.

3.5 **Children's Statutory Complaint Report** (Appendix C)

3.5.1 We received 50 Children's Statutory complaints between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020. In 2018/19, 42 were received, and 82 in 2017/18. The 50 complaints were dealt with at Stage One, with only seven progressing to an independent Stage two investigation. No stage 3 panels were completed in 2019/20.

3.5.2 Of the 47 complaints completed in the year, 43% (20) of the complaints were upheld, 51% (24) were not upheld and 6% (3) were dealt with via another method.

3.5.3 The Children's Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, outlines, how Child Statutory Complaints should be handled and the three stages for Child Statutory Complaints.

Stage One should be an opportunity to resolve the complaint at service level, this should be done within 10 working days, which may be extended to 20 working days in exceptional circumstances and with prior agreement with the customer.

Stage Two is an Independent Investigation which should be completed within 25 working days and this can be extended to 65 working days in more complex cases.

Stage Three is a panel where the investigation at Stage One and Two is reviewed.

3.5.4 The average time scales for all Children's Statutory Stage One Complaints is 21 working days, which exceeds the timescales outlined in the regulations. However there is a clear improvement since 2018/19 where complaints were responded to in an average of 25 days. As an authority we should be ensuring that we meet the statutory requirements. Overall 57% of complaints were responded to within the extended statutory time scale of 20 working days, 19% were responded to within 10 working days.

3.5.5 During 2019/20, 7 (10%) Statutory Stage One complaints progressed to Stage Two of the process. There has been an increase in Statutory Stage Two investigations in 2019/20, only one case progressed to stage two in 2018/19. All were investigated and Independent persons commissioned. The average number of days to complete a Stage Two Investigation was 37.43 days in 2019/20.

3.5.6 Of the remedies recorded against Children's Statutory Complaints in 2019/20;

- 36% were to provide an explanation and an apology.

- 26% was to provide an explanation and no remedy was required.
- 11% was to provide an explanation and service was provided
- 9% was to provide an apology and no service was provided.

3.5.8 Positive improvements that have resulted from learning from complaints include;

- Individual remedies have been completed regarding support plans and working agreements and assessments.
- Additional training to officers regarding communication and failure to keep complainant informed.
- If social workers are absent for more than two weeks, the service will look to reallocate cases, more complex cases will be reallocated as a priority.
- Introduction of systems to prevent delay in recording so that minutes can be provided to parents and professionals in a timely manner.
- Delivery of workshops to practitioners to ensure that following the completion of direct sessions, the assessments are written up and shared with families within a much shorter time frame.

3.6 **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2020** (Appendix D)

3.6.1 The Ombudsman has reported that between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020 they carried out 13 detailed investigations in respect of complaints progressed from Telford and Wrekin Council. 7 of these complaints were upheld following the investigations which is 54% this is slightly lower than 56% average across similar authorities.

3.6.2 The Ombudsman has reported that there has been 100% compliance with their recommendations following these investigations. Recommendations were made in respect of two investigations. This compares to 99% in other similar authorities.

3.6.3 Based on the 13 investigations the Ombudsman confirmed that 14% of those upheld cases provided satisfactory remedy prior to it reaching the Ombudsman, this represented 1 out of the 7 upheld complaints. This compares to an average of 11% in similar authorities.

4 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Appendix A- Customer Feedback Report (Corporate) 2019-20

Appendix B- Adult Statutory Complaints Annual Report 2019-20

Appendix C- Children's Statutory Complaints Annual Report 2019-20

Appendix D- LGSCO Annual Review Letter 2019-20