

REPORT TO: Children, Young People & Families Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 11 November 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director - Children's Services

SUBJECT: Annual Report - Comments, Complaints and Compliments relating to Children's Social Care Services 1st April 2023- 31st March 2024.

PORTFOLIO: Children & Young People

WARDS(S): All Wards

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To meet the statutory requirement to publish an Annual Report which provides an analysis on complaints processed under the Children Act 1989, Representation's Procedure and evidence how feedback from service users has been used to improve service delivery.
- 1.2 To provide the Board with an update and feedback on compliments made by clients and positive feedback from workers/professionals relating to Children Services in the People Directorate. This report will demonstrate the positive impact and outcomes on the lives of people accessing services in this Directorate.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the reports presented are accepted as the mechanism by which Elected Members can monitor and scrutinise children's social care complaints and compliments.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The aim of The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure is for Children and Young People to have their concerns resolved swiftly and wherever possible by the people who provide the service locally.
- 3.2 A complaint may generally be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child or young person, which requires a response.
- 3.3 There are 4 categories to the representation process.
 - i. Statutory Complaints - the complainant is eligible as stated in the Representations Procedure to make a formal complaint.
 - ii. Representations - where a complainant is not eligible under the Statutory Complaints Procedure to make a formal complaint, but their comments are noted and responded to. If it is not a complaint

under the Statutory Procedure then the Corporate Complaints procedure may apply. These will often be as complex and take as much time as a statutory complaint and are recorded as Customer Care issues.

- iii. Customer Care issues – can also include advice and guidance, signposting, problem solving and early resolution to prevent complaint escalation.
- iv. Compliments – positive feedback

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Where identified through the complaints process, policies can be amended to improve service delivery. The learning taken from complaints, comments and compliments ensures the ongoing development of services to provide better outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- 4.2 Halton Council is a member of the North West Regional Complaints Managers Group. The aim of the regional groups, which meet bi-monthly, is to provide a forum in which peer professionals can discuss and learn about regional and national issues. Here there are opportunities to develop local practice standards, discuss performance and problem solve. The group also discuss proposed changes to legislation and procedures and prepare consultation responses where necessary.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Investing in a timely and thorough complaint investigation and response at Stage 1 identifies potential savings for the Local Authority which can prevent the complaints progressing to Stage 2 where there is a cost. It also prevents staff resources being directed to Stage 2 investigations.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Any findings from a comment, complaint or compliment relating to this priority will be used to inform the relevant service.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

None identified.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The learning taken from complaints and compliments ensures the ongoing development of services to provide better outcomes for children, young people and their families. The transparency of the process enables children, young people and their families to challenge our provision of services if they feel unhappy about any aspect of it and provides independent oversight if required.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most in Need
Any findings from a comment, complaint or compliment relating to this priority will be used to inform the relevant service.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future
None identified.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community
None identified.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Failure to implement an efficient service could result in the Local Authority being challenged for not dealing with complaints in a timely and efficient manner and could result in the customer not receiving a service which could then detrimental to their safety and wellbeing.

7.2 Failure to meet the standards as prescribed in the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure and the Guidance "Getting the Best from Complaints" can potentially impact on the overall findings of an Ofsted Inspection.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

6.1 No matter who makes a complaint or a compliment they receive the same equality of access and provision.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

None identified

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 Getting the Best from Complaints Statutory Guidance	Rutland House, Runcorn	Dorothy.Roberts@halton.gov.uk