

Agenda item:

Report to: **Cabinet**

Date: **3 August 2004**

Title of Report: **Social Services Complaints Procedure Annual Review 2003/04**

By: **Director of Social Services**

Purpose of Report: **To report on the functioning and effectiveness of the Complaints Procedure**

RECOMMENDATION: **The Cabinet is recommended to note the complaints procedure annual review report for 2003/04.**

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 The cost of responding to complaints in 2003/04 was contained within the Department's budget.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 It is a statutory requirement that a report on the operation and effectiveness of the social services complaints procedure is submitted annually to an appropriate Committee. The attached report provides information about the number of complaints received and outlines the main themes and how complaints are used to improve services and the experiences of service users and their carers.

2.2 The number of compliments received by Social Services staff is also reported. This is important as it provides the opportunity for a balanced view to be taken of social care work.

2.3 In the preparation of the report there was consultation with those who have used the procedure, or have an interest in its functioning.

3. Compliments and Complaints

3.1 During 2003/04, 905 compliments were received. The majority, were received by staff working with adults and particularly with older people and their families. The Children & Families division received 79 compliments and Finance & Support Services, 166.

3.2 There were 588 complaints recorded in 2003/04. This is 12 more than 2002/03.

3.3 The number of complaints received about services for adults was 334 (42 less than 2002/03 when 376 complaints were recorded).

3.4 228 (68%) of the complaints about services for adults related to older people.

3.5 There was an increase in the number of complaints about Children & Families services; during 2003/04 a total of 216 complaints (165 in 2002/03) was recorded. Of these, 31 were made directly by children/young people.

3.6 Finance & Support Services recorded 38 complaints for 2003/04 and there were also 77 representations made about independent sector services provided on behalf of the Council. Contracts and Purchasing officers assisted in the resolution of these under the providers' complaints procedures.

3.7 Of the 588 complaints, only 14 complaints were not able to be satisfactorily resolved at the local resolution stage of the complaints procedure, and were moved on to the formal investigation stage.

3.8 During 2003/04 four complaints were referred for independent review by a Complaints Panel, comprising an independent chairperson, an elected member and a senior officer.

3.9 The Director responded to 149 enquiries from MPs and elected members about services for their constituents.

4. Themes & Learning from Complaints

4.1 The main complaint themes for 2003/04 were: delay, communication and service user involvement.

4.2 Whilst wanting to provide a consistently good standard of service, managers know that sometimes things do go wrong, or, there is misunderstanding about what Social Services can provide. The feedback from complaints is a crucial management tool to assist in the continuous improvement of the experiences of those eligible for and receiving social care services.

4.3 Early in 2003/04 revised complaints recording forms were introduced. The forms now include a review of the learning from complaints and action to be taken. The Complaints Unit monitor that the action and change agreed through the formal stages of the complaints procedure has been completed.

4.4 The attached Annual Review Report gives further details about learning from complaints, which is positively promoted as a vehicle for service improvement.

5. Change

5.1 The long awaited national review of the Social Services Complaints procedure together with the new guidance is now expected during 2004/05.

6. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

6.1 The Representations Procedure (Children) Regulations 1991 and the Complaints Procedure Directions 1990 states that the Council will monitor the operation of the complaints procedure. The Representations Procedure guidance states that an annual report dealing with the operation of the complaints procedure should be compiled and presented to an appropriate committee. This is the annual report for the period 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2004.

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Local Members: All

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