

Report of the Assistant Director (Children's Specialist Services) to the Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel to be held on 19th November 2014.

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Subject:

Review of the complaints process by the Children in Care Council

Summary statement:

This report summarises the issues raised by the Children in Care Council when they reviewed the complaints process in June 2014.

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1. SUMMARY

This report summarises the issues raised by the Children in Care Council (CICC) when they reviewed the complaints process in June 2014.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The annual report for complaints made by Looked After Children and young people in 2012-13 was presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 5th March 2014. During the meeting the representative of CICC raised some issues about the complaints process. It was agreed that the Complaints Manager would liaise with the CICC in order to review the complaints process and to present their recommendations to the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- 2.2 The CICC was going through a period of internal restructure, therefore it was agreed that the meeting about complaint would take place once the group was ready. The Complaints Manager and the Regulation 33 Manager Quality Assurance attended the CICC on 18th June 2014.

3. REPORT ISSUES

- 3.1 The CICC on 18th June was well attended. The review of the complaints process was part of the agenda and generated a good discussion where all members of CICC got involved.
- 3.2 The Complaints Manager made a summary of the current complaints procedure, which is set in legislation, and therefore can not be altered. However how the procedure is implemented can be looked at and improved.
- 3.3 A discussion took place about informal ways to resolve concerns such as moans and groans books and advocacy. In the CICC's view, advocacy is not always reliable because there is only one advocate and it is not full time role. This creates delays in responding to young people's concerns.
- 3.4 Accessibility was also discussed. Specific complaints leaflets for children and young people can be found in residential units, leaving care and area offices. Stocks are running low but there is an electronic version in the Council's website that can also be used. There is also a specific leaflet to assist young people with disabilities to make a complaint. Information about how to make a complaint is also at the back of the LAC reviews.

CICC members commented that access to leaflets and information about complaints is particularly difficult for young people in foster care, particularly those outside the district. They also stated that even with access to information, some young people are too scared or not confident enough to complain.

3.5 Suggestions from CICC:

- a) There should be a printed version of the leaflet as well as an electronic version.
- b) Contact details of the complaints unit should be included in the Contact Us leaflet.

- c) There should be a designated space in the buildings for information about complaints/ advocacy. There are leaflets in area offices but they are sometimes hard to find.
- d) There could be a competition among young people in care to design a leaflet.
- e) If the current leaflets are kept then the word “Complaints” should be more obvious.
- f) Information about the CICC should be included in the complaints leaflet.
- g) Awareness campaign to children and young people about complaints by having a stall in LAC events.
- h) Regular attendance of the Complaints Manager to CICC two weeks before the Assistant Director, Director and portfolio’s holder to pass themes/ concerns that can then be responded two weeks later.
- i) Members of CICC who are going to be trained as mentors could act as ambassadors for complaints: to raise awareness of how to make complaints, signpost and some problem solving. Training around complaints could be incorporated as part of their induction.

4. OPTIONS

The overview of a robust complaint procedure is a key role for corporate parents. The Panel need assurance, through this report, that the process is working effectively and that issues are addressed.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- 5.1 A sound, robust and accessible complaints procedure contribute to children young people feeling safe to disclose any concerns in the knowledge that they will be treated seriously and sensitively.
- 5.2 Views from children and young people through complaints and compliments and lessons learnt form their complaints can contribute to the shaping of the services we provide.

6. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Members are asked to note the report and consider whether they wish to accept the recommendations included in Section 3.

8. APPENDICES

None.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.