

Annual complaints performance analysis for the year 2017/18.**Report by Alison White, Head of Adult and Social Care, HSC****1 Purpose and Background of Report**

Changes to social work complaints handling have been brought about through the Public Services Reform (Social Work Complaints Procedure) (Scotland) Order 2016 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2016/157/contents/made>). These changes include provision for the Ombudsman to consider the merits of social work decisions as part of the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman's (SPSO) independent investigation of complaints.

The purpose of the Social Work Complaints Handling Procedure (SWCHP) is to provide a standardised approach to handling customer complaints about social work services, whether they are provided by local authorities (LAs) or by health and social care partnerships (HSCPs). In particular, the aim is to implement a consistent process to follow which makes it simpler to complain, ensures staff and customer confidence in complaints handling, and encourages identification of, and making best use of lessons from complaints.

The SWCHP requires Midlothian Council to ensure that *'complaint details are analysed for trend information to ensure we identify service failures and take appropriate action, and regularly reporting the analysis of complaints information helps to inform management of where services need to improve'*.

Appendix 1 presents Midlothian Council's first Social Work Annual Complaints Performance Analysis for 2017/18. The report informs how Midlothian has performed during year one of the new procedure. There is no comparative detail since we are in the inaugural years of the procedure, so there is only minimal analysis and discussion. Year one's statistical data, however will be used as a benchmark for forthcoming reports, where the year on year social work complaints data for Midlothian Council will be presented. These future reports will also detail comparative data to the established Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) family groups; and similarly to all Scottish Local Authority Social Work services when norms are established. This data is determined and then collated by members of the sub-groups of the Local Authority Complaint Handlers Network (LACHN).

The report illustrates a foreword by the Chief Social Work Officer, and includes background detail around the statutory obligations and how they were brought about. This provides contextual detail that highlights the Acts that apply and how compliance to the procedure is externally monitored.

It also focuses on what the emphasis of the procedure is in relation to consistency, coordinated responses, and how providing the data facilitates continuous improvement through benchmarking of performance within and across sectors.

To meet the obligation, local authorities are required to assess and report complaints data against a suite of 8 indicators, and these indicators are the focus of the report. The case studies about the learning and improvements that have occurred as a result of complaints during year one of the new procedure are of particular interest.

CMT were asked to approve publication of the appended annual report, and this is being progressed. Accordingly, the report is attached for the attention of both Cabinet and the ensuing Performance Review and Scrutiny (PRS) members.

2 Report Implications

2.1 Resource

The developing complaints agenda will be subject to ongoing review in terms of the focus and responsibilities of the current Customer Service Improvement Officer role to ensure that the role and outcomes continue to meet the ongoing needs of the Council in relation to complaint handling and reporting.

2.2 Risk

Failure to meet the statutory requirements as they relate to complaint handling and SPSO reporting presents a risk and therefore a commitment to further develop the function seeks to mitigate this.

2.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☐ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☐ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☒ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

2.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

This report relates directly to the key priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan; and the proposed action supports the ongoing improvement agenda across a number of the thematic areas.

2.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The report will provide a number of benefits that includes offering an enhanced understanding of complaints data. The analysis and discussion about what the results could mean, and how they can be used will complement the wider corporate objective to provide an efficient complaints service. The improvement actions and process changes described in the case studies that have been implemented as a result of complaints are evidence of enhancing delivery and outcomes.

2.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The Council is proactively responding to improvement opportunities noted as part of the complaints process.

2.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The Council is using the evidence from complaints as another form of customer feedback to learn from and develop services, and to assist in its delivery of services and processes within the divisions.

2.8 Ensuring Equalities

There are no equalities issues that relate to this report.

2.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

There are no sustainability issues with regard to this report.

2.10 IT Issues

More in depth development work whilst still being defined may be requested through a further report. Future development work will be informed by the proposed provision of a new CRM system

Following system training, staff's understanding of the process will make for more accurate reporting.

8 Recommendations

The Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:-

- Note the content of the Social Work Annual Complaints Performance Analysis in appendix 1.
- Note that is being processed for publication.

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Background Papers:

Appendix 1 - Social Work Annual Complaints Performance Analysis for 2017/18