

REPORT BY HEAD OF STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING

**STATUTORY COMPLAINTS & REPRESENTATIONS ANNUAL REPORT
2010 – 2011 [ADULT SERVICES]**

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To advise the Adult Social Care Partnership Board of the Statutory Complaints & Representations Annual Report for 2010-2011.

2 BACKGROUND

From 1 April 2009 a single complaints system has been in operation for all health and local authority adult social care services in England. The regulations outline the requirement for each responsible body to prepare an annual report for each year. A number of issues must be reported on, including, number of complaints, subject matter, matters of general importance arising out of the complaints, or the way in which the complaints were handled.

3 CURRENT SITUATION

The Annual Report is about complaints and representations made to the Health, Housing & Adult Services Directorate under the statutory procedures and covers the period April 2010 – March 2011. This report focuses solely on complaints made about adult social care services.

Complaints relating to the Housing element within HHAS are required, by law, to be dealt with under different [corporate] arrangements.

Staff are involved in difficult areas of work. This means that at times people do not welcome our involvement in their lives. There are also situations in which we cannot provide people with the resolution they want. There are also times when we get things wrong. In light of this it is therefore inevitable that we receive complaints. Like all other organisations, we would always want to get things 'right first time'. When this does not happen we want to feel that we have an accessible, open and fair way of dealing with people's concerns. To resolve complaints as quickly as possible, and to people's satisfaction is the ideal solution and we try to achieve this as much as possible.

4 KEY MESSAGES

4.1 How the procedure works

There are two stages to the statutory Health & Social Care Complaints Procedure:

- Stage One - Informal resolution by the Council
- Stage Two - Independent consideration by the Local Government Ombudsman [LGO]

4.2 Complaints received

During April 10 - March 11 Adult Services received 8780 new client referrals. This number does not include those already in receipt of a service from us and so does not truly reflect the number of contacts we undertake on a daily basis with our service users. For example those receiving home support, meals at home or attending our day services.

From these contacts a total of **125** complaints were received in respect of Adult Services.

Complaints are down in number this year by 26%.

4.3 Nature of Complaints

Complaints directed against staff have always been one of the top reasons for complaints, but this year there has been a significant decline in the numbers made, even when taking into account the overall drop in complaints for this period.

In last years report it was noted that a growing area of dissatisfaction was the disagreement with the outcome of assessments. We felt this was linked to our customer's expectations and staff were reminded of the need to manage such expectations effectively if this level of satisfaction was not to rise further. Complaints in this area have almost halved in number for this period.

Issues in respect of finance and in particular arrears remain a feature and is one of the few areas of complaint that have seen an increase this year. Generally these complaints do not raise issues about the quality of the service provision.

Areas such as the quality of service provision; not being kept informed; and lack of choice or support have all seen a rise in the number of complaints made.

Complaints about care practice issues have seen an increase to the point where this is now the main issue of complaint. These complaints are often about external services commissioned by the council.

4.4 Instantly resolving complaints

During this period we have recorded 27% of our complaints as being instantly resolved, a significant increase on last year [8%].

It is our aim to achieve a rate of at least a third of all complaints being immediately resolved.

4.5 Complaint outcomes

30% of complaints made to the Directorate had some element that was upheld, and therefore required some action on our part in respect of putting things right for the complainant. This is down from 42% last year.

4.6 Complaints from people who self fund their care

From October 2010, adults who fund their own social care now have access to an independent complaints review service provided by the LGO.

4.7 Advocacy & Special Needs

Complainants are encouraged to have support and advocacy if they wish. Where someone requests help in finding an advocate or it seems to us that an advocate may be required, we try to make the necessary arrangements.

4.8 Working with Partners

Links have also been made with health colleagues to ensure that joint working can be progressed and a joint protocol has been drawn up to formalise this arrangement. Together we have formed a 'South of Tyne & Wear Networking Group', which meets on a quarterly basis to help support the protocol, develop working relations and to share good practice.

4.9 Compliments

For the period 2010-11 we received **179** formal compliments and thank you's.

We would always hope to achieve as many complimentary comments as negative ones and this year we have achieved this.

A small selection of the good things people have said about us during this period are included at the back of the Annual Report.

5 CONCLUSION

The regulations outline that each responsible body must ensure that its annual report is available to any person on request. Once approved, the Annual Report will be placed on the council's website. An information item will also be placed in the Core Brief to make staff aware of the report and where it can be accessed. Hard copies of the report can be made available on request.

6 RECOMMENDATION

That the Adult Social Care Partnership Board note the information contained in this report, and approve the Annual Report.

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