

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S SERVICES CABINET MEMBER

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE
ANNUAL STATUTORY COMPLAINTS REPORT 2007-08**

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 The object of this report is to confirm the annual report for April 2007 – March 2008 in respect of formal complaints received under the statutory procedure by Children, Strategy and Partnerships Service.
- 1.2 This report is part of a statutory duty to address complaints regarding social care functions under Children Act Regulations. These regulations apply to certain services provided by the Children and Family Service and Safeguarding and Practice.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The complaints procedure that applies to Children's Services is governed by the Children Act 1989 and by guidance laid down by the Department of Health.
- 2.2 The Adoption and Children Act (2002) amended the Children Act 1989 and required Local Authorities to make arrangements for the provision of advocacy services for 'care leavers', 'looked after' children and 'children in need' who may wish to make a complaint about the services they have received.
- 2.3 The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 further amending the procedure, and guidance to this procedure produced by The Department of Education and Skills, came into force on 1 September 2006.
- 2.4 We want to encourage service users to tell us if they are not happy with or have worries about a service they receive and support them when they do.

- 2.5 We want to make sure that we use information from complaints to improve services.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The complaints report is compiled in accordance with the above legislation and guidance. It outlines the complaints made and key actions taken by the services in response to them.
- 3.2 The report is a statutory requirement: there is no 'do nothing' option.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 There has been a 29% reduction in the volume of complaints over the previous year. In relation to the level of service the number of complaints we receive is low at just over 3% of service users. Of these a quarter were not upheld. One third of complaints were raised by children and young people on their own behalf.
- 4.2 A theme in complaints received this year was around service users appearing not to be clearly informed about the nature and purpose of our intervention, as a result we have reviewed the information we provide and processes in reviews and care planning.
- 4.2 We must continue to ensure that complaints are responded to promptly, whilst allowing for a full consideration. We also need to ensure that staff continue to attend training so that they are clear about their responsibilities.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1 There are no direct resource implications.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

- 6.1 Our complaints procedure ensures compliance with our statutory obligations.
- 6.2 Our complaints procedure requires a consideration of the needs of complainants to ensure that the process is accessible and appropriate for all. Effective complaints procedures ensure that the views of service users, carers and their representatives have an influence on the provision of services.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

- 7.1 We surveyed all complainants about the procedure most respondents have indicated that they found it fairly easy to make a complaint and that the response they received addressed their concerns accurately. Respondents have suggested that it may be useful to make feedback more widely available so that young people could see something was being done about their complaints.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The Cabinet Member acknowledges receipt of the Annual Report on complaints for 2007/2008.

SERVICE DIRECTOR CHILDREN, STRATEGY AND PARTNERSHIPS

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Children Act 1989.

The Children Act Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4.

Adoption and Children Act 2002.

The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006

Getting the Best from Complaints – Guidance on social care complaints and representations for children, young people and others – Department for Education and Skills 2006.

Get it Sorted: Providing Effective Advocacy Services for Children and Young People making a complaint under the children Act 1989. Department for Education and Skills 2004.