

Agenda item:

**[No.]**

**CABINET**

**On 08 September 2009**

Report Title. Adult Services Annual Complaints Report 2008/09

Report of **Mun Thong Phung, Director of Adult, Culture & Community Services**

Signed :

Contact Officer :Lesley Clay, Complaints Manager, 020 8489 3398

Wards(s) affected: **ALL**

Report for: **Non- Key Decision**

**1. Purpose of the report**

- 1.1. To report on the statutory complaints procedure for Adult Services for the year 2008/09 and make appropriate recommendations to improve complaint handling and performance.
- 1.2. To seek member approval for the Adult Services Annual Complaints Report for 2008/09.

**2. Introduction by Cabinet Member (if necessary)**

- 2.1. I am delighted to present this report as this indicates a very good level of performance for Adult Services both in terms of the level of responsiveness and quality of responses.

**3. State link(s) with Council Plan Priorities and actions and/or other Strategies:**

- 3.1. Performance in handling complaints and members' enquiries is monitored monthly as part of the Council's customer focus indicators. In addition to addressing the concerns of residents and service users, learning from complaints is an important tool for service improvement. It links to Council priority 5: Delivering excellent, customer focussed, cost effective services.

#### **4. Recommendations**

- 4.1. That the Adult Services Annual Complaints Report be received.
- 4.2. That the performance for 2008/09 be noted.
- 4.3. That proposed initiatives for performance improvements are noted

#### **5. Reason for recommendation(s)**

- 5.1. N/A

#### **6. Other options considered**

- 6.1. N/A

#### **7. Summary**

- 7.1. In line with the Local Authority Social Services Complaints (England) Regulation, 2006, the local authority is legally obliged to produce an annual report reviewing the complaints handling performance.
- 7.2. It has been an excellent year in terms of performance. 99% stage 1 responses completed within the 10 day timescale and 100% for both stage 2 & 3. The performance target for 2008/09 was set at 92%.
- 7.3. Quality of responses has improved and many complaints responded to well within the 10 day requirement. This is central to continuing to improve 'service perception' and improve customer care practices.
- 7.4. Monthly performance reports are submitted to the Directorate Management Team (DMT) and cascaded down to management meetings.
- 7.5. In order to ensure that we are responding to enquiries within timescale, weekly reports on outstanding complaints are submitted to the Service Leads and Service Managers to ensure effective closure of cases at early resolution stage.
- 7.6. We continue to raise awareness of the Council's Feedback Scheme through publicity information.

#### **8. Chief Financial Officer Comments**

- 8.1. This report has no direct financial implications.
- 8.2. However, where complaints are investigated by external investigating officers the cost must be absorbed within existing resources.
- 8.3. Similarly, any cost resulting from compensation payments must be met from within existing resources. No budget exists for these payments.

## **9. Head of Legal Services Comments**

- 9.1. All local authorities are legally required to have a social care complaints procedure as ordered by the Secretary of State under section 7B of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 (LASSA). The Local Authority Social Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2006 (and statutory guidance) set out the procedures which the local authority must follow for complaints made on or after 1st September 2006. These Regulations require:
- 9.2. A complaint to be made within one year of the event complained about, unless it would be unreasonable to expect the complaint to have been made earlier than it was and provided it is still possible to consider it effectively and fairly.
- 9.3. A complaints manager to be appointed who, at the investigation stage, should ensure the appointment of an investigating officer to report in writing for adjudication by a senior manager.
- 9.4. Liaison and co-operation between local authority and NHS bodies if a complaint includes elements that relate to part of the NHS, and time limits.
- 9.5. The Regulations emphasise the need to take all reasonable steps to resolve complaints informally and require a record to be kept of all representations made, the outcome and compliance with statutory time limits:
- 9.6. Stage 1 - Informal or problem solving – 10 working days (which can be extended to 20 days if necessary), in default of which a request for a stage 2 investigation can be made.
- 9.7. Stage 2 formal – complete within 25 working days if possible and in any case, within 65 working days.
- 9.8. Stage 3 – Review Panel - complainant has 20 working days within which to request review and a Review Panel must convene within 30 working days of that request and inform the complainant and the local authority of the outcome of that review within a further 5 working days. If the Review Panel decides the complaint was not adequately dealt with, the local authority has 15 working days to inform the complainant of the action it proposes to take as a result. The Stage 3 review panel must have at least two independent members. Officers of the Council (or their spouse/civil partner) can no longer be part of the panel; one council member can be on the panel, but not as the chairperson.
- 9.9. Provided the investigation is being conducted diligently, the authority is unlikely to be criticised either by the courts or the ombudsman if the time limits are not complied with.
- 9.10. The Local Government Ombudsman is empowered to investigate written complaints made by members of the public who claim they have suffered injustice as a result of mal-administration by or on behalf of the local authority but is reluctant to become involved unless other avenues of investigation have been exhausted.
- 9.11. The above procedure applied to all complaints up to 1st April 2009 and therefore to the matters covered in this annual report.

9.12. As of 1st April 2009, complaints are dealt with under a new procedure contained in The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service (England) Regulations 2009 and further information relating to this new procedure is in the main body of the report.

## **10. Head of Procurement Comments**

10.1. N/A

## **11. Equalities &Community Cohesion Comments**

11.1. Please note the detailed equalities analysis of complaints in section 7 of the main report shows there were no obvious trends to suggest that any ethnic group were making complaints about specific services. Complaints from White British people appear on paper to be significantly down from 23 last year to only 5 this year. However, complaints from Black or Black British people while still very low raised from 3 last year to 6 this year. The figures are distorted by the high number of people who don't complete ethnicity or disability information so it is impossible to make accurate comparisons when the majority of people making a complaint are ethnicity unknown. In relation to age, the largest group registering a complaint is in the 60+ group and more women have complained than men this is a consistent trend across all council complaints monitoring as more women access council services than men. There were no recorded complaints relating to any equalities issues, e.g. racism, homophobia, sexism etc.

## **12. Consultation**

12.1. No consultation was required in drafting this report.

## **13. Service Financial Comments**

13.1. Stage 1 complaints are managed within the existing management structures and there are no additional financial implications. Stage 2 complaints have been investigated through external Investigating Officers and in 2008/09 ACCS employed 5 investigators at an average cost of £2.5k per investigation. The statutory complaint procedures have now changed and in 2009/10 and beyond we project that most stage 2 investigations will be undertaken internally.

13.2. The complaints team structure is fully funded. There are no adverse financial implications. Where compensation payments are agreed by senior managers, management should monitor these as there is no provision with service budgets.

**14. Use of appendices /Tables and photographs**

14.1. Third Avenue Photography for the Social Sector.

**15. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

The following background papers were referred to in the preparation of this report:

- 15.1 Annual Report on the Council's complaints procedure for the years 2006/07 and 2007/08 and 2008/09
- 15.2 Department of Health statutory guidelines. To access these guidelines please go to  
<http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/OrganisationPolicy/ComplaintsPolicy/SocialServicesComplaintsProcedures>

# ADULT SOCIAL CARE

## Complaints Annual Report 2008-2009



# **Adult Social Care**

## **1. Background to Complaints Procedure**

Haringey Adult Social Care aims to provide services of the highest standard. In order to achieve this we need to involve service users and listen to their views.

Adult, Culture & Community Services is a large department providing a wide range of services. We accept that things can go wrong and if anyone feels unhappy about the way they have been treated then they have a right to complain.

The Social Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2006, state that as a working guide, a complaint may be generally defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about the actions, decisions or apparent failings of a local authority’s adult’s social care provision which requires a response”.

A person is eligible to make a complaint where the local authority has a power or a duty to provide, or to secure the provision of, a service for him/her, and his/her need or possible need for such a service has (by whatever means) come to the attention of the local authority. This also applies to a person acting on behalf of someone else.

The complaints' procedure consists of a three-step process. The first step is local resolution. Whenever possible, managers will try to resolve your complaint speedily and informally. If we are not able to resolve your complaint locally, you may then ask for a formal complaint. If you are still not satisfied with the outcome you can then request a review panel.

Not only does Adult Social Care handle complaints under the Social Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2006, they also handle complaints under the corporate complaints procedure.

We welcome compliments and suggestions so that we can learn from these and improve our services.

## **2. Reporting Mechanisms**

The Directorate’s Complaints Manager now reports to the Head of Systems Development & Performance, who in turn reports to the Assistant Director of Commissioning & Strategic Services.

The Complaints Manager is a fourth tier manager and has a very good working relationship with all senior managers.

Below is a brief outline of the complaints process within the Council:

- The Complaints Manager manages the complaints process;
- The Council has a central database for logging all complaints;
- Complaints are taken in any format such as: written, oral or electronic;
- An acknowledgement letter will be sent within 2 working days of receiving the complaint. This letter will provide the complainant with the contact details of the person investigating their complaint and when the response is due. Complaints will be completed within 10 working days, sooner as far as possible;
- All complaints are sent via email to the service manager of the team directly responsible;
- Response letters at all stages carry an escalation paragraph, explaining how the complainant may take their complaint to the next stage of the complaint procedure;
- If there are any recommendations after any stages of the complaints procedure, the Complaints Manager will monitor that these have been implemented;
- The Complaints Team will generate weekly reports that are sent to all service heads; this shows how many complaints they have and the due date;
- The Complaints Team will chase up the service heads daily for complaints that are due imminently;
- The Complaints Manager produces quarterly performance reports for Directors Management Team (DMT), which are cascaded to all service heads and;
- We are always looking for ways to improve our services and feel that there are many benefits to a good complaints procedure;

### **3. Advocacy Services**

The Council will support anyone in their request to use an advocate in helping with their complaint. The Council appreciates that people may become confused by the complaints process.

A review of all current advocacy services was undertaken by the Council and we are developing advocacy services with the voluntary sector and NHS partners to meet the requirements of the Governments personalisation agenda. The Council uses independent advocacy services to specific vulnerable groups through a number of community based organisations:

- Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB): 1 fulltime post funded by Haringey Council and Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health Trust to provide advice to community mental health teams;
- HIV Advocacy: -1 fulltime post at CAB funded by Haringey Council;



- Substance Misuse - 1 advocate
- MIND in Haringey offer specialist advocacy for Mental Health service users and we are currently working with MIND to augment this service;
- HAIL (Haringey Association for Independent Living) is for service users with Learning Disabilities;
- Age Concern run an advocacy service for people in hospital addressing concerns such as making life changing decisions, moving into long-term care or not (if others had suggested it).
- Haringey has commissioned '**Rethink**' in London to act as the Council's Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) service provider. This service covers service users with both Learning Disabilities and Mental Health needs.  
'**Rethink**' IMCA service provides an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate to represent and support people who meet all the following criteria:
  1. a decision is being made about either
    - serious medical treatment or
    - long term care and health moves (more than 28 days in hospital/8 weeks in a care home)
  2. and it is believed the service user does not have the capacity to make that decision independently
  3. and the service user has no appropriate family or friends available to represent them
  4. there is also a service funded by NHS Haringey which is for people detained under the Mental Health Act.

The Complaints Manager is aware of the providers of the advocacy services and would know how a service user may make contact with these organisations.

Part of the role of the Supported Housing Scheme Manager, is to advocate on behalf of a tenant if they are unable to complain for themselves. The Day Centre Managers in Older People Services also act as advocates to assist users in complaining.

Haringey Carers, receive further support from a different group of community based organisations:

- Learning Disabilities specialist advocacy provided by Mencap;
- The Haringey Carers Centre provides advocacy: [info@haringeycarers.org](mailto:info@haringeycarers.org) tel. 020 8888 0831;
- Mental Health Carers Support Association has an advocacy project for mental health carers;
- Asian Carers Support Group;

- Black and Minority Ethnic Carers Support Service, (does offer advocacy services although this is not something that they are contracted to do for the Council).

The Complaints Team acknowledges that complainant's advocates can also be a friend or family member.

Whenever the Complaints Team receive a complaint from a Third Party, they will send a client consent form to the complainant to get confirmation that somebody other than themselves would be handling the complaint on their behalf.

This form would give the details of the advocate. The Complaints Team are aware that service users may not be in a position to give consent and they will discuss this with the individual care teams.

The Complaints Team will provide assistance to service users who do not speak English as a first language. The Council has its own translation unit and has staff throughout the Council who will offer to interpret on an ad hoc basis.

The Complaints Team will always ask if there is any way we can offer any help or support for e.g. Translation, Braille or large print copies of correspondence.

## **4. Performance 2008/09**

### **4.1 Compliments/WOW Awards**

Apart from dealing with complaints, we encourage people to write to the Complaints Team to give us compliments about staff or teams. We do ensure that the person or teams that are complimented are formally acknowledged.

The Council now belongs to the WOW! Award scheme which is for outstanding customer service.

This is an outside organisation and is open to all Council Staff. Being a part of this scheme has had a very positive effect on our compliments. For the year 2007/08 the service received a total of 78 this increased in 2008/09 where Adult Services received 195 WOW nominations, out of these nominations, Adult Services received 33 WOW awards..

## Some of the compliments we received were .....

Home Carer, cared for our mother in her final days, always with a smile she treated our mother with kindness and respect she became a friend to the family she made our mothers last days a bit better to bare thanks for everything.

Thank you very much for booking the respite for my wife. I enjoyed the break and got to see my brother who I have not seen in 4 years.

I just wanted to say a big thank you for all the support you and Haringey Services have given to my mother over the last few years and are continuing to do so. I have always received complete-back up to anything I have enquired about. The Social Workers, have all been fantastic, if there has been any query this has always been dealt with promptly and efficiently. I think people-should remember you are a support service and that they should be responsible, if possible, for their family first and be very grateful that we have such a great service available in this borough. You do a tremendous role. Thanks again for all your hard work, very much appreciated.

Adult Services received two suggestions during this period. Suggestion forms are available in all reception areas and suggestions can be made via the web, telephone or on our complaint form.

## 4.2 Whistle-blowing

Whistle-blowing is a complex element of complaint management. The Council's whistle-blowing policy was reviewed last year. The Policy applies to all Council workers which includes senior and junior members of staff. The Council will deal with these concerns anonymously when an individual does not wish to give their details. For a full copy of the policy please visit the Council's website:

<http://www.haringey.gov.uk/index/council/ourstandards/ethicalgovernance>

### 4.3 Complaints

Performance on complaints handling is determined by whether or not responses have been sent to the complainant within the set timescale. The Adult, Culture & Community Services complaints team also deal with corporate complaints.

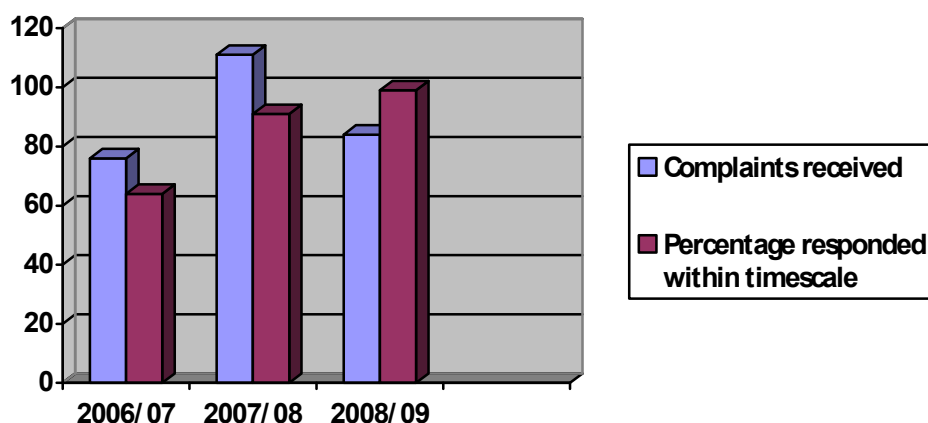
#### Stage 1 – Local Resolution

This is the most important stage of the complaints procedure. The Department's teams are expected to resolve as many complaints as possible at this initial point.

The performance target set for the period 1 April 2008 – 31 March 2009 was 92%. This target was set locally as opposed to a statutory target.

For the period 01 April 2008 – 31 March 2009 Adult Services exceeded our performance target by reaching 99% for complaints completed within the 10 day timescale. The outturn figure was 84 complaints received. All staff involved in complaints in Adult Services have worked extremely hard to achieve this performance target. If one response had not been overdue by one day, a 100% response rate would have been achieved.

The graph below provides a comparison of the last three consecutive years on the number of complaints received and whether or not they were handled within timescale.



#### Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

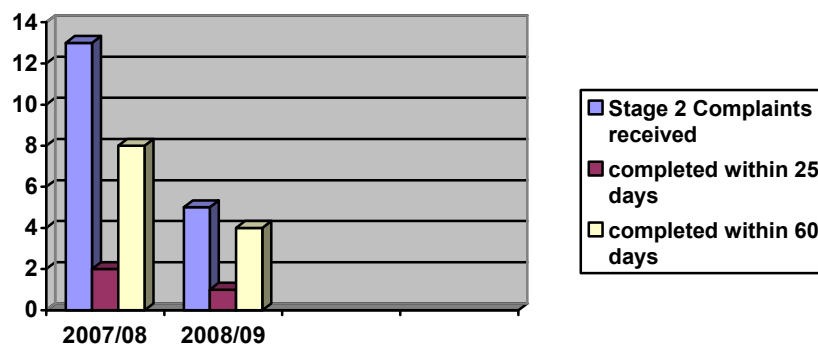
This stage is implemented where the complainant is dissatisfied with the findings of Stage 1. Stage 2 is an investigation conducted by either an internal manager or an external investigating officer. In most cases, Haringey appoint investigating officers from a pool of external investigating officers. The role of the investigating officer involves interviewing staff and file reviews, reviewing

policies and procedures, and producing a comprehensive report. Once the investigating officer has completed their report an Assistant Director is appointed to consider the findings and respond to the complainant accordingly.

The statutory procedure states that Stage 2 investigations are to be completed within 25 working days and in certain cases can be extended to 65 working days. The majority of our stage 2 investigations do need to be extended to the 65 working days due to the complexity of the complaint.

There were 5 Stage 2 investigations completed within timescale. The performance figure was 100% completed within timescale. The performance target for Stage 2's was 40% for 25 days and 60% for the extended period. This is a significantly lower figure than 2007/08 which would show that the quality of the responses has increased at Stage 1.

The graph below provides a comparison of the last two consecutive years on the number of Stage 2 complaints received and whether or not they were handled within timescale.



When analysing the number of stage one and two complaints, it is evident that the majority of complaints were resolved locally to the satisfaction of the customer and we continue to use feedback to improve our high quality service. The complexity and nature of Adult Services complaint investigations can lead to delays.

### Stage 3 – Review Panel

Where complainants are dissatisfied with the finding of the Stage 2 investigation, the Council is required to establish a Complaints Review Panel. The panel makes recommendations to the Director who then makes a decision on the complaint and any action to be taken. Review Panels are made up of two independent panellists and one Councillor. The timescales for Review Panels are as follows:

- Within 30 days set up the Panel
- Producing the Panel's findings within 5 days
- Produce the Council's response within 15 days.

For the reporting period Adult Social Care had only 1 complaint that went to Review Panel. This indicates that complainants are generally satisfied with the responses to their complaints. This is an exceptionally good level of performance.

### **Corporate Complaints Procedure**

In the Adult Culture & Community Services Directorate there are two complaints procedures. Adult Social Care uses a statutory procedure which is for any social services you may receive. The corporate procedure is a separate procedure and is used for all other council services.

The outturn figure for Adult Social Care for the period 2008/09 were 37 complaints received under the corporate complaints procedure of which all were completed within timescale which is an improvement on our 2007/08 outturn of 80%. Adult Services achieved a performance of 100%.

The Complaints Team also has a management role in all the complaints, Member Enquiries and Freedom of Information requests received for the whole Directorate.

## **5. Local Government Ombudsman**

The Commission for Local Administration is the official title of the body that runs the Local Government Ombudsman service. It is an independent body funded by government grant. They are empowered to investigate (among other things) any Local Authority. If you have a complaint, the first thing to do is complain to the council. In most cases, the council must have a chance to sort out the complaint before the Ombudsman can consider it. Councils often have more than one stage in their complaints procedure. You will usually need to complete all stages before the Ombudsman will look at your complaint. All complaints must be made by members of the public who claim to have sustained injustice in consequence of mal-administration in connection with action taken by or on behalf of an Authority.

Reporting on complaints received from the Ombudsman will be in the Feedback & Information team's corporate annual report.

## **6. How did we respond to your complaints?**

The Council takes complaints seriously. When you complain about our services, we find ways to improve the quality and delivery of services. Common themes for complaints have been long waiting times and issues with service delivery these issues are currently being addressed in the respective departments.

## 7. Who complained to us?

Equalities data is collected to assess how Adult Services can better address the needs of the community. However, only a small number of complainants supplied information. With your help in filling out feedback forms, we will be able to serve you better.

There were no obvious trends to suggest that any ethnic group were making complaints about specific services. In relation to age, the largest group that we have registering a complaint is in the 60+ group and more females have complained than men. The tables below illustrate the ethnicity and diversity of people who complain about Adult Services.

Ethnicity	No. of Records		
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Black or Black British	2	3	6
Asian or Asian British	2	0	1
White British	16	23	5
White Other	3	0	5
Mixed	2	0	0
Other Ethnic Group	4	1	0
Unknown	47	84	67
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>84</b>

Age Group	No. of Records		
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
18-23	1	0	0
24-45	6	8	5
46-59	10	9	5
60+	22	14	17
Not known	37	80	57
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>84</b>

How Received	No. of Records		
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Complaint form	6	n/a	n/a
Email	7	26	28
Fax	4	n/a	1
Feedback form	8	18	12
In person	4	9	1
Letter	29	27	21
Phone	12	29	21
Web Form	6	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>84</b>

Disability	No. of Records		
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Yes	27	16	25
No	6	11	2
Unknown	42	84	57
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>84</b>

Gender	No. of Records		
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Female	45	56	53
Male	20	49	22
Male & Female	10	2	6
Unknown	1	4	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>84</b>

## 8. Learning from Complaints and Improving Services

### Examples:

- 8.1 Front line complaint from the daughter of a service user, whose mother had an accident on the day centre transport. Service user's seat came out of the runners in the floor as it had not been securely fastened in and had probably not been properly checked at the beginning of the day

#### Learning points:

- i) Ensure that there is a specific requirement for drivers to check the anchorages of the seats in their vehicles before setting out to pick up passengers



- ii) All relevant staff to have training on locking the seats in place in the vehicles and
- iii) Review of systems to ensure that, where there is an accident, staff telephone back to the manager in the day centre immediately, and do not wait for a more convenient time or for the return to base.

### **8.2 Summary of complaint**

The Council: A. has delayed in making payments for the daughter's placement, causing uncertainty and anxiety; B has failed to properly conduct case plan reviews for the daughter; and C: has failed to respond to correspondence and complaints from the solicitors acting on behalf of the complainant. This was not just an issue about payments it was very much about a lack of planning about young people moving from children's to adult services

#### **Learning Points:**

- i) Service need to ensure that payments are made on time.

#### **Action to prevent recurrence and improve service:**

A new transition team has been set up in adult services to help prevent this in the future.

### **8.3 Summary of complaint**

Since 2004 the Council has failed to deal properly with requests for an increase in fees in respect of a care home placement. This was a case that was not managed correctly by the service and clear targets for responding were not set.

#### **Learning Points:**

- i) Review procedure to ensure that fee levels are reviewed in a timely way.

#### **Action to prevent recurrence and improve service:**

A new procedure to all managers was sent around saying that when they a request for a fee increase is received, it must be immediately sent to the Head of Service. Head of Service will then instigate the possibility of the fee increase in a timely, efficient manner. Also, all such requests sent to one central point and a clear response system in place.

### **8.4 Summary of complaint**

Family received a review and it was agreed that a specialist bed was required for their 18 year old son but an assessment was needed by the Occupational Therapy (OT) team in the Learning Disability Team (LD). The family had to endure a long wait for this assessment. This complaint was relating to the procedures in the Transition team between Children's and Adults.

#### **Learning Points:**

- i) Referrals to any service, must be actioned in a timely manner and service users and their families are to be kept informed of progress at all times

### **Action to prevent recurrence and improve service:**

Regarding the issue of transition from the Children's to the Adult Learning Disability Team, the Council now have a dedicated 'Transition Team', with two specialist transition social workers and a protocol for transition in place. In terms of allocation, all cases should be allocated, at least in the first instance and offer a 'smooth transition' to the Adult Service and to ensure any current issues are picked up. A new Occupational Therapy/Learning Disability protocol is in place to help improve the process of referrals to Occupational Therapy/Learning Disabilities.

## **9. Initiatives for 2008/09**

### **9.1 Reform of the Complaints arrangements across Health and Social Care**

As of 01 April 2009 a new joint complaints procedure was introduced for health and social care: *The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009*.

The guide, 'Listening, Responding, Improving' has been developed to help complaints professionals work with colleagues to make their organisations better at listening, responding and learning from people's experiences. It is designed to be accessible to anyone working in health and social care organisations that are involved in receiving feedback and resolving concerns and complaints from patients, service users and their representatives.

#### **What is different?**

- the new procedure is a joint complaints procedure between health services (the NHS) and adult social care services
- the new procedures advocates for a local resolution and only if your unhappy with the outcome at this stage will your complaint be referred to the Ombudsman.

The principles of the new procedure will include:

- getting it right first time
- being customer focused
- being open and accountable
- acting fairly and proportionately
- putting things right
- seeking continuous improvement to our services.

The focus will be on resolving complaints at a local level. We will acknowledge your complaint within three working days and contact you to listen to what you have to say and understand what your problem or concerns are.

We will agree with you the best way to deal with the things that you have told us about and also agree the time scale for doing this. If you need support we will arrange this for you.

We will respond to you in the way which we agreed and we will provide you with all the necessary information in relation to the issues that you have raised with us.

### **How we will handle complaints?**

When we receive a complaint we will try and sort it out straight away. If we can't then we will:

- contact you to discuss how you wish your complaint to be dealt with
- agree with you when you a deadline on a response
- appoint a manager to investigate your complaint
- where possible put things right
- learn from our complaints and improve our services

The full guidance can be can be found at:

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Managingyourorganisation/Legalandcontractual/Complaintspolicy/MakingExperiencesCount/index.htm>

As the Adult Social Care statutory complaints procedure changed from 01 April 2009, the Complaints Manager will need to establish a new training programme for all social care staff involved in investigating complaints. The training should cover the following:

- General Complaints awareness
- Customer Care
- Risk Assessing a Complaint
- Writing a Complaints Plan
- Investigating a Complaint

The Complaints Improvement Plan is continually updated this includes:

- i. Continuing to develop and embed the importance of learning from complaints to improve our services
- ii. Achieve the performance targets
- iii. Ensuring that investigators of Stage 1 complaints are briefed on the importance of resolution at Stage 1
  - iv. Ensure that complainants are kept informed through out the procedure
  - v. Ensure that stage 1 responses cover all issues raised
  - vi. Publicise the complaints procedure where ever possible.
  - vii. Recommendation that meetings are to be held after each Stage 2 investigation, with the senior managers and the complaints team. These meetings will ensure all recommendations are carried out.

### **Serious Untoward Incidents**

Adults Services has written new guidance for Serious Untoward Incidents. A 'Serious Untoward Incident' (SUI) is where an incident or a series of incidents have taken place which may give rise to public or elected member interest. It may be an incident where our actions may be open to question, where we need to be aware that poor practice has taken place so that we can alert others to potential difficulties or even danger or simply where a service user has taken action, which may be reported in the press, such as, service user committing suicide. A report must be completed within 48 hours of the incident happening and this will ensure that all senior managers have been informed of any incident immediately. The report must be sent to the Complaints Team, Safeguarding Adults Manager and the Assistant Director of Adult Services. Outcomes of any SUI will provide a base for learning.

## **10. Conclusion**

We take our complaints, compliments and suggestions feedback very seriously. We appreciate the need to act on this feedback to continue to improve our services by listening properly to our service users.

We endeavour to encourage all services to support early intervention, and emphasis on preventing problems is paramount. We aim to provide services that will help maintain the independence for the individual whilst providing a well-trained workforce.

Early resolution of complaints is a priority, which we are working hard to achieve by implementing initiatives such as 'Learning from Complaints', and training. All Adult, Culture & Community Services staff are committed to the Council's vision of high performance and improvement. In 2009/10 our focus is to:

- i) Respond within the 10 days – within 24/48 hour as far as possible;
- ii) Continue to improve the quality of our responses;
- iii) Ensure service users and carers know how to refer and increase the awareness and visibility of our service;
- iv) Continue to learn from our complaints maximising the use of team meetings and practice forums to improve and inform the quality of our practice; and
- v) Ensure the feedback/trend analysis and learning is fed into our strategic planning, performance, commissioning and service delivery processes.