

## **Divisions Affected - ALL**

### **Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**11 MARCH 2022**

#### **Customer Service**

#### **COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

#### **Report by Corporate Director Customers, Organisational Development and Resources**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to**
  - i. Consider the content of the briefing note with a view to suggestions for performance and development within this function.

### **Complaints Management Briefing Note**

2. During 2021, as part of the customer service transformation programme, complaints management was taken on by the 'voice of the customer' team within the customer service function. The council's complaints management process is managed centrally with a focus on the statutory process in adults and children's services, the central team liaising with the service to investigate and resolve complaints.
3. Following a review of the complaints management function in November 2021, a number of performance issues and associated risks relating to the operation of the corporate and statutory complaints service were identified. These issues related to backlogs, data quality and reporting, resources and workflow and case management.

4. At the beginning of December, the position was:

Service	Total	Of which (Status)	
		Unallocated / not started	Open cases (with complaints team)
Adults	89	42	47
Children's	116	51	65
Corporate	65	21	44
Other	12	0	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>168</b>

('Other' included cases that were escalated such as debt cases)

5. A Complaints Recovery Plan was introduced, and additional resource was allocated to form a backlog team within the voice of the customer team in the Customer Service Centre.
6. After a process of data cleansing and collation of information, a total of 73 cases were identified as being unallocated and were assigned to Recovery Team. Specific recovery meetings with the key directorates were held where each complaint was analysed and agreed actions taken.
7. By 14<sup>th</sup> January 2022, the position from the original backlog was:

Service	Total	Of which (Status)	
		Open cases with service	Open cases with complaints team
Adults	3	3	0
Children's	20	0	20
Corp	3	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>23</b>

8. By 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022, the position from the original backlog was:

Service	Total	Of which (Status)	
		Open cases with service	Open cases with complaints team
Adults	0	0	0
Children's	10	10	0
Corporate	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>

## Current position

- At the same time as dealing with the backlog we were also operating a support team to deal with new complaints.
- The number of complaints received 30th Nov 2021-28<sup>th</sup> Feb 2022 by type is set out below. One of the key findings from this work has been that 30% of complaint contacts do not fall into the Complaints process and have been processed as a Service Request or signposted to the appropriate organisation.

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Open with Services</b>	<b>Open cases with complaints team</b>	<b>Complete cases (responses sent)</b>	<b>Closed – other reason (withdrawn, duplicate, out of time)</b>
Statutory Adults	85	25	1	50	9
Statutory Children Stage 1s	79	39	2	26	12
Corporate Complaints	99	29	1	46	23
Service Requests / Not OCC complaint	116	-	-	-	116
<b>Totals</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>160</b>

## Resourcing

- A considerable amount of effort and capacity has gone into the recovery plan since mid-November. Internally, this has involved support from Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Legal and Governance, HR Recruitment and IT. This is in addition to the redeployment of Customer Experience staff and intense recruitment of colleagues within the Complaints team itself in the Customer Service Centre. We have also employed temporary resource at a senior complaints officer level and at a junior level plus administrative support and assorted support from other management posts within the service.

## Training

- Training of the new starters in the Complaints team has been successful and the training materials have been agreed with external companies such as Customer Contact Association and the IGO training is planned to be delivered in March 2022. Further development of training is ongoing to ensure documented processes and material. The service managers have also engaged with other Local Authorities to seek best practices and guidelines. This has proved insightful.

## **Process redesign**

13. A revised way of working was introduced on 24<sup>th</sup> January, where we are transitioning to new ways of working including management workflow and data quality.
14. We have introduced a triage process so that when any complaint is received, it is triaged within 24-48hrs and then allocated to a Complaint Officer in the voice of the customer team to acknowledge to the customer and send out to the services.

## **System solution**

15. Working with ICT colleagues, a number of systems (both currently used for other modules within OCC/CDC and off the shelf providers) have been investigated and procurement of a new system has been undertaken. We are currently in the process of configuring this for our needs and working with relevant stakeholders.
16. Phase one of this system is due to be operational in early April. This will transition the complaints team from the current manual way of working of a spreadsheet run operations to a more focussed case management solution and further enhance data and reporting.

## **Summary**

17. This briefing note sets out the results of a successful performance intervention following a review of a service function where performance metrics were highlighting issues, especially relating to increasing complaints backlogs.
18. Colleagues in the complaints team and service areas who have undertaken targeted work to identify and address the issues should be commended for the efforts they have put in to effectively address the backlog and put in place system and process improvements.
19. The approach taken highlights the role of the 'voice of the customer' team in driving performance improvement, it is worth noting that the establishment of this team and its function and capability resulted from the wider service redesign of the customer service centre undertaken during 2019/20.

## **Financial Implications**

20. There are no financial implications arising from this briefing note.  
Comments checked by:  
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## **Legal Implications**

21. There are no legal implications arising from this briefing note.

Comments checked by:

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## **Staff Implications**

22. There are no staffing implications arising from this briefing note.

## **Equality and Inclusion Implications**

23. There are no specific equality and inclusion implications arising from this briefing note.

## **Sustainability Implications**

24. Not applicable to the content of this report.

## **Risk Management**

25. Complaints management is reflected within operational risk registers.

## **Consultations**

26. Not applicable to the content of the report.

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Background papers: N/A

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