

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Children and Young People held at**  
**10.00 am on Thursday, 24 March 2022**

Present:

Members: Councillor P Seaman (Cabinet Member)  
Councillor B Gittins (Deputy Cabinet Member)

Employees Present:

I Ahmed, Complaints Officer, Customer Services  
J Gregg, Director of Children's Services  
U Patel, Law and Governance  
R Sherwood, Customer Services

Apologies: Councillor P Male

**Public Business**

**13. Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

**14. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2021 were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

**15. Children's Services Comments, Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2020/21**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services which presented the Children's Services Comments, Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2020/21.

There is a statutory duty for the Council to have a system for receiving representations by, or on behalf of, children who use the social care services they provide or commission, and for the Council to produce an annual report about the operation of the complaints.

The report, as attached at Appendix I, outlined the details of the comments, compliments and complaints for children's services in 2020/21. It highlighted the themes that emerged from them and the learning and service improvements that have resulted from the feedback received. Appendix II detailed the Council's guidance for handling complaints.

The report indicated that between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, there were 157 statutory and informal complaints received about children's services. Of these, 141 were statutory complaints, 4 corporate complaints and 12 informal complaints. The number of complaints under the statutory process had decreased from 212 in 2019/20.

A total of 17 complaints were made by children and young people themselves or from an advocate during 200/21, the remainder were from adults. There had been a slight increase of children and young people using an advocate over the past few years.

Two main themes that continue to emerge from the complaints made by and on behalf of users in 2020/21 were (i) issues regarding poor communication with users and (ii) concerns about the standards of service provided.

A total of 445 compliments were received in 2020/21 compared with 153 in 2019/20 and 78 in 2018/19. Themes from compliments were predominantly around the good standard of practice received from individual social workers and the overall standard of service received from teams. It was not currently possible to distinguish between compliments from children and young people themselves, or carers, or staff without manually going through every compliment. A selection of compliments from children and young people and families were included in the appendix to the report.

Members noted that the majority of complaints were made by adults and questioned whether the voices of looked after children were being adequately captured. Officers indicated that work was currently underway with the Participation Team to look at making the complaints literature and the complaints process more child friendly and more accessible. As part of this work, there was an expectation that leaflets would be produced in a number of different languages and be available online. Progress on this work would be reported to the Corporate Parenting Board.

Members also questioned how the level of complaints received by the children's services department compared to other departments. It was reported that it would be difficult to compare as the Council has a statutory duty to have a system in place for receiving representations by, or on behalf of, children who use our services. And the level of support given to administer the system reflected this. And whilst there were existing processes in place to deal with complaints across the council, these were not being used consistently.

Work was currently underway to develop a corporate complaints function, a standard system which would result in a more transparent and streamlined function for all departments to utilise.

In response to questions on whether the system recorded and had trigger points on the number of complaints attributable to individual members of staff, officers indicated that at present the system did not capture this level of detail; however, this would be raised with relevant operational leads.

**RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member approves the publication of the Annual Report in relation to complaints and representations in Children's Services in 2020/21.**

#### 16. **Outstanding Issues Report**

There were no outstanding issues.

17. **Any Other Business**

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 10.45 am)