

Standards Committee

16 November 2006



Annual Report of Social Care Representations Procedure 2005/06

Report of Gerald Tompkins, Head of Strategic Planning and Health Improvement

Purpose of Report

- 1 To inform the Standards Committee about the performance of Social Care in respect of the handling and consideration of representations, as contained in the **Annual Report on Representations 2005/06**.

Background

- 2 Publication of the Annual Report on Representations is a statutory requirement.
- 3 The NHS & Community Care Act 1990 and the 1989 Children Act specify requirements for Social Care to publish details about representations, including comments/suggestions, compliments and complaints, received from service users, carers and their representatives during the year.
- 4 Legislation also requires that the Annual Report contains information about how Social Care has performed in its management and operation of the Representations Procedure against national and local standards.
- 5 The Annual Report will be considered by Cabinet in the near future, and it is Cabinet that approves it for publication.

Content

- 6 The Report brings together information gathered in relation to the activities involved with the receiving, handling and consideration of compliments, comments/suggestions and complaints from service users, carers and their representatives.
- 7 Information includes statistical data on performance against standards, key issues arising from investigations of complaints, in particular, and their impact on policy, procedure and practice, and any lessons learned across branches.

Learning from Representations

- 8 This report highlights a number of areas where improvements in practice have been identified and made as a result of representations. These include:
- Reducing the likelihood of a complaint by ensuring there is a proper response when an initial concern is logged.
 - The importance of communication between staff, service users, advocates or other representatives of the service user is recognised especially where several people are involved in handling a complaint.
 - The importance of on-going training and supervision for staff is recognised and facilitated in respect of good practice and procedures.
 - Transitional plans for children reaching adulthood are scrutinised.
 - Improved recreational facilities in children's homes.
 - Training programmes are updated to reflect these and other learning points from representations received from service users and their representatives.

Key Areas for Development

- 9 This report highlights a number of areas where work is currently ongoing to improve the service:
- Implementing key roles and responsibilities of those involved with the management and operation of the new Representations Procedure for children, adult and integrated services.
 - Implementing changes to the current IT system and practice for recording the process involved for receiving, responding to and learning from complaints.
 - Managers ensuring that staff responsible for recording representations on the Social Services Information Database system actively do so, in order to ensure that information is accurate and up to date when it is analysed for the purpose of identifying performance and trends.
 - The importance of learning from complaints and other representations in any service improvements on redesign.

- Improving performance on completion timescales.
- Improving governance arrangements and reporting procedures to senior management.

Developments in 2006/07

- 10 The Standards Committee are asked to note that changes to statutory guidance on social care complaints were implemented on the 1st September 06. These changes are acknowledged in the Annual Representations Report 2005/06, however, they occurred after the reporting period. A separate procedure and guidance has now been developed for the Adult Social Care and Children & Young People's Social Care services. In particular, the changes require us respond to complaints within tighter timescales (20 working days for Stage 1 and 65 working days for Stage 2) and alter the composition of Review Panels.

Conclusion

- 11 The service receives a number of representations each year. This is predictable given the nature of the services, which are provided at difficult times in people's lives, and representations are a valuable source of feedback to inform service improvement. This Annual Report indicates positive achievements in Social Care's performance in the handling and consideration of representations, including complaints, during the year 2005/06.

Recommendation

- 12 Standards Committee are asked to note the content of this report and provide feedback on the contents if appropriate.

Background Papers

Annual Report on Representations 2005/06.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance	None at this stage. However complaints can lead to claims for compensation in extreme cases and if allowed to escalate.
Staffing	None.
Equalities & Diversity	Consistent with national and local requirements. Representations Procedure has been Impact Assessment.
Accommodation	None.
Crime and Disorder	System can record any complaints about bullying, harassment or racist incidents.
Sustainability	A priority in light of statutory requirements.
Human Rights	Compatible with Human Rights Act – able to record and respond to complaints about alleged breaches.
Localities	To ensure improvements in recording practices.
Young People	Responsive to children and young people’s needs. Need to explore issues relating to better outcomes from resolution of complaints.
Consultation	Consultation has taken place with respect to the recent changes in the Representations Procedure.
Health	Feedback from representations can improve services, leading to improved outcomes for service users.