

Learning from our Customers

A review of comments and complaints made in

1st April 2009 – 31st March 2010



Southampton City Council
Health and Adult Social Care Directorate

Christine Williams
Customer Care and Complaints Manager

Learning from our Customers

“A review of comments and complaints made in the period April 2009 – March 2010”

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The annual report provides an analysis of compliments, enquiries from Councillors and MPs, Adult Statutory concerns and Adult Statutory complaints received during the period 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010. Additionally we have also reported on the number of Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests received during this period for Adult services.
- 1.2 The Health and Adult Social Care Directorate’s Customer Care and Complaints Service, is managed within the Commissioning, Planning and Performance Division of Children’s Services and Learning and is responsible for the complaints function within both Children’s Services and Learning and the Health and Adult Social Care Division.
- 1.3 The management of complaints forms part of a broader approach to the way the Directorate delivers customer care. The complaints function is a vital source of information which assists in the development and delivery of future services. The Customer Care and Complaints Team are also responsible for Access to Personal Records under the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Requests and the Duty to Act (Whistleblowing) Procedure.

2. Background

- 2.1 The NHS & Community Care Act 1990 and The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 require Social Services to set up and maintain a complaints procedure and to operate that procedure according to specified timescales and methods of investigation and review. The guidance requires that the Annual Report be presented to the Senior Management Team and Members and that this should include a summary of statistical information along with a review of the procedure.
- 2.2 The Health and Adult Social Care Directorate encourage service users to comment on the service we provide. The absence of complaints does not necessarily mean that service users are happy with the service they receive, so it is important that user’s feel able to voice their opinions and feel confident that their views will be considered.
- 2.3 This report helps to ensure that this feedback reaches senior and other managers within the Directorate so it can inform the way we deliver services to our customers.

- 2.4 Complaints are a valuable resource and the feedback gained from them forms both an integral part of the quality assurance process and also contributes to the overall development and monitoring of services. This feedback mechanism is continually evaluated to make sure that we are developing services in line with our customer's needs and requirements.

3. Developments

- 3.1 The Customer Care and Complaints Team are continuing to develop our service to ensure we are responding to the needs of our customers and that customers feel confident that they receive a quality service.
- 3.2 During 2009 - 2010 we made further improvements to the recording systems to ensure we are capturing meaningful information to inform services of customers' views.
- 3.3 Further improvements to the collation of data on outcomes and lessons learned have been made to ensure we are capturing relevant and meaningful data.

4. Review of Contacts Received in 2009/2010

- 4.1 Between 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010, 384 contacts were received by the Health and Adult Social Care Directorate's Customer Care and Complaints Team this is a decrease of 4. However this does not represent a true figure as many contacts have been made direct to Senior Managers, Capita and Accounts Receivable regarding the changes in the Charging Policy, Domiciliary Care Service and Disabled Parking Badges. Therefore, capturing accurate data for comparison has not been possible.
- 4.2 The number of compliments received (42) for Health & Community Care has also decreased. Many of the compliments relate to the appreciation of the hard work and caring attitude of members of the Health and Community Care staff.
- 4.3 All staff members should be encouraged to forward any comments / compliments received in order that we can report on how we are improving our services.

The following tables set out the range of contacts and how they have been made.

Table 1: Contacts received by Record Type

2008 - 2009			2009 - 2010		
Record Type	Number	%	Record Type	Number	%
Stage 1 complaints	225	58%	Adult Statutory Concern	30	7.83%
Representations	94	24.2%	Adult Statutory Complaint	219	57.04%
MP/Cllr Enquiries	56	14.4%	MP/Cllr Enquiries	67	17.45%
Referrals	12	3.1%	Referrals	12	3.1%
			Comments	11	2.86%
			Corporate Complaints	3	0.78%
			Compliments	42	10.94%
TOTAL	388	100.00%	TOTAL	384	100.0%

Table 2: Monthly analysis

SCC - Customer Care & Complaints Service													
Contacts received month by month													
Record Receipt Date between 01/04/2009 and 31/03/2010													
Type of Record	Apr 2009	May 2009	Jun 2009	Jul 2009	Aug 2009	Sep 2009	Oct 2009	Nov 2009	Dec 2009	Jan 2010	Feb 2010	Mar 2010	Total
Statutory Complaint	16	12	13	16	14	20	23	24	10	17	29	25	219
Statutory Concern	5	3	3	6	0	2	2	2	2	1	1	3	30
Comment	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	2	3	0	11
Compliment	2	4	10	3	2	4	7	1	6	0	1	2	42
MP/Cllr Enquiry	5	6	10	9	5	8	3	5	6	2	4	4	67
Referral	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	3	0	0	2	3	12
Corporate Complaint	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	3
Total	29	26	37	35	23	36	35	36	26	22	40	39	384

4.4 Definitions:

4.4.1 Social Care complaints are those investigated under the statutory regulations.

4.4.2 All other complaints are investigated using the Southampton City Council Corporate complaint procedure.

- 4.4.3 Referrals are requests for help which are passed to the relevant council directorates and partner services.
- 4.4.4 Representations are enquiries, concerns or comments which can be dealt with and resolved within 24 hours. Any social care comments that cannot be resolved within this time automatically become statutory complaints.
- 4.4.5 MP/Cllr Enquiries are enquiries / complaints on behalf of a constituent or request for information which need to be investigated.

Table 3: Contacts – How received

Contacts - How received			
01/04/2009 to 30/03/2010			
How received		Number	%
	Complaint form	45	11.7%
	Email	84	21.9%
	Fax	2	0.5%
	forwarded by LGO	0	0.0%
	Letter	118	30.7%
	Personal Visit	3	0.8%
	SMS Text	0	0.0%
	Telephone	124	32.3%
	Web Application	8	2.1%
Total		384	100.0%

Table 4: Contact for Specific Service Area

The following table indicates contacts received by service area

Contacts for Service Area	
01/04/2009 to 30/03/2010	
• Adult Safeguarding	6
• Contact Centre	3
• Disabled Parking Badge	31
• Hospitals (social care)	5
• Learning Disability	8
• Locality Support Teams + Rehab Teams	59
• Mental Health	10
• Provider Services (including dom.care changes)	47
• Sensory Services	4
• Supporting People	1
• 1Finance	102

These figures do not include the many requests for help that the Customer Care and Complaints Team received throughout the year but does record all the statutory complaints received.

Table 5: Issues complained about

Reasons for statutory complaint	
01 April 2009 to 31 March 2010	
Reason	Number
Adaptations	6
assessment required	6
care concerns	11
Care Planning	7
Changes in care package	5
Charges – general queries	76
Continuing Health Care Funding	3
Day Care	7
Direct Payments	6
Disabled Parking Badges	
Declined	27
Decision / eligibility	3
Forms need improvement	1
Handling issues / lost paperwork	8
Domiciliary	34
Failure to Act	4
Financial Assessment	8
incorrect invoices received	8
Increase in charges	28
Invoices not received	7
No care being received – why invoice	2
Communication issues	41
Lack of Support	23
Payment of Invoice / Expenses	10
Residential Care Costs	3
Referral	12
Respite care costs	2
Refused	5
Response Times	12
Staff Rudeness / conduct	17
Transport issues general	5
Waiting list times	17
Withdrawal of services	8

5. Key Findings

- 5.1 The Customer Care and Complaints Team are aware that not all complaints are sent to the team.
- 5.2 However, for those recorded, the outcomes of complaints are set out in the following table

Table 6: Outcomes for Adult Statutory Complaints

Outcome	Number	%
Not Known	4	1.8
Not Upheld	69	31.5
Ongoing	24	11.0
Partially Upheld	33	15.1
Stopped by complainant	1	0.5
Upheld	82	37.4
Withdrawn	6	2.7
Total	219	100.0

6. Managing Complaints

Table 7: Responses made within timescales

Overall Performance Report				
01 April 2009 to 31 March 2010				
Complaint Type	Acknowledgement		Full Response	
	2008/09	2009/10	2008/09	2009/10
Cllr/MP Enquiry	92.86%	89.4%	96.43%	74.6%
Adult Statutory Complaint	100.0%	96.7%	57.26%	
New categorisation of complaints came into effect on 01 April 2009			LOW	63.7%
			MEDIUM	70.8%
			HIGH	87.5%

- 6.1 The new Adult Complaint Process that came into effect in April 2009 does not have timescales attached to it but is assessed by Risk Level. Low Risk is usually equivalent to 10 working days, Medium is 20 working days and High is up to 60 working days (as a guide only).

Table 8: Divisional Activity

Adult Services			
Referrals	11, 251	Formal complaints	219
New Assessments	2,475	Concerns/Comments	41
Reviews	4,892*	Referrals	12
No. of People in receipt of services	9, 839		

--	--

*This figure excludes 585 people who received no services but were reviewed during the year

7.0 Complaint Information

- 7.1 Since the introduction of the new Adult Complaint Procedure in April 2009, there is now **NO** Stage 2 and Stage 3 option for social care complaints.
- 7.2 However, this is NOT the case for complaints registered under the Corporate Complaint Procedure, i.e. Accounts Receivable, Disabled Parking Badges and Adaptations.
- 7.3 One Complaint was received from the Local Government Ombudsman regarding a service user who disagreed with assessments undertaken, this was investigated by an Independent Investigator.
- 7..4 The number of formal complaints received each month varied considerably. The greatest number of complaints, (29) were received in February and the lowest (10) in December. Analysis of the previous year's figures shows no discernable pattern and therefore we cannot predict our busiest periods.

These figures do not include the many complaints that were received and responded to without going through the complaints procedure regarding to Charging Policy issues.

9. Lessons Learned

ISSUE IDENTIFIED	ACTION NEEDED	BY WHOM	FURTHER ACTION NEEDED
Unhappy with the domiciliary care provider for several different reasons	Meetings held with Care Providers and Service Users, service monitored and improvements made Change of Provider Agency	Care Managers	Ongoing as required
Several concerns relating to Invoices for care charges, increase in charges, incorrect charges, invoices not received and Direct Payments	Financial System Review Improved invoicing layout Some charges waived or amended Financial Assessment undertaken / Review of care package Visit made to service user by care manager	Care Managers / Team Managers / Senior Management	Ongoing as required
Communication issues in general	Improve communication with all service users Review of sharing information with other agencies Review of working practice / recording		
Disabled Parking Badges complaints regarding refused, process, forms used, staff attitude, lost paperwork etc.	Meeting with Capita to review process used Many service user's received their badges following further intervention following complaint	Senior Management and Capita	Ongoing
Withdrawal of Service, lack of service provision etc	Development of Service Review of service	Service Manager	Completed

10. Achievements 2009 / 2010

During the year we have implemented the new statutory complaints regulations. These regulations have required us to handle complaints in a more flexible way. This involved changes to the database and production of new leaflets and forms

Feedback from our customers has shown that in the majority of cases people feel that they understand the complaints procedure and that it is fair.

11. Actions

Managers will be reminded that it is essential that complaint responses contain the following information:

- Acknowledgement of issues
- An apology if appropriate or an acknowledgement of complainants feelings
- An explanation of actions
- What we should have done differently
- What we will do now (actions)
- What we have learned
- What the complainant should do if they remain dissatisfied.

The Customer Care and Complaints Manager will review the training programme in line with the new regulations and will deliver this training in the autumn.

The Directorate reorganisation will involve further changes to all databases and way of working.

The Customer Care and Complaints Team will continue to remind staff of the importance of reporting all compliments received so that a true representation of the views of our customers can be obtained.

The Customer Care and Complaints Team will continue to support operational staff and managers in handling and responding to complaints and will be providing some training for them over the coming year. We aim to increase our learning from complaints, to disseminate good practice and to achieve more service improvements as a result.

12 Customer Feedback

Out of the 219 Adult Statutory Complaints made – 138 were sent survey feedback forms. We did not send them to people who had complained under the corporate complaints procedure

Out of the 138 sent out only 49 were returned completed.

Analysis of feedback forms is attached at Appendix 1

Comments made:

- Most of the people returning the survey forms stated that they did not have a problem with the complaint process, but some did mention that they were NOT told how they could proceed if they remained dissatisfied. However, they thought it to be fair.
- Communication was a very large factor for people i.e. they were not kept informed of what was happening etc.
- Some had suggested that they would like face to face meetings to discuss their concerns rather than make a complaint.
- Staff are not always honest and do not recognise the real issues of the complaint being made.

13. Access to Records Requests

This important function is provided to anyone who requests access to their Social Care records.

2008 / 2009	2009 / 2010
11	13

Last year we received 13 requests for access to records which is an increase on the previous year. 6 of these requests were received from the Police, 4 from solicitors on behalf of clients or their families and the other 3 were from service users or their relatives. All requests were completed within the statutory timescale of 40 days.

14. Freedom of Information Requests

This service is provided under the Freedom of Information Act and is facilitated by the Customer Care and Complaints Team.

2008 / 2009	2009 / 2010
22	56

This represent an 154% increase in requests under Freedom of Information Act.

We received 15 requests from the media, 3 from solicitors for deceased person's records, 5 from Members of Parliament, 10 from Independent Agencies, 6 from Researchers and 17 from members of the public.

Of these 56, 18 requests actually covered both Children's and Adults Directorates and the response rate was 98.8% responded to within the statutory timescale of 20 days. .

There were no discernable trends to the information requested. Information requests were under the following categories:

- Figures for people under the age of 65 years with both Learning Disabilities and Physical Disabilities who currently receive Direct Payments;
- Three requests have been received asking for deceased service user's records;
- Information requested on the tendering processes used by the Local Authority for various services
- Several requests regarding cost and reason for foreign travel by City Council Officers and staff members
- Information required relating to Direct Payments and what process is used
- Audit tool for Dignity in Care
- Supporting People savings / reserves (budgets for current year)
- Staff vacancies and leavers i.e. retired, left due to ill health etc.

Christine Williams
Customer Care and Complaints Manager