Children and Families Complaints Process - 1 March 2016 onwards

The Childrens Complaints policy is a statutory process. The policy can be found on the SCC web pages at

 <http://www.southampton.gov.uk/council-democracy/have-your-say/comments-complaints/complaints.aspx>

The Director of Childrens Service (KD) has requested that the following process be followed in respect of C & F complaints. This mirrors the Policy in respect of process steps, but moves responsibility for each step down one supervisory rung. The Policy will be amended to reflect this change once a trial period is completed.

The process has been requested and details agreed by

Kim Drake (Feb 2016)

Phil Bullingham (March 2016)

Christine Robinson (March 2016)

STAGE ONE

Complaint recorded and acknowledged by the Customer Relations Team.

Complaint sent to the Team Manager (Copy to Service Manager) and copy to CSL management email (for monitoring purposes)

Team Manager to investigate and formulate response letter (In team mangers name).

Response letters sent will have the telephone number and email address of the responding manager at the top of the letter. The CRT details will be given in the “dissatisfaction” paragraph at the bottom of the letter.

Draft response to be checked and authorised by Service Manager.

Team manger to send out signed response, with copy to CRT and copy to CSL management email (for monitoring purposes)

 CRT to close complaint on system.

MEDIATION

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response, the CRT will liaise with the Service Manager, to review whether mediation is likely to resolve the complaint.

Mediation will be dealt with by the Service Manager. Any formal response at the Mediation stage will be sent by (and be in the name of) the Service Manager. A copy of the response will be sent to CRT and copy to CSL management email (for monitoring purposes)

 CRT will close the complaint.

STAGE TWO

If mediation fails to resolve the issue or it is felt that mediation is not appropriate in the circumstances the CRT will allocate the matter to an Independent Investigator.

The responsibility for response at Stage two of the process, after the findings of the Independent Investigation, is that of the Principle Officer. The response will be sent by (and be in the name of) the Principle Officer. A copy of the response will be sent to CRT and copy to CSL management email (for monitoring purposes)

CRT will close the complaint.

STAGE THREE or LGO

If dissatisfaction is expressed by the complainant after stage two of the process the matter may be referred to an Independent Panel or the LGO.

Director of Childrens Services will be responsible for this area of the process and any required responses will be sent by the Director of Service.

**Cannot be dealt with under the complaints process**

The CRT will endeavour to deal with any issues regarding those matters that fall outside the complaints scope (i.e. panel referrals, court proceedings and the like) when the matter is first received. If once recorded and allocated before discovery that the matter falls outside the scope of the Childrens Policy, the allocated Team Manager will confirm this by letter to the complainant after consultation with the CRT.

**Service Request/ normal business**

Where the matter looks likely to be able to be dealt with as “normal business” the matter will be referred as appropriate. However the recipient (TM, ATM or SW) must inform the CRT that they are willing to treat the matter as “normal business” and undertake to do so, within three days of the initial referral, or the matter must be acknowledge and recorded as a complaint.

**Extensions to 10 day target for response**

There is a 10 statutory limit for complaints to be responded to. The statutory limits are in place for safeguarding and child welfare issues.

If the matter cannot be resolved in 10 days i.e. key member of staff on leave, other departments need to be consulted and the like, then providing no immediate welfare issues (of the child) are evident the investigator can inform the complainant that there will be a delay, giving reasons, and agreeing a new target date for the response to be sent. This can be done by email, letter or verbally with the complainant. This should be done before the initial 10 days have expired.

If this occurs the investigator should update the CRT by email or copy letter and the target date will be reset on the complaint data base.

**Complaint involving Team Manager**

If the complaint involves the Team Manager then the level of response liability for investigation and response moves up to the next level i.e. Service Manager.

The policy covers these issues and more. Should you have any questions let the CRT know and we will endeavour to answer them for you.

CRT Ext 3154 Email customer.relations.team@southampton.gov.uk