

Peer Review of Complaints Processing function

Peterborough City Council & Milton Keynes Council Background

Following requests by their respective members the Complaint Managers at Peterborough City Council and Milton Keynes Council agreed to undertake a Peer review of their respective Complaints processing arrangements.

The decision to compare these two councils came from the conclusion that fair comparisons would be possible as

- Both councils are Unitary
- They have a similar population level
- They both have high levels of growth
- Both have a mix of outsourced and in-house services

A Self Assessment Tool provided by the National Complaint Managers Group was utilised to assess complaints handling processes across both councils against 5 key principles. This tool was developed for application against Children's Social Care and Adult's Social care complaint environments, but can be applied equally to corporate complaint environments. The Good Practice guidance used in the development of this tool has been endorsed by the LGO, ADCS & ADASS.

Milton Keynes have a fully integrated system so that all complaints are processed across the council from receipt to completion, this ensures that customers are automatically acknowledged, greater transparency for managers and the complaints team and internal chasers are automated.

Peterborough do not have such software so there is much more manual processing of complaints across all service areas.

The full assessment completed for Peterborough is attached as Appendix D.

A summary of the main themes and the scores for each council are shown below.

Findings

Comparison of Assessment Scores (% of standard achieved)

	Peterborough City Council	Milton Keynes
Principle 1: Ensure the complaints process is accessible	78	89
Principle 2: Ensure that the complaints process is straightforward for service users and their representatives	90	83
Principle 3: Ensure that appropriate systems are in place to keep service users informed throughout the complaints process	90	86
Principle 4: Ensure that the complaints process is resolution focused	67	94
Principle 5: Ensure that quality assurance processes are in place to enable organisational learning and service improvement from complaints and customer feedback.	78	83

Both Councils have similar scores in most areas but the assessment has helped both councils initiate an action plan to improve complaints handling further which is detailed within the assessment by both councils.

Review Areas relevant to CSC complaints.

- Review options for Equality Monitoring
- Review accessibility of complaints process for vulnerable service users

- Add wording to website and literature on how complainants can expect to be treated
- Review publication of Service Improvements on Council Website
- Review staff induction to include awareness of complaints process
- Review joint complaint and outsource complaint protocols with Director of Governance
- Complaint investigation training has already been identified as necessary for some managers
- Review new options for feedback from complainants about the process

Comparison of Children's Social Care Complaints Volumes and Outcomes

Children's Social Care Complaints	Stage 1s		
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Peterborough	97	84	66
Not Upheld	47%	42%	22%
Partially Upheld	42%	44.5%	51%
Upheld	11%	13.5%	27%
Milton Keynes	87	82	89
Not Upheld	73.6%	80.4%	52%
Partially Upheld	24.1%	13.4%	37%
Upheld	2.3%	6.2%	11%

CSC Complaint Volumes

Complaint Numbers are broadly similar over the 3 years but Peterborough are seeing a decline in numbers being recorded whilst Milton Keynes has seen a consistent volume over the 3 years. Whilst Peterborough complaint numbers are lower than in Milton Keynes in the past year, Peterborough has a high volume of complaints being rejected as ineligible. Milton Keynes do not calculate figures for ineligible complaints but suspect that these are considerably less than at Peterborough. We can conclude that the volume of CSC complainants approaching the Complaint Manager to make a complaint in Peterborough is higher than in Milton Keynes but less are accepted based on other processes having jurisdiction or the complainant not satisfying the sufficient interest eligibility test

Outcomes

Outcomes are significantly different across the two councils, Milton Keynes are seeing a shift from a high volumes of complaints not being upheld to a more balanced set of results. Peterborough who have previously seen a balanced score in terms of outcomes have recently seen a significant shift towards more complaints being upheld. As illustrated in the CSC annual report as more complaints are rejected as not eligible it is more likely that the complaints that have been accepted will have some merit. However this will be monitored over the next year to see if this trend continues.

Escalations

Over 3 years Milton Keynes have conducted 7 Stage 2 investigations out of 258 cases, whilst in Peterborough we have conducted 11 Stage 2 investigations from 247 cases - so Peterborough have taken 4.4% of cases to Stage 2, against 2.7% in Milton Keynes. This would appear to highlight that Peterborough CSC could do more to engage with customers at Stage 1 to understand how to resolve their complaints without the need to escalate further.

Another factor worth considering is that in the past 3 years, Milton Keynes have not had any complaints escalate to Stage 3 whilst in Peterborough two Stage 3 panels were held following the 11 Stage 2 investigations highlighted. We should review the adjudication process to understand why this did not resolve the complaints at Stage 2 without the need for further escalation.

Customer Data

Milton Keynes produce Equality data about who complains, something Peterborough are currently unable to do effectively as they use various manual processes to receive complaints, whilst Milton Keynes have an integrated IT platform which joins the whole council together. However they do not currently produce data about the relationship of the complainant to the child, which in Peterborough we do provide. Both councils could increase the amount of data they provide in these respective areas.

This page is intentionally left blank