

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK AND HEALTH COMMITTEE - 25TH APRIL 2011

REPORT ON: CUSTOMER CARE OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2010

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

REPORT TO: 201 - 2011

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform members on the management and operation of the social work Customer Care framework and the statutory Complaints Procedure during the year 2010.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Social Work and Health Committee:

2.1 approve the contents of the report.

2.2 authorise the Director of Social Work to publish it appropriately in line with the statutory requirements.

2.3 note the forthcoming major changes to the complaints procedure as outlined in paragraph 4.8 of the report.

2.4 agree that as of next year the progress against the Customer Service Excellence Standard be the basis of the main method of reporting on Customer Care to the Committee(s).

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Any financial implications will be met from within existing resources.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 The Social Work Department's has been operating a comprehensive customer care strategy for a number of years. Good Public Information, User and Carer Involvement, Customer Charter and Customer Care Standards and an effective Complaints handling system are an integral part of this strategy. It is a longer term strategy for the Department to achieve the Customer Service Excellence Standard which is the replacement of the previous Charter Mark.

4.2 PUBLIC INFORMATION

4.2.1 The Department is continually reviewing and updating its public information to make it more effective and widely accessible. A comprehensive review was undertaken in 2010. As a result, the number of publications is now reduced and the Web based information is being improved to make it more accessible and user friendly for both our customers and our staff.

4.2.2 As part of this new approach, the newly produced information booklet 'A Guide to Social Work Services in Dundee' contains most of the key information for which customers look. It includes brief description of social work services, information about contacting the Department for these services, the standards of service customers should expect and information about making suggestions and compliments, or making a complaint if they are not satisfied.

- 4.2.3 The information on the Web is continually updated and efforts are being made to make it as user friendly and as accessible as possible. Service users are able to download and print information if so required. The updated sections include social work publications, social work quick links (for example 'Your Guide to Social Work Services in Dundee) and a set of frequently asked questions.
- 4.2.4 On the Web there are seven linked micro sites that can be accessed from the main social work and / or Council pages. These include Dundee Independent Living Centre, Dundee Adult Support and Protection Committee, Youth Justice, Children's Rights Service, Fostering or Adoption, Dundee Children and Young Persons Protection Committee and the Integrated Children's Services.
- 4.2.5 If a member of the public requests information which is not available in hard printed form, staff are encouraged to check the Council's website and print-off a copy for the customer.

4.3 **CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT / CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

- 4.3.1 Social work User Involvement policy was developed in 2007 (Committee Report 226-2007). It ensures a standardised process to systematically engage service users.
- 4.3.2 The Department is continually improving the standards of information gathering and the use of this information to inform planning, improve performance and achieve changes.
- 4.3.3 A major service user and carer survey was undertaken during 2010 (Committee Report 415-2010) in addition to a range of other targeted consultations to inform the Social Work Department Improvement Plan over the next 3 years. The results were collated and analysed and the information from these user consultations will be used to help develop the Self-evaluation Improvement plan.
- 4.3.4 It is essential to ensure that various services have a systematic approach to the assessment and analysis of satisfaction levels. The Department has implemented the use of Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) Customer Satisfaction Survey. The service user and carer survey results above were compared to the Scottish average. The use of this survey has enabled the Department to benchmark against SWIA findings for all 32 Scottish local authorities.
- 4.3.5 The social work department has developed a Consultation Toolkit. This framework is in place and is used to quality assure consultation activities.

4.4 **CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE STANDARD**

- 4.4.1 The Department is pursuing the Customer Service Excellence Standard which is the replacement of the previous Charter Mark. A three year Customer Service Excellence Standard Framework 2008-2011 (Committee Report 576-2008) was developed for putting in place improvements necessary for achieving this Standard.
- 4.4.2 This framework is based on the Cabinet Office of Customer Service Excellence. It covers a wide range of areas that include Customer Identification, Customer Satisfaction, Leadership Policy and Culture, Delivery Standards, and Standards for Timeliness and Quality.
- 4.4.3 A number of key improvements are already in place and work on the remaining actions is continuing. Some of these achievements have already been mentioned in this report above under other headings. In addition the following actions have also been completed:
- To ensure that customers are able to communicate in the language of their choice when dealing with social work services, particularly in emergencies, the Department now have the use of the Language Line Telephone Interpreting Service. Due to the nature of social work services, the Department will

continue to use face to face interpreting that is provided by the Council's Interpreting Service for non-emergency situations as before.

- To ensure that information that is displayed in various offices is up to date and the area is as welcoming as possible a maintenance strategy has been developed and implemented. A programme of visits to reception areas is now in place for this purpose.

4.4.4 Currently, the Customer Care Officer produces an annual report that provides an overview of customer care activity over a specified period. It is intended that as of next year the progress against the Customer Service Excellence Standard will be the main method of reporting on Customer Care until such time as the social work department is independently assessed with a view to achieving the standard.

4.5 **COMPLAINTS BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY**

4.5.1 The statutory social work complaints procedure deals with complaints and representations made directly by service users or made on their behalf by their representatives, whether communicated verbally or in writing or anonymously.

4.5.2 Majority of social work complaints are resolved locally at the point of service delivery to the satisfaction of the service users. These "informal complaints" do not require formal investigation.

4.5.3 Level One Complaint: Complaints which require formal investigation and detailed written responses and the unresolved informal complaints or where the complainant does not wish the matter to be dealt with informally are recorded and investigated according to the formal complaints procedure. These are called Level One complaints and are required to be acknowledged within 5 days and resolved within 14 days unless this 14-day period is extended by mutual agreement.

4.5.4 Level Two Complaints: The complainants can ask for the complaint findings to be reviewed if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the Level One complaints. These are then reviewed by senior staff members and are known as Level Two complaints. Serious complaints are always dealt with at Level Two. These complaints have to be acknowledged within 5 days and resolved within 28 days unless this 28-day period is extended by mutual agreement.

4.5.5 The complaint is reviewed by the Chief Executive if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the level two complaint.

4.5.6 If the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they can ask for their complaint to be reviewed by the Complaints Review Committee of Dundee City Council.

4.5.7 During the calendar year 2010 a total of 46 formal complaints were recorded. Compared with last year's 45 the total number of formal complaints remains constant. Of these, 25 were from Children's Services, 17 from Adult Services and 4 from Criminal Justice Services. Of the total number of complaints 81% (37) were Level One whereas 19% (9) were Level Two complaints.

4.6 **PERFORMANCE AGAINST COMPLAINTS STANDARDS**

4.6.1 Acknowledgement targets for these complaints were achieved in 87% of the cases. This is a marked improvement on previous year's figures of 73%. It is anticipated that these acknowledgment targets will improve further over the next year with the help of the new recording and monitoring database.

4.6.2 Completion targets for these complaints within the specified or the agreed period were achieved in 83% of the cases compared with 91% last year. Measures have been put in place to improve these targets.

- 4.6.3 During this period no complaint was referred to the Complaints Review Committee or the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman. This has been the case for a number of years.
- 4.6.4 The Department has continued to improve its performance in this area of customer care. Social work complaints can be extremely complex and the challenge for next year is improve both the acknowledgment and the completion targets for complaints particularly the latter.
- 4.6.5 The Electronic Complaints Recording System, that was developed and tested over the year, is now active from January 2011. It will be an effective tool for monitoring performance in complaints handling and making improvements.
- 4.6.6 The Department will continue to report on our performance against the national social work timescales for complaints.
- 4.6.7 The Department continues to show a relatively small number of formal complaints when it is considered that we have contact with over 9000 service users often under very difficult circumstances.

4.7 **COMPLIMENTS**

- 4.7.1 Every year the Department receives a number of compliments. Most of these compliments are conveyed personally to members of staff. These are received from service users, carers and other providers.
- 4.7.2 Even when compliments are conveyed in a written form it is not always possible to collate them centrally. Efforts are continuing to improve central collation and recording of these compliments. In the meantime it is acknowledged that the reported number of compliments is only a proportion of the total compliments that are actually received in any given period.
- 4.7.3 During this year 108 compliments were recorded. The examples recorded include expressions of thanks for the professional care and support provided to:
- elderly relatives;
 - young children during supervised contact and;
 - a young single parent with a history of substance misuse and domestic abuse who moved on to a college course.

4.8 **FUTURE PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES**

- 4.8.1 The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 gave authority to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to lead the development of simplified and standardised complaints handling procedures across the public sector in Scotland.
- 4.8.2 The Complaints Handling Principles proposed by the SPSO were approved by the Scottish Parliament and published in January 2011.
- 4.8.3 Following approval of the Complaints Handling Principles the SPSO published their revised Guidance on a Model Complaints Handling Procedure in February 2011. This guidance will form the basis on which standardised procedures will be developed across the public sector areas.
- 4.8.4 To fulfil their obligation under the legislation the SPSO have now established an internal unit the Complaints Standards Authority (CSA). The CSA will work in partnership with individual public sector areas to oversee the process of developing model complaints handling procedures for each sector area in line with the framework of the principles and guidance.
- 4.8.5 The new standardised procedure, when developed, could have major impact on social work sector since it may bring informal complaints that are now dealt separately, into the formal complaints process. The number of stages a complaint goes through is likely to be reduced. The Social Work Department has been

preparing for these changes for sometime. It is hoped that these measures, along with the implementation of the electronic complaints recording and monitoring system, will help in implementing these changes when they are finally agreed.

- 4.8.6 The Department is making progress towards meeting the very demanding requirements of the Customer Excellence Standard but we still have key areas to work on prior to considering external assessment against the Standard.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of sustainability, strategic environmental assessment, anti poverty, equality impact assessment and risk management. There are no major issues.

- 5.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and will be made available on the Council website <http://www.dundee.gov.uk/equanddiv/equipact/>.

6.0 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and Director of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Equality Impact Assessment

Alan G Baird
Director of Social Work

Date: 13th April 2011