

Education Children and Families Committee

Tuesday, 8 October, 2013

Children and Families Response to Complaints Review Committee Outcome

Item number	8.5.1 (b)
Report number	
Wards	All

Links

Coalition pledges	P1 – Increase support for vulnerable children, including help for families so that fewer go into care.
Council outcomes	CO4 – Our children and young people are physically and emotionally healthy. CO5 – Our children and young people are safe from harm or fear of harm, and do not harm others within their communities.
Single Outcome Agreement	SO3 – Edinburgh’s children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential.

Michelle Miller – Chief Social Work Officer

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Complaints Review Committee

1. Statement of Complaint

- 1.1 The complainant stated that on 5 September 2012, her son was locked in his room from 12:55 – 16:25 by a member of staff at Guthrie secure unit. During this period, the complainant stated no-one checked on her son or wrote up a report of his circumstances.
- 1.2 The complainant stated that the staff member locked her son in his room for no apparent reason, other than she had previously reported him on 3 September. The complainant said this was done without her being informed, nor were any other members of staff made aware of this. The complainant stated the Children's Rights Service was also not advised. The complainant understands the member of staff went back to his unit, and then home around 15:30, leaving her son locked in his room.
- 1.3 The complainant stated the late shift senior was not aware of her son's situation when she spoke to her at 18:00 on 5 September. The complainant stated the senior had been on shift since 14:30, but the single separation incident was not discussed at the shift handover.
- 1.4 The complainant stated she initially raised her concerns with the unit manager, but did not get a response until six weeks later. The complainant stated she received conflicting advice as to who was actually looking into the matter.
- 1.5 The complainant stated paperwork had incorrect times recorded in regards to the separation incident. The complainant disputed that staff took homework into her son at 15:30 and thinks the paperwork was altered and falsified. The complainant stated she would prove this to the Complaints Review Committee.

The Complaint Review Committee fully upheld the complaint and stated:

'That the complaint that relevant procedures were not followed on 5 September 2012 when the complainant's son was confined to his room be upheld. The Council has already acknowledged that procedures were not duly followed with regard to her son's detention in his room. The Committee noted that an action plan had already been put in place to ensure that, as far as possible, this poor practice was not repeated. The Committee recommended that this action plan be reviewed at six-monthly intervals by a senior manager to ensure compliance.'

'That the complaint that the observation form containing timings of checks on the complainant's son and staff initials had been altered and/or falsified be upheld. While

conflicting evidence had been presented to the Committee regarding this part of the complaint, taking into account the number of procedural irregularities at all stages, on balance of probability, the Committee believed this complainant should be upheld. The Committee recommended that Council officials presenting to the Complaints Review Committee be advised that any paperwork which they intend to produce as evidence must be distributed in advance of the meeting to all parties.'

2. Actions Taken To Improve Service

- 2.1 All staff in the Guthrie secure unit at St Katharine's have now been reminded that they must contact parents/carers if a young person is placed in a locked room as a measure of control. It has been reiterated to staff that the worker who puts the young person in a locked room must be the one who starts the paperwork, clearly stating what the issue is, what they did to try to resolve it and recorded details of what they did to help the young person resolve the issue.
- 2.2 Clear advice has been given to Guthrie staff that a young person must not remain in their room longer than is absolutely necessary, and if not possible in advance, the duty senior must be informed at the earliest possible opportunity when such a situation occurs.
- 2.3 Guthrie staff have been advised that all recording, including initialling on paperwork, must be done by the member of staff carrying out the checks.
- 2.4 Senior members of staff responsible for management of the Guthrie unit are monitoring paperwork on a regular basis to ensure staff are complying correctly with these procedures.
- 2.5 Meeting time with staff and supervision discussions have been used to ensure staff members are aware of the above and the importance of paperwork being legible, accurate and fully reflective of the work carried out in these situations.
- 2.6 As a result of the outcome of the Complaints Review Committee on 27 June, Alistair Gaw, Head of Service for Support to Children and Young People, decided the matter required to be reviewed. An independent investigation has been carried out by Kirsten Adamson, Commissioning Officer and the findings will be reported shortly in writing to senior managers. These findings will be used to inform future practice in secure and close support units at both the St Katharine's and Howdenhall Centres.

3. Recommendations

3.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is recommended to note the actions taken in relation to the decisions of the Complaints Review Committee on 27 June 2013.

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Appendices	None

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