

Education, Children and Families Committee

10am, Tuesday, 9 December 2014

Children and Families Response to the Social Work Complaints Review Committee Outcome

Item number	8.6 (b)
Report number	
Executive/routine	Routine
Wards	All

Links

Coalition pledges	P1
Council outcomes	CO1 , CO3 , C10 , C11
Single Outcome Agreement	SO2 , SO3

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Children and Families Response to the Social Work Complaints Review Committee Outcome

1. Recommendations from Complaints Review Committee

This report should be read in conjunction with the report from the Committee Services relating to a Social Work Complaints Review Committee held on 24 September 2014.

The decisions are set out below. Section 2 informs members of the background influencing the work of Children and Families.

- 1) The Committee believe that the length of time the complainant has had to wait is unacceptable, as the Council target of three months has been exceeded substantially.
- 2) The Committee had been informed that more staff were being recruited, but they believed that this should have been addressed earlier.
- 3) The Committee noted that the Council has offered an interim assessment, to be undertaken within 2 weeks from today's date – 24 September 2014. They recommended that after the full assessment is undertaken, self-directed payments should be backdated to within three months of the first visit (in line with the Council target of three months for allocation) unless a legal impediment to this exists.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council's social work services are provided in accordance with the legal requirement to assess children and their families under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.
- 2.2 Whilst there are no statutory time limits for carrying out an assessment, the Council does set Key Performance Indicators as a way of measuring performance and the quality of a service.
- 2.3 Key Performance Indicators are not a statutory requirement, and there may be valid reasons why they may not always be met.
- 2.4 The Disability Practice team has a transparent allocation process, which is intended to ensure that children with the highest level of need are given priority, in line with Council policy. Children who have been on the waiting list for

disability related issues are also reviewed within this and considered for allocation, once children in the priority criteria have been allocated.

- 2.5 The Disability Practice Team currently operates to a standard of 3 months from the date of a decision that a section 23 assessment is required, to the case being allocated for assessment.
- 2.6 Once allocated, the assessment will take an average of three months to complete. It is then submitted to the Funding Assessment Panel for consideration and scoring of any one of the Self-directed Support options required.
- 2.7 The Complaints Review Committee believed that the time the complainant has had to wait was not acceptable, as the Council target of three months had been exceeded.
- 2.8 The Disability Practice Team works with 400 children and their families. Each new referral is screened through a social work home visit, and from this, an initial assessment is made. Families are given information about services they can access, without the need for social work intervention.
- 2.9 The extended delay in this case was caused by temporary staff shortages and maternity leave.
- 2.10 The Complaints Review Committee had been informed that more staff were being recruited, but they believed this should have been addressed by Children and Families at an earlier stage.
- 2.11 There have been ongoing discussions held with senior managers regarding the waiting list for the Disability Practice Team. Members were informed of this situation in the annual report considered by Education, Children and Families Committee on 11 September 2014.
- 2.12 Staffing capacity has been increased recently to reduce the number of children and families waiting for an assessment. Other options to reduce the current waiting times further are also being explored.
- 2.13 The Complaints Review Committee noted that the Council had offered an interim assessment, to be undertaken within 2 weeks of 24 September 2014. They recommended that after the full assessment, self-directed support payments should be backdated to within three months of the first visit (in line with the Council target of three months for allocation) unless a legal impediment to this exists.
- 2.14 The family was allocated a social worker following the Complaints Review Committee. An initial assessment was carried on 8 October 2014, to consider whether there was any immediate support the family could be given. The client's focus was on her child's outstanding health issues. Monthly weekend support was offered but declined, as this was not what the family believed was needed.

- 2.15 At the Complaints Review Committee it was agreed that there would be a social worker allocated to complete the Section 23 assessment by the end of November 2014, as additional staff would be in post by that time. Earlier than anticipated, a social worker was allocated to undertake this report, on 4 November 2014.
- 2.16 The Council is not able to backdate payments as recommended by the Complaints Review Committee, as services must be provided on the basis of an assessment, which determines whether the need is consistent with the allocation of public funds. A Self-Directed Support Assessment is close to completion and alternative services have been offered in the interim.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to approve the proposal not to backdate payments for the reason outlined in paragraph 2.16

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Links

Coalition pledges	P1: Ensuring every child has the best start in life
Council outcomes	CO1: Our children have the best start in life, are able to make and sustain relationships and are ready to succeed. CO3: Our children and young people at risk, or with a disability, have improved life chances. C10: Improved health and reduced inequalities C11: Preventative and personalised support in place.
Single Outcome Agreement	SO2: Edinburgh's citizens experience improved health and wellbeing, with reduced inequalities in health SO3: Edinburgh's children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential
Appendices	Report to Education, Children and Families Committee 11.09.2014