

Education, Children and Families Committee

10am, Tuesday, 1 March 2016

Education Complaints Improvement Update

Item number	8.1
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	

Executive summary

The Advice and Complaints (Education) Annual Report 2015, presented to Education, Children and Families Committee in October 2015 outlined performance in relation to the handling of complaints in the Education sector for the years 2013/14 and 2014/15 and made recommendations for improvement.

In addition, a review report with improvement actions, was presented to Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee in September 2015 as a B agenda item and described how the new handling complaints process is being implemented in education services.

The purpose of this report is to advise the Education, Children and Families Committee of progress made to the improvements included in both of the above reports

Links

Coalition pledges	P1 – P6
Council outcomes	CO1 – CO6
Single Outcome Agreement	SO3

Education Complaints Improvement Update

Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended the Education, Children and Families Committee notes the improvement actions underway and progress made to date.

Background

- 2.1 The Council implemented its revised complaints handling procedure in March 2013 in line with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) model Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP). There are two stages to the procedure – frontline resolution (stage 1) and investigation (stage 2). Customers who remain dissatisfied after the investigation stage can take their complaint to the SPSO for consideration.
- 2.2 The Council's definition of a complaint is “an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the local authority's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the local authority.”
- 2.3 The Advice and Complaints (Education) Annual Report 2015, presented to Education, Children and Families Committee in October 2015, gave details of performance in relation to the handling of complaints in the Education sector for the years 2013/14 and 2014/15 and made recommendations for improvement.
- 2.4 In addition, a review of the way the new process was being implemented in the education service was carried out and a report of the outcome reported to Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee on the B agenda in September 2015. The minutes of the meeting recorded an action to report progress to the Education, Children and Families Committee. This report fulfils that requirement.

Main report

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Education, Children and Families Committee of the progress made towards implementing the recommendations referred to in 2.3 and 2.4.
- 3.2 Complaints are valuable. Handled well, they provide a low cost and important source of feedback and learning for services to help drive improvement and restore a positive relationship with customers. Handled badly, they can have a negative impact on public confidence and trust. Complaints can also provide an early warning of more fundamental problems in service design and delivery. The

evidence and learning from complaints can give the decision-makers an opportunity to make improvements before problems escalate.

- 3.3 We have a clear commitment to listen to our customers and act on their feedback. Learning from complaints is a continuous process that helps us to resolve common complaints and improve the services we provide. We analyse the complaints recorded to help us understand any gaps in understanding of the complaints process, we analyse the outcomes of complaints and the recommendations made to understand whether any strategic changes are required and we analyse the nature of the complaints received at all stages to look for trends and repeat complaints.
- 3.4 Recommendations for improvement made by The Advice and Complaints (Education) Annual Report 2015 and those made following the review of handling of education complaints have been grouped into four areas:
- Recording System
 - Guidance for Staff
 - Customer Satisfaction
 - Reporting and Learning from Complaints
- 3.5 Progress has been made towards identifying specific improvement actions in consultation with officers in the specific service area. In addition, improvement to complaints handling, as part of their remit, has been the subject of regular discussion at the Council Complaints Management Group (CCMG).
- 3.6 A number of improvement actions have been carried out and are planned:
- The CCMG is engaging with the project team developing the new CRM system. This new system will enable the consistent recording of complaints across all services within the Council. The CCMG, including input from the Education service, will provide detail of the specification required to provide current functionality as well as required enhancements.
 - The Council's guidance on carrying out Stage 2 investigations has been reviewed, amended and will be published on the Orb, along with relevant awareness raising communications, by the end of February 2016. The new guidance includes a template for recording activities carried out during the investigation.
 - Renewed effort has been made to encourage all relevant staff to complete the e-learning associated with the complaints handling procedure. This has led to completion rates increasing from 172 Communities and Families staff as at the end of July to 833 staff as at the end of December. Further communication is due to be circulated to all staff by the end of February 2016 to promote additional uptake.

- Plans are being developed to deliver further training with relevant groups of staff. Training will include emphasis on how to identify a stage 1 complaint and how to record and document complaints effectively.
 - The database used to record education complaints will be developed to improve tracking of complaints and to record whether an extension has been sought. This will be an interim solution until the roll out of the new CRM.
 - Reporting and learning from complaints regarding education, as well as all other Council services, are discussed at CCMG and presented in the Quarterly and Annual Complaints Analysis which goes to the Council Leadership Team and Corporate Policy & Strategy Committee as part of performance framework.
 - The CCMG is exploring options on how to best to measure customer satisfaction in Education and Social Work services. These services deal with potentially sensitive customers/cases and can lead to dissatisfaction being expressed regardless of how the complaint was handled.
- 3.7 This improvement activity is likely to result in a significant increase in the number of education complaints recorded but will result in an easily accessible and transparent complaints process for customers. Additionally, a change in culture with regard to welcoming complaints is required across the service area and this change in culture will be led and encouraged by senior management.

Measures of success

- 4.1 Performance relating to complaints management is monitored through seven indicators: Complaints received; Complaints closed within timescale; Complaints upheld, partially upheld, not upheld; Complaints by sector; Complaints by category; Recommendations as a result of investigations; and Learning from complaints.

Financial impact

- 5.1 There is no financial impact arising directly from this report.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The improvement activity led by the Council Complaints Management Group, and described in this paper, mitigates the risks associated with complaints handling such as reputational and non-compliance.

Equalities impact

7.1 There is no equalities impact arising directly from this report.

Sustainability impact

8.1 There is no sustainability impact arising directly from this report.

Consultation and engagement

9.1 Engagement with service managers on improvement activity is ongoing.

Background reading/external references

10.1 [Advice and Complaints \(Education\) Annual Report 2015](#), Education, Children and Families Committee, 6 October 2015.

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Links

Coalition pledges	<p>P1 – Increase support for vulnerable children, including help for families so that fewer go into care</p> <p>P2 – Hold the maximum P1 class size at 25 and seek to reduce class sizes in line with Scottish Government recommendations</p> <p>P3 – Rebuild Portobello High School and continue progress on all other planned school developments, while providing adequate investment in the fabric of all schools</p> <p>P4 – Draw up a long-term strategic plan to tackle both over-crowding and under use in schools</p> <p>P5 – Seek to ensure the smooth introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence and that management structures within our schools support the new curriculum</p> <p>P6 – Establish city-wide co-operatives for affordable childcare for working parents</p>
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Council outcomes

- CO1 – Our children have the best start in life, are able to make and sustain relationships and are ready to succeed
- CO2 – Our children and young people are successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens making a positive contribution to their communities
- CO3 – Our children and young people in need, or with a disability, have improved life chances
- 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
- CO6 – Our children’s and young people’s outcomes are not undermined by poverty and inequality

Single Outcome Agreement

SO3 – Edinburgh’s children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential

Appendices