



Glasgow City Council
Operational Performance Delivery
Scrutiny Committee

Item 2

20th October 2021

Report by Chief Officer of Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership

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Social Care Complaints Annual Report 2020-21

Purpose of Report:

To report on complaints activity for social care complaints in Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership for the period 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021

Recommendations:

1. Committee is asked to note and approve the content of the annual social care complaints report

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes No consulted: Yes No

1 Purpose of Report and Background

- 1.1 Appendix 1, accompanying this report, gives a full analysis of complaints about social care services in the period April 2020 – March 2021 processed under the Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership (GCHSCP) complaint procedure. This procedure is scheduled to be replaced in 2021-22 by a new GCC Local Authority Complaints Handling Procedure, as directed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Complaints Standards Authority. Changes to process will however be relatively minor and this will continue to involve three stages of complaint: Stage 1: 'Front-line resolution' (timescale 5 working days that may be extended); Stage 2: formal Investigation and written response (timescale 20 working days); stage 3: Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (independent review that may lead to formal investigation, decision and recommendations or to a decision not to take matters further).
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to present and summarise the main features of that fuller analysis across all 3 stages of complaint.
- 1.3 Figures in the accompanying report are given separately for social work (including Homelessness) and care service complaints (home care, residential and day care). These are processed within two different information systems ('C4' for social work / homelessness and 'Lagan' for most care services). It is not anticipated that these complaints will be fully integrated until 2022-23 when both Lagan and C4 are replaced and complaints managed across GCC under a common procedure and on a common information system. This was originally planned for 2021 using a platform called 'Firmstep' but is being re-scoped across the Glasgow Family using a platform called 'GovService'. Though originally planned for implementation in 2022, this has been further delayed by the impact of Covid.

2 Summary of Main Findings

- 2.1 Volumes of both social work and care services complaints decreased substantially in 2020-21: Social work fell by 41% from 661 to 393; Care Services by 46% from 581 to 315. The number of individual customers complaining about social work fell by 38% from 525 to 327 (individual customer complaint numbers not available for care services).
- 2.2 The detailed report advances four possible reasons for this fall: (1) The preceding year saw unusually high complaint numbers; (2) The management of complaints has changed during Covid; (3) Covid may have changed customer's expectations of service; (4) Certain service developments have mitigated Covid impact and are likely to have reduced complaints.
- 2.3 Change in complaints management led to more social work complaints being escalated straight to stage 2 investigation (a rise from 30 to 53%) but more care services complaints being managed at stage 1, with only a small number of the most complex of those complaints being transferred to the central complaints team for investigation. The central Complaints, FOI and Investigations Team (CFIT) team carried out more investigations despite falling numbers overall. There were also higher numbers of stage 3 (Ombudsman / Information Commissioner) complaints, up from 17 to 26.

- 2.4 There has been little change in the distribution of social work complaints between localities. The majority of care service complaints focus on home care. More are made in South locality than the other localities, in line with the greater population. A greater number of social work complaints by older persons in South Glasgow, greater proportion of children and family complaints in North East and greater proportion of complaints by adults under 65 years of age in North West, are all in line with what can be predicted from the demographic and social profiles of those localities.
- 2.5 Despite the challenges of the Covid pandemic, rising numbers of homeless applications and households in temporary accommodation, the number and proportion of homelessness complaints has fallen, reversing a trend of the previous three years. Service developments that may have contributed to this are cited in this report, linked to the annual performance report of GCHSCP. These include measures to provide more emergency accommodation, reduce rough sleeping, deliver assertive outreach, provide additional support for young homeless people, recruit more homelessness workers and sustain the housing first programme and opening a new multi-agency support hub.
- 2.6 Other service developments and rebalancing of care – more personalised care and individual budgets, fewer children looked after away from their families, more elderly people remaining at home longer – are possible factors impacting on complaint reduction. Activities that have in the past typically been a source of complaint have been reduced – for example reduced child protection investigations, registrations and adult protection investigations. Also noted are specific initiatives such as new Mental Health Assessment Units, a new Compassionate Distress Response Service and telephone support and outreach service to replace day centres closed due to the pandemic.
- 2.7 Performance against timescale for stage 2 investigations of complaints has markedly improved in 2020-21. In 2019-20, only 52% of social work stage 2 complaints had been investigated and responded to by CFIT within the 20 working day time limit with a mean response time of 24 working days and median of 20 working days. In 2020-21 this had improved to 84.3% in time with a mean time of 17 and median of 18 working days.
- 2.8 Timescales for stage 1 complaints were not met for social work complaints (except in North East locality). Only 63% of these were in time across GCHSCP. However, due to the improved performance at stage 2, the target was met for complaints across both stages, with 75% being within deadline. In addition, it is demonstrated that stage 1 complaints would have met the target had managers in localities applied available extensions.
- 2.9 For care services complaints the central team do not have direct access to care records. The performance was poorer with only 56% of 27 stage 2 complaints responded to in time (mean of 32 working days). Only 59.7% of stage 1 complaints were responded to in time by Care Services managers with no complaints having been subject to an extension. This is therefore similar to the stage 1 complaint handling issues for social work complaints.
- 2.10 Issues relating to Covid arise in few complaints and none at all for some client groups. Only complaints related to care services mention Covid in a significant proportion of stage 2 complaints.

- 2.11 There has been a steep rise in social work complaints concerning alleged breaches of confidentiality / the Data Protection Act, alleged discrimination or human rights breaches, though these are still relatively few in number. On closer examination, none of the alleged breaches of human rights and discrimination were evidenced and upheld. Only a small number and proportion of complaints of data protection breaches were upheld – 6 (21%).
- 2.12 For Care Services the top three issues complained of were quality of service, competency of staff and staff attitude. The combined proportion of complaints about failure to arrive, late arrival or failure to complete tasks have fallen proportionately and numerically from a combined 112 (32.7%) in 2019-20 to 28 (10.5%) in 2020-21. Conversely the combined number and proportion of complaints about staff competency and attitude has risen from 60 (17.5%) to 108 (40.6%), despite the overall fall in complaints. These changes may relate indirectly to changes in service arising from Covid. Fewer visits have taken place during the pandemic and therefore the opportunity for complaints of failures around planned visits is reduced. Some service users have had to adjust to different carers replacing familiar faces due to staff shielding, isolating or absent and other general staffing pressures arising from Covid. Those staff would not be as familiar with the needs and personal preferences of service users as were the regular carers and relationships would not have been established, therefore creating the conditions for complaint.
- 2.13 A smaller proportion of both social work and care services complaints have been upheld or partially upheld in 2019-20 than in the preceding year. Social work complaints upheld or partially upheld have reduced from 35.5% to 23.5% and care services from 88% to 58%. As overall numbers of complaints have also reduced, then far fewer complaints have been upheld than for any preceding year.
- 2.14 For Upheld complaints, there is good evidence that actions were then taken to offer redress and improve services. These were largely confined to improvements at an individual case level, but were nevertheless important from the customer's perspective, often involving increased financial and other support, improved engagement or the expediting of services. Specific improvements of a systemic nature are highlighted and relevant actions listed in full at section 3.8 of the appendix.
- 2.15 25 cases were reviewed by SPSO, detailed in full at section 3.7 of the appendix. Two were upheld, one of which related to kinship care and the other issues with home care dating back to Cordia's management of these services in 2018. All recommendations for the two upheld complaints have been satisfactorily implemented. A case that had been upheld last year but challenged by GCHSCP was overturned and a new decision of 'not upheld' issued by SPSO. Two others were not upheld following full investigation. The remaining 20 cases were not even progressed to full investigation by SPSO, because SPSO were satisfied that an appropriate response had been given at the second stage. This gives reassurance that the internal complaints process is functioning correctly at the second stage.

3 Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial: There are no new financial implications arising from this report.

Legal: This report raises no new legal issues.

Personnel: There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.

Procurement: There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

Council Strategic Plan: Good complaint management, clear detailed reporting and service improvement from complaints within the Council generally support the council's core values of transparency, upholding citizen's rights and working in partnership with citizens. This aligns with the council's core theme of '*A well governed city that listens and responds*' but not to any specific priority set out under that theme.

The complaints process of GCHSCP in particular also supports and informs priorities within the key theme of '*a healthier city*' and in particular priorities 38, 39, 41, 46, 48 and 50, as specific issues raised through complaints inform managers involved in the planning and review of those particular priorities.

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts: There are no proposals in this report having any relevant potential equality impacts.

Climate Impacts: There are no proposals in this report having any relevant potential climate impacts.

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts: There are no proposals in this report having any relevant privacy and data protection impacts.

4 Recommendations

1. Committee is asked to note and approve the content of the annual social care complaints report