

Children's Social Services

Summary of complaints received across service areas 2015-16

Fieldwork Service

37 complaints were received about Fieldwork Service, which is largely consistent with previous years. Their themes were very broad including communication issues, disputes with staff or with information we held, and issues involving previous spouses/partners. They included:

**A young person in an out of county placement complained about being given no reason as to why she couldn't have face to face contact with her family over Christmas and why she can't move back to Flintshire.** We explained the decision about a visit wasn't made by us but by her parents who felt that her grandparents would be unable to manage her behaviour if she visited Flintshire. The young person may also have been inclined to go to her mother's home if she visited. We reminded the young person she is not to have contact with her siblings as per child protection plan. We had offered financial assistance for her family to visit her in her placement but this was declined by them. We are looking for placements in Flintshire but no places were available or not suitable due to her challenging behaviour.

**A grandparent complained about our handling of his grandchildren's case, which was causing upset and anxiety within the family.** We explained we couldn't go into detail as he doesn't have parental responsibility for his grandchildren. However, we acknowledged this can be a difficult time for families whilst assessments are being completed as per child protection procedures. The children's mother has already been invited in separately to discuss the matter further if she wishes.

**A mother challenged our reasons for recommending supervised contact as we hadn't properly considered her daughter's views.** We advised the case remains the subject of ongoing legal proceedings and that mother can challenge our reports in that arena, but she will need to contact her legal representative. We reassured mother her children's views have been taken into account throughout the legal process and are clearly referenced in statements. The Guardian has also advocated on their behalf.

**A mother was not happy that a Social Worker had met her two daughters who are aged under 5 years of age at school and spoke to them. She had not given permission for this to happen.** We explained our statutory duty to ensure her children's safety following recent concerns raised. We reminded mother we had struggled to engage with her and her partner so we had no option but to ask the Social Worker to visit the children at school to conclude their Section 47 work (the Head Teacher was present during the meeting).

**A mother complained that the perceived risk posed by her current partner to her children is unsubstantiated and based on one isolated incident. She feels that in fact she and her son need more protection from her ex-partner who she believes could be a danger to both of them.** We explained that full checks have been made with Police and Wirral Social Services to inform our child protection work and all information has been taken into account. We reminded the mother of her own recent concerns that she shared about her current partner. A child protection conference had in the meantime been convened to move the issue forward.

### Resources

Six complaints were received about Resources during the year. They broadly related to adherence to processes, placement issues raised by parents and confidentiality. They which included:

**A prospective adoptive couple complained we had not followed due process by overturning an earlier adoption match-making decision at a late stage. There was no formal reasons behind the decision.** We apologised for our lack of communication and for not providing up to date. We agreed to review our procedures as to informing parents about decisions taken in a timely manner. We also reassured the couple that decisions have been taken with the children's welfare at the centre of decision making.

**A mother believed Social Services were not supervising the standard of fostering for her daughter properly. Also, at a recent meeting, she was treated in an "abrupt manner".** We reassured mother by explaining that all foster carers are subject to regular visits. There are no records of any concerns about the placement and her daughter's views have been sought at review meetings, visits etc. The Social Worker concerned recalled a different tone to the meeting but sought to reassure mother her perceived conduct would not have meant to offend her.

### Safeguarding

3 complaints were received during the year involving safeguarding matters, which included:

**A parent complained about the inaccuracies contained within a report to case conference and the chronology.** We apologised for the delay in responding. Challenges to the report and chronology made by the parent were attached to relevant records in PARIS, copied to her and shared with multi-agency colleagues who were also present at the conference.

**A young person was unhappy with the way in which her LAC Review was conducted.** The young person met with the Senior Manager who apologised and explained she spoke with the Chair about the issues so that the next review can be a more positive experience.

C.I.D.S. (Children's Integrated Disability Service)

2 complaints were receiving during the year:

**A family complained against Panel's decision not to award direct payments for their son.** We explained the support provided to their son is funded by Health through their continuing N.H.S. healthcare funding, as their son has primary healthcare needs. We again offered support for the family in their caring role, which is considerable, via a carers assessments and the option of a carers grant etc.

**A mother complained about the length of time it was taking to reach a decision as to whether her son was eligible for services following their move to Flintshire.** After a period of time, due to which we were awaiting information from the family's previous Local Authority, a Clinical Psychologist confirmed the son does not have a learning disability; he has autism. A referral had already been made to the Child In Need Team for support and the previous referral to CAMHS followed up. This complaint is currently open with the Ombudsman's office.