

**Report Title:** Customer Care Annual Report April 2011 – March 2012  
**Directorate:** Adult Social Care  
**Purpose:** To provide information about compliments, comments, representations and complaints and to comply with the requirements of the Health Adult Social Care Complaints Guidelines 2009  
**Date:** June 2012  
**To:** Adults, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1** The purpose of the report is to present the annual report on the compliments, comments, representations and complaints about adult social care services.

## **2 CONTEXT**

- 2.1** This report provides information about compliments, comments, representations and complaints made between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012 under the Adult Social Care Complaints Procedure and 2009 Department of Health Guidelines on Adult Social Care Complaints. Cambridgeshire County Council has an open learning culture and a positive attitude to complaints, viewing them as opportunities for learning, for improved service delivery.
- 2.2** The scope of this report includes Adult Social Care services provided through Cambridgeshire County Council and those provided through NHS Partners i.e. Cambridgeshire Community Services (CCS NHS Trust) and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT).

## **3.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 3.1** People in Cambridgeshire who either receive or are acting on behalf of a person who receives Adult Social care services have the right to compliment, comment, make representations and complain about the service they have received. All feedback about services is valued and it is vital that lessons are learnt from complaints and that those lessons lead to service improvement.

### **3.2 Where we are today – Key Points**

- Compliments have increased by 73% when compared with the previous year
- There has been a small increase in the number of complaints i.e in 2010-11 156 complaints were received whereas in 2011–12 there were 166 complaints.
- Due to early intervention when dealing with comments and enquiries 30 of the 35 received were prevented from escalating into a formal complaint.
- The most common reasons for social care complaints are:-
  - Disagreement with the service delivered
  - Communication issues
  - Lack of support which can include issues such as disappointment with the amount and type of support provided or the independent domiciliary care provider missing calls. Similarly the category of communication issues also

covers a number of different situations e.g. lack of clarity regarding eligibility or different expectations in terms of the regularity of contact between the social care team and the person or their representative.

- The service areas most commonly complained about are:- Older People and Learning Disabilities.
- A new data base for recording complaints was introduced in January 2012. This allows for additional complaints information to be recorded
- Since January 2012 38% of the complaints received were upheld
- 88% of complainants received the response to their complaint within 20 working days
- 19 of the 166 (11%) complaints were sent to a Senior Manager to review and of these 6 complaints were upheld.
- There were 8 Local Government Ombudsman referrals in 2011- 12 this compares to 6 in the previous year.

- 3.3** There has been more emphasis on embedding the learning from complaints throughout the Adult social care services delivered in Cambridgeshire in order to avoid similar occurring again and to improve the quality of service.

#### **4. DEFINITIONS**

**The definitions for compliments, comments, representations and complaints are set out below.**

- 4.1 Compliment:** a formal expression of satisfaction about service delivery by a service user or their representative.
- 4.2 Comment:** any suggestion or remark made formally by a service user, their representative or a member of the public about a County Council service, process or documentation.
- 4.3 Representation:** a comment or complaint about County Council or Government resources or the nature and availability of services.
- 4.4 Complaint:** any formal expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about service delivery by a service user or their representative.
- 4.5 Corporate Complaints:** Corporate complaints are outside the legal scope of the NHS and Community Care Act i.e. complaints that refer solely to the behaviour of a named County Council employee. A corporate complaint is investigated and responded to by the line manager of the person who is being complained about.

## **5 THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS**

**5.1** This process has been in place since April 2009, its emphasis is on:

- Resolving problems directly with the customer care manager as they are usually most involved in this process.
- Resolving the issues rather than defending actions.

### **5.2 Case Studies (demonstrating effective resolution of complaint)**

- 5.2.1** A complaint was received regarding a direct payment for an older person; specifically the complainants were concerned about a recent change in relation to Disability Related Expenditure (DRE). The complainants remained unhappy with the initial response and following a second letter of complaint it was agreed to arrange a complaints meeting. Attending the meeting were representatives from the council's finance and customer care teams and Cambridgeshire Community Services (CCS) Older People's teams. After a frank and open discussion an agreement was reached with regard to the DRE. The complainants later wrote to express their gratitude for the way in which their concerns had been dealt with.
- 5.2.2** Another complaint was received that involved concerns about the standard of care received in hospital, the care arrangements made in preparation for the hospital discharge and the standard of care received from the domiciliary care agency. This complaint was jointly investigated by the hospital's complaints manager and the council's Adult Social Care customer care manager. The investigation involved representatives from the Council, CCS and the hospital working closely together to produce a joint response. The response outlined a number of learning points including ways of improving communication within and between different teams. The complainant was satisfied with the response.
- 5.2.2** A complaint was received from the mother of someone with Learning Disabilities about the standard of social care received and also the circumstances surrounding a hospital admission. The complaint was responded to by the customer care team and reviewed by a senior manager. As the complainant remained dissatisfied a meeting was arranged with the complainants, the Head of Service and a Customer Care Manager. A plan was agreed which identified actions to ensure that the complainant was involved and informed with regards to future plans for her daughter.
- 5.2.4** The sister of someone with Mental Health problems complained about a decision made on the hospital ward and lack of consultation with regards to provision of social care. Working in partnership with CPFT a joint response, was sent out, which the complainant found satisfactory.

## 6 COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS, REPRESENTATIONS and COMPLAINTS

- 6.1 Details relating to compliments, comments, representations and complaints are considered in the following sections. The total number of complaints, compliments, comments and representations from 31 March 2011 to 1 April 2012 are recorded in Table 1. In addition the total number of compliments, comments, representations and complaints for April 2010 – March 2011 are also included in table 1. For more e detailed comparison of this information please see section 13.

**Table 1 Number of compliments, comments, representations and complaints**

	<b>Apr- June 2011</b>	<b>July- Sept 2011</b>	<b>Oct- Dec 2011</b>	<b>Jan- Mar 2012</b>	<b>Total 2011- 2012</b>	<b>Total 2010- 2011</b>
<b>Compliments</b>	7	7	8	16	38	19
<b>Comments/ Enquiries</b>	3	2	16	14	35	20
<b>Representations</b>	0	4	2	3	9	12
<b>Complaints</b>	58	35	33	40	166	5
<b>Corporate Complaints</b>	2	1	5	2	10	156

### 6.2 Compliments

- 6.2.1 38 Compliments were received. These compliments refer primarily to two distinct areas i.e. the high quality of service, and the helpful attitude of named staff members. Table 2 gives information about the number of compliments received from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012
- 6.2.2 The Customer Care Unit does not receive copies of compliments sent directly to independent providers. However providers do receive compliments. Nottingham Rehab Supplies (NRS) carry out a feedback survey; 2 examples of compliments for NRS are listed in point 5.3.

**Table 2 Compliments received from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012**

<b>Team</b>	<b>No.compliments</b>
Planned Care Teams	4
LDP	8
Physical Disabilities	4
Sensory Services	5
Customer Care	3
Quality and Workforce Development Team	3
Equipment Service	3
Duty Team	1
Carer Support Team	3
Misc	3
General	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>

### **6.2.3 Examples of compliments received:-**

“All services were excellent and the care manager most helpful” PDSS

“All your staff were exemplary in demonstrating a patient, yet efficient approach to helping my parents cope with their problems” South City - Planned Care team

“I wish to take the opportunity to express my gratitude at the very prompt and sensitive response to the referral. I have felt valued, informed throughout the process.” East LDP Team

When arranging the collection of some chair raisers the service users made a point of saying “thank you so much for the equipment it has been so helpful especially in the first 12 weeks after surgery” NRS feedback form

### **6.3 Comments/Enquiries**

There were 35 comments/enquiries, ranging from comments about discharge planning to a comment about an assessment. From October 2011 to April 2012 there were 30 enquiries/comments, some of which could have escalated into a formal complaint. The Customer Care Managers felt that early intervention and pre-emptive action should be taken to avoid this happening. This accounts for the marked rise in comments/ enquiries which were resolved informally

Examples of the comments/enquiries received are: concern raised about assessment decisions, invoice queries, lack of contact from the social care team.

### **6.4 Representations**

A total of 9 representations were received in 2011/2012. This is the same number as the previous financial year. In 2010/2011, 7 of the 9 representations were about the same policy decision. In 2011/12 there were 4 representations about transport policy. The other representations ranged from disagreement about the carers grant, contributions for respite care and the financial assessment for the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Top-Up funding

### **6.5 Corporate Complaints**

Corporate complaints refer to complaints made about a named County Council employee. A total of 10 corporate complaints were received in the 2011/2012 financial year. Table 3 gives details of the service area where the individual works. The majority of these complaints refer to the attitude of the staff members involved e.g. not returning calls, rudeness etc. One of the corporate complaints received named 4 staff members and was very closely linked to a social care complaint made about the same service. 4 of these complaints were upheld and 2 were partially upheld, the remaining 4 were not upheld.

**Table 3. Corporate complaints**

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Number of complaints</b>
LDP	5
LDP Provider Services	1
Physical Disabilities	1
Adult Social Care Duty team	2
EDT	1
Total	10

## **7 Complaints**

- 7.1** 166 Complaints were received regarding the different Service Areas provided by Cambridgeshire's Adult Social Care; details are provided in Table 4 below.
- 7.2** It should be noted that complaints that involve more than one issue have been recorded in Table 4 using the primary reason for the complaint e.g. if the majority of a complaint referred to a Older Peoples social care assessment and also mentioned a FABA assessment then the complaint has been recorded in Table 4 as an Older Person's complaint. Table 5 gives further information about the reasons people have complained.
- 7.3** During the course of the year customer care information is sent to the relevant service areas e.g Older People. As a result of this we received feedback from CCS saying that it would be useful if the Discharge Planning teams' complaints information was included separately. From January 2012 this type of complaint information has been recorded separately.
- 7.4** 72% of all Adult Social Care services are delivered to Older People. This service area received 45% of the total number of complaints.
- 7.5** 11% of Adult social care services are delivered to people with learning disabilities. This service received 20% of the total number of complaints in 2011 – 2012. It should be noted that there is a small number of complainants within Learning Disability services who have made more than 1 complaint. Therefore there is no direct relationship between the number of complaints and the number of complainants.
- 7.6** In recent months we have experienced an increase in the number of complaints that have proved to be very complex involving several issues and teams. In addition some complainants submit lengthy and numerous complaints about several closely related issues. This approach to complaining can involve a great deal of time as each complaint has to be considered and cross referenced to the other complaints to avoid duplication. Dealing with a less complex complaint can taken the customer care unit up to 5 working hours to process, whereas the complex complaints can exceed 50 working hours i.e up to 10 times longer.

**Table 4 Service Area Complaints Information**

<b>Team</b>	<b>April-June</b>	<b>Jul-Sept</b>	<b>Oct – Dec</b>	<b>Jan-March</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Physical Disabilities</b>	4	4	3	3	14
<b>Sensory Services</b>	2	0	1	0	3
<b>Older People</b>	29	16	13	16	74
<b>Older People Discharge Planning</b>	0	0	0	4	4
<b>LDP</b>	10	6	10	7	33
<b>Mental Health</b>	1	1	1	3	6
<b>Financial Assessment</b>	2	1	0	2	5
<b>Invoicing Billing</b>	2	1	0	0	3
<b>EDT</b>	1	0	1	0	2
<b>O.T.</b>	3	2	3	2	10
<b>Contact Centre</b>	1	2	0	1	4
<b>Carers Support</b>	0	0	1	0	1
<b>Transitions</b>	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Other</b>	3	2	0	1	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>166</b>

## **7.7 Reasons for complaint**

- 7.7.1** A change in the way ‘the reasons why people complain’ is recorded has affected the yearly figures; until October 2011, when a complaint was recorded all of the issues in the complaint were logged. This resulted in the number of issues recorded exceeding the number of complaints. This method of recording did not give a clear view of the primary reason why people complain. Responding to feedback from previous reports the data from October 2011 – March 2012 has been recorded differently. The primary reason for the complaint is recorded; this means that for the latter two quarters of the year the number of complaints now corresponds with the reasons for the complaint and the data gives a clearer view of the reasons why people are complaining. This method of recording will be adopted for April 2012 – March 2013. A breakdown of the reasons why people complain is shown in Table 5.
- 7.7.2** A common reason for people complaining is lack of support. This category covers a number of different factors e.g. disappointment with the information and support provided by the social care locality team or dissatisfaction with the care provided by independent provider
- 7.7.3** Complaints about the standard of care delivered by both the Social Care teams and Independent Providers and Communication issues are often inextricably woven together.

- 7.7.4** The change in the way that the nature of complaints are recorded could in part account for the decrease in complaints about communication. It should be noted that many of the complaints received have a communication element to them.
- 7.7.5** From April 2011 ‘concerns’ that are solely about a disagreement with an assessment decision are dealt with using the line management structure and are not processed as social care complaints. This change could account for the decrease in the number of complaints about “disagreement with a decision” category.

**Table 5 : Complaints Issues**

<b>Nature of the Complaint</b>	<b>April Sept</b>	<b>Oct- Dec</b>	<b>Jan - Mar</b>	<b>2011- 12 Total</b>
Abuse/ Ill-treatment	5	1	0	6
Change in service	5	0	1	6
Communication issues	20	4	6	30
Data Protection issues	0	0	0	0
Denial/Withdrawal/Delay of service delivery	5	0	0	5
Disagree with decision	24	1	5	30
Discourtesy/manner	5	0	0	5
Discrimination	0	0	0	0
Failure to provide service	19	5	3	27
Failure to meet standards	0	12	2	14
Financial issues invoicing	8	1	3	12
Financial Assessment	12	2	2	16
Lack of Support	4	6	16	26
Other statutory providers leading e.g. CPFT	3	1	0	4
<b>Misc</b>	0	0	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>183</b>

## **8 Conclusions of the Investigation Process**

- 8.1** In January 2012 a new data base for recording complaints details was introduced; this data base gives access to additional complaints information. From January 2012 it is possible to access data regarding the number of complaints that have been upheld see Table 6.
- 8.2.** 38% of complaints received between January 2012 to March 2012 were upheld. No further action refers to complaints registered as formal complaints where initial actions satisfied the complainant and they did not wish any further action to be taken. A third of complaints were in this category.

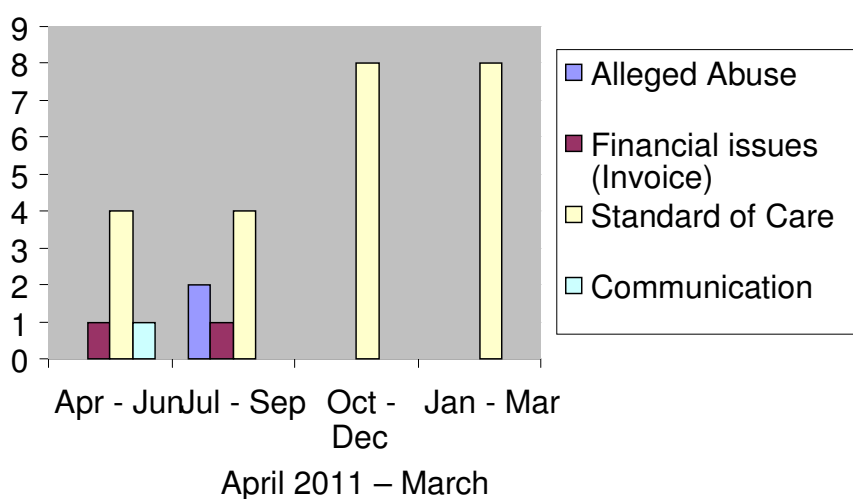


**Table 6 Complaints Upheld**

Conclusion of complaints investigation	Jan – March 2012
<b>Upheld</b>	<b>15 (38%)</b>
<b>Partially upheld</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Not upheld</b>	<b>1 (3%)</b>
<b>No Further Action following initial response</b>	<b>13 (33%)</b>
<b>Ongoing</b>	<b>11 (28%)</b>
<b>Total number of complaints</b>	<b>40</b>

## 9 Complaints involving Independent Sector Providers

- 9.1** 29 of the 166 complaints (17%) involved issues that related to Independent Sector providers. 26 of these complaints were about independent services delivered to Older People. Older people form the largest group who receive domiciliary and residential care from Independent providers.
- 9.2** In the last quarter of 2011 – 2012, 4 complaints were about domiciliary care providers and 3 of those complaints were about the same agency.
- 9.3** Complaints that refer to Independent Sector Providers are investigated by the locality team manager. The responses to complaints about poor practice are sent to the relevant Head of Service and the Adult Social Care Procurement team to determine any further action.
- 9.4** Figure 1 gives details about the complaints received by the customer care unit relating to Independent Sector providers and the issues raised by the complaints.

**Figure 1 : Complaints involving Independent Providers**

## 10 Complaint Response Times

**10.1** The Adult Social Care Complaints Policy specifies that complaints should be responded to within 20 working days. If there are reasons for exceeding this time frame then a written explanation is sent to the complainant.

The number of complaints responded to within and exceeding timescales are:-

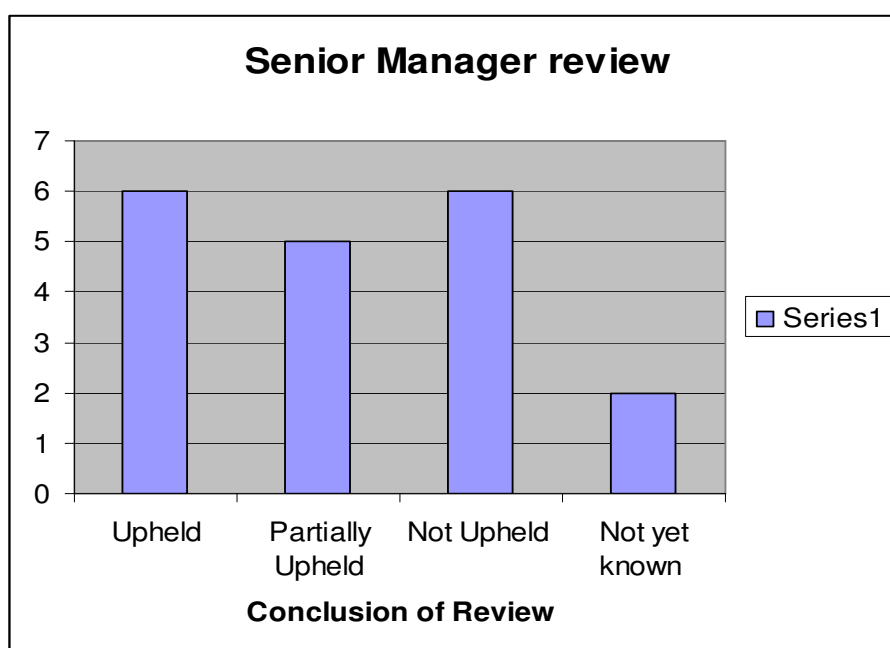
- Complaints receiving a first response within 20 working days: 146 88%
- Complaints not receiving initial response within 20 working days: 20 12%

**10.2** The reasons for the initial response taking longer than 20 working days to complete vary from incomplete draft responses from managers to complex complaints that require information from a number of different sources.

## 11 Senior Manager Review

In line with part 2 of the complaints process and at the request of the complainant, 19 of the 166 complaints (11%) were sent to be reviewed by a senior manager who then reviews the complaint and the initial response. Figure 2 gives details of the conclusion of the senior manager review of complaints .

**Figure 2 Senior Manager Reviews**



## 12 Statistics on Age, Gender and Ethnicity

**12.1** 57% of complaints related to services for older people. However, not all of these complaints referred directly to older people's services e.g. a complaint from or on behalf of an older person could refer to the financial assessment or to Occupational Therapy services.

**12.2** More women than men receive services from Adult Support Services (61%). Table 6 demonstrates that more women (67%) than men have complained in 2011 – 12. This contrasts to 2010 – 11 when more men (59%) than women complained.

**12.3.** Table 7 shows that the majority of complaints are from people with a White British ethnic background.

**12.4 Table 7 Information about complainants April 2011 – March 2012**

Group	Complaints Received	Percentage
<b>Age</b>		
19 – 64 years	71	43%
64 +	95	57%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	53	32%
Female	111	67%
Couples	2	1%
<b>Ethnic Background</b>		
White British	93	56%
White Irish	2	1%
Other	3	2%
Not Known	68	41

**13 Historical Comparison of Complaints**

**13.1** Table 8 demonstrates that the number of complaints received has increased year on year. Comparing 2009/10 with 2010/11 the number of complaints received significantly increased (79%). This is due in part to the transfer of the management of Older People's complaints to Cambridgeshire County Council.

**Table 8 Historical Comparison of Compliments, Representations and Complaints**

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/2012
<b>Compliments</b>	24	19	38
<b>Representations</b>	1	12	9
<b>Complaints</b>	87	156	166

**13.1.1** There was a small increase in the number of complaints in 2011- 12 when compared to the same period in 2010 – 11 i.e. an increase of 6%.

**13.1.2** From April 2011 to March 2012, 38 compliments were received, this compares to 22 compliments received in the previous reporting period. This 73% increase in compliments can be attributed in part to increased awareness of managers with regard to processing compliments. This is as a result of managers attending relevant training.

**13.1.3** The number of representations in 2010/11 to 2011/12 has decreased from 12 to 9. Representation numbers can vary considerably from year to year as one issue can generate several representations.

## 14 OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS AND ENQUIRIES

- 14.1** During the year 8 complaints were considered by the Local Government Ombudsman. The conclusions reached by the Ombudsman are detailed below in Table 9.
- 14.2** From April 2011 to March 2012 a total of £1100 was made in payments to complainants in line with the LGO recommendations.

**Table 9 Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) complaints**

Dates	No.LGO referrals	Comments
April 2011 - June 2011	0	
July 2011 – Sept 2011	2	1 upheld payment of £1000 1 payment of £100 time and trouble
Oct 2011– Dec 2011	1	Investigation ongoing
Jan 2012 – March 2012	5	1 further evidence requested 1 premature referral – referred to CCC for investigation 1 no further investigation 1 upheld 1 Out of time and jurisdiction
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	

- 14.3** The ratio of LGO investigations in relation to the total number of complaints has increased slightly. In 2010–2011 for every 26 complaints received 1 was referred to the LGO as compared to 1 referral for every 20 complaints in 2011 -2012 see table 10.

**Table 10 Comparative Information**

Year	Complaints Total	LGO Referrals Total	Ratio of LGO Referrals to complaints
<b>2009 - 2010</b>	87	8	1:11
<b>2010 - 2011</b>	156	6	1:26
<b>2011 - 2012</b>	166	8	1:20

## 15 SAFEGUARDING – PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE ADULTS

- 15.1** During 1 April 2011 – 31 March 2012 6 complaints contained abuse/ill treatment issues. Each of these complaints were discussed with the Adult Safeguarding managers and where appropriate safeguarding procedures were initiated

## 16 LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

- 16.1** Addressing the issue of how to avoid similar situations re-occurring is a key concern when responding to a complaint. In the response to the complainant the immediate and long term actions taken to address the issues and prevent a future reoccurrence are described. Copies of the response are sent to the team and area manager/head of

service. This ensures that the team manager can address specific team issues. In addition senior managers are aware of any learning from the complaint and are able to share the learning with other teams/areas of service.

- 16.2** In addition regular meetings are arranged between the Customer Care Team and the respective Heads of Service. Learning from individual complaints relevant to that service is discussed at these meetings. In addition any learning points from other areas of service are also discussed. This assists the embedding of learning from different service areas throughout all Adult Social Care
- 16.3** The Customer Care Managers are working with the Learning Disability Partnership to develop a process for 'Improving Practice' using the Complaints System see appendix 2
- 16.4** A common issue included in complaints relates to communications between the care manager and the individual. Difficulties with communication have been acknowledged in individual responses to complainants. Where appropriate the importance of timely, relevant and respectful communication is reinforced by the individual's line manager. Any subsequent changes in practice are shared with the rest of the team and senior managers.
- 16.5** Although not immediately obvious financial matters are at the heart of many complaints. The reasons why people are dissatisfied with financial arrangements range from incorrect invoicing to misunderstanding about making a contribution to the cost of the person's care package. Complaints involving financial assessment disputes resulted in a financial assessment appeals process being developed. Complaints that refer to this issue are now dealt with using the appeals process and not processed as a complaint.
- 16.6** There were two complaints about what constitutes Disability Related Expenditure. (DRE). The Financial Assessment Revenue Manager and the relevant Head of Service worked closely with the Customer Care team in both cases. In future these complaints could be used as precedents for any complaints of a similar nature.
- 16.7** A series of safeguarding issues were identified after receipt of 3 complaints about one service provider see point 9.3. The Head of Service co-ordinated the safeguarding response and was also asked to provide the information for responding to the complaints. Effective recording ensured that the common areas in the complaints were identified and dealt with at a strategic level ref. 8.3. In addition to the safeguarding investigation, the senior manager from Cambridgeshire Community Services carried out the following actions:-
- Reviewed the residents' feedback surveys.
  - Made arrangements for CCS to send out questionnaires to the residents at the establishment to get specific feedback regarding the care provision as well as staff attitudes.
  - Asked the Locality Team to feed back any related issues raised in forthcoming reviews.

- 16.8** Similarly the customer care unit has received a number of complaints about one Independent domiciliary care provider. This theme was identified at an early stage and reported to the relevant contracts manager for their attention.
- 16.9** Standards of care provided by domiciliary care agencies are a recurring theme. These concerns varied from missed visits to visits at inappropriate times. The main issue is independent providers not meeting expected standards because of the problem with recruitment and retention of staff within agencies. Agencies have reported that they are losing carers to residential and nursing homes. In order to address this issue the Quality Workforce Development team will be running a series of recruitment events commencing in June 2012 and are also planning a larger project aimed at scoping the extent of the issue across the county and identifying what is needed to address the issue
- 16.10** During the course of the last year early resolution and responding to complaints informally has been prioritised. This has meant potential complainants receive a speedy response and do not have to use the formal complaints process. For example a complaint was received which involved a person who was paying the full cost of their care and was receiving invoices from the social care team who were acting as an intermediary between the person and the agency. A telephone call to the team ensured that the agency invoiced the person directly. The complainant was satisfied with this action.
- 16.11** There have been a small number of complaints from April 2011 to March 2012 where the complainant provides an overwhelming amount of information to a number of different officers. In addition the same complaints are made in different forms. This can be time consuming and difficult to deal with. One method that can prove effective is to have one point of contact; this person then deals with the complaint and social care issues. This approach will be considered at an earlier stage, when dealing with complaints of this nature in the future. The introduction of a communication protocol has also proved to be another effective way of capturing all of the issues and responding to them in a consistent manner.
- 16.12** A complaint about the records kept by a domiciliary care agency resulted in changes to their record keeping practices.
- 16.13** Requests have been received from complainants to view an independent investigator's report before the director had responded. Usual practice would be for a copy of the report to be sent with the Director's response. When dealing with these requests it became clear that there is insufficient detail in the Adult Social Care Complaints policy with regard to this issue and this is an area which needs to be addressed by reviewing the policy.
- 16.14** It was clear from the investigation into a complaint about LDP services that a solicitor's correspondence had not been responded to promptly. As a result of this complaint a new tracking system with time deadlines was introduced. This enabled the Head of Service to monitor the nature and timeliness of responses to solicitors' letters.

## **17.0 Recommendations**

- 17.1** Adult Social care management team to consider the contents of the report and attached action plan.

## Customer Care Action Plan 2012 – 2013

Area	Actions	Responsible	Date for Completion	Review Date
Identify common themes in complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor the reasons why people are complaining</li> <li>• Identify common factors</li> <li>• Liaise closely with other teams e.g. Procurement.</li> </ul>	Customer Care Team	Ongoing	Quarterly
Early Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In consultation with the complainants take action to address issues before initiating the formal complaints process.</li> <li>• Monitor and report quarterly on the number of potential complaints that have been resolved informally</li> </ul>	Customer Care Team	Ongoing	Quarterly
Training for all managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to deliver Complaints Training to all Adult Social Care Managers in Cambridgeshire</li> <li>• Develop and deliver Complaints handling training for Independent Provider Managers</li> </ul>	Customer Care Team	April 2012	After each training session
Review Complaints Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review policy and include a detailed section on Independent investigation.</li> <li>• Draft review distributed for comment</li> <li>• Final draft sent for approval</li> </ul>	Customer Care Managers	September 2012	April 2013
Learning from complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify learning from complaints on a quarterly basis</li> <li>• Continue quarterly meetings with stakeholders/Heads of Service to discuss complaints and learning from complaints within their own and other</li> </ul>	Customer Care Managers	Ongoing	Quarterly



	services.			
Financial Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify complaints with financial issues</li> <li>Discuss complaints and agree actions with Financial Revenues and Assessment Manager and Development &amp; Policy Manager</li> </ul>	Customer Care Managers	Quarterly	April 2013
Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide tailored reports for Heads of Service</li> <li>Provide Quarterly reports for Strategy and Commission Adult Social Care Management team</li> <li>Write Annual Report by the end of June each year</li> </ul>	Customer Care Managers	Quarterly  Quarterly  End of June 2013	Quarterly  Quarterly  End of June 2013
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report on complaints that include communication issues at the Quarterly meetings with Head's of Service</li> <li>Report on complaints that include communication issues at the Quality Assurance Group Meetings</li> </ul>	Customer Care Managers	Quarterly	End of June 2013
Dealing with complaints involving a great deal of information in a rationalised and streamlined manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agree with Senior Managers the best course of action.</li> <li>Implement agreed actions</li> </ul>	To be determined	Ongoing	Quarterly
Feedback on complaints handling to be recorded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints Handling System to be reviewed</li> <li>Feedback on Complaints handling to be recorded and included in the annual report</li> </ul>	Customer Care Team	Half Yearly	April 2013

## **Appendix 1**

### **Explanation of Acronyms**

<b>BME</b>	Black and Minority Ethnic
<b>CCS NHS Trust</b>	Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust
<b>CPFT</b>	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust
<b>DFG</b>	Disabled Facilities Grant
<b>DRE</b>	Disabled Related Expenditure
<b>EDT</b>	Emergency Duty Team
<b>FABA</b>	Finance and Benefits Assessor
<b>LDP</b>	Learning Disability Partnership
<b>LGO</b>	Local Government Ombudsman
<b>NRS</b>	Nottingham Rehabilitation Supplies ~ contracted supplier of integrated community equipment
<b>OPMH</b>	Older Peoples Mental Health Team
<b>OT</b>	Occupational Therapy

<b>PD</b>	Physical Disabilities
<b>PDSS</b>	Physical Disabilities and Sensory Service
<b>SS</b>	Sensory Services
<b>SOVA</b>	Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults

## Appendix 2

### Improving Practice by using the Complaints system

#### Cambridgeshire Learning Disability Partnership

##### 1) Rationale

The need to learn from complaints has been highlighted in CQC reports.  
Extract from p15 CQC Annual Performance Assessment report 2009/10

- *Evaluate the reasons for the low level of complaints received to ensure that the numbers received reflect a high degree of satisfaction rather than a general lack of awareness of their right of access to the complaints procedures.*

and identified as an action in our Service Plan...

- *setting up of a process to evaluate the outcome of complaints and assess how improvements and learning points could be built into current practice.*

##### 2) Current Practice

The existing Customer care system requires the team managers to investigate the complaint and produce a draft response. This draft is reviewed by their service manager and copied to the Head of Operations and the customer care team. The Customer Care Manager is responsible for the management of complaints and produces a final response to the complainant.

If the complainant remains unhappy with the response, the service manager reviews the initial response, and produces a draft response which is copied to the Head of Operations and the customer care team. In all cases therefore our responses are shared with a number of managers to ensure that they meet the appropriate standards. The Customer Care Managers report on these outcomes and they are discussed with the Head of Service at regular meetings with the Customer Care Managers. It is important that awareness of these outcomes is shared with all relevant staff.

##### 3) Learning from complaints

Some complaints will involve elements which are upheld, and apologies are given in circumstances where actions have not been in line with appropriate policy and guidance. Measures are taken to prevent a recurrence of this situation.

However, in some cases, if the complaint has progressed to the level of the Local Government Ombudsman, the County Council may also have to make financial recompense to the complainant because of the 'injury' they have suffered.. particularly where there have been cases of maladministration.

In many cases therefore there are clear 'learning points ' that managers and staff need to be aware of. This could apply either to situations

- where existing guidance and procedures have not been followed
- where such guidance and procedures were followed but are inadequate to current circumstances
- where clear guidance does not exist

In all these circumstances it would be possible to review complaints and draw out the lessons that could be learned by summarising the most important outcomes. These points could then be examined in the light of available guidance for several reasons.

- To highlight and publicize the need to adhere to current procedures
- To highlight those situations where guidance was inadequate or lacking
- To encourage the review of policy in such situations.

#### 4) A learning process

As both team managers and service managers are responsible for investigating complaints they should already be aware of the learning points from each individual case. They could therefore simply report to our Operational Managers meeting on a monthly basis on

- Any complaints received and responded to
- Any points for shared learning

This would not allocate responsibility for shortcomings to individuals or allocate actions relating to individual cases. Such steps should already have been taken. Cases could be identified only by initials on the minutes and the focus put on identifying service-wide learning.

#### 5) A wider responsibility

The assistance of colleagues from the Transformation team or with Quality Assurance responsibility should be considered at this stage. Are there links with Operational Instructions? Have Customer care standards been adhered to? Decisions could then be taken and minuted on how best to share information and actions with wider staff groups and embed such learning into our whole service.

### **Recommendation**

A regular slot –'Complaints' should be added to the agenda of the Operations management meeting.