

Title of report: Children and Young People's Quality Assurance Briefing

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: 16 September 2025

Report by: Complaints Manager and QA Service Manager

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All wards

Purpose

To brief the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the development, management and learning arising from complaints and compliments.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- 1) That the committee notes the content of the reports.**
- 2) For the committee to make any recommendations as to how compliments and complaints management within the council and children's services could be enhanced.**

Alternative options

1. The committee may choose the option not to review the report, however this is not recommended as the report is provided to inform the committee of current quality assurance activity in supporting improvement work within the Children's Services directorate.

Key considerations

2. The attached report at Appendix A from the council's complaints department provides an overview of the management data and learning and data of complaints received in quarter one of 25/26 with relative comparisons to the prior year where appropriate.

3. The attached report at Appendix B from the Children Services Quality Assurance manager provides an overview of the service development in the management and analysis of learning from compliments and complaints.
4. The combined reports provide assurance that the two services are working closely to ensure there is a proactive and joint approach to the management and learning of compliments and complaints within children's services.

Community impact

5. A robust and reliable process for the management of complaints for Children's Services will support the improvement in the practice of the department. Ensuring children, young people and their families feel able to raise concerns and be listened to with resolution to their concerns at the earliest stage is an important part of our engagement and restorative practice approach.
6. The scrutiny function supports community development through robust scrutiny of the council's policy framework, including the Local Plan, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, County Plan and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
7. Scrutiny also supports community issues more directly through the work of the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee.
8. The function also helps to ensure that the council discharges its corporate parent duties effectively, through scrutiny of the corporate parenting board and the council's broader work to support its looked after children and their families.

Environmental impact

9. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.
10. All reports to scrutiny committees, as with all council committees, include appraisals of the impact of the report content on climate change. Scrutiny committee work programmes directly link to the Herefordshire Council Plan priorities, including the key priority to "Protect and enhance our environment and keep Herefordshire a great place to live."
11. Climate change and carbon reduction related issues are directly identified in the remit and therefore the focus of the Environment and Sustainability scrutiny committee.
12. In preparing this information report, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the council's Environmental Policy. Examples include:
 - a. Online meetings, eliminating the need to travel to Hereford for a single meeting.
 - b. Paper-free briefings and informal meetings, eliminating the need for printed paper.

Equality duty

13. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
14. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. As this report is primarily for information, we do not believe that accepting (or rejecting) this report will have an impact on our equality duty.
15. The Children's Services and Council Complaints services pay full regard to the council's responsibilities as set out in the public sector equality duty and ensures all persons are able to use the complaints process being provided with the necessary support as required to address any individual needs identified.

Resource implications

16. Effective scrutiny produces evidence-based recommendations. These can be informed by learning from best practice and an understanding of 'what works' at other similar local authorities, as well as developing a robust picture of what the situation is locally based on data, intelligence and insights. Where adopted recommendations can help with the efficiency and effectiveness of services that can be delivered differently, as well as informing the development of current and new policies.
17. As this report is primarily for information, there are no direct resource implications arising from this report. However, the function may require some funding in order to carry out its work effectively. Requirements may include purchasing training or expert advice. However, it is anticipated that much of the training and development required during the year can be met using existing council resources.

Risk management

18. Effective scrutiny is a feature of the council's governance arrangements, where the council is operating executive arrangements. There are a range of factors that could result in risks to the council of not doing scrutiny effectively. These include the failure to:
 - a. challenge and hold decision makers to account
 - b. link scrutiny work to the delivery of the council's priorities and risk management
 - c. carry out thorough and appropriate research to make evidence-based recommendations
 - d. engage partners and providers
 - e. ensure that structures and models of operation are fit for purpose and match ambition and available resources

- f. ensure that scrutiny can operate as the voice of communities and
- g. draw on member knowledge and experience to inform policy development.

19. To mitigate, tolerate or eradicate these risks, enablers for effective scrutiny include:
- a. operating in an apolitical manner
 - b. clarity of vision and purpose
 - c. scrutiny support availability, capability and capacity
 - d. effective engagement and commitment by members and officers at all levels, including cabinet, opposition leaders, scrutiny chairs and senior officers who play a central role in setting the tone and direction
 - e. robust work programming and prioritisation of topics with clear objectives and expected impacts
 - f. ensuring that scrutiny work will add value to the council and communities e.g. through strong links between work programme topics and the integrated strategic plans that set out the actions and timescales to deliver the priorities in the County Plan
 - g. access to and availability of robust data and intelligence and
 - h. good relationships with partners and providers.

Consultees

20. None

Appendices

Appendix A: Children's Complaints and Compliments Statutory Quarterly Report, Q1

Appendix B: Children's Services report on development, management and learning from complaints

Background papers

None