



Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

Date: 12 December 2017

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## Local Government Ombudsman investigation into a complaint against Northumberland Council

Report of the Chief Executive, Daljit Lally

Cabinet Member for Children's Services: Councillor Wayne Daley

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### **Purpose of report.**

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the Cabinet about the outcomes from a Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) investigation into a complaint against Northumberland Council children's social care.

### **Recommendations**

The Cabinet is recommended to note the content of the report and comment as appropriate.

### **Link to Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to the Developing the Organisation (Customer Focus) priority included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2013-2017.

### **Key issues**

The LGO investigation found fault found causing injustice and made recommendations. These recommendations follow with an update after each.

- 1. Pay Mr and Mrs X and their children £1,000 to cover their time and trouble pursuing the complaint as well as the uncertainty, distress and anxiety caused by the Council's failure to carry out an investigation into the children's welfare.**

This action will be complete by 03 November 2017.

- 2. Ensure a copy of the Independent Investigator's stage 2 report, (the LGO) report and information (the Council) obtained about Y in November 2014 are kept on the other children's files in the event that further information comes to light in future.**

This action will be complete by 03 November 2017.

- 3. Provide (LGO) with details of measures it has put in place to ensure it meets statutory timescales for investigating children's services complaints.**

Please note that since the Council investigated this complaint we have strengthened the way in which we handle complaints. Measures include:

- The complaints service has adopted the Council's IT system to log and track complaints;
- We have engaged a local consultancy, rather than use individuals, to provide experienced investigating officers who are suitably supported by the organisation and who understand the need to complete investigations in timeframe; and
- To increase capacity within the complaints service we are the recruiting a manager specifically to lead on children's services complaints.

We have agreed to provide the LGO with the relevant details by 22 December 2017.

- 4. Carry out a review to ensure relevant staff and contractors (e.g. independent investigators and independent people) have undertaken up to date training on dealing with children's services complaints to ensure the voice of the child is heard.**

This action will be complete by 11 December 2017. Preliminary information suggests that our current independent investigators and independent people have undertaken up to date training on dealing with children's services complaints to ensure the voice of the child is heard.

We are also providing a mixture of LGO led training in November and in-house training in December for children's services managers who deal with complaints.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Complaint summary**

Mr and Mrs X's complaint relates to the way the Council dealt with their family and the time it took for the Council to investigate their complaints. Mr and Mrs X complain the Council failed to do enough to protect their younger children from inappropriate behaviour by their eldest son, Y.

They say the family has been left with a great deal of uncertainty about the effect of Y's behaviour on the younger children.

Mr and Mrs X say the family was caused a great deal of distress as a result of Y being removed from their house by the police and this could have been prevented if the Council had acted sooner.

## IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

<b>Policy:</b>	Complaints contribute to monitoring the impact of the Council's policies and the effectiveness with which they are being implemented.
<b>Finance and value for money:</b>	There are no direct financial implications.
<b>Legal:</b>	There are no direct legal implications.
<b>Procurement:</b>	There are no direct procurement implications.
<b>Human Resources:</b>	There are no direct HR implications.
<b>Property:</b>	There are no direct property implications.
<b>Equalities:</b> (Impact Assessment attached)  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>	Individual complaints are risk-assessed on receipt, and appropriate actions are taken if someone is at immediate risk of harm.
<b>Crime &amp; Disorder:</b>	There are no crime and disorder implications.
<b>Customer Considerations:</b>	Complaints are one of a range of methods by which we receive feedback on the quality and consistency of our services. They are also invaluable for learning lessons and quality improvement.
<b>Carbon Reduction:</b>	There are no direct carbon reduction implications.
<b>Wards:</b>	All

## CONSULTATION

The Policy Board Member for Children's Services have been consulted about this report.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

Attached.

## Report sign off.

Finance Officer	N/A
Monitoring Officer/Legal	N/A
Human Resources	N/A
Procurement	N/A
I.T.	N/A
Interim Director of Children's Services	Andy Johnson
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Wayne Daley

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**Appendix 1 - Local Government Ombudsman investigation into a complaint against Northumberland Council.**