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**JOB DESCRIPTION**

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| **Post Title:** Complaints/Customer Relations Manager | | **Director/Service/Sector** Wellbeing Group - Governance | | **Office Use 3325** |
| **Grade:** 9 | | **Workplace:** Community Service Business Unit – County Hall | | JE ref: 3325  HRMS ref: |
| **Responsible to:** Senior Manager, | | **Date:** 8 August 2017 | **Manager Lever:** Senior Manager |
| **Job Purpose:**  To manage all stages of the response to complaints regarding children’s social care and education services provided by the Wellbeing Group, and to ensure that statutory and organisational requirements are met, that complaints are investigated with appropriate thoroughness and impartiality, and that all complainants receive a full and timely response. | | | | |
| **Resources** | Staff | The postholder will have full management responsibility for a Data Protection Subject Access Officer. S/he will also oversee the work of complaints investigators (internal and external of the organisation); with responsibility for ensuring that they have an adequate knowledge base for the particular investigations that they undertake, and for quality assurance of their work.  The postholder will have responsibility for management of the adult social care complaints team during periods of absence of the adult services complaints manager.  The postholder will be responsible for designing and delivering training about complaints policies and procedures to staff and managers across Children’s Services and Education. | | |
| Finance | | The postholder will manage the complaints team budget which will include the employment of self-employed independent investigators and for other incidental expenses of complaints investigations. | | |
| Physical | | The post holder spends a considerable amount of time in a sitting position, driving between sites for meetings or standing for long periods when delivering training sessions. | | |
| Clients | | The postholder will have no direct responsibility for providing patient/client care but s/he will have regular contact with service users, their representatives and family members who make complaints.  S/he will assist service users and members of the public during incidental contacts as required.  S/he will be responsible for arranging and co-ordinating the investigation of complex issues about possible failings in the care provided to individuals, and will need to have a clear understanding of the issues involved. | | |
| **Duties and key result areas:**   * The postholder will be the Children’s Services and Education expert adviser about national complaints policy and legislation and about best practice in handling complaints. S/he will be expected to develop and maintain the Directorate’s policy and procedures for the management of children’s social care and education complaints. * While s/he will be expected to seek senior management advice on particularly sensitive issues, s/he will be expected to make most decisions about the handing of individual complaints. * The post holder will be responsible for ensuring that complainants receive full and appropriate response to complaints which will, in some cases, involve highly-emotionally charged situations, risks to service users, major reputational threats to the organisation and potential legal proceedings. * The post holder will be a key player in redevelopment of good customer practice and standards within the organisation.   **Policy & Service Development**   * The postholder will have lead responsibility for keeping up-to-date with national policy and the development and implementation of local complaints policies and procedures in line with best practice. In addition, they will develop and influence policy and procedures in relation to the customer experience. * In relation to complaints a knowledge of, and ability to interpret, the organisation’s other policies and procedures and how their application may affect individuals or groups and make recommendations for improvement as required.   **Information Resources**   * Responsibility for making sure the complaints database meets the needs of the complaints team and reporting requirements of the organisation. * Records personally generated information.   **Research & Development**   * The postholder will be expected to analyse data about complaints, and to carry out informal investigation of patterns in the complaints received, to identify common issues and to review whether some services may be failing to publicise adequately the opportunity to complain. * Undertakes surveys related to complaints as required.   **Freedom to Act**   * Interprets national policy in relation to complaints and ensures local policy and procedure is compliant.   **Planning & Organisation**   * Identify the training needs of managers and staff in relation to complaints. * Responsible for planning and implementing how complaints should be handled and responded to in relation to existing and any new national policy and best practice. * Contribute to the development of plans for cross service and cross organisational cooperation in respect of complaints. * Taking forward action plans for improvement to ensure any changes are implemented.   **Communications and Relationships**   * Communication, in writing and face to face, with service users and their representatives (including legal representatives) about highly sensitive, contentious and complex issues. * Developing and presenting complaints workshops to staff and managers including those from independent social care providers contracted to the Local Authority. * Discussions with managers at all levels in the Group, about specific complaints and about issues raised by complaints and areas of potential improvement. * Liaison with managers to make sure lessons are learnt and any changes are implemented that arise out of complaints. * Liaison with independent providers of social care services under contract over the handling of complaints. * Liaison with partner organisations, including NHS Trusts, GP Practices and the Council, about complaints which cross organisational boundaries. * Discussion with care regulators about the handling of complaints which raise regulatory issues. * Liaison with the Health Service and Local Government Ombudsmen about complaints raised with them. * Contact with elected Councillors, about specific complaints and to report overall lessons from complaints. * Contact with advice and advocacy services and with the North of Tyne Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).   **Analytical Skills**  The postholder will need to:   * Decide how individual complaints should be handled, based on an assessment of the potential risks involved. * Analyse and interpret data in relation to complaints and liaison as appropriate with relevant managers about findings. * Decide who is best placed to investigate particular complaints, taking account of the nature of the issues, the skills and experience of the potential investigators, and the degree of independence required. * Deal with all decisions involved in ensuring that the final response to a complaint is full and accurate, and correctly represents the organisation’s views. * In all these cases, the postholder will be expected to discuss seriously contentious issues with senior managers, while making judgments about other issues which they can resolve themselves.   **The duties and responsibilities highlighted in this Job Description are indicative and may vary over time. Post holders are expected to undertake other duties and responsibilities relevant to the nature, level and extent of the post and the grade has been established on this basis.** | | | | |
| **Work Arrangements** | | | | |
| Transport requirements:  Working patterns:  Working conditions: | | Need to meet the travel requirements of the post to cover the geographical area of Northumberland County Council.  The postholder will work predominantly regular office hours but will need to be flexible in their approach in order to facilitate occasional meetings with complainants outside of these times.  Open plan office environment which can be distracting when dealing with complex reports and confidential telephone calls regarding personal and/or distressing situations.  The post holder will experience a variety of work conditions, due to the various locations and the geographical size of the organisation. The nature of the work involves office based work with the use of VDU equipment and occasional requirement for road transportation for travelling between sites. | | |

**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

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| **Post Title:**  Complaints/Customer Relations Manager | **Director/Service/Sector:** Wellbeing Group - Governance | Ref: | |
| **Essential** | **Desirable** | | **Assess**  **by** |
| **Knowledge and Qualifications** | | | |
| * Professional qualification or first degree. * Appropriate management qualification or equivalent. * Excellent knowledge and understanding of complaints policy, procedures and other organisational policies and procedures relating to community health and Social Care, in particular Safeguarding Children and Risk. |  | | a  a  a/i |
| **Experience** | | | |
| * Several years’ experience of working at senior management level in a health or social care organisation. * Experience of dealing with complaints within an organisation. |  | | a/r  a/i/r |
| **Skills and competencies** | | | |
| * Excellent planning and organisational skills * Excellent written and verbal communication skills. * Excellent understanding of the professional and ethical issues involved in providing and arranging health and social care. * Excellent analytical skills * Ability to transfer knowledge and skills effectively in training courses and in less formal settings. * Confident user of standard office software. * Standard keyboard use. * Good note taking skills. |  | | a/i  a/i/r  i  a/i  i/p  a  a  a |
| **Physical, mental and emotional demands** | | | |
| * Calm, confident – able to defuse potentially difficult situations. * Tactful, empathetic and sensitive. * Non-judgmental. * Able to work with staff at all levels and with people from all backgrounds. |  | | i  i/r  i/r  a/r |
| **Other** | | | |
| * Flexible approach to working. |  | | a/i/r |

Key to assessment methods; (a) application form, (i) interview, (r) references, (t) ability tests (q) personality questionnaire (g) assessed group work, (p) presentation, (o) others e.g. case studies/visits