

The City of Edinburgh Council

10.05 am, Thursday 22 August 2013

Social Work Complaints Review Committee - Membership

Item number	7.2
Report number	
Wards	None

Links

Coalition pledges
Council outcomes
Single Outcome
Agreement

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Executive summary

Social Work Complaints Review Committee - Membership

Summary

The Council is invited to appoint additional members to the Social Work Complaints Review Committee.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Council:

1. Agrees a limited public recruitment of independent members to the CRC.
2. Agrees to appoint all elected members as members of the CRC, other than those who are members of either the Education, Children and Families Committee or the Health, Wellbeing and Housing Committee.
3. Notes that all new members will receive appropriate training.

Measures of success

Not applicable.

Financial impact

Not applicable.

Equalities impact

Not applicable.

Sustainability impact

Not applicable.

Consultation and engagement

Not applicable.

Background reading / external references

Not applicable.

Social Work Complaints Review Committee - Membership

1. Background

- 1.1 On 2 May 2013 the Council made appointments to Committees, Boards and Joint Boards for 2013/14.
- 1.2 At that time it confirmed that Social Work Complaints Review Committees (CRCs) should be made up from a pool of independent members, and chaired by an independent member.
- 1.3 It is now proposed to recruit additional members to that Committee, including elected members.

2. Main report

- 2.1 Complaints Review Committees are established under the Social Work (Representations) Procedures (Scotland) Directions 1996 as the final stage of a comprehensive Client Complaints system. They require to be objective and independent in their review of responses to complaints.
- 2.2 The Scottish Government has indicated it intends to transfer the complaints system to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, and a consultation has taken place on the future arrangements.
- 2.3 Indicative timescales for this transfer have recently been announced as between 18 months and 2 years.
- 2.4 Following a number of resignations, there are only five active independent volunteers available to serve on the CRC, any three of whom can form a Committee. This makes scheduling meetings within statutory timeframes challenging.
- 2.5 Given the potential delay in transferring the service of up to two years, it is suggested it would be prudent to undertake a limited recruitment exercise to bolster the number of independent members on the CRC.
- 2.6 The short life nature of the appointments means there is no guarantee that sufficient volunteers will be identified. To ensure the Council can continue to meet its statutory requirements in this area, it is also proposed that elected members be included in the membership pool, subject to a number of safeguards to preserve the CRC's independence:-

- No more than one of the three members on any CRC could be an elected member
 - Members of the Education, Children and Families, and the Health, Wellbeing and Housing Committees would not be eligible to serve on the CRC, as they are asked to confirm the CRC's recommendations
 - The Convener of each CRC would continue to be chaired by an independent member (this is a statutory requirement)
- 2.7 Appointing elected members on to the CRC is a departure from the Council's previous practice, but can be justified given (1) the existing membership pressures; (2) the uncertainty about whether external recruitment will attract sufficient volunteers, given the time-limited nature of the appointments, and (3) the safeguards outlined about. Elected member representation on CRCs is common elsewhere in Scotland.
- 2.8 Appropriate training will be provided for all new members.

3. Recommendations

1. To agree a limited public recruitment of independent members to the CRC.
2. To also agree to appoint all elected members as members of the CRC, other than those who are members of either the Education Children and Families Committee or the Health, Wellbeing and Housing Committee.
3. To note that all new members would receive appropriate training.
4. To agree to adjust the Council's Committee Terms of Reference and Delegated Functions accordingly.

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