

COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2015 – MARCH 2016

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1. INTRODUCTION

This is the seventh Annual Report produced for Children's Services. It covers the period from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and provides information about compliments, comments and complaints activity within the social care aspect of Children's Services as required by statutory guidance. The report does not address complaints about other parts of Children's Services although the department does log and record this information. Of 254 complaints received by the Complaints Team, 95 were eligible to progress through the statutory Children Act complaints procedure. An additional 125 were eligible but the issues raised were judged to be easily resolvable locally, and therefore were progressed as a Concern/Enquiry. A total of 34 complaints were received and progressed through the corporate complaints procedure, some of these were social care complaints that fell outside of the scope and eligibility criteria of the Children Act complaints procedure.

2. HEADLINES FOR 2015/16

- The number of complaints handled under the Children Act has reduced from 128 in 2013/14 to 95 in 2015/16 (Table 1 Page 12)
- The highest proportion of complaints continue to be received from parents or relatives of children, however there is an increasing proportion received from children themselves (Table 3 Page 12)
- In 2015/16, stage 1 complaints took longer to resolve than in the previous 2 years, however this may be a reflection of the complexity of cases and does not necessarily mean performance is poor (Table 4 Page 13)
- The number (and proportion) of complaints progressing to stage 2 has increased from 14 in 2013/14 to 20 in 2015/16 (Table 5 Page 13)
- Poor communication is consistently held up as the key basis of a complaint (Table 6 Page 14)
- The number of complaints upheld at stage 1 has reduced over the period 2013/14 to 2015/16, however the proportion of those upheld has reduced (Table 7 Page 15)

3. MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF THE SYSTEM

For 2015/16, all complaints functions within the Council, including Children's Services, were administered and managed by the centralised the Performance and Risk Unit within the Chief Executive's Directorate. The centralised team is responsible for:

- Managing, developing and administering complaints procedures
- Establishing the relevant procedure for handling a complaint
- Maintaining a record of each complaint made and the outcome reached
- Seeking a local resolution and negotiating with complainants and managers
- Exploring alternative approaches to dispute resolution
- Providing training, information and advice for staff and managers

- Providing information, support and advice for complainants
- Monitoring and reporting on complaints to ensure performance is managed
- Ensuring that learning opportunities arising from complaints are maximised
- Appointing Investigating Officers, Independent Persons and Review Panellists

In addition to Children's statutory complaints, the centralised unit also deal with general comments, suggestions and compliments, as well as corporate complaints and enquiries, and concerns raised by Members of Parliament or Councillors.

4. PROCEDURES

As well as satisfying legal requirements, the Compliments, Comments and Complaints procedure exists in order to provide managers with valuable feedback. This enables them to monitor and learn from complaints in order to shape, develop and improve future services. Effective complaint monitoring can help to identify significant trends, highlight gaps in service provision and identify necessary improvements to policy and procedure. Monitoring acts as a measurement of public concern and can help the Directorate to identify training and development needs.

As an Authority we recognise the importance of developing a culture in which complaints are viewed as potential learning opportunities and where complainants are carefully listened to and receive swift, positive and outcome focused responses.

4.1. Children Act Procedure – social care complaints

Children and young people, their parents, carers and people denied services are eligible to use the statutory Children Act complaints procedure. The procedure is also open to those complaining on behalf of service users, either where service users are not capable of making complaints themselves, or where a service user has asked a representative to act on their behalf.

Those who are not eligible to complain via the statutory Children Act procedure may still be entitled to make a complaint via the council's corporate complaints process.

There are three stages to the statutory Children Act complaint procedure:

- Stage One, the local resolution/problem-solving stage, is the stage at which the vast majority of complaints are resolved by operational staff. The council has between 10 and 20 working days to complete this stage of the process. Most complaints will be dealt with at this stage before proceeding to subsequent stages.
- Stage Two, formal investigations are conducted at arm's length to the operational sections, usually by independent, external, Investigating Officers appointed by the

centralised Complaints Team. Statutory guidance also requires the appointment of an Independent Person, external to the council, to ensure that any investigation is carried out fully and fairly. An investigation report is received by a senior manager within Children's Services and findings and recommendations of the report form the basis of the Children's Services Directorate formal response to the complaint. This stage should take between 25 and 65 working days.

If there is any residual dissatisfaction with the outcome of a complaint at Stage Two, the complainant can request that a Stage Three Review Panel hears their complaint.

- Stage Three, a Review Panel consists of three people appointed by the centralised Complaints Team. The panel must be independently chaired and consist of two other independent panellists. The panel will be held, where possible, in a venue close to the complainant's home, within 30 working days of any request. The panel will consider whether the council has dealt with the complaint fairly and will identify options for resolving or remedying the complaint, reporting their findings and any recommendations to the Corporate Director - Children's Services. The Director's response to the recommendations forms the end of the council's statutory Children Act procedure.

Once complainants have exhausted the local authority procedure, they may choose to take their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The procedure also provides a valuable mechanism for compliments and comments to be made to the Directorate. Both compliments and comments are welcome and encouraged. Comments or suggestions for service improvements should always receive a written response from an appropriate manager.

4.2. Corporate complaints procedure

Complaints which do not meet the criteria to be considered under the Children Act statutory procedure are responded to under the two-stage corporate complaints process which is used across all directorates in the Council. Further information about the process can be found on our website:

<http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/complaints/contact.asp>

4.3. Concern/enquiry procedure

Concerns/enquiries were introduced to the complaint process in 2013-14 and have continued throughout 2014-15 and 2015-16. Issues which are judged by the Complaints Team to be easily resolvable, and not of a serious nature, are progressed as 'concerns/enquiries' rather than complaints. These are passed to the appropriate team to be resolved locally outside of the formal complaints procedure. The same approach is used by local authorities across the country, often being categorised as a 'pre-complaint'.

Complainants are informed of their right to progress through the formal complaints procedure should they remain dissatisfied. In such cases the concerns are still logged with

the complaints team to ensure that a response is provided as well as enabling learning data to be obtained.

In total there were 125 complaints progressed as a concern/enquiry during the year. Only one of these then progressed to a formal complaint.

4.4. Other procedures

The majority of complaints received within Children's Services relate to social care issues and are progressed through the statutory Children Act complaints procedure. Where a complaint is not eligible for progression through this procedure then consideration is given to other processes which may be appropriate such as referral to the Cumbria Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), HR team, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), or the Safeguarding Team (for individual safeguarding concerns).

4.5. School complaints

The local authority also receives a number of complaints relating to individual schools. These are directed back to the relevant school. The responsibility for all aspects of management, including the employment of staff, rests with a school's governing body rather than the local authority. Each governing body is responsible for ensuring that there are arrangements in place to respond to any complaints.

The centralised Complaints Team will advise on the general principles and processes if contacted by parents, carers, schools or governors. Complaints about schools are routinely screened at initial contact for any evident safeguarding concerns which may need to be referred to either the LADO or other appropriate team within Children's Services.

5. THE INDEPENDENT ELEMENT

5.1. Investigating Officers

Stage Two Children Act complaints are investigated by external Investigating Officers. Using external Investigating Officers provides reassurance for complainants regarding the impartiality of the complaints process. The Complaints Team maintains a pool of Investigating Officers.

During the period 2015-2016 there were 16 Stage Two complaints allocated to external Investigating Officers.

5.2. Independent Persons

Legislation states that Children's Services must involve an Independent Person in the investigation of complaints at Stage Two. This person cannot be an elected member, or an employee of the council or spouse of an employee. The Independent Person should ensure that the investigation is open, transparent and fair.

The Complaints Team maintains a small pool of Independent People

5.3. Independent Review Panel Chairs

If a complaint has not been settled at the investigation stage and the person making the complaint is not satisfied with the outcome or the way it was dealt with, it can be referred to a Review Panel (Stage Three).

The Complaints Team maintains a small pool of Independent Review Panel Chairs – there were 3 requests for review panels during the year 2015-2016.

5.4. Training, Monitoring and Review of Independent People

Investigating Officers and Review Panel Chairs are offered continued direct support from the Complaints Team throughout the year. We have established an annual meeting between the local authority and our pool of investigators and independent people and commit to keeping them up-to-date with relevant practice developments and policy information.

Arrangements are in place to monitor the performance of external independent people. Following any Stage Two investigation, feedback is sought from the senior manager who responded on behalf of the directorate. Managers are asked to comment on the quality of the investigation and the report produced. All employees are given the opportunity to voice their opinions through their managers, and Investigating Officers are invited to offer their own comments following each investigation.

5.5. Cost of complaint investigations and Review Panels

In 2015-16 there were 16 Stage 2 investigations allocated to external Investigating Officers and Independent Persons, and 3 Stage 3 Review Panels were requested; although only 2 of the Stage 3 Reviews actually took place during the reporting period. The total cost for Stage 2 and 3 complaints during the year was £38,350.

The Complaints Team actively work with managers and complainants in trying to reach an agreeable outcome to avoid the need for a Stage 2 investigation and to contain costs within the annual budget of £35,000.

6. ADVOCACY AND SPECIAL NEEDS

There is a statutory requirement to provide advocacy for children or young people who might want to use the complaints procedures. Children's Services currently have a contract with the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) to provide advocacy support and to provide a visiting advocacy service to children's homes throughout the county. This helps children and young people to express their views, feelings and wishes.

NYAS have advocates who specialise in working with children with disabilities, enabling them to make sure that their voice is heard in relation to services that affect them.

All children and young people who are eligible to make a complaint about children's social care services are offered the support of an independent advocate; it is their decision whether or not they choose to accept support. During 2015-2016, advocates were involved in 8 of the 22 complaints submitted by children and young people. Our commissioned advocacy provider, NYAS, supported 7 of these complaints. Pursuing a complaint without the support of an independent advocate can often indicate that young people feel empowered and confident in making complaints by themselves. The Complaints Team provide guidance and support throughout the process regardless of whether an advocate is involved.

NYAS actively work with young people in trying to resolve their concerns locally with social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers; often these are successfully resolved without progressing to a formal complaint.

Awareness raising work with children and young people as well as staff is undertaken by NYAS throughout the year. In addition to this the Complaints Team promote advocacy with all complaints received from children and young people, or in situations where it is apparent that young people may need support in having their voice heard.

7. PUBLICITY AND INFORMATION

Information on the Complaints Process is available via the Council's website and we also produce information leaflets which are available in all our customer services offices as well as from the Complaints Team and via our website. The Complaints Team regularly review publicity and information material which is available at:

<http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/council-democracy/accesstoinformation/internalreviewscomplaints.asp>

The Complaints Team attend local team meetings on an annual basis to ensure that staff are aware of their responsibility in ensuring that vulnerable children and young people who receive support from Children's Services are aware of the complaints procedure and their right to access it.

All complaints information can be made available on CD or cassette, or in other formats, such as Braille, large print, on request to the Complaints Team. Interpretation services can also be arranged when required for other languages.

7.1. Other Information for Service Users

'Stage Two: Investigation – Guidance for complainants' contains more detailed information about what will happen during the investigation of a complaint, what the complainant can expect, and how they can take their complaint further if they remain dissatisfied.

'Stage Three: Review Panel – Guidance for participants' contains more detailed information about what will happen before, during and after a Review Panel. It contains information for complainants and for senior managers and Independent Persons.

Both of these booklets are also available in a format more suitable for children and young people.

8. TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

It is important that employees feel confident and fully informed when dealing with complaints. An e-Learning package is available for employees, linking both complaints and advocacy. The package covers awareness training for business support staff and those in front-facing customer service roles. In addition there is a more detailed training course for employees who are closely involved with social care. The e-Learning package is used to complement awareness sessions with local teams.

Local awareness sessions cover the complaints procedure, timescales for responding, the standards of customer care expected and embedding the principle of learning from complaints, as well as including issues of specific interest or concern to groups of staff attending.

The Complaints Team can be contacted at any time for general or specific advice or, once a complaint has been made, for progress updates and employees are encouraged to discuss complaints, particularly the learning outcomes, at team meetings.

9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN (LGO)

The Local Government Ombudsmen in England investigate complaints about local authorities. Trained investigators handle the complaints and if they find that a local authority has caused significant injustice, they aim to get it put right by recommending a remedy. The LGO can investigate complaints about how a local authority has acted in terms of handling a complaint but they cannot question what a local authority has done just because the complainant does not agree with it.

Local authorities are expected to be given the opportunity to deal with complaints within their own complaints procedure first before recourse to the LGO.

During 2015-16 Cumbria's Education & Children's Services (as defined by the Local Government Ombudsman) were the subject of 25 complaints to the LGO:

- 16 complaints were referred back to the Council for local resolution;
- 2 complaints were closed after initial enquiry;
- 3 were deemed incomplete/invalid;
- 1 was not upheld and;
- 3 were upheld with the Council being found to be at fault, which led to injustice.

In the cases where the Council was found to be at fault, the LGO made recommendations for remedy, all of which were accepted by the Council with action now complete.

10. MP/COUNCILLOR REPRESENTATIONS

MPs and Councillors do not normally make formal complaints on behalf of their constituents. Ordinarily, they will make enquiries or raise concerns, often asking questions or asking the council to comment on a specific case, policy or decision.

During the year 2015-16, 72 letters were received from local MPs raising concerns on behalf of their constituents in relation to social care services. This is a significant rise compared to the 47 received in the previous financial year.

11. COMPLIMENTS

A total of 37 compliments were received during 2015-16. During visits to local team meetings employees are encouraged to share compliments with the Complaints Team in order that good practice can be shared with senior managers, and in turn used to inform practice development. Appendix 1 contains examples of compliments received during the year.

12. LEARNING FROM FEEDBACK

A template to record and identify learning points from complaints is routinely completed by the manager responsible for responding to a complaint at Stage 1 of the procedure. The benefit of this approach is the generation of evidence and case study examples from individual complaints, prompting managers to think about learning and outcomes as part of the process of responding to and resolving complaints. The learning feedback is then extracted from each complaint as it is closed and shared quarterly with senior managers, who discuss whether issues identified are attributed to individual practice or the need for wider practice development across the service.

A sample of actions taken as a result of learning from complaints during the year is given in Appendix 2.

Regular slots at the Children and Families senior managers meetings and District Managers meetings ensure that the messages from complaints are widely shared, and owned by managers. On a quarterly basis an analysis of all complaints, key presenting issues and themes, which are grouped with examples of upheld complaints and shared with managers. Countywide themes relating to social work practice issues are also identified, and taken forward by senior managers to identify appropriate actions in response to the feedback.

On conclusion of Stage 2 or 3 complaints an action plan is developed to allow tracking and monitoring of agreed actions, which are owned by senior managers.

13. PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS 2016-17

- Work with Children's Services Directorate Management Teams to improve the performance of complaint handling, including improving the timeliness of responses to complaints, and reducing the average time taken to achieve a resolution to complaints;

- Improve learning from complaints and compliments to ensure that a robust mechanism is in place for sharing potential practice development with appropriate managers in Children's Services.
- Deliver awareness and training sessions for students progressing through the Social Work Academy (delivered September 2016)
- Deliver awareness and training sessions on handling complaints for staff in localities (planned for October 2016).
- An action plan will be developed to address the performance issues highlighted in paragraph 2 of this report.

14. NWCMG MEMBERSHIP

Cumbria County Council is a member of the North West Complaints Managers Group (NWCMG). The aim of the regional group, which meets every two months, is to provide a forum in which peer professionals can discuss and learn about regional and national issues. Here there are opportunities to develop local practice standards, discuss performance and problem solve. The group also discuss proposed changes to legislation and procedures and prepare consultation responses where necessary. During 2015-16 we continued to share Cumbria's good practice, especially in relation to the learning process, with individual complaints colleagues in the North West.

15. PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS OF REPRESENTATIONS

Table 1: Representations received by type
(received within the year)

| Contact by procedure type | 2015/16 | 2014/15 | 2013/14 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| Children Act | 95 | 111 | 128 |
| Compliment | 37 | 56 | 53 |
| Corporate Complaints Procedure | 34 | 29 | 29 |
| Concern/enquiry | 125 | 97 | 106 |
| Referred elsewhere (LADO, Safeguarding) | 35 | 79 | 53 |
| Total | 326 | 372 | 369 |

Table 2: Method of contact for all representations

| Method of contact | 2015/16 | | 2014/15 | | 2013/14 | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| e-Form (via website or in person) | 13 | 4% | 20 | 6% | 30 | 8% |
| Email | 127 | 39% | 139 | 37% | 128 | 35% |
| Letter | 67 | 21% | 113 | 30% | 107 | 29% |
| Phone Call | 119 | 36% | 100 | 27% | 104 | 28% |
| Total | 326 | 100% | 372 | 100% | 369 | 100% |

Table 3: Children Act complaints received by complainant group
(complaints received within the year)

| Complainant group (Children Act procedure) | 2015/16 | | 2014/15 | | 2013/14 | |
|---|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| Child/Young Person | 22 | 23% | 28 | 25% | 21 | 17% |
| Foster Carer | 13 | 14% | 3 | 3% | 10 | 8% |
| Parent or Relative | 57 | 60% | 77 | 69% | 94 | 74% |
| Other (incl, prospective adopters) | 3 | 3% | 3 | 3% | 3 | 1% |
| Total | 95 | 100% | 111 | 100% | 128 | 100% |

Table 4: Children Act complaints - Stage 1 complaints resolved times
(of those responded to within the year)

| Children Act Stage 1 response time (where eligible to progress) | 2015/16 | | 2014/15 | | 2013/14 | |
|---|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| Within 10 working days or less | 20 | 26% | 26 | 34% | 32 | 41% |
| 11 - 20 working days | 18 | 24% | 19 | 25% | 27 | 34% |
| Over 20 working days | 38 | 50% | 32 | 41% | 20 | 25% |
| Total (Stage One) | 76 | 100% | 77 | 100% | 79 | 100% |

Table 5: Children Act complaints – duration of Stage 2 investigations/resolution of complaints (of those concluded within the year)

| Length of Stage 2 investigation | 2015/16 | | 2014/15 | | 2013/14 | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| Within 25 working days or less | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| 26 - 65 working days | 4 | 20% | 3 | 18% | 4 | 29% |
| Over 65 working days | 16 | 80% | 14 | 82% | 10 | 71% |
| Total (Stage Two) | 20 | 100% | 17 | 100% | 14 | 100% |

Table 6: Children Act complaints - Analysis of key themes
(complaints received within the year)

| Key Themes (Children Act procedure) | 2015-16* | | 2014/15* | | 2013/14 | |
|---|------------------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| Breach of confidentiality | 7 | 4% | 9 | 4% | 7 | 5% |
| Delayed service | 19 | 12% | 17 | 7% | 2 | 2% |
| Financial issues | 6 | 4% | 8 | 3% | 11 | 9% |
| Lack of evidence based information used | 8 | 5% | 16 | 6% | 6 | 5% |
| Lack of support for Foster Carers | 1 | 1% | 2 | 1% | 1 | 1% |
| Other | 2 | 1% | 3 | 1% | 0 | 0% |
| Placement issues | 9 | 6% | 19 | 8% | 9 | 7% |
| Poor attitude or conduct of staff | 27 | 17% | 40 | 16% | 20 | 16% |
| Poor communication | 39 | 25% | 63 | 25% | 28 | 22% |
| Service provision | 38 | 24% | 74 | 29% | 44 | 34% |
| Total | 156[^] | 100% | 251[^] | 100% | 128[^] | 100% |

* A change in the way themes are recorded during 2014 has enabled a better analysis of complaints where multiple concerns are raised.

[^] Please note that there is no direct correlation between the number of complaints received and the number of concerns raised, as some complaints have multiple themes recorded.

Chart 1: Key themes trends

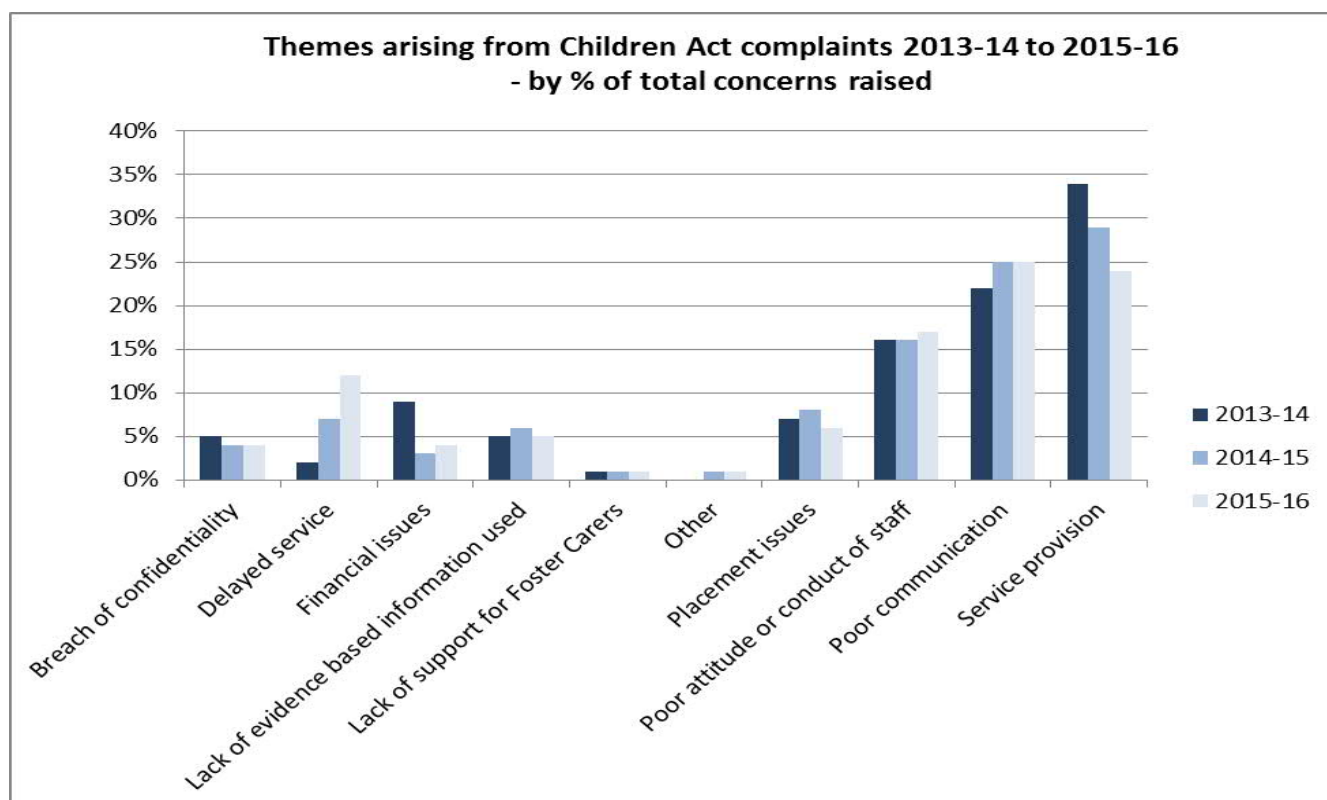


Table 7: Children Act complaints - Stage 1 outcomes
(of those responded to within the year)

| Children Act Stage 1 outcomes | 2015/16 | | 2014/15 | | 2013/14 | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| Legal Proceedings Pending | 7 | 8% | 3 | 4% | 4 | 3% |
| Withdrawn | 4 | 5% | 3 | 4% | 6 | 5% |
| Upheld | 20 | 24% | 13 | 17% | 23 | 19% |
| Not Upheld | 30 | 35% | 24 | 30% | 32 | 27% |
| Partially Upheld | 17 | 20% | 21 | 27% | 37 | 31% |
| Referred elsewhere | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1% |
| Moved to Stage Two* | 7 | 8% | 14 | 18% | 16 | 14% |
| Total | 85[^] | 100% | 78[^] | 100% | 119[^] | 100% |

*Refers to the number of complaints received in the year that progressed to a Stage 2 investigation. The number of investigations conducted in the year can often include complaints received in previous years which have then progressed to Stage 2 the following year.

[^]Please note that there is no direct correlation between the number of complaints received and the number of concerns raised, as some complaints have multiple themes recorded.

16. CONTACT

If you would like further information relating to this report or the work of the Complaints Team please contact:

Complaints/Information Governance Team
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RELATED DOCUMENTS

'Getting the Best from Complaints – Social Care Complaints and Representations for Children, Young People and Others' - Department for Education & Skills

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-getting-the-best-from-complaints>

The Children Act 1989
Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1738/pdfs/uksi_20061738_en.pdf

Sample of compliments received – 2015/16

| | |
|--|--|
| Non- Social Care | |
| Business Planning & Improvement Team | |
| Business Support member of staff complimented for the swift way in which a safeguarding issue was handled. The individual was quick thinking and child-focused and contacted the relevant person to deal with the safeguarding of the young person. | |
| Special Education Needs and Disability Team | |
| SENCO and Mum wanted to pass on their thanks for the support they received in converting a statement to an EHCP for year 6 child with physical disabilities. They found it to be a positive, inclusive process and Mum felt confident that her voice was heard. Both the primary and receiving schools felt they received a very positive outcome. | |
| Social Care | |
| Child and Family Support Team | |
| Social Worker complimented by grandparent for support given since caring for grandchildren. "I would like to thank you for sending her. She has been a God-send to me and the children, not only a very good Social Worker but somebody I feel I can call a friend. I wouldn't want anyone else, a true light at the end of the tunnel." | |
| Grandmother and children wanted to thank Social Worker for the support given in supporting them before and during court process regarding grandchildren. "Thank you for everything you have done for us". | |
| Commendation from a Judge passed on by CAFCASS, about the work of a Social Worker. The case had been a tricky one with lots of changes to the care plan and the Judge felt it was important that the hard work be recognised. | |
| Child Protection Team | |
| Compliment received from Judge commending the work of the Social Worker stating that it was "extremely thorough and comprehensive and that it was a pity that the Social Worker was not in court to hear it said. Please pass on my thanks to, it has indeed been a pleasure to work with such a competent Social Worker". | |

| |
|---|
| <p>Compliment received from parent describing the Social Worker as “amazing”. After initially not wanting the Social Worker involved in her life she felt that she couldn’t ignore or deny what the Social Worker was saying. “I really appreciate what she has done for me now. I feel safe”. She said she trusts her and “she makes me feel like I’m moving forward and not moving back – she is genuine and easy to talk to, she listens to me and calms me down. I think we have a really good relationship. I could be dead or have lost my child if it wasn’t for her, she saved my life and I really mean that!”</p> |
| <p>Compliments from health professionals about the delivery of Child Sexual Exploitation training.</p> |
| <p>Social Worker and Independent Review Officer received compliments from children’s Guardian following conclusion of care proceedings. Guardian states “I want to highlight how your input contributed towards the development of a more robust final care plan”, and “the Local Authority, particularly the Social Worker, undertook an extensive amount of good work in this case, concluding with positive and safe outcomes for the children. The proceedings were done so with a high degree of respect for both parents and handled in a very sensitive and appropriate manner throughout”.</p> |
| <p>Compliment from CAFCASS worker to a Social Worker about the work being carried out with a family. Commenting that “the efforts she has made were evident from the initial court proceedings but she has continued to try and address the issues/concerns. This is clearly to the benefit of the children in this case and will hopefully lead to a better outcome”.</p> |
| <p>Children Looked After and Leaving Care Team</p> |
| <p>Thanks to the Team Manager from care leaver following intensive input in resolving personal financial issues regarding inheritance.</p> |
| <p>Fostering and Adoption Team</p> |
| <p>Foster carers commented that the Social Worker was “absolutely brilliant” with so much knowledge that has helped them understand two young children better, that in turn will help them support the children.</p> |
| <p>Foster carer wanting to praise Social Worker for the support given during recent problems with a baby placement. Foster carer states “I think you should be proud to have her on your team, I think she is a valuable asset to the social worker fostering team”.</p> |
| <p>Homestays carer wanted to compliment a Social Worker for the support received over the last 12 months. They wanted to express “our appreciation of her attention and consideration since we embarked on the Home Stays Scheme. Her advice has proved invaluable on resolving various issues and thus restoring normality to the household. We feel fortunate to have been assigned such a caring, conscientious and professional advisor”.</p> |

Safeguarding Hub (Social Care)

GP contacted the Safeguarding Hub and provided positive feedback about the improved service. "I had to contact the Safeguarding Hub for the first time yesterday re a child protection issue. I have to say how impressed I was with the advice I got and the referral forms I had to complete on the website. Much easier than I thought it would be. The process looks well joined up now and worked well for me!"

Residential Services (Social Care)

Mum contacted Director to compliment staff at Huntley Avenue and how they provided "outstanding help, support, warmth and friendship" for the family during a recent traumatic time in their lives".

Sample of actions taken as a result of feedback – 2015/16

| You said..... | We did..... |
|--|---|
| The length of time applicants have to wait following IVF treatment before making an adoption enquiry was too long. | We reduced our timescales to reflect the position of the majority of other North West Adoption Agencies. |
| We failed to provide information for meetings both prior, and after the meetings | We clarified with parents as to what to expect regarding timescales and reinforced practice issues. |
| There was a lack of information provided regarding a Special Guardianship Order and the implications of this. | We produced an information leaflet. |
| We didn't provide a personal allowance for a young person leaving care in a timely manner. | We allocated a Pathway Worker to the young person and ensured that prompt action regarding the allocation of finances in the future. |
| We failed to clearly share information. | We reminded staff that difficult information should be shared verbally to ensure clear explanations and understanding. |
| You couldn't get hold of your Social Worker. | We ensured that we continue to make every effort to communicate with young people regularly and keep them up-to-date with plans. |
| There was a lack of communication which resulted in delays regarding fostering assessment, little written information and lack of ongoing support. | We ensured that families are given written information so they can better understand what is being asked of them. We asked staff to respond to phone calls as soon as possible. |
| We didn't issue a young person in care with a passport in time to allow them to go on a school trip. | We have introduced processes to ensure that all Looked After Children have a valid passport, which includes a check at CLA review. Team Managers now hold a spreadsheet detailing passport details with date due for renewal 6 months prior to expiry and ensure that this is recorded on ICS. |