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CUSTOMER FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS TEAM
STATUTORY ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICES

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Introduction

This report provides information for the Statutory Children's Complaints and Representations Service and the Corporate Feedback Procedure for Children and Families services, for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. The report and service is provided in accordance with the Complaints and Representations Procedures established under the Children Act 1989 and the Local Authority Act 1970.

The Procedures were amended from 1 September 2006 by The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, and 'Getting the Best from Complaints', the accompanying guidance.

The Statutory Complaints Procedure

The Statutory Procedure provides a Procedure for making representations about the discharge by a Local Authority of its functions under Part 3 and specified functions under Parts 4 and 5 of The Children Act 1989, certain functions under 2002 Act and functions regarding Special Guardianship support services.

There are three stages to the Statutory Complaints Procedure:

Stage 1 - Local Resolution

Stage 1 Statutory Complaints are investigated and responded to by a Team Manager or a County Manager, depending on what the complaint concerns. In accordance with the guidance the expectation is that the majority of complaints should be resolved at this stage. The Customer Feedback and Complaints Team place emphasis on resolving complaints at this stage, as local resolution allows the Team Manager to provide the most thorough and detailed response to a complaint, with it being their service. Effective handling at Stage 1 can prevent the complainant escalating to further levels of the procedure, or in the event that further investigation was requested a robust Stage 1 response can support a decision to decline some requests, or support any decisions challenged by the Local Government Ombudsman. There is a timescale to respond to Stage 1 complaints, of up to 20 working days.

Stage 2 – Independent Investigation

If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome following Stage 1 of the procedure, they have a right to request a Stage 2 Independent Complaint Investigation. Stage 2 investigations are carried out by external Investigating Officers. An Independent Person is appointed for all Stage 2 complaint investigations as required by the regulations.

At the conclusion of an investigation, a report is produced with findings, conclusions and recommendations. The relevant Strategic Lead acts as the Adjudicating Officer on behalf of the Local Authority and provides the Local Authority's formal response to the complainant along with an action plan to implement the recommendations. The timescale for completion of a Stage 2 investigation is up to 25 working days, although this can be extended to 65 working days with the complainant's agreement.

Stage 3 – Complaint Review Panel

Where a complainant remains unhappy with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation they may request a Complaints Review Panel. The Panel is made up of 3 independent people and is clerked by the Local Authority Legal Services. The timescale for setting up the panel is 30 working days.

The Panel's remit is to review the investigation; it cannot re-investigate a complaint. The Panel provide their findings in writing within 5 working days to the complainant and the Local Authority. The Local Authority will consider the panel's findings and produce the Local Authority's response to the Panel's findings within 15 working days.

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

In the event that a complainant remains dissatisfied following exhaustion of all three stages of the complaints procedure they can take their complaint to the LGO. A complainant can access the LGO at any point but the LGO normally provides the Local Authority with the opportunity to process through all stages of the complaints procedure unless they decide otherwise. Complaints referred back to the Local Authority to process are classed as 'premature referral' complaints. If the Local Authority take the decision to refuse to investigate a complaint or refuse to escalate the complaints to the next stage of the procedure, a complainant may then also approach the LGO.

Criteria for Accessing the Statutory Complaints Procedure

Who can complain?

The Children Act 1989 advises that the Statutory Complaints Procedure can only be utilised by the following persons:

- Any child or young person (or a parent of his or someone who has Parental Responsibility for him) who is being looked after by the Local Authority or is not looked after by them but is in need;
- Any Local Authority foster carer (including placements through independent fostering agencies);
- Children leaving care;
- Special guardians;
- A child or young person (or parent of his) to whom a Special Guardianship order is in force;
- Any person who has applied for an assessment under section 14F(3) or (4);
- Any child or young person who may be adopted, their parents and guardians;
- Persons wishing to adopt a child;
- Any other person for whom arrangements for the provision of adoption services extend;
- Adopted persons, their parents, natural parents and former guardians; such other person as the Local Authority consider has sufficient interest in the child or young persons' welfare to warrant his representations being considered by them.

Time Limit:

In addition to the above, there is a time limit on making a complaint to the Local Authority. Regulation 9 (1) states that 'a complainant must make their representations to the Local Authority no later than one year after the grounds to make the complaint arose'. However the Local Authority may consider complaints outside the specified time limit if it would not be reasonable to expect the complainant to have made the complaint within the time limit and that it is still possible to consider the complaint effectively and fairly. Matters such as these would be considered on a case by case basis.

Re-occurring Issues:

Complaints will not be accepted if they are the same or substantially the same as complaints that have already been investigated and responded to previously.

Complaints Made on Behalf of a Child:

The Local Authority has the discretion to decide whether or not the representative is suitable to make a complaint on behalf of a child or young person. The Complaints Team will confirm with the service user that the complaints raised accurately reflect their views. This is subject to the child's age and understanding and is a matter which is given careful consideration on a case by case basis.

Complaints Relating to a Child:

A number of complaints received are from adults that relate to a child or young person but are not made on that child's behalf. The Children Act 1989 gives the Local Authority discretion to decide in cases where eligibility is not automatic and whether or not an individual has sufficient interest in the child's welfare to justify his own complaints being considered.

In order to establish 'sufficient interest' the Complaints Team will review the Social Work records and liaise with the Social Work Team to ascertain the following:

- Is the complainant party to any Court proceedings?
- Does the complainant attend Child Protection Conferences, Family Group Conferences or Core Groups?
- Is there evidence on the case file of frequent communication between the complainant and the Social Worker?
- Is there evidence on the case file that information regarding the plans for the child or young person is shared with the complainant?
- Has the complainant, at any time, had care of the child or young person?
- Have the issues that are being complained about matters that have directly involved or been relayed to the complainant or are they issues that have been passed to the complainant by another party?

Once the above has been taken into account, the Complaints Team will then make an informed decision as to the sufficient interest of the complainant.

The Corporate Complaints Procedure

The Corporate Complaints Procedure can be utilised when the representation does not fit the criteria to be investigated via the Statutory Complaints Procedure and is regarding a non-statutory service or if the representation is being made in the complainants own right about a service which they have personally received, subject to the specific detail of the complaint.

Stage 1: Local Resolution

The first stage of the process is when a senior member of staff or manager of the service being complained about, is given the opportunity to investigate and respond to the complaint. The timescale for a response is 15 working days.

The complainant is advised in the response letter that they can request a review of the complaint on the basis that they can provide the Council with additional relevant information that was not considered as part of the investigation.

Corporate Complaint – Stage 2: Internal Review

On receipt of a request for further consideration of the complaint, the Complaints Team will screen the request to ascertain if the complainant has provided sufficient evidence to support a further review. If the request is accepted, the Internal Review will be allocated to a Senior Manager for investigation and response. The timescale for a review is 25 working days.

If the screening process identifies that no evidence has been provided by the complainant to support the carrying out of further investigation, the Complaints Team will inform the complainant of this decision. The complainant will be advised why this decision has been made and that they can refer their concerns to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Corporate Complaint – Stage 2: Independent Review

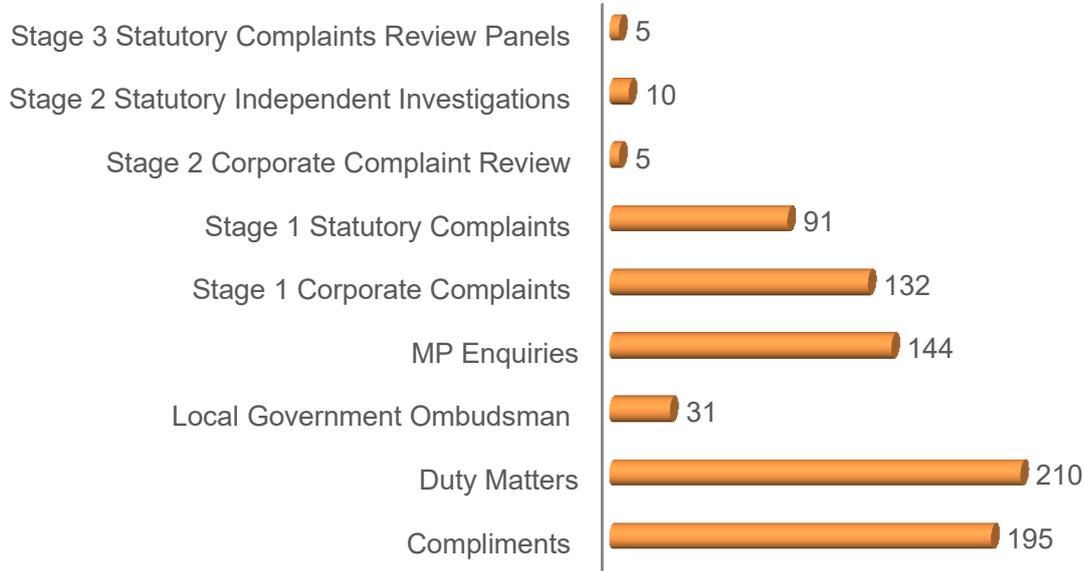
Depending on the complexity and severity of the complaint, it may be necessary for the Complaints Team to appoint an Independent Investigating Officer to investigate a complaint and then report on their findings. The findings are then summarised in a review response by a designated senior member of staff within the service area.

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

The option to approach the LGO is available to the complainant for the Corporate Feedback Procedure, as it would be for the Statutory Procedure.

Total Feedback Received

The chart below provides a general overview of the total amount of feedback which has been recorded by the Complaints Team. For the purpose of the below chart some feedback has been categorised together, such as duty and Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) matters, these shall be further broken down as the report progresses.



Screening System

In order to ensure that either Complaints Procedure is used correctly, a detailed screening process is applied to all feedback which is received. This process allows the Complaints Team to gain essential background information on the case and consider information submitted by the complainant together with the criteria previously detailed and any legal implications before making a final decision for sign off, as to how the feedback can be dealt with.

If, following completion of the screening process it is found that a representation is not eligible to enter the Statutory or Corporate Feedback Complaints Procedure then the complainant must be informed and provided with the reason why this decision has been made. If the Complaints Team takes the decision to refuse to investigate, the complainant is routinely directed to the Local Government Ombudsman which places great importance on the decision making process by the Complaints Team.

In addition to the above, there may be occasion when an individual approaches the Complaints Team with issues that fall outside of the jurisdiction of the Complaints Procedure. When this arises the Team provide advice and assistance to ensure the individual is appropriately signposted.

Duty Matters

The below table shows a comparison against the data held for the previous reporting year which is categorised as being a duty matter. Data shows a steady increase of 4% over the last three reporting years.

Year	Number of Duty Matters
2013 – 2014	118
2014 – 2015	201
2015 – 2016	203
2016 – 2017	210

The following chart provides a breakdown of how these duty matters have been categorised. Specific detail with regards to duty issues is provided to local level and also senior management on a monthly and quarterly basis.



The Complaints Team continue to raise awareness of the work undertaken in respect of duty matters. Data shows there to be only a 7% difference between the total amount of complaints processed and the amount of issues which have been categorised as a duty matter.

Whilst duty issues are not facilitated through either of the formal complaints procedures, this in itself means that matters of this nature take up a high proportion of staff time within the Complaints Team yet they can be overlooked or seen as having less significance than a formal complaint.

The Complaints Team are required to ensure the correct legislation is applied and considered, in order to be confident in the decision that further investigation cannot be facilitated. Once a decision of this nature is communicated to a complainant they are advised that the next step is to approach the Local Government Ombudsman, as such the Complaints Team need to be confident in the decision making. Communication with practitioners and local level managers is significant during this process, to verify that the information being relied upon is correct and up to date and also to ensure the relevant staff are informed of the decision.

It is also through this process that awareness is raised of the work undertaken by the Complaints Team and that relationships with staff continue to be strengthened. It is hoped that as a result of this regular communication, staff feel confident and able to approach the Complaints Team in respect of any queries they may have or for any support during a formal complaints investigation.

Statutory Stage 1 Investigations

The Complaints Team believe that providing a robust response at Stage 1 of the procedure, this can prevent the complaint progressing to Stage 2 or can support the Local Authority's decision if the matter was referred to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The Complaints Team have assessed how it can support both the complainant and the responding officer during Stage 1 and has built in the following steps into the process:

- Specific complaints are defined by the Complaints Team from the information submitted by the complainant. This is to ensure that the scope of the investigation is clear from the beginning. It also serves to ensure that each complaint is considered separately and for a clear outcome to be determined and is also in line with how the Local Government Ombudsman investigates.
- The complainant is advised in an acknowledgement letter from the Complaints Team, to make contact if they feel their complaints have been defined incorrectly. This provides assurance that the complainant is happy with the complaints being investigated and prevents any challenge on the defined complaints once the investigation has concluded.
- A pre-populated Stage 1 response letter template is created in order to provide a framework for the responding officer to use when dealing with complaints. This is to promote consistency in responding to the complaints and to ensure that the response letter clearly lays out the investigation findings in relation to each defined complaint. The standard paragraphs within the template contain information which must be provided to the complainant in order to comply with our statutory obligations.
- This reporting year the Complaints Team have made it mandatory for responding officers to submit their draft responses to the Team for statutory investigations for a quality assurance check to be carried out.

The Complaints Team processed a total of 91 complaints through the Statutory Complaints Procedure at Stage 1. The chart below provides a breakdown by quarter together with a comparison for previous years.

Reporting Period	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2013/14	22	32	26	33	113
2014/15	47	61	51	34	193
2015/16	15	11	31	14	70
2016/17	40	23	15	13	91

The data above reports an increase in Stage 1 Statutory Complaints of 30% in comparison with the preceding year, in addition to this 44% of the complaints were recorded in Quarter 1 alone.

It is difficult to provide future forecasts of complaints, as the data above shows that figures fluctuate on a quarterly and yearly basis. The Complaints Team discourage staff and management from placing importance simply on the number of complaints received as an indication of performance. The findings following investigation and whether or not the complainant has progressed the matter any further provide a more useful measure of performance. To assist with this, the Complaints Team provide regular reports to management in order that they would become aware of any potential performance matters to take forward with their teams.

Breakdown

The following tables provide a further breakdown into operational leadership, of the 91 complaints investigated at Stage 1 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure.

Specialist Safeguarding, Targeted Services and Youth Offending Service	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Specialist Safeguarding Units	20	13	10	7	50
First Response Team	-	-	1	-	1
Emergency Duty Service	1	-	-	-	1
TOTAL	21	13	11	7	52
Looked after Children and Disability Services	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Care Planning and Court Teams	9	1	2	2	14
Disability Services	4	4	1	3	12
Occupational Therapy	-	2	-	-	2
Throughcare Teams	2	-	-	-	2
Adoption Service	1	-	-	-	1
Fostering Service	2	1	1	-	4
Residential Unit	-	1	-	-	1
TOTAL	18	9	4	5	36
Partnership and Development	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Independent Case Conference Chair	1	1	-	-	2
Independent Reviewing Officer	-	-	-	1	1
TOTAL	1	1	-	1	3

Nature of Stage 1 Statutory Complaints

The table below shows the nature of complaints dealt with under Stage 1 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure during 2016/17, broken down by service areas and also detailing a percentage format specific to each service area:

Nature of Complaint	Figure	Percentage
Specialist Safeguarding, Targeted Services and Youth Offending Services		
Communication	1	2%
Case Management	44	84%
Staff Conduct	3	6%
Standard of Service	2	4%
Delay in Receiving Information	1	2%
Clarity of Information	1	2%
TOTAL	52	100%
Looked after Children and Disability Services		
Case Management	27	76%
Standard of Service	3	8%
Delay in Service	1	2%
Staff Conduct	1	2%
Contact Arrangements	2	6%
Access to Service	2	6%
TOTAL	36	100%
Partnership and Development		
Standard of Service	1	34%
Case Management	2	66%
TOTAL	3	100%

The figures above show the main theme for nature of complaint to be case management with an overall 81% of Stage 1 Statutory Complaints being recorded in this category. It should be noted that complaints are defined from verbal or written communication and on the majority of occasions a complainant raises a multitude of concerns which they wish to be further investigated. The nature is therefore recorded as a general term for the set of complaints and as such, case management can encompass a wide range of concerns.

It is acknowledged by the Complaints Team, that the nature of complaint can be seen as being generic in terms of service improvement. Following feedback from management for the latest quarterly report, a key focus for the Complaints Team this reporting year and moving forwards, is to provide detail of any upheld complaints to Strategic Leads. It is hoped that by providing the specific complaints where fault has been found, management can make stronger links to the nature of complaint and promote improved practice where any trends are identified.

Outcomes of Stage 1 Statutory Complaints

The table below illustrates the outcome of complaints dealt with under Stage 1 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure during 2016/17, including a comparison for preceding years:

Reporting Period	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Complainant not Engaging	Closed: Sensitive Matter	Complaint Withdrawn
2013/14	11%	41%	43%	-	-	-
2014/15	17%	48%	40%	1%	1%	2%
2015/16	10%	63%	18%	2%	-	7%
2016/17	4%	55%	34%	3%	-	4%

The figures above show that despite a 30% increase in Stage 1 Statutory Complaints in comparison to the previous reporting year, there is a significant decrease in complaints being found to be upheld coupled with an increase in complaints found to be not upheld. Stage 1 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure is referred to as local resolution whereby the Team Manager will investigate and respond to the complaint, it is therefore commendable that management are able to identify and accept faults in their respective teams and recognise any areas for improvement.

Whilst it is positive that despite the increase in complaints there is a record low of matters found to be upheld, this does not necessarily mean that those remaining complaints hold no value. Management are encouraged to listen to all feedback being reported about their respective services in order to remedy matters at the earliest opportunity and continue to improve the service being provided.

Timescales for Responding to Stage 1 Statutory Complaints

The following chart shows a comparison of the response timescales for Stage 1 Statutory Complaints for 2016/17 against previous reporting years.

Reporting Period	Within 10 Working Days	Within 20 Working Days	Over 20 Working Days	Complainant not Engaging	Closed: Sensitive Matter	Complaint Withdrawn
2013/14	27%	37%	30%	-	-	-
2014/15	18%	51%	27%	1%	1%	2%
2015/16	11%	47%	35%	2%	-	5%
2016/17	20%	37%	36%	3%	-	4%

The above figures show that 57% of complaints have been responded to within the prescribed timescales, supporting the services commitment to meet these targets together with the ongoing pressures of the day to day work they are faced with.

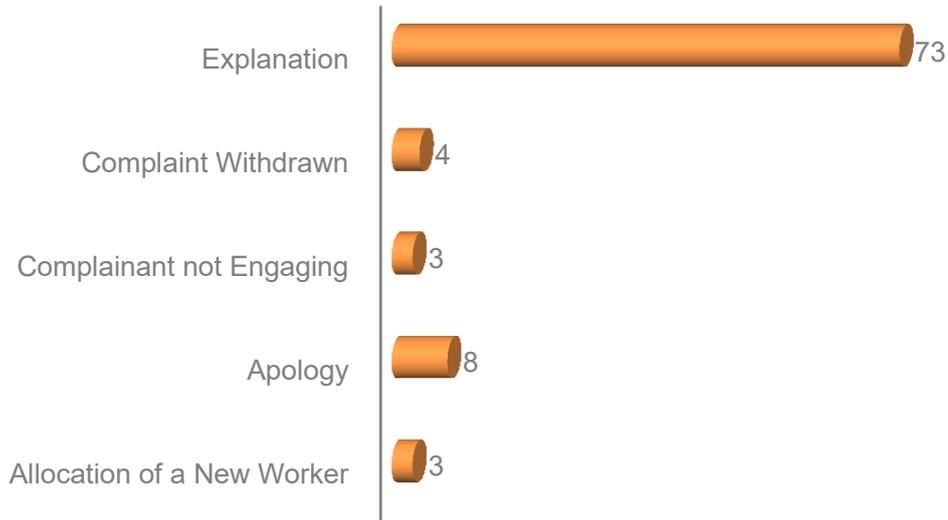
Whilst it is preferable for timescales to be adhered to, in some cases it is simply not possible. There are a number of factors which can impact the response falling outside of timescales and these will sometimes fall outside the control of the officer allocated to investigate the complaints.

When instances of this nature do occur, the advice provided by the Complaints Team is that the responding officer makes further contact with the complainant to explain the reasoning for any delay and agree to a new timeframe for completion. The Complaints Team are of the view that a thorough and robust response is imperative at Stage 1 and as such an extension to ensure this is provided, is acceptable.

Any instances of exceeding timescales are closely monitored and shared with County and Strategic Level management on a monthly and quarterly basis.

Remedies for Stage 1 Statutory Complaints

The chart below provides an overview of the remedies that have been provided to the complainant following the outcome of the complaint.



The above chart shows that 80% of Statutory Stage 1 Complaints are recorded as having an explanation provided as a remedy which is a common trend across previous annual reports. Complainants can be unsure about the decision making in terms of Social Work practice and as such a written explanation from the officer investigating the complaint is usually sufficient in resolving their concerns.

Stage 2 Statutory Independent Investigations

Whilst every effort is made to ensure a comprehensive and detailed response at Stage 1 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure, complainants do have the option to progress to a Stage 2 Independent Investigation.

The process at Stage 2 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure can be lengthy and as such the Complaints Team will, following assessment, discuss any requests with the relevant management to determine if there is a resolution which could be agreed upon without the need to invoke the Stage 2 process. Instances of this nature require careful liaison with the complainant to ascertain if they are in agreement with that course of action or whether they still wish to proceed with the Stage 2 Independent Investigation.

The below table shows the number of Stage 2 Investigations commissioned this reporting year, with a comparison for previous years:

Reporting Period	Number of Stage 2 Independent Investigations
2014/15	13
2015/16	11
2016/17	9

The figures above show a slight decrease in the amount of Stage 2 Independent Investigations upon comparison. The reader is reminded that there is a 30% increase this reporting year in Statutory Stage 1 Complaints; the below table provides a comparison for the preceding year of complaints progressing to a Stage 2 Independent Investigation.

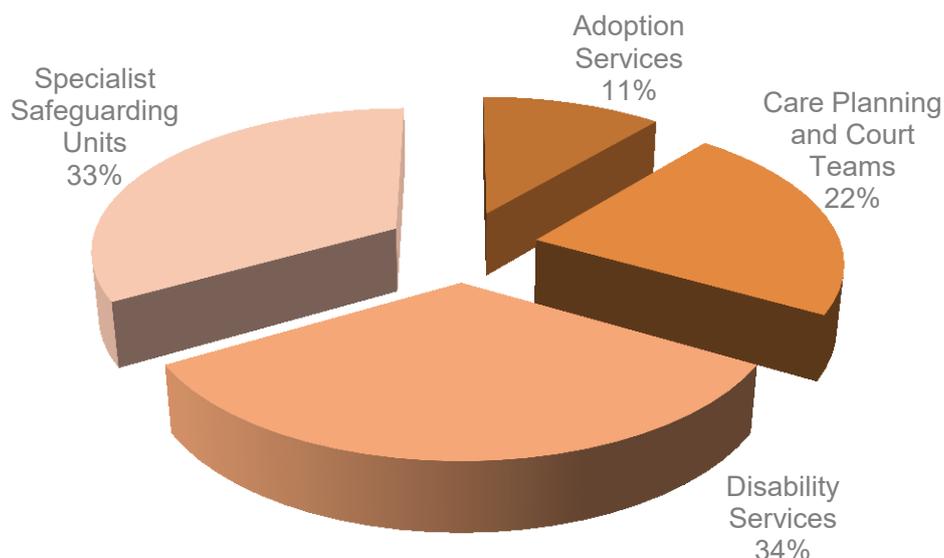
Reporting Period	Number of Stage 1 Statutory Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Independent Investigations	Percentage of Stage 1 Complaints Progressing to Stage 2 Investigation
2014/15	193	13	7%
2015/16	70	11	16%
2016/17	91	9	10%

This data shows that despite the increase in Statutory Stage 1 Complaints, there is an overall decrease in complainants wishing to progress to a Stage 2 Independent Investigation when looked at in comparison to 2015/16. With these figures in mind, it can therefore be concluded that staff responding to complaints at Stage 1 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure are providing quality responses which are resolving complainants concerns and alleviating the need for them to progress to the next stage.

The table below shows the Stage 2 Investigations that took place in respect of the services within Families First.

Service	Number of Stage 2 Independent Investigations
Looked after Children and Disability Services	6
Specialist Safeguarding, Targeted Services and Youth Offending Services	3

The chart below provides a further breakdown into teams:



Findings from Stage 2 Independent Investigations

Investigations carried out at Stage 2 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure usually contain a number of defined complaints, which the Independent Investigating Officer will make a finding on following their investigation. The number of complaints within each investigation will depend on the complainant and would be informed from the initial interview.

From the 9 Stage 2 Independent Investigations commissioned during 2016/17, there were 73 individual complaints contained within. The table below provides data in terms of the findings of those 73 complaints.

Findings	Figure	Percentage
Upheld	33	45%
Not Upheld	29	40%
Partially Upheld	8	11%
No Finding	3	4%

The above data shows there to only be a slight difference between complaints fully upheld and those found to be not upheld. The Local Authority place great significance on learning from complaints and staff are encouraged to reflect upon any identified learning in order that necessary lessons can be understood and acted upon. Where an investigation finds there to be a fault made by the Local Authority, robust actions are agreed upon by senior managers and are closely monitored to ensure completion.

Recommendations from Stage 2 Investigations

The tables below offer a small selection of some of the complaints that escalated to Stage 2 and the actions which the services have taken to complete the recommendations made by the Investigating Officer. It is usual that these recommendations are shared as part of the Senior Managers Blog, which is a communication disseminated to all practitioners within the service to ensure that any identified learning is shared as widely and effectively as possible. Any developmental matters will form part of the respective services management and development meetings. Senior managers are also advised to discuss these recommendations during team meetings and individual staff supervisions.

Service: Specialist Safeguarding, Targeted Services and Youth Offending Services
Action taken by the service following recommendations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff within Families First have been reminded of the importance of completing case closure tasks fully and recording the views of service users.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff within Families First have been reminded of the importance of personal engagement with individuals who are wishing to complain.

Service : Looked after Children and Disability Services
Action taken by the service following recommendations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior staff involved in a case have offered complainants a face to face meeting so all issues raised in their desired outcomes can be answered.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It has been discussed during a senior manager meeting what steps can be taken in circumstances where the case of a looked after child is unallocated or unavoidably unmanaged; and how the Local Authority will formally set out at an early stage how it will meet its Corporate Parenting obligations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff within Families First have been reminded that contact arrangements should be formally set out in writing at the start of the scheduled period and communicated to all parties.

Stage 3 Complaint Review Panels

The below table provides an overview of any Stage 3 Complaints Review Panels which were held in 2016/17 and the respective services involved:

Service	Number of Stage 3 Complaints Review Panels
Looked after Children and Disability Services	2
Specialist Safeguarding, Targeted Services and Youth Offending Services	3
TOTAL	5

It should be noted that 60% of the above Stage 3 Complaints Review Panels are in relation to complaints which were initially made in 2015/16; however the request to progress to the third stage of the Statutory Complaints Procedure was not received until the 2016/17 reporting year. It should therefore not be assumed that all five complaints which progressed to a Stage 3 Complaints Review Panel, are linked to the nine cases of Stage 2 Investigations in this report.

Through the Stage 3 Complaints Review Panel process, the Panel will consider information presented by the complainant before inviting officers in attendance to make comment on these. They will then deliberate before submitting a report including recommendations to the Local Authority and the complainant. The Local Authority will then provide a response to those recommendations and inform the complainant of how these shall be implemented.

The below table provides an example of some recommendations implemented following Stage 3 Complaints Review Panels.

Service : Looked after Children and Disability Services
Action taken by the service following recommendations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior managers have been advised that in instances where staff have left the authority, attempts are made to contact them to determine if they are willing to engage in the Stage 2 Investigation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff within Families First have been reminded that responses to communications are in a timely fashion and clear expectations are given in terms of how long it may take to provide a full response.
Service : Specialist Safeguarding, Targeted Services and Youth Offending Services
Action taken by the service following recommendations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration is being given to producing a leaflet for parents, to sit alongside guidance regarding the expectations of practitioners with regards to different forms of communication.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) has been reviewed by a senior manager, to ensure that it encompasses the relevant questions when professionals are making a referral to Children's Social Care.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations which have arisen from a Stage 3 Complaints Review Panel have been shared with the chair and manager of the Staffordshire Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Corporate Stage 1 Complaints

The Complaints Team processed a total of 132 complaints through the Corporate Complaints Procedure at Stage 1. The chart below provides a breakdown by quarter together with a comparison for the previous reporting year.

Reporting Period	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2015/16	35	29	19	28	111
2016/17	31	32	34	35	132

The above data represents a 20% increase in Corporate Stage 1 Complaints this reporting year. As with the data for Statutory Complaints, it is not possible to forecast figures for complaints as it is not predictable to know what may constitute a complaint to someone.

Breakdown

The following tables provide a further breakdown of the 132 complaints investigated at Stage 1 of the Corporate Complaints Procedure:

Education and Skills	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
SEND Teams	8	6	11	5	30
School Admission and Transport	-	1	1	-	2
Education Psychology	1	-	1	2	4
TOTAL	9	7	13	7	36
Partnership and Development	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Independent Case Conference Chair	1	1	-	2	4
TOTAL	1	1	-	2	4
Looked after Children and Disability Services	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Care Planning and Court Team	1	3	3	4	11
Fostering Support Team	1	1	1	2	5
Intensive Intervention Fostering	1	-	2	-	3
Occupational Therapy Team	1	1	-	-	2
Disability Team	-	2	3	-	5
Throughcare Team	-	1	-	2	3
Placement Services	-	-	-	1	1
TOTAL	4	8	9	9	30
Specialist Safeguarding, Targeted Services and Youth Offending Services	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Emergency Duty Team	1	-	-	-	1
First Response Team	1	1	-	1	3
Specialist Safeguarding Units	13	10	7	13	43
Local Support Teams	2	5	5	3	15
TOTAL	17	16	12	17	62

Nature of Stage 1 Corporate Complaints

The table below shows the nature of complaints dealt with under Stage 1 of the Corporate Feedback Procedure since the period where these were absorbed by this section of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team, broken down by service areas, also detailing a percentage format specific to each service area:

Nature of Complaint	Figure	Percentage
Education and Skills		
Access to Service	1	3%
Case Management	22	62%
Delay in Service	2	5%
Reduction of Service	2	5%
Staff Conduct	3	8%
Standard of Service	6	17%
TOTAL	36	
Looked after Children and Disability Services		
Case Management	20	67%
Communication	4	13%
Delay in Service	1	3%
Staff Conduct	3	10%
Standard of Service	2	7%
TOTAL	30	
Partnership and Development		
Staff Conduct	2	50%
Case Management	2	50%
TOTAL	4	
Specialist Safeguarding, Targeted Services and Youth Offending Services		
Disclosure of Information	5	8%
Inaccurate Information Recorded	1	2%
Confidentiality Breach	2	3%
Case Management	32	52%
Communication	6	10%
Delay in Service	2	3%
Staff Conduct	12	19%
Standard of Service	2	3%
TOTAL	62	

Outcomes of Stage 1 Corporate Complaints

The table below illustrates the outcome of complaints dealt with under Stage 1 of the Corporate Feedback Procedure during this reporting year with a comparison for the preceding year:

Reporting Period	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Complainant not Engaging	Remains Ongoing	Unable to make a Finding	Complaint Withdrawn
2015/16	9%	42%	40%	2%	4%	1%	-
2016/17	12%	45%	38%	-	2%	12%	2%

The data above shows a small amount of complaints investigated under the Corporate Feedback Procedure have been found to be wholly substantiated. This is a slight increase on the previous reporting year; however there has been a 20% increase in Stage 1 Corporate Complaints for 2016/17. The figures for complaints found to be partially upheld or not upheld are fairly consistent with the previous year and allow the Local Authority to learn from these complaints and disseminate the findings with wider teams.

Timescales for Responding to Stage 1 Corporate Complaints

The table below illustrates the timescales for responding to Stage 1 Complaints via the Corporate Complaints Procedure, with comparative data for the preceding year:

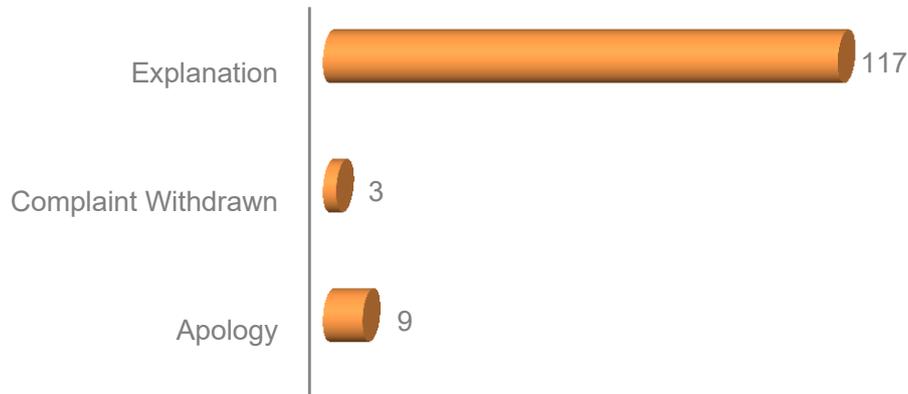
Reporting Period	Within 15 Working Days	Over 15 Working Days	Complainant Withdrawn
2015/16	59%	36%	5%
2016/17	63%	35%	3%

These figures show that 63% of complaints are responded to within the prescribed timescale set out within the Corporate Feedback Procedure.

As stated within the data for Statutory Complaints, it is sometimes necessary for responses to run outside of timescales for a number of reasons outside of the responding officer's control. The Customer Feedback and Complaints Team will continue to work closely with staff members to ensure that communication is kept open with the complainant and a revised completion date agreed.

Remedies for Stage 1 Corporate Complaints

The chart below provides an overview of the remedies that have been provided to the complainant following the outcome of the complaint.



The data evidences that the majority of Corporate Complaints have been provided with an explanation as the remedy. As with Statutory Complaints, many complainants simply require an explanation as to why certain decisions have been made and in the majority of cases, this enables the complainant to move on and accept the explanation as some form of resolution to their complaint.

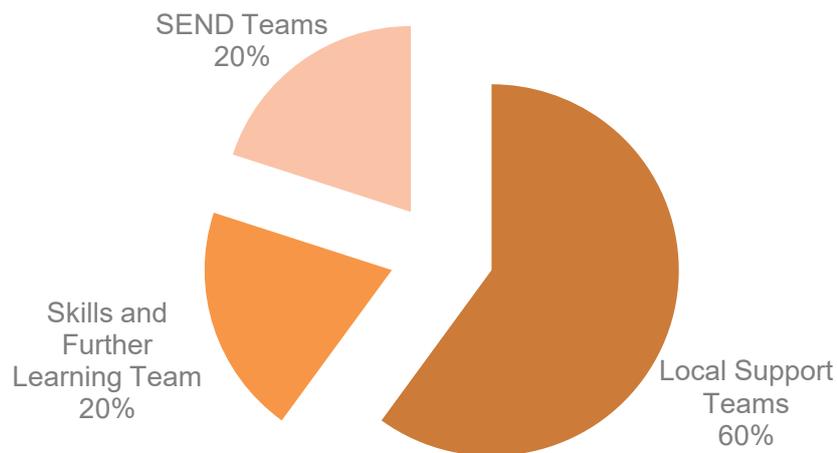
Corporate Stage 2 Complaints – Internal Review

During this reporting year, five complaints were accepted for an internal review at Stage 2 of the Corporate Complaints Procedure. The Complaints Team has discretion with requests of this nature and each request is assessed on its own merit. If it is felt that there would be no benefit to the complaint progressing to a Stage 2 Review, then the request is refused and the complaint directed to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The table below shows the Stage 2 Reviews that have taken place in respect of the services within Children and Families Services:

Service	Number of Stage 2 Reviews
Education and Skills	2
Specialist Safeguarding, Targeted Services and Youth Offending Services	3

The chart below provides a further breakdown into teams:



Findings from Corporate Stage 2 Reviews

From the five Stage 2 Reviews which took place during 2016/17, there were 46 individual complaints contained within. The table below provides further data in terms of those 46 complaints:

Findings	Figure	Percentage
Upheld	11	24%
Not Upheld	29	66%
Partially Upheld	5	10%

The data above shows that the majority of complaints have been found to be not upheld. 34% of the complaints made, have found fault within the respective services however, and as such these Stage 2 Reviews would have captured valuable learning for the Local Authority.

Recommendations and Learning from Corporate Stage 2 Reviews

The below table provides a small selection of recommendations and learning which has been identified from Stage 2 of the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

Service: Skills and Further Learning Teams
Action taken by the service following recommendations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff are reminded of the need to fully explain the process and any attached timescales to parents, so that they are not left in a situation where they are expecting a faster response than is procedurally possible.

Service: Local Support Teams
Action taken by the service following recommendations:
- All staff need to recognise when a Subject Access Request (SAR) has been made and respond in line with the Council's procedure for processing SARs.
- Staff are reminded to date and sign direct work sheets.
- Staff are reminded of the importance clearly recording reasoning, when a pre-arranged visit to children or their families does not take place.

Service: SEND Teams
Action taken by the service following recommendations:
- The response through the Stage 2 Review is shared with SEND Teams, to gain a wider understanding of the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

The Local Government Ombudsman has processed 31 complaints for children's services during this reporting period. The LGO will make a judgement on whether or not they chose to investigate the complaint themselves, or make enquiries with the Local Authority before making a decision.

The below table provides further detail; the LGO finding is reported below how it is stated from the LGO:

Service	LGO Status	LGO Finding	LGO Final Decision Summary
Adoption Services	Enquiry	Refusal to Investigate	Not Applicable
Care Planning and Court Team	Enquiry	Refusal to Investigate	Not Applicable
Care Planning and Court Team	Enquiry	Refusal to Investigate	Not Applicable
Disability Team	Enquiry	Investigation Commenced	Not Applicable
Disability Team	Enquiry	Refusal to Investigate	Not Applicable
Disability Team	Investigation	No Fault	Not Applicable
Disability Team	Investigation	Maladministration and Injustice	There was fault in the way the Council carried out a reassessment of Mrs B's son, C, following a complaint about the ending of a mentoring service. The Council has offered ten further sessions and agreed to liaise with C's mentor to ensure after that he can access social activities independently.

Fostering Services	Enquiry	No Fault	Not Applicable
Fostering Services	Enquiry	No Fault	Not Applicable
Fostering Services	Investigation	No Fault	Not Applicable
Local Support Teams	Enquiry	No Fault	Not Applicable
Local Support Teams	Enquiry	No Fault	Not Applicable
SEND Teams	Enquiry	Investigation Commenced	Not Applicable
SEND Teams	Enquiry	Premature Complaint	Not Applicable
SEND Teams	Enquiry	Premature Complaint	Not Applicable
SEND Teams	Enquiry	No Fault	Not Applicable
SEND Teams	Enquiry	Premature Complaint	Not Applicable
SEND Teams	Investigation	Maladministration and Injustice	The Council has made the provision detailed in Y's statement of Special Educational needs following the Tribunal's decision in September 2015 with the exception of the devising and monitoring of programmes by an Occupational Therapist and Speech and Language Therapist. It agrees to apologise and take action to put this right now.
SEND Teams	Investigation	Maladministration and Injustice	The Council failed to transition Ms X's son to an EHCP as early as it should have done. The Council has apologised and reviewed its processes. The LGO consider this a suitable remedy.
SEND Teams	Investigation	Maladministration and Injustice	The Council failed to carry out a proper assessment of Mrs B's disabled son in terms of his need for assisted transport to school. It then took too long to accept he did require assisted transport. As a result her son had to travel to School in his wheelchair for a complete term. The Council has agreed a payment of £200 to Mrs B's son and £150 to Mrs B.
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Enquiry	Premature Complaint	Not Applicable
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Enquiry	Investigation Commenced	Not Applicable
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Enquiry	Refusal to Investigate	Not Applicable
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Enquiry	Premature Complaint	Not Applicable
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Investigation	No Fault	Not Applicable
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Enquiry	Refusal to Investigate	Not Applicable

Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Enquiry	Refusal to Investigate	Not Applicable
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Enquiry	Refusal to Investigate	Not Applicable
Transport Team	Enquiry	Refusal to Investigate	Not Applicable
Transport Team	Enquiry	No Fault	Not Applicable
Transport Team	Investigation	Maladministration and Injustice	There was fault in the way the Council considered Mr X's appeal against the decision not to provide his daughter with transport to college during 2015/16. The Council has agreed to take the actions recommended to remedy the injustice caused. The Council has agreed to reconsider his appeal for transport for 2015/16. It should ensure minutes are taken during the appeal hearing so Mr X (and third parties) can be satisfied the Council has considered all relevant information. It should then explain its decision to Mr X in full.
TOTAL			31

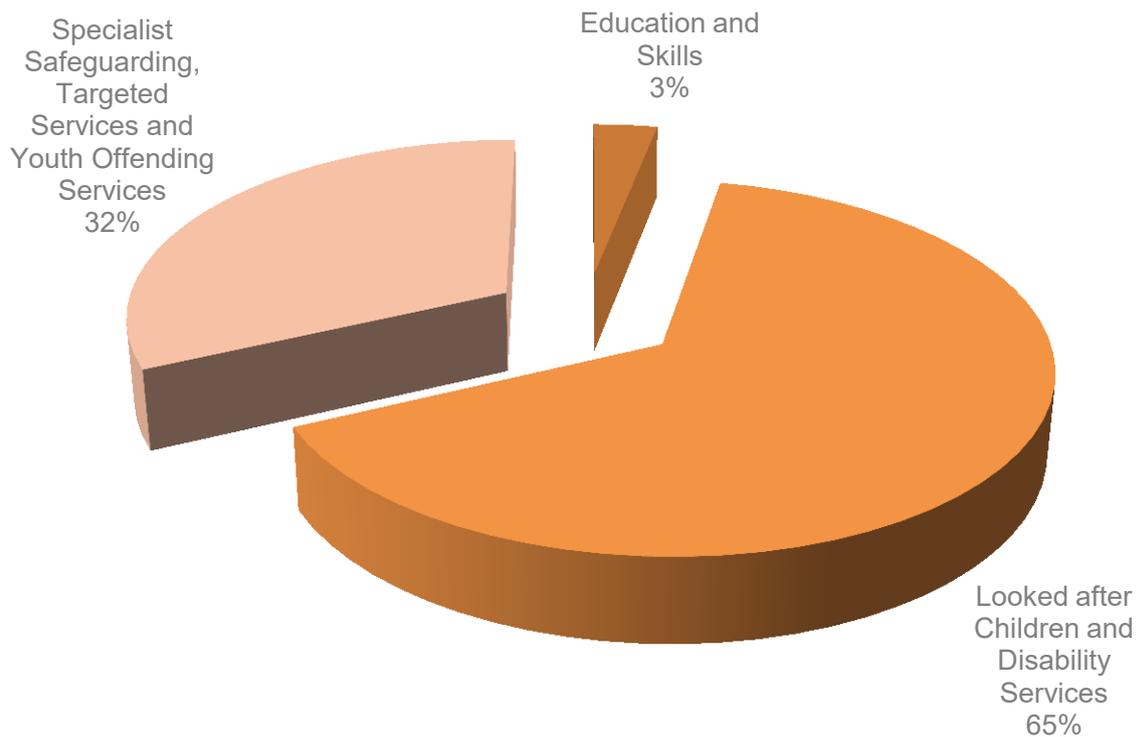
From the 31 complaints which the LGO have considered, only 16% have an upheld finding recorded. The remaining 84% are complaints where the LGO has concluded their enquiries and either not found fault, agreed with the actions taken by the Local Authority or referred the matter as a complaint for consideration via either of the Complaints Procedures. This is testament to the hard work of the individual teams who provide up to date evidence which the Complaints Team will then share with the LGO to assist them in their decision making. It also strengthens the need to provide a thorough response at Stage 1 of the process, as the LGO will use this response as a basis as to whether or not the complainant has been provided with a sufficient enough response.

The complaints which have identified fault, shape learning for the Local Authority in the same way that learning identified from Stage 2 and 3 complaints is taken forward. The LGO will monitor any recommendations and their case shall remain open until they are satisfied that a proposed remedy has been implemented.

Compliments

A total of 195 compliments have been recorded for this reporting period. This is a significant increase of 23% on comparison to the previous year's figures. Each compliment is highly valued and provides staff with some positive recognition for the hard work which they undertake. Data for compliments is routinely shared with Senior Managers, within the monthly and quarterly management reports produced by the Complaints Team.

The below chart provides a breakdown of these compliments between the services:



Examples of Compliments

Specialist Safeguarding, Targeted Services and Youth Offending Services

- Can I just extend my thanks to you for your sensitivity and understanding whilst working with the young person? As you are aware, she has had many problems previously trying to 'get along' with social workers in the past. I can honestly say that whilst you have been involved she has calmed significantly and this has been nice to see. I would consider you an 'old school' social worker, I hope you don't mind my saying this, but to be frank, I mean by this that you have all of the qualities that a fantastic social worker holds.
- The Social Worker has helped us enormously with our attendance strategy at School. She meets weekly with my attendance officer & has supported multi-agency meeting that we have instigated to ensure attendance officers within East Staffs can meet and share up-dates & best practice. We have also moved forward with some of the "hard to reach" children & parents in regard to attendance & have clear plans to continue to improve the attendance of our students.

- Hi, thank you for coming to my house on Tuesday. You were wonderful in every way possible. When you left our house a whole weight was lifted from my mind. I'm a wonderful mother and you left me feeling that way. You are an asset to the support group. Speak soon.
- I just wanted to drop you an email about one of your members of staff. I was put through to her this morning when I called about one of my cases. She today made phone calls for me when I was on hold and did a lot of digging which has helped me hugely, and has alerted us to some significant risks for the children and also some further matters of immigration which we can now pass on to our colleagues in the Home Office.
- Just wanted to say that I've really appreciated working with you. You are a compassionate practitioner who is easy to engage with, thank you.
- Due to the families Learning Needs a clear Supervision Plan was required and in an attempt to make the plan user friendly and easy to understand it was set out in table form using simple language and colour coded. The Judge asked me if the LA had a new printer and described being 'taken' with the use of colour and the set out of the document.
- I have had a lovely surprise visit from his mum at the office this afternoon who has brought me a bouquet of flowers and a very complimentary message in the card addressed from parents. Mum also said to me over the phone today that any family would be lucky to have me as their Social Worker
- I was once again extremely impressed by the efforts of one of your team to really get the views wishes and feeling of the young people to the table, despite ever increasing case-loads and additional pressures. This work does not just "happen" as it takes a great deal of time, care and sensitivity to enable young people to share how they are feeling and for them to feel safe to do so. Well done and thank you on behalf of the children, as you really made their voices heard!

Looked after Children and Disability Services

- The Social Worker comes round when I need him and he tackles issues that other social workers would 'skirt around' or give a false impression to the young person that everything is OK when it isn't. He says it as it is, and is honest with young people. He tells them when behaviour is unacceptable and talks to them about their choices and the consequences. They need that reality. He is very good and very supportive.
- I have to say that had it not been for her thoroughness in this case and a very clear robust Pathway Plan, then stepping into this cold would have been quite difficult. The work that she has put into to this has been huge, making sure that the young person has been at the centre of the decision making and that her wishes and feelings were acted upon.
- I wanted to acknowledge the significant amount of work that the Social Worker has undertaken in her practice and intervention with the young person. This has been a challenging case; she has built a relationship with her and has supported her transition to the care of her father.
- He works hard, is a good social worker and is extremely young person centred, a credit to your service and indeed Families First.
- The Social Worker has been a tremendous support to ourselves as carers and we've always felt that she supported and appreciated what we were trying to achieve for the young person while he was with us. She was particularly helpful when we found ourselves "between Social Workers" towards the end of last year during a time when the young person's behaviour was beginning to become very challenging. We've always found the Social Worker to be very professional yet friendly and approachable. She is a credit to your team and Social Services and we felt that it was important that this should be recognised.

- Two cards received from adopters recently to thank practitioners for the guidance and support offered to them and commented on how thorough and dedicated they have been to making sure the adoption process is successful for children and adopters.
- The Social Worker was described as central to their adoption journey and they felt they had been exceptionally well supported, and that he had made their adoption journey enjoyable.
- I just wanted to send you an email to say how helpful the Social Worker was during a recent Life Story Book meeting that we held in the Lichfield Care Planning and Court Team. She offered us valuable advice and insight about how to tackle the difficult subjects of a parent's death and drug misuse within Life Story Books and presented herself in a thoroughly professional manner during the meeting.
- This email is just to say how much the young people think of you, they think very highly of you and all had very positive things to say about you and how much you do for them.
- We all appreciate how hard you work but despite this you are always willing to listen and make time to complete visits not only statutory but also in times of difficulty, which in my opinion helps to contribute to the stability of the placement.
- I cannot thank you enough for your hard work and support it is lovely to work with you.
- When I first met you as a PA worker it was very scary at the time and then I made the decision to go it alone so to speak. But even right at the point you have always given 100% to support and help in any way you possibly could. It's also the support that you have given to me and ideas that you have come up with which has helped me to develop to where I am today, for example paying bill for the first time and just claiming benefits and giving advice when I was unsure what to do in a situation. I came away from the meal feeling a bit upset that I won't have the support but also felt a boost in confidence that maybe I won't need help as I have covered most things with you some time in the past. So thank you so very much for all the help and support that you and the Through Care Department have done for me. There's not enough ways to say thank you that would cover the amount of work that you have done.

Education and Skills

- Can I say how pleased I am of the Locality Managers work? We have a difficult few years but in recent weeks he has been very professional, hardworking and a credit to the LEA. I hope management are able to secure a permanent management position for him in the near future.
- He has not judged my child nor I but wished to achieve the best possible outcomes for her. He is positive, hardworking and a credit to his employer.
- I have attended two different TAC meetings over the past week, and I just wanted to say how fantastic the person centred approach has been. The one I have attended today was brilliant. A lot less informal, very hands on from all professionals engaging and parents being able to reflect on their child and their needs. I guess I just wanted to say well done.
- She asked me to pass on her thanks to us at Lichfield for all our support and help we have given while we have been working with the young person. She very much appreciates the help and advice we have given and support to help her sort out her statement and then though its conversion to a plan and sorting the place at school. She was very grateful for help and support she has received over the years from the Assessment, Transfer and Business Support teams. She commented she always finds us all very helpful, friendly and professional and very supportive of her and her family and was anxious that I passed this on to you all.

Annual Report Commentary from the Complaints Team

This reporting year shows an increase in feedback received by the Complaints Team, across each different procedure. The Local Authority are required to operate accessible complaints procedures and these figures show that individuals can be assured that any concern will be given full consideration and carried through the appropriate procedure wherever possible.

A steady increase in matters dealt with through the duty process is evident this reporting year, which follows the trend of the previous reporting year. There can often be an assumption that all feedback received is routinely entered into the complaints procedure for investigation; readers are asked to note that this is not the case and the high numbers of duty matters support this. Each piece of feedback is carefully considered and those which are not capable of further investigation are often the most time consuming for the Complaints Team staff due to the complexities involved. Decisions made by the Complaints Team are open to scrutiny by the Local Government Ombudsman and as such it is imperative that they are made in line with legislation and based on the most up to date information held. The Complaints Team wish to thank the various teams which we liaise with in the Local Authority; it is these positive working relationships which allow us to communicate effectively and access any required information in a timely manner before making an informed decision on the feedback in hand. The Complaints Team shall continue to share detail on matters of this nature, through the regular reporting to management.

Despite a significant increase in Stage 1 Statutory and Corporate Complaints, there is a decrease in complaints being found to be upheld. The Complaints Team continue to advise management that the findings of complaints should be the main focus of any reports created. Where fault has been found through a complaints investigation, the willingness of the different teams to accept responsibility and the commitment to put recommendations into practice should be commended. Learning from complaints is a valuable exercise and can assist in shaping future practice. Management within Children's Services remain intensively involved with learning identified from complaints and support the view that this should be shared in the widest possible sense.

Compliments received this reporting year have significantly increased. The content of the positive feedback is evidence of the dedication which staff are providing in their roles and is always well received. Children's Services are consistently analysed through external inspections, with the most recent Ofsted inspection concluding in August 2017 judging the service as being good and ranking the in the top third of authorities nationally. In a service which is continually adapting and striving to meet targets, the formal confirmation that services are judged to be successfully meeting the needs of young people is something to be held in the highest regard and as such the positive feedback received from those in receipt of the services provided, should be similarly noted.

This reporting year has seen various meetings take place with staff and management which has strengthened the relationship with the Complaints Team. Reporting continues to be a key feature of this Team and allows us to maintain those relationships, whilst ensuring management remains aware of any ongoing complaints which may escalate.

During the next reporting year the Complaints Team wish to reinforce the message that feedback can be best used to assist in the design and delivery of services and as an important learning mechanism and to highlight any areas where improvement can be made. We aim to continue the positive working relationships which have been made and provide assistance and support wherever possible.

Report Author:

Elaine Hemming - Customer Feedback and Complaints Officer Children's Services

01785 278601

elaine.hemming@staffordshire.gov.uk