

# Regulatory and Audit Committee

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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Hearing the Customer's View Annual Report – Children and Young People's Social Care</b>
<b>Date:</b>	
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<b>Electoral divisions affected:</b>	All

## Summary

This annual report of the Children and Young People's Social Care statutory complaints procedure, Hearing the Customer's View, covers the period between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.

## Recommendation

**Members should note the contents of the report.**

## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE HEARING THE CUSTOMER'S VIEW - ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This annual report of the Children and Young People's statutory complaints procedure, Hearing the Customer's View, covers the period between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.
- 1.2 The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 requires local authorities to have in place an effective representations and complaints procedure for complaints about Children's Social Care. This is to ensure that service users and/or their representatives are able to make comments about the services they have received or feel they ought to have received.
- 1.3 This report deals with complaints falling within the scope of this procedure. Some complaints received about social care, for example, those made by members of the public who are not service users about an aspect of social care work, are not considered under this procedure, but are dealt with under the County Council's corporate procedure.
- 1.4 This report has been produced to meet the requirement that members should be provided, on an annual basis, with information about complaints received.



- 1.5 The procedures are publicised in a leaflet about complaints and representations which is given to all service users who wish to make a complaint. The current leaflet was introduced in January 2013.
- 1.6 The Regulations require Local Authorities to designate a Complaints Manager with responsibility for undertaking certain functions. The structure of the centralised Complaints & Information Team came into effect as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013. The day to day management of the complaints are undertaken by the Statutory Complaints Officer with overall responsibility resting with the Corporate Complaints Manager.
- 1.7 In line with the requirements set out in the guidance<sup>1</sup> which accompanies the Regulations, the Complaints and Information Team is independent of Children's Services. Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 this now sits within the Council's Headquarters.

## **2 Statutory Complaints procedure**

- 2.1 The Hearing the Customer's View complaints procedure has three stages:
- 2.2 **Stage 1** – Local Resolution is where complaints are investigated and responded to by staff providing the services. The team manager has overall responsibility for providing a formal response within 10 working days of receipt, although this period can be extended to 20 working days in exceptional circumstances, such as complex complaints.
- 2.3 **Stage 2** – an independent investigation is carried out (this may still be internal to the Local Authority, although in practice an external independent Investigating Officer (IO) is almost always used. At the end of the investigation the IO will prepare a report and the Service Director will send a formal response to the complainant based upon the independent reports. These will be sent to the complainant. Legislation requires Local Authorities to involve an Independent Person (IP) in the investigation of complaints at Stage 2 of the Children Act procedures. The IP ensures that the Stage 2 investigation process is open, transparent and fair and will write a report on his/her observations. The investigation should be completed within 25 working days of receipt of the signed complaints statement, prepared by the IO and agreed by the complainant. This time can be extended to a maximum of 65 working days in certain circumstances. The complainant should be kept informed of any likely delays.
- 2.4 **Stage 3** – a Review Panel comprising an independent chair and two other independent people consider the adequacy of the Stage 2 complaint investigation. To listen to all parties and focus on achieving a resolution acceptable to all. The Panel should meet within 30 working days of the request being made, its recommendations should be recorded within 5 working days of the meeting and the Managing Director must respond to complainants within 15 working days of the date when the Review Panel made their recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> Getting the Best from Complaints (Social Care Complaints and Representations for Children, Young People and Others) *Department of Education & Skills* (2006)

### 3 Compliments received

3.1 There were **46** compliments received this year. This figure compares with 101 compliments received in 2013/14 and 72 compliments during 2012/13.

<b>Children &amp; Family Service</b>	<b>No. of Compliments 2014/15</b>
First Response	0
Family Resilience	10
Children in Need (North) including Junior CATCH	8
Children in Need (South) including Family Assessment Service and CATCH	2
Children's Care Management Including Aftercare, Children with Disabilities and Children in Care	17
Children's Care Services including First Steps, Fostering and Permanence	9
Quality Standards & Performance	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>

3.2 It is disappointing to see that compliments have declined by approx. 55% of the number received in the previous year. The Business Unit have been reminded that staff need to record these comments in one place, however it is possible that these comments are being recorded in other places such as at team meetings or on the hospitality register. The Business Unit should continue to ensure all social work teams are aware of the need to report and record any compliments they receive. Due to the nature of the work that Social Care staff are involved in, it is particularly rewarding when positive feedback is received.

3.3 In previous years, Social Care have consistently received more compliments than complaints. In general compliments tend to be about particular individuals who go above and beyond the call of duty by displaying a recognised degree of professionalism and dedication. Some have been regarding instances where it is felt that an individual child has benefited from the service provided or where the quality of work has been recognised by a senior manager or another agency.

3.4 Compliments received directly from children & young people are unfortunately minimal so are greatly received when they are; examples:

*“The best thing that has happened to me this year was coming to this foster placement (my 5th placement) and being told by my social worker that I can stay with them until I’m 18. Which means I won’t have to move placement ever again!”*

Other examples:

Compliment from a local school about the Family Resilience Service

*“A Social Worker working with a school has been very proactive and extremely effective in the impact that she has had. She has blended persistence with strong relationships and has created trust with families who have refused or failed to engage with other agencies”.*

Compliment from a foster carer

*“I wanted to thank you and your team for the support given and the incredible professionalism shown by the Social Workers who have been involved in this case. They have been truly amazing in being sounding boards during a rather difficult period for all concerned”.*

## **4 Complaints received**

4.1 There were **62** formal complaints managed through Stage 1 of the Statutory Complaints procedure during this year. This figure compares with 61 in 2013/14 and 92 in 2012/13. These numbers have remained relatively consistent with the previous year. However there has been a slight increase in the number of contacts received by the Complaints Team.

4.2 Whilst this paper does not seek to report on Corporate Complaints or General Enquiries, it is worth highlighting some figures for information and comparison. During 2014/15 there were 62 contacts made to the Complaints Team that were categorised as General Enquiries which either did not fall within the scope of the statutory procedure or were instances where customers did not wish to raise a formal complaint. The majority of these contacts were regarding lack of communication or where there was a need for immediate attention or clarification thus being satisfied with early intervention by Children’s Services and no need to escalate into a formal complaint.

4.3 Examples:

- *A Young Person wanting an immediate update on the details of where her next accommodation would be*
- *A father requesting an update on his child’s welfare as unable to get through to the Social Worker*

4.4 In addition there were 21 Corporate Complaints during the same period relating to Children’s Services. While these complaints are still directed towards Children’s Service they usually relate to a non statutory function or are instances where the complaint is not relating to a specific child.

4.5 The table below gives a breakdown of statutory complaints by service area.

*Please note that this does not include Family Resilience which are now dealt with separately under the non-statutory corporate complaints procedure.*

Service Area	No. of Complaints 2014/15
First Response	17
Child in Need (North) (includes Junior CATCH)	10
Child in Need (South) (includes Family Assessment Service and CATCH)	6
Children's Care Management (includes Aftercare, Children With Disabilities and Children in Care)	20
Children's Care Services (includes Fostering and Permanence Team)	8
Quality, Standards & Performance	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>

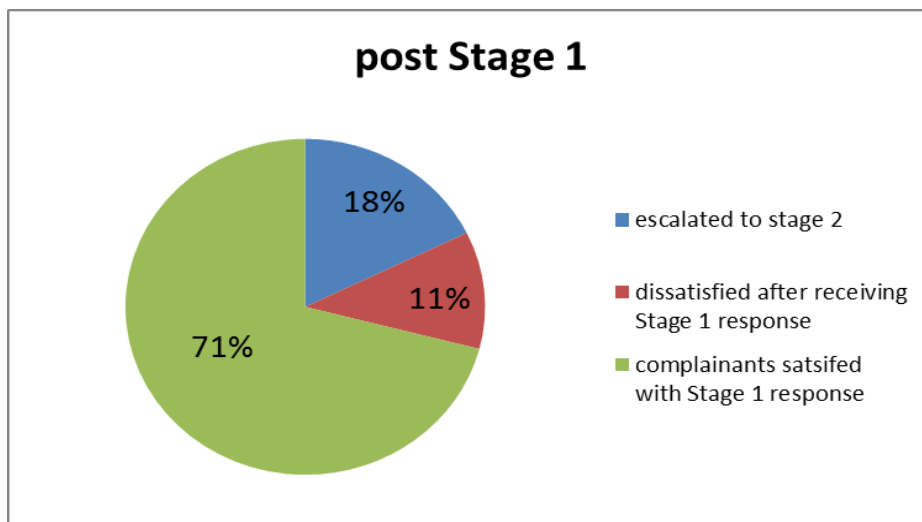
There are no particular themes being identified in relation to where the complaints are directed. The complaints were quite evenly split between the First Response Service, Child in Need (North & South) and Children in Care services. However this is not uncommon as these teams provide the majority of the services.

4.6 **Stage 2** - There is an expectation placed upon Children's Services that the majority of complaints considered at Stage 1 will be resolved locally at the point of service delivery. Where this cannot be achieved it may become necessary for the complaint to be considered at Stage 2.

4.7 There were 11 complaints managed through Stage 2 of the Children and Young People's Social Care complaints procedure this year compared with 10 in 2013/14 and 12 in 2012/13. The nature of Children and Young People's Social Care work inevitably attracts some complex complaints, which can be difficult to resolve.

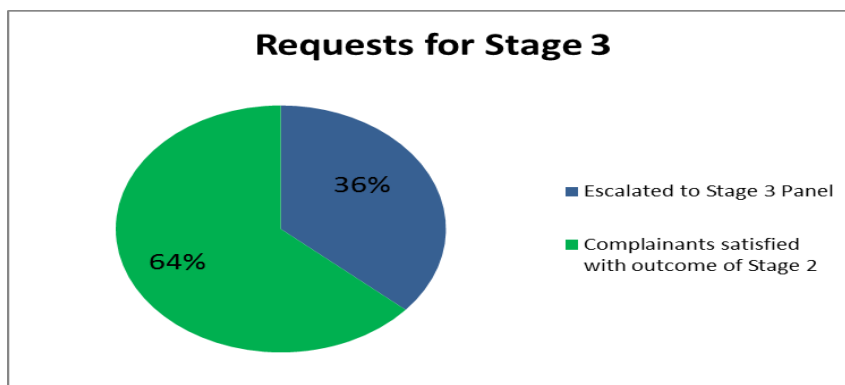
4.8 It should be worth noting that in addition to the 11 complaints managed through Stage 2 process, there were a further 7 complainants who made contact with the Complaints Team expressing dissatisfaction with the outcome of their Stage 1 response. In all but 2 of these cases, a meeting was held with the Complainant, Manager from Children's Social Care and a Complaints Officer which successfully resulted in a mutually agreeable resolution and saw the request to escalate the complaint being withdrawn.

4.9 Given the relatively small numbers of complaints received in at Stage 1 during this year, we can see from these figures that 29% of these complainants were dissatisfied in some way with the outcome of their Stage 1 response and required further intervention; with 18% of them requesting and eventually receiving an independent investigation into their complaint.



4.10 The reasons for complainants expressing dissatisfaction and requiring further intervention can vary. Primarily this has been due the complainant suggesting that the Stage 1 response which did not adequately address the issues of complaint and/or where they were left feeling as though the complaint was not being taken seriously. However, it is also fair to say that there have been occasions where escalation was inevitable irrespective of the effort put in at Stage 1.

4.11 **Stage 3** – There were 4 Stage 3 Review Panel hearings convened during this period, which mirrored the figures of 2013/14 and slightly less in 2012/13 where there were only 3.



4.12 Following the outcome of the independent Stage 2 investigation, at least 64% of complainants took no further action at all. However, as discussed above, 36% of complainants remained dissatisfied and requested a further review at a Stage 3 panel despite their complaints being upheld or partially upheld. There was no particular cause which can identify why, despite an independent investigation, the

complainant chose to escalate the matter further. However, an analysis of those Panels held last year identified that in at least 3 of the cases, these were instances where complainants would simply not accept an outcome and were intent on escalation to the highest possible stage; which is unfortunate.

4.13 It is recognised from above, that the Local Authority could better engage the complainant at an earlier stage by taking the opportunity to provide a more thorough response, which should include sharing information, where appropriate, on how the Council will be learning from the complaint. This would provide the complainant with an appreciation that they are being heard and lessons are being learned.

## 5 Issues raised in complaints

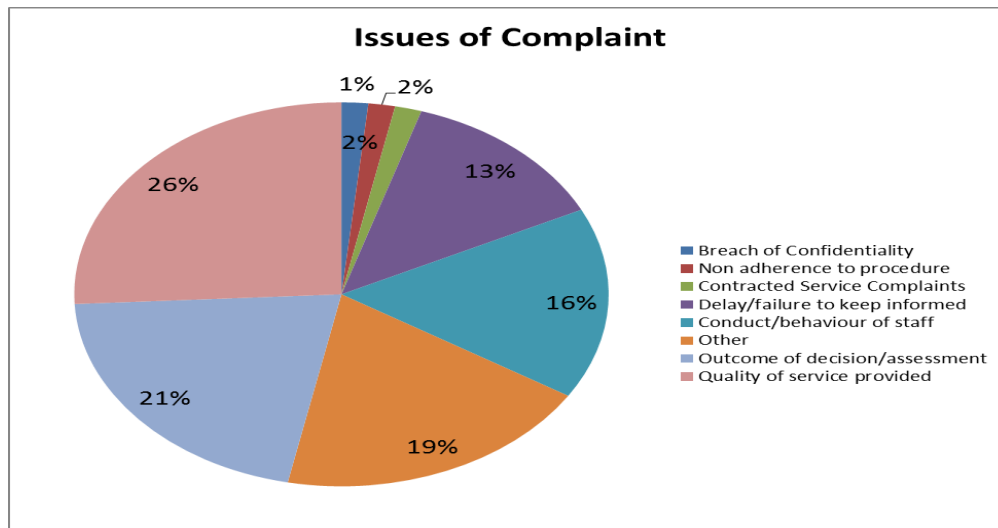
5.1 Children & Young People and their representatives are primarily telling us that they are dissatisfied with the poor levels of communication from Children’s Services. This includes (but not exclusive to),

- not having telephone calls and/or emails responded to,
- Referrals not being actioned in a timely fashion and/or timescales not adhered to
- Reports are not being completed on time thus enabling families to comment on their content before important meetings such as Child Protection Conferences.
- Quality of assessments and reports is below an acceptable standard
- Poor communication and information sharing between the different services.
- Families are not being informed about next steps and
- Failure to adequately explain what expectations Social Care may have of them.

One of the key aims of the Hearing the Customer’s View complaints process is to identify areas where services can be improved. To this end, where there are any lessons to be learned from Stage 1, local managers assimilate these and make any necessary changes to services.

5.2 The issues arising out of complaints were categorised as follows:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Number of complaints</b>
<b>Breach of Confidentiality</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Non adherence to procedure</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Conduct/behaviour of staff</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Delay/failure to keep informed</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Outcome of decision/assessment</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Quality of service provided</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Contracted Service Complaints</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>



5.3 These classifications are based upon the complaint as described at Stage 1. The system used for recording complaints does not have the option of entering multiple categories. In the event that more than one issue may arise in any given complaint it is then recorded using the most significant presenting issue.

5.4 As can be seen from the above figures, the majority of complaints were regarding the quality of service provided (26%) and disagreements or dissatisfaction with the outcome of decisions / assessments (21%) the issues of complaint are fairly evenly spread amongst the next three categories (13-19%).

The issues of complaint are:

5.5 *Outcome of decision/assessment* –The highest volume of complaints received were recorded in this category. Again this category is relatively broad in description but encompasses issues such as

- Parent dissatisfied with the reduction in DP payments
- Request by young person to remain in foster placement beyond 18<sup>th</sup> birthday
- Dissatisfaction with the decision to move children into adoptive placement within a short timeframe.
- Father challenging the decision taken to change the child’s Social Worker
- Various complaints made by a Mother dissatisfied with the outcome of an assessment which rendered her child not in need of services.

*Quality of service* – generally this category of complaint is about the quality of reports or assessments written.

*Complaints about conduct/behaviour of staff* – often when a parent / family member is aggrieved by something which they deem is not being done in their child’s best interest they will label the complaint as being one about the individual Social Worker’s conduct or behaviour which is resulting in the wronged actions. In fact, whilst this is usually the perception, often this category is used for e.g. requests for changes in Social Worker, words said by the Worker that may have caused offence



or was taken out of context. This may also include where the Social Worker has failed to communicate effectively.

## 6 Categories of Complainant

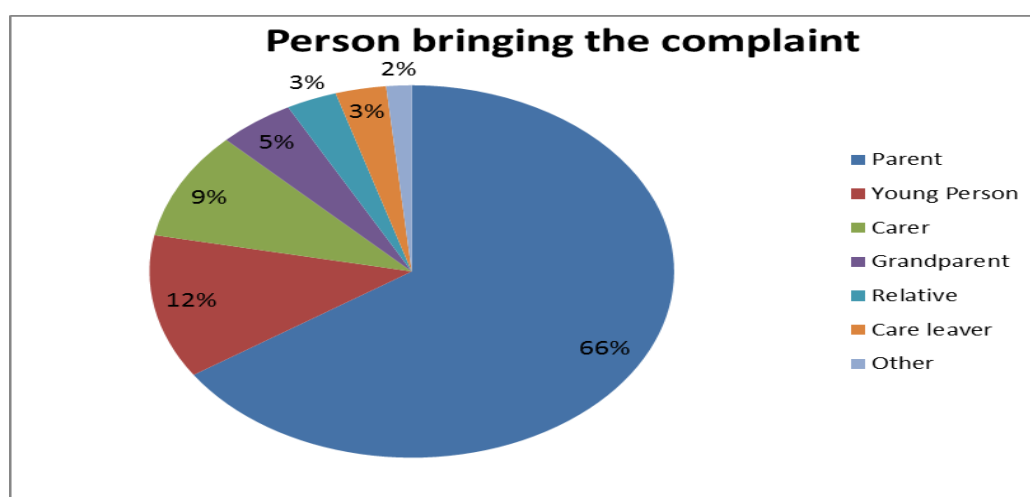
6.1 Children's Services received 5142 referrals via First Response throughout 2014/15. 677 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan during this period (323 as at 31/03/15) and 590 children were considered to be Looked After Children, (436 as at 31/03/15). 6588 children were considered to be a Child in Need (593 with a disability), 2711 as at 31/03/15 and were therefore in receipt of services.

40% (25) of the overall complaints received during this period were regarding Looked after Children. In addition, there were 17 General Enquiries about Looked after Children during this period. If we consider that approx. 7% of children who were looked after by the Local Authority had cause to raise a complaint or raise concern.

6.2 However, only 8 of these complaints were brought by the Young People themselves – 4 with the assistance of an Advocate (NYAS).

6.3 It was identified that the complainants fell into the following categories

Representative	Number of complaints
Carer	6
Grandparent	3
Parent	42
Relative	2
Care leaver	2
Young Person	8
Other	1



6.4 The highest category of complainants were brought by parents (66%) as would be expected. This has also been the case in previous years. The rationale for the Regulations is to ensure that Local Authorities have an appropriate mechanism in place for Children and Young People (C&YP) to raise any concerns they might have and receive a response quickly and effectively. It is suggested that one reason for the low number (8 complaints) received directly from C&YP is that they feel able to go directly to their allocated worker to have the matter resolved locally without the need to instigate a complaint. However this view should be balanced with some caution that instead there are some C&YP who do not feel able or confident enough in escalating the matter via a complaints process.

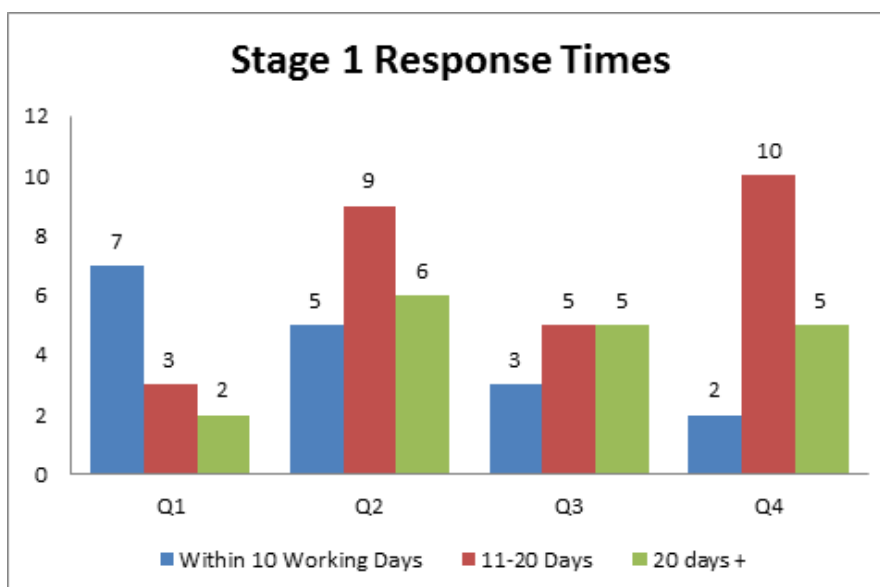
**7 Timescales for replying to complaints (total number of complaints closed this period is 61)**

<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Percentage of total</b>
Within 10 working days	27%
11-20 working days	44%
20 days plus	29%
Average time to reply	<b>17 days</b>

7.1 The timescale for responding to a Stage 1 complaint is 10 working days, although this can be extended to 20 working days if the matter is deemed complex or in exceptional circumstances. 27% of complaints were responded to within 10 working days. 71% were responded to within 20 working days. We are working hard to try to meet timescales and Children’s Services are aware of the importance of responding within the legislated 10 working days. However, as the aim is to fully investigate complaints at Stage 1 this can sometimes mean that we exceed the timescale to ensure a comprehensive response; being mindful of keeping the complainant fully informed of any delays.

7.2 The Statutory Complaints Officer manages this process and one of the main tasks is to ensure that complaints are escalated where appropriate or where a complaint is approaching its 10 or 20 day deadline. In addition, CYP services have an Officer in place who acts as a conduit, working closely with managers responsible for drafting responses. Again this is to help move through the process to ensure deadlines are met but is also there to provide support and assistance where possible to ensure a good quality and consistent response is sent to the complainant.

7.3 Unfortunately, we have seen a decline in response timescales. 71% of all complaints being answered within 20 working days as opposed to the previous year where at least 90% were responded to. This has seen our average time increase from 12.5 days to 17 days for this period. During this period there has been a high turnover in the senior management team which could have impacted upon the timeliness of responses.



7.4 It is not known whether there were any particular reasons for the decline in response timescales however, competing workload pressures including staff absences were some of the reasons to attribute to this.

## 8. Local Government Ombudsman

8.1 The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) is an independent organisation authorised to investigate complaints where the Council's own investigation has not resolved the issues raised.

The LGO assessed 2 complaints for Children & Families during the period in question. This compared with 6 in the previous year. The decisions were as follows:

<b>Detailed investigations carried out</b>	Upheld	1
	Not Upheld	0
<b>Outside of Jurisdiction</b>		1

The local authority accepted the recommendations of the LGO in relation to both complaints they had reviewed.

## 9 Use of Independent Persons for Children's Act complaints

9.1 Under the regulations, complaints involving children require the use of an Independent Person (IP) who is not employed by the Local Authority. They work with independent Investigating Officers in investigations of Stage 2 complaints to ensure that investigations have been conducted in a full, fair and effective way.

9.2 As members of the North West London Complaints Managers' Group, the Statutory Complaints Officers have access to a pool of investigators from which we obtain Investigating Officers and Independent Persons to undertake Stage 2 investigations.

## 10 Use of advocates for Children's Act complaints

- 10.1 In accordance with national guidance, Buckinghamshire County Council has made arrangements for the provision of advocacy services for children and young people who wish to make representations under the relevant sections of the Children Act 1989. During the reporting period the County Council had a contract with NYAS for the provision of advocacy services for children in care.
- 10.2 The advocacy service must ensure that independent advocates provide appropriate help to children and young people, taking into account their age, means of communication, language, sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, health or disability.
- 10.3 The advocates provided by NYAS are volunteers who have received the appropriate training in working with children and young people. They are from a variety of backgrounds and care is taken in achieving a good match between advocate and child to take into account the needs of the child.
- 10.4 NYAS were contracted to provide advocacy for children in care. There is a limited need for advocacy for children in need which is considered on a case by case basis.
- 10.5 During this period 4 complaints were recorded from Young Persons who were supported by an Advocate from NYAS. All of these complaints were resolved locally at Stage 1.

## 11 Closed complaints

The outcomes of Stage 1 complaints closed during the period are as follows:

Complaints	Outcome
Upheld	19 (31%)
Partly upheld	15 (24%)
Not upheld	21 (34%)
Withdrawn	5 (8%)
No comment made	2 (3%)
Total	62

- 11.1 It can be understood from the figures above that the majority of complaints were either upheld or partially upheld. Contrast this with the previous year when only 12% were upheld

Despite the rise in complaints that were either upheld or partially upheld at Stage 1 this did not see a decline in the number of those escalating to Stage 2. It is worth noting that of the 11 Stage 1 complaints that escalated to Stage 2, all but one finding remained the same.

## 12 Diversity monitoring of complainants

<b>Gender of complainant</b>	
Male	19
Female	20

<b>Ethnic Group of complainant</b>	<b>Number of complaints</b>
White British	28
White Irish	
Any other white background	4
Asian/Asian British	
Bangladeshi	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Black or Black British	
African	1
Caribbean	1
Any other Black background	
Chinese	
Mixed White and Asian	2
Mixed White and Black African	
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	
Any other Mixed background	
Any other ethnic group	1
Ethnic group not specified	25

<b>Sexual orientation of complainant</b>	<b>Number of complaints</b>
Heterosexual	2
Bisexual	
Gay Man	
Lesbian	
Not stated or no response	60

<b>Age of complainant</b>	<b>Number of complaints</b>
Under 10	19
10 – 15	8
16 – 17	6
18 – 25	4
26 – 40	1
41-59	1
60 – 64	

65 – 74	
Not stated or no response	31

Religion of complainant	Number of complaints
Buddhist	
Christian	10
Hindu	
Muslim	2
No Religion/Belief	13
Not stated or no response	37

Disability of complainant	Number of complaints
Hearing impediment	
Mental Health Service User	
Learning Disability	4
Physical or mobility impairment	1
Visual impairment	
Other	
No disability	32
Not stated or no response	25

12.1 Local Authorities are required to report on the age, gender, disability, sexual orientation and ethnicity of complainants rather than clients who are the subjects of complaints. The purpose of collecting information relating to diversity is to help identify any difficulties for certain groups in accessing information. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 a Complaints Monitoring Form has been sent to all complainants requesting information about age, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, ethnicity and disability. Unfortunately, the majority of complainants choose not to return these forms<sup>2</sup>.

### 13 MP letters

13.1 37 MP letters were received during the period covered by this report. A number of these had already been received as formal complaints. Policy suggests that responses should be sent within 10 working days. 24.3% were sent within 10 days. Average time = 26 days

### 14 Recommendations & Learning

14.1 Since April 2013, Children's Services have tasked an Officer from within the Quality Standards & Performance (QSP) team with overseeing any recommendations made and ensuring that there is due consideration given by the relevant services. There is also now a system in place whereby the QSP Officer will report back to the Complaints Team with an updated matrix within 3 months of the complaint closing with details of what recommendations may have been put in place and what learning has been shared within the service.

<sup>2</sup> Where information is available on ICS, this has been used here

14.2 Local Authorities are required to monitor their performance and learn from their complaints and where possible ensure that this can be used to feed into service improvement. There have been a few examples of where learning has been cascaded within the service but this has not been consistently approached. However, the Improvement Plan written in response to the Ofsted report of August 2014 focused efforts on identifying service improvement.

Examples of learning:

- **Accurate data recording:** Children's Services have been reminded of the importance of accurate case recording on children's files. The impact of this is that inaccurate information will not appropriately reflect the child's journey and the reasons for key decisions being taken. Data Protection training has been delivered and remains available on an ongoing basis to all Children Service staff.

In addition, there is evidence in the Improvement Plan (Work stream 2) to review current training and support arrangements for ICS to ensure all current and new staff are trained on how to use the system effectively.

- **Training:** A natural recommendation that arises in cases which escalate beyond Stage 1 is in relation to staff training on complaint handling. It is evident from the percentage of Stage 1 complaints that have escalated to Stage 2, that there is a need for improvement in the way in which Stage 1 complaints are handled. At the time of writing this report (July 2015) a Complaints Social Worker is now in post providing additional assistance to the Team Managers to ensure a robust investigation is undertaken. We will monitor to see whether this sees a reduction in escalations arising over the coming year.

It has already been suggested that the quality of Stage 1 responses might not be where it should be. Therefore, in addition, Children's Services have commissioned external training for Autumn 2015. The Service Director has instructed all Consultant Social Work Managers / Team Managers to attend.

- **Communication:** This underpins most of the complaints that we receive. This occurs in a number of guises; from dissatisfaction with telephone calls not being responded to, parents not being informed on developments in their children's case, delays in assessments and timeliness of reports being written. In the majority of cases, the cause for breakdown in communication was attributed to capacity issues and high work load and competing priorities. It is evident<sup>3</sup> from work undertaken during the past few months that Children's Services have invested in ensuring there is a sufficient, stable and suitably qualified workforce who are competent to deliver high-quality services to children and their families. To effect better communication, the Business Unit have recently circulated a 'telephony policy' to all social care staff reminding social workers to provide their direct contact details (including mobile number)

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/media/3137790/Improvement-Plan-for-Ofsted-April-Update.pdf>

to families and to ensure appropriate diverts are put in place if they are intending to be unavailable or absent. It is hoped that this will improve communication and ensure calls go through to the right person for a quicker response.

*Example of lesson learned*

We have recently dealt with a complaint from a parent who complained about the uncertainty of not knowing what to expect from Social Care when they became involved with her family. She was left anxious about what to expect and left in the dark for months without knowing what assessments might be undertaken and what the next steps would be.

The complainant made the suggestion that First Response should give out a leaflet to families explaining what to expect and explain the types of assessments that could come out as a result of their enquiries. Children's Services have taken this recommendation on board and now have a leaflet to share with families to manage expectations.

- 14.3 To support frontline staff the Statutory Complaints Officer has, throughout the year undertaken training to provide an introduction into what constitutes a complaint. To equip Social Workers and support staff with the knowledge and understanding of the statutory process, what's involved and what they should do if they receive a complaint.

## **15 Conclusion & Future plans**

- 15.1 The increased pressures that face Children's Services has meant that there are competing priorities when it comes to focusing on complaints. This can make the work of the Complaint's team somewhat challenging and resolution much more difficult. Whilst there was a rise in the number of contacts made to the complaints team requiring some form of intervention, we did not see a rise in the actual number of complaints received. It is hoped that recommendations identified as part of the Improvement Plan will continue service improvement which will cascade across the service and lead to an emphasis being placed on providing quality responses and enhanced customer service, if we are to reduce the amount that escalate unnecessarily.
- 15.2 We will be exploring alternative ways of conducting Stage 2 investigations in addition to making enquiries about whether Alternative Dispute Resolution will be an option for resolution.
- 15.3 We will continue to offer training to Social Workers and support staff on how to recognise and handle complaints.
- 15.4 As a result of Future Shape, the Complaints Team are now part of the Communications Team. We will work in synergy to look at our publicity and methods of informing Children & Young people on how they can access the complaints procedure. This will include working closer with NYAS and other contracted services.



15.5 During the next year we will continue to work with Children's Service to help them identify trends and put in place a strategy for learning across the whole service.

## **16 Recommendation**

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

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## **Background Papers**

None