

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 19 July 2022

10:00

Oak Room, County Buildings, Stafford

The meeting will be webcast live which can be viewed at any time here:

<https://staffordshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

John Tradewell
Director of Corporate Services
11 July 2022

A G E N D A

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2022** (Pages 1 - 6)
4. **Draft Early Help Strategy** (Pages 7 - 30)
Report of the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People
5. **Customer Feedback & Complaints Annual Report - Children's Social Care** (Pages 31 - 64)
Report of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
6. **Customer Feedback & Complaints Annual Report - Adult Social Care** (Pages 65 - 92)
Report of the Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Wellbeing
7. **Work Programme** (Pages 93 - 102)
8. **Exclusion of the Public**
The Chairman to move:-

"That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure

of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972 indicated below".

Part Two

(All reports in this section are exempt)

nil

Membership

Gill Burnett (Vice-Chairman (Overview))	Gillian Pardesi
Janet Eagland	Kath Perry, MBE
Richard Ford (Vice-Chairman (Scrutiny))	Bob Spencer (Chairman)
Derrick Huckfield	Mike Wilcox
Johnny McMahon	Conor Wileman

Notes for Members of the Press and Public

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**Minutes of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Meeting held on 16 June 2022**

Present: Bob Spencer (Chairman)

Attendance

Gill Burnett (Vice-
Chairman (Overview))
Janet Eagland
Johnny McMahon

Gillian Pardesi
Kath Perry, MBE

Also in attendance: Mark Sutton

Apologies: Richard Ford, Derrick Huckfield and Mike Wilcox

PART ONE

7. Declarations of Interest

There were none at this meeting.

8. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2022

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21 April 2022 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

9. Neglect

In February 2019 the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board had commissioned a Serious Case Review in respect of four children who died in a house fire on 5 February that year. The Review had been published in November 2020, making seven recommendations for the LA and the Partnership. The recommendations related to three main issues, these being:

- issues around developing an understanding of the impact of neglect on children within the partnership;
- the use of appropriate professional curiosity to understand family history and dynamics; and
- the ability to understand and act upon a child's experience.

Following this, Neglect, including the impact of low-level neglect on children and families, became one of the priorities for the Safeguarding

Partnership, with the work plan that sat with this priority reviewed annually.

Members received details of progress to date around each of these three issues, including an agreed strategic joint protocol, performance standards and ambitious training programme. Further work had been identified in respect of improvements in the use of the GCP2 assessment tool in practice across all tiers of services and agencies, which would assist in the early identification of neglect.

Ofsted discussions in May around child protection plans had been positive, with Ofsted concluding that majority of Staffordshire's plans for children were robust.

Members queried the impact of social worker absence on service continuity. Whilst this was a national issue Staffordshire had a stable and able management group, with team managers having regular oversight. We also have good composition of Social Worker (SW) teams which allows team managers time to have oversight of work undertaken by SWs. Staffordshire was looking at their recruitment and retention of social workers to identify further developments to support retention of their skilled social workers.

Members noted that the recently published MacAlister report highlighted concerns over the proportion of a social workers contact time with children and young people compared with the time completing the administrative roles, with the average contact time being one third. It had also identified a top-down approach to policies and the unintended consequences this had created, asking where Staffordshire sat in relation to these identified concerns. Part of considerations during the Children's Services Transformation had looked at how to increase the amount of social worker contact time. Each team now had dedicated administrative staff members to help relieve some of the admin pressures on social workers. Staffordshire continued to aspire to improve the balance of contact time, however reassurance was taken from the recent Ofsted discussions, where they confirmed that Staffordshire knew their children well and heard their voice.

The Committee queried the difference between neglect as opposed to low level neglect, the impact of both and whether these should be considered as separate issues, as the Committee had done previously. Neglect is a wide continuum and therefore whilst acknowledging low level neglect helps articulate service provision and delivery, considering neglect as a whole is important to have a joined up approach and consistency in services

Members queried whether the GCP2 assessment tool was sensitive enough to pick up signs of neglect, and at what point a decision would be taken for interventions. This was a well-researched tool which helped bring information together, presenting a broader picture that may not be obvious if incidents were considered in isolation. The tool was used by a wide range of partners, including schools, health visitors, midwives etc. creating an early evidence base which helped to inform decision making. Members noted there was no mention of an audit of GCP2's use, having concerns that no tool was perfect and the need to assess its effectiveness. GCP2 could not be used until the individual had completed the training, and whilst much training had been completed, not all those trained were making use of the tool. There was a need for further work on this and the Steering Group was looking to identify the benefits and usage of GCP2, helping to articulate the difference it was making to young people.

The use of appropriate professional curiosity to understand family history and dynamics had been a recommendation from the Serious Case Review. Members questioned whether this had improved consistently across the County, wanting to reassure themselves that GCP2 was not being used as an alternative to the recommended improvements. The professional curiosity was there, and improvements had been made, although as a partnership across all tiers there was more work to do. Key to supporting early identification of neglect was having access to the broad range of information from partners, which the GCP2 tool allowed. This work also fed into the Family Hub model currently being implemented.

Members also heard that the Government had agreed to further funding for the social worker in schools programme. Early Help and the Front Door work was open to everyone, including all schools, with a qualified professional offering advice and signposting when these services were accessed.

Members raised concerns around the risk to children and young people through inappropriate use of mobiles phones and social media, asking if the GCP2 tool helped identify this. The tool wouldn't specifically help to identify use of devices, but rather where parents were struggling to imbed good routines, boundaries and meeting children's needs. Use of these devices posed an increasing risk of criminal exploitation. However, the County Council had a very robust team working relentlessly to tackle this exploitation, although it was ever evolving.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and Officer for their report. The Committee were encouraged by the developments made and the continuing work to tackle neglect.

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is reassured by the continued work to tackle neglect for the children and young people in Staffordshire.

10. Community Safety & the Outcome of the Fishmonger Hall Inquiry

The Chairman updated Members on the Community Safety and outcome of the Fishmonger Hall Inquiry report, which had been scheduled for consideration at this meeting. The item had been deferred until after a meeting on 28 June organised by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (the Commissioner) to consider the inquiry outcome. The Chairman has been invited to attend on this meeting as the Committee's representative.

It is proposed that the item be moved to the Committee's 1 September meeting, including feedback by the Chairman on the findings, conclusions, and actions from 28 June.

RESOLVED: That the Fishmonger Hall report be included on the Committee's work programme for 1 September.

11. Work Programme Planning

The Committee had held an informal work programme planning meeting on 23 May. Members now considered the outcomes from that meeting, making the following amendments/additions to their work programme:

- the Fishmonger Hall report to be included on 1 September agenda, to include feedback from the Commissioner's 28 June meeting;
- the LA's role as part of the Prevent Partnership be included on 1 September agenda;
- the Whole Life Disabilities Strategy, which primarily looks at preparation for adulthood for those with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and autism, be included on the 16 February agenda;
- following discussions at the Prosperous Staffordshire Overview & Scrutiny Committee of 15 June the Committee and/or their representative be invited to join the 1 September Safeguarding meeting for the Children's Transformation Services item;
- the SEND Green paper, which has been included on the Safeguarding work programme, was considered by the Prosperous O&S at their 15 June meeting. A link to the report and an extract from the minutes will be circulated to Members for their consideration on whether the SEND Green paper should remain on their work programme;
- the Spotlight Review on Sexual Harassment in Schools final report and recommendations has been forwarded to the Cabinet Members, awaiting their response. Two of the recommendations

(recommendations 6 & 7) are for Scrutiny, and at the Scrutiny Chair's Forum it was agreed that Safeguarding should be the lead committee for these;

- following scrutiny of the Young Carers Service in April, Members had requested the opportunity to meet with young carers to see first hand how this service supported them. A series of visits has been arranged to young carers respite sessions throughout the County. A Teams meeting with young carers will also be arranged for September;
- the MacAlister report was finally published at the end of May. This has been included on the work programme for September, and a link to the published report has been circulated to Members for information;
- a further informal work programme planning meeting has been arranged at the conclusion of 24 November meeting. This will be an opportunity to reflect on work to date and develop the work programme moving forward.
- a suggestion was made to include consideration of reports on LGBT and hate crime on the work programme.

RESOLVED: That the further work suggested and changes to the work programme be agreed.

Chairman

Local Members Interest
N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 19 July 2022

Early Help Strategy 2022 - 2025

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Review and Scrutinise the refreshed Early Help Strategy
- b. Provide feedback on the Early Help Strategy so that this can be considered ahead of Cabinet

Summary

1. The Local Authority recognises that Early Help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. As part of Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) they make it clear that 'Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years.'
2. Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:
 - a. identify children and families who would benefit from early help
 - b. undertake an assessment of the need for early help
 - c. provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to improve the outcomes for the child.
3. As a local authority we have responsibility to promote interagency working and co-operation to improve the welfare of all children and the first step in doing this is developing a partnership strategy.
4. Staffordshire has had an Early Help Strategy for some time and this is a new version which has been developed as a partnership to meet the needs of families locally. Families' feedback and views on the effectiveness of Early Help were instrumental in helping us develop this document.
5. We ask that scrutiny consider the strategy in that context and provide any feedback that they may feel relevant and add value to the development of this strategy.

Report

Background

6. We have had an Early Help Strategy in place since 2015 and have made excellent progress delivering much needed early help to Staffordshire children, young people, and families, supporting them to achieve better outcomes. This has been evidenced through our commitment to the Supporting Families known locally as Building Resilient Families and Communities (BRFC).
7. However, it is time now to refresh the strategy to appreciate local and national change, focusing on the current opportunities and challenges that we face. There is an even greater need for early help since the first strategy was produced the Covid-19 pandemic has seen a widening of existing inequalities across society and now more than ever we need a partnership response to help local families.

Participation and Engagement

8. The strategy has been refreshed through our Early Help Operational Group, underpinning our joint commitment to delivering the Strategy. Each partner seeing local Early Help as everyone's responsibility. This Group are also developing the linked Delivery Plan to ensure that the Strategy is fully realised and further developed.
9. We engaged children, young people, and families in the development of this strategy to seek their views on Early Help. They told us:
 - a. They like working with us when they are treated as individual with high challenge, high support.
 - b. They want more information that is clear on where to go and who to talk to when they are in need.
 - c. Parents want face to face meetings to ensure that parents feel they are being supported.
 - d. The language we use is important. Make sure it is user friendly with no jargon or abbreviations.
 - e. Access for all parents requesting help and support could be easier.
 - f. Families want to repeat their stories less.
 - g. They want support when they ask for it and often find they wait too long for the help and support that they need.

This feedback has informed the Early Help Strategy we have prepared and the ongoing development of our Delivery Plan.

Link to Strategic Plan

10. The Strategic Plan provides a clear direction for Staffordshire County Council:



Staffordshire County Council

Vision: An innovative, ambitious and sustainable county, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy

Outcomes	Priorities	How we work
<p>Everyone in Staffordshire will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have access to more good jobs and share the benefits of economic growth Live in thriving and sustainable communities Be healthier and independent for longer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Staffordshire's economy to grow, generating more and better-paid jobs Tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable Encourage good health and wellbeing, resilience and independence Fix more roads, and improve transport and digital connections Offer every Staffordshire child and young person the best start in life, and the chance to achieve their potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage our communities to help themselves and each other Lead our workforce to be ambitious, courageous and empowered Use digital technology and data to connect, inform and support the people of Staffordshire Engage and listen to our communities, partners and business, working together to improve our county

Pledge: Live within our means and deliver value for money

11. This strategy contributes to all three outcomes and the plan will embed the ways of working. The strategy supports us particularly to meet the economic, health and wellbeing and best start priorities.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

12. Family Hubs

Community Impact

13. It is envisaged that this strategy will have a positive impact on the community providing greater focus on early help will stop problems escalating. A full impact assessment will be concluded prior to Cabinet.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

[Supporting Families: Early Help System Guide](#)

Department for Education/Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Published 2 April 2022

[Working Together 2018](#)

Department for Education

Published 26 March 2015 and updated 9 December 2020.

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Staffordshire's Early Help Strategy

2022 - 2025

right
help

right
time

right
place

 Staffordshire
County Council

Staffordshire Families
Strategic Partnership



Foreword

As the chair of the Families Strategic Partnership Board, it is a privilege to introduce this strategy. Firstly, I would like to thank all the children, young people, families, and partners who helped us get to this point.

Your voice was heard, and we will continue to work with you to help and support you when you tell us you need us. We were extremely pleased to hear where we had got this right for so many families already, but we want to getting even better as too many of you told us that COVID had adversely impacted on you, your lives, and the way in which we worked with you to meet your needs.

What was clear is that you want us to provide the right help, in the right place, at the right time and sometimes we could do this earlier and in a more seamless way, wrapping the support around you in a more co-ordinated way.

This strategy shares our commitment, our values, the outcomes we are seeking to achieve and the way in which we will work with you so that we all have a common understanding of where we are trying to get to and how we will work with you to achieve this.

What we now need is everyone's collective action to help us make a real difference for every child, young person and family who is looking for help and support in Staffordshire. Building trusting relationships in a joined-up way to help you and your family with your changing needs.

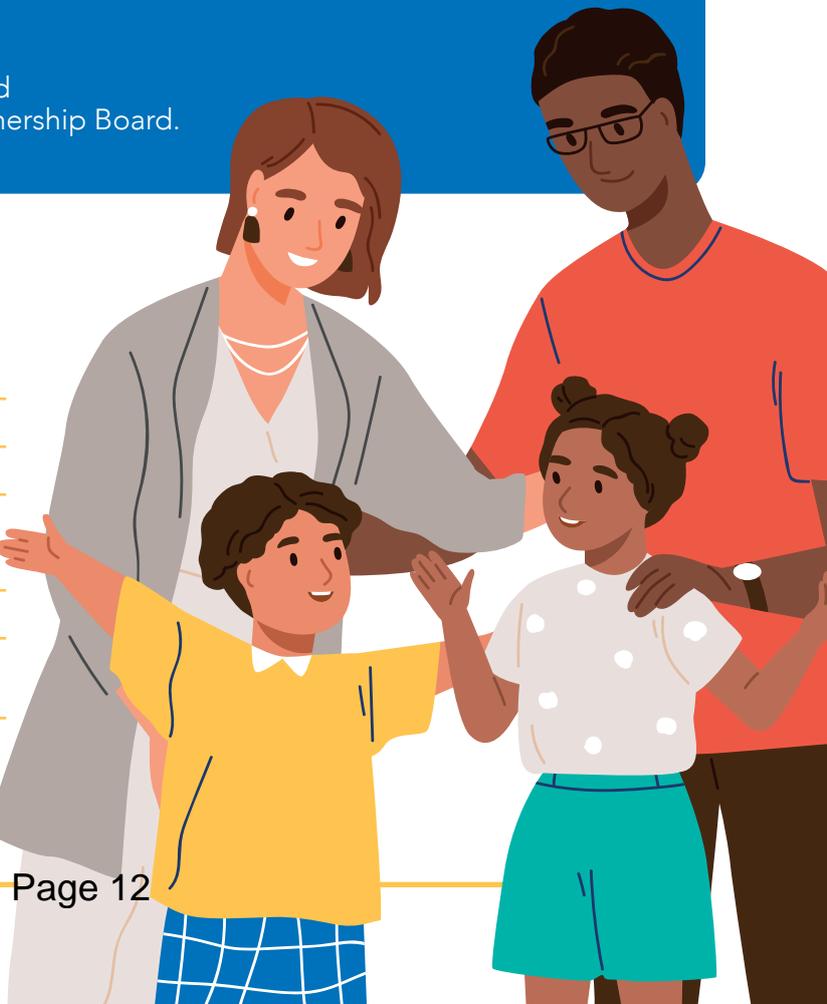
I am confident that we can do this together. Early Help is critically important to our partnership, it was the priority that united us as we all want to help and support children, young people, and families as early as we can so that we achieve that you have a better life.

Neelam Bhardwaja

Director for Children and Families Services and
Chair of Staffordshire's Families Strategic Partnership Board.

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Our Commitment

We want families in Staffordshire to have the strength, skills and knowledge they need to ensure their children are happy, healthy, safe and achieve their potential. We want to see children and families who are supported to start, grow and live well, able to lead their best life possible.



Start Well

Every child has the best possible start in life to reduce differences in the quality of their health and wellbeing in the future.



Grow Well

Children and young people are supported to reach their potential so that they can have greater control over their lives.



Live Well

Children, young people and adults are supported to make good lifestyle choices.

Staffordshire has a strong partnership who have been working to deliver Early Help for some time, but we know we can do more to provide better integrated and co-ordinated support for children and families who need Early Help.

“We will provide children and families with the support they need at the earliest opportunity by the people who are best placed to help. We will be inclusive, positive and build trusting relationships with families. We will work with families to put what they need first, as listening to families is at the heart of what we do.”

“Our support will be flexible, adaptable and respond to changing needs of our families and we will work to ensure that families only tell their story once and make it easier to access our support when it is needed.”

This commitment and strategy will be governed by the Early Help & Placed Based Approach Operations Group. They will make bringing this to life at the centre of what they do. They will be held accountable by the Family Strategic Partnership Board who are a sub-group of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Staffordshire Context and Need

Most children are happy, safe and have loving homes, but there are some families who face challenges that mean they cannot thrive in the way they want to.

There are 168,935 children and young people aged 0-19 years across the county, an area which spans 1,010 square miles.

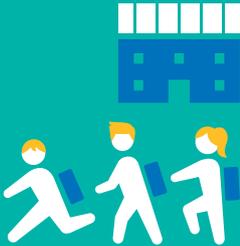
Families across Staffordshire can be very different to each other. Some live in the middle of the countryside; others live in large busy towns. People in some areas have quite a lot of money and comfortable lives, others have less and some live in poverty. This means that the needs of Staffordshire's children and families can be very different and the way we meet the needs of these families will be different.

For more information see Staffordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment: Joint Strategic Needs and Assets Assessment 2021 - Staffordshire Observatory



If Staffordshire had 100 children...





MORE THAN
10
(per 100 pupils enrolled) are persistently absent from school



The majority would have good emotional wellbeing; however,
13
would have mental health problems



3
would not be in any form of employment or training at 16-17



Many children would live in families of modest or affluent means
18
would be living in poverty



9
would be eligible for free school meals



15
would have a special educational need or disability



MORE THAN
3
would be living in a household where a parent is suffering with alcohol/drug dependency



MORE THAN
10
would be living in a household where a parent is suffering with a severe mental health issue



ON AVERAGE
19
in Year 6 would be classified as obese



LESS THAN
1
would get into trouble and work with the Youth Offending Service



MORE THAN
26
reception age children have not reached expected levels of development across all EYFS indicators



MORE THAN
15
would be living in a household where a parent is suffering with either domestic abuse, alcohol/drug dependency or a severe mental health issue



37
would achieve a 9-5 pass in English and Maths



85
would go on to any sustained education destination



MORE THAN
5
would be living in a household where a parent is suffering domestic abuse

What Do We Mean by Early Help?

Early Help is what we call the approach to supporting children and families as early as possible so that problems do not get worse.

Early Help means that children get the support needed to reach their full potential and improve children's long-term outcomes. It can improve the quality of a child's home and family life, enable them to perform better at school and support their mental health and development. Early Help can also support a child to develop strengths and skills that can prepare them for adult life.

Early Help is everyone's business and it is expected that any worker or volunteer from any agency, provider or service will respond to meet those needs, by working with others to do so. It is recognised that no one is an expert in everything and there is a team of partners available to share information, offer advice and guidance and offer practical hands-on support to one another when needed.

EARLY HELP is
about the RIGHT HELP,
at the RIGHT TIME,
in the RIGHT PLACE.



Clarke, A., Morreale, S., Field, C., Hussein, Y. & Barry, M. (2015). What works in enhancing social and emotional skills development during childhood and adolescence?, Early Intervention Foundation. <https://www.eif.org.uk/report/what-works-in-enhancingsocial-and-emotional-skills-development-during-childhood-and-adolescence>

Early Intervention Foundation (2021). Spending review 2021: The case for early intervention to support levelling up and Covid recovery. [early-intervention-to-support-levelling-up-and-covid-recovery](https://www.eif.org.uk/report/early-intervention-to-support-levelling-up-and-covid-recovery) (1).pdf

Early Help will consider the needs of the family as a whole, understanding these are interconnected, doing what works best for the child(ren).

A lead worker dedicated to a family to build an honest and productive relationship. We know that Early Help works best when those who know the family well or speak with them regularly act as the lead worker by acting as the point of contact for the family and working with a range of other agencies to support meeting the needs of children and their families.

A lead person for the family, to help coordinate support

The actions planned together need to consider what practical support may be required, such as how to do something, not presume everyone already knows how to do something. This might be how to work out a morning routine to get to school on time, guidance and reassurance for a parent learning a new technique like breast feeding, changing a nappy, how to get from point a to b using public transport or how to do a household budget and many more examples.

Delivering practical, hands-on support.

Considering the whole family.

Working 'with' families, not doing 'to' or 'for'.

Where more than one agency is working with a family, they recognise the difficulty families may experience with lots of people wanting them to do things at the same time. For this reason, the Early Help Assessment is used to bring together all of these needs in one place.

Everyone working to the same family plan.

Whilst the family have one main lead worker helping to link them with appropriate support, successful Early Help requires a partnership response. This is often achieved through multi-agency 'Team Around the Family', or 'Restorative Circle' meetings-working WITH families, not doing TO families, known as a strengths-based 'restorative approach' and promotes a culture of inclusion and support which enables children to achieve their best outcomes, builds resilience and enhances problem solving skills.

Everyone's Business

It is a collaboration and not about an individual service working alone, it relies on everyone working together effectively.



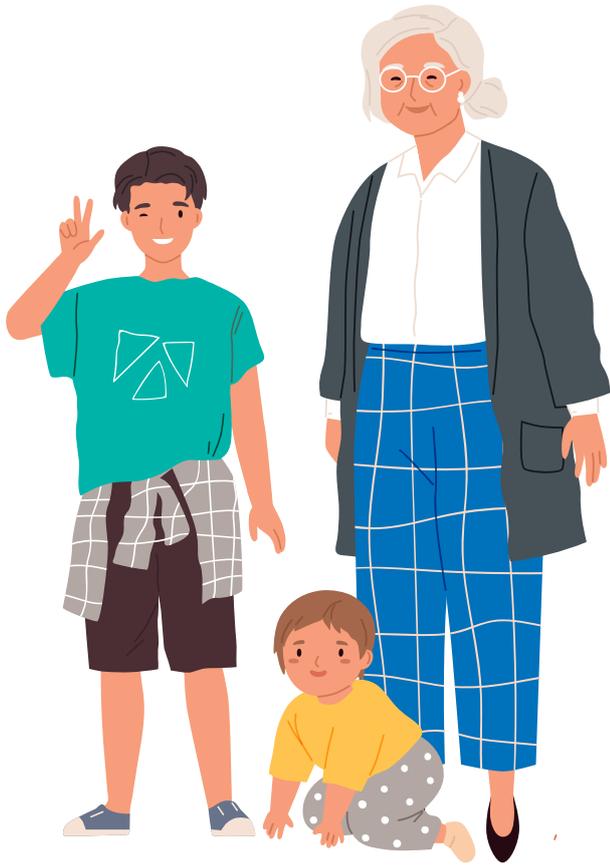
Universal and Community Support

Most children's needs are met by their family or universal services that are available to everyone, and by community-based support.



Targeted and Acute Services

Targeted services can provide additional support such as undertaking an Early Help assessment and creating a family plan with a Lead Practitioner coordinating support across a number of different agencies. If these are unable to meet the needs of a family, a request can be made for acute or specialist services.



Early Help in Action

A grandparent was struggling with the challenging behaviour of her grandchildren, after they were removed from their parent due to neglect.

The grandparent was reluctant to accept support as they thought it would question their ability to care for the children.

Over time their Early Help Practitioner built up a relationship of trust and was able to provide them with parenting support alongside helping the children make sense and deal with their lived experience. Working with the family, the practitioner developed a better support network with the extended family, school and DWP. This additional support helped the grandparent focus on improving the relationship with their grandchildren.

The grandparent is now almost able to manage without support with a plan in place to build on their resilience and determination to provide the children with a stable home supported by their network.

Early Help in Action

Mum and her 2 very young children came to Staffordshire from abroad with very limited English. With the help of interpreters, it soon became clear that the worries around some of mum's child supervision and choices were because she had no choices; the family were living in poverty with no support networks or benefits.

The Family Practitioner took a restorative approach to get mum onboard as she was initially resistant to the offered help given as she felt vulnerable.

The family were stepped down from Child in Need to Early Help once they had secured a right to remain in this country and the family could now benefit from BRFC which helped to fund much needed items and activities. Today, mum has the right benefits in place, they have a safe place to call home, the children are both in education, mum is spending positive time with the children and they are accessing activities and services in the community together with friends they have made.

Mum is attending college to study ESOL and is very keen to move into work and be a positive role model for her children.

None of this could have happened without close multiagency working with our DWP, the children's schools, health and local charities.





Early Help in Action

A pregnant woman was supported referred by her midwife to Early Help for substance misuse and poor mental health. Her temporary housing was also not suitable for a new-born.

A multi-agency approach was taken to support the parents' mental health by addressing their childhood lived experiences, alongside financial support and assistance with finding suitable housing. The Bumps to Babies programme delivered practical parenting support leading to positive outcomes for the family.

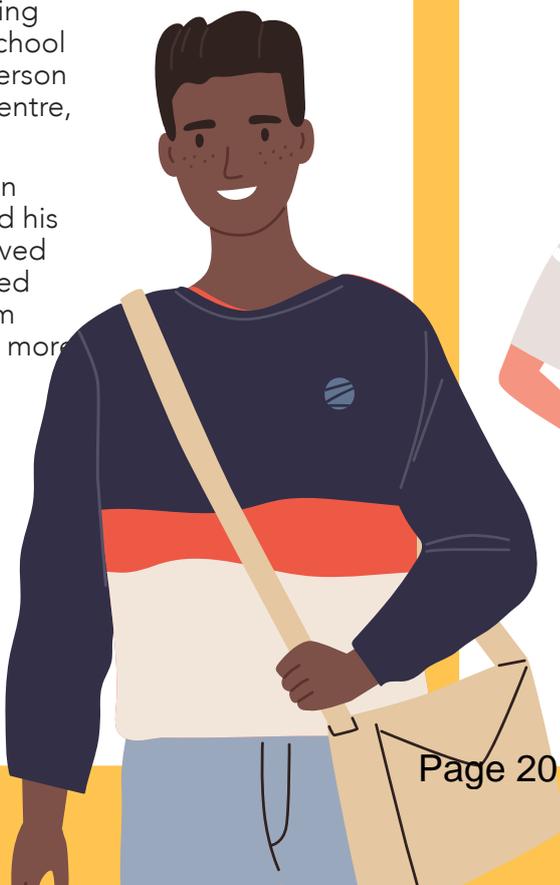
Early Help in Action

A referral was received from a 13-year-old Young Person due to their high anxiety and school avoidance since the national pandemic lockdown and their reluctance to go outside the family home. The school had already tried to provide support with no improvement.

A multi agency Team around the Family meeting was arranged. The School worked with CAMHS, the Educational Psychologist, Family Support Worker and family to complete the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) application and Staffordshire County Council were able to fund at home tuition while a decision was made. In addition, external emotional coaching was funded by School and the Young Person attending their centre, once a week.

The Young Person engaged well and his EHCP was approved and recommended a non-mainstream setting would be more appropriate.

The Young Person has started at his new school and has settled in well. They continue to do some emotional coaching work school.



Early Help in Action

Police were concerned about anti-social behaviour involving young people and issued a Section 35 notice to disperse the gatherings.

The Police contacted the Vulnerability Partnership who were able to link local Youth Workers to the site and times of the anti-social behaviour.

Where agencies were already involved with the young people, information was shared. If agencies were not involved, family support was offered via the school partnership.



Early Help in Action

A Health Visitor supported a young couple both aged 19 upon the birth of their first daughter, each parent had ASD and had previously been involved in drinking and drugs. Baby and mum had moved back in with mum's parents following an incident where the father became verbally aggressive.

The Health Visitor assessed that help was required in the following areas: Finances, housing, benefit entitlement, relationship management, mother mental health, parent support and work plans.

Their Health Visitor contacted childrens services for an Early Help Assessment and a 'Team Around the Family' was arranged. This Team put in place a range of support through a multi agency approach enabling each to support with their expertise.

Health Visitor reflected that by working in a multi agency way it helped her be clear about the work they needed to do with the family and ensured they got the right support they needed.



Early Help in Action

A family, who had fled domestic abuse, arrived in Staffordshire with very little belongings and needed support to find one of the children a school space. Upon meeting the family and undertaking the Early Help Assessment it was clear that there were several areas where they needed support. A multi-agency approach was taken to support the family to appeal a decision from a local high school for a place, undertake a financial assessment and refer the family to Potteries Moneywise. In addition, a referral was made to the BRFC fund for essential furniture.

Once referred to these organisations, they too used a multi-agency approach and made further referrals to a local charity for clothes and essentials and accessed their own funds to provide a cooker for the family.

Due to the history of domestic abuse both New Era and GLOW were also involved.

The family are now in a much better place and continue to work with several of the professionals who they were referred to.



Early Help in Action

A 15 year old girl was pregnant and needed support, given her age and previous service involvement. An Early Help Assessment was completed that also involved the soon to be grandparents and teenage expectant father.

A 'Team around the Family' was in put in place, bringing in support from the Family Practitioner, midwife and school. Working with the family, a plan was put in place to give support to the mum-to-be and wider family.

The mum-to-be was able to continue her education despite struggling with illnesses due to her pregnancy and Bumps to Babes was done on a 1-1 basis with the dad to prepare them for parenthood.

The baby is now born and mum is doing exceptionally well with the skills she has learnt and her wider family support.

The young parents are working out co-parenting between them with wider family supporting this.



Our Partnership Approach to Early Help

Early Help is everyone's business and it is expected that any worker or volunteer from any agency, provider or service will respond to meet those needs, by working with others to do so.

It is recognised that no one is an expert in everything and there is a team of partners available to share information, advice and guidance to one another when needed.

We maximise the engagement of communities, the voluntary sector, partners and universal services to address all needs at the earliest point.

Our Approach to Early Help

Our Early Help offer provides Staffordshire children and families the right help at the right time in the right place, creating a shared responsibility for services and practitioners to identify emerging support needs for individual children, and families, irrespective of whether they are providing services for children or for adults, based on an understanding that Early Help is everyone's responsibility.

Early Help support in Staffordshire aims to help families make long-term, sustainable change, enabling them to be independent and achieve positive outcomes.

Part of this approach is ensuring that a family are empowered to access community-based and universal services. We want families to feel supported by their own community.

Our Vision

Staffordshire Families and communities have the strength, skills and knowledge they need to ensure their children and young people are healthy, happy, safe and achieve their potential.

Our Values

Working WITH children and families, establishing respectful and trusting relationships, where families can expect:

- › To be listened to
- › To only need to tell their story once
- › To have one lead worker and one shared plan
- › High support and high challenge
- › To receive high support and high challenge
- › Use of everyday language with no confusing jargon or abbreviations
- › Empathetic, non-judgemental support, helping families to move past any feelings of shame or stigma that may come with asking for help.

Keeping the family central and ensuring support is individual and strength focused

Ensuring families know how and where to access available support in their local community

Promoting health, wellbeing and education for children and families.

Supporting each other to develop the services and support we provide, learning from all feedback to improve services for everyone

Supporting Children to Attend

We recognise the importance and value of improving attendance to school. Education settings have lots of opportunities. Children can build friendship networks, try new skills like sports and have the chance to play and be creative in music and the arts. They help give children the chance to grow and achieve their potential.

Early Help is Everyone's Business

- › We recognise that people who work mainly in universal services may be best placed to identify children and/or their families that are at risk of poor outcomes.
- › We work more collaboratively to identify those who are more likely to need Early Help, so that we are able to work with families most in need of our support.
- › We all promote local community resources and networks of support.
- › We will work to provide local support to address local needs.
- › Where possible we will work around the place, working with and as part of the local community.

How we will know we are making a difference?

Our Outcomes



Be Happy
and Healthy



Achieve and
Contribute.



Feel Safe
and Belong

How will we know we are making a difference?



Children enter
school ready to learn



Children attend school and take part in community activities - building their confidence, social skills and support network



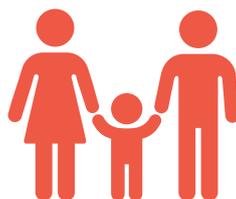
Child's developmental needs are being met, allowing them to make progress at a pace that is suitable for them



Parents /carers feel better equipped to manage the child's mental health and well-being.



Families are engaged with appropriate support that can be seen to be making a difference



Parent / carer demonstrates improved, positive parenting (e.g., improved parent / child interactions; positive attachment etc)



Child not experiencing criminal or pre-criminal exploitation (e.g., radicalisation)



Children not involved in crime or anti-social behaviour.



Children feel safe at home

Early Help... The Voice of our Children, Young People and Families.

We are building from our strengths... We asked our children and families and they told Early Help...

"I never felt rushed. You listened to me in depth [...] No one wants to admit they need help, but you gave us the structure and the skills we needed to be more consistent as parents, and we have worked so well together. You have helped us so much and we can now move forward positively".

"It's been good to talk things through with someone who can lend a fresh pair of eyes to the situation, who can advise from a professional and experienced perspective and provide strategies to help. Seeing things written down has also been helpful. Breaking down parts of the assessment weekly made it feel manageable too."

"This experience taught me to trust my instincts and helped me understand that asking for help was not me failing, but actually showing how much I love and care for my children and our family."

'It was fast, it was efficient, it was informative, it was great. I never felt rushed... you really listened to me.

"It's been good to talk things through with someone who can lend a fresh pair of eyes to the situation, who can advise from a professional and experienced perspective and provide strategies to help. Seeing things written down has also been helpful. Breaking down parts of the assessment weekly made it feel manageable too."

Throughout the whole process, I've learned so much about me as a parent, I've learnt more about how my children respond to me. You gave us the skills, techniques and structure that we need to move forward. I'm in a completely different place if I look back. We can move forward with (child) positively'

I don't have the words to describe what you did for our family. Financially we see a difference, so we can spend more time with the kids, hope - I understand that everything I can do. We can see the future. Everything has changed now.'

"I have learnt ways to help my daughter with her emotions and she has also learnt how to control them with different breathing activities and a worry box."

"I feel far less anxious and isolated. I now have a multitude of options to use for help, support or advice."

It was hard-hitting to reflect where we were as a family...we had let things slide. It was rough.

'We talked...about us as a family. (We) were able to have open discussions on where I was at as a mum and where the children are at. To be honest I was quite apprehensive 'cos I don't think I entered into this to look at me as a parent but for (child) issues. We've still got a way to go ...it doesn't happen overnight, it's a change in behaviour and how we are as a family. It's really helped us move forward together. It's been a really valuable experience for all of us as a family'

"My baby and I have been able to make some new and wonderful friends; it has also helped my baby to grow so much in his confidence, especially as he has had such a difficult year. It has also been through this support, that you have completely inspired me to see what I can do to try to help others".



What Do We Mean by Right Help, Right Time and Right Place?



Right
Help

Right Help

- › Early Help can take many forms, such as community advice programmes, school-based programmes, mentoring and peer support schemes, support in the home, home visiting programmes and more. It's about the right level of support for the challenges the family is facing at that time.
- › Children and parents/ carers should be central to each stage of the process and be supported to drive their own plans and make their own decisions.
- › Decisions are transparent and based on achieving the best outcomes for the child or young person. This will normally include the child being visited or spoken to by the people making decisions unless it is felt to not be in their best interests not to.
- › Everybody is encouraged to be an advocate for SEND so that there is greater awareness of SEND in the community.
- › Strengthening relationships and building relationships is at the core of what we do. Relationships are at the heart of what we do.
- › Everybody is encouraged to be an advocate for SEND so that there is greater awareness of SEND in the community.



Right
Time

Right Time

- › Early Help is about providing support to children and their families as soon as possible. This means both at the earliest time in a child's life, as well as, before higher level or specialist services are needed. Focusing on giving children the 'best start in life' and ensuring that children are ready for starting school.
- › Early Help is children with SEND being offered the support they need at an early stage; in a place they are comfortable and without the need for an EHCP (where this is possible).
- › We listen to the voice of the child(ren) and family, alongside evidence-based partnership information so the family only have to tell their story once and are helped to seamlessly access all the advice and guidance they need at the earliest opportunity.
- › Strong multiagency assessments helping to identify support needs early on by considering the family as a whole and doing what works best for the child(ren).
- › We maximise the engagement of communities, the voluntary sector, partners, and universal services to address all needs at the earliest point.

Right Place

Right Place

- › Places are friendly, welcoming, and inclusive for children and with additional needs and their families.
- › Working with families in their community or neighbourhood or their home, or where they feel most comfortable.
- › Families and children aware of the support available and know how to access the right support if they need it, whether this is from their family, friends, community, or statutory support.
- › Children and families can access effective support within their own community
- › Through our placed-based approach, local solutions are designed to meet local needs, of which partnership groups like the SEND and Inclusion Hubs and Children's Centres are an essential part.
- › Promoting local community resources and networks of support.
- › Localised services to address local needs.
- › District model of working with consistent child-centred keyworkers.



APPENDIX 2

What Early Help Looks Like in Practice

It is everybody's responsibility to identify and assess need, through having conversations with children, and their families and planning with them to address these needs. This will look slightly different for every family as each child is an individual with different abilities and needs who require different levels of support.

Accessing Support for Children and Families

There are many Early Help offers available for children and families. We recognise this and are working to make information easier to find and where possible integrate referral processes, so to help avoid confusion, overlap and delay in families accessing the support and advice they need.

Often, in the first instance families will seek support from their Health Visitor, GP, School, local Police, Housing Officer and other familiar professionals their family has contact with. Where the service alone cannot meet the needs of the family, (with the parents/carers agreement) they can seek more help and information from other local partners.

Early Help - Sharing information, advice and guidance

Information about the range of face to face, virtual and phone based Early Help support can be found on Staffordshire Connects (INSERT link), including the SEND Local Offer and the Health Hub advice line.

It may be that it is not always obvious which type of support is most appropriate or could

most effectively meet the support needs of the family. In such instances, remember no one is an expert in everything and this is how Staffordshire partners can work together to help share options, strategies and potential solutions. There are lots of local partnership meetings where such advice can be shared like the SEND and Inclusion Hubs, Vulnerability Hubs, and more.

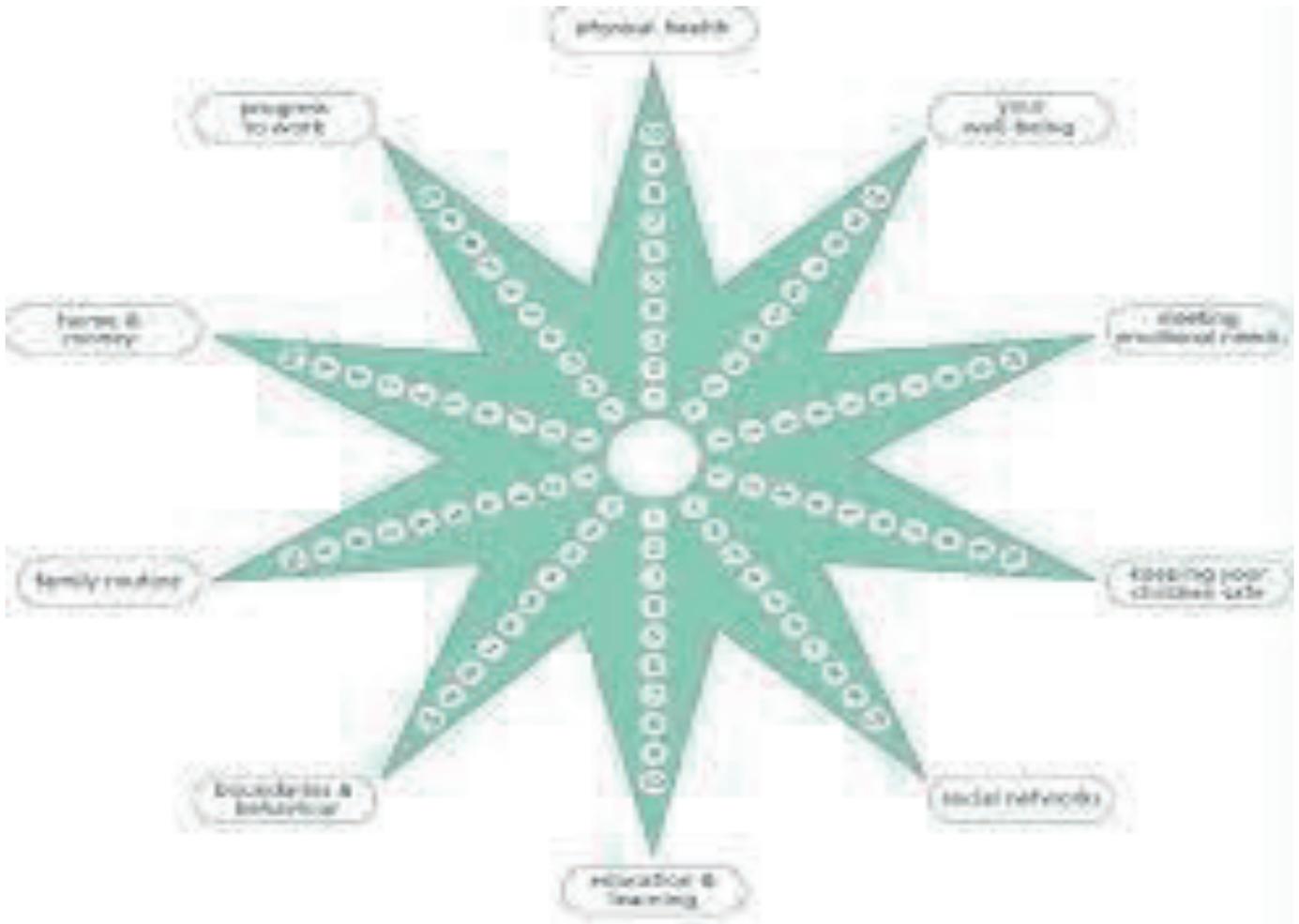
Early Help - Additional Support needed for Children and Families

For more complex support needs, Staffordshire County Council Contact Centre plays a critical role in providing a route for our children and families as well as information, advice and guidance that is community-based, with an emphasis on Early Help.

Everyone can refer to targeted Early Help to request additional support, including parents/carers referring themselves. You must have the parents/carers agreement to do so.

Referrals can be made by calling Staffordshire Children's Advice and Support Service on 0300 111 8007.

An Early Help Assessment is the main assessment Staffordshire Early Help partners use with families, to gather all the information about the family in one place and so it is easy to understand. This is the families assessment, filled in with the families



help and all information is treated confidentially.

- › Any agency or organisation can complete an Early Help Assessment
- › The assessment is co-produced with the child(ren) and family
- › It takes into account the views of all of the family
- › It includes the strengths and support needs of the whole family, recognising them to be interconnected.
- › The agency or organisation will work with other agencies to coordinate a multi-agency plan showing who will do what by when, including what the family will do to.

The Family Star Plus is part of the Early Help Assessment and helps with understanding the range of support needs.

Once all the information has been added to the assessment, this help create a shared action plan (see section 'What do we mean by Early Help 'Right Help' model of support).

Reporting concerns about the safety of a child or young person

Where professionals concerns are unable to be met by Early Help:

- › Reports can be made by calling Staffordshire Children's Advice and Support Service on 0300 111 8007.
- › Advice will be given by a Social Worker and this may result in making a referral to Children's Social Work Service, signposting to specialist services or recommending that an Early Help Assessment is more appropriate.

If you believe the child to be at risk of immediate harm this must be reported to the police on 999 or 101. Once you have reported to the police, please contact Staffordshire Children's Advice and Support Service on 0300 111 8007.

Local Members Interest
If report is relevant to ALL Members, type 'N/A' into table OR Insert Members Name and Electoral Division

Overview and Scrutiny Committee -Tuesday 19 July 2022

Customer Feedback and Complaints Service Children's Social Care Annual Report 2021/22

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that the Committee:

considers the Annual Report of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Service, Children Social Services 2020/21, taking the opportunity for any comments on the content of the report.

Report of Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

That the Committee considers the Annual Report of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Service, Children's Social Services 2021/22 taking the opportunity for any comments on the content of the report

Report

Background

1. In line with The Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, the Local Authority is required to produce an Annual Report. This report must include the number of complaints recorded under the Representation Procedure together with information on the outcome of each representation and whether statutory timescales were adhered to.
2. The Annual Report, Customer Feedback and Complaints Service, Children's Social Services 2021/22 is being submitted for scrutiny and endorsement.

3. The report contains information about the nature of complaints received, together with responses provided and their handling by the Council.
4. It is important that the Local Authority uses the evidence available from Complaints and Representations to inform service improvements. The report provides information about how complaints investigations are used to identify specific themes, where service improvement can be addressed and highlights where the County Council is providing quality services to customers which may be identified from compliments received. This is in line with the Council's Strategic Plan, to use Customer Insight to develop high quality services which meet customer needs.

Contact Details

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Children and Families Services Statutory Annual Complaints and Feedback Report 2021 – 2022

Author: Elaine Hemming

Date Friday, 17 June 2022

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 2021 to 31 March 2022. The report and service are 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 the Adoptions and Children Act 2002 and functions regarding Special Guardianship support services.

There are three stages to the Statutory Complaints Procedure:

Stage 1 – Local Resolution

This stage is usually carried out by a Team Manager, who is required to carry out an investigation by discussing the complaint with the relevant practitioners and the complainant and taking into account any evidence which is held by the Local Authority, before making an informed finding on each specific complaint. There is a timescale of 20 working days to complete this stage.

Stage 2 – Independent Investigation

This stage involves the commissioning of an Independent Investigating Officer (IIO) and an Independent Person (IP) who will carry out an evidence-based investigation by meeting with various practitioners concerned and viewing evidence held on the Local Authority files. The IIO and IP will each prepare a report, including recommendations for the service to consider. The responsible Assistant Director will then consider the reports and recommendations and prepare a response to the complainant detailing whether they accept the findings and recommendations, before all reports and responses are sent to the complainant. There is a timescale of 65 working days to complete this stage.

The Complaints Team are required to accept all requests for a Stage 2 Investigation, however attempts are always made to try and resolve the issues locally, by the Complaints Team offering to meet the complainant along with the relevant Head of Service.

Stage 3 – Complaint Review Panel

This stage involves the commissioning of three independent Panel members, who will attend a Panel meeting alongside the IIO and IP, the complainant, a representative from the service, the Complaints Manager, a Clerk to the Panel and anyone else who is considered to be required.

The Panel will consider the adequacy of the Stage 2 Investigation in light of any additional information provided by the complainant. Panel will reach a view as to whether any findings need to be overturned and whether any additional recommendations need to be implemented. The report provided by Panel will be shared with the Local Authority and the Director for Children's Services (DCS) will prepare a response to the complainant which will detail whether the recommendations are accepted. The Panel report and response from the DCS is then shared with 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.

There are two stages to the Corporate Complaints Procedure:

Stage 1: Local Resolution

This stage usually involves a Team Manager investigating the complaint by conducting discussions with staff members and liaising with the complainant. The Team Manager will then reach a conclusion in terms of the findings of the complaint. The timescale of this stage is 20 working days.

Stage 2: Internal Review

A complainant can submit a request for a Stage 2 Review; however, the Complaints Team have discretion in whether this is accepted. The complainant must provide sufficient evidence to warrant this. If accepted, a senior manager will review the stage 1 response alongside the evidence supplied by the complainant and will reach a finding on each aspect of the complaint. The timescale for completing this stage is 25 working days.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

In the event that a complainant remains dissatisfied following exhaustion of all stages of either complaints procedure they can take their complaint to the LGSCO. A complainant can access the LGSCO at any point, but the LGSCO 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 LGSCO.

Key Facts and Figures – Children and Families 2021/22 Financial Year



5264

referrals were made to Children's Services.



6173

statutory Child Social Work Assessments were completed.



1565

non-statutory assessments were completed by the Early Help service.



755

Education, Health, and Care Needs Assessments were started.



655

Education, Health and Care Plans were issued.

Key Numbers and Initial Overview – Customer Feedback and Complaints



A total of **237** complaints investigated through the different stages of the Statutory and Corporate Complaints Procedures.



197

compliments received for the whole service.



62%

of completed complaints responded to within prescribed timescales.



20% of completed stage 1 complaints found upheld,
38% found not upheld,
42% found partially upheld.



135

matters recorded under the Duty category.



43

matters considered by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

Composition of 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 and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) matters, these shall be further broken down as the report progresses.

Category	2020/21	2021/22	Change
Duty	197	135	37% ↓
Statutory Stage 1 Complaints	107	92	14% ↓
Statutory Stage 2 Independent Investigations	10	6	40% ↓
Statutory Stage 3 Panels	3	3	-
Corporate Stage 1 Complaints	100	118	18% ↑
Corporate Stage 2 Reviews	10	18	80% ↑
LGSCO	41	43	2% ↑
Compliments	264	197	25% ↓
MP/Public Enquiries	77	117	51% ↑

Analysis of Complaints and the Children and Families Service Transformation

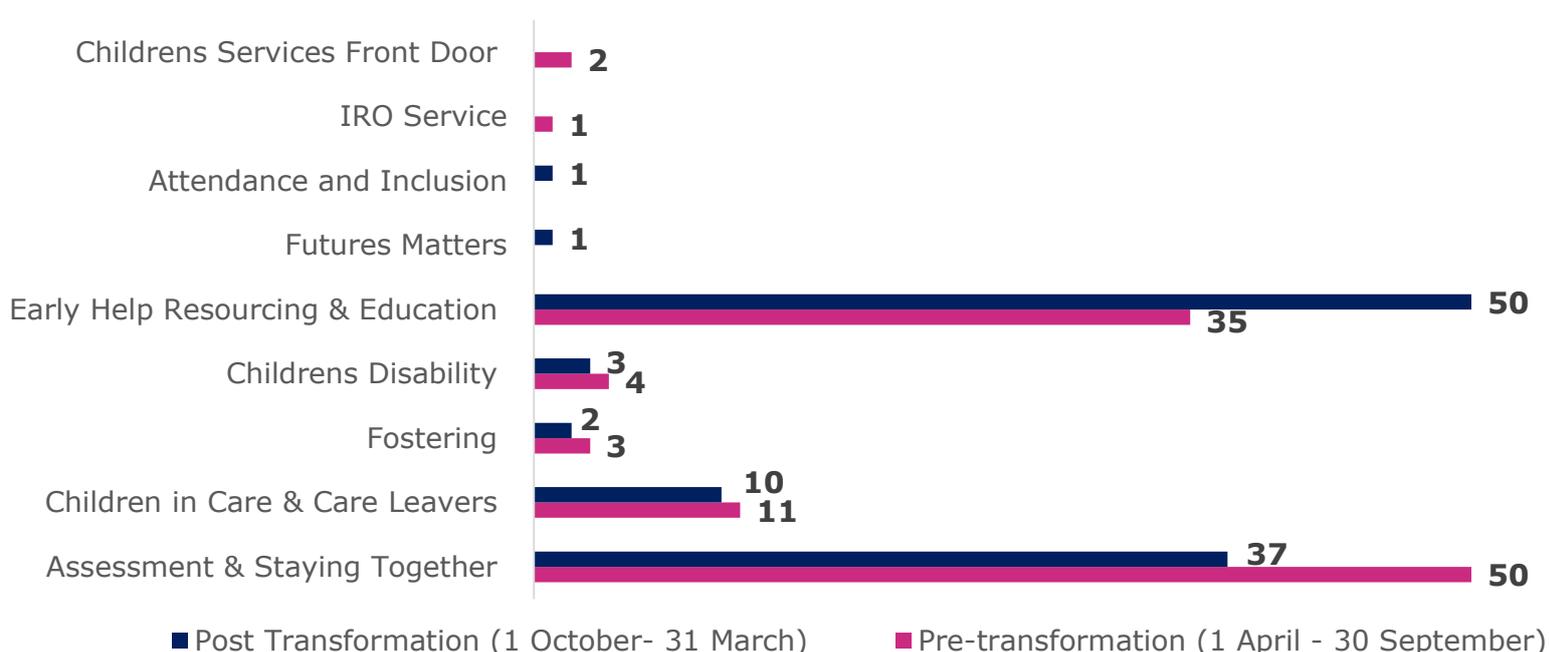
During this reporting year the service underwent a transformation which led to the service being restructured. The change in structure went live on 1 October 2021, where the service moved to a district operating model. The overarching principle for the district operating model is to deliver services to children and families at the earliest possible opportunity, ensuring they receive a timely response that works best for them, and that they receive the right help at the right time.

The structure of the database used within the Complaints Team required adaptation, in order to accommodate the change in service structure. For the purposes of this report to try and ensure this data is meaningful and of assistance, complaint figures recorded under the previous structure have been amalgamated within the new and current structure. To offer some clarity, the below may be useful to readers:

Previous Service Name (pre transformation)	Current Service Name (post transformation)
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Assessment and Staying Together
Care Planning and Court Team	Children in Care and Care Leavers
Throughcare Team	Children in Care and Care Leavers
SEND	Early Help Resourcing SEND and Education
Early Help Team	Early Help Resourcing and Family Support
First Response Team	Childrens Services Front Door

As an example, this will therefore mean that any complaints recorded against the Specialist Safeguarding Unit during this reporting year, will be categorised under Assessment and Staying Together.

The below chart has been prepared to offer an insight into the numbers of complaints (under the Corporate and Statutory procedures) which have been received this reporting year. This chart has been developed to show a comparison between the complaints received pre transformation and post transformation:

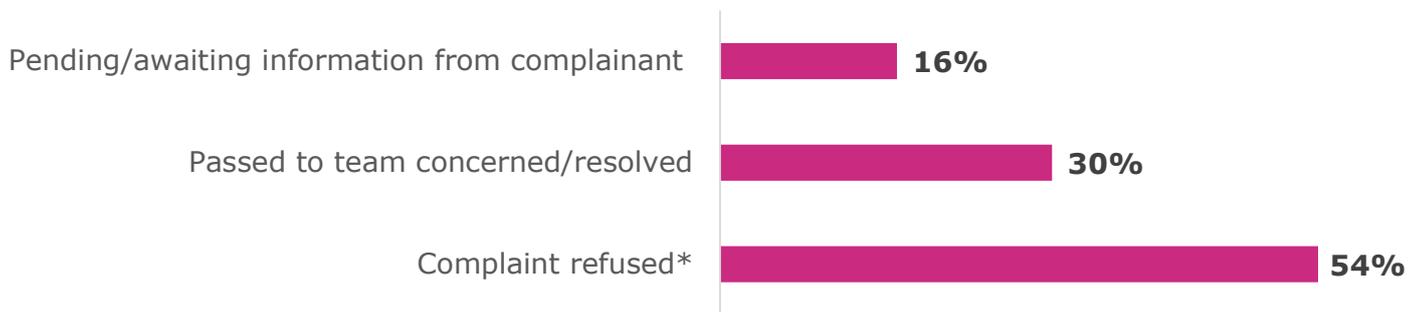


This data shows that there is little difference in the overall figures of complaints between the service transformation; 106 pre transformation and 104 post transformation, which can suggest that the transformation has not resulted in a spike of complaints received for the service as a whole.

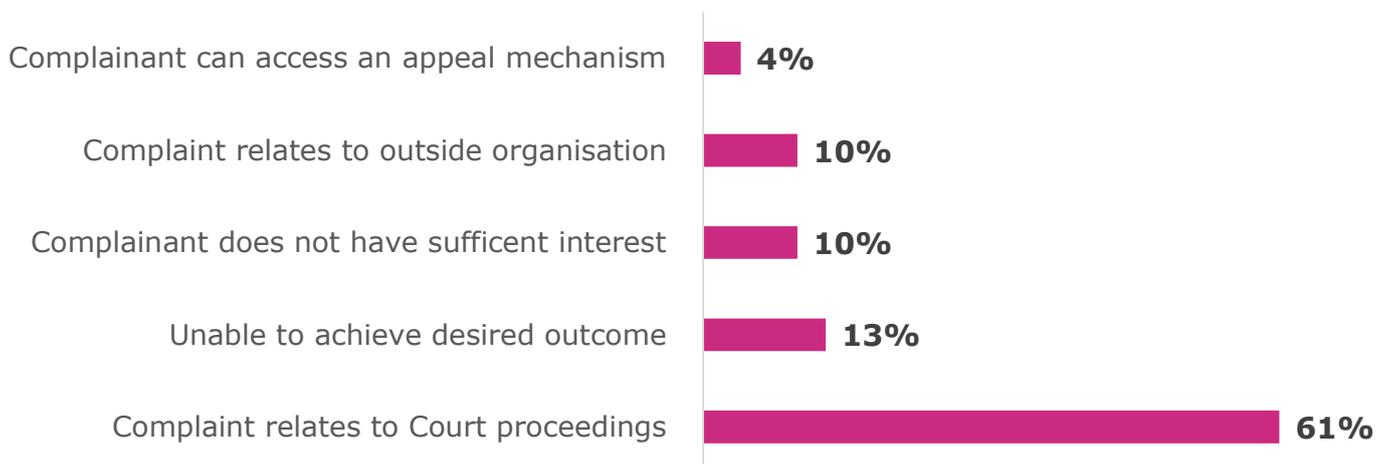
It is evident that there has been a significant increase of 43% for complaints within the Early Help Resourcing and Education teams (previously recorded as the SEND Service) between pre- and post-transformation. This increase does not indicate that all post-transformation complaints have been found to be upheld, however an increase of such significance should be explored in conjunction with the relevant management. Routine reports are provided to management which give an overview of figures recorded for complaints and discussions remain ongoing as to how we can work alongside the services to assist.

Duty Matters

A total of 135 matters were categorised under the duty system, the below chart provides detail of how these have been recorded:

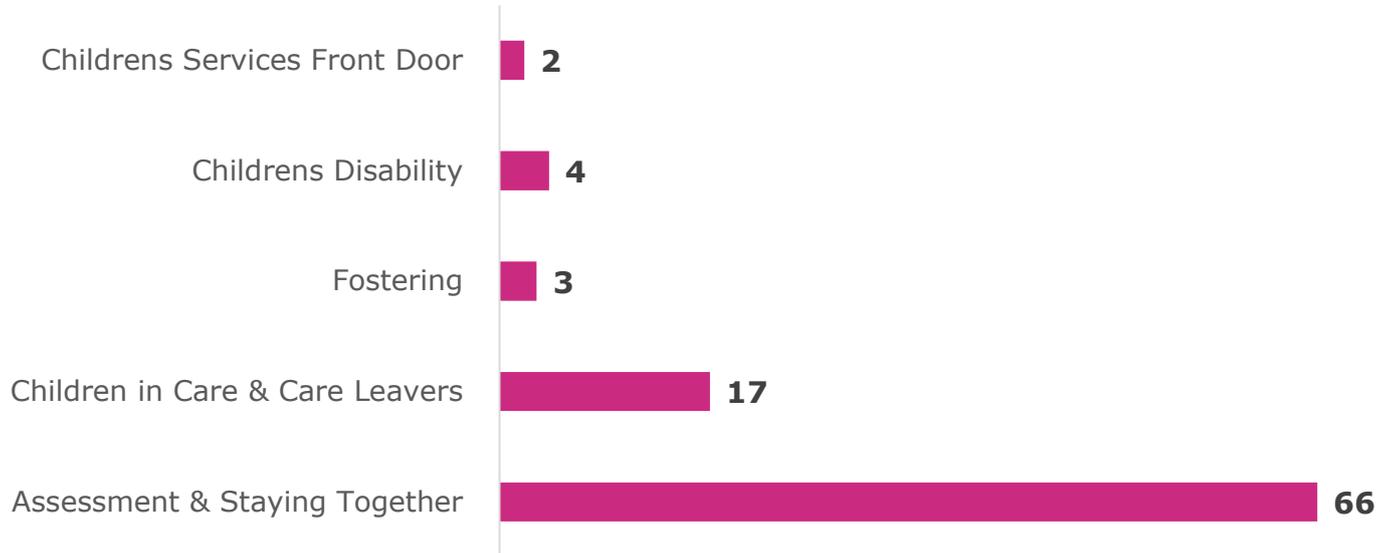


*In terms of those complaints which are refused further investigation, further detail is provided in the following chart:



Duty by Service*

*matters categorised as 'pending/awaiting further information' are not contained in these figures.



Statutory Stage 1 Complaints: Key Themes

Numbers

An overall 14% decrease is reported for Stage 1 Statutory Complaints across the services when compared to the 2020/2021 reporting year.

Nature of Complaint

Case management, standard of service and staff conduct remain the consistent themes for nature of complaints, allowing for 79% of Statutory Stage 1 Complaints.

Timescales

The services adherence to the timescales when responding to Statutory Stage 1 Complaints is recorded as 62% being responded to within published timescales.

Resolved

Various complaints have been resolved via meetings facilitated with the Complaints Team and senior management. This has been following a request for a Stage 2 Independent Investigation and has therefore reduced the cost to the public purse.

Findings

12% of Stage 1 Statutory Complaints have been found to be wholly upheld.

Relationship

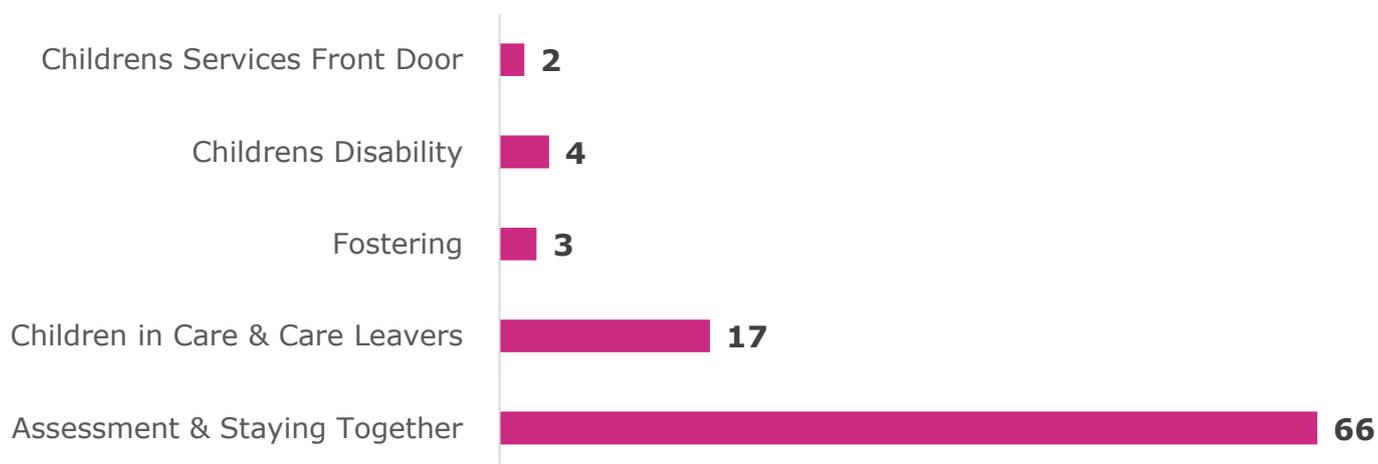
78% of Statutory Stage 1 Complaints were received from parents of service users. Only 4% were received from a young person directly or an Advocate on behalf of a young person. The remainder were from relatives or Foster Carers.

The Complaints Team processed a total of 92 complaints through the Statutory Complaints Procedure at Stage 1. The chart below provides a breakdown with a comparison for the previous reporting years:

Reporting Period	Total
2019/20	118
2020/21	107
2021/22	92

The data above reports a 14% decrease in Statutory Stage 1 Complaints, following the trend of the last three reporting years. Whilst a decrease in complaints received is always welcome, this should not minimise the significance and learning taken from those investigated complaints.

Stage 1 Statutory Complaints by Service:



Outcomes of Stage 1 Statutory Complaints*

Reporting Period	Upheld	Partially upheld	Not upheld	Complaint withdrawn
2019/20	2%	39%	39%	7%
2020/21	4%	28%	46%	7%
2021/22	13%	35%	39%	13%

*At the time of creating this report, a small number of complaints remained open/outstanding, therefore these figures are not definitive and may alter should data be requested in the future.

This data shows there has been an increase in complaints found to be fully upheld, with a decrease in those found to be not upheld. Stage 1 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure is classed as 'local resolution' where the Team Manager of the service concerned will investigate and respond at Stage 1. Whilst an increase in complaints found to be upheld is not something the service would aim for; this does show that Managers investigating complaints about their respective services are able to accept and take responsibility for any faults which they identify.

Timescales for Responding to Stage 1 Statutory Complaints

Reporting Period	Within timescale	Over timescale	Complaint withdrawn
2019/20	54%	40%	6%
2020/21	65%	26%	9%
2021/22	62%	29%	9%

The above data shows there has been little change in comparison to the previous reporting year, in respect of timescales when responding to complaints. The Complaints Team note the challenges which the Childrens Services Transformation has presented to staff and are aware that a complaints investigation can increase the workload. It is inevitable that on occasion, complaint timescales cannot be met, and, on this basis, communication is key; the majority of complaints can in part reference poor communication and a delay in providing a response to a complaint will only add to that frustration. Should a delay become a possibility, communication should be made with the complainant at the earliest opportunity, with a revised timescale agreed at that point.

Routine reports are provided to management and these reports will be modified and adapted based on the requirements of senior management, a focus of these reports will be the percentage of timescales responded to within timescale and a target for the next Annual Report will be for an increase on 62%.

Stage 2 Statutory Independent Investigations

The below table shows the number of Stage 2 Investigations commissioned this reporting year whilst also some comparative data of the preceding year with the percentage of stage 1 complaints progressing to the next stage.

Reporting Period	Number of Stage 1 Statutory Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Independent Investigations	Percentage of Stage 1 progressing to Stage 2
2019/20	124	12	10%
2020/21	107	10	9%
2021/22	92	6	7%

This data shows that along with a decrease in complaints being investigated at Stage 1, there is a slight decrease in the percentage of those complainants who progress to a Stage 2 Independent Investigation. The Complaints Team wish to note that escalation to Stage 2 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure is the complainants right and should they wish to take this avenue, we are duty bound to commission an investigation. The Complaints Team work closely with Senior Managers within the services and make every effort to try and resolve complaints where further escalation is requested. This attempt at resolution is usually through a meeting between a Senior Manager, the complainant, and the Complaints Officer, where the complainant's views are listened to, and dialogue takes place to try and reach an acceptable outcome.

This reporting year several meetings have taken place where the complainant initially wished to escalate their complaints however their view has changed following a meeting.

It should not be assumed that a request to escalate to Stage 2 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure is as a result of a poor response from Stage 1. A complainant may disagree with a Stage 1 response for a variety of reasons and ultimately their view on matters may differ from that of the Local Authority. The Complaints Team continue to work alongside the service areas to ensure a thorough a robust response is provided at Stage 1, which is evidence based and can be used to support the stance of the service should the complaint escalate to a Stage 2.

Service	Number of Stage 2 Independent Investigations*
Assessment & Staying Together	1
Children in Care & Care Leavers	1
Childrens Disability Service	3

*

*The Stage 1 Statutory Complaints Procedure

can be lengthy and as such the figures below

may not correspond with stage 1 complaints recorded within this reporting year and may be in respect of complaints investigated during the previous reporting year.

Recommendations and Learning from Stage 2 Statutory Investigations

The below provides a selection of recommendations which have been accepted by the Council following Stage 2 Independent Investigation. It should be noted that out of the six investigations, not all have been completed at the time of this report being produced.

Service: Assessment & Staying Together

A selection of recommendations accepted by the service:

That the Council should remind parents and other participants in Child Protection meetings, both verbally and in its hard-copy information, how amendments in matters of factual inaccuracy are to be proposed and how they will be dealt with.

That managers of the relevant service are reminded that actions recommended at Child Protection Conferences should be completed as far as possible in a planned and measured way, rather than being rushed during a short period.

Service: Childrens Disability Service

A selection of recommendations accepted by the service:

It is also recommended that SCC carry out a review of service provision to ensure that should another such case arise there is clarity as to which service will be responsible to respond to needs of the family involved.

Service: Children in Care & Care Leavers

A selection of recommendations accepted by the service:

Where possible, contingency plans are documented so if placements continue to breakdown there is already a plan B thus eliminating the need for crisis management which may not lead to the best outcome for the young person as key decisions have to be made at short notice.

Stage 3 Complaints Review Panels

The table below provides an overview of the Stage 3 Panels which have been carried out this reporting year:

Stage 3 Complaints Review Panels	Number of Stage 3 Complaints Review Panels*
Assessment & Staying Together	2
Children's Disability	1

*Due to the Stage 2 Investigation process being lengthy, these figures correspond with Stage 1 and 2 data from the previous reporting year.

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 the Stage 3 Complaints Review Panel.

Service: Assessment & Staying Together

A selection of recommendations accepted by the service:

In the meeting Panel asked whether the complainant had been given any information in writing about S.47 process and she advised she had received more information from the police than Local Authority but nothing in writing. Panel suggests that consideration be given to creating a leaflet to be given to appropriate individuals at the outset of s.47 process that can be easily referred to going forward. Panel are mindful that information may be provided verbally but possibly in very difficult circumstances when it may be hard to remember details and information afterwards.

Service: Childrens Disability Service

A selection of recommendations accepted by the service:

In particular Panel feel it would also be helpful for families:

- to be told what an assessment is for and will focus on as well as any decisions that have already been made which will affect this.
- when they can expect to receive the written assessment for their review and comments.
- when families would be informed of any response to their comments and feedback and who would do this.

Corporate Stage 1 Complaints: Key Themes

Numbers

There has been an 18% increase in Stage 1 Corporate Complaints comparison to the previous reporting year.

Timescales

There has been an 8% decrease in the service meeting the timescales to respond to Stage 1 Corporate Complaints.

Trends

The increase in Stage 1 Corporate Complaints is notably attributable to the Early Help Education service, who have seen a 47% increase compared to the previous reporting year.

Nature

The main themes of Stage 1 Corporate Complaints were recorded as; delay in EHCP being provided accounting for 35% of complaints, case management accounted for 41% and delay in an Annual Review amendment accounted for 14%.

Remedies

An explanation and/or an apology account for 86% of remedies for Stage 1 Corporate Complaints.

Relationships

The majority of feedback within the Corporate Complaints Procedure is from parents of young people. Very minimal contact is received from young people themselves which is a trend each reporting year.

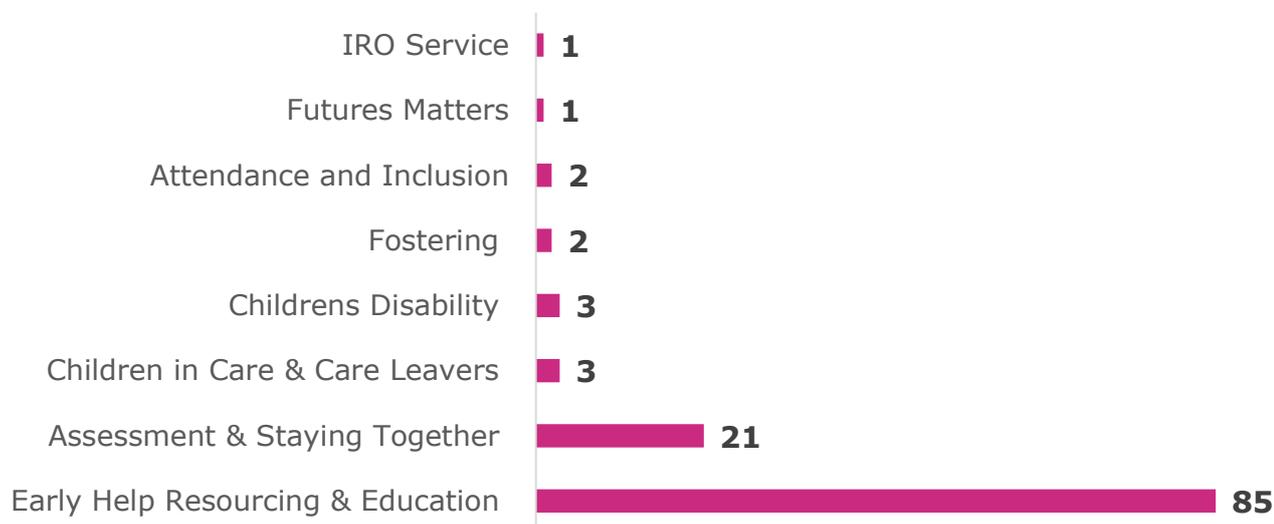
The Complaints Team processed a total of 118 complaints through the Corporate Complaints Procedure at Stage 1. The chart below provides a breakdown with a comparison for the previous reporting year.

Reporting Period	Total
2019/20	169
2020/21	100
2021/22	118

The above data represents an 18% increase in complaints investigated through Stage 1 of the Corporate Complaints Procedure. 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.

Stage 1 Corporate Complaints by Service

The following tables provide a further breakdown of the 118 complaints investigated at Stage 1 of the Corporate Complaints Procedure:



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	Complaint withdrawn
2019/20	22%	30%	24%	-
2020/21	17%	42%	20%	2%
2021/22	22%	38%	32%	8%

*At the time of creating this report, a small number of complaints remained open/outstanding, therefore these figures are not definitive and may alter should data be requested in the future.

Following a similar trend to Stage 1 Statutory Complaints, this data shows an increase in complaints found to be upheld, however there is also an increase in complaints found to be not upheld. It is the findings of complaints which can provide the most insight and as such, whilst there has been an increase in Stage 1 Corporate Complaints this reporting year, the findings of those complaints show that 70% of these have not been wholly upheld.

Timescale 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 timescale	Over timescale	Complaint withdrawn
2019/20	58%	42%	-
2020/21	61%	34%	5%
2021/22	56%	40%	4%

This data shows there has been no increase in the performance of the service regarding meeting the timescales for complaint investigations. As with the commentary regarding Stage 1 Statutory Complaints, communication needs to be maintained with a complainant should the

timescale not be realistic to achieve. It is hoped that the Complaints Team can work alongside services to improve this figure moving forwards.

Stage 2 Corporate Complaints – Internal Review:

During this reporting year, there were 26 requests for escalation to 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 LGSCO. 18 requests were accepted for an internal review at Stage 2 of the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

The table below shows the Stage 2 Reviews that have taken place in respect of the services:

Service	Number of Stage 2 Reviews
Early Help Resourcing & Education	15
Early Help Resourcing & Family Support	2
Childrens Disability	1

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: Early Help SEND Education

A selection of recommendations identified by the service:

We have undertaken a staffing review within the SEND Service and additional posts have been created to provide enhanced capacity to support the communication exchange with parents and carers. Staff have been reminded of the importance of keeping parents informed of any delays and are asked to explain reasons for any delays to families. We have developed more rigorous reporting systems that allow the Local Authority's Senior Management to monitor our performance in meeting statutory deadlines more closely and to take action to mitigate any delays more swiftly. Since the Local Area SEND inspection, we have been working with our health colleagues to identify areas of improvement to the overall quality of reports and EHCPs. We have subsequently delivered training to a range of multi-agency professionals regarding SMART outcomes and have revised the health service contribution template to further support the use of SMART targets.

The Council is committed to the identification of the special educational needs and/or disabilities of its children and young people, as well as putting in place suitable provision to meet their needs and improve their outcomes. In fulfilling its commitment, a significant transformation is currently underway which will increase the number of SEND Key Workers from October 2021, as well as other changes to the way the Children and Family

services are structures and work. It is anticipated this will address the delays some families are currently experiencing. Please also accept my apologies if you were not contacted to confirm the funding had been extended. Although the setting was aware of this, I do not have evidence that you were told. As a result of this, I will remind the team to log telephone calls or, if for some reason a phone call did not take place as requested, that we are informed so alternative plans can be made.

On behalf of the Local Authority, and the SEND service, I would like to offer a sincere apology for the service that you had received during this period. Communication is very important to me as a manager working for Childrens services. Whilst I cannot change things that have happened in the past, I can assure you that moving forward, the LA will endeavor to ensure that Parents and children are communicated with more effectively. We have recently integrated the SEND service into our Childrens services. Moving forward this will ensure that communication between key workers and families is a priority. I can see that since the Keyworker has been involved with you and your son, and that as a result communication has been much more effective. She has had regular contact with yourself, either through email or phone, and I would expect this to continue moving forward.

Service: Childrens Disability Service

A selection of recommendations identified by the service:

Action was already in progress to manage the issue of the agency not fulfilling the hours. As you are aware the social worker has contacted all known agencies at least twice, with no success. We are continually working with the commissioners to increase the providers and capacity of care agencies. This unfortunately has been adversely impacted by the pandemic leading to a crisis in social care resources. As you are aware, we have offered for the care hours to be provided as a direct payment enabling you to employ a PA.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

The LGSCO has processed 43 individual matters for the services during this reporting period. The LGSCO will make a judgement on whether 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 LGSCO finding is reported as stated by the LGSCO themselves:

Service	Findings	Recommendations / Summary
Assessment & Staying Together	No Fault	The crux of Mr W and Ms X's complaint is their belief the Council has not sufficiently investigated the concerns they have raised. The Council is required by law to consider and investigate upon receipt of information indicating a child is suffering or likely to suffer harm. The evidence seen so far shows in response to Mr W and Ms X's complaints, the Council has launched a section 47 enquiry, interviewed, and made announced and unannounced visits to Ms J and it was Draft decision for your comments 4 satisfied Y is not at risk. The police have also investigated the situation and have not found it necessary to take further action. The Ombudsman cannot

		question the merits of a decision the Council has properly made. There is no evidence the Council has acted with fault in its decision making.
Assessment & Staying Together	No Fault	We will not investigate Mr X's complaint that a social worker disclosed information about his family to other people and was responsible for him being sentenced. The Information Commissioner's Office is better placed to deal with the data matter. We cannot investigate a matter that has been subject to court action.
Assessment & Staying Together	Maladministration and Injustice	There was fault by Staffordshire County Council in its handling of the complainant's approach for assistance with accommodation when she was 16 years old. Within one month of the date of the final decision on this complaint: apologise to Ms B for the identified fault; pay her £1000 to acknowledge the lost opportunity caused by the failure to properly consider and address Ms B's needs for suitable accommodation in 2019 as outlined above and the failure to properly consider her rights under article 8 and her wishes and feelings; pay her a further £500 to recognise the lost opportunity by the failure to adequately assess or address the concerns it states it had for her welfare and safety and to acknowledge this could have left her at risk of harm; pay her a further £250 to acknowledge the frustration caused by the delayed handling of her complaint; and pay her a further £250 to recognise the avoidable time and trouble Ms B was caused in having to complaint to us in order to have the stage 2 and 3 findings and recommendations further considered. Within three months of the date of the final date of the decision on this complaint the Council will provide us with evidence: it has amended the multi-agency protocol reflects the provisions in the statutory guidance in relation to consideration of accommodation for young people who have a partner and that social work staff are made aware of this; it has completed the other actions it agreed it would as an outcome at stage 2 of the statutory complaints procedure; it will ensure that staff are aware of their duty to consider the Human Rights Act and how it applies to service users; it will ensure that social work assessments are clearly dated and signed by the social worker and social work managers so that it is clear when additions are made.
Assessment & Staying Together	Maladministration and Injustice	Mrs X complained the Council failed to follow its own safeguarding procedures correctly when it became involved with her and her family. She also complained the Council failed to progress her complaint to Stage 2 after she asked it to. She said this caused her and her family emotional distress and led her to suffer financial loss. There was fault identified in the Council's management of the safeguarding investigation. The Council has already taken actions to identify the fault, but it has agreed to also provide Mrs X with a £800 financial award. Within three months of the date of the final decision the Council has agreed to provide Mrs X with a £800 financial award in recognition of the avoidable distress and inconvenience caused by the Council's actions.
Assessment & Staying Together	Refusal to Investigate	Mr W and Ms X complained the Council failed to properly investigate safeguarding concerns they raised about Mr W's child Y. Ms X said this left her and Mr W feeling the Council did not take their concerns seriously. Based on the evidence seen there was no fault in the Council's actions.

Assessment & Staying Together	Refusal to Investigate	We will not investigate this complaint about a court report and court costs incurred during legal proceedings. This is because the complaint does not meet the tests in our Assessment Code on how we decide which complaints to investigate. The law says we cannot investigate matters which have been considered in court
Assessment & Staying Together	Refusal to Investigate	We cannot investigate this complaint about the decisions of social workers because the complaint does not meet the tests in our Assessment Code on how we decide which complaints to investigate. The complaint is not separable from matters that have been decided in court.
Assessment & Staying Together	Refusal to Investigate	The Council agreed to arrange a stage three panel to consider this complaint about the Council's children's services. We will therefore not investigate it at this stage.
Assessment & Staying Together	Refusal to Investigate	We cannot investigate this complaint about the safety of Miss X's child. This matter is not separable from those considered by a court that decided where Miss X's child should live. Only another court can change those arrangements and it would be reasonable for Miss X to return to court.
Assessment & Staying Together	Refusal to Investigate	We will not investigate Miss X's complaint about an inaccurate children service's report. It is unlikely we could achieve more than the Council's offer to place Miss X's comments next to the report.
Assessment & Staying Together	Refusal to Investigate	We will not investigate this complaint about safeguarding a child. Who will care for the child and have contact with him is a matter for a court, and the matters Mrs X complains of are or could form part of the court case.
Assessment & Staying Together	No Fault	Miss X complained the Council failed to adequately safeguard her niece Y and did not investigate information she provided indicating Y was at risk of harm. Miss X also complained the Council unfairly restricted access between Miss X's family and Y. Based on the evidence seen there was no fault with the Council's actions.
Children in Care & Care Leavers	Maladministration and Injustice	Miss X complains about the Council's actions in relation to her daughter before and after she entered local authority care. She also complains that the Council has been racist in its communications with her. The Council has accepted fault, but Miss X says its proposed financial remedy is inadequate. The Council has agreed a larger financial remedy. Miss X complains about the Council's actions in relation to her daughter before and after she entered local authority care. She also complains that the Council has been racist in its communications with her. The Council has accepted fault, but Miss X says its proposed financial remedy is inadequate. The Council has agreed a larger financial remedy. The Council has agreed that within one month of my decision it will pay Miss X a further £250 to compensate for the distress arising from its faults and for her time and trouble in bringing the complaint.
Children in Care & Care Leavers	Refusal to Investigate	We will not investigate Miss X's complaint about the Council's children services team not assessing her as a carer for her children. We could not achieve the outcome she seeks as the Court decided the children's care arrangements.
Children in Care & Care Leavers	Refusal to Investigate	We cannot investigate Miss X's complaint about a children services assessment and its views on her. They have been used in Court proceedings

Children in Care & Care Leavers	Refusal to Investigate	We cannot investigate Miss X's complaint about a children services assessment and its views on her. They have been used in Court proceedings
Children in Care & Care Leavers	Premature Referral	Complaint referred for consideration under the complaints procedure.
Children in Care & Care Leavers	Refusal to Investigate	We cannot investigate this complaint about the Council's involvement with the complainant's family. This is because the complaint is about matters considered and decided in court. It is therefore outside our jurisdiction. It is reasonable for Miss X to return to court if she is unhappy with her children's living arrangements. The actions of the Council's staff cannot be separated from matters we have no jurisdiction to consider.
Children's Disability Service	No Fault	Mr C complains on behalf of his son and daughter in law, Mr and Mrs J, that the Council did not provide reasonable options when they applied for a Disabled Facilities Grant for their young child, G. Mr C says G still does not have the adaptations he requires. We do not find fault with how the Council considered the application. It has explored the application and made a decision in line with relevant legislation.
Children's Disability Service	Maladministration and Injustice	Mrs X complained the Council failed to provide her daughter, who has several disabilities, with social care support following her discharge from hospital in July 2020. Based on the evidence seen so far the Council failed to investigate Mrs X's complaint under the statutory children's complaints procedure. The Council should arrange and start a stage 2 investigation under the complaint's procedures within one month of the final decision. It should also make a symbolic payment for the uncertainty and time and trouble this caused Mrs X.
Children's Disability Service	Maladministration and Injustice	The complainant, Mrs X, complained the Council failed to properly consider adaptations for her family when it could not find her a four-bedroom home. The Council says it has offered suitable solutions which the family refused and could do no more when the family withdrew permission to engage with other professionals. We found the Council at fault. It agrees to apologise, pay Mrs X £200 and arrange a meeting to discuss reassessing the family.
Children's Disability Service	Maladministration and Injustice	Ms X complained about errors and delays in the Council's investigation of her complaint about Children's services under the Children's Statutory Complaints procedure. The Council was at fault. It has agreed to begin a stage 2 investigation and pay Ms X £200 in recognition of the frustration caused by poor communication and delay.
Children's Disability Service	Awaiting Outcome	-
Early Help Resourcing SEND Education	No Fault	Mr X complained the Council failed to take his views into account or provide adequate support when drawing up his Education, Health and Care Plan and sourcing a suitable school placement for him. He said this negatively impacted his educational development and caused him stress and upset. There was no fault in the Council's actions.

<p>Early Help Resourcing SEND Education</p>	<p>Maladministration and Injustice (Public Report)</p>	<p>Mrs J complained the Council refused to fund travel costs for her daughter K, to attend school. A Tribunal had decided attendance at that school was not unreasonable public expenditure. And there is no viable public transport route to the school. This means Mrs J has had to arrange her own transport to get K to school. The Council will apologise to Mrs J and K for the faults identified; • pay Mrs J £300 to acknowledge the uncertainty and the resulting upset caused to K and her family by the flawed decision-making process; and • reconsider K's appeal having regard to the issues outlined as fault in this report. If the Council decides K is eligible for help with transport, it should backdate eligibility to the start of the Autumn 2020 term. The Council can deduct the costs the family would have incurred as part of their contribution to the transport costs, as set out in its post-16 transport statement. Within three months of the date of this report, we also recommend the Council take the following action. • Provide us with evidence that relevant staff, appeal decision-makers and panel members have received information about the lessons learned from this case, regarding taking account of travel time. • Audit a sample of 20% of transport applications for the 2020/21 school year for post-16 students who have applied on special educational needs (SEN) or other disability grounds where the Council has refused transport, where it previously provided it. The Council should check it has made a proper assessment in line with the statutory guidance and its own transport statement. It should check whether decision-makers have considered the time it took applicants to attend school. It should consider where there is evidence of a journey taking more than 75 minutes. If there is, it should follow the principles set out in this report. • Following the audit, if the Council finds cases in the sample where the decision was flawed, it should then review all the post-16 students who have applied for transport on SEN or other disability grounds and the Council has refused it but previously provided it for the 2020/21 school year.</p>
<p>Early Help Resourcing SEND Education</p>	<p>Maladministration and Injustice</p>	<p>To remedy the personal injustice to Ms B and X the Council will, within one month of the final decision on this complaint, apologise to Ms B and X for the identified faults and for the avoidable stress this caused; and make a payment of £1800 to recognise the injustice caused by the missed OT, SLT and keyboard provision as detailed above. This calculation is based on a rate of £200 a month for the period from November 2020 to July 2021. This is the lower end of the scale of payments we usually recommend recognising lost provision and is because the OT, SLT and keyboard formed only a part of the overall provision. Within three months of the date of the final decision on this complaint, the Council will take action to address the systemic issues this complaint has highlighted to: ensure that in future it has a mechanism to pursue schools that fail to comply with the provision detailed in an EHC Plan such as happened here and provide us with details of this; and take action to address the apparent shortage of OT providers it uses to ensure it is in future able to meet its statutory duties and provide us with details of how it will achieve this.</p>
<p>Early Help Resourcing</p>	<p>Maladministration and Injustice</p>	<p>Mrs B complained the Council failed to secure the provision in her daughter's Education, Health and Care plan since April 2020. Mrs B says her daughter's provision and this affected her daughter's</p>

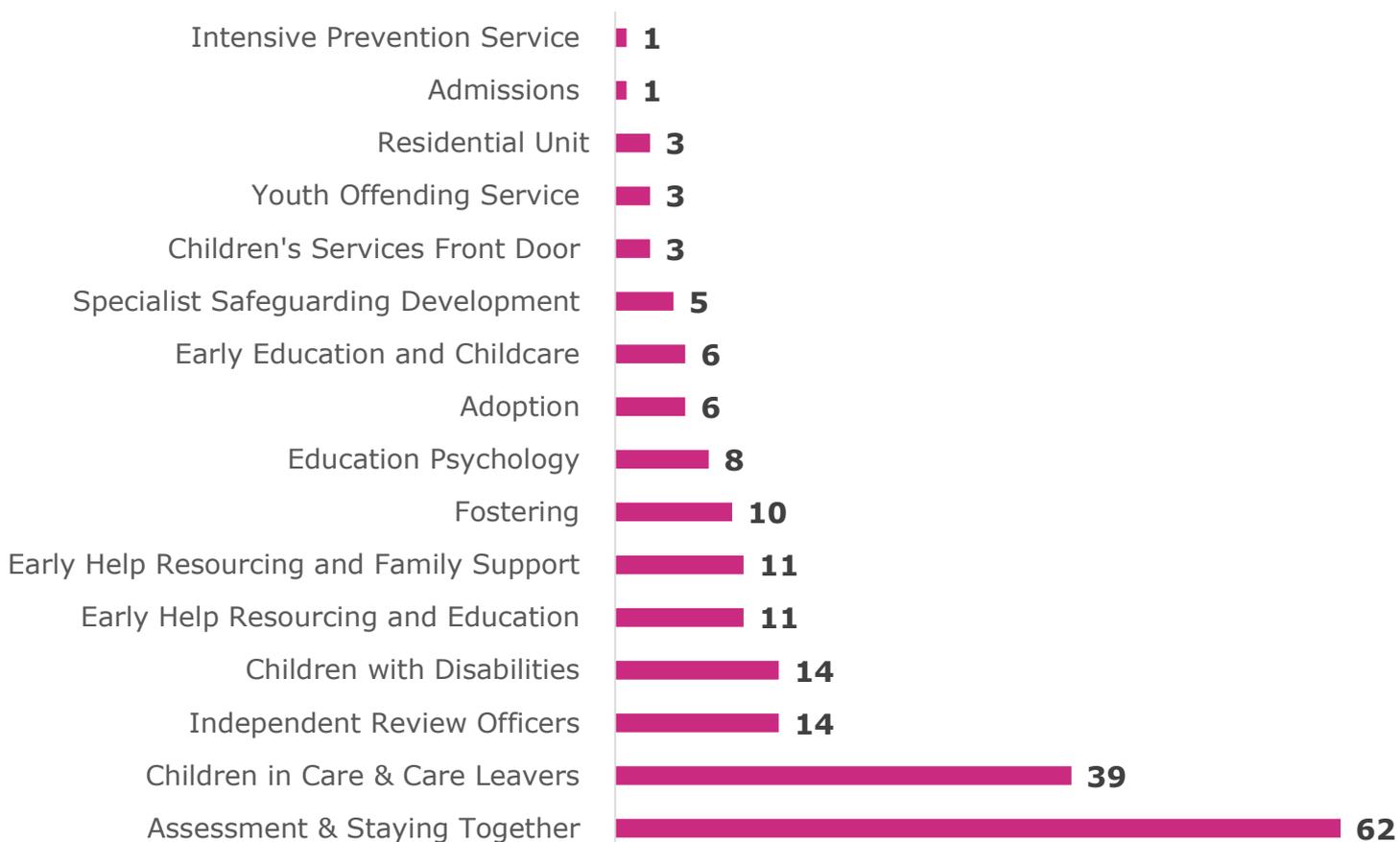
SEND Education		health. The Council was at fault for failing to secure provision and this caused Mrs B and her daughter injustice. The Council will make a financial payment to Mrs B to remedy this injustice.
Early Help Resourcing SEND Education	Maladministration and Injustice (Public Report)	The Council: • failed to review and update C's Education and Health Care (EHC) Plan; and refused their request for a personal budget. We recommend that, within three months of our final decision, the Council: • apologise to C and Ms B; • pay C and Ms B £750 each for the uncertainty, missed opportunities, stress and frustration the delays and missed decisions led to over an extended period; • pay Ms B £300 for her time and trouble in repeatedly having to raise the issues; • refund Ms B £450 for the costs of the OT report she commissioned; and • provide us with an update on what the Council has done to ensure it has met the provision set out in the May 2021 EHC Plan.
Early Help Resourcing SEND Education	Awaiting Outcome	-
Early Help Resourcing SEND Education	Awaiting Outcome	-
Early Help Resourcing SEND Education	No Fault	Mr X complained the Council failed to take his views into account or provide adequate support when drawing up his Education, Health and Care Plan and sourcing a suitable school placement for him. He said this negatively impacted his educational development and caused him stress and upset. Based on the evidence seen there was no fault in the Council's actions.
Early Help Resourcing SEND Education	Awaiting Outcome	-
Early Help Resourcing SEND Education	Awaiting Outcome	-
Early Help Resourcing SEND Education	Awaiting Outcome	-
Early Help Resourcing SEND Education	Awaiting Outcome	-
Early Help Resourcing SEND Education	Awaiting Outcome	-
Early Help Resourcing SEND Education	Awaiting Outcome	-
Early Help Resourcing SEND Education	No Fault	Miss X complained about the way the Council handled her daughter, Y's Education, Health and Care Plan review in 2020, and that it delayed issuing its decision to maintain the plan for six months in 2021. Miss X also complained the Council incorrectly declined school transport for Y and its communication about matters was

		poor. We found the Council delayed in issuing its decision not to amend Y's Education, Health and Care Plan by 15 weeks, however, it has already remedied the injustice that caused. There was no fault in the Council's decision on school transport or in its communication with Miss X.
Early Help Resourcing SEND Education	Awaiting Outcome	-
Admissions & School Transport	Refusal to Investigate	We will not investigate Mr X's complaint that the Council was wrong to refuse free home to school transport. It is unlikely we would find fault in the process or decision.
Admissions & School Transport	No Fault	There is no fault in the Council's consideration of Ms B's stage 2 appeal against its decision to withdraw free home to school transport for her son.
Admissions & School Transport	No Fault	There was no fault by Staffordshire County Council in relation to its consideration of Ms B's appeal against the decision to refuse home to school transport for her children.
Admissions & School Transport	No Fault	There was no fault by Staffordshire County Council in relation to its consideration of Ms B's appeal against the decision to refuse home to school transport for her children.
Complaints Team	Maladministration and Fault (Public Report)	As the Council closed Miss C's case more than 12 months ago, her complaint is late. However, the guidance says councils should be in favour of accepting a late complaint unless there is a good reason not to. When deciding whether to investigate, the Council needs to show it has considered Miss C's age, any issues of vulnerability, any potential benefit to Miss C of now investigating the complaint, and whether a fair and effective investigation can still take place. The Council's response to Miss C in January 2021 did not evidence it properly considered these factors which is fault.
Total		43

From the 43 complaints which the LGSCO have considered, 24% have reached a finding of fault. It should be noted that a number of matters remain pending further detail and as such the above figure is subject to change. The complaints which have identified fault, shape learning for the Local Authority in the same way that learning identified from all complaints is taken forward. The LGSCO will monitor any recommendations and their case shall remain open until they are satisfied that a proposed remedy has been implemented.

The LGSCO have also considered it necessary to issue three formal public reports this year, this is a high number for Staffordshire however through discussions with other Local Authority Complaints Teams, it appears that the LGSCO are issuing more formal reports nationally which may be to highlight and raise awareness of any trends they are picking up across a number of authorities.

The service has received a total of 197 compliments this reporting year. This is a decrease compared to the previous year; however, this should not take anything away from the achievements of those services who have received positive feedback. The chart below provides a breakdown of the individual services:



Any compliments which are received are routinely shared with senior management, who will offer their appreciation and congratulatory messages to the practitioner and service. Compliments are also shared within a quarterly report which is included alongside the Quality Assurance Newsletter. A selection of compliments are included in the quarterly report along with the reflection of the practitioner concerned, this provides a valuable insight to readers who can perhaps resonate with the way in which a particular practitioner or service have worked, which has resulted in positive feedback being received.

It is not possible to provide a list of all the compliments which have been received this reporting year, a small selection are provided below:

Early Help Resourcing and Family Support:

- I just wanted to let you know how supportive and engaging XXX has been in supporting myself and XXX with our play sessions. She has provided so many activities to ensure the sessions are fun and interesting, doing virtual sessions is not easy but anything I

asked her to provide, she embraced.

We could not have done it without her

and just wanted you to know how brilliant she has been.

- We both found her approachable, and friendly, yet professional and able to prioritise the best course of action for the whole family. Just the fact that she acknowledged the other pressures affecting each member of our family was refreshing. Her positive, caring attitude shone through, and her friendly approach and understanding was just what was needed. She then checked how we all were this morning and has arranged to see X again tomorrow. She is a credit to your service, and in the short time we have known her, she has positively influenced our experience of The Early Help Team.

Independent Review Officers:

- I just want to thank you for how you managed the Review Child Protection Conference. For such an emotive case surrounded by a lot of intimidation from Mother, I feel that the meeting was very balanced, Mother's views were listened to, but so were the risks. Thank you.
- I just wanted to express my thanks and appreciation for an amazingly managed ICPC this morning. This is the first time I have had a young person attend, your emotional warmth, diplomacy, communication and organisation are a credit to you, and I hope to attend one of your conferences again!

Childrens Disability Service:

- Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all the support you have given us this past year you have helped with so much and have been a fantastic OT, thank you as well for making our lives and XXX's a lot easier and more comfortable, we wish you all the luck and wishes.
- Just wanted to let you know how refreshing it has been to meet XXX and now have him part of XXX's case. We have had multiple professionals involved that have come to the home and she normally never gives them the time of day, although she was still like that XXX seemed to find ways to work round that and get a smile out of her in the end. It was also lovely to have a new approach to things and he has opened my eyes to new techniques to get over certain hurdles we face and there has been a huge difference already. We look forward to having his assistance throughout and it's lovely to have found someone that we can be comfortable with and that suits our situation.

Assessment & Staying Together:

- Thank you for your crucial and timely interventions in the case of probable Fabricated or Induced Injury we discussed today. Your proactivity in reviewing the child, robustness in the assessment of her history and clarity around your conclusions and recommendations were all excellent. They have made a significant difference to the decision making and safety of this girl and her brother, for which I and the other professionals involved are very grateful.

- She did everything she could to include us all in as many shadowing experiences as she could (both online and in person) and for this, I am eternally grateful. She has managed to do this despite her very busy caseload – and has always been at the end of the email if we needed help or advice about anything. The whole student year we have had, would have been very different if it wasn't for her. So please accept this as a token of my gratitude– I just wanted to shout out loud about how supportive you have been and the difference that has made.
- I just wanted to email and convey my sincerest thanks for the help I have received during a particularly difficult time. XXX has been an amazing source of support and I would like you to forward my gratitude to her for all she did for me and my son whilst under her care. If it had not been for XXX, I fear it would have taken much longer for me to break free from the abusive relationship I had found myself in. Since contacting your services and the help XXX provided, myself and my son have come on leaps and bounds.
- I cannot praise her enough for the hard work dedication and empathy she has shown XXX and supported me and my family through what can only call the most devastating time in my life. From the start of XXX going off the rails I knocked on every service that was out there and I had given up as all the doors were closed. I tried so hard to help him getting the support he needed. I cannot find the words to thank XXX for all she has done for XXX. He is honestly a changed young man today. He looks to the future and realizes his family love him, and the Social Services sector who we often see in the media are getting criticized.

Adoption:

- The training was very good; incredibly well delivered, we were amongst a good group & felt we learnt a lot over the 4 days.

Children in Care & Care Leavers:

- I would like to send a compliment about XXX's practice. Review reports are always detailed and completed with the young person, they are timely, and she will always update me with any changes. It is always apparent that she has the young person centre and is always forward planning well in advance to ensure she gets the best outcomes for the young people she works with. Any actions are always diarized and acted on.
- Throughout the time that I have known XXX, she has been highly professional and has consistently placed the child at the heart of all that she does. She has a wonderful rapport and relationship with XXX and I am grateful that she will continue to be his social worker when he moves on to High School. Everyone who has worked alongside XXX has commented on her personable nature and the child centered approach that she takes.
- Thank you again so so much it will work out because I want it to so bad as does XXX and all of the kids and all my family. But honestly, I think you have made a massive difference to us all as I was saying if there is no connection with the worker then it is kind of setting you up to fail. But I can honestly say I can tell you anything as I did, you seen me at my darkest times, and you were there for me and that I will never forget. An also that is not

being a social worker, that is being someone who honestly cares, and you definitely do care, you're a special person x

Education Psychology:

- I just wanted to say thank you so much for the webinars, I've re-watched them several times as I've worked through literacy cases this term. I have been using your assessment materials and the schools are really appreciating the individualised programs and targets we can put in place as a result.

Intensive Prevention Service:

- Just wanted to email to say what an amazing support XXX has been to both the young person he works with in our academy and also the staff. I have no doubt that he is going above and beyond what is expected of him with his job role. He fully supports us as a school, and it has been an absolute pleasure working with him these past couple of months. XXX not only listens to the child but also the staff and will do his very best in supporting both.

Early Help Resourcing SEND Education:

- I am just emailing because this is our final day in school for this year and I wanted to extend my huge gratitude to yourself and your team. Nothing is every too much trouble for you all and you are always at the end of a phone when we need; I cannot tell you how much we appreciate that. Thank you all for the wonderful work you put in for our pupils. We had our leavers assembly today, and the thought struck me that all of the achievements which our pupils have made, would never have happened if it were not for all of your work. So, thank you all very much.
- After our telephone conversation yesterday, i just wanted to confirm in email how pleased and happy I was with the help and support I received from XXX throughout our EHCP. Nothing was ever too much to ask, and she always kept in close contact and was very reassuring and very prompt without hesitation. I cannot thank her enough for her hard work in getting my daughter's school placement in our school of choice, already my daughter is showing enthusiasm and is happy in her new school. Without a doubt she was the best key worker we had throughout our long journey.

Fostering:

- From the word go with XXX the support that she gave us on the SGO package to help and guide us through has been amazing. She is always there at the end of the phone to support us. The support group she has done are so helpful giving us advice and meet others SGO people and she listens and has always got time to listen to us all and she makes us laugh and picks us up when things get us down. Even when our SGO was taking so long and XXX was took off us for a while she was still there to help. XXX was there to give us fantastic support and get it sorted always keeping up dated and phoned

when she said she would. We would love to say a big thank you to XXX for all you have done for us on our journey, and we know that you will always be there for us.

Admissions:

- I am writing to express my deepest and sincerest thanks for the help one of your team, XXX has given me over the last 12 months relating to my daughter's primary school place. We found ourselves in the stressful situation of trying to secure a primary school place before we had moved to the area. I must have sent XXX about 20 emails asking about different scenarios, and each time she responded with patience, politeness, and professionalism. She really helped us to understand the process, and, to cut a long story short, my daughter is now happily settled in our primary school of choice. I cannot commend her service enough. She is a real asset to your team.

Annual Report Analysis and Commentary:

The data contained within this report shows that there has been a decrease across some parts of the Complaints Procedures, yet this is balanced with an increase across others. Whilst it can be assumed that a decrease in certain aspects of complaints may produce a lower workload, it should be acknowledged and noted that each piece of correspondence which is received by the Complaints Team requires a detailed screening assessment to determine its eligibility to be further investigated. This assessment process is usually undertaken in conjunction with the relevant service area and requires careful consideration, with the risk of being found at fault by the LGSCO if the decision is ultimately considered wrong. The initial assessment process of complaints accounts for a large proportion of administrative time and the Complaints Team wish to express our gratitude that despite the pressures they have experienced themselves this year, staff within the services continue to work closely in conjunction with us and provide their knowledge when called upon.

A new structure across the service with a new management hierarchy has resulted in the Complaints Team making some changes to the way in which we work. A change in reporting methods has taken place, with data being provided on a more real time basis; it is hoped that this method can continue to evolve to encompass valuable data which can be fed down to the services and have an impact on performance management within complaints. The timescales for responding to complaints this reporting year show no improvement however, the Complaints Team would stress the pressures which the services have been under since the transformation, and it is hoped that now the structure is becoming further embedded, that this figure can improve.

Learning from all complainants continues to be a key theme of the work of the Complaints Team. This reporting year has seen the implementation of sharing compliments in a wider sense, through a quarterly learning from complaints report. The focus of this is to emphasise that learning does not solely need to come from complaints and that positive feedback can also initiate conversations across all services. A selection of compliments has been shared within each quarterly report, along with the reflection and views of the individual practitioner. This

reflection has been valuable in providing an insight into the way in which they approached certain situations and how they considered their practice had resulted in positive feedback.

This work will continue throughout the next reporting year, working alongside the Principal Social Worker to ensure learning from all feedback can be disseminated across the service.

Staff are thanked for their cooperation in respect of LGSCO matters this reporting year, in what has been a difficult period in respect of formal public reports being received. It is acknowledged that the LGSCO request a high level of information with rigid timescales to respond by which will no doubt impact the workload of the staff concerned. The Complaints Team will continue to work with the LGSCO to develop further understanding as to their decision-making process, particularly surrounding financial payments.

There is a clear increase in complaints relating to the Early Help Resourcing and Education services this reporting year. When looking at previous Annual Reports, this is a service which fluctuates year on year in respect of complaints recorded. It is appreciated that newly appointed managers within these services may be new to investigating and responding to complaints, and the Complaints Team are keen to offer guidance wherever possible and will continue to develop this working relationship during the coming months.

Compliments for the Local Authority have slightly decreased upon the previous year, however positive feedback should not be measured in this way as each individual compliment should be held in the highest possible regard. It is known just how valuable and appreciated each compliment is to staff members, who are working in areas which can be demanding and challenging. It should also be noted that senior managers are equally as thankful for each positive piece of feedback received and will celebrate the practitioner's achievements and congratulate them personally. During a time where staff have had to significantly adapt and alter their working patterns, positive feedback is appreciated more than ever.

The Complaints Team continue to receive exceptional support from managers at all levels within the department and despite the ongoing pressures faced by all staff within the services, their cooperation and willingness to investigate and respond to complaints is routinely noted.

Report Author: Elaine Hemming, Complaints Officer – Children and Families Services.

Local Members Interest
If report is relevant to ALL Members, type 'N/A' into table OR Insert Members Name and Electoral Division

Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 19 July 2022

Customer Feedback and Complaints Service Adult Social Care Annual Report 2021/22

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that the Committee:

Consider the Annual Report of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Service, Adults Social Services 2021/22, taking the opportunity for any comments on the content of the report.

Report of Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Wellbeing.

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

The Committee are asked to consider the Annual Report of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Service, Adult Social Services 2021/22 in order that comments can be taken into account.

Report

Background

1. The appended report fulfils the Council's duty to publish an Annual Report on the activity of the Statutory Complaints and Representation Service on behalf of the Council.
2. The operation of the Statutory Complaints Procedure was established under the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 and the Local Authority Act 1970. The report provides information about activity during twelve months between April 2021 and March 2022 in respect of statutory complaints relating to Adult Social Care.

3. The Annual Report, Customer Feedback and Complaints Services, Adults Social Services 2021/2022 is being submitted for scrutiny and endorsement.
4. The report contains information about the nature of complaints received, together with responses provided and their handling by the Council.
5. Organisational Learning remains at the heart of the legislation. This is reflected in the function of the Responsible Person and Actions Plans that ensure steps are taken to improve, where services may have failed to deliver to an acceptable standard.

Contact Details

Assistant Director: **Tracy Thorley, Assistant Director for Corporate Operations.**

Report Author: Kate Bullivant
Job Title: Complaints, Access to Information & School Appeals Manager

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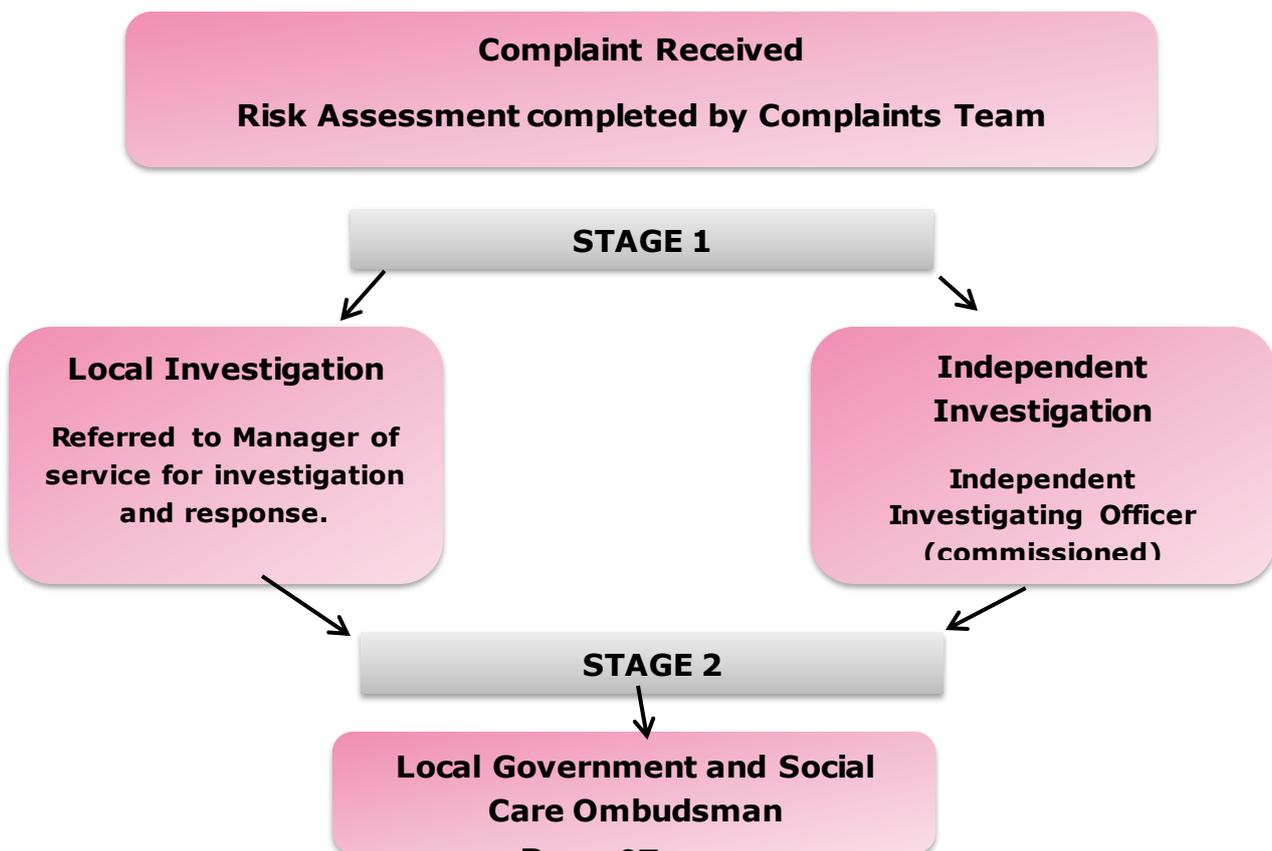
Introduction

This report provides information about complaints made during the twelve months between the 1 April 2021 and the 31 March 2022 under the complaints and representations procedures established under the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 and the Local Authority Act 1970.

From April 2012 Adult Social Care, Older People’s front line services were transferred over to Midland Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (formally Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent NHS Partnership Trust). From April 2017 the Trust co-ordinates all statutory complaints which relate to Adult Social Care services provided by the Trust.

The Statutory Complaints Procedure

The Council has a statutory obligation to operate a complaints procedure concerning statutory provision for adults. This is in accordance with the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009. These regulations set expectations for the handling of complaints by Councils, NHS bodies, Primary Care providers and independent sector providers responsible for the provision of NHS and Social Care.



Criteria for Accessing the Statutory Complaints Procedure

Who can Complain?

The NHS and Community Care Act 1990 and the Local Authority Act 1970 places the following restrictions on who can access this procedure:

- Complaints under these procedures must be made by or on behalf of an eligible person and must be in respect of that person
- An eligible person is anyone for whom the Council has a power or duty to provide, or secure the provision of a service, and this need or possible need has come to the attention of the Council
- Complaints can be made on behalf of an eligible person where the eligible person lacks capacity to make the complaint themselves (In accordance with the Mental Capacity Act 2008 or has given explicit and verified consent for the Complainant to act on their behalf

Time Limit:

Section 12 of the statutory regulations advise that the complaint must be made no later than 12 months after the date in which the matter which is the subject of the complaint came to the notice of the complainant, unless the complainant has good reason for not making the complaint within this time limit.

Overview

Careful consideration is given to the operation of the Complaints Procedure to ensure an appropriate and proportionate response is provided. Communication, coordination and information sharing are critical and ensure that safeguarding measures are applied where necessary. In addition, liaison with the Council's Care Commissioning and Midland Partnership Foundation NHS Trust ensures a coordinated response to concerns about commissioned services. Similarly, dialogue with the office of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman ensures that the Local Authority is able to take steps to resolve complaints locally where possible.

Key Numbers



145

**Statutory Stage 1
Complaints**



25

**Local Government
and Social Care
Complaints**



2

**Statutory
Independent
Investigations**



283

**Complaints
handled
informally**

TOP 3 areas of complaint

Delay in receiving service

Poor communication

Financial Assessment – assessed
charge

Page 69

The total amount of monies
paid to complainants as an
outcome of an

Ombudsman

investigation is **£250** in
recognition for the time and
trouble in raising the complaint
and any distress caused

Comparison with Preceding Year

In comparison with the previous years, we have seen a reduction in Stage 1 complaints recorded for this financial year, however there has been an increase in complaints which been resolved informally with support from the Complaints Team.

The Complaints Team takes into account that for this reporting year some clients may have chosen / or not been able to receive some services as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lock-down restrictions. Such as home care, direct payments for support and respite services.

The Complaints Team has continued to be operational during this time, however the availability of staff within the service areas has impacted on the response timescales due to staff resource being targeted towards providing essential services and supporting communities.

SCC Adult Social Care Services			
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Local Investigation	187	145	145
Independent Investigation	0	1	2
Local Government Ombudsman	35	23	25

Staffordshire County Council Adult Social Care Services

Stage 1 – Local Investigation – Breakdown

The complaints procedure aims to resolve complaints at a local level within 20 days. This is not a statutory time limit but a goal for effective complaints management. According to the complexity and needs for an effective investigation, this timescale can be extended by agreement with the complainant.

The current guidance suggests that the majority of complaints should be resolved locally, and frontline managers are encouraged to meet with complainants and attempt to address complaints in a swift and effective manner.

145 complaints were recorded under Stage 1 – Local Investigation during 2021-22. This is consistent with the previous year.

Service	District (if applicable)	Number
Adult Learning Disability Team		
	<i>South Staffordshire</i>	<i>16</i>
	<i>North Staffordshire</i>	<i>4</i>
	<i>Young Adults Team</i>	<i>8</i>
	<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>28</i>
Adult Social Care First Contact		<u>9</u>
Care Commissioning in Adult Social Care;		
- Brokerage Service		20
- All Age Disability & Mental Health		0
- Older People & Physical Disabilities		3
- Care Provider – Home Care agency		4
- Care Provider – Residential / Nursing		2
- Provider Incident and Management Support		1
	<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>30</i>
Contact Centre – Staffordshire Cares		<u>3</u>
Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)		<u>2</u>
Financial Services;		
- Debt Recovery		7
- Direct Payments Team		2
- Non-Residential		14
- Residential		8
- Welfare Benefits & Fairer Charging		38
	<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>69</i>
Fixed Equipment Team (Dolphin lifts)		<u>2</u>
Adult Safeguarding		<u>2</u>
Total		<u>145</u>

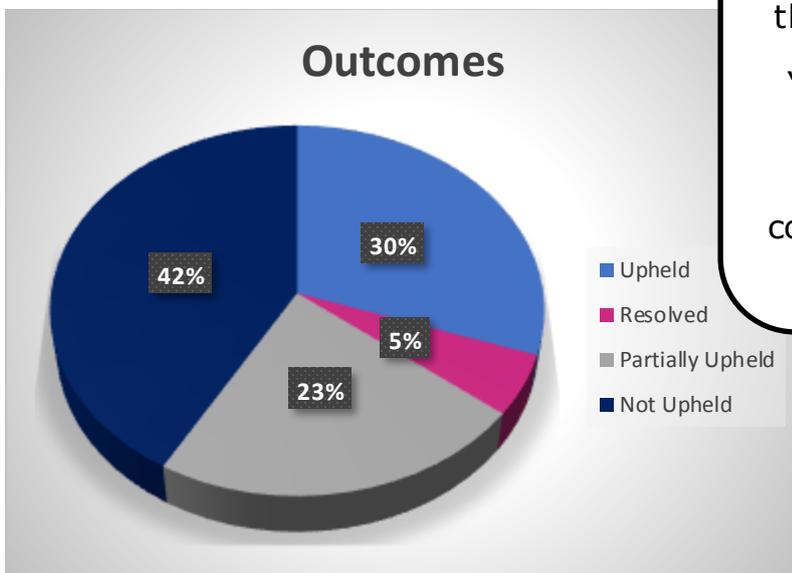
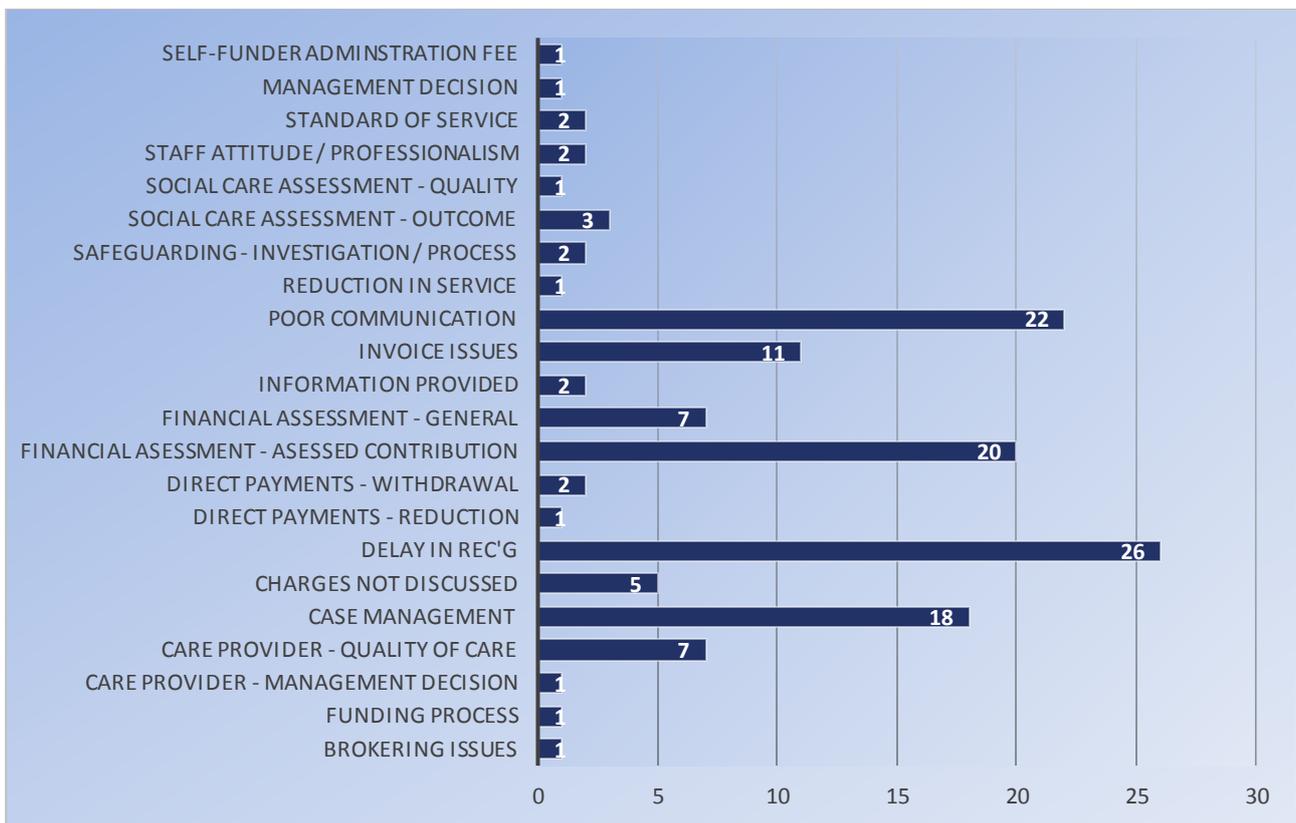
It is important to note that some complaints concern more than one service area and therefore require a joint response. However, each service area is recorded separately in the table above in order to capture all areas of complaint.

48% of the Stage 1 Complaints received were in respect of Financial Services. This was mainly concerning the outcome of a financial assessment and the length of time taken to conclude. This figure is consistent with previous years and continues to be an area of concern for the client and / or their representation.

Last financial year, the Brokerage Service investigated 7 Stage 1 Complaints. This financial year has seen the figure increase to 20 Stage 1 Complaints. This was due to the demand for sourcing placements / home care packages following hospital discharge.

Stage 1 – Local Investigation Adults Social Care (Council) – Overview of Nature of Complaint and Outcomes

The charts below provides an overview of the nature of complaints received during 2021-22 and the outcome of the complaints investigated.



34% of complaints received were the 'delay in receiving' a service and 'poor communication'. **15%** of complaints were regarding the assessed weekly financial contribution following the outcome of a financial assessment

Stage 1 – Local Investigation Adult Social Care (Council) – Breakdown by Service

The charts below show the nature of complaint and outcome for services areas within Staffordshire County Council during 2021/22.

Adult Learning Disability Team

The number of complaints received for Adult Learning Disability Team’s this reporting year is consistent in comparison with the previous year. 28 complaints were registered last financial year compared to **28** this year. The service carried out **221** assessments of new people and **1,384** reviews of people who are already receiving care 2021/22

Nature of Complaint



43% of complaints were regarding

Case Management by practitioners. This includes the management of an individual person’s case by the allocated worker. This is consistent with the previous year whereby 39% of complaints were regarding case management

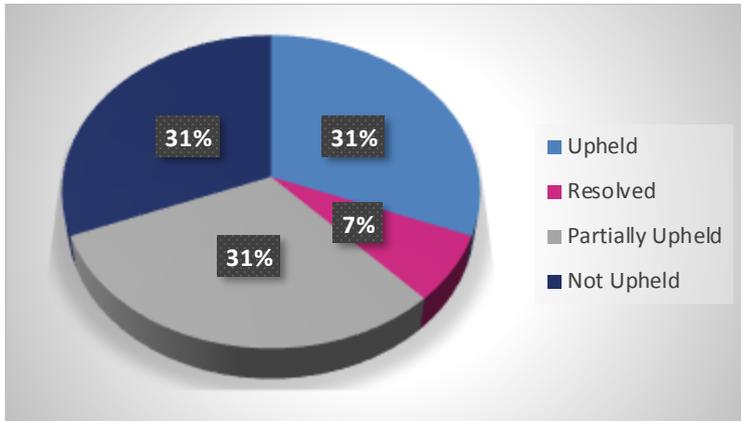
29% of complaints were regarding **Social Care**

Assessments – this includes the quality of an assessment and / or the outcome which has resulted in a reduction in services and / or direct payments .

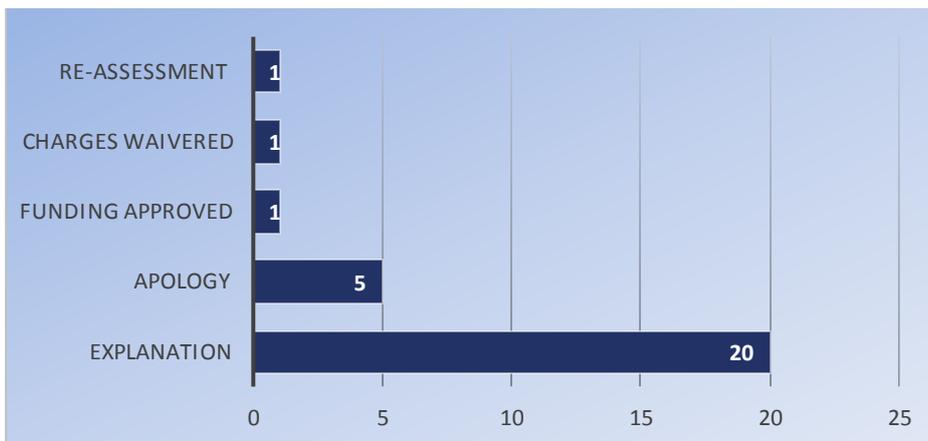
Outcome of Complaint

The data below show the outcome of the complaints investigated for the Adult Learning Disability Teams during 2021/22.

Finding



Recommendation / Learning Action



Organisational Learning and Recommendations

- Apology provided where complaints were Upheld.
- Explanation of events provided to complainant.
- Advocate appointed to assist during assessment process.
- Adult learning Disabilities Service to develop a thorough and rolling programme of training for all members of the team. A skills gap analysis to be completed initially to enable training to be identified to ensure that the workforce are skilled in completing assessments with relevant knowledge to the areas they are working in.
- Staffordshire County Council does have a manager and supervisors training programme and it is recommended that all Senior social workers ensure that they complete this course.
- Reinforce existing processes in respect of communication with service users and / or their representative.

Adults and Children’s Financial Services (ACFS)

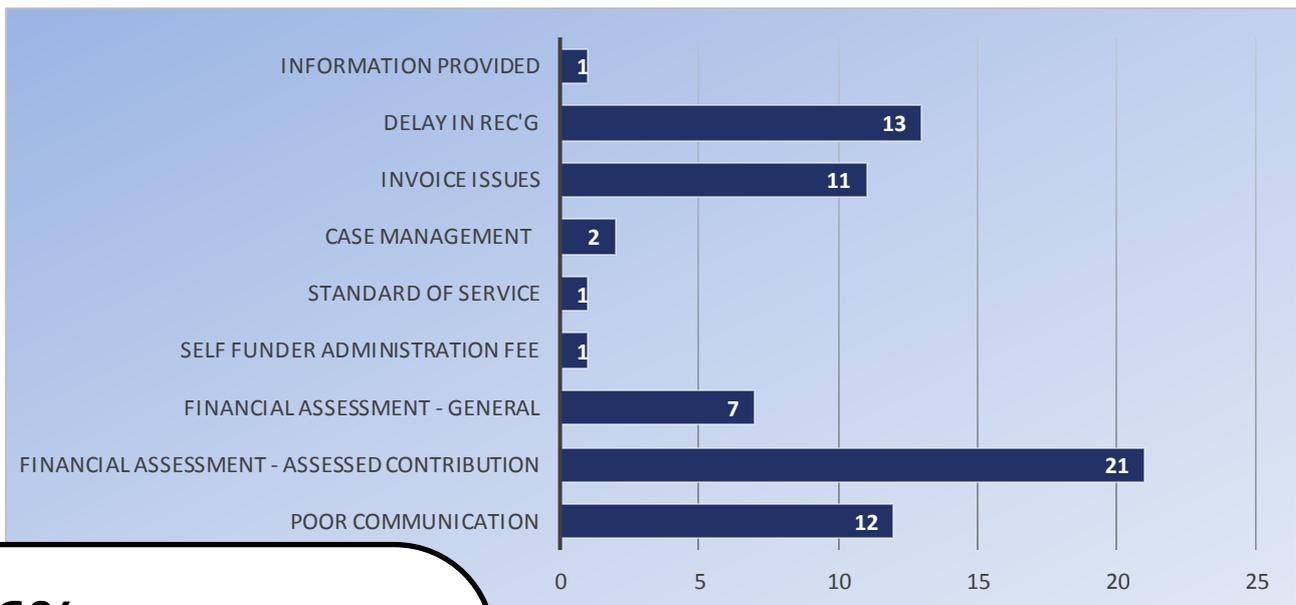
The detail below includes the following service areas;

- **Welfare Benefits and Fairer Charging Services;**
- **Residential and Non-Residential Finance Team;**
- **Debt Recovery;**
- **Direct Payments.**

ACFS completed 4865 financial assessments this financial year annually. Of those, 1994 were financial reassessments.

The number of complaints received for ACFS this reporting year slightly increased by **18%** in comparison to last financial year. **57** complaints were registered last financial year compared to **69** this year

Nature of Complaint

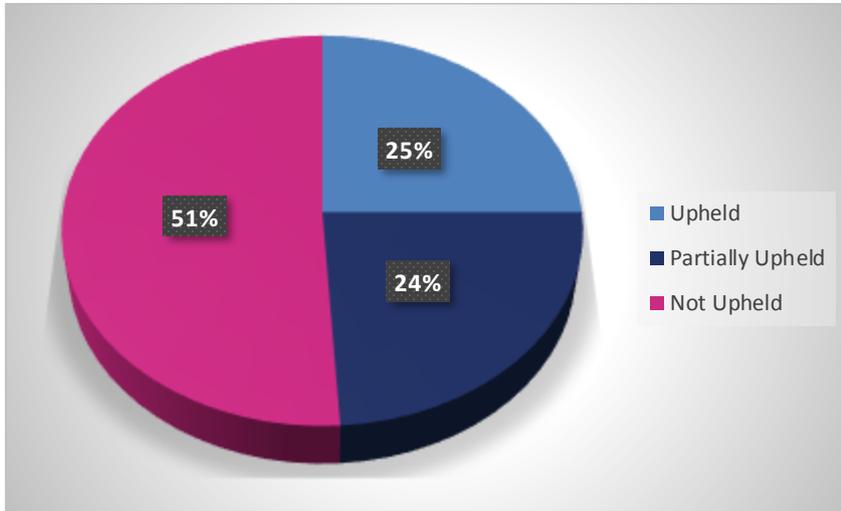


36% of complaints received were regarding **poor communication** and **delay in receiving** a service. This also includes length of time for contact to be made with the citizen following receipt of a financial assessment request. This is an increase of 8 complaints regarding this area in comparison to last year.

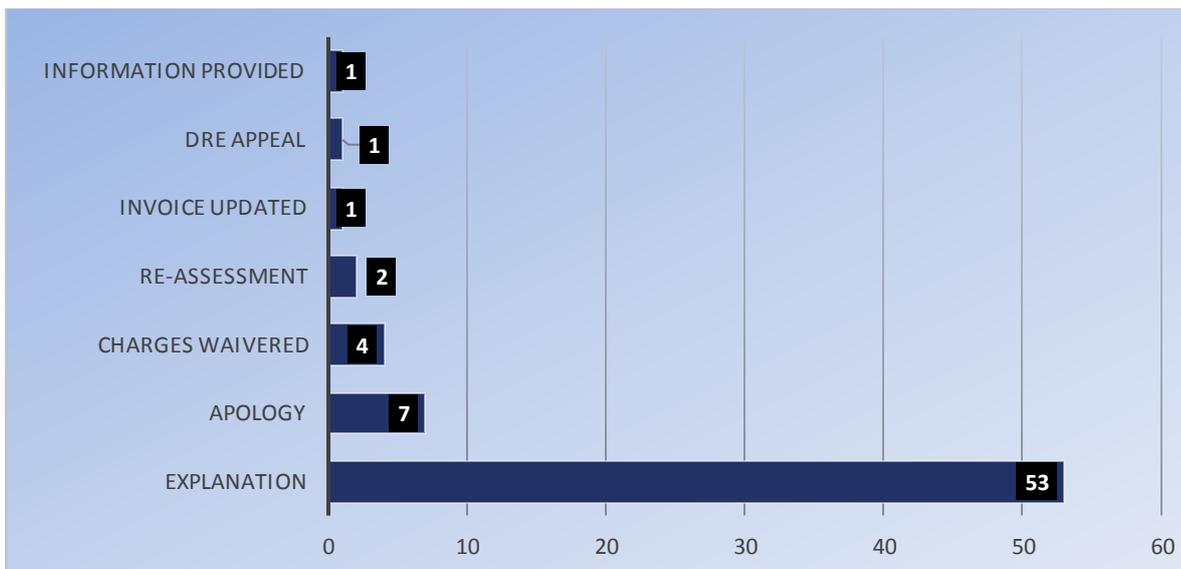
30% of the complaints received were regarding the **assessed weekly client contribution**. This was due to the weekly charge increasing following an assessment / re-assessment in line with the Care Act.

Outcome of Complaint

Finding



Recommendation / Learning Action



Resolutions and Organisation Learning;

- Apology provided where complaints were Upheld
- Explanation of events provided to complainant.
- Explanation of financial assessment process and DRE that is included.
- Explanation of invoice and charges.
- 4 complaints resulted in charges being written off, including £400 administration fee for self-funders.
- DRE appeal offered.
- Invoice updated to reflect care received
- Review of the existing process for notice periods.

Care Commissioning in Adult Social Care

The detail below includes the following services:

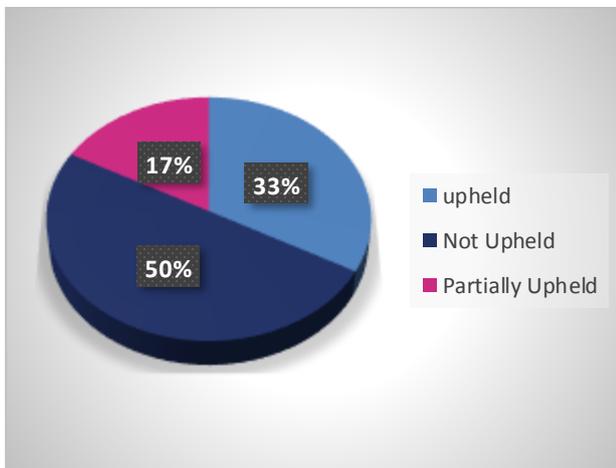
- **Older People and Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment**
- **All Age Disability & Adult Mental Health (AD&AMH)**
- **Care Providers e.g. Home Care Agency and Residential Homes**
- **Supported Living / Extra Care**
- **Provider Incident and Management Support**

Nature of complaint



60% of complaints received for Care Commissioning were regarding the **service provided by a Care Provider**. The Council becomes involved with the complaint if the complainant is unhappy with responses previously received by management of the Care Provider.

Outcome



Resolutions and Organisation Learning

- Reviewed the data provided by the provider has found out that the care company did not spend more than 15 minutes when they were required to stay for 30 minutes. Found that the support plan cannot be delivered in this amount of time. Apology provided and the outcome addressed with the care company to prevent it happening in the future.
- Apology / Explanation provided following contact with the home care agency in respect of the complaint raised.
- Apology provided for an administrative error which resulted in a letter being sent to a recently deceased citizen.

Care Commissioning continued.

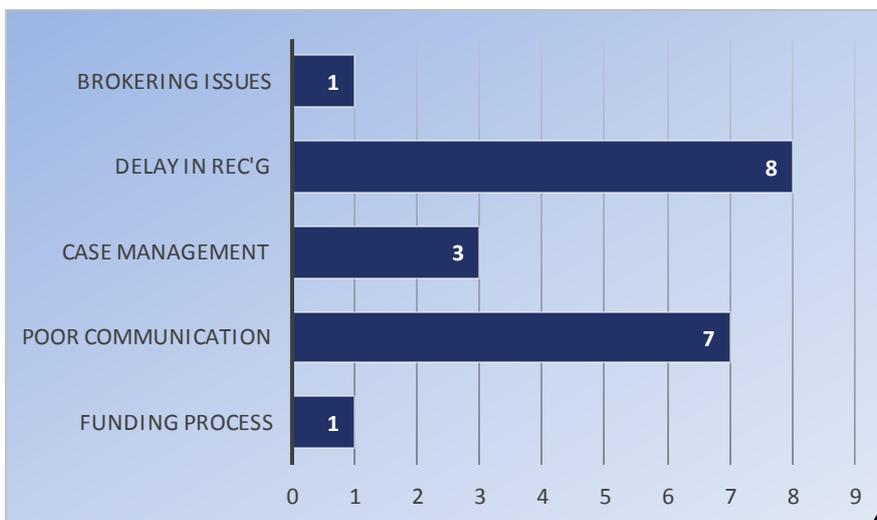
Brokerage Service

The Brokerage Service are responsible for sourcing a provider for home care and residential establishments for service users following a social care assessment when a service has been identified. It is important to note that some complaints investigated by Brokerage also required input from MPFT in order to provide a full answer to the complaint raised. This is because MPFT undertake the social care assessment.

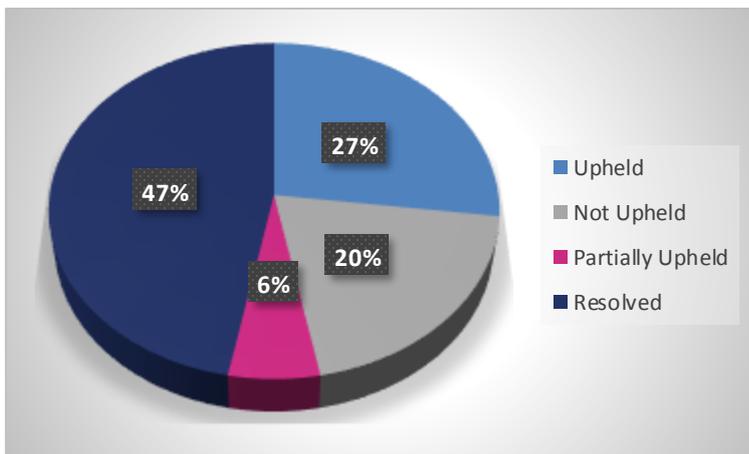
During 2021/22, the Brokerage Service actioned / sourced 8,628 care packages and placement requests

Last financial year, the Brokerage Service investigated **7** Stage 1 Complaints. This financial year has seen the figure increase to **20** Stage 1 Complaints. This was due to the demand for sourcing placements / home care packages following hospital discharge

Nature of complaint and Outcome



40% of complaints were regarding the **'delay'** in sourcing a care provider following the outcome of a social care assessment.



35% of complaints were in relation to **Poor Communication** from the Brokerage Service. This includes telephone calls not returned and lack of updates provided to families.

Resolutions and Organisation Learning

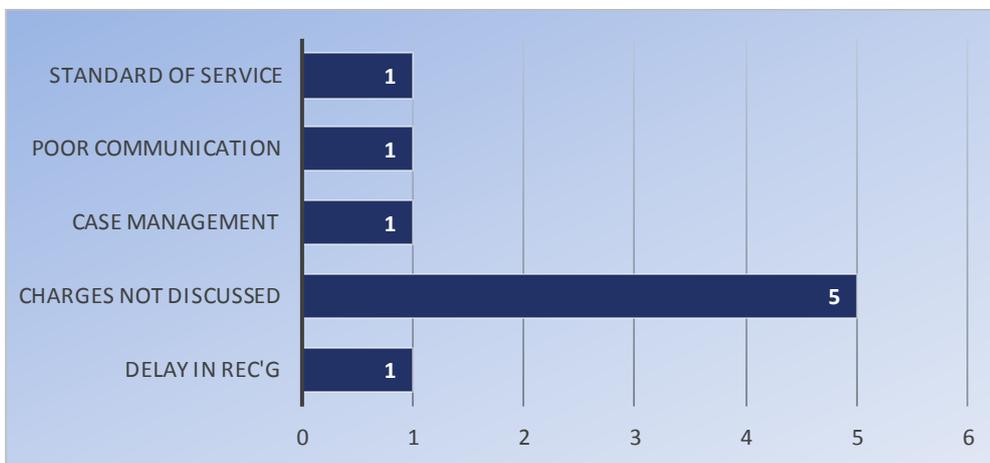
- Explanation of events provided, and processes followed by Brokerage.
- Complaints closed as 'resolved' were due to a provider being sourced during the complaints process.
- Apology provided for the delay's incurred during the brokering process.

Adult Social Care First Contact Team

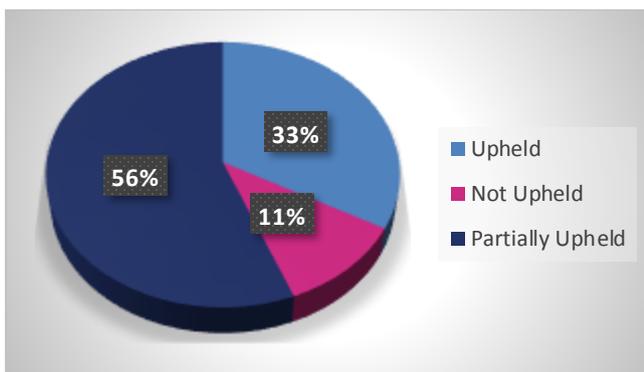
The service is point of contact for citizens who wish to request social care assistance and initial assessments are undertaken in order to establish whether a referral is made to MPFT or sign-posting to other services. During this financial year the service resolved 4,558 assessments from a total of 8,926 referrals.

The service received **9** complaints which were investigated under Stage 1 of the complaints process. There has been a **33%** decrease in complaints received for the First Contact Team in comparison to last financial year.

Nature of complaint



Outcome



55% of complaint's received were regarding **charges not being discussed** during the assessment process.

Resolutions and Organisation Learning

- Apology provided to those complaints upheld and partially upheld.
- Explanation provided in respect of whether charging was discussed with the service user.
- The first 4 weeks of the invoice waived - due to delays in financial assessment being sent out and lack of information provided by First Contact Team. £250 time and trouble payment for time taken in pursuing complaint and further delays with the invoice being sent out.

Stage 1 – Independent Investigation Adults Social Care

Independent investigation is initiated in circumstances where a complaint is complex and / or a level of seriousness is identified. This is often in circumstances of multi-agency involvement. The independent investigation is conducted by a commissioned external Investigating Officer.

A report of investigation is produced that details conclusions reached and recommends action to both resolve the complaint and make improvements for the organisation. The relevant Senior Officer adjudicates the report and provides the Council's formal response to the complainant.

The timescale under this part of the procedure is 25 days, although there is facility to agree with the complainant an extension up to 65 days. (Again, this is not a statutory requirement but an operational goal that may be subject to negotiation)

There have been **2** complaints independently investigated during 2021/22.

The first complaint was regarding an overcharge for home care, and about the quality of the care provided. The complaint also concerned Adult Social Care professionals at Midland Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT).

The complaints were directed to Staffordshire County Council as the public body with statutory responsibility for adult social care provision.

Recommendations

- **It is recommended that the Senior Officers responsible for complaints at both MPFT and SCC use this Complaint Investigation as a learning exercise and consider the need for the better sharing of information on the outcomes of complaints relating to SCC commissioned services, and what steps can be taken to improve service delivery and avoid further complaints e.g. as a result it might be jointly agreed to offer MPFT Adult Social Care staff training on the role of the Debt Recovery Team in recovering unpaid care fees.**

The Council and MPFT review all complaint feedback monthly to inform guidance and training; and training has been completed on debt recovery processes.

- **It is Recommended that the Finance Team offer an apology to the complainant for the delay experienced in resolving the complaint about her mother being overcharged for her care.**
- **It is recommended that an apology be offered to the complainant for the references made to involving the Police if the outstanding Care fees were not settled.**

The **second complaint** investigation was undertaken on behalf of Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT). The investigation focused on a safeguarding enquiry which was led by MPFT following concerns raised by family members in respect of their mother regarding alleged financial, emotional and psychological abuse.

Recommendations

Following a full investigation and access to the safeguarding documents the complaint investigation found no fault with the findings of the safeguarding investigation.

Stage 2 - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaints (to include Staffordshire County Council and Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust - MPFT)

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) is empowered to investigate where it appears that a Council's own investigations have not resolved the complaint. Whilst anyone can approach the Ombudsman at any time, the Complainant is usually required to first take up their complaint with the relevant Council to allow a local response. However, if the Complainant remains dissatisfied following local or independent investigation by the Council they then have the right to pursue the matter with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

The Local Authority has received 25 complaints which have been referred to the LGSCO, 13 complaints were fully investigated by the LGSCO and 3 were referred back to the local authority for investigation. 9 complaints were closed after enquiries were made with the Council and it was concluded that the Council was not at fault / and or outside of the LGSCO's jurisdiction.

Compared to last financial year, the numbers of complaint considered by the Ombudsman have reduced from **18** to **13** full investigations.

Summary of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaints

Service	Nature	Outcome	Recommendation
Care Commissioning	Mr X complained on behalf of (the late) Mr P. Mr X complained the care provider contracted by the Council failed to provide some of the care Mr P needed and failed to stay for the agreed 30minutes. Mr X said the Council also failed to consider paying compensation for the lack of care provided by the care provider. Mr X also complained the Council failed to change the care provider when he asked for this.	Upheld – Maladministration and injustice	Provide an apology to Mr X. Share the lessons learned with its staff, especially around how to deal with a request for a financial remedy following a safeguarding investigation and how to respond to requests to change care provider. SCC have obtained all the records from the provider, and this shows that the carers did not stay the full time. A refund of £3884.00 to be made to Mr X
Care Commissioning	Mrs X complains on behalf of her mother, Mrs Y. She complains the care home organised by the Council failed to look after Mrs Y's belongings and a number	Upheld – Maladministration and injustice	The Council should arrange for Mrs X to make a claim to the care provider directly for the items Mrs Y lost. The lack of the original inventory

	of items were lost when she moved to a new care home.		should not be detrimental to Mrs X's claim. To facilitate the claim the care provider should write to Mrs X and explain who to send her claim to. The Council (or the care provider on its behalf) should pay Mrs Y £250 to recognise the impact of the lost items and the time and trouble that Mrs X and Mrs Y were put to in making their complaint.
Care commissioning	Mrs D complains about Staffordshire County Council (the Council) and a care provider on behalf of her son, Mr E. She complains about the care provided to her son between May 2019 and March 2021. Mrs D says the failings meant Mr E was left distressed and unsafe, causing her worry. She says he had an 8 stone weight gain in 22 months and was left in pain with his foot condition, that later needed private treatment. Mrs D says Mr E's car was also badly damaged.	Upheld – Maladministration and injustice	Care provider has agreed to pay Mr E's insurance excess for the claim related to damage that happened when he was a resident, if an excess was payable. Mrs D will need to provide evidence to provider of the excess amount and that this has been paid. Within one month of the date of the Ombudsmen's final decision statement the provider will contact Mrs D to ask for evidence an excess has been paid by Mr E related to this claim. It can then repay this amount to Mr E.
Adult Learning Disability Team	Mr D complained about the Council's intention to move his brother (Mr X) to a residential care home and make changes to his care. As a result, Mr D is concerned his brother's needs would not be properly met. He also said his brother would experience distress from a change of setting.	Decision not to investigate	The investigation into this complaint will be discontinued. This is because the changes complained about has not happened or been decided. There is therefore no injustice to consider.
Adults and Children's Financial Services	Mrs X complains about the outcome of her father's financial assessment in relation to care charges, which was carried out in 2016.	Decision not to investigate	Closed after initial enquiries - out of jurisdiction
Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	Mr K complains that the Council failed to properly carry out a care assessment and financial	Under investigation	Under investigation

	assessment of Mr Derek Johnson. He says the Council also delayed dealing with his complaint and did not provide an appropriate resolution.		
Legal Services	SCC refusal to remove legal charge from property. Charge is a loan.	Decision not to investigate	Complaint closed - Decision not to investigate - outside of jurisdiction
Care Commissioning	Mrs X complains about the home care provided to her late mother (Mrs B) by a private care agency arranged by the Council. In particular, Mrs X complains about: a) Mrs B being left unsafe and neglected. b) Being told not to visit her mother during the Covid-19 lockdown. c) Mrs B being asked for money to pay for cleaning. d) The attitude and conduct of the Agency manager towards her.	Awaiting Final Statement	Awaiting Final Statement
Care Commissioning	Ms X complains the Council told her to remove her conservatory ahead of works to adapt her home then denied doing so. She says she has lost property value due to removing the conservatory	Decision not to investigate	Complaint closed - Decision not to investigate - outside of jurisdiction
Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	Mr T complains about the way the Council decided that the care and support needs of his brother could be met at his home, and he therefore did not qualify for a Deferred Payment Agreement. Mr T also complains about delays by the Council and its failure to provide information and reply to his correspondence	Under investigation	Under investigation
Adults and Children's Financial Services Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)	Mr and Mrs W complain about the way the Council completed a financial assessment when mother was no longer eligible for healthcare funding. They also complain about the way the Council completed the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) process. They say the Council's communication	Premature complaint	Referred back to Council for investigation via Stage 1 of the complaints process

	was poor and it did not provide written information about the financial assessment process and this has left them with uncertainty about what information it took into account.		
Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	Mr X complained Staffordshire County Council reduced his care despite his needs and circumstances not changing. 2. Mr X said this caused him avoidable distress and a financial loss because he is paying for some care and activities from his own money.	Not Upheld – No maladministration	The Council acted in line with Care and Support Statutory Guidance before reducing Mr X's care hours and direct payment. So there was no fault
Care Commissioning	Standard of care provided to service user by provider	Premature complaint	Referred back to Council for investigation.
Adults and Children's Financial Services	Mr X complains there was fault in the way the Council calculated his DRE (for heating costs). He says this caused him a financial loss because his care costs are more than they should be and he has an outstanding debt of unpaid charges	Not Upheld – No Maladministration	There is no fault in the way the Council assessed Mr X's disability expenses. I have completed the investigation.
Adult First Contact Team	Mrs X complained the Council failed to meet her late father, Mr Y's social care needs. She says it failed to provide him with a wheelchair and other equipment and failed to support them with finding care services. As a result, he was not allowed to die in comfort and dignity which caused her and the family significant distress.	Upheld – Maladministration and injustice	Apology to Mrs X for the distress caused to her by its failure to complete a holistic assessment of Mr Y's needs. The Council has agreed to provide evidence of the procedural changes it has made to improve contact with referrers and to ensure referrers are made aware of the outcome of an assessment.
Prisons and Approved Premises Social Work Team	Ms X complained about Staffordshire County Council (Staffordshire) and Birmingham City Council (Birmingham.) She said both councils failed to support her late father Mr Y when he was released from prison. 2. Ms X said the councils' failings caused Mr Y and his family avoidable distress. She	Under investigation	Under investigation

	said on the day Mr Y was released from prison, she had to sit in the car with Mr Y, who had autism and was seriously ill, not knowing where he was going to live or who was going to provide his care.		
Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	Mrs Y's family complain on her behalf that the Council has failed to carry out proper safeguarding investigations into circumstances surrounding her mother's care. The family says the Council has not shared information with them or properly responded to concerns raised by the family	Decision not to investigate	Discontinued investigation into the family's complaint because Mrs Y does not consent to the family complaining on her behalf and does not wish to pursue a complaint herself.
Care Commissioning	Mr Z says the Council took six months to discharge him from a home following an assessment in 2017. This led to charges of £4,186.99 which he thinks are unfair because he was ready to go home as soon as the assessment was done.	Decision not to investigate	Closed after initial enquiries - out of jurisdiction
Adults and Children's Financial Services	Mrs X complains on behalf of her husband, Mr X. She says the Council has increased Mr X's care fees by without justification. She says this has caused him financial pressure and stress. She wants the Council to reduce the costs and be clear and transparent with the information it provides in the future.	Upheld - Maladministration and injustice	To apologise to Mr Y for the injustice caused by the faults identified. The Council complete the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the quality of charging information and advice provided to the Council's residents with non-residential care needs by directing them to the Council's charging policy and the Statutory Guidance in charging letters; • Review all charging complaints and respond to the ones which were raised more than 12 weeks from the date of the final decision. The Council will complete the above within three months of the final decision. Final decision

Adults and Children's Financial Services	Ms Q complains on behalf of her aunt, A, that her care charges have unfairly been increased, and that she has not had an updated financial assessment.	Decision not to investigate	Decision not to investigate. This is because any minor fault by the Council has been acknowledged, and did not cause significant injustice.
Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	Ms X complains the Council failed to provide help when she tried to restart her meals-on-wheels service after coming out of hospital and during a period when the service stopped without notice. Ms X also complains the Council provided no care or support after her discharge from hospital. Ms X says because of the Council's fault she suffered unnecessary time, costs and upset during an already difficult time and damage to her previously good relationship with her doctor	Under investigation	Under investigation
Care Commissioning	Complaint regarding Architect fees for plans that were drawn up and presented to Planning at Millbrook. Such plans were found to be flawed as the wheelchair access arrangements on those plans were found to be not suitable for wheelchair access.	Premature complaint	Premature complaint. Complaint to be investigated via home improvement agency in first instance.
Adults and Children's Financial Services	Complaint regarding an invoice received for residential care. Family were under the impression that the care was fully funded.	Awaiting allocation	Awaiting allocation
Care Commissioning	Mrs D says that two carers for her husband behaved inappropriately in their interaction with him. She says the behaviour was inconsistent with the contract she has with the care provide	Decision not to investigate	Decision not to investigate because Mrs D has not provided evidence of consent or authority to complaint on behalf of her husband. Additionally, the alleged injustice is insufficient to warrant investigation.
Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	Mrs X complains the Council has failed to carry out proper safeguarding investigations into circumstances surrounding	Decision not to investigate	Decision not to investigate Mr X's complaint because she has not been caused an injustice as a result of the Council's actions and

her mother's care. Mrs X says the Council has not shared information with her or properly responded to concerns raised by the family.

she has a right to take the matter to court.

Other Activity

In addition to the recording and administering of Statutory Complaints, the Customer Feedback and Complaint Service have formally acknowledged and monitored an additional **283** enquiries each requiring redirection to other organisations/authorities or action into other procedures.

Dealt with by Complaints Team*	138
Referred to Adult Social Care (MPFT)**	52
Joint Statutory Stage 1 response with other organisation / NHS	6
Referral to another Organisation / Provider for action / investigation	13
MP Enquiry (Adult Social Care)	69
Safeguarding referral initiated	5
Total	<u>283</u>

*Complaints / enquiries which are handled by the Complaints Team consist of liaising with the service team in order to resolve the complainants concerns or the Complaints Team solely investigating the complaint and providing a response to the complainant. Depending on the nature and complexity of the concern raised this can take 24 hours to complete or several weeks of investigative work in order to fully conclude.

** The Council's Complaints Team refer a complaint to MPFT when the complaint solely concerns the actions of a social worker or social care assessment (Adult Social Care Team's managed by MPFT).

29% of duty matters were resolved with the **Financial Services**. This often included a telephone call to the complainant to explain an invoice / charges. This also includes resolving concerns raised regarding charging for home care provision when the visit has been missed or delayed.

8% of duty matters were resolved directly with the **Care Provider**. This involves working with the provider to resolve the concerns raised.

18% of complaints received were referred to **Adult Social Care (MPFT)**. Generally, concerns were regarding the information provided by a social worker in respect of charges for services when a care is arranged.

Compliments

During 2021/22 a total of **21** compliments were recorded with the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team which related to Adults Social Care. This figure may not represent all the compliments received as some staff members may have received a compliment directly.

Services provided by Staffordshire County Council	No. Rec'd
Adult Learning Disability Team	16
Brokerage Service	4
Staffordshire Adult Safeguarding Team	1
TOTAL	21

You have been very good, very organised. You have been a great help. Thank you so much.

Very pleased with the efforts of the social worker. She ensured that my son was in the best place possible and her attitude towards him has been very caring

We wish to pass on our thanks to two brokers from Brokerage who dealt with an emergency respite care for my Mom and the transfer to permanent care. We found them both to be very knowledgeable and they helped us through a very upsetting process in a professional and knowledgeable way

I just want to raise the wonderful standard of work of two brokers. Nothing is ever too much trouble and they are very responsive, professional and great to work with. Your team really have shown to be an integral part of the D2A model. Please can you thank them for me

Service Approach for 2021/2022

- Continue greater emphasis on quality of Stage 1 responses to complainants and the importance of discussing the complaint details with the complainant during each investigation.
- To develop processes within the Complaints Team and services areas to ensure recommendations / lessons learnt are captured and reported to senior management on a monthly basis.
- To continue to develop and enhance reporting processes and requirements with colleagues within Staffordshire County Council in order to provide complaint data regularly to senior management.

WORK PROGRAMME

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 2022/2023

This document sets out the work programme for the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2022/2023.

The Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutinising: children and adults' safeguarding; community safety and Localism. The Council has three priority outcomes. This Committee is aligned to the outcome: The people of Staffordshire will feel safer, happier and more supported in and by their community.

We review our work programme at every meeting. Sometimes we change it - if something comes up during the year that we think we should investigate as a priority. Our work results in recommendations for the County Council and other organisations about how what they do can be improved, for the benefit of the people and communities of Staffordshire.

Councillor Bob Spencer

Chairman of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

If you would like to know more about our Work Programme or how to raise issues for potential inclusion on a Work Programme, then please contact Helen Phillips, Scrutiny and Support Officer (helen.phillips@staffordshire.gov.uk)

Work Programme 2022/2023

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
Page 95	Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Kate Bullivant		
	Customer Feedback & Complaints Annual report – Adults Social Care Cabinet Member: Julia Jessel Lead Officer: Kate Bullivant	Report brought annually	
	Draft Early Help Strategy Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Lorna Scott-Smith	Draft Early Help Strategy for pre-decision scrutiny	
1 September 2022 10.00 am	Family Hub Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Ruth Blunn-Jennings	Pre-decision scrutiny	
	Children’s Services Transformation Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Neelam Bhardwaja	The new Children’s Transformation went live on 1 October 2021. More than six months on this is an opportunity for Members to seek reassurance that it is delivering as intended, including on SEND.	

Work Programme 2022/2023

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
	<p>MacAlister Report Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Neelam Bhardwaja</p>	<p>Suggested at 17 June meeting – looking at the report’s proposals and how they impact on Staffordshire’s Children’s Services November date for this suggested at 3 Aug Triangulation Originally scheduled for 4 November meeting but moved back awaiting publication of the final report. Final report published on 23 May 2022</p>	
<p>24 October 2022 10.00 am Page 96</p>	<p>Community Safety & the Outcome of the Fishmonger Hall Investigation Cabinet Member: Victoria Wilson Lead Officer: Trish Caldwell</p>	<p>Findings from the Fishmonger Hall incident showed there had been inadequate management of Usman Khan. Members want to satisfy themselves that changes have been made to prevent further such incidents. This also impacts on the Committee’s role as the designated crime and disorder panel. This will include outcomes from the Commissioner’s 28 June meeting considering Inquiry findings.</p>	
	<p>The LAs role in the Prevent Partnership & Feedback from the Commissioner’s 28 June meeting</p>	<p>As part of their Crime and Disorder role the Committee wish to scrutinise the methods the LA has in addressing community safety. They also requested feedback from the Commissioner’s</p>	

Work Programme 2022/2023

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
	Cabinet Member: Victoria Wilson Lead Officer: Trish Caldwell	meeting with partners around learning from the Fishmonger Hall inquest.	
24 Nov 2022 10.00 am	Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report Independent Chair: Sue Barnsley Lead Officer: Lynn Milligan	Report brought annually.	
January 2023 10.00am	Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board (SSASPB) – Annual Report Independent Chair: John Wood Lead Officer: Helen Jones	Report brought annually.	
16 Feb 2023 10.00 am	Whole Life Disabilities Strategy 2023 Cabinet Member: Julia Jessel Lead Officer: Andy Marriot & Nicola Day	Pre-decision scrutiny	
20 April 2023 10.00 am			
tbc	Early Intervention & prevention	Suggested by the Cabinet Member at 17 June meeting.	

Work Programme 2022/2023

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
	Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Neelam Bhardwaja		
tbc	SEND Review Cabinet Members: Mark Sutton & Jonathan price Lead Officer: Tim Moss & Neelam Bhardwaja	Suggested by the Cabinet Member at 17 June meeting. Responding to the Review and moving forward.	
tbc Page 98	Governance Model Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Neelam Bhardwaja	Suggested by the Cabinet Member at 17 June meeting. Considering how to work better together. Trying to develop a better and more effective governance model.	
tbc	Regional Permanency Partnership Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Scott Crawford & Jo Sullivan	Previously considered at 6 July O&S Committee where Members requested details of how the partnership progresses and specifically the two pilot projects TESSA and Mockingbird.	
tbc	Family Hubs – progress and further developments post public consultation Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officers: Jo Sullivan	The development of the Family Hub Model was considered at 6 July 2021 where Members asked to be kept aware of developments and the outcome of the public consultation	

Items for Consideration – Work Programme 2022/2023

Suggested Item	Details (Background)	Proposed Date of Meeting

Standing Items 2022/2023

Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
Crime & Disorder Cabinet Member: Victoria Wilson Lead Officer: Janene Cox/Trish Caldwell Page 99	This O&S Committee is the LAs designated Crime and Disorder Panel. Following discussions with the Chairman and Officers from the PFCC and the Cabinet Member and Officers responsible for community safety, it was agreed that the Chairman and Vice Chairmen will meet with the Cabinet Member and Officers after each Safer and Stronger Communities Strategy Group (SSCSG) to gain an overview of community safety within the County and identify areas for further scrutiny as appropriate.	Chairman and Vice-Chairman briefings on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thursday 19 May (at the conclusion of Full Council) to brief on performance discussed at the 18 May 2022 SSCSG NB the May SSCSG was moved to 16 June and consequently the briefing was moved to 20 June Tuesday 13 September to brief on performance discussed at the 12 September 2022 SSCSG
Children Improvement Board (CIB) Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Neelam Bhardwaja	The Chairman attends the CIB on behalf of the O&S Committee and feeds back developments to Members at each meeting as part of the work programme agenda item. CIB scheduled dates: 28.04.22; 25.05.22; 30.06.22; 20.07.22; 25.08.22; 29.09.22; 27.10.22; 24.11.22; 22.12.22	
Themes emerging from Serious Case Reviews	Where Serious Case Reviews have taken place the Overview & Scrutiny	Some areas picked up by the DHR review process

Standing Items 2022/2023

Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
Cabinet Member: Mark Sutton Lead Officer: Neelam Bhardwaja	Committee will consider any learning that can be taken from the Review	

Briefing Notes / Updates / Visits 2022/2023

Date	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome

Working Groups / Inquiry Days 2022/2023

Date	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
June & July Member visits Teams meeting in September	Young Carer Visits	Following scrutiny of the Young Carers Service in April, Members requested the opportunity to speak first hand with young carers to consider the service they receive.	A series of visits have been arranged for Members to attend Young Carer respite sessions across the County. Members will report their findings to the main Committee and a Teams meeting will be held in September with young carers.

Membership – County Councillors 2022-2023	Calendar of Committee Meetings - 2022-2023
Bob Spencer (Chairman)	16 June 2022 at 10.00 am
Gill Burnett (Vice Chairman - Overview)	19 July 2022 at 10.00 am
Richard Ford (Vice Chairman – Scrutiny)	1 September 2022 at 10.00 am
Janet Eagland	24 October 2022 at 10.00 am
Derrick Huckfield	24 November 2022 at 10.00 am
Johnny McMahon	5 January 2023 at 10.00 am
Gillian Pardesi	16 February 2023 at 10.00 am
Kath Perry	20 April 2023 at 10.00 am
Mike Wilcox	Meetings usually take place in the Oak rm, County Buildings
Conor Wileman	

