

# Delivering the Difference Together



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COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK  
STATUTORY ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021  
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICES

## 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 2020 to 31 March 2021. The report and service is provided in accordance with the Complaints and Representations Procedures established under the Children Act 1989 and the Local Authority Act 1970.

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

## The Statutory Complaints Procedure

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

There are three stages to the Statutory Complaints Procedure:

### Stage 1 – Local Resolution

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.

### Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

In the event that a complainant remains dissatisfied following exhaustion of all three stages of the complaints procedure they can take their complaint to the LGO. A complainant can access the 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.

## 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)**

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

## Key Numbers and Initial Overview 2020/21



A total of **230** complaints investigated through the different stages of the Statutory and Corporate Complaints Procedures.



**264** compliments received for the whole service.



**65%** of completed complaints responded to within prescribed timescales.



**12%** of completed stage 1 complaints found upheld, **39%** found not upheld, **44%** found partially upheld.



**197** matters recorded under the Duty category.



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

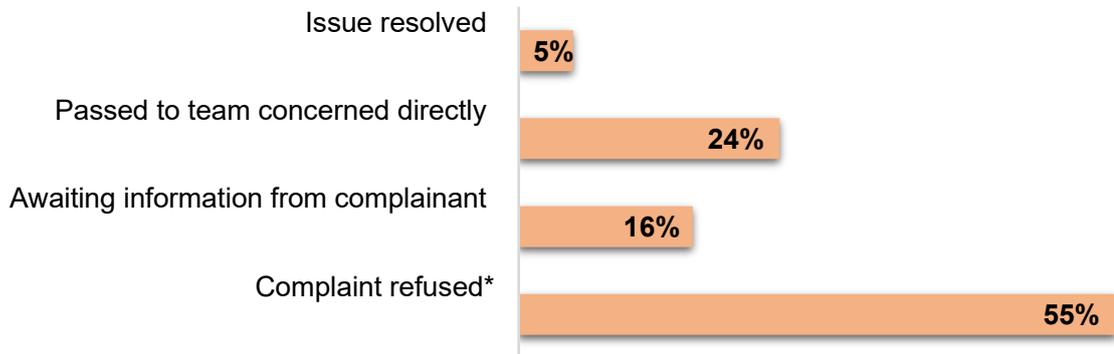
## Composition of Total Feedback Received

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.

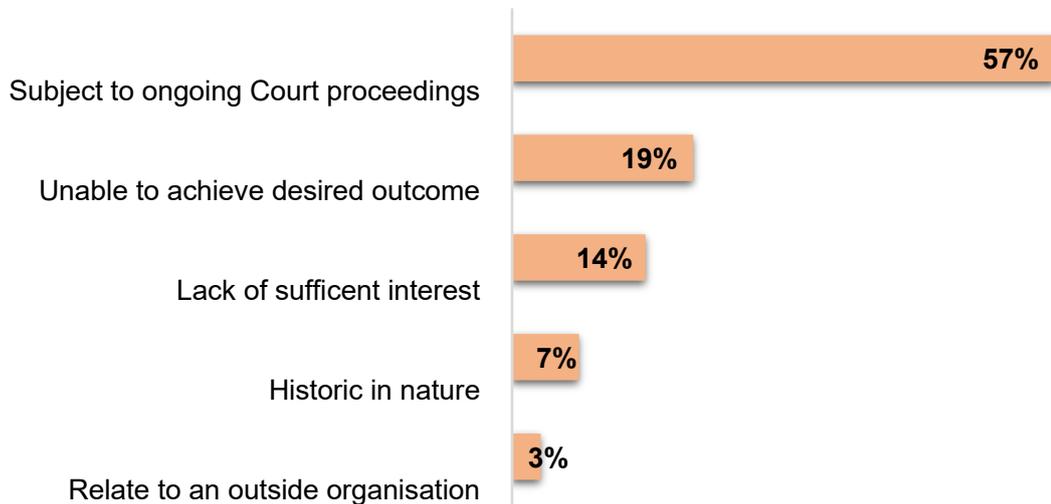
Category	2019/20	2020/21	Change
Duty	212	197	7% ↓
Statutory Stage 1 Complaints	124	107	14% ↓
Statutory Stage 2 Independent Investigations	12	10	17% ↓
Statutory Stage 3 Panels	1	3	200% ↑
Corporate Stage 1 Complaints	169	100	41% ↓
Corporate Stage 2 Reviews	18	10	44% ↓
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)	47	41	13% ↓
Compliments	225	264	17% ↑
MP Enquiries	69	77	11% ↑

## Duty Matters

A total of 197 matters have been recorded under the duty category. The following chart provides a breakdown of how these have been categorised.



\*In respect of the complaints which have been refused further investigation, the chart below provides further detail on the reasons for refusal:



## Duty Matters by Operational Leadership\*

LAC and Disability Services: 30%

Partnership and Development: <1%

Education and Skills: 15%

Specialist Safeguarding, Targeted Services and Youth Offending Services: 54%

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

Feedback categorised under the duty umbrella, remains a high figure and apportioned a large amount of the Complaints Teams work. All feedback which is received relating to Children and Families Services requires assessing, to determine if it is eligible for further investigation. The 197 matters referred to above, have therefore been through a detailed screening assessment to determine the correct avenue for the feedback to follow. Of particular note is the 55% of complaints which have been refused; compared to 35% in the preceding year. Complaints which are refused further investigation can be subject to scrutiny by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and it is therefore imperative that the decision reached is evidence based and is in line with the legislation which the Complaints Team are duty bound to follow.

## Statutory Stage 1 Complaints: Key Themes

### Numbers

An overall 14% decrease is reported for Stage 1 Statutory Complaints across the services. Upon comparison to 2019/20 this equates to a 28% decrease for Specialist Safeguarding and a 6% decrease for LAC and Disability.

### Nature of Complaint

Case management remains the consistent theme for nature of complaints, allowing for 81% of Statutory Stage 1 Complaints.

### Timescales

The services adherence to the timescales when responding to Statutory Stage 1 Complaints has increased 20% compared to the previous year, with 65% being responded to within published timescales.

### Resolved

Various complaints have been resolved to complainant's satisfaction via meetings facilitated with the Complaints Team and Heads of Service. This has been following a request for a Stage 2 Independent Investigation and has therefore reduced the cost to the public purse.

### Findings

Only 4% of Stage 1 Statutory Complaints have been found to be wholly upheld.

### Relationship

58% of Statutory Stage 1 Complaints were received from parents of service users. Only 13% were received from a young person directly or an Advocate on behalf of a young person. The remainder were from relatives, Foster Carers and Solicitors.

The Complaints Team processed a total of 107 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
2018/19	103
2019/20	118
2020/21	107

The data above reports a 14% decrease in Statutory Stage 1 Complaints. Whilst a decrease in complaints received is always welcome, it is not possible to forecast future complaint figures and any key themes can be better identified by considering the findings of these complaints.

## Breakdown

The following tables provide a further breakdown into operational leadership and individual teams, of the 107 complaints investigated at Stage 1 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure, with a comparison of the preceding year.

<b>Specialist Safeguarding, Early Help and Youth Offending Service</b>	<b>TOTAL 2019/20</b>	<b>TOTAL 2020/21</b>
Specialist Safeguarding Units	73	51
First Response Team	3	1
Emergency Duty Team	-	1
LADO Service	1	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Looked after Children and Disability Services</b>	<b>TOTAL 2019/20</b>	
Care Planning/Court Teams	12	22
Care Proceedings Teams	-	2
Disability Services	10	8
Throughcare Teams	16	11
Adoption Service	3	1
Fostering Service	6	5
Residential Units	-	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Partnership and Development</b>	<b>TOTAL 2019/20</b>	<b>TOTAL 2020/21</b>
Independent Review Officers (IRO)	-	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>

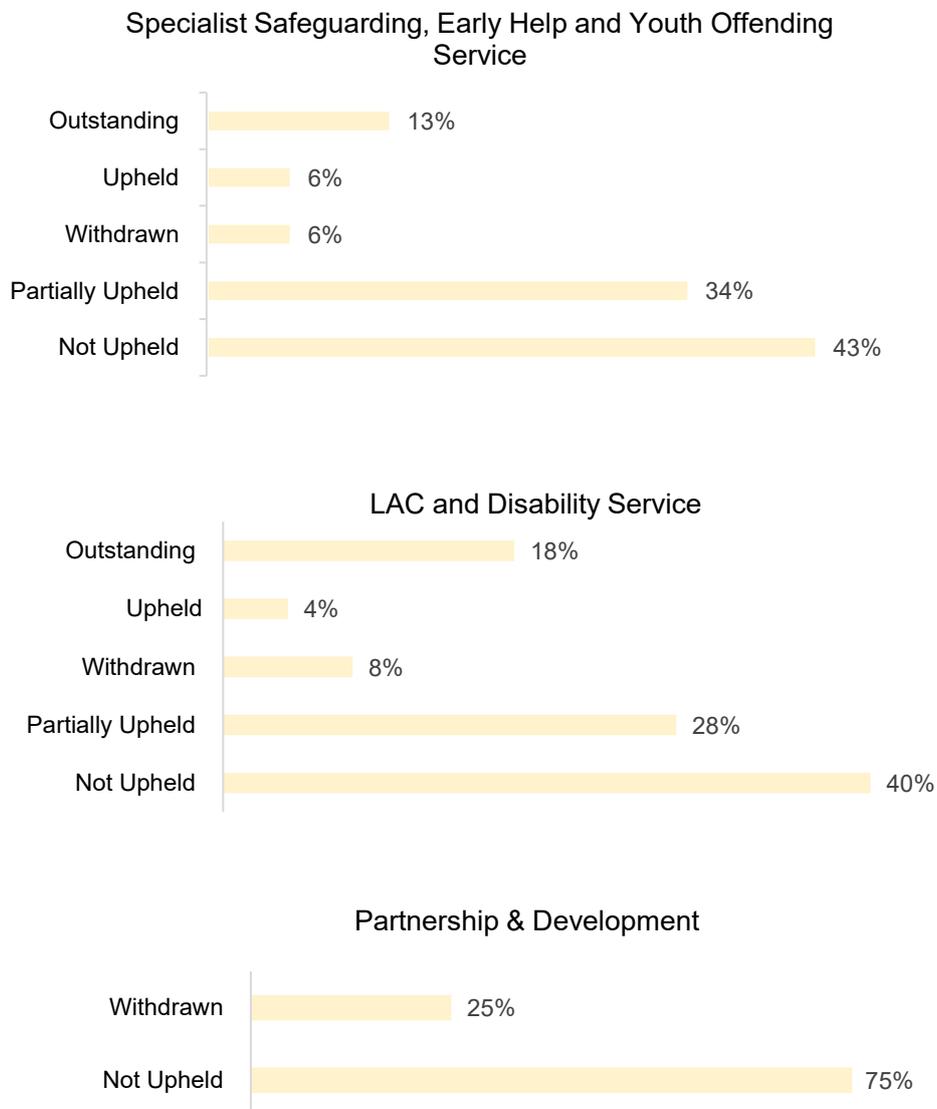
## Outcomes of Stage 1 Statutory Complaints\*

Reporting Period	Upheld	Partially upheld	Not upheld	Complaint withdrawn
2018/19	6%	56%	34%	5%
2019/20	2%	39%	39%	7%
2020/21	4%	28%	46%	7%

\*at the time of reporting 15% of complaints remained open/outstanding.

The figures above evidence a slight increase in complaints found to be upheld, however there is a decrease in those found to be partially upheld with an increase in complaints found to be not upheld.

## Outcomes by Operational Leadership



## Timescales for Responding to Stage 1 Statutory Complaints

The following chart shows a comparison of the response timescales for Stage 1 Statutory Complaints for 2020/21 against previous reporting years.

Reporting Period	Within timescale	Over timescale	Complaint withdrawn
2018/19	53%	42%	5%
2019/20	54%	40%	6%
2020/21	65%	26%	9%

The above figures report a significant decrease in complaints being responded to outside of published timescales and an increase in those responded to within timescale. When comparing this data to the preceding years, it is clear that the individual teams have exceeded themselves in terms of meeting these targets. It cannot be forgotten the immense pressure which all services were under during 2020/21 and the fact that these frontline services have managed to narrow the gap in respect of these figures should be commended.

## 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 Complaints progressing to Stage 2 Investigation
2018/19	103	8	8%
2019/20	124	12	10%
2020/21	107	10	9%

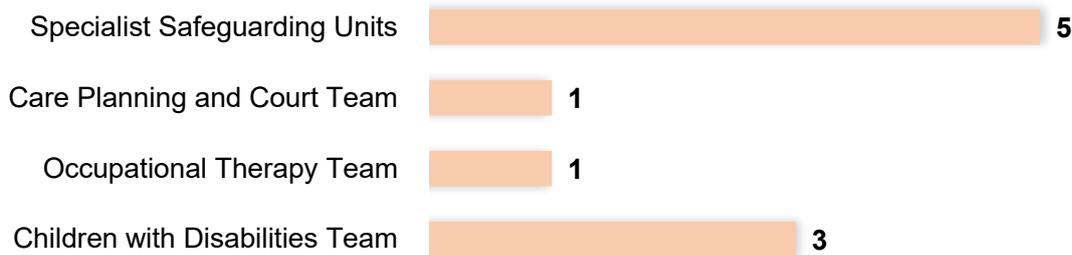
This data shows that despite a decrease in complaints being investigated at Stage 1, there is little difference in the percentage of those complainants who progress to a Stage 2 Independent Investigation. The Complaints Team wish to note that escalation to Stage 2 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure 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 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
Looked after Children and Disability Services*	5
Specialist Safeguarding, Early Help and Youth Offending Services*	5

\*a total of 4 Stage 2 Investigations remain in the process of being investigated.

The chart below provides a further breakdown into individual teams:



## Recommendations from Stage 2 Statutory Investigations

The following table provides a small selection of some of the recommendations which have been implemented as a result of Stage 2 Statutory Investigations. These recommendations are disseminated to practitioners through a variety of methods and the development of this specifically will be discussed towards the end of this report.

Service: Looked after Children and Disability Services
A selection of recommendations accepted by the service:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children's Services should acknowledge and reassure <i>young person</i> that it remained mindful of her mental and emotional well-being throughout and that her wishes and feelings remained a priority in any decision making.</li> </ul> <p>A full and unreserved apology was provided from the Assistant Director, in respect of how this young person felt. Reassurance was given that the Children in Care Council and Corporate Parenting Panel are doing a huge amount of work with children and staff to ensure that we continually improve our services in line with the voices of children in our care.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That an earlier referral to the Assistant Director should be made when responses to complaints at Stage 1 are not forthcoming within an appropriate timescale.</li> </ul> <p>Should a Head of Service be allocated a complaint which runs over timescale, the Complaints Team will endeavour to inform the appropriate Assistant Director at the point in which the timescale elapses. The Complaints Team will maintain communication with the Assistant Director to ensure the complainant can be updated.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Children with Disabilities Service reviews the value of including a space in the Property Assessment Reports for the Parents/Carers signature, and if it is</li> </ul>

decided to continue with these, to introduce measures to ensure that the date these are sent out for signature is recorded.

It was agreed that this should be explored, and if this requires changes to our IT systems then other means of capturing the information should be explored.

### **Service: Specialist Safeguarding, Early Help and Youth Offending Services**

A selection of recommendations accepted by the service:

- That whenever possible, in order to avoid any potential conflict of interest, S47 investigations involving social workers, should be undertaken by social work staff not known to the subject of the investigation.

A memo was sent to all practitioners “I would like to highlight this to all Team Managers, to consider any potential conflict of interest when allocating to practitioners, bearing in mind that smart working can mean staff from different teams being present in other offices. Whilst there may be no conflict of interest, I would ask that you be mindful of allocation and consider how the parent may feel in this situation and whether further discussions should take place with your Head of Service to consider allocating outside of your team”

- That SS considers financial compensation in terms of the financial implications outlined in 4) of the complainant’s Desired Outcomes. This should be considered in line with the LGSCO guidelines.

A monetary offer was made however the complainants declined this.

- That in line with *the complainants*, second, fifth, ninth and tenth desired outcomes, that they are given the opportunity to have their version of the events placed alongside the CSWA on the file record.

The complainants were invited to submit their views in writing and were assured these would be placed on the file record to represent their views.

## Stage 3 Complaints Review Panels

The below table provides an overview of any Stage 3 Complaints Review Panels which were held in 2020/21 and the respective services involved:

Service	Number of Stage 3 Complaints Review Panels
Specialist Safeguarding, Early Help and Youth Offending Services	1
Looked after Children and Disability Services	2

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.

<b>Service: Specialist Safeguarding, Early Help and Youth Offending Services</b>
A selection of recommendations accepted by the service:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Panel recommends that thought be given to additional training of workers in the Child Protection arena of the sensitivity and importance of initial visits in establishing a cooperative relationship with parents for the benefit of the children concerned and the family as a whole.</li> </ul> <p>This is now implemented into training for newly qualified social workers as part of the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).</p>
<b>Service: Looked after Children and Disability Services</b>
A selection of recommendations accepted by the service:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A review of ongoing anti-discrimination training offered to include Unconscious Bias training if not already part of what is offered.</li> </ul> <p>The Local Authority confirmed that this training is already taking place and includes Unconscious Bias training, which has recently been circulated to all practitioners again as a refresher session.</p>

## Corporate Stage 1 Complaints Key Themes:

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### Numbers

There has been a significant decrease in Stage 1 Corporate Complaints of 41% in comparison to the previous reporting year. This equates to a 50% decrease for Education, Strategy and Skills and a 37% decrease for Safeguarding, Early Help and YOS.

### Nature

Following the trend for Statutory Complaints, case management is the main theme of Corporate Stage 1 Complaints, accounting for 82%.

### Timescales

The services have improved their adherence to meeting prescribed timescales for responding to Corporate Complaints by 19%.

### Remedies

An explanation and an apology accounts for 76% of remedies for Stage 1 Corporate Complaints.

### Trends

The decrease in Stage 1 Corporate Complaints is notably attributable to the SEND Service. Complaints relating to this service have decreased by 50% compared to the previous reporting year.

### 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.

The Complaints Team processed a total of 100 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
2018/19	113
2019/20	169
2021/21	100

The above data represents a 41% decrease in complaints investigated through Stage 1 of the Corporate Complaints Procedure. This decrease is welcomed, especially given that in 2019/20 there was a 49% increase in complaints investigated at this stage. As with the data for Statutory Complaints, it is not possible to forecast figures for complaints as it is not predictable to know what may constitute a complaint to someone.

## Breakdown

The following tables provide a further breakdown of the 100 complaints investigated at Stage 1 of the Corporate Complaints Procedure:

Education, Strategy and Improvement	TOTAL 2019/20	TOTAL 2020/21
SEND Teams	105	58
School Admission and Transport	1	-
Home Education Team	2	-
Education Psychology	3	-
Education Welfare	1	-
Performance Licence Team	-	-
School Penalty Charge Notices	5	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>58</b>
Looked after Children and Disability Services	TOTAL 2019/20	TOTAL 2020/21
Care Planning and Court Team	11	8
Fostering Teams	4	4
Occupational Therapy Team	-	3
Disability Team	-	5
Throughcare Team	3	1
Adoption Team	1	-
Intensive Prevention Service	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>
Specialist Safeguarding, Early Help and Youth Offending Services	TOTAL 2019/20	TOTAL 2020/21
Youth Offending Team	1	-
Specialist Safeguarding Units	18	13
First Response Team	3	1
Early Help Teams	10	5
Emergency Duty Service	-	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>20</b>

When looking at the above data, there is a significant 50% decrease in complaints allocated to the SEND Service. The preceding year saw a 114% increase in complaints for this service which related to the adherence to prescribed timescales and delay in securing the services of Educational Psychologist. The fact that there has been 50% less complaints this reporting year, suggests that the work which this service have done in the previous year, has had a positive effect on reducing the number of complaints being made moving forwards.

### Outcomes of Stage 1 Corporate Complaints\*

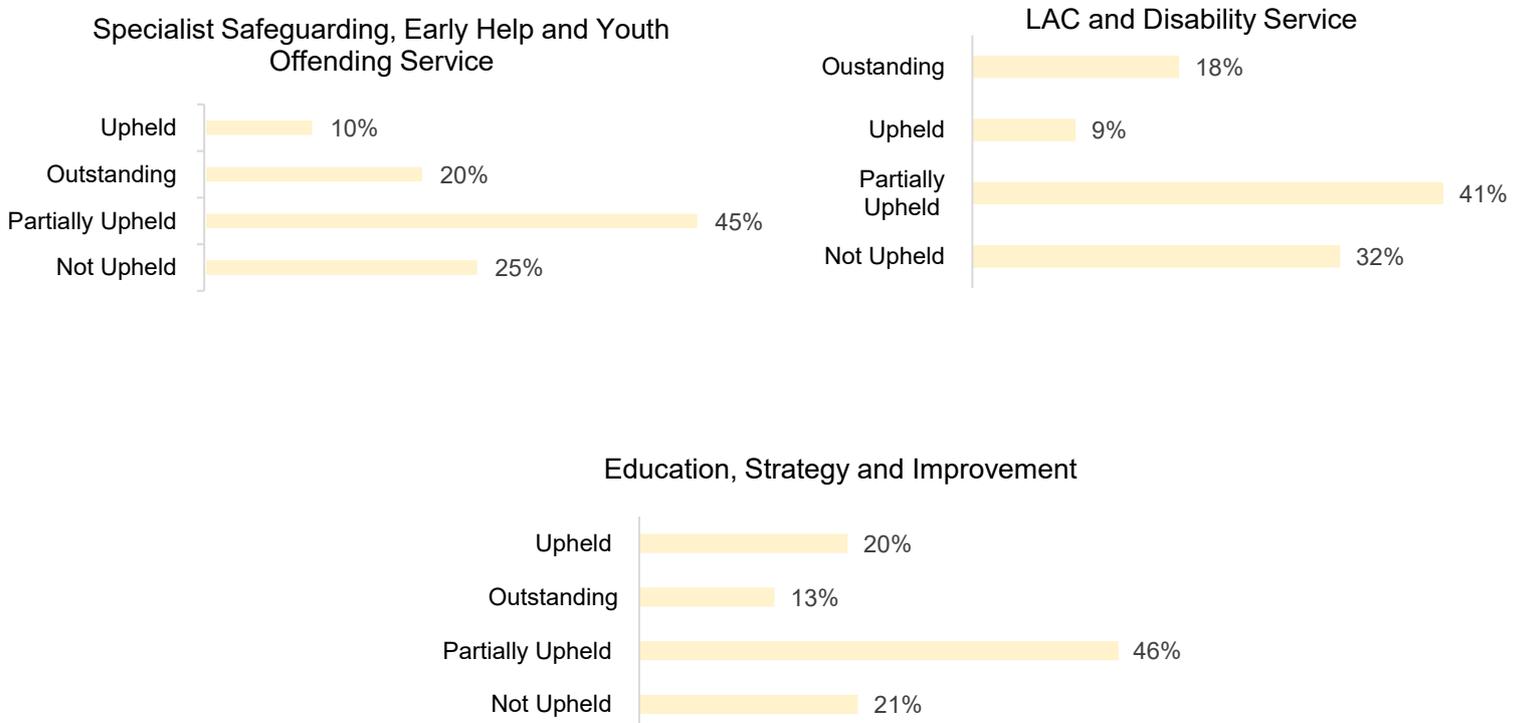
The table below illustrates the outcome of complaints dealt with under Stage 1 of the Corporate Feedback Procedure during this reporting year with a comparison for the preceding year:

Reporting Period	Upheld	Partially upheld	Not upheld	Complaint withdrawn
2018/19	19%	44%	35%	1%
2019/20	22%	30%	24%	-
2020/21	17%	42%	20%	2%

The data above shows a decrease in the complaints which are found to be upheld, with an increase for those found to be partially upheld.

\*at the time of producing this report, 9% of complaints remained outstanding and as such the data above may alter in the future.

### Outcomes by Operational Leadership:



## Timescales for Responding to Stage 1 Corporate Complaints

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

Reporting Period	Within timescale	Over timescale	Complaint withdrawn
2018/19	66%	34%	-
2019/20	58%	42%	-
2020/21	61%	34%	5%

These figures show that 61% of the completed complaints have been responded to within the prescribed timescale set out within the Corporate Feedback Procedure. This is a slight increase upon the previous reporting year. There has also been a decrease in the percentage of complaints which are responded to outside of the prescribed timescales.

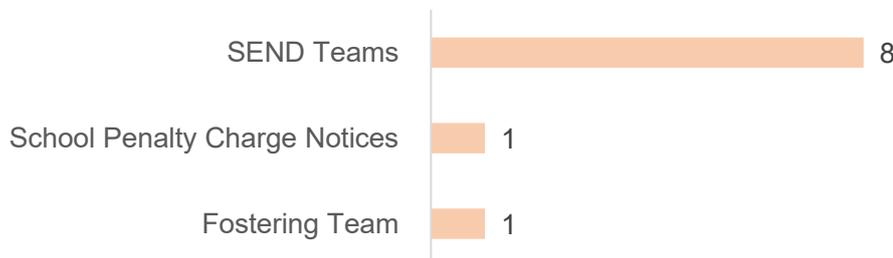
## Stage 2 Corporate Complaints – Internal Review

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. 10 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
Education, Strategy and Improvement	9
Looked after Children and Disability Services	1

The chart below provides a further breakdown into teams:



## 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.

<b>Service: Looked after Children and Disability Services</b>
Action taken by the service following recommendations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share the findings of this complaint with the Fostering Service and also discuss the DBS process and notifications around withdrawals with HR colleagues.</li> </ul>

<b>Service: Education, Strategy and Improvement</b>
Action taken by the service following recommendations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In order to reassure you that we remain committed to supporting your education in keeping with your wishes and aspirations, I agreed that we would provide further support to you via an independent advocate and I have ensured that you are provided with a dedicated SEND key worker. I understand that you have been working well together and a likely placement has been identified that will allow you to study your chosen courses.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff are continually reminded as part of their personal development to be vigilant in checking documentation to ensure that all areas which are required have been fully completed.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff will be informed that wherever possible, families need to be made aware of the steps which the SEND Service are taking regarding consulting with settings and considering parental preferences. Open communication is vital within the Service and may alleviate any future complaints of this nature.</li> </ul>

## Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

The LGSCO has processed 41 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 reported below how it is stated from the LGSCO:

Service	Status	Findings	Recommendations / Summary
Care Planning & Court Team	Refusal to Investigate	NA	The Ombudsman cannot investigate this complaint about the involvement of the Council's children's services with the complainant's family. This is because the complaints are out of his jurisdiction. Most of the matters raised have formed part of court proceedings. Other complaints date from more than 12 months ago and are made late.
Care Planning & Court Team	Refusal to Investigate	NA	Mrs X complained the Council did not include the paternal extended family in decisions about contact with her brother's children. We cannot investigate this complaint, because the law prevents us from considering issues that are being considered in court.
Care Planning & Court Team	Refusal to Investigate	NA	The Ombudsman will not investigate Mrs X's complaint about the Council's decision not to consider her complaint about its child protection involvement with her niece and her children. This is because there is no sign of fault in the Council's response to her complaint. We will not investigate this complaint. This is because there is no sign of fault by the Council. It has explained that it needs consent from the children's mother and grandmother to be able to consider this complaint from Mrs X. The Ombudsman would also seek such consent. If Mrs X wishes to pursue this complaint, she should first provide the necessary consent to the Council so it can consider it. We cannot consider the substantive complaint until the Council has had the opportunity to do so.
Education Advice Safeguarding Service	Refusal to Investigate	NA	We will not investigate Mr X's complaint about the advice provided by the Council to his daughter's school, which he says led to him being unable to see his daughter for 10 months. This matter is not separable from the contact arrangements for his daughter, about which he had a right to go to court it was reasonable to use.
Fostering Team	Refusal to Investigate	NA	We will not investigate Ms B's complaint that the Council is at fault in failing to take action in response to her complaint about a foster carer. This is because it is unlikely we could add to the investigation the Council has carried out.
Family & Friends Fostering Team	Refusal to Investigate	NA	We will not investigate Miss X's complaint about matters during a court case in 2013 and the actions of her son's special guardians at contact sessions. We cannot investigate matters that happened during court proceedings, and it would be reasonable for Miss X to return to court if she is dissatisfied with contact arrangements.
Home Education Team	Investigation	Maladministration and Injustice	For the four months of education K missed, the Council should make a payment to him of £800 for educational purposes within three months of the date of my decision. This reflects the fact that provision is still part time. His tutor should be consulted by the Council to decide how this might best be spent. For the significant time and trouble caused to Ms J through the Council's delays in complaints handling, the Council should make a payment of £400.
Early Help Team	Enquiry	Remains ongoing	NA

Occupational Therapy Team	Investigation	Maladministration and Injustice	For the Council to apologise to Miss W for the fault identified in this statement. It should also make a payment of £400 to acknowledge her time, trouble, and distress, in obtaining responses from the Council to try to understand its position in not arranging an OT assessment for a DFG for V.
Occupational Therapy Team	Premature Referral	NA – Escalated via the Complaints Procedure	NA
Occupational Therapy Team	Premature Referral	NA – Escalated via the Complaints Procedure	NA
SEND Team	Investigation	Maladministration and Injustice	For the Council to make a payment for time and trouble for Mrs B of £200, which reflects the considerable amount of effort Mrs B had to go to through the process of obtaining an EHCP for C. It should make this payment within two months. For the Council to tell me how it will ensure educational psychology can properly respond to EHCP assessment requests within statutory timescales going forward within three months. For the Council to tell me how it will ensure delays are minimised in the complaints process going forward within three months. For the Council to tell me how it might better keep parents informed through the process of achieving an EHCP within three months.
SEND Team	Investigation	Maladministration and Injustice	For the Council to apologise for the fault identified in this draft decision within a month of the date of my decision. The actions of the Council caused Mrs M time and trouble chasing it for the EP report and for the EHCP. The Council should make a payment to her of £200 as an appropriate remedy in line with our guidance within three months of the date of my decision. For the distress and anxiety caused to the family by the Council's failure to consider whether more education should be provided to N when she was out of school (or whether she needed support to access the education she was provided with) the Council should make a payment of £300 to Mrs M within three months of the date of my decision. For N's lost opportunity to potentially start full-time at the school a term earlier, the Council should make a payment of £1,200 (£300 for each of four months) for educational purposes. The Council should ask the school, within a month of the date of my decision, to identify how this might be spent to best benefit N with the aim of making the payment within three months
SEND Team	Investigation	Maladministration and Injustice	The Council will apologise to Mr and Mrs Q for the fault identified in this Statement within a month of the date of my decision. The Council will make a payment of £200 to acknowledge their time and trouble within three months of the date of my decision. The Council will make a payment of £351, based on its usual mileage rate, to reimburse Mr and Mrs Q for the transport provided to P within three months of the date of my decision. The Council will make a payment of £500 for the missed provision, £800 for the

			lack of 1:1 support at school and £115 for missed swimming lessons. These payments will be made to Mr and Mrs Q, on P's behalf, for her educational benefit within three months of the date of my decision. The Council has told me it informs schools they should return annual review documentation to the Council within two weeks of the meeting. The Council should consider whether it needs to generate reminders to schools where it has not received annual review documentation within that time. It should tell me what action it will take within four months of the date of my decision. The Council should consider amending its guidance to officers so they check annual review documentation to ensure it is complete when received. It should tell me what action it will take within four months of the date of my decision. For the Council to tell me what changes it will make to ensure it issues EHCPs within statutory timescales within four months of the date of my decision
SEND Team	Investigation	Maladministration and Injustice	For the Council to apologise for the fault identified in this statement within one month of the date of my decision. For the Council to make a payment of £1,000 to Mr D for the special needs provision he missed within three months. For the Council to make a payment of £300 for the substantial time and trouble experienced by Mrs C, over the duration of the matters complained of within three months. For the Council to consider how to keep parents and guardians informed of the progress of EHCPs within three months. For the Council to consider how it might put details of Stage Two complaints on its website within three months.
SEND Team	Refusal to Investigate	NA	The Ombudsman will not investigate Mrs Q's complaint about the Council's handling of an Education, Health and Care Plan assessment. This is because part of the complaint is late and, in addition, Mrs Q has appealed to a tribunal.
SEND Team	Enquiry	Remains ongoing	NA
SEND Team	Enquiry	LGSCO investigation commenced	NA
SEND Team	Enquiry	LGSCO investigation commenced	NA
SEND Team	Investigation	Remains ongoing	NA
SEND Team	Premature Referral	NA – Escalated via the Complaints Procedure	NA

SEND Team	Investigation	Maladministration and Injustice	The Council has agreed that within one month of the date of my final decision, it will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer to make a payment of £1200 to Mr &amp; Mrs C to acknowledge the loss of provision during the six months where no specialist tuition was in place. This should be used for the benefit of D's education.</li> <li>• Offer to make a payment of £500 to Mr &amp; Mrs C to acknowledge the further five-month period where it arranged a personal budget which did not meet the full number of hours needed to meet D's tuition provision. This should also be used for the benefit of D's education.</li> <li>• Offer to pay Mr &amp; Mrs C an additional £150 to recognise the distress the Council's fault had on them, in the form of inconvenience and frustration.</li> </ul>
SEND Team	Investigation	Remains ongoing	NA
SEND Team	Enquiry	Remains ongoing	NA
SEND Team	Enquiry	Remains ongoing	NA
SEND Team	Investigation	Remains ongoing	NA
SEND Team	Investigation	Remains ongoing	NA
School Transport Policy Team	Investigation	Maladministration and Injustice	Mrs X complains of fault in the way the Council decided not to offer free home-to-school transport for her son, Z, causing him to miss out on this. There was fault by the Council because an officer who assessed the route's safety sat on the panel hearing Mrs X's appeal. She has avoidable uncertainty whether a panel acting without fault would have upheld her appeal. The Council will arrange a fresh appeal heard by a panel with no previous involvement in assessing the route or deciding her application or appeal. To remedy injustice caused by fault, the Council will arrange a fresh hearing of Mrs X's appeal by a new panel whose members have had no previous role in deciding the matter or assessing the availability of the route. It will arrange this appeal to take place within one month of the date of the final decision
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Enquiry	Remains ongoing	NA
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Investigation	Maladministration and Injustice	Within one month of my final decision the Council agrees to: Pay Mr B £100 for his time and trouble pursuing his complaint. Appoint an Investigating Officer and Independent Person to investigate Mr B's complaint at stage two of the statutory complaint procedure. Within two months of my decision the Council agrees to remind staff dealing with statutory complaints of: the process of escalating a complaint through the statutory procedure, and the limited circumstances in which the Council is not required to investigate a complaint, or can refer a complaint early to the Ombudsman
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Investigation	Remains ongoing	NA

Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Refusal to Investigate	NA	We will not investigate this complaint about the Council's safeguarding investigations. This is because it involves matters already considered by a court and Mr Y is not the appropriate person to represent two children who are extended family members.
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Investigation	Remains ongoing	NA
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Refusal to Investigate	NA	We will not investigate this complaint about evidence that may be used by the Council in court proceedings, as it is reasonable for Mrs J to raise this matter in court. It is unlikely we would find fault on the Council's part in refusing to accept Mrs J's complaint.
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Premature Referral	NA – Escalated via the Complaints Procedure	NA
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Refusal to Investigate	NA	We will not investigate Mr X's complaint about the actions of a social worker in writing a court report. These matters are not separable from those that have been heard in court, or in respect of which Mr X has a right to go to court it would be reasonable to use.
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Refusal to Investigate	NA	We should not investigate Mr X's complaint about the actions of social workers towards him before, during and after a court case concerning his children. These matters are not separable from those which have either been heard in court or where Mr X has a right to return to court it would be reasonable to use.
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Enquiry	Remains ongoing	NA
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	Refusal to Investigate	NA	We will not investigate this complaint about evidence that may be used by the Council in court proceedings, as it is reasonable for Mrs J to raise this matter in court. It is unlikely we would find fault on the Council's part in refusing to accept Mrs J's complaint.
Throughcare Team	Enquiry	Remains ongoing	NA
Outside Agency – Care Provider	Investigation	Remains ongoing	NA
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>41</b>

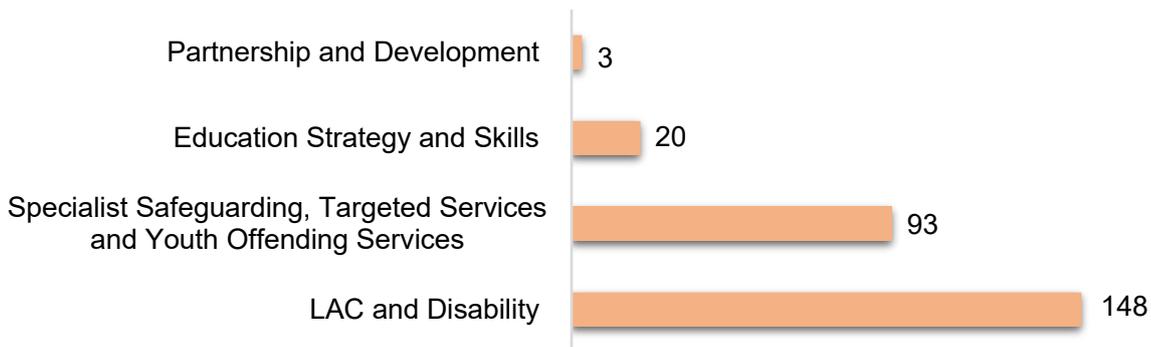
From the 47 complaints which the LGSCO have considered, 22% have reached a finding of fault. It should be noted that 13 matters remain pending further detail and as such the above figure is subject to change. The complaints which have identified fault, shape learning for the Local Authority in the same 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.

## Compliments

A total of 264 compliments have been recorded for this reporting period, a 17% increase from the previous year. During a year when services have been strained and working under entirely different and difficult circumstances, the fact that positive feedback has increased should be duly noted.

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



## Examples of Compliments

### Specialist Safeguarding, Targeted Services and Youth Offending Services

- I just wanted to highlight that she was extremely professional but also with a very warm nature. There was a lot of information to pass on and she was very reassuring and clear with her questioning.
- I wanted to thank you for the support that you have offered our children and their families and for your passion and hard work. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with you and wish you all the very best.
- She has always returned my calls and kept me in the loop of any incidents or issues raised. The communication has been amazing even though I know she has been busy. During Covid-19 she has always explored my thoughts and feelings, and as professionals in a situation of uncertainty she always managed to bring the spirit up and remain positive. I have learnt a lot from her, very structured and organised, confident and knowledgeable, this is something I will always be mindful of for my own development. I have really enjoyed working with her.
- She is thoroughly committed to working with the family and I recognise the important work she undertook pre proceedings. She has ensured that regular communication has been maintained with myself and this is extremely positive. This collaborative working, in my opinion, is extremely important in terms of reaching the best outcome for the children and as such I wanted to write to the team manager to commend her on her excellent management of this case so far.
- He answers questions, he is always available on the phone. Mum described Social Worker as patient when explaining things. Initially Mum thought social services take children away and it's not like that at all, after a few sessions she understood that it was to help her and her child; and they did. Mum said she had nothing bad to say, he has cared for me and my child. Mum said at first, she was terrified about social services, and it's not like that. Mum described Social Worker as having a peacefulness about him, it makes her calm, he helped them get back on track.

## Looked after Children and Disability Services

- I wanted to pass on my appreciation of Social Workers depth of knowledge about the boy. She was working from home, against the odds due to COVID-19, and did not have a good indoor telephone signal. However, without reference to a computer, she was able to demonstrate her insight into his life. I understand she has only been his social worker since February 2020, but she clearly knew him well. She was able to give me a good picture of his needs, previous experience, important relationships and level of wellbeing.
- I would like to thank Social Worker on all her efforts on how amazing she has been in working with myself and my partner as we now have our baby son back home I feel this is a great achievement for ourselves and we are both continuing to engage with all the support and all the advice she has given us we can't thank her enough.
- We felt she's always had our child's interest at the heart of everything and considers his best interests when making decisions. She also makes us feel empowered as she actively seeks our opinion before making any decisions. We have always found her extremely supportive and approachable. I think it will be understatement that we will miss her.
- Take care and thank you for all the support and help you are and have given to us as a family, I can't begin to tell you how much you are appreciated by us all.
- I just wanted to compliment him on his excellent work ethic and fantastic relationship building with the foster carer, myself and the child. He is very efficient and very approachable. Nothing is ever too much, and he has gone above and beyond for the child we work with.
- Judge Bailey has specifically asked me to pass on her gratitude to you for completing the plan last night – she appreciates the pressures everyone is under but the fact that you had been able to complete that was extremely helpful especially given it has led to an agreement.
- We really do consider ourselves to be very lucky to have such an amazing and dedicated social worker/friend who has been with us every step of the way!!
- It felt like we had a supportive arm around our shoulders helping to take away concerns for the boys for that funeral.
- I have chaired the CPR for the children this morning and have received some lovely comments from the father as to the positive work and relationship that Social Worker and his predecessor have delivered. Father has felt these professionals to be balanced in their approach in working with him and without prejudice as a perpetrator of domestic abuse, which he has found enabling in supporting him in being motivated to engage with the appropriate services to reduce risk.
- She has a knack of helping when I am exasperated with services, she is a sensible sounding board for me. She allows me to offload and offers support and makes me feel listened to. Sarah was the first person at the last meeting to acknowledge that I am doing well, even though I feel isolated and she helps me understand my own emotions. It's really daunting for me to work with services, I'm not used to this, it's scary, but she is always there to reassure me.'

## Education Strategy and Improvement

- I've said this a few times now, but I am immensely grateful for her support when working remotely, it's made a massive difference to my outlook and my prospects of finishing the year. She really is great to work with and ironically, we are working more productively than ever.

- I would like to compliment one of your case workers on the support she has given me over the last few weeks. I am a newish SENCo going through emergency review processes for the first time. On top of that the current situation has added extra uncertainty. She has been so patient and helpful with me. The same goes for the parents we support. She has answered what are probably the silliest little questions I've asked and sorted out a bug in the EHC hub for me in a matter of minutes.
- I just wanted to pass on my immense thanks. The plan is precise and highly accurate including much detail of the challenges that he faces. It's really refreshing to see such a well-written plan with specifics as sometimes they can be so vague. Therefore, please accept our thanks because moving forward this will be life-changing for him.
- Just a message to say a massive thank you. She absolutely cried her eyes out. And wanted to phone her big brother up, something completely new for her. Without you and your hard work do not know how we would have coped. We so very lucky that you were our key worker. Thanks, , for giving her a chance to be a child and be able to learn and be happier again. It truly means the world to me.

### Partnership and Development

- I just wanted to thank you formally for the way you conducted the review. As you know, it was a very difficult meeting and you did a sterling job of ensuring it was conducted professionally and remained on topic dealing whilst dealing swiftly and appropriately with conflict and hostility that arose. You ensured that all relevant questions in relation to the Care Plan were asked in order to reach a well-considered decision in terms of the move.

### Annual Report Commentary from the Complaints Team

The data contained within this year's Annual Report overall shows a decrease in feedback received, aside from an increase in compliments which is welcomed. The most significant decrease is seen within the figures for the Corporate Complaints Procedure and more specifically within the SEND Service. Whilst we cannot be certain as to the reasons behind a decrease in the feedback being received, the Covid pandemic may account for this. The data shows that feedback was steady across each month of this reporting year, with no significant drop or spike. The decrease in complaints received for the SEND Service could also be accounted to the work which they implemented in the previous reporting year, which is now having a positive effect in reducing the numbers of incoming complaints.

Whilst there has been a decrease in complaints, the work which each complaint produces for the responding team should be noted. The Complaints Team are grateful for the services continuing to aim to produce robust responses at Stage 1 of each Complaints Procedure and accept that these investigations are time intensive. During the Covid pandemic, the services are applauded for improving the timescales in which they respond to complaints across all services. On a similar vein to this, the fact that complaints numbers have decreased would not equate to the workload of the Complaints being decreased; it should be noted that the different Complaints Procedures are long processes which require ongoing work between the Complaints Team and the individual services. It is difficult for the figures to accurately represent the length of time which each complaint involves.

The Complaints Team have begun looking at how learning from complaints is shared this year. It is noted that we should be sharing this information as widely as possible and that this should not just be limited to learning from complaints, it is equally important to share the positive feedback which is received in order to help to shape future practice. The Complaints Officer has attended practitioner briefings and manager forums this year to understand the views of these professionals and it has transpired that practitioners are keen to understand further detail surrounding complaints and whilst they appreciate the learning from these being shared, they might find it useful to understand more about what caused the individual to submit a complaint and what those individual complaints were. The Complaints Team have

been considering how we can share such detail, in what format and how regularly. Complaints investigations can produce a high amount of data and we are currently looking at how to strike the correct balance of providing enough information to be informative without overwhelming the reader. This piece of work will remain ongoing into the next reporting year and a proposed template for sharing this detail has been shared with Senior Managers and is awaiting feedback.

There remains a minimal amount of complaints which have been found to be wholly upheld and a portion of complaints found to be partially upheld. It is these complaints which can provide the valuable learning to the services and the fact that these can be identified at Stage 1 through local resolution, shows the services willingness to identify fault and operate in a transparent manner.

It can be seen from this Annual Report that the LGSCO have made several recommendations in respect of the services. The Complaints Team are thankful to the services for working with us and providing the vast amounts of information which is requested by the LGSCO in the short timescales which we are given. The Complaints Team will continue to develop their relationship with the LGSCO and challenge decisions where we feel necessary.

The Complaints Team wish to acknowledge the hard work of the services this year and are appreciative of the strong working relationship which we maintain with each service.

**Report Author:**

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