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CUSTOMER FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS TEAM
STATUTORY ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICES

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Introduction

This report provides information for the Statutory Children's Complaints and Representations Service and the Corporate Feedback Procedure for Children and Families services, for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. The report and service is provided in accordance with the Complaints and Representations Procedures established under the Children Act 1989 and the Local Authority Act 1970.

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

The Statutory Complaints Procedure

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

There are three stages to the Statutory Complaints Procedure:

Stage 1 - Local Resolution

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

Stage 2 – Independent Investigation

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

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

Stage 3 – Complaint Review Panel

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

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

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

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

Criteria for Accessing the Statutory Complaints Procedure

Who can complain?

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

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

Time Limit:

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

Re-occurring Issues:

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

Complaints Made on Behalf of a Child:

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

Complaints Relating to a Child:

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

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

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

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

The Corporate Services Feedback Procedure

The Corporate Services Feedback 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.

The Children and Families section of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team began to facilitate the Corporate Services Feedback Procedure, for the People Directorate in September 2014. This was previously facilitated by the Corporate Section of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team, however due to the high level of service areas which this section covered, it was felt beneficial for all complaints in relation to Children and Families services to be facilitated and maintained by one section of the Team. Therefore, the monitoring and administration transferred over in September 2014; as such this report will only make reference to Corporate Complaints from this date.

Stage 1: Local Resolution

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

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

Corporate Complaint – Stage 2: Internal Review

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

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

Corporate Complaint – Stage 2: Independent Review

Depending on the complexity and severity of the complaint, it may be necessary for the Customer Feedback and Complaints Manager to appoint an approved Independent Investigating Officer to

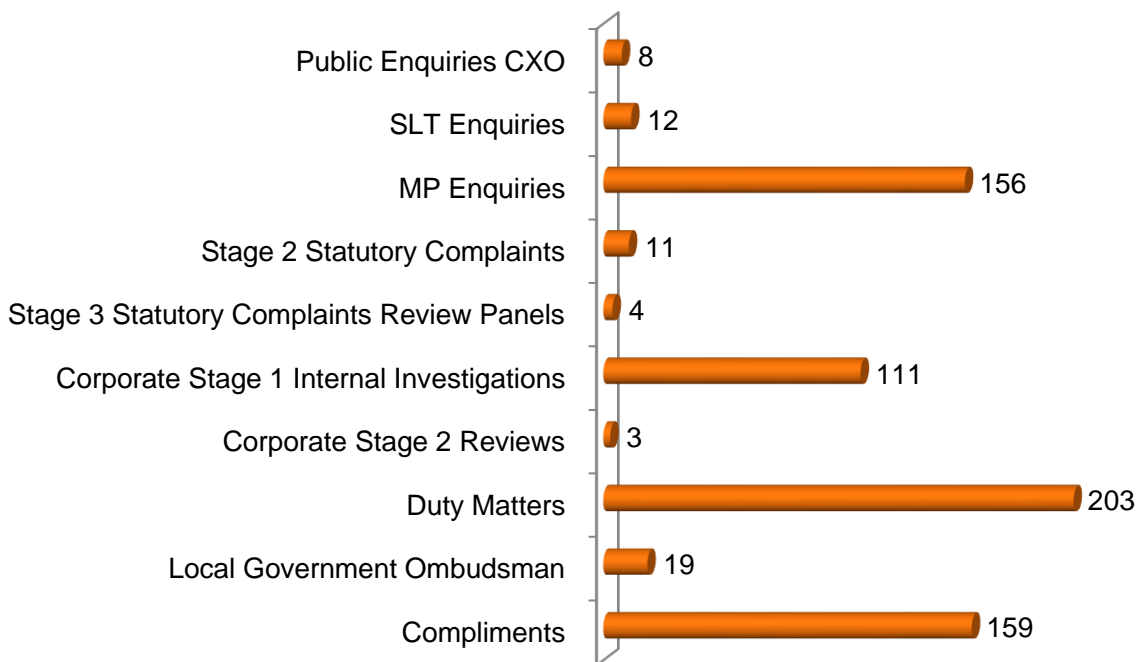
investigate a complaint and then report on their findings. The findings are then summarised in a review response by a designated senior member of staff within the service area.

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

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

Total Feedback Received

The chart below provides a general overview of the total amount of feedback which has been recorded by the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team. For the purpose of the below chart feedback has been categorised as 'duty matters' in general; however this figure shall be further broken down as the report progresses.



Screening System

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

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

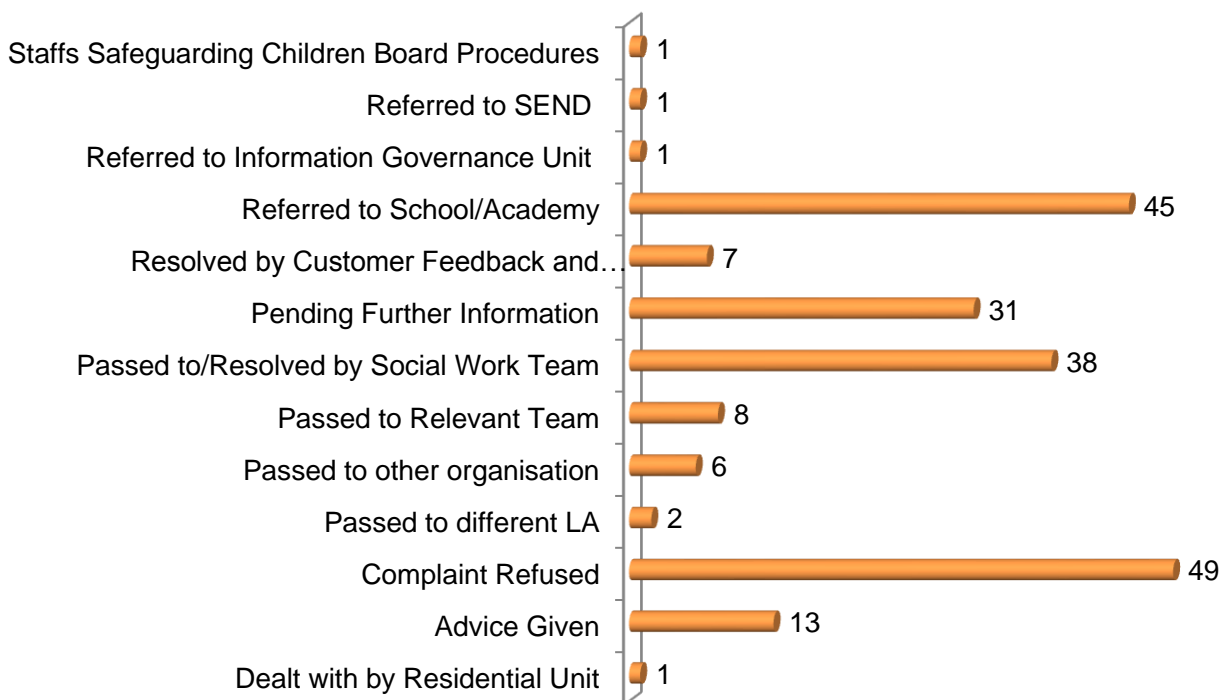
In addition to the above, there may be occasion when an individual approaches the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team with issues that fall outside of the jurisdiction of the Complaints Procedure. When this arises the Team provide advice and assistance to ensure the individual is appropriately signposted.

Duty Matters

The below table shows a comparison against the previous year's data for matters categorised as 'duty', an increase of 4% compared to the last reporting year should be noted.

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

The following chart provides a breakdown of how duty matters have been categorised. Specific detail on duty matters is provided to Senior Management via routine monthly and quarterly management reports or via request.



The Customer Feedback and Complaints Team place great significance on duty issues and matters of this nature can often be the most time consuming. The Team have to be certain that the complaints do not meet the criteria for either complaints procedure or are issues which are for investigation via a separate procedure. Through careful consideration and liaison with the relevant practitioners and officers, the Team will then prepare correspondence to advise the complainant of this decision. Due to the fact that the complainant can approach the Local Government Ombudsman at any point, the Team have to be safe in the knowledge that they have provided the correct information. It is pleasing to note that this reporting year the Local Government Ombudsman have not found fault with any of our decisions in terms of refusing complainants access to either complaints procedure.

Statutory Stage 1 Investigations

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

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

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

The Customer Feedback and Complaints Team processed a total of 70 complaints through the Statutory Complaints Procedure at Stage 1. The chart below provides a breakdown by quarter together with a comparison for previous years.

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

The data above reports a decrease of 64% in comparison with the preceding year. The Customer Feedback and Complaints Team cannot report a trend in terms of numbers of complaints or provide future forecast, as it is clear to see that these fluctuate on a year to year basis. It is also worthy of note that representation received for this reporting year may have fallen into a different category such as a duty matter or the Corporate Services Feedback Procedure. With this information in mind, the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team place more importance on the findings of complaints for performance indication, rather than simply the number of complaints received.

Breakdown

The following tables provide a further breakdown of the 70 complaints investigated at Stage 1 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure.

Specialist Safeguarding Delivery	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Specialist Safeguarding Units	4	7	25	6	42
TOTAL	4	7	25	6	42
LAC and Disability	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Care Planning and Court Teams	4	-	1	1	6
Through Care Teams	2	-	1	1	4
Adoption Service	-	-	-	1	1
Fostering Service	-	-	1	1	2
TOTAL	6	0	3	4	13
Independent Futures	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Children with Disability Teams	3	4	2	2	11
Occupational Therapy Team	2	-	-	1	3
TOTAL	5	4	2	3	14
Partnership and Development	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Independent Case Conference Chair	-	-	1	-	1
TOTAL	-	-	1	-	1

Nature of Stage 1 Statutory Complaints

The table below shows the nature of complaints dealt with under Stage 1 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure during 2015/16, broken down by service areas, also detailing a percentage format specific to each service area:

Nature of Complaint	Figure	Percentage
Specialist Safeguarding		
Inaccurate Information Provided	1	3%
Case Management	29	69%
Staff Conduct	7	16%
Standard of Service	5	12%
TOTAL	42	100%
LAC and Disability		
Lack of Funding	1	8%
Access to Information	1	8%
Case Management	6	46%
Refusal of Service	1	8%
Standard of Service	4	30%
TOTAL	13	100%
Independent Futures		

Case Management	8	54%
Delay in Service	1	9%
Level of Care Provided	1	9%
Staff Conduct	1	9%
Standard of Service	3	19%
TOTAL	14	100%
Partnership and Development		
Standard of Service	1	100%
TOTAL	1	100%

The figures above show the main theme for nature of complaint to be Case Management with an overall 62% of Stage 1 Statutory Complaints being recorded in this category. It should be noted that complaints are defined from written or verbal communication, where there may be a number of concerns raised; therefore the nature of is recorded as a general term for the complaints as a whole, rather than for each specific complaint.

Outcomes of Stage 1 Statutory Complaints

The table below illustrates the outcome of complaints dealt with under Stage 1 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure during 2015/16, including a comparison for preceding years:

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

The data above has shown a slight fluctuation in complaints being found to be partially upheld and not upheld. It should however be noted that the figures for Statutory Complaints as a whole are much lower than previous reporting years which would have an effect on these figures. Complaints at Stage 1 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure are classed as Local Resolution, where the Team Manager will investigate and respond. Based on this, it is therefore commendable that Managers are able to identify and accept any faults and areas for improvement within their respective teams.

Timescales for Responding to Stage 1 Statutory Complaints

The following chart shows a comparison of the response timescales for Stage 1 Statutory Complaints for 2015/16 against previous reporting years.

Reporting Period	Within 10 Working Days	Within 20 Working Days	Over 20 Working Days	Complainant not Engaging	Closed: Sensitive Matter	Complaint Withdrawn
2013/14	27%	37%	30%	-	-	-
2014/15	18%	51%	27%	1%	1%	2%

2015/16	11%	47%	35%	2%	-	5%
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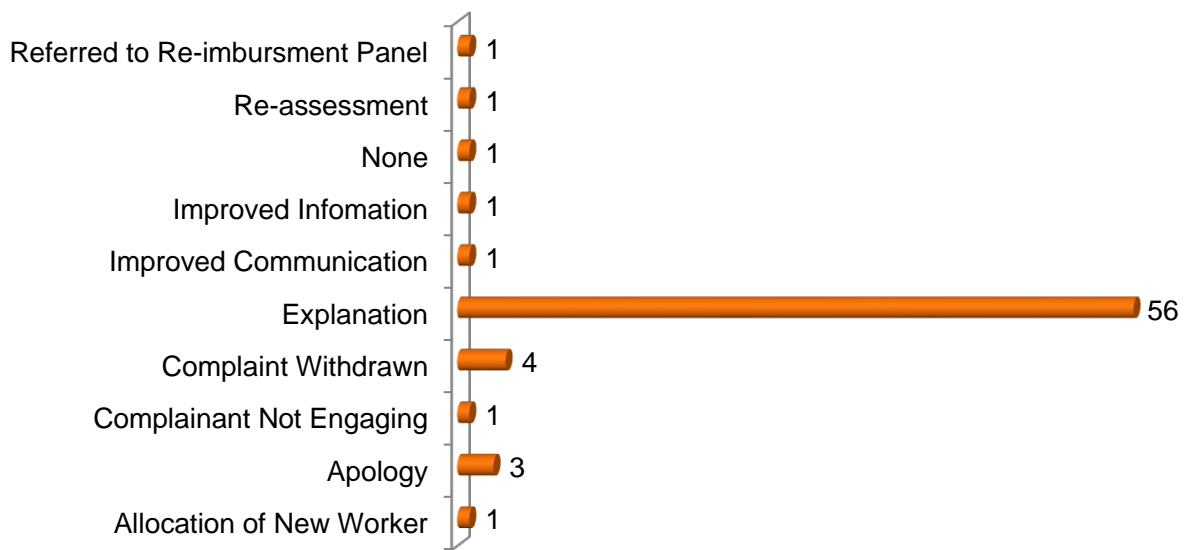
The above figures show that 58% of complaints have been responded to within the prescribed timescales, supporting the services willingness to meet these targets together with the ongoing pressures of the day to day work they are faced with.

It is of course preferable for these timescales to be adhered to, however in some cases this is simply not possible. There can be a number of reasons why a complaint can fall outside of the timescales such as staff members who need to be spoken to are away from the office, the complainant is unable to meet/discuss with the responding officer until outside of timescales or the complainant does not attend a planned appointment to discuss the complaint. When instances of this nature occur, it is the view of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team that the responding officer make contact with the complainant to agree a suitable timescale for completion. Emphasis is placed upon the complainant receiving a robust and detailed response to their complaints, which may require a slightly longer timescale to complete. The Customer Feedback and Complaints Team will closely monitor any extensions to timescales and inform the complainant that they are in agreement with this.

Any instances of exceeding timescales are reported on within monthly and quarterly management reports sent to Strategic Leads and County Managers.

Remedies for Stage 1 Statutory Complaints

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



The above chart shows that 80% of Statutory Stage 1 Complaints are recorded as having an explanation provided as a remedy. It is a frequent theme that an explanation is the most common remedy, as in many cases complainants are unsure of why certain decisions have been made and can usually be resolved by the responding officer providing a written response explaining this.

Stage 2 Statutory Independent Investigations

As detailed within the preceding years Annual Report, 2014/15 brought a change in the way Stage 2 Statutory Independent Investigations were managed by the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team. Following communication with the Local Government Ombudsman, the current stance is that requests for a Stage 2 Independent Investigation are accepted.

This reporting year, the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team have placed emphasis on the standard of the response at Stage 1 of the procedure, and offered a quality assurance check on all draft response letters. The aim of this is to ensure the response is robust, identifies fault where evident and provides a suitable and proportionate remedy; and that it supports any action taken in line with the correct legislation or procedures.

The process at Stage 2 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure can be lengthy and as such the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team will, where appropriate, discuss any requests with the relevant Senior Managers to ascertain if there is a quicker resolution which could be agreed upon, without the need for the complainant to access the Stage 2 Process. In instances of this nature, the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team will closely liaise with the complainant to ascertain if they are happy with this course of action or if they wish to proceed with the Stage 2 Investigation.

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

Reporting Period	Number of Stage 2 Independent Investigations
2013/14	8
2014/15	13
2015/16	11

The figures above show a decrease in the amount of Stage 2 Independent Investigations upon comparison; however it should be noted that there is a high decrease in the amount of Stage 1 Statutory Complaints investigated during this reporting year. The below table provides a comparison for the preceding year, in a percentage format:

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

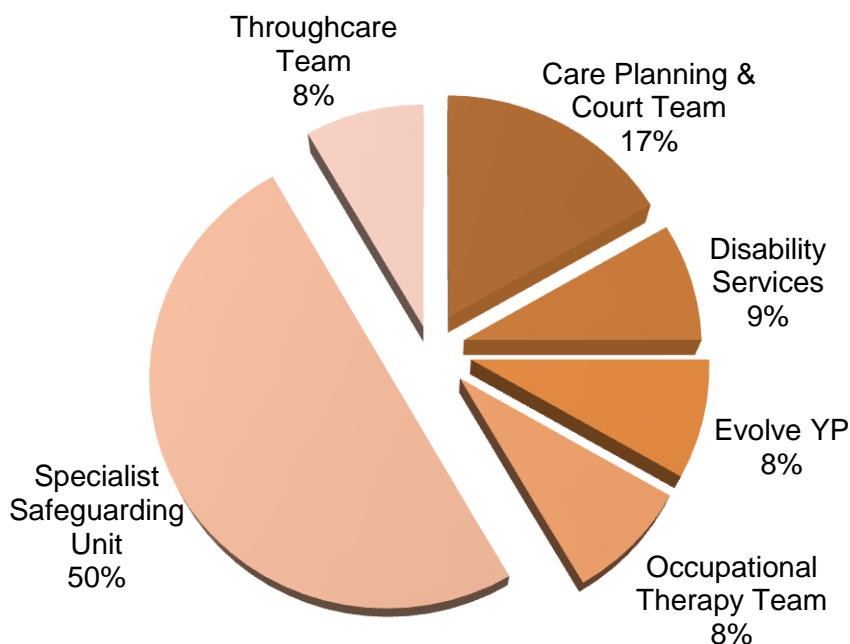
Whilst there is an overall increase in complaints progressing to the next stage of the Statutory Complaints Procedure, the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team feel strongly that this isn't an indication of poor performance or inadequate response letters. As with all complaints, the focus should remain on the finding of the complaint rather than the numbers received.

The table below shows the Stage 2 Investigations that took place in respect of the services within Families First and Independent Futures:

Service	Number of Stage 2 Independent Investigations
LAC and Disability	4*
Independent Futures	2
Specialist Safeguarding	6

*LAC and Disability had one investigation which covered two separate Teams and as such the above figures are higher than reported above.

The chart below provides a further breakdown into teams:



Findings from Stage 2 Independent Investigations

Investigations carried out at Stage 2 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure usually contain a number of defined complaints, which the Independent Investigating Officer will make a finding on following their Investigation. The number of complaints within each Investigation will depend on the complainant and would be informed from the initial interview. For this year's Annual Report, it was felt that some additional data would be helpful in terms of the findings from the Investigations.

From the 11 Stage 2 Independent Investigations commissioned during 2015/16, 10 have concluded while one remains ongoing. From the investigations concluded, there were 60 complaints contained within.

The below table provides data in terms of the findings of those 60 complaints:

Findings	Figure	Percentage
Upheld	33	54%
Not Upheld	20	35%

Partially Upheld	3	5%
No Finding	4	6%

The above data shows that just over half of the total amount of complaints investigated at Stage 2 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure have been found to be upheld. The Local Authority place great significance on the outcomes from complaints, and where these are found to be upheld robust actions are put into place, monitored by Senior Managers to ensure completion. The findings from complaints can also inform various other aspects of practice such as staff development, communication and policy developments.

Recommendations from Stage 2 Investigations

The tables below offer a small selection of some of the complaints that escalated to Stage 2 and the actions which the services have taken to complete the recommendations made by the Investigating Officer.

Service : Specialist Safeguarding Service
<i>Action taken by the service following recommendations:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Managers within Children and Family Services are reminded of the need to include an apology in their correspondence to complainants when it has been found that their complaints have been upheld. • Senior Managers within Children and Families First review the standards to be applied for the distribution of Core Group Meetings, etc. and determine a challenging but realistic standard that members of staff will be expected to achieve.

Service : LAC and Disability Service
<i>Action taken by the service following recommendations:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedural clarity is given to the arrangements for sharing of the Social Work Report ('LAC Care Plan incorporating Social Work Report to Review') to review participants. • Officers are reminded of the importance of using 'Out of Office' to indicate their availability and alternative contact arrangements. • Council procedures are reviewed to ensure compliance with guidance and regulations - Volume 2: care planning, placement and case review June 2015 and takes into consideration the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provision of written policy information to involved parties ○ Written information about the Statutory Review process and the expectations of all involved. ○ Explanation about the function of Pathway Plans and their relationship with Care Plans.

Service : Independent Futures

<i>Action taken by the service following recommendations:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaps in knowledge to be identified in supervision and appraisals with individual staff and appropriate training, learning and development needs to be part of the ongoing performance conversation and fed into training matrix and workforce development plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Commercial Unit, Commissioners and Independent Futures will work jointly to consider current non-contracted provisions and identify appropriate options available to the Council to progress any such arrangements onto more fit for purpose, formalised agreements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes from complaint to be shared with Localities to ensure understanding around issues of procurement and support plans.

Stage 3 Complaint Review Panels

The below table provides an overview of any Stage 3 Complaints Review Panels for 2015/16 and the respective services involved:

Service	Number of Stage 3 Complaints Review Panels
LAC and Disability	3
Independent Futures	1
TOTAL	4

The above figures show that from the 11 complaints investigated at Stage 2 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure, only 4 progressed to a Stage 3 Complaints Review Panel. From this data, it can be taken that the majority of complainants were satisfied with the outcome and recommendations made through the Stage 2 Process.

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

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

Service : LAC and Disability
<i>Action taken by the service following recommendations:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption Support Team to review and where required revise and develop the information provided to ensure that there is clear and age appropriate information for the siblings of children being adopted.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and information to be delivered across the relevant workforce relating to adoption and post adoption.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff undertake training in relation to Cultural awareness to have a focus on working with Eastern European Families.

Service : Independent Futures
<i>Action taken by the service following recommendations:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature to be completed and implemented regarding the DFG process to provide additional information to service users.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Local Authority to continue to develop and strengthen the relationship with District Councils, to ensure actions are monitored and coordinated.

Comparative Figures for Other Authorities

It was requested during the presentation of last year's Annual Report that the following year comparative data be provided for other Authorities. The below table provides data which has been collated from other Authorities, it should be noted this is for Statutory Complaints only:

Authority	Statutory Stage 1	Statutory Stage 2	Statutory Stage 3
Wolverhampton	128	3	0
Dudley	97	4	1
Shropshire	62	5	0
Telford and Wrekin	109	2	0
Coventry	120	8	0
Staffordshire	70	11	4

The Customer Feedback and Complaints Team would wish to note that the difference in size of these Authorities should be noted and the potential difference between the number of young people in receipt of a service for each Authority.

Corporate Stage 1 Investigations

As detailed within the preceding years Annual Report; the Children and Families section of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team did not facilitate the Corporate Feedback Procedure for the full reporting year in 2014/15. With this in mind, there would be no benefit in providing comparative year on year data as this would not be representative of a full reporting year for 2014/15.

Reporting Period	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
2015/16	35	29	19	28	111

Breakdown

The following tables provide a further breakdown of the 111 complaints investigated at Stage 1 of the Corporate Feedback Procedure:

Education and Skills	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
SEND Teams	2	4	4	3	13
School Admission and Transport	3	-	-	1	4
Elective Home Education	1	-	-	-	1
TOTAL	6	4	4	4	18
Targeted Services	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Early Years Forum	-	1	-	-	1
Educational Psychology	-	1	-	-	1
Hearing Impairment Team	1	-	-	-	1
Local Support Teams	3	2	2	2	9
TOTAL	4	4	2	2	12
Partnership and Development	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Independent Review Officer	-	1	1	-	2
Children's Wellbeing	1	-	-	-	1
TOTAL	1	1	1	-	3
Independent Futures	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Children with Disability Teams	2	-	1	3	6
Occupational Therapy Team	-	1	-	-	1
TOTAL	2	1	1	3	7
LAC and Disability	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Care Planning and Court Team	3	4	1	2	10
Fostering Support Team	-	3	1	-	4
Intensive Intervention Fostering	1	-	1	-	2
Throughcare Team	1	-	1	-	2
Virtual Head teacher	-	-	2	-	2
TOTAL	5	7	6	2	20
Specialist Safeguarding	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Emergency Duty Team	-	2	-	-	2
Specialist Safeguarding Units	17	10	5	17	49
TOTAL	17	12	5	17	51

Nature of Stage 1 Corporate Complaints

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

Nature of Complaint	Figure	Percentage
Education and Skills		

Access to Service	2	11%
Case Management	7	40%
Delay in Service	2	11%
Reduction of Service	1	5%
Refusal of Service	1	5%
Staff Conduct	1	5%
Standard of Service	4	23%
TOTAL	18	100%
Independent Futures		
Access to Service	1	14%
Case Management	2	30%
Delay in Service	1	14%
Eligibility	1	14%
Level of Care Provided	1	14%
Standard of Service	1	14%
TOTAL	7	100%
LAC and Disability		
Access to Service	2	10%
Case Management	12	60%
Communication	3	15%
Staff Conduct	1	5%
Standard of Service	2	10%
TOTAL	20	100%
Partnership and Development		
Withdrawal of Service	1	33.3%
Staff Conduct	1	33.3%
Communication	1	33.3%
TOTAL	3	100%
Specialist Safeguarding		
Information	1	2%
Disclosure of Information	2	4%
Inaccurate Information Recorded	3	6%
Case Management	20	40%
Communication	3	6%
Delay in Service	1	2%
Level of Care Provided	1	2%
Staff Conduct	10	19%
Standard of Service	10	19%
TOTAL	51	100%
Targeted Services		
Access to Service	1	9%
Case Management	4	33%
Refusal of Service	1	9%
Staff Conduct	2	16%
Standard of Service	4	33%

TOTAL	12	100%
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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 2015/16:

Reporting Period	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Complainant not Engaging	Remains Ongoing	Unable to make a Finding
2015/16	9%	42%	40%	2%	4%	1%

The data above shows a very small amount of complaints investigated under the Corporate Feedback Procedure have been found to be wholly substantiated. The figures for partially and not upheld are fairly consistent with each other; a partially upheld finding indicates services being open and honest to accepting fault, assisting the valuable learning which complaints do provide.

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, during 2015/16:

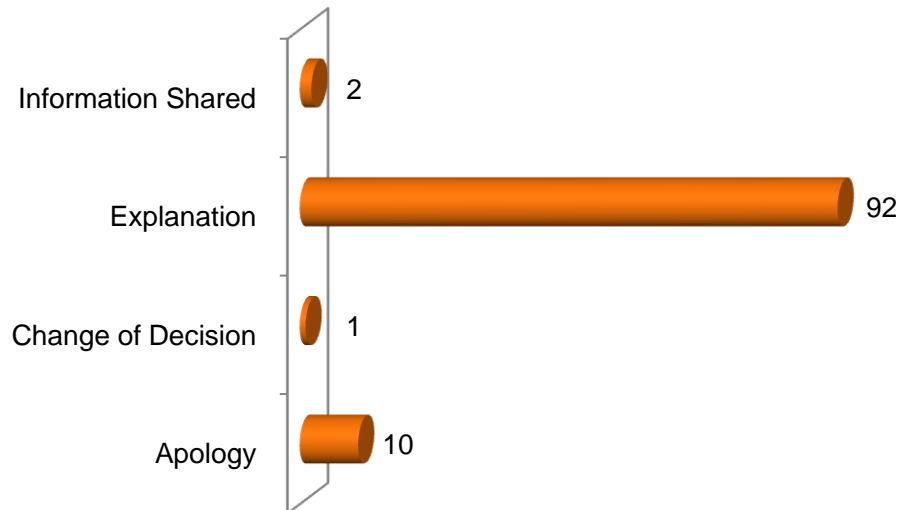
Reporting Period	Within 10 Working Days	Within 15 Working Days	Over 15 Working Days	Complainant Withdrawn
2015/16	15%	44%	36%	5%

These figures show that 59% of complaints are responded to within the prescribed timescale set out within the Corporate Feedback Procedure.

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

Remedies for Stage 1 Corporate Complaints

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



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

Corporate Stage 2 Complaints – Internal Review

During this reporting year, three complaints were accepted for an internal review at Stage 2 of the Corporate Complaints Procedure. The Customer Feedback and Complaints Team have discretion over the Corporate Feedback Procedure and complainants are requested to provide further detail if they require an internal review. The below chart provides further detail in respect of these:

Service	Number of Stage 2 Reviews	Summary of Findings
Specialist Safeguarding	1	Partially Upheld. Apology provided to complainant.
Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)	1	Partially Upheld. Apology provided to complainant.
Independent Futures	1	Upheld. Apology provided. Agreement for Education Health and Care Plan to be revisited and meeting arranged with Senior Manager.

Contact Submitting Complaints

This reporting year has seen 73% of the total feedback received has been from Parents of Service Users with 4% being received directly from Service Users. It is a regular trend that Parents provide the majority of complaints for Children and Families Services. The Customer Feedback and Complaints

Team will, where it is suitable, contact the Service User to ascertain if they are happy for the complaint to be made on their behalf. This is a difficult decision as a number of factors need to be taken into account such as the age and understanding of the young person and whether or not the complaints being made would cause any animosity between themselves and the family member. This also needs to be carefully balanced against the issue of the young person's information being released through a complaints response and whether or not they are old enough to dispute this. Liaison will take place with the relevant practitioners in these instances to inform the overall decision.

In terms of young people being able to access the procedures, there are currently a number of ways which this can be done:

- The Local Authority's Website provides clear information on how a complaint can be submitted, with the inclusion of an online feedback form
- Leaflets are provided to all premises receptions, which include a freepost complaints form
- Leaflets are handed out following the completion of assessments
- Parents/Service Users are made aware of the Complaints Procedure in Statutory Reviews
- Leaflets are included in U-Packs for children/young people who are in the care of the Local Authority
- Advocacy services are promoted and provided to young people should they request them

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

The Local Government Ombudsman received 18 complaints for Children's Services in this reporting period. The LGO will make a judgement on whether or not they chose to investigate the complaint themselves, or make enquiries with the Local Authority before making a decision. The below table provides further detail, the LGO finding is reported below how it is stated from the LGO:

Service	LGO Status	LGO Finding	LGO Proposed Remedy
Care Planning and Court Team	LGO Enquiry	LGO Investigation Commenced	Not Applicable
Care Planning and Court Team	LGO Investigation	No Fault	Not Applicable
Care Planning and Court Team	LGO Enquiry	Refusal to Investigate	Not Applicable
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	LGO Enquiry	Premature Complaint	Complaints Procedure implemented.
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	LGO Enquiry	No Fault	Not Applicable
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	LGO Enquiry	Refusal to Investigate	Not Applicable
Specialist Safeguarding Unit	LGO Enquiry	No Fault	Not Applicable
First Response Team	LGO Enquiry	No Fault	Not Applicable
School Transport Team	LGO Enquiry	Refusal to Investigate	Not Applicable
School Transport Team	LGO Investigation	No Fault	Not Applicable
School Admissions	LGO Investigation	No Fault	Not Applicable
School Admissions	LGO	No Fault	Not Applicable

	Investigation		
School Admissions	LGO Investigation	No Fault	Not Applicable
Special Educational Needs and Disability	LGO Enquiry	LGO Investigation Commenced	Not Applicable
Special Educational Needs and Disability	LGO Investigation	No Fault	Not Applicable
Special Educational Needs and Disability	LGO Enquiry	LGO Investigation Commenced	Not Applicable
Special Educational Needs and Disability	LGO Investigation	Injustice Caused	Apology provided to complainant as requested by LGO.
TOTAL			18

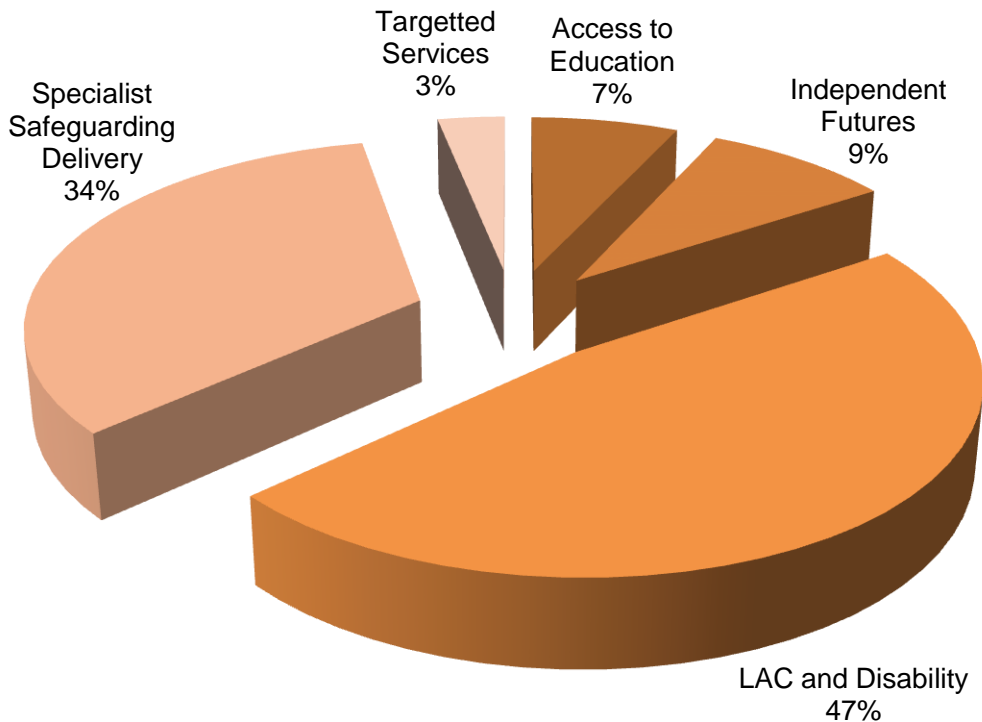
It is pleasing to see that from the above data there was only one matter which following investigation, injustice was found to have been caused. The LGO found there was fault from the Local Authority in terms of a delay in issuing an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which caused the complainant an injustice. The recommended remedy was an apology which the Local Authority complied with and the LGO were satisfied with those actions.

The findings from the LGO are testament to the hard work of the professionals within the Local Authority as the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team rely on these individuals to provide them with the data which is being requested from the LGO. It also reinforces the need to provide a clear, concise and robust response at Stage 1 of either complaints procedure; as the LGO will take these into account when making a finding.

Compliments

A total of 159 compliments have been received for the reporting year 2015/16. This is an increase of 9% on comparison to the previous year's figures. Compliments should always be significantly recognised and held in the highest regard as appreciation of the work being undertaken by staff within the Children and Families service. Data regarding compliments is routinely shared with management through monthly and quarterly reporting.

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



Examples of Compliments

Targeted Services

- He is always highly professional and has been an asset to our team. He is one of the best I have worked with in my career and having come through a route of Pastoral Management I have worked with a range of staff over the years. His focus is always on the pupils and getting the best for them which in the current climate is something which I feel is often sadly missing. As with all within Education at the moment I am certain that you have significant numbers of emails to complain but when praise is due I feel that we should speak out as loudly.
- I just want to send a quick email to say how supportive the LST have been when we have required cover for a contact and if social workers have required additional support when working step up step down cases.
- During her time in the post she has worked closely and positively with us to ensure our staff teams work in partnership for the benefit of local families. In fact, she has undoubtedly improved the way the Voluntary sector and LSTs work at many levels she is industrious, creative and dedicated in her work with a 'can do' attitude. She always brings a positive approach to meetings and is always available with advice, support and practical help.

LAC and Disability

- Stated in his Pathway Plan that "Social Worker will always be in my heart she has been such a good person for me. I will always remember her even if I am 90 years old, I will remember. Thank you for all the help you have given me, my life is good now".
- I found you and your staff very knowledgeable and accommodating, and wanted to thank you all for taking time out of your day to fulfil my request and allowing me to contribute to the amazing work that you and your team undertake.
- I wanted to say a huge thank you for the training we facilitated today. Your knowledge and understanding of radicalisation was great, you both conveyed this with confidence and certainly shared this with the group.

- I couldn't fault the care plan and it was lovely to be able to give a grade descriptor of outstanding.
- Thank you card from a care leaver (case was due to close aged 21 years), who advised that the Social Worker had helped her tremendously throughout her leaving care experience.

Specialist Safeguarding

- During the advocates meeting, a solicitor who you will know is held in high regard, was very complementary about the Social Workers practice and this was echoed by the Guardian, the solicitor for the children and the solicitor for mother. They were 'staggered' by her knowledge and how well she just 'knows children.' They were very clear that the way this case has been social worked has hugely impacted on the outcome for these children. In addition they confirmed her evidence is excellent and her updates very, very thorough.
- Social Worker was, throughout, extremely professional and knowledgeable whilst at the same time being friendly and approachable. She was extremely quick to sort out any queries we had and came back to us straight away with anything we needed to know.
- We were give the most background information on placement that we have ever been given and we were kept informed throughout on what was happening with court etc. Meetings and visits were well planned and we were informed in a very timely manner.
- Throughout she has been professional, punctual, organised and helpful. She has had her best interests at the heart of everything that she has done.
- He has specifically commented to me on how well informed the Social Workers have been throughout the case and more generally seemed impressed that we didn't simply try to take the easy option. He doesn't strike me as the type to give our praise loosely so I'd take the comments as a compliment.

Access to Education

- Thank you ever so much for your help this morning it really has helped me & what you have sent me will help us to understand what needs to be done when we return this summer. Thank you.
- I just wanted to thank you for your help and support through the appeal process for my daughter, to attend Moorside High School. She was successful in gaining a place through the appeal and I believe that it would not have been possible without your time and patience.
- Brilliant thanks ever so much for your help! You have no idea how worried I've been and how much calmer I feel now.

Independent Futures

- Despite our 3 girls being young and having a disability, she dealt with the situation calmly, respectfully, professionally and with the most lovely smile and gentle aura. The Social Worker was calm and professional with myself and incredibly discreet. On Friday, we had a great meeting and I left feeling honoured to be supported by the services who I had never really thought of as 'my friend'. I opened up hugely to her, more than any of your colleagues and this I believe is as a result of her coming into our home with a nurturing & warm nature and a non-judgemental approach.
- I want to take the opportunity to thank you for being so reasonable and patient. The transition period has been extremely fraught but I can whole heartedly say that Staffordshire Social Services were the only ones to not put additional obstacles in my way and were supportive.
- I can only compliment the Social Worker and the excellent service and support which we have been given. We have a greater feeling of being worked with as people and individually in our own rights as opposed to figures on documents.
- She was more than fantastic in her support and had to deal with me at my weakest, I was finding it hard to talk past my tears on several occasions yet she used such great skills to be able to ensure she was fully supporting of not just me but my husband and my other children at

a vulnerable time. To be honest as a student nurse, (very many years ago) I had worked within learning disability care and I had a real fear that any respite meant I had failed in my job as a mother. I was also reluctant as I thought places or people may not be as kind to him as he would need. The Social Worker was able to use her interpersonal skills to make me talk -and then see sense - she was brilliant !! I honestly feel she is a credit to her profession and I feel so supported and I'm so appreciative of her on-going care.

Commentary from the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team

This reporting year sees a further increase in the amount of duty matters which have been facilitated by the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team. The Customer Feedback and Complaints Team believe that this is testament to the strong working partnership which we have with the various services within the Local Authority. It is this positive working relationship which allows us to communicate effectively and access any required information in a timely manner, before making an informed decision on the piece of feedback in hand. Matters recorded as duty can be overlooked as they do not fall into a specific procedure. The Customer Feedback and Complaints Team would ask readers to note that duty matters require carefully balanced decisions to be made in line with the appropriate legislation and can often be time consuming. Reports prepared for management will continue to detail duty work to ensure staff are aware of the different types of feedback received.

A decrease in Stage 1 Statutory Complaints can be seen within this year's Annual Report however as it is routinely stated throughout all reports from this Team, numbers of complaints received will always fluctuate and for that reason a far better performance indication should always be taken by the outcome found, following an investigation.

This reporting year also provides the first full year of data for Corporate Complaints, since this section of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team began to facilitate the Corporate Complaints Process for Children and Families Services. It can be seen that the figures for this data are high in comparison to Statutory Complaints, supporting the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team's management decision to facilitate these through the Children's section of this team. All services within Children and Families Services can now access their respective complaints and feedback data through one report.

Figures for complaints found to be wholly substantiated continue to be a minority, even with the Corporate Complaints data included. The Customer Feedback and Complaints Team believe this to be the main focus of any reports created, as ultimately the numbers of complaints received becomes irrelevant if the findings do not support the concerns being raised. This is not to say that there are not certain areas within various Teams, where there has been fault found, the willingness of the different teams to accept responsibility for any fault and put relevant steps into place to remedy these shows motivation to make changes in order to achieve positive outcomes in the future.

It is of high importance to the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team that any agreed actions arising from complaints are implemented and monitored. Learning from complaints is an important and valuable exercise which is reiterated throughout training provided to staff members from the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team. By providing the complainant with a clear message that concerns have been addressed, it can prevent the matter from further escalating.

Reporting shall continue to be a key aspect of the Customer Feedback and Complaints Teams work, to ensure management are kept informed with any potential trends in terms of complaints and feedback.

Whilst compliments have slightly decreased these should still be held in the highest regard as each compliment provides encouragement and positive messages for those staff involved. The Customer Feedback and Complaints Team will continue to regularly report on compliments and encourage all staff to forward these on once received.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the number of complaints received is unpredictable, the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team will continue to support its customers and work with the Social Work Teams to resolve complaints. In a service which is continually adapting and striving to meet targets, complaints can be best used to assist in the design and delivery of services and as an important learning mechanism to highlight any areas where improvement can be made.

The Customer Feedback and Complaints Team wish to continue the message that the Local Authority operate accessible complaints procedures where individuals can be assured their concerns will be given full consideration and carried through the appropriate procedure wherever possible.

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