

Report to Scrutiny Board

Name of Scrutiny Panel	Children & Young People's Scrutiny Board	
Meeting Date	28 October 2020	
Subject	Complaints & Representations - Annual Report	
Wards Affected	All Wards	
Report of	Director, Children & Young People's Services	
Type of Item (please tick✓)	Review existing policy	
	Development of new policy	
	Performance management (inc. financial)	X
	Briefing (inc. potential areas for scrutiny)	
	Statutory consultation	
	Council request	
	Cabinet request	
	Member request for scrutiny (CCFA)	

Why is it coming here?

The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an overview of the complaints and compliments (representations) received for Children's Social Care Services for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

What are the key points?

Members are informed in relation to the number, type and outcomes of complaints and compliments that have been received in respect of Children & Young People's Social Care Services. This will assist members to determine whether there are areas which require more in depth scrutiny.

Possible courses of action

Members are asked to consider and comment on this report

Contact Officer

Richard Noble, Complaints and Compliments Officer

Should this report be exempt?

No

Main issues for Scrutiny

1. Overview for CYPs

1.1

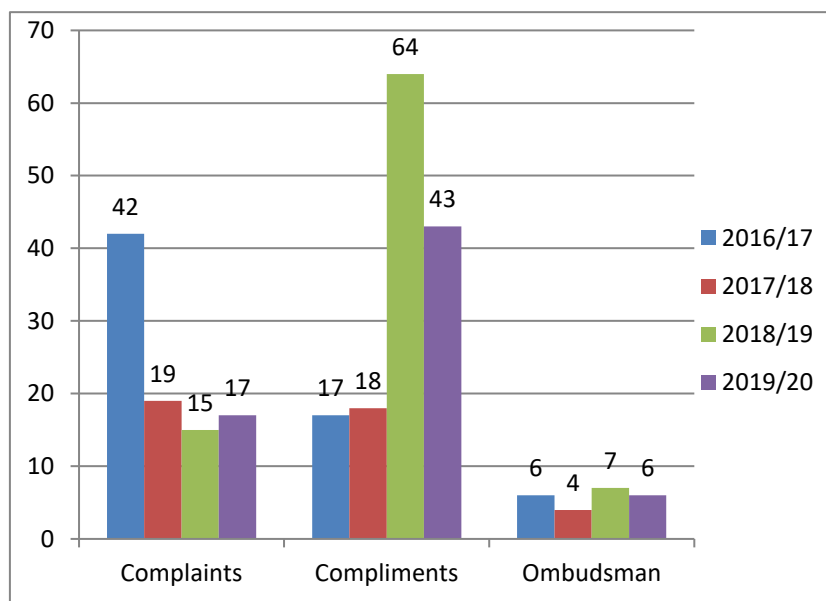
66 representations were received for Children's Social Care Services between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020. These included:

- 17 complaints (feedback requiring investigation and response)
- 6 Local Government Ombudsman complaints
- 43 compliments (positive feedback from service users)

1.2

The graph below shows a comparison over the past four years of representations received. The general trend shows a significant reduction from the peak in 2016/17, however, there is a slight increase in the number of complaints received during this reporting period than was reported in 2018/19.

The number of compliments received in the reporting period is lower than the previous year but still significantly higher than the years prior.



1.3

All of the 17 complaints that were received have been resolved. The outcomes were as follows:

- 1 was upheld
- 7 were partially upheld
- 9 were not upheld

2. Analysis of Complaints Received by Service Areas

2.1

Of the 17 Complaints received by Children's Social Care Services these were in relation to the following service areas:

	18/19	19/20
Leaving Care Services	0	0
Assessment Management	0	0
Emergency Duty Team	0	0
Family Intervention	1	0
Pathways	1	1
Child Assessment Team	1	3
Disabled Children's Team	3	0
Fostering Services	4	5
Child Protection Assessment & Safeguarding Teams	0	1
Locality Social Work Teams	5	1
Residential	0	2
Social Workers	0	4

It is acknowledged that there has been an increase in complaints about Social Workers during this reporting period.

Details of the Social Worker stage 1 complaints:

- Lack of communication – Not upheld
- Conduct/Attitude – Not upheld
- Service level – Partially upheld

The partially upheld complaint escalated to stage 2 as the complainant was not happy that certain elements of the investigation were not upheld. The stage 2 response concluded with the findings of the stage 1 investigation and the complainant accepted the decision.

2.2

The Statutory Complaints Process for Children and Young Peoples Social Care is a 3 stage process.

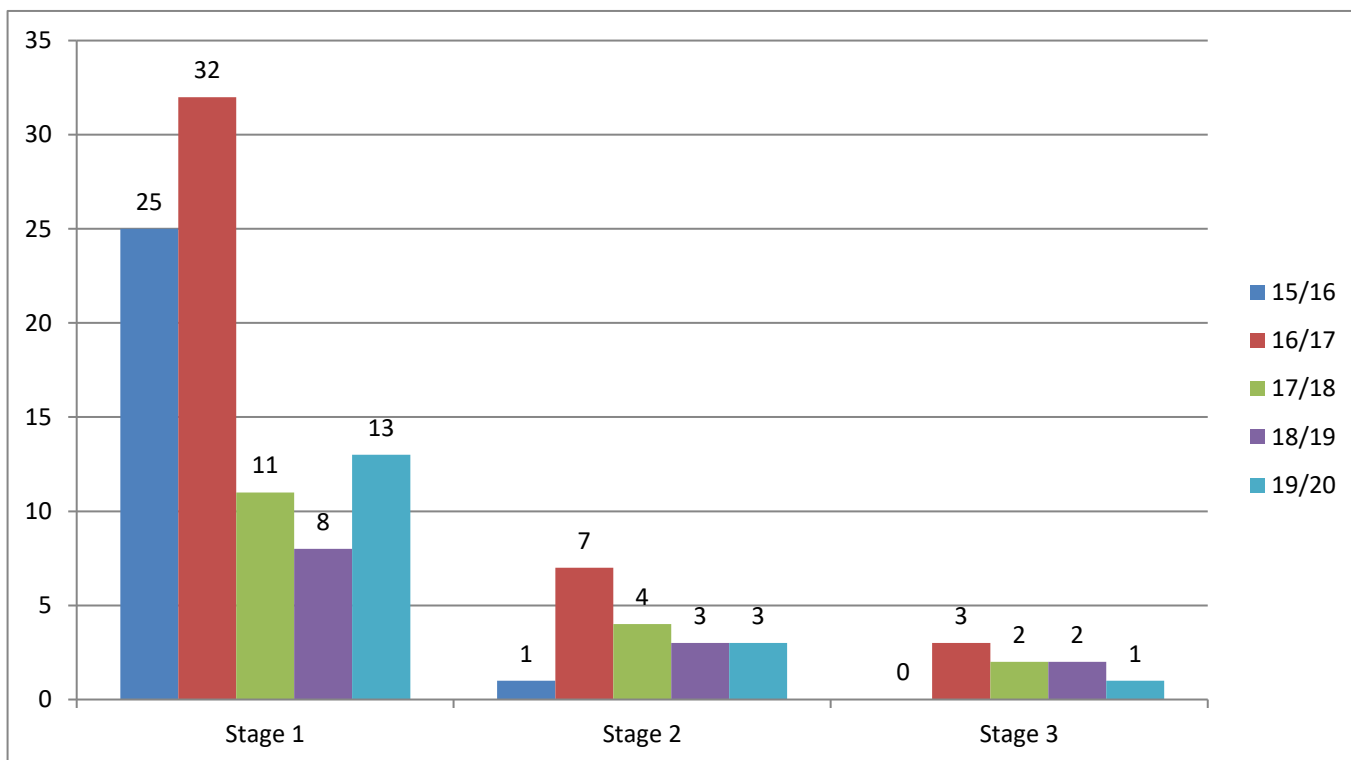
Stage 1 is an investigation by the service area. If the complainant is not satisfied with this response, they can ask for the complaint to be escalated to Stage 2.

Stage 2 is an investigation by an Independent Investigator and an officer independent of the service area to which the complaint relates. If the complainant is not satisfied with this response, they can ask for the complaint to be investigated at Stage 3.

Stage 3 a review is held, chaired by an Independent Chairperson, the Independent Investigator, the independent officer, 2 Independent Panel Members and the Assistant Director.

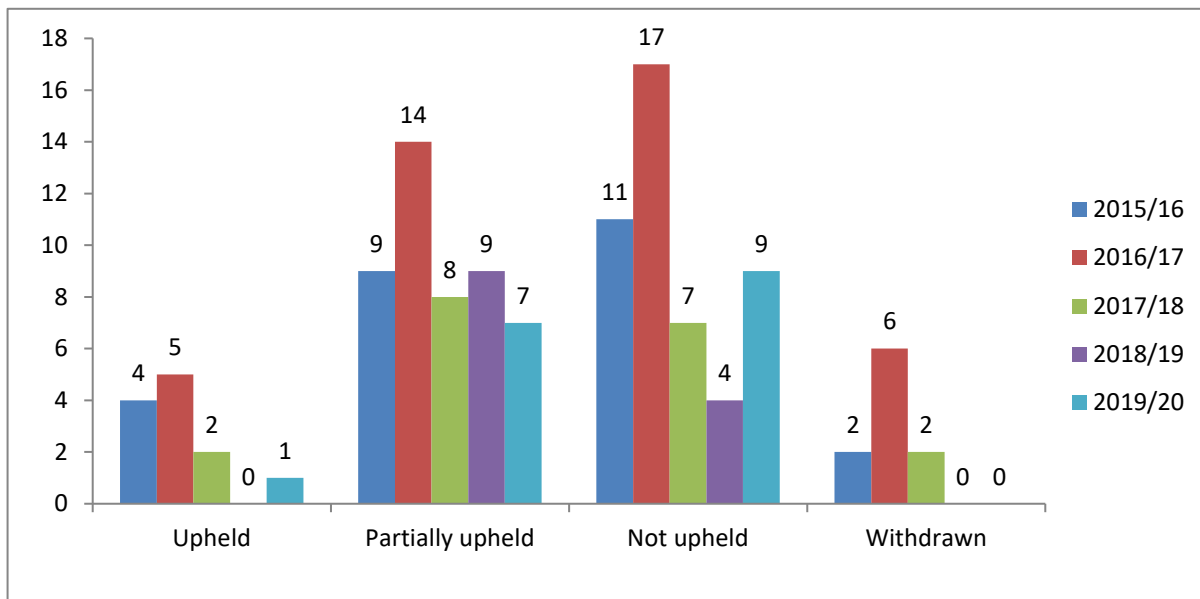
2.3

Details of the stage at which each of the 17 complaints were investigated are shown in the table below. Comparisons can be made with the previous four years. During the past 12 months, 13 complaints were investigated at stage 1, 3 at stage 2, and 1 reviewed at stage 3.



2.4

Details showing outcomes for all complaints received are outlined in the table below. Comparisons can be made with the previous four years figures.



2.5

Stage 1 Statutory Response times:

- 10 working days
- Can be extended to 20 working days in agreement with the complainant.

The table below details the length of time taken to respond to the 13 Stage 1 complaints received and shows that 3 complaints were responded to within 10 working days, 4 within 20 working days and 6 exceeded these timescales.

The complaints that exceeded the 20 day timescales related to the following teams:

- Looked after Children / Fostering (4)
- Looked after Children / Residential (1)
- Family Services / Child Assessment Team (1)

Details of the 4 complaints relating to Fostering were as follows:

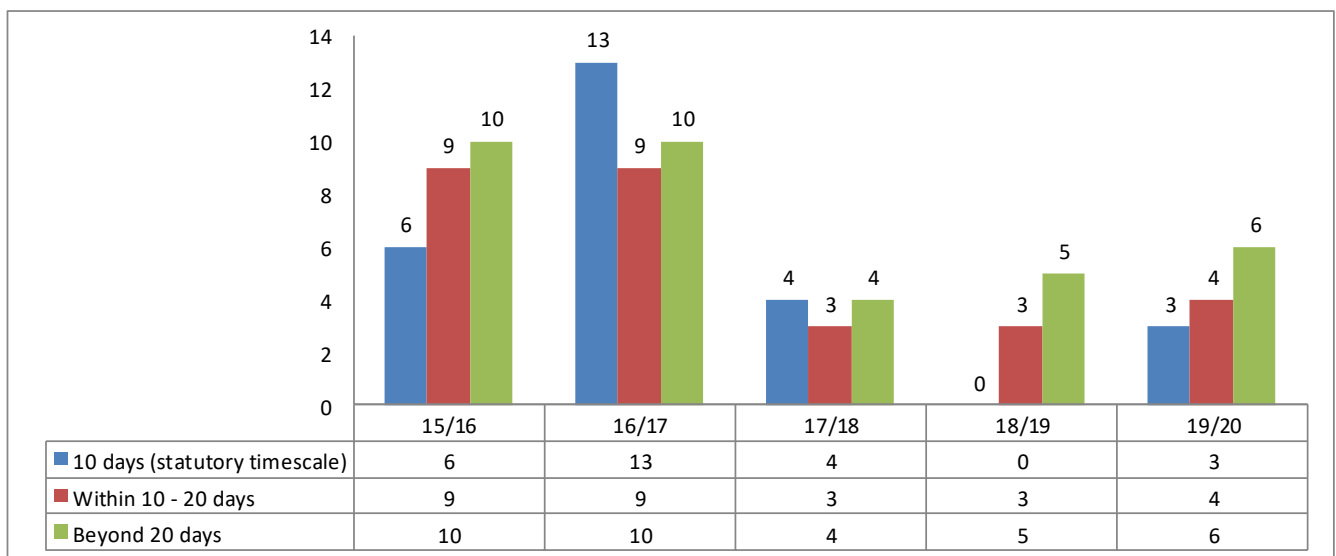
- Financial help during proceedings
- Fostering payments & the input from Pathways
- Lack of communication from Pathways over a fostering placement
- Confidentiality complaint

These complaints were very complex and required extra time to complete the investigations thoroughly and robustly.

In order to improve response times, the Complaints and Compliments Officer attends Senior Leadership Team meetings to update the service on performance and discuss specific complaints that might be more complex in nature.

We have recently improved the complaints tracking tool for all complaints and this will enable the team to follow up on all investigations at set times throughout the process. The aim is to improve number of complaints responded to within the 20 day extended timescale whilst also keeping the complainant up to date throughout the entire process. This ensures we are much more customer focused in our approach.

Timescales for the completed complaints compared against the previous 4 years.



3. Details of complaints received directly from Children & Young People

4 complaints were received directly from a young person via their advocates, of which 3 were represented by the Calderdale Advocacy Service and 1 by the Refugee Council.

Details of the complaints received:

- Lack of support and care received by the young person residing in a care home.

The investigator conducted an investigation with the home staff and resulted in a not upheld decision.

- The breakdown of a placement left the young person wanting to be placed with a different family member.

The feelings of the young person were addressed, however, resulted in a not upheld decision because as a service, procedures need to be followed before any placement can be made.

- The experiences of the young person following a placement move outside of the Borough.

Due to the sensitivity of this complaint it was responded to by the 2 Service Managers responsible for the relevant areas. The decision was not upheld, however a full explanation was provided as to why decisions were made.

- Young person not being treated fairly by the Calderdale Leaving Care Service, interpreters not always provided and there was no opportunity to experience life in foster care.

The investigator met with the Refugee Council and evidenced that despite a change in social worker, the young person was refusing accommodation and wasn't engaging with the service during the process and resulted in a not upheld complaint.

4. Learning from complaints

4.1

The Complaints and Compliments Team encourages an open and accountable approach to complaints and takes a focused approach to all identified learnings. The Complaints and Compliments Officer attends a quarterly regional meeting where best practice can be shared. They also attend service specific workshops delivered by the Local Government Ombudsman to stay informed of changes to guidance and good practice.

Quarterly reports detailing complaints/compliments and actions that services have identified, to improve customer services, are presented to Directors. The reports also highlight any outstanding actions and Directors are asked to support our drive for continuous improvement and customer service excellence.

4.2

Focus is given to what we can learn from complaints; we continuously seek ways to improve the service that we offer from the identified learnings following a complaint investigation. Some recent examples of where we have taken action to improve processes following a complaint are:

- Joint team meetings between Fostering and Pathways will be introduced to ensure communication and understanding of roles is consistent.
- Meet with the Calderdale Foster Care Association and then review the Staying Put policy, which will provide clear processes for staff and guidance for carers.
- Where a child looked after is placed with approved connected carers, this should be recognised for it being a foster placement. Where the service making the Care Planning decision is not wishing to progress with a fostering arrangement, this should be raised to senior management to ensure there is clear management oversight and communicated effectively to the carers.
- The period of time that had passed for feedback to be received on the initial complaints raised, was delayed and left the young person waiting far too long for any responses and resulted in a formal complaint. These failures will be addressed with the agency and the authority to ensure feedback is provided more efficiently.

6. Compliments

43 compliments were received in 2019/2020, compared to 64 in 2018/2019. Compliments are recorded on our database and forwarded to the manager of the person the compliment is for. Through discussions between the Complaints and Compliments Officer and the Assistant Director at Senior Leadership Team meetings it has been identified that compliments received directly by the service are not being shared with the Complaints and Compliments team; this accounts for the reduced numbers compared with 2018/19. The importance of sharing all compliments has been reinforced in training and in team meetings.

Some examples of compliments received during 2019/20 can be found below.

Examples

Thank you for all your support with this complex Kirklees case today. We were in a pickle court staff wise and it made a real difference you being able to help with this.

You may remember that you helped 'C' to be placed at Trinity Academy and hoping he had a chance of doing his GCSEs. I would like to thank you so much, he passed his 7 GCSEs & now starts A Levels in September; your faith in 'C' was not wasted.

The Judge commented on the hard work and consideration that had been put in to this case. The Guardian commended the authority on the work that had been put in with the family and the work that was scheduled to be put in. Even the parents' representatives were singing our praises. I've never been in a hearing like it.

Thank you for your understanding and for all your support. You have been brilliant. It was all very new to me and J and being honest, it gave me anxiety. However, your support and updates have made me feel much more at ease. J has learnt from this and I know he will think about his actions in the future. Wishing you all the best.

What a pleasure it has been to work with you. 'A' is flourishing now, he currently feels good and I have been able to drop a bit of the disabled mother guilt. You have been so lovely to work with, what a great team.

The last 5 years of my life have been very difficult for me and even for my son, being a victim of domestic violence was very difficult for me to deal with. This was just the beginning. Life had another slap for me, as a SEN for my son and my mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer, who eventually passed away and my son struggles to receive appropriate support. I tried everything to bring support for my son, but this did not happen until my worker had been allocated and my mental health position had got worse. They were the first person to stand by me; she was my voice and made sure that my opinion was listened to and she spoke with us all very kindly, if I didn't want to speak she didn't force me. Because of her support me and my son are heading the right way. We have now safety houses and we have started receiving support which we needed. I cannot imagine where we would be without this support and she really saved our lives.

7. Training & Development

The Complaints and Compliments Team provide training and support for all colleagues who are required to investigate complaints. The aim is to provide training that specifically relates to their individual area and working practices and identifies how to define a complaint, how to complete a robust investigation and how to respond fairly and proportionately. Training last year was delivered to over 100 colleagues and is continuously reviewed and improved with input from colleagues from services.

Training is usually delivered in a training room environment; however, the team are currently looking at delivering it using remote tools.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS REPORT CONTACT:

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