

Report to Scrutiny Board

Name of Scrutiny Panel	Children & Young People's Scrutiny Board	
Meeting Date	9 November 2022	
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 2021 to 31 March 2022.

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

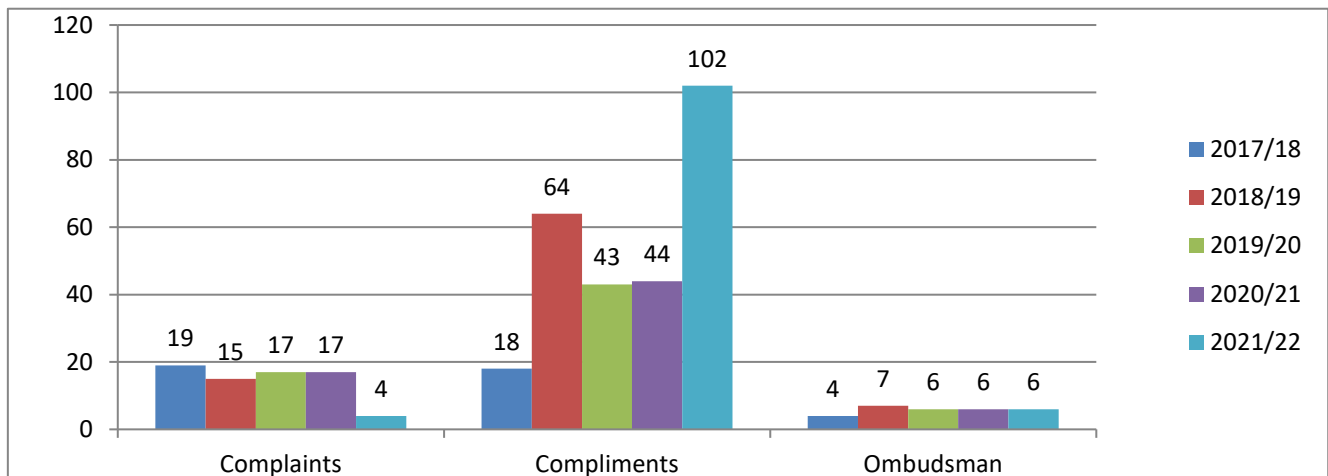
1.1

109 representations were received for Children's Social Care Services between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022:

- 4 complaints (feedback requiring investigation and response)
- 3 Local Government Ombudsman complaints
- 102 compliments (positive feedback from service users)

1.2

The graph below shows a comparison over the past five years of representations received. The general trend has been a reduction from the peak in 2016/17, with the last year showing a significant reduction in the number complaints received.



1.3

All of the 4 complaints that were received have been resolved. The outcomes were as follows:

- 2 were partially upheld
- 1 was not upheld
- 1 was withdrawn

2. Analysis of Complaints Received by Service Areas

2.1

Of the 4 complaints received by Children's Social Care Services these were in relation to the following service areas:

- 1 Early Help
- 2 Looked After Children
- 1 Looked After Child & SEND

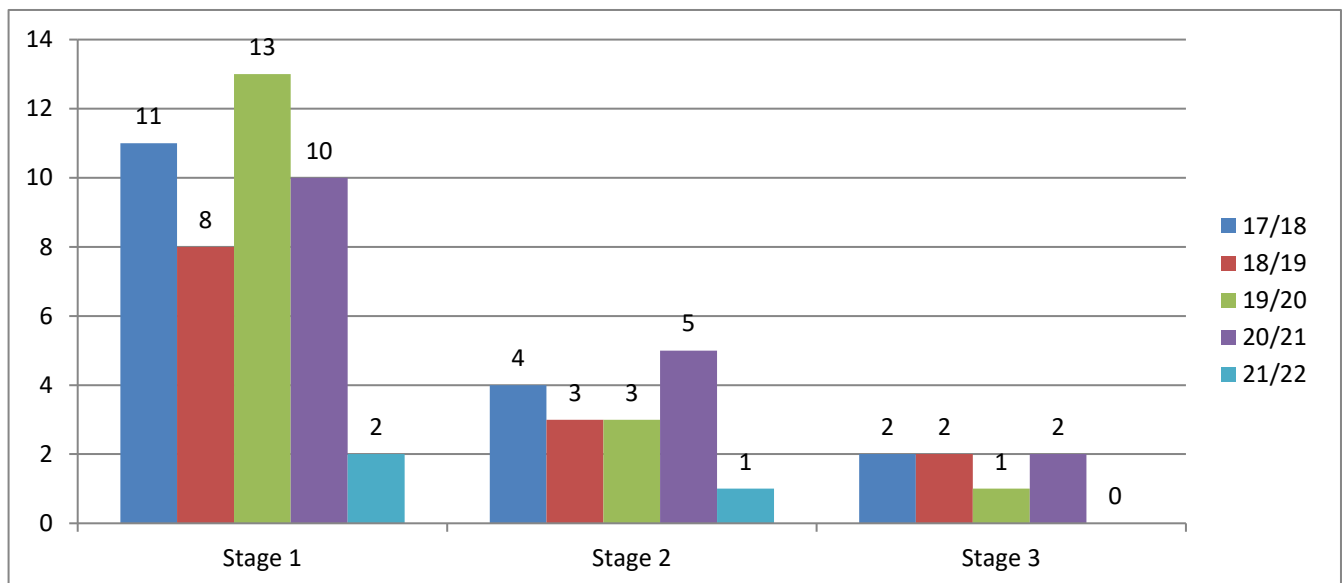
2.2

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.

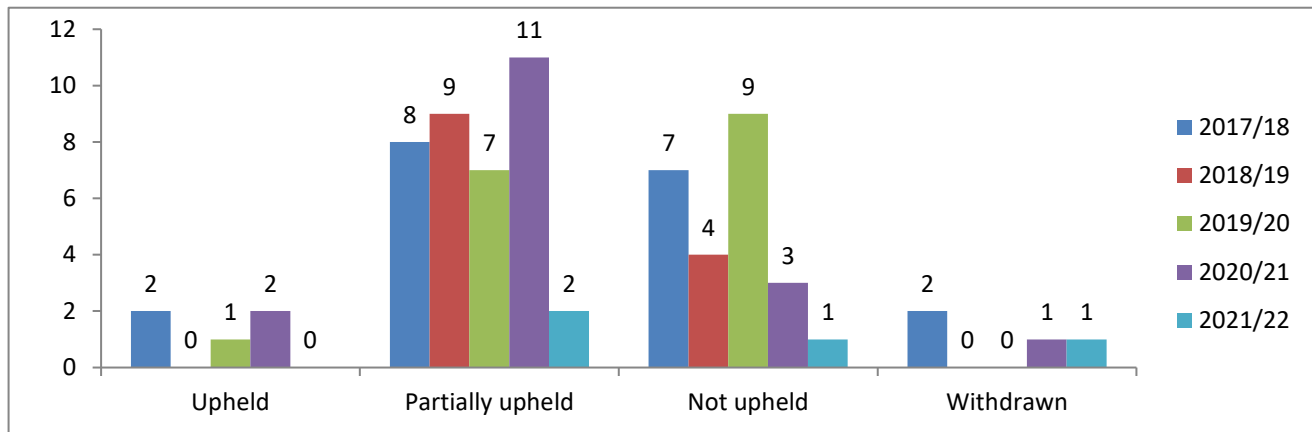
2.3

Details of the stage at which each of the investigated complaints were received, are shown in the table below, with comparisons to the previous four years. During the past 12 months, 2 complaints were investigated at stage 1, 1 at stage 2, which bypassed stage 1, and 0 were reviewed at stage 3. All complaints were fully concluded at the end of each investigation.



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.



The Complaints Officer has been working with the previous Assistant Director, (and will continue this with work with the current Assistant Director), with an emphasis of understanding complaints at the initial point of concern. We then work to identify successful outcomes prior to an investigation being required. This has had a positive impact and as shown in the low number of statutory complaints received during this reporting year.

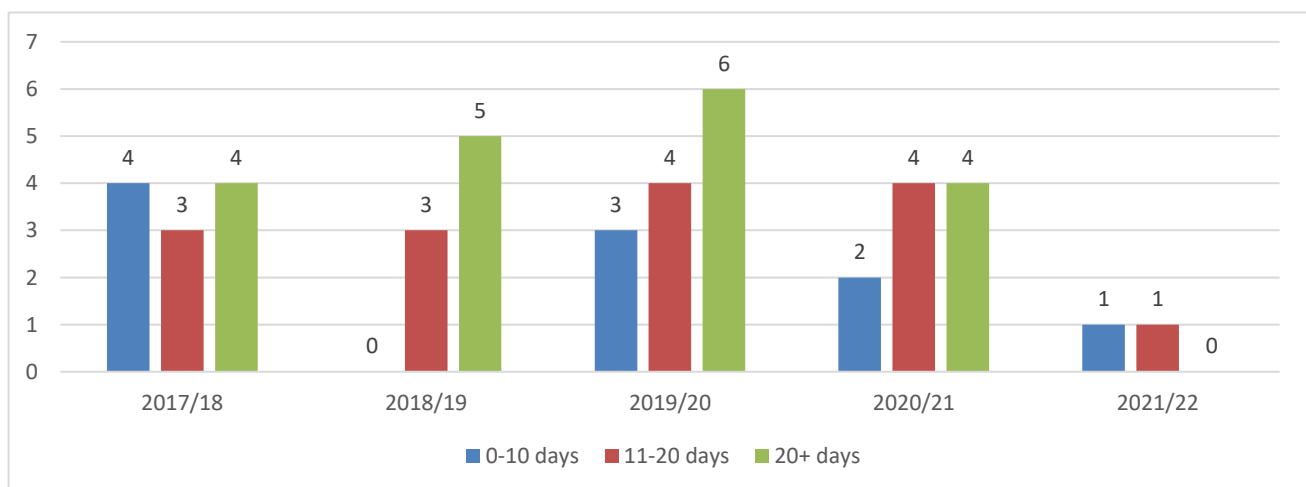
2.5

Stage 1 Statutory Response times:

- **10** working days
- Can be extended to **20** working days – this is actively encouraged within the service to ensure a thorough investigation has taken place.

The table below details the length of time taken to respond to the 2, investigated Stage 1 complaints.

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



2.6**Complaints received by LGO**

3 complaints were received during the reporting period. All 3 were for the SEND team and are detailed as follows:

- Funding levels for placement: Under investigation
- Time taken to arrange placement: Under investigation
- Decisions by SEND and the EHCP plan: closed / premature

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

Zero complaints have been received directly from a young person or via their advocates, during this reporting period.

During the pandemic, the Complaints and Compliments Officer had meetings with the Advocacy Team and Assistant Director, reviewing past instances of young people's complaints, ensuring they have a clear pathway to make a complaint where necessary.

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 is shared. They also attend service specific workshops delivered by the Local Government Ombudsman to stay informed of changes to guidance and good practice.

Regular 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:

- A lack of understanding was identified, of the importance of having an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) to support a child's needs being met, as they transitioned to school. There were also failings in professionals communicating with parents and with each other, which resulted in a key date not being met. Steps have already been taken to ensure professionals understand the process and the importance of working in partnership with parents and carers.

The Virtual School Head has acknowledged that the Personal Education Plan (PEP) should have been produced earlier and has now taken steps to ensure all looked after children in Calderdale have a PEP at the correct age, with social worker involvement and that it is reviewed termly.

- A requirement was identified to assess the communication issues in place surrounding the service and the complainant, as such, a meeting would take place between all involved with a view to establishing where service improvements could be made to assist the complainants with the communication difficulties they had experienced.

5. Compliments

102 compliments were received in 2021/22, compared to 44 in 2020/21. Compliments are recorded on our database and forwarded to the manager of the person the compliment is for. The importance of sharing all compliments has been reinforced in training and in team meetings.

Some examples of compliments received during 2021/22 can be found below:

- Another Council we helped said: 'We have had our full inspection of our children's home and although we are awaiting the outcome, it had gone back to being 'GOOD'. I really want to thank you for being so responsive in supporting us, by releasing your residential home manager; the support he provided was invaluable, thank you!'
- I have just completed case closure with Mum, and she also provided some feedback on the work you completed with J. Mum feels she learnt a lot from you. The way she uses Snapchat has completely changed in terms of her awareness of strangers within the app. J is able to identify red flags on new profiles and only adds 'friends' who are people she knows in person. Mum also said, "If J didn't have K in the first instance, I dread to think how it would have turned out, in terms of her mental health." Mum now feels that J has been strengthened by this experience.
- From West Yorkshire Police: I wanted to formally extend my thanks to you for your assistance and efforts in dealing with the suspect in such a timely fashion. I am fully aware that the assessment, panel, and recommendation process generally takes much longer than it did with this investigation which could have resulted in a charge or a further bail extension. I feel that either of these options would have been hugely detrimental in re-engaging the suspect into society and moving them away from interest in extremism. In this case, the conditional caution and subsequent engagement with professionals is the right course of action to address offending and safeguarding matters – this was only made possible by your efforts in expediting the YJS enquiries. My investigation team were also grateful for the additional advice around processes and administration provided, as well as rearranging appointments in order to deliver the caution. Your assistance is very much appreciated, please also pass on my sincere gratitude to any others who were involved.

6. Training & Development

The Complaints and Compliments Team provide training and support for all colleagues who are responsible for investigating 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.

The latest sessions have been redesigned with a new PowerPoint presentation and are delivered remotely; there has been a positive uptake for the training from Children's Social Care.

It is the aim to now re-evaluate the sessions and produce an e-learning session that will be provided to all who want an understanding of complaints with a more in-depth session for those who will conduct investigations.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS REPORT CONTACT:

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