



Complaints and Compliments

Annual Report for 2017/18

Covering the statutory complaints procedures for the Children and Young People's Service

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Analysis of representations dealt with under the statutory complaints procedure

1.0 Background

Every local authority with a responsibility for children's social care services is required to produce an annual report outlining the complaints activity for the service. This report covers the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018. The statutory complaints function transferred from Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC) to Doncaster Children's Services Trust (The Trust) on the 2 February 2015.

2.0 An outline of the statutory complaints procedure

The majority of representations that The Trust receives regarding the functions of Children's Social Care fall under the statutory complaints procedure. The procedure is defined in *The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006*. The statutory procedure allows for children and young people "to make representations, including complaints about the actions, decisions or apparent failings of a local authority's children's social services provision; and to allow any other appropriate person to act on behalf of the child or young person concerned or make a complaint in their own right" (Getting the Best from Complaints, DfE, 2006). Not all complaints regarding Children's Social Care fall under the statutory procedure, although the majority do.

The Customer Experience Manager confirms how a representation should be handled. If a contact does not meet the threshold to be dealt with as a Stage 1 complaint it is either dealt with as a "representation" or a "corporate complaint".

The statutory complaints procedure has three stages once a representation has been accepted as a statutory complaint.

2.1 Stage 1 - Local Resolution

The aim is to resolve as many complaints as possible by the local team at this early stage. The local Team Manager should discuss the complaint with the complainant and attempt to address the issues as quickly as possible. They should exchange information and thinking behind decisions and try to agree a way forward. This should take up to 10 working days, with a maximum extension of up to 20 working days for complex complaints or due to staff availability.

2.2 Stage 2 – Investigation

When a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, they may request a Stage 2 investigation. The investigation is conducted by an external Investigating Officer who is accompanied by an external Independent Person, whose role is to ensure that the investigation is open, transparent and fair. Both officers complete a report following the investigation which is passed onto a senior manager within The Trust (Adjudicating Officer) for the adjudication process.

The Adjudicating Officer then considers the reports and responds to the complainant on behalf of The Trust. The Stage 2 process should be completed within 25 working days, although this timescale can be extended to 65 working days for complex complaints.

2.3 Stage 3 – Review panel

Following a full Stage 2 investigation a complainant can request that their complaint is considered further by a review panel. The panel consists of two independent persons, plus an independent chair. Following a review meeting, the panel make recommendations to the Chief Operating Officer who then makes a decision on the complaint and any actions needed, and sends a final response to the complainant on behalf of The Trust. The review panel should be held within 30 working days of the request. Within 5 working days of the review panel meeting, the Independent Chair will send a letter to the Chief Operating Officer, outlining the panel's findings and recommendations and the Chief Operating Officer will then provide The Trust's final response within a further 15 working days. The whole process should take a maximum of 50 working days.

3.0 Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

At the conclusion of the three stages of the complaints process the complainant has the right to escalate their concerns to the Local Government Ombudsman for consideration.

The Customer Experience Manager can make an early referral to the Local Government Ombudsman at any stage of the complaints procedure.

4.0 The Complaints Service

During the reporting period the Customer Experience Team formed part of the Centre for Excellence which is located within the Safeguarding and Standards Unit. The Customer Experience Manager retained responsibility for statutory complaints as well as having line management for four advocates. The advocates provided advocacy support to children and young people receiving a service from The Trust as well as undertaking statutory independent return home interviews for children in Doncaster who have been reported missing. The Customer Experience Manager was supported by a full time Customer Experience Support Officer.

4.1 How contacts have been received

The majority of contacts were received directly by The Trust (95%) from a number of sources. This is a 4% increase from 2016/17 when 91% of contacts were received directly. Contacts have also been logged onto DMBC's on line services (4%) or passed through DMBC's contact centre (1%). This is a 5% decrease from 2016/17 when DMBC were the first point of contact for 9% of contacts to The Trust.

The Customer Experience Team received 39% of complaints directly on the telephone. The Customer Experience Manager has met with 8% of complainants directly to capture their complaints (this is a 2% increase from 2016/17). On occasion, the Customer Experience Manager and the Team Manager have met with the complainant together in order to seek early resolution.

The largest increase in source of contact has been e-mail which rose from 18% in 2016/17 to 29% in 2017/18. A breakdown of how contact has been made with The Trust is provided in Table 1 below.

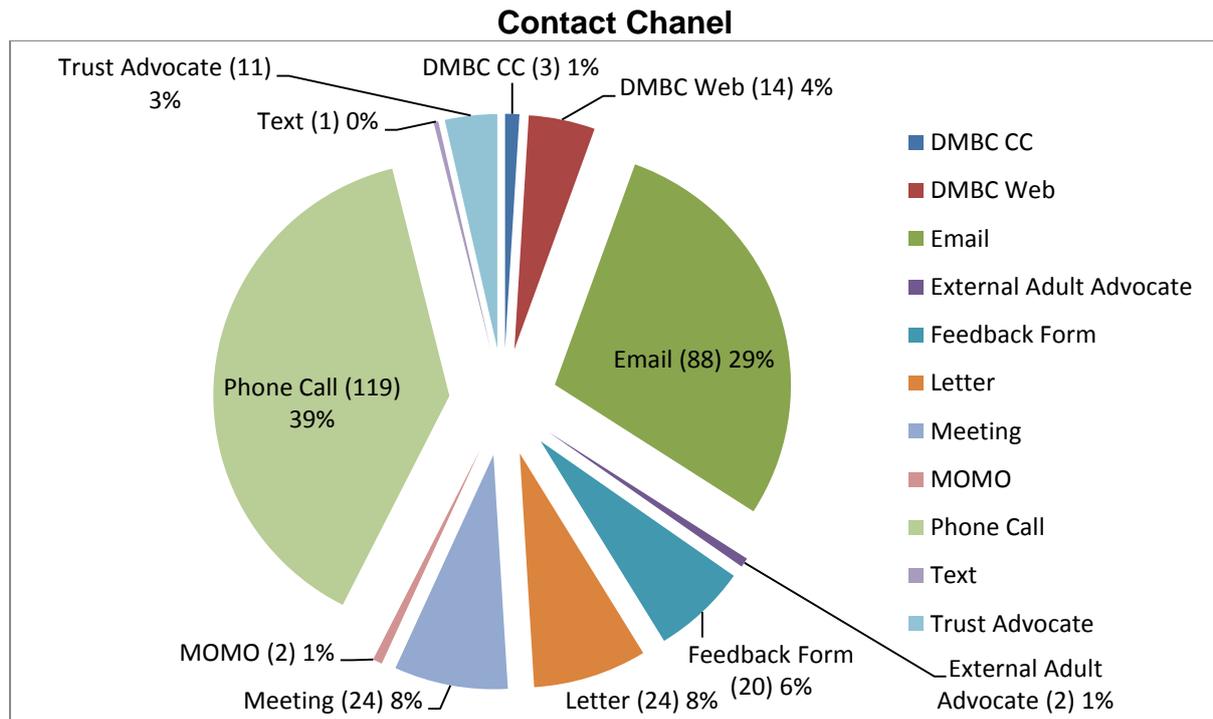


Table 1 – Contact Channel

4.2 Total number of individual complaints received

During the reporting year, 309 contacts were logged which were received from 228 different complainants. In 2016/17 The Trust received 310 contacts from 228 different complainants. Table 2 shows a comparison of how these were handled:

	2017/18 309 contacts	2016/17 310 contacts
Stage 1	229 (74%)	187 (60%)
Representations (informal)	14 (5%)	65 (21%)
Withdrawn	43 (14%)	44 (14%)
Corporate Complaint	23 (7%)	14 (5%)

Table 2 – Individual number of complaints received

Although the level of overall contacts remained similar in 2017/18 there were 42 contacts which were accepted at Stage 1 which is a 22.5% increase on 2016/17.

One of the reasons for the increase in Stage 1 complaints was a complainant who was dealt with through The Trust's persistent complaints procedure. This person raised 8% of all contacts.

Contacts Received – 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018

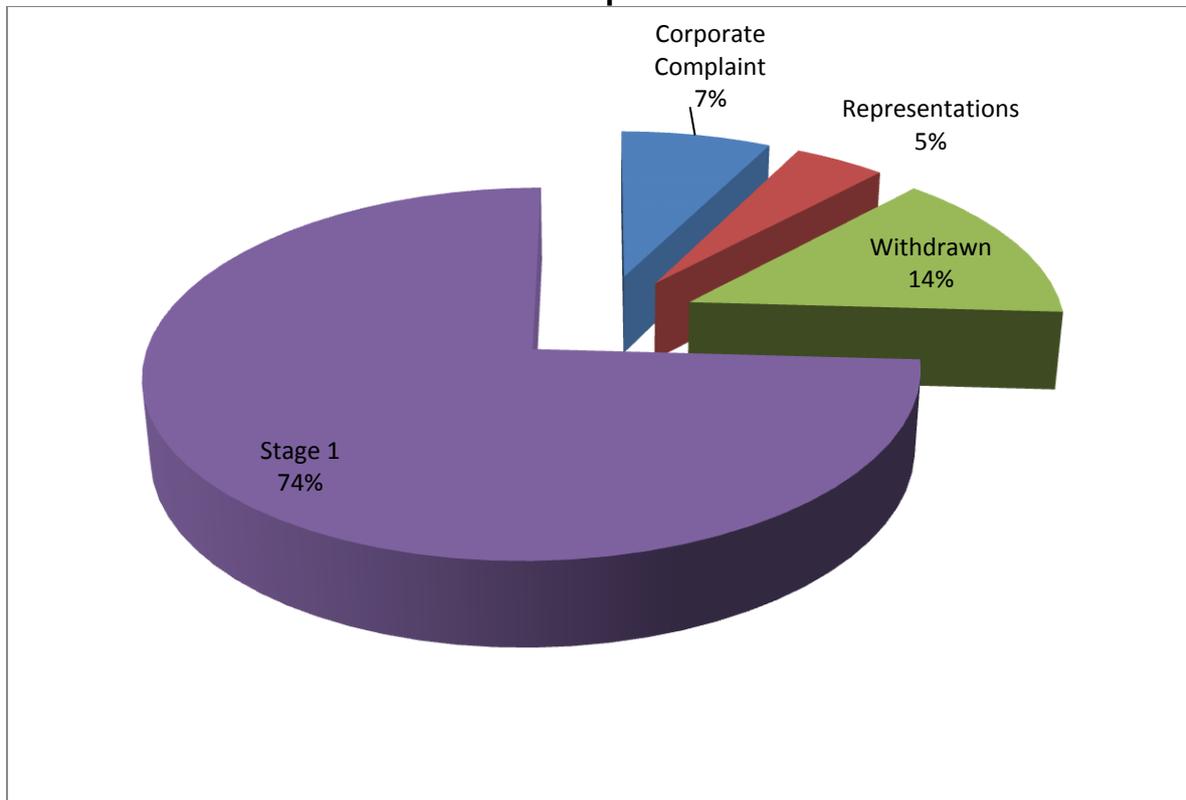


Table 3 – Breakdown of contacts received

4.3 Who made complaints/representations?

A large majority of the contacts recorded continue to be made by adults who were expressing their dissatisfaction with the service provided by children's social care.

There were 33 contacts received from young people during 2017/18 which is an 18% increase from the 28 contacts received in 2016/17.

The age of young people ranged between 13 and 24 years old.

Apart from one young person all contacts were from white British young people. In addition one young person who complained is disabled.

The Trust has received a similar number of contacts from children in care over the past two reporting years (24 young people in 2017/18 and 23 young people in 2016/17). Table 4 below shows how contacts have been received from young people and what area of support they were receiving at the time.

Route	Children in Care	Leaving Care	Care Leaver	Child Protection
Advocate	9	1		1
Telephone call with Customer Experience Manager	2	1		1
Feedback Form	5	1	1	
Letter			1	
Meeting with Customer Experience Manager	2		1	
E-Mail	3		1	
MOMO	2			
Text			1	
Total	23	3	5	2

Table 4 – Route for complaints/representations from children and young people

For the second year running there have been no complaints or representations raised by children and young people who are supported by the Trust by virtue of being children in need. In the third quarter of 2017/18 The Trust produced a new information pack which included an information pack for children and young people with advice on how to complain or provide feedback. This was to encourage young people to complain when they are unhappy about the service they receive.

For the first time two complaints were received from a child on a child protection plan and two complaints were received through Mind of My Own (MOMO). MOMO is an app used by Doncaster's children in care to enable them to express themselves and keep in touch with their social workers and others.

5.0 Stage 1 Complaints

Table 5 below shows a breakdown of the outcome of the complaint investigations. There was an 8% reduction in the number of Stage 1 complaints that were upheld/party upheld in 2017/18.

Year	No. of Stage 1 complaints	Upheld/Partly Upheld	%
2017/18	229	101	44%
2016/17	187	97	52%

Table 5 – Outcome of Stage 1 investigations

In 2017/18 there were 18250 contacts with The Trust of which 5492 became open cases. The number of complaints accepted at Stage 1 was 1.25% of all contacts with The Trust.

5.1 Breakdown of Stage 1 Complaints by Area

Below is a breakdown of the 229 Stage 1 complaints received by service area:

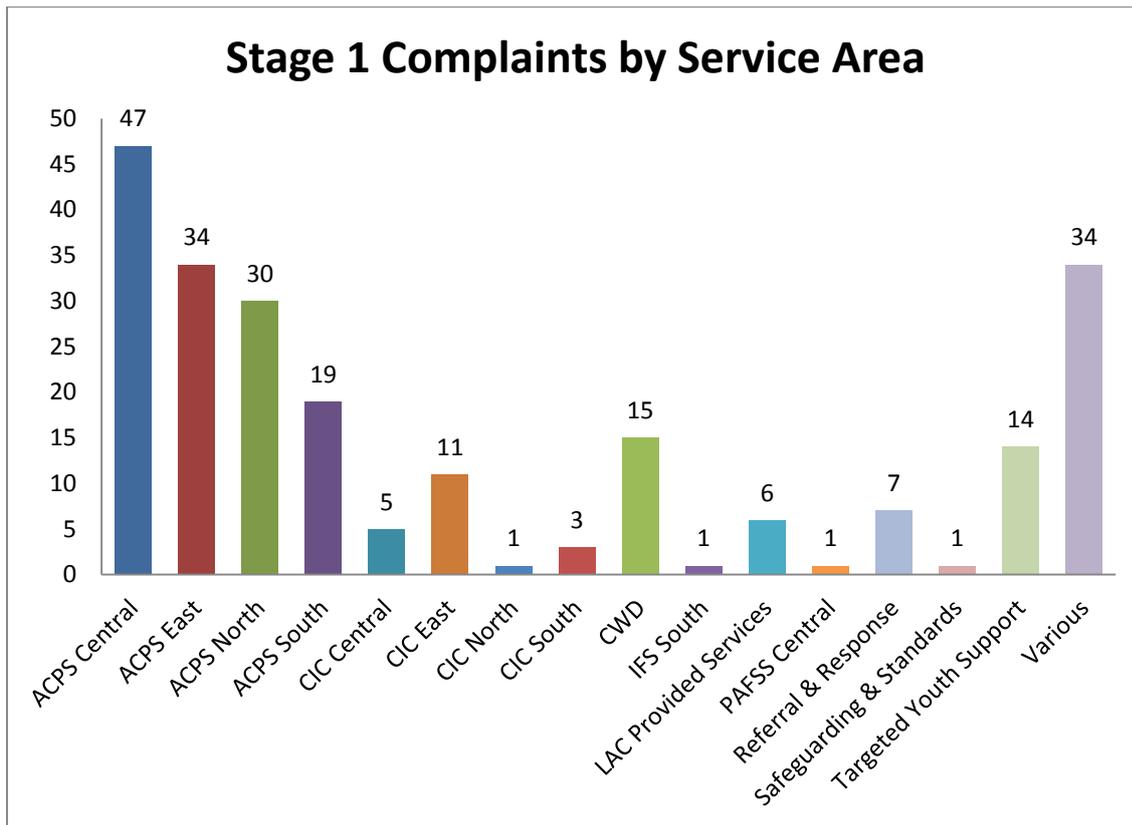


Table 6 – Complaints by service area (Various relates to more than one service area)

The majority of complaints have been received by the Area Child Protection Service teams (ACPS). This is to be expected as these areas deal with child protection matters which is an emotive subject and will involve the need for difficult conversations with families. These teams also hold the highest proportion of cases as show in the chart below:

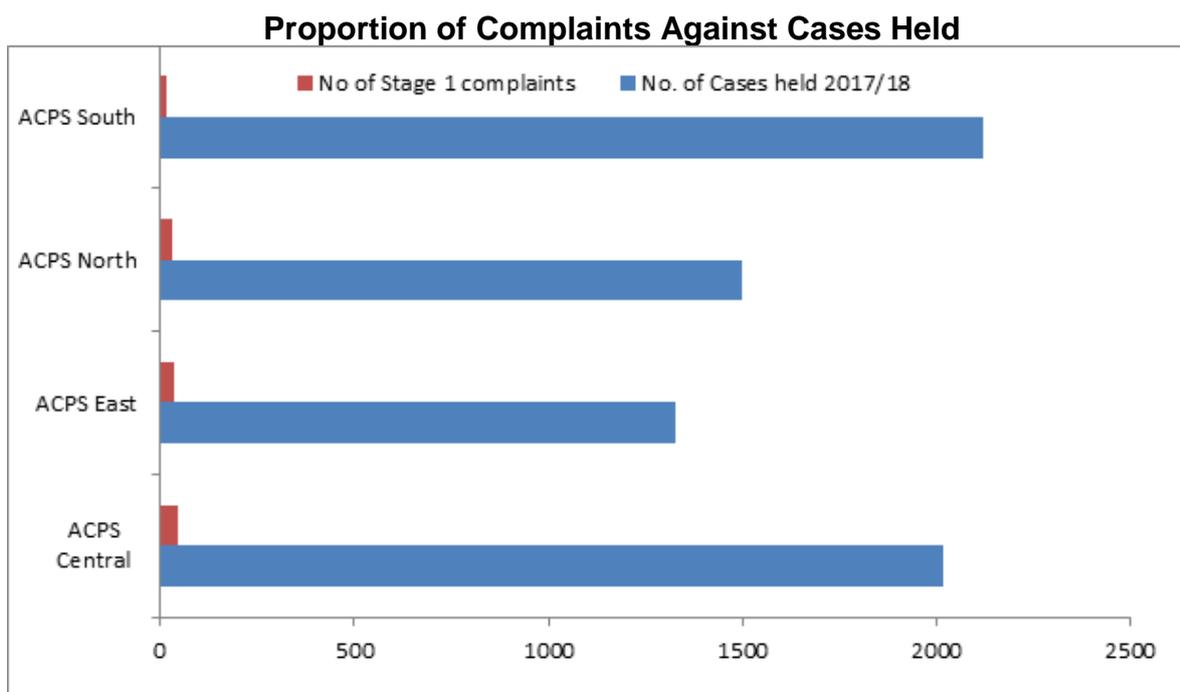


Table 7 – Proportion of complaints against cases held

5.2 Monthly trend for receiving complaints

Upon analysing the total complaints accepted at Stage 1 per month for 2016/17 in comparison to 2017/18 there seems to be no clear trend in regards to whether complaints peak during certain months at this stage.

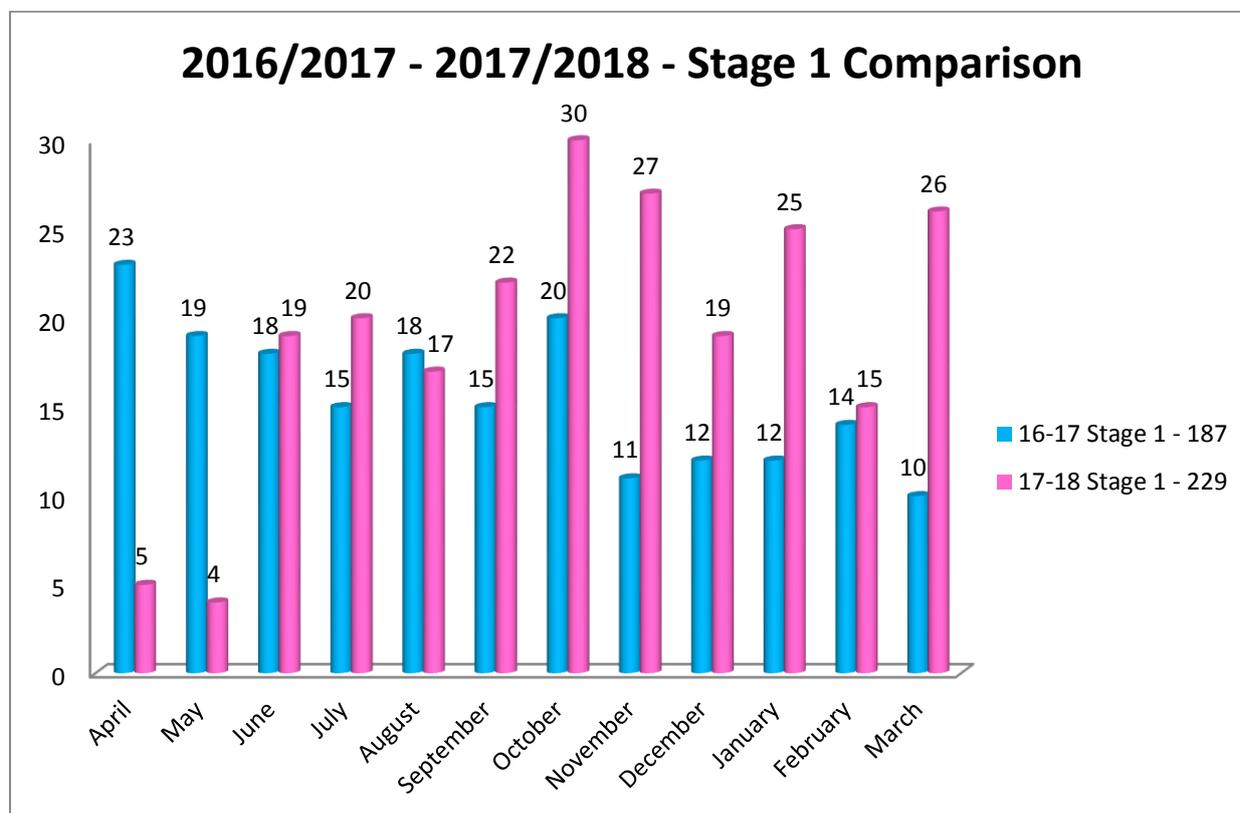


Table 8 – Number of Stage 1 complaints received 2016/17 and 2017/18 by month

5.3 Repeat complaints

The Trust received 2 or more complaints from 29 people during 2017/18 (see Table 9 below). Out of these 110 repeat contacts 85 were accepted at Stage 1 of The Trust's statutory children and young people's complaints procedure.

No. of Contacts	No. of people
2	15
3	6
4	5
5	1
12	1
25	1
Total	29

Table 9 – Repeat complainants

In 2016/17 there were 16 people who made 2 or more complaints. This shows an 81% increase from 2016/17 to 2017/18.

One person made 25 contacts with The Trust (between May 2017 and December 2017) and was dealt with under The Trust’s persistent complaints procedure. As a result of the volume of contacts they were making on a daily basis the Customer Experience Manager was the sole point of contact and these were logged on a weekly basis and dealt with at Stage 1 in line with The Trust’s statutory children and young people’s complaints procedure.

This person also requested that 4 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 but this was not agreed by the Customer Experience Manager.

5.4 Compliance with timescales - Stage 1

Below is a breakdown of the timescales to deal with the 229 Stage 1 complaints received between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018:

- Within 10 working days – 69 (30%)
- Within 20 working days – 80 (35%)
- Over 20 working days – 80 (35%)

Stage 1 complaints dealt with within statutory timescales – 65%. This is slightly lower than 2016/17 when Stage 1 complaints dealt with within statutory timescales was 67%. One of the reasons for the reduction in performance was a reduction in resource in the Customer Experience Team in 2017/18 and difficulties faced recruiting full time cover for staff absence. This had an impact on tracking complaints and prompting managers for responses.

Steps have been taken to improve performance in statutory timescales being met. This has included support from senior management, an additional contact with managers to remind them of the timescale and tailored support to individual managers depending on the competing matters that they are dealing with at the same time a response is due. The Customer Experience Team is 100% resourced. There is a projected improvement for statutory timescales in 2018/19 given performance in April 2018 and May 2019 which saw 77% of complaints responded to within timescale. This will continue to be monitored throughout the year.

Breakdown of timescale to respond to Stage 1 complaints

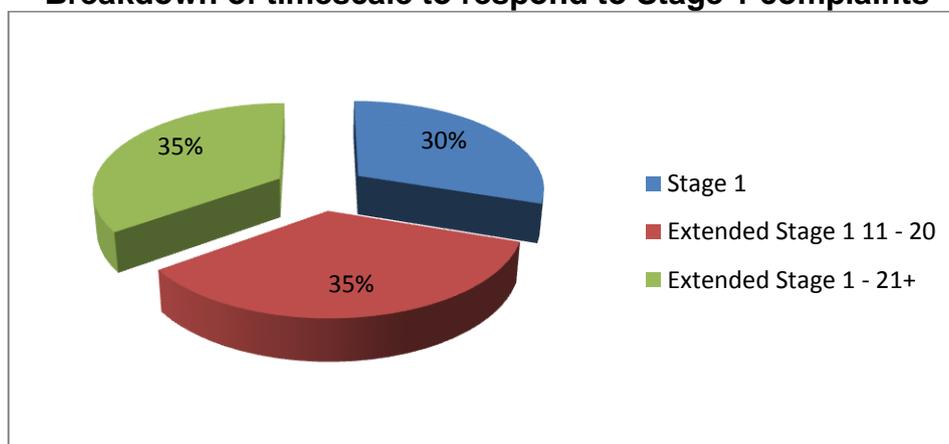


Table 10 – Breakdown of timescale to respond to Stage 1 complaints

6.0 Stage 2 complaints

There were 27 (12%) requests for Stage 1 complaints to be escalated to Stage 2 of the complaints procedure during 2017/18. Of these 26 were denied by the Customer Experience Manager and complainants were advised of their right to contact the Local Government Ombudsman if they were unhappy with this decision. The cost of 26 Stage 2 complaints could have potentially cost £104k (£4k average) which would have diverted money from delivering front line services to children and young people.

Of the 27 requests received 8 were received from 2 repeat complainants.

With a number of Stage 2 requests additional work was undertaken with the complainant to negate the need for a Stage 2 investigation. This included additional meetings, meetings with Heads of Service and also negotiation on historical matters in order to reach resolution.

Another reason that it was possible to decline so many Stage 2 requests was because a robust response is provided at Stage 1 of the complaints procedure. The Customer Experience Manager personally quality checks each Stage 1 response to ensure that all complaints have been fully responded to, lessons have been learnt where appropriate and that details of actions taken as a result of the complaint are explained to the complainant (see 9.0 below). This has included contacting other agencies for their input into complaints where they have been present during the matter being complained about or have been quoted as evidence to support the complaint. External agencies are asked to confirm that they agree with the section of the response relating to their input in order to support open communication and positive working relationships.

Managers within The Trust work openly and honestly with the Customer Experience Manager and are open to feedback and suggestions to enable complaint resolution at an early stage.

One Stage 1 complaint raised in 2017/18 was escalated to Stage 2. A Stage 1 complaint which was originally raised during 2016/17 was escalated to Stage 2 during 2017/18.

6.1 Compliance with timescales, Stage 2

The timescale for a Stage 2 complaint to be responded to is a maximum of 65 working days.

Both Stage 2 investigations took longer with one at 77 working days and one at 99 working days. One complaint was a particularly complex complaint and the other complainant did not fully engage in the Stage 2 process.

6.2 Cost of Stage 2 investigations

Due to the tighter control on Stage 1 complaints escalating to Stage 2 and the quality of Stage 2 investigations there has continued to be a decrease in the number of and costs associated with Stage 2 investigations.

Table 11 below shows the costs for Stage 2 investigations in 2017/18.

STAGE 2 - BY AREA	Complainant	Date TOR Signed	Date of Adjudication	Date Closed	No. of Working Days	Cost
East and South Area	Person 1	20/02/2017	29/03/2017	18/04/2017	77	£6,265.11
East and CWD	Person 2	Did not sign	16/02/2018	28/03/2018	99	£3,027.22
Total						<u>£9,292.33</u>

Table 11 – Breakdown of costs for Stage 2 investigations.

Table 12 below shows the continual decrease in annual costs for Stage 2 investigations between 1 April 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18.

Year	No. of Stage 2 Investigations	Annual Stage 2 Spend	Average Cost	Reduction of spend against 2015/16	% Cost reduction against 2015/16	Average Timescale (Working Days)
2015/16	6	£42,374.21	£7062.27			120
2016/17	5	£20,089.91	£4017.98	£22,284.30	53%	62
2017/18	2	£9,292.33	£4646.17	£33,081.88	78%	88

Table 12 – Annual cost of Stage 2 investigations - 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2018.

Over a two year period there has been a reduction in spend on Stage 2 complaints of £55,355.

7.0 Stage 3 Complaints

There were no Stage 3 requests during 2017/18.

8.0 Analysis in relation to the reasons for complaints being made is as follows:

Complaints have been received during 2017/18 relating to a number of different areas as follows:

Breakdown of Overall Complaint Themes

Subject of Complaint	No. Received	No. Upheld/ Partly Upheld
Accuracy of Assessment/Reports	19	7
Actions of Worker	69	16
Changes in Social Worker	6	3
Decision making	27	3
Delays in receiving services	23	13
Delays in sharing Minutes/Reports	7	6
Family time arrangements	6	5
Financial assistance	15	9
Poor communication	49	35
Unhappy with placement	8	4
Total	229	101

Table 13 – Breakdown of complaint themes 2017/18

Table 14 below shows a comparison of the number of Stage 1 complaint themes in 2016/17 to 2017/18.

Subject of Complaint	2016/2017		2017/2018	
	No. Received	No. Upheld/ Partly Upheld	No. Received	No. Upheld / Partly Upheld
Accuracy of Assessment/Reports	18	11	19	7
Actions of Worker	50	14	69	16
Changes in Social Worker	7	4	6	3
Decision making	14	0	27	3
Delays in receiving services	23	16	23	13
Delays in sharing Minutes/Reports	0	0	7	6
Family time arrangements	9	5	6	5
Financial assistance	11	8	15	9
Poor communication	46	36	49	35
Unhappy with placement	9	3	8	4
Totals	187	97	229	101

Table 14 – Comparison of themes – 2016/17 and 2017/18

9.0 Lessons learnt from complaints/representations

The Trust welcomes feedback and uses this as an opportunity to learn. Where applicable, in the Stage 1 response the manager advises the complainant the action they have taken, or will take, as a result of learning from the complainant's experience. As part of the complaints procedure, where a manager advises that action has not already been taken they are sent a "Complaint Monitoring and Learning Form" to complete and return when the remedial action has been taken. This is to ensure that the resolution offered at Stage 1 is acted upon to reduce the risk of the same matter being complained about again. It also reduces the risk of a Stage 1 complaint escalating to Stage 2 on the grounds that the resolution offered did not take place.

Details are given below of the types of complaints received under each category and the action taken as a result of them.

Accuracy of assessments/reports

In 2017/18 a similar number of complaints were received to 2016/17 regarding the quality of information contained within reports. In 2016/17, 61% of these complaints were upheld/partly upheld and in 2017/18, 37% were upheld/partly upheld.

On occasion, complainants felt that reports were biased against them or information within them was inaccurate. There were occasions where information that informed referrals and assessments were provided by a third party.

Where complaints were upheld or partly upheld, one of the resolutions offered was to attach a case note advising of the error or the parents view on the matter. This only happened when a worker was no longer with The Trust and it was not possible to obtain their views on the matter. On two occasions this related to matters in court proceedings and the opportunity was taken to inform the court of the factual inaccuracies.

Complainants have also been upset about the language used in a report and on these occasions, when workers are still with The Trust, guidance was given to staff on the use of language and the need to clearly explain statements where this complaint was accepted.

Actions of Worker

As in 2016/17 this category has received the most complaints. There has been a 38% increase of complaints about the actions of workers from 2016/17 to 2017/18. In 2016/17, 28% of these complaints were upheld/partly upheld. In 2017/18, 23% were upheld or partly upheld which shows an overall decrease of 5%. Two repeat complainants raised 10 complaints in this category (14%) of which 1 was partly upheld for each complainant.

Complaints covered a range of topics about social worker behaviour from allegations about the way a social worker spoke to the complainant, feeling that a social worker was bias against them, had lied, did not attend meetings, had not acted upon their concerns, not carried out their duties fully and that they had acted unprofessionally.

There were a number of requests for social workers to be changed because of these alleged behaviours or because the complainant disliked the social worker.

In the majority of cases there was no evidence to support these allegations. There were occasions that apologies were offered in relation to tone of voice or how the interaction had been handled. There were also occasions when it was acknowledged that workers needed to ensure that families clearly understood information being shared with them. Managers confirmed that suitable guidance would be given and that the worker would reflect on their practice going forward.

On a few occasions the worker was no longer employed by The Trust and the complainant was given advice on how they could take this complaint forward if they wanted to. The manager confirmed, where appropriate, that the new worker had been briefed on their areas of concern so that these could be considered going forward.

One young person had complained that the worker had not dealt with a matter. The complaint investigation, which included contacting an external agency, found that the worker had dealt with the matter at the time but had not shared the findings with the young person. The Team Manager not only spoke to the worker but also the team to reduce the risk of this happening again.

On two occasions young people asked for their worker to be changed as a result of their complaint and the manager agreed to do this because it was important that the young person had a good relationship with their worker in order to enable them to obtain the support they needed.

Changes in social worker

Complaints about changes in social worker related to either the number of social workers a young person has had or how a change in social worker has been handled. When social workers have left The Trust this has been out of the managers control. The three complaints that were upheld were in relation to the changes in social worker. A manager allocated a permanent worker to reduce the risk in changes.

Decision Making

There was a 92% increase in complaints about decision making from 14 in 2016/17 to 27 in 2017/18. Of these 27 complaints 1 was upheld and 2 were partly upheld.

Complaints were received about decisions to undertake assessments, social care involvement, advice that partners could not stay in the home whilst being assessed, conclusions of reports/assessments and case closure. When complaints were received relating to decisions that had been made by the court these were not accepted and the complainant was advised that they would need to return to court.

One complaint was received from a school about the decision to step a case down from a Child in Need case to receive support from Parenting and Family Support.

The manager had made the decision based on the progress made in the case over the 6 week period. The manager acknowledged that the decision should have waited for formal agreement in the planned Child in Need meeting in September 2017 and apologised that this did not happen. This decision making was brought to the attention of the Head of Service through the complaints process so that the matter could be discussed further in supervision.

Delays in receiving services

Complaints regarding the delays in receiving services have been at the same level as those received in 2016/17. There has been 13% decrease in the number of complaints that have been upheld or partly upheld.

A number of complaints were received regarding delays in receiving services from social care. This included assessments not being completed in timescale, including risk assessment which had an impact on families in relation to unsupervised contact or overnight contact taking place, transferring to another team and having access to services in the new team, or undertaking pieces of work that had been agreed or identified as part of the child in need or child protection process.

In some cases these complaints came from third parties so they did not always have a full picture of what involvement there had been in the case and parents may have chosen to share information with other family members or their partners. On other occasions timescales were driven by court proceedings. In these cases the complaints were not accepted.

A complaint was received from a foster to adopt family about their experience of the process. As a result of this complaint the decision was made to put together a booklet for new prospective adopters which will include feedback from adopters of their experience of Early Permanence Placements (including both positive and negative issues) as well as family time so that expectations are appropriately managed. This booklet will be supported by a half-day training session for prospective adopters about the role of foster carers and what to expect. A foster carer will be asked to attend to discuss their experience as part of the training.

As part of the fostering to adopt process another family experienced a delay in an assessment for an adoption allowance. As a result of their complaint the finance team have updated the adoption allowance assessment process. The contracts team have also amended their practices to put a weekly tracker in place to ensure greater clarity and oversight of their part of the procedure. These actions were taken to reduce the risk of this type of delay happening again.

Two young people complained about the delay they experienced in their case transferring to another team and obtaining the support from the new team. One young person shared that this had made them feel "*unimportant and angry*". The manager apologised that they had felt this way. As a result of the investigation into the complaint by both managers the reasons for the delay were identified as well as highlighting that the transfer protocol itself could be more robust to ensure young people were not affected by any delays to tasks that were to be undertaken by the transferring and receiving team.

The outcome was that The Transfer Protocol was updated in relation to young people either transferring just after their 16th birthday or after their GCSE's if relevant. This will ensure that the issues that occurred in these cases will not occur again in the future. The updated protocol was shared with all the area teams.

A young person complained that actions identified at their LAC review had not been progressed and that a date had not been set for their next LAC review. The following occurred as a result of their complaint to ensure that lessons were learnt:

- As part of the investigation into the complaint it was identified that the electronic case recording system does not carry forward the correct recommendations from the outcomes section when data is copied forward. It is not possible to make changes to the system so this matter was addressed by business support in the team copying data forward from the last report to the current review. All Independent Reviewing Officers were also reminded of the need to ensure that they robustly check previous minutes and recommendations to ensure actions are monitored and progressed appropriately.
- A system was put in place by business support to alert IRO's if a date has not been set for the next review.

Delays in sharing minutes/reports

In 2016/17 this was not the main presenting issue for any complaints received. In 2017/17 The Trust received 7 complaints and 6 were upheld. Complaints were received about reports not being shared ahead of meetings, minutes not being shared after meetings and reports not being shared ahead of court.

On each occasion the Team Manager apologised to the complainant and addressed the matter in supervision with the member of staff.

Family time arrangements

Although a lower number of complaints were received during 2017/18 in comparison to 2016/17 the same amount were upheld or partly upheld. Complaints have been made regarding alternative arrangements being available for family time during bad weather, family time not being confirmed to all parties, all children not being included in a referral and it not being communicated that a young person had decided they did not want to go ahead with family time. Suitable management action was taken as a result of the complaints to ensure that the children did not experience this again.

Financial assistance

Complaints have been upheld where financial arrangements have not been put in place, payments have been delayed or the correct amounts have not been paid. There have also been issues where it has not been clearly explained how long financial payments take to be processed. Where family arrangements have been made without the involvement of The Trust this has been explained to the complainant.

One young person complained about not accessing accurate information and support to enable them to access appropriate entitlements. The Team Manager identified specialist resources within the team that staff could consult with to ensure that going forward young people were provided with up to date and accurate information.

Another young person was financially affected due to Regulation 39 of the Care Planning Regulations not being fully complied to when their sibling left care to live with them. (Regulation 39 applies when a Local Authority is considering to cease to look after a child). As a result of this complaint financial remedy was given and the regulations were reissued to all relevant staff as a learning point.

Poor Communication

This category has received the second largest amount of complaints. There has been a 7% decrease in 2017/18 of the number of complaints upheld/partly upheld.

Complaints were received about telephone calls not being returned, reports for meetings being received late, meetings being moved at short notice, parents not being advised of appointments for CIC, allocated workers being difficult to contact and outcomes from assessments not being shared. On some occasions, problems had been caused by unplanned absences of staff. There have been a number of times that managers have been able to challenge the allegation of calls not being returned or updates not being provided due to clear case recording on the case file which evidences the matter was dealt with appropriately at the time. Where there was evidence that communication was poor this was apologised for by the Team Manager and addressed with individual workers in supervision.

One young person felt that they had not received enough information regarding the home it was planned for them to move to. As a result of their complaint the manager met with the young person and their advocate to let them look around their new home and discuss their concerns. Learning from this complaint was that matching of young people with residential homes should include the voice of the child and any worries they may have. These will then be discussed by the residential manager with the young person's social worker with the young person being kept informed/involved at the appropriate level.

On occasion complaints have related to calls not being returned due to the worker being away from the office for a period of time. As a result of this staff in the area were advised, in a team meeting, that if it is know that a worker is away from the office for a period of time or the matter is urgent, the caller is offered the opportunity to speak to the duty worker.

Unhappy with placement

These complaints came equally from parents and young people. On occasions parents were unhappy with where their children had been placed and opportunity was taken to explain again why this was necessary.

There were also complaints about the living arrangements whilst a suitable home was sought. The reasons for these delays were down to the limited availability of placements that were able to meet the needs of the children. These placements are highly sought after nationally and whilst this is outside the immediate control of The Trust sufficiency planning continues to be a key priority for The Trust.

On one occasion a number of suitable homes had been offered to a young person but they refused them. One young person was unhappy with incidents that had happened in her home and the Head of Service met with them to reassure them of the actions the staff were taking to ensure this was addressed.

Lessons learnt through matters raised in complaints

When a complaint is raised about a matter the complaint is looked into and responded to. However, there are occasions where learning has been identified even though the specific matter has not been complained about. On these occasions the opportunity is still taken to learn from experience and adapt services to reduce the risk of a matter being subject to complaints in the future. Examples of these are as follows:

1. Child protection conferences - When a parent/carer is unhappy with information in a report experience is that they may attempt to challenge this in a conference. The focus of the Child Protection Chair is the child who is the subject of the conference so it is not appropriate for the meeting to be distracted with issues that are not deciding factors and do not directly relate to the child. However, a parent/carer can struggle to engage in the process if they are focussing on what they feel is inaccurate information.

The Child Protection Chair meets with parents/carers ahead of the start of the conference and as a result of this issue practice has changed for the Chair to capture the essence of the matters the parent/carer is disagreeing with as their view. It will be agreed in the pre-meeting if this matter will be discussed in the conference or outside the conference with the relevant professional. This practice is to enable the complainant to feel heard and enable them to engage with the process and allow the Child Protection Chair to keep the focus of the conference on the child.

2. Foster Carers - As a result of a complaint which involved a foster carer practice was changed for supervising social workers to be sole point of contact, rather than the young person's social worker, during times when issues are raised which relate to the foster carer directly to ensure there are clear lines of communication.
3. Private Law guidance – As part of the learning from a Stage 2 complaint a procedure is to be produced for practitioners which clearly identifies how cases that are open to The Trust due to private legal proceedings should be handled. This includes visits, meetings and reporting and recording on the case file to identify the reason why social care is involved.

10.0 Local Government Ombudsman

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) raised four matters with The Trust during 2017/18. Only one matter was taken forward by the LGO and The Trust agreed to and acted upon the recommended resolution.

11.0 Compliments

Throughout the year The Trust's staff have continued to be encouraged to acknowledge and celebrate good practice which has resulted in them continuing to share the compliments they have received. Staff continue to respond positively to this public acknowledgement of their hard work and dedication to improving outcomes for children and young people within The Trust as well working together with other professionals and the public. Everyone recognises the importance of each individual and the role that they play in improving services.

During the report year, 295 compliments were gathered from across The Trust from children and young people, their families, internal and external professionals, the local community and local businesses. This is a 103% increase on 2016/17. External compliments have increased by 146% in this time period from 65 in 2016/17 to 160 in 2017/18. The Trust wishes to not only learn from feedback in relation to complaints but also recognises, celebrates and learns from good practice.

Sources of Compliments

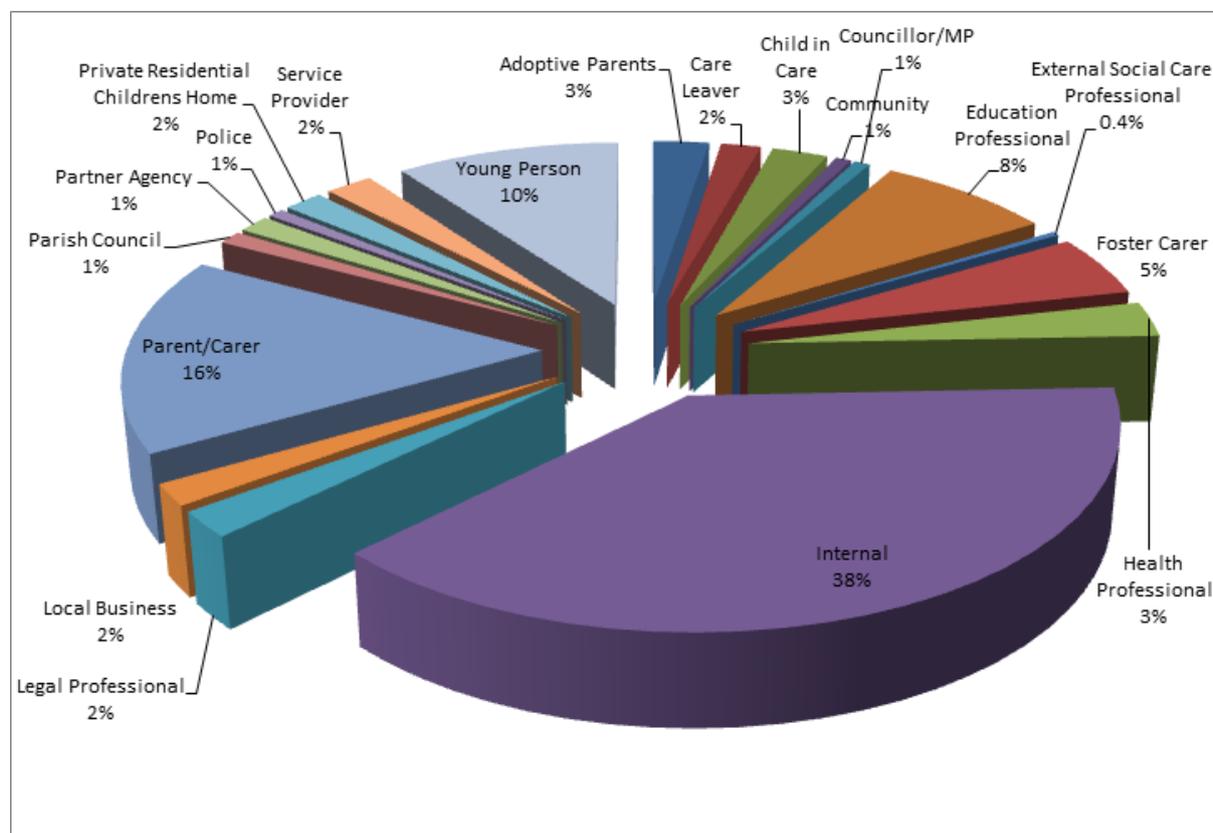


Table 15 – Sources of compliments

Compliments by Area

	Internal	External	Total
Central Area	15	24	39
North Area	19	16	35
South Area	6	8	14
East Area	13	14	27
LAC Provided Services	21	30	51
Targeted Youth Support	4	39	43
Safeguarding & Standards	30	15	45
Performance Management & Business Intelligence	7		7
Commissioning	2	4	6
HR, Comms & Executive Office	12	1	13
Legal Services	3		3
Relating to more than one service area	2	8	10
Senior Management Team	1	1	2
Total	135	160	295

Table 16 – Internal and external compliments by area

Whilst the Area Child Protection Teams (ACPS) have received the highest number of complaints accepted at Stage 1 they have also received compliments on their work as detailed in Table 15 below.

Area	No. of Stage 1 complaints	No. of internal compliments	No. of external compliments	Total Compliments Received
ACPS Central	47	8	8	16
ACPS East	34	6	4	10
ACPS North	30	11	7	18
ACPS South	19	0	7	7

Table 17 – ACPS - internal and external compliments

11.1 Examples of external compliments received

Below are some examples of the 160 compliments received from outside The Trust.

Child in Need

....is a 'really, really, really good' social worker. listens to me, does what she says and 'gets things done'.

Thank you for all you have done for me. Im glad I had you as my social worker. I will miss you but will come see you sometimes so you don't forget me. I wasn't worried cos I knew you'd sort it.

Thank you for everything you've done for me. You've been more of a friend than a social worker. I'm gunna miss you.

it's not like you think it will be from being at court... expecting it to be like school or something... but is kind (respectful) and supportive. In particular when you call at reception, the greeting is always nice and give you respect and are helpful.

Im very thankful that you have helped me keep out of trouble

Child in Care

.... is a really good social worker She listened to me, she fights for my rights..... She has a laugh with me, is honest with me..... She is the best social worker ever

Because I tell her what I would like and she always fights for me.

I've had my social Worker for over 4 years, I've been very lucky because I've had her from the very start and she's been amazing, I can tell her anything, she's like a good friend to me, she's a massive part of my life, she gets stuff done, has helped sort out all my contact issues too, it took me a good year to build that relationship up and to trust her like I do, she's very special, she understands me, my family and my background very well, and she knows my foster carers very well too

I have realised that you are a person who I am beginning to trust and to open up to I want to say a massive thank you for all your support and time I'm starting to be happy and not feeling down all the time.I'm glad you have been putting a smile on my face and for thinking positive and not negative all the time.

Helped me with accommodation and problems that are personal

Care Leaver

You are like my safety net if you were not there who would catch me when I fall

I finally get it I know I used to shout and scream at everyone but I can see you were trying to help me to help myself and sort my life out, I can't thank you all enough I am so happy now

Thank you for caring

Parents/Carers

I just wanted to let you know my resent social worker has been amazing and is a huge credit to the trust, honest and open, all ways there to talk to, i am so so pleased to of had do my risk assessment and the way she been with myself kids and the whole situation has been amazing and what a credit to the trust. thank you.

Thank you so much for your help and support through these hard times.

Thank you so much for going the extra mile for us. All the family do appreciate everything you have done.

Thank you so much for all the care and support you have given to A and B over the years. We couldn't have done it without you. Thank you for being part of the team making their childhoods a positive and happy time.

You may have just saved a young girls life I have tried for years to get her help and every door was closed. What you did was amazing. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. My daughter needed you

I feel like is the one who has really makes a difference to us. C listens to her when he won't listen to anyone else. tells it to him straight and she has been there for me too – I can pick up the phone if I need her and she will take the time to talk to me or come out and visit. She's just brilliant

'you have really helped us a lot, thank you for all of your hard work, we feel like a family now'

I appreciate all your hard work, You all helped me when I really needed it. I wouldn't have been able to get through that challenging time without all your help. Big Thanks

Adopters

We haven't had a huge amount of experience in working with Social Workers but I have to say, it really has been a pleasure to deal with every single person we have had contact with in DCS. Together, you all make a great team which from a perspective adopters point of view, makes the journey that much more enjoyable.

..... every member of the team we have worked with has been amazing and clearly do a fantastic job

..... the support and process thus far had been 'faultless' We are happy with the support and the transition arrangements that were put in place.

Our social worker was brilliant and very supportive and she did above and beyond.

Community

We feel like we have our town back

CAHMS Worker

I'm writing to thank you for the time and commitment you clearly have in supporting D, both currently and in the future.

Police

During the time they have supervised Child A they have demonstrated effective partnership work with various departments and agencies They have often taken telephone calls in their own time to support their colleagues and the Police. They have worked extremely hard, demonstrating dedication and professionalism. Without them 'going the extra mile' we would not have an understanding of Child A.

Judges

The judge was very complimentary in regards to the work completed with the children stating that it was 'excellent work' and that we had achieved an 'excellent outcome for the children'.

Judge thanked the social worker and guardian for comprehensive reports which were very helpful during the decision making process

Children's Guardian

First and foremost it has been an absolute pleasure working with you! You are organised, analytical, considered in your approach and have worked very hard to move plans along for the children and tailor the plans for each child's needs. Despite the issues in this manner concerning the attitudes of the family towards social care, you have overcome this and managed to work with a family who are very resistant to support. Your written work has been of value and has eased the process of making final decisions for these children. Professionals involved in this matter have all commented on how hard you work and hold you in high regard as a social worker. I have heard nothing but good things about you. As you know at the start of these proceedings the children were aggressive and hateful towards professionals involved, refusing to work with social workers. Over the time you have involved both children have reported to me how they have learnt to trust you, have valued your support and in very recent weeks have praised you for the visits and support you have given. The change in the children's attitude towards social care has been astounding and I consider that this is due to your persistence, empathy and consistency you have given this case.

Head teachers

I wanted to let you know that the plan for these children and the support and action has taken since taking over the case at crisis point in the summer term has been superb, all actions from the recent Case conference review have been sorted and again today following the meeting agreed actions have been followed through. Please thank again for the work she is doing to help this Mum and ensure stability for the children to hopefully ensure as they become adults the cycle does not then continue into another generation.

Thanks very, very much for your approach to this after getting the form from us. It's nice to see a practical perspective taken by professionals to ensure a family receive much needed support regardless of technicalities

12.0 Summary

The complaints and compliments procedures have continued to be embedded into the service during the reporting year. In order to ensure that practice in this area continues meetings are arranged with new managers to induct them into the process as and when.

A copy of all final complaint responses continue to be shared with Heads of Services so they have an overview of the issues causing complaints in their area and to assist in developing service delivery. Complaints Monitoring and Learning Forms are an audit tool to ensure that resolution offered as part of the Stage 1 complaint is acted upon.

Poor communication does continue to be the area receiving a high number of complaints (2nd highest) and the area which has had the most complaints upheld or partly upheld (40%). It is expected that the introductory pack introduced at the end of 2017 (which includes guidance on reports/assessments being shared in a timely way, opportunities to respond to information contained within documents, availability of social workers and who to contact when they are not available) will be embedded into service areas and impact upon the level of complaints being received about these matters in 2018/19.

It is encouraging that there have been more complaints received directly from our young people. It is evident that young people have had an impact on service delivery from updating procedures, impacting on working practices or reissuing of guidance to staff.

Learning from complaints this reporting period has had the following impact:

- Management guidance has been given to staff on lessons learnt as a result of a complaint either individually in supervision or in team meetings.
- Two young people had their workers changed at their request.
- A booklet was produced for prospective adopters which includes direct feedback from adopters of their experience of Early Permanence Placements.
- The Finance Team have updated the adoption allowance assessment process.
- The Transfer Protocol was updated for young people aged 16+.
- Working practice has changed to track recommendations and actions from Looked After Children reviews.
- A manual system was put in place to ensure the next Looked After Child review is booked.
- Specialist resource was identified to support staff with knowledge about appropriate entitlements for young people.
- Guidance was reissued to staff on Regulation 39 of the Care Planning Regulations.
- Working practice changed to include the voice of young people being placed in residential homes.
- Child Protection Chair's changed their practice to capture the essence of any disagreements with reports ahead of the child protection conference.

- Supervising social workers were identified as the single point of contact for any issues that relate to Foster Carers.
- Guidance will be issued to staff on how to handle cases open to The Trust due to private law proceedings.

There has been a massive overall 103% increase in compliments received both internally and externally about Trust staff. It is important to staff that their good work is recognised and the positive impact that this can have on children and their families in a challenging and complex field of work.

Key Priorities for 2018/19

The focus for 2018/19 will be to continue to develop an efficient and cost effective service that responds well to service user need. Performance has already started to improve in relation to response timescales with the Customer Experience Manager working closely with Team Managers to ensure robust and timely responses. This approach is supported by the Senior Management Team.

We have seen an 8% overall reduction in complaints being upheld or partly upheld in 2017/18 in comparison to 2016/17. By continuing to learn from complaints to improve service delivery it is expected the number of complaints that are upheld or partly upheld will continue to fall.

The advocacy service moved away from the Customer Experience Team on the 16 April 2018 but the relationships formed with children through this service are expected to continue to enable young people to continue to share their wishes and feelings and impact on planning for their future.

The Trust will continue to encourage staff to share positive feedback they receive from both internal and external sources so that lessons can also be learnt from good practice.

Dawn Jones
Customer Experience Manager