



Complaints and Compliments

Annual Report for 2018/19

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

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1.0 Background

Every local authority with a responsibility for children's social care services is required to produce an annual report outlining the statutory complaints activity for the service. This report covers the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019. The statutory complaints function transferred from Doncaster Council (DC) 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. Complaints that do not fall under the statutory complaints procedure are generally those matters that do not relate to children's social care involvement or services that are not provided directly by children's social workers.

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 statutory Stage 1 complaint it is either dealt with as a "representation" or a "corporate complaint". Details of how corporate complaints are handled are provided below. When a matter is dealt with as "representation" the person is responded to and advised how their contact has been handled and they in the majority of cases they are written to. If they are not written to they are spoken to and it is confirmed that they are in agreement that the matter that they have raised has been addressed to their satisfaction.

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 that the Customer Experience Manager escalates their complaint to a statutory Stage 2 investigation. The Customer Experience Manager will then make a decision on whether or not to escalate the complaint to Stage 2 based on the evidence provided by the complainant.

If the Customer Experience Manager does not agree to escalate the complaint to Stage 2 they write to the complainant and explain why they have made this decision. The complainant is advised of their right to contact the Local Government Ombudsman if they are unhappy with the decision made by the Customer Experience Manager.

If it is possible to resolve the complaint pre-stage 2 by undertaking further work to provide the complainant with resolution on the matters that they remain unhappy with then this will happen. The focus of the Customer Experience Manager is to support resolution at the earliest stage possible as this is in the best interests of all parties.

If the complaint is escalated to Stage 2 of the statutory complaints procedure an investigation is undertaken. 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 does not have management responsibility for the service area that has been complained about.

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 (Stage 3). The Customer Experience Manager will then make a decision on whether or not to escalate the complaint to Stage 3 based on the evidence provided by the complainant.

If the Customer Experience Manager does not agree to escalate the complaint to Stage 3 they write to the complainant and explain why they have made this decision. The complainant is advised of their right to contact the Local Government Ombudsman if they are unhappy with the decision made by the Customer Experience Manager.

As with Stage 2, if it is possible to resolve the complaint pre-stage 3 by undertaking further work to provide the complainant with resolution on the matters that they remain unhappy with then this will happen. The Customer Experience Manager's aim continues to be supporting resolution at the earliest stage possible.

If the complaint escalates to Stage 3 the Customer Experience Manager appoints a Stage 3 panel. The panel consists of two independent persons, plus an independent chair. After the panel has considered the complaint the Chair makes recommendations to the Chief Executive. A copy of the panel's letter is also sent to the complainant. The Chief Executive then makes a decision on the findings of the Stage 3 panel and sends the 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 An outline of the corporate complaints procedure

Complaints accepted by the Customer Experience Manager that fall outside the remit of the statutory complaints procedure may be dealt with under the Trust's corporate complaints procedure.

The corporate complaints procedure has two stages once a representation has been accepted as a corporate complaint.

3.1 Stage 1 - Local Resolution

As with statutory complaints, the aim is to resolve as many complaints as possible by the local team at this early stage. The local 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. If longer is required the complainant will be advised when to expect a response.

3.2 Stage 2 – Investigation

When a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, they may request that the Customer Experience Manager escalates their complaint to a Stage 2 investigation. The investigation is conducted by a manager who has not had previous involvement with the complaint. The manager will investigate the complaint and respond directly to the complainant. The manager will aim to respond within 20 working days but if longer is required the complainant will be advised when to expect a response.

4.0 Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

At the conclusion of the three stages of the statutory complaints procedure or two stages of the corporate complaints procedure, the complainant has the right to escalate their concerns to the Local Government Ombudsman for consideration.

The complainant can also contact the Local Government Ombudsman if the Customer Experience Manager has refused to accept their complaint or escalate it to the next stage of the relevant procedure.

The Customer Experience Manager can also make an early referral to the Local Government Ombudsman at any stage of either complaints procedure if they feel that the matter cannot be resolved through a complaints procedure.

5.0 The Complaints Service

The Customer Experience Team is located within the Safeguarding and Standards Unit. The Customer Experience Manager is responsible for dealing with representations and complaints received by the Trust. The Customer Experience Manager is supported by a Customer Experience Support Officer (0.8 FTE).

5.1 How contacts have been received

The majority of contacts were received directly by the Trust (91%) from a number of sources. Contacts have also been logged onto DC's on line services (7% - 2017/18 4%) or passed through DC's contact centre (2% - 2017/18 1%). This shows 2018/19 is comparable to 2016/17 when DC was the first point of contact for 9% of contacts to The Trust.

The Customer Experience Team received 31% of contacts directly on the telephone. The Customer Experience Manager has met with 31 (12%) complainants directly to capture their complaints (28% more than in 2017/18). On occasion, the Customer Experience Manager and the Team Manager have met with the complainant together in order to seek early resolution.

The Customer Experience Team has also dealt with a number of enquiries by signposting them through to the correct department. This has included matters such a safeguarding concerns and data protection matters.

The other sources of contact have remained similar to 2017/18 with the exception of e-mail which has decreased to 24% in 2018/19 (29% in 2017/18). Table 1 below shows how contact has been made with the Trust.

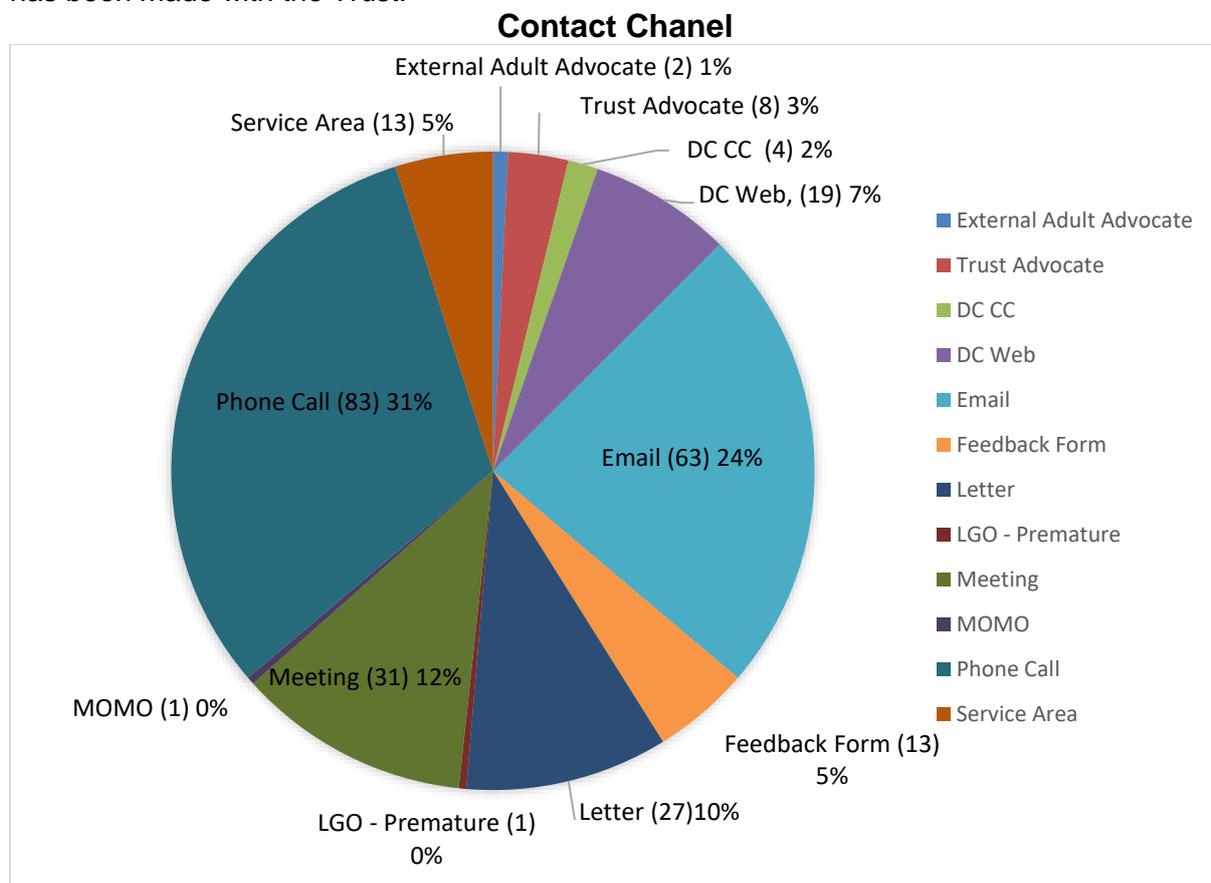


Table 1 – Contact Channel

5.2 Total number of individual complaints received

During the reporting year 265 contacts were logged which were received from 205 different people. This is a reduction of 11% from 228 people who made contact in 2016/17 and 2017/18. Table 2 shows a comparison of how these contacts were handled:

	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Stage 1	145 (55%)	229 (74%)	187 (60%)
Representations (informal)	30 (11%)	14 (5%)	65 (21%)
Withdrawn	36 (14%)	43 (14%)	44 (14%)
Corporate Complaint	54 (20%)	23 (7%)	14 (5%)
Total Contacts	265	309	310

Table 2 – Individual number of contacts received

The level of contacts has reduced by 14% since 2017/18. One reason for this reduction is the lower number of repeat complaints since 2017/18. In 2017/18 there were two people who had a high level of contact with the Trust. One of them made 8% of all contacts and was dealt with through the persistent complaints procedure.

Of the 265 contacts 145 were accepted at Stage 1 of the statutory complaints procedure which is a 37% decrease in the number of complaints that were accepted at Stage 1 in 2017/18.

There has been an increase in the number of complaints that were dealt with through the corporate complaints procedure (54 in 2018/19 in comparison to 23 in 2017/18). Following previous feedback from the Local Government Ombudsman more consideration is given to which procedure a complaint should be handled under. Another reasons for this increase is the number of complaints that were received from 3rd parties who do not receive a statutory service from the Trust.

Contacts Received – 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019

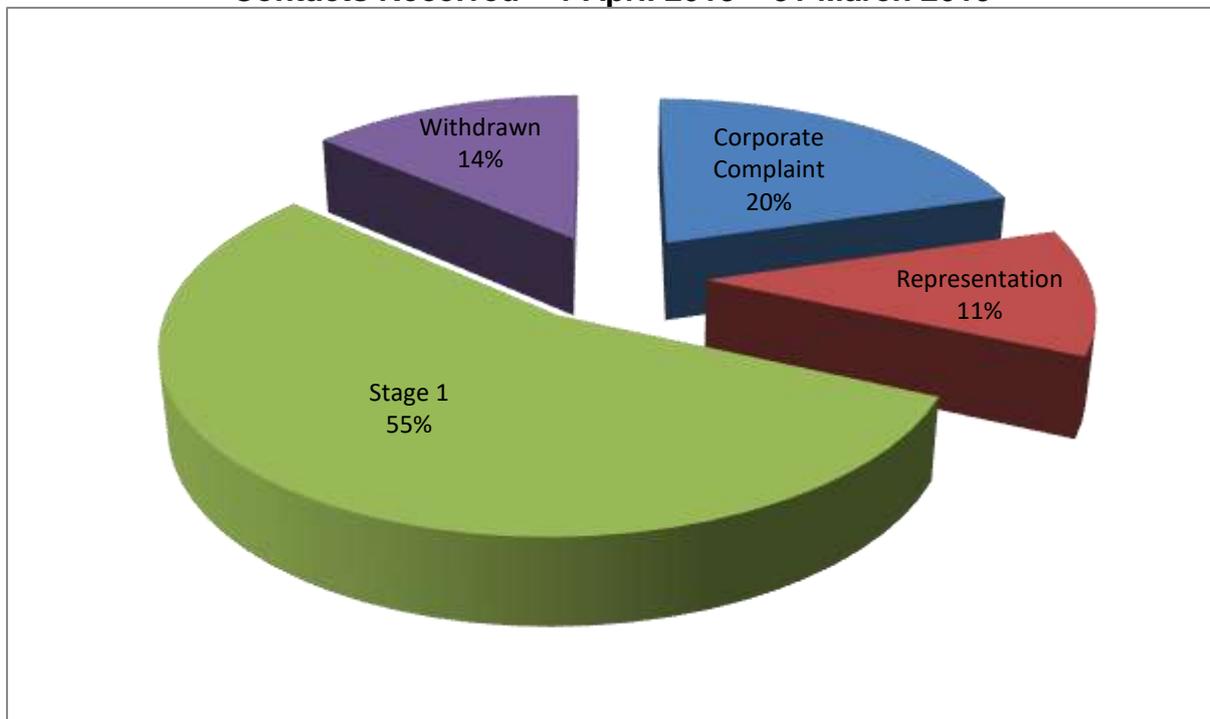


Table 3 – Breakdown of contacts received

5.3 Who made complaints/representations?

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

There were 26 contacts received from young people during 2018/19 (one young person contacted the Trust twice). This is a reduction from the 33 contacts received during 2017/18 and 28 contacts received in 2016/17.

The age of young people who contacted the Trust ranged between 11 and 20 years old.

There were contacts from 5 young people who were of a black and minority ethnic (BME) group. This is an increase from 2017/18 where only 1 young person was from a BME group.

There have been 11 complaints/contacts from children in care which is a 52% drop from 2017/18 when 23 children in care made contact. There has been an increase in complaints/contacts from care leavers (8 in 2018/19 compared to 3 in 2017/18).

In 2017/18 the Trust produced a new information pack which included an information pack for children and young people which gave advice on how to complain or provide feedback. For the first time complaints/contacts have been received from young people on a child in need plan (5) and a young person receiving support from non-statutory services from the Trust (1). One possible reason for this increase in the range of contacts from children and young people could be as a result of the introduction of the new information pack.

Table 4 below shows how contacts have been received from young people and what area of support they were receiving at the time contact was made.

Route	Child In Care	Care Leaver	Child Protection	Child In Need	Young Person
Feedback Form	1	3	1		
Meeting with Customer Experience Manager	3	2		2	
MOMO*				1	
Phone Call with Customer Experience Manager		2		1	1
Service Area		1			
Trust Advocate	7			1	
Total	11	8	1	5	1

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

* MOMO is an app used by young people receiving a service from the Trust to keep in touch with social workers and others.

6.0 Statutory Stage 1 Complaints

Table 5 below shows a breakdown of the outcome of statutory Stage 1 complaint investigations. There was a 56% reduction in the number of Stage 1 complaints that were upheld in 2018/19.

Year	No. of Stage 1 complaints	Upheld	Partly Upheld
2018/19	145	27 (19%)	26 (18%)
2017/18	229	61 (27%)	40 (17%)

Year	No. of Stage 1 complaints	Upheld/Partly Upheld
2016/17	187	97 (52%)

Table 5 – Outcome of Stage 1 investigations

In 2018/19 there were 16947 contacts with The Trust of which 4718 became open cases. The number of complaints accepted at Stage 1 of the statutory complaints procedure was 0.9% of all contacts with the Trust. This is a reduction from 1.25% in 2017/18.

6.1 Breakdown of Statutory Stage 1 Complaints by Area

Below is a breakdown of the 145 statutory Stage 1 complaints received by service area:

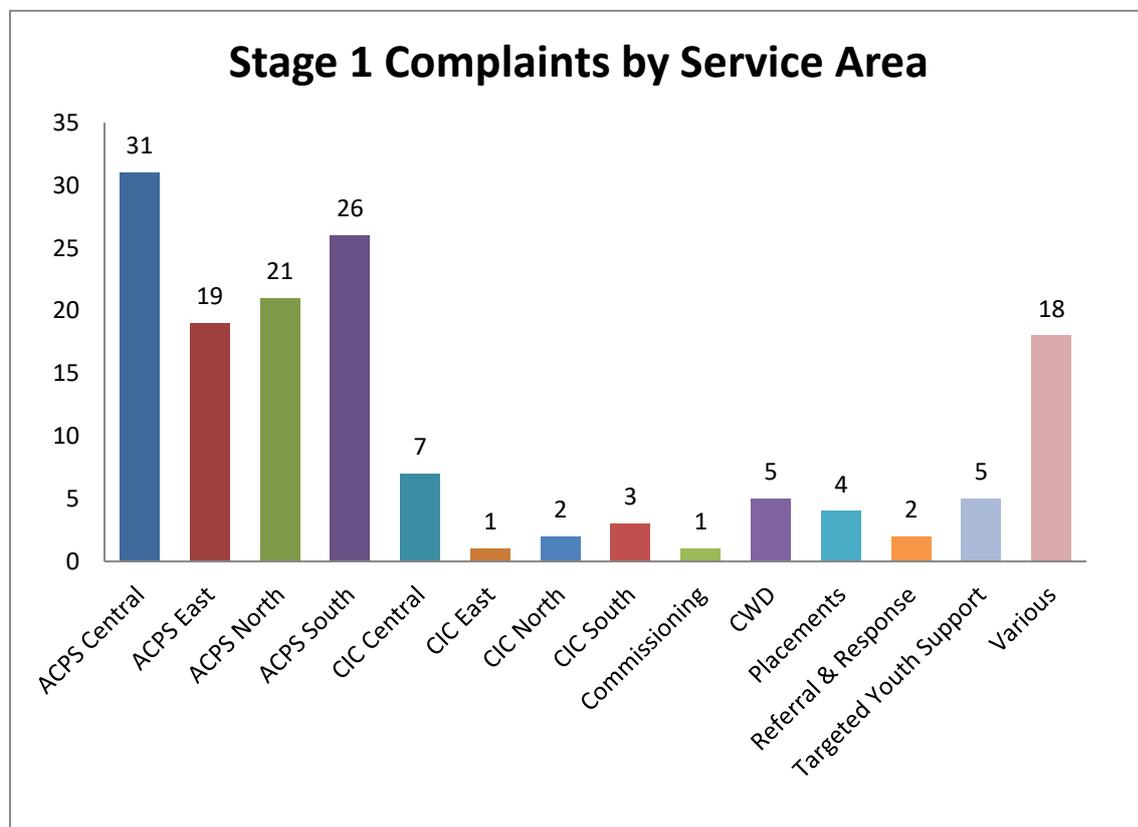


Table 6 – Complaints by service area (Various relates to more than one service area)

As in 2017/18 the majority of complaints have been received by the Area Child Protection Service teams (ACPS). As these areas deal with child protection matters which is an emotive subject and will involve the need for difficult conversations with families it is expected that this will result in complaints. These teams also hold the highest proportion of cases (75%) as show in Table 7 below by they received only 67% of Stage 1 complaints.

Proportion of complaints against cases held

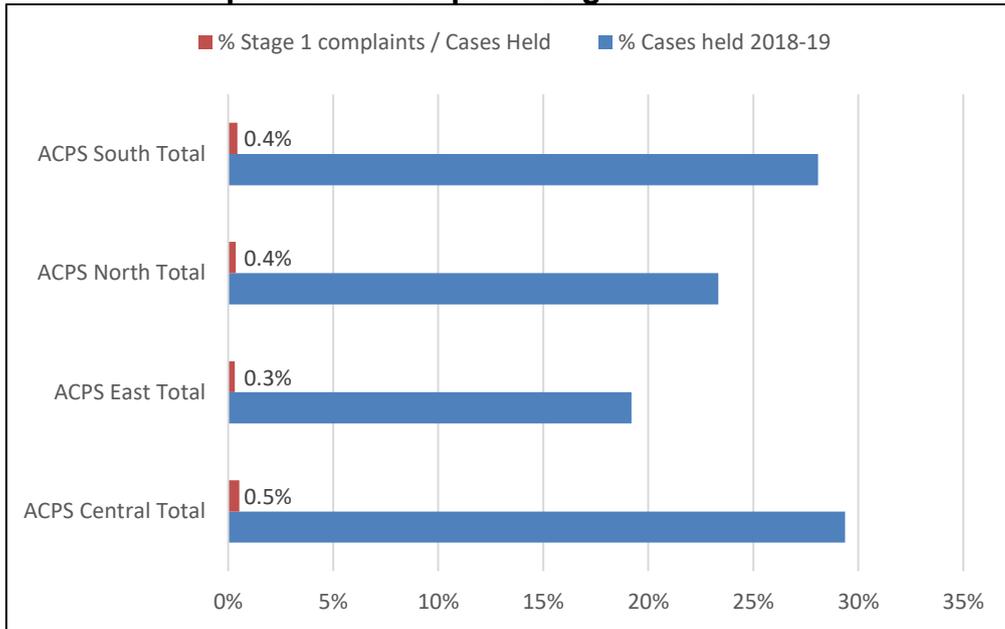


Table 7 – Proportion of complaints against cases held

6.2 Monthly trend for receiving statutory complaints

Upon analysing the total complaints accepted at statutory Stage 1 per month for 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 there still seems to be no clear trend in regards to whether complaints peak during certain months although there are more similarities for the trend in receiving complaints in 2018/19 against 2016/17.

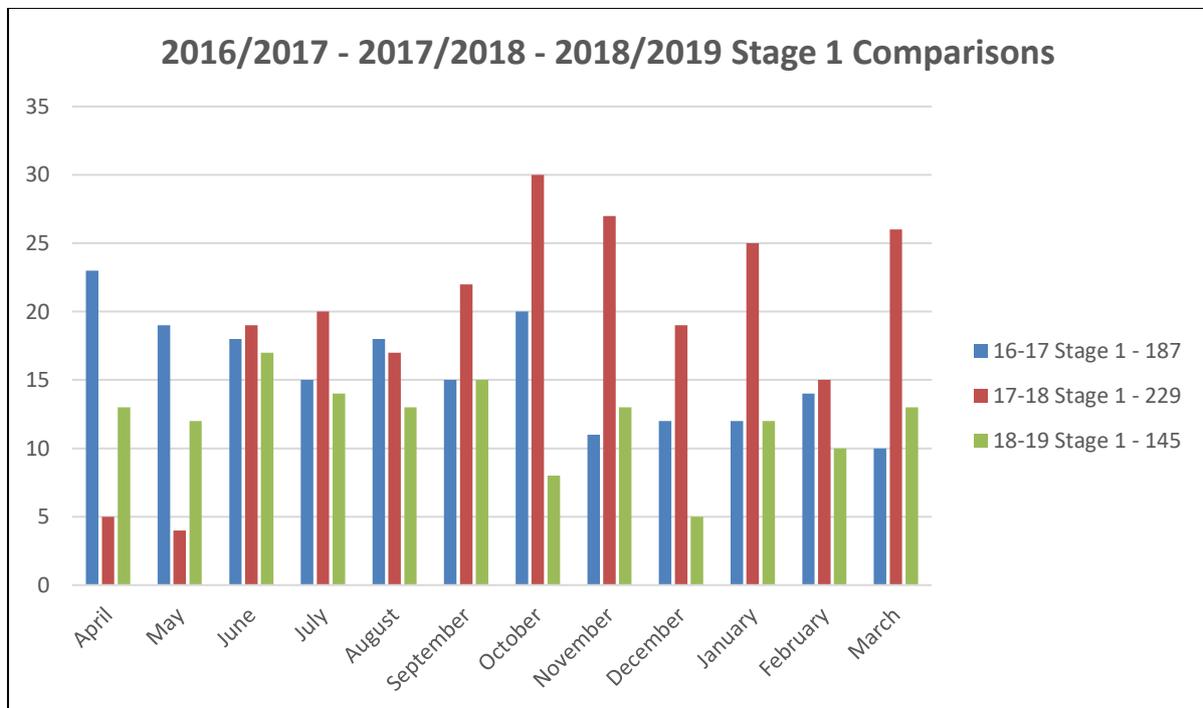


Table 8 – Number of Stage 1 complaints received 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 by month

6.3 Repeat statutory complainants

The Trust received 2 or more complaints from 24 people during 2018/19 (see Table 9 below). Out of these 65 repeat contacts 48 (74%) were accepted at Stage 1 of the Trust's statutory complaints procedure. This is a 3% decrease from 2017/18 when 85 (77%) of 110 contacts were accepted at Stage 1.

No. of Contacts	No. of people 2018/19	No. of people 2017/18
2	14	15
3	5	6
4	5	5
5		1
12		1
25		1
Total	24	29

Table 9 – Repeat complainants

There has not been a requirement in 2018/19 to treat any complainants who have raised a complaint under the Trust's Persistent Complaints Procedure. The Customer Experience Manager has worked with two managers around putting communication agreements in place and these have been managed in the area teams.

Three of the four people who made four contacts with the Trust requested a Stage 2 complaint investigation and one of the three contacted the Local Government Ombudsman. No further action was taken as a result of these requests

6.4 Compliance with timescales – Statutory Stage 1

Table 10 below is a breakdown of the timescales to deal with the 145 statutory Stage 1 complaints received between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019:

	2018/2019	2017/2018	2016/2017
Within 10 working days	68 (47%)	69 (30%)	71 (38%)
Within 20 working days	52 (36%)	80 (35%)	54 (29%)
Over 20 working days	25 (17%)	80 (35%)	62 (33%)
Total Stage 1 complaints	145	229	187

Table 10 – Response timescales

Table 10 shows that 83% of statutory Stage 1 complaints were dealt with within 20 working days. This is a significant improvement in performance for 2017/18 (65%) and 2016/17 (67%). Managers have responded positively to timescales for dealing with complaints with 100% of complaints responded to within statutory timescales in quarter 4 of 2018/19.

Breakdown of timescale to respond to Stage 1 complaints

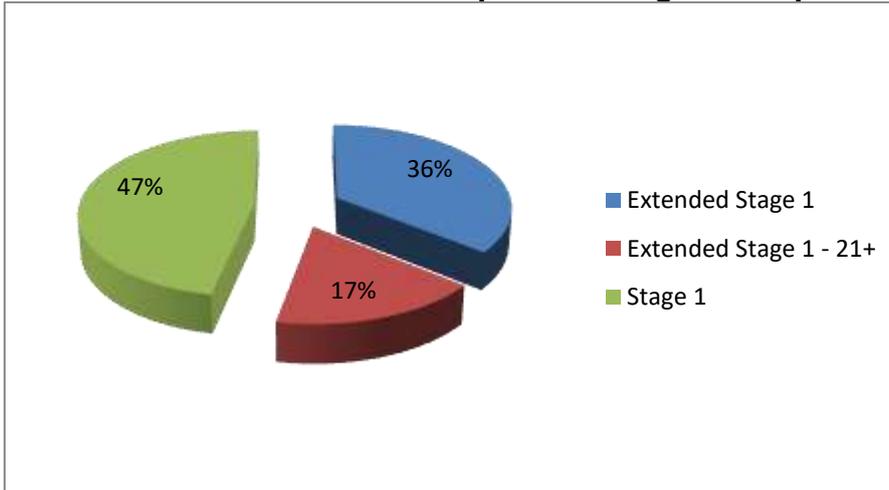


Table 11 – Breakdown of timescale to respond to Stage 1 complaints

7.0 Statutory Stage 2 complaints

There were 23 (16%) requests for Stage 1 complaints to be escalated to Stage 2 of the statutory complaints procedure during 2018/19. All of these 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 23 statutory Stage 2 complaint investigations could have potentially cost £92k (£4k average) which would have diverted money from delivering front line services to children and young people.

Of the 23 requests received 3 were received from 3 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

- Arranging for a specialist risk assessment to be undertaken
- Agreeing with managers for case notes to be added to case files which reflected the parent's views on information relating to them
- Verifying information with other agencies which resulted in assessments being updated.
- The Customer Experience Manager negotiated a young person being placed on a counselling waiting list at the same point they would have been if the referral had been sent through when this support had originally been identified.

Managers have continued to provide robust statutory Stage 1 responses which has meant it has been possible to decline so many Stage 2 requests. The Customer Experience Manager has continued to personally quality check 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. In 2018/19 external agencies have not confirmed that the information provided by the complainant was correct.

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

Managers have also sought guidance on how to manage communication with people before matters escalate to complaints. This has included meetings with Team Managers and Heads of Service to discuss ensuring resolution identified at Stage 1 is implemented. A meeting was also held between the Team Manager, Social Worker, Parent and Customer Experience Manager in order to put in place agreed levels of communication.

7.1 Cost of Statutory Stage 2 investigations

Table 12 below shows the continual decrease in annual costs for Stage 2 investigations between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2019.

Year	No. of Stage 2 Investigations	Annual Stage 2 Spend	Average Cost	Reduction of spend against 2015/16	Average Timescale (Working Days)
2015/16	6	£42,374	£7062		120
2016/17	5	£20,090	£4018	£22,284	62
2017/18	2	£9,292	£4646	£33,082	88
2018/19	0	£0	£0	£42,374	n/a

Table 12 – Annual cost of Stage 2 investigations - 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2019.

8.0 Statutory Stage 3 Complaints

There were no statutory Stage 3 requests during 2018/19.

9.0 Analysis

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

Complaints have been received during 2018/19 with the main area of complaint relating to a number of different areas as shown in Table 13 below:

Breakdown of Overall Complaint Themes

Subject of Complaint	No. Received	Upheld	Partly Upheld	Not Upheld
Accuracy of Assessment/Reports	9		6	3
Actions of Worker	48	2	6	40
Decision Making	19	1		18
Delays in receiving services	20	3	2	15
Delays in sharing Minutes/Reports	3	3		0
Family Time arrangements	4	2	1	1
Financial assistance	2	1		1
Poor communication	38	14	11	13
Unhappy with placement	2	1		1
Total	145	27	26	92

Table 13 – Breakdown of complaint themes 2018/19

Table 14 below shows a comparison of the number of Stage 1 complaint themes from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2019 and the overall findings of the complaint investigations.

Comparison of Overall Statutory Complaint Themes Received

Subject of Complaint	2018/19		2017/18		2016/17	
	No. Received	Upheld/Partly Upheld	No. Received	Upheld/Partly Upheld	No. Received	Upheld/Partly Upheld
Accuracy of Assessment/Reports	9	6	19	7	18	11
Actions of Worker	48	8	69	16	50	14
Changes in Social Worker	0	0	6	3	7	4
Decision Making	19	1	27	3	14	0
Delays in receiving services	20	5	23	13	23	16
Delays in sharing Minutes/Reports	3	3	7	6	0	0
Family Time arrangements	4	3	6	5	9	5
Financial assistance	2	1	15	9	11	8
Poor communication	38	25	49	35	46	36
Unhappy with placement	2	1	8	4	9	3
Total	145	53	229	101	187	97

Table 14 – Comparison of themes – 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19

10.0 Lessons learnt from statutory complaints/representations

The Trust welcomes feedback and uses this as an opportunity to learn. Where applicable, in the statutory 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 2018/19 there has been a significant decrease (53%) in the number of complaints that have been received about the accuracy of assessments/reports.

The main issues have been that the complainants have felt that reports were biased against them or information within them was inaccurate. This is an ongoing theme with this type of complaint. On a number of occasions the information that they were complaining about related to information being provided by a third party.

Guidance was given to complainants on how to address the issue of incorrect third party information when this had been provided by another professional/agency. A complaint was received about incorrect information from the Trust in another agencies report and the agency was contacted and advised of this and asked to correct their records.

Team Managers have prevented a number of complaints by offering the complainants the opportunity to discuss what they are unhappy about and where appropriate attaching a case note reflecting the parent's views on information shared by third parties. This option is also offered to complainants when they contact the Customer Experience Team and on occasion, with agreement from the complaining, this has resulted in the matter being dealt with informally

The Customer Experience Manager met with one complainant and their advocate four times over a period of time to gather information on a significant number of issues including information in documents. Whilst not all aspects of the complaint were upheld there were a number of issues that needed addressing in order to support the case moving forward. The Customer Experience Manager, Team Manager and Head of Service met to discuss the way forward and an action plan was put in place by the Team Manager which had Head of Service oversight. This provided the complainant with reassurance and enabled the complaint to be dealt with at Stage 1 rather than Stage 2.

On a few occasions people have complained about information within a report/assessment and has not been possible to discuss the matter with the social worker as they are no longer with the Trust. When this has happened the Team Manager has brought the concerns to the attention of the new social worker so that the matter can be considered in the next assessment/report.

There have been a number of complaints that have not been accepted as these relate to court matters and these are outside the remit of the complaints procedure. However consideration has been given as to whether or not the matter being complained about would have impacted upon decision making. On one occasion an addendum was sent to the Court with the documents for the final hearing so that the Judge was made aware of the issues raised and the response to them so that they could make an informed decision.

Actions of Worker

As in previous years this category has received the most complaints. There has been a 30% decrease in the number of complaints received about the actions of workers since 2017/18. In 2018/19, 17% of complaints were upheld or partly upheld compared with 23% in 2017/18 and 28% in 2016/17. Eleven repeat complainants raised 16 complaints in this category (33%) of which 1 was upheld and 2 were partly upheld for three different complainants.

Complaints have covered a wide range of topics about social worker behaviour from allegations about the tone of voice or comments made by a social worker, feeling that a social worker was biased against them or had lied. A number of complaints were also received about a parent being questioned about people being present in the home that should not be in contact with their child/ren either due to a decision not yet being made due to an ongoing assessment or because the person was a known risk to children. Complaints were also received about social workers not attending meetings, not visiting when they said they would, not acting upon concerns, not providing parents with support or keeping them up to date. There have also been a few complaints from parents who have said they have felt judged as "bad" parents because they no longer wished to have their child in their home and felt that they should be in care. There were a number of requests for social workers to be changed because of these alleged behaviours.

In the majority of cases there was no evidence to support these allegations. On a number of occasions it has not been possible to reach a conclusion on the complaint because the

complainant and social worker had a different view about what had been said or the context of the conversation. There were occasions that apologies were offered by the social worker in relation to how the interaction had been handled. On the occasions that the parent had not felt supported the explanation provided was that the social worker had had to focus on the immediate needs of the child which was their priority at that time.

Where complaints were accepted managers confirmed that suitable guidance would be given and that the worker would reflect on their practice going forward. In relation to social workers not contacting the complainant there were a number of occasions where clear case recordings of efforts being made by the social worker to contact families by either visiting the home or leaving telephone messages for them, which were not returned, were used as evidence to respond to the complaint.

There were complaints about the actions of the social worker when the social worker has been limited in the information that could be shared due to an ongoing police investigation. The complaint response took the opportunity to explain again why the social worker was unable to discuss certain matters with them or undertake bespoke pieces of work with young people at that time.

Parents have complained that social workers have stopped them having contact with their child rather than the other parent exercising parental responsibility. It has been confirmed in the complaint response that it is evident from case records that both parents have been advised of their parental rights and also advised to seek legal advice if they are being stopped from seeing their child by the other parent.

On occasion parents have complained that the social worker has played a role when children have made the decision that they do not wish to see a parent. Responses have been sympathetic but reinforced that the wishes of the child was being respected by the person caring for the child/ren. Confirmation was given that the child/ren had been seen alone to enable them to share their views and that the matter would be regularly reviewed whilst social care was involved in case the child/ren changed their mind.

On two occasions two different children made complaints about the actions of the worker. When the Customer Experience Manager talked to them about what it was they were unhappy with it was apparent that the information had been shared with them by their parents rather than the child experiencing this directly.

In relation to complaints about social workers not attending meeting on occasion the social worker has either not been expected to be part of the meeting when it has been arranged by another agency or the social worker had intended to come in on their non-work day to attend the meeting.

On one occasion because a social worker had not dealt with an assessment or reviewed a safety plan in a timely way it impacted upon child care arrangements for the family. Suitable management guidance was given to the social worker by the Team Manager and they resolved the issue of child care arrangements straight away.

Another complaint response found evidence that the recording in assessments had not been balanced and that only one parent had been advised to undertake a specific course rather than both parents. The complainant investigation also found that both parents had not had minutes from meeting shared with them. The manager confirmed that suitable management guidance had been given to the social worker and steps were taken by the manager to monitor the case going forward to ensure that the same issues did not happen again.

Complaints were received on a number of occasions when the parent/carers had parental responsibility for their children and they were advised that they were able to obtain information directly themselves from other agencies. When people with parental responsibility said they no longer wished to care for children the complaint response advised them of their legal responsibility and also the need to explore all available options for a young person to be cared for within their extended family before coming into care was considered.

When complainants have advised that other professionals have been present and witnessed the behaviour of the social worker the Customer Experience Team has contacted the professionals and sought their views. The views of the professionals, after the wording has been agreed, have been included in the response to the complainant. Responses from other professionals have differed to the opinions shared by the complainant.

Changes in social worker

Changes in social worker has not been the main presenting issue for any complaints in 2018/19. One reason for this could be the result of a more stable workforce. Staff turnover, sickness levels and vacancy rate have fallen between 2016 and 2018.

Decision Making

There was a 30% decrease in complaints about decision making from 27 in 2017/18 to 19 in 2018/19. Of these 19 complaints 1 was 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.

Of these 19 complaints 10 were raised by 8 repeat complainants.

Delays in receiving services

Complaints regarding the delays in receiving services have been at a similar level to previous years. However there has been a 62% decrease in the number of complaints upheld or partly upheld in 2018/19.

A number of complaints were received regarding delays in receiving services from social care. This included assessments not being completed in timescale, decisions being made about unsupervised contact, undertaking direct work identified as part of the child protection process, referrals to other services, Child in Need meetings not happening, levels of respite provided and providing details of parenting courses.

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 young person about a delay in appropriate life skills support being put in place before they moved. This delay was due in parts to a change in working practice within the Trust, the allocated social worker and the unexpected unavailability of a provider. The young person was offered access to this support as part of the complaint resolution.

A complaint was upheld because referrals had not been made to other agencies and an assessment had not been completed in timescale. The complainant refused to allow the social worker access to the home because of these delays. The Team Manager took the decision to change the social worker given the strong views of the complainant and provided a timescale for the work to be undertaken in. This was accepted as a resolution by the complainant.

On one occasion there had been a delay in receiving services due to the request being sent to the wrong person the Team Manager advised all staff in the team that if they received a direct email regarding a case that they are not currently involved in they should forward it on to an email address which has management oversight. A manager would then deal with the email as appropriate.

On occasion Child in Need meetings were not taking place. Suitable management guidance was provided to the social workers involved and they were reminded to follow the Child in Need policy and procedure. On one occasion it was not possible to discuss the matter with the social worker as they were no longer with the Trust.

There has been a delay on occasion to services being delivered due to unplanned absence of staff.

On a number of occasions services provided by other agencies have been identified as the appropriate support in multi-agency meetings. The reason for the delay in receiving services has been due to the waiting lists of other agencies. On other occasions young people have refused to engage in the services offered. These circumstances are outside the control of the Trust.

Delays in sharing minutes/reports

In 2018/19 the Trust received 3 complaints and 3 were upheld. This is a reduction from the 7 complaints received in 2017/18.

Complaints were received about reports not being shared ahead of a meeting, minutes not being shared after meetings and a parenting assessment not being shared in a timely way. Each of these complaints related to a different team.

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

Family Time arrangements

There has been an ongoing decrease in the number of complaints regarding Family Time arrangements. One was partly upheld due to a parent's mobility and the delay in the time it took to move the location of Family Time closer to their home. A complaint was upheld in relation to a delay in sibling contact being arranged before court proceedings started. The third complaint was upheld as the social worker wrongly thought that the Family Time Centre would inform the parent of the change in time for Family Time and Family Time was missed. On each occasion suitable management action was taken to address these issues. When Family Time was missed the family was offered the opportunity to make up missed Family Time.

Financial assistance

There has been a significant 87% decrease in complaints received about financial assistance with 2 being received in 2018/19 against 15 received in 2017/18.

In 2017/18 the Finance Team updated the adoption allowance process and a specialist resource was identified with knowledge about entitlements for young people. This has impacted positively on the number of this type of complaint in 2018/19.

A complaint was upheld when there was a delay in communication with a parent for adoption allowance and a decision was made to reduce the allowance without taking into consideration all the factors. As a result of the complaint the allowance was reinstated.

Poor Communication

Poor communication has continued to be the category that has received the second largest amount of complaints. There has been a 22% decrease in the number of complaints received against 2017/18 and a 29% decrease in the number of complaints upheld/partly upheld.

Complaints were received about telephone calls not being returned, reports for meetings being received late, parents not being given details of meetings, delays in new social workers making initial contact, 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. On a number of occasions managers have challenged 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. On a number of occasions within the response to the complaint the complainant has been asked to provide more information in order to enable the complaint to be investigated further. This information has very rarely been provided but the Team Manager has still taken the opportunity to remind staff to ensure they make a note of all calls. Where there was evidence that communication was poor this was apologised for by the Team Manager and addressed with individual workers in supervision.

Complaints have been raised about wording used by social workers. In some cases the social worker has disputed that this wording has been used so the manager has been unable to reach a conclusion on the complaint. On other occasions the social worker has explained the context of what was said. Where the wording used has been emotive the Team Manager confirmed that this had been discussed with the social worker and guidance had been given on more appropriate wording to use. Where complaints have been upheld the social worker has apologised for any upset caused as this was not their intention.

A complaint was received that a translator had not been used. The manager advised that this was due to the urgency of the meeting but agreed in future that if it is not possible to source a translator in time then the telephone translation service would be used. The opportunity was taken to ensure that a translator had been arranged for the next scheduled meeting which was due to happen shortly.

One parent complained that they had not been consulted as part of the assessment process and they were not in agreement to the case closing. The Team Manager spoke to the complainant and arranged for them to be consulted and agreed that due to the information they had since provided to the assessment process support would be offered to the family through the Child in Need process. The Team Manager provided the social worker with suitable management guidance regarding consultation with the parent as part of the assessment process.

There have been complaints that information has not been shared from other agencies/third parties. On a number of occasions this has been because the information had not yet been received by the Trust. On one occasion this was because consent had not yet been provided for information to be shared but it was accepted that the complainant should have been advised of the delay and an apology was offered that they had not been kept updated.

Complaints have been received of calls not being returned when the number of calls have been disproportionate. On occasion calls were not being returned because the caller was abusive to staff and they had been advised that this was not acceptable. The complaint response addressed these issues with the complainant and advice was given on communication with the Trust going forward.

A complaint was received from siblings because they did not know what would be happening with them when they turned 18 and they were concerned about the future plans for where they would live. The Team Manager apologised that there had originally been a delay in sharing information with them which had been addressed with their social worker. The Team Manager provided them with another copy of their care plan and took the opportunity to provide them with reassurance that they would continue to be involved in planning for their future.

Unhappy with placement

There were 2 complaints received where the placement was the main presenting issue. This is a 75% reduction from 2017/18.

One complaint was received from a young person who had been required to move placement because of their behaviour. Although this complaint was not upheld reassurance was given on the plans to move them to a place where they would be happier.

The second complaint was received from an adult who was unhappy with the arrangements for their child. The reason that the placement had changed was outside the control of the Trust but lessons were learnt as a result of their complaint. Processes were put in place to ensure in future that when referrals were made for placements the referrer would be asked if they already have any views about a suitable placement so that this can be considered from the outset.

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. Benefits – When a child becomes classed as “looked after” the benefits agency are automatically notified. However, on occasion a child can be classed as “looked after” and remain in the care of their parent so benefits should not be stopped. As a lesson learnt from complaints staff across the Trust who deal with notifying the Benefits Agency were asked to check the living arrangements for the child before benefits are stopped.
2. Language – An adoptive parent had been upset that they had been referred to as a “carer” when contacting the office about payments. The Manager explained that this term is used by the team as a generic title for birth parents, foster carers, adoptive parents and other carers but accepted that the complainant had experienced this as hurtful. As a lesson learnt the team changed their practice to ask people how they would like to be referred to.
3. Referrals – The Referral and Response team have been provided with training and updates on ensuring that people making a referral are updated on the outcome of their referral. If this relates to a matter that is covered by data protection the referrer will be advised that the matter has been taken forward as appropriate.

4. Core Groups – Child Protection Conference Chairs were reminded of the importance of ensuring that details of core groups are recorded in Child Protection Conference Minutes so that their frequency are monitored.
5. Foster Carer - A carer had not taken a child to Family Time and this had not been agreed with the Trust as corporate parent. Guidance was given to the carer on their remit for decision making and to ensure that everyone’s rights had been taken into consideration and appropriate support was put in place before a decision was made to cancel Family Time.
6. Family Time – The wording on the letter to confirm Family Time arrangements was amended so that it was clear to families that they needed to speak to the social worker directly about any changes to Family Time dates that had already been arranged.
7. External Services – The Customer Experience Team contacted Google Translate to advise them that their translation service for a specific language did not work correctly.
8. Adoption – as the result of a complaint working practices changed to ensure that when it is known that a social worker is leaving, time is scheduled to enable the newly allocated social worker to prepare and read reports for initial meetings with adopters. This also included a recommendation that the existing and new social worker meet to have a discussion about the adopter and child due to be matched.

11.0 Corporate Complaints

Out of the 265 contacts made during 2018/19 with the Customer Experience Team 54 (20%) were received from 44 different people and were dealt with under the Trust’s Corporate Complaints Procedure. This is an increase from 2017/18 when 7% of contacts were dealt with through this procedure. The reason for this increase is a more robust process in dealing with complaints through the correct procedure, ie the corporate complaints procedure rather than the statutory complaints procedure.

Table 15 below shows a breakdown of the outcome of the investigations into these complaints.

Year	No. of Corporate complaints	Upheld	Partly Upheld
2018/19	54	14 (26%)	7 (13%)

Table 15 – Outcome of Corporate complaint investigations

11.1 Breakdown of Corporate Complaints by Area

Below is a breakdown of the 54 corporate complaints received by service area:

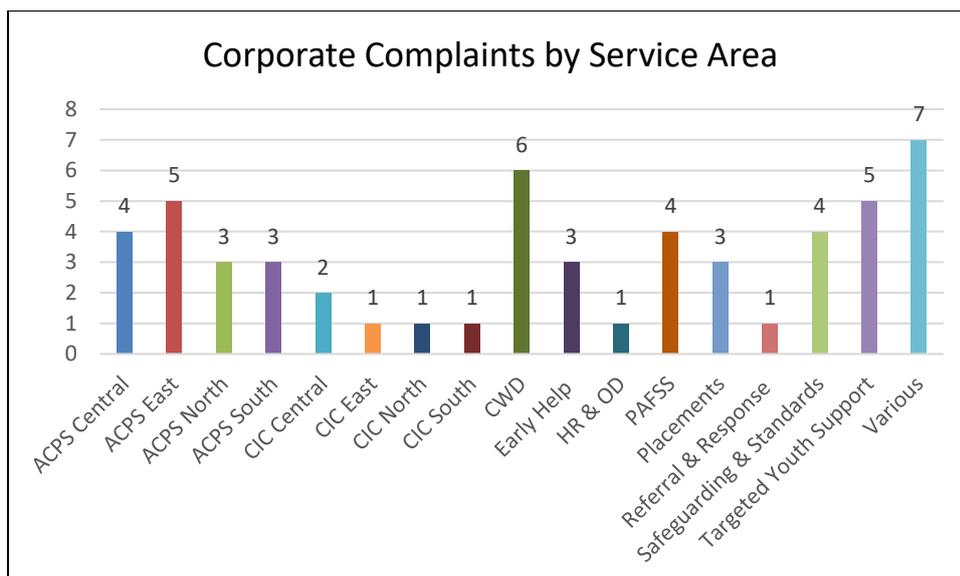


Table 16 – Corporate complaints by service area (Various relates to more than one service area)

Table 17 below shows the breakdown of who corporate complaints have been received from.

Relationship to Young Person/Child	No Received
Mother/Father	12
Grandparents	9
Children and Young People	4
Step Parent /Parents Partner	7
Sibling	2
Issues relating to Staff	3
Education Professional	2
Other 3 rd party	1
Foster Carers	4
Total	44

Table 17 – Originator of Corporate complaints

11.2 Repeat corporate complaints

The Trust received 2 or more complaints from 8 people during 2018/19 (see Table 18 below). Out of these 29 repeat contacts 15 (56%) were accepted at Stage 1 of the Trust's corporate complaints procedure.

No. of Contacts	No. of people 2018/19
2	4
3	1
4	1
6	1
8	1
Total	29

Table 18 – Repeat corporate complainants

11.3 Compliance with timescales – Corporate complaints

Below (Table 19) is a breakdown of the timescales to deal with the 54 corporate complaints received between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019.

	2018/2019
Within 10 working days	30 (55%)
Within 20 working days	15 (28%)
Over 20 working days	9 (17%)
Total Stage 1 complaints	54

Table 19 – Corporate response timescales

Table 19 above shows that 83% of corporate Stage 1 complaints were dealt with within timescales.

12.0 Corporate Stage 2 complaints

There were 8 (15%) requests for corporate Stage 1 complaints to be escalated to Stage 2 of the corporate complaints procedure during 2018/19. All of these 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. If a complaint had escalated to Stage 2 of the Corporate Complaints Procedure then it would have been undertaken by a manager in the Trust who had not been involved with the case and therefore been a resource cost. There were 5 requests were received from 3 people who were repeat complainants.

Resolution was offered at Stage 1 to place a note on a file to reflect the complainant's position. On the basis that appropriate resolution was offered this did not escalate to Stage 2.

Two complaints related to information shared with Court in the same case. Although this is outside the remit of the complaints procedure the opportunity was taken to achieve resolution by providing an update to the Court as the proceedings had not yet concluded. This was accepted as resolution by both parties.

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

Subject of Complaint	No. Received	Upheld	Partly Upheld	Not Upheld
Accuracy of Assessment/Reports	5	1	2	2
Actions of Worker	16	1	1	14
Changes in Social Worker	1	1		
Decision making	3			3
Delays in receiving services	7	3		4
Family Time arrangements	1			1
Financial assistance	5	2		3
Poor communication	15	6	3	6
Unhappy with placement	1		1	
Total	54	14	7	33

Table 20 – Analysis of presenting themes for corporate complaints

14.0 Lessons learnt from corporate complaints/representations

As with statutory complaints the Trust welcomes feedback and uses this as an opportunity to learn. Where applicable the manager has used the opportunity when responding to advise what action has been taken, or will be taken as a result of the learning from the complainants' experience. Complaint Monitoring and Learning Forms are used to track actions that have not already been completed to reduce the risk of repeat complaints or escalation of complaints.

A number of complaints have been raised relating to people being unhappy with social care involvement with their partner. This has been for a number of reasons including being unhappy that their partner has been unable to stay overnight in the home, or contact with children has been stopped or supervised whilst risk assessments were being undertaken. These complaints have been raised by both parents and their partners when one party does not have parental responsibility for the child living in the family home. This has also related to decision making about contact with children following completion of the assessment.

One complaint regarding delays in receiving services was not upheld because the Trust was not responsible for providing the service and without a referral the individual was not eligible for a service. However in order to support complaint resolution, working together with the Council the Customer Experience Manager made a referral to the relevant service in order to enable the individual to access the service they needed.

One young person was unhappy with a placement because they said that personal items had been lost when they left them there. In order to reach resolution as a gesture of goodwill the service area contributed towards replacement items and introduced an inventory process of items left on the premises to address potential complaints of this matter in the future.

One complaint related to a dispute between two parents about who should provide refreshments for their children when Family Time took place over a period of time which included lunch. In order to resolve the complaint the Team Manager put an agreement in place. As a result of lessons learnt from this complaint the Family Time booking form was amended to remind social workers to think of food/refreshments for children when Family Time takes place over a meal time and/or for an extended period of time.

15.0 Local Government Ombudsman

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) raised six matters with the Trust during 2018/19. These were dealt with as follows:

15.1 Statutory Complaints

1. One person complained that the Trust had failed to notify them regarding an incident involving their child. This was dealt with at Stage 1 of the statutory complaints procedure and the Customer Experience Manager declined to escalate this to Stage 2. The LGO decided not to investigate the complaint on the basis that it was unlikely that the LGO could add anything significant to the Trust's investigation into the complaint.
2. One complainant has gone to the LGO prematurely. They were directed back to the Trust and their complaint was dealt with through the statutory complaints procedure at Stage 1 and the response was shared with the LGO. The Customer Experience Manager declined the request for this complaint to escalate to Stage 2 and informed the LGO of this decision. The LGO took no further action on this complaint.

3. A couple complained that the Trust had not provided support to a child in their care and refused to accept their complaint at Stage 1. The findings of the LGO was that there was no fault by the Trust.
4. One person complained that the Trust refused to change the child's social worker. This had been investigated at Stage 1 and a Stage 2 request was declined by the Customer Experience Manager. The LGO made the decision not to investigate the complaint on the basis that they could not achieve the results the complainant wanted.
5. The LGO investigated a complaint that a parent and their child had not been treated properly and that incorrect information had been shared with the court about the parent. The issue about incorrect information had been dealt with when it occurred in 2012 but the case file had not been corrected. The LGO found fault in the parent not being kept updated and distress caused by incorrect information on the file. A payment of £150 for time and trouble and £300 for distress was made. The Trust and the Council agreed to implement the recommendations made by the LGO in the timescale given. The LGO was provided with details of the actions taken to implement the recommendations and have responded to say that they had recorded a compliance outcome of "Remedy complete and satisfied."

15.2 Corporate Complaints

6. One person complained to the LGO regarding the decision making about the adoption plans for their grandchildren. The LGO decided that this was a premature complaint as it had not exhausted the complaints procedure. The Customer Experience Manager had not received a Stage 2 request but on the advice of the LGO contacted the complainant to obtain more information. The Customer Experience Manager declined to escalate the complaint to Stage 2 and advised the LGO of this decision. The LGO took no further action on this complaint.

15.3 Feedback and good practice

The LGO also asked the Trust if they could use an anonymised copy of a letter sent to a young person as an internal example of a good age appropriate apology to a child. The Trust agreed to this request.

16.0 Compliments

In line with the culture of the Trust throughout the year 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. This public acknowledgement of hard work and dedication to improving outcomes for children and young people continues to have a positive impact on staff. Compliments are received from colleagues in other departments as well as from partner agencies, professionals and the public. By gathering positive feedback it enables everyone to recognise the importance of each individual and the role that they play in improving services.

During the report year, 219 compliments were gathered from across the Trust from children and young people, their families, internal and external professionals, the local community and local businesses. 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

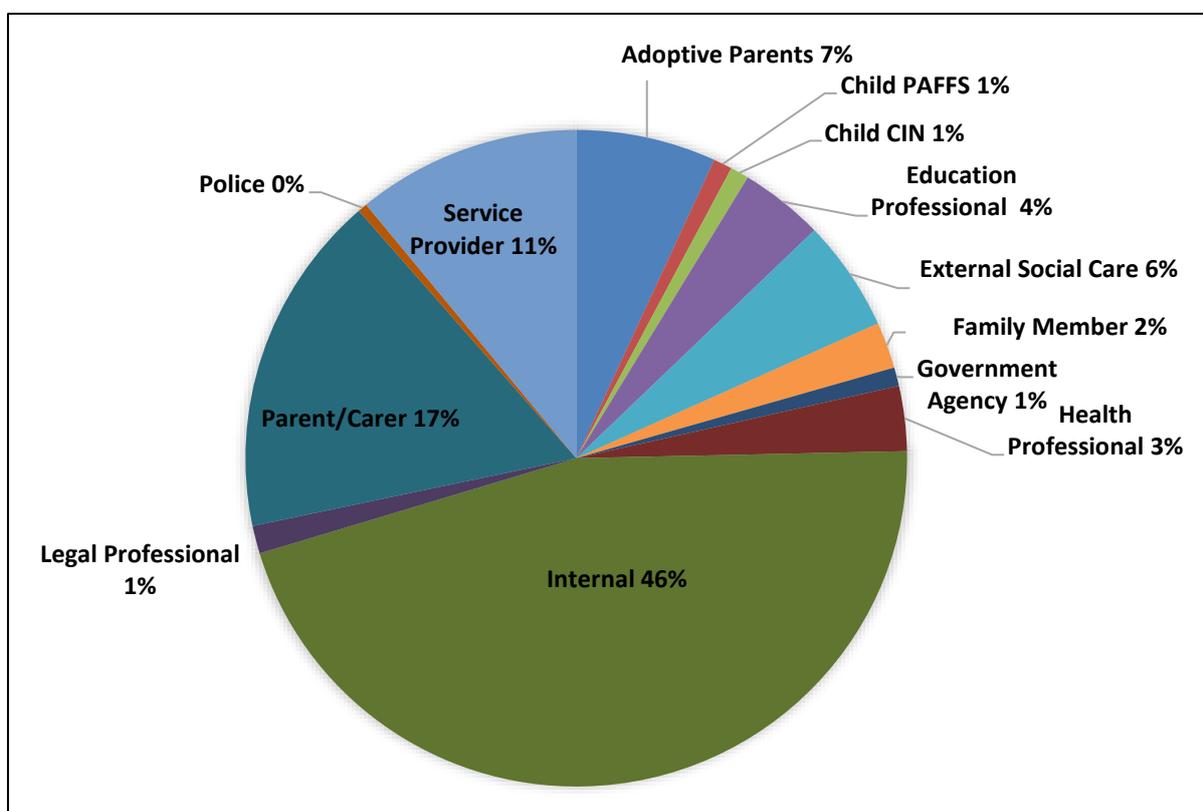


Table 21 – Sources of compliments

Compliments by Area

Area	Internal	External	Total
Central	9	14	23
North	6	2	8
East	10	1	11
South	11	13	24
Centre For Excellence	2	1	3
Corporate Resources / Support	6		6
Early Help & Front Door - MASH & CSE	4	15	19
HR & OD	1		1
Legal Services	1		1
Performance	11	4	15
Placements	6	38	44
Safeguarding & Standards	11	16	27
Senior Management Team	1		1
Young Peoples Services	21	15	36
Total	100	119	219

Table 22 – 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 23 below.

Area	No. of Stage 1 complaints	No. of internal compliments	No. of external compliments	Total Compliments Received
ACPS Central	31	7	12	19
ACPS East	19	6	1	7
ACPS North	21	1	1	2
ACPS South	26	7	11	18

Table 23 – ACPS - internal and external compliments

16.1 Examples of external compliments received

Below are some examples of the 119 compliments received from outside the Trust.

Children receiving support from Parenting and Family Support Service

Your support has made my life better, you listened to me, I do not want you to leave

can you come for tea when I close because you won't be working with us then

Children in Need

You are an amazing person and the best social worker in the world. I've been so lucky to be able to talk to someone like you. You've always listened to me even when I didn't realise it. Thank you for your help

You have listened to me and helped me a lot

Parents/Carers

Recently A became our social worker due to a horrific incident in the family. We would just like to say how lovely A has been throughout. Immediately putting us all at ease. A has been a great source of help and support. We can't thank A enough. Thank you so much for your help and support through these hard times.

Thank you very much B, you were fantastic

'I have never liked social workers much, I think they are scary but I really like C as my kids like C and I think C is a good person. For the first time I want us to work with a social worker and see if C can help us out'

...I'd just like to thank you for all you have done for me and the children. It is appreciated and you have always been fair with me and listened to what I've said. I'm sure your team often get a bad reputation from some sectors in the area but I can honestly say you have all been very good with me. I will definitely contradict anybody who says that social services just come in to take your children. Whilst I got frustrated at times and it took me a while to ensure the fuller picture was clear, I always thought we were working as a team overall

Im wanting to give compliments to 2 members of staff for listening to what I had to say and taking the time. Its the first time I felt listened to and my views valued.

I would like to say a very big thank you. I know I'm not closed yet but you have been amazing social worker what you have done for me and my family has been amazing you don't get many that do what you do for us especially taking me to see my children. THANK YOU SO MUCH.

I am so pleased I swallowed my pride and asked for your help because if I didn't I don't think that my child would still be living with us.

I needed somebody to listen and talk to and tell me what to do to improve things and to be strong to cope with things and for help with my child. D was a star she was there for me and my child.

Adopters

We wanted to just take a moment to share a massive heartfelt thank you for all you have done for us and the children. Today was the biggest day of our lives and you made it comfortable and relaxed. Truly memorable. You really have made our journey, and we can't wait for you to see and be of what's to come next!

I cannot thank you enough for everything that you did to support us. I hope that the parents and carers that you are working with know how lucky they are to have such a lovely social worker supporting them.

We cannot praise the foster carers enough for their support and help from Life Appreciation day to date and also the love for the children and the care and preparation given prior to moving to their forever family....

Community

From our perspective we had a highly successful summer feedback from the participants of the events on offer had the same thoughts and feelings. overall we feel the set up was outstanding and the idea of a booklet which included all activities and venues, details etc was genius and it allowed families to plan ahead and keep children and young people occupied throughout the full duration of the school holidays at an extremely low cost for themselves.

Overall we are happy and proud to have been a part of said project and all parties involved went above and beyond to make the events successful and beneficial for all young persons involved in offered events

Health professional

I was impressed by the person centred approach by all staff and the knowledge they had supporting the young people. Furthermore I am very grateful for welcoming me and making my observations more thorough.

Police

I wish to thank you for allowing D to attend South Yorkshire Police Training Centre in order to deliver training to new recruits to the organisation around Signs of Safety and Case Conference. D's subject knowledge and delivery was excellent and was of great assistance to SYP, as we continue to work in partnership to address the challenges before us. The students also gave positive feedback stating that the sessions were very useful and they gained valuable knowledge around the abuse subjects but more importantly, they knew what a chair of a case conference expected from them. D was a positive and very helpful influence, promoting the key messages of Working Together to Safeguard Children, which was one of the main aims of the course.

Once again thank you for allowing this to take place. Not only was D very pleasant to work alongside, D provided invaluable insight into the world of child protection to SYP staff.

Judges

I don't do youth court very often however I have to say that the reports I receive are excellent and thorough

The Judge spoke highly of E's Social Work practice, quality of assessments and recommendations for the children. The Judge has also written this in their paperwork for the case.

Education

I can't thank you and F enough for the support that you both provided during our bereavement. I was very impressed at the quick and timely response of yourself and F to meet our school needs. This was invaluable to our pupils as they were managing a whole array of emotions that the majority have never felt before. It is not often I come across a service that you need and they respond as quickly as you did - thank you. ... if children needed your support, you ensured that they were seen. Doncaster should feel very proud ... - please keep up the excellent work that you both do.

“Can I just say how thorough you were and how professional towards colleagues who hadn’t done as much work as they should. I thought you were very good with mum too, giving her the right amount of support but also making it very clear when she overstepped the mark. I felt the meeting was very child focused and you kept them at the heart of all discussions”.

... You and your staff have very challenging jobs and unfortunately, due to the nature of the work, are rarely thanked by the families and children they work with. I personally get to see the long term, positive impact that you all have on those families and I cannot thank you enough for it. Your teams are full of exceptional people who all work extremely hard. I know that the communities we work with are challenging and it can at times, feel like there are too many concerns to have an impact, but the picture would be far from what it is now, if you didn’t all work as hard as you do. ...

17.0 Summary

The complaints and compliments has continued to be an integral part of the Trust during the reporting year. In order to ensure that practice in this area continues meetings continue to be 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/Senior Manager 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.

In 2018/19 there has been a reduction in all areas in relation to the type of complaints that have been received. There has also been a reduction in the number of complaints that have been upheld or partly upheld since 2017/18 in all areas.

Timescales for dealing with complaints has improved with 83% of statutory and corporate complaints responded to in timescale.

Poor communication has continued 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 (66%). The Customer Experience Manager plans to target poor communication as part of training provided directly to service areas. The impact of this will be measured in 2019/20’s annual complaints report for both statutory and corporate complaints.

It is encouraging that there have been complaints received directly from our young people receiving support from a wider range of services. Also that these has been received from a more diverse range of young people. However there has been a significant decrease in the number of young people contacting the Trust. This was 33 young people in 2017/18 and 26 young people in 2018/19. In 2017/18 the Trust logged 40 compliments from young people as opposed to 4 logged in 2018/19. In 2019/20 the Customer Experience Manager will work with managers across the Trust to ensure that there are clear lines of communication with young people so that reassurance can be given that young people are confident in contacting the Trust and know the different ways that they can do this. Managers will also be asked to remind staff to ensure they share the positive feedback they receive so that compliments can be logged.

It is also positive that there has been a reduction in complaints that directly affect young people such as changes in social worker and unhappiness with placement.

A number of matters have been raised with the Local Government Ombudsman and the decision making not to accept or escalate complaints has been accepted.

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.
- Working practice was changed so referrers requesting a placement for a child are asked if they have any views on suitable placements so they can be considered from the outset.
- Living arrangements are checked for “looked after” children before benefits are stopped to ensure parents do not experience unnecessary financial hardship.
- The team dealing with payments ask people how they wished to be referred to so upset is not accidentally caused.
- Staff have been reminded to ensure people making referrals are updated on the outcome of the referral.
- Child Protection Chairs will ensure details of core group are recorded in Conference minutes so that the frequency is monitored.
- Family Time letters have been reworded so families know to speak to social workers directly when they wish to change arranged Family Times.
- An inventory process was introduced to ensure there was clarity around any possessions that may have been left by young people in a home.
- Working practices changed in the Adoption Team to ensure time is scheduled, when it is known a worker is leave, for the newly allocated social worker to prepare and read reports before meeting the adopters for the first time. Where possible this would also include the existing and new social worker meeting to discuss the adopter and the child due to be matched.
- Family Time booking forms were amended to remind social workers to consider refreshments for children/young people when Family Time took place over lunch or an extended period.

Compliments have continued to be 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 2019/20

The focus for 2019/20 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 senior managers.

We have seen an overall ongoing reduction in the number of complaints received and upheld or partly upheld in 2018/19 in comparison to previous years. 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.

Performance has improved in the timescale taken to deal with complaints with 100% of statutory complaints dealt with in timescale in quarter 4 of 2018/19. The focus will be to ensure that this high level of performance continues.

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.

The Customer Experience Manager will continue to build on relationships within the Trust using experience from complaints to:

- Design and deliver bespoke training for staff at all levels on how to manage potential complaints and deal with complainants with the focus on dispute resolution.
- Proactively elicit customer feedback and use this information to inform managers, support practice and impact on service delivery.

The aim of this approach is to continue give practical support to service areas with the objective of reducing the level of complaints.

Dawn Jones
Customer Experience Manager