

- TITLE:** **Children and Families Service** - Annual Report on Services Complaints, Compliments and Representations - April 2018 to March 2019
- REPORT OF:** Alison Routledge, Complaints Manager
- SERVICE:** Health & Social Care Commissioning and Quality Assurance. Care, Wellbeing and Learning
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SUMMARY

The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 sets out the procedure that Local Authorities have a responsibility to follow when a complaint is made about Children's Social Services. Regulation 13 (3) of this Act states that all local authorities must publish an Annual Report each financial year to identify the number, detail and outcomes to all complaints received. The information within this Annual Report fulfils Gateshead Council's obligations under this regulation and covers the period from 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019.

1.0 The Statutory Complaints Procedure

- 1.1 This procedure is for all representations received from children and young people, their parents, foster carers or other qualifying adults about Gateshead Council's Children's Services.
- 1.2 There are three stages to the procedure:

Stage 1 - Local Resolution

Stage 1 complaints are investigated by operational managers. Complaints at this level are expected to be concluded within ten working days, with an extension of further ten working days, (with the agreement of the complainant), if necessary. The maximum time for a Stage 1 investigation is twenty working days.

Stage 2 – Investigation

Investigations at Stage 2 are conducted at arm's length to the operational service complained about, with full and formal reporting to the complainant by an Adjudicating Officer, (usually at Service Director level), within twenty-five working days, with extension up to sixty five working days if necessary.

Stage 3 – Review Panel

If there is any residual dissatisfaction with the outcome at Stage 2, the complainant can request that the issues are taken to a Review Panel, (Stage 3). A Stage 3 Review Panel must be requested within twenty working days of receipt of the Stage 2 investigation findings. A Stage 3 Review Panel is the final stage of the statutory complaint's procedure.

2.0 Publicity and Information

- 2.1 Information about the complaint's procedure can be made available in key languages and formats. Requests for information in these formats or from customers with sight or hearing impairment are provided via the Council's Communication Team.
- 2.2 There is also a leaflet for children and young people receiving a service. This leaflet was designed with help from the children and young people from One Voice, the Children and the Young People's Forum. The leaflet includes a pre-paid slip that can be completed and posted back free of charge.
[click here to access complaints website](#)
- 2.3 When young people are admitted into Local Authority care, part of the 20-day review requirements state that they are to be visited by the Council's Children's Rights Officer. The young person also receives a 'Welcome' pack, which includes information, leaflets and other guidance on how to make a complaint.
- 2.4 Children and young people are now able to use their smartphones or tablet computers to contact the services via Mind of My Own. Mind Of My Own is an app which allows the child or young person to comment positively on the service they receive but if necessary, to raise dissatisfaction.
- 2.5 The Children's Rights Officer, Independent Visitors and Independent Reviewing Officers are important links between the child and the Complaints Manager and ensure that any issues of dissatisfaction are resolved at the earliest opportunity.

3.0 Advocacy and Special Needs

- 3.1 The purpose of advocacy in complaints procedures is to ensure that children and young people are given assistance when making or intending to make a complaint. Advocacy is about empowering children and young people to make sure that their rights are respected and that their views and wishes are fully considered and reflected in decision-making about their own lives. It is a legal requirement that any child or young person wishing to make a complaint must always be offered the services of an advocate.

4.0 The Independent Element

- 4.1 Under the complaint's procedure, there is a requirement to provide Independent Persons for all Stage 2 complaints. There is currently a consortium arrangement with South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council and Sunderland City Council, which provides Independent People for Children Act 1989 complaints. There is also a requirement to ensure that Stage 3 Review Panels consist of three members who are fully independent of the Council.

5.0 Training and Employee Development

- 5.1 Training for Investigating Officers is undertaken on an annual basis. All investigating skills training courses are commissioned from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman, (LGO). This ensures that investigating officers are trained to the Ombudsman's investigation standard with the focus being on swift resolution, proportionate investigations and appropriate redress.

5.2 A LGO Investigating Skills Training Course took place in November 2018. Although this training was primarily for Adult Social Care, Managers from the Safeguarding Children Unit (SCU) and Commissioning also attended the course. As there are a number of new managers within Children’s Services, it is anticipated that the LGO Investigating Skills training course, focussing on Children’s Services complaints, will take place in November 2019.

6.0 Complaint Recording & Resolution in Children’s Residential Facilities

6.1 All children’s residential homes have their own “in-house” complaints process to resolve low level concerns. Residential staff work with the young person and allow them to identify themselves how their issues can be resolved to their satisfaction. Information about low level concerns is retained within the facility and is available in the event of OFSTED inspections.

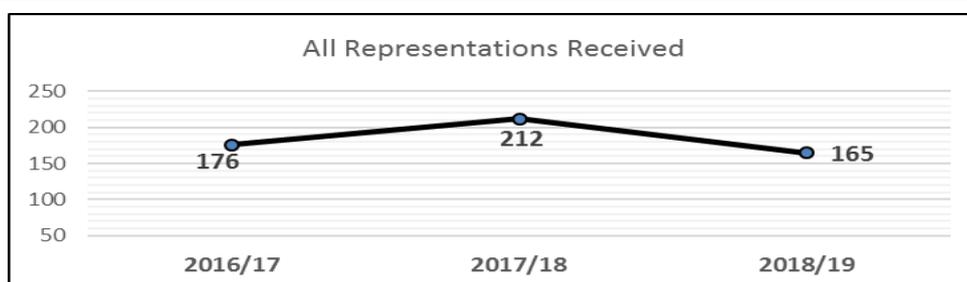
7.0 Equalities Monitoring

7.1 Gateshead Council recognises that equality monitoring of service delivery is crucial for effective planning and scrutiny of the services that it provides. This monitoring can identify which groups are using services and gauge their level of satisfaction. The information can then be used to highlight possible inequalities, investigate their underlying causes and address any unfairness or disadvantage.

7.2 Information about the complaint’s procedure can be made available in key languages and formats. Information for customers with sight or hearing impairment can also be provided.

8.0 Complaints & Representations Received

Representations	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Stage 1 Complaints	32	49	40
Stage 2 Complaints	1	2	3
Stage 3 - Review Panels	4	0	1
Corporate Complaints	5	7	2
Complaint related queries	38	35	38
Comments	Na	2	0
Data Issues / Breach	1	10	3
Insurance Claims	2	2	2
Inter-Agency Concerns	0	0	1
LGO Investigation	1	2	1
LSCB CP Unit	3	0	0
MP / Councillor Referral	1	1	1
Total	88	110	92
Compliments	88	102	73
All Representations Received	176	212	165
Trend		20.45%	-22.17%



Stage 1	2007 2008	2008 2009	2009 2010	2010 2011	2011 2012	2012 2013	2013 2014	2014 2015	2015 2016	2016 2017	2017 2018	2018 2019
	32	18	10	19	29	36	34	45	37	32	49	40
%		-44%	-44%	90%	53%	24%	-6%	32%	18%	14%	53%	18%

8.1 Key Points of Interest

- The number of formal contacts received, including compliments, about Children's Services decreased by 22.17% (165) compared with the number of contacts received during 2017/18, (212).
- During 2018/19, 44% of all Children's Services contacts were compliments.
- 40 Stage 1 complaints were received regarding Children's Services. This is a 18% decrease on complaints received during 2017/18, (49).
- The number of statutory complaints, (40), represents 43% of all dissatisfaction received about Children's Services during 2018/19, (92).
- 60% (24) of complaints related to the quality of services provided. From this, 54% (13) were regarding the quality of social work support received.
- 20% (8) complaints were in respect of the actions or conduct of individual workers of which 21% (5) were partly upheld after investigation.
- The number of complaint related queries (low level issues not requiring a written response), received increased by 9% (38) compared to the number received during 2017/18 (35).
- 18% (7) of the complaint related queries received were regarding the standard of communication provided by individual workers. Concerns highlighted were about the timeliness of sharing key information with family members.
- 29% (11) of complaint related queries were about the quality of support offered by either the social worker or the overall service provided.
- All complaint related queries received were dealt with directly by either the team manager of the service complained about or by the Complaints Section after prior discussion with the worker concerned.
- Three complaints progressed to Stage 2 of the complaint's procedure. This is a slight increase on the number of Stage 2 complaints received during 2017/18, (2).
- One corporate complaint progressed to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman. The Ombudsman investigated the complaint and found that no injustice had been caused to the complainant.

8.2 Key Themes of Complaint

8.2.1 After full consideration of all Stage 1 complaints received during 2018/19, two key themes of dissatisfaction have been identified.

1. Quality of Service - Quality of Worker Support / Involvement

Quality of services provided continues to attract the largest number of complaints. Complaints about quality cover a number of areas and can range from low level disputes to significant concerns about the actions or decisions of the services involved.

During 2018/19, 60% (24) complaints received were regarding quality issues, with 54% (13) of the complaints about quality citing the support provided by the social worker or service as their main concern.

After investigation, 69% (9) of the complaints about worker support were partially upheld, 15% (2) were not upheld and 15% (2) were fully upheld.

Following consideration of these concerns, it continues to be an issue that families of children receiving a service may misinterpret the parameters of social work involvement and, on occasion, request support or services for themselves that are outside a social workers remit. Managers should reiterate to social workers during their individual supervision sessions that they should be clear with families what support can be provided and what assistance is outside a social worker's responsibility. However, as almost 85% (11) of complaints about support were either partially or fully upheld, it may be that worker / team capacity is impacting on the support that could be provided to families.

2. Attitude of Staff

In line with the statutory guidance set out within Working Together 2018, Children's Services have a legal duty to assess all concerns raised about the wellbeing or safety of a child or young person. It is understandable that Children's Services involvement may not always be welcomed by the parents of the child or young person concerned. Therefore, relationships between social workers and families can often be challenging or problematic. It can also be evidenced that there are occasions where parents of children receiving a service will seek to access the complaints procedure to delay or hinder any action that is being considered by the Local Authority. Because of this, any increase in complaints about staff, whether about conduct or practice, should always be carefully considered alongside the situation that had prompted the dissatisfaction.

In 2018/19, eight complaints were received which included issues around staff conduct or practice. This is a 60% increase on the number of complaints received during 2017/18, (5). After investigation, 21% (5) complaints were found to be partially upheld and 12% (3) were not upheld.

Three of the complaints received had also included issues regarding either the quality of foster carer placement or the professional behaviour of the foster carer. All three complaints were investigated and responded to. Two complaints were found to be partially upheld and one complaint was felt to be unjustified.

8.3 Specific Areas of Complaint

Service Area	2016 2017		2017 2018		2018 2019	
Children with Disabilities	0.00%	0	10.20%	5	5.00%	2
Referral & Assessment	18.75%	6	24.49%	12	12.50%	5
Looked After Children Team	18.75%	6	8.16%	4	42.50%	17
Family Group Conference	3.13%	1	0%	0	0.00%	0
Fostering & Adoption	6.25%	2	8.16%	4	7.50%	3
Out of Hours Duty Team	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
Safeguarding, Care Planning	53.13%	17	46.94%	23	25.00%	10
Safeguarding Children Unit	0.00%	0	2.04%	1	7.50%	3
Total		32		49		40

- 25% (10) of all complaints received were in respect of services provided by the Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams.
- The majority of children receiving a service are allocated a social worker from the Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams. However, complaints about the

Safeguarding & Care Planning Teams reduced by almost 57% compared with the number received during 2017/18, (23).

- After investigation, no complaints about the Safeguarding & Care Planning Teams were found to be justified. 50% (5) of complaints were not upheld and 50% (5) were partially upheld.
- 12% (5) of complaints were regarding the services provided by the Referral and Assessment Team. This is a 58% decrease on the number of complaints received during 2017/18, (12).
- The key theme identified from complaints about the Referral and Assessment Team were disputes to information included within social work reports, which accounted for three of the complaints received.
- Where it is found that the information within reports is factually incorrect, this can be amended on production of reliable evidence. However, disputes to social work opinion can only be recorded on the child / children's case file.
- During 2018/19 there were 262 children on a Child Protection Plan and 1555 children receiving a statutory service. This means that from the number of families involved with Children's Services, only 2% of contacts resulted in a formal complaint.
- 50% (20) of all complaints received were regarding services provided by the Looked After Children Service. From this, 85% (17) were in respect of the support provided by individual workers within the Looked After Children Team.
- After investigation almost 44% (7) of complaints about the Looked After Children Team were found to be unjustified, 37% (6) were partially upheld and 19% (3) were fully upheld.
- Only 7% (3) of complaints received during 2018/19 were regarding the Safeguarding Children Unit with two of the complaints citing issues about the conduct of the Conference Chairs. After investigation, one complaint was found to be completely unjustified as it was found that the Conference Chair had acted appropriately.
- One complaint about a Conference Chair had also included issues about the young person's foster placement. After investigation, although the issue regarding the Conference Chair was found to be unjustified, the issue regarding the placement was partially upheld with recommendations for improvement identified.

Main Complaint Issues	2016 2017		2017 2018		2018 2019	
Delay	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
Lack of Service	0.00%	0	16.33%	8	10.00%	4
Quality of Service	59.38%	19	73.47%	36	60.00%	24
Refusal of Service	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	10.00%	4
Staff Issues	40.63%	13	10.20%	5	20.00%	8
Total		32		49		40

- 20% (8) complaints received during 2018/19 were regarding allegations of inappropriate staff conduct. This is an increase of 60% on the number received during 2017/18, (8).
- After investigation, 21% (5) of the eight complaints received were partially upheld and 12% (3) were not upheld. None of the complaints received during 2018/19 were found to be fully justified.
- Where there is evidence that workers have acted inappropriately or failed to follow processes or procedures, the matter is always addressed directly with the member of staff concerned and appropriate measures are then taken to reduce the risk of any similar situations occurring.

- Quality of Service remained the key theme of all complaints received. 60% (24) of complaints received were regarding the quality of the services provided.
- Quality of service includes:
 - Missed or late contact visits;
 - Contact visits that are cancelled at very short notice;
 - Conflicting or incorrect information by workers;
 - Allegations of poor support from the services involved in individual cases;
 - Poor communication between the workers and family members.
- After investigation, only 15% (2) of complaints regarding quality of service were found to be fully justified. However, almost 85% (11) were partially upheld.
- 54% (13) of the complaints received were regarding the quality of social work support provided to individual children or families.
- After investigation, 85% (11) of the complaints regarding social worker support were either fully or partially upheld. 15% (2) of complaints were unjustified.

8.4 Methods of Complaint

Method of Complaint	2016 2017		2017 2018		2018 2019	
Complaint Form	6.25%	2	12.24%	6	7.50%	3
E - mail	21.88%	7	26.53%	13	30.00%	12
Children's Leaflet / MoMo	3.13%	1	4.08%	2	7.50%	3
In Person	9.38%	3	8.16%	4	10.00%	4
Letter	25.00%	8	26.53%	13	15.00%	6
Telephone	34.38%	11	22.45%	11	30.00%	12
Total		32		49		40

- Email and letters continue to be the main method of complaint referral accounting for 45% (18) of complaints.
- Emails and letters tend to raise multiple areas of complaint. Therefore, it is important that an Investigating Officer meets with the complainant at the earliest opportunity to identify the key issues of concern and to highlight areas that are not able to be responded to.
- Complaints brought by relatives of children receiving a service accounted for 65% (26) of complaint referrals.
- During 2019/20 the service will be exploring opportunities for members of public to submit and track their complaints and compliments through our website, to make the process more efficient.

8.5 Complaints and Concerns direct from Looked after Children

- Six complaints were received direct from young people and five complaints were from advocates acting on the child / young person's behalf.
- Therefore, 28% (11) of complaints were referred by either Looked after Children, or by an advocate acting on the child / young person's instructions.
- This is a 120% increase from the five complaints received during 2017/18
- Two complaints from Looked after Children were referred via the MoMo (Mind of My Own) app.
- After investigation, only one complaint from a Looked after Child was found to be justified and as such, appropriate resolution was offered to the young person concerned.
- 45% (5) of complaints from children / young people were found to be unjustified and 45% (5) were partially justified.

8.6 Timescales and Outcomes

Complaints Resolved within 20 Working Days	2016 2017	2017 2018	2018 2019
Resolved	15	20	25
Not Resolved	17	29	15

- The statutory timescales for resolution are ten working days. This can be extended to twenty working days with the complainant's agreement.
- Ten complaints were completed within ten working days.
- This means that only 25% of complaints responded to had met the statutory timescale of ten working days.
- Twenty five complaints were completed within twenty working days.
- This evidences that 62% of complaints met the extended timescale of twenty working days.
- Fifteen complaints had not been completed within twenty working days.
- Where a complaint is not responded to within ten or twenty working days, the complainant has the legal right to request that their complaint is considered at Stage 2 of the complaint's procedure.
- It is a statutory duty to respond to complaints within the prescribed timescales. Therefore, the service should consider how response timescales can be improved.

Outcomes of complaints	2016 2017		2017 2018		2018 2019	
Outstanding	2		2		0	
Not upheld	43.75%	14	55.32%	26	45.00%	18
Partially upheld	50.00%	16	31.91%	15	47.50%	19
Upheld	3.13%	1	10.64%	5	7.50%	3
Closed or withdrawn	3.13%	1	2.13%	1	0.00%	0
Total		32		49		40

- In 2018/19, 45% (18) of complaints were not upheld after investigation.
- The number of complaints found to be unjustified evidences that the workers involved had acted appropriately and in line with guidance and procedures.
- 47% (19) were found to be partially justified. This evidences that the main issue of complaint was found to be unjustified, but there were areas where the service could have performed better, for example communication, delays in returning calls or late/missed visits.
- After investigation, almost 8% of complaints were found to be fully justified.
- In each case where it is found that there had been some fault by the service, the complainant will always receive a written apology within their response letter.

9.0 Stage 2 and 3 Complaints

	2016 2017	2017 2018	2018 2019
Stage 2 Complaints	1	2	3

Stage 3 Review Panels Held	4	0	1
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- Three complaints were registered at Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure during 2018/19.
- This is a 50% increase from the number of Stage 2's received during 2017/18, (1).
- There was one Stage 3 Review Panel Held during 2018/19.

Stage 2 Complaint & Stage 3 Review Panels Held

During 2018/19, Children's Services received three requests for Stage 2 complaint Investigations.

- One Stage 2 complaint was around the respite provision within the Children with Disabilities Team.

The complainant's child had previously had access to a respite facility based in a neighbouring authority. However, once the child had reached eight years old, the respite provision was moved to a Council facility within Gateshead. The complainant felt that the resource was not equal and disputed the decision that had been made by the Service. The complaint was investigated and was found to be partially upheld.

As the complainant remained dissatisfied with the investigation response, the issues progressed to a Stage 3 Review Panel.

- The Review Panel considered the findings from the Stage 2 complaint investigation report and invited comments from the complainant.
- The Panel Chair made a number of recommendations which were accepted by the Strategic Director of Care, Wellbeing & Learning. All recommendations have been being implemented by the Services concerned.
- A Stage 2 complaint was received from the parent of a looked after child and was in respect of the quality of the foster placement. The complainant also raised allegations about the conduct of the foster carer. After discussion with the Service Director for Children and Families, it was agreed that due to the issues raised, the investigation should be carried out fully independent of the Council.

After a full and through investigation, the main areas of complaint were found to be unjustified. Although there were areas where the actions of the Local Authority could have been improved upon, this did not alter the outcome of the complaint.

- The third Stage 2 complaint was regarding the quality of a Children in Need Assessment which had been carried out by the Referral & Assessment Service. The complainants had felt that a significant amount of information within the report was factually incorrect. They had also alleged that the social worker had had not included key points about the family's background which could impact on the assessment's outcome and as such, they felt that the assessment was fundamentally flawed. As an outcome to this complaint, the Service agreed to meet with the complainants and to discuss any factual changes requested by them.
- All improvements from Stage 2 investigations and the Review Panel are included within this report.

10.0 Equalities Monitoring

- 10.1 Gateshead Council recognises that equality monitoring of service delivery is crucial for effective planning and scrutiny of the services that it provides. This monitoring can identify which groups are using services and gauge their level of satisfaction. This information can then be used to highlight possible inequalities, investigate their underlying causes and address any unfairness or disadvantage.

- During 2018/19, four Stage 1 complaints were received from members of the BAME community.
- All complaints were about the standard of service provided by Children's Services. There were no issues raised about direct discrimination.
- All complaints were investigated and responded to in line with the statutory complaint's procedure.
- After investigation, two complaints were found to be unjustified, one complaint was partially justified, and one complaint was found to be fully justified. As a result of this complaint, changes to practice were implemented across the service to minimise the risk of any similar situations happening again.
- 70% (28) of all complainants were female and 27% (11) were male.
- 65% (26) of complaints were received from relatives of children / young people receiving a service.

11.0 Learning from Complaints

- 11.1 At the end of every investigation the investigating officer is responsible for identifying any improvements or recommendations resulting from the complaint. Changes can include policy, procedure or staff development.
- 11.2 Complaints about individual practice or failure to follow procedures are dealt with by reinforcement of processes and reiterating customer care standards through service / team meetings or individual supervision sessions. In addition to this, if it is felt that additional or refresher training is required for either workers or teams, this will be progressed by the relevant team manager.
- 11.3 In respect of complaints about staff attitude or conduct, if it is found that an employee has deliberately acted inappropriately or maliciously, the issue will be dealt with in line with internal employment procedures.

11.4 Improvements to service identified as a result of a complaint:

Integrated Referral & Assessment Team

- Business Support Officers have been reminded that they should always check with the social work teams before advising callers on the availability of staff and promising immediate call backs. This will ensure that callers can then be aware of when they may expect the service to contact them.
- All Social Workers responsible for carrying out assessments have been reminded that they should always confirm the child / young person's registered details with partner agencies such as education and health. This will ensure that children / young people whose care transfers to another family member, will continue to have their health and educational needs met.
- In the event an allocated social worker is on annual leave, any significant information that is raised during this time is now shared as soon as the allocated worker returns to work. If the information is felt to be urgent, it is passed to a manager within the service, who will consider whether any further action is necessary.
- When changes to children's records are identified, individual workers have been instructed to complete the updates at their earliest opportunity. This will then ensure that the case records reflect the current information in respect of the child / young person's care management.

- Due to a lack of communication in relation to contact sessions, workers have been instructed to ensure contact is made with family members as soon as they are aware that the contact session is to be postponed. Workers should, where possible, ensure that they share this information with family members by either text or in writing.
- Where no or very late contact has been made, the Service will reimburse any travel expenses incurred by the family along with arranging an additional contact session at a mutually convenient time.

Integrated Referral and Assessment Team / Safeguarding & Care Planning Teams

- All workers have been reminded that they must always share the Child Protection Conference Report with those who have parental responsibility within the timescales set out in Gateshead Local Safeguarding Children Board Procedures. This will ensure that parents of children receiving a service are better prepared and are aware of the concerns that have been raised by professionals involved in their children's care.
- When social workers are concerned that family disputes may be impacting on the child / young person's stability and emotional wellbeing, they must always explore independent mediation to support the family in resolving their issues.

Looked after Children's Services

- The Looked after Children Service have developed a clear procedure in respect of appropriate respite placements for children / young people whilst their foster carers are on holiday. This will ensure that foster carers are aware of the Local Authority's obligations to provide alternative respite placements for all children / young people who are in their care.

Looked After Children Team

- The Looked after Children Team have developed a clear process in respect of housing applications for young people who are to move to their own accommodation.
- In future, the allocated worker must always complete the Housing Assessment on behalf of the young person.
- When a young person is due to attend a Housing Panel in respect of future accommodation, that they will always be accompanied by their key worker.
- When a worker calls in sick, it is important that their electronic diary is checked to identify any meetings which may need to be rearranged. Where necessary, an email and a telephone call should be made to any family members who may be due to attend a meeting with the worker that day.
- The Looked after Children Service have developed a process for accepting significant documents shared by parents and families of children receiving a service.

This process will ensure that –

- * Family members are provided with a written receipt when submitting documents to Children's Services;
- * The information required is scanned into the child / children's file as soon as possible;
- * The documents are then returned to the family member via signed for post;
- * Should there any delays be anticipated in returning the documents, then they must be held in a secure place until this can take place.

- When a social worker is on a period of extended leave, family members will now be provided with contact details of the social worker who has taken over temporary responsibility for their child's case.
- The importance of passing on telephone enquiries has been reiterated with the Looked after Children Business Support Team. This requirement will be reinforced on a regular basis during team meetings and individual supervision sessions.
- As there has recently been a lack of clarity about the parameters of Pathway Plans and Staying Put Agreements, the Looked after Children Team have attended a briefing session in respect of the legislation and policy that guide these processes. This will ensure that all workers understand that Pathway Plans and Staying Put Agreements cease when a young person reaches 21.
- In response to issues around cancelled contact sessions, it has been agreed that if a social worker is not able to cover a contact, they must make their line manager aware of the reasons for this. The team will then ensure that every effort is made to cover the session. Where this is not possible, an alternative date and time will be offered to the family as soon as possible.
- It is recommended that Placement Planning meetings for Mother and Baby placements must identify very clearly the financial responsibilities of both the young person and the foster carer. This will then prevent misunderstandings on who should pay for specific items or services whilst the young person is in placement.

Safeguarding & Care Planning Teams

- All family members undergoing parenting assessments will now receive, (and sign for), short written guidance regarding the expected timescale for the completion of the assessment. The guidance will also clarify that, depending on the circumstances, parenting assessments may take longer than anticipated.

Children with Disabilities Team

- Following a restructure of services, the Children with Disabilities Service are now based within the Safeguarding & Care Planning Service. Previously, any disputes made by parents of a disabled child, particularly those in respect of resource allocation, were considered via an "appeals panel". However, it has been agreed that parents of children receiving a service should be considered through the statutory complaints procedure and parents are given the option to progress the complaint to the next stage of the procedure should they remain dissatisfied.

12.0 Compliments

12.1 Between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, Children's Services received seventy-three compliments about either individual workers or teams. During 2018/19, 44% of all representations about Children Services were compliments.

- Almost 18% (13) of all compliments received were regarding the Children with Disabilities Service and were all in respect of the quality of the respite provided by Grove House;
- 45% (33) of compliments were about the Safeguarding & Care Planning Teams;
- 5% (4) of compliments were about support offered by the Fostering Team;
- 10% (7) of compliments were regarding the Looked After Children Team;

- 8% (6) of compliments were regarding the Referral and Assessment Team;
- Almost 7% (5) of compliments were regarding the Complex Children in Need & Rapid Referral Team;

Examples of compliments received

Complex Children in Need & Rapid Referral Team

'Thank you for everything, I cannot thank you enough. You have restored my faith in social workers - you are the best one yet. I feel this is a fresh start for us.'

Children with Disabilities Respite - Grove House

'Thanks for all of your support and hard work over the year. You're all stars! Love B... and family xx.'

'To everyone at Grove House, thank you for all you do for us, we love you all, Love J..... and family'.

'To everyone at Grove House thank you so much for my lovely presents and card and the fabulous book of photos and comments (Mam cried at every one). I am really going to miss you all so much. I loved my visits with you and had some really special times.'

Safeguarding & Care Planning Teams

'K..... has helped me through so much recently and takes all of my thoughts into consideration. She tries her best all the time and is been like a rock to me. She is lovely and the best social worker I could ask for. We have grown a very strong bond and I know she wants what's best for me. She also keeps me updated. Yours sincerely C..... x0x0x0x.'

Safeguarding & Care Planning Teams

'Thank you so much. I feel more cared about. I liked everything. Nothing would have made it better, it made me feel better. Thank you.'

LAC Team

"My social worker is lovely, very friendly and funny.'

Integrated Referral & Assessment Team

'Thank you so much for all the help and support you have given me to rebuild my life. Its been hard but I couldn't have done it without you. You believed in me from the start even when I didn't believe in myself. I appreciate everything you've done for me even all the McDonalds and sing-a-longs in your car, (which is still my dream car). Thank you again I am going to miss you and don't worry, I am going to make a beautiful life for myself, no matter what'.

13.0 Conclusions

- 13.1 Complaints about Children's Services decreased by 18% (40) in comparison with the number received during 2017/18, (49).
- 13.2 During 2018/19, there were 1,817 children receiving a service. This means that 98% (1,777) of those who have social work involvement have been satisfied with the support offered by either the individual workers or teams within Children's Services.

- 13.3 Only three complaints moved to Stage 2 of the procedure. However, one of the complaints received had been investigated at Stage 1 during 2017/2018. Therefore, only two complaints, received during 2018/19 progressed to Stage 2 of the procedure. This means that 95% (38) of complaints had been satisfactorily resolved at Stage 1.
- 13.4 Quality of services provided continues to attract the most complaints for Children's Services. The majority of the issues raised within complaints about quality were around the support offered by the service or the worker concerned.
- 13.5 To facilitate easy feedback, Children's Services always ensure that publicity about complaints and compliments is available in public areas. Information about the complaint's procedure is also made available during Child Protection Conferences and during the assessment processes.
- 13.6 Due to the nature of Children's Service, it is anticipated that dissatisfaction may be received. However, it is also evident that the services are generally well received as during 2017/18, 44% of formal representations about Children's Services were compliments.

Contact Officer: Alison Routledge, X2408