

TITLE: **Children and Families Service - Annual Report on Services Complaints, Compliments and Representations - April 2021 to March 2022**

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SERVICE: Quality Assurance and Commissioning (Gateshead System), Children, Adults and Families

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 (1 April to 31 March) 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 2021 – 31 March 2022.

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

Operational managers investigate stage 1 complaints. 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, which must be negotiated with the complainant.

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 complainant'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.
- 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, (LG&SCO). 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 An LG&SCO Investigating Skills Training Course took place in April 2022. All current and new managers across Children's Services operational teams were invited to attend the course. Feedback from previous courses has been extremely positive and provides managers with the necessary skills to investigate and resolve complaints at all stages of the procedure.

6.0 Complaints from Children in 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.

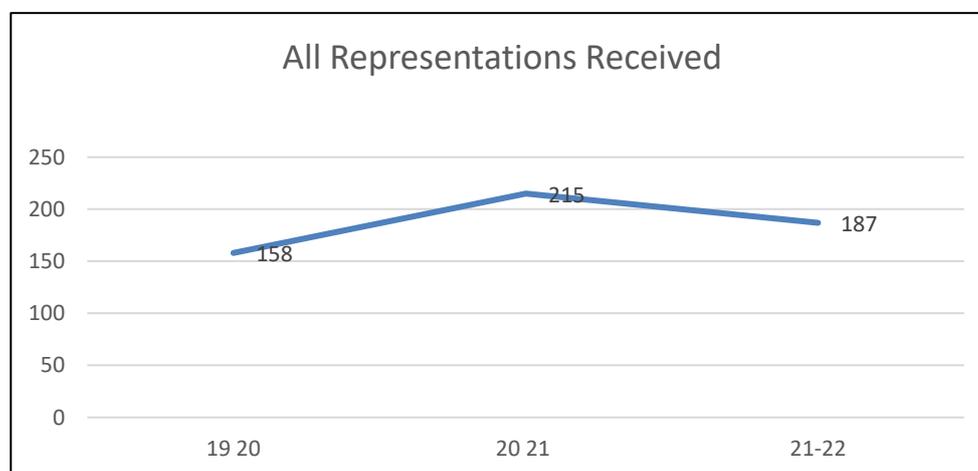
7.0 Equalities Monitoring

- 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 inequalities, investigate their underlying causes, and address any unfairness or disadvantage. However, as complainants tend to be from relatives, it is not possible to collect this information with any accuracy as diversity forms, which were sent out to complainants, were not returned.
- 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 on request.

8.0 Complaints & Representations Received

| Stage 1 | 2009 2010 | 2010 2011 | 2011 2012 | 2012 2013 | 2013 2014 | 2014 2015 | 2015 2016 | 2016 2017 | 2017 2018 | 2018 2019 | 2019 2020 | 2020 2021 | 2021 2022 |
|---------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 10 | 19 | 29 | 36 | 34 | 45 | 37 | 32 | 49 | 40 | 35 | 17 | 11 |
| % | | 90% | 53% | 24% | 6% | 32% | 18% | 14% | 53% | 18% | 13% | 51% | 35% |

| Representations | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Stage 1 Complaints | 35 | 17 | 11 |
| Stage 2 Complaints | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Stage 3 - Review Panels | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Comments | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Corporate Complaints | 2 | 14 | 19 |
| Complaint related queries | 27 | 27 | 26 |
| Data Issues | 10 | 1 | 15 |
| Insurance Claims | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| LGO Referrals | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Safeguarding Partnership Complaints | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| MP / Councillor Referral | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| Total | 88 | 79 | 88 |
| Compliments | 71 | 136 | 99 |
| All Representations Received | 159 | 215 | 187 |
| Trend | -4.24% | 35.22% | -13.02% |



8.1 Key Points of Interest – Statutory Complaints

- The number of formal contacts received, including compliments, about Children's Services decreased by 13.2% (187) compared with the number of contacts received during 2020/21, (215).
- The number of contacts raising dissatisfaction increased by 11% (79 to 88).
- This is the same level of dissatisfaction received during 2019/20.
- During 2021/22, 53% (99) of all Children's Services contacts were compliments.
- Children's Services received 11 Stage 1 complaints during 2021/22. This is almost a 35% decrease on Stage 1 complaints received during 2020/21, (17).
- 55% (6) of complaints related to the quality of services provided.
- Only 9% (1) complaint was in respect of the actions or professional conduct of workers.
- This complaint was about the actions of staff employed at a commissioned residential facility for cared for young people. This complaint was partially upheld.
- 45% (5) were regarding the quality of support provided by individual workers or services.
- The number of complaint related queries (low level issues not requiring a written response) increased by 3% compared to those received during 2020/21 (26 from 27).
- 59% (16) of complaint related queries were regarding the quality of services provided.
- All complaint related queries received about Children's Social Care 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.
- There were no complaints registered at Stage 2 of the complaint's procedure during 2021/22.
- However, there were three Stage 3 Review Panels held during this time.
- Two of the Panels held were in respect of the same complaint. The first Panel was stood down due to new information submitted by the Service.

8.2 Key Themes of Complaint

- 8.2.1 After full consideration of all Stage 1 complaints received during 2021/22, only one key theme of dissatisfaction was identified.

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

Quality of services provided continues to attract the largest number of complaints with six being received during 2021/22. However, two complaints were subsequently closed or informally resolved during the investigation process.

Complaints about quality cover several areas and can range from low level disputes to significant concerns about the actions or decisions of the services involved.

During 2021/22, three of the complaints received about quality were regarding the quality of support provided by the social worker or service. Two complaints were regarding allegations of bias by the worker involved and one complaint was about the quality of support provided to the mother when dealing with issues about the children's contact with a parent.

After investigation, two complaints about worker support were found to be partly upheld and one complaints remains under investigation.

One complaint about quality was about the assessment process. It was felt that the process was not followed and as a result the assessment report was considered unfair and prevented the complainants from being accepted as connected foster carers.

After consideration of these concerns, it continues to be an issue that families of children receiving a service may misinterpret the reasons for assessments that are undertaken and often feel that assessment outcome is biased in favour of either parent. All social workers are trained to undertake objective assessments and to reflect the family situation to the best of their professional judgement given the information and allegations presented by both parties and it is unfortunate that this does sometimes cause allegations of bias against the worker.

8.3 Specific Areas of Complaint

| Service Area | 2019 2020 | | 2020 2021 | | 2021 2022 | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Assessment & Intervention / CCiN | 25.71% | 9 | 35.29% | 6 | 27.27% | 3 |
| Children with Disabilities | 11.43% | 4 | 5.88% | 1 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Fostering Team | 2.86% | 1 | 11.76% | 2 | 9.09% | 1 |
| Cared For Children Team | 31.43% | 11 | 17.65% | 3 | 27.27% | 3 |
| Safeguarding, Care Planning | 25.71% | 9 | 23.53% | 4 | 36.36% | 4 |
| Safeguarding Children Unit | 2.86% | 1 | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Other | n/a | 0 | 5.88% | 1 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Total | | 35 | | 17 | | 11 |

- 36% (4) of all complaints received were in respect of services provided by the Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams.
- However, it should be noted that most children receiving a service are allocated a social worker from the Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams.
- 27% (3) of complaints were regarding the services provided by the Assessment and Intervention Team.
- The key theme identified from complaints about the Assessment and Intervention Service were disputes to information within assessments or the assessment process.
- 27% (3) of complaints received were regarding services provided by the Cared For Children Team. This is at the same level as the number of complaints received about the team in 2020/21, (3).
- One complaint received was from a cared for young person. This complaint is still under consideration.

| Main Complaint Issues | 2019 2020 | | 2020 2021 | | 2021 2022 | |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Delay | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Lack of Service | 8.57% | 3 | 11.76% | 2 | 18.18% | 2 |
| Quality of Service | 71.43% | 25 | 64.71% | 11 | 54.55% | 6 |
| Refusal of Service | 0.00% | 0 | 17.65% | 3 | 18.18% | 2 |
| Staff Issues | 20.00% | 7 | 5.88% | 1 | 9.09% | 1 |
| Total | | 35 | | 17 | | 11 |

- Only one Stage 1 complaint was received during 2021/22 regarding allegations of inappropriate staff conduct. This is at the same level as the number received during 2019/20.
- The complaint was not regarding Council staff but was in relation to the actions of staff in a commissioned residential facility.
- This complaint was found to be partially upheld after investigation.
- 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. Although the Council do not have jurisdiction to insist on employment action for anyone working in commissioned services, they can ask for improvements to be made under the Council's contractual arrangements.
- Quality of Service remained the key theme of all complaints received. Almost 55% (6) 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, no complaints about quality of service were fully justified. However, 40% (2) were found to be partially justified and 20% (1) was found to be unjustified.

40% (2) were either closed or informally resolved during the investigation process. One complaint remains outstanding.

8.4 Methods of Complaint

| Method of Complaint | 2019 2020 | | 2020 2021 | | 2021 2022 | |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Complaint Form – Online | 2.86% | 1 | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| E - mail | 37.14% | 13 | 58.82% | 10 | 54.55% | 6 |
| Children’s Leaflet / MoMo | 0.00% | 0 | 5.88% | 1 | 0.00% | 0 |
| In Person | 0.00% | 0 | 0.00% | 0 | 9.09% | 1 |
| Letter | 25.71% | 9 | 23.53% | 4 | 9.09% | 1 |
| Telephone | 34.29% | 12 | 11.76% | 2 | 27.27% | 3 |
| Total | | 35 | | 17 | | 11 |

- Email continues to be the main method of complaint referral accounting for 54% (6) of all statutory complaints received.
- Emails and letters tend to raise multiple areas of complaint. Therefore, it is important that an Investigating Officer speaks 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 or are outside of the remit of the complaints procedure.
- 27% (3) complaints were received by telephone. Complaints made by telephone tend to be following communication with the family which raise immediate issues.
- Complaints brought by relatives of children receiving a service accounted for 91% (10) of complaint referrals.
- One complaint was raised directly by a cared for young person. This complaint was regarding the actions of staff in a commissioned residential facility. This complaint was partially upheld after investigation.
- Children and young people receiving a service have recourse to the Council’s Children’s Rights Officer. The Children’s Rights Officer works closely with those who raise concerns and, in most cases, can resolve these successfully.

8.5 Timescales and Outcomes

| Complaints Completed within 20 Working Days | 2019 2020 | 2020 2021 | 2021 2022 |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Resolved | 17 | 5 | 4 |
| Not Resolved | 15 | 11 | 2 |

- The statutory timescale for Stage 1 resolution is ten working days. This can be extended to twenty working days with the complainant’s agreement.
- From the six complaints responded to, four were completed within twenty working days.
- This evidences that only 67% of complaints met the extended timescale of twenty working days.

| Outcomes of complaints | 2019 2020 | | 2020 2021 | | 2021 2022 | |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Outstanding | 3 | | | | 2 | |
| Not upheld | 62.50% | 20 | 50.00% | 6 | 22.22% | 2 |
| Partially upheld | 18.75% | 6 | 25.00% | 3 | 44.44% | 4 |
| Upheld | 9.38% | 3 | 8.33% | 1 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Closed or withdrawn | 9.38% | 3 | 16.67% | 2 | 33.33% | 3 |
| Total | | 32 | | 17 | | 11 |

- In 2021/22, 22% (2) of complaints were not upheld after investigation.
- 44% (4) were found to be partially justified. Partially justified highlights 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 or that processes may not have been followed in line with standard guidance.
- 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. The

Investigating Officer will also be expected to identify ways in which the service can improve.

- After investigation, no complaints were found to be fully justified.
- 33% (3) of complaints were closed or withdrawn by the complainant or moved to an alternative procedure.

9.0 Stage 2 and 3 Complaints

| Stage 2 Complaints | 2019 2020 | 2020 2021 | 2021 2022 |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | 2 | 2 | 0 |

| Stage 3 Review Panels Held | 0 | 1 | 3 |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|
| | | | |

- There were no Stage 2 requests during 2021/22.
- There were three Stage 3 Review Panels held during 2021/22. However, two Review Panels held were in respect of the same complaint as the initial Review Panel was stood down by the Review Panel Chair and subsequently rearranged following further investigation.

Stage 3 Review Panels Held

- Three Stage 3 Review Panel were held during 2021/22.
- Two of the Review Panels were regarding the same complaint and were about disputes around the level of Direct Payments provided for two children receiving a joint social care and health care package. During the first Review Panel, it was identified that new information had come to light following the investigation. Therefore, the Panel Chair agreed to stand down the Review Panel to allow further investigation to take place.

The Investigation Report was subsequently updated and shared with the complainant by the Investigating Officer. The complainant was then given the option to pursue this matter again to a Stage 3 Review Panel.

The second Review Panel was later reconvened and subsequently took place in January 2022.

Following this consideration, the Review Panel issued their findings to the Council with recommendations for the Service to consider. The Review Panel also agreed with the Council's offer for a time and trouble payment for the delays encountered during the investigation process.

- A Stage 3 Panel was held following further dissatisfaction after a Stage 2 complaint from the parents of an adopted child. The complaint was in relation to financial support following adoption along with the standards of care provided to the child whilst he was in foster care.

The Review Panel considered the information presented by the Council and the complainants and subsequently issued their findings within five days of the Review Panel being held. Following the Stage 2 and Stage 3 investigation / review, recommendations were identified which are detailed within this report.

10 Corporate Complaints

Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, Children's Services received twenty Corporate Complaints. Corporate Complaints are for complaints received from those who do not have parental responsibility, or issues relating to Child Protection matters and Early Help Services. Issues complained about via the Corporate Complaint Procedure included refusals of contact with extended family members, disputed LADO investigations, issues which were

regarding current family care proceedings and where the complainant did not have the right to information held within case records.

| Corporate Complaint - Service Area | 2021 – 2022 Total | % |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|--------|
| Access & Intervention | 6 | 30.00% |
| CWD | 0 | 0.00% |
| Early Help | 3 | 15.00% |
| Cared For Children Services | 3 | 15.00% |
| Safeguarding & Care Planning | 1 | 5.00% |
| Safeguarding Children Unit | 6 | 30.00% |
| SEND | 1 | 5.00% |
| Total | 20 | |

| Corporate Complaint - Main Element | 2021 – 2022 Total | % |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|--------|
| Delay | 0 | 0.00% |
| Lack of Service | 2 | 10.00% |
| Quality of Service | 11 | 55.00% |
| Refusal | 5 | 25.00% |
| Staff Conduct / Actions | 2 | 10.00% |
| Total | 20 | |

| Corporate Complaints - Outcome | 2021 – 2022 Total | % |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|--------|
| Currently Outstanding | 3 | |
| Not Upheld | 14 | 82.35% |
| Partially Upheld | 2 | 11.76% |
| Fully Upheld | 1 | 5.88% |
| Withdrawn / Closed | 0 | 0.00% |
| Total Completed | 17 | |
| All Complaints | 20 | |

Following Investigation 82% (14) of corporate complaints received were not upheld. However, once the complaint has been responded to, all complainants are advised of their right to request a Chief Executive Review of their complaint should they remain dissatisfied. The Chief Executive will then arrange for a full review of the complaint to be carried out.

11 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Referrals

11.1 Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, Children's Services received six Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's referrals.

| LG&SCO Referrals - Service Area | Total 2021 - 2022 | % |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|--------|
| Access & Intervention | 0 | 0.00% |
| Children with Disabilities | 1 | 16.67% |
| Cared For Children Services | 2 | 33.33% |
| Safeguarding & Care Planning | 3 | 50.00% |
| Safeguarding Children Unit | 0 | 0.00% |
| Total | 6 | |

| LG&SCO Outcomes | Total 2021 - 2022 | % |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|----------|
| Closed - No Further Action | 3 | 50.00% |
| Closed - LA Remedy Appropriate | 1 | 16.67% |
| Fault Causing Injustice | 1 | 16.67% |
| Outside LG&SCO Jurisdiction | 1 | 16.67% |
| | 6 | |

After information was provided by the Council to allow the LG&SCO to consider the issues raised with them, it was found that three referrals were subsequently closed by the Ombudsman after initial enquiries. One referral was considered by the Ombudsman, but the Ombudsman considered that the remedy proposed by the Council was appropriate to the level of injustice caused and subsequently closed the complaint.

One referral was outside of the Ombudsman's jurisdiction as the issues were subject to Court Proceedings.

The Ombudsman did consider issues relating to the quality of support to a previous foster carer when a cared for child was removed along with the subsequent LADO investigations carried out. Following this consideration, the Ombudsman did find fault in two areas. The recommendations proposed by the Ombudsman were accepted by the Council and are set out within this report.

12.0 Learning from Complaints

- 12.1 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.
- 12.2 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.
- 12.3 In respect of complaints about staff attitude or conduct, if it is found that an employee has deliberately acted inappropriately, the issue will be dealt with in line with internal employment procedures.
- 12.4 Children's Services have recently developed a Quality Assurance process which allows the Services to consider recommendations and improvements identified from all complaints that have been responded to. The process will now monitor the agreed recommendations to ensure that they are implemented within a timely manner, and to ensure that learning from complaints is shared across all Children's Services Teams.

12.5 Improvements to service identified following a complaint:

- As a result of a Statutory complaint, where it was alleged that the social worker failed to recognise a child's religious and cultural upbringing, it was arranged that specific training in respect of religious awareness for social workers will be included in the portfolio option for staff and will be a regular occurrence.

It was also recommended that all staff across Children's Services are mindful of any cultural and religious differences across the communities in Gateshead and that these are considered during social work involvement with BAME families. This issue was also addressed by the Local Authority carrying out mandatory Equality and Diversity for all Local Authority staff.

- Following a Statutory complaint in which a relative of a child receiving a service raised concerns about factual inaccuracies within a Child Protection Chairs Report, the Reviewing Unit updated the Report and the child's record with the correct spelling of all family names.
- A Statutory complaint was received, which although it was not upheld, found that the relative of a child in care may not have received copies of all the Core Group minutes. Although this was disputed by the service, they agreed to send the relative copies of the most recent reports.
- After a Data complaint about the presentation of personal records following a Subject Access Request, (SAR), the Service responsible for administering the requests carried out a review of the process. All current applications were subsequently reviewed to ensure that they were being dealt with efficiently and appropriately. In addition to this SAR Officers are now able to dedicate sufficient time to deal with each request in line with service requirements.
- A Corporate Complaint was received about a social worker who had taken information given to her by a member of a family she was working with as fact. This information was not checked, but it was subsequently used to raise a referral to the Front Door Team. It was also shared within a referral to a professional body.

Following the complaint investigation, it was found that as the referrals were unsubstantiated, they should have been verified before they were shared with Front Door Team. As an outcome to the complaint, the social worker was required to undergo refresher training in respect of the referral process. A letter was also sent to the Professional body advising that the family were not involved with the Local Authority.

- A complaint was received which included an issue where family member had requested that specific professionals were invited to attend a SEND case meeting. However, it was found that the Business Support Team did not share this request with the relevant managers before the meeting took place.

Following this complaint, the service identified that when parents ask Business Support officers for other representatives to attend meetings, the Admin Team must share this request with the Service Manager as soon as possible. This has now been implemented.

- Following a complaint where the parent of a child receiving a service complained about the lack of support during the Covid19 lockdown period, it was found that the family's self isolation period along with sickness within the Social Work Team did slightly impact on support provided. An apology was given at the time and was also reiterated within the response letter. The complainant was satisfied with the service support following the ceasing of the Covid-19 restrictions.
- After a complaint about delays in receiving Child Protection Review Reports, the worker was instructed to ensure all future reports are shared in line with timescales. This will then provide an opportunity to consider the content of the reports and to allow the family member to raise any concerns or queries before the Review Conference takes place.
- A complaint was received about an alleged breach of data, which raised issues about sharing information within court reports.

Following the investigation into this complaint, it was identified that when information from people contributing to an assessment that may be filed in Court, it is made clear to the person sharing the information, that the details of any discussions may be recorded within the assessment document and shared with others who are party to the proceedings. This recommendation was shared with Service Managers within the Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams and Assessment and Intervention Teams who have raised this requirement within their own Team Meetings.

- Following a complaint at Stage 2 which was regarding the quality and communication following a request for post adoption financial support, the following recommendations were agreed and implemented.

That following financial assessments in relation to requests for post adoption support, all outcomes to assessments now include clear and transparent details of how to appeal the decision.

A policy regarding meeting the socialisation needs of a child has been developed and is shared with all Foster Carers. This will then be measured in Cared for Children and Foster Carer Reviews.

That the child's case, whilst in the care of the Local Authority, will be reviewed by an Independent Reviewing Officer within the Child Protection Unit.

- Following a Stage 3 Review into a complaint about Direct Payments, the Panel noted that there were some issues following discussion of the Stage 2 Investigation Report with the Complainant. The Panel requested that the information to Investigating Officers should be updated to include guidance that if there is contradictory information provided by the complainant at the Stage 2 report feedback session, this should be considered. This documentation has since been updated.

In addition to this, the Council advised that a review of the Direct Payment scheme was currently being undertaken, this review will consider all documentation provided to parent to ensure that information about direct payments is clear and concise.

- After a LG&SCO investigation into a complaint about the removal of a cared for child from the foster placement along with concerns about the quality of the LADO process the Ombudsman did identify recommendations which were shared with the Council. The Council accepted the recommendations and implemented the changes required.

The Council sent a formal email around all officers within Children's Social Care Services to remind them that when LADO investigations are carried out in respect of the actions of foster carers, that in all cases, foster carers must be communicated with throughout the LADO process.

Everyone involved with the carer and/or the child who is in their care and is aware that the carer is subject to a LADO process must communicate with foster carers and allow their voices to be heard during a LADO investigation.

Details of the LADO process must be recorded on the foster carers file to demonstrate that they have been spoken to by the supervising social worker or their IFA agency (if the carer is external to the Council's fostering service) and that these lines of communication are kept open throughout the process.

All minutes from LADO meetings must demonstrate that the foster carers views have been sought, considered and part of the investigations.

13 Compliments

- 13.1 Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, Children's Services received 99 compliments about either individual workers or teams. This means that compared with the number of statutory and corporate complaints received during 2020/2, (31), 76% (99) of all representations about Children Services were compliments.
- 13.2 The Table below shows the distribution of all compliments received.

| Compliments - Service Area | Total 2021 - 2022 | % |
|--|------------------------------|----------|
| Assess & Intervention | 14 | 14.14% |
| C&F Business Support | 1 | 1.01% |
| Children with Disabilities – including Grove House | 32 | 32.32% |
| Early Help Services | 8 | 8.08% |
| Cared For Children Services | 17 | 17.17% |
| Safeguarding & Care Planning Teams | 22 | 22.22% |
| Safeguarding Children Unit | 1 | 1.01% |
| Qual Assurance & Commissioning | 4 | 4.04% |
| Total | 99 | |

| Children's Services Teams | Total 2021 - 2022 | % |
|--|------------------------------|----------|
| Assess & Intervention Team | 7 | 7.07% |
| Children & Family Business Support Team | 1 | 1.01% |
| Complex Child in Need / Rapid Response Team | 2 | 2.02% |
| Children's Residential Homes | 2 | 2.02% |
| Children with Disabilities Respite - Grove House | 27 | 27.27% |
| Children with Disabilities Team | 5 | 5.05% |
| Domestic Abuse Team | 5 | 5.05% |
| Early Help - Specialist Support Team | 3 | 3.03% |
| Fostering Team | 10 | 10.10% |
| Cared For Children Team | 5 | 5.05% |
| Safeguarding, Care Planning Teams | 21 | 21.21% |
| Safeguarding Children Unit | 1 | 1.01% |
| Social Worker in Schools Team | 6 | 6.06% |
| Travel Care Team - Children's | 4 | 4.04% |
| Total | 99 | |

13.2 Examples of compliments received

Assessment & Intervention Team

'Hi R My name is GL, one of your colleagues, SB, has been working with a family in our school and I just wanted to send a nice message to let you know that we have really enjoyed working with her. She is proactive, efficient and keen to get the family the support and help that they need. In the short time that she has had the case, she has already put a comprehensive support plan in place. I just wanted to take the time to pass on our thanks. Kind regards G' – GL

"Thank you S... you know for getting my head together you know it really sad my tears are still falling down my face. S.. thank you for being the kick start I need u know, and just having u there and some1 as kind and as nice an completely understanding and the thing is I will man. THANKYOU S.. for being there"

CCiN & RR Team

'Good Morning N.. I just wanted to rant one more time haha. I just wanted to say how amazing you have been in standing by our side all these years. We were very lucky to have met you and C.... as the people to help us go through all that we have. As a family we want to wish you all the luck in the world for the future. You have genuinely changed not only our lives but the way we see everything around us. Myself, J, E, K and L will forever remember all that you have done for us. We will keep dropping the scarf and emptying the buckets and one day we can all be happy together. Wishing you the best of luck. M & J. Ps: If allowed please do keep in touch i promise we won't rant at you anymore.' - MP

Children's Homes – Kites Rise

'One year ago today, i walked in here with no hope in hell that i would have such an amazing team of staff around me who are the most loving and supportive people I've come across. Words will never be able to even explain how grateful I am for everything you have all done for me, before coming to Kites Rise, I had no hope of being loved and cared about but you've proved me wrong, We have such good laughs. On my bad days you all sure know how to pick me back up and put me on my feet again. I really can't thank you enough for your love and support. I look forward to spending many more years here at Kites Rise.' - EU

Children with Disabilities - Grove House Respite

'PM told me Grove House is fantastic, it feels to her that LS is being cared for by a big family, not by carers. The standard of care is very high, and they meet all of LS needs, he is growing and getting big, but they have all of the specialist equipment to move and handle him safely to and from his bed, chair etc. PM said she can't fault anything at Grove House, communication is excellent, they use the home/school communication book, and they telephone before and after visits to check if there are any changes and to give updates. This gives PM peace of mind so she can have a break, knowing LS is safe, happy and well cared for.' – PM

"S... had her last stay at Grove House prior to her 18th Birthday. S gave staff a thank you card which she had written herself with the following message: 'Thank you for looking after me, I have really enjoyed coming to Grove House and will miss you all, From S...

'MR aunt/carer for CR said she is very happy with the care provided for CR at Grove House. CR doesn't say a lot about his short breaks, but he is always happy to go for short breaks and seems happy when he returns home. Staff know CR well and he gets on well with staff. Communication is good and staff always telephone to let her know how CR has been on his short break. MR said Grove House is a great service for families, they can have a break without worrying as they know their young people are well cared for. MR told me she has no concerns at all about Grove House she only has praise for the good work they do.' – MH

Children's Travel Care Team

'Hi A..., Thank you so much for responding so quickly to this last-minute change. You have, as ever, been amazingly helpful and supportive.as you have throughout this most difficult year. On behalf of the entire Cedars community could I thank you for your outstanding work this year. Have a wonderful holiday and well-deserved break. Our best wishes, M...

Early Help Service – Domestic Abuse Team

"I met J.. at a very hard time in my life. She was so lovely and supportive, she made me feel at ease. I was able to disclose some of the most horrendous details of my life that i haven't shared to anyone. Without her i would never have been able to do that. She supported me with Marac and with information with Police. Without her i would not be where i am today. I couldn't thank this lady enough. Thank you - women like me need more women like her."

Early Help Service – Specialist Support Team

'Without the help and support i received from RS, I do genuinely believe my circumstances and frame of mind would be a stark contrast from confident happy person i am now due to her help. She made me laugh when i needed it most and made talking to her about intimate and distressing situations that had happened to me very easy. RS really was a beacon of support when i need it most and for that I am forever thankful :)'

"R and the support she gave me from the very first phone call was second to none. I can only describe her as an angel, she supported me through one of the worst times of my life and I don't know how i would have gotten through it without her. She was real, relatable, and so incredibly supportive. I always felt able to approach R and for a long time the only person I felt able to confide in, in which she responded in a non-judgmental but honest and appropriate way. i am so thankful that R helped save me. I don't think she realises her own worth - an incredible woman, an asset to your team, Thank goodness for R x.' – SR"

Fostering Team

'M is coming out on Wednesday to me too. I'm so grateful I've eventually found some support and people in the same position as us. I'm usually not a moaning person just loads going on at moment & it's feels massive that there is someone to help me or direct me in the right direction. Thanks again L.'

'To whom may concern. I would like to thank CC for all the help and support she gave me and family through the fostering process past few months. She was so caring and understanding and giving information when needed and being there when I needed anything. I was confused in this process, but she told us how works and what to expect etc, which put us especially myself at ease. When you have member of staff like CC that gives her all to her work and cares and understanding with the people she works with. I believe she needed recognition for her work. Yours, KM"

Cared For Children Team

"The reason for my email is just to say how much we appreciate all the support NH has given us as a family over many years but especially during this last very trying year and with our new arrival, N has been so helpful and supportive with the transition of LB into our family. I just would love it if there was a way to recognise how much he is appreciated! Many thanks J & D M "

Safeguarding & Care Planning Teams

'Many people slate Social Services, but I think from my own point of view, my case has been a huge help as its enabled me to get help I would have dragged my feet over getting!! D... has been instrumental in helping us all get through this, So I would like to make you aware that she deserves some recognition before she leaves!!' – NU

*'To L..., Thank you so much for all your support that you have given us, it has been tough i must admit hah, and the support you and your team has given us had been brill. So, thank you L... it means a lot to us and good luck in your new job x (we may even see or hear from you again)
Take care, all our love, L,S,J,C, A & J... xxxxxx'*

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