
Annual Report April 2017 – March 2018

Children's Services Feedback Cambridgeshire County Council

Compiled by Jo Shickell
Customer Care Manager
April 2018

Executive Summary

- ↓ In the period between April 2017 and March 2018, the Customer Care Team has received 176 (187)* compliments. **This constitutes a 6% reduction.**
- ↓ The Customer Care Team have received 46 (96) Enquiries, 13 (19) Councillor Enquiries, and 66 (40) MP Enquiries in this year. **This constitutes a 23% drop when all combined.**
- ↑ The Customer Care Team have received 190 (164) Stage 1 Statutory complaints throughout this year, of which 16 (11) are still ongoing and will be responded to in the following year. **This constitutes a 16% increase.**
- ↑ The Customer Care Team have received 63 (13) Stage 1 Corporate complaints throughout this year, of which 1 (1) is still ongoing and will be responded to in the following year. **This constitutes a 79% increase in Corporate complaints being managed within the Team.**
- ↓ Throughout the year, a total of 8 (12) Stage 2 Statutory complaints were worked with. Of these, 5 (3) were initiated in previous year. 6 (7) concluded in this year, therefore 2 (5) remain ongoing and will be responded to in the following year. **This constitutes 33% reduction.**
- ↑ Throughout the year, a total of 9 (0) Stage 2 Corporate complaints were worked on. All 9 were initiated and concluded in this year. **These cases were previously managed elsewhere.**
- ↔ In this year, 3 (3) Stage 3 Statutory complaints were worked on. 1 (1) was received in the previous year. All 3 (2) concluded in this year. **This % has stayed the same.**
- ↑ In this year, 4 (0) Stage 3 Corporate complaints were worked on. All 4 were initiated and concluded in this year. **These cases were previously managed elsewhere.**
- ↓ In this year, 5 (5) Local Government Ombudsman enquiries were worked on. All 5 were received and responded to in this year. **This % has stayed the same.**

To conclude we have seen a 30% increase in stage 1 complaints with a 29% increase at stage 2 and a 57% increase at stage 3 (statutory/corporate combined).

* Figures in brackets are for the preceding year: April 2016 – March 2017

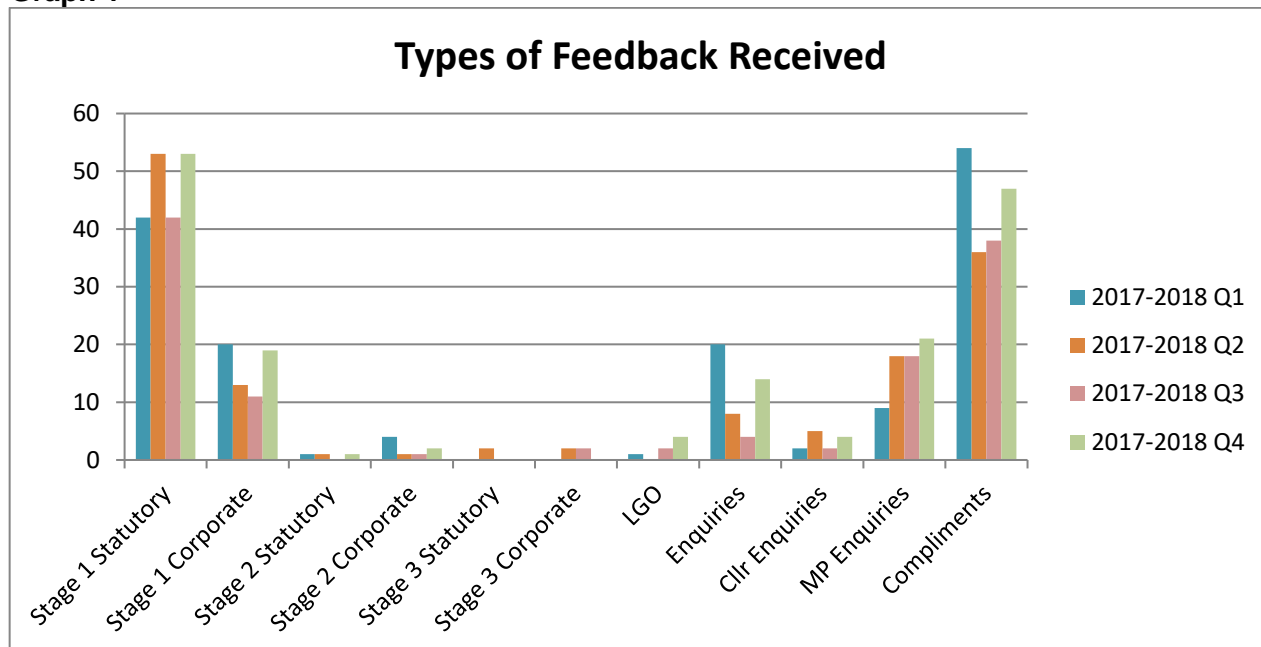
CONTENTS

	Page
1.0 Summary of Feedback	3
1.1 Compliments	3
1.2 General Enquiries	5
1.3 MP and Cllr Enquiries	6
1.4 Formal Complaint Procedure	6
1.5 Stage 1 Statutory Complaints	6
1.6 Stage 1 Corporate Complaints	9
1.7 Stage 2 Statutory Complaints	10
1.8 Stage 2 Corporate Complaints	10
1.9 Stage 3 Statutory Complaints	11
1.10 Stage 3 Corporate Complaints	11
1.11 Local Government Ombudsman	11
2.0 Themes, Learning, and Actions	12
2.1 Communication	12
2.2 Statutory Assessments Process and SEND Services	13
2.3 Assessments	14
2.4 Child in Need / Child Protection / Looked After Children / Adoption Support	15
2.5 Worker Behaviour	15
2.6 Children's Change Programme	15
3.0 Customer Care Team Update and Conclusion	16
4.0 Customer Care Team Contact Details	17
Appendix A – Counting Complaints	18
Appendix B – Complaint Process	19

1.0 Summary of Feedback

The Customer Care Team (CCT) are responsible for receiving and recording all forms of feedback regarding Children's Services across Cambridgeshire County Council. Graph 1 gives an indication of the volume of different types of feedback received throughout the past year, broken down into the last four quarters.

Graph 1

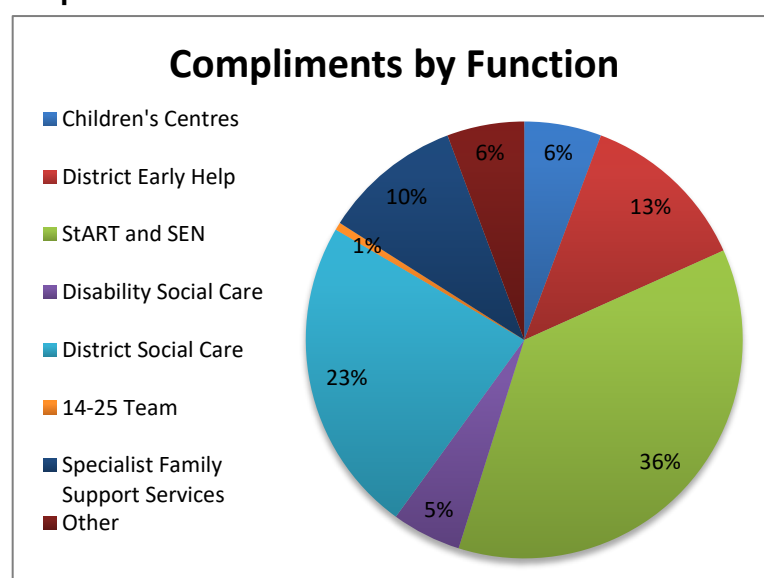


1.1 Compliments

In the period between April 2017 and March 2018, the CCT has received 176 (187) compliments. They are divided into compliments from young people, parents, other family members and foster carers; compliments from external professionals; and compliments from members of staff with no line management for the individual cases.

Graph 2 identifies compliments received by Function.

Graph 2



The Customer Care Team receives a range of compliments about Children's Social Care.

We are aware that some parts of the service collect and report back separately and those compliments are not all reproduced here. This includes the Child and Family Centres and the Participation Services.

We have received 176 compliments in total this year which are available to view online at:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/contact-us/council-complaints-procedures/>

They have been anonymised both in terms of the children and families concerned and also in terms of those individual members of staff being praised. A variety of examples are included below:

Young Person said of a Consultant Social Worker:

Dear X

Thank you for being a supercalafrafragilisticxpaedocious social worker for me and A. You have been so kind that I feel really sorry for saying goodbye. Life is going well with M and N and I really like living here at [location]. I love my school my mum and dad (M and N) chose for me. I feel quite sad that I won't see birth parents as much as I did before. But that's OK because sadness is something to learn from. I am enjoying lessons and my favourite is SRE (Sex and Relationship Education). In SRE I am learning about puberty. Puberty is where certain things happen to you as you become older e.g. feet growing larger etc. Well that might sound disgust and vile but it is true.

See ya

SENCO said of SEN Casework Officer:

I just wanted to add as well, a big thank you to you and to everyone at the SEND service for your help and advice over the years that I have been SENCo. Your support has always been very helpful and valuable.

Young Person said of Children's Centre Staff:

From X (young person) to A (Children's Centre Manager):

I'm just so thankful that I've had the opportunity with you guys to gain such valuable experience as without it I really wouldn't be able to move forward like this. I will always be so incredibly grateful for all the kindness, support and opportunities the children's centre and all the team have given me both personally and professionally, cheesy I know, but I really couldn't of done any of this without you guys. Remembering how scared of everything I was when I first accessed the services and how little confidence I had feels like a lifetime ago and almost like a different person, so to get to this point now is something I never thought would happen and probably wouldn't of happened without the teams help and support. Please let them all know also that I am definitely still going to be volunteering alongside the new job as I honestly love you guys to bits and would miss the team far too much. Plus the new job is based at the Z centre so when the children's centre moves will all be in the same place, so that will be great for keeping in touch. Thanks so much again and hopefully will get a chance to see you soon and I'm sure I'll see most of the team when we start back in September.

Young Person said of a MET Hub Support Worker:

Following on from your meeting with X yesterday I would like to pass onto you the feedback that X has given me. She feels that you built a positive relationship with her and that she could discuss concerns with you openly and although you offered guidance and advice, you never judged her which made her feel valued as a human being. She thanks you for your support and guidance in allowing her to recognise that a different path could be taken.

Parent said of a Disability Social Worker:

We now have X successfully moved into Young Adults. A has been in touch and all our requirements for funding, including [location] have been approved.

Thank you very much for your support in arranging this. I guess we won't see you again, therefore, I wanted to thank you for your involvement in helping X over the last few months.

X had a half day at [location] today with a TA from [school] and all went well. So with a good wind,

we have another string to our bow, ensuring X is happy, fulfilled and cared for.
Best wishes for the future.

Step Parent said of an Early Help Family Worker:

I just wanted to thank you and your team, for your support and understanding with the meetings surrounding Xs wellbeing.

I feel relief and happy that my voice and feelings were heard throughout as that is something I had not experienced prior to the meetings being called.

Although I am a Mum to 3 great boys, being a Step-Mother to a young girl has been a testing experience at times. I struggled to find a way for X to be able to have a good relationship with me that hadn't made her feel disloyal to her Mum. It was hard to find a way to show her Mum that I am not taking her place as Xs Mum, but that having me in her daughter's life would be of so much benefit to them both.

The first meeting was such a huge turning point as I felt safe and comfortable to be able to be open and honest about everything as I wanted her Mum to understand that I have always been a positive influence in her daughter's life, and that working together instead of against each other was the only way to ensure X was going to be able to be a happy and positive young girl.

I am now hopeful for the future. I know there are going to be some tough hurdles to cross at some point...life has the habit of throwing them in our paths! But for now, the support and advice given, the positive steps taken, the unity instead of mutiny, and the lovely change already in X, has given me a chance to smile and enjoy being a Step-Mother.

I hope you and your Team are aware of the difference you do make to children and their families life. You have certainly made on to mine.

Again, thank you.

Parent said of SEND Specialist Practitioner:

Dear X,

A, B & I would like to say a massive thank you for all your help & support during our time at [location] & the skills course. You have given us the knowledge & confidence to help A reach his full potential. You've listened & supported us through the challenges & celebrated the achievements with us. You've really helped to give us the confidence to move on now as A moves on to 'big' school. We will miss you! Keep up the good work & the fantastic group.

Much love

C, B & A xxxxx

Grandparent said of Statutory Assessments and Resources Team:

Dear X,

I am A's "Nonna" and met you at the meeting at [location] where you mentioned that you had managed to get funding agreed for him to attend Red Balloon Of the Air in September.

I just wanted to say thank you for having the idea that it might be suitable for him in the first place and then securing the funding.

I think it could be really good for him and will hopefully work on his psychological as well as educational issues.

Here's hoping....

1.2 General Enquiries

From April 2017 – March 2018, 48 (97) service user enquiries were worked on. 2 (1) of these were received in the previous year and carried forward into this year. Zero (2) enquiry was still open and therefore ongoing as of the end of this year.

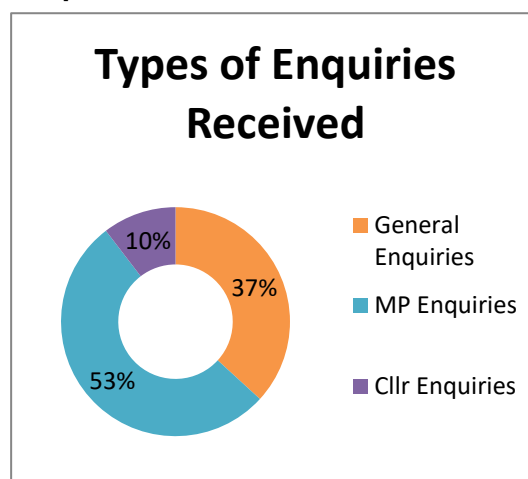
1.3 MP and Councillor Enquiries

The Customer Care Team facilitates responses to MP and Councillor enquiries. These are not counted as complaints. In some cases, a complaint may already have been received and in some, but not all cases, a complaint may be made subsequently. Every care is taken with these responses, which are written in the expectation that they will be shared with the MP or Councillor's constituent.

From April 2017 – March 2018, 14 (19) Councillor enquiries were worked with. 1 (0) of these was received in the previous year and carried forward into this year. 1 (1) enquiry was still open and therefore ongoing as of the end of this year.

From April 2017 – March 2018, 71 (42) MP enquiries were worked on. 5 (2) of these were received in the previous year and carried forward into this year. 2 (5) enquiries were still open and therefore ongoing as of the end of this year.

Graph 3



1.4 Formal Complaints Procedure

Children's Social Care has a formal complaint procedure in three Stages, which is in line with Regulations and National Guidance*. A detailed description of Cambridgeshire's procedure is available on:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/contact-us/council-complaints-procedures/>.

There were a total of 7087 children open to Children's Social Care in this year. The number of complaint cases about which Stage 1 Statutory complaints were received represents 3% of the total cases.

1.5 Stage 1 Statutory Complaints

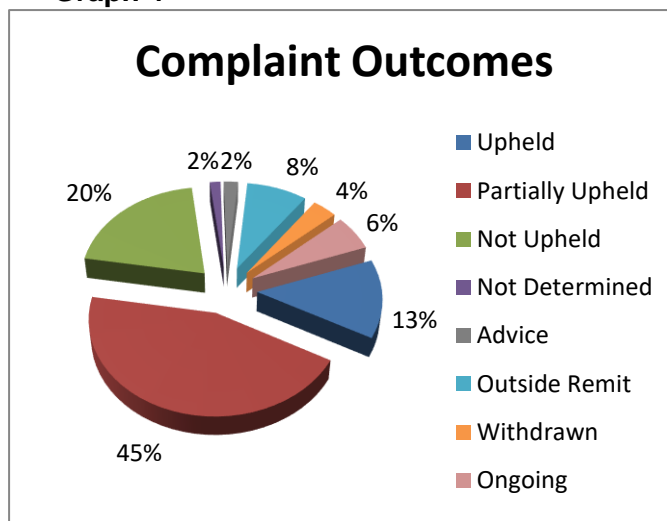
From April 2017 – March 2018, the CCT worked with 201 (174) Stage 1 Statutory complaints. 11 (10) of these were received in the previous year and carried forward into this year. Out of the 201 complaints worked with, 189 (167) received a response, 4 (4) were reopened as of the end of the year. Therefore, 16 (11) cases were still open and therefore ongoing as of the end of this year.

Out of the 201 (174) complaints worked with this year:

- ↑ 27 (15) were upheld, **4% increase**
- ↑ 90 (60) were partially upheld, **11% increase**
- ↓ 41 (58) were not upheld, **13% decrease**
- ↑ 3 (2) were not determined, **0.3% increase**
- ↓ 7 (10) were withdrawn, **2% decrease**
- ↑ 4 (2) did not qualify as advice was sought, **0.8% increase**
- ↓ 17 (16) were outside of the complaints remit, where issues were historic or had already been investigated, **1% decrease**
- 12 (11) were ongoing as of the end of the year

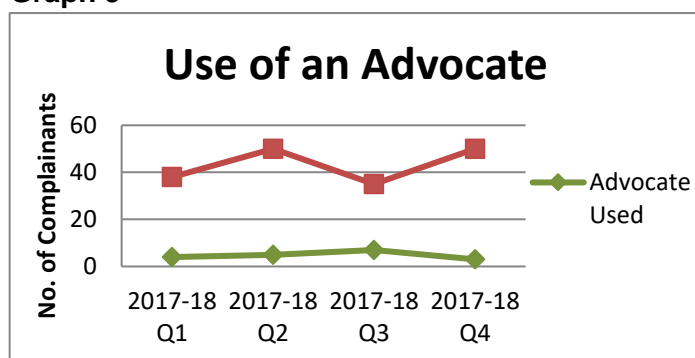
Out of the 189 (168) Statutory complaints for which responses were provided during this year, 60 (40) complainants returned with further concerns to their initial complaint, at which point their Stage 1 complaint was re-opened for investigation which constitutes a 7% increase. 15 of these complainants re-opened their complaint multiple times, accounting for 77 cases which were re-opened at a Stage 1. 68 (38) complainants who submitted a complaint in this year had made at least 1 unrelated complaint previously which **constitutes a 13% increase in returning complainants.**

Graph 4

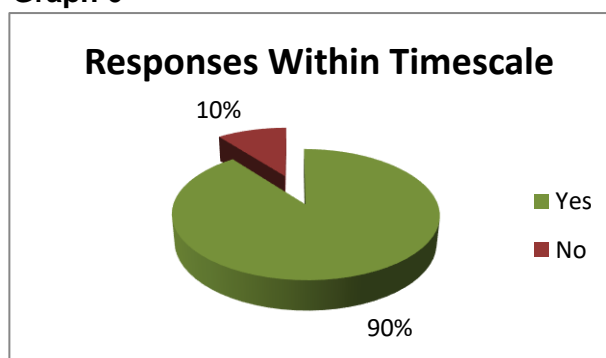


Out of the 190 (164) Statutory complaints received in this year, 127 (110) were made by parents or step-parents, 18 (15) were made by a young person, 35 (27) were made by other family members, and 10 (12) were received from non-family members. Advocates have been involved in 19 (15) complaints received in this year. 12 (12) of these were 'Looked After' young people, 1 (0) was a CP young person, 2 (1) were Child in Need, and 4 (0) were involved with the 18-25 team. 11 (12) of them were assisted by NYAS.

Graph 5



Graph 6



Out of the complaints responded to in this year, 46 (32) responses were extended from the initial 10-working-day timescale to a 20-working-day maximum.

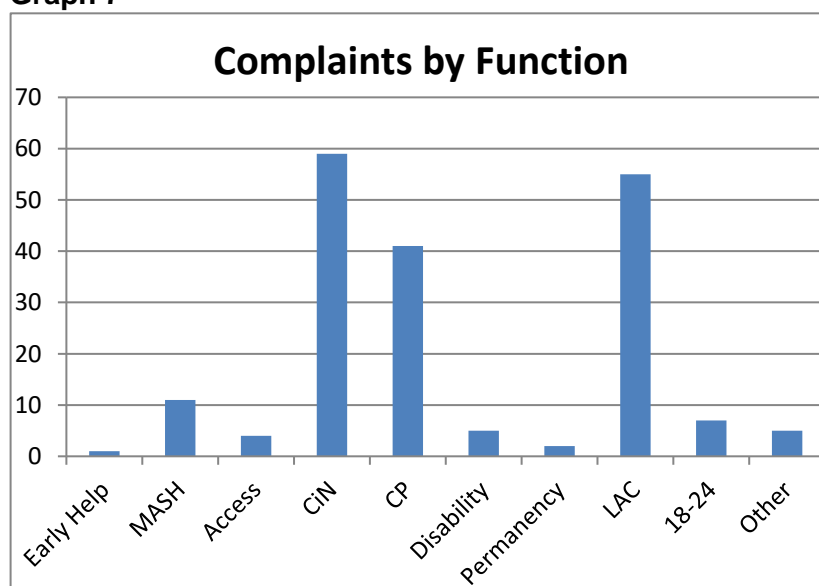
16 (19) were responded to outside of the prescribed timescale (whether it was 10 or 20 working days).

There were a wide range of issues raised within the complaints.

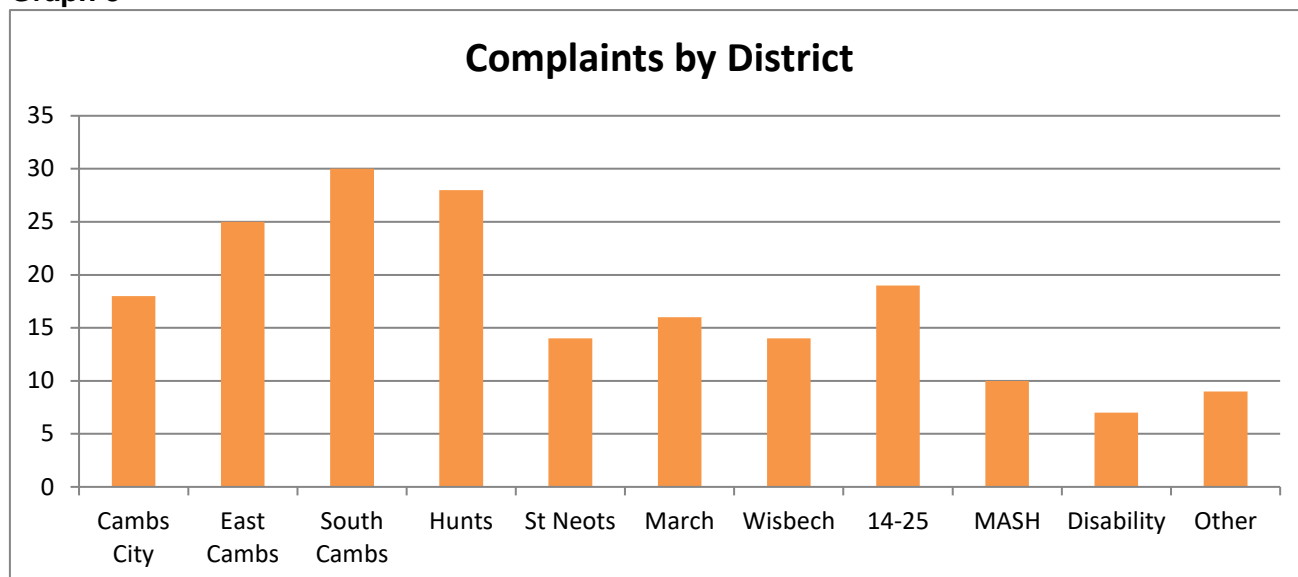
The highest volume of complaints were received in relation to Child in Need where 59 (67) complaints were received, and Looked After Children where 55 (34) complaints were received.

The majority of Statutory stage 1 complaints, 30 received in this year, were received from South Cambridge District.

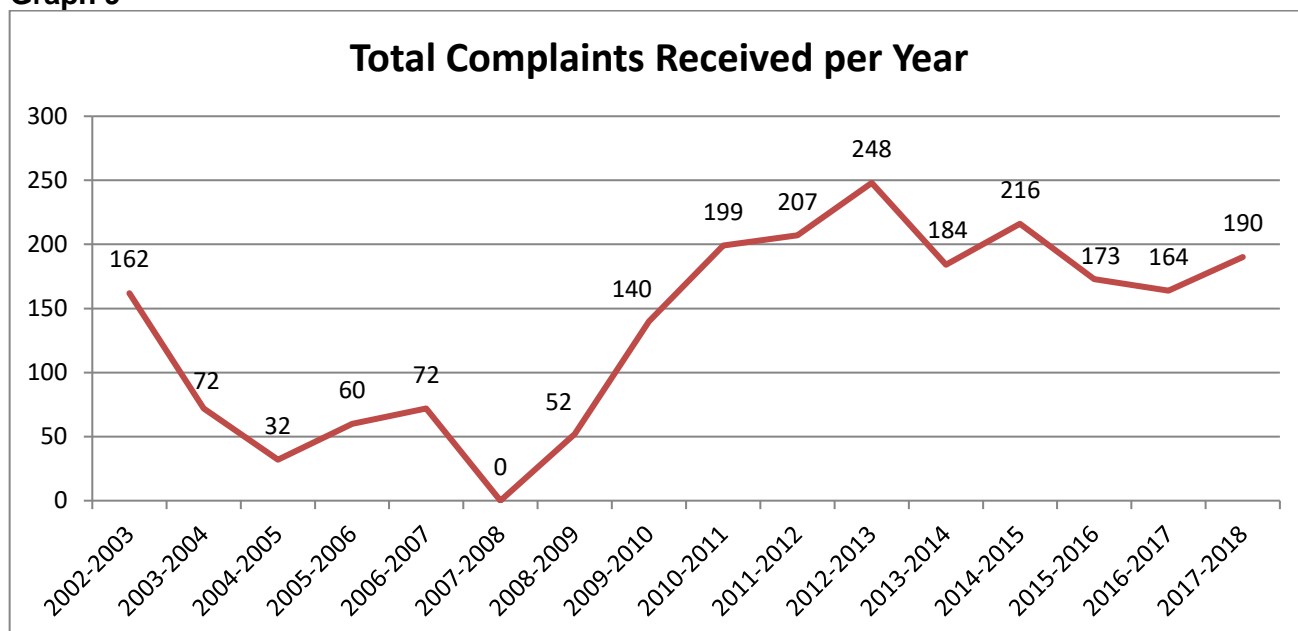
Graph 7



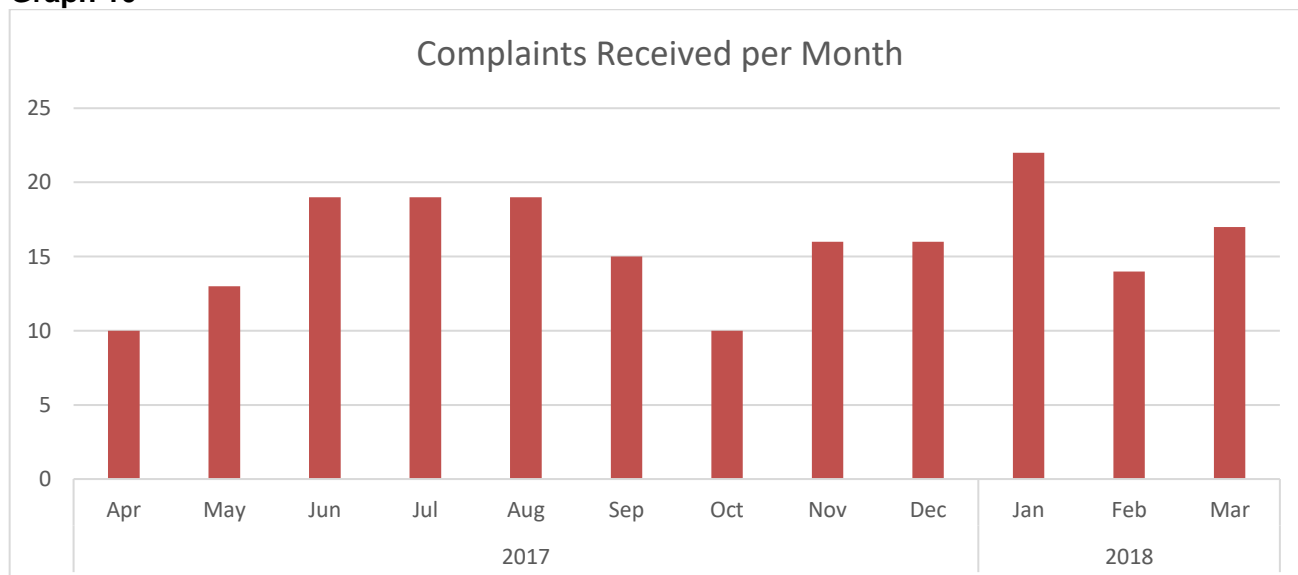
Graph 8



Graph 9



Graph 10



1.6 Stage 1 Corporate Complaints

From April 2017 to March 2018, the CCT worked with 64 (13) Stage 1 Corporate complaints. 1 (0) of these was received in the previous year and carried forward into this year. 1 (1) case was still open and therefore ongoing as of the end of this year.

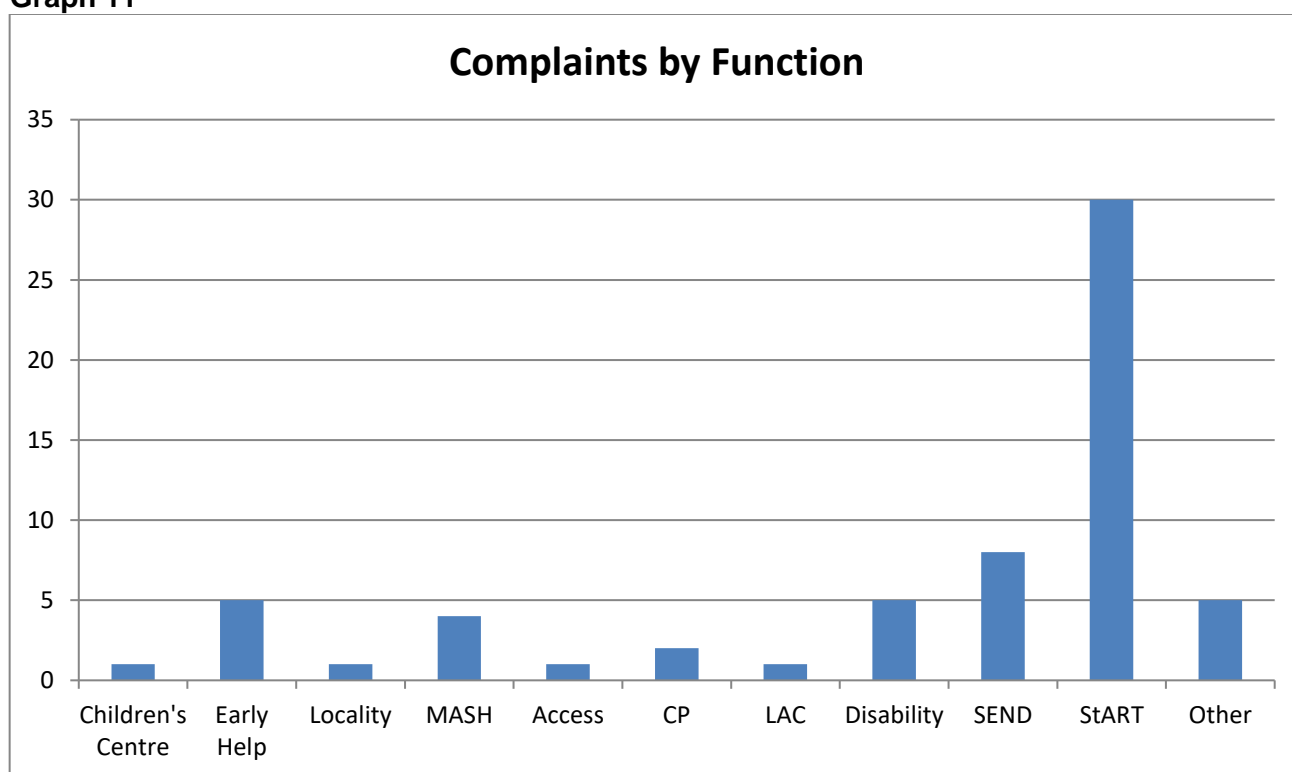
Out of the 63 complaints which concluded in this quarter:

- 1 was outside of remit
- 16 were not upheld
- 27 were partially upheld
- 19 were upheld

Out of the 63 (12) Corporate complaints for which responses were provided this year, 3 (2) came back with further concerns to their initial complaint, at which point they were re-opened for investigation at Stage 1. Out of the 63 (13) complaints received in this year, 12 (2) of the complainants had made at least 1 unrelated complaint previously.

Out of the 63 (13) complaints received in this year, 43 (4) were made by parents or step-parents, 4 (1) were made by the young person themselves, 3 (1) were made by another family member, and 13 (7) were made by others unrelated to the young person.

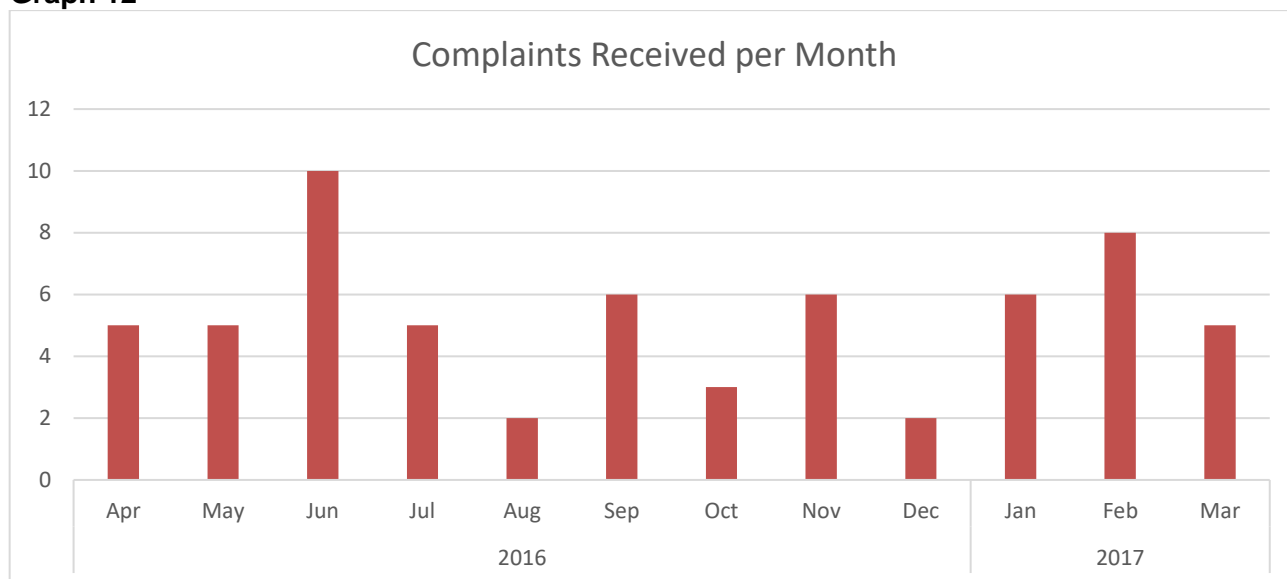
Graph 11



Out of the 63 Corporate complaints responded to this year, 9 (0) responses were extended from the initial 10-working-day timescale to a 20-working-day maximum. 10 (0) were responded to outside of the prescribed timescale (whether it was 10 or 20 working days) which constitutes 16%.

The highest volume of Corporate complaints was seen in the Statutory Assessment Team (StAT), with 30 complaints received in the year which constitutes 48% overall.

Graph 12



1.7 Stage 2 Statutory Complaints

From April 2017 to March 2018, the Customer Care Team worked with 8 (12) Stage 2 Statutory complaints. 5 (3) of these were received in the previous year and carried forward into this year. 2 (5) cases were still open and therefore ongoing as of the end of this year. These will be reported on in the next annual report.

Out of the 6 (4) Stage 2 investigations which were investigated and concluded this year, a total of 67 (34) issues were investigated.

- 7 (8) were upheld
- 10 (6) was partially upheld
- 45 (16) were not upheld
- 5 (1) were not determined
- 0 (3) were outside of the complaint remit

Out of the 6 (4) complaints which concluded in this year, all 6 (4) responses were extended from the initial 25-working-day timescale to a 65-working-day timescale. 0 (1) were responded to outside of the prescribed timescale (whether it was 25 or 65 working days).

Of the 3 (9) Stage 2 complaints received in this year, 2 (1) were made by a young person, and 1 (5) was made by a parent. Each of the 3 complaints was made in relation to different services: Child in Need, Child Protection, and Looked After Child.

1.8 Stage 2 Corporate Complaints

From April 2017 to March 2018, the CCT worked with 11 Stage 2 Corporate complaints, all of which were initiated this year. 2 cases were still open and therefore ongoing as of the end of this year.

Within the 9 complaints which concluded in this year:

- 1 was upheld
- 4 were partially upheld
- 4 were not upheld

Out of the 9 complaints which concluded in this year, 5 responses were extended from the initial 10-working-day timescale to a 20-working-day timescale. 4 were responded to outside of the prescribed timescale (whether it was 10 or 20 working days).

Of the 11 Stage 2 complaints received in this year, 8 were made by a parents, 1 was made by another family member, and 1 was made by another unrelated to the young person. 6 of the complaints were made in relation to SEND or StART services, 2 were made in relation to PQA, 1 was in relation to Permanency, and 2 related to other services.

1.9 Stage 3 Statutory Complaints

From April 2017 to March 2018, the CCT worked with 3 (2) Stage 3 Statutory complaints. 1 (1) of these was received in the previous year and carried forward into this year. All cases were closed in this year, therefore 0 (1) cases were ongoing as of the end of this year.

Out of the 3 Stage 3 investigations which were worked with this year, 1 was closed prior to panel as it was deemed outside of remit, 1 was deemed partially upheld, and 1 was deemed not upheld.

Out of the 2 (1) complaints which were seen through to panel, both were concluded within ten weeks from the date of initiation.

Of the 2 (1) Stage 3 complaints received in this year, 1 was made by a parent and 1 was made by another unrelated to the young person. 1 complaint was made in relation to the Permanency team and 1 was in relation to Disability services.

1.10 Stage 3 Corporate Complaints

From April 2017 to March 2018, the CCT worked with 4 Stage 3 Corporate complaints. All complaints were initiated and concluded this year.

Within the 4 complaints which concluded in this year:

- 0 were upheld
- 4 were partially upheld
- 0 were not upheld

All 4 complaints were made by parents. 2 complaints were made in relation to StART services, 1 was in relation to Permanency services, and 1 was in relation to another service.

All 4 complaints which concluded in this year were extended from the initial 10-working-day timescale to a 20-working-day timescale. 3 were responded to outside of the prescribed timescale.

1.11 Local Government Ombudsman

From April 2017 to March 2018, the CCT worked with 7 (5) Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) enquiries. All enquiries were initiated this year. 5 (5) cases were closed in this year, therefore 2 (0) cases were ongoing as of the end of this year.

4 of the enquiries which concluded this year were deemed by the LGO to be outside of remit. The LGO found fault by the Council with 1 enquiry, causing the complainant injustice. The Council has agreed to the LGO's recommendations to remedy the injustice caused.

Of the 7 (4) enquiries received this year, 6 (2) were made by parents and 1 (0) was made by another family member. 3 complaints were made in relation to Child in Need services, 1 was made in relation

to Child Protection, 1 was made in relation to Looked After Children, 1 was made in relation to Permanency services, and 1 was in relation to SEND.

2.0 Themes, Learning, and Actions

The issues raised in complaints are inevitably similar at all three Stages of both the Corporate and Statutory Complaints Process. While each point contains valuable learning, it should be remembered that the total number of complaints is low.

Please note that learning has been taken from all complaints rather than just those that were upheld or partially upheld.

2.1 Communication

- Children and their families should now be provided with an information pack at the outset of our involvement, to include the contact details of all Workers involved to be shared with non-resident parents as well as the resident parent (if allocated to a Unit, this should include the allocated Worker, Unit Co-ordinator and Consultant Social Worker's details).
- When Workers are away from the office, on leave or on visits, it is essential they divert their phones onto other colleague's numbers and/or leave a voice mail message signposting the caller as to whom they might contact in their absence.
- All Workers should have their Outlook Calendar's open to view with all appointments listed in the case of illness, when cover is required or meetings need cancelling.
- Should delay become unavoidable, then it is essential to keep the service user informed, agreeing an extended (realistic) timeframe that the task will be completed within.
- When corresponding with service users, it is important any written work is checked for factual accuracy not only for spelling but for gender, title etc.
- Workers should ensure they take time to explain processes clearly, where possible sharing supporting literature that outlines in more detail the process being followed and its limitations to manage expectations.
- When it is necessary to change worker due to staff turnover, it is essential that this is fully explained to the service user and where possible, a brokered introduction of the new worker with an appropriate handover.
- There has been some confusion amongst staff over the use of the term 'Early Help' between the work of the Early Intervention and Prevention District Team and that of the team that provide financial support payments to children with a disability. The Simplify to Succeed Board are considering this issue.
- All written correspondence with families should follow Council corporate communications guidance and should be written on suitable headed paper/compliment slips.
- Service teams need to be aware of support programmes they are promoting or recommending to ensure children and young people who are eligible do not miss out (i.e. Share Foundation's ISA criteria)
- Important meeting minutes and plans should be translated into the Service User's first language, even if they state this is not necessary, to ensure the message is received as intended.
- It was agreed a policy would be written to outline the Council's approach to families transferring in from another Authority, especially where there is an established package of support relating to a service user's needs, in order to better manage expectations.

- Workers have been reminded to be cautious when labelling behaviours as part of their professional judgement, ensuring records are made of any information received or observed behaviour that has led to this opinion.
- When deadlines are due during approved staff absence, it is important to communicate if delay is likely to the child or family and whether cover for the outstanding task will be provided and if so by whom, providing contact details.
- When staff turnover or demand management dictates a necessary change of Worker, this situation must be communicated to the service user with a brokered introduction where possible.
- Supervised Contact Service to provide contact details of staff supervising contact to families in case of delay or difficulty.
- Both parents with Parental Responsibility (resident and non-resident) to be kept informed when their child's case is being transferred out of county, passing on contact details of the receiving Local Authority.
- Checking out service users understanding of the messages we wish to convey is vital, especially if there are mental health concerns.
- When considering suitable accommodation for 'Looked After' young people, it is important that thorough checks are made with any potential host family and sufficient information shared with them to outline any risks or vulnerabilities the young person may have.
- All children and families should be advised how to provide feedback in relation to services/intervention, and supported to do so where necessary, especially young people.
- Both parents with Parental Responsibility (resident and non-resident) should be provided with the opportunity to participate in their child/ren's assessment and plan, receiving the information pack at the outset of our involvement, attending meetings where possible and receiving minutes.
- Completed kinship and viability assessments should be served on the applicant along with a letter detailing how they can challenge the outcome and seek legal support.
- The importance of having an open dialogue with families around mental health/illness, specific diagnosis and the family's understanding of what that means for them cannot be underestimated.
- The Multi Agency and Safeguarding Hub (MASH) now provide feedback to referrers via email.
- Workers must try at all costs to contact parents/carers if cancellation of meetings is necessary.
- Acronyms should be avoided in all communications with families and other professionals without firstly explaining what they stand for.
- All Data Protection breaches through sharing sensitive and privileged information without consent must be reported to Information Governance and internally investigated.
- In accordance with the recently revised Customer Service Charter staff should answer 85% of all calls, and aim to avoid the use of voicemail. Where voicemail is used, staff will respond to messages within 2 working days. Staff will respond to e-mail enquiries in full within five working days, and written correspondence in full within 10 working days, whilst ensuring you know who to contact if you require more information. Where we are unable to respond in full within the timescales stated above, staff will advise families of this and provide detail of when a full response will be provided.

2.2 Statutory Assessment Process and SEND Services

- Time should be taken to explain the reasons as to why a school is being proposed in an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) especially where it is not the first choice of the parent/s.

- Information about the Education Health and Care Plan application process and eligibility criteria should be widely accessible and promoted with all interested applicants to better manage expectations.
- Where the Council had failed to deploy an Educational Psychologist (EP) as a result of a misunderstanding with the school, it was agreed to reimburse the parents the cost of their own privately commissioned Educational Psychologist.
- All written correspondence sent out to families over eligibility for schemes/funding should be approved a Senior Manager within the Service to avoid miscommunicated messages (i.e. Early Years funding/Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund).
- A written policy for transferring in Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) Services families, outlining our offer to them, is being finalised in order to manage expectations, especially where there is an established package of support relating to a services user's needs.
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Services now write to parents as well as the referring School with their outcome decision over Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) criteria being met.
- The Annual Review pro-forma and associated process for children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or Statement of Educational Needs has now been amended. The new form/process was developed in consultation with parents/carers and schools. Now as part of the new process, proposed amendments are made to the Plan as the discussion takes place, during the Annual Review meeting.

2.3 Assessments

- When assessing a child, young person or parent/carer against complex eligibility criteria, it is essential to check out their understanding in order to manage their expectations.
- It has been agreed that Case Management Orders are to consistently state that the Local Authority is to serve the completed kinship and viability assessments on the subject together with a letter that confirms how they may challenge the outcome and seek legal support as required. The Kinship team to send these kinship assessments out as a matter of course, with Units sending out the viability assessments. Legal Services will send a copy of the filed Special Guardianship Order assessment plan back to the Kinship assessment team to ensure that consistent versions are being seen.
- Single assessments and carers assessments should be completed concurrently when assessing a disabled child's needs.
- Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC) risk assessments should be completed prior to positive/social activities commencing with children and young people.
- When triaging concerns or completing assessments, staff should ensure they speak to all key partners to understand wider context of concern.
- Where possible those with Parental Responsibility should be invited to participate in assessments that relate to their child, providing them with the opportunity to identify and raise issues they feel are important and share in decision making, beyond consultation. If it is not possible or appropriate for them to be present, then opportunities should be explored to ensure they remain involved and informed.

2.4 Child in Need/Child Protection/Looked After Children/Adoption support

- Non-resident parents with Parental Responsibility (PR) must be enabled to participate in their child's CIN/CP meetings/conference, if not in person by having their views represented, even when there is a perceived risk, and to receive a copy of the assessment/minutes in a timely way.
- Single Assessment/Child Protection Conference reports should be sent out two working days in advance of Conference to enable the family to feedback or challenge any perceived inaccuracies, ideally before it is signed off.
- In an Adoption Support Plan, it had been stated that the cost of the adopter's lease car should have been deducted out of their adoption allowance, this will routinely be checked in the future.
- Pre-placement information relating to foster children should be shared with foster carers. Fostering Service to review their procedures and to inform foster carers of available support from Foster Talk.

2.5 Worker Behaviour

- When inheriting a case from another team/service/county, it is imperative that time is spent to read historical involvement and checking out own understanding before approaching the family with assumptions.
- Workers need to be careful not to share confidential information about service users with others without the subject's consent (i.e. mother's whereabouts shared with ex-partner despite DV).
- Worker's need to be cautious in the language they use when relaying information about criminal investigations. Service users being investigated are deemed to be 'alleged perpetrators' until charged and convicted.
- Worker's to be cautious when sympathising with a Service User's situation, in case they are left with the impression that we agree with their point of view.
- Staff reminded to be cautious to not share personal information with service users even if invited.

2.6 Children's Change Programme

- Senior managers need to be mindful when responding to demand to minimise the movement of staff as a first response. Such decisions can cause, lack of trust by the family, inconsistency in the delivery of the plan and low morale in the workforce, leading to instable service provision.
- Managers to ensure appropriate cover arrangements are put in place when staff are off long term sick/maternity leave.
- Where change of worker is necessary, a brokered introduction with the new worker should be facilitated.
- Neighbouring Social Care Units have helped facilitate cover for other Units where capacity has been compromised due to illness, absence or vacancies.

3.0 Customer Care Team Update and Conclusion

The 2017-2018 year has been very busy for the Customer Care Team, with an overall 30% increase in stage 1 complaints (Statutory and Corporate combined) over the previous year. Within this percentage we have seen a 16% increase in Statutory complaints which includes a 13% increase in returning complainants raising new concerns, largely relating to issues experienced through the Children's Change Programme.

During the past year, the Customer Care Team introduced the offer of a meeting with a Head of Service where the complainant indicated they remain dissatisfied after receipt of their Statutory Stage 1 response. Despite the overall increase of Statutory stage 1 complaints and a 7% increase in re-opened complaints, we have seen a 33% decrease in these complaints escalating to a stage 2 investigation which indicates this new measure has proved to be an effective additional intervention.

Although the 8% increase in Looked After Children (LAC) complaints and the number of complaints received in South Cambridgeshire appear to indicate an upward trend, these can be explained due to the increase in subject access requests received from LAC care leavers reading their historical records, highlighting problems in the past, and the recruitment and retention difficulties experienced in the south of the county.

The timeliness of the production and distribution of Looked After Children's Review minutes which often fall outside of statutory timescales, is hampered by so many Cambridgeshire Children being accommodated outside of the county, necessitating Independent Reviewing Officers spending much of their working week travelling to Reviews. With our strategy to recruit and identify more in county carers and placements, hopefully this will alleviate this issue.

Another area of concern is the Council's current policy on the use of Woodlands Lodge to fulfil its overnight Short Breaks offer to Disabled children. We have seen a number of complaints from parents disagreeing with the Disabled Children's Panel's decision to allocate this provision stating it does not meet their child's specific needs. On each occasion following investigation, this aspect of their complaint has been upheld and direct payments have been agreed.

Having assumed responsibility for Early Help, including Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Services complaints this year, the Customer Care Team have managed a significant 79% increase of Corporate stage 1 complaints. With this additional responsibility the Team have also facilitated nine Corporate stage 2 investigations and four stage 3 reviews which were previously managed elsewhere. This is not to suggest that Corporate complaints have increased *par se*, rather that the Customer Care Team's handling of them has increased significantly.

Of note, 48% of all Corporate complaints received were around the Statutory Assessment process, and 16% of Corporate complaints were responded to outside of timescale (whether that be 10 or 20 days).

Despite an overall decrease in general enquiries, we have seen a 39% increase in MP enquiries on behalf of their constituents, most of which will have already complained through either the Statutory or Corporate complaint process or will go on to complain thereafter.

Following a review of the Children's Complaints and Representations Procedure in January 2018, a further revision will be made later this year to include the revised LSCB escalation policy (May 2018) for partner agencies to use when complaining about Children's Staff where there is a disagreement about a safeguarding decision, the Single Route of Redress with respect to EHCP tribunal decisions, and all complaints relating to Child Protection Conferences will now be dealt with in accordance with Peterborough and Cambridgeshire's Local Safeguarding and Children's Board's (LSCB) revised three stage complaints procedure.

With Local Government Ombudsman links strengthened, recent LGO training provided locally to responding managers, we are confident that we can continue to learn and improve practice, whilst

providing a transparent, thorough and fair service to all service users of the Complaints and Representation procedure.

The Annual Report for April 2017 – March 2018 is available to the public on the main County Council website through the following link:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/contact-us/council-complaints-procedures>

4.0 Customer Care Team Contact Details

Address:

Customer Care Team
Box SH1215
Shire Hall, Castle Hill
Cambridge
CB3 0AP

Telephone:

01223 699664
01223 714765

E-mail:

Childrens.ServicesFeedback@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Appendix A – Counting Complaints

This Appendix aims to explain how complaints are counted and how outcomes are decided.

It is rare that complaints contain only one issue and it is often the case that the issues are not very clear, making it difficult to count them separately or to compare them easily with other complaints. Nevertheless themes and learning are taken very seriously.

At Stage 1, a complaint is counted as one, even if it contains more than one issue. For example, a parent may ring to say that she is dissatisfied with how a Social Worker spoke to her on a first visit; factual inaccuracies in a report, and the late arrival of minutes of a meeting. Each of these will be investigated and a single response will be sent. If the same parent rings again while the complaint investigation is ongoing, to say that the Social Worker also failed to show his ID card, this will be added to the same complaint. Once the complaint has been investigated and a response sent, any new complaint will be counted separately.

In the above example, there may be no witness to the visit and it may not be possible to ‘determine’ whether or not the Social Worker showed his ID card or not, or if he was rude. Where it is one person’s word against another’s, the outcome of those aspects is that they ‘cannot be determined’ either way. If, having checked available information, there is evidence to support the content of the report; the complaint that the report contains factual inaccuracies will not be ‘upheld’. Finally, if the minutes were late, i.e. more than 10 working days after the event, that aspect will be ‘upheld’.

Overall, this complaint would be deemed to be ‘partially upheld’ as one aspect was upheld. Even where more aspects are ‘not upheld’ than are ‘upheld’, the complaint will still be deemed to be ‘partially upheld’.

The Customer Care Manager, who has no line management involvement with the cases that are complained about, makes the final decision as to whether or not a complaint is upheld.

In a Statutory Stage 2, the two Independent Investigators meet with the complainant to go through which aspects of the original complaint continue to cause concern. These are usually the aspects which were ‘not determined’ or ‘not upheld’ at Stage 1. The Investigators draw up a ‘Schedule of Complaint’ with the complainant, which the complainant signs only when she is happy that this is an accurate reflection of her views. This can contain a list of issues. Each of these is investigated and a finding (of ‘upheld’, ‘partially upheld’, ‘not upheld’ or ‘cannot be determined’) is reached against each one.

The complainant receives copies of both Investigation Reports in full, together with a letter from the Assistant Service Director. There is no County Council involvement in the making or altering of the Statutory Stage 2 outcomes.

Each Statutory Stage 2 investigation is counted as one investigation and is not counted as a number of separate complaints. Similarly, each Statutory Stage 3 Panel is counted as one. The number of Stage 2 investigations and Stage 3 Panels is reported upon within in-house and public reports.

At Statutory Stage 3, the complainant notifies the Independent Panel in advance of the Panel Meeting as to which complaints continue to be unresolved and these are discussed. While a Statutory Stage 3 Panel is not a new investigation, the Panel will, nevertheless comment on whether it agrees with previous findings or not. The Panel findings are sent to the complainant at the same time as they are sent to the Service Director. The Service Director also writes directly to the complainant.

