

Appendix 3



Children and Adults Services

Annual Statutory Representations Report
Children and Adults Social Care Services 2015/16

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Part One - Introduction

Welcome to Durham County Council's (DCC) Children and Adults Services (CAS) Annual Report which details representations made in relation to CAS Social Care Services. The report covers the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

The report is published under the provisions and requirements of the relevant regulations: *The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006* and the *Local Authority Social Services and the National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009*¹. The reporting format reflects the requirements detailed in the regulations. The regulations for children and young people's social care complaints are different to those for adult social care complaints and for this reason the data and analysis is presented in individual sections within the report.

Complaints are valued as an important source of feedback from service users on the quality of services provided by CAS. Each complaint is investigated, findings fed back to the complainant and various remedies provided when appropriate. Complaints also provide opportunities to learn lessons and continually improve services to prevent a repeat of any failures.

There is no statutory requirement to publish data on compliments but it is important to provide a rounded view of what service users, their carers, families and nominated representatives think about the services they receive. Compliments provide the opportunity to understand what elements of services are valued and why.

During the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework (SIF) of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, which was carried out in February - March 2016, inspectors looked at a selection of children and young people's complaints and the arrangements for managing complaints regarding Children's Services. The Ofsted report published on 16 May 2016 included at paragraph 108: "Complaints are well coordinated and managed, with learning regularly identified and fed back to inform future practice."

This Representations Annual Report is broken down into seven parts and provides an overview of the following areas in the reporting period:

- The numbers and composition of complaints and compliments received.
- Information in relation to the complainants.
- Performance data in relation to the handling of complaints.
- Lessons learnt and actions taken to improve service delivery.
- Future developments.

¹ Statutory Regulations for the management of complaints only apply to complaints about **social care** provision, as defined in community care legislation, not to any other service within the Authority. The Regulations **prescribe** how social care complaints must be managed and progressed, hence children's and adult social care complaints are referred to as 'statutory complaints'. All other complaints received by the Local Authority are dealt with under the corporate complaints procedures. Whilst for 'corporate complaints' there is a duty placed upon a Local Authority to have a complaints procedure, how such complaints are managed is not prescribed by Regulations. Each Local Authority can determine how it manages its non-statutory (or corporate) complaints.

Part Two - Key messages for CAS

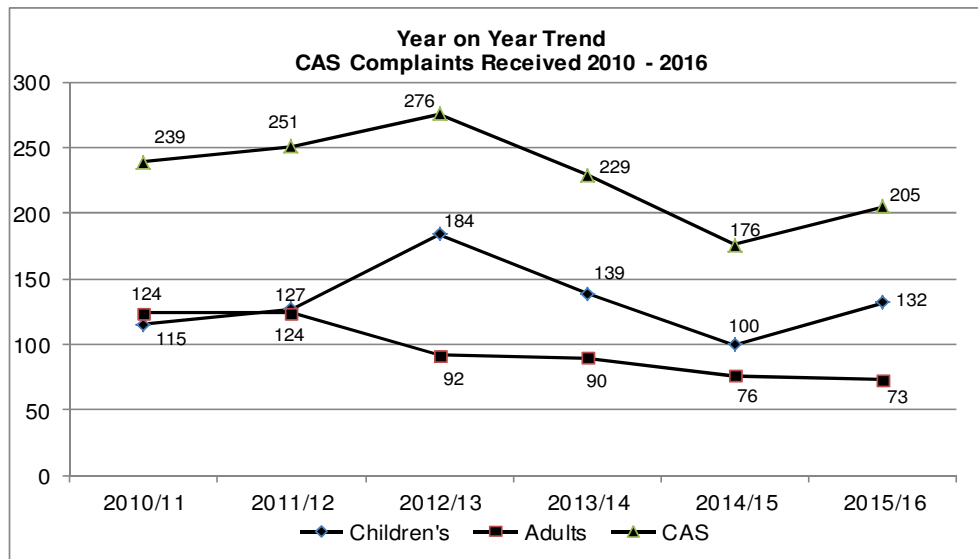
Number of complaints received

In 2015/16, a total of 205 new complaints were received by CAS; 132 related to children's social care services and 73 related to adult social care services. There has been a 16.5% increase in CAS complaints when compared with the number of complaints received in 2014/15 (176). Children's social care complaints have increased by 32% in comparison to the previous reporting year whilst complaints about adult services have decreased by 3.9% over the same period.

Graph 1 below illustrates a trend of a steady overall increase in the number of statutory complaints received over the period 2010-2013, with the increase being mainly attributable to complaints in relation to children's social care services. In 2013/14 the number of complaints decreased in relation to both children's and adults social care services and in 2014/15 the total figure was at its lowest for 6 years.

In 2015/16 the downward trend continued for adult services complaints but there was an increase in complaints relating to children's services, resulting in an increase in numbers in CAS overall. Reasons for this have been considered. A number of front-line services have been reconfigured through change and transformation programmes. Whilst the changes have been embedding, the service has experienced some staffing pressures leading to families having numerous different social workers, as referenced in the Ofsted SIF report.

Graph 1: Year on year trend 2010-2016 – CAS complaints received



Composition of complaints received

Children's social care complaints are managed and resolved in 3 Stages:

- Stage 1 (local resolution) which has a target timescale of up to 20 working days.
- Stage 2 (independent investigation) which has a target timescale of 25-65 working days.
- Stage 3 (Review Panel) which has a total timescale of up to 50 working days.

Of the 132 complaints, 2 were actioned directly at Stage 2 of the statutory complaints process and 6 of the 132 new complaints progressed from Stage 1 to Stage 2. No complaints were progressed to Stage 3. Of the 132 complaints, 129 were concluded at the year-end, with 3 ongoing.

Complaints relating to adult social care must be resolved within 6 months of receipt and within timescales agreed with the complainant (see Part Four for more details). There is one stage to this procedure. If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the Local Authority's (LAs) response, the next step is for them to take the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). Of the 73 complaints in relation to adults social care services, all were concluded by the year end.

In total, 202 of 205 CAS complaints were completed at the year-end (98.5%), compared with 97.2% at the end of 2014/15. This is despite the fact that a number of complaints (17) were received in the latter 2 weeks of the final quarter of the reporting year.

Benchmarking comparisons

Table 1: Complaints relating to children's social care services – North East regional authorities 2015/16

Local Authority	Number of Complaints	Rate of Complaints (per 1000 0-19 Population*)	Total Number of Stage 2 complaints**	Stage 2 Complaints as a % of Stage 1 Complaint Numbers**
A	37	0.82	4	10.8%
B	26	0.85	4	15.4%
C	25	1.11	5	20.0%
D	50	1.12	1	2.0%
Durham	132	1.16	8	6.1%
E	81	1.20	11	13.6%
F	56	1.19	8	14.3%
G	45	1.36	4	8.9%
H	67	1.86	16	23.9%
I	54	2.15	14	25.9%
J	176	2.86	23	13.1%
K	No information	-	No information	-

* ONS Mid-2013 population estimates, Office for National Statistics

** Note: some complaints actioned at Stage 2 in 2015/16 may have been investigated initially at Stage 1 during 2014/15 or 2015/16; and some may have been investigated directly at Stage 2, bypassing Stage 1

Table 1 shows that from the information supplied, in 2015/16 in comparison to regional neighbours:

- Durham had the fifth lowest rate of Stage 1 complaints (1.16) per 1000 population aged 0-19 years. In 2014/15 and 2013/14 Durham had the second lowest rate.
- Durham had the second lowest percentage (6.1%) of Stage 1 complaints progressing to Stage 2, the same result as in 2014/15. Durham has historically had a relatively low percentage of complaints escalating to Stage 2 for a number

of years. Managers and staff try to resolve as many complaints as possible within the Stage 1 (local resolution) part of the process. This may at times mean that resolution is achieved outside target timescale (20 working days), for example due to meetings being held with complainants to reach a satisfactory conclusion; this is balanced against the time and cost involved in the Stage 2 process.

Table 2: Complaints relating to adult social care services – North East regional authorities 2015/16

Local Authority	Total Number of Complaints	Rate of Complaints (per 1000 18+ Population**)
A	11	0.10
Durham	73	0.18
B	15	0.21
C	23	0.21
D	37	0.25
E	47	0.29
F	73	0.32
G	40	0.34
H	62	0.39
I	87	0.39
J	49	0.59
K	No information	-

** ONS Mid-2013 estimates, Office for National Statistics

Table 2 shows that in 2015/16, in comparison with 10 neighbouring authorities who supplied information, Durham had the second lowest rate of complaints (0.18) per 1000 population aged 18 and over. This is an improvement on 2014/15 and 2013/14 when Durham had the fourth and fifth lowest rate respectively.

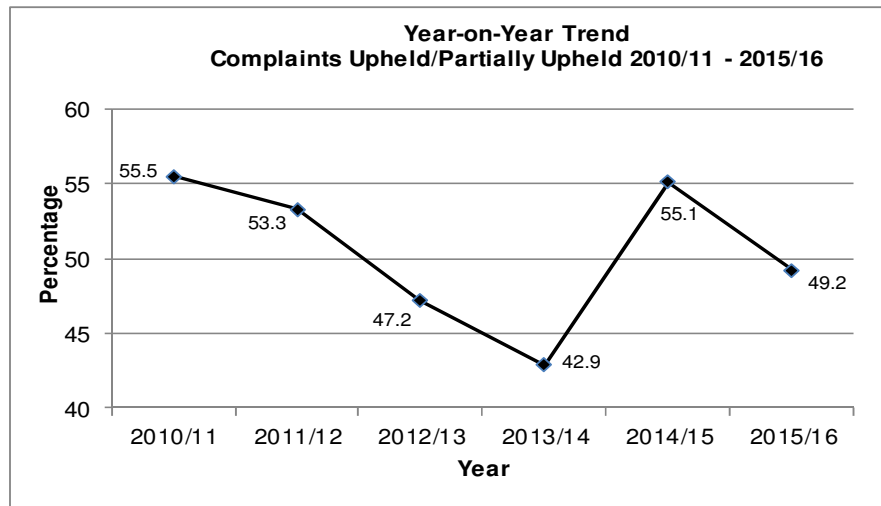
Number of complaints upheld

Once complaints have been investigated, a determination is made based upon the findings as to whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. A complaint determined as 'upheld' means that all elements of the complaint have been found to be substantiated or justified. A complaint 'not upheld' indicates that no element of the complaint has been substantiated or justified. A finding of 'partially upheld' denotes that some elements of the complaint have been found to be substantiated or justified whilst other elements of the complaint have not.

Of the 205 complaints received by CAS, 40 were upheld (19.5%) and 61 were partially upheld. (29.7%) There were 101 that were not upheld (49.3%), and 3 that were not completed by the year end (1.5%).

As Graph 2 overleaf illustrates, in previous years the percentage of complaints upheld and partially upheld across CAS as a whole had been decreasing year-on-year but in 2014/15 this percentage increased by 12.2%. In 2015/16, the percentage of complaints upheld and partially upheld has decreased by 5.9% from the previous year but has not returned to the levels of 2012-2014.

Graph 2: Complaints not upheld in CAS 2010-2016



In children's social care complaints, of the 132 new Stage 1 and 2 complaints, 22 were upheld in full (16.7%) and 37 were partially upheld (28%). There were 70 complaints (53%) that were not upheld; and 3 complaints (2.3%) were still being investigated at the year-end (two of which were at Stage 2, both having been escalated from Stage 1). The percentage of complaints not upheld in children's social care services has varied over the past 3 years but has risen by 5% from 2014/15.

In adult social care complaints, of the 73 complaints received, 18 were upheld (24.7%) and 24 were partially upheld (32.9%). There were 31 complaints that were not upheld (42.4%). The percentage of complaints not upheld in adult social care services has varied over the past 3 years but has risen by 1.6% from 2014/15.

Percentage of complaint acknowledgements within 2 working day timescale

There were 99% of complaints acknowledged within the timescale of 2 working days, which is a 1.3% improvement on the previous year. One complaint about children's services was acknowledged outside the 2 working days. The complaint had been received by a front-line team and receipt was not acknowledged until it was brought to the attention of the Complaints Team.

Complaints completed within timescale

Of the 132 new children's social care complaints, 130 were actioned at Stage 1. Where Stage 1 complaints are not complex, the regulations state that whenever practicably possible, they should be resolved within 10 working days, which can be extended to 20 working days where complaints are complex.

During 2015/16, of the 132 new complaints, 22 were responded at Stage 1 within the 10 working day timescale (16.7%). A further 51 were responded to within 20 working days (38.6%). One of the 132 new complaints was still under investigation at the year-end (0.8%), at Stage 1, outside of the 20 day timescale. The remaining 58 of the 132 new complaints were responded to outside Stage 1 and Stage 2 timescales (43.9%). Of these, 2 were actioned directly at Stage 2.

Of the total 8 Stage 2 complaints (6 of which had been escalated from Stage 1 so were not new complaints), 2 were responded to within the 65 working day timescale, 4 outside this timescale and 2 investigations were ongoing at the year end.

The above information is illustrated in Charts 1 and 2 below:

Chart 1: Stage 1 response timescales

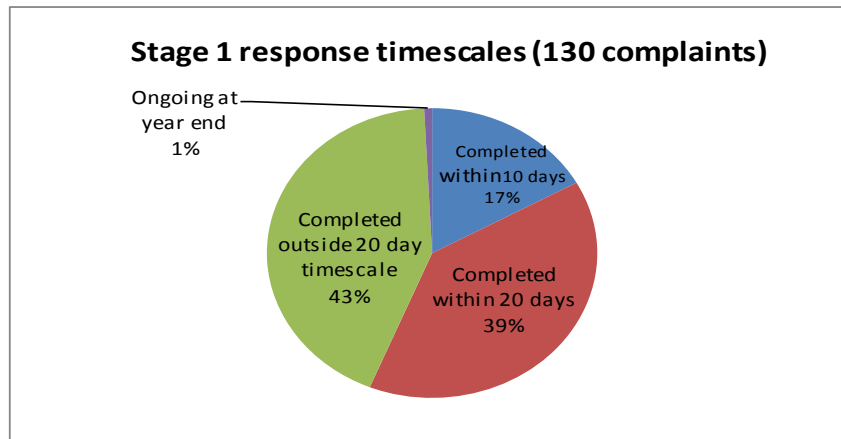
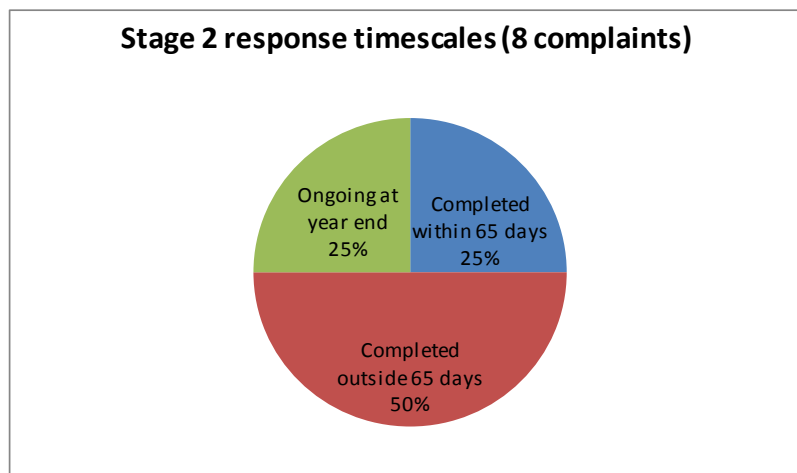


Chart 2: Stage 2 response timescales



For complaints relating to adult social care, all 73 complaints were completed at the year-end and 72 were completed within the individual timescales agreed in the Complaints Resolution Plan (CRP), 98.6% compared with 100% in 2014/15. The 1 complaint completed outside of the negotiated timescales was due to the service issuing a response 1 week after the date given on the CRP, and not updating the complainant that the response would be later than anticipated.

Subject matter of upheld and partially upheld complaints

Of the 101 CAS complaints which were fully or partially upheld during 2015/16, the following 3 categories had the highest occurrence:

1. 'Professional Conduct of Staff'² - 34.7% of complaints included this as an element (28 children's services and 7 adult services).
2. 'Lack of Communication/Information' - 31.7% of complaints contained this as an element (24 children's services and 8 adult services).
3. 'Disputed Decision' – 14.9% of complaints contained this as an element (7 children's services and 8 adult services).

Note: a complaint can have more than one category recorded within it.

These have been the 3 major categories for complaints within CAS as a whole during previous years. For this reason action has been put in place to obtain a more detailed analysis about these 3 category areas, and work is being undertaken to seek a more detailed understanding regarding the frequency of occurrence, for inclusion in next year's report.

Complaints by team and service area

Tables 3 and 4 show the breakdown of complaints by team and Graph 3 provides the breakdown by service area. Further detail is included in Parts Three and Four of this report.

Table 3: Children's complaints by team

Service Area	Number of Stage 1-3 Complaints 2015/16	Number of Stage 1-3 Complaints 2014/15	Direction of Travel from Previous Year	% of Total Complaints 2015/16	% of Total Complaints 2014/15
Child Protection	43	32	↑	32.6%	32%
Assessment & Intervention ^a	38	35	↑	28.8%	35%
Families First ^b	19*	-	-	14.4%	-
Looked After and Permanence	11	8	↑	8.3%	8%
Disability Social Work	9	4	↑	6.8%	4%
First Contact & Emergency Duty Team	4	10	↓	3.0%	10%
Young People's Service	4	0	↑	3.0%	-
Fostering and Adoption	3	7	↓	2.3%	7%
Full Circle	1	0	↑	0.8%	-
Safeguarding Children ^c	0	2	↓	-	2%
Independent Reviewing Officers	0	1	↓	-	1%
Children's Home	0	1	↓	-	1%
Total	132*	100	↑	100%	100%

^aTeams in place since February 2014 following an internal restructure

^bTeams in place since further restructure throughout 2015/16

^cTeams no longer in place

*Includes 2 complaints actioned directly at Stage 2

² The distinction between professional conduct issues and the separate category of 'Staff Attitude' is that the former relates to how the worker conducts themselves according to their professional responsibilities and the regulatory requirements, whilst the latter relates to, for example, allegations of rudeness in communication.

Table 3 shows that in Children’s Services, the service area receiving the greatest number of complaints was the Child Protection service, followed by the Assessment and Intervention service, which was gradually replaced by the Families First service.

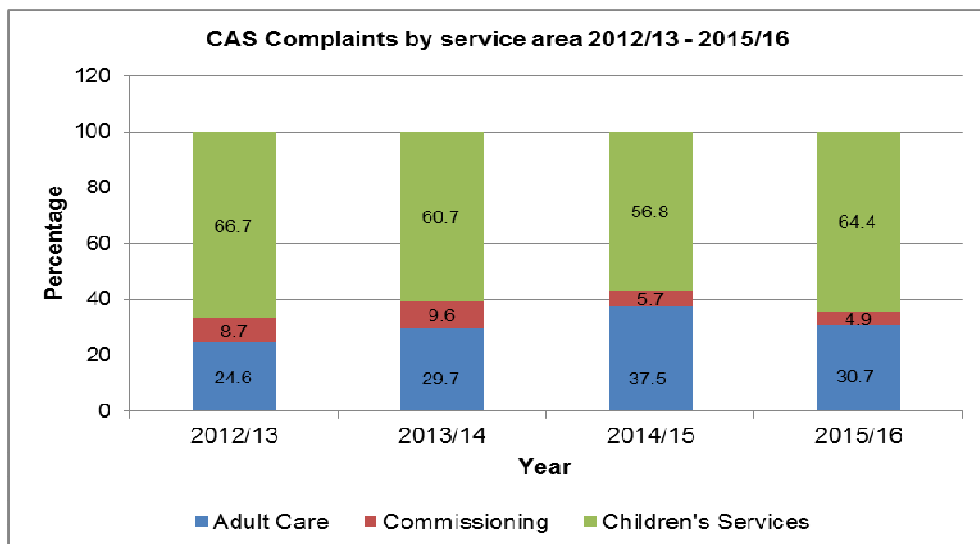
Table 4: Adult complaints by team

Service	Number of Complaints 2015/16	Number of Complaints 2014/15	Direction of Travel from Previous Year	% of Total Complaints 2015/16	% of Total Complaints 2014/15
Older People/ Physical Disabilities/Sensory Impairment	32	41	↓	43.8%	54.0%
Learning Disability/Mental Health/Carers/Substance Misuse	15	17	↓	20.5%	22.3%
Commissioning	10	10	-	13.7%	13.2%
County Durham Care And Support	2	7	↓	2.8%	9.2%
Adult Care - Safeguarding	3	1	↑	4.1%	1.3%
Finance	9	0	↑	12.3%	-
Emergency Duty Team/Social Care Direct	2	0	↑	2.8%	-
Total	73	76	↓	100%	100%

Table 4 shows that in Adult Care, as in previous years, the service area receiving the greatest number of complaints was Older People/ Physical Disabilities and Sensory Impairment followed by the Learning Disability/Mental Health/Substance Misuse service. These service areas have the greatest amount of direct contact with service users and members of the public.

As Graph 3 illustrates, for the past 4 years, Children’s Services have received the highest percentage of complaints relating to CAS. In 2015/16, of the 205 CAS complaints, 64.4 % related to Children’s Services. Adult Care accounted for 30.7% of all complaints in 2015/16, whilst complaints relating to the Commissioning service (regarding commissioned care providers) area accounted for 4.9% in 2015/16.

Graph 3: CAS statutory complaints by service area



Complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

During 2015/16, the LGO contacted the Council in relation to 34 (15 children's and 19 adult) statutory cases that had been referred to them. This represents a 41.7% increase on the 24 cases referred to the LGO in 2014/15. The LGO usually makes an enquiry with the Council to ask what action has been taken, and to request copies of any correspondence. After considering the information from the Council and the complainant, the LGO then issues a Draft Decision Notice, which both parties are given an opportunity to comment upon, before the LGO issues a Final Decision.

The process for complaints about children's social care services has 3 stages prior to referral to the LGO, in contrast to the adult procedure which only has 1 stage. If a complainant is dissatisfied with the LAs response, the next step is for them to take the matter to the LGO.

At the end of 2015/16 in relation to children's and adult social care services, 4 LGO investigations were ongoing (1 children's and 3 adult cases) for which Draft Decisions are awaited. In 3 adult cases, enquiries were received and information is awaited on what action the LGO intends to take. In 2 children's cases the LGO took no action. During 2015/16 the Council received 25 Final Decision letters (12 children's and 13 adult cases), of which 6 complaints were upheld:

- In one case (children's) the LGO agreed with the Council's finding of fault and recommended a financial remedy (£600).
- In one case (children's) the LGO found maladministration with injustice and made 2 recommendations, including a time and trouble payment (£350).
- In one (adult) case the LGO found maladministration without injustice. No recommendations were made to the Council but a care home was required to make some improvements.
- In one case (adult) the LGO found fault without injustice and agreed that the Council's offer to make a time and trouble payment (£350) was adequate remedy.
- In one case (adult) the LGO found maladministration with injustice but closed the case as the Council had remedied the injustice.
- In one case (adult) the LGO found fault with injustice and recommended that the Council should apologise to the complainant for the injustice and write advising of actions taken to avoid a recurrence.

A total of £1300 was paid across CAS for 3 complaint resolutions (2 children's and 1 adult) which is a comparable figure with 2014/15 when a total of £1150 was paid, also across 3 complaints (2 children's and 1 adult).

Complaints by complainant type

In complaints received about children's social care services, 'Parents' constituted the largest cohort of complainants with 93 of the 132 complaints made by parents (70.5%). In complaints about adult social care services, 'Relatives' (non-parent) made 43 of the 73 complaints (58.9%). These have been consistent cohorts over previous reporting years.

Age and gender profiles of complainants

Using information based on the eldest child in a family or the child who the complaint was made on behalf of, 56 of the 132 children's services complaints were made on behalf of girls aged 0-18 years (42.4%), and 75 were made on behalf of boys aged 0-17 years (56.8%). One complaint (0.8%) was made by foster carers about a general finance issue and was not relating to the case of a particular child in their care. In relation to adults' complaints, the majority (65.7%) were made by (or on behalf of) females and 34.3% of complaints were made by (or on behalf of) males.

Ethnicity and diversity

Of the total of 205 complaints made regarding childrens and adults social care services, 98% were made by or on behalf of services users recorded as being White British. Two services users were recorded as being Mixed Race Asian (1%), one as White Other (European) (0.5%); and one complaint (0.5%) did not relate to a particular service user.

Declined complaints

During the year, CAS declined to consider 24 complaints, an increase on the 9 declined complaints in 2014/15. There were 17 declined complaints about children's services and 7 about adult services. Declined complaints are not included in the numbers of actioned complaints. Reasons for declining complaints are detailed in Parts Three and Four of the report.

Remedies and learning outcomes

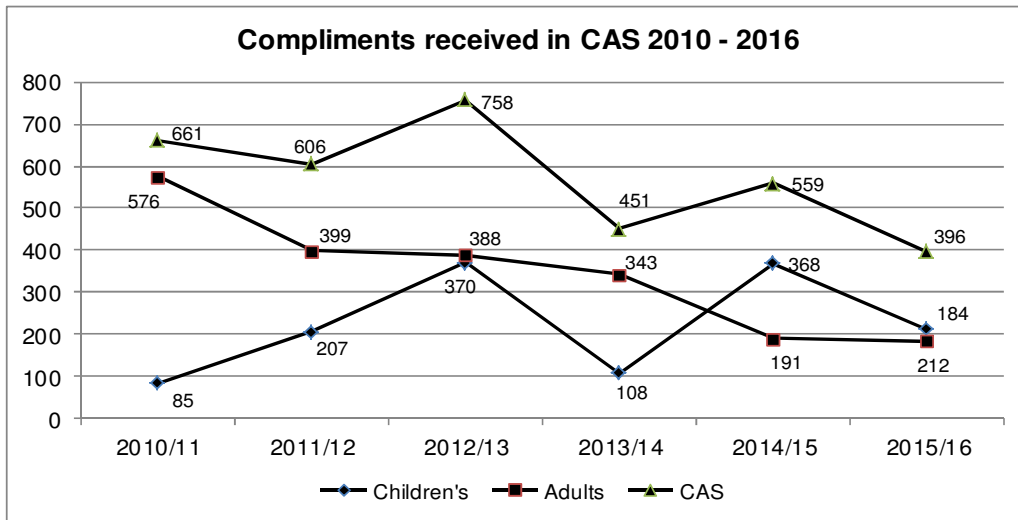
Examples of the remedies used to achieve resolution and the learning and practice developments that have resulted from complaints are provided in Part Five of the report.

Number of compliments received

In the reporting year, a total of 396 compliments were received by CAS; 212 in relation to children's social care and 184 regarding adult social care. This represents a decrease across the service of 29.2% in comparison to the previous year's number of 559. This information is illustrated in Graph 4 overleaf.

Managers are reminded regularly through CAS communications of the importance of capturing and reporting compliments received by staff in the form of letters, emails and cards. The outcome of a review to standardise the definitions of compliments within CAS is being implemented from October 2016.

Graph 4: Compliments received in CAS 2010-2016



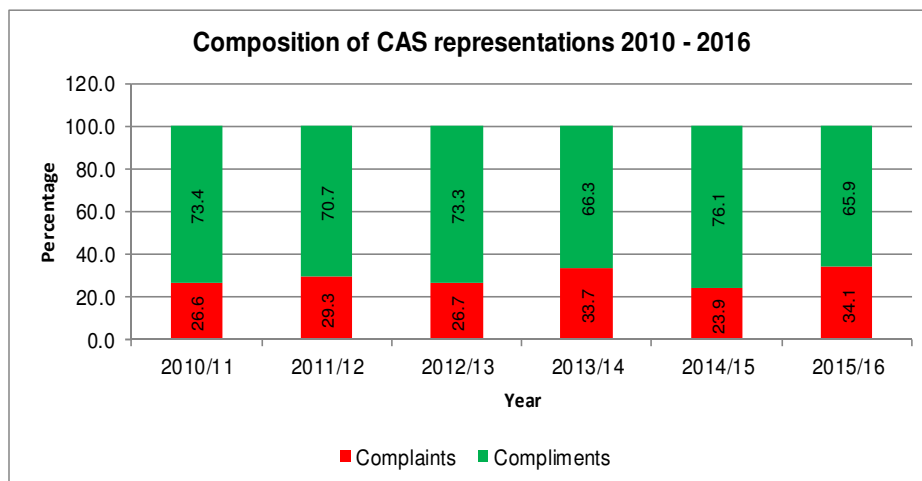
Ratio of compliments to complaints

The ratio of compliments to all complaints received across CAS is 1.9:1. This means that for every complaint received, almost 2 compliments were received. This represents a decrease on the previous year when the ratio of compliments to complaints was 3.2:1.

Consideration has been given to why the number of compliments has fluctuated so significantly over the last 3 years. A number of front-line services have been re-configured through change and transformation programmes. Service user numbers in adult social care are declining as citizens are accessing services through other non-statutory provisions outside of the Council's remit following the introduction of the Care Act 2014. These could be reasons why compliments about adult services have decreased in 2015/16.

Graph 5 shows that between 2010/11 and 2015/16, the percentage of compliments received has consistently outweighed the percentage of complaints received.

Graph 5: Composition of CAS representations 2010-2016



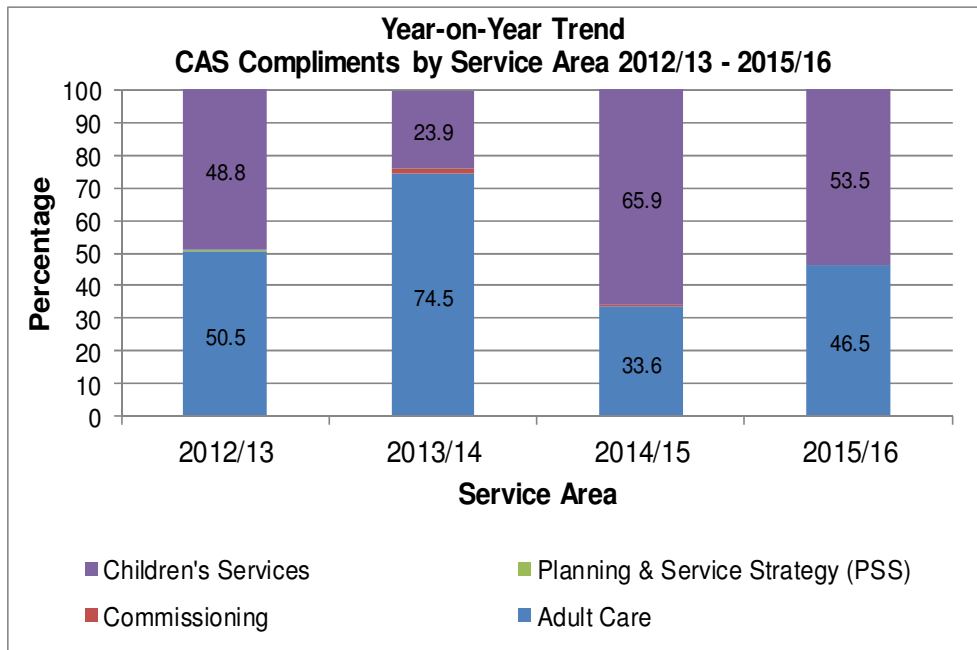
Compliments by team and service area

In Children's Services, in relation to social care provision the Think Family (preventative) service received the highest percentage of compliments in 2015/16, followed by the Council's children's homes (34.9% and 18.9% respectively).

In Adult Care, County Durham Care and Support attracted the greatest proportion of compliments across the service area, receiving 136 (73.9%) compliments. The Older People's/Physical Disabilities and Sensory Support Service area received 41 (22.3%) compliments.

Graph 6 (overleaf) shows that in 2015/16 the percentage of CAS compliments relating to Adult Care increased to 46.5% from 33.6% in 2014/15. Compliments relating to Children's Services decreased to 53.5% from 65.9% during the same period.

Graph 6: CAS compliments by service area



Part Three - Representations relating to children's social care services

Context

This part of the report presents the data for representations relating to children's social care services received during the reporting year 2015/16. It reflects the publication requirements of *The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006*. Locally-agreed reporting information is also provided.

The regulations for children's social care complaints detail that complaints should be managed and resolved in 3 stages:

- Stage 1 (local resolution) which has a target timescale of 10 working days for non-complex complaints, which can be extended up to 20 working days if necessary.
- Stage 2 (independent investigation) which has a target timescale of 25-65 working days.
- Stage 3 (review panel) which has a timescale of up to 50 working days.

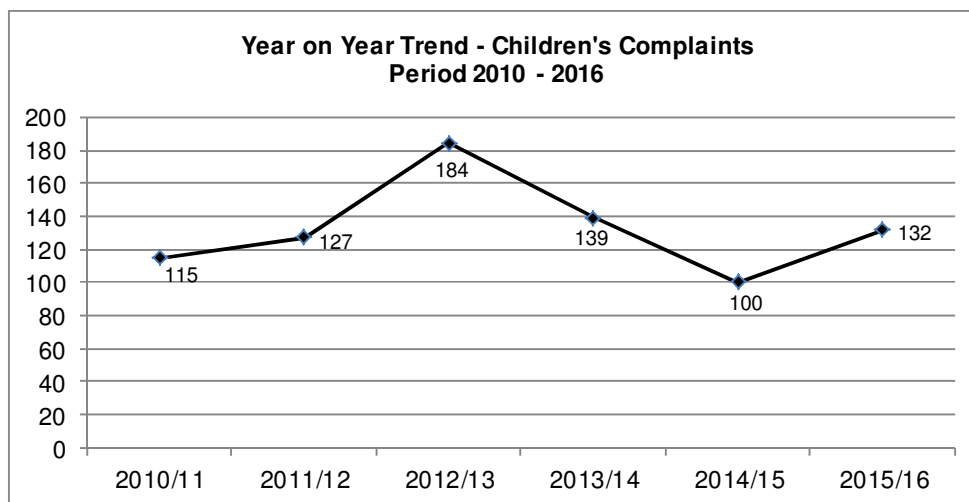
When a complaint is received it is risk-assessed to ensure that there are no safeguarding or other procedural issues that might supersede the complaints procedure. Dates are checked to ensure that it is within the 12 month limitation period (which may be waived in certain circumstances at the discretion of the local authority).

Where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint heard under the regulations, they can refer outstanding issues to the LGO who will determine their course of action dependent on the issues presented within the complaint. This can be done at any point of the process.

Year on year trend 2010-2016

Graph 7 below highlights overall performance from previous annual reports, showing year on year comparisons of the total numbers of complaints received for children's social care.

Graph 7: Complaints trend 2010-2016 – children's social care



Complaints increased between 2010/11 and 2011/12 then peaked in 2012/13. Reasons for this increase were explored with Children's Services managers and with neighbouring local authorities, 4 of whom also reported large increases in the same year. No particular and over-riding factor was identified for the increase in complaints about children's social care services in 2012/13. A decrease of 24.5% was experienced between 2012/13 and 2013/14. In 2014/15 there was a further 8.1% decrease in the total number of children's social care complaints received; 100 compared to 139 complaints received in 2013/2014.

In 2015/16, complaints have risen again to a similar level as 2013/14, with 132 complaints. This represents a 32% increase from 2014/15 numbers. Reasons for this have been considered. A number of front-line services have been reconfigured through change and transformation programmes. Whilst the changes have been embedding, the service has experienced some staffing pressures leading to families having numerous different social workers, as referenced in the Ofsted SIF report.

The service regularly considers ways of ensuring that complaints are resolved as quickly as possible and endeavours to find ways of minimising the number of complaints which are escalated to Stages 2 and 3. Despite this, during 2015/16 a total of 8 complaints were taken to Stage 2 by complainants, which represents a 60% increase from 2014/15 when 5 complaints were actioned at Stage 2.

Through increased and improved publication of statutory complaints processes by CAS, the Council and the media, service users can be more aware of their right to complain and their right to take their complaint further if they remain dissatisfied. This may account for the increased number of complaints overall, and complaints taken to Stage 2 during 2015/16. The Local Government Ombudsman reports that nationally in 2015/16, complaints have increased by 34%, which is reflective of the increased number of complaints relating to children's social care services.

Number of complaints received

In 2015/16, a total of 132 new complaints were received and progressed under the children's social care complaints regulations. This represents an increase of 32% on the 100 complaints received in 2014/15.

Of the 132 new complaints received:

- A total of 130 were actioned at Stage 1 (local resolution).
- Two were taken directly to Stage 2 of the process (independent investigation).
- None were actioned at Stage 3.

This report contains performance information in relation to the 132 new complaints recorded at Stages 1 and 2; of which 129 were concluded by the year end (97.7%).

Complainants asked for 6 of the 130 to be escalated to Stage 2. This report also contains some information about the total 8 complaints investigated at Stage 2.

Complaints received by service area

As shown in Table 7 below, the service area receiving the greatest number of complaints was the Child Protection service followed by the Assessment and Intervention service, which was gradually replaced across the year by the Families

First service. These service areas have the greatest amount of direct contact with service users and members of the public.

Table 7: Number of complaints received by service area 2014/15

Service Area	Number of Stage 1-3 Complaints 2015/16	Number of Stage 1-3 Complaints 2014/15	Direction of Travel from Previous Year	% of Total Complaints 2015/16	% of Total Complaints 2014/15
Child Protection	41	32	↑	31.1%	32%
Assessment & Intervention ^a	40	35	↑	30.3%	35%
Families First ^b	19*	-	-	14.4%	
Looked After and Permanence	11	8	↑	8.3%	8%
Disability Social Work	9	4	↑	6.8%	4%
First Contact & Emergency Duty Team	4	10	↓	3.0%	10%
Young People's Service	4	0	↑	3.0%	-
Fostering and Adoption	3	7	↓	2.3%	7%
Full Circle	1	0	↑	0.8%	-
Safeguarding Children ^c	0	2	↓	-	2%
Independent Reviewing Officers	0	1	↓	-	1%
Children's Home	0	1	↓	-	1%
Total	132*	100	↑	100%	100%

^aTeams in place since February 2014 following an internal restructure

^bTeams in place since further restructure throughout 2015/16

^cTeams no longer in place

*Includes 2 complaints actioned directly at Stage 2

Percentage of complaint acknowledgements in timescale

The statutory timescale for acknowledging a children's social care complaint is 2 working days. Of the 132 new complaints, 131 (99.2%) were acknowledged within the 2 day timescale. The remaining complaint was acknowledged after 13 working days, immediately it came to the attention of the Complaints Team from a front-line team.

Complaints completed within timescale

Of the 132 new children's social care complaints, 130 were actioned at Stage 1. Where Stage 1 complaints are not complex, the regulations state that whenever practicably possible, they should be resolved within 10 working days, which can be extended to 20 working days where complaints are complex. During 2015/16:

- Of the 132 new complaints, 22 (16.7%) were responded to at Stage 1 within the 10 working day timescale (16.7%), Two of these Stage 1 complaints were then escalated to Stage 2, where 1 was responded to within the Stage 2 timescale of up to 65 working days, and 1 was ongoing at the year end, on target to be responded to inside this timescale.
- A further 51 (38.6%) were responded to within 20 working days (38.6%), one of which was then escalated to Stage 2, and was ongoing at the year-end, outside the 65 working day timescale.

- One of the 132 new complaints was still under investigation at the year-end (0.8%), at Stage 1, outside of the 20 day timescale. The complainant has been advised of reasons for the delay and apologies given.
- The remaining 58 of 132 new complaints were responded to outside Stage 1 and Stage 2 timescales (43.9%). Of these, 2 were actioned directly at Stage 2 for which there is a maximum 65 working day timescale. Neither was completed within the 65 days. One was completed in 78 working days and one in 80 working days. Reasons for these delays included the necessity to engage an Advocate during the process, and complainants requesting additional time to review the draft investigation report and provide written comments.
- Three of the 56 Stage 1 complaints which were responded to outside 20 working days were then escalated to Stage 2. At that Stage, one was responded to within 65 working days and two outside this timescale.

As mentioned above, during 2015/16 a total of 8 complaints at Stage 2 were investigated by an Investigating Officer (IO) who is independent of the service area being complained about. In accordance with the regulations, an Independent Person (IP) was also commissioned. This person must not have worked for the LA for at least 3 years. Their role is to oversee the process to ensure it is carried out in a fair and timely manner. The 65 day response timeframe includes the issuing of a LA Adjudication response to the IO and IP reports.

Part of the independent investigating officers' role is to give regular progress updates to the complainants and the LA. As relatively few complaints are taken to Stage 2, those which do reach this stage are particularly complex and often comprise numerous elements.

Of the total 8 Stage 2 complaints, 6 were completed by the end of 2015/16, two of which were completed within 65 working days. The remaining 2 Stage 2 complaints was ongoing at the year-end, 1 on target to be completed within timescale and 1 outside timescale. The IO has kept the complainant updated and given reasons why timescale will not be met.

As mentioned above, of the 130 complaints which were actioned initially or wholly at Stage 1, 22 were responded to within 10 working days, with a further 51 being responded to within 20 working days. Therefore in total, 73 of the 130 Stage 1 complaints were responded to within the statutory timescale of up to 20 working days (56.2%). One Stage 1 investigation was ongoing at the year-end (0.7%), outside timescale, therefore 56 of the 130 Stage 1 complaints took longer than 20 working days to complete (43.1%). Additionally the 2 direct Stage 2 complaints were resolved outside the 65 working day timeframe, so in total 58 of the total 132 new complaints were completed outside statutory timescales (43.9%).

The service continues to strive to improve on performance against the target response timeframes and has introduced a more robust escalation process to improve this, ensuring senior managers are fully informed when there is a potential risk of timescales being exceeded. This process continues to be monitored and reviewed as necessary.

Number of complaints upheld

Of the 132 new Stage 1 and 2 complaints, 22 were upheld in full (16.7%) and 37 were partially upheld (28%). There were 70 complaints (53%) that were not upheld. One of the new complaints (0.8%) was still being investigated at the year-end. Two complaints (1.5%) which moved from Stage 1 to Stage 2 were also still ongoing at the year end, therefore their final outcome (at Stage 2) is to be confirmed.

Table 5 below shows the breakdown of children's social care complaints by teams. In 2014/15, 20% of complaints were upheld, 32% were partially upheld and 48% were not upheld. The percentage of complaints not upheld in children's social care has varied over the last 3 years but has risen by 5% from 2014/15.

Table 5: Outcome of complaints for children's social care services 2015/16

Outcome of Complaints 2015/16 Children's Social Care					
Service Area	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Ongoing	Total
Child Protection	14**	6*	20	1	41
Assessment & Intervention ^{1,3}	6	15**	19**	0	40
Families First ²	1	5	11	2**	19
Looked After and Permanence	0	6	5	0	11
Disability Social Work	0	3	6**	0	9
First Contact & Emergency Duty Team	0	0	4	0	4
Young People's Service	0	1	3*	0	4
Fostering and Adoption	1	1	1	0	3
Full Circle	0	0	1	0	1
Total	22	37	70	3	132

¹Teams in place since February 2014 following an internal restructure

²Teams in place since further restructure throughout 2015/16

³Teams no longer in place

*Includes complaint actioned directly at Stage 2

**Includes complaints escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2 and resolved at Stage 2

Categories of upheld and partially upheld complaints

As detailed in Table 6, of the 59 complaints which were fully or partially upheld 28 included 'Professional Conduct of Staff' (57.1%). Complaints in this category usually alleged that social workers had failed to follow procedures, had misled families, or had given preferential treatment to one parent over another.

(The distinction between professional conduct issues and the separate category of 'Staff Attitude' is that the former relates to how the worker conducts themselves according to their professional responsibilities and the regulatory requirements whilst the latter relates to, for example, allegations of rudeness in communication.)

'Lack of Communication/Information' was included in 24 of the 59 upheld/partially upheld complaints (40.7%). Examples include not being able to contact social workers and not receiving copies of children's records such as contact sheets or assessment reports.

There were 11 upheld/partially upheld complaints categorised as being in relation to 'Lack of Service – Contact/Visits' (18.6%) and a further 11 regarding 'Speed of Service' (18.6%). Such complaints tended to be made where parents felt that they or their children had not been visited often or quickly enough by social workers. These 2

categories have not featured within the 'top 3' in previous years but do reflect the reasons attributed to the overall increase in complaints relating to children's social care services.

'Professional Conduct of Staff' and 'Lack of Communication/Information' have been 2 of the 3 major categories of complaints in relation to children's social care services in preceding years. For this reason action is being taken to obtain a more detailed analysis of these category areas, for improved analysis of complaints received in 2016/17.

Table 6: Categories of upheld/partially upheld complaints 2015/16

Complaint Category / Issue	Number of Complaints
Professional Conduct of Staff	28
Lack of Service – Communications/Information	24
Lack of Service – Contact/Visits	11
Speed of Service	11
Disputed Decision	7
Provision of Service - Assessment	6
Staff Attitude	4
Application of Service Guidance/Procedures	3
Confidentiality	2
Lack of Service – Denied Service	2
Quality of Service - Transport	2
Safeguarding	2
Discrimination	1
Provision of Services – Placement Provision	1
Standard of Care	1
Total	105*

**Note: a complaint can have more than one category recorded within it*

Complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

During 2015/16, the LGO contacted the Council in relation to 15 children's social care cases that had been referred to them. The LGO usually asks the Council what action has been taken and requests copies of any correspondence. The LGO then issues a Draft Decision Notice, which the Council and complainant are invited to comment upon, before the LGO issues a Final Decision.

During 2015/16, of the 15 children's social care cases received by the LGO, 13 were progressed to investigation. Final Decision letters were received for 12 of the 13 cases:

- In 5 cases the LGO took no further action as the complaints were outside their jurisdiction.
- In 3 cases the LGO stated that the Council had not been at fault.
- The LGO closed one case as unable to give the complainant her desired outcome.
- The LGO said one case was premature as it had not been fully investigated by the Council.
- In one case the LGO agreed with the Council's finding of fault and recommended a financial remedy (£600).
- In one case the LGO found maladministration with injustice and made 2 recommendations, including a time and trouble payment (£350).

In the other case, the LGO's investigation of the complaint was still ongoing at the year-end. The complaint had been through Stage 2 of the process and the complainant then made a request for Early Referral to the LGO (by-passing a Stage 3 Review Panel).

A total of £950 was paid relating to 2 children's cases which is a comparable figure with 2014/15 when a total of £1000 was paid, also across 2 complaints. It should be noted that compensatory redress was only considered (and agreed in line with Scheme of Delegation) where there was strong evidence of shortcomings.

Complaints by complainant type

As has been the trend over previous reporting years, 'Parents' constituted the highest number of complainants, making 93 of the 132 complaints (70.5%). This is an increase on the 2014/15 figure of 69% complaints made by Parents. 'Other relatives' (in most cases, grandparents) brought 25 complaints (18.9%) compared with 18% in 2014/15. 'Carers' made 6 complaints (4.6%) followed by 'Advocates'* who made 4 complaints (3.0%). Two complaints (1.5%) were made by an 'Other' person (in 1 case, a teacher) in relation to a child's case). The other 2 cases (1.5%) were made by 'Clients' (1 child and 1 young person). In 2014/15, 9% of complaints were made by Carers, 3% by Advocates, 1% by Other persons and none by Clients.

**DCC has a contract with the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) to provide free advocacy services to children and young people who are looked after. Additionally, 3 of the parent/relative/carer complaints were made through Advocates from the Citizens Advice Bureau.*

Age and gender profiles of complainants

Complaints made about services to children or young people may be submitted on behalf of one or more children in the family. If a complaint is made on behalf of more than one child, it is logged on the record of the eldest child. Using this information, 56 of the 132 complaints were made on behalf of girls aged 0-18 years (42.4%), and 75 (56.8%) were made on behalf of boys aged 0-17 years. One complaint (0.8%) was made by foster carers about a general finance issue and was not relating to the case of a particular child in their care.

Ethnicity and diversity

In 130 of the 132 complaints, the eldest child (or the child who the complaint was made on behalf of) was White British (98.5%); in 1 case (0.75%) the child was recorded as being Mixed Race Asian; and 1 case (0.75%) did not relate to a particular child.

Declined complaints

During the reporting year, 17 complaints were declined. Three cases were declined as the issues of complaint had already been considered as part of court proceedings. Three cases were declined due to there being concurrent criminal proceedings against the complainants. In 3 cases complaints were declined due to the children's case being in care proceedings so the issues needed to be raised within the court process. Three complaints were about matters that occurred outside the 1 year timescale. In 2 cases the complainants did not have Parental Responsibility so the complaint matters could not be considered. One complaint was declined as the case

was subject to private law proceedings. One complaint was declined due to the complainants stating their intention to take the Council to court. The other complaint was declined on the basis that it was based on opinion for which no evidence could be provided by the complainant; therefore it was not possible to undertake an investigation. Declined complaints are *not* included in the total figure of 132 complaints received.

Number of compliments received

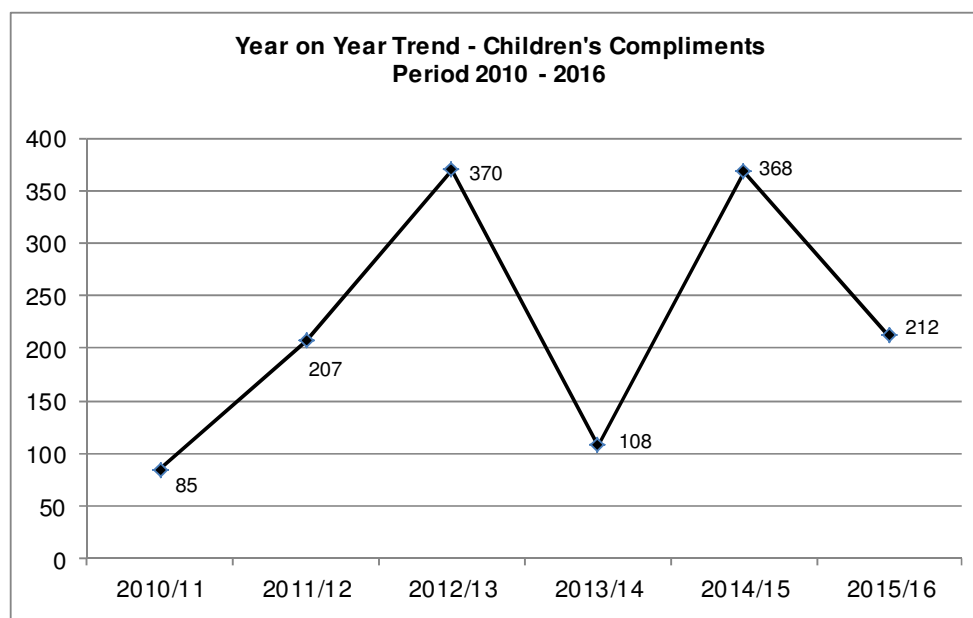
In the reporting year, the number of recorded compliments fell to 212. This represents a decrease of 42.4% from 2014/15 to 2015/16.

Ratio of compliments to complaints

The ratio of compliments to complaints received was 1.6:1. In 2014/15 the ratio was 3.5:1. In 2013/14 the ratio was 0.8:1. In 2012/13 it was 2.0:1 and in 2011/12 it was 1.6:1.

Consideration has been given to why the number of compliments has fluctuated so significantly over the last 3 years. A number of front-line services have been re-configured through change and transformation programmes. Whilst the changes have been embedding, there have been an increased number of complaints, and a decreased number of compliments.

Graph 8: Compliments year on year trend 2010-2016



Compliments received by service area

In 2015/16, the service which received the most compliments was Think Family, a positive intervention service, followed by the Children's Homes throughout the County.

Table 8: Number of compliments received by service area 2014/15

Service Area	Number of Compliments 2015/16	Number of Compliments 2014/15	Direction of Travel from Previous Year	% of Total Compliments 2015/16	% of Total Compliments 2014/15
Aycliffe Secure Service	4	90	↓	1.9%	24.5%
Assessment and Intervention ¹	6	24	↓	2.8%	6.5%
Children's Homes	40	22	↑	18.9%	6.0%
Child Protection	4	10	↓	1.9%	2.7%
Community Support Team	15	43	↓	7.1%	11.7%
Disability Social Work	16	7	↑	7.5%	1.9%
Family Pathfinder	5	91	↓	2.3%	24.7%
Families First ²	8	-	↑	3.8%	
Fostering and Adoption	13	8	↑	6.1%	2.2%
Full Circle	4	3	↑	1.9%	0.8%
Initial Response/Emergency Duty	0	7	↓	-	1.9%
Looked After & Permanence	19	23	↓	9.0%	6.3%
Think Family	74	35	↑	34.9%	9.5%
Young People's Service	4	0	↑	1.9%	
4Real ³	-	5	↓	-	1.3%
Total	212	368	↓	100%	100%

¹ Teams in place since February 2014 following an internal restructure

² Teams in place since further restructure throughout 2015/16

³ Teams no longer in place

Key areas highlighted within compliments received

Compliments highlight that service users have appreciated the following:

- Feeling respected, listened to and supported.
- Having decisions explained to them.
- Being kept informed.
- Staff explaining issues in a way the client understood.
- Professionalism, care and commitment of staff.
- Being able to contact staff easily.

Examples of compliments received

Some examples of compliments received include:

- *“(Staff member) is an excellent example of what community support means. She is so understanding and always there to give you the best possible advice. I trust her as she knows what she is talking about and she understands what you are going through.”*

Community Support Team

- *“Thank you for all of the work you have done with (service user). I am really grateful for the support and professionalism you brought to the situation. Thank you!!!”*

Assessment & Intervention Crook

- *“(Staff member) has been a pillar of strength and support. She has, on more occasions than thought possible, gone over and above the call of duty in her role, and she has had very little thanks. We believe that she should be commended not to mention compensated for the work that she has had to do as without her (service user) would still be awaiting his first operation, we would not have any of the correct paperwork and meetings would not have been achieved or planned. We cannot speak highly enough about her. The same goes for (staff member) who has been very pro-active in trying to get these issues sorted out.”*

Fostering and IRO Services

- *“..... Your professionalism, support and guidance meant the world to us. We will always hold fond memories of the last 18 months.”*

Looked After and Permanence Service

- *“(Staff member)is an excellent example of what community support means. She so understanding and always tries to give you the best possible advice. I trust her as she knows what she is talking about and she understands what you’re going through.”*

Community Support Team

Part Four - Representations relating to adult social care services

Context

This part of the report presents the data for representations regarding adult social care received during the year 2015/16 and reflects the statutory requirements of *The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009*. The reporting format also includes locally-agreed reporting information over and above that required by the Regulations.

The regulations for adult social care complaints promoted new ways of managing and seeking to resolve complaints. There are no fixed timescales, with the exception of 3 working days to acknowledge the complaint, although the local performance target has been set at 2 working days (to align with the children's regulations) and a 6 month completion target. Under the regulations, a complaint made verbally, if capable of being resolved within 1 working day, does not constitute a complaint for recording purposes.

When a complaint is received, it is risk-assessed to ensure that there are no safeguarding or other procedural issues that might supersede the complaints procedure and that it is within the 12 month limitation period. Consent must be obtained to confirm that someone making a complaint on another's behalf has been given the authority to do so.

Once the above determinations have been made, complainants are invited to be involved in planning how their complaint is to be addressed, within what timescale and their expectations on the desired outcome. From this a Complaints Resolution Plan (CRP) letter is produced.

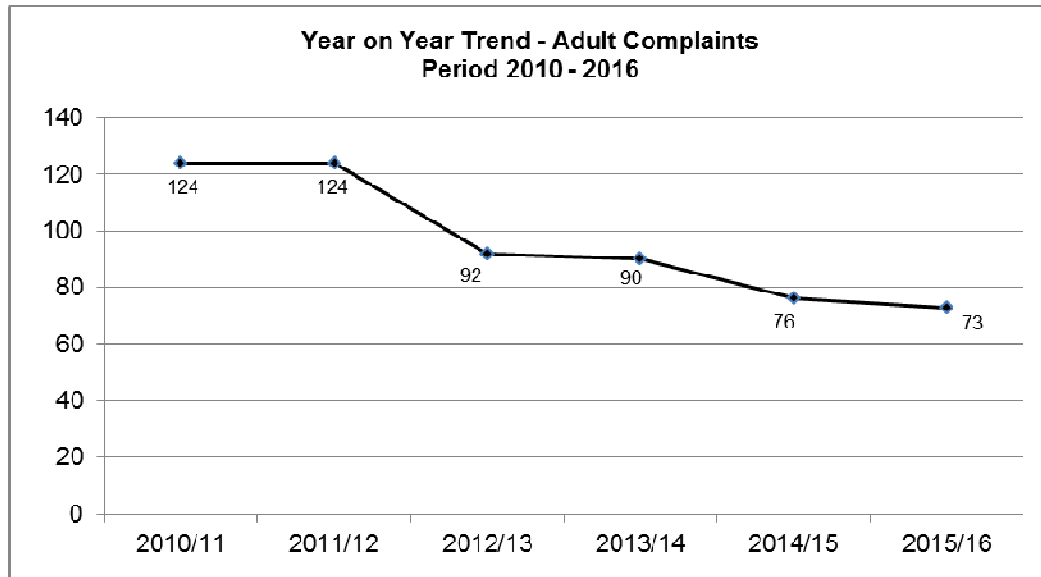
Different resolution methods are utilised depending on the issues being addressed and individual preferences and circumstances.

Where all proportionate resolution mechanisms have been exhausted and if the complaint remains unresolved, the complainant can refer outstanding issues to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Year on year trend 2010-2016

Graph 9 overleaf shows year on year comparison of the numbers of complaints received for adult social care. The graph shows that in 2015/16 there was a 3.9% decrease in the number of complaints received; 73 compared to 76 complaints received in 2014/15, continuing the downward trend of the previous reporting years apart from a spike which occurred between 2010/11 and 2011/12. (This had coincided with changes to charging policies leading to a greater number of complaints being made.) The 73 complaints received in 2015/16 reflect the second lowest number in the 6 years since 2010/11 and reflects the ongoing work to improve service delivery, including learning from previous complaints so that mistakes are not repeated.

Graph 9: Complaints trend 2010-2016 – adult social care



Number of complaints received

In 2015/16, a total of 73 complaints were received and progressed through the statutory adult social care complaints procedure. This represents a decrease of 3.9% on the 76 complaints received in 2014/15. Of the 73 complaints received, all were completed by the end of the reporting year.

Complaints received by service area

As in previous years, the service receiving the greatest number of complaints was Older People/ Physical Disabilities/ Sensory Impairment, followed by the Learning Disabilities/Mental Health/ Substance Misuse service area.

Table 11: Number of complaints received by service area 2015/16

Service	Number of Complaints 2015/16	Number of Complaints 2014/15	Direction of Travel from Previous Year	% of Total Complaints 2015/16	% of Total Complaints 2014/15
Older People/ Physical Disabilities/Sensory Impairment	32	41	↓	43.8%	54.0%
Learning Disability/Mental Health/Carers/Substance Misuse	15	17	↓	20.6%	22.3%
Commissioning	10	10	-	13.8%	13.2%
County Durham Care And Support	2	7	↓	2.7%	9.2%
Adult Care - Safeguarding	3	1	↑	4.1%	1.3%
Finance	9	0	↑	12.3%	-
Emergency Duty Team/Social Care Direct	2	0	↑	2.7%	-
Total	73	76	↓	100%	100%

Percentage of complaint acknowledgements in timescale

In accordance with the regulations the statutory timescale for acknowledging an adult social care complaint is 3 working days; however the CAS performance target is 2 working days. Of the 73 complaints received, all (100%) were acknowledged within the 2 day timescale.

Complaints completed within timescale

Complaints Resolution Plans (CRPs) were completed in all of the 73 complaints received in the year. The CRPs included timescales for response and are calculated based upon the potential complexity of the case. Of the 73 complaints received, all were completed at the end of the reporting year and 72 of these were completed within the agreed timescale of the CRP (98.6%).

Number of complaints upheld

Of the 73 complaints received, 18 were upheld in full (24.7%) and 24 were partially upheld (32.9%). There were 31 complaints that were not upheld (42.4%). The percentage of complaints not upheld in adult social care has varied over the last 3 years but has risen by 1.6% from 2014/15.

Table 9: Outcome of complaints 2015/16

Service Area	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Ongoing	Total
Older People/ Physical Disability & Sensory Impairment	6	10	16	0	32
Learning Disability/ Mental Health / Substance Misuse	1	7	7	0	15
Adult Care - Safeguarding	3	0	0	0	3
Commissioning	5	4	1	0	10
County Durham Care And Support	0	2	0	0	2
Finance*	2	1	6	0	9
Emergency Duty Team/Social Care Direct	1	0	1	0	2
Total	18	24	31	0	73

**Finance is no longer part of CAS but the complaints were regarding statutory services*

Categories of upheld and partially upheld complaints

As detailed in Table 10 (overleaf), of the 42 complaints which were fully or partially upheld, 8 contained a category of 'Lack of Communication/Information' (19.0%). Complaints in this category usually detailed a failure in providing comprehensive and comprehensible information or not following up with information and updates when promised.

There were also 8 upheld/partially upheld complaints related to the category of 'Disputed Decision' (19.0%). An example of this is where following assessment, a client did not meet the criteria to receive a service and this was challenged.

The next highest category of upheld/partially upheld complaints was 'Professional Conduct of Staff' with 7 complaints containing this as an element (16.7%). Such

complaints tended to be allied to disputed decisions and involved allegations that assessments had not been thoroughly conducted.

(The distinction between professional conduct issues and the category of ‘Staff Attitude’ is that the former relates to how the worker conducts themselves according to their professional responsibilities and the regulatory requirements whilst the latter relates to, for example, allegations of rudeness in communication.)

These have been the three major categories of complaints in preceding years in relation to adult social care services. For this reason action has been taken to obtain a more detailed analysis of these category areas, for improved analysis of complaints received in 2016/17.

To try to mitigate against further complaints, particularly in the ‘top 3 categories’ in Adult Care key messages and learning from complaints are communicated to managers and staff through briefing notes which are published on the intranet. Although complaints continue to be received regarding these themes, total complaints regarding Adult Care services have decreased slightly during 2015/16.

Table 10: Categories of upheld and partially upheld complaints received 2015/16

Complaint Category / Issue	Number of Complaints
Lack Of Service - Communications/Information	8
Disputed Decision	8
Professional Conduct Of Staff	7
Standard of Care	5
Quality Of Service - Personal Care	4
Application Of Service Guidance/Procedures	3
Confidentiality	3
Finance - Assessment	3
Lack Of Service - Denied Service	3
Quality Of Service - Personal Financial Issues	3
Quality Of Service - Work Of Other Agencies	3
Finance - Charging Policy	2
Provision of Service – Placement Provision	2
Quality Of Service - Missed/Late Dom Care Calls	2
Safeguarding	2
Speed of Service	2
Staff Attitude	2
Finance - Direct Payment	1
Lack Of Service – Change to Clients Service	1
Lack of Service – Contact/Visits	1
Provision Of Service - Assessment	1
Quality of Service - Laundry	1
Total	67*

**A complaint can have more than one category recorded within it*

Complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

During 2015/16, the LGO contacted the Council in relation to 19 adult social care cases that had been referred to them. The LGO usually asks the Council what action has been taken and requests copies of any correspondence. The LGO then issues a Draft Decision Notice, which the Council and complainant are invited to comment upon, before the LGO issues a Final Decision.

During 2015/16 in relation to adult social care complaints the Council received 6 enquires and 13 Final Decision letters. Of these:

- In 5 cases, the LGO found no evidence of fault by the Council.
- In one case, the LGO closed the case on the basis that a care home should investigate the matter first.
- In one case the complainant failed to provide enough information to the LGO who therefore closed the complaint.
- The LGO decided to close one case as 'premature' as it had not been through the Council's complaints procedure. Upon investigation it was not upheld.
- The LGO closed one case on the grounds that it was out of timescale.
- In one case the LGO found maladministration without injustice. No recommendations were made to the Council but a care home was required to make some improvements.
- In one case the LGO found fault without injustice and agreed that the Council's offer to make a time and trouble payment (£350) was adequate remedy.
- In one case the LGO found maladministration with injustice but closed the case as the Council had remedied the injustice.
- In one case the LGO found fault with injustice and recommended that the Council should apologise to the complainant for the injustice and within 3 months write advising of actions taken to avoid a recurrence.

A total of £350 was paid relating to 1 adult case in comparison with 2014/15 when a total of £150 was paid to 1 adult complainant. It should be noted that compensatory redress was only considered (and agreed in line with Scheme of Delegation) where there was strong evidence of shortcomings.

Of the 6 enquiries, the LGO decided to investigate 3 for which Draft Decisions are awaited in relation to:

- One complaint regarding the communication process during and after a safeguarding enquiry;
- One complaint regarding the decision making process when moving a service user from one care home to another;
- One complaint regarding a disagreement with assessment and finance decisions.

For the remaining 3 enquiries, information is awaited on what action the LGO intends to take.

Complaints by complainant type

'Relatives' (non-parent) constituted the highest category of complainant at 43 complaints (60%). This is consistent with trends in previous years. Twelve 'Clients' who raised complaints on their own behalf (16.4%); this reflects a decrease when compared to 2014/15 (18.4%). The number of 'Parents' making a complaint relating to their adult child was 9 which equates to 12.3%, a decrease from the 2014/15 figure of 19.7%. 'Advocates' made 6 complaints (8.2%) compared with 10.5% in 2014/15. The remaining 3 complaints (4.1%) were made by 'Other' persons for example friends. The overall conclusion is that fewer service users were complaining directly, with

more complaints being received from representatives on their behalf, in particular family members such as their adult children, spouses and siblings.

Age and gender profiles of complainants

Almost two-thirds (65.7%) of complaints were made by on or behalf of females (17.8% aged 18-64 years, 24.7% aged 65-84 years and 23.3% aged 85+ years). Males accounted for 34.3% of complainants (17.8% aged 18-64 years, 9.6% aged 65-84 years and 6.8% aged 85+ years). This data represents an increase in complaints from females (compared to 2014/15 when 55.3% were made in relation to female service users) and particularly an increase for females aged 85+ whose complaints comprised 13.2% of the total in 2014/15.

Ethnicity and diversity

Complaints were made by or on behalf of service users, 97.2% of whom were White British, 1.4% White Other (European) and 1.4% Mixed Race Asian.

Declined complaints

During the year, 7 complaints were declined. Three complaints were declined on the basis that they were outside the 1 year timeframe. Two complaints were declined as they related directly to care homes, which must be given an opportunity to investigate in the first instance. One complaint was declined as it concerned a report of court and should have been raised through a legal process. One complaint was declined as the complainant did not have the service user's authorisation to make the complaint.

Declined complaints are *not* included in the figure total of 73 complaints received.

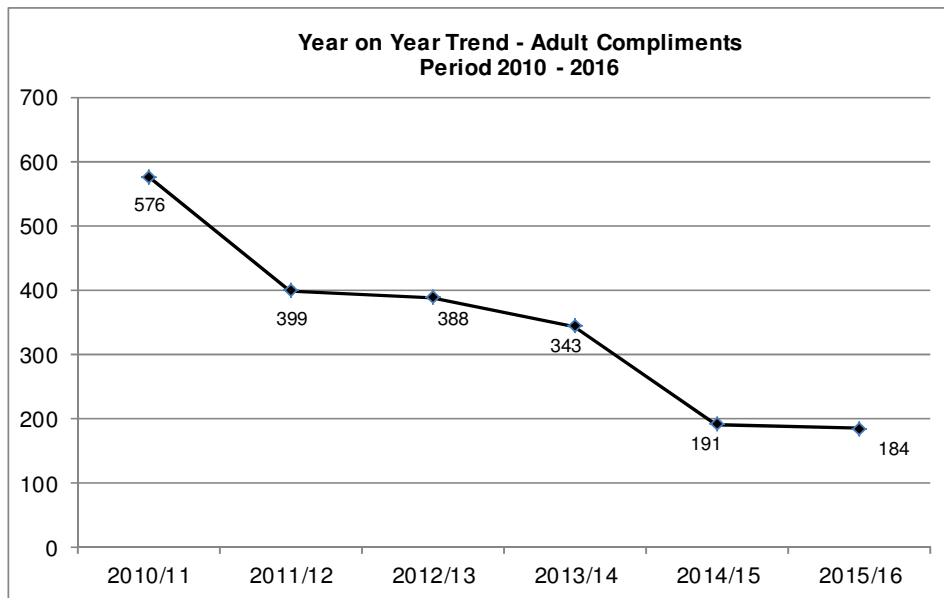
Number of compliments received

In the reporting year, a total of 184 compliments were received within the Adult Care service. This represents a slight decrease of 3.7% from the 191 received during 2014/15. Graph 10 shows that following a peak in 2010/11, the number of compliments relating to adult's services has fallen year on year, with 2015/16 being the lowest since 2007/08.

Ratio of compliments to complaints

The ratio of compliments to complaints in 2015/16 was 2.5:1, the same ratio as in 2014/15. In 2013/14 it was 3.8:1 and in 2012/13 it was and 4.2:1.

Graph 10: Year on year trend compliments – 2007-2016



Compliments by service area

Table 12: Total number of compliments by service area 2015/16

Service	Total Compliments 2015/16	Total Compliments 2014/15	Direction of Travel from Previous Year	% of Total Compliments 2015/16
Older People/ Physical Disabilities/ Sensory Impairment	41	58	↓	22.3%
Learning Disability/Mental Health/ Carers/Substance Misuse	6	4	↑	3.3%
County Durham Care and Support	136	126	↑	73.9%
Commissioning	0	3	↓	-
Social Care Direct	1	0	↑	0.5%
Total	184	191	↓	100.0%

County Durham Care and Support (CDCS), the in-house provider received 136 of the total number of compliments (73.9%). The Older People's/ Physical Disabilities/ Sensory Support service area received 41 compliments (22.3%). These percentages reflect those in 2014/15 (65.9% and 30.4% respectively).

Key areas highlighted within compliments received

Compliments highlight that service users have appreciated:

- Being treated with dignity by staff providing care
- Being helped to regain their independence and confidence with the support of carers
- Being provided with aids and equipment that assists with their daily living

- Staff's sensitivity and support when dealing with family bereavement
- Being given information in a way that is easy to understand
- The quick responses they have received when requesting assistance.

Examples of compliments received

Some examples of compliments received include:

- *"(Staff member) was very focused and listened to what I was saying and showed concern. She was also very empathetic and very considerate. She was able to give me very valuable information. I can only describe the service that I have been provided with as wonderful. I am extremely grateful and would like to thank you for such an excellent service."*

Occupational Therapy Service

- *"I would like to inform you of the kind and considerate support my parents, I and my sister have received over the past 5 months from (staff member). She has supported our parents from having to give up their own home and to relocate into a nursing home. The transition has been understandably very emotional but she has always been on the other end of the phone offering support and advice on many occasions. She has always maintained her professionalism in a supportive reliable manner. We are very grateful to have had her assigned to our parents."*

Sedgefield Locality Team

- *"I would like to record my formal thanks to (staff member) for their prompt, sensitive and practical assistance that they have provided. The response has been exemplary ensuring safety, self-dignity and independence are promoted and respected. Please forward my thanks to the team."*

Intermediate Care Plus

- *"Thank you so very much for all your help and understanding of an old lady of 88 years helping me to find my way back to my own home (for I was lost). Your kindness and way of doing things I cannot find the words to express. All you ladies were just wonderful. (I will miss you all). Keep up your good work."*

Reablement Easington

- *"A very special thank you, just to let you know your kindness means more than words could ever show. And with sincere appreciation this comes to say to you, your thoughtful, caring ways bring such happiness too. Thank you all very much indeed for your care it was very much appreciated."*

Reablement Easington

Part Five - Remedies and learning outcomes 2015/16

Remedies in children's and adult complaints

Providing remedies to issues that have arisen in a complaint are essential if trust and confidence are to be restored between the local authority and its service users. Even where complaints are not upheld, full explanations, further information and often apologies are given. Remedies can be varied and examples of some provided in this reporting year are as follows:

Children's complaints:

- Full explanations were given or repeated in terms that the complainant was able to understand more clearly.
- Social Workers were changed in some cases, even where complaints were not upheld, in order to improve working relationships with parents.
- Addendums were added to reports to ensure that discrepancies were recorded in line with parent's wishes.
- The Social Resource Centre (which provides volunteer drivers to take children to and from contact sessions) put alternative transport in place after a complaint was received.
- Personalised contact arrangements were put in place to ensure a social worker and service user could maintain good communications.

Adult complaints:

- A re-assessment was carried out and a care package was changed as a result.
- A safeguarding and practice development officer made a follow-up visit with a care home to ensure improvements had been carried out following a safeguarding investigation.
- An alternative domiciliary care provider was quickly contacted in a case where the previous provider had cancelled their provision at late notice.

For both adults and children's services complaints, meetings with managers have continued to be an effective method in satisfactorily concluding complaints. Complainants appreciate the time that managers give to addressing their concerns in an open and informal way.

Compensatory payments were made where the failures constituted maladministration and/or injustice as defined by the Local Government Ombudsman. These are detailed within the Local Government Ombudsman sections of the report. A total of £1300 was paid across CAS for 3 complaints (2 children's' and 1 adults) which is a comparable figure with 2014/15 when a total of £1150 was paid, also across 3 complaints (2 children's and 1 adults). It should be noted that compensatory redress was only

considered (and agreed in line with Scheme of Delegation) where there was strong evidence of shortcomings.

It is recognised that where CAS is responsible for service failures that have caused losses and significant emotional distress, there is clearly the duty to acknowledge that and avoid further distress to the complainant. In each of the concluded complaints in CAS full explanations and where appropriate, apologies were offered.

Learning outcomes in children's and adults complaints

Complaints provide invaluable information from which the service learns how to improve. Complaints also act as a prompt to ensure all staff work consistently to policies and procedures. Some of the learning outcomes extracted and acted upon in the reporting year have included:

Children's complaints:

Policies and procedures

- The procedures for allegations made against foster carers are being reviewed, in liaison with the Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- The process between First Contact and social work teams was reviewed and updated to ensure families are contacted more promptly after a referral has been received.
- Discussions were held between the fostering and child protection services on how to improve the system for reimbursing monies to foster carers.

Communications

- Staff reminded to ensure that parents are informed of dates, times and venues of meetings and contact sessions, and any changes to these, in good time.
- Managers and staff reminded that they should return calls when messages are taken or voicemails, as soon as practically possible.
- The need for good communication between colleagues in different teams, or when handing over cases, to ensure that no unnecessary delays are experienced by service users.
- Information on how to make a complaint was made more widely available by being included in the introductory pack for families.
- Social workers were reminded that telephone numbers should be double-checked with callers before recording on the system.

Reports

- Reminding social workers of the need to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for sharing reports with families for Child Protection Conferences.

Social work practice

- Monitoring arrangements have been introduced to ensure improved performance and compliance with regard to Single Assessment timescales.
- Managers reminded staff through the supervision and appraisal process of their professional responsibilities when engaging with families and young people.
- Social workers were reminded of the importance of checking factual information with families before completing reports.

Adult complaints:

Policies and procedures

- The procedure for issuing invoices was reviewed to make it more robust.
- The best interest procedure and process for involving an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) have been reviewed.

Communications

- Team managers and staff were reminded that they need to ensure that service users and their families understand the purpose of an assessment and why decisions have been made.
- Staff were reminded to clearly communicate the criteria for the Intermediate Care Plus (IC+) service, particularly when service users are admitted to hospital during a period of service provision, and that the service user and their family understand that the service is based on assessed need and is for *up to* 6 weeks.
- Staff were reminded of the need to ensure that the conversations about the financial implications of any services provided are discussed and clearly understood by service users and their families and that the appropriate documentation is completed to reflect these discussions.

Social work practice

- Staff were reminded that adequate notice of meetings should be given to service users and their families.
- Staff in the Emergency Duty Team were reminded that referrals can be made to the IC+ service outside of an emergency situation.

Part Six – Developments

Although the complaints function in relation to children's and adults social care complaints is enshrined in statutory regulations, DCC CAS does not simply meet that duty, but continuously strives to achieve and maintain a high level of service in relation to the management of complaints. With this aim in mind, a number of developments have been undertaken during 2015/16. These include:

- Revised procedures for dealing with adult social care statutory complaints have been made available for staff on DCC's intranet.
- Continuing and strengthening the monitoring system to ensure actions and learning outcomes arising from complaints are implemented in a timely and effective way and fully embedded.
- Reviewing and updating the complaints information that is available for service users.
- Reviewing and updating the complaint category codes, to enable improved reporting and understanding of the themes within complaints.
- Review of compliments - what is classified as a compliment and how they are logged.
- Development of further complaint training sessions for managers and staff.

Key areas that for development in 2016/17 include:

- Further development of the escalation process involving closer monitoring of children's social care managers to endeavour to improve response timescales.
- Sharing the results of the compliments review across CAS, ready for implementation during 2016/17.
- Review of the Joint Protocol arrangement for complaints involving both adult social care and health services.
- Review of Durham's participation and role within the Northern Regional Complaints Managers Group (NRCMG).
- Creation of an improved invoicing system for Investigating Officers and Independent Persons who carry out Stage 2 investigations.
- Closer follow-up of upheld and partially upheld complaints, including monitoring learning outcomes and informing senior management.
- Complaints Officers' attendance at social care manager's sessions to deliver key messages and updates.
- Development of an e-learning package for managers and staff regarding how to properly action complaints.

Part Seven – Conclusion

Complaints and compliments are a valuable source of feedback to inform service improvement. This Annual Report indicates positive achievements in performance in the handling and consideration of complaints and compliments but also recognises the need to strive for continuous improvement. The implementation of learning outcomes arising from complaints provides the opportunity to change practice and improve service delivery with transparency and accountability.

Over the period 2010-2012, there has generally been an overall upward trend for complaints and compliments, with a reduction in both of these areas in 2013/14. In 2014/15 the reduction in complaints continued, and total compliments increased. In 2015/16 the pattern reversed, with total complaints increasing and compliment numbers decreasing. Although the number of compliments has decreased this year, for every complaint received, over twice as many compliments were received.

The complaints function is a statutory requirement for social care services, and it plays a vital role in contributing to shaping the management of quality and assurance across the service. Developments for the future continue to focus on learning from complaints to improve the service.

In 2015/16 the percentage of complaints upheld and partially upheld decreased from the previous year. The highest number of complaints which were upheld and partially upheld related to a lack of communication/information, staff conduct and disputed decisions. The service continues to monitor these areas in particular for the future and from 2016/17 a more detailed analysis of these categories can be given.

A collaborative approach with the complainant to reach complaint resolution continues to develop. An approach based on local resolution and one where the complainant is central to the discussion and resolution of the complaint is proactively encouraged.

Details about the CAS Complaints procedures are available on Durham County Council's website (www.durham.gov.uk) and public information is in key locations throughout the County.

Further information is available by contacting the CAS Complaints Team at

CAS Complaints Team
Room 3/48
Durham County Council
County Hall
Durham
DH1 5UJ
Tel: 03000 266855/ 265762
Email: CASComplaints@durham.gov.uk .

Appendix 1 - Glossary of abbreviations

CAS	Children and Adults Services
CDCS	County Durham Care and Support
CRP	Complaints Resolution Plan
DCC	Durham County Council
IC+	Intermediate Care Plus
IMCA	Independent Mental Capacity Advocate
IO	Investigating Officer
IP	Independent Person
LA	Local Authority
LGO	Local Government Ombudsman
NRCMG	Northern Regional Complaints Managers Group
NYAS	National Youth Advocacy Service
ONS	Office for National Statistics
SIF	Single Inspection Framework

Children and Adults Services

Annual Statutory Representations Report

Children and Adults Social Care Services

2015/16

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Children and Adults Services, CMI Team 2015