



Durham County Council

Children and Young People's Services

Supporting Document to Annual Representations Report

Examples of Complaints and Compliments received in CYPS 2008/09



**Supporting Document to CYPS
Annual Representations Report 2008-09**

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Examples of statutory complaints 2008/09

The following examples aim to give a flavour of the diverse range of formal statutory complaints that were received in the reporting year. Standards Committee has expressed a particular interest in being informed about the numbers and details of complaints regarding poor service and staff conduct, so most are examples of these types of complaint. Only very brief details are given in an effort to maintain confidentiality. The examples provided illustrate a snapshot of the issues complained about, and show how outcomes are provided to the benefit of the service user, in addition to highlighting learning points that have informed future policy and practice.

Complaints about conduct or attitude of staff

- A mother complained about the attitude and unprofessionalism (failing to bring case notes to a meeting) of a Social Worker, with regard to taking her child off the Child Protection List.

A reply was sent explaining the reasons for the Social Worker not having the case notes (she had stood in at the last moment to cover for a colleague who had to go home due to a family bereavement, in order that the meeting could still go ahead). There was no evidence found to support the fact that Social Worker displayed a negative attitude.

- A mother complained about the general attitude of a Social Worker and because he took her children for a supervised visit with her ex-partner, for longer than had been agreed by the court.

Following a visit to the mother and her partner by the CiN Team Manager, it was agreed that moving forward, a different worker would take the children to the contact sessions; it was further explained that the extra time was to allow for travelling time.

- A young person complained that staff in a Children's Home were refusing to give him his tobacco when he woke up.

The investigation concluded that the staff had acted in line with the rules and expectations of the home and had acted appropriately.

- A grandmother complained that a Social Worker had inadvertently given out the current contact number of her grandchildren, who have been adopted; she was also upset that she had not been sent any photographs of them.

An investigation could find no record of the phone number having been sent out, and the complainant was unable to produce any evidence of receipt of this information. The complainant was given information showing that the adopters had not agreed to send the birth family any photos of the children. Initially the complainant remained unhappy, but following further discussion with the CQO and having been sent more information from the Social Worker, she is now happy that her grandchildren are doing well and understands that although she will receive letters and progress reports from them, she will not get any photos.

- A man complained about what he felt to be non-professional conduct by his partner's children's Social Worker. He felt that she had a negative attitude towards him which was reflected in her reports about the care being given to the children. Some safeguarding issues regarding the children's paternal grandmother were also raised, as he felt the SW had not properly addressed these.

It was found that the Social Worker (SW) had written biased reports against the complainant. The Court was informed of this via DCC solicitor, so that a custody hearing could be delayed until new reports were written by a different SW. The SW had however acted appropriately regarding the safeguarding concerns.

- A young person in a secure unit complained that her Social Worker had not contacted her and had refused to give her grant.

It was agreed that the SW would visit the young person on a weekly basis, and that the SW would also contact her father for finances for more clothes.

- A mother complained that her daughter's Social Worker was not making enough effort to help the daughter get her baby back from care; the daughter was unable to get housing without her baby.

The investigating manager tried numerous times to meet with the daughter separately from the mother to discuss the complaint. Eventually the mother withdrew the complaint as she herself had thrown her daughter out as the daughter was pregnant again.

- A grandmother complained about her granddaughter's Social Worker, whom she felt was 'out of her depth' and had an unprofessional attitude, and who she said had passed on confidential information without her prior consent.

The investigation concluded that information had been passed on as the SW had *not* been informed by the complainant that it could not be. The SW, although new to the team, was believed to be knowledgeable about and committed to the particular case. Some aspects of her behaviour were however deemed to be inappropriate and this was dealt with by her Team Manager.

- A complaint was received from a grandmother about a Social Worker, following the decision to send 4 siblings to live with different families. The grandmother stated that the carers of 2 of the children had offered to look after all 4, but this had not been allowed. She felt that it was due to the SW's insistence that the children were to be adopted, rather than continue with long-term fostering arrangements which would allow the grandmother to retain some contact with the children.

Meetings were held with the grandmother, at which she was given assurances and explanations regarding the children's future. Decisions such as adoption are not made by one person, and numerous factors had been taken into account by a multi-disciplinary team. It was difficult for the grandmother to accept decisions made, as the only contact she would retain with her grandchildren would be through indirect letterbox contact. However the decision for adoption had been reached as this is believed to be in the best interests of *the children*.

- A father complained about inappropriate comments allegedly made by a Social Work Team Manager, relating to his son.

The investigation concluded that the words used by the Manager had been taken out of context by the father; and that she was in fact attempting to promote some suitable activities for the child so the father could be given some respite.

- A mother complained that it had been brought to her attention that Social Workers had been discussing her family's case in a public setting

The investigation into this serious allegation is ongoing at the time of writing this report; a meeting has been held with the complainant.

- A Refuge Support Worker complained on behalf of a mother, regarding confidential information having been discussed about her child, to another mother, by a Social Worker.

There had been a misunderstanding, whereby the friend's mother had picked up information from another source, who coincidentally had the same name as the Social Worker.

- A mother complained about a number of mistakes that she felt had been made by her daughter's Social Worker.

The complaint was withdrawn as the mother decided to await the results of her request for her daughter's records.

Complaints about poor service

- A grandmother complained about lack of communication from a Social Worker regarding her request for extra contact with her grandchildren.

Investigation showed that the children and their mother had been consulted about extra contact, and that some consent would be given for some longer contact during school holidays. This has now been communicated to the complainant.

- A mother complained that her adopted son's core assessment had not been completed, and about the length of time taken to remove him from her care following a decision to do so 6 months earlier.

Following a visit to the adoptive parents, a reply was sent to explain that the time taken was due to efforts made by the Social Worker and her team to maintain the child at home and ensure that the situation was assessed correctly.

- Parents complained about the organisation of direct contact meetings between their adopted children and their siblings and birth mother

Following a multi-agency meeting arranged by the Looked After Social Work Service Manager, a letter was sent to the parents to apologise for the problems experienced, and clarifying future arrangements.

- A NYAS Advocate complained on behalf of 2 children about lack of information and communication regarding a request to visit their grandmother who lives abroad.

Following investigation, a reply was sent that the Social Worker would meet with the children and explain to them the reason for the delay, which was due to awaiting a decision about the case from the Crown Prosecution Service.

- A father whose children are in foster care complained that no steps were taken to teach him and his partner how to provide a safe environment; he felt that his needs and advice from other professionals were being ignored; and he was not happy with level of care being given to his 2 youngest children

The Social Worker met with complainant numerous times to discuss his concerns and possible ways forward. The final response letter to complainant agreed that parenting classes should have been organised sooner; these have now been arranged. The other complaints were not upheld; reasons were given to the complainant.

- A mother complained about the time taken for assessment to be carried out on her disabled son, and about a letter being sent too late regarding Direct Payments

A letter of apology was sent – the manager held discussions with colleagues in Direct Payments regarding CRB checks, and for the future, letters are to be sent to families if there is to be a delay in allocating a Social Worker.

- A mother complained that it took too long for her to receive an amended copy of her son's assessment report; she wanted to see copy of the original report, and was unable to contact the Social Worker.

A manager visited the complainant to explain that no copy was kept of the original report. Action was taken regarding acknowledgement slips from external agencies.

- A grandmother complained that a Social Worker was failing to monitor contact meetings, organise parenting classes, or organise a CRB for her sons new girlfriend

It was agreed that an Assistant Social Worker would supervise contact meetings; parenting classes had in fact been organised; and as the son was no longer seeing the girlfriend, there was no requirement for a CRB.

- A young person complained that her Social Worker hadn't helped her, didn't return her calls and cancelled visits.

The investigation concluded that the Social Worker had in fact given a lot of help and support to the girl and her family, at times above and beyond the call of duty. An explanation was given about why she sometimes had to cancel meetings and re-arrange visits.

- A mother complained on behalf of her son, who is being looked after, querying why the child's father had been allowed unsupervised contact, why was his father sent information about their son although he doesn't attend meetings about him, and why had she received documents showing her son's current address, which should have been confidential information

The complaint was upheld and apologies were offered to the complainant, together with assurances that steps would be taken to ensure that such errors did not occur

in future. It was explained that the child's father had a right to receive information about him, even though he does not attend the meetings.

- A mother complained that she had been offered respite and Reach Out Care for her disabled son, instead of the Direct Payments which she had requested.

Following a meeting with the investigating manager, it was agreed that a re-assessment of the child's needs would be carried out.

- A step-father felt that his family had received little support or advice from DCC regarding the behavioural problems of his wife's son, which were causing disruption to the family.

A Team Manager met with the complainant to discuss his concerns, but was limited in the information she could give as he did not have parental responsibility. The complainant was aware that DCC had identified appropriate services for the young man, but he would not engage with them. It was agreed that if further services were required in the future, a re-referral could be made.

- A grandmother complained that Durham County Council Safeguarding and Specialist Services failed to provide an adequate level of service to her granddaughter, whom she believed should have been made the subject of a Child Protection Plan.

Although the individual elements of the complaint were not upheld, the complainant was informed that, had account been taken of the 'bigger picture', it may have been prudent to undertake a Child Protection conference. Policies and procedures are to be amended to reflect this decision. The child has since been taken to another County by the parents; updates on the child's situation have been sought and the grandmother has been provided with contact details for the new area Social Services.

- A mother complained that her son's Social Worker did not fully understand his ASD; that her requests for information were ignored; and that she had not been invited to a meeting about her son.

The investigation concluded that the SW had followed proper processes in her dealings with the boy, and had taken into account his special needs; she had given advice when asked; and that the mother had been invited to the meeting, initially verbally.

- An aunt who has a Guardianship Order for her sister's children complained about visitation arrangements for the children's mother; and the lack of advice and support (practical and financial) received from Social Services.

Financial assistance was agreed, and the complainant withdrew her complaint regarding lack of advice. Unfortunately the children's mother passed away before the issue of contact sessions could be resolved.

Complaints regarding both staff conduct and poor service

- The mother of an oxygen-dependant baby complained that she had not received a copy of the Social Worker's report following an initial assessment visit, nor had she heard from the SW if she was entitled to any Direct Payments.

The complainant was contacted by a Team Manager and was satisfied with her son's assessment and care plan.

- The mother of a young man who was a Child in Need complained about the lack of communication from the Social Worker (SW) and other professionals, and was not happy with a court report written by the SW. The young man had chosen not to live with his mother, and was residing with his father; the mother felt that this was not the best environment for him.

Following a thorough investigation of all the mother's concerns, in which the investigating officer contacted the boy's school to ascertain his well-being, the mother was informed that her son is doing well and is happy living with his father. He is no longer considered to be a Child in Need.

The investigation also found that the SW had at times acted in an unprofessional manner and the report she had written was in fact below the standard that DCC considers to be acceptable. The SW has now left the service.

- A father complained that he wanted a new Social Worker, whom he could trust and who doesn't 'sexually discriminate' against him. He also requested better contact facilities, including a bottle warmer for his youngest child.

The complainant felt he had been discriminated against because the SW had given his partner a lift to court and not him (his partner had declared herself homeless at the time and had no finances). This part of his complaint was not upheld; the issue of the contact facilities had already been raised by the Team Manager and subsequent to this complaint, a bottle warming facility was purchased.

- A parent complained about the decision to refuse a claim for financial support for her daughter. She also expressed dissatisfaction at the way the department had dealt with her application.

Her claim for support was fully considered but the decision remained unchanged. The reply also stated that the member of staff who had dealt with her application had responded appropriately in explaining to the complainant that the decision had to be reviewed internally before being taken to the Local Government Ombudsman.

- A mother complained about her perceived attitude about a member of staff, together with a lack of information sharing/consultation in relation to her daughter's care.

The member of staff no longer works for the Service so this issue could not be investigated or upheld. An apology was offered for the lack of information sharing and arrangements were made for future communications with the mother; this part of the complaint was upheld.

- A Foster Carer complained about the lack of information given about a child when he was initially placed in her care. She was also unhappy about the attitude and manner of the Chair of a Review Meeting about the child.

An apology was given immediately for the complainant's perceived attitude of the Chair. This was followed by an apology for the lack of information given at initial placement – she had however been given all the information that was available about the child at that time.

Stages 2 and 3 statutory complaints

During the reporting year, a formal statutory complaint was received from a foster carer, who made a complaint about a Team Manager and her Fostering Team. She felt that she had been victimised and that as a result of this, the child she was fostering was removed from her care. No evidence was found of the alleged victimisation; the decision to remove the child had been taken by his social work team, not the fostering team or manager. The complainant remained dissatisfied with this response at Stage 1 and requested an independent investigation at Stage 2.

At Stage 2, an independent Investigating Officer (IO) is recruited. This person may be assisted by an Independent Person (IP) who is also from outside of the authority to ensure transparency and no conflict of interest. They will agree with the complainant the elements of the complaint; interview all relevant people involved; review all relevant records and conduct the investigation within the parameters agreed. At the conclusion of the investigation the IO produces a written report with findings detailing whether a complaint was upheld, partially upheld, unproven or not upheld. The IO also makes recommendations as to how upheld complaints can be put right. The recommendations can include changes to how services are provided; policy and practice changes; the offering of apologies; and, in certain circumstances, compensatory redress. Stage Two complaints investigations have completion timescales of 25 working days from the date that the request to progress to the next stage is received. Extensions can be requested, as per the statutory guidance, up to a maximum of 65 working days.

In the case above, the IO and IP reports have recently been received, and at the time of writing they are being considered by the Head of SaSS, who will respond to the complainant. Details will be reported in next year's Annual Report.

In September 2008, a Stage 3 Review Panel was held at the request of complainants. The complaint had originally been received in December 2007 and, due to its complexity, had been taken directly to Stage 2. There were a total of 18 areas of concern within the one complaint, relating to the Foster Care placement of 3 children, some of which were broken down further into sub areas. The Stage 2 investigation was very thorough but the complainants remained dissatisfied at the end of it.

Stage 3 involves the complaint being referred to a Review Panel of 3 people who are independent of Durham County Council. The Panel cannot re-hear a complaint. They will review the evidence obtained during the investigation, make a judgment as to whether the investigation was conducted fairly, thoroughly and rationally and that the findings and recommendations were reasonable and reasoned. The Panel hearing involves the complainant and staff involved and gives all parties the

opportunity to present their respective accounts. The panel deliberates findings and produces recommendations at Director level.

Apologies were given to the complainants for the fact that this complaint went over timescale at both Stages 2 and 3. (This had been in part due to periods of non-availability of the complainants themselves.) A number of recommendations were made by the Review Panel, all of which have been actioned, including

- A Training Needs Analysis being carried out in on of the CiN teams
- A review of the Independent Reviewing Officers caseload management, to ensure that adequate cover arrangements are in place during unforeseen absences
- A review of the operation of the Integrated Children's System (ICS) to ensure correct distribution of children's Care Plans

As so few complaints go on to Stage 3, and due to the turnover of staff in the Complaints Officer post, the roles and responsibilities of staff involved at Stage 3 was not clearly set out. Detailed guidance for staff about the various elements of the Stage 3 process has now been created, for future reference.

Examples of corporate complaints 2008/09

The following examples aim to give a flavour of the diverse range of formal corporate complaints that were received in the reporting year. Standards Committee has expressed a particular interest in being informed about the numbers and details of complaints regarding poor service and staffs conduct, so most are examples of these types of complaint. Only very brief details are given in an effort to maintain confidentiality. The examples provided illustrate a snapshot of the issues complained about, and show how outcomes are provided to the benefit of the service user, in addition to highlighting learning points that have informed future policy and practice.

- A parent complained about a lack of response from an Education Welfare Officer (EWO), following a complaint she had sent in previously regarding a school Head, which had been referred to SGSS. The parent had subsequently refused to send her daughter to school.

The parent was informed of her legal responsibility to ensure her daughter attends school, which had been explained to her via telephone by an EWO. An apology was given about the fact that she had not received a reply to her original letter of complaint, as it had been assumed that her concerns had been addressed by the EWO on the phone. The Service Manager took responsibility to discuss this with EWO staff to avoid future recurrences.

- A parent phoned with a query about school transport for his son with SENs, then lodged a complaint regarding the attitude of staff who dealt with his enquiry. He felt that there was not enough flexibility in their approach.

A reply was sent which apologised for the perceived unintentional lack of staff concern, and which explained the reasons for what the complainant had felt to be bureaucratic processes.

- A father complained about DCC's failure to ensure that his daughter (who lives with her mother) receives adequate education, due to frequent non-attendance at school.

A reply was given that Education Welfare Officers had done all they could and that legal proceedings were taking place against the mother, though only limited details of this could be given to the complainant for reasons of confidentiality.

- A parent complained about an Education Welfare Officer interviewing his daughter at school without his prior permission. The daughter had been absent from school on numerous occasions and her father had failed to respond to requests from the school to give reasons for her absence. The school asked the EWO to speak to the daughter.

An apology was made to the parent for upset and anxiety caused to the family, when it would have been better to have spoken to the father. The issue of the daughter's non-attendance at school without evidence of exceptional circumstances from her father remained outstanding and was to be pursued outside the complaints process.

- Parents sent in a maladministration complaint in relation to a secondary school application and associated transport.

A reply was sent which fully explained how admission and transport decisions are made, and thanking the complainants for bringing their concerns to the attention of the Service Manager, as parents comments are taken into account during the annual review of admission policies.

- A parent complained about the reply to a request for transport to a specialist college, for his son, a young person on the Autistic Spectrum.

The reply apologised for causing distress and requested copies of certain documents so that the decision could be reviewed.

- A young man complained that Durham County Council had not processed his application for student finance properly.

DCC Student Support had processed the forms correctly and within the allowed timescale but had not received all required information from the complainant. The complainant was informed that the Student Loans Company would write to him separately regarding a payment schedule.

- A mother complained about an Education Welfare Officer regarding discussing her son with the family doctor

The mother was informed that the EWO had acted reasonably as the child had not been seen for some time, so it had been necessary to contact partner agencies to ascertain his well-being.

- A mother complained that there had been no support staff organised for her son, who has Down's syndrome, for when he started in Nursery in January.

A very quick response was given to the mother, to allay her worries – a Learning Support Assistant had been organised; however this had been done very near to the start of the new school term, despite the mother having raised the issue a number of months in advance, so an apology was offered for any unnecessary distress caused.

- A father complained about an Education Welfare Officer's threats to prosecute him for his son's non-attendance at school, which was due to medical problems.

A senior EWO met with the father and son and then conferred with other agencies. As a result of this a referral was made to the Home and Hospital Support Service. The EWO had acted correctly; all the information about the boy had not been given to the school by the parent.

- A company complained that documents which had been sent to Safeguarding and Specialist Services, containing sensitive information, had been mishandled.

The company was not able to provide proof of delivering documents to the Council, which in any case had been sent to the incorrect location. No evidence could be found of any information having been mislaid. In addition, the service concerned had tried without success to inform the company that deadlines for the receipt of the information had been missed.

- The leader of a voluntary organisation (a club offering activities for young people) complained that Durham County Council had cast negative aspersions upon him and the club.

Following a thorough investigation, no evidence could be found to uphold the complaint; and safeguarding concerns relating to the complainant were raised which were followed up separately from the complaint. The complainant was dissatisfied with the response at Stage 1 and requested that his complaint be taken to the next stage. This request was received on 21st April 2009, so the complaint was the first from CYPS to be actioned under the revised Corporate Representations Policy and Procedure following Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

- A student complained that staff in the Student Support team had spoken to him in an inappropriate manner.

The Stage 1 investigation could not find any members of staff who could corroborate what the complainant had alleged, whereas it had been noted that the student had himself used offensive language and had therefore been informed that the conversation would be terminated should he continue to do so.

- A mother complained about the way a Social Worker had spoken to her and the things she had said with regard to her children who had been taken into care.

This was actioned under the Corporate Complaints Procedure, although it was about a Social worker, as the complaint was not about the services to the children; rather it was a complaint about the conduct of a member of staff of CYPS, towards an adult. The Social Worker had tried to explain as clearly as possible what had happened to the children and why; the mother had found this difficult to hear and upsetting.

- A lady complained about an Adult Evening course, which was initially delayed; subsequently she was not informed that the course had begun, and when she asked for a refund of her course fees, the Centre manager was unhelpful and had an 'abrasive' manner.

The complainant received a full refund. (Note, future complaints of this nature will not be dealt with by CYPS, as since LGR, Adult Learning is the responsibility of Adults, Well-being and Health.)

Complaint regarding discrimination

During the reporting year one complaint was received in CYPS which was about alleged sex discrimination. The complainant was a Social Work student who had been turned down for a placement; the University where she was studying had told her that this was because she was pregnant. On investigation it was found that the student also did not have access to transport, which would have proved more of a difficulty for some placements. However, despite this, officers in SaSS continued to try to find a suitable placement. A possible placement was eventually found (places are limited and demand often exceeds supply); this was offered to the University and the complainant would have been asked to undertake a Health and Safety Risk Assessment, which all pregnant DCC employees must undertake. However the University had already told the complainant that no places were available.

The complaint was not upheld by CYPS, but as a result of the issues raised, the procedures for locating and offering Social Work placements are being reviewed.

Examples of compliments received 2008/09

Copies of compliments received can be viewed on request, for up to one year after the reporting quarter. Many compliments highlight the professionalism of staff and their willingness to go 'the extra mile'. A number of recent compliments were received from parents about Sure Start services. A few examples of the many compliments received across the service this year are given below:

- (About Sure Start) Helped me meet new people, gained new friends. Somewhere to go, get out of the house, have fun. Had support and advice when needed and questions answered. Lots of support.
- ,,,, the opportunities and experiences offered through the CATs programme and the excellent relationships built with the high quality staff employed to take children out on activities have changed their lives forever....
- To [Social Worker] You have made our family complete, thank you.
- (From a foster carer) [Social Worker] is the best social worker we have ever had and is straight down the line and honest.
- (From a foster carer) [Social Worker] is positive, fair, has firm boundaries, is an excellent communicator and offers support as and when needed. He is a good role model for those in the LAC system.
- Myself and my family were grateful for all help and support throughout a difficult time...
- I would like to thank the staff for the help and advice which they gave me when my daughter was going through a lot of problems..."
- (About Sure Start) The staff go out of their way to answer any questions I have, if they don't know the answer they try to find it out.
- (About Sure Start) Calming, relaxing, fun for parents and children.
- I am writing to express our thanks for the personal intervention of [name].....[she], as ever, worked a 'miracle' and made things happen...
- Thank you very much [name]. The parents were very impressed with you today. They thought you were extremely knowledgeable and approachable.
- I just wanted to thank you all for everything and for the support and smiley faces that you've always offered [child] and I. [Name of Children's Centre] was the one place [we] felt comfortable and for this reason you will never know the difference you made to us – thank you.
- (About Children's Information Centre) Fast efficient service with friendly advisors – excellent.
- CDYES have done more in a few days than others have done in years.

- (About ITSS) Personnel are always polite, professional and flexible.
- (About conference organised by EDS) Thanks for helping me to re-engage the vision!
- (To SGSS) Just a quick e-mail to say a huge thank you for all of the time, support and advice you have given our school...
- Just a note to say thank you...for taking part in the Slovenian Study tour....the Slovene team...found it very informative and learned a lot of 'best practice' issues they would be using on their return to Slovenia....
- (About 'Playing for Success') The best school trip ever!" (a Poetry Day in conjunction with a Durham Cricket game).
- (Re Celebration of Achievement Event) Well done for yesterday's event and it was obvious by how well things went all the hard work that had gone into making this the success it was....
- (from a young person) How very sorry I am for sometimes while I have being here I will try not to miss you and all staff and YPS. Good luck in the future.
- (from a young person to a SW) Thanks for all your help in the past. Even though I have been a little sh** you have stuck with me and it does really mean a lot....
- 5 compliments to Park House (residential home for children with disabilities), including Thank you for all the care received over past 5 years. At times we couldn't have coped without the breaks you provided.
- I wanted to pass on the very positive comments about you and your staff that was shared at corporate parenting this morning. Cllr [name] said he felt the home was well run, and that young people were well cared for. Well done...
- Many thanks for the respite care you provided for [young person] this weekend...this respite has been fundamental in salvaging the placement so far and in giving [young person] positive experiences...
- (about an Independent Reviewing Officer)It was a very large meeting and her calm manner enabled it to remain a calm, well managed meeting and without exception everyone was heard....it was one of the most well managed meetings I have ever attended.
- (about mental health training given by a Service Manager) ...[He] has an excellent style, combining friendly approachability with a huge wealth of knowledge and experience....
- (to Aycliffe Secure Unit) I would like to take this opportunity to inform you....of my heartfelt appreciation for the care and attention that has been given to my 14 year old granddaughter [name]....the staff have always been kind, thoughtful, understanding and willing to listen....everyone I have come into contact withhave been superb...

- (from a Foster Carer about a SW) ...Everything I asked was done, she has been supportive, encouraging, understanding and often went out of her way to help keep the placement going...
- (from a parent) I don't think I could change anything [about dealings with CYPS] the help and support you's have given my daughter and myself have been brilliant.
- [The SW] was very approachable, always available, and very helpful.
- Thank you for your help and support. It's made a difference to [name].
- (to CDYES) I received a lovely phone call from a delighted parent yesterday who wanted to Thank [names] for their outstanding support not only to [young person] but also to them....
- (to 14-19 Partnership) ...I pleased I was to receive the 14-19 Partnership Newsletter and see the New College Duke of Edinburgh Award group on the front page...it sends a fantastic message about the contribution of personal development and informal learning in helping YP to succeed...
- (to CDYES SW, re a Victim Liaison Officer) My life has completely changed, I am so grateful and looking forward to a lovely family Christmas.
- (from a school) We are writing to thank you for the input given to us by the Behaviour Support Service...It has been a pleasure to work with someone who can offer real guidance and advice, which is manageable and effective...
- (to an EWO) Thanks very much for all the help and support you have given to our family it has meant a lot to us.
- (to the Finance Team) Thank you for all your support with Governorth accounts....the group wished to place on record their thanks for your fabulous help and support...
- (to the Communications Team) - ...very pleased with the directory ...it has been road-tested today by parents and children and they are fully behind the launch in March...
- (from a parent re Moving Up Together Sessions – transition support) ...The group leaders and course content were excellent...
- (Re ITSS) It is very encouraging to know that Becta (the Government agent for ICT) recognises the excellent work we do to support schools, children and young people in County Durham and great to be named as the best support service in the country...
- Nothing needs to be changed it was a smooth helpful service. [Social Worker] is an absolute credit to this service. A real diamond.
- I would not change anything. I was very grateful for everything.
- Just wish to say thank you for all the help you are giving me and my son. Thank you very much.

- Wanted [child] to be assessed/examined for special needs....I have received a letter this morning for [child] to [see Doctor] for which I am pleased and I would like to thank everybody who is concerned about this matter. Thank you.
- Very good communication, always available, always open and honest.
- Thank you so very much for all your help, support and cooperation with all our family during this last year, you have restored my faith in Social Workers!
- Whenever I was upset you were there. Whenever I had trouble you were there. If I was sad you would cheer me up. You have always been there for me so I just want to say a massive THANK YOU!!!
- Thank you for helping me with my problems and helping me understand my feelings. I will miss you.
- [Social Worker] has single-handedly restored my faith in your service. She has worked tirelessly....Her services are always provided with a smile and a sense of humour making her easy to talk to and confide in, simply she puts us at ease and is a pleasure to work with....
- I am writing to say what a pleasure it was working with [Social Worker] on the [children's] case. I have rarely encountered a more committed and child centred worker...
- I write to offer my congratulations to you and your staff, and most of all the young people at [children's home], on your success in renewing your Investing in Children membership....
- I am writing to tell you what a pleasure it has been to work with your Anti-Bullying Service [member of staff]....his enthusiasm inspired other group members...his suggestions created opportunities for further learning...
-I write to acknowledge the outstanding assistance given by the [School and] Governor Support Service...
- I just wanted to write and thank you and all the other people working in Durham's Children and Young Peoples Services who have helped our daughter navigate her way through the various phases of her school education. We have always appreciated the help and support you have all provided and hope that we have never seemed to take it for granted.
- I wanted to thank you and the Further Maths network for the opportunity and support for my son....Many thanks for your support...I know he enjoyed the challenges....
- Please pass on our thanks to [ITSS] staff for their patience, hard work and support throughout the year...A first class service.
- ...She delivered a first class presentation in meeting the needs of the group and handled some very difficult perspectives regarding the CAF....[she] was totally unperturbed by their negative stance and handled the situation perfectly....

- I am writing to let you know that the issues I raised regarding [school] have been satisfactorily resolved....I would like to thank [SGSS] and [Complaints Officer] for your prompt responses...
- ...I met [name] from the Youth Engagement Service, when she came out to my home I talked and she listened and it was good to get it all out. She has worked a lot with me an [my daughter] and now I can see a light at the end of the tunnel....

About Connexions:

- You're the only person who listened to me – thanks.
- Thanks again for all your help, it has been reassuring and appreciated, a lot better than the job centre!
- Thanks received for sending out vacancies and keeping in regular contact.
- Thank you for the information. You've been very helpful.
- [Young person] got told yesterday he is getting kept on, thanks for your help once again.
- One on one talk and we were treated like an adult.
- I really enjoy coming here.

About Sure Start:

- I think it is an excellent centre that provides a wide range of activities for children and carers. The staff are very professional and my daughter really enjoys her time there.
- Informal health clinic is very useful and reassuring and means fewer unnecessary doctors appointments being made.
- Excellent facility, very friendly and safe and caring environment.
- Always very welcoming and very clean and tidy.
- The range of activities is excellent, especially the things that you wouldn't have available at home.
- I am grateful that Sure Start provide a free training course for parents and carers.

From the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Ireland:

-We are deeply impressed with your achievements in the Children's Trust arrangements and the Investing in Children workWe would like to thank all those involved for the kindness shown in allowing us to attend the Children's Executive Board meeting, which ...made a very big impression on us and will inform the work of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in the roll out of county based children's services committees in Ireland.

And finally, the following excerpt from a long letter from a previously disaffected parent of 2 autistic sons: ...

- The stress and anxiety that we've been through is slowly ebbing away thanks to everyone that's been there supporting us throughout, their patience has been outstanding.....this LEA has proved to me that yes, Every Child does Matter!

Good News Story - Easington Children's Centre

Colleagues across CYPS have recently been asked to record and report examples of 'Good News Stories', whereby improvements to services have been made as a direct result of complaints received, and tangible examples of changes to the lives of children and young people can be seen as a result. As this is only a recent initiative, there is only one such story to report in this year's report; however it is hoped next years Annual Report will include a number of examples.

"It was noted that attendees of Easington Children's Centre had reduced in numbers and on various occasions it was brought to Family Workers' attention that this was due to the 2009 timetable change. Also, due to staff sickness, Family Workers were limited to time for preparation of groups and parents accessing services recognised this. One parent who regularly attends different sessions with her daughter wrote a letter of complaint. This was passed directly to the centre Coordinator.

Although the complaint was brief it indicated that the parent and others were not satisfied with the activities indicating they were all structured the same. They were also dissatisfied with the amount of time Family Workers were out of the room in the kitchen preparing snacks. Within 24 hours of the letter being received the Centre Coordinator called a meeting to include the Cluster Manager, Senior Family Worker and the one Family Worker based at Easington.

It was decided that a Family Worker from the Wheatley Hill/Thornley cluster would be transferred to cover long term sickness at Easington. Once this was in place a review of the timetable also was carried out, and at the time of writing, the timetable is in the process of being altered / amended to suit service user's needs / wants. In relation to staff not being in the room at all times a kitchen area was built into the Multifunction room enabling a member of staff to be present and accessible to the group at all times.

Since the changes have been put in place there has been an improvement to group numbers; also a more relaxed and happy atmosphere within the groups. These changes have not only benefited service user's but also staff, as they are now able to work under a lot less pressure and in a more relaxed working environment."

Appendix A - Glossary of terms and abbreviations and terms used

AW-B&H	Adults, Well-being and Health (formerly Adult and Community Services)
ASCL	Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CiN	Children in Need
CLA	Children Looked After
CQO	Complaints and Quality Officer
CRM	Customer Relations Management (management information system)
CYPS	Children and Young People's Services
DCC	Durham County Council
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DH	Department of Health
ECM	Every Child Matters
EWS	Education Welfare Service
Exit survey	A customer service questionnaire sent to services users families when a child's case is closed
GB	Governing Body
liC	Investing in Children
IO	Investigating Officer (statutory complaints Stage 2)
IP	Independent Person (statutory complaints Stage 2)
LGO	Local Government Ombudsman
LGR	Local Government Reorganisation
NRCOG	Northern Regional Complaints Officers Group
NYAS	National Youth Advocacy Service
P&P	Planning and Performance
SaSS (MT)	Safeguarding and Specialist Services (Management Team)
SCD	Social Care Direct
SGSS	School and Governor Support Service
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SS	Specialist Services
SSID	Social Services Information Database (management information system)
SW	Social Worker
upheld	Where a complaint is 'upheld', this means that, following investigation, CYPS agrees with the complainant's accusation

If you need this information summarised in another language or format such as Braille, large print, CD or talking tape, please call the number below.

إذا اردت معرفت ملخص هذه المعلومات باللغة العربية اتصل علي الرقم التالي
Arabic

আকারে এই তথ্যটি পেতে নিচের নম্বরে ফোন করুন:
Bengali

假如您需要這份資料的中文摘要，請致電下面的號碼。
Chinese

यदि आप यह जानकारी का संक्षेप हिन्दी में चाहते हैं, तो कृपया निचे दिए हुए नम्बर में सम्पर्क करें।
Hindi

Jezeli potrzebujesz streszczenia tych informacji w jezyku polskim zadzwon prosze na ponizszy numer
Polish

ਜਾਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਖ਼ਬਰ ਦਾ ਨਿਚੋੜ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਥੱਲੇ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਹੋਏ ਨੰਬਰ ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।
Punjabi

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات اردو میں درکار ہیں تو اس نمبر پر کال کیجیے۔
Urdu



(0191) 383 XXXX

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