

Appendix 3



Children and Adults Services

**Annual Statutory Representations Report**  
Children and Adults Social Care Services 2014/15

# Annual Statutory Representations Report

## Children and Adults Social Care Services 2014/15

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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 2014 to 31 March 2015.

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*<sup>1</sup>. 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. 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.

The 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

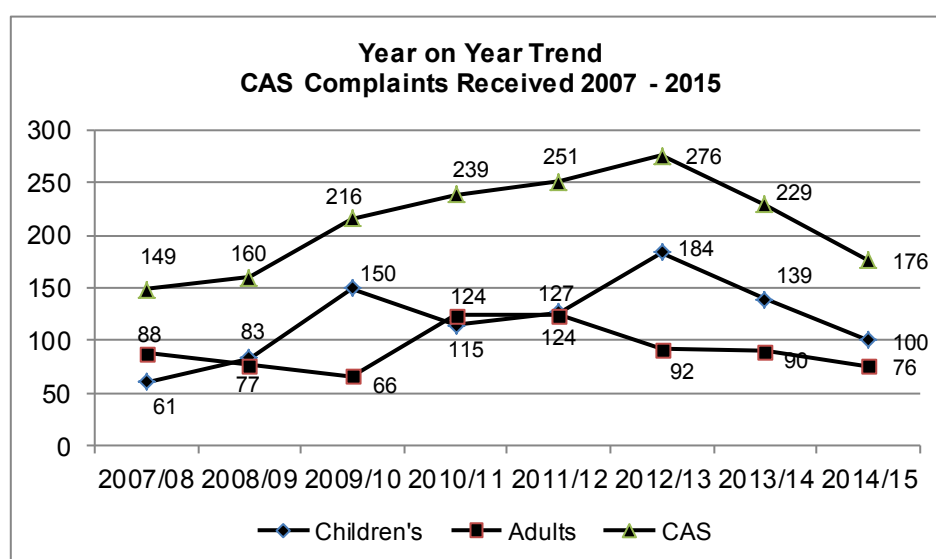
## Part Two - Key messages for CAS

### Number of complaints received

In 2014/15, a total of 176 complaints were received by CAS; 100 related to children's social care services and 76 related to adult social care services. There has been a 23.1% decrease in CAS complaints when compared with the number of complaints received in 2013/14 (229). Children's social care complaints have decreased by 28.1% in comparison to the previous reporting year whilst complaints about adult services have decreased by 15.6% 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 2007-2013, with the increase being mainly attributable to complaints in relation to children's social care services. Since 2013/14 the number of complaints decreased in relation to both children's and adults social care services. In 2014/15 the total figure was at its lowest for 6 years.

**Graph 1: Year on year trend 2007-2015 – 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 100 complaints received in relation to children's social care, all were managed at Stages 1 and 2 of the statutory complaints process. Of the 100 Stage 1 complaints, 5 were subsequently progressed to Stage 2, and no complaints were progressed to Stage 3. Of the 100 complaints, 97 were concluded at the year-end (the 3 ongoing were at Stage 2 of the process).

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 76 complaints in relation to adults social care services, 74 were concluded by the year end.

A total of 171 (97.2%) CAS complaints were completed at the year-end.

### Benchmarking comparisons

Although the Regulations do not require Local Authorities (LAs) to publish benchmarking information it is recognised that comparator information may be of interest. Benchmarking information from neighbouring (North East) authorities for the 2014/15 reporting year is shown in tables 1 and 2 below and overleaf.

**Table 1: Complaints relating to children's social care services – North East regional authorities 2014/15**

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	15	0.488	5	33.3%
<b>Durham</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0.876</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5.0%</b>
B	65	0.966	7	10.8%
C	45	1.003	3	6.7%
D	45	1.007	1	2.2%
E	42	1.167	7	16.6%
F	31	1.372	22	71.0%
G	78	1.654	18	23.1%
H	60	1.817	4	6.7%
I	60	2.389	15	25.0%
J	213	3.461	19	8.9%
K	No information	-	No information	-

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

\*\* Note: some complaints actioned at Stage 2 in 2013/14 may have been investigated initially at Stage 1 during 2013/14 or 2014/15; and some may have been investigated directly at Stage 2, bypassing Stage 1

Table 1 shows that from the information supplied, in 2014/15 in comparison to regional neighbours:

- Durham had the second lowest rate of Stage 1 complaints (0.876) per 1000 population aged 0-19 years. This is the same result as for 2013/14.
- Durham had the second lowest percentage of Stage 1 complaints progressing to Stage 2. 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 part of the process. This may mean that resolution is achieved outside target timescale (20 working days), for example, due to further 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 2014/15**

Local Authority	Total Number of Complaints	Rate of Complaints (per 1000 18+ Population**)
A	14	0.130
B	33	0.141
C	18	0.168
<b>Durham</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>0.183</b>
D	17	0.235
E	46	0.285
F	24	0.290
G	36	0.302
H	54	0.358
I	64	0.401
J	152	0.686
K	No information	-

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

Table 2 shows that in 2014/15, in comparison with 10 neighbouring authorities who supplied information, Durham had the fourth lowest rate of complaints (0.183) per 1000 population aged 18 and over. This is an improvement on 2013/14 when Durham had the fifth lowest rate.

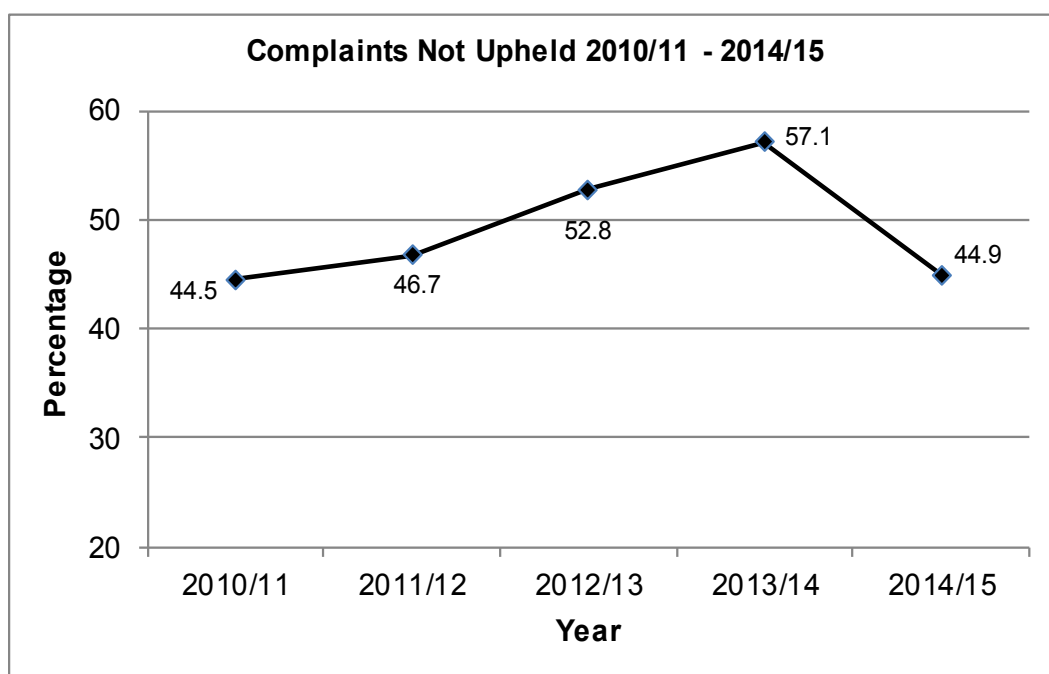
### Number of complaints upheld

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 176 complaints received by CAS, 37 (21.0%) were upheld and 55 (31.3%) were partially upheld. There were 79 (44.9%) that were not upheld, and 5 (2.8%) that were not completed by the year end.

As Graph 2 overleaf illustrates, in previous years the number of complaints not upheld across CAS as a whole had been increasing year-on-year. However in 2014/15 a greater percentage of complaints (52.3%) were upheld or partially upheld. Consideration has been given for reasons for this increase but no trends or themes have been identified.

**Graph 2: Complaints not upheld in CAS 2010-2015**



In children's social care complaints, of the 100 Stage 1 and 2 complaints, 20 (20%) were upheld in full and 29 (29%) were partially upheld. There were 48 (48%) complaints that were not upheld. There were 3 (3%) complaints, all at Stage 2, which were not completed by the year end. At the end of 2013/14, 58.2% of complaints about children's social care services were not upheld, and in 2012/13 this figure was 38.3%.

In adult's social care complaints, of the 76 complaints received, 17 (22.4%) were upheld and 26 (34.2%) were partially upheld. There were 31 (40.8%) complaints that were not upheld. There were 2 (2.6%) complaints which were not completed by the year end. At the end of 2013/14, 54.4% of complaints about adults social care services were not upheld, and in 2012/13 this figure was 61.4%.

### **Percentage of complaint acknowledgements within 2 working day timescale**

There were 97.7% of complaints acknowledged within the timescale of 2 working days, which is a 0.7% improvement on the previous year. One complaint about children's services and 3 complaints about adults' services were acknowledged outside the 2 working days during the early part of the year. This was due to administrative error and has been resolved by introducing a more robust system for when complaints are initially received.

### **Complaints completed within timescale**

Of the 100 children's social care complaints, 70 (70%) were resolved within the 20 working day timescale, an improvement on the previous year when 58.7% were resolved in timescale. Three investigations (3%) were ongoing at the year-end (all at Stage 2) and the other 27 complaints (27%) were resolved outside timescale.



For complaints relating to adult social care, 74 complaints were completed at the year-end with 2 ongoing. Of the 74 completed complaints, 100% were completed within the individual timescales agreed in the Complaints Resolution Plan (CRP), compared with 97.5% in 2013/14.

### **Subject matter of complaints**

As in previous reporting years, the 3 major categories for complaints within CAS were:

1. *Lack of Communication/Information* featured as an element in the majority of both childrens and adult services complaints, relating to 43 (24.4%) of CAS complaints (27 children's services and 16 adults services).
2. *Professional Conduct of Staff* featured in 34 (19.3%) CAS complaints (22 childrens services and 12 adult services).
3. *Disputed Decision* – 32 (18.2%) of total CAS complaints contained this as an element (19 childrens services and 13 adult services).

In an effort to mitigate against complaints with these categories, within Adult Care, key messages and learning from complaints are communicated to managers and staff through briefing notes which are published on the intranet. In Children's Services the recently introduced Single Assessment Process for families requires feedback to individuals making referrals, thereby improving communication. Across CAS, disputed decisions are reviewed on an individual basis, and practice standards have been developed which include expectations in regard to communication and professional conduct.

### **Complaints by team and service area**

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

Table 3 shows that in Children's Services the service area receiving the greatest number of complaints was the Assessment and Intervention service followed by the Child Protection service. These two service areas have the greatest amount of direct contact with service users and members of the public.

**Table 3: Children's complaints by team**

Service Area	Number of Stage 1-3 Complaints 2014/15	Number of Stage 1-3 Complaints 2013/14	Direction of Travel	% of Total Complaints 2014/15	% of Total Complaints 2013/14
Assessment & Intervention*	35	3	↑	35%	3.8%
Child Protection*	32	-	-	32%	-
Initial Response/First Contact	10	6	↑	10%	7.6%
Looked After Children	8	5	↑	8%	6.3%
Fostering and Adoption	7	0	↑	7%	-
Disability Social Work	4	2	↑	4%	2.5%
Safeguarding Children	2	55	↓	2%	69.5%
Independent Reviewing Officers	1	0	↑	1%	-
Children's Home	1	1	↓	1%	1.3%
Young People's Service	0	4	↓	-	5.1%
Aycliffe Secure Services	0	1	↓	-	1.3%
Full Circle	0	1	↓	-	1.3%
Pathfinder	0	1	↓	-	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>↑</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Teams in place since February/March 2014 following an internal restructure. The Safeguarding teams have been superseded by Child Protection and Assessment & Intervention teams.

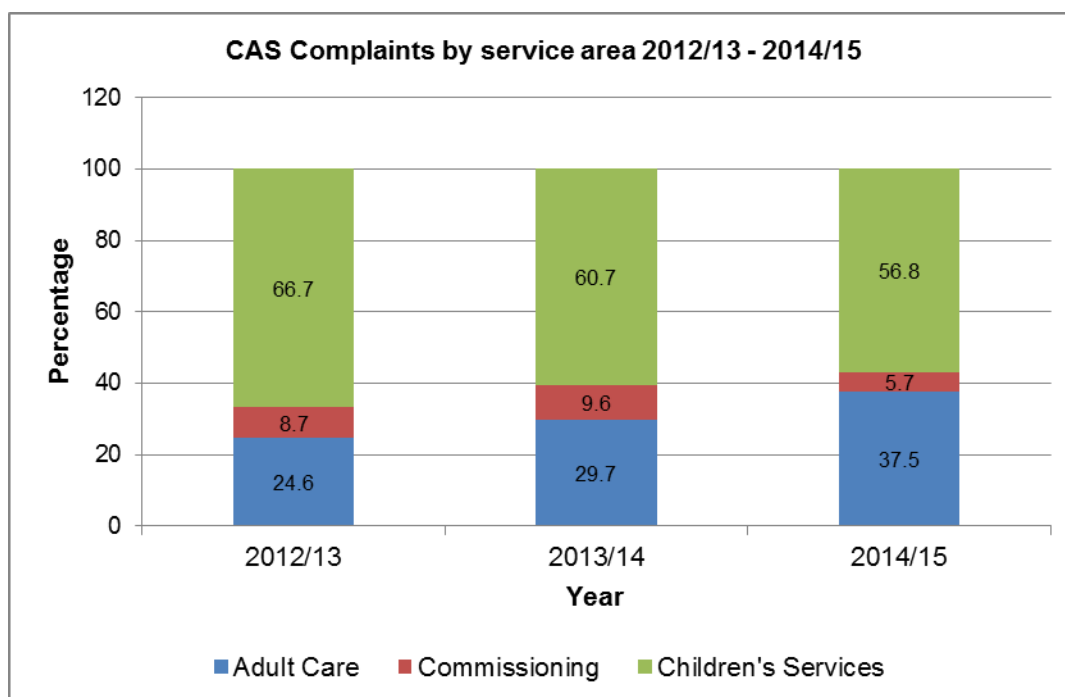
Table 4 below shows that in Adult Care the service area receiving the greatest number of complaints was Older People/ Physical Disabilities and Sensory Impairment service followed by the Learning Disability/Mental Health/Substance Misuse service, which has the greatest amount of direct contact with service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

**Table 4: Adult complaints by team**

Service Area	Number of Complaints 2014/15	Number of Complaints 2013/14	Direction of Travel	% of Total Complaints 2014/15	% of Total Complaints 2013/14
Older People/ Physical Disabilities & Sensory Impairment (OP/PDSI)	41	48	↓	54.0%	53.3%
Learning Disability/Mental Health/ Substance Misuse	17	12	↑	22.3%	13.3%
Commissioning	10	22	↓	13.2%	24.4%
County Durham Care And Support	7	4	↑	9.2%	4.5%
Adult Care - Safeguarding	1	4	↓	1.3%	4.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

As Graph 3 overleaf illustrates, for the past 3 years, Children's Services have received the highest percentage of complaints relating to CAS. In 2014/15, of the 176 CAS complaints, 56.8 % related to Children's Services. Adult Care accounted for 37.5% of all complaints in 2014/15, whilst complaints relating to the Commissioning service area accounted for 5.7% in 2014/15.

**Graph 3: CAS statutory complaints by service area**



### Complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

During 2014/15, the LGO contacted the council in relation to 24 (11 children's and 13 adult) statutory cases that had been referred to them. 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.

During 2014/15 in relation to children's and adults social care services, the council received 5 LGO Enquires (2 childrens and 3 adult cases) which were not taken to investigation. A further 19 enquiries (9 childrens and 10 adults cases) were answered for which Draft and Final Decisions were subsequently received.

- In 7 cases (6 childrens and 1 adults) the LGO decided not to investigate
- In 7 cases (1 childrens and 6 adults) the LGO investigated and no fault was found
- In 3 adult's cases maladministration and injustice were identified
- In 1 children's case the LGO decided there had been injustice to the complainants
- In 1 children's case a Draft Decision did not conclude there had been maladministration or injustice but suggested a remedy to resolve the complaint.

## Complaints by complainant type

In complaints received about children's social care services, *Parents* constituted the largest cohort of complainants with 69 (69%) of complaints made by parents. In complaints about adult social care services, *Relatives (non-parent)* made 32 (42.1%) complaints. These "complainant types" have consistently been the largest cohorts over previous reporting years.

## Age and gender profiles of complainants

Using information based on the eldest child in a family, 49 (49%) of the 100 children's services complaints were made on behalf of girls aged 1-17 years, and 51 (51%) were made on behalf of boys aged 0-18 years. In relation to adult's complaints, the majority 55.3% were made by females. Males made 44.7% of complaints.

## Ethnicity and diversity

Of the total of 176 complaints made regarding childrens and adults social care services, 98.3% were made by or on behalf of services users recorded as being White British and 1.7% Mixed Race Asian.

## Declined complaints

During the year, CAS declined to consider 9 complaints, a decrease on the 14 declined complaints in 2013/14. There were 5 declined complaints about children's services and 4 about adults 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 accrued from complaints are provided in Part Five of the report.

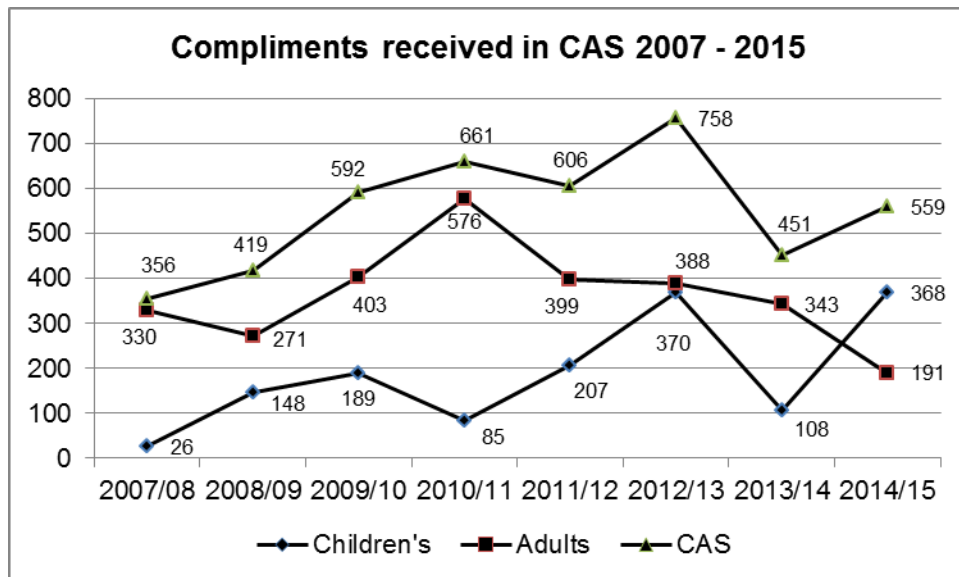
## Number of compliments received

In the reporting year, a total of 559 compliments were received by CAS; 368 in relation to children's social care and 191 regarding adult social care. This represents an increase across the service of 23.9% in comparison to the previous year's number of 451.

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.

**Graph 4: Compliments received in CAS 2007-2015**

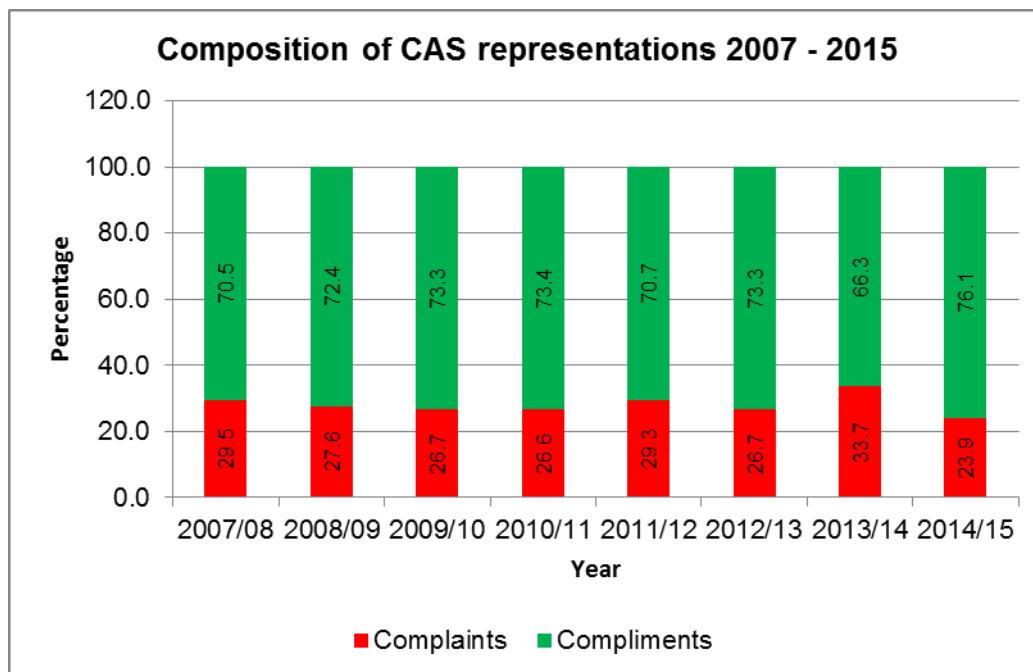


### Ratio of compliments to complaints

The ratio of compliments to all complaints received across CAS is 3.2:1. This represents an increase on the previous year when the ratio of compliments to complaints was 2:1.

Graph 5 below shows that between 2007/08 and 2014/15, the percentage of compliments received has consistently outweighed the percentage of complaints received. In 2014/15 compliments as a proportion of total representations were at the highest level to date, at 76.1%.

**Graph 5: Composition of CAS representations 2007-2015**



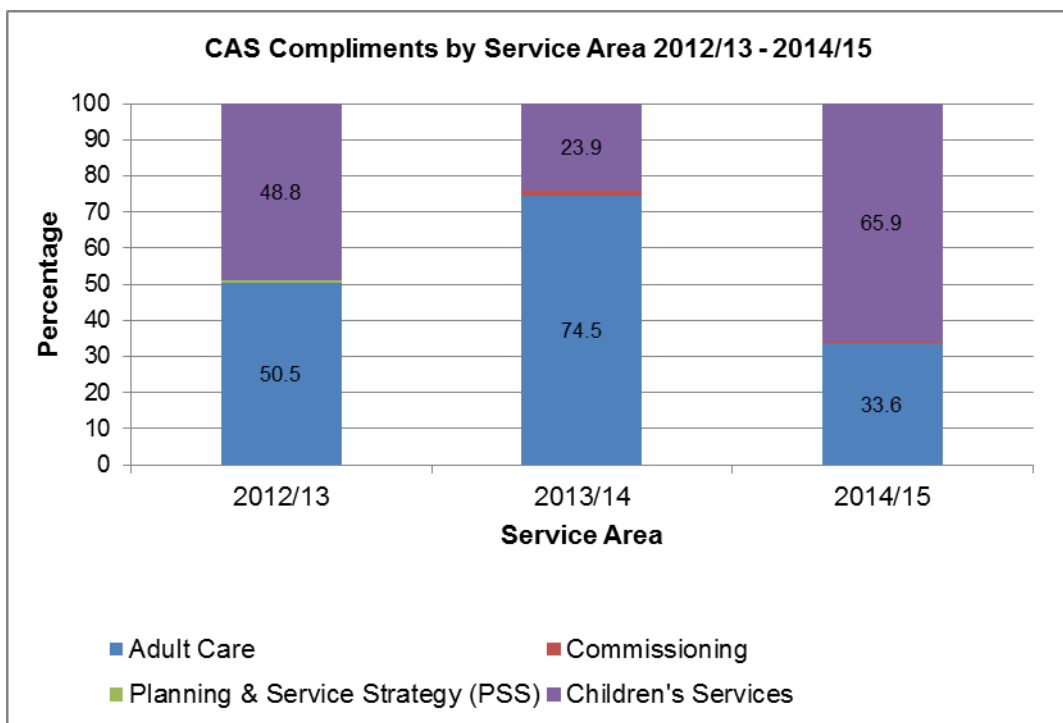
## Compliments by team and service area

In Children's Services, in relation to social care provision the Family Pathfinder service received the highest percentage of compliments in 2014/15, closely followed by Aycliffe Secure Service, (24.7% and 24.5% respectively).

In Adult Care the 44.3% decrease in compliments received in 2014/15 is linked to changes in the types of provision provided by County Durham Care and Support's (CDCS) in-house residential care services. However CDCS still attracted the greatest proportion of compliments across the service area, receiving 126 (65.9%) compliments. The Older People's/Physical Disabilities and Sensory Support Service area received 58 (30.4%) of compliments.

Graph 6 shows that in 2014/15 the percentage of CAS compliments relating to Adult Care decreased to 33.6% from 74.5% in 2013/14. Compliments relating to Children's Services increased to 65.9% from 23.9% 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 2014/15. 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 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 timescale of up to 50 working days

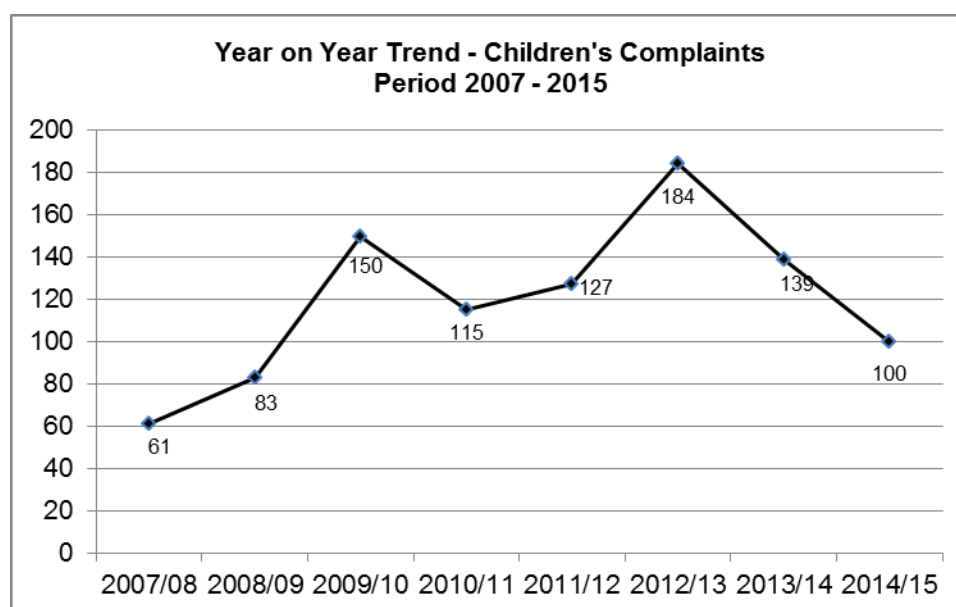
When a complaint is received it is risk-assessed to ensure that there are no safeguarding or other procedural issues that might supersede the complaints procedure. Dates are checked to ensure that it is within the 12 month limitation period (which may be waived in certain circumstances at the discretion 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 2007-2015

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 2007-2015 – children's social care**



In 2014/15 there was a 28.1% decrease in the total number of children's social care complaints received; 100 compared to 139 complaints received in 2013/2014. A decrease of 24.5% was experienced between 2012/13 and 2013/14.

Over the period 2007-2015 the number of complaints increased between 2007/08 and 2009/10, some of which was due to improved recording. Complaints then decreased before rising again to peak 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.

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. This has included meeting with complainants, using the telephone or face to face communication rather than written communication, apologising when necessary and writing high quality robust responses when a formal letter is required. The service is also increasingly looking at ways of ensuring that learning from complaints is noted and implemented so that mistakes are not repeated. This may account for the decreased number of complaints in 2013/14 and 2014/15. A culture of 'valuing the apology' is also becoming embedded.

### **Number of complaints received**

In 2014/15, a total of 100 complaints were received and progressed under the children's social care complaints regulations. This represents a decrease of 28.1% on the 139 complaints received in 2013/14.

Of the 100 complaints received:

- All were actioned at Stage 1 complaints (local resolution).
- Complainants asked for 5 of the 100 to be escalated to Stage 2 of the complaints process.
- None were actioned at Stage 3.

This report contains performance information in relation to the 100 complaints recorded at Stages 1 and 2; of which 97 (97%) were concluded by the year end (with 3 Stage 2 complaints remaining open into the 2015/16 reporting year).

Of the 5 complaints recorded at Stage 2, none were new complaints considered directly at Stage 2. All 5 had been investigated at Stage 1 and had subsequently been escalated to Stage 2 of the process at the complainants' request. This report contains information about those complaints whilst at Stage 2.

### **Number of complaints upheld**

Of the 100 Stage 1 and 2 complaints, 20 were upheld in full (20%) and 29 were partially upheld (29%). There were 48 complaints (48%) that were not upheld. Three complaints all at Stage 2 (3%) were ongoing at the year end.



In 2013/14, 15.2% of complaints were upheld, 26.6% were partially upheld and 58.2% were not upheld. Therefore, in 2014/15 a greater percentage of complaints were upheld than in the preceding year.

**Table 5: Outcome of complaints for children’s social care services 2014/15**

Outcome of Complaints 2014/15 Children’s Social Care					
Service Area	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Ongoing	Total
Assessment & Intervention*	4	11	18	2	35
Child Protection *	11	10	11	0	32
First Contact*	1	1	8	0	10
Looked After and Permanence	1	3	4	0	8
Fostering and Adoption	1	4	2	0	7
Disability Social Work	0	0	4	0	4
Safeguarding Children	1	0	0	1	2
Independent Reviewing Officers	0	0	1	0	1
Children’s Home	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100</b>

\* Teams in place since February 2014 following an internal restructure

### Percentage of complaint acknowledgements in timescale

The statutory timescale for acknowledging a children’s social care complaint is 2 working days. Of the 100 complaints, 99 (99%) were acknowledged within the 2 day timescale. During the early part of the reporting year, 1 Stage 1 complaint was acknowledged outside 2 day. This was due to an administrative error and was quickly resolved.

### Complaints completed within timescale

Of the 100 complaints received, 70 (70%) were resolved within the 20 working day timescale for Stage 1 complaints. This is an improvement on the preceding years as 58.7% were resolved in timescale in 2013/14 and 39.4% in 2012/13. Three investigations were ongoing at the year-end (all Stage 2) and the other 27 complaints (27%) were resolved outside the timescale. The service continues to strive to improve on performance against the target response timeframes and has introduced escalation measures to improve this, whereby more senior managers are informed when there is a potential risk of timescales being exceeded.

At Stage 2, complaints are 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) is 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 the LA’s 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.

## Categories of complaints

As shown in Table 6 below, of the 100 complaints actioned, 27 (27%) included *Lack of Communication/Information* as at least one of the reasons for the complaint. Examples include complaints relating to not being able to contact social workers and not receiving copies of children's records such as contact sheets or assessment reports.

*Professional Conduct of Staff* was included in 22 (22%) complaints. 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.

There were 19 complaints (19%) categorised as *Disputed Decision*. In some cases, this related to parents being unhappy about the decisions made by social work teams in relation to family dynamics, for example in cases where a mother's new partner is believed to be a risk to the children.

These have been the 3 major categories of complaints in preceding years in relation to children's social care services. In 2013/14 *Lack of Communication/Information* was cited in 40.5% of complaints, followed by *Professional Conduct of Staff* (35.4%) and *Disputed Decision* (19.0%).

In Children's Services the recently introduced Single Assessment Process for families requires feedback to referrers, which is way of improving communication. Across CAS, disputed decisions are reviewed on an individual basis, and practice standards have been developed which include expectations in regard to communication and professional conduct.

**Table 6: Categories of complaints received 2014/15**

Complaint Category / Issue	Number of Complaints
Lack of Service – Communications/Information	27
Professional Conduct of Staff	22
Disputed Decision	19
Lack of Service – Contact/Visits	10
Speed of Service	10
Staff Attitude	9
Confidentiality	9
Quality of Service – Report Writing	6
Lack of Service – Denied Service	5
Lack of Service – Restricted Choices of Services	5
Application of Service Guidance/Procedures	4
Provision of Services – Reviews/Conferences	4
Safeguarding	4
Provision of Service - Assessment	2
Quality of Service - Personal Financial Issues	2
Lack of Service – Referrals Not Actioned	1
Quality of Service – Late Referrals	1
Finance - Assessment	1
Finance – Charging Policy	1
Provision of Service – Foster Care	1
Protection Investigation	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>144*</b>

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

## Complaints received by service area

As shown in Table 7 below, the service area receiving the greatest number of complaints was the Assessment and Intervention service followed by the Child Protection service. These two 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 2014/15	Number of Stage 1 – 3 Complaints 2013/14	Direction of Travel	% of Total Complaints 2014/15	% of Total Complaints 2013/14
Assessment & Intervention	35	3	↑	35%	3.8%
Child Protection	32	-	-	32%	-
First Contact*	10	6	↑	10%	7.6%
Looked After and Permanence	8	5	↑	8%	6.3%
Fostering and Adoption	7	0	↑	7%	-
Disability Social Work	4	2	↑	4%	2.5%
Safeguarding Children	2	55	↓	2%	69.5%
Independent Reviewing Officers	1	0	↑	1%	-
Children's Home	1	1	↓	1%	1.3%
Young People's Service	0	4	↓	-	5.1%
Aycliffe Secure Services	0	1	↓	-	1.3%
Full Circle	0	1	↓	-	1.3%
Pathfinder	0	1	↓	-	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>↑</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

During 2014/15, the LGO contacted the council in relation to 11 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 2014/15, of the 11 social care cases received by the LGO, 9 were progressed to investigation. Final Decision letters were received for 8 of the 9 cases:

- One stated that the council had not been at fault;
- One stated that there had been injustice to the complainants;
- In 6 cases the LGO decided not to investigate.

In the other case, a Draft Decision Notice was received after the end of the reporting year. The council has agreed to undertake the LGOs recommended action to resolve the complaints.

The 2 enquiries which the LGO did not progress to investigation are summarised below:

- In one case the LGO decided to close as 'premature' as it had not been through Stage 2 of the complaint procedure. It is currently ongoing as a Stage 2 complaint.

- Another case was classified by the Ombudsman as ‘premature’ due to the complainant escalating to the Ombudsman before the Council’s process had been completed.

### Complaints by complainant type

As has been the trend over previous reporting years, *Parents* constituted the highest number of complainants, representing 69 (69%) of the 100 complaints. This is an increase on the 2013/14 figure of 53.2% complaints made by Parents. *Other relatives* (in most cases, grandparents) brought 18 (18%) complaints compared with 22.8% in 2013/14. *Carers* made 9 (9%) complaints followed by *Advocates\** who made 3 (3%) complaints. One complaint (1%) was made by an *Other* person (a Head teacher) in relation to a child’s case. In 2013/14, 3.8% of complaints were made by Carers, 13.9% by Advocates, 3.8% by clients and 2.5% by Other persons.

*\*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.*

### 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. The 100 complaints were made on behalf of a total of 174 children and young people. Using the eldest child’s information, 49 of the 100 complaints were made on behalf of girls aged 1-17 years, and 51 were made on behalf of boys aged 0-18 years.

### Ethnicity and diversity

In 99 of the 100 (99%) complaints, the eldest child (or the child who the complaint was made on behalf of) was White British; in 1 (1%) case the child was recorded as being Mixed Race Asian.

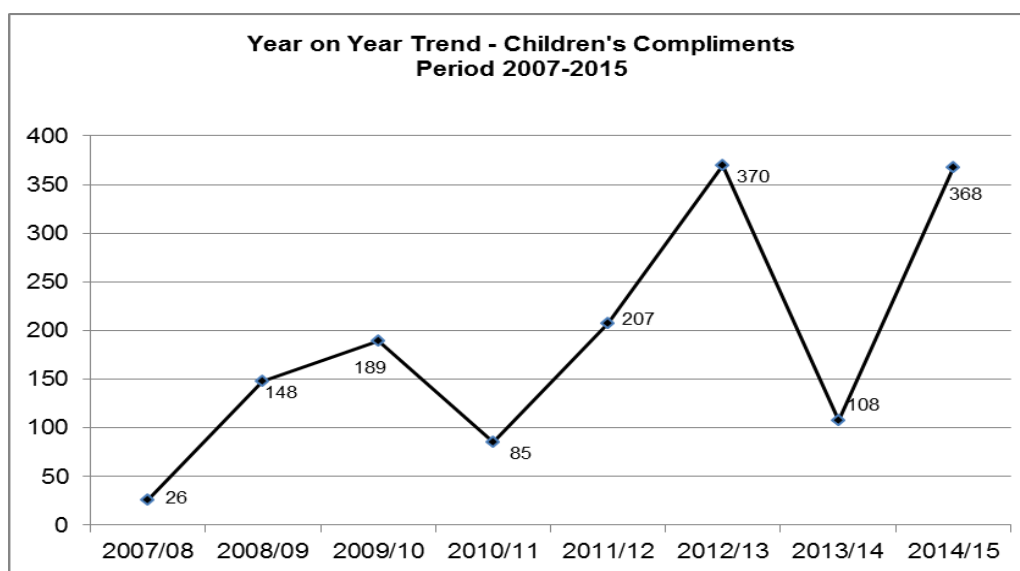
### Declined complaints

During the reporting year, 5 complaints were declined, 2 due to the cases being subject to legal processes and therefore required to be addressed through the Courts and 2 cases were in relation to matters which were over one year old; 1 of these cases had been through a legal process, and in the other case the complainant had stated an intention to take legal action against the Council. The other case was one which DCC had not been involved with. Declined complaints are *not* included in the total figure of 105 complaints received.

### Number of compliments received

In the reporting year, the number of recorded compliments rose again to former levels, from 370 in 2012/13 to 108 in 2013/14 to 368 in 2014/15. This represents an increase of 240.7% from 2013/14 to 2014/15, in contrast to the decrease of 70.8% which was reported in the previous year.

**Graph 8: Compliments year on year trend 2007-2015**



Reasons for this increase are attributed to improved collecting and reporting of compliments, with managers having been reminded to report any compliments received from service users and their families.

### Compliments received by service area

In 2014/15, the service which received the most compliments was the Family Pathfinder Service, closely followed by Aycliffe Secure Services, which received 24.7% and 24.5% of compliments respectively. The Community Support Team, and Think Family, which are both positive intervention services, received 11.7% and 9.5% of total compliments respectively.

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

Service Area	Number of Compliments 2014/15	Number of Compliments 2013/14	Direction of Travel	% of Total Compliments 2014/15	% of Total Compliments 2013/14
Aycliffe Secure Service	90	11	↑	24.5%	10.3%
Assessment and Intervention	24	-	-	6.5%	-
Copelaw Activities (CATS)	0	1	↓	-	0.9%
Children's Homes	22	2	↑	6.0%	1.8%
Child Protection	10	-	-	2.7%	-
Community Support Team	43	56	↓	11.7%	51.8%
Disability Social Work	7	1	↑	1.9%	0.9%
Family Pathfinder	91	2	↑	24.7%	1.8%
Fostering and Adoption	8	1	↑	2.2%	0.9%
Full Circle	3	6	↓	0.8%	5.6%
Initial Response/Emergency Duty	7	1	↑	1.9%	0.9%
Looked After & Permanence	23	8	↑	6.3%	7.4%
Safeguarding Children	0	11	↓	-	10.3%
Supervised Contact Service	0	1	↓	-	0.9%
Think Family	35	0	↑	9.5%	-
4Real	5	7	↓	1.3%	6.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>108</b>	↑	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Ratio of compliments to complaints

The ratio of compliments to complaints received is the highest for a number of years at 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.

## 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:

- *You have been lovely to work with, we always felt listened to and we know you did your very best for (child). Thank you! You have been great! **Looked After and Permanence teams***
- *I am very grateful for all the help and support that (worker) has given me. With Community Support help I now feel that my son will live with me forever and we can look forward to our future together as a happy family. **Community Support Team***
- *You are straightforward, not false and you made me feel confident in you; you put me at ease; you got the children counselling and you listened to me in a way that no one else had done. **Assessment and Intervention Team***
- *Thank you so much for taking care of us when we were born and for finding us our new mammy and daddy. We will always be grateful to you, and we will be happy and healthy in our new home. Our mammy and daddy are really grateful too that you picked them to look after us and are looking forward to a lovely family life together. **Looked After and Permanence teams***
- *I have to say that XXXX is amazing and has been a huge positive in both mine and XXXX life. XXXX has been easy to get hold of, she always replies to messages and has been such a big help for me too. She has always been there with advice when I needed it. **Looked After and Permanence teams***
- *It was lovely working with XXXX, she listened to my worries and helped me through the bad and hard times and never failed to cheer me up. I have come so far and made so much progress since working with XXXX. **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 2014/15 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.

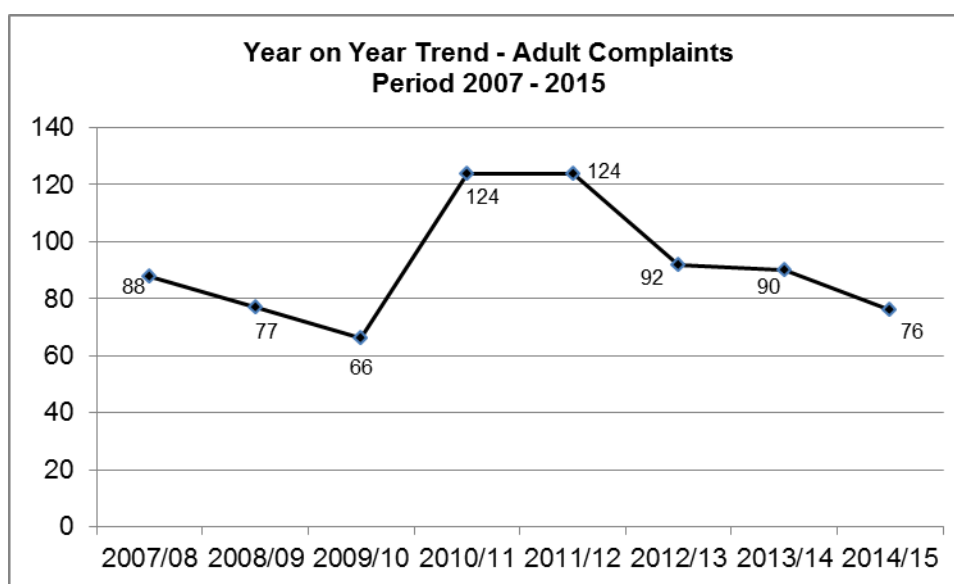
Where all proportionate resolution mechanisms have been exhausted and if the complaint remains unresolved, the complainant can refer outstanding issues to the Local Government Ombudsman.

### Year on year trend 2007-2015

Graph 9 overleaf shows year on year comparison of the numbers of complaints received for adult social care. The graph shows that in 2014/15 there was a 16% decrease in the number of complaints received; 76 compared to 90 complaints received in 2013/14, continuing the downward trend of the previous reporting year when compared to 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 76 complaints received in 2014/15 reflect the second lowest number in the 8 years since 2007/08 and reflects the ongoing work to improve service delivery, including learning from previous complaints so that mistakes are not repeated.



**Graph 9: Complaints trend 2007-2015 – adult social care**



### Number of complaints received

In 2014/15, a total of 76 complaints were received and progressed through the statutory adult social care complaints procedure. This represents a decrease of 16% on the 90 complaints received in 2013/14. Of the 76 complaints received, 74 were completed by the end of the reporting year.

### Number of complaints upheld

Of the 76 complaints received, 17 (22.4%) were upheld in full and 26 (34.2%) were partially upheld. There were 31 (40.8%) complaints that were not upheld. Two complaints (2.6%) were carried forward into 2015/16, one of which is the subject of an independent investigation.

**Table 9: Outcome of complaints 2014/15**

Service Area	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Ongoing	Total
Older People/ Physical Disability & Sensory Impairment	8	11	21	1	41
Learning Disability/ Mental Health / Substance Misuse	5	7	4	1	17
Adult Care - Safeguarding	0	1	0	0	1
Commissioning	3	4	3	0	10
County Durham Care And Support	1	3	3	0	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>76</b>

### 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 76 complaints received, 73 (96.1%) were acknowledged within the 2 day timescale. In the 3 cases where the timescale for acknowledgement was not met, this was due to administrative error and was resolved.



## Complaints completed within timescale

Complaints Resolution Plans (CRPs) were completed in all of the 76 complaints received in the year. The CRPs included timescales for response and are calculated based upon the potential complexity of the case. Of the 76 complaints received, 74 were completed at the end of the reporting year and 100% of these were completed within the agreed timescale of the CRP. Of the 2 complaints not completed at the end of the reporting year they remained within the timescale agreed in the CRP.

## Categories of complaints

As detailed in Table 10 below, of the 76 complaints received, 16 (21.1%) contained a category of *Lack of Communication/Information*. 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 13 (17.1%) complaints related to the category of *Disputed Decision*. 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 complaint was *Professional Conduct of Staff* with 12 (15.8%) complaints containing this as an element. Such complaints tended to be allied to disputed decisions and involved allegations that assessments had not been thoroughly conducted.

These have been the three major categories of complaints in preceding years in relation to adult's social care services. In 2013/14 *Lack of Communication/Information* featured in 24.4% of complaints, *Disputed Decision* featured in 24.4% followed by *Professional Conduct of Staff* (17.7%).

**Table 10: Categories of complaints received 2014/15**

Complaint Category / Issue	Number of Complaints
Lack Of Service - Communications/Information	16
Disputed Decision	13
Professional Conduct Of Staff	12
Quality Of Service - Personal Care	7
Staff Attitude	6
Quality Of Service - Work Of Other Agencies	6
Finance - Direct Payment	5
Finance - Charging Policy	5
Application Of Service Guidance/Procedures	4
Lack Of Service - Denied Service	4
Lack Of Service – Change to Clients Service	4
Provision Of Service - Assessment	4
Provision Of Service - Equipment	3
Finance - Assessment	3
Quality Of Service - Missed/Late Dom Care Calls	3
Lack Of Service - Restricted Choices Of Current Services	3
Quality Of Service - Personal Financial Issues	2
Safeguarding	2
Provision Of Service - Reviews/Conferences	2
Quality of Service – Missed Medication	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>105*</b>

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

To try to mitigate against complaints with these 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. Across CAS, disputed decisions are reviewed on an individual basis, and practice standards have been developed which include expectations in regard to communication and professional conduct.

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.

### 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 2014/15**

Service	Number of Complaints 2014/15	Number of Complaints 2013/14	Direction of Travel	% of Total Complaints 2014/15	% of Total Complaints 2013/14
Older People/ Physical Disabilities/Sensory Impairment	41	48	↓	54.0%	53.3%
Learning Disability/Mental Health/Carers/Substance Misuse	17	12	↑	22.3%	13.3%
Commissioning	10	22	↓	13.2%	24.4%
County Durham Care And Support	7	4	↑	9.2%	4.5%
Adult Care - Safeguarding	1	4	↓	1.3%	4.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>90</b>	↓	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

The service area receiving the greatest number of complaints was Older People / Physical Disabilities and Sensory Impairment service followed by the Child Protection service, which has the greatest amount of direct contact with service users and members of the public.

### Complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

During 2014/15, the LGO contacted the council in relation to 13 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 2014/15 in relation to adult social care complaints the council received 3 enquires and 10 Final Decision letters. Of these:

- In 6 cases it was stated that the council had not been at fault;
- In 3 cases maladministration and injustice were identified;
- In 1 case the LGO decided not to investigate.

The 3 enquiries received were in relation to:

- One complaint for which a Draft Decision Notice has not been issued at the time of writing. The complaint had been independently investigated.
- One complaint regarding a service which had not been commissioned by the council.
- One case which the LGO decided to close as 'premature' as it had not been through the council's complaints procedure.

### Complaints by complainant type

*Relatives* (non-parent) constituted the highest category of complainant at 32 complaints (42.1%). This category includes adult children complaining on behalf of their parent, and spouses. This is consistent with trends in previous years. The number of *Parents* making a complaint relating to their adult child was 15 (19.7%) which reflects an increase from the 2013/14 figure of 13.3%. The number of *Clients* who raised complaints on their own behalf was 14 (18.4%); this reflects a decrease when compared to 2013/14 (28.9%). *Advocates* made 8 (10.5%) complaints compared with 3.4% in 2013/14. The overall conclusion is that fewer service users were complaining directly, with more complaints being received from representatives on their behalf.

### Age and gender profiles of complainants

The majority (55.3%) of complaints were made by on or behalf of females (19.7% aged 18-64 years, 22.4% aged 65-84 years and 13.2% aged 85+ years). Males accounted for 44.7% of complainants (23.7% aged 18-64 years, 10.5% aged 65-84 years and 10.5% aged 85+ years). This data represents an increase in complaints for males (compared to previous years) and an increase for both males and females aged 85+.

### Ethnicity and diversity

Complaints were made by or on behalf of service users, 97.4% of whom were White British and 2.6% Mixed Race Asian (2 separate complaints from one complainant).

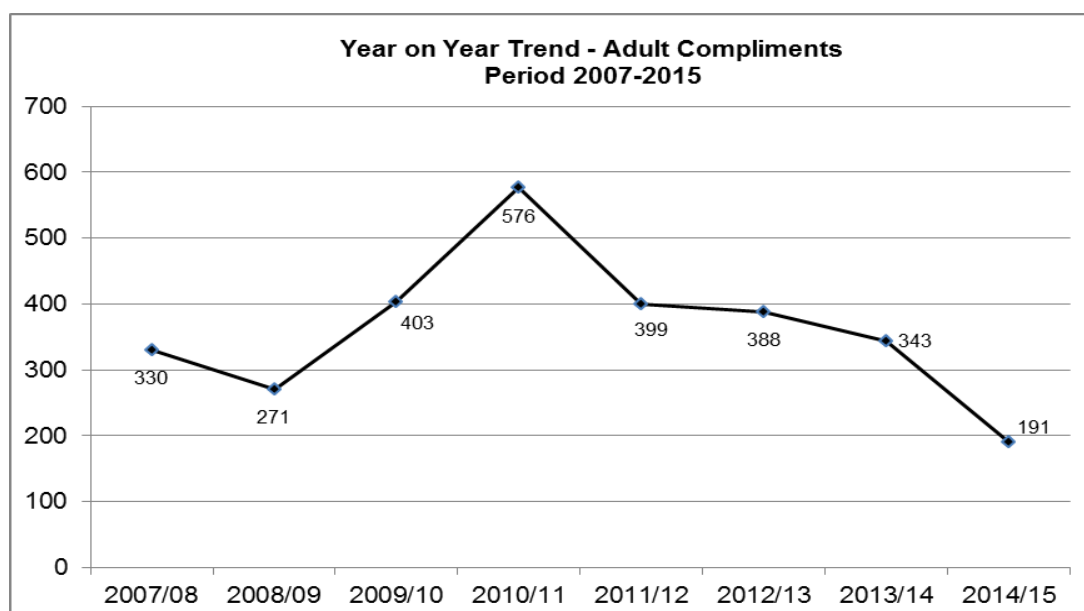
### Declined complaints

During the year, 4 complaints were declined. One complaint was declined on the grounds that the service user had not given his permission for his care worker to make a complaint on his behalf, and the issues raised were more than 1 year old. One complaint was declined on the grounds it was a matter to be resolved directly between a care provider and a service user's family. Two complaints were declined on the grounds that the complaints had previously been concluded (in one case the matter having been adjudicated by the Ombudsman). Declined complaints are *not* included in the figure total of 76 complaints received.

## Number of compliments received

In the reporting year, a total of 191 compliments were received within the Adult Care service. This represents a decrease of 44.3% from the 343 received during 2013/14. The graph below shows that following a peak in 2010/11, the number of compliments relating to adult's services has fallen year on year, with 2014/15 being the lowest since 2007/08. The reporting year has changes in the type of provision provided by CDCS, a service which has historically received high numbers of compliments.

**Graph 10: Year on year trend compliments – 2007-2015**



## Ratio of compliments to complaints

The ratio of compliments to complaints in 2014/15 was 2.5:1 compared to 3.8:1 in 2013/14 and 4.2:1 in 2012/13.

## Compliments by service area

**Table 12: Total number of compliments by service area 2014/15**

Service	Total Compliments 2014/15	Total Compliments 2013/14	Direction of Travel	% of Total Compliments 2014/15
Older People/ Physical Disabilities/Sensory Impairment	4	4	-	2.1%
Learning Disability/Mental Health/Carers/Substance Misuse	58	99	↓	30.4%
County Durham Care and Support	126	233	↓	65.9%
Commissioning	3	6	↓	1.6%
Planning And Service Strategy	0	1	↓	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>343</b>	↓	<b>100%</b>

County Durham Care and Support (CDCS), the in-house provider received 126 (65.9%) of the total number of compliments. The Older People's/ Physical Disabilities/ Sensory Support Service area received 58 (30.4%) of compliments. These percentages reflect those in 2013/14 (67.9% and 28.9% 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:

- *(Service user) wanted to compliment the occupational therapy assistant. She could not praise this gentleman high enough. As soon as the occupational therapy assistant was appointed (staff member) appeared the same day. Such speedy service was appreciated. He was absolutely brilliant and got everything sorted and into place, he was friendly and professional and a pleasure to deal with.*  
**Occupational Therapy**
- *The workers who supported me were extremely helpful and very pleasant. They treated me with care and consideration and I have nothing but praise for them. Their support, kindness and professionalism was of the highest standard.*  
**Integrated Short Term Intervention Service**
- *Social Worker (name) has been so helpful and caring to both me and my partner, who is seriously ill. As sole carer I was struggling to cope until (SW) became involved. He organised day care twice a week which has given me a much needed break. (SW) has a unique ability to combine his own caring qualities with professionalism. Nothing seems to be too much trouble to him and he always finds the time to listen and advise. He is an asset to social care.*  
**Weardale Locality Team**
- *You're just the sort of person whose kindness means more than you could ever know. Thank you so much for looking after mam. What a great service you provide. She was happy, safe and well cared for in the six weeks you visited.*  
**Reablement Durham and Sedgfield**
- *(Staff Member) attended my wife today to assess and assist her loss of vision problems. We would like to put on record our appreciation of his understanding, knowledge and the care he took to reassure and provide the best of information and help. We found his visit very helpful and reassuring.*  
**Sensory Impairment**

## Part Five - Remedies and learning outcomes 2014/15

### 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.
- Complainants were asked for their agreement to share their 'story' with managers and staff, to aid the learning from their experience. In one case the complainant was invited to meet with a training manager to assist in the creation of a training session.

#### Adult complaints:

- Reimbursement action was taken where there was no evidence on the case record that charging policies and the financial assessment process had been discussed or explained.
- Explanations were provided or reiterated where communication had previously taken place but the client's understanding had not been checked.
- Occupational Therapy and Needs assessments were conducted under second opinion conditions where disputes arose following the original assessments for adaptations or care services.
- Where the client expressed a loss of trust and confidence in an individual worker a different worker was allocated to restore the relationship.

For both adults and children's services complaints, meetings with managers have continued to be an extremely 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. 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 however, 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 provided.

### **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**

- Ensuring that policies and procedures for foster carers are regularly reviewed, updated and re-published to reflect current working practises.
- Reviewing and amending the procedures relating to the Public Law Outline (PLO) process, to ensure that it is clear for parents whose children are at potential risk of being removed from their care.

##### **Communications**

- Staff being 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 should return calls when messages are taken or voicemails
- 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.
- The Full Circle (therapeutic) service agreed to review its published leaflets and amend where necessary.

##### **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**

- Staff ID badges should always be shown when visiting members of the public and care must be taken regarding how complainants are addressed.
- Staff were reminded to adhere to the procedure for sharing copies of Supervised Contact Records with families.



## Adult complaints:

### Policies and procedures

- Letters sent to families, in the event of a service user death whilst subject to a Deprivation of Liberties (DOLs) authorisation, should mention that a coroner might *routinely* become involved.

### Communications

- Staff in the Older People's service were reminded that Notifications of Service/Change of Circumstance forms must provide clear information, in particular:
  - In relation to medical information that will form the basis of decisions on care or charging
  - Internal jargon (used by social care and health services) must be avoided and plain English should be used
- Staff must ensure that service users are informed if they no longer have an allocated worker with reasons for this. They should be given information about the relevant team's duty system and the contact details.
- 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.
- Team managers and staff were reminded that they must clarify to care providers why respite care is required for individual service users.
- When respite care arrangements are made, social workers should ensure that families are informed of and fully understand that possible financial implications.

### Social work practise

- Team managers were reminded of the need to act promptly when there are changes made in the type or provision of care for a service user.
- Team managers and staff were reminded of the need to be mindful at all times regarding professionalism and communication skills.
- Team managers and staff were reminded that social workers should where necessary proactively support families, to ensure that they are given accurate advice and assistance in understanding the payment of invoices for care.



## 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 2014/15. These include:

- Revised procedures for dealing with children and young people's statutory complaints have been made available for staff on DCC's intranet.
- Examples of compliments are shared through the quarterly reports and internal staff publications.
- Managers and staff have received specific training regarding responding to complaints, including 'valuing the apology'.
- Undertaking a full review of the children's complaints process to ensure accessibility and transparency in line with best practice from the LGO.

Key areas that for development in 2015/16 include:

- 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.
- Delivering further training sessions to managers and staff who deal with and respond to complaints.
- Reviewing and updating the complaints information that is available for service users.

## 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 2007-2012, 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, but compliments relating to children's services, and total compliments increased. Although the number of compliments about adult's services has decreased this year, for every complaint received, over twice as many compliments were received.

As the complaints function has embedded into the quality and development service, it plays a vital role and contributes 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.

The highest number of complaints received relates to a lack of communication/information, staff conduct and disputed decisions. Whilst remembering that complaints are often about perception, the service continues to monitor these areas in particular for the future.

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](http://www.durham.gov.uk)) and public information is in key locations throughout the County.

Contact the CAS Complaints Team in writing at CAS Complaints Team, Room 3/48, Durham County Council, County Hall, Durham DH1 5UL or by phone to 03000 268422 or email [CASComplaints@durham.gov.uk](mailto:CASComplaints@durham.gov.uk) .

## Appendix 1 - Glossary of abbreviations

<b>CAS</b>	Children and Adults Services
<b>CDCS</b>	County Durham Care and Support
<b>CRB</b>	Criminal Record Bureau
<b>CRP</b>	Complaints Resolution Plan
<b>DCC</b>	Durham County Council
<b>IO</b>	Investigating Officer
<b>IP</b>	Independent Person
<b>LA</b>	Local Authority
<b>LD</b>	Learning Disabilities
<b>LGO</b>	Local Government Ombudsman
<b>MH</b>	Mental Health
<b>NHS</b>	National Health Service
<b>NYAS</b>	National Youth Advocacy Service
<b>ONS</b>	Office for National Statistics
<b>OP</b>	Older People
<b>PDSI</b>	Physical Disability & Sensory Impairment

Children and Adults Services

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Children and Adults Social Care Services  
2014/15

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Children and Adults Services, CMI Team 2015