

Children and Young People's  
Services

# **Annual Statutory Representations Report**

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Children and Young People's Services 2016/17

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## Part One – Introduction

Welcome to Durham County Council's (DCC) Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) Annual Report which details representations made in relation to children's social care services. The report covers the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. This is the first Annual Representations Report regarding Durham's children's social care services following the disaggregation of Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) and Adult and Health Services (AHS).

The aim of this report is to give members of the public, Members, managers and staff a summary overview of the information which has been shared through quarterly reports during 2016/17, in relation to complaints and compliments received about children's social care services.

The Council is required by law to have management arrangements in place for considering children's social care representations, including complaints, under the Children Act 1989. National legislative procedures for social care were amended in September 2006 with the introduction of the *Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006*. It is a requirement of the regulations that the Council publishes an annual report. The contents of this report reflect the requirements of what must be included in the annual report, as set out in the guidance document *Getting the Best from Complaints* produced by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), which accompanies the regulations.

In addition, the report includes a section regarding compliments information.

Other key features of the regulations include:

- the requirement for local authorities to appoint a Complaints Manager; and
- a 12 month time limit to make complaints.

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).

### Children's social care complaints process

#### Stage 1 – Local Resolution

This initial stage allows Children's Services managers the opportunity to try and resolve complaints locally, usually within the team being complained about.

#### Stage 2 – Investigation

Stage 2 involves a full and formal investigation by an independent Investigating Officer (IO). An 'Independent Person' (IP) must also be appointed to oversee the investigation and report on the timeliness and transparency of the IO's investigation. Both the Investigating Officer and Independent Person produce reports, which are submitted to a senior manager who writes the Council's final 'Adjudication' response to the complainant. Whilst the regulations do not require Investigating Officers to be independent of the Council, we have signed up to a contract for the provision of Independent Investigating Officers, as well as a contract for Independent Persons.

### **Stage 3 – Review Panel**

A review panel is convened when the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response. The panel consists of an independent chairperson and two panel members; all 3 individuals must be independent of the Council.

#### **The Local Government Ombudsman**

Although complainants can refer complaints at any stage to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) they will not normally investigate until the Council has conducted its own investigation and provided a response at all 3 stages detailed above. Further information is included in Part Two of this report.

#### **External support to the complaints process**

##### **The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)**

The DfES '*Get it Sorted*' guidance states that more robust procedures should be put in place to ensure children and young people are aware of the advocacy service and that it should be easy to access; the Council is committed to these principles. Children and young people who would like an advocate can contact NYAS directly. If they complain to the Council the Complaints Officer will provide them with information and advice about the advocacy service provided by NYAS. Further information is included in Part Two of this report.

##### **Investigating Officers**

While the Regulations do not require Investigating Officer's to be independent of the Council, the Service has signed up to a contract for the provision of Independent Investigating Officers.

##### **Independent Persons**

The Service has signed up to a contract for the provision of Independent Persons.

## Summary of key messages

The key headlines from this report are as follows:

- The Service received 107 Stage 1 complaints, a reduction from 130 in 2015/16.
- The Service actioned 3 complaints at Stage 2 during 2016/17, a reduction from 8 in 2015/16.
- Parents made the highest number of complaints (64.5%), with 7.5% of complaints being made by young people or their Advocates.
- The majority of Stage 1 complaints were about Families First and Child Protection teams (37.4% and 29.9% respectively).
- Of the complaints received 88.6% met a target response date of 10 working days from receipt. A further 68.3% met a target response date of 20 working days from receipt.
- The majority (53.3%) of complaints were not upheld.
- The most common theme of upheld and partially upheld complaints was ‘Lack of communication – not informed about the case’.
- The Local Government Ombudsman issued one Final Decision letter in which fault was found, resulting in a financial remedy payment of £1000.
- Complaints continue to provide invaluable information from which Children’s Services learns how to improve. Some examples are provided below:
  - Child Protection team staff were reminded of the need for birth response plans to be shared with the appropriate staff, including staff in hospitals.
  - Managers reminded staff that a case note should be recorded when families are signposted to the relevant agencies for benefits advice to evidence guidance has been given.
  - Managers were reminded that when court orders are issued, they have a responsibility to ensure that the allocated case worker follows up the actions as appropriate.
- The Service received 119 compliments, a reduction from 212 in 2015/16. However, 74 of those 212 were about a preventative service (Think Family), for which compliments are now logged under the corporate arrangements
- The majority of compliments (22.1%) received were in relation to Fostering and Adoption services, closely followed by Families First (21.2%) and Looked After and Permanence (20.4%) teams.

Note: 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 Local Authority. The regulations **prescribe** how social care complaints must be managed and progressed, hence children’s 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.

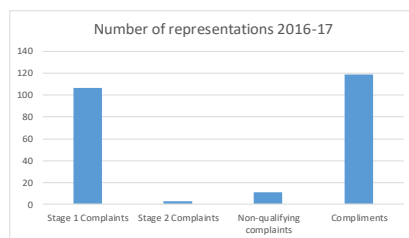
## Part Two – Representations made to the local authority- children’s social care services

We received 107 Stage 1 complaints during 2016/17, a reduction from 130 in 2015/16.

We actioned 3 complaints at Stage 2 during 2016/17, a reduction from 8 in 2015/16.

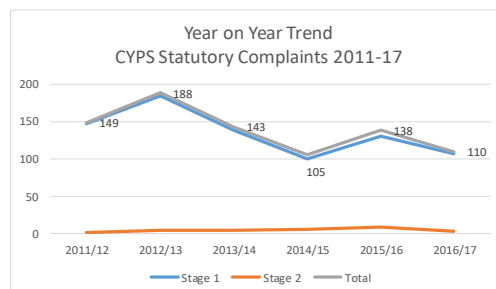
We declined to action 11 complaints during 2016/17, a decrease from 17 in 2015/16. These included complaints about private law matters and from persons who were not eligible to act on a child’s behalf. In all cases the complainant was advised of the reasons why we could not investigate their complaint and the most appropriate way to pursue the matter.

We received 119 compliments during 2016/17, a reduction from 212 in 2015/16.



## Year on year trend 2011 – 2017

The graph below highlights overall performance from previous annual reports, showing year on year comparisons for the past 6 years of the total numbers of complaints received for children’s social care. This shows there has been a 20.3% decrease in complaints since 2015/16.



## Which customer groups made the complaints

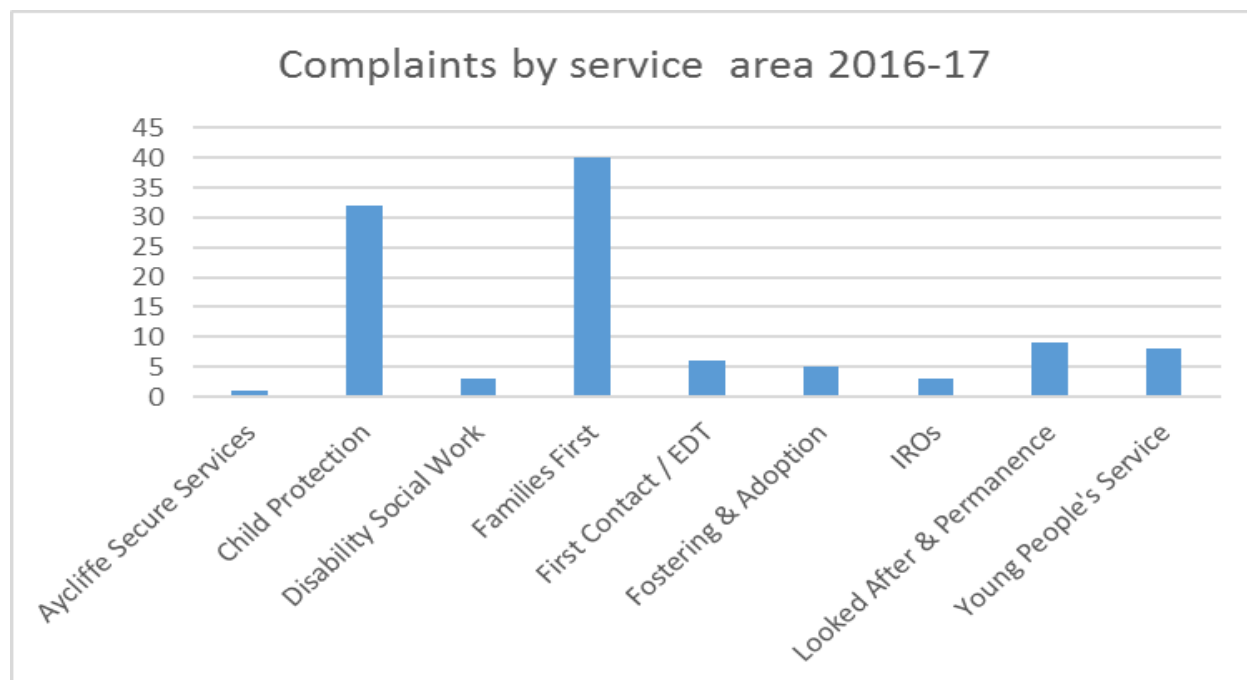
For the purpose of this report, the 'customer group' is the service users (children and young people) or their representative(s) who requested or received services from the service areas which are listed in the table below, and who complained about those services.

Service Area	Number of Stage 1 Complaints 2016/17	Number of Stage 1 Complaints 2015/16	Direction of Travel from Previous Year	% of Total Complaints 2016/17	% of Total Complaints 2015/16
Families First <sup>a</sup>	40	17	↑	37.4%	13.1%
Child Protection	32	41	↓	29.9%	31.5%
Looked After and Permanence	9	11	↓	8.4%	8.5%
Young People's Service	8	4	↑	7.5%	3.1%
First Contact & Emergency Duty Team	6	4	↑	5.6%	3.1%
Fostering and Adoption	5	3	↑	4.7%	2.3%
Disability Social Work	3	9	↓	2.8%	6.9%
Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)	3	0	↑	2.8%	-
Aycliffe Secure Services	1	0	↑	0.9%	-
Assessment & Intervention <sup>b</sup>	0	40	↓	-	30.7%
Full Circle	0	1	↓	-	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>↓</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>a</sup>Teams in place since restructure throughout 2015/16

<sup>b</sup>Teams no longer in place

As shown in the table and graph, the service area receiving the greatest number of complaints was the Families First service followed by the Child Protection service. These service areas have the greatest amount of direct contact with service users and members of the public.



## Statistical data - age, gender, disability, sexual orientation and ethnicity of complainants

Data is gathered on who is the complainant. Details are:

- Children and young people either directly or through a NYAS Advocate (7.5%) and
- Adults 'on behalf of' children and young people (the service users) (92.5%).

In the 92.5%, parents represented 64.5% of complaints about children's social care services.

When a formal complaint is received, it is logged on the record of the eldest child (if there are more than one children in the family who are receiving the service being complained about) unless the complaint is regarding services to a particular child. From the child's records we can obtain information in relation to age, gender and ethnicity of 'the complainant', which is noted only for the requirements of the Annual Report.

Sexual orientation of the service user is not recorded unless it is of relevance to the young person's case.

Three complaints were received in 2016/17 relating to children and young people receiving services from the Disability Social Work Team, which represents a decrease from the 9 received in 2015/16.

### Age and gender profiles of complainants

Using the information of the eldest or specific child receiving the service:

Complaint made by or on behalf of	Aged	Number	% of total complaints
Boy	1 to 17	59	55.1%
Girl	0 to 18	46	43.1%
Transgender	15	1	0.9%
Other*		1	0.9%
<b>Total</b>		107	<b>100%</b>

\*One complaint (0.8%) was made by foster carers about a general issue and was not relating to the case of a particular child in their care.

### Ethnicity profiles of complainants

Using the information of the eldest or specific child receiving the service, it can be reported that in 102 of the 107 complaints, the eldest child (or the child who the complaint was made on behalf of) was White British (95.4%); in 1 case (0.9%) the child was recorded as being Mixed Race Asian; in 1 case (0.9%) as 'Any Other Ethnic Group' and 1 case (0.9%) did not relate to a particular child. In 2 cases (1.9%) no ethnicity information was recorded.



The important matter is that complaints are welcomed as a potential source of learning, regardless of the service users' (or their representatives') age, gender, disability, sexual orientation or ethnicity.

## Advocacy services provided under the complaint arrangements

### National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

Durham County Council has a contract with the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) to provide free advocacy services to children and young people who are looked after. Children and young people who would like an Advocate can contact NYAS directly. If they complain to the Council, the Complaints Officer can provide them with information and advice about the advocacy service provided by NYAS and in some cases, has contacted NYAS on a complainant's behalf. The DfES '*Get it Sorted*' guidance states that more robust procedures should be put in place to ensure children and young people are aware of the advocacy service and that it should be easy to access; the Council is committed to these principles.

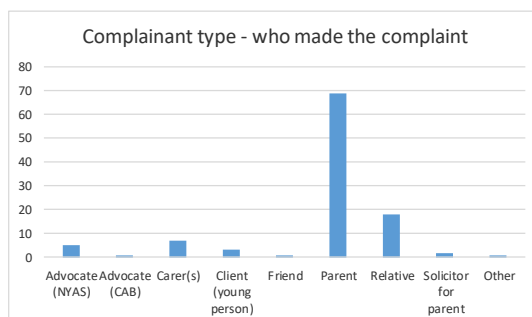
In a complaint received in 2016/17 from a young person who was supported by a NYAS Advocate, the complainant expressed that she would like to tell the Head of Children's Services about her experience. A meeting was arranged, with positive discussion about the work of Advocates.

### Representational Advocacy Service (RAS)

The Council also has a contract with the Representational Advocacy Service (RAS), which is part of the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). Each year a number of complaints are received from Representational Advocates acting on behalf of the representative(s), usually parents(s) of children and young people.

### How advocacy services were taken up – who made the complaints

The graph below shows that 'parents' constituted the highest number of complainants, making 69 of the 107 complaints (64.5%). A further 1 complaint was received from a parent through a RAS Advocate, and 2 through solicitors. 'Clients' made 3 complaints and NYAS Advocates made 5, so a total of 8 complaints were received directly from children and young people, which represents 7.5% of the 107 Stage 1 complaints.



## Compliance with timescales

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

- Stage 1 (local resolution) which has a target timescale of 10 working days for non-complex complaints, which can be extended up to 20 working days if the complaint is complex or Advocate involvement is required.
- Stage 2 (independent investigation) which has a target timescale of 25 working days, extendable up to a maximum of 65 working days.
- Stage 3 (review panel) which has a timescale of up to 50 working days.

Performance against these targets in 2016/17 is summarised below:

No. of complaints targeted to be responded to within:				Total number
	10 working days	11- 20 working days	65 working days	
Stage 1	44 of which 39 met this target (88.6%)	63 of which 43 met this target (68.3%)		107 of which 82 met their target (76.6%) and 25 did not (23.4%)
Stage 2			3 of which 0 met this target	3

### Stage 2 complaints

In 2016/17 three complaints were independently investigated at Stage 2, compared with 8 in 2015/16. In all 3 cases the timeframe of 65 working days was not met, which reflects the complaint complexity and depth of investigation at this stage. The complainants were kept fully informed and agreed to the extended timeframes for response, expressing preference for a detailed investigation. The final outcome of all 3 Stage 2 complaints was that they were all partially upheld.

No complaints were taken to Stage 3 during 2016/17.

## The types and outcomes of complaints made

When complaints are received they are recorded and categorised according to the subject matter of the issues raised. Detailed below is the outcomes of complaints in 2016/17 in the associated categories.

The list of possible categories was expanded at the beginning of the year to more accurately reflect the different types of issues that are raised through complaints.

Complaint Category / Issue	Number of Upheld Complaints	Number of Partially Upheld Complaints	Number of Not Upheld Complaints	Total
Application of service guidance/procedures	0	0	1	1
Confidentiality	2	3	1	6
Discrimination	0	0	1	1
Disputed Decision – disagreement with an action	1	2	7	10
Disputed Decision – disagreement with an assessment	0	4	1	5
Disputed Decision – disagreement with a report	0	2	3	5
<b>Disputed Decision – disagreement with an explanation or decision</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	11	<b>18</b>
Lack of Communication – no information received	2	3	5	10
Lack of Communication – not informed of meeting details/change	2	1	0	3
<b>Lack of Communication – not updated about case</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	4	<b>12</b>
Lack of Communication – unreturned phone calls/texts	2	3	6	11
Lack of Communication - other	0	4	1	5
Lack of Explanation / Explanation not understood	2	3	2	7
Lack of Service – change to clients service	1	0	0	1
Lack of Service – contacts/visits	0	4	3	7
Lack of Service – denied service	0	3	2	5
Lack of service – referral of concern not actioned	0	2	3	5
Provision of Service - assessment	1	1	2	4
Provision of Service - equipment	0	0	1	1
Provision of Service – foster care	0	1	1	2
Quality of Service – report writing	0	3	1	4
Quality of Service – transport	0	1	0	1
Safeguarding	0	0	2	2
<b>Speed of Service</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	4	<b>11</b>
<i>Standard of Care</i>	0	0	1	1
<b>Staff Attitude</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	12	<b>18</b>
Staff being or seeming to be biased	0	0	7	7
Staff being or seeming to be untruthful	0	2	5	7
<b>Staff not acting in best interest of service user</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	14	<b>21</b>
Staff not adhering to statutory timescales or responsibilities	1	3	2	6
Staff not preparing for a meeting or conference	0	1	1	2
Staff not turning up for /attending or being late for a meeting	1	2	0	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>75</b>	104	<b>202*</b>

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

The 5 categories with the highest number of upheld and partially upheld complaints are shown in bold in the table above and these were:

- 8 were about complainants *not being updated about the case* (4%);
- 7 were about complainants' *disagreement with an explanation or decision* (3.5%);
- 7 were about *staff not acting in the best interests of the service user* (3.5%);
- 7 were about the slowness of the *speed of service* (3.5%); and
- 6 were about *staff attitude* (3.0%).

The table shows that in 2016/17, the majority of complaints received were not upheld (53.3%), meaning that although the complainant was dissatisfied in some way, the service had acted appropriately.

Service Area	Not upheld	Partially upheld	Upheld	Total Complaints 2016/17	Upheld & Partially upheld as a % of Total
Aycliffe Secure Services	0	1	0	1	100.0%
Child Protection	20	8	4	32	37.5%
Disability Social Work	1	1	1	3	66.7%
Families First	24	13	3	40	37.5%
First Contact & Emergency Duty Team	2	2	2	6	66.7%
Fostering and Adoption	2	3	0	5	60.0%
Independent Reviewing Officers	2	1	0	3	33.3%
Looked After and Permanence	2	5	2	9	77.8%
Young People's Service	4	3	1	8	50.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>46.7%</b>

It is the 46.7% of complaints, which were upheld or partially upheld which are of particular interest to Children's Services, where fault was found and hence learning and service improvement was required.

These complaints give the service the opportunity for learning, on an individual level for example, where a Social Worker can be supported by management to improve their personal performance and sometimes across the whole service, where a policy or procedure is improved as a result of a complaint. Further examples of learning and service improvement as a consequence of complaints received are outlined in Part Three of the report.

### Complaints that were considered by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

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.

The LGO usually asks the Council what action has been taken and requests copies of any correspondence. The LGO then issues a Draft Decision Notice, which the Council and complainant are invited to comment upon, before the LGO issues a Final Decision.

During 2015/16, the LGO contacted the Council in relation to 7 children's social care cases that had been referred to them, compared to 15 cases in 2015/16:

- In 1 case the LGO said the complaint was premature as it had not completed all stages of the statutory process for children's social care complaints.

- The LGO declined 1 case on the basis that the matters were for consideration by a court of law.
- In 1 case the LGO requested the Council to investigate the matters at Stage 2. This was arranged and the complaint is included within the three Stage 2 investigations mentioned earlier in this report.
- The LGO closed 3 complaints without taking action:
  - In 1 case (which had been investigated at Stage 2 in 2014/15) it was deemed to be out of timescale with no good reason given by the complainants as to why they had not brought the matter to the LGO sooner.
  - In 1 case the complainant failed to send the LGO further information when requested.
  - In 1 case the LGO decided they were unlikely to find a different outcomes from the Council's investigations or find fault.
- One Final Decision letter was issued in which the LGO found that the Council's faults in how it supported a young mother before and after giving birth to her baby had caused her avoidable distress during the 4 months prior to the baby's birth, whilst she was in hospital, and during the first 3 months of the baby's life. The Council has acknowledged the failures and agreed a number of actions, and made a financial remedy payment to the mother in recognition of the impact of the faults on her.

A total of £1000 was paid relating to 1 case (see the point above). It should be noted that compensatory redress was only considered (and agreed in line with the Council's Scheme of Delegation) where there was strong evidence of shortcomings.

### Part Three - Learning and service improvement

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. Even where complaints are not upheld, full explanations, further information and often apologies are given. Some of the learning outcomes and remedies for resolution in the reporting year are as follows:

- Staff were informed that if Finance Panels are to be cancelled, the potential implications on individual cases could be discussed with an Operations Manager if necessary.
- Child Protection team staff were reminded of the need for birth response plans to be shared with the appropriate staff, including staff in hospitals.
- Staff were reminded that when service users are signposted towards obtaining legal advice, they should be informed that this is at their own discretion/choice and may incur costs which *they* would be liable for, not the local authority.
- Managers reminded staff that a case note should be recorded when families are signposted to the relevant agencies for benefits advice to evidence guidance has been given.
- Managers were reminded that when court orders are issued, they have a responsibility to ensure that the allocated case worker follows up the actions as appropriate.
- The process of managing complaints which include data protection issues was reviewed. A clear pathway was developed for staff and managers. A briefing note issued to improve staff awareness that if a data breach issue and complaint was raised both matters needed to be fully investigated.
- The Dispute Resolution Process (DRP) between social work teams and the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service was reviewed and arrangements made for senior managers to meet on a monthly basis to review all DRP information and ensure appropriate actions taken.
- Families First staff were reminded about the material available to prospective complainants which tells them how they can make a complaint; including reference to the Council's website, CYPS factsheet, a leaflet specifically designed for children, and the LSCB pack "Information for Parents, Carers, Children and Young People" prior to an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC).
- Social Workers were changed in some cases, even where complaints were not upheld, in order to improve working relationships with parents.

- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) worked with a school to ensure they were clear about the roles and responsibilities of a LADO.
- Following a complaint about a Viability Assessment, inaccuracies were corrected and details entered on the appropriate case file.
- A kinship carer disputed the contents of the notes of a Looked After Review meeting and although the Independent Reviewing Officer who had chaired the meeting said the notes were accurate, it was agreed that the complainant's comments could be added to the case notes.

Compensatory payments were made where failures constituted maladministration and/or injustice as defined by the Local Government Ombudsman. These are detailed within the Local Government Ombudsman section in Part Two of this report, in that 2016/17 a total of £1000 was paid in relation to 1 complaint. It should be noted that compensatory redress was only considered (and agreed in line with the Council's Scheme of Delegation) where there was strong evidence of shortcomings.

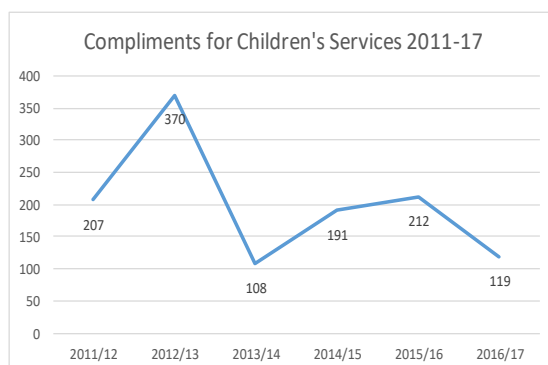
Meetings with managers have continued to be an effective method in satisfactorily concluding complaints. Feedback from complainants tells us that they appreciate the time that managers give to addressing their concerns in an open and informal way.

It is recognised that where Children's Services is responsible for service failures that have caused losses and significant emotional distress, there is clearly the duty for this to be acknowledged and further distress to the complainant be avoided. In each of the concluded complaints in Children's Services, full explanations and where appropriate, apologies were offered.

## Part Four – Compliments information

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.

In the reporting year, 119 compliments were received in relation to children's social care. This represents a decrease across the service of 43.9% in comparison to the previous year's number of 212. This information is illustrated in the graph below:



A revised definition of what is determined as a compliment was implemented throughout CYPS in 2016/17. The updated definition of what can be logged as a compliment is:

- A positive statement from a service user, that had not been actively sought (e.g. via feedback form, questionnaire etc); it can be verbal (if is recorded e.g. in case notes), or in writing e.g. in an email, letter, thank-you card or text message.

This does not include 'sought feedback' such as positive comments received within survey forms, which are given to service users for completion. This partially accounts for the decrease in the number of compliments for reporting purposes. Managers are regularly encouraged to ensure that all compliments in the form of positive comments, letters, emails and cards are shared with their staff and teams to re-inforce their value.



## Compliments received by service area

Service Area	Number of Compliments 2016/17	Number of Compliments 2015/16	Direction of Travel from Previous Year	% of Total Compliments 2016/17	% of Total Compliments 2015/16
Aycliffe Secure Service	2	4	↓	1.7%	1.9%
Assessment and Intervention <sup>1</sup>	0	6	↓	-	2.8%
Children's Homes	8	40	↓	6.7%	18.9%
Child Protection	5	4	↑	4.2%	1.9%
Community Support Team	14	15	↓	11.8%	7.1%
Disability Social Work	0	16	↓	-	7.5%
Emergency Duty Team	1	0	↑	0.8%	-
Family Pathfinder <sup>1</sup>	0	5	↓	-	2.3%
Families First <sup>2</sup>	26	8	↑	21.8%	3.8%
Fostering and Adoption	25	13	↑	21.1%	6.1%
Full Circle	8	4	↑	6.7%	1.9%
Looked After & Permanence	23	19	↑	19.3%	9.0%
Think Family <sup>3</sup>	-	74	-	-	34.9%
Young People's Service	7	4	↑	5.9%	1.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>↓</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>1</sup>Teams no longer in place

<sup>2</sup>Teams in place since restructure throughout 2015/16

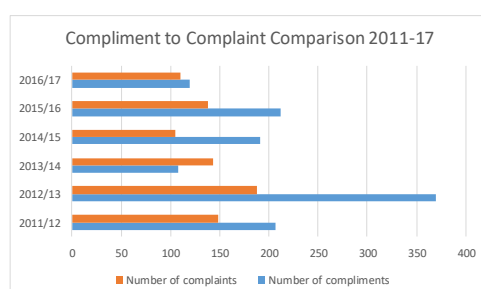
<sup>3</sup>Preventative service - compliments are now counted as non-statutory provision (corporate)

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.

## Ratio of compliments to complaints

The ratio of compliments to all complaints received across CAS is 1.1:1. This means that for every complaint received, a compliment was also received. This represents a decrease on the previous year when the ratio of compliments to complaints was 1.9:1. The graph below shows that the percentage of compliments received has consistently outweighed the percentage of complaints received.



## **Part Five - Review of the effectiveness of the complaints procedure**

### **Complaints Governance**

During 2016/17 the Quality Assurance Manager fulfilled the role of 'Complaints Manager' in accordance with the requirements of the regulations, managing a team of two Complaints Officers. The Complaints Team was independent of social care services' operational line management, thus ensuring a high level of independence in the way social care complaints are managed within the Council.

### **Public Information**

We are committed to making sure that everyone has equal access to all our services, including the complaints procedure. We have produced two leaflets (one for children and young people and one for their adult representatives) which contain details on how to access the information in other formats, for example, large print, audio and Braille. Information is also available on the Council's website. People may make a complaint in any format they wish. This can be in writing, by email, via the Council's website, over the phone, in person or by any other reasonable means. The Complaints Manager can arrange for advocates and interpreters (including British Sign Language interpreters) where appropriate.

### **Developments**

Although the complaints function in relation to children's social care complaints is enshrined in statutory regulations, DCC CYPS 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 2016/17. These include:

- Continuing to strengthen the monitoring system to ensure actions and learning outcomes arising from complaints are implemented in a timely and effective way and fully embedded.
- Further development of the escalation process involving closer monitoring of children's social care managers to endeavour to improve response timescales.
- Creation of an improved invoicing system for Investigating Officers and Independent Persons who carry out Stage 2 investigations.
- The Complaints Officer attending social care manager's sessions to deliver key messages and updates.

## **Reporting**

Complaints information is reported on a quarterly basis to senior management teams, for cascading to managers and staff. The information in this report is therefore a year-end summary of information which has previously been shared.

## **Conclusion**

The complaints function is a statutory requirement for social care services, and it plays a vital role in contributing to shaping the management of quality and assurance across the service. Developments for the future continue to focus on learning from complaints to improve the service. The implementation of learning outcomes arising from complaints provides the opportunity to change practice and improve service delivery with transparency and accountability.

A change being implemented in the 2017/18 year is the complaints governance arrangements. There is one dedicated Complaints Officer for managing CYPS complaints, with the role of 'Complaints Manager' being undertaken by the CYPS Development and Learning Manager.

A collaborative approach is continually promoted during the management of complaints, where the complainant is central to the process and resolution is proactively sought and encouraged

Further information regarding anything in this report is available by contacting:

Hazel Ostle  
CYPS Development and Learning Manager  
Durham County Council  
County Hall  
Durham  
DH1 5UJ  
Tel: 03000 262306

## Appendix 1 - Glossary of abbreviations

<b>AHS</b>	Adult and Health Services
<b>CAB</b>	Citizens Advice Bureau
<b>CYPS</b>	Children and Young People's Services
<b>DCC</b>	Durham County Council
<b>DfES</b>	Department for Education and Skills
<b>DBS</b>	Disclosure and Barring Service
<b>DRP</b>	Dispute Resolution Process
<b>ICPC</b>	Initial Child Protection Conference
<b>IO</b>	Investigating Officer
<b>IP</b>	Independent Person
<b>IRO</b>	Independent Reviewing Officer
<b>LADO</b>	Local Authority Designated Officer
<b>LGO</b>	Local Government Ombudsman
<b>NRCMG</b>	Northern Regional Complaints Managers Group
<b>NYAS</b>	National Youth Advocacy Service
<b>RAS</b>	Representational Advocacy Service

## Children and Young People's Services

# Annual Statutory Representations Report Children's Social Care Services 2016/17

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Children and Adults Services, CMI Team 2015

**Contact: Equality & Diversity,  
Room 4/139, County Hall,**

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