

COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2014– MARCH 2015

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1. INTRODUCTION

This is the sixth Annual Report produced for Children's Services. It covers the period from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 and provides information about compliments, comments and complaints activity within the social care aspect of Children's Services as required by statutory guidance. The report does not address complaints about other parts of Children's Services although the department does log and record this information. Of 237 complaints received by the Complaints Team, 111 were eligible to progress through the statutory Children Act complaints procedure. An additional 97 were eligible but the issues raised were judged to be easily resolvable locally, and therefore were progressed as a Concern/Enquiry. A total of 29 complaints were received and progressed through the corporate complaints procedure, some of these were social care complaints that fell outside of the scope and eligibility criteria of the Children Act complaints procedure.

2. MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF THE SYSTEM

Management of the complaints process in Children's Services initially came under the responsibility of the Business Planning and Improvement Team within the Information and Performance Unit in Children's Services. However in November 2014 all complaints functions within the Council, including Children's Services, were centralised and are now managed under the Performance and Risk Unit of the Chief Executive's Directorate.

Staff involved in the management of complaints are responsible for:

- Managing, developing and administering the procedures
- Facilitating the smooth running of the process
- Maintaining a record of each complaint made and the outcome reached
- Promoting local resolution and negotiate with complainants and managers
- Exploring alternative dispute resolution
- Providing training, information and advice for staff and managers
- Information, publicity, support and advice for complainants
- Monitoring and reporting on complaints
- Ensuring that learning opportunities arising from complaints are maximised
- Appointing Investigating Officers, Independent Persons and Review Panellists

3. PROCEDURES

As well as satisfying legal requirements, the Compliments, Comments and Complaints procedure exists in order to provide managers with valuable feedback. This enables them to monitor and learn from complaints in order to shape, develop and improve future services. Effective complaint monitoring can help to identify significant trends, highlight gaps in service provision and identify necessary improvements to policy and procedure. Monitoring acts as a measurement of public concern and can help the Directorate to identify training and development needs.

In Children's Services we recognise the importance of developing a culture in which complaints are viewed as potential learning opportunities and where complainants are carefully listened to and receive a swift, positive and outcome focused response.

3.1 Children Act procedure – social care complaints

Children and young people, their parents, carers and people denied services are eligible to use the statutory Children Act complaints procedure. The procedure is also open to those complaining on behalf of a service user, either where the service user is not capable of making the complaint them self or where the service user has asked the representative to act on their behalf.

Those who are not eligible to complain via the statutory Children Act procedure may still be entitled to make a complaint via the council's corporate complaints process. The Complaints Team deal with comments, suggestions and compliments as well as with statutory and corporate complaints and enquiries and concerns raised by Members of Parliament or Councillors.

There are three stages to the statutory Children Act complaint procedure. Stage One, the local resolution/problem-solving stage, is the stage at which the vast majority of complaints are resolved by operational staff. The council has between 10 and 20 working days to complete this stage of the process. Most complaints will be dealt with at this stage before proceeding to subsequent stages.

At Stage Two, formal investigations are conducted at arm's length to the operational sections, usually by independent, external, Investigating Officers appointed by the Complaints Team. Statutory guidance also requires the appointment of an Independent Person, external to the council, to ensure that any investigation is carried out fully and fairly. The investigation report is received by a senior manager within Children's Services and findings and recommendations of the report form the basis of the Directorate's formal response to the complaint. This stage should take between 25 and 65 working days.

If there is any residual dissatisfaction with the outcome of a complaint at Stage Two, the complainant can request that a Stage Three Review Panel hears their complaint. A Review Panel consists of three people appointed by the Complaints Team. The panel must be independently chaired and consist of two other independent panellists. The panel will be held, where possible, in a venue close to the complainant's home, within 30 working days of any request. The panel will consider whether the council has dealt with the complaint fairly and will identify options for resolving or remedying the complaint, reporting their findings and any recommendations to the Corporate Director - Children's Services. The Director's response to the recommendations forms the end of the council's statutory Children Act procedure.

Once complainants have exhausted the local authority procedure, they may choose to take their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The procedure also provides a valuable mechanism for compliments and comments to be made to the Directorate. Both compliments and comments are welcome and encouraged.

Comments or suggestions for service improvements always receive a written response from an appropriate manager.

3.2 Corporate complaints procedure

Complaints which do not meet the criteria to be considered under the Children Act statutory procedure are responded to under the three-stage corporate complaints process which is used across all directorates in the Council. Further information about the process can be found on our website:

<http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/537/6374/6375/40886111953.pdf?timestamp=42130103324>

3.3 **Concern/enquiry procedure**

Concern/enquiries were introduced to the complaint process in 2013-14 and have continued throughout 2014-15. Issues which are judged by the Complaints Team to be easily resolvable, and not of a serious nature, are progressed as 'concerns/enquiries' rather than complaints. These are passed to the appropriate team to be resolved locally outside of the formal complaints procedure. The same approach is used by local authorities across the country, often being categorised as a 'pre-complaint'.

Complainants are informed of their right to progress through the formal complaints procedure should they remain dissatisfied. In such cases the concerns are still logged with the complaints team to ensure that a response is provided as well as enabling learning data to be obtained.

In total there were 100 complaints progressed as a concern/enquiry during the year. Only two of these then progressed to a formal complaint.

3.4 Other procedures

The majority of complaints received within Children's Services relate to social care issues and are progressed through the statutory Children Act complaints procedure. Where a complaint is not eligible for progression through this procedure then consideration is given to other processes which may be appropriate such as referral to the Cumbria Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), HR team, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), or the Safeguarding Team (for individual safeguarding concerns).

3.5 School complaints

The local authority also receives a number of complaints relating to individual schools. These are directed back to the relevant school. The responsibility for all aspects of management, including the employment of staff, rests with a school's governing body rather than the local authority. Each governing body is, therefore, responsible for ensuring that there are arrangements in place to respond to any complaints.

The Complaints Team will advise on the general principles and processes if contacted by parents, carers, schools or governors. We record enquiries regarding schools on our Respond database. Complaints about schools are routinely screened at initial contact for any evident safeguarding concerns which may need to be referred to either the LADO or other appropriate team within Children's Services.

4. THE INDEPENDENT ELEMENT

4.1 Investigating Officers

Stage Two Children Act complaints are investigated by external Investigating Officers. Using external Investigating Officers provides reassurance for complainants regarding the impartiality of the complaints process. The Complaints Team maintains a pool of Investigating Officers.

During the period 2014-2015 there were 22 Stage Two complaints allocated to external Investigating Officers.

4.2 Independent Persons

Legislation states that Children's Services must involve an Independent Person in the investigation of complaints at Stage Two. This person cannot be an elected member, or an employee of the council or spouse of an employee. The Independent Person should ensure that the investigation is open, transparent and fair.

The Complaints Team maintains a small pool of Independent People

4.3 Independent Review Panel Chairs

If a complaint has not been settled at the investigation stage and the person making the complaint is not satisfied with the outcome or the way it was dealt with, it can be referred to a Review Panel (Stage Three).

The Complaints Team maintains a small pool of Independent Review Panel Chairs – there were 5 requests for review panels during the year 2014-2015.

4.4 Training, Monitoring and Review of Independent People

Investigating Officers and Review Panel Chairs are offered continued direct support from the Complaints Team throughout the year. We have established bi-annual meetings between the local authority and our pool of investigators and independent people and commit to keeping them up to date with relevant practice developments and policy information.

The Complaints Manager monitors the performance of external independent people. Following any Stage Two investigation, feedback is sought from the senior manager who responded on behalf of the directorate. Managers are asked to comment on the quality of the investigation and the report produced. Staff have the opportunity to voice their

opinions through their managers. Investigating Officers are invited to offer their own comments following each investigation. The Complaints Manager collates this information and is able to report back to senior management on any problems arising from investigations and to independent people at workshops.

4.5 Cost of complaint investigations and Review Panels

In 2014-15 there were 22 Stage 2 investigations allocated to external Investigating Officers and Independent Persons, and 5 Stage 3 Review Panels were requested; although only 4 of the Stage 3 Reviews actually took place during the reporting period. The total cost for Stage 2 and 3 complaints during the year was in the region of £38,000.

The Complaints Team actively work with managers and complainants in trying to reach an agreeable outcome to avoid the need for a Stage 2 investigation.

5. ADVOCACY AND SPECIAL NEEDS

There is a statutory requirement to provide advocacy for children or young people who might want to use the complaints procedures. Children's Services currently have a contract with the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) to provide advocacy support and to provide a visiting advocacy service to children's homes throughout the county. This helps children and young people to express their views, feelings and wishes.

NYAS have advocates who specialise in working with children with disabilities, enabling them to make sure that their voice is heard in relation to services that affect them.

All children and young people who are eligible to make a complaint about children's social care services are offered the support of an independent advocate; it is their decision whether or not they choose to accept support. During 2014-2015 advocates were involved in 16 of the 28 complaints submitted by children and young people. Our commissioned advocacy provider, NYAS, supported 14 of these complaints. Pursuing a complaint without the support of an independent advocate can often indicate that the young person feels empowered and confident in making a complaint by themselves. The Complaints Team provide guidance and support throughout the process regardless of whether an advocate is also involved.

NYAS actively work with young people in trying to resolve their concerns locally with social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers; often these are successfully resolved without progressing to a formal complaint.

Awareness raising work with children and young people as well as staff is undertaken by NYAS throughout the year. In addition to this the Complaints Team promote advocacy with all complaints received from children and young people, or in situations where it is apparent that young people may need support in having their voice heard

6. PUBLICITY AND INFORMATION

Information on the Complaints Process is available via our website and we also produce information leaflets which are available in all our customer services offices as well as from the Complaints Team and via our website.

The Complaints Team regularly review publicity and information material and in light of the findings from the 2012 Ofsted Inspection, consultation with children and young people was carried out to help redesign publicity materials that are age appropriate. Following successful consultation new leaflets and wallet-sized plastic contact cards were directly mailed to every child or young person in the care of the local authority. The Complaints Team annually send a copy of the complaints leaflet and plastic contact to all children who are looked after by the local authority. The same information materials are also distributed throughout the county and with local teams to ensure that awareness of the complaints procedure is well publicised, particularly with children and young people who are new to receiving social care services.

Following consultation with appropriate young people and professionals, a complaints leaflet specifically for children with disabilities was rolled out early in 2014-15. The leaflet is also available to assist parents or carers with learning difficulties.

Staff from the Complaints Team attend local team meetings on an annual basis to ensure that staff are aware of their responsibility in ensuring that vulnerable children and young people who receive support from Children's Services are aware of the complaints procedure and their right to access it.

Complaints are also publicised by the Complaints Team by attending Independent Reviewing Officer meetings, Foster Carer Forums, Children in Care Council meetings, and by meeting with young people in our residential homes.

All complaints information can be made available on CD or cassette, or in other formats, such as Braille, large print, on request to the Complaints Team. Interpretation services can also be arranged when required for other languages.

6.1 Other Information for Service Users

'Stage Two: Investigation – Guidance for complainants' contains more detailed information about what will happen during the investigation of a complaint, what the complainant can expect, and how they can take their complaint further if they remain dissatisfied.

'Stage Three: Review Panel – Guidance for participants' contains more detailed information about what will happen before, during and after a Review Panel. It contains information for complainants and for senior managers and Independent Persons.

Both of these booklets are also available in a format more suitable for children and young people.

7. TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

It is important that staff feel confident and fully informed when dealing with complaints. An e-Learning package, developed early in 2013, continues to be available for staff, linking both complaints and advocacy. The package covers awareness training for business support staff and those in front-facing customer service roles. In addition there is a more detailed training course for staff who are closely involved with social care. The e-Learning package is used to complement awareness sessions with local teams.

Local awareness sessions cover the complaints procedure, timescales for responding, the standards of customer care expected and embedding the principle of learning from complaints, as well as including issues of specific interest or concern to groups of staff attending.

In addition to raising awareness of complaints with front line staff, a series of workshops aimed at managers responding to complaints was developed in 2013-14. The training workshops were completed in early 2015, with managers from all children's social care teams having been provided with an opportunity to participate. The aim of the workshop is to raise awareness with managers about how to effectively handle complaints, and how to avoid a complaint escalating to a Stage 2 investigation.

The Complaints Team can be contacted at any time for general or specific advice or, once a complaint has been made, for progress updates. Staff are encouraged to discuss complaints, particularly the learning outcomes, at team meetings.

An updated complaints procedure document for staff and managers was launched in March 2015, and can be viewed alongside all other Children's Services policies and procedures on the online Procedures Manual.

8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN (LGO)

The Local Government Ombudsmen in England investigate complaints about local authorities. Trained investigators look into the complaints and if they find that a local authority has done something wrong which has caused significant injustice, they aim to get it put right. They can investigate complaints about how a local authority has done something or failed to do something, but they cannot question what a local authority has done just because the complainant does not agree with it.

Local authorities are expected to be given the opportunity to deal with complaints within their own complaints procedure first. If a complainant remains dissatisfied then they have a right to complaint to the LGO.

During 2014-15 Cumbria Children's Services were the subject of 9 complaints to the LGO. Two of these resulted in a full investigation, one of which found the Council to be at fault in relation to the way Child Protection procedures had been carried out, this resulted in the Council being required to pay £3,000 to the complainant. The other investigation was ongoing during the writing of this report. Of those not investigated, the Local Government Ombudsman deemed that two of the complaints she received were outside of her

jurisdiction; two were too old to investigate; two had been referred prematurely and the Council were asked to conduct Stage 2 independent investigations into the issues raised; and one complaint was partially investigated with it being found that the Council were not at fault, the remainder of the complaint couldn't be investigated either because the issues raised were too old or that they fell outside the jurisdiction of the LGO.

9. MP/COUNCILLOR REPRESENTATIONS

MPs and Councillors do not normally make formal complaints on behalf of their constituents. More usually, they write to make enquiries or raise concerns, often asking questions or asking the council to comment on a specific case, policy or decision.

During the year 2014-15, 47 letters were received from local MPs raising concerns on behalf of their constituents in relation to social care services.

10. COMPLIMENTS

A total of 55 compliments were received during 2014-15. During visits to local team meetings staff are encouraged to share compliments with the Complaints Team in order that good practice can be shared with senior managers, and in turn used to inform practice development. Appendix 1 contains examples of compliments received during the year.

11. LEARNING FROM FEEDBACK

The 2012 Ofsted Announced Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services, commented that; "appropriate arrangements are in place for responding to and for sharing lessons learned from complaints". This is an area that we have continued to prioritise and strengthen further during 2014-15, continuing to review how we can best make use of the learning opportunities presented by compliments and complaints.

A template to record and identify learning points from complaints is routinely completed by the manager responsible for responding to a complaint at Stage 1 of the procedure. The benefit of this approach is the generation of concrete evidence examples from individual complaints, prompting managers to think about learning and outcomes as part of the process of responding to and resolving complaints. The learning feedback is then extracted from each complaint as it is closed and shared monthly with senior managers, who discuss whether issues identified are attributed to individual practice or the need for wider practice development across the service.

A sample of actions taken as a result of learning from complaints during the year is given in Appendix 2.

Regular slots at the Children and Families senior managers meetings and District Managers meetings ensure that the messages from complaints are widely shared, and owned by managers. On a quarterly basis we analyse all complaints for key presenting issues and themes, which are grouped with upheld examples and shared with managers. Countywide themes relating to social work practice issues are also identified, and taken forward by senior managers to identify appropriate actions in response to the feedback.

On conclusion of Stage 2 or 3 complaints an action plan is developed to allow tracking and monitoring of agreed actions, which are owned by senior managers.

12. PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS 2015-16

- The Complaints Team and NYAS will continue to work in partnership to promote and raise awareness of advocacy services and complaints. This will include attending local social care team meetings together, and speaking to young people via Children in Care Council meetings and visits to residential homes.
- Learning from complaints and compliments will be strengthened further to ensure that a robust mechanism is in place for sharing potential practice development with appropriate managers and staff.
- The centralisation of the Children's Services complaints function will be used as an opportunity to develop the overall service and improve performance.

13. NWCMG MEMBERSHIP

Cumbria Children's Services is a member of the North West Complaints Managers Group (NWCMG). The aim of the regional group, which meets every two months, is to provide a forum in which peer professionals can discuss and learn about regional and national issues. Here there are opportunities to develop local practice standards, discuss performance and problem solve. The group also discuss proposed changes to legislation and procedures and prepare consultation responses where necessary. During 2014-15 the Complaints Officer continued to share Cumbria's good practice, in relation to the learning process, with individual Children's Services complaints colleagues in the North West.

14. PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS OF REPRESENTATIONS

Table 1: Representations received by type
(received within the year)

Contact by procedure type	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Children Act	111	128	148
Compliment	56	53	57
Corporate Complaints Procedure	29	29	65
Concern/enquiry	97	106	0
Referred elsewhere (school, LADO, Safeguarding)	79	53	39
Total	372	369	309

Table 2: Method of contact for all representations

Method of contact	2014/15		2013/14		2012/13	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
e-Form (via website or in person)	20	6%	30	8%	34	12%
Email	139	37%	128	35%	103	33%
Letter	113	30%	107	29%	94	30%
Phone Call	100	27%	104	28%	78	25%
Total	372	100%	369	100%	309	100%

Table 3: Children Act complaints received by complainant group
(complaints received within the year)

Complainant group (Children Act procedure)	2014/15		2013/14		2012/13	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Child/Young Person	28	25%	21	17%	24	16%
Foster Carer	3	3%	10	8%	12	9%
Parent or Relative	77	69%	94	74%	110	74%
Other (incl, prospective adopters)	3	3%	3	1%	2	1%
Total	111	100%	128	100%	148	100%

Table 4: Children Act complaints - Stage 1 response times
(of those responded to within the year)

Children Act Stage 1 response time (where eligible to progress)	2014/15		2013/14		2012/13	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Within 10 working days or less	26	34%	32	41%	36	25%
11 - 20 working days	19	25%	27	34%	51	36%
Over 20 working days	32	41%	20	25%	55	27%
Total (Stage One)	77	100%	79	100%	142	100%

Table 5: Children Act complaints – duration of Stage 2 investigations
(of those concluded within the year)

Length of Stage 2 investigation	2014/15		2013/14		2012/13	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Within 25 working days or less	0	0%	0	0%	1	7%
26 - 65 working days	3	18%	4	29%	5	36%
Over 65 working days	14	82%	10	71%	8	57%
Total (Stage Two)	17	100%	14	100%	14	100%

Table 6: Children Act complaints - Analysis of key themes
(complaints received within the year)

Key Themes (Children Act procedure)	2014/15*		2013/14		2012/13	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Breach of confidentiality	9	4%	7	5%	12	8%
Delayed service	17	7%	2	2%	10	7%
Financial issues	8	3%	11	9%	2	1%
Lack of evidence based information used	16	6%	6	5%	17	12%
Lack of support for Foster Carers	2	1%	1	1%	5	4%
Other	3	1%	0	0%	1	1%
Placement issues	19	8%	9	7%	11	8%
Poor attitude or conduct of staff	40	16%	20	16%	27	19%
Poor communication	63	25%	28	22%	30	21%
Service provision	74	29%	44	34%	27	19%
Total	251[^]	100%	128	100%	142	100%

* A change in the way themes are recorded during 2014 has enabled a better analysis of complaints where multiple concerns are raised.

[^] Please note that there is no direct correlation between the number of complaints received and the number of concerns raised, as some complaints have multiple themes recorded.

Chart 1: Key themes trends

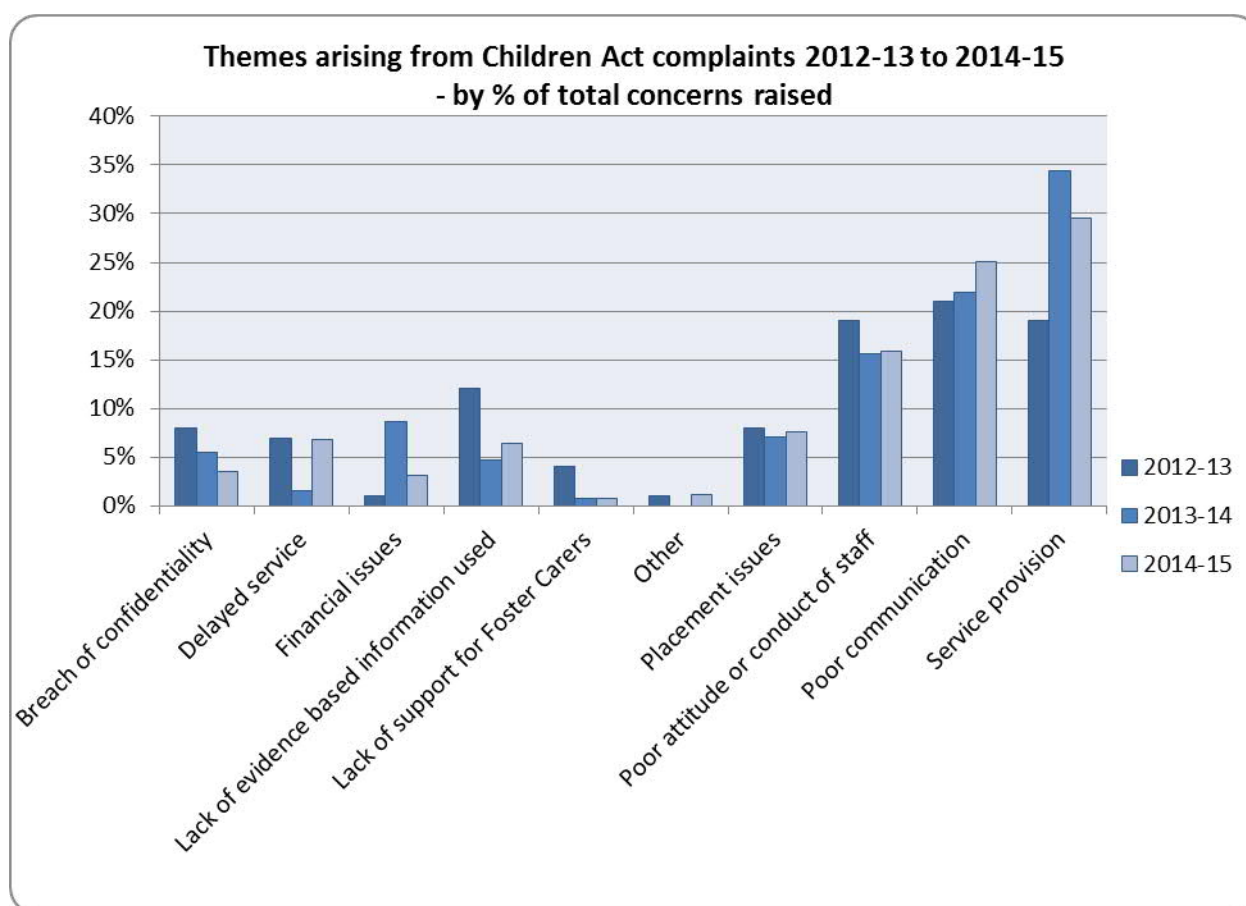


Table 7: Children Act complaints - Stage 1 outcomes
(of those responded to within the year)

Children Act Stage 1 outcomes	2014/15		2013/14		2012/13	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Legal Proceedings Pending	3	4%	4	3%	3	2%
Withdrawn	3	4%	6	5%	14	9%
Upheld	13	17%	23	19%	23	16%
Not Upheld	24	30%	32	27%	45	30%
Partially Upheld	21	27%	37	31%	53	36%
Referred elsewhere	0	0%	1	1%	3	2%
Moved to Stage Two*	14	18%	16	14%	7	5%
Total	78	100%	119	100%	148	100%

*Refers to the number of complaints received in the year that progressed to a Stage 2 investigation. The number of investigations actually conducted within the year often include complaints received in previous years which have then progressed to Stage 2 the following year.

15. CONTACT

If you would like further information relating to this report or the work of the Complaints Team please contact:

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Report produced by: Claire Thomson, Complaints/Information Governance Officer

RELATED DOCUMENTS

'Getting the Best from Complaints – Social Care Complaints and Representations for Children, Young People and Others' - Department for Education & Skills

<http://wearchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/Getting%20the%20best%20from%20complaints.pdf>

The Children Act 1989
Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1738/pdfs/uksi_20061738_en.pdf

Sample of compliments received – 2014/15

Non- Social Care
Business Planning & Improvement Team
Regional manager of advocacy provider (NYAS) stated that the partnership working with the complaints service in Cumbria is a model of good practice that is regularly promoted with other local authorities.
Thank you for all your help and support. Please thank the wonderful ladies at Parent Partnership, they were fantastic.
Social Care
Child and Family Support Team
Positive comments received from two parents. Both were extremely thankful and appreciative of the involvement from Children’s Services, particularly from the SW and Family Support Worker.
Email received from a school saying “things really do seem to be improving” and that the SW involved with a family is “fab”.
Card received by a Child and Family Support Worker from a young person and their parent, saying “thank you for all your help and understanding and guidance, it will always be appreciated. Thanks again”.
A school professional praised the work of a NQSW who had been working with a number of families and “has been a pleasure to work with, so professional” to the extent that it had been thought she had been doing the job for a long time.
Email from a school professional regarding a Child and Family Worker. The email was to highlight the obvious effect and appreciation of her work with children and their families. They wanted to say thank you for her “attention to detail, common sense, tenacity and especially her sense of fun”.
An IRO wanted to compliment a Child and Family Worker for her hard work and involvement with a child who was deregistered from a child protection plan. The child “spoke glowingly” about the worker.
An Independent Reviewing Officer wanted to pass on commendations to a Social Worker for her report in relation to a family. “It was a difficult case and she managed to get in and work alongside the family and provided an eloquent and accurate report for conference.”

A solicitor expressed thanks for the excellent work of a Social Worker at court. "The Judge was impressed with the high quality interlocking advice to the court, the care plan devised and how the information received was acted upon."

Feedback from Primary School Head teacher about a Social Worker stating that she had been "very professional, showed good knowledge, used a range of different strategies, communicated well and put the parent at ease, led and managed meetings in a professional manner."

Compliment received for a Social Worker "when you first got involved I would have been happy never to see my daughter again. You have rebuilt my family!"

Compliment for a Social Worker from another professional, stating how supportive they had been with a number of cases "It is really positive when we can work well together and this seems to be having a positive impact for the young people we discussed. I wanted to pass on our thanks."

Child Protection Team

Email received from a young person saying "thank you for all your help along the way".

A Guardian appointed by the court was particularly impressed with the detailed work undertaken by an assessing SW, the structure and quality of her assessment reports, and the work undertaken directly with the maternal grandmother.

Head teacher emailed to commend a SW for her "excellent leadership during particularly challenging core group meetings. She has shown considerable skill in managing sensitive and difficult situations".

Thank you card received by SW and Child and Family Support Worker from a family saying "thank you for giving us the opportunity to become parents and thank you for always being there".

A mum wrote about a Social Worker, stating that they have "been a brilliant support and help throughout her time being my Social Worker. I couldn't of asked for a better Social Worker. She has done her job properly and took all the appropriate steps to make sure my child was protected. Thank you for having such a lovely Social Worker."

Children Looked After and Leaving Care Team

A judge wanted to express how they were pleased with how a case had been handled by a SW. Saying they were "pleased that the children would be placed all together and the placement was so soon and plans were progressing so well so promptly".

Email from a care leaver thanking a manager for the letter received about their success at University. They stated it was "nice for the hard work" of them self and their carers to be recognised.

Conference and Review Service

Thank you email received by an Independent Reviewing Officer from the grandmother of a young person. Thanking her for everything she had

done for the young person whilst they had been in care. The young person had been in a residential unit and demonstrated concerning levels of risk. The IRO liaised closely with the SW, young person, and the family.

Email received from a young person, outlining a few thoughts about their review and about the Independent Reviewing Officer. Saying "I can talk to her without being judged and it's easy to talk to her about any problems I might have, I feel like she listened when I explained it would be better to meet away from school and I find her to be kind and friendly and she explains the reason for the meeting in a way that I can understand".

Fostering and Adoption Team

An independent adoption agency complimented a Social Worker and the way in which she worked with a child and adoptive family. "She has been brilliant to work with and the family have been impressed too. In a time when social workers get such bad press it is refreshing to hear them getting credit where it is deserved. She is obviously an asset to Cumbria Children's Services and I sincerely hope we get the opportunity to work with her again"

At a foster care review foster carers were very complimentary about the support offered to them by their Social Worker. They were clear that "without her support we would not have been able to maintain the placement for the boys."

Triage Team (now known as Cumbria Safeguarding Hub)

Secondary School Head Teacher complimenting a Social Worker for being so "helpful and supportive" when they made a referral to the safeguarding hub. "The advice and guidance given was invaluable."

LDD Team (Social Care)

Letter received by a Child and Family Worker from the family of a young person as they transferred to Adult Social Care. Young person commented "Special thanks to my wonderful caring social worker, going to miss you lots", and the family commented "Thank you for your support over the past few years, we couldn't have asked for a better person to help us through our times of sorrow, happiness and frustration. We will miss you dearly".

Thank you card received by a Social Worker from mum and family of a young person after the case was closed. "...a million thank yous for everything you have done, I really appreciate it. Also for being there for me :-) I'll miss your visits".

Sample of actions taken as a result of feedback – 2014/15

You said.....	We did.....
Delays were being experienced in making decisions about requests for various types of financial support.	Scheme of Delegation for Section 17 financial support was introduced to speed the process up. Changes also made to the Special Guardianship policy, and procedures tightened up and a fairer process implemented for Residence Order Allowances.
There is often information in reports and assessments that is disputed by parents and carers.	Reflective Practice/Supervision training introduced for managers and supervisors to support staff with continuous professional development. Parents/carers encouraged to provide written details where professional views are disputed so that their own views can be uploaded onto case files.
The use of the word 'malicious' can often be emotive or inflammatory.	The outcome category 'malicious' has been removed from LADO records. Staff reminded that where a third party uses the word 'malicious' then it should be clearly documented in records where the term originated.
Frustrations about not being able to contact key staff in relation to individual cases for advice or updates. Complaints about staff not returning phone calls or not answering phone calls.	Guidance in relation to communication issued to staff. Managers also reminded of the need to ensure that any unforeseen prolonged staff absences do not affect service delivery by making suitable arrangements to access emails in the absence of such staff.
Recognition that placement moves are difficult for children and young people, even when the move involves extended family members.	Further work has taken place on the Better Placements policy which is now known as CLA Recovery. Individual Pathway Plans include consideration of extended family members in the first instance. All in-house foster carers have created a "This is our family...." Information leaflet which is given to CLA in preparation for planned new placements.
Transfer of cases between teams often had a negative impact on individual cases.	Practice Guidance developed for staff in relation to case transfers.
Contact plans between young people and their families are not being progressed.	Contact agreements being put in place for all children and young people open to the CLA teams. New guidance being developed which will include timing of reviews.