

Report to Scrutiny Board

Name of Scrutiny Panel	Children & Young People's Scrutiny Board	
Meeting Date	27 October 2021	
Subject	Complaints & Representations - Annual Report	
Wards Affected	All Wards	
Report of	Director, Children & Young People's Services	
Type of Item (please tick✓)	Review existing policy	
	Development of new policy	
	Performance management (inc. financial)	X
	Briefing (inc. potential areas for scrutiny)	
	Statutory consultation	
	Council request	
	Cabinet request	
	Member request for scrutiny (CCFA)	

Why is it coming here?

The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an overview of the complaints and compliments (representations) received for Children's Social Care Services for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

What are the key points?

Members are informed in relation to the number, type and outcomes of complaints and compliments that have been received in respect of Children & Young People's Social Care Services. This will assist members to determine whether there are areas which require more in-depth scrutiny.

Possible courses of action

Members are asked to consider and comment on this report

Contact Officer

Richard Noble, Complaints and Compliments Officer

Should this report be exempt?

No

Main issues for Scrutiny

1. Overview for CYPS

1.1

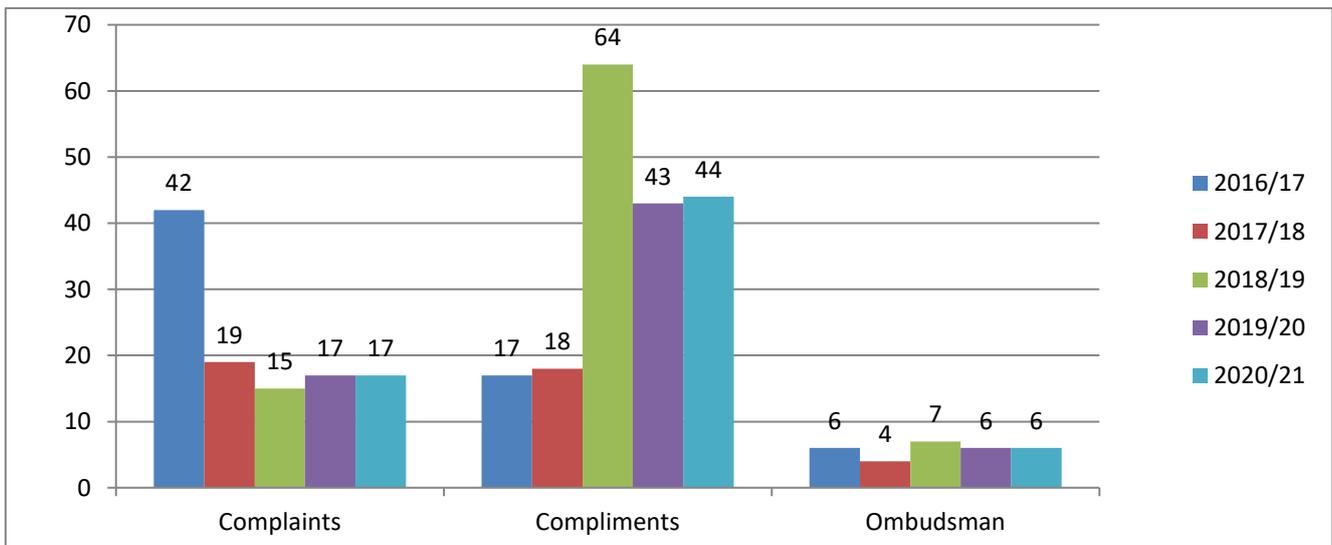
67 representations were received for Children's Social Care Services between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021:

- 17 complaints (feedback requiring investigation and response)
- 6 Local Government Ombudsman complaints
- 44 compliments (positive feedback from service users)

1.2

The graph below shows a comparison over the past five years of representations received. The general trend shows a significant reduction from the peak in 2016/17, with the last 4 years showing a consistent level in received complaints received.

The number of compliments received in the reporting period is slightly higher than the previous year. The Complaints and Compliments Officer liaises with the service to ensure compliments are sent through to the team, and the aim is to report a more significant increase in the next reporting period.



1.3

All of the 17 complaints that were received have been resolved. The outcomes were as follows:

- 2 were upheld
- 11 were partially upheld
- 3 were not upheld
- 1 was withdrawn

2. Analysis of Complaints Received by Service Areas

2.1

Of the 17 Complaints received by Children's Social Care Services these were in relation to the following service areas:

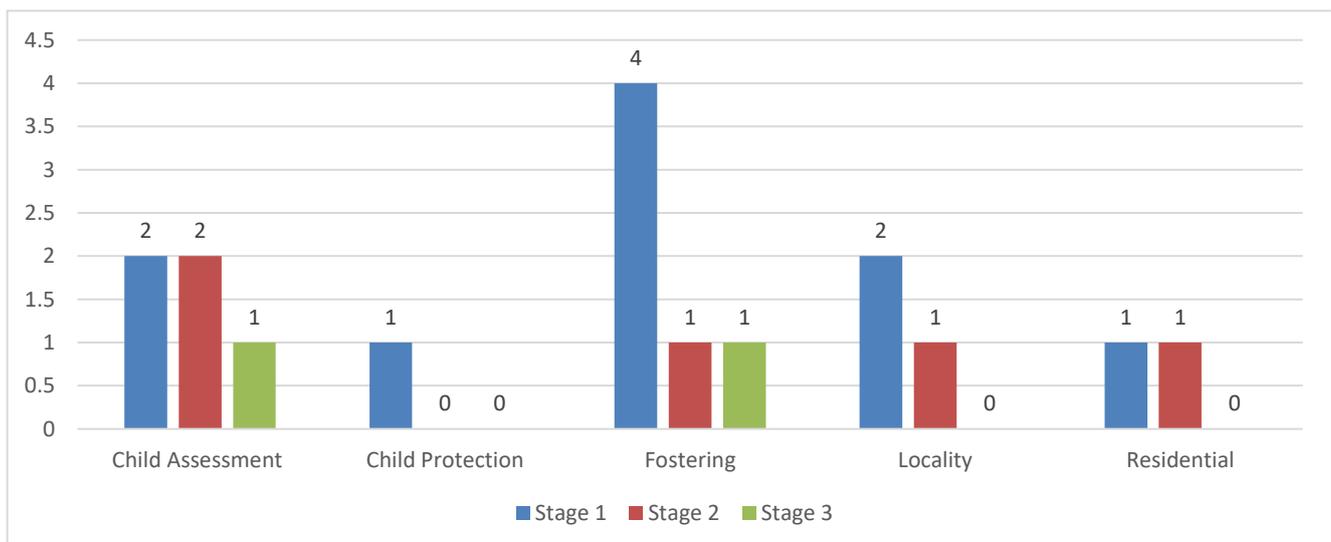
- 5 Child Assessment
- 1 Child Protection
- 6 Fostering
- 3 Locality
- 2 Residential

2.2

The Statutory Complaints Process for Children and Young Peoples Social Care is a 3-stage process.

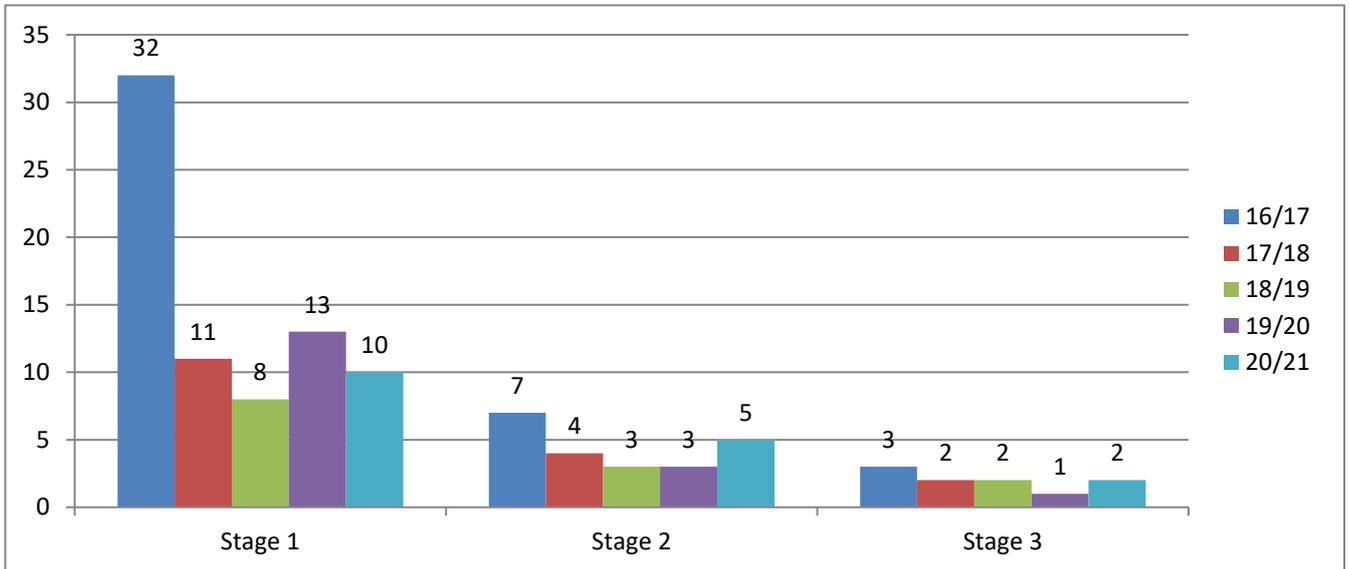
- Stage 1 is an investigation by the service area. If the complainant is not satisfied with this response, they can ask for the complaint to be escalated to Stage 2.
- Stage 2 is an investigation by an Independent Investigator and an officer independent of the service area to which the complaint relates. If the complainant is not satisfied with this response, they can ask for the complaint to be investigated at Stage 3.
- Stage 3 a review is held, chaired by an Independent Chairperson, the Independent Investigator, the independent officer, 2 Independent Panel Members and the Assistant Director.

The following graph details at which stage the complaints were investigated for each service:



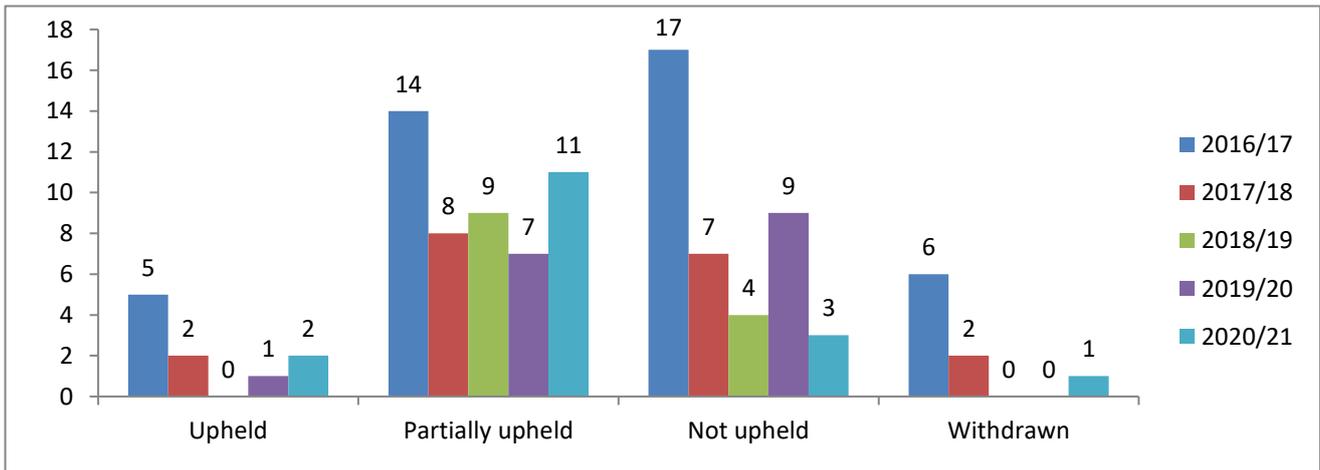
2.3

Details of the stage at which each of the 17 complaints were received, are shown in the table below, with comparisons to the previous four years. During the past 12 months, 10 complaints were investigated at stage 1, 5 at stage 2 of which 1 was withdrawn, and 2 reviewed at stage 3.



2.4

Details showing outcomes for all complaints received are outlined in the table below. Comparisons can be made with the previous four years figures.



There has been an increase in upheld/partially upheld complaints compared to the last few years. However, this year's figures included:

- A partially upheld stage 2, which originated from the previous reporting year.
- One stage 2 that was partially upheld, after also being partially upheld at stage 1,
- Two stage 3 panels were partially upheld, after also being partially upheld at stage 2.

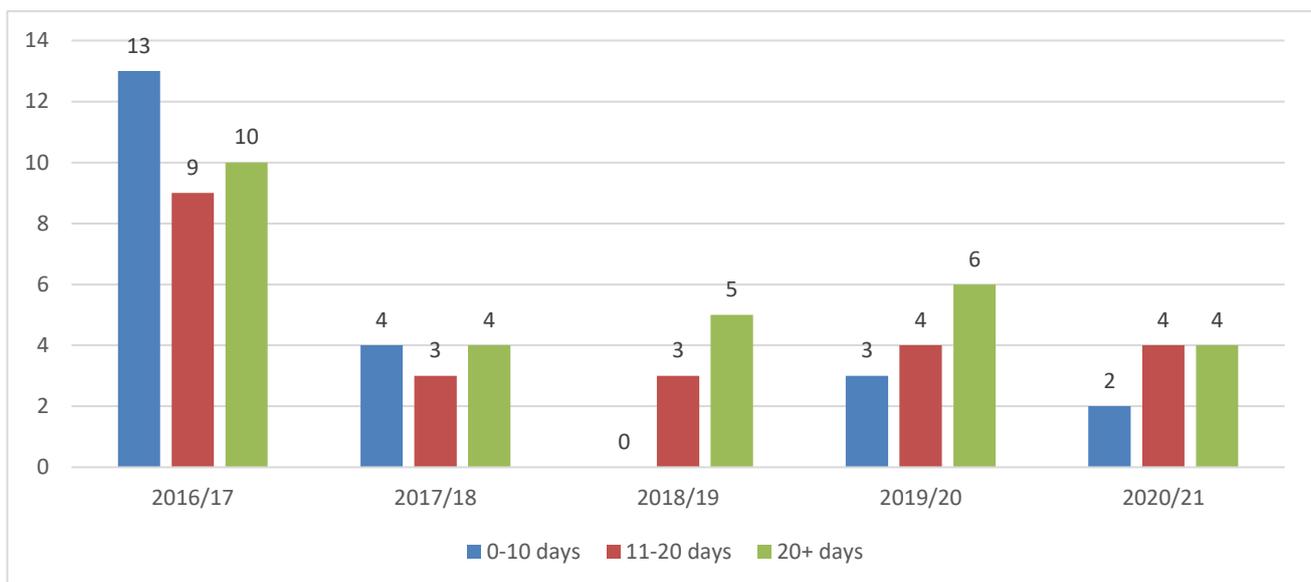
2.5

Stage 1 Statutory Response times:

- 10 working days
- Can be extended to 20 working days in agreement with the complainant.

The table below details the length of time taken to respond to the 10, Stage 1 complaints received and shows that 2 complaints were responded to within 10 working days, 4 within 20 working days and 4 exceeded these timescales.

Timescales for the completed complaints compared against the previous 4 years.



The complaints that exceeded the 20-day timescale, related to the following teams:

- Fostering (3)
- Locality (1)

Details of these 4 complaints were as follows:

- Foster care issues and how they were dealt with
- Foster care allegations
- Delay in placement
- Standard of care received

These complaints were complex and required extra time to complete the investigations. One was also made by a young person, so more time was required to ensure their feelings and circumstances could be considered throughout the process.

In all cases, the complainants were kept informed of the revised deadlines.

3. Details of complaints received directly from Children & Young People

4 complaints were received directly from a young person via their advocates, of which 3 were represented by the Calderdale Advocacy Service and 1 by Wish, who act as a voice for women's mental health.

Of these complaints, 1 was escalated from a stage 1 investigation during 2019/20 and carried forward to 2020/21

Details of the complaints received:

1. Lack of support whilst in hospital, lack of communication from Social Worker and updates from the new Social Worker.

Result: The investigator concluded their investigations, upholding the first two points and not the third.

2. Time in Foster Care and lack of contact with siblings.

Result: The investigation was partially upheld, and recommendations put in place regarding future letterbox contact and a plan to formulate contact with siblings.

3. The experiences of the young person whilst in Foster Care.

Result: The complaint was upheld, a new placement was found, and an allegations management strategy meeting held.

4. Young person experiencing issues at the home they resided at, and complaints made to the home were not taken seriously.

Result: Stage 2 – The investigation concluded over all with a partially upheld decision and highlighted ways of working with the young person and exploring all options.

4. Learning from complaints

4.1

The Complaints and Compliments Team encourages an open and accountable approach to complaints and takes a focused approach to all identified learnings. The Complaints and Compliments Officer attends a quarterly regional meeting where best practice is shared. They also attend service specific workshops delivered by the Local Government Ombudsman to stay informed of changes to guidance and good practice.

Quarterly reports detailing complaints/compliments and actions that services have identified to improve customer services are presented to Directors. The reports also highlight any outstanding actions and Directors are asked to support our drive for continuous improvement and customer service excellence.

4.2

Focus is given to what we can learn from complaints; we continuously seek ways to improve the service that we offer from the identified learnings following a complaint investigation. Some recent examples of where we have taken action to improve processes following a complaint are:

- Joint team meetings between the Fostering and Pathways Teams were introduced, to ensure communication is improved, and understanding of different roles within the teams is consistent.
- Meet with the Calderdale Foster Care Association and review the Staying Put policy, to provide clear processes for staff and guidance for carers.
- Where a looked after child is placed with approved connected carers, this should be recognised as being a foster placement. If the service making the Care Planning decision doesn't want to progress with a fostering arrangement, this should be raised to senior management to ensure there is clear management oversight and communicated effectively to the carers.
- The period that had passed for feedback to be received on the initial complaints raised was delayed and left the young person waiting far too long for any responses and resulted in a formal complaint. These failures will be addressed with the agency and the authority to ensure feedback is provided more efficiently.

6. Compliments

44 compliments were received in 2020/21, compared to 43 in 2019/20. Compliments are recorded on our database and forwarded to the manager of the person the compliment is for. The importance of sharing all compliments has been reinforced in training and in team meetings.

Some examples of compliments received during 2020/21 can be found below:

A big thank you for leading this FDHC. This whole process wouldn't successfully work without three things:

- *willing volunteers for teams*
- *in depth understanding of what makes for an effective front door*
- *team leadership, so everyone's potential to contribute is realised*

The whole team ticked boxes on the first two, you delivered on the third. It's amazing that none of you had been involved in providing a FDHC before - you all behaved as if it was the most natural thing in the world. Your leadership was humble, accommodating, and inclusive. The result was a clear, analytical and comprehensive summary/presentation which will undoubtedly help Rotherham's continuous improvement. Great to work with you as always. Thank you so much.

Thanks for everything you do for me and the kids, we appreciate it.

I am very grateful for all the support and advice you have provided me over the last few months. You have really made a difference, especially when things got tough. You are always extremely knowledgeable and remained unbiased and gave me as much advice as possible. Although you can't make decisions for me, you gave me enough information for me to make those decisions myself.

Effective communication whether face to face, virtually, telephone or email, all responded to with required detail and prompt responses. Actions from meetings completed promptly to provide relevant and appropriate information as required to prevent delay and uncertainty...homes practices are fantastic, person centred, personalised and common sense approach... works in transition both in Children's continuing care and through transition to adulthood...the facility is a real asset to CYP and families who access the service. Whenever I attend meetings for child/young person feedback is always consistent and positive. The staff and management team are committed to the very best care and support for individuals particularly around their person-centred approaches and reasonable adjustments. During Covid, the team have experienced a difficult time trying to continue to provide a high standard of service and have had to reduce their intake at any one time whilst prioritising all dependent on their individual and family circumstances. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the whole team for their commitment and dedication to all the service users and for the consistent commitment to professionals by attending meetings in relation to those service users. Thank you!

I would just like to take this opportunity to say a massive thank-you to both of you and your team in particular for the amazing support you have given my team in progressing the visits to the victims and getting them to engage with us. We would have never got to speak to a lot of them without you, you are our unsung heroines!

You were well informed and supplied up-to-date information in support of my child and always placed her needs first. I was also supported with regards to my grandson's EHCP. When I knew something was not working, you were kind and respectful and made sure the information I had was correct.

The social worker wrote very clearly in child's voice from point of view of the unborn baby, I used this in conference (referencing this was the SWs) and professionals and mum found this powerful. Lancashire colleagues stated that this has not been seen before by them in their authority, this was a great piece of work by the SW and used in conference to direct mum's thinking to the direct link to her baby.

You helped me understand what was right and wrong, that there are consequences to my actions and how to make good choices, not bad choices. I worked with you both at the allotment which helped me to talk and I didn't get stressed, angry or upset. It made me happy and relaxed. You treated me with respect and explained things if I didn't understand. I go to Employability Solutions College. I felt I was listened to and I feel I was respected. It was an incredible journey.

I've just attended the Schools Transition Conference, organised by School Effectiveness Officer, which was attended by Head Teachers and Cluster reps from across Calderdale. The Young Advisors presented this PowerPoint and blew me away. The presentation content was great, the findings were interesting and important, and many Head Teachers commented how brilliant and useful they had found it. Each of the Young Advisors presented clearly, confidently and with succinct point - and I rather emotionally, was almost in tears. They absolutely need recognising I think through the Exec. The plan is for this presentation to be disseminated by the Heads to their respective schools, along with other recommendations set out at the end of the presentation.

I am always really happy to see just how many courses and workshops there are out there for me to attend. I am always extremely grateful to receive all the latest and up to the minute information that you manage to gather for us. I find this really supportive and so helpful, because I am invited to attend such a wide range of events that are beneficial to me and the care I give my Nephews as an SGO Kinship Foster Mother, and also with my work that I do with the Social Care Field. I am always amazed at how much information you send me. You provide such a good support and information service to us that brings us all together to learn, grow and develop skills that we can use to give our children a safe, warm and caring environment. I love to feel empowerment, and it's so important to me to provide and encourage the same for the children in my life, and your constant support helps me to do that. Thank you

7. Training & Development

The Complaints and Compliments Team provide training and support for all colleagues who are required to investigate complaints. The aim is to provide training that specifically relates to their individual area and working practices and identifies how to define a complaint, how to complete a robust investigation and how to respond fairly and proportionately.

The sessions have been redesigned with a new PowerPoint presentation and are currently being delivered remotely.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS REPORT CONTACT:

Richard Noble
Complaints and Compliments Officer

Email: richard.noble@calderdale.gov.uk