



APPENDIX 1

Children, Adults & Housing: Children and Young People's Services

Annual Report 2015 – 2016 Complaints and Compliments

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CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 15-16

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1. Executive Summary

This report provides information about complaints made in the twelve months between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016.

Havering Children's Services takes all complaints seriously and employs a thorough tracking system to ensure responses are timely and robust. Whilst complaints can be framed negatively, Havering strives to learn from every encounter with its users. Complaints are used to improve and progress the service, whilst providing a direct response to the user by trying to resolve the issue in the first instance. In 2015/16, Havering Children's Services received 94 complaints (including enquiries). Each complaint is scrutinised individually but also forms a thematic annual report to help the organisation learn, develop, and improve services.

Children's Social Care noted a significant increase in the number of complaints received throughout 2014/15, however complaints in the reporting year covered by this report have remained steady, at about the same level. The service has also noted that complaints have become increasingly complex. The sustained increase in the number of children on Child Protection Plans that started in 2014/15 has contributed to the type and complexity of complaints, and is reflective of some of the complaints in relation to attitude/behaviour of staff - which were mainly around decision making.

It is clear with Children Social Care complaints that there are sensitivities around most children's cases and with the decisions regarding whether a child is taken into care or made subject to a Child Protection Plan and it is necessary for social workers to provide families with the information to understand these processes.

In 2015/16 Children's Social Care began making major changes to its structure to work more closely with families and to build up those relationships through its 'Face to Face' vision and it is anticipated this will lead to better outcomes for families and lead to continuous improvement in the level of service provided. As part of this vision, the MOMO (Mind of My Own) app has been introduced to obtain children's wishes and views and also their concerns. Enabling children to raise issues through the use of technology is key to ensuring they feel their voice is heard, and will support the service in delivering better outcomes for children.

2. Introduction

Children Social Care collects information about contacts where the nature of the communication does not meet the threshold to be a statutory complaint and where informal resolution resolves the enquiry. These are counted as 'Enquiries'.

2.1 Regulations

The Local Authority Social Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2006' govern complaints, representations and compliments received about children and young people's services.

There are three stages covered within the regulations as set out below, with Havering Complaints Team also collecting information about enquiries that come through to the complaints service.

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Stage 1 – Local Resolution

This is the most important stage of the complaints process, with an expectation that the service (and its external contractors) works to resolve as many complaints as possible at this initial stage. Response times are 10 working days with a further 10 working days if required. If a young person requires an advocate this should be sought for them. If the complainant is not happy with the response at Stage 1 they can request to progress to Stage 2 within 20 working days of receiving the response.

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

Response times are 25 – 65 working days. An Independent Investigator and Independent Person are appointed at this stage. The Independent Person must be external to the organisation. Following the independent investigation, the investigation report will be sent to the complainant, along with the adjudication letter giving the decision of the Head of Service. If the complainant is not happy with the response at Stage 2, they can request their complaint to be heard by a Review Panel within 20 working days of receiving the response.

Stage 3 – Review Panel

The Review Panel is managed independently of the Complaints, Information & Communication Team via Democratic Services. The Panel must consist of three independent people, one of whom is the Chair. The Panel must be held within 30 working days from request. Following the Panel Hearing, the recommendations will be issued to the complainant, independent people, advocate and Director within 5 working days. The Director must issue their decision within 15 working days of receiving the recommendations.

Local Government Ombudsman

A further option for complainants is the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) who is empowered to investigate where it appears that a Council's own investigations have not resolved the complaint. Complainants can refer their complaint to the LGO at any time, although the LGO normally refers the complaint back to the Council if it has not been considered in full under the Council's statutory procedure first.

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3. Complaints Received

3.1 Ombudsman referrals

Ombudsman enquiries have increased in 2015/16 with one maladministration with injustice and four premature/informal enquiries.

	Apr15- Mar16	Apr14- Mar15	Apr 13- Mar14
Maladministration (no injustice)			
Maladministration & Injustice.	1		
No maladministration after investigation			
Ombudsman discretion			
Investigation with Local settlement			
Outside Jurisdiction			1
Investigation Discontinued			1
Premature/Informal enquiries	4	3	1
Total	5	3	3

3.2 Total number of complaints

The total number of stage 1 complaints remained at about the same level as 2014/15 (a slight increase of 6%), as compared to the significant increase experienced from 2013/14 to 2014/15 (26% increase). Of the total number of complaints received, 10 (14%) were made by children directly or via an advocate.

	Enquiries	Stage 1	Stage 1 escalated to Stage 2
2015/16	20	74	
2014/15	27	70	1
2013/14	36	42	5

Enquiries do not form part of the statutory process, therefore these figures are not included elsewhere in this report. Children Services collects information about Enquiries, as it is important as a learning tool, to understand how to prevent complaints escalating, and resolve at an early stage.

3.3 Stages

There has been a slight increase of nearly 6% in Stage 1 complaints in 2015/16 compared to 2014/15 seeing an increase to 74 from 70 for the respective counting years. There were no Stage 2 investigations, although there were 6 requests for Stage 2 that were not granted, for example, because the case was within Court proceedings, the complainant was not acting in the best interest of the child, or did not progress following meetings with complainants. When a complainant requests Stage 2, they are offered a meeting with the Senior Complaints Officer and other relevant officers in an attempt to seek early resolution. This approach has been successful in getting resolution (in 3 of the 6 cases) to the satisfaction of the complainant, and with a good outcome for the child.

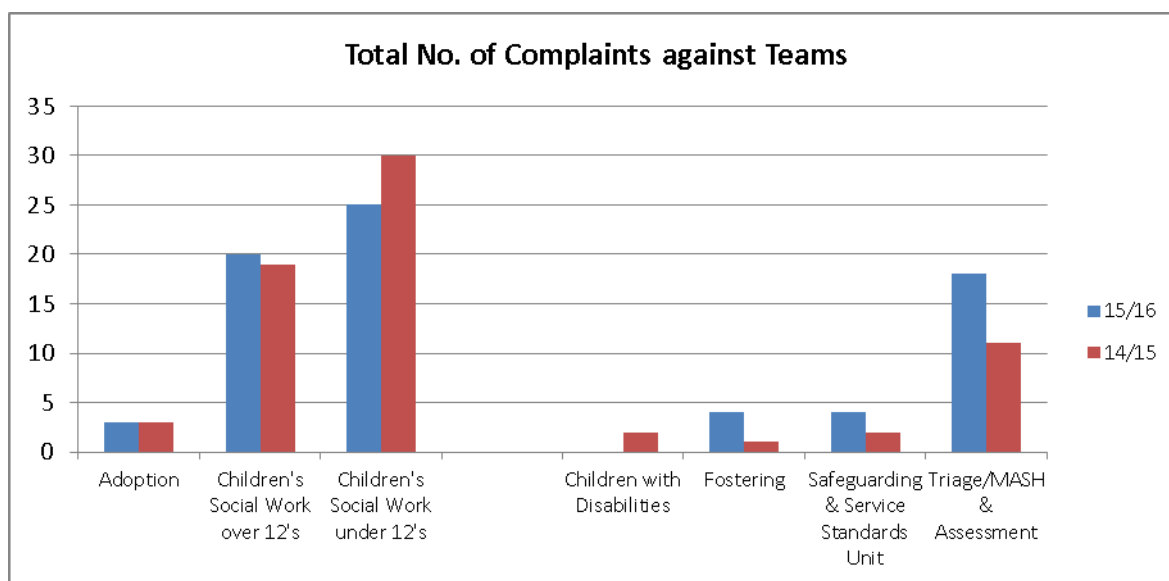
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3.4 Teams

Stage 1 Complaints have increased in 2015/16 across 'Over 12s'; 'Fostering'; 'Triage/MASH & Assessment' and the 'Safeguarding & Service Standards Unit' (SSSU). Fostering had the largest percentage increase - four times that of the previous year, although the actual number of complaints is low. SSSU has doubled (although the actual number remains low), with Triage/MASH & Assessment experiencing a 64% increase. 'Under 12s' service received the highest number of complaints, although the number received had reduced from the previous year.

During 2015/16, Children's Services began a process of transformation, starting with a review and pilot of changes in the MASH (and now implemented) in the last quarter of 2015/16. Over this period, there was no apparent impact on the number of complaints received (with 5 of the 18 complaints received in this period).

The service noted throughout 2015/16 an increased number of children on Child Protection (CP) Plans of 25% from the beginning of April 2015 to the end of March 2016. Given these higher activity levels within the service in terms of CP plans, complaints as a *proportion* of these, is showing a downward trend.



Year	Adoption	Children's Social Work over 12's	Children's Social Work under 12's	Children with Disabilities	Fostering	Preventative Team	Safeguarding & Service Standards Unit	Triage/MASH & Assessment
15/16	3	20	25		4		4	18
14/15	3	19	30	2	1	2	2	11

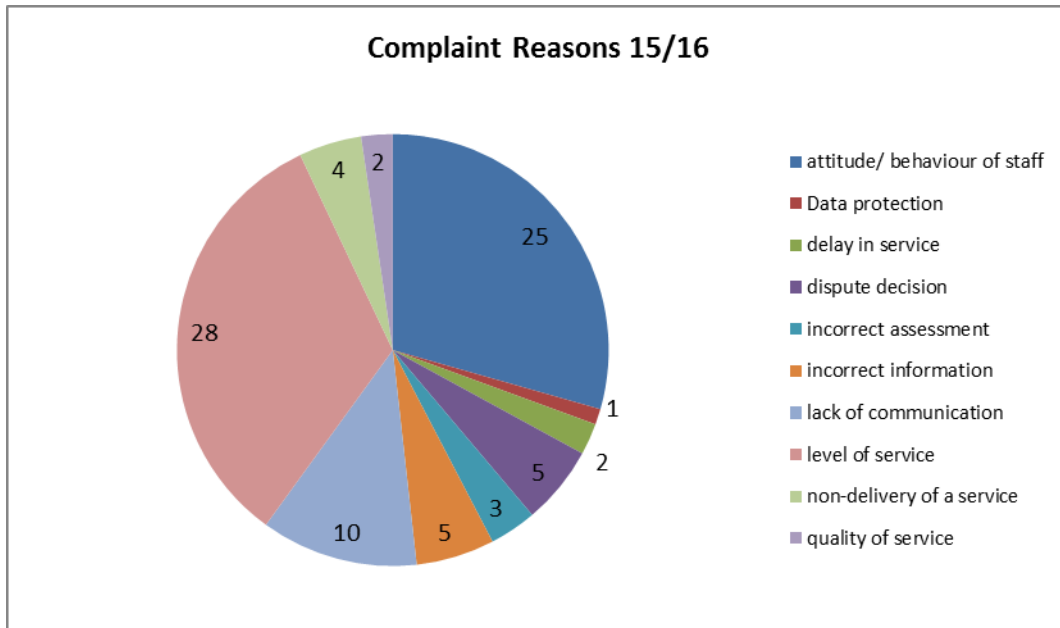
The Children with Disabilities Team moved to Learning & Achievement in September 2014, becoming the Children & Adults Disabilities (CAD) Team. The new CAD Team brought together children with disabilities social workers and education staff (including specialist staff such as educational psychology) to improve the experience of children and young people with disabilities in mainstream and specialist education provision up to the age of 25. The two services are not 'like for like', therefore comparison of complaints

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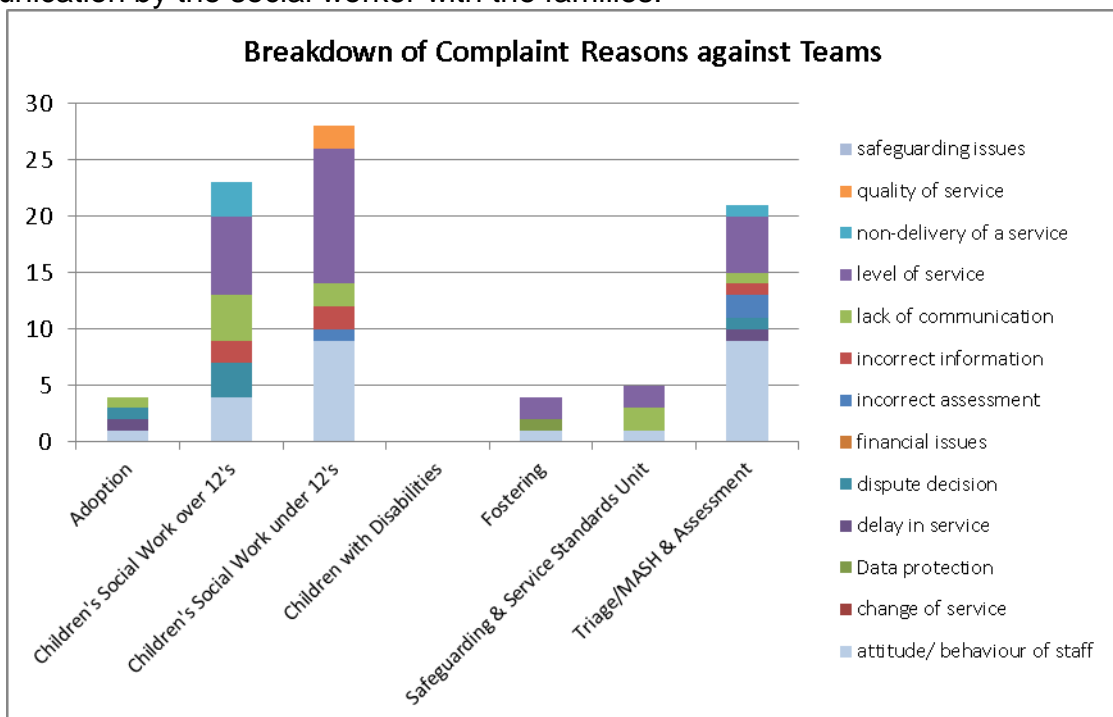
reporting is problematic. Complaints for this service in 2014/15 were recorded under Children's Services, however the recording was moved to Learning & Achievement in 2015/16. The number of complaints received in 2015/16 for the Children & Adults Disabilities Team was 13.

3.5 Reasons

Below is the breakdown of complaint reasons in 2015/16. It should be noted that a number of complaints had more than one reason. 'Level of Service' and 'Attitude/Behaviour of staff' are the main reasons for complaint.



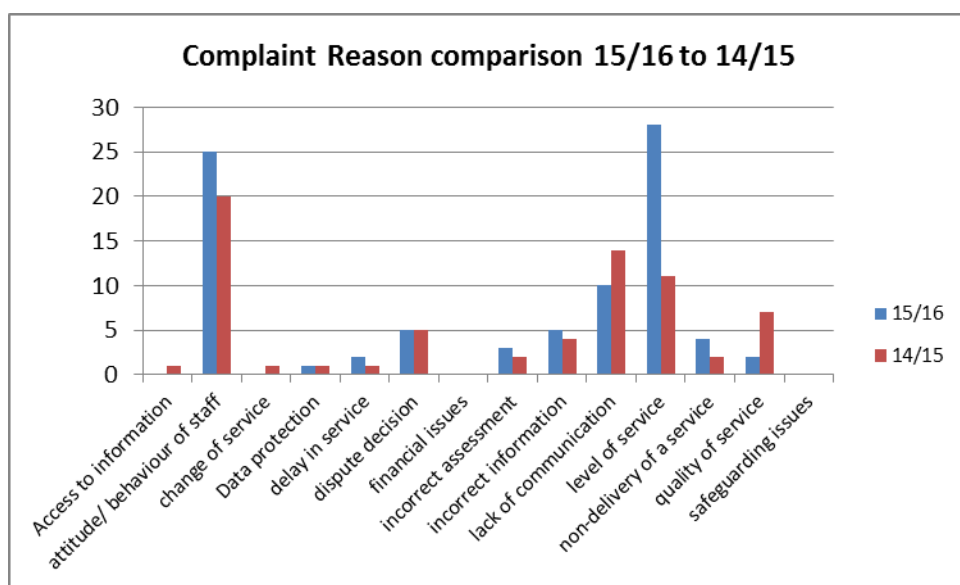
The Service has noted the number of complaints that are in relation to 'attitude/behaviour of staff' which is across all teams. Although the majority of these types of complaints were more about the decisions that families were unhappy about, some were also linked to lack of communication by the social worker with the families.



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Column1	attitude/behaviour of staff	change of service	Data protection	delay in service	dispute decision	financial issues	incorrect assessment	incorrect information	lack of communication	level of service	non-delivery of a service	quality of service	safeguarding issues
Adoption	1			1	1				1				
Children's Social Work over 12's	4				3			2	4	7	3		
Children's Social Work under 12's	9						1	2	2	12		2	
Children with Disabilities													
Fostering	1		1							2			
Safeguarding & Service Standards Unit	1								2	2			
Triage/MASH & Assessment	9			1	1		2	1	1	5	1		

The comparison below shows the significant increase (increasing from 11 to 28) in 2015/16 regarding 'level of service' compared to 2014/15. 'Attitude/Behaviour of Staff' also showed a 25% increase in 2015/16 compared to 2014/15. As highlighted above, the majority were in relation to the decision as opposed to the actual behaviour of staff.



3.6 Outcomes and Learning

As per 'complaint reason', for some complaints, there are multiple outcomes. A breakdown has been shown as below.

Of the complaints received, 38 were upheld, 26 not upheld, 8 withdrew and 2 resulted in no further action. This also would include those categories below, for example, upheld with an explanation/apology given.

Apology	Complaint withdrawn	Explanation/ Apology given	Explanation/ Information provided	No further action required	Reassessment/ Reallocation	Report provided
3	7	22	56	3	2	1

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3.6.1 Looked After Children Complaints 2015/16

Whilst all complaints are thoroughly considered, particular attention is provided to complaints for Looked after Children (LAC) as they are the most dependant on the good delivery of our services. In 2015/16 there were 33 complaints made and the common themes that emerged within these complaints are about communication with staff members (42%) and the decisions made about their case (39%). The senior management team of Children's Services has reflected on these complaints, and other feed-back that has been received from Children in Care. A key element of the transformation of Children's services is an effort to improve the levels of communication between social workers and Children in Care through the Face-to-Face Programme. This programme also includes the adoption of innovative ways to allow the child's voice to be heard. An example of this is supporting staff and LAC to use Mind of My Own (MOMO) which allows children to communicate with wishes and feelings when they want to via a medium that most of them are comfortable with. Havering has also developed a recruitment and retention strategy in order to decrease the percentage of agency workers within the service. Reducing the number of agency social workers will enable more stability and provide greater consistency, with the aim of Children in Care experiencing fewer changes of social worker. An independent advocacy service is available to Children in Care who may wish to complain about the service that they have received.

3.6.2 Leaving Care Complaints 2015/16

Within the Leaving Care team there were 7 complaints in 2015/16, 85% of these related to the delivery of the service. In order to provide a better service, Havering has submitted a bid to the DfE Innovation Fund to support successful transitions to adulthood. There is recognition that these complaints suggest that the level of service provided to this group could be improved. Havering has decided to create a pathway for care leavers in order to provide them with wrap around support as they progress to adulthood. In the event that the Innovation bid is unsuccessful, there is a contingency to work with partners to adopt the principles of the bid.

3.6.3 General Themes and Trends 2015/16

Overall in Children's Services the highest number of complaints was about the level and quality of the service provided (40%). This is a wide-reaching category which covers many different areas of complaint such as the standard of assessment, the care provided to children that are looked after by the local authority and the decisions made by social workers with regards to case direction. We acknowledge that as a service it is vital to always deliver the best possible outcomes, at the same time we must accept that there will always be issues raised and unpopular decisions made, especially given the nature of our work.

32% of complaints received were with regards to the behaviour of staff and communication whilst data protection and incorrect information accounted for 10%. The relatively low level of complaints relating to incorrect information demonstrates that our social work staff are working conscientiously and diligently. In terms of communication, new tools such as MOMO have also been introduced to encourage children and young people to share their views in a secure and confidential environment. The remaining 18% of responses were miscellaneous comments.

50% of all the complaints made were not upheld but learning was noted and attributed against them. No complaints for this period progressed past stage one. This suggests that the level and type of response from the management team is effective in resolving complaints swiftly.

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3.6.4 Summary

- Each complaint that we receive is taken seriously, analysed and responded to appropriately at source.
- Many of the changes proposed through the Face-to-Face programme aim to address the issues raised by complaints in the last 12 months – specifically in relation to communication.
- Havering CYPS is currently undertaking a wide-ranging programme of transformation, which will change the way we practice and enable social workers to tailor their intervention on a case by case basis.

3.7 Response times

Complaints have become more complex and response times reflect this as shown below. The number of responses within 10 days and 11-20 days has declined by 11% and 4% respectively, and those responded to over 20 days has doubled. As previously noted, the complexity of complaints has increased and this has impacted on response times. However it should be noted that within the statutory framework it allows for extension of up to 20 days and where this is required holding letters are sent to the complainants. Improved monitoring is now in place to address response times.

	Within 10 days		11-20 days		Over 20 days		Withdrawn	
	Apr 15 Mar16	Apr14 Mar15	Apr 15 Mar 16	Apr14- Mar15	Apr 15 Mar 16	Apr14- Mar15	Apr 15- Mar 16	Apr14- Mar15
Stage 1	25	28	25	26	23	11	2	3
%	34		34		32			

3.8 Stage 2 Complaints

There were no Stage 2 investigations during 2015/16, although there were requests for Stage 2 that did not progress.

3.9 Stage 3 Review Panels

There were no Stage 3 Review Panels during 2015/16 compared to two in 2014/15.

	2015/16	2014/15
Stage 2 request for a Stage 3 with no Review Panel		
Stage 3 Review Panel		2

4 Corporate Complaints

Corporate complaints do not form part of the statutory process, but are shown to have dropped considerably from 20 in 2014/15 to 7 in 2015/16. For those received, 67% were responded to within the target timescale. Corporate complaints are reported on separately.

5. Expenditure

Expenditure was incurred for 2015/16, which related to a Stage 2 investigation from 2014/15 and one Stage 2 in 2015/16 which did not escalate to investigation and has reduced from 2014/15.

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	Publicity/ leaflets	Independent investigators	Total
Apr 2015 – Mar 2016		£2,614.20	£2,614.20
April 2014 – March 2015	£796.25	£2,210.72	£3,006.97

6. How Complaints were received

There has been an increasing trend that complainants' preference is either email or letter.

	Letter or Complaint Form	E-mail	Telephone	In Person	Online
2015/16	21	35	11	2	4
2014/15	20	24	26	0	-

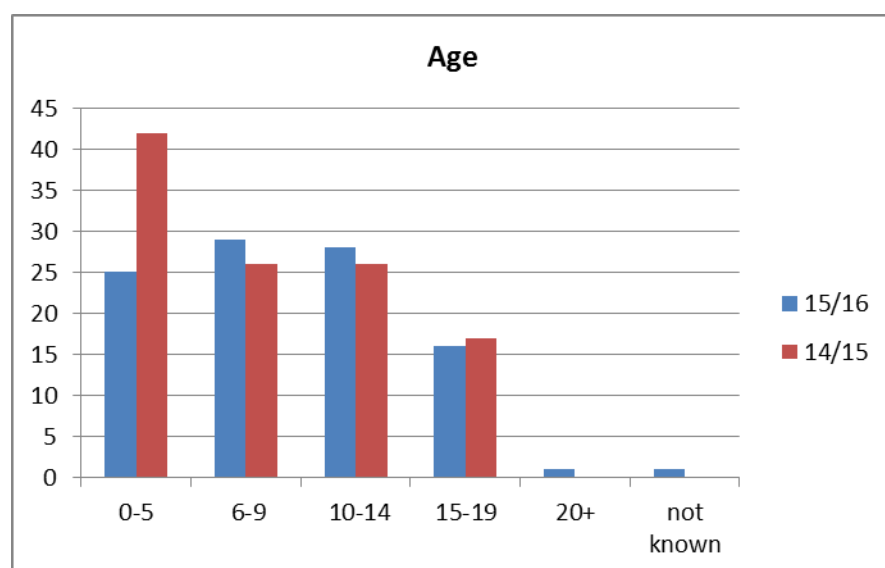
7. Monitoring Information

7.1 Age

Children's complaints sometimes involve a number of children within the family unit and therefore the breakdown of ages shown includes all children, which will show a larger number than the number of complaints received.

There has been an increase in the number of children on a Child in Need Plan between the ages of 5-9 where there was an average of 51 for 2015/16 as opposed to an average of 25 in 2014/15. It is noted that statistics are not reflective of the complaints data categories and discussions will be needed on how best to capture monitoring information data so that it is consistent to meet legislative requirements.

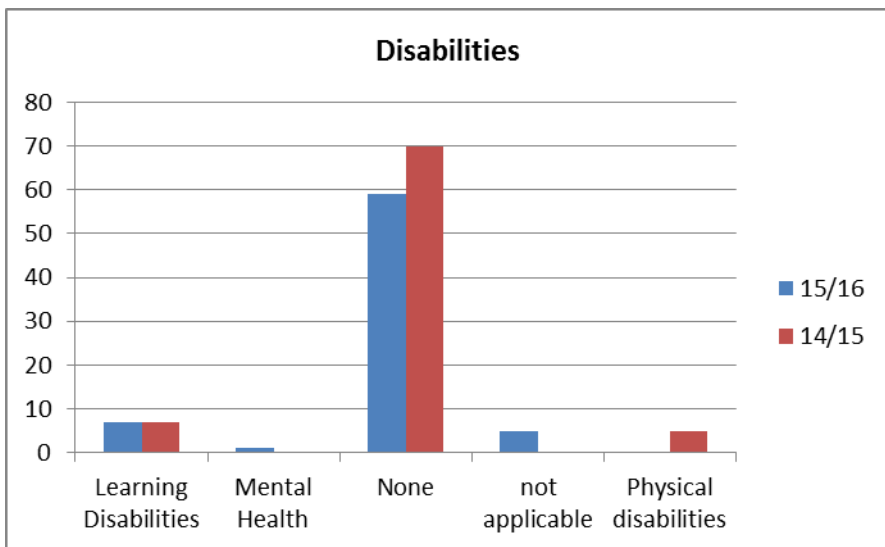
Within Havering there has been an increase in the number of children in the borough to the end of 2015/16 as compared to 2014/15. The change in population was 3% for ages 0-5 and 6-9 with a 1% increase in ages 10-14. Ages 15-19 has shown a reduction of 1%.



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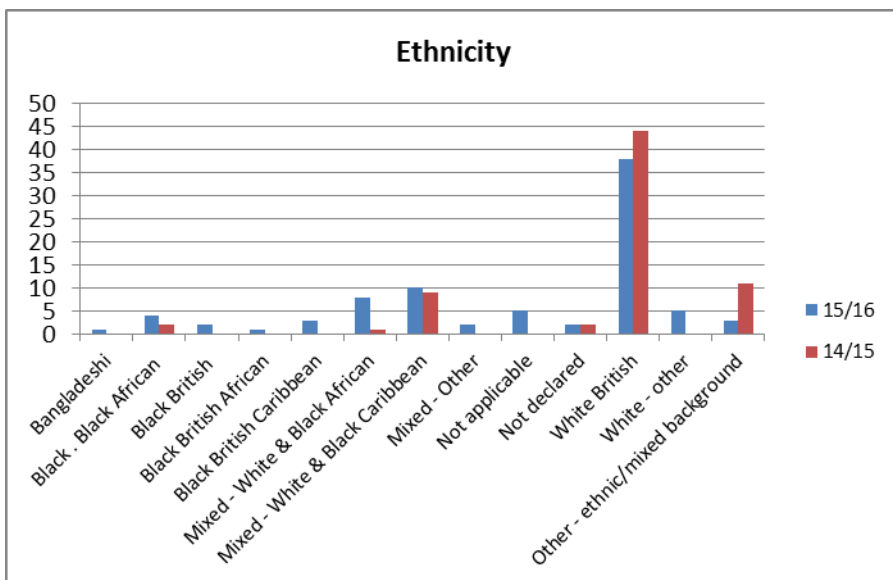
7.2 Disability

Complaints relating to those with learning disabilities have remained at the same level in 2015/16 as 2014/15 and there has been a reduction in complaints involving children with physical disabilities compared to 2014/15 (there were none in 2015/16).



7.3 Ethnicity

The highest increase of 88% has been in children of 'Mixed White and Black African' ethnicity in 2015/16 compared to 2014/15, with other slight increases across the other ethnic backgrounds. 'White British' has fallen by 14%



8. Members Correspondence

Members' correspondence has remained at the same level in 2015/16 as 2014/15, with 58% being responded to within timescale. The first two quarters of 2015/16, there were only 4 members enquiries into the service, with 8 in quarter 3 and 12 in quarter 4. This increase in volume in the latter part of the year affected response times, with 25% responded to on time in quarter 3, although this had increased to 67% in quarter 4. The

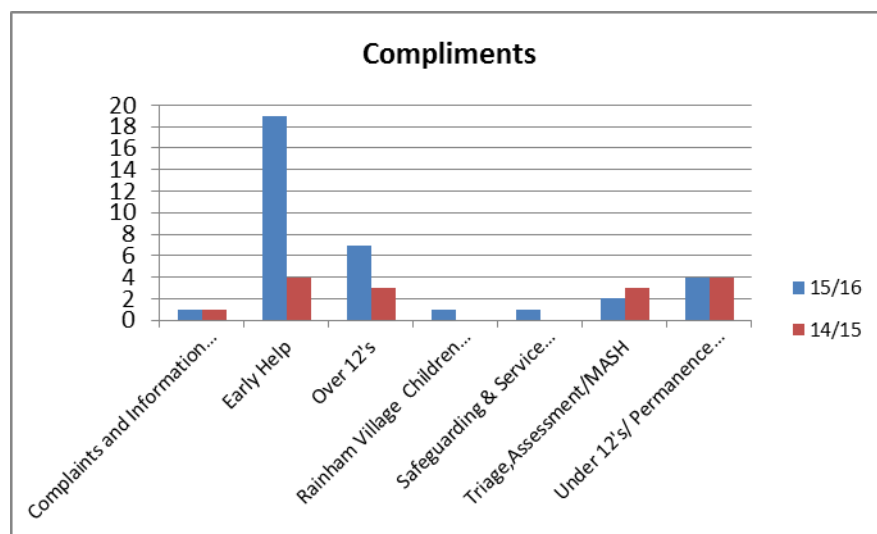
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Service recognises the need to improve response times and more practice monitoring systems have been introduced. Members' correspondence is reported on separately

	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14
Members Correspondence	24	24	27

9. Compliments

Compliments increased by 94% in 2015/16 (35) compared to 2014/15 (18). The increase is mainly attributable to the Family Intervention feedback evaluation forms received during this period for Early Help. This is shown in the breakdown of compliments received by teams below.



Some examples of compliments received are shown below:

A family write in about the support from a worker and the change in their child's life – 'he is becoming more sociable towards family members and my family have noticed this, especially nan and grandad I get so much support and understanding...' – **Early Help**

A Mum feels that the social worker 'has always listened to me, and the kids like the social worker'

'Things are starting to turn around, social worker will go into college and she will speak to young person and the girls, other social workers didn't do that'

'The kids feel like they have a voice now' – **12+/Leaving Care**

A family grateful for help said 'it made such a difference to have their concerns listened to'. – **Rainham Children's Centre**

Parents write in regarding the support for their son by the worker 'your professionalism was quite apparent and your support for us.... to find a mutually acceptable solution actually went beyond the call of duty.' – **Triage/MASH & Assessment**

A mother gives her feedback – 'I've had more than enough support - she has been amazing - she tells me I'm doing a great job - she's spoken to my family and answered their questions every time I need her she is there- and she always lets me know what is going on.' – **Under 12s**

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10. Conclusion

Complaints have continued to play an important part in providing a good source of information to the Service. The increasing number of complex complaints across Children's Services has had an impact on the response times, however continued efforts in face to face meetings have again resulted in a reduction in Stage 2 investigations.

Due to the changing demography and increasing demand for services, Children's services have experienced a number of different pressures and challenges throughout this period. In addition, a number of structural and organisational changes have taken place. This is likely to be reflected in the number of complaints that are attributable to the level of service received.

It has also been noted throughout 2015/16 that the majority of complaints were made by parents and not by children. Children's Services have taken this on board and has introduced the Mind of My Own (MOMO) app to allow children to make their views and wishes known, and raise concerns. The Complaints Team is linked into MOMO and will be monitoring this throughout 2016/17.

In Havering we aspire to continually improve the quality of our service. Going forward, the Face-to-Face programme strives to provide the tools to work in an analytical and reflective way which will in turn produce purposeful and evidence-based intervention through systemic practice.

The systemic family therapy training will equip social workers with the confidence to reflect on their decisions as well as explore alternative ways of meeting need. By encouraging this diversity in practice we will enable our social workers to tailor their intervention to each family, resulting in a more personalised service.

As a result of these changes and improvement to our practice we would expect to see a fall in the number of complaints regarding the level and quality of the service that is delivered as well as the behaviour and communication from staff. Complaints will continue to be monitored stringently and the complaints tracker will be reviewed fortnightly by the senior leadership team.

All learning will continue to be fed back into the service to enhance and develop our service delivery.

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11. Complaints Action Plan

Issues Identified	Lessons Learnt	Action to be taken	Department	Timescale	Review
Communication between social workers and parents/families relating to decisions made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the way decisions about children are communicated. Better communication around contact arrangements and case progression Ensure when there is a change in social worker (e.g. following staff departure), this is communicated effectively. 	Introduction of the 'Face to Face' programme	All	31 st March 2017 and ongoing	'Face to Face' programme started Summer 2016
Children are not able to make their voice heard through the complaints process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase understanding of outcomes sought by children in relation to their CP plans 	Introduction of 'Mind Of My Own' (MOMO), allowing children to communicate their wishes and feelings.	All	Ongoing	MOMO introduced Summer 2016
Children Leaving Care not feeling supported into adulthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve service offer for children who are care leavers, to better support them making successful transition to adulthood. 	<p>Review of pathway for care leavers, including developing a holistic programme in collaboration with Adult and Mental Health Services.</p> <p>One of the BHR ACO pilots for Havering will be focussed on children services.</p>	<p>Leaving Care</p> <p>Adult Services</p> <p>Mental Health Services</p>	31 st March 2017 and ongoing	Bid submitted to DfE Innovation Fund August 2016 to support development of approach.
Standard of delivery and level of service to be reviewed to ensure children and their families understand decisions made.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S20 – parents not clear about process and implications – clear explanation and information needs to be at an early stage S47 – parents not given sufficient information about process – consistent 	<p>Social workers to give clear and concise information about process.</p> <p>Managers to ensure that communication is addressed through the PDR process.</p> <p>Process already in place that two senior managers sign off S47s.</p>	Triage/MASH & Assessment	Ongoing	Work ongoing. Leaflets about processes in final stages of design.

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Issues Identified	Lessons Learnt	Action to be taken	Department	Timescale	Review
	determination needed and clear information about process				
Important information is not always recorded appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information leading to an action/decision should be recorded in detail. • Information needs to be recorded accurately 	<p>Work is already being undertaken to look at improved recording across the service.</p> <p>Assessments to identify clearly fact from opinion and identify the source of the information.</p>	All	On-going	<p>Managers continue to carry out case file audits to ensure recording is appropriate. Practice weeks, led by Director and Principal Social Worker, ongoing throughout the year.</p> <p>Admin Team developed and embedded as part of the recent service restructure in order to improve the quality and completeness of case recording. Regular data quality reports are sent out by the Policy and Performance service to Children and Young People's Services, identifying where case records are incomplete and / or inconsistent.</p>