

## APPENDIX 1

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

## Annual Report 2013 – 2014 Complaints and Compliments

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## **Executive Summary**

Children & Young People's Services had a restructure during 2013/14, resulting in the establishment of a Triage/MASH & Assessment Team which is the initial contact team for all children's enquiries. This was part of a London wide agreement between Directors of Children's Services with the Metropolitan Police to improve information sharing for the better protection of children. Many serious case reviews over the years have identified poor inter-agency information sharing as a risk factor for children. The multi-agency hub (MASH) brings together police, health and other partners with Children's Social Care.

It was highlighted that the Children's report structure and format needed changing by Members from the previous year's Children's Annual Complaints report and has noticeably changed and has provided a level of information to inform the service. Although this has been provided for this report, it has been noted that this level of information may not be available to Children & Young People's Services through the new CRM system which children's and adults complaints will be transferred over to. However the Complaints, Information and Communication Team will try and aim to provide this if not available through other means.

There have been areas identified through the report for Children & Young People's Services to take on board, and most of these areas, e.g. improvement of recording is already in the process of being actioned by way of regular auditing and feedback, team level reporting of data and continued support for staff on the use of the CCM recording system.

## 1. Ombudsman referrals

Of the three Ombudsman cases, one was referred back to the local authority as premature, one not investigated and one the investigation was discontinued.

	Apr13- Mar14	Apr 12- Mar13	Apr11 -Mar12
Maladministration			
No maladministration after investigation			1
Ombudsman discretion			1
Investigation with Local settlement		1	
Outside Jurisdiction	1	1	3
Investigation Discontinued	1		3
Premature/Informal enquiries	1	3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>

## 2. Total number of complaints

The total number of complaints received during 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014 was 90. This is a slight increase of 16% from 2012/13 which totalled 82.

The number of Stage 1 decreased slightly in 2013/14 by 2%. The number of Stage 2 complaints was the same as in 2012/13. However it should be noted that there were 10 requests for Stage 2, with only five progressing to independent investigation.

	Enquiries	Stage 1	Stage 1 escalated to Stage 2	Direct Stage 2	Stage 2 withdrawn	Stage 2 dealt with internally	Stage 3 Requests	Stage 3 Review Panel's	Total
2013/14	36	42	5	-	2	3	1	-	90
2012/13	27	43	5	-	-	-	1	1	82
2011/12	29	48	2	1	1	1	-	1	93

### 2.1 Enquiries

There has been a significant increase in enquiries this year and these have mainly related to issues outside of the statutory framework, e.g. outside of timescale.

	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Enquiries	36	27	29
Enquires escalating to a Stage 1 Complaint	0	5	0

## 3. Stage 1 Complaints

The majority of complaints were made by parents and only 4 were made by children/young people directly. This will need to be looked at in terms of whether young people are being informed about making complaints directly themselves through the advocacy service.

### 3.1 Service Areas

There have been decreases in complaints across the board, however within the Under 12s Team and Triage/MASH & Assessment Team these have significantly increased. It should be noted that before the restructure these two teams were previously the Children in Need Team and Duty and Assessment Team respectively. Fostering complaints have been shown for the first time in 2013/14 following attendance to each of the Children's Teams by the Complaints Team which identified particular areas of fostering along with special guardianship complaints that did fall under the statutory procedure.

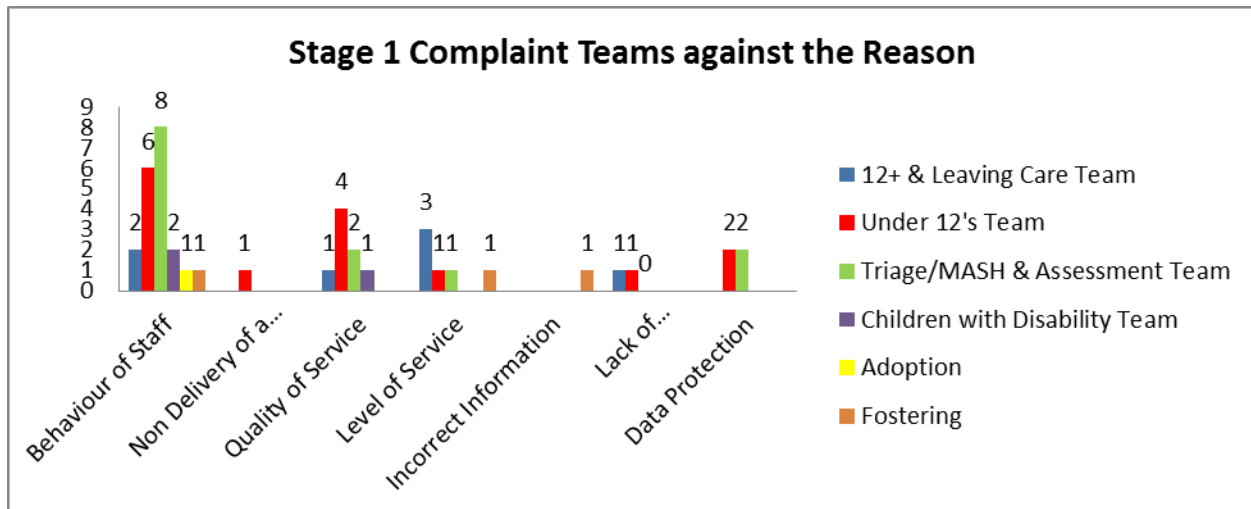
<b>Service Area's</b>	<b>Apr 13 – Mar 14</b>	<b>Apr 12 – Mar 13</b>
Under 12's (Children in Need Team)	11	5
Family Link	-	1
Triage/MASH & Assessment Team (Duty and Assessment Team)	13	8
Children with Disabilities Team	2	4
Leaving Care (now 12+ Team)	7	9
Looked After Children Team (now Permanency Team)	4	9
Intensive Family Intervention Team	-	3
Safeguarding & Service Standards Unit	-	2
IFIT/ DAAT	-	1
St Kilda's Children Centre/ DAAT	-	1
Adoption	1	-
Fostering	3	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>43</b>

### 3.2 Reasons

The main reason for complaint was 'behaviour of staff' which increased significantly during 2013/14 than in 2012/13. However quality of service reduced significantly from 2012/13 by 43% and this may be a result of the change in recording.

	Quality of Service	Behaviour of Staff	Level of Service	Lack of Communication	Data protection
<b>Apr 13 – Mar 14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Apr 12 – Mar 13</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>
	Dispute decision	Welfare Concerns	Incorrect Information	Incorrect assessment	Delay to implement a Service
<b>Apr 13 – Mar 14</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Apr 12 – Mar 13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

The main reason for complaint 'behaviour of staff' was highest within the Triage/MASH & Assessment Team and the Under 12's team. It should be noted that these were usually linked to unhappiness about decisions made by social workers within very emotive situations. However, it also highlighted that complainants did not feel they were given clear information/explanations about processes.



### 3.3 Outcomes

The main outcome for 2013/14 was an apology given with explanation. This was linked with acknowledging how complainants felt about the experience they may have gone through and providing a clearer understanding for the complainant about the process. The Complaints Team will be looking at recording of outcomes to see how this information can be better captured.

### 3.4 Response times

Of the 42 complaints received, 48% were responded to within the 10 working days timescale, 40% were responded to within 20 working days, 2 outside the timescale. 3 complaints withdrew. Where complaints were responded to within 20 working days, or went outside of timescale the complaints team sent out relevant holding letters.

	Within 10 days		11-20 days		Over 20 days		Withdrawn		Rolled over to 2013-14	
	Apr13-Mar14	Apr12-Mar13	Apr13-Mar14	Apr12-Mar13	Apr13-Mar14	Apr12-Mar13	Apr13-Mar14	Apr12-Mar13	Apr13-Mar14	Apr12-Mar13
Stage 1	20	24	17	20	2	4	3	2	-	3

## 4. Stage 2 Complaints

There were a total of 10 Stage 2 complaint requests for 2013/14. Of these 5 progressed to independent investigation and had escalated from Stage 1, 3 were resolved through face to face meetings with the complainant and 2 were withdrawn. There have been continued efforts to resolve complaints by meeting with complainants which has been successful, resulting in some complaints not progressing to an independent investigation. The majority of the complaints at this stage involved disputes between one parent and another about the welfare of the child.

## 4.1 Outcomes/Recommendations

Of those Stage 2 complaints investigated, the recommendations were mainly around improving contact/communication between the complainant/family and the local authority, while ensuring that the wishes and feelings of the child are taken on board. Also highlighted was information recorded in particular assessments/child protection plans and that these need to be clear and identify between facts and opinion and information accurately recorded.

## 4.2 Response times

The Stage 2 complaints investigated were complicated cases and only two of these were completed within the 65 statutory timescale, while three were outside of the timescale. It should also be noted that where investigations cut through particular holiday periods, such as Easter and Summer that this has had an impact.

	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Within 25 Working Days	-	1	-
Within 65 Working Days	2	-	-
Outside of Timescale	3	2	4
Withdrawn	2	-	2
On-going	-	2	3

## 5. Stage 3 Review Panels

There was one Stage 3 Review Panel during 2013/14.

	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Stage 2 request for a Stage 3 with no Review Panel	-	1	-
Stage 3 Review Panel	1	-	1

## 6. Corporate Complaints

There was a decrease of 16% in the number of corporate complaints received during 2013/14 compared to 2012/13. The spike in 2012/13 was due to the closure of certain groups within Children's Centres. Complaints within the Children and Young People's Services that do not fall within the statutory procedure are recorded under the corporate procedure.

	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Corporate Complaints	15	49	8

A breakdown of corporate complaints is given below. It should be noted that there is a difference between the overall figure given above and the breakdown of the complaints below and this is as a result of complaints that have been recorded under Children's Services via another service area incorrectly.

	Children's Centres	Fostering & Adoption	Under 12's	Triage/MASH & Assessment
Total	7	3	2	1

## 7. Expenditure

Expenditure for independent investigations is held within the Complaints, Information & Communication Team, which holds a small budget of £14,460. Although there were a total of five complaints requiring an independent investigation, one investigation was paid via the service. One payment for an independent investigation was made in this period which rolled over from 2012/13. There were no compensation payments made during 2012/13.

	Publicity/ leaflets	Independent investigators	Total
April 2013 – March 2014	£449.50	£9,203.40	£9,652.90

## 8. How Complaints & Compliments were received

Emails and telephone are the preferred method of contact with emails the most preferred. Telephone contact has increased from 2012/13; however the use of complaints leaflets decreased quite significantly.

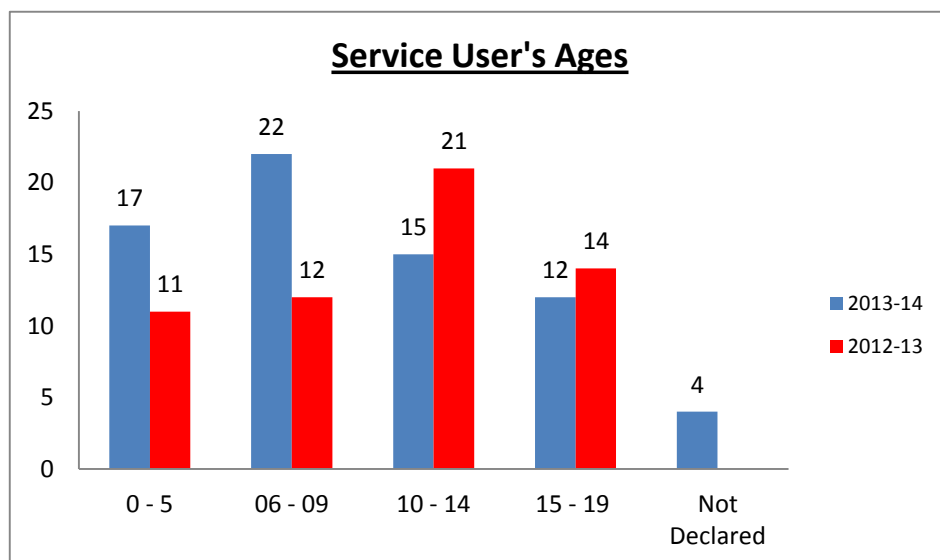
	Letter	E-mail	Complaint Form	Fax	Telephone	In Person	Online	Thank You Card	Evaluation Form
2013-14	25	50	5		30	3	1	13	1
2012-13	13	54	19	1	21	1	2	7	1

## 9. Monitoring Information

The monitoring information that follows includes all siblings within the family unit involved in the complaint.

### 9.1 Age

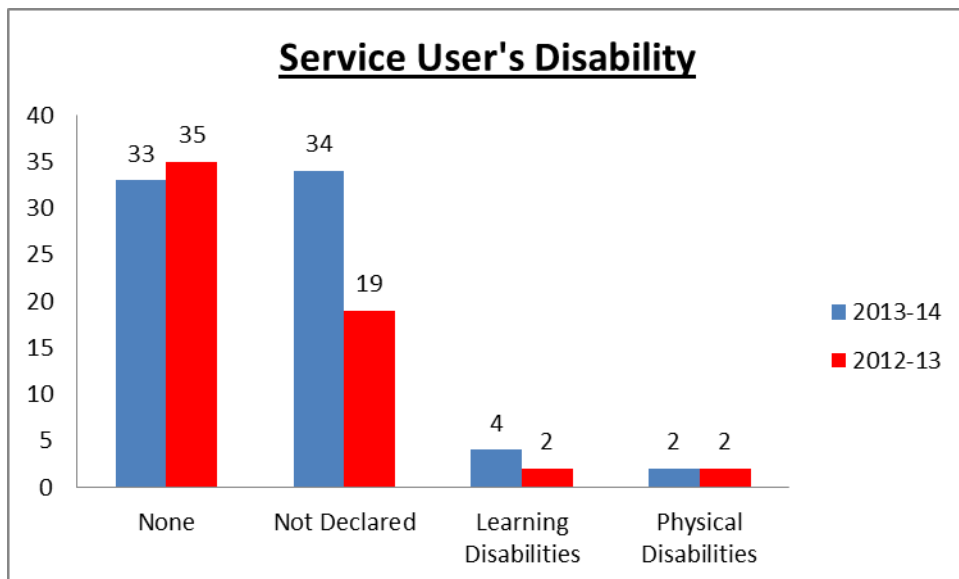
Complaints relating to children between 0-5 and 6-9 years have increased significantly during 2013/14 from 2012/13 by 55% and 65% respectively, while complaints relating to children between 10-14 and 15-19 have decreased. The rise in younger children complaints correlates to a rise in care proceedings and child protection plans.





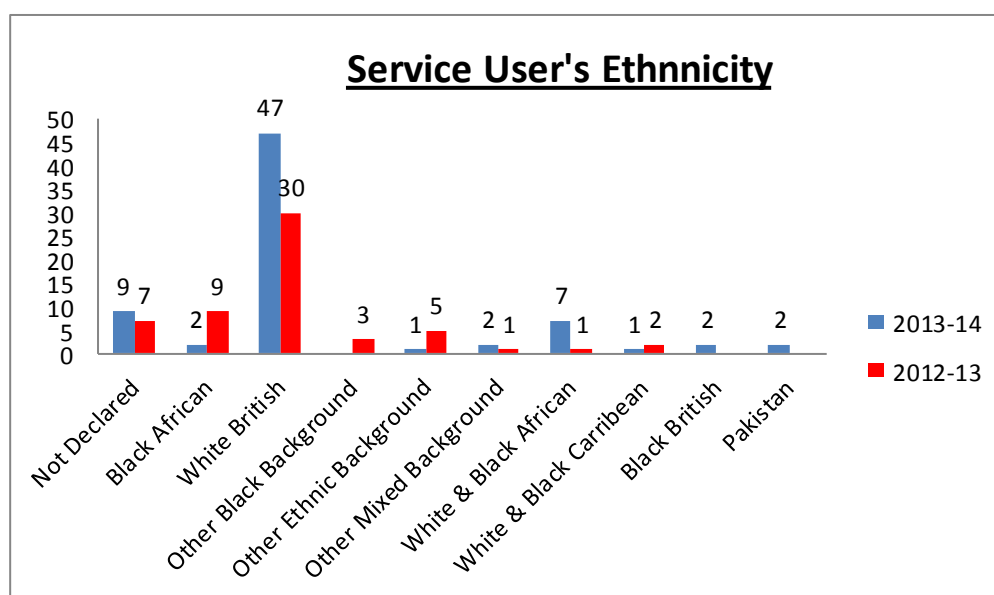
## 9.2 Disability

There is a high number that disability has not been recorded during 2013/14. This may need to be looked at in light of the changeover of the database system being used for children's records.



## 9.3 Ethnicity

Within Havering 87.6% are white British, with 4.8% being from an Asian/Asian British background, 4.8% Black/African/Caribbean/British background, 2.1% from a mixed background and 0.5% from other ethnic background. The breakdown of ethnicity in relation to children does appear reflective of this. It should be noted that 'not declared' has increased slightly and will need to be looked at to ensure information is captured.



## 10. Members Correspondence

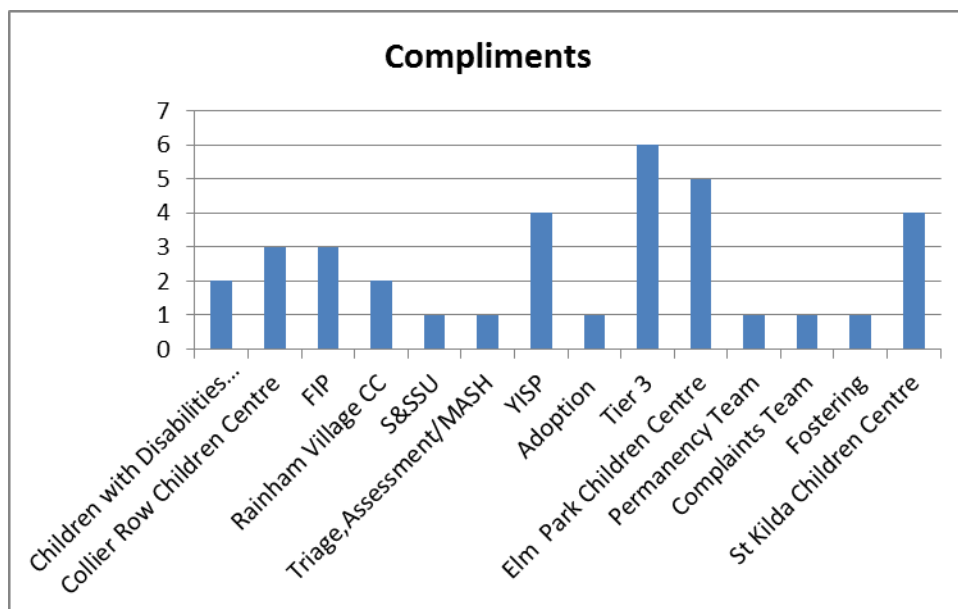
The number of Members correspondence in 2013/14 has dropped by 56% compared to the previous year 2012/13. Of the members correspondence received, 67% were responded to within the 10 day timescale.

	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Members Correspondence	27	46	36

## 11. Compliments

In 2013/14 39 compliments were received, compared to 43 in 2012/13. This has decreased only slightly from last year by 9%. This also can include professionals complimenting staff members. The type of compliments received were around supportive and practical advice, being helpful, kind and understanding and staff's hard work, commitment and professionalism.

	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Compliments	39	43	34



## 12. Conclusion

The format of this report has changed to help highlight the areas of information and context for complaints within the Children & Young People's Services. There are particular areas of concern highlighted, in particular, behaviour of staff. However when taking this in context it is clear that where decisions are made about children, i.e. where a decision needs to be made about whether a child stays with one parent over another, or that a child is seen to be at risk and placed in care, these are very emotive situations and many occasions the complaint is because a parent(s) is/are not happy with that decision. Although this can be justified, it also highlights the need for better communication/information from social workers at the outset to try and alleviate some of the anxieties and trust issues associated with these decisions.

Those complaints that were not escalated through the face to face meetings have been effective and should continue. Where possible and practical, face to face meetings may be looked at from an earlier stage as an effective means of preventing complaints escalating. What has been noted is the number of complaints received directly from young people has increased slightly from two in 2012/13 to four in 2013/14; this will need to be explored. It may be that with the new advocacy service that concerns are being dealt with in an effective way; however this information should be captured to evidence this.

There will be changes in the way that Children's complaints will be recorded and this may affect the level of recording that is available, once these are moved over to the new CRM database; however the Complaints, Information & Communication Team will aim to capture similar information as in this report. This will help the service to identify areas for improvement as they go forward.



## 9. Complaints Action Plan

Issues Identified	Lessons Learnt	Action to be taken	Department	Timescale	Review
S20 – parents not clear about process and implications	clear explanation/ information on possible implications needs to be given at early stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social workers to be reminded to provide concise and clear information.</li> <li>Managers to ensure that communication is addressed through the PDR process.</li> </ul>	Triage/MASH & Assessment	On-going	
S47 – parents not given sufficient information about process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determination of S47 needs to be consistent.</li> <li>Clear explanation/ information about process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process already in place that two senior managers sign off S47s.</li> <li>Social workers to give clear and concise information about process</li> </ul>	Triage/MASH & Assessment	On-going	
Important information is not always recorded appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information leading to an action/decision should be recorded in detail.</li> <li>Information needs to be recorded accurately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work is already being undertaken to look at improved recording across the service.</li> <li>Assessments to identify clearly fact from opinion and identify the source of the information.</li> </ul>	All	On-going	
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