

## APPENDIX 1

# Children Services

# Annual Report 2017 – 2018 Complaints and Compliments

**Prepared for:**

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## 1. Executive Summary

Since 2016, Havering Children's Services has been on an improvement journey in its approach to working with families and developing a new way of working. Last year, Children's Services launched its vision to enable our children and families to lead happy, healthy lives. This is focused around spending more face to face time with families and helping them to find their own solutions. In the recent Ofsted inspection of Children's Services, it was reported that Havering shows 'a determination to strive for improvement and an openness to learning has been pivotal in driving such improvements.' In all service areas, inspectors have found improvements since 2016. Ofsted found a learning organisation that routinely assesses itself and seeks to improve.

Listening to children and young people's views has been a central part of the Children's Services vision. The continued use of MOMO with young people has encouraged them to have more of a voice in raising any worries or concerns they may have about their care. It has been noted that complaints from young people directly have continued to increase, although still relatively low, at a steady pace and this is encouraging to see.

Complaints continue to play a part in identifying areas within services requiring improvement. The opening of 'The Cocoon', which provides face to face contact with young people in an informal setting, has proven to be very welcomed by young people. Complaint meetings have been held with young people in this venue and young people have commented how they prefer the informal environment that 'The Cocoon' offers them. The space is governed by the Youth Management Team (YMT). The YMT consists of children in care and care leavers aged between 14-25 years old who are active in shaping service design, delivery, and evaluation. Creating the Youth Management team aims to strengthen the relationship between the young people and social services, giving them a voice in the strategic leadership in the development, implementation and sustainability of the Cocoon and services. It also allows young people to work alongside professionals and to get an understanding of how processes work, as well as providing the opportunity to think about what skills that they would like to develop and explore with support so as to improve their prospects and gain experience.

Looking forward, we are aiming to introduce surgery-type sessions with members of the Complaints Team attending at 'The Cocoon', to give young people an opportunity to speak to them directly and raise any concerns that they may have. This would complement the existing Director's Surgery which was introduced in February 2018 to enable young people to raise and discuss individual and group issues of concern, share ideas and influence change with the Director and Assistant Director of Children's Services. This process has started to identify issues and is empowering young people to engage with senior officers to improve their individual lived experiences and services for the wider group.

Weekly tracking and monitoring of complaints is undertaken by the Heads of Service and Assistant Director to address specific concerns and ensure responses are provided. Although responses continue to improve, staff turnover can on occasion lead to some delay. Robust auditing and quality assurance of cases has continued within the service, resulting in better oversight and monitoring of cases. There is a quality assurance framework in place which is focused on learning and the development of practice, placing social worker's and practitioners at the centre of quality assurance activity. This includes two Practice Weeks per year, quarterly audits, regular observations of practice and independent audits. For example,

in the Practice Weeks of September 2017 and March 2018, there was an average of 90% of cases showing evidence good rapport with the child and family.

An emphasis on workforce development has been a vital part of the Children's Services improvement journey. Staff retention and permanency has improved, providing increased stability and consistency for children and young people. This has been complemented by the launch of Havering's Social Care Academy, offering professional development opportunities for social care staff, as well as an increased focus and embedding of systemic supervisions across the service. The frequency of supervision is monitored through performance data and the quality of records through the audit programme; a themed audit around supervision recording has been planned for 2018/2019. Practice Week findings show that the majority of practitioners feel they are getting good case direction and supervision.

Furthermore, a recent restructure of social care has ensured there are adequate numbers of case holding posts throughout the service. This forms part of the vision to spend more face to face time with families and also to address the growing demand that we are facing in the borough. Likewise, social work practice should also improve with the introduction of a new case management system, Liquid Logic, from December 2018.

## 2. Introduction

The 'Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (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 follows:

### Stage 1 – Local Resolution

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 Complaint & Information 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.

### 3. Complaints Received

#### 3.1 Ombudsman referrals

There were three Ombudsman enquiries during 2017-18, one found maladministration and injustice relating to provisions on Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP), one was closed after initial enquiries and the other is ongoing and the outcome of this will be known in 18/19.

	Apr17- Mar18	Apr16- Mar17	Apr15- Mar16
Maladministration (no injustice)			
Maladministration & Injustice	1	1	1
No maladministration after investigation			
Ombudsman discretion			
Investigation with Local settlement			
Outside Jurisdiction		3	
Investigation Discontinued			
Premature/Informal enquiries	1	2	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>

#### 3.2 Total number of complaints

Total number of complaints, including enquiries, is 140 for 2017-18. This is a slight increase of 4% to 2016-17 (135). The total of Stage 1 statutory complaints have dropped slightly by 2% in 2017-18 from 92 (2016-17) to 90. Complaints made directly by children/young people have increased steadily year on year in the last three years and in 2017-18 there were 18 complaints received directly from children/young people, up from 15 in 2016-17. Of the 18, five were withdrawn, which was as a result of early meetings held with the child/young person or the necessary action being taken quickly.

Enquiries have increased slightly in 2017-18 by 16% from 43 in 2016-17 to 50 in 2017-18. Enquiries do not form part of the statutory process and therefore these figures are not included in further reporting in this report, besides contact method which does include enquiries in the figures.

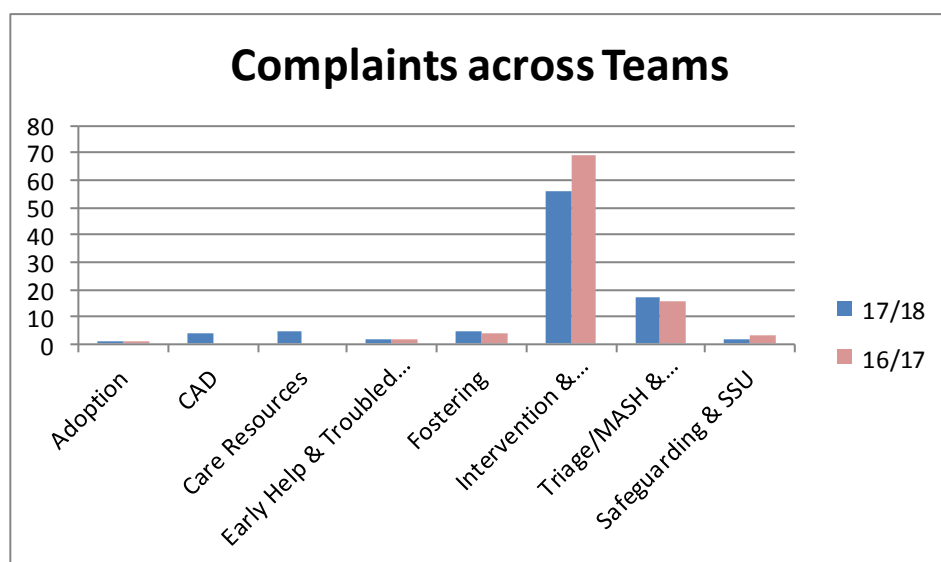
	Enquiries	Stage 1	Stage 1 escalated to Stage 2
202017-18	50	90	1
202016-17	43	92	1
2015/16	20	74	

#### 3.3 Stages

During 2017-18 there was one escalation to Stage 2, which commenced late in 2017-18 and the outcome of this will be known in 18/19. Meetings with complainants who are not satisfied with Stage 1 have continued to prove successful in reducing escalation to Stage 2. There were no Stage 3 Reviews during 2017-18.

### 3.4 Teams

The complaints received have in the main been received by parents, centred around the unwelcome intervention by social workers and decisions made regarding their children. This is reflected in the high number of complaints for Intervention & Support Services. However, it should be noted that the number of complaints has dropped by 19% from 69 in 2016-17 to 56 in 2017-18 for Intervention & Support Services. Triage/MASH and Assessment received the next highest, and again this was related to intervention particularly around child protection.

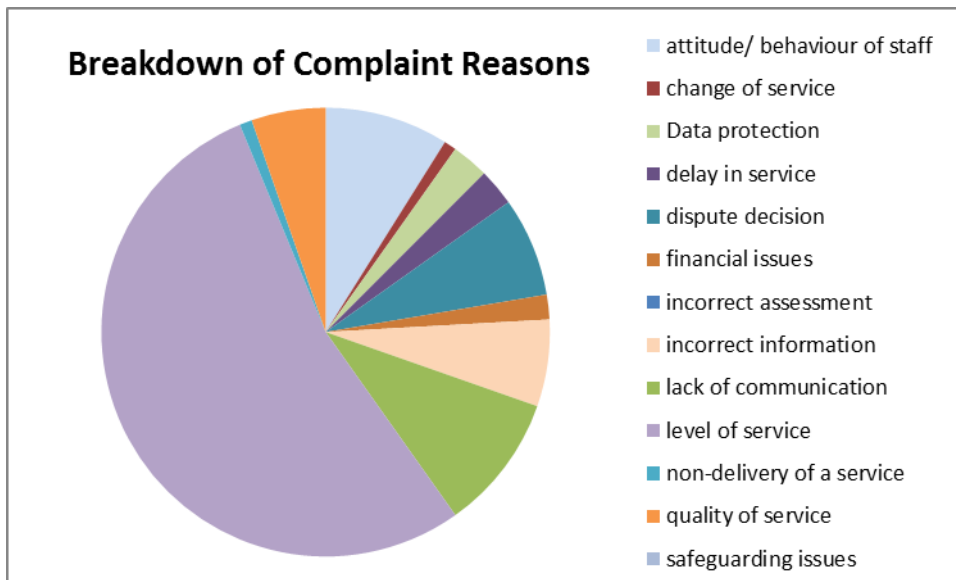


Column1	Adoption	CAD	Care Resources	Early Help & Troubled Families	Fostering	Intervention & Support Services	Triage/MASH & Assessment	Safeguarding & SSU
2017-18	1	4	5	2	5	56	17	2
2016-17	1			2	4	69	16	3

### 3.5 Reasons

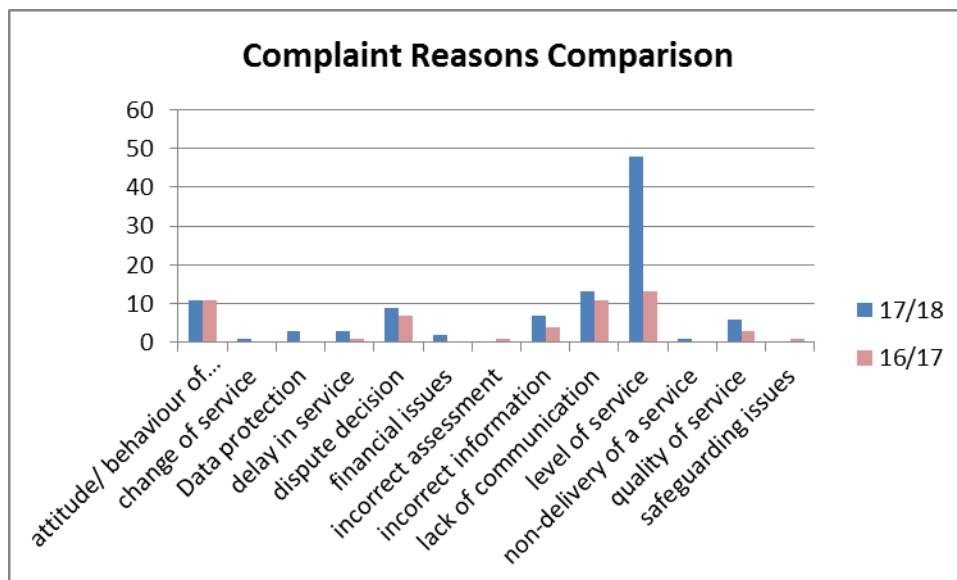
‘Level of service’ is the main reason for complaint and relates to level of support parents feel they should be receiving when intervention occurs. The focus of intervention would be to the child or children, although increasing emphasis is on the family as a whole. Also complaints relating to ‘level of service’ are where parents feel they are not always being kept updated, or the lateness or non-receipt of information/paperwork for meetings.

‘Lack of communication’ is the next highest reason for complaint and has increased slightly in 2017-18 (13) compared to 2016-17 (11) and links to ‘level of service’ in terms of not being kept updated. ‘Behaviour of staff’ is at the same level in 2017-18 (11) as in 2016-17 and Children’s Services continue to provide briefing and training sessions for staff as part of their systemic approach to engaging with children and families. 116 social care staff have undertaken or are currently undertaking systemic training.



'Level of service' has increased significantly in 2017-18, as shown in the graph below with complaints covering a number of elements regarding intervention. It has been highlighted that many of these complaints relate to parents'/carers' perception of a social worker's role and their expectations. Within this category, complaints also related to the information within assessments or reports, in which parents did not feel the content was a true reflection of discussions. It should be noted that of those complaints regarding 'level of service', 23 were 'upheld' and 25 were 'not upheld'. Of complaints 'upheld', they mainly resulted in an apology being given for the delay in providing relevant information/paperwork.

The significant increase from 2016-17 will need to be explored as this could be the result of reporting/recording difficulties.





### 3.6 Outcomes & Learning

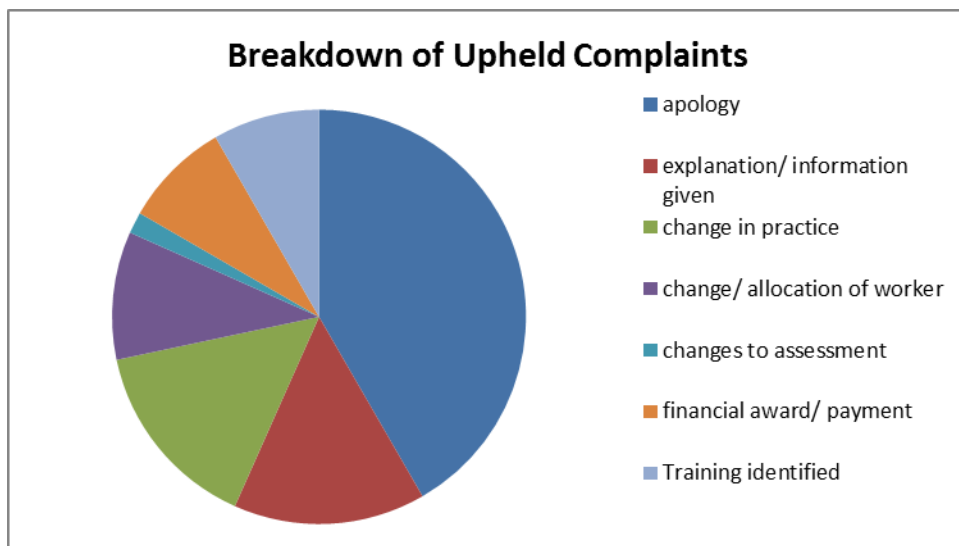
There were 41 complaints upheld in 2017-18 with 38 not upheld, eight withdrawn and one with no further action required. Two complaints had not been closed at time of reporting, as meetings with complainants were undertaken and final notification of outcome required.

Complaint Withdrawn	No further Action	Not Upheld	Upheld
8	1	38	41

Of those upheld, the main outcome was an ‘apology’ given which is linked to the next highest outcomes, ‘explanation/information given’ and ‘change in practice’ related to information not being provided at the time or clarification of processes or explanation as to the reasons why a particular course of action was taken. Therefore the need for social workers to understand the importance of follow up work with families is being reinforced with staff. It has also been recognised that a response is required for complaints from fathers, centred around how they felt they were not being included in decisions around their children. Social workers will therefore need to be more mindful of taking into account fathers’ views and wishes.

Communication is an area that has been highlighted and steps are being taken to better inform families for handover of cases and ensure that when a social worker leaves the authority, the necessary actions are put in place to redirect emails to ensure that delays communicating with families are minimised.

The recording of information within assessments and Section 7 reports was identified as an area for improvement and managers have put in place an audit process to ensure that reports for Court are quality assured and signed off by the team manager.



#### 3.6.1 General Themes and Trends 202017-18

The general themes and trends for 2017-18 in relation to young people was around the level of support or lack of support provided when leaving care. The opening of The Cocoon, an informal venue for young people to go to, where they can meet with Children’s Services

officers, social workers or advocates, has assisted in dealing with their concerns in a more conducive way. Complaints meetings have also been conducted there and young people have found this more comfortable to discuss their concerns openly.

Communication between social workers and families is still sometimes a factor, particularly when there is changeover of social worker or social workers leaving the authority. However, over the last 18 months, Children's Services have decreased their percentage of agency social workers by over 20%. As of April 2018 70% of social workers are permanent and the aim is to increase this by a further 10% in 2018/19. Targeted and focused recruitment campaigns and the introduction of a market supplement have helped to increase the permanency rate. The systemic training offer and innovation work are also widely publicised and have helped to raise the profile of Havering as a place to work. A noticeable benefit in a more stable workforce is the reduction in the number of children experiencing 3+ changes of social worker in 12 months. This has reduced from 14.9% in March 2017 to 4.7% in April 2018.

Staff retention and workforce development has also been boosted by the launch of the Social Care Academy in March 2018. The Academy brings together social care career development and progression routes, accessible to all staff across both Children's and Adult Social Care. It sets out learning and development opportunities that may be available; by mapping a progression route from the career entry point to more specialist and senior roles by providing a framework for achievement that is both developmental and aspirational.

The quality and accuracy of information recorded has been identified as an area requiring improvement, in particular with assessments. Children's Services have reinforced the need for quality assessments and recording through the introduction of the 'Obsessions with Assessments' programme in April 2018. The aim of this training is to enhance how assessments are undertaken in the various contexts they are done using a variety of modalities. This programme builds on what Children's Services are doing well and continues developing improvements in areas that may need them. By the end of the 12 months, Children's Services want to be able to see a positive change in the confidence of staff carrying out assessments and an increase in their ability to hold onto positions of curiosity, imagination, rigour and focus in assessments. To date, nine workshops have taken place and 298 staff have attended.

Furthermore, in December 2017 Children's Services procured a new case management system, Liquid Logic. The plan is for the system to be live from December 2018 with an extensive amount of work regarding configuration, data migration and training before then. The introduction of this system will not only better support case management and social work practice but also enable access to performance data in a way not currently available.

### **3.7 Response times**

Response times have not improved and continuous efforts will need to be made to identify causes for delay. However it should be noted that with the time taken for complaints to be investigated thoroughly, this does inevitably cause responses to be over timescale. Simultaneously, this has also resulted in the reduction in complaints escalating.

	Within 10 days		11-20 days		Over 20 days	
	Apr17 - Mar18	Apr 16 Mar17	Apr17- Mar18	Apr16 Mar17	Apr17 - Mar18	Apr16 Mar17
Stage 1	15	21	28	30	47	41
%	21	23	31	33	48	45

## 4. Expenditure

There is no expenditure incurred for 2017-18. One Stage 2 investigation proceeded in 2017-18, however costs will be incurred in 18/19 expenditure.

	Publicity/ leaflets	Independent investigators	Total
Apr 2017 – Mar 2018			
Apr 2016 – Mar 2017		£9,432.00	£9,432.00

## 5. How Complaints were received

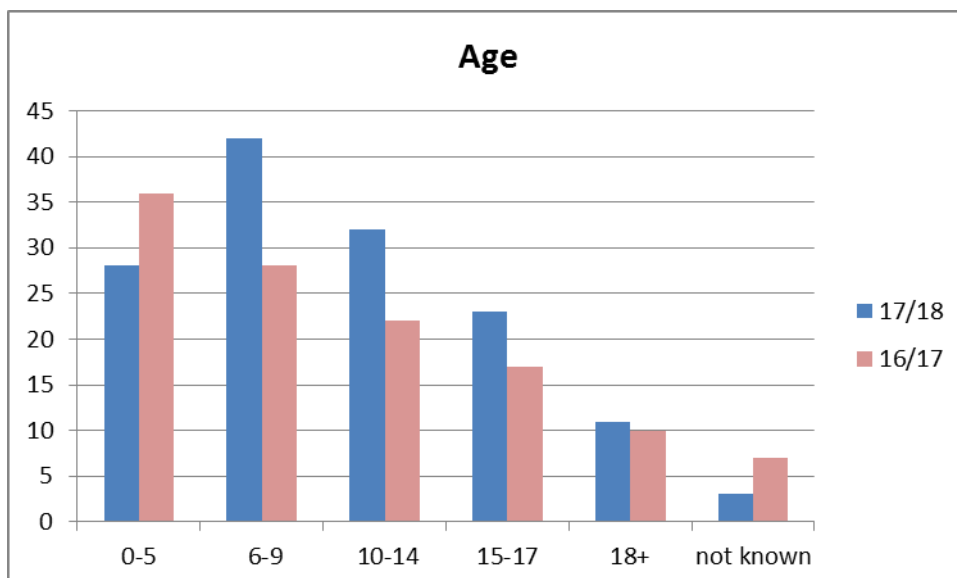
The figures shown below for 2017-18 also include enquiries and therefore not a true comparison to 2016-17.

	Letter	E-mail	Complaint Form	Telephone	In Person	Online	Social networking
202017- 18	19	85		24	2	7	2
202016- 17	16	33	4	28	1	9	

## 6. Monitoring Information

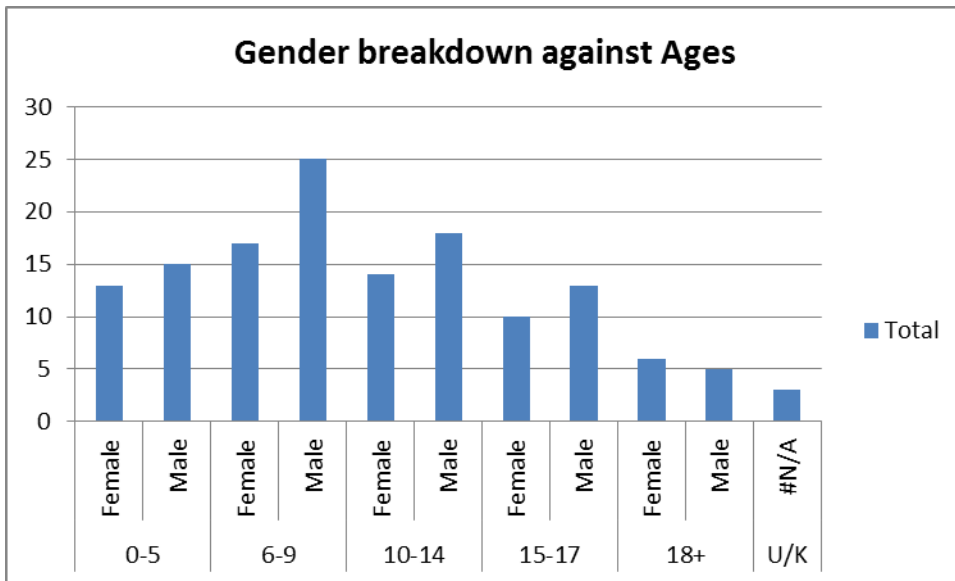
### 6.1 Age & Gender

The figures below show all children associated with complaints, which could be more than one child. There have been increases across age ranges 6-9, 10-14 and 15-17, with a slight increase in those 18+.



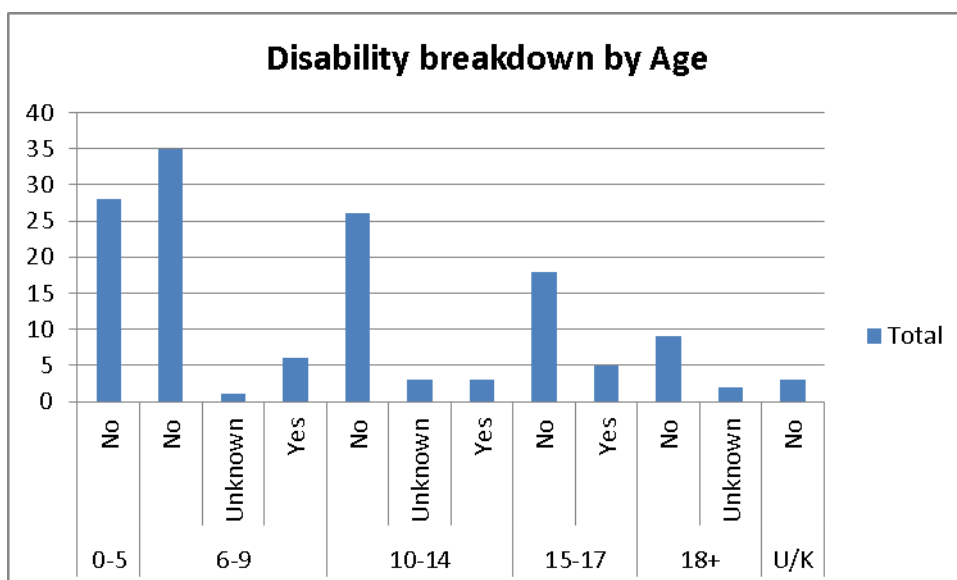
note: 2016-17 age range category 15-19 changed to 15-17 and 18+ for 2017-18

Below shows the breakdown of female and male children within each age range. The number of male children is the highest across all age ranges, except for 18+, where there are a slightly higher number of female children. This data will be reported going forward, however as this is the first year reported there is no comparative data.



## 6.2 Disability

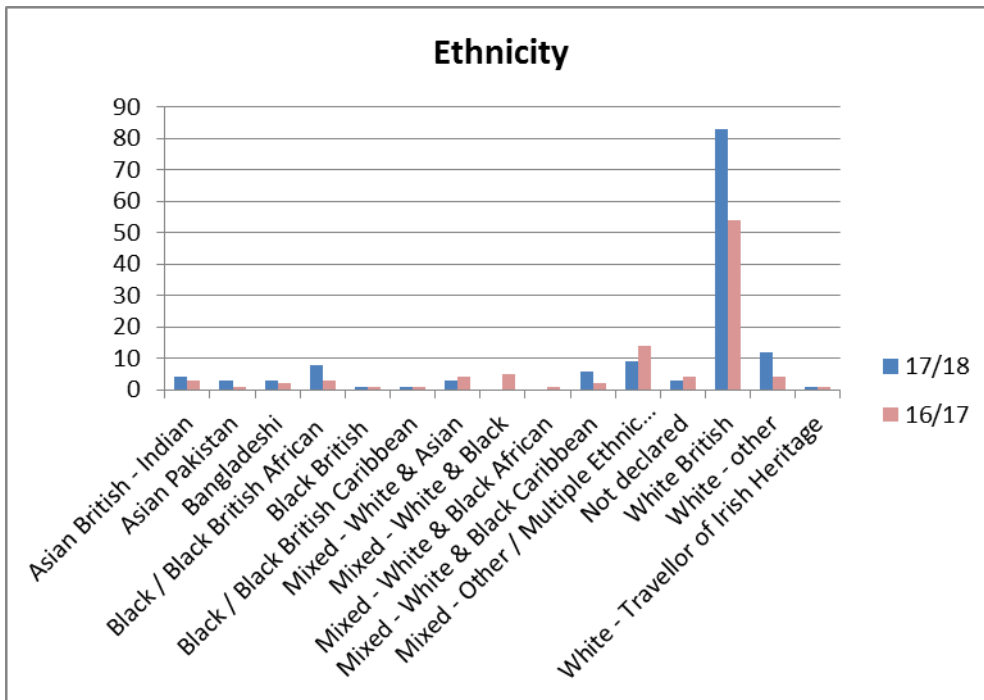
Within the chart below it shows where a disability is recorded as yes or no. However on exploring this further, there were two children with a visual impairment, one with a hearing impairment and one with a speech impairment. It should be noted that the breakdown relates to only two children, with one child having visual, hearing and speech impairments. Children's Services may need to look at how disability is recorded going forward.



## 6.3 Ethnicity

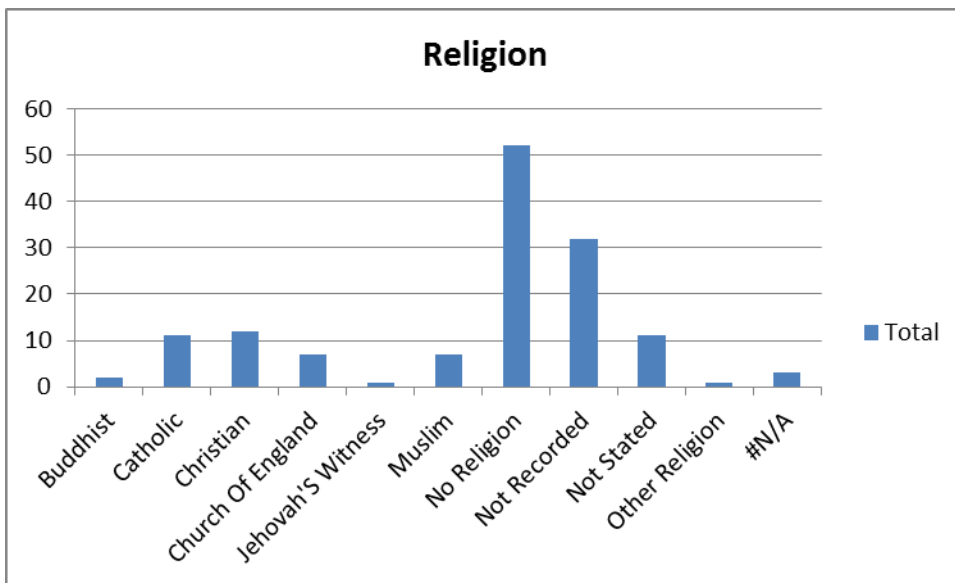
'White British', as reflected in the borough's demographic makeup, is the highest. There also shows that there continues to be increasing representations from differing ethnic

backgrounds accessing the complaints process, in particular 'Black/Black British African' and 'Mixed – White & Black Caribbean' and 'White other'.



### 6.4 Religion

There is a high number recorded as 'no religion' or 'not recorded' and recording practices will need to be addressed with the introduction of the new social care system. However there is representation from differing religious faiths accessing the complaints process.



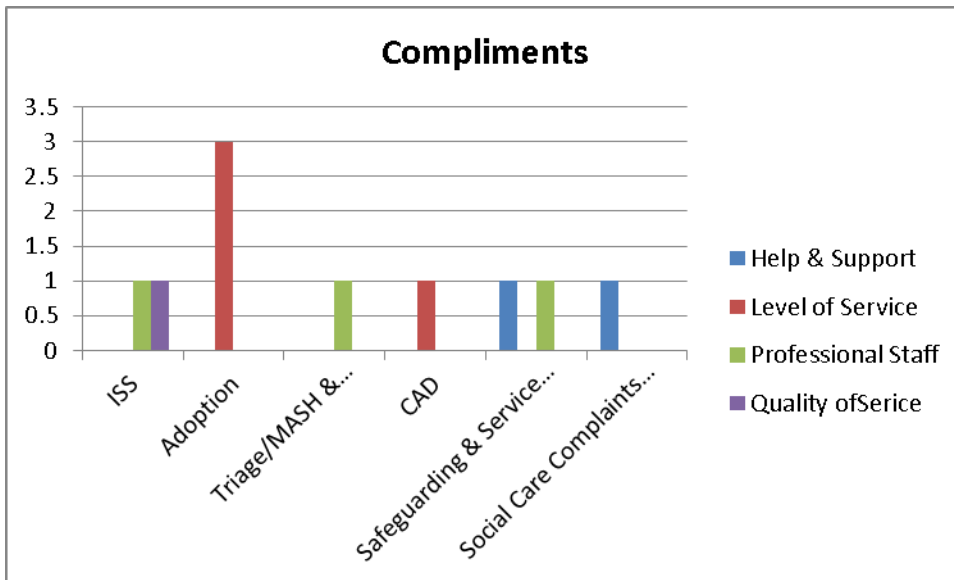
### 7. Members Correspondence

There was a slight increase in the number of member enquiries during 2017-18 (63) compared to 2016-17 (61), with 62% being responded to within timescale.

	202017-18	202016-17
Members Correspondence	63	61

## 8. Compliments

Compliments are still quite low and efforts will need to be made to encourage staff to ensure that compliments received are sent to the Social Care & Information Team to be logged. Adoption had the highest number of compliments relating to the level of service provided.



Some examples of compliments received are given below:

'to formally record the positive feedback you received from the family at the recent Child Protection Conference. The parents stated that you were hard working, had listened to them, progressed the Child Protection Plan and that they were very grateful to you for all you had done.' – **INTERVENTION & SUPPORT SERVICES**

A headteacher says – 'very impressed with the professional manner '...' spoke to parents and children. Whilst all concerned were put at ease all parties were left with a clear understanding as to what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. I have no doubt that '....'s involvement will have already had a positive impact on the family. ' – **TRIAGE/MASH & ASSESSMENT**

'We have had a long journey firstly trying to get our son '...' a diagnosis and then trying to mould a sometimes inflexible system to allow him to be the best '.....' he can. We have the scars, both physical and mental, to prove how tough this fight has been.

Occasionally, in amongst the darkness, we meet a source of light and I'm happy to say that '....' is a brilliant example of that. Nothing is too much trouble for him and what he says he will do he does. And quite often he will go further than we expected.

Never underestimate how much these things, no matter how small, mean to the families that you are dealing with. Having someone fight your corner in such a professional and caring way is amazing.' – **CHILDREN & ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES**

‘to thank you personally for steering me in the right direction and your help in this matter’. – **SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS & INFORMATION**

‘Mr and Mrs J..... (carers) where very impressed with how you engaged the children, generally C..... is reluctant to engage with professionals and the carers advised that you completed some direct work with the children in a way they have not seen any social workers do. They advised that the children really enjoyed the time you spent with them, so much so that they didn’t want you to leave – **SAFEGUARDING & SERVICE STANDARDS UNIT**

‘say thank you to everyone involved in organising this years panto. A..... loved it, she actually said on the way home “can we see Beauty and the Beast every year” so it really did go down well’ - **ADOPTION**

## **9. Conclusion**

Children’s Services are striving forward with their vision for children and young people, looking at providing support and ensuring that not only focus is on children and young people, but taking a whole-family approach. This is being achieved through embedding systemic practice across the service, improving workforce stability and development, and enabling social workers to spend more time with families. Complaints can help to shape the service provided by identifying those areas that could improve and those areas that are working well, by way of compliments.

It has been acknowledged that there is a greater need for improvement in responding to complaints in a timely manner and with the increased capacity built into the Social Care Complaints & Information Team it is hoped that this will help to support Children’s Services in a positive way.

The Social Care Complaints & Information Team are also looking to move towards a more customer-focussed way of dealing with complaints and again, with the added support in the team, this will help to have arrangements in place to undertake briefing/training sessions within teams and provide a platform for young people to raise their concerns through sessions arranged at the Cocoon.

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## 10. Complaints Action Plan

Issues Identified	Lessons Learnt	Action to be taken	Department	Timescale	Review
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	Children-focussed leaflets were produced on S47 and Looked after Children (LAC) to explain the process and were launched on 3 April 2017. We are continuing to develop this offer across the service.
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	<p>Managers continue to carry out case file audits to ensure recording is appropriate.</p> <p>Introduction of 'Obsession with Assessments' training/briefing sessions introduced to reinforce the need for accurate reporting.</p> <p>Introduction of Liquid Logic from December 2018 will also help this.</p>
Better communication around contact arrangements and case progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication around changes in contact with families.</li> <li>Communication gap when social worker leaves.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To explore better communication re contact arrangements and case progression</li> <li>Use of generic emails to ensure continued communication when a social worker leaves service areas to ensure consistency.</li> </ul>	All	On-going	Management arrangements were strengthened during 2014-2015 and a further restructure of teams took place in 2016-17 and in 2018 to assist in improving practice overall. It is improving and ensuring better communication with families and better handovers is being addressed in supervision and through the Council's Personal Development Review (PDR) process. The embedding of systemic supervision across the service is also improving this.
S7 reports/court reports – inaccurate information/interpretation of information		Managers to quality assure and sign off all reports that go to Court			



Improved response times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Responses need to be completed in a timely manner.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaints to be tracked on a weekly basis by Senior Leadership Team within Children's Services</li></ul>	Assistant Director/SLT	On-going	
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