

APPENDIX 1

Children Services

Annual Report 2018 – 2019 Complaints and Compliments

Prepared for:

Tim Aldridge, Director Children Services

**Prepared by: Veronica Webb,
Complaints & Information Team Manager**

	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Pages</u>
1	Executive Summary	3
		4
2	Introduction	
3.	Complaints Received	5-9
3.1	- Ombudsman Referrals	5
3.2	- Total No. of Complaints	5
3.3	- Stages	5
3.4	- Teams	6
3.5	- Reasons	6-7
3.6	- Outcomes & Learning	8
3.7	- Response Times	9
4.	Expenditure	9
5	How complaints Received	9
6	Monitoring Information	9-12
6.1	- Age	9
6.2	- Disability	10
6.3	- Ethnicity	11
6.4	- Religion	11-12
7	Members Correspondence	12
8	Compliments	12-13
9	Conclusion	13
10	Action Plan	15-17

1. Executive Summary

Children's services complaints have continued to increase over the last few years, alongside a backdrop of growing demand and increasing complexity of needs.

The continued overarching theme of complaints is where families disagree with the rationale behind interventions taking place, or are not clear on why some decisions are taken. While statutory processes are often necessary, and the right thing to do to keep a child safe, they can be overwhelming and emotive times for families. In some cases, families may not be ready to engage with services and therefore not all interactions will have a positive outcome. Our systemic model of practice, which we have been developing and implementing over the last 18 months, focusses on reducing the number of statutory interventions and working with families in a way that identifies strengths and builds resilience. The training for our staff in systemic practice develops skills in having difficult conversations and co-producing interventions to ensure the most positive outcomes.

The number of Stage 2 requests increased in 2018-19 and efforts are on-going to resolve as many complaints prior to escalation to Stage 2. It is acknowledged that the Social Care Complaints Team were not as effective as in recent years due to depletion of staff, however this is being addressed, leading to a more proactive team going forward. There have been improvements in 2018-19 for those complaints being responded to within the statutory timescales, and the Social Care Complaints Team will continue to work closely with managers and the Complaints Manager will be attending regular monitoring meetings with the Senior Management Team to ensure that this improvement continues.
action

In the past there have been separate reports for Children's Services and Learning & Achievement. However Learning & Achievement complaints are reported corporately, and complaints in relation to the Children and Adults with Disabilities Team has been incorporated within the Children's report over the last few years. A separate report was not required, however information involving schools has been incorporated within this Executive Summary as follows.

Of the 25 enquiries received and recorded in 2018-19 involving schools these were referred to the relevant school or academy to be taken through their own complaints procedure. 40% (10) of these were referrals via Ofsted with 60% (6) related to bullying. Other enquiries related to issues around how teachers dealt with particular situations involving their child, or how the school was being managed.

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 was one enquiry which found maladministration and injustice in relation to foster care with six premature/informal enquires and two closed after initial enquiries. The decision for the enquiry from 2017-18 found maladministration and injustice with no further action required in relation to Education Health & Care Plan .

	Apr18- Mar19	Apr17- Mar18	Apr16- Mar17
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	6	1	2
Closed after initial enquiries – no further action	2		
Total	9	3	6

3.2 Total number of complaints

The total number of Stage 1 complaints in 2018-19 has increased by 15% (106) compared to 2017-18 (90), with the total number of enquiries reduced by 66% (17) from 2017-18 (50). Enquiries do not form part of the statutory process and therefore are not included further in this report.

The number of complaints received directly from young people has dropped by half in 2018-19 to 9 from 18 in 2017-18. This will need to be explored as to the reasons which could be as a result of direct work with young people to resolve issues they have at an early stage

	Enquiries	Stage 1	Stage 1 escalated to Stage 2
2018/19	17	106	6
2017/18	50	90	1
2016/17	43	92	1

3.3 Stages

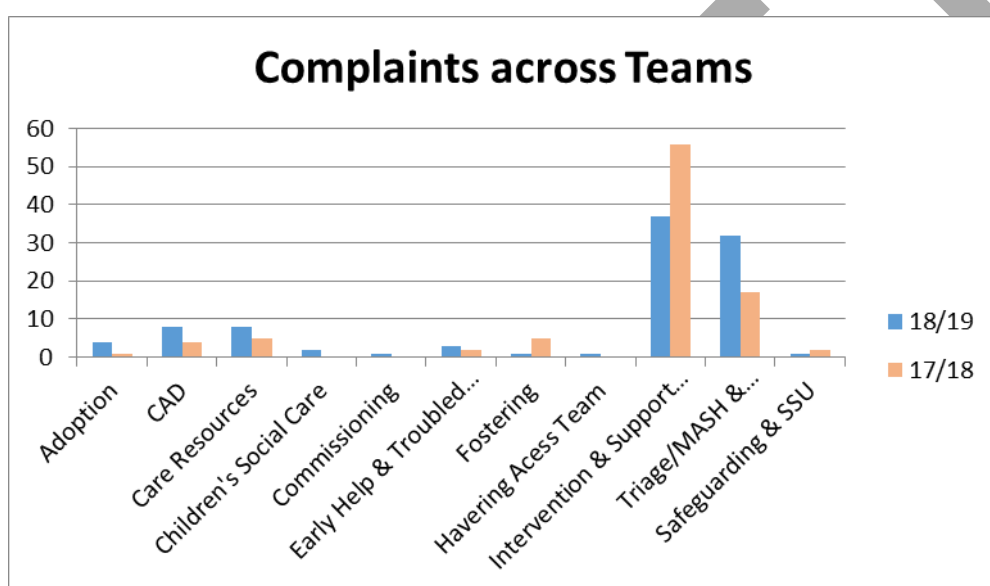
During 2018-19 there were six escalations to Stage 2, this is a significant increase from one in 2017-18. It is recognised that for the main part of 2018-19 complaints were not managed as effectively in previous years due to depletion of staff within the Social Care Complaints & Information Team. There were no Stage 3 Reviews in 2018-19.

3.4 Teams

The Triage/MASH & Assessment Team received the highest number of complaints during 2018-19, which has almost doubled from 2017-18, with Intervention & Support Services second highest.

The types of complaints received by these services continue to be the same theme where intervention is unwelcomed by parents which included disagreement on information contained within assessments, unhappy with children being put on a child protection plan, unannounced visits undertaken by social workers.

Children & Adults with Disabilities Team complaints have doubled to eight in 2018-19 from four in 2017-18. These referred to Education & Health Care Plans (EHCP) and the level or delay in providing equipment, or provision such as Speech and Language Therapy.



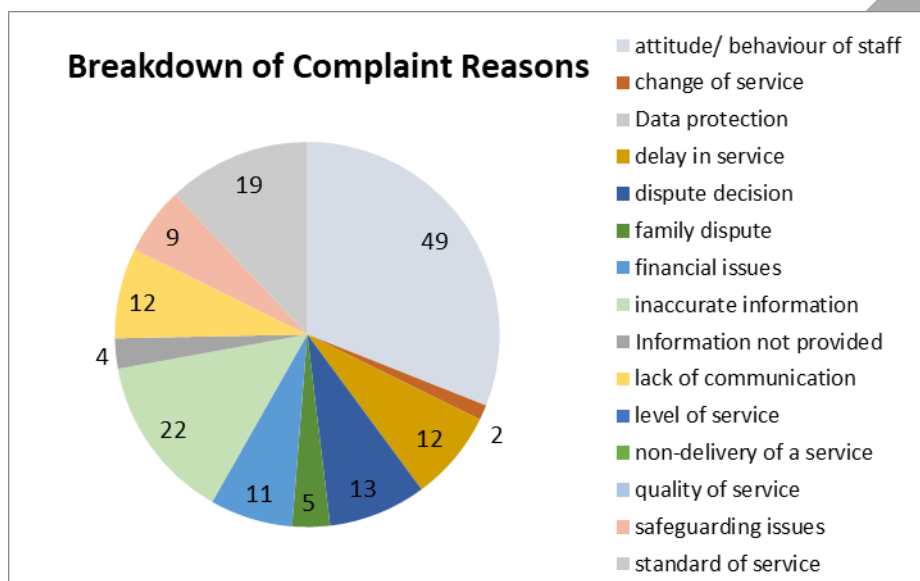
Column1	Adoption	CAD	Care Resources	Children's Social Care	Commissioning	Early Help & Troubled Families	Fostering	Havering Access Team	Intervention & Support Services	Triage/MASH & Assessment	Safeguarding & SSU
18/19	4	8	8	2	1	3	1	1	37	32	1
17/18	1	4	5	1	1	2	5	1	56	17	2

3.5 Reasons

The number of complaints regarding attitude/behaviour of staff has risen by 78% from 11 in 2017-18 to 49 in 2018-19. However, the majority of the complaints received reflected where parents were unhappy with the social worker where they perceived information within assessments was misleading, inaccurate, or did not reflect individual's views with a bias towards one parent. This type of complaint reason tended to be where parents were no longer together and had an acrimonious relationship. Social work staff will need to think about and be mindful of how sensitively they work with parents particularly during times of parental separation and to ensure that they respectfully listen to all parties and accurately record their wishes and feelings in relation to their children.

Inaccurate information was the second highest and reflects some of the reasons regarding attitude/behaviour, whereby one parent did not agree with the content of an assessment and felt their views were not taken into account. Where there was inaccurate information within an assessment that could be amended, these were. Team Managers will be responsible for quality assuring assessments with particular scrutiny around potential bias and accurate recording of information during the assessment process.

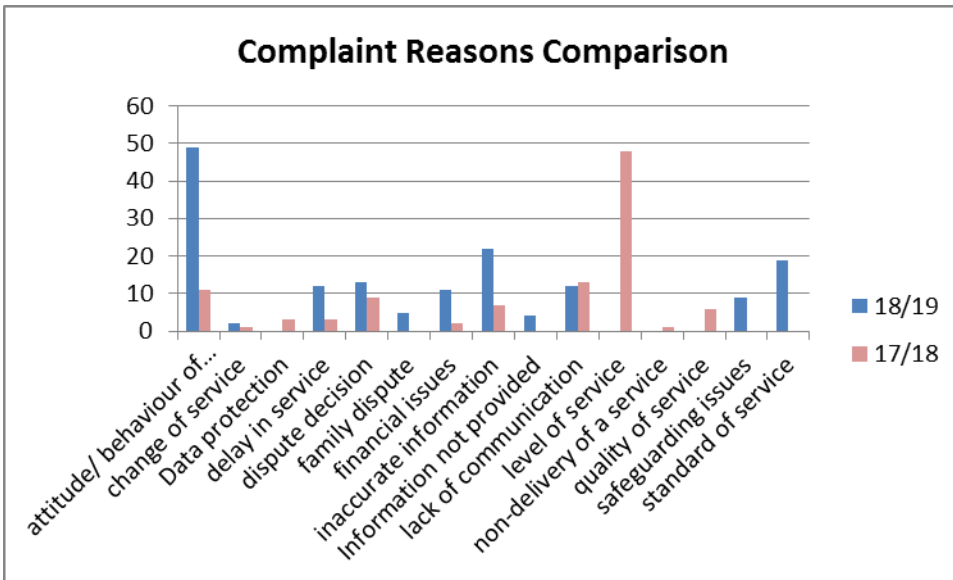
Standard of service was the next highest and related to level or lack of support that parents or young people were receiving or felt they should be receiving. Social Workers will need to explore the level of support which families are receiving from Children’s Services during the assessment and planning phases.



Below is a comparison of complaint reasons between 2018-19 and 2017-18. There have been increases across attitude/behaviour of staff, delays in service, dispute decisions, financial issues, inaccurate information, safeguarding issues and standard of service. Performance Development Reviews (PDR) core competencies will be discussed during team meetings on a quarterly basis to ensure that Social Workers are engaging with children and families in a respectful and collaborative manner. Teams can use quarterly complaints summaries to evaluate how children and families score attitudes and behaviours within professional relationships.

Team Managers will ensure that any anticipated disruption in service delivery is counted by support from colleagues in other teams within the service area. Children’s Services will continue to use the Quality Assurance framework and other feedback loops to understand the standards of service delivered in the community to children and families.

It should be noted that the categorisation for reasons changed during 2018-19 and therefore categories such as standard of service has combined to include level of service, quality of service and non-delivery of service.

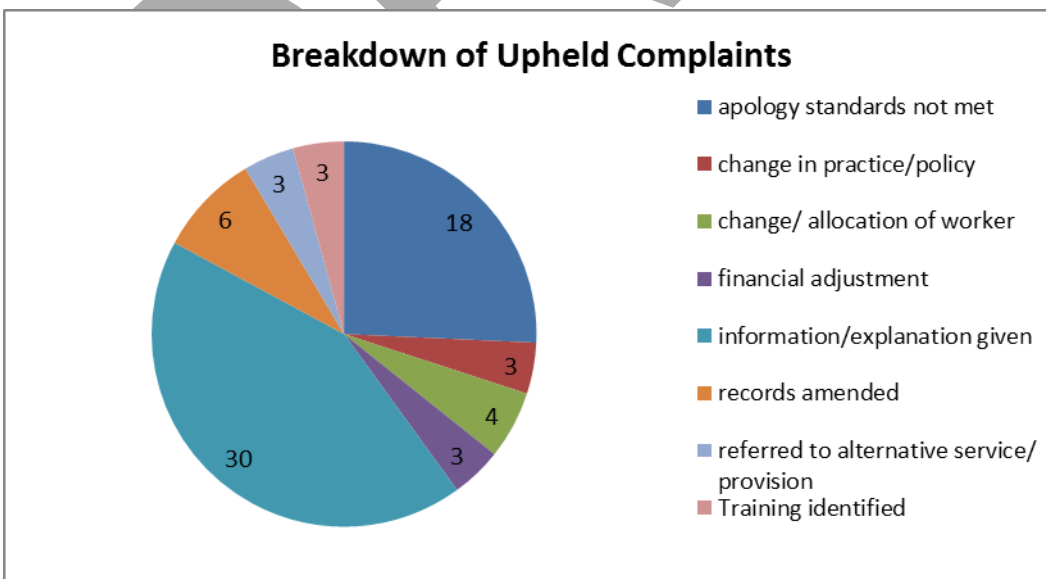


3.6 Outcomes & Learning

There were 14 complaints withdrawn during 2018-19, which was either through the Service resolving the concerns or where the relevant consent or information was not provided. The majority of complaints were not upheld (40), with 34 being partially upheld and 18 upheld.

Complaint Withdrawn	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld
14	18	34	40

Below shows the breakdown of those complaints upheld. It should be noted that there may be more than one outcome to a complaint, which may have a number of complaint elements within it. This could result in an apology being given along with a financial adjustment, or information/explanation given along with an apology and could be a combination of up to three i.e. apology being given, information/explanation and change in practice/policy.



3.6.1 General Themes and Trends 2018/19

Although ‘attitude/behaviour of staff’ was the highest reason for complaint the general theme is about the intervention and the type of intervention that may occur by social workers within Children’s Services. Clarifying the need for intervention may not always be possible, especially in relation to child protection concerns and therefore the Service may need to look at ways to minimise the impact to families when intervention occurs.

Inaccurate information and recording practices needs to be reinforced, and with the implementation of the Liquid Logic system for Children’s Social Care records this should address this area. Children’s Services will also undertake quality assurance of assessments and plans and use service user feedback to reduce / minimise this from happening. Social Workers could also invite families to reflect on the progress of the assessment or intervention at various phases of engagement with them to make sure that their lived experience is fully understood.

There has been a reduction in the number of young people making complaints directly and this could be due to the utilisation of the Cocoon which has resulted in young people being able to discuss their concerns in an informal environment with early resolution.

3.7 Response times

Response times have decreased in 2018-19 and it is noted that during this time the Social Care Complaints & Information Team were depleted and impacted on effectively managing and ensuring responses were dealt with within the required timescales. However, managers also need to understand the importance of responding within timescale and although it is acknowledged that there may be competing priorities, it should be noted that delays in responding leads to escalations, which require more of their time.

	Within 10 days		11-20 days		Over 20 days	
	Apr18- Mar19	Apr17- Mar18	Apr18- Mar19	Apr17- Mar18	Apr18- Mar19	Apr17- Mar18
Stage 1	18	15	30	28	44	47
%	17	21	28	31	42	48

4. Expenditure

Expenditure incurred for a Stage 2 investigation and time and trouble payment relates to a complaint in 2017-18 which concluded in 2018-19. Expenditure for the Stage 2 investigations for 2018-19 will be shown in 2019-20.

	Publicity/ leaflets	Independent investigators	Payments	Total
Apr 2018 – Mar 2019		£5,346.45	£200.00	£5,546.45
Apr 2017 – Mar 2018				

5. How Complaints were received

Email and telephone are the preferred method of contact in 2018-19, although it is noted that complaints received on-line have increased, while those received by letter has decreased

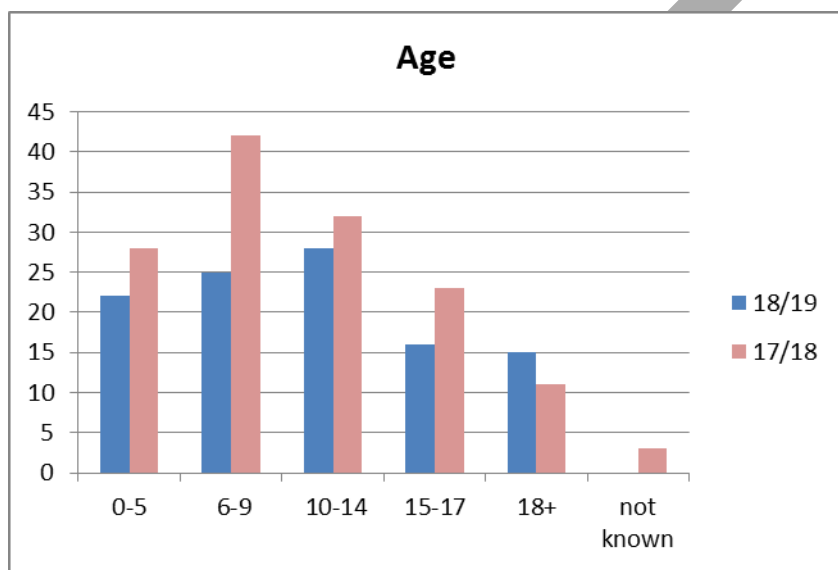
slightly. From the table below, 2017-18 also included enquiries and therefore does not show a true comparison to 2018-19.

	Letter	E-mail	Complaint Form	Telephone	In Person	Online	Social networking
2018/19	12	55	6	18	3	13	
2017/18	19	85		24	2	7	2

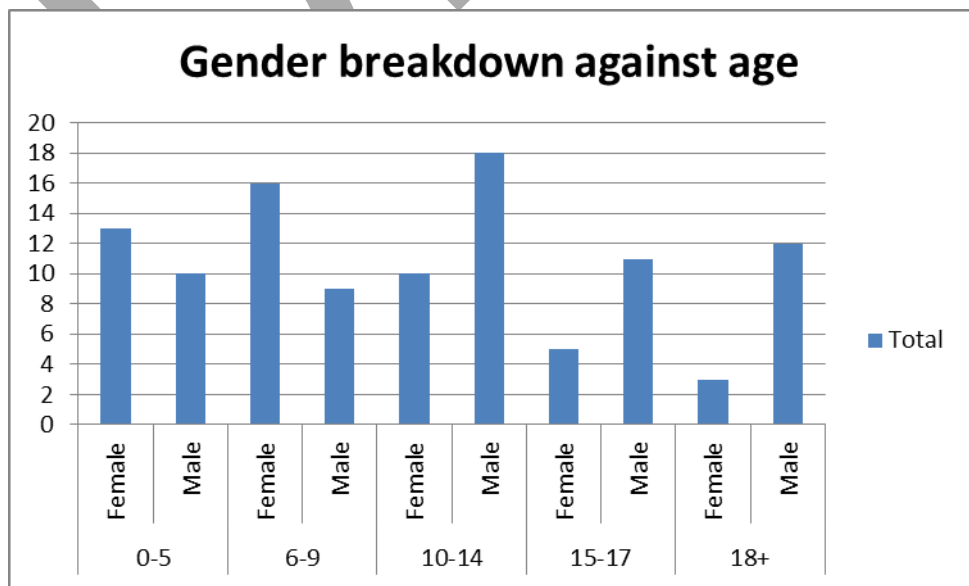
6. Monitoring Information

6.1 Age & Gender

There has been an increase in the number of children 18+ involved in complaints in 2018-19, for those leaving care requiring support with finances. There was a decrease across all other age ranges.

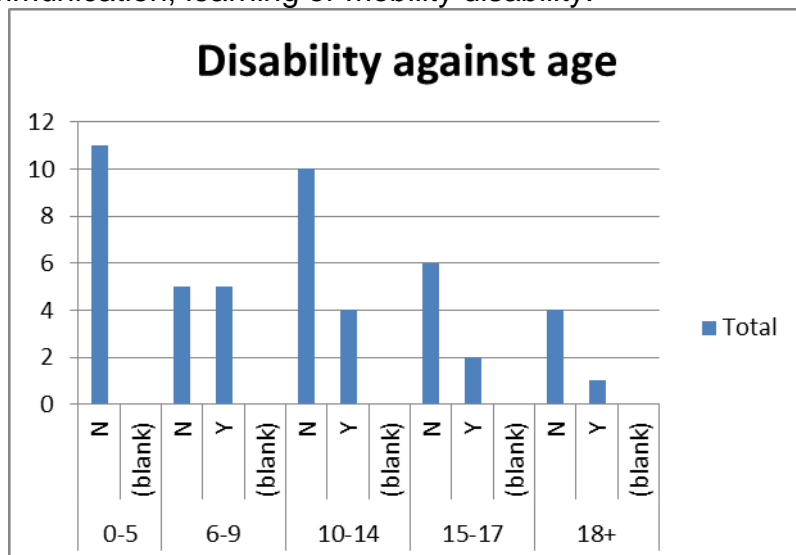


The breakdown below shows the gender breakdown against age. Within the 0-5 and 6-9 age group the majority are female, while for the older age groups from 10 years old onwards are mainly male.



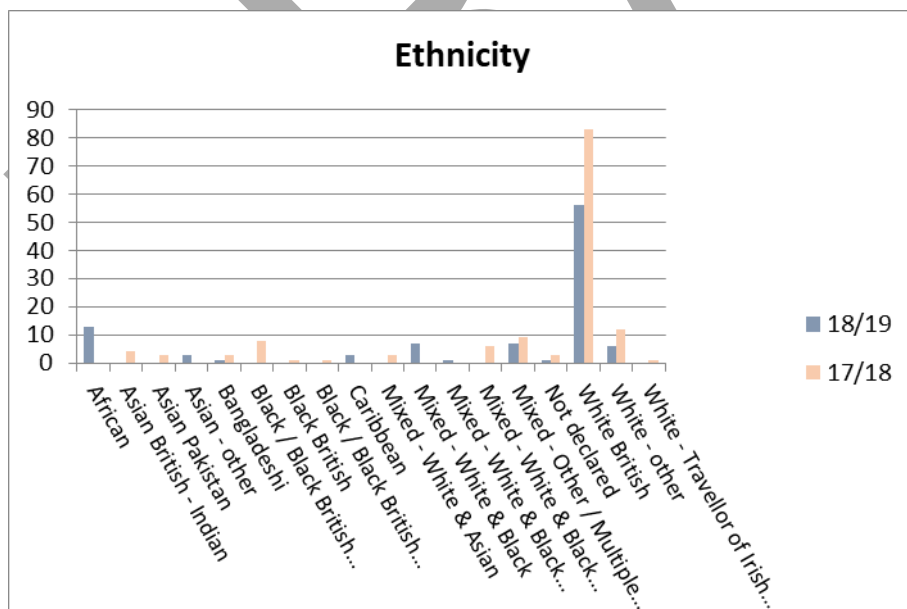
6.2 Disability

The breakdown below shows that the majority of children are recorded as not having a disability. However it is noted that a number of entries are blank and this may be improved going forward with the Liquid Logic system which may provide more detailed information. From those that indicate a disability, these refer to an Autism/Aspergers Syndrome diagnosis, communication, learning or mobility disability.



6.3 Ethnicity

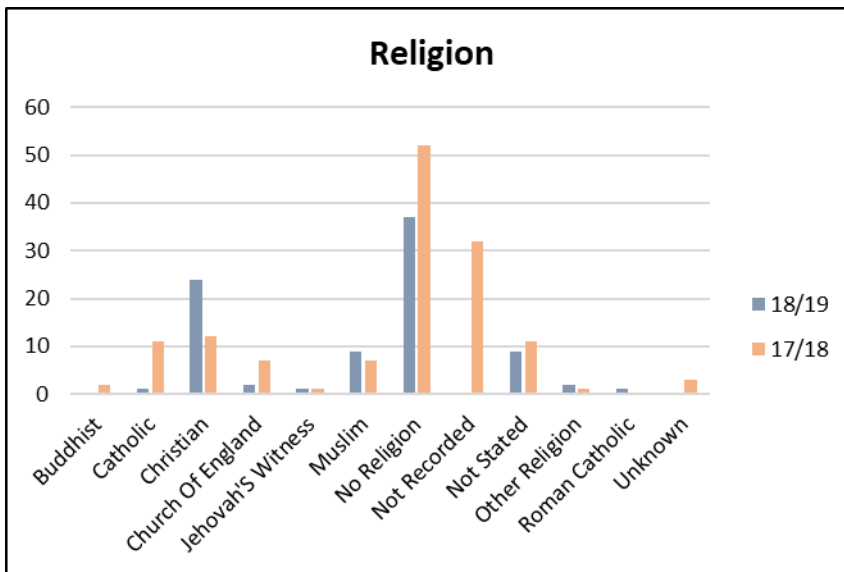
There has been a decrease in the number of 'White British' in 2018-19 compared to 2017-18, with increases in those with an 'African' heritage, 'Mixed-White & Black', 'Caribbean' and 'Asian other'.



6.4 Religion

Information recorded shows that 'no religion' status is the highest, with 'Christian' being the second highest. It is encouraging to see that a number of different religions have been

recorded and efforts should be made to ensure this information is captured consistently. Children’s Services to ensure that all relevant demographics are recorded on the case files at the point of allocation.



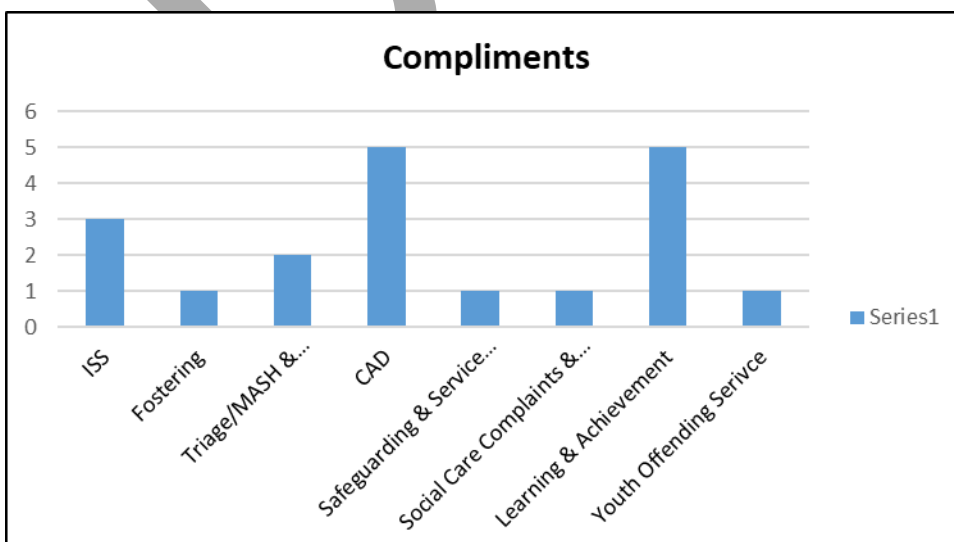
7. Members Correspondence

During 2018-19 a decision was taken that members correspondence reports were not circulated due to difficulties with reports being produced via CRM. However those recorded for Children’s Services in 2018-19 are provided below, with 72% (34 of 47) being responded to within timescale.

	2018/19	2017/18
Members Correspondence	47	63

8. Compliments

The total number of compliments received in 2018-19 increased from 10 in 2017-18 to 19. This also includes compliments received for Learning & Achievement, who with Children and Adults with Disabilities Team both received the highest. Figures are still low and efforts need to be made to ensure that compliments are sent for recording purposes.



Some examples of compliments received are given below:

A father writes to an Advanced Practitioner 'thank you for all the help and care you have given ... and myself over the last 6 months. I do not think we would be where we are now without your professional and caring approach.'

A mother gives positive comments during a Child Protection Conference Review stating that the social worker had helped and listened to her during work with herself and her children and had experienced a very positive working relationship with the social worker.

A foster carer is thrilled about the child she is caring for being nominated for an award at school and writes to the Advanced Practitioner.. 'if it wasn't for your support and guidance he would not be where is now.'

A father writes to the Social Care Complaints Manager 'I do appreciate that this has taken up a large amount of your time, so I thank you for that.'

A Court Magistrate is impressed with a Youth Offending Services Practitioner report to Court and described it as 'a report of the highest quality.'

9. Conclusion

There has been a significant increase in the number of complaints for Children's Services. Complaints can be very emotive where a number of parents do not accept decisions and the interventions by Children' Services. This has resulted in a number of parents remaining dissatisfied and wanting to progress to Stage 2, resulting in a very high number of Stage 2 requests within 2018-19.

Unfortunately the increase in both the number of complaints and the number of Stage 2 progressions impacted on the effectiveness of the Social Care Complaints Team at a time when the team was depleted for most of 2018-19. However, going forward we are looking to develop the team to be more proactive, customer focused and more effective. Plans to include complaints within the recently implemented Liquid Logic Children's Social Care system should assist with closer monitoring and improvements with response times.

Closer working with teams will also be essential in ensuring that managers take responsibility for responding to complaints within timescale and that they are supported to do so. Attending team meetings will be a way to do so and these will need to be planned effectively.

With the complexity of complaints involving children, the family dynamics that can be involved in these type complaints and the increasing volume, care needs to be taken to ensure that complainants feel able to complain, feel supported and confident that their complaint will be dealt with in a fair and thorough way. This may sometimes result in timescales being exceeded, however complainants need to be kept informed and updated throughout the process.

PAGE DELIBERATELY LEFT BLANK

DRAFT

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"> Parents to be provided with all relevant information about child protection processes at the beginning of our engagement with a family. Clear explanation/ information about process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team managers sign off S.47's in the service Social workers to give clear and concise information about process 	<p>Triage/MASH & Assessment</p> <p>ISS</p>	On-going	Leaflets not distributed due to possible changes. Will look at information sharing processes over the next 6 months to look at developing an information resource for children and families.
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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work is already being undertaken to look at improved recording across the service. Assessments to identify clearly fact from opinion and identify the source of the information. 	All	<p>On-going</p> <p>Twice yearly practice week audits.</p> <p>Monthly case file audits by team managers.</p>	<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"> Communication around changes in contact with families. Communication gap when social worker leaves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore better communication re contact arrangements and case progression All families will be notified in writing when there are significant changes in service delivery for example, a change of Social Worker. The allocated Social Worker will also complete a handover whenever this is possible to 	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.

		introduce the new worker.			Use of generic emails to ensure continued communication when a social worker leaves service areas to ensure consistency.
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"> Responses need to be completed in a timely manner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints to be tracked on a weekly basis by Senior Leadership Team within Children's Services 	Assistant Director/SLT	On-going	Complaints representation on quarterly monitoring meetings with SLT.
Assessments –	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> data breaches from copy and pasting source of information to be clearly identified care re bias of father's views information from professional discussions may be backtracked. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ICS assessment templates have been remodelled in line with our systemic model of practice. This allows more time for social workers to reflect on the information they are inputting into the assessments. Following the restructure, management oversight and grip has been strengthened thereby allowing for greater quality assurance of assessments. The allocation system of work in the assessment service has been strengthened which has reduced caseloads and the urgency for work to be completed in a fast paced environment. This will allow more thoughtful and reflective time thereby strengthening practice. 	Assessment & ISS	Quarterly review of audit findings which is tracked via SMT	

Representatives/ Advocates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly identify role and level of formality for someone acting on someone else's behalf 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the commencement of a complaint Complaints & Information Team clarify role of individual acting on someone else's behalf and to understand that role throughout the process 	Complaints & Information Team	On-going	
General communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telephone contacts to be followed up in writing Clarify when a case is closed to an individual rather than service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will be picked up within teams and through the new social care system. Workers are to clearly specify whether the case is being transferred/reallocated and communicate to families. 	All	On-going	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 			

DRAFT