



**Northamptonshire
County Council**

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council**

**Northamptonshire County Council
Annual Complaints and Compliments Report
Children, Families & Education
2016/17**



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Introduction

This is the Compliments and Complaints Annual Report for 2016/2017 summarising the customer feedback received in the Children, Families and Education directorate of Northamptonshire County Council.

We recognise that our customers have a range of experiences when contacting us, working with us and using our services. Some of these experiences are positive, and we want to recognise where good practice is evident, while others fall short of our standards, and it is essential that we learn from them. As an organisation, we provide people with a mechanism to feed back to us both positive and negative experiences and encourage a culture of learning, where the focus is on resolution and continual improvement. Where possible, we take immediate action to put things right at the first point of contact, and where this is not possible, we operate a robust complaints procedure.

We are supported in this by the Complaints and Compliments Team, whose core aims are to:

- Provide impartial support for both customers and staff
- Provide advice and guidance
- Identify advocacy needs
- Facilitate informal mediation
- Deliver briefings to all staff, managers and councillors
- Deliver bespoke training in effective complaints handling and delivering good customer service
- Carry out recruitment of investigators and independent persons
- Provide up to date performance information about representations, complaints, comments and compliments to help inform service improvements and help us to monitor our contracts more effectively
- Generate accurate and up to date performance information for managers to help them to monitor complaints, representations and comments in their specific area, identifying any potential 'hotspots' and enabling learning and staff performance management
- Implement a system to ensure that managers work to prescribed legislative timescales and comply with statutory procedures
- Monitor services to track the outcomes of complaints.

This report provides analysis and comment for Children, Families and Education on all complaints managed under the statutory process, as well as examples of compliments received by the directorate throughout the year. Some examples of feedback received are interspersed with the text in the document.

The Complaints Manager, which is a statutory role in the Authority, is responsible for ensuring that complaints are handled appropriately and providing support to the department in resolving complex cases. In addition, the

Complaints Manager will highlight key trends that emerge each year and any recommendations that would improve how we work. The Children, Families and Education department has responsibility for implementing any such improvements.

Our policies are published on the Northamptonshire County Council website:

<http://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/council-and-democracy/have-your-say/Pages/compliments-comments-and-complaints.aspx>

1. Why do we publish a report?

The Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 (as amended by the Children Act 1989) requires that local authorities in charge of Children and Young People's Services produce and publish an annual report on the statutory complaints and representations procedures. This requirement was updated by the introduction of Statutory Instrument 1738 in September 2006.

The Children Act 1989 also places a duty on all Councils to establish and publicise a procedure for the consideration of representations and complaints made to them about the services provided under the Act. This has been strengthened by new Regulations issued in 2006.

2. What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet with the quality of a service or with a failure to provide a previously agreed service, or with the attitude or behaviour of a member of staff.

3. Who may complain?

In accordance with the Children Act, 1989 and Adoption and Children Act, 2002, as well as guidance in *Getting the Best from Complaints*, we consider representations and complaints brought to our attention by:

- any child or young person who is being looked after by the local authority or is not looked after by them but is in need
- the parent or the person with parental responsibility for him of a child in need or looked after by the authority
- any local authority foster carer including agency foster carers
- children leaving care
- a child or young person subject to a Special Guardianship Order
- Special Guardians
- any person who has applied for an assessment under section 14
- any child or young person who may be adopted, their parents and guardians

- persons wishing to adopt a child
- any other person engaged in the provision of the adoption process
- adopted persons, their parents, natural parents and former guardians
- any person with sufficient interest in the child's or young person's welfare and can represent their views.

In addition, complaints which are not covered by the Children's Act are also accepted and managed under our Corporate Complaints Policy.

When a complaint is made on behalf of a child or young person, we will seek whenever possible to establish if the child concerned is in agreement with the views represented. We have the discretion to decide if the complainant is suitable to represent the child or young person and if they act in their best interest.

In some circumstances, the Complaints Manager may consider that the representative does not have sufficient interest in the child's welfare, in which case the complainant will be notified in writing, explaining that no further action should be taken.

Sometimes we also receive complaints that relate to a child or young person but are not made on the child's behalf. The Children Act 1989 gives discretion to local authorities to decide in cases where eligibility is not automatic whether or not an individual has sufficient interest in the child's welfare to justify their own complaint being considered. In reaching a decision, where possible, the local authority may wish to check with the child or young person that they are happy with the third party making a complaint.

We also accept complaints made anonymously where it is deemed that there is interest to the child/ children or there is value in investigating concerns. Such contacts are judged on an individual basis by the Complaints Manager.

Where necessary, we coordinate with other partners or other local authorities to ensure the most accurate and comprehensive response is offered to a complaint.

4. The process

The procedures for Children's complaints are determined by legislation, predominantly involving the:

- Children Act 1989
- Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006
- The Children & Adoption Act 2002
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

In keeping with the statutory process, we operate a three stage complaints process in relation to children and young people:

Stage 1: We acknowledge the customer's complaint, received via phone, email, letter, online form etc, log details of this and allocate it to the responsible team manager for local resolution. The focus at this stage is on immediate contact being made with the customer and a resolution being offered. We acknowledge that most customers expect a high standard of customer service, someone to take accountability if standards haven't been met, and immediate remedial action whenever possible.

Stage 2: Where a resolution could not be reached at stage 1, and the customer remains dissatisfied with either the response received or the actions taken, the complaint can be escalated to stage 2. Before agreeing this, we will always attempt to meet with the customer, with support from the Complaints and Compliments Team, to agree on a plan of action which would help us achieve the best possible outcome for the complainant. Where this is not possible, an independent investigation is initiated to assess whether the complaint is substantiated or not, and to make recommendations about the improvements the service could be making as a result of learning from the complaint.

Stage 3: Where the customer feels that the independent report is not satisfactory, or where recommendations made in the report are not implemented in a timely and effective manner, an escalation can be requested. Prior to this, we will always attempt to meet with the customer, so that a service manager can take ownership of the issue and work towards a resolution. Should this not be successful, and should it be considered that it is in the complainant's best interest to escalate the matter, an independent panel is set up to investigate the quality of the report and/ or the implementation of recommendations.

Once our statutory process is complete, the customer has recourse to the Local Government Ombudsman, who on occasion decide that an investigation is required. In certain circumstances, we can agree with the customer and the LGO that an early referral (prior to the completion of the statutory process) is beneficial.

Compliment from an adopted adult who accessed her records and subsequently received an intermediary service to contact maternal and paternal relatives. They are all now in regular direct contact with each other and plan to meet soon.

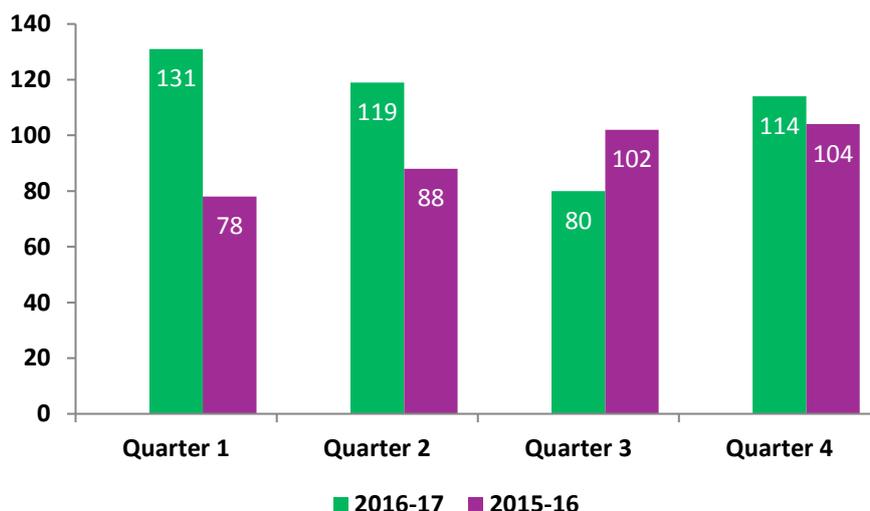
Complaint regarding the lack of contact from Social Worker not attending meetings that she had arranged.

A compliment is an expression of praise for an interaction, a service or a product. We log compliments from members of the public and staff as they help us identify good practice, recognise those members of staff who provide a high quality service and learn from our customers' feedback.

6. Headline figures

Between the 1st of April 2016 and 31st of March 2017, we received a total of 444 new complaints, compared to 372 in the previous financial year. This is an increase of 19%.

Complaints Received by Quarter



However we have also seen a reduction in the numbers of complaints escalated to stage 2, 25 (compared to 30 in the previous year and 65 during 2014-15) through better case management and timely contact made with the customers. A focus on resolution at the earliest opportunity has led us to achieving better outcomes for people, a reduction in costs to the tax payer and improved social practice through timely feedback mechanisms into the service.

Compliment from a parent: He has been a rock in my son's life and has gone above and beyond his job in supporting myself and my son through our difficult time. I have had several case workers working on my case and I believe he is by far one of the best social workers around.

Complainant feels that Social Services stereotyped him due to his culture. The complainant feels that the Social worker sided with mother.

Complaint regarding a Social Worker transporting his Grandson using an incorrect car seat and not knowing the correct legislation.

Complaint from a Young Person regarding a lack of communication between himself and his social worker and difficulty in making contact.

Complaints Activity

1. Number of complaints received

A total of 444 complaints were received in the financial year, an increase of 19% on the previous year's figures. Whilst this is a concerning trend which changes the direction of travel we have witnessed over the past financial year, we welcome the opportunity to improve our services and welcome feedback from customers, with a focus on learning, improving practice and avoiding escalation of issues. The focus during the year has been on improving first line resolution, by contacting the customers as soon as possible, listening to their concerns and dissatisfaction, and working with them towards achieving a satisfactory outcome.

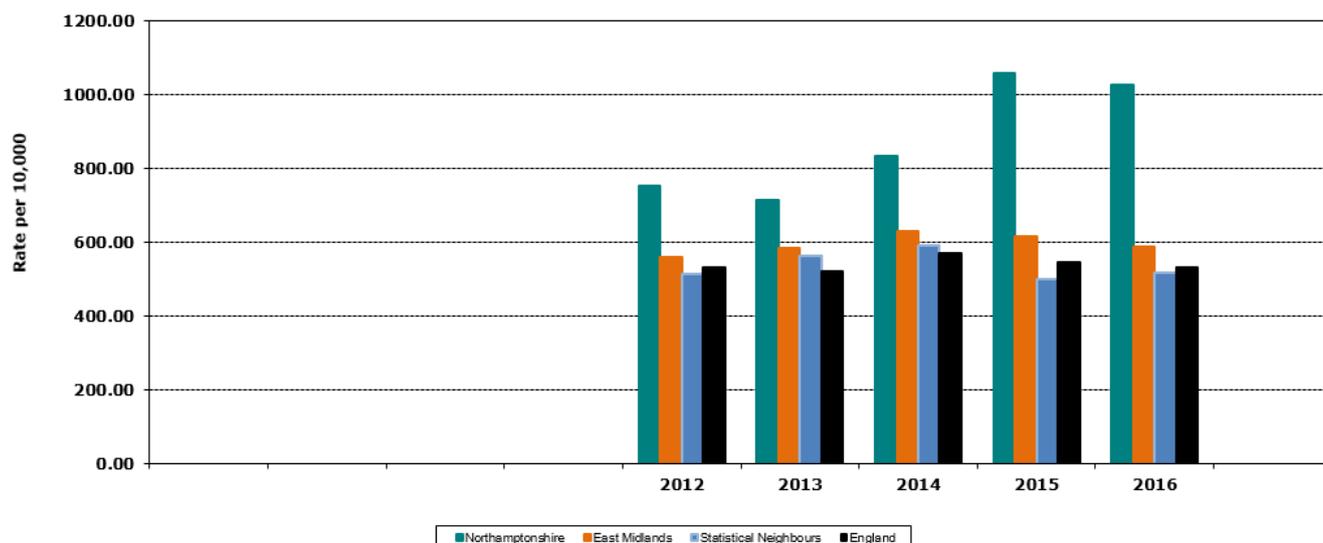
Northamptonshire County Council receives a very high level of referrals into Children's Services, which accounts for the high volumes of complaints received, however in terms of rate of complaints per total caseload, the Authority is similar to others:

Rates per 10,000 of referrals to Children's Social Services

Local Authority, Region and England						2012	2013	2014	2015	2016		Change from previous year
928	Northamptonshire	-	-	-	-	753.30	713.90	834.50	1059.10	1026.20	-	-32.90
983	East Midlands	-	-	-	-	561.30	585.60	631.20	617.40	589.90	-	-27.50
	Statistical Neighbours	-	-	-	-	516.91	562.80	592.09	500.86	519.76	-	18.90
970	England	-	-	-	-	533.50	520.70	573.00	548.30	532.20	-	-16.10

						Quartile bands			
		Trend	Change from previous year	Latest National Rank	Quartile Banding	Up to and including			
928	Northamptonshire	↓	-32.90	-	-	-	-	-	-

Rates per 10,000 of referrals to Children's Social Services



To give some context, in the financial year to end of March 2016, Northamptonshire County Council's Safeguarding Teams have dealt with over 20,615 cases. Just over 2% of these have led to a complaint being raised.

2. How we receive complaints

The majority of customers contact us by telephone, followed by completion of our online form. We want to offer people as many channels as possible by which they can get in touch, and the use of email and web forms means that customers have a communication channel open at all hours. We have seen a slight increase in complaints logged using our web form, and will continue to work on making this as user-friendly as possible, and if possible also linked into our back-office system, in order to reduce hand-over points and unnecessary delays for the customer.



Telephone call	131
Complaint form	63
Email	146
Letter	57
Web forms	44
In person	3

Compliment received for work on a life story book: I wanted to drop you an email to let you know how appreciative I am of one of your team and how unbelievably lucky I feel to have met her. She is in my opinion fabulous, she is truly great at what she does, she has a real warmth about her and an amazing ability to make you feel like you and your child are the only thing that matters. I always looked forward to her visits and how far she had gotten in her creation of my daughter's life story book and I have to say she has created the most beautiful book for my little girl and I could not be more thrilled. She is an amazing lady and a credit to your organisation, we truly struck gold when she was assigned to us.

3. How we categorise complaints:

Poor/ inadequate communication	No or delayed contact from Social Worker Late calls Missed calls Unable to contact Social Worker or appropriate team Social Worker unable to communicate appropriately with Young Person
Professional Decision Making	Failure to consider relevant matters in coming to a decision, or dissatisfaction with action taken in implementing that decision Lack of action following concerns being raised Action perceived as not being founded on facts
General staff conduct/ attitude	Inappropriate behaviour of a Council employee or someone acting on the Council's behalf Behaviour and communication perceived as unprofessional Failure to act
Policy/ Procedure	Failure to follow agreed Council procedure, policy, rules or standards of service Council failure to fulfil statutory responsibilities
Bias/ Unfair discrimination	Discriminatory practice Harassment

	Malice/ bias when making a decision
Confidentiality/ Data Protection	Breach of confidentiality Breach of data protection Inaccurate information captured in social care documents
Standard of Service Provided	Staff inefficiency Service provided did not meet expectation Level of support did not meet expectation Delays in provision of service
Financial Issues	Delays in payments No/ Missed payments Invoicing issues Adoption allowance, Fostering payments

When customers express dissatisfaction or disagreement with the Council’s policy or procedure, we record this as a **negative comment** (outside of the statutory complaints process), unless the customer chooses to appeal, where appropriate.

4. Complaint themes

The recurring themes of complaints last year have included the following types of issues:

- Complaints about the social worker’s conduct, behaviour or actions;
- Not following up or delivering on promises or commitments;
- Data breaches or inappropriate sharing of information;
- Lack of support and specifically of financial support or payments;
- Challenging professional decisions of social workers and staff;
- Inaccuracies in the information captured in assessments;
- Feelings of not being listened to or being ignored.

Complaint from a young person regarding financial allowances not being paid and lack of clarity around entitlement and conditions associated with allowances.

5. Complaints by Service Area

Our frontline services across the Children, Families and Education Services naturally carry the weight of complaints, given that they have the highest volume of direct contact and interactions with customers. By its nature, some Social Care practice and decision making can be seen as intrusive and difficult for families to accept, which leads to complaints.

Service:	Number of Complaints:	Main Themes:
Adoption, Permanence, Post Order Teams, Children in Care, Leaving Care, Corporate Parenting, Fostering, Connected Persons, Supervised Contact, UASC	68	Financial support, lack of support, lack of communication, inaction, Social Worker conduct, data breaches
Disabled Children's Teams	23	Financial support, Social Worker conduct, record keeping
Safeguarding (including MASH, Initial Assessment, First Response Teams, Emergency Duty Team)	293	Social Worker conduct, factual inaccuracies in assessments, lack of action, Social Worker bias, poor communication, data breaches.
Early Help Team	2	Social Worker conduct, lack of support
Transitions	6	Lack of support, delays
Safeguarding & Quality Assurance Service	13	Data breaches, lack of preparation for conferences
Learning, Skills and Education (School Admissions, SEN, Inclusion, Education Entitlement, EHC, Education Welfare)	38	Transport provision, delays, lack of support, Social Worker/ professional attitude

Complaint Outcomes:

A total of 447 complaints were closed between the 1st of April 2016 and the 31st of March 2017. This data relates to all complaints that were pursued and closed within the financial year 2016/17, therefore some of those cases may have been received and recorded outside of this period. Occasionally, a customer may choose not to pursue a complaint and/ or we are not able to establish the necessary consent/ permissions to allow an investigation to be pursued. It may also be necessary to decline or suspend a case that is already involved in another process, such as Court proceedings or where a Police investigation is underway, in order not to prejudice those proceedings.

In some cases (12) recording is incomplete and it has not been possible to clearly identify an outcome.

Outcome	2016/17
Upheld	126
Partially Upheld	88
Not Upheld	155
Suspended	35
Not Pursued	25
Escalated to Next Stage	6

Complaints Performance

1. Complaints Timescales

This data relates to the volume of complaints that were closed/ resolved within the period, therefore some cases may have been received outside of this period (before 1st April 2016).

Compliment received from a parent stating: Thank you for all your support over the last year. You are a great person and all you wanted is the best for my child. Me and my lil' cheeky boy wish you luck for the future. I know I gave you a bit of a hard time at first but with your support you were right. Thank you so much

The statutory timescale for responding to complaints at Stage 1 is **10 working days**. Working days means 'days that the Council offices are open' i.e. Mon to Fri (not incl. Public Holidays). A maximum of 20 working days may be allowed, but the expectation is that any extension is agreed with the complainant as soon as possible. Any complaints that exceed the 10 working day timescale without an agreed extension in place are recorded as 'out of timescale'.

Complaints which are not covered by the Children's Act regulations, and which are covered by the Corporate Complaints Policy, are also subject to a 10 working days timescale, but not subject to the same 3 stage process.

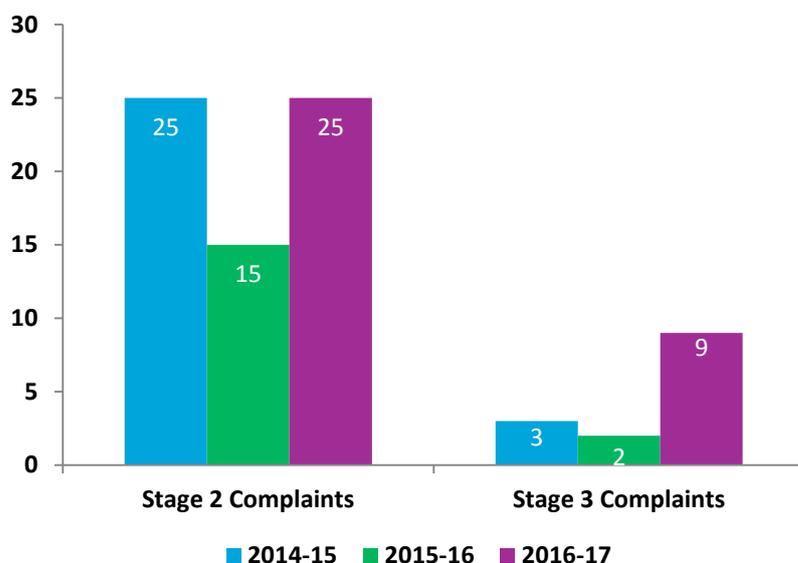
149 stage 1 complaints were resolved within 10 working days timescales. This represents 40% of all complaints completed at this stage. A further 118 (31%) were completed within the extended 20 days timescale, for which the service has to get consent from the customer to extend. A total of 108 complaints (29%) did not meet the 10 or 20 working days timescales.

Complex caseloads and staffing pressures continue to impact on our ability to keep to timescales across the Directorate, and this has unfortunately led to a deterioration on the previous year's performance.

2. Complaint Escalations (Stage 2 and Stage 3)

We have recorded more Stage Two and Stage Three complaints within this financial year than in the previous year. Many of these complaints came into the service in the previous financial year and escalated for various reasons. Senior Management have endorsed the need to ensure that everyone who complains has early contact from the responding Manager be it via a telephone call or a face to face meeting, to

ensure that the issues have been fully understood and any immediate actions required to help remedy the complaint have been considered. If a customer remains unhappy with the response they receive at Stage One, then they are automatically offered a meeting with a more senior member of staff, which has helped to de-escalate a number of complaints.



Customer complains that in the 14 months her son has been under the care of Social Service he has had 6 different Social Workers.

Also, customer complains there is no pathway plan in place for when her son turns 18.

The escalation rate is only 5.6% in the financial year, which is in line with many highly performing authorities.

Following Stage 2 investigations being completed, should there be complaints which are not upheld, customers are offered the option of Adjudication Meetings to discuss the findings of the report and agree a way forward with the service.

However, delays in implementing agreed actions have led to an increase in requests for escalation of matters to Stage 2 and Stage 3, or self-referrals to the LGO. This is an area of focus for the service, and is being addressed across the directorate.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the positive effect the social worker has had with not just me as a Foster Carer, but also the Young Person currently residing with me. I have found him to be a productive, task focused Social Worker, who has done exactly what he said in both meetings and 1 to 1 interactions. It's refreshing that he has regular contact with the young person, both by phone and also calling round to our home and takes time to ensure his voice is listened to. He has treated my home with respect, kept us both notified of any changes and been a real decent chap. In my opinion, a real credit to your service!!

3. LGO Investigations and Decisions

The Local Government Ombudsman Service is the regulator for Local Authority complaints in England & Wales. Further information about the Ombudsman Service may be found on their website: www.lgo.org.uk.

There are four types of Ombudsman Enquiry:

- **Initial Assessment** - Enquiries to understand if the Local Authority are already aware and dealing with a case
- **Premature Complaints** – Complaints that are in the Council's complaints process and are returned to the Council to address
- **Detailed Investigations** – Usually complaints that have completed the Council's complaints procedure and require further investigation and/or are deemed to be in the public interest
- **Reports** – Public Reports issues by the Ombudsman's office following an investigation, normally where significant fault or injustice has been identified that is deemed to be in the public interest.

In the period ending 31st March 2017, a total of 53 complaints were escalated to the LGO in relation to Northamptonshire County Council's Children, Families & Educations Services. This is a significant reduction from 73 in the previous year. A total of 65 were concluded by the LGO in the financial year. The LGO decided that:

- 9 were to be closed after initial enquiries
- 7 were incomplete or invalid
- 22 were referred back to the Council for local resolution
- 27 were investigated, resulting in 3 not upheld, and 24 being upheld.

Of those complaints which were upheld by the LGO, 2 required a financial redress, 2 required an apology, 1 needed no remedy, 1 needed a new review to be carried out and 18 recommended a mixture of actions and solutions.

The corporate Complaints and Compliments Team and the service have made a number of changes over the year to improve performance in regards to LGO cases and also the relationship with the Ombudsman:

- the Complaints team produce a weekly report focused only on LGO cases which goes to senior management, highlighting actions, deadlines and accountable officers, so there is clarity around what needs to happen next;
- a process map and guidance has been developed for staff to help them manage contacts from LGO
- the Monitoring Officer regularly monitors actions and checks responses to ensure compliance from the service.

Compliments Activity

There were 136 compliments recorded for the directorate during 2016-17, a significant increase on the previous year.

Service area	Nos.
Safeguarding and Care Planning	51
Adoptions	10
MASH	1
Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	6
Early Help	2
Education	1
Residential homes	2
Transitions	1
UASC	2
Permanence Team	11
Post-adoption and Special Guardianship	4
Fostering	7
Leaving Care	6
Looked After Children	17
Social Work Academy	6
First Response Team	2
Disabled Children's Team	2
Supervised Contact Team	5

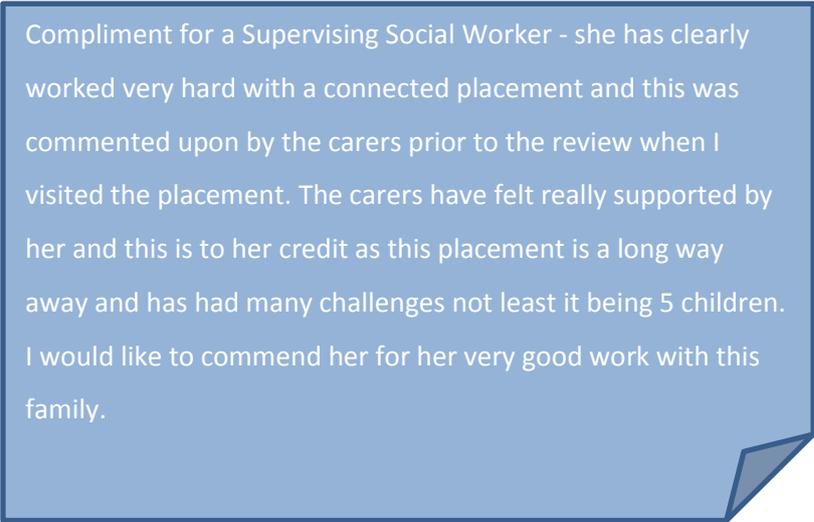
Compliment from prospective concurrency placement adopters- highlighting the great deal of work which the worker has done and also their positive "can do" attitude in picking up the work and getting on with it

Compliment from a CAFCASS Family Court Advisor: Her management of a case was excellent and she updated me appropriately and in good time and she responded to my queries very quickly. Her evidence was of a very good standard, she was clear, concise and balanced.

The majority of these compliments refer to individuals who have provided excellent service, demonstrated a high level of professional aptitude and were perceived to have gone above and beyond expectations.

Compliments are shared with senior managers and circulated in the staff bulletin, in the same way as complaints, so that good practice can be recognised and celebrated, and also feed into learning.

Some examples of compliments received are presented throughout this report.



Compliment for a Supervising Social Worker - she has clearly worked very hard with a connected placement and this was commented upon by the carers prior to the review when I visited the placement. The carers have felt really supported by her and this is to her credit as this placement is a long way away and has had many challenges not least it being 5 children. I would like to commend her for her very good work with this family.

Complaints from Young People

Children and Young People who wish to complain are offered the option of an advocate who can work with them and support them through the process. This is to ensure that their voice is captured and that the process is managed in as smooth a way as possible and is supportive of the young person's needs. This option is offered to them at the first point of contact.

During the year we have received 23 complaints from children and young people, a decrease from 35 in the previous year. These were either made by them directly (20), or through an advocate on their behalf (3).

Most of these (6) related to involvement with the Safeguarding and Care Planning part of the directorate, which carries the weight of the caseload, as well as Looked after Children Teams (6). The Leaving Care Teams received 5 complaints from young people, whilst the Disabled Children's, High Needs and EHC teams received 3 each. The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, Transitions and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children services received 1 complaint from young people each.

In regards to themes, the most common category of complaints relates to lack of support or poor level of service received, including financial support, followed by poor communication. Social Worker attitude or behaviour also feature, as does dissatisfaction with the way decisions are made about the care and support of young people.

Improvements made as a result of feedback

Throughout the year we have continued to focus on learning and practice improvement. Feedback from complaints and compliments has been used to drive changes to our policies and procedures, as well as development of appropriate and effective communication to staff and customers.

Below are some examples of actions taken as a result of customer feedback:

1. Clarity around the financial support we offer

As a result of complaints raising issues around the lack of clarity of what financial support we offer to carers, several policies have been reviewed and clarified: Special Guardianship Order, Adoption Allowance and Carer Allowances. These are now more accessible and set clear expectations.

2. Support for kinship carers

The process allocation has been changed in order to offer kinship carers the same level of support as the one offered for local authority foster carers.

3. Data breaches

The matter of improving processes in order to reduce the incidence of accidental disclosures (for example, letters being sent to the wrong address), has been discussed in team managers meetings, in addition to it being an area of focus at the bi-monthly Information Management Board meetings.

4. Inappropriate use of car seats

Some complainants have raised the fact that our use of car seats did not always reflect recent changes in regulations. This was addressed through the purchase of several types of car seats for various age groups, briefing notes being sent to all staff on several occasions, and team meetings discussing their appropriate use.

5. Communication and recording

The safeguarding teams have completed team evaluations and team plans looking at learning from complaints and improving quality and timeliness of work, including ensuring reports are ready for conference and shared with families. These plans/evaluations should improve the standard of service as they are designed to look at how the team improve the quality of the service they are delivering.

6. Child Protection Conference procedures

Following on from a complaint regarding the Child Protection Chair not following guidance as set out in the parents' CPC leaflet, a review of the leaflet was carried out to clarify it and make it more accurate. This led to changes in Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children's Board procedures as well.

Moving Forward

In the report *Are we getting the best from children's social care complaints?* published in March 2015, the LGO provides the following points as good practice for managing Children's complaints:

Follow the process

The process is statutory so councils should follow the guidance and not depart from it without good reason. Once the process has started, the complainant has a right to have their complaint considered at each stage.

Choose the appropriate procedure

Ensure from the outset that the complaint procedure is appropriate in the circumstances of the complaint. Explain in writing how the complaint is being dealt with and the right to approach the LGO if the complainant is unhappy with the outcome.

Don't delay

The statutory timescales are designed to ensure complaints are handled effectively, fairly and swiftly throughout the process. Delays can happen at each of the three stages, but also moving from one stage to another. Building in additional stages, such as meetings, can also add an unnecessary delay.

Make it a seamless service

A complaint should be progressed in as seamless a way as possible. Those complaints which involve different parts of the council should not require the complainant to make multiple complaints to different areas.

Look for a swift resolution

Try to resolve a complaint at all times, but don't allow such attempts to delay or disrupt the statutory procedure. If faults on the part of the council are realised at any stage, seek to remedy any injustice caused when they arise. Some complaints do not need to be investigated at great length, even though they have to go through the whole process – make sure that stage two investigators understand that investigations should be proportionate.

Early referral to the LGO?

We will continue to consider complaints brought early to us by complainants on a case by case basis. We are unlikely to accept early referrals from councils except in the circumstances set out in Annex 3 of the statutory guidance.

Our focus for the coming year will be on:

- Improving the timeliness of implementing agreed actions, to reduce the time it takes to reach resolution, achieve desired outcomes for customers and reduce escalations.
- Strengthening our internal reporting and ownership of LGO cases so that actions are implemented quickly and there is a clear process in place to feed back to the LGO when needed.

- Improving the service's responsiveness to complaints, with the Central Business Support Team taking ownership of sending reminders and chasing responses.
- Exploring the possibility of digitalising our customers' contact with us, to reduce the resources spent on inputting information into systems and instead focusing on resolution and early contact with the customer.
- Creating a more refined mechanism for the corporate team to record and extract data from complaints records, to allow for real time learning and improvements to happen.
- Carrying out a programme of work to improve children's and young people's awareness and understanding of the complaints process, and to explore ways of making the feedback process accessible and suitable to them.
- Taking monthly updates on LGO cases to CFE management meetings, with clear actions, responsible officers and deadlines.
- Identifying a lead officer with responsibility for coordinating responses to complex complaints and LGO cases.

Compliment from parent: The Social Worker has been a tower of strength to my lad in supporting him. My son has felt comfortable and confident in her company knowing she has never let him down. She is the most professional, kind, warm hearted and amazing lady that we have had the pleasure of having in our lives. She will always be welcome in our home.

'He has consistently worked in a child centred way to achieve the best outcomes for the siblings' individual needs. Most significantly, navigating them towards securing a permanent fostering arrangement...It is to his credit that he continues to prioritise the needs of the children around contact arrangements with birth parents, previous Foster carers and in terms of sibling contact working for them to be placed within the same locality.'