

CABINET

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| DATE | 11 th August 2021 |
| REPORT OF | Cllr Ian Lindley Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People |
| RESPONSIBLE OFFICER | Lisa Arthey, Director of Children's Services |
| SUBJECT | Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2020/21 |
| STATUS | Open |
| FORWARD PLAN REF NO. | CB 08/21/02 |

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The Children's Social Care statutory complaints procedure supports the Council's aims of a stronger economy and stronger communities and enables citizens to voice concerns. The outcomes sought from the procedure are healthier and happier lives for children and young people.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report provides an overview of the activity and analysis of complaints and compliments for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Receives and accepts the Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report for 2020/21.
2. Refers the Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report for 2020/21 to the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel for their consideration.

REASONS FOR DECISION

It is a requirement of The Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 to produce an annual report regarding the representations made about social care statutory services. The purpose of the attached report is to inform the general public, elected members and Council officers about the effectiveness of the statutory complaints procedure.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1 The Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the

Health and Social Care Act 2003 require the Council to operate and maintain a procedure for resolving complaints and representations from children, young people or their representatives concerning statutory services.

1.2 The attached Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report provides a breakdown of the complaints, concerns and compliments received during 2020/21, the service improvements implemented, and lessons learnt as a result of complaints and representations.

1.3 During 2019/20 the Council received the following representations concerning children's social care statutory services:

Complaints = 118

Compliments = 18

This compares with 152 complaints and 7 compliments in 2019/20.

1.4 Of the 118 complaints responded to at stage one, one escalated to stage two (independent investigation) during 2020/21.

At stage one, twenty-six complaints (**22.1.8%**) were responded to outside of the maximum statutory timescale of twenty working days. The stage two complaint was responded to within the statutory deadline.

1.5 **43.2%** of stage one complaints were not upheld.

1.6 Complaints and compliments provide the Council with useful information in respect of the way Children's Social Services are delivered, identifying good practice and opportunities for improvement which have resulted in changes to our systems. It is to be noted that the greatest number of complaints is with the Children's Assessment and Safeguarding Service. This is to be expected as the service is a frontline service dealing with a large number of cases with very complex issues to address. Further information on the type of complaints and compliments is contained within section four of the annual report.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

2.1 The Children's Social Care statutory complaints procedure aims to treat all members of the community equally. The procedure for the handling of complaints is an important contributor to citizen and service user perceptions and informs service improvement, this ensures that an individual's diversity and human rights are promoted through an efficient and effective complaints process.

2.2 The arrangements for dealing with Children's Services complaints are critical in ensuring that customer's views on our services are recognised and that feedback received is acted upon. Children's Service Statutory Complaints procedure complies with the Corporate Policy Framework. This includes confidentiality for complainants and keeping complainants fully informed about the progress of their complaints.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 3.1 It is a statutory requirement that an annual report is completed for these complaints and the activities undertaken in responding to the complaints follows current guidance. The current approach is set out in the attached report.

4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 If the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) make a finding of fault against us then we are obliged to make public the findings. All complaints investigated by the LGSCO are available on their website at www.lgo.org.uk

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 The handling of the Council's complaints is an in-house service funded through the revenue budget. Efficiencies are continuously sought from refining the complaints handling process (better use of systems and expertise) and through making service improvements based on what our customers are telling us, so that any mistakes are not repeated. There has been one stage 2 complaint in 2020/21 and no stage three panel reviews. Each stage two and three complaint needs to have additional funding found for external and independent investigation and verification.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The report will not have any impact on climate change or environmental implications.

7. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY

- 7.1 Cabinet may wish to refer this report to Scrutiny for consideration.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The report is providing information on complaints, concerns and compliments received. As such there are no direct additional financial implications arising from the report itself. However, as the report makes clear each stage two and three complaint requires further funding which although met from existing budgets the current processes and procedures need to restrict the number of these to assist with maximising budgets to front door delivery of services.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Section 13 (1) of the Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 requires that for the purposes of monitoring, every Local Authority must as soon as possible after the end of the financial year compile a report of representations. This report ensures that the Council meets the statutory requirement within the regulations. The attached report is thorough

and contains within it lessons to be learned from this valuable process.

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The lessons learnt and improvements in practice contained within Section four of the annual report, includes reference to actions taken with employees to address concerns/issues highlighted via the statutory complaints process. Remedial action has been taken in the provision of additional training, re-emphasising effective communication and improving procedural processes.

11. WARD IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 People who might make use of the complaints process may live in any ward of the Borough.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2006/1738/contents/made>

Department for Education and Skills 'Getting the Best from Complaints'.
September 2006.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-getting-the-best-from-complaints>

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/35/contents>

Adoption and Children Act 2002.
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/38/contents>

Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003.
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/43/contents>

13. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

Paul Ellis, Head of Information Governance and Complaints, North East Lincolnshire Council, Telephone: (01472) 323372

COUNCILLOR IAN LINDLEY
PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE



www.nelincs.gov.uk

North East Lincolnshire Council

Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021

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1. Context

The Children's Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Health and Social Care Act 2003 require the Council to operate and maintain a procedure for resolving complaints and representations from children, young people or their representatives.

This report provides an overview of Children's Social Care complaints and representations made to North East Lincolnshire Council during the period 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021, in accordance with the Children's Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 and the accompanying guidance 'Getting the Best from Complaints'.

What is a Complaint?

A complaint can be generally defined as 'any expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about a service that is being delivered or a failure to deliver a service'.

The Statutory Complaints Procedure aims to ensure those children, young people and their parents or carers who make representations have their concerns resolved swiftly and wherever possible by the people who provide the service.

Who can make a Complaint?

Section 26(3) and section 24D of the Children Act 1989, section 3(1) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Adoption and Support Services Regulations 2005 require the responsible authority to consider representations including complaints made to it by:

- any child or young person (or a parent of them or someone who has parental responsibility for them) who is being looked after by the local authority or is not looked after by them, but is in need
- any local authority foster carer (including those caring for children placed through independent fostering agencies)
- children leaving care
- Special Guardians
- a child or young person (or parent of them) to whom a Special Guardian order is in force
- any person who has applied for an assessment under section 14F(3) or (4), (Adoption and Support Services Regulations 2005)
- any child or young person who may be adopted, their parents and guardians
- persons wishing to adopt a child
- any other person for whom arrangements for the provision of adoption services extend
- adopted persons, their parents, natural parents and former guardians
- such other person as the local authority consider has sufficient interest in the child or young person's welfare to warrant their representations being considered by them.

Where a complaint is made by a child or young person, an advocate is offered to support the young person through all stages of the complaint's procedure.

2. The Statutory Complaints Procedure

The complaints procedure has three stages, with a strong emphasis on resolving complaints at the first stage:

Concern - When a customer contacts us with an issue which can quickly be resolved prior to going through the statutory complaint's procedure, these are logged as a concern and where possible responded to within 5 working days.

Stage one (Local Resolution) - This stage of the complaint's procedure is where we would aim to resolve all issues through a quality and timely response, reducing the need for further stages. Council social care service teams and external contractors providing social care services on our behalf are expected to resolve as many complaints as possible at this level. Team managers provide a written response to the complainants within 10 working days. This can be extended to 20 working days if the complaint involves complex matters, or to allow time for appointing an advocate where a vulnerable person is involved. The complaints team, work in partnership with managers to ensure that quality responses are provided within the specified timescales.

Stage two (Independent Investigation) - This stage is usually implemented where the complainant is dissatisfied with the findings of stage one. Stage two is an investigation conducted by an external investigating officer together with an independent person who oversees and ensures the fairness and transparency of the investigation process. The findings from the investigation and any recommendations are set out in a report to the head of service who provides a written response to the complainant on behalf of the Council. The timescale for responding to a complaint at stage two is 25 working days, with an extension of up to 65 working days for complex cases.

Stage three (Independent Review Panel) - Where complainants wish to proceed with complaints following dissatisfaction with the outcome of the complaint at stage two, the Council is required to establish a Complaints Review Panel. Complaints Review Panels are made up of three independent panellists. The Panel's role is to ensure that the process has been followed and to consider the complaint/s and wherever possible work towards a resolution. The Panel makes recommendations to the Director of Children's Services who then makes a decision on the complaint and on any action to be taken.

There are various timescales relating to stage three complaints. These include:

- setting up the Panel within 30 working days of the complainant's request
- producing the Panel's report within five working days
- sending the Council's response to the complainant within 15 working days of the Panel's report.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman - If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Independent Review Panel, they have the right to take their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), who is empowered to review or investigate where it appears that the Council's own investigations have not resolved the complaint or not been handled appropriately. Complainants can refer their complaint to the LGO at any time, although the Ombudsman normally refers the complaint back to the Council if it has not been considered under the relevant procedures in the first instance.

Team Structure - the NELC Complaints Team consists of:

Paul Ellis – Head of Information Governance and Complaints
Adele Beharrell – Information Governance and Complaints Officer
Ian Hollingsworth – Information Governance and Complaints Officer

3. Summary of Findings 2020/21

| Year | Concern | Stage one | Stage two | Stage three | LGSCO |
|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------|
| 2020/21 | 51 | 118 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| 2019/20 | 0 | 152 | 3 | 0 | 9 |
| 2018/19 | 0 | 112 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 2017/18 | 0 | 99 | 3 | 0 | 2 |
| 2016/17 | 1 | 66 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 2015/16 | 7 | 106 | 4 | 2 | 6 |

Between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021, the Council responded to 118 representations, compared with 152 in the same period for 2019/20. This is a decrease of 22.3% but is consistent with previous year's figures. Improvements have been made to the recording of concerns to ensure that all contacts are recorded which has led to the significant increase in the number of concerns recorded.

The last available mid-year population figure we have is for 2019 and there were 34,503 under 18s living in North East Lincolnshire. The 2020 figure for the mid-year population is not due to be released until the end of June 2021 and will be inserted into this report if possible prior to publication. As of 1st April 2021, the Council had 2,376 open childcare cases, including 558 looked after children. When compared to the previous year as of 19th April 2019, the Council had 2,535 open childcare cases including 450 looked after children. This is a decrease of 159 open childcare cases and an increase of 108 looked after children.

The 118 representations received accounted for 4.9% of the open cases based on this figure, however it should be noted that the number of open childcare cases does vary throughout the year. Last year the number of representations were 6% of the open cases.

A total of 118 stage one complaints were processed and responded to. One complaint was escalated to stage two and no panel reviews were held during 2020/21.

The high percentage of complaints resolved at stage one reflects the time and effort put in at this stage to address the complaint without the need for escalation to stage two. The emphasis of the complaints process is to reach a resolution and efforts made to resolve complaints at stage one focus on ensuring the complainant understands the response they have received and what outcome can be realistically achieved. This may be done through further correspondence if it is felt that this might resolve the issue, or the service managers or team managers may meet with complainants.

Four complaints were raised with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) during 2020/21, all of which related to Children's Assessment and Safeguarding Services. The outcomes were:

- Premature
- No investigation – local remedy
- No investigation – in court proceedings
- No investigation – no injustice caused

The LGSCO outcomes are explained below:

Premature – the LGSCO determine that the Council has not been given the opportunity to investigate the concerns and directs the complainant to follow the Council's complaints process.

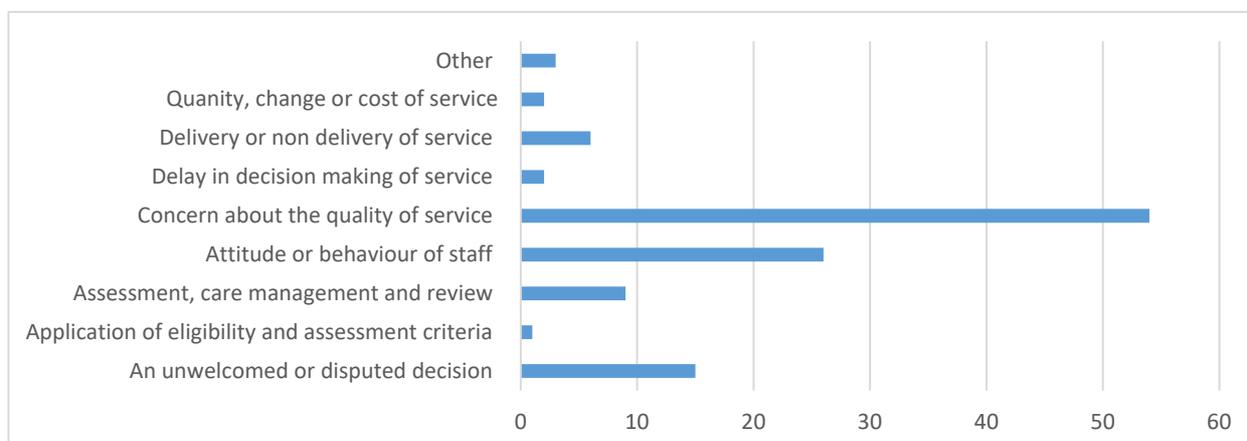
No investigation – the LGSCO determine that they will not investigate the complaint. This may be because it is outside of jurisdiction (legal courts) or because they cannot add anything to the Council's own investigation of the issues (local remedy).

Complaints by Service Area

| Service Area | 2020/21 | | 2019/20 | |
|---|---------|------|---------|------|
| | No. | % | No. | % |
| Children's Assessment and Safeguarding Service (CASS) | 104 | 88.1 | 130 | 85.5 |
| Through Care Services | 7 | 5.9 | 6 | 3.9 |
| Fostering and Adoption Services | 4 | 3.3 | 7 | 4.6 |
| Contact Services | 1 | 0.8 | 1 | 0.7 |
| Children's Safeguarding and Reviewing Service (CSRS) | 1 | 0.8 | 1 | 0.7 |
| Residential Unit | 1 | 0.8 | 0 | 0 |

Nature of Complaints

| Complaint Types | 2020/21 | |
|--|---------|-------|
| | No. | % |
| An unwelcome or disputed decision | 15 | 12.7 |
| Application of eligibility and assessment criteria | 1 | 0.8 |
| Assessment, care management and review | 9 | 7.6 |
| Attitude or behaviour of staff | 26 | 22.03 |
| Concern about the quality of service | 54 | 45.7 |
| Delay in decision making of service | 2 | 1.6 |
| Delivery or non-delivery of services | 6 | 5.08 |
| Quantity, change or cost of service | 2 | 1.6 |
| Other | 3 | 2.5 |



The Outcome of complaints

| Outcome Stage | 2020/21 | | | | | | 2019/20 | | | | | |
|------------------|---------|------|-----|-----|-----|---|---------|------|-----|-----|-----|---|
| | 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 1 | | 2 | | 3 | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Upheld | 15 | 12.7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 27 | 17.8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Partially upheld | 43 | 36.4 | 1 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 56 | 36.8 | 3 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Not upheld | 51 | 43.2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 55 | 36.2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Withdrawn | 6 | 5.1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 4.6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| No Finding | 3 | 2.5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 4.6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Timescales for complaints

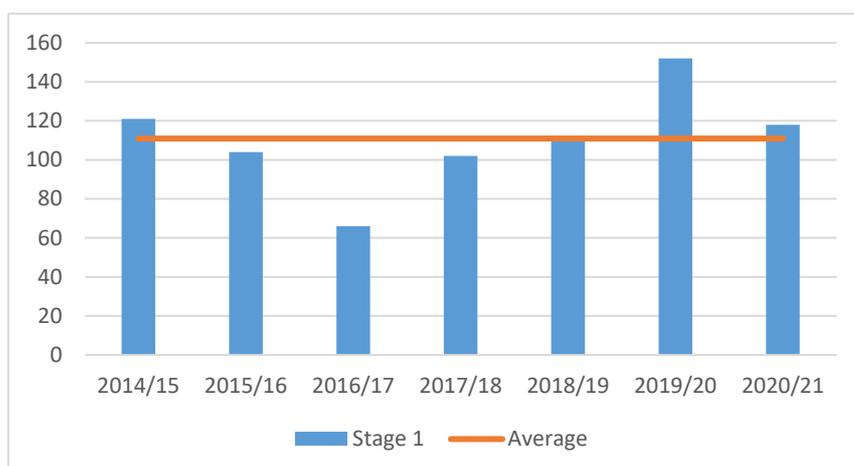
| Response | Outcome | 2020/21 | | 2019/20 | |
|----------|---------------------------------------|---------|------|---------|------|
| | | No. | % | No. | % |
| Stage 1 | Within 10 days | 64 | 54.2 | 75 | 49.3 |
| | Within 20 days | 28 | 23.7 | 59 | 38.8 |
| | Outside of 20 days | 26 | 22.1 | 18 | 11.8 |
| Stage 2 | Within 25 days | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Within 65 days | 1 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| | Outside of 65 days | 0 | 0 | 3 | 100 |
| | Ongoing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Withdrawn | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Stage 3 | Panel set up within 30 days timescale | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Panel report produced within 5 days | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Response sent within 15 days | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Outside of Timescale | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

There has been a decrease in the number of complaints responded to within 10 days at stage one, during 2020/21. During this time 52% of stage 1 complaints were responded to within 10 working days. The longer investigation times were caused by the disruption due to the covid pandemic, this resulted in all services having to adapt to new ways of working as well as new priorities taking precedence over the usual activities. Significant efforts were made to ensure that customers were notified of the potential delays and a notice was also placed on the council's website to help manage expectations. It should be noted that during this time organisations such as the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman also significantly limited the service they offered. Despite these disruptions' efforts were made to ensure that complaints which needed addressing quickly were prioritised and addressed as soon as possible.

There have also been some complex issues raised which has resulted in officers requiring more time to complete an investigation and further ongoing work and dialogue following the initial response. It should also be acknowledged that the officers allocated to investigate the complaints have also had a number of other competing priorities resulting from increased focus on the activities of the service arising from recent inspections. During this time, the service has also been engaged in significant improvements which has led to changes in the structure of the service, new management arrangements and increased officers within the service.

The number of complaints has been relatively consistent in recent years. Although the most recent figures show a slight decrease compared to 2019/20 they are in line with the average received.

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| 2014/15 | 121 |
| 2015/16 | 104 |
| 2016/17 | 66 |
| 2017/18 | 102 |
| 2018/19 | 112 |
| 2019/20 | 152 |
| 2020/21 | 118 |



Compensation payments

Compensation can be provided to a complainant by the Council as either part of the investigation or on the recommendation of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman following their investigation, where it is concluded that there has been maladministration by the Council causing injustice to the complainant.

In the financial year 2020/21, we have not paid out any financial compensation related to cases concluded in this time.

During 2019/20, compensation was recommended following an investigation by the LGSCO. The complaint resulted in a decision finding of fault causing injustice and a recommendation was made to provide financial compensation.

Prior to this there have been no compensation payments since 2016.

4. Lessons Learned and Improvements to Service Delivery

A number of actions can arise from a complaint investigation which are specific to the individual complaint. Approximately 62% of complaints had some form of action or improvement identified as a result of the investigation. In some instances, actions are very specific to the case being investigated, below are some examples:

- Assigning a new social worker where this is beneficial to the case.
- Review of contact arrangements/sessions.
- Keeping families informed of any changes/update to a case.
- Social Worker meeting with the complainant to discuss and explain the content of reports in further detail or clarify other aspects of an ongoing case.
- Offering an apology to the complainant where communication from the service could have been better.
- Financial assistance provided to support an individual caring for a child in her care.
- Social Worker putting further support in place for a child and family.
- Parenting assessments to be completed.
- Meetings organised with family to discuss their concerns and support they require.
- Family Group conferencing to be offered.
- Single assessment to be completed.

Examples of the service improvements made following complaint investigations include:

For Children's Assessment and Safeguarding Service, it was highlighted that social workers should take care when discussing personal information with parents in a public area. This has been reinforced within teams and at all times a confidential space should be found to discuss personal information. All staff across the council are required to undertake data protection training and this is regularly monitored.

Some issues arose due to the sudden impact of changing work practices due to the pandemic. To facilitate improved communication all staff now have access to remote working including telephones. Fortnightly meetings take place between the business support manager and head of safeguarding to ensure no issues are occurring. This has helped to ensure calls and emails are returned to customers in a timely manner. In addition, as part of the services continuing development for social workers and managers, development sessions around returning telephone calls and talking to families about their issues in a timely way are being held. This is a priority for the service to ensure that people are encouraged to engage with the service.

In order for social workers to deliver difficult conversations with families and within a timely manner, sessions are delivered to social workers as part of the work force development plan, this will equip social workers with the skills and knowledge they require to support them in dealing with this matter. In addition, further workshops have taken place with staff to look at interventions and support for families to prevent escalation in cases. It has been identified that further training in autism and dyslexia would be beneficial to staff and the service is currently in the process of arranging some workshops to deliver these sessions.

Staff have been reminded of the importance of using interpreters where English is not a family's first language to ensure language is not a barrier.

Staff have been reminded of the importance to ensure they are sharing reports and assessments with families prior to meetings being held so any issues are addressed beforehand.

Contact Services have identified that all staff need to undertake restorative conversations training to support them in challenging appropriately. This has been undertaken with some of the staff further training is planned.

It was identified that all staff need to introduce themselves at the start of every contact session and explain the expectations to the parent and children. This has led to the development of a Guidance in contact documentation to support clarity around expectations. The guidance document for staff has been reviewed and amended to reflect this expectation. Lanyards have been purchased with staff names as the feedback from families attending contact was that it was difficult to see the ID badges especially during the wearing of masks. The guidance document is regularly reviewed in team meetings and reissued, and staff sign this to confirm they have read this document.

To support staff with handling children safely in difficult and challenging situations, it has been recommended that all staff undertake Team Teach training, however this training is still to be sourced as a training package due to difficulties around Covid.

Through Care Services have identified that wherever possible children should have one allocated social worker and all work should be completed in a timely manner and where applicable in line with statutory guidelines. The service strives to ensure all young people have a case worker who can respond to need appropriately. Where staff changes have taken place the service support young people via the duty team until to ensure that allocation and relationships can start to be built between worker and young person.

To ensure children have some support for anxiety and worries when being moved to a different foster care placement at short notice, the team have access to Barbados and also Young Minds Matters who have a crisis team who they work very closely with and who are available to provide strategies to new carers and young people looking at: grounding techniques, Mindfulness and Trauma informed approached than support with immediate anxieties.

In relation to Fostering and Adoption, work has been undertaken to ensure that all relevant parties are provided with support and information regarding the LADO process. Individuals are now provided with an information leaflet that explains the process. They are also provided with a letter from the Service Manager which details a named person in fostering to contact in the event of their link worker not being available. The carers are all offered independent support from the Fostering Network. If this is required, then the fostering team will take responsibility for making the referral. This provides the carers with one-to-one independent support. They can also attend meetings with the carers. This also allows them to access free legal advice if required. Throughout the investigation, fostering team maintain regular visits and contact with the carers. All documents that are required to be shared with carers and formats for referrals and letters are all saved within a word drive that all link workers have access too.

In addition, it was identified that all fostering staff should undertake further training around the LADO process, so they are clear on how to support and provide information to relevant parties. The service has now provided all link workers with a process to follow, and they also receive support from their team manager. Training sessions are now held within the team that the link workers attend. This is further discussed in the first supervision after the training session to ensure the process is fully understood by the link worker. This is then discussed again formally in supervision at six months.

5. Compliments received for 2020/21

| Service area | No. | Summary of compliment |
|--|-----|---|
| Children's Assessment and Safeguarding Services | 11 | Complimenting social worker for hard work and support offered to family. |
| | | Complimenting social worker for professional behaviour when dealing with case. |
| | | Complimenting social worker for all the work done with family. |
| | | Thanking social worker for support and their professionalism whilst dealing with a case. |
| | | Complimenting social worker for professionalism when dealing with CIN meeting. |
| | | Thanking social worker for all the help and support provided to family. |
| | | Thanking a social worker for how she has managed a case during the court process. |
| | | Complimenting social worker for work done with family. |
| | | Complimenting the practice of a social worker. |
| | | Thanking social worker for the dedication to a case and the support that has been offered. |
| Complimenting families first practitioners and family support workers for the support offered. | | |
| Childrens Safeguarding and Reviewing Service | 5 | <p>Thanking worker for supporting family.</p> <p>Complimenting worker for how well an online meeting was managed.</p> <p>Complimenting worker for the level of service provided.</p> <p>Thanking officer for the time and care when dealing with a case.</p> <p>Thanking the service for being welcoming and offering valuable support.</p> |
| Residential Unit | 1 | Complimenting staff for the amount of support offered and the activities provided. |
| | | |
| Childrens Disability Service | 1 | Complimenting social worker for her hard work and support when dealing with a case. |

6. Looking Forward – Priorities for 2021/22

As well as the improvements for the service delivery, the complaints handling service also has a number of priorities to focus on during 2021/22.

The last year has seen a significant change in working practices and the team have had to adapt quickly to ensure customers can get their concerns listened to. One of the challenges is in ensuring that we can support customers whilst encouraging the use of online and remote ways of giving feedback.

To support electronic sharing of information interactive reporting dashboards are being developed to enable managers to see and examine the feedback being received.

The team will continue to raise awareness of the complaint's procedure across the Council, ensuring staff are familiar with the procedures and fully equipped with effective complaints handling skills. This will support all customers being dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner.

To ensure feedback is handled within timescales the team will monitor compliance and ensure any issues are raised with the Director of Children's Services as appropriate. Any improvements identified will be highlighted by providing reports and intelligence to relevant service managers to use in any service reviews or improvement plans. The team will also continue to promote the need for all officers to report feedback as appropriate including compliments and suggestions.

Working closely with the Clinical Commissioning Group will ensure both organisations are able to share learning in dealing with complaints and will also ensure customers are clear how their complaint will be addressed when it involves both organisations. The team will also maintain networks with other local authorities and our local partners, to share good practice and contribute to the development of policy and practice, both locally and nationally.

All available information in relation to complaints will continue to be reviewed and updated as necessary to ensure it is as clear as possible for all customers.

7. Conclusions

Whilst it has been noted that there has been a decrease of 22% in the number of complaints received compared to 2019/20, we have dealt with 51 concerns compared to none recorded in 2019/20. This is a result of managers pro-actively responding to customer concerns and improvements which ensure these concerns are now all recorded.

There have been significant changes within the service in the past year and moving forward it is expected that there will be more stability. This should result in better timescales for dealing with complaints. There should also be less changes taking place with the management of cases and much more stable case management, leading to less issues that lead to concerns being raised. The increased number of social workers also means that there are less cases being handled by each social worker.

Significant effort has been put into developing the electronic childcare management system to ensure it supports social workers and improves the case recording. The service have also implemented a procedures and policies reference system called Tri-x. This is to ensure consistent and easy access to all the information needed for social workers. This will support the consistency of service and advice to families and carers.