

COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2016 – MARCH 2017

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1. INTRODUCTION

This is the eighth Annual Report produced for Children's Services. It covers the period from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 and provides information about compliments, comments and complaints activity within the social care aspect of Children's Services as required by statutory guidance. The report does not address complaints about other parts of Children's Services, although the department does log and record this information. Of 204 complaints received by the Complaints Team, 71 were eligible to progress through the statutory Children Act complaints procedure. 108 of the 204 were eligible but the issues raised were judged to be easily resolvable locally, and therefore were progressed as a Concern/Enquiry. A total of 25 complaints were received and progressed through the corporate complaints procedure, some of these were social care complaints that fell outside of the scope and eligibility criteria of the Children Act complaints procedure.

2. HEADLINES FOR 2016/17

- The number of complaints handled under the Children Act has reduced from 95 in 2015/16 to 71 in 2016/17 (Table 1 Page 12).
- The highest proportion of complaints continue to be received from parents or relatives of children (72%). There is a reducing proportion received from children themselves (13% this year compared to 23% in 2015/16 - Table 3 Page 12).
- Complaints at stage 1 were dealt with more quickly in 2016/17 than the previous year. In 2016/17, the proportion of stage 1 complaints that were resolved in under 10 days increased to 33% (up from 26% in the previous year). The proportion taking between 11 and 20 days also increased (up from 24% to 34%), but the proportion taking longer than this (over 20 days) fell over the year – down from 38 complaints to 21 (50%-34% - see Table 4, Page 13).

3. MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF THE SYSTEM

For 2016/17, all complaints functions within the Council, including Children's Services, were administered and managed by the centralised the Performance and Risk Unit within the Resources & Transformation Directorate. The centralised team is responsible for:

- Managing, developing and administering complaints procedures
- Establishing the relevant procedure for handling a complaint
- Maintaining a record of each complaint made and the outcome reached
- Seeking a local resolution and negotiating with complainants and managers
- Exploring alternative approaches to dispute resolution
- Providing training, information and advice for staff and managers
- Providing information, support and advice for complainants
- Monitoring and reporting on complaints to ensure performance is managed
- Ensuring that learning opportunities arising from complaints are maximised

- Appointing Investigating Officers, Independent Persons and Review Panellists

In addition to Children's statutory complaints, the centralised unit also deal with general comments, suggestions and compliments, as well as corporate complaints and enquiries.

4. PROCEDURES

As well as satisfying legal requirements, the Compliments, Comments and Complaints procedure exists in order to provide managers with valuable feedback. This enables them to monitor and learn from complaints in order to shape, develop and improve future services. Effective complaint monitoring can help to identify significant trends, highlight gaps in service provision and identify necessary improvements to policy and procedure. Monitoring acts as a measurement of public concern and can help the Directorate to identify training and development needs.

As an Authority, we recognise the importance of developing a culture in which complaints are viewed as potential learning opportunities and where complainants are carefully listened to and receive swift, positive and outcome-focused responses.

4.1. Children Act Procedure – social care complaints

Children and young people, their parents, carers and people denied services are eligible to use the statutory Children Act complaints procedure. The procedure is also open to those complaining on behalf of service users, either where service users are not capable of making complaints themselves, or where a service user has asked a representative to act on their behalf.

Those who are not eligible to complain via the statutory Children Act procedure may still be entitled to make a complaint via the council's corporate complaints process.

There are three stages to the statutory Children Act complaint procedure:

- Stage One, the local resolution/problem-solving stage, is the stage at which the vast majority of complaints are resolved by operational staff. The council has between 10 and 20 working days to complete this stage of the process. Most complaints will be dealt with at this stage before proceeding to subsequent stages.
- Stage Two, formal investigations are conducted at arm's length to the operational sections, usually by independent, external, Investigating Officers appointed by the centralised Complaints Team. Statutory guidance also requires the appointment of an Independent Person, external to the council, to ensure that any investigation is carried out fully and fairly. An investigation report is received by a senior manager within Children's Services and findings and recommendations of the report form the basis of

the Children's Services Directorate formal response to the complaint. This stage should take between 25 and 65 working days.

If there is any residual dissatisfaction with the outcome of a complaint at Stage Two, the complainant can request that a Stage Three Review Panel hears their complaint.

- Stage Three, a Review Panel consists of three people appointed by the centralised Complaints Team. The panel must be independently chaired and consist of two other independent panellists. The panel will be held, where possible, in a venue close to the complainant's home, within 30 working days of any request. The panel will consider whether the council has dealt with the complaint fairly and will identify options for resolving or remedying the complaint, reporting their findings and any recommendations to the Corporate Director - Children's Services. The Director's response to the recommendations forms the end of the council's statutory Children Act procedure.

Once complainants have exhausted the local authority procedure, they may choose to take their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The procedure also provides a valuable mechanism for compliments and comments to be made to the Directorate. Both compliments and comments are welcomed and encouraged. Comments or suggestions for service improvements should always receive a written response from an appropriate manager.

4.2. Corporate complaints procedure

Complaints which do not meet the criteria to be considered under the Children Act statutory procedure are responded to under the two-stage corporate complaints process, which is used across all directorates in the Council. Further information about the process can be found on our website:

<http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/council-democracy/accesstoinformation/internalreviewscomplaints.asp>

4.3. Concern/enquiry procedure

Concerns/enquiries were introduced to the complaints process in 2013-14 and have continued throughout 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17. Issues which are judged by the Complaints Team to be easily resolvable, and not of a serious nature, are progressed as 'concerns/enquiries' rather than complaints. These are passed to the appropriate team to be resolved locally outside of the formal complaints procedure. The same approach is used by local authorities across the country, often being categorised as a 'pre-complaint'.

Complainants are informed of their right to progress through the formal complaints procedure should they remain dissatisfied. In such cases, the concerns are still logged with the complaints team to ensure that a response is provided as well as enabling learning data to be obtained.

In total there were 108 complaints progressed as a concern/enquiry during the year. Two of these were escalated to a formal complaint through the Corporate complaints procedure.

4.4. Other procedures

The majority of complaints received within Children's Services relate to social care issues and are progressed through the statutory Children Act complaints procedure. Where a complaint is not eligible for progression through this procedure, then consideration is given to other processes which may be appropriate, such as referral to the Cumbria Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), HR team, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), or the Safeguarding Team (for individual safeguarding concerns).

4.5. School complaints

The local authority also receives a number of complaints relating to individual schools. These are directed back to the relevant school. The responsibility for all aspects of management, including the employment of staff, rests with a school's governing body rather than the local authority. Each governing body is responsible for ensuring that there are arrangements in place to respond to any complaints.

The centralised Complaints Team will advise on the general principles and processes if contacted by parents, carers, schools or governors. Complaints about schools are routinely screened at initial contact for any evident safeguarding concerns which may need to be referred to either the LADO or other appropriate team within Children's Services.

5. THE INDEPENDENT ELEMENT

5.1. Investigating Officers

Stage Two Children Act complaints are investigated by external Investigating Officers. Using external Investigating Officers provides reassurance for complainants regarding the impartiality of the complaints process. The Complaints Team maintains a pool of Investigating Officers.

During the period 2016-2017 there were 11 Stage Two complaints allocated to external Investigating Officers.

5.2. Independent Persons

Legislation states that Children's Services must involve an Independent Person in the investigation of complaints at Stage Two. This person cannot be an elected member, or an employee of the council or spouse of an employee. The Independent Person should ensure that the investigation is open, transparent and fair.

The Complaints Team maintains a small pool of Independent People.

5.3. Independent Review Panel Chairs

If a complaint has not been settled at the investigation stage and the person making the complaint is not satisfied with the outcome or the way it was dealt with, it can be referred to a Review Panel (Stage Three).

The Complaints Team maintains a small pool of Independent Review Panel Chairs – there were 3 requests for review panels during the year 2016-2017.

5.4. Training, Monitoring and Review of Independent People

Investigating Officers and Review Panel Chairs are offered continued direct support from the Complaints Team throughout the year and commit to keeping them up-to-date with relevant practice developments and policy information.

Arrangements are in place to monitor the performance of external independent people. Following any Stage Two investigation, feedback is sought from the senior manager who responded on behalf of the directorate. Managers are asked to comment on the quality of the investigation and the report produced. All employees are given the opportunity to voice their opinions through their managers, and Investigating Officers are invited to offer their own comments following each investigation.

5.5. Cost of complaint investigations and Review Panels

In 2016-17 there were 11 Stage 2 investigations allocated to external Investigating Officers and Independent Persons, and 3 Stage 3 Review Panels were requested. The total cost for Stage 2 and 3 complaints during the year was £21,043.

The Complaints Team actively work with managers and complainants in trying to reach an agreeable outcome to avoid the need for a Stage 2 investigation and to contain costs.

6. ADVOCACY AND SPECIAL NEEDS

There is a statutory requirement to provide advocacy for children or young people who might want to use the complaints procedures. Children's Services currently have a contract with the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) to provide advocacy support and to provide a visiting advocacy service to children's homes throughout the county. This helps children and young people to express their views, feelings and wishes.

NYAS have advocates who specialise in working with children with disabilities, enabling them to make sure that their voice is heard in relation to services that affect them.

All children and young people who are eligible to make a complaint about children's social care services are offered the support of an independent advocate; it is their decision whether or not they choose to accept support. During 2016-2017, advocates were involved in 5 of the 9 complaints submitted by children and young people. Our commissioned advocacy provider, NYAS, supported all 5 of these complaints. Pursuing a complaint without the support of an independent advocate can often indicate that young people feel

empowered and confident in making complaints by themselves. The Complaints Team provide guidance and support throughout the process regardless of whether an advocate is involved.

NYAS actively work with young people in trying to resolve their concerns locally with social workers and Independent Reviewing Officers; often these are successfully resolved without progressing to a formal complaint.

Awareness raising work with children and young people, as well as staff, is undertaken by NYAS throughout the year. In addition to this, the Complaints Team promote advocacy with all complaints received from children and young people, or in situations where it is apparent that young people may need support in having their voice heard.

7. PUBLICITY AND INFORMATION

Information on the Complaints Process is available via the Council's website and we also produce information leaflets which are available in all our customer services offices as well as from the Complaints Team and via our website. The Complaints Team regularly review publicity and information material which is available at:

<http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/council-democracy/accesstoinformation/internalreviewscomplaints.asp>

The Complaints Team issue a 'complaints tracker' on a fortnightly basis to all Children's Services assistant directors, senior managers and service managers to support them in the monitoring and chasing of complaint responses within their service area. A list of complaints that have been responded to during this period is also issued for information.

All complaints information can be made available on CD or cassette, or in other formats, such as Braille, large print, on request to the Complaints Team. Interpretation services can also be arranged when required for other languages.

7.1. Other Information for Service Users

'Stage Two: Investigation – Guidance for complainants' contains more detailed information about what will happen during the investigation of a complaint, what the complainant can expect, and how they can take their complaint further if they remain dissatisfied.

'Stage Three: Review Panel – Guidance for participants' contains more detailed information about what will happen before, during and after a Review Panel. It contains information for complainants and for senior managers and Independent Persons.

Both of these booklets are also available in a format more suitable for children and young people.

8. TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

It is important that employees feel confident and fully informed when dealing with complaints. An e-Learning package is available for employees, linking both complaints and

advocacy. The package covers awareness training for business support staff and those in front-facing customer service roles. In addition, there is a more detailed training course for employees who are closely involved with social care. The e-Learning package is used to complement awareness sessions with local teams.

Local awareness sessions cover the complaints procedure, timescales for responding, the standards of customer care expected and embedding the principle of learning from complaints, as well as including issues of specific interest or concern to groups of staff attending.

During 2016-17, a training programme was devised for all Cumbria County Council senior managers with regard to Corporate Governance. Part 1 of this programme, provided over 7 sessions, was attended by 80+ senior managers and included a session specific to Children's Services complaints handling.

A training and awareness session on complaints was provided in September to the new students who joined the Social Work Academy.

The Complaints Team can be contacted at any time for general or specific advice or, once a complaint has been made, for progress updates and employees are encouraged to discuss complaints, particularly the learning outcomes, at team meetings.

9. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN (LGO)

The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman in England investigates complaints about local authorities. Trained investigators handle the complaints and if they find that a local authority has caused significant injustice, they aim to get it put right by recommending a remedy. The LGO can investigate complaints about how a local authority has acted in terms of handling a complaint but they cannot question what a local authority has done just because the complainant does not agree with it.

Local authorities are expected to be given the opportunity to deal with complaints within their own complaints procedure first before recourse to the LGO.

During 2016-17 Cumbria's Education & Children's Services (as defined by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman) were the subject of 19 'decisions' from the LGO in relation to the complaints they considered:

- 6 complaints were referred back to the Council for local resolution;
- 3 complaints were closed after initial enquiry;
- 2 were deemed incomplete/invalid;
- 3 were not upheld and;
- 5 were upheld with the Council being found to be at fault, which led to injustice.

In the cases where the Council was found to be at fault, the LGO made recommendations for remedy, all of which were accepted by the Council with action now complete.

10. MP/COUNCILLOR REPRESENTATIONS

MPs and Councillors do not normally make formal complaints on behalf of their constituents. Ordinarily, they will make enquiries or raise concerns, often asking questions or asking the council to comment on a specific case, policy or decision.

During the year 2016-17, 63 letters were received from local MPs raising concerns on behalf of their constituents in relation to social care services. This is a decrease compared with the 72 received in the previous financial year.

11. COMPLIMENTS

A total of 67 compliments were received during 2016-17. Of these, 5 were Other non-social care, 14 were related to SEND and 48 to children's social care. During visits to local team meetings employees are encouraged to share compliments with the Complaints Team in order that good practice can be shared with senior managers, and in turn used to inform practice development. Appendix 1 contains examples of compliments received during the year.

12. LEARNING FROM FEEDBACK

A template to record and identify learning points from complaints is routinely completed by the manager responsible for responding to a complaint at Stage 1 of the procedure. The benefit of this approach is the generation of evidence and case study examples from individual complaints, prompting managers to think about learning and outcomes as part of the process of responding to and resolving complaints. The learning feedback is then extracted from each complaint as it is closed and shared quarterly with senior managers, who discuss whether issues identified are attributed to individual practice or the need for wider practice development across the service.

A sample of actions taken as a result of learning from complaints during the year is given in Appendix 2.

A member of the Complaints Team attends the Children & Families managers meetings to ensure the message from complaints are widely shared and owned by managers. A member of the Complaints team also attended the Workforce Practice Board which considers key issues arising from complaints, e.g. The low number of young people making complaints.

On conclusion of Stage 2 or 3 complaints an action plan is developed to allow tracking and monitoring of agreed actions, which are owned by senior managers.

13. PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS 2017-18

Action planned	Timeline for completion
<p>A service review as to our approach to complaint handling is to be undertaken in 2017-18. The review will consist of a number of workstreams:</p> <p>ICT – Will see a review of the current Respond system in operation used to capture and monitor complaints.</p> <p>Service engagement / customer engagement – Will see the central team engage with the Children’s Directorate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review communication currently around tracker reports, performance reporting, meeting attendance, training sessions to review what works, what can be improved upon and identify any new or additional requirements for consideration. ○ To review service standards and in addition to the mandatory requirements consider if there are other standards we should be working towards or monitoring ○ Confirm our training materials/e-learning packages are of benefit to the service and that staff are aware of their existence to support complaint handling. ○ What mechanisms should be in place to ensure learning from complaints is captured then used to deliver service improvements. ○ Engagement is also to take place with external customers. <p>On completion of the engagement work the revised requirements will be developed into a delivery plan to schedule the changes required as part of the review.</p>	<p>By end September 2017.</p> <p>September - November 2017.</p>
<p>A Service Manager is to be nominated as the lead officer responsible for learning from complaints across the county.</p>	<p>October 2017.</p>
<p>Mailshot all children who are looked after to provide them with information on the complaints procedure, the options for contacting us and the actions to follow should they wish to raise a complaint.</p> <p>Awareness of complaint procedure to be raised via the Children in Care Councils and our advocacy providers NYAS as well as a briefing being provided for all Children & Families Directorate staff.</p>	<p>October – November 2017.</p>

Benchmarking exercise to compare performance with other authorities and identify if good practice available that we may learn from.	November 2017.
Learning from complaints is to be included as a quarterly item on team brief (a briefing issued to all staff on a quarterly basis) to ensure learning is an agenda item for discussions within teams.	From November 2017.
Quarterly analysis of complaint themes to be undertaken to identify where improvement work is required to reduce complaints. On identification of a specific theme generating a high volume of complaints training and guidance on the actions required to support a reduction of complaints for the theme will be prepared. Outcome following the intervention work would be to see a reduction in complaints for the theme identified.	From January 2018.
Deliver awareness and training sessions for students progressing through the Social Work Academy.	As appropriate.
Investigation Officer & Independent Persons – Learning and Development session.	February 2018.

14. NWCMG MEMBERSHIP

Cumbria County Council is a member of the North West Complaints Managers Group (NWCMG). The aim of the regional group, which meets every two months, is to provide a forum in which peer professionals can discuss and learn about regional and national issues. Here there are opportunities to develop local practice standards, discuss performance and problem solve. The group also discuss proposed changes to legislation and procedures and prepare consultation responses where necessary.

15. PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS OF REPRESENTATIONS

Table 1: Representations received by type
(received within the year)

Contact by procedure type	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Children Act	71	95	111
Compliment	67	37	56
Corporate Complaints Procedure	25	34	29
Concern/enquiry	108	125	97
Total	271	291	293

Table 2: Method of contact for all representations

Method of contact	2016/17		2015/16		2014/15	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
e-Form (via website or in person)	2	1	13	4%	20	6%
Email	134	49	127	39%	139	37%
Letter	42	16	67	21%	113	30%
Phone Call	93	34	119	36%	100	27%
Total	271	100	326	100%	372	100%

Table 3: Children Act complaints received by complainant group
(complaints received within the year)

Complainant group (Children Act procedure)	2016/17		2015/16		2014/15	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Child/Young Person	9	13%	22	23%	28	25%
Foster Carer	4	6%	13	14%	3	3%
Parent or Relative	51	72%	57	60%	77	69%
Other (incl, prospective adopters)	7	9%	3	3%	3	3%
Total	71	100%	95	100%	111	100%

Table 4: Children Act complaints - Stage 1 complaints resolved times
(of those responded to within the year)

Children Act Stage 1 response time (where eligible to progress)	2016/17		2015/16		2014/15	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Within 10 working days or less	20	33%	20	26%	26	34%
11 - 20 working days	21	34%	18	24%	19	25%
Over 20 working days	21	34%	38	50%	32	41%
Total (Stage One)	62	100%	76	100%	77	100%

Table 5: Children Act complaints – duration of Stage 2 investigations/resolution of complaints (of those concluded within the year)

Length of Stage 2 investigation	2016/17		2015/16		2014/15	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Within 25 working days or less	0	0	0	0%	0	0%
26 - 65 working days	1	33	4	20%	3	18%
Over 65 working days	2	66	16	80%	14	82%
Total (Stage Two)	3	100	20	100%	17	100%

Table 6: Children Act complaints - Analysis of key themes
(complaints received within the year)

Key Themes (Children Act procedure)	2016-17*		2015/16*		2014/15	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Breach of confidentiality	5	4%	7	4%	9	4%
Delayed service	9	7%	19	12%	17	7%
Financial issues	1	1%	6	4%	8	3%
Lack of evidence based information used	4	3%	8	5%	16	6%
Lack of support for Foster Carers	4	3%	1	1%	2	1%
Other	2	1%	2	1%	3	1%
Placement issues	10	8%	9	6%	19	8%
Poor attitude or conduct of staff	26	20%	27	17%	40	16%
Poor communication	45	35%	39	25%	63	25%
Service provision	23	18%	38	24%	74	29%
Total	129	100%	156[^]	100%	251[^]	100%

[^]Please note that there is no direct correlation between the number of complaints received and the number of concerns raised, as some complaints have multiple themes recorded.

Chart 1: Key themes trends

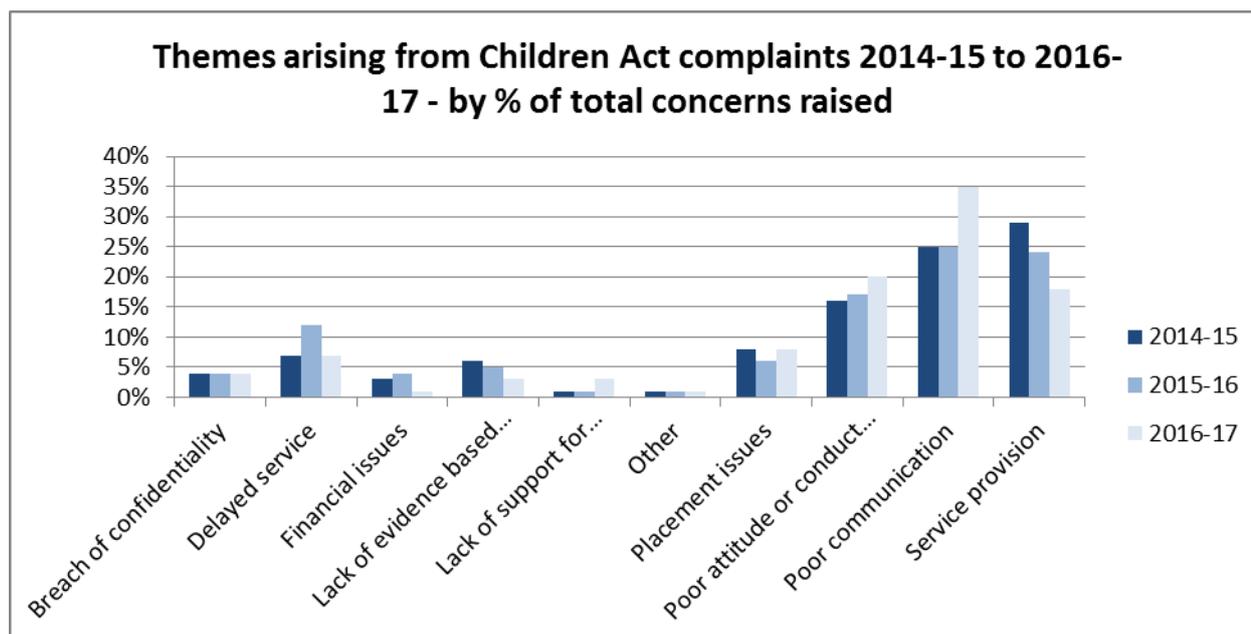


Table 7: Children Act complaints - Stage 1 outcomes
(of those responded to within the year)

Children Act Stage 1 outcomes	2016/17		2015/16		2014/15	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Legal Proceedings Pending	5	6%	7	8%	3	4%
Withdrawn	4	5%	4	5%	3	4%
Upheld	18	21%	20	24%	13	17%
Not Upheld	28	32%	30	35%	24	30%
Partially Upheld	25	29%	17	20%	21	27%
Moved to Stage Two*	6	7%	7	8%	14	18%
Total	86	100%	85[^]	100%	78[^]	100%

*Refers to the number of complaints received in the year that progressed to a Stage 2 investigation. The number of investigations conducted in the year can often include complaints received in previous years which have then progressed to Stage 2 the following year.

[^]Please note that there is no direct correlation between the number of complaints received and the number of concerns raised, as some complaints have multiple themes recorded.

16. CONTACT

If you would like further information relating to this report or the work of the Complaints Team please contact:

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RELATED DOCUMENTS

'Getting the Best from Complaints – Social Care Complaints and Representations for Children, Young People and Others' - Department for Education & Skills

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-getting-the-best-from-complaints>

The Children Act 1989
Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1738/pdfs/uksi_20061738_en.pdf

Sample of compliments received – 2016/17

Non- Social Care
Countywide
"It's probably not said enough but the work that you have done in making the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) a success has been fantastic. It really could not be easier from my perspective. Organising events in Lancashire is much harder as there is no SPOC and acquiring contact details is a major task in itself."
Special Education Needs and Disability Team
Email from parent: "... thank you for having the opportunity to talk to you today, and talk over some of my queries and concerns. I really appreciated it, it made things clearer the whole Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) process seems much clearer to me now and I know what to expect in September, thank you for your support and advice".
Feedback from parent regarding the Assessment Officer: "... thank you for the enormous amount of work you must have put in in a short time to arrive at the situation we found ourselves in this morning. Your care, commitment and professionalism shone through and we have every confidence that the final EHCP Plan will allow XXX to achieve his potential".
Thanks to Statementing Officer following child's change of school: "thank you so much for helping us find this school, just to be able to speak to a teacher about Luke is amazing in itself".
Social Care
Support & Child Protection Teams
Parent thanking staff for doing their jobs so well. Made the family so welcome and have been so kind when things have been tough. Staff were always on hand with a kind word or a smile and this has helped.
"Thank you xxx for being a brilliant caring Social Worker. Hope you go far, you truly deserve it!!!"
Regarding social worker - "if it wasn't for her we would be sitting here now with no family. Instead we have proved everyone wrong apart from xxx and we have worked so hard, kept it together in hard times and now we have been signed off! It was all down to xxx and also xxx our current SW, she was the only person who sat us down and worked with us, instead of telling us what we have to like the SWs we have had before xxx. The children loved her, she put a lot of time

into our family and helped us an awful lot (she might as well moved in haha). But on a serious note, Teresa was an absolute delight to work with, she never once looked down at us like a lot of others did. I would just like to tell you how much of an excellent SW xxx is, she is a people's person and I have formed a lovely friendship with xxx. She deserves all this praise. Thank you!"

Email from Head at Xxxxxx Jnr School writing to thank and praise the work of XXX (Social Worker)

From Team Manager in respect of Family Worker, "...wanted to say a big thank you for your contribution to this case and for the provision of your excellent verbal evidence in court gave very clear and child-centred evidence"

Compliments and thanks from a family social worker is working with: "You are a very nice lady and you are so kind. We have loved working with you. We will miss you a lot. You helped us a lot. Lots of love" and "To the best Social Worker. Helped us out and played games with us. Nice person and kind and thoughtful. You're wonderful. Oh your amazing, utterly amazing."

Compliment received from Solicitor re social worker: "XXX said to me at court that he thought SW's work on this matter was excellent. I concur with this view. SW's excellent interpersonal skills have made a real difference for XXX as she has brought together parents with very polarised views to ensure XXX gets to spend time with both parents."

Children Looked After and Leaving Care Team

Social Worker was presented with a framed poster of a lady standing outside a caravan, signed on the back by the young person and a thank you from the family.

Compliment from step-mother regarding Personal Advisor: "I would like to officially have a massive thanks given to xxxx who works a Personal Advisor with the Children Looked After and Leaving Care Furness and South Lakes Team. She has stepped in to support my stepson when his Personal Advisor was on long term sick. She has been fantastic in her support, she was able to make time to support my stepson and myself when looking for accommodation. I do feel as though she has gone above and beyond with her work. She is open and honest and does what she says she is going to. I cannot tell you how much this is appreciated and we often not hear the good things that people do and I really wanted her management to know how much she is appreciated."

Email received from Family Court Adviser (Children And Family Court Advisory Support Service - CAFCASS) in respect of social worker: "I just wanted to pass on some very positive feedback regarding xxx and the work he undertook in the case of xxx, the child being xxx. He provided very thorough written documentation for the court which was very helpful, and dealt with all of the issues effectively and efficiently. The outcome was to the benefit of xxx in the short and long term. I think it is important to provide this feedback as it is all too easy for people to get lost in the difficulties the local authority sometimes encounters."

Fostering and Adoption Team

Regarding Advanced Practitioner: "... we would just like to let you know about the wonderful support we receive from xxx ... goes beyond the

requirements of her role in supporting us and the children we care for is always at the end of the phone to hear our problems and always makes us feel valued which is very important".

Feedback received from Adopters regarding social worker: ".....xxx was professional and empathetic, set realistic expectations around timescales and always delivered exactly what she said she would within the timescales she stated. Merle never made promises but always communicated clearly and openly about the process and our stage within it".

Compliment received from Foster Carer re social worker: "xxx starting visiting my home at the beginning of the year she was here to do a friends and family assessment for fostering! I just wanted to say that she is a lovely lady who helped me and my mam greatly nothing was ever too much trouble for her! Even though she had to ask personal questions it never felt intrusive. I just wanted to say thank u to her."

Conference and Review Service (Social Care)

Regarding Independent Reviewing Officer: "The Panel Chair wanted you and your manager to know how helpful your submission to Permanence Panel was ..."

Family Assessment and Support (FAST) (Social Care)

Compliment received from Adopters regarding Child & Family Worker - most appreciative of her work on the Life Story Books.

Sample of actions taken as a result of feedback – 2016/17

You said.....	We did.....
Staff to consider use of abbreviations in report/minutes. This is not understandable to people outside our field of work.	Signs of safety have been addressed in practice standards. This action has been actioned at the IRO development day.
Lack of information provided regarding SGO and the implications of this	Information leaflet being produced.
When communicating with parents regarding the commissioning of advocates then include an overview of the process, outlining the steps involved and timeframes for sourcing this support.	Briefing drafted for parents and is now being utilised.
Ensure that unannounced visits take place at an appropriate time i.e. not late evening.	Social Workers have been reminded not to undertake visits at unsociable hours. Unannounced visits now involve two Social Workers in attendance to avoid any potential for causing service users anxiety and concern.
Need to address deficiencies in the permanence process to ensure that delays are prevented	Permanence policy launched and now being embedded into practice. Policy is ensuring that long term plans for children are robustly monitored by a Permanence Panel, which is chaired by a senior manager. All actions are monitored on a monthly basis to ensure that drift and delay is avoided and children's plans are progressed in a timely way. Workshops in all districts being led by senior managers to embed practice and ensure the effective implementation of the policy with both children's teams and fostering service.
While a strategy to address change of SW is in place, in the interim period there is still some work to be done to ensure that there is consistency for children	A central panel to look at recruitment and academy process. Practice Standards note the need for a clear handover/allocation supervision.
For cases referred to the Hub from Leaving Care, it would be beneficial for the Hub to send a closing letter to prevent confusion for leaving care young people in the future	System is in place