

TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN

COMPLAINTS – QUARTERLY REPORT

QUARTER THREE AND QUARTER FOUR – OCTOBER 2017 – MARCH 2018.

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide information relating to all complaints and compliments received in quarters three and four which covers the period October 2017 to March 2018.

2. Complaints Process

- 2.1. The Complaints Process for Statutory Children's Services follows the statutory guidance. This is a 3 stage process as follows:

- Stage One – the initial stage of the process is investigated by the appropriate Team Manager. The service must respond within 10 working days, however an extension up to 20 working days can be requested for more complex cases.
- Stage Two – on receipt of the response to their stage one complaint, complainants have 20 working days to progress their complaint to stage two if they are unhappy with the initial outcome. At this stage, the complaint is dealt with by an independent investigating officer and can take up to 65 working days to complete.
- Stage Three – if the complainant remains unhappy with the outcome of the stage two complaint, they have 20 working days to progress their complaint to stage three. At stage three, a review panel will be appointed to investigate the complaint. This will consist of three independent people who will make recommendations to the Director of Social Care.

- 2.2. If the Complainant remains unhappy, they can raise their complaint with the Local Government Ombudsman.

- 2.3. Any complaints that do not relate to Statutory Children's Services, are handled under the Corporate Complaints Procedure, which is a one stage process, allowing 15 working days to complete the investigation.

3. Complaints Received

- 3.1. The table below shows the number of complaints received across each stage of the complaints process:

Complaint Stage	No Received – Q1 (Apr – Jun)	No Received – Q2 (Jul – Sep)	No Received – Q3 (Oct – Dec)	No Received – Q4 (Jan-Mar)
Stage One	35	44	45	53
Stage Two	6	5	2	1
Stage Three	4	1	2	3
Corporate (Non Statutory)	0	4	2	1
Total	45	54	51	58

- 3.2. In quarter three and four, there were 98 stage one complaints received. In total the number of stage one complaints received in the year was 177 compared with 183 in 2016/17 which shows a 3.3% decrease.

- 3.3. Two stage two complaints were received in quarter three and only one stage two complaint was received in quarter four. In total the number of stage two complaints received in the year was 14 compared with 21 in 2016/17 which shows a decrease of 33%.

3.4. Overall the number of stage three complaints received in the year was 10 compared with two in 2016/17. This shows a significant increase however the stage three complaints are predominantly historic and relate to the period from when Children's Services was judged inadequate by Ofsted. The complaints are highly complex and have many elements to investigate.

3.5. The table below shows the number of stage one complaints received by service area or team.

Service Area / Team	Number of Stage One Complaints Received				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
ICRT / Assessment Teams	6	8	14	17	45
Emergency Duty Team (Out of Hours)	0	0	0	0	0
Child Protection Locality Teams	16	19	19	26	80
Looked After Children / Permanence Teams	1	2	3	4	10
Next Steps	0	12	4	1	17
Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Teams	2	0	2	0	4
Children's Homes	0	0	0	0	0
Children with Disabilities	4	1	3	5	13
Project Team	0	1	0	0	1
Support to Independence	0	1	0	0	1
Fostering	1	0	0	0	1
Adoption	2	0	0	0	2
ECHP	3	0	0	0	3
Total	35	44	45	53	177

3.6. The highest numbers of complaints received in quarter three and four and overall in the year relate to child protection locality teams. This is expected due to the nature of work carried out within this service as it is the largest service area covering four locality areas through 11 teams. The second-highest complaints received in both quarter three and quarter four and overall in the year relate to the Integrated Contact and Referral Team and Assessment Team. Further review into this increase could identify if improvement actions are required at the front door in order to reduce the likelihood future complaints

Themes

3.7. The main themes of the complaints received in each quarter are shown in the table below:

Quarter One	Quarter Two	Quarter Three	Quarter Four
Top Three: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff actions/ attitude • Lack of communication and contact • Lack of action in relation to contact Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of support completing forms • Cancellations of appointments • Incorrect data • Late arrival at appointments • Unhappy with procedures followed • Inaccuracies of reports. 	Top Three: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions taken / not taken by staff • Lack of communication • Staff attitude Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissatisfaction with recorded information / incorrect information • Contact issues • Lack of payment / funding 	Top Three: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions and attitude of staff • SW behaviour and communication • Contact Arrangements Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of action taken • Incorrect information • Lack of support in assessments • Inappropriate comments/information • Placement unsuitable • Clothing allowance • Cancellation of app • Payments • Not receiving docs 	Top Three: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude/actions of SW • Lack of/incorrect information • Poor communication /missed appointments Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay in case closure/case progression issues/lack of action after referral • Lack of support/false promises • Monitoring visits • Contact issues • Unfair treatment • Social worker turnover • Dissatisfaction with outcome or lack of grounds to invoke plan • Clothing issue

- 3.8. Across all quarters the majority of complaints relate to attitude and behaviour of staff. In addition poor communication and lack of information is also a re-occurring theme.
- 3.9. To reduce the number of complaints relating to staff actions and attitude, TfC are striving towards having a more stable workforce across all teams in social care. This in turn will increase the likelihood of strong and trusting relationships to develop between families and their worker. TfC is monitored monthly against a key performance indicator to reduce the number of agency staff; significant improvement has been made from April 2017 to date.
- 3.10. It is recommended that the top three themes are reviewed by senior management to identify if there are areas for improvement or if complaints relate to the same teams.

Timeliness of Response

- 3.11. The response time to stage one complaints increased in quarter four from 54% to 61%. Overall timeliness for 2017/18 is 57% compared with 32% in 2016/17. Despite a dip in quarter three, the response time to complaints is improving.

Complaint Stage	% within Timescale Q1	% within Timescale Q2	% within Timescale Q3	% within Timescale Q4	Direction of Travel
Stage 1 Complaints (Timescale 10-20 working days)	43%	66% Increase from Q1	54% Decreased from Q2	61% Increase from Q3	↗

- 3.12. In response to the dip in performance in quarter three, team managers received training to improve the quality of stage one complaint letters in attempts to reduce the amount of complaints progressing to stage two.

Complaint Outcomes

- 3.13. The outcomes of the complaints that were completed across the 4 quarters are shown below. The numbers completed do not equate to the number received, as there were complaints open at the start of the period covered (which were received in previous quarters) and some complaints received within the 4 quarters covered that are due to be completed in 2018/2019.

Complaint Stage	Number of Complaint Elements								Total
	Upheld		Partially Upheld		Not Upheld		Unsubstantiated/ Withdrawn		
Quarter One	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Stage One	4	11%	13	35%	17	46%	3	8%	37
Stage Two	10	37%	7	26%	7	26%	3	11%	27
Stage Three	17	33%	5	10%	14	27%	15	30%	51
All Stages	31	27%	25	22%	38	33%	21	18%	115
Quarter Two	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	Total
Stage One	2	5%	15	33%	25	57%	2	5%	44
Stage Two	11	26%	9	21%	18	43%	4	10%	42
Stage Three	5	50%	0	0%	4	40%	1	10%	10
All Stages	18	19%	24	25%	47	49%	7	7%	96
Quarter Three	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	Total
Stage One	2	4%	21	44%	23	48%	2	4%	48
Stage Two	5	17%	2	7%	22	76%	0	0%	29
Stage Three	1	7%	1	7%	10	66%	3	20%	15
All Stages	8	9%	24	26%	55	60%	5	5%	92
Quarter Four	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	Total
Stage One	4	10%	22	52%	15	36%	1	2%	42
Stage Two	10	18%	14	25%	28	50%	4	7%	56
Stage Three	11	36%	3	10%	14	47%	2	7%	30

All Stages	25	20%	39	30%	57	45%	7	5%	128
Overall	82	19%	112	26%	197	46%	40	9%	431

- 3.14. In Quarter three 65% of all complaint elements were not upheld or unsubstantiated/withdrawn. 24% were partially upheld leaving 9% of complaints elements upheld. While in quarter four 50% of all complaints elements were not upheld or unsubstantiated/withdrawn. 30% were partially upheld leaving 20% of complaints elements upheld.
- 3.15. Overall across the year, 55% of complaint elements were either not upheld or unsubstantiated/withdrawn. 26% were partially upheld and 19% were upheld.

Number of Complaints by Young People

- 3.16. The table below shows the number of complaints from young people concluded in 2017/2018 across each stage of the complaints process:

Complaint Stage	No Concluded
Stage One	20
Stage Two	5
Stage Three	1
Total	26

- 3.17. 11 of the 20 stage one complaints made by young people (or their advocates) in 2017/2018 were submitted by one complainant, his sister and a friend of which none were fully upheld. This equates to 55% of all stage one complaints made by young people and their advocates.

Pre-Complaints

- 3.18. Pre-complaints are where issues and/or concerns presented by individuals are dealt with through informal resolution. Whilst customers are provided with information about the complaints process and their rights to complain, we aim to achieve informal resolution where appropriate and when in the best interests of customers. The table below shows the pre-complaint data for each quarter:

Pre-Complaints	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Number received of Pre-complaints	12	21	22	25	80
Progressed to Stage 1	0	0	1	2	3

- 3.19. Across all quarters the number of stage 1 complaints received was 177; the total number of pre-complaints in the same period was 80. Through responding to issues or concerns at the outset, we have helped our customers to receive satisfactory resolutions informally with just three progressing to a formal stage one complaint.

Ombudsman Referrals

- 3.20. Six complaints were highlighted to the customer feedback team from the Local Government Ombudsman in 2017/18; no further action has been taken with regards to five of the referrals, the sixth referral is still in the process of being considered by the LGO.

Lessons Learned

- 3.21. An action plan has been developed by the Customer Feedback Team which includes actions and recommendations from stage two investigations and stage three panels. The action plan is closely monitored by the team. Reminders are sent to managers with responsibility for the recommendations each month and reported in performance clinics to ensure that the learning is shared across the whole service.
- 3.22. In quarter three and four the following learning is being applied:
- Clearly explaining social workers roles to ensure there is no gap between client expectation and what is achievable.
 - Contact with children's other family members to be considered, promoted and supported.
 - Providing written clarity to children about the precise purpose and function of contact arrangements.

- Strengthening check lists/audit forms for Conference Chairs so the roles of attendees are always clarified at the outset of conferences.
 - Improving the promotion of advocates to assist parents attending Child Protection Conferences.
 - Raising the profile of information governance policies including the restrictions on information that can be supplied to extended families under Subject Access Requests.
 - Further strengthening the pathway planning process to take full account of children's opinions.
 - Improving recording on case notes to reflect all forms of communication.
 - Promotion of Life Story Work and recording evidence.
 - Work with parents (especially fathers) to be enhanced so they are fully listened to and remain engaged in the assessment process.
 - Consider how feedback is given to parents following use of tools in direct work with children and young people.
 - Work with practitioners to provide sufficient evidence as to why they have reached their hypothesis within the assessment process.
 - Review the Mental Health training module so that PTSD areas are adequately covered.
 - Consider how the process for updating parents and carers on the outcome of Section 47 investigations can be enhanced.
 - Timely submission of reports to allow parents and carers sufficient time to read and understand prior to ICPC.
- 3.23. A number of lessons have already been taken on board following the stage two and three complaints within the last two quarters; these include:
- The new Liquid Logic recording system is now in place and will ensure a more robust monitoring system.
 - Before any assessment is undertaken, parents and carers are provided with an information pack. This is shared at the initial visit and clearly describes their role and responsibilities.
 - Information to parents and carers regarding advocacy was revised and social workers were reminded to discuss the role of an advocate during their intervention with families, particularly at the Initial Child Protection Case Conference stage.
 - The LADO service has reviewed its minute taking process.

Compliments

- 3.24. It is important to recognise positive feedback to inform service developments and best practice. 95 compliments were received in quarter three and four and a total of 144 compliments received across 2017/2018 compared with 40 in 2016/17.

Team	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Adoption	1	2	3	2	8
Anti-Bullying Team	0	0	1	0	1
Assessment Team	4	2	6	7	19
Business Support	0	0	0	1	1
Fostering	0	0	5	3	8
Children's Homes	4	15	4	2	25
Complaints Team	1	0	3	0	4
CP Coalfields 1	3	0	1	1	5
CP Coalfields 2	0	0	1	0	1
CP East 1	0	1	2	0	3
CP East 2	0	1	2	0	3
CP North 1	1	0	3	1	5
CP North 2	0	0	1	0	1
CP South & East	0	0	0	1	1
CP Washington 1	0	0	1	1	2
CP Washington 2	0	0	0	1	1
CP West 1	1	0	1	3	5
CP West 2	5	1	1	2	9

Team	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
CP West 3	0	0	0	1	1
Early Help	0	0	0	3	3
IRO	0	2	10	8	20
LAC and Permanence Team 2	0	0	0	1	1
Legal	0	1	0	0	1
Next Steps	0	0	2	8	10
Participation Team	0	1	1	0	2
Performance Team	0	0	1	0	1
Youth Offending Team	0	0	1	1	2
Other	0	0	0	1	1
Total	20	26	50	45	144

3.25. The majority of compliments received to date are for Children's Homes and the IRO service across the four quarters. Below are some examples of compliments received in the last quarter.

Assessment Team:

'I am writing this email to provide you with some positive feedback for a member of your team, Lauren Fox. She came into my school unexpectedly yesterday to deal with a concern about a child we had. She was the duty social worker this day. From the moment she arrived she was professional, proactive and courteous. She immediately listened to the schools concerns and took immediate action. Her manner when speaking to the child in question was extremely appropriate. The little boy immediately felt at ease and was able to talk more about his feelings. This is not something this child would usually do and I feel this was solely down to Lauren's manner and ability to get down to the child's level and speak clearly and calmly.

Likewise when she invited the parent to come into school to continue her assessment she knew exactly how to manage this mother. She made Mum feel listened to and involved in the process and continually sympathised with her whilst also ensuring she was aware of what was happening. She reiterated her role was to support. She has continued to communicate with me today in relationship to this case and is 100% committed to helping this family. Lauren is a credit to together for children'.

Adoption

'We'd like to thank you most sincerely, for all of the help you've given us since starting the adoption process. From the very beginning and throughout you have made us feel supported and put us at ease. What could have been a stressful time; you have made it enjoyable and helped us to be fully prepared for panel. We have gained essential knowledge of what it takes to become excellent adopters. We especially appreciate all of the time you've taken to keep us updated and you carry on doing so. You have remained professional yet made yourself approachable and we feel we can contact you any time if needed.

IRO Service

'Everyone involved with the CPP has been so supportive and helped change mine and my sons lives with respect to recognising domestic violence and any risks posed to either myself or my son'.