

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15th October 2009

ANNUAL REPORT ON CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

April 2008 – March 2009

REPORT OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMPLAINTS MANAGER AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES:

- **Safe City**
- **Healthy City**
- **Learning City**

CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES:

- **CI01 - Delivery of customer focused services**
- **CI02 - Being 'One Council'**
- **CI03 - Efficient and effective council**
- **CI04 - Improving Partnership Working to deliver 'One City'**

1.0 Why has this report come to the Committee?

1.1 The Council is required, through an appropriate committee, to monitor the complaints arrangements that it has in place regarding children's social care issues, to ensure that those arrangements comply with the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

1.2 This document presents the Annual Report on Children's Services Social Care complaints (and compliments) for the period April 2008 to March 2009, in accordance with Regulation 13(3) of the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006. The report provides a review of the effectiveness of the complaints procedure.

1.3 The aim of this report is to:-

- provide information on the number and type of complaints and compliments we receive
- describe how the Complaints Procedure operates and give suggestions on how this can be improved
- indicate any significant changes which have been made following the introduction of new complaints regulations in September 2006
- Provide information on non Social Care complaint's received by the Children's Services Complaint's Team

- 1.4 Members' views are welcomed in terms of how information from complaints can be used to improve and develop service delivery and suggestions for improvement in current complaints process.
- 1.5 Work around complaints is linked to the following Corporate Improvement Priorities and Corporate Improvement Objectives:-

Corporate Improvement Priorities

- Healthy City (priority 2) - An example of the Statutory Complaints Procedure being used to effectively achieve this priority by ensuring the emotional health and well being of a child/young person can be seen in appendix 3, case study 1.
- Safe City (priority 3) – Use of complaints to ensure that people are free from crime, disorder and substance misuse. For example please see appendix 3, case study 2.
- Learning City (priority 4) – lessons learned from complaints will be used to ensure that all children and young people in the city receive the best preparation and foundation for adult life. During this accounting period, however, no case studies are available to reflect this.

Corporate Improvement Objectives

- Delivering Customer Focused Services (CI01) – putting the customer at the centre of service delivery; seeking customer feedback and views to shape services; using the findings from reviews to shape and improve services.
- Being 'One Council' (CI02) – making all of our services and workforce inclusive to all.
- Efficient and Effective Council (CI03) – ensuring a consistent performance framework and culture across the Council; ensuring services are provided in the most efficient, economic and affordable way.
- Improving Partnership Working to Deliver 'One City' (CI04) – improving the image of the City.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 By Local Government Ombudsman definition a complaint (or representation) is *'An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of a service, action or lack of action, by a department or its staff'*
- 2.2 The regulations and guidance introduced in September 2006 covers complaints and representations made by children and young people. They also apply to parents, foster carers and other adults making a complaint. These regulations aim to ensure that, regardless of the complexity of their complaint, vulnerable children and young people get the help they need and at the right time and that lessons learned from

such complaints lead to an improvement in service delivery. These complaints are usually referred to as 'statutory complaints'.

- 2.3 Separate procedures exist in relation to some school and education complaints but these are still dealt with by the Children's Services Complaints Team. This includes complaints concerning school curriculum, school admissions, pupil exclusions and Special Educational Needs.
- 2.4 Parents/carers must pursue all other school complaints through the school's published complaints procedure which is available on request from the relevant school. At present this process involves informal resolution by a teacher, followed by formal resolution by a head teacher then progression to investigation by the governing body of the school. If a parent/carer should still remain dissatisfied after consideration of the complaint by the Governing Body they are advised of their right to contact the Secretary of State for Education. It should be noted, however, that the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Bill (ASCL) 2009 proposes that the Local Government Ombudsman host a new independent complaints handling function for schools to consider school complaints after consideration by the governing body. Subject to legislation, it is proposed that this new service will be introduced, in pilot form, in September 2010.

3.0 Current position (including regulations)

- 3.1 In September 2006 new statutory regulations were introduced by the then Department for Education & Skills (now the Department of Children, Schools and Families) entitled 'Getting the Best from Complaints – Social Care Complaints and Representations Procedure for Children and Young People' to deal with complaints and representations made to Children's Services by children and young people. These regulations revoked and replaced the 1991 Representations Procedure (Children) in order to reflect the changes made by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Health and Social Care Act 2003.
- 3.2 Implementation of the new regulations introduced a number of key changes including:-
 - extension of Local Authority functions, especially those relating to Social Care, about which complaints can be made
 - a three stage complaints process with timescales for completing each stage
 - Requirement for Local Authorities to designate an officer, known as a Complaints manager, to undertake certain functions in relation to Children's Social Care complaints.
 - more focused and precise brief, including the introduction of timescales, for dealing with Stage 2 complaint investigations and Stage 3 Review Panels

3.3 The regulations state that complaints can be made in relation to the following statutory social care functions:-

- an unwelcome or disputed decision
- the quality or appropriateness of a service
- delay in decision making or provision of services
- delivery or non delivery of services, including the complaints procedure
- quantity, frequency, change or cost of a service
- attitude or behaviour of staff
- application of eligibility and assessment criteria
- the impact on a child or young person of the application of a local authority policy
- assessment, care management and review
- accuracy or quality of a social work court report

Parts 4 & 5 of the Children Act, 1989 also dictates that the following functions may be the subject of a complaint:-

- the decision by the local authority to initiate care and supervision orders (section 4.31)
- the effect of the care order and the local authority's actions and decision where a care order is made (section 4.33)
- control of parental contact with children in care (section 4.34)
- how supervisors perform their duties where a supervision order is in force (section 4.35)
- matters that do not relate to the Court and which are specifically actions of the local authority can be considered, regarding applications for and duties in relation to child assessment orders (section 5.43)
- matters relating to applications for emergency protection orders and decision relating to the return of children who have been removed (section 5.44)

Adoption related functions that can be the subject of a complaint:-

- provision of adoption support services
- assessments and related decisions for adoption support services
- placing children for adoption, including parental responsibility and contact issues
- removal of children who are, or may be, placed by adoption agencies

Special Guardianship functions that can be the subject of a complaint:-

- financial support for special guardians
- assistance in relation to contact
- therapeutic services for children and young people

It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list. Any other complaint received is considered, if necessary in consultation with the City Solicitor, Data Protection Officer or Freedom of Information advisors.

3.4 Representations, including complaints, can be made by:-

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

3.5 In accordance with DCSF statutory requirements, Children's Services has adopted a 3 stage statutory complaints procedure that seeks to resolve dissatisfaction in respect of Social Care complaints. In line with Ombudsman guidance on good practice this procedure is also used for all education related complaints (with the exception of school complaints)

3.6 An effective database and monitoring tools are used to ensure that all complaints received by the Children's Services Complaints Team are recorded and monitored. A summary of complaints is presented to the Children's Services Leadership Team and Case Management Senior Management Team on a monthly basis. This information includes details of trends or themes identified by the Complaints Manager together with an update on implementation of recommendations made by investigating officers and review panel chairs. This information is used to improve and develop service delivery by, for example, highlighting poor practice and identifying staff training requirements.

4.0 Sunderland Children's Services (Social Care) Complaints

4.1 The Complaints Procedure provides a three stage process for the resolution and investigation of complaints made by children and young people who use our services, or their representatives.

4.2 Stage 1

The emphasis of the first stage of the procedure is on local problem solving. Most complaints should be resolved at this stage and are usually addressed by operational managers who hold direct responsibility for the service about which the complaint has been made. At this stage complaints are acknowledged within 3 working days and resolved and responded to within 10 working days. Where necessary, and with the agreement of the complainant, this period can be extended by a further 10 working days. If the local authority fails to achieve this timescale the complainant has the right to request immediate progression to Stage 2 of the complaints procedure.

In 2008/9 there were 66 complaints, of which 53 were resolved at Stage 1 (80%)

This compares to 62 complaints in 2007/8 of which 46 were resolved at Stage 1 (74%)

4.3 Stage 2

If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the response made at stage 1, or if there has been a delay, they can request progression to stage 2 of the complaints procedure. A stage 2 complaint investigation can be undertaken by a service manager who has had no prior involvement with the case or the complaint and who is not responsible for the service area which the complaint concerns.

If it is considered that a greater element of independence is required (for example if a complaint covers a number of service areas) or a complaint is considered to be particularly sensitive an Investigating Officer from an independent agency is commissioned to carry out the investigation. This is also the case when workload and resource issues dictate that service managers do not have the capacity to carry out these investigations, as is the current situation.

There is a requirement to provide an Independent Person to oversee all stage 2 complaint investigations. A consortium arrangement is in operation with other regional local authorities to provide this service for a nominal fee.

Stage 2 complaint investigations must be completed within 25 working days of an Investigating Officer agreeing the elements of complaint to

be investigated with the complainant, although an extension of up to 65 working days can be requested if necessary. The Head of Safeguarding adjudicates and responds to the outcome and recommendations of the Stage 2 investigation, which may include the offer of redress or compensation, in conjunction with the Complaints Manager

In 2008/9 there were 20 requests for Stage 2 investigations.
This compares to 7 requests in 2007/8

The cost of commissioning independent Investigating Officers and Independent Persons for Stage 2 complaints in 2008/9 was £35,041. Previous year comparison data is not available but processes now in place to ensure this information is now recorded

Compensation/redress payments made in 2008/9 amounted to £17,405

Please note that previous year comparison data is not available in respect of the cost or commissioning Stage 2 investigations or compensation payments but processes are now in place to ensure this information is recorded.

4.4 Stage 3

The final stage of the complaints procedure is an Independent Review Panel. This is an opportunity for the complainant to have any areas of the complaint that remain unresolved heard before an Independent Panel, which comprises an independent chair and two independent persons with knowledge of Social Care policies and procedure. Also present will be the Stage 2 Investigating officer and Independent Person, the Head of Safeguarding, the Complaints Manager and the complainant(s) and chosen representatives. A panel must take place within 30 working days of receiving the request from the complainant.

After hearing the complaint and representations from panel attendees, the Panel will make their recommendations and, together with the Complaints Manager, will produce a panel report with their recommendations which again may include redress or compensation. The panel findings are then responded to by the Executive Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Head of Safeguarding and the Complaints Manager.

In 2008/9 there were 4 complaints which went to Stage 3.

This compares to 1 complaint in 2007/8

- 4.5 If a complainant still remains dissatisfied following a Stage 3 Review Panel hearing they can request a further investigation by the Local Government Ombudsman.

In 2008/9 the Local Government Ombudsman were asked to investigate 4 Sunderland City Council Children's Services complaints.

This compares to 5 requests in 2007/8. Please note that this figure may include complaints relating to the previous financial year and that it may also include complaints not previously dealt with through the Statutory Complaints Procedure first.

- 4.6 The Children's Services Complaints Manager is responsible for the implementation and operation of the complaints procedure on a day to day basis. This post is independent of the operational sections of Children's Services and is accountable to the Head of Service, Performance, Information and Policy.
- 4.7 Stage 1 complaints concerning independent service providers commissioned by Children's Services are investigated by the relevant independent provider. Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints will be managed by the Children's Services Complaints Manager. The Complaints Manager will inform the relevant Head of Service if any complaint about a commissioned service is received and consideration is given to sharing information with other appropriate bodies, i.e. Ofsted for concerns relating to registration issues etc.
- 4.8 The Complaints Manager will decide if information received through a complaint may more appropriately be investigated by the Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board; or if a complaint should actually be part of a service area appeals process – i.e. the fostering service.

5.0 Non Social Care Complaints received by the Children's Services Complaints Team

- 5.1 In conjunction with the Customer Services Manager the Complaint's Team also investigate and respond to Corporate Children's Services complaints regarding issues such as special educational needs assessments and provision, home to school transport, awards, school premises etc.

During 2008/2009 the Complaints Team investigated and responded to 7 corporate complaints in respect of the special education needs assessment process, school admissions, home to school transport, student awards and school personnel issues. Previous year's statistics are not available

- 5.2 The Complaints Team also provide advise to complainants on the school complaints procedure and liaise with the relevant school or Governor's Support Team when school complaints re received directly by the Complaints Team.

During 2008/2009 the Complaints Team provided advice on 23 school complaints. Previous years statistics are not available (see appendix 1 – table 3

- 5.3 It should be noted that figures included in this report in relation to non social care complaints relate to those complaints received directly by the Children's Services Complaints Team. This does not give an accurate reflection of the actual number of complaints received in relation to non social care complaints as the majority of these complaints are directed straight to either the school, governor's support team or corporate complaints section.

6.0 Learning from complaints to shape service improvement – identifying trends & themes

- 6.1 Processes are in place to ensure that lessons learned from all complaints are used to identify gaps in services, highlight poor practice/procedure or recurrent problems and identify staff training requirements. Complaints data is presented to the Children's Services Leadership Team on a monthly basis (statistics) with more detailed information being presented quarterly.

A process is also in place to ensure recommendations from Stage 2 Complaint Investigations and Stage 3 Review Panels are discussed with a view to their implementation and reviewed at quarterly Case Management Senior Management team meetings.

7.0 Publicity and Information

- 7.1 Children's Complaints Procedure leaflets are provided to all carers, providers and service users. They are also displayed in all Children's Services (Social Care) reception areas.

All Looked After children and children classed as being in need are informed of their right to make a complaint and are given a copy of the 'Answer back' complaints leaflet at the onset of service provision. They are also advised of their right to advocacy (see below).

More 'child friendly' complaints leaflets are currently being designed to appeal to, and make it easier for, children and young people to make complaints. These leaflets are being designed following consultation with young people from the Change Council and will include a version for both under 11's and over 11's. It is anticipated that these will be ready for use in October 2009.

Corporate Complaints leaflets, which also give details of how to make a social care complaint, are displayed in all local authority public areas.

- 7.2 Complaints can be received in a number of ways, including:-

- By approaching staff responsible for the provision of a service

- By contacting the Complaints Team by telephone, letter or email
- By completing a web form on the Sunderland.gov.uk web site
- Via councillors
- Via the Customer Services Team
- Children and young people in need or those who are being Looked After can complete an 'Answer Back' form
- Through Independent Reviewing Officers as part of the statutory review process
- Through an independent advocacy service

Consideration is also currently being given to the following, particularly with a view to encouraging feedback from children and young people:-

- The use of a freefone telephone number
- The use of a freepost service
- A facility to enable service users or their representatives to text in a complaint, or at least a request for a call back from the Complaints Team, free of charge.

8.0 Advocacy

- 8.1 Children and young people who are Looked After, or classed as children in need are informed of their right to ask for independent advocacy support to help them make a complaint or representation.
- 8.2 Advocacy is commissioned by tender and this service is currently provided by Action for Children at a cost of £30,000 per annum. This service will be going out to tender in preparation for 2010/11 and it is envisaged that this will be at a reduced cost of approximately £25,000 per annum.

For 2008/9 there were 19 referrals made to Action for Children for advocacy. 18 of these were made through the Young People's Officer and 1 by direct telephone call from the young person concerned. Previous year's comparative data is not available as tender arrangement was not and advocacy was spot purchased as and when required.

Please note that not all advocacy referrals result in formal complaints being lodged as the advocacy service will often aim for informal resolution with relevant service area in the first instance.

These complaints covered:

- Dissatisfaction with current services – e.g. actions of social worker or unhappiness with level of assessment

- Changes in placement – mainly the closure of Wendover Road but also changes from external placement to internal LA placement
- Post 16 transitional issues
- Contact issues – including post adoption contact and contact with teenagers own child
- Specific issues such as life story work

9.0 Training & Development

- 9.1 Plans are in place to ensure that the topic of Good Complaint Handling is included in the Children's Services staff induction programme. This will be a brief overview of what constitutes a complaint, how to keep on the right track in dealing with them and early resolution.
- 9.2 The Local Government Ombudsman provides training on Effective Social Care Complaint Handling for staff who deal with the later stages of complaints. This focuses on investigation, providing remedies and learning from complaints. This training was last provided in November 2008 but due to numerous staffing changes in Case Management another course is to be arranged for senior managers new to post.
- 9.3 To satisfy Children's Home Ofsted requirements the Complaints Team have provided training for the homes on good complaint handling, the statutory complaints procedure and more specific children's homes complaints procedure
- 9.4 Total Respect training is available to all practitioners. This course is run in conjunction with young people from the Change Council and highlights what young people expect from a complaint procedure and making a complaint.
- 9.5 The Complaints Manager and Complaints Officer attend monthly directorate complaints coordinators meetings to discuss cross service issues, changes in procedure, problems with the ICCS Complaints database etc.
- 9.6 The Complaints Manager attends the quarterly Northern Regional Complaints Managers meetings which provide an easily accessible benchmarking forum.

10.0 Summary of Complaints information

- 10.1 Appendices at the end of this report sets out various comparative data for 2007/8 and 2008/9

11.0 Compliments

- 11.1 Compliments are a valuable way of monitoring services, as well as providing information on how services are performing. A compliment

can be accepted in any format (i.e. verbally, in writing, by telephone or electronically) and every effort is being made to ensure these are being recorded. Compliments are acknowledged by the relevant senior manager and then collated and recorded by the Complaints Team.

11.2 During 2008/9 the Complaints & Feedback Team were informed of 17 formal compliments, as shown below;-

- Support received from Child & Family Worker during repossession of a family home
- Involvement of children & young people in the training of post graduate social work students at Durham University
- 2 acknowledgements of excellent support received from Social Workers in dealing with a young people displaying challenging behaviour and development of coping strategies
- Acknowledgement from Residential Home staff for excellent work carried out by Social Worker with resident displaying extremely challenging behaviour.
- 7 expressions of thanks to YOS Restorative Justice for work carried out by young offenders.
- 5 expressions of thanks to Aiming High for Disabled Children for various organised events

This compares to 6 compliments being highlighted to the Complaints Team in 2007/8 and 20 to date for the current year. Managers have recently been reminded of the importance of informing the Complaints Team of all compliments and positive feedback.

12.0 Service Improvement Plans 2009/10

The following initiatives have been included in the Performance, Improvement and Policy Service Improvement Plan 2009/10 to improve the performance of the Children's Service Complaint's Team in managing representation, complaints and compliments during 2009/10:-

1. The Children's Services Complaints & Feedback also process suggestions from staff relating to Social Care and Education issues as part of the Corporate Improvement Campaign. Work is to be carried out to identify and encourage participation of schools who are not currently involved in this campaign.
2. Review and finalise the Children's Services Complaints Procedure to include guidance on the implementation of recommendations, redress and payment of compensation.
3. Complaint's Monitoring to be a standard agenda item in Case Management's Senior Management Team monthly performance meeting. Discussion to centre on implementation of recommendations and lessons learned from Statutory Complaints.
4. Develop staff training sessions and guidance on investigating and responding to Stage 1 complaints

5. The Complaints Manager, In conjunction with Governor Support Manager, to produce guidance for schools and provide briefing sessions on the proposed changes to the schools complaints procedure, A New Way of handling Parents Complaints about School Issues, effective from April 2010.
6. Roll out full use of the Isuku Complaints database (ICCS) reporting functionality.

Please see Appendix 2 for details re progress of implementation of 2008/09 Service Improvement Plan complaints items.

13.0 Conclusion

The management of Children's Services Complaints is continually reviewed to ensure compliance with the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure and DCSF guidance on getting the best from complaints.

Procedures are now in place to ensure that lessons learned from complaints and feedback are used to highlight poor practice, identify training requirements and therefore improve service delivery and the overall experience for service users.

At the heart of the process is the need to listen to the views of children and young people, provide them with good support in the form of advocacy and to respond quickly.

14.0 Recommendations

- (i) Accept this annual report
- (ii) Offer comments, suggestions or recommendations in relation to any aspect of the report
- (iii) Consider how Members, or this Committee, could further strengthen the handling of Children's Services Complaints

15.0 Background Papers

- Getting the Best from Complaints (Social Care Complaints and Representations for Children, Young People and Others) 2006, DfES
- The Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006

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APPENDIX 1 – COMPARATIVE DATA

Table 1
Social Care Complaint Comparison – Complaints received & response times

	Complaints received	S1 response <10	S1 response <20	Overdue
2006 – 2007	132	41	18	73
2007 – 2008	62	8	9	45
2008 – 2009	66	26	23	17

Table 2
Reason for complaint – Social Care

Reason	2006 – 2007	2007 – 2008	2008 – 2009
Conduct of staff	42	34	21
Delay in service provision/action	7	0	1
Lack of services/resources	11	16	6
No data	7	3	0
Quality issues	65	9	1
Action taken by Children's Services	not recorded	not recorded	20
Lack of communication	not recorded	not recorded	6
Financial Assistance etc.	not recorded	not recorded	7
Contact arrangements	not recorded	not recorded	4
TOTAL	132	62	66

Table 3
Non Social Care Complaints – Schools

2008/2009	Nursery	Primary	Secondary
Bullying	1	2	0
School handling of issue	0	4	0
No detail known	0	7	5
SEN provision		3	1
TOTAL	1	16	6

APPENDIX 2 - Service Improvement Plans 2008/09 – RAG rated implementation progress

Initiative	Comments	RAG
Managerial changes to the Complaints Team – the appointment of a dedicated Children's Services Complaints Manager on a permanent basis from October 2008, will continue the improvements made by an interim appointment in May 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated Children's Services Complaints Manager appointed wef 1.10.08 Dedicated permanent Children's Services Complaints Officer appointed wef 1.4.09 0.5 fte permanent Children's Services Admin Assistant appointed wef Complaints Manager and Complaints Officer have access to all Case Management E Casefiles to assist with processing of complaints with view to early resolution. All Complaints Staff have access to ICS Social Care database 	
The dissemination to staff of a revised policy and procedure on handling complaints, including an updated policy for handling complaints in children's residential care homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised policy now in use and easily accessible to all staff via Intranet Revised Residential Care Homes policy produced by Residential Services Manager in consultation with Complaints Manager Effective complaint handling training has now been delivered to all residential care homes to satisfy Ofsted requirements 	
Increasing awareness of the complaints service through briefing sessions for all Children's Services staff as part of further developing a learning culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions ongoing with the Workforce Development Co-ordinator to include complaints training in mandatory staff induction sessions Training to be devised for Safeguarding Senior Managers in effective complaint resolution and, if required, dealing with Stage 2 investigations Effective complaint handling training has been delivered to Children's residential home staff to satisfy Ofsted requirements 	
Extending the role of the Young People's Officer in promoting participation in the complaints process within residential and foster care settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective working relationship established between Children's Services Complaints Team, Young People's Officer and Looked After Development Manager Young People's Officer actively engaged in promoting participation in the complaints and advocacy process with Looked After children. Young People's Officer arranged for Action for Children to visit children's residential homes to advise young people on their right to advocacy and roles and responsibilities of advocates Looked After young people from the Change Council recently involved in designing new complaints leaflets specifically designed to attract the attention of the 4-11 and 12-18 age groups. 	
Increasing accessibility to the complaints system by widening methods of publicity, including different language, and communication formats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints can now be submitted online, by email or via the Customer Contact Centre New complaint leaflets are in process of being reviewed and redesigned Action for Children are designing leaflet and posters on how to contact an 	

	<p>advocate which will be given to all Looked After children and displayed in all residential children's homes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration currently being given to 'smart' texting by Complaints Team/Young Peoples Officer. This will enable global reminders/prompts about, for example, their right to make a complaint or have an advocate, to be sent to all Looked After children with mobile phones. • Consideration also being given to use of Children's Services Complaints free phone number and possibility of Looked After children being able to test the Complaints Team, free of charge, if they have a complaint they wish to make. • For people with special needs, such as learning disabilities, sensory or physical impairment or mental health problems, the Complaints manager will liaise with specialist teams or voluntary organisations to ensure complainant is able to express their views fully. • Translation services are available through Language Point and literature can be provided, on request, in a number of languages. 	
Ensuring that the new complaints leaflet reaches all our customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Services Statutory Complaints Leaflets are currently displayed in the reception area of all Children's Services Social care establishments • All Looked After children and children classed as being in need are informed of their right to make a complaint and are given a copy of the 'Answer back' complaints leaflet at the onset of service provision. They are also advised of their right to advocacy. • Corporate Complaints leaflets, which also give details of how to make a social care complaint, are displayed in all local authority public areas. • All leaflets and procedures are available on the www.sunderland.gov.uk web site 	
Ensuring that the new corporate complaints database is fully utilised to provide effective performance data on the working of the complaints service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isuku ICCS system reporting functionality now available but not yet in full use by Children's Services Complaints Team. A more 'manual' system still in operation but consideration being given to more effective use of ICCS system data. 	
Introducing a satisfaction survey to obtain feedback from customers on the operation of the complaints service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not yet implemented. Discussion with Corporate Customer Services Manager required re this and diversity monitoring, neither of which are currently recorded 	
Providing clear advice and guidance to staff on the recording of complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Services staff are encouraged, through email and training sessions, to contact the Complaints Team for advice or guidance at any time. • Children's Services Statutory Complaints Procedure on intranet and accessible to all staff. 	
Training for staff to enhance their awareness of good communication with service users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be considered following discussion with Workforce Development Coordinator 	

Appendix 3 – Case Studies

Healthy City – Priority 2

Case study 1	Young person with complex needs and undergoing psychiatric treatment voiced concerns to residential worker at secure accommodation where she was residing. She was concerned that she did not think her wishes were being taken into consideration or that she was been consulted regarding her future placement plans. An advocate was commissioned by Children's Services to visit the young person to assist her in making a formal complaint. The complaint was dealt with as a Stage 1 complaint and was investigated and responded to by a senior manager. This assured the young person concerned that she would be consulted in all aspects of the placement planning process and that this would involve consultation with health professionals, senior managers and her solicitor. The young person informed the advocate that she was happy with the response and outcome of her complaint and felt assured that she could ask for an advocate at any time.
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Safe City – Priority 3

Case study 2	<p>Persistent, often unsubstantiated, complaints from resident of neighbouring property to Cotswold Road Children's Home concerning behaviour of residents, attitude of children's home workers, vandalism, damage to property, drug use, congregation of youths attracted by children's home residents etc. The Complaints Manager liaised with the Children's Home manager, Customer Services Manager, Community Police Team, Anti Social Behaviour team and Gentoo in relation to this matter and this resulted in the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased police patrolling of the area• An agreement that Children's Homes staff would use staff car park to rear of Children's Homes if space available rather than park in front of complainants house• An agreement that the complainant could contact the Children's Homes Manager or Deputy Manager by telephone or email at any time, should problems still be encountered. If this failed for any reason the complainant was advised to contact the Complaints Manager as a central point of contact• The installation, by Gentoo, of a wrought iron fence on low wall to stop youths congregating and sitting on the wall <p>Unfortunately, the complainant still persisted in making complaints concerning the home and his relationship with the home staff and residents ultimately broke down. A mediation session was then arranged by the Complaints Manager through Unite Mediation Services which involved the complainant, tenant from another neighbouring property of the home, Children's Home Manager and the Complaints Manager. The complainant accepted that not all of the problems he was experiencing could be attributed to the home or home residents and various agreements were reached on both sides to alleviate problems, which have proved successful to date.</p>
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