



Cheshire West and Chester Council

Children's Social Care Complaints and Compliments

Annual Report
2017 - 2018

Introduction

This report provides information about the Children's Social Care Complaints and Compliments received by Cheshire West and Chester Council during the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018. It highlights how the service has performed against statutory timescales and indicates where improvements or revisions to services have been identified as a result of compliments in highlighting best practice as well as through the process of listening and responding to complaints.

The Council's Customer Relations team, within the Governance directorate, was responsible for the coordination of Compliments and Complaints during this period.

In accordance with statutory guidance, responses to complaints received by the Authority should be proportionate. Officers are encouraged to resolve matters locally at the first point of contact to avoid escalation wherever possible. Concerns raised with the service and resolved by close of play the following day are not counted as statutory complaints. Where this approach does not deliver a satisfactory outcome for the complainant, matters are then referred through the formal complaints procedure.

The objectives of this report are to:

- be open and transparent about our social care complaints process
- meet our statutory obligation to produce an annual report
- provide clear and concise comparative data on compliments and complaints, including details of complaints broken down by subject and service area
- provide a summary of customer profile and type of customer interaction
- identify actions for service improvements identified from complaints

Context

The aim of the Council's Children and Young People's Services is to support and protect those children, young people and families who need care and support to enable them to develop their abilities to live as independent and fulfilled lives as possible. Sometimes people are unhappy with the service we provide as an authority and we make every effort to ensure that we listen to their feedback and complaints, and that we learn from them.

Whilst considering this report it is important to know the overall picture of Children's Social Care involvement in the Cheshire West and Chester area. During 2017-18 the Council's Children's Social Care teams dealt with 4,460 children, 3,084 of these were new referrals. Of those receiving services 74 formal complaints were received and responded to, representing 1.7% of the children the Council helped.

1.0 STATUTORY COMPLIANCE PROCEDURE

1.1 The Children's Social Care Complaints Procedure

The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006; Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000; Adoption and Children Act 2002; and the Health and Social Care Act 2003 require the local authority to have a procedure for resolving complaints and representations received by, on behalf of, or relating to children and young people.

Complaints are considered in accordance with the statutory social care complaints procedure and there is a strong emphasis on resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity, which the Customer Relations Team has actively encouraged over the past 2 years.

1.2 Role of the Customer Relations Team

The Customer Relations Team acts as a central independent point through which complaints can be made to the Authority without the need to refer directly to the service. Complaints can be made via telephone; in writing; through the online social care complaints portal; or directly to the dedicated social care complaints email inbox. Complaints received directly by the service that cannot be resolved within a day are referred to the Customer Relations Team.

The Customer Relations Team, often in liaison with the service, will 'triage' the complaint to determine whether it is eligible for consideration under the statutory framework or whether an alternative procedure (safeguarding for example) would be more appropriate. This ensures a consistent approach to what is accepted as a complaint.

The Customer Relations Team also offers corporate and ad hoc training, advice and support to service staff at all levels in their consideration of complaints and also performs a quality assurance role in the preparation of complaint responses. The Team will also liaise with complainants to keep them informed on progress with their complaints, and provide advice about the complaints process and the role of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

1.3 What is a Complaint?

Any expression of dissatisfaction about a council service (whether that service is provided by the council or by a contractor or partner) that requires a response. There is no difference between a 'formal' and an 'informal' complaint. Both are expressions of dissatisfaction that require a response.

1.4 Who Can Make a Complaint?

There are a variety of people who can complain:

- Any child or young person who is Looked After or who is a child in need or is a child with disabilities
- Foster parents

- People applying to adopt, or who are receiving services from our Adoption service
- Care leavers
- Special Guardians

Complaints can also be accepted from individuals acting on behalf of a service user, for example an advocate or family member, although this must be with consent from the service user when they are considered old enough. Where a service user's capacity to make informed decisions may be in question, the Customer Relations Team - in conjunction with the Service Team Manager - will look at whether the person pursuing the complaint is acting in the young person's best interests.

1.5 Stage 1 – Local Resolution Stage

The majority of Stage 1 investigations are conducted by Team Managers from the relevant service. The investigation of a complaint is a managerial responsibility and should not be delegated to other staff. In the first instance complaints are allocated to the Senior Manager to appoint an appropriate Team Manager to investigate and draft a response to the complainant.

The initial timescale for providing a response is 10 working days, although this can be extended to 20 working days when a matter is more complex. The Customer Relations Team works with managers to ensure that quality responses are produced within the specific timescales. Decisions are recorded for each complaint as upheld, not upheld or partially upheld. The learning outcomes and remedial actions are shared with the complainant within the written response.

1.6 Stage 2 – Formal Independent Investigation

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the findings of the Stage 1 complaint investigation, or has not received a response to Stage 1 within the 20 working days allowed, then a request for a Stage 2 investigation can be made.

Once the Stage 2 investigation has been agreed an Investigating Officer (IO) will be appointed. Investigators can be an officer from the service who has no previous knowledge of the complaint and no line management responsibility. However, there is a presumption in favour of the IO being appointed from the North West List of Independent People. The IO will lead, and has overall responsibility for the investigation and will prepare the main report which will state outcomes and make recommendations to the service where appropriate.

A second person, the Independent Person (IP) will be appointed from the North West List of Independent People. The IP ensures that the process of investigation is open, transparent and fair. They work alongside the IO to provide an independent and objective view of the investigation. They see all the same relevant files as the IO and participate in all interviews and discussion relevant to the investigation. The IP reads the IO's report and produces his/her own report on the investigation, commenting on each complaint element and stating whether he/she agrees with the IO's findings.

There are up to 25 working days for the completion of the Stage 2 investigation, with an extension of up to 65 working days available for complex cases.

Following an investigation the findings and any recommendations are set out in a report to the Director and the Service Team Manager. The service must provide a written response to the report and this will be sent to the complainant, along with a copy of the report, within 10 working days of receiving the report. The service may consider offering a meeting with the complainant to discuss the report and the response.

1.7 Stage 3 – Independent Review Panel

Where complainants wish to proceed to Stage 3 they have 20 working days (from the date that they received notification of the department's response to the stage 2 report) to request a Review Panel.

The Independent Review Panel consists of three independent people drawn from the North West List of Independent People, one of whom is appointed as Chair of the Panel.

Following the investigation, panel members have 5 working days to agree the report. The report has to be sent to the complainant within the 5 working days and a copy is also given to the Director of Children's Services.

The Director has 20 working days from the day of the panel to write to the complainant with their response to the report. The letter should outline what the directorate intends to do as part of learning from the complaint. The letter will also explain that if the complainant remains unhappy they can contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

1.8 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Where complaints remain unresolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, a referral may be made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for consideration. This can be done by the complainant following completion of all 3 stages of the children's social care complaint process or at an earlier stage if there is a mutual agreement between the complainant and the Council to do so. The Ombudsman will require reasons for the referral if it is done prior to completion of all stages of the policy. The Council will usually seek advice from the Ombudsman's office before making any referral.

2.0 PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

2.1 Summary of Complaint Activity

From April 2017 to March 2018 there were a total of 166 social care complaint representations made to Cheshire West and Chester Council. Of the 166 representations received, there were 73 **valid complaints** progressed, with the remainder either ineligible (20), withdrawn (9) or resolved via an alternative route (64).

Of the 73 formal complaints, 8 requested a stage 2 escalation as the complainant remained dissatisfied. 1 of the 8 was taken to a full stage 2 investigation. A further 6 could not demonstrate sound justification for continuing their complaint and the

service felt all issues had been resolved as far as possible. The final request was transferred to be dealt with under the Corporate Complaints process. None of the 2017-18 complaints have progressed to a Stage 3.

2.2 Comparison with Previous Years

The table below shows the number of considered and progressed complaints for the year compared with the previous two years.

Table 1: Total number of complaints considered

Year	Total no. of valid complaints processed	Withdrawn/ not pursued/ other	Ineligible*	Total no. of complaints representations considered
2017-18	73	73	20	166
2016-17	52	64	24	140
2015-16	68	48	22	138

**Complaints not valid through the Social Care procedure, for example complaints that were being dealt with through court proceedings or the complainant was not directly involved with the child or does not have parental responsibility and is therefore ineligible.*

2.3 Numbers of Complaints - Observations

The number of valid complaints investigated by the Council has increased by 40% compared to the previous year, as well as seeing an increase in the total number of complaint representations handled by the Customer Relations team.

There are two explanations for this increase in complaints received during 2017-2018:

1. The service has been more proactive in raising awareness of the complaints process. It is only to be expected that as a result complaints may rise. However, the 'triage' process carried out by both the Customer Relations Team and the Children's Social Care Team demonstrates that these 'complaints' can often be resolved outside of the formal process. This is borne out by the fact that of the 166 complaints received only 73 were deemed to be valid.
2. There has been a significant rise in caseload in the Winsford area which has resulted in some delays with assessing individual cases. Complaints about delays can be associated with a lack of support as the individual (and/or their representative) can see little sign of progress. This is reflected in the figures in Table 5 below.

Members have previously asked for benchmarking or comparative information to be included in future reports. This has proved difficult to obtain from a sufficient number of local authorities willing to participate in the exercise, in time for publication of this report. However, a retrospective analysis of previous years could be provided in future, for example data that is published in relation to 2017/18 could be included in the 2018/19 Annual Report.

2.4 Complaint Outcomes

The table below shows where a formal complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. Where complaints are complex and raise a number of different issues, there is a greater likelihood that some elements of a complaint will be upheld, whilst others not, and consequently the complaint will be classified as partially upheld overall.

Table 2 - Stage 1 outcomes and comparisons with previous year

Year	Upheld	Partially upheld	Not upheld	Outstanding	Total
2017-18	7(10%)	40(54%)	26(35%)	0(0%)	73
2016-17	7(13%)	31(60%)	14(27%)	0(0%)	52
2015-16	13 (19%)	28 (41%)	27 (40%)	0 (0%)	68

This year, 64% of complaints have either been upheld or partially upheld which is a decrease from 73% in the previous year. This demonstrates that the robust approach, by both the Customer Relations team and the Children's Services team, in triaging complaints and signposting to alternative paths is working effectively. The complaints which are being accepted are more likely to be valid issues which need review by the service. This may also be as a result of increased awareness of complaint handling and officers are better able to identify or acknowledge fault and offer a reasonable remedy. It should also be noted that there has been a significant improvement in cross-service working within the Children's Services teams.

Table 3 - Stage 2 outcomes and comparisons with previous years

Year	Upheld	Partially upheld	Not upheld	Open cases	Withdrawn	Total
2017-18	0	1	0	0	0	1
2016-17	0	3	0	0	0	3
2015-16	0	4	0	0	0	4

Of the 73 formal complaints, 8 requested a stage 2 escalation as the complainant remained dissatisfied. One of the 8 was taken to a full stage 2 investigation. The stage 2 complaint was partially upheld on two minor elements. Most of the complaint was not upheld.

Six requests for escalation did not progress to a full stage 2 investigation as, in the Customer Relations Team's view, they could not demonstrate sound justification for continuing their complaint and the service felt all 'complaint' issues had been resolved as far as possible. Any outstanding concerns were referred back to the services to resolve under routine business working with the client/family. These are usually where complainants voice a continued dissatisfaction with the outcome of the complaint rather than evidence any continued wrongdoing or outstanding injustice. The other request was transferred to be dealt with under the Corporate Complaints process as it was felt this was the most appropriate route to investigate the issue.

By comparison, there were 6 requests for escalation in 2016/17 out of 52 valid complaints, so the rate of escalation remains similar at approximately 11%.

The Customer Relations Team and Children's Services Senior Management Team communicate regularly to review management of the complaints and escalations to Stage 2 and 3. There is a clear commitment to resolve complaints at Stage 1 across the service in order to improve customer satisfaction with the complaint process, as well as reducing the costs associated with escalation. During 2017/18 the Customer Relations team carried out training sessions with the Senior Practice Lead and Team Leaders, promoting consistency and a holistic approach to learning about complaints service-wide.

Stage 3 outcomes and comparisons with previous year

There were no complaints escalated to stage 3 in 2017/18. Again, this is evidence of more robust complaint investigations and resolutions at stages 1 & 2 and/or a commitment to take on board findings from the IO and IP at stage 2. In previous years adjudication letters at stage 2 more often than not accept the independent findings and recommendations.

2.5 Breakdown of complaints received by Service Area

Table 4 below shows a breakdown of complaints received by each service area.

Table 4

Service Area	Number of Complaints per Year		
Children in Need	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16
Winsford	13	11	6
Chester	14	13	15
Ellesmere Port	8	8	19
Children in Care			
Winsford	8	2	7
Chester	6	5	4
Ellesmere Port	5	1	1
Leaving Care	5	1	6
Children with Disabilities	4	7	7
Provider Services			
Fostering	3	0	0
Adoption	1	0	0
Integrated Early Support	0	0	1
Safeguarding	0	0	1
Contact and Referral Team	4	1	1
Transition Team	2	3	0
Total	73	52	68

The locality areas that received the most number of complaints i.e. Winsford and Chester also serve the highest population and so we would expect the volume of complaints to be proportionally higher.

Within the Winsford area, staffing has been challenging in some areas and there have been some changes, especially with agency workers, which could account for some of the increase. Officers are empowered to address the complaint at the earliest stage which still recognises the right to complain but can prevent escalation.

The Customer Relations team will continue to work closely with the Children's Services team both at the gateway when complaints are initially received, and by reflecting on the outcomes of case reviews. However it is recognised that due to the sensitive nature of the work we undertake, families may use the complaint process to reflect their dissatisfaction with their situation as well as to complain about practice and decisions.

There has also been an increase in complaints received in relation to Children in Care. The reason for this increase can be attributed to raising the profile of how to complain and signposting to Action Children in Care and National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). This increase also shows that children are being given a voice and are actively encouraged to use the complaints procedure. The increase can also be attributed to the fact that Children in Care cases are particularly complex and resource intensive which in turn makes progress slower resulting in complaints being made.

2.6 Breakdown of complaints received by Subject

By their nature, complaints are specific to the circumstances of the individual and cover a wide range of individual experiences. The majority of complaints also relate to more than one aspect of a service that has been received.

Complaints received by the Authority have been classified on the basis of the primary area of concern (subject) identified by the complainant. Detailed below are the numbers that fall within each category:

Table 5

Complaint Subject (primary area of concern)	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16
Standard of Service Delivery	29	22	22
<i>Inaccuracies in assessments</i>	1	5	0
<i>Lack of support</i>	15	12	14
<i>Failure to investigate concerns</i>	5	4	3
<i>Issues with contact arrangements</i>	4	1	5
<i>other</i>	4		
Social Worker	31	20	17
<i>Allegations of Misconduct</i>	3	1	11
<i>Issues with Attitude / Behaviour</i>	16	12	6
<i>Lack of Support</i>	7	4	0
<i>Preference for one parent over another</i>	4	3	0
<i>Social Worker and Team Manager</i>	1	0	0
Communication	4	7	10
<i>Lack of response</i>	1	4	7
<i>Late / missing reports</i>	1	1	2
<i>Cancellation of appointments</i>	2	2	1
Child Protection Issues	1	0	3
Financial Issues	1	0	0
Accommodation/Placement Issues	3	3	6
Adoption	0	0	1
Fostering	1	0	3
Eligibility for Service / Unhappy with Social Care involvement	2	0	6
Data Protection Issues	1	0	0
Total	73	52	68

There has been a decrease in complaints about inaccuracies and lack of response which demonstrates learning from last year's report and perhaps evidences that the training delivered throughout the year has helped the service to pinpoint issues and respond to them in a timely manner.

An increase in complaints about attitude and behaviour may be as a result of increased statutory involvement across the board in all localities. Part of the role of the service is to issue care proceedings in order to safeguard children. This can often impact greatly on the relationship and interface between families and the support we are trying to deliver to improve outcomes. It is therefore understandable that complaints are raised by families within this context, citing the behaviour and attitude of workers. It is important to note however that in some circumstances, workers could have responded or managed situations differently which has contributed to some complaints. Therefore our Senior Practitioners continue to facilitate reflective practice sessions with social workers in order to assist practitioners in gaining insight into how our statutory involvement impacts upon families and how to deal most effectively to challenging situations.

Children's Social Care has a permanent team management structure across all areas of their service provision, with the exception of the disability service. The management team therefore benefits from a cohesive and consistent approach to managing staff and performance. This has had a positive impact upon all areas of practice, therefore reducing allegations of misconduct.

2.7 Complaint Response Times

Of the 73 valid complaints, the department responded to 31 within the statutory timescales (10 working days). This can be extended to 20 working days for more complex cases requiring longer to investigate. Wherever possible, customers are kept informed and are able to negotiate new timeframes.

The following tables give a breakdown of the responses that met the timescales at each stage of the complaints procedure, and a comparison with previous years.

Table 6 - Complaint response times

Statutory time frames	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16
10 working days or less	14	14	20
20 working days or less	31	20	24
Outside the statutory timescale	28	18	24
Total	73	52	68

Overall, performance has decreased slightly this year in meeting the statutory deadlines for complaint responses with 62% of cases answered in time.

The service recognises there has been a further decrease in performance with regards to meeting response times. NYAS have also raised concerns about delays in responses, although they note that young people are usually satisfied once they do receive a response to their complaint. The service aimed to improve compliance to a minimum standard of 85% within 2017/18.

Reasons for not meeting this target are due to volume and complexity, and a high turnover of staff in some teams. There is still an issue for some social workers in balancing replies to complaints against the operational demands of the service.

The Customer Relations team are working closely with the Service to identify a single point of contact (SPOC) for each service area to help coordinate casework and improve response times, including managing the demand on Team. The SPOC will support and assist Team Managers and the wider service with the completion of responses within time. The Customer Relations Team will continue to offer drafting advice and support.

2.8 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

The number of cases referred to the LGSCO during this reporting period was 3.

Referral of cases to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has increased from 1 case in 2016/17 to 3 cases in 2017/18. 2 of the cases were closed after initial enquiries with no further action required. 1 case was upheld for maladministration and injustice.

Additionally, 1 case was reported that crossed over between Adults and Children's Social Care relating to the Transitions team. This case was upheld for maladministration and injustice.

The LG&SCO Annual Review Letter for 2017-18 highlights that 17 complaints and enquiries were received relating to Education & Children's Services. The difference in figures is that the LG&SCO do not separate out Children's Social Care complaints from other services, and they also report on a different calendar basis to us (i.e. when they make a decision rather than when a complaint is received). In addition, they do not necessarily inform us of cases where they refer the customer to come back to us for local resolution. This would usually be when the customer has approached the LG&SCO before attempting to access the Council's own complaint process.

The single complaint that was upheld was of an extremely complex and individual nature and the remedies, requiring service review of the processes and/or policies, will service to strengthen delivery of services in the future. Given the matter concerned very specific and individual circumstances, and all of the Ombudsman recommended remedies have been actioned, it is unlikely there will be a reoccurrence of complaints on similar issues.

The Authority remains committed to ensuring the complaints process continues to develop and remains open, transparent and accessible to those who need to use it.

2.9 Point and method of receipt for complaints within the authority

The Customer Relations Team records both the 'point of receipt' and 'method of receipt' of complaints into the Council. This intelligence can help support service improvement decisions. Table 7 shows that the established systems for ensuring that complaints are directed to the Customer Relations Team for co-ordination are working well, with those sent into the service re-directed to the Customer Relations

Team. While Table 8 shows an increase in preference of customers for contacting us using the on-line complaint form.

Table 7

Point of receipt	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16
Service Area	11	5	12
Customer Relations Team	61	45	50
Director	2	1	5
Chief Executive	0	0	0
Other	0	1	1
Total	73	52	68

Table 8

Method of receipt	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16
Letter	8	4	12
Telephone/verbal	15	11	10
Email	41	35	43
Online complaints	7	0	2
Feedback form	2	2	1
Total	73	52	68

66% of complaints are submitted by email or online form.

The feedback form is part of the information pack previously mentioned in this report that is provided to customers by the Social Worker during their first visit and provides an option for people to complete a form in writing. However, this year has clearly seen 'email' as the preferred option with 56% of complaints being emailed directly to the Social Care Complaints email address.

3.0 PROFILE/CATEGORY OF COMPLAINANTS

A summary of customer profile and type of customer interaction has shown the following:

Table 9

Person making the complaint	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16
Child or young person being looked after or in need	7	1	1
Parent/s	50	37	55
Local Authority foster carer	0	6	3
Special guardian	2	0	0
Persons wishing to adopt	0	0	0
Persons with sufficient interest in child's welfare	5	3	3
Advocacy service	9	5	6
Total	73	52	68

The number of complaints received either directly from young people or via an advocate is low, and we believe this is because young people's complaints are as much as possible resolved informally before they become "formal" issues in the majority of cases.

The service will continue to consider how to capture complaints from children and young people and ensure that they are aware of their options to escalate matters if they choose to. However, the primary focus will continue to be on ensuring the early resolution of issues that are causing the child or young person concern.

4.0 COMPLIMENTS RECEIVED

The Council welcomes positive or negative feedback from its users. A total of 37 compliments were recorded during the year, which represents a decrease on the previous year's figures. The service wants to strengthen how compliments are reported as it believes more compliments are received than are actually recorded.

Table 10

Year	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16
No. of Compliments	37	34	46

A selection of compliments recorded is included below as examples:

Fostering Team:

"I wanted to let you know that I believe that the "Dad's Support Group" you host every other month has become a vital and trusted source of information both from experts, but also other dad's at the group for myself. I could not imagine how I would be able to find this information any other way; I am providing a better experience for my daughter through what I am learn at each meeting — the ability to ask both experts and other dad's any queries I have has proved invaluable, to both myself, my wife and my daughter.

As men we don't find it easy to discuss emotions and ask the questions we want to ask sometimes; this support group could not have made it any easier, and in a comfortable and relaxed environment. In all truth, I believe that other authorities and areas should consider similar pilot schemes along the same lines — the fact that there is such a high repeat attendance and engagement rate each month for this group indicates that it is working for us dads, and we benefit from this support group!"

Edge of Care Team:

"Thank you for all the help you have given me to help me get my babies back home where they belong. It has been lovely working with you and you will be missed by all of us. We hope you have a lovely summer XXXX - Mum

Dear xxxx you have been kind and lively and helpful to us and I wish you a good time xxxx, thank you for all you have done you have been a great help. To xxxx, you have been so kind to us, you are the best I will miss you lots, thanks for the KFC xxxx – Children"

CIN - Northwich & Winsford:

"Thank you card: Just to say Thank you for your kindness. This comes just for you with a special thank you. Have a wonderful Christmas. To xxxx Thank you for everything. Kindness like yours means more than you know, and more than a 'thank you' could possibly show, for words aren't enough to tell someone like you, How thoughtful you are and how very nice too. Thank you, you are lovely!"

5.0 LEARNING AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

The Council has identified areas and opportunities from which learning can be taken from the complaints and the compliments process and used to improve future service delivery.

5.1 Learning from Complaints Cases

There have been a number of valuable learning points from complaints cases which have led to practice service improvements, and the following examples highlight the changes made:

- The leaving care team reminded of the importance of supervised contacts for young people and will ensure that they take place as stated within care plans.
- Improvements in keeping both parents fully up to date in relation to their child(ren).
- Improvements to the way information is shared between parents in conflict, and ensuring this is recorded when it has been and that it is done within a professional meeting format.

5.2 Policy and Procedure

- The revised Children's Social Care Policy and Procedure documentation was approved, published and used operationally during 2017-18 following several, well received, training sessions.
- A complaint 'Toolkit', developed by the Customer Relations team during 2016-17, was rolled out to officers within Children's Services during 2017-18 through several, well-received, training sessions. The Toolkit reflects current best practice as well as the statutory requirements of the complaint process.
- An update of the Single Assessment Recording policy was completed
- A new Complaint Management System has been commissioned

5.3 Communication

- Intranet and Internet data has been reviewed during 2017-18 to ensure complaint information and guidance for staff and customers is up to date and reflects current processes.

5.4 Professional Practice

- The introduction of an appeals process with regard to conference discussions, negating the need for families to use the complaints process for this.
- The Local Safeguarding Children Board identified 'Transition' as an area requiring further work and development. This improvement programme is still underway.

5.5 Personal Development

- Local Government Ombudsman complaint handling training for Team Managers and the Customer Relations Team completed.

- The Effective Complaint Handling training was run twice during the year as part of the Council's corporate training programme and was aimed at new staff with refresher updates available for existing staff.

6.0 FUTURE PLANS FOR COMPLAINT HANDLING

A new Complaint Management system has been commissioned and will be developed to support the requirements of the CSC and Customer Relations teams, to improve efficiency and data recording, with an enhanced reporting facility. This should become operational during 2019/20. As part of the rollout of the new system improved networking with ASC teams via a dedicated customer contact coordinator will ensure any bottlenecks with complaints are dealt with more efficiently and effectively. There will also be more scope to share learning at structured meetings between ASC and the Customer Relations team, and through improved system reporting. Additionally, the corporate training programme for Effective Complaint Management will continue in future years.

End Report.