

Children's Services Complaints, Comments and Compliments

Directorate of People

Annual Report

1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018



Contents

1. Purpose.....	3
2. Overview of Complaints Procedure.....	3
3. Headlines.....	5
4. Complaint Activity/ Service Areas.	6
5. Complaint Outcomes.....	7
6. Complaint Resolution Timescales.....	8
7. Areas of Complaint.....	9
8. Receipt of Complaints.....	10
9. Comments	10
10. Compliments.....	11
11. Example of Compliments.....	11
12. Learning from Complaints.....	12



1. PURPOSE

Every Local Authority with a responsibility for Social Care Services is required to provide an annual report into the operation of the complaints and representations procedures.

This report provides information relating to all statutory and corporate complaints received in respect of Children's Services during the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018.

2. OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The procedures for Children's complaints are determined by legislation, predominantly involving the:-

- Children Act 1989, Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.
- The Children & Adoption Act 2002 and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

However, some complaints fall outside of the statutory process. This is where the complainant does not meet the requirements to be considered under the statutory process, e.g. someone is unhappy with regard to the conduct of an officer not directly connected to their child. In these cases the complaint is dealt with under the corporate complaint process. All complaints received are included in this report.

Children's Services is committed to a positive and proactive approach to complaints handling. Complaints are a mechanism for ensuring that the service area remains receptive to the need to make improvements to its practice standards and the quality of the services that it provides.

The key objective in the management of all complaints is to achieve appropriate and effective resolution within the shortest possible timescales, enabling the Directorate to:-

- Learn from complaints, comments and compliments, and to change, review or maintain practice and services accordingly.
- Ensuring that complaints and comments are properly recorded and acted upon, and that where necessary things that have gone wrong are put right promptly.
- Ensuring that staff and service users understand their rights, and responsibilities within the complaints process.
- Ensure that senior managers have a 'line of sight' into the quality of frontline practice

All Children who wish to make a complaint are offered the services of an independent advocate. This is provided by The Children's Society, Black Country Advocacy Service, The



Workspace, All Saints Road, Wolverhampton, WV2 1EL, Telephone 01902 877563, Free phone 0800 6523839, childrenssociety.org.uk

The Council's website provides full information regarding how to make a complaint. There is also the facility to register a complaint via the website.

Please see link to Social Care Complaints and Compliments web page.

<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/care-health/children-and-family-care/complaints-and-compliments/>

The three stages of the statutory process can be summarized as follows

Stage 1 - Local Resolution: The complaint is investigated by the relevant manager / team. This is overwhelmingly the Stage at which the majority of all complaints are resolved.

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation: This is where the complaint has not been resolved at Stage 1 and the complainant has decided that they want an independent investigation into the complaint.

Stage 3 – Panel: Where Stage 2 of the complaints procedure has been concluded and the complainant is still dissatisfied, they can request further consideration of the complaint by a Review Panel. Generally, the Review Panel should not reinvestigate the complaints, nor should it consider any substantively new complaints that have not been first considered at Stage 2.

Ombudsman: Once the three stage statutory process has been exhausted a complainant has the right to take their complaint to the Ombudsman.

The Social Care Complaints Team

The Social Care Complaints Team is part of the Integrated Commissioning Hub within the People Directorate. The team are responsible for the day to day operation and management of all Social Care complaints for Children Services.

A substantial proportion of the complaints received can reasonably be described as complex, requiring significant time and effort from the area of service involved, and working in partnership with the Social Care Complaints Team, to try to find a resolution that is both appropriate and will provide a satisfactory resolution to the complainant. These efforts can, as appropriate, prevent complaints from escalating to Stage 2 of the complaints procedures which is both costly and time consuming for all parties involved.

The Social Care Complaints Team can be contacted for advice and information regarding making a Complaint, Compliment or Comment on 01384 814724 / 812417 or by email at



complaints.socialcare@dudley.gov.uk or in writing to The Social Care Complaints Team, 3-5 St James's Road, Dudley, DY1 1HZ

3. HEADLINES

All complaints that were registered this year received an acknowledgement and a response. The following information was extracted from the complaints data base on the 30th April 2018.

The key data for 2017/18 can be summarised as follows:

176 statutory complaints (7% increase on 2016/17)
50 corporate complaints (56% increase on 2016/17)

The three main issues arising concerned communication, staff attitude quality of support.

24 comments received
1 Stage two independent investigation
1 Ombudsman case
45 compliments received

44% of statutory and corporate complaints were either upheld or partially upheld

23% of statutory complaints received a response with 10 working days
55% of statutory complaints received a response within 20 working days

36% of corporate complaints received a response with 10 working days
56% of corporate complaints received a response within 20 working days

During the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018 Children's Services received/registered **176** statutory complaints. This compares to **164** for the period April 1st 2016 to 31st March 2017. This represents an increase of **12** cases (7%).

In addition, we registered **50** complaints under the corporate complaints process. This compares to **32** for the period April 1st 2016 to 31st March 2017. This represents an increase of 18 case (56%)

Out of a total of 176 statutory complaints received 29, were upheld, 16 % and 49 were partially upheld, 28 %. This compares to a total of 164 statutory complaints received for the period 1st April 2016 to the 31st March 2017 of which 44 were upheld, 26 % and 26 were partially upheld, 16%.

Therefore there has been a reduction in the number of complaints upheld but an increase in the number partially upheld.



Out of a total of 50 corporate received 12 were upheld, 24 % and 10 were partially upheld, 20 %. This compares to a total of 32 corporate complaints received for the period 1st April 2016 to the 31st March 2017 of which 9 were upheld, 28 % and 2 were partially upheld, 6 %.

Therefore again there has been a reduction in the number of complaints upheld but an increase in the number partially upheld.

Of the 176 statutory complaints received 20 of these were from young people

Informal comments: This is where someone may wish to raise an issue without it being a request to formally register a complaint. We recorded **24** such comments this year.

Stage 2 Complaints 2017/18: There has been **1** complaint which was progressed to a stage two investigation. This is in relation to communication and court evidence regarding children in care and how the case has been progressed through court.

Stage 3 Review Panel 2016/17: There have been no complaints which have progressed to a stage three review panel.

Ombudsman: **1** case proceeded to the Ombudsman. This compares to **1** case in 2016/2017. The Ombudsman investigation was regarding a decision made by the LADO. The complaint was not upheld.

There were no public reports issued against the Local Authority. The Ombudsman may issue a public report if it is decided that it is in the public interest to highlight the issues it has raised.

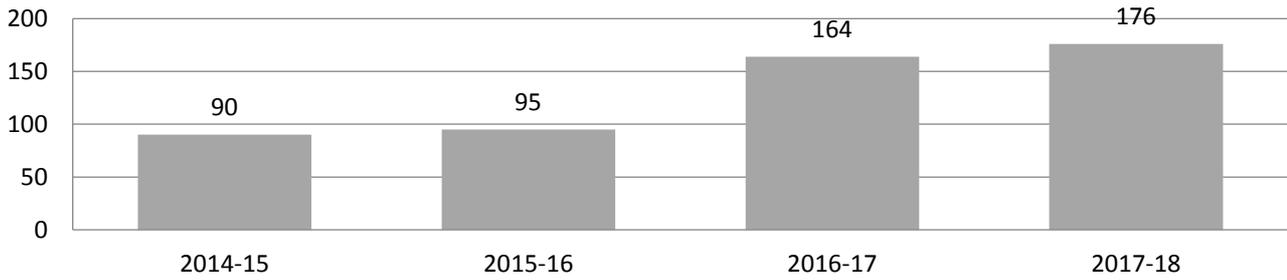
Compliments: Children's Services, for the period 2017/18, received **45** compliments. This compares to 81 received during 2016/17.

4. COMPLAINT ACTIVITY:

The chart below provides a comparison with regards to the number of **statutory** Children's Services complaints registered over the last 4 years. The second chart shows the service areas against which complaints were registered during 2017/2018.

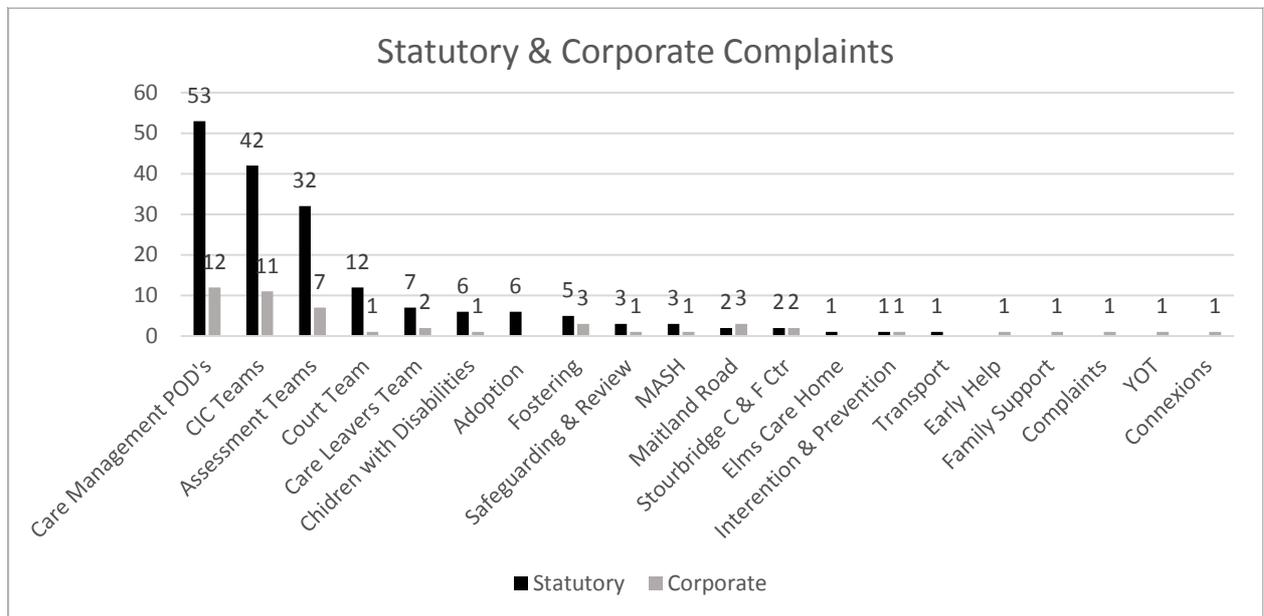


Statutory Childrens Service Complaints

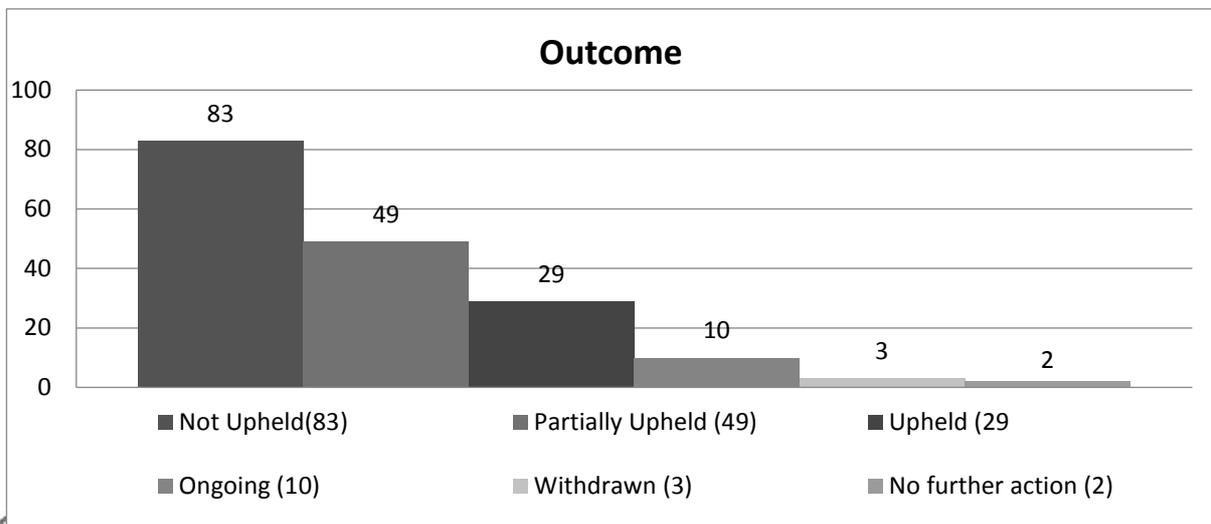


Breakdown of Service areas receiving statutory and corporate complaints 2017/18:

The **176** statutory and **50** corporate complaints received, during 2017/18, involve service areas that include both the previous and current structure.

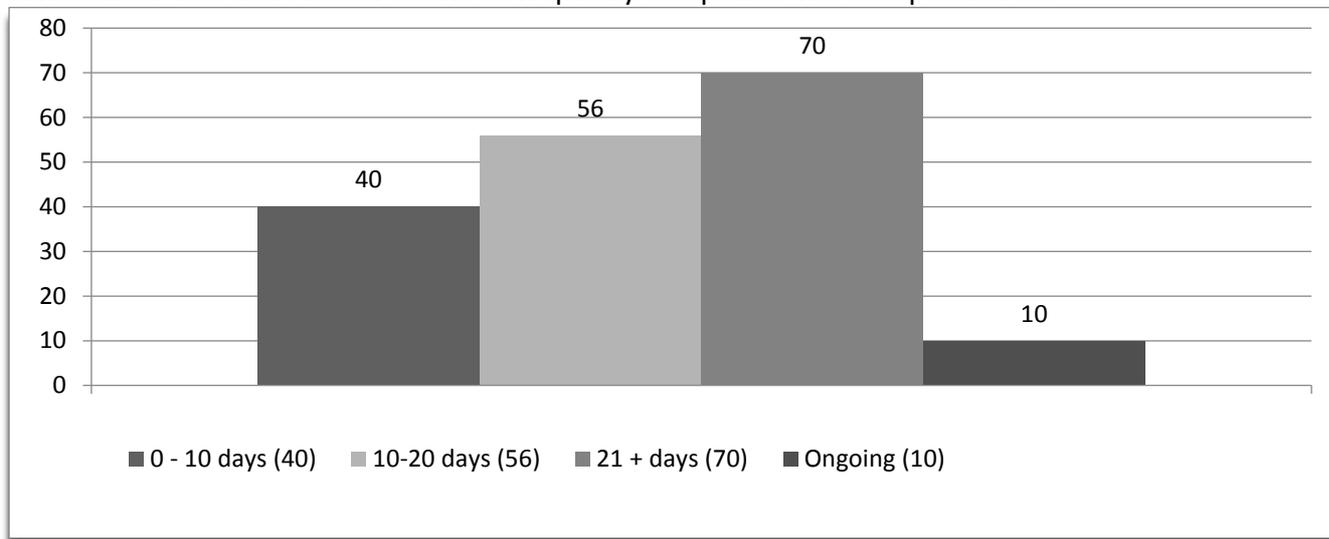


Complaint Outcomes:-



The chart above indicates that the majority of complaints for the year 2017-2018 were not upheld amounting to **83 (47%)** compared to **85 (52%)** in 2016/17. This demonstrates that whilst overall number of complaints may have increased the number of complaints being upheld has fallen.

Timescales: The chart below shows how quickly complaints were responded to.



Timescales The statutory timescale for responding to a complaint is 10 working days which can be extended for a further 10 working days if the complaint is complex or with the agreement of the complainant

During 2017/18, 23% of statutory complaints received a response within the statutory 10 working day timescales. A total of 55% received a response within 20 working days. This compares to 27% being responded to within 10 working days in 2016/2017 with a total of 53% receiving a response within 20 working days.

During 2017/18, 36% of corporate complaints received a response within the statutory 10 working day timescales. A total of 56% received a response within 20 working days. This compares to 38% being responded to within 10 working days in 2016/2017 with a total of 66% receiving a response within 20 working days.

In the past year improved systems of monitoring and progress chasing complaint responses have been put in place within the Complaints Team. Whilst the complexity of cases may be delaying responses in many cases it is unclear if other pressures are impacting on the ability of the service to respond to complaints more quickly.



Areas of Complaint: The following chart shows the most common types of complaint issues for received for both statutory and corporate complaints. There have been **219** issues over 20 areas.



The largest number of issues recorded, were in respect of communication-lack **74**, followed by staff behavior **26**, quality of service-support **25** and staff behaviour **38**

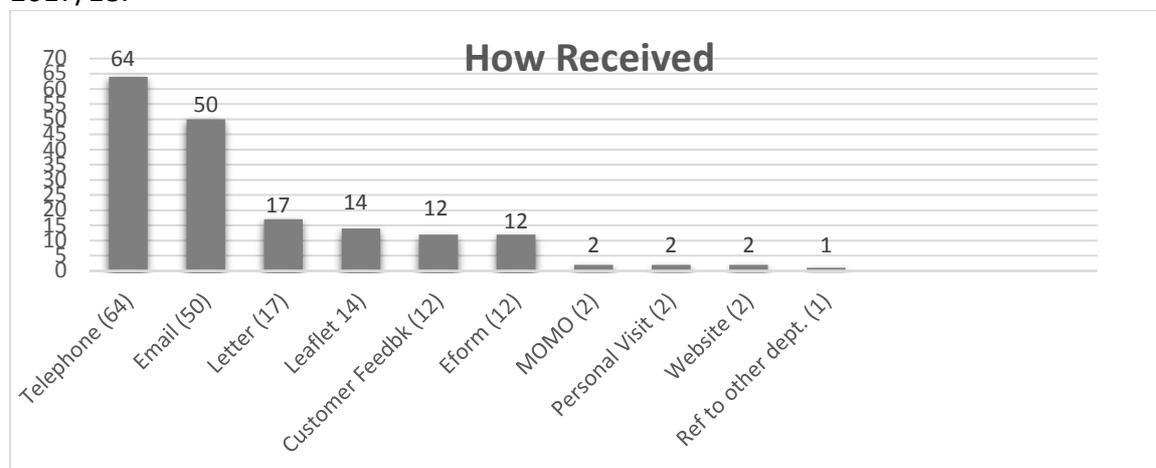
A further analysis of the top four most common areas of statutory complaints has shown that 73 % of all complaints regarding communication were upheld. However, only approximately 33% of all complaints in respect of staff behaviour /attitude and quality of service were upheld. This indicates that whilst a significant number of complaints are about staff behaviour relating to social workers these are often not upheld, as this may relate to cases where a social worker has had to take a robust approach with a parent after a difficult decision has been made about their child.

In addition during the coming year monthly reports will be produced by the Complaints Team that will identify all complaints received in the previous months broken down by teams along with the reason for the complaint. This will enable trends / issues in respect of



particular teams or issues to be identified more quickly and communicated to the relevant managers for consideration. It will also support an increased level of management oversight.

Receipt of Complaints: An analysis of how complaints were received is shown below for 2017/18.



It can be seen that the most popular methods of registering a complaint remain, telephone and email.

There are already a number of ways in which a complaint can be registered including in person (supported by complaints staff), by phone, in writing, using the complaints leaflet, e mail or on line. A further development to ensure that young people are able to raise any concerns is the implementation of the Mind of My Own (MoMO) application.

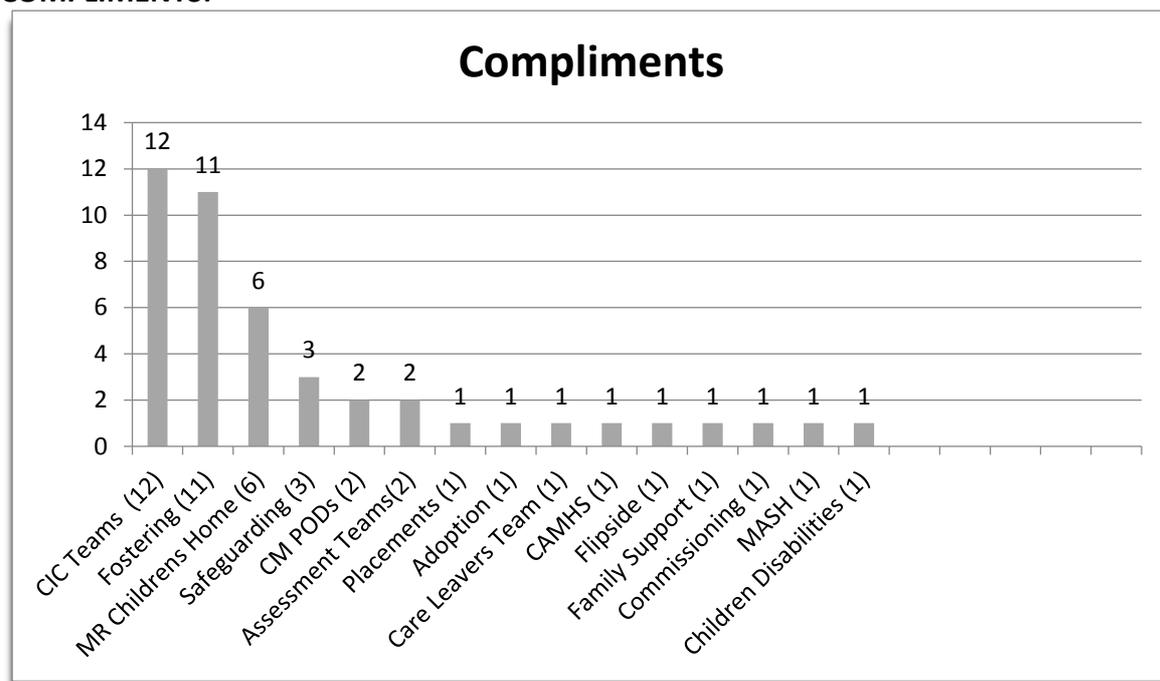
The Mind of My Own (MOMO) application allows children and young people in care to communicate with workers whenever they choose. It also provides a method where children and young people will be able to make a complaint which will be directed to the Complaints Team.

COMMENTS

In the period 1st April 17 to 31st March 18 **24** comments were received compared to **25** for the period April 16 to March 17. A comment is where someone may wish to raise an issue without it being registered as a formal complaint, e.g. query concerning ongoing contact. Comments received by the Complaints Team are recorded, acknowledged and then forwarded to the relevant Service Manager for a response. Comments are monitored in the same way to ensure that a response is provided.



COMPLIMENTS:



The total number of compliments received for the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018 was 45 compliments spread over 20 teams. This compares to 81 for the same period previous year. Compliments originate from internal and external sources. Staff are now actively encouraged to pass on compliments for registration as they are also a useful tool for learning and good practice.

The overwhelming majority of compliments are for the Fostering who received 11 compliments followed by CIC Team 1 (7) and MR Children's Home (6).

Examples of compliments

Below are just a selection of compliments received

- Mrs Y is a foster carer, who has recently taken care of two young children. She wishes to express her thanks and appreciation to worker who in Mrs Y's words "went above and beyond" in her efforts to help her over the period 12th to 13th September to ensure that she had everything in place to support her care for the two children.
- The DMBC Supervising social worker has worked with the family since April 2016. During this time she has been a brilliant advisor and font of knowledge for X. X has complete confidence and belief in X's experience and honesty with a good



understanding of family realities. With the voice of reason she always replies to phone calls, texts and emails without X having to chase her – well done, you are a true asset to fostering services.

- Thank you for your lovely email and your compliments to Flipside , it is really appreciated to have feedback in recognition of the work done by the team and glad that what they have made a difference to yours and the young person's lives.

I fully support your kind thoughts in all foster carers being given the opportunity to have the access to the flipside model that you have had and we will look at how we can build on this.

LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS:-

One of the key objectives in the management of complaints is to identify and learn from complaints, comments and compliments, and to change, review or maintain practices and services accordingly.

Since January 2017 a formal process to capture any learning from complaints has been in place. When a new complaint is received it is distributed to the relevant manager for investigation and response. When the complaint is distributed a learning and monitoring form is also sent to the manager.

The form contains provision for any learning identified as part of the complaint investigation to be documented. Specific actions that are required to implement the learning along with the responsible person(s) and a timescale are also given.

The complaints team record any identified learning on a central data base and use this to capture overall learning data as well as to monitor progress with regard to implementing the learning. Learning can be applied to individuals, teams, services areas of the division as a whole.

In addition, any learning that is identified will be routinely shared with the Centre for Professional Practice who will work closely with the Complaints Team to ensure identified learning contributes to the Centre for Professional Practice's workforce development strategy, audit planning and wider training.

As previously stated , it is important that the process for learning from Complaints becomes an integral part of the management of complaints following the introduction of the revised process.



EXAMPLE OF LEARNING FROM UPHELD COMPLAINTS:

Learning	Complaint	Actions
Improve Communication	Complaint from grandparents regarding where they have contact- why does it have to be in contact centre	Action: Listen to the views of family members when undertaking assessments Assessment Training Sessions will be included in the new Training Programme 2018
Provide Training	As above	A training session were completed within the Children In Care service in February 2018 around the quality of assessments.
Change in practice/process	Grandmother, and foster carer complaining about conduct of social worker . Also, states that a policy change was not communicated to	Action: SWs to communicate in a respectful and professional manner at all times RESPONSE: These have been implemented in the new practice standards and are being re-enforced by the implementation of Restorative Practice. The point about practice and recording was addressed in the Children In Care audit intervention in December 2017.
Communication	Complaint from young person not being informed that SW had left	Action: SW inconsistent in practice and recording RESPONSE: These have been implemented in the new practice standards and are being re-enforced by the implementation of Restorative Practice.
Provide Training	Complaint from foster carer - regarding the way Children's Social Services have supported the 2 children in his care.	Action: Team Managers check LAC Review recommendations within supervision and ensure tasks are progressed The Supervision Policy is being revised to include a crib sheet which will address the identified learning from this complaint

Completed by Social Care Complaints Team

