

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER

ANNUAL REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS REPORT 2013-14

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To present the Annual Representations and Complaints Report 2013-14 for Children and Adults Social Care Service in line with statutory requirements.

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 There is a statutory requirement to present an annual report covering representations and complaints received about services delivered under the Children Act 1989 and under the NHS Community Care Act 1990.
- 2.2 These statutory procedures confer on service users, or representatives acting on their behalf, the right to make representations about our services. They require the Local Authority to address these representations, through a three stage procedure for complaints concerning services to children and a two stage procedure for Adults Social Care Services.
- 2.3 The Children Act procedure has timescales attached to each stage and specific guidance as to the handling of complaints at each stage. Stage one is an opportunity for local resolution by the service concerned and should be completed in less than twenty working days. Stage two is an independent investigation, with up to sixty-five working days and stage three is review by panel, with recommendations to the Director, which should be concluded in thirty working days.
- 2.4 The procedure for Adults Social Care aims to resolve complaints within one stage; timescales are therefore attached to each complaint according to the issues involved. The second stage of this procedure rests with the Local Government Ombudsman.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Children's Social Care:
- 3.1.1 Complaints have remained at the same level with forty complaints being dealt with under the formal procedure.
- 3.1.2 All complaints but one were resolved at the first stage of the procedure. One complaint was investigated at stage two of the procedure.

- 3.1.2 Six complaints were made by children or young people on their own behalf; this represents around 15% of complaints. The majority of complaints have been made by parents, a significant proportion, around 20%, of which have been made by separating parents. Issues of concern to these parents have been in connection with perceived fairness of the service or arrangements for contact with their children.
- 3.1.4 The main areas for complaint have been service delivery and information and communication. A number of complaints in respect of service delivery have been from people wishing to challenge the grounds for involvement of children's services. Complaints about information and communication have concerned what complainants considered was a lack of timely and adequate information.
- 3.1.5 70% of complaints were not upheld with 25% upheld in full or in part.
- 3.1.6 In response to complaints made actions that have been taken include the following:
- Increased requirements placed on external provision in terms of the monitoring information they provide.
 - Undertook a development workshop for staff on working with families where domestic abuse is a feature.
 - Supported young person to move to a placement of her choice.
 - Confirmed and clarified expectations in relation to contact arrangements.
 - Worked with young people around developing behaviour management strategies.

3.2 Adults Social Services

- 3.2.1 There were forty seven complaints made about Adults Social Care Services last year.
- 3.2.2 All complaints were resolved within the one stage procedure; none were referred to the Local Government Ombudsman.
- 3.2.3 Over half the complaints received are in relation to services to older people; this is consistent with the proportionately higher volume of service to this group.
- 3.2.4 The main areas of complaint were service quality, which concerned issues in relation to delay and standards of service, and information and communication, which were in the main from relatives who felt that discussions that were held with the service user should have included them.
- 3.2.5 42% of complaints were not upheld with 23% of complaints upheld in full.
- 3.2.6 In response to these complaints the following actions have been taken:

- Access to equipment within an establishment was improved and the user guide revised to include more information.
- Review of process to ensure feedback is given in respect of safeguarding enquiries.
- Review of processes to ensure that budgets are responsive to changes in service.
- Agency was supported with a policy review and the development of a protocol around information sharing and capacity.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 Not applicable.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

5.1 None

6. IMPLICATIONS FROM INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 An integrated impact assessment has not been undertaken as this report presents a summary of findings from complaints that have been investigated in line with statutory requirements.

6.2 The production of the Annual Representations and Complaints Report fulfils statutory duties.

6.3 An accessible and transparent complaints procedure offers a route whereby any potential inequality can be challenged and so helps to ensure that services are able to fulfil their statutory duties in terms of diversity and equality. None of the complaints received this year cited equality and diversity as an issue.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

7.1 None required.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That the Annual Representations and Complaints Reports for Children and Adults Social Care Service is received and approved

DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report

Getting the Best from Complaints. Social Care Complaints and Representations for Children, Young People & Others. DFES 2007.

The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.

**REPRESENTATIONS ANNUAL REPORT
2013-2014**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is the Annual Report on complaints and representations for People Directorate for the year 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014. The report considers complaints and representations that have been made under the statutory complaints' procedures, which apply to Adult's and Children's social care services.
- 1.2 This report is written under the terms of the Children Act 1989, Representations Procedure Regulations (England) 2006 and The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, Making Experiences Count.
- 1.3 The complaints regulations that apply in each of the service areas results in quite different complaints procedures. The principles of transparency, objectivity and fairness are however common and central to both. They are reported together in the one report being part of one directorate.
- 1.4 The Children Act procedure applies to representations about children's social care services and specifically services that are provided under parts 3, 4 & 5 of the Act. These services include the following provision:
- Family support services
 - Services for children with a disability
 - Care and protection of children & young people
 - Supervision orders
 - Adoption related functions

The Making Experiences Count procedure in Adult's Services applies to services provided or commissioned by the Local Authority for: people with a learning disability; people with a physical disability; older people. Services to people with a mental health issue are provided by the health trust and reported under procedures that apply to that organisation.

- 1.5 There is an increasing emphasis, in all areas of life, on taking account of the views and opinions of the customers and users of goods and services. It is widely expected that views will be sought and that they will be acted on in order to ensure that standards improve. We have long been aware that the provision of social care service is no different in that we must understand the views of the users of our service. Only by ensuring a good understanding can we work together to meet expectation and continue to improve service standards.
- 1.6 Service providers have developed and continue to develop mechanisms for capturing the views and opinions of all service users and their representatives at all levels of service, from the strategic to the individual. For example: the children in care council takes part in regular 'creative conversations' with senior managers, which form part of service development, service users with a learning disability are members of, and co chair, the Learning Disability Partnership Board.
- 1.7 Another important route by which users of our services and their representatives can have their voices heard is through our complaints procedures. We recognise that occasionally people's experience of our services, despite making every effort to ensure a positive experience, may not meet their expectations. This may be for a number of reasons but whatever the reason we need to know so that we can take action where necessary to put things right. We work with some of the most vulnerable members of our community and we need to be sure that we get our services right for them. We would always wish to support people in their lives and not to cause a difficulty or concern to any service user or carer. It is for this reason that we would seek to promote access to our complaints procedure and to turn to that procedure in our effort to find resolution to the issue of concern.
- 1.8 Dealing with complaints gives us an opportunity to look in detail at our services and the impact they have on people's lives. The information gathered in this way gives can give a particular insight and is an important contribution to the intelligence on the effectiveness of services. Indicating where developments and improvements can be made both for the individual and for the wider benefit.

The commentary below looks at the complaints and representations from the two service areas separately, within the context of the procedures that apply in each of those areas.

2 ADULTS SERVICES

2.1 The Procedure

2.1.1 When a complaint is received it is initially screened to assess the impact of the issues concerned. In all but the most readily resolved cases the complainants will be consulted about the way in which their complaints will be addressed. Their view of the issues will be taken into account in making the decision about the most appropriate means of dealing with the complaint.

2.1.2 We have a number of ways of dealing with complaints and the procedures allow us to be flexible in our approach. For more minor readily resolved issues the manager of the service concerned will offer resolution. For the more complex complaints that cannot be responded to directly by the service concerned we can arrange for either in house or completely independent investigation or review. These complaints are subject to a resolution plan or agreement with the investigator that clearly sets out for the complainant what the issues are and the means by which they will be addressed. These investigations report to Service Manager, Head of Service, or the Assistant Director of Adults Social Services, to adjudicate and provide a response to the complainant on behalf of the Chief Executive of the Local Authority.

2.1.3 There is opportunity to revisit the complaint if it is judged by the complainant and the Local Authority that there is some value in doing so, if, for example, some significant information has been missed or an aspect of the complaint not considered properly. Other than this the complainant, if they continue to be dissatisfied, has recourse to the second stage of the procedure. The onus then in our complaint handling is to 'do it once & do it right'.

The commentary below will consider the complaints made and dealt with under the procedure for adult's services. It does not reflect the issues that are addressed and resolved by services in the course of their day to day work.

2.2 Complaints received

Year	Number of complaints
2011-12	40
2012-13	46
2013-14	47

There has been a very small increase in complaints this year from last.

Recent years have shown an increase in complaints. In this period there has been a transformation of the way in which we assess for and arrange services. There has been a shift towards an emphasis on working in partnership with service users and their families, to put them in control and to facilitate their having a greater say and a choice in their services. For some service users and families this has presented something of a challenge where they have expected a more traditional provision of service. These concerns can be seen to be reflected in a number of complaints.

Adult's services has around 2800 service users. Complainants therefore represent a very small proportion of all service users.

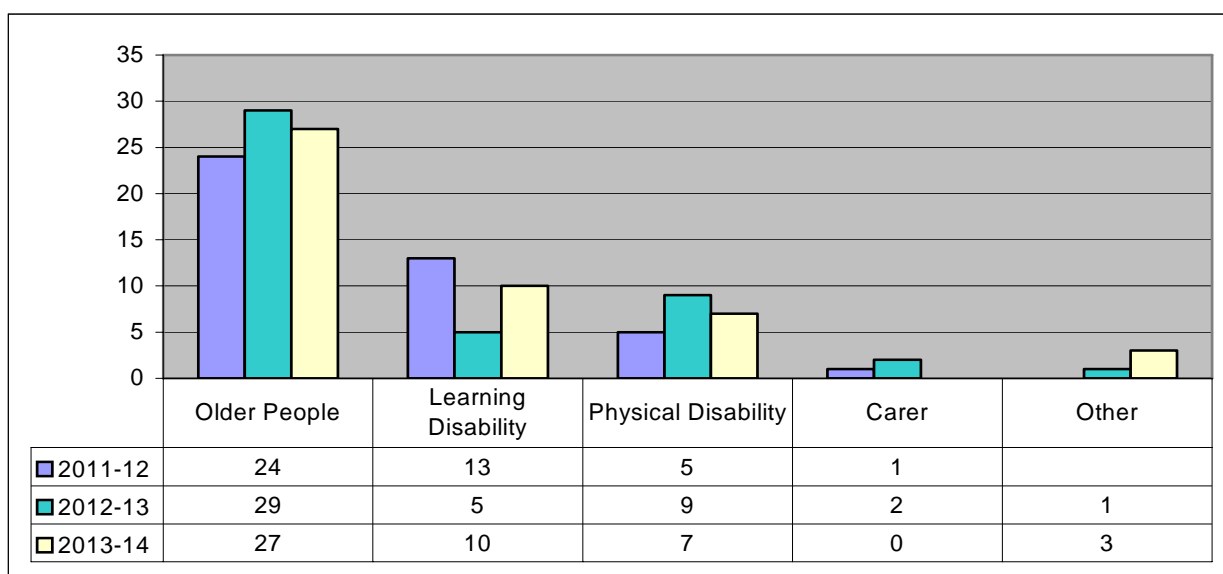
2.3 Complaints by Complainant

	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Service User	4	9	10
Relative	35	34	34
Other	1	3	3

Consistent with previous years the majority of complaints were made on behalf of service users by a relative representing their views. We recognise that it is difficult for vulnerable service users to raise concerns themselves. We aim to address this by making information about complaints widely available, by ensuring that our staff are well informed about the procedure, understanding their

role in facilitating and enabling individuals to make a complaint when they indicate they have an unresolved concern. We also commission independent advocacy services who can offer representation for individuals who have a concern about a service and may not have other sources of support.

2.4 Complaint by Service User



Over half of complaints received by Adult's Services are about services to older people. This is consistent with the fact that older people are by far the largest service user group. They are also more likely to be in receipt of home care services. Home care is a high volume service for which service delivery issues, such as timing of calls, are both critical to the effectiveness of the service and significant to individuals.

Complaints for or on behalf of service users with a learning disability have shown an increase on the previous year but are lower than for the year 2011-12. There were some process issues in relation to assessments and personal budget allocation, which led to delays in individuals receiving information about their personal budget. These issues have now been resolved.

The category 'other' refers to individuals who have been involved in procedures for which Adult's Services is responsible but who do not fall into the identified service user groups.

2.5 Complaints by team

Long Term Conditions	3
Learning Disability	10
Rehabilitation/Re-ablement (R&R)	7
Access and Adult Protection (AAP)	6
Localities	10
Safeguarding	1
Prevention	1
External provision	9

The two localities teams have between them received ten complaints. The localities teams support a large number of service users and so it is to be expected that they would receive a larger number of complaint. Relative to the size of the population they serve this level of complaint is very low and reflects efforts made to resolve concerns of service users before they reach the formal procedure. The number of complaints received by the Learning Disability team has reflected some specific issues as noted (Para. 2.4) above.

The next largest number of complaints have concerned external provision. These are the agencies commissioned by the Local Authority to provide services on our behalf. In the main they provide home care and residential care services. It is very important that we are aware of concerns about these services as it assists in our monitoring and quality assurance processes. We want to be sure that these agencies are providing excellent service and to work with them to ensure best standards.

Complaints made about Rehabilitation and Re-ablement services were in relation to issues around the quality of service provision. In the main these complaints were from family members concerned that their relatives were not getting a service they felt they should receive.

Issues raised in respect of Access and Adult Protection were in connection with processes issues such as delays or concerns that family had not been adequately informed

2.5 Complaints by People Directorate Priority

Support Independent Living	22
Enhance Wellbeing	13
Prevention & Early Intervention	2
Safeguard & Protect	10

People Directorate has identified six key priorities towards which all People Directorate services are working. In order to understand how well we are meeting these priorities it is important to understand what our service users say and so to look at all forms of feedback in the context of those priorities.

The above chart sets the complaints we have received against those priority areas. As can be seen the majority of complaints relate to the priority 'support independent living'. This is a key priority within Adults' Services as we move to support more people within their homes and their communities. It is important that we get our systems and processes right so that people receive the service that best suits them in achieving and maintaining control over their own lives.

2.6 Complaint by Finding

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Upheld in full	6	14	11
Upheld in part	13	12	15
Not upheld	21	20	19
Not Found			2

The above chart illustrates complaint by finding. Just over half of the complaints received this year were upheld in some aspect. Fewer complaints were completely upheld and slightly more partially upheld. The chart shows that this years figures are in line with previous years.

The two complaints for which there was no finding related to complaints where it was not possible to find any information to support them one way or another and so a firm conclusion could not be reached. One of these complaints was about agency provision and the agency enrolled the complainant in a review of relevant policies so that the complainant could share her views on whether she thought they were sufficiently robust.

All complaints were resolved. Four complainants had questions about their response but on further clarification or on more information being shared they accepted the response.

No complainants have taken their complaint to The Local Government Ombudsman this year because they were dissatisfied with the response.

2.7 Complaint by main issue

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Service delivery	23	7	12
Service quality	12	23	17
Appropriate Service		10	2
Information/communication	3	5	13
Customer service	2	1	1

The chart above shows that the main issue that people complain about have shown some change from the previous year. There has been an increase in complaints about service delivery, but not to the level of previous years, a decrease in complaints about service quality and a more significant increase in complaints about information and communication.

As we increasingly put people in control of their services and emphasise inclusion and involvement then expectations will increase in respect of the information we share. Another aspect of the focus on the service user is that services will communicate directly with the service user, unless they require otherwise and on occasion this can leave families feeling that they have been excluded.

Complaints about service quality include:

- Delay in putting in place funding arrangements.
- The way in which safeguarding enquiry was conducted
- Delay in the outcome of an assessment
- That required equipment/specialist service was not in place to support a resident.
- That standards of care were not adequate
- Missed calls, standard of care offered.

In response to complaints about service quality we have:

- Reviewed process to ensure appropriate information was shared promptly.
- Review of process to ensure that information is, wherever possible, shared about safeguarding enquiries.
- Staff were reminded that complaint enquiries should not delay ongoing casework.
- Information fed into whole service review. Admission procedure amended to ensure that on entering from hospital all necessary referrals have been made to partner agencies.
- Staff group were reminded about professional standards when communicating with relatives.
- Agency developed bathing risk assessment, staff instructed in respect of procedures and the importance of clear recording.

Complaints about service delivery include:

- Lack of assessment and charges for service,
- Appropriate equipment was not provided
- That a requested service had not been arranged and that the personal budget was to be reviewed with a view to making reductions.
- Failing to make the necessary changes to the personal budget to meet the costs of alternative provision.
- Delay in processes for reimbursement of overpayment on service charges

In response to complaints about service delivery we took the following action:

- Reimbursed charges
- Access to equipment within an establishment was improved, and the user guide updated to include more information.
- Assurances were given in respect of the personal budget, agreements made in respect of timescales and actions to enable progress with an agreed plan for future service.
- Changes to budgets were made and processes reviewed and amended to ensure that budgets are responsive to service changes.
- Improvement in information sharing processes between services.

Complaints about information and communication include:

- Charges for service
- Delay in following up on a funding issue and not informing complainant
- That an agency did not inform service user about changes to her service
- That the service was not taking account of the service users view in the way in which support was being delivered

In response to complaints about information and communication we:

- Made changes to the assessment process,
- Agreed to reduce charges because of some communication and recording issues,
- Agency agreed to waive some charges and put in place an improvement plan relating to information and communication.
- Service continued to work with the service user and with partner agencies in meeting needs in the preferred way.
- Agency was supported with a policy review and the development of a protocol around information sharing and capacity.

3 3. Children's Services

3.1 The Procedure

Our complaints procedure is designed to make sure that problems are responded to without delay and without unnecessary complication. There are three stages:

Stage One: allows the people most closely involved with the service concerned to deal with the issue that has been raised. This is because usually these colleagues will be most familiar with the problem and understand what can be done to sort it out promptly.

Stage Two: is a more detailed investigation of a complaint. This stage involves the appointment of an investigating officer. The investigating officer is independent of the service complained about. If the complaint is from, or about, a child or young person then someone independent of the council the 'Independent Person' oversees the investigation. The Independent Person provides an extra assurance that the complaint is investigated properly and fairly. The complainant will get a full report from the investigation, along with the responsible manager's decision.

Stage Three: is the final stage of the procedure. It is an independent review of the complaint. A panel of three people, who are all new to the

complaint and who are independent of the Local Authority, will review the information from the Stage Two investigation. They will talk to the complainant, the Investigating Officer and the responsible manager. They then make recommendations to the Assistant Director of the Service, who must take them into account in reaching the final decision on the complaint.

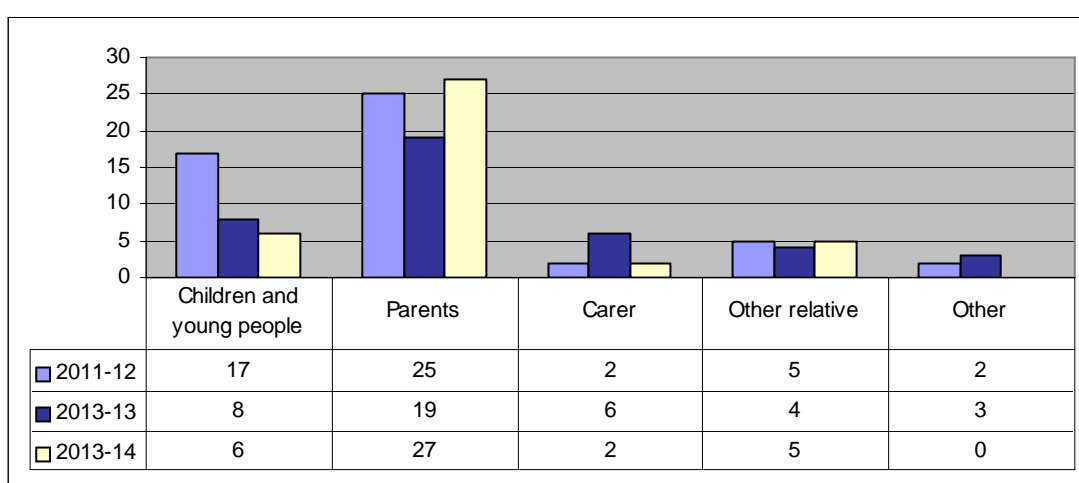
3.2 Complaints Received in year

Year	Number of Complaints
2011-12	51
2012-13	40
2013-14	40

The number of complaints has remained at the same level as last year. Young people and their parents are routinely involved, or their views represented, within decision-making processes, which offers more opportunities to have concerns addressed informally, so then there are fewer issues that remain unresolved. In these circumstances it is to be expected that the number of formal complaints remains low at around 5% of service users.

All but one of these complaints were resolved at the first stage of the procedure.

3.3 Complaints by complainant



The majority of complaints this year have been made by parents. A significant proportion of these, just over 20%, relate to conflict between separating, or separated, parents around residence of and contact with the children.

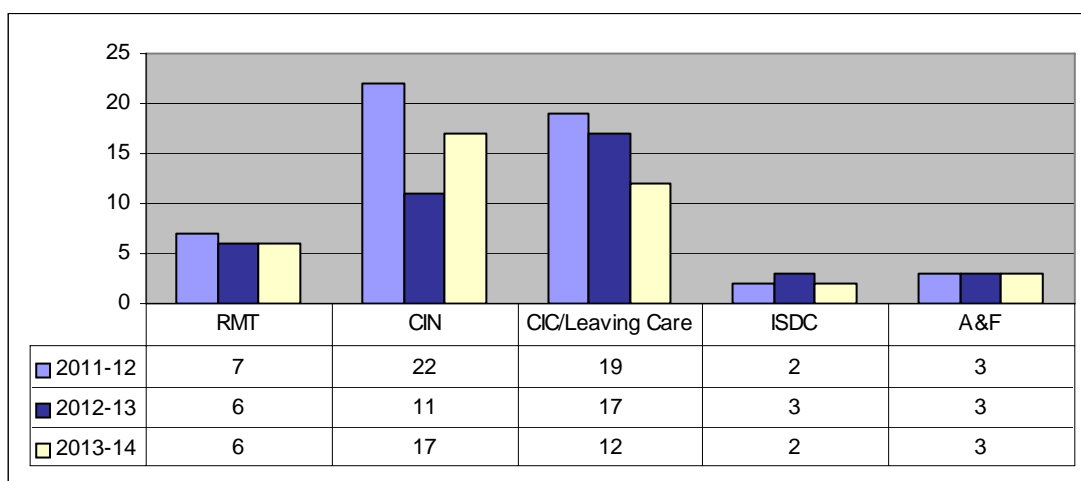
Complaints in these situations have been in the main about what the complainant considers to be a lack of balance in reports for court, or in relation to contact arrangements.

Around 15% of complaints are made by children and young people on their own behalf. The Children’s Advocate works pro-actively with children and young people. They will often approach the advocate direct to have issues of concern raised on their behalf and to have them resolved before they reach the stage of becoming a formal complaint.

Complaints from ‘other relatives’ are in the main from grandparents, these complaints concern issues such as contact with grandchildren or comments about the processes in which they are indirectly involved and may be on their own behalf or on behalf of their son or daughter, the children’s parents.

Complaints from carers have reduced from last year. The complaints this year are from foster carers and include complaints about the service to them as carers, and on behalf of the children in their care.

3.4 Complaints by Service Area



RMT = Case management -Referral Management
 CIN = Case management - Children in Need
 ISDC = Integrated Service for Disabled Children

CIC = Case Management - Children in Care (also includes Case Management - Leaving Care and residential home)
 A&F – Adoption and Fostering

The case management teams for children in need have received an increased number of complaints over the year. A number of these complaints have been from people who are involved in child protection procedures and who feel they have not been sufficiently involved in, or informed about the process, or are seeking to challenge the grounds for the actions being taken by the service. Services work hard to ensure that families who are part of child protection procedures understand the reasons for the concerns and the actions that are being taken as a result of these concerns. In circumstances where parents are not together there is more likelihood of one parent feeling that they are not being treated fairly or being excluded, this is a concern that has given rise to some of these complaints.

The chart above illustrates that complaints in relation to children in care and leaving care have reduced. There has been a reduction in complaints about contact although it is still a feature of a small number of complaints. It would be expected that such an emotive issue as contact with children who are in care or for whom the plan is long term care would give rise to concerns. Other concerns have in the main related to issues in connection to the appropriateness of placements.

Complaints that have been made about the referral management team have remained at a steady level and have concerned aspects of the assessment process, for example accuracy of information in an assessment, whether individuals have felt listened to within the process.

3.5 Complaint by finding

	Upheld	Not Upheld	Upheld in Part	Not found
2011-12	6	33	12	1
2012-13	3	24	9	2
2013-14	2	27	8	3

Around 25% of complaints have been upheld in full or in part with just under 70% not upheld. This is broadly in line with previous years. Complainants will generally be satisfied if they consider that their views have been heard, their concerns taken seriously and they receive a considered response.

We recognise that children’s services involvement in people’s lives may not always be welcomed and may give rise to concern, even when correct process has been followed. Complaints then give us an additional opportunity to explain, to clarify and to work with families. Although a complaint may not be upheld there are still lessons that services can take from their consideration of the views of service users.

The complaints that are not found are around issues of perception, where people feel they have not been treated properly, or where there has been no supporting information one way or the other in relation to the complaint. In those circumstances it is not possible to reach a conclusion on the complaint.

3.6 Complaints by Strategic Priority

People Directorate Priority	Number of Complaints
Safeguard and Protect	22
Raise Aspiration	5
Enhance Wellbeing	11
Support Independent Living	2

The above chart reflects the complaints made about children’s social care services in relation to the strategic priorities of People Directorate.

Over half of the complaints relate to the priority area ‘safeguard and protect’. These complaints concern safeguarding processes and interventions. These are key functions of the service and it will, therefore, be anticipated that they would feature in a significant proportion of complaints.

Complaints that relate to the priority ‘enhance wellbeing’ concern services that support young people to ensure that their best interests are met. These complaints include for example issues around family contact and appropriate provision.

3.7 Complaints by main issue

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Service delivery	18	8	12
Service quality	16	20	10
Appropriate Service	1	4	1
Information/communication	9	6	12
Inclusion/involvement	2	2	5
Customer service	5		

The chart illustrates that there has been a significant decrease in complaints about the quality of service and a corresponding increase in complaints about service delivery and about information and communication. There have been some complaints, as mentioned above in this report, which have sought to challenge the grounds for intervention in relation to the protection of children. These complaints have been categorised under the heading of service delivery. Complaints about information and communication are largely from parents who have felt that they have not been given the information they wanted, or thought they should have, at the right time.

Complaints about service delivery include:

- A request for necessary service was not agreed.
- Funding was not being made available for a school trip
- The response to concerns in relation to the management of challenging behaviour was not sufficiently thorough.
- Contact sessions were not taking place as arranged.
- That children's services intervention was unnecessary

In response to complaints about service delivery we have:

- Decisions in respect of services not being provided were reviewed and the reason for the decision, which was that the criteria was not met, was clarified. In other complaints the service was put in place.

- Revisited policy and confirmed it was fair and reasonable.
- Increased requirements placed on external provision in terms of the monitoring information they provide.
- Agreements with external placements amended to reflect increased requirements around reporting and monitoring.
- Expectations in relation to contact were confirmed and clarified.
- Further explanation was given of the reasons for intervention.

Complaints about service quality include:

- The behaviour of other young people within an establishment.
- Inaccuracies in a report.
- Conduct of child protection enquiry.
- Breach of confidentiality and unclear information in report.
- The approach taken during child protection enquiries.

In response to complaints about service quality we have:

- Worked with young people in developing strategies to manage behaviour. As a result a young person was motivated to contribute to wider anti-bullying agenda.
- Further explained and clarified the content of a report.
- Revisited elements of practice standards.
- Added a note to clarify information in a report
- Reviewed the role of the service in assessments where there are issues in relation to domestic abuse.
- Undertaken a development workshop for staff in relation to working with families where domestic abuse is a feature.

Complaints about information and communication include:

- Information sharing in respect of child protection conference and lack of consultation around the processes.

- Sharing of confidential information and not listening to & taking account of concerns.
- Not being open and not sharing information about concerns.
- Lack of information about the nature and purpose of intervention.
- No explanation of the changes to contact arrangements

In response to complaints about information and communication we have:

- Ensured the sharing of accurate information and advice in relation to child protection and other processes.
- Explained the duty to share information in respect of safeguarding children.
- Explained the actions being taken in response to concerns that had been raised.
- Apologised that it was not possible to share information about concerns at a particular point in the process.
- Offered further clarification that contact arrangements had been changed by direction of the court.

Complaints about inclusion and involvement and appropriate service include:

- That a young person's views about where she should live were not being listened to.
- That a young person was not being consulted about where he wished to live and who he would like contact with.
- A father was not being included in decisions about contact.
- That the service being provided to a young person was not suitable to her needs.

In response to complaints about involvement and appropriate service we:

- Worked with the young person around ensuring an appropriate placement. The outcome was that she moved to the placement of her choice.

- Consulted with the young person and confirmed that he was happy with the current arrangements and that they were in line with his wishes and views.
- Clarification was offered in relation to the role of the service and where responsibility rested in respect of contact.
- Explanation was given that placements had been selected subject to multi agency assessment of need.

Monitoring and reporting

Services look to complaints for information about their performance and views of the people who use those services. From this information they can identify areas for development or for confirmation that existing processes are working effectively. To ensure that information is used for effective learning it is reported to a number of groups across the directorate and the council.

Service Monitoring

Safeguarding children in care

- These meetings give consideration to the issues being raised by complaints, links to the other information being presented to the groups and identifying what action should be taken to address these issues and to reduce the likelihood of any reoccurrence in the future. Information from this meeting is fed into reports that are presented to the LSCB.

Meetings are held with service managers and heads of service as required to address particular issues in relation to individual complaints

Divisional Monitoring

Information is reported to the A.D Children & Adults' services at regular performance meetings with their senior managers.

- These meetings identify both the most significant individual issues and wider themes and issues and actions to be taken in response to ensure that any learning is implemented across the wider service and that any implications for policy are addressed. Information can in turn be presented as required to other strategic and development groups e.g workforce development, to inform their actions.

Corporate Monitoring

Reports are presented quarterly at corporate senior management and at elected member review of council performance. These reports provide an overview of numbers of complaints, broad subject areas of the complaint, complaints upheld and development implemented. This allows for consideration, at a senior level, of the implications for wider strategic and policy development.

Access

We want to make sure that access to the complaints procedure is as straightforward as possible for anyone who wishes to use it. We ensure that information about the procedure is available, that service users know how to make a complaint and that our colleagues understand their role in offering advice and support to anyone who approaches them with a concern.

We make available independent guidance and support through the provision of advocacy. The Children's advocate offers support to all children and young people who receive a social care service and may wish to make a complaint or raise a concern about that service.

We commission advocacy services for vulnerable adults. A feature of this provision is that advocates will offer support to individuals who wish to make a complaint and represent the service users' views through the complaints process to ensure that they are understood and responded to effectively.

Timescales

Adults' Services

1-10	11
10-20	14
20+	21

Under the statutory procedure for adults services timescales are not specified. They are to be set for each complaint, according to the issues within the complaint. The more complex the issues then the longer will be needed to resolve them. Fifty four per cent of complaints about Adults' Services were resolved in fewer than twenty working days

Children's Services

1-10	11
10-20	21
20+	8

Complaints made under the Children Act procedure are subject to statutory timescales. For complaints at stage one complaints should be resolved in under ten working days, up to twenty working days can be taken for more complex complaints. Twenty five per cent of complaints about children's services were responded to in fewer than ten working days and eighty per cent in fewer than twenty working days. This represents an improvement in performance on the previous year with five per cent more complaints being resolved in fewer than twenty working days.

Of those complaints that took over twenty days this was as a result of the complexity of the complaints, which required them to be investigated by a manager from another area or needed the contribution of more than one service area in the response.

Others were delayed because complainants or staff members were unavailable and

therefore not able to contribute information that was necessary to the consideration of the complaint.