

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

**ADULT CABINET MEMBER  
AND  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES CABINET MEMBER**

**ANNUAL REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS REPORT 2014-15**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 To present the Annual Representations and Complaints Report 2014-15 for social care services for children and adults in line with statutory requirements.

**2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 There is a statutory requirement to present an annual report on 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 services. There is a requirement that local authorities address these representations, through a three stage procedure for complaints for social care services for children and a two stage procedure for social care services for adults.
- 2.3 The Children Act procedure sets out three stages under which complaints can be investigated and heard. The guidance specifies the timescales for dealing with complaints at each stage.
- 2.4 The procedure for adult social care complaints 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 To receive and approve the Annual Representations and Complaints Report for 2014-15 for adult and children's social care services.

**4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

- 4.1 The complaints procedures and annual report meets the requirements of the Children Act 1989 and NHS Community Care Act 1990.

4.2 During 2014-15 there were 40 complaints about adult social care services and 65 complaints about children's social care services. The annual report provides a summary of the complaint categories and the outcome of the complaint.

4.3 The service uses complaints findings to inform service development and improvement. The report provides an overview of the actions taken as a result of complaints information.

## 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 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.

## 8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 That the Annual Representations and Complaints Reports for Children and Adult Services is received and approved.

DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE

Civic Centre  
Ashby Road  
Scunthorpe  
North Lincolnshire  
DN16 1AB

Author: Becky McIntyre

Date: 29 July 2015

### **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.



# **Adult and Children Social Care Services**

## **Annual Representations and Complaints Report 2014-15**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1** This is the Annual Report of complaints and representations for adult and children's social care services for the year 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015. 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** The report is in two sections, one covering the NHS Community Care Act 1990 complaints procedures and the other covering the Children Act 1989 complaints procedures.

## **2. Adult Social Care Services**

### **2.1 Complaints Process**

- 2.1.1** This is the annual report on complaints about Adult Social Care Services, which have been addressed under the terms of: The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, Making Experiences Count.
- 2.1.2** This report outlines the complaint's made under the statutory procedure and the actions taken in response.
- 2.1.3** The Making Experiences Count procedure in Adult Services applies to services that are provided or commissioned by the Local Authority for: people with a learning disability; people with a physical disability; older people. North Lincolnshire's Mental Health Services are commissioned from the health trust, complaints are addressed under their procedures and are reported through the trust reporting arrangements.
- 2.1.4** The statutory procedure that applies in Adult Services is a two stage procedure; the first stage rests with the Local Authority, the second stage with the Local Government Ombudsman.
- 2.1.5** The first stage of the procedure supports a flexible, proportionate response to complaints. The way in which complaints are dealt with reflects the significance of the issues of complaint and takes into account the views of the complainant. We would expect that the responsible service would, in most cases, take responsibility for resolving their own complaints. It is important that services own their complaints and work with individuals who have cause for dissatisfaction to resolve those concerns.

- 2.1.6 For more complex complaints or in circumstances where an element of independence is required complaints are investigated by someone independent of the service, either a manager from another service area or someone who is independent of the Local Authority. Such investigations will report to a senior manager on their findings.
- 2.1.7 The principle in dealing with complaints in one stage is to 'do it once do it right' and the focus is always on resolution. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response they receive at stage one then the reason for the dissatisfaction will be reviewed. Any complaint which has not been thoroughly addressed, for example where some elements of the complaint have not been fully looked into, will be revisited. Where the complaint has been thoroughly looked into and the complainant is unhappy with the outcome then this too will be reviewed to ensure that the outcome is fair and appropriate and that all actions that should be taken have been identified. If the response has been a complete response and no further action can be taken then the complainant will be referred the Local Government Ombudsman for stage two of the procedure.

## 2.2 Overview of 2014-15 Complaints

### 2.2.1 Complaints received

Year	Number of Complaints
2012-13	46
2013-14	47
2014-15	40

The number of complaints has decreased overall this year from the previous two years. Improvements to processes and some changes to service delivery, in part in response to learning from complaints in previous years, has contributed to this reduction. For example there is now an improved responsiveness in terms of amending personal budgets to reflect changes in service, as a result of which there have been no complaints this year about this issue. Establishment of a hospital based social work team has led to improved communication and discharge processes, which has had an impact on the number of complaints received.

### 2.2.2 Complaint by finding

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Upheld in full	14	11	4
Upheld in part	12	15	15
Not Upheld	20	19	18
Not found		2	3

Around half of the complaints received this year were not upheld, half were either upheld in full or in part. Three complaints were not found, which means that there was insufficient information to reach a conclusion on the complaint. These three complaints concerned the outcome of assessment, re-assessment was offered and accepted by the complainants as a means of resolution. Two complainants this year have referred their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). The Ombudsman returned one of these complaints because it was considered that the Local Authority had not had sufficient opportunity to respond and in the other case a request for information was made to the local Authority by the LGO.

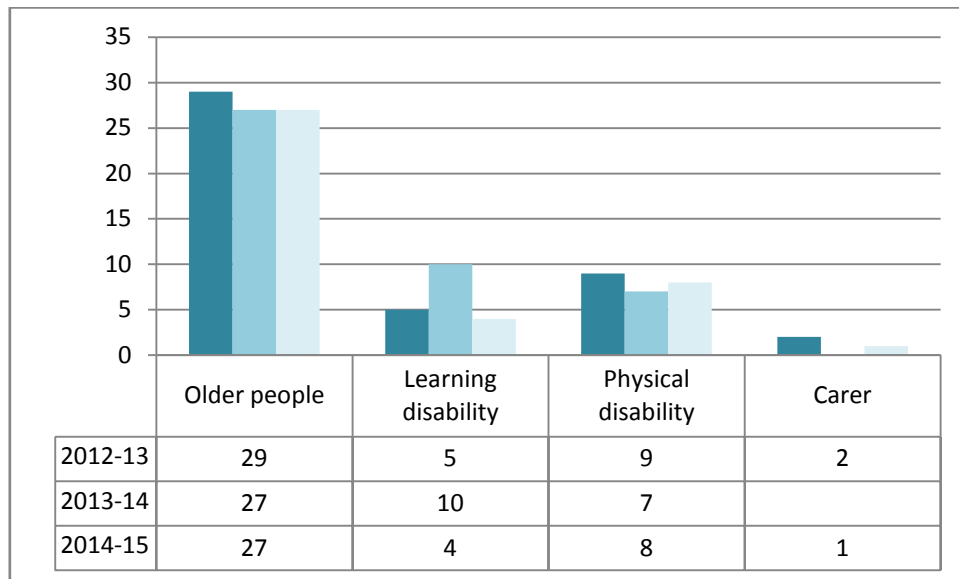
### 2.2.3 Complaints by complainant

Complainant	Service user	Relative	Other
2012-13	9	34	3
2013-14	10	34	3
2014-15	5	33	2

In the main complaints were made on behalf of service users by a relative, the chart shows that this is consistent with previous years. We understand that vulnerable service users may be reluctant to make a complaint about their service and we address this in a number of ways. We ensure that service users are informed about their right to complain, advocacy services are commissioned to assist and support individuals who wish to make a complaint

about their service, our staff are informed about the procedure. Services also work to ensure that service users are given opportunities to share their views about the service, through wider feedback mechanisms, for example reviews, without having to make a complaint. Any concerns identified in this way can be promptly resolved without recourse to the procedure.

## 2.2.4 Complaints by Service User group



Complaints in relation to services to older people from around a third of all complaints received this year. It is to be expected that complaints concerning these services would represent the greatest number of complaints as older people are the largest group of service users within Adult Services, they are also more likely to require a short term service or a service that has to be put in place at short notice, for example following a hospital admission and discharge, which call for prompt assessment and arrangement of service to meet a changed need.

Complaints about services to people with a learning disability have reduced this year, this in part is as a result of a reduction in concerns in relation to personal budgets. Processes of assessment and allocation of budgets have become smoother and understanding about these processes on the part of relatives and carers has improved.

Complaints in relation to services to people with a physical disability have remained at a level consistent with previous years.

### 2.2.5 Complaints by team

Team	Number of Complaints
Physical Disability	7
Learning disability	4
Rehabilitation/re-ablement	2
Access	10
Localities	7
Safeguarding/adult protection	1
Hospital Team	2
Housing related support	1
External provision	6

The access team respond to requests for services and undertake a significant number of contact and initial assessments. This team have received the single largest number of complaints this year, although low in comparison to their volume of activity. In the main complaints about access have centred on concerns about the outcome of assessments, which are based on unmet needs and not always in accordance with family wishes. Outcomes of assessments have, on occasion, been pre-empted by complainants. Concerned that the outcome may not be what they were wishing for they have made a complaint before the assessment and resource allocation process has been concluded. Another feature has been complaints made by relatives who were concerned that they have not been fully involved in the assessment process and consider that some information has therefore been missing from the assessment.

Reviewing of the personal budget has prompted complaints within the physical disability service. Reviews have clarified what is acceptable expenditure for the personal budget and individuals have felt that this has led to a limiting of their personal choice in relation to meeting their support needs.



Complaints about the Localities Team concerned issues in relation to delays in putting a service in place and provision of appropriate services.

Complaints about external provision relate to services that are commissioned on behalf of individuals from the independent sector. Complainants can choose to have the provider to deal with their complaint, or they can come to the Local Authority to have their concerns about the provider addressed. These complaints have related to the provision of home care and residential care and are more usually in connection with quality.

### 2.2.6 Complaint by main issue

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Service delivery	7	12	7
Service quality	23	17	12
Information & communication	5	13	19
Inclusion and involvement			2

The above chart illustrates that issues in relation to information and communication have been the most significant cause for complaint. This reflects in part issues referred to earlier in the report around family members considering that they have not been included in processes and that therefore they have not had the opportunity to share relevant information. There are occasions when vulnerable adults will not want their families involved and do not give their consent for information to be shared with them. When outcomes of assessments or services arranged are not exactly what individuals have wished for, or were expecting, they can feel as though they have not been appropriately included and that decisions have been made without them.

Issues in relation to service quality have given rise to 15% of complaints. These complaints relate to, for example standards of care, timeliness in putting services in place and level of support.

## **2.3 Complaint focus and actions**

### 2.3.1 Complaints about Information and Communication include:

- Lack of communication in relation to personal budget expenditure?
- Family were not included in or were not informed about care planning
- Lack of clear information about making contributions for service
- Comments made in an assessment that reflected views not fact
- Lack of co-ordination around a discharge from hospital.
- Assessment did not include family member as agreed, appropriate service was not provided.
- Delay in identifying appropriate housing and support service.
- Lack of information about the outcome of a safeguarding alert
- Concern that personal information had been shared

In response to complaints about issues relating to information and communication the following actions were taken:

- Ensured that support planning documentation is clear about appropriate expenditure
- Put in place a communication agreement with family
- Clarified that charges would be met by the service
- Issued reminders to staff around:
  - Content of assessments
  - Appropriate sharing of assessments.
  - Roles and responsibilities within hospital discharge processes
- Arranged a re-assessment of needs.
- Offered apologies and explanation of the service provided.
- Explained processes and the options under consideration.
- Reviewed procedures to ensure that all relevant individuals are informed about the outcome of safeguarding alerts.
- Explained process and reviewed support needs.

### 2.3.2 Complaints about service quality include:

- Standards of personal care were not maintained to an acceptable level
- Delay in seeking appropriate advice and support
- Manner in which a care service was delivered

- Delays in assessing for and agreeing the personal budget
- Lack of support and lack of contact with family
- Failing to follow service user instruction
- Delay in provision of equipment
- That appropriate standards of care were not being provided
- Delay in carrying out changes to service
- That support offered was not adequate

In response to complaints about issues relating to service quality the following actions were taken:

- Review of staff rota's and cover
- Providing refresher training in relation to moving and handling
- Issued reminders to staff about appropriate conduct
- Reassessment offered with support to manage personal budget
- Introduction of a record for essential information
- Put in place an agreement in relation to contact.
- Apologised for misunderstanding on part of worker which led to instructions not being followed.
- Addressed issues of delay with equipment provider
- Process change to ensure improved monitoring of provision
- Care plan revised to ensure that requirements in relation to delivery of care were specific
- Process reviewed to ensure monitoring of transfer between teams.
- Offered re-assessment of need.

2.3.3 Complaints in relation to service delivery and inclusion and involvement include:

- A request for funding of a particular service was not granted
- A rehabilitation service was not provided in the preferred way.
- A necessary piece of equipment was not provided
- Appropriate family members were not included in decisions being made about service provision
- That the appropriate service was not provided and that the assessment leading to the decision was inaccurate

In response to complaints about service delivery and inclusion and involvement the following actions were taken:

- Clarification of service provision and of options available
- Procedure changed in relation to determining where rehabilitation needs are assessed as being best met, to ensure clarity.
- Review of policy in relation to provision of small pieces of equipment
- Explanation around capacity and consulting with service users in making decisions about their service.
- Explanation of the assessment outcome and service criteria

## 2.4 Timescales

2.4.1 Although the Adult Services complaints procedure does not carry with it specific timescales, as a one stage procedure the means of addressing a complaint, including the length of time taken should reflect the issues in the complaint. We do however monitor the length of time taken to respond to complaints in order to ensure that complaints are dealt with in a timely way. In general the more complex a complaint the longer will be taken to resolve.

10 days & under	12
11-20 days	10
21 days & over	18

The above chart shows that 55% of complaints received this year were addressed in fewer than 20 working days. A further 30% were responded to in fewer than 30 working days.

2.4.2 Complaints that took longer than 30 working days to response to did so for a number of reasons, for example: the involvement of more than one service area, long term absence of key members of staff, more complex issues requiring more detailed enquiries.

### **3. Children's Social Care Services**

#### **3.1 Complaints Process**

3.1.1 This section of the report is the Annual Report on complaints and representations for statutory services to children and families for the year 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015.

*(For the purpose of the commentary in this report the term Children's Service(s) is used to describe the functions to which the statutory procedure applies, as set out below)*

3.1.2 This report is written under the terms of the Children Act 1989, Representations Procedure Regulations (England) 2006.

3.1.3 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 Children 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 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. If the complaint directly involves 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. The responsible manager is the Principal Officer of the service concerned.

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.

- 3.1.4 Children's Services has a range of means by which it engages with children and young people, their families and their representatives. Ensuring that they have a voice 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 wider service development.
- 3.1.5 Children and young people and their families are heard at the individual level by including them in planning and in reviews, seeking their contribution and offering support to ensure that they are able to take part.
- 3.1.6 We do however recognise that despite making every effort to ensure a positive experience for children, young people and their representatives, occasionally people's experience of our services, 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 look at the issue of concern and take action to resolve that concern. We work with people at times in their lives when they are experiencing particular challenge and we would always wish to act promptly to address any issues raised to ensure that people continue to have full confidence in our service. We therefore promote our complaints procedure as a means of resolving any concerns on the part of the children, young people and their representatives who use our services.
- 3.1.7 The complaints procedure offers the opportunity for services to review their performance in the light of the views of the people who use them. This is a valuable opportunity and one that can provide valuable information about the effectiveness of services, in turn enabling services to learn and to identify where improvements can be made.

## 3.2 Analysis of complaints

### 3.2.1 Overview of complaints activity

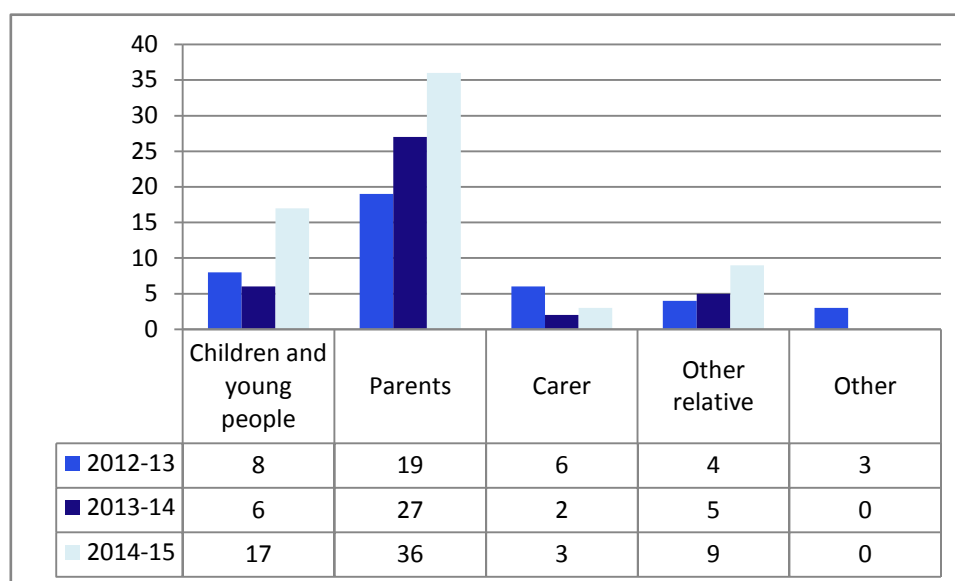
Year	Number of Complaints	Percentage of complaints to open cases
2012-13	40	6%
2013-14	40	6%
2014-15	65	7%

The number of complaints has increased since last year however the proportion of complaints to open cases remains low at around 7%. One feature is an increased number of complaints from parents who have been involved in private law proceedings, for example seeking residence of their children. Children's case management have been involved in an increased number of such proceedings and requests for reports to inform the courts' decision making. In these situations, as would be expected, the relationship between parents can be acrimonious and so they are more likely to raise concerns about a perceived lack of fairness or balance.

The service encourages children and young people to make representation using the complaints procedure. This empowerment and ensuring that young people are aware of their right to complaint has resulted in an increased number choosing to use the formal procedure to have their issues addressed.

All but one of the complaints received were resolved at the first stage of the procedure, which represents 98% of complaints. Another complaint went straight to stage two, independent investigation, because of the complexity of the issues involved.

### 3.2.2 Complaints by complainant



The majority of complaints this year were made by parents. A significant proportion of these complaints, just over 25%, relate to conflict between separating, or separated, parents around residence of and contact with the children as above. 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.

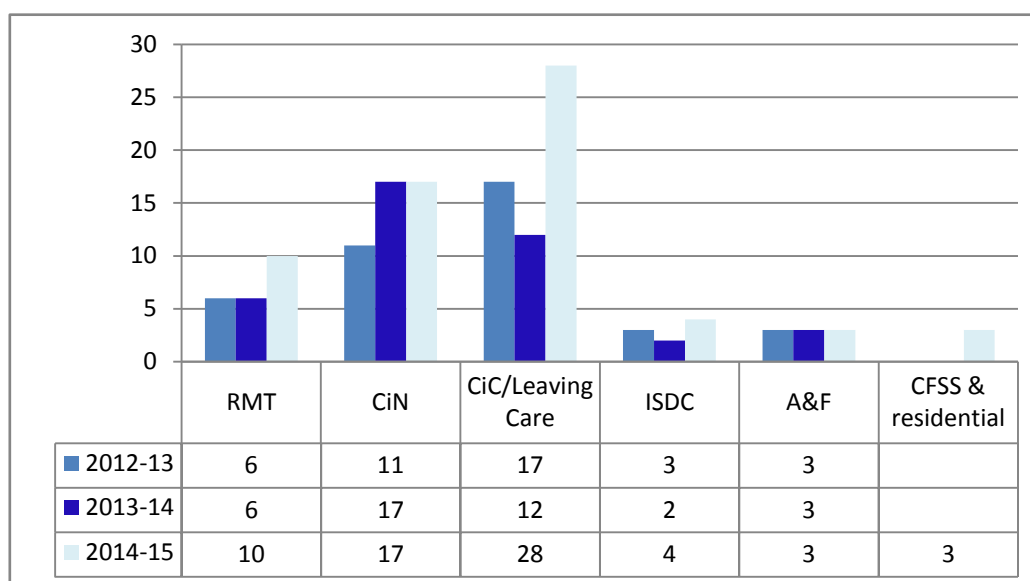
Around 29% of complaints this year were made by children and young people on their own behalf, an increase on the previous year. Children's Services makes every effort to ensure that children and young people have a voice and that they understand what to do if they have a worry or a concern. Young people have indicated an increased willingness to use the complaints procedure to have their concerns addressed and to influence decisions being made in respect of their care. In addition the Children's Advocate works proactively with children and young people so that children and young people are familiar with her and will approach her if they have an issue to rise. The Children's Advocate advises young people about their right to complain and has supported 9 young people to make a complaint.

Complaints from young people have concerned a range of issues including: concerns about support coming to an end, their views being listened to in respect of planning about where they live and family contact.

The complaints from 'other relatives' are mainly from grandparents. These complaints have purported a lack of appropriate response to concerns, sharing of inaccurate information, delays in process.



### 3.2.3 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*

*Cfss – Child & Family Support Service & Residential*

The case management teams for children in care and care leavers have received an increased number of complaints over the year. This increase in part reflects the increased number of complaints from children and young people.

The chart above illustrates that complaints in relation to services to children in need have reduced slightly.

Complaints that have been made about the referral management team have also increased, but remain at a low level, particularly in the context of the number of contacts that are dealt with by the team.

Complaints in relation to the ISDC service have also increased, but even so they remain at a low level for the service.

### 3.2.4. Complaint by finding

	Upheld	Not Upheld	Upheld in Part	Not found
2012-13	3	24	9	2
2013-14	2	27	8	3
2014-15	2	42	19	2

Around 30% of complaints have been upheld in full or in part with just under 60% 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. Only one of these complaints has progressed to the next stage of the procedure because the complainant was dissatisfied with the 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. Services can become involved at difficult and stressful points in people's lives and they are unfamiliar with the service and its role. Complaints can then give the opportunity to clarify and explain and remedy any potential misunderstanding. Complaints when they are not upheld can still provide an opportunity for the service to learn.

The complaints that are recorded as '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 whether the complaint was justified.

### 3.2.5 Complaints by main issue

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Service delivery	8	12	12
Service quality	20	10	27
Appropriate Service	4	1	2
Information/communication	6	12	17
Inclusion/involvement	2	5	6
Customer service			1

The chart illustrates that there has been a significant increase in complaints about the quality of service and a smaller increase in complaints about information and communication. Service quality covers a range of issues around the way in which we deliver services rather than the service itself and can include timeliness of provision, the way in which concerns have been responded to or acted on and quality of assessments.

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.

### **3.3. Complaint focus and actions**

The summary of complaints below includes all complaints both upheld and not upheld.

#### **3.3.1 Complaints made about service delivery include:**

- Changes being made to service provision
- That a requested service was not being provided
- Not putting support in place when needed
- Financial support for placement
- Unsuitable service provision

In response to complaints about service delivery we have:

- Reviewed the arrangements for transport for short breaks
- Clarified the purpose of our intervention,
- Reviewed our practice to ensure that requirements with placement providers around standards, expectations and outcomes are subject to clear agreement.
- Reinstated provision and agreed funding
- Developed information for carers in respect of special guardianship orders.

#### **3.3.2 Complaints about service quality include:**

- A lack of objectivity towards one party in assessments

- Concerns about a possible breach of confidentiality
- Content of court reports is inaccurate and not balanced.
- Way in which contact is managed
- Worker not visiting as arranged
- The conduct of assessments and perceived unreasonable requirements around contact
- Timeliness of putting provision in place
- Actions taken in respect of the behaviour of another young person
- Delays in assessment and lack of information about the outcome
- The support that the complainant considered necessary was not offered
- Late notice in respect of a court hearing
- Lack of response to request for support

In response to complaints about service quality we have:

- Offered explanation around intervention, the role of the service and the nature of the concerns
- Introduced a contact communication book
- Offered clarification with staff around the role of the service in private law proceedings.
- Offered re-assurance in respect of the rules around the sharing of personal information
- Negotiated and reached agreement around requirements of contact
- Supported a young person to undertake anti-bullying ambassador training
- Undertaken to review with staff the processes around assessments, in particular in relation to third party information and in sharing the assessment with the people involved.

3.3.3. Complaints about information and communication include:

- Inaccurate advice in relation benefit eligibility
- Information sharing during assessment process
- Lack of information sharing with parents

- Not being clear about the reasons for involvement by the service
- That information being shared was inaccurate
- Poor communication around the placement of children and contact arrangements
- Not keeping parent informed throughout the assessment and delay in communicating the outcome
- Advice given to family around contact

In response to complaints about information and communication we have:

- Given support to secure appropriate benefits
- Offered apologies for delays
- Clarified within the service their responsibilities in terms of information sharing with parents who have parental responsibility
- Held a family meeting to ensure that any misunderstandings were addressed
- Made changes to the service to further support parental engagement
- Agreed with parents to amend agreements so that decision making responsibility rested in full with them.
- Clarified the role of the service in respect of court reports
- Ensured that the required information was shared.

3.3.4. Complaints about inclusion and involvement and appropriate service and customer service include:

- The way in which the change of social worker took place
- The lack of information about a proposed placement
- Not being listened to in planning for the future
- The service not working with parents and not taking into account the progress being made
- That the placement is not meeting their needs
- Cancelling of contact without notice

In response to these complaints we have:

- With the help of the children in care council looked at what young people would like to happen when their social worker changes and going forward to develop, from their views, a set of minimum standards.
- Undertaken a review foster carer profiles to ensure they are child friendly and informative,
- Made agreement with young person around increased family contact as part of a graduated approach to a return home.
- Ensure that contact takes place in accordance with established arrangements.
- Reviewed process to make sure that the children's advocate is informed about placement support/disruption meetings so that support can be offered to young people.

#### 4. Timescales

- 4.1 Complaints made under the Children Act procedure are subject to statutory timescales. Complaints at stage should be resolved in under ten working days, up to twenty working days can be taken for more complex complaints.

Number of days	Total Responses
Between 1 and 10	20
Between 10 and 20	24
Over 20	21

Thirty per cent of complaints about children's services were responded to in fewer than ten working days and sixty eight per cent in fewer than twenty working days.

- 4.2 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.

## **5. Monitoring and reporting**

Services actively use findings from complaints to inform them about their performance and to understand the 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.

### **5.1 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.
- Meetings with service managers and principal managers as required. Review complaints considering specific issues in relation to individual complaints and identifying any themes and cross cutting issues.

### **5.2 Divisional Monitoring**

- Information is reported to the Assistant Directors at regular performance meetings with senior managers. These meetings identify both the most significant individual issues and wider themes and issues and actions required, to ensure that any learning is implemented across the wider service and that any implications for policy or practice development are addressed. Information can in turn be presented as required to other strategic and development groups, e.g. workforce development, to inform their actions.
- Information is included in quarterly service performance monitoring reports. Informing the service about qualitative aspects of performance and making the information integral to service monitoring and service development.

### **5.3 Corporate Monitoring**

- Reports are presented quarterly at customer service board, which provides corporate senior management and elected member review of council performance. These reports provide an overview of numbers of complaints, broad subject areas of the complaint, complaints upheld and actions taken.
- An Annual Complaints Report is presented to the Cabinet Member.

Reporting at this level allows for consideration of the implications for wider strategic and policy development.

## **6. Access**

- 6.1 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 children, young people, vulnerable adults and their representatives 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.
  
- 6.2 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. Advocacy services are commissioned for adults who may wish for support in pursuing a complaint.