



EAST RIDING
OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

**Children's Services
Feedback
Annual Report
2014 – 2015**

Customer Relations Team

Contents

	Page
Introduction	3
Executive Summary	4
Compliments	6
Complaints	8
Children's Social Care	9
Corporate	15
Learning Lessons	19
Contacts	20
Local Government Ombudsman	20
School Complaints	21
Subject Access Requests	22
Freedom Of Information Requests	23

Introduction

It is a statutory requirement of the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 that the Local Authority publishes an annual report providing information regarding Children's Social Care complaints and representations. These are the 'Regulations' referred to throughout this report.

East Riding of Yorkshire Council Children's Services welcome complaints, compliments and comments as a way of improving service delivery to children, young people and their families.

This report provides information about complaints and representations made relating to Children's Social Care services under the Regulations during the twelve month period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015. In addition the report includes information relating to Children's Services corporate complaints and representations, Subject Access Requests (SAR), and Freedom of Information Requests (FOI).

All timescales for complaints referred to within this report are in working days.

The Customer Relations Team oversee the management of complaints and representations, SAR and FOI requests for children and adult services for the Local Authority, following Legislation / Regulations and statutory guidance ('Getting the Best from Complaints' DfES 2006).

Executive Summary

Compliments

75 compliments received in 2014/15 in Children's Services compared to 100 in 2013/14.

The number of compliments received continues to outnumber the number of complaints received overall.

The majority of compliments relate to quality of service provided and staff attitude and practice.

Children's Social Care Complaints

51 complaints were dealt with consisting of 32 new complaints and 19 ongoing from 2013/14.

There was a 40% reduction in complaints dealt with, down from 85 in 2013/14.

There was a 51% reduction in new complaints received, down from 66 in 2013/14.

47 complaints were resolved with four cases still in progress and transferred to 2015/16.

33 complaints (65%) were resolved at Stage 1

Most complaints are made up of several parts:

- 56% of those resolved at Stage 1 were not upheld
- 72% of those that progressed to Stage 2 were not upheld
- 73% of those that progressed to Stage 3 were not upheld

The majority of complaints received (45%) relate to issues with level and quality of service provision received.

There was a significant decrease in the number of concerns raised regarding staff attitude and behaviour from 30 (35%) in 2013/14 to 9 (18%) in 2014/15.

Corporate Complaints

There were 17 corporate complaints dealt with this year, two of which were ongoing from 2013/14.

12 complaints (71%) were successfully resolved at Stage 1.

Five complaints progressed to Stage 2.

Local Government Ombudsman

Nine enquiries, or request for information, were received from the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), with three of these progressing to an investigation and fault found with only one.

Contacts

Of the 82 contacts received that did not progress to being a complaint, the majority of the concerns raised were resolved satisfactorily by the relevant team or service area.

Subject Access Requests (SAR)

Numbers received have significantly increased to 34 from 23 in 2013/14, a 47% increase.

SARs have continued in trend from the previous year being increasingly complex in nature and requiring a coordinated response across a number of services.

19 of the 34 SARs (56%) were processed within statutory timescales.

Freedom of Information Requests (FOI)

192 FOIs were received compared to 183 in 2013/14, a 5% increase.

151 of FOIs (79%) were completed within statutory timescales.

Children's Social Care consistently receives the highest number of FOI requests in Children's Services each year.

Compliments

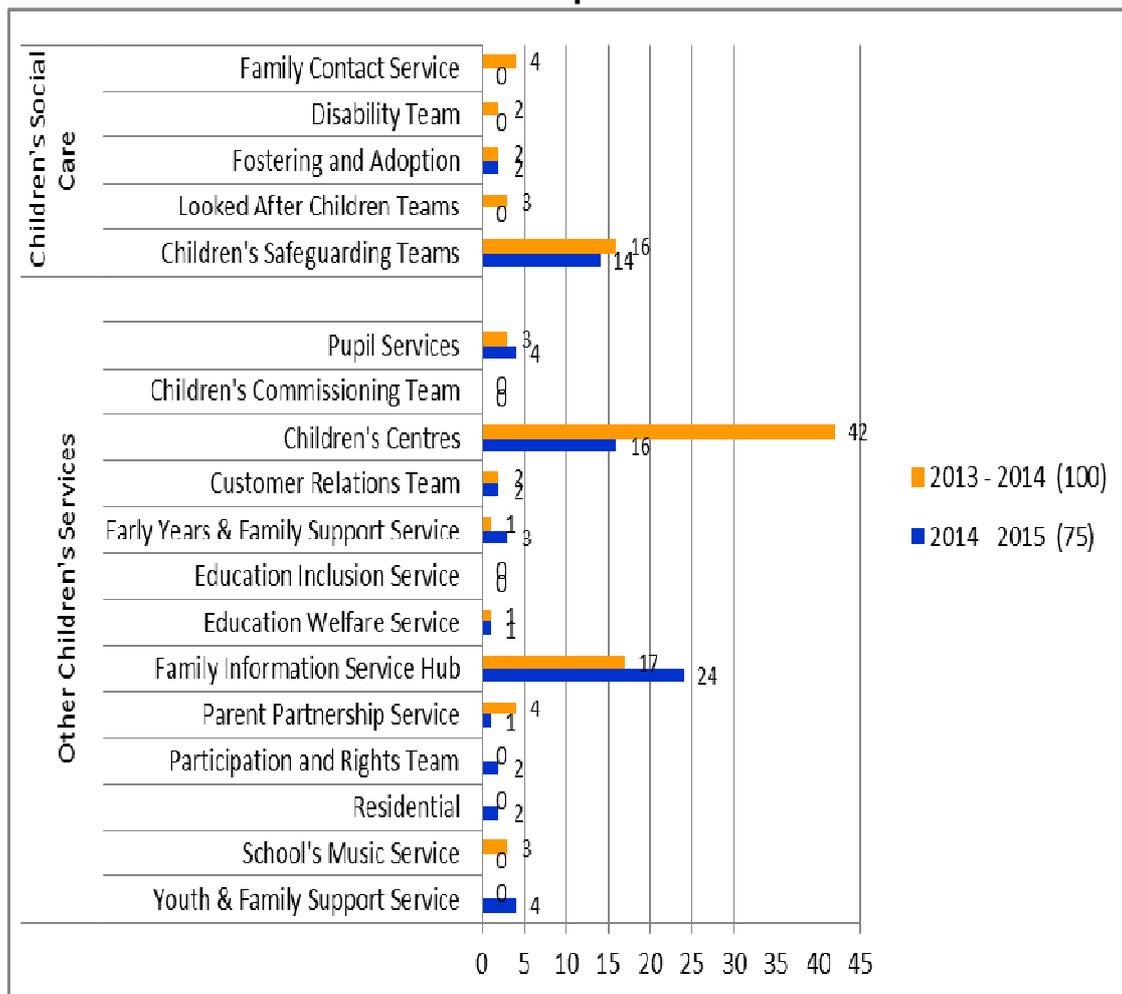
75 compliments were received in Children’s Services compared to 100 in 2013/14.

16 compliments were received for Children’s Social Care compared to 45 in 2014/15.

The number of compliments received across Children’s Services consistently outnumbers the number of complaints received year on year.

The majority of compliments relate to the quality of service provided and staff attitude or approach and practice.

Breakdown of Compliments Received



Compliments – Areas for Development

Aims 2014/15	Update and Aims / Priorities for 2015/16
Increased recording of compliments in children’s services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities taken to raise the profile of compliments with staff through team meetings, supervision – however numbers captured are still low and do not reflect level of positive feedback received • First stage of review of Council feedback system and processes, which included compliments, took place – improving ease of capturing compliments was part of this review • Objective for 2015/16 will be to agree new feedback software / system which will enable staff / officers to capture and input compliments directly • Practice of capturing compliments remains inconsistent and will transfer as an aim to improve for 2015/16

Complaints

What is a Complaint?

A complaint can be generally defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet, which requires a response.

Complaints can be made in person, by telephone, letter or email, or through an advocate.

Children and Young People in East Riding of Yorkshire known to Children's Social Care services can be supported in making a complaint by officers from the Children's Rights and Participation Team, who can provide an advocacy service.

Officers from Local Authority Children's Services will always look for opportunities to resolve concerns raised, as a positive alternative for the service user to entering a formal complaints process.

Children's Social Care Complaints Procedure

The Social Care complaints procedure is a statutory process which allows service users or other people on their behalf, to make complaints about Children's Social Care. There are three stages to this process:

Stage 1 – This is the most important stage of the complaints procedure as it is an attempt to address the complaint as quickly and informally as possible at a local level. Complaints at Stage 1 should be responded to within 10 working days, with an extension of a further 10 days where necessary.

Stage 2 – a complaint usually progresses to this stage if the complainant is dissatisfied with the findings of Stage 1. This is a more in depth investigation conducted by a senior officer and an external Independent Person. The findings of this investigation are adjudicated by a senior manager in Children's Services. Complaints at Stage 2 should be responded to within 25 working days, although in certain cases this can be extended up to 65 days if the complaint is more complex or there are unexpected delays.

Stage 3 – If the complainant remains dissatisfied then the complaint can progress to this stage, the Review Panel, made up of three Independent People. The Review Panel make recommendations to the Director of Children, Families and Schools who then makes a decision on the complaint and any action to be taken. The timescales for this stage are:

- Review Panel to be convened within 30 days
- The Panel's report to be produced within 5 days of the panel
- The Local Authority's response to be produced within 15 days of receiving the Panel's report

If the complainant remains dissatisfied then they can refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), who is empowered to investigate where it would appear that the Local Authority's own investigations have not resolved the complaint. Complainants can refer their complaint to the LGO at any time, although the Ombudsman would normally refer the matter back to the Local Authority to be considered under the appropriate complaint procedure first before getting involved.

Children's Social Care Complaints

32 new complaints were dealt with in, a decrease of 34 (51%) from 2013/14.

19 cases were ongoing from 2013/14, the same number of cases transferred from the previous year.

Of the 51 complaints dealt with, 33 complaints (65%) were resolved at Stage 1, a 4% improvement from the previous year.

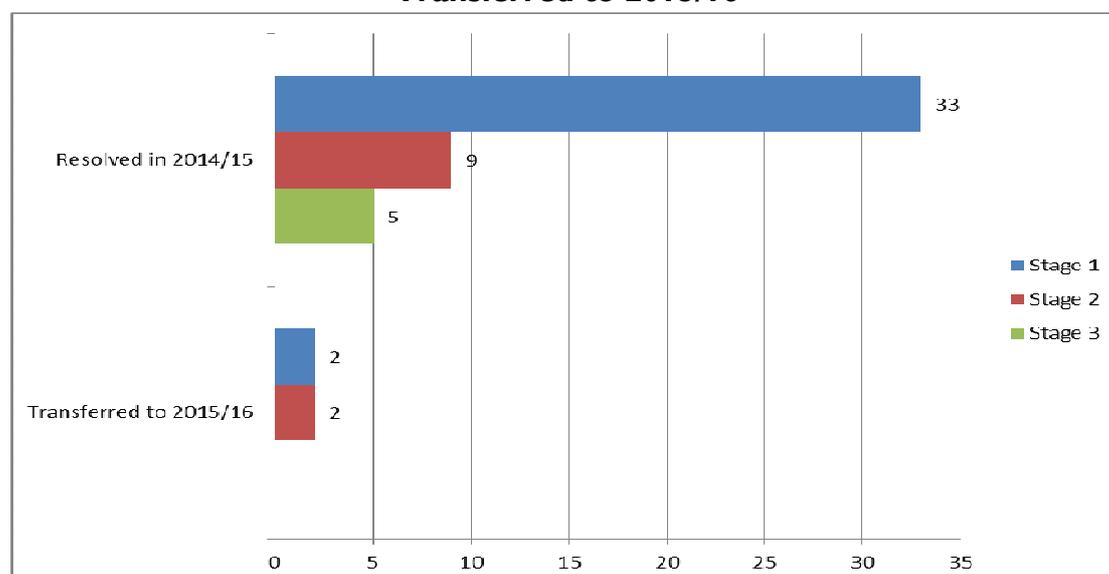
Four cases are ongoing and transferred to 2015/16.

The majority of complaints relate to issues with level and quality of service provision, with a significant decrease in the number of concerns raised regarding staff attitude and behaviour.

19 Stage 1 complaints and 4 Stage 2 Children's Social Care complaints were not completed within statutory timescales.

A change of approach at the outset to seek alternate resolution or remedy, in agreement with the complainant, is starting to show an increase in the number of concerns being resolved and a reduction of those progressing to formal complaints.

Children's Social Care Complaints Resolved at Each Stage 2014/15 and Transferred to 2015/16



Children's Social Care Complaints in Context

Complaints ongoing brought forward from 2013/14	19
New complaints received during 2014/15	32
Complaints ongoing carried forward to 2015/16	4

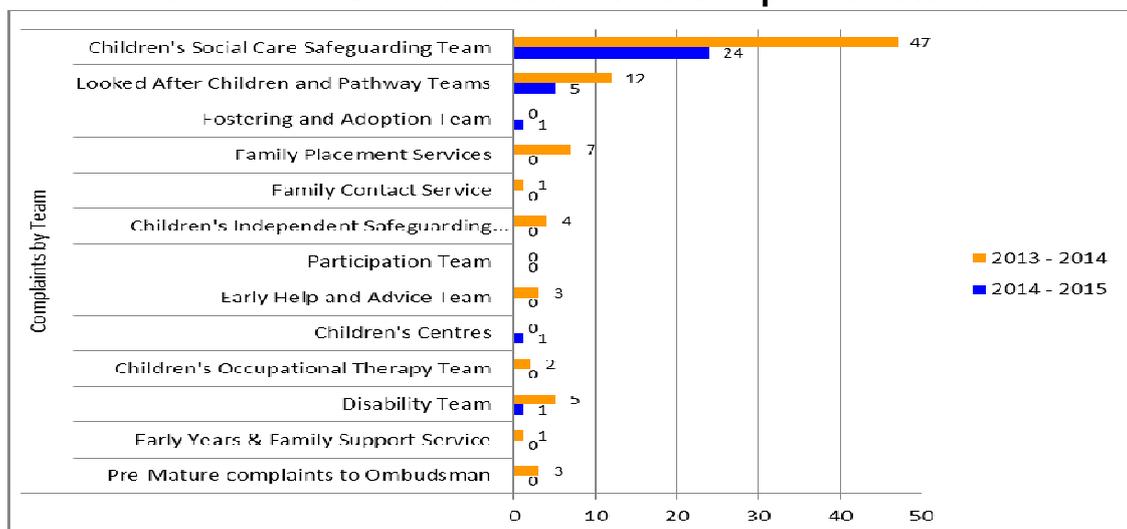
Complaints handled during 2014/15	Resolved in 2014/15	% Resolved in 2014/15	Transferred to 2015/16
Stage 1	33	64.7%	2
Stage 2	9	17.6%	2
Stage 3	5		
Total	47		4

Under 18 year olds in East Riding of Yorkshire (Source: Population Census)	June 2014	63141
Total number of open Children's Social Care Cases	31/3/2015	1739
Total Number of Looked After Children	31/3/2015	292
Total Number of Child Protection Cases	31/3/2015	175

Total number of complaints dealt with in 2014/15	51
% of complaints to CSC Cases	2.93%

Number of complaints from Under 18 year olds	7	13.73%
Number of complaints from Looked After Children	6	11.76%

Breakdown of Children's Social Care Complaints Received



Completion Rates for Children’s Social Care Complaints

Completion Rates – Stage 1	Cases
Completed in less than 10 days	2
Completed between 10 and 20 days	4
Completed between 20 and 30 days	6
Completed in more than 30 days	13
Did not progress as a complaint – alternatively resolved	8
Total	33

Completion Rates – Stage2	Cases
Completed in less than 25 days	0
Completed between 25 and 65 days	3
Completed in more than 65 days	4
Did not progress as complaint	2
One due to legal proceedings One due to complainant deciding not to continue with complaint	
Total	9

It is recognised that an unacceptable number of Children’s Social Care complaints are not completed within statutory timescales. Increasing capacity to deal with a complaint will remain an area for development in 2015/16 as it is recognised as a contributing factor to improving completion rates and successful dispute resolution. Improving the consistent quality of investigator’s reports will also remain an area for development in 2015/16.

However, it is acknowledged that a more thorough investigation at Stage 1, exceeding timescales, has in some circumstances resolved issues and prevented progression, or been at the request of the service user.

Outcomes of Children’s Social Care Complaints Completed

The 33 complaints that were resolved at Stage 1 contained 116 parts.

The nine complaints that were resolved at Stage 2 contained 117 parts (only those not upheld at Stage 1 were investigated).

The five resolved at Stage 3 contained 33 parts.

Stage 1

	Parts	%
Not upheld	65	56
Upheld	35	30
Partially upheld	12	10
No finding	4	4
Total	116	

Stage 2

	Parts	%
Not upheld	84	72
Upheld	15	13
Partially upheld	7	6
No finding	11	9
Total	117	

Stage 3

	Parts	%
Not upheld	24	73
Upheld	5	15
Partially upheld	0	0
No finding	4	12
Total	33	

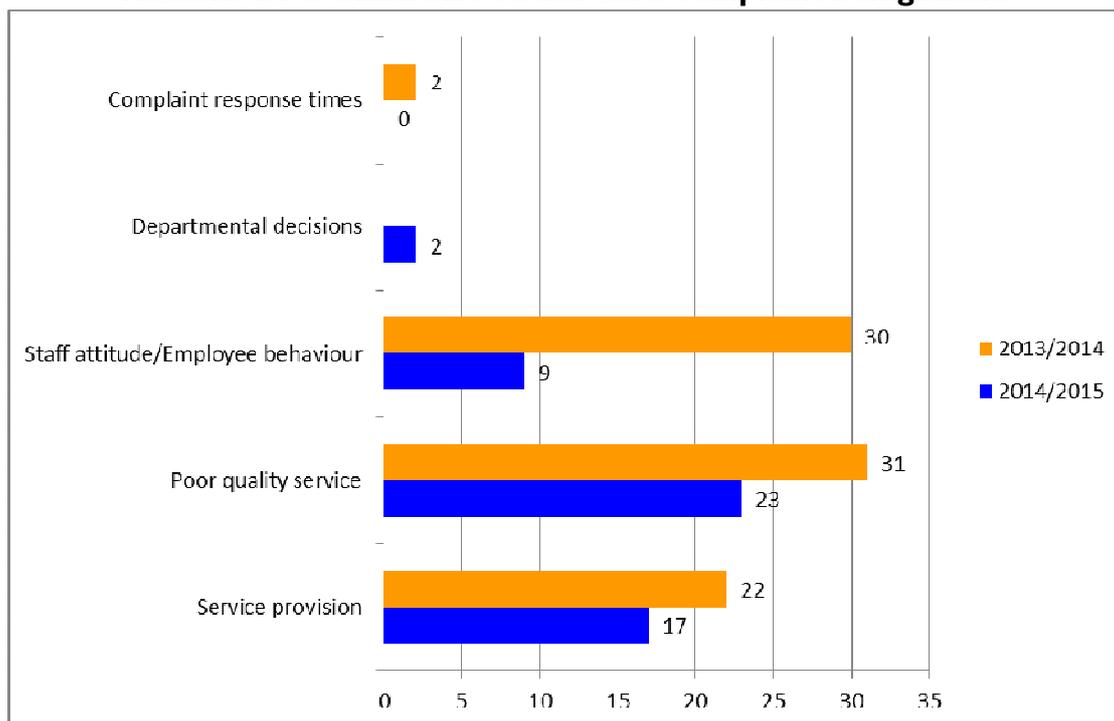
Nine complaints progressed to Stage 2 showing that the majority of concerns raised had been addressed satisfactorily at Stage 1. A significant percentage of complaints investigated were not upheld at each stage of the complaints process. This data shows that investigation recommendations and decision making were appropriate and consistently sound.

Reasons for Children’s Social Care Complaints

For the 51 complaints dealt with this year, these were the underlying themes and reasons for the complaints being raised:

Departmental decisions	4%
Staff attitude/Employee behaviour	18%
Poor quality of service	45%
Service provision	33%
Total	100%

Reasons for a Children's Social Care complaint being made



Complaints – Areas for Development

Aims 2014/15	Update and Aims / Priorities for 2015/16
Increase number of investigating / adjudicating officers available to deal with complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training sessions for managers acting as investigating officers took place • Time and support for managers available from customer relations manager increased as Customer Relations Team recruited new officers – scope is there to increase this further in 2015/16 so will remain an aim • Developing adjudicating officer training to be priority for 2015/16 • Business case started to increase investigating officer capacity – developing a senior customer relations officer role will be a priority for 2015/16
Improvement in complaint investigations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of complaints resolved at first stage – however improving timescales will remain a priority in 2015/16 • Increase in number of concerns

	<p>raised resolved successfully by alternate dispute resolution methods rather than progressing to formal complaint</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased support given by customer relations manager to investigating officers through the complaint process (with carrying out investigations and report writing) – this will remain a priority for 2015/16 • Quality of the responses sent to the LGO has improved in 2014/15 in respect of their requests for information / during their investigations
Improved use of action plans and lessons learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action plans and adjudication responses are ‘smarter’ – recommendations / decisions made are clearer and closer monitoring is in place • Revised lessons learned template introduced to improve monitoring • Further improvement will transfer as a priority in 2015/16
Smarter use of performance data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Relations Team performance data set has continued to develop in 2014/15 – information / progress reports more readily available and capability to monitor progress improved • New case recording system / processes introduced in the Customer Relations Team
Develop new methods of making a complaint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s leaflet re designed and introduced • Website content reviewed and updated • Dedicated secure email account introduced for Customer Relations Team • Council review of feedback system to include how complaints can be made – area for development in 2015/16

Corporate Complaints

Complaints made about Children's Services other than under the Children's Social Care statutory procedure are dealt with under the Local Authority Feedback Policy - the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

Stage 1 – This is the most important stage of the complaints procedure as it is an attempt to address the complaint as quickly and informally as possible at a local level. Complaints at Stage 1 should be responded to within 10 working days, with an extension of a further 10 days where necessary.

Stage 2 – if the complainant is dissatisfied with the findings of Stage 1 then a request for the matter to be considered by the Director of Children, Families and Schools can be made who will then provide a response within 10 working days

If the complainant remains dissatisfied then the matter can be referred to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Activity

17 corporate complaints were dealt with comprising of 15 new cases and 2 ongoing cases transferred from 2013/14. The number of complaints dealt with this year was the same as the previous year.

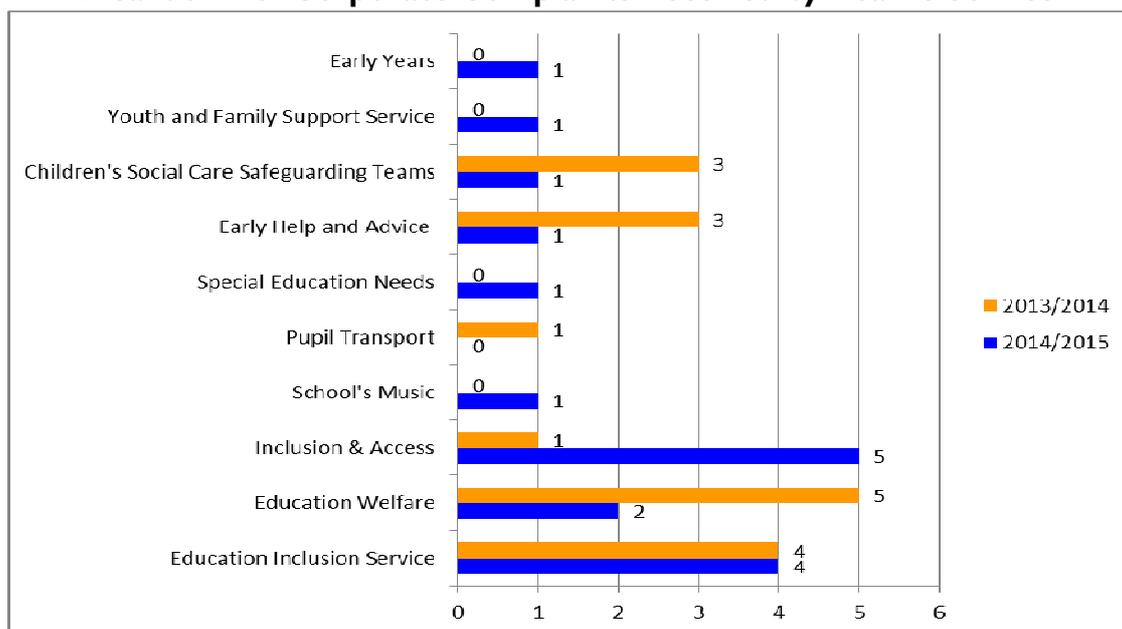
All 17 cases dealt with in 2014/15 were resolved and no cases were carried forward to 2015/16.

12 of the cases were resolved successfully at Stage 1 (71%), (2 of these were withdrawn as the complainant chose not to proceed). This is an improvement on 2013/14 when 67% were successfully resolved at Stage 1.

Only 5 of the 17 corporate complaints dealt with this year progressed to Stage 2 (29%). This is a 4% improvement on 2013/14 where 33% progressed to Stage 2

One corporate complaint progressed to the Local Government Ombudsman in 2014/15 – this related to the allocation of a blue badge with the Ombudsman upholding the complaint.

Breakdown of Corporate Complaints Received by Team / Service



Time Taken to Complete Corporate Complaints

Days taken	Stage 1	Stage 2
Withdrawn	2	
<10	11	0
10 - 20	1	3
20 +	3	2
Total	17	5

Outcome of corporate complaints resolved in 2014/15

There were 12 complaints successfully resolved at Stage 1.

There were 36 parts to the 17 investigated Stage 1 complaints.

Of the 5 complaints resolved at Stage 2, there were 11 parts (only those parts not upheld at Stage 1 were investigated at Stage 2).

Stage 1

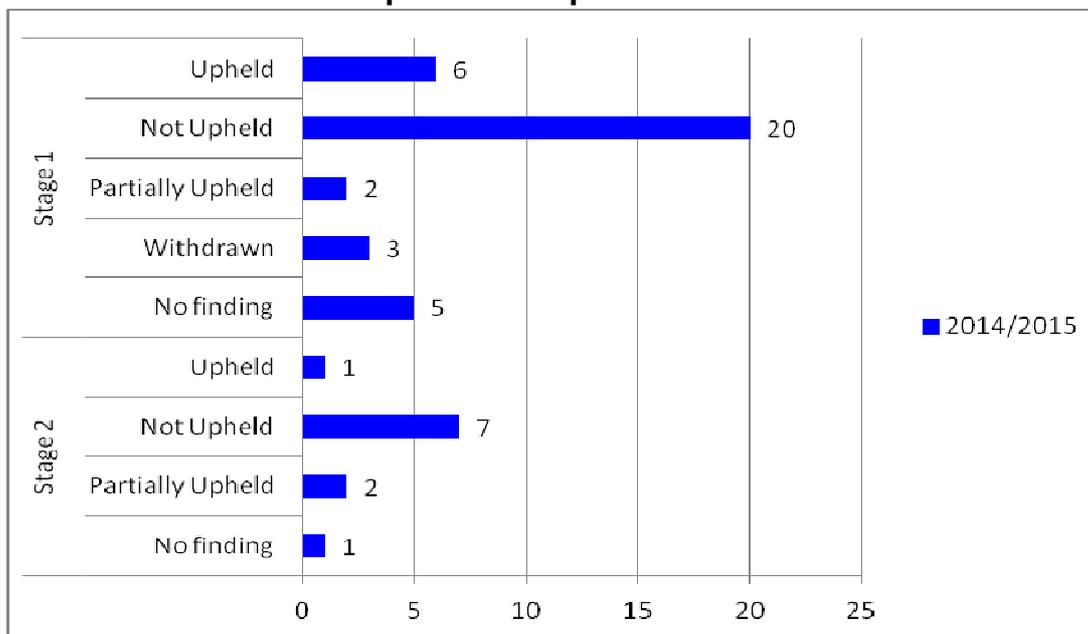
	Number	%
No finding	5	14
Withdrawn	3	8
Not upheld	20	55
Partially upheld	2	6
Upheld	6	17
Total	36	

Stage 2

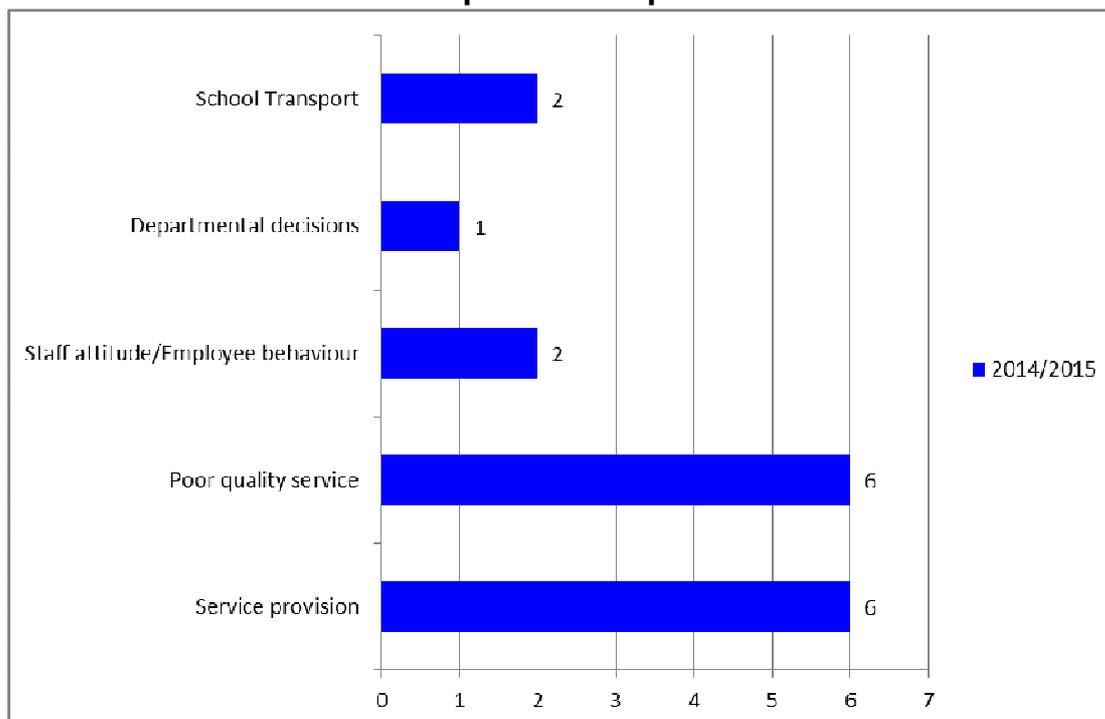
	Number	%
No finding	1	9
Not upheld	7	64
Partially upheld	2	18
Upheld	1	9
Total	11	

55% of the complaints made at Stage 1, were not upheld. Of those not upheld at Stage 1 that progressed to Stage 2, 64% continued to be not upheld with only 1 part overturned to being upheld. This is a strong indication that the investigation findings and decision making at Stage 1 was sound and accurate.

Outcome of Corporate Complaints Resolved in 2014/15



Reasons for Corporate Complaints in 2014/15



Corporate Complaints – Areas for Development

Aims 2014/15	Update and Aims / Priorities for 2015/16
Smarter use of performance data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Relations Team performance data set has continued to develop in 2014/15 – information / progress reports more readily available and capability to monitor progress improved • Planned introduction of a new Council feedback system in the next year will improve reporting capability further • New case recording system / processes introduced in the Customer Relations Team • Updating Customer Relations Team procedures and process guidance a priority in 2015/16 following introduction of the new feedback system

Learning Lessons

The statutory guidance **Children Social Care: getting the best from complaints**, issued by the Department for Education and Skills in 2006 tells us that *'Local Authorities should develop a listening and learning culture where learning is fed back to children, young people and their families who use their services – and fed into internal systems for driving improvement'*, and also *'it should give children and young people opportunities to tell the Local Authority about both their good and bad experiences of the service'*.

Complaints are a way of providing service managers with useful information in respect to how services are delivered, and can inform changes in future practice, policy and procedure. Feedback is gathered from the Investigating Officer/s and reviewed along with the recommendations and findings of the investigation reports.

The recommendations are monitored through Action Plans; a copy of which is sent to the complainant. These Action Plans contain details of the recommendations; include the nominated officer / service area responsible for each action and the timescale to be completed.

Some examples of learning from Children's Social Care complaints in 2014/15:

- Signs of safety meetings – procedures updated to ensure that minutes from meetings are routinely shared with the family; process updated to ensure that it is clear who has responsibility to ensure this takes place
- Where legal services are involved relating to a child's case, (for court cases in respect of adults involved in a child's life), current practice and procedures have been reviewed to ensure it is clear who is expected to communicate decisions made to parents / carers to avoid confusion and provide clarity
- Formal supervision arrangements have been reviewed for newly qualified social workers and staff new to the local authority to ensure that the appropriate level of support and guidance is in place
- Where adults are risk assessed to supervise contact sessions, the assessments undertaken are to be documented and stored on the child's Children's Social Care electronic case record
- For cases that are transferred in from another local authority, timescales have been introduced for the allocated social worker to contact the family
- East Riding Safeguarding Children Board and Children's Social Care managers have reviewed the information that is given to parents / families in respect of s47 investigations, to improve clarity and understanding of the process being followed
- The allocation of SARN assessment process has been reviewed to improve timescales for allocation

- Where a decision is made to exclude a parent / carer from a child protection conference or review, the process has been updated to ensure that this parent / carer receives a full, timely explanation of the reasons why
- To promote better understanding of conversations / verbal agreements and decisions made between families and staff in the Disability Team, a follow up in writing will take place to ensure there is a shared understanding and allow parents / carers to make informed decisions
- For Disability Team cases involving a number of local authority services – the increased use of multi agency meetings has taken place as a forum to ensure appropriate information and views are shared consistently, and the families have opportunity to input / share their views ‘once’ rather than have to deal with a number of services at different times

Issues and learning opportunities identified through reviewing performance in 2014/15 resulted in a number of areas for development for children’s services in 2015/16. These will be reviewed as appropriate throughout the year and then overall when completing the report for 2015/16.

Contacts

There were 82 contacts received that did not progress to a formal complaint – this is a 16% increase from 71 in 2013/14. There are two main reasons for this significant increase. The first is that there has been an improvement in the recording and performance management system used by the Customer Relations Team in respect of capturing details of these contacts. The second reason is the increased early involvement of the Customer Relations Team with social care managers to resolve issues locally rather than progressing to a formal complaint. The majority of these were resolved by the relevant team to the complainant’s satisfaction.

Other reasons for not progressing to a complaint included

- legal proceedings / police investigations taking place
- complainant did not meet the criteria under the Regulations to make a complaint
- no response / confirmation of complaints received, despite follow up from the Customer Relations Team

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

There has been a noticeable change in the practice of the LGO during this year requiring the Council to provide a more detailed response to their enquiries, often on more than one occasion for the same case. Despite this being a challenge in

terms of manager's capacity to prepare the response and provide supporting documentation, this has been seen as a positive as it has provided the LGO with a fuller picture of the background to a complaint and resulted in little fault found with local authority practice.

In addition, the customer relations manager has been more involved in supporting managers to prepare their response to an LGO enquiry or investigation; improving the quality and depth of information sent. The new Customer Relations Team framework used to send the information through has been recognised as good practice by the LGO.

Nine requests for information were received from the LGO; with most of these cases the LGO came back for further information.

The LGO was satisfied with the information provided for six of the cases and no fault was found. Of the three remaining cases that were investigated, fault was found in only one which related to the allocation of a blue badge.

School Complaints

The Council does not investigate school complaints, however the Customer Relations Team have continued to support schools and complainants by providing advice and guidance.

School Complaints – Areas for Development	
Aims 2014/15	Update and Aims / Priorities for 2015/16
N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop advice and guidance for schools and parents • Develop recording and monitoring systems

Subject Access Requests

There has been a significant increase in the number of Subject Access Requests (SARs) received from 23 in 2013/14 to 34, a 48% increase.

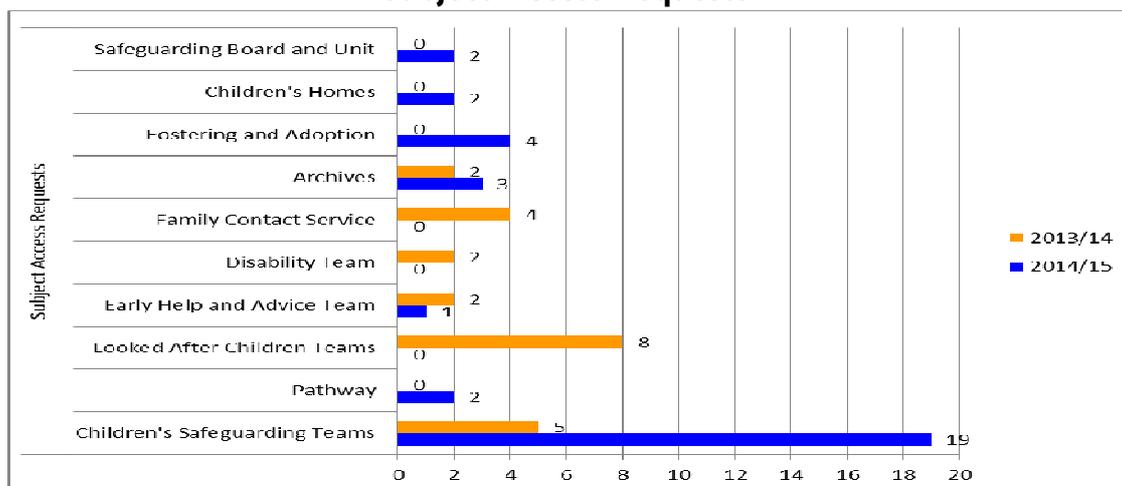
The complexity of the nature of the SAR requests also continues to increase. This has meant increased workload and capacity pressures for managers, often requiring a coordinated response across a number of services / teams.

19 (56%) of the 34 SARs received in 2014/15 were completed within the statutory 40 days. 61% were completed within 40 days in 2013/14.

Improvement in SAR completion timescales will continue to be an area for development for 2015/16, with a priority being how to increase manager capacity to complete SARs.

The quality of redacted records released to the applicant has significantly improved in 2014/15 with the introduction of the use of electronic redaction software.

Subject Access Requests



Subject Access Requests – Areas for Development

Aims 2014/15	Update and Aims / Priorities for 2015/16
Meeting SAR statutory timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers / complexity continued to increase in 2014/15 – capacity to meet this demand is a significant issue and key priority to address in 2015/16 • Introduction of redaction software has improved the quality of records released to the applicant

Freedom of Information Requests (FOI)

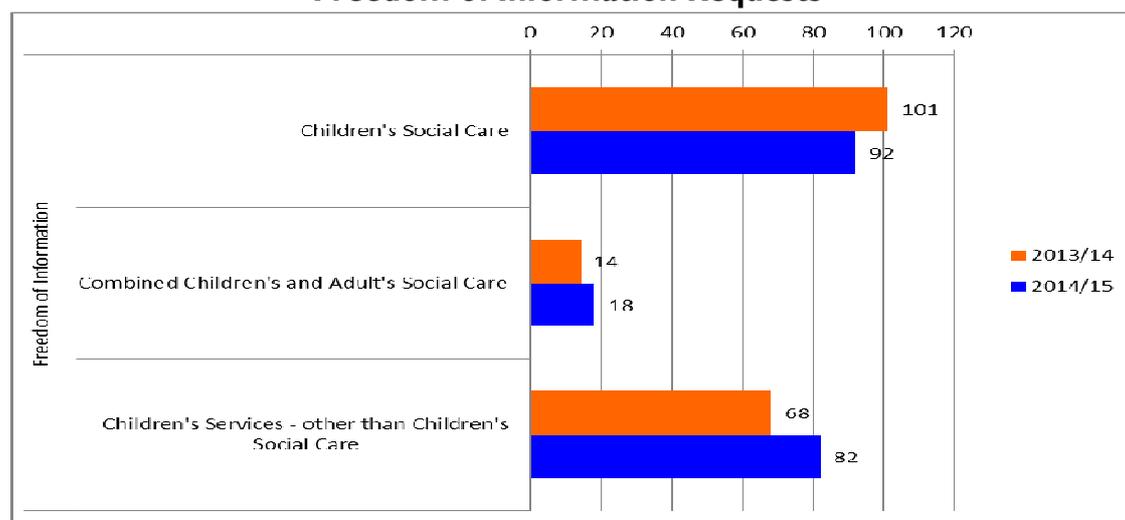
The number of new FOIs received continues to rise year on year with 192 received compared to 183 in 2013/14, a 5% increase.

151 of FOIs (79%) were completed within statutory timescales; this is recognised as an area for improvement in 2015/16. Closer monitoring of completion rates will be introduced with senior managers to understand underlying reasons, and to improve performance in 2015/16.

Children's Social Care consistently receives the highest number of FOI requests in Children's Services each year.

The trend of increased complexity to FOI requests across all Children's Services has continued.

Freedom of Information Requests



Freedom Of Information Requests – Areas for Development

Aims 2014/15	Update and Aims / Priorities for 2015/16
Improve response rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New template introduced to improve the quality of response from managers in 2014/15 • Improving timescales is an area for development in 2015/16

Angela Grasby
Customer relations manager