



EAST RIDING

OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

**Children's Services
Feedback
Annual Report
2015 – 2016**

Customer Relations Team

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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 2015 to 31 March 2016. 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 oversees 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

81 compliments received in 2015/16 in Children's Services compared to 75 in 2014/15.

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

27 complaints were dealt with consisting of 23 new complaints and 4 ongoing from 2014/15.

There was a 47% reduction in complaints dealt with, down from 51 in 2014/15.

There was a 28% reduction in new complaints received, down from 32 in 2014/15.

16 complaints were resolved this year with 11 cases still in progress and transferred to 2016/17.

Ten complaints (63%) were resolved at Stage 1 (65% in 2014/15)

Most complaints are made up of several parts:

- 60% of those resolved at Stage 1 were not upheld
- 54% of those that progressed to Stage 2 were not upheld

The majority of complaints received (89%) relate to issues with level and quality of service provision received.

There was a significant decrease again this year in the number of concerns raised regarding staff attitude and behaviour - from 30 in 2013/14, 9 in 2014/15 to 2 in 2015/16.

Corporate Complaints

There were 16 corporate complaints dealt with this year, with seven cases still in progress and transferred to 2016/17.

Six complaints (67%) were successfully resolved at Stage 1.

Five complaints progressed to Stage 2.

Local Government Ombudsman

Eight enquiries, or requests for information, were received from the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), with four of these progressing to an investigation. Only one case investigated was partially upheld; where fault was found but no injustice had been caused.

Contacts

Of the 158 contacts received that did not progress to being a complaint, the majority of the concerns raised were resolved satisfactorily by the Customer Relations Team, or relevant team or service area.

Subject Access Requests (SAR)

Numbers received have significantly increased again this year to 57 from 34 in 2014/15 and 23 in 2013/14.

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

70% of SARs were processed within statutory timescales; an improvement from 56% in 2014/15.

Freedom of Information Requests (FOI)

207 FOIs were received compared to 192 in 2014/15, an 8% increase.

170 of FOIs (82%) were completed within statutory timescales.

Compliments

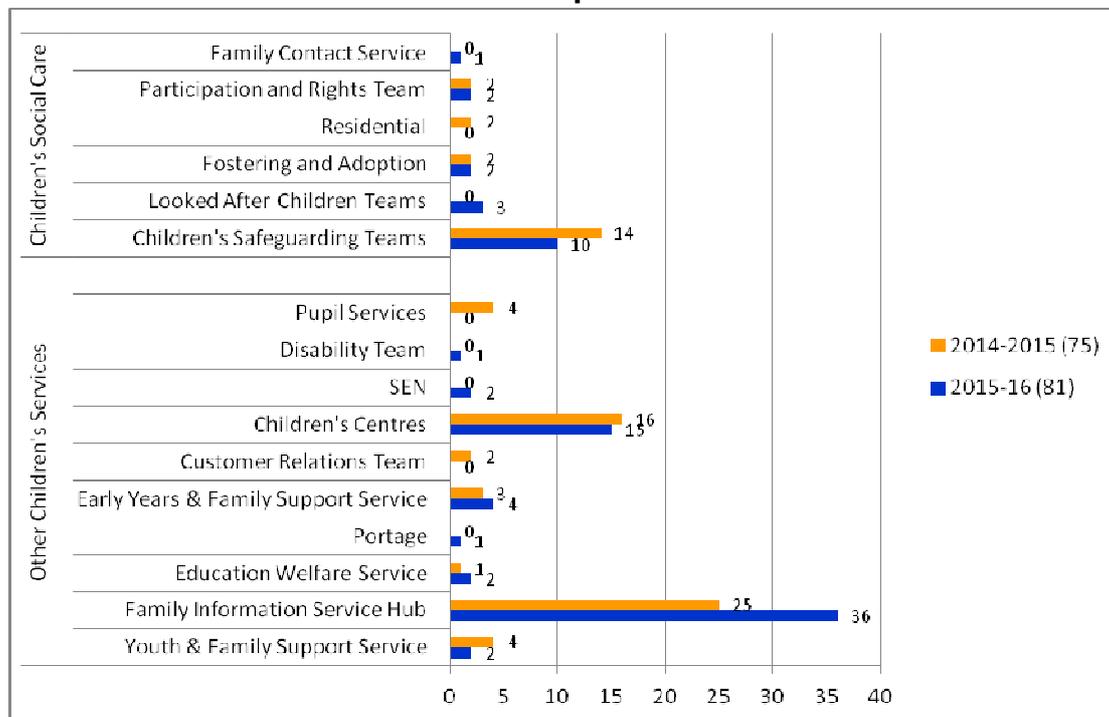
81 compliments were received in Children's Services compared to 75 in 2014/15.

18 compliments were received for Children's Social Care compared to 16 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, staff attitude or approach and practice.

Breakdown of Compliments Received



Compliments – Areas for Development

Aims 2015/16	Update and Aims / Priorities for 2016/17
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 • New feedback software / system acquired 2015/16 which will enable staff / officers to capture and input

	<p>compliments directly. This to be rolled out across services in 2016/17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practice of capturing compliments remains inconsistent and will transfer as an aim to improve for 2016/17
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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

23 new complaints were dealt with in 2015/16, a decrease of 9 (28%) from 2014/15.

Four cases were ongoing and transferred from 2014/15 – one at Stage 1, two at Stage 2 and one at Stage 3

Of the 27 complaints dealt with this year 16 were successfully resolved:

- Ten complaints (37%) were successfully resolved at Stage 1, 65% of complaints (33 out of 51 dealt with) were successfully resolved at Stage 1 in 2014/15
- Five complaints (19%) were successfully resolved at Stage 2, nine out of 51 complaints (18%) were successfully resolved in 2014/15
- One complaint was dealt with at a Stage 3 Independent Panel Review – five cases were dealt with at Stage 3 in 2014/15

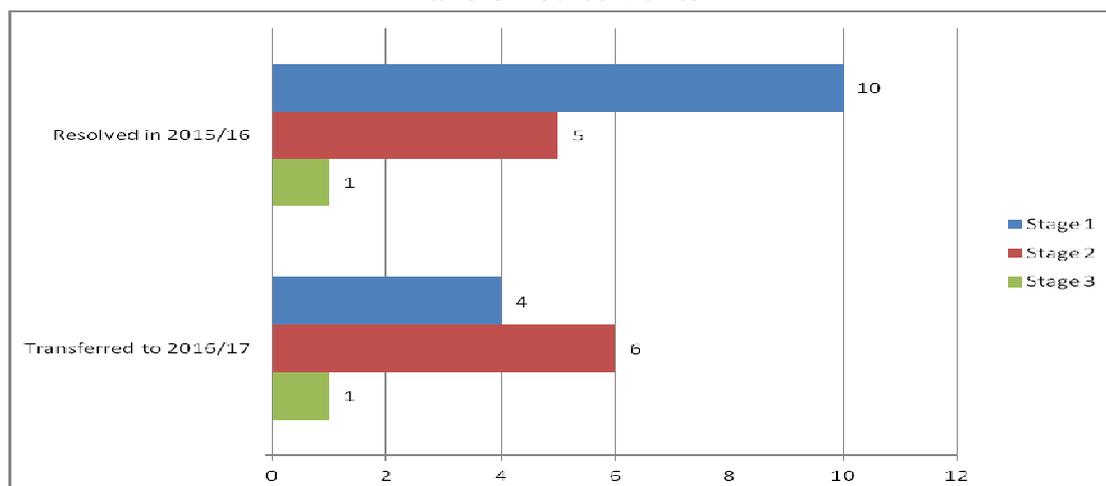
11 cases are ongoing and transferred to 2016/17 – four at Stage 1, six at Stage 2 and one at Stage 3.

The majority of complaints relate to issues with level and quality of service provision, with a significant year on year decrease in the number of concerns raised regarding staff attitude and behaviour – down to two cases this year from nine in 2014/15 and 22 in 2013/14.

Nine Stage 1 complaints and two Stage 2 Children's Social Care complaints were not completed within statutory timescales. This is an improvement on the previous year (19 and 4 respectively); however this will remain an area for improvement in 2016/17.

A change of approach at the outset of concerns being raised, exploring opportunities for alternate resolution or remedy, in agreement with the complainant, has shown an increase in the number of concerns being resolved at an earlier point and a reduction of those progressing to formal complaints. Appointment of a senior customer relations officer towards the end of this year, who has responsibility to respond when concerns are initially raised, has had an immediate impact and there is scope to develop this role further in 2016/17.

Children's Social Care Complaints Resolved at Each Stage 2015/16 and Transferred to 2016/17



Children's Social Care Complaints in Context

Complaints ongoing brought forward from 2014/15	4
New complaints received during 2015/16	23
Complaints ongoing carried forward to 2016/17	11

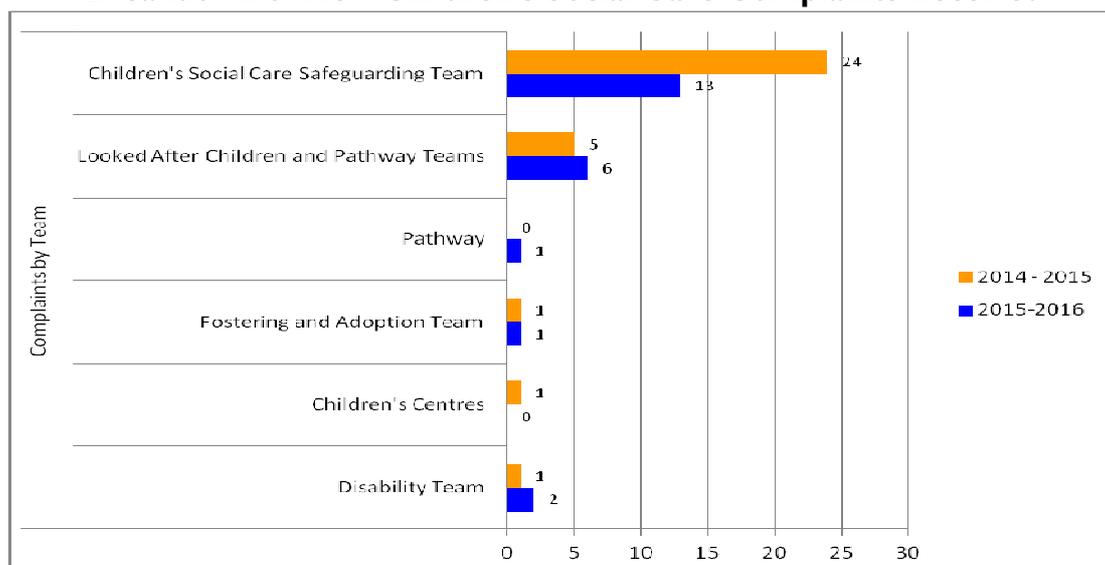
Complaints handled during 2015/16	Resolved in 2015/16	% Resolved in 2015/16	Transferred to 2016/17
Stage 1	10	63	4
Stage 2	5	31	6
Stage 3	1	6	1
Total	16	100	11

Under 18 year olds in East Riding of Yorkshire (Source: Population Census)	June 2014	63141
Total number of open Children's Social Care Cases	31/3/2016	1754
Total Number of Looked After Children	31/3/2016	261
Total Number of Child Protection Cases	31/3/2016	216

Total number of complaints dealt with in 2015/16	27
% of complaints to CSC Cases	1.54%

	Number	As % of total complaints
Complaints from Under 18 year olds	6	22%
Complaints from Looked After Children	6	22%

Breakdown of New 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	1
Completed between 10 and 20 days	0
Completed between 20 and 30 days	1
Completed in more than 30 days	8
Total	10

Completion Rates – Stage 2	Cases
Completed in less than 25 days	1
Completed between 25 and 65 days	0
Completed in more than 65 days	2
Did not progress as complaint (Both due to complainant deciding not to continue with the complaint)	2
Total	5

Completing Children Social Care complaints within statutory timescales continued to be a challenge this year, and it is acknowledged that although improving, it is an unacceptable picture. Increasing capacity to deal with a complaint will remain an area for development in 2016/17 as it is recognised as a contributing factor to improving completion rates and successful dispute resolution.

There has been some improvement in the quality of investigation reports this year; the increased amount of support available to individual managers from the customer relations manager has contributed to this improvement. Improving the consistent quality of investigators reports will also remain an area for development in 2016/17.

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 ten complaints that were resolved at Stage 1 contained 102 parts.

The five complaints that were resolved at Stage 2 contained 57 parts (only those not upheld at Stage 1 were investigated).

The one complaint resolved at Stage 3 contained 2 parts.

Stage 1

	Parts	%
Not upheld	61	59.80
Upheld	24	23.53
Partially upheld	11	10.79
No finding	6	5.88
Total	102	100

Stage 2

	Parts	%
Not upheld	31	54.39
Upheld	15	26.32
Partially upheld	2	3.51
No finding	9	15.79
Total	57	100

Stage 3

	Parts	%
Not upheld	0	0.00
Upheld	1	50.00
Partially upheld	0	0.00
No finding	1	50.00
Total	2	100

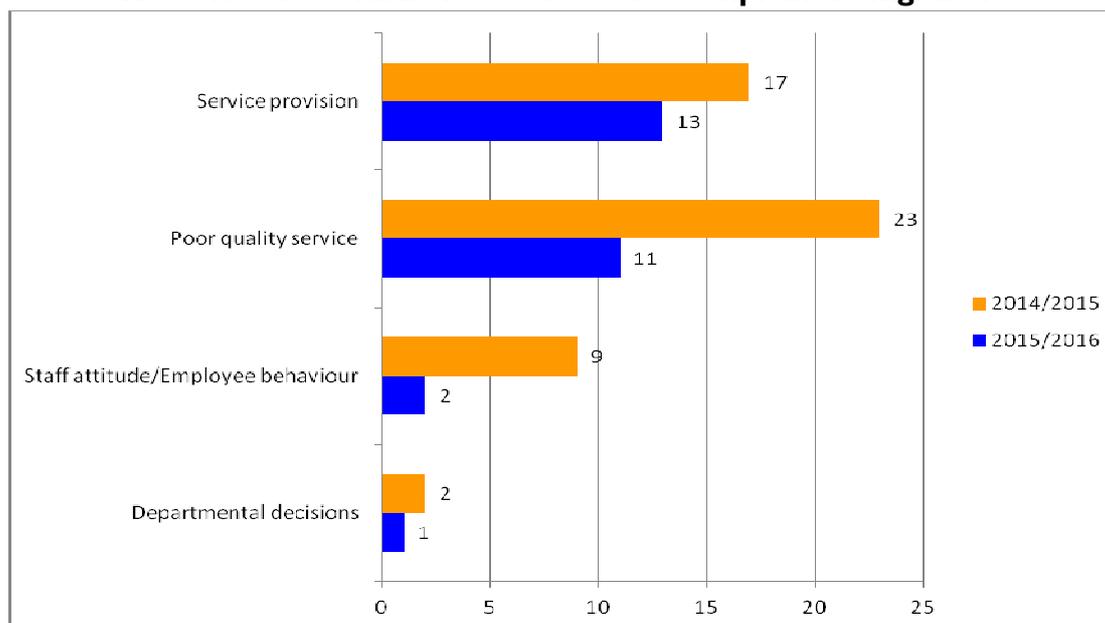
Five complaints progressed to Stage 2 showing that the majority of concerns raised had been addressed satisfactorily at Stage 1. A significant percentage of complaints investigated were not upheld at each stage of the complaints process. This data shows that investigation recommendations and decision making were appropriate and consistently sound. The low percentage of complaints upheld shows also that Children’s Social Care case decision making was appropriate where concerns were raised.

Reasons for Children’s Social Care Complaints

For the 27 complaints dealt with this year, these were the underlying themes and reasons for the complaints being raised with comparison to the previous year:

	2014/15	2015/16
Departmental decisions	4%	4%
Staff attitude / Employee behaviour	18%	7%
Poor quality service	45%	41%
Service provision	33%	48%

Reasons for a Children’s Social Care complaint being made



Children’s Social Care Complaints – Areas for Development

Aims 2015/16	Update and Aims / Priorities for 2016/17
Increase number of investigating / adjudicating officers available to deal with complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaint investigation training for managers to be reviewed and delivered in 2016/17 With support from the customer relations manager, managers from other Children’s Services (non Children’s Social Care) have successfully acted as investigating and

	<p>adjudicating officers for several Children’s Social Care complaints in 2015/16 – there is scope to build on this in 2016/17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing adjudicating officer training is still outstanding as an aim from 2015/16 and will transfer as a priority for 2016/17
<p>Improvement in complaint investigations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time and support available from the customer relations manager for managers carrying out investigations has increased – scope is there to increase this further in 2016/17 - the aim to improve quality of investigations and reports writing will remain a priority • The percentage of complaints resolved at the first stage remains stable however there is room for improvement and will be a priority for 2016/17 • Improving timescales will remain a priority in 2016/17 as this continues to be a challenge to address • Significant increase seen in number of concerns raised resolved successfully by alternate dispute resolution methods rather than progressing to formal complaint. Improvement in case recording on the child’s electronic case record when issues have successfully been resolved will be a priority for 2016/17 • Appointment of a senior customer relations officer in the last quarter of 2015/16 has had immediate impact on earlier successful resolution of concerns raised – there is scope to develop this role further in 2016/17 • The quality of the responses sent to the LGO continued to improve in 2015/16 - in respect of the LGO’s requests for information and during their investigation or assessment stage
<p>Improved use of action plans and lessons learned</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action plans and adjudication responses have continued to improve in quality and timeliness • Lessons learned and action plans have been shared with the Improvement and Quality manager who has incorporated learning into social worker development and practice sessions • Further improvement will transfer as a priority in 2016/17
<p>Smarter use of performance data</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Relations Team performance data set has continued to develop in 2015/16 – quality and range of information available increased with further improvement in monitoring complaint progress • Development of more detailed analysis and reporting of themes and trends / lessons learned will be a priority in 2016/17

<p>Develop new methods of making a complaint</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council have purchased a ‘digital platform’ for all feedback the Council deals with • Processing of social care complaints will transfer to this new system in 2016/17 • Service users will be able to access this system through the Council website – to monitor progress of their complaint in addition to making a complaint or leaving any feedback • Alongside introducing this new system a review of how residents interact with the Council is taking place – opportunities for using social media to raise a complaint / leave feedback will be included in this review in 2016/17 • Further update of Customer Relations Team procedures will follow the introduction of the new system
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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

16 corporate complaints were dealt with which were all new cases as no cases transferred from 2014/15. The number of complaints dealt with this year was similar as the previous year - 17 in 2014/15.

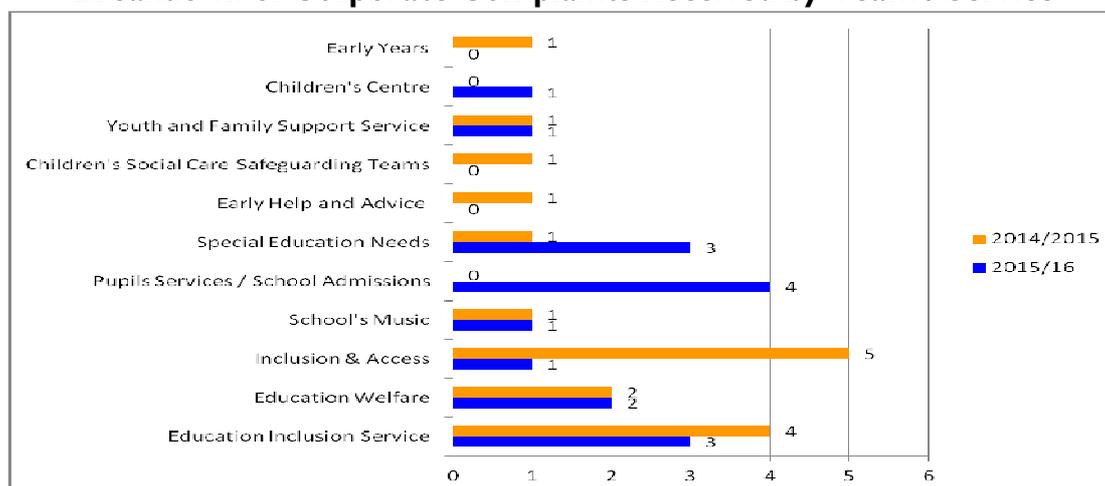
Of the 16 cases dealt with in 2015/16, nine were resolved and seven cases were carried forward to 2016/17 – five cases at Stage 1 and two cases at Stage 2 transferred.

Six of the cases were resolved successfully at Stage 1 - 67%, (three of these were withdrawn as the complainant chose not to proceed). This is a slight decrease in

performance from the previous year, where 71% of complaints dealt with were successfully resolved at Stage 1.

Only five of the 16 corporate complaints dealt with this year progressed to Stage 2 (31%). This is only a slight percentage increase from 2015/16 when five out of the 17 corporate complaints dealt with progressed to Stage 2 (29%).

Breakdown of Corporate Complaints Received by Team / Service



Time Taken to Complete Corporate Complaints

Days taken	Stage 1	Stage 2
<10	7	3
10 - 20	1	0
20 +	0	0
Complaint withdrawn	3	0
Complaint carried forward to 2016/17	5	2
Total	16	5

Corporate complaints have all been completed within required timescales.

Outcome of corporate complaints resolved in 2015/16

There were six complaints successfully resolved at Stage 1- three of these were investigated and three withdrawn as concerns were successfully resolved before completion of a formal complaint investigation.

There were 25 parts to the 13 investigated Stage 1 complaints (including the three that were withdrawn).

Of the three complaints resolved at Stage 2, there were eight parts.

Stage 1

	Number	%
Withdrawn	3	12
Not Upheld	14	56
Partially Upheld	4	16
Upheld	4	16
Total	25	

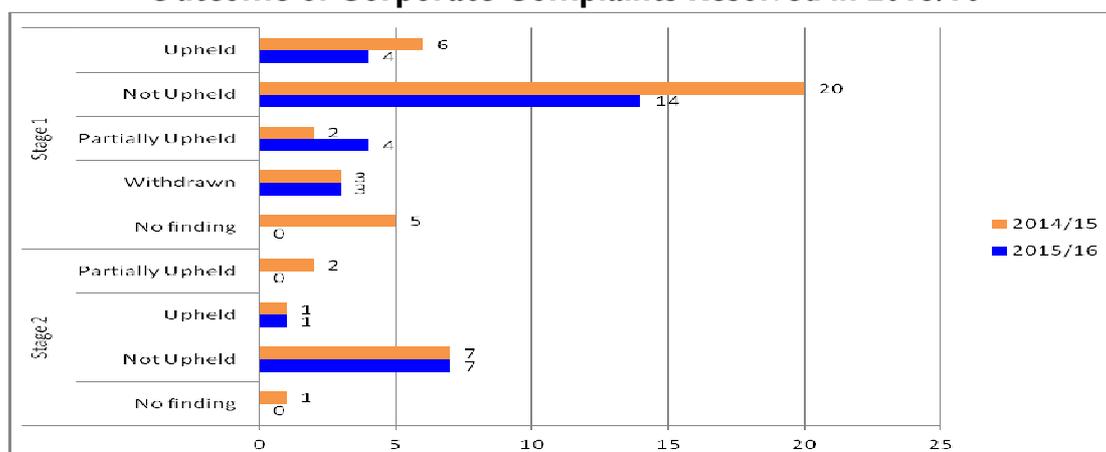
Stage 2

	Number	%
Not Upheld	7	88
Partially Upheld	0	0
Upheld	1	12
Total	8	

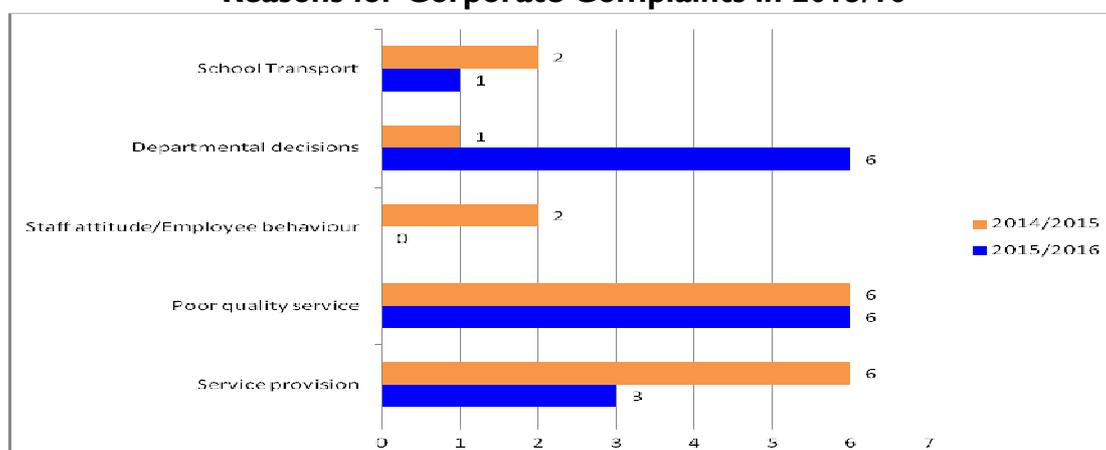
56% of the complaints made at Stage 1, were not upheld. Of those not upheld at Stage 1 that progressed to Stage 2, the findings remained the same and no aspect of these complaints were overturned and upheld. This would indicate that the investigation findings and analysis at Stage 1 was sound and accurate.

It is usually those aspects of a complaint not upheld that can progress to Stage 2 if the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response received. One complaint this year that was upheld at Stage 1 did progress to Stage 2, as the complainant requested further information and clarification of aspects of the response.

Outcome of Corporate Complaints Resolved in 2015/16



Reasons for Corporate Complaints in 2015/16



Corporate Complaints – Areas for Development

Aims 2015/16	Update and Aims / Priorities for 2016/17
Smarter use of performance data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Relations Team performance data set has continued to develop in 2015/16 – quality and range of information available increased with further improvement in monitoring complaint progress • Development of more detailed analysis and reporting of themes and trends / lessons learned will be a priority in 2016/17 • The Council have purchased a ‘digital platform’ for all feedback the Council deals with – the transfer of Corporate Complaints to this system is planned for the second quarter of 2016/17 • Service users will be able to access this system through the Council website – to monitor progress of their complaint in addition to making a complaint or leaving any feedback • Alongside introducing this new system a review of how residents interact with the Council is taking place – opportunities for using social media to raise a complaint / leave feedback will be included in this review in 2016/17 • Further update of Customer Relations Team procedures will follow the introduction of the new system
Complaint investigation training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaint investigation training for managers to be reviewed and delivered in 2016/17

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. 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 2015/16:

- Complaint reports, lessons learned and action plans have been shared with the Improvement and Quality manager who has incorporated learning into the social worker development and practice sessions
- A review of current procedure / guidance took place, followed by the introduction of improved, clearer guidance, for young people who are looked after in respect of the personal allowances they will receive; for example in respect of pocket money and savings. This was done in consultation with looked after young people and foster carers
- A re-emphasis with social workers took place in respect of the use of appropriate bags and suitcases for all movements between placements for children and young people looked after
- Effective strategies were introduced to manage conflict within relationships of young people who are placed together in residential homes
- Processes were put in place to ensure looked after young people's views are sought and considered in respect of holiday arrangements that impact on their lives
- Improving communication with families when there are difficulties sourcing appropriate short break provision for Children's Disability Team cases – to provide regular progress updates
- Improving the use of the lead professional role for those cases receiving support from the Children's Disability Team and Special Educational Needs Team - to

ensure effective communication with the family takes place, avoiding confusion and delay and providing clarity for staff re roles and responsibilities

- Additional training has been provided for those practitioners completing CAFs (Common Assessment Framework) and a new CAF form (Early Help Assessment) is being piloted aimed at improving the quality and accuracy of information gathered to then improve the analysis and quality of planning for those children, young people and families who have additional needs
- A review of the information held on the East Riding of Yorkshire Council website relating to the School Admissions process and School Complaints was carried out to improve the advice and guidance available for parents / carers

Contacts

There were 158 contacts received this year that did not progress to a formal complaint – this is a significant increase of 48% from 82 in 2014/15. 146 of these contacts related to Children Social Care cases.

There continues to be an improvement in the recording and performance management system used by the Customer Relations Team in respect of capturing details of these contacts and how concerns are effectively resolved; the appointment of a senior customer relations officer in the last quarter of this year, who has a key role to help resolve these concerns, made an immediate impact and gives scope to support Children’s Social Care managers further in 2016/17.

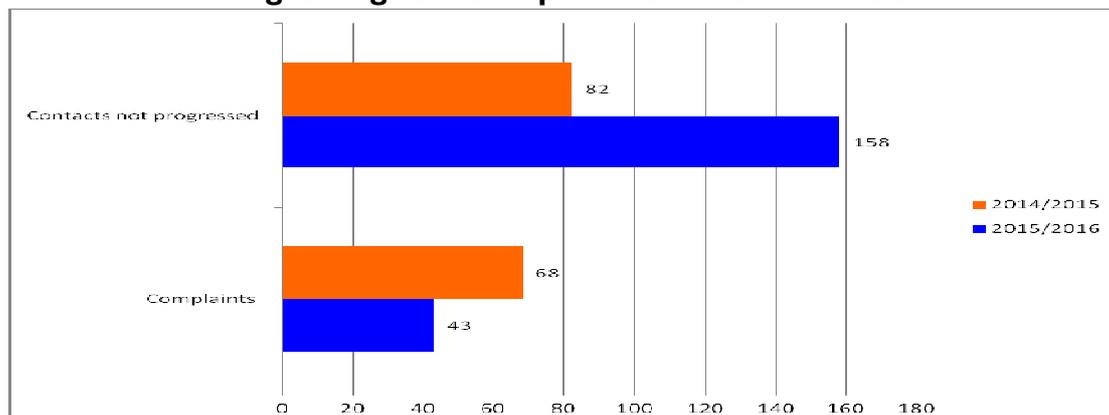
Improved recording on the child’s electronic social care case record to capture concerns that have been successfully resolved is a priority for 2016/17. A review of the contacts received this year that had been sent through to a team manager to resolve, showed that only approximately 50% of those dealt with showed outcomes recorded on the electronic case file.

Of the 146 Children’s Social Care related concerns that were raised only two progressed to a formal complaint. This shows the effectiveness of offering alternate methods of resolving disputes and concerns – either by the Customer Relations Team or the team manager. However with a low rate of evidence of successful resolution in the child’s records it may be that the complainant chose not to progress to a formal complaint because they had given up due to not receiving a response, or did not know how to make a complaint. Further analysis will take place in 2016/17.

There are times when concerns raised do not progress to a complaint which include:

- 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

Comparison between Formal Complaints and Contacts not Progressing to a Complaint for all Children’s Services



Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

The requests for information the local authority receives from the LGO, following a complaint being made to them, require an in depth, detailed response from local authority managers; the timeframes for providing the response are often very short.

Despite this being a challenge in terms of a manager's capacity to prepare the response and supporting documentation, the quality of information provided has continued to improve this year and has been seen as a positive providing the LGO with a succinct picture of the background to a complaint / case, and resulted in little fault found with local authority practice.

The customer relations manager has continued to support managers in preparing their response to an LGO enquiry or investigation; improving the quality and depth of information sent.

Eight requests for information were received from the LGO this year; with several of these cases the LGO came back for further information, sometimes on more than one occasion. Four of these cases they then progressed to investigation. Three of remaining four they closed as inappropriate or early referrals; one case is still being assessed by the LGO and will transfer to 2016/17.

Of the four that progressed to investigation:

- two cases were not upheld and no fault or injustice was found; the LGO was satisfied with the information provided in response to their questions which evidenced that the local authority had acted appropriately
- one case was partially upheld where fault was found but no injustice was caused; it was acknowledged that the local authority had already acted to remedy the situation
- one case is still being investigated and will transfer to 2016/17

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.

The school related performance data collated by the Customer Relations Team is included in the annual review of local authority schools and provide a fuller picture when establishing those schools causing concern, and equally identifies those schools that have effective procedures and processes in place to respond to concerns raised.

There were 28 contacts to the Customer Relations Team made by parents seeking advice regarding complaints they had about schools in 2015/16.

School Complaints – Areas for Development	
Aims 2015/16	Update and Aims / Priorities for 2016/17
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop advice and guidance for schools and parents• Develop recording and monitoring systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advice and guidance available on the Council's website was updated to provide improved information for those parent / carers and schools with school related concerns• To develop recording and monitoring systems further in 2016/17 will remain a priority

Subject Access Requests

There has been a significant year on year increase in the number of Subject Access Requests (SARs) received: 57 this year (68% increase), from 34 in 2014/15 and 23 in 2013/14.

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.

Of the 57 SARs received 17 of the requests for records did not progress: either withdrawn or did not complete the required formalities, or the local authority did not hold any records. Each of these 17 still involved manager's time and involvement prior to not progressing. (15 of the 17 were for Children's Social Care records).

40 SARs were completed this year – 36 of these were requests for Children's Social Care records.

28 (70%) of the 40 SARs in 2015/16 were completed within the statutory 40 days. This is a significant improvement from 56% that were completed within 40 days in 2014/15.

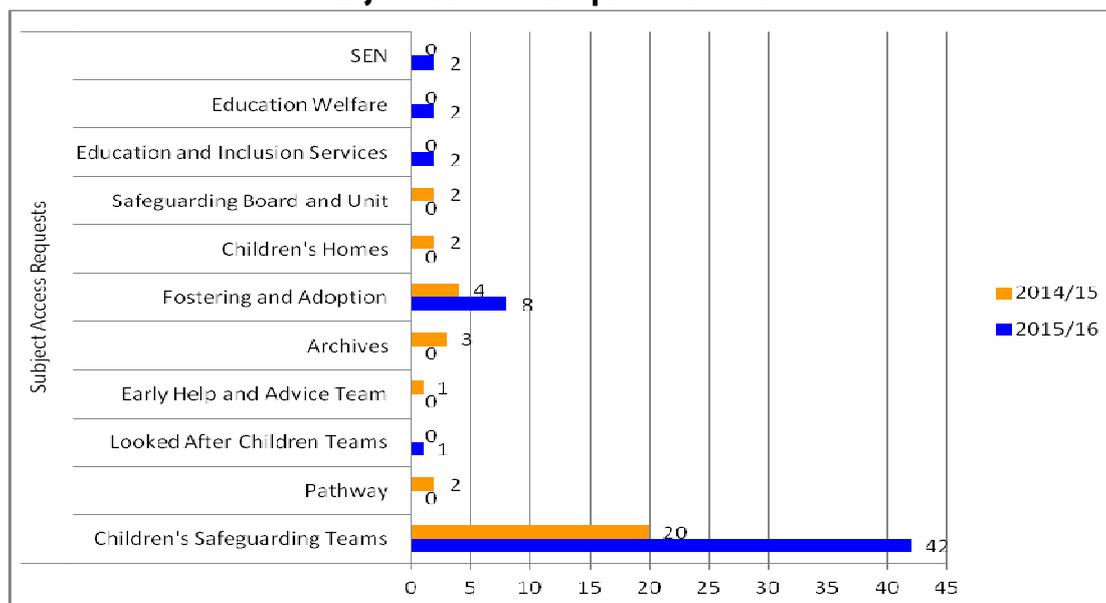
In recognition of the increasing number and complexity of SARs a senior customer relations officer has been appointed to take over the responsibility of preparing SARs for the Children and Young People's Support and Safeguarding Service, and coordinating records for those SARs that cover records from across a number of Children's Services. Since this officer has been in post for the last quarter of 2015/16, all SARs dealt with have been completed within statutory timescales.

Improvement in SAR completion timescales will continue to be an area for development for 2016/17, with a priority being how to increase manager capacity, and provide further support from the Customer Relations Team, to complete SARs.

The quality of redacted records released to the applicant has continued to improve in 2015/16 with the greater use of electronic redaction software and improved level of scrutiny of the records released to the applicant.

An end to end review of the SAR process commenced at the end of 2015/16 to clarify roles and responsibilities and identify areas where further improvements can be made. In recognition that the records to be released can be of a sensitive nature or reflect difficult periods in a person's life, senior customer relations officer time will be allocated to offer individual feedback and the opportunity to review and explain the records that are being released if required in 2016/17.

Subject Access Requests Received



Subject Access Requests – Areas for Development

Aims 2015/16	Update and Aims / Priorities for 2016/17
Meeting SAR statutory timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers / complexity continued to increase in 2016/17 – capacity to meet this demand within statutory timescales was recognised as a concern and a senior customer relations officer was appointed to add capacity and deal with most of the SARs received in local authority Children's Services. Priority to improve timescales further will remain for 2016/17 Greater use of redaction software has improved the quality of records released to the applicant Greater oversight and scrutiny of records to be released is taking place Progress reports to local authority senior management introduced to monitor performance
Updating procedures and processes for handling SAR requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of existing procedures / processes started at the end of the year – new processes to be introduced and procedures updated to be completed in 2016/17 Introduction of an individual, tailored response from the senior customer relations officer to requests for records will continue in 2016/17 Good practice to be shared - success with new processes and procedures to be replicated and implemented with other local authority services dealing with SARs

Freedom of Information Requests (FOI)

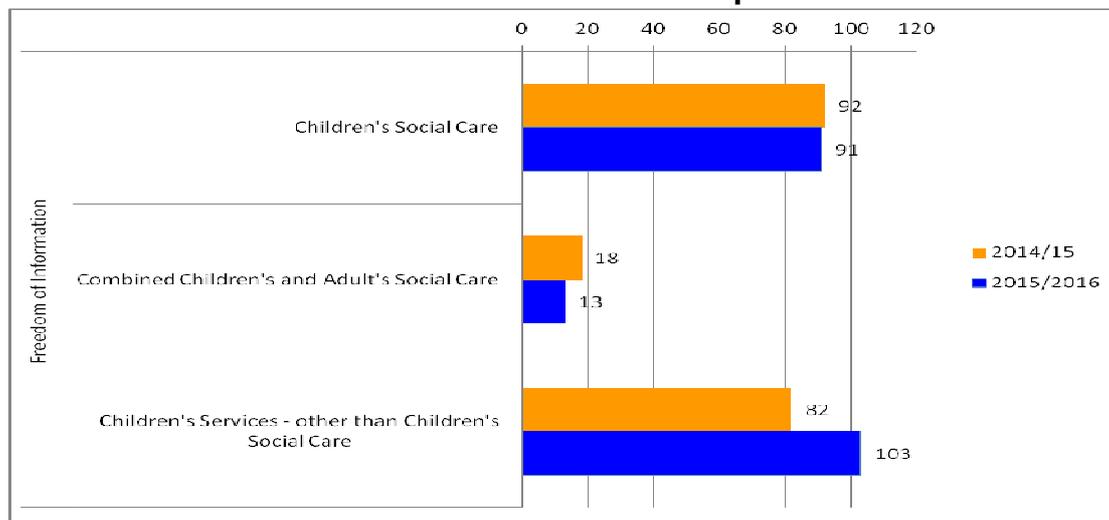
The number of new FOIs received continues to rise year on year with 207 received compared to 192 in 2014/15, an 8% increase.

170 of FOIs (82%) were completed within statutory timescales; which is a slight improvement from 79% in 2014/15. This will continue as an area requiring improvement in performance in 2016/17.

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

Closer monitoring of completion rates was introduced with senior managers mid way through this year; aimed at improving performance. Increased scrutiny by the customer relations manager of the quality of FOI responses received from managers has also been introduced. Additional support provided by the customer relations officers to those managers tasked with collating the FOI response has helped ease capacity pressures. Together these have resulted in an improvement in timescales and quality of response sent to the applicant.

Freedom of Information Requests



Freedom Of Information Requests – Areas for Development

Aims 2015/16	Update and Aims / Priorities for 2016/17
Improve response rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer scrutiny and oversight introduced to monitor performance • Improving timescales will continue as an area for development in 2016/17

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