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To: Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet – 18 November 2025

Subject: **COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS 2024-25**

Classification: Unrestricted

Previous Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This report provides information about the operation of the Children Act 1989 Complaints and Representations Procedure in 2024/25 as required by the Statutory regulations. It also provides information about the 'non-statutory' social care complaints and complaints received about Education Services.

Recommendation: The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **COMMENT** on the contents of this report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides detailed information about complaints and other representations received across the whole of the Children Young People and Education Directorate (CYPE).
- 1.2 There is a statutory requirement on the directorate to operate a robust complaints procedure for children, and those who are eligible to make a complaint on their behalf, about the social care services they receive. The statutory complaints procedure is designed to ensure the rights and needs of the child are at the heart of the process and that young people's voices are heard. Children in Care in Kent are advised how to make a complaint and are informed of their right to access the advocacy service.
- 1.3 The statutory requirement to produce an annual complaints report in respect of children's social care services is included in the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006. The Regulations are specific about the type of information which must be included in this annual report.

- 1.4 Complaints about children's social care services that meet published criteria are considered under the Children Act statutory complaints procedure. However, complaints which meet the eligibility criteria but cannot be progressed formally because of concurrent legal proceedings (in family and/or criminal court), active child and family assessment, or an active child protection enquiry, are progressed as an informal 'representation'. A 'representation' ensures that the concerns of the eligible child, parent or carer can be taken into consideration by the social care team without a risk of being prejudicial to the relevant concurrent proceedings. All informal representations are recorded on the complaints database, and where appropriate, on the child's social care record.
- 1.5 Functions excluded from the complaint procedure include multi-agency child protection decisions and decisions made in a court of law. Complainants are advised of the alternative routes available for challenging such decisions. Complaints which fall outside of the scope of the statutory complaints' procedure are considered under the KCC corporate complaints procedure, these include complaints about SEN and other non-social care services. All complainants, and those making representations, are routinely advised of their right to challenge the decision of the Council via the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).
- 1.6 Complaints which do not fall within the scope of either the corporate complaints procedure or the statutory Children Act procedure are handled as 'Enquiries' and customers are advised of alternative routes to progress their concerns, for example appeals processes, safeguarding referrals and school complaints.
- 1.7 Issues raised by Members of Parliament (MP) and Elected Members on behalf of constituents are registered and responded to as 'Member Enquiries'. However, if there is an active complaint, or the most appropriate way to address the concerns would be to progress them as a formal complaint, then the elected representative is advised of this course of action and subsequently provided with a copy of the complaint response when it is provided to the constituent/complainant.

2 Representations received

Table 1 - Representations received for CYPE Directorate

Type of Record	2021-22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Direction of travel from 2023/24
Children Act complaint	57	30	26	63	123%
Corporate complaint	981	1210	1159	1210	4%
Representation ⁽¹⁾	10	0	0	0	n/a
Member Enquiry	524	739	636	578	-8%
Enquiry	227	288	907	595	-108%
Comment	42	36	21	40	53%
Compliment	90	39	40	33	-18%
Total complaints	1038	1240	1185	1273	7%
Total all representations	1931	2342	2789	2519	-12%

(1) 'Representation' – until 2018 this category was used for all complaints not eligible to progress through the formal complaint process. Complaints not eligible for progression are now rejected at the assessment stage, and this category is only used for cases that are eligible, but legal or statutory processes prevent them being progressed as formal complaints under the Children Act.

- 2.1 The total number of representations received decreased by 12% in the year 2024/25, although formal complaints increased by 4% through the corporate process and by 123% through the Children Act Process. This represents a significant increase in the complexity of issues being raised, as fewer are being handled as initial enquiries that can be resolved easily. The above table does not include rejected or withdrawn complaints, of which there were an additional 573 cases in 2024-25.
- 2.2 The volume of Member Enquiries has reduced slightly, down 8% from the previous year. This year included a National Election which traditionally means we see a decrease in MP enquiries due to pre-election period. A proportion of customers have continued to pursue several different routes to seek resolution to their issues and concerns.
- 2.3 Whilst it is important to record the volume of complaints received, performance cannot be measured against this figure. Anybody who receives a service from KCC has a right to submit a complaint if they are dissatisfied with that service. However, performance can be measured by the percentage of those complaints subsequently upheld, either in full or part. Section 4 of this report provides an analysis of complaints received, with Tables 8 to 11 focusing on the key themes raised and the proportion of those that were upheld either in full or part.

Table 2 - Representations received by type and service/division

Type of record	Integrated Children's Services	Education	SEN & Disabled Children	Corporate Directors Office	Commissioning	Early Help and Preventative Services	Total
Children Act complaint	50	0	13	0	0	0	63
Corporate complaint	402	150	636	18	2	2	1210
Member Enquiry	81	125	364	7	1	0	578
Enquiry	337	58	193	2	5	0	595
Comment	6	34	0	0	0	0	40
Compliment	16	1	15	0	1	0	33
Total complaints	453	150	650	18	2	2	1273
Total representations	892	368	1221	27	9	2	2519
% complaints received	51%	41%	53%	67%	22%	100%	51%

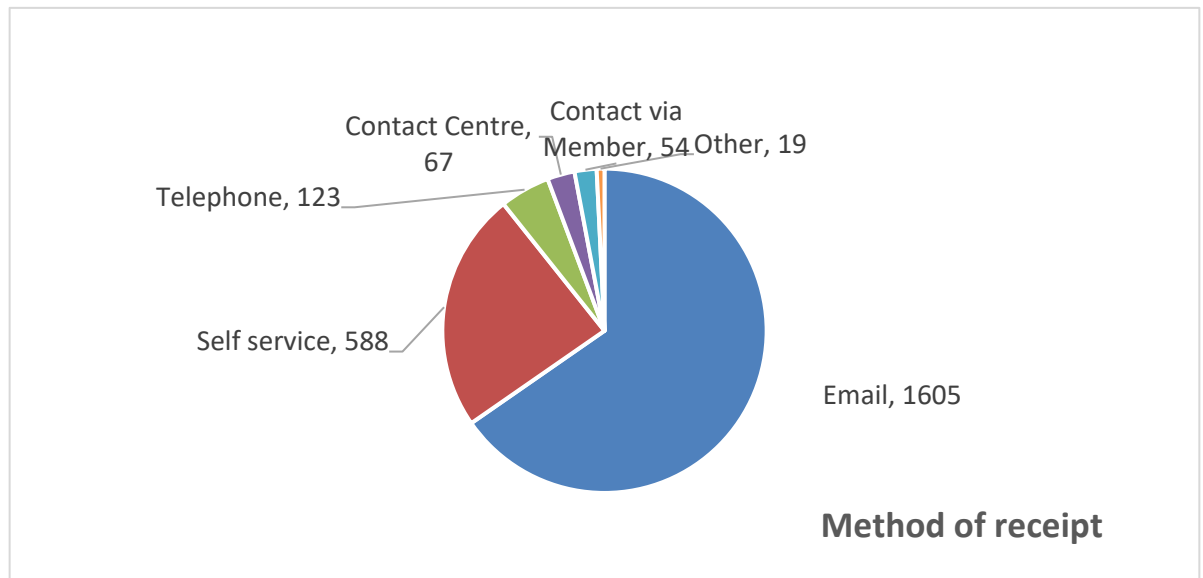
*Corporate Director's Office, and Commissioning

- 2.4 In 2024/25 there were an additional 573 complaints/enquiries received but not progressed. Of these, 522 were rejected at assessment stage, for the reasons identified below, and 51 were subsequently withdrawn by the customer.

Table 3 – Rejected complaints

Reason for complaint rejection	Number	% of total
Duplicate complaint	131	23%
Complaint subject to legal proceedings	111	19%
Complaint not for this organisation	56	10%
Representative not authorised to act on behalf of client	50	9%
Ongoing Assessment	39	7%
Other	38	7%
Customer declined to provide sufficient information to be able to investigate	36	6%
Appeal not a complaint - Housing, Parking, School Admissions, Social Care etc	21	4%
Complaint about an issue more than 12 months old	16	3%
Signposted to Ombudsman	10	2%
Service Request not a complaint	7	1%
Customer refused to provide a name or address	2	0%
Not our organisation	2	0%
Complaint about personnel matters	1	0%
Insufficient information provided by customer	1	0%
Same complaint already dealt with at all stages of the procedure	1	0%
No. of complaints rejected	522	

Table 4 - Method of receipt – all representations



*Other incs post, face to face.

3 Consideration of complaints

3.1 Dependent on what is being complained about, there is a legal requirement to handle complaints from Looked After Children and Children in Need, or those eligible to make a complaint on their behalf, through the three-stage procedure specified in the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

3.2 The three stages for the statutory Children Act complaints procedure are:

- Stage 1 - Local Resolution (up to 20 working days)
- Stage 2 - Independent Investigation (up to 65 working days)
- Stage 3 - Independent Review Panel (30 working days)

3.3 The KCC complaints procedure consists of two stages:

- Step 1 – Local Resolution (up to 20 working days)
- Step 2 – Director Review (up to 20 working days)

The final stage for both procedures is escalation to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

3.4 The following table shows the number of Children Act complaints dealt with at each stage.

Table 5 – Children Act complaints requested and accepted at each stage

Stage	2021/22	2022 /23	2023/24	2024/25
Stage 1 – Local Resolution	57	32	21	63
Stage 2 – Independent Investigation	9	5	8	13
Stage 3 – Independent Review Panel	10	3	0	1

- 3.5 The number of complaints accepted and handled through the statutory Children Act complaints procedure has increased from the previous year from 21 to 63 cases. In 2023/24 additional training was given to advisors in the customer feedback team to triage and assess cases, ensuring that those that are eligible, are progressed through the Children Act Complaints Procedure. We are also seeing more cases where the LGSCO are directing Councils to carry out investigations under this procedure.
- 3.6 Triaging new cases involves giving consideration to who is making the complaint, the type of issues being raised, and when the issue being complained about occurred. Complaints which do not relate to an alleged injustice to an eligible child or young person are progressed through the corporate complaints' procedure.
- 3.7 Complainants are encouraged to allow the local social care team an opportunity to resolve their concerns before requesting progression as a formal complaint. This is particularly the case where it appears that services have not been afforded an opportunity to address matters locally before being raised as a formal complaint. Such cases are recorded as 'enquiries', and most are resolved successfully without the need to then progress as a formal complaint.
- 3.8 Of the 13 cases investigated at Stage 2, the reasons given for the requested escalations were - 6 because the customer disagreed with the outcome of Stage 1, 3 cases were because the customer did not feel they had been given an adequate response or explanation, 1 failed to address all issues, and 3 bypassed stage 1 and were accepted by the council at stage 2.
- 3.9 One Stage 3 Review Panel was requested in the reporting period for 2024/25
- 3.10 Customers who approach the LGSCO without first completing all stages of the complaints process are usually referred back to the Council by the Ombudsman. As a matter of course, customers are advised how they can escalate their complaint if they are dissatisfied with the outcome at each stage of the process.

4 Analysis of complaints

4.1 Integrated Children's Services and Disabled Children's Service

Table 6 - Complaints received by service

Service	No. received	% of total complaints	Snapshot of relative service caseload as of 31/3/25	% of complaints as a proportion of service caseload
Children's Social Work	268	60%	5736	5%
Children with Disabilities	46	10%	1464	3%
Children in Care	38	8%	1652	2%
Front Door	26	6%	47110	0%
Early Help	19	4%	2265	1%
Adolescents and Open Access	13	3%	233	6%
18+ and Leaving Care	11	2%	1846	1%
UASC	9	2%	173	5%
Fostering	6	1%	612	1%
Safeguarding & QA	6	1%	3019	0%
Adoption	2	0%	59	3%
CART (Children's Allowance Review	2	0%	n/a**	n/a
Attendance and Inclusion	1	0%	n/a**	n/a
VSK	1	0%	2186	0%
Total number complaints received	448			

*number of contacts made to Front Door Service (includes Out of Hours Service)

** Unable to provide figures, not case holding teams

Table 7 - Complaints received by customer type

Customer	Total	% of total complaints
Parent	367	81%
Other customer (incl. providers/professionals)	40	12%
Child in care	13	3%
Foster carer	12	3%
Family member	9	2%
Carer (grandparent/special guardian)	7	2%
Care leaver/leaving care	2	>1%
Adoptive parent/prospective adoptive parent	1	>1%
Total number of complaints received	451	

- 4.2 The following table shows the volume of cases closed in the reporting year April 24 to March 25. This volume is different to the number of cases received, as cases can be received up to 31st March 2025, but will close in the following reporting period.

Table 8 – Complaints closed by service

Division	Total	%
Children's Social Work	281	59%
Children with Disabilities	53	11%
Children in Care	39	8%
Front Door	28	6%
Early Help	17	4%
Adolescents and Open Access	13	3%
UASC	12	3%
18+ and Leaving Care	12	3%
Fostering	8	2%
Safeguarding & QA	6	1%
Adoption	3	1%
CART (Children's Allowance Review Team)	2	0%
Attendance and Inclusion	2	0%
VSK	1	0%
Total	477	

Table 9 - Key themes and outcomes from complaints closed

	No. closed	No. Upheld/ part upheld	% upheld/part upheld
Communication issues (e.g. delays or failure to communicate, quality of communications, incorrect information/advice given)	77	38	49%
Equalities and regulatory issues (e.g. discrimination, data protection issues, health and safety)	47	17	36%
Issues with service (e.g. delays or failure to do something, quality of service, cancellation or withdrawal of a service)	203	62	31%
Policy and procedure issues (e.g. procedures not followed, disagree with policy or procedure, disagree with decision)	81	21	26%
Staff conduct	112	35	31%
Total number of issues raised	520	173	33%

- 4.3 More than one theme can be logged against each complaint, which is why there can be a higher volume of reasons than closed cases.
- 4.4 There is no direct correlation between the number of complaints received and the number of services or issues being complained about. This is due to the multi-faceted and often complex nature of some complaints which can span multiple services.
- 4.5 Overall, 33% of complaints received against Integrated Children's Services and Disabled Children's Services were either upheld in full or part. This is a decrease from 42% in the previous year.
- 4.6 The majority of complaints received and progressed through the statutory Children Act complaints procedure were in relation to the Children in Care service. The majority of these cited quality of service delivered as the main reason for complaint.
- 4.7 15 complaints were received from children and young people who are either in care, transitioning from care, or who have already left the care of KCC.
- 4.8 The following are key themes were raised in complaints from children and young people who are currently in or leaving the care of KCC:

Contact arrangements – 1 received (1 not upheld)

Disagreement with decision – 2 received (1 upheld, 1 not upheld)

Delay in doing something – 3 received (2 upheld, 1 partly upheld)

Failure to do something – 2 received (1 partly upheld, 1 not upheld)

Quality of Service – 2 received (1 partly upheld, 1 not upheld)

Staff conduct – 1 received (1 upheld)

4.9 Education Planning & Access, and SEN

Table 10 - Complaints received by service

Service	No. received	% of total complaints	Snapshot of relative service caseload as of 31/3/25	% of complaints as a proportion of service caseload
Special Educational Needs (SEN)	584	80%	22,293	2.6%
Home to School Transport	26	4%	15,085	0.2%
Community Learning & Skills	65	9%	16,948	0.4%
Fair Access	55	7%	15,766	0.3%
Area Education Officers	4	0%	613	0.7%
Total no. complaints received	734			

Table 10 – Complaints closed by service

- 4.10 The following table shows the volume of cases closed in the reporting year April 24 to March 25.

Division	Total	%
Area Education Officers	3	2%
Community Learning & Skills	65	42%
Fair Access	53	34%
Transport (Education)	35	22%
Total	156	

Table 11 - Key themes and outcomes from complaints closed

	No. closed	No. Upheld/ part upheld	% upheld/part upheld
Communication issues <i>(e.g. delays or failure to communicate, quality of communications, incorrect information/advice given)</i>	37	24	65%
Equalities and regulatory issues <i>(e.g. discrimination, data protection issues, health and safety)</i>	7	3	43%
Issues with service <i>(e.g. delays or failure to do something, quality of service, cancellation or withdrawal of a service)</i>	67	33	49%
Policy and procedure issues <i>(e.g. procedures not followed, disagree with policy or procedure, disagree with decision)</i>	29	3	10%
Staff conduct	11	8	73%
Value for money	7	4	57%
Total number of issues raised	158	75	47%

- 4.11 More than once theme can be logged against each complaint, which is why there can be a higher volume of reasons than closed cases.

Table 12 - Key themes and outcomes from complaints closed – SEN

	No. closed	No. Upheld/ part upheld	% upheld/part upheld
Communication issues <i>(e.g. delays or failure to communicate, quality of communications, incorrect information/advice given)</i>	189	173	92%
Equalities and regulatory issues <i>(e.g. discrimination, data protection issues, health and safety)</i>	7	5	71%
Issues with service <i>(e.g. delays or failure to do something, quality of service, cancellation or withdrawal of a service)</i>	532	433	81%
Policy and procedure issues <i>(e.g. procedures not followed, disagree with policy or procedure, disagree with decision)</i>	64	32	50%
Staff conduct	2	2	100%
Total number of issues raised	794	645	81%

4.11 Table showing a top 5 issues raised against the SEN service.

Table 13

Classification	SEN	SEN Assessment and Placement	SEN Casework	SEN Casework 16+	Total
Delay in doing something	176	9	23	23	231
Failure to do something	129	11	23	29	192
Quality of service delivered	74	11	14	18	117
Failure to communicate	72	5	7	18	102
Disagreement with decision	25	12	13	4	54

4.12 Complaints about schools are managed within each school's own complaints procedure and some disagreements, for example, disputes relating to Education Health and Care Plans, are considered through the appropriate appeals route, including statutory tribunal.

4.9 In 2024/25, there were 150 Education complaints received and progressed, a 4% increase from 145 in 2023/24.

4.10 In comparison, 584 complaints were received and logged under one of the four service categories for Special Education Needs (SEN), an 11% increase

from 2023/24. Since 2021/22 the service has seen an increase of 51% in complaint volumes.

5 Complaints considered by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

- 5.1 The number of complaints heard at Ombudsman level increased for the directorate in 2024/25 by 5%
- 5.2 A total of 195 complaints were received by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in 2024/25 relating to services provided by the Children, Young People and Education directorate. Of these, 57 resulted in further detailed investigation by the Ombudsman, 88% of those being investigated were upheld against Kent County Council, in improvement on the directorate's performance of 90% the previous year. Nationally 91% of cases in this area are upheld by the LGSCO.
- 5.3 The Ombudsman has noted that the way in which they choose which complaints they will investigate has changed, leading to a higher number of complaints being upheld vs not upheld. The below is the Ombudsman's explanation of the change.
- 5.4 *"...We are less likely to carry out investigations on 'borderline' issues, so we are naturally finding a higher proportion of fault overall. Our average uphold rate for all investigations has increased this year and you may find that your organisation's uphold rate is higher than in previous years. This means that comparing uphold rates with previous years carries a note of caution. Therefore, we recommend comparing your authority's uphold rate with that of similar organisations, rather than previous years, to better understand performance."*

Table 12 – Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman involvement

	Detailed investigation		Closed: out of jurisdiction/ no further action or withdrawn	Premature/ incomplete	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld			
Children Social Work Services	6	1	30	9	46
Kent Test/School Admission appeals	0	1	5	0	6
Home to School Transport/Free School Meals	3	1	4	0	8
Special Educational Needs	41	4	19	37	101
The Education People	0	0	0	1	1
Community Learning and Skills	0	0	0	0	0
Closed by LGSCO – not sent to KCC	0	0	2	27	29
Closed under CYPE by LGSCO but not CYPE services	0	0	4	0	4
Total	50	7	64	74	195

- 5.5 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman found fault with 50 complaints relating to the Children Young People and Education directorate in 2024/25 (down 11% on previous year where 56 were upheld). The Ombudsman findings can be found at the following link for Children Social Care decisions [SearchResult - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#) and here for education decisions [SearchResult - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

6 Advocacy services provided under these arrangements

- 6.1 The Council has a statutory obligation to offer independent advocacy services to any eligible child or young person wishing to make a complaint under the Children Act complaints procedure.
- 6.2 A change was made to Kent's advocacy arrangements on 1 April 2015 so there is one point of contact for independent advocacy for all children and young people in Kent wishing to make a complaint, irrespective of their status as Children in Need, Children in Care, subject to a Child Protection Plan, or as Care Leavers. The advocacy service in Kent is provided by the Young Lives Foundation and has been since 1 April 2015.
- 6.3 In 2024-25 a total of 28 complaints were received from young people. It is a positive point to note that 14 young people made a complaint without the support of an independent advocate, this would indicate that they felt empowered and confident about raising their concerns. Whilst it is right that children and young people have access to the support of advocates, in recent

years there has been an emphasis on advocates supporting young people in trying to resolve their concerns rather than going direct to the complaint's procedure.

7 Compliance with timescales

Table 13 – Response performance – Integrated Children's Services

Procedure/stage	No. of responses made	No. of responses in timescale	% of responses provided within timescale	Previous Year %
Statutory complaint (Stage 1) (standard timescale)	48	20	42%	33%
Statutory complaint (Stage 1) (extended timescale)	48	41	85%	58%
Statutory complaint (Stage 2)	4	4	100%	0%
Statutory complaint (Stage 3)	0	0	n/a	n/a
Corporate complaint (Stage 1)	424	257	61%	48%
Corporate complaint (Stage 2)	100	55	55%	50%
Member Enquiry	89	62	70%	52%

**includes those complaints responded to within 10 working days*

Table 14 – Response performance – Disabled Children's Service

Procedure/stage	No. of responses made	No. of responses in timescale	% of responses provided within timescale	Previous Year %
Statutory complaint (Stage 1) (standard timescale)	12	2	16%	10%
Statutory complaint (Stage 1) (maximum timescale)	12	8	67%*	30%
Statutory complaint (Stage 2)	6	3	50%	29%
Statutory complaint (Stage 3)	2	1	50%	100%
Corporate complaint (Stage 1)	53	25	47%	23%
Corporate complaint (Stage 2)	18	7	39%	13%
Member Enquiry	23	10	43%	22%

**also includes those complaints responded to within 10 working days*

7.1 Response targets are based on cases closed with the reporting year.

- 7.2 The maximum timescale of 20 working days for Stage 1 Children Act complaints was achieved in 85% of complaint responses from Integrated Children's Services, and 67% for Disabled Children's Services. An increase in performance from 58% the previous year for Integrated Children's Services, and an increase in performance from 30% the previous year for Disabled Children's Services. The standard timescale for responding to Children Act Stage 1 responses is 10 working days, which can be extended up to 20 working days if required.
- 7.3 Integrated Children's Service responded to 100% of Stage 2 complaints within the 65-day timescale, with SEN and Disabled Children responding to 50% within timescale.

Table 15 – Response performance – Education

Procedure/stage	No. of responses made	No. of responses in timescale	% of responses provided within timescale	Previous Year %
Corporate complaint (Stage 1)	156	112	72%	75%
Corporate complaint (Stage 2)	12	9	75%	33%
Member Enquiries	109	25	23%	37%

Table 16 – Response performance - SEN

Procedure/stage	No. of responses made	No. of responses in timescale	% of responses provided within timescale	Previous Year %
Corporate complaint (Stage 1)	675	57	8%	7%
Corporate complaint (Stage 2)	165	8	5%	15%
Member Enquiries	405	40	10%	4%

- 7.4 Almost all areas of the directorate saw an improvement in complaint performance for 2024/25. The only exceptions to this were responses within Education and SEN divisions.
- 7.5 Work is continuing within the SEND service to ensure the handling of complaints is effective and parents feel more confident that their concerns are being heard.

8 Learning the lessons from complaints

8.1 Several complaints received in 2024/25 informed wider service development:

Area for development	Identified Actions
Assessment SEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Robust quality assurance measures are now in place and the LA remains committed to ensure that decisions are made fairly and in accordance with the legal framework. The LA is keen to ensure that it fully considers expert recommendations, where this is possible, in the future.• X will receive appropriate monitoring of their educational progress and further referrals for professionals can be made, if significant changes in his special educational needs have been identified. This can be requested via the annual review process.• The LA remains committed to providing a high-quality assessment process and continuously strives to enhance its service. It is currently focused on meeting the statutory timescales, without compromising the quality of assessments.
Communication	<p>Staff reminded of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At the next team meeting, workers will be reminded of the importance of transparent communication in building trust and understanding between families and professionals, to fully explain processes related to child protection concerns to avoid causing anxiety and distress.• Workers will be reminded at the next team meeting to be mindful of the challenges families face when a child lacks educational provision for an extended period. To recognise when extra support may be needed during such times and the importance of clarifying this support is not

Area for development	Identified Actions
	<p>due to parenting concerns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When parents express concerns about social services' views on their parenting, it is beneficial to involve relevant professionals to provide direct feedback and reassurance. This helps alleviate worries and provides clarity. This will be discussed at the next team meeting. • When assessing the level of support required based on the current situation, and if there if there are no parenting concerns, the team manager will consider allocating a Social Work Assistant instead of a Social Worker to provide the appropriate level of support.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service to take forward lessons learned following a complaint as they continue to work on the retention of social workers and the smooth transition of work should it be necessary to change a child's social worker during the course of an intervention.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That Team Managers must ensure that when workers are absent from the team appropriate steps are taken to ensure families are aware. • That all families need to be provided with the team duty number at the outset of our involvement with them, in order that there is an alternative means of contacting the team when they cannot get hold of the allocated worker.

9 Review of the effectiveness of the complaint's procedure

- 9.1 Management of the children's complaints team transferred over to form part of a wider centralised KCC customer care and complaints function in April 2023. Social care complaints are required to remain detached from the delivery of those services being complained about. Having a centrally managed service has helped facilitate delivery of an impartial complaints process. Additional resources from the wider centralised customer care service have also been

utilised during what has been a challenging year for CYPE customer feedback. The ability to draw on centralised resources has been key in supporting the progression of overdue cases for SEN, and in ensuring that the handling of customer feedback for CYPE has been able to continue despite the challenges.

- 9.2 The effectiveness of the complaint's procedure depends on the wider organisational culture and the tendency to learn the lessons where the service has not been to the required standard. The Children's Complaints and Customer Care Team continue to receive support from Senior Management for the prioritisation of complaints, and in ensuring the availability of Independent Investigators where a Stage 2 investigation is required.
- 9.3 On receipt of new representations, the Children's Complaints and Customer Care Team assess each case, paying attention to complaints with regards who is making the complaint, what is being complained about, when the alleged injustice occurred, and whether there are any concurrent investigations or legal proceedings taking place. This assessment informs the decision-making process for determining which process is most appropriate for addressing each element of customer feedback. Many of the complaints can be complex and require sensitive handling.
- 9.4 The Children's Complaints and Customer Care Team has continued to experience further significant challenges during 2024/25. The volume and complexity of complaints and managing customer expectations continue to be one of the more challenging areas of work for the team. An increase in requests for support with the management of challenging behaviours from customers indicates that this is not limited to the handling of complaints, but instead a shift in behaviours from the public towards KCC staff.
- 9.6 **Training** – capacity within the complaints service continues to impact the delivery of complaints training for staff. Sessions are provided on demand for those services requiring awareness raising for staff, or for individuals tasked with undertaking independent investigations.
- 9.7 **Young Lives Foundation** - The Young Lives Foundation is an independent organisation which provides an Advocacy Service and the Independent Persons for the Stage 2 complaints. The reports produced by the Independent Persons have generally been to a good standard and delivered within the required timescales. The Advocacy Service has also been proactive in supporting and representing children and young people to make their views known. Regular contract monitoring meetings take place between the Young Lives Foundation, KCC's Commissioning Service, with the Children's Complaints and Customer Care Manager also participating.

10 Compliments

The Customer Feedback Team also record and share compliments received about staff and services. In 2024/25, the number of compliments formally received and logged decreased from the previous year. We will work on encouraging staff to share any compliments they receive; it is important we use positive feedback to help drive improvements as well as use them to celebrate achievements and good practice.

Theme	Total
Customer care	12
Delivery	1
Good Staff Attitude	7
Politeness	2
Prompt response	2
Quality of service	6
Quality of communication	3
Grand Total	33

- 10.1 Set out below are a few examples of the compliments received in 2024/25 across the directorate:

Feedback from parent: “I just wanted to say how helpful, supportive and kind ..., EHC Assessment Officer, has been in regard to the EHCP process for my daughter. She has gone out of her way to keep me updated, to make really complicated information accessible to me and to make sure I have all relevant information to help me. She has taken the time to explain things and been patient. This hasn't gone unnoticed and I just wanted to say a huge thank you and show how much I appreciate her efforts.”

Feedback from a parent: “I had to email to say that today we had the pleasure of meeting the lovely lady who supports families from children's services ... I would to tell her manager what a huge credit she is to your team & how amazing she is in her role & as a person in general.

... we immediately felt comfortable & at ease with, understanding, supportive, intelligent, caring, honest, helpful & professional & feel this has to be noted & she should be appraised highly as this is rare & your team are blessed to have her working with you.”

Feedback from external charity: “I want to take this time to share how caring, personal-centred, and solution-focused ... was. From her agenda to managing the meeting, her presence and focus on the trauma this also had played to those involved. As a safeguard lead and looking at quality within the charity, I want to thank her for what she does, and I will look at it in my approach to ensure I am at the same standard.”

Feedback from a parent: "...has really changed our perception of social workers he is kind, caring & really wants to help. He has had such a positive impact on our family unit as a whole."

11 Objectives for 2024/25

Objectives for 2024/25 include:

- Focus on improving the quality of data entered on the customer feedback system to ensure accurate and informative performance and learning data is captured. Including the capture of those compliments received by services.
- Continue to ensure the operation of the complaints procedures in line with statutory requirements and monitor performance standards.
- Increase the provision of training for staff across the CYPE directorate on the effective handling of complaints.
- Focus on developing the skills of the customer feedback team to ensure effective and good quality handling of customer feedback.
- Continue to work with all services, particularly SEN, in improving response times for customer feedback.

12 Recommendations

Recommendation: The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **COMMENT** on the contents of this report.

13 Report Author

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