From:	Paul Webb – Cabinet member for Children's Services Beverley Fordham – Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education (Education and Skills)
To:	Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee – 26 November 2026
Subject:	**COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS 2025-26**
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 2025/26 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's, 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. Complaints received

Table 1 – All Case types received at Stage One for CYPE Directorate

Type of Record	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Children Act complaint	30	26	66	**73**
Corporate complaint	1210	1159	1210	**1374**
Member Enquiry	739	636	578	**1026**
Enquiry	288	907	595	**267**
Comment	36	21	40	**4**
Compliment	39	40	33	**149**
Total complaints only	1240	1185	1276	**1447**
Total all records	**2342**	**2789**	**2522**	**2893**

2.1 The total number of complaints received increased by 14% in the year 2025/26, and an increase of 11% progressing through the Children Act Process. Overall, there was an increase in feedback of 13% compared to the previous year. The above table does not include rejected or withdrawn complaints, of which there were an additional 775 cases in 2025/26. This represents a significant increase in the volume of work being handled by the customer feedback team & services.

2.2 The volume of Member Enquiries increased by 70%. In some cases, customers have chosen 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.

2.4 It is more appropriate to measure 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 6 to 13 focusing on the key themes raised and the proportion of those that were upheld either in full or part.

Table 2 - Cases received by type and division

Type of record	Integrated Children's Services	Education	SEN & Disabled Children	Corporate Directors Office	Commiss-ioning	Early Help and Preventative Services	Total
Children Act complaint S1 – Local Resolution	54	0	19	0	0	0	73
Children Act complaint S2 – Independent Investigation	13	0	9	0	0	0	22
Children Act complaint S3 – Independent Review Panel	5	0	2	0	0	0	7
Corporate complaint S1	486	162	702	17	4	3	1374
Corporate complaint S2	124	34	176	2	2	0	338
LGSCO	77	48	108	0	1	0	234
Member Enquiry	109	342	456	117	2	0	1026
Enquiry	134	20	107	4	2	0	267
Comment	1	3	0	0	0	0	4
Compliment	106	2	36	0	5	0	149
Total complaints only	759	244	1016	19	7	3	2048
Total of all records	**1109**	**611**	**1615**	**140**	**16**	**3**	**3494**

2.5 In 2025/26, there were an additional 775 complaints/enquiries received but not progressed. Of these, 734 were rejected at assessment stage, for the reasons identified below, and 41 which were subsequently withdrawn by the customer.

Table 3 – Rejected complaints

Reason for complaint rejection	Number
Duplicate complaint	207
Complaint not for this organisation	99
Complaint subject to legal proceedings	97
Customer declined to provide sufficient information to be able to investigate	84
Representative not authorised to act on behalf of client	81
Other (e.g duplicate MP enquiry, legal proceedings, communication restrictions, personnel issues)	58
Withdrawn	41
Ongoing Assessment	38
Service request not a complaint	26
Complaint about an issue more than 12 months old	18
Appeal not a complaint - Housing, Parking, School Admissions, Social Care etc	11
No consent	9
Signposted to Ombudsman	6
Total	775

Table 4 - Method of receipt – all complaints (Stage one)

Method of receipt	Number	% of total
Email	2164	75%
Self-service/Online	558	19%
Telephone	55	2%
Contact via MP	42	1%
Contact Centre	30	1%
Contact via Member	24	1%
Post	15	1%
Face to face	3	0%
Contact via Corporate Director	2	0%
Total	**2893**	

3 Analysis 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)
- Escalation to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

3.3 The KCC complaints procedure consists of three stages:

- Stage 1 – Local Resolution (up to 20 working days)
- Stage 2 – Director Review (up to 20 working days)
- 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	2022 /23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Stage 1 – Local Resolution	32	22	63	73
Stage 2 – Independent Investigation	5	10	13	22
Stage 3 – Independent Review Panel	3	1	3	7

3.5 The number of complaints accepted and handled through the statutory Children Act complaints procedure has risen at every stage.

3.6 Of the 22 cases investigated at Stage 2, the reasons given for the requested escalations were - 12 because the customer disagreed with the outcome of Stage 1, 3 cases where the customer felt the response did not address all issues raised, and 2 where the customer felt they had been given an inadequate explanation. 5 by passed Stage 1 and were logged at Stage 2.

3.7 Of the 7 cases investigated at Stage 3, the reasons given for escalation were – 5 customers disagreed with the decision, 1 felt they had been given an inadequate explanation, and 1 customer felt the reasons given at Stage 2 were not clear

Table 6 – Outcome of complaints at Stage 1 - Local Resolution

Division/Outcome	Not Upheld	Upheld/Party Upheld	Total
Integrated Children's Services	36	15	51
SEN and Disabled Children	12	10	22
Total	48	25	73

Table 7 – Outcome of complaints at Stage 2 - Independent Investigation

Division/Outcome	Not Upheld	Upheld/Party Upheld	Total
Integrated Children's Services	4	5	9
SEN and Disabled Children	2	5	7
Total	6	10	16

*the number closed will not match the number received

Table 8 – Outcome of complaints at Stage 3 – Independent Review Panel

Division/Outcome	Not Upheld	Upheld/Party Upheld	Total
Integrated Children's Services	3	2	5
SEN and Disabled Children	1	0	1
Total	4	2	6

*the number closed will not match the number received

Table 9 – Complaint Classifications at Stage 1

Problem category	Total	%
Issues with Service	40	52%
Policy and Procedure	28	36%
Communication	7	9%
Equalities and regulatory	1	1%
Quality of service	1	1%
Total	77	

*more than one category can be recorded at case closure

3.8 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.

3.9 **Integrated Children's Services and Disabled Children's Service**

Table 10 – Corporate Complaints received by service

Service	No. received	% of total complaints	Snapshot of relative service caseload as of 31/3/26	% of complaints as a proportion of service caseload
Children's Social Work	336	63%	5560	6%
Children with Disabilities	48	9%	1542	3%
Children in Care	39	7%	1691	2%
Front Door*	31	6%	47673	0%
Early Help	27	5%	2552	1%
Adolescents and Open Access	10	2%	198	5%
18+ and Leaving Care	8	1%	1915	0%
UASC	2	0%	129	2%
Fostering	16	3%	595	3%
Safeguarding & QA	8	1%	3112	0%
Adoption	3	1%	67	4%
CART (Children's Allowance Review Team)**	0	0%	n/a	n/a
Attendance and Inclusion**	6	1%	n/a	n/a
VSK	0	0%	1945	0%
Total number complaints received	**534**			

*number of contacts made to Front Door Service (includes Out of Hours Service)
** Unable to provide figures, not case holding teams

3.10 The following table shows the volume of cases closed in the reporting year 2025/26. 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 11 – Complaints **closed** by service

Division	Total	%
Children's Social Work	305	56%
Children with Disabilities	44	8%
Children in Care	63	12%
Early Help	31	6%
Front Door	29	5%
Safeguarding & QA	11	2%
Adolescents and Open Access	10	2%
Fostering	11	2%
18+ and Leaving Care	27	5%
Attendance and Inclusion	7	1%
Adoption	3	1%
UASC	2	0%
Total	543	

Table 12 - Key themes and outcomes from complaints closed

	Volume of themes recorded	No. Upheld/ part upheld	% upheld/ part upheld
Communication issues *(e.g. delays or failure to communicate, quality of communications, incorrect information/advice given)*	92	50	54%
Equalities and regulatory issues *(e.g. discrimination, data protection issues, health and safety)*	51	19	37%
Quality of service *(e.g. delays in providing service or the service did not meet the standards expected)*	136	50	37%
Service not Provided *(e.g. failure to do something, cancellation or withdrawal of a service)*	44	14	32%
Policy and procedure issues *(e.g. procedures not followed, disagree with policy or procedure, disagree with decision)*	120	35	29%
Staff conduct	131	43	33%
Total number of issues raised	**574**	**211**	**37%**

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

3.12 Overall, 37% (211) of complaints received against Integrated Children's Services and Disabled Children's Services were either upheld in full or in part. This is an increase from 33% (173) the previous year.

3.13 **Education Planning & Access, and SEN**

Table 13 - 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)	649	80%	23,462	3%
Home to School Transport	37	5%	15,304	<1%
Community Learning & Skills	29	4%	12,444	<1%
Fair Access	82	10%	78,707	<1%
Area Education Officers	14	2%	595	2%
Total no. complaints received	**811**			

3.14 649 complaints were received and logged under one of the four service categories for Special Education Needs (SEN), a 12% increase from 2024/25.

3.15 The following table shows the volume of cases **closed** in the reporting year 2025/26 for Education services.

Table 14 – Complaints closed by service

Division	**Total**	**%**
SEN	753	84%
Area Education Officers	9	1%
Community Learning & Skills	31	4%
Fair Access	73	8%
Transport (Education)	34	4%
Total	900	

Table 15 - Key themes and outcomes from complaints closed for Education services

	Volume of themes recorded	**No. Upheld/ part upheld**	**% upheld/ part upheld**
Communication issues *(e.g. delays or failure to communicate, quality of communications, incorrect information/advice given)*	16	7	44%
Equalities and regulatory issues *(e.g. discrimination, data protection issues, health and safety)*	9	6	66%
Quality of service *(e.g. delays in providing service or the service did not meet the standards expected)*	26	15	58%
Service not Provided *(e.g. failure to do something, cancellation or withdrawal of a service)*	18	3	17%
Policy and procedure issues *(e.g. procedures not followed, disagree with policy or procedure, disagree with decision)*	71	18	25%
Staff conduct	16	6	38%
Total number of issues raised	**156**	**55**	**35%**

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

3.17 Overall, 35% (55 cases) of complaints received against Education Services were either upheld in full or in part. This is a decrease from 47% (75 cases) the previous year.

Table 16 - Key themes and outcomes from complaints closed – SEN services

	Volume of themes recorded	No. Upheld/ part upheld	% Upheld/ part upheld
Communication issues *(e.g. delays or failure to communicate, quality of communications, incorrect information/advice given)*	220	172	78%
Equalities and regulatory issues *(e.g. discrimination, data protection issues, health and safety)*	10	8	80%
Quality of service *(e.g. delays in providing service or the service did not meet the standards expected)*	313	247	79%
Service not Provided *(e.g. failure to do something, cancellation or withdrawal of a service)*	207	148	71%
Policy and procedure issues *(e.g. procedures not followed, disagree with policy or procedure, disagree with decision)*	134	80	60%
Staff conduct	8	7	88%
Total number of issues raised	**892**	**662**	**74%**

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

3.19 Overall, 74% (662) of complaints received against SEN were either upheld in full or in part. This is a decrease proportionately from 81% (645) the previous year.

3.20 Table 14 shows the top 5 issues raised against the SEN service.

Table 17 – Top 5 complaint reasons

Classification	SEN	SEN Assessment and Placement	SEN Casework	SEN Casework 16+	Total
Failure to do something	34	38	112	50	234
Delay in doing something	40	42	69	39	190
Quality of service delivered	22	39	55	25	141
Failure to communicate	12	21	41	30	104
Disagreement with decision	18	22	21	7	68

3.21 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 Complaints considered by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

4.1 A total of 234 complaints were received by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in 2025/26 relating to services provided by the Children, Young People and Education directorate.

4.2 44 resulted in further detailed investigation by the Ombudsman. Of these 40 cases were upheld against Kent County Council (91%). This is a reduction of upheld complaints from last year in which 50 were found against the Council.

4.3 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.

4.4 *"…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 18 – Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman involvement

	Detailed investigation				
	Upheld	Not upheld	Closed after initial enquiries	Premature/ incomplete	Total
Children's Social Work	7	0	41	31	**79**
Kent Test/School Admission appeals	0	1	8	0	**9**
Home to School Transport/Free School Meals	0	0	16	4	**20**
Special Educational Needs	32	3	26	46	**107**
The Education People	1	0	0	0	**1**
Community Learning and Skills	0	0	0	0	**0**
Closed by LGSCO – not sent to KCC				18	**18**
Total	**40**	**4**	**91**	**99**	**234**

4.5 The Ombudsman findings can be found at the following link for Children Social Care decisions SearchResult - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

4.6 For education decisions - SearchResult - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

5 Advocacy services provided under these arrangements

5.1 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.

5.2 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.

5.3 In 2025/26, a total of 38 complaints were received from young people. It is a positive point to note that 10 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 directly through the complaint's procedure.

5.4 The following key themes were raised in complaints from children and young people who are currently in or leaving the care of KCC;

Complaint theme/Outcome	Upheld/Partly Upheld	Not Upheld
Delay in doing something	0	1
Disagree with policy or procedure	0	1
Disagree with decision	1	10
Failure to do something	3	2
Quality of communications	2	2
Quality of service delivered	6	9
Staff conduct	1	0
Totals	**13**	**25**

6 Compliance with timescales

6.1 Response targets are based on cases closed within the reporting year. CYPE, as a whole, responded to 25% of Stage One complaints within 20 working days.

Table 19 – Response performance – Integrated Children's Services (incs. Children with Disabilities 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)	51	6	12%	42%
Statutory complaint (Stage 1) (extended timescale)	51	33*	65%	85%
Statutory complaint (Stage 2)	9	4	44%	100%
Statutory complaint (Stage 3)	5	3	60%	n/a
Corporate complaint (Stage 1)	492	209	42%	61%
Corporate complaint (Stage 2)	126	56	44%	55%
Member Enquiry	119	46	39%	70%

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

6.2 The maximum timescale of 20 working days for Stage 1 Children Act complaints was achieved in 65% of complaint responses from Integrated Children's Services, which is down from 85% the previous year. 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.

6.3 The SLA for corporate complaint responses is 85% responded to within 20 working days, the service achieved 42%, which is down from 61% the previous year.

6.4 Work has been undertaken in the service to improve timeliness; focus has been on responding to complaints even if the issue is not resolved (looking at what we will do) and proceeding with investigations even if we haven't been able to arrange a meeting with complainants.

Table 20 – Response performance – Education only

Procedure/stage	No. of responses made	No. of responses in timescale	% of responses within timescale	Previous Year	Average days to respond	Average days previous year
Corporate complaint (Stage 1)	147	70	48%	72%	28	23
Corporate complaint (Stage 2)	34	16	47%	75%	14	27
Member Enquiries	332	120	36%	23%	37	41

Table 21 – Response performance – SEN only

Procedure/stage	No. of responses made	No. of responses in timescale	% of responses provided within timescale	Previous Year	Average days to respond	Average days previous year
Corporate complaint (Stage 1)	727	62	8%	8%	89	122
Corporate complaint (Stage 2)	174	25	14%	5%	69	91
Member Enquiries	446	28	6%	10%	91	116

6.5 SEN complaints have seen a significant drop in time to respond to complaints over the last year. Work is continuing within the SEN service to ensure the handling of complaints is effective and parents feel more confident that their concerns are being heard.

7 Learning the lessons from complaints

7.1 Several complaints received in 2025/26 informed wider service development:

Area for development	Identified Actions
Clarity of information about transport processes	Information provided to families about transport arrangements has been reviewed to make the process clearer. Internal forms used by services to support transport planning should not be issued to families unless they are intended for completion by the parent or carer. Staff have been reminded to check that any correspondence explains clearly what action is required and where families should apply for transport support.
Professional practice and communication with families	Further learning has been shared with the relevant team to reinforce professional standards, respectful communication and the potential impact on families when these standards are not met. The learning has been used to remind staff of the importance of sensitive, clear and professional practice when working with children and families.
Support for families during periods of crisis	The importance of regular contact with families during periods of crisis has been reinforced with relevant staff. This is to ensure that families are offered practical and emotional support at the earliest opportunity and that contact arrangements are clear, consistent and responsive to the family's circumstances.
Compliance with statutory guidance for education, health and care needs assessments	Staff have been reminded of the importance of following statutory guidance when requests for education, health and care needs assessments are received. This includes ensuring that requests are considered properly, timescales

Area for development	Identified Actions
	are monitored, and families are kept informed about the process. Staff have also been reminded that where a child is attending school on a part-time timetable because of difficulties, the situation should be monitored and reviewed so that appropriate support and oversight are maintained.
Timely and appropriate responses to correspondence	Relevant staff have been reminded of the need to respond to correspondence appropriately and within expected timescales. This is intended to improve communication with families and reduce avoidable delay or uncertainty. Reminded relevant staff of the statutory timescales for issuing post-16 education, health and care plans, to support more consistent compliance and clearer communication with young people and families.

8 Review of the effectiveness of the complaint's procedure

8.1 The complaints procedure remains an important route for children, young people, parents and carers to raise concerns, have those concerns considered independently of service delivery, and receive a response. The evidence in this report shows that the procedure is being used, that complaints are being identified and recorded across the directorate, and that learning from complaints is being used to inform service improvement. However, the increase in demand and the reduction in response performance show that further improvement is needed, particularly in relation to timeliness and consistency.

8.2 The centralised management of customer feedback continues to support impartiality, consistency and oversight. This is particularly important for statutory social care complaints, where the complaint's function must remain separate from the services being complained about. Central oversight also allows themes, performance issues and learning to be identified across the directorate rather than only within individual services.

8.3 The increase in complaints accepted under the Children Act procedure suggests that triage arrangements are identifying complaints that are eligible earlier, alongside an increase in receiving complaints from those eligible for the procedure. The number of complaints received directly from children and young people, including some made without advocacy support, is also positive and indicates that the process is accessible to some young people. The continued availability of independent advocacy remains an important safeguard for those who need support to make their views known.

8.4 Timeliness remains the main area where the effectiveness of the procedure has been affected. Performance against response times reduced in most areas during 2025/26, reflecting the continued pressure on services and the volume and complexity of complaints, particularly in SEN. While work to close older cases has helped reduce backlogs, it has also affected reported performance. Improving timeliness remains a key priority.

8.5 The procedure is also effective when it leads to learning and service improvement. The examples in section 8 show that complaints have been used to identify changes in practice, including communication with families, clarity about processes, and quality assurance in SEN decision-making. Further work is needed to strengthen how learning is recorded, shared and followed up so that there is clearer evidence of impact over time.

8.6 Overall, the complaints procedure continues to provide an essential and effective framework for hearing concerns, identifying fault, putting things right and supporting organisational learning. However, its effectiveness during 2025/26 was limited by increased demand, delays in responding, and continuing pressure in some service areas. The priorities for 2026/27 will therefore focus on improving response times, strengthening the quality of complaint responses, improving data quality, and ensuring that learning from complaints is consistently embedded across CYPE.

9 Compliments

9.1 The Customer Feedback Team also record and share compliments received about staff and services. In 2025/26, the service formally recorded 149 compliments. We 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.

Table 22 – Compliment themes across CYPE

Theme	Total
Customer care	58
Good service delivery(i.e. Availability of staff, service knowledge)	39
Good Staff Attitude	16
Politeness	1
Good communication/Prompt responses	35
Grand Total	**149**

9.2 Set out below are a few examples of the compliments received in 2025/26 across the directorate:

SEN Assessment & Placement - “I just wanted to take a moment to thank you sincerely for all the support you've provided. Your excellent communication, understanding, and guidance have made a real difference to us, and it's truly appreciated.”

SEN Assessment & Placement - “Thank you so much for all of your help and support you have given us throughout the whole process, especially when I didn't understand or I kept repeating myself. You showed patience and understanding and reassured me of what was going to happen and the timescale.”

Children’s Social Work Team - I wanted to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude for the support and care I've received through your team, especially from my assistant social worker. Her professionalism, empathy, and dedication have made a meaningful difference in my life. It's clear that her work reflects strong leadership and a team culture that truly prioritises the wellbeing of others.
Please accept my heartfelt thanks for the role you play in guiding such an impactful team.”

Children in Care – “Our contact coordinator for the children in care team has been an absolute pleasure to have contact with. He's very efficient and is always so helpful. If he doesn't know the answer off the top of his head, he does what he can to find out for us. He has displayed so much empathy and kindness in every communication I have had with him. He has been so respectful and I can't thank him enough for his support through what is already a difficult time for our family. His hard work and dedication deserves to be recognised.”

10 Objectives for 2026/27

The priorities for 2026/27 are:

- Improve response times across all complaint types, with a particular focus on SEN, Member Enquiries and areas where performance has reduced during 2025/26.
- Continue to work with services to ensure complaints are responded to clearly, fully and in plain English, with all issues addressed and decisions explained using the available evidence.
- Maintain robust triage arrangements so that complaints are directed to the correct procedure, including the statutory Children Act procedure where this applies.
- Strengthen the quality of data recorded on the customer feedback system so that performance, themes, outcomes, remedies, compliments and learning are captured accurately and consistently.

- Increase training and support for staff across CYPE on effective complaint handling, including evidence gathering, responding to all parts of a complaint, offering appropriate remedies and identifying learning.
- Improve how learning from complaints is recorded, shared and followed up, so there is clearer evidence that service improvements have been made and sustained.
- Continue to promote access to the complaints process for children and young people, including awareness of independent advocacy and support for those who wish to raise concerns directly.
- Continue to develop the skills and resilience of the Customer Feedback Team so that the team can provide consistent oversight, support services effectively and manage increasing demand.

11 Recommendations

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

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