

**By:** Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services  
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**To:** Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee  
6 September 2016

**Subject:** **COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS 2015/16**

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Previous Pathway of Paper:** Social Care, Health and Wellbeing DMT – 5 August 2016

**Future Pathway of Paper:** None

**Electoral Divisions:** All

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**Summary:** This report provides information about the operation of the Children Act 1989 Complaints and Representations Procedure in 2015/16 as required by the regulations

**Recommendation:** The Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **COMMENT ON** the content of this report

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report covers the Complaints and Representations relating to Specialist Children's Services and to the Disabled Children's Service. There is a statutory requirement on the Directorate to operate a robust complaints procedure for children and those closely involved with them. The procedure provides people with the right to be heard, the opportunity to resolve issues and to take matters further if they are not resolved. It also provides an additional safeguard for vulnerable people and the information contained in complaints and representations contributes towards quality assurance and service development.
- 1.2 The statutory requirement to produce an annual complaints report in respect of Children's Social Services is included in the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006. The associated guidance states that the report should be presented to staff and to Members and be made available to the regulator and the general public. The Regulations are quite prescriptive about the type of information that needs to be included in the report
- 1.3 All Children in Care in Kent are advised how to make a complaint. Information about the complaint procedure is also available in leaflets, on the website, in local offices, from front line staff and via partner organisations, so that all children in receipt of services, and the adults in their lives, are encouraged to exercise their right to complain should they find themselves dissatisfied with the service.

## 2. Representations made to the local authority

Type of Record	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Statutory complaints	305	224	222	196	210
Enquiry	151	149	148	139	139
Compliment	59	93	89	94	68
Non-statutory complaints	198	172	105	35	37
Representations and miscellaneous contact	267	269	316	253	288
<b>Complaints total</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>247</b>

### 2.1 Representations via elected representatives

2.1.1 Issues raised by Members of Parliament and County Councillors on behalf of constituents are usually registered and responded to as “enquiries” but the elected representative is also advised of their constituent’s right to make a statutory complaint as appropriate.

### 2.2 Non-statutory complaints and representations

2.2.1 Complaints received about services excluded from the statutory complaints procedure or from people without a statutory right to complain are handled as Representations. Advice is given to the complainant and the Representation is recorded both on the complaints database and on the client record. A written response is sent from the Service Manager within five working days.

2.2.2 Functions excluded from the complaints procedure include child protection investigations, multi-agency decisions and certain types of court action where there are other routes for challenging the Local Authority which would make an independent investigation inappropriate. Complaints about other non-statutory functions are handled under the Council’s corporate complaints procedure. All complainants and those making representations were advised of their right to challenge the response via the Local Government Ombudsman.

2.2.3 Other “miscellaneous” contacts received included complaints about other Local Authorities and organisations, personnel issues, legal action and matters for the police.

## 3. Contact method

Type of Record	Card/Gift	Email	Letter	Telephone	Website	Total
Children Act	0	129	37	33	11	210
Non-statutory Complaint	0	22	7	7	1	37
Enquiry	0	96	41	2	0	139
Compliment	6	61	1	0	0	68
Representation	0	98	37	32	11	178

3.1 As in previous years, it remains relatively unusual for people to complain online although there was a slight increase in use of the website to provide feedback. The

most significant change in 2015/16 was the scale of the continuing increase in the use of email, which was up by over 50%, and the corresponding decrease in the use of letters.

#### 4. Compliments

4.1 The Complaints Team also logs compliments, which is the positive feedback received about staff and services. The statistics are similar to previous years.

4.2 Compliments were received about the following services.

Service	%
Adoption	4
Assessment and Intervention	2
Children in Care	5
Children in need	1
Disabled children	10
Respite care for disabled children	42
Out of Hours service	1
Family support	3

#### 4.3 Compliments made by parents

4.3.1 62% of the total compliments received were from parents; the majority of those were about the respite care service for disabled children.

Parent with children in need to social worker  
*"I want to thank you for everything you've done to help me and my kids. If it wasn't for you god knows what would have happened to me..."*

Parents of disabled children to respite centre  
*"I trust the staff – they are fantastic"*  
*"The service is a godsend"*

4.3.2 Eight compliments were made by children and young people: five were about respite care, two from children in need and one from a child in care thanking the social worker for her support.

Child to social worker  
*"You have helped me out...I do listen and the things you say mean a lot. You were made to do this job. I have never had a better person to talk to about what's going on in my life... thank you so so so so so so so so so so much. You are the best in the world."*

4.3.3 Compliments about social workers were also received from professionals in other agencies and service providers involved with the child.

Probation officer  
*"M was very astute in her dealings with X...the quality of agency liaison and social work input was one of the best examples I have seen of good practice."*

Assistant Head teacher  
*"The level of initiative and appropriate level of challenge you presented, combined with empathy and understanding towards the family you supported makes you a credit to your profession."*

## 5. The number of statutory complaints at each stage and those considered by the Local Government Ombudsman

5.1 It is a legal requirement to handle complaints from clients and closely associated people complaining about services for Looked After Children, Children in Need and certain other specified functions, according to the three stage procedure. This requirement applies, irrespective of where in the Local Authority the complaint is received. Clients and certain other people have the right to access the procedure and the Local Authority would be at risk of legal challenge if complaints were not handled according to the requirements. The requirements are detailed and prescriptive in terms of the eligibility of complainants and which complaints must be handled under the procedure, as well as the process and timescales.

5.2 There are three stages to the statutory complaints procedure:

- Stage One - Local Resolution
- Stage Two – Investigation
- Stage Three - Complaints Review Panel

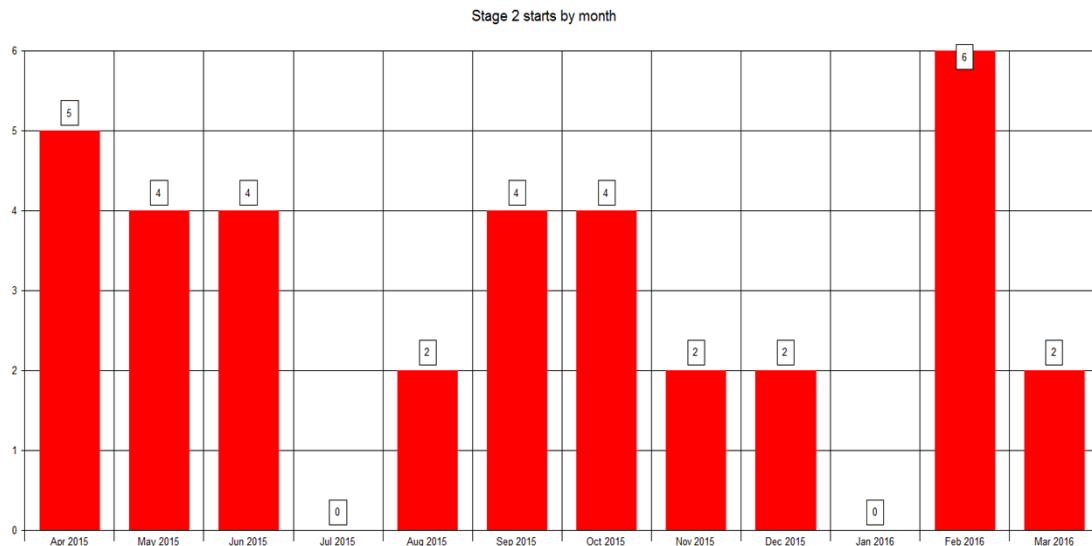
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Stage One – Local Resolution	305	223	228	193	210
Stage Two – Formal Investigation	26	27	33	25	36
Stage Three – Complaints Review Panel	1	0	2	1	1
Local Government Ombudsman referral *	18	23	30	29	17

\*includes non-statutory complaints and enquiries about new complaints

5.3 Where a complaint is not resolved at Stage One, or if Stage One is not completed within the timescale, then the complainant has the right for the complaint to be considered at Stage Two of the procedures (Investigation Stage). This involves a thorough investigation into the issues and consideration of the complaint by an off-line Investigating Officer and an Independent Person.

5.4 Two of the Stage Two complaints had not been considered at Stage One; in both cases this was because of the serious nature of the allegations made, which warranted immediate investigation. One of the investigations did not continue once the complaint had been formalised but was instead handled under the process for allegations against foster carers.

5.5 Stage Two investigations involve valuable, in-depth examination of cases, which frequently influences practice. Complainants have the right for their complaints to progress to Stage Three, which is a Complaints Review Panel, if they remain dissatisfied and the main issues are not upheld at Stage Two.



- 5.6 The number of Stage Two complaints in 2015/16 is equivalent to 17% of the number of Stage One complaints received in the same year. The previous years had been showing a steady decrease (15% in 2013/14, 13% in 2014/15).
- 5.7 73% of the Stage Two complainants had received a written response at Stage One within the statutory timescale. 44% had not had a discussion or meeting with the manager before the reply at Stage One was written. Eight of the twelve young people who complained at Stage Two had not been contacted by the manager responding at Stage One before the reply was sent.
- 5.8 The emphasis in the legislation and guidance is on early resolution at a local level. Kent's policy is that local managers should usually meet or at least speak with complainants, unless there is a good reason not to, to attempt resolution before writing. This approach is reinforced in guidance and support provided by the Complaints Team. Areas of the service that adopt this approach have a lower proportion of Stage Two investigations. Staff at the local level are expected to continue to try to resolve complaints when they escalate to Stage Two or beyond.
- 5.9 The increase in Stage Two complaints did not lead to a corresponding increase in escalation to Stage Three or the Local Government Ombudsman. One complaint escalated to a Stage Three Complaints Review Panel.
- 5.10 The decrease in complaints escalating to the Local Government Ombudsman (reported last year) continued in 2015/16. 17 complaints were made to the Local Government Ombudsman. Six of the referrals to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) were statutory complaints; all had been investigated at Stage Two and one at Stage Three.

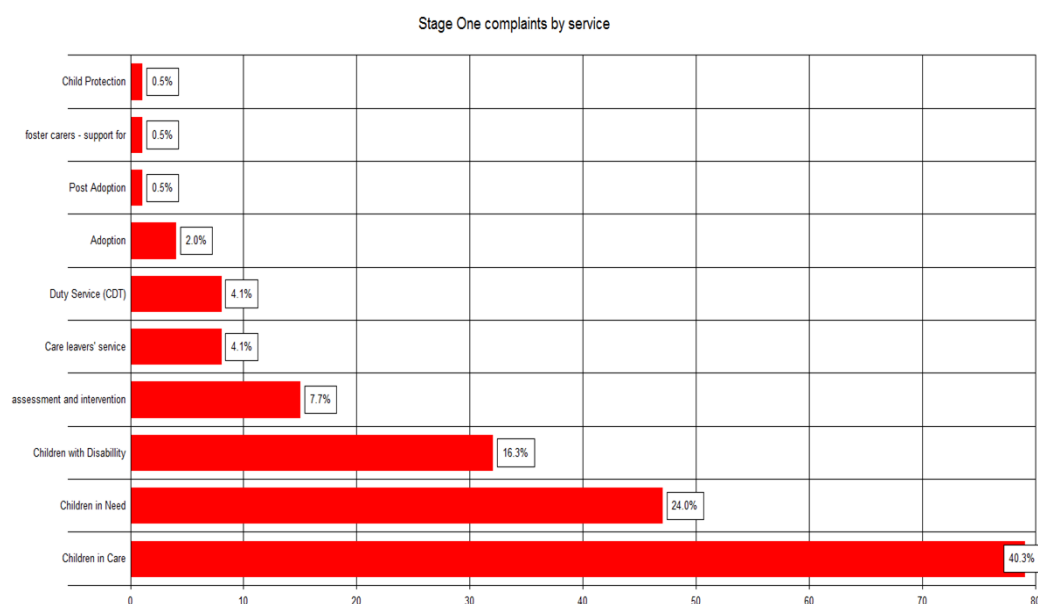
## 6. Which Customer Groups made the Complaints

### 6.1 Statutory complaints

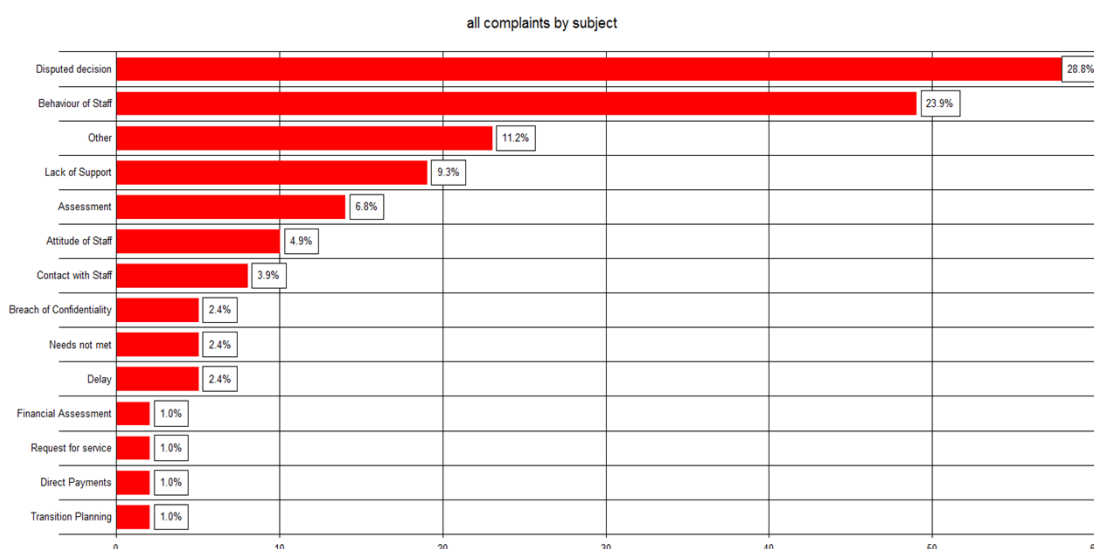
Originator	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Child or young person	29	36	43	32	44
Parent	230	149	138	130	133
Close relative	20	12	6	10	7
Carer	8	9	17	6	8
Foster carer	11	13	5	13	7
Other	0	0	5	0	7
Legal representative	6	1	0	1	0
Prospective adopter	0	4	0	1	2
Special Guardian	0	1	8	3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>210</b>

## 7. The types of complaints made

7.1 This section sets out the issues raised by complainants: what the statutory complaints were about. While most complaints were not upheld, they do provide insight into how people directly affected by services experience them. The graph below shows the services which the Stage One complaints were about.



7.2 The breakdown of the statutory complaints by subject using data from all three stages (as seen in the graph below) reflects how the complaints were presented by the complainants themselves. There is some overlap between categories. "Other" refers to the complaints about isolated issues which were raised in less than 1% of the total number of complaints.



### 7.3 Complaint about professional decisions and assessments

7.3.1 One third of the complaints made about decisions related to Children in Care. Half of those were made by the children and young people themselves, most complaining about proposed placement moves or standards of accommodation.

7.3.2 Parents of Children in Care complained about issues relating to the care plans for their children. Three foster carers complained about a decision to remove children from their care.

7.3.3 16 of the complaints were from parents of disabled children wanting more support than had been offered or disputing the decision that their children did not meet the threshold for a service from the Disabled Children's Service.

7.3.4 Two of the complaints were from care leavers wanting their support to continue longer.

7.3.5 Many of the complaints about decisions relating to children in need were from estranged parents or relatives wanting the Local Authority to take more action.

7.3.6 19 parents disputed the outcome of assessments that had been made or disagreed with statements or information about themselves that had been included in the assessments of their children's needs.

### 7.4 Lack of support / needs not met

7.4.1 Half of these complaints (13) were from children and young people. Three were care leavers: wanting help to go to university, help to get back into education and help to obtain a council property. Younger Children in Care wanted contact with their siblings and more visits from the social worker. Some children described feeling isolated.

7.4.2 Only five of the complaints were from parents: wanting more support such as respite care and help with a child's behaviour. One adoptive parent complained about the lack of post-adoption support.

7.4.3 Five of the complaints were from relative carers including two Special Guardians. All wanted more support from a social worker.

## 7.5 Complaints about staff

7.5.1 As in previous years, 90% of these complaints were from parents and 10% were from children and young people.

7.5.2 Some of the complaints from parents described the relationship with the social worker as having “broken down” and a number requested a change of social worker. Many of these complaints appeared to focus a general disagreement with decisions (e.g. an Interim Care Order) or their distress about the situation they found themselves in onto the worker with whom they had the most contact. As in previous years, complaints reflect a public perception that decisions are taken by social workers in isolation and that a change of social worker could result in a different decision.

7.5.3 Some complaints were more specific. They included allegations that staff had been discussing a child’s case openly in the office, a worker’s inconsistency, not receiving information as promised and meetings being “disorganised”.

7.5.4 The children and young people complaining about staff wanted a closer relationship with the social worker: “she doesn’t listen to me”, “doesn’t return my calls”, “is always late”. One care leaver described feeling “unsupported”.

## 7.6 Delay

7.6.1 These complaints were very clear and specific. They were: a birth parent complained about the delay in being sent pictures of her child who is being adopted, a young person complained about the delay in being given savings from a former foster carer, a mother complained about access for her partner following a clear DBS check, another complaint was about a delay in reassessing a child and another related to a delay in allocating an Occupational Therapist.

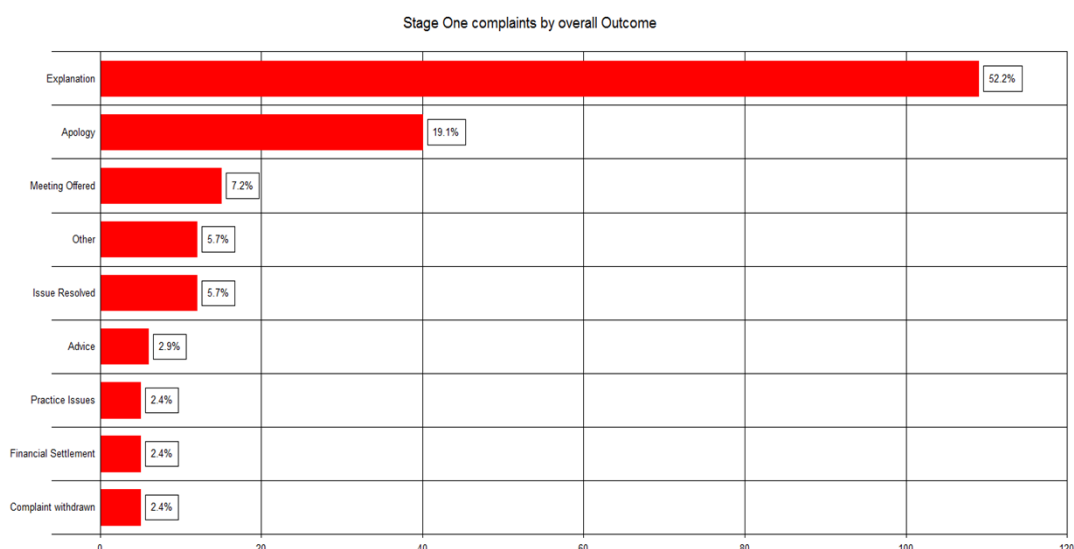
## 7.7 Breach of confidentiality

7.7.1 Two complaints were that correspondence had been sent to the wrong address. A parent complained that the social worker divulged personal information to another family member and a close relative complained that the child’s assessment named her as the person who had made the referral, resulting in relationship breakdown with the child’s mother.

## 8. The outcome of complaints

8.1 Of the Stage One complaints completed in 2015/16; 11% were fully upheld and 28% partially upheld. 7% resulted in further work or meetings planned to resolve the issue, and 2% were withdrawn. 49% were not upheld.





- 8.2 More than one outcome was recorded for some complaints; an upheld complaint may generate an apology and a financial payment, for example. It should be noted that “Apology” is recorded only when fault has been identified. Providing an explanation remains the most common outcome of a complaint. “Issue resolved” is recorded when the complainant has agreed the resolution, usually in a meeting, before the written reply is sent.
- 8.3 33 Stage Two complaints were recorded in 2015/16. Six complaints were fully upheld, nine were partially upheld, 11 were not upheld and seven were withdrawn before the investigation was completed.
- 8.4 The complaint which escalated to Stage Three was partially upheld. The complaint was upheld following further investigation by the Local Government in 2016/17 and resulted in a public report that was presented to the Children’s Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee on 5 July 2016.
- 8.5 Concerns and themes emerging in upheld complaints are set out in the section in this report on learning the lessons from complaints.
9. Outcome of complaints considered by the Local Government Ombudsman
- 9.1 Complainants have the right to contact the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) at any time, however the LGO will usually refer them back to the Local Authority as premature if it has not had the opportunity to consider the complaints under its own procedures. The LGO may decide to investigate a complaint prematurely on the grounds of urgency or because of the serious nature of the complaint.
- 9.2 Complainants may complain to the LGO if they wish to challenge a decision that they are ineligible to access the statutory complaints procedure.
- 9.3 Of the complaints considered by the LGO in 2015/16, eight had been considered under the statutory complaints procedure, six had been handled as representations, four had been recorded as “miscellaneous” and the complainant provided with advice as to the appropriate body for considering the complaint (e.g. court of law, Independent Review Mechanism, District Council), and three had been handled

under the Council's corporate complaints procedure. One had been handled as an MP enquiry.

#### 9.4 The Ombudsman's decisions were as follows.

<b>Ombudsman Decision</b>	<b>Detail</b>
<p><b>Not investigated</b> 5 complaints</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The LGO decided that there were insufficient grounds to warrant investigation of what was a late complaint.</li> <li>• LGO decided that the complainant was not personally affected by the information that was alleged to have been given to her family by the Council and that it was unlikely therefore to find fault.</li> <li>• The decision not to investigate was because the complaint was about the complainant's deregulation as a foster carer and the complainant was able to apply to the Independent Review Mechanism.</li> <li>• The LGO could not investigate matters of residence and contact which had been decided in a court of law.</li> <li>• The complaint related to work which the social worker had carried out specifically for the court. The complaint was therefore deemed to be outside the LGO's jurisdiction.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Premature complaint</b> 4 complaints</p>	<p>The LGO referred the complaints back to the Council because it had not had the opportunity to consider them via its own complaints procedures.</p>
<p><b>No fault found</b> 4 complaints</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three of the complaints were about how the Council had carried out child protection investigations. The LGO found in all cases that the Council had followed requirements.</li> <li>• One complaint alleged the Council caused delay in the District Council processing a Disabled Facilities Grant for adaptations to the family home for a disabled child. The LGO found the Council to have been pro-active and not responsible for the delay.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Maladministration and injustice caused</b> 2 complaints</p>	<p>Two complaints relating to services to disabled children, two or more years before.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council failed to update a disabled child's core assessment in a three-year period and also failed to renew the child in need plan every six months, as required. The Council apologised and agreed a payment in respect of avoidable distress and time and trouble to make the complaint.</li> <li>• The Council failed to identify suitable services for a disabled child. The Council apologised and agreed a payment for avoidable distress and time and trouble to make the complaint.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Local Settlement</b> 4 complaints</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council agreed that it was wrong to place a young mother in b&amp;b accommodation.</li> <li>• The Council had agreed to make a backdated payment to a Special Guardian following a review of the payments made, but the payment had not been received.</li> <li>• The Council was at fault because the summary of its child protection involvement was ambiguous and failed to make it clear that concerns were unsubstantiated and did not lead to ongoing involvement.</li> <li>• The Council agreed that it was at fault for failure to have a written agreement in place for the temporary change in living arrangements while a child protection investigation was conducted. The Council apologised and made a payment for avoidable distress.</li> </ul>
<p><b>No maladministration</b> 2 complaints</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was no fault in the way in which the Council investigated and recorded two incidents of alleged abuse.</li> <li>• The complainant alleged that the Council told other people that he posed a risk to children but the LGO found that the Council acted in accordance with regulations.</li> </ul>

## **10. Details about advocacy services provided under these arrangements**

- 10.1 It is a statutory requirement for the Local Authority to offer an advocate to a child or young person wishing to make a complaint.
- 10.2 A change was made to Kent's advocacy arrangements on 1 April 2015 so that there is now 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 has been provided by the Young Lives Foundation since 1 April 2015.
- 10.3 44 of the complaints received in 2015/16 were made by children and young people.
- 10.4 32 complaints were sent to the Complaints Team by advocates on behalf of children and young people. 12 children and young people contacted the Local Authority direct themselves to make a complaint and were offered the advocacy service run by the Young Lives Foundation (YLF): four took up the offer, seven did not, one young person chose to be supported by a parent. A further four complaints were received via other agencies (Coram Voice and the British Red Cross) that young people had contacted direct for support. The majority of complaints made by children and young people (28) were sent direct to the Complaints Team by the Council's contracted advocacy service run by YLF who supported complainants in 32 complaints.
- 10.5 In total, 38 children and young people used an advocate to help them pursue their complaints.

## **11. Compliance with timescales, and complaints resolved within extended timescale**

### **11.1 Statutory timescales**

The Local Authority must consider and try to resolve Stage One complaints within 10 working days of the start date. This can be extended by a further 10 working days where the complaint is considered to be complex. Many of the complaints recorded were considered complex, for example, when more than one agency or service was involved or when cases were involved in other processes, such as court proceedings.

#### **11.1.1 Performance against statutory timescales in 2015/16 were as follows:**

- 96% Stage One acknowledgements sent out within three working days (98% in 2014/15)
- 76% of Stage One responses met the 10 day timescale set (68% in 2014/15)
- 73% of Stage One responses met the 20 day (extended) timescale (75% in 2014/15)
- 74% of all Stage One responses were completed within 20 days (79% in 2014/15)

#### **11.1.3 The Local Authority should consider Stage Two complaints within 25 working days of the start date (the date upon which a written record of the complaints to be investigated has been agreed) but this can be extended to 65 working days where this is not possible. The complexity of the complaints at Stage Two made a 25 day**

target unachievable and so they were extended. 33% of Stage Two complaints were fully completed within 65 working days in 2015/16.

11.1.4 It is also a statutory requirement to try to resolve complaints and care must be taken not to jeopardise resolution or quality when seeking to improve performance against timescales.

## 11.2 Non-statutory timescales

- 94% complaints acknowledged within three working days (97% 14/15)
- 74% of non-statutory complaints met the 20 day timescale (72% in 14/15)
- 99% of enquiries were acknowledged within three working days (96% in 14/15)
- 67% of enquiries were completed within 20 working days (67% in 14/15)

## 12. Learning the Lessons from Complaints

12.1 Complaints usually result in actions on particular cases. The lessons summarised in this section are those with wider implications which have needed to be shared across the county to improve the service to children and their families. They are mainly taken from complaints which were upheld in full or in part, and resulted in an apology, change of decision, change of policy or some other action taken as the direct consequence of a complaint. Some lessons learned came out of Stage Two investigations and were not necessarily the main issues that complainants themselves had raised.

12.2 Most lessons learned were about practice and communication issues. A number of complaints may have been avoided with clearer and more frequent communication. The main issues arising were as follows.

- Communication issues including ambiguities and misunderstandings exacerbated by poor quality of recording
- Copies of letters, emails and other significant documents not uploaded onto the client system. Too many records saying e.g. "letter sent"
- Failure to always fully engage parents in a meaningful way when completing assessments of their children to ensure that reports are balanced and accurate
- Failure to consult some adults with parental responsibility who are not the main carers for the child when completing assessments. This has been a theme in past years

12.3 In all cases, action was taken locally to resolve complaints on an individual basis. A number of changes to policy and /or procedures were made or planned, to address some of the issues raised, which were potentially widespread across the service rather than isolated local incidents. Examples in 2015/16 include:

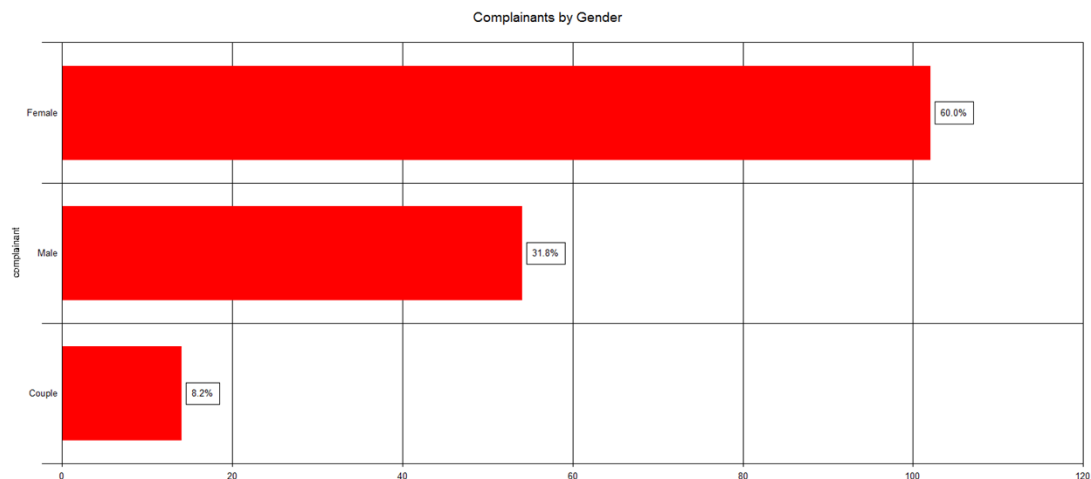
- A review of information provided to potential adopters was agreed
- Following a number of complaints last year about historic data being inappropriately pulled into reports by the client system, the system was changed in early 2015. No further complaints were received on this subject in 2015/16
- Following a complaint to the Ombudsman, a change has been made to the wording of the Direct Payments policy

12.4 Themes identified in previous years not repeated in the year's complaints are also an indication that lessons have been learned and that system and practice changes have had an effect. The main themes identified in 2014/15 which showed a significant reduction in 2015/16 were:

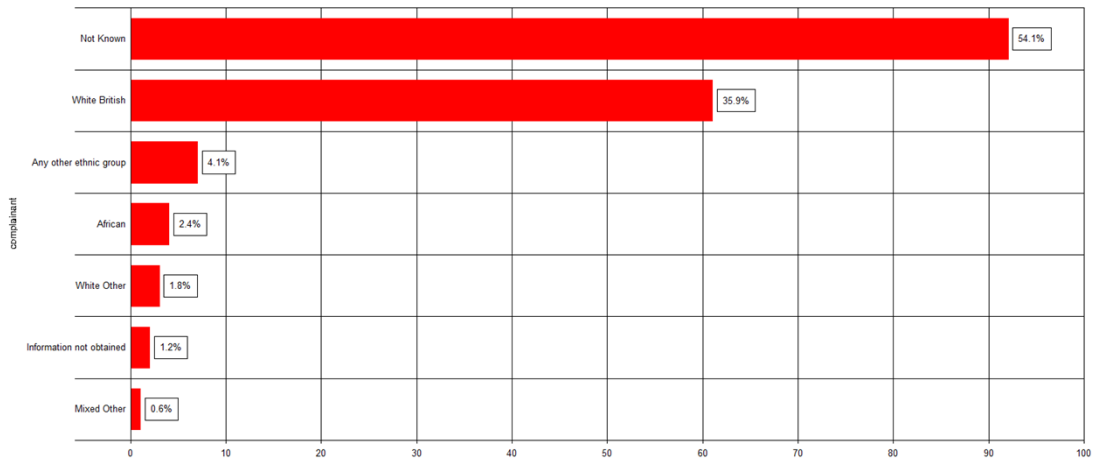
- Fewer complaints upheld about confidentiality breaches. In the complaints that were received, the cause identified was human mistake rather than system and management oversight failures, as in previous years
- Fewer complaints from relative carers and Special Guardians about support and inconsistent payments
- Only one complaint about the transition process to adult services for disabled children

### 13. Summary of statistical data about complainants

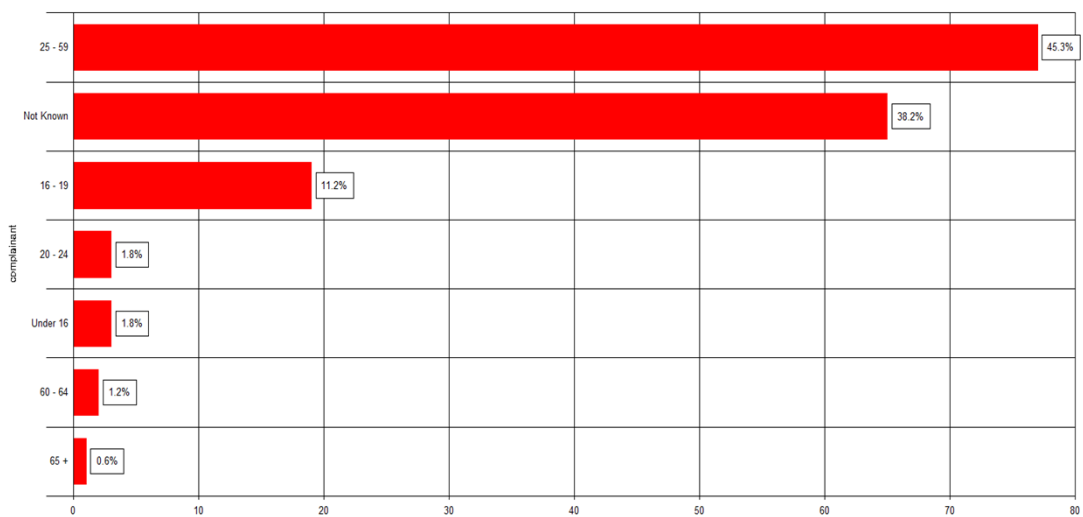
13.1 Diversity information is taken from the client system in respect of Children and Young People and a form is sent with every complaint acknowledgement, seeking information on the ethnicity, gender and age of complainants, because, for most people, this information is not already held by the Local Authority.



Complainants by Ethnicity

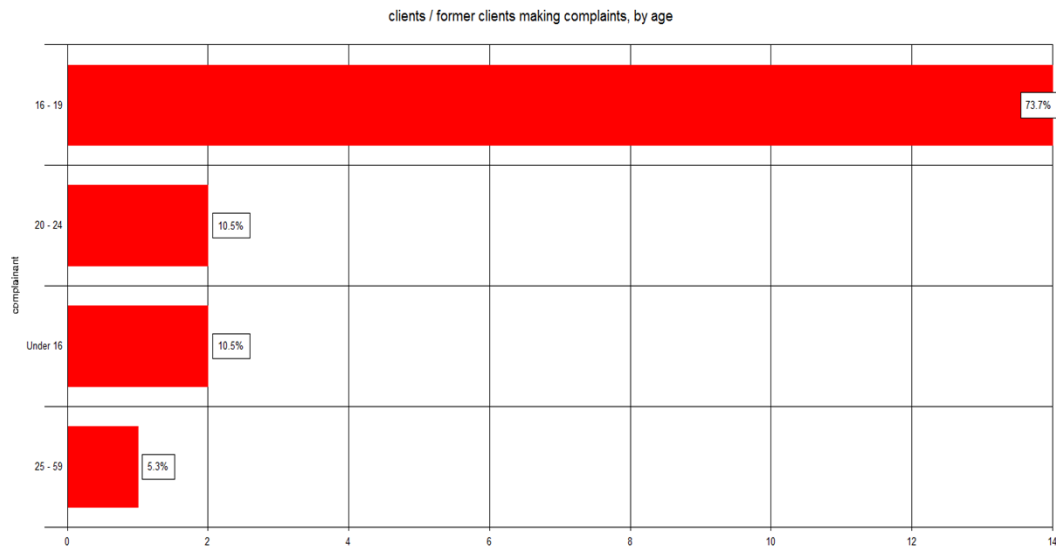


Complainants by Age



13.2 As in previous years, the majority of complainants were white British mothers of children in the care system.

13.3 One of the main reasons the complaints procedure was introduced was to provide a means for children and young people to raise any concerns they have about the service. While adults also have the right to complain about how they are directly affected by services, it is important that the Council continues to seek ways to ensure the complaints procedure is accessible to children and is easy to use.



13.4 21% of the total number of statutory complaints received were from children or young people (16% in 2014/15).

#### 14. Review of the effectiveness of the complaints procedure

14.1 The management of the SCS Complaints Team transferred to the Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Operational Support Unit on 1 April 2016. This brings the Children's and Adults complaints teams together whilst continuing to work to the different statutory complaints requirements.

14.2 With the change of management arrangements, the opportunity is being taken to review aspects of the operation of the complaints procedure. This includes placing an emphasis on early resolution; learning the lessons from complaints and more regular reporting to the management team. In light of a recent finding by the Local Government Ombudsman, it is likely that there will be more Stage Three Complaints Review Panels rather than early referral to the Ombudsman's Office.

14.3 Another development is that a decision has been taken to purchase a corporate customer feedback database that Directorates will be required to use to log complaints and other representations. It is important that the database is configured to enable the Directorate to continue to meet all statutory requirements in terms of complaints handling and reporting.

14.4 Although there has been a change to the management arrangements for children's complaints, the Complaints Team will continue to work closely with Specialist Children's Services and the Disabled Children's Service to ensure effective and robust complaints processes are in place. The effectiveness of any complaints procedure is dependent on the wider organisational culture in which it operates.

14.5 In 2015/16 the complaints team responded to a number of team/unit requests for information about complaints relating to their services. This included attending management team meetings to provide presentations on complaints handling, and to provide induction sessions for new managers.

14.6 Two full days' training were provided by the Local Government Ombudsman for new Investigating Officers. The pool of staff trained to act as Investigating Officers increased in 2015/16 and contributed to improved response times.

14.7 The majority of staff acting as Investigating Officers in 2015/16 were Team Managers (62%). Others were Senior Practitioners, Service Managers, Independent Reviewing Officers, Practice Development Officer, Independent Child Protection Conference Chairs and a Principal Occupational Therapist. Investigators were nominated by Assistant Directors and were each allocated an investigation into a complaint in another part of the county under different line management. Investigators came from the following services:

East Kent	5
North Kent	4
West Kent	4
South Kent	5
Disabled Children's Service	5
Safeguarding	5

14.8 The Complaints Team monitors complaints by service unit and area. Weekly reports were provided for management in 2015/16 summarising complaints and highlighting overdue responses. Complaints highlighting issues with policy, practice across the county or serious failings were brought to the attention of the Divisional Management Team. Other regular reports about complaints and representations included quarterly monitoring to the Specialist Children's Services Divisional Management Team via the Management Information Unit and to Corporate Management Team via the Strategic and Corporate Services Directorate. Complaints data on performance and by subject was also provided for some Area Deep Dives.

## 15. Conclusion

15.1 Kent County Council continues to operate a robust and responsive service for people making complaints about Specialist Children's Services, in accordance with legal requirements. It is important that children and families feel able to complain if they are dissatisfied with the service received as it provides an opportunity to resolve issues and, where the service has not been to the expected standard, it is an opportunity to learn lessons and put things right.

## 16. Recommendations:

16.1 Recommendation: The Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee is asked to <b>CONSIDER</b> and <b>COMMENT ON</b> the content of this report
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## 17. Background Documents

None

## 18. Report Author

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