

**Children's Service
Complaints and Representations Procedure**

Annual Report 2018 – 2019

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1. Summary

- 1.1 This Report is produced in accordance with the statutory guidance for the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, Adoption and Children Act 2002, the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003.
- 1.2 The report considers compliments, complaints and representations received between 1st April 2018 and 31st March 2019. It also provides an analysis of outcomes, trends and learning from complaints which can be used by the service for planning and improved service delivery.
- 1.3 Complaints against schools are governed by different legislation. Each school is required to have its own complaints procedure and complaints about schools are not therefore included in this report.
- 1.4 During the year a total of **106** complaints were processed under the Children's Social Care statutory complaints procedure or the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure. The report explains how the complaints were resolved under the procedures. There were **four** referrals to complaints the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- 1.5 In addition, **36** compliments were recorded.

2. The Procedure

- 2.1 The report considers complaints and representations received about Children's Social Care Service; the Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service; and the Education Inclusion Service.
- 2.2 Complaints about Children's Social Care and the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service are dealt with under the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 and accompanying statutory guidance 'Getting the Best from Complaints'. A summary of the procedure can be found at Appendix 1.
- 2.3 Complaints about the Education Inclusion Service and Local Authority Designated Officer fall outside the scope of the statutory complaints procedure and are dealt with under the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure. Information about this procedure can be found at www.bathnes.gov.uk
- 2.4 The feedback received is recorded against one of the following headings: compliment, complaint or representation.

- **A complaint** can generally be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet, which requires a response.
- **A representation** is feedback which does not need a formal response or where the person concerned does not want it to be recorded as a complaint. Children and young people often chose to raise a concern in this way as they do not want to enter the formal complaints procedure.
- **A compliment** is positive feedback about the service or an individual member of staff. Compliments from service users and other agencies are recorded.

2.5 The key principles of the Complaints Procedure are:

- People who use services are able to tell the Council about their good and bad experiences of the service.
- People who complain have their concerns resolved swiftly and, wherever possible, by the people who provide the service locally.
- The procedure is a positive aid to inform and influence service improvements, not a negative process to apportion blame.
- The Service has a 'listening and learning culture' where learning is fed back to people who use services – and fed into internal systems for driving improvement.

2.6 Children's Social Care has set out its commitment to responding to the concerns of children and young people who are in care in the Care Pledge. The Pledge has been endorsed by the Council's Corporate Parenting Group.

We will work hard to sort out any problems or worries you have.

If we can't do what you ask, we will explain the reasons why.

We will make sure you know how to get an independent advocate - that's someone who will listen to you and work with you to get things changed.

We will make sure you have all the information you need to make a complaint.

3. Complaints and Compliments – analysis of the data

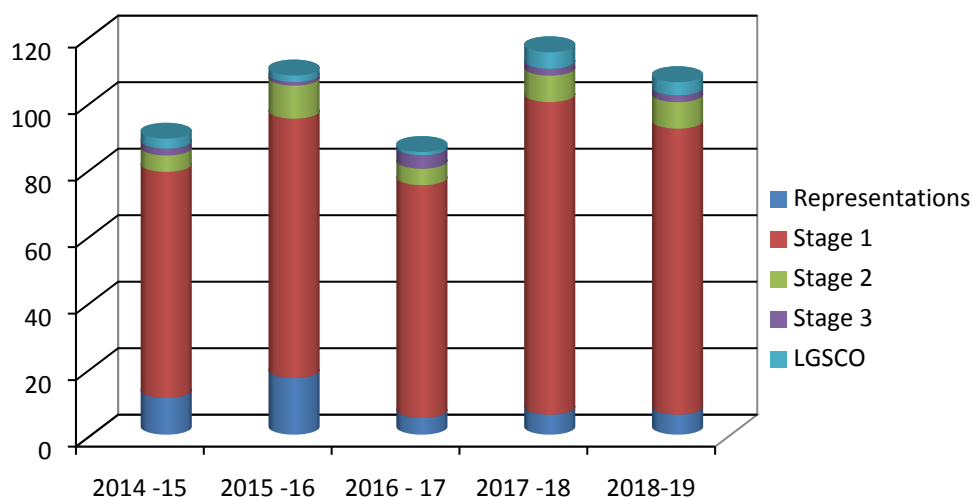
3.1 Through induction and training all staff are advised of their responsibilities under the Complaints Procedure and are equipped to receive complaints and compliments when working with young people, families and carers. Staff are aware of the importance of sharing all complaints and potential complaints with the Complaints and Data Protection Team to ensure the complaint is correctly recorded and monitored in accordance with the statutory guidance or corporate procedure.

3.2 Table 2: Numbers of complaints received and resolved

	Carried over 2017 – 18	Received 2018 - 19	Resolved	Not pursued	Carried forward 2018 – 19
Representation	1	6	5	2	0
Stage 1 (Statutory Procedure)	8	67	60	12	3
Stage 1 (Corporate Procedure)	2	19	17	1	3
Stage 2 (Statutory Procedure)	4	3	5	0	2
Stage 2 (Corporate Procedure)	0	5*	4	0	1
Stage 3 (Statutory Procedure only)	1	2	3	0	0
Referral to Ombudsman	2	4	5	0	1
Total	18	106	99	15	10

*requests for investigation which did not progress to full investigation

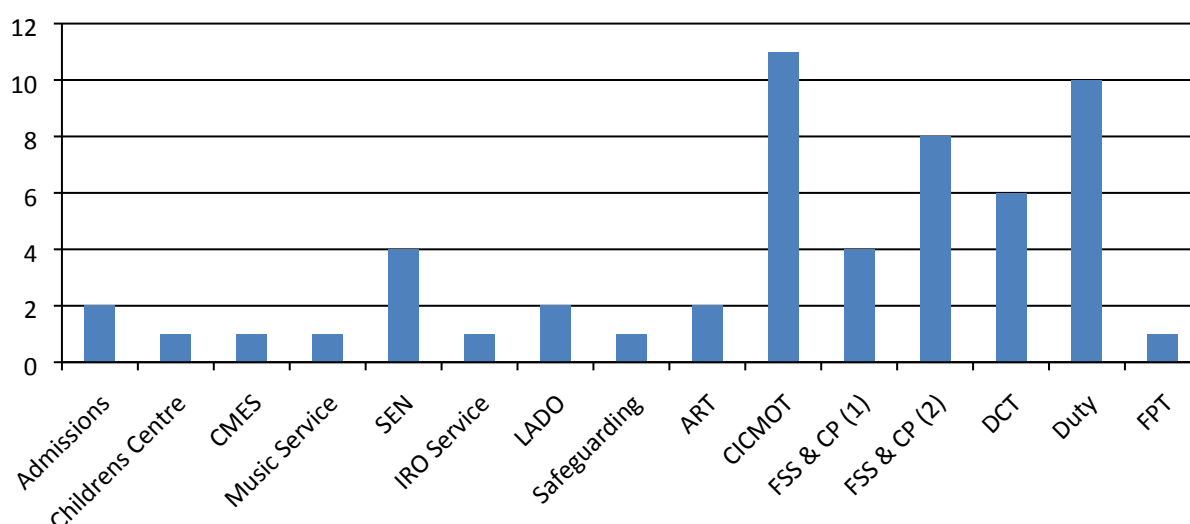
3.3 Table 3: Comparison with previous years



3.5 The total number of complaints received across the service has decreased during the year but not significantly.

3.6 The distribution of complaints across the three stages and referrals to the Ombudsman remain consistent.

3.7 **Table 4:** breakdown of Stage 1 complaints received by Children Social Care Teams.



3.8 As might be expected the Children's Social Care teams receive the highest number of complaints as they provide frontline services. A full list of team names is given at Appendix 2.

3.9 **Table 5** illustrates the broader themes drawn from the complaints and gives the number of upheld or partially upheld complaints in each category. These categories are taken from the statutory guidance.

Category	Number of Stage 1 complaints	% Stage 1 complaints	Upheld or Partially Upheld
Attitude or behaviour of staff <i>includes issues with poor communication</i>	18	21%	4
Assessment, care management or review <i>includes delays in completing an assessment and perceived bias in an assessment</i>	12	14%	3
Application of policy <i>includes the impact this has on a young person</i>	1	1%	1

Quality of the service <i>Where the service did not meet service user expectations</i>	13	15%	4
Delay in making a decision or providing a service	11	13%	2
Unwelcome or disputed decision	13	15%	2
Appropriateness of service <i>includes disagreement with the involvement of the service or the service failing to be involved with a family.</i>	17	20%	3
Application of eligibility / assessment criteria <i>includes disagreement with the outcome of an assessment</i>	1	1%	1

- 3.12 Unusually there is a reasonably even spread of complaints across the categories. There has been a noticeable increase in the number of complaints in the categories of 'Unwelcome or disputed decision' and 'Appropriateness of Service' and a significant drop in the number of complaints in the category of 'Attitude or behaviour of staff'.
- 3.13 This suggests more complainants are challenging the decisions taken and recognise these are decisions taken by the service as opposed to 'blaming' staff for the decisions.
- 3.14 The examples below illustrate the type of complaints received in the key categories and the responses provided by the manager. All complaints were upheld:

Complaint recorded under 'attitude or behaviour of staff' – A care leaver complained about her Personal Adviser saying that he was supposed to contact her and hasn't. He missed a core group meeting and a few other meetings he was supposed to support her in. He has not helped or supported me.

Response – The manager found the Personal Adviser made an initial attempt to contact her but he didn't reach her and did not make efforts by following up with further calls. He did not leave a message and as a result a substantial amount of time passed before contact was made. The manager apologised on behalf of the team for the distress this caused and said the young person was to contact her direct if this happened again.

Complaint recorded under Assessment, Care Management or Review – the complainant (a father) said that he had not been informed that his children had been on a Child in Need plan or the reason why.

Response – The manager found that the social work team had focused attention

on events which affected the children's half-siblings and their mother and the unintended consequence was that the team failed involve their father in their communications and planning. The manager apologised for this and reassured the father he would be informed, consulted and involved in future.

Complaint recorded under Concern about Quality of Service - There were several elements to this complaint, an example of one element is:

- My granddaughter had benefitted greatly from play therapy when she lived with us and it was agreed that this would be arranged once she had settled with her new family – the social worker was actioned to sort this out and to date this has never happened.

Response – The manager identified that it is difficult when there are a number of workers and teams involved without clear understanding of their roles and who is doing what tasks. She said she would particularly address the issue of the social worker sharing information and outcomes from her tasks so that foster carers and kinship carers are reassured they are being done and followed up.

4. Learning from complaints

- 4.1 The primary purpose of the Complaints Procedure is to allow the service the opportunity to put things right for the individual complainant when they have gone wrong. The statutory guidance also states that:

All local authorities should provide a system for:

- The dissemination of learning from complaints to line managers;
- The use of complaints procedure as a measure of performance and means of quality control; and
- Information derived from complaints to contribute to practice development, commissioning and service planning.

To achieve this there are systems in place to collate and then disseminate information gathered at the conclusion of each stage of the procedure.

Stage 1 complaints

- 4.2 In 2018 -19, 23% of Stage 1 complaints were either upheld or partially upheld. Although the number of complaints that were upheld is lower than in previous years the information will provide valuable insight into areas where improvements can be made. (See section 3.14 above).
- 4.3 A quarterly report is prepared for senior managers which draws together the themes from complaints and the actions that have been taken in response to the complaints. The quarterly reports are also available to all managers responsible for service and team plans.
- 4.4 As numbers of complaints are relatively small and are spread across a number of service areas it is difficult to identify trends in the data, however, a

small number of complaints have been received from fathers who do not feel they have been appropriately involved by the service. This has been raised with managers and the Service Improvement Board will be considering this as an area of work which requires further consideration.

Stage 2 complaint investigations

- 4.5 Between April 2018 and March 2019, three requests for Stage 2 complaint investigations under the statutory complaints procedure were received. Four investigations were on-going from the previous year.
- 4.6 Five investigations were concluded during the year and 2 were on-going at the end of the year.
- 4.7 In addition, 5 requests for Stage 2 investigations were received under the Corporate Complaints procedure. These were reviewed by the Corporate Complaints Team. Of these requests, 3 were referred back to the service for further work, 1 was closed with no further action and 1 complaint was on-going at the end of the financial year.
- 4.8 The number of complaints progressing to Stage 2 under the statutory complaints procedure is in line with previous years (6% of Stage 1 complaints progressed to Stage 2 compared to 8.5% of in 2017 -18). Many complainants say they escalate their complaint because they feel the Stage 1 response has not fully addressed their concerns or it has 'missed the point'. Timescales are also a factor. This is considered further in Section 5, however, evidence has shown that those complaints which took in excess of 30 working days to respond to are more likely to progress to Stage 2. Timeliness of responses is therefore very important.
- 4.9 Each complaint investigation report makes recommendations for action or improvement to the service. The recommendations are passed to the Head of Service in the form of an action plan. The completion of the action plan is monitored by the Complaints and Data Protection Team and feedback is given through the quarterly report.
- 4.10 Some actions are relatively straight forward to complete or are specific to the individual case, others require longer to address and embed within the service.

Examples of recommendations for action include:

- Information on the B&NES website regarding eligibility for the Short Breaks scheme should be updated and clarification should be provided about which elements of the EHCP is relevant to the provision.
Confirmed as completed by the Commissioning Team.
- Thought should be given by the Duty Team as to how best to meet the needs of children and young people who have particular communication

needs. This may include considering specialist workers from across the department, training and development or accessing support from outside the department as and when needed.

Shared with Team Managers and Deputy Team Managers through the management meeting.

- The Council should remind Children's Social Care Team Managers and social workers about the importance of:
 - Regular management oversight of cases;
 - Placing supervision notes on case files;
 - Ensuring important decisions, and the process for reaching those decisions, are clearly recorded on a young person's case file;
 - Ensuring all contacts, e.g. telephone calls, are recorded on case files;
 - Involving parents in the assessment process;
 - Keeping parents informed of significant events in the lives of children whilst they are in the care of the local authority.

This longer term piece of work will be addressed through team and management meetings and individual supervision.

The above is not an exhaustive list of the recommended actions but examples of the areas for improvement identified during the course of complaint investigations.

Stage 3 Complaints

4.11 Three Stage 3 Review Panels were held during the year. Complainants can ask the Panel to consider complaints which were not upheld at Stage 2 or where they have not achieved the remedy they were looking for. The majority of the recommendations of the Panel relate to the specific circumstances of the complainant. However, examples of more general recommendations include:

- The service should introduce a monthly letter to parents in prison. The Panel recommended that BANES should consider a publication by Barnardo's 'Working with children with a parent in prison. Messages from practice';
- Practitioners and managers in social care to access the in-house training and guidance regarding cultural awareness;
- For Children's Social Care and Youth Connect Services to identify ways of understanding how the other service works and recognising the differing demands and pressures on each service in order to assist and improve communication.

Complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGSCO)

4.12 The LGSCO considered 6 complaints about Children's Services. Two of these complaints were carried over from the previous year and four new complaints were made to the Ombudsman. The Council was required to respond to the Ombudsman's enquiries on three of these complaints.

4.13 The outcomes were:

- One complaint remained open at the end of the year;
- One complaint was referred back to the Council without investigation as it was considered 'premature' i.e. it had not exhausted the Council's complaints procedure.
- One complaint was not investigated by the Ombudsman because the key issues had been considered in court and are out of jurisdiction for the Ombudsman;
- The investigation of one complaint was discontinued because the Ombudsman cannot investigate what happens in schools and cannot investigate when someone has appealed to a tribunal:
- The Council was found at fault in two cases:
 - The Council failed to follow the instructions of a Stage 3 Review Panel on the content of a letter it was told to write to remedy a complaint. The Council was told to revise the letter in line with the Ombudsman's findings; and
 - The Council was at fault in the way it dealt with the provision of alternative education. To remedy the complaint the Council agreed to a payment for missed education and reimbursement of the cost of on-line learning

The Council completed both remedies to the satisfaction of the Ombudsman.

Compliments

4.14 Once again members of staff throughout the service have received compliments from the young people and their families and from colleagues working in partner agencies. A total of 36 compliments were recorded.

4.15 Compliments reflect good practice and provide valuable information which can be considered alongside complaints to help establish where the strengths and weaknesses of the service are. To demonstrate how much positive feedback is received by the Service, the Principal Social Worker now compiles a monthly celebration newsletter which is shared throughout the service.

4.16 The table below captures examples of the compliments received. These compliments have been selected to show the range of issues and services covered. There are many more that could have been included.

Table 6 – Examples of compliments received

From foster carers to their Supervising Social Worker	Thank you for always making yourself available when we needed advice. We couldn't have managed without you.
From a support worker to the Connecting Families Team on behalf of a family	I would just like to thank you for the flexibility you showed in agreeing to replace the fridge freezer for CE that you had already supplied. It was above and beyond what was expected.
From a parent to the manager of the Adolescent at Risk Team	<i>A massive thank you for the amazing support you've given my family and me! CL was so caring and a much needed light in the dark. I am so glad the service is there for children and parents like ourselves. I can't thank you enough C for keeping my family together and helping us mend and heal.</i>
From a parent about her son's social worker in the Disabled Children's Team	EK was empathetic and understanding and working with her was a nice experience. I was concerned to contact Social Care in the first instance but working with E eased my concerns.
From the Named Safeguarding Nurse at RUH to a social worker in the Duty Team	<i>I wanted to say what a great example of joined up work today in relation to a safe discharge plan for L from the Paediatric Ward. HS made a concerted effort to come into the hospital to talk with us on the ward then discussed further with L herself. We are grateful to H for all her efforts to get to the hospital today. This resulted in a safe discharge plan to L back to her mother.</i>

5. Complaint handling and monitoring

Response to Stage 1 complaints

- 5.1 Compliance with timescales is monitored very carefully in recognition of the need to deal with complaints as swiftly as possible. The importance of this is noted above.

- 5.2 An acknowledgement of a Stage 1 complaint should be sent in 2 working days and a full response within 10 working days. This can be extended to 20 working days when the complainant requests an advocate or the complaint is particularly complex. This extension should be in agreement with the complainant.
- 5.3 In 2018-19, the target of 95% of acknowledgments to be sent within 2 working days was met.
- 5.4 The average time taken to respond to a Stage 1 complaint was 24 working days for complaints dealt under the statutory Complaints Procedure. The average time taken for complaints dealt with under the Corporate Complaints procedure was 12 working days.
- 5.5. Although the time taken by Children's Social Care to respond to complaints is higher than the target of 10 working days it is permissible to respond within 20 working days. The majority of complainants receive a response within 15 working days, however, there are complaints which take significantly longer and these impact on the average time taken. The reason for a significant delay varies but it is often due to the availability of managers and staff to complete the initial investigation of the complaint.
- 5.6 It was noted in Section 4 that a delay in responding to a complaint can increase the likelihood that the complaint will escalate to Stage 2 and therefore careful monitoring of the response is important. The Complaints and Data Protection Team assists managers by sending prompts and with drafting the response. Where there is an unavoidable delay the Team sends a holding letter to the complainant.

Response to Stage 2 complaints

- 5.7 The response to a complaint at Stage 2 should be sent within 25 working days from the date the complaint is agreed with the complainant. This timescale is very challenging for the investigating officer and independent person as the time needed for file reading and interviewing staff is considerable. The time allowed can be extended up to a maximum of 65 working days with the agreement of the complainant and this is required on most investigations.
- 5.8 Five investigations were concluded during the year. Two investigations were carried over from the previous year and because of delays caused by one complainant the average time for these investigations was 195 working days. The average time taken to complete the investigations completed during 2018/19 was 78 working days. The Complaints Manager continues to work with each Investigating Officer and Independent Person to reduce the timescale as far as possible but there are a number of challenges which affect this.

Response to Stage 3 complaints

- 5.9 A Stage 3 Review Panel should be held within 30 working days of the request being received. There were three Panels during the year which were held within an average of 34 working days.

6. Accessing the procedure

- 6.1 The statutory Complaints Procedure was introduced in the Children Act 1989 to give children and young people who are either 'looked after' or deemed to be a 'child in need' a way of telling the Council when they are unhappy about something in their life. There are many different ways for young people and their families to make a complaint or representation.
- 6.2 Information is available on the Council's website and there is an information sheet for staff to share with young people and families when they first start working with them or when an issue arises.
- 6.3 A complaints leaflet has been designed specifically for children and young people. It is available on the website and is included in the Child in Care Pack which is given to each young person when they become 'looked after'.
- 6.4 A young person who is looked after will have the chance to raise any concerns they have with the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) at their regular review and the IRO will explain to them how to access the complaints procedure if this is appropriate.

6.5 Table 8 – Methods used to make a complaint

Email	53%
Letter	12%
Telephone	27%
Complaint form	8%

- 6.6 Of the 73 Stage 1 complaints and representations made under the statutory Complaints Procedure, 6 were made by young people. Two complaints were made by young people with the support of an advocate (see Section 6.8 below). None of these complaints were escalated to Stage 2. Based on learning from previous complaints, managers are required to meet with the young person, if they are agreeable, rather than rely on a written response. The meeting should help understanding on both sides.
- 6.7 The remainder of the complaints were made by adults complaining about their own contact with the service or on behalf of children. The majority of complainants were parents (84 complaints), but complaints were also received from foster carers, grandparents, an aunt and a step-parents.
- 6.8 Section 26A of the Children Act, 1989 requires the local authority to 'make

arrangements for the provision of advocacy services to children or young people making or intending to make complaints under the Act'. The advocacy service commissioned by Bath and North East Somerset is 'Shout Out!' which is part of 'Off the Record' and advocates from Shout Out! regularly provide support to young people considering making a complaint. However, support can be provided by any agency that the young person is working with if this is their preference.

- 6.9 Information about the advocacy service is available to children and young people in the publicity information about the Complaints Procedure. In addition, Children and Young People who become looked after are automatically referred to Shout Out and an advocate will contact them before their first review to offer support. Advocacy support is also offered to children/young people to support them to attend a Child Protection Case Conference. Shout Out! will provide information and support to make a complaint if needed. The Complaints and Data Protection Team always makes young people aware that they can have help from an advocate with their complaint.
- 6.10 Shout Out has produced a wallet sized card on 'the Pledge' and this includes information about the Complaints and Data Protection Team Manager with contact details.
- 6.11 Parents and carers wanting to make a complaint do not have the same automatic right to an advocate as young people but Bath and North East Somerset commissions a specialist advocacy service at the Care Forum in Bristol to provide a service to those parents who meet their criteria.
- 6.12 Feedback collected by the advocacy service is always very positive and indicates that complainants who use the service feel well supported with their complaint and achieve a better outcome than they would if they had pursued the complaint on their own.
- 6.13 When making a complaint, complainants are invited to provide information about their ethnicity, gender and disability on the complaint form. If the complaint is made by letter, email or telephone the complainant is not currently asked for this information and so this information is incomplete.
- 6.14 This data can be used as an indicator of the make-up of the population which accesses the complaints procedure but unfortunately the information available for 2018/19 is too limited to be useful for analysis. A database for recording complaints data was introduced in April 2019 and will enable analysis of data in future years.

7. An overview of the work of the Complaints and Data Protection Team

- 7.1 The Complaints and Data Protection Team has undergone a significant change during the year. In November 2018 the Complaints and Data Protection Team transferred to One West to become part of a centralised team working alongside Information Governance and Corporate Complaints

colleagues which it was envisaged would provide additional support and resilience for the Team.

7.2 Team Structure: Two members of the Team left their posts in 2018 which left a vacancy for an Information Governance Officer from July 2018 until January 2019. The Complaints Officer post has been vacant since June 2018. Recruitment to this post started in the new financial year. The make-up of the team is now:

- **Complaints and Data Protection Team Manager** manages the complaints service for Children's Services and Adult Social Care. In Adult Social Care this is a combination of direct management of complaints and oversight of the complaints handled by Virgin Care. The Complaints Manager also manages the process for dealing with Subject Access Requests to Children's Services and Adult Social Care under the Data Protection Act 2018 along with requests from the police to share information under the joint information sharing protocol. She also works closely with the Information Governance Team and Caldicott Guardian on information security issues (data breaches).
- **Information Governance Officer** dealing primarily with Subject Access Requests under the Data Protection Act 2018 and with requests from the Police under the 2013 joint Protocol for Disclosure of Information.
- **Information Governance Officer** dealing primarily with complaints against Children's Services and Adult Social Care.

7.3 Monitoring of the procedure: The Complaints and Data Protection Team Manager produces quarterly monitoring reports on complaints handled under the statutory Complaints Procedure and the corporate Complaints Procedure as well as the Annual Report. Data is also available to all service areas on request to help with service monitoring and planning and information about specific issues or trends is provided to the Service Improvement Board.

7.4 Training: The Complaints and Data Protection Team Manager delivers a session on a bi-monthly basis on complaints and information governance as part of the induction programme for social care staff. Sessions to share learning gained from dealing with Subject Access Requests is planned with individual teams for 2019/20.

7.5 Liaison with other Councils – Regional Meetings: The Complaints and Data Protection Team Manager is a member of the South West Region Complaints Managers Group. The Group is currently developing a toolkit to assist Councils evidence the learning that comes from complaints and feedback.

7.6 Liaison with other Councils – Register of Independent People: The Complaints and Data Protection Team Manager also links with complaints managers in 7 neighbouring authorities to operate a Register of Independent

Investigators and Stage 3 Panel Members. This Register has been running for a number of years and ensures that the Council has access to appropriately appointed and trained independent investigators and Stage 3 Panel Members. The Group holds an annual Network Meeting to support the development of those people in the independent roles.

7.7 Table 9 – Requests for information

Completed					
	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019
Subject Access Requests	44	30	36	51	57
Advice and signposting	5	37	73	77	18
Information sharing (requests from police & other agencies)	64	43	81	76	68
Court Order	5	4	3	6	6
Response to internal review	1	0	2	1	1

- 7.8 The number of Subject Access Requests has risen slightly during the year. The Complaints and Data Protection Team is currently reviewing the recording of Subject Access and Information Sharing requests to ensure it accurately reflects the number of files reviewed and the time taken in order to complete the request.
- 7.9 The timescale for responding was amended with the introduction of the GDPR in May 2018. The Council previously had 40 days to respond to a Subject Access Request. It must now respond within one month of receiving the request. Where the request is complex this can be extended by a further 2 months but the requestor must be advised of this extension within one month. This timescale has been complied with on requests received since May 2018.

8. Areas for development in 2018 – 19

- 8.1 Many of the areas for development are a continuation of the work already being undertaken.

8.2 Complaints:

- Continue to work with managers to improve the response times for complaints at Stage 1.
- Continue to support managers with the handling of complaints through individual support sessions and meetings and develop a programme to provide bespoke training as required.

- Develop the internal web page to provide a resource for managers on all aspects of the Complaints Procedure.
- Ensure that the outcome of all complaints is captured and shared with the service in a way that enables it to identify where improvements should be made and record when this has happened in order to evidence the learning.
- Review the information available to the public to ensure it is accurate and accessible for children, young people, their parents and carers.
- Contribute to the work of the South West Region Complaints Managers Group to develop a toolkit for ensuring that the service is able to learn from complaints and that this can be evidenced.

8.3 Data Protection/Information Sharing:

- Continue to review the implementation of GDPR/Data Protection Act 2018 and revise procedures accordingly. This includes reviewing the way the SARs and information sharing requests are recorded and monitored.
- Support the implementation of the Caldicott Function Plan through the Complaints and Data Protection Service. In particular record and assist the Information Governance Team with the monitoring and investigation of data breaches within the Service to prevent recurrence wherever possible.

Sarah Watts
Complaints and Data Protection Team Manager
September 2019

Appendix 1 - Summary of the Complaints Procedure

Stage One – Local Resolution

The majority of complaints should be considered and resolved at Stage 1. Staff at the point of service delivery and the complainant should discuss and attempt to resolve the complaint as quickly as possible.

Complaints at Stage 1 should be concluded within 10 working days. This can be extended by a further 10 days where the complaint is complex, or the complainant requests an advocate.

If the complaint is resolved at Stage 1 the manager must write to the complainant confirming what has been agreed. Where the complaint cannot be resolved locally or the complainant is not satisfied with the response, the complainant has 20 working days in which to request a Stage 2 investigation.

There are some complaints that are not appropriate to be considered at Stage 1 and these can progress directly to Stage 2.

Stage Two - Investigation

Once the complainant has decided to progress to a Stage 2, the Complaints Manager arranges for a full investigation of the complaint to take place. The investigation is carried out by someone who is not in direct line management of the service or person about whom the complaint is made.

The investigation is overseen by an Independent Person who must be involved in all aspects of the investigation to ensure it is fair, thorough and transparent.

The complainant should receive a response to their complaint in the form of a report and adjudication letter within 25 days of making the complaint. This can be extended up to a maximum of 65 working days where the complaint is particularly complex or where a key witness is unavailable for part of the time.

The Adjudicating Officer should ensure that any recommendations contained in the response are implemented. This should be monitored by the Complaints Manager.

Stage Three - Review Panel

Where Stage 2 of the procedure has been completed and the complainant remains dissatisfied, he can ask for a Review Panel. The purpose of the Panel is to consider whether the Local Authority adequately dealt with the complaint in the Stage 2 investigation. The Panel will be made up of three people who are independent of the local authority.

The Panel should focus on achieving resolution for the complainant and making recommendations to provide practical remedies and solutions.

The complainant has 20 working days in which to request a Review Panel from receipt of the Stage 2 report and adjudication letter and the Panel must be held within 30 days of receiving the request.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied he can refer his complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Appendix 2 - Children's Service Teams

Admissions – Schools Admissions and Transport

ART- Adolescent at Risk Team

Children's Centres

CMES – Children Missing Education Service

Music Service

SEN- Special Educational Needs

IRO – Independent Reviewing Officer

Safeguarding – Child Protection Case Conference Chair

CICMOT – Children in Care/Moving on Team

LADO – Local Authority Designated Officer (Managing Allegations)

FSS and CP (1) and (2) – Family Support Services and Child Protection (Teams 1 & 2)

DCT – Disabled Children's Team

Duty – Duty and Assessment Team (including Referral and Information Officers (RIOs))

FPT – Family Placement Team