

Statutory Social Care Annual Report

Complaints and Customer Feedback

For the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

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Introduction

i. Background

Local authorities are legally required to establish complaints procedures to deal with complaints about their social care functions. The complaints procedure for children and young people is covered by the Children Act 1989 and the Department for Skills and Education produced guidance, 'Getting the Best from Complaints' (2006), which outlines the procedures which local authorities must have in place. For adult social care, this report is also produced in accordance with the requirements of the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints Regulations (2009).

Lancashire County Council is the Vice Chair of the National Complaints Managers Group (England) and the Vice Chair of the North West Complaints Managers Group which comprises 23 local authorities. The aim of this group is to provide a forum where complaints staff can learn and share best practice, develop and implement local practice standards, discuss performance and problem solve. These groups are also consulted on proposed changes to legislation and learning from complaints by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services and the Association of Directors of Children's Services.

ii. Purpose

The purpose of the Annual Report is to review the operation of the complaints process over a 12 month period, including statistical data, and to provide the local authority with the means by which it keeps itself informed about complaint themes and how effective its current arrangements are for handling customer complaints. It offers an analysis of what the information obtained from the operation of the complaints process means for the council.

This report also includes information on compliments and comments received by the council.

iii. Period covered and data

The report covers the period 1 April 2018 to the 31 March 2019. The report makes extensive use throughout of data available from the Customer Feedback System which records all statutory social care complaints and feedback for the council. The statistical information presented within this report can be verified by reference to this database and is based on the date feedback is received. All percentages and costs are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Section One	Summary and Overview highlights the key messages from the report and gives the overall picture across the council
Section Two	Statistical data, analysis and learning in relation to Adult Social Care Services .
Section Three	Statistical data and further information and analysis and learning in relation to all Children's Services .

If you require any additional information please contact Lancashire County Council Complaints Team on 01772 539414 or email your request to complaintsandfeedback@lancashire.gov.uk

Section One: Summary and Overview of all Social Care Complaints and Feedback

1.1 Executive Summary

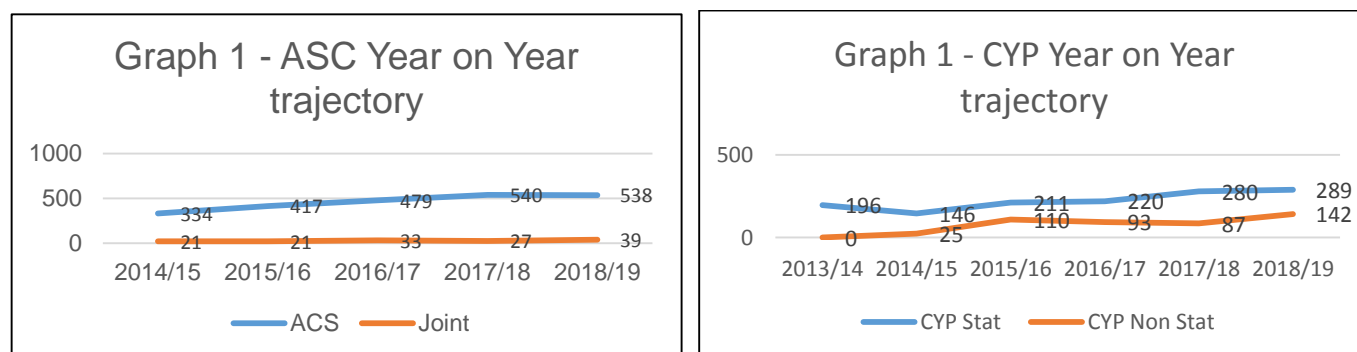
Complaints are used by the council as an opportunity to learn and improve. As a direct result of complaints in 2018/19 the council has made improvements to processes and procedures, it has improved communication with the NHS, customers and their families, issued guidance to staff and commissioned extra training for staff and managers.

Complaints represented just over 1% of all active adult social care and children's social care cases throughout Lancashire in 2018/19. Statutory complaint totals have increased overall by 3% (805 in 2017/18 to 827 in 2018/19). Most other councils are also experiencing a rise in complaints and ombudsman investigations rose nationally by 5% last year. Just over 23% of statutory social care complaints relate to the customer experience of "social work practice".

Graph 1 below shows that there were 538 complaints about adult social care (ASC) which is broadly the same as in 2017/18. Included in this figure were 39 complex joint complaints with the NHS, which is an increase of 44% from 2017/18 (27).

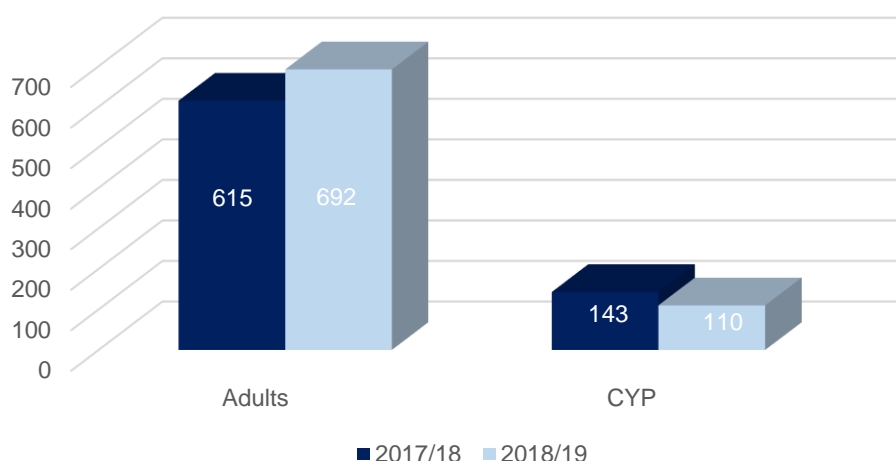
Graph1 also shows the continued increase in statutory children's social care (CSC) complaints totals by 3% (from 280 complaints in 2017/18 to 289 in 2018/19). Non statutory CSC complaints increased by 63% from 87 complaints in 2017/18 to 142 in 2018/19). This is mainly due to an increase in complaints about children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

The numbers of complaints that have gone to the ombudsman have decreased for both adults and children's social care.



Graph 2 overleaf shows a 6% increase in **compliments** from 758 in 2017/18 to 802 in 2018/19 mainly due to an increase in adult social care feedback. The totals for CYP positive feedback have decreased from 143 in 2017/18 to 110 for 2018/19.

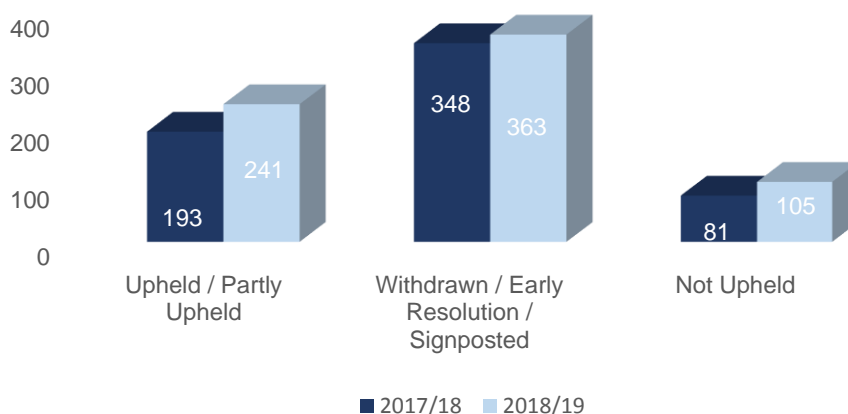
Graph 2 - Compliments



1.2 Statutory complaint trends and outcomes

Social care complaints represented 1% of CSC and 1.2% of ASC active cases. Adult social care complaints have levelled off after a number of years of consecutive rises but CSC complaints continue on an upward year on year trajectory. The number of complaints is rising as a percentage of total customer feedback. It represents just over 50% of all feedback received in 2018/19. In 2017/18, this figure was just under 50%. Increasingly people are therefore contacting the council to complain rather than to compliment staff.

Graph 3 - Statutory Complaints by Final Outcome



Graph 3 above shows a breakdown in the number of statutory complaints by final outcome for all 709 closed complaints during 2018/19. 13% of all complaints were not upheld in 2017/18 and this proportion has gone up to 15% of all complaints in 2018/19. Just over a third (34% of complaints) were justified by being upheld or partly upheld. This points to at least one third of complaints having an aspect which is justified. More than half (51%) of complaints have also been 'nipped in the bud' or withdrawn at an early stage in the complaints process. This figure is welcome news as it shows the success of early action to resolve complaints.

In 2017/18 the total amount spent on investigations for statutory adult social care complaints was nil because all complaints in ASC were investigated internally and for children's social care it was £4714.67.

1.3 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) complaints received

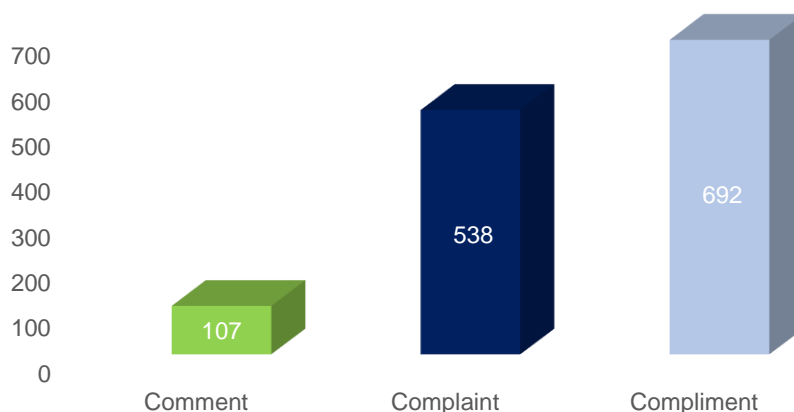
79 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) social care and education final decisions were received during 2018/19. This is a welcome 19% decrease on 2017/18 figures (98).

Section Two: Adult Social Care Feedback

2.1 Summary of ASC feedback in 2018/19

Graph 4 shows a breakdown of ASC by feedback type. A total of 538 complaints were received in 2018/19 which is similar to the previous financial year (540). However it should be noted that people are more likely to compliment adult social care rather than to complain.

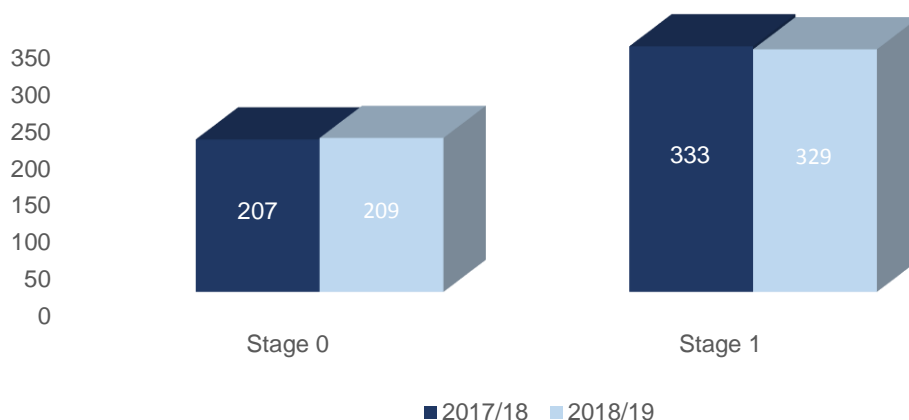
Graph 4 - Feedback Type



2.2 Breakdown of complaints by stage

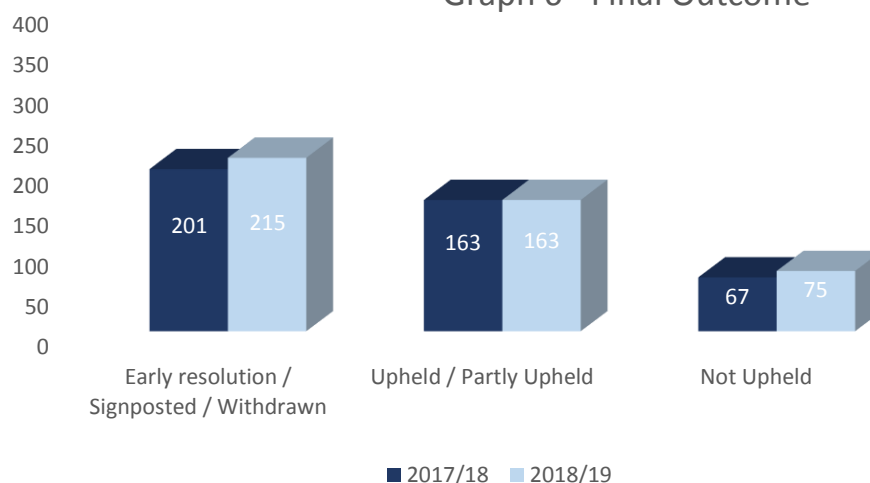
The breakdown of ASC complaints is shown in Graph 5. Stage 0 is the early resolution of complaints. It can be seen that a significant proportion of complaints continue to be 'nipped in the bud' with similar numbers of complaints requiring investigation at the formal stage.

Graph 5 - Complaint Stage



The outcomes of 453 closed complaints that commenced in this financial year, and had outcomes recorded against them at the year-end, are shown in Graph 6, the rest (85) were still open at year-end. Of all closed complaints, 47% were resolved early, 36% had at least one aspect upheld and only 17% were not upheld. These are similar proportions to the figures for 2017/18.

Graph 6 - Final Outcome



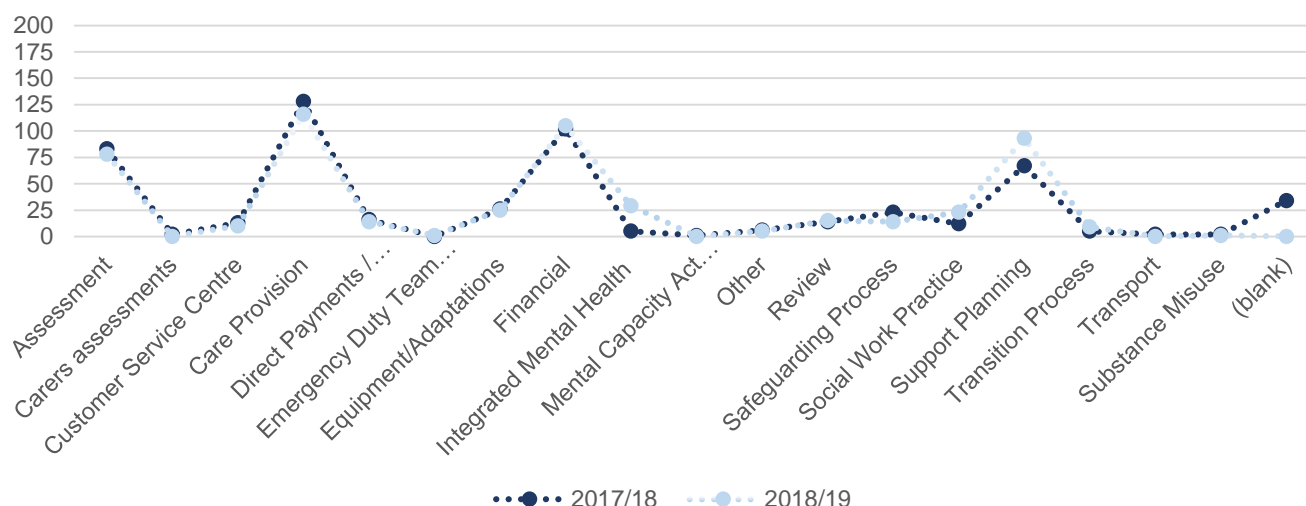
A total of 329 internal complaint investigations were undertaken. The breakdown of these was 23% upheld (77), 26% partly upheld (84) and 23% not upheld (75). 22% (74) remain open and 6% (19) were withdrawn throughout the complaint process. These proportions are similar to 2017/18. When the upheld and partly upheld figures are considered together, it can be seen that in about half of all cases, when an investigation is undertaken, an aspect is found to be justified.

Of the total number of complaints received in 2018/19, 2% (10) exceeded the 6 month statutory maximum timescale. This is mainly due to the complexity of the cases.

2.3 What do people complain about?

Graph 7 shows complaints by service type for the last 2 financial years.

Graph 7 - Complaints By Service Type



For 2018/19, the most frequent subject of complaint was Care Provision (116) which received 22% of the total number of complaints, which is similar to the previous year. There has also been a significant increase in the number of complaints about Support Planning from 67 complaints in 2017/18 to 93 in 2018/19. Assessment and financial related complaints have stayed broadly the same this year as compared to last year.

2.4 Learning for adult social care

Area	Learning point for adult social care
Social Care	<p>All social work students were informed of the correct procedures for introducing themselves to service users at the student forum and were sent an email reminder of the importance of accurate recording.</p> <p>Social care staff have been reminded to update the financial recording systems in a timely manner so that invoices can be correctly calculated and issued.</p> <p>In another complaint, staff have been reminded of the importance of inputting the correct financial information and providing information to customers on financial implications.</p> <p>Social workers have been reminded to improve communication surrounding the cancelling of meetings.</p> <p>A reminder has been issued to all workers of the importance of returning calls to the service user and/or their family members in a timely manner.</p>
Direct Payments / Finance	<p>Workers have been reminded to ensure that people are informed of the financial implications of care and that they understand these, particularly prior to being discharged.</p> <p>The principal social worker has devised a new process and easy read information explaining LCC's charging arrangements for non-residential care services which is currently being rolled out around the council area.</p> <p>Social care managers have drafted information for LCC's internet pages on financial contributions and a number of other social care areas, including first and third party top ups.</p> <p>There is now a clear pathway in place for interim services pending the start of a Direct Payment.</p> <p>Managers have improved timescales for undertaking direct payment reviews and improved communication between teams and service users about the outcome of reviews and direct payment arrangements.</p> <p>A finance letter which caused a complaint due to having been sent to a deceased person has been shared with the finance team to see if this practice can be reviewed and improved.</p> <p>Financial Assessment Officers have been reminded of the requirement to only complete assessments with the appropriate named person and ensure key questions are asked.</p>

Transitions	The Transitions Team have improved communication around checking before cases are transferred and closed. They now write to the service user before closing a case, to check if there are any outstanding concerns.
Older Peoples Service	<p>An older people's care home investigation established the importance of dealing with residents' concerns as they arise; sharing information during handovers, staff meetings and residents' meetings.</p> <p>A home will purchase a wheelchair for residents' use and ensure that assessments and plans are updated. The management team will share this learning with other homes.</p>
Crisis Care / Emergency Duty Team	Workers now consider contacting the service user/family to establish whether there is any other need for service user support, eg information off the care agencies preferred provider list.
Safeguarding	Social workers were reminded about the importance of notifying families about the outcome of a safeguarding enquiry, ensuring that sensitive information is shared appropriately.
Mental Health	Care coordinators have been given clarification on the commissioning process of domiciliary care via the Care Navigation team.
Quality Improvement	<p>The QI team have reviewed the system for the initial screening of residents, who are affected by home closures, identifying early on who may require input from health and finance staff for advice, information and assessments. A link officer is identified with sufficient capacity to undertake the work.</p> <p>When a home is ceasing to provide a service, we now explain to relatives that, whilst there is a proposed date to work towards, due to staff seeking new employment, it may become urgent to move service users before that date.</p>
Learning Disability and Autism	Managers have reminded staff that they should only approve payment on the financial recoding system when the appropriate finance form (FIN107) is seen or scanned. A service representative is now on the Direct Payment forum. Disputes and cases are now referred to the forum.
Shared Lives	The Shared Lives Service now take into account the service user's preference for communication when undertaking a review.
Intermediate Care	NHS Therapy teams now hold regular multidisciplinary team meetings, in order to facilitate safe discharge from health arranged intermediate care.
Continuing Health Care	<p>The Continuing Health Care (CHC) Manager has asked the specific Clinical Commissioning Group if the Department of Health Public Information booklets on CHC can be made available for practitioners to share with service users and their families.</p> <p>The team manager has suggested at a Management Meeting that practitioners should provide a blank copy of the CHC checklist at service user meetings to enable those present to refer to the information whilst discussions are being held.</p>
Reablement	<p>Managers have identified the need for better communication between social care workers and family/service users, for example to provide information about the reablement process as well as financial information.</p> <p>Managers now appreciate that reablement capacity and the use of reablement should be constantly reviewed in order to ensure we are providing the right level of service user support, equitably.</p>
Complaints Service	The complaints team now issues a covering letter with all complaints information included.

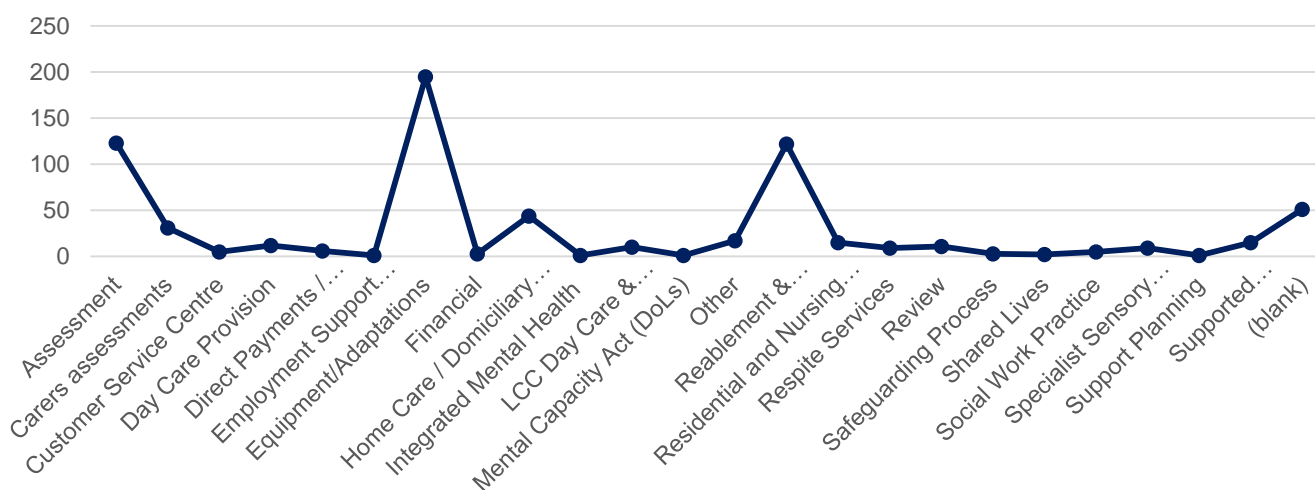
2.5 ASC services which were the subject of compliments

Graph 8 shows the number of compliments received by service type for 2018/19.

The number of statutory compliments has shown a welcome increase from 615 in 2017/18 to 692 in 2018/19. This is mostly related to the leaflet 'Your Views Count' being circulated after assessments or reviews. In 2017/18, 26% of all compliments were because of equipment and adaptations received and this has increased slightly by 2% in 2018/19. Compliments for Home Care/Domiciliary Care Services have increased by 3% in 2018/19 to 44. Compliments for reviews have doubled this year as have those for Carers' Assessments. Reablement compliment figures have gone up from 108 in 2017/18 to 122 in 2018/19, in all probability because of the recent work on Passport to Independence.

However, there has been a decrease in the proportion of compliments in relation to service user assessments (152 in 2017/18 to 124 in 2018/19).

Graph 8 - Compliments By Service Type



2.6 Joint Complaints

A Joint Complaints Protocol is in place with the NHS. Complaints investigations increasingly involve many different parts of the Council as well as health services and contracted service providers therefore adding much more complexity which the complaints team coordinates.

There was an increase in joint complaints during 2018/19 to 39 compared with 27 in 2017/18. These complaints are sometimes complex and take longer to resolve as they involve ASC and the NHS, typically Hospital Trusts and/or Clinical Commissioning Groups. Six joint complaints were still open at the close of 2018/19. Of the resolved complaints 14 were not upheld, 10 partly upheld and 5 were fully upheld. Four were withdrawn by the complainants. Integrated Mental Health and Support Planning were the biggest themes with 11 each.

2.7 Exceptional Compliments

- "I feel compelled to write you regarding our recent experience of Broadfield House Care Home where my mother was admitted after having a fall and a short stay in the Royal Preston Hospital. S (Social Care Support Officer) who had recently been out to assess my mother about her care needs, has been an excellent example of professionalism and has delivered a high standard of care and support for my mother and our family throughout. I have been a RC priest*

now for over 30 years and I have experience of care homes all over the country through my career. I have to tell you that Broadfield stands head and shoulders above them all. The atmosphere that is created by the staff there is a credit to the care team members and to the leadership team. Over the time I have been visiting, nothing is too much trouble and you are always greeted with a warm welcome. My mother constantly says how kind people are, how cheerful and caring they are towards her. I can testify that I have seen this high level of care given not only to my mother but to all residents and visitors. I for one am extremely grateful that my mother is in such a caring and engaging home. I would be very grateful if you can pass my comments on to both S and all the team at Broadfield. They are a credit to Lancashire County Council and an outstanding example of how a Care Home can be run"

- *"Things were pretty drastic for Mum following the death of my father and both her and my brother were fighting a losing battle with alcohol. You helped massively with your input, although it looked at the time that for both Mum and my brother there would be no good ending. But in actual fact there has been an extremely happy ending to everything. Mum was last in hospital on Christmas Eve 2016, and from that day has not touched a drop since. My brother is also completely sober and now using his time effectively helping with a charity that focuses on men dealing with life after prison/addictions. As a family we are reunited and I speak to my brother almost daily. Together we are helping Mum with the biggest change in her life since losing Dad and that is moving from where she has lived for over 50 years. We are hoping to move her into an apartment and she is excited about this new chapter in her life. You know how bad things had got, and this must seem very belated, but I wanted to pass on to you how much you helped at that dreadful time. Also I wanted you to know that sometimes, when all hope seems to be lost, that situations can turn around. So as I said, this is a very belated thank you and I hope that this news brings some encouragement that may be helpful to others who are lost in a very dark place."*
- *"I would like to pass on a word of praise. I am a retired social worker and I know Krystal and her family who live in very poor home conditions. Krystal has a learning disability and has also had difficulty with her parents, particularly around them engaging with her independence and any offers of support for years. Relationships with services have been poor over the years. Others have tried but got nowhere. However, you have done wonders and Krystal and her family can't praise you enough, not just what you've done but the way you've done it!"*
(Please note that the name Krystal is fictitious)

2.8 LGSCO Complaints

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) provides the final stage for complaints about local authorities and some other organisations providing local public services. Their service is provided free of charge. Complainants approach the LGSCO when all other options for pursuing their complaint are closed by the Council, after it is considered that a proportionate response has already been provided. The LGSCO will only consider complaints that have already been through the Council's complaints procedures, although sometimes an early referral will be made to the LGSCO when complainants continue to be dissatisfied and the council considers that it has not done anything wrong or it has done all it can to resolve the matter.

In 2018/19, the LGSCO received total of 62 separate complaints in relation to ASC in Lancashire (in 2017/18 it was 80). Of these, 31 were referred to the council to respond to. Table 1 shows the number of LGSCO adult social care enquires staying reasonably steady over the last few years with welcome slight decrease for 2018/19.

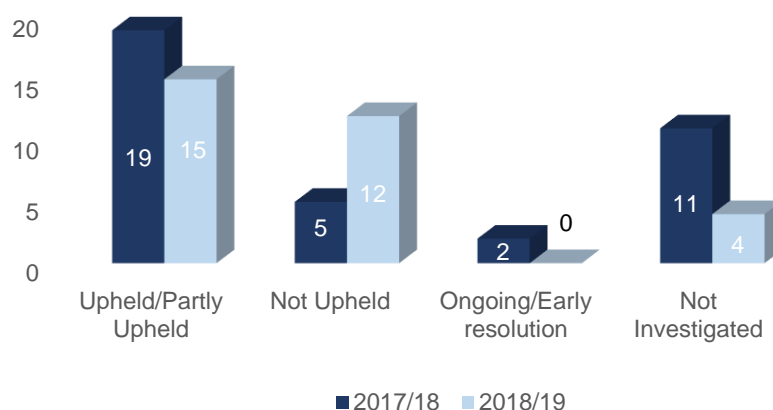
Table 1

LGSCO enquiries for Adult Social Care	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Total Received	30	30	37	31

Graph 9 below shows of the 31 LGSCO ASC final decisions received in 2018/19, 39% were not upheld, 13% were not investigated and 48% were upheld. It should be noted that the LGSCO will also uphold complaints that the council has already upheld. Of the 15 complaints that were either upheld or partly upheld, just 8 were not upheld by ASC originally, **making an actual uphold rate of 26%.**

The final decisions resulted in a total of £24,484.83 being paid out by the council.

Graph 9 - Final Outcome



There have not been any ASC public reports in 2018/19. This is welcome news, as there were two in 2017/18. The main learning from the 15 upheld and partly upheld complaints is outlined below.

2.10 LGSCO ASC identified learning

- a) In a complaint about top up payments, we reviewed our procedures to ensure that:
- Information regarding top-up payments is in line with the Care Act 2014;
 - written top-up agreements were entered into with third parties (rather than the agreement being between the care home and the third party);
 - we ended the practice of allowing a third party to pay the top-up directly; and

We reviewed other cases potentially affected and provided the ombudsman with a written report of the review of our procedures.

- b) In a complaint about the council struggling to find an appropriate care home for an individual, we reviewed the lessons learnt and shared them formally with relevant staff in relation to considering alternative support. The care provider also reviewed their procedures to ensure support plans are updated appropriately when changes are identified through their monthly support plan reviews
- c) We changed our procedures to ensure that out of county service users are receiving an adequate social work service.
- d) We revised our third-party agreement form to ensure that it is Care Act compliant. We made social care teams fully aware of the correct procedures and guidance around third-party arrangements.

- e) We carried out a lessons learned exercise to identify what worked well and what did not about our decision to end a supported living scheme. It involved representatives from the housing association, care provider and borough council as well as gathering comments from tenants and their representatives.
- f) Managers have reminded their social work teams to ensure reviews of needs assessments are carried out in accordance with the Care Act.
- g) Managers have reminded their social work teams to improve record-keeping.
- h) We trained ASC staff in complaints handling
- i) We issued a staff guidance to ensure that complainants are informed of the implementation of outcomes to their complaints.
- j) The complaints team periodically reviews the effectiveness of the complaints process with complainants.

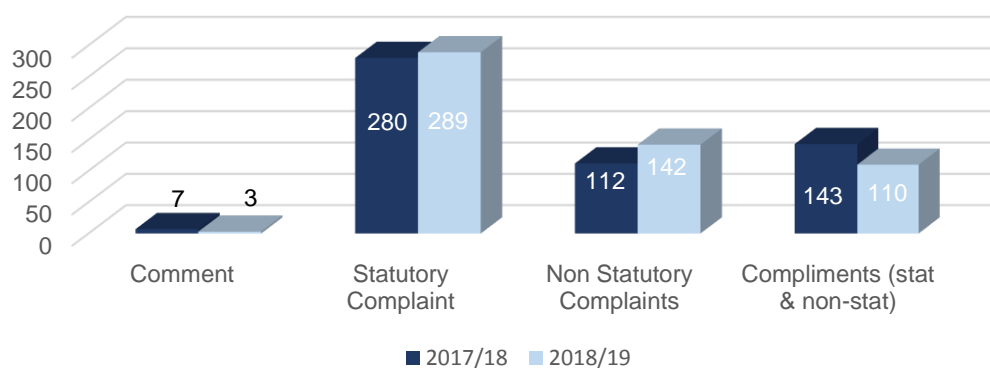
Section Three: Children and Young People Feedback

3.1 Summary of CYP and CSC feedback in 2018/19

There is a statutory and non-statutory process for complaints about CYP services. The statutory process involves three stages for social care complainants, who are eligible to complain. The Stage 1 initial response is always compiled by the service manager involved. If the person complaining is still unhappy, they can request a Stage 2 independent investigation. If the complainant remains unhappy, a Stage 3 review panel, which reviews the way the stage 2 was investigated, can be requested. The non-statutory process applies to non-social care complaints (for example education or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities SEND) or for people complaining about CSC who do not have parental responsibility for a child (for example grandparents). In 2018/19 the total amount spent on investigations for children's complaints was £4,714.67. This is less than the cost spent on investigations in 2017/18 which was £6,090.15.

Graph 10 shows the overall rise in CSC statutory complaints by just over 3%, to make an overall total of 289 for 2018/19. The vast majority of CSC complaints are made by parents or guardians. Only 25 complaints were made by children or their advocates in 2018/19.

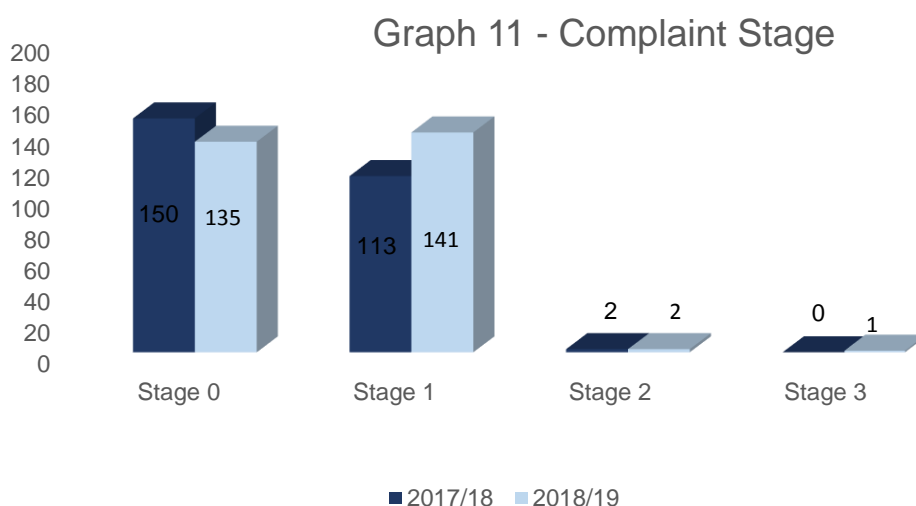
Graph 10 - Feedback Type



3.2 Breakdown of complaints by stage

The breakdown of complaints with outcomes recorded against them can be seen in Graph 11. Stage 0 is the early resolution of complaints. It can be seen that there has been an increase in complaints responded to at the formal stages rather than at in the early stages (Stage 0).

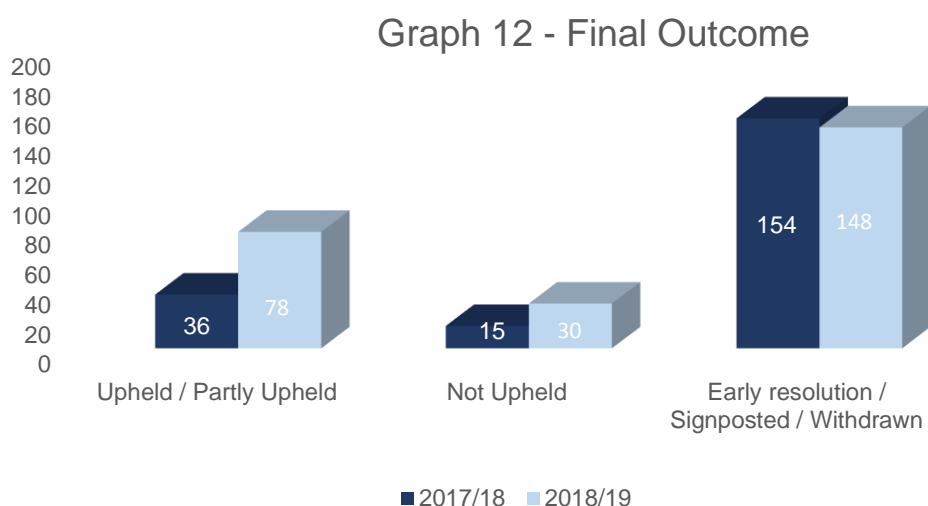
The number of complaints resolved locally at Stage 1 is more this year than it was in 2017/18 (an increase of 28). Two independent complaints investigations were commissioned and one Stage 3 panel was held.



3.3 Breakdown of complaints by outcome

Graph 12 shows a breakdown of the 256 closed complaints which had a final outcome recorded at the time of writing this report. Of these 12% were not upheld, 30% were upheld or partly upheld and most complaints (58%) were signposted, resolved early or withdrawn (a similar proportion for the last two financial years). Local and early resolution of complaints is a better outcome for everyone, as escalation is time-consuming and expensive.

More complaints were upheld or partially upheld during 2018/19 than the previous financial year with the proportions increasing from 18% of all closed complaints in 2017/18 to 30%. Therefore complaints are found to be justified in about a third of all cases.

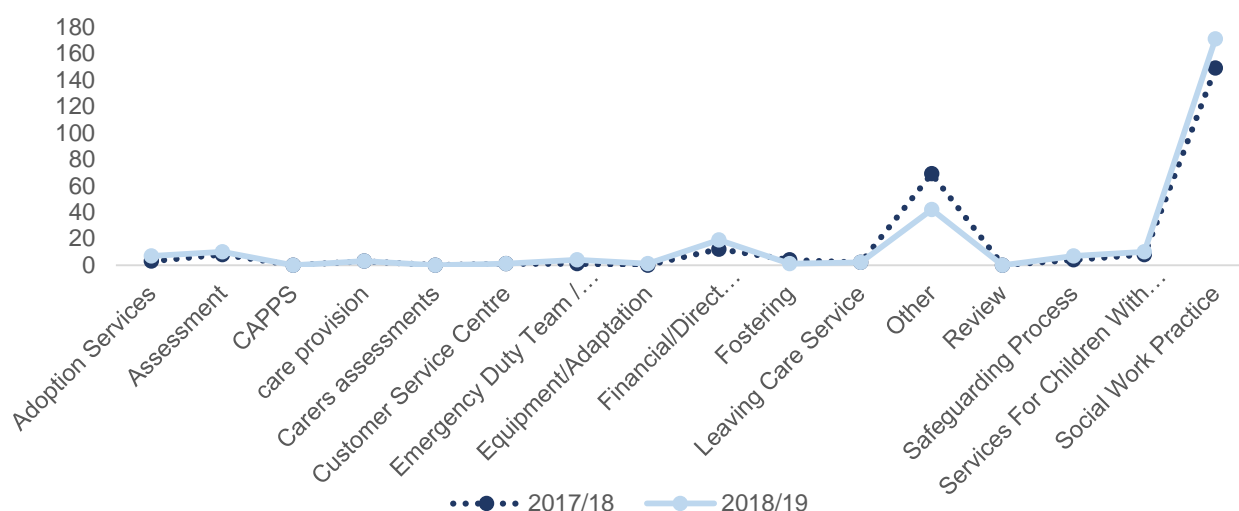


Of the total number of statutory CSC complaints received in this financial year, almost 50% (133) exceeded the statutory timescale (20 working days). It is considered that the reason for this is staff retention, with some social workers leaving and managers picking up on complaints afterwards, leaving the council in some difficulty with achieving a resolution to matters.

3.4 What do people complain about in the statutory process?

Graph 13 below shows a breakdown by service type for the last 2 financial years. It can be seen that the proportions are similar, although there was a 15% increase in the number of complaints in relation to social work practice, increasing from 149 in 2017/18 to 171 in 2018/19. Social work practice continues to be the most frequent subject of complaint covering more than 61% of all CSC complaints.

Graph 13 - Complaints By Service Type



3.5 Learning for CSC

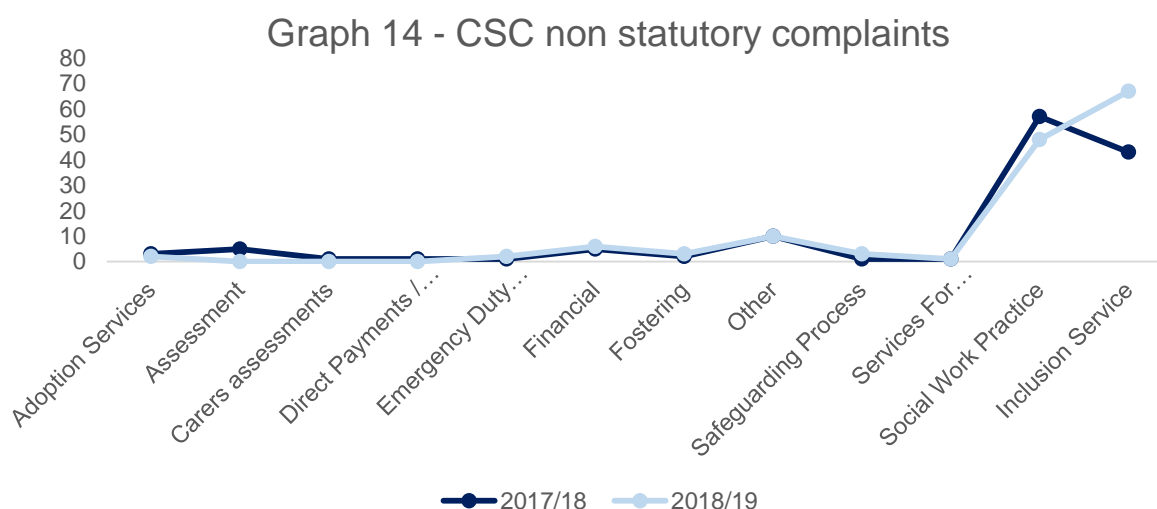
Area	Internal learning point for CYP social care
Social Care	<p>Social workers have been reminded to take care when speaking with service users or their family and be mindful of how it may affect them.</p> <p>Social workers have been reminded by their managers to follow through with tasks within the timescales they have provided.</p> <p>A reminder has been issued to all workers of the importance of returning calls to the service user and / or their family members in a timely manner.</p> <p>Social workers have been reminded by their managers of better communication especially surrounding cancelling of meetings</p> <p>Managers have reviewed and improved the service practices and approaches to working with children and families.</p> <p>Social workers have been reminded that calls are recorded by the Customer Service Centre and saved on the children's recording system.</p> <p>Managers have reminded social workers of the importance of responding to parents, carers & partner organisations that the council works with.</p> <p>In a specific complaint about communication with a complainant, we have clarified how best it is for the worker to contact the person.</p>

	<p>In a specific complaint, the social worker and the complainant now have weekly contact so that updates can be provided.</p> <p>In another complaint, we have improved communication to ensure that the individual has a better understanding of the rationale behind council decisions.</p> <p>A team manager has revisited the absence from work policy and the importance of maintaining online diaries with other members of staff, including other managers.</p>
Adoption Services	The adoption team ensures that newly qualified staff attend extra training, to ensure workers are providing the right information and giving the right messages.
Financial	<p>Practice managers have now been made fully aware of the complaints procedures to help prevent delays in financial complaints being dealt with.</p> <p>Additional training has been provided to social care in relation to financial issues.</p>
Partnership Working	<p>Additional checks have been implemented with Business Support to ensure records are kept up to date.</p> <p>All staff are now required to take part in yearly training on Information Governance matters and managers get reports of uptake.</p> <p>In a specific complaint, involving a number of partner agencies, contact was made with all services that were involved to avoid the same reasons for the young person's complaint happening again.</p>
Safeguarding	<p>In a specific complaint, the social worker gave the complainant the dates for core group meetings and the review meeting and the parents were approached for their consent to enable them to attend.</p> <p>In another complaint, the matters arising from a meeting were shared with the group of staff who are responsible for chairing allegations strategy meetings.</p>
Assessment	<p>In a complaint about involvement, it was made clear to the social workers that both parents were to be involved. Staff within assessment teams engaged in a training & development session in relation to this issue.</p> <p>In a complaint about the accuracy of assessment information, a family support worker got in touch with the complainant to ensure that information was accurately recorded.</p>

3.6 Summary of non-statutory CSC complaints

Non CSC statutory complaints are made by a people who are **not** entitled to complain under the Children Act procedures (for example a family friend or a relative without parental responsibility) or if the complaint is about something that cannot be complained about under the Children Act (for example adoption or fostering matters/complaints by members of the public: please see further categories below). Complaints about the Inclusion Service are also non-statutory, if CSC is not involved.

3.7 What are CSC non-statutory complaints about?



Graph 14 above shows that non statutory complaints have increased overall, but particularly for the for the inclusion service from 43 2017/18 to 67 in 2018/19.

Identifying themes and learning from all CSC complaints – non statutory or statutory - is valuable. Senior managers are informed of the themes on a regular basis through quarterly reporting and regular attendance at team meetings or senior management meetings.

3.8 Services which were the subject of compliments and comments in 2018/19

Due to the nature of CSC, not many compliments are received (14). However, with the addition of compliments for the Inclusion Service, a total of 110 compliments were received for 2018/19, which is a decrease of 33 from 2017/18 (143).

3.9 Exceptional Compliments

From a NHS partner organisation:

"I know as professionals we don't hear this a lot. But everyone is saying how amazing you are as a social worker and how great you are with the young people. I have talked a lot in our management meetings about how great you have been with M, and now other practitioners are also saying the same about your work with L. I know in this job, you don't get a lot of acknowledgement for how hard you work, so just wanted to let you know it has not gone un-noticed at our end. Everyone gives a mini cheer when they find out you are the allocated social worker for a young person receiving a Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service!"

Compliment from a family member:

"I wanted to write to let you know how impressed I have been by the efficient and professional service and advice that I have received from your social worker on the couple of occasions that I have been in contact. Her guidance has been clear and helpful. I know how quick people can be to criticise but I wanted to pass on my thanks."

Compliment from an external trainer who provides Practice Educator training and long arm support to new social worker's:

I have done a session with a new social worker and her manager in CSC in Lancaster. The atmosphere within Mill 14 was excellent, to the extent that I would like to work there! I found it a very positive experience. The social worker and her manager were both very organised in terms of the new social worker's progress for her assessed and supported year in employment. In addition on a more general note, the general buzz around the room is so much more positive. I have noticed a positive difference in all the staff I have met there over the last year."

3.10 LGSCO Complaints

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGSCO) acts as the regulator and provides the final stage for complaints about local authorities and some other organisations providing local public services. Their service is provided free of charge. Complainants approach the LGSCO when all other options for pursuing their complaint are closed, after a proportionate response has been provided. The LGSCO will only consider complaints that have already been through the council complaints procedures. Sometimes the council will make early referrals to the LGSCO when complainants continue to be dissatisfied and the council considers that it has not done anything wrong or it has done all it can to resolve the matter.

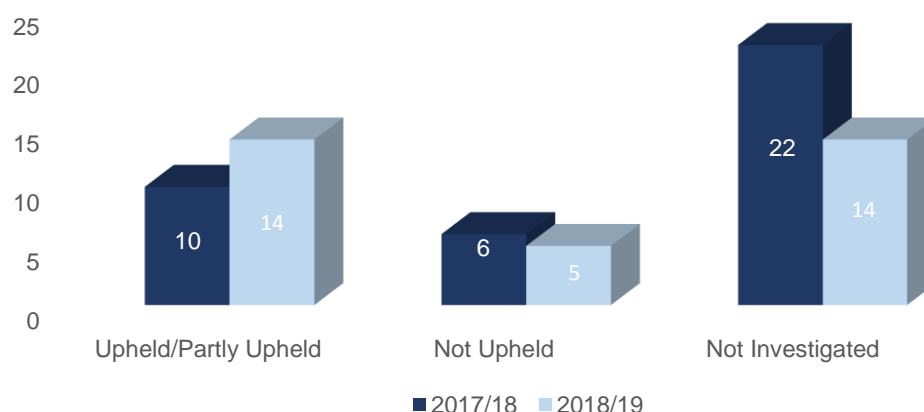
In 2018/19, the LGSCO received total of 66 separate complaints in relation to CSC, Inclusion and Education services (in 2017/18 it was 80). Of these, 48 were referred to the council to respond to. Table 2 shows the number of LGSCO enquires over the last 4 years, with welcome decrease for 2018/19.

Table 2

LGSCO enquiries for all Children's complaints	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Total Received	56	47	61	48

The 48 CYP enquiries received from the LGSCO in 2018/19 resulted in 22 final decisions within the same year and an additional 11 final decisions were received from the previous year, making a total of 33. Graph 15 shows that of the 33 LGSCO CYP final decisions received in 2018/19, 5 were not upheld, 14 were not investigated and 14 were either upheld or partly upheld. As the LGSCO will also uphold complaints that the council has already upheld and of the 14 complaints, 3 had already been upheld or partly upheld, **this makes an actual uphold rate of 33%**. A total of £2,100 was paid out in final decisions, a significant decrease when compared with settlement amounts paid out for 2017/18 (£7,100).

Graph 15 - Final Outcome



The LGSCO was satisfied with the actions and the continuous improvement undertaken as a direct result of the complaints upheld by their investigations in 2018/19. There was one public report. The complaint centred on a couple who had a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) in place for their niece and nephew. They said the council failed to provide them with necessary help and support. The council paid an extra of £1,225 for the further distress and time and trouble caused and additional money for backdated payments for respite and allowances. The report was taken to Full Council and a full apology was made. At the time of writing this report, the council actions are still to be signed off by the ombudsman

3.11 LGSCO Children's Social Care identified learning

The identified learning from the other upheld social care and education complaints is as follows:

- a) We reviewed our procedures to ensure complaints about contact arrangements are properly considered in the future.
- b) We trained CSC staff in complaints handling
- c) We issued a guidance note to staff who deal with CSC complaints about the requirements of the statutory complaints guidance.
- d) We now ensure that parents and guardians know when child protection action will continue, even after court cases where no concerns about child safety are raised (where this is the case).
- e) Managers consistently communicate the learning from complaints at team meetings to social workers.
- f) We issued a staff guidance to ensure that complainants are informed of the implementation of outcomes to their complaints.
- g) The complaints team periodically reviews the effectiveness of the complaints process with complainants.

h) In 3 complaints about Education Health and Care Plans (EHC):

- We reminded staff of the statutory timescales for producing EHC plans and the need to provide EHC review outcome letters in a timely manner;
- We reviewed arrangements with education providers for ensuring EHC plan annual meetings take place and that EHC plans are issued within statutory timeframes; and
- We worked with a specific Clinical Commissioning Group to develop a process to highlight when problems develop with EHC plans.