

Customer Feedback Annual Report Children's Services 2017/18

Feedback and Insight Team, Information, Intelligence and Insight
July 2018



Customer Feedback Annual Report

Children’s Services 2017/18

1. Introduction

The report covers Children’s Services formal feedback and representations for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018. The report details the comments, compliments and complaints formally recorded on the Council’s customer feedback system. In addition to annual reporting, internal reporting takes place on a quarterly basis, with more regular monitoring reports for services issued on request. This regular monitoring of formal feedback enables ongoing improvement.

The Children’s Act 1989 and NHS and the Community Care Act 1990 require all local authorities with social services responsibilities in England and Wales to have a complaints procedure. ‘Getting the Best from Complaints’ provides guidance for local authorities on implementing the Children’s Act. This annual report is produced in line with national guidance and is designed to share information more widely with members of the public.

Statutory complaints relate to the provision of social care and are handled in line with the national regulations referred to above. These statutory complaints follow the Council’s Statutory Complaints Procedure for children’s services, the key stages of which are set out in section 2 of this report: stage 1 - local resolution; stage 2 – investigation; stage 3 - review panel and section 4 - referral to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Few complaints progress through all stages of the procedure, and Shropshire Council aims to provide thorough investigations and responses at stage 1.

The remainder of complaints for Children’s Services fall under the Council’s corporate complaints procedure, for example these may be complaints about educational improvement services, a support service or administrative process rather than social care. Corporate complaints are investigated at stage 1, reviewed at stage 2 and customers may choose to progress their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman as a final stage. You can find out more in the Council’s Corporate Customer Feedback Report 2017/18.

How can I provide feedback on my experience of using a service provided by Shropshire Council’s children’s services?

You can give us your views in a number of ways; use the one that suits you best. If you are a child, you can make the complaint yourself, use an advocate or ask an adult you trust to make the complaint on your behalf. You can:

- Speak to a member of staff.
- Telephone us: 01743 256188
- Email us at: customer.feedback@shropshire.gov.uk

Fill in the customer feedback form on the council website. Use the “make a complaint” button at: <https://new.shropshire.gov.uk/feedback/children-and-young-peoples-complaints/>



Complaint

A complaint is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction about the service provided by the council. Parents, carers and other trusted adults may complain about the service a child has received. A child may also complain themselves, or receive the support of a professional advocate. We aim to make it as easy as possible to make a complaint.

Compliment

Many people get in touch with a compliment when the information or support they have received has exceeded their expectations. It is really helpful to learn when a service has been provided well or when a member of staff has done a great job. We like to recognise compliments alongside any complaints. It is good for us to say ‘thank you’ to our teams and staff too.

Comment

Feedback about a service could be:

- a suggestion to improve it.
- a question as to whether something could be done differently.
- an idea for delivering a service differently.



2. The Children’s Complaints Process

Shropshire Council encourages children, parents, carers and others to give feedback and suggests that any concerns are raised with social workers, other members of council staff, teachers or a trustworthy adult. We aim to address any concerns as quickly as possible and provide support if a child or adult wishes to make a more formal complaint.

Complaints, comments and compliments can be made by telephone, email, letter or by using our online form. Support is also available from complaints officers based within Shropshire Council’s Feedback and Insight Team.

For a copy of the leaflets we use see:

<https://new.shropshire.gov.uk/feedback/children-and-young-peoples-complaints/>

Complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days of being received and we let the complainant know how their complaint will be handled.

STAGE 1 - The Statutory Complaints Officer will contact the appropriate team manager for Children’s Services and ask them to investigate the complaint. The complainant will be provided with a written response within 10 working days (for statutory complaints). In some cases it may take up to 20 working days, but we let the customer know if this extra time is needed and why. If a customer is unhappy with the response at stage 1 they can request to go to Stage 2.

STAGE 2 - If a complaint is not resolved at Stage 1, and the complainant or their representative remains dissatisfied with the investigation or response, an external Independent Investigating Officer and an external Independent Person are commissioned by Children’s Services to further investigate the complaint. The Investigating Officer and Independent Person will aim to produce a report within 25 working days. However, if the case is complex, they can have a maximum of 65 days in which to produce their reports. Once the reports have been finalised they are sent to the adjudication officer (usually the head of the service) who will, after careful consideration of the reports, provide the complainant with a written response to the complaint.

STAGE 3 - If the complainant still remains dissatisfied with the decision/outcome following the independent investigation, they can ask to have their complaint reviewed by the Complaints Review Panel.

The Complaints Review Panel is made up of three external people who will review the complaint, but they will not reinvestigate or consider new complaints. The complainant can attend the panel meeting if they choose to and can bring a friend or someone they can trust.

Ombudsman - If a complaint cannot be resolved locally it can be investigated by the Ombudsman. The council has a timescale of 28 calendar days to provide a response to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). Complaint responses are often complex and it can be necessary to collate, catalogue and provide a large volume of information for the LGO’s consideration.. Complainants can request to go to the Ombudsman after Stage 2 if they choose to.

We cannot promise to deliver the outcomes complainants want, but we do make sure that complaints are dealt with as quickly and as thoroughly as possible. We work to keep complainants informed of what is happening and the progress being made.

The Shropshire Council Annual Customer feedback report includes a similar diagram to outline the corporate complaints process: stage 1 – investigation, stage 2 – review, final stage – Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

3. Customer Feedback 2017/18

In 2017/18 there were 169 cases of feedback recorded for Children’s Services (including Educational Improvement & Efficiency (commonly referred to as Learning & Skills)). There were:

- 37 compliments
- 9 comments or other types of enquiry
- 49 corporate complaints
- 74 statutory complaints

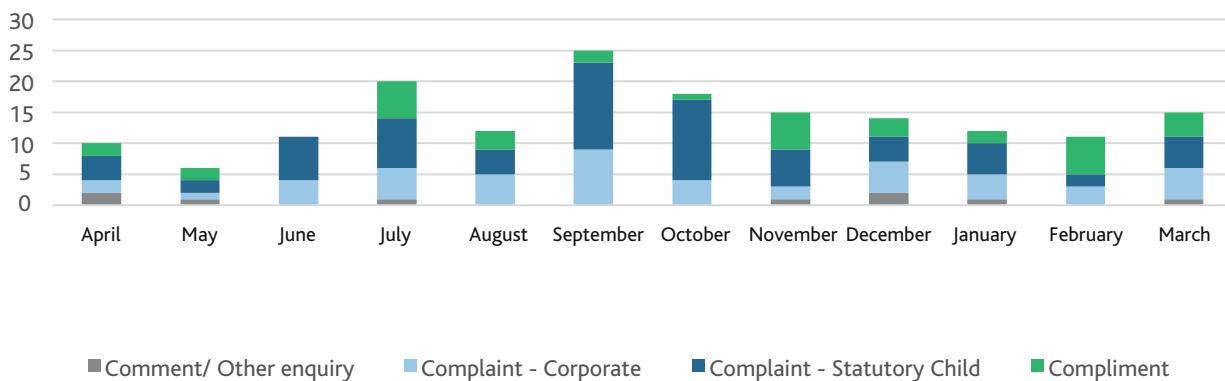
123 of the cases were for Children’s Services excluding education (covering social care and support services).

Educational Improvement & Efficiency (Learning & Skills) receive very few cases of customer feedback. In 2017/18 there were 43 cases and 7 were related to schools. There were:

- 14 compliments
- 6 other enquiries (including comments)
- 23 complaints

The average number of customer feedback responses recorded per month during 2017/18 was 14. September, July and October were the months with the most feedback. May was the month with the least feedback during the year. Overall average monthly feedback volumes were greater after quarter 1.

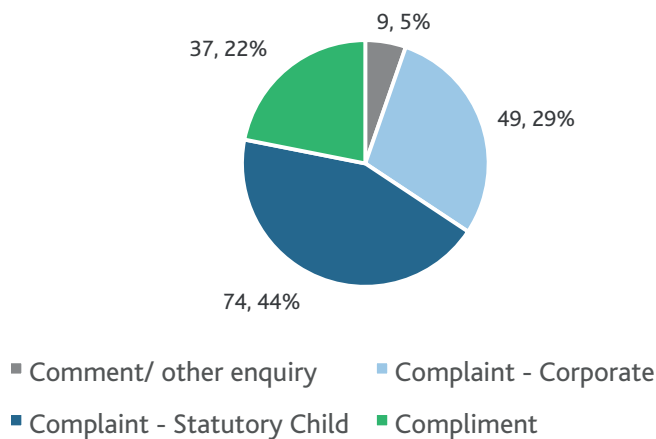
Customer Feedback by Month 2017/18



The majority of customer feedback recorded takes the form of complaints rather than comments or compliments (this is due to recording practice, with staff members less likely to more formally report a compliment). Of all the customer feedback recorded, 73% of cases were complaints.

Of the 123 complaints received within the year, 49 were corporate cases (29%) and 74 were statutory complaints (44%). The process on page 4 highlights the statutory complaints process and timescales for children’s services. Corporate complaints tend to be less complex in nature.

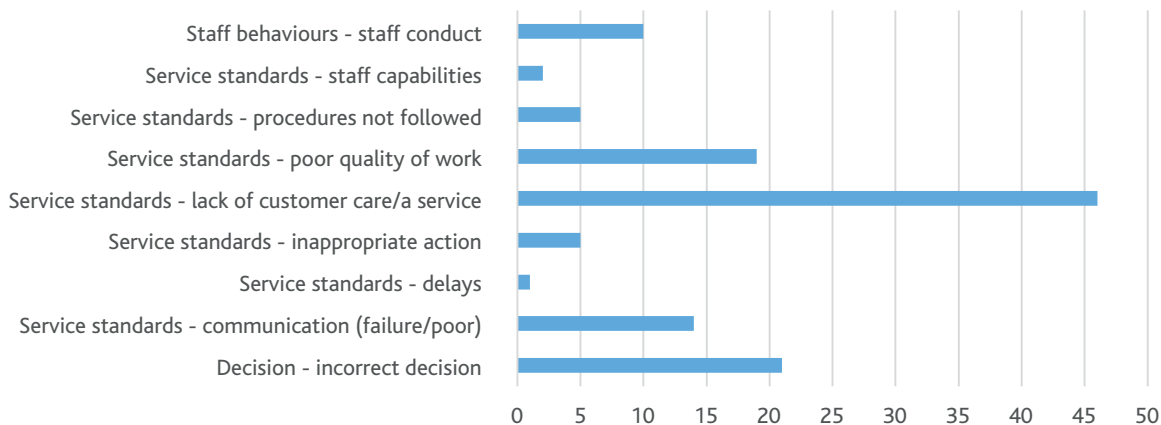
Types of Customer Feedback Recieved 2017/18



During 2017/18 complaints commonly related to a failure to provide a service or to provide the expected level of customer care within a service (service standards – lack of customer care/a service). Complainants challenging a decision, poor quality of work and lack of/poor communication were the other dominant themes within the complaints made. However, despite complaints falling within these overarching categories, there were no real patterns or trends highlighting problems to be addressed (complaints were spread across teams and processes).

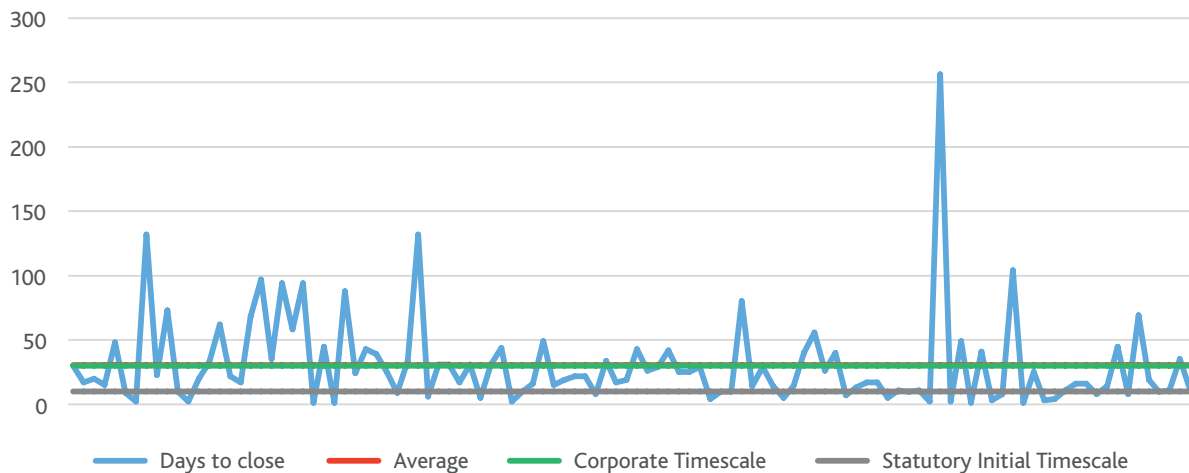
There were no complaints relating to a failure to assess and understand needs and very few complaints related to delays. This suggests good performance in these areas.

Main reason for complaint 2017/18



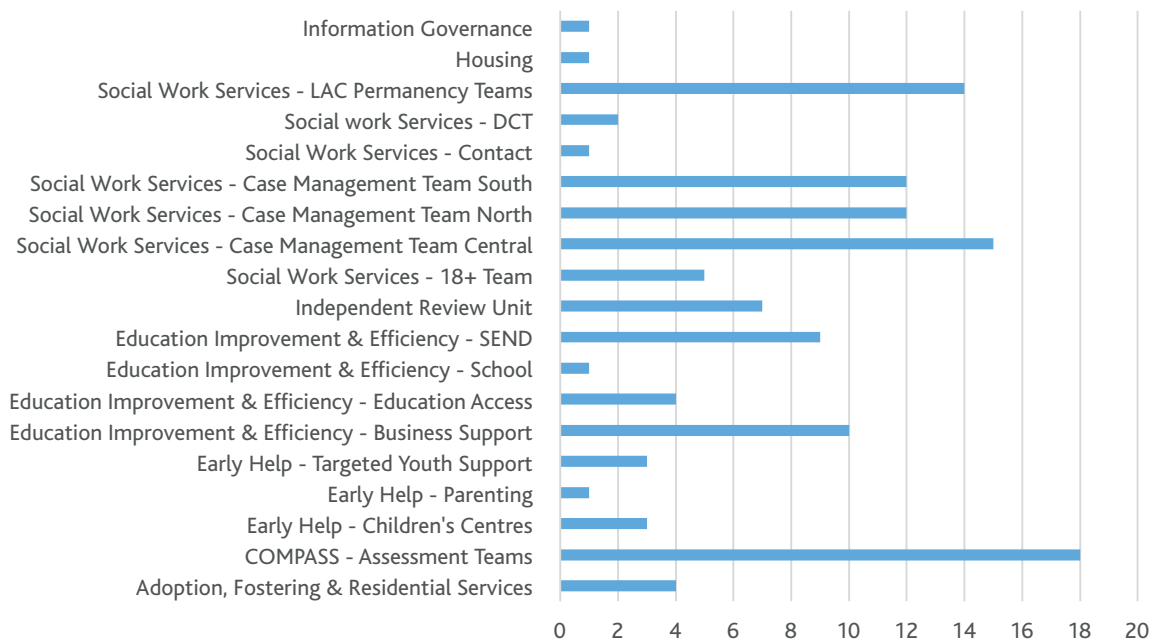
During 2017/18 Children’s Services took an average of 29.5 days to close stage 1 complaints. Corporate complaints took an average of 28 days to close (within the 30 working days timescale). Statutory complaints took an average of 30.8 days to close suggesting that the complexity of cases required correspondence with a majority of complainants to extend the initial 10 working days timescale in order to allow for more detailed investigation.

Days to Close - Stage 1 Complaints 2017-18



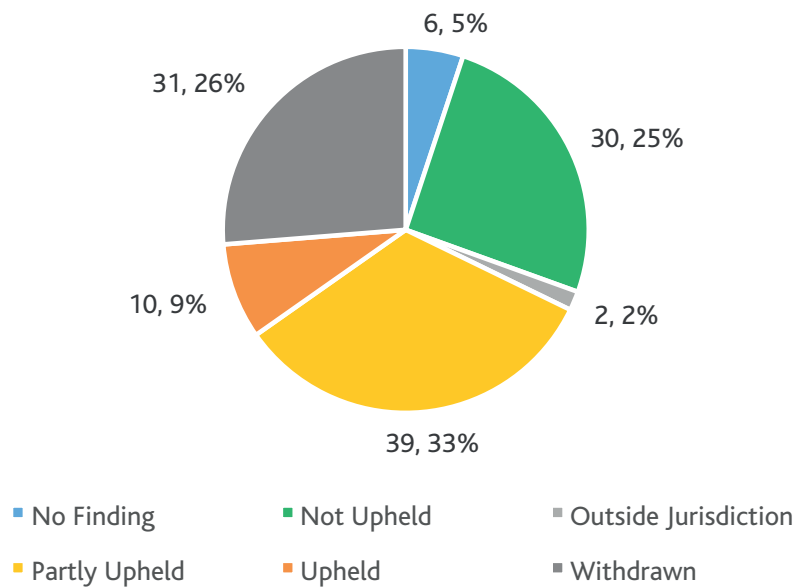
Quarterly reporting considers complaints by team in order to understand whether or not teams require any additional support to identify the reasons for complaints. The analysis highlights that complaints are spread across teams (as are compliments) rather than focused on particular areas of service, although some types of service are more likely to result in feedback than others. Overall in 2017/18 Case Management Teams received more complaints (39 of the 123), Assessment/ COMPASS had 18 complaints, and LAC Permanency Teams received 14 complaints.

Childrens Complaints by Team 2017/18



At the end of 2017/18, 118 of the 123 complaints received were closed (some recent complaints remained open at the end of the financial year (5). Of those completed, 8% were upheld, 33% were partly upheld and 25% were not upheld. Other complaints were withdrawn, outside of the Council’s jurisdiction or resulted in no finding.

Outcome of Stage 1 Complaints 2017/18



In addition to understanding the outcome of stage 1 complaints it is important to consider how many complaints progress beyond stage 1. During 2017/18 few complaint cases progressed beyond stage 1. This suggests effective stage 1 handling. In total 7 cases progressed beyond stage 1 within the year. Two cases have been raised with the Local Government Ombudsman.

The Local Government Ombudsman’s report for 2017/18 considers complaints referred to the LGO within the year (so this will include complaints referred to Shropshire Council in 2016/17). Of the 84 complaints the LGO received for Shropshire Council during 2017/18, 19 were for Children’s Services (including education), 17 were considered and of those only 2 were upheld.

Shropshire Council’s data shows that during 2017/18 there were 14 complaints relating to looked after children (2 complaints related to the same complainant/ child). During the year 4 complaints were made by children.

Overall Children’s Services seem to have performed well through 2017/18 in relation to the handling of customer feedback but it is important to put performance into context with previous performance to compare change over time. The next section of the report considers performance in comparison to 2015/16 and 2016/17.

4. Annual Comparison

A comparison with 2015/16 and 2016/17 data highlights that, overall, performance remains very similar with little change. It is positive to see that good performance has been maintained. The section of this report on recommendations will be used to highlight where further work may be required.

Number of compliments – almost the same

- There were 37 complaints recorded in 2017/18 and 36 compliments recorded in 2016/17, the same number as 2015/16.
- Compliments have been made at a relatively steady rate over the year (although there were more in July, November and February than in other months). On average 3 compliments are received per month.



The Same

Number of complaints – increase

- The number of complaints received in 2017/18 was 123. In 2016/17 there were 102 complaints and in 2015/16 there were 107 complaints.
- Despite the relatively small change in complaint numbers there is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that there may have been an increase in complaint complexity.



Worse

Nature of complaints – similar challenges

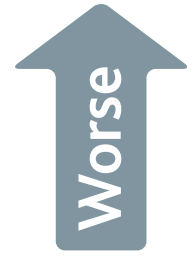
- When comparing the type of complaints made in the last 3 years it is possible to see a change in complaints. Communication was a dominant theme in 2014/15 (32 complaints) but for the last 3 years complaints about communication have been fewer in number (12 in 2015/16, 14 in 2016/17 and 14 in 2017/18).
- In 2014/15 'procedures not followed' and complaints relating to assessment were common themes but in 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 these topics were not featured significantly. Where the complaint has been related to 'procedures not followed' this has generally been related to data protection and confidentiality.
- In 2016/17 'lack of customer care/a service' was the most dominant theme within complaints, featuring in 35 complaints (compared to 19 the previous year). In 2017/18 the same pattern is evident with 46 complaints falling into that category.
- In 2016/17 the other main category of complaints was 'poor quality of work' (21 complaints) but other types of complaints had significantly reduced in number. There were significantly fewer complaints related to delays and staff conduct. The 2017/18 data suggests that 'poor quality of work' remains a concern with 19 complaints but more people are raising concerns over decisions with 21 complaints under the category 'decision - incorrect decision'.



The Same

Days to Close – increased

- In 2015/16 it took an average of 26.5 working days to close Children’s Services complaints. In 2016/17 the average timescale to close complaints was 25.8 working days and in 2017/18 the average was 29.5 working days. It should be noted that a small number of long running cases can significantly influence the average timescales but this will require close monitoring and action to address delays where possible.



Outcome of complaints – Fewer complaints were upheld

- In 2015/16 the percentage of complaints upheld was 16%. The proportion of upheld complaints increased in 2016/17 to 23%. However fewer complaints were partly upheld (34% in 2016/17 compared to 49% in 2015/16) so overall there is little change. 31% of complaints were not upheld (the same proportion as 2015/16). The remaining proportion of complaints were withdrawn, fell outside of Shropshire Council’s jurisdiction or did not result in a finding.



Complaints Progressing Beyond Stage 1 - remains similar

- During 2015/16 there were 8 requests to progress to stage 2. In 2016/17 6 of the cases received progressed to stage 2. This highlights ongoing good performance.



5. Example Compliments

Shropshire Council’s Children’s Services received 37 compliments in 2017/18. Examples of the compliments recorded are shown below.

Compliment for Joint Adoption Service: “We are grateful to [name removed] for her kindness and sensitivity towards us throughout the assessment process, and would like the Panel to know that her skill in demonstrating a genuine empathy whilst maintaining an unwavering professionalism, has been very much appreciated”.

Compliment for Joint Adoption Service: “I would like to pass onto some positive feedback on my social worker, [name removed]. Her level of commitment and dedication is very obvious and at time, has gone above and beyond what I would expect. Her support at every point has been very much appreciated she has been so efficient and at every point keeps me informed, which really helps to allay any worries I may have. I am really grateful for all she has done for me to this point and I know she is an asset to your team.”

Compliment for Safeguarding: “I would like to compliment [name removed], Social Worker, for the way she has, after many years, helped secure the future for our grandson. Despite many complex issues she has worked hard with the family, school and the child to ensure the best outcome for him.”

Compliment for [name removed], Targeted Youth Support: “Thank you for everything you have done for me and my family. You have helped change our lives for the better.”

Compliment from a parent for [name removed], Social Worker: [Name removed] has worked extremely hard for my family. She is very passionate and cares deeply for the children she has in her care. I wouldn’t have got through the last few months without her, she really is a very dedicated and tenacious professional”.

Compliment for [name removed], Personal Advisor, Leaving Care Team from a care leaver: The care leaver was very complimentary and thankful for the support provided to him, which has “helped him to make positive changes in his life”.

Compliment for Early Help Family Support Worker, Children’s Centre Services South Shropshire. “I would just like to say how beneficial the support from Early Help, and particularly [name removed] has been over the past year.....such super progress has been made. I just wanted to pass on my thanks, and appreciation, for the commitment and care, that [name removed] demonstrated throughout the process - I think she went above and beyond..... Keep up the good work!

Compliment for [name removed], Educational Psychology Service: “Thank you so much for today. Your frankness and blissful honesty, coupled with support and encouragement was great to witness. Brilliant!”



6. Example Complaints

Shropshire Council Children’s Services received 123 statutory children’s and corporate children’s complaints during 2017/18. Some example complaints have been included to illustrate the way complaints are received and the nature of the issues raised. All complaints have been anonymised and personal details removed. In some cases wording may have been changed very slightly to ensure anonymity (with steps taken not to alter the point being made within the complaint).

The customer is unhappy about a perceived lack of information about the process their case is progressing through. The customer has reported that they do not have any idea what is happening with regards to their case or why. They also report inconsistency with the case due to the high number of social workers involved. The complainant has stated that their daughter, in particular, has found it hard to adapt and build a positive rapport with the different social workers and believes this has impacted on the ability for the case to move forward in a more timely and positive manner. The complainant also reports leaving messages asking for the social worker to contact her but never receiving a call back.

The complaint refers to the time taken to complete a risk assessment (9 weeks) and the accuracy of the final report. The complainant reports that inaccuracies were highlighted but not acted upon or shared with other agencies involved in the case.

The complainant is not happy with the assessment report and “feels the report is sloppy, hurried, at times unprofessional, flawed, with incomplete investigations and misrepresentations”.

The complaint is about the delay and the length of time it is taking to authorise payment regarding a residence order.

The complainant feels the communication from the social worker “has been very poor”. “The case has been left to drift”. They feel the social worker “has done nothing to promote contact” and that “lack of action is going to make the process for [name removed] to return home very difficult”.

The complainant feels there has been “total mismanagement” with their case, from meetings being cancelled, meetings arranged without venues and a “delay of granting parental responsibility back to the complainant”.

The complaint is about a supported board and lodgings placement and the belief that it was not adequately prepared for by Shropshire Council’s lead on the case. The complainant feels that “due to lack of appropriate training and support the placement has broken down” and that “[name removed]’s needs have not been adequately met”.

The complainant does not feel that the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is meeting her son’s needs, since the review from Primary School to Secondary School.

The complainant wishes to complain about the suitability of the special educational needs home to school transport that is being provided by Shropshire Council.



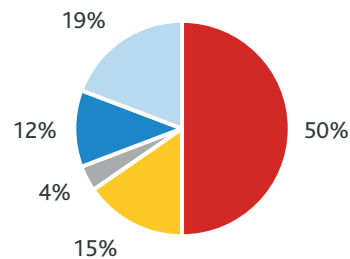
7. Learning and Actions

Shropshire Council’s Children’s Services recorded learning and/or actions against 54 cases (44%) of complaints in 2017/18. Limitations in the system used to record complaints means that the ability to easily record and report multiple learning and action points is not currently in place. For that reason only the primary action or learning point can be recorded and reported below. It is hoped this recording issue will be overcome as part of Shropshire Council’s digital transformation programme.

Of the learning points recorded in 2017/18:

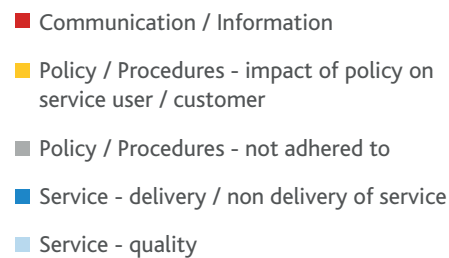
- 50% related to the learning concerning communication and/or information provided.
- 19% of learning points were in relation to service quality.
- 15% of learning related to the impact a policy or procedure had on a complainant.
- 12% of learning was associated with the delivery or non-delivery of a service.

Learning Points Recorded 2017/18



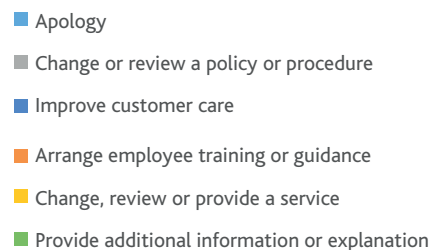
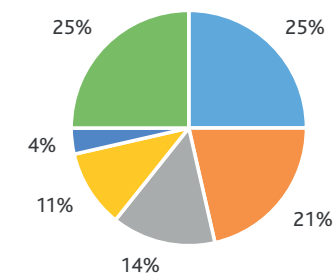
Of the actions that were recorded against the complaints closed in 2017/18:

- 25% of actions were to provide an apology.
- 25% of actions were to provide additional information or explanation.
- 21% of actions were to arrange employee training or provide employee guidance.
- Other actions taken included to change or review a policy or procedure, to change, review or provide a service and to improve customer care.



In working to report complaints we consider the main problem experienced, but this does not do justice to the complexity of issues that can be raised within a complaint and investigated. Reading complaints in detail highlights that although a complaint may relate to a specific service or concern about lack of a service, there may be other issues such as lack of communication, the way someone felt or perception of someone’s attitude towards them. Complaints reporting does not highlight the details within complaints but the way staff consider and investigate complaints does allow for more learning to take place and allows managers to influence the practice of staff members.

Improvement Actions Recorded 2017/18



8. Example Learning and Actions

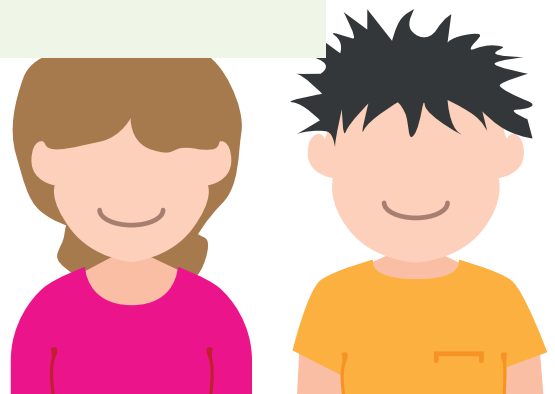
Shropshire Council Children’s Services maintains a focus on complaints reporting and each quarter takes the learning and actions from complaints and considers how the learning can be used to make improvements. There are some examples of learning below. These examples may appear out of context because they are not provided with the original complaint but they do highlight how the Council responds to complaints without sharing confidential information. These examples are mainly from upheld and partly upheld cases. Complaints that were not upheld may include some learning within notes on the case and often this can relate to misunderstandings of how the Council has delivered a service or what to expect from a service.

Wherever possible the Education Access Service seek to gain views of young people as well as parents in matters pertaining to either education and/or welfare. Due to the complaint the service will review the process and revise the written invitation to attend meetings. The letter inviting parents to attend meetings will now contain the fact that the young person involved, if age appropriate, will be included in the meeting. The Service will ask parents to inform them if they feel it would detrimental to the young person to attend so adjustments can be made.

The manager has apologised that the complainant has not had an appropriate level of communication, Core Groups did not take place within appropriate timescales or visits to the family home. Problems were generated due to unexpected staff changes. An explanation was given that multiple attempts were made to contact the complainant but they were not successful. Reassurance has been offered, to highlight that Shropshire Council is keen to develop a positive relationship with the complainant and family.

Following the complaint Shropshire Council will be creating a local policy which will give consideration to the future recording of meetings. If this facility was in place, this would have influenced the situation but not necessarily changed the decision that led to the complaint.

The complainant made comments around “under trained workers”, in respect of Shropshire Social Workers, Although they receive support, and engage in regular training opportunities to better inform their practice the comments will be shared with Shropshire Council’s Training and Development Team for consideration in the development of training. To overcome other elements of the complaint another social worker will be allocated to take the complainant through the assessment process, provide a draft final document, and go through this with the complainant prior to it being signed off, to make sure the information captured is correct.



The complainant did not agree with some of the information contained within the reports and considers it to be incorrect. The complainant has been asked to confirm the information she feels is not factual and then action will be taken to add an addendum to the case file.

An apology has been offered for the lack of communication regarding the LAC review and for the error in choosing the complainant's home as the venue for the review without any prior consultation or consent. This will be raised in a team meeting and highlighted with any new staff to ensure that the experience is avoided in the future.

An apology has been offered for the poor communication and mix ups in relation to the meetings, and as a result meetings not taking place. It has been recognised that such delays are not acceptable for children and families and the whole service at every level is working hard to address this and ensure that other families do not have the same experiences.

The manager apologised that the complainant felt that the letter about school attendance was disrespectful. An explanation was given that Education Welfare Officers regularly visit all Shropshire schools to look at attendance registers and discuss with school staff any additional support that may be required. Letters are then issued and this letter was in line with the Council's procedures in relation to school attendance. An apology was also given for the time it took to return a phone call about the matter.

An apology has been given that there was confusion and names were spelled incorrectly resulting in errors within reports. Action will be taken to ensure the Social Work Assessment is amended and a corrected copy will be issued to the complainant.

The complaint investigation has highlighted that a meeting may be beneficial to have a more detailed discussion with the complainant to review the support needed and consider the best way to provide that support and how to implement changes to the current arrangements, which don't appear to be meeting the complainant's expectations.

10. Recommendations

Shropshire Council’s Children’s Services receives low levels of complaints overall but the annual report can help to explore change over time, identify any areas of concern and highlight action that can be taken to maintain good performance. Recommendations for 2017/18 are:

- 1 Numbers of compliments remain at a steady rate across the last 3 years and it is recommended that staff are reminded that it is important to report compliments as well as complaints. Compliments also provide very helpful feedback and really give a flavour of what works well and what people using children’s services really value. A team receiving larger numbers of complaints can appear to be a concern until a consideration of compliments highlights that there is a more balanced view of the service overall.
2. There has been a slight increase in complaint numbers over 2017/18. Early results for 2018/19 indicate that this increase may be continuing but with low numbers it is not yet certain whether this will be sustained. As a result this is something that will be monitored very closely and it is recommended that Children’s services staff recognise that any small increases in complaint numbers can have an impact due to the work involved in undertaking robust complaint investigations.
3. Complaints are currently spread across teams, with more complaints for teams dealing with complex issues or higher volumes of customers. It is important to continue to monitor the services receiving complaints through regular performance reporting. Over 2017/18 Social Work Services Case Management Teams, Compass (Assessment) and the LAC Permanency Teams have the greatest number of complaints. Within Education Improvement and Efficiency Business Support and SEND receive more complaints than other areas of service. Close working will continue between the Feedback and Insight Team within the Information, Intelligence and Insight Unit and Children’s Services to ensure any patterns within complaints are identified early so that action may be taken.
4. There were fewer complaints recorded under the theme of communication during 2017/18. However, communication does continue to be a secondary reason for making a complaint. The example complaints included in this report also highlight some concerns over communication. It is recommended that staff are regularly reminded to respond promptly to customers and to ensure correct contact details are provided (leaving messages and not responding back is still an issue regularly raised within complaints). The learning from complaints suggests that communication is a main learning point.
5. Anecdotal evidence, alongside the time taken to conclude complaint investigations suggests that some complaints are resulting in frequent correspondence. Where staff members recognise that progress is not being made, it is recommended that meetings are organised. Face to face communication often allows a better understanding on both sides and a more immediate resolution.



Recommendations continued...

6. Overall performance in relation to timescales was not as good in 2017/18 as it has been in previous years. Average performance for statutory complaints is significantly over the initial 10 working days timescale. Investigators should be reminded of the importance of being responsive on allocation of complaints (for example confirming when responses will be issued). It is recommended that the Feedback and Insight Team work with Children’s Services to highlight any common delays and maintain a focus on addressing this change as much as possible over 2018/19.
7. Although very few complaints were upheld in 2017/18 the number of complaints recorded under the categories of ‘service standards - lack of customer care/a service’ and ‘service standards - poor quality of work’ suggest that complainants perceive that the quality of service has not been acceptable. It is recommended that this is explored in more detail. If there are improvements identified that may reduce complaint numbers; alternatively if expectations are not in line with what can be delivered, there will be a need to communicate in order to address this mismatch.
8. Ongoing analysis of complaints suggest that complaints relating to dissatisfaction with the actions taken by social workers occur when there is a higher turnover in staff and when temporary and agency staff have been in place. It is recommended that Children’s Services Managers make this connection in their monitoring of customer feedback and staffing information.
9. There has been an increase in complaints recorded against the category ‘service standards - procedures not followed’. It appears that data protection and confidentiality form concerns within this category. This could, in part, be due to increased awareness of data protection as a result of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). It is recommended that the risk of these issues is managed to reduce occurrence and that when mistakes are made staff are supported and encouraged to identify solutions and share learning.
10. As Shropshire Council implements its Digital Transformation Programme and uses new IT systems it is recommended that all staff within Children’s Services are regularly reminded of the importance of good recording. Good complaints investigations rely on a review of information recorded and delays can be caused when clear information is not readily available. Where good practice in recording information is in place (some social workers appear to have particular skills in this area) this could be shared.
11. All services can find that there are times of pressure, particularly as a result of staff absences or new requirements. It is recommended that team managers maintain regular communication with senior managers if complaint handling at stage 1 becomes difficult. It is as a result of effective stage 1 complaints handling that stage 2 cases are kept to a minimum. Early action to add additional capacity to a team or share workload across teams has been effective in the past and allowed good complaints handling performance to be maintained.



Recommendations continued...

12. Over the last year work has been taking place to develop additional resources to support staff in identifying and investigating complaints and responding to customer feedback. As this information is made available on the Council’s Staff Intranet Children’s Services staff are asked to assist in promoting the new resources widely.

13. It is recommended that close working is maintained between Children’s Services and Shropshire Council’s Feedback and Insight Team as digital transformation is delivered. Every effort has been made to ensure the design of a new complaints system addresses current system challenges. However it is recognised that longer term change may be necessary and it is suggested that any issues identified following implementation are recorded and reviewed in order to maintain a focus on system effectiveness.

Customer Feedback Annual Report Children's Services 2017/18

For more information concerning Shropshire Council's
Customer Feedback reporting contact:

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