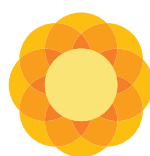
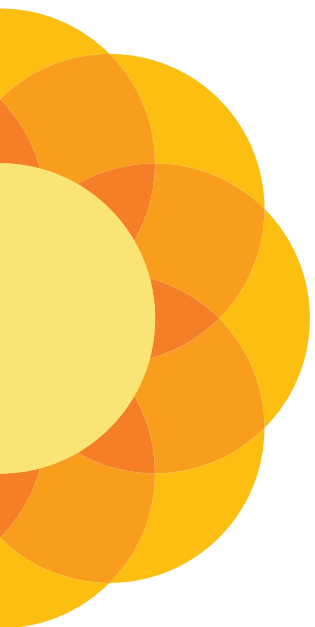




Annual Complaints and Compliments Report

2021 - 2022

August 2022



**BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST**

1. Executive Summary

The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 (*"The Regulations"*) places a statutory duty on all local authorities to produce an annual report detailing representations made by (or on behalf of) children and young people who receive services or support from Children's Services.

This report provides information about complaints and compliments received by Birmingham Children's Trust for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. In general, the data should not be relied upon to provide a sole indicator on the quality of the service, but it can highlight specific concerns at particular times and give a guide to remedial action taken to resolve recurring issues.

The headlines from the report are:

- The number of complaints increased at all three stages of the complaints procedure.
 - There was an increase of 16.8% at stage 1 (362 complaints received).
 - There was an increase of 6.4% at stage 2 (50 complaints received).
 - There was an increase of 40% at stage 3 (14 complaints received).
- 35% of stage 1 complaints were found to be upheld or partially upheld. The figure was 56% at stage 2 and 71% at stage 3.
- Approximately 54% of stage 1 complaints were responded to within the 20-working day deadline, and the average response time was 28.81 working days.
- 44% of stage 1 complaints received were about service quality, while 35% of complaints related to service failure or refusal.
- 22 stage 1 complaints received were made by children, young people or former service users. This equates to approximately 6% of all stage 1 complaints received.
- Of the 23 complainants who referred to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman, four complaints were referred back to the Trust as 'premature complaints'.
- The Ombudsman conducted six investigations, finding fault in three complaints (two were historic legacy cases and the other related to delays with a Section 47).
- compensation paid during 2021/22 was 51.7% lower at £7,089.00 while the cost of investigating complaints at stage 2 and stage 3 rose by 73.2% to £143,177.96 which is a concern.
- The investigation of complaints over the course of the year has highlighted a number of service improvements, including reviews of practice, re-training for staff and reminders to staff about existing practice guidance.
- 52 compliments were recorded.

This report will be published on the Birmingham Children's Trust website and made available to inspection bodies, elected members, residents and staff.

2. Complaints Procedure

The procedure for investigating complaints about children's social care is detailed in the Regulations and the pursuant statutory guidance, 'Getting the Best from Complaints'. The Complaints & Information Service is responsible for managing complaints for the Trust.

The statutory complaints procedure has three stages which aim to resolve grievances and address representations as soon as reasonably practicable, and within specific timescales. The three stages are described below:

Stage 1 – Local Resolution

This stage provides the opportunity for managers and staff who have responsibility for the case, to resolve issues of dissatisfaction at a local level as early as possible. The Complaints & Information Service provides support and guidance to both the complainant and the Team Manager, to help achieve early resolution and, where things have gone wrong, ensure that matters are put right quickly with lessons learned captured and fed back into service improvements.

The timescale for resolving complaints at stage 1 is ten working days but can be extended to 20 working days (for more complex cases or if an advocate is required).

Stage 2 – Investigation

This stage allows for independent scrutiny of the original complaint. The investigation is conducted by an external Investigating Officer and an Independent Person (whose role is to oversee the fairness and transparency of the investigation process).

The Investigating Officer and Independent Person will consider all details surrounding the complaint and make recommendations for a better or improved service, and how any service failings can be remedied.

After considering the findings and recommendations of the investigation team, the relevant Assistant Director provides a written response to the complainant setting out their view of whether they agree with the findings of the investigation.

The timescale for responding to complaints at stage 2 is 25 working days, which can be extended to 65 working days if necessary.

Stage Three – Review Panel

If the stage 2 investigation is unable to resolve matters, the complainant can request that their complaint be considered at the final stage of the procedure by a Review Panel, which consists of three independent panellists.

The Panel review the stage 2 investigation and response, and make recommendations to the relevant Director, who will then respond to the complainant on the outcome of the review and any actions to be taken.

There are three timescales for stage 3 complaints:

- Organising the panel within 30 working days of the complainant's request.
- Producing the Chairperson's report within 5 working days of the panel taking place.

- Responding to the complainant within 15 working days of the Chairperson's report.

Complaints which are not eligible for consideration through the statutory procedure may be considered through the Trust's local complaints procedure. The local complaints procedure has two stages which, like the statutory procedure, aim to resolve complaints and address representations as soon as reasonably practicable, and within specific timescales. The two stages are described below:

Stage 1 – Local Resolution

This stage provides the opportunity for the Team Manager to resolve issues of dissatisfaction at a local level as early as possible. The Complaints & Information Service provides support and guidance to both the complainant and the Team Manager, to help achieve early resolution and, where things have gone wrong, ensure that matters are put right quickly with lessons learned captured and fed back into service improvements.

The timescale for resolving complaints at stage 1 is 20 working days.

Stage 2 – Review Stage

Stage 2 of the local procedure is a review of the stage 1 response, normally completed by a Head of Service or the Complaints & Information Manager. The reviewing manager will write to the complainant to share the findings and outcome of the review, providing the details of any actions to be taken.

The timescale for resolving complaints at stage 2 is 25 working days.

Mediation

Every effort is made to resolve escalated complaints through a mediation process, which is a part of the procedure for managing complaints. Where a complainant indicates that they are unhappy with the response at any previous stage, a mediation meeting is normally offered to the complainant. The process is chaired by an external mediator whose role is to help parties reach a solution and to arrive at an outcome that both parties are happy to accept.

Mediation is a voluntary process and will only take place if both parties agree. It is a confidential process where the terms of discussion are not disclosed to any party outside the mediation hearing.

The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

Once the complaints procedure has concluded, a complainant may contact the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is a free service that investigates complaints about local authorities (and care providers) in a fair and independent way.

3. Statistical Performance

Volume: By department

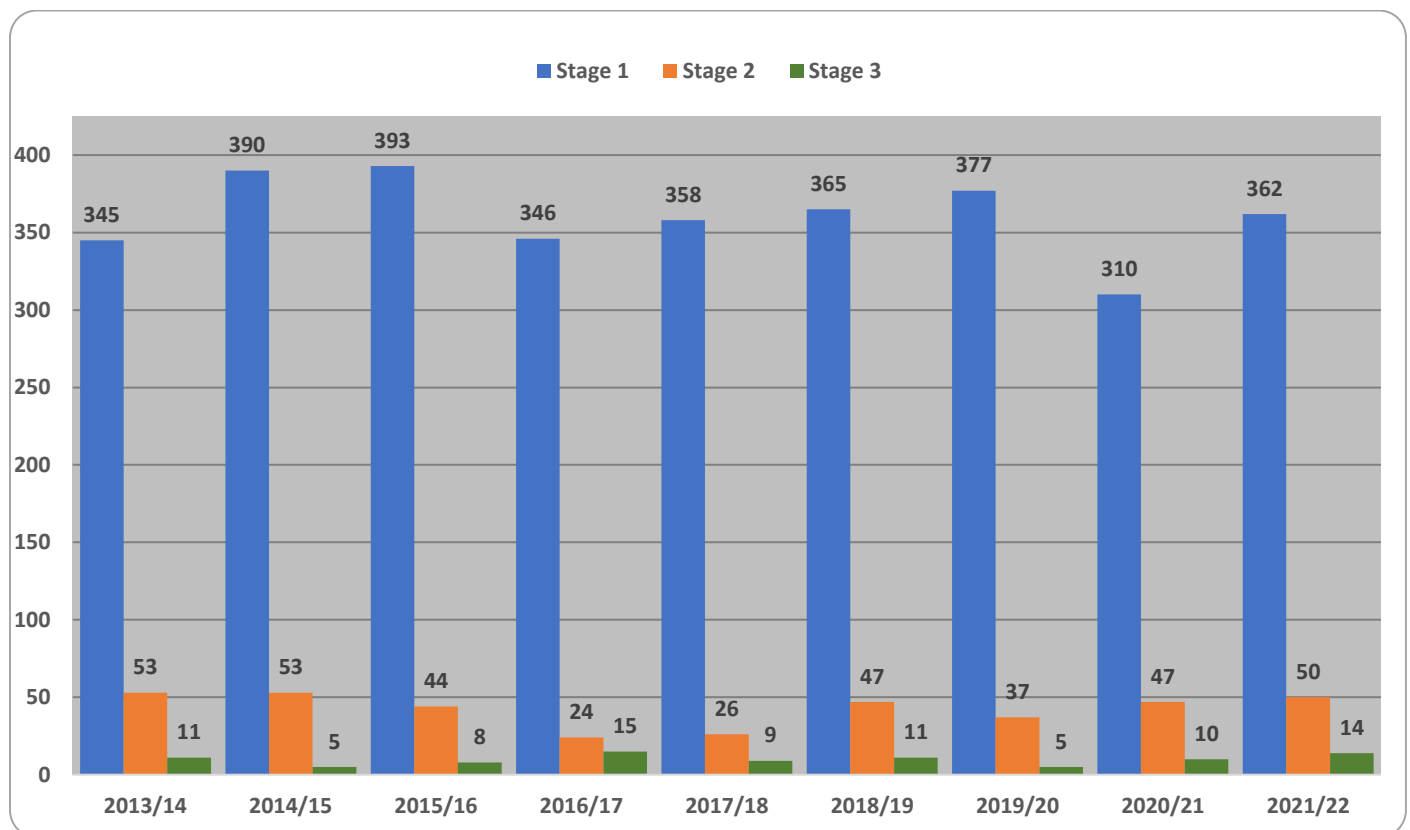
362 stage 1 complaints were received in 2021/22, an increase of 18.4% compared to 2020/21. 234 complaints (65%) were considered through the statutory complaints procedure, while 128 complaints (35%) were considered through the Trust's local complaints procedure.

The number of stage 2 complaints increased from 47 in 2020/21 to 50, while the number of Stage 3 Review Panels requested also increased (14 compared with 10 in 2020/21).

While the volumes of complaints may appear high, the volumes should be considered in the context of the number of referrals received and Family Assessments completed.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Referrals Received	13,869	15,286	15,636
Ratio of S1 Complaints to Referrals	2.72%	2.03%	2.32%
Family Assessments Completed	12,451	12,830	11,588
Ratio of S1 Complaints to Family Assessments	3.03%	2.41%	3.12%

Ratio of stage 1 complaints to referrals/assessments



Number of complaints received since 2013/14

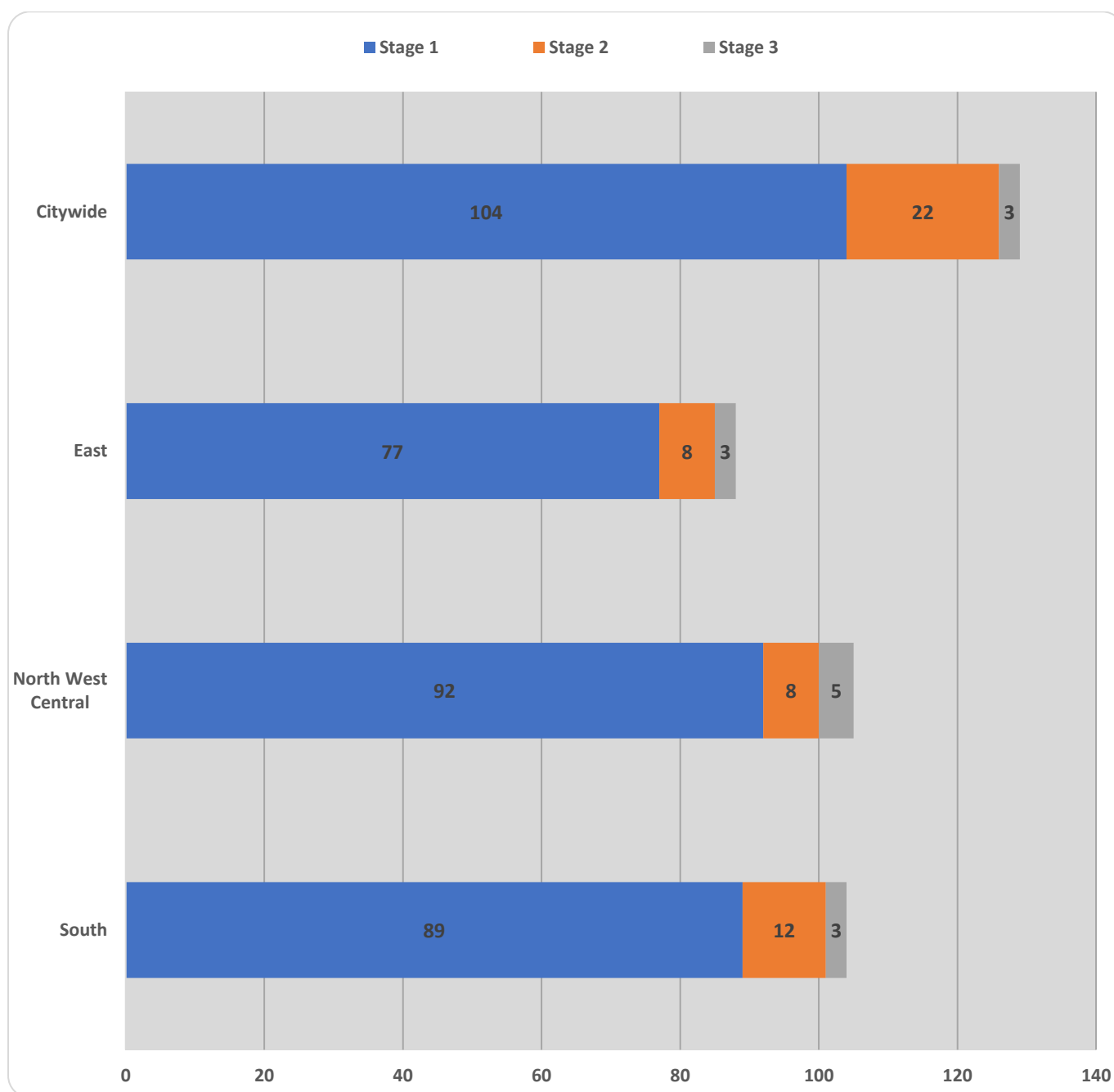
Volume: By area & service

NB. For reporting purposes, service areas which are delivered across the Trust have been grouped together as 'Citywide'.

The services receiving most stage 1 complaints were: North West Central Child in Care (44); Disabled Children's Social Care (37); South Safeguarding (34); East ASTI¹ (28); and South Child in Care (28).

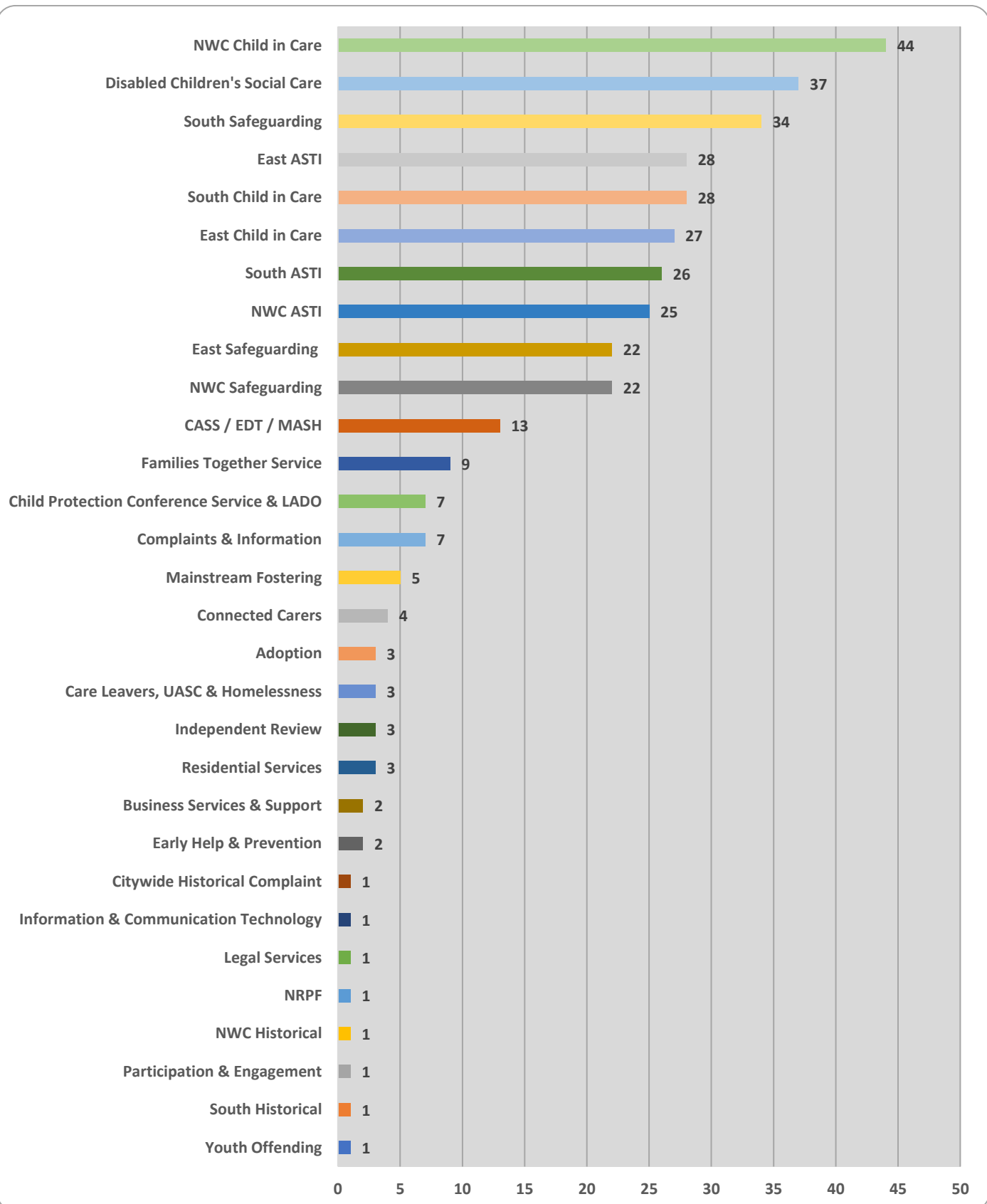
The services receiving most stage 2 complaints were: Disabled Children's Social Care (10); South Safeguarding (7); South ASTI (4); East Child in Care (3); and East Safeguarding (3).

The services receiving most stage 3 requests were: South Safeguarding (3); East Child in Care (3); and Disabled Children's Social Care (2). Six other services received one stage 3 complaint.



Complaints received by area and stage

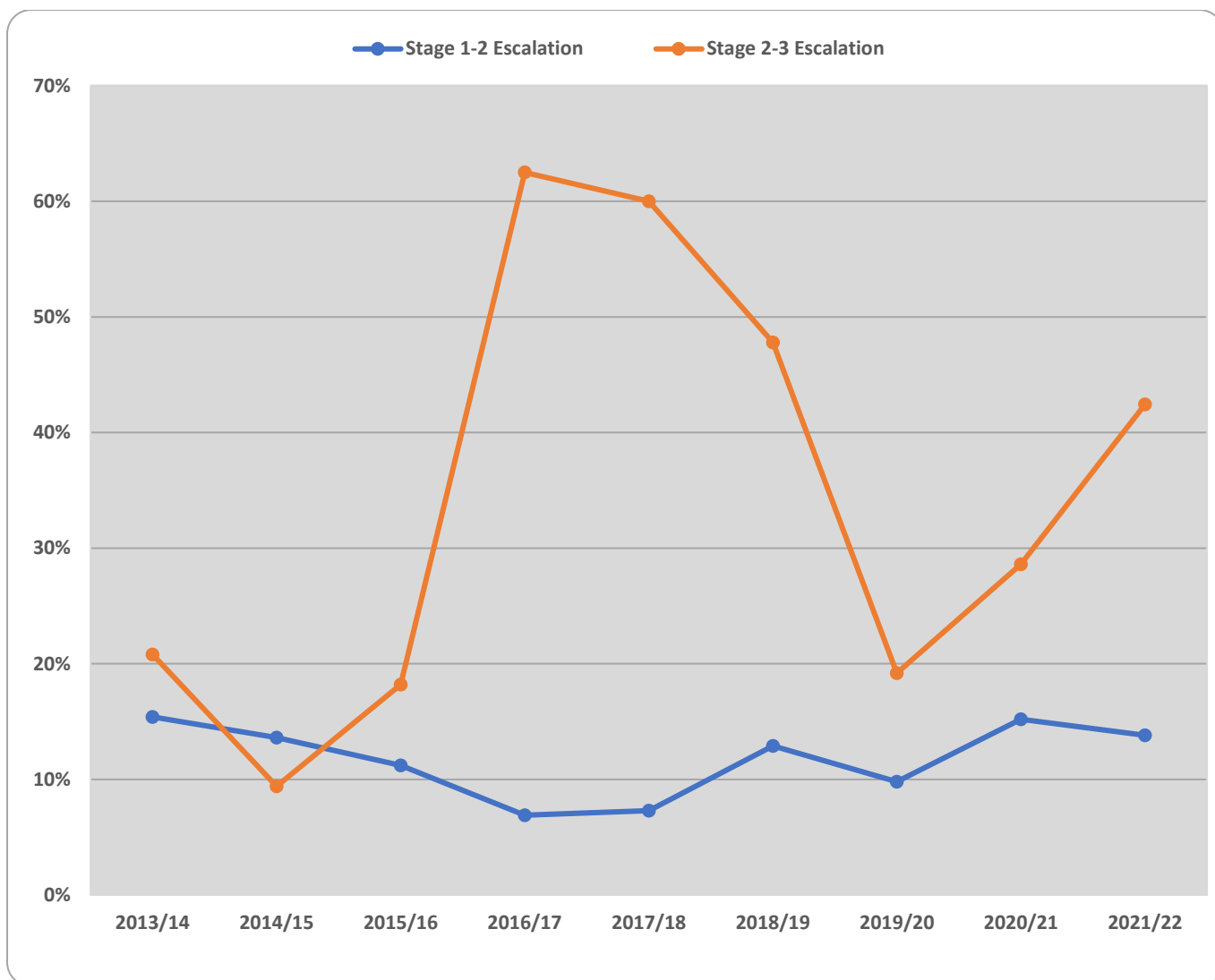
¹ Assessment & Short-Term Intervention



Stage 1 complaints received by service

Escalation of complaints

The percentage of complaints which escalated from stage 1 to stage 2 decreased to 13.8% (from 15.2% in 2020/21). For the second successive year, the percentage of complaints which escalated from stage 2 to stage 3 increased (from 28.6% in 2020/21 to 42.6%).



Escalation of complaints to stages 2/3

How quickly are we responding to complaints²?

There has been a reduction in the percentage of complaints which were responded to within 20 working days. 142 of 265 (53.4%) stage 1 complaints responses were issued within deadline (the compliance rate was 63.7% in 2020/21). The average response time was 28.81 working days, which compares with 27.44 working days in 2020/21.

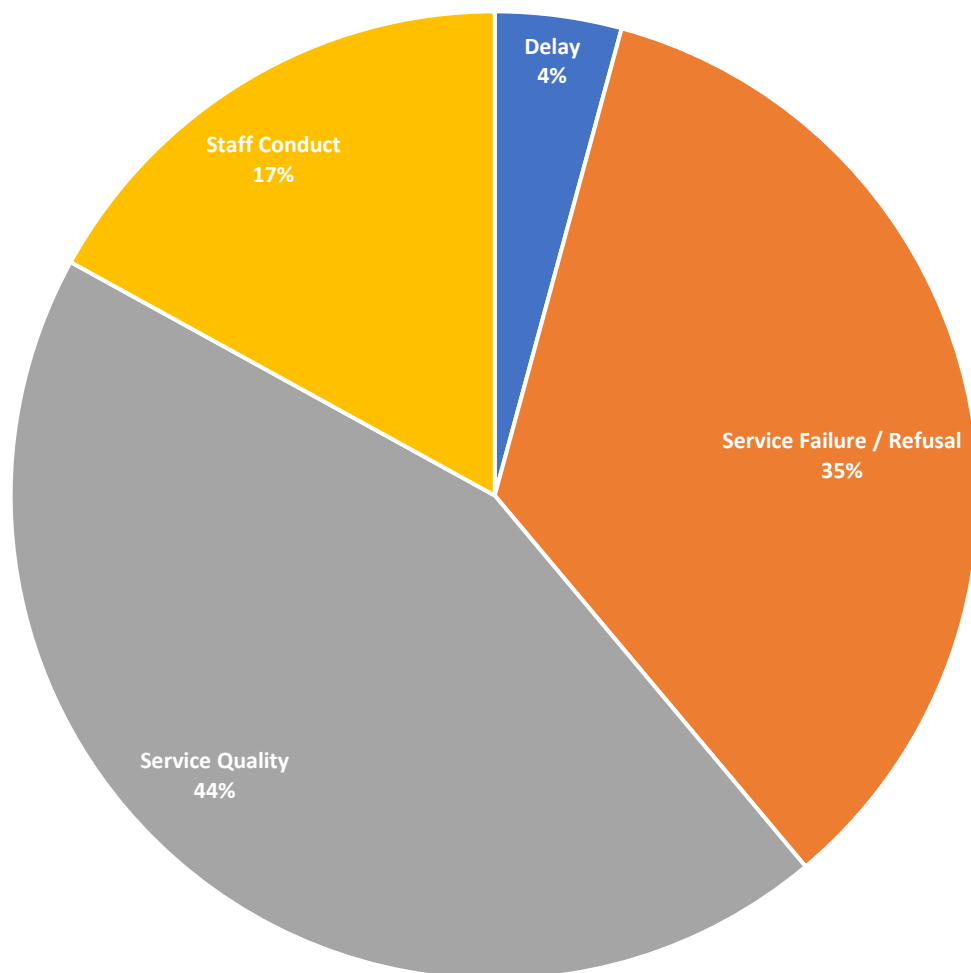
No statutory stage 2 complaints were responded to within the primary deadline of 25 working days (compared with six complaints in 2020/21), while ten complaints (30.3%) were responded to within the secondary deadline of 65 working days. The average response time was 87.48 working days (compared with 64.09 working days in 2020/21).

Nine local stage 2 responses (64%) were issued within deadline and the average response time was 32.80 working days (compared with 50% and 32.80 working days in 2020/21).

A breakdown of performance at each stage can be found at Appendix A.

² Commentary does not include cases which were outside the jurisdiction of the complaints procedure or withdrawn by the complainant.

What are families complaining about?



Reasons for complaint

Complainants may have multiple reasons for complaining. Accordingly, the total number of complaints and the total number of reasons for complaint varies significantly.

There were 1,018 stage 1 complaint aspects recorded in 2021/22, compared with 839 in 2020/21. Of the complaints recorded, the following themes/trends were identified:

- There were 86 complaints regarding the failure to take action.
- A further 80 complaints concerned the appropriateness of action taken.
- 69 complainants were unhappy with the failure to provide a service or support.
- There were 66 complaints received regarding a failure to provide advice or information.
- 63 complainants stated that they had receive an inadequate service or support.
- 48 complaints were received where the complainant stated that inaccurate information had been recorded.
- There were 46 complaints about inappropriate staff conduct.
- 41 complainants disagreed with decisions which the Trust made.

A detailed breakdown of the reasons for complaint can be found at Appendix B,

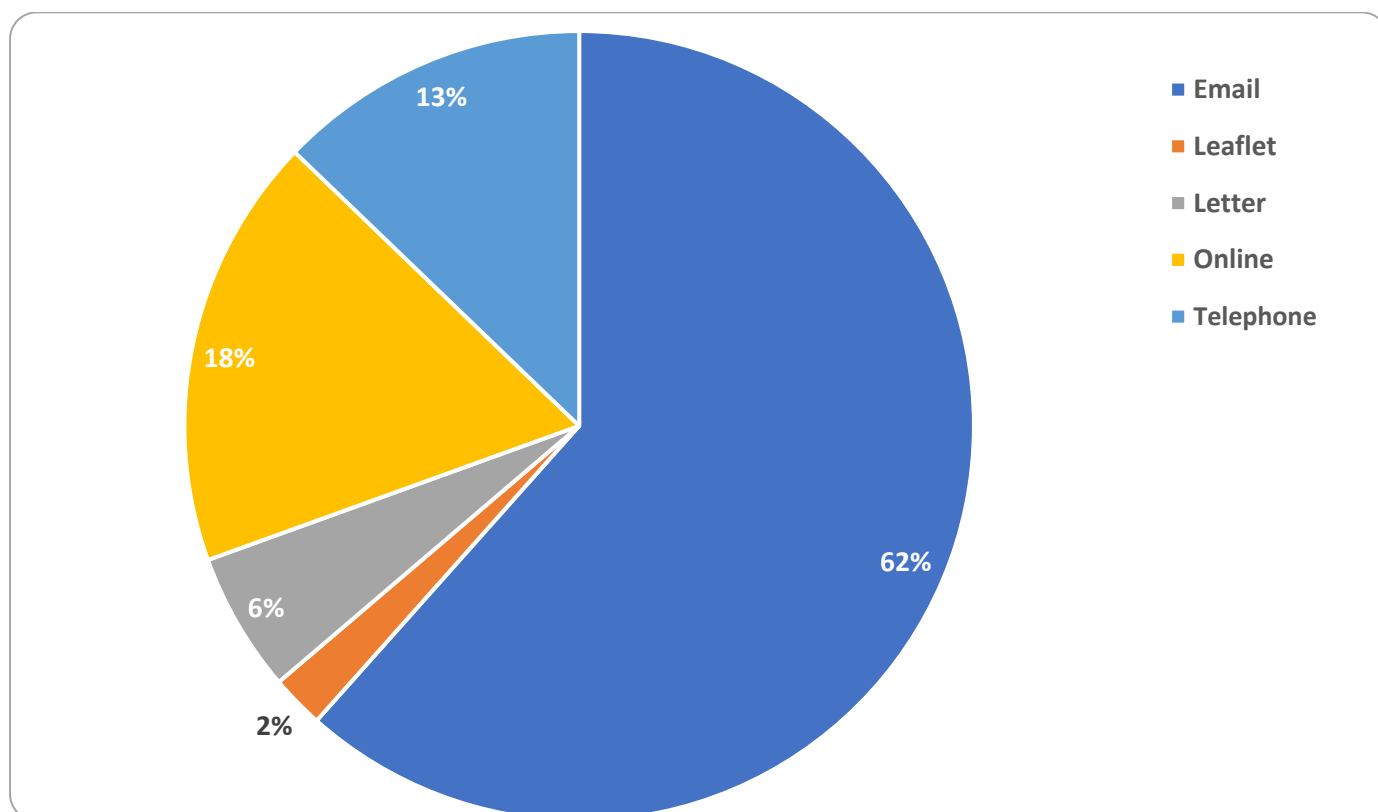
Outcomes

The number stage 1 complaints which were upheld or partially upheld decreased from 38% in 2020/21 to 35% in 2021/22. There was a slight increase in the percentage of stage 2 complaints which were upheld or partially upheld (56% compared with 55.3% in 2021/22). 71.4% of stage 3 complaints were upheld or partially upheld, a significant increase from 20% in 2020/21.

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Upheld	13.3%	2.0%	–
Partially Upheld	21.3%	54.0%	71.4%
Not Upheld	35.1%	28.0%	14.3%
Inconclusive	1.9%	–	7.1%
Outside Jurisdiction	11.1%	4.0%	–
Withdrawn	16.5%	2.0%	7.1%
Response Outstanding	0.8%	10.0%	–

Outcomes of complaints³

How are complaints being made?



Method of complaint

³ Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Consistent with recent years, the majority of stage 1 complaints (approximately 80%) were submitted via email or by an online complaint form. For the second consecutive year, the number of complaints made by telephone increased, while complaints made by post (i.e., by letter or hard-copy complaint form) decreased for the fourth consecutive year.

Who is complaining?

Approximately 75% of all stage 1 complaints received were made by parents or other family members, a decrease of 2% compared with 2020/21.

22 of the stage 1 complaints received were made by children, young people or care leavers (including former service users), which equates to 5.99% of all stage 1 complaints). This is an increase from 2020/21 which saw eight (2.58%) complaints received from children, young people or care leavers. Examples of the complaints received from children, young people and care leavers in 2021/22 are detailed at Appendix C.

Mediation

There were seven mediation meetings held during 2021/22. Of these seven mediations, three complaints were successfully resolved, with four complaints escalating to the stage 2 of the complaints procedure thereafter.

4. Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

23 complainants contacted the Ombudsman's office during 2021/22, an increase of 10 compared with 2020/21.

Four complaints were referred back to the Trust as premature, while the Ombudsman declined to investigate 13 complaints. Six complaints were investigated, and fault was identified in three cases. A summary of the complaints investigated and the remedial actions (where applicable) the Trust was required to take to remedy the fault identified is detailed below.

Complaint 1 (Historical Complaint – Complaint Upheld)

The Trust failed to properly consider complaints made in 2016 and 2020 about alleged abuse and mistreatment by social workers and foster carers while when the complainant was in care (between 1994 and 2006).

To remedy the fault identified, the Trust agreed to consider the allegations the complainant made about his foster carers through the statutory complaints procedures and made a payment of £200 to recognise the delay in responding to the complaint in 2020.

Complaint 2 (Historical Complaint – Complaint Upheld)

When the complainant accessed her social care records, she found that staff at the care home she lived in wrongly stated that she had a personality disorder. The complainant learned that this was not correct after reading her medical records. The Social Worker failed to correct or challenge the wrong information and the records remain incorrect.

The Ombudsman found the Trust was at fault on the basis that it failed to consider whether the complainant should be provided with support or advice when accessing her personal records. To remedy this fault, the Trust agreed to make a payment of £400 to recognise the confusion and distress caused by finding the incorrect information on the file and to recognise the lost opportunity for support.

Complaint 3 (North West Central ASTI – Complaint Upheld)

The Trust took too long to deal with a complaint about a Section 47 investigation.

To remedy the fault, the Trust agreed to apologise to the complainant in writing and make a payment of £750 to recognise the avoidable distress and inconvenience that the delay caused.

Complaint 4 (North West Central Child in Care – Complaint Not Upheld)

Officers made false statements about the complainant regarding her actions as a foster carer. In addition, neither the Trust nor the complainant's fostering agency properly investigated the complaints the complainant made about this matter.

The Ombudsman found no fault in the information the Trust (and the fostering agency) provided.

Complaint 5 (Disabled Children's Social Care – Complaint Not Upheld)

The complainant was unhappy with how the Trust dealt with the Section 17 and Section 47 assessments undertaken in January and February 2021.

The Ombudsman discontinued their investigation as further investigation would not lead to a different outcome (to the Trust's consideration) and because the Ombudsman could not achieve outcome the complainant wanted.

Complaint 6 (CASS / EDT / MASH – Investigation Ongoing)

The Trust failed to respond appropriately to the complainant's report of concerns about the welfare of a child.

The Ombudsman has yet to conclude this investigation.

5. Learning & Improving from Complaints

The learning arising from customer feedback plays a crucial role in helping the Trust understand how customers experience the services we provide. When responding to complaints, managers are encouraged to identify any areas for improvement and any measures which can be taken to prevent a recurrence of the event which led to the complaint.

This learning is captured in quarterly reporting and disseminated across the Trust. In addition, this learning feeds directly into the Trust's 'Practice Hub', which – along with other quality assurance activity – is used to inform the Trust's approach to improving practice.

As part of its work with Practice Hub, the Complaints & Information Service continues to liaise with Trust's Learning & Development Manager to identify how the learning arising from practice complaints feeds into training and development plans.

Examples of learning and service improvements identified as a direct result of complaints made in 2021/22 can be found at Appendix D.

6. Complaint Costs

There was an increase in investigation costs of 73.2% in 2021/22, with expenditure rising to £143,177.96 during the year (compared with £82,669.81 in 2020/21).

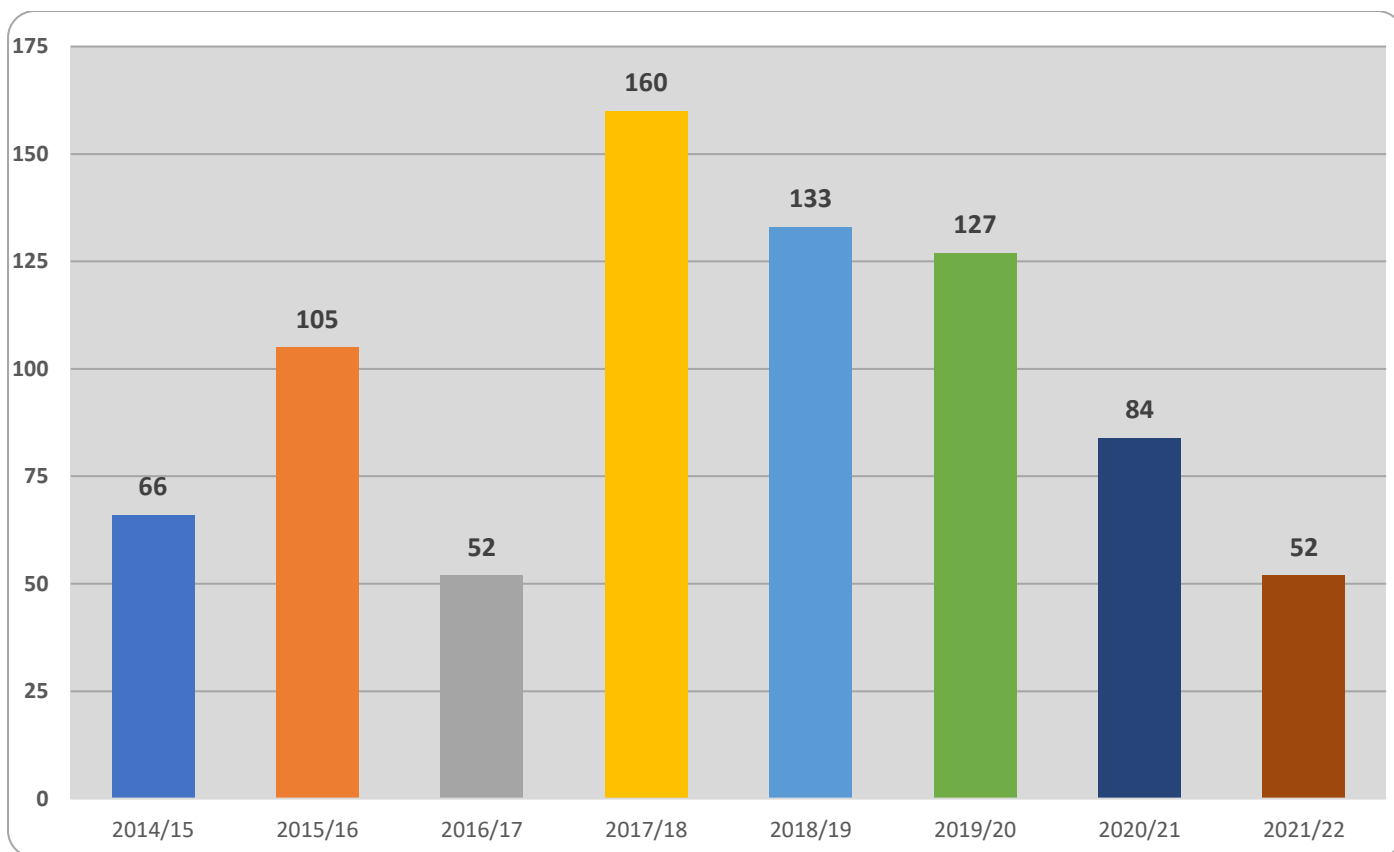
By contrast, the total amount of compensation / financial remedy paid out in 2021/22 reduced by 51.7%, with a total of £7,089.00 paid (compared with £13,699.49 in 2020/21).

	Cost Reason	2020/21 Expenditure	2021/22 Expenditure
Stage 2	Investigating Officer	£57,818.31	£90,399.00
	Independent Person	£18,600.50	£24,783.50
Stage 3	Review Panel	£6,251.00	£27,995.46
Compensation	Stage 1	£3,674.48	£1,400.00
	Stage 2	£6,550.00	£3,739.00
	Stage 3	–	£600.00
	Ombudsman	£3,475.00	£1,350.00
TOTAL PAYMENTS		£96,369.29	£150,266.96

Investigation Expenditure

7. Compliments

For the fourth successive year, there was a reduction in the number of compliments recorded. 52 compliments were recorded during 2021/22, a decrease of approximately 38.1% compared with the previous year. A sample of the compliments received during the year is detailed below.



Compliments

"I am writing to give you an update regarding your last visit. There has been a positive turn around with my husband. He has started understanding the meaning of abuse and how it affects the whole family. Your visit has impacted tremendously on my family and I can't appreciate you enough. My husband since then, he's been walking towards the positive part coupled with the counselling he is receiving. Thank you once again."

Marva Cunningham (North West Central ASTI)

"I literally believe you're the best social worker. You have been fantastic, you made sure I had everything I needed. You even used to and come see me on weekends which are your days off. You're always on top of things. Everything was done on time. Whenever I contact you, you reply quickly. You really made things very easy. I just wish you can be my over-18 advisor. You are caring and fun to have as a social worker. Thank you"

Noreen Hussain (South Child in Care)

"We would like to pass on how supportive Theresa has been with us as new foster carers over the last ten months. It has been a very challenging time with it all being new to us, adding in the pandemic and the behaviours the boys have presented. As she has so much hands-on knowledge of the boys, she knows exactly what we are talking about and has been able to empathise having faced some of these

challenges herself! Both boys are also very fond of her and are always delighted to see her when she visits. Her dedication in doing what is right for all four children is clear and obviously lies at the route of all she does."

Theresa Burden (East Child in Care)

"Can I just take this space to thank Joel for everything he has done for not only the girls and mom but me also. The support he has given has been amazing and he always went above and beyond to ensure we had everything that we needed. As a family, we feel truly blessed to have had Joel as our social worker. Thank you."

Joel Davison (East Safeguarding)

"I can't put into words how much I appreciate the help & support from Yael through this difficult time we as a family are going through. I was reassured things are being put into place to help & support my daughter. I appreciate everything that Yael has done and continuing to do to get the help and support to meet my daughter's needs."

Yael Collins (Care Leavers, UASC & Homelessness)

"Having been in the care system from the age of 8 to 21 (13 years) I can honestly say that Terri is the best worker I have ever come across. Throughout my experience with her, she always made me feel comfortable, happy and excited for my future. Without Terri I don't think I would be where I'm at today, especially in terms of my education. Not only has she helped me immensely with my finances- making sure I was aware of every bursary available (which helped me achieve the full David Edgar master's bursary) and helping me with rent/other issues, but she always made sure that I was emotionally okay and made me feel as though I had someone to talk to, that I could trust. She always kept in contact to make sure everything such as Uni was going okay, and communicated that if I ever had any issues, she would be there to help! I feel as though anybody who has the pleasure of having Terri as their worker will be in the safest / best hands! Again, thank you Terri for everything you have done for me!"

Terri Farrington (Care Leavers, UASC & Homelessness)

"I would like to say, I enjoyed working with Lauren. Lauren helped me face some things in my own life which I was afraid to think about. I appreciate the time Lauren spent with me. Lauren has a very calm manner and is very politely spoken, which put me at ease, as I was going through a lot of emotions during this whole process. I would like to thank Lauren for her guidance and support which I received. Thankyou."

Lauren Devlin (Mainstream Fostering)

"Thank you very much for your support and help. You are very kind-hearted and taught me how to take care of my children. You are a professional who knows how to help vulnerable groups and get out of their predicament. With your help, all aspects of our family, and the situation of taking care of children have changed a lot. Once again, thank you."

Roohi Dodhy (South Safeguarding)

"I wanted to share how brilliant Teri has been with supporting my son. It's been a very difficult year with his mental health and Teri's support and passion with supporting G has been amazing!! Whilst it's

been a frustrating journey with getting G assessed, Teri has ensured that G is safe and felt supported and without her interventions, then I shudder to think where we would be."

Ellen (Teri) Connolly (Families Together Service)

"I just wanted to thank you for your help and assistance this past week. I understand that the covid restrictions made this urgent task even more difficult however you kept me updated step by step and remained in contact throughout so that I could update others accordingly. So I just wanted to write and say thank you and that I really appreciated your time and efforts."

Jennifer Wickham (Complaints & Information)

"We want to acknowledge that in our adoption journey our social worker Nicola Lewis has been extremely supportive and helpful, she has shown authentic empathy and has been an invaluable presence for our new family, always going the extra mile"

Nicola Lewis (Adoption)

"I would also like to share that Kirsty's practice was exceptional from the case consultation earlier and she has a very good understanding of domestic abuse and safeguarding. This makes the process so much easier for both myself and the victim in receiving tailored support at the earliest opportunity."

Kirsty Downes-McGill (North West Central Safeguarding)

"I just wanted to extend my sheer gratitude to you for your exceptional diligence and significant achievements, particularly in a relatively short space of time. Your exemplary professional, proactive approach has been life-changing (in the best possible way) for C; and by default, for A and me. We remain truly indebted to you. As I'm sure you may already be aware, you are quite rightly held in the highest of esteem by your fellow professionals, both within and outside of your discipline, which further demonstrates your sheer determination and philanthropic approach. I remain utterly impressed that your teaching background has further enhanced your real understanding and ability to bring about beneficial change across a plethora of service providers to the young people who you have been an exceptional advocate for. Thank you also for your patience with me. We are beyond fortunate to have had your professional input and are most grateful that you attended and provided valuable insight at C's EHCP Review. We will miss you terribly and hope our paths shall cross at some point in the future. Stay safe, well and amazing!"

Hannah Hannigan (Disabled Children's Social Care)

"I am emailing you today to say how impressed we have been by Mike French. We feel he has gone above and beyond with how he has supported our new placement. He has been out to our young person's previous foster carer and collected her passport and some of her belongings (which were important to our young person). I am aware that it easy to complain but it is important to give out a shout when someone really puts in the extra support to foster carers and young people."

Michael French (Independent Review)

"Tasneem has been my advocate for these past couple of months and I would just like to say what an excellent job she has done for me and I really appreciate her help."

Tasneem Akhtar (Participation & Engagement)

8. Next Steps

Complaints should always be viewed as an opportunity to learn from any systemic (or one-off) failings and make necessary improvements. Complaints should never be considered a nuisance or as an interruption to the delivery of services, and, as a learning organisation, we must embrace complaints to improve services and respond to these openly and honestly. While complaints can highlight failings, they often illustrate examples of good practice.

The following points highlight areas for improvement going forward:

- Continue to monitor complaint trends and regularly share these as part of quarterly reporting to the Trust's Executive Group.
- Engage on a quarterly basis with Assistant Directors and their management teams to discuss Trust-wide trends but also trends particular to specific service areas.
- Continue to listen to concerns raised by children, young people and families, and act on any failings their feedback highlights.
- Minimise complaints about the lack of communication by engaging with children, young people and families throughout the complaints procedure;
- Review the Trust's complaints policy, website and literature and the cost of investigation.
- Continue to improve the mechanisms for ensuring that the learning from complaints is fed back into social work practice.
- Identify further complaint training opportunities and ensure that these are made available to all relevant staff in the Trust.
- Identify different ways to engage with children and young people, raising awareness of the complaints procedure and how they can get their voice heard.
- Ensure that Ombudsman enquiries are responded to within timescale, improve compliance with Ombudsman recommendations and ensure more effective dissemination of Ombudsman decisions across the Trust to help inform (and improve) practice.
- Utilise the learning the Local Government Ombudsman makes for decisions across the country to feed into practice and to ensure more robust complaints investigations.

Appendix A – Responsiveness⁴

	0-10 Working Days	11-20 Working Days	21+ Working Days
Citywide	21.4%	35.9%	42.7%
East	23.1%	26.9%	50.0%
North, West & Central	26.7%	21.6%	51.7%
South	24.6%	31.1%	44.3%
TOTAL	23.7%	29.7%	46.6%

Average Response Time	28.81 Working Days
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Stage 1 responsiveness

	Number of Complaints	Percentage
0-25 Working Days	0	0.0%
25-65 Working Days	10	30.3%
66+ Working Days	23	69.7%

Average Response Time	87.48 Working Days
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Statutory Stage 2 responsiveness

	Number of Complaints	Percentage
0-25 Working Days	9	64.3%
26+ Working Days	5	35.7%

Average Response Time	29.93 Working Days
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Local Stage 2 responsiveness

⁴ Data does not include cases which were outside the jurisdiction of the complaints procedure or withdrawn by the complainant.

Appendix B – Reasons for Complaint

Category	Sub-Category	Complaints
Delay	Follow Guidance / Policy / Procedure	1
	Make a Decision	1
	Meet or Contact Customer	1
	Provide a Service / Support	7
	Provide Advice / Information	8
	Respond to Emails / Letters / Text Message	2
	Respond to Telephone Call / Message	2
	Take Action	21
	TOTAL	43
Service Failure / Refusal	Consult / Notify	25
	Follow Guidance / Policy / Procedure	4
	Invite to Meeting	9
	Listen	25
	Make a Decision	1
	Meet or Contact Customer	24
	Provide a Service / Support	69
	Provide Advice / Information	66
	Provide Identification	4
	Respond to Emails / Letters / Text Message	18
	Respond to Telephone Call / Message	22
	Take Action	86
	TOTAL	353
Service Quality	Appropriateness of Venue	1
	Availability of Staff	1
	Breach of Confidentiality	23
	Breach of Court Order	2
	Change of Allocated Worker	5
	Concerns about Care Provision	11
	Disagreement with Assessment	31
	Disagreement with Decision	41
	Equalities / Diversity Issues	2
	Inaccurate Information Recorded	48
	Inadequate Service / Support	63

	Inappropriate Action Taken	80
	Inappropriate Service Offered	16
	Incorrect Advice Given	8
	Lateness / Non-Attendance	10
	Loss or Damage to Property	1
	Meeting Cancelled / Re-scheduled	8
	Meeting Terminated	1
	Organisational Discrimination	5
	Other / Miscellaneous	6
	Poor Communication	21
	Service Cancelled / Reduced / Withdrawn	6
	Unable to Reach Staff	14
	Unreasonable Decision	29
	Wrong Information Provided	16
	TOTAL	449
Staff Conduct	Accusatory Conduct	6
	Bias	13
	Bullying / Threatening	17
	Conflict of Interest	3
	Discriminatory Behaviour	7
	Dishonest Conduct	12
	Inappropriate Conduct	46
	Lack of Customer Care	11
	Lack of Knowledge/Training	9
	Lack of Ownership	1
	Lack of Professionalism	19
	No Consent to Act	4
	Other / Miscellaneous	3
	Rude or Aggressive Behaviour	18
	Unhelpful Attitude	4
	TOTAL	173

Appendix C – Voice of the Child

Details of complaints made by children, young people and care leavers are listed below.

- A complaint from a child in care who was unhappy with her Social Worker. The young person feels that the worker does not care and does not provide information.
- A complaint from a child in care regarding the support he received from his Social Worker to process housing benefit, provisional driving licence, passport and housing applications. These were not completed until after the complainant turned 18.
- A complaint from a young person known to the Youth Offending Service about his worker. Young person feels that the worker does not listen and gives instructions which the complainant struggles with.
- A complaint from a young person who was the subject of a Family Assessment. The Social Worker made inappropriate comments about the young person's mother during a telephone conversation. The worker also advised the complainant that he would be moving to a care home, but this did not happen. The young person was not happy with the explanation provided for this move being cancelled.
- A complaint from a child in care which raised several areas of dissatisfaction:
 - The young person feels that her family is being mistreated by the Trust.
 - Contact / Family Time arrangements are poor.
 - No financial support provided.
 - No support or assistance provided to move home.
 - The young person does not like the way transportation between school and home has been set up.
- A complaint from a child in care about the way he was treated by his foster carer in a previous placement. The young person felt that he was treated differently by the carer to another child who was placed. The carer did not want to take the young person to contact with parents and did not receive all the savings he accrued whilst in this placement.
- A complaint from a child in care that she is not being listened to by her social worker and that the Trust's decisions are the opposite of what the young person wants.
- A complaint from a child in care who made a Subject Access Request. The young person is unhappy that third-party information was redacted from the disclosure as she wanted to see all information held on her case file.
- A complaint from the adult sibling of a child in care who was unhappy with how her brother's care was being managed. The young person had been inappropriately placed with the complainant in a property that was too small. The complainant also raised about the delay reallocating a new Social Worker after the previous allocated left.
- A complaint from a child in need about her Social Worker:
 - The worker does not stay in contact.
 - The worker does not respond when assistance is requested.
 - The worker does not provide updates.
- A complaint from a care leaver about his savings from his time as a child in care. There was a shortfall in the amount received and a significant delay resolving the matter.

- A complaint from a child in care regarding the delay in receiving her records following a Subject Access Request.
- A complaint from a child in care about her Social Worker. The Social Worker did not provide any help or support despite knowing the abuse the young person experienced in the care of her parents. The Social Worker was also unavailable for a period of three days when the young person needed to discuss something.
- A complaint from a Care Leaver about her Personal Advisor:
 - No support provided to resolve a debt problem the young person had accrued.
 - The Personal Advisor made the young person sit in the boot of her car, despite the young person exhibiting no Covid symptoms.
 - The Personal Advisor made inappropriate comments about her personal life in front of the young person.
 - The Personal Advisor spoke about the young person behind her back.

Appendix D – Learning and Improvements Arising from Complaints

A sample of the learning and improvements identified in complaint investigations is detailed below.

Stage 1

- A complaint from a parent regarding the Trust's management of a referral resulted in a reminder to Social Workers and Referral & Assessment Officers in the Children's and Advice Support Service that when a parent makes a referral to the Trust, they must make sure that they contact the parent directly to share the outcome.
- A complaint from a parent of a disabled child resulted in reminders to Social Workers and Team Managers on the importance of sharing Child in Need Meeting minutes and updated Child in Need Plans promptly with parents (and other relevant attendees).
- A complaint from a parent about a home visit resulted in reminders to Social Workers that they must show their staff identification when visiting families at their home. The complaint also identified the importance of working transparently with families and explaining the Trust's role.
- A complaint from a parent of a child in care found that there were insufficient measures in place during staff absence to ensure that communication was maintained. The Head of Service discussed this learning with her Team Managers and instructed them to ensure that more effective measures were in place when there was extended staff absence.
- A complaint from a parent whose children were subject to a Child Protection plan identified a training need for the allocated Social Worker around working with families who have experienced (or perpetrated) domestic abuse.
- A complaint from a parent of a child who was subject to a Child Protection plan resulted in the creation of a webinar on the appropriate "use of self" as a professional. The webinar would also address what it means to be a trauma-informed practitioner and understanding the potential for triggering further trauma when working with children and their families.
- A complaint from a member of the public who made a Subject Access Request via a third-party registered mail provider identified the need for staff to routinely check junk mail folders to ensure that any emails re-directed to junk can be actioned promptly.
- A complaint from a parent of disabled child identified the following learning for staff in the Disabled Children's Social Care Service:
 - The need for assessments to be progressed in a timely format to avoid drift and delay and ensure that families can access the services required at the right time to prevent situations from escalating.
 - The need to hold child in need reviews in line with statutory guidance which will ensure that children's, parents, carers and professionals views are obtained, and the plan is supportive to the current level of need.
 - The need for processes around obtaining support packages to be clearly explained to parents.
 - For information and guidance to be offered to parents around contact for them to make their own informed decision about contact arrangements, where appropriate.
 - For there to be clear recordings to provide explanations when meetings have not been held or assessments completed which will support new allocated workers.
- A complaint from a parent of a disabled child identified the need to provide written information to parents/cares to explain care package that are offered in respect of the time and frequency of support. This will support communication and an understanding in respect of care packages they receive.

- A complaint from a mother whose children were subject to Child Protection Plans resulted in reminders being provided Conference Chairs regarding the language used where there are mental health and emotional wellbeing issues.
- A complaint from a parent about a Family Assessment resulted in reminders being provided to Social Workers on the importance of explaining the assessment process when conducting their initial visit to families.
- A complaint from a parent of a disabled child has highlighted the need to provide timely written information to parents / carers in respect of the Trust's hourly rate for contracted providers. This information should also include details of how any shortfall for a preferred provider (where the hourly rate exceeds the Trust's hourly rate) can be made up by using their own funds or DLA payments.
- Several complaints identified the need for Social Workers to communicate more effectively, with undertakings given that this to be addressed in supervision discussions and team meetings.
- A complaint from a parent of a disabled child identified the need to broaden the Social Worker's understanding and awareness of children with specialised needs, such as Autism. The complaint also resulted in a reflective discussion about how we communicate with children and families, to ensure that we use an appropriate tone, and in language that the child, young person or family member is able to understand.
- A complaint from a child in care about how he was treated in a former foster placement identified the need to regularly seek the views and voice of the child to give the child an opportunity to raise any concerns regarding their care. The complaint also identified the need for clear boundaries and house rules to be shared with children at the start of the placement.

Stage 2

- A complaint from the parent of a child in need recommended a review of the Trust's complaints policy to incorporate guidance about how to manage complaints which relate to more than one service area.
- A complaint from the parent of a disabled child identified the need to ensure that historical assessments cannot be overwritten or erased on CareFirst / Eclipse.
- A complaint from the parent of a disabled child resulted in guidance to Social Workers about the importance of making timely, thorough case notes, and reminding them of the Trust's practice guidance on case recording.
- A complaint from the parent of a child in care identified the need to remind staff that a formal policy exists for managing communication with individuals whose behaviour is "unreasonably persistent and vexatious", and that this policy should be followed when it is considered necessary to impose restrictions on an individual's contact with the Trust.
- A complaint from a parent whose children transferred from ASTI to the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Team recommended that The Trust should consider devising practice guidance to ensure that that identified needs are not overlooked when cases transfer to the NRPF Team.
- A complaint from prospective Special Guardians identified the need to review the Financial Support Policy for Permanent Care Arrangements to ensure that it is correctly worded and a reminder to Social Workers about the importance of documenting child in need meetings.
- A complaint from a child in care identified the following:
 - Social Workers should be reminded of the need to obtain authorisation from senior management when admitting a child or young person into care.
 - Social Workers should be made aware of relevant legislation, guidance and caselaw regarding accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds.

- Social Workers should be reminded of the statutory requirement to ascertain and consider the wishes and feelings of a young person about whom decisions are being made, and that there is an expectation that the Trust will work openly and honestly with young people.
- A complaint from a parent of a child in need resulted in reminders being provided to Social Workers and Team Managers of the importance of recording the completion date, and the names of the officers responsible for completing and for authorising the assessment, on the document.
- A complaint from a grandparent who was primary carer for her grandchildren resulted in a service-wide reflective discussion which covered the following:
 - Family Assessments should clearly note the date that they are started and completed including when they are reviewed by the Team Manager.
 - Social Workers ensure that they are clear about the terminology being used that is related to any legal processes and to seek appropriate guidance if need be.
 - Social Workers seek clarity on the role of third parties who are included in meetings and communications relating to a case.
 - File records include all relevant emails and case discussions to enable an effective audit trail of all actions undertaken in the management of a case.
- A complaint from a member of the public who made a referral resulted in the Head of Service completing random calls into CASS as an anonymous caller to ensure they are being put through to a Social Worker. The Head of Service also completed a tabletop review of how the referral was managed, which formed the basis of a reflective discussion with Social Workers and Referral & Advice Officers.
- A complaint from a step parent to two children in care, identified the need to be mindful of the way the Trust works with household members who not have parental responsibility, including what information can be shared and clarity around what is expected of them. This was addressed as part of a team meeting.