

Children's Social Care Compliments and Complaints

Annual Report 2018-2019



Contents page

1. Introduction	4
2. The Complaints Procedure	5
3. The role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)	6
4. Advocacy	6
5. Summary Data	7 - 8
6. Customer Data	9 - 11
7. Positive Feedback	12
8. What we have learnt from your feedback	13 - 14
9. Monitoring for 2018-19	15

1. Introduction

It is a requirement of The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 that the local authority publishes an Annual Report, to provide a mechanism by which the local authority can be kept informed of the operation of its complaints procedure for Children's Social Care (Regulation 13 (3)).

This Annual Report covers the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019. It includes information about:

- the complaints procedure
- the number of complaints at each stage of the complaints procedure and any that were investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman
- the types of complaints that were made, the outcomes and compliance with timescales
- the compliments that were received
- the customer groups that provided feedback
- the learning and service improvements that have been implemented



2. The Complaints Procedure

Stage 1- Local Resolution

Complaints at Stage 1 can be made to a social worker directly or to the Customer Service Team. Complaints received about Children's Social Care are acknowledged within 3 days and responded to within 10 days or within an extended period of an additional 10 days.

Stage 2 – Independent Investigation

Complaints that have not been resolved at Stage 1 can be escalated to Stage 2. At Stage 2, an officer from outside of the Children's Social Care Service is appointed to investigate and respond to the complaint within 25 working days. For complex complaints this can be extended to 65 working days with the agreement of the person making the complaint.

An Independent Person who does not work for the Council will also be involved in all aspects of consideration of the Stage 2 Complaint including any discussions about the action to be taken in relation to the child.

If the complaint has not been resolved at Stage 2, the person making the complaint can ask for their complaint to be heard by a Stage 3 Independent Review Panel. This request should be made within 20 working days of the Stage 2 Response.

Stage 3 – Independent Review Panel

The Independent Review Panel is made up of three Independent People who do not work for the Council; their role is to review all of the information about the complaint and to make recommendations to resolve it. The person making the complaint will be able to make written or verbal statements to the panel and can bring someone with them for support if required.

The panel will inform the person making the complaint and the Corporate Director of their recommendations within 5 working days of the panel date. The service then has 15 days in which to respond. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

On completion of Stage 3 customers are advised of their right to approach the **Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman, PO BOX 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH** if they do not feel their complaint has been resolved.

3. The role of the Independent Reviewing Officer

Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) are a legal requirement – they have powers under Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 to refer cases to The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS). Their primary focus is to quality assure the care planning process for each looked after child, and to ensure that the child's current wishes and feelings are given full consideration. IROs also have a role in relation to complaints for looked after children.

In regards to complaints the IRO's responsibilities are as follows:

- To ensure that the child understands their right to make a complaint to the Local Authority and has the option of an advocate to provide support with the complaint.
- To give consideration to who is best able to instigate the complaint on behalf of the child, where the child does not have the ability or understanding to instigate their complaint. This could include the IRO (Section 26(3), 1989 Act).
- Where there is an outstanding complaint being addressed within the local authority's complaints procedure this should not prevent the IRO from continuing to work to resolve the matter, either informally or by using the formal local dispute resolution process.
- The IRO must be advised of any complaint brought by or on behalf of the child so that they may assist with resolving the problem.
- In all cases the welfare of the child is the primary concern. The IRO will need to make a judgement in consultation with their line manager about whether a problem raised as a complaint is sufficiently serious to make a referral to Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service. Alternatively the IRO may consider that it would be more reasonable to await a resolution through the formal complaints procedure and/or the use of the formal local dispute resolution process.

4. Advocacy

Children and young people making a complaint are offered the support of an advocate who can support them to make a complaint, to ensure that they can express their concerns and that they are listened to. Advocacy for children and young people in Milton Keynes is provided by Coram Voice. They can be contacted by:

Free phone: 0808 800 5792

Text: 07758 670 369

Email: help@coramvoice.org.uk

Online: <http://www.coramvoice.org.uk/young-peoples-zone/getting-touch>

5. Summary Data 2018-19:

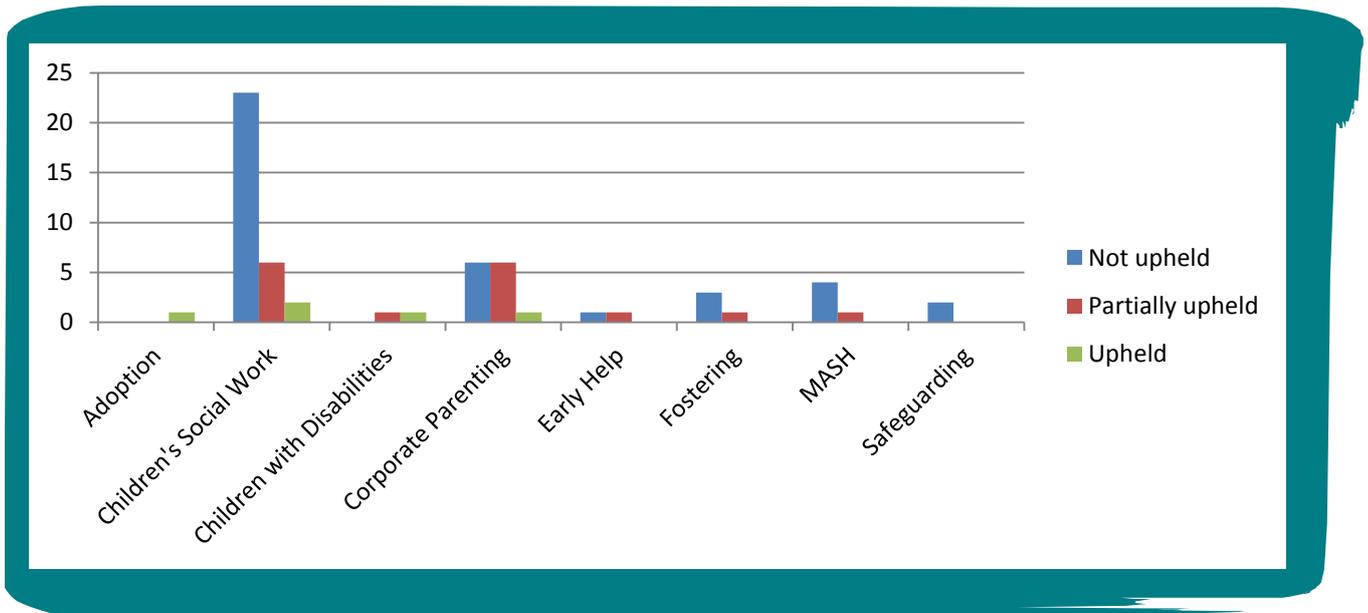
- Around 2,200 Children were supported by our social care teams.
- 65 complaints were received, compared to 89 complaints in 2017-18.
- 98% of complaints were resolved at Stage 1 compared to 97% during 2017-18.
- 1 complaint was escalated to Stage 2 compared to 3 during 2017-18.
- No complaints were escalated to Stage 3 this year or last year.
- 3 enquiries were made to Milton Keynes Council by the Local Government Ombudsman. 2 decisions were received of which 1 was not upheld and 1 was not investigated. A number of cases will have been received and decided in different business years, this means that the number of enquiries received will not always match the number of decisions made.
- 47 compliments were received, compared to 46 recorded during 2017-18.



Outcomes

Of the complaints received: 65% were not upheld, 27% were partially upheld and 8% were upheld. We recognise the value of customer complaints and welcome them as an important source of feedback on our services. We use the information from complaints to learn from and drive forward improvements to respond positively to our customers' needs and expectations.

During 2018-19 the key areas of feedback received through complaints related to:



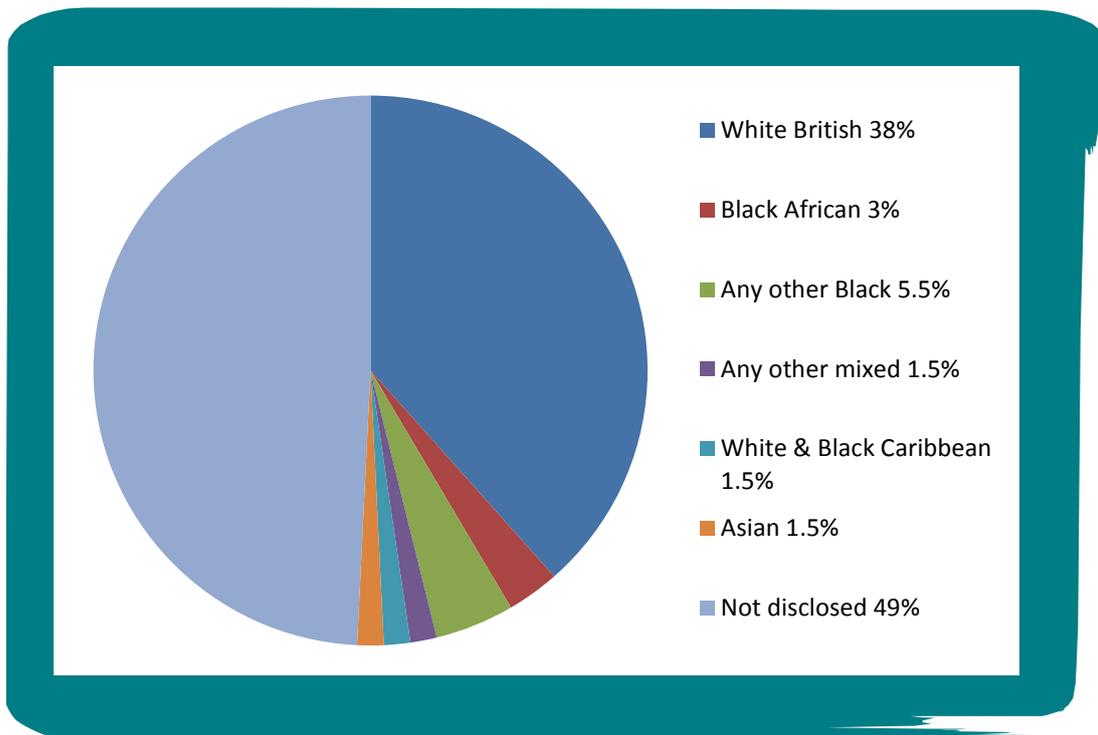
- 38% Professional decision making
(74% not upheld, 17% partially upheld, 9% upheld)
- 38% Service failure
(61% not upheld, 35% partially upheld, 4% upheld)
- 22% Staff conduct
(61% not upheld, 31% partially upheld, 8% upheld)
- 2% Contractor related
(100% upheld)

87% of complaints closed within 2018/19 were responded to within the response timescale, the complaints that were responded to outside of the timescale were due to additional time that was required for complex complaints or due to key staff being absent from work and service pressures which caused a delay in the investigation. In these cases the person making the complaint was contacted with an explanation for the delays.

6. Customer Data

We ask everyone to provide some optional personal information when making a complaint. This information is treated confidentially and helps us to monitor if everyone is able to give us feedback. This information also enables us to provide additional support where required, such as through providing an interpreter or providing information in braille or another format. The sections titled 'not disclosed' indicate that the person making the complaint chose not to give us this information.

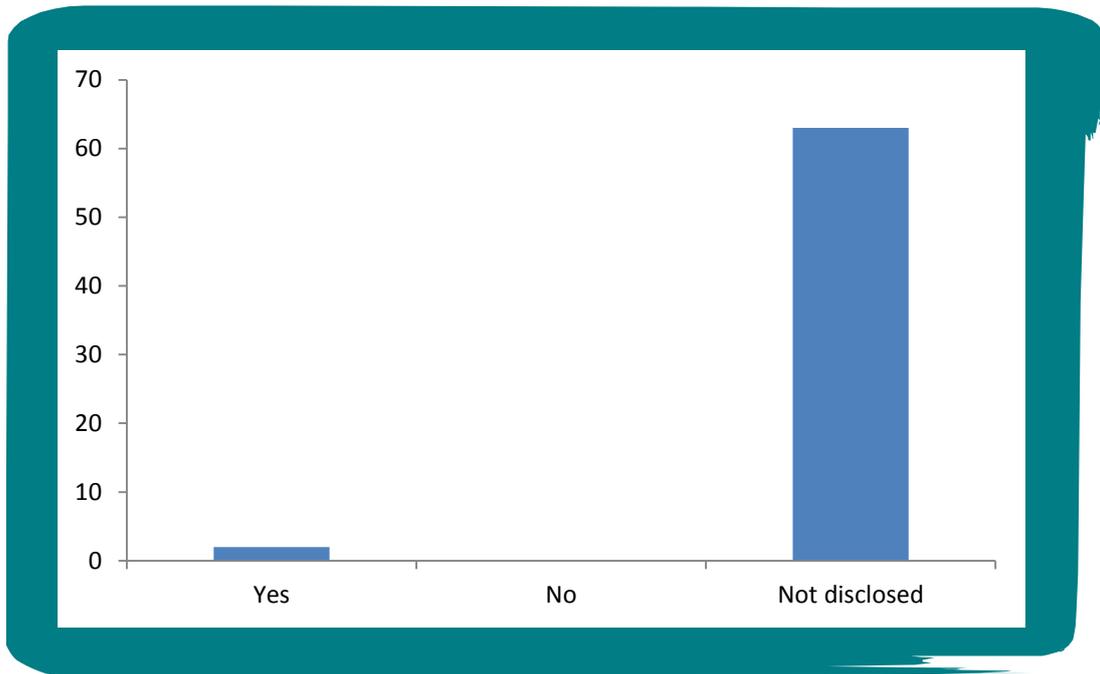
Ethnic Background:



The chart above shows that individuals who described themselves as White British made up just over a third of all complaints received by Children's Social Care during 2018-19. However 32 customers chose not to disclose their ethnic background.

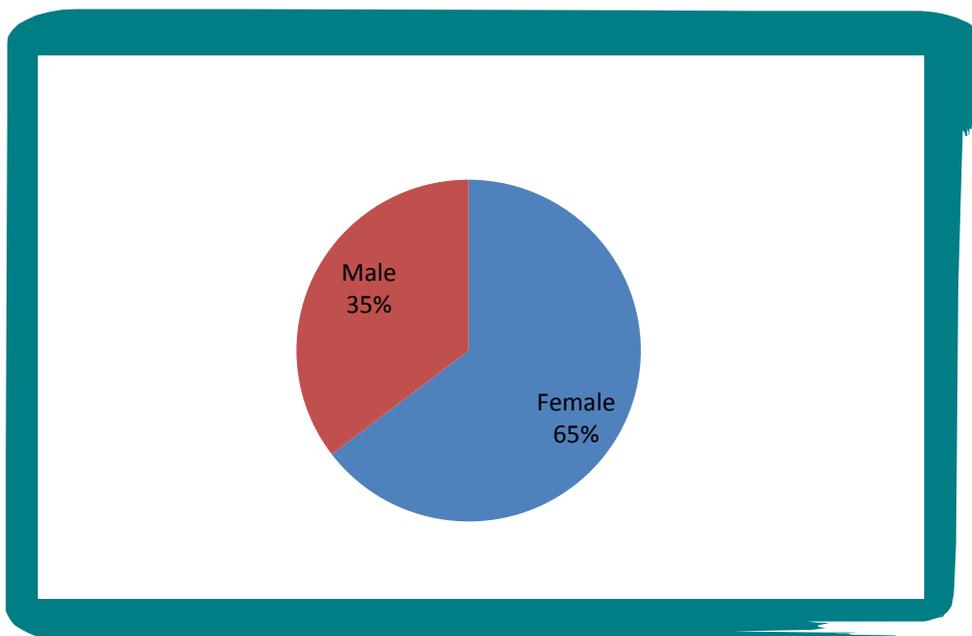
(The Ethnic Groups above comply with the Ethnic Groups recommended by the Office for National Statistics)

Disability:



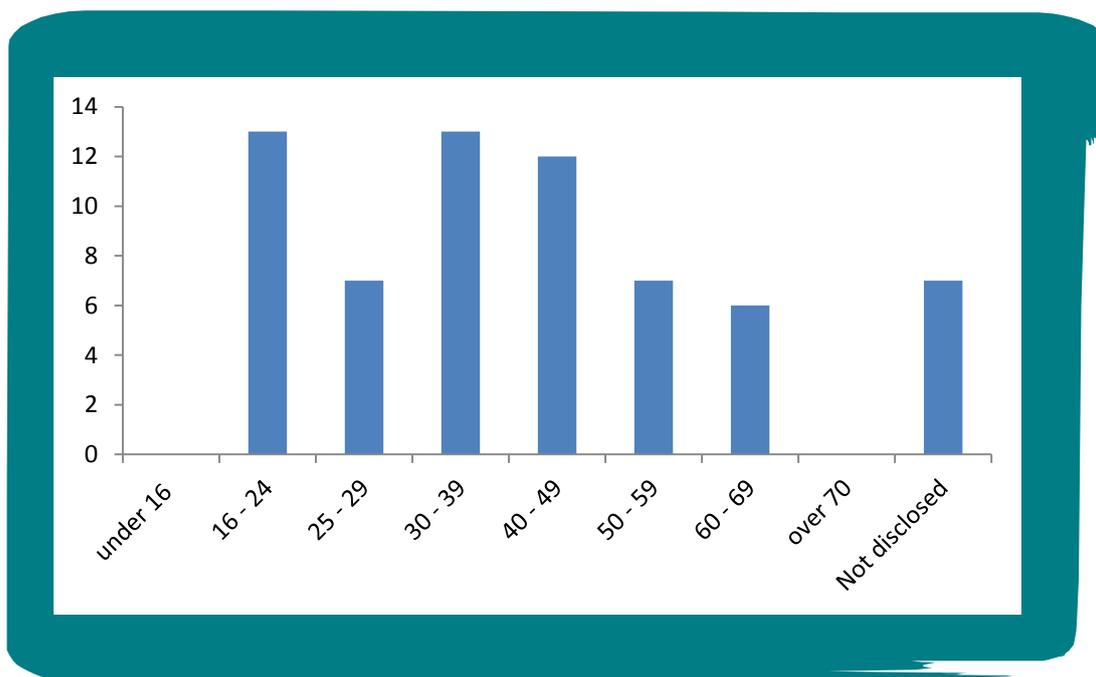
3% of customer's stated that they had a disability and 97% chose not to disclose any additional needs or request any additional assistance with making their complaint.

Gender:



There were 42 complaints from females and 23 from males during 2018-19.

Age Groups:



The chart above shows that complaints were received from a range of age groups during 2018-19. We recognise that we didn't receive any complaints from children and young people under the age of 16. We continue to work with our advocacy service, Participation Youth Worker and Independent Reviewing Officers to ensure that children and young people's feedback is received and acted on.

7. Positive Feedback

We received 47 compliments during 2018-19. Here are some examples of those compliments:

From a family being supported by our Children and Families Practice (CFP): “Aaron has been working with my family over the last 20 weeks and has been a great support. He has provided lots of useful information and has always been very encouraging.

He has always been very positive in regards to things I’ve done or trying to do in the home. At times I may feel like I was failing but he was there to say I’m doing fine, trying a variety of methods and keeping us on track.”

From a family working with MASH: “Sarah was fantastic and very supportive and we are proud of the Children & Families assessment completed.

From a mother being supported by our Children’s Social Work Team: “I just want to say a massive thank you for the help and support you have given me and we had a rocky start to begin with but we have both worked together so I can better myself as a person and as a parent we also came to an agreement for emailing as we thought it would be better as sometimes I felt like I couldn’t talk on phone to you because of my anxiety and it’s worked really well, you always did what you said you were going to do and you have been a great help and I won’t ever forget what you have done for me and my family. Thank you Abbie.”

From a young person who is supported by our Corporate Parenting Team: “Deonne is definitely the best social worker I have had. I know I can always talk to her and rely on her. She is always there when I need support, she is also really good at understanding me and taking time out to make sure I feel happy and if there is anything she could help with she would, even when she is really busy. I really don’t know what I would have done without Deonne this year she is amazing and has been the biggest support I have had. We are all so lucky to have her as a social worker.”

From a Judge after a court hearing: “I wanted to thank Jane for her work in this case, she has a wonderful relationship with the family. She has provided excellent reports, sound advice, and I would like to commend her for being an example of a very good social worker.”

From a Foster Carer and the children in her care: “We wanted to tell you that we really enjoyed the fostering fun day. We had a fantastic time and enjoyed all the activities that had been organised, especially the fire engine and bouncy castle. We really appreciated the day.”

Compliments are an essential part of the feedback that we receive in helping us to improve our service as they enable us to recognise and build on our strengths.

8. What we have learnt from your feedback

The feedback that we have received has made a difference to the service by enabling us to introduce a range of service improvements including:

You said:

That the role of independent visitor ended abruptly for you.

We did:

Agree that any decision to end the work of an independent visitor in the future will be made in conjunction with the independent visitor and the young person and will be done in a timely manner in order that they can have a positive ending to the work.

You said:

There was a lack of communication to keep me informed about my children's progress, despite my social worker promising me he would do this.

We did:

Discuss this with your social worker who apologised and looked at ways to work with you that helped you to feel involved in your children's lives within the contact agreement agreed in Court.

You said:

A social worker came to my home for a child and family assessment for my unborn baby I am complaining as I feel some of what she wrote on the assessment is wrong.

We did:

Apologise for any upset this involvement has caused you and your family and ensured all your comments were added to the Children's Social Care records so that any errors of fact are clearly recorded and there is no further misunderstanding.

You said:

You were not informed of the urgency to arrange a final farewell contact with your child before they were placed for adoption.

We did:

Where there is a plan for adoption we now ensure that all parents are aware of the timescale in which they can have a final farewell contact with their child if this is something they wish to have.

9. Monitoring for 2019-20

Action	Owner	Deadline for completion
Review of quarterly customer feedback and development of quarterly action plan.	Corporate Customer Feedback Manager	Quarter 1 - 15 July 2019 Quarter 2 - 21 October 2019 Quarter 3 - 20 January 2020 Quarter 4 - 20 April 2020

For more information please visit our website

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/complaints

