

# Children's Rights Service

**Children's Service  
Statutory Complaints Report 2014 - 2015**

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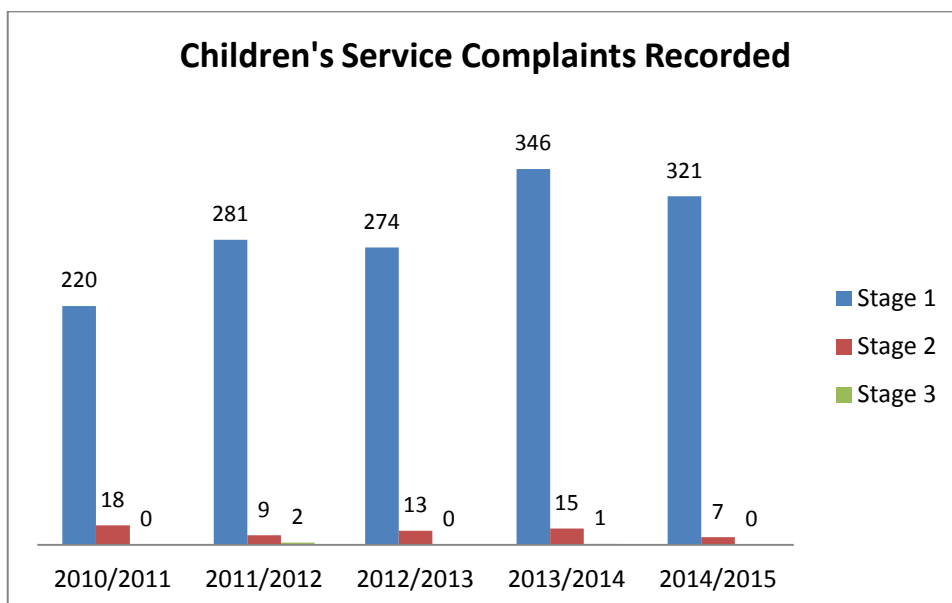
## 1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 All local authorities with Children's Social Care responsibilities are required to maintain and operate a Children's Act complaints process in line with statutory guidance. The management of this process should sit outside operational Children's Service's delivery and the responsible "complaints manager" should not report into Children's Service line management. The Authority must produce a statutory annual complaints report detailing complaints performance and activity.
- 1.2 In Surrey, the Children's Act Complaints Process is delivered by the Rights and Participation Service. This service sits at arm's length from operational teams in the Resources Division of the Children, Schools and Families Directorate.
- 1.3 The Children's Act Complaints Procedure considers complaints from and on behalf of children and young people, and their carers who are receiving a service under the Children's Act. Complaints can for example be made about the type or quality of service, the provision or lack of provision, and/or about staff interventions with users. Young people making or thinking of making a complaint are entitled to an advocate. The Rights and Participation Service does, on occasion, receive complaints that are in reality concerns of a safeguarding nature and or not about Children's Act provision. Such concerns are referred to operational teams for action as appropriate and in accordance with the Safeguarding Board Procedures. These concerns are not considered under the Statutory Complaints procedure.
- 1.4 The procedure operates a three stage process. Stage one is local resolution, where the matter is responded to by the team working with the family or as close to the point of delivery as possible. These complaints may be made direct to the operational team via the contact centre or complaints team or Councillor or any other officer of the council. The statutory guidance expects that most complaints will be responded to within 10 working days at stage one or 20 working days for more complex cases. Stage one complaints are responded to by operational managers. At stage two the process is managed by the Rights and Participation Service who can appoint an independent investigator and independent person to investigate the complaint and produce a report of their recommended findings. This stage can take between 1 to 6 months to complete. The third stage is a review panel hearing. The Panel, which is made up of independent people will hear representations from the complainant and the service. The Panel will then review the complaint and having reached recommended findings in relation to the complaint, will refer their findings to the Deputy Director Children's Services. The Deputy Director will then consider the Panel's recommendations and respond formally to the complainant on behalf of the Local Authority. Following stage three, if the complainant remains unhappy they can refer the complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) for their consideration. The LGO may investigate the complaint and can issue a public report of their findings.
- 1.5 Complainants are advised that they have the right to request their complaint is progressed through the procedure at the end of each stage should they remain dissatisfied.
- 1.6 Children's Service occasionally respond to informal inquiries received from County Councillors and Members of Parliament where it is deemed that a response via the complaint process would not be appropriate. During 2014-15, 20 enquiries were received from Members of Parliament (MP) and County Councillors (Cllr); enquiries were recorded on the Customer Feedback Database. This is the database also used for recording complaints. It is interesting to note that of the 20 MP/Cllr enquiries, 10 were also known to the Rights and Participation Service as complainants whose complaints were being or had been addressed through the complaints process. Recording these types of enquiries on the database ensures that we are systematic in approach with a view to ensure that work is not duplicated and that responses are managed through the correct process.

## 2 SCC CHILDREN'S SERVICES' COMPLAINTS ANALYSIS 2014 – 2015

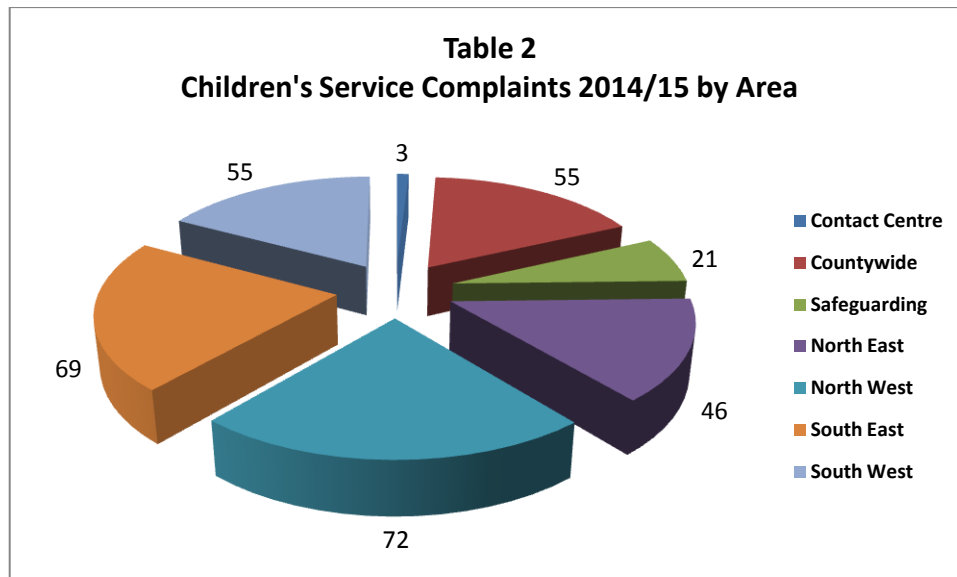
### 2.1 VOLUME OF COMPLAINTS RECORDED

#### 2.1.1 Table 1: Children's Service Complaints recorded 2014 -2015



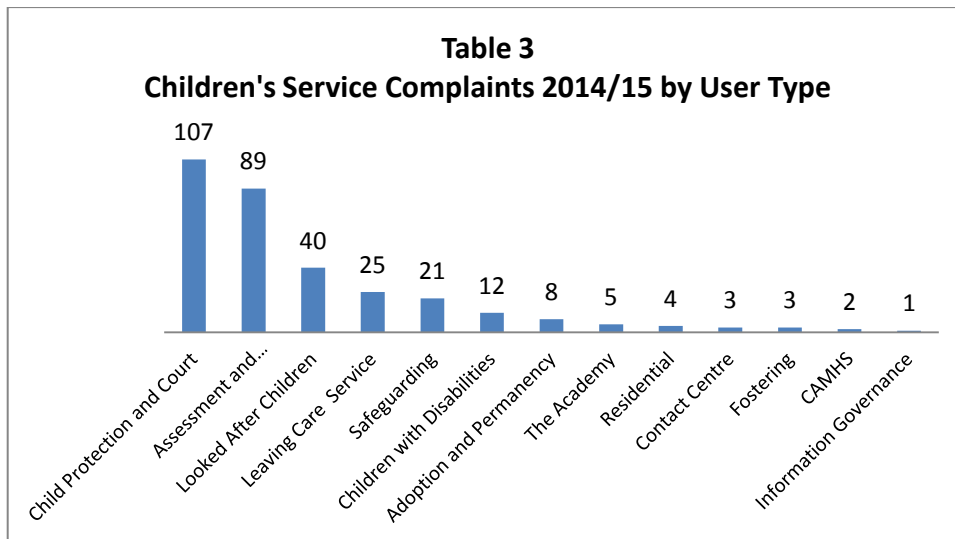
2.1.2 As illustrated in Table 1, the total number of complaints recorded between April 2014 and March 2015 for Surrey Children's Service has decreased by 25 when compared to the previous 12 months. As demonstrated by the table, the general trend is an increase in the numbers of complaints recorded, therefore this slight decrease may be indicative of improved resolution at an informal stage of the process given that as discussed later in this report, escalation through the process remains low and has not increased when compared to the previous 12 months. It may also reflect improved recognition by operational teams of what complaints qualify to be responded to via the process and concerns that can be responded to via alternate routes, such as for example private legal proceedings. This aspect is considered in more detail later in this report. The Rights and Participation Service will continue to monitor recording levels and within the current fiscal year seek to determine if there are any specific causes or trends that can clarify the lower recording levels.

2.1.3 Table 2 details Children's Service complaints by service area over the last year. These relate to complaints *about* these areas, rather than complaints received *by* these areas. The chart demonstrates that the majority of complaints are in the main directed at the operational social care teams, which is to be expected as it is these teams which interact the most regularly and closely with the families with whom the service intervenes. The chart indicates that as in the previous 12 months, the majority of complaints were recorded as being about the North West Area. Analysis of the recording data does not highlight any specific trend. This could suggest that recording activity in the remaining areas may not be as proactive. The Complaints Manager regularly meets with Team Managers and Assistant Team Managers in all areas and during those meetings will consider complaint recording and any barriers to this.

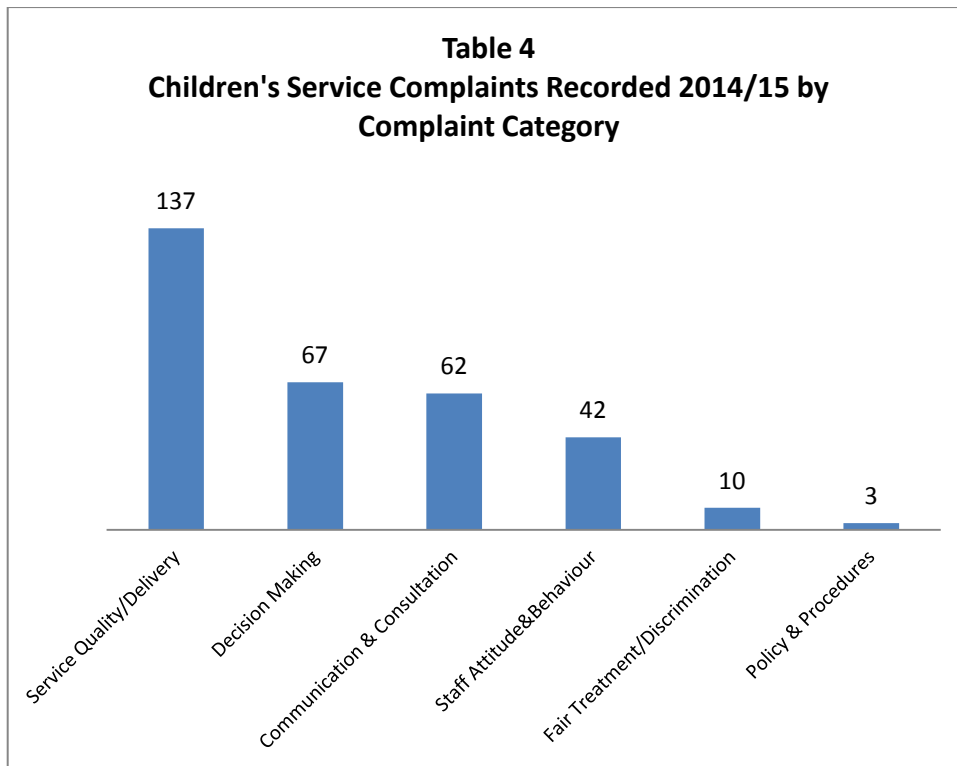


2.1.4 Table 3 details number of complaints received by service area. The data demonstrates that the majority of complaints received are from those receiving services from Child Protection and Court Proceedings Teams (CP &P) (107), this is consistent with recording levels in the previous 12 months. As with previous years, the data demonstrates that these include complaints about the content of reports requested by the Court in private proceedings. For example, parents may use a Child and Family Assessment as part of their evidence in Private Proceedings and the other party may then complain about the content of said assessment as in their view the assessment 'is biased against them'. It should be noted that these assessments are not written for the Court and the decision to share content rests with the family members and not Surrey Children's Service (SCS). The expectation is that the content would therefore be challenged in Court and not via the complaint process. It is of note that when challenged on this point, parents are increasingly indicating that they are self representing in Private Legal Proceedings. It is reasonable to suggest that given the current economic climate parents involved in Private Legal Proceedings will continue to make complaints about matters that are more appropriately addressed within the legal system. The records held indicate that parents do seek to use the complaint process as a way of collecting information that they perceive will then support their private legal case. Similarly the Court may direct SCS to undertake enquiries under specific sections of the Children's Act. The purpose of the enquiry and report is to assist the Court in making directions where there has been for example, a Residence or Contact Order application by a parent. The expectation in this case is also that the concerns will be discussed as part of the ongoing legal proceedings and not addressed via the complaint process.

2.1.5 The table also shows that levels recorded by the CP&P Teams, the Assessment and Intervention Teams (89) and finally the Looked after Children Teams (40) account for 73% of all complaints received in relation to Children's Service in Surrey. This is not unexpected given that it is in the main these teams that are involved following referrals for intervention received from either partner agencies such as Health or the Police or concerns raised by families themselves.

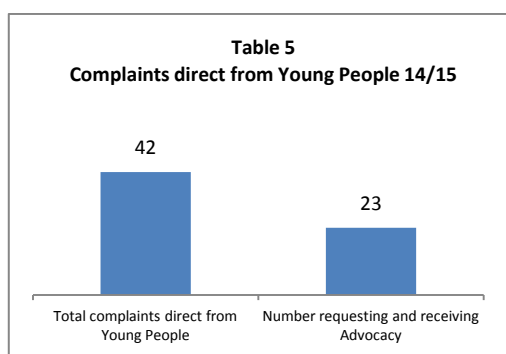


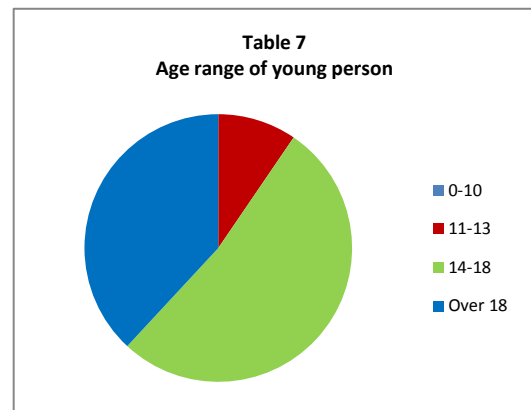
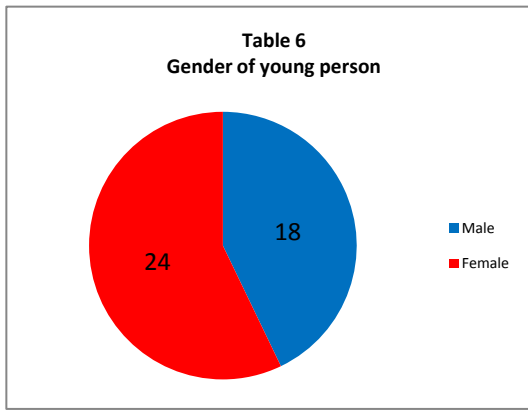
- 2.1.6 Table 4 details the number of complaints received by category (type of complaint). The chart demonstrates that the majority of complaints are in regard to 'Quality of Service' provided. As indicated earlier in this report, the majority of complaints recorded are in relation to service provision by the Referral Assessment and Intervention Service and the Child Protection and Court Proceedings Teams. It is therefore not unexpected that in the main complaints about Quality of Service relate to customers perceptions of the service and what it may be able to offer. This can also include misunderstandings by families about the role of Surrey Children's Services in private legal proceedings. The majority of these complaints are resolved by providing more robust or detailed explanations around the decisions and actions taken by the Service. This in turn emphasises the need to ensure that timely and full explanations are provided when decisions and actions are taken.
- 2.1.7 'Communication and Consultation' is the next most common category of complaint. An example will relate to families' expectations around what constitutes regular or frequent communication from the allocated social worker. This highlights the need to ensure that families expectations around frequency and detail of communication from social care professionals is carefully managed. As with complaints about 'Quality of Service', the majority of complaints about communication continue to be resolved by explanation.
- 2.1.8 The third most common complaint category is 'Decision Making'. Complaints in this category relate to the outcome of assessments or reports where parents/young people disagree with the social workers' professional opinion as expressed within the content of the assessment or report. For example, where there is disagreement with the outcomes arising from an assessment or report, this disagreement is expressed as a complaint suggesting that the outcome is flawed. During 2014-15 9 independent and 9 management reviews of assessments and reports were undertaken at the second stage of the process. The reviews did demonstrate that reports and assessments were not always as detailed or robust as they could have been. However, reviews found the outcomes were not affected by this and remained unchanged.
- 2.1.9 The top three categories of complaints this year indicate the need for improved communication with families. As a result the Complaints Manager will be working with Area Managers in the coming year to seek out specific actions to address gaps in effective communication. It is especially important to ensure that expectations are managed as far as reasonably possible, given that interactions are with families who may be in crisis.



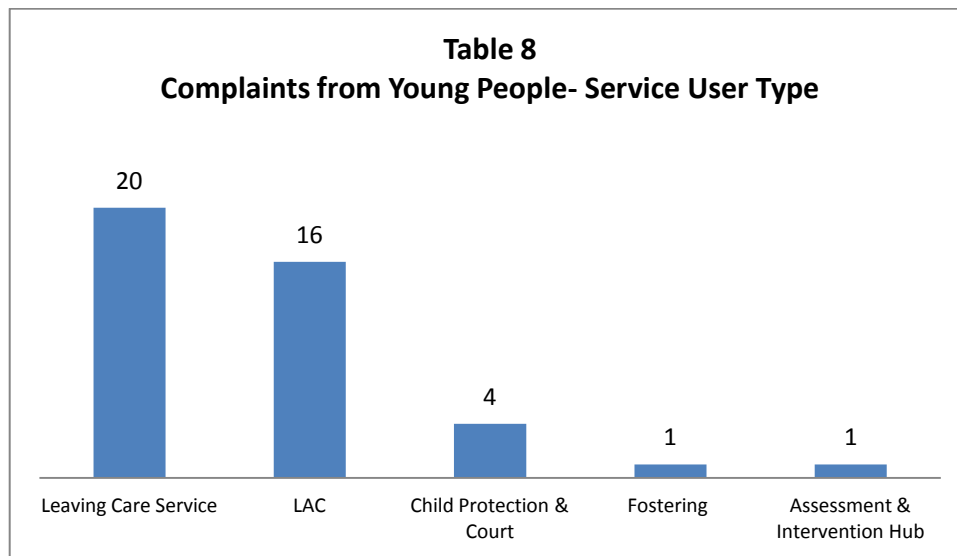
2.1.10 In 2014-2015 a total of 42 formal complaints were received directly from children and young people. This is a decrease of 4 when compared to those recorded in the previous 12 months. However for both years complaints recorded as being direct from Children and Young People represent 13% of all complaints received. In addition to formal complaints, there continues to be an increase in number of contacts from young people seeking support to achieve informal resolution of problems and concerns. Tables 6 & 7 below show that 52% of young people making a formal complaint were aged between 14 and 18 and over and that complaints recorded as being from females were higher than those recorded from males. What is of particular significance is the number of complaints recorded as being from unaccompanied asylum seeking (UAS) young people under the age of 18; in 2014-15 12 complaints were recorded as being from UAS young people. This is a significant increase when compared to the 6 recorded in the previous 12 months. We will continue to monitor recording levels during the current fiscal year.

2.1.11 Table 5 also shows that of the 42 formal complaints recorded, 23 of the young people requested and received advocacy support. Of the 23 who received advocacy support, 3 were supported by an 'independent advocate' while the others elected to either receive support from Rights and Participation Service staff (17) or from an advocate of their choosing (3), for example a family member or friend or other professional such as a teacher.





2.1.12 Table 8 shows the breakdown of complaints recorded (direct from young people) by service type. The majority of these (86%) were received from either looked after young people or those leaving care. Care Leavers's main concerns remain around financial support and support to find secure accommodation. For looked after children, concerns remain around contact with family and concerns relating to placements. The one complaint recorded as being about Fostering Services related to an alleged breach of a young person's confidentiality by the carer. As indicated earlier in this report, this year has seen a particular rise in complaints and contacts from UAS young people. Complaint topics from these young people include concerns about communication including appropriate use of translators or translation services, as well as placements.

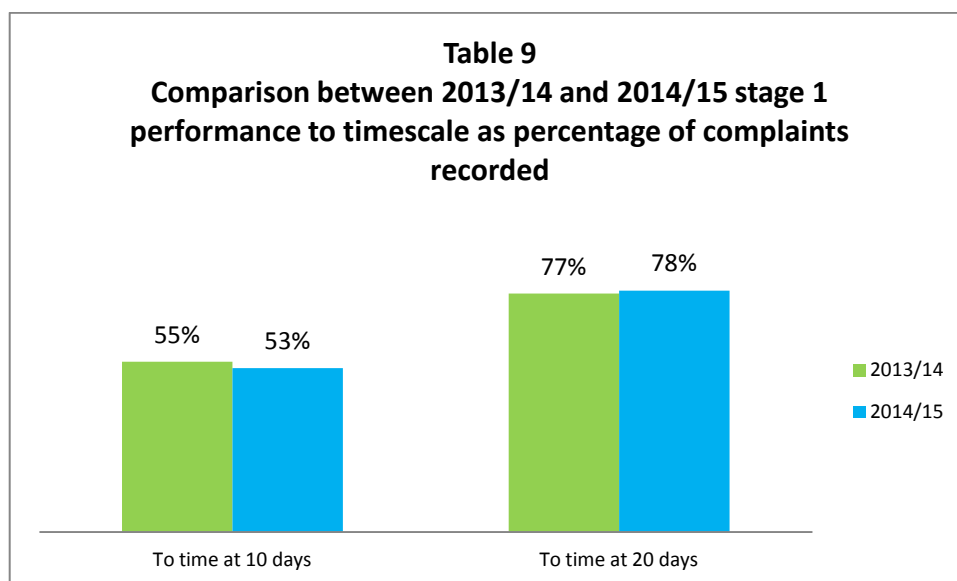


2.1.13 Once again a majority of complainants - 217 equating to 68% identified themselves as White British. This is not unexpected given the demography of the County's population. This figure does not differ on a proportional basis when compared to the previous 12 months where 68% of complainants also identified themselves as White British. Other ethnic identifications included Asian and Black Caribbean. Generally, the breakdown is reflective of the local area and is therefore a good indication of the accessibility of the procedure.



## 2.2 PERFORMANCE AGAINST TIMESCALES: HOW RESPONSIVE HAVE WE BEEN?

### 2.2.1 Table 9: Children's Service Performance at stage 1

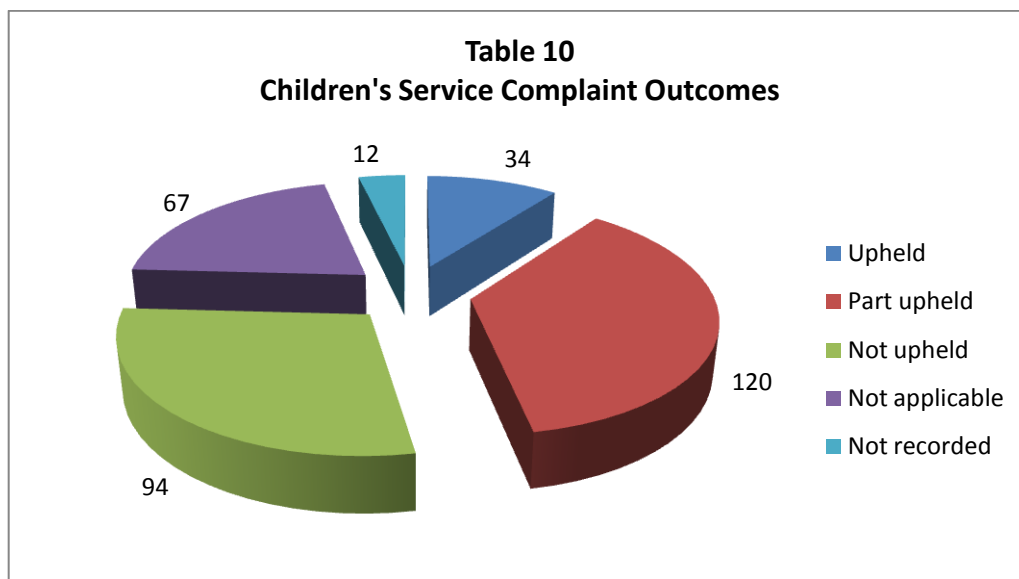


2.2.2 Table 9 shows the detail of time taken to respond to complaints at Stage1, (local resolution) providing a comparison between the current reporting year and the previous one. The table shows performance for responses at both the 10 and 20 day statutory timescales. The table demonstrates that 53% of complaint responses met the statutory timescales of 10 working days and that there was 78% compliance at 20 days. These figures decrease slightly when considering specifically complaints direct from young people where 43% were responded to within the 10 day timescale and 69% within the 20 day timescale. However, it should also be noted that the average time taken to respond to a complaint at the first stage of the process is 14 days which is well within the 20 day timescale. There will, in some circumstances, be cases which cannot be responded to within the 10-day timescale. Whilst performance against timescales is important, it is promising to note that the percentage of complaints progressing to full independent investigation at the second stage of the process has decreased to 2% compared to 4% of complaints received in the previous 12 months. This reflects an increase in the use of alternative resolution such as mediation and case reviews at the second stage of the process. This has a positive financial impact for the Service due to the reduction in commissioning services from external consultants.

2.2.3 We have continued to spend a significant amount of time interrogating the data and chasing responses. We routinely reminded operational teams of their responsibilities to log complaints and update records. The Customer Feedback Database is used for recording complaints. Changes made to the Database have enabled us to manage complaints more effectively as the Database now automatically generates reminders to the person allocated to the complaint at stage one. It is envisaged that this will in turn improve performance against response timescales at the first stage of the process. Other changes to the Database include changes in the recording of generic as well as specific learning arising from complaints. These changes will support the analysis of the 'learning actions' data to inform service delivery within Surrey Children's Services. We will be working with Performance Teams within Surrey Children's Services in regard to the appropriate sharing and monitoring of learning identified from complaints.

## 2.3 COMPLAINTS OUTCOMES & RESOLUTION

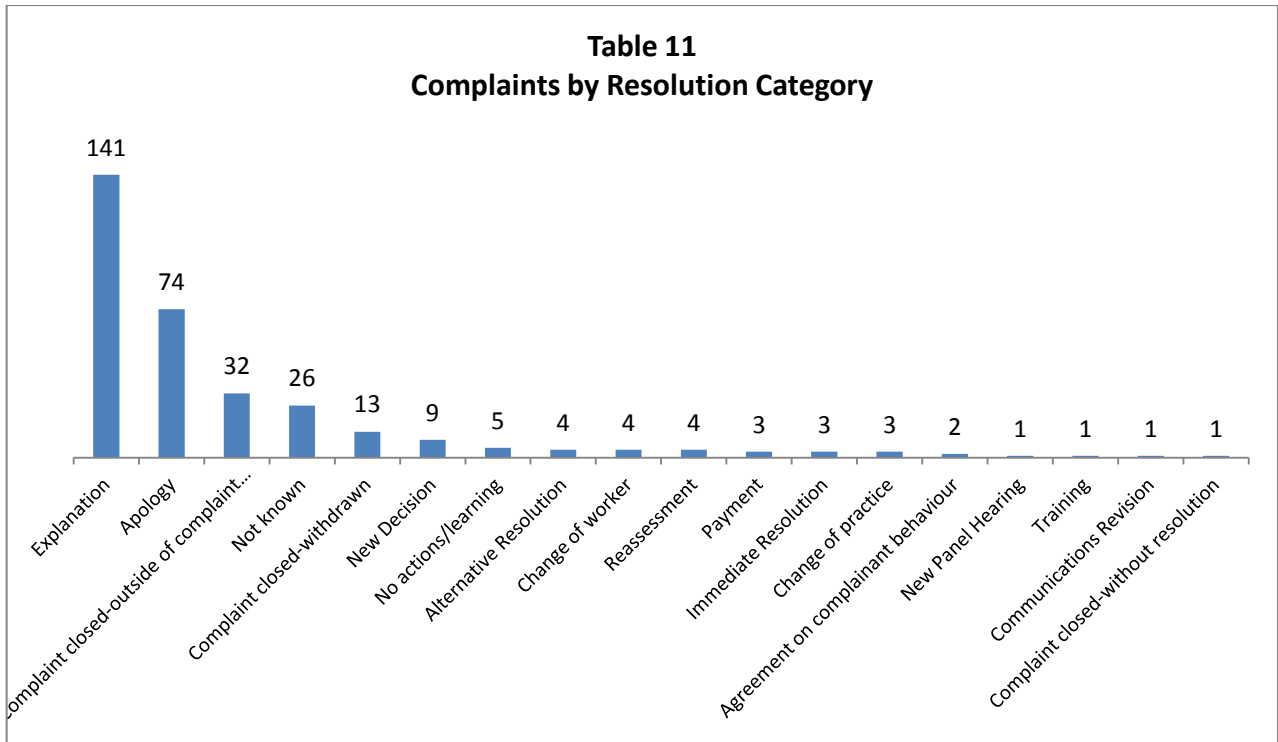
2.3.1 Table 10: Children's Service complaints recorded by outcome.



2.3.2 Table 10 shows that 94 complaints responded to at Stage one of the process were 'not upheld' (no fault found), another 120 were 'part upheld' (some fault found) and a further 34 of complaints were recorded as fully 'upheld' (fault found). The records for the remaining 12 complaints are incomplete and do not record that a response has been sent and therefore the outcome remains unknown. The Complaints Manager will continue to work with operational manager and seek to identify and address any barriers to maintaining accurate complaints records.

2.3.3 During the year, complaints about matters that could not be considered via the complaints process, for example those where there are ongoing private legal proceedings, account for 65 of the complaints recorded. In all these cases the complainants have been advised of alternative routes that may be available to them or to seek independent legal advice. Regular meetings between the Complaints Manager and Children's Service operational managers continue and include discussion on learning or actions arising from complaints to inform service delivery

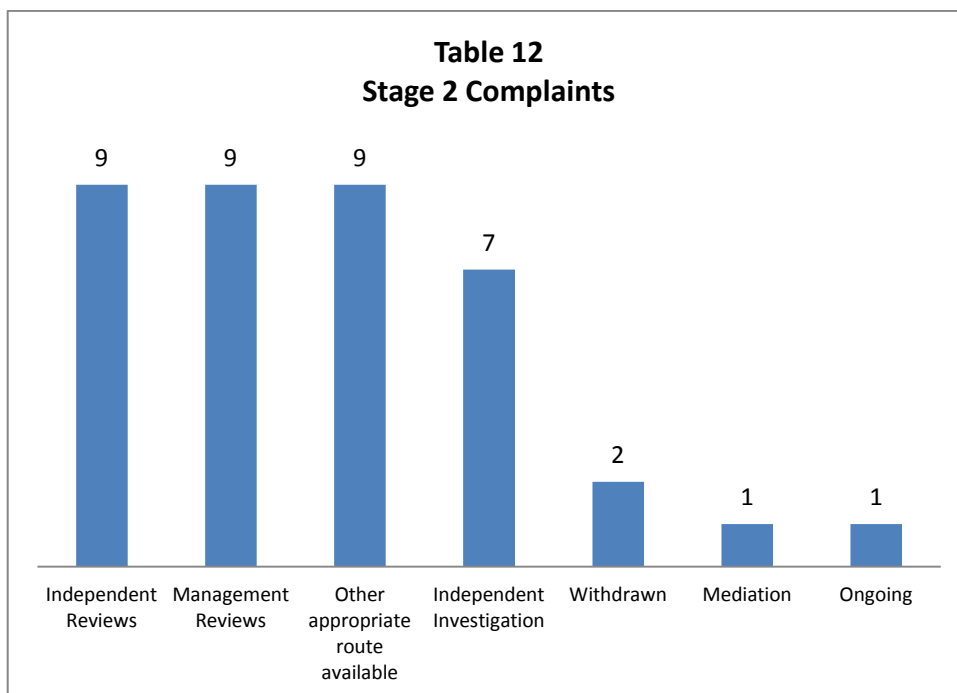
2.3.4 Table 11 details complaints recorded by resolution category



2.3.5 Analysis of the data shows that that we need to improve the quality of communication between Children’s Servies and families. This is supported not just by the fact that the majority of complaints are resolved by explanation but also by the fact that we routinely receive requests from both the Service and service users asking for support in managing communication and resolving issues. As a Service, we have become much more involved in leading on learning from complaints and will continue to provide management information on this as outlined above at 2.3.2

## 2.4 ESCALATION OF COMPLAINTS

2.4.1 Table 12: Complaints escalated to stage two (Corporate and Statutory processes)



2.4.2 During 2014-15, a total of 38 requests were received for complaints to be escalated to the second stage of the process. Of these 38, 26 have been responded to at the second stage of the process with one independent investigation ongoing. Of these 26, 7 complaints (2% of all the complaints recorded) progressed to full investigation under the statutory process, one of these was a complaint that came direct from a young unaccompanied asylum seeker. 9 complaints have been responded to via External Independent Reviews, 9 via Internal Management Reviews and one via Independent Mediation. The changed approach at the second stage of the process is not only reflected in a decrease of Independent Investigations but also in a decrease of complaints escalating beyond stage 2, with no complaints recorded in the period being considered at the third stage of the process.

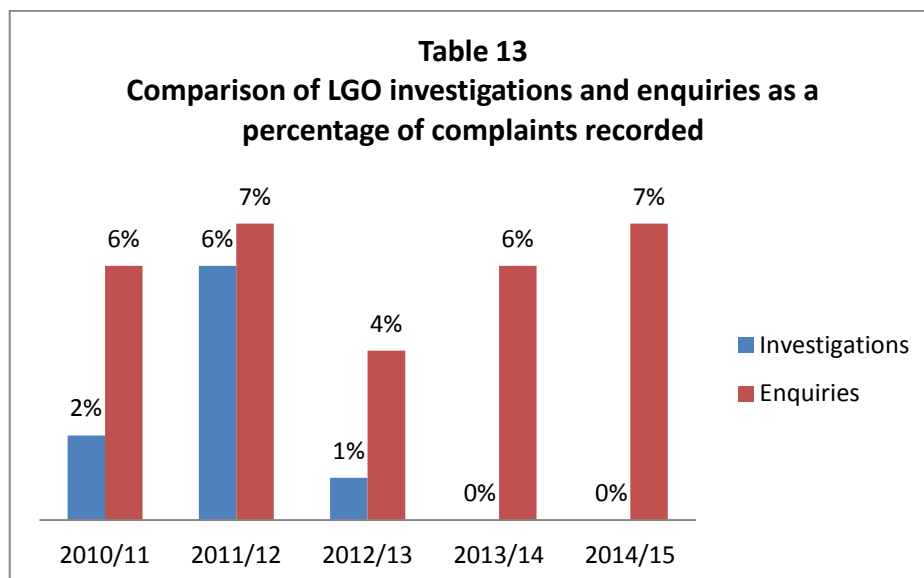
Of the remaining 12 escalation requests:

- 9 were declined as an alternative more appropriate route was available to the complainant e.g. seeking independent legal advice
- 2 were withdrawn
- 1 Independent investigation is ongoing

2.4.3 As indicated above none of the complaints recorded during the 2014-2015 year progressed to the third stage of the process. A single complaint that was responded to at the third stage of the process during this reporting period was recorded during the previous fiscal year.

## 2.5 LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN ENQUIRIES

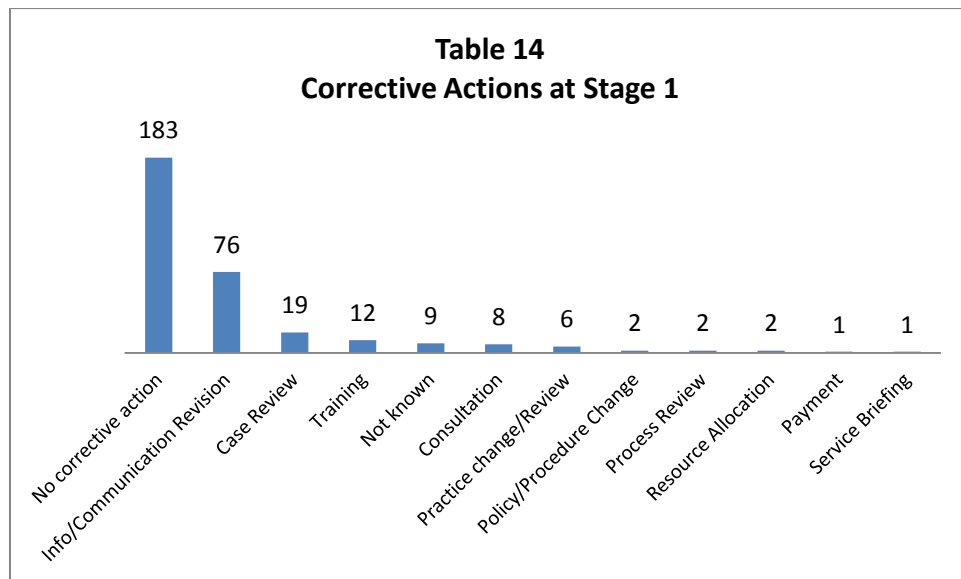
2.5.1 Table 13 shows the total LGO enquiries and investigations received compared to the previous year. It must be noted that not all enquiries from the LGO progress to full investigation. In the main this is because following initial enquiries we are able to demonstrate that the Council has taken reasonable steps to resolve the complaint. On some occasions we have been able to agree a way forward with the LGO and with agreement from the complainant this has led to resolving the complaint satisfactorily for all parties without the need for a formal investigation. Although the proportion of enquiries from the LGO increased during the 2014-15 fiscal year, for the second year running, none of these resulted in formal investigations. This follows the trend over the past five years which, as demonstrated in Table 13 below, is that the proportion of enquiries from the LGO has remained relatively stable whilst formal investigations have decreased.



2.5.2 The LGO issued no public reports in relation to Children's Service during this period. This is a positive result and shows that not only do we have a low rate of escalation to the LGO but that under external scrutiny the majority of complaints have been appropriately dealt with by the local authority.

## 2.6 LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

### 2.6.1 Table 14: Corrective actions identified at stage 1



- 2.6.2 Table 14 shows that 132 complaints resulted in corrective actions being identified. This is proportionately similar to the 128 identified in the previous 12 months. 183 complaints were explicitly recorded as not leading to any corrective action. This is significantly less than in the previous reporting year. This reflects an improved understanding from operational managers that there is potentially an element of learning from all complaints whether upheld or not. Robust responses at stage 1 of the process that clearly set out and uphold acknowledged errors and omissions contribute significantly. For example, a robust response may provide the opportunity for agreement to an acceptable remedy as opposed to a full investigation or review at the second stage of the process thus avoiding further delay in resolution for the complainants and costs to both parties.
- 2.6.3 None of the stage 1 responses that were dealt with as reviews by peer managers during the year escalated to the second stage of the process. These peer manager reviews were completed to establish whether or not, in the light of changed or new information received from the complainant, the outcome of court reports or statutory assessments would have resulted in a different or changed decision. To date, whilst peer manager reviews have resulted in some corrective action, no changes in outcome have been identified. The corrective actions identified include clarity around information received from third parties and what is actually the professional opinion of the social worker completing the assessment.
- 2.6.4 At the close of the second stage of the process or enquiries received from the LGO enquiries the Rights and Participation Service develops and circulates corrective action plans (CAPs) to managers who are responsible for carrying out the actions and sharing these within their service area.
- 2.6.5 The corrective action plans drawn up and circulated across Children's Service list, between them, a total of 93 separate actions. These actions were identified by the Service and need to be completed in order to improve delivery and put matters right. Key learning themes are discussed in the sections below.
- 2.6.6 96% of the corrective actions identified this year were reported as completed by the Service. This is an improvement on last year's completion rate of 95%. The status of the remaining 4% is unknown at the time of reporting. Changes in the recording of identified actions or learning arising from complaints have been made for the 2015-16 fiscal year. These changes include recording learning within the Customer Feedback Database and the introduction of automatic reminders to record and complete learning identified at each stage of the complaint process.

2.6.7 At stages 2 and beyond, the top 2 types of corrective actions taken as a result of escalated complaints are:

- Service Briefing (18 complaints)
- Information Revision (15 complaints)

2.6.8 The key learning themes identified at Stages 2 and beyond relate to:

- 1- Difficulties in managing expectations for families where more than one team is involved. For example cases with children who have educational as well as behavioural needs. Learning includes closer communication between operational teams as well as making sure that families understand the different roles for each area or service.
- 2- Clear communication with families to ensure clarity in understanding the key messages relative to assessment, interventions and support available
- 3- Social care professionals reminded of the importance to maintain confidentiality and to explain this to third parties involved with a family (such as grandparents) as appropriate especially when taking account of the wishes and feelings expressed by young people

2.6.9 Specific examples of learning from complaints identified by operational and Rights and Participation staff are listed below:

1. Review of SCC guidance regarding continuing fostering placements where the fostering team has concerns about potential risk to either the looked after child or other children present in the carers home
2. Assessments to clearly distinguish between social care professional opinion and comments received from third parties
3. Review the process for recording that the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer, who manages allegations about individuals who work with children and young people, has been explained to and understood by alleged perpetrator.

## **2.7 SUMMARY: WHAT HAVE WE DONE WELL AND WHERE CAN WE IMPROVE?**

2.7.1 What we are doing well?

- Improved identification and recording of learning and actions arising from complaints at all stages of the process
- Average response times for initial stage of the process remain within timescale
- Maintained low levels of complaints escalating through the process
- Maintained low levels of complaints investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman

2.7.2 What do we need to improve?

- Effective communication with families to ensure clarity around reasons for interventions
- Assessments to clearly distinguish between comments or information received from third parties and the professional opinion of social care Accessibility of the complaint process for children and young people especially unaccompanied asylum seeking young people given that numbers of these continue to increase

We will continue to work closely with operational teams in regard to the 3 points identified above. This will include the Complaints Manager having regular discussions with Team and Area Managers that are case by case specific as well as countywide.

### **3. ADVOCACY SUPPORT**

- 3.1 Advocacy Services continue to be successfully delivered by the Rights and Participation Service since 2010. The service provides the statutory complaint related advocacy support for children and young people in line with the requirements of 'Get it Sorted'. In order to do so, the Service manages a pool of self-employed independent advocates and commissions independent advocacy support when requested by a child or young person. In other cases, the advocacy service provides advocacy support and advice to children and young people assisting them to resolve their complaints and concerns or supporting them to advocate for themselves.
- 3.2 Surrey complaints information, both online and paper based, is systematically circulated and promoted within Children's Services. Advocacy provision continues to be promoted with a particular focus on reaching Looked After Children or Care Leavers and the staff that work with them.
- 3.3 Over the past year, the advocacy service has maintained its role as the 'go to' children's rights and advocacy advice and helpline for Surrey young people and staff. This is evidenced by the steady flow of contacts from young people seeking support from us to achieve informal resolution of problems and concerns but also in number of contacts from staff seeking advice and guidance;. The advocacy advice helpline provides more flexible support options based on discussions and assessment with those making contact. In line with its ambition, the advocacy helpline supports young people to take a lead on their complaints : each interaction promoting choice and encouraging young people to make informed decisions about how they wish their complaint or enquiry to be dealt with, and to experiment with problem solving strategies.
- 3.4 Over the past year the advocacy service has also worked with operational staff to nurture and develop their natural advocacy role. This has included an 'Advocacy Starts with You' poster campaign, advocacy workshops delivered to targeted staff and coaching conversations between the advocacy service manager and members of staff. Supporting staff to enhance their advocacy role will continue to be a priority for next year.
- 3.5 Finally, the advocacy service continues to collaborate with the social enterprise Sixteen25 in the ongoing development and internal promotion of the self-advocay app MOMO (Mind Of My Own). This app is available for free download on smart phones or computers by children and young people in Surrey to use in communicating concerns to services. In the past year the app has been updated to be used by the Leaving Care Service Personal Advisors and young people to help with Pathway Planning.

### **4 MONITORING THE PROCESS**

- 4.1 The Rights and Participation Service support Children's Service to manage and learn from complaints. The key services offered are: complaints advice and support, quality assuring of responses, mediation, complaint case debrief sessions, production of performance reports, liaising with Local Government Ombudsman, Complaints Visiting Workshops, 1-2-1 complaints handling coaching for operational managers, and development and monitoring of corrective action plans (CAPs).
  - 4.1.1 We offer Stage 2 complaints debriefing sessions to staff involved in complex cases. This provides the opportunity to discuss the process of the case, learning outcomes and how the experience was for staff involved. One formal debriefing session took place this reporting year in a case where criminal proceedings were initiated during the independent investigation at the second stage of the process. The outcome of the criminal case is as yet unknown. Formal

publication of the investigation report was withheld following a request from the Police and is pending the outcome of the criminal case.

- 4.1.2 As well as holding informal debriefing discussions with operational managers we have provided support to individual staff members involved in such cases as well as support in the form of facilitation of meetings with complainants. During the current year, workshops to assist managers in compiling responses at the first stage of the process are being developed. This is a direct response to requests from operational managers seeking to resolve complaints at an early stage..
- 4.1.3 We continue to draw up corrective action plans following the outcome of complaints at stages 2 and 3 of the process. Plans are agreed and signed off by the senior operational manager who is responsible for taking actions forward. As already mentioned earlier in the report, discussions continue with Performance Management to agree on a methodology for sharing learning and best practice across Children's Services. It is anticipated that the changes to the Customer Feedback Database to facilitate the recording of learning will serve to inform data analysis in 2015-16.
- 4.1.4 We produce monthly reports for the Directorate Leadership Team in line with the Rights and Participation Service Delivery Plan. The Service also produces reports and summaries for inclusion in the Children's Service Report Card.
- 4.2 During 2015-2016 the Rights and Participation Service will focus on:
- *Where appropriate, increase the use of methods alternative to independent investigation to address complaints at the second stage of the process.*
  - *Working with operational managers to support the identification and dissemination of learning at the initial stage of the process*
  - *Working closely with staff to increase the number of children and young people enabled to speak up for themselves whether in the context of formal complaints or informal resolution of problems.*

## **5 FINAL COMMENTS**

- 5.1 Overall this has been another positive year for complaints management across the services. Stronger working relationships continue to be developed between operational services and the Rights and Participation Service resulting in effective resolution of complaints at the earliest stage. Examples of this include:
- Consultation with operational teams where there are indications that an alternate and more appropriate route, may be available to the complainant
  - Consultation with operational teams where complainants are displaying 'persistent and unreasonable behaviour' and supporting appropriate decisions regarding restricting access to the complaint process accordingly
  - Continuing discussions with operational where complaints relate to services across the Directorate; to promote a single response as appropriate
  - Continued consultation with the Chief Executive's office to ensure effective response to enquiries from MP's and County Councillors
- 5.2 We will continue to work with operational services on improving recording and updating complaints information as well as focusing on learning as a continued priority in the coming year.



5.3 As identified earlier in this report, we have noted improvements in the quality of responses at Stage1 of the process which have resulted in:

- Early resolution and identification of learning to inform service delivery
- Reduced numbers of complaints escalating through the complaint process

This follows the continuing use of individual coaching for operational managers. The coaching includes discussions in meetings and over the telephone, both generic and case specific depending on individual cases and circumstances. During 2014/15 a total of 24 formal coaching sessions were delivered either to individuals or groups of managers. Additionally informal case by case discussions have been held between operational managers and the Complaints Manager generally around written response content and structure. These activities continue to nurture closer working relationships between us and operational managers. This in turn ensures a collaborative approach privileging complaint resolution and promoting increased ownership of that resolution by Children's Service staff.

Jessica Brooke/Mona Saad/Kate Sandow  
**Children's Rights Managers**

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