

REPORT TO: Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 1st November 2010

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Children and Young People Directorate

SUBJECT: Annual Report - Comments, Complaints and Compliments relating to Child Care Services 1st April 2009-31st March 2010.

WARDS: All

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To meet statutory requirement to publish an Annual Report.
- 1.2 To report and provide an analysis on complaints processed under the Children's Act 1989, Representation's Procedure.

2. RECOMMENDATION: That

- 2.1 The report is noted as the mechanism by which the Local Authority is kept informed about the operation of its complaints procedure.
- 2.2 The Annual Report where applicable will evidence how feedback from service users has been used to improve service delivery.

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The aim of The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure is for children and young people have their concerns resolved swiftly and wherever possible by the people who provide the service locally.
- 3.2 A complaint may generally be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child or young person, which requires a response.
- 3.3 There are 3 categories to the representation process.
 - i. Statutory Complaint - the complainant is eligible as stated in the Representations Procedure to make a formal complaint.
 - ii. Representation - where a complainant is not eligible under the Representations Procedure to make a formal complaint, but their comments are noted and responded to. If it is not a complaint under the Representations Procedure then the Corporate Complaints procedure may apply.
 - iii. Compliment – positive feedback
- 3.4 The formal complaints procedure has a process of 4 stages.

Stage 1: Aims to resolve the problem as quickly as possible (within 10 working days, or 20 if complex)

Stage 2: If unhappy with response at stage 1, a request can be made for the complaint to be investigated by an Independent Investigator/Person (within 25

working days, 65 if complex).

Stage 3: If still dissatisfied, a request can be made for a Review Panel to consider whether the complaint has been dealt with adequately. The Review Panel is made up of 3 independent people and should be held within 30 working days of request.

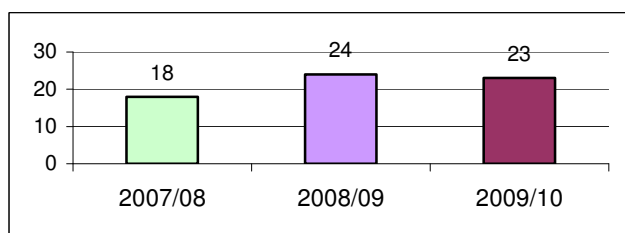
Stage 4: If still dissatisfied, the complainant has the right to refer self to the Local Government Ombudsman, they can do this at any stage of the complaint.

3.5 The Customer Care Manager has responsibility for the overall administration of complaints liaising with relevant services across the Children and Young People's Directorate, parents and families in working to resolve children's social care complaints.

4.0 Annual Report 1st April 2009 – 31st March 2010

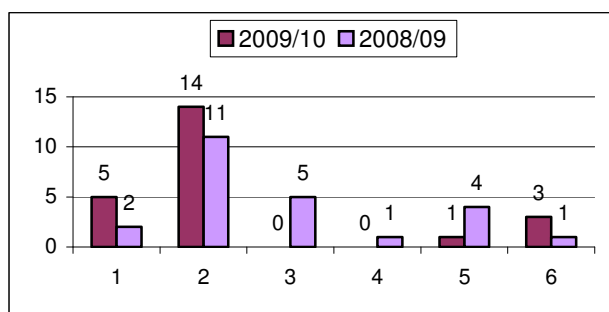
4.1 Four young people made a complaint, two of whom used an advocacy service. From 1st May 2009 the organisation 'Action for Children' provides a Children's Rights Service; this is a mediation and advocacy service for children and young people.

4.2 Statistical Data



There were 23 Statutory Complaints made to the Local Authority in 2009/10.

Types of Statutory complaints made



1	Service delivery	4	Council policy
2	Social Worker Practice	5	Assessment / Review Process
3	Statutory Requirement	6	Other

(Other may comprise of complaints made across a number of areas)

4.3 The outcome of complaints

	Upheld	Partially upheld	Not upheld	Totals
Stage 1	1	1	21	23

One complaint not upheld is still ongoing, progressing to a Stage 2 investigation.

- Upheld – foster carer complaint, training issue identified for individual foster carers.
- Partially upheld – communication between professionals.

Actions taken to resolve complaints at early stages have resulted in low number of complaints progressing to formal stages.

4.4 All Statutory Complaints were dealt with, inside timescales, 16 of those being dealt with within 10 working days and 7 within the extended timescales of 20 days. This extended deadline can occur where a key member of staff is absent, or the complaint is more complex, this is as per regulations.

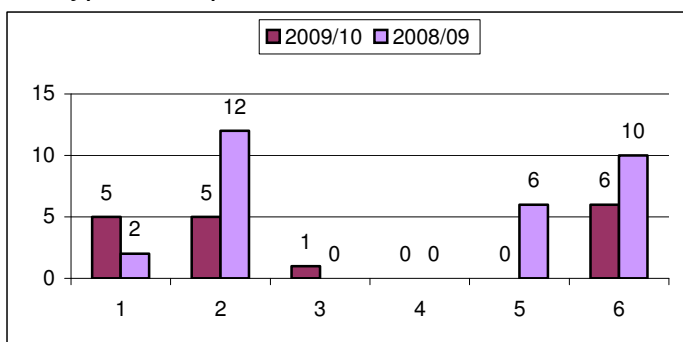
One complaint was carried forward from the previous year, which was investigated at Stage 2. There were 2 elements to this complaint neither of which were upheld.

4.5 No complaints progressed to Stage 3.

No complaints or enquiries regarding Children’s Social Care were received via the Local Government Ombudsman in 2009/10.

4.6 **There were 17 representations made to the Local Authority in 2009/10.**

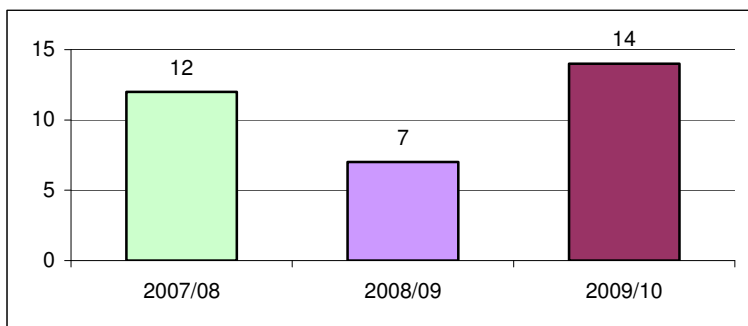
The types of representations made.



1	Service delivery	4	Council policy
2	Social Worker Practice	5	Assessment / Review Process
3	Statutory Requirement	6	Other

4.7 An additional 16 contacts were dealt as Customer Care issues. These being contacts, which were resolved by the Customer Care Team at point of contact. i.e. liaising with Social Workers, provision of information, signposting.

4.8 **There were 14 Compliments made in respect of Children’s Social Services.**



4.9 9 compliments were in respect of Children in Need Services. Comments included

- Many thanks for your care and input over the years.
- Thanks, we would never have been able to manage on our own.
- Thanks for your support in a difficult case; it is my view that this was achieved as a result of your dedication and hard work.
- Just wanted to let you know how thankful I am for this service.

4.10 5 compliments in respect of Looked after children Division. Comments include

- Thanks for taking care of my daughter
- Improved communication, reduction of incidents and positive impact in the community

4.11 **Learning and service improvement**

Training was commissioned from the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) Office for Principal Managers and Practice Managers within what was the Children's Social Care Division. The training lasted 1 day; 2 days were commissioned, 13th January 2010 and 10th March 2010. The training focused on carrying out an investigation of a complaint, and the expectations of the LGO. There was 93% attendance and the feedback was excellent. Training for the Children and Families department will continue and will be provided by the Customer Care Manager.

5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Where identified through the complaints process, policies can be amended to improve service delivery. There were no implications identified in this year.
- 5.2 Where the complaints process has been used, issues are followed up by managers and used in supervision to inform individual learning, and more widely through training and quarterly reporting to the Operational Leadership Team to inform service development.

6 RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 Failure to implement an efficient service could result in the local authority being challenged for not dealing with complaints in a timely and efficient manner and could result in the customer not receiving a service which could then be detrimental to their safety and well being.
- 6.2 Whilst complaints can result in changes for individuals, collectively they are a key source of information to help us develop the services we provide or commission.

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 7.1 No matter who complains they receive the same equality of access and provision.
- 7.2 Children and young people under the age of 18 made four complaints. The ethnicities of these complainants were White British (source Carefirst) with 3 being female and 1 being a male.
- 7.3 Nineteen complaints were made by adults over the age of 18 years, none declared a disability, 15 were female and 4 were male. 17 were White British (source Carefirst) with 2 not being known.

8 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 8.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**
The learning taken from comments, complaints and compliments ensures the ongoing development of services to provide better outcomes for children, young people and their families. The transparency of the process enables children, young people and their families to challenge our provision of services if they feel unhappy about any aspect of it and provides independent oversight if required.
- 8.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**
Any findings from a comment, complaint or compliment relating to this priority will be used to inform the relevant service.

- 8.3 **A Healthy Halton**
Any findings from a comment, complaint or compliment relating to this priority will be used to inform the relevant service.
- 8.4 **A Safer Halton**
Any findings from a comment, complaint or compliment relating to this priority will be used to inform the relevant service.
- 8.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**
Any findings from a comment, complaint or compliment relating to this priority will be used to inform the relevant service.

9 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer	
Representation Procedure 1989	Chester 1 Grosvenor House	Dorothy Roberts Customer Manager	Care