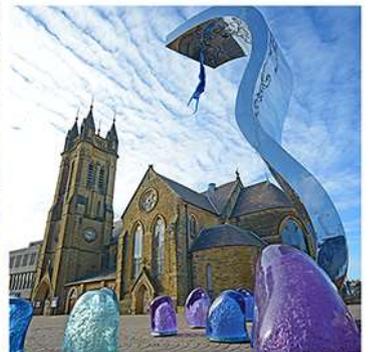


Customer Feedback Annual Report - Children's Services

April 2018– March 2019

Approved 22 July 2019 and Published 23 July 2019

Blackpool Council



Customer Feedback Annual Report – Children’s Services

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Customer Feedback Annual Report – Children’s Services

1. Overview

Blackpool Council Children's Services Department is responsible for a wide range of services for children, young people and their families in Blackpool, including education for all ages, social care, early help, children's centres, youth offending services, special educational needs and children with disabilities.

From the latest figures available, there are 28,605 children and young people aged 0-17 in Blackpool. These children and their families are our key 'customers'. All our services are geared towards championing children and young people and improving outcomes for them and their families by ensuring they receive swift and timely access to the services they need.

When people have complaints we will listen to them, and, wherever possible, will negotiate and agree a course of action to resolve the complaint. We deal with complaints in a fair and transparent way, treating those who make them with courtesy and respect. We encourage comments and compliments as well as complaints, as part of our commitment to a process of continuous learning and improvement.

The Children’s Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 are supported by the statutory guidance “Getting the Best from Complaints”. Blackpool Council Children’s Services has implemented procedures to meet the requirements and recommendations of the legislation and guidance and, in line with the statutory requirements, the Authority is required to produce an annual complaint report made available to the public. We also have responsibility for dealing with other complaints which fall outside the scope of the Children’s Act regulations; these complaints will follow Blackpool Council’s Corporate Complaint Procedures.

This report provides information about Compliments, Comments, Complaints and MP/Councillor enquiries received by Blackpool Council’s Children’s Service’s during the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019. The report highlights how the service has performed against the statutory timescales and indicates where improvements or revisions to services have been identified as a result of compliments in highlighting best practice and through the process of listening and responding to complaints.

Figures within the report are broken down into the following areas:

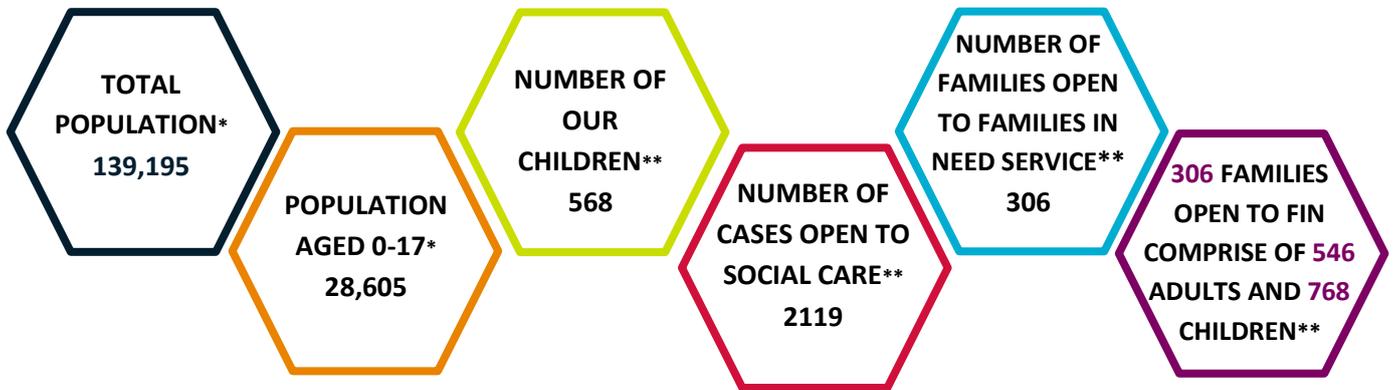
- Children’s Social Care (Including Safeguarding)
- Early Help for Children and Families
- SEN, Education and Psychology
- Schools Standards and Effectiveness
- Business Support and Resources

It must be noted that Schools Standards and Effectiveness was a new category last year and was previously logged under SEN, Education and Psychology. This should be taken into consideration when looking at the figures which do a three year comparison.

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2. Children’s Services Key Headlines

Whilst considering this report it is important to see the overall picture of Children’s Social Care involvement in the Blackpool area.



305 items of feedback were logged for Children’s Services in 2018/2019

Children’s Services received 166 complaints this year.

There has been a 5% increase in complaints compared to the 158 received in 2017/2018

The greatest numbers of complaints were from received were related to Children’s Social Care [140]; this represents less than 7% of the cases open to Children’s Social Care.

There are 0 outstanding complaints for 2018/2019

The majority of complaints received were statutory complaints, accounting for 96%

3 complaints were referred to the Local Government Ombudsman

Enquiries from MP and Councillors totalled 47

83 compliments were received this year; which is very similar to the amount of compliments in 2017/2018.

**Mid-year 2018 population estimates
**Data correct as of 31 March 2019*

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3. Complaints

There are three stages to the statutory Children’s Act Complaint Procedure; Stage 1 is the local resolution/problem-solving stage whereby the Council would provide a response to the complainant. This is the stage where the vast majority of complaints are satisfactorily resolved.

If a complainant remains unhappy with the outcome of the Stage 1 response, they can request Stage 2, which is a formal investigation by an External Investigating Officer (EIO) and Independent Person (IP). In 2018/2019 there have been no social care statutory complaints that have been escalated to Stage 2.

At Stage 3 an independent, external Review Panel is appointed. The Panel will consider whether the Council has dealt with the complaint fairly and consider the investigation reports conclusions and recommendations. No complaints this year have been escalated to Stage 3, which replicates the performance of the previous year.

Those who are not eligible to complain via the statutory Children’s Act Procedure (complaints about children’s social care services) may still be entitled to make a complaint via the Council’s Corporate Complaints Procedure.

There are also three stages to the Corporate Complaints Procedure. Stage 1 is the local resolution whereby a service or team manager would investigate and provide a response to the Complainant. This is the stage where the vast majority of complaints are satisfactorily resolved.

If a Complainant remains unhappy with the outcome of the Stage 1 response, they can request Stage 2, which is an appeal to the relevant director or head of service to review the complaint to ensure that complaints are thoroughly investigated at each stage and that the correct decisions were made. In 2018/2019 there have been 5 corporate complaints that have been escalated to Stage 2.

At Stage 3 a Review Panel is appointed to consider the complaints on behalf of the Chief Executive. The Panel consists of 3-4 independent Senior Officers. The purpose of the Review Panel is to ensure that complaints are thoroughly investigated at each stage and that the correct decisions were made. No Children’s Services corporate complaints this year have been heard at Stage 3, which replicates the performance of the previous year.

Once the Complainant, statutory or corporate, has exhausted the Local Authority Procedure, they may choose to take their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Stage 1 Statutory and Corporate Complaint Data

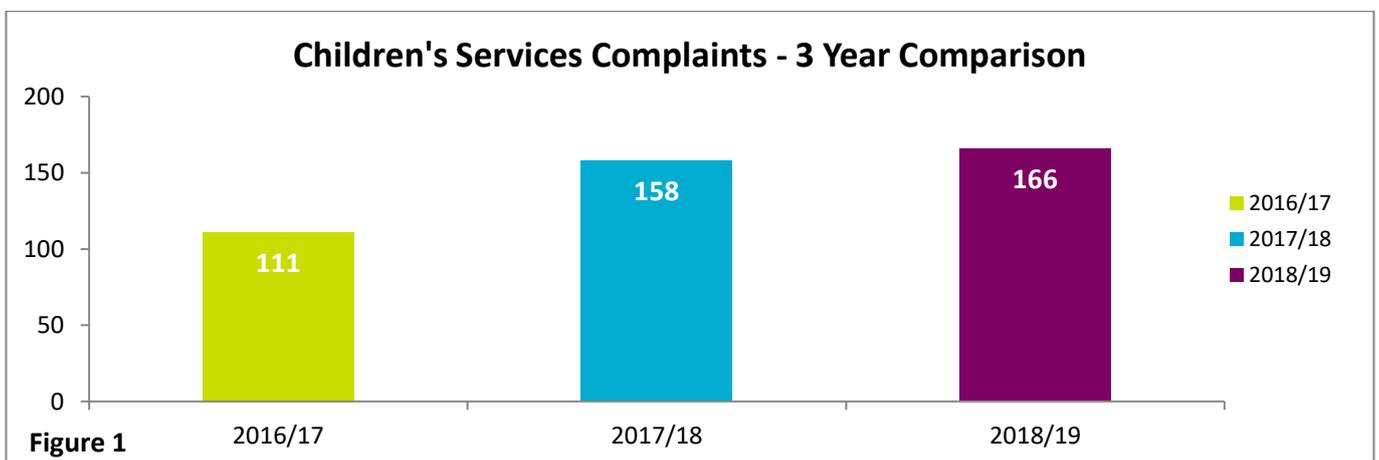
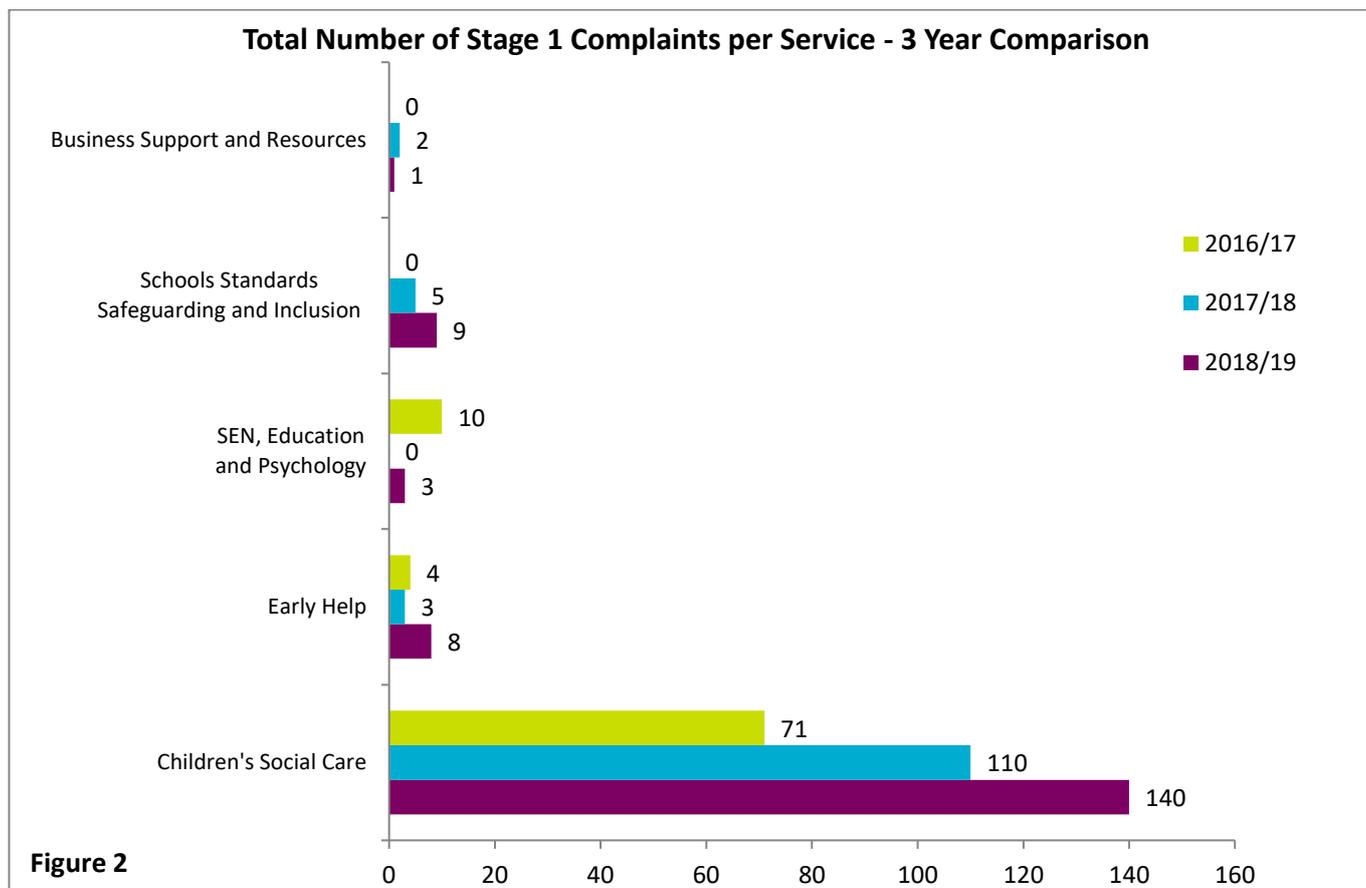


Figure 1

Customer Feedback Annual Report – Children’s Services



Children’s Social Care, as could be expected and in line with previous years, has received the highest number of complaints. As a front line service they are often delivering difficult news, emotional messages and endeavouring to support families in crisis. This service has to take decisions with and for families for the benefit of children, which some families find difficult to accept.

Children’s Social Care dealt with 84% of the overall complaints logged in 2018/2019. Although the number of cases open to Children’s Social Care is similar to the year before; it can be seen that over the last 2 years the number of complaints has doubled. Possible explanations for the increase are the public awareness of the Ofsted report, the high turnover of staff/agency staff, strained resources and the increase in the general complaint culture, which has also been confirmed through discussions at the North West Complaint Managers Group.

Early Help for Children figures have more than doubled to the previous year. However, this is likely to be due to the increase in the number of families open to the Families in Need (FIN) service, which increased from 209 in 2017/18 to 306 in 2018/19 and now comprises of 546 adults and 768 children.

Schools, Standards Safeguarding and Inclusion were a new service category last year, with previous data being incorporated in SEN, Education and Psychology, this can be seen in the greater amount of complaints in 2016/17 in SEN, Education and Psychology category. The Schools, Standards Safeguarding and Inclusion complaints have increased since last year, there is no particular reason for this and figures are still relatively low and expected as the area includes complaints regarding the school admission process and the Pupil Welfare Service.

It must be noted, that complaints about schools do not fall under the remit of the Statutory or Corporate Complaint Procedures; it is the responsibility of the school/academy to address complaints under its own school procedures.

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The majority of complaints received were Statutory Complaints, accounting for 96% of all complaints. Complaints that did not fall within the Statutory Complaint Procedures were dealt with via the Council’s Corporate Complaint Procedures. There are no outstanding 2018/2019 complaints for Children’s Services.

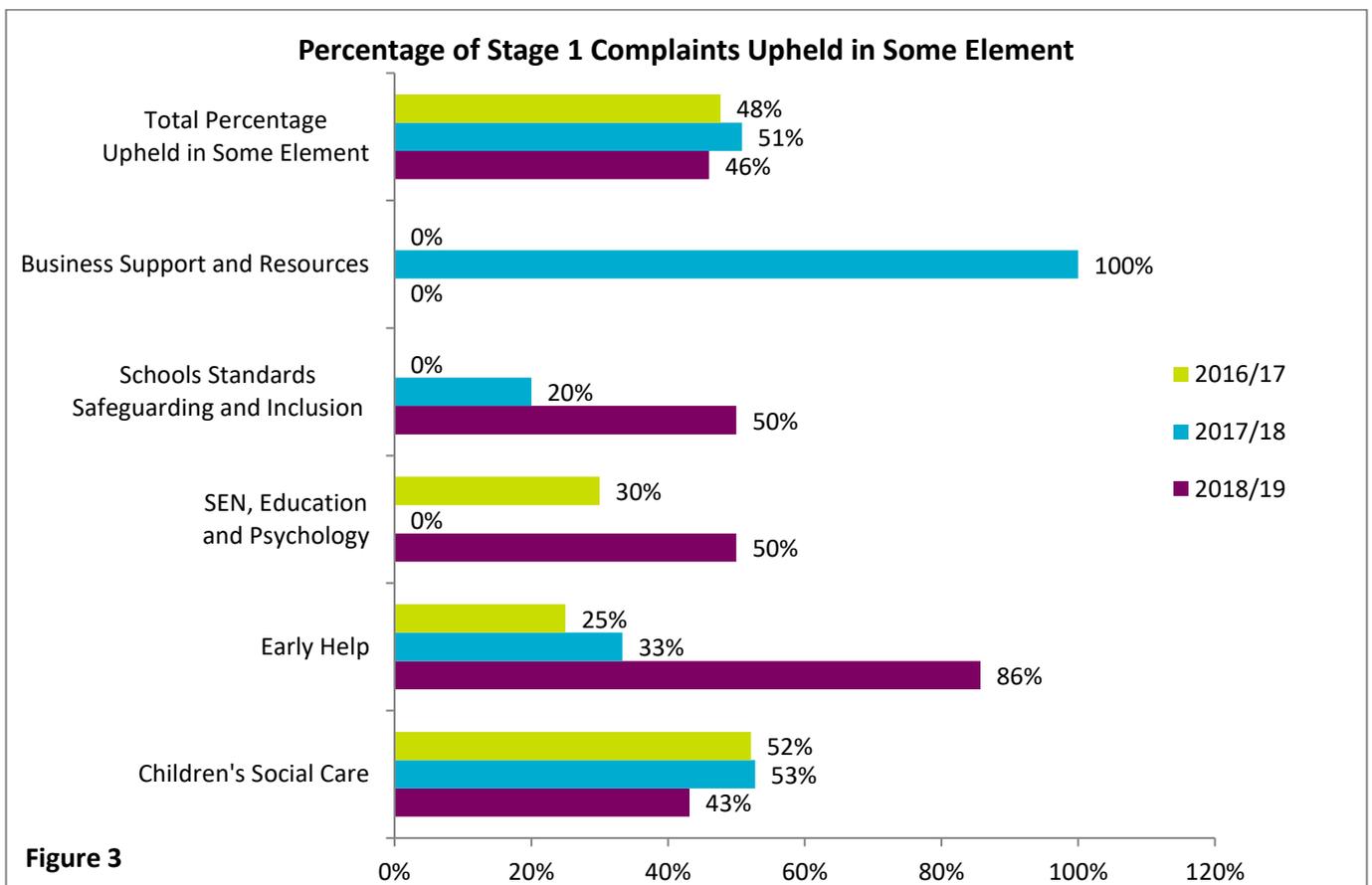
Stage 1 Complaint Outcomes

Children’s Services welcomes all customer feedback as an opportunity to learn and to improve, and in doing so, may be expected to receive a higher number of complaints. Simply reporting the number of complaints made does not indicate how the service is performing. It is important to measure the complaint numbers against the number of complaints that were “upheld” or “partially upheld”.

A complaint may be upheld if it is evident from investigation, that the service provided was not of a standard that a person could reasonably expect. An outcome of partially upheld is when some, but not all, elements of the service provided have not met a reasonable standard.

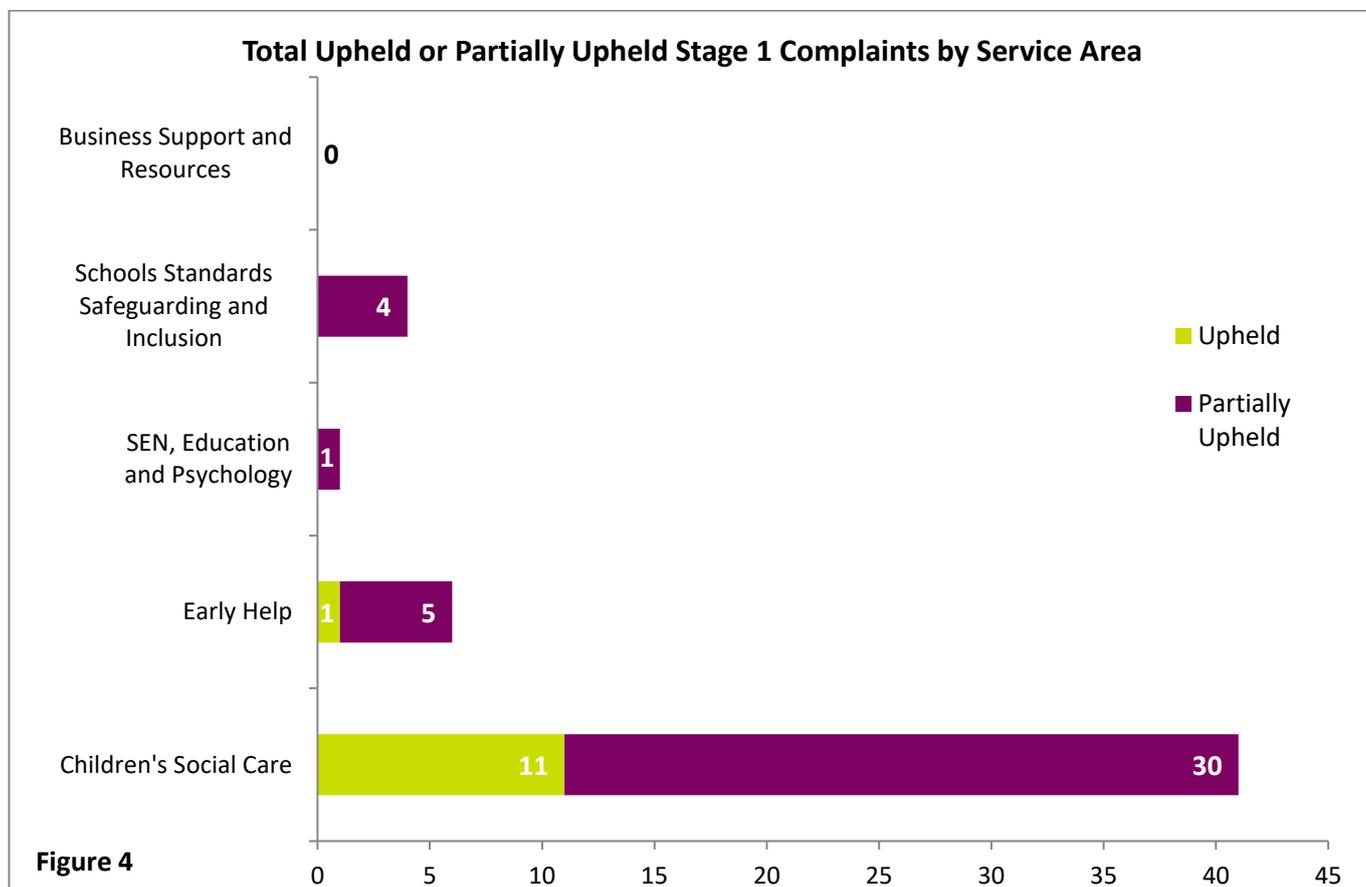
Of those complaints which have been fully considered, 11 percent were classified as upheld and 35 percent as partially upheld, making a total percentage upheld in some element of 46 percent.

Figure 3 is a breakdown of the number of 2018/2019 complaints upheld in some element, broken down by service area:



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Below is a further breakdown of the number of 2018/2019 complaints upheld in some element, broken down by service area:



A few of the general reasons for complaints being upheld over the year are shown below:-

- Delay or lack of communication between social workers and family members; in particular when the allocated worker is on annual leave or off sick. An example being, when meetings are cancelled with little or no notice
- Perceived actions, lack of actions or lack of communication from social workers; in some cases this has been accepted and subsequent actions implemented
- Incorrect or missing information from reports. Any incorrect information should be amended or an addendum added to a report following the outcome of a complaint.
- Delays in assessments and reports which have not been completed in line with statutory timescales
- A complaint may be upheld due to a number of minor or varied issues, which have overall resulted in a poor experience for the service user and/or their families.

Stage 1 Complaint Theme

When complaints are received, they are given a theme based on the main overarching concern.

There are currently 10 standard themes used to classify Children’s Services statutory complaints. These themes help Children’s Services identify trends and patterns whilst aiding in the recognition of action required. However,

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if a complaint has a number of aspects to it, it is often difficult to highlight one particular theme; therefore, ‘Quality of Service’ tends to be used. In March 2018 the themes were reduced from 12 to 10, ‘request for service’ and ‘miscellaneous’ are no longer used. A further review of the themes will be undertaken at the end of this year to tie in with the implantation of a new complaint management system; sub categories will be explored to give a further breakdown into complaint trends.

The following chart shows the breakdown of the annual complaints by theme:

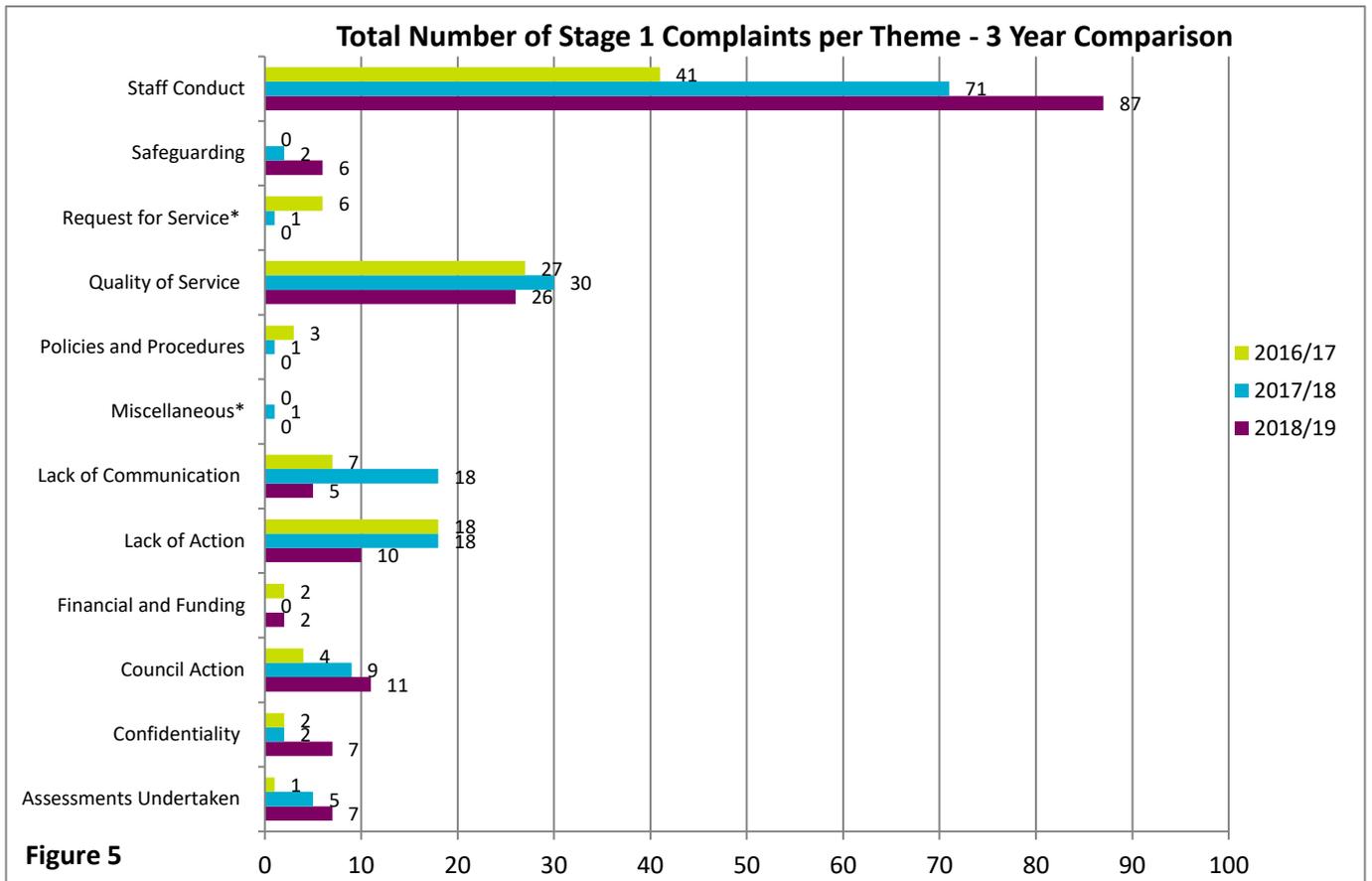


Figure 5

The theme of “staff conduct/treatment of customer” continues to be a prevalent theme. Section 1 of the Children’s Act 1989 creates a statutory obligation to put the needs of the child first and social workers often have to make decisions, in line with legislation, for the benefit of children; some families find the decisions difficult to accept and this can sometimes cause the working relationship between social workers and parents to break down.

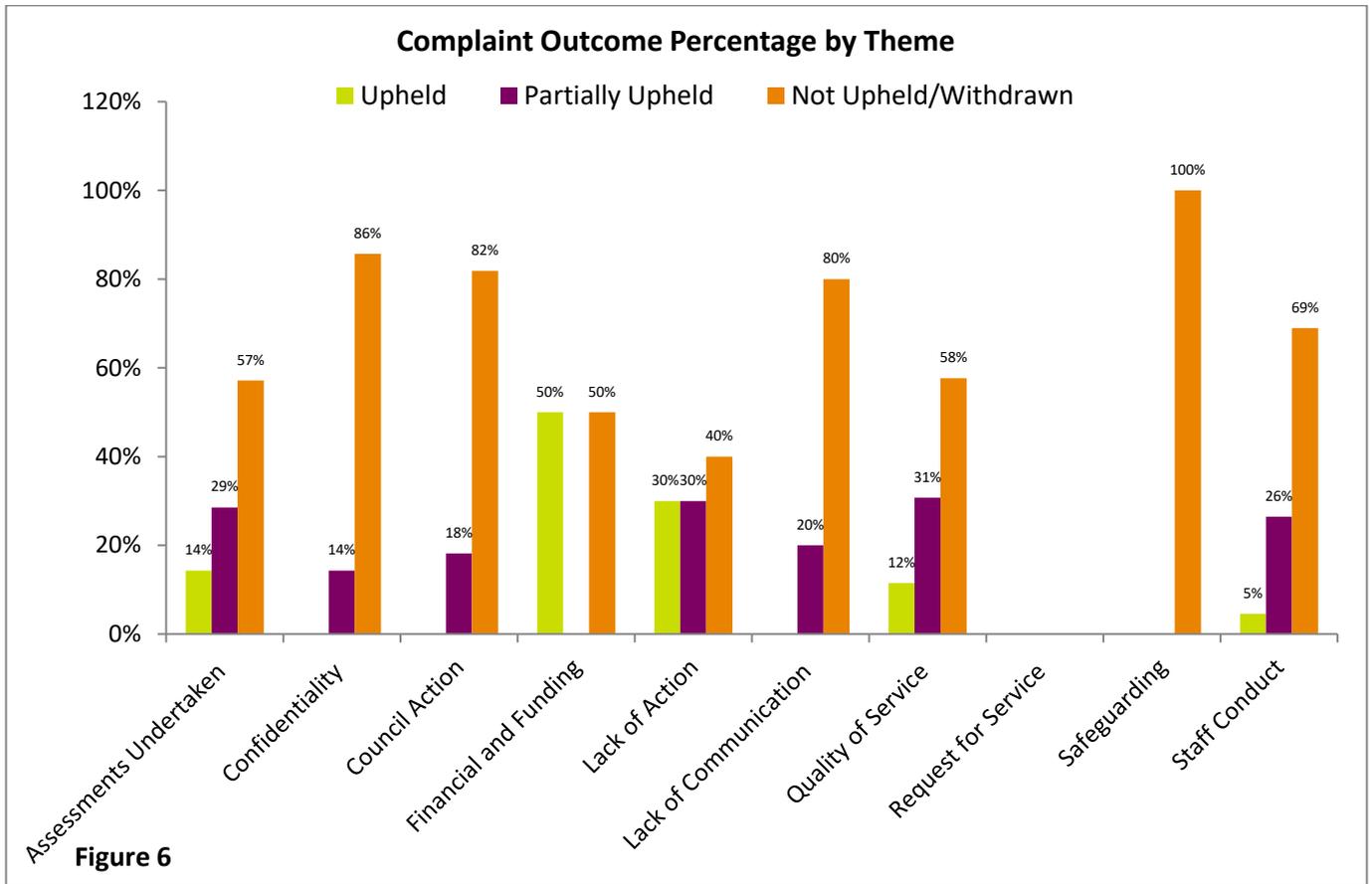
Social Services have to make decisions that could affect those children and families for the rest of their lives; however, all social workers have to work within a clear legal framework and cannot do anything without having a sound legal reason. It can take time to build a trusting relationship between families and the social workers.

It must be noted that only 5% of the complaints investigated in the ‘Staff Conduct/Treatment of Customer’ theme have been fully upheld.

On occasions where poor conduct of staff has been raised, the Manager will address these concerns with the member of staff in supervision meetings and further training will be provided if necessary.

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The following chart shows the breakdown of annual complaint outcomes by theme:-



Perceptions of quality of service are very real to service users and must be listened to, in order to make necessary improvements to our services. It is essential that open and clear discussions with service users and, if appropriate their family, occur early on, to provide an opportunity to address any misunderstandings and alleviate any concerns. This should be followed by very definite checking of understanding, in order that the expectations can be managed and attained wherever possible.

It must be noted that there are only five themes whereby the complaints have been fully upheld; Assessments Undertaken, Finance and Funding, Lack of Action, Quality of Service and Staff Conduct.

Stage 1 Timescales

Statutory legislation dictates that all complaints should be addressed and concluded within a 6 month timeframe; specifically, with Stage 1 of the procedures to be completed within 10 and 20 working days. With regard to corporate complaints, these follow a similar timescale, in most cases 15-20 working days is initially allocated for investigation and response at Stage 1. However, where complex cases are concerned it is sometimes more appropriate to allocate a longer timeframe for a thorough investigation to be achieved.

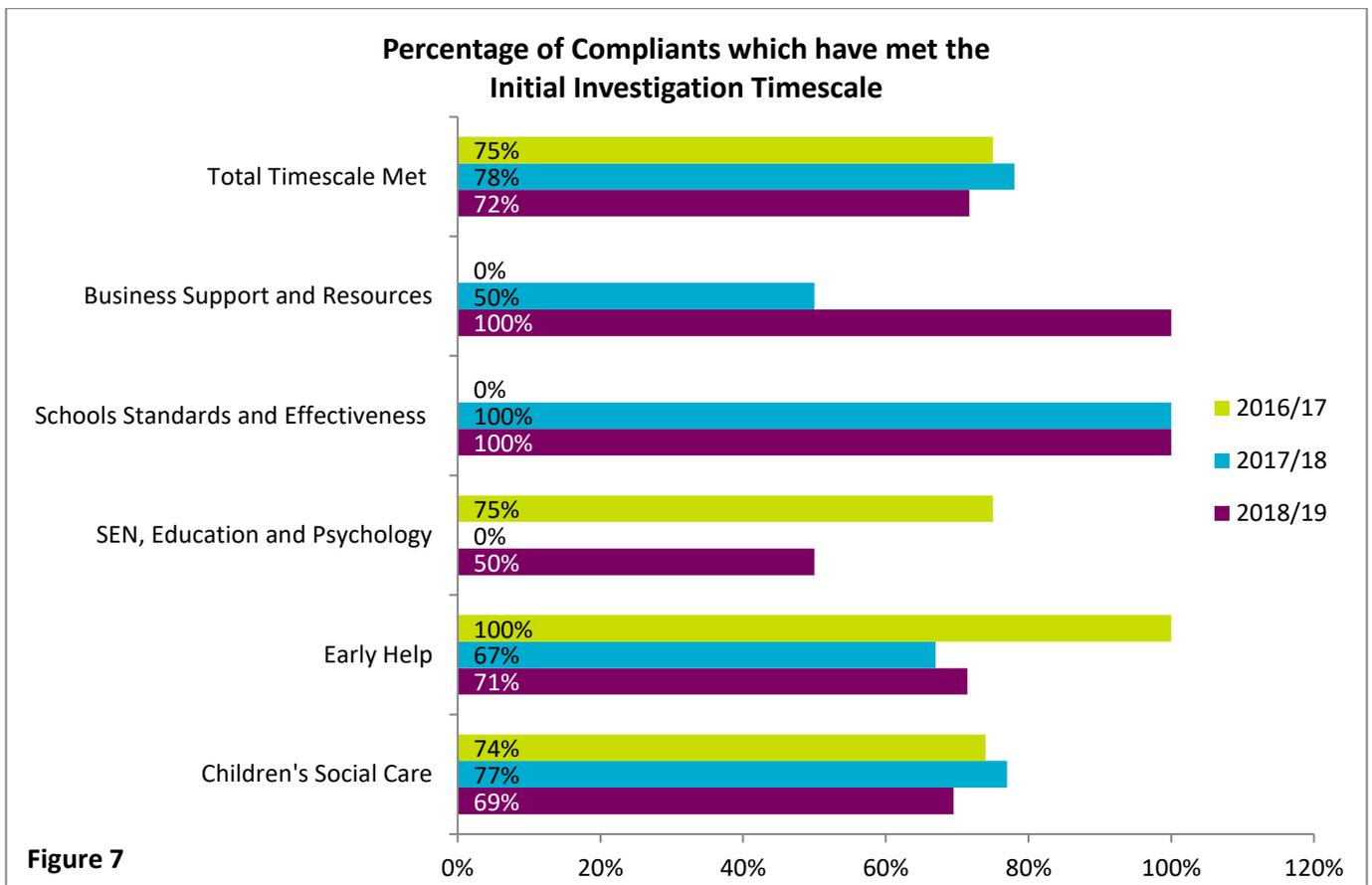
It is good practice to keep the Complainant informed of progress at all times. Therefore, if for any reason, Children’s Services is unable to meet the allocated timescale for response, contact should be made advising of the

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delay together with a new expected date of response, and apology for inconvenience caused. It is usual to contact the Complainant via their original form of contact to the Council or via their indicated preferred method for reply.

It must be noted, that wherever possible, every effort is made to achieve the realistic timescale originally provided to the Complainant. However, this is not always possible. It is recognised that not meeting an anticipated timescale does not assist in complaint resolution and further frustrates the Complainant. However, transparency on behalf of the Council is essential so that the Complainant can understand the difficulties being faced and why the delay is necessary.

The following chart shows the breakdown of annual complaints meeting the timescale:-



Unfortunately there has been a slight decrease on previous years in the overall number of responses which have met the initial timescales. The Customer Relations Team will continue its work with Children’s Services in order to improve the number of complaints meeting timescale.

Stage 2 Complaints

We have received five appeals for escalation Stage 2 of the corporate complaint process this year. Two of the Stage 2 corporate complaints were relating to the Fostering Team. The other three Stage 2 corporate complaints were regarding the Safeguarding Children’s Team, Families in Need, and a school start deferral. All of the Stage 2 corporate complaints were as a result of the complainant being dissatisfied with the Stage 1 response provided by the Team Manager. All of the Stage 2 corporate complaints were investigated by a senior service manager and a

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response was provided following that investigation by the Director of Children’s Services. Three of the Stage 2 corporate complaints were partially upheld and two of these escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman whereby we were found to be at fault in one case and the other one has not yet reached a conclusion. Lessons learnt have been shared with staff; in particular the importance of communication with families. The other two Stage 2 corporate complaints were not upheld.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO)

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) investigate complaints from the public about councils and some other bodies providing public services in England. It is the last stage of the complaints process, for people who have given a council or a provider the opportunity to resolve the issue first and where the Complainant feels their issues have not been addressed or resolved to their satisfaction.

However, some Complainants prefer to contact the LGO in the first instance. The LGO will determine whether this is a premature complaint which must be directed back to the Council to investigate and respond to in the first instance or if they will commence an investigation based on the information provided by the Complainant.

Throughout 2018/2019, three Children’s Services complaints received by the Council were referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

During the Ombudsman’s investigation, the Council will be asked to provide the LGO with information; it is often the case that the LGO will make more than one request for information for each enquiry.

There have been 3 initial requests for information from the LGO and 2 draft LGO decisions requesting the Council’s comments. The Complainant also gets the opportunity to provide their comments on the Draft Decision.

Out of the 5 enquiries, all were responded to within the timescale set by the LGO.

We have also received two final LGO Decisions this year:

- One was closed after initial enquiries
- One was upheld - maladministration and injustice

4. Outcomes and Learning

Following the completion of the complaints process, managers are asked to identify any possible learning from the complaint, either for their own staff or team or with implications across the Directorate.

Lessons Learnt and actions taken as a result of customer feedback are recorded and shared quarterly at the Children’s Management Team meetings.

Please refer to **Appendix A** for a selection of lessons learnt in 2018/2019.

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5. Feedback from Young People

This year we have received two formal complaints from young people. This has been a significant drop to the ten complaints received from young people in the previous year.

The ‘Getting the Best from Complaints’ statutory document provides guidance for local authorities on implementing the Children Act 1989 complaints procedures for children and young people with an emphasis on resolving problems quickly and effectively and learning from them. The aim of this guidance is to primarily improve the access that children and young people have to all the public services on offer to them and to improve the standards that they can expect. It is hoped that an effective complaints procedure will ensure that their voices are heard and that as a result, service delivery will improve. It is disappointing that approach this is not reflected in the formal complaint figures; the Customer Relations Team will continue to work closely with Children’s Services to ensure that young people feel able to share their feedback in both an informal and formal way.

The Customer Relations Team in collaboration with the Our Children Engagement Officer has this year been working to produce an age appropriate leaflet to give young people more information on how they can provide feedback, how to make a formal complaint and what happens once they have made a complaint. This piece of work was completed in February 2019. The leaflet will be given to all of Our Children and it has been produced in a fold-away style so that Our Children can keep the information to hand in a purse or wallet. The leaflet provides young people with a number of ways to communicating their feedback, including; by email, over the phone, by text, via an online form, via printable feedback forms, with the support of an advocate or in person to a trusted adult. It is hoped that by giving young people more information about how they can provide feedback, they will feel more confident to have their voices heard.

In addition to the above, Children’s Services provide a number of other channels to ensure that young people are comfortable in sharing their feedback. Below is a short list of some of the ways young people share their feedback; however, these feedback channels may not lead to a formal complaint being initiated:

- Via people they are familiar with e.g. Foster Carer, Residential Worker or Social Worker
- Through the ‘Just Uz’ Blackpool Young People in Care Council
- Through the Corporate Parent Panel
- Via Review and Child Protection Monitoring Forms
- Via the Our Children Engagement Officer

Appendix C gives further detail on how Blackpool Council facilitates feedback from Our Children by the Authority.

The Customer Relations Team will continue to work closely with Children’s Services Management to develop a unified approach for dealing with and reporting on all feedback from young people.

6. Compliments

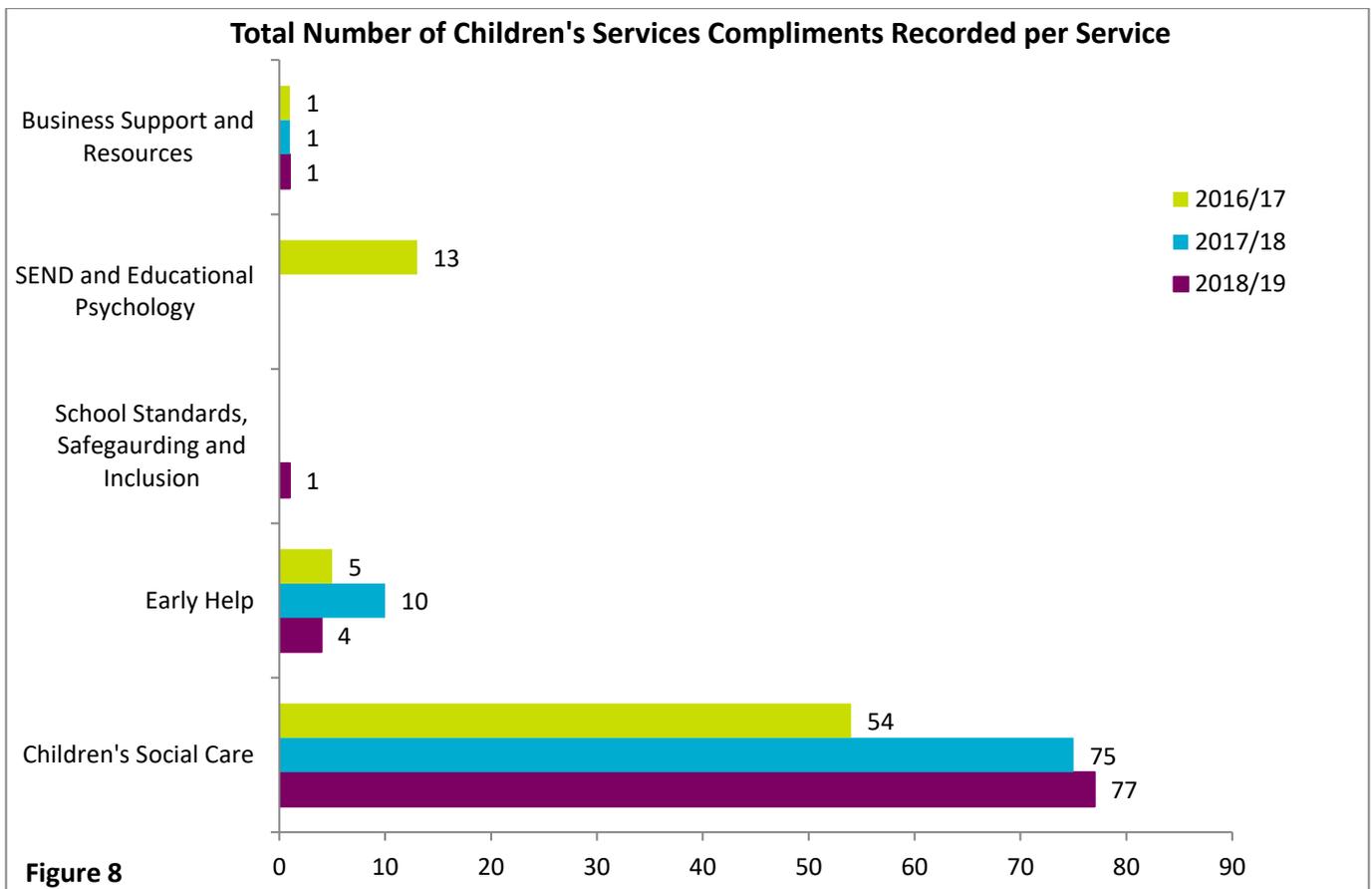
Compliments are extremely important and help to highlight the areas in which we are improving or maintaining levels of high quality service. They act as a morale booster for staff and are evidence that every detail within service delivery matters. Good practice is commended and discussed at senior level to ensure it is implemented across the board where possible.

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For the purposes of official compliment recording within the Department, a compliment can be defined as an unsolicited statement of satisfaction or praise received from an outside source regarding an aspect of the service or an individual member or members of staff.

Certain teams have been very good at recording compliments received; however, there are services that rarely pass on compliment data for reporting purposes. The reported figures may therefore not be a true reflection of compliments received by Children’s Services and can only show the number of compliments that have been officially recorded.

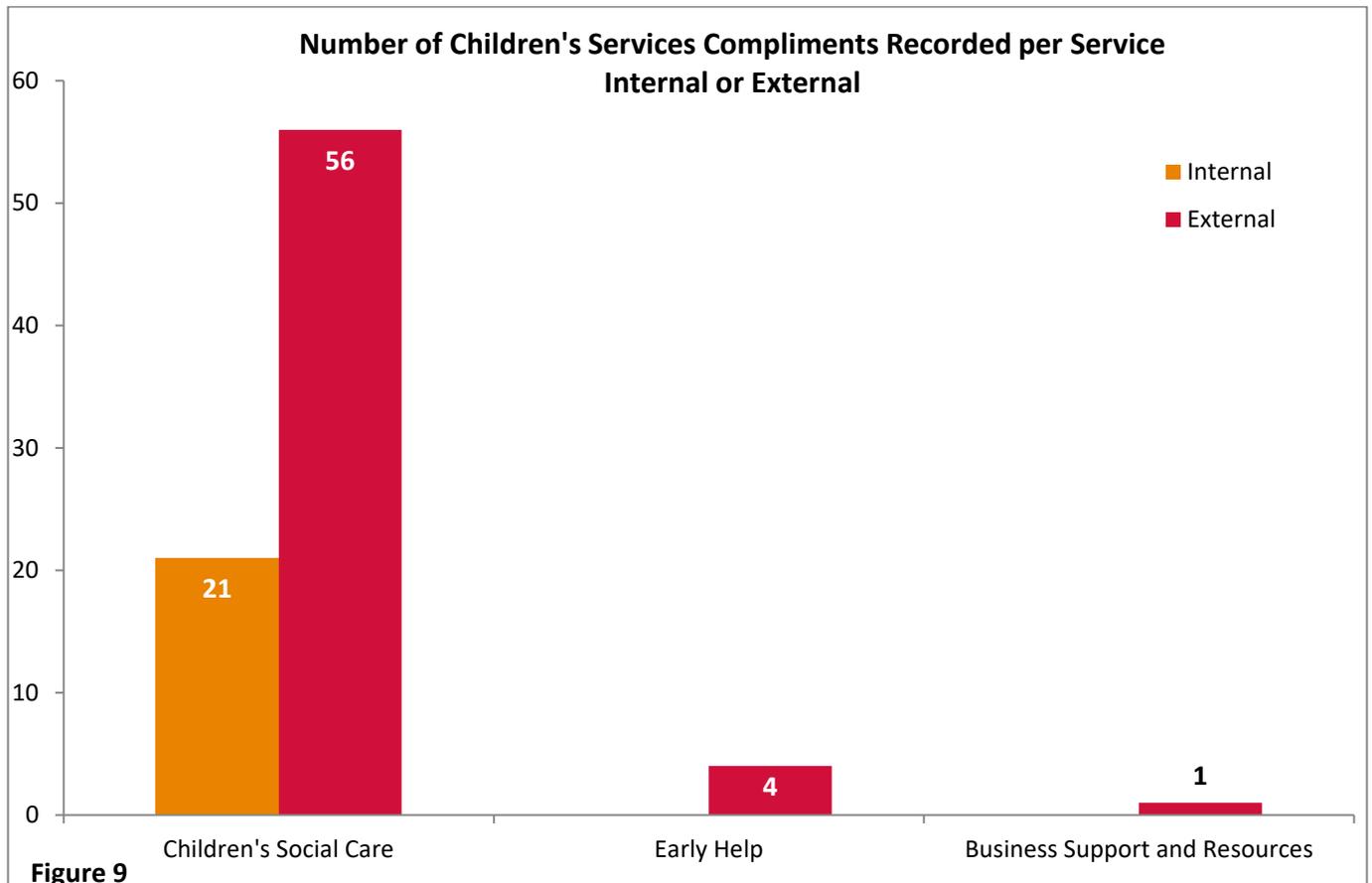
The table below demonstrates the levels of compliments received by Children’s Services split by Service.



The number of compliments recorded for Children’s Social Care has remained positive to last years improved figures. Due to the nature of the work carried out by Children’s Services, it is not often that compliments from external customers are received. Services are therefore encouraged to report internal positive feedback as well as compliments from service users and their families, this continues to have a positive impact on the figures.

Internal compliments are generally received from Legal Services and Conference Chairs to praise Social Workers on their hard work, preparation and support to families, for conferences and court proceedings.

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Below is a small selection of some of the internal compliments recorded:

- *“I just wanted to thank you once again for the amazing talk you did last night for our police cadets. The talk was not only interesting, but extremely informative. I know the cadets took a lot away from this and hopefully it will make them all more aware of the dangers and potential CSE risks that are out there.”*
- *“I just wanted to congratulate P on his quality of work. If he is due to attend a conference he will always ring prior to discuss the concerns about the family and any issues that may be relevant. He always has a report available prior to conference and his analysis of the family situation is evidence based and accurate.”*
- *“I would like to say thank you for the way I have been welcomed into the service and also for the opportunities for professional and personal development that you have given me.”*
- *“I just wanted to say thank you and well done. This is a really complex case and the pieces of work you have done for this case have been excellent. Your knowledge and planning shown in the final care planning meeting has been very impressive, especially bearing in mind your experience.”*

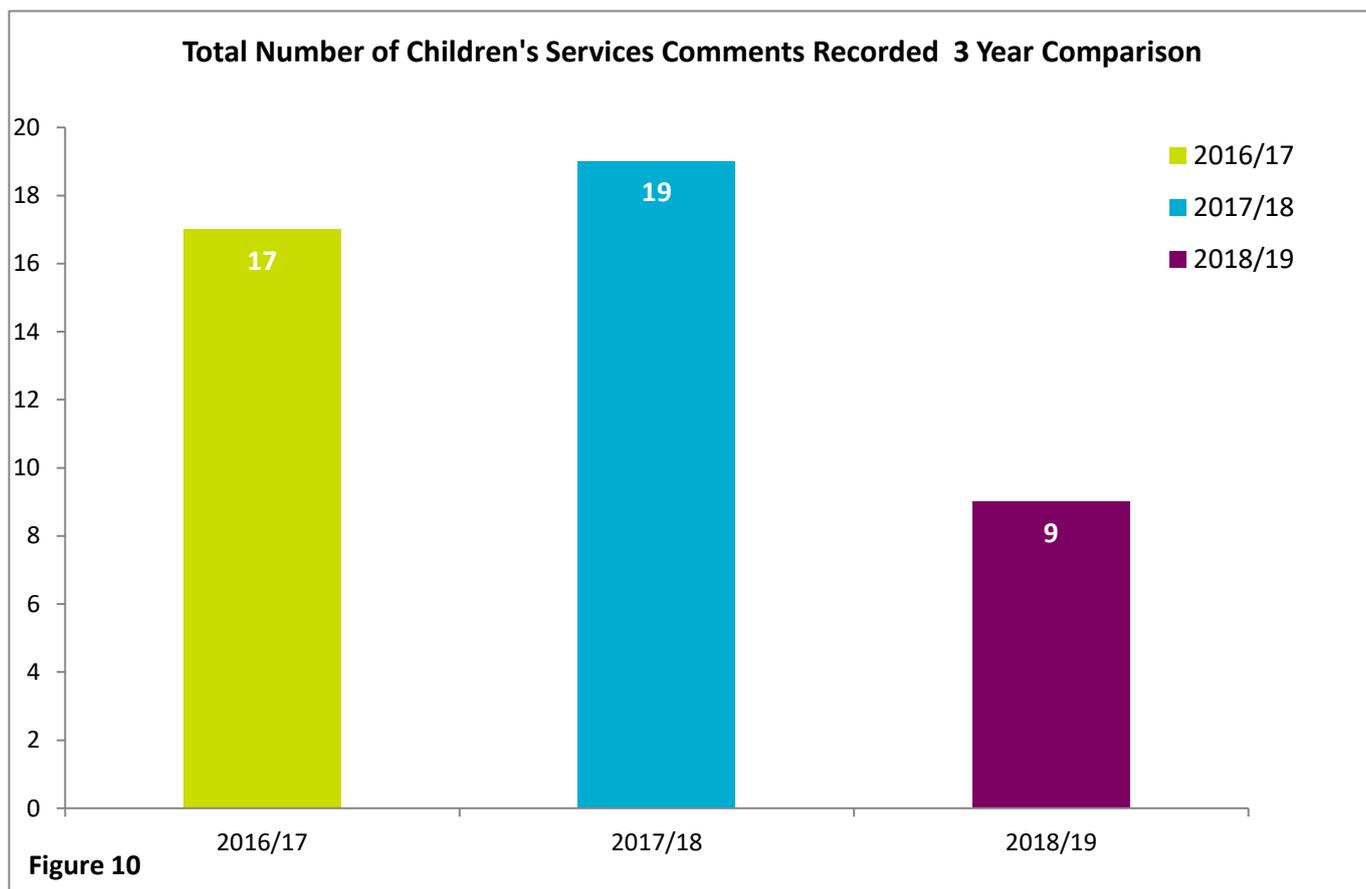
Please refer to **Appendix B** for a selection of external compliments recorded.

7. Comments

Comments are equally as important as complaints and help to shape and improve the quality of service. If necessary, Children’s Services will respond to comments based upon the same timescale as complaints. However,

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each comment will be judged individually as to whether a detailed response is necessary or not. Work on the comment will continue whether the Customer is aware of this work or when it is inappropriate to share the outcome of the comment with the Customer. It is believed that service users are being more direct in conversation with Council representatives and action is being taken early to try and prevent a complaint being lodged.



Comments are usually received via the on line feedback form directly from service users. Services do not always pass comments on to be logged therefore the above figures are not a true reflection of all 'comments' received by Children’s Services and can only highlight the number of comments that have been officially recorded. There has been a decrease in the amount of comments over the previous years.

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8. Member of Parliament (MP) & Councillor Enquiries

Blackpool Council’s Chief Executive maintains that all MP Enquiries should be actioned and responded to within 5 working days. This year the Councillor Enquiry timescales have been increased from 5 to 10 working days. MP and Councillor Enquiries can be categorised as:

- requests for information
- reasons for decisions
- requests for service
- requests for review of cases

The following table shows the annual breakdown of MP Enquiries received by Children’s Services and the percentage which met the 5 day response timescale:-

Member of Parliament Enquiries	2018/19		2017/18 Comparison		2016/17 Comparison	
	Number of Enquiries	% Meeting 5 Day Timescale	Number of Enquiries	% Meeting 5 Day Timescale	Number of Enquiries	% Meeting 5 Day Timescale
Children’s Social Care	22	45%	23	52%	25	56%
Early Help for Children and Families	3	33%	0	Nil	1	100%
SEN, Education and Psychology	3	67%	5	80%	10	70%
Schools Standards and Effectiveness	8	25%	6	50%	Previously Logged Under SEN, Education and Psychology	Nil
Business Support and Resources	1	100%	5	80%	0	Nil
TOTALS	37	43%	39	59%	36	61%

The number of cases meeting the 5 day response timescale is lower than the previous years. The 5 day turnaround for response is extremely tight especially in light of complex cases and again if the timescale is extended it is counted as missing the timeframe. We will continue to work with services to further improve timescales over the next year.

Children’s Social Care accounts for the majority of MP Enquiries again this year – (59%). Some complainants turn to their MPs for support during or after the complaint process in hope that involvement of their MP will achieve a

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better outcome for them. We can also receive multiple enquiries from an MP regarding the same individual; these are all logged as separate enquiries.

The following table shows the annual breakdown of Councillor Enquiries received by Children’s Services and the percentage which met the 5 day response timescale:-

Councillor Enquiries	2018/19		2017/18 Comparison		2016/17 Comparison	
	Number of Enquiries	% Meeting 10 Day Timescale	Number of Enquiries	% Meeting 5 Day Timescale	Number of Enquiries	% Meeting 5 Day Timescale
Children’s Social Care	5	60%	4	75%	9	100%
Early Help for Children and Families	0	Nil	0	Nil	0	Nil
SEN, Education and Psychology	2	100%	2	100%	1	100%
Schools Standards and Effectiveness	2	0%	1	0%	Previously Logged Under SEN, Education and Psychology	Nil
Business Support and Resources	1	100%	2	100%	0	Nil
TOTALS	10	60%	9	78%	10	100%

The amount of Councillor Enquiries is comparable to the previous year. The Customer Relations Team still request that, if possible, services provide their response to the Customer Relations Team within 5 days; this allows dedicated time for the approval process. Unfortunately even with the actual timescale being increased to 10 working days, Children’s Social Care did not meet the timescale in two of the five enquiries and Schools Standards and Effectiveness failed to meet the timescale in both of their enquiries.

If we are unable to meet the timescales we will ensure that our efforts to provide the information as soon as possible are communicated to the MP or to Member Services and if need be, an interim update is provided. We will continue to work with services to further improve timescales over the next year.

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9. Looking Forward

The Customer Relations Team facilitates the Customer Feedback process for Children’s Services. The Team is also responsible for the production of statistical information and reports for all Council complaints and customer feedback.

The Team is currently working with the Council’s ICT services to develop a new council-wide Customer Feedback System, with the aim of providing a more user-friendly, straight forward approach of logging feedback. The systems improved reporting tools will allow essential feedback data to be provided to services on a more regular basis. It is hoped that the new system will empower services to take better control of complaint and feedback management and provide additional subcategories for complaint themes, so that trends can be clearly identified and acted upon. The new system will be piloted within Children’s Services during the last two quarters of the 2019/2020 year with the intention to go live across the Council in April 2020.

The Team will also be updating the Children’s Services Customer feedback procedures document and will looking to provide further guidance and support to all services and the focus will be on improving the handling of complaints, the quality of responses and to increase learning from complaints and compliments, to ensure that a robust mechanism is in place for sharing lessons learnt, best practice and potential development.

In addition, the Team will offer ongoing support to staff acting as investigating officers, with the intent to improve staff confidence by improving the timeliness and quality of responses made and with the aim to reduce the need for secondary or follow up enquiries. The updated procedural documents and a staff guidance tool will be available by December 2019.

The Customer Relations Team will continue to work closely with Children’s Services Management to develop a unified approach for dealing with and reporting on all feedback from young people.

Children’s Services will continue to work with the Customer Relations Team:

- To ensure that we acknowledge the importance and value of complaints and other customer feedback.
- To resolve the issues and concerns as soon as they are made aware of them in order to minimise the number of matters being escalated to a formal complaint.
- To ensure that complaints are handled in line with the Council's Customer Care Standards and any other relevant legal and policy requirements.
- To provide a clear route by which customers can raise concerns about the service they have received from the Council.
- To ensure that complaints are dealt with fairly, promptly and sensitively.
- To learn from our mistakes and use feedback from customers to continuously improve services.
- To share best practice learnt from compliments received.

Appendix A – Summary of some of the Lessons Learnt in 2018/2019

‘Nipping it in the bud’: In some cases, when a complaint is dealt with within 24 hours it can be closed down as an informal complaint. There has been some good examples this year of complaints being ‘nipped in the bud’ and dealt with as ‘informal’ due to the fast action of workers trying to resolve the issues as soon as they are made aware of them.

The importance of communication: Service Managers and Team Managers have reiterated the importance of communication to all staff as this can be key to prevent escalation to a formal complaint. Staff have been asked to ensure that they are keeping families as up to date as possible with progress of the case.

Allocating a new social worker to the case: In some cases a new social worker has been allocated to the case as a result of the complaint; this is not always necessary, however it can be difficult to maintain a good working relationship with families when they feel that the relationship has broken down so changing the allocated worker can be a good way to move forward.

Complaints Procedure: The Local Authority has been found to be at fault for the lack of information provided about the complaints procedure by the social worker. All new social workers are now informed of the complaints procedure should a family ask them for the details and the procedure has been reiterated to all other staff.

Invitations to parents: Staff have been asked to be extra vigilant when organising conferences and meetings to ensure that both parents are invited where possible and if this is not appropriate each parent is to be informed.

Letter box contact: There has been a review of the letter box process and procedures and training has been delivered to all staff in the letter box service. The letter box files have also all been reviewed. The lessons learnt have been shared with the whole adoption team and other services which may deal with this process.

Home visits: All workers have been reminded that they are able to visit the family home for visits when parents cannot leave the home due to illness. This means that the family are still being seen and the plans in place can still progress.

Maintaining communication when social workers are off at short notice: The way in which communication is maintained when staff are off work at short notice has been explored. Social Workers have been asked to ensure that young people and families have a relevant point of contact if they cannot get in touch with their allocated worker.

Sharing of Information with Birth Families: Staff have been reminded to have a conversation with prospective foster parents regarding the information that will be shared with birth families when a foster placement is occurring to ensure that they are not surprised if the foster parents receive their details in reports.

Appendix B – A Selection of External Compliments Recorded

X has advised that he is aware of the negative things that have been said about Blackpool children's social care and he would like to express that he honestly would not have been able to get through this situation without the support of children's social care. X said without the support of Children's Social Care he really does believe that Y wouldn't have been safe. Thank you so much to the social worker for all her hard work [Compliment for Safeguarding Children's Team]

This centre is one of the best I have been to with my daughter. It is clean, pleasant and you always get a warm welcome from the staff with smiling faces. The kitchen staff and reception staff are lovely and always very welcoming. [Compliment for Contact Centre]

Y has helped us tremendously on a professional level. She has many roles but the main one seems to be around critical response and she has given us great advice and met with us in advance of the situations so you are well prepared. She is great at teaching how to communicate the information to children and parents and whether or not to set up a signing book [Compliment for Pupil Welfare]

I just wanted to send in a little something to say a very big thank you to the social work team for their hard work. They have been amazing and we would not be where we are now without the hard work and support provided by children's social care [compliment for Duty and Assessment]

Thank you for supporting me and being the only person who ever really cared. I will never forget everything you have done for me and your role in shaping me to become the person I am today. Thank you for never giving up and always going above and beyond for me and my family. [Compliment for Safeguarding Quality and Review]

*This service has worked very hard to engage Z and keep him safe. The communication from the staff has been excellent and I have felt very included in the work that has been done. This is an excellent service, thank you so much.
[Compliment for the Link]*

We cannot commend our son's social worker enough. We feel she really went above and beyond what was expected of her to ensure that our journey was smooth and the transition of our son into our care was as successful as possible. We often received emails and calls out of hours to keep us informed. We also want to say how flexible the social worker was with visits doing her best to not disrupt routines, despite the 6 hour time difference. Our experience of Blackpool council has been tremendous. We cannot emphasize how much we have valued the council's commitment to us. [Compliment for Adoption]

X has been really helpful with explaining different consequences to Y. X has been amazing, she always responds immediately to any of our messages. All the other staff are brilliant too – keep being amazing at all that you do. Thank you so much. [Compliment for Our Children Team]

Appendix C – Children’s Services – The Voice of Young People

It is important to ensure that children and young people’s views are heard. It is felt that most children and young people feel confident in expressing their views about the services they receive from Blackpool Council.

It has been highlighted that most young people prefer to speak to the people they are familiar with e.g. Foster Carer, Residential Worker or Social Worker rather than making a formal complaint.

The increased use of mobile phones by workers has helped communication to improve as social workers and young people are in regular communication via text/WhatsApp. This allows issues to be sorted efficiently and directly between young people and workers to ensure concerns do not escalate to formal complaints.

Children have the opportunity to discuss any concerns with their social worker during statutory visits as they must see the children alone. This hopefully gives children and young people the opportunity to discuss their concerns in private.

Our Children have the chance to raise any issues they may have through the Looked After Review process. All children and young people receive a consultation booklet before their six monthly review meetings. This booklet considers all aspects of their lives, school; home; contact with family; satisfaction with the care they are receiving.

The Independent Reviewing Officer visit children prior to their review meeting to discuss their care plan and to ensure that they are happy with it.

Just Uz

The JustUz Children in Care Council (CICC) is a voice for all children who are looked after by Blackpool and encourages all children, young people and those leaving care to be actively involved in helping to decide what services they receive and how they are run. JustUz is a place where young people in care can have their say on issues that matter to them, and can make sure that they are heard by the people who make decisions.

The ‘JustUz’ website also provides a ‘Speak to us’ form where Young People can contact JustUz CICC if they have any issues they would like raised on their behalf.

Children in foster care also receive a Children’s Guide to Foster Care which includes the young people’s feedback form on the back page of the guide.

The Feedback received through ‘Just Uz’ has highlighted some key themes;

- Young People want Social Workers to get to know them really well and spend quality time with them.
- Young People want us to speak to them in a way they understand, not in social work language. Justuz have launched the ‘War Against Words’ and have banned 6 key words as a starting point. They are contact, LAC, stat [statutory] visit, placement, LAC Review and siblings. There will be more words to follow.
- Young People have recently given their views on the role of the IRO and their review meetings. They have told how us very clearly how they want their meetings to happen, the key themes were they want their meetings to be more fun, friendly and less formal, and to have food and drinks available. They want us to make sure we do what we promise and let them know what their plans are and written in a way they understand.

Advocacy

Independent advocacy has an integral role to play to facilitate children having a voice so they can be heard by local authorities, their families, cares and their communities.

Appendix C – Children’s Services – The Voice of Young People

In Blackpool Council this service is provided by *Empowerment* who observe the precept of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, i.e. the right of each child to be consulted on all matters affecting them. If a Child or Young Person raises concerns they are offered an independent advocate to help them convey their concerns, wishes and feelings in order for all parts of their concerns to be dealt with.

Appendix D – Report Data in Accessible Format

Complaint breakdown by Service	Total Number of Complaints 2018/19			Complaint Outcomes 2018/19			
	Totals	Percentage %	Fully considered	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld and Partially Upheld	Percentage upheld in some element %
Children's Social Care	140	87%	95	11	30	41	43%
Early Help	8	5%	7	1	5	6	86%
SEN, Education and Psychology	3	2%	2	0	1	1	50%
Schools Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion	9	6%	8	0	4	4	50%
Business Support and Resources	1	1%	1	0	0	0	0%
Children's Commissioning	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0%
Total Percentage Upheld in Some Element	161	100%	113	12	40	52	46%

Previous Years Complaint Data	2017/18			2016/17		
	Totals	Percentage upheld in some element %	Upheld and Partially Upheld	Totals	Percentage upheld in some element %	Upheld and Partially Upheld
Children's Social Care	110	53%	58	71	52%	37
Early Help	3	33%	1	4	25%	1
SEN, Education and Psychology	0	0%	0	10	30%	3
Schools Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion	5	20%	1	0	0%	Diff Log
Business Support and Resources	2	100%	2	0	0%	0
Children's Commissioning	2	0%	0	1	0%	0
Total Percentage Upheld in Some Element	122	51%	62	86	48%	41

Appendix D – Report Data in Accessible Format

	Number of complaints meeting timescale 2018/19		Percentage of complaints meeting timescale in previous years	
	Total	Percentage	2017/18	2016/17
Complaints - Timescales				
Children's Social Care	66	69%	77%	74%
Early Help	5	71%	67%	100%
SEN, Education and Psychology	1	50%	Nil	75%
Schools Standards and Effectiveness	8	100%	100%	Diff Log
Business Support and Resources	1	100%	50%	Nil
Children's Commissioning	0	0%	100%	Nil
Total Timescale Met	81	72%	78%	75%

	2018/19		Outcome Percentages % 2018/19					Previous Years	
	Total	Percentage %	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld and Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Withdrawn	2017/18 Theme Totals	2016/17 Theme Totals
Complaints by Theme									
Assessments Undertaken	7	4%	14%	29%	43%	14%	43%	5	1
Confidentiality	7	4%	0%	14%	14%	0%	86%	2	2
Council Action	11	7%	0%	18%	18%	36%	45%	9	4
Financial and Funding	2	1%	50%	0%	50%	0%	50%	0	2
Lack of Action	10	6%	30%	30%	60%	30%	10%	18	18
Lack of Communication	5	3%	0%	20%	20%	40%	40%	18	7
Miscellaneous	0	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1	0
Policies and Procedures	0	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1	3
Quality of Service	26	16%	12%	31%	42%	38%	19%	30	27
Request for Service	0	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1	6
Safeguarding	6	4%	0%	0%	0%	17%	83%	2	0
Staff Conduct	87	54%	5%	26%	31%	46%	23%	71	41
Totals	161	100%	7%	25%	32%	38%	30%	158	111

Appendix D – Report Data in Accessible Format

Compliments by Service	2018/19			Previous Years	
	Internal	External	Total	2017/18	2016/17
Children's Social Care	21	56	77	75	54
Early Help	0	4	4	10	5
School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion	0	1	1	0	0
SEND and Educational Psychology	0	0	0	0	13
Business Support and Resources	0	1	1	1	1
Totals	21	62	83	86	73