Children and Families’ Services
Families and Homes Directorate

Annual Complaints Report
2017 / 2018

Corporate Parenting

Children's Social Care

Safeguarding and Family Support

Virtual School

Quality Assurance

Annual review of complaints received by Children’s Social Care

Complaints Team
Finance and Governance Directorate
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Executive Summary

It is a statutory requirement to produce an annual report about complaints made by or on behalf of children and young people who receive support or services from Children’s Social Care.

This report provides an overview and analysis of all complaints received during the reporting period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 (2017/18) including a summary of identified issues, examples of service improvement and details of objectives for 2018/19.

Comparisons from the previous reporting period, i.e. from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 (Financial Year 2016/17), have been included where available.

This report will be published on the Council’s website, and made available to managers and staff, elected members, residents and inspection bodies.

Graphical information regarding the volume and type of complaints for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 can be found from page 11 onwards, from which the following key points are highlighted below.

- **Service User Population**

  In 2017/18, just over 3500 safeguarding referrals were made to Children’s Social Care’s Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

  At the beginning of April 2017, there were 281 Looked After Children being provided a service. During the previous year 2016/17, 199 young people left care and are in receipt of a leaving care service.

- **Stage One Complaints**

  During the reporting period of April 2017 to March 2018, the Social Care Complaints Team recorded a total of 42 complaints relating to children’s social care, compared to 47 in the same reporting period in 2016/17.

  The majority of complaints received, 41(98%) were resolved satisfactorily at the Local Resolution Stage, which means that only one complaint moved on to stage two of the complaints procedure. This is 11% improvement compared with the previous reporting period of 2016/17.

  Just over half of the complaints 22 (52%) were made by parents, carers or relatives of the children or young people. Of the 20 complaints made by the child or young person, 10 came via an advocate and 10 were received from the young person directly. This is an increase on the number in the same period last year when only 4 complaints came directly from children and young people.
Of the Stage One responses received during the reporting period, 84% were responded to within timescale of 20 working days. This is a 22% improvement on the previous year. The primary reason for this improvement is due to changes made to the reporting timescales in 2016/17 to reflect the complex nature of the complaints. For example, some complaints required a meeting with the advocate/parents, which was not possible to do within the initial 10 working days.

Of the cases responded to at Stage One, 20 (49%) were upheld or partially upheld during the reporting period 2017/18, compared to 19 (43%) in the previous reporting year 2016/17.

- **Stage Two Complaints**

Of the 42 complaints recorded during the reporting period, 1 complaint progressed to Stage Two. This is a decrease in comparison to the same period in 2016/17; when 6 complaints escalated to the second stage.

Due to the complex nature of the complaints and the need to consult fully with all relevant parties, it took longer than 65 working days to complete the investigation.

- **Stage Three Complaints**

No complaints escalated to the Stage Three Review Panel stage of the complaints procedure during the reporting period. One panel was held during the reporting period where the complaint had originated in 2016/17.

- **Escalation to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)**

A complainant can contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), at any point during the complaints process. During the reporting period 2017/18, one complaint was investigated by the LGSCO and 3 other were closed without enquires being made. They did not uphold any of these complaints.

- **Compliments**

During this reporting period, 28 compliments were received, which is a slight increase on the 25 received in the previous year. The Safeguarding and Family Support Service received 21 compliments, followed by Corporate Parenting with four compliments, and Quality Assurance received three. A snapshot of compliments can be found on page 10.

**Background – Statutory Complaints Procedure**

Children’s Social Care complaints are investigated under the statutory provisions of the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006. The legislation is supported by detailed guidance from the Department for Education, ‘Getting the Best from Complaints’, and used in the development of the Children and Families Social Care complaints procedure published by the Council.
The Social Care Complaints Team has the key responsibility for managing the statutory process for complaints from children and young people (or their representatives) about the quality of the service they receive.

The fundamental key principles that underpin Waltham Forest’s Children’s Social Care complaints procedure are:

- Ensuring that complaints are managed effectively at all stages of the procedure by having clear and straightforward systems in place to capture complaints and that these processes are readily accessible to all service users, and
- Ensuring decisions are taken as quickly as possible and where fault is found, lessons are learnt which are then fed back into service improvements.

The statutory children’s social care complaints procedure has three distinct stages which aim to resolve complaints and address representations as soon as reasonably practicable, and within specific timescales. These stages are described as follows.

- **Stage One – Local Resolution**

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

  The timescale for resolving complaints at Stage One is 10 working days, but can be extended to 20 working days for more complex cases.

  The timescale in which a complaint is to be responded to is decided by the complaints team and agreed with the complainant, based upon the information in the complaint and the best way to try and resolve it. For example, a parent may want to have a meeting with the team manager to discuss the issues first. It is not always possible to arrange this and respond within 10 working days.

- **Stage Two Investigation**

  This part of the procedure is used when the complainant remains dissatisfied after a Stage One investigation, or the complaint is sufficiently serious to warrant a more formal investigation.

  This stage allows for a fresh and independent look at the original complaint. The investigation is conducted by an external Investigating Officer (and an Independent Person when required) who oversees the fairness and transparency of the investigation process.

  The Investigating Officer and Independent Person will look at all details surrounding the complaint and make recommendations for a better or improved service, and how any service failings can be rectified.
After considering the findings and recommendations of the investigation team, the Director of Children and Families' Services provides a written response to the complainant setting out their view of whether or not they accept the outcome of the investigation.

The timescale for responding to complaints at Stage Two is 25 working days. This can be extended to 65 working days if necessary; but this is always done with the agreement of the complainant.

- **Stage Three Review Panel**

  If there is any residual dissatisfaction with the outcome at Stage Two, the complainant can request that the issues are taken to a Review Panel consisting of three independent panellists.

  The panel considers the complaint and makes recommendations for the consideration of the Deputy Chief Executive, Families and Homes; who will then respond to the complainant on the outcome of the review and any actions to be taken.

  There are various timescales relating to Stage Three complaints, including:

  o Organising the panel within 30 working days of the complainant's request;
  o Producing the Chairperson's report within 5 working days detailing its recommendations; and
  o Sending the local authority's response to the complainant within 15 working days of the Panel's report.

- **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) stage**

  If a complainant remains dissatisfied after exhausting all three stages of the statutory complaints process they can take their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

  A complainant can access the LGSCO at any point; but the LGSCO normally expects the Local Authority to process the complaint through all stages of the statutory procedure before dealing with it.

  The timescales for responding to the LGSCO’s enquiries (usually 28 calendar days) is set by them and the Council is required to adhere to them. All responses to the LGSCO were sent to them within the given timescale.

**Publicity and Information**

To encourage and facilitate easy access to the complaints process for children and young people, publicity material and information relating to the complaints process continues to be widely publicised through:

- The Council’s website
- Speaking to their Social worker
- Speaking to Coram Voice (advocacy)
- Speaking to the Social Care Complaints Team who can provide additional or more detailed advice and support as requested.
- Speaking to the Independent Reviewing Officer during or after Reviews

In addition, when children and young people are admitted into Local Authority care, as part of the 28-day review meeting, information, leaflets and other guidance on how to make a complaint are included in the ‘Welcome Pack’.

**Advocacy**

Advocacy in its broader sense is about empowering children and young people to make sure that their rights are respected and that their views and wishes are fully considered and reflected in decision-making about their own lives.

Although the role of advocacy is not limited to assisting children or young people when they wish to make a complaint, the purpose of an advocate in the complaints procedure is to ensure that children and young people’s interests are promoted effectively by a personal champion.

To support this process, during 2017/18 Waltham Forest Council commissioned Coram Voice to provide an advocacy support service to Looked After Children, Care Leavers, and Child Protection Advocacy for children aged 7+. Coram Voice can also provide Children’s Services facing advocacy for Disabled Children. The provision of the advocacy service encourages young people to have their voices heard and their issues discussed at the point of service delivery rather than progressing to a complaint.

They also provide an Independent Visitors service to Waltham Forest. They work with children and young people who are in care. Some of these children and young people may have no or very little contact with their families and for some the contact may not always be a positive one. Where it is thought to be in their best interest, they will be asked whether they would like an Independent Visitor.

National consultations with young people have shown that young people do not necessarily want to make complaints, but want to have their issues resolved. The Coram Voice advocacy and Independent Visitor service supports children and young people in trying to achieve such resolutions.

Coram Voice provided the following services to Waltham Forest children from June 2017 – March 2018. (Data taken from their ‘Annual Report on provision of Advocacy and Independent Visitor service for Waltham Forest - 1 June 2017 to 31 March 2018’
Number of young people who received service

![Chart showing the number of young people who received service through different advocacy types.]

**Issues based advocacy** relates to matters faced by children or young people with which they want independent support. The table below shows the subject matters raised.

**Child Protection advocates** help children and young people understand the child protection process, gain answers or get their views across before, during or after meetings; such as the Child Protection Conference and Core Group Meetings.

**Independent visitors** are volunteers who befriend and support children and young people aged up to 18 who are looked after by the local authority.

**Issues raised by child/young person**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue Description</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>18</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about SW / PA</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complaint</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support at meetings</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Education, Training &amp; Employment - access to</td>
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<td>Safeguarding - concerns about YP's safety</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance, Benefits &amp; Debt - other</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>Health</td>
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<td>Conclusions about SW / PA</td>
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At the end of the reporting year, 241 separate issues, covering 54 different subjects, were raised by Coram Voice on behalf of Waltham Forest young people. The top ten are outline in the above table. Complaints represented only 7% of all issues raised.

There was an increase in the number of issues raised and dealt with by an advocate; from 170 in 2016/17 (with the previous provider) to 241 reported by Coram Voice.

It is not possible to make a comparison with the previous reporting period 2016/17, as the advocacy provider changed from Barnardo’s to Coram Voice and each provider reports under different category headings.

**Listening to service users and learning from complaints**

Children’s Social Care considers outcomes from complaints as valuable learning. To improve service quality, managers responding to complaints/representations are encouraged to identify any areas for improvement within the service and to inform the complainant of actions which will be taken to prevent a recurrence of the event which led to the complaint.

All resolution and actions ensuing from complaint investigations are assigned to the responsible manager and progress against those actions is monitored by both the service area and the Social Care Complaints Team over the course of the year.

An example of identified learning following complaint investigations during 2017/18 are:

- Social Workers are to be mindful of the information they write in assessment reports to ensure that it does not disclose personal information inadvertently to a third party.

- Where a Looked After Child has an uncertain immigration status, efforts should be made to establish and document a child’s rights before they turn 18, after which time their case can often become more complicated and they may have fewer routes open to them.

**Managing the complaints process**

Both Children’s and Adults Social Care Complaints Services are managed by the Finance and Governance Directorate, on behalf of the Families and Homes Directorate. This ensures that the Social Care Complaints Team is independent of operational line management and of direct service providers.

The team consists of a Complaints Manager and Complaints Officer. They are responsible for the administration and management of both the adults and children’s statutory social care complaints process.

External consultants are commissioned to investigate Stage Two complaints and sit on Stage Three Review Panels.
During the reporting year, £27,600 was spent on using external consultants; however, this was mainly for investigation of complaints that originated in 2016/17. Complaints should be made through an online portal (or by letter if the person does not have online access). They are then allocated to team managers via this system which has the ability to send out reminder notifications and to keep the complainant informed about where their complaint is within the process.

**Training and Development**

E-learning is available to all staff; including modules on complaint handling, customer care, data protection and so on; these can be accessed through the Council’s Website. Formal complaint training is being planned for 2018/19.

The Social Care Complaints Team is available to support and advise staff; to ensure that best practice is followed during a complaints investigation; and to provide targeted training with individual members of staff and managers on request.

In addition, complaints handling procedures and processes are regularly updated and made available on the staff intranet.

**Integrated Services**

Many of Waltham Forest’s health and social care services are provided in partnership with health agencies within the borough, primarily; the North East London NHS Foundation Trust, Barts Health NHS Trust and the Waltham Forest Clinical Commissioning Group.

Complaints processes are provided and managed separately by each agency, and performance in this report is specifically about the Waltham Forest Council aspect of complaints procedure.

**Compliments**

Children and young people come to the attention of Children’s Services for a variety of reasons, and the input with some families may not always be welcomed. However, much of the support provided is greatly appreciated, with many compliments delivered verbally. These are not easily captured for reporting purposes.

However, where staff have done an exceptionally good piece of work or provided an excellent service, some parents and carers have sent in a written compliment to that worker or team.

During this reporting period, 28 compliments were received, which is a slight increase on the 25 received in the previous year.

The Safeguarding and Family Support Service received 21 compliments, followed by Corporate Parenting with four compliments, and Quality Assurance received three.
A snapshot of these is outlined below:

- The support and help I received from the social worker was extraordinary. She is a superstar in my eyes and has made a big difference in my individual life. I believe Walthamstow needs more social workers with the same personality and attitude as her.

- I would like to thank you for your professional assessment. The writing shows you have listened to us both and I really appreciate that I have documentation of the person’s own words.

- The customer was full of praise for the social worker and described her as the only worker who ‘has met her on her level’. She described her as helpful and understanding.

- Further to the review meeting may I say thank you so very much, personally, for being so concerned and supportive in understanding, the paramount well-being of my family member. Thank you for your help and support in these matters.

- I felt that both you and your colleague were very professional, child friendly and caring during the assessment.

- Although, the assessment process can often be a very intrusive, intimidating process for young people, you and your colleagues expertise and child friendly attitude, have managed to relax and put the child at ease, when communicating with you and has turned a very stressful process into a more bearable and pleasant experience.

**Analysis of complaints**

The following sections of this review provide statistical information on the number of statutory cases recorded and actioned; the performance against statutory timescales for handling complaints and complaint trends between the reporting period to date, and the same period the previous reporting year 2016/17.

In this report, we have identified six main issues about which people made a complaint. These are the same categories used across all Council directorates, and by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. This provides consistent and comparative information across all directorates.

It is not always easy to fit Children’s Social Care complaints into one of the six areas, as it is not a ‘one size fits all’ solution, and some complaints cross multiple categories. Each complaint is allocated a ‘best fit’ category according to the issues raised by the complainant and is from their perspective. The types of complaints are roughly allocated as follows:
- **Policy and Decision** – usually relates to an outcome of an assessment or a service request that has not been agreed

- **Staff Attitude** – primarily around customer service issues, or where a worker said they would do something; but did not.

- **Poor Quality** – mainly about the quality of reports and case management

- **No Provision** – where a service was agreed; but not provided

- **Communication** – usually about, calls, messages, emails, etc not being returned

- **Delay** – where a formal or informal deadline is set to provide a service; but is missed and provided much later.

During the reporting period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, the Social Care Complaints Team recorded a total of 42 complaints, compared to 47 in the same reporting period in 2016/17.

The following chart shows the reasons for making a complaint during the reporting period, compared with the previous year 2016/17.

The above chart shows that there were 5 less complaints made in this reporting period than in the previous year. To enable a like for like comparison, percentages give a better indication of whether there was an increase or decrease in the specific types of complaints received.
• Overall there was an 11% decrease in the number of complaints received in this reporting period compared to 2016/17

• There was a significant drop in the number of complaints about Policy and Decisions, which was down to 10 (24%), from 25 (53%) in the previous year.

• There were fewer complaints about staff Attitude 17%, down from 21% last year.

• There is a more even spread of complaints in this reporting year, in comparisons to the previous period, when Policy and Decision made up more than half of the complaints received.

The following chart sets out information about who accessed the statutory procedure during the reporting period.

Just over half of complaints, 22 (52%) were made by parents, carers or relatives of the children or young people. Of the 18 complaints made by the child or young person, 8 came via an advocate and 10 were received from the young person directly.
The following chart sets out the total number of complaints requiring a response by each service area during the reporting period and the number responded to within timescale:

- **The Safeguarding and Family Support Services, includes the Referral and Assessment teams.**

- **Corporate Parenting service also includes the Leaving Care Service, Placement and Resources Service and Fostering and Adoption Team**

The following chart shows the number of cases that were escalated at each stage of the Complaints Process during the reporting period, compared with the previous year 2016/17.
The majority of complaints received, 41 (98%) were resolved satisfactorily at the Local Resolution Stage, which means that only one complaint moved on to stage two of the complaints procedure. This is 11% improvement compared with the previous reporting period of 2016/17.

One complaint was withdrawn as it was submitted by a third party who did not have consent from the service user.

During the reporting period 2017/18, only one complaint was investigated by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and 3 others were closed without enquires being made.

The following table shows the percentage rate of the type of complaint that was upheld or partly upheld.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trend</th>
<th>No of Complaints</th>
<th>Upheld</th>
<th>Partially Upheld</th>
<th>Not Upheld</th>
<th>Withdrawn</th>
<th>% of Complaints Upheld and Partially Upheld</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage One</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy and Decision</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Attitude</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Quality</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Provision</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delay</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage Two</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy and Decision</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage Three</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGSCO Complaints</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy and Decision</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It should be noted that the regulations allow for complex cases to be responded to using the 20 working days extended timescale.

Many managers contact complainants and offer to meet with them informally to discuss the complaint and try to provide a verbal resolution prior to sending their written response. The clarification of complaints also enables a better quality response, as issues usually become clearer during a meeting or telephone conversation.

This is considered good practice as it enables any misunderstandings to be sorted out swiftly; especially for parents involved in a child protection enquiry. However, arranging such meetings usually means that responding to the complaint can take longer than 10 working days, and as such 20 workings days is used as the main performance measure.

The following chart shows the number of complaints responded to within timescale per quarter.
The following chart shows the number of working days taken to respond to complaints within this reporting period.

![Chart showing number of working days taken to respond to complaints]

Of the Stage One responses made between 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018; there was a 7% improvement in the overall response time, as 84% were responded to within the 20 working day timescales used for complex complaints, this was compared to 77% for the same reporting period in 2016/17.

In a report called ‘Are we getting the best from children’s social care complaints?’, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman states ‘Don’t delay - The statutory timescales are designed to ensure complaints are handled effectively, fairly and swiftly throughout the process’.

They go on to say ‘We also receive complaints from people frustrated by delays, often finding the path through the statutory process to be littered with obstacles, coming to us hoping to find a swifter and simpler resolution’.

It is vital that complaints are responded to within the set timescale to ensure that users, parents and carers know that their dissatisfaction is taken seriously and does not add to their frustrations.

It should be noted that Care Leavers and Looked After Children can email the Director of Children’s Social Care directly with any concerns they may have. This often resolves matters quickly and efficient without resorting to the complaints process.
The following chart shows the outcome of Stage One Complaints received during the reporting period, compared with the previous year 2016/17.

Of the cases responded at Stage One, 20 (49%) complaints were upheld/partially upheld in the reporting period, compared to 19 (40%) in the previous reporting year 2016/17.

With regards to those complaints that were upheld, the service offered apologies and advised the service users of any actions that would be taken to prevent the incident that led to their complaint from recurring.

**Child Protection – safeguarding, plans and conferences**

In 2017/18, just over 3500 safeguarding referrals were made to Children’s Social Care’s Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). By the very nature of these referrals; they could give rise to a complaint being received.

The majority of complaints in relation to child protection were primarily from parents and relatives around the quality of reports written by the allocated worker or about information written about them that they felt misrepresented their views.
Complaints received by each service in comparison to previous year

23 (55%) of the complaints received in this reporting period were in relation to safeguarding and family support. This includes cases where at the time of the complaint, the child may have initially been subject to a Child Protection Plan, but subsequently became subject to a Child In Need Plan.

For many complainants the child protection enquiry is the first contact that they may have had with ‘Children’s Social Care’, so they initially refer to the information leaflets that they are given, which state:

‘The law also says that Children’s Social Services must work with parents and carers and keep them involved with what is happening’.

When parents/carers feel that they are not kept informed regularly or fully involved in what is happening with their child; they use the appropriate mechanisms to raise this.

It is acknowledged that a child protection enquiry can be upsetting and difficult for parents/carers to come to terms with, especially if they are the subject of any allegations. The majority of issues raised in complaints about child protection procedures are in relation to the child protection investigation, poor communication, and the attitude of the social worker. These are often all contained in one overall complaint.

It is evident that when concerns are not dealt with at the time the issue is raised, this causes frustration which leads to a greater level of dissatisfaction. An example of this is when telephone calls and messages are not returned, complainants feel that they are being ignored and they cannot find out what is happening.
Corporate Parenting

The Corporate Parenting Service is primarily split between two types of service users; those who are in care (Looked After Children) and those who have left care (Care Leavers).

At the beginning of April 2017, there were 281 Looked After Children being provided a service. During the previous year, 2016/16, 199 young people left care and are in receipt of a leaving care service.

During the reporting period, 17 (40%) complaints were received compared to 22 (48%) in 2016/17; this amounts to an 8% decrease.

The chart below shows which groups of people complained about the Corporate Parenting Service during this reporting period compared to 2016/17.

One complaint came from a Looked After Child themselves, with the other five coming from a parent, carer or advocate. It was similar with Leaving Care Services, with one care leaver making two complaints directly, with the seven others coming from advocates acting on their behalf.

As referred to earlier in this report, the low number of complaints received directly from children in care or their advocates, could be partially due to informal complaint resolutions facilitated by Coram Voice, who contact managers directly to raise the young person’s concerns and resolve issues informally; this is identified as good practice and enables early resolution of problems.
The chart below shows what Looked After Children and Care Leavers complained about in the Corporate Parenting Service in the period compared to 2016/17.

![Bar chart showing complaints]

**Improvements in 2017/18**

- Complaint leaflets and the information on the website were updated to ensure that it remains accessible to all.
- The complaints procedure was reviewed and updated.

**Priorities for 2018/19**

- The Social Care Complaints Team will continue to work with Children’s Social Care to identify areas for service improvement and learning from complaints. This will be done through the implementation of action plans, which the Social Care Complaints Team will set out with recommendations for service improvement. Children’s Social Care will have the opportunity to review recommendations, agree or change them as appropriate and then feed back to the Social Care Complaints Team.
- We will work with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to provide complaints training sessions to new managers within Children’s Social Care to ensure that they are familiar with Waltham Forest’s complaints process and can effectively signpost people on how to make a complaint.
The training will also help participants to develop their skills in evaluating information and making sound decisions when responding to complaints, communicating those decisions effectively, and resolving and learning from complaints.

- We will work with the Council’s General Data Protection Regulation Support team, where required, to support the service to identify and implement any changes required by the General Data Protection Regulation in relation to complaints handling; such as, consent, retention periods and Privacy Notices.

The Complaints Team Privacy Notice has been created and can be found on the Council's website at: https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/content/corporate-complaints-team-privacy-notice