

**Report Author:** Complaints Officer

**Date of Report:** 05/04/2019

**Title:** **Customer Feedback Annual Report 2018/2019**

## 1. Introduction

Each year, Social Services Departments are required to produce an annual report which provides an overview of customer feedback alongside a review of the effectiveness of our complaints process.

The figures presented in this report show our performance during the financial year 2018/19 within the complaints procedure and measured against the Social Services Complaints Procedures (Wales) Regulations 2014.

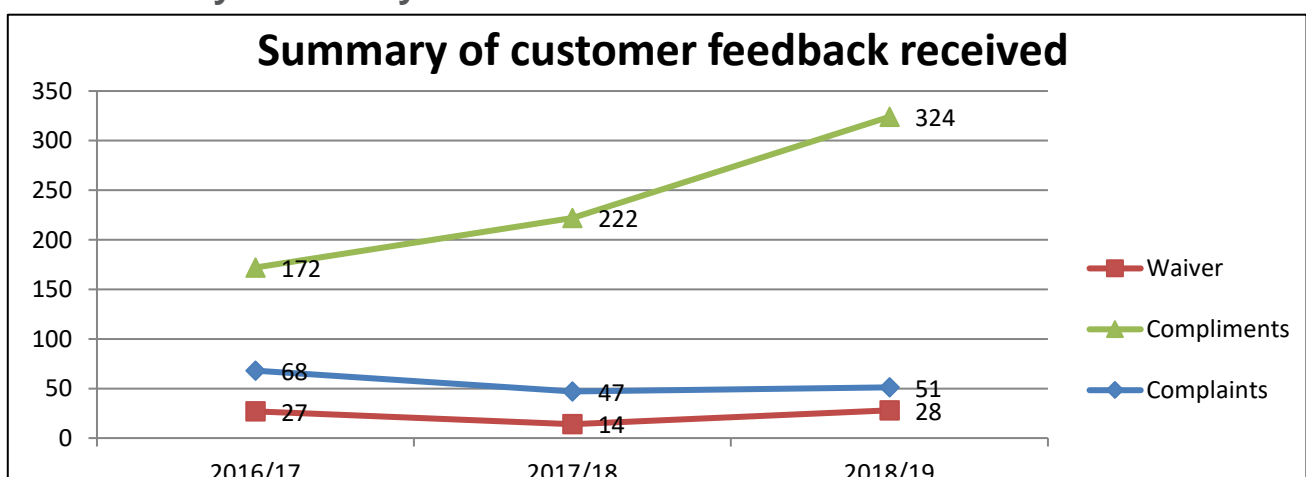
The Social Services Customer Connections Team is responsible for dealing with customer feedback i.e. complaints, waiver applications and compliments across both Community Support Services (CSS) and Education and Children's Services (E&CS). It is also responsible for monitoring and processing complaints for the wider authority and reports to the Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.

This annual report is divided into sections. Each section will provide an overview as follows:

- Section 2 – Summary of activity and core standards
- Section 3 – Complaints
- Section 4 – Concerns
- Section 5 – Complaints resolved within 24 hours
- Section 6 – Waivers
- Section 7 – Compliments
- Section 8 – Lessons Learned and action taken
- Section 9 – Evaluation of procedure
- Section 10 – Extensions due to exceptional circumstances

The data provided in the annual report will generally cover three years; this will provide some context in terms of activity and trends.

## 2. Summary of activity and core standards



**Chart 1: Summary of customer feedback received over three years**

Chart 1 summarises the activity over the last three years for complaints, waiver applications and compliments. Complaints are at similar levels 2017/18. Praise is also at similar levels and there is an increase in waiver applications.

All complaints and compliments are recorded against one of the Department's seven core standards listed in table 1.

Standard	This means that:
<b>Courtesy &amp; Respect</b>	You can expect to be treated with courtesy and respect. For example, you should be given the name of the person you are talking to, and you should be called by your title unless you ask us not to.
<b>Confidentiality &amp; Privacy</b>	Information about you will be treated as confidential. For example, staff will only discuss your needs with people who need to know, if you do make a complaint only the staff directly involved will know the details.
<b>Information</b>	You should expect to receive leaflets which explain the services you are receiving, or might receive. For example, "Your Voice" and "Moving into a Care Home - A guide for people in Denbighshire".
<b>Communication</b>	You should expect full communication with staff in the Social Services Department. For example, speaking to the person responsible for your case.
<b>Involvement &amp; Participation</b>	You should expect to be fully involved in discussing the services you are receiving. If you have a carer, he/she will be asked their views and offered a separate assessment.
<b>Staff</b>	Staff assessing needs will produce an identity card, have a relevant qualification and/or experience, and have regular support and training
<b>Response Times</b>	These are times in which responses should be made. For example, services should start at the time agreed, you should receive a copy of the Care Plan.

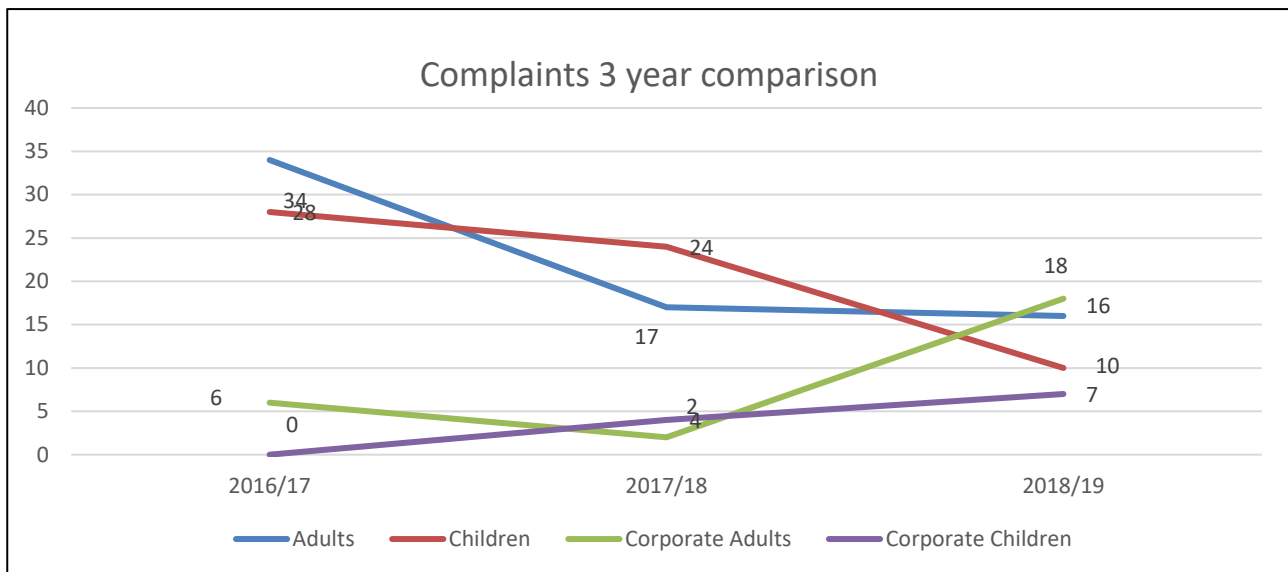
**Table 1: Social Services Core Standards**

A number of complaints in 2018/19 were levelled against staff and 11 of 21 complaints were either upheld or partly upheld, with only 3 complaints fully upheld. The staff complaints account for around 40% of all complaints.

### 3. Complaints

Overall, the number of formal complaints recorded during 2018/19 are slightly increased on last year. Chart 2 illustrates the number of complaints received by each service including both Stage 1 and Stage 2.

Corporate complaints are those raised about Social Services which fall outside of the statutory guidance, but were dealt with under the councils' corporate complaints procedures.



**Chart 2: Complaints – 3 year comparison**

A lower number complaints against Children's Services is conversely due to the higher number received verbally – which gives the service the opportunity to see them recorded as concerns, not complaints, if dealt with in 24 hours. More Adult's complaints are received in writing or email meaning they automatically enter the statutory process and cannot be recorded as concerns – irrespective of how quickly they are dealt with.

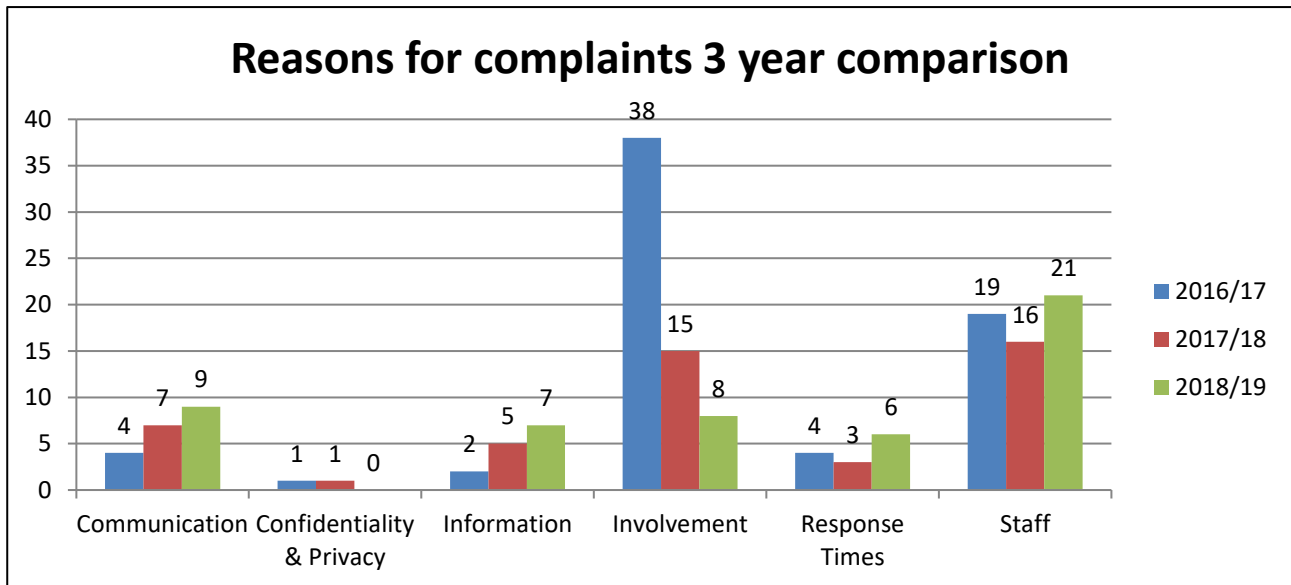
The number of corporate complaints has risen in 2018/19. This increase is partly due to an increase in the number of complaints regarding homelessness prevention. As homelessness prevention is governed by the Housing Act, complaints do not fall under the statutory procedures. Another reason is the more rigorous application of GDPR where services are unable to discuss complaints without specific authority from the citizen.

Such a complaint was received regarding Mrs X from a concerned friend Mrs Y. This was responded to at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of our processes and it was a difficult complaint to deal with. There was clearly a concerned citizen advocating for another, but the citizen receiving services was happy with the intervention of social services and would not consent to details being shared. The service handled this very well, explaining the processes to the complainant in a manner that did not disclose personal information but put their mind at rest.

### 3.1 What were the complaints about?

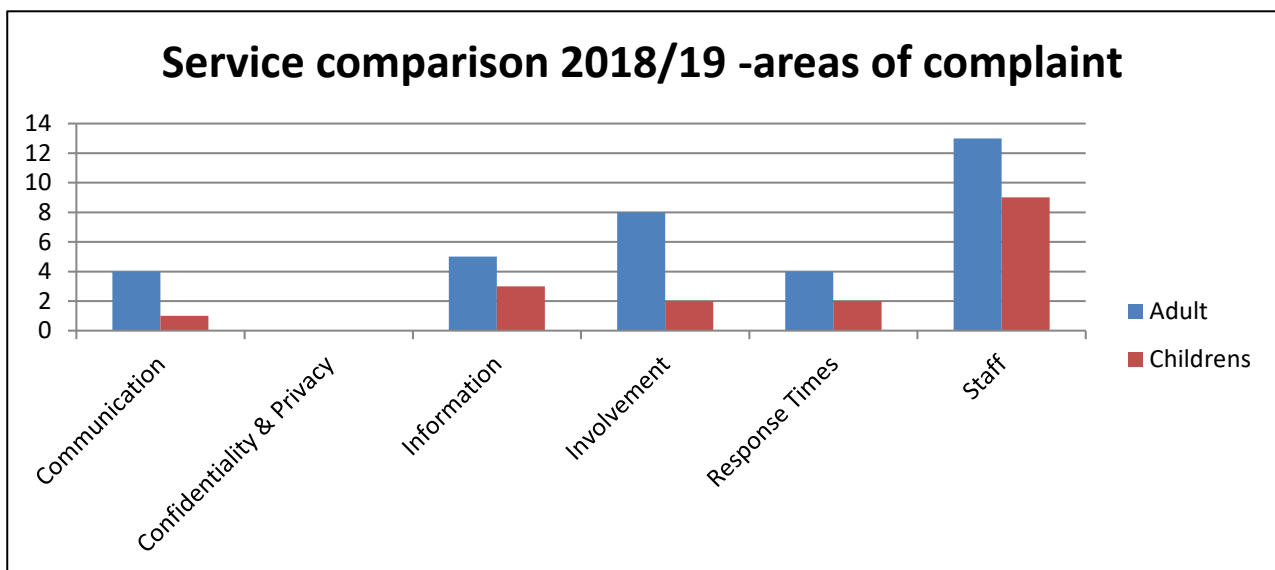
The reason for making complaints (measured against the core standard in table 1) for each year is illustrated in chart 3.

Involvement, staff and communication continue to be the 3 main areas of complaint and this is consistent with previous years but complaints regarding involvement continue to drop from a high of 38 in 2016/17.



**Chart 3: Reason for making complaints – 3 year comparison**

When looking at the nature of complaints by service, chart 4 shows that Adults and Children's Services receive complaints in the broadly the same areas. The majority of complaints against both services were against staff and 55% were either upheld or partly upheld.



**Chart 4: Reason for making complaints by service 2017/18**

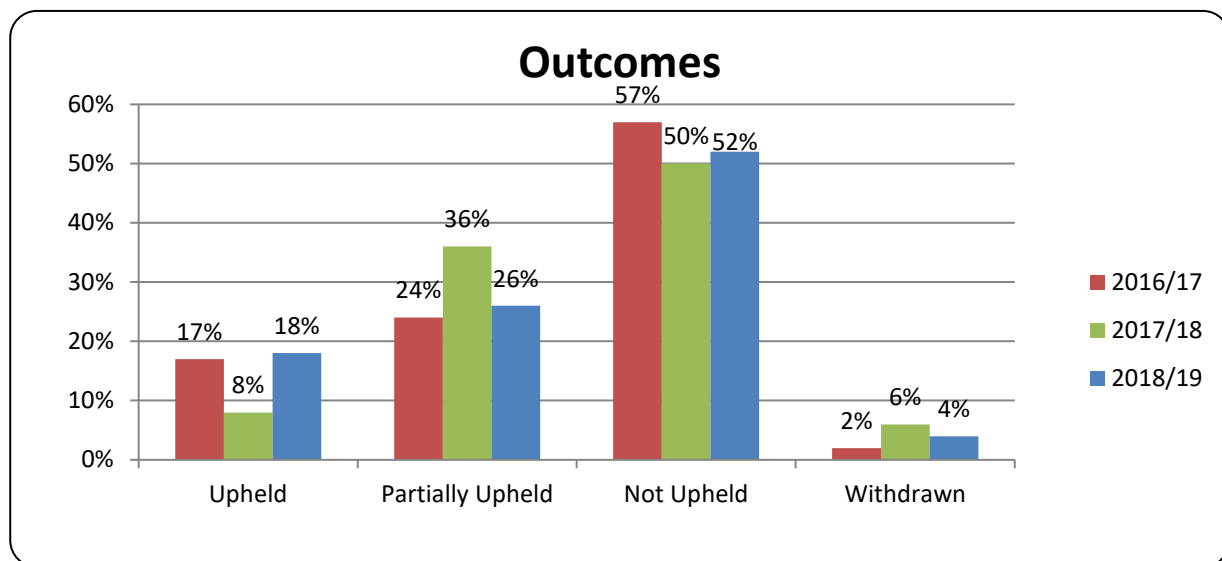
## 3.2 Acknowledgment of complaints

All complaints were acknowledged within the statutory timescale of 2 working days, unless the complaint was resolved prior to acknowledgement. In the case of statutory complaints we must acknowledge in writing within this timescale. Corporate complaints can be responded to in the manner they were received.

### 3.3 Stage 1 complaints

#### 3.3.1 Outcomes

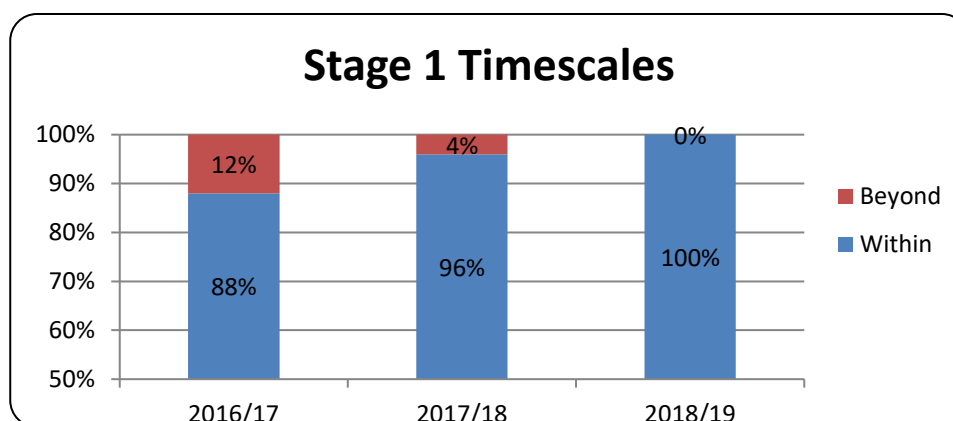
Chart 5 illustrates the outcome of complaints.



**Chart 5 Outcome of complaints**

#### 3.3.2 Timescales

The performance in dealing with complaints has been exemplary in 2018/19 at 100% for both Adults and Children's services. This is the first time Denbighshire has achieved this result and shows continual improvement. The target set by the Council is 95%. This compares favourably against local authorities in North Wales and Denbighshire is one of the best performing authorities in Wales in terms of responding to complaints in a timely manner.



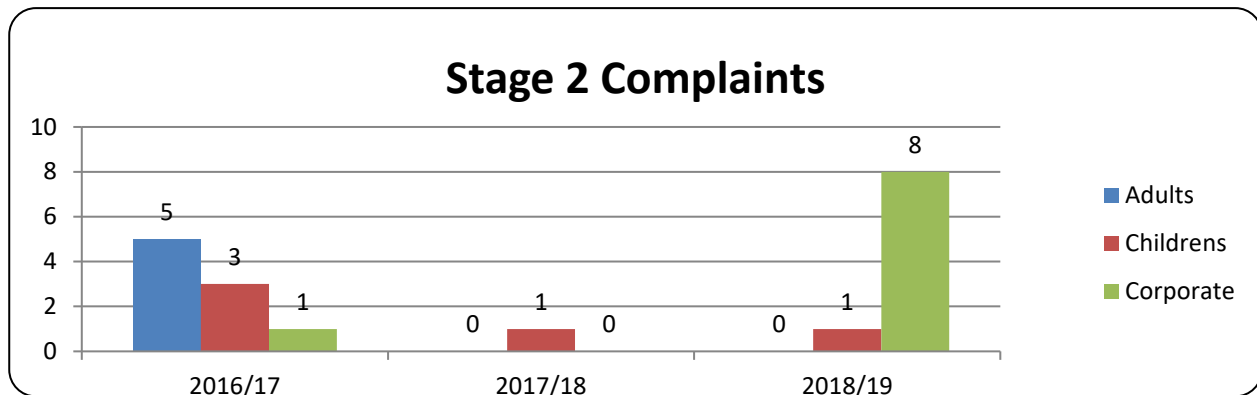
**Chart 6**

**Stage 1 complaints –  
adherence to  
timescales**

### 3.4 Stage 2 complaints

Chart 7 shows a breakdown of stage 2 complaints by service for the last three years. Although the number of Stage 2 investigations has increased where people have been unhappy with the outcome of a stage 1 investigation, only one of the 7 Stage 2 investigations was partly upheld, suggesting that we had dealt with complaints fairly from the outset.

Also only one of the Stage 2 investigations in 2018/19 was dealt with under statutory regulations meaning that on only one occasion has the authority looked to commission an Independent Investigator. The other Stage 2 complaints were dealt with under corporate procedures and investigated by Senior Managers.

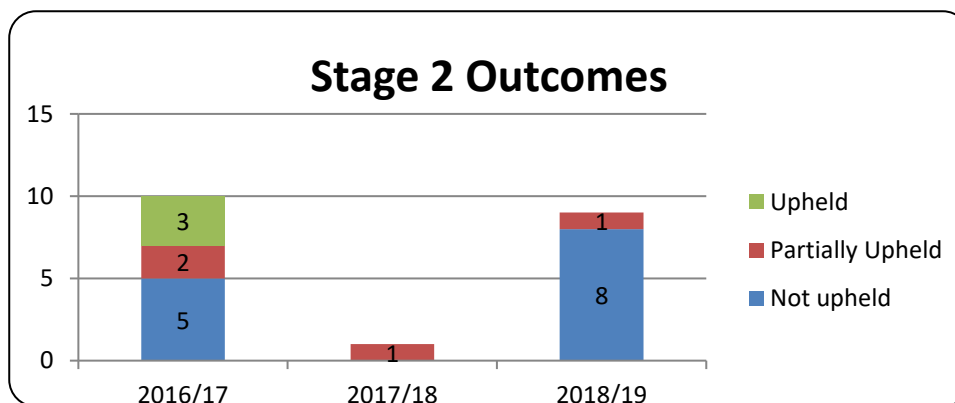


**Chart 7 Complaints progressed to stage 2**

### 3.4.1 Outcomes

Chart 8 details stage 2 complaints by outcome. Generally a Stage 2 complaint is investigated when the complainant is unhappy with either the decision or the process around the Stage 1 investigation. Although the number of Stage 2 investigations has increased, the number not upheld suggests that the process was carried out correctly.

On no occasion has a complainant then followed the route to the Public Services Ombudsman Wales, further evidencing our correctly handling and decision making.

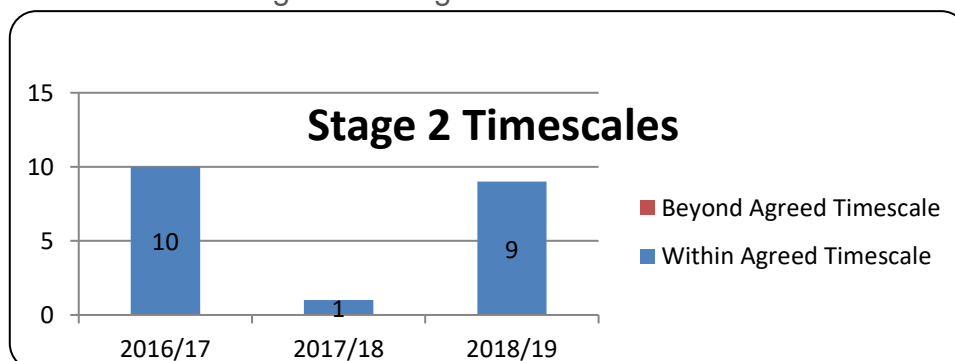


**Chart 8**

**Stage 2 complaints by outcome**

### 3.4.2 Timescales

There were no Stage 2 investigations in 2018/19 that ran over timescale.

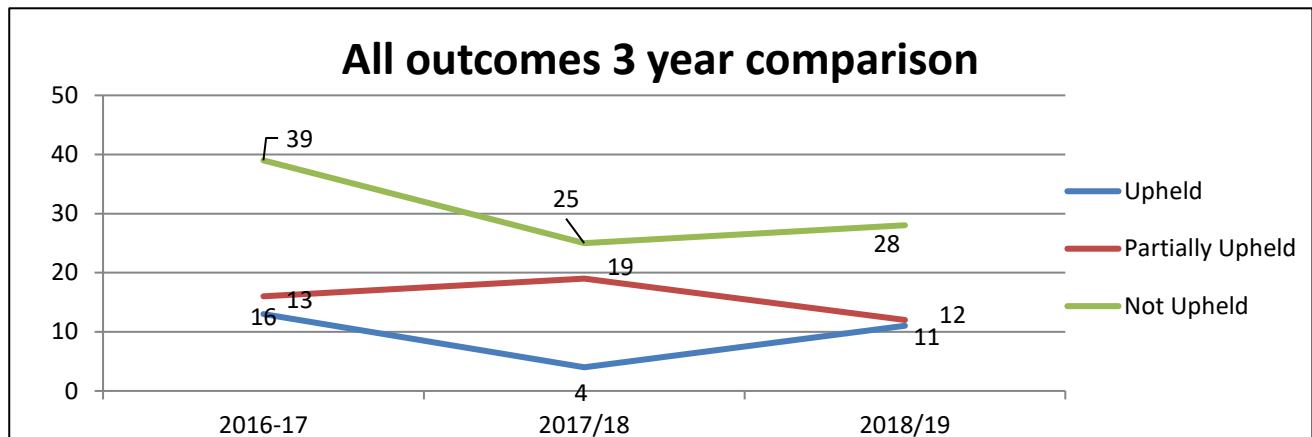


**Chart 9**

**Stage 2 complaint timescales**

### 3.4.3 Stage 1 and 2 outcomes

Chart 10 below shows the difference in outcomes between the last 3 years. The number of complaints is similar to 2017/18 and the number not upheld remains at just over 50%.

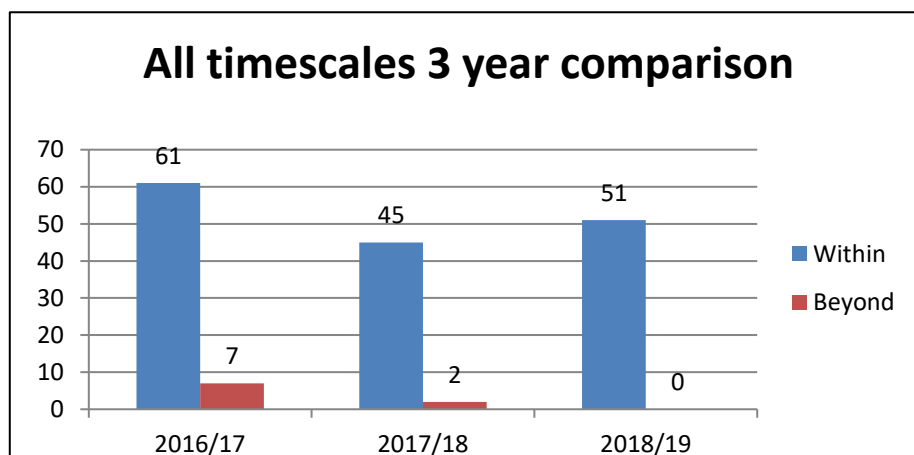


**Chart 10 – All outcomes 3 year comparison**

### 3.4.4 All Timescales

As shown in chart 11 below, there is a 100% record in dealing with complaints within timescale in 2018/19 and this is a first for the authority. This is as a result of continued improvement over the past years

On average, complaints to Social Services are dealt with in 5 days but both statutory and corporate processes allow 10.



**Chart 11**

**All timescales 3 year comparison**

## 4. Concerns

Concerns are issues raised that did not meet the criteria for the statutory complaints procedure or valid verbal complaints that were dealt with within 24 hours and downgraded. These issues were resolved informally.

### Total concerns 3 year comparison

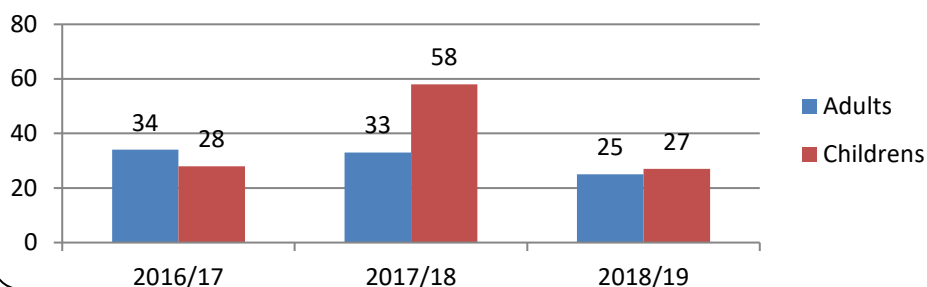


Chart 7

Concerns 2017/18

## 5. Complaints resolved within 24 Hours

Within the statutory complaint legislation, any verbal complaints that are resolved by the close of the next working day, to the satisfaction of the complainant, should not be recorded as a complaint. Such complaints are recorded as concerns.

The total number of complaints dealt with in less than 24 hours and thus recorded as concerns is as in 2017/18. The services dealt with 82% of all verbal complaints within 24 hours and this equated to 65% of all concerns received.

	2017/18	2018/19
<b>Adults</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Children</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>21</b>

## 6. Waiver applications

The table below shows that the number of approved waiver applications has seen an increase on 2017/18.

Year	Waiver
<b>2016/17</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>2017/18</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>2018/19</b>	<b>28</b>

## 7. Compliments

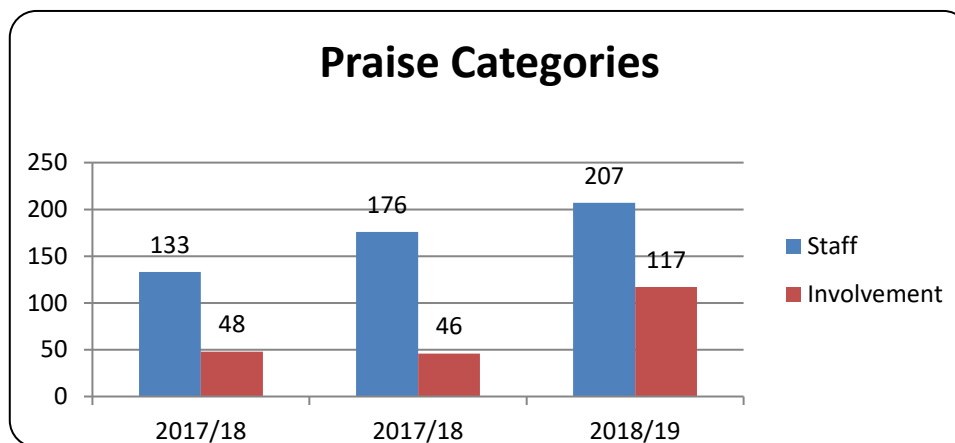
The table below shows the number of compliments received over the last three years. There is a significant rise of 30% in recorded compliments in 2018/19. This is partly due to social workers being more aware of the need to report all praise received and passing all instances on to either the complaints officer or their team managers.

Social Services receives far more positive feedback than it does negative.

Year	Compliments received
<b>2016/17</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>2017/18</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>2018/19</b>	<b>324</b>



Chart 12 shows the number of compliments received measured against core standards



**Chart 12**

**Compliments received**

## 8. Lessons learned and action taken

Where a service finds it has not acted appropriately and a complaint is upheld or partly upheld, it will endeavour to learn from the errors made. These are recorded and agreed with the complainant.

A complaint to the Homelessness Prevention Team from a citizen was partly upheld after a Stage 2 investigation by a service manager. It was agreed that staff would attend further training after issues were identified around communication with the citizen.

### 8.1 Areas of improvement

The complaints team continues to work with the services to improve the way complaints are dealt with.

- 8.1.2 Both Adults and Children's services continue to deal with complaints as swiftly as possible and this has resulted in 82% of verbal complaints being resolved within 24 hours.
- 8.1.3 The complaints team has designed and begun delivering a conflict management course and these will be delivered on a rolling basis to staff working in both services. The course is designed to better equip officers to deal with difficult situations and to de-escalate conflict. This will improve the relationships our staff develop with citizens.
- 8.1.4 As part of wider authority improvements, the statutory complaints database will be improved and incorporated into a new Customer Relationship Management system due to be in place in 2019/20. This will improve the way complaints are recorded and managed.

### 8.2 Areas of weakness

- 8.2.1 Highlighted by the number of complaints made against staff there still remain some weaknesses in how we communicate with citizens. Notwithstanding some of the situations social workers are involved in are extremely stressful and emotive but we should constantly strive to improve communication skills. This is actioned above where the Homelessness Prevention Service is providing further training and also via the complaints department's conflict management courses – these courses also focus on the complaints processes and how to avoid them.

## 9. Evaluation of procedure

The complaints officer continually evaluates the procedures and attends meetings with staff and management to discuss the complaints processes and to inform on the number of complaints received by department. In addition, Team Managers are consulted and give feedback on the complaints procedures.

*"I am confident that the team are aware of the complaints procedures within the authority and in the way complaints are dealt with. They have told me they are happy that complaints – that will sometimes involve them in person – are dealt with appropriately and sensitively.*

*Education & Children's Services have an excellent relationship with the complaints officer and I am happy that the processes are carried out in a manner that provides an equitable service to citizens when they complain but also in a manner that is sensitive to staff involved. The team buy into the process and fully understand the benefit in dealing with complaints quickly and fairly"*

Christopher Roberts, Team Manager Education & Children's Services.

## 10. Extensions due to exceptional circumstances

A complaint received against a care home by a citizen has been extended due to the nature and the length of the investigation. The complaint was dealt with by the Care Home but the citizen was unhappy with their response.

The citizen was completely supportive of the councils need to extend the statutory timescale and in how we dealt with his complaint.

It would not have been possible to collate the relevant information, investigate it and respond within the normal 10 day timescale as the investigation involved staff outside the control of the council.