

Meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Monday 29th June, 2020 at 6.00pm

On Microsoft Teams

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Agenda - Public Session

(Meeting open to the public and press)

1. Apologies for absence.
2. To report the appointment of any substitute members serving for this meeting of the Committee.
3. To receive any declarations of interest under the Members' Code of Conduct.
4. To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 5th March, 2020 as a correct record.
5. Children's Services COVID-19 Update (Pages 1 – 18)
6. Children's Services Complaints, Comments and Compliments Annual Report 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 (Pages 19 – 43)
7. Annual Scrutiny Programme 2020/21 (Pages 44 –46)
8. To consider any questions from Members to the Chair where two clear days notice has been given to the Monitoring Officer (Council Procedure Rule 11.8).



Chief Executive

Dated: 19th June, 2020



Distribution:

Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee:

Councillor A Millward (Chair)

Councillor P Sahota (Vice-Chair)

Councillors M Aston, J Baines, I Bevan, P Bradley, J Cooper, S Craigie, K Lewis, C Perks and S Ridney.

Cc Councillor R Buttery (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)

Parent Governor Representatives

Ms E Wilkes – Primary Schools

Vacancy – Secondary Schools

Vacancy – Special Schools

Church Representatives

Vacancy (Archdiocese of Birmingham)

Vacancy (Worcester Diocesan Board of Education)



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Minutes of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee
Thursday, 5th March, 2020 at 6.00 pm
In Committee Room 2, the Council House, Dudley

Present:

Councillor A Millward (Chair)
Councillor P Sahota (Vice-Chair)
Councillors M Aston, J Baines, I Bevan, J Cooper, K Lewis, C Perks and S Ridney.

Officers:

S Jones – Service Manager Family Support, C Knowles – Interim Director of Children's Services and A Osei – Interim Head of Children in Care and Placement Resources (All Directorate of Children's Services) and K Buckle – Democratic Services Officer (Directorate of Finance and Legal).

Invitees

Two representatives of Dudley Youth Council.

43. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor P Bradley and D Harkins Director of Public Health and Wellbeing.

44. **Declaration of Interest**

Councillor P Sahota declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to agenda item no. 7 – Fostering Service Annual Report as his partner was employed by a Fostering Agency that had a contract with the Local Authority.

45. **Minutes**

Resolved

That subject to the deletion of V and the replacement of VI in minute no. 37 – Education Outcomes first line bullet point six, the minutes of the meeting held on 30th January, 2020, be approved as a correct record and signed.

46. **Public Forum**

A Member of the public requested responses to questions asked by parents at the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) meeting on 27th September, 2019 and enquired whether Members were aware of the review in relation to Social Inclusion services referring to the large deficit in relation to high needs.

The Interim Director of Children's Services requested the Member of the public to email her providing further detail in relation to the questions that were asked, in order that responses could be provided.

It was noted that the review of the Social Inclusion services was currently in the consultation period and the Interim Assistant Director of Special Education would be consulting with a wide range of staff, with the remodelling progressing onto various Boards and Scrutiny following that consultation period.

Resolved

That the Member of the public be requested to provide further detail to the Interim Director of Children's Services in order that the questions raised at the SEND meeting on 27th September, 2019 could be responded to.

47. **Children's Services Update**

The Interim Director of Children's Services referred to the Director's report that was submitted to the Children's Services Improvement Board and would ensure that this document was presented to Scrutiny in the future.

It was noted that Ofsted were pleased with the new Senior Leadership team within Children's Services. The Interim Director of Children's Services had carried out a diagnostic of the service, and a children in need review was being conducted in order to investigate whether the service was proactive in meeting their needs, including preventative work, in order to ensure that where possible children remained with their families.

Ofsted had raised concerns in relation to the Children with Disability Service and a review of those cases was currently being conducted. The findings of that review would be presented to this Scrutiny Committee once completed.

The Interim Director of Children's Services undertook to forward the new Structure Chart of the Senior Leadership Team to Members.

Agency staff had been reduced to 23% with a number of agency Social Workers transitioning into permanency within the Local Authority.

Following completion of a diagnostic of the service it had revealed areas requiring improvement, and core skills were being developed, including training for Managers and Social Workers to manage and understand risk, providing them with a clear vision that children were first and at the centre of everything that was done within the Service.

In relation to an Audit exercise the development of a whole new Quality Assurance Framework would take place with the analysis and findings of that review being reported to this Committee following completion. It was stated that A Osei, Interim Head of Children in Care and Resources was leading on the review.

In relation to the SEND agenda, the formation of a Send Operation Group had taken place which was jointly chaired with partner organisations. It was reported that there was a robust Action Plan that met with the Department for Education (Dfe) approval and the Interim Director of Children's Services was pleased with the direction in which the service was travelling. The Board would meet on 25th March, 2020 with the (Dfe), the Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Ofsted representatives attending. A report would be submitted to this Committee for consideration following that meeting.

The Interim Director of Children's Services provided an open invitation to Members to form focus groups to attend various Sections of the Services such as the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and the Adoption Service.

Following a request by a Member it was agreed that the whole profile of Social Work staffing could be shared with Members, including those who would shortly retire from the Service.

It was noted that those applying for Special Guardianship Orders would receive the same level of support as Foster Carers. Foster Carers were encouraged to enter into Staying Put arrangements in order that care leavers could remain with their foster carers.

Those wishing to Foster to Adopt would receive an adoption allowance and support packages following successful assessments and Members were invited to meet the Service team members.

A Member commented on the events organised for Elected Members to meet with children in care and encouraged more of those events in order to strengthen relationships between children in care and Members. The Interim Director of Children's Services confirmed that she would work with Members in order to support the provision of those events.

Resolved

- (1) That the information reported on at the meeting be noted.
- (2) That the Interim Director of Children's Services be requested to submit a report to the next meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee for consideration on the recommendations of the Send Operation Group.
- (3) The Interim Director of Children's Services be requested to disseminate to Members details of the whole profile of the service Social Workers, including those who were agency staff and those who were leaving the Authority.

48. **Fostering Service Annual Report.**

The Interim Director of Children's Services set the scene for the presentation of the report submitted and introduced the new Interim Head of Children in Care and Placement Resources, referring to the literal requirement to present the annual report.

The Interim Head of Children in Care and Placement Resources reported that a future report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee and would cover the period 31st March to 30th June, 2020.

In presenting the report, particular reference was made to the number of children in care, their placements and those children residing with family friends or members. It was accepted that due to demands on the service some children were placed with neighbouring authorities Foster Carers.

Mention was made of the Executive Summary to the report submitted and the aspiration to make Dudley the agency of choice, however it was accepted that foster carers could move in between private areas and the Council and the need to encourage Foster Carers to remain with the Local Authority was outlined.

Although a number of foster carers were being assessed and approved, if current numbers were added to those who had left the Authority there remained a net loss and there was the need and desire to improve Dudley Fostering Service.

The Chair referred to the possibility for Elected Members to drive the agenda and committed her support to the recruitment campaign.

It was admitted that although funding was an issue, foster carers wished to be respected and valued. The Interim Head of Children in Care and Placement Resources referred to a Foster Carers development day in May, that would provide learning opportunities from existing foster carers, as far as their requirements were concerned and the need to investigate competitive payments.

It was acknowledged that the assessment process for Foster Carers was intrusive and that area needed to be addressed.

Although all neighbouring authorities had unique selling points there was the requirement to consider values and the Interim Director of Children's Services referred to the work that would inform the requirements of Foster Carers, including the need to value and celebrate them. Advertising campaigns would be crucial, however the part time Communications and Public Affairs resource was far from adequate to facilitate those and further resource was required. Full details were needed to be included on the Council's website and there may well be the appetite for joint marketing across all neighbouring authorities.

Members referred to the need to celebrate the work of foster cares. The lack of Black Minority Ethnic (BME) Foster Carers and the requirement to address those resources were also echoed. The Truth be Told video advertisement was referred to and the need to reinvigorate this was suggested.

The Interim Director of Children's Services suggested that Community Faith Leaders could be engaged with in order to recruit Foster Cares from BME communities. Members would be presented with how the key priorities for the service are to be addressed within the next report on the service, as competitive practices were required in order to make Dudley more attractive to Social Workers.

In responding to a question from the Vice-Chair, the Interim Head of Children in Care and Placement Resources advised that placements for children varied and would include residential care, semi supported or supported accommodation and some remaining with their parents.

The Chair referred to a dinner for Foster Carers that was previously hosted by the Local Authority and suggested the possibility of future events being hosted in the future.

A Member suggested that the hub at the entrance of Russells Hall Hospital could be utilised to promote the recruitment drive, as there was enormous footfall within that area and the Interim Head of Children's Services confirmed that she would investigate this opportunity.

The marketing opportunity of nominating Foster Carers for MBE's and OBE's was also referred to and Members welcomed that opportunity.

A Member suggested advertising on Black Country Radio and Councillor Lewis undertook to provide Officers with relevant contact details. There was also the suggestion that the Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet Members for Children and Young People become involved with any possible radio campaign.

In responding to a question, the Interim Head of Children in Care and Placement Resources undertook to provide Members with the number of children placed with Agency Foster Carers in the Borough.

The Interim Director of Children's Services referred to continuing work in relation to all Directors of Children's Services notifying other Authorities when placing children out of their areas.

The work in relation to retaining those Social Workers that received training in Dudley and the possibility of conducting a mapping exercise to identify Adoption Agencies on a Ward basis was referred to. It was stated that details of both would be reported to a future meeting of this Committee.

A Member suggested that the Youth Council could assist with advertising for Foster Carers as they visited many of the schools within the Borough, as part of their 'Make Your Mark Campaign'.

There followed a request that the interview process for Foster Carers be examined as part of the review process.

Resolved

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted on the progress made within the Dudley Fostering Service from 1st April 2018 to 31st March, 2019 and the identified priorities for 2020 to 2021 be noted.

- (2) Members acknowledged that the corporate parenting responsibilities and the pledge for Children in Care in line with the Fostering Service provision were being met and adhered to.
 - (3) That the Interim Head of Children in Care and Placement Resources be requested to provide Members with details of the number of children that were placed with Agency Foster Carers within the Borough.
 - (4) Details of the work in relation to retaining those Social Workers that received training in Dudley and a mapping exercise that identified Adoption Agencies on a Ward basis, be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.
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49. **Update on the Youth Offending Service Inspection Action Plan**

A report of the Interim Director of Children's Services was submitted on the progress made against the recent Youth Offending Service Action Plan.

The Service Manager Family Support stated that the Service had been judged three points away from Good, however the Service would remain as requires improvement for a period of three years until the next inspection. Members generally were in agreement that this was unjust given the circumstances and the amount of work that had been conducted within the Service since the Inspection.

The Chair commented positively on the fact that a Lead Officer from the CCG played a role in the statutory multi agency service and enquired whether other partner agencies were involved with the service. The Service Manager Family Support reported that there was a vehicle to galvanise the service in order to involve partners and the small resource currently available consisted of two representatives of the CCG.

The Vice Chair advised that he had never encountered a yellow rag rating and queried whether those that were yellow should in fact appear as amber.

In responding, the Interim Director of Children's Services advised that funding details would not become available until April, 2020 and therefore it was not the case that there was a risk but that was on track.

In responding to further concerns of the Vice Chair that the critical actions referred to actions 1.3, 2.7 and 3.1. The Service Manager Family Support responded stating that work was continuing and on track in relation to the Health Review; the complete audit, collated findings and recommendations, cross reference actions with current Youth Offending Service improvement plan and incorporated findings into the 2020 version of the Youth Justice Board Plan 2020 were on track to be completed by 30th March, 2020 and were not an amber rag rating as they were not at risk.

The scoping work referred to at 3.1 had taken place on 29th February, 2020 and this action would now have a green rag rating as it had been completed.

Following a query in relation to the possibility of requesting an inspection of the service prior to a further three year period elapsing, the Interim Director of Children's Services suggested that a peer review of the service take place in order to provide assurances in relation to the improvements made to the service and would provide a temperature test .

The Chair also requested that should further reports be submitted to the Committee on services that involved partners such as the CCG, partners from those organisations should also be invited to attend meetings.

The Chair thanked the Service Manager Family Support and his team for the work undertaken in relation to the Youth Offending Service and Members echoed that appreciation.

Resolved

- (1) That the information contained in report submitted on the progress made against the recent Youth Offending Service Action Plan and information contained in the presentation be noted.
- (2) That the Inspection Action Plan Version 4, be endorsed.

50. **Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report 2019/20**

Members considered the Annual Scrutiny report for 2019/20.

The Interim Director of Children's Services expanded on the items suggested for inclusion in the work programme for the 2020/21 municipal year referring to the themed processes that would spotlight on certain areas of the Service and prior to each session an invitation would be forwarded to Members to meet the relevant Service teams to help members to frame questions for Scrutiny.

In responding to a question in relation to the Successor Programme, the Interim Director of Children's Services advised that a new Project Manager had been appointed and the Programme would go live on 16th November, 2020, with a planned training programme in place.

Members were invited to visit both the SEND activity and Education Outcomes Teams.

Resolved

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted on the Annual Overview and Scrutiny report for 2020/21 be noted.
- (2) That the Monitoring Officer, following consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair be authorised to make any necessary amendments to update the annual report prior to its submission to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Full Council.

- (3) That the following items be rolled forward for inclusion in the draft Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2020/21:-
- The School Readiness Strategy
 - Updates on the Multi-Speciality Community Provider (MCP)
 - The Successor Programme
 - Elective Home Education
 - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
 - Early Years Transformation Academy
 - Quarterly reports on Complaints, Comments and Compliments
 - Physical Activity and Healthy Weight Update
 - Dudley Child Health Profiles
- (4) That the following items be suggested for inclusion in the draft Annual Work Programme 2020/21
- Themed processes in relation to Children in Care, Care Leavers, Fostering and Adoption, Unregulated homes/supervised placements and the Virtual School.
 - Safeguarding Children in need – Early Help Family Support, Quality Assurance, new Safeguarding Partnership and the Youth Offending Service.
 - Education outcomes – Elective Home Education, School Performance, Ofsted, SEND updates, Children Missing Education, Off Rolling and Early Years.
 - Emotional Health and Wellbeing of Children and Young People.
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51. **Feedback from the Joint Children's Services and Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committees (Scrutiny Development) Working Group and the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee (Scrutiny Development) Working Group.**

A report was considered on the feedback from Joint Children's Services and Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committees (Scrutiny Development) Working Group meetings and the Children's Services Committee (Scrutiny Development) Working Group.

It was noted that the Chair had requested a briefing note be provided to all Members in relation to the Multi-Specialty Community Provider and further sessions may be helpful on this.

Following further discussion it was suggested that the Chair write to the Chief Executive Officer P Maubach, of the CCG, requesting further clarification on the MCP in view of the recommendation of the Working Group.

Resolved

- (1) That the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing together with Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group be requested to closely monitor those patients whose General Practitioners were out of Borough to ensure that they continued to receive effective and quality health, wellbeing and care services and a review and monitoring process be implemented.

- (2) That the Chair forward a letter to P Maubach, Chief Executive Officer of the CCG and the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing requesting further information on the governance of the MCP procurement, commissioning and organisation to members with particular focus on local democratic accountability; provide reports on the progress with the development of an integrated care model to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people in the Dudley Borough.
- (3) That the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing be requested to investigate how MCP Services could work closely with Children's Centres as part of the work to develop the care model for children and young people.
- (4) That Members be requested to advise Officers of the new housing estates within their Wards that have no health care facilities.
- (5) That the CAMHS Service Development Lead (Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership Trust) be requested to consider conducting a table top review of all mental health services and partners, to ensure that a streamlined and improved service was provided, with clear defined pathways that none professionals and service users could understand.
- (6) That during the 2020/21 municipal year an Informal Working Party be established to visit Sections and Teams within the Directorate of Children's Services in order to formulate recommendations for scrutiny of the relevant Service areas, when discussing the themed areas of the Services referred to in the draft Annual Work Programme.
- (7) That the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing be requested to consider rolling out across the Borough the work to address healthy weight that has already been piloted in four Wards of the Borough and consider groups with protected characteristics in relation to future work to be conducted on physical activity and healthy weight.
- (8) That the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise be requested to consider placing a levy on hot food takeaways including those applications for change of use for this purpose.
- (9) That the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing be requested to submit further reports on the progress of the work being undertake to shape the Local Authority's approach to promote healthy weight to future meetings of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 7.55pm

CHAIR

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 29th June, 2020

Report of the Interim Director of Children's Services

Children's Services COVID-19 Update

Purpose

1. This report is compiled to update members of the current position, challenges and risks within children's services in respect of the following areas:-
 - Critical Services Activity during COVID-19
 - Safeguarding vulnerable children
 - Improvement Board update
 - Schools update including – extending the school offer to pupils in year 6: Reception and years 10 and 12
 - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND update)

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that:-
 - Members note the contents of the report.
 - Members comment on and approve the continuing focus of work across the Directorate to improve the quality of practice.
 - Members recognise the continued work of all staff within the Directorate to ensure that children are supported through the Pandemic, subsequent lockdown restrictions and emerging recovery planning.
 - Members acknowledge the ongoing challenges facing the service to achieve the continuous improvement to ensure good and outstanding services for all children.

Background

3. Critical Services Activity

We continue to operate a business as usual service except for where it is not safe to visit a family home in line with public health guidance and our COVID-19 strategy. We know our most vulnerable children and there are tracking mechanisms in place to monitor their progress and safeguard them. As part of our ongoing risk assessment cases are Red/Amber/Green (RAG) rated on a weekly basis and staff use the Directors “Need to Know” notification system for high risk cases.

Staffing levels have remained relatively stable across the service, and I continue to be impressed by the commitment and dedication of our social workers and support staff.

Dudley’s Early Help system remains in operation having to adapt dynamically during the COVID-19 pandemic with all five Family Centre’s, serving the borough, closing to the public on 24th March 2020, following the lockdown arrangements. Multi-Agency Action Meetings have continued using technology during this period, with partners contributing well in this format. During this period telephone and technology based contact with families has been the focus for early help staff, from the 24th March through to the 15th April 2020.

The arrival of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) enabled the service to structure around a RAG rating system for families, (reviewed weekly). A cluster based approach to visiting families, who must have face to face contact with an early help professional has been developed. During the lockdown period there has been a significant decrease in professional requests for support from early help. This has resulted in the current release of health staff not having an impact, particularly as Health Visitors remain in role.

A significant amount of work has taken place in relation to supporting families, with food parcels in partnership with food banks, providing excellent examples of the Council working with voluntary and community organisations, to ensure family’s needs are met. The dialogue is now moving to the model of post lockdown recovery with plans being developed to have a limited number of Family Centre’s open, with reduced staffing, to mirror timescales outlined by the Government in relation to schools.

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) have made some adjustments to typical arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to the condition of grant. Given the pressures faced by Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) nationally, the YJB have reduced reporting requirements associated with the grant, but we still need to be able to account for how the money provided to Local Authorities is used. The YJB have removed the requirement to send a Youth Justice plan in this financial year (2020/2021).

In the interim, they requested a copy of our business continuity plan, not to quality assure or provide advice on, but so that they can evidence how we plan to use the allocated resources during the COVID-19 pandemic period and beyond. In addition, the YJB also requested a copy of Dudley's Youth Offending Service (YOS) recovery plan and the latest position with our self-assessment of national standards, appreciating that we may have not fully concluded the work or had it signed off by the YOS Management Board.

Further guidance has been provided to Dudley MBC by the YJB detailing how:-

- Police officers will remain in Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and retain the ability to deliver cautions.
- Appropriate adults being recognised as critical workers.
- Courts only dealing with urgent work making better use of technology to convene matters.
- Adjustments being made to support children in the secure estate (longer phone calls and additional phone credit) as visits have been ceased.

YJB also issued Local Authorities with details of an early release scheme relating to the secure estate. No Dudley young people were eligible as this did not include the remand cohort, rather focusing on young people at the end of their sentences.

With these factors in mind, Dudley's Youth Offending Team (YOT) have undertaken a review of all current case work and allocated a RAG rating (combined with Early Help as a whole Family Solutions approach). This determines which young people must have face to face contact with a professional from the team. Cases are reviewed each week, considering vulnerability and/or risk of re-offending. YOS are supporting the limited court activity, the interface with the Police and the secure estate. The team remain active in the fortnightly multi-agency Adolescent Risk Management Meeting, where concerns around young people are greatest and require a high degree of information sharing across disciplines.

The focus now moves to the YOS model of post lockdown recovery with the YOS sighted on regional and national messages around support to young people, both in the secure estate and in the community as part of the preventative agenda that plays a significant role in the contemporary work of Dudley's YOS.

A piece of planned work is underway with Public Health and Children's Social Care (CSC) to ensure that staff are supported during COVID-19 and through the recovery phase.

Education staff and public health are working closely together to develop processes regarding test and trace.

Children & Families

The Assistant Director Children's Social Care is currently preparing a report on the quality of social work practice, to inform Senior Leaders and Members regarding the challenge and actions required, to enable the service to achieve the goals within the improvement agenda in a timely way. Building on the diagnostic report undertaken In November 2019, this report provides a key focus on practice improvement and the services ability to improve outcomes for children and young people.

We are developing our integrated front door further and it will shortly include a social worker from the Dudley Disability Service (DDS) 0 to 18 service and Missing Co-ordinator. This will ensure that we provide the most appropriate response at the point of initial contact to children with a disability or significant health needs and a more seamless pathway to our most high risk young people accessing the right specialist services.

The service will be rebranded as First Response and Children's Assessment Service, which will include the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) process as one of its functions.

We held the first (relaunch) of the Children's Strategic Mash Group on 2nd June, 2020. This was well attended by key partners, where the Terms Of Reference (TOR) and priorities have been agreed. We also agreed the Membership and TOR for the Children's MASH Operational Group, including the frequency of meetings for both groups. The reporting on progress and any proposed changes from the Children's Mash Operational Group will be via the Children's Strategic Mash Group in the first instance and then to the Children's Safeguarding Partnership Group for ratification, and Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership Executive Board to be noted.

The significant fall in new contacts received into the front door since the lockdown has continued, although we have seen some increase in recent weeks. As the number of pupils returning to school increases we would expect to see an upturn in numbers of contacts through the front door and are anticipating that we might start to see a spike in the levels of concern, due to the impact of the lockdown on mental health for example. We continue to undertake business as usual activity to ensure vulnerable children are safeguarded in partnership with other agencies **(see Appendix 1)**.

Children In Care & Resources

As stated above we are reviewing the quality of practice within children in care services and have had a spotlight on children placed at home with parents on care orders, with a view to identifying the practice which may have led to some drift in progressing applications for discharge of care orders and the appropriateness of some placements.

Analysis of children in progress for adoption has been completed – 31 children have Agency Decision Maker (ADM) decisions and are at different stages of the adoption



process since March 2018. We have identified serious drift and delays and are tackling these head on. The good news is that, as at 1st May, 2020, 6 children had moved in with their adopters and a further 2 are moving in with their adopters later this month.

The Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) has been tasked to find placements for a further 13 children, whose adoptions have been delayed and a report on their family finding activities was due by the end of June 2020.

Due to effective and purposeful tracking by the new Head of Service, 88 Children have now been identified as suitable to be matched with their carers' and to exit the care system via Special Guardianship Orders. As a result of COVID-19, and the courts not prioritising these applications, 10 applications which were due to be lodged are on hold. However, social workers are tasked with completing all the necessary paperwork, in readiness so that these applications would be prioritised when the courts resume.

A Programme Board consisting of representatives from the service, commissioning and finance are working on a placement resource sufficiency, commissioning, market management and quality assurance strategy of provider services. It is anticipated that a fostering recruitment strategy will be available in July 2020 and a sufficiency strategy will be in place by September 2020. The service will use these to formulate the Corporate Parenting Strategy for the end of November 2020. A number of significant ongoing changes are being made to improve the resources available to children. A revised approach to access to resources is showing positive signs of placement stability but it is too early to assess and measure impact, this will continue to be monitored and reported on at future Boards.

The Contact Centre remains closed due to COVID-19 with restrictions resulting in social workers having to facilitate some court directed contacts in the community. Preparations to re-open contact for court directed work is underway.

Care Proceedings – Special Guardianship Orders (SGO), Adoption and Discharge delays are an ongoing concern as courts in the region continue to prioritise emergency safeguarding application during lockdown. Most dentists have been closed so the Child in Care (CIC) cohort due for checks from March to date will be outstanding, these will be prioritised as dentists re-open.

Staff with home visits have continued to take place in line with statutory requirements and prioritise families based on a RAG rating system which is reviewed weekly.

Virtual School: There is strong oversight and grip on the Virtual School and we are beginning to see the impact it is making in promoting the education of children and young people in care. The Dudley Virtual School has developed systems and processes throughout the year with a new team structure working in partnership with schools and Social Care. A key function of the Virtual School is to ensure children's personal education plan is of good quality and addresses the holistic learning needs of a child in care, taking into account their unique circumstances. Furthermore, there

is ongoing training for Designated Teachers (DT's), Social Workers (SW), Social Worker Team Managers (SWTM), Foster Carers (FC) and Independent Review Officers (IRO's). The e-Pep (electronic Personal Education Plan) has been established in the Post 16 age group and Designated Persons (DP's), Connexions Personal Advisers (PA) Team, and Work – Based Training providers have been given up to date orientation about how to facilitate Post 16 e-Pep.

A collaborative approach with the Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) team is being established. This will provide an integrated approach to Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) reviews alongside Pep meetings.

All children in care are supported by an identified Education Adviser, and all schools have a link adviser. The first annual conference, ***'Improving Outcomes For Children In Care' is scheduled virtually for Thursday 9th July 2020.*** Foster Carers have also been offered free access to a webinar at the end of June 2020 entitled 'Supporting The Emotional Well-Being Of Children In Care'.

The strategic direction of the team is outlined in the developing Service Plan for Children in Care and Resources, with calendared monitoring and reporting events. The learning offer this year has been greatly enhanced with the Challenge Tuition Programme being accelerated to meet the challenges of home-schooling due to the COVID-19 situation. Similarly, the newly introduced Arts Link programme has been moved on-line to a regional website. Carers, children and young people have been supported throughout the COVID-19 'lockdown', issuing regular *'Love To Learn' bulletins* which provides advice and guidance to home education continue to complement the work provided by schools.

Safeguarding Review and Quality Assurance

Multi-agency working with partners to ensure attendance at child protection conferences and Children Looked After (CLA) Reviews is good. The Safeguarding and Review Service continue to maintain good performance during the pandemic, ensuring that children's meetings are timely. Partnership meetings continue to ensure that any difficulties are dealt with and any obstacles to good partnership working are resolved.

The Safeguarding and Review Service is developing its Service Plan to include a range of activities that hear the voices of children, young people and their parents/carers. This work-stream will link to the wider participation strategy and will importantly focus upon what influence children, young people and their families will have upon the shaping of services.

The Safeguarding and Review Service has reviewed and strengthened its Dispute Resolution Protocol, which sets out the duties upon Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) and Child Protection Chairs to appropriately challenge the Local Authority where there are concerns about care planning for children. The new protocol has been shared with the wider service and tracking and reporting mechanisms have been put in place.

The service is currently developing the new Quality Assurance Framework, to be presented to June's Improvement Board. The purpose of this will be to ensure that there is a robust, clear, process of assurance understood by all that will link into the ongoing learning and development of staff that underpins quality of practice improvement.

Independent auditors will be undertaking a process of moderating the manager's audits and providing one to one mentoring/ coaching to those managers as a result to support their development through June and July 2020.

Practice Workshops

The service has begun to roll out a series of 4 mandatory practice workshops covering, referrals, assessment, planning and review initially, to all managers through June and early July 2020. These workshops focus on good practice requirements and have been developed with staff from the service. The aim is that managers having been through the workshops will then lead to roll them out through July to September 2020 to all children's social care staff

Signs of Safety

The service is in preliminary discussions with the national leads for the potential roll out of Signs of Safety as a model of practice for the service, which will be complemented by the restorative practice approach. This will support the ongoing work to raise quality of practice across the service and partnership.

Education, SEND, Family Solutions, Early Years & Youth

Education Outcomes

The key educational focus for Dudley during the COVID-19 outbreak has been to ensure that as many schools as possible have been open for the children of critical workers and vulnerable pupils, either with a Social Worker and/or with an Educational Health and Care Plan.

The majority of schools have only closed when there were no families needing provision or because the numbers were so low that it was safer to move the pupils to another school to reduce the number of staff needing to be in work. Around half of the schools were open during the Easter holidays, including a few on both Bank Holidays.

For the majority of young people, education has been provided remotely by their school for them to learn at home. Most schools have provided online learning but, where necessary, physical learning packs have been produced for families.

All 79 Primary schools have been contacted and are now open.



- 78 have extended their opening for at least one of the three targeted year groups from 15th June, 2020 (76 by 8th June, 2020)
- All 78 Schools are planning to open for the Year 6 cohort by 22nd June, 2020 (72 from 8th June, 2020)
- 65 Schools have opened for Year 1 pupils from 15th June, 2020 (54 from 8th June, 2020)
- 52 Schools are planning to open for Reception pupils by 22nd June, 2020 (40 from 8th June, 2020)
- 51 Schools are planning to open all three year groups by 22nd June, 2020 (33 from 8th June, 2020)

Some primary schools have decided to open using a split week to maximise their year groups' time back in school. This will remain under review, as we expect pupil numbers to increase, as confidence builds and non-essential shops are re-opened.

All 19 secondary schools have been contacted and are now open. All schools are also offering on-line learning for all year groups.

As from 15th June, 2020, all schools except one, are inviting year 10 into school for face to face sessions, which include direct teaching in classes and, academic and/or pastoral mentoring. The one school that isn't offering face to face sessions for year 10 are continuing to offer an extensive on-line learning package that includes daily live lessons led by the teaching staff from the school.

Two out of the three schools with post-16 provision are offering face-to-face sessions in school for year 12 to supplement on-line learning.

All schools are adhering to the 25% cohort Department of Education (DfE) guideline.

All secondary schools have also started their transition planning and are in contact with the primary schools. They are currently following the DfE guidance not to invite year 6 into schools for induction, although a couple of schools will continue to review this and are keen to offer some visits to take place, perhaps in July 2020.

Schools are also preparing on-line virtual tours, and transition packs are being sent home. Microsoft Teams meetings with pastoral staff, and phone calls with Year 6 class teachers and the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) are additionally being set up by many schools.

Approximately 1000 Devices (Laptops and Chromebooks) have been received for children who have involvement with a social worker. Education Outcomes are working with the Social Work team, Dudley Grid for Learning and Research Machines to prepare these devices for distribution to schools and families as soon as is practical. The devices are intended to support children with remote learning and to help them stay in touch with social care services. A number of 4G devices are available to support those families without internet access. Along with many

Local Authorities the facility to order laptops for Year 10 disadvantaged students is not currently open to us but this order will be placed as soon as that is available.

As well as ensuring that all pupils and staff are safe during this period, a key concern has been providing free school meals to families of pupils that are eligible. This has involved providing food bags for families and the majority of schools are using a national voucher scheme that allows parents to buy food at a supermarket of their choice.

SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)

The COVID 19 Pandemic has impacted the capacity of resources across the Dudley SEND System, to deliver some of the actions and outputs in the Written Statement of Action (WSOA).

To mitigate this, a review has now been completed with all of our partners to review and re-prioritise where necessary, the delivery dates for actions and we have revised our delivery plans accordingly. This has been shared with our DfE Advisor who is satisfied with the re- prioritised areas.

The Amendment Coronavirus Act 2020 to modify Section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014: (Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments and Plans: Guidance on temporary legislative changes relating to coronavirus), came into effect on the 1st May 2020 following the Guidance issued by the DfE on 30th April 2020, outlining the changes and modification of requirements under the act relating to SEND.

The DfE report on the review on our progress at the 25th March, 2020 Strategic Oversight Group (SOG) commented on our progress against the commitments we made in our WSoA submission. It reports that of the 131 specific actions in the WSoA, 31 are completed, 79 in progress and 21 not yet to start. Since the time of the report in March, 2020 the WSoA progress is now 60 completed, 57 in progress and 14 not yet started. The March, 2020 report also states that:

- Leaders understand the scale and pace expected of them to make the required progress in the priority areas identified in the WSoA.
- The SEND Oversight Group is driving forward an ambitious improvement plan that goes beyond the WSoA and ensures that the 14 priority areas are visible.
- The SEND Improvement Strategy has clear governance in place along with programme management capacity and monitoring arrangements.
- The SOG intends to provide the overall strategic direction of the SEND Improvement Strategy. This will ensure delivery of the SEND improvement plan complies with statutory, duties under the Education Act, Care Act, Children and Families Act and other relevant legislation.

The area reports that the following key milestones have been delivered:

- SEND Communications Strategy and Plan in place.



- SEND team structure revised and recruitment funded.
- Review of all SEND operational procedures and processes underway.
- Agreed Parents/Carers improvement project participation.
- Transparent pathways and criterion to SEND provision.
- Additional Clinical Commissioning Group Deputy Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) post, funded to support the Designated Medical Officer (DMO).
- Joint Commissioning Strategy development underway.
- SEND Outcomes Framework development underway.
- Preparation for Adulthood pathway development underway.
- Education & Health Care Plan (EHCP) task & finish improvement group launched.
- Revision of SEND Workforce Development Plan underway.
- Dudley EHCP database in place to provide robust Management Information (MI) and National, regional and statistical neighbour data.

Dudley, have established the foundations for a programme of SEND improvement and has engaged stakeholders and a number of actions have already been completed or are in progress, but at this early stage there is little evidence of impact and a constant focus on this will be necessary going forward.

The SEND Senior Managers have joined the West Midlands Regional Group and have access to updated information regarding SEND changes. Dudley attended the DfE presentation on 1st May, 2020 with others from the region, and as a result have put in place revised compliance measures and adopted the 'best endeavours' and 'practical reasonable' approach as required by the amended regulations guidance.

As part of the wider SEND Improvement Programme we have comprehensively reviewed and subsequently revised the EHCP processes, policies, procedures, and approaches.

The SEND Panel criteria and multi-agency member attendance has resulted in an improved quality and robustness in the decision-making process. In addition, the High Cost and Post 16 Commissioning Panel, with their newly established criteria and multi-agency attendance has enabled tripartite and joint funding discussions, that has seen shared cost across Social Care, Health and SEND.

The dedicated Compliance and Tribunal Officer has significantly impacted on the court process and improved Dudley's previous reputation which has resulted in not only two cases being ruled in our favour, but four cases being vacated with consent orders saving the Local Authority significant courts costs in resolving these cases collaboratively with parents.

The Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) statement has been approved through the Directorate Leadership Team (DLT) and is now out for consultation which concludes at the beginning of July, 2020. This clearly outlines how supporting

specific children unable to access full-time mainstream education will be going forwards.

The SEND Network and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) cluster development, will enhance the joint working between SEND and the SENCo's to improve identification of SEN support children through the graduated approach and improves the outcomes for those with EHCP's. A SEND Network programme is being developed with the SENCo leads for this transformation change.

The latest SEND guidance places greater emphasis on the impact of the family when the Risk assessment is being carried out, to ensure that as many children as possible are encouraged to return back to school safely. More schools are asking for support from SEND with the risk assessments, particularly those with underlying health conditions that may be part of the shielded list. Collaboration with the DCO on joint risks assessments are taking place.

The Local Offer and Participation Officer has started, so the usage and promotion of the Dudley Local Offer will begin in earnest, to provide families with a Local Offer that actively communicates with parents and young people in enabling families to access the statutory information to help them make informed choices.

The SEND Service is now fully staffed with the caseloads assigned to Case Officers for the first time in a long while.

A Provision & Services Group has been started with membership across the partners. Key deliverables have been agreed to make sure that we have a robust Joint Commissioning Strategy, Joint Sufficiency Plan supported by robust demand model back with full ongoing maintenance of data and governance cycles.

A Preparation for Adulthood project group has been set up to deliver the co-produced a Provision for Adulthood (PFA) Strategy and Pathway. The group is also tasked with delivering improvements to the way we work together with partners, also track, manage, and develop the Provision for Adulthood (PFA) provision across Dudley, utilising the 0-25 Demand Model, being developed though the Provision & Services Group.

SEND Systems Improvements have continued to deal with ongoing historic problems with the data. User training has been rolled out across the SEND team, with Servelec, the system supplier, providing direct support to make sure we are getting maximum benefit from Synergy. The work is being undertaken at a transformational level and will deliver great improvements around the ability to use data for decisions, as well as moving to more efficient case management routines.

Family Solutions

The Children's Directorate Leadership Team (DLT) have agreed to progress opening of Dudley North and Stourbridge Family Centres, with relevant assistance from the Local Authority support services, in order to maximise support to families



who need Early Help support linked to the 1st June, 2020 (and beyond) extension of school places. A date will be determined for opening, following a risk assessment and agreement on safe use of the building for staff, partners and members of the public in line with the Council's wider recovery plan led by the Deputy Chief Executive.

Youth

We have continued to operate a duty rota, with a duty manager for each day as well as a duty worker and two back up staff, in the event the duty person has to go and conduct a PACE interview etc.

As previously indicated the Youth Offending Service (YOS) are undertaking home visits to undertake offending behaviour work, or safe and well checks. Some have made contact with children over the phone or virtual face-to-face contacts. Parents/carers have also been contacted via this means.

Children are accessing offending behaviour work/resources via the YOS virtual classroom, YouTube videos for the bee project and workbooks through the post.

The Employment, Training and Education (ETE) staff member has also been delivering learning resources to pre-16 children.

Staff continue to manage the courts on a Black Country rota. Most of the court work recently has been that of swearing warrants and proceeding with breaches or trials. There is a backlog of cases building up in the Youth Court, as sittings have not been taking place. Meetings are taking place between Police and YOS' across the West Midlands to see if we can address this issue.

Police have been taking a "light touch approach" which has seen a steady flow of work into pre court outcomes.

Staff are using jabber or Microsoft teams to be part of their supervision or participate in child protection conference, strategy reviews and Detention Training Order (DTO)/CLA reviews etc.

YOS continue to manage the risk to the public as well as the safety and wellbeing of children we work with via the integrated safeguarding meeting, and referrals continue to be made for prevention and diversion away from court.

The National standard audit has been submitted and action for improvements have been developed.

Since Easter bank holiday detached youth work has been running on 5 evenings and 2 afternoons each week.

The focus has been on young people and supporting them to understand and follow the ever changing lockdown guidance as well as any ASB. The work is in partnership

with police and park activators with strong community engagement starting to come through.

Improvement Services to the Children and Families Board

The Board is currently operating on a monthly virtual basis. This situation will remain under review.

Children's Services continue to focus their attention on improvement across the range of services, in line with detailed improvement plans, and monitored through the Children's Improvement Board.

The Children's Improvement Board has received an interim report on the Dudley Disability Service audit work, following the agreement with Ofsted, in December, 2019 that all children's cases would be reviewed. This was in response to them raising concerns around safeguarding of this group of children.

The Board has agreed that the action plan prepared in response to the findings will be reported on by the Director of Adult Services.

The Board is however awaiting the final reports that have not been presented, although they have been prepared and the last board received verbal feedback.

The Board continues to monitor the progress of the partnership against the newly agreed children's improvement plan and the SEND plans.

4. The information in this report updates the Members on the key activity required to maintain the safety and wellbeing of children and young people during this pandemic.
5. Throughout the current period of Lockdown, ongoing consultation and discussion is occurring with key stakeholders, to ensure that all actions necessary to identify and protect vulnerable children occurs in line with ongoing national and local advice.
6. The activity outlined in this report supports the key corporate Stronger and safer communities and Growing the Economy and Creating jobs

Finance

7. Central Government have made numerous funding streams available to support local authorities during the Coronavirus outbreak, including financial assistance to Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council.

The latest assumption is that Children's Services will benefit from approximately £1.8m of Dudley's Covid funding which will support the extensions of placements for children in care and to cover the loss of traded services income during the lockdown period, including school led community activities.

Law

8. The Coronavirus Act 2020 makes provision in connection with coronavirus, and for connected purposes.

Equality Impact

9. The activity outlined within this report are within the operational functions of the Directorate and meet the needs of all children and families within the council.
10. The service delivers to all children and young people requiring support and or education within agreed frameworks. The services have processes of consultation with young people to support ongoing service improvement.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

11. This report has no additional Human Resources/Organisational Development issues outside of those already incorporated into the authorities COVID 19 responses.

Commercial/Procurement

12. Any procurement or contracting activity will be undertaken following the Councils Contract Standing Orders.

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

13. The activity outlined in this report is targeted to support families during the current COVID 19 period to ensure that vulnerable families receive the necessary support and assistance required.

C. Knowles

Catherine Knowles

Interim Director of Children's Services

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Matthew Sampson

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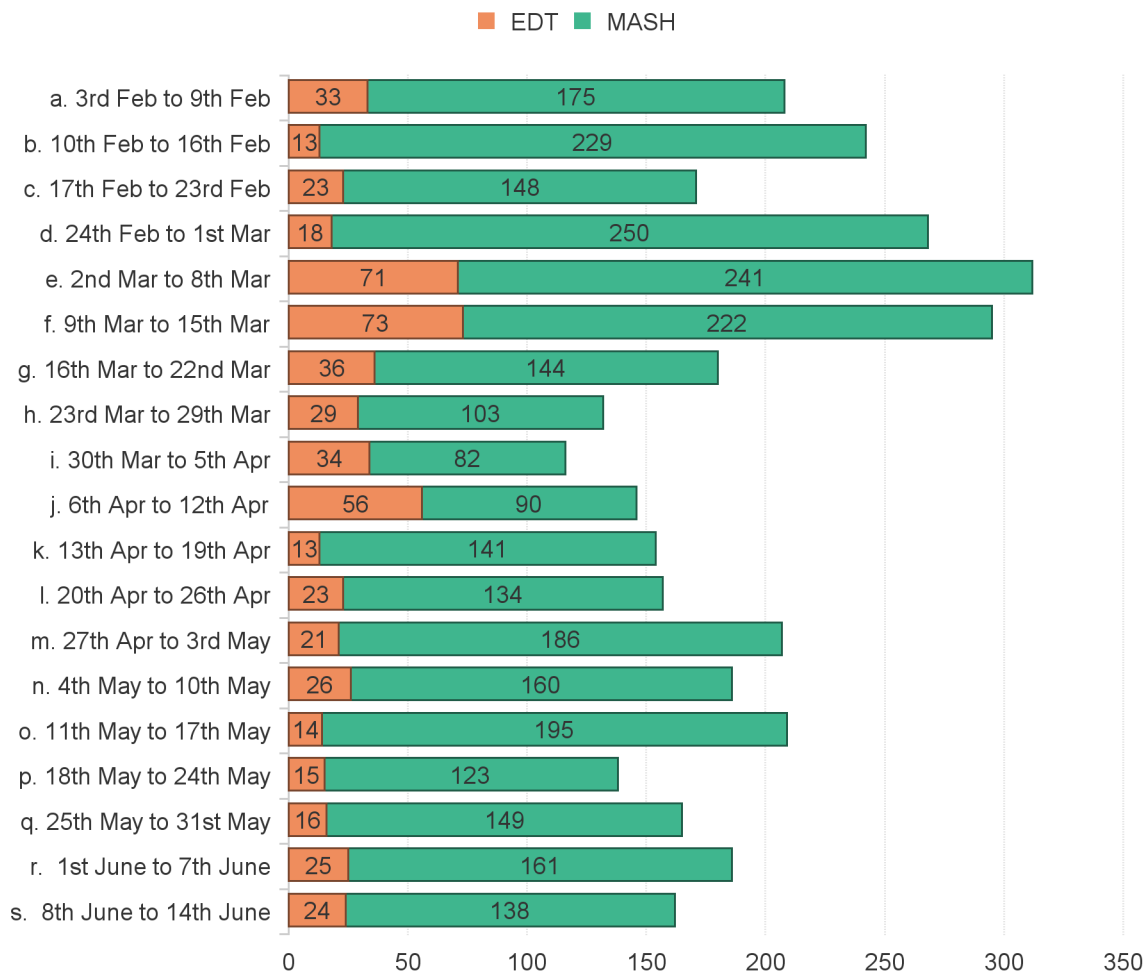
Email: matthew.sampson@dudley.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Contact Activity Data: Attached



	EDT	MASH	Total Contacts
a. 3rd Feb to 9th Feb	33	175	208
b. 10th Feb to 16th Feb	13	229	242
c. 17th Feb to 23rd Feb	23	148	171
d. 24th Feb to 1st Mar	18	250	268
e. 2nd Mar to 8th Mar	71	241	312
f. 9th Mar to 15th Mar	73	222	295
g. 16th Mar to 22nd Mar	36	144	180
h. 23rd Mar to 29th Mar	29	103	132
i. 30th Mar to 5th Apr	34	82	116
j. 6th Apr to 12th Apr	56	90	146
k. 13th Apr to 19th Apr	13	141	154
l. 20th Apr to 26th Apr	23	134	157
m. 27th Apr to 3rd May	21	186	207
n. 4th May to 10th May	26	160	186
o. 11th May to 17th May	14	195	209
p. 18th May to 24th May	15	123	138
q. 25th May to 31st May	16	149	165
r. 1st June to 7th June	25	161	186
s. 8th June to 14th June	24	138	162



Analyst comments as at 15/06/2020

Despite fluctuations in the number of weekly contacts, as can be seen in the chart and table above, analysis has found that the weekly average number of new contacts to front door services since lockdown has been 163. This compares to a higher average pre-lockdown range of 233 per week (the average from the seven weeks prior to 23rd March)

Weekly Average contacts by source - affect of lockdown

					Weekly Average in 7 weeks pre- lockdown						Weekly Average Since Lockdown began
Anonymous					14	Anonymous					16
Family Member					18	Family Member					13
Health					56	Health					45
Housing					6	Housing					5
Individual					1	Individual					2
LA - Other Dept					21	LA - Other Dept					22
Other					8	Other					6
Other Agency					28	Other Agency					23
Police					28	Police					25
Schools					62	Schools					12
Total:						Total:					

The data to the left analyses changes in the number of weekly contacts from each source type before and after the lockdown period. It can be seen that the average number of contacts from Family Members, Housing, Other agencies and Police have fallen slightly. The average number of weekly contacts from Health services have fallen more by about 20%. The most significant drop has been from Schools which previously made an average of 62 contacts to front door services per week but this has reduced to an average of 12 per week.

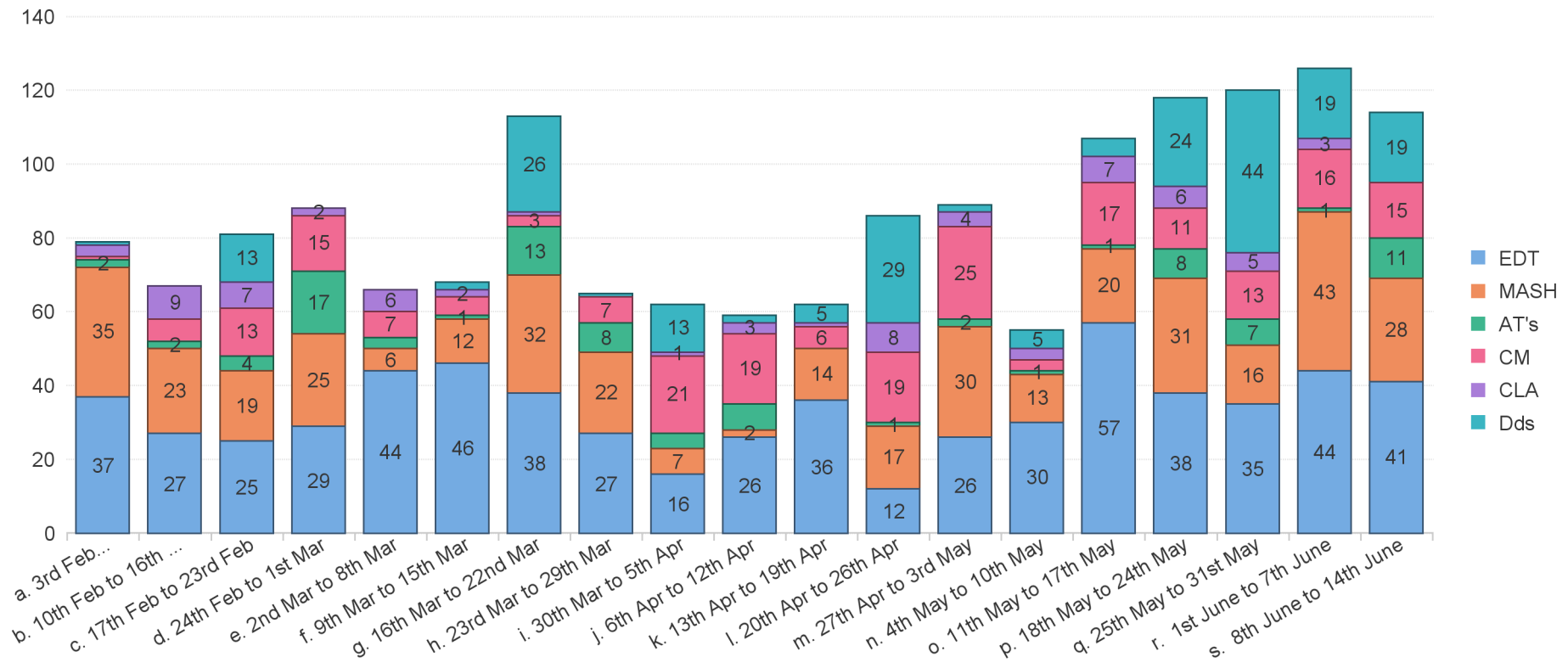
Conversely there has been a slight increase in contacts from Anonymous callers.

Since the return to some schools of some groups of children on 1st June there has not been any significant increase in new contacts from those schools .

Open case contacts (Exc DV) by receiving service area

	EDT	MASH	AT's	CM	CLA	Dds	Total Contacts
a. 3rd Feb to 9th Feb	37	35	2	1	3	1	79
b. 10th Feb to 16th Feb	27	23	2	6	9		67
c. 17th Feb to 23rd Feb	25	19	4	13	7	13	81
d. 24th Feb to 1st Mar	29	25	17	15	2		88
e. 2nd Mar to 8th Mar	44	6	3	7	6		66
f. 9th Mar to 15th Mar	46	12	1	5	2	2	68
g. 16th Mar to 22nd Mar	38	32	13	3	1	26	113
h. 23rd Mar to 29th Mar	27	22	8	7		1	65
i. 30th Mar to 5th Apr	16	7	4	21	1	13	62
j. 6th Apr to 12th Apr	26	2	7	19	3	2	59
k. 13th Apr to 19th Apr	36	14		6	1	5	62
l. 20th Apr to 26th Apr	12	17	1	19	8	29	86
m. 27th Apr to 3rd May	26	30	2	25	4	2	89
n. 4th May to 10th May	30	13	1	3	3	5	55
o. 11th May to 17th May	57	20	1	17	7	5	107
p. 18th May to 24th May	38	31	8	11	6	24	118
q. 25th May to 31st May	35	16	7	13	5	44	120
r. 1st June to 7th June	44	43	1	16	3	19	126
s. 8th June to 14th June	41	28	11	15		19	114

Trend of open case contacts by receiving service



Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 29th June 2020

Report of the Interim Director of Children's Services

Children's Services Complaints, Comments and Compliments Annual Report 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide supplementary information regarding key issues arising from the Children's Services Annual Complaints, Comments and Compliments report for the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that:-
 - Members note and comment on the contents of the report and approve the report for public publication in line with statutory requirements

Background

3. Every Local Authority with a responsibility for Social Care Services is required to provide an annual report in relation to the operation of the complaints and representations procedures.
4. The annual report provides information relating to all statutory and corporate complaints received in respect of Children's Services during the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.
5. The statutory process is a three-stage process. For a complaint to be registered under this process certain criteria must be met as set out in statutory guidance.
6. Corporate complaints are those that fall outside of the statutory process. This is where the complainant does not meet the requirements to be considered under the statutory process. These cases are registered and managed under the two stage corporate process.
For the first time SEND compliments and complaints are included in the annual report. This follows its transfer to Childrens Services in late 2019.

7. Additionally some contacts are registered as comments. This is where someone may wish to raise an issue without it being a request to formally register a complaint.
Complaint / Compliment Numbers
8. There was again an increase in the total number of compliments received for the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020. A total of **108** compliments were received over 28 teams compared to 82 for the same period the previous year.
9. Capturing learning continues but further progress in this area is still required. As a result the process has been further reviewed and going forward regular reports can now be produced that show upheld or partially upheld cases where no learning has currently been identified.

All complaint responses that have been upheld or partially upheld continue to be shared with the Centre For Professional Practice. This ensures that these can be analysed and any learning identified and taken forward.

10. There has been a small overall decrease in complaint numbers during the past year. The number of complaints fell from 205 to 202, which represents a 2% reduction. There continued to be a reduction in the number of complaints registered under the statutory process. The continued analysis of complaints to ensure they are managed under the correct procedure has contributed to the movement in these numbers compared to the previous year. However, work continues, in what is a complex area, to ensure cases are managed appropriately. The Ombudsman is due to publish a further paper in terms of how to treat Children's Services complaints later this year, which may again shift the balance in these numbers.
11. It should be noted that Children's Services receive on average of around 10,850 contacts per year meaning that less than 2% of all contacts result in a complaint being raised. Furthermore it should be noted that less than 0.60% of all contacts result in a complaint being upheld or partially upheld.



12. 32% of statutory complaints were either upheld or partially upheld. This is a slight increase on the 47% for 2018/19.
13. 33% of corporate complaints were either upheld or partially upheld. This decrease compared to the 38% were upheld or partially upheld in 2018/19.
14. There continues to be at low level of stage two Statutory independent investigations with only two being undertaken during the past year. This prevention of escalation to stage 2 of the process can be largely attributed to the continued close working relationship between the Complaints team and Children's Services staff. If a complainant remains dissatisfied all attempts are made to try to resolve the issues locally.

There has been one complaint this year, which has progressed to a stage three review panel. This is because of dissatisfaction with the stage two investigation outcome report and is still in the process of being arranged due to the COVID-19 situation.

Complaint Response Timescales:

15. This area continues to prove challenging with only 41% of all complaints receiving a response within 20 working days compared to 51%. Managers are aware and are reminded of the need to adhere to timescales. The Complaints Team provides regular reminders and offers support where applicable. Additionally complaint trackers are produced on a regular basis to highlight cases either coming up to the response deadline or those that have exceeded it.

Members previously requested information regarding the possible reasons why complaint responses were exceeding timescales. As stated this area continues to prove challenging and some cases can reasonably be described as complex. However, out of 135 cases that exceeded the 20 working day timescale there were only 20 cases (15%) where some indication had been given as to why the response had been delayed.

Consideration may therefore want to be given for requesting manager's to offer an explanation as to why a response was provided outside of timescale. This could then be considered by senior management. However, such measures would further increase workloads for both front line managers and the Complaints Team.

Therefore, overall, the service still faces challenges in terms of responding to complaints within the required timescales and it is acknowledged that further work is required in this area to improve performance.

16. **Areas of Complaint:** The three main issues arising concerned quality of support, communication, staff behaviour and staff attitude. This is broadly the same as the main reasons for complaints during the previous year.
17. Whilst there has been an increase in the number of corporate complaints this year in respect of staff behaviour/attitude and lack of communication, 104 cases were

received compared to 61 in 2018/19), only approximately 13% (14 cases) of these complaints were upheld. It should be noted that with regard to staff behaviour a social worker or manager may have to make decisions that families do not agree with or decisions the court are making, e.g. safeguarding a child, and this may lead to a complaint based on the nature of the work that is being undertaken.

Finance

18. There are no direct financial implications arising from the contents of this report.

Law

19. The procedures for Children's complaints, are determined by legislation, predominantly involving the: -

- Children Act 1989, Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.
- The Children and Adoption Act 2002 and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

20. However, some complaints fall outside of the statutory process. This is where the complainant does not meet the requirements to be considered under the statutory process. In these cases, the complaint is dealt with under the corporate complaint process. All complaints received are included in this report.

Equality Impact

21. This report has no direct implications for the Council's commitment to equality and diversity. The complaints policy is applied fairly and equitably to all users.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

22. There are no organisation service transformation implications that require consideration.

Commercial Procurement

23. There are no commercial or procurement implications that require consideration.

Health and Wellbeing

24. There are no health, wellbeing or safety implications that require consideration.

C. Knowles

Catherine Knowles
Interim Director of Children's Services

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Appendices

Children's Services Complaints, Comments and Compliments Annual Report 1st April 2019 – 31st March 2020

List of Background Documents

Appendix 1 – Children's Services Complaints, Comments and Compliments Annual Report 1st April 2019 – 31st March 2020

**Children's Services Complaints, Comments and
Compliments**

Directorate of Children's Services

Annual Report

1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020

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ASS = Assessment Team

CM Pod = Care Management

CIC = Children in Care

EDT = Emergency Duty Team

FAST = Intervention and Prevention Team

YOT = Youth Offending Team

ART = Adolescent Response Team

EHCP= Education Health Care Plan

1. PURPOSE

Every Local Authority with a responsibility for Social Care Services is required to provide an annual report into the operation of the complaints and representations procedures.

This report provides information relating to all compliments, statutory and corporate complaints received in respect of Children's Services during the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.

2. OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The procedures for Children's complaints are determined by legislation, predominantly involving the: -

- Children Act 1989, Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.
- The Children & Adoption Act 2002 and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

However, some complaints fall outside the statutory process. This is where the complainant does not meet the requirements to be considered under the statutory process, e.g. a grandparent who does not have parental responsibility makes a complaint about contact arrangements, someone is unhappy with regard to the conduct of an officer not directly connected to their child. In these cases the complaint is dealt with under the two stage corporate complaint process. All complaints received are included in this report.

All Children who wish to make a complaint are offered the services of an independent advocate. This is provided by The Children's Society, Black Country Advocacy Service, The Workspace, All Saints Road, Wolverhampton, WV2 1EL, Telephone 01902 877563, Free phone 0800 6523839, childrenssociety.org.uk. Staff from the Social Care Complaints Team can and do assist children and young people where necessary to ensure details of their complaint are fully obtained and registered.

The Council's website provides full information regarding how to make a complaint. There is also the facility to register a complaint via the website.

Please see following links to Social Care Complaints and Compliments web pages.

Statutory: <http://www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/care-health/children-and-family-care/complaints-and-compliments/>

Corporate: www.dudley.gov.uk/council-community/compliments-comments-complaints

The three stages of the statutory process can be summarised as follows

Stage 1 - Local Resolution: The complaint is investigated by the relevant manager / team. This is overwhelmingly the Stage at which the majority of all complaints are resolved.

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation: This is where the complaint has not been resolved at Stage 1 and the complainant has decided that they want an independent investigation into the complaint.

Stage 3 – Panel: Where Stage 2 of the complaints procedure has been concluded and the complainant is still dissatisfied, they can request further consideration of the complaint by a Review Panel. Generally, the Review Panel should not reinvestigate the complaints, nor should it consider any substantively new complaints that have not been first considered at Stage 2.

Ombudsman: Once the three stage statutory process has been exhausted a complainant has the right to take their complaint to the Ombudsman.

The Social Care Complaints Team

The Social Care Complaints Team is part of the Integrated Commissioning Hub within the People Directorate. The team are responsible for the day to day operation and management of all Social Care complaints for Children's Services.

A substantial proportion of the complaints received can reasonably be described as complex, requiring significant time and effort from the area of service involved.

The Complaints Team work in partnership with Children's Services managers and offer support and guidance to try to find a resolution that is both appropriate and will provide a satisfactory resolution to the complainant. These efforts can, as appropriate, prevent complaints from escalating to Stage 2 of the complaints procedures which is both costly and time consuming for all parties involved.

The Social Care Complaints Team can be contacted for advice and information regarding making a Complaint, Compliment or Comment on 01384 814724 / 812417 or by email at complaints.socialcare@dudley.gov.uk or in writing to The Social Care Complaints Team, 3-5 St James's Road, Dudley, DY1 1HZ

3. HEADLINES

All complaints that were registered this year received an acknowledgement and a response. The following information was extracted from the complaints data base on the week beginning 4th May 2020.

The key data for 2019/20 can be summarised as follows:

There was again an increase in the total number of compliments received for the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020. A total of **108** compliments were received over 28 teams compared to 82 for the same period the previous year.

A further review of the process to capture any learning from complaints has also been undertaken as capturing learning from complaints still proves challenging at times.

All complaint responses that have been upheld or partially upheld and continue to be shared with the Centre for Professional Practice who, where applicable, ensure that cases can be analysed and any learning identified taken forward.

Additionally greater use of national Ombudsman data and reports is starting to be used. These reports are shared weekly with a range of staff who may be able to identify good practice that can be incorporated into the work of the service.

The total number of statutory and corporate complaints received was **202**. This is slightly less than the **205** received during 2018/19 and represents a 2% overall reduction.

It should be noted that Children's Services receive on average of around 10,850 contacts per year meaning that less than 2% of all contacts result in a complaint being raised. Furthermore it should be noted that less than 0.6% of all contacts result in a complaint being upheld or partially upheld.

The **202** complaints are broken down as follows:

28 statutory complaints (**69%**) decrease on 2017/18 (91 compared to 28)

174 corporate complaints (**34%**) increase on 2018/19 (174 compared to 114)

Therefore, the overall number of complaints has remained relatively the same.

The continued analysis of complaints to ensure they are managed under the correct procedure has contributed to the movement in these numbers compared to the previous year. Work continues, in what is a complex area, to ensure cases are managed appropriately. The Ombudsman is due to publish a further paper in terms of how to treat Children Services complaints later this year which may again shift the balance in these numbers.



The three main issues arising concerned quality of service-support, communication-lack and staff behavior/attitude. This is broadly the same as the main reasons for complaints during 2018/19.

12 comments were received.

There were **2** complaints which was progressed to a stage two investigations. One is in relation to a complaint regarding the dissatisfaction of parent of the way transition from children services to adults and how case has been handled

The second case is in relation to delayed payments for an adopted child and the lack of communication between services. Both cases are currently still being progressed

There has been **1** complaint which has progressed to a stage three review panel. This is as a result of dissatisfaction with stage two investigation outcome report and is still in the process of being arranged due to the Co Vid 19 situation.

A total of **2** cases proceeded to the Ombudsman. This compares to **1** case in 2018/2019. The Ombudsman investigations were regarding the following:

- Regarding treatment of independent company employee and the resulting consequences this case was partially upheld and the ombudsman's findings were accepted
- Issues around the accuracy of an assessment report and disclosure of personal details. This case was not upheld. The Ombudsman found no fault against the Council.

There were no public reports issued against the Local Authority. The Ombudsman may issue a public report if it is decided that it is in the public interest to highlight the issues it has raised.

32% of statutory complaints were either upheld or partially upheld which is a decrease on the **47%** for 2018/19.

33% of corporate complaints were either upheld or partially upheld. This is a decrease compared to **38%** in 2018/19.

32% of statutory complaints received a response with 10 working days. This is an improvement on the **25%** for 2018/19. **57%** of statutory complaints received a response within 20 working days. This is a slight improvement on 2018/19 performance when **51%** were responded to within 20 working days.

38% of corporate complaints received a response within 20 working days. This is a decline on the 2018/19 performance when **51%** were responded to within 20 working days.

Therefore overall the service still faces challenges in terms of responding to complaints within the required timescales. The Complaints Team provides regular

reminders and offers support where applicable. Additionally trackers are produced on a regular basis to highlight cases either coming up to the response deadline or those that have exceeded it.

During the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 Children's Services received/registered **28** statutory complaints. This compares to **91** for the period from April 1st 2018 to 31st March 2019. This represents a decrease of **63** cases (**69%**).

In addition, we registered **174** complaints under the corporate complaints process. This compares to **114** for the period April 1st 2018 to 31st March 2019. This represents an increase of **60** cases (**53%**).

Out of a total of 28 statutory complaints received **4**, were upheld, **14%** and **5** were partially upheld, **18 %**. This compares to a total of **91** statutory complaints received for the period 1st April 2018 to the 31st March 2019 of which **28** were upheld, **31%** and **15** were partially upheld, **16%**.

Therefore there has been a decrease in the number of statutory complaints upheld with the number partially upheld increasing slightly

Out of a total of **174** corporate complaints received **23** were upheld, **13%** and **34** were partially upheld, **20%**. This compares to a total of **114** corporate complaints received for the period 1st April 2018 to the 31st March 2019 of which **24** were upheld, **21%** and **19** were partially upheld, **17%**.

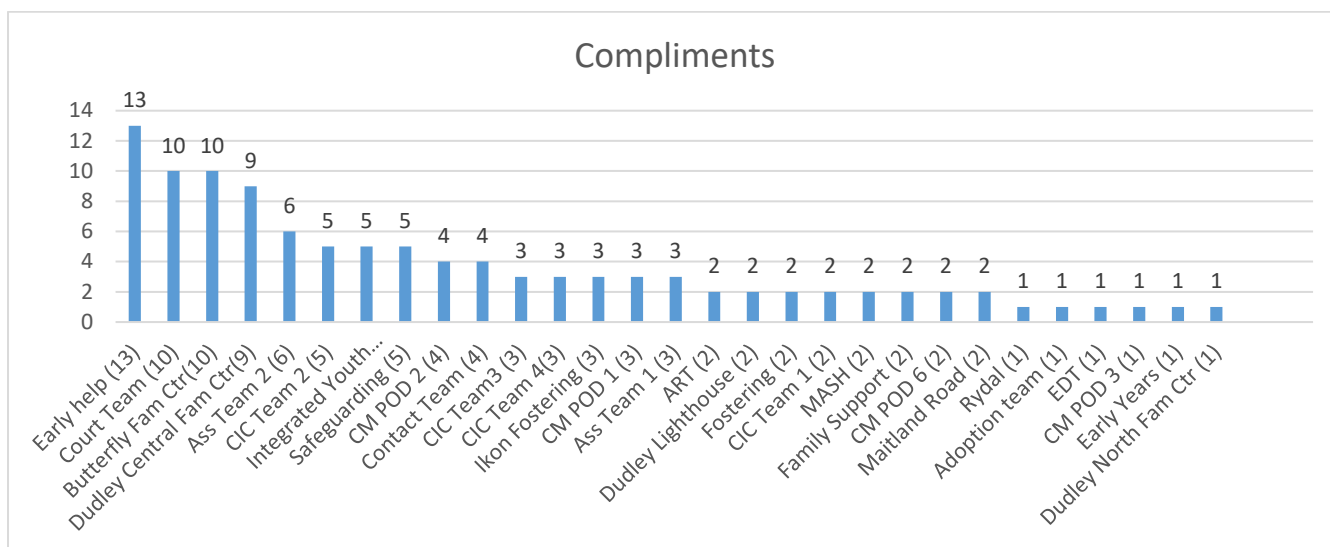
Therefore again there has been a decrease in the number of complaints upheld with the number partially upheld slightly increasing.

Of the **205** statutory and corporate complaints received **14** of these were from young people which is almost the same as the previous year.

Informal comments: This is where someone may wish to raise an issue without it being a request to formally register a complaint. We recorded **12** such comments this year. Compared to **21** for the period 2018/19 which is a decrease of **9** (**43%**).

4. COMPLIMENTS:

The total number of compliments received for the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 was **108** compliments divided over 29 teams. This compares to 82 for the same period in the previous year. Compliments originate from internal and external sources. Staff are actively encouraged to pass on compliments for registration as they can also be a useful tool for learning and good practice and for staff morale.



The Early Help service received the most compliments, **13** followed by the Court Team and Butterfly Family Centre (**10**) each.

5. EXAMPLES OF COMPLIMENTS

Below are just a selection of compliments received

- I'm writing to say how well xxxx has done with me and xxxx. Without xxx me and xxxx wouldn't be where we are today. She has done all the hard work & I'm so glad she has been our allocated social worker.

She puts us first. She's always making sure xxxx is okay and is also there if I ever feel down. Without xxx I wouldn't get through it all. xxxx has picked me up whenever I've needed her. She is brilliant at her job she put all her time and effort into it and there is not many people who do that in this kind of job and I would be happy to give her a reference for anything. I wish xxx all the luck in the future too.

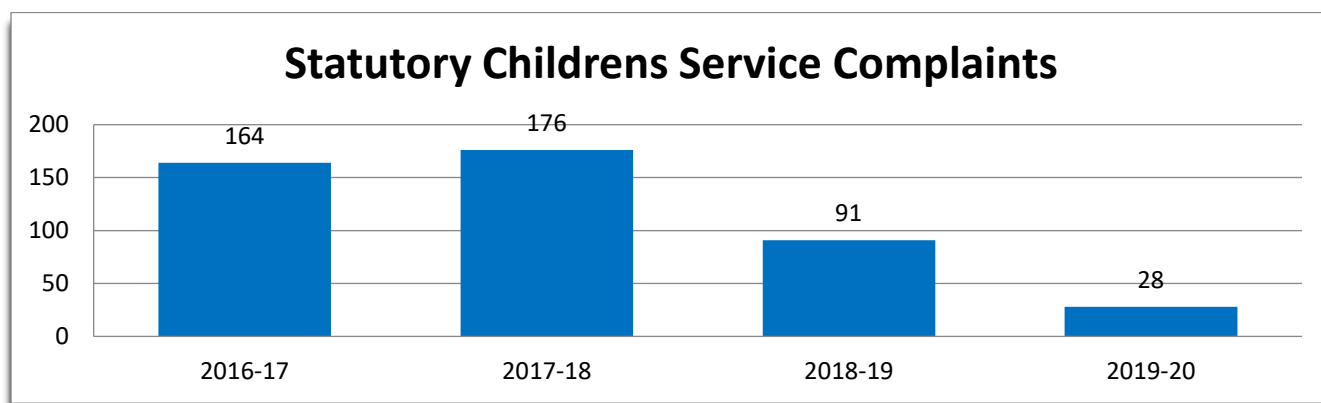
- I just wanted to drop an e-mail to express my appreciation for your input on the xxxx case. You have both gone above and beyond (in my view). It has definitely been a case of best practice which I know we all strive to do but at times caseloads and pressures take over us. So thank you because by working together, things have become more transparent, leading to a well-informed risk management plan.
Perfect joined up working.
- I will be kind of sad as of today as xxx will no longer be coming to visit us due to our deallocation. She was very friendly and professional. If we ever needed any assistance or pointers she was there and kept us well updated. xxx is a

great asset to the Dudley Children Service and I would like to say thank you and say I will miss her visiting and so will xxx. As for xxx, xxx was the back bone, she allocated and sorted the problems of previous social workers. She was very reasonable and was always available at the other end of the phone. She was very professional and lovely natured (Kind hearted) again, I can't explain how much xxx and xxx have done for us and made our life easy. I would just like to say thank you.

- I have come into contact with xxx on a number of occasions and have been very impressed with how approachable and supportive he is with everybody including partner agencies and members of the public. I attended his briefing at Halesowen Family Centre and again he left a lasting impression of how passionate he is about the voluntary sector and promoting early help. I am sure you are aware that xxx was also asked questions at this meeting which were not really for that arena but he handled it really well. xxx is a fantastic addition to the early help service and to have some more great male role models.

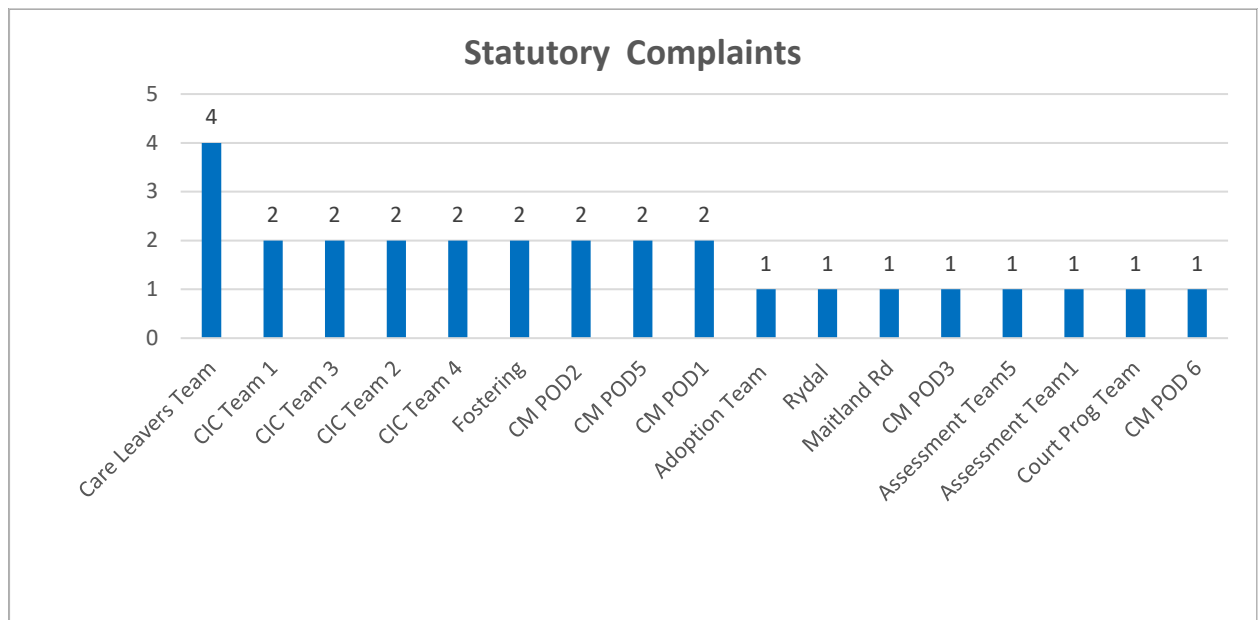
6. STATUTORY COMPLAINT ACTIVITY/SERVICE AREAS

The chart below provides a comparison with regards to the number of **statutory** Children's Services complaints registered over the last 4 years. The second chart shows the service areas against which complaints were registered during 2019/2020.

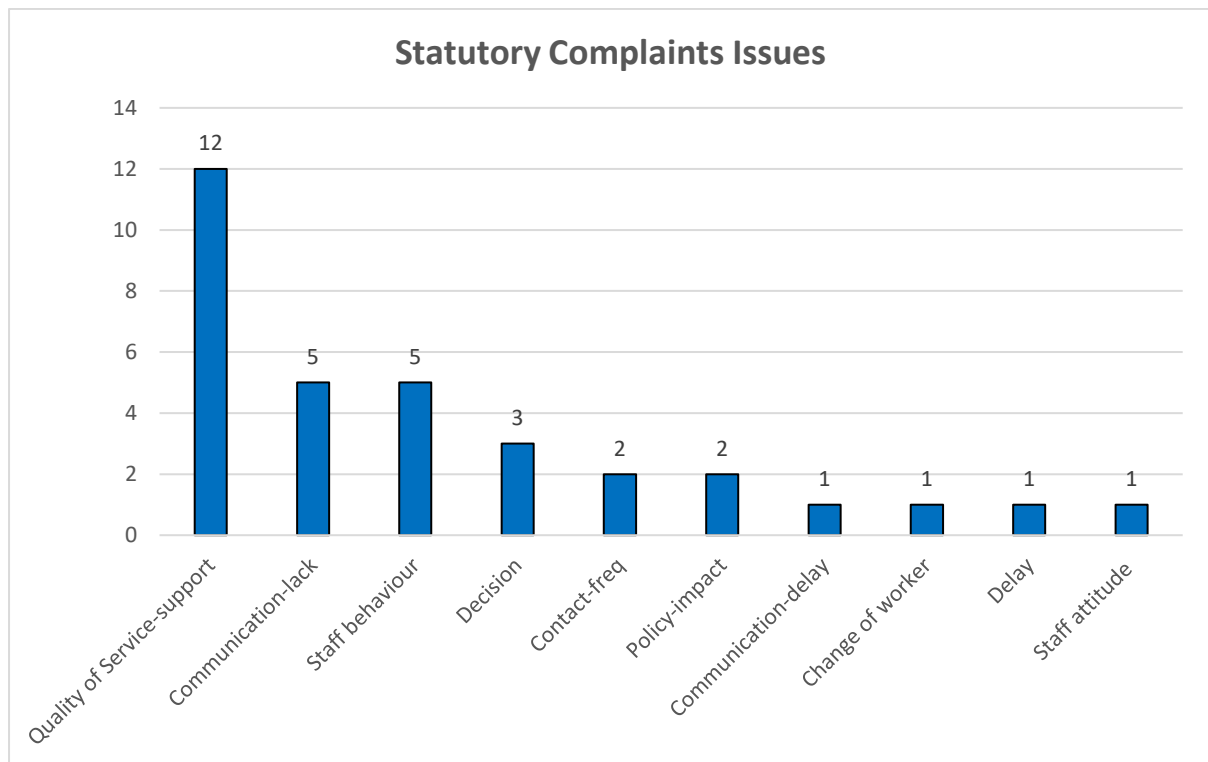


Breakdown of Service areas receiving statutory complaints 2019/20:

The **28** statutory complaints received, during 2019/20 were in respect of the following service areas.



Areas of Complaint: The following chart shows the most common types of complaint issues received for statutory complaints. There have been **33** issues over 10 areas.

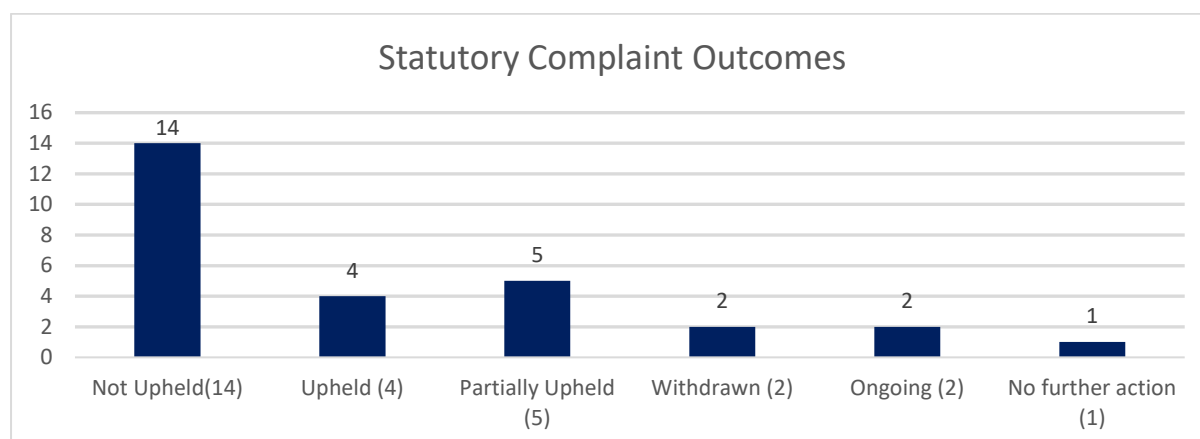


The largest number of issues recorded, were in respect of quality of support **12**, followed by communication **and** staff behaviour **with 5**, each.

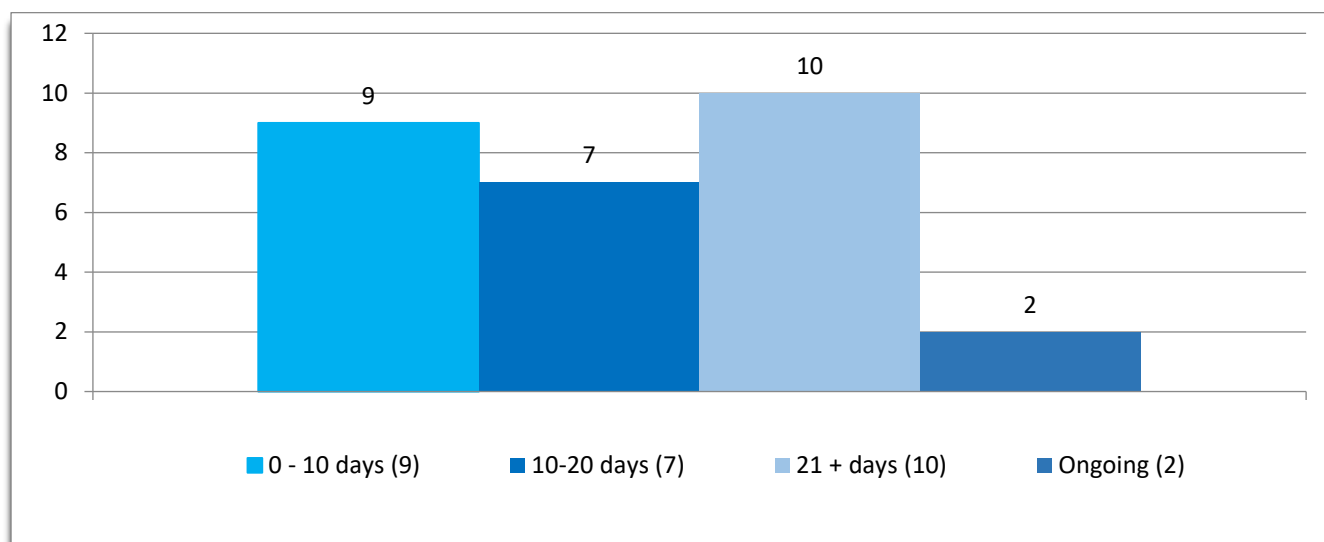
A further analysis of the top three most common areas of statutory complaints has shown that only 14% of complaints were upheld and they were in relation to quality of service support, communication and delay.

7. STATUTORY COMPLAINTS OUTCOMES:-

The chart below indicates that the majority of statutory complaints for the year 2019-2020 were not upheld, **14 (50%)** compared to **43 (47%)** in 2018/19. This shows that while the overall number of complaints has decreased the number of complaints not being upheld has remained relatively the same.



8. STATUTORY COMPLAINT RESOLUTION TIMESCALES: The chart below shows how quickly complaints were responded to.



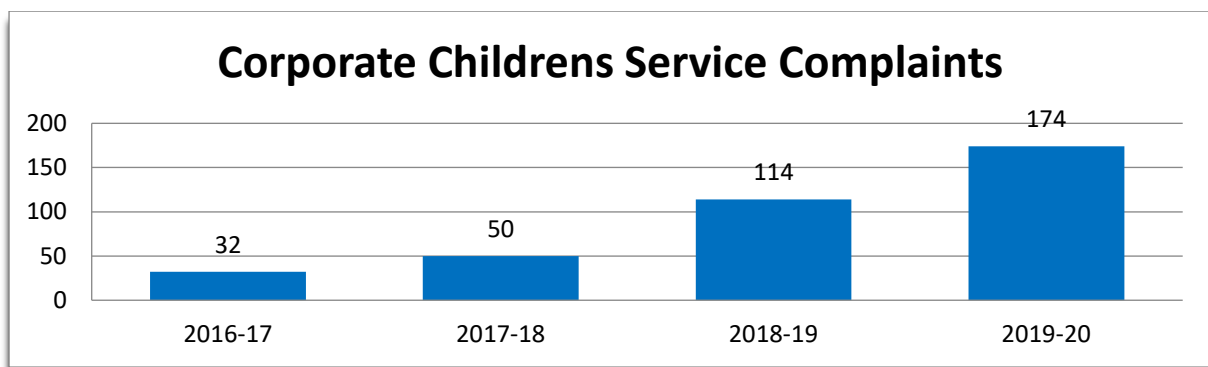
Timescales The statutory timescale for responding to a complaint is 10 working days which can be extended for a further 10 working days.

During 2019/20, 32% of statutory complaints received a response within the statutory 10 working day timescales. A total of 57% received a response within 20 working days. This compares to 25% being responded to within 10 working days in 2018/2019 with a total of 51% receiving a response within 20 working days.

Therefore, whilst there has been some improvement in overall performance in this area with prompt response times proving a continued challenge.

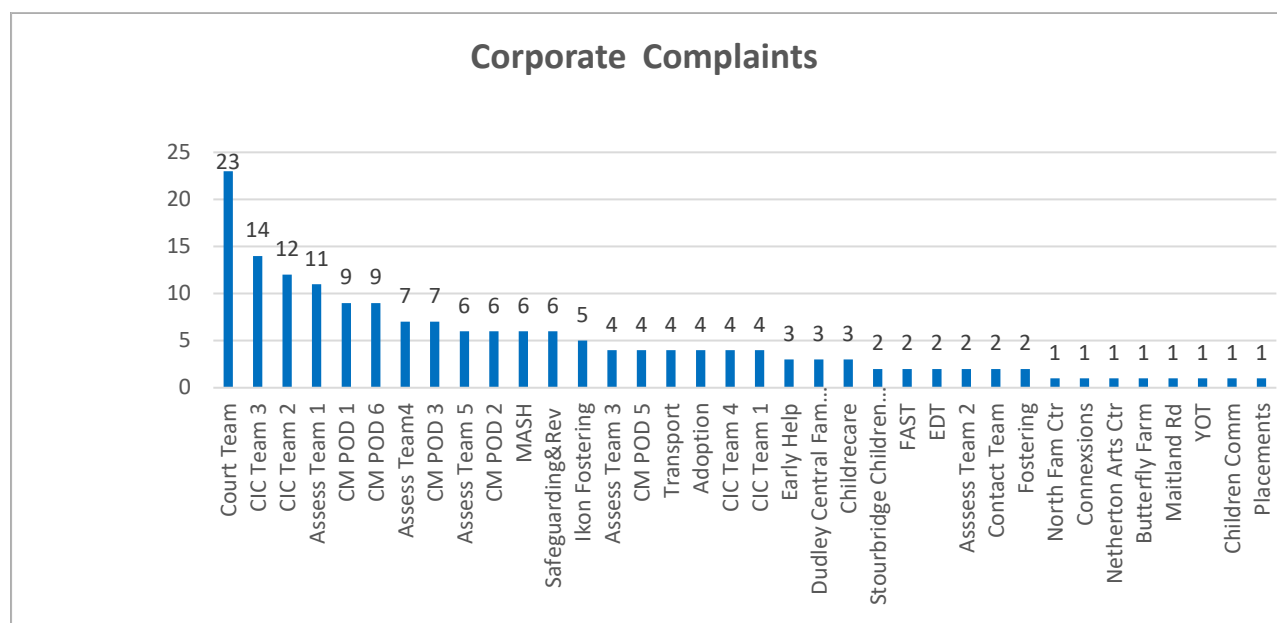
9. CORPORATE COMPLAINT ACTIVITY /SERVICE AREAS

The chart below provides a comparison with regards to the number of **corporate** Children's Services complaints registered over the last 4 years. The second chart shows the service areas against which corporate complaints were registered during 2019/2020.

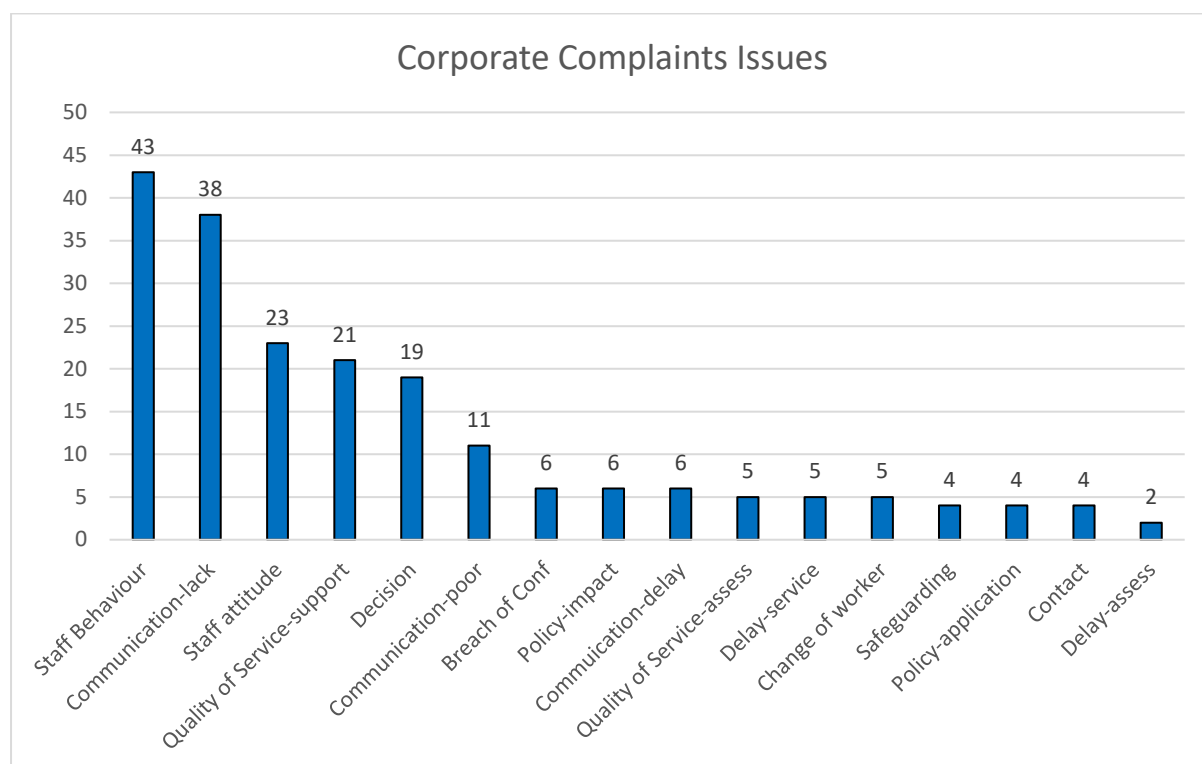


Breakdown of Service areas receiving corporate complaints 2019/20:

The **174** corporate complaints received over 36 separate service areas, during 2019/20.



Areas of Complaint: The chart below shows the most common types of complaint issues received for corporate complaints. There have been **202** issues over **16** areas.

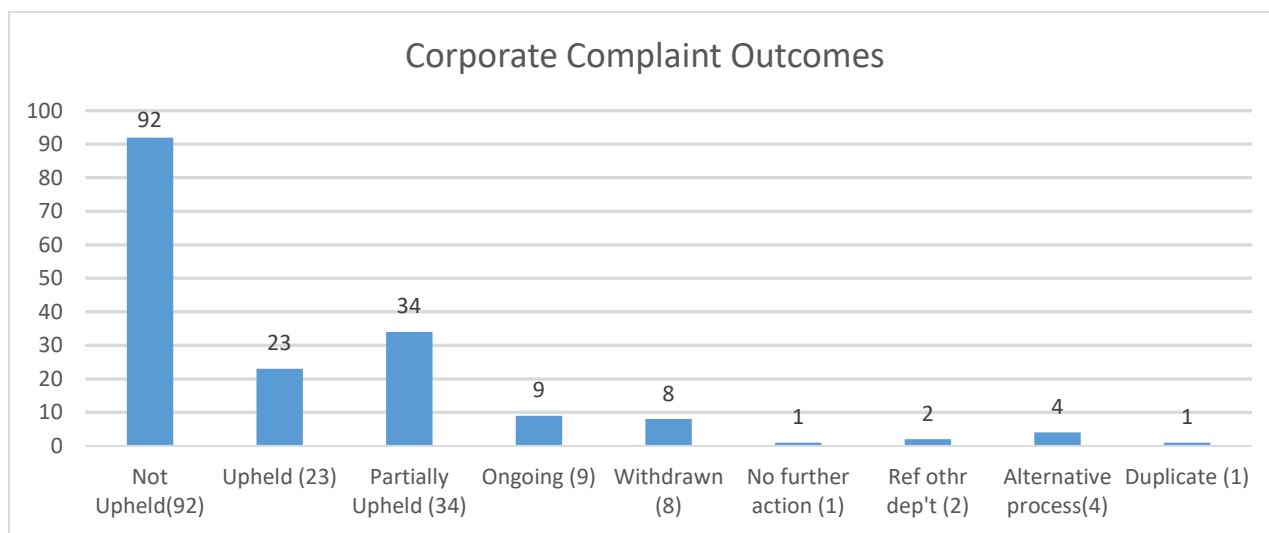


The largest number of issues recorded, were in respect of staff behaviour **43**, followed by **38** communication-lack, staff attitude **23** and **21** quality of service-support

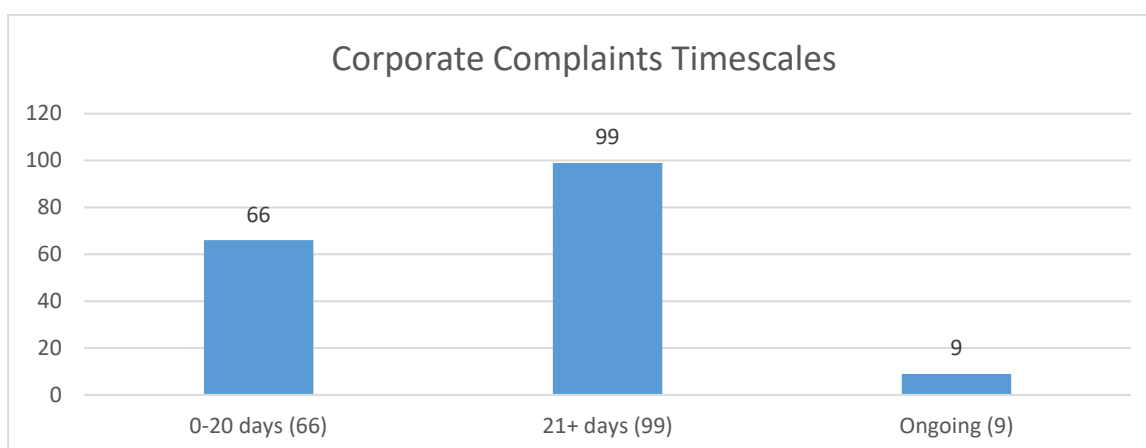
A further analysis of the top three most common areas of corporate complaints has shown that again only a small number, **8%**, of all complaints regarding staff attitude, staff behavior and communication were upheld.

10. CORPORATE COMPLAINT OUTCOMES

The chart below indicates that the majority of corporate complaints for the year 2019-2020 were not upheld, to **57 (33%)** compared to **43 (38%)** in 2018/19. This shows that while the overall number of complaints has decreased the number of complaints not being upheld has remained relatively the same.



11. CORPORATE COMPLAINT RESOLUTION TIMESCALES: The chart below shows how quickly corporate complaints were responded to.



During 2019/20, **38%** of corporate complaints received a response within the required 20 working day timescales. This compares to **51%** being responded to within 20 working days in 2018/2019.

Therefore there has been a decrease in the performance of response times for Corporate complaints.

12. COMMENTS

In the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020, **12** comments were received compared to **21** for the period April 2018 to March 2019. A comment is where someone may wish to raise an issue without it being registered as a formal complaint, e.g. query concerning ongoing contact. Comments received by the Complaints Team are recorded, acknowledged and then forwarded to the relevant Team Manager for a

response. Comments are monitored in the same way to ensure that a response is provided.

13.SEND

The SEND service transferred to Childrens Services during 2019/20. However, data is still available from the previous years to enable comparisons to be made.

The SEND Service is undergoing a transformational journey as it establishes itself as a competent, compliant and communicative service. Having moved into Children Services in November 2019, the SEND Service has embarked on a rigorous recruitment and retention drive to have in place staff able and confident to ensure that the delivery of Education, Health and Care Plans are provided in accordance with the Children and families Act 2014, part 3, SEND Code of Practice.

In addition, as part of the wider SEND Improvement Programme we are in the process of developing new relevant policies and procedures and reviewing and revising those currently in place. This covers:

- Designing an effective feedback process to channel learning from complaints into SEND case officer's performance.
- Agreeing and publishing a procedure where complaints are dealt with professionally, within timescales and parents/carers are kept up to date in individual cases.
- Agreeing and putting in place a process to learn from complaints/mediation and tribunals and what has changed as a result.
- Agreeing a pro-active approach to complaints received where early intervention is the key feature.

We have also introduced a project management based approach to dealing with any upheld complaints and resulting actions from the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). Enclosed is the tracker used to monitor this and the current status of all remedial actions.

The appointment of the Compliance and Tribunal Officer on the 6th April 2020 will further strengthen the SEND Service ability to review decisions and defend the Local Authority position in collaboration with legal adviser support.

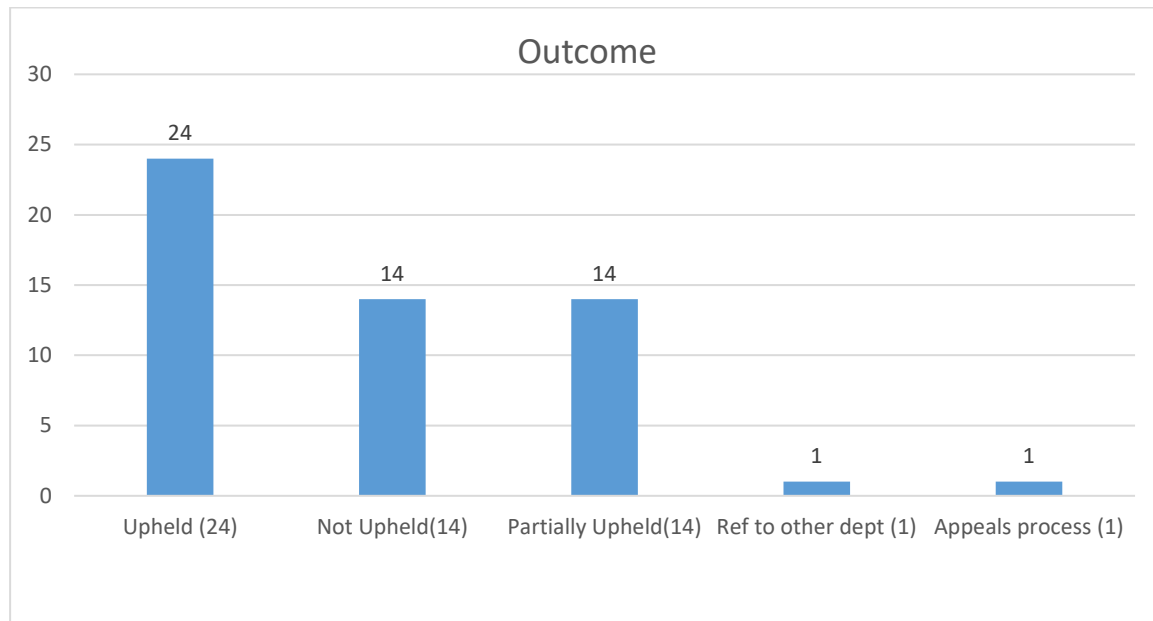
Of course, it will take time to embed new practice, learn new conversations with families and settings, so the work of the SEND Quality Assurance Consultant in developing the SEND handbook, the Induction and Training Program and the Quality Assurance framework will ensure staff learn from the themes of complaints and Ombudsman findings.

Therefore the information presented below show the beginnings of a change journey that will be sustained as the SEND service firmly has a permanent and established workforce.



In the period 1st April 19 to 31st March 2020 **54** complaints were received during his period in relation to SEND, compared to **28** for the previous period 1st April 18 to 31st March 2019 an increase of **93%**.

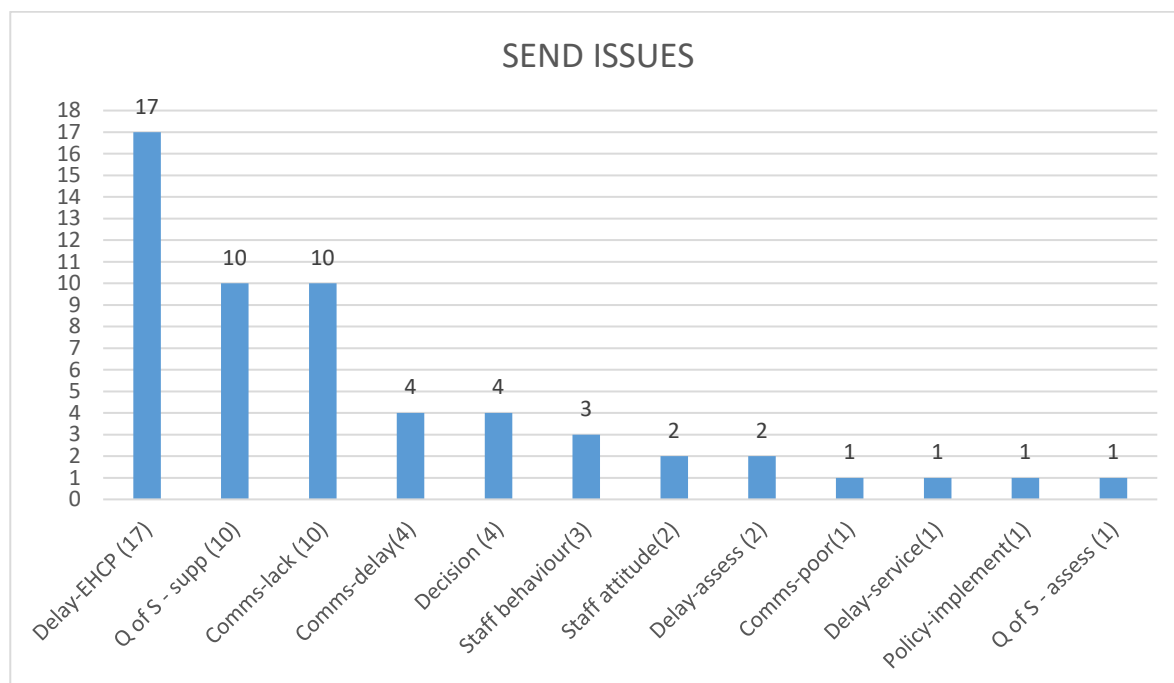
The chart below shows the outcomes of the complaints for the period 1st April 2019 to March 2020.



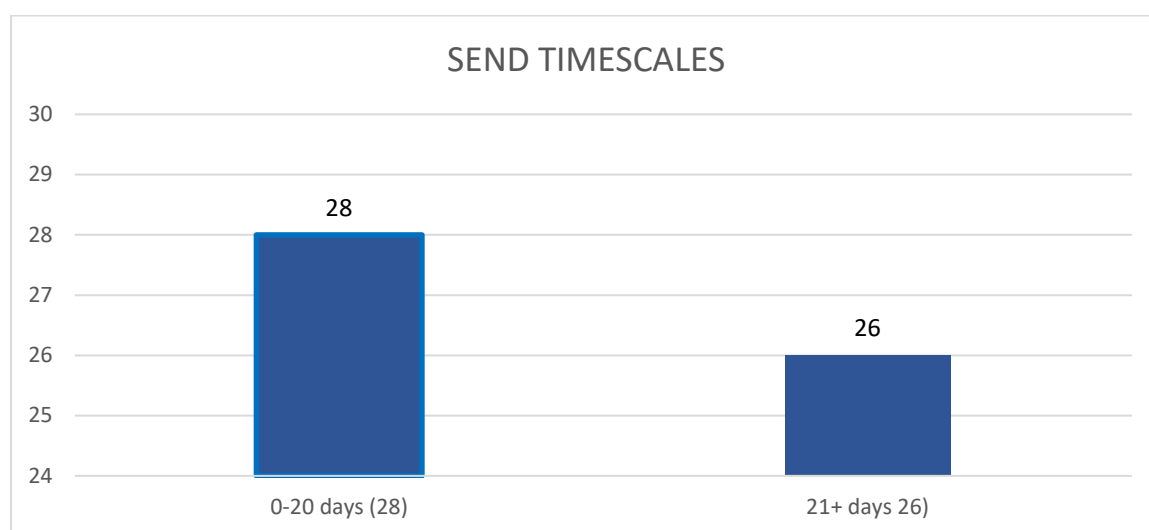
A total of **24** of these complaints were upheld (**44%**) compared to **15 (54%)**. The upheld complaints this year related to Quality of Service-support-, communication-lack/poor and Delay. A further **14 cases (26%)** were partially upheld and these related to the same issues as the upheld complaints. This compares to **6 (21%)** being partially upheld to in the previous year.

Therefore, whilst the number of complaints received overall has increased the number upheld has proportionally decreased from 54% to 44%. There has also been a slight increase proportionally in respect of the number of complaints partially upheld increased from 21% to 26%.

The chart below shows **56** issues over **12** separate areas, delay-care plan, **17**, being the highest number of which **7 (41%)** were upheld. Comparing this to the period 1st April 18 to 31st March 19 the highest number of complaints again related to the delay in producing EHCP's (Education Health Care Plan) **15** , of which **7 (47%)** were upheld.



The chart below shows the timescales for responding to SEND complaints. The chart shows that **28 (52%)** of complaints were responded to within the 20 working day timescales. For the previous period 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019 **16 (57%)** were responded to within 20 working day timescales.



Comments

For the period 1st April 19 to 31st March 20 **7** comment were received compared to **1** in the previous year 1st April 18 to 31st March 19. As previously stated, this is where someone may wish to raise an issue without it being a request to formally register a complaint.

Compliments

For this period 1st April 19 to 31st March 20, **22** compliments were received compared to **4** in the previous year 1st April to 31st March 2019 which is a significant increase and shows that improvements are being made.

Compliment Examples

- I would just like to say thank you your colleague who I dealt with over the telephone today regarding my queries with the EHCP process. She was extremely understanding and clarified my questions in a very professional manner.

I also asked about whether private ASD and ADHD assessments (which are done with appropriately trained professionals) would hold rigor in the LA and diagnoses made would be accepted. Although she couldn't confirm herself she promptly sought advice from her colleges who were able to clarify that private diagnoses are indeed accepted as valid.

I apologise that I didn't catch her name, but please extend my thanks to your clerical / admin and call handling staff for being so helpful.

- Thank you so much for taking the time to talk me through EHCP's and additional funding and how we get this funding, both from yourself and other authorities. This is definitely something myself and my finance team will follow up. With regards to the additional funding for XXX and XXX I confirm that my finance department, copied in above will be in touch to invoice you for their additional needs.

Thank you also for discussing possible transport solutions and support with me for these students, I really appreciate you giving me the contact and information

Your help this afternoon has been invaluable and will help to ensure that we can fully meet the needs of these students.

Ombudsman Cases

There have been **3** cases received in for the period 1st April 19 to March 2020 all of which were upheld.

As stated above the service transferred to Childrens Services in Late 2019 and significant investment has been made to improve the service.

14. LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS:-

One of the key objectives in the management of complaints is to identify and learn from complaints, comments and compliments, and to change, review or maintain practices and services accordingly.



There is a formal process to capture any learning from complaints that may arise. During 2019/20 the process of gathering learning has proved challenging. Therefore Additional reporting measure swill be put in place to identify where learning forms Have not been returned when complaints have been upheld or partially upheld.

Complaint responses that have been upheld or partially upheld continue to be shared with the Centre for Professional Practice. This ensures that these can be analysed and any learning identified and taken forward.

EXAMPLE OF LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS:

Learning	Complaint	Actions
Provide Training	Health Visitor reporting concerns about inappropriate and unprofessional safe sleep advice that staff member completing the assessment gave.	Action: 1. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome leaflet information to be located in Family Centre and Intervention & Prevention Team office to further raise staff awareness. 2. Training to be provided by Russell's Hall Hospital- Safeguarding Lead Nurse Child 3. Discussions to take place with the member of staff in question regarding the correct protocol to be followed when giving advice.
Policy/Procedure change	Complaint from father regarding the DNA test which was taken and the way it upset son	Action: YP to be informed before test takes place - to be discussed with the whole team to ensure we adequately prepare children in the future.
Improve Communication	Not being updated on progress of EHCP assessment, calls and emails are being ignored	Action: 1. Creating additional capacity of case officers to improve communication with parents and families. 2. All staff reminded of expected standards for contact with families & will continue to monitor performance. 3. Additional training re above also being carried out. 4. Introduced new practice to ensure all calls are recorded with

		brief details of call/enquiry so messages can be officially actioned and tracked.
Change policy/procedures	Complaint regarding the length of time taken to issue reference for some who wished to be a nanny-loss of earnings	Action: Revised procedure put in place.
Improve Communication	Parent claims SW has made offensive remarks towards her family, speaks down to her, and her manner is very abrupt and insensitive.	Action: Being sensitive when families are going through difficult times. Social workers to complete tasks if any have been suggested. All Social workers to be sensitive to family's situation and maintain good and respectful communication with families. Completed
Improve Communication	Delay in SW informing her that daughter had gone missing from care.	Action: EDT manager to remind workers to make all efforts to contact parents out of hours in situations such as children going missing or hospital admissions.
Improve Communication	Parents disagree with decision to keep children on a Child Protection Plan. They are also unhappy with the way the vote was carried out and the conduct of Conference Members - talking over each other and raising their voices.	Action: Remind IRO / Chairs to explain to conferences Dudley position on step down at 3 months. IRO / Chair to explain during conference process.

Completed by Social Care Complaints Team

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 29th June, 2020

Report of the Lead for Law and Governance

Annual Scrutiny Programme 2020/21

Purpose

1. To consider arrangements for the Annual Scrutiny Programme during 2020/21.

Recommendations

2. That the Committee note that the annual report, as agreed at the last meeting, will be submitted to the Full Council on 23rd July, 2020.
3. That, following consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Officers, the Lead for Law and Governance be authorised to confirm the future programme of scrutiny business for this Committee following the meeting of the Council on 23rd July, 2020.
4. That the arrangements for a scrutiny review of the Dudley MBC and partner response to the Coronavirus Pandemic, as set out in paragraphs 9 to 13, be noted.

Background

5. The Committee's annual scrutiny report for 2019/20 was considered at the meeting on 5th March, 2020. The report and minutes of that meeting are available on the [Committee Management Information System](#).
6. The annual report included ongoing items for inclusion in the Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2020/21. In view of the cancellation of meetings during April, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the annual report will now be presented to the Full Council on 23rd July, 2020.

7. A proposed calendar of meetings for the 2020/21 municipal year will also be considered by the Council on 23rd July, 2020. Once the programme is confirmed, consultation will take place with the Chair, Vice Chair and Officers to confirm the programme of scrutiny business for the remainder of this municipal year.
8. The Committee has the flexibility to amend its programme of business at any time due to changing circumstances and any issues that might arise during the municipal year.

Future Scrutiny Review of Dudley MBC and Partner Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic

9. At its meeting on 10th June, 2020, the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a full scrutiny review of the response of the Council and partners to the COVID-19 pandemic in due course.
10. This will form the basis of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee's programme of business for the 2020/21 municipal year. The scrutiny review will take place over a series of meetings, each with a specific theme or themes.
11. Members of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee will act as the 'core membership' for undertaking the review. Members of other Scrutiny Committees (including the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee), experts and other attendees will be invited to contribute to the review, depending on the theme(s) under consideration.
12. Recommendations arising from the scrutiny review should aim to guide and assist all Directorates and Partners in future planning and responding to any further Pandemics.
13. A meeting will be held with the Chairs and Vice Chairs of each Scrutiny Committee to brief them on the scope and timing of the scrutiny review in due course. This will be co-ordinated by the Democratic Services Team.

Finance

14. The costs of operating the Council's scrutiny arrangements are being contained within existing budgetary allocations.

Law

15. Scrutiny Committees are established in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 and the requirements of the Council's Constitution, which was adopted under the Local Government Act 2000, subsequent legislation and associated Regulations and Guidance.

16. Scrutiny powers relating to health are included in the Health and Social Care Acts 2001 and 2012, and associated Regulations and statutory guidance. The Police and Justice Act 2006 gives the Council powers to scrutinise the work of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enables local authorities to scrutinise other partners. Much of this legislation is consolidated in the Localism Act 2011.

Equality Impact

17. Provision exists within the scrutiny arrangements for overview and scrutiny to be undertaken of the Council's policies on equality and diversity.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

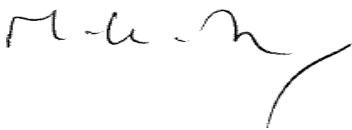
18. Overview and scrutiny work is primarily administered within the resources available to the Democratic Services Team with support from Directorates and other Officers as required. Any proposals to develop the Council's overview and scrutiny functions have to be set in the context of the resources available and the organisational capacity to support scrutiny work.

Commercial/Procurement

19. Individual items included in the Annual Scrutiny Programme may have commercial implications, which will be reported to the relevant Scrutiny Committee.

Health, Wellbeing and Safety

20. Reports to Scrutiny Committees will consider the impact on the health, wellbeing and safety of the Borough's citizens. This is consistent with building stronger, safer and more resilient communities in line with the Dudley Vision and to protect our residents' physical, and emotional health for the future.



Mohammed Farooq
Lead for Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Contact Officer: Steve Griffiths (Scrutiny Officer)
Telephone: 01384 815235
Email: steve.griffiths@dudley.gov.uk

List of Background Documents

[The Council's Constitution](#) – Article 6 and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules
Scrutiny Reports and Minutes available on the [Committee Management Information System](#)