

DIRECTORATE OF CHILDREN SERVICES

**COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS
ANNUAL REPORT**

April 1st 2005 – 31st March 2006

CHILDREN SERVICES

Produced by Quality and Complaints Team July 2006

C O N T E N T S

SECTION 1

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Complaints Team

SECTION 2

- 2.1 The Complaints Procedures
 - 2.1.4 Stage One
 - 2.1.5 Stage Two
 - 2.1.6 Stage Three
- 2.2 Corporate Complaints

SECTION 3

- 3.1 Overview

SECTION 4

- 4.1 Developments and achievements 2005/06

SECTION 5

- 5.1 Compliment Data 2005/06
- 5.2 Examples of Compliments received

SECTION 6

- 6.1.1 Comparison over three years
- 6.1.3 Complaint Issues
- 6.2 Complaints received across the Directorate
- 6.3 How are complaints received?
- 6.4 Outcomes in Terms of Findings
- 6.5 How are complaints resolved?
- 6.6 Timescales
- 6.7 Ethnicity
- 6.8 How do we ensure that complaints are genuinely resolved?

SECTION 7

- 7.1 Areas of development for Quality & Complaints Team 2005/06

SECTION 8

SECTION 1

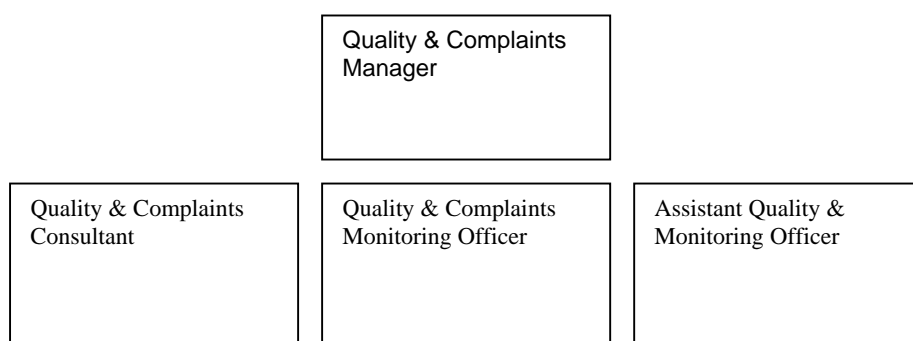
1.1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 This Report provides information relating to Children Social Care Compliments Comments and Complaints, during the period 1 April 2005 to 31 March 2006.
- 1.1.2 The procedures for Children's complaints, are determined by legislation, predominantly involving the:-
- Children Act 1989, Part iii, Sections 24, 26, 59, Schedules 6 and 7
 - Regulations and Guidance Volume 3.
 - The Children & Adoption Act 2002 and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.
- 1.1.3 Every Local Authority with a responsibility for Social Care Services must provide an Annual Report into the workings of the complaints and representations procedures. This requirement is contained in the Children Act 1989.

The complaints procedure cannot operate without effective information; therefore, all service users and people who request a service are provided with information on how to complain or make a compliment. Complaint information is displayed in all public reception areas. It is also given out at different stages in the core process to all service users. Last year 2005/06 Children's Specialist Services received 3,495 referrals undertaking work on a longer term basis with 1,705 children and their families; within the Adults and Children's Directorates combined 10,000 complaints leaflets were circulated either directly to service users or by being displayed in District offices.

1.2 THE QUALITY AND COMPLAINTS TEAM

- 1.2.1 The Quality & Complaints team is part of the Policy & Performance Unit within the Directorate of Adult Community and Housing Services [DACHS]. The Quality and Complaints Team has a service level agreement with the Directorate of Children Services to carry out the management and day to day running of the social care complaint process for children. The following structure chart shows the Quality & Complaints Team



1.2.2 Our key objective in the management of all complaints is to achieve appropriate and effective resolutions within the shortest possible timescales. Every effort is made to ensure that each complaint is dealt with close to the point of service delivery. We are committed to a positive and proactive approach to complaints handling. We view complaints as a mechanism for ensuring that we continually improve the quality of the services we provide as well as a method of seeking resolutions to individual dissatisfaction.

SECTION 2

2.1 THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

2.1.1 This will be the last Annual Report before the procedures are changed in line with directives from central government (DfES). The new guidance that we are given will introduce new concepts and practices to complaints handling and will be introduced by new guidance from the DfESes, there will be significant developments and changes in the new procedures with perhaps the most obvious and immediate impact being a reduction in the time available to offer a resolution to a complaint.

2.1.2 Despite the anticipated changes the purpose of the Complaints, Comments and Compliments procedures will remain as:

- Providing a way for service users, or a person acting on their behalf, to tell the Directorate what they think of the service.
- Enabling the Directorate to learn from complaints and compliments, and to change, review or maintain services accordingly.
- Ensuring that complaints are properly recorded and acted upon, and that where necessary things that have gone wrong are put right promptly.
- Ensuring that staff and service users understand their rights, and responsibilities within the complaints process.

2.1.3 The complaints procedure for social care services has 3 stages and this will remain under the new guidance; the timescales given are for the current procedures but will decrease soon.

- Stage One. Problem solving and informal resolution.
- Stage Two. Formal Complaint investigation.
- Stage Three. Independently chaired Review Panel

2.1.4 Stage One

Offers the Local Authority the opportunity of considering the complaint and responding to as appropriate; most commonly this involves either

apologising for any mistakes made and correcting any resulting disadvantage (upholding the complaint) or finding that the work that was undertaken was correct (not upholding the complaint). Looking into a complaint at Stage 1 should be a relatively short piece of work; however, it is important that the response is informative, accurate, fair and as helpful as it can be.

Important points within Stage 1

- The timescales at Stage One gives 28 days to respond to children, or their carers who raise a complaint.
- Since 2001, the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 has placed a duty upon local authorities; to provide a response at the first stage within 14 days to any young complainant receiving a 'leaving care' service, who is looked after or was formally looked after
- Young people are offered the services of an advocate
- A written response is provided by the relevant manager to the young person or their representative.

2.1.5 Stage Two

Children's Services complaints allow 28 days for the investigation of the matter by the complaint investigator and the response by the Assistant Director Specialist Children Services. Additionally, an Independent Person, in line with legislation & Guidance, is appointed in each case to oversee the investigation from the perspectives of thoroughness, fairness and objectivity. If an advocate has not been appointed previously the child/young person is again offered advocacy services at this stage.

2.1.6 Stage Three

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after the Stage two process, then he/she can request that matters move to Stage 3. This process requires the local authority to establish a stage 3 Review Panel to hear the complaints. The Review Panel currently involves one elected Council member, and two independent people, one of whom must chair the panel. Also in attendance will be the complainant and advocate, the complaint investigator, the independent person, a senior manager from Children's Specialist Services, complaints manager and other officers who support the complaints process. Essentially the Review Panel considers the management of the complaint and the responses made at stages 1 and 2. The Review Panel after listening to the issues related to the complaint then provides written recommendations to the Director of Children's Specialist Services, which are copied to the complainant advising of the outcomes the Panel considers appropriate.

The Director then provides a final written response to the complainant within 28 days following the Review Panel.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the stage 3 response he/she can; within twelve months of the panel hearing, approach the Local Government Ombudsman seeking further enquiries or investigation to be carried out into the complaints by that office.

It had previously been believed that the Review Panel process at Stage 3 was to be replaced by Government with a process of external review by the Commission for Social Care Inspection; however, plans for this have been abandoned.

2.2 CORPORATE COMPLAINTS:-

2.2.1 We also have a duty to comply with general complaints which do not fall within the boundaries of the National Health Service and Community Care Act (1990) and the Children Act (1989). Complaints in this category are called "Corporate Complaints" and are dealt with under the Council's Complaints and Representations procedure.

SECTION 3

3.1 OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITY 2005/06

3.1.1. SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENT ACTIVITY 2005/06

- i) During 2005/06 Dudley Social Services Department as it was and the Directorate of Children Services as it is now, provided a service to 1,705 Children and their families.
- ii) The total number of Children complaints received for Social care Services 2005/06 is **119** this compares to **117** for 2004/05 – this increase of **2** is modest compared to the rise in the previous year (2003/2004) from **94** which represented a growth of 24%.
- iii) The **119** complaints are individual areas of complaint. They were made by **93** separate young people or their representatives, although some multiple complaints were made.
- iv) The majority i.e. **63** of the complaints relating to services provided to children were made or led by Adults. **38** complaints were made by children; this figure includes complaints made by advocates at the direct request of a child. What has been noted this year is an increase in the number of complaints being made by Foster Carers, this year Foster carers either helped **6** young people to complain or raised complaints on their behalf, a further **5** carers made complaints in their own right. The numbers of Foster Carers making a complaint has not been recorded in previous years; recent work ensuring that carers are aware of their right to use the complaints procedures appears to have been noted and complaints are now being brought forward; the prime purpose of complaints from the

Local Authority's perspective is to learn how it can improve its services.

- v) There have been **3** complaints from other sources.
- vi) It will be noted that there were two more complaints received than there were complainants; this is because some people raise more than one complaint when making contact
- vi) There have been **3** Stage 2 complaints for 2005/06. There were **none** in 2004/05
- vii) There were **no** Stage 3 Review Panels requested or convened last year.

3.1.2 **Of the 104 complaints that received a response at Stage 1:**

87.5% of all complaints were dealt with within the current statutory timetable of 28 days [20 working days], this is an improvement on 56% for the previous year.

5.8% of complaints were dealt with between 28 days and 40 days

6.7% of complaints took over 40 working days – the longest being **167** days.

3.1.3 There were **29** registered compliments compared to **36** for 2004/05, a decrease of 7.

3.1.4 **Local Government Ombudsman:** - There have been **no** findings of Maladministration by the Ombudsman concerning Dudley Social Services complaint matters for 2005/06.

3.1.5 **Advocacy:** - **8** children/young people making a complaint chose to have the assistance and support of an advocate during the complaint process. Advocacy needs to continue being proactive in assisting young people to identify making a complaint as a possible useful resolution to difficulties that they may have. S26 of the Children Act 1989 requires that children who are looked after by the local authority are supported in making any complaints or representations, by providing access to an advocate. Therefore, in recent years, the Quality and Complaints Team in conjunction with the NCH Black Country Children's Rights Service have ensured that all children who want an advocate are provided with one.

SECTION 4

4.1 EXAMPLES OF DEVELOPMENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS 2005/06

4.1.1 The Quality & Complaints Team returned to full complement in April 2005 which has meant increased support and assistance being offered

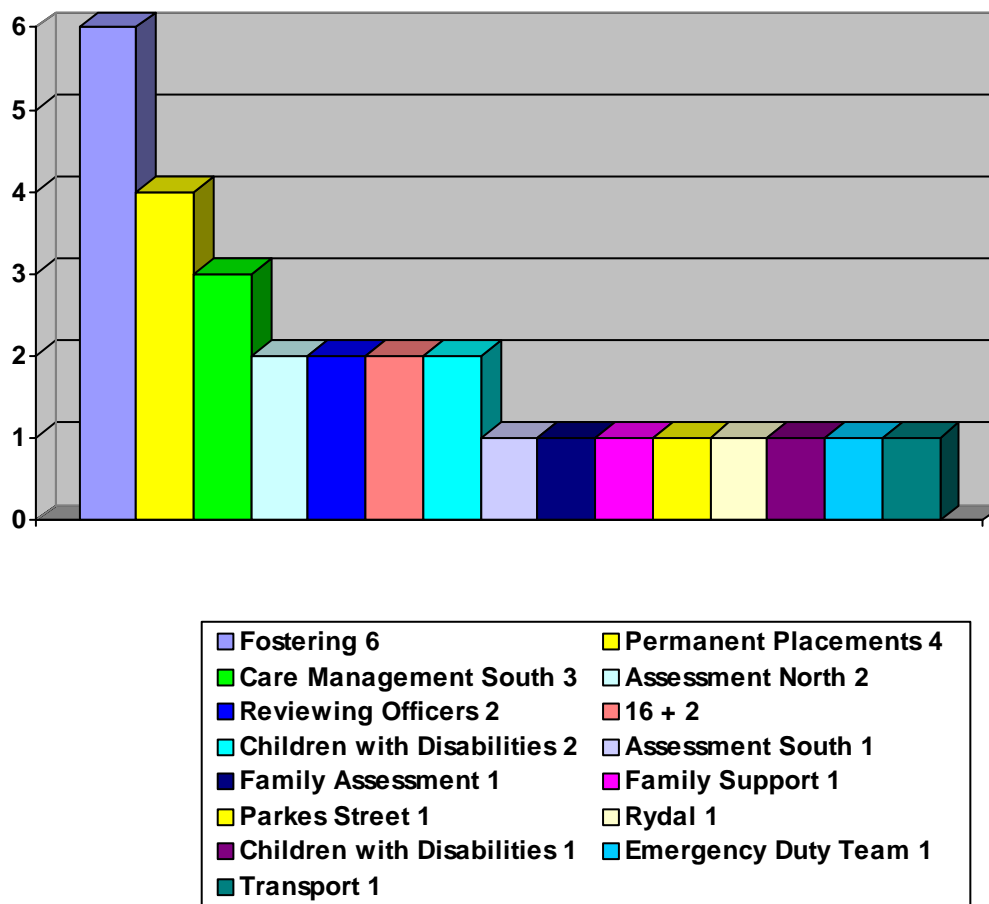
to operational managers which may account for the improvement in the numbers of complaints being resolved within timescale.

- 4.1.2 Regular contact with residential Children Homes continues in order to monitor and assist access to the complaints procedures. Young People who raise a complaint are offered a visit from a member of the Quality and Complaints Team.
- 4.1.3 The majority (**91**) of all complaints resolved at Stage1 were acknowledged and concluded within the statutory timescale.
- 4.1.4 Training for Managers, Social Workers and other relevant groups has continued. 2005/06 has seen the training offered being tailored to more precisely meet the needs of staff. Training now available includes
- A new half day course to inform front line staff of their responsibilities when a complaint is made
 - A new course, training managers and other senior team members in responding to complaints at Stage 1 of the procedures
 - A new course for Managers and Senior Managers who may be required to undertake a Stage 2 investigation
 - In total planned complaint handling training was provided for **81** staff
 - The Quality and Complaints Team provided training to 45 members of Dudley Council Plus staff
- 4.1.5 The creation of a complaints form provided to people with a learning disability
- 4.1.6 A presentation to newly approved Foster Carers on the procedures and assisting the Young People whom they care for to utilise these.
- 4.1.7 The Quality & Complaints Team continues with a working party to ensure delivery of on-line children procedures and another project which enables Looked after Children and Young People to comment (via an interactive computer program) on their level of satisfaction with the services that they receive
- 4.1.8 The Quality and Complaints Team has visited over twenty establishments and District Teams to give an overview of the procedures
- 4.1.9 A protocol has been agreed with the Flipside [specialist fostering]Team
- 4.1.10 An information protocol for foster carers advising them how to complain in their own right
- 4.1.11 Monthly reports to Heads of Service concerning complaints in their areas

4.1.12 A questionnaire has been created and is being sent to all complainants at the conclusion of their complaint seeking their views on the workings of the complaints procedures

SECTION 5

5.1 COMPLIMENTS DATA 2005/06



5.1.1 It should be recognised that complaints and compliments are often the result of difficult and sometimes traumatic events for people, complaints are often driven by a desire to effect change and prevent a repeat of a mistake being made, a compliment can be equally powerful in its message and just as we must learn from complaints we can also learn from compliments.

5.1.2 The above graph shows a reduction in compliments to **29** from last year's figure of **36**. The figures for 2005-2006 do not reflect the true level of compliments made, a recent request for all outstanding compliments to be forwarded revealed 15 from one Team alone which had not been previously presented.

5.1.3 Despite this it is clear that some areas of service are highly valued. Many of the compliments received comment on the kind and caring attitude of staff, as well as the positive difference that the service has made.

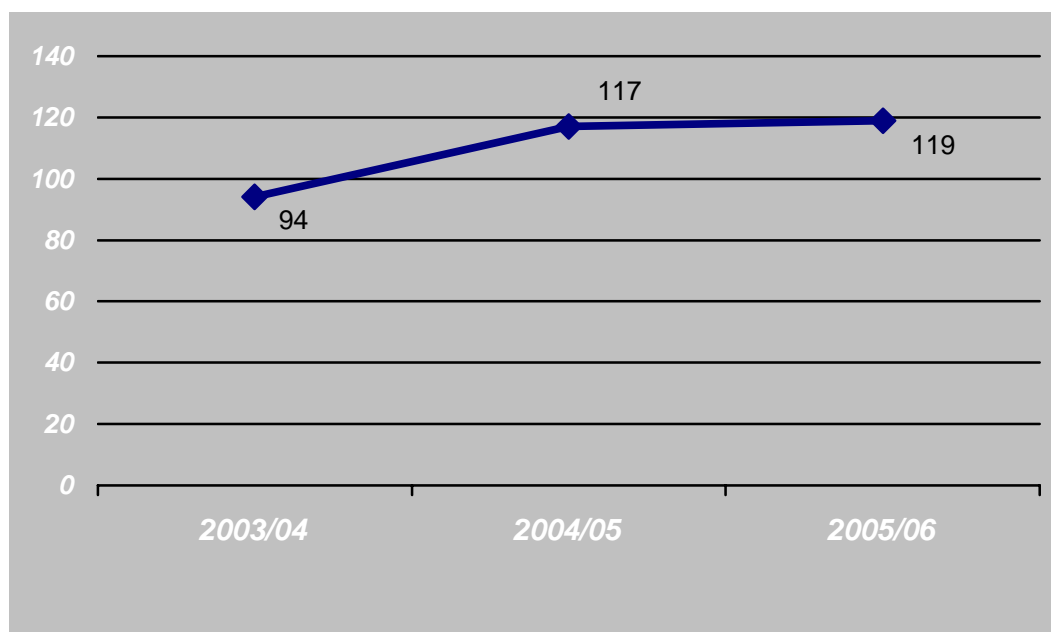
5.1.4 The nature of some of the statutory work carried out by Children and Families may not lend itself to receipt of compliments, indeed it is possible that this awareness causes workers to be reticent about forwarding those that they do receive however there is no evidence to suggest that Children Services should not be receiving an increased number of compliments. This issue will continue to be monitored.

5.2 EXAMPLES OF COMPLIMENTS RECEIVED:-

- *Thanks were given to Social services staff for their efforts in a fundraising quiz night which raised £194 for a local charity supporting Children with disabilities.*
- *A compliment was received from the mother of a young person to his foster Carers*
- *Thanks were received for staff at the Directorate's Family Assessment Centre from the mother of a family who wrote; "I'm pleased to have my family back together and that has a lot to do with you getting me through the assessment . I am really grateful to you and all the staff".*
- *A parent wrote to one of the Directorates Young People's establishments saying; "total dedication has been shown to me and throughout the whole time that he has been with you"*
- *Two young people who had hurt themselves were taken to Hospital by a member of staff and thanked her for her prompt attention and for making them feel comfortable.*
- *Praise for a member of staff; "supportive, helpful, thoughtful of child's needs and carers, trustworthy, whatever she said she'd do she did. Very reliable, understanding hard working always there for child and carer. I have never met anyone so good and devoted to this type of work, everyone gains from her."*
- *Praise for two members of staff from the parent of a child; "I would like to write to you regarding the wonderful support , my family has been given by M and L. M has helped my daughter in so many ways. Her ability to be professional caring and friendly, and offer good advice all point to her doing extremely well in her career."*
- *L has provided my daughter "with friendship and someone to relate to. Isolation and depression were very much part of her life and L has been a wonderful support, she accepts L the way she is who trusts her and confides in her".*

SECTION 6 COMPLAINT DATA 2005/06

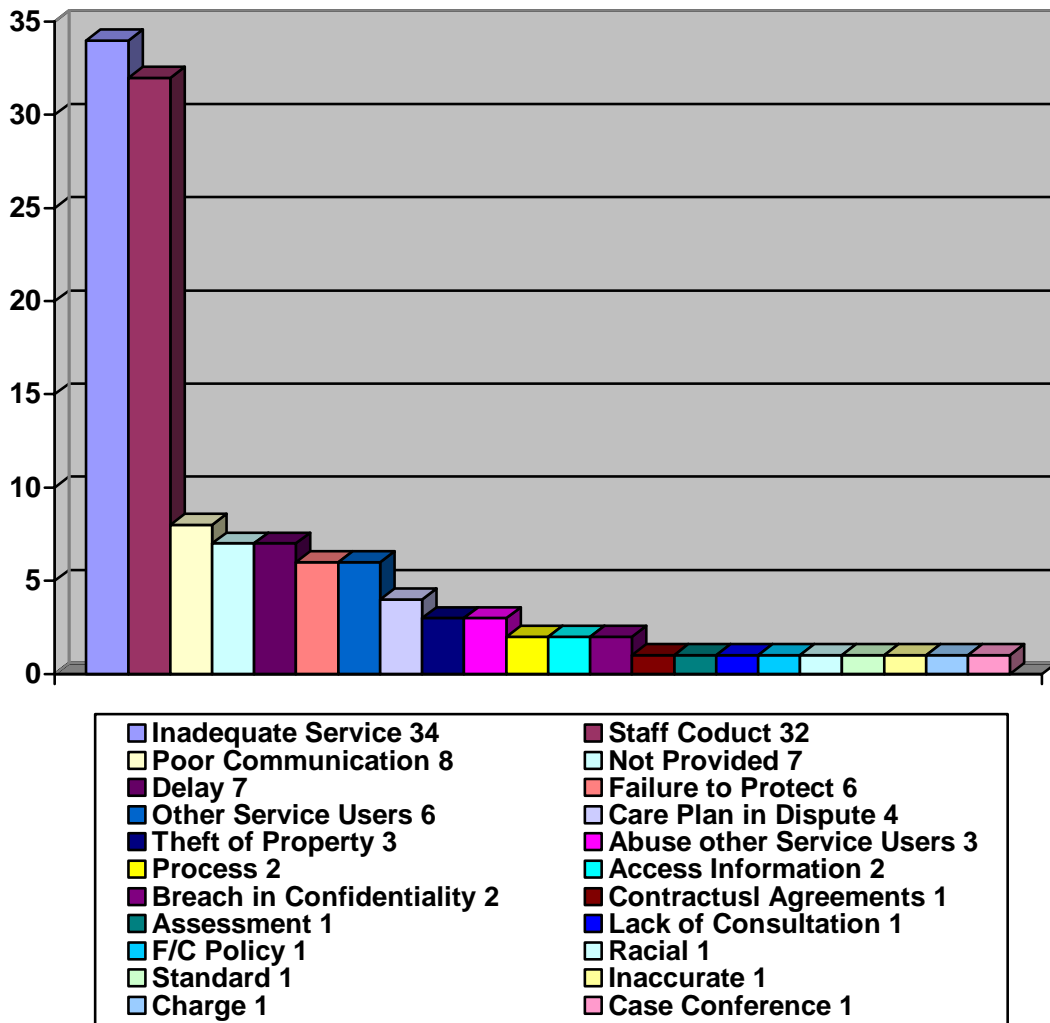
6.1.1 COMPARISON OF TOTAL COMPLAINTS OVER PAST THREE YEARS



6.1.2 2005/06 saw a modest increase of **2** from **117** in 2004-2005 complaints to **119** in 2005-2006. The number of Complaints received remains a modest percentage of the total number of service users; however the maintenance of the increase from the previous year's figure of 94 is seen as positive and is believed to reflect:-

- Greater awareness of, and access to the complaint procedure
- Increased awareness and use of advocacy services.
- Increased complaint training for staff.
- Greater contact between members of the complaints team and young people/advocacy services and also with Social Services teams and establishments.

6.1.3 COMPLAINT ISSUES



6.1.4 There is a broad range of issues complained about; however the highest and most consistent areas of complaint throughout the year remains 'inadequate service', together with 'staff conduct'.

6.1.5 Complaints which were placed within the 'inadequate Service' category included a concern about frequent changes of worker resulting in a lack of consistency and progress, the level of contact and quality of work from an allocated worker, punctuality of support workers and complaints about the quality of contact arrangements.

6.1.6 Complaints about 'staff conduct' concerned alleged comments made by staff and the attitudes presented in their work; these concerns are addressed and challenged when they arise.

6.1.7 Some of the remaining issues complained about involved:-

- The management of a Child Protection plan
- Commissioned transport arrangements identified as having a detrimental impact on a child's placement. The transport arrangements were fully reviewed and changed.
- Failure to identify the possibility that a young person had specialist health needs. This complaint was dealt with at Stage 2.
- The appropriateness of a Care Plan and placement for a child; this was initiated at Stage 2.
- The identified placement for a disabled child
- Frequent changes of Social Worker
- Delay in assessment
- Support workers for a child with a disability arriving late.
- Delay in assessing entitlement to Direct Payments

6.1.8 Complaints arising from young people in children's homes have mainly focussed on the behaviours of other Young People and how such behaviours have had an impact on them.

6.1.9 It needs to be noted that not all complaints are upheld, however it is acknowledged that the issues for the young person concerned or their relatives were sufficiently serious for them to contact the Local Authority to make a complaint, therefore explanations were rightly provided in response to all aspects of complaints.

6.1.10 Learning from complaints will be focussed on in Section 8 below

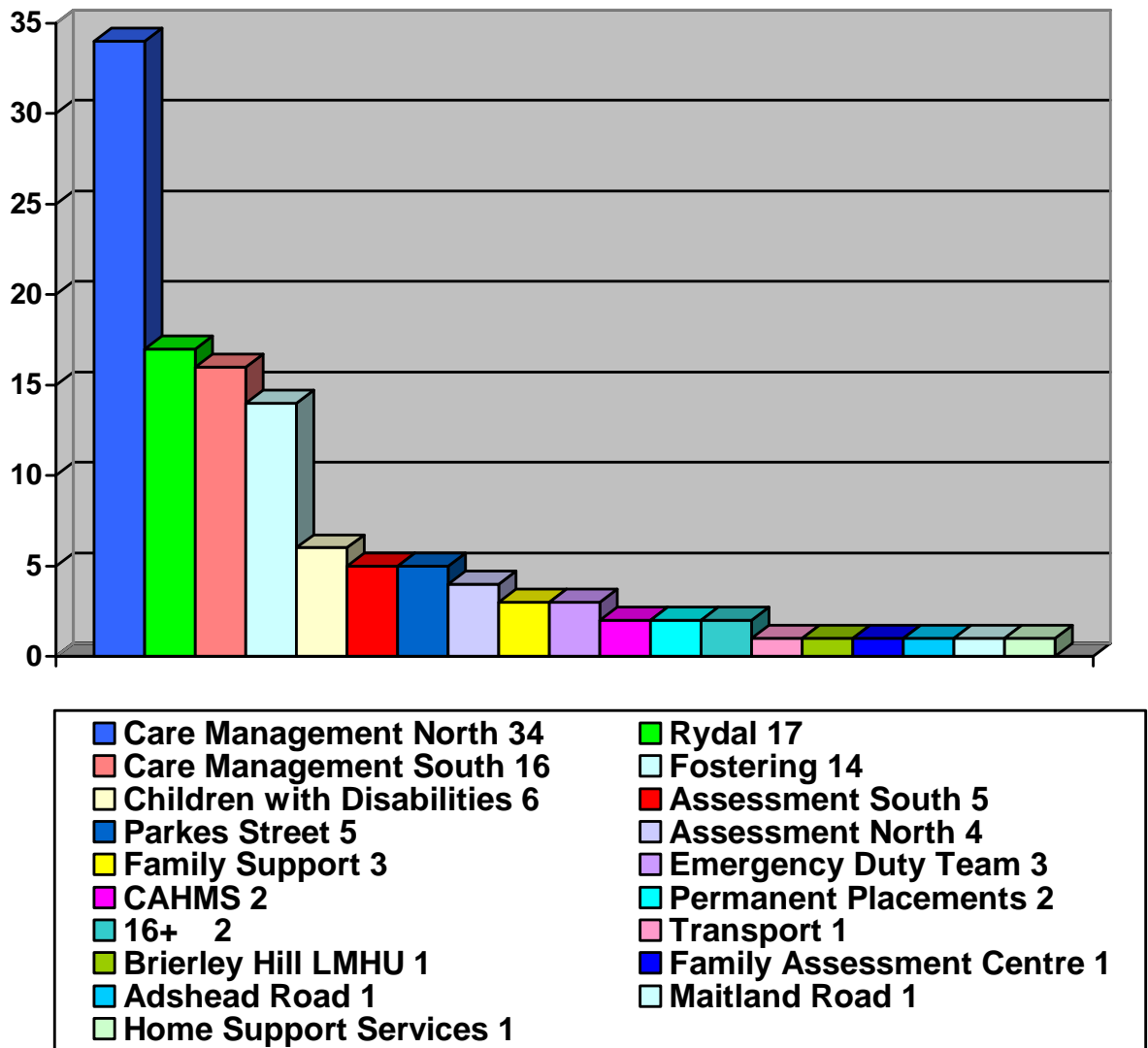
6.1.11 Training forms an important aspect of the measures taken to address issues and themes arising out of complaints. This has been provided on a regular basis over a number of years to all Social Care Staff in the organisation. More recently the training offered has been reviewed and a course specific to Staff who may respond to complaints has been devised to assist them in this; other Staff are offered awareness raising training which focuses on recognition of complaints and to whom these should be forwarded. Training will continue to be an integral part of the Quality and Complaints Team work in 2006 -2007.

6.1.12 All complaints are important in their own right; however, it is relevant to note that there does not appear to have been a particular event or incident during 05/06, which resulted in multiple complaints. The

exception to this has been a number of complaints being made by young people towards other young people in residential care, sometimes against each other. The issues are very real to the young people concerned but it is reassuring that young people are gradually becoming more confident in using the complaint process to raise issues which are important to them.

6.1.13 There needs to be balance when looking at the complaint figures in that we can consider that members of staff often have to make difficult decisions and as the messenger of those decisions they are sometimes in a position where complaints are perhaps not unexpected.

6.2 COMPLAINTS RECEIVED ACROSS THE DIRECTORATE



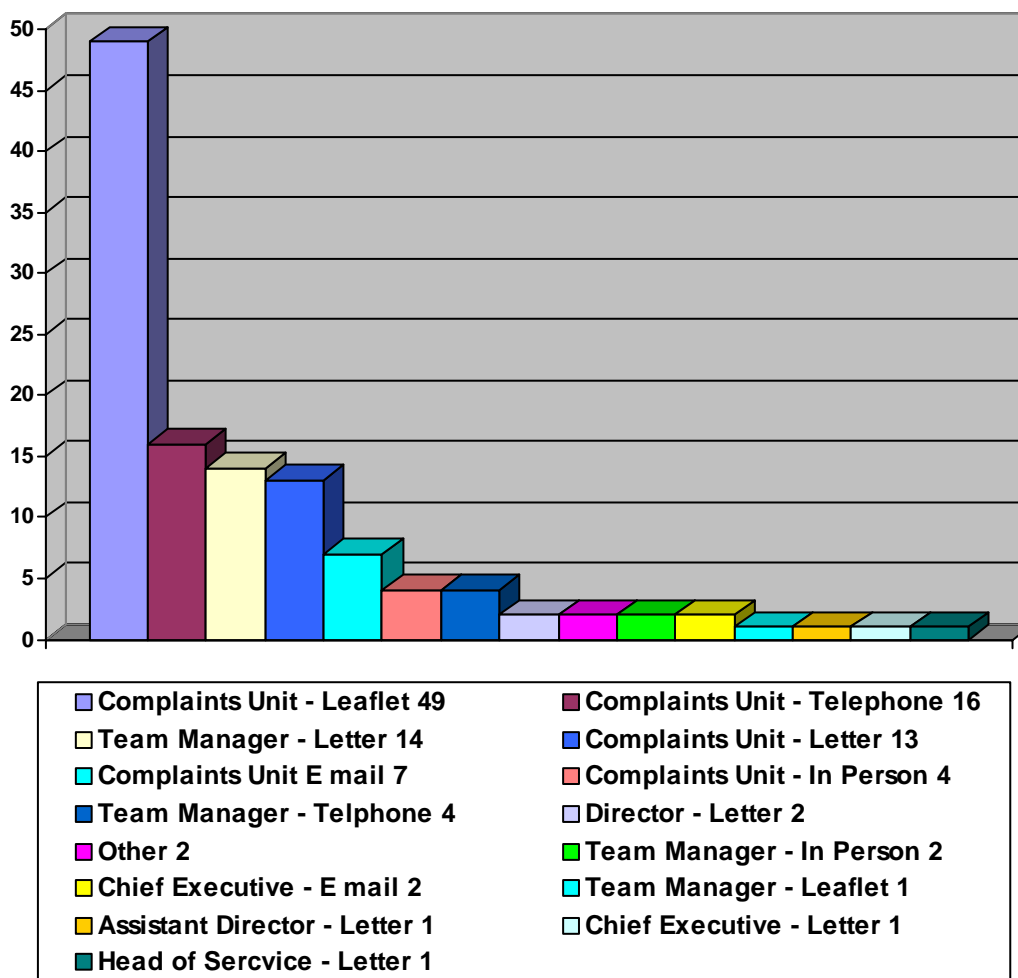
6.2.1 As noted earlier in this report Children's Specialist Services provided services to 1705 children and their families. In percentage terms 93% of all service users either felt satisfied with the service they are receiving or did not for whatever reason chose to put forward a

complaint. This statistic in no way diminishes the importance of each complaint or the impact incidents of poor practice or inadequate services had on each of the people who complained.

6.2.2 As was the case last year the Care Management Teams have been the main recipient of complaints; this is unsurprising as these Teams will hold cases for the greatest lengths of time and will deal with many people who are going through extremely difficult and painful transitions. What is notable this year is the increase in the number of complaints concerning Fostering, this is to be seen as positive as the Quality and Complaints Team have worked, along with the Advocacy Service, to ensure that all young people who are looked after are aware of the complaints procedures and that this is not just restricted to the residential establishments who are relatively easy to contact.

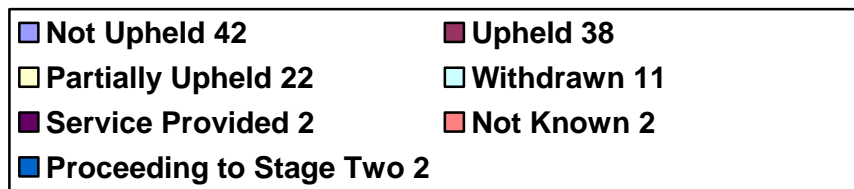
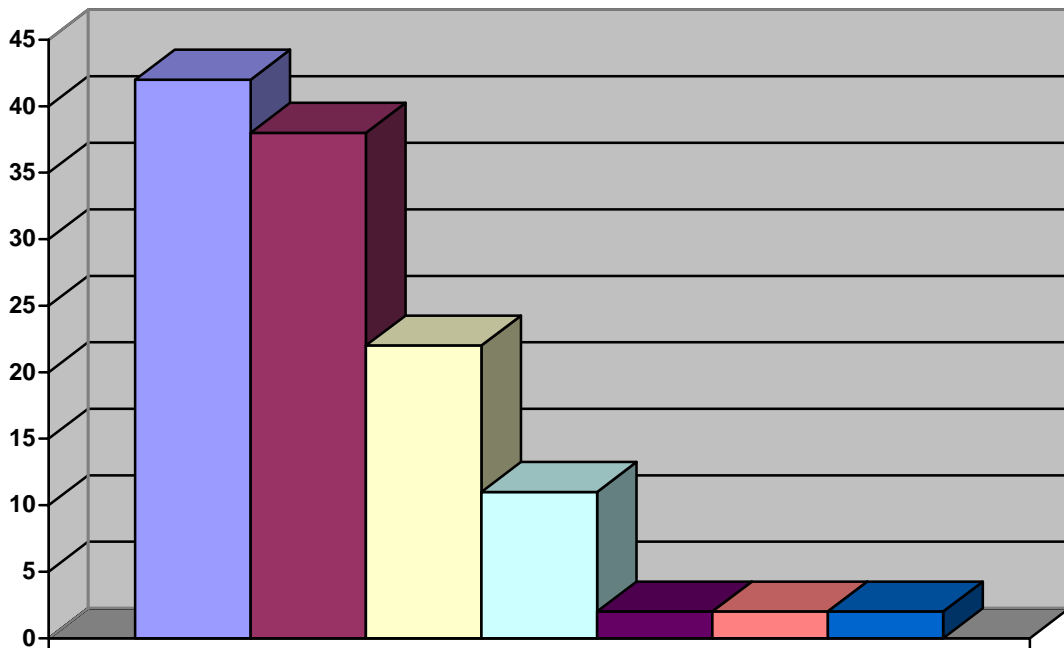
6.2.3 Complaints activity is monitored throughout the year, not least to detect where a specific service area might be struggling in its delivery of services. However, an increase in complaint numbers must not necessarily be seen as a negative; it can be an indicator that people have been given greater awareness and access to the complaint process, and particularly for young people this is crucial in that they need to feel secure and confident in being able to complain.

6.3 HOW ARE COMPLAINTS RECEIVED



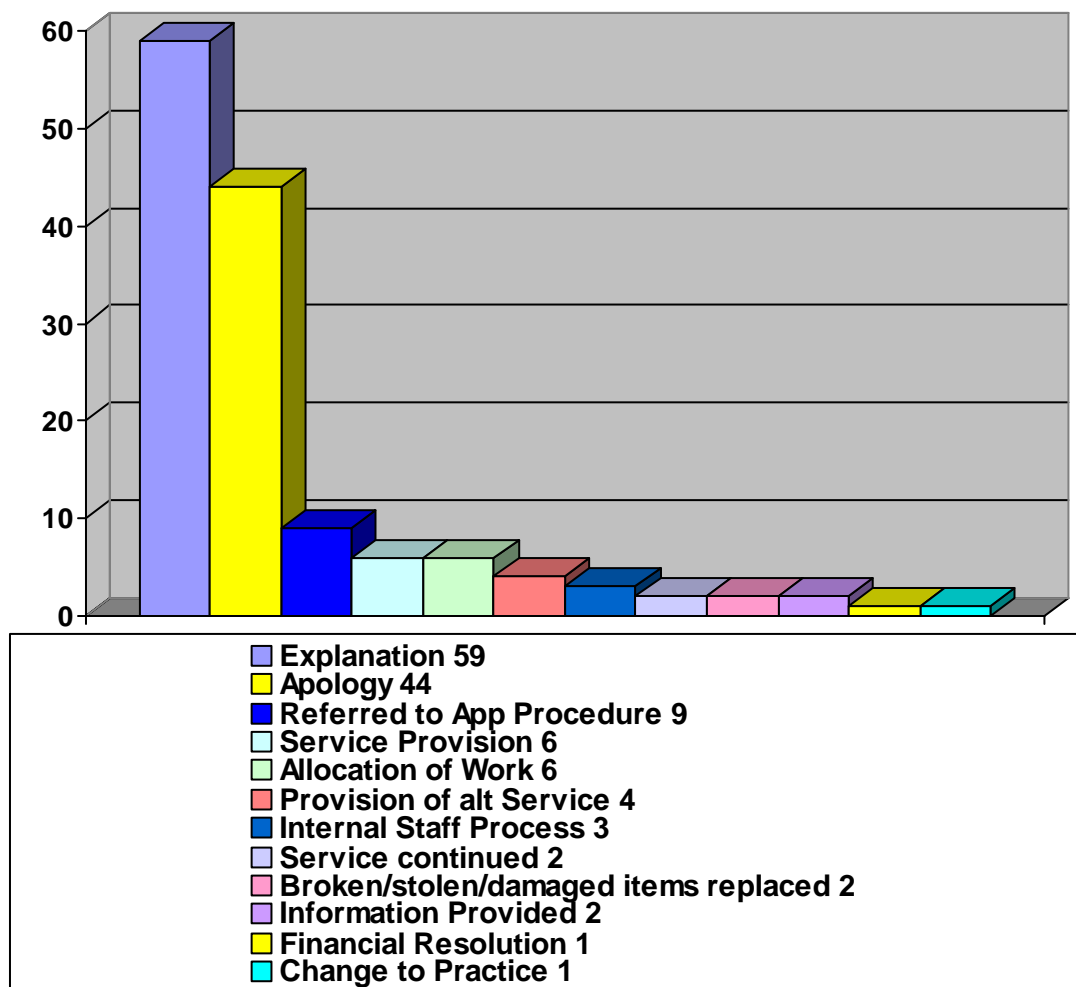
6.3.1 Complaint leaflets remain the most common way of communicating complaints to both Directorates, followed by telephone calls and letters either to the Quality and Complaints Team or Team manager of the service concerned. The number of complaints received by e-mail has stayed broadly the same. It will be noted that there were two complaints that have been recorded as received by other means; these were one complaint which was referred on by an Emergency Duty Team worker and another which was forwarded by a Reviewing Officer, the complaint having been raised at a Review. The quality and complaints Team is researching how complaints can be made by text, there will be a statutory requirement that Local Authorities have the means to accept complaints in this manner. All complaints are acknowledged before a Manager is allocated to carry out the response to the complaint matters.

6.4 OUTCOMES IN TERMS OF FINDINGS



- 6.4.1 The majority of complaints result in a finding, this might for example be a finding of 'Upheld' and therefore the view is that the complaint is justified. There are occasions where a complaint is resolved at a very early point through discussion and agreement; in those situations a finding is not always possible or practicable.
- 6.4.2 It can be seen from the above chart that there are slightly more complaints that are upheld than those that are not, Children's Services welcome complaint as an essential tool in improving services through customer feedback.
- 6.4.3 Service users have the right to raise several areas of complaint at one time; this can result in several different findings.
- 6.4.4 Two complaints are recorded as the finding being not known. In one complaint the complainant indicated that they did not accept the resolution offered by the Local Authority and advised that they would be taking further action, yet have not yet done so. In the second the complainant left the country before a resolution could be offered and could not be contacted.

6.5 HOW ARE COMPLAINTS RESOLVED?

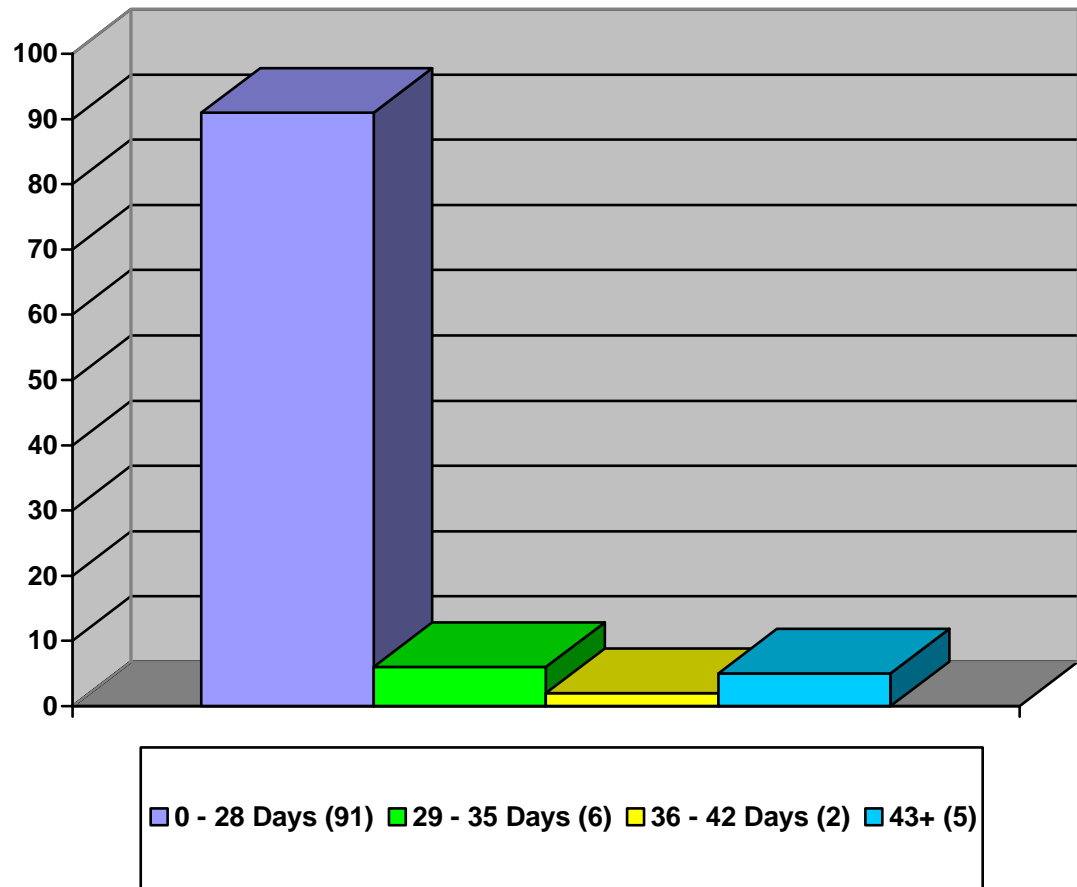


6.5.1 It will be noted that the chart above shows more resolutions (**139**) than complaints (**119**), some complaints require more than one action if they are to be satisfactorily resolved.

6.5.2 As was the case in 2004-2005, the majority of complaints were resolved by providing an explanation; often this explanation will be detailed and will have required a thorough examination of records and discussions with relevant members of staff. Explanations are provided even where it is felt that the complaint is not upheld. A number of complainants receive several outcomes for example an explanation together with an apology and, where required, new service provision.

6.5.3 Where a complaint is withdrawn the complaints Team will contact the Young Person or their representative to clarify the reason for that decision and ensure that it is indeed the informed choice of the complainant rather than dissatisfaction with the process, or fear of continuing or other reasons. Having a complaints procedure has evident benefits for the Local Authority giving critical customer feedback on the Services that are offered and provided; the Local authority will continue to investigate the circumstances of serious complaints even when these have been withdrawn to ensure any necessary changes can be made.

6.6 TIMESCALES



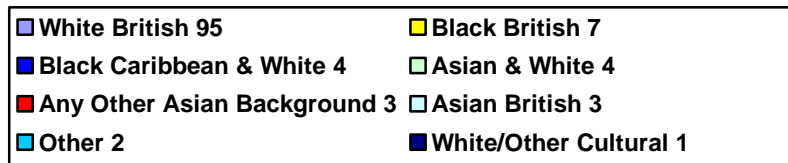
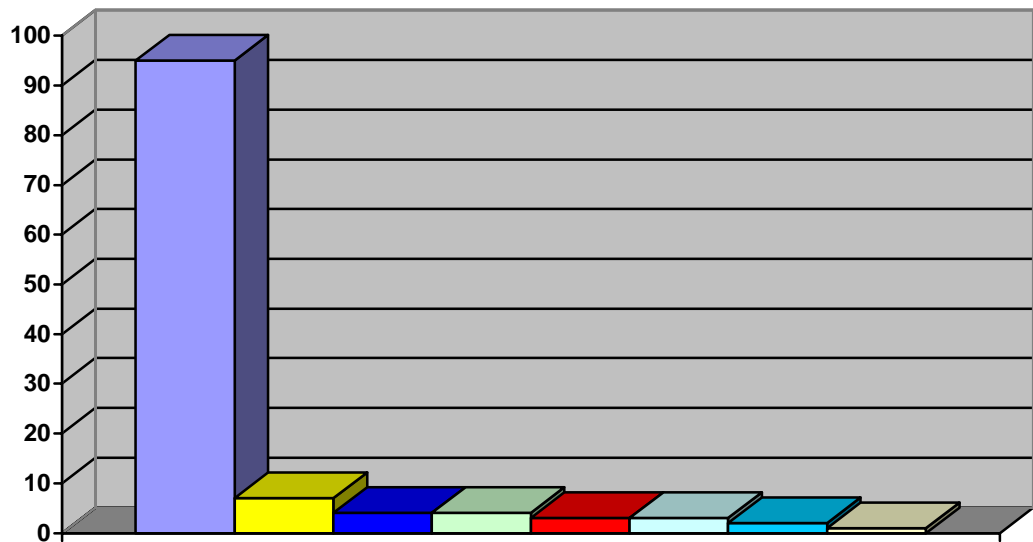
6.6.1 It will be noted from the figures above that only **104** of the **119** complaints are commented on in respect of timescales, this is because the **11** complaints that were withdrawn were not counted, nor were the **2** where the outcome was not known nor the **2** which proceeded to Stage 2 as these could not be described as being resolved at Stage 1.

6.6.2 Of the **104** complaints which were resolved at Stage 1, **87.5%**, compared with **68%** from the previous year, were addressed and resolved within the statutory timescale of 28 days. The percentage of complaints which took between 28 and 42 days reduced from **12%** to **6.7%**. Those which took in excess of 42 working days reduced from **20% to 4.8%** – the longest being 167 days; this was a complaint which the Quality and Complaints team believed that it and the relevant District team had done all that it could to resolve, but the Complainants whilst refusing to allow the complaint to proceed to Stage 2 of the procedures nonetheless refused to allow the complaint to be closed at Stage 1. During its involvement in the complaint, the Quality and Complaints Team remained active liaising between the Complainants and the Directorate and provided mediation as appropriate.

- 6.6.3 The above improvement in performance is possibly the result of the Quality and Complaints Team being at full compliment throughout 2005/6 and the training that has been provided to a wide range of staff
- 6.6.4 Timescales for responding to children complaints are statutory; at present Social care Services are allowed up to 28 days to acknowledge and address complaints to a conclusion. It is known that the new Government guidance dealing with complaints will greatly reduce this timescale, although as yet the final guidance has not been issued. It is anticipated that this will be brought into line with the timescale allowed for dealing with leaving care complaints. This change will provide a significant challenge to all those responding to complaints. Every effort will be continue to be made during 06/07 to work with staff responsible for responding to complaints in order to ensure a timely and effective response.
- 6.6.5 It is acknowledged that delay must be avoided where possible, however where it is unavoidable and where the complainant is in agreement then a degree of delay can be viewed as reasonable
- 6.6.6 **Reasons for Delays:** - The following are not put forward as justification or delay instead they are presented as part and parcel of the difficulties in concluding all complaints in good time. Complaints where delay occurred during 2005/06 involved:-
- Complainant (parent) making repeated further complaints whilst the original was being investigated
 - Complex issues concerning a number of teams which require careful coordination
 - Arranging agreeable times to meet with Complainants
 - Complainant (parent) raising concerns about the behaviour of their (looked after) child which needed careful investigation to protect the placement
 - Seeking financial redress for a young person and gathering evidence to prove that this is due
 - Other procedures being exhausted before the Complaints procedure can become involved

6.7 ETHNICITY

- 6.7.1 Every effort is made to record a complainant's ethnicity.
- 6.7.2 It is the case that a number of people prefer not to describe their ethnicity or it is simply not known to the complainant. The recorded figures for 2004/05 are as follows:-



6.7.3 As can be seen the majority of children/young people who currently access the complaint process are White/British. The figures do however indicate a growing awareness and use of the complaint process from children/young people from an ethnic minority background. It is believed that one of the greatest challenges here is to ensure that people who do not use spoken or written English are aware of the complaints procedures and are able to use these if they need to. To assist with this Interpreters and publicity material can and is provided wherever required or requested in order to assist young people and or their carers. Further work will be carried out in the coming year to raise awareness and improve accessibility to the complaint process for all looked after children.

6.8 HOW DO WE ENSURE THAT COMPLAINTS ARE GENUINELY RESOLVED?

6.8.1 The Stage 1 response letter invites complainants to seek further assistance from the Quality and Complaints team, if they are still dissatisfied.

6.8.2 In addition, the Quality and Complaints team is able to undertake a monitoring role with regard to complainant satisfaction. This involves

direct communication with the complainant on occasion, to ensure that they are, indeed, satisfied with the response that they have received.

- 6.8.3 The Quality & Complaints Team has designed a customer satisfaction questionnaire which has been recently introduced. This questionnaire is sent out to all complainants six weeks after the complaint is concluded. Alternatively the complainant can receive a phone call from a member of the Quality & Complaints Team in order to go through the questionnaire. The complainant is invited to comment on their satisfaction with the complaint process and how they felt their complaint matters were handled. The responses form part of the information/feedback held in monitoring reports provided to Senior Managers/Managers

SECTION 7

7.1 AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT FOR THE COMPLAINT & COMPLIMENT PROCESS 05/06

- 7.1.1 Increased monitoring of timescales/response by Managers
- 7.1.2 Increased awareness training for front line staff. Training for Managers/Seniors in responding to stage 1 complaints.
- 7.1.3 Training for Managers and Senior Managers in addressing stage 2 and 3 complaints.
- 7.1.4 Revised complaint leaflets and other publicity material in light of new legislation and Guidance. Ensure accessibility of this material to young people, including those with communication difficulties in a readily available variety of formats.
- 7.1.5 Put in place a robust system to audit-trail the implementation of recommendations arising out of complaints.
- 7.1.6 Develop the structure, presentation and delivery of complaint reports to children & young people. It is recognised that reports provided to children/young people need to have a balance between providing all relevant facts and information whilst at the same time being child centred and appropriately easy to understand.
- 7.1.7 To provide increasingly informative analysis of performance to management teams.
- 7.1.8 Review and revise the current procedures, ensuring that they are then made widely available to staff and service users.
- 7.1.9 Clear guidance to staff about how to respond positively and helpfully to comments made by service users and carers will continue to be provided.
- 7.1.10 Develop and implement a staff survey in order to gather views and reflections from staff concerning their experience of the process.

- 7.1.11 To undertake consultation with independent groups and partner agencies about levels of satisfaction with the complaint and compliment service.
- 7.1.12 To improve performance specifically with regard to time scales for the resolution of complaints.
- 7.1.13 Review the criteria and referral form for the allocation of independent persons
- 7.1.14 Carry out an audit across all establishments/reception areas to ascertain availability of publicity material for the public and staff.
- 7.1.15 Mediation: - Greater emphasis will be placed on mediation. This could be an effective tool in resolving complaints early or indeed at any point in the complaint process at Stage 1, 2 or 3. It is intended that the Quality & Complaints Team will lead on mediation with the opportunity to recruit the skills of a trained independent mediator to assist if required.
- 7.1.16 Raise awareness of the importance of gathering in compliments about Children Services. A small part of this will involve the implementation of compliment certificates to all establishments/members of staff who receive a compliment.
- 7.1.17 The Quality & Complaints Team will lead a project to develop a DVD/Video for people whose means of communication is neither written nor spoken English. The languages presented will include spoken English (for people with a visual impairment), the six major Community languages (all spoken), British Sign Language and signed Makaton.

SECTION 8

8.1 EVIDENCE OF LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS: EXAMPLES 2005/06

- 8.1.1 Local authorities have complaints procedures for a number of reasons; in addition to being the mechanism by which service users can ensure that they receive the services to which they are entitled and that any dissatisfaction is addressed the complaints that are received can offer invaluable customer feedback on the services that are provided.
- 8.1.2 Outcomes to many complaints are implemented at a local level, all should result in an apology where appropriate, but it can be difficult from these to establish the wider learning for the Directorate. Some complaints, however, have a wider relevance to the Directorate identifying the need for procedures to be changed or clarified, or the creation of new training or services. As can be seen below Children's Services have been able to learn in this manner from a number of complaints over the last year:

- Decision to fund a specialist placement in lieu of other funding for a young person waiting to leave Hospital.
- In a number of individual complaints new or reviewed Services were provided where this was appropriate
- Amendment of Reviewing arrangements for Young People in residential assessments
- Amendment to recording legal advice
- Review of timescales for implementing changes to care plans
- Strengthening of allocation arrangements of complex child care cases
- Increased awareness of the need to ensure that all agency staff have access to appropriate training and action was carried out to implement this
- Specialist short term placement being found for a young person
- Raising awareness of the protocol between the Police, Social Services and Emergency Duty Team to aid the appointment of an appropriate adult when a Young Person is arrested and mental health concerns are identified.
- In a number of cases complaints highlighted inadequacies in the services being provided by private hire companies particularly concerning safety and reliability, as a result contracts were withdrawn.
- New arrangements are being made to ensure that the property of Children and Young People is properly audited and better protected and any loss is fully investigated before compensation is considered.