



Customer Service Annual Report 2019-20

Report Summary

This report gives a summary of complaints and compliments received by the Trust between 2019 and 2020 and their outcomes. It also details the processes and procedures put in place by the Trust to help service users and others understand and access these, as well as ways in which the Trust has improved its service and learned from complaints.

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A hands-on approach to help children in Slough be
..... Safe, Secure and Successful

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Executive summary

This report provides an overview of the activity of the Complaints Service in the year during the period of 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

What has worked well?

The Trust has received 147 complaints in the last year which is an increase on the previous year (108). Whilst an increase may indicate an increased dissatisfaction from service users, it may also indicate that the complaints process is more accessible.

The increase is in part due to recording a category of complaints not put through as these require a significant level of time and consultation provided by the Complaints Manager to understand the issues being raised and often signposting the complainant to the most appropriate place to resolve their issues.

12 young people have been able to access the complaints procedure and seek resolution to their concerns.

The timeliness of responses to statutory complaints has improved from 50% within 10 working days last year to 80% this year.

The number of complaints that have been addressed as representations has remained consistent which is positive and evidences the negotiation skills of the Complaints Manager in seeking to address concerns without implementing the statutory procedure, ensuring complainants receive a more targeted and personal response.

The complaints process has been updated through the year with improvements made based on feedback from professionals and from the LGSCO (Local Government Social Care Ombudsman), this includes amending the letter template to include lessons learned, ensuring managers who investigate complaints seek contact with the complainant with more face to face discussions taking place and providing some targeted external training to managers about the complaints legislation and procedure.

As a result of a LGSCO investigation the feedback received led to the Trust initiating some targeted training for managers on the complaints process, this was high quality training.

What has worked less well?

A proportion of complaints have been focused on the attitude and behaviour of staff, reflecting the need to continuously be aware of the way in which we speak to service users being respectful and systemic. It is acknowledged that social workers must have difficult conversations with service users and these conversations may cause some service users to be unhappy.

Of the 28 statutory complaints 2 were upheld and 12 were partially upheld, and of the 36 representations 5 were upheld and 13 partially upheld, suggesting that there is still scope for further improvement and development.

There has been some turn over of managers within the Trust which has resulted in some inconsistencies in adhering to the process and timescales, this has also impacted on the capacity to take time to reflect and learn from complaints as robustly as the Trust would aspire to.

In 2019-20 eight complainants requested to progress their stage 1 complaints to stage 2, this is an increase from 2018-19 when only three requested to do so.

Whilst the eight requests were made for a complaint to progress to a Stage 2 of the statutory process only three were progressed having been carefully screened and responded to, one of these was upheld, one was discontinued after determining the statutory basis of the complaint and one remains outstanding at the time of the report.

An increased number of complainants; six in total took their complaints to the LGSCO, requiring a robust approach to responding to the information requests.

Further Development for 2020/21

Ensure active process of learning from complaints by linking outcomes to practice development.

Continued training for managers to ensure they are able to conduct and respond to complaints and to resolve them as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Continue to provide monthly management information on the complaints activity so that operational managers can maintain an oversight of activity and take actions to address issues identified.

Trust to promote the Behaviours and Values policy to ensure that all staff remain aware of and uphold them when conducting Trust business.

Introduce a focused learning discussion at the conclusion of all complaints that progress to a Stage 2 investigation in order to reflect and identify areas for improvement.

1. Introduction

This report provides information about complaints made during the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

The statutory responsibility under the Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006; requires children's services to have complaints procedures in place in order to regulate the procedure which needs to be followed in consideration of representations made under the Children Act 1989 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

It is a statutory requirement to produce and publish an Annual Report.

The Complaints Manager has responsibility for managing the statutory process for complaints from children and young people (or their representative) and a responsibility in ensuring the quality of that service.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview and analysis of all complaints, concerns and compliments received by the trust in the past year, and summarise the issues that have arisen, providing a mechanism by which the Trust can monitor the quality and effectiveness of services and of its complaints procedure.

The report will be presented and approved by the Trust, Board, and, under the contractual arrangements, to Slough Borough Council (Council).

This report will be published on the Trust's website.

A summary of the complaints procedure is attached to this report as annex 1.

2. Progress made in 2019-20

- The Complaints Manager continues to work with complainants and with professionals to address complaints at an informal mediatory level rather than progressing to a formal Stage 1. This has resulted in many complainants providing positive verbal feedback that they felt they had been given a chance to talk and be listened to by a senior manager.
- The Complaints Manager continues to be directly available to complainants which has enabled them to clarify the issues they were concerned about, taking the opportunity of talking with an informed and neutral party.
- The Trust complaints policy continues to be reviewed and updated and is published on the Trust website.
- The Complaints Manager has incorporated written procedures for social worker managers and Heads of Services investigating complaints of what the Trust expects of how they should investigate. This has been developed over time through listening to feedback from managers and quality assuring the complaints responses.
- The mandatory training programme on complaints continues to be delivered throughout the year to relevant staff across the Trust, in particular targeting those who are front line, operational staff and managers.
- The Trust continues to focus on improving the recording of data to inform better analysis and information available. The new category of 'not put through' that was introduced last year has better reflected the amount of the complaints / issues that are received and managed within the Trust.

- The template letter to respond to stage 1 complaint has been updated so that any complaints that the investigating officer has upheld or partially upheld must also state what actions the Trust will implement to ensure that this issue does not re-occur, this ensures we are demonstrating to the complainant that we are learning from complaints and improving services.
- Short monthly reports have been provided to Heads of Service regarding complaints / compliments in their areas of responsibility, enabling improved management oversight and focus where there may be performance or service issues that need to be addressed. Equally this highlights where a compliment has been received highlighting good practice.

3. Access to the Statutory Complaints Procedures

The aim is that the Complaints Procedures are accessible and simple to use, when children, young people and 'significant others' feel dissatisfied with the service provided by the Trust. The Complaints Manager is responsible for ensuring that the Trust complies with the Statutory Complaint Procedures, and provides an easily accessible service for those service users who wish to make a complaint. These strategies include:

- The Complaints Manager is available to the public Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm and offers a number of ways for people to contact them for advice, opportunity to discuss a concern or problem, or to make a complaint. These include face to face meetings, telephone calls, email correspondence, letters.
- A new complaints leaflet has been designed and made available to all social workers to give to young people and other service users; business cards have also been provided to all of the staff of the Trust which includes the contact details of the Complaints Manager. A requirement of The Practice Standard of Statutory Social Work and Early Help is that service users are informed of their right to make a complaint and how to contact the Complaints Manager. The Trust's new website has full details of how to make a complaint or compliment, and the intranet provides staff in the Trust with easy access to the procedure.
- The Complaints Manager is available to work with the Children in Care Council (Reach Out! group) to develop child-centred information sheets/ brochures for children to enable them to make a complaint.
- All Child Protection Conference Chairs explain to families and Child Protection Conference participants of their right to make complaints and advise them of the contact details of the Complaints Manager and how to lodge a complaint.
- All Independent Reviewing Officers are required to advise all of the children who are looked after by the Trust of their right to make a complaint and how to go about it.

4. Overview of Statutory Complaints

4.1 Overview

The Complaints Manager routinely collects a range of data on the complaint activity, and it is from this data that the following analyses have been completed.

When a complaint is made the Complaints Manager holds a discussion with the complainant to ascertain the nature of the complaint in order to consider the most appropriate procedure to follow in response to the complaint.

Once a decision is made regarding the nature of the complaint and the appropriate procedure to investigate the complaint the Complaints Manager liaises with the appropriate staff in the Trust to carry out the investigation

The table below shows the complaint activity during the year 2019/20 and the procedure followed to investigate and respond to the complaint.

Complaints that have been resolved at a mediatory level are recorded as a representation on the Trust’s records.

4.2 Total Number of Complaints and Representations 2019/20

Table: Total number of complaints all categories

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Statutory Complaints	28 (19.0%)	26 (24%)	44	63
Representations (Mediatory)	36 (24.5%)	35 (32.5%)	46	33
Corporate Complaint	19 (13%)	1 (0.9%)	2	0
Miscellaneous	3 (2.5%)	6 (5.5%)	7	0
Not Put through	27 (18%)	3 (2.8%)	0	0
Declined	34 (23%)	37 (34.3%)	20	0
Total	147	108	119	96

The above table shows that a total of 147 complaints were received in 2019-20, this is an increase from last year; the increase is mostly due to the Trust now recording complaints/contacts not put through and an increase in Corporate Complaints which covers areas of activity that do not fall within the Statutory process.

Complaints that are classed as not put through do not progress to a formal or informal process however they still require a significant level of time and consultation provided by the Complaints Manager to understand the issues being raised and often signposting the complainant to the most appropriate place to resolve their issues. It is therefore important to record this activity.

The complaints that were declined was because they did not meet the criteria for accepting a complaint, i.e. the case was in Court proceedings, or the case was under police investigation; the person making the complaint did not have parental responsibility or the complaint was for Slough Borough Council, or that the complaint has already been investigated and resolved.

Case example

Complaint was regarding tutor for a private teaching organisation, advised the complainant that this is for the education department and directed them to SBC’s complaints department.

4.3 Timelines of Responses to Complaints

The Trust aims to respond and resolve a Stage 1 Complaint within ten working days of the acknowledgement of the receipt of the complaint.

In 2019-20 out of the 28 statutory complaints:

- 23 (82.1%) were resolved within time scales, (50% in 2018/19)
- 3(10.7%) were outside timescales (46.2% in 2018/19)
- 2 remain outstanding

The timeliness of complaints responses within ten working days has increased in the last year, which is an improvement. The reasons for complaints responded to outside of timescales are varied; the majority were due to complainants delaying in responding to the investigating officers, or failing to attend meetings arranged to discuss the complaint, one was due to the pressure of allocating resources due the pandemic Corona virus. 1 complaint was suspended at the request of the complainant.

The Complaints Manager continues to liaise with managers responsible for investigating complaints and complainants when the timescales are unlikely to be met.

4.4 Trust Corporate Complaints

In 2019-20 nineteen complaints were identified as Trust corporate complaint, this is an increase from last year representing 13% of all complaints this year as opposed to 0.9% last year). The Trust is applying the criteria of what constitutes a statutory complaint more robustly and it is felt that this approach has contributed to this increase.

The main criteria being applied to the complaint is to determine if there is a lack of provision of care for the child/ren, if so it will be managed as a statutory complaint, if there isn't then it will be managed as a corporate complaint. Legislation and statutory guidance is used to inform all decisions.

4.5 Who is making the complaints?

The Statutory Complaints Procedures are only accessible to those who qualify in regards to specific criterion, and below is a breakdown of the role of the complainant.

Table: Role of the Complainant 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020

Complainant	2019-20	2019-20 %	2018-19	2018-19 %
Children/ young care leaver	6	21.4%	6	23%
Parent	1	3.5%	0	0%
Mother	16	57.1	11	42.3%
Father	3	10.7	8	30.8%
Foster carers	0	0	0	0
Other (grandparents; advocate; SGO; carer; adopters; sibling)	2	7.1	1	3.8%
Total	28	100%	26	100

The largest group of individuals lodging a Stage 1 Complaint remains the mother of a child/ children receiving a service from the Trust. Overall mothers lodged a total of 16 of the 28 complaints, and fathers lodging a total of 3 of the 28 complaints.

Young people, all of whom were clients of the Leaving Care Service, lodged 6 complaints of the 28 statutory complaints, two of which were with the support of an advocate.

4.6 Method of Lodging a Complaint

To enable service users to make a complaint, the decision on how to make that complaint is entirely up to them. The table below provides information about the method of lodging a complaint.

Table: Method of Lodging a Complaint

Mode of making a Complaint	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
Email	21	13	28	42
In person	2	5	3	5
Telephone	5	5	7	8
Letter	0	2	5	7
Other (e.g. MP)	0	1	1	1
Total	28	26	44	63

The same numbers of complaints were lodged via telephone this year as were in 2018-19; many more potential complainants did contact the Complaints Manager to seek guidance and advice on how to lodge a complaint. Data shows that the preferred method of contact is via email.

Potential complainants also accessed the Complaints Manager to discuss their concerns and on many occasions a mediated resolution was negotiated with the service user and the relevant manager.

4.7 Reasons for Making a Complaint

There are many reasons people who are involved with children’s social care will complain, but for the purposes of collecting data the Trust has put them into four categories.

- **Category 1** Behaviour/ attitude of social worker or staff member
- **Category 2** Case management decision/ Disagreement with decision
- **Category 3** Quality of services provided by the Trust
- **Category 4** Lack of / failure to provide services.

Table: Reasons for making a complaint

Reason for making complaints	2019-20	2019-20 %	2018-19	2019-18 %
Behaviour or attitude of social worker	14	50%	10	38.4%

or staff member				
Case Management decision/ Disagreement with decision	2	7.1%	2	7.6%
Quality of services provide by the Trust	12	42.8%	14	53.8%
Lack of/ failure to provide service	0	0	0	0
Not Recorded	0	0	0	0
Total	28	100	26	100

The category receiving the most complaints in 2019-20 was 'behaviour or attitude of social worker or staff member.' Complaints relating to staff behaviour increased in 2019-20 compared with 2018-19; of these 8 were partially upheld, 4 were not upheld and 2 were abandoned. The fact that 8 were partially upheld suggests that there remains ongoing work to ensure that staff are adhering to the Trust Behaviours and Values.

Complaints 'relating to quality of service' reduced in 2019/20 and the majority of these were not upheld.

Complaints have enabled managers to focus on areas for improvement within their services and staff behaviour is addressed through individual supervision, staff training and embedded within the Trust Behaviours and Values Policy (currently being rewritten).

4.8 Outcomes of Statutory Complaints

There are three outcomes to a complaint:

Upheld – this means the Trust accepts it is at fault; the Trust will apologise, and also explain what it will do to rectify the error and reduce the risk of the error re-occurring in future

Partially Upheld – this means the Trust partially accepts that it is at fault and will apologise, and also explain what it will do to rectify the error and stop the error from occurring in future

Not Upheld – this means the Trust does not accept that it is at fault.

Table: Outcomes of complaints 2019-20

Year	Upheld	Partially upheld	Not upheld	Withdrawn	Abandoned / suspended	N/A	No outcome recorded (still in progression)	Total
2019-20	2 (7.1%)	12 (42.8%)	10 (35.7%)	1 (3.5%)	2 (42.8%)	0	1 (3.5%)	28
2018-19	1 (3.8%)	13 (50%)	9 (34.6%)	1 (3.8%)	2 (7.6%)	0	0	26
2017-18	4 (9%)	22 (50%)	13 (29.5)	2 (4.5%)	1 (2.2%)	0	2 (4.5%)	44
2016-17	4 (6.5%)	26 (41%)	27 (43%)	0	0	2 (3%)	4 (6.5%)	63

In 2019/20 out of the 28 statutory complaints 2 complaints were upheld, 12 complaints were partially upheld, 10 complaints were not upheld, 1 complaint was withdrawn, 2 complaints were abandoned and 1 complaint remains outstanding.

1 complaint was withdrawn by the complainant and 2 were abandoned because the complainants failed to confirm the statement of complaint and did not respond to further contact.

The outcome of complaints remains broadly similar to those in the previous year with a slight increase in those upheld.

The % of complaints not upheld has not changed significantly, whilst the complaint is not upheld the process allows the complainant to air their concerns and feel assured that they have been listened to.

Managers are responding to complaints in a more open and reflective way and are being strongly encouraged to discuss the complaints with the complainants in their investigations, and due to the significant focus on early resolution the complaints which do progress to stage one are more likely to be upheld or partially upheld.

Escalating Statutory Complaints:

In 2019-20 eight complainants requested to progress their stage 1 complaints to stage 2, this is a significant increase from 2018-19 when only three requested to do so.

Stage 2 requires both an Independent Investigator and an Independent Person to ensure that a complaint is investigated with independence and impartiality and in line with the statutory requirements.

Three requests to progress to stage 2 were accepted:

- In one case the Director of Operations as the Adjudication Officer accepted the Independent Investigators report in its entirety.
- In one case the Independent Investigator advised the complainant that the stage 2 could not continue as the Trust were executing their statutory duty, therefore the stage 2 investigation was aborted.
- At the time of writing the report one case is still in progress.

Five requests to progress to stage 2 were declined as the cases were in court proceedings. Where a stage 2 complaint is declined a clear response is given to the complainant to explain the reasons why it was declined and reminds the complainant they have a right to go to the Ombudsman.

In 2019-20 six complainants escalated their complaints to the Local Government Officer & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) this is an increase from last year when only three progressed their complaint to the LGSCO.

Of these six complaints, three were statutory stage 1, two were deemed premature as they had not yet been considered by the Trust, one was outside the Ombudsman jurisdiction.

Two complaints that had been categorised as 'miscellaneous' and 'not put through' were also deemed as outside of Ombudsman jurisdiction.

One complaint that had been declined by the Trust was closed after initial enquiries by the LGSCO.

Our experience with the Ombudsman has taught us the importance of making sure that we are able to respond comprehensively to the questions they raise providing adequate information for them to make a timely decision about whether they are going to accept and investigate a complaint.

It also highlights the importance of keeping clear up to date case notes as these are often required by the LGSCO to inform their decision.

LGSCO Decision	2019-20
Maladministration (no injustice)	
Maladministration & injustice	
No Maladministration after investigation	
Ombudsman discretion	
Investigation with Local settlement	
Outside Jurisdiction	3
Investigation Discontinued	
Premature / Informal enquiries	2
Closed after initial enquiries – no further action	1
Total	6

Case example

Complaint was managed as a Stage 1; following a stage 1 investigation, the complainant remained dissatisfied and went on to complain to the LGSCO.

The Trust was able to provide full clear documents which resulted in the LGSCO agreeing with Trust that it was a court matter and therefore also outside of their jurisdiction.

5. Representation

5.1 Who is making the representations?

The Trust has defined 'Representation' for its purposes where the complainant has agreed to resolve their concerns at a mediatory level; the Trust has only accepted complaints / representations from those who meet the criteria according to the Statutory Complaints procedure.

The Trust addressed 36 representations during the year, which is one more than the previous year.

Table: Role of the Complainant 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020

Complainant	2019-20	2019-20	2018-19	2018-19
Children/ young care leaver	6	16.7%	7	20%
Mother	17	47.2%	17	48.5%
Father	7	19.4%	7	20%
Parents	1	2.8%	0	0
Foster carers	2	5.6%	1	2.8%

Other (grandparents; advocate; SGO; carer; none)	3	8.3%	3	8.5%
Total	36	100	35	100%

The largest group of individuals contacting the Trust and having their concerns addressed as a representation the mother of a child/ children receiving a service from the Trust. Overall mothers lodged a total of 17 of the 36 complaints, and fathers lodging a total of 7 of the 36 complaints.

Young people, all of whom were clients of the Leaving Care Service, lodged 6 complaints of the 28 statutory complaints, two of which were with the support of an advocate.

5.2 Method of lodging a representation

To enable service users to make a complaint, the decision on how to make that complaint is entirely up to them. The table below provides information about the method of lodging a complaint.

Table: Method of Lodging a Representation 1st April to 31st March

Method of making a representation	2019-20	2018-19
Email	16	17
In person	3	2
Telephone	17	15
Letter	0	1
Other (e.g MP)	0	0
Total	36	35

The data for 2019-20 shows that the preferred method of contact was via telephone and email; the Complaints Manager contacted the complainants who had emailed their complaints to discuss their complaint and ask if they wish for their complaint to be progressed as formal stage 1 or as a representation.

5.3 Timelines of Responses to Representations

Whilst there is no set timescale for responding to a representation the Trust aims to resolve representations within ten working days in line with the statutory timescales.

This timeframe is applied more flexibly as the aim is to resolve the concerns between the complainant and the Trust through discussion and meetings.

The meetings may be multi-agency with senior managers, which can take longer to arrange and may involve more than one meeting.

In 2019-20 again the majority of representations were not resolved within timescales, this maybe partly due to the complicated nature of the complaint and or the complainant being available to discuss their concerns.

5.4 Reasons for making a representation

There are many reasons people who are involved with children's social care will raise concerns or wish to make a complaint, but for the purposes of collecting data the Trust has put them into four categories.

Category 1 Behaviour/ attitude of social worker or staff member

Category 2 Case management decision/ Disagreement with decision

Category 3 Quality of services provided by the Trust

Category 4 Lack of / failure to provide services

Table: Reasons for making a representation

Reasons for making representation	2019-20	2019-20 %	2018-19	2018-19 %
Behaviour or attitude of social worker or staff member	26	72.2%	23	66%
Case Management decision/ Disagreement with decision	4	11.1%	5	14%
Quality of service provide by the Trust	6	16.7%	6	17%
Lack of/ failure to provide service	0	0	1	3%
Not recorded	0	0	0	0
Total	36	100	35	100

The category receiving the most complaints addressed as representations in 2019-20 was 'behaviour or attitude of social worker or staff member.' There was a slight increase in this area from last year

Complaints have enabled managers to focus on areas for improvement within their services and staff behaviour is addressed through individual supervision, staff training and embedded within the Trust Behaviours and Values Policy (currently being rewritten).

5.5 Outcomes of Representations

Table: Outcomes of Representations 2019-20

Year	Not upheld	Partially upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Abandoned / Declined	Suspended	Pending	N/A	Total
2019/20	15 (41.6%)	13 (36.1%)	5 (13.8%)	0	1 (2.7%)	0	0	2 (5.5%)	36
2018/19	16 (46%)	10 (29%)	5 (14%)	0	3 (8.6%)	1 (2.8%)	0	0	35
2017/18	22 (48%)	17 (37%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	0	46
2016/17	15 (45.5%)	8 (24%)	2 (6%)	0	0	0	1 (3%)	7 (21%)	33

In 2019-20 out of 36 recorded representations there was a slight % decrease in representations not upheld; a slight % increase in partially upheld but there was no change in representations upheld.

This is positive and shows the impact of trying to manage complaints early, reducing the need to progress into a formal statutory process.

Managers have been very positive and proactive in supporting early resolution through representations.

1 representation was abandoned as the complainant failed to confirm their statement of complaints despite Complaint Manager's phone calls and emails.

Case Example for complaint managed as representation illustrating good practice.

A complainant came to the Trust offices and met with Complaints Manager, the complainant (a mother) was extremely upset and made a number of complaints, but at the end she made some statements that suggested she was in significant emotional distress and having difficulty coping. The Complaints Manager was very concerned and discussed this with the Head of Service.

The Head of service responded with an immediate response to aid the mother on the day in question and put in place emergency support including some respite care and initiated a new assessment to ascertain his/her needs. The mother provided feedback that she was grateful for the immediate response and appreciated the rest.

6. Learning from complaints and representations

The Trust amended the response letter to include what action would be taken as a result of the complaint, this evidences reflection and learning by the manager completing the response and evidences to the complainant that action will be taken as a result of their complaint.

In addition the Head of Service is asked to provide evidence of what has been learnt from this complaint and evidence how the learning has been implemented and embedded in practice.

The main learning to arise in 2018-19 was the need for clear communication with families and children, which will be addressed in supervision and one to one's.

Case 1 example from mother:

Complaint: Mother was unhappy about an unannounced visit from the social worker, and that it was a duty social worker who had not read the case notes beforehand.

Learning: Manager to pick up with social worker in supervision and recommend that they adequately read records before visiting a family and understand the objectives of visits being completed on behalf of the Trust.

Additionally, when complaints are received this can be discussed further in supervision and reflected upon to determine if a different approach was more suitable.

Case 2 example from young person:

Complaint: Young person feels that they were not consulted about when to end their stay with their parent.

Learning: That it is important that that the social worker communicates clearly with the young person to avoid confusion and unnecessary distress.

7. Compliments

In addition to managing and monitoring complaints and representations the Trust also collects compliments. It is important to acknowledge compliments as this provides a balance to the complaints received and enables the Trust to share good practice in order to continue to impact on individual learning and reflection.

The compliments have been broken down into three categories, and these are described below:

Category 1: Social Work Practice which relates to feedback about the Social Worker’s and allied Trust professionals’ skills and empathy in their communications and practice skills in the work with children and families,

Category 2: Case Management which relates to the skills exercised by the staff of the Trust demonstrated in managing meetings, care and case planning and allocating resources in the process of supporting and safeguarding children, young people and families.

Category 3: Partnership Working which is evidence of Trust staff working in partnership across Services/ Teams within the Trust and between Trust staff and professionals across agencies, to enhance the safeguarding and well being of children, young people and families.

From April 2019 to March 2020 a total number 48 compliments were recorded, of these 38 related to category 1; two for category 2 and eight for category 3. We believe this number is much higher; however we are only able to report on those compliments that were submitted to the Complaints Manager. We continue to encourage staff across the Trust to submit any compliments they receive.

Table: Compliments by category

Category of Compliment		No	%
1	Social Work Practice	38	79.7%
2	Case Management	2	4.1%
3	Services provided by the Trust	8	16.6%
Total		48	100

Compliments are received via a number of different methods. The compliments include positive feedback from children, young people and families, other professionals and community members.

Below is a breakdown of those who have complimented the work of the Trust.

Role of the person making the compliment

Compliments are made by a range of people and in the last year we have received compliments from:

- Parents.
- Adopters

- Family relations
- Young person / care leaver
- Other agencies e.g. legal, health, schools.

Example of a compliment from a young person in care

Just wanted to let you know that I got my results today and I passed all my exams. I am so happy as I am going on to next year!

Wouldn't of been able to do it without all your extra help and support!

Thank you so much

Example of compliment from father on behalf of family

Father outlined that he was very anxious and nervous when the Trust became involved, as he is 'old school' and has a negative view of statutory intervention. However 'dealing with the social worker x has completely changed my view.....she has been absolutely fantastic and changed my child's path'.

The feedback outlines that social worker x's approach, commitment and drive to arrange a plan in a short period of time (to keep B out of care) has been invaluable to the family. (B) was outlined to be at the centre of decision making, but father also felt the whole family was considered and explored. Social worker was outlined to have developed a network and support which may not have otherwise been possible due to the escalating behaviours the family where struggling to manage.

Example of compliment from a school representative

Dear Trust

I just wanted to say well done and thank you all so much in chairing and delivering the content of the ICPC on the X family on Friday.

We thought you were thoroughly assertive, professional and controlled in this meeting.

Thank you again for your help and support.

8. Member Enquiries

The correspondence from the local Members has been recorded by the office of the CEO. Between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020, 4 enquiries were logged and each of these was managed by the designated Head of Service.

- 2 of the 4 enquiries were for Children with Disabilities (CWD) team and responded to by the delegated Head of Service, both of these related to the assessment and care provisions to the eligible children

The remaining 2 enquiries were from the same parent regarding the dissatisfaction with the level of care provision in place and parental responsibility

9. Standards for the Complaints Function

Key Aim of Complaints Function:

The Trust acknowledges that those who access its services are from the most vulnerable sections of the community and, as such, understands the need to continue to strive in delivering a service within a culture of transparency, openness, respect and listening.

The Trust continues to develop and distribute a child/ young person friendly complaints leaflet to continue to ensure that the complaints process is accessible and the Complaints Manager approachable.

The Complaints function is accessible, understandable and a well-managed customer-focused service supported by the following standards:

- A service with an established process for managing new complaints.
- A service that is resourced with an accessible, qualified and verified team of Investigating Officers and Independent Persons to support Stage 2 investigations.
- A clear Complaints Procedures and a strong policy base for the management of complaints.
- A Complaints Training programme, that informs staff of the Statutory Complaints Procedure in children's services, the role they play in this process and the rights of the service users to complain.
- A culture for staff to see complaints as a means to learn and reflect in their professional practice as Social Workers rather than as a negative force.
- Accessible information for service users on how to make a complaint.
- Accessible information on how to make a compliment.
- A service which is valued by service users and staff.

10. Developmental Plan for the Complaints Service

The Trust will aim to continue to enhance the management of complaints in line with the Statutory Guidance, with the following:

- Development of strategies to ensure that all those who qualify to utilise the Statutory Complaints Procedures are aware of their right and the knowledge about how to exercise their right to challenge and lodge a complaint.
- Continue to provide training for managers and social workers to ensure they have a full understanding of the Complaints Procedure and their roles and responsibilities within it.
- Complaints Manager to work with the Reach Out! groups and the IROs to ensure that children and young people are aware of their right to make a complaint and on how to do this.
- To increase access to advocacy for those children / young people who wish to make a complaint.
- Continue to work with managers and social workers to ensure there is learning from complaints and this is incorporated into ongoing personal and professional development priorities.
- Where a complaint does progress to a Stage 2, and the complaints are upheld ensure a learning discussion takes place between the Complaints Manager, Social Worker and their manager.
- The Complaints Manager will hold liaison meetings with the relevant managers for more complex cases.
- Continued training for managers to ensure they are able to conduct and respond to complaints and to resolve them as quickly and efficiently as possible.

- Continue to provide monthly management information on the complaints activity so that operational managers can maintain an oversight of activity and take actions to address issues identified.
- Trust to promote the Behaviours and Values policy to ensure that all staff remain aware of and uphold them when conducting Trust business.
- Introduce a focused learning discussion at the conclusion of all complaints that progress to a Stage 2 investigation in order to reflect and identify areas for improvement.

Annex 1 Complaints Procedure Summary

Definitions

The Children Act 1989 defines the complaints procedure as being for 'representations (including complaints)'. A representation could include a complaint, concern, a compliment in regards to the nature, delivery or availability of a service. The representations are defined below:

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet.

Concern: There are many instances where minor concerns can be addressed without further recourse to the complaints procedure. These are generally handled within the team or informally by the Complaints Manager and resolved through mediation.

Compliment: Comments made to praise or thank someone for the service provided.

Deferred Complaint: It may not be possible to respond to a complaint immediately, for example if a case is in, or about to begin Court proceedings; the Trust has discretion in deciding whether to consider the complaint, whereas to do so would prejudice any Court decisions. In such cases the complaint is deferred until the Court proceedings are concluded and then the complaint may be resubmitted.

Decline Complaint: The Trust has the discretion to decide whether or not to accept a complaint made by a person who does not meet the criteria of 'qualifying individual' (please see point 4.4 page 6)

Representation: Where a complaint has been resolved at a mediatory level and not progressed to the formal Stage 1, the Trust has recorded this as a 'representation' in our data.

Legislation

The arrangements for the Statutory Procedure and Management of Complaints from children and young people (or their representatives) are set out in The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

The Legislation requires the Trust to appoint a Complaints Manager responsible for:

- Managing, developing and administering the Complaints Procedure;
- Providing assistance and advice to those who wish to complain;
- Overseeing the investigation of complaints that cannot be managed at source;
- Supporting and training existing and new members of staff;
- Quality assuring the management of and responses to complaints, and
- Monitoring and reporting on complaints activity and data.

Legislation is supported by detailed guidance from the Department for Education entitled 'Getting the Best from Complaints' which has been taken into account in the Complaints Procedures published by the Trust.

Complaints Procedures

Statutory Complaints Procedure at Slough Children's Services Trust

Responsibility for the service rests with the Head of Quality Assurance and Safeguarding, who manages the Complaints Manager. This ensures independence from the line management of cases and the allocation of resources.

The purpose of the Statutory Procedure is to enable the complainant to have access to independent consideration of the matters raised.

Complaints process using the Statutory Procedure:

Stage One: Local Resolution

This initial stage provides the Trust with the opportunity to try and resolve issues of dissatisfaction at local level with managers and staff who have responsibility for the case.

The Trust has 10 working days from the acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint in which to respond to the complainant. As a rule, the Practice Manager (PM) of the service in question will write to the complainant within this timescale, providing details of their investigations and any outcomes or decisions made.

Stage Two: Independent Investigation

Stage Two involves a full and formal investigation. Having received the response at the conclusion of Stage One, if the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome is able to escalate their concerns and request progression of their complaint to the next stage.

The Complaints Manager will appoint an Independent Investigating Officer (IO) to lead the investigation an Independent Person (IP) must also be appointed who works alongside the IO and will be involved in all aspects of the investigation. The role of the IP (as identified in Guidance) is to shadow and oversee the quality of the work of the IO.

The Complaints Manager provides ongoing guidance advice and support during the Stage Two process.

The investigation should be completed and the response sent to the complainant within 25 working days. Where this is not possible, this may be extended to 65 days. The Complaints Manager will maintain a dialogue with the complainant if a response in the 25 working days is not feasible.

On conclusion of the investigation, both the IO and IP individually write a report. The IP comments on the findings outlined in the IO's as to whether they are in agreement or not with the outcomes and recommendations. Both reports are forwarded to the Head of Service for consideration and response.

Stage Three: Review Panel

Where Stage Two has been concluded and the complainant remains dissatisfied, they will be eligible to request further consideration of the complaint by an Independent Review Panel.

The Panel does not re-investigate the complaints, nor does it consider any new complaints that have not been first considered at Stage Two.

The Panel comprises three people, all of whom must be independent of the Trust. The purpose of the Panel is to consider the complaint and wherever possible, work towards a

resolution, which very often takes the form of recommendations made to the CEO of the Trust, who will write to the complainant, informing them of the outcome reached.

The complainant should be advised of their right to refer their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman if still dissatisfied.

Final Stage: The Local Government Ombudsman

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) is impartial and investigates complaints of injustice arising from maladministration by the Trust. When they receive a complaint, the LGO are on the side of neither the complainant nor the Trust.

Complainants are entitled to refer complaints to the LGO at any stage. The LGO however will not normally accept the complaint until the Trust has had a chance to complete all stages of the Complaints Procedures.

This is the final stage that the complainant can take with their complaint, if they remain dissatisfied; their only recourse is through judicial proceedings.

What may be complained about?

Some examples are outlined below (this is not an exclusive list)

- An unwelcome or disputed decision
- Attitude or behaviour of staff
- Poor/ lack of communication
- Application of eligibility and assessment criteria/ assessment care management and review
- Concerns about the quality or appropriateness of a service
- Delay in decision making or provision of services/ delivery or non-delivery of services.

What is exempt from the Statutory Complaints Procedure?

Some examples are outlined below (this is not an exclusive list)

- The person wishing to complain does not meet the requirements of a 'qualifying individual'. A person is a 'qualifying individual' if the Trust have a power or a duty to provide a service to them. A representative can complain on behalf of the child, but there must be a direct connection, for example, have parental responsibility.
- The same complaint has already been dealt with at all stages of the procedure.
- The complaint does not concern the actions or decisions of the Trust (or any body acting on its behalf).
- Regulation 8, as set out in the Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 provides the Trust with discretion in deciding whether to consider complaints, where to do so would prejudice any of the following:
 - Court Proceedings
 - Tribunals
 - Disciplinary Proceedings
 - Criminal Proceedings, or
 - Grievance Proceedings.

Timescales for Statutory Procedure

Each stage in the management of complaints is time limited and the timelines are set out in the regulations. On occasions the time line is not achieved, and when this occurs the Complaints Manager is empowered to negotiate an extension with the complainant.

Some of the reasons why a complaint may need to be managed through the use of a negotiated extension are:

- A more complex complaint may require additional time for a thorough investigation to take place
- Those who need to be interviewed (either professionals or complainant) could be unavailable within timescales due to annual of sick leave
- In some cases a member of staff may have left the Trust and it may take time to contact them and seek their agreement/ involvement in the investigation. Staff who have left are under no obligation to participate in an investigation
- It may take time to secure the services of an IO and an IP.

The progression of requests for an escalation to a Stage 2 Complaint Investigation because of dissatisfaction with the judgements and outcomes following a Stage 1 Investigation has required requests for an extension, because of the need for the Complaint Manager to build a pool of suitably qualified and vetted IO and IP.

Non Statutory Complaints Procedure in Slough Children's Services Trust

Complaints not covered by the Statutory Complaints Procedures may be dealt with under the Trust Corporate Complaint Procedure. These are often complaints made by parents, or carers regarding the impact of a service on them personally, liaison and coordination of these remain through the Complaints Manager. The Corporate Complaint Procedure will be developed as follows

Stage One:

- The aim of the Corporate Procedures will be to resolve complaint at the earliest opportunity. Stage One is investigated formally by the manager of the officer with the same rigor and thoroughness as complainants managed through the Statutory Complaint Procedures.

Stage Two:

- If the complaint remains unresolved, the Head of Service will initiate an investigation into the complaints made.

Stage Three:

- The Chief Executive will review the complaint and consider whether the complaint has been dealt with appropriately.

The timescale for Corporate Complaints will mirror the timescale for the statutory procedure in order to maintain and monitor standards.