

Meeting:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date:	20 November 2007
Subject:	Children's Services complaints Annual report
Key Decision: (Executive-side only)	No
Responsible Officer:	Stuart Dalton, Adults and Children's Complaints Service Manager
Portfolio Holder:	Janet Mote
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	The report

SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report sets out the Children's Services complaints annual report.

RECOMMENDATIONS: None. For Information purposes only.

REASON: N/A

SECTION 2 - REPORT

ANNUAL REPORT for Children's Services for period 2006/07

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1. Context

This report provides information about complaints made during the twelve months between 1 April 2006 and 31 March 2007 under the complaints and representations procedures established through the Representations Procedure (Children) Regulations 2006, and the Council's corporate complaints procedure.

To fulfil a requirement under the new regulations, where informative the data has been split into 2 sections covering the period 1 April 2006 to 31 August 2006, where the old regulations applied, and 1 September 2006 to 31 March 2007, where the new regulations apply.

All timescales contained within this report are in working days.

Text in quotation marks indicate direct quotations from the 2006 Regulations or Guidance unless otherwise specified.

1.1 What is a Complaint?

"An expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child or young person, which requires a response."

However, "The Children Act 1989 defines the representations procedure as being for 'representations (including complaints)'." Therefore both representations and complaints should be managed under the complaints procedure (unlike for Adult social services, where only complaints need be captured).

1.2 Who can make a Complaint?

The child or young person receiving or eligible to receive services from the Council or their representative e.g. parent, relative, advocate, special guardian, foster carer etc

“The local authority has the discretion to decide whether or not the representative is suitable to act in this capacity or has sufficient interest in the child’s welfare.”

2. Stage of the Complaints Procedure and statistics

The complaints procedure has three stages:

Stage 1. This is the most important stage of the complaints procedure. The Service teams and external contractors providing services on our behalf are expected to resolve as many complaints as possible at this initial point.

The Council’s complaints procedure requires complaints at stage 1 to be responded to within ten working days (with an automatic extension to a further ten days where necessary).

Stage 2. This stage is implemented where the complainant is dissatisfied with the findings of Stage 1. Stage 2 is an investigation conducted by an independent external Investigating Officer for all statutory complaints and an internal senior manager for corporate complaints. A senior manager, usually a Group Manager, adjudicates on the findings.

Under the Regulations, the aim is for Stage 2 complaints falling within the social services statutory complaints procedures to be dealt within 25 days, although this can be extended to 65 days if complex.

Stage 3. The third stage of the complaints process is the Review Panel under the statutory procedure. Under the corporate complaints process, the Chief Executive reviews the complaint.

Where complainants wish to proceed with complaints about statutory Children’s Services functions, the Council is required to establish a complaints Review Panel. The panel makes recommendations to the Corporate Director who then makes a decision on the complaint and any action to be taken. Complaints Review Panels are made up of three independent panellists. There are various timescales relating to stage 3 complaints. These include:

- setting up the Panel within 30 days;
- producing the Panel’s report within a further 5 days; and
- producing the local authority’s response within 15 days.

A further option for complainants is the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) who is empowered to investigate where it appears that a Council’s own investigations have not resolved the complaint. Complainants can refer their complaint to the LGO at any time, although the Ombudsman normally refers the complaint back to the Council if it has not been considered under our procedure first.

3. Summary of Activity

The Complaints Service manually recorded 56 complaints [corporate complaints database (log) 43] during the year (20 complaints during the first half of the year and 36 in the latter half), compared with 52 manually last year [corporate log 53]. This figure is the total number of complaints that the Complaints Services handled. Please note the Complaints Service

took over central logging of complaints in September 2006 because we recognised the level of complaints that were not being captured on the corporate log.

Total complaints made:

Between 1 April 2006 and 31 March 2007, we received and closed 56 complaints. Of these, 4 progressed to Stage 2. 2 in the first half and 2 in the second half of the year.

Of those 4 complaints, 1 proceeded to Stage 3 (in the second half of the year).

3.1 Comparison with the preceding year

This indicates a 7.7% increase in complaints from last year within the Directorate for manual recordings.

The Complaints Service took on central logging of complaints in September 2006 to ensure systematic capturing of complaints. Interestingly, Community Care Stage 1 complaints recording has increased by 40% in comparison.

Despite the central logging, greater promotion of the right to complain and mandatory complaints training for all managers having taken place between January and March 2007, there is more work to be done to improve identifying and logging complaints. The Complaints Service has started complaint surgeries to help address this with some initial success.

Key message: Councils that capture high levels of Stage 1 complaints invariably achieve high Star ratings as it demonstrates a willingness to hear concerns, address them and improve services as a result of them. Whereas Councils that capture lower levels of Stage 1 complaints tend to get lower star ratings. [Source: Jerry White, Local Government Ombudsman & Steve Carney, Head of Complaints, CSCI 2007]

3.2 Outcomes of Stage 1 complaints

Please note the new database does not capture this information. The Complaints Service is negotiating with BTP to introduce this on the new database.

This is a significant drawback because this information helps managers identify trends. Therefore, as of April 2007, the Complaints Service has started to manually record outcomes for the next annual report.

3.3 Response times

This information will be reportable under the new complaints database (which became operational in February 2007) for future annual reports.

Anecdotally, response times have significantly improved over the last two years. Few complaints run seriously over time (over a month late) in comparison to previously. However, there is still work to be done to improve response times.

3.4 Key improvements

Within 2006-07 the Complaints Service has made the following changes to improve complaints management:

- The Complaints Service centrally logging all complaints and sending acknowledgements and leaflets to complainants (80% increase in complaints captured in the second half of the year after central logging was introduced);
- A new database was introduced (though it does not capture all the information that the Council is statutorily required to capture under the complaints regulations);
- The Complaints Service now vets all complaints response letters to improve quality and ensure the right to proceed to the next stage is included in the letter;
- Mandatory complaints training for all managers;
- A complaints surgery was piloted at Pinner Road which has proved successful in helping staff manage complaints better and will be extended to other service areas;
- New leaflets have been introduced;
- The complaints sections of the Harrow website have been significantly improved, including downloadable complaints leaflets;
- The Complaints Service now acts as the point of contact for complainants so senior managers do not become embroiled in complaints and thus compromise their position to adjudicate if complaints escalate.
- A full-time locally-based advocacy service has been introduced for children in need.

4. Focus for the near future:

- Learning from complaints
- Training for staff and members (if welcomed)
- Raising awareness of the complaints process
- Improved and more regular reporting
- Improved timescale adherence. The next annual report will provide response times for complaints
- Better support for staff involved in complaints
- Improving management of the independent complaint investigators pool
- Improving complaints monitoring and management within Partnership and contracted services (e.g. CORAM, CAMHS, Children's Trusts)

5 Stage 1 Complaints

Annual (Percentages *rounded up/down:*)

Children's Services	CIN		Duty/Referral & Asst		CWD/SE N		Fostering & Adoption		Asylum Seekers/Connections		Leaving Care		Family Centre		CLA		EWO		Total
	no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%	no	%	
Number of complaints as per corporate log	17	40	6	14	3	7	12	28	2	5	3	4.5	0		0		0		43
Recorded manually	18	32	8	25	6	10.5	12	21	5	9	3	5	1	1.5	2	3.5	1	1.5	56

Analysis: CIN constitute 32% of the complaints (the figure was 60% last year). A great deal of work has been done to improve complaint-handling in CIN. Gail Hancock has offered high profile support for this improvement drive and specific measures have included allocating complaints administrative co-ordinator and holding complaints surgeries at Pinner Road. The successful measures to address high turnover of staff is also likely to have contributed to better complaint-handling in CIN. A significant proportion of CIN (4 out of 17) were about policy/procedural requirements not being met. To put this in context, not one Community Care complaint in this period was about policy/procedural requirements not being met. CIN was also the only area where attitude of staff was the primary cause of complaint (though only 2 out of 17).

12 complaints in Fostering and Adoption is high (double last year's figure) and partly reflects delays with inter-country adoption which have since been addressed.

All areas showed lower corporate recording than the Complaints Service were capturing manually. Central logging by the Complaints Service should remove these discrepancies from future reports. The numbers of complaints for Referral & Assessment, CWD, Leaving Care and CLA seem relatively low and are target areas for raising awareness on the part of the Complaints Service.

Half Yearly Stage 1 statistics:

Children's Services	CIN	Duty/Referral & Asst	CWD/SE N	Fostering & Adoption	Asylum Seekers/Connections	Leaving Care	Family Centre	CLA	EWO	Total
1 Apr 06 - 31 Aug 06 (manually recorded)	10	2	2	4	2	0	0	0	0	20
1 Sept 06- 31 Mar 07 (recorded manually)	8	6	4	8	3	3	1	2	1	36

Analysis: The introduction of central logging of complaints may account for the 80% increase in complaints in the second half of the year (the Adults increase was 50% in the second half of the year). The introduction of advocacy may account for the 5 complaints in Leaving Care and CLA given there were none in the first 6 months of the year before the full-time advocacy service started.

Nature of complaint: as per corporate log (Percentages rounded up/down:)

Children's Services	CIN		Duty/Referral & Asst		CWD		Fostering & Adoption		Asylum Seekers/Connexions		Leaving Care		Family Centre		CLA		EWO		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	
Level & quality of service	2	5	6	14	1	2	5	11.5	1											15
Attitude of staff	2	5																		2
Policy & procedural requirements not met	4	9					2	5			1	2								7
Action/lack of action	7	16			1	2	3	7	1		2	1								14
Service Delay	2	5					1	2												3
Withdrawal, reduction or change in service																				
Failure to provide information					1	2	1	2												2
Total	17	39.5	6	14	3	7	12	28	2	4	3	7								43

Analysis: The basis for two thirds of complaints was either the level or quality of service or the action or lack of action making trends analysis difficult and a further reason why central logging should help improve reporting.

The low level of CWD and Leaving Care complaints recorded makes complaint trend analysis impossible. The lack of Asylum and Connexions complaints as well may indicate some work around complaints awareness in these areas may be beneficial.

Interestingly, 17% of complaints were about policy and procedural requirements not being met given there were none in Adults.

The following new categories have been introduced for the new database and will hopefully offer more insight into the types of complaints each team is receiving.

• <i>Failure to follow policy or procedure</i>	• <i>Refusal to provide service</i>
• <i>Loss or damage to property</i>	• <i>Change to individual's service – withdrawal</i>
• <i>Quality of facilities</i>	• <i>Delay failure in taking action</i>
• <i>Allocation/Reallocation</i>	• <i>Level of service</i>
• <i>Breach of confidentiality</i>	• <i>Quality of service delivery</i>
• <i>Discrimination by an individual</i>	• <i>Policy/legal/financial decision</i>
• <i>Discrimination by a service</i>	• <i>Freedom of Information</i>
• <i>Staff conduct Attitude/Behaviour</i>	• <i>Hate & race crime</i>
• <i>Comms – Failure to keep informed</i>	

Complaint made by:

Children's Services – person making the complaint as recorded manually	
Child/young person in need/being looked after	5
Child leaving care	
a parent/relative of his;	
Person with parental responsibility	24
Local authority foster carer	9
Child leaving care	
Special guardian	
Child to whom a Special Guardian order is in force	
parents of such a child	
Person who have applied for assessment under section 14F(3) or (4) ABOUT SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP – not keep	
Advocate	2
Persons whom arrangements for the provision of adoption services extend/prospective adopters/intercountry adoption	5
Persons with sufficient interest in the child's welfare	
Parent on own behalf	
Other (inc solicitors)	8
Asylum seekers	3
Total	56

Analysis: This is the first annual report to examine who is making a complaint and it highlights some interesting points.

Please note in particular the low level of complaints being made by young people directly. The national average is over 20%. So at 8% Harrow still has work to do to around improving access, awareness and empowering young people to make complaints directly. Strategies the Complaints Service has devised include:

- the introduction of a full-time local advocacy service (replacing the previous system of an advocate being contracted once a need was identified);
- Exploring how to ensure advocacy literature can be given to all new CLA;
- The Complaints Service has introduced quarterly meetings with the IRO team as no referrals were being made through this route;
- Other initiatives include a planned presentation to the Foster Carers Association; and
- Previous initiatives include a freephone telephone number.

6 Equalities Information – Service Users (corporate log)

Gender of Service User (as per corporate log)

Male	20
Female	17
Not specified	6

Ethnic Origin of Service User (as per corporate log)

<i>Add Categories</i>	
White/British	5
White/other	1
Black Caribbean	1
Black other	
Black African	2
Asian other	7
Irish	2
Indian	
Mixed Asian	1
Mixed Other	1
Other	1
Not recorded	22

Analysis: It is difficult to draw strong conclusions from limited data. However, the level of complaints relating to service users from Black and Indian backgrounds seems low (and seems similarly low in Adults). The Complaints Service is devising an Equalities Service Plan to try to increase access to the complaints process for all service users. The next annual report will capture ethnicity and gender in all complaints.

Disability (as per corporate log -including mental health services involvement)

No. where service user has a disability	2
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Analysis: The Complaints Equalities Service Plan will also aim to increase access to the complaints process for disabled service users.

7. STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS

There were 4 Stage 2 complaints during the year, compared to 11 (including 1 corporate) last year.

All 4 Stage 2 complaints required investigations to be undertaken by external independent investigating officers and came under the Children Act procedure.

There were varied issues referred to in the complaints that were made. Of the 4 complaints that were considered, none were dealt with within the 25 day time period. 1 took over three months, none took over six months.

Of the 4 complaints, none were fully upheld; 3 were partially upheld; 1 were not upheld and none were withdrawn.

Response Times:

Service	Children in Need	Fostering	Children with Disabilities	TOTAL
Number	2	1	1	4
Within 25 days (post Sept 06)				
Within 28 days (pre-Sept 06)				
Within 65 days	1	1		2
Over timescale	1		1	2
Withdrawn				
Pending				

Analysis: The average time to produce a final response at Stage 2 (including the adjudication) was 54 days.

All local authorities recognise that the 25 day timescale is extremely tight and the Council uses independent investigators which by their nature take longer than an internal investigator. The advantage of a complainant trusting an independent investigator's findings and thus very few complaints proceeding to Stage 3 outweighs the negative effect of longer timescales. In all cases the Complaints Service advised the complainant of the progress of the investigation.

Equally, this average is disappointing. The Complaints Service endeavours to ensure the speediest response possible whilst achieving a fair and thorough investigation. Therefore the Complaints Service paid for training for the core group of independent investigators in March 2007, where one of the key messages was the importance of timescales.

Outcomes

Outcomes:	Children in Need	Fostering	Children with Disabilities	TOTAL
Upheld		1		1
Partially Upheld			1	1
Not Upheld	2			2
Withdrawn				
Pending				
% escalating to Stage 2	11%	8%	17%	
% upheld (fully or partially)	0%	100%	50%	

Key message: The best indicators as to how well a team are managing complaints are the percentage of complaints that escalate from Stage 1 to Stage 2, whether Stage 2 complaints are upheld or not and what learning is identified from complaints.

Analysis: As a general guide the figure is approximately 10% escalate to Stage 2. Overall 7% of complaints escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2 (the following areas had no Stage 2's and should be congratulated: Duty/Referral & Asst, Asylum Seekers/ Connexions, Leaving Care, Family Centre, CLA, EWO). Equally mediation has had to be used in 8 complaints to prevent a Stage 2 which without mediation would have made the percentage 21% instead of 7%. Children's Services should also be congratulated that only in 1 of the 4 complaints was the primary reason for complaint upheld.

Nature of Complaint:

	Children in Need	Fostering	Children with Disabilities	TOTAL
Legal requirement not met				
Conduct or Attitude of staff				
Non-provision of requested Service		1		1
Level/quality of service	1			1
Service Delay				
Withdrawal, reduction or change in service				
Failure to communicate				
Action/Lack of action	1		1	2
Other Reason				
Total	2	1	1	4

Analysis: Due to the success of mediations, it is difficult to draw broad conclusions from Stage 2 complaints, especially as they apply to different service areas.

Only one of the four Stage 2 complaints upheld the principle point of complaint (the non-provision of a requested service).

8. STAGE 3 COMPLAINTS

There was 1 Complaint Review Panel held and no complaints were investigated under the corporate procedure at Stage 3. This compares with 2 Review Panels last year. Timescales relating to statutory social services Stage 3 complaints include:

- A Panel should be established within 30 days – this happened in 0 of the 1 cases. Panel convened on day 31.
- The Panel is required to produce a report within 5 working days detailing its recommendations – this happened in 1 of the 1 cases.
- The local authority should send a response within 15 days of the Panel's report – this happened in 1 of the 1 (response dated 7 days after panel) cases.

8.1 Stage 3 complaints by Service Area, Timescales and Outcome.

Status	Service Unit	Setting up Panel (30 day timescale)	Panel report produced (5 day timescale)	Council Response (15 day timescale)	Outcome
Children Services	Fostering	31	Same day	7	Compensation
Corporate					

Analysis: The review panel upheld the issues of complaint that were major considerations. Only £200 compensation was offered and this nearly resulted in the case going to the Ombudsman. A change in management addressed the underlying point of why the complaint escalated so far.

9. Ombudsman complaints and enquiries.

During the year, there were 2 premature complaints made to the Ombudsman and 0 complaints were considered by the Local Government Ombudsman.

9.1 Complaints made to the Ombudsman and Decision

Service Area	Total	Outcome of Ombudsman Consideration	
		Ombudsman Discretion – no or insufficient injustice	Premature Complaint
Fostering	1		1
Children in Need	1		1

Analysis: Harrow’s continuing exemplary record of non-investigation by the Ombudsman can be attributed to the good work of local management to resolve complaints, the independence and quality of the 2nd stage investigations and the introduction of mediation to resolve complaints that would have otherwise escalated further.

10. Percentage escalation

The following table indicates how many complaints have escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2 and how many have progressed from Stage 2 to Stage 3. By measuring these figures as a percentage we can gauge customer satisfaction with our responses to their complaints.

(last year’s percentages in brackets)

	Service Area:
Stage 1 to Stage 2	7% (21%)
Stage 2 to Stage 3	25% (18%)

Analysis: The reduced escalation rate for complaints from Stage 1 to Stage 2 of 7% this year in comparison to 21% last year is a doubly remarkable success when one considers that as of September 06 all letters have been checked to ensure the right to proceed to the next stage is included (whereas in the previous year this did not happen and the right to go to the next stage was often not included).

This successful reduction can be attributed to:

- The willingness and support of Children’s Services management and staff for embracing a more proactive and transparent approach to complaints management. Particular mention should go to Paul Wedgbury, Gail Hancock and Arlene Weekes for the excellent work they have done to improve the complaint handling culture in their respective areas.
- Better response times so complainants feel they are being taken seriously.
- Mediation has been used very successfully to resolve complaints where a request for a Stage 2 has been made.
- Better response letters (now the Complaints Service checks every complaint response).
- Improved retention of good staff and management.

The one Stage 3 Children’s review Panel was the only statutory complaints review panel across Children’s and Adults last year.

11. Compensation/Reimbursement Payments

The Ombudsman said at a conference in May 2007, that the single biggest failing of the social care complaints procedure is that compensation is not addressed or considered where it should be.

The Council provides compensation if after a complaint has been investigated or as part of an Ombudsman's investigation, it is concluded that:

- the Ombudsman would find that there has been maladministration by the Council causing injustice to the complainant; and
- he would recommend that compensation should therefore be paid to the complainant.

Payments related to the following service areas:

Service	Stage	Amount
Fostering and Adoption	1	£1,484.14 [compensation]
Fostering and Adoption	2 (requested)	£10,687.50 [reimbursement]
Fostering and Adoption	3	£680 [reimbursement]
Fostering and Adoption	3	£1,835 [compensation]
	Total	£ 14,686.64

12. Mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution

The DoH consultation document on the proposed amalgamation of the NHS and social care complaints procedures entitled 'Making experiences count' states, "Our proposals place more emphasis on people being able to talk to the people responsible for delivering and/or commissioning the services involved. We believe that there should be every opportunity given to resolve things through discussion and negotiation rather than by using a set procedure."

Harrow Council is already delivering pioneering work in this field. The success of internal mediation noted in the previous annual report at resolving complaints and thus preventing complaint escalation continues. The use of mediation has grown with staff/managers who were initially sceptical or reluctant now requesting mediation themselves. The number of mediations has increased threefold this financial year. Mediation was successful in 15 out of 20 social care cases meaning improved complainant satisfaction, staff and management time and stress was reduced and the money needed for independent investigations was reduced. To put this in context, the vast majority of Councils have not used mediation once in the last year.

13. Advocacy

The new locally-based dedicated advocacy service (Your Voice Your Choice) delivered by Kids Can Achieve started in November 2007. It is hoped that this new measure will help empower young people to raise and address their concerns. Historically Harrow receives far fewer complaints from the young people directly than other Councils. The national average is approximately 20%. Harrow's figure was only 4 for 2005-6 (8%). In the first 5 months of the new advocacy service there were 24 referrals (though many were resolved without the need to make a complaint). Further strategies are being devised to raise awareness of the advocacy service.

Feedback from service users to the advocacy service:

"Without your help and support I would have found it incredibly difficult to initiate and would probably have given up."

"We feel we have benefited greatly from the advocacy service provided by KCA advocacy service... Without this service...the children would still be on the register."

"me and my brothers r goin 2 a new care home and we are happy 2 move there. THANK U 4 UR HELP"

The Department of Health are proposing the introduction of the equivalent of PALS and ICAS in social care.

14. Complaints dealt with by the local authority and NHS Bodies

Please note that there were no joint investigations during this financial year.

15 Learning Lessons/Practice Improvements

The DoH consultation states organisations will be expected to achieve "a demonstrable change in the quality of services as a direct result of what people tell organisations through their complaints."

This is one of the key areas where we need to improve as a Council. The Council is also introducing an extension to the complaints database in 2007 that will allow us to capture and report on agreed actions/learning outcomes from complaints with a named lead and timescale for implementation. This is one of the key areas for improved complaint management. Currently, (with exceptions) there is generally not enough emphasis during and after complaints on learning and ensuring agreed learning is carried through.

Complaints provide senior managers with useful information in respect of the way that services are delivered. The consideration of complaints has resulted in changes to procedures as follows:

Service	Outcomes/ Recommendations/action points
Children with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance to staff that professionals should to be very explicit when discussing actions and their possible outcomes.
Family Placement Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on a recruitment and retention strategy – this will be addressed by the Workforce Strategy.
Children in Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ..'Where an undertaking is given by the Department, it should be fulfilled....' This is in response to the failure in tracking the completion of agreed tasks. The Safeguarding & Family Support Group are required to review the process of allocating, tracking and completing case related tasks and make recommendations to ensure that all tasks are completed in time. • To assist and reassure complainants it may be helpful if they could be provided with written information about the Quality Assurance process used to ensure reports presented at family courts are of the required standard
Children in Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers to be reminded that service users must be treated fairly and with respect..... regarding lack of effective communication and consultation • Service managers will be reminded that core assessments should be discussed directly with parents, their views and wishes recorded and that assessments signed before transfer to another team. • Social work reports for conferences should be shared 10 working days before the conference. <i>[This issue has been an issue in previous complaints]</i> • A practice note will be issued to remind managers that Child protection plans should stipulate what constitutes a statutory visit from other contacts to avoid confusion.

16. Record of compliments

Please note no compliments were forwarded to the Complaints Service in this financial year.

17. Summary of consultation

Below is a summary of the keys points from Department of Health's complaints consultation 'Making experiences count' proposing new complaint regulations in 2009:

- "A **single, comprehensive complaints process** across health and social care" to be introduced i.e. You can complain to one organisation about a

- number of NHS and social care organisations and expect that organisation to co-ordinate one response from the different organisations.
- **Keeping both existing Ombudsmen** separate (Health Service Ombudsman and Local Government Ombudsman).
 - Introducing a **PALS** equivalent in social care (PALS and ICAS defined on P.30 “Making experiences count”). The Council will fund PALS, the Department of Health the ICAS equivalent
 - **Advocacy** support to be a statutory right (like ICAS in the NHS).
 - Suggests the current procedure is too process-driven. Proposes a more **outcome-focused procedure** with more flexibility/options tailored to the individual complaint and needs of the complainant. “There should be every opportunity given to resolve things through discussion and negotiation rather than by using a set procedure.”
 - A **one-stage complaints process** (currently 3 Stages) before going to the Ombudsman but with more flexibility on how to manage the Stage 1 complaint depending on whether it is simple or complex.
 - A **new single regulator**.
 - “**Legal accountability on the most senior managers** to ensure complaints arrangements meet people’s needs and that services are improved as a result of what people have told them.”
 - **Commissioners will be required to collate complaint information from providers** about the level, nature and resolution of complaints by contractors. How providers respond to complaints should then routinely be used when making commissioning decisions.
 - Core standards for complaint handling. It is proposed that there will be overall targets in respect of **performance management** and targets for concluding cases.
 - Particular emphasis will be placed on monitoring **lessons learnt** feed into continuous improvement of the quality of services.

Stuart Dalton

Complaints Manager, Children’s Services Date: 17 August 2007

Financial Implications

None

Performance Issues

No PAF or BVPI indicators. However, complaints has a significant impact on the customer satisfaction KPI.

SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

Name: Bharat Patel	<input type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: 18/09/07		
Name: Sharon Clarke	<input type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date: 11/09/07		

SECTION 4 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact: STUART DALTON, PEOPLE FIRST COMPLAINTS SERVICE
MANAGER (020 8424 1578)

Background Papers: NONE

IF APPROPRIATE, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	YES/ <u>NO</u>
2.	Corporate Priorities	<u>YES</u> / NO