

**DIRECTORATE OF CHILDREN SERVICES**

**COMPLAINTS COMMENTS AND COMPLIMENTS  
CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES  
ANNUAL REPORT**

**April 1<sup>st</sup> 2006 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007**

**Policy Performance & Resources Division**



Produced by Quality and Complaints Team July 2007

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## SECTION 1

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 This Report provides information relating to Children Social Care Complaints Comments & Compliments, during the period 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007.
- 1.1.2 The procedures for Children's complaints, are determined by legislation, predominantly involving the:-
- Children Act 1989, Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.
  - The Children & Adoption Act 2002 and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.
- 1.1.3 Every Local Authority with a responsibility for Social Care Services is legally obliged to have in post a Complaint Manager, part of whose role it is to provide an Annual Report into the workings of the complaints and representations procedures. This requirement is contained in the Children Act 1989. Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.
- 1.1.3 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, comment or make a compliment. Complaint information is displayed in all public reception areas.
- 1.1.4 During 2006/07 Children's Specialist Services received 3205 referrals for its services, undertaking work on a longer term basis with 1741 children and their families; within the Adults and Children's Directorates combined up to ten thousand 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 & Resource Unit within the Directorate of Adult Community and Housing Services [DACHS]. It 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 team has a number of years experience in handling statutory social care complaints; its aim is to provide a high quality service bringing added value to the Directorate of Children Service.

	Quality & Complaints Manager	
Quality & Complaints Officer	Quality & Complaints Monitoring Officer	Assistant Quality & Monitoring Officer

1.2.2 The Directorate of Children Services is 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 the individual's dissatisfaction wherever possible.

## **SECTION 2**

### **2.1 THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES**

2.1.1 This is the first annual report since the procedures were changed in line with directives from central government Department for Education and Skills. (DfES). The new guidance has introduced new concepts and practices to complaints handling which the complaints team and the Directorate have been swift to incorporate into practice. There have been 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 changes that have been observed, the purpose of the Complaints, Comments and Compliments procedures remains as:

- Providing a way for a child/young person, 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 new complaints procedure for social care services retains the 3 stages that existed previously ;

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

#### **2.2. Stage One**

Offers the Team responsible for the relevant service the opportunity of considering the complaint and responding on behalf of the Directorate 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.

### 2.2.1 Important points within Stage 1

- The timescales at Stage 1 gives 10 working days to respond to children, or their carers who raise a complaint; however, this can be extended by a further 10 days if the complaint is complex or key staff are unavailable.
- Young people who complain on their own behalf are offered the services of an advocate
- A written response is provided by the relevant manager to the young person or their representative.
- The Directorate has the discretion to refuse to consider a complaint which was not raised within twelve months of the incident/event occurring.

### 2.3. Stage Two

Children's services complaints allow 25 working days for the investigation of the matter by the complaint investigator and the response by the Assistant Director for 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.

### 2.4. Stage Three

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after the Stage two process, then he/she can, within 20 working days, request that matters move to Stage 3. This process requires the local authority to convene a stage 3 Review Panel to hear the complaints within 30 working days of the request. The Review Panel involves three independent people, one of whom is appointed to 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 has 5 working days to provide written recommendations to the Director of Children Services, copied to the complainant. The Director then has 15 working days to respond to the complainant; this concludes the Local Authority's handling of the complaint.

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. If the Ombudsman determines that the complaint has not been looked into fairly and correctly by the Directorate, or that the service user has suffered an injustice in the services [S]he has received then the

Ombudsman will reach a finding of Maladministration. Dudley has maintained an excellent record in that again this year there has been NO findings of maladministration regarding Social Care complaints.

## **2.5 CORPORATE COMPLAINTS:-**

2.5.1 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 2006/07**

#### **3.1.1 SUMMARY**

- i) During **2006/07** Dudley Directorate of Children's Services provided a service to 1,741 Children and their families.
- ii) Children's Services received **123** complaints from **112** young people or their representatives this compares to **119** complaints for **2005/06** – this increase of **4** is roughly in proportion to the rise in the previous year (**2004/2005**) from **117**.
- iii) The **123** complaints are individual areas of complaint.
- iv) The majority i.e. **87** of the complaints relating to services provided to children were made or led by Adults. **36** complaints were made by children or advocates. The number of complaints made by Foster Carers has been maintained from last year, falling slightly from **11** to **10**.
- v) The range of people who can bring a complaint on behalf of a child and the issues that can be complained about have been extended by the new guidance. This has not, however, created an unrestricted arena for disputes to be continually debated; it is the responsibility of the Quality and Complaints Team to manage these issues according to legislation, assisting in finding a resolution where appropriate and helping to direct the complainant to a more suitable route if using the procedures would not be appropriate.
- vi) There have been **NO** Stage 2 Formal complaints for 2006/07. This is a very satisfactory picture and demonstrates the time and quality of response being provided by Managers dealing with complaints. There were **3** Stage 2 complaint investigations in 2005/06.
- vii) **No** Stage 3 Review Panels were requested or required during 2006/07. However, **1** Complaint Review Panel is arranged for September 2007 to conclude a complaint first raised in 2005/06, the

complainants availability to present her case to Panel has been limited until this point

- 3.1.2 **111** complaints received a response at Stage 1, this does not include the **9** that were withdrawn and **3** that remain ongoing;

**46.8%** of all complaints were dealt with within **10** working days and a further **24.3%** within a further **10**. Therefore **71.1%** were dealt with within the statutory timetable of **20** working days; this compares with the figure of **87.5%** of complaints being dealt with within **28** calendar days in 2005/6

A further **6.4%** of complaints were dealt with between **21** and **25** working days. **5.5%** between **26** and **30** working days.

**18%** of complaints took more than **31** working days to complete; the longest being **103** days.

- 3.1.3 There were **39** registered compliments compared to **29** for 2005/06, an increase of **10**.

- 3.1.4 **Local Government Ombudsman:** - There have been **No** findings of Maladministration by the Ombudsman concerning Children Social Care complaint matters for **2006/07**, this maintains a highly satisfactory record over a number of years.

- 3.1.5 **Advocacy:** - **5** children/young people making a complaint chose to have the assistance and support of an advocate during the complaint process. Government guidance requires that all young people making a complaint in their own right are provided with an Advocate; the Quality and Complaints Team in conjunction with the National Youth Advocacy Service have ensure that all children making a complaint who request an advocate are provided with one.

## SECTION 4

### 4.1 Examples of the activities of the Quality & Complaints Team 2006/07

4.1.1 The Quality & Complaints Team has managed the introduction of new complaint legislation and guidance and has put in place new procedures to guide, advise and assist staff and service users in the handling of Social Care complaints.

4.1.2 Regular contact is carried out by the Team's Complaints Officer with residential Children Homes across the Borough in order to monitor and assist access to the complaints procedures. Young People who raise a complaint are offered a visit from the Complaints Officer or Complaints Manager. This provides easy, fast and informal access for young people to the complaint process.

4.1.3 The majority (**80**) of all complaints resolved at Stage 1 were acknowledged and concluded within the statutory timescale. The Quality & Complaints Team monitors each complaint and works closely with each Manager responding to a complaint to assist them as and where required.

4.1.4 Training for Managers, Social Workers and other relevant groups has continued for **2006/07**. The training included:-

- A new half day course to inform front line staff/newly appointed 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 complaint investigation
- In total such planned complaint handling training was provided for **71** members of staff

4.1.5 The creation of a complaints form for people with a learning disability raised awareness amongst service users of their right to make a complaint.

4.1.6 Links with Dudley Foster Carers Association have continued which enables carers to bring their concerns forward as necessary

4.1.7 The Quality and Complaints Team maintains contact with residential establishments and District Teams to assist the process.

4.1.8 A complaint handling protocol is being agreed with the Youth Offending Team. Several other protocols are in place with Health colleagues, and multi agency teams such as Flipside – a specialist multi agency fostering service.

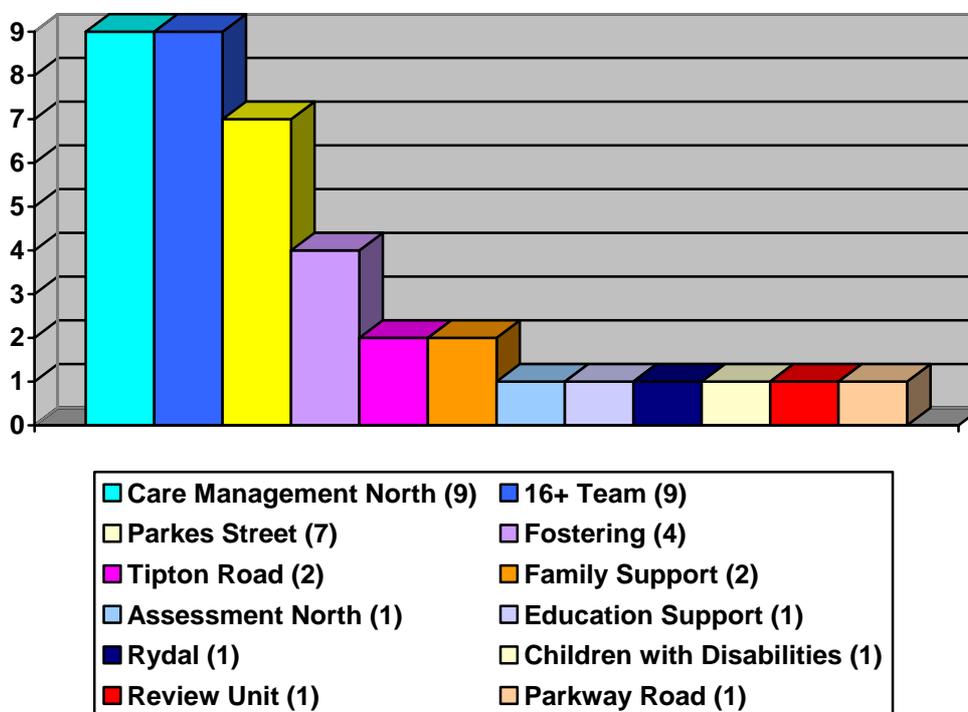
4.1.9 Monthly summary reports are provided to Heads of Service concerning complaints in their areas. Quarterly monitoring reports are presented to Senior Managers.

4.1.10 Questionnaires are sent to complainants at the conclusion of their complaint seeking their views on the workings of the complaints procedures

4.1.11 During this year the Quality & Complaints Team maintained its service to the Children Directorate in the day to day operation and management of the complaint process whilst also taking on responsibility for the day to day operation and management of Housing Services complaints, such complaints fall under the Corporate complaint process.

## SECTION 5

### 5.1 COMPLIMENTS DATA 2006/07



5.1.1 Although we have a statutory responsibility to register complaints and ensure that they receive a response, we also believe that there is much to be learnt by the way of good practice by proactively gathering and reporting on compliments received across the Directorate.

5.1.2 The above graph shows an increase in compliments to **39** from last year's figure of **29**. The Quality and Complaints team has undertaken a drive to alert staff within Children's Services of the need to register these.

5.1.3 It needs to be recognised that many people who come to the attention of Social care services are (at least at that point) vulnerable and may be going through a particularly stressful period; it may be contended that it is not surprising that at these points people do not forward compliments. Despite this it is clear that some areas of service are

highly valued; as can be seen above the highest number of compliments were received for the 16 plus team who work with young people as they prepare to leave the care system and begin the process of living independently. Many of the compliments received comment on particular workers, the kind and caring attitude of staff and 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 Services does not easily lend itself to receipt of compliments; it is notable therefore that the teams who received the most complaints also received the most compliments.

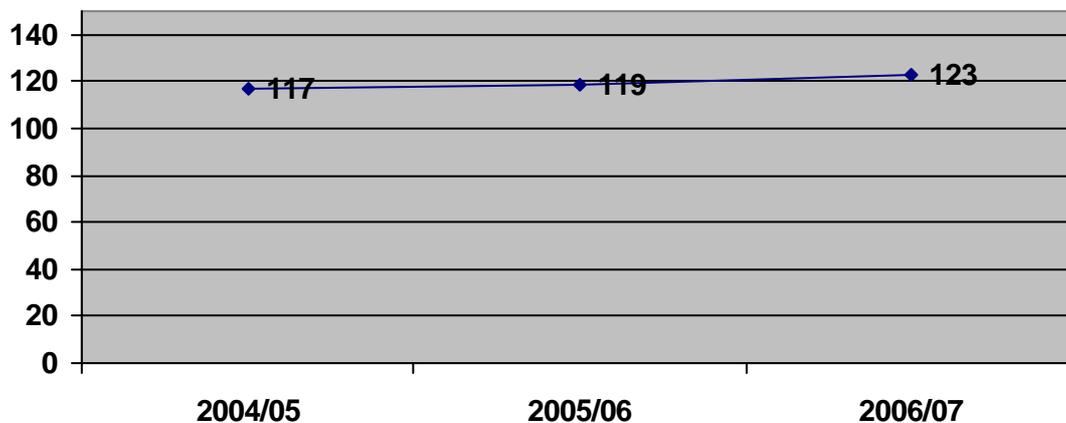
5.1.5 It is possible that the nature of the work in the Children's Services cause workers to be reticent about forwarding compliments that they do receive; it is also possible that they see these as personal messages of thanks, rather than something that should be made more widely known about. There 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:-**

- *A young person wrote to her residential worker, "you helped and pushed for me to go to school. You helped me to have respect, but most of all you helped me because you believed in me, thank you".*
- *A young person who achieved an MA with merit wrote, "I am very grateful to be where I am today and just wouldn't have been able to do it without the 16+ Team. You all do a great job which can turn people's lives around".*
- *Thanks given by a mother and child for the support received from specific workers.*
- *A compliment from a young person in respect of the cook at a residential home.*
- *A young person wrote a detailed letter to their Social Worker thanking them for the help that they had given.*
- *A young person wrote to their 16+ worker, "I can't express enough how grateful I am to you for getting me my ICS Course"*
- *A young person wrote of their former children's home "if I need any information the staff will help me get it .....I know I can go there and talk to anyone there at any time of the day."*
- *A young person wrote this year about a residential home that has been closed for a number of years, thanking them for their support.*

## SECTION 6 COMPLAINT DATA 2006/07

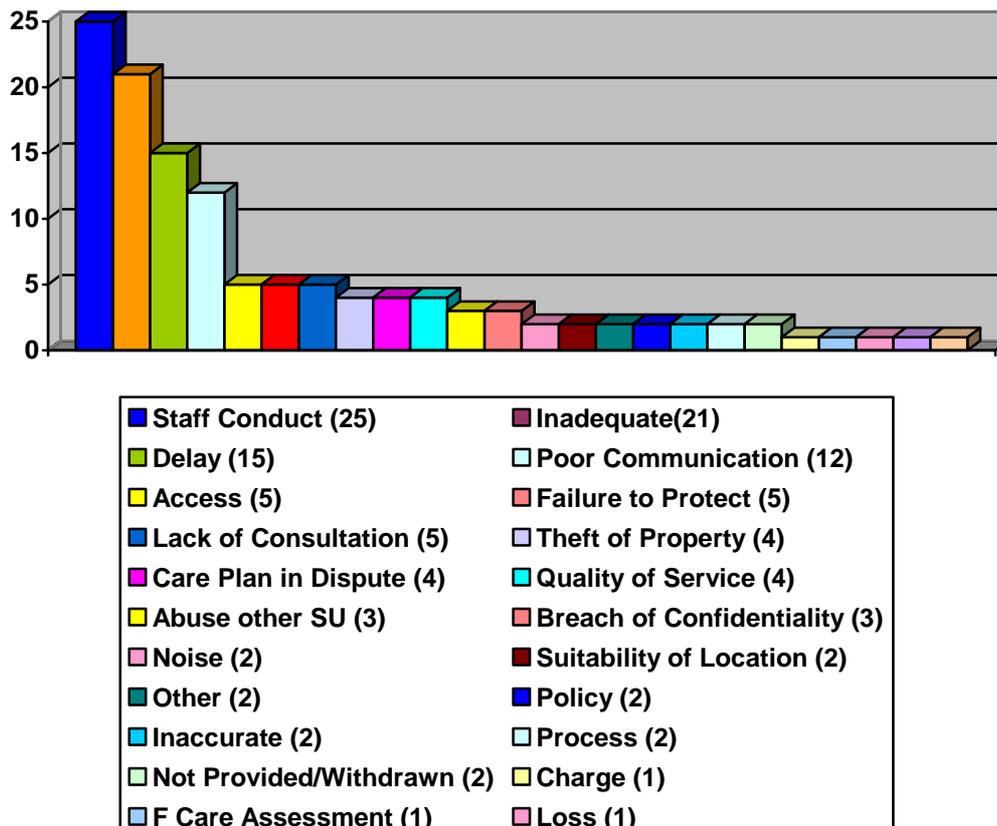
### 6.1.1 COMPARISON OF TOTAL COMPLAINTS OVER PAST THREE YEARS



6.1.2 **2006/07** saw a modest increase of **4** from the **119** complaints received in 2005-2006 to now stand at **123**. The number of Complaints received remains a modest percentage of the total number of service users; however the continued increase in the numbers is seen as positive and is believed to reflect:-

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

## 6.2. COMPLAINT ISSUES



- 6.2.1 There is a broad range of issues complained about; however as was the case last year, the highest and most consistent areas of complaint throughout the year remains 'inadequate service', together with 'staff conduct'. Despite this, the numbers for these have reduced by **13** and **7** respectively.
- 6.2.2 Complaints which were placed within the 'inadequate Service' category include concerns 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.
- 6.2.3 Complaints about 'staff conduct' concerned comments made by staff and the attitudes presented in their work; these concerns are addressed and challenged when they arise.
- 6.2.4 Some of the remaining issues complained about involved:-
- The appropriate hair care for children of African descent which has caused the Directorate to review how it ensures that workers and carers are properly informed of these needs.
  - One young person made a number of complaints and allegations within a relatively short period of time; the particular circumstances

of these were all looked into and responded to, but it also led to a review of the young person's needs.

- One young person objected to a move when they learned that they would be one of six people in a Children's Home, as a result a request was made to freeze the decision and an eventual compromise was reached which involved her sharing with only two of a similar age to her, until her long term plan could be implemented.
- Delay in allocating a service, resolved by allocating a worker to complete an assessment.
- Complaint about the refusal to provide a stairlift which the Local Authority believed the young person could not use safely.
- One complaint illustrated the complexities of the work undertaken by Children's Services being from a young person in long term foster care who had wanted to change his surname to that of his carers; he complained that there had been a delay in this. However, his mother had objected to this and the District were concerned by the possible impact on her fragile health of pursuing this further with her.
- Complaint about reliability and punctuality of taxi bookings dealt with under new transport commissioning arrangements.
- One complaint concerned plans to vary the age range of the young people placed in a children's homes.

6.2.5 This year has seen a number of instances where young people have sought to use the section within the complaints procedures which allows for a decision to be frozen, until the complaint has been responded to, this is unless it can be shown that the change is immediately necessary to safeguard the young person's best interests.

6.2.6 Learning from complaints will be focussed on in Section 8 below.

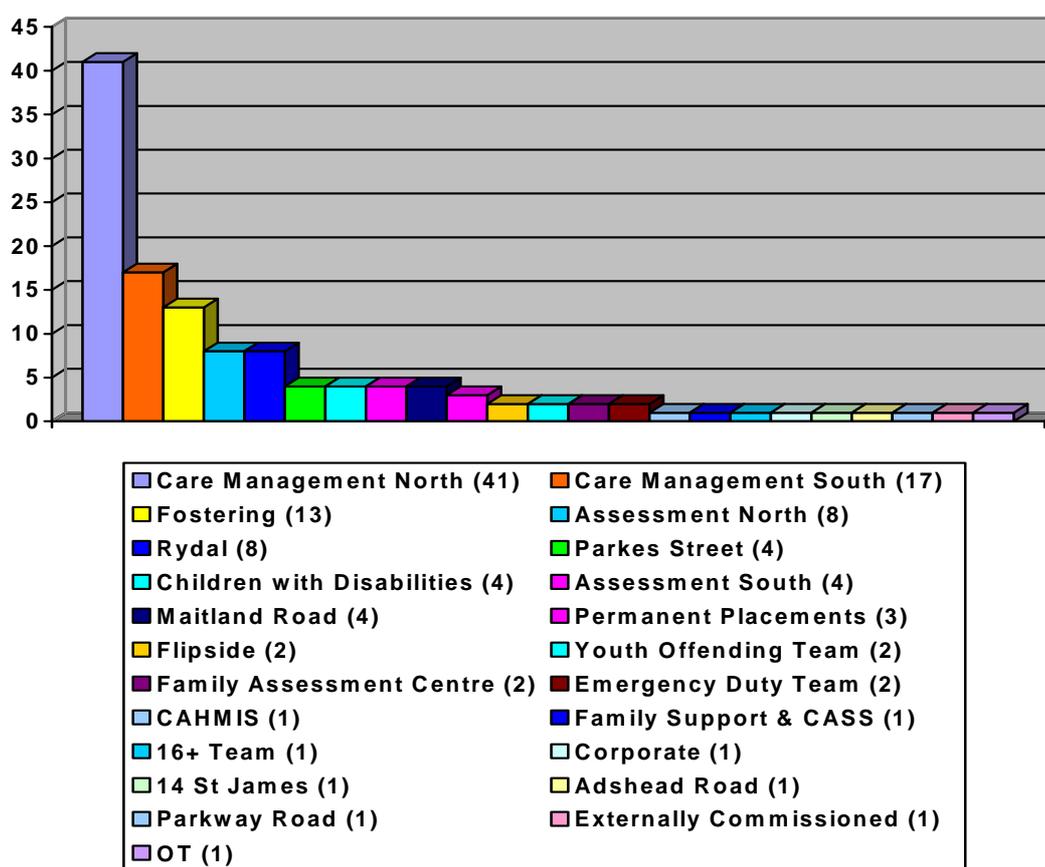
6.2.7 All complaints are important in their own right; however, it is relevant to note that there does not appear to have been a particular event or incident during 2006/07, which resulted in multiple complaints.

6.2.8 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.

## 6.3 Comments

- 6.3.1 This year has seen a number of instances where young people have sought to use the new facility within the complaints procedures which allows for young people to raise a 'Comment' before deciding whether to pursue a complaint. Each comment is registered and requires a response. This approach allows the opportunity for the young person to receive an informal response in good time and to decide at that point whether they wish to pursue a complaint. This is the first year that we have remarked on comments; we received **17** in **2006/7** and anticipate that this will increase during 2007/08.

## 6.4 COMPLAINTS RECEIVED ACROSS THE DIRECTORATE.

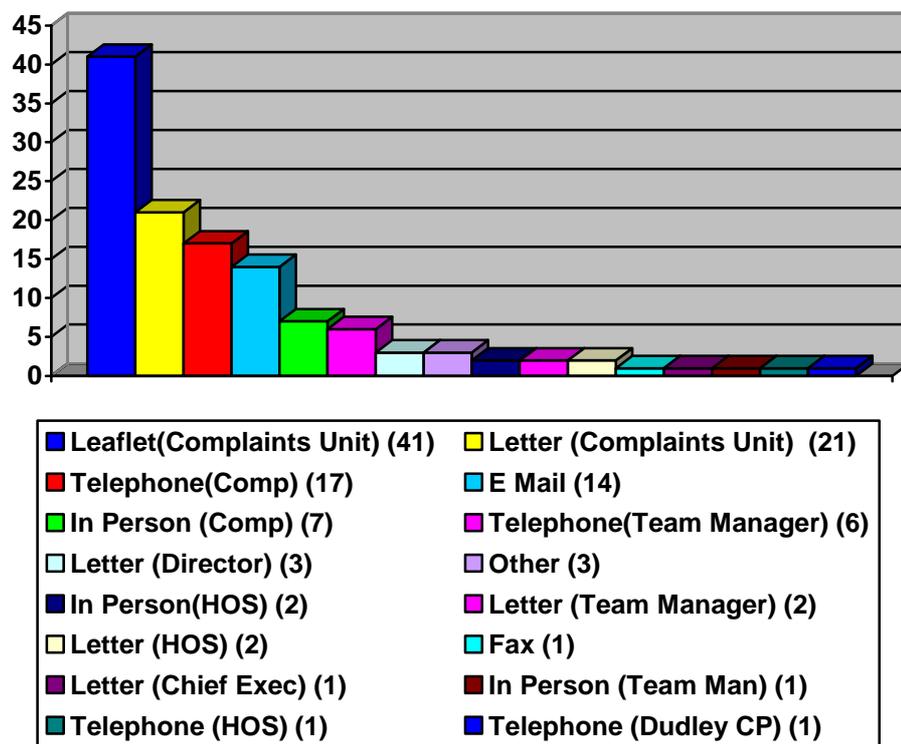


- 6.4.1 As noted earlier in this report Children's Specialist Services provided services to 1,741 children and their families; from this we can calculate that 93% of all service users either felt satisfied with the service they are receiving or did not for whatever reason chose to put forward a complaint. 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.

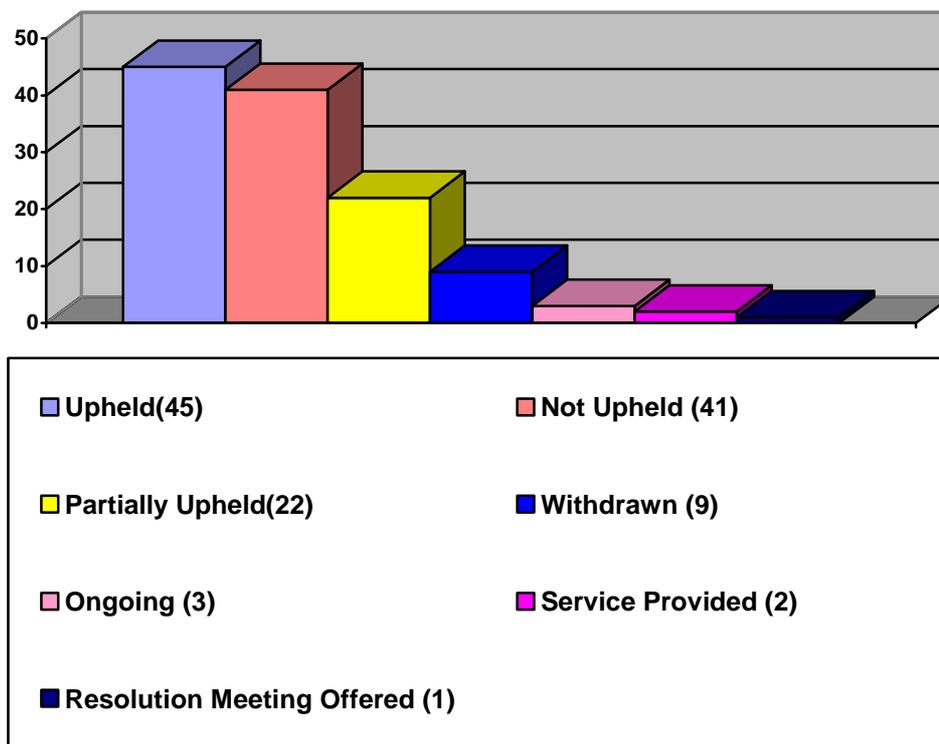
- 6.4.2 Under closer scrutiny the figures for last year and those for this, show a good degree of similarity. Care Management North, Fostering and Care Management South received 34, 14 and 16 complaints respectively. As has been the case for several years now, the Care Management Teams have been the 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, as has been said before, not all complaints are upheld, but they do require careful consideration to ensure that they have been responded to appropriately and any lessons that can be learnt, either for that case or in general, have been taken forward.
- 6.4.3 The number of complaints concerning the Fostering Service has not increased further after the rise that was commented upon last year. We are aware that the advocacy service, NYAS, is taking steps to increase the awareness of all young people that they have contact with, to the complaint process.
- 6.4.4 It will be noted that there is one complaint for an externally commissioned service and one for Occupational Therapy Service, these services are commissioned by the Directorate
- 6.4.5 Complaints activity is monitored throughout the year, not least to detect where a specific service area might be struggling in the manner in which the service is delivered. However, an increase in complaint numbers should 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.

## 6.5 HOW ARE COMPLAINTS RECEIVED



6.5.1 Complaint leaflets remain the most common way of communicating complaints, 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 doubled. It will be noted that there were three complaints that have been recorded as received by other means; all involved Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's), two being forwarded directly by them. The role of IRO's is crucial in ensuring that all young people have access to the complaint procedures, each young person's situation is reviewed at least twice yearly and once of sufficient age and understanding they are invited to attend their reviews. The Quality and Complaints Team now has the facility whereby complaints can be made by text in line with statutory requirements.

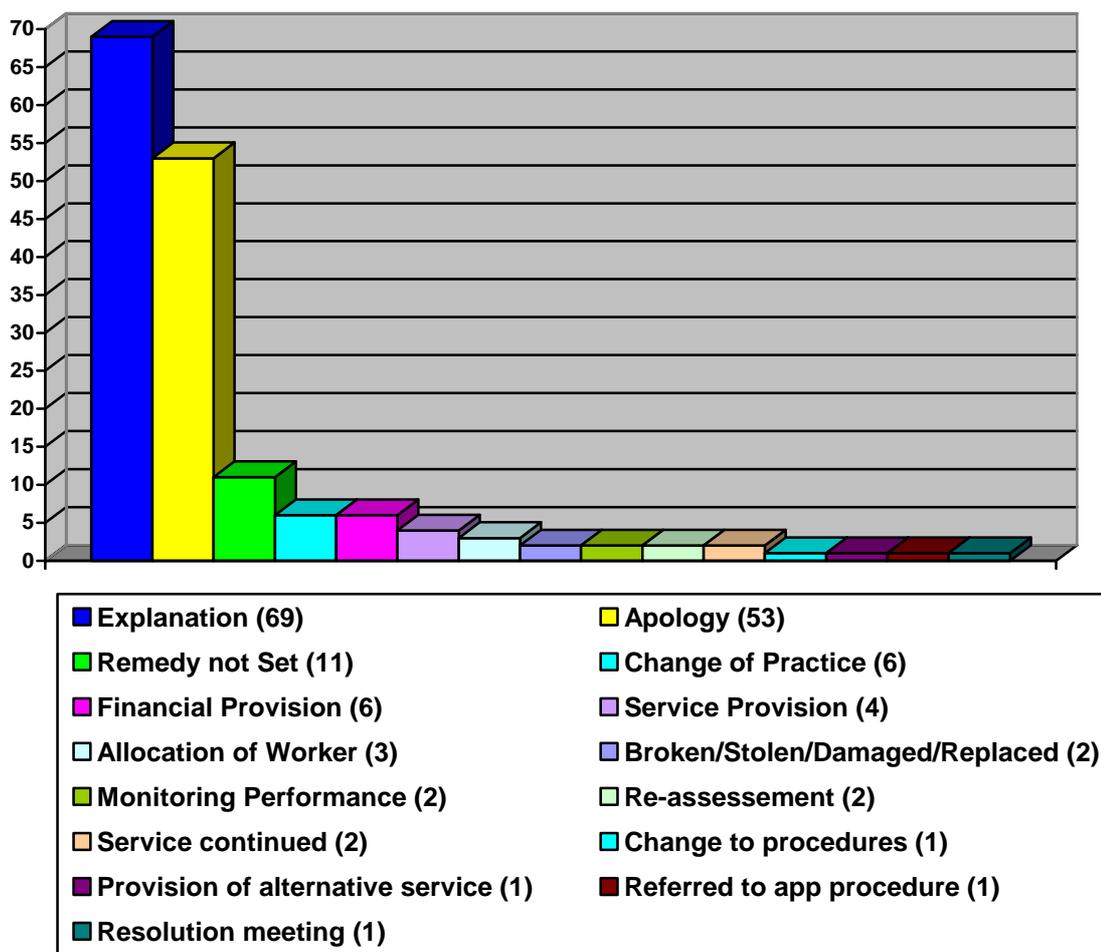
## 6.6 Outcomes in Terms of Findings



6.6.1 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.

6.6.2 It can be seen from the above chart that there are slightly more complaints that are upheld than those that are not; however, those which are partially upheld and where a service is provided must be added to those which are upheld; when this has been done the percentage of those that have been upheld to some extent can be seen to have risen slightly over the past twelve months from 52% to 56% compared to those which have not been upheld at all.

## 6.7 HOW ARE COMPLAINTS RESOLVED?

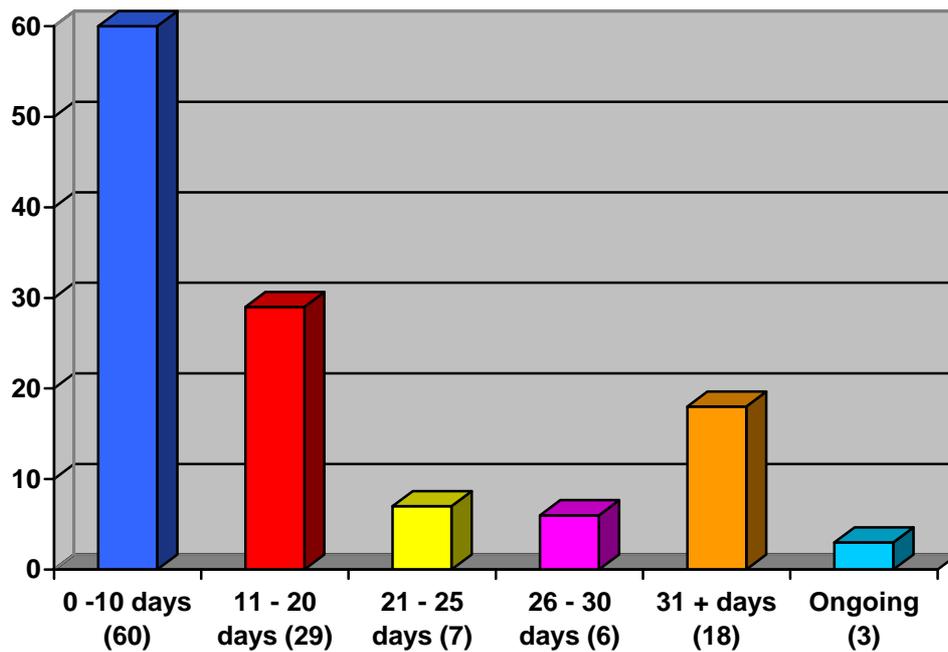


6.7.1 It will be noted that the chart above shows more resolutions (**164**) than complaints (**123**); some complaints require more than one action if they are to be satisfactorily resolved and all upheld complaints should receive an apology.

6.7.2 As was the case in 2005-2006, the majority of complaints were resolved by providing an explanation; quite often this will be detailed following 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.

6.7.3 It will be noted that there are **11** complaints where the outcome has not been set, these include the three which are currently ongoing and **8** of the **9** which were withdrawn; Any complaint that is withdrawn will result in the Complaints Team contacting 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 for other reasons.

## 6.8 TIMESCALES



6.8.1 It may have been noted from the figures above that only **111** of the **123** complaints are commented on in respect of timescales, this is because the **9** complaints that were withdrawn were not counted, nor are the **3** which are ongoing as these could not be described as being resolved at Stage 1. However the principal conclusions to be drawn in respect of timescales are:

- **46.8%** were resolved within **10** working days and
- **25.25%** within 20 working days.
- **6.4%** of complaints were dealt with between **21** and **25** working days
- **5.5%** of complaints took between **26** and **30** working days.
- **18%** of complaints took more than **31** working days to complete

6.8.2 We have not been able to maintain the rate of improved timescale compliance as shown in 2005/06, however timescales are generally satisfactory for this year, particularly given the increase in the numbers of complaints and the fact that the vast majority were resolved at an early stage. The figures do indicate a better timescale performance this year than in all other previous years apart from 05/06. It is also important to stress that every effort is made to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of the child/young person at the beginning of the complaint process wherever this is possible and appropriate. We aim to achieve a good outcome rather than unnecessarily enter into a Stage 2 Formal Investigation of a complaint which can be lengthy and overly formal for the child/young person – with that in mind all complaints were resolved/concluded at the first complaint Stage, the Informal stage during 2006/07 which is a highly positive indication of the effort Managers have put into addressing each complaint.

6.8.3 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, if it enables a thorough consideration of the complaint and an appropriate response to be found.

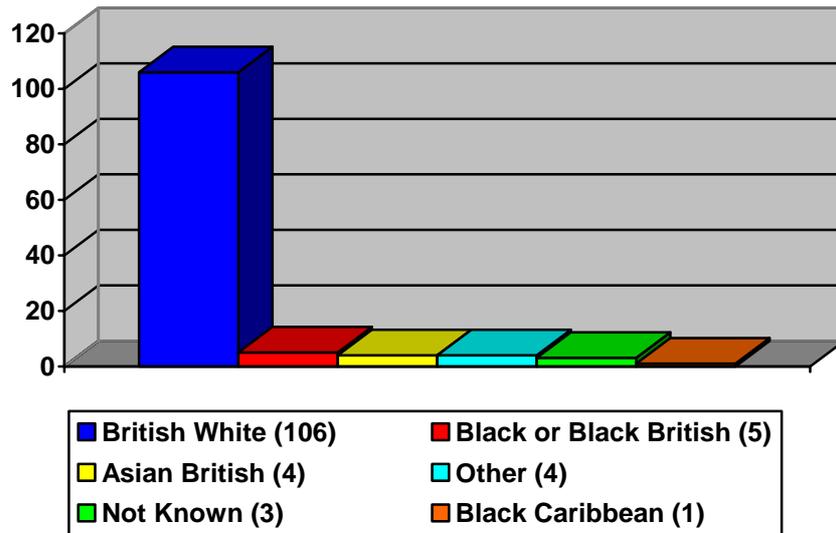
6.8.4 **Reasons for Delays:** - The following are not put forward as justification for delay instead they are presented as part and parcel of the difficulties in concluding all complaints in good time. Complaints where delay occurred during 2006/07 involved:-

- Complex issues concerning a number of teams which require careful coordination
- Arranging agreeable times to meet with Complainants
- A parent asking for inappropriate action to be taken, requiring meetings to explain why this could not be the remit of the procedure and to explore whether there were issues which could be pursued through the procedures
- A parent and child presenting repeated further complaints on the same issues whilst the original was being investigated
- Arranging appropriate financial redress for a young person
- Other procedures being exhausted before the Complaints procedure can become involved

## 6.9 ETHNICITY

6.9.1 Every effort is made to record a complainant's ethnicity. However, it needs to be noted that on a number of occasions the complaint is being raised on behalf of a child and therefore the description provided as to the child's ethnicity might not be totally accurate.

6.9.2 It is also 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 2006/07 are as follows:-



6.9.3 As can be seen the majority of children/young people who currently access the complaint process are White/British. Whilst there is some evidence of awareness and use of the complaint process from children/young people from an ethnic minority background we do have concerns that this may not be representative and it is important that all who wish to make a complaint, feel able to do so. The quality and complaints Team continue to be involved in a number of projects which seek to raise awareness of the procedures to all.

## 6.10 HOW DO WE ENSURE THAT COMPLAINTS ARE GENUINELY RESOLVED?

6.10.1 Responses that are offered at Stage 1 of the procedures should invite complainants to seek further assistance from the Quality and Complaints team if they are still dissatisfied.

6.10.2 The early acknowledgement of complaints by the team is believed to promote a level of confidence which will encourage complainants to raise any issues that they are unhappy with.

6.10.3 All complainants should receive a customer satisfaction questionnaire six weeks after the complaint is concluded. 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 2007/08**

- 7.1.1 Establishing a clear process to evidence and report on the wider learning for the Directorate arising out of complaints.
- 7.1.2 Continued monitoring and improvement of timescales and response by Managers
- 7.1.3 Further awareness training for front line staff. Continued training for Managers/Seniors in responding to stage 1 complaints.
- 7.1.4 Continuation of training for Managers and Senior Managers in addressing stage 2 and 3 complaints.
- 7.1.5 Revised complaint leaflets and other publicity material in light of new legislation and Guidance. Ensuring accessibility of this material to young people, including those with communication difficulties in a readily available variety of formats.
- 7.1.6 Creation of a more detailed information sheet to be sent to new complainants advising of what their rights are within the procedures
- 7.1.7 Establishing a robust system to audit-trail the implementation of recommendations arising out of complaints, leading to clear evidence of how and where the Organisation has learned from complaints.
- 7.1.8 Continued presentation and delivery of complaint reports to children & young people.
- 7.1.9 To provide increasingly informative analysis of performance to management teams and Divisional Managers
- 7.1.10 Clear guidance to staff about how to respond positively and helpfully to comments made by service users and carers will continue to be provided.
- 7.1.11 Creation of further protocols for all multidisciplinary team working with young people.
- 7.1.12 Carry out an audit across all establishments/reception areas to ascertain availability of publicity material for the public and staff, once new material has been circulated.
- 7.1.13 There will be a continued emphasis on the need to record all compliments that are made in respect of the Directorate and individual staff.

7.1.14 Increased efforts to raise awareness of the complaint process to people from an ethnic minority.

## **SECTION 8**

### **8.1 EXAMPLES OF LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS: 2006/07**

8.1.1 Local authorities have complaints procedures for a number of reasons; they are the means by which service users can challenge any inadequacy in the services to which they are entitled; they are a means by which the local Authority can routinely satisfy itself that standards are maintained and for this a healthy number of complaints is essential. Complaints are also an invaluable source of customer feedback for the Local Authority which will sometimes give cause for the organisation to reflect on whether policies and procedures are having the desired impact.

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:

- Complaints relating to obtaining passports for looked after children has led to decision by the Directorate to have a single proactive approach in obtaining passports for all looked after young people to prevent disappointment and last minute difficulties in travel arrangements
- Review of Youth Offending procedures to consider issues of 'reparation for victims.
- Increased guidance for staff in acting as the 'appropriate adult' for young people questioned by the Police.
- Clarification of the Local Authority's policies in respect of payments to relative carers
- Identification of a need to incorporate into training for carers a component dealing with the possibility that they may be the subject of a complaint.
- Specific training for staff in recognising and managing behaviours relating to Asperger's Syndrome.
- Provision of specialist placements for two separate young people.

- Tightening of information being provided to carers, regarding the young people they are caring for.
- Reinforcing training for carers regarding the particular hair and skin need's of African - Caribbean children.
- Significant change to the provision of transport to schools etc for children in care, in part resulting from a number of complaints about this.
- One complaint about an education plan not being completed because of an immediate shortage of staff in the District team was resolved by the plan being completed by the education team worker.
- In a number of individual complaints new or reviewed Services were provided where this was appropriate.

8.1.3 The aim for 2006/07 is to provide outcomes from complaints to policy makers and to Senior Managers planning services, to inform and assist in the planning and delivery of services, thus evidencing the importance and value of people raising complaints.

## **ELECTED MEMBERS VISITS TO SOCIAL CARE ESTABLISHMENTS**

- 9.1.1 Each year Elected Members are nominated by their Area Committees to carry out required visits to Dudley MBC Social Care establishments. Members are provided with a schedule of visits covering all social care establishments, together with feedback forms to complete during their visits.
- 9.1.2 Service users, and staff are provided with the opportunity to put forward any thoughts or comments to Members who then clearly take full and proper account of this in their feedback.
- 9.1.3 The feedback forms, once completed are sent to the relevant Assistant Director. This provides the opportunity for Members to put forward immediate and valuable information, observations and comments regarding their visits, together with specific requests for action or a response to any issues arising out of the visit. Any action taken as a result of the feedback from Members is monitored to ensure it takes place. Clearly, this is a valuable and vital tool in our ongoing aim of continually learning and developing our services for all people using services.