

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

SOCIAL SERVICES

REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

ANNUAL REPORT

2019/20



1. INTRODUCTION

It is a statutory requirement for local authorities to have in place a representations and complaints procedure for Social Services.

Each local authority is required to produce an annual report concerning the operation of its representation and complaints procedure.

This annual report provides information about the operation of the Social Services Representation and Complaints Procedure between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020. The report contains information about the number and type of complaints received and also provides details of the activities undertaken by the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team during that period to develop the representation and complaints service.

2. BACKGROUND

Social Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf adopts a positive attitude towards complaints and views them as a valuable form of feedback, which assists in the development and improvement of services. Complaints also provide an opportunity to learn lessons where a service has fallen short of an expected standard.

The representation and complaints procedure is widely publicised generally and specifically to people who use our services and provides them with an opportunity to:

- ❖ Voice their concerns when they are dissatisfied in order that the issue can be rectified to their satisfaction, wherever possible
- ❖ Make compliments
- ❖ Suggest improvements
- ❖ Challenge decisions

The aim is for our representation and complaints procedure to secure a better service for all the people using social care services and is underpinned by the following key principles:

- ❖ Commitment to providing quality services
- ❖ Accessible and supportive to those with particular needs
- ❖ Prompt and responsive with resolution at the earliest possible opportunity
- ❖ Strong problem solving element
- ❖ Operated without prejudice or discrimination
- ❖ Adheres to the principle of equal opportunity

The representation and complaints procedure also provides an opportunity for service users to address concerns in relation to independent sector providers

where they remain dissatisfied following implementation of the agencies own internal complaints procedures.

The Social Services complaints process has two stages:

Stage One: Local Resolution – The emphasis at this stage of the process is to resolve the complaint by means of discussion and problem solving. The complainant will be offered a discussion about the issues they have raised and this can either be done by telephone or face to face in an attempt to resolve the issues. This must be done within 10 working days of the receipt of the complaint. Following this discussion and any further investigation that is necessary, a written response will be provided within 5 working days.

Stage Two: Formal Consideration – If the complainant remains dissatisfied after completion of stage one, they may request that the complaint proceeds to stage two of the process. This involves a formal investigation of the complaint with a report being produced by an independent investigating officer. The timescale for dealing with this stage is 25 working days.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the stage two investigation, they may progress their complaint to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.

3. STAGE 1 'INFORMAL' COMPLAINTS

In 2019/20 there were 112 recorded complaints during the year, compared with 86 in the previous year. There was a small decrease in Stage 1 complaints about Adult Services with 55 received in 2018/19 compared to 54 this year whilst there was a significant increase in Stage 1 complaints about Children's Services with 31 received in 2018/19 compared to 58 this year.

The new complaints regulations and guidance sets an expectation that complainant's will be offered a face to face meeting wherever deemed appropriate as a means to resolving their complaint. This has continued to be effective in resolving most complaints at a local level and has resulted in more positive outcomes for complainants and their ongoing relationship with the service.

Of the Stage 1 complaints that were received, only 42.5% were responded to within statutory timescales which is a decrease from 58% in 2018/19. This is an area where we would like to see a significant improvement as well as monitoring systems that are currently in place the need to respond to deal with complaints in a timely manner will be reinforced through training and manager briefings.

Support to improve the quality of Stage 1 complaint responses has also been provided across service areas and the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team has issued good practice guidance to assist in ensuring written

responses meet an expected standard as well as quality assuring responses before they are issued to complainants.

Adult Services

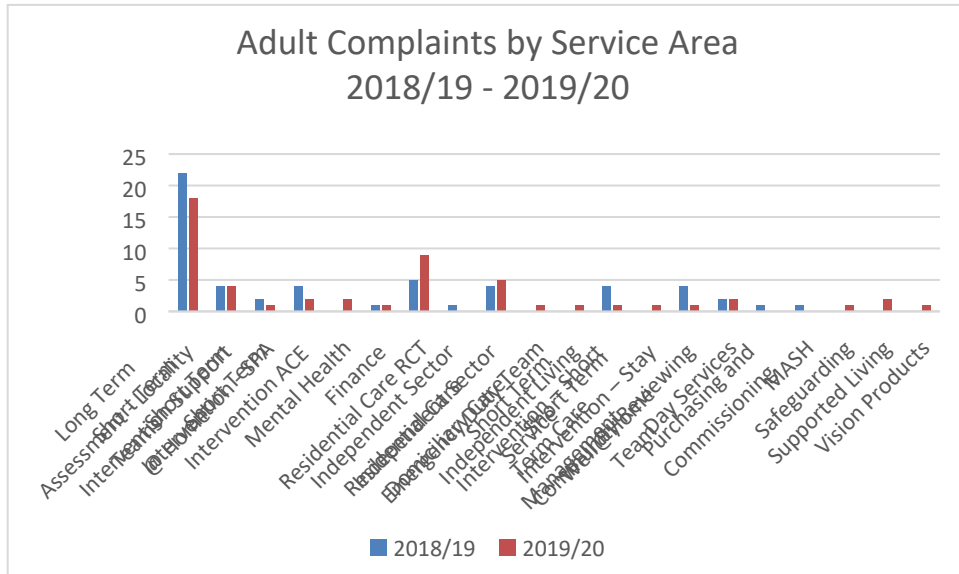
54 complaints were received for Adult Services during the year. This represents a 2% increase on the total amount received in 2019/20

Of the complaints made about Adult Services, 9% (5) were made by the service users themselves and 91% (49) were made by their representatives e.g. carers, family members and advocates. These figures highlight the reliance of many adults on their family and carers to raise issues on their behalf and is consistent with comments received as part of the Social Services Performance Measures Survey undertaken in September 2019.

Details of complaints received recorded by Service Area are summarised in Table 1 and compares them with the previous year.

Table 1: Summary of complaints by service area

Service Area	2018/19	2019/20
Long Term Assessment - Locality Teams	22	18
Short Term Intervention Support @ Home	4	4
Short Term Intervention - SPA	2	1
Short Term Intervention ACE	4	2
Mental Health	0	2
Finance	1	1
Residential Care RCT	5	9
Independent Sector Residential Care	1	0
Independent Sector Domiciliary Care	4	5
Emergency Duty Team	0	1
Independent Living Service	0	1
Short Term Intervention – Short Term Care Management	4	1
Short Term Intervention – Stay Well@Home	0	1
Community Reviewing Team	4	1
Day Services	2	2
Purchasing and Commissioning	1	0
MASH	1	0
Safeguarding	0	1
Supported Living	0	2
Vision Products	0	1
Total	55	54



There are no significant changes in the number of complaints per service area over the last year. Numbers remain low across Adult Service given the number of service users with a Care and Support plan.

Table 2 sets out in more detail what the complaints were about and compares them with the previous year.

Table 2: Summary of what complaints were about

Nature of Complaint	2018/19	2019/20
Failure to provide a service	8	5
Financial issues	3	1
Lack of information/communication	5	4
Issues around adaptations	4	0
Staff issues	11	16
Waiting for assessment/Request for assessment	0	0
Quality of care	9	16
Quality of service	13	12
Information Governance	1	0
Missed Calls	1	0
Total	55	54

Complaints relating to quality of care/service and issues around staff are the highest category of complaints. Complaints around staff issues have increased in comparison to previous year, as have complaints around the quality of care.

Some logged quality of care issues relate to complaints about care provided by private commissioned domiciliary care providers which come to the attention of the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team and so figures can be

impacted when complainants use the Council as an intermediary in complaints that relate to the private sector.

Of the 54 Stage 1 complaints received for Adults Services, 45 were resolved locally, 3 progressed to Stage 2, one complaint was withdrawn by complainant, 2 required No further Action and 3 are on hold due to COVID -19

Children’s Services

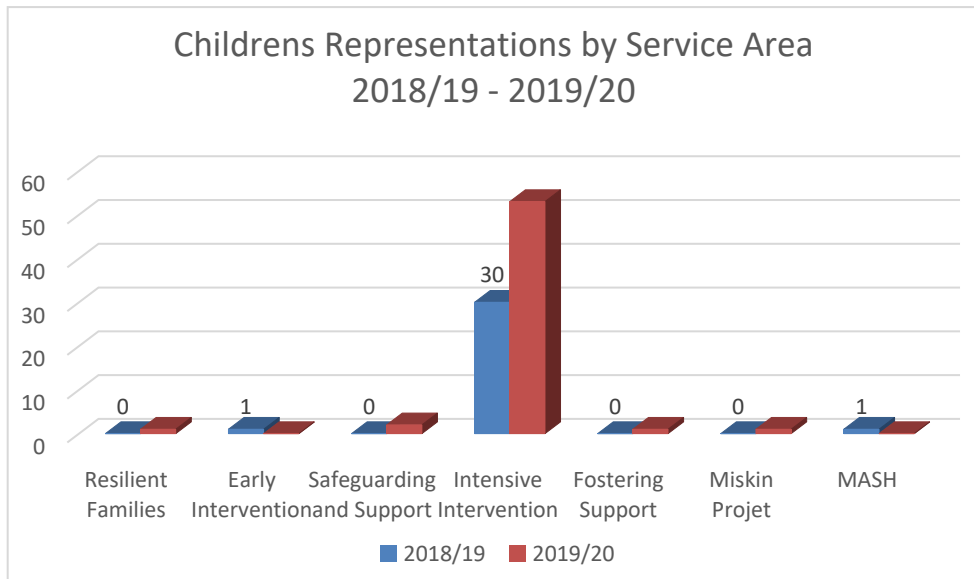
58 Complaints about Children’s Services were received during the year. Whilst this represents an increase compared to the previous year when 31 complaints were received it is important to note the numbers are low in comparison with the number of families worked with and that the figures for 2018/19 were unusually low. With the exception of five complaints all complaints were for the Intensive Intervention Services which is consistent with previous years.

Over the past year the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team has continued to support services areas by triaging contacts and providing advice and answering queries at the first point of contact with parent/carers. This has successfully reduced the number of issues that have progressed to Stage 1 of the complaints process.

Table 3 sets out the complaints received recorded by service area and compares them with the previous year.

Table 3: Summary of complaints by Service Area

Service area	2018/19	2019/20
Resilient Families	0	1
Miskin Project	0	1
Early Intervention	1	0
Intensive Intervention	30	53
Fostering	0	1
MASH	0	0
Safeguarding and Support	0	2
Total	31	58



Of the 58 complaints received 4 progressed to Stage 2 Complaints

Of the 58 complaints made about Children’s Services, all representations were made by parents/relatives and carers.

Representations

There were no representations received from children or advocates in this reporting period.

Table 4: Summary of children and young people’s representations

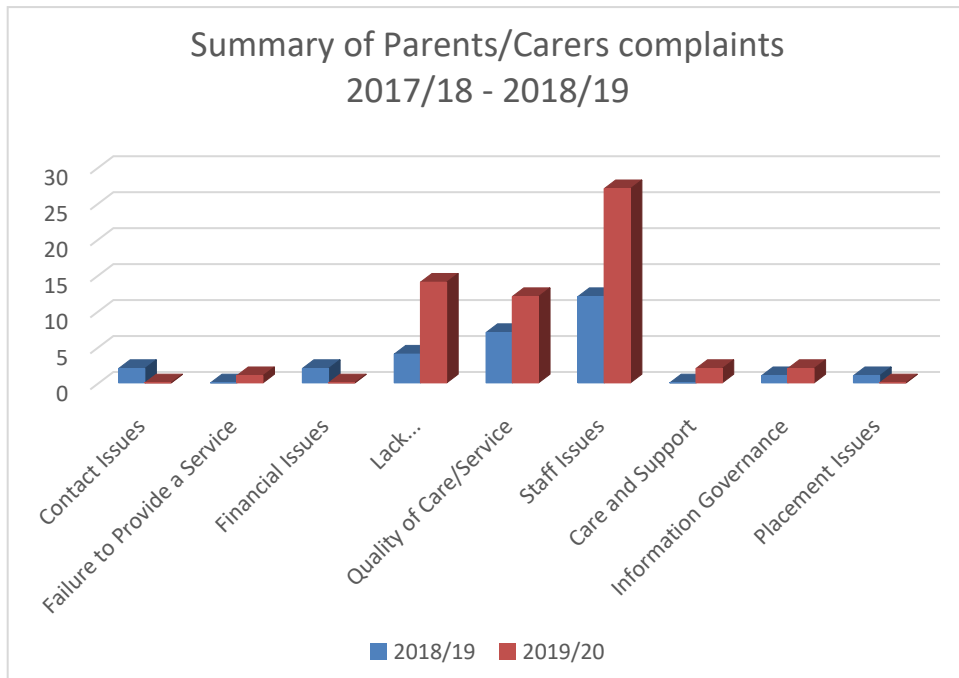
Nature of complaint	2018/19	2019/20
Staff issues	1	0
Quality of Care	1	0
Financial	0	0
Quality of Service	0	0
Total	2	0

The Council commissions an Independent Advocacy Provider for children and young people in line with the requirements of the Social Services Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 and the National Approach to Advocacy. This involves all children over the age of 5yrs being offered the support of an advocate when they become a Child Looked After or subject to Safeguarding arrangements. The Advocacy Service supports children and young people to have their say and effectively supports children and young people to raise any concerns about their care and support outside of the complaints process.

Table 5 sets out the detail of complaints made by parents/carers and compares them with the previous year.

Table 5: Summary of complaints from Parents/Carers

Nature of complaint	2018/19	2019/20
Adoption Process	0	0
Contact issues	2	0
Failure to provide a service	0	1
Equality issues	0	0
Financial issues	2	0
Lack of information/communication	4	14
Quality of care/service	7	12
Staff issues	12	27
Care and Support	0	2
Information Governance	1	2
Placement Issues	1	0
Total	29	58



Complaints relating to staff issues and lack of information remain the highest category of complaint, and have increased on figures received for 2018/19. Again these represent low numbers in comparison to the number of cases dealt with throughout 2019/20 and do not reflect the difficulties in staff retention over this period and frequent changes in staff that usually impact on the quality of service. That said the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team is of the view that further training should be provided to staff on managing difficult conversations and dealing with persistent and unreasonable customers.

4. CONTACTS AND CONCERNS

This year the Customer Feedback Team has again focused on attempting to resolve issues at source where this is considered appropriate and have worked collaboratively with managers across both services resulting in a reduction in complaints being passed to front line services.

In 2019/20 the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team dealt with a total of 151 contacts 2 of which progressed to Stage 1 complaints. 63 contacts were for adults services with 88 contacts being received for Children's Services.

The Team also received 5 concerns where the subject specified that they did not wish to make a complaint but where action was identified as necessary. These were recorded and passed to the relevant service area where they were successfully resolved.

5. STAGE 2 'FORMAL' COMPLAINTS

Overall, there were 7 Stage 2 complaints made during 2019/20, 6 of which progressed from Informal Complaints and one progressed from Stage 1 of Corporate Complaints process. The number of complaints received is an increase compared with the number of Stage 2 complaints for 2018/19.

Adult Services

There were 3 stage 2 complaints received for Adult Services – 2 of which progressed from Stage 1 Informal Complaint process and 1 progressed from Corporate Complaint.

Table 7: Summary of complaints made at Stage 2

Nature of complaint	2018/19	2019/20
Staff Issues	0	1
Failure to Provide a Service	1	0
Complex Learning Difficulties	0	0
Quality of Care	0	1
Issues Around Adaptations (Vision Products)	0	1
Total	1	3

Children's Services

There were 4 Stage 2 complaints received relating to Children's Services, all of which progressed from unresolved complaints at Stage 1.

Table 8: Summary of complaints made at Stage 2

Nature of complaint	2018/19	2019/20
Quality of Service/Care	2	2
Lack of Communication/Information	0	0
Failure to Provide a Service	1	0
Contact Issues	0	1
Staff Issues	0	1
Total	3	4

6. OMBUDSMAN Enquiries/Complaints

In 2019/20, 12 complaints were made to the Public Services Ombudsman, 9 for Children's Services and 3 for Adults.

1 enquiry was referred back to the authority for investigation, 1 referred back to authority for stage 2 investigation, The Ombudsman made recommendations for 2 complaints and 7 required no further action.

LEARNING THE LESSONS

In 2019/20 the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team held its first learning event following the investigation of a Stage 2 complaint against children's services. The event was hosted by the Investigating Officer and the Independent Person and involved a cross section of staff from across Children's and Legal Services.

The event proved to be successful and resulted in a number of actions for improvements specifically in relation to the transfer of cases from both neighbouring and cross border local Authorities.

It was a particularly valuable exercise in establishing understanding of existing policy and where working with neighbouring Councils could be beneficial in avoiding unnecessary delay in the transfer of cases and in particular those with safeguarding concerns.

It is intended that learning events will be used in all cases where there are identified improvements and/or recommendations following a Stage 2 complaint and it is hoped that this can be extended to Adult Social Care.

Examples of further learning from complaints include:

- Improved information on falls procedure for relatives of older people in residential care, and;
- Reminder to staff to ensure where residents are not accompanied to hospital that relevant information is passed to the receiving hospital.
- Staff reminded of the need to update wishes and feelings of service users in regard to representation and whom they wish information to be shared with.
- Revisit ordering process and suitability of provider of equipment necessary to support individuals who require adaptations to access respite provision.
- Following a user of the lifeline service falling in the garden public information was updated to advise users of the range limitations to the

lifeline pendant. This information is also to be reinforced by staff during installation.

- Information on website relating to Care Homes in Authority reviewed and updated ensuring information regarding their statement of purpose is accurate.

7. COMPLIMENTS

Compliments provide valuable information regarding the quality of services that are provided and identify where they are working well. The number of compliments recorded in 2019/20 was 83 compared to the 123 received in 2018/19

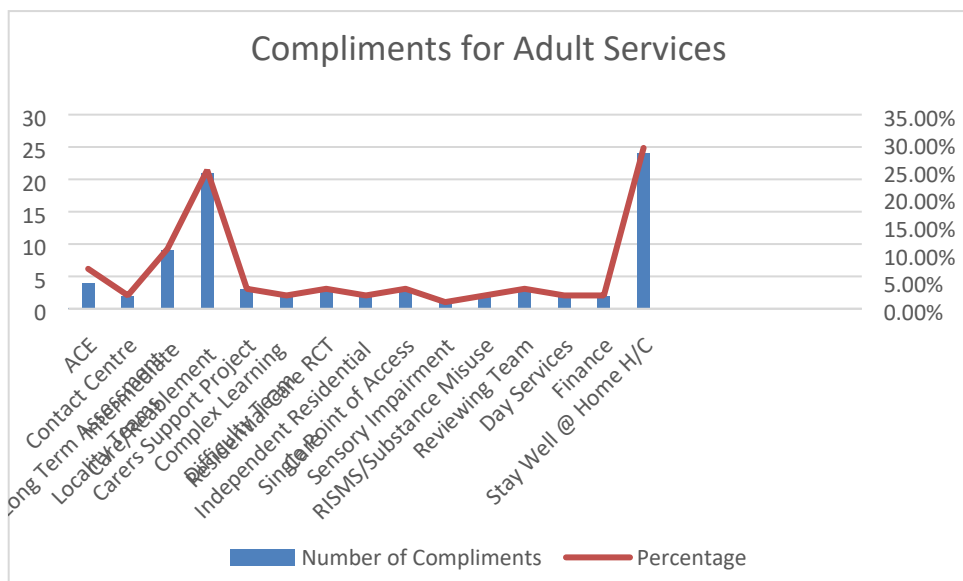
Adult Services

In 2019/20 there were 83 compliments made within Adult Services.

Table 8 sets out the number of compliments recorded by Service Area.

Table 8: Summary of compliments received

Service areas	Number	Percentage
ACE	4	7.2%
Contact Centre	2	2.4%
Long Term Assessment - Locality Teams	9	10.8%
Intermediate Care/Reablement	21	25%
Carers Support Project	3	3.6%
Complex Learning Difficulty Team	2	2.4%
Residential Care RCT	3	3.6%
Independent Residential Care	2	2.4%
Single Point of Access	3	3.6%
Sensory Impairment	1	1.2%
RISMS/Substance Misuse	2	2.4%
Reviewing Team	3	3.6%
Day Services	2	2.4%
Finance	2	2.4%
Stay Well @ Home H/C	24	29%
	83	



The following are examples of some of the compliments received for Adult Services during 2019/20

- *Many thanks for all your hard work in running our trip to see Calendar Girls It was thoroughly enjoyable and greatly appreciated.*
- *SU and wife rang to pass on praise to Karen O'Sullivan and to note that nothing had been too much trouble and that "couldn't have gone through the last few months without her assistance".*
- *Locum SW wanted to "commend you and your staff for the level of care and kindness shown to NAME, she looks 100% better than when she lived at home and her family are delighted".*
- *Family of SU said that "RCT SS are outstanding. I am very pleased with the service we have received and I couldn't have asked for better".*
- *SU and Daughter would like to say how very grateful for all the "fantastic help and support that you give us. We are very lucky to have you".*
- *Family of SU would like thank Laura for her "Patience and professional support" "Has been much appreciated" and looking for SU best interests*
- *Catherine Nursing Directorate would like to give praise to Kevin on how beneficial his input is in a particular case and how good work is being overlooked.*
- *SW giving thanks to all staff at Pentre House for helping SU reach her goals*
- *Daughter of SU is would like to give the opportunity to say thank you to the team for all the kindness you have shown the family.*
- *SU and family are saying that they are "forever grateful" and "would like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the support, love and care you have given".*

- *Giving thanks to Ceri for her "professionalism and humanity" and for explaining the purpose of intermediate care "She demonstrated and she provided an excellent service".*
- *Daughter of SU phoned SPA and said that she was "so grateful that you took the time to listen" to her and what mattered. "You were so empathetic and that you really understood where she was coming from"*
- *Feedback given by telephone from husband of SU. Husband wanted to personally thanks staff "for the support provided to his wife throughout a very difficult period. His wife has made real good progress and increased confidence".*
- *Son of SU giving thanks for the help and support given to him and also pass thanks on to all staff. He praised our hard work and was very appreciative of everything*
- *SU giving thanks for carer saying "she was absolutely outstanding, she was calm, kind, helpful, very caring and treated me as if I was her grandmother"*
- *"I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all and the wonderful nightmobile staff that have supported my father for past 2 years to maintain his independence in his own home"*
- *Wish to compliment the entire team of service provided and swift response and for the understanding of needs.*
- *Daughter of SU gave positive feedback saying that they are "experts in their field". "I really wish my mother could stay with the RCT girls".*
- *Daughter of SU wanted to pass on her thanks for all the support received from services before his passing.*
- *Family of Margaret Thomas would like to give thanks for the care and support given to mother during her last weeks*
- *SU given lots of praise to IC for their services.*
- *SU giving thanks for services saying "Thank you so much for all your help, it's meant so much to me and Den and we are truly thankful*
- *Son of SU would like to congratulate OT on work that she has done being so professional, caring, attention to detail and for having manners which are "first class" and genuine.*
- *Sister of SU wanted to give thanks to Keith saying "Your visit has opened up her life she is back to writing and colouring, thank you so much it has made such a difference".*

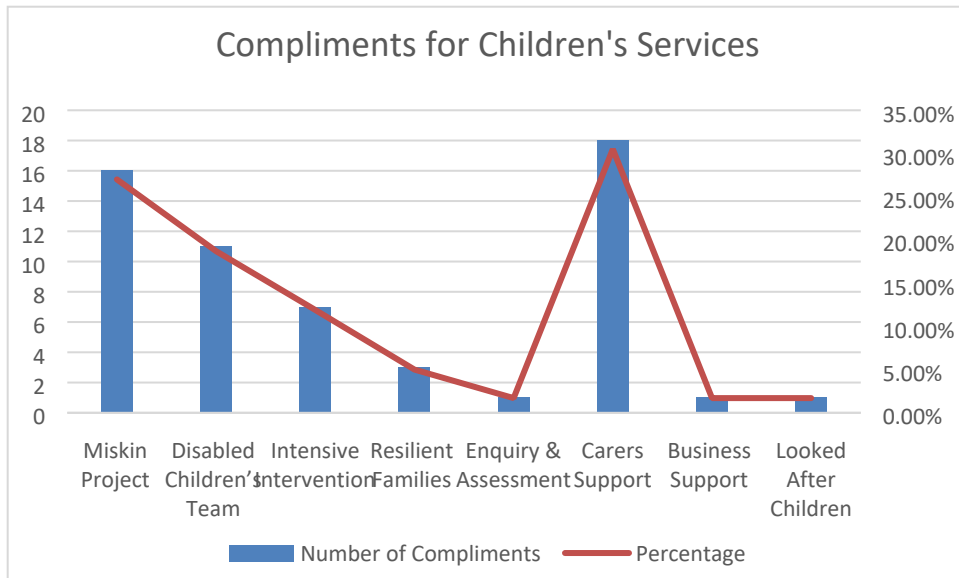
Children's Services

The number of compliments recorded in 2019/20 was 59 compared to 39 received in 2018/19

Table 9 sets out the number of compliments recorded by Service Area.

Table 9: Summary of compliments received

Service areas	Number	Percentage
Miskin Project	16	27%
Disabled Children's Team	11	18.7%
Intensive Intervention	7	12%
Resilient Families	3	5%
Enquiry & Assessment	1	1.7%
Carers Support	18	30.5%
Business Support	1	1.7%
Looked After Children	1	1.7%
Supported Living	1	1.7%
Total	59	100%



The following are examples of some of the compliments received for Children's Services during 2019/20:

- *TM giving thanks to Miskin Project for work they've done with SU*
- *IRO giving praise to SW for high standard of work. Family members report Lauren to be very helpful*
- *To say thank you to the team for a great awards ceremony and the positive changes and achievements made.*
- *Parent giving thanks to Support Workers who they thought were very friendly and very good at what they do and have helped the family a lot.*
- *IRO giving praise and thanks to SW for negotiations with adults support agency to ensure that young person is supported into adulthood*
- *Parent giving thanks to SW saying " You have played a major roll in NAME's childhood and I cannot thank you enough for your support, understanding and guidance."*
- *Giving thanks for the support to SU with 100 percent at school and how important emotionally the SW's are.*
- *Family of SU have said "the support from resilient families has been brilliant and helped us out as a family". "I would like to state that Cherie Carmens has been brilliant"*
- *Family wanting to thank team for making them having "a more positive outlook on NAME behaviour, being more understanding and open as a family".*
- *Independent reviewing officer feels the needs to "highlight all of the excellent work that you are doing" "you have gone above and beyond".*
- *Mother of SU "wanted to mention while she was on the phone, that she really appreciated all the help and support she has had off everyone over the summer holidays".*
- *Mother rang to thank SW for her work and thanking CS for rectifying the issues she had raised. Mum feels that SW went above and beyond*
- *IRO wanted to highlight evidence "Of some exceptional practice" "NAME took real pains and went to great lengths to attempt to convene the work in the best way". "Sessions were hard for them all, including NAME and carers, and were carried out with skill, effort and care with support available before, during and indeed well beyond".*
- *Family of SU would like to pass on "Many thanks to NAME for always being there for us as family. So, professional about her job. Very lucky to have her".*
- *SU wanted to compliment everyone at RCT to because of the pleasant surprise of the quantity of presents left. "I'm sure it will give many children in RCT a happy Xmas, it certainly gave me a warm glow so well done for running the campaign.*

- *Grandmother rang in to say how fantastic the services are that we offer and feels it is a great benefit to her grandchildren.*
- *Parent of the carer meal would like to say "Thank you for a lovely evening!! Thoroughly enjoyed".*
- *"We had a fun filled Carers Cwtch last night, full of spirit, fun and laughter, Happy Christmas all!" Really enjoyed myself thank you all, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year."*
- *"Just a quick email to say a huge thank you for the life story book that was completed for NAME. It is so colourful, informative and age appropriate." "So thank you these workers are invaluable".*
- *Parents of SU would like to pass on their thanks to allocated support worker. "She has been amazing with our son, and would like her to receive the positive feedback she deserves- she is an asset to your team."*
- *Work experience Co-ordinator said that the pupils "Thoroughly enjoyed their week in the world of work. Meeting people, learning new skills and gaining valuable experiences have been noted as highlights." "We are most appreciative of the opportunity so kindly offered by your company."*

8. WORK PROGRAMME, PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- ❖ **Over the last year the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team have focused on making improvements to the Corporate Customer Feedback Scheme whilst ensuring the Statutory Complaint's process remains responsive to users and continues to provide support to managers and staff.**
- ❖ **The Customer Feedback and Engagement Team held the first learning event following a Stage 2 complaint and this model of learning from complaints will be utilized going forward with opportunity for service user feedback to also be included where appropriate.**
- ❖ **The Customer Feedback and Engagement Manager has liaised with the Complaint's Standards Authority (CSA) which has been developed as part of the Public Services Ombudsman's new powers and this has resulted in free complaints training for Council staff including managers across social care which will take place in 2020/21.**
- ❖ **In line with new legislation the Customer Feedback Team has submitted complaints data on a quarterly basis to the CSA.**
- ❖ **Early intervention by the Complaints Officers has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of Stage 1 complaints across both Adults and Children's Social Care.**
- ❖ **The Customer Feedback and Engagement Team has continued to provide support and advice to managers on complaints resulting in clear improvements on response writing for individual managers. In 2020/21 further focus on written**

responses will include a quality assurance process to target individual training needs of managers in complaints handling as well as working to improve response timescales.