

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
20TH SEPTEMBER, 2010**

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**CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS  
AND COMMENTS ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To submit to Members the Annual Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report 2009/10 - attached at **Appendix 1**.
2. The Council is required by law (*The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006*) to have management arrangements in place for considering children's social care representations, including complaints.
3. There is a legal requirement for the Council to publish an annual report on Children's Social Care complaints for consideration by Council members.

**Summary**

4. The Children's Social Care Service welcomes complaints, compliments and comments as they are essential to the continuous improvement of service delivery to children, young people and their families.
5. The report provides a breakdown of the complaints, compliments and comments received during the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010 and highlights examples of organisational learning resulting from complaint investigations.

**Recommendations**

6. It is recommended that:-
  - (a) Members note the content of this report.

**Paul Wildsmith, Director of Corporate Services**

**Background Papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no implications with regard to S17 Crime and Disorder.
Health and Well Being	For some clients accessing the Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure there maybe an impact on their Health and Well Being.
Sustainability	There are no implications with regard to sustainability.
Diversity	There are no implications with regard to diversity.
Wards Affected	No particular wards are affected by this report.
Groups Affected	No particular groups are affected by this report. However, Adult Social Care recognises the complex needs and delivery issues and the often daily changing circumstances of people, this is reflected within the policy and procedures.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report links to the Healthy Darlington theme in particular the promotion of the health and well being of the people of the Borough.
Efficiency	This report does not identify specific efficiency savings.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

7. The total number of representations in Children's Social Care decreased from 58 in 2008/09 to 26 in 2009/10.
8. There was a significant reduction in both the number of complaints received from 48 in 2008/09 to 25 in 2009/10 and in the number of compliments received from 10 in 2008/09 to 1 in 2009/10. No comments were received regarding Children's Social Care Service in either year.
9. The most common complaints concerned staff attitude and behaviour (six); service provision (six) and information (five). Four complaints were received regarding decisions/assessments, two were received regarding communication and the remaining two concerned confidentiality and the lack of services.
10. Of the 25 complaints received eight were upheld; four partially upheld; seven were not upheld; two were inconclusive; one was ongoing at the time of writing the report and the outcome of three of the complaints received was unknown. Following the introduction of a centralised recording and reporting system for all representations the outcome of all complaints are now recorded.
11. Seven complaints initially investigated at stage one of the Children's Social Care Complaints Procedure were subsequently escalated to stage two.
12. One complaint was dealt with initially at stage two and resolved at that stage.
13. Of the seven complaints investigated at stage two, two were escalated to stage three of the Children's Social Care Complaints Procedure
14. The Ombudsman received one complaint which was only investigated by Darlington Borough Council at stage one of the procedure. At the time of producing the annual report there was no indication whether or not the matter would be formally investigated by the Ombudsman. Subsequently the Ombudsman felt the Council's actions were appropriate and did not investigate the matter. This was recorded as a Local Settlement Decision against Darlington Borough Council by the Ombudsman.
15. One complaint was accepted by the Ombudsman for investigation without referring it back to the Council, this complaint concerned both Housing and Children's Social Care Services, although it was recorded as a Housing complaint by the Ombudsman. The outcome of this complaint was Local Settlement.
16. In the majority of cases resolution actions identified were specific to resolving the complainant's individual issues. However, the following actions taken by the Children's Social Care Services as a result of complaints considered in this period will benefit the service as a whole:
  - The reinforcement of the appropriate process for alerting people with children to people of concern.
  - Improved clarity and consistency in contact arrangements.
  - A review in relation to the process of audit and review of case files.

- Introduction of letters to be sent out to referrers of child protection concerns.
- The development of a parents' support group.
- The introduction of joint training with Adults Social Care.
- Training around complaints handling for reception staff.
- A review of the process for sending out copies of assessments to service users.
- The introduction of an investigation 'checklist' to improve complaint handling.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

17. No consultation was carried out in the preparation of this report.