

To:	Education & Children's Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date:	12th February 2020
From	Digital and Customer Services Directorate Customer Services & Business Support Division Wendy Griffiths, Assistant Director Customer Services & Business Support

The Business Support and Improvement Journey so far for Education & Children's Social Care

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report provides an update to the Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Customer Service & Business Support services currently provided to Education and Skills which includes administrative support to frontline and back office teams, enquiry and complaint handling, quality assurance, governance and performance management activity.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Council took a decision to consolidate all support services back in 2016/2017 which brought together all enabling support services including programme/project/change management, performance/data/insight, administration/customer service, HR and ICT&D teams. This decision was taken with a view of improving the efficiency and effectiveness across all support functions and to deliver considerable savings for the Council. Business support had a savings target of £3.6m which was delivered in 2017/2018 following a redesign of the PSS model and transition to a new Business Support offer.
- 2.2. Following the consolidation of support services, a new Head of Service post was created to take a lead role for each Directorate to drive a programme of business improvement activity. The programme had a specific focus on improving the customer experience by reviewing all business processes and enhancing the quality of support provided to frontline teams and senior officers. Viki Sullivan is the Head of Business Improvement and Support for Education and Skills Directorate and manages a business support team equating to 70.42 FTE at present however not all services within Education and Skills have been consolidated.

- 2.3. There is a plan to further consolidate the remaining administrative posts and activity that remains in Education and Skills by March 2021 which will include all customer service and business support activity currently being undertaken in Libraries, Adult Education, Travel Assist and Senar.
- 2.4. Part of the programme of improvement has included making positive changes to the complaint tracking process. Complaint handling sat in disparate teams post consolidation which caused confusion and duplication. This has now been brought in to one team for Education and Skills with a lead Business support coordinator overseeing all complaint activity which has provided improved oversight, tracking and coordination. Prior to April 19, not all complaints were listed on iCASE, meaning that it was difficult to track and monitor complaints received into the Directorate, in October 2019, a further tracker was introduced to break down these complaints, assign relevant officers and monitor for responses. This will enable us to both strengthen the current process to ensure complaints are dealt with in a timelier manner and look at what the complaint data is telling us to help improve the service and reduce the number of complaints received in the future.
- 2.5. In October 2019, SENAR introduced Locality Panels for EHCPs (Educational Health Care Plans) with a view to simplifying the overall process and provide the best care for children. This is being run in conjunction with the introduction of a new online portal, with the aim to reduce turnaround times, the use of paper and improve the ability to track and monitor progress. There is also the possibility that Home to School Transport can then align to this model, to enable decisions of all types of support to be reviewed and implemented. There is a lot of focus on both areas at the moment, so resolution to the outstanding issues is a priority for both the Service area and Business Support teams.
- 2.6. In Q3 2019, the Business Support team transferred from Vauxhall Gardens to Thornberry, with the archiving and destruction of any paper held documentation being completed in Q4. This has prompted a review of how we currently work to be instigated. Part of the focus for 2020 will be to look at ways to 'Work Smarter', which includes increasing the ability for the teams to have the opportunity to have more agile working through the reduction of paper-based processing and enhanced by the use of laptops rather than desk tops as part of the Windows 10 migration.

3 Complaints Handling






- 3.1. Complaints fall under two categories. Complaints raised directly by the Citizen and complaints raised with the local councillor or MP. Letters from the latter are classed as 'Yellow Letters' based on the historical way they were received. As mentioned above iCASE was not fully utilised pre-April 2019, however, after this date only letters raised from the Citizen are logged on this system. Yellow Letter complaints are currently logged and tracked on a spreadsheet. We also know that officers receive and process complaints from Citizens and Councillors directly which are not always entered into the core system.
- 3.2. Although Business Support manage the receipt of complaints, the resolution still relies heavily on the Service Areas, some of which are performing better than others in responding within the due dates which is predominantly as a result of officer's capacity and operational activity. One of the risks identified in this process is that only complaints raised directly through the complaints process are logged with the team. Complaints sent directly to the service area from the Citizen are not managed in the same way, and

therefore it is an inconsistent process. It also makes volume / performance tracking currently report flawed data. 'Yellow Letter' items are always logged through the business support co-ordinators, so more accurate data is available.

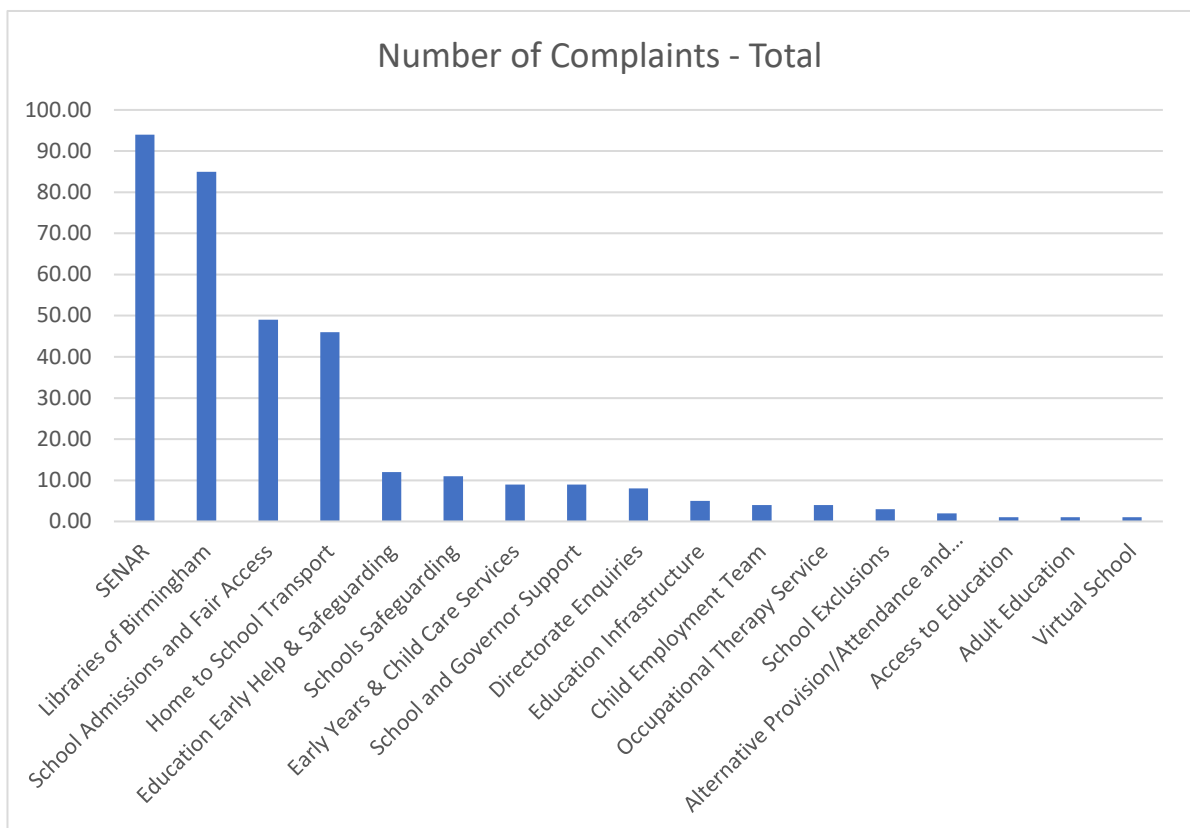
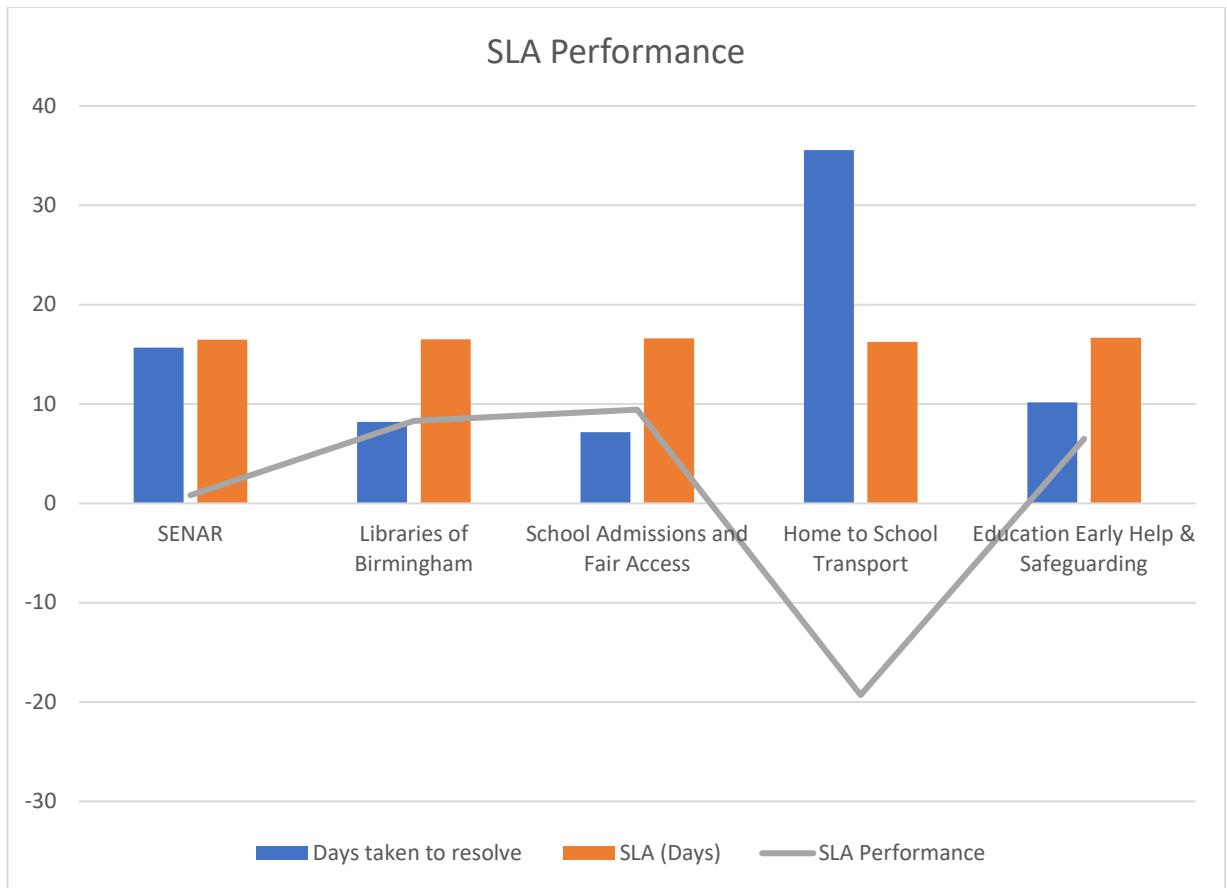
- 3.3. In 2019, a total number of 468 complaints were logged as Yellow Letters within the Directorate, this is a 43.2% increase on 2018. The top 5 service areas for complaints are listed in the below table. For complaints log through Business Support received directly from the Citizen a total number of complaints were logged, which was an overall increase of 48.7%. As mentioned above, the figures for complaints received direct from Citizens does not show the full picture, as the items received directly into the service areas are not always logged and therefore the figures have been omitted. Due to the changes in how complaints were logged last year in comparison to previous the figures could potentially have increased due to more robust reporting.
- 3.4. In 2019, the average response time for Yellow Letters was 12.4 days, with a target of 16. The worst performing area was Home to School Transport, with an average response time of 32.9 days, the best performing area was Library Services, who responded on average within 5 days. Regarding complaints from Citizens that have been logged through iCASE, the data shows an overall average response time increasing to 17.3 days, with Home to School Transport taking 35.5 days to resolve a complaint, with School Admissions improving their performance from 11.8 days in 2018 to 4.8 days in 2019. New meetings implemented with Interim Head of Service for Home to School Transport to address both the level of complaints and the time taken to address, are scheduled weekly.

Complaints Data Analysis 2019
















The below table shows the Service areas with the highest number of complaints, and how quickly they have responded against the SLA provided (negative numbers indicate the number of days taken over the SLA to resolve).

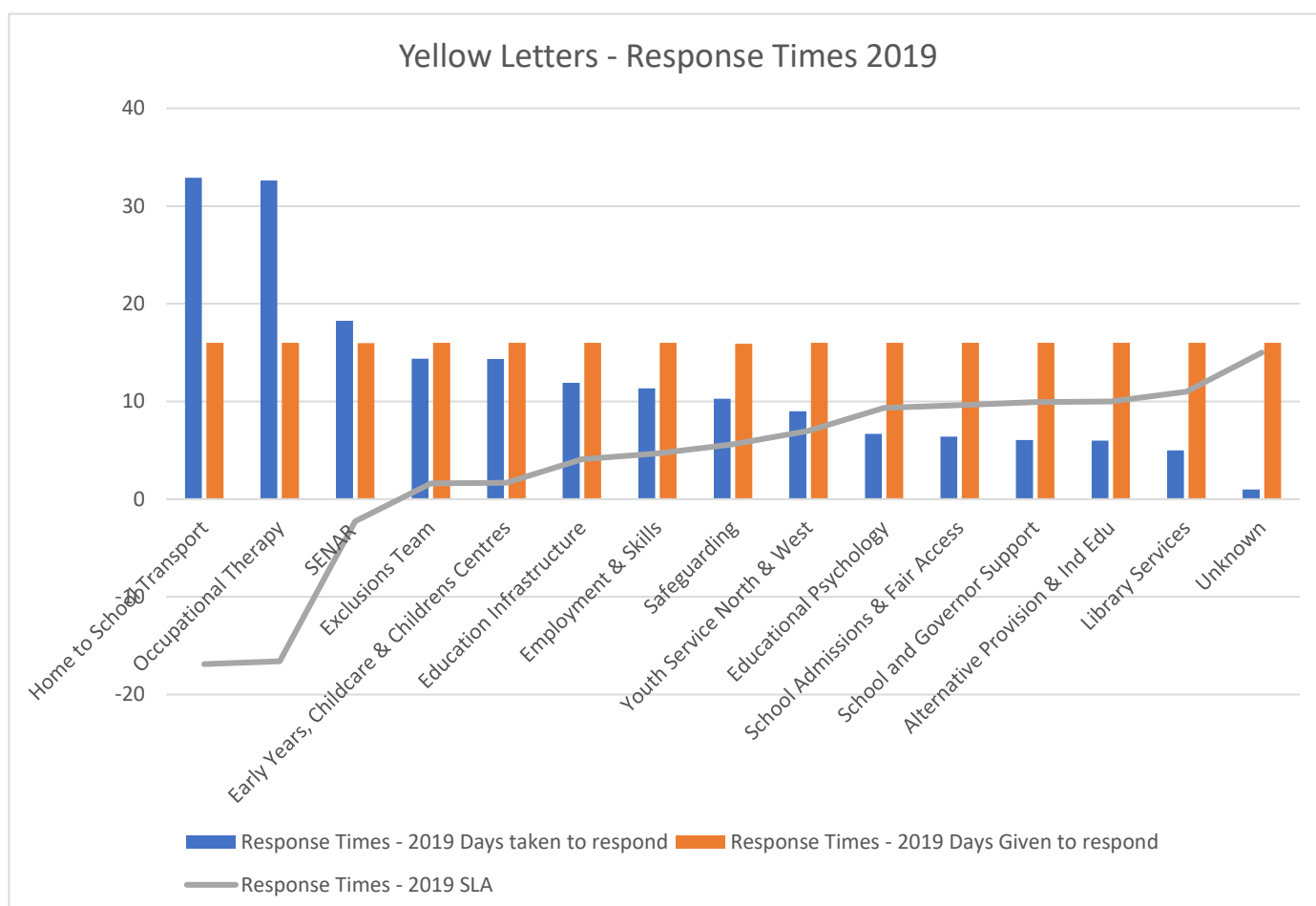
Top 5 - Service Areas with the highest number of complaints	Days taken to resolve	SLA (Days*)	Number of Complaints - Total	SLA Performance
SENAR	16	16	94	1 
Libraries of Birmingham	8	17	85	8 
School Admissions and Fair Access	7	17	49	9 
Home to School Transport	36	16	46	-19 
Education Early Help & Safeguarding	10	17	12	7 

* The variation in the number of days to respond relate to an automatic date generated when the case is logged initially to meet the corporate target for responding to complaints within 15 working days (for stage 2 complaints) or 20 working days (for stage 3 complaints).



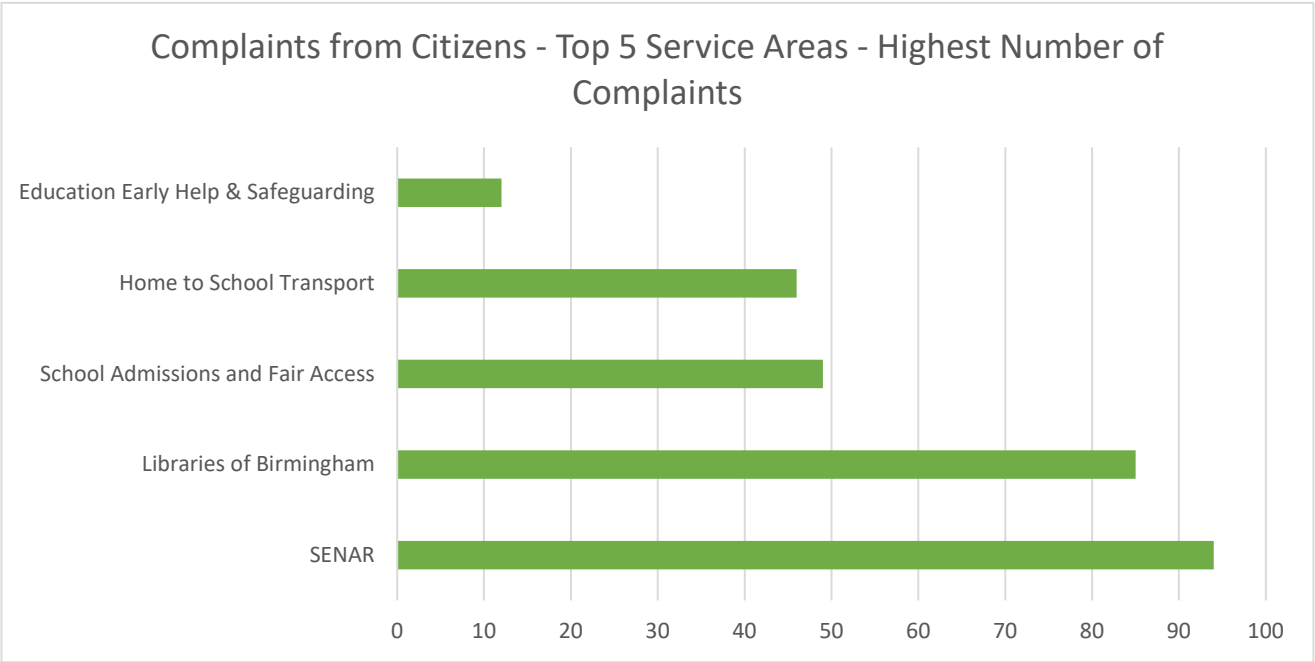
Yellow Letters – Response Times 2019

Response Times - 2019			
Service	Days taken to respond	SLA	SLA Performance
Home to School Transport	33	16	-17 
Occupational Therapy	33	16	-17 
SENAR	18	16	-2 
Exclusions Team	14	16	2 
Early Years, Childcare & Children's Centres	14	16	2 
Education Infrastructure	12	16	4 
Employment & Skills	11	16	5 
Safeguarding	10	16	6 
Youth Service North & West	9	16	7 
Educational Psychology	7	16	9 
School Admissions & Fair Access	6	16	10 
School and Governor Support	6	16	10 
Alternative Provision & Ind Edu	6	16	10 
Library Services	5	16	11 
Unknown	1	16	15 

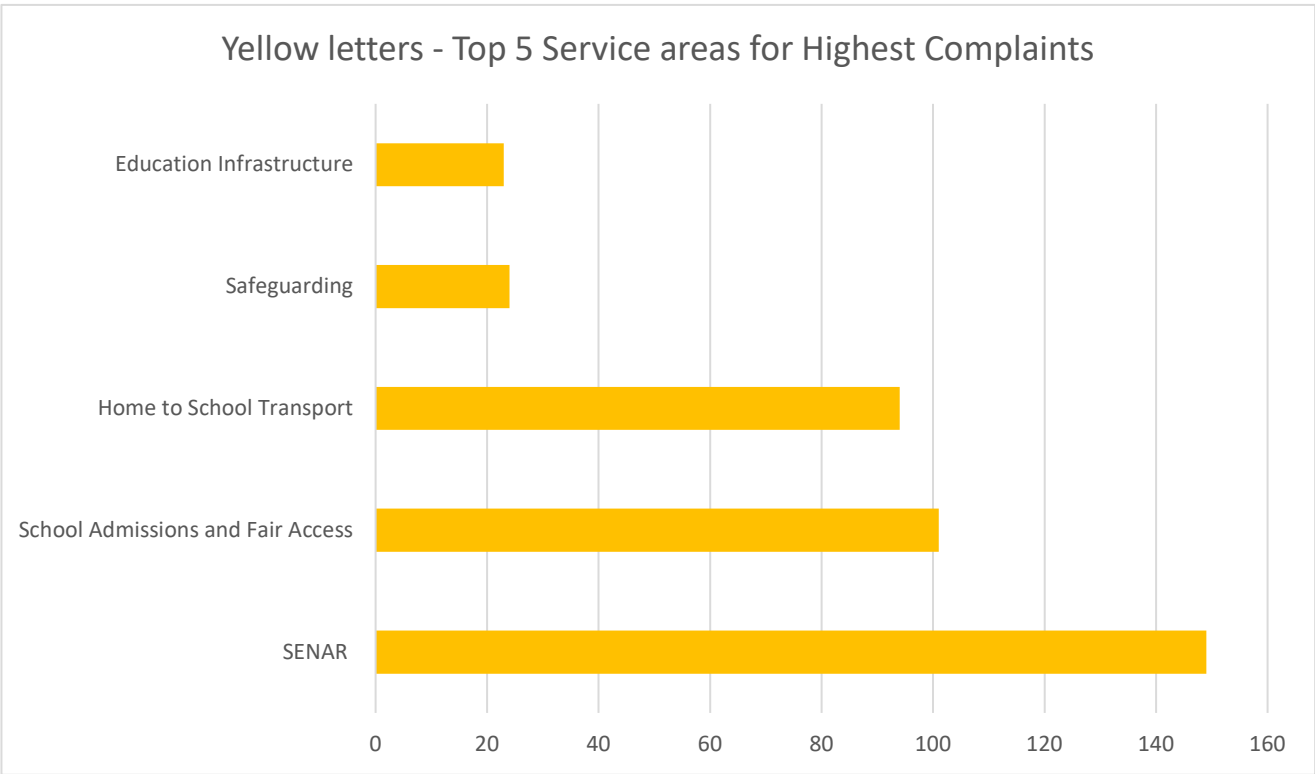


Assessment of Reasons for complaint:

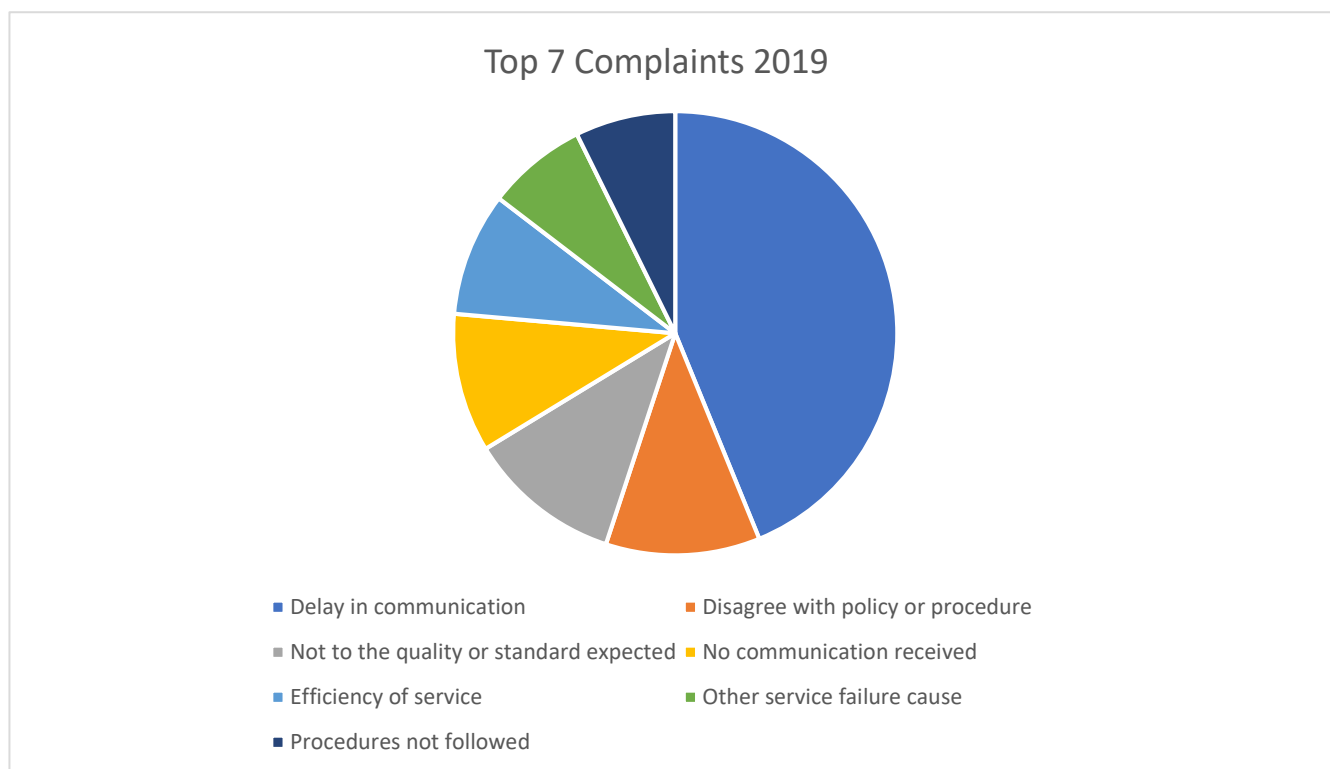
The below demonstrates the 5 Service Areas to receive the highest number of complaints from Citizens in 2019:



With the below showing Yellow Letters



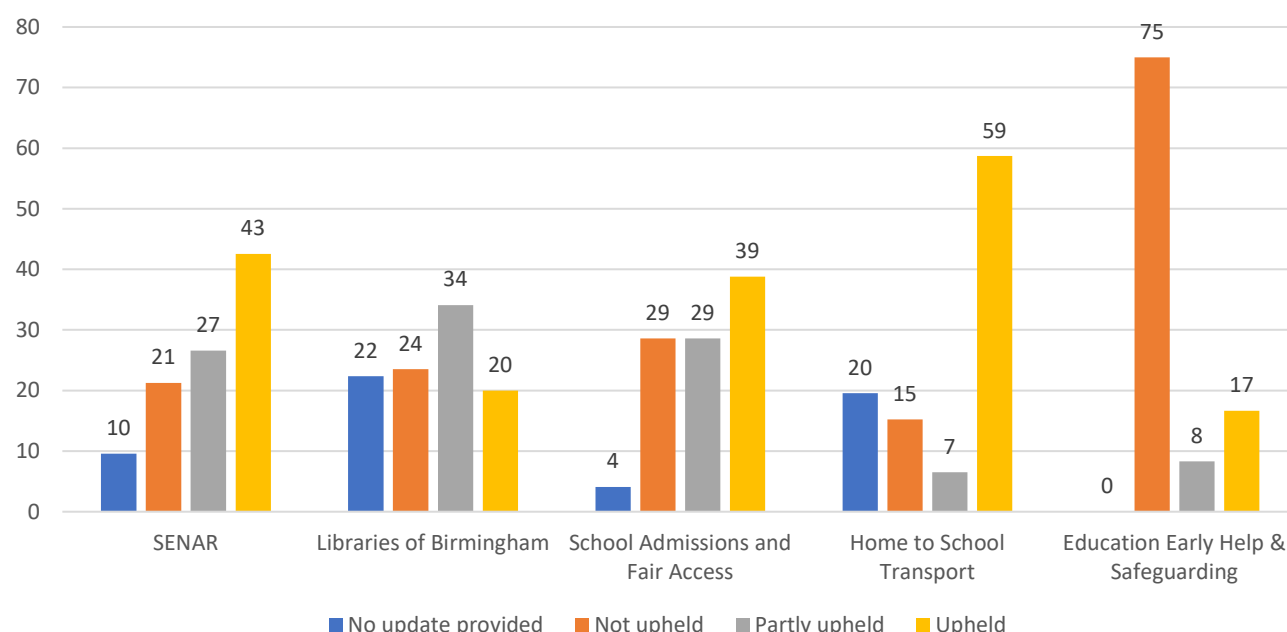
The below shows the 7 most common reason for complaints:



Complaints from Citizens – Outcomes

Service Area	Total Number of Complaints	Outcome in Percentage				Grand Total
		No update provided	Not upheld	Partly upheld	Upheld	
SENAR	94	10	21	27	43	100
Libraries of Birmingham	85	22	24	34	20	100
School Admissions and Fair Access	49	4	29	29	39	100
Home to School Transport	46	20	15	7	59	100
Education Early Help & Safeguarding	12	0	75	8	17	100
Schools Safeguarding	11	9	73	18	0	100
Early Years & Child Care Services	9	33	44	22	0	100
School and Governor Support	9	22	56	0	22	100
Directorate Enquiries	8	75	0	13	13	100
Education Infrastructure	5	0	40	20	40	100
Child Employment Team	4	25	50	0	25	100
Occupational Therapy Service	4	25	50	0	25	100
School Exclusions	3	33	67	0	0	100
Alternative Provision/Attendance and Independent Education	2	0	100	0	0	100
Access to Education	1	100	0	0	0	100
Adult Education	1	0	0	0	100	100
Virtual School	1	0	0	100	0	100

Top 5 Areas - Outcome Percentage (%)



3.5. Quality Assurance Framework

- 3.6. Business Improvement are in the process of completing a full end to end review of all processes that fall within their remit. As part of this review, base line data is being established, with a long-term view of looking at ways to track the quality of work produced within the team. A tracking system is currently being trialled within Elected Home Education, between the service area and Business Support

In addition to reviewing staff performance issues, we are also reviewing how requests are being submitted to see if this also is a factor to consider when reviewing perceived level of service being provided. For example, the below table shows the volumes processed for Child Employment Licences in 2019, as per the instructions online, an applicant should apply for a licence 21 days before performance, as the below demonstrates, the average time given by an applicant is often below this timeframe – by managing the applicants expectations we can improve service and reduce complaints.

2019			
Month	Total number Licences	Number of Days Application Submitted prior to performance	Daily Average VOLS
Jan	208	17	10
Feb	212	16	10
Mar	479	19	23
Apr	164	12	8
May	811	9	39
Jun	1140	18	54
Jul	357	13	17
Sep	68	22	3
Oct	281	22	13
Nov	475	21	23
Dec	527	20	25

- 3.7. Following on from the above, once correct measures are being tracked, where an SLA is not being met due to external factors, the process can be reviewed to see if streamlining of the process can reduce the time take to produce an item.
- 3.8. Once baseline data has been established, the next step is to implement measurable quality tracking, split into internal and measures. This will be a combination of issues identified as part of any quality checking that is in place and complaints raised based on a service failure created through the errors in the process.
- 3.9. Once the processes have been reviewed as they currently stand, weaknesses can also be identified and if possible, mitigating steps implemented to address. The trial is currently underway between the Elected Home Education team and Business support to track volumes and errors made to both monitor team performance and address issues and also to see where duplications in process are causing errors to occur.

3.10. Governance Over View

- 3.11. Currently, Governance for Education and Skills and Business support is overseen within Digital and Customer Services. Complaints are measured and reported into the team monthly, however, as mentioned above, considerable work is already being completed to address the way in which these are both addressed and logged.
- 3.12. SARs and FOI's are currently managed within the Governance team, although requests for information are increasingly being requested from the E&S Business Support area from the Governance team. Please see below for a breakdown of the number of requests received (NB no items have been recorded as being requested prior to May 2019)

Month	Information request	Subject access request	Total
May	3	3	6
June	20	6	26
July	23	5	28
August	14	5	19
September	21	7	28
October	27	5	32
November	19	4	23
December	16	1	17

FOI and SAR performance January 2018 – December 2019

FOI's

On time	Out of time	Pending	Total
106	36	1	143

SAR's

On time	Out of time	Pending	Total
24	11	2	37

- 3.13 A priority identified in June 2019 was the need to improve the underpinning support for DMT to ensure compliance with corporate requirements in relation to Audit, risk management, business planning and overall coordination of directorate administration. Expertise has been developed across the existing teams with the recruitment of industry standard process and administration skills brought in by some recent recruits to the management team within Business Support.
- 3.14 A further key focus for 2020, is the overall management of GDPR across both Business Support and services within Education and skills. An Information Asset Register has already been submitted for review to the working group, and key findings established to address. Issues relating to Business Support are on track to be completed by the start of Q2 2020 to ensure robust compliance.

3.15. Improvements identified

- 3.16. As part of the process mapping already completed within E&S BS, 'Quick Win' improvements have already been identified. There is scope to streamline the Child Employment licensing process, removing the need to print and transport documents between teams, and enable the service are to pick up key tasks relating to the process, with all administration related tasks to sit within Business support. To Be process maps are completed, and currently under review.
- 3.17. Within Schools Admissions and Fair Access, there are several discussions underway between Business Support, the Service area and Document Management to review the need to print 7 copies of each case in readiness for panel. This task alone takes 0.22 FTE in off peak times and 1.1 FTE for peak periods to complete. This is a significant resource being utilised, but also increases the security risk of the paperwork, especially as it is also transported from site to site (between Business Support in Lancaster and Legal Services in Woodcock Street) daily.
- 3.18. Within SENAR, it has been identified that there is several excel spreadsheets currently being used to track work, which is then copied directly into Impulse. To Be process maps will be drawn up and tested with the team. SENAR is already one of the key areas where backlogs are causing complaints and decreasing capacity, so it is imperative that processes are reviewed and streamlined where possible, using existing resources (IT etc) to release some of the pressures on the team.
- 3.19 Within the Safeguarding Course booking process, a new excel tracker was introduced, replacing the manual tick boxes of the invoices and bookings with an automated solution, taking the processing time for running the reports to update records from 1 week to 1 day. Incoming tracking has also now been established, so the Service Area are able to obtain status reports regarding funding instantly, rather than waiting for a manual report to be created. This has added value to the performance of this income generating service.

4.0 Further Implementation

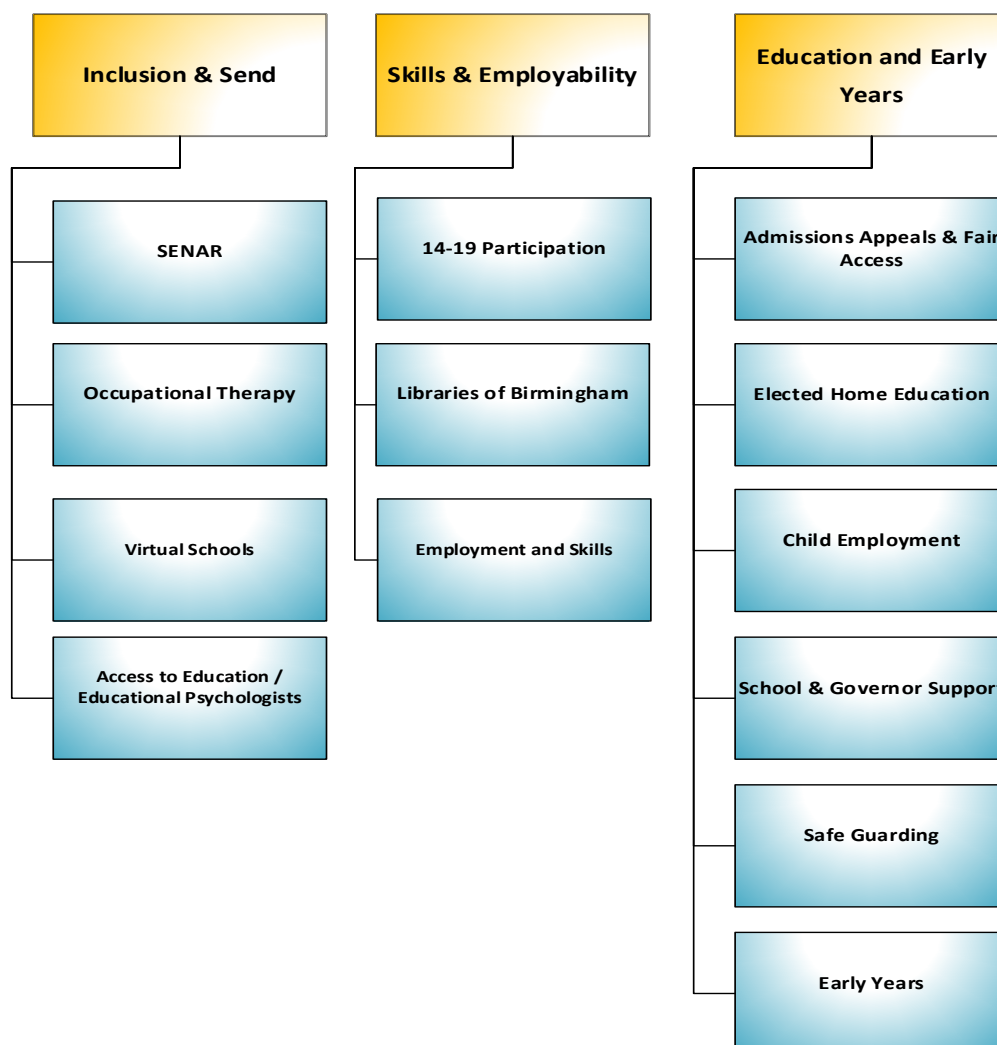
- 4.1. In addition to the opportunities already identified within Child Employment, funding has also been earmarked for a new online portal. This is in the design phase with a

third-party IT team, with the long-term view that all requests pertaining to obtaining licences / work permits / chaperone request are applied for online, in a pre-filled application that is then reviewed and signed off within the service area. As the document is completed by the applicant, the manual process currently completed by the team will demise. The long term aim of this portal is for Birmingham City Council to maintain the rights, and in turn sell this on as a solution to other local councils, bringing in potential revenue.

- 4.2. Locality Panel's for EHCP's went live in October 2019, which has led the way for IT development to now be reviewed. The Assistant Director for SEND/Inclusion has enlisted Rain-Maker, a third-party IT company to review the current IT processes, with a view to introducing a 'one stop' IT platform. This is still in its early stages, so at this present moment in time the actual solutions have not yet been identified. Any changes relating to this process will have impact on business support requirements, so it is vital that we remain engaged throughout these changes.
- 4.3. Due to the improvements for the Safeguarding process, the team are now able to support with a pilot linked to the reporting of safeguarding instances in schools, that are not allocated a social worker to follow up. This pilot will introduce a tracking and monitoring programme to establish trends with schools or children that can then be followed up if required. This will be run using existing resourcing, although it has been stipulated that if additional FTE is required then further funding from the Service area will need to be provided. Business support is working closely with the service area to maximise existing resources.
- 4.4. As already mentioned above, baseline data is to be established for all processes within E&S Business Support. This will enable the Business Support Managers to effectively manage performance, establish the relevant capacity and to track trends for forecasting.
- 4.5. A full End to End review to be completed for the whole of Business Support, which will include comprehensive process maps and identify efficiencies. This work has already started, with 27% of the mapping already completed and a planned programme of work in development for the remaining business support processes, working collaboratively with services to assist them to make efficiencies.

5. Business Support – Services Provided

- 5.1. Currently, although Business Support is established within Education & Skills, the team does not provide administrative support to every service within the team, please see below for an over view of current Services with this support in place which represents 66% of the current services within Education and Skills.



- 5.2. There are plans being developed to further consolidate remaining administrative activity by March 2021 so that a consistent structure is embedded across the Council.

6.0 One Team Approach

- 6.1. As with other Directorates, there are currently a number of channels and teams who are dealing with citizens complaints for Education and Skills. An example of a few are as follows
- Contact Centre – calls are taken by the team, however, often the knowledge is not available to provide the citizen with a full response – these are often referred into either the Business Support team or directly to the service area.
 - Emailed into the Service areas email account. Email accounts are managed differently according to service. SENAR for example is managed as part of the work in process within Business Support, and complaints / queries are picked up within the team. Other teams, such as Child Employment have requested that complaints are sent directly into the service area.
 - Online Complaints – These are overseen by Business Support, however, as with the contact centre the knowledge is currently restricted to the Service areas. This often leads to the Business Support co-ordinator chasing for responses, but unable to provide any guidance themselves. It is currently only the items received through the Business Co-ordinator that are recorded on iCASE.
 - Raised with local councillors / MP's – these are the complaints classed as Yellow Letters and are treated as more urgent requests. As with the online complaints, these are managed by the Business Support Co-Ordinator, and responses requested from the service area.
- 6.2. Regardless of the method of receipt, currently the Service Areas are responsible for providing responses to all complaints raised. This can often place additional pressure on teams, especially when other factors, such as peak workloads, are also an issue.
- 6.3. A review is being undertaken across all complaint channels, the overall management of complaints and the time taken to resolve. As shown above, often a complaint is the result in the delay in communication, and therefore is avoidable. It may also be beneficial to review where Business Support are providing services to the main Service Areas if general queries can be resolved at the first point of contact to prevent a complaint being raised.

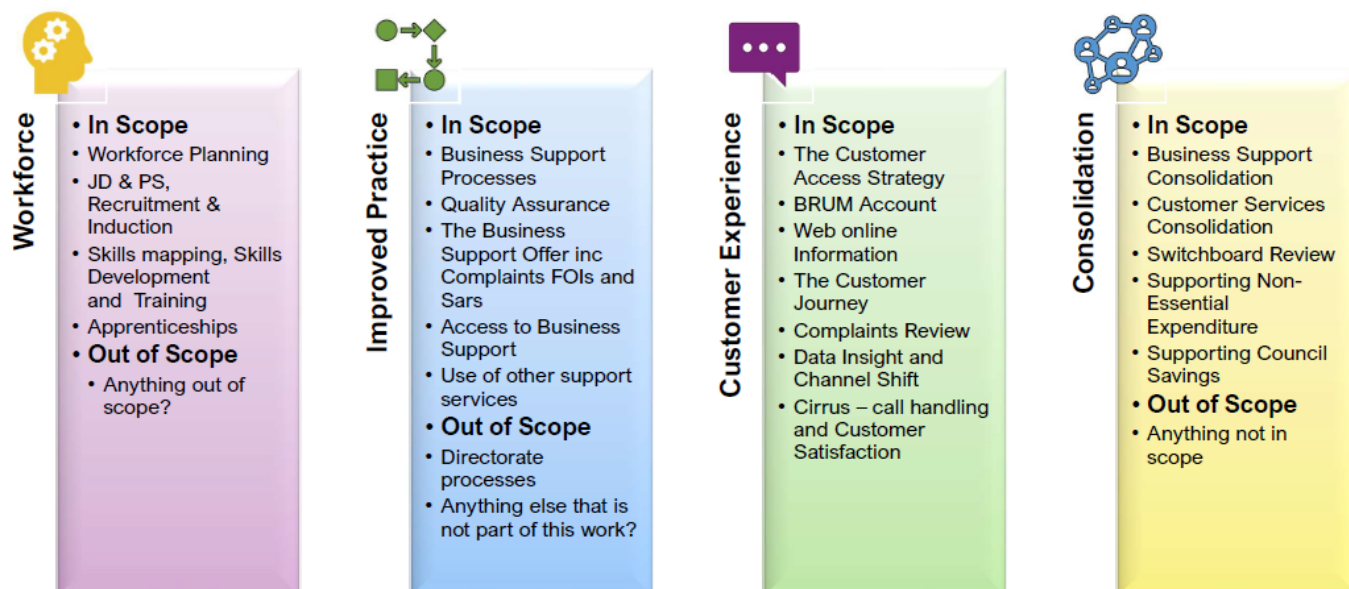
7 Next Steps

- 7.1 To implement the Business Improvement and Customer Service improvement programme. This programme of improvement cuts across the whole council. The vision is to improve and deliver change within Customer Services and Business Support in order to continue delivering high quality services to citizens and enabling the Council to deliver excellent services by providing the right tools, technology and business support.
- 7.2 To do this we will focus on four key areas:

- Our workforce
- The way we deliver services
- How Customers access the Council
- Providing an effective and efficient model



Programme Outline



The programme is governed by a cross cutting change board sponsored by the Assistant Director for Customer Services and Business Support, Wendy Griffiths.

