



ANNUAL CASEWORK REPORT 2014-2015 LEGAL AND INVESTIGATIONS DEPARTMENT

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COMMISSIONER'S FOREWORD



I am very pleased to welcome you to NICCY's second Annual Casework report which outlines the work of the Legal and Investigations team. The majority of the work this report concentrates on occurred when my predecessor, Patricia Lewsley-Mooney, was in post, and I would like to commend her and the team for the work undertaken during the 2014/2015 business year.

This report demonstrates not only the range of work the team undertakes, impacting on every aspect of the child's life, but also the different methods employed - from signposting to providing legal advice, guidance and support, and when appropriate, taking legal action. It is vital that children, young people, and their parents and carers, get the resolution which is in their best interests, as quickly as possible, and are assisted by the organisation or body best placed to do so.

Once again 'education' presents as more than half of all our legal casework, which in view of the universal nature of the service is only to be expected, and within this, special educational needs is once more the highest area of concern. This is an area we will monitor carefully as the provisions of the new Special Educational Needs and Disability Act take effect.

Naturally each enquiry we receive concerns a child or young person, although it is generally their parents or carer who instigates the enquiry. This serves as a reminder that parents are most often the 'protector' of their children's rights - exercising these on behalf of their child as the 'rights holder' - and that the two rarely compete.

As Northern Ireland enters an increasingly challenging economic environment, we are deeply concerned that children and young people may experience a decrease

of services. We will continue to monitor the trends in casework and use this to inform the advice and support we provide to service providers and Government.

Another theme highlighted in the report are the limitations of the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, and how this is impacting on NICCY's work. We are working with Government and the NI Executive to conclude the long overdue review of this legislation, a process begun back in 2007 when we made our first submission. Whatever the outcome, I am confident that we will continue to develop our legal work, ensuring a more strategic focus and a rights compliant, efficient system for children and young people.

Finally, I wish to congratulate NICCY's Legal and Investigations team for their hard work and diligence. It is clear from feedback that they offer an effective service, which this year has improved the lives and outcomes for many of the 445 children and young people through the legal services provided. I look forward to working with them during my term, and expanding and developing NICCY's legal, casework and investigations services further.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Koulla Yiasouma'.

**Koulla Yiasouma
Commissioner**



INTRODUCTION

This is the second Annual Casework Report for NICCY, the first one which was produced last year having been very well received.

The purpose of this report is to give a greater understanding of the casework service we provide and an indication of the types of cases which we receive and deal with. The casework service is distinct from our legal work, although both are dealt with by the Legal and Investigations Team.

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) is a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). NICCY was established on 1st October 2003 under the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

Our founding legislation sets out our duties and powers, together with the Commissioner's principal aim which is:

"to safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people"

The legislation gives us the power to assist with complaints to relevant authorities (Article 11) and investigate complaints against relevant authorities (Article 12). It is this work which we refer to as casework and which is the subject matter of this report.

In the 2014 business year we dealt with 445 cases in total; this was made up of 332 new cases and 113 cases which were ongoing. Similarly, to last year the largest number of enquiries we received was in relation to the area of education.

A full statistical breakdown of the enquiries received is contained within the main body of the report.



CASEWORK SERVICE

The casework service is provided by the Legal and Investigations team, which is comprised of five people:

- ▶ Head of Department – Barrister
- ▶ Senior Legal & Investigations Officer – Solicitor
- ▶ Legal & Investigations Officer – Solicitor
- ▶ Advice Officer
- ▶ Administrative Officer

The ethos of casework within the organisation is to attempt to resolve issues for children and young people, at the earliest possible stage, without the need to resort to legal proceedings. We believe a lot can be done on a non legal level to attempt to bring about resolution and a satisfactory outcome for the child or young person concerned. This may include advice and guidance as to how to access a complaint procedure, or assistance navigating such a procedure. In addition, if necessary, we can assist with the drafting of letters of complaint or attend at meetings to discuss or address complaints. In some complex cases we have called round-table meetings of all the agencies concerned to address the issue and reach a resolution. Although we attempt to resolve issues at the earliest opportunity we do also have the power to take legal proceedings, or initiate a formal investigation, if necessary, within defined circumstances.

Within the Legal and Investigations team we operate a Legal Assistance Policy. This policy sets out the various levels of legal assistance which we can provide, which are:

- ▶ Signposting
- ▶ Advice and Guidance
- ▶ Help and Support
- ▶ Advocacy / Representation
- ▶ Legal Advice
- ▶ Legal Representation or Funding

An explanation of each type of assistance

which we provide is set out below.

Signposting – Referral of a client to another more appropriate body or person to assist them, either with the entirety of their case or an aspect of it; or for additional support.

Advice and Guidance – Advice (other than legal advice) on areas such as how to progress a complaint, including guidance through complaints procedures, codes of practice.

Help and Support – Engagement with a relevant authority to assist a client or on their behalf. This could include the writing of letters, drafting of documents, telephone conversations with key personnel, facilitating meetings and supporting clients at same.

Advocacy / Representation – Advocating for and representing clients at meetings and other forums.

Legal Advice – Advice given by a properly qualified legal practitioner either a solicitor or barrister. This could include oral advice or written advice such as a barrister's opinion.

Legal Representation or Funding – Representation in relation to legal proceedings by a qualified legal practitioner (either internal staff or an external person), or funding to enable a client to engage legal representation or advice.

Accessing the casework service

We provide advice over the telephone, via email or in person. Clients can also contact us via a link on our website (see back cover for these details).

Legal Outreach Clinics

In addition our team provide an outreach service where we can take a legal complaints clinic to a group of interested people. This consists of a presentation on child rights and a legal advice clinic. We outline the work we do and take individual complaints which are then brought back to the office to be dealt with in the usual way. This year we took a decision to focus our legal outreach service on the area of Special Educational Needs (SEN) advising parents around the rights of their children in this complex area. We held a total of three outreach clinics, two of which were targeted at parents of children with SEN, with the third being a joint outreach with external stakeholders from Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) and Equality Commission of Northern Ireland (ECNI). As a result of the clinics held with parents of children with SEN we received a number of direct referrals to our casework service to assist individual children and young people.

Number of People Contacting the Casework Service

In the 2014/15 business year our casework service dealt with 332 new cases in addition to 113 cases which were still ongoing from the previous business year. Over the course of the year we closed 353 cases. Cases are closed when they are resolved or where the client has disengaged. We exceeded our target of a 90% closure rate where the case objective had been met. Unfortunately clients do sometimes disengage during a case, however this is normally due to the issue having resolved for them and the fact that they no longer require assistance. In these situations we always write to the client advising that we assume they no longer require assistance and we are closing the case, but they are free to contact us if they do require further assistance and the matter will be re-opened.

We provide information on our website around what types of matters we can or cannot deal with, however we do still receive a number of complaints each year about issues which fall outside our remit. In these cases we signpost clients to the most appropriate organisation to deal with their enquiry.

Once again the largest area for enquiries which fell outside of our remit was family law issues around child contact with an absent parent. The child in these matters has a right to contact with both parents, however we cannot become involved in these matters, even though the right to family life may be engaged, as our powers relate to complaints about the actions of relevant authorities only. In these matters the dispute is normally between two parents who are engaged in ongoing court proceedings, the conduct of which also falls outside our remit due to our legislation.

The statistical breakdown on annual casework follows.

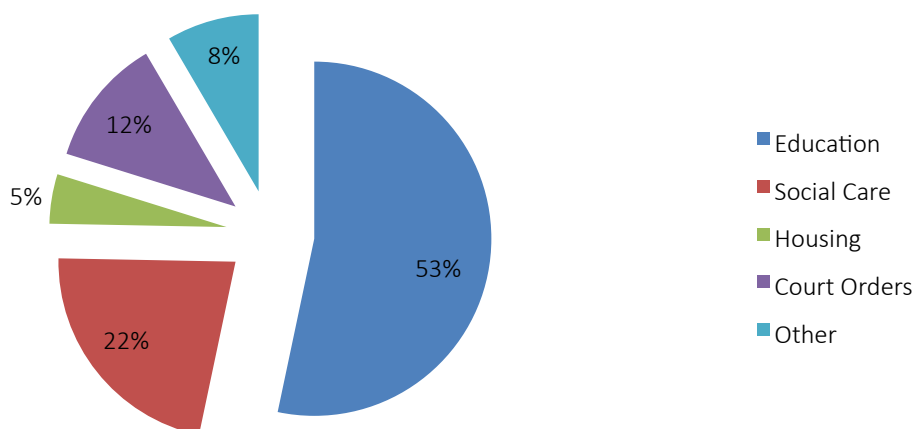




STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR

Annual Casework Report Statistical Breakdown

2014/15



As can be seen from the above, education enquires formed over 50% of the work of the casework team this year. Education enquiries are broken down in the next diagram.

Some of the other areas of enquiries we dealt with are those in respect of health and social care. These frequently revolved around provision, but also included complaints about social workers. We dealt with complaints around provision but signposted clients with complaints about social workers to the appropriate Trust complaints procedure or the Patient and Client Council.

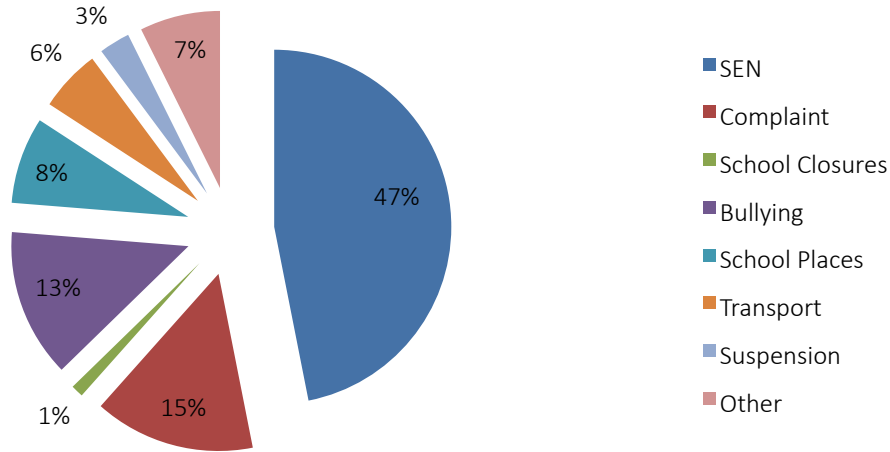
We received complaints about housing issues which involve children. Some of these we could address but most we signposted to Housing Rights.

We occasionally received complaints which related to actions of the Police Service of Northern Ireland. We cannot deal with these due to restrictions in our legislation and refer clients to the Police Ombudsman, the statutory body set up to deal with such complaints.

We continued to receive enquiries around court proceedings and court orders made in respect of children with regard to contact or residence. We cannot deal with these matters as they fall outside of our remit, which is complaints regarding relevant authorities. We state on our website that we cannot deal with such complaints, to advise parents who may consider us an appropriate recourse in such matters as they consider that their child's rights are involved.

We dealt with other matters which involve court orders made in respect of children and young people, particularly within the Youth Justice System.

Education Enquiries



Range of Enquiries

Special Educational Need

It can be noted from the pie chart above that Special Educational Need (SEN) is once again the largest area within the education enquiries. Indeed it has risen from 37% last year to 47% this year.

We continue to offer advice in this area together with a SEN guide for parents. Last year we began to offer representation at Special Educational Needs Disability Tribunals (SENDIST) for the first time, after considering what was offered by other organisations. We have had a number of Tribunal cases this year and will continue to offer this service to assist parents through a complex system.

We also assisted parents, children and young people, with enquiries around the statementing process, SEN provision and difficulties they may be facing around school placement or transport.

General Education Enquiries

Enquiries in this area have risen by 50% this year from 10% last year to 15% of all education complaints this year. This is the second largest area of enquiries we receive in education after SEN. Most of these complaints are in relation to how issues have been handled in school. We either direct clients to the school complaints procedure or assist them through the complaints system. We do sometimes attend meetings in schools with parents, where we attend on behalf of the child. We view our role in such meetings as ensuring the child's voice is heard and mediating between the adults in an attempt to repair relationships if they have broken down.

School Closures

Our enquiries regarding school closures dropped this year to 1% from 6% last year. This is gratifying as we have no real role in these matters. We direct clients to the procedure which will be followed in such circumstances and what opportunity they would have to input into the procedure.

Bullying

Our enquiries regarding bullying were up 1% on last year to 13%. These enquiries encompassed complaints about bullying by peers and in some cases by teachers. We directed clients to the school bullying policy and advised them to arrange a meeting with the school if they have not already done so. We worked with the client and the school to attempt to find a satisfactory resolution to the matter.

School Places

Our enquiries around school places dropped from 10% last year to 8% this year. We receive enquiries of this nature each year where school places are allocated at nursery, primary and secondary schools. In each case we directed the client to the appropriate admissions criteria and advised that the only ground for appeal is that the criteria were not applied correctly. If a parent believed that the criteria were not applied correctly we offered advice around the appeals process and sometimes attended an appeal hearing with parents.

School Transport

Enquiries around school transport have dropped from 10% last year to 6% of all education enquiries this year. We engaged regularly with transport officers and parents to attempt to resolve issues for children in this area.

School Suspension

Enquiries in relation to school suspensions and expulsions dropped from 4% to 3% of all education enquiries this year. We work with children, young people and their parents to ensure that proper processes have been followed and to guide them through any appeals process available. We also worked with clients when children were suspended or excluded, to assist them in finding a new school place or get home tuition put in place if appropriate.

Other

7% of our education enquiries fell into this category as they did not come under any of the headings above.



CASE STUDIES – EXAMPLES OF CASEWORK

This section comprises some examples of the cases we have dealt with this year via the casework function of NICCY. These illustrate the range and diverse nature of the enquiries dealt with during the year.

Realising the Rights of Transgender Children in Education

NICCY was contacted by the parent of a transgender child who, due to their school's failure to acknowledge their identity, was out of education. The young person wished to wear the appropriate school uniform for their gender, however the school refused to permit the young person to attend school in what they viewed to be the incorrect uniform. NICCY was concerned about the potential discrimination against the young person, the school's failure to make reasonable adjustments and the denial of the young person's right to education. NICCY contacted the school to discuss its concerns, as a result of which the young person was permitted to return to school in the appropriate uniform pending a meeting.

NICCY, along with the young person's parent, then met with the school, and the education and library board. The young person was also invited to attend part of the meeting to have the opportunity to discuss their feelings and concerns and ensure that their voice was heard. Following NICCY's intervention at this meeting, the school acknowledged the young person's identity and agreement was reached regarding the school uniform. Further issues were then considered and, with the input of the young person, agreement was reached regarding the young person's name to be used on roll call and school records, PE classes, bathrooms and arrangements were made to deal with any potential incidents of bullying. The parent has since reported that following NICCY's assistance the young person is now much happier and more confident.

Meeting the Needs of Children with Special Educational Needs

Case 1

NICCY was contacted by the parents of a child who had a diagnosis of Aspergers and a statement of Special Educational Need. The child's statement provided for placement in a mainstream setting with support measures. The child's school felt his behaviour had deteriorated to such a point that they could no longer meet his needs, and further that his placement at the school was having a detrimental impact upon the other children in his class. NICCY advised the parents of the process upon which the school and Education and Library Board would have to go through before amending the child's statement; and their opportunity to contribute to the process. NICCY further attended several review meetings where the child's placement, the current support provisions, additional supportive strategies and staff training were discussed. The training and strategies implemented following these meetings proved very successful. As a result, the child is much happier and the classroom atmosphere much less stressed. The school felt able to meet the child's needs and he remains in mainstream school.

Case 2

NICCY was contacted by the parent of a seven year old child who had a diagnosis of ADHD and also some traits of autism. The child also had mental health issues and was under the care of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The parents and the school felt that the child needed full time class room assistance of 25 hours a week. However the Education and Library Board offered only 10 hours per week. NICCY agreed to represent the parents before the SENDIST Tribunal. We prepared a very detailed Notice of Appeal which cross referenced all of the evidence indicating that the child needed a high level of assistance. NICCY also agreed to fund a private Educational Psychology report which recommended a high level of assistance. Based on our Notice of Appeal and the private report the Education and Library Board conceded the appeal and offered full time assistance to the child.

Case 3

NICCY was involved in the case of an eight year old boy whose parents suspected that he was on the autistic spectrum. He also had a diagnosis of ADHD. His local ELB had agreed to conduct a statutory assessment and following this had issued a Notice in Lieu of a Statement. The parents sought assistance from NICCY in appealing this decision. NICCY agreed to represent the parents and drafted a detailed Notice of Appeal setting out the reasons why we believed the boy would be entitled to a statement. NICCY also agreed to fund an independent Educational Psychologist report to assist with the appeal. During the independent assessment the Educational Psychologist indicated that she felt a diagnosis of autism was warranted. NICCY disclosed the report to the ELB and asked them to reconsider their position. The ELB conceded the appeal on this basis and agreed to provide a Statement of Special Educational Need.

NICCY then assisted the parents in their liaison with the ELB regarding the proposed provision to be made available to the child via the statement.

Case 4

NICCY was contacted by the parent of a 13 year old boy who attended a mainstream school. He had a diagnosis of autism and had a statement of special educational need. The boy had disclosed that he was being bullied at school. In addition the parent was concerned that the school were not employing strategies which were specifically suited to the child's needs. The parent had previously contacted the school but did not feel that they were being listened to. NICCY facilitated a meeting between the parents and the school. Through this meeting we were able to ensure that the parents had an opportunity to discuss their concerns in full and the child's voice was heard. As a result the school agreed to make some changes, and to amend the strategies employed in addition to ensuring more open communication with the parents.

Case 5

NICCY assisted a 17 year old young person who had physical disabilities and attended a mainstream school. He was concerned that the school were not making reasonable adjustments to accommodate his disabilities. These related to access to computers and physical education. There were also issues around communication. NICCY took detailed instructions from the young person and agreed to attend a multi disciplinary meeting, which was also attended by representatives from the school, ELB and social services. NICCY raised the issues that were concerning the young person and ensured that his voice was heard. Through this meeting a resolution was reached on all matters and the young person felt that they had been listened to.

Misuse of Rolling School Suspension

In this matter NICCY became concerned about the prolonged exclusion from school of a child with Special Educational Needs. The child had been placed on a rolling suspension and NICCY was troubled by the lack of consideration given to the child's return to school at the end of each period of suspension in addition to the reason given for the rolling suspension. NICCY attended a meeting with the school and members of the Board of Governors, where we raised our concerns and reminded the decision makers of the statutory limitations in respect of suspensions and the reasons for suspension. As a result, the rolling suspension was lifted and the child returned to school.

Meeting the Needs of Children with Diabetes

In this case a child with a range of diagnoses had a care package which included overnight respite care and a home carer. The child was then diagnosed with diabetes and required insulin injections. Due to the omission of insulin in a policy regarding the administration of medication, insulin could only be administered by medically trained staff. This meant that the child's home carer and staff at his respite centre could not be trained to administer his insulin, unlike staff in his school who were trained almost immediately. Consequently the child could not be left alone with his home carer and his respite care was at risk. NICCY engaged with the child's social worker and senior staff within the Health and Social Care Trust as a result of which the child's home carer was trained in the administration of insulin and medically trained staff were recruited in order to facilitate his respite care.

This case was one of many where NICCY engaged in follow up work due to our concerns about the issue for not just this child but others who may face a similar difficulty.

NICCY wrote to each of the Health and Social Care Trusts regarding the issue and outlining our concerns about the potential discrimination of insulin dependent children. A scoping exercise was then commissioned by the Chief Nursing Officer and Chief Social Services Officer to identify nursing tasks and procedures carried out by non nursing staff. NICCY continue to liaise on this matter and await the outcome of the scoping exercise.

School Transport

NICCY were contacted by the parent of a six year old child who attended a Special School, and attended an after school facility three afternoons a week. The child was entitled to transport assistance to and from school, from the education and Library Board. The school had a policy which stated that children were only permitted to be transported from school to their home. The after school provision was closer to the school than the child's home but due to the policy the boy was being transported past the facility to his home and then his mother was transporting him back to the after school facility. The mother was of the opinion that all this travelling was not in the best interests of her child. NICCY engaged with the school and the ELB. The ELB were happy to transport the child directly to the after school facility but felt bound by the school policy. NICCY sought a legal opinion from Counsel on the issue as we did not believe that the school could bind the ELB in this way. The opinion stated that the policy was potentially open to legal challenge as the school did not have the power to restrict where children were to be transported to once they were off the school premises. NICCY then contacted the school and invited them to review their policy in light of this, which they did. In the interim the child concerned in this case moved away and left the school.

School Attendance

Case 1

NICCY was contacted by the parent of a child aged 14 years, who was refusing to attend school due to a school phobia. The child had been out of education for approximately two years. The Educational Welfare Officers within the ELB had previously prosecuted the parents of the child for failing to ensure his attendance at school. NICCY took instructions from the child and his parents and then attended a number of multi disciplinary meetings of educationalists and mental health professionals. Through these meetings NICCY was able to progress the situation and a change of school was agreed, with a phased re introduction of the child to school which would be at his pace and meet his educational and emotional needs. Exceptional Teaching agreed to put a 1:1 tutor in place in order to teach the child separately to allow him to settle into the school environment before transitioning him into the main class. The child was able to engage with the 1:1 tuition in the school environment and it is hoped he will soon be able to rejoin his class on a permanent basis.

Case 2

NICCY were contacted by the foster parents of a 16 year old young person who attended a special school. The young person had experienced a difficult start in life and was presenting with behavioural issues which the school found difficult to manage. Due to events which had taken place in school the young person was on a restricted timetable and was only attending school for two hours on three days each week. The foster parents were concerned that this was not meeting his educational needs and asked NICCY to engage with the school to ensure that the hours of attendance were increased. NICCY engaged with the boy's social worker and

the school. A multi disciplinary meeting was convened and an agreement was reached to increase the hours of attendance steadily and to monitor the situation until he was able to attend school on a full time basis.

School Bullying

Case 1

NICCY were contacted by the mother of a 13 year old child who felt that she was being bullied by a senior teacher in her school. Her mother had attempted to liaise with the school but did not feel that any progress had been made. NICCY took instructions from the child and her mother and then attended a meeting with the Principal of the school with the mother. NICCY were able to put the views of the child forward and to support the mother in putting forward her opinions. As a result the school agreed to monitor the situation and to offer mentoring to the child to ensure her emotional needs were met.

Case 2

NICCY was contacted by a parent who was worried about her daughter. They were a newcomer family and the daughter was experiencing bullying at school. She felt that other pupils were laughing at her and she began to develop psychosomatic symptoms. NICCY contacted the school and arranged a meeting between the class teacher, the head of pastoral care, the parent and the child. The meeting was centred on the young person and she was able to distribute what she had written about how she felt about the bullying. She was also able to communicate that she felt that the teachers were putting responsibility back on to her to address the bullying and that she wanted the teachers to be more vigilant and quick to react when incidents of bullying took place.

School Admission

NICCY was contacted by a parent whose child had been refused a place at her chosen nursery school and wanted to challenge this decision.

The nursery school had published the admission criteria, as required by the DOE and this included a subsection “the child or parents had a serious long term illness”. The school, without publishing, had added an enhancement to the criteria, stating that “the child was likely to face significant educational challenges as a result”.

The parent suffered from uncontrolled diabetes, of a severe and debilitating nature which resulted in the client requiring day and night time care. The parent received disability benefits to reflect this. The parent obtained medical evidence from her doctor to support this and submitted the evidence with the application as required. The admission was declined as the school stated that the child did not meet the enhanced criteria of “the child was likely to face significant educational challenges as a result”.

Article 27 and 31 of the education (NI) Order 1998 require Education and Library Boards to make arrangements enabling parents to appeal if they are dissatisfied with an admissions decision. The appeal is to an Appeal Tribunal constituted by the relevant ELB in accordance with the Schools Admissions (Appeal Tribunals) Regulations (NI) 1998.

The parent wished to appeal the decision, NICCY represented the parent at the Tribunal, no further medical evidence was required. NICCY successfully argued that the criteria had been enhanced at a stage which was not permitted, nor was it necessary. Therefore the Board of Governors did not correctly apply its own criteria.

The appeal tribunal found in favour of the parent and the daughter secured her pre school place in the nursery school.

Looked after Children Absconding from Care

NICCY was involved in a number of cases within a short time frame wherein young teenage girls were absconding from Trust care. In all of these cases the young people were putting themselves at risk either through drugs, alcohol or exposure to the risk of sexual exploitation when they were absent from their placements. NICCY sought to assist in each of the individual cases working with a number of agencies to try to ensure the safety of the young people involved. We also used our experiences from these cases to feed into our wider work in respect of child sexual exploitation.

Mental Health

NICCY was contacted by a parent who was concerned about the treatment her son was receiving. Her son was 16 years old and had been diagnosed with ADHD when he was 4 years old. He was receiving care from CAHMS but could be volatile and become violent towards himself and others. The parent initially contacted NICCY as CAHMS were about to discharge him, not transferring him to adult services. His social worker had asked that he be referred by CAHMS to adult services. The parent was querying why her son could not be transferred to adult services instead of having to go through another referral process.

Whilst we were looking into this the parent contacted us again to say that she and her son were in the local Accident and Emergency Department, where they had been all night. Her son was very distressed and agitated, he had been mixing his medication with alcohol. He was threatening suicide and had threatened to kill his younger brother.

The hospital could not keep him and the hospital social worker was trying to get CAHMS to come and assess him. The young person's own social worker could not be contacted. NICCY made several calls on the young person's behalf.

NICCY then contacted CAHMS and asked them to attend the hospital to assess the young person regarding a safety plan. CAHMS initially refused to do so, only after a number of calls from NICCY did CAHMS then attend the hospital and organise suitable alternative accommodation as the young person could not return home because of the threat to his younger brother. The young person was then given an emergency appointment for the following day with a psychiatrist at CAHMS to be reassessed.



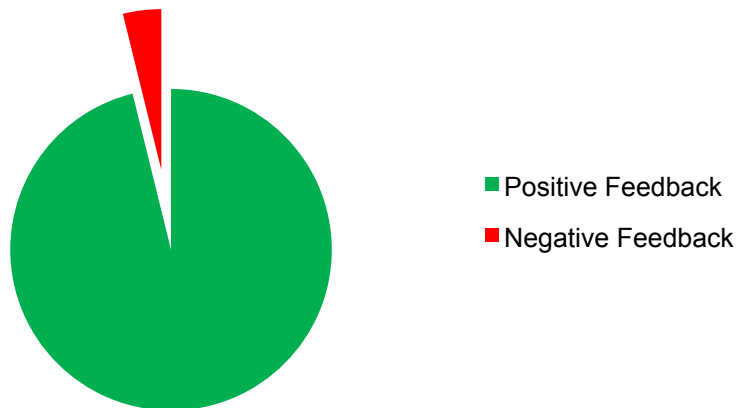
EVALUATION PROCESS

EVALUATION REPORT 2014/15

Once an enquiry is closed each client is sent an evaluation form, this year we closed 346 enquiries. The evaluation form is sent along with a letter explaining why we seek feedback, a pre-paid envelope and a website permission slip. Feedback can be, and often is, returned anonymously.

In the 2014/15 business year we received a 96.15% positive feedback rate from completed evaluation forms. This represented a 12.15% increase over the previous business year. The rate of returns was once again slightly higher than the previous year, we believe this to be down to a simplified form with clearer questions.

Evaluation Forms Returned



The content of each evaluation form is analysed to determine if any learning can be taken from client's comments or training needs identified for staff. Almost all the comments on the returned forms were positive. The following are a selection of comments made:

"very prompt service"

"very helpful from start to finish..."

"could not have achieved the outcome without the help and advice of NICCY"

"I was extremely satisfied with the support I received from NICCY..."

"very professional, friendly, supportive and reassuring service"

"staff were very pleasant and knowledgeable"

"very helpful and got a resolution quickly"

"extremely pleased with NICCY service..."

"we just wanted to thank you for listening to us"

"excellent, concise advice relevant to our issue"

As in previous years, the positive comments reflect the experience that the vast majority of our clients have.

The only negative feedback which we received once again appears to be due to restrictions on our remit. Our legislation prevents us from becoming involved in

some issues and we signpost clients on such occasions to the most appropriate organisation which can provide the assistance which they require.

One client commented as follows:

"Dismissed and referred to Parenting NI through phone call. Not exactly the outcome I was hoping for. Disappointing."

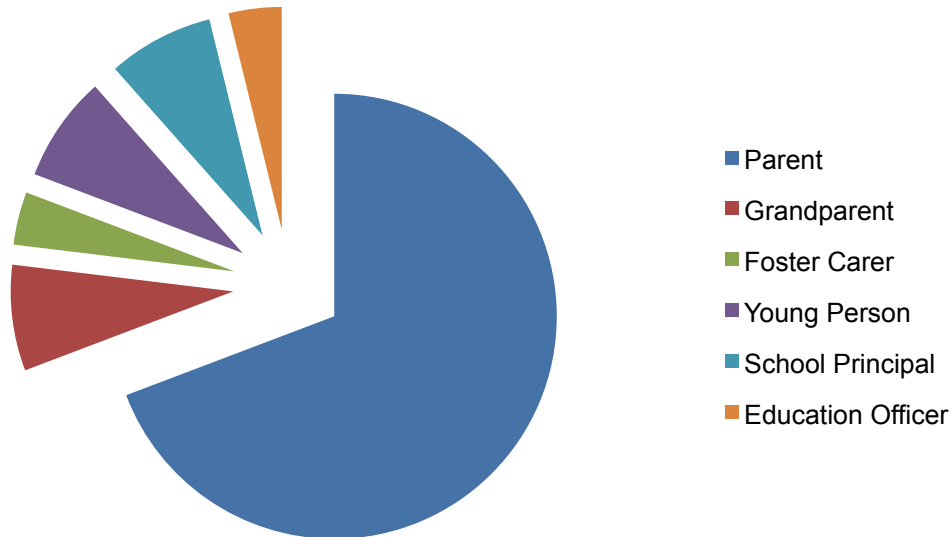
Clients are only signposted when necessary, so this feedback, although disappointing, is unavoidable. Our remit is clearly set out on our website, in our leaflets and is explained to clients when it becomes clear an issue is outside of our remit. We do our best to manage client expectations in this way, however it is the case that clients who are unaware of the restrictions on our remit will contact us from time to time.

The restrictions on our remit are something which we hope to have changed. We are actively working towards this with our sponsor body OFMDFM. We have provided OFMDFM with a report regarding recommendations for a review of our legislation and have had a number of meetings with them around this. OFMDFM are considering the report at present.

Considering the content of the answers given to the questions on our evaluation form allows us to gather useful information and data regarding the people who contact us, and allows us to further develop the service we offer.

Question 1 Analysis

In what capacity did you contact NICCY?

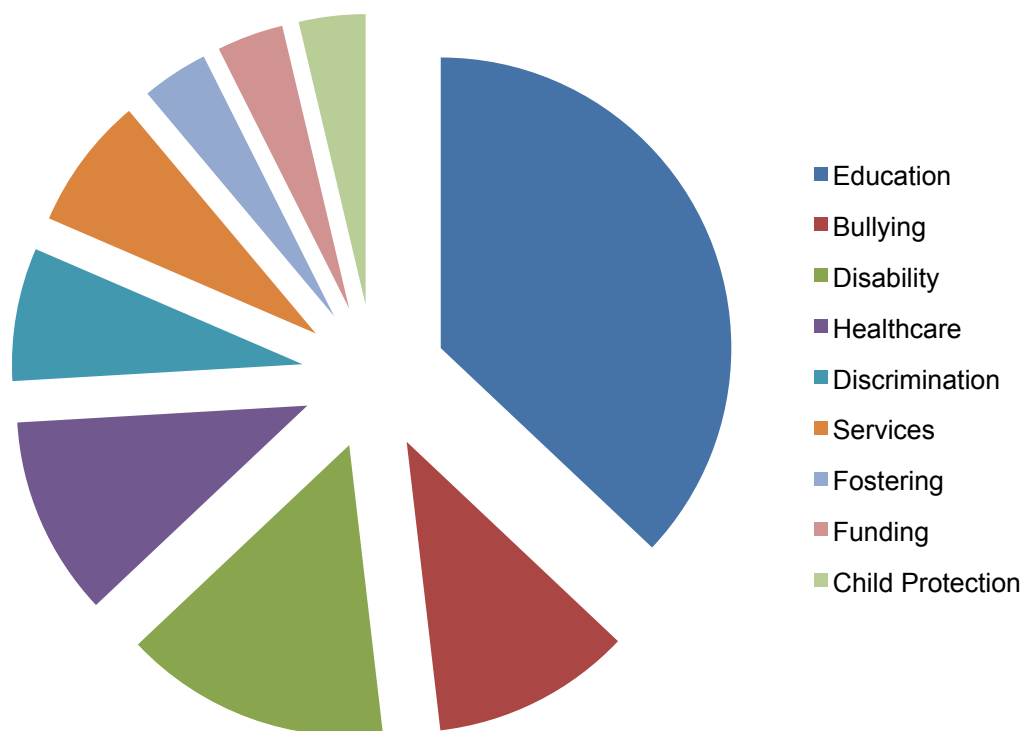


As can be seen from the graphic above a large majority of the evaluation forms returned to us came from parents of children and young people. This does reflect the fact that most enquiries come from parents rather than the young people themselves. Evaluation forms were also returned to us by grandparents, young people, school principals, a foster carer and an education officer.

Question 2 Analysis

Question 2 establishes the reason for contacting NICCY.

What was the nature of your complaint?

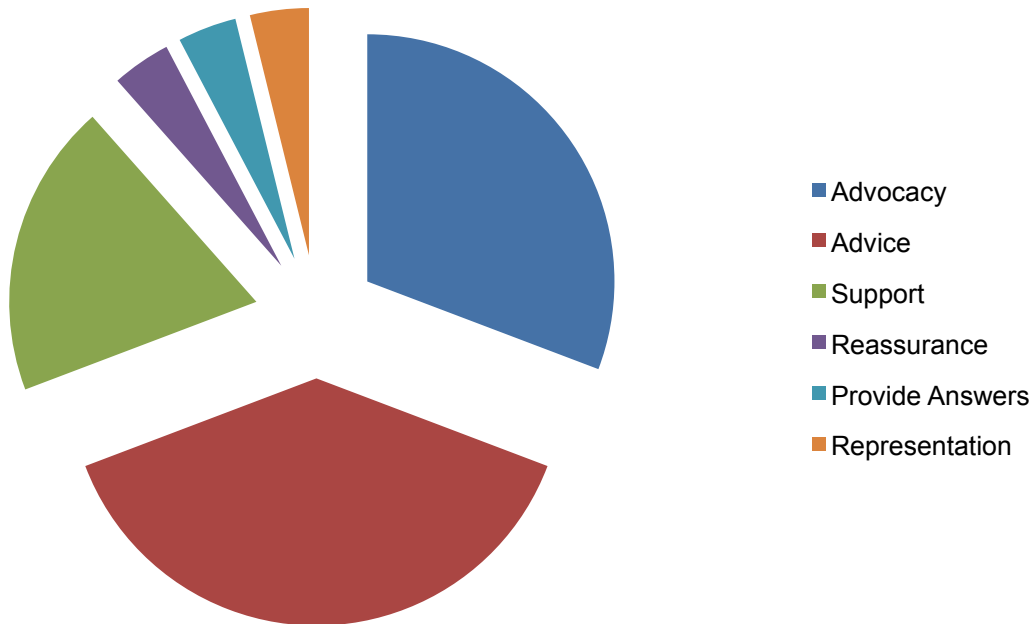


With a large majority of the returns stating that the nature of their complaint was education this again reflects our typical casework patterns. Other issues such as bullying, disability, services and funding are also seen regularly across casework.

Question 3 Analysis

This question establishes how the client wanted NICCY to help when they contacted us.

How did you want NICCY to help?



Often when a client contacts us they are unaware of how we can help. This question asks how they want us to help which gives us an understanding of what people expect from us. The majority of respondents wanted advice or advocacy more often than not in an education setting. Support was the third most requested assistance with reassurance, provision of answers and representation also being reflected in the returns.

Question 4 Analysis

Were you happy with the service you received from NICCY?



23 respondents ticked that yes, they were happy with the service received. One ticked 'no', the single negative form, and two did not answer. Of the two that did not answer the rest of the form was positive.

The remainder of the form is given over to comments, some of which have been quoted above.



GOING FORWARD

NICCY continually review the casework service which we provide, seeking ways to improve or enhance the service provided. This becomes more challenging as the overall budget of the organization is reduced year on year.

In the 2015/16 business year we will be carrying out a comprehensive review of how we deliver the casework service. Our aim in doing so is to ensure we continue to use the resources available to us, to best meet the needs of the children and young people who come to us for assistance.

Notes

Notes



**Northern Ireland
Commissioner
for Children and
Young People**

Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DP

T: 028 9031 1616
E: legalteam@niccy.org
W: www.niccy.org
Twitter: @nichildcom
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/
nichildrenscommissioner](https://www.facebook.com/nichildrenscommissioner)

NICCY
PROMOTING THE RIGHTS OF
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

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if you require alternative formats of this material.**