



# **ANNUAL CASEWORK REPORT 2018-2019 LEGAL AND INVESTIGATIONS DEPARTMENT**

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# COMMISSIONER'S FOREWORD



**I would like to welcome you to NICCY's Casework Report 2018-19, which outlines the nature of cases and enquiries that the Legal and Investigations Team has undertaken on behalf of over 450 children, young people and their families. The team works within the duties and powers outlined in the Commissioner for Children and Young People (NI) Order 2003.**

The report demonstrates how we have discharged our statutory responsibilities as outlined in Articles 7(2) and (3) of the legislation, to keep under review law, practice and services provided to children and young people. We have supported children and their families on a range of issues. Education continues to be our biggest area of work, and continues to grow year on year.

Within education, special education is the biggest area with bullying somewhat behind. The Northern Ireland Assembly passed legislation in both these areas in 2016, however the lack of government has meant that they are yet to be implemented. It is crucial that both the Special Education and Disability Act and the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act are commenced as soon as possible.

The Legal and Investigations service makes sure that we, as an organisation, can gain an overview of the issues and emerging trends which most adversely affect children and their families. By hearing directly from them and engaging with relevant authorities, we are able to identify the barriers that prevent children and young people from enjoying their rights. Therefore as a result of the growing concerns around the experiences of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in mainstream schools we have commenced a Children's Rights Based Review of SEN which will report in early 2020. The evidence gained from our casework will help to inform this Review.

It is also important we maximise those powers which are unique to NICCY, and you will see in this report that we are utilising our investigatory

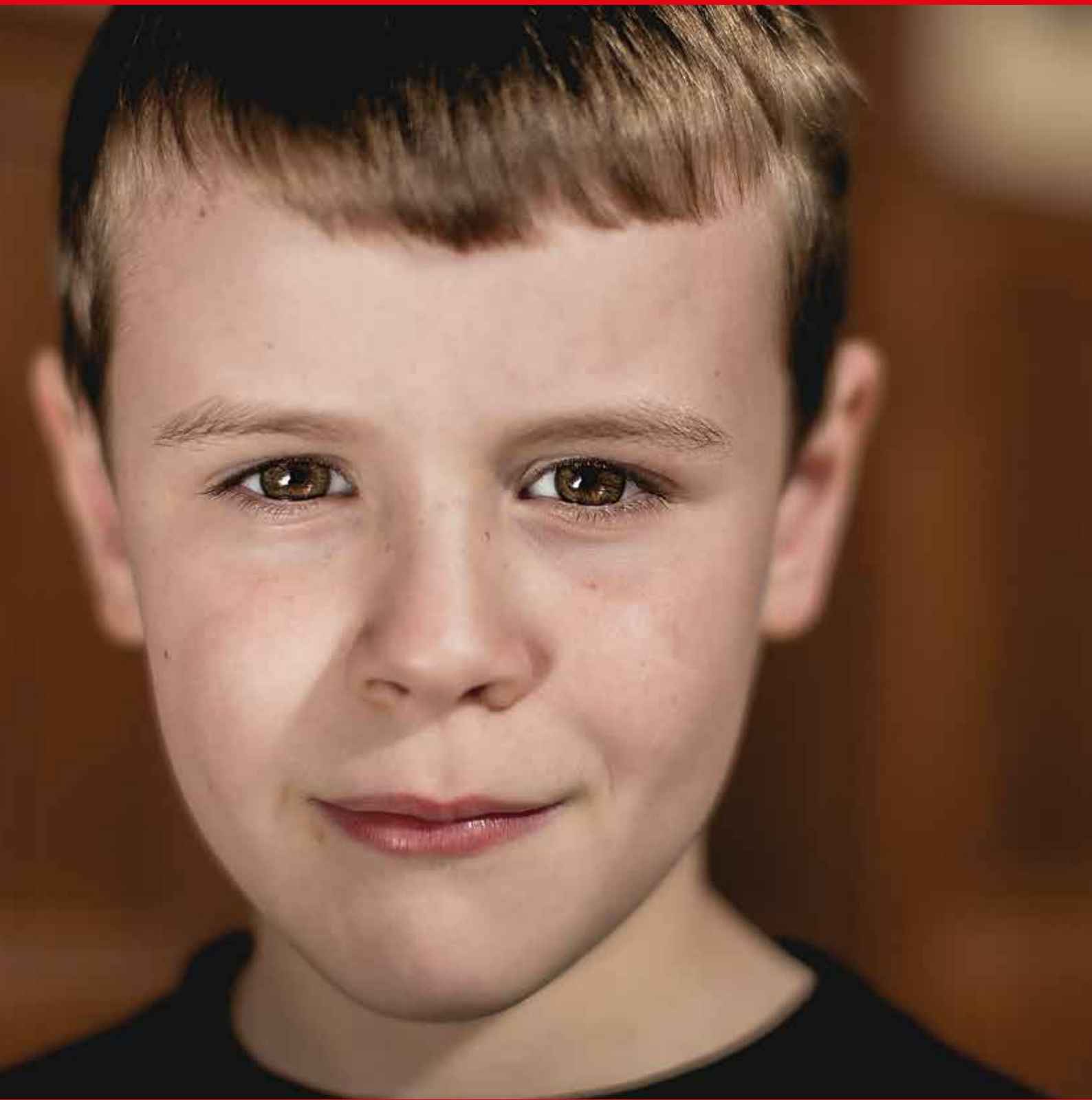
role in an increasing number of cases. The team have also been working on NICCY's first Formal Investigation which will also report early in 2020. This has required us to develop and adopt a methodology that incorporates the correct systems and processes to ensure we comply with and meet the requirements of our Legislation.

NICCY has also developed internal working processes to ensure that our Legal Team are able to inform the policy advice and guidance we issue to government and relevant agencies. This ensures that our work, including our reactive work, is informed by the most egregious breaches of our children's rights in Northern Ireland.

This has been another year of no Executive or Assembly in Northern Ireland. It is of deep concern that the necessary developments in law and policy that would secure improvements in the lives of children and young people, are not happening.

Yet again there has been overwhelmingly positive feedback from clients regarding the quality of the work of our Legal and Investigations Team. They continue to display commitment and compassion to children and young people during another year of change. I am incredibly grateful to them for all their hard work and care.

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



## INTRODUCTION

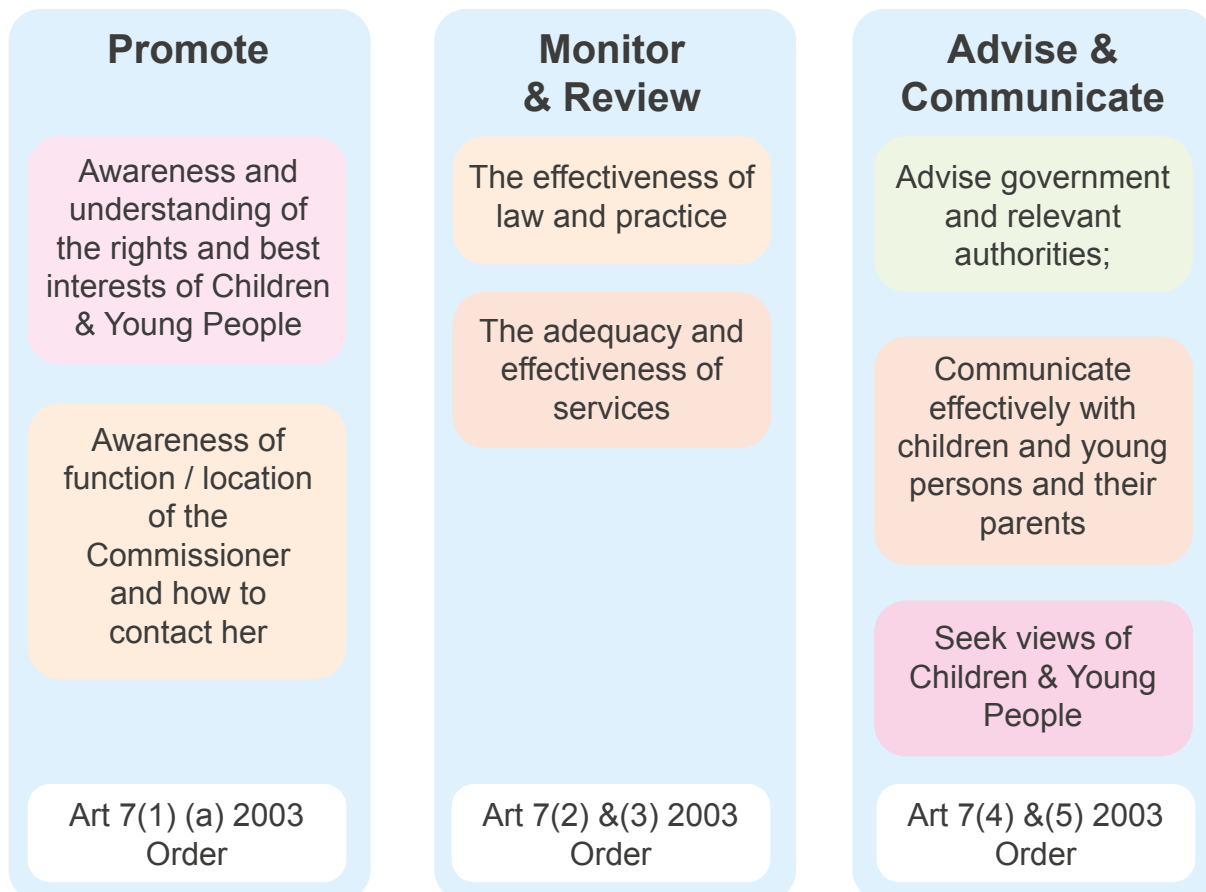
Welcome to our Annual Casework Report for the 2018-'19 Business Year which provides an overview and breakdown of NICCY's casework service and the types of cases received by the Office. The casework service is part of the overall work carried out by the Legal and Investigations Team, headed up by the Chief Executive.

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) was created in accordance with 'The Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order' (2003) to safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people in Northern Ireland.

As such one of NICCY's key functions is to address breaches of children's and young people's rights (Article 7 of the Order) where we will investigate and resolve, determine or make recommendations to those relevant authorities under NICCY's remit.

Further in carrying out the functions of the Office, paramount consideration must be given to the rights of the child or young person, and to all relevant provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Commissioner is also to have regard to the importance of the role of parents in the upbringing and development of their children. Furthermore under the founding legislation, the Commissioner has statutory duties to keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law, practice and services provided by relevant public authorities.

## NICCY's Statutory Duties



## NICCY's Statutory Powers

### Undertake Commission Challenge

Research or educational activities concerning the rights or best interests of children and young persons or the exercise of her functions

Conduct investigations as she considers necessary or expedient to meet her duties

Compile info', provide advice and publish any matter (including educational activities, investigations and advice) concerning their rights and best interests

Art 8(1) & (3) & (5)

### Issue Guidance Make Representations

In relation to any matter concerning the rights or best interests of children or young persons

Make representations or recommendations to any body or person relating to the rights and best interests of children and young persons

Art 8 (5) & (6)

### Address Rights Breaches Advocacy

Assist with complaints to / against relevant authorities

Bring, intervene in, or assist in legal proceedings

Art 11, 12 & 14

The legislation gives us the power to assist with complaints to relevant authorities (Article 11) and investigate complaints against relevant authorities (Article 12). This work is referred to as casework.

In the 2018-'19 business year, we dealt with 472 cases in total; these were made up of 410 new cases and 62, which were ongoing and carried forward from the previous business year.

Enquiries that are referred to our casework service are progressed if they fall within our statutory remit. Where enquiries are outside our remit we always signpost the client to an appropriate body who can assist them with their case. In this business year we signposted 99 matters to other organisations. Further details of our signposting is set out in a later section.

Where we identify matters that give rise to concerns of systemic failings on the part of a relevant authority, we can invoke our investigative powers. During this business year, we identified a number of appropriate cases for investigation and progressed them with relevant authorities accounting to us for their actions, and/or inaction.

Recommendations were made to the relevant authority where deemed necessary or alternatively, we were able to offer reassurances received to parents/ guardians/ carers that the relevant authorities had done everything required of them.

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



## **THE CASEWORK SERVICE**

The ethos of casework within the organisation is 'resolution before legal action', that is, to attempt to resolve issues for children and young people, at the earliest possible stage, without the need to resort to legal proceedings i.e. resolution before formal legal proceedings. We believe a lot can be done at this stage 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 complaints procedures, or assistance navigating such processes. In addition, if necessary, we can assist with the drafting of correspondence and attend meetings to advocate on behalf of the child or young person where matters can be discussed and addressed. In some complex cases, we have called roundtable meetings of all the statutory agencies involved to address the issues 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 investigations (both casework investigations and formal investigations) if necessary, within defined circumstances.

We also provide representation at Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunals (SENDIST) and can assist complainants with preparing cases through to representing them at the Hearing. In this business year, we have become more involved in representing children before the SENDIST. While the majority of these cases settle in advance of hearing we have also conducted advocacy when cases have been heard in full before the Court.

*NICCY's casework feeds into all of the other areas of work across the organisation. We use the complaints and information we gather from our casework to assist us with keeping under review law, practice and services as they relate to children and young people and inform our advice to Government and our wider policy work.*

### **Accessing the casework service**

Cases are initiated by complainants completing our online Complaints and Advice Form, which appears on our website (see back cover for these details). If however, a person requires additional help or support, we will take details via telephone. Children and young people are not required to complete the online form and are always given priority access to the team on the same day that they make contact with us.

Once the information is received by the team, it is allocated to a Caseworker who then progresses the case by seeking further instructions from the complainant and offers them advice, assistance and representation, depending on what the case requires.

We provide advice over the telephone, via email or in person at meetings.

At this stage, we obtain consent to seek necessary information from relevant authorities and agencies on behalf of the complainant.

### **Number of People Contacting the Casework Service**

In the 2018-'19 business year our casework service:

- ▶ Dealt with 410 new cases;
- ▶ Carried forward 62 cases ongoing from the previous business year;
- ▶ Closed 400 cases; and
- ▶ Exceeded our 90% successful closure rate where the case objective had been met.

Cases are closed when they are resolved. It is also unfortunately the case that clients do sometimes disengage during a process; this is normally due to the issue having been resolved for them, and the fact that they no longer require assistance. In these situations, we will 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 case will be re-opened.

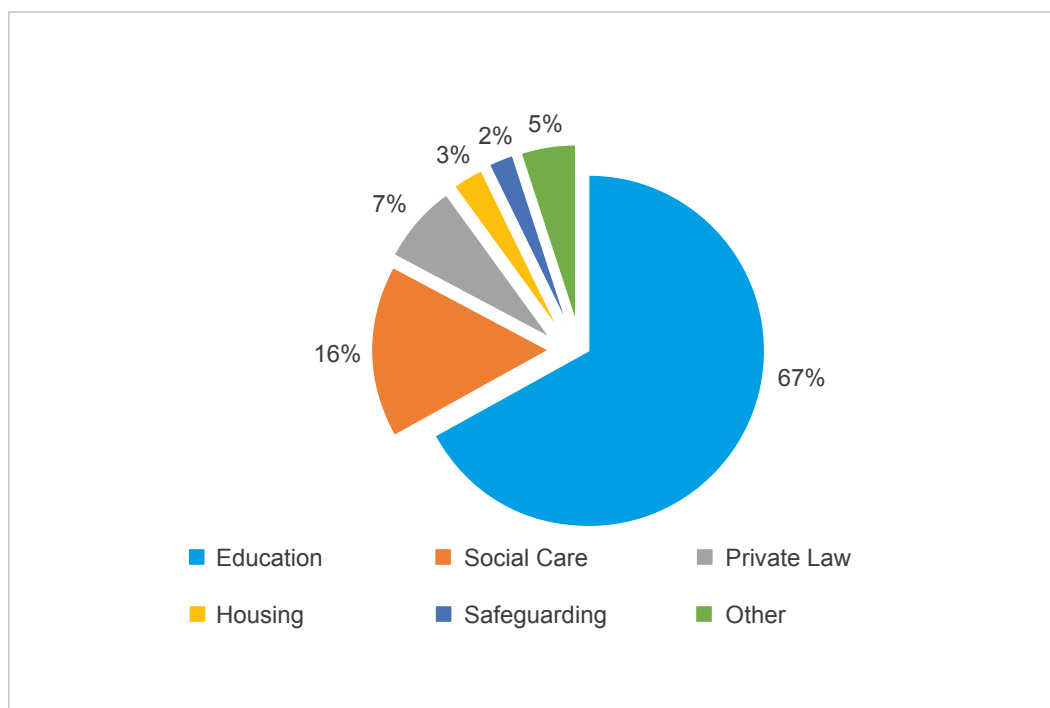
The statistical breakdown on annual casework follows.





## ANNUAL CASEWORK REPORT STATISTICAL BREAKDOWN

## 2018-'19



As can be seen above, education enquiries constituted over 60% of the work of the casework team this year. This is a continuing trend of education making up the majority of our enquiries. The nature of the 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' alleged misconduct or concerns around their decision-making. We dealt with the complaints around provision but signposted those with complaints about social workers to the appropriate Trust's Complaints procedure, the Patient and Client Council or to the appropriate regulatory body.

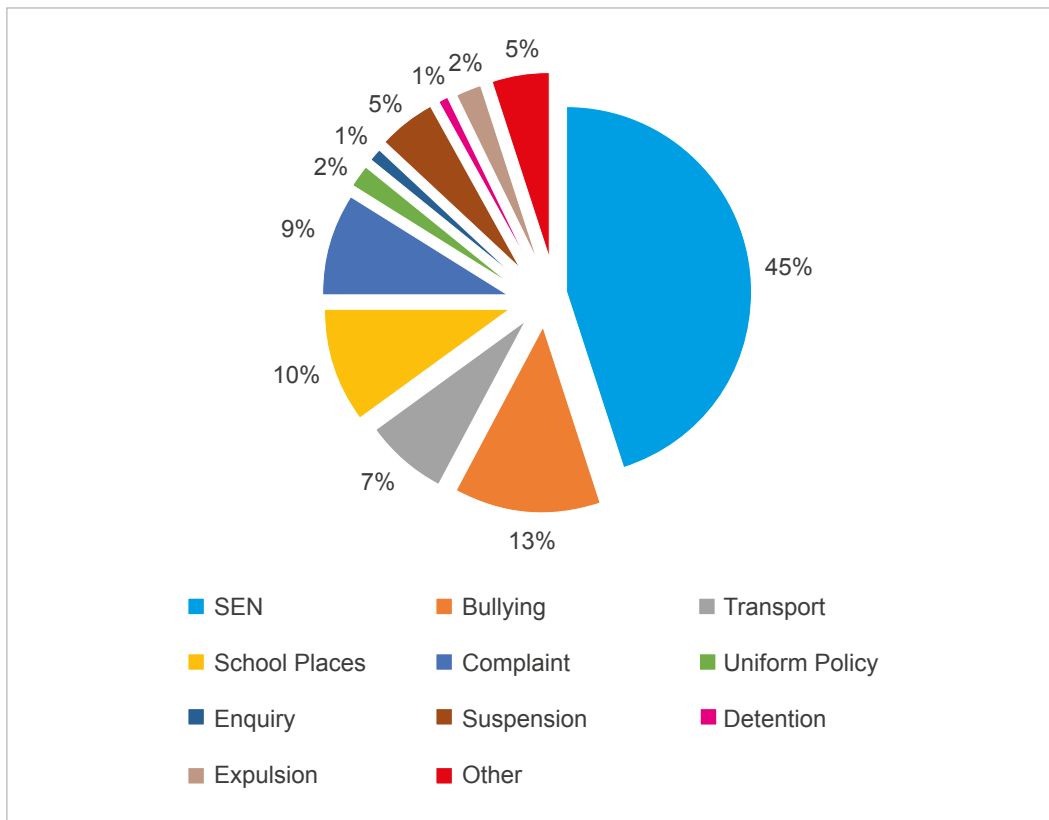
We received a small number of complaints about housing issues, which involve children. Some of these we could address but others we signposted to Housing Rights.

We occasionally received complaints which related to the actions of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). We cannot deal with these due to restrictions in our legislation which prohibits us from acting where there is an existing statutory complaints mechanism in place, so we referred these matters on to the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

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.

Our legal team also 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 Needs

It can be seen from the pie chart above, Special Educational Needs (SEN) continues to be the largest area within the education enquiries.

We continue to offer advice in this area and have developed a 'Guide to Special Educational Needs' for parents, which is available on our website. We offer representation at Special Educational Needs Disability Tribunals (SENDIST). We have had a large number of Tribunal cases this year and will continue to offer this service to assist parents and carers through a complex system.

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

#### Bullying

These enquiries encompassed complaints about bullying by peers and in some cases by teachers. The types of bullying ranged from allegations of physical, verbal, social and cyber bullying. We directed clients to the school bullying policy and advised them to arrange a meeting with the school if they had not already done so. We also assisted complainants in accessing the school complaints mechanisms and worked with the client and the school to attempt to find a satisfactory resolution to the matter.

### **School Placements**

Our enquiries around school places rose from **5.5% last year to 10% 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 and guidance around the appeals process.

### **School Transport**

Enquiries around school transport increased from **6% last year to 7%** of all education enquiries this year. We engaged regularly with EA Transport Officers and parents to attempt to resolve issues for children in this area.

### **School Suspensions**

Enquiries in relation to school suspensions and expulsions dropped from **8% to 5%** 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 to challenge the decisions, in finding a new school place or get home tuition put in place, if appropriate.

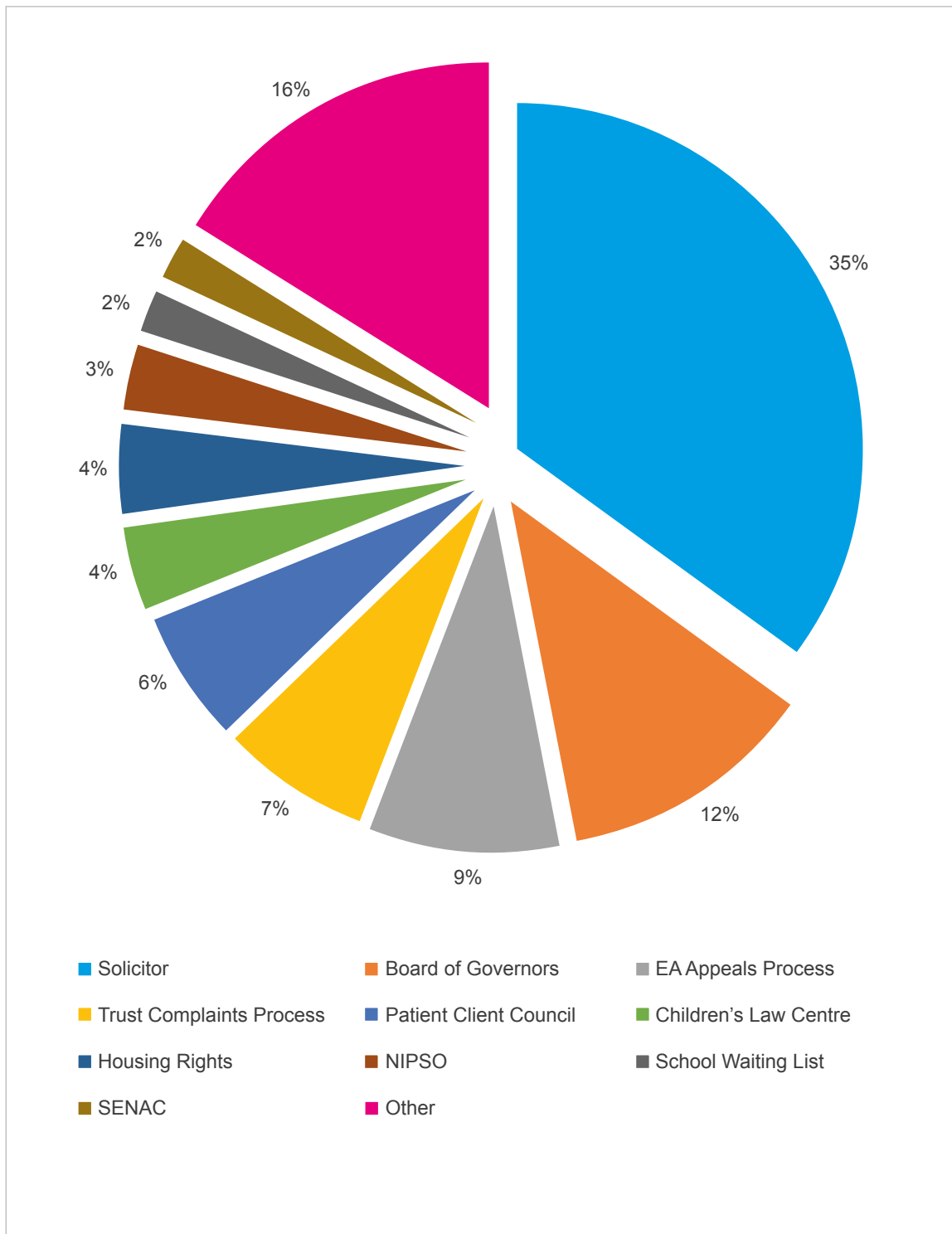
### **Other**

The remainder of our education enquiries fell into this category, as they did not come under any of the headings above.



## SIGNPOSTING

## Signposting 2018-'19



In 2018/19 we signposted 99 enquiries to other agencies as we were unable to assist with the enquiry due to restrictions in our legislative remit which prevents us from acting in certain matters. For example, where there is another statutory complaints mechanism available or where there is no relevant authority involved.

Of these 99 enquiries, the majority were signposted to solicitors in private practice as they related to private law matters of children's contact with non-resident parents and questions of residence, both of which are outside our remit. While these are clearly children's rights cases as the child in these matters has a right to family life, we cannot become involved in these matters. This is even though the right to family life may be engaged, as our powers relate to complaints about the actions of relevant authorities only.

The remainder were signposted to other relevant agencies and organisations as appropriate, whose remit specifically covers the area of complaint such as Housing Rights, NIPSO, CLC and SENAC.



## CASEWORK EXAMPLES



## Interventions

### ► **Case Study 1:**

NICCY were contacted by the Solicitors acting for two young people aged 16 and 17 who had been placed in a hotel and Bed and Breakfast accommodation by the Trust as part of their bail conditions. The young people did not feel that the accommodation they were placed in was suitable to their needs given their young age and the additional vulnerabilities that they experienced. They had issued Judicial Review proceedings against the Trust. The Judge had asked that we be contacted to ascertain whether we would consider intervening in the case as a third party intervener. We sought, and were granted leave to intervene in the case. We produced a written submission to the Judge setting out arguments based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments. In the written judgment the Court thanked us for our helpful submission and while it declined to find that the accommodation was not suitable per se, it did set out guidance for the Trust about the suitability of accommodation for 16-17 year olds which we feel will be helpful in future cases.

## Alleged Assault on Pupil by Teacher

### ► **Case Study 2:**

We were contacted by the mother of a 7-year-old girl. The child alleged that the Principal of the school assaulted her. The Principal was suspended pending the police investigation. A decision was taken that the Principal should not be prosecuted and was due to return to the school. The parent and child were very concerned about the Principal's return to the school and the emotional impact that would have on the child. NICCY contacted the Child Protection Service for Schools within the Education Authority (EA) to discuss the matter and then spoke with the Acting Principal in order to agree a way forward, which would minimise the impact on the child and allow her to return to the school safely. Following these discussions, the child was able to return and felt safe within the school.

## Bus Pass

### ► **Case Study 3:**

We were contacted by the mother of an 11-year-old girl. She had been attending her nearest secondary school but she was being bullied, and her parents made the decision to move her to a different school. The parents sought a bus pass from the Education Authority as the new school was some distance away, they were initially refused on the basis that she was not attending her closest school. NICCY advised the mother to gather evidence from the previous school about the bullying and we assisted her to appeal the decision to refuse the bus pass. The result was that the bus pass was granted and the child was able to start in her new school where she settled well.

## SEN And Suspensions

### ► **Case Study 4:**

We were contacted by the mother of a 12-year-old boy who had special educational needs, but did not have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The child had been suspended from school on five occasions and the school had indicated that they were going to consider expelling him due to his behaviour. We advised the mother that she should request that the EA conduct a Statutory Assessment of her son. This was granted and we guided the mother through the complete process, including advising her on the detail of the provision within the Statement when it was produced. As a result of our input, the mother was able to navigate the special educational needs process and the child received the provision he required and was able to continue in the school without being expelled.

## SEN and SENDIST

### ► **Case Study 5:**

We were contacted by the mother of a 6-year-old boy who had diagnoses of Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). He was having difficulties in school and his mother was extremely concerned for his mental health. The mother had been liaising with the school in relation to this, but unfortunately, the school had not prioritised the child for assessment by the Educational Psychologist. We advised the mother that she had the right to make a parental request for Statutory Assessment, which she did, and the request for assessment was refused. On behalf of the child, and on the instruction of the mother, we then issued an appeal to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST). The appeal was registered and we then produced a robust case statement setting out the case on behalf of the child, making reference to the professional reports which were provided by his Paediatrician and Occupational Therapist. On the basis of the strength of the argument put forward by us in the case statement the EA conceded the case and agreed that the child would have a Statutory Assessment. The result of our intervention in this matter was that the child received all of the provision he needed to assist him in school without having to have the case heard before the Tribunal.

▶ **Case Study 6:**

NICCY were contacted by the father of a 10-year-old girl who had diagnoses of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Dyslexia. She was having extreme difficulties in school and the parents had sought a Statutory Assessment of her needs. This had been refused by the EA. We assisted the father to appeal this and produced a case statement which set out clearly the need for the child to be assessed, and thereafter for provision to be made for her needs. The EA conceded the appeal on receipt of our case statement and agreed to conduct the assessment. When the assessment was completed, the EA issued a statement and we were able to advise the parents as to changes which needed to be made to ensure that it fully met the child's needs. The result was that the child got the provision that she needed in a timelier manner than if she had to proceed through the Tribunal process.

▶ **Case Study 7:**

An organisation contacted us who had been representing a number of clients in appeals to the SENDIST. Due to unforeseen staffing issues they were no longer able to offer representation to the clients and they asked whether we could assist. We agreed to take on the cases. One such case was transferred to us and there was an imminent deadline for a case statement. We reviewed the papers and assessed that the majority of the reports were out of date. We contacted the child's school and arranged for some updated information to be sent to us and based on this information we drafted the case statement setting out clearly the reasons why the child was entitled to a Statutory Assessment of his special educational needs. Thereafter the EA conceded this appeal and agreed to assess the child. The result was that the child's needs were assessed and thereafter provided under a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

## SEN And Representation

### ► **Case Study 8:**

NICCY were passed a case from another organisation which was due for hearing before the SENDIST. When we reviewed the papers, we were not confident that the appeal would be successful and we advised the mother of this. We suggested that it may be more appropriate to try to agree a number of measures with the school instead of proceeding with the hearing. Nevertheless, the mother wanted us to proceed to the hearing of the case and we agreed to represent her. On the morning of the hearing the Chair of the Tribunal asked that the issues be narrowed to three key areas and we sought some time to negotiate in order to try to reach a resolution. We were able to agree some matters for the child which we were satisfied would meet his needs. One matter remained contentious and the Tribunal heard the mother's and father's concerns in relation to other issues and subsequently dismissed the appeal. Whilst this Tribunal hearing was unsuccessful, we were able to put in place a robust plan to assist the child going forward, that was agreed by the school and the parents.

## Expulsion

### ► **Case Study 9:**

NICCY were contacted by the mother of a 15-year-old girl who had been repeatedly suspended from school. She had a diagnosis of ADHD and was undergoing treatment for mental health issues and substance misuse issues. The school moved to expel the girl and the mother wanted some guidance as to how she could best represent her at the meetings during the expulsion process and thereafter how should could appeal if the expulsion was granted. We made contact with the school to discuss all aspects of the case and agreed a way forward which allowed the young person to return to school, on a limited basis, pending a decision being made in relation to her expulsion. We assisted the mother by drafting key points for her to put forward at the meeting and advised her throughout the process. The Governors of the school decided to expel the girl and we advised the mother about her rights to appeal the decision and the process around this. As a result of our involvement in the case the girl's absence from school was minimised and her rights were advocated for at all of the meetings pertaining to her expulsion.

## **Bus Overcrowding**

### **► Case Study 10:**

NICCY were contacted by a number of concerned parents of children who got a bus to school. They were worried about overcrowding on the bus and the children's safety as a result. NICCY engaged with the transport provider and was able to ensure that a swift resolution was found which met the needs of the children and ensured their safety.

## **Downs Syndrome and Education**

### **► Case Study 11:**

We were contacted by the mother of a 6-year-old girl who has Downs Syndrome. She attended a mainstream primary school and was academically very capable but sometimes became overwhelmed by the other pupils in her class. The school had put in place a number of measures to try to address this but her mother was concerned that instead of these helping that they were actually causing more difficulties with the child's integration and were leaving her isolated. The mother had arranged a meeting with the school to discuss the issues and she contacted us to discuss what the child should be entitled to so that she could ascertain whether her needs were being met. We explained the contents of her statement and how this should translate into provision. We gave her advice about the types of reasonable adjustments which the school would be required to make under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to ensure that the child was not less favourably treated as a result of her condition. Armed with this knowledge, the parent was able to negotiate a number of adjustments with the school which would help her daughter but would also ensure that her integration in the class was not compromised. In this case, while we did not engage directly with the school we were still able to have a positive impact for the child by empowering the parent and advising her of the child's rights.

## **Bullying by Teacher of Pupil**

### **► Case Study 12:**

NICCY were contacted by the mother of a 15-year-old girl who has a diagnosis of ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder). The mother contacted us as her daughter had been having difficulty in school and in particular, she had alleged that one teacher was bullying her. She had covertly recorded the teacher shouting at her in an aggressive and demeaning manner. We advised the mother that she needed to make the Principal aware of the issue and make a formal complaint using the school complaint process. We also conducted a casework investigation of the matter under Article 12 of our legislation. We wrote to the school and asked them to account to us and explain what action they had taken to ensure that this matter was robustly investigated, and that the child would be safeguarded within the school. The school provided us with details and assurances in relation to the future safeguarding of this child and indeed all children in the school.

## **Medical Condition Affecting Education**

### **► Case Study 13:**

We assisted the family of a newcomer child. She was due to start school, however; she had been diagnosed with a medical condition which the school had no prior experience of. Matters were further complicated as only one member of the family spoke English, so communication was difficult. The school were not sure if this condition was contagious so they contacted the Education Authority for advice. The EA had not responded to the school and as a result, the child was unable to start school for some weeks until the school received confirmation that her condition would not be placing other pupils at risk. We also contacted the Education Authority to try to progress the matter. Subsequently the Public Health Agency were able to confirm that the child's condition posed no risk to other students and she was able to start school.

## **Mental Health Issues**

### **► Case Study 14:**

A young person contacted us regarding the secure facility he was a resident in. He had complaints about the type, and level, of treatment and the resources available to him within the secure facility. He felt that he was not being listened to and his thoughts and feelings were not being taken into account around many different matters pertaining to his care. NICCY made contact with those responsible for providing his care, including his parents, his social worker and the medical and support staff responsible for his treatment within the facility. The young person's views were conveyed to all involved and relevant changes were implemented.

## **Bullying and Mental Health**

### **► Case Study 15:**

A young person was subjected to homophobic bullying in her post primary school. Her Mother had arranged an appointment with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), as she was suffering from anxiety and sleep issues because of the bullying. The child's Mum had been in touch with the school frequently to report matters and to try to have the bullying stopped. She had not yet made a formal complaint through the school's complaint process. Due to the nature of the bullying and the impact on the young person, we conducted a casework investigation under Article 12 of our legislation and contacted the school. We asked what actions they had taken and measures they had put in place to ensure the safety of the young person. The parent also submitted a formal complaint to the Board of Governors, which ran concurrently with our investigation. The school provided a full explanation for their actions and before the conclusion of the formal complaint process, matters in school had resolved for the pupil. Our involvement resulted in the school reviewing the content and implementation of their policy which benefited the young person involved and all the other pupils.

### **► Case Study 16:**

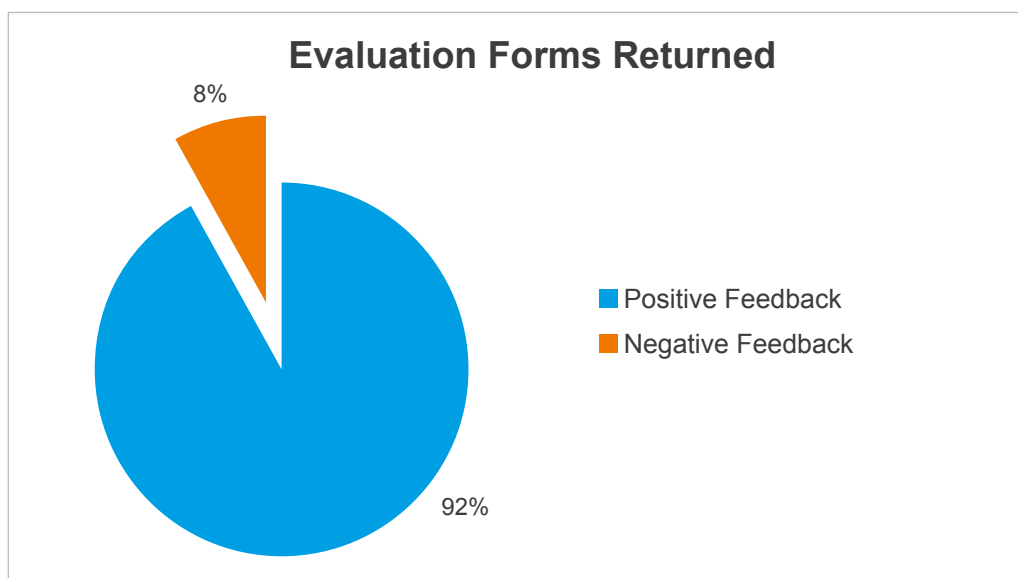
NICCY were contacted by the mother of a 12-year-old girl who had unfortunately made several attempts on her life. The family had attempted to have their daughter assessed for ADHD and anxiety over a period of over two years. Their daughter made a suicide attempt and the parents took her to the Family GP. Unfortunately, the GP sent a referral letter to CAMHS, as opposed to making an urgent phone call. The family contacted NICCY three days later because they had not heard anything from CAMHS. NICCY contacted CAMHS who advised that an appointment would be offered some nine weeks later. NICCY entered into detailed correspondence with CAMHS, highlighting that their approach was in breach of Trust policy, which stated that a next day appointment should have been offered. Eventually, NICCY advised CAMHS that the family had been advised to pursue Judicial Review of CAMHS' decision. An appointment was then offered for the following morning. The child has now received an appropriate diagnosis and is attending with CAMHS. NICCY advised the family to consider a complaint about the GP.



## **EVALUATION PROCESS**



When we close an enquiry, we issue an evaluation form to each client by either email or hard copy. Feedback can be, and frequently is, returned anonymously.



Of the return this year, almost 92% contained positive feedback, with individual staff and indeed our service as a whole being praised.

The following are a selection of comments:

*“They were very helpful from the onset.”*

*“Excellent support received. EA issued a statement for my son. A fantastic service which was highly appreciated.”*

*“The service was excellent.”*

*“The person I spoke to was lovely and gave me good advice. I was extremely satisfied with the service I received.”*

*“Right from my first call I was treated with respect and listened to.”*

*“Very helpful, friendly and caring.”*

We welcome positive feedback and comments, as we know these reflect the experience of the vast majority of our clients. In the event that we receive negative feedback, this is taken very seriously, and we seek to use it constructively in order to improve our service, and to identify any training needs, if necessary.

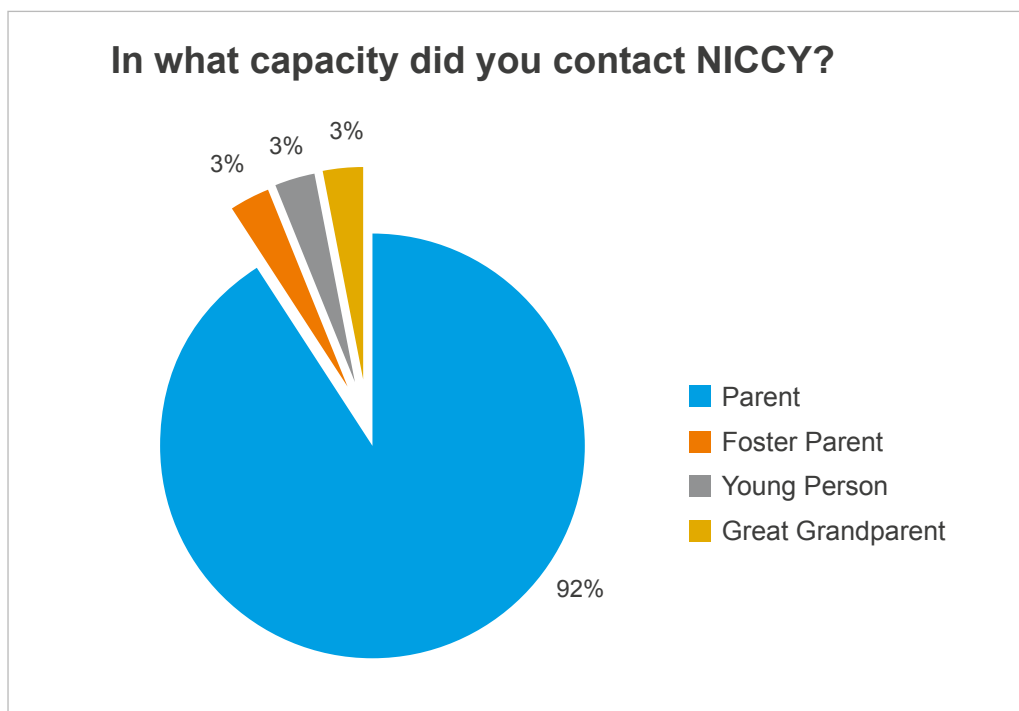
All feedback is reviewed within both the team and by our Chief Executive, with a view to commending staff, where positive, and learning, where negative.

Within the 2018/19 business year, it was identified that the source of negative feedback came from frustrations felt because of our remit restrictions which prevented us from being able to assist clients, and not with our service, per se. Nonetheless, we always attempt to provide initial advice to the client and signpost them to the most appropriate agency.

The restrictions on our remit are an issue NICCY has addressed in reviews of the legislation and would hope to have changed. To this end we have been actively working towards this with previous and current Sponsor Bodies.

NB: See below for the evaluation questions used to glean useful information and data regarding the service provided.

### Question 1 Analysis

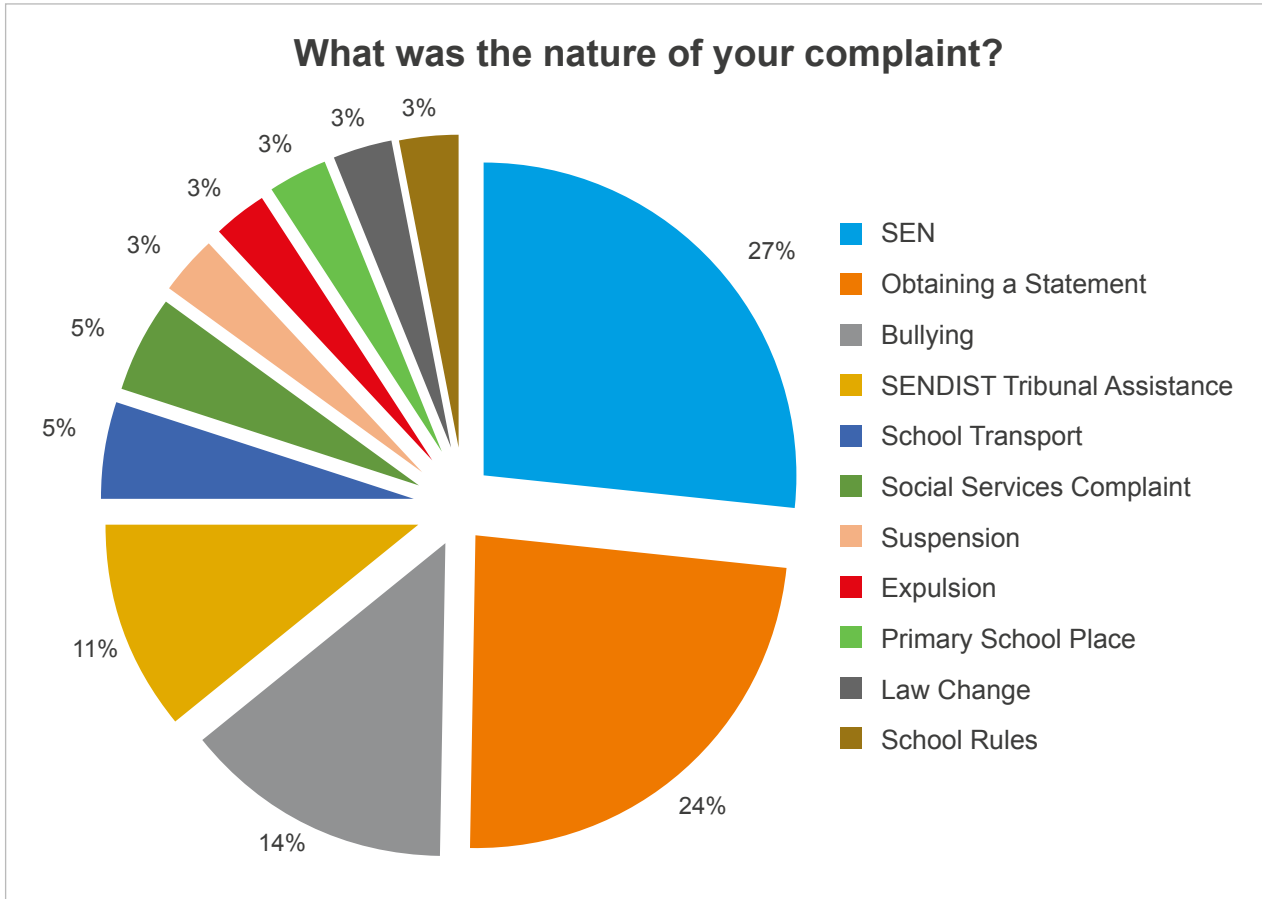


The vast majority of the evaluation forms that are returned to us are completed by parents and this is reflective of the fact that it is primarily parents who refer cases to us on behalf of their children.

However, we are keen to receive as much feedback from children and young people as possible. We always try to gauge their assessment of our service when we are speaking to them as, historically; we have found that children and young people are less likely to return evaluation forms. We also ensure that when we are speaking to a young person at the conclusion of their case, we remind them of our evaluation form or capture their feedback verbally if they wish to provide any.

## Question 2 Analysis

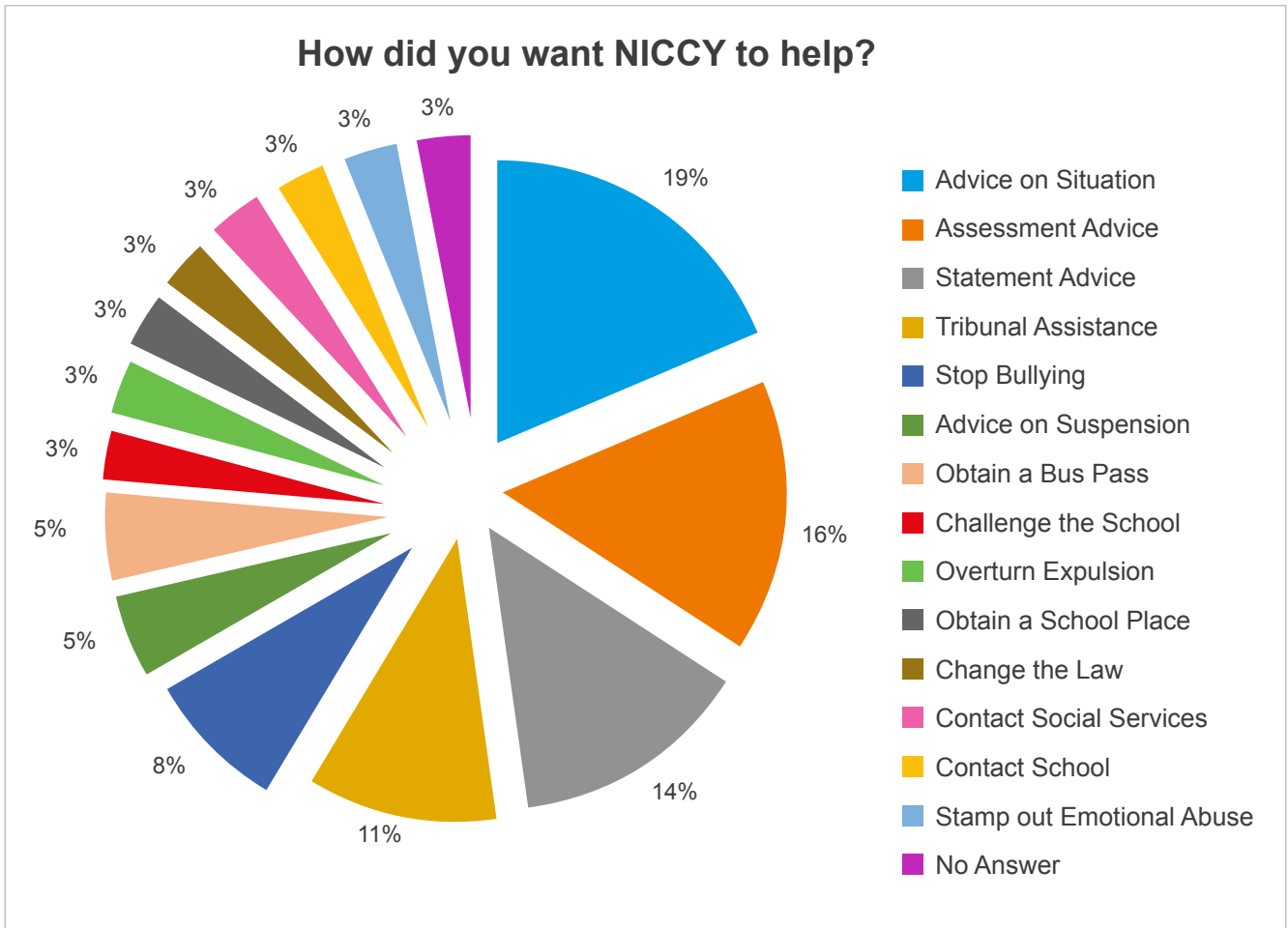
Question 2 establishes the reason for contacting NICCY.



The returned evaluation forms cover a wide range issues but as expected school and education issues are the majority. This reflects our casework which is dominated by education issues such as Special Educational Needs and Bullying.

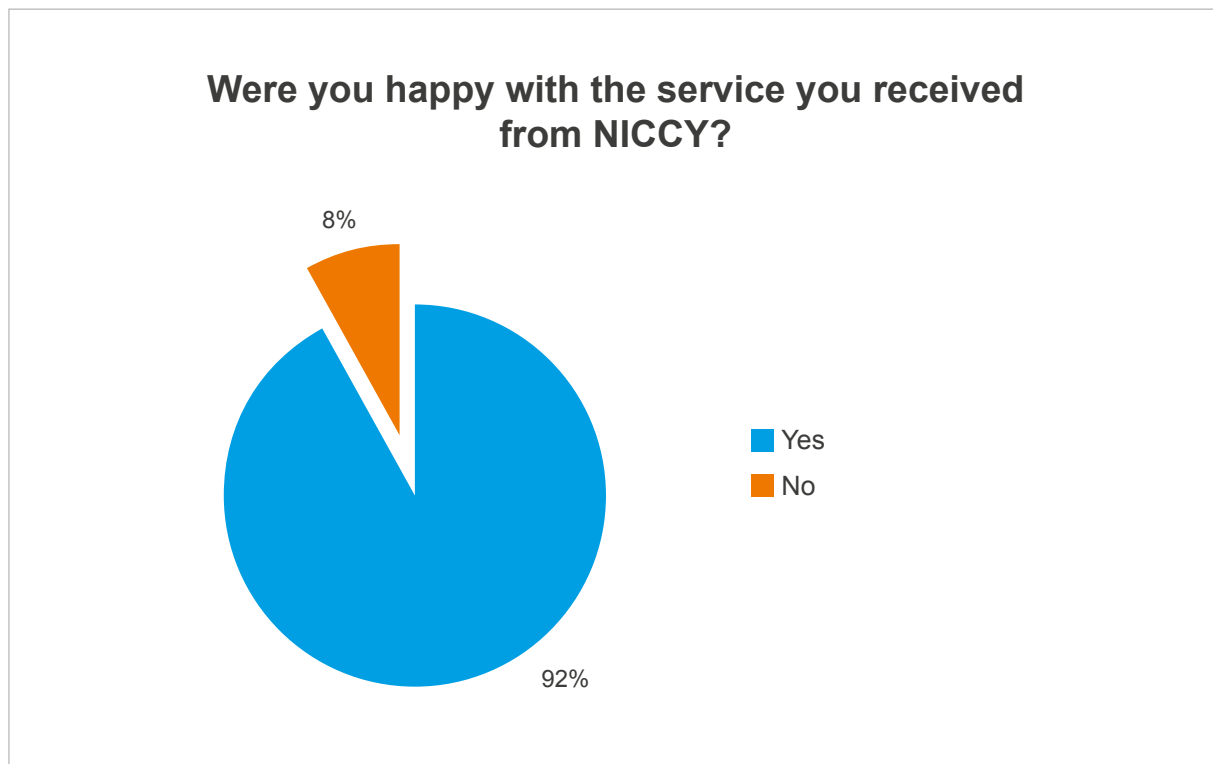
### Question 3 Analysis

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



This question is designed to help us understand what each client expects from us at the outset. The majority of people contact us with realistic requests for advice. We do however get enquiries from people that are unaware of how we work and the limitations of our remit. These enquiries can result with a dissatisfied client or an outcome that is less than they expected if we are unable to assist due to our remit restrictions. We always try to carefully manage client expectations from the outset to try to prevent such outcomes.

## Question 4 Analysis



As set out above, the vast majority of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with our service. Where there was dissatisfaction this could, in the main, be attributed to frustrations regarding our remit rather than any true complaint about the standard or quality of our service.



## **GOING FORWARD**

As an Independent Human Rights Organisation (IHRI), NICCY keeps under review the operation and delivery of the complaints / casework service provided, to improve and enhance if/where possible. Complaints received and subsequently our casework numbers are growing year on year, and we are aware of their increasing complexity, it is incumbent on us therefore to ensure that our clients continue to receive timely, accurate, effective, professional advice and resolution.

We remain absolutely committed to assisting children, young people and their parents or carers with complaints via our casework service and Investigations conducted each year. We have seen that our approach assists children and young people, both individually and collectively, by bringing about positive change in the provision of services and practice overall on the part of responsible relevant authorities. We also continue to represent children and young people at Tribunals.

NICCY's Legal and Investigations Team will continue in their work to resolve complaints at the earliest stage (insofar as this is possible), while at the same time, supporting children and young people and referrers<sup>1</sup> throughout the range of processes involved in investigating complaints and achieving successful outcomes.

<sup>1</sup> Referral sources of complaints include parents, carers, guardians as well as statutory agencies and individuals.



**You can contact the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People using the following details:**

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Commissioner  
for Children and  
Young People**

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BT2 7DP

**T:** 028 9031 1616  
**E:** [legalteam@niccy.org](mailto:legalteam@niccy.org)  
**W:** [www.niccy.org](http://www.niccy.org)  
**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/  
nichildrenscommissioner](https://www.facebook.com/nichildrenscommissioner)  
**Instagram:** [niccy\\_yp](https://www.instagram.com/niccy_yp)  
**Twitter:** [@NICildCom](https://twitter.com/NICildCom)

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PROMOTING THE RIGHTS OF  
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

**Please contact the Communications team at NICCY if you require alternative formats of this material.**