



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
– 2 SEPTEMBER 2025

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE STATUTORY COMPLAINTS AND
COMPLIMENTS ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a summary of the Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report for 2024/25.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 sets out the policy framework against which children's social care complaints should be considered.
3. Local authorities must, each financial year, publish an Annual Report (Regulation 13(3)).

Background

4. The Complaints Team, which sits within the Corporate Resources Department of the County Council, manage and co-ordinate complaints relating to three separate complaints systems:
 - a) Adult Social Care - a statutory process.
 - b) Children's Social Care – a statutory process.
 - c) Corporate Complaints – a non-statutory process, which considers complaints relating to other services provided by the Council and where there is no other form of redress.
5. The Children and Family Services Department is contacted daily by service users, carers and other parties with concerns or requests for information. These queries are dealt with at a local level within care teams or through the Director's office without recourse to the formal complaints process. The complaints team do, on occasion, also receive queries and concerns that suggest a child or young person may require immediate support or which raise safeguarding concerns. Such reports are best handled outside of the formal complaints procedure and are referred into the First Response team or allocated workers for urgent consideration as appropriate.

6. The Annual Report for Children's Social Care is appended to the report and provides a summary of the statistical information and headline issues emerging from the analysis of complaints activity for 2024/25.
7. Also appended is the Corporate Complaints Annual Report for 2024/25 and analysis is included of complaints about Children and Family Services. This is to allow the Committee to scrutinise and further explore all the departmental areas highlighted in both reports.

Summary of the Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 24/25

Case Volume

8. The number of statutory complaints received in 2024/25 were as follows:
 - 41 complaints considered at Stage 1, compared to 42 in 2023/24
 - 4 complaints considered at Stage 2, compared to 7 in 2023/24
 - 3 complaints considered at Stage 3, compared to 3 in 2023/24
9. When examining these complaint volumes, it is important to consider the broader operational landscape to contextualise the proportionality of concerns raised. Complaints as a percentage of the number of 24/25 referrals to Children's Social Care (Table 2 of Annual Report) is 0.7%, demonstrating only a small number go on to make a statutory complaint.
10. Analysis of the complaints received show the main areas complained about were staff conduct / customer care and poor communication. These were very often interlinked.
11. During the year, two complaints were received directly from children or young people. The Complaints Manager continues to have good links with Children's Rights Officers. This is to ensure and validate that young people are not blocked in any way from accessing the formal complaints procedure.
12. It is important to note that some complaints regarding Children's Social Care are not considered through the statutory procedure. The Council follows guidance from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in determining such cases. This can be either because the complainant is not eligible, or the subject matter falls outside of the scope of the statutory procedure.
13. The Council considered 168 complaints under the Corporate Complaints Procedure; a significant increase from the previous year (129). The majority being Child Protection matters.
14. Taking this all into consideration, the overall number of complaints saw an increase of 19% as shown below.

Reporting Year	Statutory Complaints	Corporate Complaints	Total
2023-24	52	129	181
2024-25	48	168	216

Stage Escalations

15. The number of complaints escalating to Stage 2 reduced this year by 3. As a percentage of Stage 1 complaints this equates to an escalation rate of **10%**, slightly down from the previous year (**17%**).
16. There were three complainants who requested escalation to Stage 3 after completing Stage 2.

Statutory Complaints Performance

17. **56%** of Stage 1 cases were responded to within the maximum limit of 20 working days, this compares to **61%** in the previous year.
18. There are often good reasons why complaints exceed 20 working days to resolve, for example complexity or meetings being arranged. Whilst personal contact is positive and should be encouraged, statutory guidance makes clear this does not “stop the clock” in terms of the 20-working day deadline.
19. Timescales for Stage 2 complaints also improved during the year with three of the completed investigations being concluded within the statutory timescale of 65 working days.
20. The Council has continued to manage Stage 2 investigations through an in house “arms-length” investigator. This is helping with response timescales but more crucially with quality of reports and reducing un-necessary escalation.
21. Two of the three Stage 3 review panels held were convened and responded to within statutory timescales. The remaining case was delayed by the complainant’s availability to attend a panel hearing.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Performance

22. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman **received 73 enquiries relating to Education & Children Services, of which 19 were Upheld. 12 of the Upheld cases were recorded as ‘fault and injustice’ and a summary of these is included within the Annual Report. No Public Reports were issued.**

Financial Implications

23. Financial redress payments totalling £5,200 were made this year along with recommendations to review policies and procedures, strengthen complaint handling and take steps to improve record keeping and documenting key conversations with partner organisations.

Compliments

24. The Council received six compliments; this is a decrease from the previous year (18). The Complaints Team continue to remind managers of the importance of recognising and sharing positive feedback, which bring balance to the annual report. **A selection of compliments received is included within the Annual Report.**

Learning from Complaints

25. There is good evidence of learning from complaints at a local level with upheld complaints having clearly articulated actions to improve wider performance over and above resolving the individual issues.

Resource Implications

26. The Annual Report outlines that the costs incurred through the statutory complaint's procedure were £9,300; **a decrease of £3,450** from the previous year (£12,750).
27. This, together with improved consistency of reports, evidences the expected benefits from the department continuing to fund a full-time complaints investigator.
28. Other improvement activity will be carried out within existing resources and therefore there are no resource implications.
29. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on this report.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

30. The Children and Family Services Department supports vulnerable children and young people from across all communities in Leicestershire. Complaints and compliments are a way of ensuring that service responses are fair and equitable to all. This report does not highlight any specific equal opportunities implications.

Background Papers

Report to Scrutiny Commission: 10 June 2024 – Annual Corporate Complaints and Compliments Report 2023/2024:

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=7444&Ver=4>

Circulation under the Local Alert Issues Procedure

None.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Childrens Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments: Annual Report 2024-25

Appendix B – Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2024-25

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