

Brief Summary of the Corporate Complaint and Compliments Annual Report

Compliments

1. 393 compliments received in 2024/25 (down 7% - 422). Libraries, Heritage & Museums accounted for 57% (393) of all compliments, showing continued high public appreciation for these services.

Corporate Complaints – cases received

2. 1,287 corporate complaints were received (down 12%). Top departments for complaints received: Children & Family Services (CFS) and Environment & Transport (E&T).

Performance

3. The five service areas with the highest volume of closed complaints in 2024/2025 were:
 - SENA (446 cases closed)
 - School and SEN Transport (132 cases closed)
 - Child Protection (120 cases closed)
 - Drainage (73 cases closed)
 - Child in Need (51 cases closed)
4. The Annual Report highlights work within the SENA service to continue to improve communication and the duration of the needs assessment.

Stage 1 response times

5. During 2024/2025, the percentage of complaints responded to within 10 and 20 working days decreased from the previous year. However, 93% were responded to within 40 working days, which is the maximum recommended response time by the ombudsman. This is an improvement from 2023/2024 (90%). There remain some pressures particularly around SEN complaints which has affected overall response timescales.

The breakdown is as follows:

- 44% of all complaints received a response within 10 working days.
- 71% received a response within 20 working days.
- 93% received a response within the maximum 40 working days.

Escalation to stage 2 and response times

6. If a complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of stage 1, they may request further consideration of their complaint. Such requests will be considered under stage 2 of the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

7. In 2024/2025 75 complaints escalated to stage 2 (a 6% decrease from 23/24), this escalation profile has, positively, had a decreasing trajectory since 2022/2023 (see below for figures). This means fewer complainants have requested a stage 2 review year on year.
 - 2024/2025 75 escalations
 - 2023/2024 80 escalations
 - 2022/2023 82 escalations
8. Of stage 2 complaints, 51% received a response within 20 working days. This has decreased from 2023/24 (61%).

Brief Summary of the Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report

Compliments

9. 278 compliments were recorded, a decrease from 313 the previous year. The actual number may be higher, as not all compliments are centrally recorded. Compliments highlight positive experiences with staff, support during difficult times, and effective service delivery.

Complaint Volumes

10. 317 complaints were received in 2024/25, a 14% decrease from the previous year (369 in 2023/24), following a significant increase the year before.
11. Of the 317 social care statutory complaints that were received, there were 280 unique complainants with 13 raising more than one unrelated complaint. There were 2 complainants who, each, raised 5 unrelated complaints.
12. During the year 2024-25, one complaint was considered using the Joint Complaints protocol.

Cause of complaint

13. The most frequent causes recorded were quality of work (including home and residential care), poor communication, and delays in providing services. Complaints about customer care/conduct dropped by 35%, showing improvement in staff interactions. Please note recording allows for multiple causes to be selected.
14. 42% (143) complaints were upheld. This is a slight decrease on the previous year (50%).

Responsiveness and Outcomes

Stage 1

15. Response times for stage 1 cases has remained steady, with 65% responded to within 20 w/ds and 92% within 40 w/ds.

Stage 2

16. 38 complaints requested escalation to stage 2 of the Council's local process for review by a senior manager. This is an increase (9/31%) from 2023/24 (29).
17. 51% of stage 2 cases were responded to within 20 w/ds, which is down from 90% in 23/24.

Summary of the Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Report

Case Volume

18. 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
19. 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.
20. Analysis of the complaints received show the main areas complained about were staff conduct / customer care and poor communication. These were very often interlinked.
21. 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.
22. It is important to note that some complaints regarding Childrens 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.
23. The Council considered 168 complaints under the Corporate Complaints Procedure; a significant increase from the previous year (129). The majority being Child Protection matters.
24. 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

25. 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%).
26. There were three complainants who requested escalation to Stage 3 after completing Stage 2.

Statutory Complaints Performance

27. 56% of Stage 1 cases were responded to within the maximum limit of 20 working days, this compares to 61% in the previous year.
28. 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.
29. 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.
30. 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.
31. 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.

Compliments

32. 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.