



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
1 SEPTEMBER 2026

CHILDRENS SOCIAL CARE STATUTORY COMPLAINTS AND
COMPLIMENTS ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Committee with a summary of the complaints and compliments received in respect of children's social care services commissioned or provided by the Children's and Family Service during 2025- 26. The Annual Report is appended to this report.

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 this report and provides a summary of the statistical information and headline issues emerging from the analysis of complaints activity for 2025/26.
7. In addition to the social care report, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee will be provided with the Corporate Complaint Report 25/26. This is to allow the Committee to scrutinise and further explore all the departmental areas highlighted in both reports.

Childrens Social Care Statutory Complaints received and outcomes.

8. 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.
9. The number of statutory complaints received in 2025/26 were as follows:
 - 46 complaints considered at Stage 1, compared to 41 in 2024/25
 - 11 complaints considered at Stage 2, compared to 4 in 2024/25
 - 1 complaints considered at Stage 3, compared to 3 in 2024/25
10. The Council considered 183 complaints under the Corporate Complaints Procedure; a significant increase from the previous year (168). The majority being Child Protection matters. Taking this all into consideration, the overall number of complaints saw an increase of 8.9% as shown below.

Reporting Year	Statutory Complaints	Corporate Complaints	Total
2023-24	52	129	181
2024-25	48	168	216
2025-2026	58	183	241

11. While social care complaints have increased, this should be viewed in the context of a corresponding increase in service activity. Social care related complaints (statutory and corporate) as a percentage of the number of 25/26 referrals to Children's Social Care is 0.6% (0.7% in 24/25), demonstrating only a small number go on to make a statutory complaint and that complaint volumes have not risen at the same rate as referrals.
12. Analysis of the statutory social care complaints decided show the main areas complained about were poor level of service or service failure.
13. 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.

Stage Escalations

14. The number of stage 2 complaints in 25/26 is 46 (41), an increase of 8. As a percentage of Stage 1 complaints this equates to an escalation rate of 24%, an increase from the previous year (10%).
15. There was one complainant who requested escalation to Stage 3 after completing Stage 2.

Statutory Complaints Performance

16. 46% of Stage 1 cases were responded to within the maximum limit of 20 working days, this compares to 56% in the previous year.
17. 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.
18. Timescales for Stage 2 complaints also improved during the year with 7 of the completed investigations being concluded within the statutory timescale of 65 working days.
19. 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.
20. The Stage 3 review panel was held and responded to within statutory timescales.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Performance

21. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman received 63 enquiries relating to Education & Children Services, of which 17 were Upheld. No Public Reports were issued.

Compliments

22. The Council received 20 compliments; this is an increase from the previous year (6). The Complaints Team continue to remind managers of the importance of recognising and sharing positive feedback, which bring balance to the annual report.

Learning from Complaints

23. 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

Recommendations

24. The Committee is asked to:

- a) Note the Children's Social Care Complaints Annual Report, covering the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026
- b) Provide comment and feedback on the content and analysis within the report

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Childrens Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments: Annual Report 2025-26

Appendix B – Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2025-26

Officers to contact

Chelsea O'Neill
Complaints and Information Manager
Corporate Resources Department
Tel: 0116 305 6243
Email: Chelsea.oneill@leics.gov.uk