

# CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



Report subject	<b>Children's Services Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2024-25</b>
Meeting date	15 September 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	To provide an update on the compliments, complaints and representations made to BCP Council about Children's Services during 2024-25.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p><b>It is RECOMMENDED that:</b></p> <p>1. The Committee agree that this report is published on the Council's website.</p>
Reason for recommendations	Local authorities must publish an annual report of its consideration of representations under their statutory responsibilities The Children Act (1989).
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Richard Burton, Portfolio Holder for Children & Young People, Education and Skills
Corporate Director	Cathi Hadley, Corporate Director, Children's Services
Report Authors	Teresa Salmon, Children Complaints Manager
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

## Background

1. Getting the Best from Complaints (DfES 2006).

## **Options Appraisal**

2. Local authorities must publish an annual report of its consideration of representations under their statutory responsibilities The Children Act (1989).

## **Summary of financial implications**

3. Financial payments can be made as a result of a complaint if this redress is considered appropriate. Any costs in this respect are accepted as the responsibility of the relevant service against which the complaint is made. Financial redress can be offered at any point within the process if identified or can be recommended by the Ombudsman.

## **Summary of legal implications**

4. The Statutory foundation for the Children's Social Care Services Complaints Procedures are The Local Authority Social Services Act (1970), The Children Act (1989), The Children Act (2004), The Human Rights Act (1998), The Adoption and Children Act (2002) and The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (2006). Local authorities must publish an annual report of its consideration of representations under that framework. Alongside this, government guidance is also relevant including Getting the Best from Complaints (DfES 2006), Get It Sorted (DfES 2004) and the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Page 2 of 26 Regulations Vol 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (2010).

## **Summary of human resources implications**

5. None.

## **Summary of sustainability impact**

6. None

## **Summary of public health implications**

7. None

## **Summary of equality implications**

8. No equalities implications, as the processes followed by the Complaints Team ensure that service users are treated equally. Many of the service users of children's services will be vulnerable, or from potentially disadvantaged groups. The complaints process is a vital part of the council's quality assurance function to ensure all service users receive fair treatment and reasonable adjustments. The Complaints and Compliments Service ensures complainant's individual requirements are supported, for example through interpreting services or by appointing an independent investigator with a specialist background or knowledge.

## **Summary of risk assessment**

9. The Complaints and Compliments Service manages complex, high-risk complaints which if not effectively managed could result in scrutiny by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, Central Government, Ofsted, or through the courts via judicial review. The implications of this scrutiny could negatively affect the Council's reputation and result in major financial costs. Practice issue complaints can include elements of safeguarding which require effective management and proactive action. The Complaints and Compliments Service must be able to recognise these issues when they arise within a complaint context and action them appropriately.

## **Background papers**

10. None

## **Appendices**

Appendix A - Children Services Annual Report on Compliments and Complaints 2024-25

Appendix B – Infographics Children’s Services Compliments & Complaints

Appendix C – Infographics Children’s Services Compliments

# Children Services

## Annual Report on Compliments and Complaints

**2024 - 2025**

## **1. Purpose**

Every Local Authority with a responsibility for Social Care Services is required to provide an annual report into the operation of the complaints and representations procedures. This report provides information relating to all compliments, representations and statutory and non-statutory complaints received in respect of Children's Services during the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.

This annual report complies with the statutory requirement for Children's Social Care complaints. It is produced in accordance with the DfES guidance 'Getting the Best from Complaints' which reflects the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

## **2. Overview of Complaints Procedure**

The procedures for Children's complaints are determined by legislation, predominantly involving the: -

- Children Act 1989, Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006
- The Children & Adoption Act 2002 and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

However, some complaints fall outside the statutory process. This is where the complainant does not meet the requirements to be considered under the statutory process, e.g. a grandparent who does not have parental responsibility makes a complaint about contact arrangements, someone is unhappy with regard to the conduct of an officer not directly connected to their child. In these cases, the complaint is dealt with under the two stage corporate complaint process. All complaints received are included in this report.

Children's Services is committed to a positive and proactive approach to complaints handling. Complaints are a mechanism for ensuring that the service area remains receptive to the need to make improvements to its practice standards and the quality of the services that it provides.

The key objective in the management of all complaints is to achieve appropriate and effective resolution within the shortest possible timescales, enabling the Directorate to:-

- Learn from complaints, comments and compliments, and to change, review or maintain practice and services accordingly.
- Ensuring that complaints and comments are properly recorded and acted upon, and that where necessary things that have gone wrong are put right promptly.

- Ensuring that staff and service users understand their rights, and responsibilities within the complaints process.
- Ensure that senior managers have a 'line of sight' into the quality of frontline practice.

Complaints are defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child or young person, which requires a response'. The statutory complaints procedure, which applies to complaints about social work, has 3 stages:

#### Stage 1 - Local Resolution

These complaints are responded to by the manager who is as close to the point of service delivery as possible.

#### Stage 2 - Formal investigation

At this stage a full and formal investigation is undertaken by an investigating officer (usually an external person) and an independent person. The investigations are adjudicated upon and are responded to by a senior manager within the Service.

#### Stage 3 - Review

A review panel meeting is held to review the processes conducted under Stages 1 and 2, with independent people sitting on the panel. The review is adjudicated and responded to by a Service Director within Children's Services.

If complainants remain dissatisfied at the end of Stage 3, or at any point if they feel that the complaint has not been dealt with correctly, they may refer the matter to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Complaints that are regarding the services provided outside of Children Social Care, or that do not qualify for the statutory complaints process, follow the Council's corporate process with 2 stages and then progression to the Ombudsman.

### **3. The Children Services Complaints and Compliments Team**

The Children's Services Complaints and Compliments Team was part of the Quality, Performance Improvement and Governance Service within Children Services during this reporting period. The team are responsible for the day-to-day operation and management of all complaints and compliments for Children's Services.

A substantial proportion of the complaints received can reasonably be described as complex, requiring significant time and effort from the area of service involved. The Complaints and Compliments Team works in partnership with Children's Services managers and offer support and guidance to try to provide a satisfactory resolution to the complainant. These efforts can, as appropriate, resolve complaints negating the need for escalation to Stage 2 of the complaints procedures.

#### 4 Complaints and Representations Information

Stage One complaints decreased overall by 4% compared to the previous reporting year. SEND related complaints increased by 21% and Children Social Care complaints decreased by 21% compared to the previous reporting year. There was an increase of 17% in the number of compliments recorded compared to the previous reporting year.

	Social Care	Quality Performance Improvement and Governance	SEND	Other Education and Skills	Cross Services	Other	TOTAL
<b>Compliments</b>	120	42	91	6	3	0	262
<b>Complaints</b>	143	4	161	28	25	6	367

During the year, 367 distinct complaint requests to the Council were made that were progressed through either the Statutory or Corporate complaints process. There were also 90 MP enquiries processed by the Complaints Team, an increase of 36% compared to the previous reporting year. In addition to this the Complaints Team have received a further 316 contacts where the issues raised were either resolved as a concern, another appeals process applied e.g. Court, Tribunal etc or the Council was not able to consider through the complaints process. This represented a decrease of 50% compared to the previous reporting year.

#### Compliments

Compliments are received from children and young people, parents, family members and other professionals both inside and outside of the Council.

Below is a sample of some of the compliments received for Children's Services:

### **From a Children's Guardian to the PLO & Court Team**

*Following my comments in X's LAC review today, I wanted to formally share my feedback.*

*I have been impressed with Andrew's work on this case. He has involved me in all meetings and decisions made along the way. I feel when he consults with me as X's Children's Guardian, he really listens to and takes on board my comments. It has been enormously helpful for my own enquiries to have such good communication with X's social worker.*

*From what I have seen, Andrew has put in a great deal of effort to engaging with the family network to create a safety plan for X that gives reunification the best possible chance of success. This has been a complex case and one that has at the outset presented a very concerning picture as to both parents' capacity to meet X's needs. To be in a position whereby we have a much more positive outlook is to Andrew's credit and the hard work he has put in.*

### **From an adopted adult to Aspire Adoption**

*My experience with Aspire in regards of searching for my adoption records was exemplary throughout. Jayne was absolutely fantastic at keeping me informed and guiding me through every stage of the process. Her clear understanding and empathy was greatly appreciated. She is an absolute credit to your team. Thanks again for all your help, especially to Jayne.*

### **From a kinship carer to the Fostering Team**

*X advised that Sam was brilliant, they could speak freely to her, and she was very supportive and helped them along the way. She looked forward to her visits and it was a positive experience.*

### **From a school to the Targeted Family Support Team**

*Just a quick email to say thank you for all the support you are giving to our families. I have been really impressed with the meetings I have attended and the plans in place for them. It's so refreshing to have someone who really cares and puts the families at the heart of what they do!*

### **From a parent to the SEND service**

*My daughter has Julie as her case worker. She is doing a great job. She is really helpful and she is responding the same day. We are very happy to have her as our case worker.*

### **From a parent to Early Help**

*I am writing to you regarding one of your Early Help Support workers - Charlotte.*

*I would like to convey my deepest gratitude and appreciation for her support throughout her time with me. She was professional at all times and she made my children trust her and feel that they could open up to her about their thoughts and feelings. Because of Charlotte my children now have much greater enthusiasm in their school life. She provided sound advice as well as excellent reports that are more than sufficient for any future use in court proceedings. She was very efficient in her dealings with other professional organizations.*



*I would be good to have Charlotte with us and we felt very well looked after. I would like Charlotte to be used as an example for all social workers.*

### **From a parent to the Inclusion Team**

*I just wanted to thank you, for your visit last week. My Husband and I could see ourselves, what great progress both X and Y had made with all aspects of their learning, especially in terms of confidence, engagement and most importantly enjoying their learning! I feel very validated by your comments, that my approach in supporting our children is working.*

*Thank you, for making the visit a comfortable one for X and Y. They both said how nice you were and they told my mum yesterday, how lovely the visit was and how proud they both felt, to show you all of their learning and creative work.*

### **From a family to Assessment Team 1**

*Hi Bex, I hope you are okay. Just to let you know we have finished read the assessment. It was huge, I'm just messaging to thank you so much for everything you done for us, meeting you was lovely, you are a really good human ♥ once again a BIG thank you*



### **From a young person and carer to the CHAD Team**

*I just wanted to say thank you from me and X for all your hard work with young people you support and X looks after. We feel that you have young people's best interest in your heart; you are a great support to them, their families, but also my foster carer; you keep everyone updated with any changes in the young person's life and their circumstances; your responses are prompt; you involve all professionals (including my foster carer!) in the young person's plans; you listen to X's worries and concerns and act upon them.*

*We would like to simply say that we value your professional attitude, support, and input.*

### **From a parent to CFF 1**

*Thank you everyone for your hard work, determination and support. L/L have really been a life saver for us as a family.*

*Looking forward to hearing from you.*

### **From a professional to the SEND service**

*I have just received X's EHCP and just wanted to leave you a compliment as it was written so well, you really took my points from the advice template and made them so much clearer than I was able to- thank you so much for that and I hope you're having a lovely half term 😊*

### **From a parent to the Children's Occupational Therapy Team**

*I'm sorry for the delay to this email but I really wanted to sit down properly and make sure I thank you all properly for the various parts you played in our house extension & new added bedroom.*

*Starting with lovely Hayley from our 1st call and meeting to our last you were always so kind and helpful with your ideas and suggestion.*

*You were the 1st person to get the ball rolling for this project and pushing it through for us.*

*I know it wasn't easy and I cannot thank you enough.*

### **From a young person to the CEYP 1 Team**

*The young person shared that Sasha is easy to get in contact with and he is very happy with the support that she is providing. He said that she really helped him with getting his visa, getting into college and playing football. He did not think that there was anything that she could do better than she already is.*

### **From a professional to the IRO service**

*Sam, you were an excellent Social worker when we worked alongside previously and as an IRO your young people are very lucky to have you as their IRO.*

*You are caring and kind in your practice and advocate for your young people to get the best out of their care experience.*

*It is a pleasure to work alongside someone who has the same passion for what we do.*

### **From a parent to the SEND service:**

*I honestly, just so grateful for you all helping L and helping our family progress forward knowing we are doing our best.... you should be so proud of your professionalism and hard work. People like you change young people's lives, and I feel very blessed to be asking for help while there is such an immense team there happy to support.*

### **From a residential home manager to the CIC 4 Team:**

*Following a visit to a child this morning I spent time with manager of the residential home and she shared that Chris's communication with them has been brilliant, she said that Chris was really responsive, even outside of office hours and that they have found him an outstanding social worker to work alongside.*

*The manager said they felt supported by Chris and that they have seen the young person build a relationship with Chris and they think he has trust in Chris and will also reach out to Chris.*

### **From Foster carers to the CHAD Team:**

*I just wanted to let you know that I've received a compliment regarding your practice from A's Foster Carers. I met them yesterday during the Fostering Coffee Morning (for Carers who look after children with disabilities) and heard that you are an amazing Social Worker!*

### **From an adopter to the Aspire Adoption Family Finding, Matching and Placement Team:**

*I saw R today and she very kindly brought over the life story book.*

*Thank you so much- it's perfect, really appreciated! Such a lovely thing for her to flick through when she's abit older.*

**From a parent to the CFF 3 Team:**

*Just wanted to pass along some positive feedback for Chelsea after a discussion with Ms M this morning.*

*Your Mum praised your social worker Chelsea for working so openly and transparently. Your Mum also praised Chelsea for being honest if she doesn't have the answer and will quickly signpost your Mum to the right support.*

**From a foster carer to the IRO Service:**

*I also would say that that was one of the nicest CLA reviews I have attended in a long time. You were friendly and made the girls feel relaxed. I particularly liked the way you explained the process without overcomplicating it for them, also your understanding that the length of some of these meetings can be challenging particularly when they are new to the whole system and not letting it drag on.*

**From a school to the SEND Service:**

*I wanted to say thank you for all your help, support and guidance this year. It is a pleasure working with you.*

**From a Foster Group to the PLO & Court Team 1:**

*Jamie has been one of the most attentive, reliable and resourceful social workers I've worked alongside and his care, commitment and dedication to the siblings has been evident in his practice. Despite the challenges that have arisen, Jamie has remained professional and has always been focussed on the best interests of the children, working with me to find solutions.*

**From another Local Authority to the SEND service:**

*May I thank you for all your hard work and constant communication whilst working on this case with us. There are usually difficulties working across teams in different counties, but in this case it has been an absolute pleasure working with you. I hope to work with Bournemouth SEND and in particular you, in the future.*

**From a parent and IRO to CFF 5:**

*Parent said that she appreciates Justice being open, honest and up front with her. I also found him to be completely upfront with the significant concerns of this case and still retain this relationship with the parent, with an assessment that did well to balance the risk and protective factors.*

**From a shadowing student to the Private Fostering Team:**

*It is lovely to see a team so passionate about getting it right and about outcomes from children and young people, I hope this is something I can keep in my toolbox as I become a social worker.*

**From a parent to the Contact Service:**

*Thank you so much for everything Nikki, your the first person in forever that has made me feel like a half decent mum and that I'm not a complete failure and I had no faith in anyone*

*until I met you and you have given me hope that there is still good people out there so thank you very much 😊 we will actually miss you lol.*

#### **From a school to the Assessment Team 1:**

*Rose has recently finished working with one of our pupils at (school) and has gone above and beyond always with her wonderful approachable nurturing nature and the way she interacts with us as a school and with our pupil has been second to none!*

#### **From a young person to the CIC 1 Team:**

*I want to take this opportunity to thank you for everything you have done for me. Your help has made a huge difference in my life. You have always been there to listen to my concerns and support me when I needed it most. I appreciate the time you took to understand my situation and offer guidance. Your kindness and patience have helped me feel more confident in myself. Thank you for teaching me important skills and helping me through challenges. I feel so lucky to have you as a social worker.*

#### **From parents for the SEND Service:**

*X and I would like to take this chance to profoundly thank Kay, case officer for our twins. She was always available to answer our questions and kept us updated. She was a very honest person, however, she communicated even the difficult messages to us with a lot of empathy and we always felt at ease communicating with her.*

*The support, help and communication that Katie has given us, has been brilliant and has helped make this part of the process so much more easier to understand and to go through.*

*We would like to tell you that it's very important in your life to find a person who loves and knows his job. In our case it's you Alex because of you our kid got that we have been dreaming for her. We want to say thank you for your professionalism, help, time and reliability. We hope that parents with special needs kids will find more people like you Alex. Thank you very much.*

*Katie and Susan have been really great throughout. Proactive, empathetic, understanding and knowledgeable.*

*Louise has been extremely helpful and always answered my emails promptly. She delivers empathy within her mannerisms and makes me as a parent feel heard and considered.*

*The SEN case worker Natalie took time to listen to our views on our daughter's strengths and difficulties and feedback from the school SENCo. She was respectful, professional and courteous throughout and explained the next steps carefully to us and we felt that our views were listened to and we felt included and respected in this process.*

*Emily was really lovely, I was nervous about the meeting but Emily made me feel really relaxed and she helped me get all the information required into the plan and I feel happy and confident about it going to panel now.*

**From family to the IRO Service:**

*We are grateful to all who attended the Conference, and particularly Kelly who chaired the Conference in a very professional manner. As a result of her input at the outset we feel the Conference proceeded in a respectful and courteous way - which might not have been easy bearing in mind the sensitive, and potentially contentious matter being discussed. I am mindful that the outcome of the Conference was what we had been seeking, but my comments would equally apply if decisions had gone the other way. So again, thanks to everyone and particularly Kelly.*

**From mum to the Child Health and Disability Team:**

*Ali is an amazing social worker. She goes above and beyond and is very helpful.*

**From young person to the Care Experienced Young People Team2:**

*She has been nothing but brilliant, been advocating for me at college, fighting my case no matter what, taking the time to talk to me and fully understand each and every situation, and made my transition to adulthood so much easier. She is extremely kind, caring and understanding of each and every situation, and calls to catch up if there's an issue, and always communicates all the details and is honest with me, even if I've done something wrong, she would give me a telling off, not to demotivate me, but to put me back on the right direction if anything I did was wrong. She is an asset to the team at CEYP, and I wish her all the best for the future and I can't wait to continue working with her.*

**From a colleague to the MASH service:**

*I wanted to pay a compliment to Jake. I have just been triaging a difficult case and when I looked through his assessment he completed in the MASH I was very impressed how he got his point across to a difficult father who was obstructing support for his child but in a professional manner. I thought it was clear and precise without being prejudice towards the father. Well done Jake! I will use this as a template for good voice of the child work when parent is placing barriers in the way.*

**From a parent for a worker in the Children and Families First Team:**

*I'd like to write my sincere gratitude for Gemma that has recently attended a very complex court proceedings.*

*Gemma went beyond my expectations and they're hard to meet.*

*Her professionalism, knowledge, intuition and decision making are undoubtedly on a very high level.*

*Not everyone can see the truth in complex cases where the social worker could be manipulated by the perpetrators- just like I was in the past.*

*I'll be forever grateful to Gemma because she helped us win the freedom from violence, manipulations, fear and all other types of abuse.*

*Thank you so much. I wish her best for the future.*

**From a professional to the IRO service:**

*I have not been to a CP conference for a number of years now but I would like to say that I thought Caren was an excellent Chair at this conference. I thought that she struck a very good balance with the parents of being supportive but also challenging appropriately. I thought she led the conference very well, in what could have been a very difficult meeting. I also felt listened to and that my contribution was valid.*

**From a parent (via a colleague) to the Children in Care Team 2:**

*I have just spoken with x's father to inform a PLR I am completing and I wanted to share how highly he spoke of Emma, scoring her 9/10 of how satisfied he was and he said he feels very listened too.*

*I said I would like to share this praise to which he agreed.*

**From a placement manager to Assessment Team 1:**

*Apologies I couldn't be there in person today,*

*Did want to pass on a huge thank you to yourself, this has been one of our smoothest welcomes / transitions for a long time and that's largely down to your efforts with Y.*

**From a Judge via a colleague to the PLO & Court Team 1:**

*The Judge was very complimentary of you as a social worker. He said that he was very grateful to you and there has been some great social work with this case.*

**From parents to the SEND Secondary Team:**

*I just wanted to advise you that during a Mediation Meeting earlier this week the parent made a very specific point of praising the Education Health Care Co-ordinator (EHCCO), Monika, who works with their family.*

*They stated that Monika is always friendly and approachable with a lovely manner. That she is always able to provide excellent advice and guidance whilst remaining professional and not making promises she cannot keep, that everything is explained clearly to the family with patience, empathy and understanding.*

**From a colleague to the SEND BSO Team:**

*We just wanted to make a point of thanking Declan for the care and detail he takes when handing calls and emails that are on their way to our Appeals and Resolutions Team. Declan always takes the time to put the enquirers at ease and find out the best course of action and person to talk to in our team by checking in with us if he is uncertain. This never goes un-noticed and we feel is worthy of praise as in our seriously busy days this small additional detail can make a big difference. Thank you to Declan!*

**From a Foster Carer to Aspire Adoption Family Finding, Matching and Placement Team:**

*I would like to say thank you to Annie who has been an amazing inspiration to me always putting the needs of N first.*

**From a BCP Solicitor to the PLO and Court Team One:**

*You may be aware that this matter concluded last week with care and placement orders.*

*I feel it appropriate to highlight the excellent level of social work brought to this case by Jamie. There is no doubt in my view that his forward thinking for X has meant that every avenue of an appropriate long term placement has been explored and that fortunately for X her next move is likely to be to her forever home.*

*The final evidence drafted by Jamie was executed with thought and logic and made it an easy read for myself, the parties and most importantly the Judge. This was a complex case that Jamie managed to present in a digestible way. This will have contributed to us securing final orders without the need for a fact find.*

**From a parent to the Child Health & Disability Team:**

*Hi Charlotte*

*aww.so happy for x and so pleased you were able to see him..*

*I really do appreciate all the hard work and battles you undertake in x's and my interests. You are a top social worker..just saying..*

*Many thanks*

**From a Foster Carer to the IRO Service:**

*We could not have done the transition without you. You have listened to my frustrations and given me hope each time. All that is left to say is that you have gone above and beyond.*

**From an adoptee to Aspire Adoption & SG Support Team:**

*Dear Clare*

*This is just a quick note to thank you sincerely for the time and effort that you put into the file about my adoption. There's so much detail in the file and the 12 page summary is fantastic. It was a fascinating read and filled an awful lot of gaps for me. It's been quite a journey!*

**From a parent to the Children & Families First Team3:**

*I wanted to share the views of a parent in today's conference, she shared that the support from CSC and wider professionals has been excellent. She has felt listened too and supported. She spoke highly of Mahles practice in terms of building a rapport with her and the boys, ensuring the right services are in place, communicating well and advocating for the boys individually. She has found the child protection plan a helpful process and feels that it has really changed the trajectory for X in particular. She said lots more positive things but that is a summary.*

**From a care leaver to the Care Experience Young People Team 2:**

*I'd like to start this email by saying Paula has been personable, someone I can talk to about the current state of affairs that interest me and my life. This is the crux of what a support care worker is and should be... truly caring and supportive of all their young people from their interests to their qualms. She in fact has to chase me up to organise*

*meetings (of which, I am so sorry Paula!). In the past with many of my care leaver support PA's (calling them PA's feels diminishing, they're a support network in and of themselves) - I would chase them up for queries about all aspects of my life and the support I could receive without much avail. Paula? She's all over it, in fact she will somehow be one step ahead. She ensures I am aware of what I'm entitled to but is also just such an incredible person to chat to - she makes sure I am ok, whilst also letting me ramble on about anything and everything. I have never felt so comfortable, understood and just all round eager to actually chat to a social worker.*

*I am so grateful to have had Paula as my care leaver support, she is brilliant in so many senses of the word and has truly made me feel understood - giving a sense of normalcy, humanity and treating me as a person and not a checkbox. She truly cares about young people, and she is human just like us! She is very down to earth, kind and I absolutely love when we do finally call (due to my own negligence) as time flies.*

*Thank you Paula, and I hope this compliment email is received well.*

### **From young people regarding the Children in Care Team 2:**

*I wanted to email to share feedback from my last visit with 2 children.*

*Both children told me that they 'really liked Dannii and that she is the best social worker they have had', they both said, 'she is a person who does what she says she will do, and they hope she remains their social worker.'*

*At the start of the children's review the foster carer also shared that she hoped 'Dannii doesn't go anywhere because she is brilliant'.*

### **From a family to the SEND service:**

*Holly of BCP SEND has been nothing short of amazing & I can't praise her enough. Not only has she tweaked the EHCP (in agreement with us & consultation with the College & presumably yourselves too) to get it to the point where College have agreed that they can meet need. But she has also sought and gained EHCP funding for x's continued OT support post 16.*



## Stage 1 - Who Complained?

	Social Care	Quality Performance Improvement and Governance	SEND	Other Education and Skills	Cross Services
Parent	68%	0%	90%	86%	88%
Self (young person)	15%	50%	3%	0%	8%
Other family/friend	7%	0%	1%	3.5%	0%
Grandparents	5%	0%	1%	3.5%	0%
Carer	3%	25%	2.5%	0%	4%
Other (not connected to a child)	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other agency	0%	25%	2.5%	7%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

It is usual for the majority of complaints to be received from parents. However, young people also complain on their own behalf and the contracted independent advocacy service, Coram Voice, is available to support any young person receiving a social work service who wishes to make a complaint. This is a legislative requirement under the Children Act.

In relation to diversity and protected characteristics (where this data is recorded):

Complainants		Social Care	Quality Performance Improvement and Governance	SEND	Other Education and Skills	Cross Services
Recognised as having a disability		8%	0%	2%	0%	8%
Gave their ethnicity as other than White British		12%	0%	4%	0%	8%
Gender	Female	60%	50%	88%	78.5%	52%
	Male	36%	50%	8%	18%	36%
	Couple	4%	0%	4%	3.5%	12%
	Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

## Timescales at Stage 1

The Children Act Legislation states that the authority should respond to complaints within 10 working days but can extend this to 20 days if necessary. If the authority fails to respond to the complainant within this timeframe, the complainant has the right to progress to Stage 2 of the procedure should they wish to do so.

Complaints following the corporate procedure should be responded to within 20 working days at Stage 1.

Some complaints are assessed as having more than one aspect to them – for example service delay alongside a data protection issue. These are recorded separately to enable more accurate analysis. Therefore, the following table shows both number of complaints received, along with detailed analysis by category of complaint by team.

Complaints raised regarding Children's Services are often emotive and reflect the complexity of the, often statutory, intervention undertaken. Complaints are managed sensitively with a view to resolving as many as possible in the early stages. However, it is inevitable that sometimes it can take longer to resolve the difficult issues raised and managers are expected to keep the complainant informed of progress and expected timescales.

55.85% of complainants received a response to their complaints within the 20-working day timescale.

Service	No of Complaints	%age share	No of complaint categories	%age share of categories	% answered on time	% fully upheld	% partially upheld
Admissions	1	0.27%	1	0.12%	100%	0%	0%
Aspire Adoption - Adoption & SG Support Team	3	0.82%	7	0.87%	57.14%	28.57%	14.29%
Aspire Adoption - Recruitment & Assessment Team	1	0.27%	4	0.5%	0%	0%	25%
Aspire Adoption - SGO Assessment Team	1	0.27%	2	0.25%	0%	50%	0%

Assessment 1	2	0.54%	5	0.62%	40%	80%	0%
Assessment 2	4	1.09%	10	1.24%	90%	30%	20%
Assessment 3	8	2.18%	21	2.61%	85.71%	28.57%	9.52%
Assessment 4	4	1.09%	10	1.24%	100%	60%	10%
Business Support (Children's)	1	0.27%	1	0.12%	100%	100%	0%
Care Experience Young People Team 1	4	1.09%	6	0.75%	100%	33.33%	0%
Care Experience Young People Team 2	3	0.82%	6	0.75%	100%	66.67%	33.33%
Child Health & Disability Team	5	1.36%	18	2.24%	100%	16.67%	5.56%
Children & Families First 1	7	1.92%	11	1.37%	72.73%	0%	9.09%
Children & Families First 2	2	0.54%	2	0.25%	0%	50%	0%
Children & Families First 3	7	1.92%	18	2.24%	100%	38.89%	5.56%
Children & Families First 4	11	3.00%	27	3.36%	66.67%	25.93%	11.11%
Children & Families First 5	7	1.92%	10	1.24%	60%	40%	0%
Children & Families First 6	7	1.92%	20	2.49%	95%	25%	20%
Children & Families First 7	1	0.27%	2	0.25%	0%	0%	50%
Children in Care 1	10	2.72%	19	2.36%	68.42%	26.32%	21.05%
Children in Care 2	7	1.92%	15	1.87%	40%	53.33%	0%
Children in Care 3	20	5.45%	48	5.97%	75%	35.42%	10.42%

Children in Care 4	4	1.09%	8	1.00%	100%	62.50%	12.5%
Children in Care 5	1	0.27%	1	0.12%	0%	100%	0%
Children's Safeguarding & Quality Assurance (Non-IRO)	1	0.27%	3	0.37%	0%	100%	0%
Compliance Team (Childrens)	4	1.09%	8	1.00%	100%	87.50%	0%
Targeted Family Support	1	0.27%	4	0.5%	100%	25%	50%
Fostering Parent and Child Pod	1	0.27%	1	0.12%	100%	100%	0%
Inclusion 1	5	1.36%	9	1.12%	66.67%	22.22%	22.22%
IRO Service	2	0.54%	6	0.75%	100%	0%	66.67%
MASH	6	1.63%	8	1.00%	75%	12.50%	0%
Participation Team	1	0.27%	1	0.12%	100%	0%	100%
PLO and Court 1	6	1.63%	18	2.24%	66.67%	27.78%	11.11%
PLO and Court 2	3	0.82%	4	0.5%	25%	25%	25%
School Transport	2	0.54%	4	0.5%	100%	75%	25%
SEND	90	24.52%	185	23.01%	54.59%	61.62%	8.11%
SEND Primary	29	7.90%	53	6.59%	9.43%	56.60%	18.87%
SEND Secondary	30	8.17%	67	8.33%	32.84%	58.21%	4.48%
SEND Post 16	12	3.27%	29	3.61%	0%	62.07%	17.24%
CROSS TEAMS (same service area)	28	7.63%	67	8.33%	50.75%	43.28%	14.93%

CROSS SERVICES	25	6.81%	65	8.08%	47.69%	26.15%	15.38
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>804</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>55.85%</b>	<b>45.15%</b>	<b>11.94%</b>

### Categories of complaints and their outcomes.

Each individual bringing a complaint may have raised more than one complaint issue. Each complaint is therefore categorised to ensure that outcomes are clear, and any learning is taken forward.

Category	Categories of Complaints	%age share	% answered on time	% fully upheld	% partially upheld
Assessment process	4	0.5%	75%	0%	25%
Breach of confidentiality e.g. available to public	19	2.26%	42.11%	57.89%	5.26%
Care / welfare concerns notified but not acted on	7	0.87%	85.71%	0%	14.29%
CIC placement	3	0.37%	33.3%	0%	33.33%
Contact issues	19	2.36%	84.21%	36.84%	5.26%
Content of report	22	2.74%	63.64%	9.09%	13.64%
CP conference process	1	0.12%	100%	0%	0%
Delay / lack of agreed action	182	22.7%	44.51%	54.95%	13.19%
Disproportionate intervention	17	2.11%	70.59%	5.88%	5.88%
Disputing decision	41	5.1%	63.41%	9.76%	2.44%
Finance inc loss/theft of property	19	2.36%	42.11%	42.11%	5.26%
Inaccurate recording / info on file	9	1.12%	66.67%	44.44%	11.11%
Lack of available services	43	5.35%	48.84%	58.14%	11.63%
Lack of involvement / being kept informed / listened to	74	9.2%	72.97%	43.24%	13.51%
Practice issues	44	5.47%	59.09%	38.64%	11.36%

Safeguarding / welfare of child	19	2.36%	68.42%	15.79%	10.53%
Subject Access Request	4	0.5%	50%	50%	0%
Attitude / conduct	55	6.84%	72.73%	23.64%	12.73%
Communication	204	25.43%	49.02%	64.71%	14.22%
Discriminatory behaviour	18	2.24%	61.11%	11.11%	11.11%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>804</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>55.85%</b>	<b>45.15%</b>	<b>11.94%</b>

Communication and delay / lack of agreed action were the most common categories of complaints brought at Stage One.

### Numbers progressed to Stage 2.

The vast majority of the complaints that are received are managed and resolved at Stage 1. Social Care saw an increase of 8% in complaints moving to Stage 2 within the year. SEND saw a decrease of 4% compared to the previous reporting year in complaints moving to Stage 2.

	<b>Social Care</b>	<b>Quality Performance Improvement and Governance</b>	<b>SEND</b>	<b>Other Education and Skills</b>	<b>Cross Services</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Overall</b>
Percentage of complaints that did not progress to Stage 2	68%	50%	74%	75%	84%	100%	72%

### Categories and outcomes at Stage 2

As at Stage 1, complainants can raise a number of issues within their complaints at Stage 2. These are categorised separately to ensure that outcomes are clear and any learning is taken forward.

Whilst 101 Stage 2 complaints were requested during the year, 94 complaints with 279 separate issues of complaint were investigated and responded to within the year.

Category	Number of Complaint Categories	%age share	% answered on time	% fully upheld	% partially upheld
Communication	41	14.68%	36.59%	46.34%	24.39%
Delay / lack of agreed action	69	24.71%	42.03%	52.17%	10.14%
Assessment Process	9	3.23%	55.56%	22.22%	11.11%
Lack of Involvement being kept informed / listened to	19	6.81%	21.05%	26.32%	26.32%
Safeguarding / welfare of child	15	5.38%	20%	33.33%	13.33%
Practise Issues	15	5.38%	40%	53.33%	6.67%
Attitude / conduct	14	5.02%	35.71%	28.57%	14.29%
Transition to Adult Services	3	1.08%	33.33%	33.33%	33.33%
Finance including loss/theft of property	3	1.08%	100%	33.33%	0%
Lack of available services	34	12.19%	23.53%	38.24%	23.53%
Breach of confidentiality / Data Breach	3	1.08%	33.33%	0%	0%
Content of report	18	6.45%	22.22%	44.44%	16.67%
Discriminatory Behaviour	2	0.72%	50%	0%	50%
Disputing Decision	12	4.3%	16.67%	58.33%	8.33%
Policy	2	0.72%	100%	0%	0%
Child in Care Review Process	4	1.43%	0%	75%	0%
Care / Welfare concerns notified but not acted on	6	2.15%	0%	0%	0%
Inaccurate recording / info on file	2	0.72%	50%	0%	50%
Disproportionate Intervention	5	1.79%	40%	40%	0%
Subject Access Requests	2	0.72%	50%	0%	0%

Child in Care Placement	1	0.36%	100%	100%	0%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>33.69%</b>	<b>41.22%</b>	<b>15.41%</b>

Delay and communication were the most common categories of complaints brought at Stage Two.

### **Timescales at Stage 2**

Complaints managed under the Children Act legislation (Social Care) should complete the Stage 2 process within 25 working days (roughly 1 month). However, guidance allows for an extension of up to 65 working days (roughly 3 months). The Stage 2 process begins with the Terms of Complaint being agreed and concludes with the response to the investigation report by the Adjudication Officer. Complaints managed under the Corporate Stage 2 process (Quality Performance, Improvement and Governance, SEND, Early Help and Education Support) should be completed within 15 working days. However, complaints can cross services and where they do so with social work, the legislative process is applied.

Children's Services' complaints are managed to ensure that a robust, evidence-based investigation is carried out and a considered response to the complaint issues is given. We strive to keep within timescales, but the complexity of issues can sometimes lead to revised timings. Complainants are kept informed of delays and the reasons for them.

### **Stage 3**

Stage 3 Review Panel numbers and outcomes (Children Act process only) for Children Social Care. Whilst eight Stage 3 Review Panels were requested during the year, eight were held during the year and they considered 27 elements of complaint. The outcomes of these panels are set out below.



Category	Number of Complaint Categories	%age share	% answered on time	% fully upheld	% partially upheld
Communication	5	18%	100%	20%	0%
Lack of Involvement being kept informed / listened to	1	4%	100%	0%	0%
Safeguarding / welfare of child	3	11%	100%	0%	0%
Practise Issues	1	4%	100%	0%	0%
Attitude / conduct	3	11%	100%	0%	33%
Delay / Lack of Agreed Action	2	7%	100%	0%	0%
Child Protection Conference Process	1	4%	100%	0%	0%
Contact Issues	1	4%	100%	0%	0%
Child in Care Review Process	2	7%	100%	100%	50%
Care / Welfare concerns notified but not acted upon	1	4%	100%	0%	0%
Disproportionate Intervention	1	4%	100%	0%	100%
Lack of available services	6	22%	100%	0%	17%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>15%</b>

### Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) numbers and outcomes.

During the reporting year, 36 referrals were made by complainants to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, an increase of 12.5% compared to the previous reporting year.

The Ombudsman issued 29 final decisions regarding BCP Children's Services within the complaint's year, 8 for Children Social Care, 3 for cross service complaints and 18 for Education and Skills. Fault was found by the Ombudsman in 12.5% of Children Social Care complaints, 33.33% of cross service complaints and 44.44% of Education and Skills complaints.

## 5 Learning from complaints and service improvements

One of the key objectives in the management of complaints is to identify and learn from complaints, comments and compliments, and to change, review or maintain practices and services accordingly.

Some examples of service actions that have been implemented as a result of learning from complaints are detailed below:

The **SEND Service** are aware of the need to improve communication and are implementing a Service Charter which covers communication commitments.

The **SEND Service** has been restructured internally during the year to ensure greater oversight on children and families, placements and where alternative provision needs to be put in place to avoid delays.

The **SEND Service** are continuing to develop training for officers through the new Quality Assurance Framework. This will include further training on Section F of EHCPs and regular audits.

The **Compliance Team** are increasing their workforce and investigating the use of new technology to speed up redaction work in the Subject Access Request process.

**Children Social Care** undertook a review of all processes and procedures relating to unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and children and this formed part of the revised Local Offer for care experienced young people which was published in January 2025. The revised Local Offer also clarified housing options available to Care Experienced Young People.

**Children Social Care** undertook a review of learning and development available to social workers and other alternatively qualified social care colleagues. This included a review of learning specifically in regard to supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking young people and children.

**Children Social Care** have produced new practice standards which support staff to understand their responsibilities, including timeliness and quality of case note recording to minimise any miscommunication, in particular where there is unplanned staff absence or a change in the allocated worker.

**Children Social Care** have started developing a robust policy regarding savings for children in care. This policy will provide clarity and specifically set out the process for ensuring any accrued savings follow a child or young person if they should move home. The issue of Junior Individual savings account (ISA) will also be covered in this policy, considering those children that did not qualify for the Child Trust Fund.

The **Inclusion Service** now arranges online education provision for excluded pupils while they are waiting for a place at an alternative provision school or independent alternative provision to be commissioned.

### **Advocacy**

BCP Council contracts with Coram Voice to provide an advocacy service for young people involved with Social Care services. The contract with Coram Voice fulfils the council's

obligations under the Children Act '89 and the Advocacy Services and Representations Procedure (Children) (Amendment) Regulations 2004. The service follows the DfES guidance 'Get it Sorted' 2004. The legislation and its guidance state that independent advocacy must be available and offered to all children and young people who may wish to make a complaint.

### **Training and Support**

The Complaints Team provide support for teams, individuals and managers across Children's Services as necessary, ensuring that practice is compliant with legislation, guidance, procedures and best practice. They can check responses, guide with the process and expectations and support with keeping complainants updated.

The objectives of the training for managers are:

- To clarify the different stages of the procedure.
- To consider good practice in the first stage investigations.
- To look at resolution and redress issues.
- To consider good practice in first stage responses.
- To consider how the service learns from complaints.

During this operating year, three Complaint Training for Managers courses were run by the Complaints and Compliments Manager with a total of seventeen team managers and service managers attending from across Children's services.

### **Southern Region Complaints Managers Group (SRCMG).**

BCP Council is represented on the SRCMG by Complaints personnel. This group contributes to the development of guidance and best practice in complaint management which feeds into the National Complaints Managers' Group, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and relevant government bodies.

Attendance also ensures that the Council is up to date with developing practice in complaint management whilst affording the opportunity to consider particular practice issues with others and to share best practice and learning.

### **Complaint Recording Systems**

All complaint records are held on the system electronically with essential data i.e. complaints and outcomes to be held in a secure area of MOSAIC. This allows for records to be retained alongside other records in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

### **Financial Costs**

Financial payments can be made as a result of a complaint if this redress is considered appropriate. Any costs in this respect are accepted as the responsibility of the relevant service against which the complaint is made. Financial redress can be offered at any point within the process if identified or can be recommended by the Ombudsman.

## Financial consequences – Remedy and Redress

There is no formal remedy and redress policy for Children's services; therefore, guidance continues to be taken from publications by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

	Quarter 1 Apr - Jun	Quarter 2 Jul - Sep	Quarter 3 Oct - Dec	Quarter 4 Jan - Mar
LGSCO directed Financial Remedies	£3,750.00	£4,000	£200	£13,900
Non-LGSCO Financial Remedies	£5,351.43	£6,400	£9,632	£15,200
<b>Total</b>	<b>£9,101.43</b>	<b>£10,400</b>	<b>£9,832</b>	<b>£29,100</b>

## Financial consequences – Complaint Investigations

There are costs of employing stage two external investigators and independent people and stage three review panels which fluctuate with demand, alongside interpretation and translation costs at all stages in the complaints process.

	Quarter 1 Apr - Jun	Quarter 2 Jul - Sep	Quarter 3 Oct - Dec	Quarter 4 Jan - Mar
Stage 1	£168.88	£35.00	£0	£0
Stage 2	£8,077.40	£23,489.37	£12,551.46	£32,680.09
Stage 3	£1,721.25	£3,161.25	£1,467.50	£2,301.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£9,967.53</b>	<b>£26,685.62</b>	<b>£14,018.96</b>	<b>£34,981.09</b>

## Going Forward

The key priorities for 2025-26:

- To continue to actively promote the Complaints procedures across all teams to ensure that staff are confident in complaint handling and the relevant procedures. All staff should be aware of the complaint procedures and frontline staff should know how to capture information about things that go wrong and refer this information correctly.
- Timeliness of completing responses continues to remain a key focus for improvements and there will be a drive to ensure that managers adhere to the complaint timescales through specific complaint handling training, the complaint escalation procedure and support from senior management throughout the year.
- The Complaints and Compliments Manager will continue to report to senior management on a quarterly basis and present the key messages from complaints activity; ensuring that the learning is shared and cascaded to all operational teams for service improvement and quality assurance purposes.
- The complaints team will continue to participate in the regional complaint network to keep abreast of relevant changes to policy and procedure and related information.