

Report to Scrutiny B

Name of Scrutiny Board	Children & Young People's Scrutiny Board
Meeting Date	TBA
Subject	Complaints & Compliments Annual report
Wards Affected	All wards
Report of	Director, Children & Young People's services

Why is it coming here?

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information regarding complaints and compliments received for the Children's Social Care Service. The reporting period covered by this report is from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 and supplements the data provided on the Council's website. [Council complaints \(calderdale.gov.uk\)](https://www.calderdale.gov.uk/council/complaints)

What are the key points?

During this reporting period the Council received ninety-four representations, nineteen complaints inclusive of the Local Government Ombudsman complaints and seventy-five compliments. Members are informed in relation to the number, type and outcomes of complaints and compliments that have been received in respect of Children & Young People's Social Care Services. This will assist members to determine areas for improvement or which require more in-depth scrutiny.

Possible courses of action

Members are asked to consider and comment on this report.

Contact Officer

Faye Hamer, Customer First Operational Lead

Should this report be exempt?

No

Report to Scrutiny Board

Background

Good complaint handling requires effective procedures and well-trained staff alongside a positive complaints culture that enables those procedures to achieve maximum impact. Organisations must embrace complaints through increased transparency, accessibility, and complaint handling governance. The Council produces a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the organisation's complaint handling performance and compares it with previous years.

Main Issues for Scrutiny

1. OVERVIEW FOR CYPS

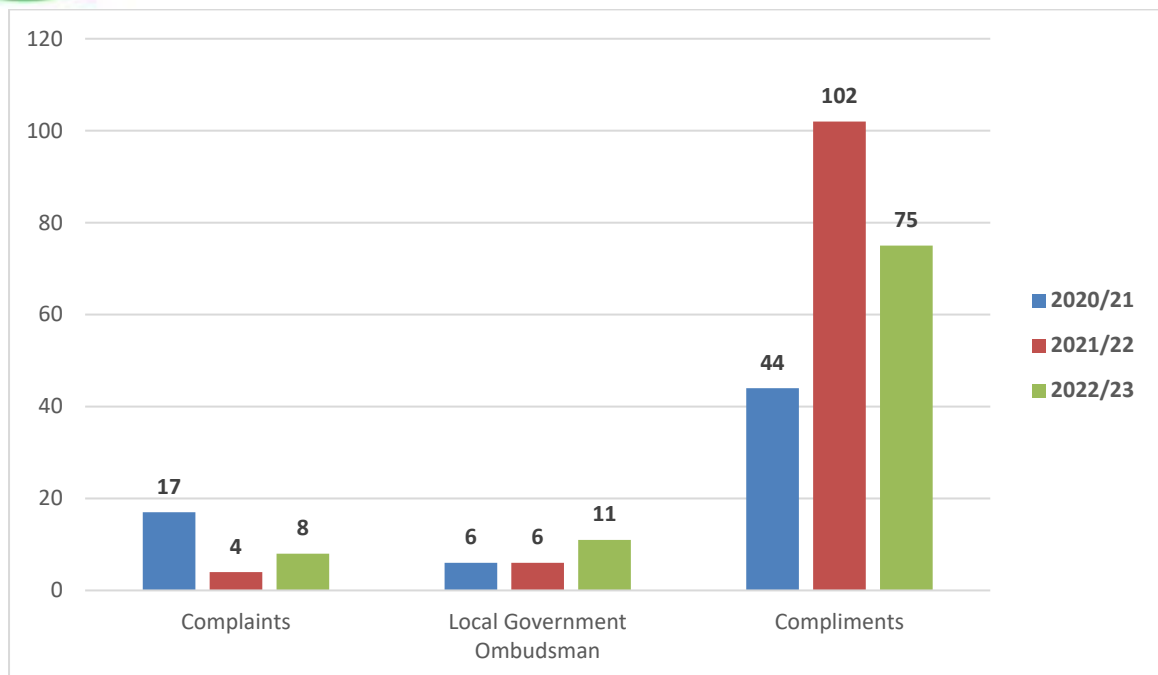
1.1

Ninety-four representations were received for Children's Social Care Service between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, broken down as follows:

- Eight Complaints.
- Eleven Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) complaints.
- Seventy-five Compliments.

1.2

The graph below shows a comparison over the last three years of representations received. The number of complaints received has increased against 2021/22 but remains lower than the complaints received in 2020/21. The number of LGO complaints has increased compared to the previous three years, more information about these complaints can be found in 2.3 of this report.



1.3

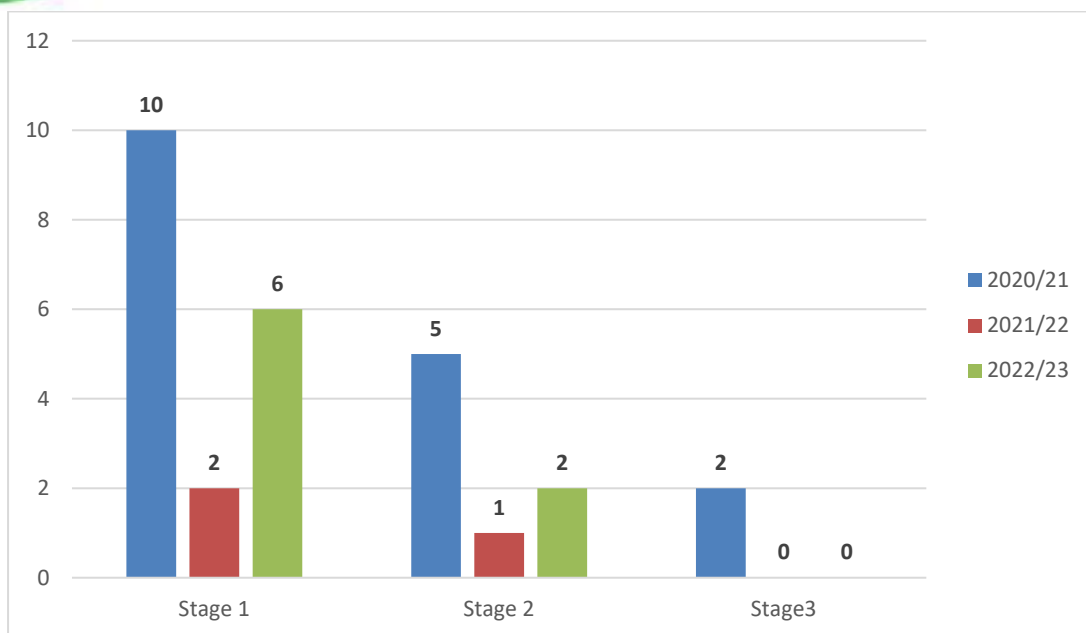
The Statutory Complaints Process for Children and Young Peoples Social Care is a 3-stage process.

- Stage 1 is an investigation by the service area. If the complainant is not satisfied with this response, they can then ask for the complaint to be escalated to Stage 2.
- Stage 2 is an investigation by an Independent Investigator and an officer independent of the service area to which the complaint relates. If the complainant is not satisfied with this response, they can then ask for the complaint to be investigated at Stage 3.
- Stage 3 is where a review is held, chaired by an Independent Chairperson, the Independent Investigator, the Independent Officer, 2 Independent Panel Members and the Assistant Director.

1.4

Of the eight complaints that were received in 2022/23, six were resolved at Stage 1 and two complaints were investigated at stage 2.

The graph below shows the number of investigations received and completed, then broken down to the stage the investigation took place. It includes the data for the last three years.



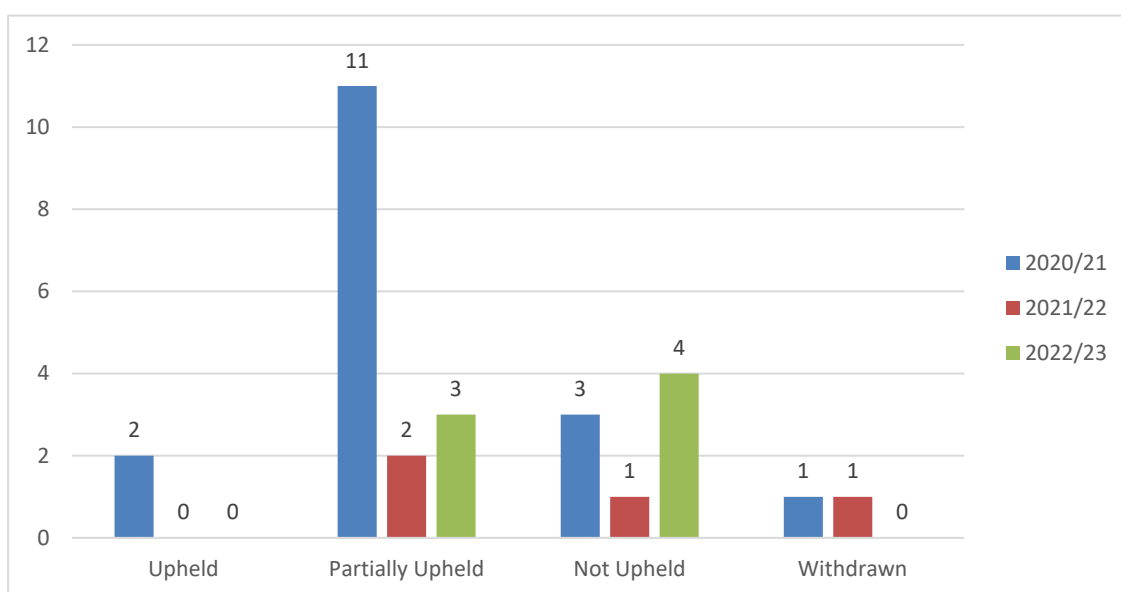
Of the eight complaints that were received in 2022/23, six were resolved at Stage 1 and the outcomes were as follows:

- Three were partially upheld.
- Three were not upheld.

The two complaint outcomes investigated at stage 2 were as follows:

- One not upheld.
- One on hold due to the personal circumstances of the complainant.

The following graph shows the outcomes for complaint investigations for the last three years.



The Complaints and Compliments Officer works closely with the Children and Young People's Service, ensuring there is an emphasis on understanding complaints at the initial point of concern, and identifying successful outcomes prior to an investigation being required, including learning to take forward.

2. ANALYSIS OF COMPLAINTS BY SERVICE AREA

2.1

Of the eight complaints received by Children's Social Care Services these were in relation to the following service areas:

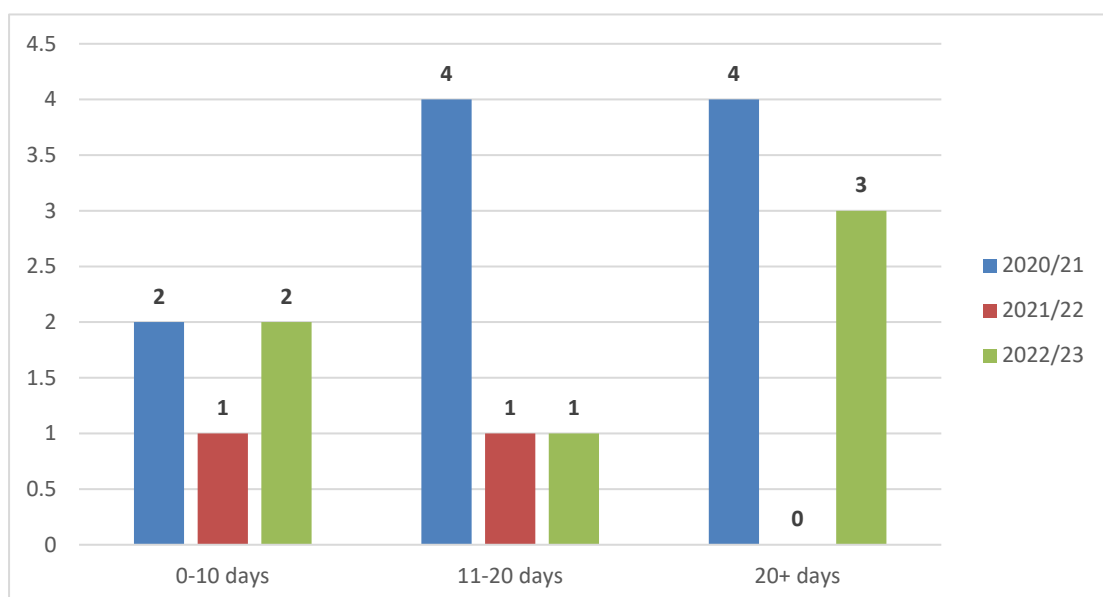
- Two Fostering.
- Two Locality Teams.
- Two Residential.
- One Family Intervention.
- One Education and Inclusion (Looked After Child).

2.2

Stage 1 Statutory response times.

The Council's complaints procedure acknowledges the need for complaints to be dealt with in a timely manner. The Investigating Officer is asked to respond within 10 working days and if this is not possible this can be extended to 20 working days. This is actively encouraged within the service to ensure a thorough investigation is completed.

The graph below shows the time taken to respond to stage 1 completed complaints and includes three years of data.



2.3

Complaints received by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

Eleven complaints were received during the reporting period. Seven were directly for Children's Social Care and four were for the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Team (SEND).

Of the seven Children's Social Care complaints, five were closed after the initial enquiry by the Ombudsman, all five complaints being made by the same person. This person is known to the service and at the time of receiving the complaints, the complainant was under court proceedings. Upon the LGO reviewing the complaints made, the repeated contact to the Council and the courts findings, the Ombudsman then ended their involvement.

Of the two remaining complaints, one was closed without any investigation, and the other was reviewed and upheld. The second complaint was initially categorised as a corporate investigation, but the Ombudsman found it somewhat unclear which process it should fall under. The decision was taken to uphold the complaint after conducting a stage 2 investigation.

The four complaints received for the SEND team, two were closed after initial investigation and two were classed as premature. Premature complaints are referred back to the Council, so that they can be investigated under its own procedures, prior to any Ombudsman involvement.

3. COMPLAINTS MADE BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

During this period, three complaints were received directly from young people and were all represented by the Calderdale Advocacy Service.

Details of the complaints received:

1. Lack of support from Special Educational Needs and removal of funding for their place at school. (This was a Looked after Child, therefore investigated as a statutory stage 1).

Outcome:

On conclusion of the investigation, the element around support was upheld and the funding element of the complaint was partially upheld, with the school placement and funding being reinstated.

2. Time in Foster Care and the lack of support from Pathways. The complaint focused on the support provided by Pathways. The elements of the complaint about the time spent in foster care, were deemed historical, and appropriate advice was provided.

Outcome:

Several points were investigated and evidenced that support had been provided throughout, however one element of the complaint regarding a slight delay in financial support being provided was partially upheld.

3. Lack of communication and the level of service received by Children's Social Care since they became a Looked after Child.

Outcome:

This complaint bypassed stage 1, due to the young person requesting to go through the process to stage 3. It was agreed to hold a stage 2 investigation with an Independent Person as the investigator.

Outcome:

All elements of the complaint were not upheld.

4. LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

4.1

The Complaints and Compliments Team encourages an open and accountable approach to complaints and takes a focused approach to all identified learnings. The Complaints and Compliments Officer attends and provides information to the quarterly regional meeting where best practice is regularly shared. They also attend service specific workshops delivered by the Local Government Ombudsman to stay informed of changes to guidance and ensure good practice.

Regular reports and updates, detailing complaints, compliments and actions that services have identified to improve customer experience are presented to Directors and Senior Management Teams. The reports also highlight any outstanding actions and Directors are asked to support our drive for continuous improvement and good customer service.

4.2

Focus is given to what we can learn from complaints and we continuously seek ways to improve the service that we offer, from the identified learnings following a complaint investigation. Some recent examples of where Children's Social Care have taken action, to improve processes following a complaint are as follows: -

- The SEND Assessment Team did not follow the guidance in the SEND Code of Practice in that the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) was not amended and a leave to appeal letter was not issued. The young person's voice was not heard prior to making the decision, and a planned Annual Review in the Summer Term of 2022 was not held.

The failure to follow the code of practice was discussed with SEND officers, it was reiterated the responsibility of all Council employees to act as corporate parents and in the best interests of our young people.

- A number of staff changes within the Pathways Team, left a young person feeling unsupported. Following a meeting, a plan of support was agreed to ensure the young person had a direct line of communication with the team. Team and Practice Managers were involved to ensure the lack of support that was felt, didn't happen again.

5. COMPLIMENTS

75 compliments were received in 2022/23, the table below shows the number of compliments received for the last three years. Compliments are recorded on our database and then forwarded to the Manager and the person the compliment is for. The importance of sharing all compliments has been reinforced in training and is regularly discussed in team meetings.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Compliments received	44	102	75

Some examples of compliments received during 2022/23 can be found below:

- Just a quick email to say that I won't be complaining any further. It was an emotional day, and I should have waited before emailing you. The work Children's Services do is very important, and I imagine cases are rarely straight forward. I really appreciate the time you have taken to consider our case and the way you have communicated.
- I know it's a bit soon but letting you know I've bitten the bullet and decided to retire, I'm leaving at the end of July this year. I wanted you to know, as over the years I've worked closely with you and respect all the hard work you've done with our students.
- As we discussed earlier, the court session went well yesterday, and the orders were agreed. We are now proceeding with the arrangements we made at the Family Group Conference for visiting the boys. We would like to thank you for the effort and time you spent bringing all the discordant parts of the families together. We were in a very unhappy place at the start of the process, but the compassion you showed helped us to navigate the negative feelings we had towards the Social Services. You have allowed us to become happy grandparents again. Thank You so much.
- I just want to pass on my compliments to you. I am incredibly worried about this young person, and you have contacted me for my views and have listened to and understood what I had to say. You 'hit the nail on the head' with your analysis. I'm not sure what the outcome of the assessment is yet as I'm waiting but I am confident that you and your team will make the right decision for this young person.
- At the last Youth Justice Board meeting, we had a couple of examples of the impact of your work with our young people and families. The Board wanted me to let you know as Chair that your outstanding casework has been very much appreciated. Achieving change and making a difference are easy things to say, but harder in practice to get the outcomes you want through your work. The relationships you are building with our young people is evident, helping them to reflect and make positive step changes in their life. This isn't the first time as a Board we have seen your work identified for praise and you are definitely one of our stars and a credit to Calderdale. Thank you very much on behalf of the board for your outstanding work.
- Your parenting assessment and written evidence was excellent, very balanced, and entirely child-focused, with a compassionate tone.
- I would like to say thank you for taking the time to listen to our concerns last week after the visit to our daughter. Having had sight of the report today, I note there are just a couple of issues which I'm sure will be mentioned. However, I would like to say I am very pleased with the quality of the report and the recommendations. There seems to be a good comprehension of what has gone on both recently and two years ago.

6. TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

The Complaints and Compliments Team provide training and support for all colleagues who are responsible for investigating complaints. The aim is to provide training that specifically relates to their individual area and working practices and identifies how to define a complaint, how to complete a robust investigation and how to respond fairly and proportionately.

The latest sessions have been redesigned with an updated PowerPoint presentation and are delivered remotely; sessions are currently arranged either when requested, or when identified by the Complaints and Compliments Officer.

It is important to highlight that these training sessions undergo continuous assessment to ensure their relevance and they follow current legislation. These sessions are conducted through remote PowerPoint presentations. Encouragingly, there has been a positive response to the training.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS REPORT CONTACT:

Faye Hamer

Customer First Operations Lead - Email: faye.hamer@calderdale.gov.uk