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### **Cabinet Member for Children and Young People**

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#### **Time and Date**

3.30 pm on Monday, 9th October, 2017

#### **Place**

Diamond Room 1 - Council House

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#### **Public Business**

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interests**
3. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 8)
  - (a) To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2017.
  - (b) Matters Arising
4. **Children's Social Care Comments, Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2016/17** (Pages 9 - 28)

Report of the Director of Children's Services
5. **Outstanding Issues Report**

There are no outstanding issues.
6. **Any Other Business**

To consider any other items of business which the Cabinet Member decides to take as a matter of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.

#### **Private Business**

Nil

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Martin Yardley, Deputy Chief Executive (Place), Council House Coventry

Friday, 29 September 2017

Note: The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Usha Patel, Governance Services Tel: 024 7683 3198

Membership: Councillor: B Kaur (Deputy Cabinet Member) and E Ruane (Cabinet Member)

By invitation Councillor J Lepoidevin (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Please note: a hearing loop is available in the committee rooms

If you require a British Sign Language interpreter for this meeting  
OR if you would like this information in another format or  
language please contact us.

**Usha Patel**

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**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Children and Young People held at**  
**2.00 pm on Tuesday, 28 February 2017**

Present:

Cabinet Member: Councillor E Ruane

Other Members: Councillor P Seaman (Deputy Cabinet Member)  
Councillor M Lapsa (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Employees (by Directorate):

People J. Brookes, M McGinty, N Patterson

Place M Salmon

Apologies: There were no apologies

## **Public Business**

### **13. Declarations of Interests**

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests made.

### **14. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2017 were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

### **15. Connecting Communities Phase 2 Proposals - Petitions (Children's Centres and Youth Services)**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of People that responded to petitions relating to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's portfolio, that had been presented to the Council as part of a public consultation that took place from 12<sup>th</sup> September to 12<sup>th</sup> December 2016 on a set of proposals across Children's Centres, nurseries, youth service and libraries with an associated Phase 2 savings target of £3.8m. The proposals included the development of integrated Family Hubs for 0 – 19 year olds located in areas of highest need (turning 8 Children's Centres into Family Hubs and retaining Council delivery of a targeted and specialist youth offer focused on young people who are hardest to reach and most vulnerable as part of the Family Hub model).

Connecting Communities was an ambitious approach to redesigning services through collaboration with local communities. This was in the context of an estimated 55% grant reduction to Coventry City Council from Central Government between 2010/11 and 2020.

During the consultation, 2 e-petitions and 3 written petitions had been received that related to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's portfolio in respect of the 'Family Hubs' proposal. 1 of the written petitions related to 'Youth Services, Children's Centres and Public Libraries' and this petition would also be considered at a meeting of the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills on 6th March 2017.

Final decisions on all of the proposals detailed in the "Connecting Communities Phase 2" report would be made by the Cabinet at their meeting on 7th March 2017.

The petitions considered were as follows:

- i) An e-petition headed 'Save our Children's Centres', received on 13th December 2016 and bearing 6 signatures, that stated:

"We believe that the proposal to close 9 Children's Centres and convert 8 Children Centres into 'family hubs' is wilful neglect of the most important asset this city has for future prosperity and security – Coventry's children. Removing nursery provision from all Children Centres will place children at greater disadvantage and will increase inequality and social immobility. There is no guarantee that private providers will take over nursery provision in Children's Centres. Ofsted has found the provision at these Children's Centres to be outstanding. We are not assured that privatisation of these public services will offer the same quality of nurturing for children and parents. Children Centres provide access to multiple support services for parents and children. The proposal gives little detail over what services the 'family hubs' will deliver, where they will be delivered, who will deliver them and how services delivered by the Council, NHS and the private sector will be integrated. The provision of services for areas of highest need will leave gaps in service provision, contrary to the Council's early intervention strategy.

The petition organiser was unable to attend the meeting.

- ii) An e-petition headed 'Save our Youth Services' received on 13th December 2016 and bearing 11 signatures, that stated:

"We reject the Council's proposal to close youth services at 16 locations. The services provided by 8 new family hubs will only be available to the 'most vulnerable'. Youngsters who are not 'most vulnerable' will not have their needs met, reducing their future opportunities and creating additional demands on services at a later date. Youth club activities will cease. Removing these activities will reduce the opportunities for the children to approach youth workers for help. Will there be enough volunteers to run a reliable and effective alternative. Our children need places to go and things to do. They also need trained staff that can provide a positive role model for the future. We call on Coventry City Council to connect our communities to find the funding for our current services and fight with the people of Coventry for a better deal for public services from central Government."

The petition organiser was unable to attend the meeting.

- iii) A written petition headed 'Save Jardine Youth Services' received on 12th December 2016 and bearing 382 signatures, that stated:

"We, the undersigned protest at the cuts planned by Coventry City Council including closing virtually every library, children and family centre, adult education and community centre, making cuts in transport for the disabled and sacking all lollipop men and women, reducing street cleaning and road maintenance, and axing another 1000 jobs that will then never be available to the young people of our city.

We particularly object to the plan to close Jardine youth centre and Tile Hill Children's Centre (Sure Start) both on Jardine Crescent which are used by young people, children and families in our area. These are both essential safe spaces, open new doors and horizons to the young people, children and families that are central to healthy local communities."

The petition organiser, Sarah Smith, attended the meeting and spoke on behalf of the petitioners. Sara outlined the concerns of families in the Tile Hill Area of the City on the proposed closure of the Children's Centre and Youth Centre in Jardine Crescent, many of whom relied on the facilities. She spoke of her personal experiences at the Tile Hill Centre, which she viewed as a valuable lifeline that had helped her overcome many personal issues. She spoke of similarly assistance provided to others, particularly vulnerable young people and families.

- iv) A written petition headed 'Please stop all cuts to Youth Services' received on 12th December 2016 and bearing 209 signatures, that stated:

"Stop Coventry youth centres from being closed down and turned into family hubs.

The closure of youth centres in and around Coventry City will leave kids without places to go to have fun, make friends and socialise with the community. As a child myself who attends the Xcel leisure centre which is one of the centres rumoured to close I am utterly devastated and I will do everything and anything I can to prevent it. In the Xcel leisure centre I attend Canley youth theatre a group which has inspired hope, laughter and tears. In the centre there lies so many memories and I consider it as a home it is our centre and the Coventry City Council cannot close it down. Coventry City Council should research the great work Canley youth theatre has done and all the other groups which are in the centre to realise what an amazing effect it has on young people like myself. Not only would you be taking down a building you would be taking down a museum of living memories. People need to realise that not all kids are reckless juveniles and our centre proves that. We have kids of all different backgrounds, races, religions and sexualities however we are all one big family and we all enjoy where we are and what we do. We don't want this great sense of unity, friendship, family taking away or the transferable skills we learn every time we attend. It will take away young people's spirit and it will diminish the strong community we share together. Think about the domino effect which could occur if we were to lose such vital provisions."

The petition organiser, Bailey Evatt, attended the meeting and spoke on behalf of the petitioners. Bailey outlined his concerns for the many young people who use youth centres in the City. In particular he spoke of his personal experiences at the Xcel Leisure Centre, which he viewed as a vital provision that had had a huge effect on his life and helped him overcome many personal issues. He spoke of similarly experiences for other who saw the Centre as a home where everyone enjoyed their time and had become a strong community.

- v) A written petition headed 'Stop the Cuts' received on 12th December 2016 and bearing 327 signatures, that stated:

"We the undersigned, protest at the £3.8m cuts planned by Coventry City Council affecting public libraries, youth work and nursery provision, children's and youth centres. We believe those essential services should be provided by properly paid staff, not replaced by volunteers working for free.

We object to the Council's current 'consultation process', supposedly listening to people's views on whether these cuts should go ahead, when at the very same time the Council has set up a fund of over £1/2m to give grants to those who want to take over services under threat.

We believe the Council should use some of the £84m it has in reserves to stop these cuts, and buy time for a serious campaign in the city involving the Council, trade unions, and all those affected by these cuts to demand proper national funding from the Government of essential local services."

This petition will also be considered by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills on 6th March 2017.

The petition organiser, Dave Nellist, attended the meeting and spoke on behalf of the petitioners. Dave outlined the concerns of the petitioners, particularly focussing on the funding for public libraries, youth work and nursery provision, children's and youth centres. Recognising the importance of the facilities for many people, particularly the vulnerable, and suggested that the City Council's reserves could be used to support a further year of operation of the services, allowing time for the Authority to undertake work lobbying the Government for more funding for these essential provisions.

The Cabinet Member thanked the petition organisers for their attendance and indicated that he was aware that approximately 30 young people were presenting a petition relating to supporting youth services provision, to no. 10 Downing Street in April 2017. He acknowledged that public libraries, youth work and nursery provision, children's and youth centres, were very important services for a lot of young people and families.

The Cabinet Member was informed that the City Council had a statutory duty to ensure sufficient childcare for working parents, as far as was practicable, and sufficient Children's Centres to promote integrated health, early education and childcare. It was for the Council to determine sufficiency levels for Coventry, whilst having regard to the relevant legislation and guidance and the needs of the city.

During the consultation, extensive interest was received from the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector and schools regarding alternative use of Children's Centre space, in addition to a high level of interest from voluntary and community sector in the delivery of future universal youth services. There had also been a willingness from partner organisations including Police and Health to collaborate and share resources to better meet the needs of young people aged 0 – 19 years.

The City Council valued the contribution that Children's Services made to local communities and was working to ensure that the impact on service users and children in the city would be minimised through the willingness from the PVI sector to collaborate in mitigation and by working in partnership.

Subject to the agreement of the Cabinet on 7th March 2017, the Council would continue to develop integrated Family Hubs for 0 – 19 year olds, located in areas of highest need.

There had been a high level of interest from groups and organisations interested in accessing Transition Fund, premises and other support in relation to universal youth services. The Transition Fund would enable work with interested parties in the youth services sector to create community solutions with an ethos that solutions are found collaboratively with the community groups and organisations. A bid to the Big Lottery Youth Investment Fund, if successful, would also contribute to an increase in universal youth support in the city and form part of the mitigation of the Connecting Communities proposals.

**RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member, having heard and considered the petitions submitted as part of the Connecting Communities Consultation on the 'Family Hubs' proposal,:**

- 1) Agrees that he will write to the Minister of State for Children and Families to lobby the Government for funding to support the provision of youth services in the City.**
- 2) Recommends that the Cabinet take into account the issues raised through the petitions, when considering the Connecting Communities report at their meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2017.**

**16. Outstanding Issues Report**

There were no outstanding issues.

**17. Any Other Business**

There were no items of other business.

(Meeting closed at 3.15 pm)

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## Public Report Cabinet Member Report

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

9 October 2017

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Councillor Ruane

**Director approving submission of the report:**

Deputy Chief Executive (People)

**Ward(s) affected:**

All

**Title:**

Children's Social Care Comments, Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2016/17

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**Is this a key decision?**

No

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**Executive summary:**

There is a statutory duty for the Council to have a system for receiving representations by, or on behalf of, children who use the social care services they provide or commission; and for the Council to produce an annual report about the operation of the complaints procedure.

This report sets out the details of the comments, compliments and complaints across Coventry's children's social care services in 2016/17. It highlights the themes that arise from them and the learning and service improvements that have resulted from the feedback received.

**Recommendations:**

The Cabinet Member is recommended to:

- (1) Consider the Council's performance in relation to complaints and representations in children social care in 2016/17.

**List of appendices included:**

Appendix I – Children's social care comments, compliments and complaints annual report 2016/17

Appendix II – Coventry City Council People Directorate and Social Care Complaints Handling Guidance

**Background papers:**

None

**Other useful documents**

Young people's guide to making a social care complaint

[http://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/37/childrens\\_social\\_care/625/](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/37/childrens_social_care/625/)

Complaints Managers' Group (May 2016) Good Practice guidance for handling complaints concerning adults and children social care services <https://www.adass.org.uk/media/5360/good-practice-guidance-final-09062016.pdf>

Department for Education (September 2006) statutory guidance for local authority children's services on representations and complaints procedures <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-getting-the-best-from-complaints>

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

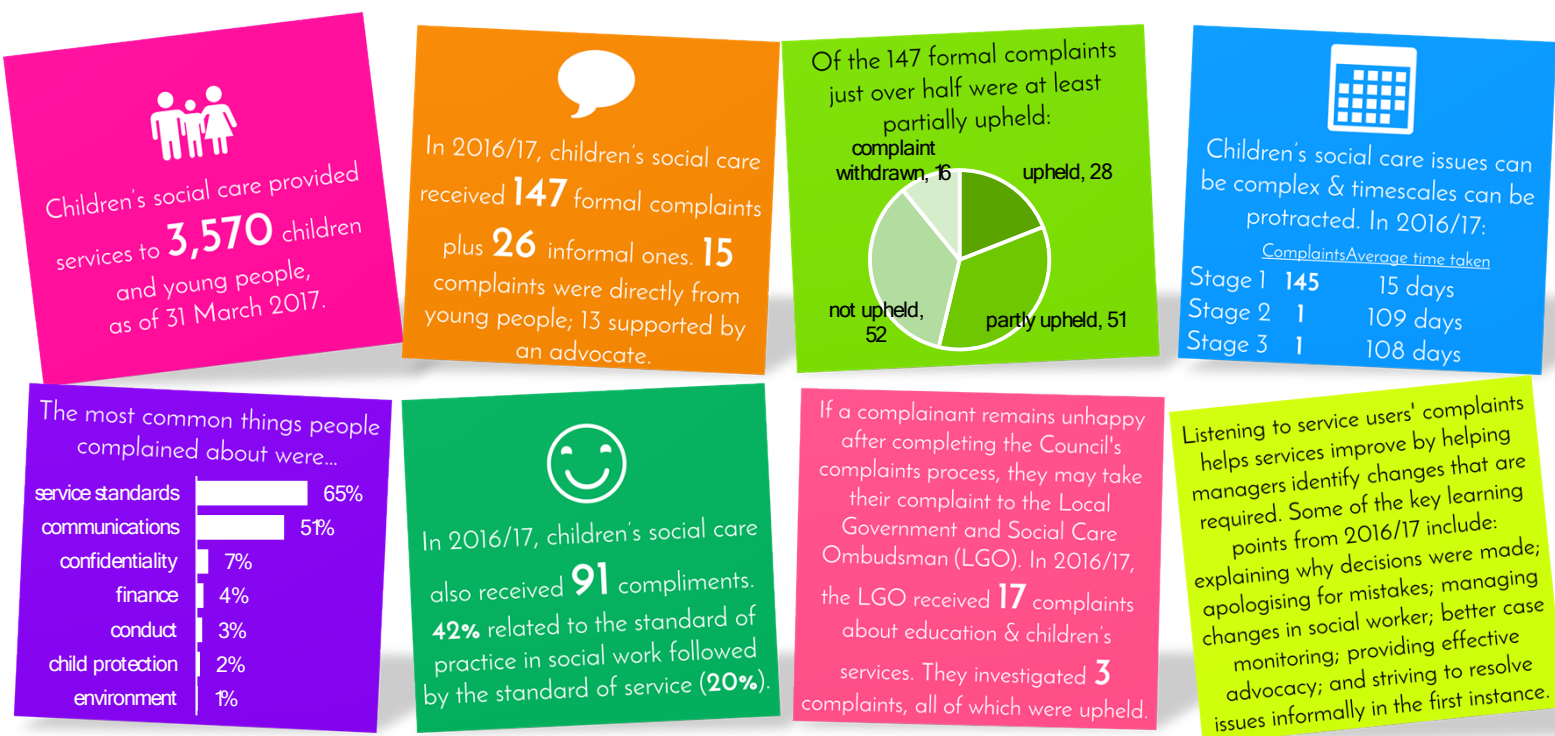
No

**Report title:  
Children's social care comments, compliments and complaints annual report 2016/17**

**1 Context (or background)**

- 1.1 There is a statutory duty for the Council to have a system for receiving representations by, or on behalf of, children who use the social care services they provide or commission; and for the Council to produce an annual report about the operation of the complaints procedure.
- 1.2 This report sets out the details of the comments, compliments and complaints across Coventry's children's social care services in 2016/17. It highlights the themes that arise from them and the learning and service improvements that have resulted from the feedback received.

**2 Options considered and recommended proposal**



**Having your say about children's social care**

*If you have a problem with children's social care services or if you are unhappy about something that is happening to you, this can usually be sorted out by speaking to someone you trust like your social worker, keyworker or foster carer. But if they can't put things right for you, then you can make a complaint. You can do so by asking to speak to your **children's rights officer**. The children's rights officer makes regular visits to children's homes in Coventry or you can ring them on **0800 0272 18**.*

- 2.1 Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, there were 173 statutory and informal complaints received about children's social care services. That is, 147 statutory complaints and 26 informal complaints; an increase from 133 statutory complaints in 2015/16.
- 2.2 91 compliments were received in the year compared with 68 in 2015/16.

- 2.3 A small number of complaints (15) were from children and young people themselves or from an advocate, the remainder were from adults. There has been a decrease of children and young people using an advocate compared to 17 in 2015/16.
- 2.4 Two main themes could be identified as arising from the complaints by and on behalf of users in 2016/17: issues regarding poor communication with users; and concerns about the standards of service provided.
- 2.5 Themes from compliments were predominantly around the good standard of practice received from individual social workers and the overall standard of service received from teams
- 2.6 Appendix I sets out the children's social care comments, compliments and complaints annual report for 2016/17, highlighting trends and the themes that has arisen from complaints and the learning and service improvements that have resulted from the feedback received.
- 2.7 Appendix II sets out the Council's internal guidance for handling People Directorate and social care complaints.

### **3 Results of consultation undertaken**

- 3.1 None identified or undertaken.

### **4 Timetable for implementing this decision**

- 4.1 Areas for development and improvement will be included within the divisional and relevant team plans.

### **5 Comments from Director of Finance and Corporate Services**

#### **5.1 Financial implications**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. Financial remedies resulting from any complaints are typically paid out of service budgets.

#### **5.2 Legal implications**

This report meets the legal requirement for the Council to monitor arrangements made in accordance with regulations by keeping a record of each representation received, and compiling a report every 12 months on the operation of the procedure.

### **6 Other implications**

#### **6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council Plan?**

This annual report sets out the progress made by the service towards the Council Plan vision to be locally committed, by improving the quality of life for Coventry people, by contributing to the priority to protect our most vulnerable people.

It also works towards the Children and Young People Plan priorities to ensure that children and young people are safe, achieve and make a positive contribution. Children, young people and others acting on their behalf are encouraged to report any concerns about the care and services they are receiving so that these can be addressed quickly.

#### **6.2 How is risk being managed?**

There are reputational as well as financial risks when things go wrong. It is, therefore, important that the Council takes action and learns from the outcome of complaints.

**6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

The co-ordination and management of complaints involves considerable officer time. Therefore, where things have gone wrong, it is important for the Council to put things right, learn from the experience and make the necessary improvements. The feedback that is received from complaints and other representations is reported to managers on a regular basis to inform service planning and improvements.

**6.4 Equalities and equality and consultation analyses (ECA)**

ECAs have been built into the delivery of work within children's social care services. As part of continuous improvement, the service will continue to review the integration of equality and diversity into operational practice and performance monitoring.

**6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment**

None

**6.6 Implications for partner organisations?**

Children's social care may be delivered in-house, or by external agencies for instance partner organisations commissioned by the local authority. The responsibility remains with the Council even when services are delivered by external agencies or partner organisations. Therefore, it is important for the Council and partner organisations to learn from the experience when things go wrong, and work together to make the necessary improvements.

**Report author(s):****Name and job title:**

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Interim Complaints Officer

Si Chun Lam  
Interim Insight Manager (Intelligence)

**Directorate:**

People

**Contact:**

[CLYPCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:CLYPCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk)

Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

28/09/2017 11:55:09

Contributor/ approver name	Title	Directorate or organisation	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
<b>Contributors:</b>				
Amrit Bilkhu	Integrated Services Manager, Looked After Children and All-Age Disability Team (0 to 14)	People	17/08/2017	31/08/2017
Stella Botchway	Consultant in Public Health Intelligence	People	08/09/2017	12/09/2017
Jane Brooks	Strategic Lead for Early Help and Protection	People	23/08/2017	14/09/2017
Matt Clayton	Temporary Service Manager to Route 21, EDT, CIS, The Grange & Gravel Hill	People	17/08/2017	06/09/2017
Iqbal Ghag	Service Manager, Referral and Assessment Service	People	23/08/2017	25/08/2017
Shirley Gounder	Adoption Service Manager	People	17/08/2017	14/09/2017
Sandra Kerr	Service Manager, North West Neighbourhood Team	People	23/08/2017	23/08/2017
Jaspal Mann	Equality and Diversity Officer	People	18/09/2017	20/09/2017
Wendy Ohandjanian	Equality and Diversity Officer	People	18/09/2017	18/09/2017
Karen Ogle	Service Manager, North East and South Neighbourhood Teams	People	23/08/2017	31/08/2017
Nigel Patterson	Neighbourhood Services Manager (Integrated Youth Support)	People	23/08/2017	11/09/2017
Katherine Robinson	Service Manager, Family Placement Service	People	17/08/2017	25/08/2017
Paul Smith	Strategic Lead for Looked After Children	People	17/08/2017	14/09/2017
Usha Patel	Governance Services Officer	Place	08/09/2017	11/09/2017
<b>Names of approvers for submission: (officers and members)</b>				
Finance: Rachel Sugars	Finance Manager	Place	08/09/2017	26/09/2017
Legal: Julie Newman	People Team Manager	Place	08/09/2017	11/09/2017
Gail Quinton	Deputy Chief Executive (People)	People	20/09/2017	26/09/2017
John Gregg	Director Children's Services	People	08/09/2017	26/09/2017
Members: Councillor Ed Ruane	Cabinet Member (Children and Young People)		14/09/2017	19/09/2017

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# Children's social care comments, compliments and complaints annual report 2016/17

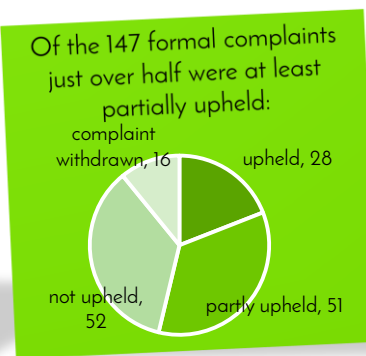
COMMENTS  
COMPLIMENTS  
& COMPLAINTS

**Ilius Ahmed**  
Interim Complaints Officer  
People Directorate  
Coventry City Council

# Children's social care 2016/17 complaints & representations key facts & figures

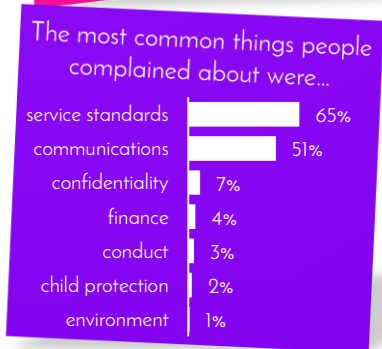
Children's social care provided services to **3,570** children and young people, as of 31 March 2017.

In 2016/17, children's social care received **147** formal complaints plus **26** informal ones. **15** complaints were directly from young people; 13 supported by an advocate.



Children's social care issues can be complex & timescales can be protracted. In 2016/17:

Complaints	Average time taken
Stage 1	145 15 days
Stage 2	1 109 days
Stage 3	1 108 days



In 2016/17, children's social care also received **91** compliments. **42%** related to the standard of practice in social work followed by the standard of service (**20%**).

If a complainant remains unhappy after completing the Council's complaints process, they may take their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO). In 2016/17, the LGO received **17** complaints about education & children's services. They investigated **3** complaints, all of which were upheld.

Listening to service users' complaints helps services improve by helping managers identify changes that are required. Some of the key learning points from 2016/17 include: explaining why decisions were made; apologising for mistakes; managing changes in social worker; better case monitoring; providing effective advocacy; and striving to resolve issues informally in the first instance.

### Having your say about children's social care

If you have a problem with children's social care services or if you are unhappy about something that is happening to you, this can usually be sorted out by speaking to someone you trust like your social worker, keyworker or foster carer. But if they can't put things right for you, then you can make a complaint. You can do so by asking to speak to your **children's rights officer**. The children's rights officer makes regular visits to children's homes in Coventry or you can ring them on **0800 0272 118**.



## Introduction

Local Authorities are required by law (Children Act 1989, plus subsequent changes including the Local Authority Social Services Complaints Regulations (1990) as a result of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003) to have a system for receiving representations made by or on behalf of children who use the social care services they provide or commission. These include: social work services, residential care, fostering, adoption and the provision of support to families, children with disabilities and young people in trouble with the law.

Representations are defined as comments, compliments and complaints.

Local authorities are required by law to appoint a complaints officer to oversee all aspects of the procedure.

Some complaints received do not meet the criteria to be dealt with under the statutory procedure. When this is the case, these are registered under the Council's corporate complaints procedure. The arrangements for handling these complaints are different from the statutory process in terms of timescales and the independence of the people who investigate and review the complaints.

The People Directorate has a nominated officer assigned to the management of representations from children and others who present feedback on children's social care services.

The purpose of the comments, compliments and complaints system is to ensure that:

- the views and experiences of people who use services are heard;
- positive feedback is used to develop services and acknowledge good practice;
- things that have gone wrong are put right;
- the organisation learns from both positive and negative feedback; and
- the organisation sustains its focus on service users / customers / citizens.

As part of the Council's commitment to openness, quality assurance, service development and listening and learning from service users, this report provides summary information from comments, compliments and complaints received under the statutory procedures in relation to children's social care services between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017.

Particular reference is made to the range of representations received and responses to them and specific trends and issues that emerged in the reporting period.

## Summary

Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, children's social care services dealt with 5,395 referrals; this represents a substantial decrease from the previous year (7,987). As of 31 March 2017, children's social care were providing services to 3,570 children and young people, a 2% decrease compared to 3,645 a year ago (31 March 2016).

The total number of statutory and informal complaints received about children's social care services in 2016/17 was 173 (147 statutory complaints and 26 informal complaints); an increase from 133 statutory complaints in 2015/16. 91 compliments were received in the year compared with 68 in 2015/16.

A small number of complaints (15) were from children and young people themselves or from an advocate complaining on behalf of a child; the remainder were from adults. There has been a decrease in the number of children or young people using an advocate to make a complaint, compared to 17 in 2015/16.

Two main themes could be identified as arising from the complaints by and on behalf of users in 2016/17: issues regarding poor communication with users; and concerns about the standards of service provided.

Themes from compliments were predominantly around the good standard of practice received from individual social workers and the overall standard of service received from teams.

## Responding to feedback

Comments, compliments and complaints can tell the Council a great deal about the service users' experiences of service delivery, professional practice and the outcome of management decisions. Children's social care services welcome this feedback and encourages children, their advocates and anyone who uses the service or who is affected by it, to make their views known.

### Promoting feedback

It is vitally important that the comments, complaints and compliments system is easily accessible. This maximises the opportunities for individuals to make their views known. Complaints can be accepted through the contact centre via a visit to the centre, by letter, by an online form or by telephone. Complaints may also be made directly to the team that is providing them with a service. Sometimes, complaints are also made via elected members (councillors) the chief executive; or directly to senior managers. Complaints can also be referred to the Council from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO). Complainants who contact the complaints team directly are encouraged to use the contact centre to ensure that their complaint can be processed efficiently.

The majority of complainants chose to make a complaint through the contact centre. Statistics have shown that this has been an increase on the previous year.

Of particular importance is the need to inform children of their opportunity to make representations and to find methods they can easily use. There have been 15 complaints from children and young people themselves this year, which is a decrease on last year (17). Work has taken place with Barnardo's advocacy service to ensure that more feedback is received from children and young people. More work will be undertaken to improve this number further in 2017/18.

The table below indicates how many complaints were received and method of complaint.

Method	Number of complaints
Email	114
Form	28
In person	7
Letter	13
Telephone	9
Not known	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>173 (including informal)</b>

### Advocacy

Since 1 April 2004, the Advocacy Services and Representations Regulations 2004, have required councils to make arrangements for the provision of advocacy to children and young people making representations under the Children Act 1989. Of the 15 children and young people making complaints during the year, 13 used an advocate to support them in making their complaint. Since April 2006, the advocacy service has been commissioned from Barnardo's.

## Representations received in 2016/17

Comments	Compliments	Complaints
0	91	173 (147 statutory & 26 informal)

The total number of statutory complaints received about children's social care services in 2016/17 were 147 (plus 26 informal complaints); an increase from 133 statutory complaints in 2015/16.

	Compliments recorded	Formal statutory complaints
2009/10	134	123
2010/11	145	148
2011/12	122	116
2012/13	126	133
2013/14	85	102
2014/15	66	117
2015/16	68	133
2016/17	91	147

## Complaints

Listening to service users' complaints helps services improve by helping managers identify changes that are required. The statutory procedures offer a 3-stage process, and the corporate procedures offer a 2-stage process, both of which aim to provide a satisfactory resolution to any complaint, preferably as quickly as possible.

The table below sets out the number of complaints in 2016/17 by resolution:

Formal statutory complaints	2016/17	
Upheld	28	19%
Partly upheld	51	35%
Not upheld	52	35%
Complaint withdrawn by complainant	16	11%
Open	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	

The following table sets out the number of complaints by team:

Team	Complaints
South neighbourhood team	27
North East neighbourhood team	22
North West neighbourhood team	17
Route 21 (leaving care service)	17
All ages disability team (0-25)	16
Referral and assessment service	13
Fostering	8
Looked after children	8
Multi-agency safeguarding hub	7
Adoption	3
Other	3
Safeguarding children's service	2
Special educational needs	2
Youth service	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>

## Comments

People may also express disappointment, disagreement or observations about services without necessarily wanting to complain. Feedback of this nature will be recorded as a comment on the Council's central customer relationship management system and forwarded to the relevant service area for consideration and action.

No comments were recorded in 2016/17.

## Compliments

Compliments tell the Council what people appreciate about services and the way they are provided. Positive feedback also encourages and motivates staff and enables them to celebrate their good performance. Every compliment received is shared with the individual or team to whom it refers and copied to the relevant managers.

91 compliments were received in the year. The majority of compliments (42%) reflected satisfaction about the standard of practice in social work; and nearly one-fifth were compliments about the standard of service provided by a social worker and/or child and family worker. Other compliments received were categorised were about good partnership working; child-centred practice; and the quality of communication.

Compliments recorded include those from other professionals and partner organisations, for instance, advocates, police officers, judges, schools; as well as compliments from foster carers and service users, for instance, parents/carers, children and young people, and other family members.

The following are a sample of compliments received by children's social care in 2016/17:

Children / young people	Foster carers	Parents / guardians
"She is the best social worker ever because she does everything to keep me safe and happy and if she is free then she is always there for me and comes and talk to me when I'm at school and home... She brings shine to every day and sparkles like a star."	"She is brilliant, her support to me and the work with the two girls who are placed with me is fantastic. She is great with the girls, she's following their life story work and does all the tasks that are needed I'm really impressed with the support she provides us and it makes a real difference."	"My daughter wanted me to say she had a great time at young carers this holiday. She's made me take her back to Coombe Abbey twice so she could show me what she did. Thanks for including her."
"Thank you for everything. I miss you time to get on well with my new social worker!"		"My son absolutely loved it and hasn't stopped talking to everyone about it. Thank you so much for arranging, it's great to see him have some fun on his own."
"Thank you for supporting me and my mum for twelve weeks. You've been so much help!"		"My daughter had a brilliant time at the party and last week's activities, her confidence is really building each time she attends and I'm so glad she gets a break. Keep doing what you do!"
"She always kept to her promises... everything was completed I felt like I could be honest with her and that I gained someone who I can trust."		"Thanks for including my son – it does him the world of good hanging out with children who know what's going on for him!! P.S. he loved his certificate, its pride of place on the fridge, you always go the extra mile!!"
"Without your support, I doubt I would be as happy as I am today. You also helped me with college, finding a job and other things which I really appreciate you doing."		

### Local resolution (Stage 1)

The service aim to resolve problems, whenever possible, at Stage 1. At this stage, the allocated manager (usually the manager responsible for the service being complained about) will try to identify what's needed so that the complainant feels able to continue to work with the service. Examples of the types of resolutions offered can be found later in this report.

There were 147 complaints, of which 145 were resolved at Stage 1. That is, 99% of complaints were resolved at Stage 1 of the complaints process, this is an increase from the percentage of 89% during 2015/16. More emphasis on local resolution has been introduced this year, helping improve the percentage resolved at stage one of the process.

### Formal investigation (Stage 2)

In certain circumstances a formal investigation of the circumstances leading to a complaint is a more appropriate response, although this tends to be a lengthier process. This may be required when complainants remain dissatisfied with the conclusion reached at Stage 1 or when the complaint is particularly complex or involves a number of service areas. These investigations are always conducted by someone outside the direct line management of the service and the person about whom the complaint is being made.

In 2016/17, there was one investigation carried out at Stage 2, compared with seven in 2015/16. At the time of reporting, the complaint had been successfully resolved at Stage 2.

This investigation was undertaken by external investigators. At the conclusion of all Stage 2 investigations the investigating officers' reports are read by senior managers for them to consider and act upon before a response is sent to the complainant.

### Review panel (Stage 3)

Within the **statutory** complaints procedure, where complainants are dissatisfied with the outcome of a formal investigation at Stage 2, they can request that a review panel of three independent people be convened to examine the investigation. Review panels can make recommendations to the Director of Children's Services if they conclude that the complaint is justified, or that more could be done to resolve the matter, or if they feel the Council should take action to prevent similar situations arising in the future.

One complaint was considered by a review panel this year. The panel upheld the findings of the Stage 2 investigations and no further action was required. A single complaint, considered at Stage 2 during the reporting period, may be considered by a panel if the complainant makes a final decision to move to a Stage 3 review.

Note: this is different from the corporate complaints procedure, where no Stage 3 exists.

### Timescales

The legislation and corporate procedures set out timescales for dealing with complaints at each stage of the process. The timescales are:

	<b>Legislation (statutory children's social care complaints)</b>	<b>Corporate complaints</b>
Stage 1	10 working days (can be extended to 20 working days)	10 working days
Stage 2	25 working days (can be extended to 65 working days)	20 working days
Stage 3	Within 30 working days of complainant's request	Not applicable

The complexity of social care issues means that complaint resolution can sometimes be protracted and achievement of the time-scales can suffer as a result. The complaints officer, therefore, undertakes rigorous monitoring of progress in relation to responding to complaints.

The table below sets out the complaints by stage, and the timescales in 2016/17:

Complaint stage	Timescales	Number of complaints
Stage 1	Within 10 working days	73
	Over 10 working days	72
Stage 2	Within 25 working days	0
	Over 25 working days	1
Stage 3	Within 30 working days	0
	Over 30 working days	1
Total		<b>147</b>

Complaint stage	Number of complaints	Average timescales
Stage 1	145	15 days
Stage 2	1	109 days
Stage 3	1	108 days

The average time in days to complete Stage 1 complaints was 15 working days in 2016/17 compared to 30 days in 2015/16. Adherence to timescales had previously been a challenge so weekly meetings were introduced with senior managers, so that complaint timescales were improved.

Investigations of Stage 2 complaints under the statutory procedure often need to be extended beyond the 25 working days timescale due to the complexity of the issues being considered. In these situations, the importance of keeping the complainant informed and securing their agreement to an extension of the timescale, is recognised and addressed. However, there were some delays in completing Stage 2 complaints with the average time in days to complete Stage 2 complaints being 109 working days in 2016/17. This is still an improvement from 148 working days in 2015/16.

There was one Stage 3 complaint, and the review panel took over 30 days but the response to their recommendations were also completed within time.

### Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

If the complainant remains unhappy following the outcome of the Council's complaints process, they have the option of taking their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO).

In 2016/17, the LGO received 17 complaints with the category of education and children's services. Of these, three investigations were held, of which all were upheld by the LGO. This compared to two (both upheld) in 2015/16.

## Identified issues and resolutions

### Compliments and complaints by category

Compliments	Total
Standard of practice (social work)	38
Standards of service	18
Good partnership working	5
Good child focus	5
Good communication	2

Complaints	Total
Standards of service	95
Poor communication	75
Breach of confidentiality	10
Finance	6
Staff conduct	5
Child protection issues	3
Standard of environment	1

Note: compliments and complaints cover more than one category.



## Resolutions

All staff dealing with complaints are encouraged to make any reasonable effort to ensure that the complaint is resolved. Common resolutions this year were:

- a full explanation of why decisions were made;
- apologies for mistakes made and any distress caused;
- a change in social worker, where this could be managed in the best interests of the child;
- the opportunity for complainants to ensure their view is recorded on the social care file;
- additional monitoring of the case through the usual supervision route;
- provision of advocacy to ensure child's voice could be heard; and
- to aim to deal with complaints informally in the first instance – this has achieved a positive resolution in many cases, which in turn has decreased complaint escalation.

For some complaints, compensation was paid. The key principle for any financial remedies paid is that a remedy should, as far as possible, put the complainant back in the position they would have been in but for the fault identified. Typically, compensation will be considered if a service user has had to use their own finances due to the delay in offering a service or if their belongings have been damaged or lost through no fault of theirs. The following table sets out compensation paid in 2016/17:

Amount	Detail
£52. <sup>50</sup>	To savings account
£60	ISA savings
£100	Delay in response
£113	£100 towards carpet plus £13 towards travel
£200	Inconvenience, time for response (LGO)
£250	Nursery funding
£300	To savings account
£300	Court proceedings
£500	Distress caused
£1,000	Compensation regarding delay
£1,000	Funding for move
£1,875 + £500	Settlement costing + premium service fee
<b>TOTAL: £6,250<sup>50</sup></b>	

## Service improvements

Upon completion of the complaint investigation, officers are asked to identify specific service improvements as a result of the complaint. On the completion of Stage 2 upheld complaints, managers have provided action plans that detail recommendations across all services to improve services. These are regularly monitored by the complaints officer and are forwarded to the senior leadership meetings for regular review.

Examples of some of these improvements are:

- re-emphasising to social workers the importance of keeping data safe and records are stored in compliance with the data protection act – with training supported and advised by the Council's information governance team and by the Council's information management strategic group;
- improvement to quality of social workers assessment and analysis;
- reduce drift and delay in care planning and assessments are up to date;
- children with disability to be assessed as a child in need;
- common assessment process and robustness of the process to continue to be reviewed; and
- reducing timeframe for responding to complaints, by providing support to front line managers in responding to complaints at Stage 1 and reinforcing the need to return calls in accordance with corporate timescales.

## Progress on actions

A number of actions were identified in the 2015/16 report. Progress on these actions is as follows.

### **Distribution of new leaflets**

Newly designed complaint leaflets, explaining the process for children and young people were distributed to all service areas and service users.

### **Further revision of the Stage 1 process**

The appointment of a full time interim complaints officer enabled all Stage 1 complaints to be monitored and managed more effectively. For the first three quarters of 2016/17 year the average time in days to complete Stage 1 complaints was 13 working days, compared to 18 working days in quarter 4. Further work has continued in 2016/17 to streamline the process and a more informal approach to investigate complaints has been undertaken to ensure that, where possible complaints are not escalated within the complaints process and are resolved more quickly.

## Service improvement and learning for 2017/18

### **Close working with Barnardo's and the Children's Champion to ensure that the voices of children and young people are heard**

The complaints officer is now working more closely with Barnardo's and meets with them on a regular basis to review cases. Work is to be done with the Children's Champion to gain more feedback from children and young people, including ways to improve the way children and young people can make complaints, compliments and representations. The Complaints Officer will attend Voices of Care and Children's Planning Groups to gain feedback on improvements that could be made.

### **Review on ease of access to complaints process**

There will be a review on how children and young people can access the complaints process. The Complaints Officer will work directly with children and young people in conjunction with the Children's Champion to ensure the Council has a process that is accessible and a complaint is easy to process.

### **Further revision of the Stage 1 process**

There has already been an improvement in the average time in days to complete Stage 1 complaints (from 19 to 15 working days). In 2017/18 the Complaints Officer will meet with all teams on a regular basis to ensure complaints are monitored and dealt within statutory guidelines. Review of all Stage 1 complaints at the point of contact will also take place to attempt to resolve complaints informally where possible.

### **Further revision of the Stage 2 process**

There were significant delays in completing Stage 2 complaints in 2015/16 with the average time in days to completion being 148 working days, instead of the 25 working days statutory guidelines. In 2016/17 the average working days for completion was 109. The Complaints Officer will meet with managers on a regular basis to monitor and manage the complaints to ensure they are completed in a timely manner. A complaints report will also be provided to the senior leadership team.

### **RAG report and action plans**

A RAG report was introduced in Q4 to ensure managers were able to have an overview of complaints in their area. It enabled current complaints to be monitored and discussed at Management Team Meetings, allowing joint working and responses. This process has continued into 2017/18 as it has been effective in monitoring complaints. Stage 2 complaint action plans were also introduced in Q4 and are recommended resolutions from upheld complaints to be completed for all service areas. This is monitored by the Complaints Officer. The Complaints Officer will link with workforce development as and when required to recommend any training provision.



### **Training for team and managers on complaint processes**

Complaints Officer to provide training sessions on all aspects of complaint processes. Feedback sessions will be provided on positive and negative areas of categories of complaints.

### **Specific service area improvements/learning which have been identified**

In the South Neighbourhood and North-East Neighbourhood all telephone calls made to social workers who are not in the office are referred to the duty social worker/senior practitioner/team manager in that order to ensure that there is a reduction in complaints relating to poor communication/poor service. If callers refuses to give their details, managers have requested that a note is made of this.

In the North West Neighbourhood Team, in terms of learning from complaints and closing the loop staff will be reminded that they should respond within a day and if they are unable to do so that they pass to duty to respond. Managers have been reminded of the timescales for completion and to try to find resolution where possible informally. Managers are liaising with admin to ensure an escalation process if the worker concerned is not in the office.

In the Referral and Assessment Service, officers have been reminded to adhere to data protection principles and manage information sensitively. To reinforce this message and area of practice all staff members have been asked to undertake data protection training (this is ongoing and subject to monitoring).

Workers have been reminded to quality assure documents being shared with families to eradicate third party data being breached. Officers are reminded to liaise with absent parents and make them part of the assessment process. Officers have been told documents need to be shared in a timely manner with relevant parties. Officers have been reminded to ensure calls are responded to and in the case of professionals, social workers are advised to share their work mobile numbers and in respect of service users, a system is in place whereby in the absence of the allocated social workers, a duty social workers will take the call and remind the allocated social workers to follow up on their return as necessary.

In the Looked After Children service, themes identified are around poor communication, concerns regarding the standard of service and disputes in relation to care plans. This highlights a need for improvement around communication, accessibility, participation and overall customer service. Social workers do work hard to ensure the needs of children and young people are met, however there is some evidence of a lack of sharing of information and open communication channels to ensure that all involved, including children, young people and their parents are consistently kept informed and included. Having reviewed the complaints, on large the worries in relation to standard of service and care plan disputes are due to poor communication. Some work has started in cluster meetings, and workers are reminded to ensure effective communication, responding within appropriate timescales, and improving diary management to factor in space to return calls and respond to emails. Workers are reminded of the necessity and benefits of working together collaboratively, and reiterating the importance of regular team around the child meetings to include all those involved. Team managers are improving their oversight of such issues in supervision, and addressing on an individual basis where necessary to improve the communication skills of social workers. All social workers and team managers are reminded to quality assure care plans and any other documents before approval and before distributing. Dip sampling activity is taking place in relation to care plans with managers, senior practitioners and social workers to identify areas of concern/strength and to action plan for improvement, taking on board comments made by children and parents. Social workers are reminded and encouraged to ensure that children, young people and their families are invited to and supported to attend important meetings such as lac reviews and pep meetings, wherever possible. Wider work is being implemented, including training to develop and improve the skills of the workforce and to ultimately provide a consistently good service.

In the children's disability team (all ages disability team 0-14), team managers and senior practitioners have been working with social workers reinforcing the importance of ensuring parents' involvement as part of the

assessment process. Workers are reminded that children, young people and their parent's views are integral to an assessment, and that building positive working relationships improves communication and ensures the process is inclusive. Dip sampling has taken place with team managers around the quality of children and family assessments, and an action plan has been implemented. This plan includes introducing clear check points for review, designing a development/ training day, focussed on assessment and improving analysis, and ensuring good management oversight and grip. Social workers are also regularly reminded of the importance of good communication, keeping children and families informed and included throughout. It is reinforced that workers and managers will not complete or sign off assessments unless they have been shared with families, and managers are improving their quality assurance of all documents. Managers are also improving their oversight and performance management within supervision, addressing issues on an individual basis where necessary.

In fostering and adoption, officers will initiate a review of the arrangements for finance panel and pathways to care agreements to clarify policies for these arrangements and will ensure that Finance panel includes representatives of senior management in both services to enable consistency of approach across both services. Improve recording and detail of financial support packages to adopters and special guardians to ensure there is clarity about what has been agreed and for how long. Review arrangements for financial support to special guardians ensure that these are compliant with national guidance without applying this guidance inconsistently. Ensure that health advice is available to panel as needed. Clarify message about approval process to carers transferring from another agency. Review methods for undertaking statutory checks for other local authorities to include consideration of methods of checking adult services records and to ensure that all household members are checked as requested. Work is also in place to ensure that the business service centre have access to adult services electronic records system.

In Route 21, the care leaving service, the majority of complaints have been around the standard of service and poor communication young people have received. All of these have been due to workers leaving and tasks not being finished or handed over correctly. Service improvements to address these issues including 1) working to ensure stable workforce and planned transitions when new workers become involved; 2) Team managers to ensure they meet with workers before they leave and review all cases for outstanding actions; 3) Ensure that when a worker leaves, all their young people are notified and have a named point of contact in their absence; 4) Rationale for any decisions to be clearly recorded on file so this can be explained to young people in the absence of their workers. Also in Route 21, in relation to financial issues around staying put, a review of staying put is being undertaken. With regard to Subject Access requests not being completed in a timely manner, this issue has been flagged with the strategic lead for looked after children as there is no capacity within the service to meet timescales that are required.

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# Coventry City Council People Directorate and Social Care Complaints Handling Guidance

## Introduction

Coventry City Council is committed to putting local people and their needs at the heart of what it does. When things go wrong, it is important to make it right. Effective management and resolution of complaints, as well as learning from complaints, help ensure that Council services meet the needs of local residents and communities, and helps build a foundation of trust in order for the Council to have new conversations with residents, communities and partners to enable people to do more for themselves as active and empowered citizens. A key principle of this is continuous improvement, and this includes reviewing the Council's complaints processes and systems to ensure consistency and improve the way the Council serve the people of Coventry.

The Council's complaints policy is set out at [www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/). It defines complaints as "any expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the Council or its employees, which the customer feels should have been provided". In addition to the corporate complaints process, there are statutory requirements for the Council to have a system for receiving representations made by or on behalf of children or an adult using social care services provided by / commissioned by the Council, arising from the Children Act 1989 and Local Authority Social Services and National Health Services Complaints Regulations 2009 respectively. The Council strives to act in accordance with best practice, set out in the National Complaints Managers' Group (May 2016) Good Practice guidance for handling complaints concerning adults and children social care services. Where possible, complaints should be resolved informally. If this is not possible, service users can formally complain to the Council.

## Guidance

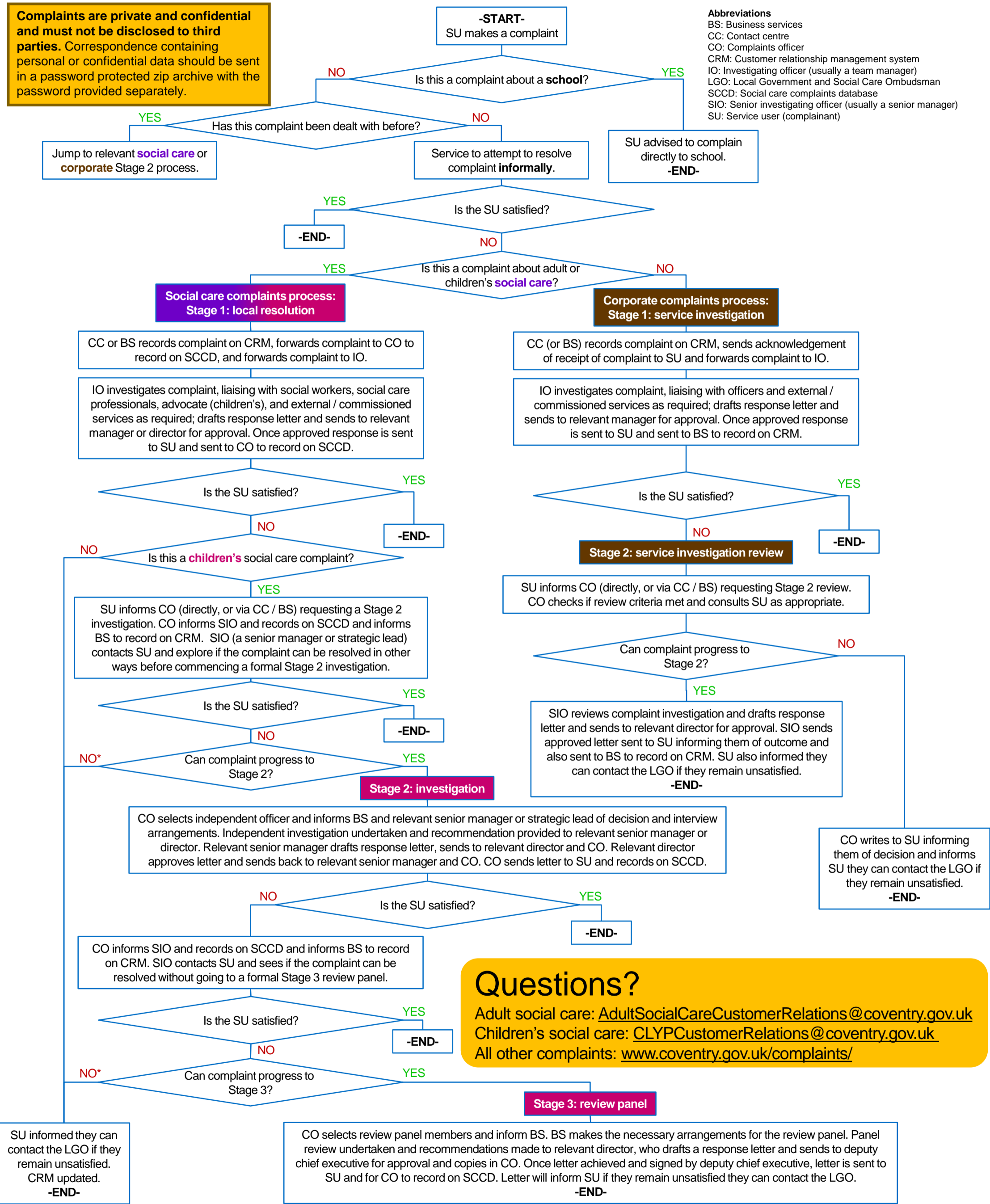
Corporate complaints	Adult social care complaints	Children's social care complaints
<b>Formal complaint stages: two stages</b> Stage 1: service investigation Stage 2: service investigation review	<b>Formal complaint stages: one stage</b> Stage 1: local resolution	<b>Formal complaint stages: three stages</b> Stage 1: local resolution Stage 2: investigation Stage 3: review panel
<b>Timescales</b> Acknowledgement: 3 working days Stage 1: 10 working days Stage 2: 20 working days	<b>Timescales</b> Acknowledgement: 3 working days Stage 1: 20 working days	<b>Timescales</b> (* maximum extension for complex cases) Acknowledgement: 3 working days Stage 1: 10 (to 20*) working days Stage 2: 25 (to 65*) working days Stage 3: 30 working days
<b>Service areas</b> Adult education, children's transport, education (except schools or education admissions appeals), housing options, HR/workforce/ICT/transformation (external only), libraries.	<b>Service areas</b> Adult social care.	<b>Service areas</b> Children's social care.
<b>Recording of complaints</b> On the corporate customer relationship management (CRM) system.	<b>Recording of complaints</b> On the corporate CRM system plus the social care complaints database.	<b>Recording of complaints</b> On the corporate CRM system plus the social care complaints database.
<b>Reporting and learning from complaints</b> Quarterly summary figures provided to and discussed at people leadership team; annual report on complaints to the LGO produced and upheld LGO complaints referred to the monitoring officer.	<b>Reporting and learning from complaints</b> Weekly progress reports and meetings held with senior managers, plus quarterly reports provided to adult social care management team and people leadership team, and annual report to the relevant cabinet member.	<b>Reporting and learning from complaints</b> Weekly progress reports and meetings held with senior managers, plus quarterly reports to children's services leadership team and people leadership team and annual report to the relevant cabinet member.

**Escalation of corporate complaints**  
If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, and they consider that one or more of the following apply: relevant information was not taken into account in investigating the complaint; procedures have not been properly applied in handling the complaint; there has been an incorrect interpretation of Council policy, they can ask for the complaint to be reviewed via a service investigation review. The review will either be conducted by a senior manager of the service or, a senior officer or manager outside the line management of the service depending on the circumstances. The complainant will be expected to explain, in writing or verbally, the grounds for seeking a review.

**Remedies, compensation and financial redress**  
The key principle for any financial remedies paid is that a remedy should, as far as possible, put the complainant back in the position they would have been in but for the fault identified. Any financial redress should be agreed with the relevant director, in line with LGO guidance: <http://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/advice-and-guidance/guidance-notes>

**Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO)**  
If a complainant is unhappy about the way the Council has dealt with their complaint, they can contact the LGO. The LGO would normally expect a complaint to be made within twelve months of when the complainant first knew of the problem that they are complaining about, and normally require all complainants to go through all stages of the Council's own procedure before considering the complaint. However, in certain circumstances the LGO has the discretion to waive this requirement. Note that a complainant can approach the LGO at any stage of the complaints process.

## Process Flowchart



**Questions?**  
Adult social care: [AdultSocialCareCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:AdultSocialCareCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk)  
Children's social care: [CLYPCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:CLYPCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk)  
All other complaints: [www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/)

\* on rare occasions a complaint may not progress to the next stage, e.g. out of timescale



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