



Cabinet Member (Children and Young People)

Time and Date

3.00 pm on Monday, 22nd October, 2018

Place

Diamond Room 5 - Council House

Public Business

1. **Apologies**

2. **Declarations of Interests**

3. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 6)

To note the minutes of the meeting held on 16th April, 2018

4. **Outstanding Issues Report**

There are no outstanding issues.

5. **Children's services comments, compliments and complaints annual report 2017/18** (Pages 7 - 36)

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People)

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

Martin Yardley, Executive Director (Place), Council House Coventry

Friday, 12 October 2018

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

Membership: Councillor: P Seaman (Cabinet Member)

By invitation: Councillor J Lepoidevin, T Skipper (Deputy 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

Tel: 024 7683 3198

Email: usha.patel@coventry.gov.uk

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Children and Young People held at
3.30 pm on Monday, 16 April 2018

Present:

Members: Councillor E Ruane (Cabinet Member)
 Councillor J Lepoidevin (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Employees (by Directorate):

People: J Gregg, People Directorate
 U Patel, Resources Directorate

Place

Apologies: Councillor B Kaur

Public Business

23. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

24. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th October 2017 were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

25. Recommendations from the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) Task and Finish Group on the Retention of Social Workers

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services which outlined recommendations from the Education and Children's Services Board (2) Task and Finish Group on the Retention of Social Workers.

At their meeting on 29th June 2017, the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) agreed to establish a task and finish group to consider the issues and details around the retention of social workers arising from an item on the Ofsted report. The task and finish group met four times, as well as holding two focus groups with social workers.

The scoping document, the social work research, the financial information and the workforce strategy and exit interview information were all attached as appendices to the report.

The Cabinet Member expressed concern over the high rate of staff turnover in some areas and the resulting reliance on agency staff and considered options to improve staff retention rates. He considered that more work needed to be done around the retention and recruitment of experienced social workers.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People:

1. **Notes the recommendations agreed by the Education and Children's Scrutiny Board (2).**
2. **Requests a report on the implementation of the progression scheme in September 2018, including details of numbers of staff leaving due to the removal of the market supplement and any associated agency costs.**
3. **Requests that the Director of Customer and Transformation investigates the potential level of savings that could be made by removing the BSC line management tier of responsibility to enhance the provision of specialist admin support to social work teams.**

26. Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) Outcomes based Commissioning Model

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Children's Services which sought permission, in principle, to the continued running of the local Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) and support team using an outcomes based commissioning model. The Life Chances application was approved in principle in August 2017.

Coventry City Council has operated a Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) and support team since September 2015. This was grant funded until March 2017 and since then has been core funded whilst officers have been exploring future funding models. One option which has been explored with the FDAC National Unit, in order to sustain the delivery over the medium term, was an outcomes based commissioning model. FDAC National Unit have the benefit of a national application to the Life Chances Fund, which provided them with grant funding to support delivery of the service using an Outcomes based Commissioning model, with Bridges Fund Management as the preferred social investor.

Although this is a citywide project, the FDAC Team would only work with a small number of cases (26-34 per annum) and therefore overall impact at ward level was low.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People:

1. **Approves the adoption of an outcomes based commissioning model to fund the continued running of the FDAC and support team to include entering into a contractual arrangement with a special purpose vehicle, which will provide funding for the running of the support team for 4.75 years and the running of post intervention support for a further 2 years. In return, the City Council will agree to make incremental repayments to the special purpose vehicle based on agreed performance milestones, up to a capped amount (to be agreed).**
2. **Delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services, City Solicitor and the Director of Finance and Corporate Services to negotiate and finalise the detailed terms of the all necessary legal agreements in line with the principles set out in this report.**

27. **Outstanding Issues Report**

There were no outstanding issues.

28. **Any other items of public business which the Cabinet Member decides to take as a matter of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

There were no items of other business.

(Meeting closed at 4.35 pm)

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Coventry City Council

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

22 October 2018

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Councillor Seaman

Director approving submission of the report:

Deputy Chief Executive (People)

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Children's services comments, compliments and complaints annual report 2017/18

Is this a key decision?

No

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 for children's services in 2017/18. 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) Approve publication of the annual report in relation to complaints and representations in children's services in 2017/18.

List of appendices included:

Appendix I – Children's services complaints and representations annual report 2017/18

Appendix II – Coventry City Council Complaints Handling Guidance

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

Young people's guide to making a social care complaint

https://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>

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Guidance for bodies in our jurisdiction to support good complaint handling <https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/advice-and-guidance/guidance-notes>

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 services comments, compliments and complaints annual report 2017/18****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 for children's services in 2017/18. 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

- 2.1 Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, there were 179 statutory and informal complaints received about children's services. That is, 156 statutory complaints, 12 corporate complaints and 11 informal complaints. The number of complaints under the statutory process continue to increase, up from 147 in 2016/17 and 133 in 2015/16.
- 2.2 64 compliments were received in the year compared with 91 in 2016/17 and 68 in 2015/16.
- 2.3 21 complaints were made by 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 – 7 during 2017/18, compared to 15 in 2016/17 and 17 in 2015/16.
- 2.4 Two main themes continue to be identified as arising from the complaints by and on behalf of users in 2017/18: 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. It is not currently possible to distinguish between compliments from children and young people themselves, or carers, or staff without manually going through every compliment. A selection of compliments from children and young people and families have been included in the appendix.
- 2.6 Appendix I sets out the children's services comments, compliments and complaints annual report for 2017/18, 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 guidance for handling 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 have been included within the divisional and relevant team plans for implementation in 2018/19.

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 paid out of service budgets. All complaints relating to financial issues were investigated and rectified accordingly.

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. 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 in children's services. As part of continuous improvement, the service will continue to review the integration of equality and diversity into operational practice and performance monitoring.

The complaints officer will collect data on complainants by protected characteristics such as ethnicity, sex and disability status from 2018/19 onwards. This will enable the Council to identify if its complaints policy is operating as intended, eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity in line with the public sector equality duty.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

Children's services 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:**

Si Chun Lam

Insight Development Manager (Place and Public Sector Transformation)

Ilius Ahmed

Complaints Officer

Directorate:

People

Contact:

CLYPCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk

Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

11/10/2018 11:42:34

Contributor/ approver name	Title	Directorate or organisation	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
Contributors:				
Neil Macdonald	Strategic Lead – Quality Assurance	People	12/09/2018	17/09/2018
Jaspal Mann	Equality and Diversity Officer	People	12/09/2018	13/09/2018
Wendy Ohandjanian	Equality and Diversity Officer	People	12/09/2018	13/09/2018
Rebecca Wilshire	Strategic Lead – Early Help and Protection	People	12/09/2018	13/09/2018
Paul Smith	Strategic Lead – Looked After Children	People	12/09/2018	17/09/2018
Usha Patel	Governance Services Officer	Place	19/09/2018	24/09/2018
Names of approvers for submission: (officers and members)				
Finance: Rachel Sugars	Finance Manager	Place	12/09/2018	24/09/2018
Legal: Julie Newman	City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer	Place	12/09/2018	24/09/2018
Gail Quinton	Deputy Chief Executive (People)	People	18/09/2018	24/09/2018
John Gregg	Director of Children's Services	People	12/09/2018	24/09/2018
Members: Councillor Seaman	Cabinet Member (Children and Young People)		19/09/2018	28/09/2018

This report is published on the Council's website: www.coventry.gov.uk/councilmeetings/

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Children's services complaints and representations annual report 2017/18



Children's services 2017/18 complaints & representations key facts & figures

Page 14

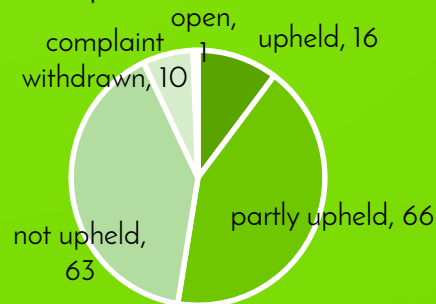


Children's services had **3,623** open referrals as of 31 March 2018.



In 2017/18, children's services received **179** complaints (156 were statutory, 12 corporate, and 11 informal). **21** complaints were made by young people; **7** supported by an advocate.

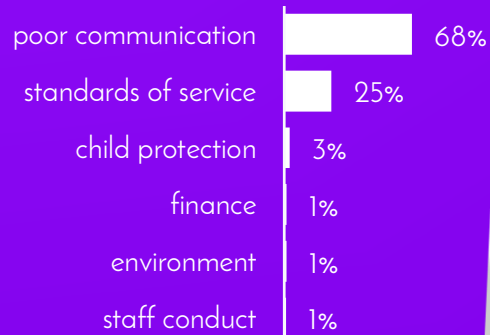
Of the 156 formal complaints just over half were at least partially upheld:



Children's services complaints can be complex & timescales can be protracted. In 2017/18:

Complaints		Average time taken	
Stage 1	153	16 days	
Stage 2	3	125 days	
Stage 3	0	N/A	

The most common things people complained about were...



In 2017/18, children's social care also received **64** compliments. Compliments were about the standard of practice, partnership working, taking a child-centred approach, and communication.

If a complainant remains unhappy after completing our complaints process, they may take their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). In 2017/18, the LGSCO received **29** complaints about education & children's services. They investigated **3** social care complaints; all were upheld.

Listening to service users' complaints helps services improve by helping managers identify changes that are required. Key learning points from 2017/18 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 services

If you have a problem with children's 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 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 services between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018.

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 2017 and 31 March 2018, children's services completed 21,035 contacts and received 5,871 referrals. This compares to 24,385 and 5,433 in 2016/17. As of 31 March 2018, there were 3,623 referrals open to children's services, compared to 3,574 a year ago.

The total number of statutory and informal complaints received about children's services in 2017/18 was 179. That is, 156 statutory complaints, 12 corporate complaints and 11 informal complaints. The number of complaints under the statutory process continue to increase, up from 147 in 2016/17 and 133 in 2015/16.

21 complaints were made by 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 – 7 during 2017/18 compared to 15 in 2016/17 and 17 in 2015/16.

Two main themes could be identified as arising from the complaints by and on behalf of users in 2017/18: 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. It is not currently possible to distinguish between compliments from children and young people themselves, or carers, or staff.

Feedback

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 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 (LGSCO). Complainants who contact the complaints team directly are encouraged to use the contact centre to ensure that their complaint can be processed efficiently.

As during 2016/17, the majority of complainants in 2017/18 chose to make a complaint via email or through the contact centre.

Advocacy

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 21 complaints from children and young people themselves this year, which is an increase on last year (15). Work has taken place with Barnardo's advocacy service to ensure that more feedback is received from children and young people.

Since 1st 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 21 children and young people making complaints during the year, 7 used an advocate to support them in making their complaint. Since April 2006, the Council has commissioned Barnardo's to provide an advocacy service.

Complaints

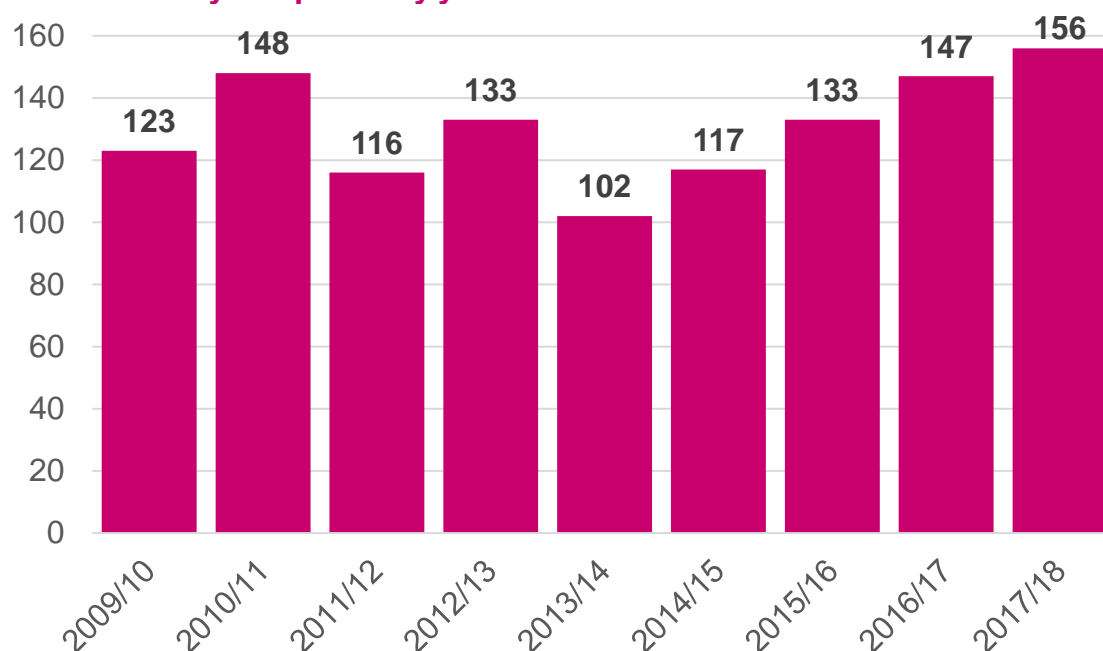
The table below indicates how many complaints were received, and how the complaint was received:

Method	Number of complaints
<i>Email</i>	83
<i>Form</i>	80
<i>Letter</i>	9
<i>Telephone</i>	5
<i>Not known</i>	2
TOTAL	179

156 statutory complaints, were received about children's services in 2017/18. This compares to 147 statutory complaints in 2016/17. In addition, we received 12 corporate and 11 informal complaints.

Annual comparison

Formal statutory complaints by year



Listening to service users' complaints helps services improve by helping managers identify changes that are required. The statutory procedures offer a three-stage process, and the corporate procedures offer a two-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 2017/18 by resolution:

Formal statutory complaints by upheld status

Status	Number of complaints	%
Upheld	16	10.5%
Partly upheld	66	42.5%
Not upheld	63	40%
Complaint withdrawn by complainant	10	6%
Open	1	1%
Total	156	

Formal statutory complaints by team

Team	Complaints
Referral and assessment service	21
South neighbourhood	19
Looked after children / looked after children permanency	18
Fostering & adoption	13
Team South	10
ThroughCare	10
Team west	9
North west neighbourhood	7
Team east	7
Route 21	7
Team central	6
Multi-agency safeguarding hub / responsive services	6
Children's disability team	5
North east neighbourhood	4

Team	Complaints
Area team Willenhall	4
Safeguarding	3
Commissioning	2
Area team Radford	1
Area team Gosford	1
Area team Hillfields	1
Unknown	2
Total	156

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 and forwarded to the relevant service area for consideration and action.

No comments were recorded in 2017/18.

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.

64 compliments were received in the year.

The majority of compliments reflected satisfaction about the standard of practice in social work; and 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.

It is not currently possible to distinguish between compliments from children and young people themselves, or carers, or staff without manually going through every compliment. Below is a selection of compliments from children/young people and parents/carers:

Thank you for all that you have done for our family, you've helped in many ways.

She brings shine to every day and sparkles like a star.

Thank you for supporting me and my mum!

Thank you for your support and your kindness. We as a family appreciate your efforts!

Thank you doesn't seem enough for what you have done for me and my mum.

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.

I appreciate everything you have done for me man, you have thought so much to get me out man!

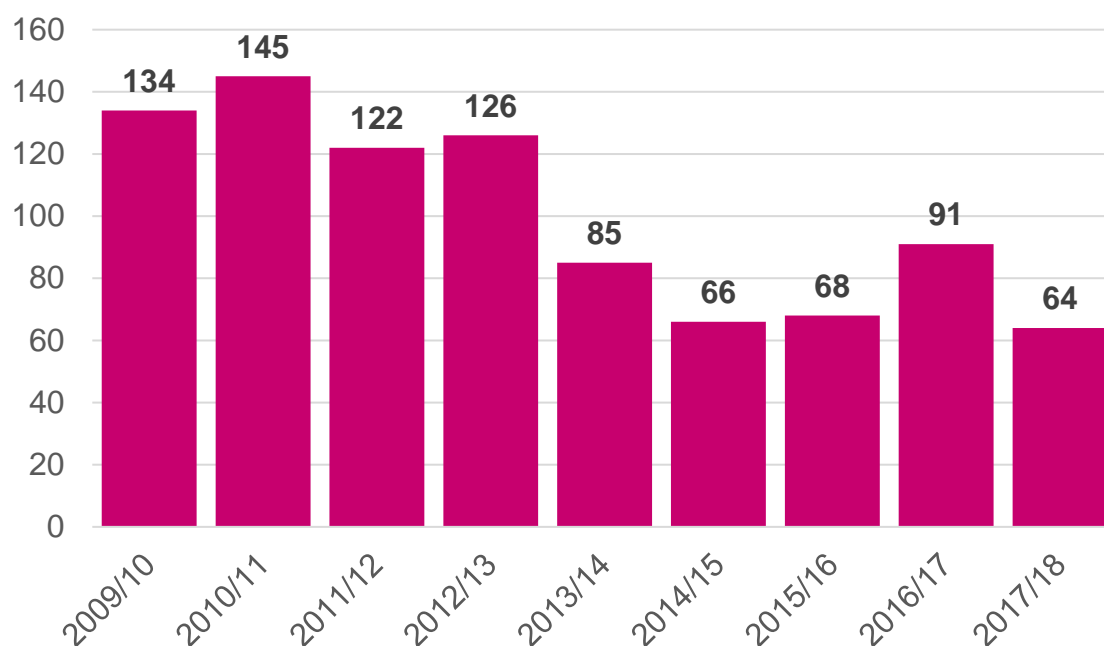
She is the best social worker ever because she does everything to keep me safe and happy and if she is free then she is always there for me and comes and talk to me when I'm at school and home.

Thank you for giving me some sanity!!!

I love [social worker] so much. She is lovely and so nice and so beautiful.

Annual comparison

Compliments recorded by year



Resolution of complaints

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 156 complaints, of which 153 were resolved at Stage 1. That is, 98% of complaints were resolved at Stage 1 of the complaints process, this is a slight decrease from the percentage of 99% during 2016/17. More emphasis on local resolution has been introduced this year, due to the restructure of children's services, helping to keep the percentage resolved at stage one of the process at a high level.

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 2017/18, there were 3 investigations carried out at Stage 2, compared with one in 2016/17. At the time of reporting, all complaints have been successfully resolved at Stage 2.

These investigations were 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.

There were no complaints considered for review at Stage 3 during 2017/18.

Timescales

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

Stage	Statutory complaints	Corporate complaints
1	10 working days (can be extended to 20 working days)	10 working days
2	25 working days (can be extended to 65 working days)	20 working days
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.

Statutory complaints by stage and timescales in 2017/18

Stage	Timescales	Number of complaints
1	Within 10 working days	67
	Over 10 working days	86
2	Within 25 working days	0
	Over 25 working days	3
3	Within 30 working days	0
	Over 30 working days	0
Total		156

Average timescales by stage in calendar days

Stage	Number of complaints	Average timescales
1	153	15.79
2	3	124.66
3	0	N/A

The average time in days to complete Stage 1 complaints was 15.79 working days in 2017/18, compared to 15 days in 2016/17. Adherence to timescales had previously been a challenge; weekly meetings with senior managers have ensured that complaint timescales were mostly maintained despite an increase in the number of complaints.

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 timescales, 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 124.66 working days in 2017/18 compared to 109 working days in 2016/17.

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 (LGSCO).

In 2017/18, the LGSCO received 29 complaints or enquiries relating to the category of education and children's services for Coventry City Council. The LGSCO does not separate education and children's services and do not necessarily inform the local authority of every complaint or enquiry received, so it is unclear how many of these related specifically to children's services.

The LGSCO undertook full investigations for three children's services complaints (and one education complaint). It upheld all three children's services and the one education complaint it investigated.

Identified issues and resolutions

Complaints by category in 2017/18

Category	Complaints
Poor communication	206
Standards of service	76
Child protection issues	9
Finance	4
Standard of environment	4
Staff conduct	3

Compliments by category in 2017/18

Category	Compliments
Standard of practice (social work)	26
Standards of service	15
Good partnership working	10
Good child focus	10
Good communication	3

Note: compliments and complaints may be about more than one category so the total does not add up to the total number of complaints.

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 often achieves a positive resolution in many cases, which in turn decreases complaint escalation.

Compensation

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 2017/18:

Detail	Amount
<i>Fostering fees</i>	£24,478.48
<i>Allowances</i>	£5,194.16
<i>Reimbursement of savings</i>	£896.10
<i>Funding for course</i>	£300.00
<i>Compensation following LGSCO investigation</i>	£100.00
<i>Cost of passport</i>	£58.50
Total	£31,027.24

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 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), 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 2016/17 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. This is currently being refreshed and a new leaflet is to be issued.

Information hub for social services

A new information hub is to be launched to provide complaint information and processes to members of management and staff within Social Care to support the investigation and complaints process.

Further revision of the Stage 1 process

The appointment of a full time complaints officer enabled all Stage 1 complaints to be monitored and managed more effectively. For the first three quarters of 2017/2018 year the average time in days to complete Stage 1 complaints was 16.52 working days, compared to 12.94 working days in quarter 4. Further work has continued in 2017/18 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.

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.

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 a slight increase in the average time in days to complete Stage 1 complaints (from 15 working days to 15.79 working days). In 2018/19 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 2017/18 with the average time in days to completion being 124.66 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 2016/2017 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

Team Central

For central there are 3 main area of learning and development to focus on as follows:

- Communication – Delays in responding and availability of allocated worker has been identified. Staff have been reminded to respond to communications within one day. Mobile numbers have been added to all social worker e-mails to ensure alternative methods of contact are available and finally admin staff now redirect customers to the duty person and or manager when necessary.
- Data breach – All staff have now undertaken their data protection training and have been reminded of the importance of proof reading all documents before sending out to families or professionals. Lock print is also utilised to avoid papers being inadvertently joined with others that may be lying uncollected on the printer.
- Distributing plans – All staff have been reminded to distribute care plans and minutes to families in a timely way so they are clear what is expected of them.

Looked after children (LAC) and permanency

In the looked after children service, themes identified are around finances, insensitive communication, quality and timeliness of Life Story Work and family time/contact. This highlights a need for improvement around communication, consistency in social worker, 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 open communication channels to ensure that all involved, including children, young people and their parents are consistently kept informed and included. This includes ensuring that children are prepared for transitions through life story work that is to a high standard and that children's time with their birth families is prioritised.

Having reviewed the complaints, both birth parents, adopters and foster carers have on a number of occasions complained that social worker communication with them were "insensitive". Social workers need to be mindful of how comments within an assessments, emails and during discussions can be perceived as being insensitive. Wider work is being implemented, including training to develop and improve the skills of the workforce and to ultimately provide a consistently good service.

There is also a need for greater transparency and consistency in regards to financial decision making. Clear financial policies regarding allowances available to adopters/carers should be available online and sent to anyone whom has requested financial assistance so that everyone, including managers, social workers and adopters/carers, are clear about how decisions are made generally. Additionally, outcome letters should be sent out and held on file to evidence what decisions have been made for their family specifically and what they can expect in the future.

Safeguarding

The Quality Assurance Service will be improving their method of gaining feedback about Child Protection Conferences and LAC Reviews. With the rolling out of the signs of safety methodology it is vital that the Service understands young people and families' experience of the meeting they attend/are the subject of. Up to now this has been by a feedback form but this may not be the most effective/accurate method. A technological based solution may be the way forward.

The Service needs to be more explicit about how a complaint can be made and under what circumstances. This can be both in writing and verbally. The Service needs to be sensitive when allocating an Independent Reviewing Officer as there may be reasons why a particular person is more/less suitable than another. This is especially when the young person's Child Protection Plan ends because that have become looked after.

There will also be an introductory letter to the young person explaining who their independent reviewing officer is with their role explained and a pen picture/photograph. There will also be a drive to improve access to advocacy for both looked after children and those in need of protection.

Team East

In the East including Children with Disabilities service, on review of the complaints received, a number of the complaints were partially upheld and many of which related to parents/carers being dissatisfied with communication from the service and dissatisfaction of the service they received. To ensure learning from this and to close the loop, practitioners have recently been reflecting on Relationship Based Practice at a recent Practice Improvement Session. Managers during 1-2-1 with practitioners will continue to explore relationships to ensure we deliver a high standard service and our communication with families improves.

Team South

The complaints that were upheld or partly upheld mainly relate to: lack of contact with or from Social Workers; delay in referrals being made to other service or commissioned providers; not following processes properly for involving parents in child protection conferences; and data protection.

In the South area we have been embedding the Signs Of Safety approach and focussing on the importance of involving family as partners in safety planning and relationship based practice. We have also been working on making sure that our interventions are purposeful and, we have been completing training to ensure that we understand the Data protection requirements. We have started to seek parents' feedback so that we can get a better sense of whether the interventions we provide are helpful and learn more about what we do well and what we need to improve.

Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and responsive services

Staff have been reminded that some parents find social care involvement difficult, and we must hold this in mind when working with parents

MASH staff have been reminded that during these conversations parent's views should be reflected back to them to give them an opportunity to really hear what they have actually said and to ensure we have captured their views accurately. Staff have been reminded that in many situations, parents have not always felt empowered to take steps to change without support to do so and we are there to help and support. On learning from some of the complaints the MASH initial triage team is now manned by qualified Social Workers who are trained to manage difficult conversations in a transparent and respectful manner. Staff have also been reminded to be aware of the tone of their voice when speaking to both parents and professionals. As a Local Authority we are embedding Signs of Safety which enables workers to ensure families' voice is better included.

ThroughCare

The majority of complaints to Route 21/ Through Care this year have been in 3 main areas; issues around tasks not being completed by previous social workers, concerns around placements and issues around finances and entitlements. In response tasks not being completed a new transfer checklist is now in place and regular transfer meetings are happening between team managers to ensure when cases transfer there is clarity around outstanding tasks. The issues around Placements are feeding into a wider piece of work about the quality of placements available for LAC and care leavers. In terms of issues around finances and entitlements updated training has been given to all staff following the redesign and we will be publishing this information in multiple formats as part of the Local Offer at the end of the year.

Fostering

A number of complaints related to special guardianship support and in particular financial support to special guardians. As a result of learning from this, we have drawn up a leaflet to provide to all connected persons applicants to clarify support arrangements, updated our pathways to care policy and updated our policy on special guardianship support to ensure that areas of uncertainty are clarified.

There was a complaint about use of words in assessment which has been considered alongside wider developmental work in assessment practice.

Learning from complaints overall

Our teams take complaints very serious and we continue to use these to inform our practice throughout Children's Services. We have monthly Practice Improvement Forums, where all Children Services Practitioners come together to consider learning and development and this includes feedback and learning from complaints and audits, this enables us to continuously reflect on the service we provide and improve. We have the same forums each month for managers, to ensure the same learning is applied.

We will continue to develop these forums and continue to learn from all feedback from children, young people, parents, carers, families and professionals, to ensure the service we deliver continues to be improved.

Ilius Ahmed, Complaints Officer &
Si Chun Lam, Insight Development Manager
Insight Team
Coventry City Council
September 2018

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Complaints handling guidance

Coventry City Council

Insight Team
September 2018

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Introduction

About this guide

This document is the Council's internal complaints handling guidance, and is to be read in conjunction with the complaints policy.

Making things right

Coventry City Council is committed to putting local people and their needs at the heart of what it does. As employees of the Council, we work to ensure that people have a positive and trouble-free experience with us in all transactions and interactions. However, sometimes things go wrong. When things go wrong, we encourage people to speak up, so that we can make things 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 complaints policy

Coventry City Council's complaints policy sets out how individual members of the public can complain to the Council, as well as how the Council handle compliments, comments and complaints. Where possible, complaints should be resolved informally. If this is not possible, they can formally complain to the Council.

The complaints policy can be found at: www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/. The policy 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*”.

Depending on the subject and nature of the complaint, a different pathway is followed:

- complaints about **children's social care** including care homes and other providers commissioned by the Council follow the statutory process for representations made by or on behalf of children using social care services provided by / commissioned by the Council arising from the Children Act 1989;
- complaints about **adult social care** including care homes and other providers commissioned by the Council follow the statutory process for representations made by or on behalf of an adult using social care services provided by / commissioned by the Council arising from the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Services Complaints Regulations 2009;
- **all other complaints** relating to Council services are dealt with by the corporate complaints policy.

Note that complaints about non-Council services, for instance, schools, hospitals; complaints by employees; or complaints about elected members (councillors) are outside the scope of the complaints policy.

The Council strives to act in accordance with best practice, for instance:

- the National Complaints Managers' Group (May 2016) [Good Practice guidance for handling complaints concerning adults and children social care services](#);
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO):
 - [guidance on good complaint handling](#) (for instance, running a complaints system; managing unreasonable complaint behaviours and remedies); and
 - [single complaints statement](#) guidance for councils and care providers on best practice in receiving and dealing with comments, complaints and feedback about their services.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

The LGSCO is the final stage for complaints about councils, all adult social care providers (including care homes and home care agencies) and some other organisations providing local public services. It is a free service that investigate complaints in a fair and independent way; and provides a means of redress to individuals for injustice caused by unfair treatment or service failure.

If a complainant has exhausted all of the Council's own complaints process, and remain dissatisfied with the Council's decision and/or its handling of the complaint, they have the right to take the complaint to the Local

Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). When a complaint has exhausted the Council's complaints procedure, they are informed of this right – and provided detail with how to contact the LGSCO.

Find out more

Info hub

Further guidance, reports and information available on the Complaints, Comments and Compliments Information Hub (**3Cs Info Hub** in short) on the intranet at <https://coventrycc.sharepoint.com/sites/3CsInfoHub/>.

Key contacts

People Directorate Complaints Officer

- Adult social care complaints: AdultSocialCareCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk
- Children's social care complaints: CLYPCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Link Officer

- LGSCO Link Officer: Ombudsman@coventry.gov.uk

Guidance

The following table sets out key characteristics of the Council's complaints processes:

Type	Corporate	Adult social care	Children's social care	LGSCO
Stages	Informal resolution Stage 1: service investigation Stage 2: service investigation review	Informal resolution Stage 1: local resolution	Informal resolution Stage 1: local resolution Stage 2: investigation Stage 3: review panel	Enquiry and assessment Investigation Decision and remedy
Timescales (in working days)	Acknowledgement: 3 days Stage 1: 10 days Stage 2: 20 days	Acknowledgement: 3 days Stage 1: 20 days	Acknowledgement: 3 days Stage 1: 10 (to 20 ¹) days Stage 2: 25 (to 65 ¹) days Stage 3: 30 days	Enquiry: 1-3 days Investigation: 20 days Draft decision: 5-10 days Remedy: as set out in the final decision statement
Services	All other services ²	Adult social care	Children's social care	All
Recording	On the corporate customer relationship management system, Dash .	On the corporate system, Dash plus the social care complaints database .	On the corporate system, Dash plus the social care complaints database .	On the Tracker on the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman management portal.
Reporting	Quarterly summary trends and indicators on the 3Cs Info Hub ³ .	Weekly progress reports provided on the 3Cs Info Hub and regular progress meetings held with relevant managers. Quarterly trend and context provided to relevant management team and indicators on People Leadership Team dashboard. Annual report to the relevant Cabinet Member.		Upheld complaints referred to the Monitoring Officer for follow-up action. Quarterly trends and context on the 3Cs Info Hub . Annual report to relevant committees and relevant Cabinet Member.

Escalation of 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

¹ This is the maximum extension for complex cases as defined by the statutory guidance.

² All other services, e.g.: adult education; benefits and tax; children's transport; corporate, finance and legal; education and libraries (except schools or education admissions appeals); environmental services (including household waste collections, noise complaints); housing services; planning; parking, etc.

³ Indicators currently provided on the People Leadership Team dashboard. This is accessible via the 3Cs Info Hub and the Performance Hub (coming soon).

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.

With children's social care complaints, in line with the Department for Education statutory guidance for local authority children's services on representations and complaints procedures, a complaint may be escalated to a Stage 2 investigation or Stage 3 review panel if a complainant wishes for it to do so. When this happens, a senior officer will always work with the complainant to see if the complaint can be resolved without escalation first.

Escalation to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

If a complainant is unhappy about the way the Council has dealt with their complaint, they can contact the LGSCO. The LGSCO 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 LGSCO has the discretion to waive this requirement. Note that a complainant can approach the LGSCO at any stage of the complaints process.

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 LGSCO guidance set out at <http://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/advice-and-guidance/guidance-notes>.

Where a complaint has gone to the LGSCO, the local authority has the option of suggesting a remedy to resolve the complaint – or to accept the LGSCO's recommendation.

Learning from complaints

Learning from complaints help ensure that Council services meet the needs of local residents and communities. That is why it is important for services to treat complaints as an opportunity to learn lessons from previous experiences, to drive forward improvements, for example, improvements to training or to inform changes to procedures. The Council regularly publishes reports on complaints, including lessons learned, to ensure that complaints are properly communicated to elected members.

Privacy and information governance

Please remember that complaints, investigations and information about it are private and confidential and must not be disclosed to third parties.

Our summary privacy notice states:

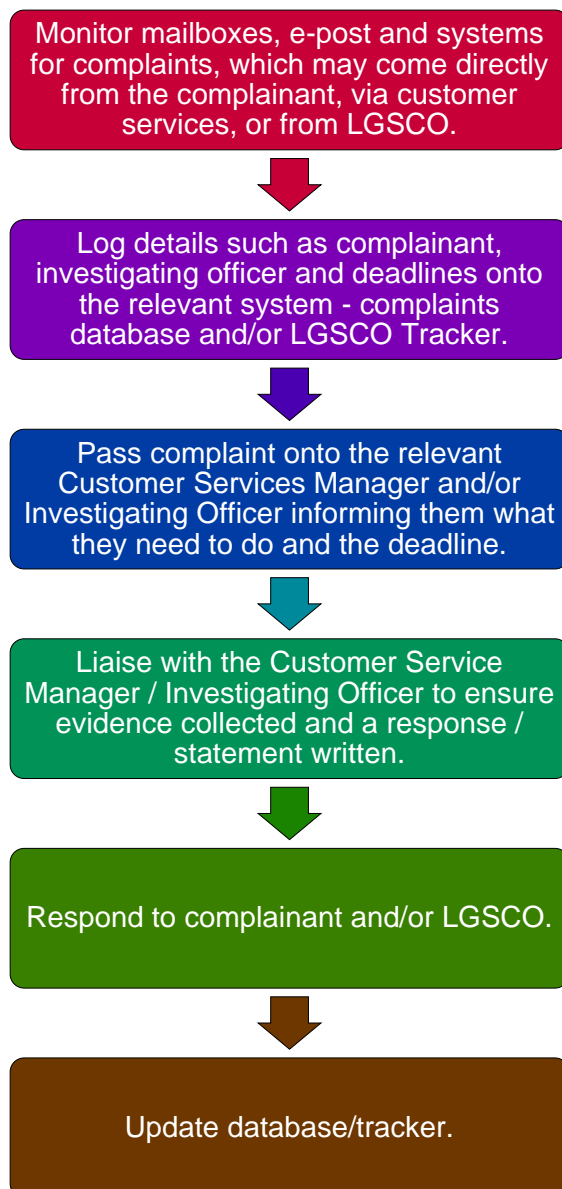
We will use the information you provide to handle your complaint in line with the Council's complaints policy available at www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/. We may share this information with other organisations which may include independent external investigators, children's advocacy services and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. We will only share your information if this is part of solving your complaint. More information on how we handle personal information and your rights under the data protection legislation can be found in the full Privacy Notice: www.coventry.gov.uk/privacynotice/.

You can help ensure that we protect people's information by ensuring that you follow the Council's information governance and data protection policies. In particular, please:

- **ensure that any correspondence containing personal or confidential data is sent in a password protected zip archive with the password provided in a separately email;** and
- **double-check** people's names, contact details, email addresses, mailing addresses and telephone numbers!

Role of the complaints function

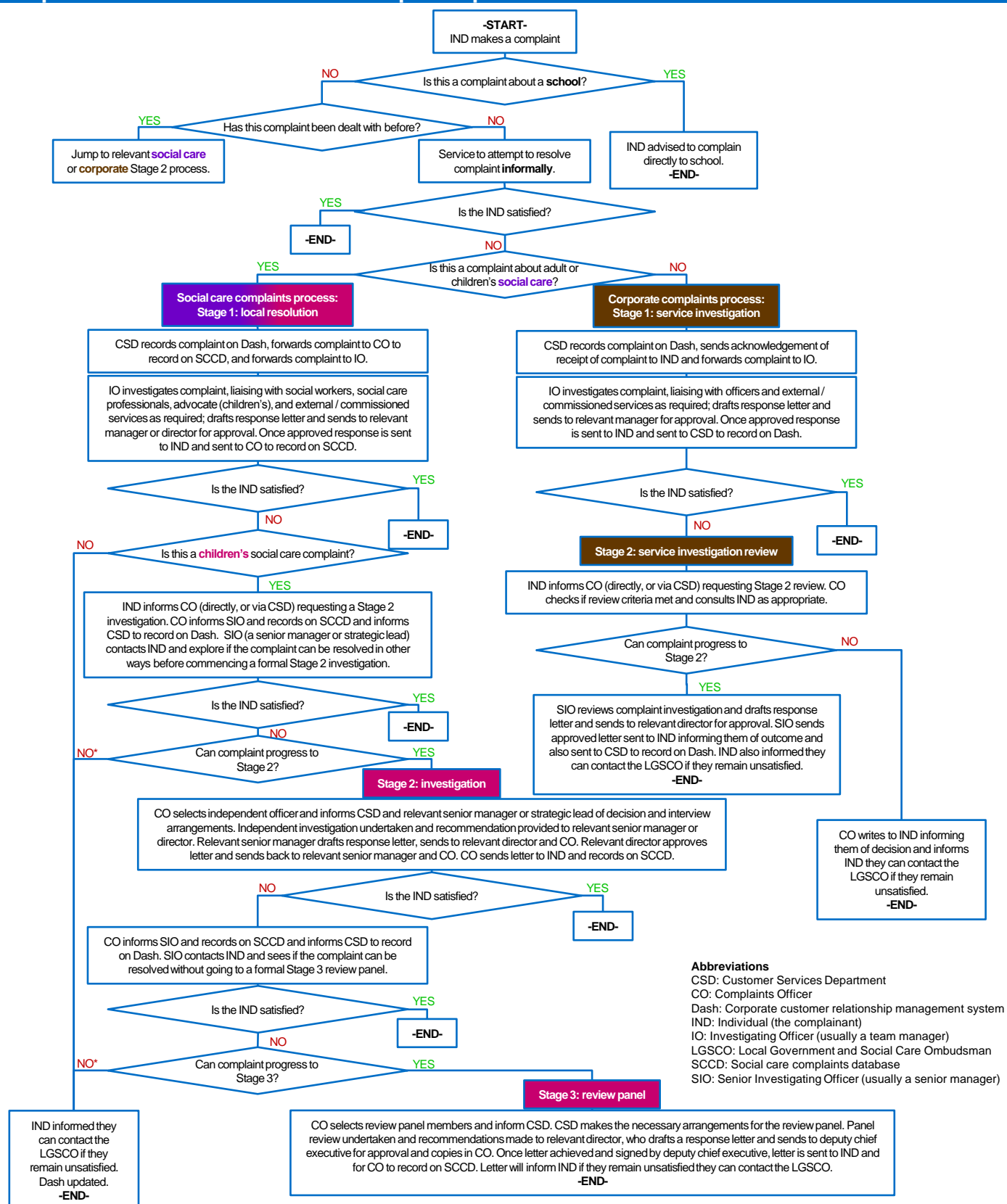
The following outline sets out what the Council's complaints function in the Insight Team do in relation to the day-to-day handling of complaints:



In addition, the function also:

- manages the 3Cs Info Hub, a one stop shop on the intranet;
- regularly meet with managers across social care and advocacy services to provide progress updates and discuss cases;
- appoints independent investigators and facilitate service investigations and reviews, in conjunction with children's services and commissioning;
- provides regular reports and statistics on complaint numbers, timescales and key messages to senior management; and
- produce annual reports.

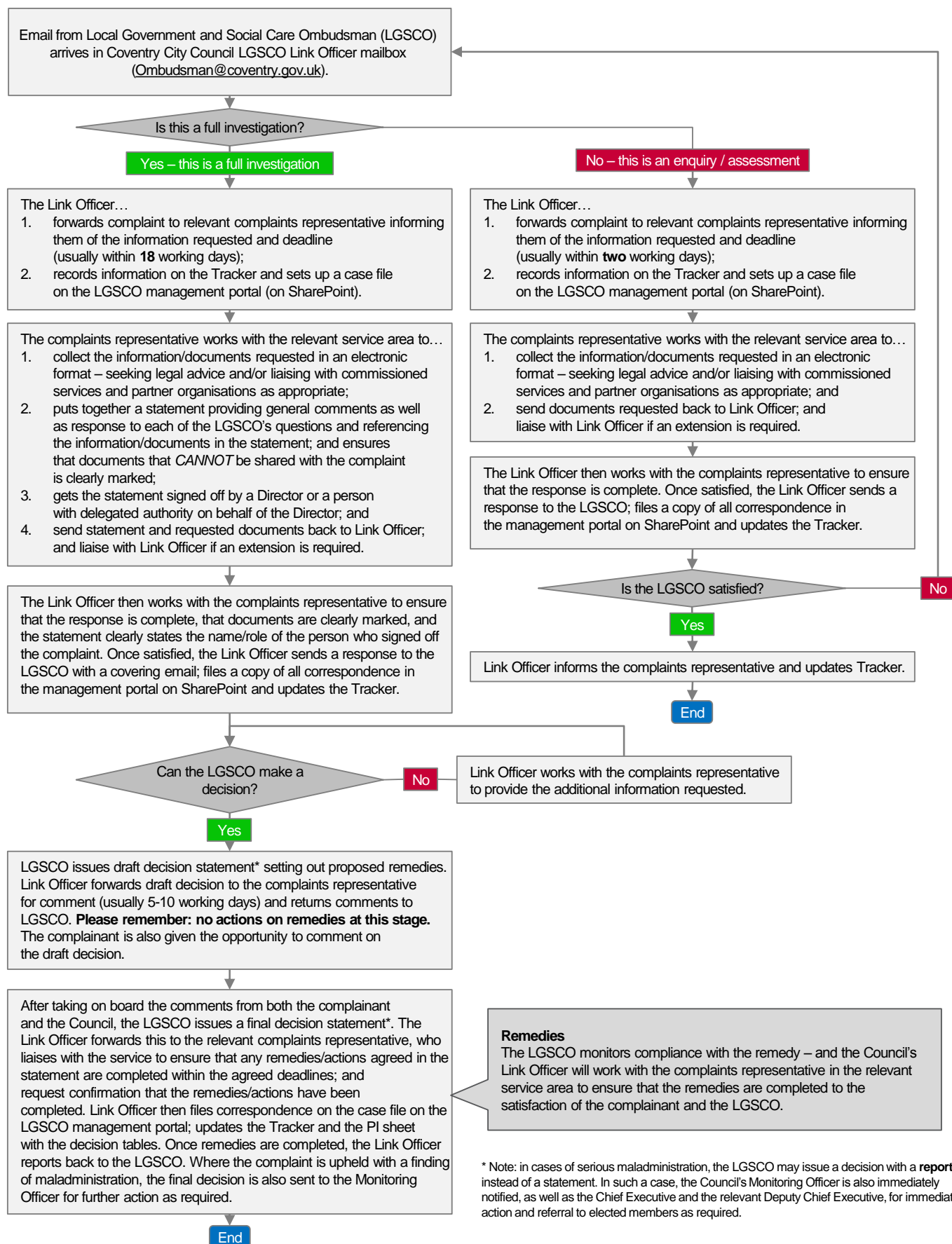
People Directorate and social care complaints process flowchart



Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman process complaints guidance

Stage	Notes
Enquiry / assessment	The request will have a short deadline of between 1 to 3 working days . At this stage, the LGSCO will ask the Council for a copy of its formal complaint responses; and confirmation that the complaint has fully completed the Council's complaints process. The request will not include any new actions and should be returned to the Link Officer by the date specified.
Premature	If a complaint has not completed the Council's own complaints process, the LGSCO will return the complaint as a "premature" complaint for consideration under the Council's complaints process. It is important to remind complainant of their right to complain again to the LGSCO when they exhaust the Council's complaints process. Following completion of the complaints process (whether it is resolved or not), a copy of the final response should be sent to the Link Officer.
Investigation	The Link Officer will send a covering email requesting a written response to the LGSCO's questions. This needs to be returned by a set deadline, usually within 18 working days , so that the deadline (within 20 working days) can be met. The response must be provided as a statement , providing general comments as well as responses to each of the questions. It must also include the name and role of the author, and be signed off by the Director or a nominated person. Any supporting evidence must be provided as electronic attachments and referenced in the statement. Any information that cannot be shared with the complainant should be clearly marked and packaged separately. It may be necessary to seek legal advice and/or liaise with commissioned services and partner organisations as appropriate. The Link Officer needs confirmation that this has been done (in the form of an email trail). If the LGSCO investigator has asked us to consider whether we are prepared to remedy any injustice that may have been caused – we should comment on this as this is an opportunity for us to resolve the issue.
Draft decision	Following the investigation, the LGSCO will typically issue a draft decision statement . This will state whether the complaint was upheld or not, and detail the investigator's findings and explains the decision made. At this stage, the Council is asked whether it agrees with the decision and remedy. This is an opportunity to comment on the decision, and suggest any changes or corrections. At this stage, remedial actions must not be taken yet – remedies should only be completed after the final decision. We are usually requested to respond within 5-10 working days . <i>Note: the investigator may choose to issue a decision as a report (under Section 30(1) of the Local Government Act 1974) in which case the Council's Monitoring Officer is notified.</i>
Final decision	The final decision letter and statement should be circulated, as appropriate, to everyone who was involved in the investigation and everyone who needs to know of the investigation outcomes. Action on remedies should now be completed. In cases where the LGSCO makes a finding of maladministration , the final decision letter and statement is also forwarded by the Link Officer to the Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer will decide if any further action is required.
Remedy	The LGSCO aims to remedy personal injustice when its investigations reveal there has been fault. Remedies are not intended to be punitive and are not just about money: the remedies also look into the root causes and recommend improvements to systems when they haven't worked properly, so that others do not suffer the same problems in future. The LGSCO monitors compliance with the remedy – and the Link Officer will work with the complaints representative in the relevant service area to ensure that the remedies are completed to the satisfaction of the complainant and the LGSCO. Confirmation and evidence that all actions required, as per the final decision letter and statement. This can be as soon as within 5-10 working days ; or longer for more complex issues.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman process flowchart



Version control

Document Location

Published location: <https://smarturl.it/cov-complaints-guide>

SharePoint: [https://coventrycc.sharepoint.com/teams/ChiefExec/PublicHealth/Insight/Documents/Complaints handling guidance 2018.docx](https://coventrycc.sharepoint.com/teams/ChiefExec/PublicHealth/Insight/Documents/Complaints%20handling%20guidance%202018.docx)

Reviewing arrangements

This guidance is reviewed annually with the annual complaints report.

Revision History

Revision date	Summary of Changes
13/09/2018	3.1 Integrated guidance, combining previously separate complaints handling guidance for the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and People Directorate and social care into one document.

