



Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Time and Date

2.00 pm on Thursday, 30 January, 2025

Place

Diamond Rooms 1 and 2 - Council House

Public Business

1. **Apologies and Substitutions**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Coventry Cultural Strategy - Progress Report** (Pages 3 - 8)
Briefing Note of the Director of Regeneration and Economy
4. **Review of Statutory Complaints Report 2023-24** (Pages 9 - 72)
Briefing Note of the Director of Human Resources
5. **Work Programme and Outstanding Issues 2024/2025** (Pages 73 - 80)
Report of the Director of Law and Governance
6. **Any Other Items of Public Business**
Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as a matter of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.

Private Business

Nil

Julie Newman, Director of Law and Governance, Council House, Coventry

Wednesday, 22 January, 2024

Note: The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Suzanne Bennett, Governance Services - Telephone: 024 7697 2299 E-mail: suzanne.bennett@coventry.gov.uk

Membership: Councillors M Ali, A Jobbar, L Kelly (Deputy Chair), J Lepoidevin, G Lloyd (Chair), C Mijs, G Ridley, R Singh and CE Thomas

By invitation Councillors S Agboola, N Akhtar, G Duggins, S Nazir, E Reeves

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Coventry City Council

Briefing note

To: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Date: 30th January 2025

Subject: Coventry Cultural Strategy - Progress Report

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To provide an update of progress on delivery of the Coventry Cultural Strategy 2017-2027, including progress on new governance arrangements and the development of a new Strategy Action Plan 2025-2027.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Co-Ordination Committee is recommended:
- 1) To note progress on delivery of the Coventry Cultural Strategy and the revised focus areas.
 - 2) To note progress on delivery of the Culture Works Collective governance arrangements.

3 Cultural Strategy 2017-2027

- 3.1 In January 2017, Cabinet approved a partnership Coventry Cultural Strategy 2017-2027, in support of the long-term positioning of culture in the city.
- 3.2 The process of developing the Strategy had begun with a period of structured primary and secondary research, which was followed by phases of consultation and engagement. This process shaped the emerging Strategy and informed development of the Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 Bid.
- 3.3 The Cultural Strategy set out a ten year-vision for the cultural life of Coventry, building on the existing heritage and culture of the city. The Strategy was structured around Five Goals for cultural growth in the city, each of which was under-pinned by 'Seven Big Ideas' that support the transformation of the cultural life of the city.
- 3.4 The Five Goals outlined in the Strategy are: Partnership; Lifelong Learning; Diversity; Health and Well-Being; and Economic Growth. The Seven Big Ideas outlined in the Strategy are: Place Partnership; Creative Production Hubs; City is a Festival; Seven Years Younger; Nation in Coventry; Diverse City; and Getting Coventry Moving.
- 3.5 The Strategy was designed to span a timeline in which Coventry was bidding for (and then became) the UK City of Culture 2021. It was therefore acknowledged from the outset that the Strategy approach would need to remain flexible, consultative, and responsive, continuing to evolve over the full ten-year period, to achieve its vision.

- 3.6 Work to refresh implementation of the Strategy in 2022 identified the need for an enhanced focus on climate change and Coventry's Green Future, creating a greater alignment for the Strategy with Coventry's Climate Strategy objectives.
- 3.7 A further refresh (to the conclusion of the Strategy period in 2027) is now required to respond to subsequent and evolving changes in the operating environment for the sector. This includes the impact for the sector of the City of Culture Trust going into administration in 2023; the cost-of-living crisis and other societal changes; and the appointment in July 2024 of a new Head of Culture and Creative Economy at Coventry City Council (a post jointly funded by the City Council, Coventry University and the University of Warwick – to support delivery of the Strategy and sector development). The need for new governance aligned to this required refresh has also been a central consideration – specifically in relation to the forming of a Coventry Cultural Compact through close collaboration between the city's cultural sector and wider partners.

4 Coventry Culture Works Collective

- 4.1 Cultural Compacts are partnerships designed to support the local cultural sector and enhance its contribution to development and delivery of city outcomes, with a special emphasis on cross-sector engagement beyond the cultural sector itself and the local authority.
- 4.2 The Coventry Culture Works cultural compact was initiated in 2023, to create an entity that could take ownership of delivery of the Strategy, including shaping and driving legacies of Coventry City of Culture, following the City of Culture Trust going into administration.
- 4.3 It was widely advocated by the sector and recognised that an inclusive process of development was needed to take the Compact and the city forward, and this has been the subject of significant discussion and collaboration. An initial event – Future Works – was held in January 2024, led by local creatives, focussing on the future of culture in Coventry. The event was attended by around 80 people and provided valuable feedback on the direction of travel, as well as key opportunities and challenges for the cultural sector. At the time there was however limited capacity within key stakeholders to take some of these recommendations forward and to fully develop the new, inclusive governance model for Culture Works.
- 4.4 Further to the appointment of a new Head of Culture and Creative Economy in July 2024, Coventry City Council facilitated a Future Works II event in October 2024, with nearly 200 people attending. This event was aimed at securing a mandate from the cultural sector and key stakeholders for the next steps, including:
- Testing that the aims of the Cultural Strategy were still relevant, and seeking sector input to future delivery plans, with the Council playing a convening and enabling role.
 - Putting forward a refreshed governance model for the Culture Works cultural compact, with feedback being gathered and taken into consideration in terms of next steps.
 - Introducing a new piece of work to develop a culture-specific communications strategy for Culture Works and wider Strategy implementation.
- 4.5 Based on the feedback and testing of the Cultural Strategy themes at Future Works II, it is proposed that 'Cultural Engagement & Opportunity' is added as an overt Strategy Goal in the refresh. This will support an increased focus on cultural

participation and the infrastructure required to support this. To ensure both diversity and partnership are established as central to the delivery plan (particularly given the joint ownership of the partnership Strategy), it is further proposed that these areas of focus are both positioned as Foundations for the Strategy, cutting across the other focus areas, as illustrated below.



- 4.6 The Cultural Strategy will, therefore, continue to have a wider focus on making Coventry a better place through arts, culture and creativity, thus advocating for a wider role for arts and culture, beyond just the cultural sector itself. It is proposed this should include ongoing exploration and commitments around impact for health and wellbeing, tourism, skills development, tackling local inequalities, environmental factors and other linked sectors.
- 4.7 The Strategy Refresh will also help to articulate the different narratives and ambitions for the future, for example, using Coventry’s existing strengths in order that the city may become recognised as a centre for excellence in cultural co-creation. This ambition is linked to the city’s unique demographic (which is both young and diverse); inclusive models of delivery developed through local partners and communities; and the city’s strengths in data, research and evidence around cultural engagement.
- 4.8 These above Strategy aims and Goals directly correlate with the One Coventry Plan objectives of:
- Improving outcomes and tackling inequalities within our communities (Health and Wellbeing, Cultural Engagement and Opportunity)
 - Increasing the economic prosperity of the city and region (Economic Prosperity, Lifelong Learning and Skills)
 - Tackling the causes and consequences of climate change (Environment and Social Justice)

In addition, the Cultural Strategy and the new way of working through the Culture Works Collective will allow the Council to fully explore its role as a partner, enabler and leader – e.g. through policy and advocacy regarding sector development and where applicable, through supporting or acting to facilitate joint/consortium funding bids (such as the city’s recent collective bid for Creative People and Places funding, led by a consortium of local partners).

5 Cultural Compact Governance

- 5.1 Based on the feedback from the Future Works events and wider sector conversations, there is strong support for the Cultural Strategy to be held as a joint responsibility between stakeholders, organisations and residents, with the Culture Works Collective cultural compact providing a way to create a more democratically representative body. Work to develop this approach has been supported by Arts Council England Development Funding for Cultural Compacts.
- 5.2 It is proposed that the Culture Works Collective will have shared, delegated responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the partnership Coventry Cultural Strategy, informed by the wider Future Works Open Forum, an annual large event following on from Future Works I & II. It is proposed the Future Works Open Forum will be an annual event bringing together everyone who is interested in the future of arts and culture in Coventry. It will be an opportunity to take stock of progress and have a wider conversation about the needs, opportunities and successes of arts and culture in Coventry.
- 5.3 The Culture Works Collective will bring together people with the knowledge, passion and skills to fulfil the vision of Culture Works, as well as to act as the representatives of different sectors, which all have an impact on the arts and cultural ecology of the city.
- 5.4 To ensure a good level of representation from the cultural sector, community and voluntary sector and the key anchor institutions in the city on delivering impact across the Strategy’s focus areas (Economy, Health & Wellbeing, Skills, Environment), the structure proposed seeks to ensure the steering group for the Culture Works Collective will include members from all of these groups, with the members called ‘The Reps’.
- 5.5 The Reps will be the members of the Culture Works Collective. They will be people representing the interests of different stakeholder groups, ranging from residents to private businesses and the cultural sector. These are outlined below:

Cultural Sector Reps (8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reps from smaller cultural organisations, up to 4 members in total ● Freelancers from the cultural and creative sectors, up to 4 members in total ● Members will be selected through an open application process
Community Sector Reps (7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● These Reps will represent the residents of Coventry either directly or through the work they do ● Two residents will be selected through an open application process ● The other Reps will include, for example, faith and community organisation/network representatives. These Reps will be selected via a recommendation process. Voluntary Action Coventry are already linked to the Compact through their lead role in the Coventry Creative People & Places consortium application.
Other Sector Reps (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● These Reps will be representing the key focus areas of the Cultural Strategy, including economic development, education and skills, health and wellbeing and environment and social justice. ● They are likely to be organisations or networks already working across these areas ● These members will be selected by an application or via specialist recommendation process

Wider Stakeholder Reps (7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● These are Reps from wider partnering organisations including Coventry City Council, Coventry University, University of Warwick, Coventry Cathedral (as a key physical venue), and the three larger National Portfolio Cultural Organisations (Warwick Arts Centre, The Belgrade Theatre and Culture Coventry Trust) ● These appointments will be direct appointments
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5.6 There will therefore be a maximum 28 representatives, with the recruitment process (initial recruitment currently underway) due to complete in February 2025.

5.7 Following recruitment of the Reps, the group will look to recruit the Chair from within the existing membership; develop its formal Terms of Reference and sub-group governance structures. The group may also establish time-limited additional working groups or invite specialist advisors to support specific areas of work.

6 Additional Development Work

6.1 Across the past nine months, a sector development and delivery programme has been supported through the City Council, funded by £307k of Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Funding, via the West Midlands Combined Authority Cultural Pillars programme. This funding has supported the commissioning of specific co-created cultural programming, along with key elements of strategic research and planning, in support of future sector development. The work commissioned includes:

- Cultural Programming – five creative programmes were commissioned through direct appointment and open application processes to work in Coventry areas identified as having higher levels of disadvantage and historically lower levels of cultural participation. The ‘Made In Cov’ and ‘Greenways’ programmes involved local artists and creative practitioners working within communities to co-design activities, co-create artworks and performances and bolster local pride through end of programme exhibitions and celebration events. The commissions worked with residents in Foleshill, Hillfields, Bell Green, Henley Green and Willenhall. Nearly 1500 residents were engaged directly and regularly as participants with wider community engagement through end of programme events and online audiences.
- Cultural infrastructure mapping – commissioned to provide new data and evidence to inform the Strategy delivery plan. This work will support development of a future cultural capital pipeline, in support of the infrastructure ambitions of the refreshed Cultural Strategy.
- A Joint Cultural Needs Assessment – developed with the University of Warwick, to ensure that the refresh of the Cultural Strategy and accompanying delivery plan are strategically linked to the One Coventry Plan, and the key aims of the Council.
- Development of a Communications Strategy and Delivery Plan to provide a clear roadmap for the Culture Works Cultural Compact, as well as to inform the wider delivery plan for the Cultural Strategy.
- A Cultural Sector Skills Development Programme – with a focus on the financial resilience of organisations (delivered from November 2024 to January 2025). The feedback from this programme will inform the future Strategy Delivery Plan in relation to skills activities.

- Delivering a Community and Culture Mixer event in November 2024 – to bring together community and cultural organisations to stimulate new partnerships, as well as to explore the potential for Coventry submitting a Creative People and Places (CPP) application to Arts Council England. This event was attended by nearly 100 people and the CPP bid was submitted in January 2025.
- 6.2 The Council’s Culture and Creative Economy Team is also participating in initial conversations with stakeholders around a further potential Place Partnership application to Arts Council England (up to £1m). The focus of this application would be around skills development, and it would therefore form a key part of the delivery of the Lifelong Learning and Skills part of the Cultural Strategy.
- 6.3 Initial conversations have also commenced with the sector and with local, regional and national partners regarding the development of a visual arts strategy for the city, to maximise the opportunities presented through the City Centre Cultural Gateway project.
- 6.4 The finalisation of the Cultural Strategy Delivery Plan 2025-2027 through the Culture Works Collective is key to shaping, driving and capturing local delivery across the remainder of the Cultural Strategy period from 2025 to 2027.
- 6.5 The city’s proactive engagement with national and regional opportunities for Culture and the Creative Industries is also considered key to securing resilience and growth in these sectors and securing longer-term positive outcomes for the city.

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Coventry City Council

Briefing Note

To: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Date: 30th January 2025

Subject: Review of Statutory Complaints Reports 2023-24

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To ensure Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee have oversight of published complaint reports and outcomes for 2023-24.
- 1.2 To brief the Committee on the additional reporting and oversight requirements arising from the new Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Complaint Handling Code (the Code).
- 1.3 To enable Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee to have oversight of the complaints system and recommendations arising from complaints that have been investigated, have been progressed. The Committee are not required to consider individual complaints.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee are recommended to:
 - 1) Review and consider the contents of the Children's Services, Adult Social Care and LGSCO Complaints reports for 2023-24.
 - 2) Note that Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee are assigned lead responsibility for complaints within Council governance arrangements (as the "Member Responsible for Complaints") to support a positive complaint handling culture, in accordance with the new LGSCO Code.
 - 3) Identify any further recommendations for the appropriate Cabinet Member.

3 Background and Information

- 3.1 The Council is expected to address complaints in accordance with the relevant statutory complaints processes (The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 or Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009) and / or the advice and guidance issued by the LGSCO under their powers under section 23(12A) of the 1974 Local Government Act.
- 3.2 Statute requires preparation of an annual report on the operation of the complaints process and the lessons learnt or service improvements arising from them for both Children's Services and Adult Social Care complaints. These are required to be

publicly available, and are published on the Comments, Compliments and Complaints area of the Council's website.

- 3.3 The LGSCO issues an Annual Review letter each July in respect of those complaints (both statutory and non-statutory) which have exhausted the Council's complaints process and been escalated to, investigated and decided by the Ombudsman. The letter is addressed to the Council's Chief Executive, Leader, and the Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee "to encourage effective ownership and oversight of complaint outcomes", and a report similar to those noted above is prepared following receipt of the LGSCO's letter.
- 3.4 These reports are each considered in detail at the relevant Cabinet Member meetings and at Ethics Committee, ahead of being brought to Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee for overview and review. They are then published on the Council's website.
- 3.5 In February 2024 the LGSCO issued their new 'Complaint Handling Code' ('the Code') setting out their expectations for complaint handling by local Councils, together with new overview and scrutiny guidance.
- 3.6 The Code does not replace any of existing statutory complaint processes referenced above but is intended to operate alongside / in conjunction with these. Councils are encouraged to adopt the Code as soon as practicable, with the LGSCO considering adherence to the Code as part of their complaint investigations from April 2026 onwards.
- 3.7 Under the Code it is expected that all Councils will now produce an overall annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge. This is to be reported through the appropriate governance arrangements and published on the complaints section of the Council website, alongside the response to the report from the relevant governance arrangement.
- 3.8 In addition to this the Code stipulates that Council's should assign lead responsibility for complaints in governance arrangements in order to "support a positive complaint handling culture". The Code refers to this role as the "Member Responsible for Complaints", and that it is for each Council to decide whether the role is carried out by an individual or committee depending on the governance arrangements in place.
- 3.9 Given that Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee already review the existing annual complaints reports it would appear appropriate that they are designated to review and respond to the Council's overall annual complaints performance and service improvement report moving forward.

4 Health Inequalities Impact

- 4.1 There are no Health Inequalities impacts directly related to this report.

Appendix A: Children's Services Complaints and Representations Annual Report 2023-24

Appendix B: Adult Social Services Complaints and Representations Annual Report 2023-24

Appendix C: Complaints to the LGSCO Annual Report 2023-24

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Children's Services Complaints and Representations Annual Report 2023 - 24



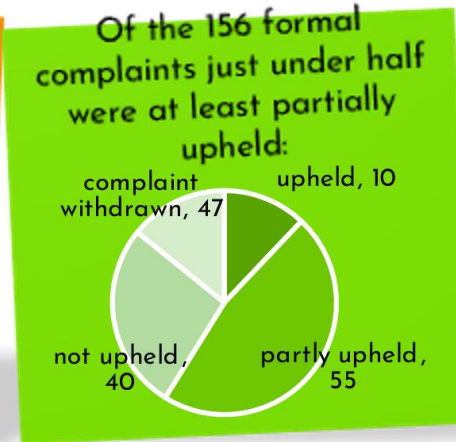

Children's Services 2023/24 Complaints & Representations key facts & figures



Children's services had 4505 open referrals as of 31 March 2024.

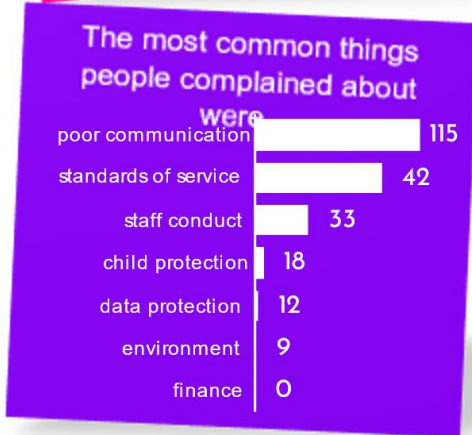


In 2023/24, children's services received **229** complaints (156 were statutory, 13 corporate, and 60 informal). **20** complaints were made by young people; **8** supported by an advocate.

Children's services complaints can be complex & timescales can be protracted. In 2023/24:

Complaints Stage	Average time taken
Stage 1	129 12 days
Stage 2	20 59 days
Stage 3	7 36 days




In 2023/24 children's social care also received **188** 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 2023/24, the LGSCO received **11** complaints about education & children's services. They investigated **1** social care complaint; which was upheld.

Listening to service users' complaints helps services improve by helping managers identify changes that are required. Key learning points from 2023/24 include: extension of the mentoring scheme, improving frequency of communication, and providing more support to foster carers at the end of a long-term placement

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**.

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Welcome

Welcome to the 2023/24 complaints and representations annual report. 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 provided by or commissioned by Coventry City Council for the year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

Background

Local Authorities are required by law to have a system for receiving representations made by or on behalf of children who use the Children's 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. Children Services 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; that when things have gone wrong opportunities are taken to rectify; the organisation learns from both positive and negative feedback; and the organisation sustains its focus on service users / customers / citizens. 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

In 2023/24 children's services completed 25,242 contacts and received 4,505 referrals. This compares to 26,677 and 4,912 in 2022/23. As of 31 March 2024, there were 3,429 referrals open to children's services, compared to 3,702 a year ago.

The total number of statutory and informal complaints received about children's services in 2023/24 was 229, the same as were received in 2022/23. The 229 complaints received consist of 156 statutory complaints, 13 corporate complaints and 60 informal complaints.

The number of complaints under the statutory process has decreased to 156 received in 2023/24, compared to 167 in 2022/23, 177 received in 2021/22 and 141 received in 2020/21.

20 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 slight decrease in the number of children or young people using an advocate to make a complaint, despite being made aware of this provision, – 21 complaints received during 2022/23 compared to 14 complaints in 2021/22, 8 in 2020/21, 13 in 2019/20 and 11 in 2018/19

Two main themes could be identified as arising from the complaints by and on behalf of users in 2023/24: 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.

Description of Complaint Types

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.

Informal

Where possible, complaints should be resolved informally. The complaint is usually sent to a Team Manager to make contact with the individual to discuss their concerns to ensure a resolve can be actioned as soon as possible. If this is not possible, complainants can formally complain to the Council. Informal matters can also be related to concerns that require resolution or follow up investigation outside of the formal process.

Statutory

Complaints about Children's Services follow the statutory process if they are not able to be resolved informally. Complaints that fall under the Statutory complaints process are complaints made by children, young people, parents and carers.

All other complaints relating to Council services are dealt with by the corporate complaints policy.

Corporate

A Corporate complaint example would be as follows: When a member of the public who is not a service user or a holder of parental responsibility for a young person request that their concerns are investigated formally.

Feedback

Promoting 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.

Where possible, issues/complaints should be handled at the point of delivery. It is when a person feels that they are still not satisfied, then it is recorded as a formal complaint and investigated as such. The length of time to investigate and resolve complaints depends on their complexity. Where there are particular complexities that will require an elongated period of investigation, a timescale is agreed with the complainant.

Providing feedback

People can provide feedback directly to the service or team; to customer services; or to the Complaints Officer. Further information about how to make a complaint, access advocacy or support, and the complaints process is available on the Council's website at www.coventry.gov.uk/comments. 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.

In 2023/24, the majority of complainants chose to make a complaint via email or through the contact centre.

Advocacy

Of particular importance is the need to inform children and young people of their opportunity to make representations and to find methods they can easily use. There have been 20 complaints from children and young people themselves this year, compared to 21 last year. 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, 18 used an advocate to support them in making their complaint. Since April 2006, the Council has commissioned Barnardo's to provide an advocacy service. All children and young people are made aware of the provision that the Local Authority has to make available to them to access an Advocate but many have refused this offer.

Complaints

The Council received 156 statutory children’s services complaints. It also dealt with 13 corporate complaints and 60 informal.

The table below indicates how the complaint was received:

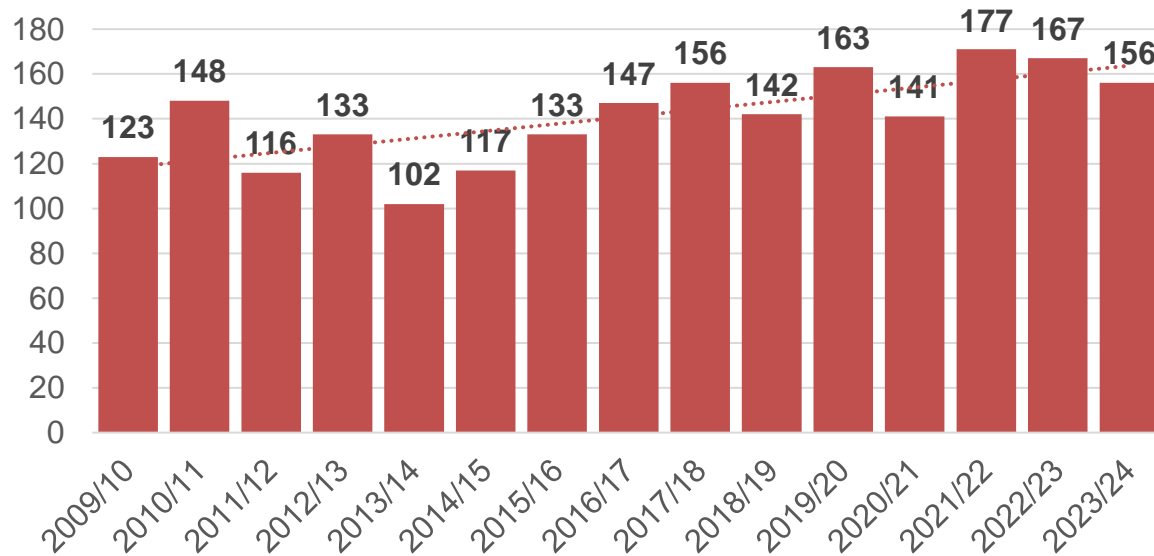
Method	Number of Complaints
Email	110
Contact Centre/Form	42
Letter	2
Telephone	2
Total	156

Note: table above excludes non-statutory and informal issues.

Statutory complaints

156 statutory complaints were received about children’s services in 2023/24. This compares to 167 in 2022/23.

Statutory complaints overtime



Listening to service users' complaints helps services improve by helping managers identify changes that are required. When complaints are received, they are reviewed to see if the concerns can be resolved informally in the first instance. 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 2023/24 by resolution. The majority of complaints were either Partially Upheld or Withdrawn by the complainant or include concerns relating to ongoing court cases.

Statutory complaints by upheld status

Status	Number of complaints	%
Upheld	10	6%
Partly upheld	55	35%
Not upheld	40	26%
Complaints withdrawn	47	30%
Still Open	4	3%
Total	156	100%

Statutory complaints by team

The below table shows a breakdown figure of number of complaints received per team in 2023/24.

Team	Complaints
Through Care	20
Team West	37
Children's Disability Team	9
Children in Care	26
Team South	16
Team East	20
Team Central	16

Team	Complaints
Fostering & adoption	4
MASH	3
Quality & Assurance	0
Social Work Academy	3
Early Help (Team West)	0
Early Help (Team East)	1
Placements	0
Safeguarding	1
Total	156

Resolution of complaints

Local resolution (Stage 1)

The service aims to resolve concerns, whenever possible informally or at Stage 1. At this stage, the allocated manager (usually the manager responsible for the service being complained about) will identify what is 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 statutory complaints, of which 129 were resolved at Stage 1. 87% of complaints were resolved at Stage 1 of the complaints process, compared to 89% during 2022/23. Considering that there were the same number of statutory complaints in 2023/24 compared to 2021/22, this shows a slight decrease on last year of the number of statutory complaints resolved at Stage 1. The new Service Recovery Team is now in place (as detailed below) with a Service Recovery Manager and work will continue to ensure that team managers are supported when necessary with complaints guidance and regular reminders to improve the volume of complaints resolved at Stage 1 and within timeframe.

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 2023/24, there were 20 Statutory Stage 2 complaints and 4 Corporate Stage 2 investigations, compared with 11 Statutory Stage 2 complaints and 2 Corporate Stage 2 investigations in 2022/23.

The investigations for the Statutory Stage 2 complaints were undertaken by external commissioned investigators. At the conclusion of these Stage 2 investigations the investigating officers/persons' reports are read by senior manager who acts as an Adjudicating Officer for them to consider and act upon before a response is sent to the complainant. The Corporate Stage 2 complaints were investigated by Senior Managers and not reviewed by commissioned investigating officers.

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 and Education 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 7 Stage 3 complaints received and 5 of these were reviewed by an independent panel during 2023/24. The other 2 stage 3 complaints were withdrawn. The number of Stage 3 complaints was the same in 2023/24 as in 2022/23 but in comparison to the number of Statutory complaints which was 156, this number remains very low which recognises the work which is put into Stage 1 complaints by Team managers.

Timescales

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

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 50 working days of complainant's request	Not applicable

The complexity of Children's Services issues means that complaint resolution can sometimes be protracted, and achievement of the timescales can suffer as a result. Not all potential delays are due to delays within the Council, they are also due to the complainant submitting additional complaints or the complainant providing further information. The complaints officer/team undertakes rigorous monitoring of progress in relation to responding to complaints via a weekly RAG report which is shared with senior management.

Statutory complaints by stage and timescales

Stage	Timescales	Number of Complaints
1	Within 10 working days	61
	Over 10 working days	68
2	Within 25 – 65 working days	11
	Over 25 - 65 working days	9
3	Within 50 working days	5
	Withdrawn	2
Total		156

Average timescales investigated by stage in working days

Stage	Number of complaints	Average timescales
1	129	12
2	20	59
3	7	36

Average timescales do not include 2 stage 3 complaints that were withdrawn.

The average time in days to complete Stage 1 complaints is 12 working days in 2023/24, compared to 9 days in 2022/23. This is an increase of 3 days and is over the Statutory timescales. Further guidance and training is being developed for team managers to ensure they complete Stage 1 complaint investigations in a timely fashion and that responses are provided with the 10-day timeframe.

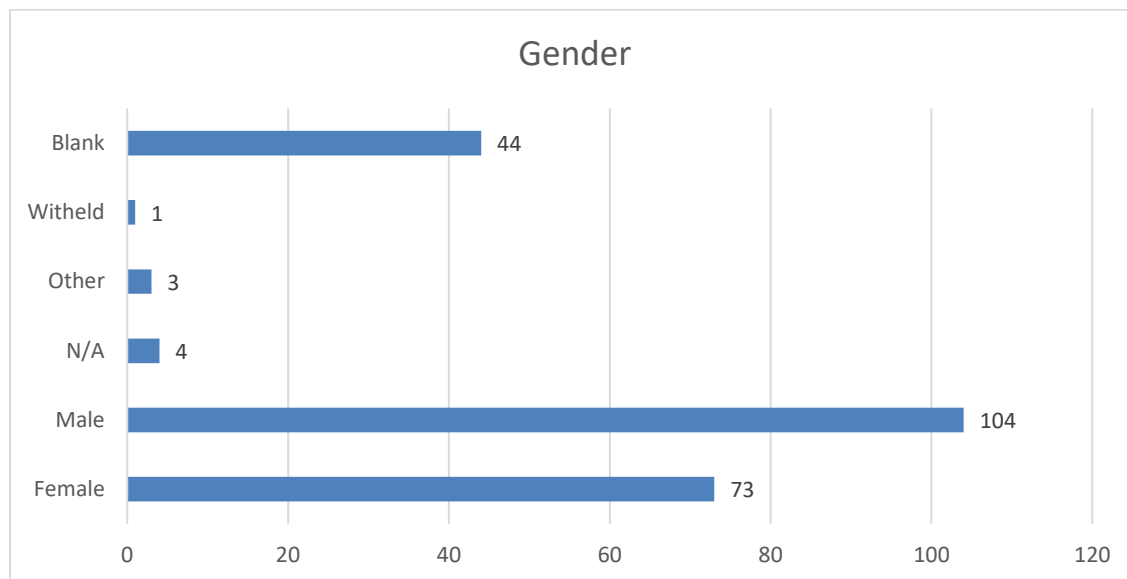
Investigations of Stage 2 complaints under the statutory procedure often need to be extended beyond the 25 working days timescale up to 65 working days due to the complexity of the issues being considered. In these situations, the importance of keeping the complainant informed and securing their agreement to an extension of the timescales, is recognised and addressed. Stage 2 complaints were resolved within an average of 59 working-days in 2023/24 compared to an average of 48 working days in 2022/23. 2023/24 has seen an increase in investigation times for Stage 2 complaints from the previous year by 11 days. There has been a significant delay in 9 Stage 2 complaint investigations due to exceptional circumstances with the Independent Investigating Officer. This was beyond the control of the Local Authority.

The two Stage 3 complaints were resolved within 36 working days compared to 26 working days in 2022/23. 2023/24 has shown an increase in the average timeframe for resolution of complaints at all stages. Children's Services continues to aim for all complaints to be resolved within the statutory timescale guideline of 10 working days for Stage 1 complaints, 25-65 working days for Stage 2 and 50 working days for Stage 3. This can be impacted by complexity, availability of staff members for discussion and the availability of Independent investigators and panel members.

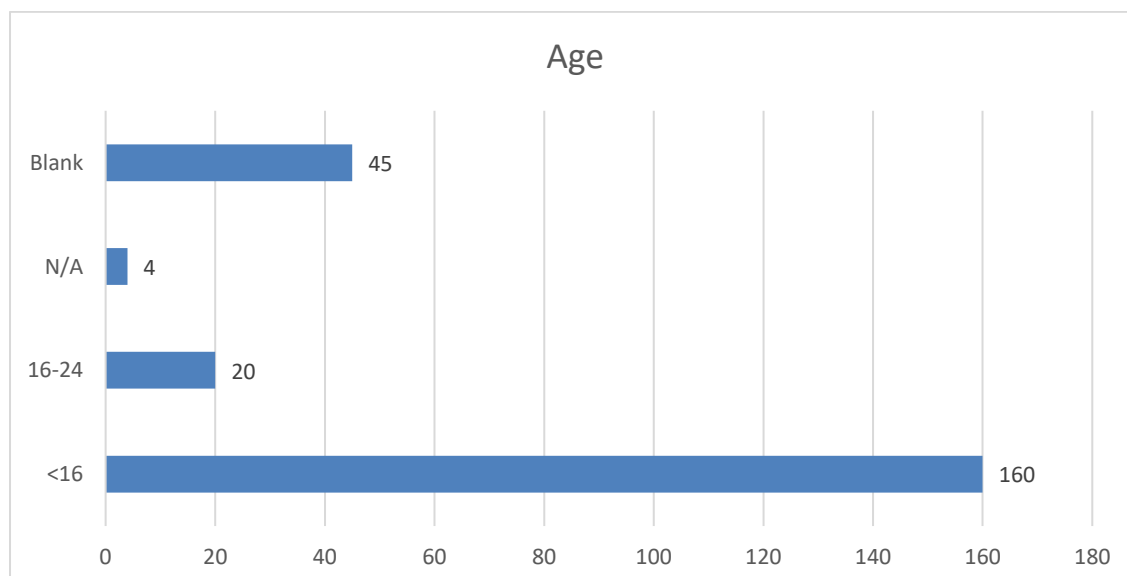
Equality

During 2023-24, we captured Equality Data to obtain further information and a characteristic insight on the complainants and service users who made complaints within Children's Services. The below graphs illustrate the data captured but this does not include complaints submitted for the SEN service area as we were unable to obtain those details, due to equality data not being required when SEN complaints are registered.

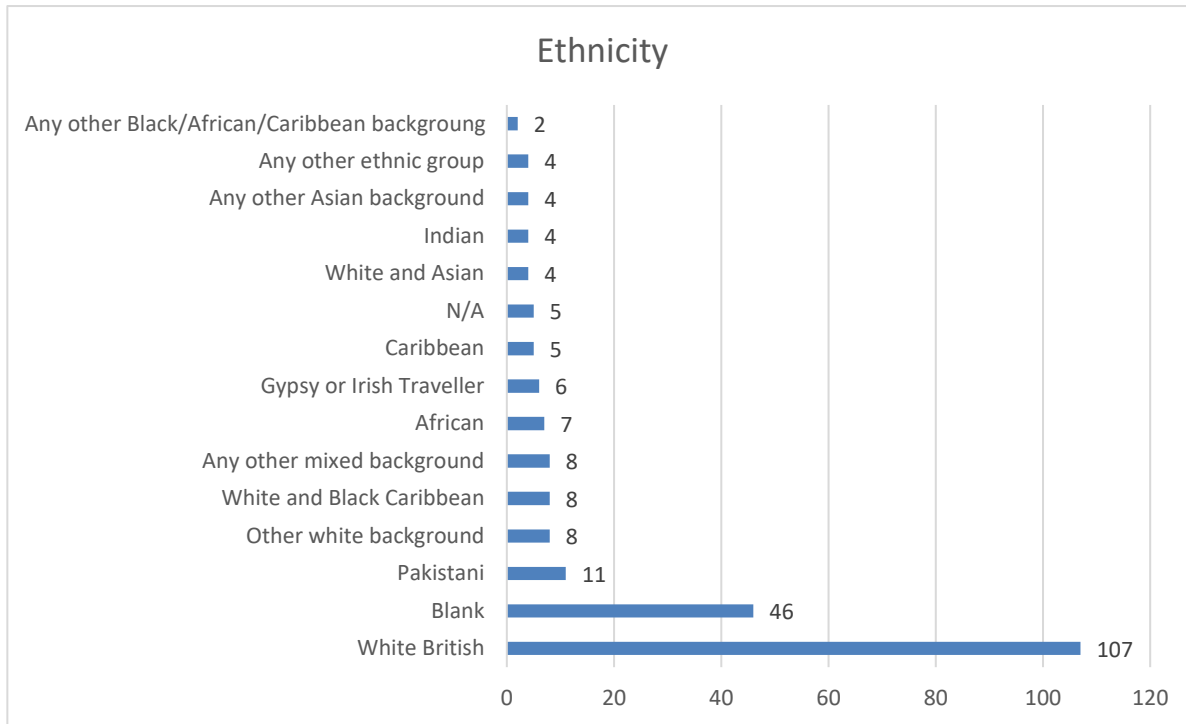
The below graph shows out of 229 complaints received during 2023-24 (excluding SEN), 104 were from male complainant's/service users and 73 were from female complainant's/service users.



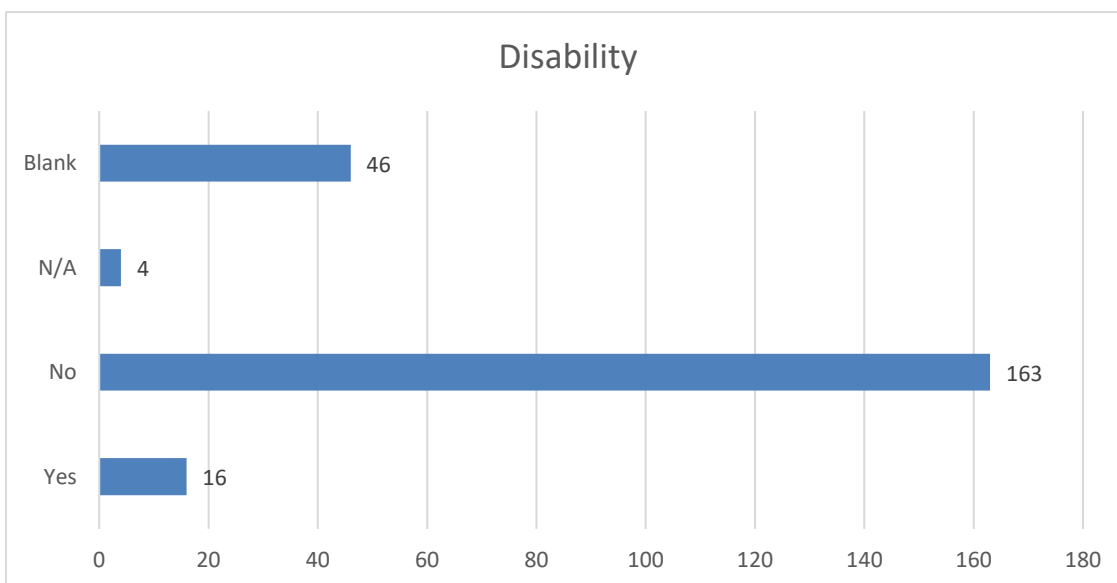
The below graph shows the age range of the complainant or service user. 156 of the complaints received in 2023-24 (excluding SEN) were from or submitted on behalf of young people under the age of 16, 20 of complaints received were from or submitted on behalf of young people between the ages of 16-24. 4 were marked "not applicable" and 45 were left blank.



Of the 229 Complaints received in 2023/24 (not including SEN/Education complaints), 107 complainants identified as White British, 46 were left blank, 11 identified as Pakistani, 8 as other White background, 8 as White & Caribbean, 8 as any other mixed background, 7 identified as African, 6 as Gypsy or Irish Traveller, 5 as Caribbean, 5 returned a “not applicable” answer, 4 identified as White & Asian, 4 as Indian, 4 as Any other Asian Background, 4 as Any other ethnic group and 2 as any other Black/African/Caribbean background.



The data captured during 2023-24 showed that 16 (7%) of complainants had a disability and that 163 (71%) did not, with 4 as non-applicable (N/A) due to this information not being able to be captured.



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 2023/24, the LGSCO received 24 complaints or enquiries relating to the Education and Children's Services for Coventry City Council. The LGSCO does not provide a breakdown of the individual numbers for each service and does not necessarily inform the Local Authority of every complaint or enquiry received, so it is not possible for us to ascertain how many of the 24 cases related specifically to Children's Services.

The LGSCO did not undertake any investigations in respect of these cases this year.

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 2023/24.

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.

188 compliments were received in 2023/24, compared to 363 in 2022/23 and 502 received in 2021/22.

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 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.

Below is a selection of compliments from children/young people and parents/carers to Children Services Teams.

Dear [Name], I hope this message finds you well. I want to thank you for the great support you gave us so far, without your help and support it wasn't possible to get our voice heard. I applied for Stage Two Complaint last week and today I met the School Director. The outcome is that the other boy is still attending the school, and my son continues to be anxious and distressed to be in the school. I requested the school transfer form today and I am in the process of filling it. Would you Please call me on [Number] if it is possible, as I need to consult you about a few things. Many thanks. Kind regards, [Name]

I am writing to give my review of [Name] one to one session work with myself. She is very professional yet easy to talk to and very understanding. I found the course very informative and has helped me in my daily life. She has given me coping mechanisms and a lot of knowledge that I didn't have before. She also went above and beyond for my family with getting us some well needed clothes and general items from a charity. I would like to thank her for all that she has done for us.

I would like to say thank you for making me feel very comfortable at the above CP, this was my first time attending a CP and you made me feel very confident and I also felt that my voice was listened to. I will not be so nervous if I have to attend another CP.

We have been working with [Name] who has supported us with one of our foster children, her ability to explain and expand on ways we can support him and some of the tasks she has done with him have really helped us as a family. I was always worried how we would cope with his behaviour when he is bigger but [Name] has given us confidence to understand what we know and can put into practice

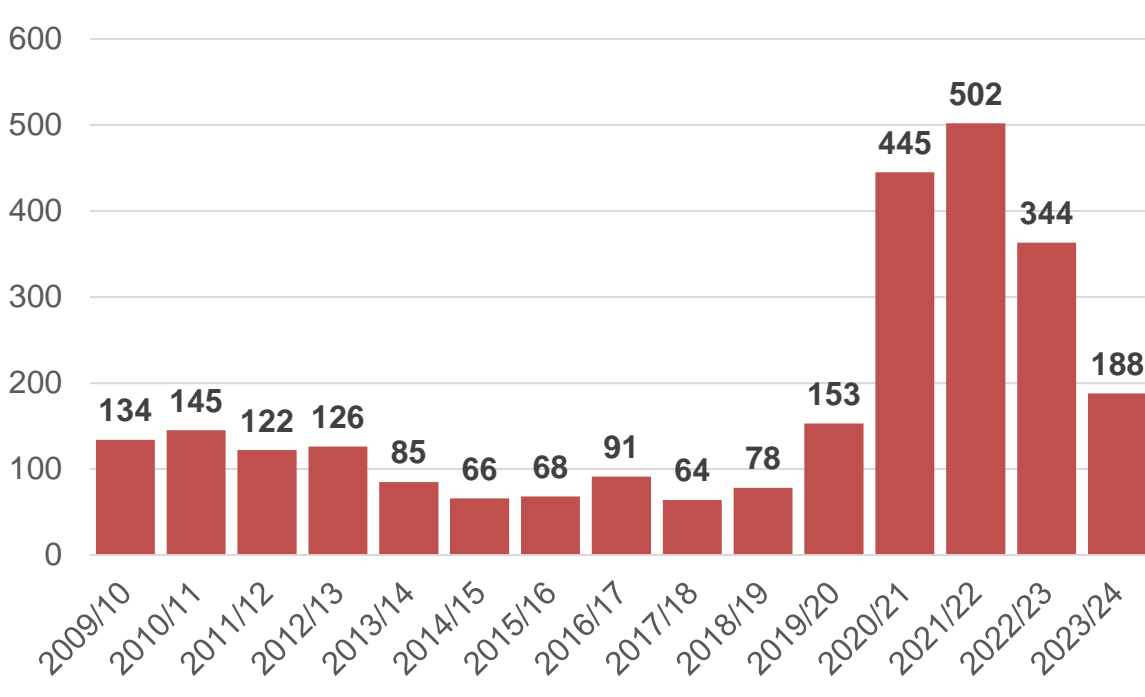
Just wanted to share that [Name] mother of [Name] shared some really positive feedback about her experiences of working with Horizon and Edge of Care. [Name] shared that in the past she has felt as though professionals have been looking to identify problems and have blamed her parenting for some of the challenges her children have faced. However, during the MACE meeting she shared that her most recent experience of accessing services has been totally opposite, she shared she has felt listened to, not blamed and she shared that she has been really reassured to know that she is not the only parent to be in a position where her child is potentially being exploited. [Name] shared she really values the support that has been offered to her about being reflective and recognising the impact her parenting can have, she knows feels able to "take a step back" to prevent challenges in her relationship with her daughter and she recognises now how the wider family environment has been impacted in a positive way.

I wanted to say thanks to the social worker [Name], [Name] and [Name] for supporting my family and I through this difficult time. Also, extra thanks to [Name] as from my previous experience I did not like working with social worker but talking to [Name] made me feel more comfortable, i felt less pressured and more willing to work with everyone on this case.

The support and assistance that we have received from [Name] our supervising social worker we cannot put into words, he has supported and guided us through the process, and we knew we could contact him if we had any problems, he has been a godsend to us and a credit to the care system.

Compliments recorded by year

The below graph shows the year-by-year compliments figures received and 2021/22 shows the highest number of compliments received in 14 years.



Compliments by theme in 2023/24

The below table shows the compliment themes. A compliment can have more than one theme.

Category	Compliments received
Standard of Service	64
Good communication	53
Standard of practice (social work)	33
Good child focus	19
Good partnership working	19

Note: totals may not add up because numbers may fall under more than one category.

Compliments by category received in 2023/24

The below table shows the breakdown of compliments received from:

Compliment from	Compliments received
Professionals	45
Parent/Carers	31
Young Person/Child	22
Police/Judge/Legal	18
School/Education	5
Foster Carers	5
Adopters	6
Other	56

Compliments by team

The below table shows a breakdown figure of number of compliments received per team in 2023/24.

Team	Compliments
Team Central	23
Team East	5
Team South	11
Team West	16
Responsive Services	23
Social Work Academy	0
Youth Offending	29
Total	107

Team	Compliments
Through Care	53
Edge of Care	13
LAC & Permanency	6
Fostering and Adoption	5
Placements	0
Children's Disability Team	3
Total	80

Team	Compliments
Safeguarding	0
Quality Assurance	1
Children's Champion	0
Total	1

Service improvements and learning points

Children’s Services are committed to learning from customer feedback. When complaints highlight where things have gone wrong, managers will work on identifying any remedial and developmental action required to improve service delivery.

When complaints are received, they are recorded on a database and each concern raised within the complaint is logged under a ‘reason of complaint code’. These codes include main categories and subcategory subjects. An example of this would be Standard of Service which has the subcategory reason codes service level/care plan dispute, lack of/access to/eligibility for service and delay in receiving service. It is not unusual for a complainant to raise more than one concern in the same complaint. For example, a complainant may submit a complaint about communication and finance issues experienced during the same incident, and both concerns along with any additional subcategories within the complaint codes would be recorded accordingly under that complaint.

From the 156 formal complaints received, the table below highlights the different types of concerns raised within the complaints received in 2023/24 under the main category. This does not show the actual number of complaints received but only the main reasons of complaints data. Currently our system does not capture an individual complaint code breakdown of the outcome of each concern – so the figures below reflect the alleged complaint, rather than whether a complaint was upheld or not within those specific categories.

Complaint issue/category

Category of concern raised	Number of times raised
Communication	115
Standards of service	42
Alleged Staff conduct	33
Child protection issues	18
Breach of Confidentiality	12
Standard of environment	9

Resolutions

All staff dealing with complaints are encouraged to make any reasonable effort to ensure that the complaint is resolved. Common resolutions this year mirror the previous years. These are: a full explanation of why decisions were made; apologies for mistakes made and any distress caused; a change in practitioner, where this could be managed in the best interests of the child; the opportunity for complainants to ensure their views 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/Remedy

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 their own. Some complaints at Stage 2 and 3 of the process resulted in payments.

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 these are regularly monitored by the Complaints Officer and Operational/Strategic Leads of the service areas and discussed within the senior leadership meetings for regular review and improvements.

Examples of some of these improvements include:

- To ensure that information is communicated in a timely way and in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of families who are experiencing difficulties.
- Extension of the mentoring scheme to allow for mentoring support to be offered to carers during the standards of care process.
- Foster carers to be supported to work with the service regarding the ending of long term fostering to ensure that where moves needed they take place in the best way for children and young people.
- Improve frequency and levels of communication with families, especially where children are not in their birth families care.
- Ensure that parents and carers receive reports/minutes in a timely manner following meetings and that sharing of information is robust.

Progression Actions / Work in progress

A number of actions were identified in previous reports, which are progressing as follows:

- **Complaint Leaflets / External Webpages**

Updated easy-to-read complaints leaflets are planned for 2024/25 and complaints information webpages will be revisited and refreshed in conjunction with the changes arising from the new Compliments, Comments and Complaints policy being introduced this year.

- **Service Recovery Team**

The former complaints team has been redesigned to create the Service Recovery team and expanded to include a Service Recovery Manager, two additional Service Recovery Officers and additional Administration support. This will help ensure more timely responses to internal and external queries and provide a more robust case management support to services.

- **Ongoing revision of the Stage 1 process**

The average time to complete Stage 1 complaints has increased to 12 working days in 2023/24, compared to 9 days in 2022/23, and which is in excess of the Statutory 10-day timescales. Further guidance and training is being developed for team managers to ensure they can complete Stage 1 complaint investigations in a timely fashion and that responses are provided within the 10-day timeframe.

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

Stage 2 complaints were resolved within an average of 59 working-days in 2023/24 compared to an average of 48 working days in 2022/23. While over the initial 25 working days timescale this is still

within the permitted extension of up to 65 working days. The increase has been both due to the complexity of the issues being considered, but also due to high demand on Independent Investigating Officers, and we are working to increase the pool of these to address the impact of delays due to availability or caseload.

- **Internal Complaints Investigation Form**

This form is for investigating officers to capture additional learning and understanding of complaint concerns to ensure service areas and teams consistently improve their services and implement any learning necessary. These are not being uniformly or consistently completed across all elements of Children's Services, and steps will be taken in 2024/25 to increase officer awareness of these and additional training offered on the importance of (and benefits from) completion as standard.

- **Investigating Officers Complaints Handling Guidance**

The guide is to provide support and guidance for investigating officers on statutory, corporate, and informal complaints. It will be updated and refreshed in 2024/25 to reflect the changes arising from the new Compliments, Comments and Complaints policy being introduced this year, and will be published on Council's website for reference to and use by external Independent Investigating Officers as well as internal staff. This will then be revisited and refreshed on a yearly basis.

- **Training for Children's Services and Managers on Complaint Process**

Further training will be provided to all Managers / Investigating Officers during 2024/25 to ensure continuation of effective complaint handling and to maximise early resolutions wherever possible.

Specific service area improvements/learning which have been identified

Children's Disability Team

During the year 2023-2024 there were seven complaints made in respect of the Children with Disabilities Teams. Out of these seven complaints, three were upheld and two were partially upheld. There was one common theme in these complaints which was about the need for practitioners to ensure that they communicate information in a timely way and in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of families who are experiencing difficulties.

The Children's Disability Teams take complaints seriously and learning was taken forward with practitioners at the time of the complaints. The learning from the complaints will also be shared with practitioners during team and service meetings.

Fostering

There was 1 complaint against the fostering service in 2023-24 which was considered at stage 1 and stage 2. This complaint by a foster carer covered areas of practice both in the Fostering service and in Throughcare. The aspects related to the Fostering service relate to delay in receipt of information for a standards of care meeting and delay in receipt of minutes for this. They also relate to actions of the service related to the disruption of a long-term matched arrangement for a young person. In response to this complaint the service has reviewed and updated the process notes for standards of care meetings and reinforced to those arranging these what the expectations are prior to and after these to ensure that information is shared in a timely way.

The mentoring scheme has been extended to allow for mentoring support to be offered to carers during the standards of care process. In addition, the service has reviewed expectations around the ending of long term fostering arrangements making clear that foster carers are asked to work with support offered

to prevent this and to work with the service to ensure that moves where needed take place in the best way for children and young people.

Children in Care

During 2023-2024, complaints that were upheld or partially upheld were about a range of different issues. The themes which were reoccurring within a small number of the complaints were:

1. Majority of complaints related to poor communication or communication not being received in a timely way.
2. Not receiving reports or minutes following meetings and lacking in sharing of information.

Overall, the complaints reached solutions that families were satisfied with. The learning has identified that communication could be better with families, especially where children are not in their birth families care. Every effort and consideration will be given to ensure that families are responded to in a timely way, and they are kept aware of what is going on in their children's lives. It is vital that parents and carers receive reports/minutes following meetings and that sharing of information is robust. It remains important that we take learning and understand the impact of the way we communicate with families. Lack of information sharing and poor communication impacts families and can weaken relationships. Working with families in a restorative way will improve their experiences which continues to be embedded.

The Children in Care service holds monthly service meetings, with a focus on best practice. The learning themes identified from the 2023 -2024 complaints will be shared at a service meeting during the next quarter.

Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) and responsive services.

Responsive Services are committed to continuous learning from complaints, and this is a standard agenda item on all service meetings. From the three complaints received between 2023 and 2024, there were no identifiable themes and learning was shared with individual practitioners and across the whole service. The findings of these complaints have been considered to support in the continuous improvement of delivery of services for children, families and professionals by Responsive Services.

The service continues to work restoratively and welcomes challenge, to inform practice changes to better support the children and families we work with. It is important to understand the impact of the way in which we work with families and if there are points of learning we will take these on board to seek to improve families' experiences.

Responsive Services are proud of the level of engagement that they have with parents and children, making sure that they feel involved, are listened to and views are clearly recorded in all contacts, referrals and assessments.

Quality Assurance Service (Child Protection Conference Chair Service, Independent Reviewing Officer Service, and LADO Service)

The Child Protection Conference Service

The Child Protection Conference Chairing Service take their relationship with Partner Agencies very seriously. There was one complaint received during the 2023/24 period regarding an alleged breach of confidentiality. This was investigated swiftly and a conclusion reached without any delay. The complaint was not upheld. The complaint did however remind those within the service of the importance of data protection and their responsibilities in relation to information sharing.

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service

There was one complaint received in respect of this service area over 23/24 period and this was

investigated under stage 1 of the council's complaints procedure, by the IRO Service Manager. This related to concern about the manner of an Independent Reviewing Officer during a child in care review meeting.

The complaint was broken down into 6 separate sections and each were responded to individually. After a thorough investigation, the IRO Service Manager found the one element of the complaint to be partially upheld and therefore the concluded the overall complaint to be partially upheld. The complainant's experience was acknowledged and the IRO and other participants in the review acknowledged the language used by the IRO was less sensitive than would be ideal and had caused hurt to the complainant, causing them to feel the need to leave the review meeting.

The IRO has apologised for the poor choice of language used and has engaged in a reflective discussion with the IRO Service Manager, about the impact of language, and the need for this to be consistently respectful, restorative, and relational. It was further suggested that the complainant is supported in all review meetings by an advocate and that the IRO has updating discussions about assessments in advance of reviews, to ensure that conversations around care planning and sensitively approached and well managed.

This outcome was shared with the complainant, who was satisfied with the investigation and action taken.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Service

There was one complaint in relation to this service area raised over 2023/24, which was resolved at stage one. The complaint related to an individual in a Position of Trust, subject to an allegation. The individual was dissatisfied with the outcome of 'substantiated' that had been reached at the conclusion of the LADO process and felt that this was not justified. The complainant was also unhappy that they were not included in the Position of Trust meeting, held between members of the professional network.

The complaint was investigated by the Risk Management Coordinator, responsible for the LADO Service, and was found to not be upheld. Despite this, the following learning for the LADO Service was identified:

- There needs to be consistently timely communications and recording around Position of Trust meetings and investigation within the Children's Services electronic recording system (LCS). Specifically, Position of Trust meeting minutes need to be written up and promptly uploaded to the appropriate file, as well as the recording of case notes detailing communications between the professional network.

The LADO Service takes all complaints seriously. Learning is carefully considered by the responsible managers and translated into action plans to support continuous improvement. The LADO Service is currently recruiting to a newly created position of LADO Coordinator. This will increase efficiency within the service going forward, ensuring that records are accurate and promptly uploaded to the Children's Services electronic recording system.

Social Work Academy

The operational teams in the social work academy support cohorts of Newly Qualified Social Workers into the service (NQSWs). The Academy develops NQSWs through their continuous professional development and their journey as newly qualified social workers, stepping into professional and accountable practice. Effectively, new staff consistently join and pass through the service. The learning relates to this stage in the Social Worker career. The learning feeds into the Coventry Family Valued program, and the development of relational, restorative practices and value base when working with families. The evolved practice methodology Family Valued will significantly update the Academy offer and connect the underpinning theories and principles to practice delivery and will shape the future career of NQSWs as they grow and develop further in Coventry. Relational and restorative practice connect this to "a way of being" and will build the foundations as learning is taken forward. The team managers will connect and align closely to this work to enable this transition.

Team Central

Team Central Between 2023 and 2024 complaints have continued to reduce as restorative practice is embedded. From the complaints either upheld or partially upheld there are 3 common themes:

1. Communication
2. Conduct of the Social Worker
3. Sharing of information in a timely manner with professionals and families.

Social Workers are encouraged to respond to families and professionals in a timely way. Social workers have been trained in Family Valued Relational Practice which should ensure that families feel included valued and respected throughout the process of our interventions. Guidance around expectations of Social Workers is now embedded. The team are clear on what constitutes best practice. Any complaints are personally addressed with individuals at the time by the Team Manager. Furthermore, learning from complaints remain on the agenda of supervision sessions, team meetings and whole team meetings. Central have embedded a system where they routinely seek service user feedback every month and discuss the feedback in the team and the learning themes.

Team East

A review of the complaints received by East Help and Protection has shown that the main themes of complaints are as follows:

1. Communication
2. Conduct of the Social Worker
3. Parents feeling unclear of process and challenge of processes undertaken

Unfortunately, a higher number of stage 1 complaints progressing to stage 2 complaints is evidenced for year 2023/24 compared to that of 2022/23. To prevent this from continuing the social work team will begin to review outcomes of complaints as whole service group and ensure there is a feedback loop to the actions set and learning from the complaints. To support positive practice the East area has challenged poor practice where it has been identified through individual supervision or team meetings with bespoke short sessions run by the Team Managers. All new and agency staff are trained in line with the Coventry Family Valued approach and guidance around expectations of staff is embedded in the form of practice standards and recording guidance, so all are clear what constitutes best practice. The Team Managers continue to lead by example and complaints are addressed promptly with attempts made by the Team Managers to locally resolve in the first instance.

Team South

There have been 27 complaints in Team South. The main themes from complaints are:-

- 1) Lack of clarity about expectations of the father and the plan for children.
- 2) Social worker communication with families in a timely way.
- 3) Paperwork not being shared in a timely manner.
- 4) Process not being followed – Conference was rearranged. Communication and timescales.

The South area is focusing on ensuring more timely support to families, with records being provided in a timely manner. South are utilising support from Restorative Practice Leads to ensure that families are supported in a restorative way.

Team West

During this year, there have been a number of complaints from Parents in relation to:

- 1) Communication.
- 2) Level and timeliness of support and safeguarding assessment and checks.
- 3) Records not being accurate or shared or shared in a timely way.

Social Workers in Team West have all received Restorative Practice training within service meetings to consider how best to work with families. In addition, they are in the process of embedding the new Re-Think Formulation approach to try and focus more on working with families where they are stuck. West have recognised the need to communicate better with fathers, especially those not living in the same household as their children.

The West has the highest volume of referrals in the city so caseloads of Social Workers are higher, this does sometimes impact on the ability of managers and Social Workers to respond in a timely way. The Operational Lead and Team Managers are aware of this and therefore are mindful to try and resolve complaints quickly and informally.

All learning from complaints is shared and discussed with practitioners to ensure continuous improvement in service deliver to children and families.

Through Care

A review of the complaints received by the Through Care service has identified that communication is the main theme and reason why complaints are partially upheld. The communication issue is what leads to matters ending in complaints and could be resolved much earlier. As a result of the review a targeted whole service session in respect of communication and impact of good communication will be held. Communication that is timely has been a priority within the service and learning is disseminated within manager meetings and developmental sessions.

The feedback from complaints or compliments continues to be an agenda item on a weekly basis within the management team and key themes are shared within team meetings to ensure we have a continued focus on any areas for improvement.

Children Services



Success Summary

Our Teams take complaints very seriously and we continue to use these to inform our practice throughout Children 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, to ensure the same learning is applied.

We 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

Out of a total of **229 complaints received**, the number of complaints resolved informally has **increased from 48** in 22/23 **to 60** in 23/24

The average timeframe to **investigate Stage 2 complaints** has continued to be investigated within the formal timeframe expectations

The **two main themes for complaints** received in 2023/24 is **standard of service** and **communication** however these concerns **have reduced** compared with the **complaints received**

Statutory **Stage 3 complaints** continue to remain **extremely low** showing that the majority of complaints are **resolved at Stage 1** or informally

The Service Recovery Officers provide Children Services with **quarterly complaint and compliment reports** so any learning and success can be be addressed

The **Internal Investigation Form** continues to provide service areas with more insight into service improvement and delivery

Further information

Further information about complaints and representations and a copy of the Council's complaints policy and [complaints handling guidance](#) is available at www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/.

Ilius Ahmed
Service Recovery Officer
Customer Services – Improvement & Development
November 2024

Kelly Boyce
Service Recovery Officer
Customer Services – Improvement & Development
November 2024

Steve Paterson
Service Recovery Officer
Customer Services – Improvement & Development
November 2024

Kenneth Kanebi
Ombudsman Liaison Officer
Service Recovery Officer
Customer Services – Improvement & Development
November 2024

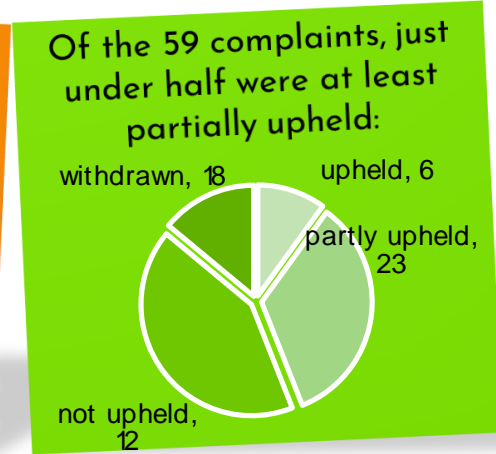
Adult Services Complaints and Representations Annual Report 2023-24



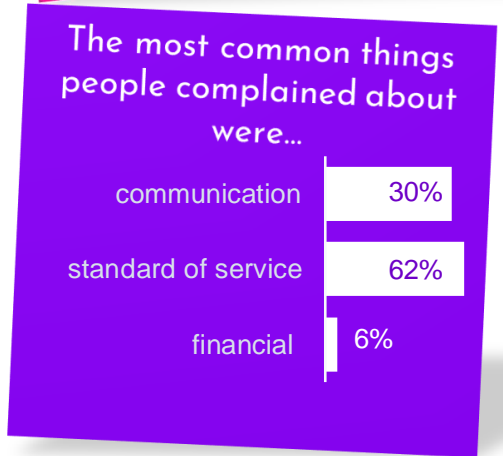
Adult Social Care 2023/24 Complaints & Representations key facts & figures


 There were 3650 adults in long-term support as of 31 March 2024


 In 2023/24, the Council received **59** complaints about Adult Social Care, compared to 66 in 2022/23




 The Council aims to resolve complaints within 20 working days. In 2023/24, **46%** were resolved within 20 working days, 65 % in 2022/23 and 64% in 2021/22




 In 2023/24, we received **173** compliments; down by 80 compared to last year. These were all about the standard of care provided at care homes for older people.

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 (LGSCO). In 2023/24, the LGSCO received **10** Adult Social Care cases. A total of **2** cases were upheld

Listening to service users' complaints helps services improve by helping Managers identify changes that are required. Key learning points from 2023/24 include: Ensuring regular meetings are held to learn from complaints, centralised database to capture practice learning, quality assurance visits to be carried out,.

Comments, Compliments and Complaints about Adult Social Care

You have the right to receive a good level of service. Listening to your views helps Adult Social Care Services to put things right and improve things for the future, so your comments, compliments, complaints and suggestions are important and always welcome. You can contact the Adult Social Care Complaints Officer by phone to **08085 834 333** or online at www.coventry.gov.uk/form_speakup/ or by email to AdultSocialCareCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk.



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Welcome

Welcome to the 2023/24 complaints and representations annual report. 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 Adult Social Care provided by or commissioned by Coventry City Council for the year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

Background

Local Authorities are required to have a system for receiving representations by or on behalf of people in need of adult social care support who have a range of support needs due to a disability or frailty (Local Authority Social Services and National Health Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.) Services cover assessment and case management, direct service provision or the arrangement of a range of services, including support at home, day opportunities, supported housing, intermediate, residential and nursing care or provision of equipment.

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 Local Authority has a nominated officer assigned to the management of representations for Adult Social Care.

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.

Within this report 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

In 2023/24 the service received a total of 73 complaints and of these 59 were **statutory complaints**, compared to 66 in 2022/23. 33% of these complaints were fully or partially upheld, compared to 45% in 2022/23. Whilst there has been an overall increase in complaints received there was a reduction in Statutory complaints.

The main themes of complaints received over this period were as follows:

- Method/Quality of communication
- Standard of Service
- Standard of work

In addition to the statutory complaints above, the service received 8 informal complaints during 2023/24, a reduction from 14 Informal complaints in 2022/23 along with 6 Stage 1 Corporate complaints. These are complaints resolved/handled at the point of delivery. In line with our complaints policy and with best practice, most concerns are dealt with on an informal basis, for example, by social care providers; and may not be reflected in the figures in this report.

Description of Complaint Types

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 handles compliments, comments and complaints. A complaint can be made to an employee either by telephone, social media, e-mail or in writing.

Informal

Where possible, complaints should be resolved informally and for a number of complaints this is what we try to do in the first instance. If this is not possible, complainants can formally complain to the Council. Informal matters can also be related to concerns that require resolution or follow up investigation outside of the formal process.

Statutory

Complaints about Adult Services 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 (England) Regulations 2009.

All other complaints relating to Council services are dealt with by the corporate complaints policy.

Corporate

A Corporate complaint example would be as follows: When a member of the public who is not a service user or a holder of parental responsibility for a young person, requests that their concerns are investigated formally.

An example of a corporate complaint could be a member of the public who has raised concerns regarding a service that they are not personally involved with such as, seeing a social worker act in a way they do not deem appropriate or witnessing a poor level of service.

Feedback

Promoting feedback

Representations from people who came into contact with Adult Social Care and their families provide a useful source of information about quality-of-service delivery, professional practice and the outcome of decisions we make that affect their care and support. A key part of the complaints process is how the Council learns from negative experiences and use this to improve what we do. Adult Social Care always welcomes feedback, whether this is positive or negative and there are a number of ways in which people can make their views known and these include:

- During the assessment process we will engage with individuals and their carers about what is important to them and incorporate this into their support plans
- At the conclusion of the assessment and/or review we will invite individuals and their families to use our 'real time survey' so that we have immediate feedback on their experience
- We use surveys for individuals and for carers to obtain wider feedback.
- We listen to experts by experience and our Stakeholder Group in respect of strategic or service changes.

Providing feedback

Where possible, issues/complaints should be handled at the point of delivery. When a person feels that they are still not satisfied, then it is recorded as a formal complaint and investigated as such. The length of time to investigate and resolve complaints depends on their complexity. Where there are particular complexities that will require an elongated period of investigation, a timescale is agreed with the complainant.

People can provide feedback directly to the service or team; to customer services; or to the Complaints Officer. Further information about how to make a complaint, access advocacy or support, and the complaints process is available on the Council's website at www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/.

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.

In 2023/24, the majority of complainants chose to make a complaint via email or through the Council's contact centre.

Complaints

The number of statutory complaints has decreased to 59 in 2023/24 from 66 in 2022/23.

The number of complaints and their outcomes are detailed below.

Complaints 2023/24 vs 2022/23

Outcome	2023/24		2022/23	
Upheld	6	10%	10	15%
Partly Upheld	23	39%	20	30%
Not upheld	12	20%	15	23%
Complaint withdrawn	18	31%	19	29%
Open	0	0%	2	3%
Total	59	100	66	100

How people complained

Method	2023/24	2022/23
Email	41	42
Contact Center/Form	18	22
Letter	0	2
Phone	0	0
Total	59	66

Complaints by service area

The below table shows a breakdown of complaints received and investigated by each service area team

Service Area	2023/24	2022/23
All Age Disability (Assessment & Case Management)	13	14
Adult Commissioning	3	8
Assessment & Case Management OP	14	20
Adult Safeguarding	1	3
ASC Enablement & Therapy Services	4	5
Mental Health	7	3
Community Discharge Team	1	2
Finance	1	3
Hospital Team	3	2
Telecare Service	3	1
Internal Provider Services	2	0
Promoting Independence/intake	7	5
Total	59	66

Complaints regarding external providers

Providers of residential and domiciliary care services must have a complaints procedure that complies with the Care Homes Regulations 2001, the Care Standards Act 2000 and the National Minimum Standards stipulated by the Care Quality Commission. There is an expectation that the individual pursues a complaint with provider organisations through the provider's own complaints procedures in the first instance. However, if the individual is dissatisfied with the response of the provider or, if they wish to pursue the complaint through the Statutory Adult Social Care Complaints Process, they have the right to do so. Where possible, we encourage complainants to utilise the providers' complaints procedures in the first instance as this enables the complaint to be dealt with at source as opposed to through the Council.

Complaints regarding external providers are monitored through contract monitoring and, where required, providers are expected to make immediate improvements and/or to produce action plans to deliver service improvements with delivery monitored through contractual mechanisms.

Timescales

There are no externally prescribed timescales for the resolution of complaints. The only stipulation within the regulations is that timescales should be reasonable, and that the complaints process should be concluded within six months. It is acceptable to extend this deadline with the agreement of the complainant.

As there is no specific requirement, the approach taken is to agree a timescale with the complainant. It is normal practice to inform complainants should an extension be required. Most often, extensions are sought due to the complexity of complaints, including where the complainant supplies additional information/evidence part way through an investigation. In these instances, the complainant is contacted with an explanation for the delay and the likely revised timescale.

As a benchmark for monitoring the timescale for completion of complaints, Adult Social Care applies an internal guideline that complaints should be completed within 20 working days. Performance on this standard is monitored by the Adult Social Care Management Team. This year's performance against the target is shown in the table below:

Complaint Stage	Timescales	2023/24	2022/23
Stage 1	Within 20 working days	27 (46%)	43 (65%)
	Over 20 working days	32 (54%)	23 (35%)
	Still Open	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total		59	66

Where the 20-working day response timescale has been exceeded, this can be due to the requirement to involve other professionals, including health care professionals in other organisations and is relevant to Mental Health complaints. The responses received from other organisations are at times outside of the 20-working daytime-frame. This can then impact on the investigation period which occasionally can be out of the direct control of the Local Authority.

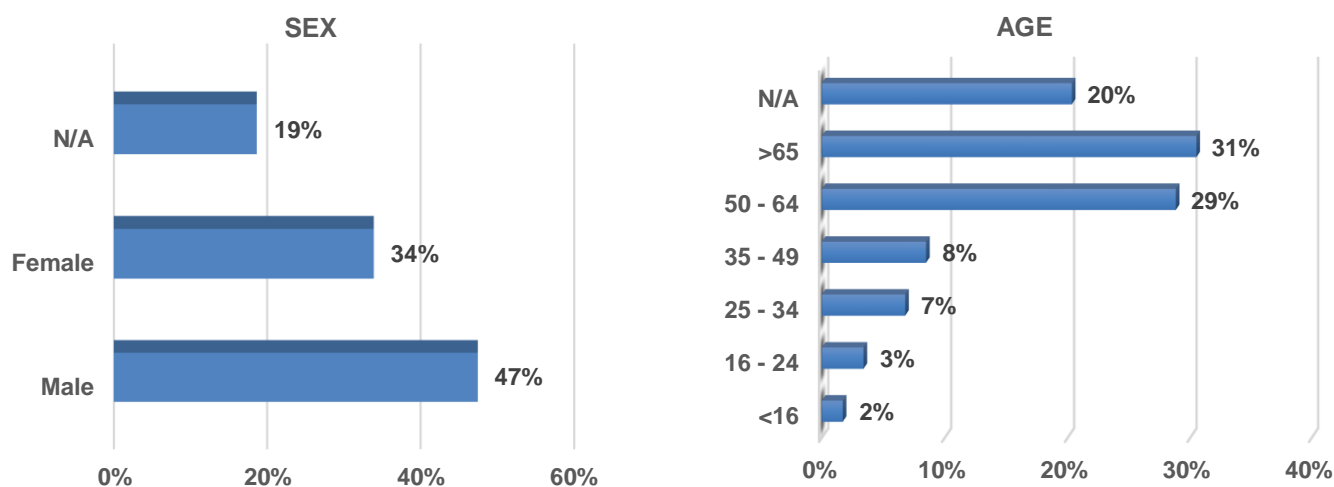
The overall percentage on complaints being resolved within the 20 Working Day timescale has shown a marginal improvement given the increased number of complaints but more have been processed within the 20 days). The improvements could be a result of Team Managers being more involved in the case management and with potential complaints at an earlier stage, allowing them to discuss with the complainants to provide explanation and support. This enables them to provide the formal responses more easily and within timeframe.

Services do not operate in isolation and the provision of support requires coordination across a range of areas, This, along with the complexity of situations means that complaints inevitably cut across a number of service areas impacting on the timeliness within which the complaint can be investigated. For example: All Age Disability and Commissioning may well have had input to a specific situation. Although 65% of complaints received have been responded to within 20 working days, 35% (23 complaints) have gone over timescale. Monitoring of the reasons for the delay is something that is now being developed.

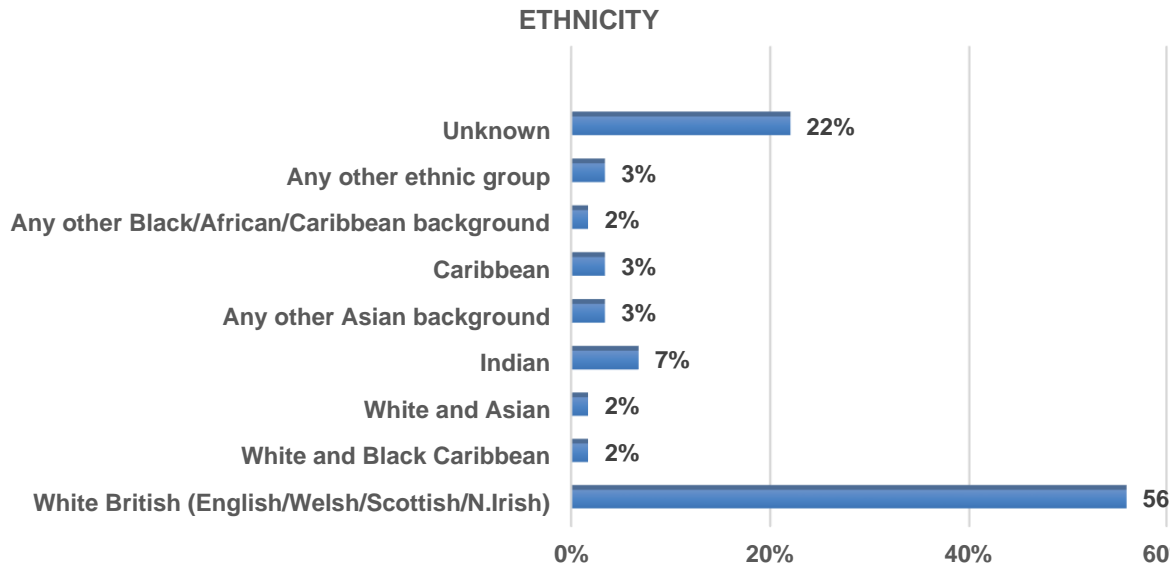
Equality

The Local Authority has a system in place to capture the equality data required to support the complaints process. Information is only ever recorded in relation to who the service user is. The below graphs illustrate the data captured but this does not include complaints submitted for the Ombudsman. Data was obtained from Adult Social Care case recording systems, and, on that basis, it has not been possible to capture information pertaining to every complainant, only those with an existing case record. These are recorded as 'not available' (N/A).

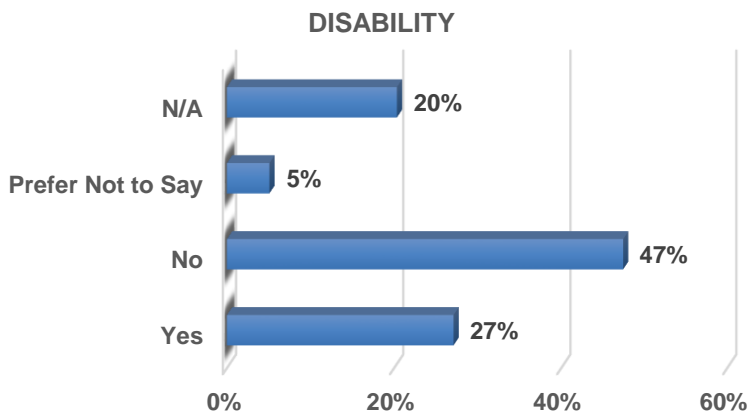
The below graph shows out of the 59 complaints received in 2023-24 (excluding Ombudsman), 28 complaints (47%) were from male complainants/service users, 20 complaints (34%) were from female complainants/service users and 11 (19%) were not available (N/A).



The above graph also shows the age range of the complainant or service user. 2 complaints (3%) of the complaints received during 2023- 24 (excluding Ombudsman) were from or submitted on behalf of service users aged 16-24. 4 complaint (7%) was also received or submitted on behalf of service users aged 25-34. 5 complaints (8%) were received/submitted from service users aged 35-49. 17 complaints (29%) were received/submitted from service users aged 50-64. 18 complaints (31%) were received/submitted from service users aged 65+. 1 (2%) complaint received related to a service user under 16, this complaint received by parents regarding home adaptations and this service sits within Adult Services but for equality information we capture the service user details. The information was not available (N/A) for 12 (20%).



The majority of complainant's/service users in 2023-24 (excluding Ombudsman) were White British with a total of 33 (56%), followed by 4 (7%) with Indian background. 2 (3%) with any other Asian background, Caribbean background and any other ethnic group each. 1 (2%) with a White & Black Caribbean background, White and Asian background and any other Black/African/Caribbean background each. 13 (22%) of the complaints received were N/A.



Out of the 59 complaints received, 16 (27%) had a disability and 28 (47%) did not, with 12 (20%) logged as (N/A).

Ombudsman

In 2023/24 Adult Social Care received 10 new cases, while 9 cases were decided, the outcomes of which were as follows:

- 2 Cases Upheld
- 1 Case Incomplete/Invalid
- 3 Cases closed after initial enquiry.
- 3 Case was decided as premature and referred for local resolution
- 1 Case is currently still open

This compared to 2022/23 which had 8 new cases, while 9 cases were decided, the outcome of which were

- 4 Cases Upheld,
- 1 Case was Not Upheld.
- 2 Cases were Closed after initial enquiry,
- 1 Case advise was given, and
- 1 Case was decided as premature and referred for local resolution.

Out of the 9 cases decided in 2023/24, 1 Upheld case, received financial remedy or reimbursement.

A summary of the 9 cases decided by the Ombudsman in 2023/24 are as follows -

Case 1 -

Mr. B said the Council ignored their concerns, does not care, and had abused Mr. B and Ms. C. The family had tried all avenues to try and improve Mrs. C's care support, and Mr. B wants a public apology and substantial compensation. The LGO concluded that they would not investigate the complaint since they were satisfied the Council had thoroughly investigated and responded to Mr. B's complaint. The Council had accepted any failure in service, apologised, and taken action to improve service and communication, therefore no further action was needed.

Case 2 -

Ms. B complained that the Council failed to arrange for her care, did not ensure that the care provided met her needs, and did not investigate her complaints about poor care, including that the carer took a video call while she was undressed. In addition, the Council failed to complete a financial assessment and wrongly invoiced her for over £1,000. Ms. B says that the Council's shortcomings left her distressed and her care needs unmet. The LGO found fault because the Council took too long to assess Ms. B's care needs and arrange care. The LGO recommended a £750 remedial action for loss of service and for distress and frustration caused to Ms. B.

Case 3 -

Mr. X complained that a Care Provider (commissioned by the Council), wrongly gave medication to Ms. Y, to make her compliant, and falsified records to obtain the prescription. Mr. X says this contributed to her death. The LGO did not investigate this complaint, as the medication was prescribed by a GP. They found no fault with the Council, as they could not conclude that any fault by the care provider caused the injustice Mr. X claimed.

Case 4 -

Ms. C complained about the Council's failure to provide suitable accommodation, care and support to Mr. B. She said she had discovered Mr. B unkempt and in extreme filthy living conditions and called an ambulance for him. Mr. B was taken to hospital where he died a few days later. Ms. C says the hospital doctor said Mr. B died of neglect and Ms. C blamed the Council for failure to provide Mr. B with care. The LGO did not investigate Ms. C's complaint because they found there was no good reason to investigate.

Case 5 -

Mr X complained the Council has unfairly prevented him from seeing his mother, Ms Y. He said this situation has caused him significant upset. The LGO did not investigate Mr X's complaint about the Council's decision to restrict

contact between Mr X and his mother. This is because the LGO considered that it would be unlikely to find fault with the Council's decision.

Case 6 -

Ms. X complained about neglect for over 18 months. She said the Council incorrectly described her condition. Ms. X wanted the Council to provide her with care and treat her with some dignity. The LGO explained it will not pursue the complaint because it appears the Council had not been given a reasonable opportunity to investigate and reply.

Cases received in 2022/23, but remedy completed in 2023/24

There was one case which was decided in 2022/23, but which remedy was reported in the Ombudsman 2023/24 annual report.

Case 1:

The Council was at fault for not providing Mrs. X with information about the care process and explaining how the care assessment would work when she asked for care for her mother, Mrs Y. As a result, her mother paid for private care and did not realise she could have received help towards the costs of care. The Council agreed to apologise, make a payment, (backdated amount of Mrs. Y's Direct Payments from 1 November 2021 to 27 May 2022) and ensure it has procedures in place to give people information about the care system when they initially approach the Council for assistance.

Cases received in 2023/24 but decided in 2024/25

The reporting of these cases will be in the Ombudsman 2024/25 annual report.

Case 1:

Ms. X, a representative, complained that the Council failed to carry out a social care assessment for Ms. Y on two occasions, the second when Ms. Y requested care and support as she was struggling to look after herself and her child when she was receiving treatment. Ms. X said the assessment completed by adult social care was a contact assessment (not a full needs assessment) and did not consider Ms. Y's caring responsibilities. The Ombudsman upheld this complaint stating that the Council failed to act when Ms. X asked for assistance with childcare and other support. The Council agreed to apologise and pay £250 for avoidable distress caused.

Case 2:

Ms. X complained the Council failed to deal properly with safeguarding concerns about her adult son. The LGO concluded that the Council was not at fault over its handling of the safeguarding concerns.

Case 3: (Still Open)

Complaint from Ms. B concerning care for Ms. C in the months before her death. This complaint is still being investigated and the details will be reported once the case has closed.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) publish an annual report regarding Adult Social Care each year, this year's can be found at- <https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/annual-review-reports/adult-social-care-reviews>

Cases escalated to the Ombudsman – Regional comparison

The table below shows the number of complaints that were escalated to the Ombudsman in the West Midlands region in 2023-2024. Coventry has a relatively low number of complaints escalated, given the size of the city. This data is newly added, and it is difficult to speculate on response satisfaction levels on this data alone. It would be useful to know how many of these complaints were upheld before escalating. We will continue to draw on this data where useful and look to expand the narrative on future reports.

Authority Name	Adult Social Care
Birmingham City Council	38
City of Wolverhampton Council	10
Coventry City Council	10
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	10
Herefordshire Council	6
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	18
Shropshire Council	17
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	7
Staffordshire County Council	46
Stoke-on-Trent City Council	8
Telford & Wrekin Council	5
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	9
Warwickshire County Council	19
Worcestershire County Council	20
Totals	223

Compliments

Feedback from compliments provides an equally valuable message, clearly affirming when services make a difference, and personal qualities have added value to the outcome for users and carers. We have as much to learn from what works well as when it goes wrong, and the service actively considers compliments made. **173** compliments were received in **2023/24** compared to **253** in **2022/23**. These were all related to the quality and standard of care provided to older people. Compliments came from service users and their family members, thanking individual members of staff and teams for the ongoing support and care provided by social workers, care teams and departments. Compliments are received by forms, thank you cards, letters and emails.

The below tables show the % of compliments compared to Statutory Stage 1 complaints received during 2023-24

Month	No. Complaints	No. Compliments	% Of Compliments compared to Complaints received
April	5	16	220%
May	4	10	150%
June	1	14	1300%

Month	No. Complaints	No. Compliments	% Of Compliments compared to Complaints received
July	9	02	-78%
August	5	15	200%
Sept	6	08	60%

Month	No. Complaints	No. Compliments	% Of Compliments compared to Complaints received
October	4	22	450%
November	5	22	340%
December	2	17	750%

Month	No. Complaints	No. Compliments	% Of Compliments compared to Complaints received
January	8	11	37.5%
February	6	20	233%
March	5	16	220%

Below are examples of compliments received during 2023-24.

*Excellent feedback (Name), many thanks for your ongoing hard work, support & commitment
Kind Regards”
(Name)*

(Name) came into the Opal to be assessed using the Stair lift. She said that she has been so worried and nervous about coming into the Opal, and that you provided her with lots of reassurance and support. She said that you have been so patient, and kind and she wasn't worried at all when she used the stair lift with you They both said that you worked at their pace and that you didn't make them feel rushed”.

*”
A very good afternoon, (Name)
I would just like to thank you in the part you've played in myself getting the wet room. Today is the last day of it being fitted and completed. This will seriously change my life.
Huge thanks and gratitude,”*

Name) called to say a huge thank you for the fast service and how quick her commode request was completed this afternoon.”

Thank you to you both for all the help and support you have given to (Name). I do believe that it all depends on the people that come into the life of a person who makes a difference, you guys have understood that Shafee is a very complex young man and you have always respected our family values at the same time. We really appreciate all the help and support.”

*Thank you (Name). I appreciate how you took your time to explain everything to my parents, they were very impressed by your kindness and consideration.
Thank you again for your help and support.”*

“He has reassured me. (Name) has been very professional and approachable.

Many thanks

(Name) “

The staff who attended last night to help my wife were caring and very helpful. We are glad that we have the system in place, and it is worth the money.

Thank you 😊

Kind Regards

(Name)

Hi, bathroom job finished just been inspected. Need seat installing. Thanks for all the work and help. Workmen were all good, on time and helpful. (Name)

The work carried out was first class, the chap who did the work could not be faulted in his attention to detail, the site was left clean and tidy. He should be getting a 'pat on the back' for his professionalism. I hope this will be conveyed to him.”

Service improvements and learning points

Adult Social Care is committed to learning from service user and customer feedback. Where complaints highlight that matters have gone wrong, managers must identify any remedial and development action required to improve service delivery.

Most common areas of feedback

When complaints are received, they are recorded on a database and each concern raised within the complaint is logged under a 'reason of complaint code'. These codes include main categories and subcategory subjects. An example of this would be Standard of Service which has the subcategory reason codes *service level/care plan dispute lack of/access to/eligibility for service and delay in receiving service*. It is not unusual for a complainant to raise more than one concern in the same complaint. For example, a complainant may submit a complaint about communication and finance issues experienced during the same incident, and both concerns along with any additional subcategories within the complaint codes would be recorded accordingly under that complaint.

The table below highlights the different types of concerns raised within the complaints received in 2023/24 compared to 2022/23 under the main category. This does not show the actual number of complaints received but only the main reasons of complaints data. Currently our system does not capture an individual complaint code breakdown of the outcome of each concern – so the figures below reflect the alleged complaint, rather than whether a complaint was upheld or not within those specific categories.

Category	2023/24		2022/23	
Standard of Service	87	62%	60	52%
Communication	43	30%	48	42%
Protection	2	1%	2	2%
Environment/property	1	1%	1	1%
Financial issues	8	6%	4	3%

The 2 main categories of concerns raised are, Standard of Service and Communication.

Communication

30% of complaints received in 2023/24 were related to communication. This is a reduction on the previous year. When service users and their families are referred for support, they require information on subjects they may have not encountered before. They also need to be kept informed of progress and decisions in processes that are complex and often appear confusing. These may be services directly provided by the Council or those delivered through independent sector provision and can include care and support delivered in care homes, housing with care support and a range of other community support services. Representations of this nature are categorised in terms of the provision, quality, method and timelessness of information as well as accuracy.

Communication themes seen during 2023/24 were as follows: Information not being shared in its entirety, meaning that service users were making decisions without all of the information available, particularly in relation to direct payments and financial assessments; Social workers allegedly talking in an unprofessional manner during phone calls and face-to-face meetings; family members views not being recorded in assessments leading to them feeling undervalued and referrers not being made aware of allocation timescales when making a referral into the service.

The service takes this feedback seriously and in each case, individuals involved will have been made aware of the feedback in relation to their practice.

Learning from complaints is discussed at the regular Quality Meetings held by the service and cascaded via team briefings. The Service Recovery Team and the Ombudsman Liaison Officer attend to offer guidance and support the learning to be taken forward.

Standard of Service

62% of complaints received in 2023/24, compared to 52% in 2022/23, were related to standard of service. Standard of Services includes service delivery, assessment of eligibility for services and timeliness in receiving services. Not all adults will be eligible for services from Adult Social Care following assessment. This can inevitably result in challenge and disagreement on how individual needs can be met. These are often emotive and challenging situations which can stimulate complaints where people do not agree with the practitioner's views or level of service received. Delays may also be incurred due to sourcing the right support, again leading to a complaint.

The Standard of Service themes seen during 2023/24 continue to be similar of that in 2022/2023. Concerns were raised regarding the delay in receiving assessment and services across all of Adult Social Care. The quality of care received by service users through contracted providers was also raised across multiple complaints.

It is inevitable that with the increasing number of people accessing our services, waits for the completion of assessments or review alongside practical support exist. Adult Social Care continue to recruit staff to support with the Intake/Contact assessment process to support the wait for assessment and to identify urgent needs.

Compliments

The improvement initiative is continuing whereby compliments are captured by the complaints team and sent on a monthly basis to the Adults Principal Social Worker which are then published in the Adult Social Care internal news bulletin. In 2023/24 compliments have slightly decreased by 32% compared to the previous year. This still reflects positively on the service provided by Adults Services.

Compliments to date reflect well on Adult Services. In 2023/24 Adult Commissioning received the highest number of compliments, these were mostly from care homes regarding the excellent service and level of care provided. Service areas need to ensure compliments are shared with the complaints team, so these are logged and recorded accordingly going forward.

Responding to and learning from complaints

The learning elements from complaints are captured in service areas on a regular basis as part of the business management process and further evaluation of complaint data is reviewed for ongoing learning and improvements. Across Adult Social Care various processes to address learning and outcomes of quality and assurance are in place, and the learning from complaints is regularly discussed on an on-going basis with management teams and social care staff. Compliments and Complaints, along with Ombudsman enquiries are discussed at the quarterly Quality and Experience review meeting which is chaired by the Principal Social Worker. This is an opportunity to identify practice alerts that arise from complaints. There needs to be a consideration of an achievable and deliverable timescale for responses to complaints. We do monitor achievements against this, with the continuation of the RAG reporting process and quarterly data capturing. Upon completion of the complaint investigations, service improvements can be identified to change practice. Examples of these changes are:

- Adult Social Care is as keen to learn from what works well as we do from what goes wrong. We continue to collate the compliments as well as complaints and look at themes, learning and where good practice exists, we share this via our internal Let's Talk meetings and briefings with colleagues across the services as well as with individuals on a one-to-one basis.
- In addition to this, an internal centralized database has been developed to capture our practice learning and areas of improvement and we hold quarterly meetings to review all our learning from quality and experience.
- Management oversight of complaints into the service is now embedded, with regular meetings with the Adults Principal Social Worker and regular updates from colleagues in the Customer Relations Team into the Adult Social Care Management Team enabling greater oversight of how the process is managed and any delays.

- The Commissioning Team have developed protocols and processes for the quality management of contracted services.
- All concerns in relation to communication, especially where this can improve, are taken seriously and dealt with at an individual level to ensure all workers uphold professionalism and reflect on their actions to ensure reflections and learning from complaints informs future practice.
- Prior to a full quality assurance visit being carried out Contracts Officers and Clinical Support Nurses review the previous six months concerns and complaints to identify any trends in order to focus their quality visit and focus our support around the trend identified.

Adult Services Complaint Literature

In 2024/25, the Communications Team, with support of Adult Services, are creating complaint leaflets which will be easy-to-read and available in multiple languages.

Service Recovery Team

The current complaints team has been re-launched as the Service Recovery team and has expanded and taken on a Service Recovery Manager, two additional Officers alongside additional Administration support. This will help ensure more timely responses to internal & external queries and to provide a more robust case management support to service areas.

Internal Complaints Investigation Form

This form is for investigating officers to capture additional learning and understanding of complaint concerns to ensure service areas and teams consistently improve their services and implement any learning necessary. This is achieved by sharing the internal investigation forms are shared with Heads of Service on a quarterly basis.

Complaints Training Module

Over 2024/25, training will be provided to all Managers/Officers in Adult Services on the complaints and Ombudsman process to ensure continuation of effective complaint handling.

Specific service area improvements/learning which have been identified

Adult Commissioning

Three complaints were investigated by the adult commissioning team during the year. One was resolved informally. Two complaints had elements that were upheld. One complaint centered around Personal Assistant payment rates and duration of calls delivered by a commissioned home support provider. The learning from this was that a reminder to all practitioners would support greater understanding of the difference between personal assistant rates and those of commissioned home support due the latter having greater overhead costs. This has been done. Call duration was being monitored going forward. A lesson was that basic expectations of home support providers may on occasion not be delivered. The commissioning team have worked with the provider to try and ensure future contractual compliance. The second upheld complaint was in relation to a home support provider not offering to support with regular showers and carers not attending at allocated times to enable the service users to meet medical and religious needs. The provider was required to address these matters. Learning was in relation to ensuring that agencies are staffing appropriately for time critical calls and respecting peoples wishes regarding maintaining good personal hygiene.

Community Social Care (65+) and All Age Disability

There have been a small number of complaints upheld with most issues relating to communication, charging for services and clarity regarding processes. Due to the complex nature of people's needs, there are occasions where multiple professionals are involved which although very positive for service users, can sometimes lead to confusion and lack of clarity in relation to processes and roles and responsibility of different organisations. Adult Social Care continue to work in an integrated way with partners and ensure that

communication is as clear as possible. Where there has been a miscommunication with regards to charging, remedial actions have been taken.

We continue to identify areas for improvement and feedback supports improvements in service delivery.

Hospital, Therapy, and Intake Teams

There have been a small number of formal complaints which mainly relate to communication, expectations and charging for services. There have been occasions where communication hasn't been as clear as it could have been, and this also includes being explicit in our communication about service delivery.

All concerns in relation to communication, especially where this can improve, are taken seriously and dealt with at an individual level to ensure all workers uphold professionalism and reflect on their actions to ensure reflections and learning from complaints informs future practice.

Where improvements have been identified, managers ensure immediate improvements and actions are taken. Any issues raised about a lack of communication between a staff member and service user have been raised on an individual level and staff reminded of our Adult Social Care standards

Financial Assessment Team

As a result of our learning, from the complaint received, there was a delay between the initial contact from the financial assessment officer of 5 months following the FA referral. The Financial Assessments team will seek to undertake the Financial Assessment following the FA referral as quickly as resources allow.

Mental Health

Formal complaints in relation to Mental Health Services for ASC remain low receiving 4 in the last period. Our interventions are often at a time of great distress to individuals and their families and communicating the finer elements of statutory responsibility can be difficult and this is apparent in each complaint received again this year. Complaints reflect the complexity of situations individuals are experiencing and no particular themes are evident from the outcome of our investigations with 1 not upheld and 3 partially upheld.

Complaints are also influenced by differing perceptions of mental capacity and managing the need to consider people's personal and sensitive data. Investigating Officers continue to provide direct feedback into the service to enable greater consideration of the impact of our interventions.

Adult Social Care 2023/24

Complaints and representations key facts and figures

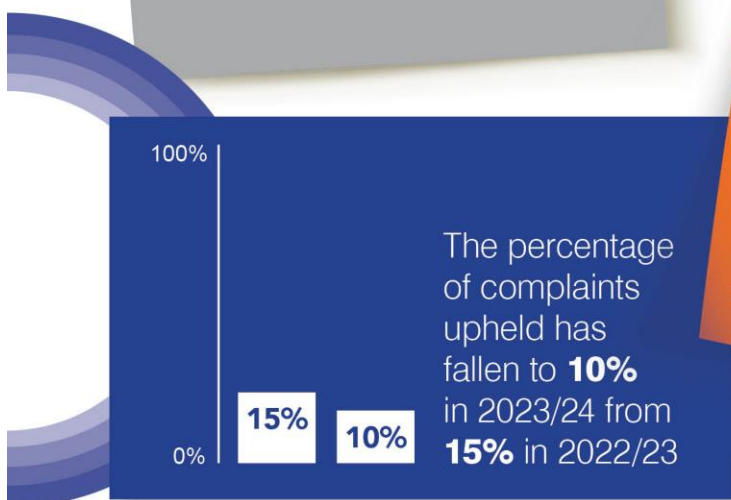


Adult Social Care (ASC) has always taken complaints very seriously and it is a priority that we learn from them, improving individual practices but also practice throughout the whole of the Adult Social Care Directorate

There has been a slight **increase of people** supported but Adult Services, from 3595 in 2022/23 compared to 3650 in 2023/24 however the number of Statutory complaints received in 2023/24 **has reduced** to 59 compared to 66 in 2022/23

Complaints themes such as Communication around standard of service has decreased from 72% in 2022/23 to 30% in 2022/24

The learning of complaints is regularly reported throughout the year to ASCMT by providing quarterly complaints and compliments reports and conducting regular learning meetings throughout the year. It is important that we all know the areas where we can improve, and this is supported by Senior Managers and learning in implements throughout the service



The Internal Investigation Form continues to provide service areas with more insight into service improvement and delivery

Further information

Further information about complaints and representations and a copy of the Council's complaints policy and complaints handling guidance is available at www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/.

Ilius Ahmed
Service Recovery Officer
Customer Services – Improvement & Development

Kelly Boyce
Service Recovery Officer
Customer Services – Improvement & Development

Steve Paterson
Service Recovery Officer
Customer Services – Improvement & Development

Kenneth Kanebi
Ombudsman Liaison Officer
Service Recovery Officer
Customer Services – Improvement & Development



Customer Services - Improvement & Development

Coventry City Council

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Coventry City Council

Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership

November 2024

Ethics Committee
Audit and Procurement Committee

9 January 2025
3 February 2025

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership – Councillor G Duggins

Director approving submission of the report:

Chief Executive

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman 2023/24

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive summary:

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (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 investigates complaints in a fair and independent way and provides a means of redress to individuals for injustice caused by unfair treatment or service failure.

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 will handle their compliments, comments and complaints. The Council also informs individuals of their rights to contact the LGSCO if they are not happy with the Council's decision once they have exhausted the Council's complaints process.

The LGSCO issues an annual letter to the Leader and Chief Executive of every Council, summarising the number and trends of complaints dealt with relating to that Council that year. The latest letter, issued 17 July 2024, covers complaints to the LGSCO relating to Coventry City Council between April 2023 and March 2024 (2023/24).

This report sets out the number, trends and outcomes of complaints to the LGSCO relating to Coventry City Council in 2023/24. It focuses on upheld complaints, service areas with a high number of complaints, compliance with Ombudsman's

recommendations, learning from complaints, comparisons with prior years, and how we compare to other local authorities.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership is recommended to:

1. Consider the Council's performance in relation to complaints to the LGSCO.
2. Note the Council's updated complaints process and guidance
3. Request the Audit and Procurement Committee to review and be assured that the Council takes appropriate action in response to complaints investigated and where the Council is found to be at fault.

The Ethics Committee is recommended to:

1. Comment on the findings.
2. Consider the Council's performance in relation to complaints to the LGSCO complaints that were upheld.
3. Note the Council's updated complaints process and guidance.

The Audit and Procurement Committee is recommended to:

1. Consider the Council's performance in relation to complaints to the LGSCO.
2. Note the Council's updated complaints process and guidance.
3. Review and be assured that the Council takes appropriate actions in response to complaints investigated and where the Council is found to be at fault.

List of appendices included:

Appendix 1: Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2024
Appendix 2: Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Investigation Decisions in 2023/24 for Coventry City Council

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review of Local Government Complaints 2023-24

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?

Yes, Ethics Committee on 12 December 2024 and Audit and Procurement Committee on 17 March 2025

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title:
Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman 2023/24

1 Context (or background)

- 1.1 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (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 investigates complaints in a fair and independent way and provides a means of redress to individuals for injustice caused by unfair treatment or service failure.
- 1.2 Coventry City Council's Complaints Policy, published on the Council's website at www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/, sets out how individual members of the public can complain to the Council, as well as how the Council will handle their compliments, comments and complaints. The Council also informs individuals of their rights to contact the LGSCO if they are not happy with the Council's decision once they have exhausted the Council's complaints process.
- 1.3 The LGSCO issues an annual letter to the Leader and Chief Executive of every Council, summarising the number and trends of complaints dealt with relating to that Council that year. The latest letter, issued 17 July 2024, covers complaints to the LGSCO relating to Coventry City Council between April 2023 and March 2024 (2023/24). The letter can be found in Appendix I.
- 1.4 This report sets out the number, trends and outcomes of complaints to the LGSCO relating to Coventry City Council in 2023/24. This report focuses on upheld complaints, service areas with a high number of complaints, learning from complaints, comparisons with prior years, and how we compare to other local authorities.
- 1.5 The Council has a robust and transparent policy for handling complaints. In addition to this annual report, the Council also produces formal reports on complaints about adult social care and children's social care, to Cabinet Member Adult Services and Cabinet Member Children and Young People respectively.

2 Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 Across all Councils, the LGSCO received 17,937 complaints and enquiries in 2023/24, up from 15,488 the previous year. The areas receiving the greatest number of detailed investigations were Children's Services (4,666), Housing (2,953), and Adult Services (2,499).
- 2.2 For Coventry City Council, the LGSCO received 80 complaints and enquiries in 2023/24, which is 7 complaints more than the previous year (73).

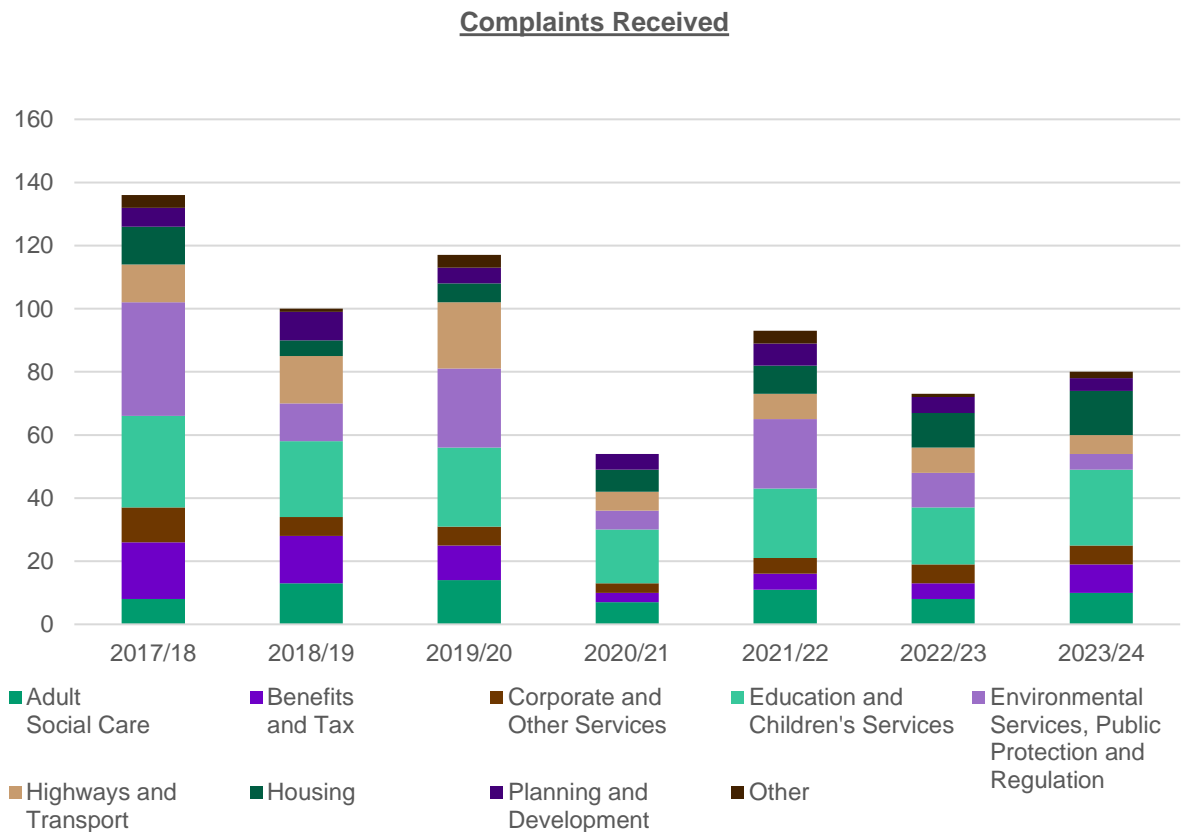
2.3 Figure 1.

Figure 1: Complaints and enquiries received by category

Category (as defined by LGSCO)	Complaints in 2022/23	Complaints in 2023/24
Adult care services	8	10
Benefits and tax	5	9
Corporate & other services	6	6
Education & children’s services	18	24
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	11	5
Highways & transport	8	6
Housing	11	14
Planning & development	5	4
Other	1	2
Total	73	80

2.4 Figure 2 sets out how the number of complaints and enquiries received by the LGSCO in last 7 years.

Figure 2: Complaints and enquiries received in last 7 years



- 2.5 In 2023/24 there was a slight increase (up 9%) in complaints and enquiries received – **80** (2023/24) compared to **73** (2022/23). The category with the highest number of complaints and enquiries remained Education and Children’s Services with 24 (up 33% from 18 in 2022/23). However, there was a significant decrease (55%) from 11 to 5 complaints regarding Environmental Services in 2023/24. This was almost equivalent to a 50% decrease reported in 2022/23.
- 2.6 It is not possible to comment on the Council’s overall performance based solely upon the number of complaints or enquiries to the LGSCO. Interpretation is challenging in relation to number, as a high number of complaints may indicate that a council has been effective at signposting people to the LGSCO through their complaints handling process. Equally it could be argued that a high number of complaints may highlight that a Council needs to do more to resolve issues through its own complaints process and so save customers from needing to escalate their complaints to the LGSCO
- 2.7 When dealing with an enquiry, the LGSCO can choose to investigate cases where it sees merit in doing so. Following an investigation, the LGSCO can decide if a complaint is: **upheld** – where a Council has been at fault and this fault may or may not have caused an injustice to the complainant; or where a Council has accepted it needs to remedy the complaint before the LGSCO makes a finding on fault; or **not upheld** – where, following investigation, the LGSCO decides that a Council has not acted with fault.
- 2.8 In 2023/24 the LGSCO made **69** decisions relating to Coventry City Council, down from **81** the previous year:
- **2 x** incomplete/invalid.
 - **4 x** advice given.
 - **21 x** ‘referred back’ for local resolution.
 - **34 x** closed after initial enquiries; and
 - **8 x** complaints investigated, of which **3** were upheld and **5** were not upheld.
- 2.9 The number of complaints investigated (**8** complaints in 2023/24) decreased compared to previous years (**20** in 2022/23, and **14** in 2021/22).
- The LGSCO upheld a lower proportion of complaints they investigated than in previous years: 38% of complaints were upheld (3 out of 8) in 2023/24, compared to 85% (17 out of 20) in 2022/23, 71% (10 out of 14) in 2021/22, and 77% (10 out of 13) in 2021/20.
 - This compares to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) statistical neighbours’ upheld rate of 79%, West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) upheld rate of 77% and a national upheld rate of 80% for 2023/24.
 - The tables below, set out how Coventry compares to its CIPFA statistical neighbours (Figure 3) and with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) constituent authorities (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Complaints investigated: Comparison with CIPFA nearest neighbours 2023/24

Overall, 79% of complaints were upheld among Coventry and its 15 statistical neighbours. The authority with the highest percentage of complaints upheld in 2023/24 was Salford (100%) and lowest was Coventry (38%). Bolton had the second highest upheld rate (90%).

Local Authority	Not Upheld	Upheld	% Upheld	Total
Salford	0	11	100%	11
Bolton	1	9	90%	10
Leicester	3	18	86%	21
Wolverhampton	1	6	86%	7
Oldham	2	12	86%	14
Blackburn and Darwin	1	5	83%	6
Bristol	7	35	83%	42
Rochdale	1	5	83%	6
Sheffield	4	20	83%	24
Medway	4	16	80%	20
Sandwell	4	14	78%	18
Derby	4	14	78%	18
Bradford	9	20	69%	29
Kirklees	8	13	62%	21
Coventry	5	3	38%	8

Figure 4: Complaints investigated: Comparison with WMCA constituent authorities 2023/24

Of 211 complaints investigated across the seven constituent areas of the WMCA, 174 (77%) were upheld and 37 were not upheld. The authority with the highest percentage of complaints upheld in 2023/24 was Solihull (100%), albeit from just 5 cases, while the lowest was Coventry (38%). Walsall was the second highest on (95%).

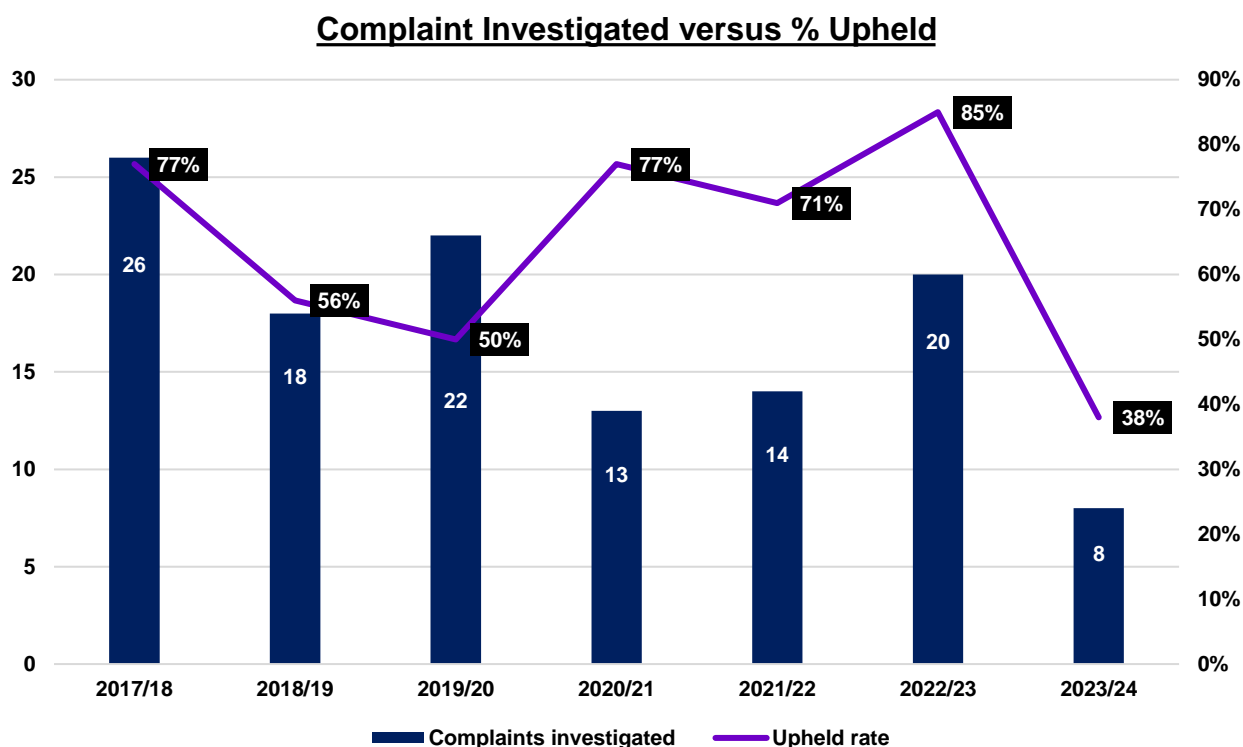
However, the Ombudsman has made us aware that they are being more selective about the complaints they look at in detail, prioritising where it is in the public interest to investigate. This has meant that changes in uphold rates this year are not solely down to the nature of the cases going to the ombudsman. As the Ombudsman is less likely to carry out investigations on ‘borderline’ issues, they are naturally finding a higher proportion of fault overall.

Local Authority	Not Upheld	Upheld	% Upheld	Total
Solihull	0	5	100%	5
Walsall	1	18	95%	19
Birmingham	17	115	87%	132
Wolverhampton	1	6	86%	7

Sandwell	4	14	78%	18
Dudley	9	13	59%	22
Coventry	5	3	38%	8

Figure 5: Complaints investigated, and percentage upheld over the last 7 years

Figure 5 sets out how the number of complaints investigated, and the percentage of complaints upheld by the LGSCO for the last 7 years.



2.10 Of the 3 upheld complaints for Coventry, 2 complaints had remedies determined by the LGSCO and 1 the LGSCO found that Coventry had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached them (33%). This compares to an average of 14% in similar authorities. There was 1 complaint that resulted in some form of financial redress or reimbursement (£750)

2.11 Following an investigation, the LGSCO will typically issue a statement setting out its findings and decision. If the LGSCO decides there was fault or maladministration causing an injustice to the complainant, it will typically recommend that a Council take some action to address it. Wherever possible the LGSCO will publish decision statements on its website, except where the content of the report could identify the individual complainant. In some cases, where the LGSCO upholds a complaint, the LGSCO may choose to issue a formal report of maladministration

2.12 In 2023/24, the Ombudsman reported that the Council agreed to, and carried out, the recommendations made in five cases during the year. However, it was disappointing that in two of those cases the Council did not complete the recommendations within the agreed timescales. In one case, new Community

Trigger guidance was produced two months after the agreed deadline. For further details see Appendix 2.

2.13 The following table, Figure 6, sets out details about the complaints that the LGSCO investigated by service area.

Figure 6: Complaints investigated by service area in 2022/23 compared to 2023/24

Service area	2022/23				2023/24			
	Upheld	Not upheld	% upheld	Response time (days)	Upheld	Not upheld	% upheld	Response time (days)
Adult social care	4	1		18	2			22
Bereavement Services	1			0				
Children's services	1			18		2		33
Corporate & Other Services						1		9
Highways		1		23	1			5
Household waste assisted collections	3			12				
Household waste collections	2			9				
Housing services	3			16		1		7
Planning	2	1		10		1		2
Regulatory Services	1			10				
Total	17	3	83%	13	3	5	38%	13

2.14 This year saw a decrease in the number of detailed investigations completed: 8 in 2023/24 compared to 20 in 2022/23. These related to Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Corporate & Other Services, Highways, Housing Services, and Planning.

2.15 The LGSCO typically expects Councils to respond to investigation enquiries within 20 working days. In 2023/24 we averaged 13 working days.

2.16 Satisfactory remedy decisions are complaints where the Ombudsman has decided, while the authority did get things wrong, the authority had offered a satisfactory way to resolve it before the complaint was referred to the Ombudsman. In 2023/24 the LGSCO found 33% (1 of 3) of upheld cases Coventry had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman. This compares to 12% (2 of 17) in 2022/23, 10% (1 of 10) in 2021/22 and 10% (1 of 10) in 2020/21.

2.17 In Figure 6, 38% of complaints investigated were upheld in 2023/24. This compares to an average of 80% in similar authorities. Adjusted for Coventry City Council's population, this is **0.8 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents**. The average for authorities of this type is 4.4 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents. (The figures used are based on latest census data).

Figure 7: Number of Upheld Complaints per 100,000 residents.

Local Authority/ Authority Type	Number of Upheld Complaint per 100,000 Population	
	Upheld Complaints	Upheld Complaints per 100,000 Population
County Councils	911	4.5
District & Borough Councils	256	1.2
London Borough Councils	724	8.2
Metropolitan Councils	532	4.4
Unitary Authorities	764	4.6
Across the UK	3,215	5.6
Coventry	3	0.8

Figure 8: Satisfactory remedy provided before the complaint reached the Ombudsman comparison with other WMCA constituent authorities

Of 174 complaints upheld in WMCA area the Ombudsman considered that in only 14 cases the authority had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached them (8%).

Local Authority	Upheld cases where the authority had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman		Total Number of complaints upheld
	%	Number	
Coventry	33%	1	3
Dudley	15%	2	13
Birmingham	8%	9	115
Sandwell	7%	1	14
Walsall	6%	1	18
Solihull	0%	0	5
Wolverhampton	0%	0	6

2.18 The LGSCO Annual Review Letter recognises compliance with Ombudsman's recommendations, which is included on the [interactive data map of council performance](#) which shows performance data for all councils in England. In 2023/24 the Ombudsman was satisfied we successfully implemented all their recommendations 100%. This was based on 5 compliance outcomes - 2 Adult Care Services 1 Environmental Service, 1 Housing Service and 1 Highway Services (although 2 of these enquiries related to the 2022/23 financial year).

Figure 9: Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations

Local Authority	Complaints where compliance with the recommended remedy recorded	
	Number	% Where remedy successfully implemented
Birmingham	115	99%
Walsall	18	99%
Sandwell	14	99%
Dudley	13	99%
Wolverhampton	6	99%
Solihull	5	99%
Coventry	3	100%

2.19 Following their investigations, the LGSCO recommended some changes be made to the Council’s processes and procedures. A summary of the recommendations is set out in the Learning from complaints table (Figure 9). Further details about the outcomes of each of the complaints investigated this year and the actions taken are set out in Appendix 2.

2.20 Figure 10: Learning from complaints

Service Area	Summary of actions agreed
Adult Social Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop practice guidance around the whole family approach. • Deliver training to staff in the contact team about recognising when parents need support. • Provide evidence of work underway to address working practices relating to communication. • Review record keeping procedures and language used in communications to ensure clear explanations are provided in plain English about different discharge decisions. • Review the way safeguarding investigations are conducted to identify why errors occur and lessons learnt. • Provide copy of the Home’s guidance or policy document regarding the reporting of accidents or injuries sustained by service-users.
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind relevant staff of the proactive duty to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act and ensure this is communicated to applicants. • Draw up procedures or guidance for considering homelessness applications where children might reasonably be expected to reside with the applicant when domestic abuse is a factor.
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to review policies and procedures for assisted refuse collections to ensure refuse workers are properly alerted to new assisted collections;

	<p>and arrangements remain clear to refuse workers throughout the duration of the assisted collection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to review policies and procedures for missed refuse collection reports to ensure reports are properly recorded, responded to, and monitored for repeated issues. • Agree to review policies and procedures for complaints about refuse and recycling to ensure complainants receive considered responses and are told how to escalate their complaint, both within the Council's complaints procedure and to the Ombudsman. • Remind staff to adhere to the complaints policy, specifically providing a response or update to the complainant within the specified timeframe. • Ensure that reports of missed collections are escalated to the Waste Team.
Highways & Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure contacts received from members of the public about road contractors failing to comply with conditions are responded to promptly and where this is not possible, or the level of contact becomes too much and a drain on resources, the Council will set out reasonable and realistic levels of contact for that individual on that topic.

3 Results of consultation undertaken

3.1 None identified or undertaken.

4 Timetable for implementing this decision.

4.1 The LGSCO Link Officer function is now part of the Council's Customer Service Team. All communication between the local authority and the LGSCO, such as complaints, enquiries, investigations, and remedies, all go via the Ombudsman Liaison Officer.

4.2 The Council's guidance and process for dealing with LGSCO complaints is set out in Complaint Handling Guidance http://www.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/download/4587/complaints_handling_guidance . Following the 2017 annual letter, this guidance was updated to ensure that investigations, particularly upheld complaints, are properly communicated to elected members. As a result:

- complaints to the LGSCO continue to be formally reported to the Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership and the Audit and Procurement Committee every year (this report). In addition, this report is also considered by the Ethics Committee.
- complaints about Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care, including cases investigated by the LGSCO, continue to be reported through an annual report to the Cabinet Member Adult Services and Cabinet Member Children and Young People respectively.
- where an investigation has wider implications for Council policy or exposes a more significant finding of maladministration, the Monitoring Officer will consider

whether the implications of that investigation should be individually reported to relevant members; and

- should the Council decide not to comply with the LGSCO's final recommendation following an upheld investigation with a finding of maladministration or should the LGSCO issue a formal report (instead of a statement), the Monitoring Officer will report this to members under section 5(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

5 Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law and Governance

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. In 2023/24 there was 1 complaint which resulted in some form of financial remedy or reimbursement, totalling £750. This is detailed in Appendix 2 and was paid out of the budget of the relevant service areas.

5.2 Legal implications

The statutory functions of the LGSCO are defined in the Local Government Act 1974. These are: to investigate complaints against councils and some other authorities; to investigate complaints about adult social care providers from people who arrange or fund their own adult social care; and to provide advice and guidance on good administrative practice. The main activity under Part III of the 1974 Act is the investigation of complaints, which it states is limited to complaints from members of the public alleging they have suffered injustice as a result of maladministration and/or service failure.

The LGSCO's jurisdiction under Part III covers all local Councils, police and crime bodies; school admission appeal panels and a range of other bodies providing local services; and under Part IIIA, the LGSCO also investigate complaints from people who allege they have suffered injustice as a result of action by adult social care providers.

There is a duty under section 5(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 for the Council's Monitoring Officer to prepare a formal report to the Council where it appears that the authority, or any part of it, has acted or is likely to act in such a manner as to constitute maladministration or service failure, and where the LGSCO has conducted an investigation in relation to the matter.

6 Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to the Council Plan (www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/)

The Council Plan sets out the Council's vision and priorities for the city. The vision: One Coventry – Working together to improve our city and the lives of those who live, work and study here. Effective management and resolution of complaints, as well as learning from complaints, will help ensure that Council services meet the needs of 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.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

It is important that the Council takes action and learns from the outcome of complaints. Appendix 2 sets out the actions the Council has taken; for example, providing training, instruction and guidance to staff and improving communications between services to help to reduce the likelihood of the same fault happening again.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

The co-ordination and management of complaints to the LGSCO often involves considerable officer time at all levels of seniority. It includes collecting a significant amount of data, preparing and writing formal responses, and chasing to meet timescales set out. It may also require liaison with and external input from partner organisations and commissioned services.

It is therefore preferable (and beneficial) for complaints to be resolved informally at first point of contact wherever possible, or resolved through the Council's internal complaints procedures, adult social care complaints procedures, or children's social care complaints procedures, as appropriate. This would improve satisfaction for residents and communities, as well as save Council time and resources. The Council also publishes guidance on complaints handling. See link for reference http://www.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/download/4587/complaints_handling_guidance

6.4 Equalities/EIA

We welcome all feedback and encourage members of the public to let us know if they have anything to say about Council services, whether that be for us to take action to put things right if something has gone wrong, or to let us know when we are doing something well.

The Council is committed to making it easy for everyone to submit compliments, comments or complaints to us, and we offer several different pathways to do so. As well as our [Compliments, Comments and Complaints](#) web page and our online [Speak Up](#) form, we also offer contact by telephone, email, social media, letter or via face-to-face contact. We also advise people that they can ask somebody else to act on their behalf, for instance, a friend or relative or Citizens Advice.

Where necessary and appropriate, translation and interpretation services, correspondence in large print, audiotape, or braille, or the services of an advocate (for instance, Barnardo's) are also available. Should a complainant remain dissatisfied following the conclusion of the Council's complaints process, they are able to refer their complaint to the LGSCO. Both the Council's complaints policy and individual complaint response letters set out the escalation process and make it clear how members of the public can do so.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment

None.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

Investigations by the LGSCO may involve not only services directly provided by

Coventry City Council, but also commissioned or outsourced services. In such cases, the Council will liaise with partner organisations and third-party contractors to comment or provide information as part of an investigation.

Additional Information

In February, following a period of consultation, the LGSCO launched the **Complaint Handling Code** for councils, setting out a clear process for responding to complaints effectively and fairly. The purpose of the Code is to enable organisations to resolve complaints raised by individuals promptly, and to use the data and learning from complaints to drive service improvements. It will also help to create a positive complaint handling culture amongst staff and individuals.

The LGSCO issued the Code as “advice and guidance” for all local councils in England under section 23(12A) of the Local Government Act 1974. This means that councils should consider the Code when developing complaint handling policies and procedures and when responding to complaints. If a Council decides not to follow the Code, the LGSCO expects it to have a good reason for this.

The Code only applies to complaints where there is no statutory process in place. This means that some complaints about children’s services, adult social care and public health are not covered by the expectations set out in the Code. The Code does not apply to complaints about the behaviour of locally elected officials.

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Contributor/ approver name	Title	Service	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
Andrew Walster	Director of Streetscene & Regulatory Services	Streetscene & Regulatory Services	14/10/2024	02/11/2024
Andy Williams	Director of Business, Investment & Culture	Business, Investment & Culture	14/10/2024	04/11/2024
Colin Knight	Director of Transportation & Highways	Transportation & Highways	14/10/2024	04/11/2024
Mandeep Chouhan	Resident Experience Lead, Customer Service	Customer Services	31/10/2024	01/11/2024
Jaspal Mann	Strategic Lead, (EDI)	Public Health	14/10/2024	22/10/2024
Sukriti Sen	Director of Children and Education	Children & Education	14/10/2024	31/10/2024
Alison Duggal	Director of Public Health and Wellbeing	Public Health	14/10/2024	31/10/2024
Sally Caren	Head of Adult Care and Support Services and Housing	Adult Services and Housing	14/10/2024	04/11/2024
Richard Moon	Director of Property Services and Development	Property Services and Development	14/10/2024	31/10/2024

Contributor/ approver name	Title	Service	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
Susanna Chilton	Chief People Officer	Human Resources	14/10/2024	04/11/2024
Suzanne Bennett	Governance Services Co-ordinator	Law and Governance	07/10/24	07/10/2024
Names of approvers for submission: (officers and members)				
Barry Hastie	Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer)	Finance	04/11/2024	12/11/2024
Julie Newman	Chief Legal Officer	Law and Governance	04/11/2024	04/11/2024
Julie Nugent	Chief Executive		04/11/2024	12/11/2024
Councillor G Duggins	Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership		12/11/2024	14/11/2024

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Agenda Item 5

SCRUCO Work Programme 2024-25

Last updated 17th January 2025

Please see page 2 onwards for background to items

10th June 2024
LGA Peer Review Findings Draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2023-24
26th June 2024
Serious Violence Duty Proposed Consultation for the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2024-2027
21st August 24
City Centre PSPO Monitoring City-wide PSPO Consultation Additional Licensing of HMO's (Cabinet Report) Dog Control PSPO (Cabinet Report)
19th September 24
National Planning Policy Framework Consultation
25th September 24 (moved from 18th September)
One Coventry Plan Performance report (Cabinet Report) City-wide PSPO (Cabinet Report)
31st October 2024 (moved from 23rd October)
Climate Change Strategy (Cabinet Report) Temporary Accommodation (Cabinet Report)
14th November 2024
Coventry City Council Transformation Programme
20th November 2024
Shareholder Committee Reports Strategic Energy Partnership Performance Update
18th December 2024
Community Safety Plan 2024-27 WMCA Corporate Update and Scrutiny Annual Report Regulation 19 Local Plan
21st January 2024
Binley Cycleway – Section 7 (Clifford Bridge Road) – Call In
30th January 2025 (moved from 29th January)
Complaints Reports Coventry Cultural Strategy – progress report
6th March 2025 (moved from 5th March)
Artificial Intelligence Coventry Municipal Holdings Ltd – published accounts Peer Review Progress Update
10th April 2025 (moved from 9th April)
Health Inequalities and Marmot HDRC One Coventry Plan Performance Report (24/25 pt 2) Regulation 19 Local Plan – consultation results
2024-25
Domestic Abuse Adaption and Resilience Plan Cost of Living and Poverty

SCRUCO Work Programme 2024-25

Planning Performance
Fly-tipping Overview
Communications Strategy
External Partnerships
Offender Management

2025-26

Transformation Programme update (November)
PSPO reviews – 2027-28
Strategic Energy Partnership Projects
Shareholder Reports

SCRUCO Work Programme 2024-25

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
10th June 2024	LGA Peer Review Findings	Following a visit by a peer review team in January 2024 Scruco will consider the recommendations and actions	Vanessa Millar / Michelle McGinty Cllr Duggins
	Draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2023-24	To consider the draft report before it is presented to Council	
26th June 2024	Serious Violence Duty	At their meeting in November 2023 the Committee requested a 6-month progress update, including the measurables identified by the Police and Crime Board to measure success. Check whether guidance has been sent to schools. Including the inspection report on tackling the risk of serious youth violence and criminal exploitation	Cllr AS Khan Allison Duggal Caroline Ryder Neil Macdonald WMP
	Proposed Consultation for the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2024-2027	To consider the consultation plan for the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2024-27	Joy Adams Cllr AS Khan
21st August 24	City Centre PSPO Monitoring	As requested, Scruco will consider progress on implementation of the new PSPO agreed at Cabinet 13 th June 2023	Liam Nagle Cllr AS Khan
	City-wide PSPO Consultation	Summary of findings from the Public Consultation and opportunity for members to be part of the consultation process which will form part of the final report to Cabinet.	Joy Adams Cllr AS Khan
	Additional Licensing of HMO's (Cabinet Report)		Adrian Chowns Cllr Welsh
	Dog Control PSPO (Cabinet Report)		Cllr A Khan
19th September 24	National Planning Policy Framework Consultation	To consider the response from the Council to the governments consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework	Rob Back Cllr N Akhtar

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
25th September 24 (moved from 18th September)	One Coventry Plan Performance report (Cabinet Report)		Valerie De Souza Cllr Duggins
	City-wide PSPO (Cabinet Report)		Joy Adams Cllr AS Khan
31st October 2024 (moved from 23rd October)	Climate Change Strategy (Cabinet Report)		Rhian Palmer Cllr O'Boyle
	Temporary Accommodation (Cabinet Report)	Referred from SB4 as meeting schedules do not match with Cabinet.	Jim Crawshaw Cllr N Akhtar
14th November 2024	Coventry City Council Transformation Programme	To review the progress and implementation of the CCC Transformation Programme and funding associated with it.	Cllr Brown Michelle McGinty
20th November 2024	Shareholder Committee Reports	A chance for Scrucoco to consider the reports ahead of the Shareholder Panel. The Board asks that future reports are shared after the audited accounts are published.	Cllr Duggins Andrew Walster
	Strategic Energy Partnership Performance Update	Shareholder Panel Report	Anna Livesey Cllr O'Boyle
18th December 2024	Community Safety Plan 2024-27	To consider the results of crime survey and to feed into the development of the community safety partnership plan.	Joy Adams Cllr AS Khan
	WMCA Corporate Update and Scrutiny Annual Report		James Hughes
	Regulation 19 Local Plan		Chris Styles, Rob Back Cllr N Akhtar

SCRUCO Work Programme 2024-25

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
21st January 2024	Binley Cycleway – Section 7 (Clifford Bridge Road) – Call In	To consider a call-in on the Binley Cycleway – Section 7	Andrew Walster Cllr Hetherton
30th January 2025 (moved from 29th January)	Complaints Reports	To consider the progress on implementing recommendations and lessons learned identified as a result of formal complaint investigations to the Ombudsman, as well as Adults and Children’s Social Care	Adrian LeCras Mandeep Chouhan Cllr Brown
	Coventry Cultural Strategy – progress report	Following their meeting on 20 th December 2023, the committee requested a further update on progress in delivering the Cultural Works model, including communication with Members.	David Nuttall/ Salla Virman Cllr N Akhtar
6th March 2025 (moved from 5th March)	Artificial Intelligence	To consider how AI is prioritised and utilised across the Council, including improving services and reducing budget pressures. To invite SB1 Members. To include impact on jobs and skills (referred from SB3)	Cllrs Brown/ Hetherton Paul Ward
	Coventry Municipal Holdings Ltd – published accounts	Following their meeting on 20 th November, ScrucO requested a further item to consider the published accounts	Andrew Walster
	Peer Review Progress Update	12-month progress review report	Cllr Duggins Michelle McGinty
10th April 2025 (moved from 9th April)	Health Inequalities and Marmot	To look at what the Council is doing to address health inequalities and to monitor progress. Raised at OCP progress item on 25 th September OCP Indicators for Male/Female Life expectancy	Allison Duggal Cllr Caan
	HDRC	An update and progress on the project	Sue Frossell Cllr Caan
	One Coventry Plan Performance Report (24/25 pt 2)		Valerie De Souza Cllr Duggins

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
	Regulation 19 Local Plan – consultation results	As agreed at their meeting on 18 th December the committee requested the responses to the consultation the Local Plan	Cllr N Akhtar R Back
2024-25	Domestic Abuse	A regular update item on the progress of delivery on the Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy	Jayne Ross Cllr AS Khan Cllr P Akhtar
	Adaption and Resilience Plan	To consider what the Council is doing to protect the city from the impact of climate change, including partners involved in the delivery and represented on the Climate Change Board	Cllr O’Boyle Colin Knight Rhian Palmer Bret Willers
	Cost of Living and Poverty	To update on support offered to low -income families as well as the OCP indicator of % of children living in relatively low-income families.	Cllr Duggins
	Planning Performance	Development Management function - overall performance against Government targets. Annual monitoring report (AMR).	Cllr N Akhtar, Rob Back
	Fly-tipping Overview	To review the impact of increased fines on reducing fly-tipping	Cllrs AS Khan/ Hetherton Martin McHugh Sarah Elliott Davina Blackburn
	Communications Strategy	To consider the refreshed Communications Strategy with the new Director in post	
	External Partnerships		Cllr G Duggins
	Offender Management	Following an item on Local Policing Update at their meeting 21 st February 24 the committee agreed to consider a further item on Offender Management	Cllr A Khan Davian Blackburn

SCRUCO Work Programme 2024-25

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
2025-26	Transformation Programme update (November)	An update on progress following the item in November 2024	Cllr Brown M McGinty
	PSPO reviews – 2027-28	To be considered by scrutiny as part of the 3-year review	Davina Blackburn
	Strategic Energy Partnership Projects	Further progress reports following update in November 2024	Rhian Palmer Cllr O’Boyle
	Shareholder Reports	To receive reports for the Shareholders Panel – as requested at the last meeting, reports should include cashflow details for the businesses	A Walster Cllr Duggins

Work Programme Decision Flow Chart

