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Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

9th January 2025

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Councillor P Seaman

**Director approving submission of the report:**

Director of Childrens and Education Services – Sukriti Sen

**Ward(s) affected:**

All

**Title:**

Children’s Services Comments, Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2023/24

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**Is this a key decision?**

No

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**Executive summary:**

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

This report sets out the details of the comments, compliments and complaints for Children’s Services in 2023/24. It highlights the themes that arise from them and the learning and service improvements that have resulted from the feedback received.

**Recommendations:**

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People is recommended to:

- (1) Approve publication of the annual report in relation to complaints and representations in children’s services in 2023/24.

**List of appendices included:**

Appendix I – Children’s services complaints and representations annual report 2023/24  
Appendix II – Coventry City Council Complaints Handling Guidance

**Background papers:**

None

**Other useful documents**

Young people's guide to making a social care complaint

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

Complaints Managers' Group (May 2016) Good Practice guidance for handling complaints concerning adults and children social care services

<https://www.adass.org.uk/media/5360/good-practice-guidance-final-09062016.pdf>

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

[centre/reports/advice-and-guidance/guidance-notes](https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/advice-and-guidance/guidance-notes)

Department for Education (September 2006) statutory guidance for local authority children's services on representations and complaints procedures

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-getting-the-best-from-complaints>

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

No

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

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

No

## **Report title:**

### **Children's Services Comments, Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2023/24**

#### **1 Context (or background)**

- 1.1 There is a statutory duty for the Council to have a system for receiving representations by, or on behalf of, children who use the social care services they provide or commission; and for the Council to produce an annual report about the operation of the complaints procedure.
- 1.2 This report sets out the details of the Comments, Compliments and Complaints for children's services in 2023/24. It highlights the themes that arise from them and the learning and service improvements that have resulted from the feedback received.

#### **2 Options considered and recommended proposal.**

- 2.1 Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, there were 229 statutory, corporate, and informal complaints received about children's services. That is: 156 statutory complaints, 13 corporate complaints and 60 informal complaints.
- 2.2 The number of statutory complaints has decreased from 167 received in 2022/23, 177 were received in 2021/22, 141 received in 2020/21, and 163 received in 2019/20.
- 2.3 Of the 156 statutory complaints 129 (83%) were resolved at Stage 1; 20 (13%) at Stage 2; and 7 (4%) were escalated to Stage 3 (of which 2 were subsequently withdrawn). This compares with 149 (89%) at Stage 1, 11 (7%) at Stage 2, and 7 (4%) at Stage 3 in 2022/23.
- 2.4 10 (6%) of the 156 complaints were Upheld, with 55 (35%) Partially Upheld. This compares with 8 (5%) Upheld and 57 (34%) Partially Upheld in 2022/23.
- 2.5 188 compliments were received during 2023/24, compared to 344 received in 2022/23 and 502 received in 2021/22.
- 2.6 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 decrease in the number of children or young people using an advocate to make a complaint, despite being made aware of this provision available to them, with just 8 advocate-supported complaints received during 2023/24 compared to 19 complaints in 2022/23, and 14 in 2021/22.
- 2.7 Two main themes continue to be identified as arising from the complaints handled in 2023/24: issues regarding poor communication with users accounted for 50% of the reasons for complaint, while concerns about the standards of service provided were the next most common (18%).
- 2.8 Themes from compliments were predominantly around the good standard of practice received from individual social workers and the overall standard of service received from teams. It is not currently possible to distinguish between compliments from children and young people themselves, or carers, or staff without manually going through every compliment. A selection of compliments from children and young people and families have been included in the appendix.

2.9 Appendix I sets out the children's services Comments, Compliments and Complaints annual report for 2023/24, highlighting trends and the themes that have arisen from complaints and the learning and service improvements that have resulted from the feedback received.

2.10 Appendix II sets out the Council's guidance for handling complaints.

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

None identified or undertaken.

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

4.1 Areas for development and improvement have been included within the divisional and relevant team plans for implementation in 2023/24.

### **5 Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources and 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 paid out of service budgets. All complaints relating to financial issues were investigated and rectified accordingly.

#### **5.2 Legal implications**

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

### **6 Other implications**

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

This annual report sets out the progress made by the service towards the Council Plan vision to be locally committed, by improving the quality of life for Coventry people, by contributing to the priority to protect our most vulnerable people. Children, young people and others acting on their behalf are encouraged to report any concerns about the care and services they are receiving so that these can be addressed quickly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Service Recovery Team will collect data on complainants by protected characteristics such as ethnicity, sex and disability status from 2023/24 onwards. This will enable the Council to identify if its complaints policy is operating as intended, eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity in line with the public sector equality duty.

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

None

**6.6 Implications for partner organisations?**

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

**Report author(s):**

**Name and job title:**

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Angela Whitrick/Matt Clayton	Strategic Lead – Looked After Children	Children’s Services - Looked After Children	11/11/2024	22/11/2024
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Sukriti Sen	Director of Childrens and Education	Childrens and Education	11/11/2024	22/11/2024
Members: Councillor Seaman	Cabinet Member (Children and Young People)		11/11/2024	06/12/2024

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