









	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	
 Number of FORMAL complaints	644	544	747	2022/23 saw a significant increase in formal complaints (detailed overleaf).
 Number of INFORMAL complaints	624	862	1091	2022/23 saw a further significant increase in informal complaints (detailed overleaf).
 Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	17/30	20/35	26/114	In 2022/23 we received 114 approaches from the LGSCO. 26 complaints were upheld.
 Timescales (overdue)	39%	18%	21%	In 2022/23 21% of all complaints exceeded the deadline for response.
 % fully justified complaints	8%	8%	9%	2022/23 continued to see a low volume of complaints reported as fully justified.
 % part justified complaints	11%	9%	11%	2022/23 continued to see a low volume of complaints reported as partially justified.
 Compliments	633	380	537	We received 537 compliments in 2022/23
 Learnings	119	127	212	We gathered 212 learnings from complaints in 20221/23 (details overleaf).

Total Complaints Overview
1838 Complaints

2022/23

performance

2022/23

Numbers

Total Complaint Contacts – 1838

This is a 31% increase from the 1406 received in 2021-22 and a 166% increase over the 4 years of Dorset Council. Although the apparent change in culture since the Covid pandemic may still account for some of the increase, (and we are encouraged that the Complaints function is easy to find), we are very mindful of this continual trend of a year on year increase, and this report highlights the areas of greatest concern. Although in some cases complaints have given the authority a chance to learn and implement changes, some communications remain aggressive or vexatious.

Directorate	2021-22	2022-23	%
Adult Social Care	49	143	-4%
Adult Non Social Care	80	138	+42%
Childrens Social Care	120	140	+17%
Children s Non Social Care	174	309	+78%
Place	586	937	+59%
Corporate	172	168	-2%
Code of Conduct*	60	44	-27%
TOTALS	1406	1838	+31%

Out of the 1838 contacts, 747 of these were considered as formal complaints. The focus on early resolution continues to pay dividends for both council staff and those complaining but we need to ensure that we don't obstruct statutory processes due to the significantly increased demand. We have also seen an increase in vexatious and aggressive behaviours.

Formal Complaints 747

Of the 1838 complaints received 2022-23, 747 required the formal complaints process to reach an outcome. Figures demonstrate that the split between complaints that require formal resolution, and those that appear resolvable, is similar to the previous year. Both formal and informal complaint numbers have risen, but our appetite to resolve matters and promote positive outcomes is still very much in tact.

Place services continue to have had the greatest numbers as they provide the most visible services to the public, however also provide the best means of resolution without undue process. There is a marked increase in SEN related matters in Children's Services also, swelling the formal process numbers.

Informal Complaints 1091

Of the 1838 complaints received 2022-23 1091 were considered as cases where resolution could be met without the undue process of the formal complaints route.

Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Complaints

Complaints are up 31% year on year and Members should be heartened that of these 1838 complaints only 124 reached the Ombudsman, with 114 leading to a decision. Of the 114 decisions only 36 were investigated and 26 of these upheld. This is very similar to 2021-22s findings where 121 reached the Ombudsman, 32 investigated and 20 upheld. Considering the 31% increase in complaints overall, only a 2% increase in complaints finding the Ombudsman seems a good news story.

This means that of the 36 complaints 72% were upheld by the Ombudsman which compares to an average of 72% in other similar organisations – so consistent.

Dorset Council met the recommendations in 100% of these cases.

They breakdown as follow::

- Education/Children's - Of the 40 cases investigated – 17 upheld.
- Corporate Services - Of the 11 cases investigated - 2 upheld.
- Adult Social Care - Of the 11 cases investigated - 4 upheld.
- Adult non social care (Housing) - Of the 7 cases investigated – 0 upheld.
- Planning (Place) - Of the 26 cases investigated – 2 upheld.
- Highways (Place) - Of the 10 cases investigated – 0 upheld.
- Environment/Place - Of the 9 cases investigated – 1 upheld.

Total Complaints Overview

2022/23

2022/23

The financial remedies in 2022-23 resulted in a total cost of £40,630 (down from £42,300 in 2021-22). 17 related to SEN delays or children out of education at a cost of £39,680 (up from 6 decision sin 2021-22).

We should add that a further £21,800 was spent in the service on pre-emptive financial remedy through the complaints process thus preventing LGSCO intervention. We also note the 1 Childrens Services Stage 2 investigation cost Dorset Council £46,304.60. This did not progress to the Ombudsman. Interestingly in only 8% of upheld cases the LGSCO found the organisation had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman. This compares to an average of 13% in similar organisations. This pre-emptive work in SEND is making up the 8% referred to in the LGSCOs report.

SEND is an area the Complaints Team are focusing support on as some of these delays and complaints are historic but only more recently finding their way into the Complaints Process. We continue to work closely with Children's Services and are recording learnings wherever possible.

The other financial remedies were:

1 Adult Social Care finding at a cost of £750:

Pay Mrs Y £750 to acknowledge the distress, time and trouble caused to her and her family by the failings in Mr X's care. This figure is a symbolic amount based on the Ombudsman's published Guidance on Remedies.

And 1 Place finding at a cost of £200 (Enforcement)

Within four weeks of my final decision: 30. Mr X will provide the Council with evidence to show the cost of upgrading the fence along his boundary to an acoustic fence. The Council will pay Mr X the difference in cost to enable an acoustic fence to be built. Mr X will arrange with his neighbour to upgrade the fence.

Timescales – 21% Overdue

This is a setback as 18% were overdue the previous year. This however demonstrates the impacts of the increased numbers coming into the corporate complaints team and the challenges for team managers in helping us promote timely responses. The delays are proportionate to the increased numbers. Its worth remembering that in 2020-21 29% were overdue so we are satisfied we are delivering a better services despite the 31% overall increase in complaints.

The complaints procedures operated by the Council vary in timescales for responses. The Whole Authority procedure is 20 working days, the Children's Services Social Care procedure is 10 working days, up to 20 by exception (with automatic escalation to an independent investigation if not met. This can be costly). The Adult Social Care procedure does not specify exact timescales, and we are now looking to establish these on a case by case basis depending on the gravity and risk of the complaint and the time need to investigate it.

Justifications – 9% fully 11% partially

This is again similar to the previous years. It may still seem surprising that so few complaints are considered to be justified my responding managers, but the real challenge is to ensure the justified complaints contribute to the lessons learned and continual improvement

Compliments – 537

The is still a massive good news story with a 30% increase in positive feedback year on year. Although we cannot yet boast that the compliments outnumber the complaints, we have not lost any ground in our commitment to generating positive sentiments to offset the complaints.

Learnings - 212

We are pleased to report a 40% increase in the return on learning points from complaints. This is really impressive as it demonstrates commitment to providing genuine value from peoples complaints to Dorset Council

No only have the volume of learnings increased, the quality and supporting action plans overseeing delivery has improved, offering significantly more assurance that loops are being closed and lessons genuinely learned

Total Complaints Overview

2022/23

2022/23

Background

The purpose of this report is to highlight key issues from the Annual Report for Complaints 2022/23. There is a full annual report to support this executive summary together with material to meet the statutory functions associated with Social Care.

Introduction

The Corporate Complaints Team sit in Legal & Democratic as an Assurance function, with the emphasis more on learning from complaints, rather than merely processing numbers. As the report will show the greater level of scrutiny on services remains year on year with an increase in most directorates

The Complaints Team have also been heavily involved in helping Dorset Council manage vexatious and unreasonable behaviours.

The council operates 4 complaints procedures. The Council's own – which is a one stage process with a review process as necessary and Children's Services and Adult Services Social Care have their own legal procedures. Full details of these procedures are found in Appendix 1 and 3 as full reports which are required to satisfy legislation. We have also been delegated the Councillor Code of Conduct complaints to triage and manage. Although not contributing greatly to the overall numbers, it has been an interesting experience trying to apply the same culture of learning to a new and unfamiliar policy to the team.

The team's focus for this coming year is:

Team Wellbeing and Development – Further galvanising a team to deal with increasingly upsetting subject matter, and (at times) vexatious behaviours. We have been very vocal in ensuring staff are aware of the support available.

Reporting/Learning – 2022-23 saw an improvement in the quality of learnings presented by team managers. There is a genuine mutual awareness for delivering extra value. However some complaints are resolvable without grass-roots learnings presenting themselves.









Total Complaints Overview

2022/23

dorsetcomplaints



2022/23

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
 Number of FORMAL complaints	236	197	151	160	747
 Number of INFORMAL complaints	322	315	209	245	1091
 Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	5/27	6/28	8/33	7/26	26/114
 Timescales (overdue)	22%	15%	22%	26%	21%
 % fully justified complaints	10%	9%	6%	9%	9%
 % part justified complaints	10%	9%	9%	15%	11%
 Compliments	129	135	131	142	537
 Learnings	45	50	52	65	212

Total Quarterly Complaints Overview
Total Complaints = 1838









2022/23

performance

dorsetcomplaints



2022/23

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
	Number of FORMAL complaints	100	85	70	67	322
	Number of INFORMAL complaints	206	189	95	125	615
	Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	2/11	1/12	0/14	0/8	3/45
	Timescales (overdue)	10%	26%	28%	28%	23%
	% fully justified complaints	10%	5%	8%	10%	8%
	% part justified complaints	7%	7%	6%	13%	8%
	Compliments	56	97	70	76	299
	Learnings	10	17	18	17	62

Place Complaints
Total Complaints = 937









2022/23

performance

dorsetcomplaints



2022/23

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
	Number of FORMAL complaints	26	14	9	10	59
	Number of INFORMAL complaints	27	34	13	35	109
	Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	1/3	0/2	1/3	0/3	2/11
	Timescales (overdue)	20%	26%	25%	25%	24%
	% fully justified complaints	15%	5%	2%	10%	8%
	% part justified complaints	15%	7%	4%	15%	10%
	Compliments	7	7	5	11	30
	Learnings	1	1	2	6	10









Corporate - Total Complaints = 168

2022/23

performance

dorsetcomplaints

2022/23

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
	Number of FORMAL complaints	15	28	12	17	72
	Number of INFORMAL complaints	18	24	15	9	9
	Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	0/2	0/1	0/4	0/0	0/7
	Timescales (overdue)	33%	9%	17%	32%	23%
	% fully justified complaints	6%	6%	10%	2%	6%
	% part justified complaints	3%	6%	8%	12%	7%
	Compliments	5	1	1	3	13
	Learnings	3	1	1	2	7

People - Adults - Non Social Care
Total Complaints = 81









2022/23

performance

dorsetcomplaints



2022/23

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
	Number of FORMAL complaints	24	23	13	17	77
	Number of INFORMAL complaints	16	14	17	19	66
	Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	0/2	2/4	2/3	0/2	4/11
	Timescales (overdue)	33%	16%	18%	48%	29%
	% fully justified complaints	10%	16%	0%	2%	7%
	% part justified complaints	3%	10%	12%	12%	9%
	Compliments	39	15	28	21	103
	Learnings	6	7	7	10	30

People - Adults - Social Care
Total Complaints = 143









2022/23

performance

dorsetcomplaints



2022/23

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
	Number of FORMAL complaints	62	39	37	42	180
	Number of INFORMAL complaints	23	37	31	31	38
	Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	2/8	3/9	5/7	6/11	16/35
	Timescales (overdue)	18%	15%	8%	11%	13%
	% fully justified complaints	10%	13%	12%	20%	14%
	% part justified complaints	17%	13%	12%	17%	15%
	Compliments	10	7	11	20	48
	Learnings	11	20	20	23	74

**People - Children's - Non Social Care
Total Complaints = 218**









2022/23

performance

dorsetcomplaints



2022/23

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
	Number of FORMAL complaints	9	8	10	7	34
	Number of INFORMAL complaints	32	17	38	19	106
	Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	0/1	0/0	0/2	1/2	1/5
	Timescales (overdue)	18%	0%	33%	10%	15%
	% fully justified complaints	10%	6%	2%	10%	7%
	% part justified complaints	17%	10%	10%	20%	14%
	Compliments	12	8	13	11	44
	Learnings	14	4	4	7	29

People - Children's - Social Care
Total Complaints = 140

2022/23

performance

Annual Complaints Report 2022-23

Appendices

Children's Service Statutory Reporting Requirements

To get perspective on the small number of complaints received from our Children in Care it is important to understand the overall numbers for Children's Social Care complaints. Most complaints received are from parents (some estranged) and not necessarily representing the voice or best interest of the child. That is why we need to shine a light on the complaints process and how young people can find it

The figures below show an increase in complaints over all for Childrens Social care, but not limited to Children in Care which feature further down the report. Representations capture the figures for complaints that were resolved informally outside of the Statutory Process

Children's Social Care	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21
Representations	106	91	131
Stage 1	34	29	51
Stage 2	1	1	1
Stage 3	0	0	0
LGSCO approaches	5 with 1 upheld	6 with 1 upheld	4 none upheld
Children's Whole Authority			
Representations	129	75	19
Formal Complaint	180	98	37
LGSCO approaches	35 with 16 upheld	13 with 6 upheld	5 with 3 upheld

1 case accepted at Stage 2 relating to a lack of support for a grandparent who sought custody through the courts. This was ultimately upheld and resolved by a back payment of £43,230

The Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) investigates complaints from the public about councils and other bodies providing public services in England. It also investigates complaints about registered social care providers.

Social Care

Of the 5 Social Care complaints to be formally investigated by the Ombudsman, maladministration was only found in 1 case, highlighted below

Summary:

Summary: The complainant, a foster carer, alleged that the Council wrongly removed her son from her care and failed over a prolonged period to consider properly her status as a foster carer. The Council investigated the complaint and found fault in the way it dealt with alleged child protection concerns. After an Ombudsman investigation, the Council agreed to refer the complainant to its Fostering Panel and the Council recently decided she should be allowed to continue as a foster carer subject to a further assessment and training. We have now considered the impact of the Council's faults and recommended a way to remedy the injustice caused to the complainant.

Annual Complaints Report 2022-23

Non Social Care

The 35 Non Social Care complaints heard by the Ombudsman related to delays with Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) and poor communication regarding Special Educational Needs (SEN) and children out of education. 16 were upheld by the Ombudsman with financial penalties amounting to £39,680

It should be known that a further £21,800 was spent on SEN complaints for pre-emptive financial remedy that were therefore not heard by the Ombudsman. Positive work, but costs arising from complaints that we need to ensure we share with Senior Leaders

Which customer groups made the complaints;

Of the complainants who categorised themselves, we present the following data on who is complaining to children's services Social Care

Foster Carer	10
Grandparent	12
Parent	79
Young Person	3
Advocate	10
Customer	18
Other Relative	2

The types of complaints made;

Most complaints fall under subcategories of Service Provision, largely around delays of perceived failures to deliver a service

Themes	Children's Social Care
Communication	7%
Data	2%
Finance	0%
Policy - Disagreement with Decision	7%
Service Provision - Delay	0%
Professional Practice/Quality of Service	74%
Other	5%

The outcome of complaints;

Of the complaints received for Children's Social Care in 2022-23 only 7% were considered Fully Justified by operational managers shows there is some level of justification as outlined below:

Fully Justified	7% up from 6% last year
Partially Justified	14% up from 10% last year
Not justified	79% down from 84%

Annual Complaints Report 2022-23

In 2022-23 the Complaints Team have improved the quarterly reporting and added extra value in terms of learnings and actions from complaints. In many cases however the complaints process is used by parents who are unhappy with records held that cant be legally altered. There is always more work to do in providing robust assurance of our self assessment of the services we provide.

Focus on Children in Care

The table below demonstrates a breakdown of Children in Care complaints. All complaints by young people are coming to the Complaints team via an advocacy service. As the numbers are so low there could be concerns we are not hearing the voice of the Child in Dorset through the complaints process and work in 2021-22 has highlighted this with the QAROs

Year	Number of Complaints
Children in Care 2022-23	10
Children in Care 2021-22	8
Children in Care 2020-21	15
Children in Care 2019-20	10
Children in Care 2018-19	20

Advocacy is described as supporting children to have their say and making sure their views and wishes are taken into consideration on decisions and matters that affect them, it is also about ensuring that rights are upheld. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the right of children to be listened to in decisions which affect them. There is a statutory duty to provide an independent advocacy service that supports children and young people to have their views and wishes taken into account when key decisions are being made about their lives.

An advocate can help if:

something needs to be started, changed or stopped, for example, if the child is unhappy about their treatment by children's social care or there are worries about plans being made, such as a move a child needs support during meetings to make sure their voice is heard children need advice and want to know their rights

a child needs support to make a complaint

In 2022-23 we have identified 10 cases that related to children in care, all via an advocate representing the voice of the child through the complaints process. You will note the figures are consistently low by comparison to the overall figures.

In Q1 we identified 3 complaint/contacts from a young people in care – all upheld

B (CIC)

The learning from this complaint will need to be taken forward in the Legal Team and Children's Services to raise the importance of planning earlier when a child wishes to change their name. This will ensure that all documents and ID are in place at age 18 to prevent delay for the young person and to ensure their wishes are heard and acted upon promptly and effectively, between teams and agencies.

SP re A

Annual Complaints Report 2022-23

There should have been clearer communications about the urgent transfer of the young person (YP) to a new social worker, and the realistic challenges and limits in the social worker's capacity to be available to offer the family the support needed. This has been discussed with the managers who held oversight at that time to ensure this can inform improved practice and procedures in future. 5

The abrupt decision the home took to end both the YP's placement and education was not a child-centred or positive approach for him and our Commissioning Team have already addressed and raised this with the home to highlight the impact on the YP, and the extended situation this created for the family whilst an alternative matched home was sought.

H (CIC)

Manager to ensure that processes are in place to promote better communication with all involved, and especially the children, when children in care need to move placement.

In Q2 we identified 1 complaint/contact from a young person in care. This relates to contact with the father and we are working towards an informal resolution with the help of the team manager

In Q3 we identified 5 complaint/contact from a young person in care

Purbeck YP is unhappy with Social Worker

West - Lack of contact arranged for YP

East – MP approach seeking help for YP

North – Unhappy with decision to move placement

West – Lack of Communication from SW

In Q4 we have had 1 approach from a child in care in relation to contact with parent – still under investigation

Compliance with timescales, and complaints resolved within extended timescale as agreed;

The table below show the majority of all Stage 1 cases for Children's Services Social Care were within the 20-day statutory timescale. A trend that is improving

Timescales	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21
0-20 Working Days	85%	77%	78%
20+ days	15%	23%	22%

As always, closer observation reveals that some cases exceed the 20 days as a result of agreeing a more informal approach and resolution after the receipt of the original complaint, with good work from locality managers. This can include follow up calls and meetings, so the figure in isolation does not tell the whole story of the journey of the complaints.

learning and service improvement, including changes to services that have been implemented and details of any that have not been implemented;

Learning points are collected at all stages of the complaints procedure. At stage 1, Operational Managers identify learning from complaints and learning actions. At Stages 2 and 3, action plans are compiled based on the recommendations of the investigator's or panel chair's report. In addition, the LGSCO will include recommendations to remedy complaints, and actions are monitored by the complaints team to ensure that they are completed.

Annual Complaints Report 2022-23

How we disseminate learning

Quarterly reports to Children's Services Leadership Team produced by the Complaints team

Dissemination of the quarterly report to Operational Managers to be discussed at Service Team Meetings.

The complaints team also feed into the performance data for SLT each quarter

How we learn from complaints

Improvement in Stage 1 responses - Additional Training to be provided to Team Managers on how to complete and present and stage one investigations. The Complaints Team Manager will be attending meetings to advise and update

Improvement in communication, sharing of Assessments and CIN Plans - Practice issue raised. Notes from Meetings to be completed in a timely manner and a copy sent to the attendees, including the family. Operational Managers to ensure that Team Managers and Social Workers are clear about the need to record meetings. Robust quality assurance processes put in place.

Improved use of complaints as a measure of performance and quality control:

Evidence of sharing of quarterly reports and using to track individual team performance. The Senior Assurance Officer will be leading on this

Examples of learning from Complaints:

We have collected 29 good quality and robust organisational learnings in 22-23 down slightly from 33 last year. In addition, non social care complaints provided 74 cases with valuable learnings, up significantly from 56 the previous year which is really pleasing

Case ID	What we have learned from Complaints	What we have done as a result to improve practice
COM/00000886	Complaint upheld regarding possible parental alienation	Manager confirmed that they have begun to run workshops around Parental Alienation in the East and Purbeck Locality. They are involving Children's Social Care Principal Social Worker in this, so that Parental Alienation is understood by all our Social Workers and taken into consideration when assessing families where parental conflict, separation and divorce is a feature. As a council we are participating in a pilot project where issues of contact between separating parents is being taken out of the court arena and alternatives to litigation are considered.
COM/00001162	Complaint upheld regarding communication and contact with Social Worker	Manager has asked the social worker to ensure that, following the next review, she schedules the next review with the professionals at the meeting. If for any reason this needs to be re-scheduled, the social worker will ensure that another meeting is re-arranged.
COM/00001192	Should have been more oversight from social workers prior to the domestic incident.	Manager to ensure that every effort is made to allocate duty social workers to visit on time where such concerns are known to exist.

Annual Complaints Report 2022-23

COM/00001212	The SEN Team were unable to meet the child's needs in a timely way	The actions taken are as follows: There is wider work underway about the provision of specialist school placements, and Dorset Council are investing in improving provision for all of Dorset's children, including the development of the provision at Coombe House near Shaftesbury. We are also working with our colleagues in the maintained and independent schools to make sure that we have sufficient provision to meet needs.
COM/00001269	Manager has ensured that the social worker, and the rest of the team, are aware of best practice when sharing reports with parents and how they talk to children about issues, as a result of this complaint.	Manager has talked to social worker about how important it is for parents to feel that they are being listened to and they have looked at prioritising the social worker's time.
COM/00001272	Complaint upheld regarding communication of panel decisions	As part of the Panel decision making processes, the panel is now emailing panel outcomes to the SEN Provision Leads by the end of the week of the panel. This ensures that we are able to effectively and efficiently communicate those decisions to all involved, especially to the young people and their families.
COM/00001310	Complaint upheld regarding communication of panel decisions	Manager has worked with the team and, as the chair for the SEND Panel in North Dorset has implemented a process whereby the SEND Provision Leads are notified of the panel outcomes no later than the next working day. This enables us to effectively communicate those decisions to all involved, especially to families.
COM/00001320	Complaint upheld in regards to the lack of communication particularly relaying if scheduled appointments and contact is not going ahead due to social worker on sick leave etc. This has been acknowledged to cause stress and impacts adversely on the anxiety and depression of customer	Manager has asked that the team complete updated training on customer service as I they do not wish level of service to be repeated or caused any further anxiety
COM/00001333	The referral could have been dealt with in a more sensitive manner	Manager has raised this with colleagues to ensure other families do not have the same experience in similar situations
COM/00001383	Manager to ensure that, when there are workers off in the team for a long period of time, children are written to explaining the situation and what their plans will be to have a social worker and also their care plans.	Complaints team to query any follow up actions necessary

Annual Complaints Report 2022-23

<p>COM/00001362</p>	<p>1. Social Worker involved needs to understand when sensitive information is shared, how this should be recorded and discussed with parents in advance of sharing with partners</p> <p>2. Where parents are separated or one parent only has PR for one child and not others involved in assessment it is essential the report is written in a way which enables the information not relevant to that parent to be removed without losing the essence of the assessment and concerns raised.</p>	<p>1. Supervision discussion with Social Worker</p> <p>2. Reflective workshop on information sharing and report writing</p>
<p>COM/00001422</p>	<p>Complaint upheld regarding lack of acknowledgment to emails and lack of updates may have caused anxiety and distress to customer</p>	<p>To make the service work better, we have put significantly more resource into the team over the Autumn, including new caseworkers and specialist Family Workers. We also continue to actively recruit new permanent Provision Leads. Action for the complaints team is to follow this up and to ensure this is completed.</p>
<p>COM/00001440</p>	<p>To make the service work better, we have put significantly more resource into the team over the Autumn, including new Caseworkers and specialist Family Workers. We also continue to actively recruit new permanent Provision Leads.</p>	<p>To make the service work better (SEN ECHP) we have put significantly more resource into the team over the Autumn, including new Caseworkers and specialist Family Workers. We also continue to actively recruit new permanent Provision Leads.</p>
<p>COM/00001496</p>	<p>As learning from complaint and findings, manager will ensure that, through the Senior Management Team, our Legal and Locality Teams all are reminded of the importance of full genograms in care proceedings and consideration of all extended family links and promoting sibling contact as a priority for children in our care. This will take place through Reflective Practice training in our teams and supervisions. Recently, Dorset have implemented the need for a Child and Family Assessment to be completed annually for each Child In Care and this will be a useful tool to gather all family information and consider contact issues further, aside from the Care Plan and Child In Care Reviews.</p>	<p>Complaints team to query any follow up actions necessary and facilitate by means of an action plan to ensure these targets are met</p>

Annual Complaints Report 2022-23

COM/00001550	<p>Manager confirmed that Dorset Council are working hard to ensure that they have an increase in Foster Placements and Residential Placements based in Dorset for our children and young people in the future.</p>	<p>There are now twice weekly placement meetings that have been introduced between Senior Managers, Fostering and Commissioning to support more proactive identification of placements and addressing barriers or issues relating to placement searches.</p>
COM/00001695	<p>The Service Manager has spoken to the SENDIASS Officer and reviewed with her in detail how the conversation should have been handled differently. We expect our staff to treat everyone with dignity and respect and she has recognised that she should have behaved in this way towards you.</p>	<p>We will be looking at additional customer services training for our SENDIASS team in early 2022. I know that some offers of support have already been made to you: If you would find it helpful, SENDIASS can offer you a different officer to support and advise you and the Chesil Locality Team could offer you some support for you and your family.</p>
COM/00001782	<p>In relation to lack of communication this is something we will be able to address as we move forward, this was predominantly down to a shortage of staff due to sickness and change of agency staff at the time. We now have SEN PLs in place and are recruiting to the SEN Family Worker roles which will support this.</p>	<p>Team Around the Schools support is being put in place in relation to Stalbridge Primary. SEN Team Manager will be responsible by 28.02.2022</p>
COM/00001085	<p>Manager has contacted the Purbeck Team Manager to discuss the nature of this complaint and to make sure they appreciate the strain the complainants are feeling as they continue to care for the three children.</p>	<p>Manager and Social Worker have reflected on, in going through the terms of the complaint, how they can make sure that they take the time to listen to families' concerns and explain decisions.</p>
COM/00001122	<p>Upheld complaint regarding contact arrangements and communication</p>	<p>Manager has ensured that the social worker, and the rest of the team, are aware of best practice when sharing reports with parents and how they talk to children about issues, as a result of this complaint. Manager has talked to social worker about how important it is for parents to feel that they are being listened to and they have looked at prioritising the social worker's time.</p>
CIC (H)	<p>Information was presented to young person in visual format which proved very effective and will be used in future. Young person had concerns about not being able to contact social worker, so a student social worker was also allocated to him so that he has two workers to communicate with.</p>	<p>With regard to Transition Services, manager stated that there are council wide improvements being implemented by Theresa Leavy across Children's Services to address the lack of placements for young people to move on to.</p>
CIC (LB)	<p>The learning from this complaint will need to be taken forward in the Legal Team and Children's Services to raise the importance of planning earlier when a child wishes to change their name. This will ensure that all</p>	<p>Complaints Team to seek update on action plan</p>

Annual Complaints Report 2022-23

	documents and ID are in place at age 18 to prevent delay for the young person and to ensure their wishes are heard and acted upon promptly and effectively, between teams and agencies.	
COM/00001496	As learning from complaint and findings, manager will ensure that, through the Senior Management Team, our Legal and Locality Teams all are reminded of the importance of full genograms in care proceedings and consideration of all extended family links and promoting sibling contact as a priority for children in our care	This will take place through Reflective Practice training in our teams and supervisions. Recently, Dorset have implemented the need for a Child and Family Assessment to be completed annually for each Child In Care and this will be a useful tool to gather all family information and consider contact issues further, aside from the Care Plan and Child In Care Reviews.
Stage 2 MY	A full IP report and adjudication letter including high level organisational learnings we provided	The Complaints Team and Children's Services are working on a detailed action plan relating to a Stage 2 investigation to ensure actions follow the lessons

Sharing Information

Professionals need to ensure they have explicit permission to share information, either through statutory guidance or with the consent of the children and family involved. This includes when sharing information with other family members.

Maintaining confidentiality within a family is complex and checks should always be made of the records to confirm what can and cannot be shared with each family member. A handover of key information between practitioners and their managers in respect of any changes in family's circumstances should take place after periods of absence to ensure clarity about what has happened and what information can be shared with whom.

Data Protection and Appropriate Action to take

Managers need to contact Data Protection Team as soon as possible following a potential breach to seek advice about immediate actions to mitigate risk and distress to the family. When aware that a data breach has occurred, advice must be obtained from the Data Protection Team about immediate actions required. Information on how to report a data breach can be found at <https://intranet.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/task/report-a-data-breach/> Unless advised otherwise, contact should be made with the family to alert them to the breach and to provide apologies, reassurance and information about what the service will be doing to rectify the situation and mitigate the risks.

Safeguarding, the Legal Framework and Good Practice

Reference Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers.

A summary of statistical data about the age, gender, disability, sexual orientation and ethnicity of complainants

All complainants to Dorset Council are sent an equality and diversity monitoring form as part of the complaint process. Complainants are asked to complete this form but it is completely voluntary. If complainants contact us via the online form, we currently collect any information offered. We will need to introduce manual collection for postal complaints in future. The percentages are based on those who completed the form only and not specific to Children's Services as they are anonymous

Happily the data for 2022-23 seems more complete and indicative of trends but these figures are based only on the 1428 records provided, (up from 1146 last year).

Annual Complaints Report 2022-23

	2022- 23	2021-22
Gender		
Female	50%	47%
Male	33%	37%
Self described or non binary	1%	1%
Prefer not to say	16%	15%
Sexuality		
Heterosexual	67%	66%
Gay Man	1%	1%
Bisexual	2%	2%
Prefer not to say (selected)	14%	15%
Gay Woman/Lesbian	2%	1%
Left Blank	14%	13%
Age		
16-24	4%	1%
25-34	11%	20%
35-44	15%	15%
45-54	16%	15%
55-64	17%	18%
65-74	17%	12%
75 & Older	6%	10%
Left blank	14%	9%
Religion		
Atheist	2%	3%
Buddist	0%	0%
Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and other Christian denominations)	30%	29%
Hindu	0%	0%
Jewish	0%	1%
Muslim	0%	1%
None/no religion	36%	35%
Other	2%	2%
Prefer not to say (selected)	12%	12%
Left Blank	18%	17%
Ethnicity		
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0%	0%
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0%	0%
Black or Black British - African	0%	0%
Black or Black British - Caribbean	0%	0%
Mixed Ethnic Background - Other White background	0%	0%
Mixed Ethnic Background - White and Asian	0%	0%
Mixed Ethnic Background - White and Black African	0%	0%
Mixed Ethnic Background - White and Black Caribbean	0%	0%
Not known	0%	0%
Prefer not to say	4%	5%
Traveller of Irish Heritage	0%	0%

Annual Complaints Report 2022-23

White - British	70%	68%
White - Gypsy or Traveller	0%	0%
White - Irish	0%	1%
White - Other White background	0%	1%
Other	2%	1%
Left Blank	24%	24%
Disability		
Mental Health, Learning Difficulty/Sensory	0%	1%
Mental Health Long Term	2%	1%
Mental Health - Unspecified	2%	3%
Physical Disability - Long Term	4%	10%
Physical Disability - Unspecified	6%	3%

A review of the effectiveness of the complaints procedure

The Complaints Team send out forms to gather feedback from complainants about their experience of complaining in order to continually improve the service. Regrettably there has been very little uptake on this and there is no reportable data of any value established.

Monitoring the effectiveness of the Complaints Procedure

We need to improve on current arrangements for collecting this information and the Complaints Team are aware that customer feedback on the complaints process is important

Annual Complaints Report 2022-23

Appendices

Adult's Service Statutory Reporting Requirements

We hope the Infographic provides key information at a glance in a format that allows the Quarters to be directly compared. We include the specific the number of complaints and the manner in which they were considered. We have specified the number of complaints which were justified, and the number referred to the Ombudsman. Complaints should be regarded as an important tool and be performance monitored to ensure the Council can evidence that we are a learning organisation. Compliments should also be valued and communicated effectively to staff. Good practice and learning should be disseminated. These are feedback as soon as we receive them and are highlighted in internal quarterly reporting

Complaint Themes and Subject matter

Q1	Number of Complaints
Service Provision / Quality of Service	20
Disagreement with Decision	7
Finance	9
Customer Service	1
Communication	1
Other	2
Q2	Number of Complaints
Customer Service	4
Data	1
Disagreement with Decision	8
Finance	1
Misconduct	1
Quality of Service	12
Service Provision	10
Other	0
Q3	Number of Complaints
Communication	2
Disagreement with Decision	2
Finance	4
Misconduct	2
Quality of Service	20
Q4	Number of Complaints
Communication	2
Disagreement with Decision	9
Finance	3
Data	2
Quality of Service	20

Annual Complaints Report 2022-23

Learning from Complaints

Dorset Council have collected 28 learning points from 2022-23, a slight increase from the 22 the previous year, with a sampling below:

What we have learned from Complaints	What have we done to improve practice	
3240 (LW) Adult Care Learning Disability East	Poor communication	Manager is reviewing communication with the team and our Business Support staff to ensure that she is available to those who wish to contact her.
2555 (LW) North Dorset Locality Adult Care	Lack of review of care at care home and poor care received at care home.	We seek to review support each year to ensure the support remains appropriate and work through any issues identified. Manager has raised this with the Commissioning Team to ensure this is a clear feature in new contracts and shared the complainant's experience with the Quality Assurance Team who undertake visits to providers to ensure they are working to the standards agreed. The issues raised will form part of the next review with Wisteria.
3301 (LW) Dorchester and West Dorset Locality Adult Services	While previously contacting the locality team complainant had difficulty getting through the automated telephone exchange.	Manager has asked our IT team to review the system to ensure it is in working order. We are also in the process of exploring whether the default action when a tone is not received can be to be put through to an operator, rather than to be disconnected.
3501 (BL) Adult Care EAST		Assessment and Support co-ordinator to remain allocated and continue to offer support (though this has been continuously declined in past) and will provide information documents on support groups
3643 (LW) Adult Care Dorchester and West		Duty worker worked with Locality Manager and the Area Practice Manager to identify changes in practice which he has implemented and has continued to utilise since this time. These changes include always reading the case notes prior to taking any action, ensuring full discussions are completed with the ward if we are informed by an agency that a customer has been admitted to hospital and to liaise with the Home First Team.

Annual Complaints Report 2022-23

		<p>Locality Manager also stated that, as a locality they are also fully aware of the guidance regarding hospital admissions, when to protect packages of care and when they need to be ended.</p>
3095 (LC) Adult Finance	<p>We need a clear policy that staff will follow when placements are offered with the Care South homes on block contract -</p>	<p>Payment of £975 will be made which is the difference between Buxton House and Grove House for 3 weeks</p> <p>We will write a clear policy that staff will follow when placements are offered with the Care South homes on block contract - This will include making sure the person and family are aware of the weekly cost of the placement and what that will mean if the person becomes self funding - note to staff on the learning from the complaint. The intention is that this will be turned into an e-learning package and rolled out over the coming weeks. We have already changed the process and correspondence to address the other learning points.</p> <p>Looking at the history to the Care South block contracts and the contract itself. The department is working with an evidence base from its fair cost of care exercise and has shared the initial findings with Care South as part of the meetings.</p>
3227 (LC) Purbeck Adult Care	<p>I have discussed this with K and obtained a written response from her which is attached. K explained to me the detail that she has expressed in her letter to you and has reflected on this instance so she can improve her practice going forward.</p>	<p>From a council perspective our staff follow guidance from BCP's adults safeguarding board in relation to hoarding and utilise a toolkit and checklist to assess for hoarding, so I have gone through this with the worker for future reference. Unfortunately, it does seem to be a poor choice of language which unfortunately has caused you undue distress.</p>
3604 (DMc) Adults	<p>Sometimes callers are frustrated, angry or upset.</p>	<p>Worker and wider team has reflected on how to respond and strategies to resolve calls amicably.</p>
3573 (LW)	<p>Locality Manager has discussed with the Line Manager the need to inform individuals and their representatives when a worker leaves and ensure we communicate what actions are being taken to put an alternative in place.</p>	<p>Locality Manager has discussed with the Line Manager the need to inform individuals and their representatives when a worker leaves and ensure we communicate what actions are being taken to put an alternative in place.</p>
3573 (LW) Adult Social Care North	<p>Record of phone calls not taken and saved.</p>	<p>Case discussed at Complaints Team Meeting, and it was agreed that record of telephone calls to be kept in W folder and added to Infreemation. Also, team are going to ensure internal deadlines are allocated to complaints to stop them being forgotten and that timely reminders are sent so that cases can be escalated to Senior Manager, if no engagement from Manager</p>

Annual Complaints Report 2022-23

3972 (LC) East Locality	Allocated worker didn't keep in contact with xxx as she was waiting for a SW to be allocated. Duty worker did however maintain contact.	We are meeting in the New Year to look at change the way PODs work to ensure responsibility is maintained even if workers change.
COM 3859 Housing adaptation (DMc)	Communications between the service user, OTs and personnel at DAHS service often dysfunctional. Issues unrelated to delivery of service caused long delays. Service user did not agree with or understand the limitations of the service or recommended works that would meet the need	Manager of DAHS will proactively flag up cases where SU does not agree with assessment of an OT or specification agreed with the service, which will take the form of a request to set up a case conference with managers to agree a strategy. A leaflet to be designed explaining basic steps in the delivery of DFG service which will compliment the verbal communication given to the SU. Communication to be improved between DAHS and OT service by regular liaison meetings to discuss issues where a client may have different expectations of the service.
3501 (LC)	there is currently a significant pressure in social care following on from the recent pandemic, therefore we have had to prioritise our services for urgent and crisis situations. I apologise that we have not been able to complete a full review of xxxxx support plan since your request.	We have created a waiting list for reviews, starting in October 2022, and xxxxxxxxxxxx is due to be allocated a worker to support with a review in January 2023.
COM 4087 (DMc)	Errors made in handling of the case, such as questions needing to be asked to support their decision around priority need. Lack of communication	Staff training in the new year to address shortfalls in approach currently taken.
COM/3879 (BL) East Locality	Social Worker mislead complainant as to when meeting would take place	Apology issued/SW aware of language used and will be more mindful going forward. Reassessment of subject may be warranted. All parties involved will be advised accordingly.
COM/3708 (LC)	Dorset Council didn't recognise that Mrs C's needs would require CHC.	ASC - CARE REVIEWS - We have created a waiting list for reviews, starting in October 2022, and Ms C is due to be allocated a worker to support with a review in January 2023.
COM/4333 KB	'Blanket' emails sent from a Dorset Council Team address (rather than an individual) can be misleading and cause confusion to the recipient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence to be proofread prior sending to ensure it is accessible by the recipient • To sign emails off from a person, rather than from a generic team account • Will be covered in a refreshed 'DC Style Guide' released by Comms
COM/3963 KB	Assessment wasn't prioritised, despite client's depleting funds	1. We have identified a worker to handle enquiries relating to capital depletion, in order that people can be seen in a timely way when their funds are reaching £23,250.

Annual Complaints Report 2022-23

	<p>It is not clear whether our Operational Team or our Financial Team offered sufficient information about 12-week property disregard & Deferred Payment Agreements</p> <p>No updates were provided on progress of assessments, unless customer chased the team</p>	<p>2. We have also reminded both operation and finance staff of the need to provide clear information in relation to 12-week property disregard period and well as Deferred Payment Agreements.</p> <p>3. We have reminded staff of the importance of providing regular updates, to clients and their family to ensure that tasks are allocated until completed.</p>
COM 4125 DMc	<p>Delay and lack of continuity in allocating and supporting a social worker. Ineffective communication.</p>	<p>Review how to allocate and prioritise work effectively within the Team. Remind staff of importance of keeping people informed of progress.</p>
COM/3530 LW/KB	<p>There has been learning about the need to ensure everyone involved has the same understanding of how an individual's needs will be met and that the voice of family can inform this. This has also highlighted the need for good communication to manage the expectations on all sides about what can be achieved and roles and responsibilities.</p>	<p>Manager will ensure that this learning is cascaded to Dorset Council's Adult Social Care Teams. This will be achieved through the Joint Specialist and Locality Managers meetings by the end of April 2023.</p>

LGSCO Findings

Complaints for 2022-23 at Dorset Council were up 31% year on year but members should be heartened that of these 1838 complaints only 124 reached the Ombudsman, with 114 leading to a decision, (presumably 10 spurious). Of the 114 decisions only 36 were investigated and 26 of these upheld.

This is very similar to 2021-22s findings where 121 reached the Ombudsman, 32 investigated and 20 upheld. Considering the 31% increase in complaints overall, only a 2% increase in complaints finding the Ombudsman seems a good news story.

Dorset Council met the recommendations in 100% of these cases.

They breakdown as follow:

- Education/Children's - Of the 40 cases investigated – 17 upheld.
- Corporate Services - Of the 11 cases investigated - 2 upheld.
- **Adult Social Care - Of the 11 cases investigated - 4 upheld.**
- **Adult non social care (Housing) - Of the 7 cases investigated – 0 upheld.**
- Planning (Place) - Of the 26 cases investigated – 2 upheld.
- Highways (Place) - Of the 10 cases investigated – 0 upheld.
- Environment/Place - Of the 9 cases investigated – 1 upheld.

Of the 4 upheld cases only 1 resulted in a requirement for a financial remedy of £750:

Pay Mrs Y £750 to acknowledge the distress, time and trouble caused to her and her family by the failings in Mr X's care. This figure is a symbolic amount based on the Ombudsman's published Guidance on Remedies.

Annual Complaints Report 2022-23