









# 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

# 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

# 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



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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.

### 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

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Partially Justified 14% up from 10% last year

Not justified 79% down from 84%

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

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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

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;**

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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.

### 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
<b>COM/00000886</b>	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.
<b>COM/00001162</b>	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.

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<b>COM/00001192</b>	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.
<b>COM/00001212</b>	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.
<b>COM/00001269</b>	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.
<b>COM/00001272</b>	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.
<b>COM/00001310</b>	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.
<b>COM/00001320</b>	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
<b>COM/00001333</b>	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
<b>COM/00001383</b>	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



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<p><b>COM/00001362</b></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><b>COM/00001422</b></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><b>COM/00001440</b></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><b>COM/00001496</b></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>

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<b>COM/00001550</b>	<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>
<b>COM/00001695</b>	<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>
<b>COM/00001782</b>	<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>
<b>COM/00001085</b>	<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>
<b>COM/00001122</b>	<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>
<b>CIC (H)</b>	<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>
<b>CIC (LB)</b>	<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>

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	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.	
<b>COM/00001496</b>	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.
<b>Stage 2 MY</b>	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).

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

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

### **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.