









		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	
	Number of FORMAL complaints	544	747	772	2023/24 saw a slight increase in formal complaints (detailed overleaf).
	Number of INFORMAL complaints	862	1091	816	2023/24 saw a reduction in informal complaints (detailed overleaf).
	Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	20/35	26/114	33/117	In 2023/24 we received 117 approaches from the LGSCO. 33 complaints were upheld.
	Timescales (overdue)	18%	21%	18%	In 2023/24 18% of all complaints exceeded the deadline for response.
	% fully justified complaints	8%	9%	8%	2023/24 continued to see a low volume of complaints reported as fully justified.
	% part justified complaints	9%	11%	9%	2023/24 continued to see a low volume of complaints reported as partially justified.
	Compliments	380	537	569	We received 569 compliments in 2023/24
	Learnings	127	212	192	We gathered 192 learnings from complaints in 2023/24 (details overleaf).

Total Complaints Overview

1588 Complaints

2023/24

performance

2023/24

Numbers

Total Complaint Contacts – 1588

This is an 13% decrease from the 1838 received in 2022-23 but still the second highest number of complaints in Dorset Council's 5 year history. We are encouraged that the Complaints function is still easy to find, and the reduction on overall complaints points to the success we have had in promoting local resolution before complaining in the Place directorate.

The Complaints function is a learning mechanism for Dorset Council as well as an early warning system. This report highlights the areas of possible concern as well as the valuable organisational learning. However, we should be encouraged by the reduction in SEND (Childrens non Social Care) complaints

Directorate	2023-24	2022-23	%
Adult Social Care	117	143	-22%
Adult Non Social care	122	138	-13%
Childrens Social Care	139	140	+1%
Children s Non Social Care	248	309	-24%
Place	791	937	-18%
Corporate	171	168	+2%
Code of Conduct*	51	44	+16%
TOTALS	1588	1838	-13%

Formal Complaints 772

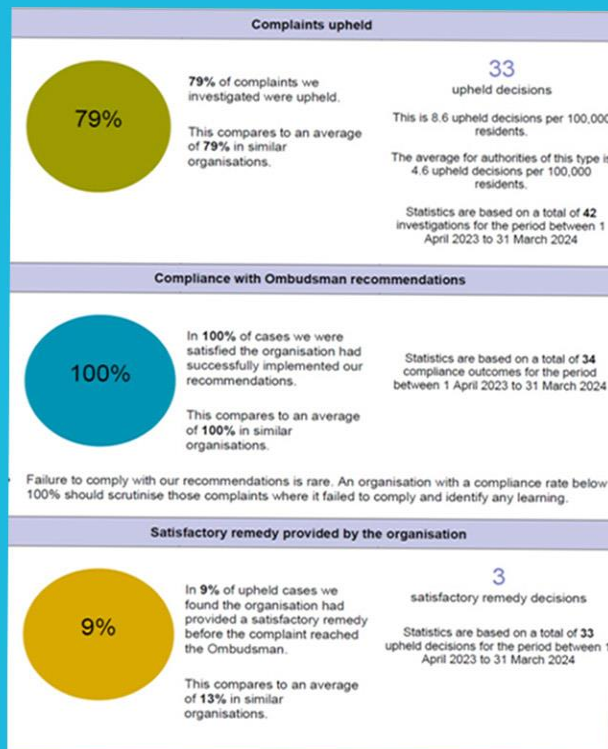
Out of the 1588 contacts, 772 of these were considered as formal complaints. The focus on early resolution continues to pay dividends for both council staff and those complaining but we need to ensure that we don't obstruct statutory processes due to the significantly increased demand.

The figures in the infographics demonstrate that the split between complaints that require formal resolution, and those that appear resolvable, is similar to the previous year.

Informal Complaints 816

Of the 1588 complaints received 2023-24 816 were considered as cases where resolution could be met without the undue process of the formal complaints route.

The Ombudsman's Handling Code (when they formally start using it later in the year) will limit informal resolution and we will expect complaint volumes to rise sharply as there is no 'Informal/Stage 0' option. We welcome the clarify and will still apply common sense, but through the complaints process



2023/24

The Ombudsman report that 79% of complaints they investigated were upheld. This is exactly the same in other organisations, but does show a slight increase on the 72% upheld the previous year both locally and (again) as an average across comparable authorities.

However, this only tells a small part of the story.

The Complaints Team received and managed 1659 complaints in 2023-24 which is the second highest number since Dorset Council was formed. Councillors and Members should be heartened that of these 1659 complaints only 117 (7%) reached the Ombudsman at all, which is actually a reduction from the 124 the previous year. This demonstrates that the majority of the time Dorset Council get it right first time, and have a positive culture around complaints, learnings and actions

Of the 117 approaches only 42 were investigated and 33 of these upheld. The key observation from the Ombudsman's figures are that we are missing an opportunity to resolve upheld complaints in line with their financial remedies guidance. The Corporate Complaints Team provide remedies guidance to managers as part of the process, and the expectation is we recognise this if we are upholding complaints. Essentially Dorset Council want to do the Ombudsman's job for them in terms of upheld complaint investigations and as a Council we only achieving this on a small number of cases. This is a point to improve on as an authority.

These were the success stories who pre-empted the Ombudsman successfully

Category	Reference	Decision	Decision Reason
Education & Childrens Services	2 3017734	Upheld	Injustice remedied during LGO consideration
Highways & Transport	2005119	Upheld	Injustice remedied during organisations complaint processes
Planning & Development	22010953	Upheld	Injustice remedied during organisations complaint processes

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

Overall the Ombudsman's involvement breaks down as follow:

Category	LGSCO Approaches	Investigated	Upheld	Upheld Previous Year
Adult Care Services	16	8	7	4
Benefits & Tax	3	0	0	0
Corporate & Other Services	7	0	0	0
Education & Childrens Services	45	24	21	17
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	12	3	0	1
Highways & Transport	10	2	2	0
Housing	7	0	0	0
Planning & Development	26	5	3	2

So as in 2022-23, SEND related complaints dominate the Ombudsman's involvement. This again is largely due to children out of education in Dorset and a lack of available, suitable placements. This is a national issue, but we have taken steps to improve communication and be more available before matters escalate to complaints.

Strictly speaking Dorset Council financial remedies in 2023-24 resulting in a total cost of £71,608.96 which is a tremendously large increase on 2022-23 where Ombudsman findings totalled £40,630 and 42,300 in 2021-22.

This breaks down as £69,608.96 in relation to SEND and children out of education, and £2000 for Adult Social Care. However, one of the SEND cases was obstructed by the complainant as they refused payment, favouring a legal route. This has yet to come to fruition and the Ombudsman closed the case in the knowledge that the payment was never made. So in terms of actual payments made, Dorset Council paid £40,408.96, with £38,408.96 of that related to SEND matters

Outside of Children's Services, (as above) the only other payments totalled £2000 across 6 Adult Social Care cases. Place with the largest number of complaints as a directorate, come out of the year very well indeed and should be pleased with the Ombudsman's report finding fault in only 5 cases:

Total Complaints Overview

2023/24

2023/24

Highways & Transport - 22007648

We found fault on Mr J's complaint about the Council's decision to replace street lights near his home. It failed to show it properly considered the location's zone under its policy. It did not consider the impact of the replacement lights or assess their impact after installation. It refused to carry out night visits during summer months without considering possible exceptions.

The Council agreed to ensure recorded and reasoned future decisions about street lighting replacement properly consider area zoning. The Council agreed to ensure impact assessments of replacement LEDs for old sodium bulbs in old lanterns are carried out and considered before and after installation. The Council agreed to remind relevant officers of the need to provide meter readings when these are referred to in a response to our enquiries. The Council agreed to review the ability to exercise discretion to carry out night visits during the summer months, how this might be implemented, and provide officer guidance on it.

Highways & Transport - 23005119

We will not investigate this complaint about the Council's failure to tell a school about a road closure due to roadworks.

The Council has acknowledged failings in its procedure for scheduled roadworks. It has apologised to the Headteacher and confirmed the lessons it has learned from the incident.

We will not investigate Mr X's complaint because the Council has acknowledged its errors and apologised to Mr X. It has investigated the incident and identified its failings and what should be done to ensure the same errors do not reoccur. We consider this to be a suitable remedy to the complaint. We do not consider further investigation will lead to a different outcome.

Planning & Development – 22010953

We will not investigate this complaint about the Council's decision to grant planning permission to correct a breach of planning control. Also it is too late to consider complaints about decisions to grant planning permission made more than four years ago. Finally, we are satisfied that an apology for the delay in updating the complainant of the progress of a planning enforcement investigation is a suitable remedy for this part of the complaint.

We will not investigate Miss X's complaint because:

- we will not exercise discretion and investigate complaints about planning permission granted more than a year ago as there is no good reason to do so
- there is no evidence of fault in the way the Council considered the retrospective planning application to keep the increased parking area; and the Council has apologised for the failure to update her on the progress of its planning enforcement investigation. We consider this to be a suitable remedy to this part of the complaint.

Planning & Development – 22016217

Mr B says the Council failed to consider the impact a development would have on him and failed to consider his objections.

The Council failed to properly consider the impact the development would have on Mr B's solar panels and kitchen and failed to link all his objections to the planning record. That likely did not affect the decision to approve the application

The Council will remind

planning officers of the need to ensure all objections are uploaded to the online record for the planning application and considered in the report for the application

Planning & Development – 23005667

complained the Council lost planning control of a site on land next to their home that affects an area of outstanding natural beauty. Based on the information seen so far, there was fault for which the Council should apologise for the disappointment and frustration it caused to X.

We know that the Council intended to take enforcement action but did not do so. It seems likely its enforcement officer had assumed the Planning Inspectorate decision was an appeal to an enforcement notice. However, it was an appeal on a refusal of planning permission and no enforcement notice had been served. Because the Council did not serve its notice in time, The Council agreed to continue its review of its planning enforcement service and the drafting of its new enforcement policy so that it is ready to present to the first available meeting of the relevant scrutiny committee following the elections in May 2024. The review will include work practices and procedures, staffing levels and other resources necessary for the Council to deliver its planning enforcement service.

The Childrens and Adults payments feature in the Appendices

Total Complaints Overview

2023/24

2023/24

Councillor Code of Conduct

The Corporate Team have been delegated the management of the Code of Conduct Complaints and report an 8% increase. This table offers a breakdown of Dorset Council, and Parish & Town Council complaints and captures how few have real substance

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Code of Conduct Complaints	60	47	51
Dorset Councillor Conduct Complaints	10	10	17
Number of Councillors	82	82	82
% of Councillors subject to Complaint	12%	12%	21%
Number Investigated	0	1	1
Number Upheld*	0	0	1
Parish & Town Councillor Conduct Complaints	50	37	34
Number of Councillors	1400	1400	1400
% of Councillors subject to Complaint	4%	3%	2%
Number Investigated	3	6	1
Number Upheld*	0	0	0

Timescales – 17% Overdue

This is encouraging as 18% were overdue the previous year. This still demonstrates the impacts of the large numbers coming into the corporate complaints team and the challenges for team managers in helping us promote timely responses. The improvement is proportionate to the slight reduction in numbers.

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 needed to investigate it.

Justifications – 9% fully 11% partially

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

Compliments – 568

We are pleased to report 568 compliments across the directorates compared to 520 the previous year. This is something for Dorset Council to celebrate and hopefully presents a more balanced report on service perceptions. It is still clear that people were more likely to voice complaints, than compliment a job well done. These split into directorates as follows: Place 310, Childrens 111, Adults 103, Corporate 44

Learnings - 196

We are pleased to report 196 learnings from complaints in 2023-24 which is an excellent return. Especially as the learnings are now so measurable and present genuine action plans that close loops in the service areas. This is a similar number to 2022-24 but achieved over a fewer number of complaints, so really impressive as it demonstrates commitment to providing genuine value from peoples complaints to Dorset Council

Total Complaints Overview

2023/24

2023/24

Background

The purpose of this report is to highlight key issues from the Annual Report for Complaints 2023/24. 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 – 2023-24 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

2023/24

2023/24

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
	Number of FORMAL complaints	168	209	201	194	772
	Number of INFORMAL complaints	247	219	160	190	816
	Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	7/19	15/27	7/27	6/36	33/117
	Timescales (overdue)	18%	18%	15%	19%	18%
	% fully justified complaints	10%	7%	8%	6%	8%
	% part justified complaints	10%	10%	9%	8%	9%
	Compliments	131	126	156	156	569
	Learnings	56	58	26	52	192

Total Quarterly Complaints Overview









Total Complaints 23/24 = 1588

2023/24

performance

dorsetcomplaints

2023/24









		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
	Number of FORMAL complaints	52	82	70	65	269
	Number of INFORMAL complaints	168	154	102	98	522
	Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	0/12	3/10	2/11	0/10	5/43
	Timescales (overdue)	15%	18%	22%	17%	18%
	% fully justified complaints	7%	7%	8%	9%	8%
	% part justified complaints	9%	10%	9%	7%	9%
	Compliments	75	64	86	85	310
	Learnings	18	13	18	15	64

Place complaints
 Total complaints = 791
 2023/24

performance

dorsetcomplaints

2023/24

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
	Number of FORMAL complaints	15	20	25	24	84
	Number of INFORMAL complaints	25	12	16	34	87
	Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	0/4	0/2	0/2	0/2	0/10
	Timescales (overdue)	8%	7%	8%	20%	11%
	% fully justified complaints	5%	6%	10%	0%	5%
	% part justified complaints	15%	12%	10%	8%	11%
	Compliments	14	13	7	10	44
	Learnings	1	2	1	9	13









Corporate Complaints
Total Complaints = 171

2023/24

performance

dorsetcomplaints

2023/24

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
	Number of FORMAL complaints	19	23	18	19	79
	Number of INFORMAL complaints	8	10	6	19	43
	Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	0/4	0/1	0/0	0/2	0/7
	Timescales (overdue)	15%	24%	19%	21%	20%
	% fully justified complaints	10%	3%	4%	0%	4%
	% part justified complaints	3%	6%	13%	12%	9%
	Compliments	1	2	1	2	6
	Learnings	3	5	0	5	13

People - Adults non social care complaints









Total Complaints = 122

2023/24

performance

dorsetcomplaints

2023/24

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
	Number of FORMAL complaints	14	20	31	22	87
	Number of INFORMAL complaints	10	7	5	8	30
	Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	3/4	2/3	1/5	2/5	7/16
	Timescales (overdue)	36%	22%	21%	29%	27%
	% fully justified complaints	10%	6%	0%	8%	6%
	% part justified complaints	3%	9%	17%	8%	9%
	Compliments	16	22	29	30	97
	Learnings	6	0	3	7	16









People - Adults- social are
Total complaints = 117

2023/24

performance

dorsetcomplaints

2023/24

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
	Number of FORMAL complaints	53	43	48	41	185
	Number of INFORMAL complaints	18	15	15	15	63
	Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	4/5	9/10	4/9	4/17	20/40
	Timescales (overdue)	18%	14%	10%	14%	14%
	% fully justified complaints	23%	17%	6%	8%	14%
	% part justified complaints	20%	17%	16%	4%	14%
	Compliments	14	12	19	14	59
	Learnings	20	27	3	8	58









People - Children - non social care
Total Complaints = 248

2023/24

performance

dorsetcomplaints

2023/24

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
	Number of FORMAL complaints	15	21	9	20	65
	Number of INFORMAL complaints	14	21	16	23	74
	Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	0/0	1/1	0/0	0/0	1/1
	Timescales (overdue)	18%	14%	10%	14%	14%
	% fully justified complaints	8%	7%	20%	8%	11%
	% part justified complaints	16%	7%	16%	16%	14%
	Compliments	11	13	14	15	53
	Learnings	8	14	1	8	31

People - Children - social care
Total complaints = 139

2023/24

performance

Annual Complaints Report 2023-24

Appendices

Children's Service Statutory Reporting Requirements

Although the overall numbers for Childrens Complaints are similar year on year, this report will highlight the increase in formal Stage 1 complaints for Social Care, the timeliness of the responses and the trend in cases escalating.

Most complaints received are from parents (some estranged) and not necessarily representing the voice or best interest of the child. However, more of this issues raised 2023-24 have qualified for the statutory process and escalation route to stage 2 and 3. The majority of the Stage 2 escalations have been around CWAD and often seek a level of financial remedy which is not always possible in this process

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

Happily this report will also offer assurances that SEND related complaints were beginning to fall during the year

Children's Social Care	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22
Representations	74	106	91
Stage 1	64	34	29
Stage 2	5	1	1
Stage 3	1	0	0
LGSCO approaches	1 with 1 upheld (passed back to Council)	5 with 1 upheld	6 with 1 upheld
Children's Whole Authority	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22
Representations	63	129	75
Formal Complaint	182	180	98
LGSCO approaches	24 with 21 upheld	35 with 16 upheld	13 with 6 upheld

5 cases were accepted at Stage 2 detailed below. This is up from just 1 in 2022-23 and we are looking more closely at why the stage 1 investigations are failing to resolve the complaints straight away

CASE no	Team locality	Brief Subject	Outcome Upheld/ Part/Not	Total cost of IO	Total cost of IP	Additional cost
COM/4822	CWAD	For a period of 8 months, prior to child being taken into care, the family had been struggling. No support was offered, or action taken by Children's Services to try and keep child in his home environment.	Partially Upheld	£3367.20	£2,117.74	None

Annual Complaints Report 2023-24

COM/3262	CWAD	The level of service and resourcing provided by Dorset Council is not sufficient to meet the assessed needs of complainant's son.	Upheld	£3,780	£1,207.50	None
COM/4613	CWAD	Mother has not had clear confirmation in writing from Dorset Council of a permanent housing arrangement that meets daughter's needs	Upheld	£1,462.90	£459.50	None
COM/4783	North	Mother believes that the social work practice that she has experienced as a parent under child in need has been poor and she has raised complaints that she feels have not been dealt with appropriately.	Withdrawn at Stg3	Withdrawn at Stg3	Withdrawn at Stg3	Withdrawn at Stg3
COM/3472	Chesil	Alleged errors in report, inappropriate comments from Social Worker and lack of contact with late father who was in prison.	Stage 2	Not yet known	Not yet known	Not yet known
TOTALS				£8,610.10	£3,784.74	£0
OVERALL COST						£12,394.84

Local Government Ombudsman (LGSCO)

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

Only 1 Social Care Case was presented to the Ombudsman that they queried with Dorset Council. After enquiry, they passed the case back to Dorset Council for local process escalation. This was classed as upheld, albeit still under investigation at Stage 2

Non Social Care

Of the 33 UPHELD cases across Dorset Council in total, 21 of 33 were in Childrens Services and 20 relating to SEND matters and children out of education. The other cases were in Adults (7) and 5 in Place

The findings are outlined below

Annual Complaints Report 2023-24

Reference And Remedy	Complaint in Brief	Service improvement recommendations
22006903 £500	Miss X complained that the Council failed to provide her son Y, with education set on his EHCP, and for failing to provide education when he was out of school. The issue of a lack of access to education prior to July 2021 is out of time and there are no good reasons to exercise discretion and investigate	Ensure relevant staff are appropriately trained with respect to the EHCP process. The Council should ensure staff are aware of the statutory timescales and that changeover of staff does not impact on process.
22007794 £31,200+ Rolling Cost (Unpaid as Mr M challenging via solicitor)	Mr X complained the Council failed to make suitable alternative educational provision or special educational needs provision for his sons, carry out annual reviews of their Education, Health and Care Plans, or respond to his requests for support and his complaints. We have found fault by the Council causing injustice	I have concluded my investigation having made a finding of fault. The issue of a lack of access to education prior to July 2021 is out of time and there are no good reasons to exercise discretion and investigate. Further. we also do not have jurisdiction to investigate the failure to provide said education post the EHCP issued in July 2021. This is because Miss X acquired a right of appeal against the Council's EHCP which she later exercised. There is however fault in the time taken for the Council to issue Y's EHCP after September 2022, and the Council has further acknowledged it has not delivered SALT sessions to Y. The Council have agreed to my recommendations.
22007859 £2000	Miss X complained the Council failed to provide her son, C, with suitable alternative education when he was unable to attend school. Miss X said this caused him to miss out on his education and has caused distress, frustration, and financial difficulties for the family.	33. By 29 June 2023 the Council will: · Apologise to Miss X for the distress caused. · Pay Miss X £1700 for the benefit of C's education (this has been worked out at £400 a month from January 2022 until May 2022 taking into account school holidays). Pay Miss X £300 for the distress and frustration caused. 34. The Council should provide us with evidence it has complied with the above actions.

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<p>22009300 £2200</p>	<p>Miss X complained about the way the Council handled educational provision for her son (B), her complaints, and her information. She said this caused her and B unnecessary distress, frustration and uncertainty, and the loss of education and social interaction with peers impacted on B.</p>	<p>The Council will remind staff of the Council's legal duties to provide alternative educational provision when a child is out of school for health reasons. The Council should consider sharing a copy of our focus report ("Out of school, out of sight? Ensuring children out of school get a good education") and our final decision with staff. The Council will remind all staff, including directors, that when they receive any communication which is or could be a complaint, they must pass it to the complaints team and/or relevant department.</p>
<p>22009845 £150</p>	<p>Miss B complained about the Council's handling of her concerns for her grandchild's welfare whilst in her son's care. The Council agreed it was at fault for failing to acknowledge and respond to her calls and it wrongly shared information about her contacts with his mother. We found it also failed to apologise as promised</p>	<p>The Council will remind relevant social care staff of its Recording Policy and Guidelines which sets out when information received from anonymous non-professionals should not be shared with children and parents. This would include sharing information about whether a person have reported concerns and the number of calls they have made. The Council will remind its social care staff to acknowledge and respond to contacts from non-professionals regarding concern about a child as set out in the Council's Recording Policy and Guidelines, or as agreed with the individual.</p>
<p>22011440 £3800</p>	<p>Ms X complains the Council failed to issue an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan for her child, B, within the statutory timeframe. She also complains the Council failed to provide B with suitable alternative education provision and communicated poorly. We have found the Council at fault for the delay in issuing a final EHC Plan. We have also found the Council at fault for failing to arrange suitable alternative provision for B for periods during the 2020/2021 and 2021/22 academic years.</p>	<p>The Council will remind officers of its duty, under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996, to provide provision or suitable education for children of compulsory age who cannot attend school, because of exclusion, medical reasons, or otherwise. The Council will remind officers of the Department for Education's statutory guidance, which says the Council should consider liaising with medical professionals, such as the child's GP, in cases where medical evidence is not readily available. The Council will remind officers of the importance of keeping proper, suitable records, and refer officers to the Ombudsman's Principles of Good Administrative Practice.</p>
<p>22013476 £1400</p>	<p>Ms X complains her child has had no education since December 2021 as a post- 16 college place did not work out. Ms X says that this has caused her and her child's mental health to decline.</p>	<p>The Council should pay Ms X £1400 within one month of the date of the decision on this complaint. The Council should provide us with evidence it has complied with the above actions.</p>
<p>22015157 £1600</p>	<p>Mrs X complained that the Council failed to provide alternative educational provision for her son, and</p>	<p>We find the Council at fault which caused injustice. The Council has agreed to apologise and make a payment to remedy the injustice.</p>

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	communicated poorly with her	
22015375 £100	Mr X complains the Council failed to safeguard his child from malicious referrals and threatened to take action against him in a meeting if he could not safeguard his child	The Council has agreed to remind staff that where the Council is the lead agency for a child, it should be ensuring there is a record of the meeting.
22015727 £5954	Miss Y complains the Council failed in its duty to provide a full-time education to her son, D, when they moved into its area last year. Although the Council has put some alternative provision in place, Miss Y says this is part time and not sufficient for D.	The Council will improve the way it makes decisions about requests for alternative provision. This could be in the form of staff training or a briefing paper. As part of this, the Council will draw officers' attention to the Section 19 duties, accompanying statutory guidance and the LGSCO's focus report 'Out of School, Out of Sight?'
22016569 £600	Mrs A complained about the Council's failure to provide her son, S, with suitable education after he stopped attending school in October 2022	The Council agreed to share this decision with its SEN officers and emphasise the importance of keeping up the service standards for communications and the importance of the Council acting on its section 19 duties.
22016709 £1800	The Council took too long to issue the draft and final education, health, and care plans (EHC plans). It could not get an assessment from an educational psychologist. Throughout this period of delay, the provision set out in the existing EHC plan was not always in place, and the Council took too long to arrange alternative provision to support Mrs B's son	Share this decision with the relevant staff.
23001076 £4500	Mrs X complains the Council failed to provide the educational provision as set out in her son, Y's, EHCP. We have concluded our investigation having made a finding of fault. After Y stopped attending School A in November 2022, the Council failed to deliver the provision in Y's EHCP, nor did it appropriately consider its section 19 duty	Review its out of school procedures to ensure it meets its duties to secure alternative provision when its section 19 duty applies. The Council should also review its EHCP annual review procedure to ensure it follows the statutory process. The Council should inform the Ombudsman of the outcome of its review.

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<p>23001176 £400</p>	<p>Miss X complained the Council failed to issue an amended final Education, Health and Care plan for her daughter Y, in line with the statutory timescales before her transition to high school, and delayed her right of appeal.</p>	<p>The Council will provide training for all staff involved in special educational needs on its obligations under the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities code of practice, to include: the statutory guidelines to issue a final Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan by 15 February in years where a child is due to transition to secondary school; how it explains the EHC plan and review process to parents and ensures staff clearly explain review timelines in transition years; and the difference between the EHC plan review deadline and the school admissions deadline for secondary school placements.</p>
<p>23001987 None</p>	<p>Mrs X complained that the Council delayed arranging a suitable school placement for her child and communicated poorly with her. Mrs X said this caused unnecessary and avoidable distress and frustration, and caused her child stress and anxiety. We find the Council at fault for communicating poorly.</p>	<p>In its complaint response, the Council explained that it did not accept the specialist setting's offer of a place for C because it felt a mainstream school could meet C's needs. It said it was gathering more information about C's needs and would bring C's case back to the panel to reconsider the request for a specialist setting. The Council agreed that it had communicated poorly with Mrs X. The Council apologised for this.</p>
<p>23004838 £8900</p>	<p>Mrs Y complained the Council failed to provide her child, Z, with a suitable education when they were unable to attend school, review their Education Health and Care Plan and communicate properly with her. We have found fault by the Council in failing to make alternative provision for Z, complete a phase transfer review within the required timescale and communicate properly with Mrs Y, causing injustice.</p>	<p>The Council has agreed to review its procedures for ensuring officers: consider the Council's section19 duty at appropriate stages; make decisions about this duty promptly; properly record the reasons for their decisions; and communicate decisions to parents and carers; and report to us on the outcome of the review and any changes made.</p>

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<p>23009049 £850</p>	<p>Miss X complained about the Council's failure to issue her son's Education, Health and Care Plan within statutory timescales. The Council was at fault because it took too long to issue the plan following an annual review. We have also found the Council at fault for not communicating with Miss X effectively</p>	<p>As the Council proposed to amend Y's EHC Plan, it should have sent out details of the proposed amendments within 4 weeks of the annual review meeting and the final amended plan within 8 weeks of the proposed amendments. Therefore, the Council should have finalised Y's EHC Plan by 24 April 2023. However, the Council issued Y's final EHC Plan on 7 August 2023. This was fault and amounted to a delay of 15 weeks in producing a final EHC Plan. The Council says the delay in finalising the EHC Plan was the reason why it did not consult with placements sooner. This is a further injustice to Miss X and to Y.</p>
<p>23009232 £250</p>	<p>Mr X complained the Council proposed an inadequate and inappropriate Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plan for his child. He also complained the Council was incompetent and unprofessional in its handling of further drafts. We found fault with the Council for delaying production of the EHC Plan.</p>	<p>This delay of seven months was fault. There are various reasons for this delay, such as revisions being needed to the Draft EHC Plans and delays in getting information, such as from the school. However, this does not mitigate the fault of the Council in failing to meet the statutory timescales.</p> <p>37. These delays have caused a delay in Mr X being able to engage his appeal rights to the tribunal. In addition, the delays have caused Mr X inconvenience, stress and frustration.</p> <p>38. While this has impacted Mr X, this has not caused an injustice to Y. This is because the educational provision outlined in Y's 2019 EHC Plan is comparable to the provision detailed in the 2023 EHC Plan. What has changed between the two EHC Plans is the outcomes. Since Y continued to receive the same level of support he would have been entitled to, this has not put Y to a disadvantage.</p> <p>39. The Council was also at fault for putting incorrect information and making errors in Y's Draft EHC Plans. Mr X has pointed to numerous typographical errors, misinformation and referring to his child by the incorrect name. While the Council has corrected these errors when it produced the Final EHC Plan, these errors will have added to Mr X's inconvenience and frustration.</p>

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23009368 £1754.96	Ms X complained the Council wrongly refused her application for home to school transport for her child Y to the school named in Y's Education, Health and Care Plan.	The Council will provide training/updated guidance to all relevant staff (Special Educational Needs and Disability and transport teams) on how to apply the Dudley test for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans and the implications of only naming one school, without conditions, in an Education, Health and Care Plan.
23017734 None	Miss X, says the Council failed to properly reply to her children services' complaint.	Progressed to Stage 2
21017726 £1650	Mrs X complained the Council delayed issuing her son's Education, Health and Care plan and it failed to secure suitable alternative provision while it sourced a suitable school place for him	The Council acknowledged the delay in issuing the Education Health and Care plan. We found fault in the alternative provision the Council secured. The Council has agreed to apologise to Mrs X and make a payment in recognition of the injustice caused by the faults

Total = £69,608.96 (£31,200+ rolling unclaimed)

Which customer groups made the complaints;

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

Young Person	5
Grandparent	3
Group	1
Individual	2
Parent	36
Advocate	2
Customer	15
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	3%
Finance	0%
Policy - Disagreement with Decision	18%

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Service Provision - Delay	0%
Professional Practice/Quality of Service	65%
Misconduct	5%
Other	2%

The outcome of complaints;

Of the complaints received for Children's Social Care in 2023-24 only 11% were considered Fully Justified by operational managers shows there is some level of justification as outlined below:

Fully Justified	11% up from 7% last year
Partially Justified	14% the same as last year
Not justified	75% down from 79% last year

In 2023-24 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. However, I have assurances through the work of the Corporate Parenting Board Sub Committee that we are hearing the voices loud and clear, and acting before things escalation unduly to formal complaints.

Year	Number of Complaints
Children in Care 2023-24	3
Children in Care 2022-23	10
Children in Care 2021-22	8
Children in Care 2020-21	15
Children in Care 2019-20	10

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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 2023-24 we have identified just the 3 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.

Children in Care (CIC)

In Q1 there were no CIC complaints, but 2 from last year are still with us as dialogue continues with advocacy around contact with a sibling, and the death of a parent in custody. Neither could be pursued through the complaints process, although 1 remains on our books and has had the benefit of an Investigating Officers views

In Q2 there were 2 CIC complaints, CW Fostering & housing, and AG relating to carehome and loss of money

In Q3 there was just 1 CIC complaint regarding incidents at a property and notice to leave. This was managed informally in the service without advocacy

In Q4 there were no complaints from CIC or advocacy

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	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22
0-20 Working Days	86%	85%	77%
20+ days	14%	15%	23%

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

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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, within statutory timescales. The Complaints Team Manager will be attending meetings to advise and update

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 in QAudits and closing loop with service managers. Identifying trends early

Examples of learning from Complaints:

We have collected 31 really good quality and robust organisational learnings in 23-24, up from 28 last year which is really pleasing

Case ID	What we have learned from Complaints	What we have done as a result to improve practice
COM 4177 Chesil (DMc)	Ensure correct procedures are followed by social workers when seeking parental consent for any child and family assessments	Staff reminded via either email or Team meeting
COM/4636 (LW)		Social Worker recognises that four representatives from Dorset Council was not proportionate in a core group meeting will ensure this is considered in future.
COM/4714 (BL) ChAD	Documentation should have been updated and readily available to the duty workers and paperwork should have been provided Family felt pressurised into keeping the child and guilty for not keeping him longer. Both officers have reflected on why they may have portrayed themselves as frustrated due to the nature of the day	JUSTIFIED Managers from ChAD will be discussing this with Social Workers in the Locality Teams to ensure that files are regularly kept up to date as this paramount for emergency situations and to keep the child, foster carers and their families safe. Both officers have reflected on why they may have portrayed themselves as frustrated due to the nature of the day. This will be discussed and monitored in future supervisions with both workers.
COM/3472 Purbeck C SC (LW)	Manager identified learning for the organisation is the use of language, the phrase 'ticking boxes'.	General discussion held about complaints / communication at Team Meeting on 01.06.23.

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<p>COM/4816 + COM/4415 (linked) Fostering/CSC DMC/BL</p>		<p>JUSTIFIED Confirmation that incorrect car seat is no longer in use and removed from foster carer by social worker Review of all car seats has taken place - those that were inappropriate or incorrect have been removed and replaced All KiT workers have received briefing to confirm, remind and reinforce legal requirements in the safe transport of children Regular supervision of social workers taking place and HoS has requested that type of car seat is recorded within children's notes. All new team members will have induction which will include safety awareness Changes have been made and implemented as a direct result of this complaint</p>
<p>COM/4886 KBO</p>	<p>Child/young person should be returned to their parent/carer/ home address following a Social Work visit, unless alternative arrangement has been agreed with parent/carer.</p>	<p>Justified - Social Worker involved has reflected on the incident (with Team Manager oversight) to inform and improve future working practice.</p>
<p>COM/4876 C SC (NORTH) (LW)</p>	<p>Complainant did not receive the conference report in a timely way was justified. Manager to talk to mother to confirm any amendments she wishes to make to the information provided in previous assessments.</p>	<p>Manager stated they have learnt from this and will ensure complainant is in receipt of the report, ahead of the conference in October, within timescales. Manager to ensure that any comments made by mother are included in the children's chronology.</p>
<p>COM/4853 C SC (DORCHESTER AND WEST) (LW)</p>	<p>Redacting third party information in assessments where these are shared with different family members and understanding the impact that sharing very limited details can have on a family. The importance of young parents who are involved in private family law proceedings to have an advocate to support them</p>	<p>This has been discussed with the social worker involved. Manager has discussed with complainant and her daughter, creating a case study based on the daughter's experiences to share with the Court and CAFCASS so that this can be considered for other young people in the same situation.</p>
<p>COM5120 NORTH CSC INF REPS</p>	<p>SW should not enter property without express consent given</p>	<p>JUSTIFIED SW has reflected on actions and agrees this was inappropriate at the time SW will now call on mobile if no answer at door</p>
<p>COM 5084 NORTH DORSET CSC STAGE 1</p>	<p>Not everything was explained to the complainant</p>	<p>Addressed in individual supervision session Review of this within Children and Advice Service</p>

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	Complainant not supported by Children's Services throughout the process	
COM/5088 CWAD Stage 1	Unhappy with outcome of CIN assessment & Social Worker's involvement in the case	Service Manager is mindful of the need to work in partnership and harmony with the family, so whilst no fault has been found, they will provide a new worker
COM/5542 CIC Stage 1	It was not acceptable for CIC to move with belongings in black bags.	This has been raised with the whole team and apology given with assurance that suitcases will be provided in the future. Work is being carried out with Housing to raise the profile of joint strategy.
COM/5392 CSC EAST LOCAL Stage 1	Investigation has concluded that family have not received the standard of service that they should have and that on this occasion Dorset Council have not provided adequate help or support.	There are a number of learning points that Dorset will take from this complaint: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that children and parents have access to good quality support and help when there is domestic abuse within a household. • Ensuring that all children and parents are signposted to appropriate bereavement services. • Ensuring that children's records are updated and all information that is shared by parents is saved to children's records.
COM/4613 C SC – STAGE 2 CWAD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complainant should be provided with clear confirmation in writing from Dorset Council Housing Solutions of their intention to provide a permanent housing arrangement that meets her child's needs. • To strengthen closer working relationships between Housing, Advice, Housing Solutions and Children's Services, they may wish to consider regular monthly meetings to review the current circumstances. • To strengthen a closer working relationship with complainant, Children's Services to consider more frequent Child in Need meetings to ensure that all professionals and complainant are kept fully up to date with any change in circumstances to 	<p>Housing Solutions has already written to S in line with this recommendation.</p> <p>The social work team and relevant colleagues in Housing met on Monday 7 August and will meet monthly thereafter. Manager from Housing Solutions agreed that complainant would be updated regularly.</p> <p>Eight-weekly Child in Need meetings have been arranged, to which complainant will be invited. Likewise, four-weekly Child in Need visits to child will be arranged. The focus of the Child in Need</p>

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	ensure that her daughter's needs are appropriately met.	planning will be on ensuring that complainant's child is well cared for and her needs prioritised
COM/5127 (LC)	Parent was unhappy about a statement made in the 'Manager's Comment' field of the minutes for an Early Help Team Around the Family (TAF) Meeting. The impact of the statement, shared with the ex-partner, has been to undermine and complicate the relationship with the ex-partner and that it has led to a break in the contact with the children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with our digital team to remove the statement in relation to Domestic Abuse from the children's record. • Write to the ex partner to inform her of the error, acknowledge what has happened, and provide an apology to her for any impact this misinformation created. • Contact the other attendees of the TAF meeting to make them aware that the information provided was incorrect. • Formally advise our Data Protection Team of the error. <p>There is wider learning for us as a Service. We need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how we record sufficient relevant information on a child's record when there is a third party named. • Reflect upon the way that we record the rationale for our decisions to ensure that it remains robust, but with an awareness that it will be shared with parents. • Consider changing the way wording is imported from one part of a case record to another to allow for editing / changing by Locality managers where appropriate. • Question more rapidly and robustly when factual challenges are raised by parents about information we hold.
COM/5624 C SC Stage 1 (KBO)	Parent was unhappy with Social Worker's approach and how this left her feeling.	Follow-up emails will be sent after visits, bullet pointing what was discussed and any agreed actions to help improve the communication between parent and social worker.
COM/5542 C SC Stage 1 (LW)	<p>Care leaver not feeling listened too.</p> <p>Lack of appropriate accommodation.</p> <p>Clothing went missing during move due to lack of suitcases.</p> <p>Inappropriate sharing of personal information.</p>	<p>A learning event has been held with the team around these issues for this young person and others.</p> <p>Discussion to be had with Service Manager regarding sharing of information.</p>
COM/5513 C – INFORMAL (LW)	<p>No response from team to emails.</p> <p>\Promised once a month call did not take place with social worker</p>	<p>Manager has addressed this within the team and given updated advice and training on the importance of correspondence.</p> <p>.</p>

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		Manager has addressed this with the previous worker explaining the impact on complainant. The new worker is aware that agreed calls should take place. This learning was also part of the advice and training as addressed in the above point.
COM/5213 SEN (LC)	Parenting assessment was not sent to parent, who disagreed with some of its contents.	A social worker has visited the family to reassess the current situation and see what support Children's Services can offer.
COM/5154	Parent has not been routinely invited to CIC reviews.	Parent is to be invited to future reviews.
	This was a complaint made by a grandmother who felt that their daughter had been asked for information about her as part of a court ordered psychological assessment. Information about psychological assessments and what's involved being available to parents would be helpful.	Team manager to talk to the team about information being available to parents explaining the process of a court ordered psychological assessment helpful information can be found here: Psychological assessment (of an adult) - Family Rights Group (frg.org.uk)
COM/1855 (KR)	Concerns raised by grandparent regarding the lack of sibling contact and the siblings being separated in foster care.	Regular monthly sibling contact has been arranged and appropriate facetime contact in between is being considered.
COM/5358 (LC)	Data Breach: The Business support team undertake Box phish training. So unfortunately, this was human error with an email done in a rush. Learning is useful as it is a reminder to not fire off 'quick' emails (which this was) and take time to pause before sending. Fortunately, the impact of the data breach was low, but it has sent a warning to all of us to be ever more cautious and double check we have bcc'd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would like to know if it is possible to have a delay send on all our emails to give us at least 30 secs to stop an email if we know we have not bcc'd. • Ensure our whole team can learn about the potential consequences of such data breaches. • I have also suggested to Business support that it would be good to try and limit the number of emails we send out.
COM/4546 SEN (LW)	Improve the way SEN Team makes decisions about requests for alternative provision in the form of staff training or a briefing paper. As part of this, the Council will draw officers' attention to the Section 19 duties, accompanying statutory guidance and the LGSCO's focus report ' Out of School, Out of Sight? '	Manager has carried out this staff training and has arranged for presentation of the training to those who were on leave / out of the office.
COM/5963 CSC Business Support (LW/BL)		There is some learning that could have prevented the two further taxis. Had the service had a conversation with the taxi company in August 2023, in addition to checking that the bookings had been cancelled, the mistake on the part of the taxi company would have been identified earlier.

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		This learning will be shared with the KIT service to help prevent a re-occurrence. It is noted that the taxi company have sent their apologies for their error, and I would again extend my apologies for the distress you have experienced as a consequence of this error
COM/6084 C SC (LW)	There was a gap where children were not seen by a social worker, due to extremely urgent issues arising with another service user.	Manager has reminded the social worker of the importance of maintaining fortnightly visits.
COM 6230 C SC (DMc)	PA shared information with other professionals Minimal support available with supported accommodation	Staff reminded that they need to be clear what consent is given and no confusion Significant changes made to the level of support offered to their care leavers. Survey commissioned for all care leavers to help us understand what the Council are doing well and what needs changing
COM/5994	Although CHAD services acted in a manner to ensure Keira's immediate safety, the advice given to her to stay with her friend for the weekend should not have been issued without the consent of her parent(s)	Concerns have been shared with the service manager for CHAD and requested some additional training for staff.
COM/6317 (C SC) (LW)	The Manager and Social Worker discussed how to ensure that Families and Carers have our Duty and CHAD telephone numbers and email addresses, so that any important emails or calls are not missed.	As a result of this discussion, the Manager confirmed that each Social Worker will share with Families and Carers at Child in Care Reviews the CHAD and Duty contact details. The Manager aims to ensure that this action is completed by 1 March 2024.
COM/6475 CSC (BL)	There was drift within the service and communications/information were not consistent and lacking. We accept that communications should have been with both parents, as they share PR.	We acknowledged that during our intervention with the family the communication was not clear and fell below the expected standards. We have extended our apologies and TM has spoken directly with both family and SWs to ensure this practice does not continue
COM/5740 CSC (BL)	Partially upheld It is clear that there was some missed appointments and delayed documents within the context of a worker's illness absence and her subsequent decision to leave the local authority.	We acknowledge concerns around the comments recorded within the minutes of the review child protection conference which suggest some bias on the part of the social worker. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will try to ensure communication is delivered in a timelier manner • Apology offered for distress caused • There was delay to filing court order, but this does not indicate a lack of support from the SW to the family • By the nature of a split meeting, information shared pertains to the children and predominantly to the parent that is in the meeting at the time. It is important to

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		<p>read this document with that context in mind. That said, it is important that information shared is evidenced based and avoids value judgements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apology offered for missed meeting - this was an unforeseen error; however, children have since been discussed at core meeting + conference. • New SW allocated to children with positive open dialogue • Explanation that conversation held outside of CSC remit, however concerns raised will be flagged with XX. Note that issue may have already been addressed further to positive work recorded on file
COM/6411 (C SC) (LC)	Although Social Workers and managers are trained in the importance of including both resident and non-resident parents at every stage of involvement, this doesn't always happen.	Manager to ensure, through 1-2-1 supervision and case oversight, that social workers are inclusive and, at point of closure being agree, both resident and non-resident parents are given an opportunity to have their views and input heard.
COM/6204 (C SC)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parent did not feel they had been listened to nor the context of their family's individual situation had been considered. 2. Delay in delivering the highchair. 3. The OT identified that the seat was not as had been assessed or quoted for. We suspected at that point that the order may have been inadvertently mixed up prior to delivery and attempts were made to rectify this. 	<p>The team will consider how they obtain additional information, for example, it may be a better option to arrange a face-to-face discussion to allow for a conversation, and an opportunity to explain why the panel made the recommendations to the family worker.</p> <p>Despite the Occupational Therapist (OT) chasing our equipment services on numerous occasions, the chair was not delivered until September.</p> <p>The length of time taken to resolve the seating was inexcusably. The Occupational Therapist did everything to try and get the issue resolved as quickly as possible. Despite raising this with our equipment service, no explanation has been offered. The manager of the Occupational Therapy service is continuing to follow this up with them to ensure that it does not occur again.</p>

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

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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. This year we had a 70% uptake. The percentages are based on those who completed the form only and not specific to Children's Services as they are anonymous

	2023-24	2022-23
Gender		
Female	52%	50%
Male	32%	33%
Self described or non binary	1%	1%
Prefer not to say or left blank	15%	16%
Sexuality		
Heterosexual	66%	67%
Gay Man	1%	1%
Bisexual	2%	2%
Prefer not to say (selected)	17%	14%
Gay Woman/Lesbian	1%	2%
Left Blank	13%	14%
Age		
16-24	4%	4%
25-34	12%	11%
35-44	17%	15%
45-54	17%	16%
55-64	18%	17%
65-74	13%	17%
75 & Older	7%	6%
Left blank	12%	14%
Religion		
Atheist	3%	2%
Buddist	1%	0%
Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and other Christian denominations)	30%	30%
Hindu	0%	0%
Jewish	0%	0%
Muslim	0%	0%
None/no religion	35%	36%
Other	3%	2%
Prefer not to say (selected)	12%	12%
Left Blank	28%	28%
Ethnicity		

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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%	4%
Traveller of Irish Heritage	0%	0%
White - British	74%	70%
White - Gypsy or Traveller	0%	0%
White - Irish	0%	0%
White - Other White background	0%	0%
Other	2%	2%
Left Blank	2%	24%
Disability		
Mental Health, Learning Difficulty/Sensory	2%	0%
Mental Health Long Term	4%	2%
Mental Health - Unspecified	4%	2%
Physical Disability - Long Term	2%	4%
Physical Disability - Unspecified	5%	6%

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.

Compliments

Finally we are happy to advise that Childrens services received 111 compliments in 23-24 so genuinely heartening to see

The positive sentiments and hope it presents more of a balanced critique of the service

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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 Numbers

The Corporate Complaints Team happy to report a decrease in complaints in 2023-24 compared to the previous year

We suspected that there may be other complaints coming into the authority via other routes (MPs or to the Chief Executive) that may be are missing the process. We are implementing new protocols to ensure a single point of entry for complaints

Directorate	2023-24	2022-23	%
Adult Social Care	126	143	-13%
Adult Non Social care	126	138	-9%

Complaint Themes and Subject matter

We report on the following themes, shown below by Quarter

Q1

Service Provision / Quality of Service	13
Disagreement with Decision	7
Finance	3
Customer Service	1
Communication	2
Other	2

Q2

Service Provision / Quality of Service	13
Disagreement with Decision	5
Finance	3
Customer Service	3
Communication	3
Other	0

Q3

Service Provision / Quality of Service	16
Disagreement with Decision	9
Finance	3
Customer Service	4
Communication	2

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Other	2
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Q4

Service Provision / Quality of Service	15
Disagreement with Decision	11
Finance	1
Customer Service	4
Communication	1
Other	0

Learning from Complaints

Dorset Council have collected 20 learning points from 2023-24, a decrease from the 28 in the previous year, with a sampling below:

CASE	What we have Learned	What we have done
COM/4826 (TB)	There was a gap in the two-way communication and understanding which was unrelated to the cost of care.	<p>Manager discussed with social worker and explored and agreed learning around the following;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To summarise what was agreed at any future meetings and send this out to those involved for clarity. 2. To organise follow-up calls and to check in with relevant parties and evaluate progress. 3. To instil methods to maintain these and adhere to them as good practice standards.
COM 4516 (DMc)	Communication during assessment process could be clearer to ensure the completion of assessments are transparent	CHC Hub to review communication throughout the assessment process and confirm good practice
COM/4221 (LC)		As a conclusion, I think your complaint is partially justified, the garage was entered and the mobile hoist brought through into the home causing distress to both your parents, however these events could have been avoidable given that various OT's on duty covering the previous 2 weeks had requested that the hoist be moved into the home. ***** regrets entering the garage to locate the hoist and will not do so again in similar circumstances. We have allocated the case to an alternative Occupational Therapist and your family will not have to work with ***** going forward.
COM/4896 (LW) (A SC)	Alongside the Major Adaptation Panel we hold for funding, we hold a complex case panel where there is conflict of opinion between staff and families so we can look at the issues across the service before they escalate.	Manager will be taking this recommendation back to the Housing Standards Team, Adult Social Care service and Commission service as well as our contract provider.

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COM/4862 (A SC – Purbeck) (LW)	Social Worker did not follow Dorset Council policies in relation to the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) or follow best practice when assessing care needs.	Manger will discuss the concerns raised with the Social Worker and ensure that she undertakes further training in relation to completing Mental Capacity Act Assessments, understanding the DoLS procedures and legal requirements and further development in assessing under the Care Act.
COM/4911 A SC North (BL)	Breakdown in clear communication between Service User, Social Worker and Medica Professional Unnecessary distressed caused	PARTIALLY JUSTIFIED In order to adopt a more positive relationship between service user and Dorset Council, decision has been made to end Social Worker’s involvement and if necessary, transfer case to another SW should further support or work be needed. If there are no further concerns raised by Safeguarding teams and all parties are satisfied and happy, then service users request for referral will be ended with no further action.
COM/4626 A WA Housing Solutions (BL)		Goodwill gesture made £549.13
COM/4571 A SC (LW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We did not communicate effectively after we received the first complaint. • There was a void of time before the Locality Manager picked up the complaint when the previous person responded left Dorset Council. • We did not effectively keep the complainant updated with the progress of the complaint. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Specialist Services feels he should have been more proactive in offering an apology, when staff member left and has taken this learning on board. • Head of Specialist Services has reminded the team that, if someone has attended a meeting, they should be sent a copy of notes / minutes.
COM/3651 A WA Housing (LC)	Confusion and poor communication regarding when complainant’s mother had started paying for her accommodation.	In recognition of DC’s part in this, we have agreed not to pursue outstanding fees.
COM5414 Financial Assessment (BL)	Consideration of all information available before coming to a decision.	Discussion with team re ensuring all appropriate information has been gathered. Action completed 01 Sept’23

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COM/5070 Housing (LC)	Email sent to both parties using cc function resulted in a minor breach of the tenants data.	<p>Manager has spoken directly to the officer responsible and her manager - it was a genuine error. She is aware of the use of CC and BCC in emails. Email guidance has been issued to all officers in Housing Standards about the use of BCC and CC on emails. Use of BCC and CC was discussed at a team meeting</p> <p>Reminder emails to the Housing Standards team about the issue and use of BCC and CC have since been sent.</p>
COM/5922 (BL) ASC Safeguarding	<p>Partial justification</p> <p>We need to be clear in our dealings with service users when discussing matters over the telephone and when we are not in an office environment – this can help to minimise any misunderstanding or confusion</p> <p>The provider and Registered Manager should have advised of the current situation at the home, enabling the complainant time to consider whether the placement was suitable. As the CQC are the regulator it is their responsibility to ensure that Providers exert their duty in this respect.</p> <p>Dorset Council acknowledges actions regarding the care home as being too late given the complainants experiences, however the circumstances around the complaint have had an impact and are contributing to learning across the system to help ensure that other people and families in similar circumstances do not have the same experience.</p>	<p>Team discussion to ensure noise during phone calls is minimised or an explanation is provided to ensure this is not misconstrued in future.</p> <p>We have reissued guidance to all providers about the identification and management of contractures. This is to ensure that these are prevented from developing, and that the manual handling of any person with a contracture is managed carefully to reduce the person experiencing pain and any further reduction in mobility.</p> <p>As part of NHS England (enhanced health in care homes programme) work has been initiated to improve the quality of, and access to, healthcare advice and support in care home settings.</p> <p>Dorset Council are now awaiting final decision from the NMC</p>
COM/5853 (KR) ASC	When a staff member is off sick we need to ensure we check promptly what appointments they have on the day and make contact in a timely manner to cancel/rearrange, hopefully limiting the impact on the clients	Manager to discuss with Management colleagues in the team to ensure there is a robust process in place for this
COM/5981 A SC (BL)		Considering the individual circumstances XXXX, their age and recognising the changes in their health condition, I have decided to make a

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		<p>compassionate decision for her to remain at XXXX and be funded by Dorset Council.</p> <p>We confirm that we will be backdating this award to the date their funding fell below the threshold as advised by the latest financial assessment.</p>
COM/5226 A SC (BL)	Though SW acted in the best interests (re safeguarding concerns) the intervention was misplaced as they did not consult the LPoA's	<p>We will be taking forward some refresher training for teams around working with people who have LPOA's and decision making.</p> <p>Fee's will be reimbursed (£2,600)</p>
COM 6239 A SC (BL)	Social Worker used inappropriate language when speaking to complainant	Social Worker apologised and matter discussed in supervision
COM/6344 ASC – LC	Best Value search was requested within 4 months of previous search moving a placement from temporary to perm. Feedback from brokerage was that this was not necessary and a desktop review of market was sufficient.	Improvements in process between Brokerage and Ops around use of BVS. This will be linked into the brokerage development workstream of transformation.
COM/6242 ASC – KR	Customer felt the duty worker lacked empathy towards situation	As a learning point, I will ensure that they reflect on how they ask questions and also how they offer advice on alternative provisions that may have already been tried
COM/5654 A SC (LW)	<p>The Council will review its response to the safeguarding concern and consider what different steps it should have taken.</p> <p>The Council will also review the way it monitors safeguarding training within the care providers it commissions.</p>	<p>The Safeguarding Team should have considered progressing the concern to a section 42 (2) enquiry, this would have been the appropriate response to the concerns raised to allow a full review to have taken place. Further training has taken place within the service, and we have now incorporated an authorisation process at each stage of the safeguarding process.</p> <p>Reminder sent to team by manager stating:</p> <p>Please ensure you always triangulate the information you monitor during the visits ensuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You check the provider's policies and procedures and that they have a copy of Dorset's Safeguarding policies in place. • Ensure the provider is aware that they must report all safeguarding concerns including those that may relate to another provider or health & social care organisation. • Training records demonstrate all staff have received safeguarding training and that the provider assesses staff understanding through supervision and that refresher training is available.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any incidents identified within care records and supporting documentation that you identify as a safeguarding concern are followed up with the provider to ensure an appropriate safeguarding alert has been raised with the Safeguarding Triage Team. <p>Also discussed at team meeting.</p>
COM 6394 ASC (KR)	Dealing with complex conversations on the telephone phone, particularly specialised needs	Discussions with duty worker and consider any training and learning to support duty role

LGSCO Findings

The Ombudsman reported 33 UPHELD cases across Dorset Council as a whole authority. Of these only 7 were related to Adult Services, as the lions share (21 of 33) in SEND.

As a percentage it would read as a big increase on 22-23 as only 4 were upheld that year, but across 23-24 as a figure the impact does not present too much of a concern. What is new is the financial remedies being requested from the directorate with the Ombudsman's findings cost you £2000 in remedies over 6 of the 7 cases. Small figures but in virtually all cases

We should observe that a decrease in complaints, but an increase in LGSCO findings and remedies is not ideal, but we are a learning authority and welcome the independent views and findings.

Dorset Council met the recommendations in 100% of these cases. The cases and outcomes are captured below:

Reference	Complaint in Brief	Service improvement recommendations
22005228	Summary: Mrs X complained the Council charged her mother, Mrs Y, for care without providing information and without getting her consent. Mrs X says this caused the family distress when they received the bill.	Issue guidance to relevant staff on the importance of providing information about financial implications before an individual becomes liable for costs.
22010334	Mr X (as I shall call him) complains that the Council failed to take seriously the financial safeguarding concerns he raised about his wife's father (Mr R). In particular he complains the Council's actions in visiting Mr R have exacerbated the situation between them. He also complains the Council has not properly responded to his complaint.	Within one month of my final decision the Council will apologise to Mr X for failing to provide a response to his complaint and offer the sum of £300 in acknowledgement of the injustice caused. The Council should provide us with evidence it has complied with the above actions.

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<p>22014842</p>	<p>The Council incorrectly required Miss X to fund her personal assistant and made that decision without notifying her or her mother, who is her representative. Although it advised her to apply for her specific food and exercise needs as disability-related expenditure, it has since refused to accept them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miss X has already accumulated a £4,000 bill for unpaid care costs which she cannot repay. This has already had a negative impact on Miss X's health and that of her mother, who acts as her representative. Without funding for her personal assistant, Miss X's wellbeing and independence will suffer further, particularly as her mother is now living abroad. 	<p>The Council will take the following action within one month of my final decision to provide a suitable remedy:</p> <p>a) provide a written apology to Mrs C and Miss X for the avoidable uncertainty and inconvenience caused by the errors in the financial assessment process identified above; and b) make a symbolic payment of £150 each to both Mrs C and Miss X to acknowledge their avoidable uncertainty and inconvenience (the Council should not offset these payments against any outstanding debt).</p> <p>34. We publish guidance on remedies which sets out our expectations for how organisations should apologise effectively to remedy injustice. The organisation should consider this guidance in making the apology I have recommended in my findings.</p> <p>35. The Council should provide us with evidence it has complied with the above actions.</p>
<p>22014884</p>	<p>carers from a care provider commissioned by the Council verbally abused, neglected and traumatised her;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the care provider commissioned by the Council withdrew care without notice; and • the Council delayed putting in place a new care package. 	<p>I am satisfied the procedural measures the Council has undertaken are appropriate and should hopefully prevent similar problems occurring in future. I consider though Ms X has suffered an injustice as she was caused distress at having the care package removed without notice and the carers did not always carry out the actions required in the care plan. Ms X is also left with some uncertainty about whether the situation could have been improved if the Council had followed the right procedure. As remedy for that I recommended the Council apologise to Ms X and pay her £300. The Council has agreed to my recommendation</p>

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23007466	<p>Mrs X (as I shall call her) complains the Council failed to take seriously the concerns she reported in June 2022 about her elderly mother Mrs A. She says it was not until February 2023 when she saw some meeting notes from November 2022, that she realised that a safeguarding alert should have been raised. She says as a result Mrs A was suffering unauthorised restraint for some months.</p>	<p>Within one month of my final decision the Council will review its response to the safeguarding concern raised in June 2022 and consider what different steps it should have taken then;</p> <p>31. The Council acknowledges that its failure to investigate critically at that point caused injustice both to Mrs A and to Mrs X;</p> <p>32. Within one month of my final decision the Council will apologise to Mrs X specifically for its failure at that point, and offer her £500 for the distress caused by its poor service;</p> <p>33. Within one month of my final decision, the Council will also review the way it monitors safeguarding training within the care providers it commissions. The Council should provide us with evidence it has complied with the above actions.</p>
23009113	<p>Mr X complained about the Council's handling of the bathroom work carried out under his disabled facilities grant application.</p>	<p>The Council failed to communicate with Mr X while acting as his agent with the contractor. The Council will apologise and pay Mr X £100 to recognise the distress caused.</p>
22000568	<p>Mr B complained about a Hospital Trust's decision to discharge his late father, Mr G, home from hospital in October 2020. He also complained about the community health and social care support provided to his father by a Community Trust and the Council</p>	<p>support provided to his father by a Community Trust and the Council.</p> <p>We did not find evidence of fault in the actions of the Community Trust. There was fault in the way the Hospital Trust and the Council dealt with Mr G's discharge arrangements including how they considered the impact of the caring role on Mrs G, his wife. The Hospital Trust and the Council have agreed to our recommendations and will apologise to Mr B and Mrs G. They will also make a symbolic payment of £250 each to Mrs G to acknowledge the adverse impact the faults had on her.</p>
		<p>£2000 in Financial Remedies</p>