

Corporate Parenting Board

10 December 2024

Corporate Complaints Team Annual Report 2023-24

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr. C Sutton, Children's Services, Education & Skills

Local Councillor(s):

All

Executive Director:

J Mair, Director of Legal & Democratic

Report Author:

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Title:

Annual Report – Corporate Complaints Team

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

This annual report provides an update on the numbers, types and outcomes of complaints made against Children's Services at Dorset Council, and also focuses on Children in Care.

Recommendation:

That the Corporate Parenting Board reviews and scrutinises the annual report, and are assured that it complies with statutory and regulatory guidance.

Reason for Recommendation:

To have an awareness of the numbers and types of complaints and the organisational learning.

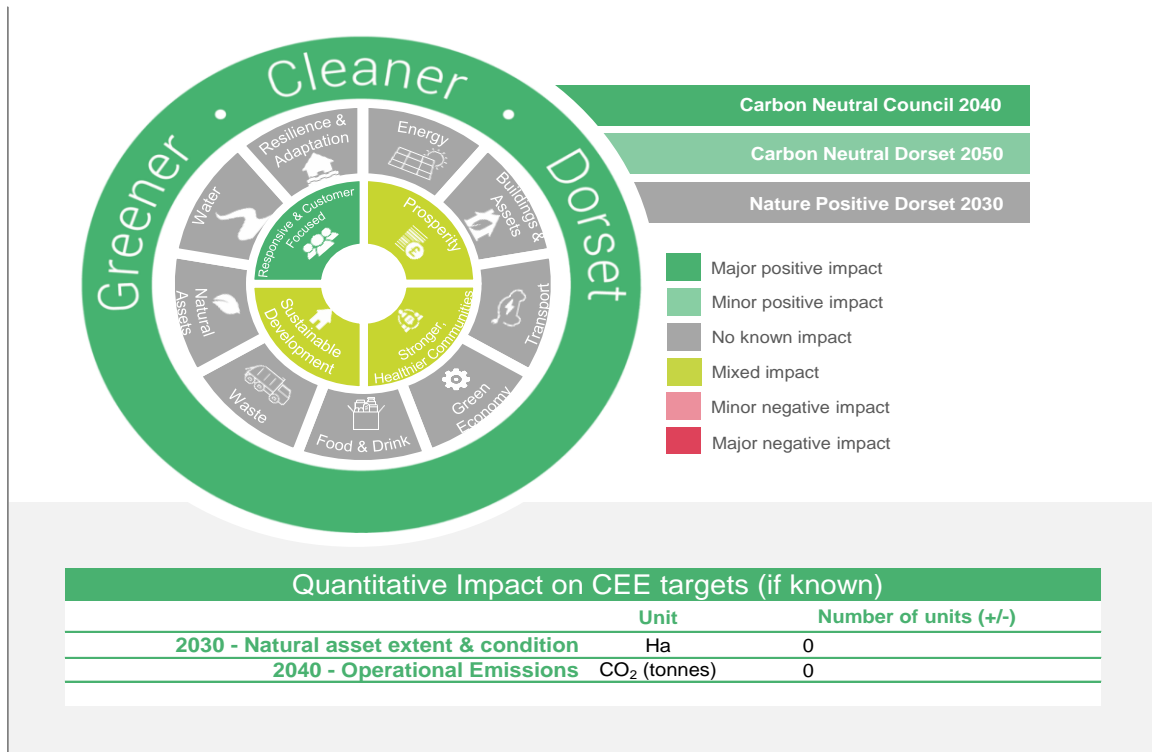
1. **Key Messages for 2023/24**

- 1.1 For context Dorset Council received 1,588 Complaint Contacts. This is a 13% decrease from the 1,838 received in 2022-23 but still the second highest number of complaints in Dorset Council's 5 year history.
- 1.2 Children's Services figures are essentially the same year on year for Social Care matters with a 1% decrease from 140 to 139 in 2023-24. Non Social Care complaint contacts substantially decreased by 24% from 309 to 248.
- 1.3 We received just three Complaints from Children in Care in 2023-24 - a decrease from the 10 received the previous year. Numbers of complaints are usually low from our Children in Care and many concerns are well handled in the service before the need for any escalation. The Corporate Director has made a point of encouraging young people in care to complain, and the early indication in 24-25 is that this has had an impact.
- 1.4 Of the complaints received for Children's Social Care in 2023-24 11% were considered fully justified by operational managers, with 14% considered partially justified. This is a slight increase on the previous year.
- 1.5 The Complaints Team, as an Assurance function, continue to make a difference in promoting a culture of learning from complaints.

2. **Financial Implications**

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 Stage 2 investigations cost Children's Services £12,394.84 on Independent Investigators.
- 2.3 Whilst reporting on the outgoing finance it is important to note that the Complaints Team have generated **£9,240.17** (up from £7376) from schools by providing a complaints advice service.

3. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications



4. Well-being and Health Implications

4.1 The high volume of complaints across the directorates have had an impact on staff wellbeing and the team are regularly encouraged, through line management and other Dorset Council support, to be mindful of themselves and their colleagues in-keeping with our behaviours.

5. Other Implications

None

6. Risk Assessment

6.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk:LOW

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

None

8. **Appendices**

Complaints Annual Report 2023-24

9. **Background Papers**

None

10. **Report Sign Off**

- 10.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).