

Corporate Parenting Board

11 December 2025

Corporate Complaints Team Annual Report 2024-25

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:

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

Local Councillor(s):

All

Senior Leadership Team:

J Mair, Director of Legal & Democratic

Report author and job title:

Email: antony.bygrave@Dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Local Government Ombudsman

Report status: Public

Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

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.

1. Recommendation(s)

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

2. Reason for the recommendation(s)

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

3. The report

Key Messages for 2024/25

- 3.1 For context Dorset Council received 1919 Complaint Contacts. This is a 17% increase from the 1659 received in 2023-24 and the highest number of complaints in Dorset Council's history to date.
- 3.2 Children's Services complaints for social care matters have increased significantly in volume and complexity (34%). Non Social Care complaint contacts have also risen, showing a 21% increase.
- 3.3 We received just three Complaints from Children in Care in 2024-25 which is the same as the previous year. What is of interest is that 2 of the 3 formal cases at Stage 1 have progressed to stage 2 or beyond. 1 case has had Ombudsman involvement . These complaints by young people came to the Complaints team via an advocacy service. The numbers continue to be low, but the Stage 2 escalations indicate a greater level of awareness of the process, and confidence in using it the have their voices heard.
- 3.4 Of the total number of complaints received for Children's Social Care in 2024-25 11% were considered fully justified by operational managers, with 11% considered partially justified. This is the same as previous year.
- 3.5 The Complaints Team, as an Assurance function, continue to make a difference in promoting a culture of learning from complaints.

4. Alternative options considered

N/A

5. Legal considerations

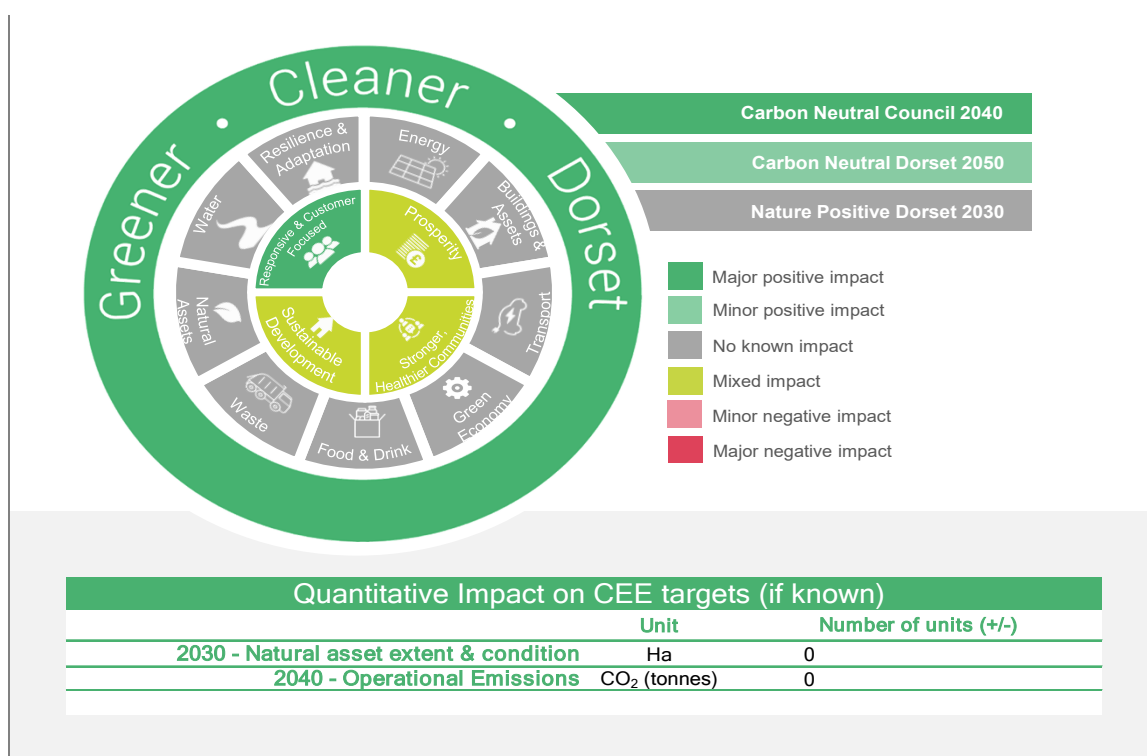
N/A

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 Although not relating to Children in Care, Dorset Council financial remedies in 2024-25 resulting in a total cost of £40,630 which is consistent with previous years although there was a single payment that was not claimed from previous year £63,150.
The total sum paid from Ombudsman cases was therefore £103,510 .
- 6.2 In addition to this, we have worked hard to pre-empt Ombudsman outcomes as part of the complaint handling process and have also paid £42,621 for SEND related complaints, outside of any involvement from the Ombudsman.

- 6.3 Stage 2 investigations cost Children's Services £15,986 on Independent Investigators compared to 12,394.84 the previous year
- 6.4 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.

7. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications



8. Well-being and health implications

- 8.1 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.

9. Other implications

None

10. Risk implications

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

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

11. Equalities

None

12. Appendices

- 12.1 Appendix 1: Complaints and Representations Childrens Appendices
Expanded 2024 25

13. Background papers

None

14. Report sign-off

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)