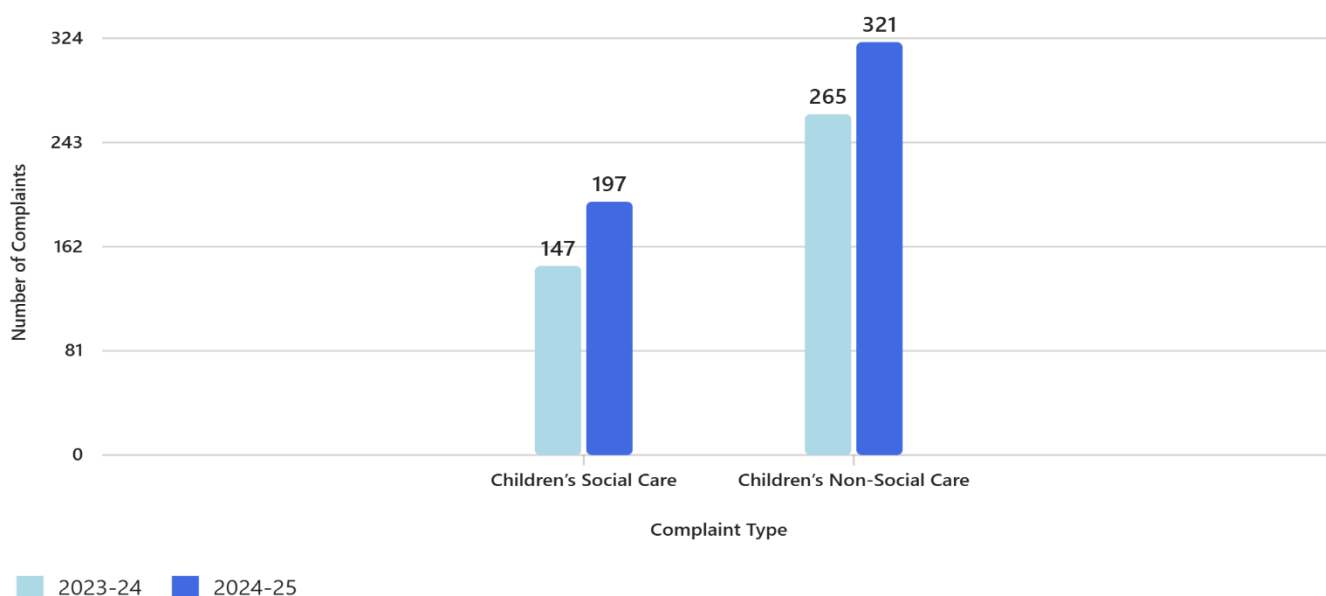


Children's Service Statutory Reporting Requirements

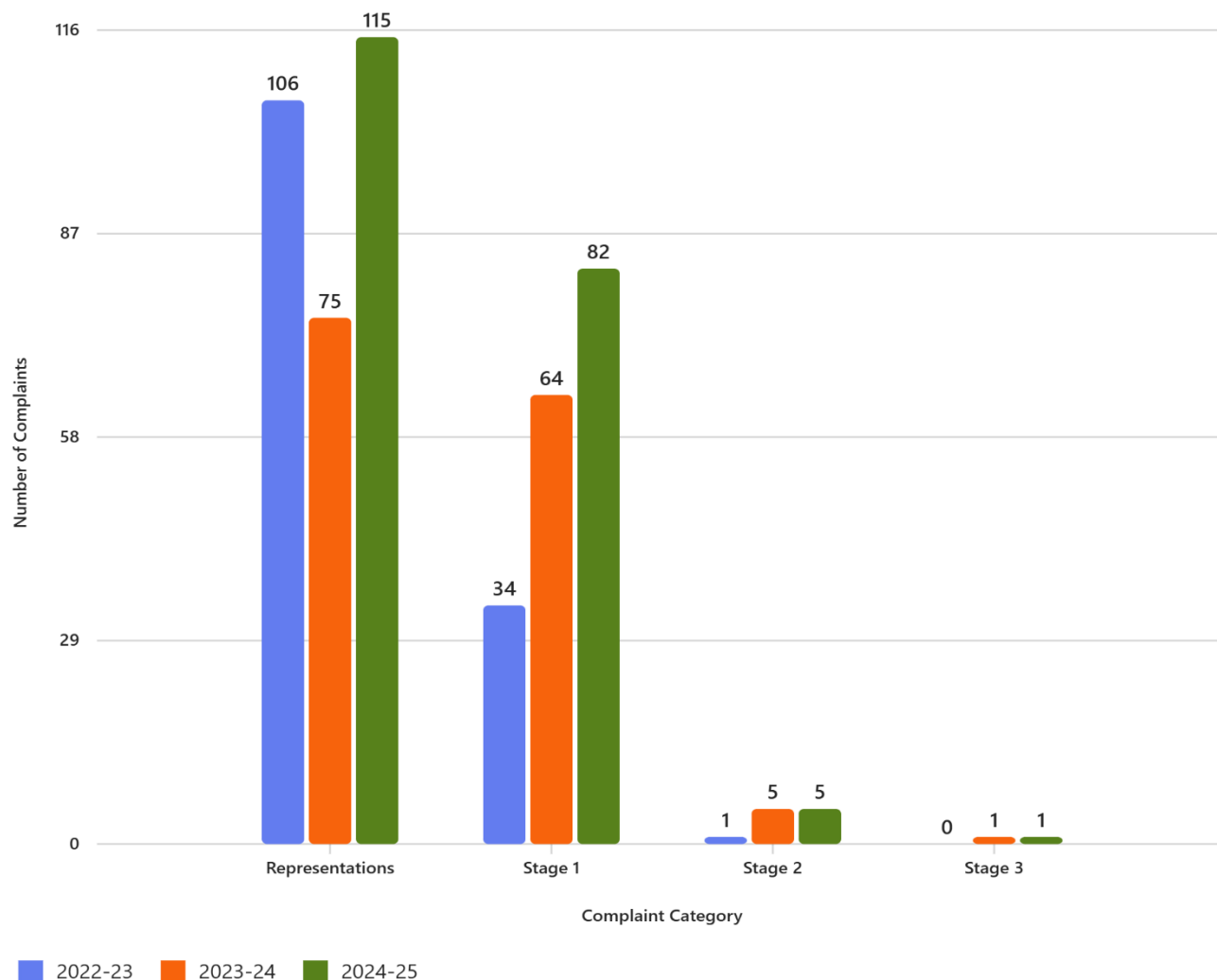
There has been an overall 17% increase in Complaints across Dorset Council, but the increase in Childrens Services complaints is proportionately higher on 2024-25 with a 34% increase in Social Care complaints, and 21% increase for Non Social Care.



Complaint Type	2024-25	2023-24	%
Childrens Social Care	197	147	+34%
Childrens Non Social Care	321	265	+21%

Most complaints received are from parents and not necessarily representing the voice or best interest of the child. However, more of the issues raised in 2024-25 have qualified for the statutory process and escalation route to stage 2 and 3.

Children's Social Care	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
Representations	115	75	106
Stage 1	82	64	34
Stage 2	5	5	1
Stage 3	1	1	0
LGSCO approaches	1 but with no injustice	1 with 1 upheld (passed back to Council)	5 with 1 upheld



Again 5 cases were accepted at Stage 2 detailed below. This is the same as the previous year. A SWAP audit pointed towards a delay at STAGE 1 being the main cause of the increase in escalation requests. However in each case, there was a financial element that was the cause of a disagreement over the outcome at Stage 1. Timescale is however a factor and we have introduced an escalation protocol to ensure senior oversight. This only tells a small part of the story as the Complaints Team and service Managers have worked together really effectively in 2024-25 and managed to de-escalate several requests for stage 2s, by meeting and resolving matters. [Interestingly, 2 Stage 2 requests are from Young People, which indicates more comfort in escalating complaints](#)

Children's Whole Authority (Non Social Care)	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
Representations	62	66	129
Formal Complaint	253	182	180
LGSCO approaches	25 with 15	24 with 21 upheld	35 with 16 upheld

Stage 2 Complaints

These are the cases that progressed to Stage 2 in 2024-25

CASE no	Team locality	Brief Subject	Outcome Upheld/ Part/Not	Total cost of IO	Total cost of IP	Additional cost
COM/6406	CWAD	There has been a delayed and insufficient response to address the family's need for support.	Partially Upheld	£3745.00	£1992.50	None
COM/3472	Purbeck	Via Advocacy – Role of Social Worker in supporting a parent in Prison	Still Under investigation after delay and change of IO	TBC	TBC	TBC
COM/6872	CWAD	Via Advocacy -Issues relating to the way social services has behaved towards young person. Newly presented historic matters could not be investigated at stage 2	Original Complaints resolved at stage 1.	£1,752	£405	
COM/5670	CWAD	Safeguarding and failure to act for a child in need with Autism and intellectual disability	Largely not upheld and heard at Stage 3	£1459	£90	
COM/6660	Child Protection	Formal complaint regarding the family's interactions with children's social care.	Still Under investigation	TBC	TBC	TBC
TOTALS				£6,956	£2,487.50	
OVERALL COST					£9,443.50	

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:

Dorset Council (24 002 245)

Statement Upheld Child protection 17-Jan-2025

Summary: Mrs X complained about failings in the Council's child protection investigation. There was some fault in the Council's communication and record keeping, as well as a delay giving Mrs X a report before a meeting. However, there was no fault in the Council's decision-making processes and no significant injustice.

Non Social Care

Of the 33 UPHELD cases across Dorset Council in total, 15 of 33 were in Childrens Services relating to SEND matters and children out of education. Although a concern, this is a 29% reduction in upheld cases

The findings are outlined below

CHILDRENS NON SC (SEN)

- **Dorset Council (24 004 153)**

Statement Upheld Alternative provision 31-Jan-2025

Summary: Mrs X complains the Council failed to provide her child with a suitable education. There were delays in arranging alternative provision after the Easter break in 2024 and this is fault. It resulted in a loss of education for a period of nearly seven weeks. The Council has agreed to remedy this injustice.

- **Dorset Council (24 012 300)**

Statement Upheld Special educational needs 16-Jan-2025

Summary: We will not investigate this complaint about missed special education provision for Miss X's child. The Council has already upheld her complaint and offered Miss X a suitable remedy for the injustice to her and her child, and further investigation by us would therefore not be proportionate.

- **Dorset Council (24 000 817)**

Statement Upheld Special educational needs 23-Dec-2024

Summary: Miss Y complained about the way the Council dealt with Z's Education, Health and Care needs assessment and the special educational provision in their Education Health and Care Plan. We have found fault by the Council, causing injustice, in failing to: consult with school A or other schools before issuing the final EHC Plan in 2023; properly consider Miss Y's request for free school transport; and deliver the SEN provision in Z's EHC Plan. The Council has agreed to remedy this injustice by apologising to Miss Y, making payments to reflect the impact on Z of the missed SEN provision and the time and trouble, travel costs and distress caused to Miss Y and a service improvement.

- **Dorset Council (23 019 263)**

Statement Upheld Alternative provision 17-Dec-2024

Summary: Miss X complained the Council failed to secure suitable education provision for her son from late 2022 to mid-2024. She said the Council had not addressed her concerns, or adapted the provision to meet her son's needs. We have found the Council at fault for failing to properly consider its section 19 duty between October 2022 and January 2023. However, on a balance of probabilities, we find this did not cause an injustice. Other parts of Miss X's complaint, about later time periods, concern matters which are part of, connected to, or could have been part of, an appeal to the SEND Tribunal. We cannot investigate these matters. We explain why in our decision statement.

- **Dorset Council (24 003 542)**

Statement Upheld Alternative provision 05-Dec-2024

Summary: Ms X complained the Council failed to provide a suitable education for her daughter, Y, between November 2023 and July 2024 when she was unable to attend school due to anxiety. The Council was at fault. It will apologise to Ms X and pay her £2,400 to recognise the period of suitable alternative provision Y missed, and the distress this caused Ms X.

- **Dorset Council (24 002 157)**

Statement Upheld Special educational needs 08-Oct-2024

Summary: Miss X complained the Council failed to provide her child, Y, with appropriate education and provision in line with Y's Education, Health and Care Plan. The Council was at fault which caused Miss X and Y frustration and distress and meant Y missed out on some education provision. The Council should apologise and make a payment to Miss X.

- **Dorset Council (23 019 593)**

Statement Upheld Alternative provision 30-Sep-2024

Summary: The Council was at fault because it did not issue an amended EHC Plan for Y within statutory timescales. This caused avoidable frustration, distress, uncertainty and a delay in appeal rights. The Council did not secure educational provision in Y's Education, Health and Care Plan for half a term. This caused Y a loss of educational provision to which he had a legal entitlement. The Council will apologise, make payments of £150 to Ms X and £1000 to Y and issue Y's amended Education Health and Care Plan without further delay.

- **Dorset Council (23 018 030)**

Statement Upheld Special educational needs 29-Sep-2024

Summary: Miss Y complained about the way the Council dealt her child, Z's special educational needs support and alternative provision. We have found finding fault by the Council, causing injustice, in failing to: provide Z with a suitable education; and complete the EHC Plan review process within statutory timescales. The Council has agreed to remedy the injustice by apologising, making a payment to reflect the distress caused and the impact on Z of the missed education.

- **Dorset Council (23 019 949)**

Statement Upheld Alternative provision 08-Sep-2024

Summary: Mrs C complained about the Council's decision not to assess her daughter for an Education, Health and Care Plan and a statutory Care Needs Assessment. We found the Council was at fault. This caused Mrs C unnecessary distress and meant that S missed two terms of education. The Council agreed to our recommendations to address the injustice its actions caused Mrs C and S.

- **Dorset Council (23 015 263)**

Statement Upheld Alternative provision 21-Aug-2024

Summary: The Council failed to ensure Y received suitable fulltime education, either by supplementing provision when Y was put on an extended part-time timetable by the school, or when Y became unable to attend school due to medical needs. This was fault and caused loss of education, distress, created additional caring responsibilities and caused unnecessary time and trouble. The Council will apologise, make a symbolic financial payment, and carry out service improvements. The complaint is upheld.

- **Dorset Council (23 014 194)**

Statement Upheld Special educational needs 05-Aug-2024

Summary: Mrs E complains her son's school was following an out-of-date Education, Health and Care Plan. We uphold her complaint due to fault by the Council in its actions around this. Mrs E also complains about the school's actions around a teacher's use of language, inappropriate emails and suspensions of children with special educational needs. Our decision is these are internal management issues within the school, and so not in the Ombudsman's jurisdiction.

- **Dorset Council (23 015 090)**

Statement Upheld Special educational needs 01-Aug-2024

Summary: Mrs Y complains there were failings in the way the Council provided her grandchild Z with alternative educational provision while carrying out an education health and care needs assessment and Z could not attend school causing distress and loss of educational provision. We found fault as the Council delayed the education health and care needs assessment and issuing a final education health and care plan. The Council has accepted it was at fault and apologised which is suitable action for it to take. We have found no evidence of fault by the Council in the way it considered whether to provide Z with alternative provision. So we have completed our investigation.

- **Dorset Council (23 015 704)**

Statement Upheld Special educational needs 06-May-2024

Summary: The Council was at fault for delays in issuing an Education, Health, and Care Plan, for Mrs X's son. That fault caused Mrs X an injustice because she was left with avoidable distress and inconvenience in following up as to what the Council were doing, as well as having a delayed right of appeal. It also has left Mrs X with uncertainty about what special education provision her son may also have missed out on because of delays. The Council have agreed to remedy Mrs X's injustice in line with my recommendation.

- **Dorset Council (23 012 891)**

Statement Upheld Special educational needs 21-Apr-2024

Summary: Mrs X complained about delays in the education, health and care plan process. She said the Council has failed to provide suitable alternative provision; delayed naming a suitable school for her son and said the communication has been poor. We find the Council was at fault. This caused significant stress to Mrs X and her son missed out on education. The Council has agreed to several recommendations to address this injustice caused by fault.

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 the previous year of £63,150. The total sum paid from Ombudsman cases was therefore £103,510.

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.

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

Advocate	3
Child in Care	4
Customer	53
Grandparent	5

Individual	3
Other Relative	3
Parent	26
Solicitor	1
Young Person	3

The types of complaints made;

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

Communication	6%
Data	2%
Disagreement with Decision	12%
Misconduct	2%
Service Provision	78%

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% the same as previous year

Partially Justified 11% down from previous year

(NB: The Ombudsman often consider partially as upheld)

Not justified 78%

In 2024-25 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, or require compensation for a sense of wrongdoing, this cannot be achieved through the process.

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. The numbers continue to be low, but we have had 2 cases progress to Stage 2 which indicates a greater level of awareness of the process, and confidence in using it the have their voices heard.

Year	Number of Complaints
Children in Care 2024-25	3
Children in Care 2023-24	3
Children in Care 2022-23	10
Children in Care 2021-22	8
Children in Care 2020-21	15

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 complaints from CIC or advocacy, but one that progressed to stage 2 from the previous year. This complaint was largely not upheld and contained a lot of historic complaints which were out of scope of the process. We did our best to resolve the case, but the IO and IP agreed that the outcomes requested were financial

In Q2 there was 1 CIC complaint regarding a young person (YP) that wanted to make it known their views regarding placements being a place of safety, with carers that understood young people with traumatic backgrounds.

In Q3 there was 1 CIC complaint where a YP felt that their carers had no experience with young people, who have had a traumatic background. The complaint was also against the foster carers, not providing a caring environment. Also a complaint against the Local Authority for failing in their duties by placing them in an environment where he experienced abuse and was not kept safe.

In Q4 there was 1 complaint from CIC via advocacy regarding a request to change their Social Worker

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

The table below shows the majority of all Stage 1 cases for Children's Services Social Care were within the 20-day statutory timescale. However there was a concern identified in Q2 and an escalate protocol was put in place to seek improvement. We expect to see progress on 24-25

Timescales	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
0-20 Working Days	77%	86%	85%
20+ days	23%	14%	15%

As always, closer observation reveals that some cases exceed the 20 days as a result of agreeing a more informal approach and resolution after the receipt of the original complaint, with good work from locality managers. This can

include follow up calls and meetings, so the figure in isolation does not tell the whole story of the journey of the complaints.

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

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

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 46 really good quality and robust organisational learnings in 24-25 which is really encouraging. This is a 48% improvement on the 31 learning cases in 23-24.

Case ID	What we have learned from Complaints	What we have done as a result to improve practice
COM/6315 and COM/6345 (C SC – LW)	Family repeatedly stepping in to provide care for a child should generate curiosity as to what is happening for the child and why the parent is not able to provide care themselves; this is particularly the case when risks have previously been identified. Professionals should not justify inaction through a "family arrangement" if there is enough information on record to suggest this is not the case.	Ensuring assessments are holistic and include information held by other agencies and consider the views of those people important to the child, including wider family. Assessments need to ensure that known risks around mental health are given sufficient weight in terms of the impact this has upon a child now and in the future. The absence of information being shared by Health is going to be escalated further to prevent other



	Special Guardianship payments have been delayed.	children potentially being at risk as a result of an absence of information sharing. This has now been remedied and complainant will receive a back payment and ongoing payments, as per the support plan.
COM 6500 (C WA) DMc	It took seven months to issue an EHC plan	Training under Section 44 (2) of the Children and Families Act 2014 with regards to duty to reassessment of children or young person with an EHCP
COM6179 (CSC) Fostering BL	1. Important learning – The impact of changes in social workers upon foster carers and children living within the foster family. Has and can lead to not feeling supported, instability and/or inconsistent support. 2. EHCP drift, it is recognised at strategic level improvement are required around processes. Important for Foster carers to be supported in meetings	1. On going work to reduce changes in social workers. This should be on going- but is already recognised. 2. Process being improved. This is part of much bigger process and work is on going 3. Permanent workers where practically possible to attend necessary meetings or arrange for alternative support person to attend. This has been completed- conveyed to staff members. Other key notes; Social Worker would like the opportunity to repair the relationship and move forward. Work towards this has begun but understandably will take time. When will the educational psychologist assessment report be available/ shared? This was shared in February When can the complainant expect to receive the further amended draft EHCP which was prepared on 5th Feb? This is completed The Educational psychologist has shared in a recent email that Reese's name is onto panel to request specialist assessment on 12th March. This is correct
COM/6411 C WA (LC)	• As a father with parental responsibility not adequately	• The importance of not signing off the social workers assessments without



	informed or included during the period of our involvement with child. • Parent should have been contacted at the time of the referral and views included within the Children & Families assessment. • Should have been invited to attend all Child in Need meetings and these should have been held separately to enable both parents to attend and be part of the planning • Should have been kept up to date about any new concerns and been involved in the safety planning for child during these times, and should have been a part of the decision making • Parent raised these issues with the social worker during the period that the child remained open to service and they were still not addressed to a satisfactory level.	both parents having been contacted and given the opportunity to have their views and input included. • To ensure that through 1:1 supervision and case oversight officer continuously reminding social workers to ensure their practice is inclusive and that at point of closure being agreed, both the resident and non-resident parent are a part of this.
COM/6732 SEN (LW)	Manager recognises that we should have been more proactive in our searches for educational provision by speaking to our settings on the telephone when consultations were being sent out.	Manager to ensure that, in future, we are not only relying on emails when we are consulting for educational provision for our young people, and that we keep families regularly updated also. LW has queried how and when this will be implemented.
COM 7223 CSC (DMc)	Need to focus on cases during transfer from CP to Permanence and that identified actions are checked and followed up	Discussed at a Team meeting under 'Practice Matters'
COM/6975 CSC (BL)	We have recognised that learning needs to take place around SGO orders and the need to continue to share information and involve those who hold the order even if the child has left their care.	An assessment to look at risks outside the home which include drugs and influences that can take place in the community has been started and TM has requested this is completed within two weeks and that the outcomes are shared with guardians The youth workers in Weymouth and Portland are also aware of the YP and we keep in close contact to ensure any worries are shared and acted on.



COM/7239 C SC (LC)	Team have not always got things right, particularly in managing consistent communication. The impact of this has been to leave the complainant feel marginalised and disempowered.	Manager has asked the team to ensure that an email with an update on progress made and a forward plan, alongside any relevant advice is sent to the key family members each week so that all know the same thing at the same time. Manager has also asked those involved to ensure that all meetings are minuted and shared with those present promptly.
COM/6926 C SC (LC)	The social worker failed to produce a written assessment in a reasonable timescale and there were inaccuracies within that assessment. Social worker also talked about her personal life and her broader caseload which was inappropriate.	Manager has confirmed that the social worker's conduct has been formally addressed with her.
COM/6524 C WA (KR)	Alleged mistreatment by social worker, insufficient support, and lack of consideration for other agencies' information	Although no immediate issues were found with the social worker's practice, Dorset Council acknowledges the need for improved professional curiosity and apologises for the impact on the complainant's trust.
COM 7140 C SC (DMc)	Section 20 not explained properly to young person and all options explored	Leaflet for young people has been produced to make it clear what options are available to them.
COM/7064 LC	We would like all social workers for our children and young people in care to text them or call them to wish them happy birthday and happy Christmas. Sending a card is also something that can be done, especially if the social worker is not in so you would know you are cared about. We have heard you and I will ask the team manager to talk to the social workers about why this is so important.	<i>CIC had a new phone number in April and asked SW to save the number when she dropped you and your friend off. She was driving at the time and may have then forgotten to do so. I accept that these little things can mean so much and we need to be mindful of this.</i> In respect of the meeting, I have spoken to SW, and she has said there was a genuine misunderstanding. She was expecting confirmation from your foster carer that the time was ok to see you and as did not receive this. Your foster carer did not realise she was waiting for this. We need to remember that no matter how busy we get, our young people need to be seen and heard.
COM/7566 LC	When spoke to SW, unsympathetic and refused to accept language such as aggression, abuse and SW made us feel that we were lying about the severity of the incidents and appeared to dismiss them. We also felt that she was patronising and lecturing us when she spoke to us on the phone.	met with SW to discuss complaint and recorded the reflection in personal supervision. We talked and reflected on how we can ensure the families are treated with care and compassion, having their views listened to and considered. Within that we thought about how we as practitioners consider our working style and how this may be perceived by parents. SW has been able to reflect on how approach was perceived by parent and is sorry for any upset



		that she may have caused as this was not her intention.
COM/6315 C SC (LW)	Action 1 Ensuring assessments are holistic and include information held by other agencies and consider the views of those people important to the child, including wider family. Assessments need to ensure that known risks around mental health are given sufficient weight in terms of the impact this has upon a child now and in the future. Family repeatedly stepping in to provide care for a child should generate curiosity as to what is happening for the child and why the parent is not able to provide care themselves; this is particularly the case when risks have previously been identified. Professionals should not justify inaction through a “family arrangement” if there is enough information on record to suggest this is not the case. Action 2 The absence of information being shared by Health needs to be escalated further to prevent other children potentially being at risk as a result of an absence of information sharing. Action 3 Special Guardianship payments have been delayed.	Action 1 Meeting held between to discuss outcomes of file review. Encourage consultations with MH SFT practitioners for advice and guidance where MH is factor. If there is a challenge in receiving information this should be escalated. Ensure through supervision and oversight that all agencies are being consulted. Ensure learning and development (which take place as part of pathfinder) for importance of family networks and those connected to a child. SMs and TM’s to review other cases in teams in chesil where maybe family arrangements where there has been no legal. Ongoing learning and development. Review of family arrangements from will be shared. Action 2 Encourage consultations with MH SFT practitioners for advice and guidance where MH is factor. If there is a challenge in receiving information this should be escalated. Ensure through supervision and oversight that all agencies are being consulted. Ensure learning and development (which take place as part of pathfinder) for importance of family networks and those connected to a child. Reflective session to take place by SMs with TM. Action 3 This has now been remedied and complainant has received a back payment and ongoing payments as per the support plan.
COM 7223 CSC (DMc)	Need to focus on cases during transfer from CP to Permanence and that identified actions are checked and followed up	Discussed at a Team meeting under ‘Practice Matters’
COM/7792 LC	Childs missing episode on the 23 rd September 2024	XX are now instructed/guided to call mother immediately if child leaves the sight of supporting adults whilst in the community, this includes leaving the XX without a supporting adult. Once a telephone call is made to Mother XX supporting adult will call the police and then drive to your mother’s property, positioning the car on the road leading to the property in attempt to prevent and discourage any unwanted behaviour.



		In response to your complaint, manager has scrutinised the incident documentation for factual information and has completed a lesson's learnt to understand what changes can be made to improve response to situations that may occur in the future and learn from this. We have amended child's risk assessment to instruct/advise supporting adults to call parent before calling the police. Our embedded police colleague has completed sessional work with child in managing safety and behaviours. We have also liaised with our local police service and there is a marker put on your mother and grandparents home address.
COM/6847 C SC (INFORMAL) (BL)	Data Breach Learnings The assessing social worker had misunderstood the consent to share form, believing this to mean that you had given your permission for this information to be included.	Following this incident, the manager worked with the complainant and his ex-partner to compile an assessment that was agreeable to both parties and the new document does not contain this personal information. A request has been made for all copies of the previous document to be deleted and the new assessment is now recorded on our electronic record. To ensure that this does not happen again the issue was immediately brought to the notice of the whole team and clarification of the consent to share process was communicated.
COM/7826 C SC (LW)	Child was assaulted by another individual living at an address, whilst in care.	The manager changed the Social Worker, and the team the child is in, the day following the incident. Manager will be very careful in matching child with any young people if he does move somewhere else with other young people. Manager to speak to the Police to check an area before child is moved, to consider the risk within the area. Manager is also completing a viability assessment on the brother of the complainant.
COM 7358 C SC (DMc)	Language and behaviour used by foster carer unacceptable	Training to be provided for foster carers To explore training opportunities for previous carer and family



	Carers had no experience with young people who have had a traumatic background	
COM/7863 C SC (KR)	The Social Worker sent the complainant the review Child and Family Assessment which outlined Dorset Council's recommendation and decision to step down our involvement from a Child in Need Plan. The Complainant stated that they did not receive the email.	In response to the complaint, manager has identified some key areas for learning, including ensuring that families are aware of our intention to step down our involvement from a Child in Need plan and for this to be discussed in a meeting with professionals and with the family prior to the meeting. Manager to work with the Social Worker to ensure these conversations are had verbally with families so our decision can be talked through, and so families do not feel this has been sprung upon them.
COM/7863 C SC (KR) (same complaint)	It was the Social Worker's understanding that an Advocate would be able to support a parent, regardless of Dorset Council stepping down the child's Child in Need plan. This was incorrect and the appropriate service for free, confidential, accurate and impartial advice and support relating to Education to families living in Dorset with children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) and parents and carers is SENDIASS.	Manager will be reminding the team of the referral and eligibility process for the Advocacy services within our local offer to ensure that everyone is clear on the eligibility for accessing these services and to avoid any confusion or undue stress on families.
COM/4647 C SC (KR)	In this case, the lack of consistent involvement and delays in response are recognised as sources of frustration for the father warranting compensation as a goodwill gesture to acknowledge these service lapses and the resultant impact on the family.	An apology and the £500 payment aligns with the Local Government Ombudsman's Financial Remedies Guidance, which advises symbolic payments when service failures cause inconvenience or distress.
COM/7846 C SC (CB)	Complaint about having to chase SW for dates of meetings and minutes.	Social worker now aware of the need to get Core Group meeting minutes recorded and to send the records to everyone who attended the meetings. 3 month reminder set for complaints to check that this is being actioned.
COM/7921 C SC (CB)	Our Social Worker is from overseas and sometimes communication can be a barrier. We are working alongside them to help reduce this.	A support plan is already being created alongside Social Worker in helping to aid and develop their communication style.
COM 8111 C SC (DMc)	Not all information recorded	Reminded the Team of importance of recording at the time of event so they have all the right information on hand



COM/8092 C WA (KR)	Social workers should avoid taking work-related telephone calls during personal emergencies.	The social worker involved has been advised not to take work-related calls during personal emergencies. This learning will be shared with the wider team during the next team meeting on 6 February 2025.
COM/8198 C WA (KR)	- The importance of ensuring clarity and proper understanding of concerns and requests through appropriate channels. - The need to address and differentiate safeguarding concerns, information requests, and court-related matters clearly. The significance of maintaining positive working relationships between all parties involved for the child's best interests.	- Reviewed records and engaged with relevant social workers to ensure accurate understanding and response. - Confirmed procedures for handling safeguarding concerns and thresholds for investigations. - Allocated a new social worker with a planned handover to ensure continuity and support. Offered a meeting with senior staff to clarify roles, responsibilities, and improve collaboration.
COM/8390 C WA E&P Permanence (KR)	Contact for visit arrangements should be confirmed by phone if not agreed in person or via email and unannounced visits can cause frustration and should be avoided where possible.	Social workers will be instructed to confirm future visits either during a visit or by phone if prior agreement is not reached.
COM 8293 C SC (DMc)	Team Manager been advised that good practice would have been to share the ongoing communication with Miss X with the Complaints Team and Miss X be offered the opportunity to submit formal complaint	Discussed at supervision meeting
COM/8453 CSC LC	character statement from someone who said they are a trainee social worker for Dorset Council. She later identified this person as *****. Customer stated that officer has provided completely false information in their witness statement. Customer is concerned that officer is having a lot of involvement with ex on a personal level. X told me the purpose of her call was that she wants to ensure that someone who is giving these false statement, giving advice and stating they are a trainee Social Worker are not accessing her records.	Whilst employees can provide character references for friends/family, xxxx should not have submitted this character reference using her student social worker title. This is not appropriate and should not be associated with Dorset Council. This has been discussed with the officer and is being addressed with her. checked the systems and xxxx has not had access to records, or children's records or files or ex's children's records. As an outcome of this investigation and peace of mind and the protection xxxx we will now lock down the records so xxxx will not have access to any of these records.

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

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

Data Protection and Appropriate Action to take

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

Safeguarding, the Legal Framework and Good Practice

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

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

All complainants to Dorset Council are sent an equality and diversity monitoring form as part of the complaint process. Complainants are asked to complete this form but it is completely voluntary. 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

Gender

- **Female:** 49.2%
 - **Male:** 34.0%
 - **Prefer not to say:** (6.5%)
 - **Prefer to self-describe:** (0.7%)
 - **Non-Binary:** (0.3%)
 - **Missing:** (9.3%)
-

Gender Assigned at Birth

- **Yes:** (80.5%)
 - **Prefer not to say:** (8.5%)
 - **No:** (0.7%)
 - **Missing:** (10.4%)
-

Age Group

- **55–64:** (17.7%)

- **35–44:** (16.7%)
 - **45–54:** (16.2%)
 - **65–74:** (13.5%)
 - **25–34:** (12.8%)
 - **75–84:** (5.6%)
 - **19–24:** (3.2%)
 - **Over 85:** (1.2%)
 - **16–18:** (0.8%)
 - **Missing:** (12.4%)
-

Disability Status

- **No:** (54.0%)
 - **Yes:** (21.1%)
 - **Prefer not to say:** (13.9%)
 - **Missing:** (11.0%)
-

Ethnicity

- **White - British:** (69.1%)
 - **Prefer not to say:** (4.0%)
 - **White - Other White background:** (1.6%)
 - **Other ethnicities:** <1%
 - **Missing:** (22.2%)
-

Sexual Orientation

- **Heterosexual/Straight:** (66.2%)
 - **Prefer not to say:** (14.7%)
 - **Bi:** (1.8%)
 - **Other:** (1.7%)
 - **Gay Woman/Lesbian:** (1.0%)
 - **Gay Man:** (0.9%)
 - **Missing:** (13.8%)
-

Religion or Belief

- **None/no religion:** (34.8%)
- **Christian (all denominations):** (29.9%)
- **Prefer not to say:** (12.0%)
- **Atheist:** (2.5%)
- **Other religions:** <3%
- **Missing:** (17.4%)

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 95 compliments in 2024-2025 so genuinely heartening to see

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