

CHILDREN & FAMILIES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS

PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/2025

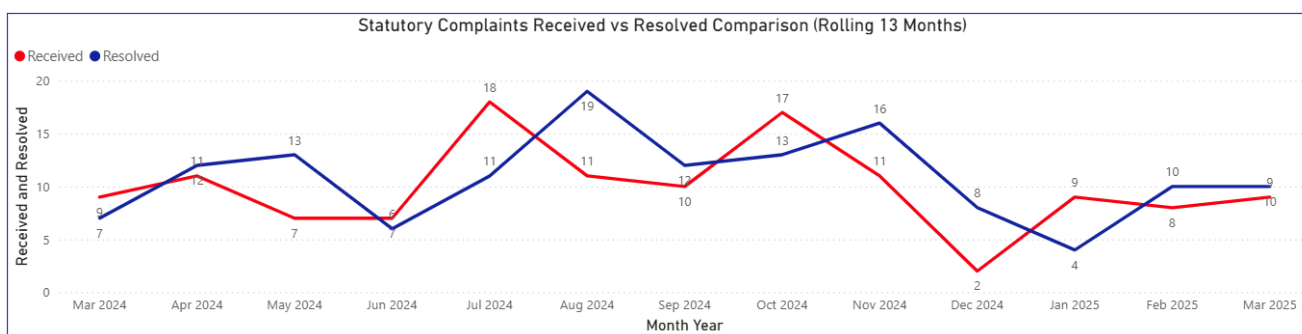
Date: June 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report focuses on Children's Social Care complaints and compliments received for the period 1 April 2024 to the 31 March 2025. The report makes extensive use throughout of data, feedback received, as well as insight and learning from operational services.

During the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, 120 Children's Social Care stage 1 complaints were considered under the statutory complaints process, which is 45% higher than the 66 complaints for previous period 2023/2024. The statutory timeframes for Children's Statutory Complaints is 10 days to respond at stage 1, extendable to 20.

Graph: Statutory Cases Received and Resolved (Rolling 13 Months)



During this period around a 32% were responded to within 10 working days. Cases taking over 50 days were the following topics:

- **Assessments:** 5 cases
- **Quality of Care:** 3 cases
- **Staff Conduct:** 2 cases
- **Finance:** 1 case

This year 37% of statutory complaints were upheld at stage 1, which is a 23% reduction from the previous financial year. This does represent more complaints being upheld the reduction in upheld rate is due to there being more complaints in total thus the proportion of upheld complaint is less.

Table: Upheld/Partially Upheld Statutory Cases by Quadrant

Quadrant	Received	Resolved	Upheld Cases	Partially Upheld Cases	% Upheld/Partially Upheld	Average Days to Respond
North	39	42	2	10	29%	15
Mid	37	41	6	10	39%	18
South	29	35	7	7	40%	18
West	11	13	1	5	46%	13
Countywide	2	1	0	0	0%	14
Not Recorded	2	2	1	1	50%	16
Total	120	134	16	33	37%	17

The most statutory complaints received were in the Staff Conduct topic followed by Assessments and Quality of Care. This differs from the previous year where the most complaints were regarding Assessments followed by Safeguarding and Staff Conduct. Staff Conduct complaints have risen by more than 300%.

Table: Statutory Cases Resolved by Topic

Topic	Resolved 2024/25	Resolved 2023/24
Staff Conduct	47	11
Assessments	36	15
Quality of Care	36	9
Safeguarding	9	11
Finance	6	9
Total	134	55

Table: Topic by Statutory Case Outcome

Of these Staff Conduct complaints 21% (10) were upheld. Compared to last year where 45% (5) complaints were upheld. Most complaints were upheld but proportionately less.

Overall, 37% (49) of statutory complaints were upheld compared with 60% (33) in 2023/24. This suggest that there are more complaints in 2024/25 however they are not being upheld and could be avoidable using some of the learnings above.

Topic	Not Relevant	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Staff Conduct	1	35	6	4	1	47
Assessments	1	16	11	7	1	36
Quality of Care	1	17	13	2	3	36
Safeguarding	0	6	3	0	0	9
Finance	0	3	0	3	0	6
Total	3	77	33	16	5	134

In recent years, the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in analysing complaints has revolutionised the way organisations handle customer feedback. AI technologies, such as natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning, have been employed to sift through vast amounts of complaint data efficiently and accurately. This approach not only saves time but also uncovers valuable insights that might be overlooked by manual analysis.

The primary reasons for utilising AI in complaints analysis include its ability to identify recurring themes, detect patterns, and extract actionable insights from unstructured data. AI can quickly categorise complaints, highlight common issues, and suggest potential improvements.

In this context, the use of AI to analyse the child and family stage 1 and corporate complaints for the year has provided a comprehensive overview of the themes, actions, and learnings embedded within the complaint descriptions. By leveraging AI, we can gain a deeper understanding of the underlying issues and take proactive measures to address them, ensuring a more responsive and customer-centric approach.

AI analysis of child and family services stage 1 statutory and corporate complaints provided the following results:

Communication Issues

Several complaints highlighted a lack of communication from social workers, including not returning calls or emails, and not providing updates on cases. There were some cases where social workers provided confusing or contradictory information, leading to frustration and misunderstandings.

Professionalism and Conduct

There were some complaints about social workers being rude, dismissive, or unprofessional during interactions with families and some highlighted concerns about social workers showing bias, not being empathetic, or not considering the family's perspective.

Decision-Making and Case Handling

Complaints were about social workers not providing adequate support, not following up on important issues, and not taking necessary actions. There were some issues with social workers providing incorrect information in reports or not including all relevant details.

Confidentiality and Trust

There were instances where social workers shared personal information without consent, leading to a loss of trust and some general concerns about the trustworthiness of social workers and the impact on the family's willingness to engage with services.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides information on complaints Children and Family Services for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, dealt with through either the statutory social care complaints procedure or the corporate complaints process. The complaints process provides us with the opportunity to monitor performance, improve service quality and learn from complaints made by our service users. We achieve this by capturing a range of complaint information including, the nature of the complaint, the action we took, the outcome of the complaint and whether we responded to the complaint on time. By publishing an annual complaint report, we hope to demonstrate our commitment to transparency and a positive approach to dealing with and learning from complaints.

BACKGROUND

Under statutory regulations, we are required to prepare an annual report about the previous year that examines how well we dealt with Children and Family complaints, including the numbers received and how many were upheld. Our Children and Family service is required to operate a statutory complaints procedure in accordance with the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 and the Local Authority Social Services Complaints (Amendment) Regulations 2009. Any complaint, which does not fall under these provisions, we will consider under our corporate complaint's procedure.

ANALYSIS OF COMPLAINTS

AI analysis of all Children and Family social care complaints provided the following results:

LEARNINGS FROM UPHELD (INCLUDING PARTIALLY UPHELD) COMPLAINTS

Communication Issues

Consider communication protocols to ensure timely updates and responses. Implement regular check-ins and follow-ups to keep clients informed. Reviewing training on effective communication skills and guidelines for communication with residents.

Staff Conduct

Address unprofessional behaviour and ensure staff demonstrate empathy and respect towards clients. This could be actioned by providing training on professional conduct, empathy, and bias awareness.

Assessment and Decision-Making

Ensure assessments are thorough, accurate, and timely. Involve people in the decision-making process to enhance transparency.

Support and Services

Identify any gaps in service provision.

Safeguarding Concerns

Strengthen safeguarding measures to protect residents from harm. Ensure all actions are appropriate and in the best interest of the client. Ensure all staff are completing their ongoing training on safeguarding protocols.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Investigate any perceived gaps in data handling. Ensure staff are completing mandatory training on data protection and confidentiality.

LEARNINGS FROM NOT UPHELD COMPLAINTS:

Communication Issues

Even when complaints are not upheld, it's important to ensure people feel heard and understood. Consider if any improvement can be made.

Assessment and Decision-Making

Continue to ensure that all assessments and decisions are well-documented and justified, providing clarity to residents.

Support and Services

Regularly review the adequacy of support and services provided, even if complaints are not upheld.

Safeguarding Concerns

Continue to ensure that safeguarding concerns are always taken seriously and investigated thoroughly.

CONCLUSION

This report is produced independently of Child and Family Services and as such does not capture all learning and actions taken as a result of customer feedback and complaints. Throughout the year learning from complaints is undertaken by teams and services based on feedback from people who use the services and professional reflections.

The analysis shows that there has been an increased number of child statutory complaints received, and a higher proportion of those complaints were not upheld compared with the previous year, indicating there may be some avoidable complaints. More complaints were part upheld than fully upheld, many of these cases were due to complaints having multiple points raised where some of the points were upheld and others not upheld, leading to an overall outcome of part upheld.

This year, ECC received 120 stage 1 statutory Children Social Care complaints and 200 Corporate Complaints, totalling 320 new complaints received. There were 22 new statutory stage 2 cases, which equates to 16% of resolved stage 1 statutory complaints during the year going to stage 2. This compares to 9% the previous year. Therefore, both volume and proportion of stage 2 child statutory complaints were higher in 2024/25 compared with the previous year; around three quarters of the complaints escalated to stage 2 had an outcome of upheld or part upheld and had a different outcome compared to the stage 1 outcomes, indicating further improvements could be made to stage 1 responses.

Although there was a higher volume of complaints received in 2024/25 compared with the previous year, there were only 4 complaints upheld by the Ombudsman, compared with 3 the previous year. The rate of Ombudsman complaints upheld compared with our received volumes was just 1%, the same as 2023/24.

COMPLAINTS BY TOPIC

Table: Complaints Received by Topic for Current and Previous Year

Topic	Received 2024/25	Received 2023/24
Assessments	74	64
Finance	7	14
Quality of Care	49	23
Safeguarding	38	62
Staff Conduct	152	117
Total	320	280

COMPLAINTS BY LOCATION

The most complaints were received from within Colchester followed by Chelmsford. Last year the most complaints were also received from within the Colchester area however this was followed by Braintree and whilst complaint from Braintree remain consistent the complaints from within Chelmsford have increased by 83%.

Table: Complaints by Location

District	Received 2024/25	Received 2023/24
Basildon	33	22
Braintree	30	32
Brentwood	8	7
Castle Point	12	6
Chelmsford	44	24
Colchester	56	46
Countywide	7	16
Epping Forest	13	23
Harlow	18	23
Maldon	13	6
Not Applicable	7	33
Other	25	9
Rochford	13	5
Tendring	33	20
Uttlesford	8	8
Total	320	280

THEMES BY QUADRANT

Mid and North quadrant have received the most complaints this year. This is mostly in the Staff Conduct topic. However, 37% and 29% of complaints respectively in these quadrants were upheld.

Table: Topics by Quadrant

Topic	Countywide	Mid	North	Not Recorded	South	West	Total
Assessments	4	16	32	7	18	8	74
Finance	0	2	4	0	1	0	7
Quality of Care	0	14	13	3	9	10	49
Safeguarding	2	12	15	2	2	5	38
Staff Conduct	3	46	47	9	25	22	152
Total	9	90	100	21	55	45	320

Table: Upheld/Partially Upheld Combined Cases by Quadrant

The quadrant with the highest upheld complaints was South with 41% followed by West with 40% however it should be noted that they received almost half the number of complaints of Mid and North quadrants.

Quadrant	Received	Resolved	Upheld Cases	Partially Upheld Cases	% Upheld/Partially Upheld	Average Days to Respond
Countywide	9	8	3	0	38%	17
Mid	90	98	12	24	37%	16
North	100	106	8	23	29%	15
Not Recorded	21	23	3	3	26%	14
South	55	61	13	12	41%	17
West	45	48	6	13	40%	17
Total	320	344	45	75	35%	16

Table: Upheld/Partially Upheld Statutory Cases by Team

Team	# Received	# Resolved	# Upheld/ Partially Upheld	% Upheld/ Partially Upheld	% Not Upheld/ Withdrawn	Average Days to Respond
A&I & CYPWD (Mid)	19	20	9	45%	55%	21
A&I & CYPWD (North)	11	9	6	67%	33%	24
A&I & CYPWD (South)	18	23	9	39%	61%	14
A&I & CYPWD (West)	5	6	4	67%	33%	10
C&F Hub	3	4	1	25%	75%	17
CIC & Leaving Care (North)	13	16	4	25%	75%	12
CIC & Leaving Care/Fostering (Mid)	15	16	8	50%	50%	14
CIC & Leaving Care/Fostering (South)	8	9	2	22%	78%	13
CIC & Leaving Care/Fostering (West)	4	5	1	20%	80%	8
Family Solutions + Supporting Families	4	4	0	0%	100%	17
FS&P (Mid)	4	5	0	0%	100%	8
FS&P (North)	7	7	1	14%	86%	13
FS&P (South)	2	2	2	100%	0%	38
FS&P (West)	0	1	0	0%	100%	0
FT & Support Service	1	1	0	0%	100%	10
Local Delivery (North)	2	2	0	0%	100%	10
Mental Health	1	1	1	100%	0%	23
Not Recorded	2	3	1	33%	67%	7
Safeguarding – Independent Review	1	0	0	0%	100%	6
Total	120	134	49	37%	63%	15

Analysis: Statutory Complaints Cases by Team

The following analysis has been conducted in response to a notable trend observed across the CIC & Leaving Care/Fostering teams, where only 33% of statutory complaints resolved are either Upheld or Partially Upheld.

The purpose of this analysis is to explore the nature and themes of these complaints, categorised by specialism, and to provide a comparative overview of those that were Not Upheld.

By examining complaint descriptions and outcomes, and identifying patterns across teams, this analysis aims to support service improvement and enhance responsiveness to concerns raised by service users.

Upheld & Partially Upheld Statutory Complaints by Specialism

Assessments

- **Themes:** Delays in receiving reports, lack of emotional and psychological support, inaccurate documentation.
- **Outcome:** Apologies issued, corrections made, and support plans initiated.

Quality of Care

- **Themes:** Poor communication, lack of support, incorrect documentation, and exclusion from decision-making.
- **Outcome:** Acknowledgement of service gaps, apologies, and reassurances of ongoing support.

Safeguarding

- **Themes:** Concerns about foster carer behaviour and child safety.
- **Outcome:** Miscommunication acknowledged; safeguarding protocols reinforced.

Staff Conduct

- **Themes:** Allegations of misinformation, pressure tactics, and lack of empathy.
- **Outcome:** Partial recognition of procedural issues; clarification and improvement actions taken.

Not Upheld Statutory Complaints by Specialism

Assessments

- **Themes:** Lack of consultation, poor transition planning, and advocacy concerns.

Finance

- **Themes:** Disputes over fostering payments and financial responsibility.

Quality of Care

- **Themes:** Perceived negligence, poor placement decisions, and lack of educational support.

Staff Conduct

- **Themes:** Allegations of misconduct, poor communication, and lack of transparency.

Not Upheld Statutory Complaints by Team

Across all teams, communication issues, lack of transparency, and disputes over decision-making are common in Not Upheld complaints. These themes suggest that while complaints may not meet the threshold for formal upholding, they often reflect service user dissatisfaction with engagement and clarity.

Individual team analysis below:

CIC & Leaving Care (North)

- **Themes:** Financial disputes, lack of support, and dissatisfaction with foster placements.
- **Examples:** Complaints about missed payments, perceived negligence, and lack of communication.

CIC & Leaving Care/Fostering (Mid)

- **Themes:** Placement decisions, emotional wellbeing, and lack of transparency.
- **Examples:** Concerns about sudden moves, poor handling of sensitive family matters, and limited updates.

CIC & Leaving Care/Fostering (South)

- **Themes:** Procedural dissatisfaction and communication breakdowns.
- **Examples:** Complaints about missed meetings, lack of clarity on care plans, and perceived bias in decision-making.

CIC & Leaving Care/Fostering (West)

- **Themes:** Procedural dissatisfaction and communication breakdowns.
- **Examples:** Complaints about missed meetings, lack of clarity on care plans, and perceived bias in decision-making.

Overall volumes for complaints by children in financial year 2024/25 have increased by 65% (15 cases) compared to financial year 2023/24, with the increase seen primarily in the North and South quadrants and the Staff Conduct and Quality of Care topics.

Complaints by children are categorised where a cases complainant was either a Child or Adult (aged since time of complaint) service user or an Advocate, with no other complainants associated.

Table: % Complaints by Children by Quadrant

The North quadrant received the most complaints by children with 12 complaints which resulted in 12% of all North quadrant complaints being made by children. The Staff Conduct topic was the driver with 8 complaints relating to that topic.

The South quadrant had the highest % of complaints made by children at 18% which amounted to 10 complaints. The Staff Conduct, and Quality of Care, topics were the drivers with 4 and 3 complaints raised for those topics, respectively.

The West quadrant was joint-top with the South quadrant with % of complaints made by children at 18% which amounted to 8 complaints, however overall complaint volume was less than the South quadrant. The Staff Conduct, and Quality of Care, topics were the drivers with 4 and 3 complaints raised for those topics, respectively.

Quadrant	Received 2024/25	Complaints by Children 2024/25	% Complaints by Children 2024/25	Complaints by Children 2023/24
North	100	12	12%	6
South	55	10	18%	5
West	45	8	18%	4
Mid	90	7	8%	8
Countywide	9	1	13%	0
Not Recorded	21	0	0%	0
Total	320	38	12%	23

Table: % Complaints by Children by Topic

The Staff Conduct topic received the most complaints by children with 18 complaints which resulted in 12% of all Staff Conduct complaints being made by children.

The Quality of Care topic had the highest % of complaints made by children at 22% which amounted to 11 complaints.

The Finance topic did have a higher rate at 43% however due to relatively low volume with complaints received, percentages may appear disproportionately large and may not accurately reflect meaningful insight.

Topic	Received 2024/25	Complaints by Children 2024/25	% Complaints by Children 2024/25	Complaints by Children 2023/24
Staff Conduct	152	18	12%	9
Quality of Care	49	11	22%	3
Assessments	74	4	5%	7
Finance	7	3	43%	0
Safeguarding	38	2	5%	4
Total	320	38	12%	23

Voiceability have been commissioned to provide an all-age advocacy service that provides both statutory and non-statutory advocacy. Their contract runs from July 2024 to June 2029.

Some of the children's cases are subcontracted to action for family carers, whilst Voiceability increase their own capacity of trained staff.

In the period 1st July 2024 to 30th June 2025 139 referrals were received.

The top 3 most common issues for Voiceability during this period were (All CYP Referrals):

- **Information/exploring options for decision making:** 60
- **Housing/Accommodation Related Issues:** 50
- **Support at or Representation at Meetings (Lac/CP):** 38

Chart: Referrals by Referral Source

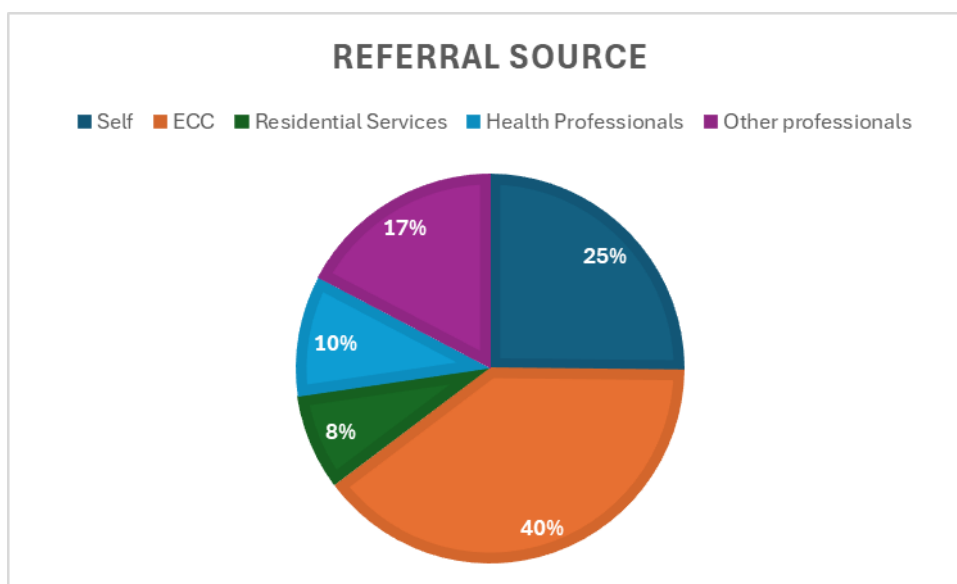


Table: Age Demographics

Age Group	Referrals
0-4	1
5-9	9
10-14	19
15-19	80
20-24	11
Not disclosed	6

Table: Ethnicity Demographics

Ethnicity	Referrals
White	76
Unknown	6
Prefer not to say	12
Black / African / Caribbean	2
Asian / Asian British	2
Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Groups	9
Inappropriate to ask	30
Other Ethnic Group	0

Table: Gender Demographics

Gender	Referrals
Male	49
Female	47
Unknown	22

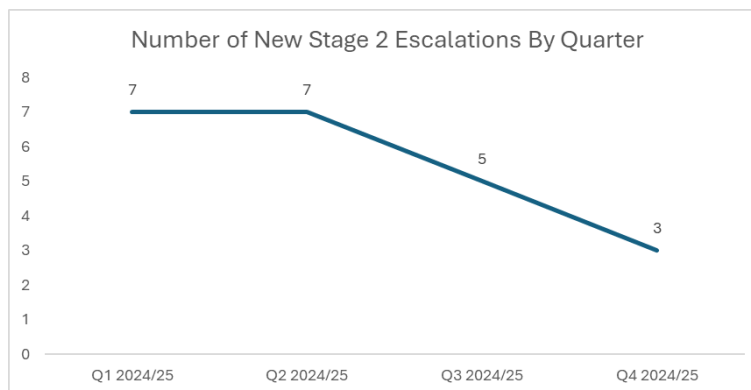
CHILD STATUTORY COMPLAINTS STAGE 2 AND STAGE 3 ANALYSIS

Between April 2024 and March 2025, 22 new requests were progressed for child stat complaints to be escalated to Stage 2. At the start of the year there were 4 cases with a Stage 2 investigation in progress. A total of 26 cases were in progress at Stage 2 during the year.

Between April 2024 and March 2025, 19 cases received a Stage 2 child statutory complaint response. At the end of the year, there were 6 cases with current Stage 2 investigations in progress (these will complete in 2025/26).

Of the 19 resolved cases, 3 were upheld, 11 were part upheld and 4 were not upheld.

At the start of the year a high volume of Stage 2 requests was being received. Quarters 3 and 4 showed a trend of the volume reducing. The graph below demonstrates this. The reduction is likely due to the Complaints and Compliance Team working with child and family services to encourage a phone call prior to progressing to stage 2, to explore further resolution at local level.



Between April 2024 and March 2025, 5 Stage 3 panel hearings took place, and 7 final Stage 3 adjudication decisions were issued (2 of these were for panel hearings held in 2023/24).

Of the 7 Stage 3 final decisions, none were upheld, 5 were part upheld and 2 were not upheld.

SUMMARY OF REMEDIES AND ACTIONS AGREED FOR STAGE 2 AND 3 CHILD STATUTORY COMPLAINTS

There were several recommendations agreed by Child and Family services as a result of stage 2 and 3 statutory complaints. These are summarised below:

1. Apologies and Acknowledgment

- 5 formal apology letters from a senior manager within child and family services.

2. Financial Remedies

- 4 Financial Remedies for distress, uncertainty and/or inconvenience caused by having to go through the complaints process.

3. Information, Communication & Documentation Improvements

- Review of the information provided to families in receipt of Direct Payments.
- Resend eligibility criteria for direct payments and the Direct Payment Tool documents to Social Workers.
- Send out minutes of a TAF meeting which had not previously been sent out to a parent.
- Put into place a communication plan for a parent of a child in care, to help them to understand what to expect.
- Review information on the local offer and ensure it is accessible to parents of children with disabilities.
- Amend a section 7 report to ensure a balanced view of both parents and review language used.
- Consider putting into place checks for a manager to have oversight when a case is closed due to a resident parent withdrawing consent.

4. Training and Professional Development

- Work with a provider to ensure access to high-quality training for personal assistants.
- Update Children's Services staff training in respect of relevant ages for fostering.

5. Assessments and Reassessments

- 3 reassessments of a child and/or family's needs to consider respite.
- Support a parent to access an assessment with Adult Services for mental health.
- Instigate a continuing care fund assessment to check if a child is eligible for health funding to help manage their needs.
- Step down following a CWD assessment, including arranging a TAF meeting and identifying a lead professional.

6. Service and Support Enhancements

- Consider funding activities during school holidays for a child with disabilities.
- Consider developing a workflow process that includes parental feedback in assessments.
- Ensure parental views are included in needs assessments before managerial sign-off.

7. Case Management and Oversight

- 2 cases included reminding social workers and team managers of the importance of having chronological dated life plans.
- Remind social workers and team managers of the importance of copying email communications into the young person's electronic record.
- Remind social workers and team managers of the importance of arranging Statutory visits on schedule.
- Remind social workers and team managers of the importance of seeing a child on their own during statutory visits.
- Check with a young person in care to see if they would like to change their social worker due to delays experienced between statutory visits.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN INVESTIGATIONS

During 2024/25 30 Child and Family Services cases were escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. 4 were progressed to formal investigation. Of the cases investigated 4 were upheld. This compares to 3 cases being upheld the previous year. 1 of the upheld cases was deemed that the council had already provided a satisfactory remedy. The other 3 upheld cases agreed the remedies to be an apology and financial remedy.

The Ombudsman made service and learning related recommendations for one case in relation to child and family services. These were:

- To deliver briefings to social workers in the children in care service clarifying ECC policy and expectations when a child being adopted has welfare benefits in payment that need to transfer to the adopted parents; and when they have a personal education plan that must transfer to a new school or local authority area. This is to avoid a repeat of the confusion found during this investigation over both these matters.
- To review the support services ECC offers to adoptive parents in the time between a child moving into LA care and an Adoption Order being made. ECC agreed a need for a clear procedure to show who was responsible for considering requests for services from adoptive parents and what services we may offer, including mental health support for the child or parents. ECC also agreed to consider what further training or support its social workers may need if faced with such requests. This is to avoid a repeat of fault found, where adoptive parents asked for and needed support, but the Council failed to respond in good time or provide adequate support until the Adoption Order was made.

The summaries published by the LGSCO on their website for the 4 upheld cases are copied below:

- Case 1: Mrs X complained the Council's child in need reports contained wrong or inaccurate information and did not appropriately consider the medical evidence she provided. Mrs X also complained the Council did not arrange a transition plan for her son to its adult social care team. Mrs X says the Council's actions meant she and her son did not receive the support they should have. We found fault regarding how the Council investigated the complaint about the child in need reports, but no fault in its consideration of a transition plan. The Council has agreed to provide a remedy to address the injustice identified.
- Case 2: Mr X complained about how the Council responded to a concern he raised in relation to his son, after a childcare arrangement broke down. There was no fault in the Council's initial decision to take no action. It took a decision it was able to take and there is no obvious flaw in the way it made this decision. Nor was there any fault in how it carried out its duties as part of the child and family assessment process after it received more information. There was fault it delayed completing that assessment, and this delay caused Mr X an injustice. However, I find there is no significant unremedied injustice remaining.
- Case 3: We upheld a complaint from Mr D and Mr E that they did not receive enough support from the Council when they adopted a child from its area. In particular, when they needed support with the child's challenging behaviours. We considered fault by the Council caused them unnecessary distress. The Council accepted these findings. At the end of this statement, we set out the action it has agreed to take to remedy their injustice and make service improvements.
- Case 4: Mrs X complained the Council failed to safeguard her child and failed to carry out correct assessments. Mrs X said this caused her child permanent physical scars and caused her unnecessary and avoidable distress and frustration. We find the Council at fault, and this caused injustice. The Council has agreed to apologise and make a payment to reflect the injustice caused.

COMPLIMENTS ANALYSIS

This year there were **226 compliments** received by Children and Families. An analysis of these showed the following main themes and learnings:

Main Themes and Learnings

1. Quality of Care

- **High-Quality Care:** Compliments often highlight the compassionate and attentive care provided by the staff. Service users and their families appreciate the positive impacts on their lives, effective communication, and the dedication shown by the care providers.
- **Positive Outcomes:** Many compliments mention significant improvements in the well-being and quality of life of service users due to the care received.

2. Staff Conduct

- **Professionalism and Empathy:** Many compliments focus on the professionalism, empathy, and dedication of staff members. Social workers and other staff are praised for their supportive, caring, and respectful attitudes.
- **Support and Guidance:** Compliments often mention the valuable support and guidance provided by staff, which helps service users, and their families navigate challenging situations.

3. Assessments

- **Thorough and Timely Evaluations:** Compliments related to assessments mention thorough and timely evaluations, clear communication, and effective collaboration with service users and their families.
- **Positive Impact:** The assessments are often praised for their positive impact on the care and support provided to service users.

4. Safeguarding

- **Dignity and Respect:** Compliments related to safeguarding highlight the importance of treating service users with dignity and respect, listening to their concerns, and ensuring their safety.
- **Effective Handling:** Compliments often mention the effective handling of safeguarding concerns and the positive outcomes achieved.

5. Finance

- **Helpful Financial Support:** Compliments related to finance mention the helpfulness of staff in resolving financial issues, providing clear guidance, and supporting service users during difficult times.
- **Professionalism:** Financial staff are praised for their professionalism and understanding.

Examples of Compliments

Here are some examples of compliments received this year:

- **Example 1:** North Quadrant - 'CUSTOMER THANKS THE FAMILY WORKER FOR THEIR HARD WORK AND SUPPORT. CUSTOMER DOES NOT FEEL LIKE THEY WOULD HAVE HAD THE STRENGTH OR COURAGE TO GET THROUGH AND BE WHERE THEY ARE NOW WITHOUT THE HELP OF FAMILY SOLUTIONS.'
- **Example 2:** North Quadrant - 'THANK YOU FROM STUDENT SOCIAL WORKER TO PLACEMENT TEAM FOR RECENT PLACEMENT UNDERTAKEN. GAVE PRAISE OF BOTH YOUR PLACEMENT FACILITATION AND THE TEAM SUPPORT. STATED THAT THE PLACEMENT WAS OUTSTANDING AND THAT ALL STUDENTS WHO CAN COME TO THE TEAM WOULD FEEL NURTURED AND SUPPORTED, RESPECTED AND INCLUDED AND HE WILL BE FOREVER THANKFUL OF THE OPPORTUNITY HE WAS GIVEN.'
- **Example 3:** North Quadrant - 'FAMILY SHARING FEEDBACK THAT THE SUPPORT WORKER PLAYED A HUGE PART IN BUILDING THEM BACK UP AND THEY ARE SAD TO SEE THEIR CASE IS BEING CLOSED.'
- **Example 4:** North Quadrant - 'CUSTOMER STATES - THEY WANTED TO REITERATE THEIR THANKS AND APPRECIATION FOR THE WORK SW HAS CARRIED OUT SUPPORTING THEIR SON. THEY KNOW THEY'RE NOT THE

EASIEST PERSON TO WORK WITH BUT SW HAS PERSEVERED AND HOPEFULLY FOUND A SOLUTION TO HELP SUPPORT THEIR SON IN THE COMING YEARS. SW HAS BEEN PATIENT, PROFESSIONAL & KIND BUT ABOVE ALL SHE HAS REALLY LISTENED TO THEM AND THEIR WIFE IN THEIR REQUESTS AND CONCERNS REGARDING THEIR SON."

- **Example 5:** North Quadrant - "CUSTOMER WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE SOCIAL WORKER FOR HER HELP SUPPORTING THEIR SON. CUSTOMER HAS DESCRIBED THE SOCIAL WORKER AS PATIENT, PROFESSIONAL AND KIND."

APPENDIX 1: COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The way we deal with representations and complaints relating to Adults Social Care is set down by Central Government. As a result, the process and timescales for dealing with them may vary dependent upon the type of complaint or representation being made.

Who can use this process?

- a person who receives or has received services from Essex County Council; or
- a person who is affected by, or likely to be affected by, the action, omission, or decision of Essex County Council.
- by a person acting on behalf of a person mentioned above who:
 - has died
 - is a child
 - is unable to make the complaint themselves because of physical incapacity or lack of capacity within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act 2005

If the complainant has a private arrangement with a social care organisation or provider, they will need to raise their complaint with them.

Our complaints policy cannot change decisions made by a court of law. We may not be able to help if the event you are complaining about occurred longer than 12 months ago.

STEP 1 – LOCAL RESOLUTION

Most problems are resolved by speaking to the person you are dealing with or their manager. If you are not able to resolve it this way, please tell us the details of your complaint. We will investigate the complaint quickly and thoroughly and give you a detailed response, this will:

- summarise the nature and substance of the complaint
- describe our investigation process and summarise its conclusions and findings; and,
- include any apology, remedy, outcome or explanation or planned action

If the complaint is about both health and social care, we will work with our health colleagues and the complainant to try to reach a resolution. To do this we will need the complainant's permission to share the details of their complaint.

Everyone who funds their own care, including those using a direct payment, have the right to refer any complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, once the residential home or domiciliary care agency has had an opportunity to investigate and resolve the complaint. Although any complaint can be referred to the Ombudsman at any time for their consideration.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the recommendations of the Council's complaints process, it remains open to them to make a formal written complaint to the Ombudsman: <http://www.lgo.org.uk/>

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) is independent, impartial and gives a service which is confidential and free of charge. The Ombudsman has the same powers as the High Court to require people to provide information or produce documents for investigation.

Any member of the public can complain to the Ombudsman if they feel there has been maladministration or injustice. However, the Ombudsman usually suggests that the complainant should first exhaust the local complaints procedure, as detailed above.

REMEDIES

In most cases if a complaint is upheld or partially upheld, an apology will be offered and information will be given to the complainant as to what action the service will take to ensure the same situation does not arise again, for the complainant or future service users.

The apology should be given by the manager on behalf of the service complained about, although this can also be sent from a senior officer within the Compliance and Complaints Team.

If a case has been poorly handled causing an injustice to the individual, consideration will be given as to whether a financial remedy would be appropriate.

This information is issued by:
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County Hall, Chelmsford
Essex, CM1 1QH



Essex_CC



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The information contained in this document can be translated, and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.