

Annual Complaints Report - Solihull Children's Social Care Services

1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022

Executive Summary

Children's Social Work Services

- Information on how to complain, comment or make a compliment about Solihull Council's Children's Services can be found on the Council's webpages at <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Tell-us/Complain-about-childrens-services> and information specific to Children in Care can be found on the Internet at the following link <https://www.ovossolihull.co.uk/>
- 2021/22 saw a very slight increase in complaints to Solihull Children's Social Work Services compared to the previous year. 54 new complaints were received, compared to 52 in 2020/21.
- During 2021/22, Children's Social Work Services provided a service to 3433 service users and therefore complaints were received from only 1.6% of these people / their families.
- Children's Social Work complaints continue to be accurately split between Statutory, (complaints raised by or on behalf of children) and Corporate complaints (complaints raised by adults relating to any service provided directly to them). There were 23 new Statutory complaints and 32 new Corporate complaints during 2021-22.
- 53% (10/19) of Statutory complaints were resolved within the 20 working day timescale which is a decrease compared to 2020/21, but the level of detail included in Stage 1 responses has been maintained, despite the extenuating circumstances faced by Children's Social Work Services during the year, including the ongoing impact from the COVID pandemic. This reassures complainants that their complaints have been investigated and responded to appropriately
- The quality of responses has been maintained, with only 4 statutory complaints progressing to Stage 2 in 2021/22 and only 1 Ombudsman complaint investigation during 2021/22.
- Providing such quality responses does take time, but if the response resolves the complaint at a local level, then this can only be positive for both the complainant and the Council.

APPENDIX 1

- All but 13 of the new Statutory complaints received since 1st October 2013 have been resolved either via investigation at Stage 1 of the complaints process, through mediation, or through a combination of both.
- 79% of Corporate complaints were resolved within the extended 30 working day timescale, with 6 complaints taking longer to respond to. This is an increase compared to 64% in 2020/21. The extensions were all agreed with the complainant and were to ensure the fullest possible response for the complainant.
- During 2021/22, the Performance & Complaints Team has continued to send learning forms to investigating managers in Childrens Social Work Services for each complaint responded to and then liaise with those managers through to implementation of the learning highlighted. 89% (80 out of 90) of the learning forms sent to managers during 2020/21 had been completed and returned by the end of the reporting year and learning outcomes have been categorised. Information will be collated regarding the impact that this learning has had in practice. Any outstanding learning forms are chased by the Complaints Team until they have been returned.

Children's Learning and Achievement

- During 2021/22 there were 43 new complaints for the EHCP (Education, Health & Care) Team which is a increase compared to 31 in 2020/21. To support the SEND improvement journey staff have been actively encouraging of parents submitting formal complaints, so that issues can be clearly understood, looked at and addressed; and learning monitored at senior levels.
- 75% of the complaints responded to at Stage 1 by the EHCP Team were completed within 30 working days which despite an increase in complaints, is comparable to 77% in 2020/21.
- During 2020/21 the Performance and Complaints Team has sent learning forms to the investigating managers in Learning & Achievement for each complaint responded to. 75% (42 out of 56) of the learning forms sent to managers were completed and returned in 2021/22 and learning outcomes have been categorised. A further 5 have been returned since April 2022. Any outstanding learning forms will be chased up by the Complaints Team to ensure they are returned and learning is implemented.
- There were 6 upheld outcomes from Ombudsman investigations in 2021/22 for Learning & Achievement and the findings have been taken on board and learning implemented. The number of new Ombudsman investigations had decreased by the end of year and this pattern has continued in 2022/23.

APPENDIX 1

- The Performance and Complaints Team also received 1 new complaint in relation to ESCOS (Education Service for Children Out of School), 1 in relation to School Admissions, 2 in relation to the EHE Inclusion Team and 2 regarding Looked after Children's Education.

Compliments

- 74 compliments were received for Children's Services during 2021/22. These included 33 professional and 41 service user compliments. The report highlights some fantastic compliments for a range of different teams from across Children's Services. These also provide an opportunity for learning from good practice.

The Complaints Team

- Talking to complainants ensures that where it is appropriate and possible, that concerns are resolved, without the need to progress to the formal complaints process. This can prove to be a productive and quicker means of resolution for all concerned. The Performance & Complaints Team have, handled 112 such cases in 2021/22 for Children's Social Work Services and 32 for Learning & Achievement.
- The Complaints Team have also received some really positive compliments from complainants.
- Detailed complaints reports for heads of service and the Directorate Leadership Team are produced on time and at regular intervals (both monthly and quarterly). These highlight areas needing attention and are an integral part of the complaints service provided by the Performance and Complaints Team. Complaints data is also reported to CLT.