

Children and Young People Directorate
Annual report on compliments, complaints, and enquiries
2023-2024

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides information on complaints and enquiries handled by the Children and Young People Directorate (CYP) between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 and includes the annual report required by statutory guidance, in 'Getting the Best from Complaints' (Social Care Complaints and Representations for Children, Young People and others) *.
- 1.2 The report includes information on complaints falling within the Council's corporate complaints procedure which were eligible for consideration by CYP, for the same period.
- 1.3 Enquiries from MPs, Councillors, the Mayor, and general enquiries are also included, for the same period.
- 1.4 The report provides information on all stages of the complaints procedures, as well as complaints to The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).
- 1.5 This report draws on statistical information extracted from icasework live data as of May 2024.

2 Purpose of Report

To provide:

- 2.1 Numbers of complaints and representations received by CYP.
- 2.2 Information about compliance with timescales.
- 2.3 Key themes of complaints.
- 2.4 Outcomes of complaints.
- 2.5 Learning and service improvements.
- 2.6 Information about monitoring and quality assurance.
- 2.7 Details about independent advocacy services.

3 Stage 1 complaints and enquiries

3.1. Response times:

- Statutory complaints: 10 working days, with option to extend to 20 working days for complex complaints.
- Corporate complaints: 10 working days
- MP/Mayor/Councillor enquiries: 10 working days.

3.2. **Table 1a. Total of new cases received over past three years.**

2021/2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
254	342	368

3.2.1 Table 1b. Breakdown of new cases received over past three years.

Period	Corporate Stage 1	Children Act Stage 1	General enquiry	Mayor enquiry	Member enquiry	MP enquiry	Chief Executive enquiry	Total
2023 -2024	93	100	17	12	47	96	3	368
2022 - 2023	72	96	17	28	23	91	15	342
2021 -2022	53	83	16	10	14	65	13	254

3.3 Table 2a. Breakdown of new cases received 2023/2024

Period	Corporate Stage 1	Children Act Stage 1	General enquiry	Mayor enquiry	Member enquiry	MP enquiry	Chief Executive enquiry	Total
Q1	15	22	5	3	15	22	1	83
Q2	20	20	2	1	12	15	0	70
Q3	18	26	5	6	8	33	0	96
Q4	40	32	5	2	12	26	2	119
Total	93	100	17	12	47	96	3	368

3.3 Table 2b. Case total received (monthly figures)

Month	Corporate Stage 1	Children Act Stage 1	General Enquiry	Mayor Enquiry	MP enquiry	Member Enquiry	Chief Executive enquiry	Total
April	6	6	1	0	11	7	1	32
May	7	5	1	0	4	5	0	22
June	2	11	3	3	7	3	0	29
July	3	8	2	0	2	4	0	18
August	7	8	0	1	9	1	0	26
September	10	4	0	0	4	7	0	25
October	9	9	1	4	17	5	0	45
November	4	6	3	0	10	1	0	24
December	5	11	1	2	6	2	0	27
January	12	13	3	0	7	3	1	38
February	9	11	2	1	6	4	1	34
March	19	8	0	1	13	5	0	45
Total	93	100	17	12	96	47	3	368

3.4. Common issues raised in new cases.

- 3.4.1. Delays in meeting statutory timescales for Education, Health, Care Needs Assessments (EHCNA) and Education, Health, Care Plans (EHCP).
- 3.4.2. Delay in providing school travel assistance, reimbursing travel costs.
- 3.4.3. Delays in processing payments to foster carers, connected carers, supported lodging providers and Special Guardians.
- 3.4.4. Disagreement with professional decisions – outcome of assessments, Child Protection conferences, school admissions.
- 3.4.5. Attitude, conduct of worker – inappropriate behaviour, lack of support, perceived bias against complainant, management of Child Protection Conference and Looked After Children review.

3.5. Table 3. Stage 1 Complaints and enquiries with % responded on time.

Period	Stage 1	Children Act Stage 1	General enquiry	Mayor enquiry	Member enquiry	MP enquiry	Chief Executive enquiry
Q1	53% (8/15)	27% (6/22)	0% (0/5)	100% (3/3)	93% (14/15)	81% (18/22)	0% (0/1)
Q2	85% (17/20)	65% (13/20)	100% (2/2)	100% (1/1)	83% (10/12)	86% (13/15)	0
Q3	50% (9/18)	61% (16/26)	40% (2/5)	83% (5/6)	50% (4/8)	66% (22/33)	0
Q4	37% (15/40)	50% (16/32)	67% (2/5)	100% (2/2)	83% (10/12)	50% (13/26)	50% (1/2)

3.6. Table 4. Cases responded to within timescale – by Division.

Directorate	Stage 1	Children Act Stage 1	General enquiry	Mayor enquiry	Member enquiry	MP enquiry	Chief Executive enquiry
Children's Social Care	15% (3/20)	48% (42/87)	33% (2/6)	100% (2/2)	78% (11/14)	57% (12/21)	0
Education Services	70% (45/64)	83% (5/6)	50% (4/8)	90% (9/10)	85% (24/28)	73% (52/71)	33% (1/3)
Families, Quality and Commissioning	11% (1/9)	57% (4/7)	0% (0/3)	0	60% (3/5)	50% (2/4)	0

3.7. Table 5. Outcome of Stage 1 complaints

Outcome	Stage 1	Children Act Stage 1	Total	%
Not upheld	18	40	58	33%
Partly upheld	13	23	36	20%
Upheld	44	35	79	45%
Resolved on receipt	2	1	3	2%
Total	77	99	176	

3.8. Recurring themes of upheld and partially upheld Stage 1 complaints*

- Not meeting statutory timescales for Education, Health, Care Needs Assessments (EHCNA) and Education, Health, Care Plans (EHCP)
- Delays in processing payments to Supported Lodging Providers, and provider invoices.
- Delay with arranging SEN travel assistance
- Attitude, conduct, communication, and practice of staff
- Disagreement with professional decisions

* Appendix I contains details of Stage 1 outcomes

4. Stage 2 complaints

4.1. Response times:

- Statutory complaints: 25 working days, with option to extend to 65 working days
- Corporate complaints: – 20 working days

4.2. Table 6. Stage 2 requests received.

	Requests received	Accepted for investigation	Withdrawn	Rejected	Resolved by ADR
2023-2024	18	13	0	0	0
Children Act	9	4	0	0	0
Corporate	9	9	0	0	0
2022-23	30	16	1	13	0
Children Act	21	9	1	11	0
Corporate	9	7	0	2	0
2021-22	33	18	3	9	3
Children Act	21	9	3	8	1
Corporate	12	9	0	1	2

4.2.1 The number of Stage 2 complaint requests and the subsequent investigations both decreased compared to the previous year.

4.2.2. As in previous years, most complaints are successfully resolved at Stage 1.

4.2.3. A total of 212 complaints were received during the year (up from 198 in 2022-23)

4.2.4. 9% of that total were escalated to Stage 2 by the complainant.

4.2.5. The percentage of complaints accepted for Stage 2 investigation was 6.6%.

4.3. Escalation reasons

4.3.1. Main Reasons for Stage 2 Requests:

- I. There were significant delays and failures in delivering policies and procedures related to EHCNA/EHCP. These included a case of delayed EHCP finalisation, leaving a child without alternative provision, and another case involving removal of a child's EHCP.
- II. Disagreement with IRO assessment, contesting the accuracy of information recorded on file.
- III. Dissatisfied with the service provided by Young People Relate.
- IV. Dissatisfied with the adoption assessment process - experiences in relation to the unsuccessful adoption for two children.
- V. Dissatisfied with financial remedy: untimely payment of nurse fees.

4.8. Table 7. Outcomes of Stage 2 complaints

Outcome	Corporate	Children Act	Total
Not upheld	2	3	5
Partly upheld	1	0	1
Upheld	4	0	4
Total	7	3	10

4.9. Actions arising from upheld and partly upheld Stage 2 complaints:

1	Change or review policy or procedure
2	Provide additional information or service
3	The Local Offer to be updated and published by the end of September 2023
4	*Financial Remedy – Rent and Bursary to be paid, one off payment of £250 for stress caused. Reimbursement for books purchased.
5	Reminder to managers to speak with complainant during Stage 1
6	Apology for the delay experienced in completing EHCNA
7	Apology for failure to carry out annual review within statutory timeframe and delay in agreeing to a full Education Otherwise Than at School package (EOTAS).

* applies to multiple complaints

5. Stage 3 complaints

5.1. Response times:

- Corporate complaints – 30 working days. The Independent Adjudicator (IA) deals with Stage 3 complaints on behalf of the Council.
- Statutory complaints (review panel) – 30 working days to convene and hold the Review Panel, 5 working days for the Review Panel to issue its findings and 15 working days for the Executive Director to respond to the findings.

5.2. **Table 8. Stage 3 requests received.**

	Requests received	Accepted	Withdrawn	Rejected
2023-24	1	1	0	0
Children Act	0	0	0	0
Corporate	1	1	0	0
2022-23	2	2	0	0
Children Act	1	1	0	0
Corporate	1	1	0	0
2021-22	9	7	0	2
Children Act	5	3	0	2
Corporate	4	4	0	0

5.3. **Table 9. Details of Stage 3 complaints completed during the year.**

Case Type	Service	Details	Outcome	Remedy
Corporate	Integrated SEND Services	Delay and fault in completing an education health and care needs assessment	Upheld	-Enforce policy or procedure. -Council commits to prioritising any future order by the Tribunal about M's SEN and completing it within the statutory timescale.

6. **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) complaints**

6.1. **Table 10. Numbers of complaints received in 2023-24 (with initial decision)**

Case type	Numbers received	Service	Decision
Corporate	2	SEN team	Cases to be investigated
Total	2		

6.2. The number of LGSCO complaints is down from 4 in 2022-23

6.3. **Table 11. LGSCO complaints completed during 2023-2024.**

Case type	Service	Details	Decision	Remedy
Corporate	Integrated Services & SEND	Failure to complete the annual review process following the review meeting.	Fault causing injustice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apology - A payment of £150 made. - Officers in the SEND team should be reminded of the duty to complete the annual review.
Corporate	Integrated Services & SEND	The Council's handling of application for home-to-school transport for disabled son	Fault causing injustice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apology - Pay £150 in compensation, - Consider a new application for travel assistance, - Review the Travel Assistance Policy, - Remind staff to adhere to the statutory guidance and the Travel Assistance Policy, when providing decision notifications to service users. - Remind staff of the Ombudsman's principles of good administrative practice and the

				importance of keeping proper and appropriate records in relation to decision-making.
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7. Monitoring and Quality Assurance

- 7.1. Online tracker provides insight into all current and outstanding cases. It is assessable to all DMT members and Heads of Service and undergoes weekly review by DMT.
- 7.2. Escalation procedure is established to flag cases nearing completion date and those that are overdue. CYP Casework team sends reminders to managers before the deadline; and it also follows up on overdue cases.
- 7.3. To integrate the insights from complaints into the quality assurance framework, quarterly reports are generated. These reports inform the quarterly quality assurance cycle and are presented to the directorate management team. This ensures a regular and reflective process to capture recent complaint learnings, close the loop, prevent recurring issues, and enhance customer satisfaction.

8. Independent Advocacy

- 10.1. Advocacy services for young people have been delivered by National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) since 1st January 2020.
- 10.2. The contract requires NYAS to deliver a minimum of 1,000 advocacy hours per year, with an option for the Council to spot-purchase up to 500 additional hours on top of this, as needed.
- 10.3. The Advocacy Service works with children and young people in the above eligible groups who are:
 - Children Looked After who want or need to be supported to attend formal meetings, such as CLA Reviews, to get their wishes and feelings heard.
 - Children Looked After who have a concern about their care that they don't feel has been sufficiently addressed by the Council, and so wish to raise a complaint.
 - Children and young people that are subject to Child Protection Plans where the child or Social Worker feels support of an advocate would be beneficial at conferences.
 - Care Leavers that have a concern about the support they have received from the Council, that they wish to be addressed.
- 10.5 Referrals for the advocacy service can either be self-referrals or a referral from a young person's social worker, personal advisor, participation manager, independent reviewing officer or CP conference chair.
- 10.6 The service provides time-limited support, information, and representation from independent advocates. This will support Children Looked After (CLA), care leavers and children subject to Child Protection Plans when decisions are made about their lives, or when they wish to raise a concern about a service they have received.
- 10.7. During 2023-2024 **twelve** young people were supported by NYAS advocates to make a complaint.

Summary of activity on FOI requests for the year 2023-2024

1. Requests received

	Request	Internal review	Information Commissioner	Total	%
April 2023	15	0	0	15	6%
May 2023	21	0	0	21	8%
June 2023	14	1	1	16	6%
July 2023	20	0	0	20	8%
August 2023	28	0	0	28	11%
September 2023	25	0	0	25	10%
October 2023	31	1	0	32	12%
November 2023	24	1	0	25	10%
December 2023	15	0	0	15	6%
January 2024	15	0	0	15	6%
February 2024	30	0	0	30	11%
March 2024	20	0	0	20	8%
Total	258	3	1	262	

2. Requests received in previous years

Year	Requests	Internal reviews	Total
2022-2023	233	8	242
2021-2022	202	3	205

3. Performance on requests for 2023-2024

	Requests	Internal review
Total for the year	69% (179/258)	67% (2/3)
Q1	90% (45/50)	100% (1/1)
Q2	82% (60/73)	0
Q3	63% (44/70)	50% (1/2)
Q4	46% (30/65)	0

4. Past years' performance

Year	Performance
2022-2023	81% (190/234)
2021-2022	45% (89/198)