

Cardiff Council

Children's Services

Complaints and Compliments

Quarter 3 - 2020/21



Social Services Quarter 3 Feedback Report

1. Introduction

This report covers Social Services complaints & compliments for the period 1st October 2020 to 31st December 2020.

It is a statutory requirement under the following items of legislation for Local Authorities to have in place a Representations and Complaints Procedure for Social Services.

- ✓ Representation Procedure (Children) (Wales) Regulations 2014
- ✓ Social Services Complaint's Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014

Statutory complaints relate to the provision of social care and are handled in line with the national regulations referred to above.

The procedure places the emphasis on the initial local resolution stage – Stage 1 - with complainants being offered a discussion to resolve the matter. The second formal stage (Stage 2) provides for independent investigation. If the outcome of Stage 2 does not satisfy the complainant s/he has recourse to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Citizens making complaints have a right to be listened to properly and have their concerns resolved quickly and effectively. Children's Services emphasis is on listening to concerns and using this learning to improve services for everyone who uses them.

Complaints should be handled in such a way that the complainant is the focus, not the process, and that the particular circumstances of the complainant are taken into account (including their age or disability). Where the complaint relates to a looked after child, a child in need or a care leaver the local authority has a duty to provide an advocate as required.

How were complaints received during Quarter 3?

During Quarter 3, 48 complaints were received by Children's Services. The four methods by which Children's Services received are detailed below with a comparison to previous months.

Children's Services				
Contact Method	2019/20	2020/21 Q1	2020/21 Q2	2020/21 Q3
Email	26 (17.8%)	5 (41.7%)	13 (48.1%)	24 (50.0%)
Letter / Complaints Form	32 (21.9%)	2 (16.7%)	3 (11.1%)	4 (8.3%)
Online Form	34 (23.3%)	3 (25.0%)	8 (29.6%)	10 (20.8%)
Telephone	54 (37.0%)	2 (16.7%)	3 (11.1%)	10 (20.8%)
Total	146 (100.0%)	12 (100.0%)	27 (100.0%)	48 (100.0%)



2. Quarter 3 Feedback Summary

During Quarter 3, there have been 102 cases of feedback recorded for Children's Services. These 102 cases consist of:

- ✓ **48 complaints**
- ✓ **54 compliments**

There has been a notable increase of complaints during Quarter 3, when compared to Quarters 1 and 2, when 12 and 27 complaints were received respectively.

Complaints Received				
2019/20	2020/21 Q1	2020/21 Q2	2020/21 Q3	2020/21 As of 1.3.21
146	12	27	48	120

However, despite this increase, **we are still projected to have received fewer complaints for 2020/21 when compared to 2019/20**. At the time this report was produced (1st March 2020), Children's Services have received 120 complaints so far during 2020/21. 146 complaints were received during 2019/20.

While the increase in complaints during Q3 (and so far during Q4) may be a concern to some, we are moving away from the simplistic notion of an increase in number of complaints representing a worsening service being delivered by the service. On the contrary, we feel a growth in complaints is more indicative of an engaged customer base, who are more likely and more able to tell us when we are doing something well or poorly. We have enabled easy access to complaints processes for everyone and there are more channels than ever for our customers to tell us what went wrong or right. This, coupled with our established processes to ensure complaints are properly recorded, is of course likely to result in an increase in complaints.

To expand on this point, there has been a notable increase in compliments during Quarter 3, when compared to Quarters 1 and 2. Children's Services have already received a sizeable increase of compliments recorded when compared to the previous year.

Compliments				
2019/20	2020/21 Q1	2020/21 Q2	2020/21 Q3	2020/21 As of 1.3.21
101	30	41	54	153

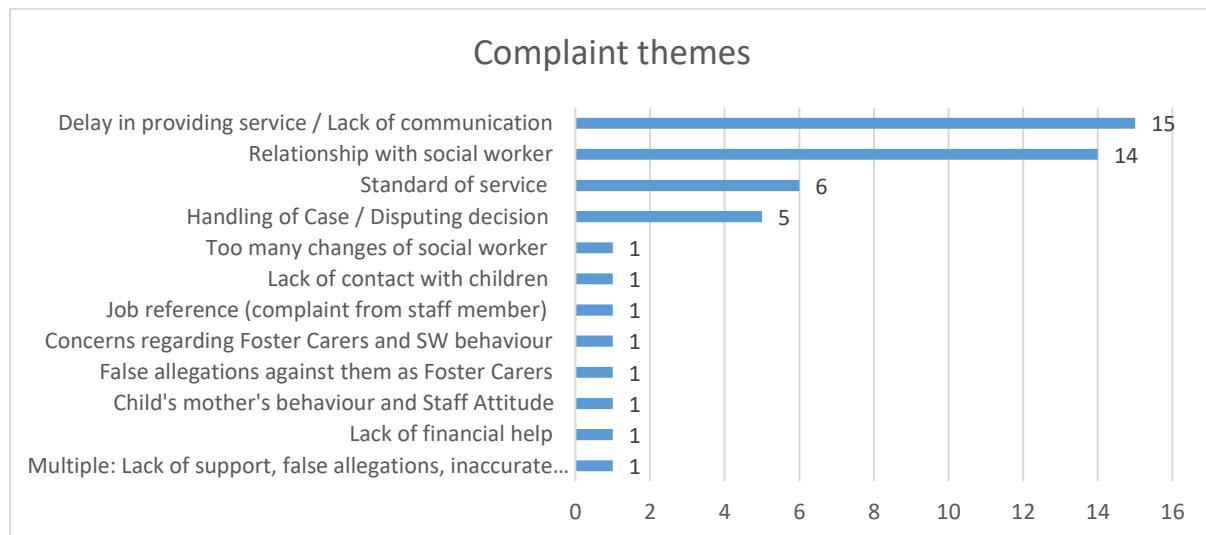
During each quarter, the majority of customer feedback recorded takes the form of compliments rather than complaints. Of all the customer feedback recorded, 52.9% of cases were compliments



3. Complaint analysis

Complaint themes

An analysis of complaints received during Quarter 3 suggests that our complaints are becoming increasingly complex as there is usually more than one point that a complainant will like us to consider. It is often difficult therefore to pick out an overarching 'theme' to some complaints. However, during Quarter 3, there were two specific themes that accounted for more complaints than others.



A **delay in providing service / lack of communication** has been the most dominant theme within complaints during quarter 3 and has accounted for just under a third (31.3%) of complaints made during the quarter.

THEME 1 - Delay in providing service / lack of communication is a recurring theme and often relates to issues where the complainant feels they are being ignored.

For example, leaving messages for a social worker and not having them returned in what they feel is a timely fashion. Pressure from work can mean that communication is not always as robust as it could be and this may be more about managing expectations about the level of contact that social workers can provide, rather than increasing communication. This is reflected in the complaint outcomes, as just under half (7) of the 15 complaints about this topic were 'not upheld'. This is similar to the number of complaints 'not upheld' for all complaints during quarter 3.

A complainant alleging a poor **relationship with their social worker** has been the second most dominant theme within complaints during quarter 3 and has accounted for over a quarter (29.2%) of complaints made so far this year.



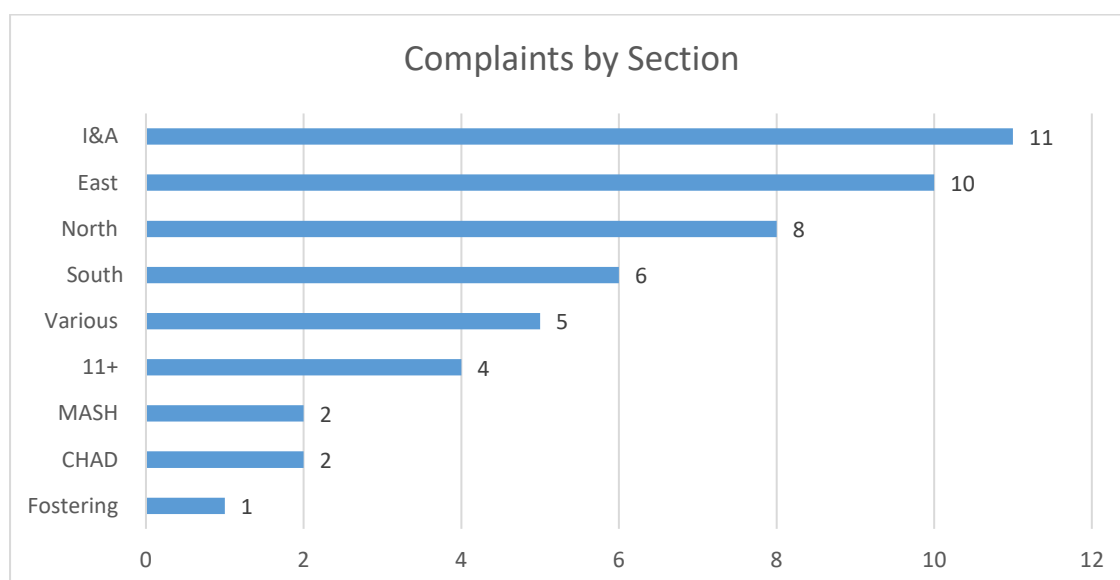
THEME 2 - Relationship with Social Worker often links to poor communication but it is harder to gather evidence in this area as it revolves around perceptions about the individual behaviour of a staff member towards a complainant. Whilst there will always be a push to strengthen relationships, due to the difficult messages that must be delivered by social workers, this will always be a subjective theme.

Complainants alleging a poor **standard of service** (15.1%) and **disputing a decision** (13.7%) were the other dominant themes within the complaints made.

THEME 3 - Disputing a decision is perhaps not a surprising theme as due to the nature of the work in Children's Services, decisions must be made in the best interest of the young person, often without the consent of families. These complaints frequently link to the outcome of decisions following an assessment. However, 0% of these complaints were upheld during quarter 3 which provides evidence that professional decisions are being made in line with legislation and policies. The challenge may be around ensuring that these decisions are well communicated.

Complaints by section

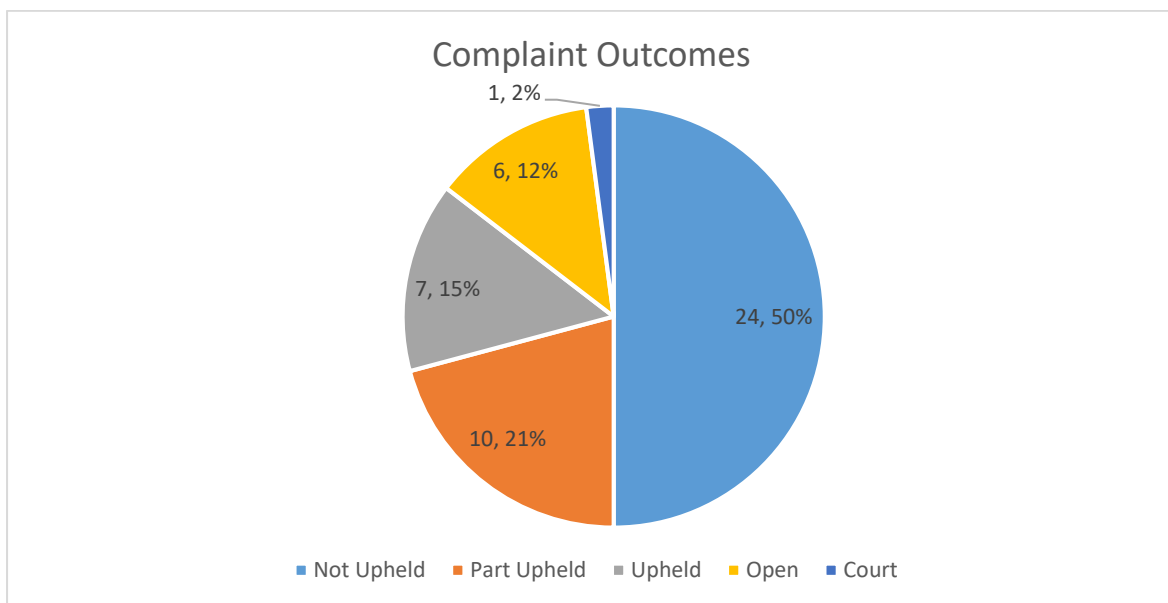
When comparing complaints by section, we see that Intake & Assessment accounted for 22.9% of complaints made during Quarter 3. They were closely followed by our East (20.8%), North (16.7%) and South localities (12.5%)



Complaint outcomes

At the time of publication, 42 of the 48 complaints received for Children's Services during Quarter 2 have been closed. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have an impact on the service's ability to respond to complaints within statutory timescales as all Council officers have been concentrating on making sure that vital services are available to those residents who need them the most. Complainants receive regular updates on the status of their complaint if, for any reason, we are unable to respond to a complaint within our statutory timescales.

Of those complaints that were completed, just 15% were upheld and 21% were partly upheld. **Exactly half (50%) of Children's Services complaints were not upheld.** 1 complaint was closed after it was found the complainants was trying to revisit issues that had already been considered in the court arena.



In addition to understanding the outcome of stage 1 complaints, it is important to consider how many complaints progress beyond stage 1. During 2020/21, relatively few complaint cases have progressed beyond stage 1. This suggests effective handling of complaints at stage 1.

Stage 2 complaints

2019/20	2020/21 Q1	2020/21 Q2	2020/21 Q3
10	0	1	3

3 complaints proceeded to Stage 2 during Quarter 3.



4. Compliment analysis

Children's Services received 54 compliments during Quarter 3. Examples of the compliments recorded are shown below.

From a young person in relation to Christmas presents that were delivered: "Hey Julia just want to say a massive thankyou to u and the other staff for the pressies xx"

From a parent in relation to Children's Services: "Just wanted to say thank you for all your hard work with our family in recent weeks. It has made a huge difference and I felt like we were all listened to. Hopefully X will get the help she needs."

From an IRO: "Steph, I am writing to compliment the work that you have undertaken with the families and specially with children. The use of the Three Houses Tool with children as part of your section 47 assessments has allowed us to hear the children's voices during the recent Initial Child Protection Conferences. It also gives us information on their daily life experience, which is important."

From a foster carer in relation to a social worker: Foster carer was very complimentary about how X has worked with her and the girls so far, describing him as a great match and that both girls had fed back after his discussions with them that they liked their new social worker'

From a family in relation to a social worker His mother said Jessica was the most pro-active and helpful worker she had ever had. The grandmother said she was the most empathetic and understanding worker they had had and all the family responded well to her and trusted her. Nice to hear!

6 individual thank you cards were received from a family to a social worker (Emily). Assorted messages including

- Thank you for your support during this virus and also now
 - Thank you for helping our family
- Thank you for all your help with me and helping with my worrying and for all help with my family love X
- For all your work with our family. We have had some difficult times but we look forward now to brighter days. Thank you for always advocating for my fab 5, for being their voice when they needed you to be - and standing by your standards with courage and conviction. It didn't go unnoticed. Thank you.



8. Quarter 3 Comparison – Children’s Services

In summary, a comparison with data for other quarters highlights the following:

Number of complaints – increase (quarterly), decrease (annually)

There has been a notable increase of complaints during Quarter 3. 48 complaints were received during Quarter 3, compared to Quarters 1 and 2, when 12 and 27 complaints were received respectively.

However, despite this increase, we are still projected to have received fewer complaints for 2020/21 when compared to 2019/20.

Number of compliments – increase

In previous reports, there has been a concern that the good service provided every day by Children’s Services is not being represented with the number of compliments received. The complaints team have looked at ways of updating our recording procedure to ensure our compliments are captured and that we are continuing to take on board what our customers want.

Happily, compliments have increased for each quarter so far this year and 54 were recorded during Quarter 3. Children’s Services have already received a sizeable increase of compliments recorded when compared to the previous year. There have been 153 compliments recorded for Children’s Services so far in 2020/21 compared to 101 compliments in 2019/20.

Nature of complaints – similar challenges

‘Relationship with social worker’ has remained one of the dominant themes within Children’s Services complaints as well as ‘lack of communication’. Comments on reasons for this can be found on pages 4 and 5.

Outcome of complaints – Fewer complaints have been upheld

Finally, 50.0% of Children’s Services complaints were not upheld during Quarter 3. This compares favourably to 2019/20 when 46.6% of complaints were not upheld.

Complaints Progressing Beyond Stage 1 – slight increase

During Quarter 3, there were 3 requests to progress to stage 2 of the Social Services complaints process. This is a slight increase from Quarters 1 and 2. However, that such relatively few complaint cases have progressed beyond stage 1 suggests good complaint handling at stage 1.

