



Cardiff Council

Children's Services

Complaints and Compliments

Quarter 4 - 2020/21



Gweithio dros Gaerdydd, gweithio gyda'n gilydd
Working for Cardiff, working together

Social Services Quarter 4 Feedback Report

1. Introduction

This report covers Social Services complaints & compliments for the period 1st January 2021 to 31st March 2021.

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 4?

During Quarter 4, 53 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.

Contact Method	2019/20	2020/21 Q1	2020/21 Q2	2020/21 Q3	2020/21 Q4
Email	26 (17.8%)	5 (41.7%)	13 (48.1%)	24 (50.0%)	23 (43.4%)
Letter / Complaints Form	32 (21.9%)	2 (16.7%)	3 (11.1%)	4 (8.3%)	4 (7.55%)
Online Form	34 (23.3%)	3 (25.0%)	8 (29.6%)	10 (20.8%)	14 (26.42%)
Telephone	54 (37.0%)	2 (16.7%)	3 (11.1%)	10 (20.8%)	13 (24.53%)
Total	146 (100.0%)	12 (100.0%)	27 (100.0%)	48 (100.0%)	53 (100.0%)



2. Quarter 4 Feedback Summary

During Quarter 4, there have been 110 cases of feedback recorded for Children’s Services. These 110 cases consist of:

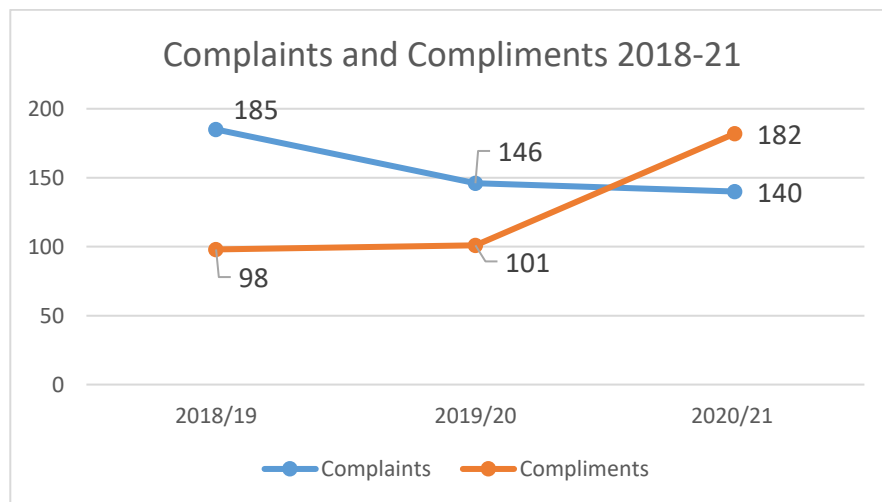
- ✓ **53 complaints**
- ✓ **57 compliments**

There were more complaints received during Quarter 4 (53) when compared to the other quarters of the year. **However, Children’s Services have received fewer complaints for 2020/21 (140) compared to 2019/20 when 146 complaints were received.** It should also be noted that complaints for Children’s Services have decreased for two consecutive years in a row (185 in 2018/19, 146 in 2019/20 to 140 in 2020/21). This ongoing decrease is a positive reflection on the service, particularly when considering the ongoing challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Complaints Received					
2019/20 TOTAL	2020/21 Q1	2020/21 Q2	2020/21 Q3	2020/21 Q4	2020/21 TOTAL
146	12	27	48	53	140

Compliments have also continued to increase as 57 compliments were received during Quarter 4. For 2020/21 as a whole, compliments have seen a 80.2% increase when compared to the previous year.

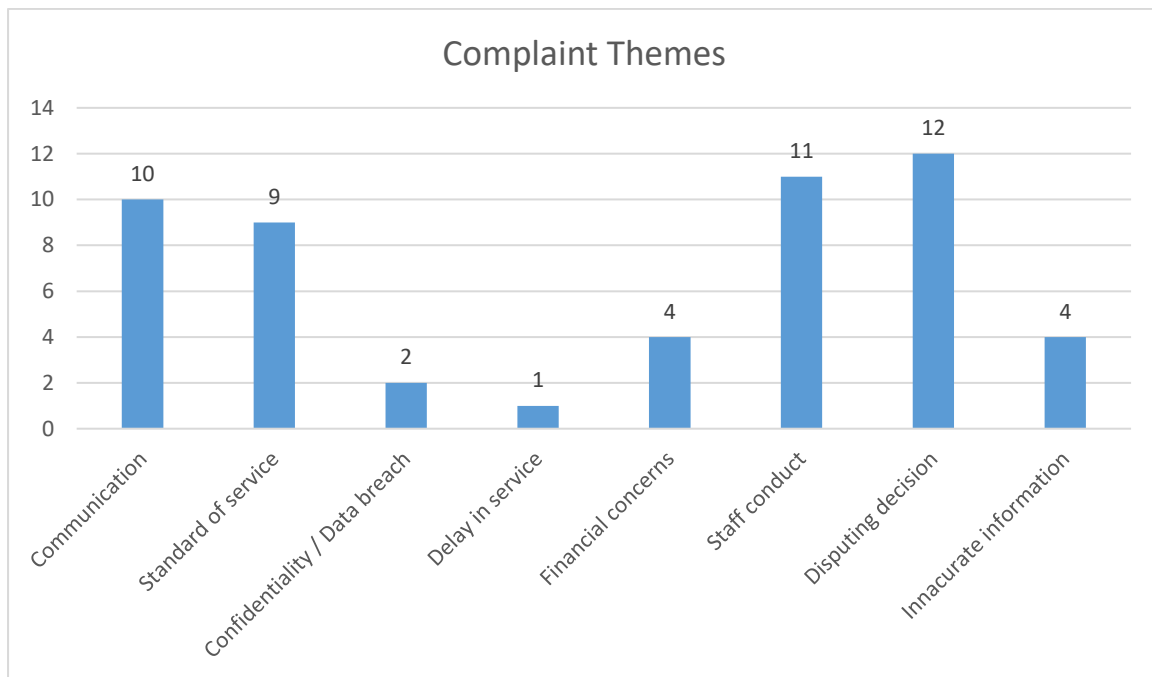
Compliments					
2019/20 TOTAL	2020/21 Q1	2020/21 Q2	2020/21 Q3	2020/21 Q4	2020/21 TOTAL
101	30	41	54	57	182



3. Complaint analysis

Complaint themes

An analysis of complaints received during Quarter 4 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 4, there were specific themes that accounted for more complaints than others.



Disputing decisions has been the most dominant theme within complaints during quarter 4 and has accounted for 22% of complaints made during the quarter.

THEME 1 – Disputing decisions 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, of those complaints closed, 0% of these complaints were upheld during quarter 4 (2 are still open, 1 was closed with a meeting arranged and 1 was withdrawn) which suggests that professional decisions are being made in line with legislation and policies.



Complaints regarding **staff conduct** includes staff behaviour, attitude and complainants' relationship with social workers. This has been the second most dominant theme within complaints during quarter 4 and has accounted for 20% of complaints made in quarter 4.

THEME 2 – Staff conduct 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.

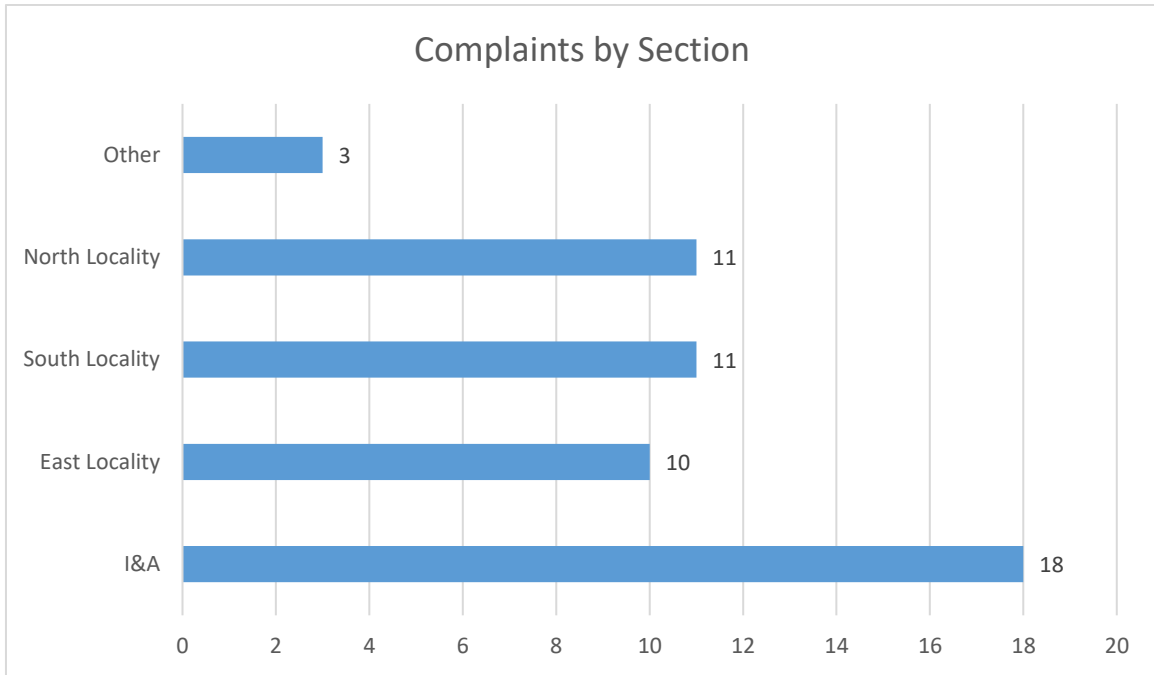
Complainants alleging poor **communication** (18%) and regarding **standard of service** (16%) were the other dominant themes within the complaints made in quarter 4.

THEME 3 - Communication was a common theme in quarter 4 and also made part of complaints about staff and disputing decisions. Some of the points raised included an alleged lack of support, not returning messages, complainants not receiving reports, and contact issues especially during Covid-19 when contact was limited to virtual only during periods of lockdown.

Complaints by section

When comparing complaints by section, we see that Intake & Assessment accounted for 33.96% of complaints made during Quarter 4. They were closely followed by our North (20.75%), South (20.75%) and East localities (18.87%)





Complainants

Complaints are made by a variety of people including young people, parents, foster carers and family members. There are also complaints that are made through agencies, advocates and councillors on behalf of others. Of the 53 complaints made during Quarter 4, 36 (67%) complaints were made by parents, 5 (9%) were made by carers/foster carers, 5 (9%) were made by wider family members such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, 3 (5%) were made by young people and 3 (5%) complaints were made by others; a neighbour, a friend and a Councillor on behalf of their constituent.

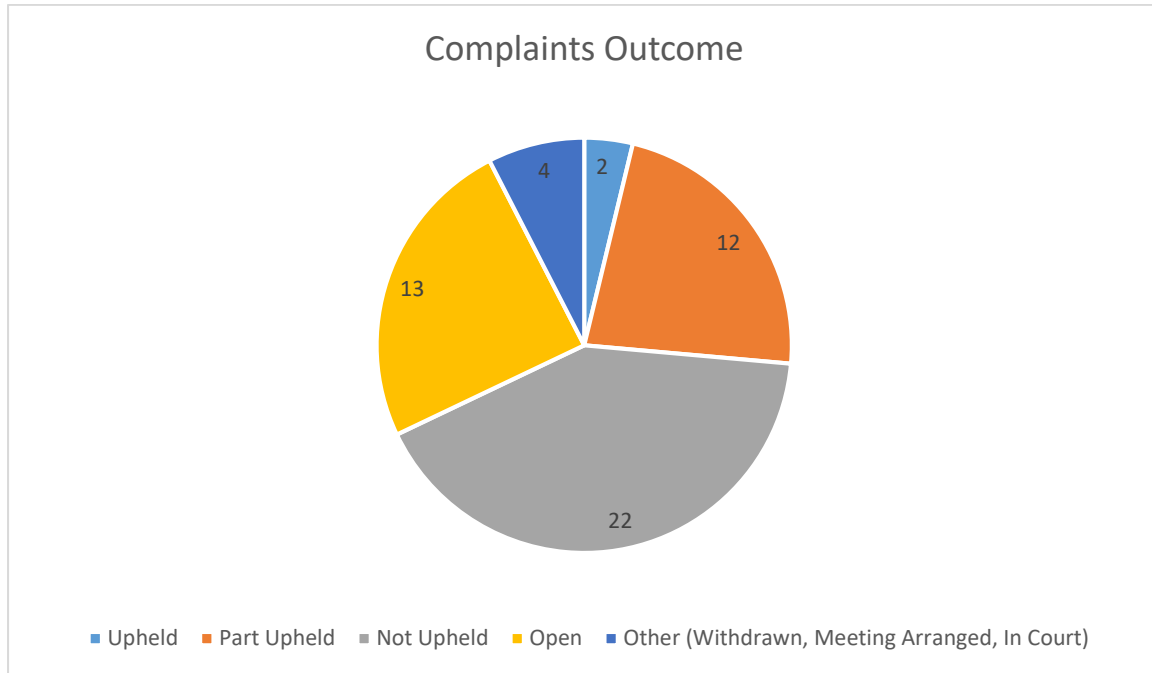
Complaint outcomes

At the time of publication, 40 of the 53 complaints received for Children's Services during Quarter 4 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 5% were upheld and 30% were partly upheld. **More than half (55%) 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. 1 complaint was closed as meetings were arranged to resolve the issues and 1 complaint was withdrawn.



Stage 2 Complaints

In addition to understanding the outcome of stage 1 complaints, it is important to consider how many complaints progress beyond stage 1. The number of complaints that have proceeded to Stage 2 has remained relatively static during when comparing 2019/20 and 2020/21 as 10 Stage 2 complaints were made in both years.

6 complaints proceeded to Stage 2 during Quarter 4.

2019/20	2020/21 Q1	2020/21 Q2	2020/21 Q3	2020/21 Q4
10	0	1	3	6



4. Compliment analysis

Children's Services received 57 compliments during Quarter 4.

Examples of the compliments recorded are shown below.

From a young person 'Great news from the University, I finally received my results for my Master's degree in Cyber Security. So after another tough year, I'm now a master in Cyber Security. I got 4 MERITS and 3 PASS, I think overall 2:1 still waiting for overall certificate. I will never forget what you did to me. I will never forget. Thank you very very very much for everything again and again.'

From a residential provider 'he said that Jessie Jo Fuge and Nina Richards were brilliant social workers and couldn't praise them highly enough.

From a young person and family 'couldn't praise you enough for the work you did with them. She told me she doesn't think she'd be coping now with the 4 kids if it wasn't for the help you put in with her. She described how you were really good at listening and you seemed to understand exactly where she was coming from which made it easy for her to accept the advice you gave. She also said the changes you helped make are long lasting and mum literally described the work you did as changing their lives for the better.

From a judge to a social worker 'Judge Coates has just complimented Joel's S37 in court. Well done Joel – well written.'

From an IRO 'In a very short space of time, the newly allocated SW has managed to build a trust and rapport with A that was clearly evident during discussions prior to start of meeting. That was nice to see as there have been a number of changes of SW over the last few years and A has not had a similar response to all of them.'

From a care leaver 'Just a quick one Sian just wanted to say how much I appreciated you speaking up for me in the meeting you really helped me get my point across and to be honest I'm very much thankful'

From Cheka Safeguarding 'his s47 was a wonderful example of Signs of Safety! It was extremely child focussed and friendly. I praised him for this in Conference, (he was a little embarrassed) but I also wanted to let you know.'

From a Barrister 'finally I would like to thank you all for making this case an easy one to present for the LA. your responses to emails and directions of the court has been exemplary and shows your commitment to the well being of Z.'



8. Quarter 4 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 slight increase of complaints during Quarter 4. 53 complaints were received during Quarter 4, compared to Quarters 1, 2 and 3 when 12, 27 and 48 complaints were received respectively.

However, despite this increase, we have received fewer complaints for 2020/21 (140 complaints) when compared to 2019/20 (146 complaints). As previously noted, complaints for Children’s Services have decreased for two consecutive years in a row (185 in 2018/19, 146 in 2019/20 to 140 in 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.

Compliments have increased in quarters 3 and 4 (111 compliments) in comparison to quarters 1 and 2 (71 compliments). Children’s Services have received a sizeable increase of compliments recorded when compared to the previous year. There have been 182 compliments recorded for Children’s Services in 2020/21 compared to 101 compliments in 2019/20.

Nature of complaints – similar challenges

‘Disputing decision’, ‘Staff conduct’ and ‘communication’ have remained one of the dominant themes within Children’s Services complaints.

Outcome of complaints – Fewer complaints have been upheld

Finally, 55% of Children’s Services complaints were not upheld during Quarter 4. This compares favourably to quarter 3 when 50% of complaints were not upheld.

Complaints Progressing Beyond Stage 1 – slight increase

During Quarter 4, there were 6 requests to progress to stage 2 of the Social Services complaints process. This is a slight increase from previous quarters. However, that such relatively few complaint cases have progressed beyond stage 1 suggests good complaint handling at stage 1. The number of complaints that have progressed beyond stage 1 has also remained static when compared to the previous year – 10 being received for both 2019/20 and 2020/21.

