



# Cardiff Council

## Children's Services

### Complaints and Compliments

### Quarter 1 - 2021/22



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

## 1. Introduction - Social Services Quarter 1 Feedback Report

This report covers Social Services complaints & compliments for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 30<sup>th</sup> June 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 1?

During Quarter 1, 64 complaints were received by Children's Services. The four methods by which Children's Services received complaints are detailed below with a comparison to previous months.

Contact Method	2020/21 Q2	2020/21 Q3	2020/21 Q4	2021/22 Q1
Email	13 (48.1%)	24 (50.0%)	23 (43.4%)	<b>22 (34.4%)</b>
Letter / Complaints Form	3 (11.1%)	4 (8.3%)	4 (7.55%)	<b>3 (4.7%)</b>
Online Form	8 (29.6%)	10 (20.8%)	14 (26.42%)	<b>17 (26.6%)</b>
Telephone	3 (11.1%)	10 (20.8%)	13 (24.53%)	<b>22 (34.4%)</b>
Total	27 (100.0%)	48 (100.0%)	53 (100.0%)	<b>64 (100%)</b>



## 2. Quarter 1 Feedback Summary

During Quarter 1, there have been 101 cases of feedback recorded for Children's Services. These 102 cases consist of:

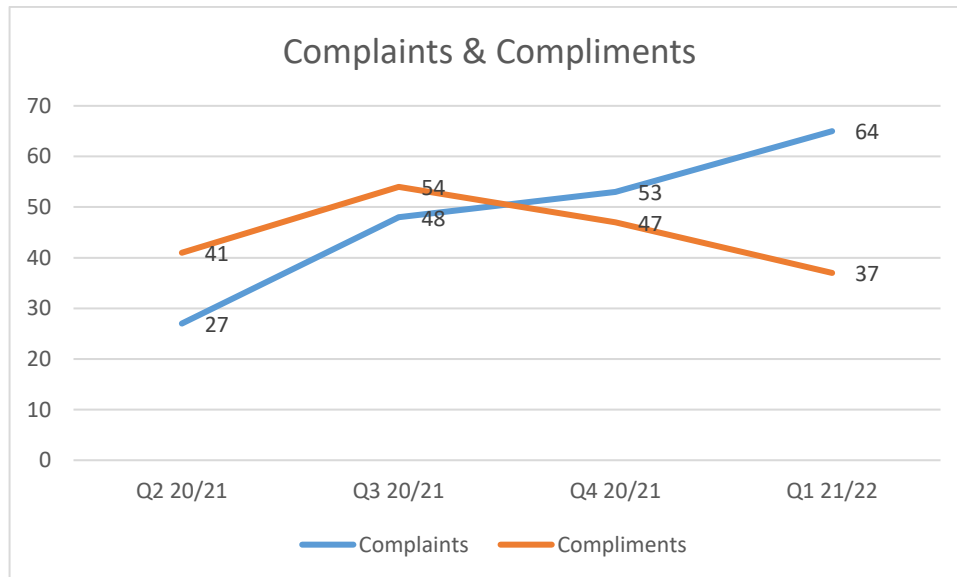
- ✓ **64 complaints**
- ✓ **37 compliments**

The number of complaints received has increased when compared to previous quarters, as demonstrated by the below table.

Complaints Received			
2020/21 Q2	2020/21 Q3	2020/21 Q4	2021/2022 Q1
27	48	53	64

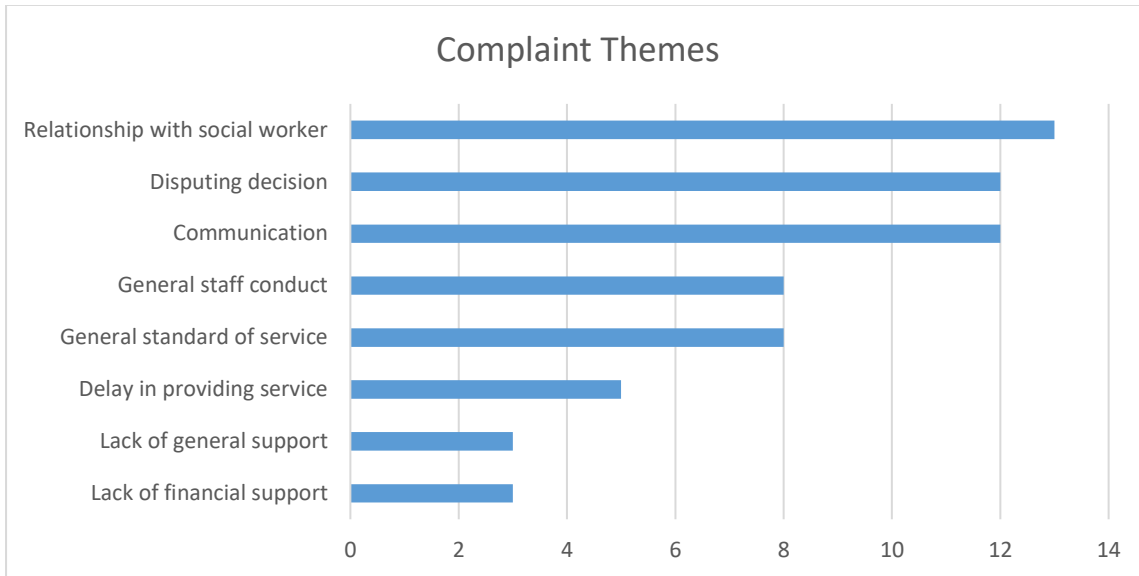
There has been a decrease in compliments during Quarter 1, when compared to last year's Quarters 3 and 4.

Compliments Received			
2020/21 Q2	2020/21 Q3	2020/21 Q4	2021/22 Q1
41	54	47	37



### 3. Complaint analysis

#### Complaint themes



**‘Relationship with social worker’** has been the most dominant theme within complaints during quarter 1 and has accounted for 20% of complaints made during the quarter.

**THEME 1 – Relationship with social worker.** Due to the nature of the work in Children’s Services, decisions must be made in the best interest of the young person and sometimes this is difficult for the person who is making the complaint to recognise. Of the complaints that have been closed about this topic, 60% have been not upheld and 30% part upheld.

**‘Disputing decision’** and **‘communication’** were the second most dominant themes, accounting for 18.8% of complaints made during the quarter.

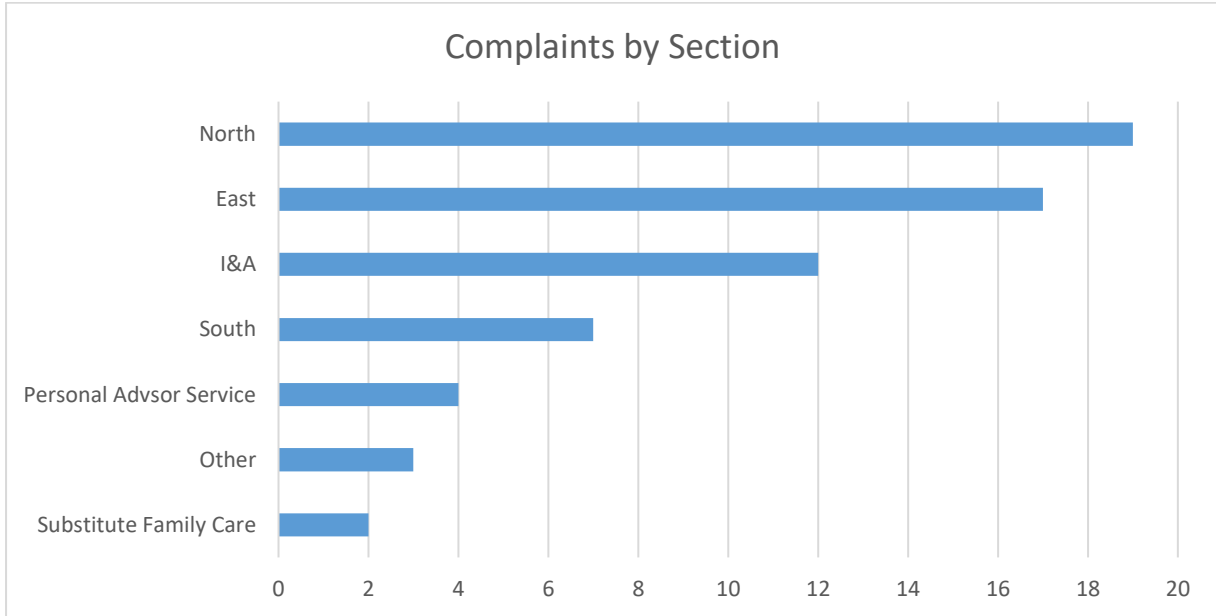
**THEME 2 –Disputing decisions.** Again, due to the nature of the work in Children’s Services, decisions must be made in the best interest of the young person, often without the consent of families. These complaints frequently link to the outcome of decisions following an assessment. Of those complaints closed, 0% of these complaints were upheld during quarter 1 which provides evidence that professional decisions are being made in line with legislation and policies.

**THEME 3 - Communication** was a common theme in quarter 1 and also made part of complaints about staff and disputing decisions. Some of the points raised included an alleged lack of support and messages not being returned.



### Complaints by section

When comparing complaints by section, we see that North Locality accounted for 30% of complaints made during Quarter 1. They were closely followed by East Locality (26%), Intake & Assessment (18%) and South Locality (11%).



### Complainants

Complaints are made by a variety of people including young people, parents, foster carers, family members, friends, neighbours. Some complaints are made through agencies/advocates/councillors on behalf of others. Of the 64 complaints, 41 (64%) complaints were made by parents, 9 (14%) complaints were made by wider family members such as grandparents and siblings, 3 (5%) complaints were made by young people, 5 (8%) complaints were made through an Advocate (4 of which were on behalf of young people) and 4 (6%) complaints were made by a carer and 2 (5%) complaints were made by others; Child Commissioner Wales and through a Solicitor.

### Complaint timeframes

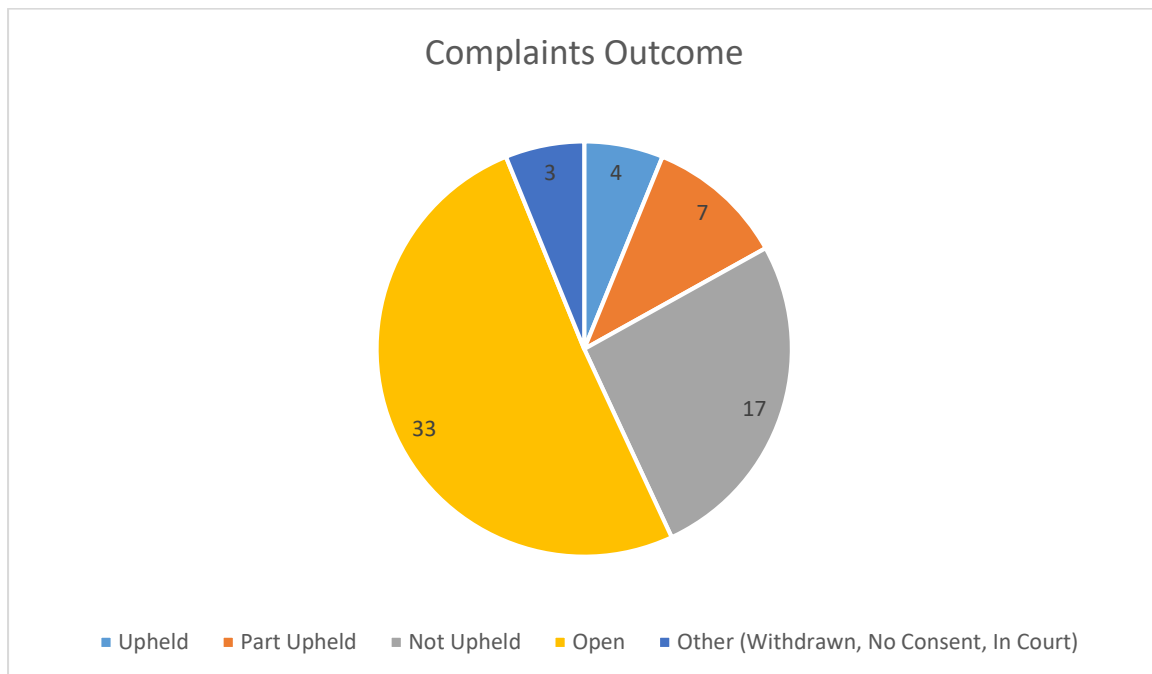
At the time of publication, 32 of the 64 complaints received for Children’s Services during Quarter 4 have been closed. Of the 64 complaints, 8 (13%) were responded to within the timeframe, 23 (36%) were responded to within 3 months and 32 (51%) remain open.



## Complaint outcomes

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 32 complaints that were completed, just 4 (12.5%) were upheld and 7 (21.8%) were partly upheld. **More than half 17 (53%) of Children’s Services complaints were not upheld.** 2 complaints were closed after it was found the complainants were trying to revisit issues that had already been considered in the court arena. 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. During Quarter 1 of 2021/22 so far, just 2 complaint cases have progressed beyond stage 1. This suggests effective handling of complaints at stage 1.

2020/21 TOTAL	2020/21 Q2	2020/21 Q3	2020/21 Q4	2021/22 Q1
10	1	3	6	2



## 4. Compliment analysis

Children's Services received 37 compliments during Quarter 1. Examples of the compliments recorded are shown below.

- **From a young person** - Dear X, where do I begin? You have been supporting me doing probably the most hectic times of my life. I can't ever thank you enough. You encourage me to try and recognise my worth and set boundaries. Despite my hesitance you were perpetually patient with me. I have never met someone so determined, reliable and caring as you (probably why you're so good at your job). Whenever I reached a low point this year I would remind myself how I wouldn't want to waste your efforts as well as considering how far I had come. Thank you believing in me when it felt like nobody else did. Sincerely, X. thank you for rekindling my old love of hot chocolate.
- **From a judge** - Just wanted to let you know that the Judge was really positive about X's assessment today and thanked her for her work.
- **From the court** - 'The court is grateful to X, the social worker, who has taken on the task of completing the risk assessment at relatively short notice. It is a thorough and comprehensive document and reflects on the information which the local authority has gained, not only in the original proceedings but during the life of the care order.'
- **From a young person** - "Just wanted to share that I visited C today who, together with his foster carer, spoke very highly of the support C receives from SW. C is very happy that SW has been so 'on the ball' and always contactable. Just wanted to say a huge thank you really for all your hard work SW. C is becoming more independent every time I see him!"
- **From guardian and Court** - "an extract from the Guardian's final analysis for X, shared with court...'X is fortunate, in my view, to have SW as his allocated Social Worker. The court will note from her various reports that she has a detailed understanding of X's needs and a fondness for him. It is vitally important for children, such as X, when parents and relatives are not championing his corner, that there are professionals taking on that role.'
- **From a family** - "Hiya I am emailing you regarding one of your colleagues X! I just wanted to say how absolutely blown away by the support me and my family received from her few months ago...X did so much over the last few months than any other support we have had over the years she rang once a week without fail every problem that I had she seemed to of sorted it keeping me updated regular having talking to her on the phone every week not only helped my son but also helped me as a parent and I didn't feel lonely and I could speak to X about anything she really was my rock and kept me going! (Son's) mental health is improved so much I really can't thank her enough and families can definitely benefit from your services and make a huge difference! I'm not sure what the circumstances are with coming out to peoples homes but with Coronavirus easing now I would love X to come visit our new home so me and my children could meet and thank her in person I would really appreciate it if we could organise that to happen. Many thanks again for the fantastic job you provide for people that need it"



## 5. Quarter 4 Comparison – Children’s Services

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

### **Number of complaints – increase (quarterly).**

There has been a slight increase of complaints during Quarter 1 when compared to previous quarters. 64 complaints were received during Quarter 1, compared to Quarters 2, 3 and 4 of 2020/21 when 27, 48 and 53 complaints were received respectively.

### **Number of compliments – decrease**

Compliments have decreased in Q1 of 2021/22 in comparison to previous quarters. 37 compliments were received during Quarter 1, compared to Quarters 2, 3 and 4 of 2020/21 when 41, 54 and 47 compliments were received respectively. 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 will continue to look 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.

### **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’ and ‘disputing decision’.

### **Outcome of complaints – Fewer complaints have been upheld**

Finally, (of the complaints that have been closed) 53% of Children’s Services complaints were not upheld during Quarter 1. This has remained relatively static when compared to Quarter 4 2020/21 (55% not upheld) and Quarter 3 2020/21 (50% not upheld).

### **Complaints Progressing Beyond Stage 1 – 2 so far during 2021/22**

There were 2 requests to progress to stage 2 of the Social Services complaints process during Quarter 1 of 2021/22. There were 10 requests to progress to Stage 2 in 2019/20 and 2020/21 respectively so the 2 received this quarter is relatively small.

