

**Cardiff Council Social Services
Annual Complaint, Compliments and
Members Enquiries Report
April 2022 – March 2023**

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	3
2. THE TEAM	3
3. THE PROCESS	4
4. MEMBERS ENQUIRIES PROCESS	5
5. SOCIAL SERVICES STATISTICS	5
6. ADULT SERVICES OVERVIEW	6
7. CHILDREN SERVICES OVERVIEW	18
8. SUMMARY AND FINDINGS	23
9. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS	24

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg



1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

It is a statutory requirement for all Local Authorities in Wales to have a procedure for complaints and representation for Social Services under the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014.

In addition to this, each Local Authority is required to produce and publish an annual report regarding the operation of their Social Services Complaints Procedures. This report contains statistical information and analysis relating to complaints and representations dealt with during the period April 2022 to March 2023.

Adult and Children's Services take a positive approach to all complaints, concerns and issues raised. Work is undertaken with individuals and teams to identify and put in place suitable outcomes for individuals as well as taking the opportunity to learn lessons from complaints raised where expected standards have not been met.

Social Services are committed to ensuring that concerns raised are listened to and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. The information gathered by the complaints teams is a key source of intelligence which enables understanding, learning and reflection in respect of people's experience of Social Services.

Whilst we are now post-pandemic, COVID-19 has continued to have impact across Social Services and the Council as a whole. The significant pressure and demand for our services has resulted in some delays in receipt of services and this has impacted the complaints across both Adults and Childrens Services.

Whilst there have been no changes to the way in which complaints are recorded by Children's Services, recording of complaints have continued to be improved and enhanced in Adult Services. This is reflected in the report with an improvement in the way in which Adult Services has been able to illustrate some of the themes and categories of complaints and how they are dealt with.

The new council wide complaints system, HALO, is being introduced over the next 12 months. This will manage all complaints and councilor correspondence being received into all services and will offer a more consistent reporting tool. Adult Services have been pivotal to the testing and trialing of this system.

2. THE MANAGEMENT OF COMPLAINTS

In November 2021 Social Services separated the Complaints Teams across Adult Services and Children's Services to strengthen management capacity and oversight of complaints received by the individual service areas following the creation of a Children's Services Directorate and an Adults, Housing and Communities Directorate. Both Directorates are located under the overarching leadership of the Corporate Director of People and Communities who also upholds the statutory responsibilities of the Director of Social Services.

The Complaints Teams are supported by Senior Managers in each of the service areas of Adults Services and Children's Services and by the Corporate Complaints Team.



During 2022/23, Adult Services recruited two Complaints and Engagement Officers to work under the direction of the Complaints Manager to strengthen the complaints and service users' engagement functions. This increase in resource has seen improved response times to complaints and enquiries even though the numbers have increased. Whilst there is currently only one Complaints and Engagement Officer in post, there is a commitment to recruit to the second one early 2023/24.

In Adult Services, a monthly report on complaints and compliments is produced as well as quarterly statistics and analysis which is presented to the Adult Services senior management team in their regular meetings.

In Children's Services, two officers job share the Complaints Manager role, aided by two full time Complaints and Correspondence Assistants for efficient communication with complainants and streamlined complaints resolution. Weekly meetings with Operational Managers guide ongoing investigations and response drafting, whilst weekly updates highlight open complaints and unresolved issues. Quarterly analysis of complaints is completed to monitor statistics and drive service improvement.

3. THE PROCESS

Cardiff Council has separate Adult and Children's Services Complaints Policies that are based on the principles of the Welsh Government legislation: The Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014.

All complaints received by Adults and Children's Services are required to be acknowledged within the statutory timescale of two working days. In some cases, where some of the concerns raised fall outside the responsibility of Social Services, the Complaints Officer liaises with the appropriate Service Area or Agency to provide a joined-up response.

The Adult and Children's Social Services complaints process has two stages:

- **Stage One: Local Resolution** – The emphasis at this stage of the process is to resolve the complaint by means of discussion and problem solving. The complainant will be offered a discussion about the issues they have raised, and this is either undertaken by telephone, or face to face in an attempt to resolve the issues. This must be completed within 10 working days of the receipt of the complaint. Following this initial discussion and any further investigation that is necessary, a written response is provided within 5 working days.
- **Stage Two: Formal Consideration** – If the complainant remains dissatisfied after completion of Stage 1 complaints process, they may request that the complaint proceeds to Stage 2 of the process. This involves a formal independent investigation of the complaint with a report being produced by the investigating officer appointed to the case. The timescale for dealing with this stage is 25 working days from agreement of the issues to be reviewed.



If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation, they may progress their complaint to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales. All individuals accessing services receive information regarding how to raise a complaint, the 2 stages for handling complaints within Social Services and how to contact the Ombudsman. This is set out in the Adult and Children’s Services ‘How to be Heard’ documents.

4. MEMBERS ENQUIRIES PROCESS

The Adults and Children’s Services Complaints Standard Operating Procedures makes provision for an individual to approach their Local Councillor, Assembly Member or Member of Parliament. Elected Members carry out an important role in handling concerns and queries that an individual constituent may have. Collectively, these are called Member Enquiries and can range from requests for services, comments, and queries to complaints.

Social Services receives concerns from Elected Members through 3 routes:

- directly through the Cabinet Office,
- through the HALO portal,
- by direct email.

All methods of contact are managed in the same way across Social Services. Whilst they do not form part of the formal recorded complaints data, the number and range of complaints that are received through this route are collated and analysed in order for services to be able to identify themes and patterns of concerns being raised as well as assisting to identify key areas of pressure on the complaints system.

5. SOCIAL SERVICES STATISTICS

	Complaints	Stage 1 complaints	Stage 2 complaints	Days to resolve (av.)	Members Enquiries	Days to respond (av.)	Compliments
2022/2023	365	351	14	32	323	25	334
%	↓ 2%	↓ 3%	↑ 40%	↓ 31%	↑ 85%	↓ 1%	↑ 0%
2021/2022	373	363	10	47	175	26	334

During 2022/23 there were 699 cases of feedback recorded for Social Services. Of these, 365 were complaints and 334 were compliments. Additionally, a total of 323 Member Enquiries were received for Adults and Children’s Services.

Overall, the figures for Stage 1 complaints were slightly down when compared to last year, while Stage 2 complaints had increased. While complaints relating to Childrens Services had decreased, those relating to Adult Service had increased. There was a 60% increase in Member Enquiries in Children’s Services and a 94% increase in Member Enquiries for Adult Services. An analysis of these figures is provided in section 6 of this report.

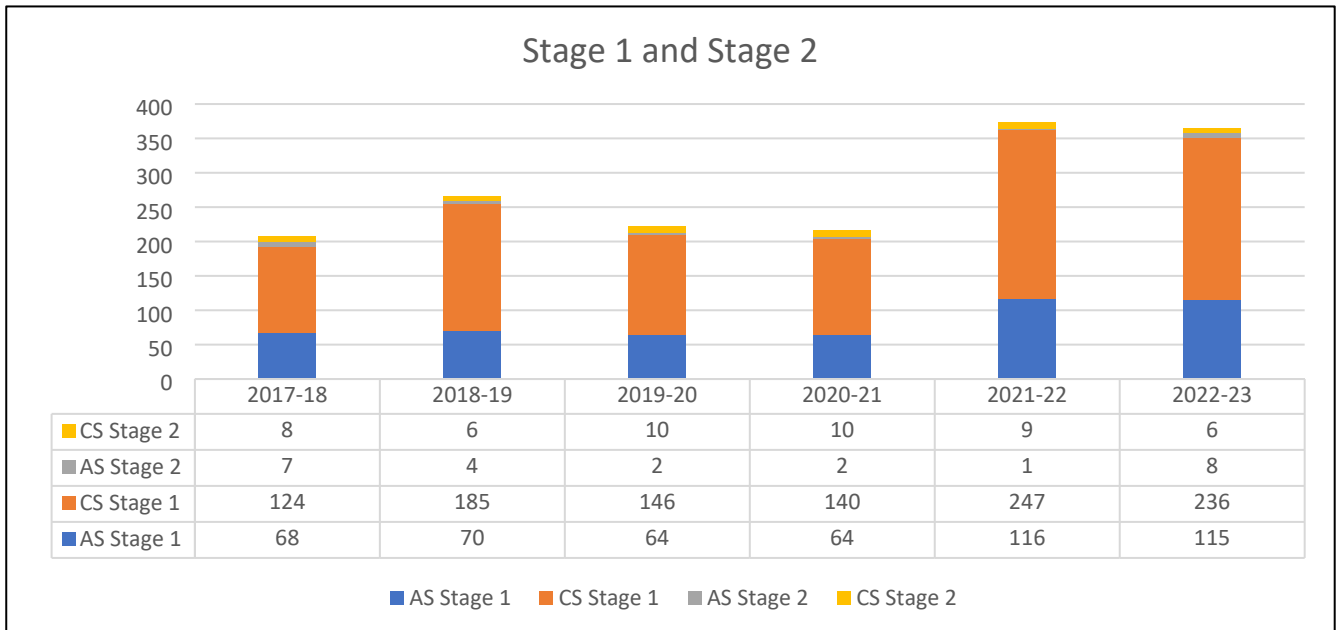









Chart 1: Stage 1 and Stage 2 Complaints for both Adult and Childrens Services 2017 - 2023

6. ADULT SERVICES OVERVIEW

	All Complaints	Stage 1 complaints	Stage 2 complaints	Days to resolve (av.)	Members Enquiries	Days to respond (av.)	Compliments
							
2022/2023	123	115	8	28	227	21	158
%	↑ 5%	↓ 1%	↑ 700%	↓ 40%	↑ 94%	↓ 0	↓ 13%
2021/2022	117	116	1	47	117	21	182

As stated above, overall complaints received by Adult Services have increased slightly during 2022/23, when compared to the previous year. While there was a small reduction in Stage 1 complaints, there was an increase in complaints progressing to Stage 2. The increase is consistent with the experience of other Local Authorities across Wales who have also reported an increase in the number of requests being made for Stage 2 investigations. However, it should also be noted that the outcomes from the Stage 2 complaints have substantially reflected the Stage 1 decisions, indicating that even though complainants have not been satisfied with the findings at Stage 1, the original investigations were undertaken in a manner that identified the most appropriate outcome.

The following reasons are understood to underpin the increase in Stage 2 complaints:

- ❖ **Increase in demand and pressure on services** and resultant delays in service provision – In 2022 Adult’s Services supported 4675 individuals with care and support plans which was a 6% increase from the previous year.
- ❖ **Increased awareness** – The service has revised its guidance, available documents and support resulting in that citizens becoming better informed about how to make a complaint, in particular this could explain the increase in Stage 2 complaints.

6.1 ALL CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence is any written or verbal contact received to the Compliments and Complaints teams from members of the public, professionals or Councillors and Elected Members. These may not always be complaints, and include requests for information, enquiries, compliments, and other general correspondence as well as complaints. These are recorded as every item of correspondence requires an action and monitoring these ensures that the Council are able to have an understanding of the workload of each team. Sometimes the general correspondence received can take significant work to address, including supporting managers to respond appropriately and prevent a general correspondence becoming a complaint.

During 2022/23, Adult Services received a total of 553 pieces of correspondence. This is a 32% increase from 2021/22 when 418 items of correspondence were received. The main increase is in Members Enquiries, which have increased from 117 in 2021/22 to 227 in 2022/23. Councillors and Assembly Members became more accessible to citizens during the year, with the removal of pandemic restrictions, offering opportunities for citizens to speak to them in person through their surgeries in addition to the opportunities for digital contact.

The number of informal issues and enquiries that are raised to the Adult Services Compliments and Complaints Team outside the normal complaints' procedure continues to grow. It is recognised that if a satisfactory outcome can be secured at the informal stage it improves overall customer satisfaction through the achievement of an early resolution. However, the formal complaints received are often more complex and frequently involve issues that relate to several service areas within the Council and have multiple themes. Consequently, they often take longer to investigate and resolve.

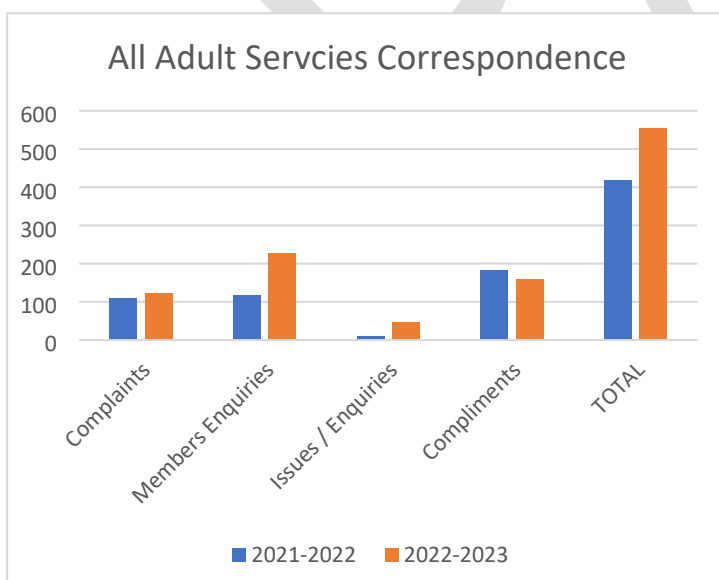


Chart 2: All Adult Services Correspondence Received in 2022/23

2022-2023

- 227 Members Enquiries
- 123 Complaints – including 8 Stage 2 complaints and 5 Withdrawn complaints.
- 158 Compliments
- 45 Issues/Enquiries (dealt with outside of complaints procedure)

5 complaints were withdrawn during the year. On review these were withdrawn during the complaints process, where early intervention by services had resolved the initial complaint



that had been raised and complainants were satisfied that issues had been addressed. Any complainant who informs the Compliments and Complaints Team that they wish to withdraw a complaint has this request confirmed in writing and are invited to refer to the team should they be dissatisfied at any later point in their journey. The team do not actively contact complainants to ask if they wish to withdraw complaints, and where issues are resolved during the complaints process and no request to withdraw the complaint has been received, a full response is provided in line with the regulatory requirements.

Examples of the issues and enquiries dealt with by the team outside of the complaints process include but are not limited to:

- Request for services, including information regarding how to access services.
- Requests to review a decision made by teams within Adult Services (these are managed through a formal appeals process and overseen by the Compliments and Complaints Team).
- Requests for information that do not require input through other formal processes.
- Queries regarding services offered through the Council, such as types of day services available, and other organisations that services will refer to in order to support citizens.
- Public concerns regarding the wellbeing or behaviour of individuals where there is no formal relationship, such as concerns regarding a neighbour.

Quarter 2 and 3 were the busiest months for the Adult Services Compliments and Complaints Team which is consistent with previous years. The highest month for complaints and enquiries was October, where 40 cases were received. 3 Stage 2 complaints were received in November which would link to the increase in complaints received in Quarters 2 and 3.

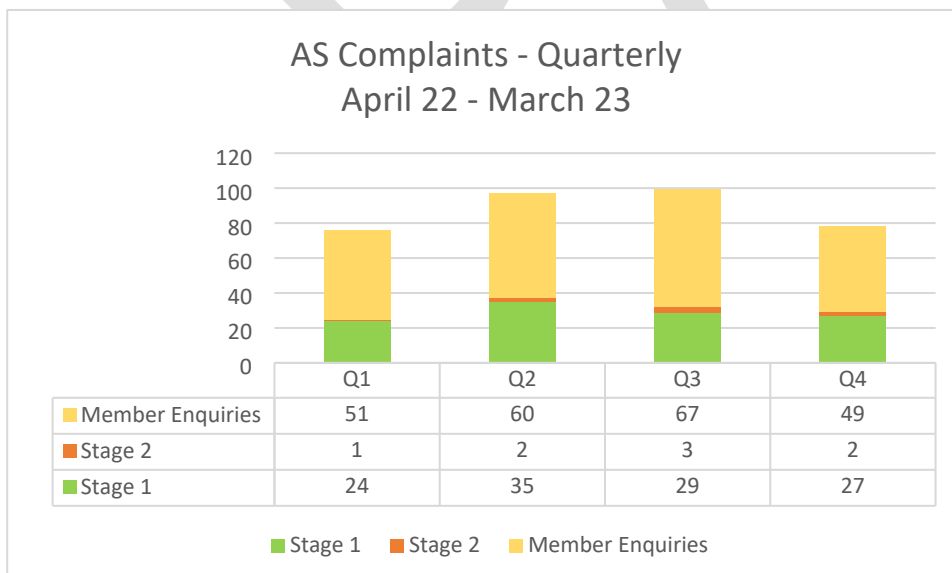


Chart 3: Adult Services Complaints by Quarter 2022/23



THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF ADULT SERVICES COMPLAINTS, LESSONS LEARNED AND HOW WE ARE ADDRESSING THESE.

Adult Services has seen an increase in complex cases this year. As a result of the pandemic a number of citizens did not receive services due to restrictions on visitors to their homes or the reduced availability of community support and this has resulted in the increased level of need that citizens are now presenting with. An increase in demand for services post pandemic and delays in undertaking assessments due to a lack of social work and service capacity has impacted on the complexity of some of the complaints received. The service has taken steps to address significant areas of delay in accessing assessments by introducing additional capacity from a dedicated commissioned service, improving our recruitment arrangements, and reviewing the links between the hospital teams and community teams to reduce delays. The Discharge to Assess and Discharge to Recover and Assess pathways are being utilised to prevent delays in hospital discharge and to provide an opportunity for individuals to be assessed in a more appropriate environment.

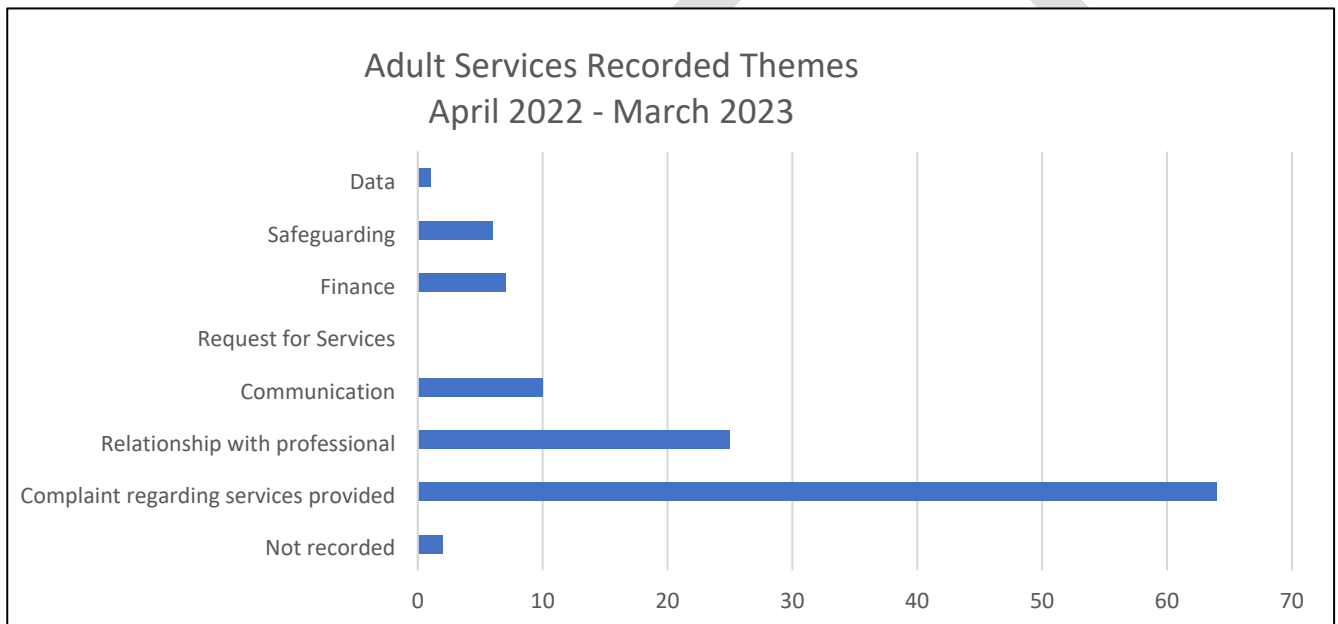


Chart 4: Recorded Themes of Complaints Received

56% of the complaints received in 2022/2023 were regarding services being received, and nearly a quarter of complaints received were regarding relationships with a professional.

The key themes underpinning many complaints received are as follows.

- **Communication:** complaints were often in relation to citizens being unable to contact the right person at the right time, and delays in assessments or requests with no clear communication provided.
- **Relationship with professional:** complaints generally relate to specific members of staff where the individual is unhappy with their approach, support, and advice. This can be in relation to Council staff but also commissioned providers delivering care on behalf of Adult Services



- **Services provided:** complaints were often in relation to commissioned services provided on behalf of Adult Services and / or delays in assessments being undertaken.

When an outcome for a complaint is identified, there is consideration regarding lessons learned following this and actions that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of the same situation occurring in the future.

Some of the lessons learned and actions undertaken from 2022-23 have included:

- Review of policy relating to Hospital Discharge for individuals into the community to ensure that the right level of support is put in place to support an individual whilst they settle back into an independent life.
- Improved recording relating to who is important to an individual, and those they want to be involved in their care and support.
- Better access to training for staff, particularly relating to challenging conversations to ensure that communication for individuals is as positive and inclusive as possible.
- Improved formal/written communication with complainants following phone conversations to ensure that they remain fully informed regarding any delays.
- Where a relationship with a professional has broken down, ensuring that the individual is supported to understand any impact a change in professional may have and to support them to navigate this, either through support to rebuild relationships or to develop a positive relationship with a new professional.
- Closer links with the Training Unit and Quality Assurance Manager have been developed to support better address the concerns being raised, and to ensure that the learning from complaints is fed into the training needs assessment for staff, informing policy and service development.
- The whole service approach to embedding Collaborative Communication training into practice supported by mentoring and opportunities for reflective practice is also expected to positively impact on the way in which assessments are carried out and the relationships that Social Workers have with individuals receiving services.
- Additionally, work has been undertaken to strengthen the management of provider performance issues for commissioned services and to improve Quality Assurance processes so that where issues related to the quality of commissioned care are raised, there are formal structures in place to address these in a timely way.

Lessons learned ensures that Adult Services can continue to develop its services to meet the needs of citizens in a way that has a positive impact on their lives. Further feedback opportunities are being introduced in 2023-24 to not only consider lessons learned following a complaint being raised but offering the opportunity for citizens to feedback more regularly through their journey with social services and allowing teams to be more proactive in their approach to supporting people. A short satisfaction survey to seek views following both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints has been developed, providing better opportunities to assess the success of the strengthened complaints process and to identify other areas of development through feedback from individuals.

6.2 TIMESCALES FOR RESPONSES

The performance on acknowledging complaints has improved in 2022/23. The reporting mechanisms for logging the acknowledgement date has improved and more complete figures will be available for 2023/24. Further work is being completed to ensure that every complaint receives a formal acknowledgement within 2 days.

The table below provides an analysis of the length of time it has taken to send out acknowledgement letters, measured against the target timescales.

Acknowledgement for Stage 1 (Target - 2 working days)	2021/2022		Within deadline	2022/2023		Within deadline
Same Day	22	19%	24%	76	69%	95%
1-2 working days	6	5%		28	26%	
3+ working days	3	3%		5	5%	
not recorded	86	74%		1	1%	
Average	2 Days			1 Day		

An analysis of response times has indicated that all 6 complaints raised that were not acknowledged within the target timescale had been received directly by Social Work Teams who had not informed the Compliments and Complaints Team until later in the process. Work has been undertaken with teams to address this issue, including awareness raising of the complaints process.

The table below summarises response times for stage 1 complaints measured against the target timescale.

Stage 1 Responses (Target - 15 working days)	2021/22		Within deadline	2022/23		Within deadline
0-7 Days	12	10%	16%	21	19%	38%
7-14 days	7	6%		21	19%	
14+ working days	82	71%		68	62%	
not recorded	15	13%		0	0%	
Average	50 Days			28 Days		

While a high number of complaints were still not responded to within deadline during 2022/3, the figures show an improving trend and the average number of days to provide a full response to complainants has decreased from 50 days to 28 days, ensuring that complainants are responded to in a timelier way than experienced previously. This improvement has been achieved despite the higher number of complaints and their increased complexity.

An escalation procedure is now in place, with overdue cases referred to the relevant Operational Manager and the Director is also informed where prompt responses are not provided by the service managers.



There has been a significant increase in the requests for Stage 2 investigations this year. On review 2 key-reasons have been identified for this:

- The complexity of the cases has increased.
- Complainants felt that the complaint has not been fully investigated or investigated in a balanced way.

The table below summarises the response times for Stage 2 complaints.

Stage 2 Responses (Target - 25 working days)	2021/2022		2022/2023	
0-25 Days	0	0%	0	0%
25+ working days	1	100%	8	100%
not recorded	0	0%	0	0%
Average	85.5 Days		53 Days	

While the timescales for responding to Stage 2 complaints have improved in 2022/3, from 85.5 days to 53 days, these are still above the target of 25 working days. Stage 2 complaints are carried out by external independent investigators. A period is required to appoint the investigator and it will usually take at least 20-25 days for the investigator to carry out the review, including speaking to the complainant and interviewing any officers involved, and for a report to be drafted. Once the report is submitted, it is then reviewed internally, and a letter is drafted to go along with the report setting out the Council's response, this is then sent to the complainant. The Stage 2 complaint process can therefore be time consuming, and the average timescales reflect this.

As stated above Local Authorities across Wales have reported that there has been an increase in the number of requests being made for Stage 2 investigations which has impacted on the availability of the investigators. This together with the complexity of the complaints has also impacted on time scales. The service is continuing to work to improve response times, while ensuring that a thorough investigation is carried out.

Of the 8 Stage 2 complaints to Adult Services in 2022/23, 2 did not go through Stage 1 as the complainant did not engage with the process. In the 6 cases where there had been a Stage 1 response, the Stage 2 outcome supported the original findings.

6.3 OUTCOMES

Complaints provide the service area with an opportunity to review their practices, and where a complaint is received the outcome of that complaint may be that it is upheld. Even in cases where a complaint is not upheld it often offers the opportunity for the team to review why an individual has raised a concern and to change the approach from the team when supporting that individual.

23% of complaints received during 2022/23 were upheld and 61% not upheld. The number of upheld complaints this year is an increase from 2021/22 (10% of cases). However, during the previous year, recordings were also made for partially upheld (17%) and not recorded (33%). On this basis, it is unlikely that the increase seen this year is a more accurate reflection of the findings.

Examples of where a complaint has been upheld include:

- Evidence of delays experienced when waiting for an assessment.
- Complaints regarding relationships with professionals where there has been a breakdown in relationship.
- Issues with commissioned care providers where it is identified that the care agency is at fault.

From April 2022, clearer outcomes for individual complaints were recorded. This is in line with the Ombudsman return requests.

Upheld – where the main point of the complaint is upheld, even if smaller areas are not upheld.

Not Upheld – where a complaint is either not upheld at all, or a smaller part of the complaint is upheld.

Not Applicable – when a response is regarding a councillor enquiry or a complaint has been withdrawn or abandoned, such as when an individual is involved in a Court of Protection process.

Progress to Stage 2 – where a complainant is unhappy with the initial outcome and a Stage 2 investigation is triggered.

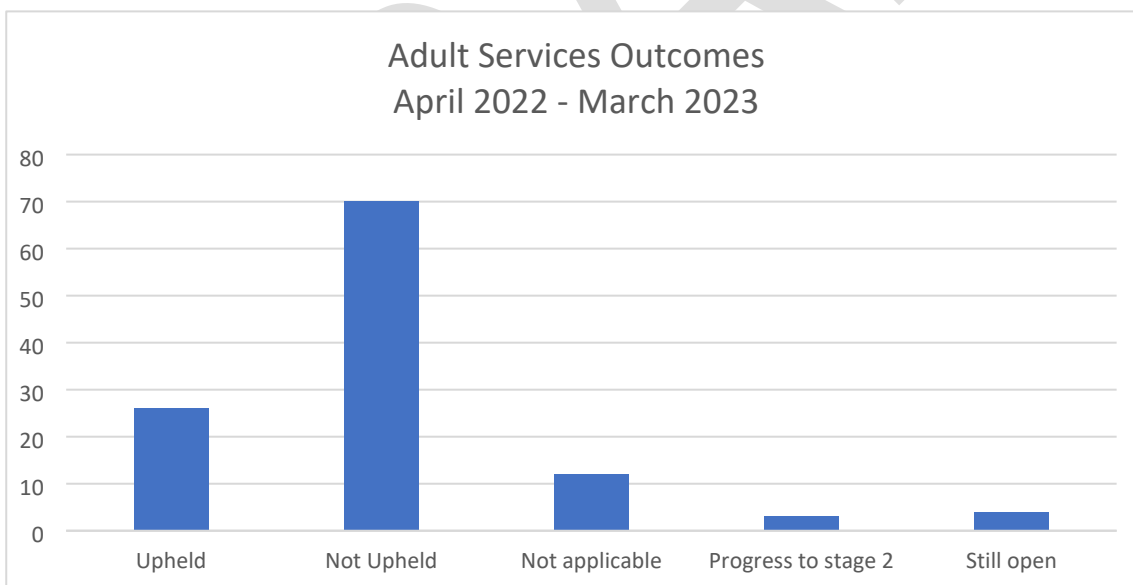


Chart 5: Adult Services Outcomes



6.4 OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS FOR ADULT SERVICES

Adult Services had 3 complainants approach the Ombudsman in 2022/2023. Of these:

- 1 was closed after initial consideration.
- 1 had an early resolution settlement.
- 1 was closed due to premature contact.

During 2022/23 no Ombudsman cases relating to Adult Services required investigations that led to reports.

6.5 MEMBERS ENQUIRIES

There has been a significant increase in Member Correspondence for 2022/2023. This has been reviewed and on reflection there are a number of reasons identified why this may be the case:

- Prior to the pandemic citizens would attend a weekly ward surgery where they would raise queries and concerns. Councillors and Assembly Members are now more accessible, with social media presence and through other digital formats, in addition to local surgeries.
- There was an election held in May 2022, and a lot of canvassing was carried out at that time. Following this there was a new intake of Councillors.
- There has been an increase in Member Enquiries requesting information about accessing services, rather than raising complaints or concerns and the number of enquiries of this nature have been the predominant theme of Councillor Correspondence

In total, Adult Services received 227 member enquiries broken down by the following service areas:

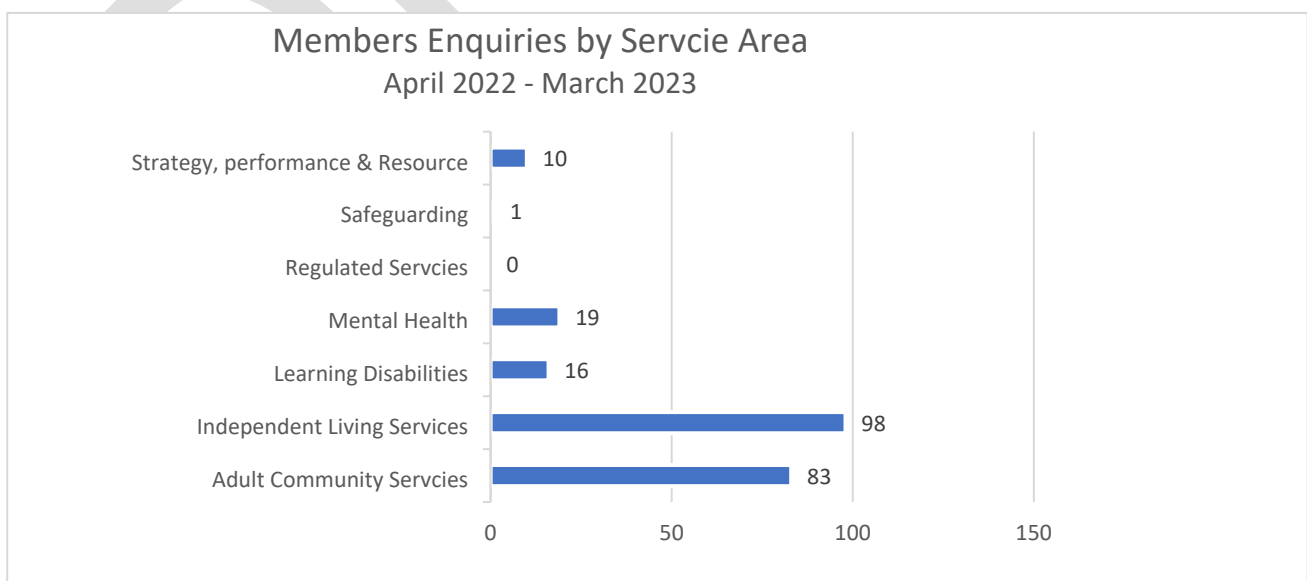


Chart 6: Members Enquiries by Service Area



The Table below summarises the response times for Members Enquiries measured against the target timescale.

Members Responses (Target - 10 days)	2021/2022		2022/2023	
0-10 Days	36	30%	113	50%
11+ working days	62	26%	114	50%
not recorded	23	19%	0	0%
Average	21 Days		21 Days	

Of the Members Enquiries received, 132 (58%) were a request for services or information relating to available services, highlighting the increase in individuals requiring help and support living in the community. These requests for service are predominantly referred to the Independent Living Services (ILS) to carry out an initial 'What Matters' conversation to support identification of further services that may be suitable to support them. A further 28 (12%) instances of correspondence were requests for information, including information requested about the closure of care facilities and information about funding to support transport to community groups. The remaining 30% of correspondence received were relating to concerns relating to care services, including issues with commissioned care services, delays in assessments being undertaken, finance issues and relationships with professionals.

Adult Services aim to provide a full response to elected members, the target time is often not met due to the time taken to ensure that a thorough review takes place. However, the approach of resolving a concern to achieve the best outcome for an individual is supported by Members, and they are kept informed as to the progress of all enquiries raised

6.6 COMPLIMENTS

Adult Services receives compliments from people accessing services and their families as well as from other professionals. When compliments are received these are shared with the Director and feedback is provided directly to the individual or team receiving the compliment and their Operational Manager. Cardiff Social Services believes it is very important to highlight positive feedback to staff and to share this with staff teams.

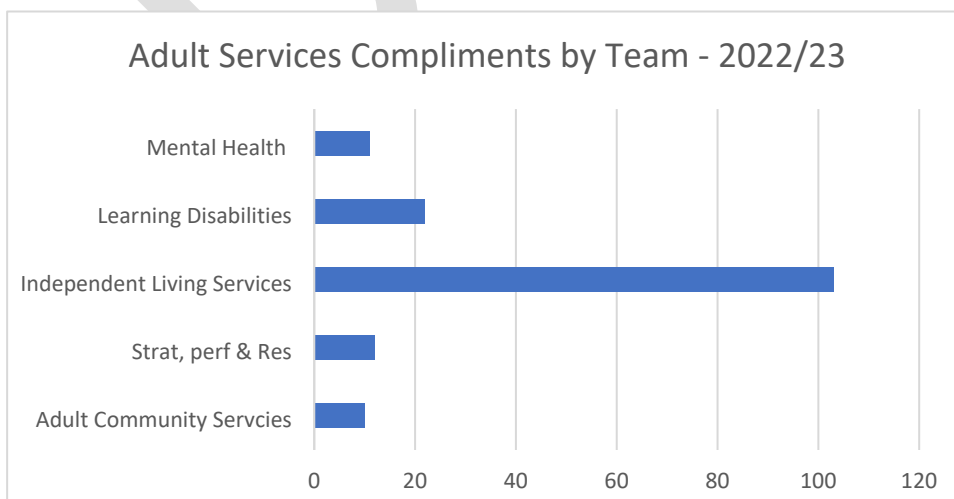




Chart 7: Compliments

Compliments are captured regarding support received from both professionals and individuals and their families. Independent Living Services actively seek feedback from individuals regarding the support received, evidenced in the large number of compliments received for this team. The compliments for this team are relating to support received to access services and as a reflection of the care received by the Community Resource Team (CRT). Whilst other areas in Adult Services do not currently actively seek feedback following intervention there has been excellent feedback evidencing the positive work that social workers and other professionals have undertaken to support individuals.

There has been evidence of excellent joint-working between Social Care staff and colleagues in Health evidencing the strong relationships between the teams. Feedback from family members regarding the support received by Social Work staff has remained very positive with evidence of services making a meaningful difference to the lives of individuals and their family members and those who are important to them.

A summary of some of the positive feedback received regarding Adult Services teams.

Family member for a social worker in the Learning Disability Team

I would like to say a huge thank you for the support & understanding you have shown to O & myself during our time of need. You have listened, understood our needs and fought our corner, the outcome has had a truly positive impact on our family which I cannot thank you enough for. We will be both sad to leave your care and wish you all the best for the future. You have truly been a fantastic advocate for us all

Service user for Independent Living Services

You were compassionate and caring. Though communication because of various restrictions was sketchy/difficult at times, I never felt abandoned and when the contractor finally undertook the work, it has so far been excellent and so beneficial

Service user for day services

I very much enjoy the time I spend at the day centre and could do with it more than twice a week. All the staff are very friendly and helpful.

External professional for Learning Disability Team

I should add how much I've enjoyed working with yourself and Cardiff colleagues on this case. I've learnt an enormous amount about your approach to wellbeing and least restrictive care practice which has been incredibly valuable.



Service user for an outreach worker and Ty Canna Mental Health support unit

Thank you to the team at Ty Canna for all the help over the last 3+ years. I was in a real bad place when you first started working with me and A has been a big support to me in that time. He has helped me to get out more, helped me when I am down and to socialise more by inviting me to the groups which I have started to go to and enjoying the Hilton. I know my 1-2-1 support has stopped but A still rings in his spare time and I know he is only a phone call away if something comes up. I don't think I would have made any progress without A and Ty Canna. I am forever grateful for Ty Canna, you and A's help.

Service user for CRT Care staff

Excellent, very caring and supportive, such nice girls. Could not be happier with the care I received. Carers are wonderful.








External professional for discharge team

I just wanted to thank you and the team for the fantastic change we have seen in triage and IDH process, the difference is remarkable. Your influence and guidance is obviously making a huge difference.

Family member for social worker in the community team

I am writing to express my deep appreciation for the outstanding care and support provided by social worker, R. My father, who has been disabled due to a stroke, was recently seen by R for an evaluation of his care needs. I was extremely impressed by her compassion, empathy and the thoroughness of her evaluation. R's professionalism, kind and understanding nature helped make a difficult time easier for my father and our family. She truly went above and beyond in her duties and kept frequently in touch with us via email and phone to update on the progress.

7. CHILDREN SERVICES OVERVIEW

	Complaints	Stage 1 complaints	Stage 2 complaints	Days to resolve (av.)	Members Enquiries	Days to respond (av.)	Compliments
							
2022/2023	242	236	6	36	93	29	180
%	↓ 5%	↓ 4%	↓ 33%	↓ 21%	↑ 60%	↓ 6%	↑ 18%
2021/2022	256	247	9	46	58	31	152

The 236 complaints received in 2022/23 represent 6.5% of the total children, young people and families (3635) that were supported, and just 0.5% of the total number of contacts received across Children’s Services (45,264)

2022/23 saw a decrease in complaints recorded for Children’s Services, compared to the 247 in 2021/22.

Children’s Services continue to improve support for young people to access advocates, enabling them to raise complaints and concerns and encouraging them to share their perspectives.

7.1 ALL CORRESPONDENCE

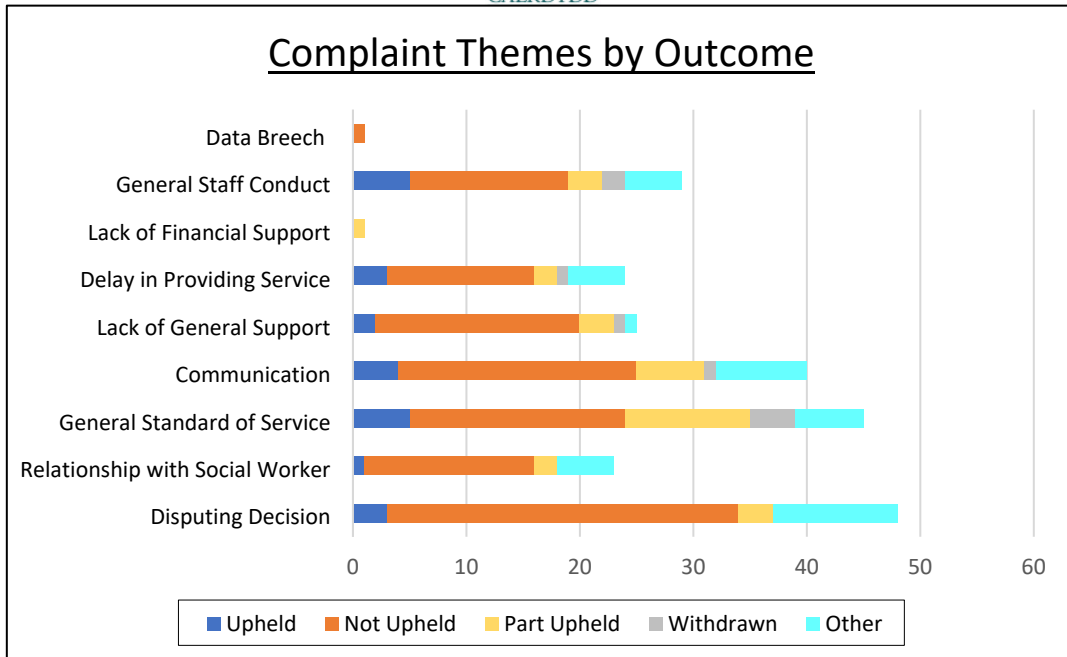
Children’s Services have received a total of **561** cases of feedback in 2022/23

- **236 Complaints**
- **93 Member enquiries** (which is a 60% increase from the 2021/23 figure)
- **52 ‘Fast Track’ requests for service**
- **180 Compliments**

Whilst a decrease was seen in the number of Stage 1 and 2 complaints received, Member enquiries saw a large increase of 60% compared to the previous year.

The decrease in complaints can in part be attributed to the introduction of the ‘fast track’ requests for service; to improve customer satisfaction and minimise complaints, the Children’s Services complaints team has introduced a ‘48-hour call back’ request in the 2022/23 period. This ‘fast track’ option enables a Team Manager to contact the service user within 48 hours to address concerns and resolve issues at first point of contact, preventing issues from progressing to a formal complaint stage. This both enhances the quality of service delivery and improves the overall customer experience. Children’s Services received **52** ‘fast-track’ requests in 2022/23

7.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS FROM CHILDRENS SERVICES COMPLAINTS



'Disputing Decision' was the most dominant theme to Children's Services complaints throughout 2022/23, accounting for 20% of complaints made. Due to the nature of the work in Children's Services, decisions must be made in the best interest of the young person. Complaints included disputing the decision to remove a child from their parent's care, or to move a looked after child from their placement.

'General Standard of Service' was the second most common theme, accounting for 19% of complaints made. This theme broadly covers dissatisfaction with the service received from Children's Services, including complaints that involved multiple allegations covering the other themes outlined, that represented perceived poor overall service.

'Communication' accounted for 17% of complaints made. This theme accounts for complaints regarding the communication received from the Local Authority, and most commonly refers to perceived poor communication from a social worker, for example the time taken to return calls or text messages. Of the 39 complaints received regarding communication, just 4 were upheld.

7.3 LESSONS LEARNT FROM CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMPLAINTS

Children's Services are dedicated to reviewing practices when complaints are identified. This commitment ensures that the service takes feedback into account and takes appropriate action to prevent similar impacts on other families.

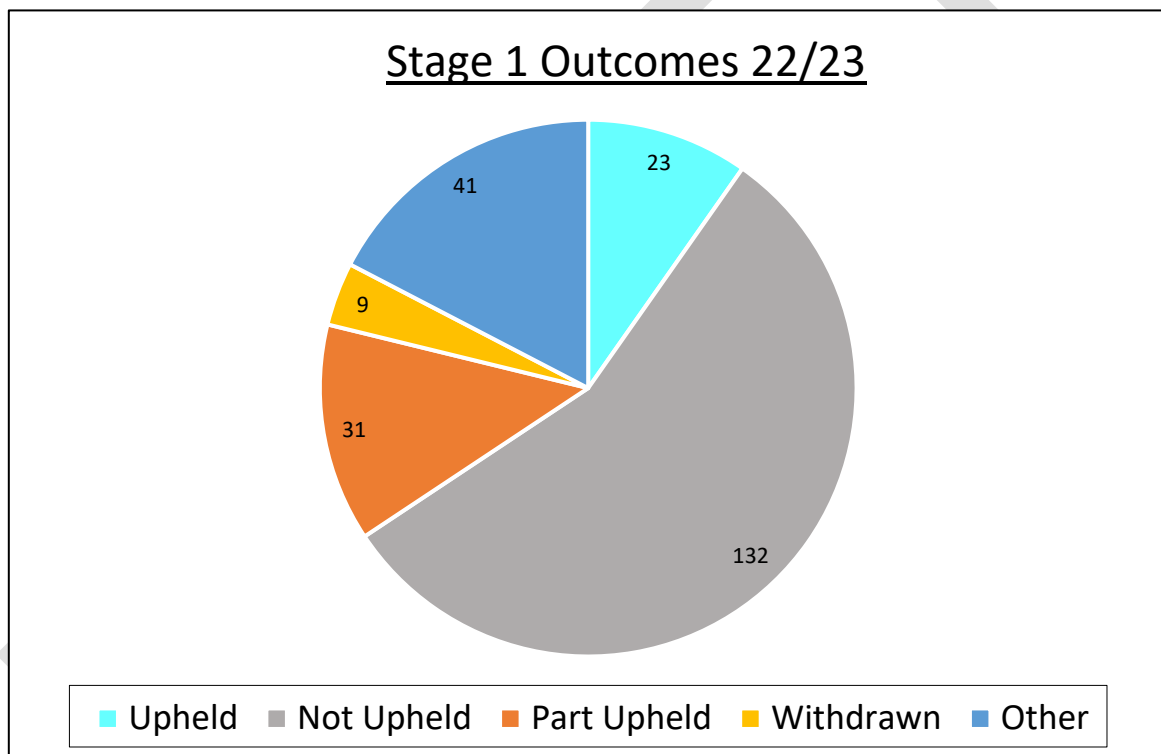
During 2022/23, a member of the public lodged a complaint regarding their previous interaction with Children's Services. The complainant had initially contacted the service to raise concerns about safeguarding but felt that the call handler had lacked professionalism and empathy.



In order to learn from this complaint and prevent recurrence of similar mistakes, staff members were reminded about how difficult a decision it can be to reach out to Children's Services, and the importance of providing support to individuals expressing concerns. The caller had been unsure of the children's names or addresses but did have valuable information to start the process of finding out, and so staff were further reminded of their duty to make efforts to gather information and fill in any gaps using the contacts and resources available to them.

These measures were applied to improve the overall responsiveness and quality of support provided by Children's Services, fostering an environment where persons are encouraged and empowered to share their safeguarding concerns.

7.4 OUTCOMES

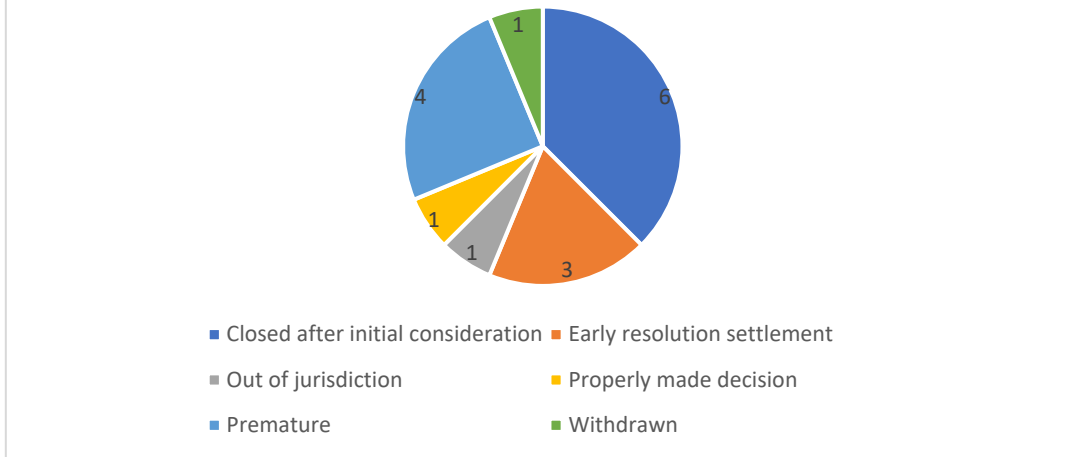


Just 10% of Stage 1 complaints received by Children's Services in 2022/23 were upheld. 13% were part-upheld, with the majority (56%) not upheld. 4% were withdrawn and the remaining 17% were categorised as 'other'; this category includes complaints which, for example, were in court, or had no consent.

Of the 6 Stage 2 complaints received, 1 was part-upheld, and the remaining 5 are ongoing.

7.5 OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS FOR CHILDRENS SERVICES

Children's Services Ombudsman Complaint Outcomes 22/23



16 complainants approached the Ombudsman in 2022/23 about Children's Services. Of these complaints;

- 6 were closed after initial consideration
- 4 were premature
- 1 was out of jurisdiction
- 1 withdrawn
- 3 reached an early resolution settlement by completing ombudsman's recommendations
- 1 was decided by the Ombudsman to have had a decision properly made previously by the Authority.

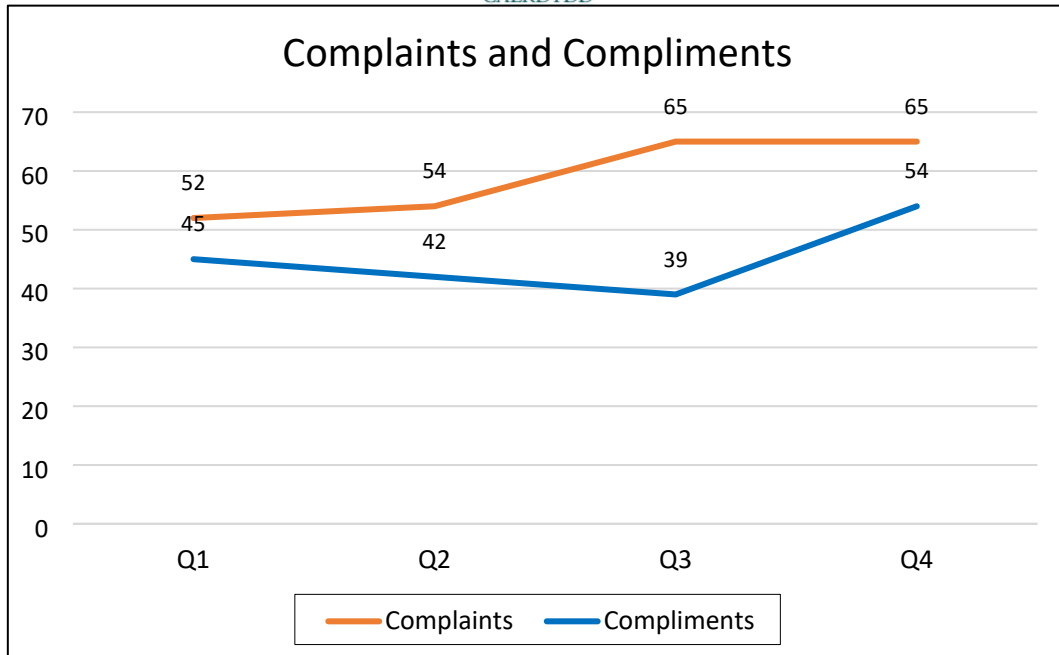
None reached formal investigations that led to reports.

7.6 COMPLIMENTS

Compliments

2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
91	178	152	180

The commitment and hard work demonstrated throughout the service area is reflected in the 180 compliments received in 2022/23, an 18% increase compared to the previous year (152). The complaints team will continue to seek out improved methods of gathering positive feedback.



When compliments are received, they are shared with the individual concerned as well as the Director and the relevant Operational Manager.

The 180 compliments received by Children's Services in 2022/23 were received from a variety of individuals, including young people, families, foster carers, and other professionals.

Some feedback from the people we support in Children's Services:

I have been meaning to contact you to pass on some positive feedback for Matt Smith. I know he has left the team now to train as a social worker, but I just wanted to say how excellent Matt was during the case with my son. Unfortunately, my son stopped engaging at the latter stage of his restorative order, but Matt was there from the start with good advice, care and so knowledgeable that it helped us tremendously. Matt will make a brilliant social worker and whatever family he works with again are very, very lucky. He is truly amazing. Thank you.

Parent wanted me to pass on to you how grateful the family are for all of your support. She commented that your support has helped them mature both as parents and as a couple.

Feedback from other professionals in Children's Services:

Following [young person's] review with him advising that he now wants to remain living in Cardiff but independently, along with all the other issues identified. Cath has just updated me that she has followed through with arranging a separate meeting with [young person] with his PA to address the other issues. She has also submitted the YGR – for a Tenancy Training. All this done today, amazing. He is one lucky young person to have Cath following up with things so promptly.

I recently visited the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to talk to staff about their work in supporting some of our city's most vulnerable children, often in crisis situations; and met with Head Teachers in a number of schools in the city's southern arc. The work being undertaken is simply outstanding. Collectively, it represents a huge contribution to giving children and young people the support they need at critical times in their lives. It was equally clear that demand pressures of unprecedented scale and complexity continue to grow – highlighting the need to for us to protect critical services.

8. SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

Overall Social Services have evidenced clear improvements regarding responding to complaints and correspondence throughout 2022/23. There has been a general trend of better acknowledgement and response times, as well as stronger reporting offering service areas the opportunities to reflect on practise and decision making.

Adult Services have seen an improvement to acknowledgement timescales to 95% of all Stage 1 complaints being acknowledged formally within the 2 days timescale. There has also been an increase in the number of complaints having an increase in the response time of 15 days from 16% to 38%.

Adult Services have identified that whilst the introduction of the themes and categories reflected in this report has been useful, there needs to be some further development of this into 2023/24 reporting structure. This includes separating out the commissioned services and strengthening the 'services' theme to identify the teams more effectively.

Children's Services have seen a reduction in the overall number of complaints received in 2022/23 compared to the previous year. Additionally, improvements have been seen in response times to both complaints and enquiries, despite a large increase in the number of Member enquiries received in 2022/23 from 2021/22.

9. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

In the previous year's report, there was reference to the introduction of the new Halo system, that is being introduced to manage and oversee all Complaints and Correspondence received across the Council. There has been several delays in the introduction of this system, and it is now hoped that this will be introduced for Social Services in 2 Stages, throughout the next year. It is intended that all Councillor and Members correspondence will go live on Halo by quarter 2 and the remaining complaints will go live by the end of quarter 3.

Adult Services are developing a stronger system for overseeing the Stage 2 investigators, including a clear letter of intention to be issues alongside all Stage 2 complaints to the investigators. This is to ensure that the standards expected and the support the independent investigator receives from the team is clearly laid out and is designed to improve the communication between the investigator and the team, and the team and the complainant.

Children's Services have previously encountered delays in initiating and concluding Stage 2 investigations due to a shortage of available independent investigators. Furthermore, concerns were raised regarding the quality of reports produced by certain investigators, resulting in additional delays in the conclusion of Stage 2 complaints.

To address these issues, in 2023/24 the team have undertaken a thorough review and expansion of our list of approved investigators. Going forward, this step will ensure a larger and more diverse group of professionals available to undertake investigations promptly and maintain the standard of report quality.

By increasing the pool of approved investigators, Children's Services aim to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our processes, reducing delays and an ensuring the timely conclusion of investigations.