

# Customer Feedback Annual Report

## Children's Services

# Shropshire Council

## 2020/21

Feedback and Insight Team, Shropshire Council  
July 2021



# 1. Introduction

The report covers Children's Services formal feedback and representations for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. The report details the comments, compliments and complaints formally recorded by Shropshire Council. The annual report is designed as a public document, but regular internal reporting is carried out. This regular monitoring of formal feedback enables any issues to be addressed early and focuses attention on ongoing improvement.

The Children's Act 1989 and NHS and the Community Care Act 1990 require all local authorities with social services responsibilities in England and Wales to have a complaints procedure. 'Getting the Best from Complaints' provides guidance for local authorities on implementing the Children's Act. This report is produced in line with national guidance.

Statutory complaints relate to the provision of social care and are handled in line with the national regulations referred to above. These statutory complaints follow the Council's Statutory Complaints Procedure for children's services, the key stages of which are set out in section 2 of this report: stage 1 - local resolution; stage 2 – investigation; stage 3 - review panel and section 4 - referral to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Few complaints progress through multiple stages of the procedure, and Shropshire Council aims to provide thorough investigations and responses at stage 1 and 2.

The remainder of complaints for Children's Services fall under the Council's corporate complaints procedure, for example these may be complaints about educational improvement services, a support service or administrative process rather than social care. Corporate complaints are investigated at stage 1, reviewed at stage 2 and customers may choose to progress their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman as a final stage. You can find out more in the Council's Corporate Customer Feedback Report 2018/19.

You can give us your views in several different ways. Please use the one that suits you best. If you are a child you can make the complaint yourself, request an advocate or ask an adult you trust to make a complaint on your behalf. You can:

- Speak to a member of staff
- Telephone 01743 256188
- Email: [customer.feedback@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.feedback@shropshire.gov.uk)
- Fill in the form on the Council's website or portal here: <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/feedback/children-and-young-peoples-complaints/>

## Complaint

We aim to make it as easy as possible to make a complaint. A complaint is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction about a service provided. Family members and advocates may also make a complaint on behalf of one of our customers. We will ask for consent to ensure that the complaint is not being made against the customer's wishes.

## Compliment

Many people get in touch with a compliment when the information or support they have received has exceeded their expectations. It is helpful to learn when a service has been provided well or when a member of staff has done a great job. We like to recognise compliments alongside any complaints. It is good for us to say 'thank you' to our teams and staff members too.

## Comment

Feedback about a service could be:

- a suggestion to improve it.
- a question as to whether something could be done differently.
- an idea for delivering a service differently.

## 2. The Children's Complaints Process (Statutory)

### Feedback Received

Shropshire Council encourages children, parents, carers and others to give feedback and highlight any concerns so that they may be addressed as quickly as possible. Children can speak to someone they trust such as a social worker, teacher or other adult. Support is also available from complaints officers based within Shropshire Council's Feedback and Insight Team.

**Telephone:** 0345 678 9000

**Email:** [customer.feedback@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.feedback@shropshire.gov.uk)

**Website:** <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/feedback/children-and-young-peoples-complaints/>

**Online:** Log into the My Shropshire portal

### Acknowledgment

Complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days of being received and we let the complainant know how their complaint will be handled.

### STAGE 1

The Statutory Complaints Officer or a colleague will contact the appropriate team manager within Children's Services and ask them to investigate the complaint. The complainant will be provided with a written response within 10 days for statutory complaints (sometimes we may have to ask for longer if the issues are more complex and may need 20 working days to complete the investigation). If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint response, they may request to go to stage 2.

### STAGE 2 - Review

If a complaint is not resolved at Stage 1, and the complainant or their representative remains dissatisfied with the investigation or response, an external Independent Investigating Officer and an external Independent Person are commissioned by Children's Services to further investigate the complaint.

The Investigating Officer and Independent Person will aim to produce a report within 25 working days. However, if the case is complex, they can have a maximum of 65 days in which to produce their reports. Once the reports have been finalised, they are sent to the adjudication officer (usually the Head of the Service) who will, after careful consideration of the reports, provide the complainant with a written response to the complaint.

### STAGE 3 - Panel

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the decision/outcome following the independent investigation, they can ask to have their complaint reviewed by a Complaints Review Panel. The Complaints Review Panel is made up of three external people who will review the complaint, but they will not reinvestigate or consider new complaints. The complainant can attend the panel meeting if they choose to and can bring a friend or someone they can trust.

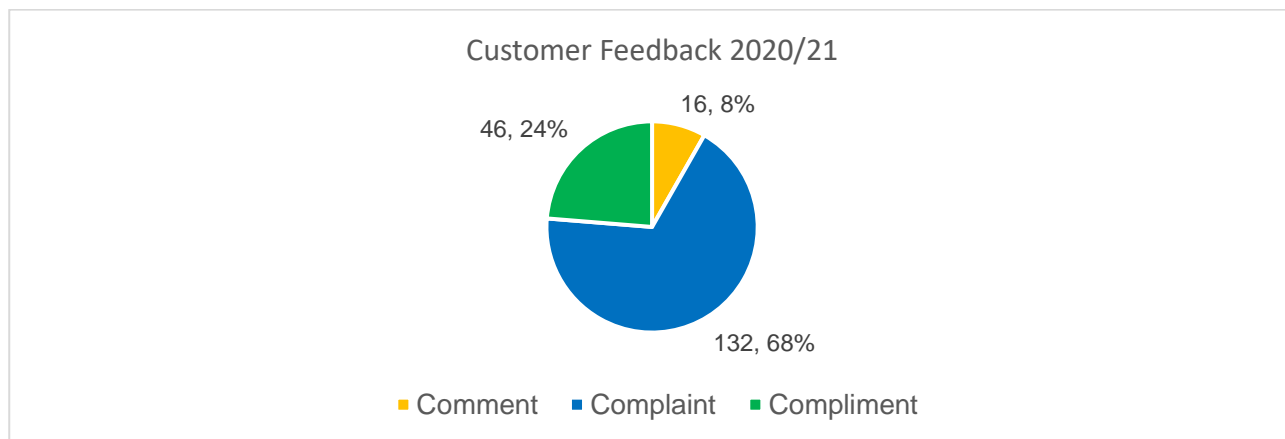
**Ombudsman** If a complaint cannot be resolved locally it can be investigated by the Ombudsman. The Council has a timescale of 28 calendar days to provide a response to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO). Responses are often complex, lengthy and require a large volume of appendices to be collated, catalogued and returned to the LGO. Complainants can request to go to the Ombudsman after stage 2.

The Shropshire Council Annual Customer feedback report includes a similar diagram to outline the corporate complaints process: stage 1 - investigation, stage 2 – review, final stage - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

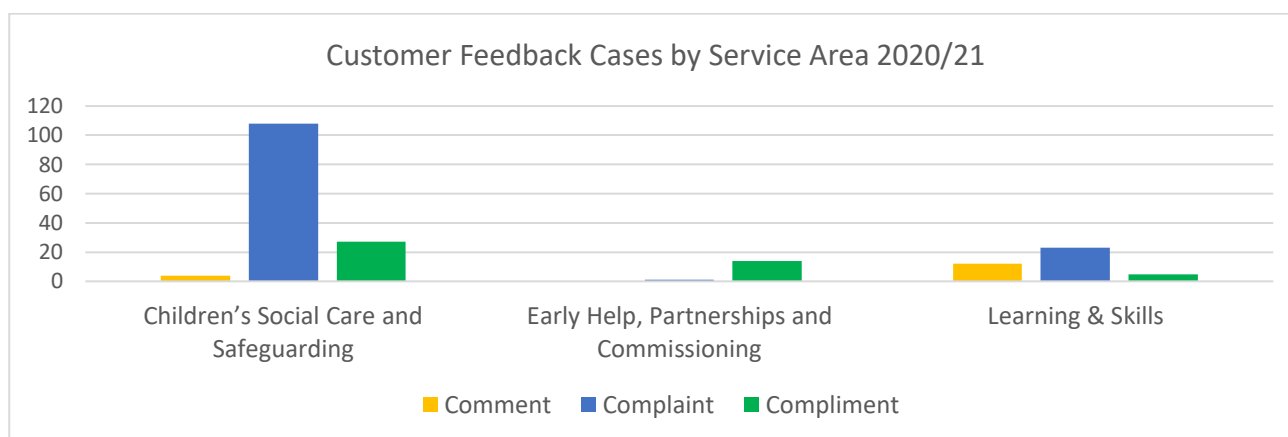
### 3. Customer Feedback 2020/21

In 2020/21 there were 194 cases of feedback recorded for Children’s Services. There were:

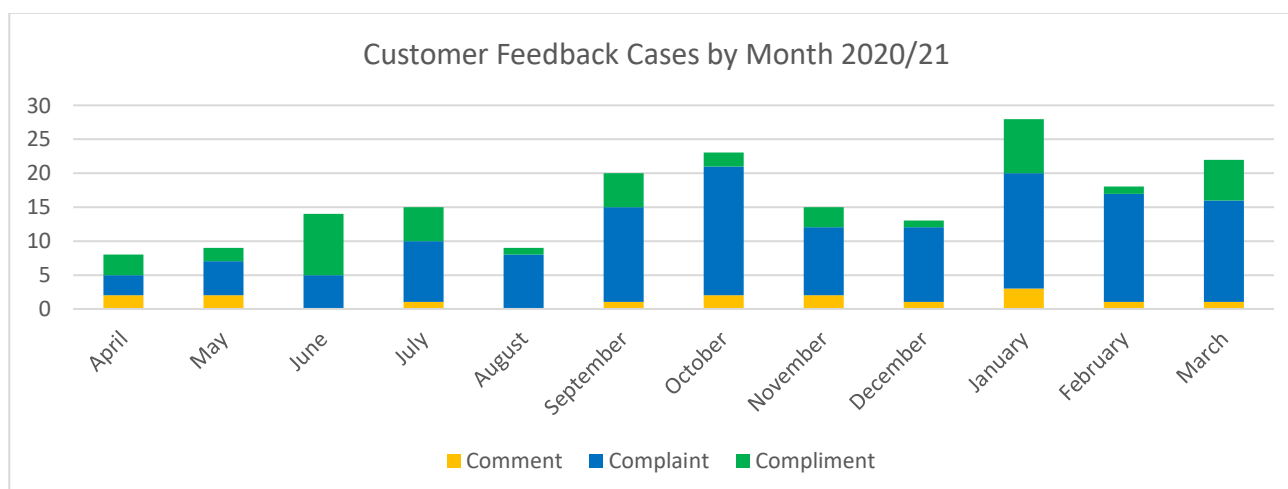
- 46 compliments
- 16 comments or other types of enquiry
- 132 complaints



The chart below illustrates how this feedback was spread across service areas.



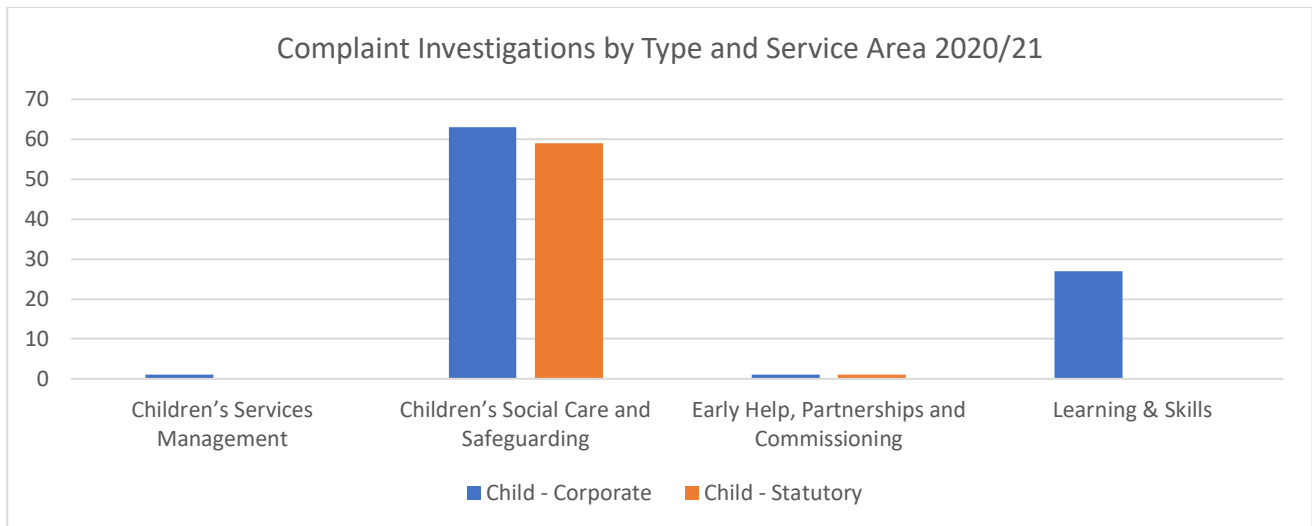
The average number of customer feedback responses recorded per month during 2020/21 was 16. January was the month with the most feedback. March, September and October also saw higher than average cases of feedback. August was the month with the least feedback. Monthly feedback volumes were greater in quarter 3 and 4 (this pattern has also been seen in previous years).



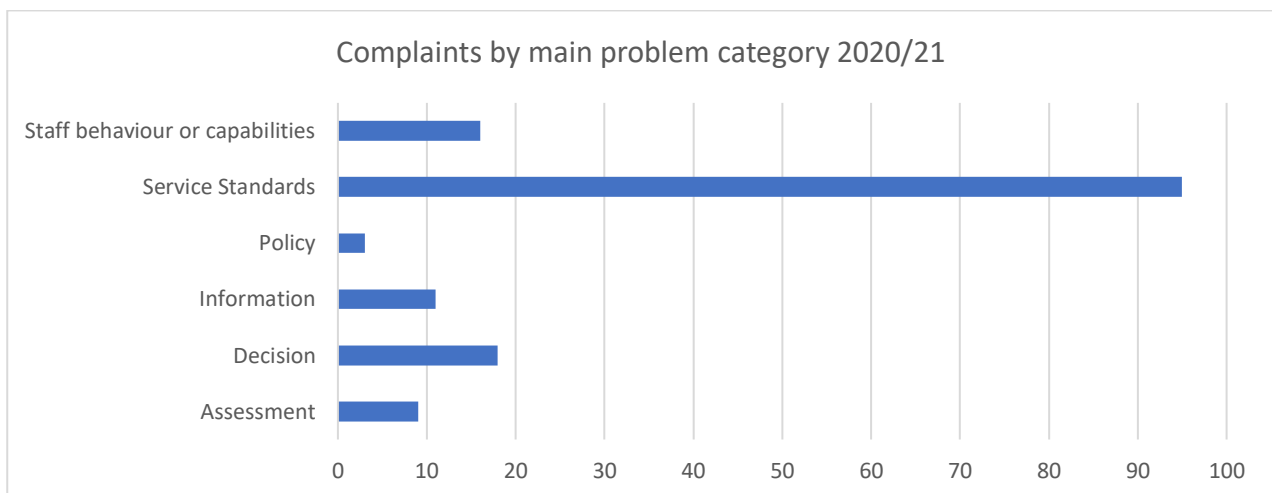
Most customer feedback recorded takes the form of complaints rather than comments or compliments (this may be due to recording practice, with staff members less likely to more formally report a compliment). Of all the customer feedback recorded, 68% of cases were complaints.

Complaints are considered in more detail at the investigation stage and the data we use to consider performance is based on information captured within complaint investigations. There were 132 complaint cases and 152 complaint investigations.

Of the 152 complaint investigations carried out within the year, 92 were corporate cases (61% of all complaints investigations) and 60 were statutory complaints (39%). The process on page 3 highlights the statutory complaints process and timescales for children’s services.

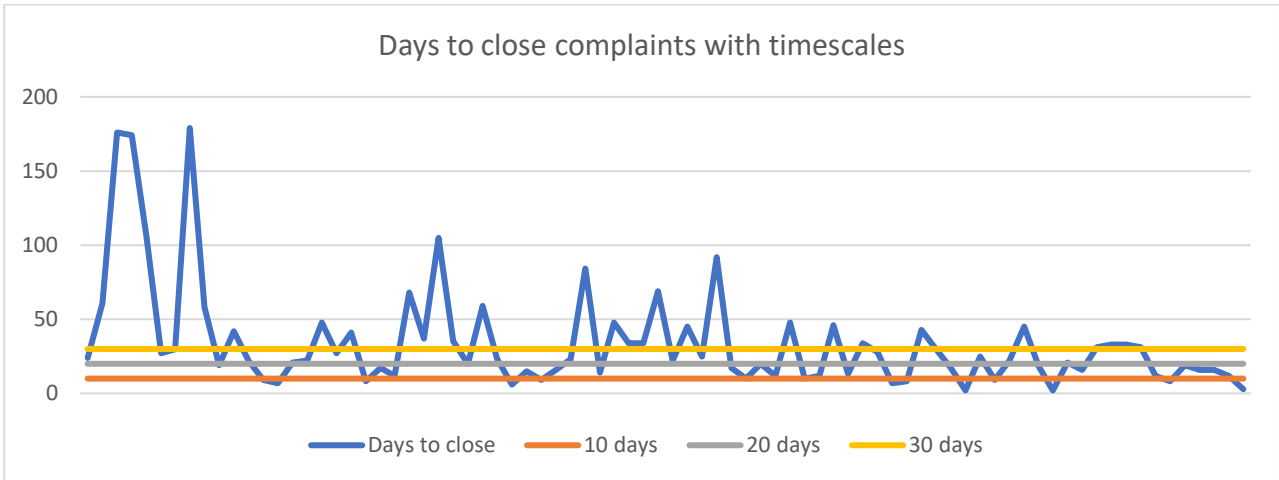


During 2020/21 complainants commonly referred to concerns relating to service standards, this includes sub-categories covering a failure to provide a service/take action, lack of/poor communication, concerns about quality of service and concerns over inappropriate/incorrect action. However, despite complaints falling within these overarching categories, there were few patterns or common themes within the complaints made (complaints were spread across teams and it was difficult to determine many areas of performance in need of attention). There were very few complaints related to policy, not following procedures, or failure to assess/understand customers’ needs/issues. This suggests good performance in these areas.

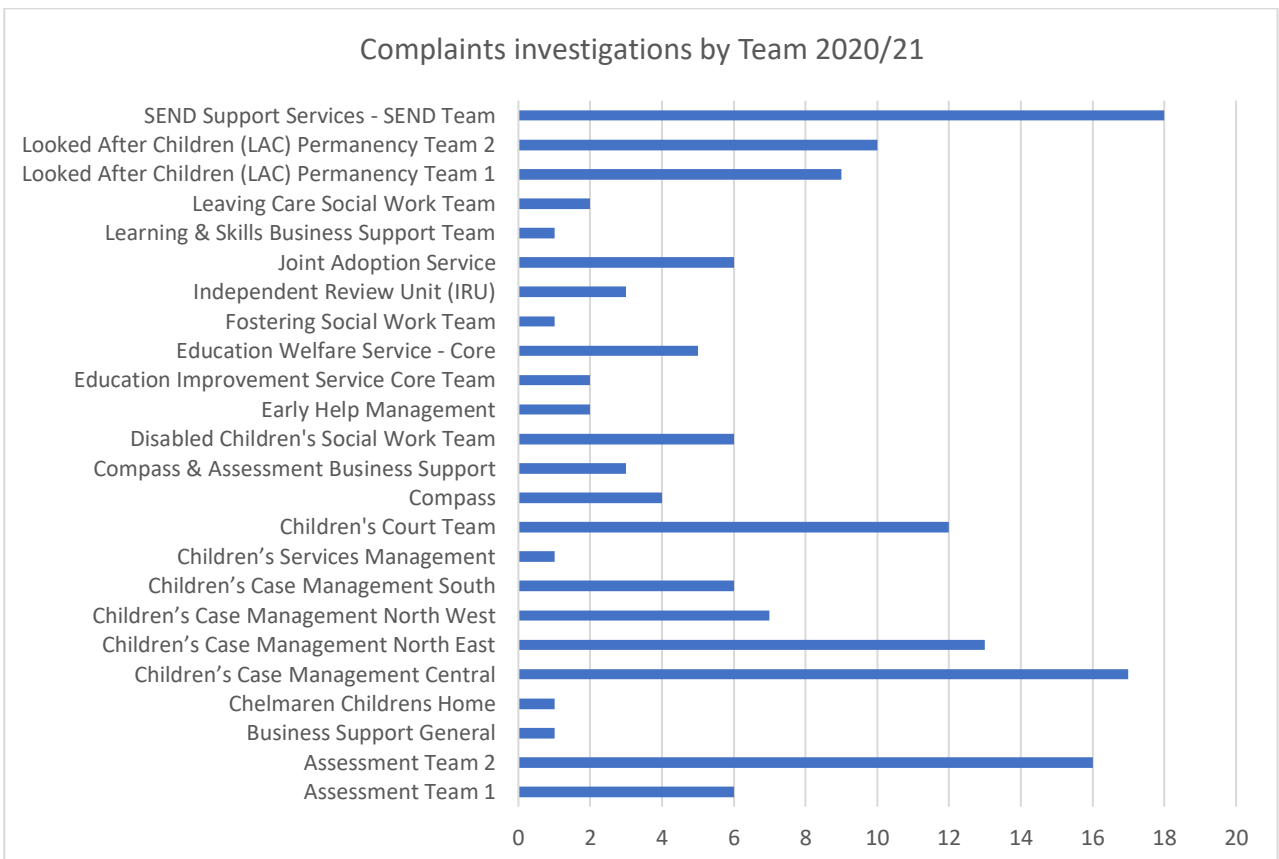


The data highlights that there are repeat complainants making regular complaints and remaining in touch with Shropshire Council over long periods of time. There can be challenges managing these cases when customers have been responded to but remain persistent on the same/similar issues.

During 2020/21 Children's Services took an average of 33 days to close stage 1 complaints. Corporate complaints took an average of 34 days to close (over the 30 working days timescale). Statutory complaints took an average of 31 days to close suggesting that, in an increasing number of cases correspondence with complainants was required to extend the initial 10 working days timescale. Average performance is no longer within target, days to close performance has not been such a concern in previous years and the impact of the pandemic and staff resources are likely to be some of the reasons for such a change in performance. The issue has been highlighted to leads within Children's Services and monitored closely within quarterly reports and additional complaints management reports.

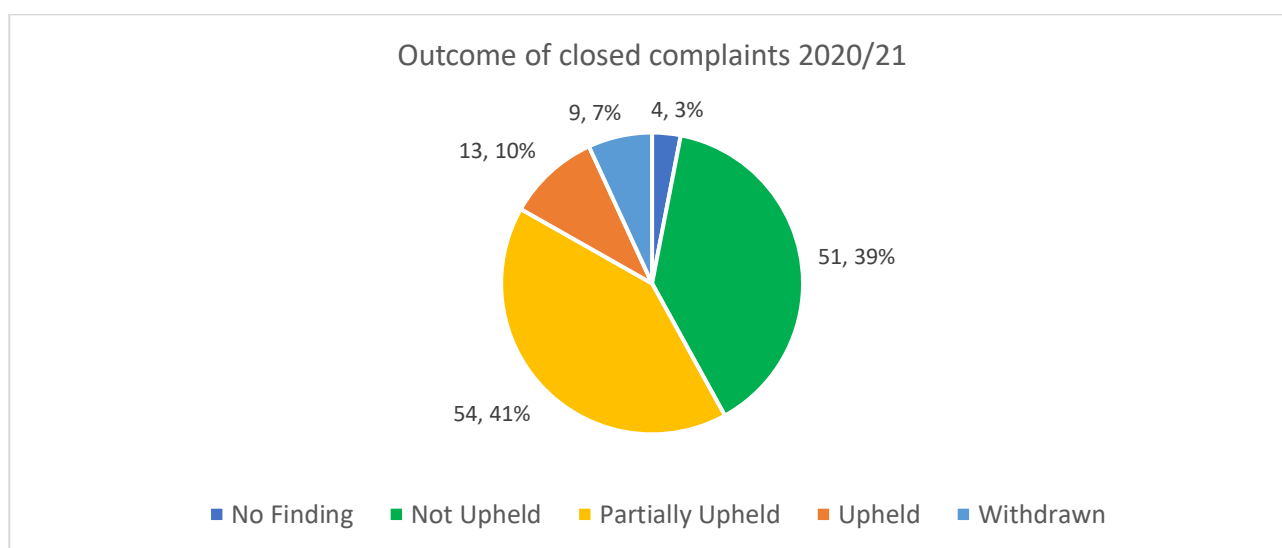


Quarterly reporting considers complaints by team in order to understand whether teams require any additional support. The analysis highlights that complaints are spread across teams (as are compliments) rather than too focused on particular areas of service, although some types of service are more likely to result in feedback than others. Case Management Teams, SEND Support Services, Looked After Children Permanency and Assessment Teams received more complaints. This is influenced by the nature of the services provided.



There has been a noticeable change in Children’s Services complaints. Numbers have increased and overall average efficiency responding to complaints has reduced. Close working takes place with Team Managers and leads for quality and it is understood that this is a result of pressures within the services and growing numbers of children and families receiving support. Context is important when considering performance and it is recommended that complaint performance is not considered in isolation.

In addition to numbers of cases and time to respond, it is very important to consider the outcome of the complaints made. Of the 152 complaint investigations that were closed within the year (some recent complaints remained open at the end of the financial year) 10% were upheld, 41% were partially upheld and 39% were not upheld. Other complaints were withdrawn or resulted in no recorded outcome. This performance is encouraging and suggests that, despite a growth in complaint investigation numbers, there has not been an increase in the proportion of upheld complaints and outcome proportions are similar to previous years.



Shropshire Council’s data shows that during 2020/21 there were 23 complaints relating to looked after children. During the year 2 complaints were made by children themselves.

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 few complaint cases progressed beyond stage 1. This suggests effective stage 1 handling. In total 7 progressed beyond stage 1 within the year. 2 cases have been raised with the Local Government Ombudsman. The Local Government Ombudsman’s report for 2020/21 considers complaints referred to the LGO within the year (so this will include complaints referred to Shropshire Council in 2019/20). Of the 50 complaints the LGO received and considered for Shropshire Council, 8 were for Education and Children’s Services, 3 were upheld and the remainder referred back to Shropshire Council for local resolution (sometimes this can be because complainants can approach the Ombudsman before their complaint has been considered by Shropshire Council).

The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on complaints numbers to some degree but within Shropshire Council (and all local authorities) there was a requirement to continue to deliver a complaints service through the pandemic so the impact was not significant overall (after initial impact feedback levels returned to average levels). The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman made a decision to pause casework and did not accept new complaints for three months between March and June 2020. This has meant that the 2020/21 year should not be considered a ‘full year’. It is possible that there could be an increase in 2021/22 data. The Ombudsman has also expressed concerns at the national level about the pressures on complaint handling functions in councils expressing concerns “about the general erosion to the visibility, capacity, and status of complaint functions within councils” and commented “These concerns are not new and cannot be wholly attributed to the trials of the pandemic”.



## 4. Annual Comparisons 2018/19 to 2020/21

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
<p><b>Number of compliments – increased</b></p> <p>In the last financial year (2020/1) Shropshire Council received 46 compliments for Children’s Services. This marks a significant increase on the previous year. Numbers are back to a level similar to 2018/19.</p>	40	25	46
	Performance has improved against this measure in 2020/21.		
<p><b>Number of complaints investigations – varies/increased</b></p> <p>The number of complaint investigations for Children’s Services was 152 in 2020/21. This is an increase on the 119 in 2019/20 but very similar to the previous year (2018/19). Overall performance around numbers of complaints remains fairly steady but numbers will continue to be monitored regularly.</p>	153	119	152
	Although more complaints were received in compared to 2019/20 numbers are in line with previous years and almost identical to 2018/19.		
<p><b>Days to close – Average days to close increased</b></p> <p>The average number of working days taken to respond to stage 1 complaints during 2020/21 was 33 working days. This is a significant increase compared to previous years with the average exceeding both the corporate and statutory timescales. Complaints investigators increasingly report concerns about their ability to meet complaint timescales as a result of workload and other pressures/priorities. This issue has been highlighted and considered by managers and quality leads within Children’s Services.</p>	15 working days	26 working days	33 working days
	Days to close is the performance indicator of most concern due to increases. Too many complaints investigators are exceeding timescales.		
<p><b>Outcome of complaints – Fewer complaints upheld</b></p> <p>Fewer stage 1 complaints were upheld in 2020/21 (10%) compared to previous years (16% of complaints were upheld in 2019/20 and 13% the year before). In 2020/21 41% of complaints were partially upheld (compared to 44% last year). This performance overall is relatively steady and suggests that standards are being maintained and quality of service has been consistent despite the pressures being experienced within services.</p>	13%	16%	10%
	Performance has improved slightly compared to 2019/20 (the number of partially upheld complaints has also been considered).		
<p><b>Cases progressing beyond Stage 1 – increase/low number</b></p> <p>Good performance has been maintained and only small numbers of cases progress beyond stage 1. With the numbers so small it is difficult to draw any conclusion from the very slight increase in 2020/21. In 2018/19 and 2019/20 4 cases progressed beyond stage 1. In 2020/21 the total was 7. 8 cases were considered by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and 3 were upheld. Monitoring will continue for this measure in the hope that the ‘days to close performance’ does not lead to an increase in complainants able to request escalation to the next stage.</p>	4	4	7
	Numbers of complaints progressing beyond stage 1 remain small. With very small numbers it is difficult to determine patterns in data and performance remains good.		



## 5. Example Compliments

Shropshire Council's Children's Services received 46 compliments in 2020/21. Examples of the compliments recorded are shown below.

Compliment for North Targeted Early Help Team: "It's brilliant and reassuring to see how creative the Early Help staff have been in the ways they have continued to support vulnerable families during lockdown. The need must have been great and it's good that families recognised challenges and sought support. Thank you to you and the team. A 'can do' attitude is so helpful."

For Senior Social Worker, Disabled Children's Team: "Thank you so much, I am so grateful you have just made me cry with the kindness. What a lovely man who delivered it. He even brought some crayons for [name removed] which I was short of. Thank you so much again for arranging it."

Compliment for Targeted Early Help Family Support Worker: "It has been so nice to talk to you, has definitely helped me... Good to have someone who can see things from both sides. I felt you were keeping an eye on [name removed] for me, she has spoken to you probably more than she would have talked to me. It was good to have a 3rd party involved. It's been a massive help, thank you."

Compliment for Team Secretary, Disabled Children's Team: "I wanted to share how incredibly impressed we are with [name removed] she is a shining star at the other end of the telephone! We always love it when she answers the phone as we routinely - and without fail - receive a warm welcome, an incredibly helpful attitude and prompt responses to our queries. She is a little ray of sunshine who always brightens up our day."

Compliment for IAG Personal Advisor - Leaving Care Team: "I've received a lovely card from the Leaving Care Team and I just want to express my gratitude for the kindness and thoughtfulness. I very much appreciate all the support I've been given. As a consequence of your support, I've felt a better person than I did before so I would just like to say thank you very much for everything you and everyone else in the Leaving Care Team do. You are bringing nothing less of happiness and fortune to people in need of it and I applaud every single member for providing the best. You all work extremely hard and I am very grateful for your support."

Compliment for Social Worker, Case Management Team Central: "I'd just like to thank you and your team for all the support you have given to [name removed]. I can't thank you enough it means a lot....again from the bottom of my heart thank you so much."

Compliment for Supervising Social Worker, Fostering Team: Ms [name removed] stated that she had had an excellent service from both the Children's Case Management Team and from the Fostering Team. She said that she had been well supported and received an excellent service..."

Compliment for Early Years Co-ordinator, Education Improvement Service and SEND Early Intervention Officer, SEND Team: "I just wanted to take time to say how helpful and supportive the two webinars have been this week: Supporting Emotional Well-being for children and Supporting Staff Well-being in Early Years. The webinars have been so carefully prepared, with excellent visuals and super presentations, allowing for input/feedback throughout as well. Lots of very useful information and practical ideas too."



## 6. Example Complaints

Shropshire Council's Children's Services received 132 complaints and carried out 152 complaints investigations during 2020/21. Some example complaints have been included to illustrate the way complaints are received and the nature of the issues raised. All complaints have been anonymised and personal details removed. In some cases wording may have been changed very slightly to ensure anonymity (with steps taken not to alter the point being made within the complaint). Please note that many of these cases were not upheld. Sometimes complaints can arise from a misunderstanding or expectations beyond the level of service Shropshire Council is required to deliver.

"[Name removed] raised complaints about the service provided by Children's Social Care during the handling of her children's cases. She says it took 3 months for a Social Worker to be assigned to one child. That meetings were cancelled, including the LAC review. She says that when a new Social Worker was allocated she "received a letter from the social worker, no introduction and no explanation as to why she was wanting to visit and did not turn up for the visit and no contact was made to explain why". She highlights concerns that "the information at the CP Panel Meeting was not accurate and information was not provided prior to meetings..."

"Mr and Mrs [name removed] wish to complain about their Social Worker and their experience of the journey to adoption. They say that there have been moments and incidents in the process which they have ignored "as just bumps on the road"; however each of them has caused them "trauma which has culminated in very real agony" as they realise that they are being dealt another delay.

"My complaint relates to the lack of clarity, timescale and decision that has been made by the independent reviewing officer, supported by my social worker to secure funding for a solo placement. I have waited and waited for communication from the care planning team and despite my social worker being clear about our need to understand the future for us as a family, I continue to receive radio silence."

"Customer's complaint is in respect of her daughter. Customer states that the local authority is not providing her daughter with appropriate or full-time education. Customer believes that the local authority is failing to provide provision which is specified and quantified in her EHC plan."

"Ms X says that she sent a request to her son's Social Worker, following the information regarding the funding for his residential placement under Section 20 (voluntary action to place him in a residential setting as they as a family are struggling with his mental health and anxiety). Ms X says that she has been asking for help since January 2020 with no avail."

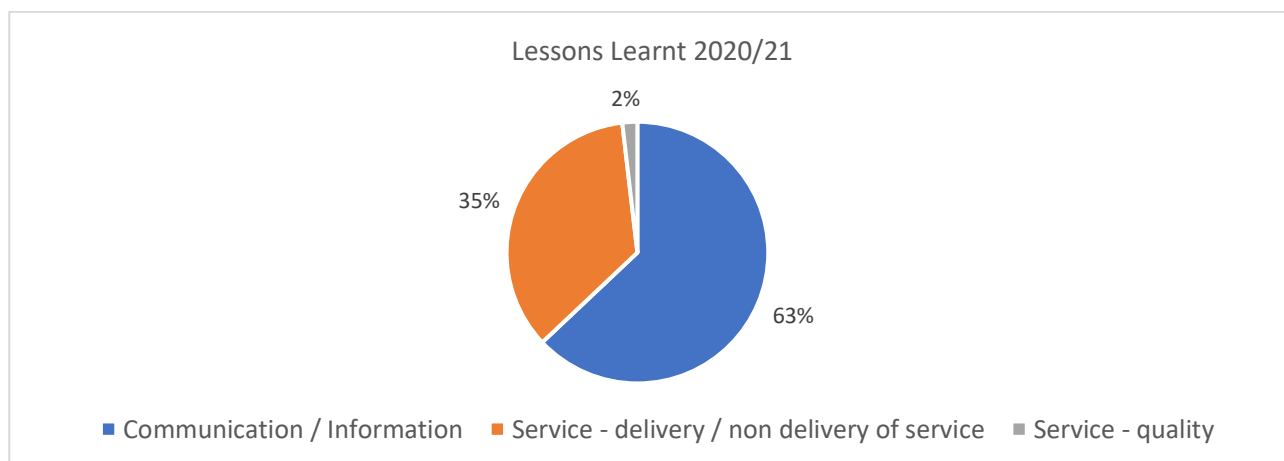
"I applied for transport for my son with the SEN team back in January. A lady was dealing with this. Every week she tells me the payment will arrive next week. Then it's lost in system. Then another week. It's now nearly 4 months. We are in lockdown due to coronavirus. Taxi driver needs payment..."



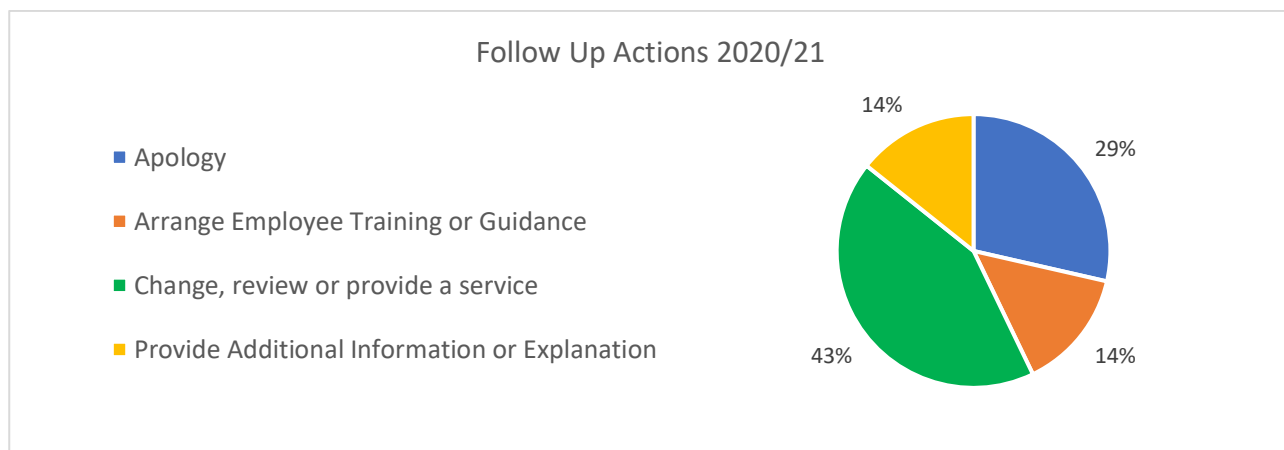
## 7. Learning and Actions

Shropshire Council's Children's Services recorded learning and/or actions against 57 cases (44%) of closed complaints in 2020/21. Learning and actions are more likely to be recorded when a case is upheld or partially upheld and some fault can be found. For many cases not upheld there will not be any learning or actions to implement.

Of the learning points recorded in 2020/21, 63% related to the learning concerning communication and/or information provided and 35% about the delivery or non-delivery of a service (e.g. delays). Very few of the learning points related to investigators identifying any issues with quality of services provided.



Very few complaints cases required follow up actions. Of those where actions were needed 43% were to change, review of provide a service.



Complaints performance monitoring considers the main problem experienced, but this does not do justice to the complexity of issues that can be raised within a complaint and investigated. Reading complaints in detail highlights that although a complaint may relate to a specific service or concern about lack of a service, there may be other issues such as lack of communication, the way someone felt or perception of someone's attitude towards them. The way staff consider and investigate complaints allows for more learning to take place, often informally as experience can help with overall learning.

## 8. Example Learning and Actions

Shropshire Council's Children's Services maintains a focus on complaints reporting and each quarter reviews all the customer feedback data collected to ensure learning can be used to make improvements. There are some examples of learning below. These examples may appear out of context because they are not provided with the original complaint but they do highlight how the Council responds to complaints without sharing confidential information. These examples are mainly from upheld and partly upheld cases. Complaints that were not upheld may occasionally include some learning within notes on the case and often this can relate to misunderstandings of how the Council has delivered a service or what to expect from a service.

"Recognition that Children's Services should always consult and inform parents about placement moves. Due to the level of risk the move happened swiftly. Parents should still have been informed at the time and are owed an apology for this."

"An apology will be provided for the lack of communication from the local authority when [name removed] was off work. Whilst her absence could not be helped, better communication would have supported [name removed] and her family."

"As a result of the complaint, there is individual learning for some staff and I will meet with them individually to go through this, it is likely this will be more effective. I will also write a 'Learning from Complaints' learning brief, which will be anonymised and go out to all staff."

"There is the recognition that there was some miscommunication within the team regarding the receipt of the referral from Telford and Wrekin which confused issues for the complainant. There is learning over the way referrals are communicated within the team in the future."

"We are always trying to improve our practice. Learning from this complaint will be taken forward to look at how communication could have been improved, we are striving to work with families in a restorative way."

"There is a recognition that the Team failed to recognize the dates and return transport, ...and that the assessment has not been progressed in a timely manner. In respect to learning and changes going forwards the team now have a dedicated administrative worker for booking transport and meetings are being arranged to support this process. A meeting has been organised and further fortnightly meetings planned where any further issues can be raised. A social worker will be reallocated, and they will be able to progress the updated social work assessment."

"The Team Manager has reviewed, and worked with others to discuss, her view of the initial response sent to the complainant. With hindsight she agrees that the response was not satisfactory and that she should have provided a follow up letter / telephone call once she clarified the issues raised. This is learning that she will now take forward and will discuss with the management team to ensure that this is applied across all the Service."

## 9. Progress Update

There have been a number of developments over the last 12 months and key achievements are summarised below:

	<b>Action 2019/20</b>	<b>Progress Made</b>
1	There was an action to remind all teams to record compliments.	The recording of compliments has improved, and compliments are now received more consistently for teams across Children's Services. There has been a wide range of very positive feedback both for individual members of staff and for wider team activities and service provision.
2	More effective use of complaints reports was included as a recommendation in 2019/20.	Quarterly performance reporting is provided within Power BI dashboards and access is given to managers across Children's Services. Currently these performance reports are still not well used. However, additional reminders and detailed reports are often provided by the Feedback and Insight Team's complaints leads, so it is possible that this case level data is preferred to overall performance data.
3	Address communication as an ongoing theme within complaints.	The focus on improved communication appears to have generated improvement in some areas but the service pressures generated by the Covid-19 pandemic have meant that new challenges have arisen as changes have been made within service delivery approaches. More communication is online, and this has generated some improvements. However, new challenges have arisen due to increases in demand. Themes will continue to be monitored to consider change over time.
4	Address quality within some complaint responses.	Quality is not a concern across all teams and services (many responses are of a very high standard) but there are some concerns that occasionally complaint responses do not meet expected standards. This has been highlighted with managers and the Feedback and Insight Team has offered complaint templates and quality checking support.
5	Work to reduce the number of days to close complaints.	Despite work over the last 12 months to highlight concerns over complaint timescales, managers and officers have not been able to address performance issues in this area. Service pressures and workloads appear to be the main cause of delays and as a result this must remain an ongoing area of action.
6	There was a recommendation to improve reporting of complaints made by children and complaints regarding looked after children.	This recommendation has been completed with changes made to the way data was captured within the complaints system. There are significant challenges with the current complaints IT system, but the changes made now mean that these key elements of data are captured in a way that can be easily reported and used to inform the reporting of data required by Ofsted.
7	Information handling appears to be an emerging theme within complaints and requires close attention.	More complainants are aware of their information governance rights since the General Data Protection Regulation was introduced and the last few years have seen information accuracy and access to information becoming more of a theme. Conversations with Children's Services leads and reminders every quarter within performance reports have been used as a means of retaining a focus on this issue but the Council's training programme and access to information resources and specialist officers have made the most positive impact overall.
8	Ongoing training and the provision of information for staff was an important, ongoing recommendation.	Over the last year the Statutory Complaints Officer and Statutory Complaints Support officer have worked to support Children's Services complaints investigators. Individual support has been provided and the Statutory Complaints Officer has also delivered group training sessions.



## 10. Actions and Recommendations

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Complaints performance for Shropshire Council's Children's Services remains good overall but there are signs that services are under increasing pressure and finding it more difficult to respond to complaints in a timely way. Recommendations for 2020/21 are:

1. Children's Services staff are encouraged to continue their efforts to listen to service users and take informal feedback to allow concerns to be addressed early or preventative action taken, before issues lead to the creation of formal complaints. Complaint investigation numbers remain fairly similar to 2018/19 after a slight drop in 2019/20 but there is a concern that numbers could increase if demand for services continues to rise. The pandemic generated significant challenges and the longer-term impact is not yet known. Close working will continue between the Feedback and Insight Team and Children's Services Managers and quality/performance leads to monitor customer feedback performance and take action as issues are identified.
2. Days to close complaints performance must be a priority in 2020/21. If timescales are missed for statutory stage 1 complaints, complainants may request escalation to stage 2. This increases costs for the organisation. Although escalated cases have remained small in number, there are concerns this could increase. It is recommended that internal communications are used within Children's Services to remind all complaints investigators of the need to respond to complaints within the allocated timescales.
3. Linked to the recommendation above, it is important that the escalations process is used effectively. When timescales are missed it is recommended that managers are made aware and kept updated until responses have been issued. It can feel uncomfortable escalating issues when staff members are under pressure, but it is important that those in positions of responsibility are made aware of the challenges being faced and the potential impact when timescales are not met.
4. Across the whole council there are concerns with the number of repeat complainants, persistent or vexatious customers (this is evident in the customer feedback data for Children's Services). Repeat customers can take up considerable amounts of staff time. Sometimes concerns are genuine and different complaints are made over time, but on other occasions customers can make repeated complaints on the same issues and refuse to accept a decision or outcome of an investigation. It is recommended that, for Children's Services and the wider council, work takes place to explore good practice in other local authorities.
5. Complaints are currently spread across teams, with more complaints for teams dealing with complex issues or higher volumes of customers. It is often clear through the complaints process when teams are finding it difficult to cope with levels of service demand. It is recommended that all complaints investigators contact the Feedback and Insight Team (customer feedback) and highlight early when they have concerns about their ability to investigate. Prompt discussions can help to mitigate risk. Reporting concerns once timescales have passed, and cases are overdue, must be avoided.
6. IT system changes mean that complaints data must now be retained and managed slightly differently. As a result, it is recommended that data management and retention is picked up as a project for the complaints leads within the Feedback and Insight Team in 2020/21 and included in the team plan.