

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

9TH May 2024

Title: Complaints from Children & Young People

1. Legislation:

Under section 26(3) of the Children Act 1989, every local authority is required to establish a procedure for considering complaints about children's services. The procedure covers complaints about:

- the council's services to children in need or in care.
- fostering and adoption services.
- services to children leaving care.

Complaints can be made by a parent, a person/ people caring for a child, or family members who are involved with the child. Children and young people are also able to make a complaint themselves.

2. Statutory Complaints Process

The Complaints Procedure for Children's Services follow a four-stage process.

Stage 1

The statutory period for completing an investigation and responding to complaints relating to Children's Social Care Services is 10 working days but can be extended to 20 working days in line with statutory guidance.

In Worcestershire our Advanced Social Work Practitioners Team undertake Stage 1 Complaint Investigations and Complaint Responses; this means they are undertaken by an individual independent of the Team undertaking the direct practice and decision making.

Stage 2

If the individual remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint response at stage 1, individuals can ask that the complaint to be reconsidered.

In order to request a stage 2 review of the complaint; individuals will raise:

- the reasons why they disagree with the Stage 1 response.
- the potential outcomes they would hope to see from escalating the complaint.

This request should be made within 20 working days of the date of the stage 1 response. Details of how to raise a stage 2 complaint will be included in the stage 1 response letter.

The statutory period for completing an investigation and responding to stage 2 complaints relating to Children's Social Care Services is 25 working days but can be extended to 65 working days in line with statutory guidance. Stage 2 Complaint Investigations are undertaken by Independent Investigating Officers commissioned by the County Council's Consumer Relations Department.

Stage 3

If an individual remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the Children's Social Care Services complaint response at stage 2, individuals may ask for the complaint to be reviewed at an Independent Review Panel.

In order to request a stage 3 review of the complaint, individuals will outline:

- the reasons why they disagree with the Stage 2 response.
- any potential outcomes you would like to see from escalating your complaint.

This request should be made within 20 working days of the date of the stage two response. Details of how to raise a stage 3 complaint will be included in the stage 2 response that you receive.

The statutory period for holding the Independent Review Panel is 30 working days from the date of your request for a stage 3 review. Panels are arranged by the Consumer Relations Department and are chaired by Independent Individuals of the Local Authority.

Stage 4

If after this, individuals are dissatisfied with the response to the complaint individuals can refer the matter to the [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#).

3. Advocacy for Children, Young People and Care Leavers

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 (amended Children Act 1989), and The Advocacy Services and Representations Procedure (Children) (Amendment) Regulations 2004, requires Local Authorities to make arrangements for advocacy support for children and young people in receipt of social care services who wanted to express their views or make a complaint.

A *Child Advocate* can offer advice and support to a *child* or young person. The main purpose of a *child's advocate* is to enable *children* to express their wishes and feelings; the aim of *child advocacy* service is to encourage empowerment of *children*.

Worcestershire commission Independent Service 'Coram Voice' to provide Advocacy Services to children and young people who make complaints; [Worcestershire - Coram Voice](#)

4. Complaints from Children & Young People 2023/2024

In 2023/2024 we received 8 Complaints from children and young people; this is a reduction on the previous year from 9 in the previous year.

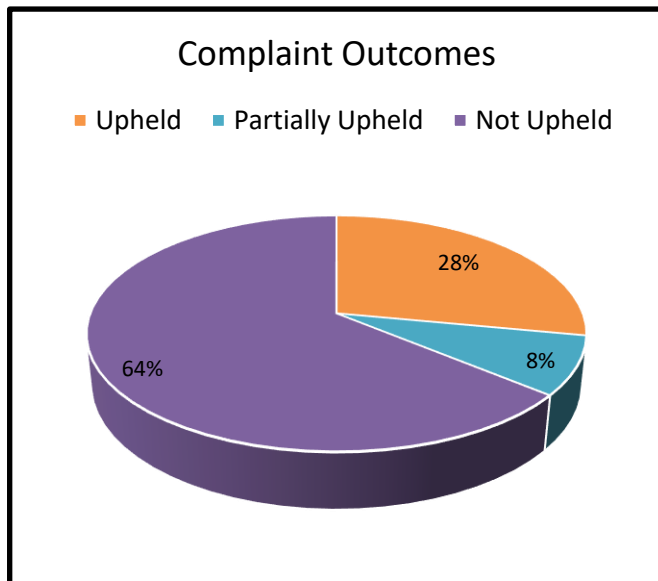
The volume of Complaints received by children is low in comparison to the number of children and families we work with, in practice we work hard to engage with children and young people to hear their views, and if worries arise, we action quickly to resolve meaning complaints do not escalate and children receive timely and effective outcomes.

All complaints received this period were from children and young people who are looked after children; and all received an offer of an Advocate.

The corresponding graph outlines the outcomes from Complaints. Although we have received 8 Complaints, many will have multiple points and each receive an outcome. Across the 8 Complaints there were 27 Complaint Points.

The majority receive a not upheld outcome at 68%.

Of the Complaints that received a Partially Upheld Outcome; these related to decisions being made for children. The finding was the decision was appropriate, however, the learning was in respect of how we communicated this.



Of the Complaints with an Upheld Outcome: the identified learning is:

- Ensure we share reports for Children Looked After Reviews before the meeting.
- If visits to children and young people need to be cancelled, we communicate this directly to children and we ensure the follow up visit is held in a timely manner.
- Ensure that when we write reports, any information from previous reports is appropriately updated.
- Following up with timely and accurate advice.

We share learning from Complaints directly with those allocated to the child; all complaints have a reflective discussion between the manager and the worker to support learning.

We share learning from Complaints with our Children's Social Care Leadership Team on a bi-annual basis to discuss themes and ensure learning is shared through the service.

5. Independent View of Complaints Practice in Worcestershire

In May 2023 Ofsted undertook an Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services; as part of this inspection, they met with the Practice Manager and reviewed Complaints made by children & young people, are investigations and responses and how we embedded individual and service learning. Ofsted reported:

"When children make complaints, they are well supported and consistently offered an advocate to represent their views".

"Senior leaders' understanding of practice is informed by audit practice undertaken both within WCF and also with partners. Audits are strengthened through the involvement of children, carers, and parents and through moderation. Learning from audits leads to improvements in practice which ensures the effective closing of the loop. A variety of methods are used to gain feedback from children, parents and carers which influences service developments, together with any learning from complaints".

This report is publically available at: [50223271 \(ofsted.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/50223271)
