

# **Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**24 June 2025**

## **Children, Families and Education Services Customer Feedback Annual Report.**

**1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025**

### **Recommendation**

That the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers and comments on the contents of this report.

### **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This is the annual customer feedback report for Children and Families and Education Services covering the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.
- 1.2 The report summarises and analyses compliments, complaints and comments received by these two services including learning and service improvement. Data, trends, and themes have been compared over the last two years.
- 1.3 In January 2024, a new customer feedback system was implemented to log all feedback received by Warwickshire County Council. This system is now fully embedded. As a result, raising and tracking complaints is simpler for customers, and complaint handling is streamlined. Managers now have richer data and enhanced reporting to identify patterns and causes, enabling efficient issue resolution. Additionally, a central logging process for compliments was introduced in 2024/25 and is managed by the Customer Relations team.
- 1.4 At an organisational level:
  - Overall feedback received is continuing to reduce and in 2024/25 it was at its lowest over the last five years at 2147 cases.
  - Complaints decreased by 43% from 1520 in 2023/24 to 869 in 2024/25.
  - Compliments increased by 43% from 454 in 2023/24 to 650 in 2024/25.
  - Comments increased by 89%, from 218 in 2023/24 to 628 in 2024/25. These are requests for a service or information from customers that require a response from the relevant service. They only become a complaint if they are not handled appropriately and within the agreed timescale.

### 1.5 In Children and Families Services:

- Overall number of complaints have decreased from 183 in 2023/24 to 177 in 2024/25.
- Compliments increased significantly from 25 in 2023/24 to 120 in 2024/25.
- Comments increased from 2 in 2023/24 to 28 in 2024/25.

### 1.6 In Education Services:

- Complaints have increased from 105 in 2023/24 to 119 in 2024/25. During this period, school admissions handled a total of 22,297 applications, encompassing Reception, Junior, and Secondary transition rounds, as well as in-year applications. Additionally, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Inclusion processed 1,821 requests for EHCP needs assessments and worked with 6,974 children with an EHCP.
- Compliments increased from 1 in 2023/24 to 8 in 2024/25.
- Comments increased from 7 in 2023/24 to 23 in 2024/25.

1.7 Identifying, actioning, recording, and sharing lessons learnt is crucial for improving customer experience with council services. This process allows staff to reflect on how cases could have been better handled and apply these insights for future improvements. Examples of actions taken include; the strengthening of the consent process on who can complain, the introduction of an alert system for young people's advocates to ensure customers wishes are met and improvements to cross service complaint investigations.

## 2. **Complaints Process**

2.1 Every local authority with a responsibility for Social Care services is required to provide an annual report, outlining the workings of both their adults and children's complaints and representations procedures.

2.2 The procedure for dealing with children's statutory complaints (those raised by or on behalf of children relating to our Social Work Services) and representations is determined by the following legislation:

- The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006,
- The Adoption and Children's Act 2002,
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, and
- the accompanying guidance 'Getting the Best from Complaints' (DfES July 2006).

2.3 The requirement contained in the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, is that every local authority with a responsibility for Children's Social Care services is obliged to have in post a

complaints manager, part of whose role is to provide an annual report into the workings of the complaints and representations procedures.

2.4 Complaints relating to Children's Services, which do not fall within the boundaries of the statutory Social Care complaints process, are processed via the Council's corporate Complaints Policy.

2.5 The statutory complaints and representations procedure serves four main purposes:

- i To provide a way for a child/young person, or a person acting on their behalf, to give their views of the service they have received.
- ii. To enable council services to learn from complaints and compliments and to change, review or maintain its services accordingly.
- iii. To ensure that complaints are properly recorded and acted upon and that where necessary, things that have gone wrong are put right promptly.
- iv. To ensure that staff and service users understand their rights and responsibilities within the complaints process.

2.6 The statutory complaints procedure, used for complaints defined by the relevant legislation and raised by, or on behalf of children receiving a service from Children's Social Work Services, has three stages:

- Stage One - Local resolution.
- Stage Two - An independent complaint investigation. Involving an Independent Investigator and an Independent Person.
- Stage Three - An independently chaired review Panel.

2.7 The Council takes every submitted feedback case seriously, especially complaints, as it wants to make sure its complainants are dealt with fairly, consistently and within appropriate timescales, and to ensure that learning and improvements can be registered and actioned.

2.8 Procedures relating to how the Council deals with and responds to complaints are detailed in [Warwickshire County Council's Complaints Policy](#) and [Warwickshire's County Council Children's Statutory Complaint Procedure](#)

2.9 These policies have been developed in line with best practice recommendations and legislation that covers complaints about local authorities' services. In the Complaints Policy, a complaint is defined as:

*"... any expression of dissatisfaction with a service that the Council (or one of its partners or contractors) has provided, and that requires a response."*

- 2.10 The Statutory Complaint Procedure clarifies the types of complaint that are covered by the relevant legislation and subject to the three state statutory complaints process.

### 3. Analysis of customer feedback received during 2024/25.

- 3.1 Feedback can be shared by customers through an online portal, by telephone, by post or via email and it is categorised into complaints, compliments, and comments. Questions from the public are not recorded on the system but are dealt with directly by the appropriate service.
- 3.2 The following analysis covers data, trends and themes compared over the last two years.

#### **Feedback cases –All Council Services**

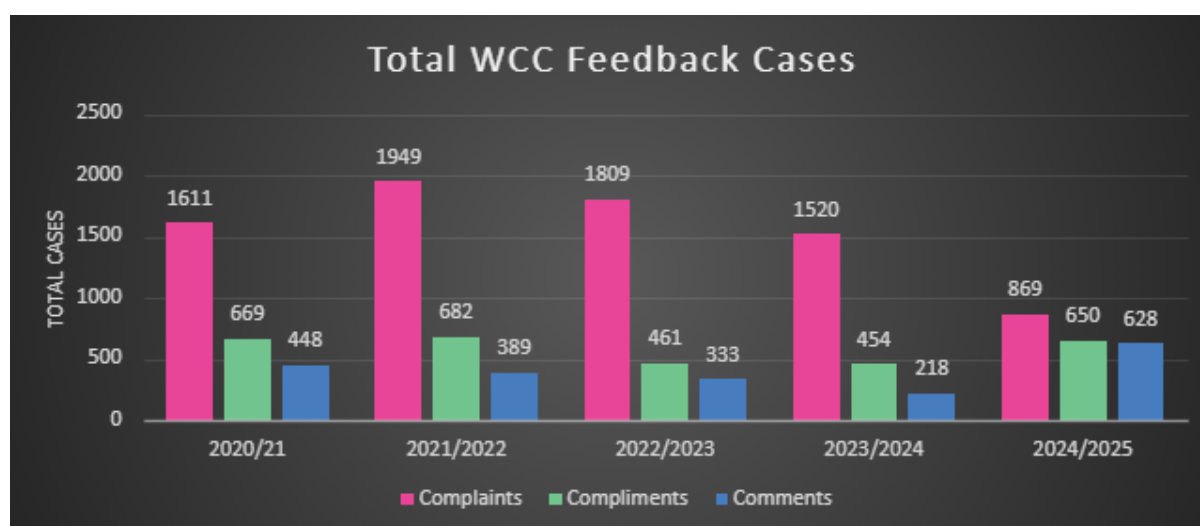


Figure 1: Number of complaints, compliments and comments received from 2020/21 to 2024/25 across all WCC services.

#### **Overall cases**

- 3.3 The total number of feedback cases raised has decreased by 45 cases, from 2192 in 2023/24 to 2147 in 2024/25, representing a 2% reduction. This decrease aligns with the trend of reducing cases over the last 3 years. (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.)

#### **Complaints**

- 3.4 The number of complaints decreased by 651 cases, from 1520 in 2023/24 to 869 in 2024/25, a decrease of 43%. (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.)
- 3.5 The significant reduction in complaints this financial year is likely to be due to targeted training in complaints handling and improvements in our processes, including a clearer understanding of what constitutes a "complaint." This encompasses exclusions to the complaints processes

such as court-related concerns and cases eligible for other appeal or tribunal processes. Additionally, there is better identification of service requests and the implementation of checks to determine if a resident is reporting an issue for the first time. In line with the Councils Complaints policy a service request is:

*Requests for service or information – initial requests alert us to something we need to respond to and only become a complaint if we do not deal with them appropriately and within the agreed timescale.*

This aligns with the definition of a complaint as set out in the new Complaint Handling Code from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, which was published in February 2024 and which local authorities are expected to have regard to.

### **Comments**

- 3.6 The total number of comments over the last two years increased by 188% from 218 in 2023/24 to 628 in 2024/25. This is due to improvements in the identification of service requests, and these being classified as comments. (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.)
- 3.7 Compared to the previous system, the new customer feedback system, introduced in January 2024, allows for reassignment of cases to the correct feedback category, providing a more accurate reflection of customer feedback. Previously, cases had to remain in the initial category entered by the customer, resulting in service requests being recorded as complaints instead of comments.

### **Compliments**

- 3.8 The number of compliments has significantly increased from 454 in 2023/24 to 650 in 2024/25 an increase of 43%. This is attributed to a new central logging system and the introduction of a compliments email address for the Council . (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.)

## Complaints per population analysis

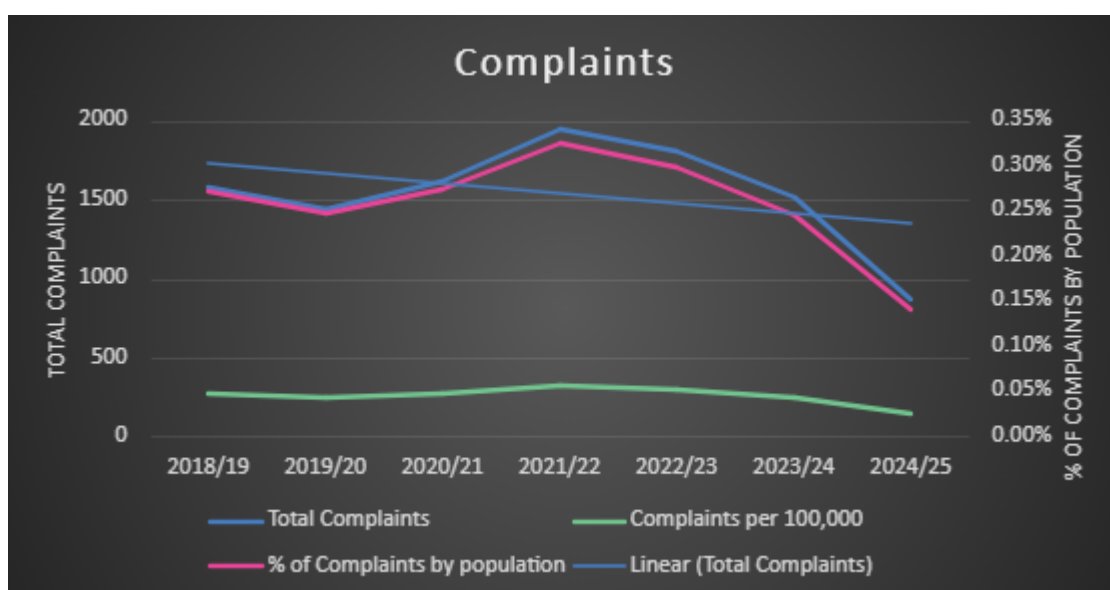


Figure 2: Trends in Complaints from 2018/19 to 2024/25, using 2023 ONS population data.

- 3.9 When the total number of complaints are analysed per 100,000 population, the complaint rate for 2024/25 is 0.14%. Figure 2 illustrates a steady decline over the last four years from 0.35% in 2021/22. This analysis is based on 2023 data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), as 2024 data is not yet available.

## Feedback cases over time - Children Families and Young People Directorate

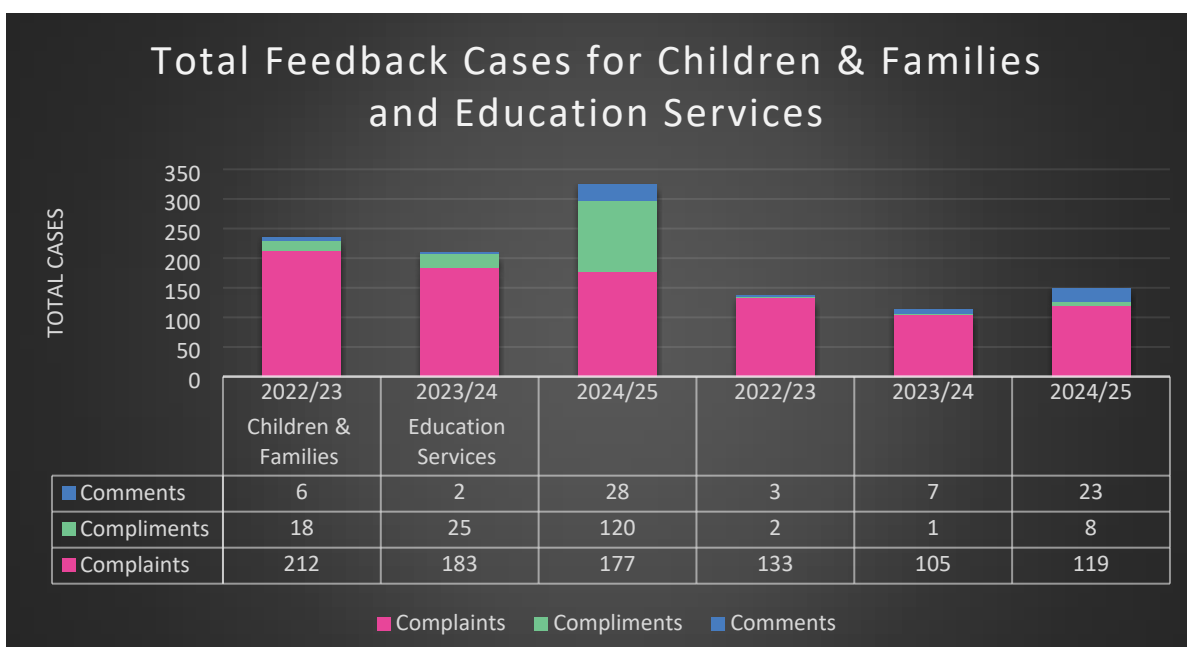


Figure 3: Number of cases assigned to Children & Families Service and Education Service by type from 2022/23 to 2024/25.

## **Children and Families Service**

### *Complaints:*

- 3.10 Over the past two years the number of complaints has consistently decreased with an overall reduction of 3% from 183 cases in 2023/24 to 177 in 2024/25. This is in line with the organisational trend of decreasing complaint cases over the last 3 years.
- 3.11 It should be noted that out of these 177 recorded cases on the customer feedback system, 60 were raised by a single person and were subsequently merged into two cases for investigation purposes. Ongoing work with the services is taking place with this customer (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.)

### *Compliments:*

- 3.12 Compliments have increased from 25 in 2023/24 to 120 in 2024/25 an increase of over 380%. This is attributed to a new central logging system within the Customer Relations team and the introduction of a compliments email address for the Council. This has ensured raising compliments is quick and effective. (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.)

### *Comments:*

- 3.13 The number of comments has increased from 2 in 2023/24 to 28 in 2024/25 an increase of 1300%. This is due to improvements in the identification of service requests, and these being classified as comments, this could be when a person raises an initial alert to something that needs to be responded to. (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.)

## **Education Service:**

### *Complaints:*

- 3.14 The number of complaints increased from 105 in 2023/24 to 119 in 2024/25, a 13% increase. Despite this rise, the figures remain lower than the 133 complaints recorded in 2022/23, representing an overall decrease of 11% over the past three years. (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.)

### *Compliments:*

- 3.15 The number of compliments has increased slightly for education from 1 in 2023/24 to 8 in 2024/25. Although this is a 700% increase in reported compliments, this number is low compared to other services. Proactive promotion of logging compliments is recommended in this service area. (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.)

### *Comments:*

- 3.16 The number of comments has increased from 7 in 2023/24 to 23 in 2024/25, which is a significant percentage increase of 700%. This is due to

improvements in the identification of service requests, and these being classified as comments.

### **Complaints data trends by month**

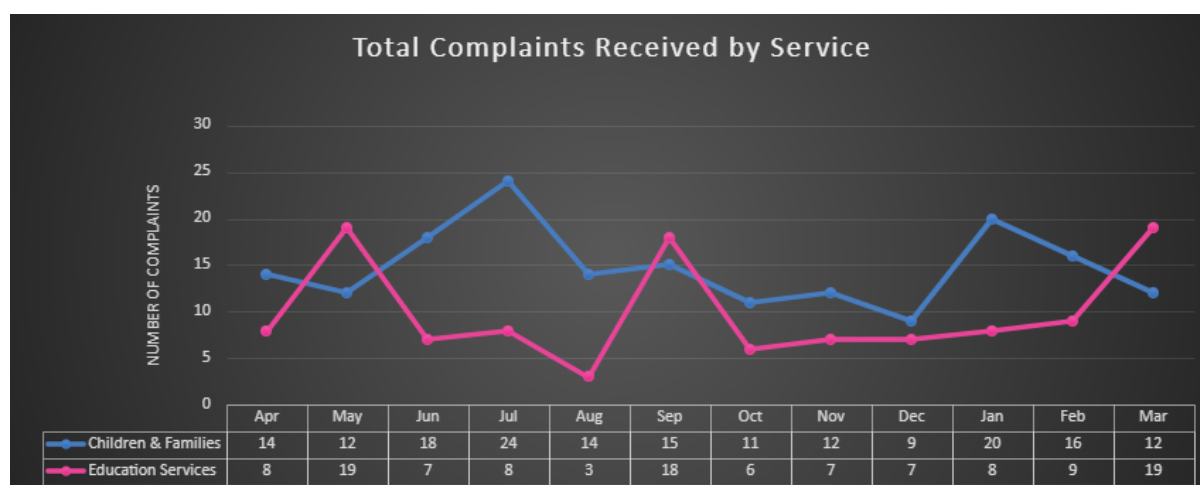


Figure 4: Number of complaints for Children & Family Service and Education Service by month.

### **Children and Families Service**

#### *Trend increases*

- 3.17 The data in Figure 4 indicates that the most significant peak in complaints occurred in Children and Families Service in July 2024, with 24 cases raised. This represents 14% of all new complaint cases reported in 2024/25. July often coincides with summer holidays, leading to changes in routine and increased time at home, which can sometimes result in more conflicts or issues that children might report. (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.)

#### *Trend decreases*

- 3.18 Complaint numbers decreased in March, May, October, November, and December, with 9 to 12 cases raised in each month. The lower figure in December is consistent with previous years. However, there is no clear single identifier for the other months, and this pattern has varied over previous years. The trend in complaints can be influenced by various factors such as changes in policy, service delivery, or public awareness of how to log complaints. (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.)

### **Education Services**

#### *Trend increases*

- 3.19 The data in Figure 4 shows that the most significant rise in complaints within Education Service occurred in May 2024 and March 2025, both with 19 cases raised and in September with 18 cases raised. These figures account for 47% of all new complaint cases reported in the 2024/25 period. Although this pattern does not completely match the trends of the previous three years, the increase in September is often linked to the start of the



school year, which typically leads to more education-related complaints. March's increases may be attributed to transition planning at schools such as moving from primary to secondary school. (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.)

#### *Trend decreases*

- 3.20 Decreased numbers of complaints in August are consistent with previous years. This is a trend across education related services due to decreased engagement during holiday periods. (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.)

#### **Initial feedback contact method**

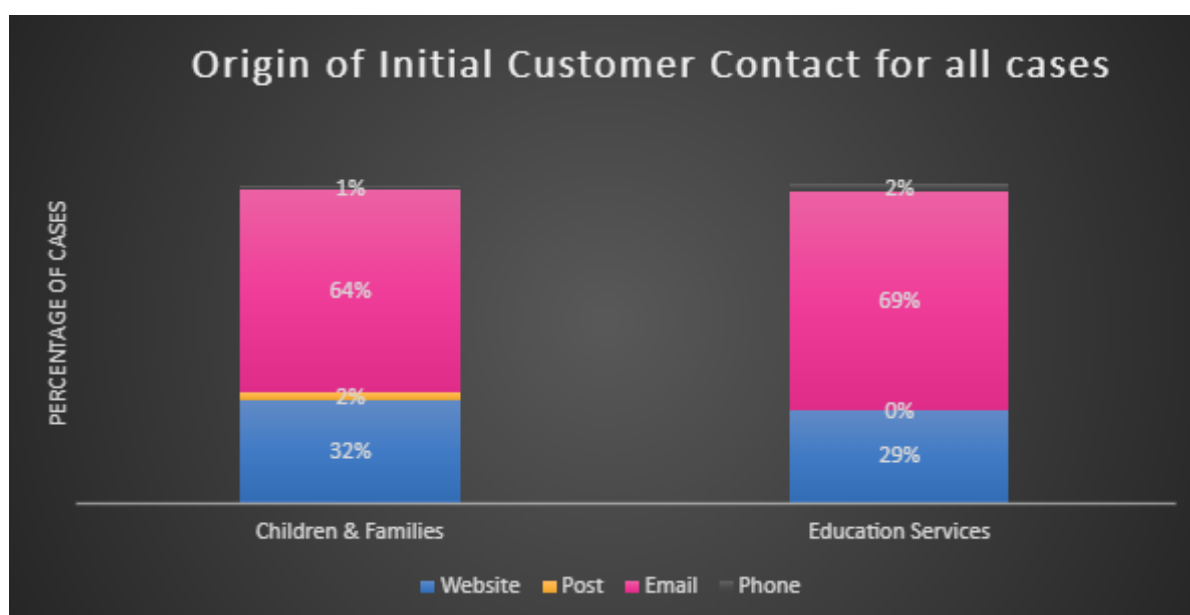


Figure 5: Percentage breakdown of original contact method for complaints, comments, and compliments for 2024/25.

- 3.21 The 'type of initial feedback contact method' data has only been collected since the implementation of the new customer feedback system in January 2024. There is, therefore, no comparative data before this date.

#### **Children and Families Service**

- 3.22 Figure 5 highlights that the most common method of receiving cases in Children and Families Service is through email, accounting for 64% of all cases. The second most frequent method is via the customer feedback system portal on the Councils website, with 32% of cases submitted this way.

#### **Education Services**

- 3.23 Figure 5 highlights that the most common method of receiving cases in Education Service is also through email, with 69% of cases raised this way. The second most frequent method is via the customer feedback system

portal on the Councils website, accounting for 29% of cases. (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.)

- 3.24 During 2024/25, the Customer Relations team continued to invest time speaking directly to prospective complainants, regardless of how the initial contact was made or the service that their feedback related to. This proactive approach provides an important opportunity to build a trusting relationship with the customer, which is particularly critical when managing more complex complaints. This allows for a more thorough understanding of the concerns raised and desired outcomes, and in turn supports investigating managers to provide more precise and detailed responses.
- 3.25 Talking directly to customers also ensures that where it is appropriate and possible, concerns are resolved without the need to progress to the formal complaints process. This can prove to be a quicker and more beneficial means of resolution for all concerned.

### **Complaints data for Stage 2 and Stage 3 for all WCC services**

General complaints Stage 2	Cases 24/25
Children and Families	11
Education	27
Communities	4
Resources	1

*Figure 6: Breakdown of general Stage 2 complaints across all WCC services for 2024/25.*

Statutory Social Care complaints (Children and Families)	Cases 24/25
Stage 2	30
Stage 3	14

*Figure 7: Breakdown of Stage 2 & 3 Statutory complaints for Children & Families Service 2024/25.*

- 3.26 All initial complaints once triaged and confirmed as being the correct feedback type and complying with the complaints policy's definitions, are then allocated to the appropriate service area at Stage 1 for local resolution.
- 3.27 As per policy, if a customer remains dissatisfied, they can then request a Stage 2 investigation of the complaint, which is undertaken by the Customer Relations team. This year data has been collected by Directorate and the complaints process followed, as shown above in figures 6 and 7.
- 3.28 There has been a steady rise in Stage 2 complaints across the Directorates and processes followed, rising from 48 closed cases in 2023/24 to 65 in 2024/25.
- 3.29 The reasons for this increase include the high number of Stage 2 complaints that carried over from 2023/24, which were subsequently closed in 2024/25. Additionally, complaint responses now use a letter/email template that

informs residents they can escalate to a Stage 2 review or investigation. This information had not been consistently included in responses previously.

- 3.30 The Customer Relations has worked to reduce the number of Stage 2 reviews, by consulting with services to seek de-escalations, where it is felt that the issue could be resolved informally with complainants before a complaint is accepted at Stage 2. The Customer Relations team refused 7 general reviews in 2024/25 due to the request for a review not meeting WCC complaints policy Stage 2 criteria.
- 3.31 To further reduce the number of cases escalated to Stage 2, it is recommended that services send a more robust response to complainants at Stage 1, which is in line with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) best practice.
- 3.32 There was a 75% increase in the number of complaints reaching Stage 3 from 8 cases 2023/24 to 14 cases in 2024/25. Of these 14, 10 completed the panel process.
- 3.33 Customers can at any time in the process, approach the LGSCO for them to consider their complaint. The proportion of customers that complain to the LGSCO compared to the total number of customer contacts is small. The annual review and summary of upheld complaints issued by LGSCO in the financial year 2023/24 was taken to Cabinet on 5 September 2024. The report can be found here:  
[Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman – Annual Review and Summary of Upheld Complaints](#)

### **Complaint categories by subject**

	Children & Families Service		Education Services	
	2024/2025	%	2024/2025	%
Protection of user	49	28%	17	14.3%
Communication	24	14%	9	7.6%
Staff conduct	50	28%	3	2.5%
WCC Service standards	44	25%	82	69%
Financial Issues	6	3%	3	2.5%
Physical environment issues	0	0%	0	0%
Discrimination	1	0%	1	0.8%
Policy	0	0%	1	0.8%
Commissioned Service Provision	0	0%	0	0%
Outside Complaints process	3	2%	3	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 8: Breakdown of subject categories per service for 2024/25.

## Children and Families Service

- 3.34 The data in the figure 8 indicates differing trends for service areas in terms of categories of concern, and facilitates more targeted, specific training in each of the services areas.
- 3.35 The top categories within this service area are:
- Protection of user (28%). This category is selected when there is a safeguarding concern identified.
  - Staff conduct (28%) This is selected when a staff member's delivery of a message is being questioned. If this is found to be a matter for Human Resources (HR) the complaint is closed in line with policy and dealt with under internal HR processes.
  - Council service standards (25%) This is chosen when the customer believes the Council has not provided a service that they feel they are entitled to.
- 3.36 This is consistent with previous years, with the protection of user consistently the highest assigned complaint category in Children and Families Services. The number of complaints in these categories have reduced compared to previous years, as overall numbers of complaints have decreased (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.).

## Education

- 3.37 The top categories within this service area are:
- Council service standards (69%)
  - Protection of user (14.3%)
  - Communication (7.6%)
- 3.38 It is noteworthy that the category Communication has reduced from 38% in 2023/24 to 7.6% in 2024/25 (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.). This would indicate significant improvements have been made in this area.

### **Complaints per team:**

#### **Children and Families Service:**

Top 3 teams	24/25	%
Initial Response South	23	13%
Children with Disabilities Team	18	10%
Nuneaton Children's Team	18	10%

*Figure 9: Top 3 teams receiving complaints from Children & Family Service for 2024/25.*

- 3.39 Figure 9 above shows that the Initial Response South team received the highest number of complaints in 2024/25, accounting for 13% of the overall

complaints. The Children with Disabilities team and the Nuneaton Children's team followed each with 10% of the overall complaints. These are the biggest teams, working with the largest number of people so it is not surprising they have the most complaints.

These teams are also expected to have the highest number of complaints due to the statutory assessments required within these areas.

- 3.40 Year-on-year comparison is not possible due to significant team name changes within the Children and Families Service over the last three years. For example, in 2022/23, the Initial Response team was split into areas, and as of January 2025, a more extensive restructure occurred due to the Children and Families Pathfinder initiative. Work is currently underway to update the system with the new team structures.

## Education Services

Top 3 teams	24/25	%
SEND and Inclusion	110	92%
Admissions	5	4%
Adult and Community Learning	2	2%

*Figure 10: Top 3 teams receiving complaints from Education Service for 2024/25*

- 3.41 Figure 10 shows that the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Inclusion team received with the highest number of complaints in 2024/25, accounting for 92% of the overall complaints. There has been a 62% increase in complaints raised from 74 in 2023/24 to 110 complaints in 2024/25. This is in line with national trends and is consistent with previous years. (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.)
- 3.42 The Admissions team had the second highest number of complaints in 2024/25, with 5 complaints recorded, compared to 24 in 2023/24. Over the last three years there has been a 93% decrease from the 68 complaints recorded in 2022/23.

## Remedies

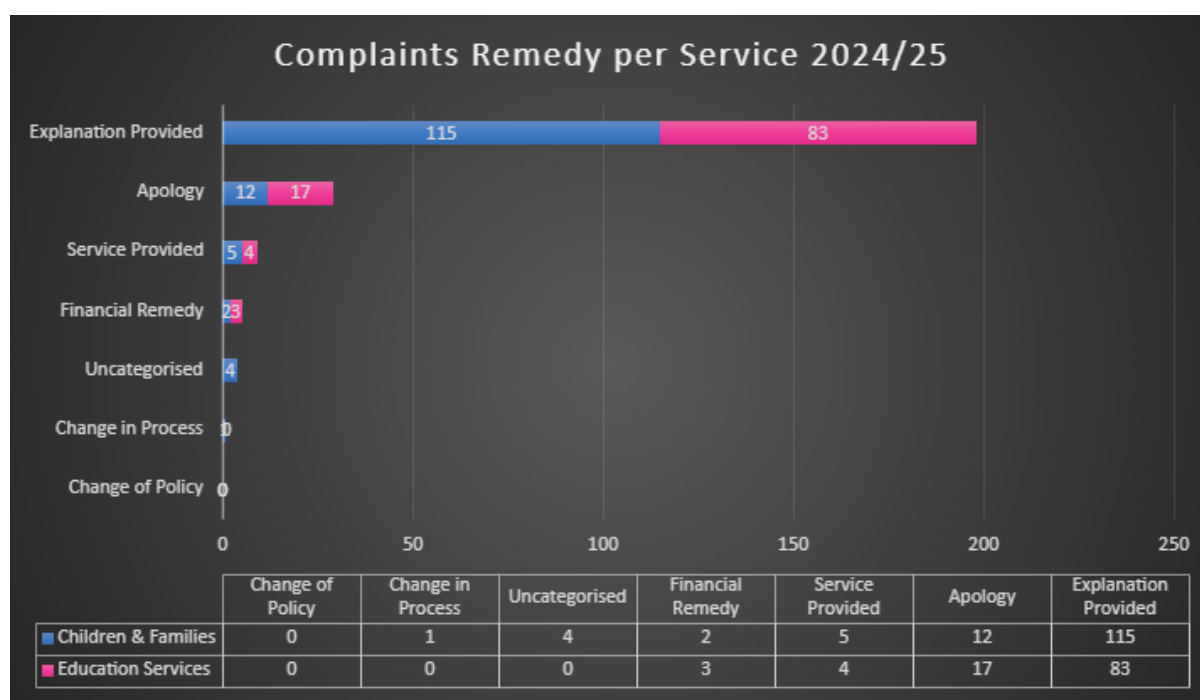


Figure 11: Closed complaint remedies for Children and Families and Education Services in 2024/25. Please note more than one remedy can be selected for an individual case.

- 3.43 When things have gone wrong, the Council has the power to offer remedies to put things right. The Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)'s Complaint Handling Code, which the Council has to have regard to, says that organisations should have systems in place to ensure that a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process and should ensure that appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation to stage 2 or the LGSCO. The Code states that any remedies offered should reflect the impact on the individual as a result of any fault identified and organisations should take account of the good practice guides issued by the LGSCO when deciding on appropriate remedies. The LGSCO also has the power to make recommendations to the Council in cases where the LGSCO has investigated and found fault causing injustice. Whilst the LGSCO cannot force the Council to carry out its recommendations, they publish public reports that draw public attention to non-compliance and use reports to draw attention to particularly significant issues of concern. Where such formal reports are issued by the LGSCO, formal action has to be taken by the council in question, including discussing the report at a meeting of members. It is therefore extremely rare for a council not to comply with the LGSCO's recommendations. The LGSCO's recommendations will usually aim to put the complainant back in the position they would have been in, but for the faults they have identified. The LGSCO's guidance on remedies can be found here: [LGSCO Guidance on remedies](#).

- 3.44 Remedies can take many forms, including apologising, taking corrective action to put things right such as the service provided, a change in process or policy, or a quantifiable financial remedy.
- 3.45 Data analysis indicates the top 3 remedies are consistent for both Children and Families and Education Services. Which are explanation provided, an apology and service provided.

### **Children and Families Service**

- 3.46 The most frequent remedy provided by the council was an “explanation provided” at 83% of complaint cases closed. This would usually take the form of a fuller, more person-centred explanation, which may include clarifying of the process or language being used. This has remained the top remedy for all previous years (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.).
- 3.47 An apology ranked second as the most used remedy at 9%. Recently, the Customer Relations team provided training to services emphasising that apologies should be a "matter of course" for all upheld complaints.
- 3.48 “Service provided” is the third ranked remedy selected by services and is again consistent with previous years at 4%. This would be entered when the original service requested via the complaint, has been delivered or granted following the complaint e.g. the service that was late has now been provided (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.).

### **Education Services**

- 3.49 As with the Children and Families Service, the most frequent remedy provided by the council was an “explanation provided” at 78%. This has remained the top remedy for all previous years (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.).
- 3.50 An apology ranked second as the most used remedy at 16%.
- 3.51 “Service provided” is the third ranked remedy selected by services and is again consistent with previous years at 4%. (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.).
- 3.52 To note, the customer feedback system allows multiple remedies for various stages of the complaint, so there may have different remedies applied at different points e.g. Stage 1 ends with an apology, Stage 2 may end up with financial remedy.

### **Outcomes**

- 3.53 Categories of outcomes have changed in the new feedback system to improve data accuracy. For example, previously a case may have initially been recorded as a complaint but later closed as a “question answered”

once clarification was received from the member of public. However, it would have remained recorded as a complaint as this is what it was initially categorised as. The new feedback system allows for a reallocation if the wrong feedback type was initially selected, and outcomes are only recorded against complaints.

- 3.54 The categories have been analysed in respect of the three statutory reportable categories “upheld, not upheld and partially upheld” and when looking at data trends over previous years, excludes complaints in the old system that were closed as “questions answered” and any withdrawn complaints. This does mean the percentage calculates to less than 100%

## Children and Families Service

Top 3 Outcomes	2024/25	%
Upheld	9	6%
Partially Upheld	54	39%
Not Upheld	51	37%

Figure 12: Complaints closed by outcome (excluding withdrawn complaints).

- 3.55 During 2024/25, the most common category was "partially upheld" indicating that 39% of complaints (54 cases) had some concerns upheld, but not all. However, the second most common outcome was "not upheld" accounting for 37% of complaints (51 cases), which shows that, after investigation, no failings were identified.

## Education Service

Top 3 Outcomes	2024/25	%
Upheld	45	42%
Partially Upheld	32	30%
Not Upheld	24	23%

Figure 13: Complaints closed by outcome (excluding withdrawn complaints).

- 3.56 During 2024/25, “upheld” was the most common outcome and applied to 42% of all closed complaints in this service. This indicates that, following investigation, failings were proven to be found. This trend is consistent with last year’s data. (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.) Specific examples are given under lessons learnt at paragraph 3.62.
- 3.57 The second most common outcome was “partially upheld” and applied to 32 cases, accounting for 30% of complaints raised against this service. This indicates that these complaints involved multiple issues, and after investigation, some failings were identified, but not all. Consequently, some remedies should be undertaken. This trend is again consistent with last year’s data. (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.).



### **Timescale compliance**

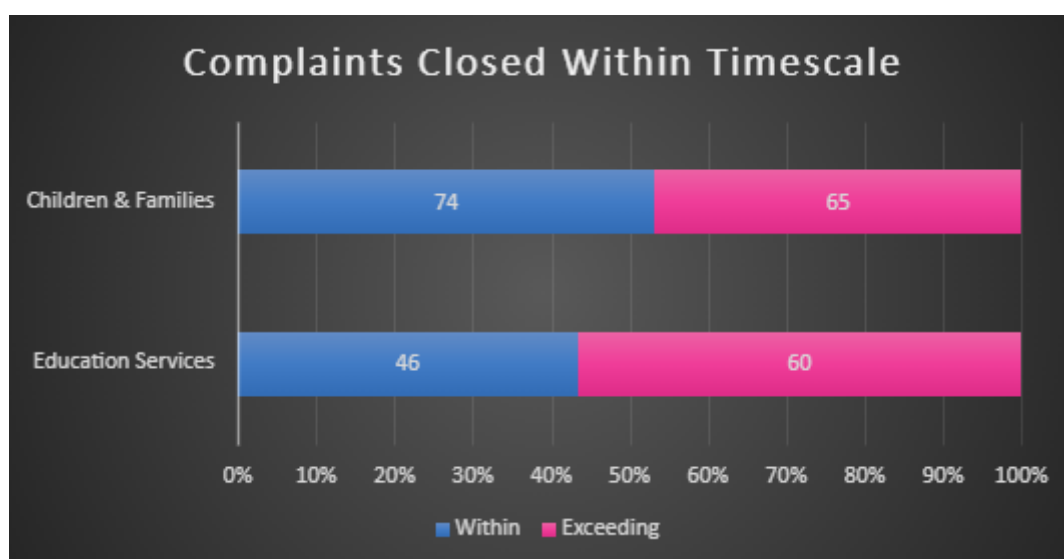


Figure 14: Timescales for closed complaints for Children & Families and Education Services for 2024/25.

- 3.58 Timescales are different and dependent on the type of complaint type and process followed. The relevant timescales for each type of complaint are covered in the Council's Complaints Policy and associated procedures.

#### **Children and Families Service**

- 3.59 There has been an increase in the number of complaints completed within timescales, rising from 45% in 2023/24 to 53% in 2024/25. Although more complaints are being closed within timescale, further targeted work is required with services to emphasise the importance of timely complaint resolution (See Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data. 1).
- 3.60 To note, the system and internal policy timescales on which the figure 14 is based, allows for 10 working days to complete a Stage 1 investigation, however national guidance "[Getting the best from complaints](#)" does allow a further 10 days if the case is complex. This will be considered by services when completing an investigation.

#### **Education Services**

- 3.61 Figure 14 shows that in 2024/25, 43% of complaints (46 cases) were closed within the designated timescale. In 2023/24, this figure was over 50%, indicating a continued area for improvement within this service.

### **Lessons learnt and actions taken to improve services.**

- 3.62 Identifying, actioning, recording, and sharing of 'lessons learnt' is critical in improving customer experience with Council services. It is an opportunity for staff to reflect on how that case could have been prevented/gone better and how, the Council, can improve in future cases. These lessons are used for learning and training purposes for not only the team who have managed the case, but also for the wider Council.

3.63 Examples of lessons learnt, and actions taken from past cases within Children and Families and Education Services include:

- **Strengthened Consent Process:** The process for consent on who can complain within Children's Services has been strengthened. A comprehensive consent process for who can complain on a child's behalf has been developed with Legal Services for the Customer Relations team and services to follow.
- **Young People's Advocate Alerts:** An alert for young people's advocates has been added to the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to ensure the customers' wishes are met.
- **Improved Cross-Service Complaints Handling:** Efforts to work better with cross-service complaints, such as interviewing individuals from different services, have been implemented. Cross-team working was identified by the LGSCO for a specific complaint as an area for improvement

3.64 The Customer Relations team has also implemented several actions organisationally and specifically for Children and Families and Education Services following feedback from customers and operational services. These include:

- **Directly Addressing Customer Complaints:** Letter templates have been updated to encourage addressing complaints point by point and now include an investigation outline.
- **Policy and Template Accessibility:** All relevant policies and letter templates are now uploaded onto the system for each case, providing services with a clearer understanding of the relevant policy and how to write a good response letter.
- **Complaint Type Determination:** The Customer Relations team now decide the complaint type, allowing local services to be guided by the Customer Relations Officer's expertise on not only Council policy but also Central government and where relevant LGSCO guidance.
- **Service Request Understanding:** The Customer Relations team have been trained to understand what constitutes a service request and have implemented this learning effectively, as shown in the number of comments and fewer complaints.
- **Training in Policy Exclusions:** The Customer Relations team have been retrained on WCC policy exclusions, such as complaints about councillors which are dealt with the Monitoring Officers and complaints about data protection or information governance matters as these are dealt with by the Data Protection Officers. This practice has proven effective in managing customer expectations at the point of contact.

- **Internal Reviews:** General reviews are now primarily undertaken by the Customer Relations team rather than commissioned to external persons, reducing service costs, and ensuring better team relationships.
- **System Training:** All system users have been offered a service-wide training session on how to use the system, with an additional session following recent system changes.
- **Real-time data:** Directors now have access to the internal BI dashboard, allowing real-time analysis of complaints and adherence to timescales.
- **Quality Assurance Process:** Customer services have piloted a quality assurance process for Stage 1 complaints with the SEND and Inclusion service, resulting in fewer Stage 2 escalations and the upskilling of a new staff member responsible for complaints.
- **Improved Accessibility:** The Customer Contact team recently launched SignLive, a 24/7 British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting service, to ensure deaf and hard-of-hearing people can contact the Customer Service Centre by phone.

#### **Improvements planned for 2025/26:**

3.65 The following improvements are planned for 2025/26:

- **Complaints Policy Review:** Ensure the existing policy is compliant with the new LGSCO Complaint Handling Code.
- **One-to-One Complaints Sessions:** Provide ad-hoc case guidance through one-to-one sessions between the Customer Relations team and internal services.
- **Letter Writing Training:** Offer training for internal services on Stage 1 letter writing, including LGSCO best practice guidance.

## **4.0 Benchmarking**

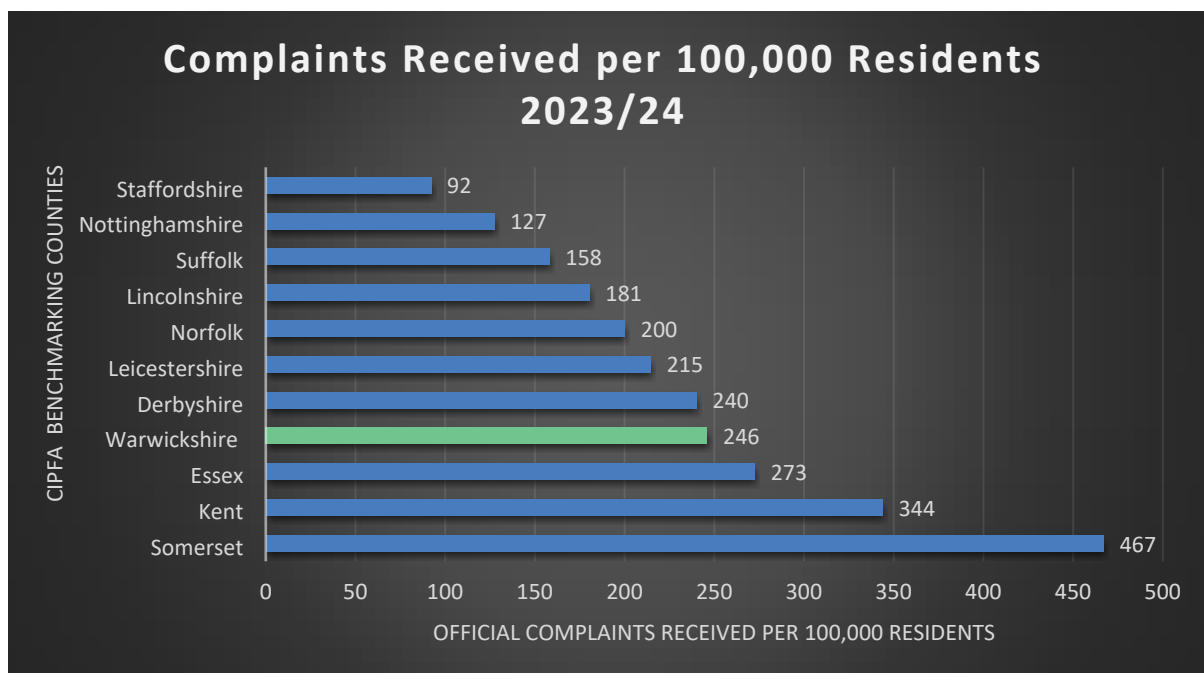


Figure 1515: Complaints received per 100,000 residents (2023 ONS Data) from CIPFA benchmarking counties 2023/24.

- 4.1 This year's feedback report includes benchmarking data regarding the number of complaints for all Council services per 100,000 residents. This enables comparative analysis across Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) benchmarking counties, although the data in Figure 15 relates to the previous reporting period 2023/24, as current data is not yet available.
- 4.2 The 2023/24 data indicated that at 246 complaints per 100,000 residents the Council needed to make improvements in overall complaint numbers compared to similar local authorities.
- 4.3 In 2024/25, as outlined in this report, there has been a significant reduction in complaints, resulting in an improved statistic of 141 complaints per 100,000 residents in Warwickshire. How this figure compares to other counties can only be determined once their 2024/25 complaints data is published, so conclusions regarding the Council's relative improvement cannot yet be drawn.
- 4.4 WCC welcomes feedback and teams social workers, and education staff will always inform people of their right to complain.

## 5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report

## 6 Environmental Implications

- 6.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

## Appendices

1. Appendix 1 Children and Families OSC Feedback data.

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): n/a

Other members: Councillors Dahmash, Falp, Scott, Albon and Norris