

Solihull Council Annual Statutory Complaints Report 2025/26

Childrens Services



Annual Complaints & Representations Report

Solihull Children's Services

1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

1 Introduction

This is the Annual Report of Solihull Council's Children's Services Complaints and Representations, covering the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

1.1 Children's Social Care Services

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.

1.2 The procedure for dealing with children's statutory complaints (and representations) is determined by the following legislation:

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

1.3 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.

1.4 Legitimate 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 Process.

1.5 Information on how to complain, comment or make a compliment about Solihull Council's Children's Services can be found on the Council's webpages at <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Tell-us/Complain-about-childrens-services>

The Council does have a translation and interpreting service for users of Council services where their first language is not English or if, due to their disability or impairment, they require alternative formats such as British Sign Language, large print etc..

1.6 Information specific to Children in Care can be found on the Internet at the following link <https://www.ovossolihull.co.uk/> Age specific, printable leaflets have also been designed and are available on this site which explain the complaints process, provide contact details for making a complaint and suggest other people who children can talk to about their concerns. This website and the leaflets also provide contact details for the Council's contracted advocacy service for young people, NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service) should this be required.

2 The Statutory Complaints Procedure

2.1 The Statutory Complaints and Representations procedure serves four main purposes:

- a. To provide a way for a child/young person, or another relevant person as described in the guidance, to give their views of the service they have received.
- b. To enable Council services to learn from complaints and compliments and to change, review or maintain its services accordingly.
- c. To ensure that complaints are properly recorded and acted upon and that where necessary, things that have gone wrong are put right promptly.
- d. To ensure that both staff and service users understand their rights and responsibilities within the complaints process.

2.2 The Children's Services and Skills Directorate, in conjunction with the Customer Relations Manager, has the discretion to refuse to consider a complaint which was not raised within twelve months of the incident/event occurring. In these cases, the Customer Relations Manager should write to advise the complainant that their complaint cannot be considered, explaining the reasons why they have adopted this position. Each complaint is considered on its' own merits and will be accepted beyond the twelve-month timescale, where it is considered that a fair and transparent response can still be provided. This approach is outlined on the Council's complaints webpage (see 1.5 above).

2.3 The Statutory Complaints Procedure has three stages:

- Stage One - Local resolution.
- Stage Two - An independent complaint investigation.
- Stage Three - An independently chaired Review Panel.

2.4 Stage One – Local Resolution

Stage 1 offers the relevant social work team, the first opportunity to consider the complaint and respond on behalf of the Directorate. In most cases and where possible, this involves the Team Manager making contact with the complainant in order to resolve concerns as early as possible. This gives us the opportunity to either apologise for any mistakes made and correct any resulting disadvantage (upholding the complaint); or establish that the work undertaken was correct and enables us to explain this to the complainant (not upholding the complaint). It is important that the response is informative, accurate, fair, timely and as helpful as it can be.

There is an initial statutory 10 working day timescale for responding to the complaint, with a possible extension to 20 working days with the agreement of the complainant, where complaints are complex, or if time is needed to appoint an advocate.

2.5 Stage Two – Investigation

Where a complainant is unhappy with the outcome of their Stage 1 statutory complaint, they can request consideration of their complaints at Stage 2. All Stage 2 investigations are carried out by an Independent Investigating Officer, alongside an Independent Person, as required by the regulations. The Independent Investigating Officer and Independent Person, compile a report with findings, conclusions and recommendations. A relevant senior member of Children's Social Care Services staff then adjudicates the reports and provides a formal response to the complainant, along with an action plan to implement any recommendations or changes arising from the learning from the complaint.

The timescale for a Stage 2 investigation is 25 working days; however, this can be extended to 65 working days, if there is a significant amount of detail or there are complex issues to investigate.

2.6 Stage Three – Review Panel

Where a complainant remains unhappy with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation, they can request a Stage 3 Review Panel. The Panel is made up of three independent people and is administered by the Council's Complaints Team. The timescale for setting up the Panel is 30 working days. The Panel's remit is to review the Stage 2 investigation; however, the purpose of the Panel is not to re-investigate the complaint. The Panel provides their findings in writing to the complainant within 5 working days; the Directorate then considers the Panel's findings and produces the Local Authority's response to the Panel's findings, which is sent to the complainant within 15 working days of receiving the Panel report.

3 Complaints about other areas of Children's Services

- 3.1 The procedure for dealing with complaints concerning Children's Services which do not fall within the remit of the Statutory complaints process, is the Corporate Complaints Procedure; this is an internally determined procedure. An overview of this procedure can also be found at <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Tell-us/Complain-about-childrens-services>

3.2 The Corporate Complaints Procedure

This procedure is used to process complaints about issues such as:

- Early Help provision
- Child protection S47 enquiries
- Assessments of potential foster carers and adopters
- Foster carer registration
- complaints about services provided by the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Service
- any complaints concerning Children's Services that do not relate to social care (unless an alternative appeals process is already in place for this purpose).

3.2.1 From 1 April 2025, the Council adopted the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, which acts as a guide for organisations to respond to complaints promptly and create a positive complaint handling culture. The Corporate Complaints Procedure has two stages:

3.2.2 Stage One

This stage is similar to Stage 1 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure and offers the relevant Team Manager, the first opportunity for considering the complaint and responding on behalf of the Directorate. It is good practice, where appropriate, for the Team Manager to make contact with the complainant in order to resolve complaints as early as possible. Complaints at this stage should be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt and a full response provided within 10 days from the date that the complaint was acknowledged. This timeframe can be extended by a further 10 working days; however if this happens, the reason(s) should be clearly explained to the complainant.

3.2.3 Stage Two

If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the individual's satisfaction at stage 1, it should be progressed to stage 2 of the complaint procedure. Stage 2 is the organisation's final response.

The Council should make reasonable efforts to understand why an individual remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.

The person considering the complaint at stage 2 should not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1. The request for escalation should be acknowledged within 5 working days and a full response provided within 20 working days of the acknowledgement. This timeframe can be extended to 40 working days for more complex cases.

4 The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

If a complainant remains unhappy after exhausting all stages of a complaints process, they can take their complaint to the LGSCO. A complainant can access the LGSCO at any point during the complaint process; however, the LGSCO normally allows the Local Authority the opportunity to process a complaint through every stage of the appropriate complaint's procedure, before investigating it themselves. Complaints referred back to a Local Authority by the LGSCO to process are classed as 'premature' complaints.

5 The Complaints Team

In Solihull during 2025-26, the responsibility for the management and day-to-day administration of complaints for Children's Services, lay with the Children's & Adults Complaints Team.

The Complaints Team is part of the Business Intelligence and Improvement Division within the Resources Directorate. The Complaints Team strive to ensure that:

- they achieve respectful dialogue with all complainants and work with investigating professionals to provide the best response in the most efficient timescales
- complaints are acknowledged within 5 working days
- complaints are responded to within the timescales determined by the appropriate complaint's procedure, by working with the service area to achieve this
- complaints and compliments are accurately recorded, which leads to accurate performance data being produced
- when things have gone wrong, they work with the relevant staff to put things right as quickly as possible
- both complainants and staff understand the relevant complaints procedure, how it relates to them and their rights and responsibilities within it
- any learning from complaints is acknowledged and that they work with the appropriate service area to ensure that the necessary changes are made to improve services provided
- internal or professional mediation is instigated, where appropriate
- high quality and timely performance reporting is provided to management teams, to ensure that they are aware of issues arising and can work with the Complaints Team and the relevant staff, to resolve these and maintain a high-quality service to service users.

6. Contacting the Children's & Adults Complaints Team

- 6.1 The information provided on Solihull Council's webpages enables service users to make a complaint in differing ways; by e-mail, letter, telephone, webform and leaflet and in 2025-26 the Complaints Team was contacted via all of these available methods.

All complainants with an email address receive both acknowledgements and responses for their complaints via the Council's secure e-mail system, unless otherwise requested. This is a very cost effective and efficient way for service users to communicate with the Council and the Council with them and provides an accurate way of tracking communication between the two parties.

- 6.2 The Complaints Team correspond directly with all complainants / their advocates, whether their complaints are statutory or corporate, in order to properly understand their complaints and hence make it easier for both complainants and investigating managers.

7. Information for children in and on the edge of care

- 7.1 Information for children in and on the edge of care is provided on the Children in Care webpage (see 1.6 above), giving children and young people the information they need to be able to make a complaint. A direct link is also provided to the Complaints Team e-mail address at candacomplaints@solihull.gov.uk

- 7.2 Further information is provided on the Children in Care webpage, so that should they wish, children and young people can contact an advocate directly for help to raise any concerns. This can be found at the following link: <https://www.ovossolihull.co.uk/>

- 7.3 Complaints leaflets specifically aimed at both younger and older children are available on the Council's Internet page at <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Tell-us/Complain-about-childrens-services> as well as on the webpage for Looked After Children at <https://www.ovossolihull.co.uk/> and are in addition to the leaflet which is more appropriate for adults making their own complaints about Children's Services, or complaints on behalf of their children. These leaflets can be printed and completed and sent to the Complaints Team by complainants.
- 7.4 The Complaints Team will also, where requested, assist children and young people to acquire an advocate who will assist with their complaint, by contacting the advocacy service commissioned by Solihull (NYAS) directly, requesting them to make contact with the complainant.
- 7.5 Solihull Children's Services also use the Mind of My Own app to provide children with an easily accessible route to make their concerns/opinions known. Details about the app are also included on the Children in Care webpage discussed above.

8. How we received complaints for Solihull Children's Services

- 8.1 Figures 1 and 2 (below) show the ways that Solihull Children's Services have received initial contacts about complaints since 2020/21.

Method	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Email	76%	79%	78%	76%	80%	81%
Telephone	13%	15%	12%	16%	16%	14%
Letter	1%	4%	4%	4%	1%	2%
Leaflet	1%	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%
Web Form	9%	2%	6%	2%	1%	3%
In person	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%

Fig 1

- 8.2 Predictably, in a world of increasing technology, email continues to be an extremely popular, convenient and efficient way for people to raise complaints and in 2025/26 81% of complainants have chosen to make their initial contacts to the Complaints Team in this way. Email has, since 2020/21, been the most popular form of initial contact used by complainants.

Telephone contact is, after email, still the second most popular method used by people to make their first contact regarding their concerns. Initial contacts by other methods have been very few since 2020/21 which reflects the transition to using more up to date technology.

The leaflets used for making a complaint about Children's Services are readily available in an on-line format (see 6 and 7 above). The leaflets guide the complainant through the type of essential information which is required when raising their concerns. The percentage of contacts using a leaflet has however continued to remain low, and this method was not used during 2025/26, however this method remains an option, should complainants choose to use this format.

All complainants who email the Complaints Team receive an auto generated response which also explains the type of information which helps the Complaints Team to understand their complaint and what would resolve the issues for them.

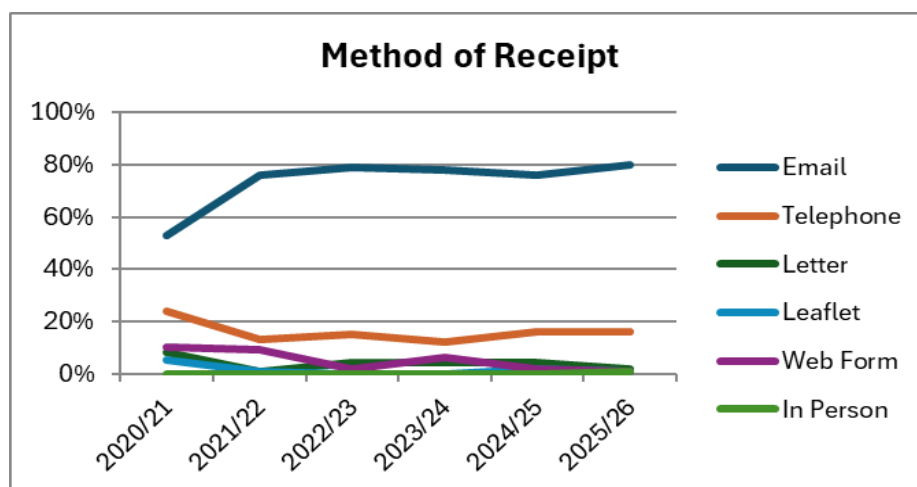


Fig 2

8.3 In 2025/26, the Complaints Team continued to invest time speaking directly to prospective complainants where possible, regardless of how the initial contact was made. This is always an important opportunity to build a trusting relationship with the complainant/service user, giving them a point of contact throughout the duration of their complaint. This is particularly important when dealing with more in-depth complaints, as it enables the Complaints Team to fully understand the concerns being raised and then to define them appropriately, which in turn helps investigating managers to provide clearer, more detailed responses to complainants, assisting their understanding of the outcomes reached.

8.4 Talking to complainants also ensures that where it is appropriate and possible, that 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. The Complaints Team have, in 2025/26 handled 58 such "duty" cases for Children's Social Care Services.

9. Solihull Children's Services complaints recorded for the 2025/26 financial year

During the 2025/26 financial year, Solihull's Children's Services received 170 new complaints compared to 114 new complaints received in 2024/25, an overall increase of 56 (49%).

These new complaints can be broken down into the following areas:

- 64 (compared to 79 in 2024/25) for Children's Social Care Services
- 86 (compared to 27 in 2024/25) for the EHCP Team
- 17 (compared to 8 in 2024/25) for other areas of Children's Services

In addition, 3 complaints covered both Children's Social Care Services and EHCP Team/Other areas of Children's Services.

10 Who made complaints?

- 10.1 165 of the 170 new complaints made during 2025/26, across Children's Services were received from adults, making complaints either on behalf of children or in relation to a service impacting themselves directly (14 of these represented Children Looked After).

Of the other 5 complaints, 2 were from a professional advocate acting on behalf of a child (1 of which was Children Looked After) and 3 were made directly by the service user (2 of which were from a Child Looked After).

- 10.2 68% of new complaints were received from females and 28% from males, with 4% of complaints being made jointly by parents (compared to 66%, 31% and 3% respectively in 2024/25).

- 10.3 Seventeen looked after young people were therefore supported to make a complaint by either a parent/carers or a professional advocate; or contacted the Complaints Team directly.

- 10.4 In 2025/26, the 17 complaints from Children Looked After constituted 38% of the 45 new Statutory complaints which were raised in relation to services provided by Children's Social Care. This is a decrease when compared with 25 (38%) of the 65 new Statutory complaints in 2024/25. These statutory complaints from Children Looked After were in relation to 5 different social work teams.

There was a total of 160 complaint issues within these 17 complaints; 10 (6%) were upheld, 17 (11%) were partially upheld, 78 (49%) were not upheld and 10 (6%) were found to be inconclusive. There was no stage 1 outcome for 45 (28%) issues, as they progressed directly to stage 2. Twenty-eight of these issues were closed at stage 2 in 2025/26; 15 were not upheld, 7 were partially upheld and 6 were upheld. Seventeen issues were still being investigated and were carried forward to 2026/27.

- 10.5 The main focus of complaints raised by or on behalf of Children Looked After was "Unsatisfactory Communication".

Unsatisfactory Communication is one of the main issues arising from complaints across Children's Services in general (further detail is provided within section 15 below). Within the reporting process to senior management, these issues are broken down under further headings, enabling the Complaints Team to highlight any specific concerns to managers in Children's Services.

11. A summary of Children's Social Care complaints recorded for the 2025/26 financial year

11.1 Live complaints brought forward from 2024/25

- 11.1.1 There were 12 live complaints still under investigation and carried forward from 2024/25. These were at the following stages: 3 were corporate complaints (all at Stage 1); and 9 were statutory complaints (4 at Stage 1, and 5 at Stage 2).

- 11.1.2 Two of the Statutory complaints carried forward at Stage 1 were resolved at Stage 1 and two were escalated to Stage 2; of the 5 complaints carried forward at stage 2,

three were resolved at stage 2 whilst 2 were escalated and resolved at stage 3 during 2025/26.

11.1.3 The three Stage 1 corporate complaints brought forward were all resolved at Stage 1 during 2025/26.

11.1.4 Three Stage 1 Statutory complaints originally closed in 2024/25, were reopened during 2025/26 at Stage 2. Two were resolved at Stage 2 and the remaining complaint was escalated to stage 3 and then resolved.

11.2 New complaints received for Children's Social Care Services during 2025/26

11.2.1 During the 2025/26 financial year, Solihull Council's Children's Social Care Services received 67 new complaints. 44 were processed via the Statutory process; 22 via the Corporate process (which includes 3 complaints that covered both Children's Social Care Services and Education Services); and one complaint that included both the statutory and corporate processes.

The number of new complaints for 2025/26 (67) is a decrease of 15% compared to the 79 received in 2024/25; however, this needs to be considered alongside a decrease in service users of 10%, as described at 13.1 below.

11.2.2 Of the 45 new statutory complaints received, 33 (73%) were resolved at Stage 1. 12 of the new complaints were escalated to Stage 2 and 5 were resolved during 2025/26. Of the remaining 7 complaints, 4 were still under investigation at Stage 2 at the end of the year and therefore carried forward to 2026/27 and the remaining 3 were escalated to Stage 3 with one being resolved during 2025/26 and 2 stage 3 complaints remaining active at the end of the year and carried forward to 2026/27.

11.2.3 73% of the new Statutory complaints received in 2025/26 have currently been resolved either via investigation at Stage 1 of the complaints process, through mediation, or through a combination of both. The majority of complainants making Statutory complaints therefore appear to have been satisfied with the responses that they have received at Stage 1, choosing not to request progression of their complaint to the next stage.

11.2.4 16 of the 23 Corporate complaints received in 2025/26 were closed at Stage 1. Seven complaints progressed to Stage 2 during 2025/26, and all were responded to. No corporate complaints were carried forward to 2026/27 for Children's Social Care Services.

11.3 Children's Social Care complaints carried forward into 2025/26

11.3.1 At the end of the 2025/26 financial year, the number of live complaints carried forward to 2026/27 was 6. This is a decrease on the previous year's total of 14.

11.3.2 The 6 carried forward to 2026/27, were statutory complaints (4 at Stage 2 and two at Stage 3).

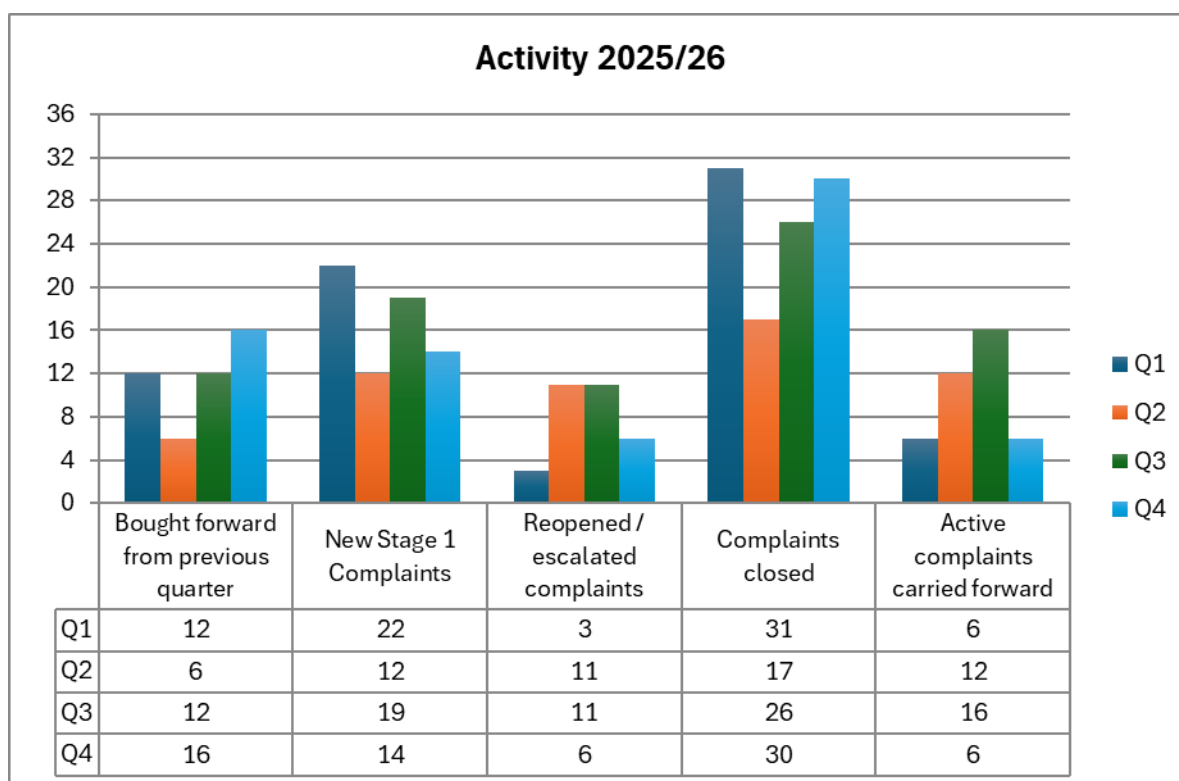


Fig 3

11.3.3 Figure 3 above shows that there was a decrease in the number of new complaints received for Children's Social Care Services in Q2 compared to Q1. New complaints rose again in Q3 before decreasing again in Q4. The number of complaints carried forward at the end of each quarter fluctuates, depending on response timescales and the date on when the investigation commenced in the previous quarter.

12. Timescales for responding to complaints in Children's Social Care Services

In 2025/26 the Complaints Team have continued to provide accurate data to senior management concerning response timescales for complaints processed under both the Statutory and Corporate complaints processes. Timescales for each process are described below.

12.1 Statutory Complaint timescales

12.1.1 The initial timescale for processing Stage 1 complaints within the Children's Statutory Complaints Process is 10 working days, (extended to 20 working days for complex cases).

Children's Social Care Services aim to respond to as many Stage 1 Statutory complaints within the initial 10-day timescale, as possible; whilst at the same time ensuring an appropriate level of detail and accuracy, so that the complaint can be resolved as quickly as possible; this being positive for all concerned.

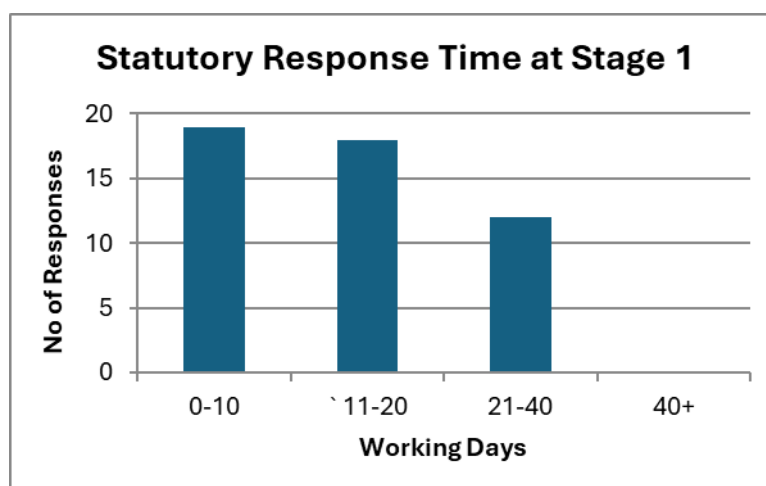


Fig 4

- 12.1.2 In 2025/26, 49 Statutory complaint investigations were completed and responses provided at stage 1 of the Statutory Children's Complaints process by Solihull Children's Social Care Services. Figure 4 above shows the timescale in which these complaints were responded to. 19/49 (39%) of complaints were responded to within 10 days (the initial response timescale), which is an improvement on the 21% in 2024/25.
- 12.1.3 18/49 (37%) were responded to within 11 – 20 days, giving an overall total of 37 (76%) complaints being responded to within 20 days (the extended timescale). The overall percentage of stage 1 complaints responded to within 20 working days has increased from 6% in 2024/25 to 76% in 2025/26.
- 12.1.4 In 2025/26, 12/49 (24%) of Stage 1 Statutory complaints, were resolved between 21 and 40 days (6 of these were responded to with 24 days and were therefore only just out of time). No complaints took longer than 40 days to resolve and none were withdrawn.
- 12.1.5 In 2026/27, the Complaints Team will continue to work with investigating managers in Children's Social Care Services, to try and reduce the numbers of Stage 1 Statutory complaints that take more than 20 days to respond to, with an additional aim to respond to more complaints within the initial 10 working day timescale.
- 12.1.6 The percentage of Stage 1 Statutory complaints responded to within 20 working days has increased in 2025/26, while the level of detail included in Stage 1 responses has been maintained. This appears to reassure complainants that their complaints have been thoroughly investigated.
- 12.1.7 Despite 12 of the Stage 1 complaint responses being outside of the 20-working day timescale, these responses still appear to have resolved the majority of complaints at a local level, without complainants feeling the need to progress their complaint to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (see 12.2.4 below). This can only be positive for both the complainant and the Local Authority.

12.2 Corporate complaint timescales

As detailed at 3.2.3, the Council has adopted the LGSCO Complaint Handling Code from 1.4.25. The timescale for processing complaints at Stage 1 within Solihull Council's Corporate Complaint Process is 5 working days to acknowledge the complaint plus 10 working days to investigate from the date of acknowledgement (extended to 20 working days for complex cases) and 20 working days at Stage 2 (extended to 40 working days); where an appropriate senior officer, usually the Head of Service, responds to the escalation of the complaint.

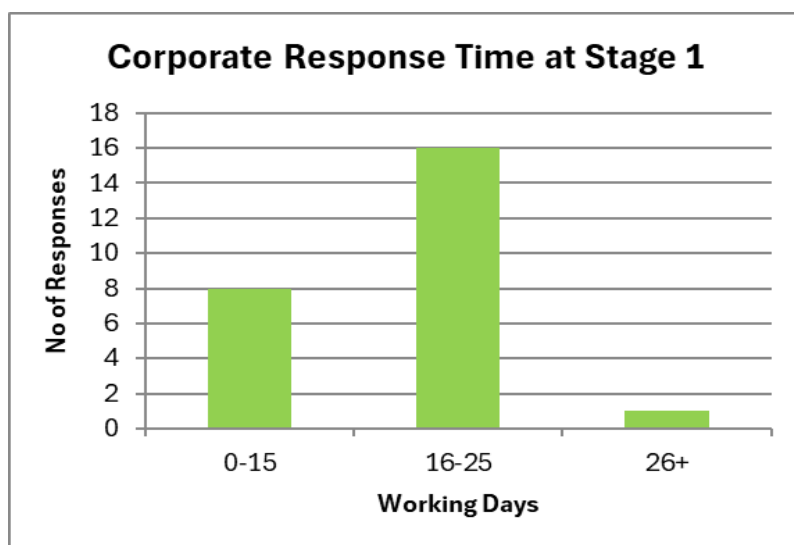


Fig 5

- 12.2.1 In 2025/26, twenty-five Corporate complaints were investigated and responded to at stage 1 by Solihull Children's Social Care Services. Figure 5 above, shows that 8 (32%) Stage 1 complaints were responded to within 15 days, whilst a further 16 (64%) took 16-25 working days, meaning that 24/25 (96%) complaints were responded to at stage 1 within the extended 25 working day timescale. As the timescales have changed in 2025/26, it is not possible to compare responses against the 2024/25 timescales.
- 12.2.2 One (4%) Stage 1 Corporate complaints took longer than the 25-working day timescale to respond to, taking 31 days to respond. Some delays can occur due to the detail of a complaint and the need to ensure that the response is as thorough as possible. The Complaints Team liaise with complainants where delays occur to keep them fully informed.
- 12.2.3 Six Corporate complaints in relation to Children's Social Care Services, progressed to Stage 2 in 2025/26, compared to 5 in 2024/25.

All six of these Stage 2 investigations were completed in 2025/26; 2 (33%) were responded to within the maximum 25 working days timescale at Stage 2; 3 were responded to within the extended 45 working days; and one complaint exceeded the maximum response timeframe. No Stage 2 corporate investigations were carried forward to 2026/27 for Children's Social Care Services.

12.2.4 Five enquires were received from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) in relation to Children's Social Care Services in 2025/26. The LGSCO declined to investigate two of these and the remaining three were closed as premature. No complaints remain open to investigation for Children's Social Care at the end of 2025/26. More information can be found at point 20 below.

12.2.5 As outlined at 12.1.7 above, the level of detail which continues to be included in complaint responses from investigating managers appears to be a significant contributor to the low numbers of complaints which progress to the Ombudsman. This can sometimes have a slight impact on response times; however, it does appear to reassure the complainant that their complaints have been thoroughly investigated and responded to and resolves their complaint without them considering a need to refer to the LGSCO. The Complaints Team keep lines of communication open with all complainants regarding the response times for their complaint.

13 Trend Data for Children's Social Care complaints

13.1 As outlined above at 11.2.1, the 67 new complaints received for Children's Social Care Services in 2025/26, represent a 15% decrease when compared to the 79 new complaints received in 2024/25.

During 2025/26 however, Children's Social Care Services provided a service to 3998 service users compared to 4553 in 2024/25 (a decrease of 12%). This may suggest that the decrease in complaints in Solihull Social Care Services in 2025/26 has been due to a decrease in service users.

Complaints were received from only 1.7% of service users/their families in 2025/26 which is consistent in comparison to 1.7% in 2024/25.

13.2 Detailed in the chart below (*Figure 6*) is a comparison of the number of complaints received each quarter between 2020/21 and 2025/26.

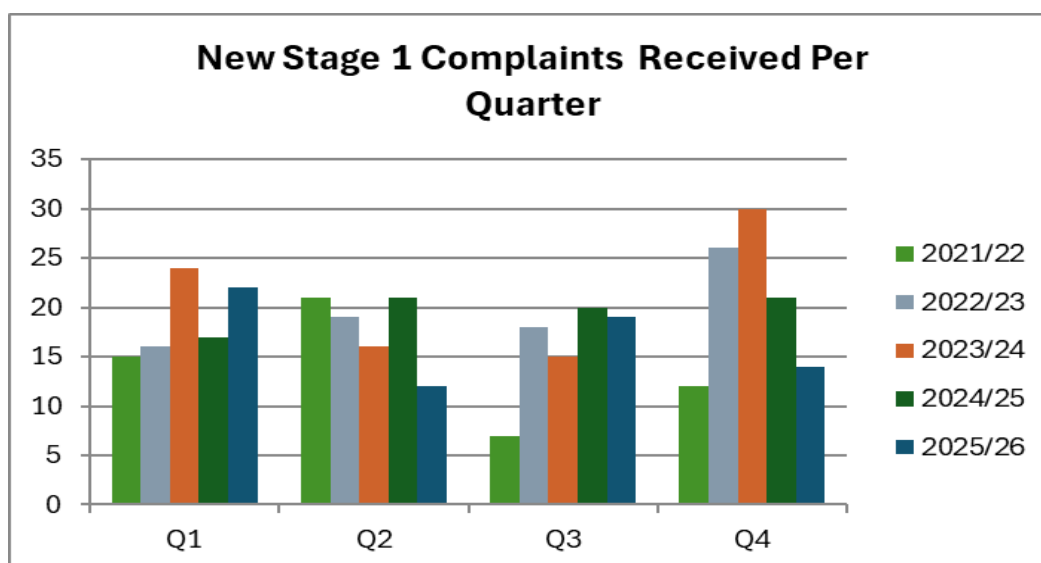


Fig 6

- 13.3 Figure 6 above shows that in 2025/26 the lowest number of complaints were received in Q2 and Q4 and that the numbers received in Q1 to Q3 were very similar.
- 13.4 Having mapped the quarterly trends for receiving new complaints over a number of years, there is a difficulty in pre-empting the number of new complaints that will be received and hence planning for this workload in both Children's Services and in the Complaints Team is difficult. In 2 out of the 4 years shown however, the highest number of complaints were received in Q4. The onset of the COVID19 pandemic is likely to have been the cause of the low number of complaints received in 2020/21.
- 14. An Overview of Complaints and Issues for Children's Social Care Services by Team**
- 14.1 The accurate definition of complaints by the Complaints Team means that several issues are often identified within each complaint. Figure 7 below, shows a breakdown of the numbers of new complaints (both Statutory and Corporate) received during 2025/26, along with the number of corresponding issues for each of Solihull's Children's Social Care teams.

New Stage 1 Complaints & Issues Per Team	Total Issues	Total Statutory Complaints	Total Corporate Complaints
Care Experienced Team	9	2	
Child Protection & Review Unit	10	1	2
Child we Care For Team	54	8	4
Children with Disabilities Team	136	12	1
Children's Assessment Team 1	29	2	5
Children's Assessment Team 3	40	2	2
Children's Assessment Team 4	2	1	
Children's Social Care Admin	2		1
Emergency Duty Team	4	1	1
Fostering Team	1		1
LADO (POT Process)	5		2
MASH Team	3	1	1
Safeguarding & Support Team 1	81	5	1
Safeguarding & Support Team 2	27	5	1
Safeguarding & Support Team 3	25	2	2
Safeguarding & Support Team 4	52	3	3
Safeguarding & Support Team 5	32	3	1
Youth Offending Service			
Grand Total	512	48	28

Fig 7

Note – some complaints will span both the Statutory and Corporate complaints procedures or are responded to by more than one team and therefore do not equate to the total number of new complaints received.

- 14.2 In 2025/26, the highest number of complaints were received in relation to the Children with Disabilities Team and totalled 13. Numbers of new complaints for this team were higher in Q1 and Q4 (see fig 8 below), which is in line with the overall receipt of all complaints, as shown at 13.2 (figure 6) above.

The work undertaken by the Children with Disabilities Team means that they dealt with a proportionally higher number of service users in this reporting period and therefore potentially, this would explain why they receive a proportionally higher number of complaints.

NEW COMPLAINTS RECEIVED	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Children with Disabilities Team	7	2	0	4	13
Child we Care For Team	6	2	3	1	12
Children's Assessment Team 1	3	2	2	0	7

Fig 8

- 14.3 After the Children with Disabilities Team, the teams receiving the highest number of new complaints were the Child we Care for Team, with 12 complaints, followed by the Children's Assessment Team 1 who received 7 new complaints.

15 Categories of Issues Raised within Complaints

- 15.1 Defining complaint issues, the detail within these and what this tells us, is something that is regularly reviewed by the Complaints Team, in liaison with senior managers in Children's Services. This enables a depth and accuracy of performance reporting, both via monthly live complaints reports to heads of service and the Directorate Leadership Team and quarterly reporting to both Senior Leadership and Directorate Leadership teams; in order to ensure that any areas of concern are highlighted and dealt with efficiently.
- 15.2 The Complaints Team supply within reporting to senior managers, a further breakdown under the categories of issues which show the higher number of complaint issues, so that they are more easily able to define any potential areas of concern and use this along with the learning highlighted from complaints to improve practice/review procedures.
- 15.3 The breakdown of complaints into issues by the Complaints Team assists investigating managers to respond efficiently and accurately to each part of the complaint.

New Stage 1 Issues per Quarter	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Breach of confidentiality	1	1	4		6
Decision Making	13	7	18	15	53
Quality/ Accuracy of Social Work reports	3	4	21	19	47
Safety issues (non safeguarding)	1	4	1		6
Impact of LA policy on service user	3		2	2	7
Recording of information	3	7	1	6	17
Attitude or Behaviour of Staff	36	19	36	15	106
Failure to complete agreed outcome	8		2	2	
Inappropriate comments/actions	19	11	26	11	
Consent not requested / provided			2		
Rudeness	3		1		
Poor interaction with child		1			
Accusation of bias	6	7	5	2	
Delivery / Non Delivery of Service	22	17	23	31	93
Lack of involvement of family member with POA/ PR		1	1	1	
Delay in undertaking assessment	3		2	1	
Dissatisfaction with fostering process	1				
Support not provided by allocated worker	3	3		2	
Delay in providing support		1	5	3	
Unsuitable placement	1				
Correct process/ procedure not followed	12	12	12	22	
Frequent change of Social Worker	2		3	2	
Contact Issues	10	5	0	4	19
Full contact not provided	2	1			
Contact not increased	1				
Contract stopped	1	2			
Amount of Intervention by workers	1	2		4	
Contact not arranged	5				
Finance Issues	2	1	0	0	3
Funding not provided	2	1			
Unsatisfactory Communication	52	34	36	30	152
Incorrect / Contradictory information given	12	8	11	5	
Documentation / Information not provided	10	10	5	10	
Documentation / Information delayed	2	2	1	4	
Not being listened to	12	9	4	4	
Calls / Email not returned	6	1	7	4	
Not informed / invited to meetings	6		1	1	
Contact not made when requested	4	3	1		
Not contacted on a regular basis		1	3	2	
Meeting cancelled at short notice			2		
Meetings not held on time			1		
Grand Total	146	99	142	122	509

Fig 9

- 15.4 The issues highlighted in figure 9 above are the categories of new issues raised by complainants during 2025/26. Not all of these will be upheld.
- 15.5 Within the 67 new complaints received during 2025/26, there was a very slight decrease in the number of issues raised, from 511 in 2024/25 to 509 and these are detailed in fig 9 above.

The average number of issues per complaint has increased slightly from 6.4 to 7.6, therefore, the evidence suggests that complaints in 2025/26 were becoming more complex than they previously were.

- 15.6 The issues relating to unsatisfactory communication, attitude / behaviour of staff, delivery/non delivery of service, contact issues and finance issues are broken down further by the Complaints Team into sub-categories, in order to provide a better understanding to managers regarding the specific reasons for complaint (see fig 9 above). This enables managers to focus, where required, on any area that receives repeated or higher levels of complaints, looking at possible reasons for this, so that learning can be focussed in these areas and implemented in order to improve practice.
- 15.7 As in previous years, attitude/behaviour of staff, delivery/non delivery of service and unsatisfactory communication were the top areas of complaint (see fig 9 above). These are issues which are a common cause for complaint in any complaint arena; however, it should be recognised that figure 9 shows the number of issues *raised* under each heading. Following investigation, not all of these issues are upheld. The outcomes of investigated issues are discussed in section 16 below.
- 15.8 The total number of new issues received in relation to unsatisfactory communication received during 2025/26 decreased slightly when compared with 2024/25 (as shown in fig 10 below); and the number of new issues raised in relation to attitude / behaviour of staff and delivery / non-delivery of service also decreased when compared to 2024/25.

Issue	No of issues 2020/21	No of issues 2021/22	No of issues 2022/23	No of issues 2023/24	No of issues 2024/25	No of issues 2025/26
Attitude/behaviour of staff	58	164	144	163	166	106
Unsatisfactory communication	73	90	180	168	168	152
Delivery/non-delivery of service	55	49	130	79	96	93

Fig 10

- 15.9 As outlined above at 15.5, these issues are reported to senior management in detail within quarterly reports, in order to identify any possible areas of concern, so that managers can focus, where required, on any area that needs their attention, so that learning can be focussed in these areas in order to improve practice.

16 Outcomes of resolved complaints by issue for Children's Social Care Services

- 16.1 The table below shows the percentage of issues that have been upheld/partially upheld for the top 3 areas of complaint between 2020/21 and 2025/26.

Type of issue	% upheld & partially upheld at stage 1					
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Unsatisfactory communication	40%	38%	31%	50%	53%	33%
Delivery / non delivery of service	36%	17%	38%	49%	39%	44%
Attitude or behaviour of Staff	24%	32%	32%	18%	21%	19%

Fig 11

- 16.2 The percentage of complaint issues upheld/partially upheld in 2025/26 for unsatisfactory communication has decreased compared to 2024/25, the upheld / partially upheld rate for attitude / behaviour of staff has also slightly decreased but has increased for delivery/non-delivery of service.
- 19% of issues raised in relation to attitude or behaviour of staff were upheld/partially upheld and a number of issues are found to be inconclusive. This is sometimes due to the nature of these complaints (e.g. issues raised regarding the verbal tone of conversations with workers) and therefore a lack of evidence from both the complainant and the Council; however, these complaints are monitored, and appropriate action is taken by managers in Children's Services when required.
- 16.3 Following the completion of the investigations for these complaints, the investigating managers have looked at the learning issues that have been highlighted and learning actions have been outlined and put into place, to try to ensure that the same issues do not reoccur (see learning from complaints in Section 21 below).
- 16.4 A total of 72 complaints (390 issues) were responded to during 2025/26 at stage 1 and the outcome of each issue (see fig 12 below) within these complaints is recorded and reported to senior managers by the Complaints Team.
- 16.5 The outcomes for all complaint issues closed at Stage 1 in 2025/26 were as follows: 48 (12%) were upheld, 66 (17%) were partially upheld, 222 (57%) were not upheld and 50 (13%) were found to be inconclusive. In addition, no issues were withdrawn, (either by the complainant, or where evidence came to light and they were unable to be investigated within the confines of the complaints process). No issues were still being investigated at stage 1 at the end of the year.

These outcomes are shown in Figure 12 below.

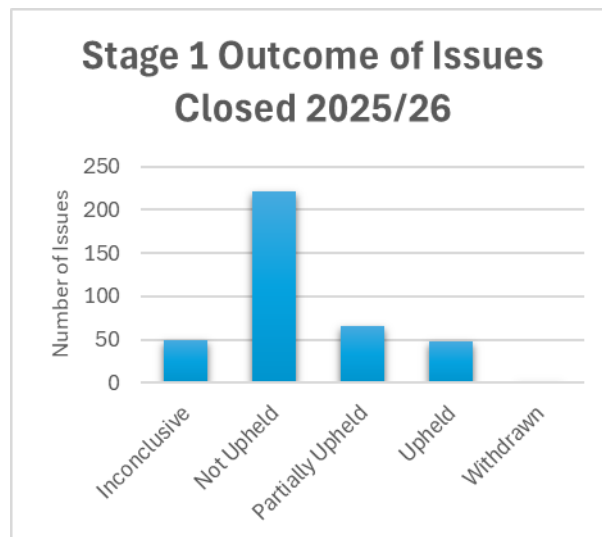


Fig 12

16.6 Upheld or partially upheld issues constituted 29% of all issues responded to in 2025/26, compared to 38% and 39% respectively in the previous two years. Whilst the percentage of upheld and partially upheld issues has decreased in 2025/26, the numbers of complaints progressing to Stage 2 are still relatively low and no social care complaints were investigated by the Ombudsman during this period. This would, therefore, not raise any particular concern about the outcomes being found by investigating managers.

16.7 Learning from complaint issues was identified and progressed as described in Section 20 below.

17. Complaints for other areas of Children, Young People & Families Services

17.1 During 2025/26 there were no complaints for Solihull Council's Youth Offending Team or for the Exploitation & Missing Team.

18. Complaints relating to services provided by Solihull EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) Team

18.1 Complaints made in relation to services provided by Solihull Council's EHCP Team are processed via the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure.

18.2 During 2025/26, 88 new formal complaints relating to the Council's EHCP Team were received (including 2 complaints that spanned both SEND and Children's Social Work), compared to 29 in 2024/25. To support the continuing SEND improvement journey, staff are actively encouraging of parents submitting formal complaints, so that issues can be clearly understood, looked at and addressed; and learning monitored at senior levels. Despite the increase in the number of new complaints for the EHCP Team, the number of complaints progressing to investigation by the Ombudsman remains low and there has been a decrease in the number of adverse outcomes found in 2025/26 when compared to 2024/25 (as shown in Fig 16 below).

In addition to formal complaints, 40 Duty cases (those cases where concerns are raised and resolved, with the agreement of the complainant, without progressing to

a formal complaint) were also received and handled by the Complaints Team. This is a slight decrease compared to the 41 handled during 2024/25.

- 18.3 Of the 88 formal complaints received during 2025/26, 39 (45%) progressed to Stage 2 of the Corporate process. This is an increase when compared to 8 (28%) in 2024/25.
- 18.4 124 complaint investigations were completed and responded to in 2025/26 (which included any open complaint investigations brought forward from 2024/25); 88 at Stage 1 and 36 at Stage 2.
- 18.5 9 complaints for the EHCP Team were carried forward to 2025/26, four at stage 1 and five at stage 2.
- 18.6 Figure 13 below shows the 88 new complaints as they were received across each quarter. Complaints were highest in quarters 1 and 3, with a corresponding higher number of issues identified, when compared to quarters 2 and 4.

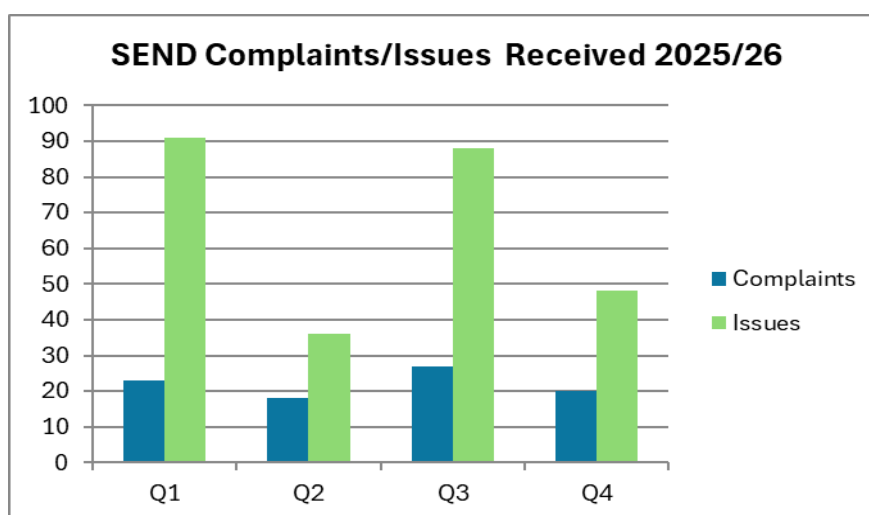


Fig 13

18.7 An overview of complaint issues for the EHCP Team

In 2025/26, a total of 263 issues were received within the 88 new complaints outlined above. The 3 main issues about which new concerns were raised were the Council not fulfilling its duty to provide education (39 issues), EHCP not being followed (29 issues) and EHCP process not being followed (28 issues) as per fig 14 below. The number of individual issues raised against each main category have increased in quarters 1 and 3, which is in line with the number of new complaints in these quarters.

New SEND Issues Per Quarter	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Impact of LA policy on service user			1	1	2
Breach of Confidentiality		1			1
No policy / process in place			2		2
Safety Issues (non safeguarding)			1		1
Recording of information	1	1			2
Change of EHCP Officer		1	1		2
Inappropriate type of worker allocated			4		4
Decision making	2		3	2	7
Attitude / Behaviour of Staff	8	2	1	2	13
Consent not requested / provided			1		
Failure to meet agreed outcome	3				
Rudeness	1				
Inappropriate comments/actions	4	2		2	
Issues with EHCP	47	23	57	25	152
Assessment(s) not provided		1		1	
Council not fulfilled duty to provide education	11	5	15	8	
Delay in finding school / suitable placement	3	1	2	3	
Delay in finalising EHCP assessment			1	1	
Delay in providing support	2	1	2	1	
Delay in providing home schooling			1		
Delay in undertaking assessment				1	
Delay in providing EP report	1				
Quality of EP/OT report	1				
EHCP not being followed	12	5	12		
EHCP not completed within timescales		1	3	1	
EHCP not reviewed	3		1		
EHCP process not followed	8	4	11	5	
Funding not provided	3	1	2	1	
Provision not named in EHCP		1	1		
Unsuitable placement		1	2		
Required advice / information not sought		2			
Correct process not followed	3		4	3	
Unsatisfactory Communication	33	8	18	18	77
Calls / Email not returned	7		1	2	
Contact not made when requested	2	1	2	2	
Documentation / Information not provided	9	2	7	4	
Documentation / Information delayed	2	2	1		
Incorrect / contradictory information provided	7	1	3	3	
Not contacted on a regular basis	1		2	1	
Recording of information		1			
Not being listened to	5	1	2	5	
Grand Total	91	36	88	48	263

Fig 14

18.8 Timescales for responding to complaints in the EHCP Team

88 complaint investigations were completed and responded to by the EHCP Team at Stage 1; 43 (49%) were responded to within the initial 15-working day timeframe and a further 37 (42%) received a Stage 1 response within the extended 25 working day timeframe. This means that a total of 91% of the complaints responded to at Stage 1, were completed within 25 working days. Only six complaint responses exceeded the 25 working-day timeframe allowed at Stage 1.

Two complaints were withdrawn at stage 1 and four Stage 1 complaints were still being investigated at the end of 2025/26 and carried forward to 2026/27 (see 18.5 above).

- 18.9 Of the 36 complaint investigations completed at Stage 2 during 2025/26, 21 (58%) received a response within the initial 25-working day timeframe at Stage 2 and a further 13 (36%) complaints were responded to within the extended 45 working day timeframe. This means that a total of 94% of the complaints responded to at Stage 2, were completed within 45 working days. Only 2 complaints exceeded the 45-working day timeframe at Stage 2. No complaints were withdrawn at stage 2 and 5 active Stage 2 complaints were carried forward to 2026/27.

In 2026/27 the Complaints Team will work with the EHCP Team to try to ensure that all complaints are responded to within their respective timescales.

18.10 Outcomes of resolved complaints by issue for the EHCP Team

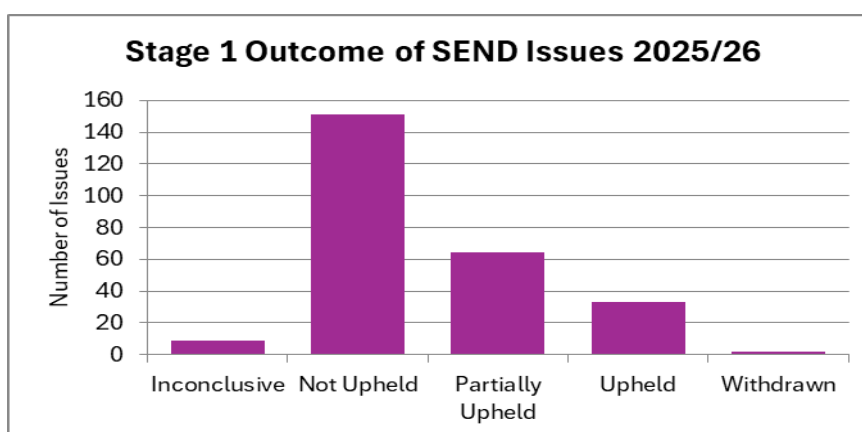


Fig 15

Of the 259 issues that were responded to at Stage 1 by the EHCP Team, 33 (13%) were upheld, 64 (25%) were partially upheld, 151 (58%) were not upheld and 9 (3%) were inconclusive (as shown at fig 15 above). Two issues (1%) were withdrawn at stage 1 and 12 issues were still being investigated and carried forward to 2026/27.

The 41 Stage 2 complaints that were responded to during 2025/26 had 126 issues within them, 23 (18%) of which were upheld, 25 (20%) were partially upheld, 76 (60%) which were not upheld and 2 (2%) were inconclusive. No complaints/issues were withdrawn at stage 2.

19. Complaints for other areas of Children's Learning and Achievement

The Complaints Team also received 19 new complaints for other areas of Learning & Achievement, 7 of which covered more than one team:

- 19.1.1 One complaint for the Children's Education Admin Team which closed at Stage 1.
- 19.1.2 One complaint for Children's Public Health which closed at Stage 1.
- 19.1.3 One new complaint in relation to the EHE Inclusion Team which closed at Stage 2.
- 19.1.4 One complaint for the Educational Psychology Team which was closed at Stage 1.
- 19.1.5 One complaint in relation to EPAS was brought forward from 2024/25 and a further 9 were received during 2025/26. Six were closed at stage 1 and the remaining 4 closed at stage 2.
- 19.1.6 One complaint in relation to the Finance Team (Oracle Cloud) closed at stage 2.
- 19.1.7 One complaint in relation to the Family Hub - Elmwood closed at stage 1.
- 19.1.8 One complaint in relation to the Family Information Service closed at stage 2.
- 19.1.9 Two complaints were received in relation to Education Services, with one closing at stage 2 and one still being investigated at stage 1 and carried forward to 2026/27.
- 19.1.10 One complaint in relation to the LAC Education Service closed at stage 1.
- 19.1.11 Two complaints in relation to School Admissions both closed at stage 1.
- 19.1.12 Two complaints were received in relation to School Transport, with one closing at stage 1 and the other at stage 2.
- 19.1.13 Two complaints were received in relation to SISS Team, both of which closed at stage 1.

20. Complaints considered by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

- 20.1 During 2025/26 the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) found outcomes for 20 cases for Solihull Children's Services.
- 20.2 Of these 20 cases, the LGSCO referred 10 cases back to the Local Authority for resolution (premature), 5 were closed after initial enquiries by the LGSCO, and 5 complains were closed after investigation, with 4 being upheld and one being not upheld as per the table below.

Outcome	Children's Services Team & outcomes
Investigated – Upheld	EHCP Team (4): apology, £5250 paid to complainants, review of processes,

Investigated – Not upheld	EHCP Team (1): investigation discontinued
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Fig 16

- 20.3 The level of detail provided in the responses from Children's Services still appears to being having a positive direct link to the low numbers of complaints referred to and then investigated by the LGSCO.

21 Areas for Learning and Improvement highlighted by team managers and heads of service for Children's Services

21.1 Learning for Children's Social Care Services

- 21.1.1 During 2025/26, the Complaints Team has continued to send learning forms to investigating managers for each complaint responded to and to liaise with those managers through to the implementation of the learning highlighted.
- 21.1.2 There were 21 learning forms outstanding at the end of 2024/25 which were all returned during 2025/26. 74 new learning forms were sent to managers in 2025/26 and by the end of this reporting period 93 (98%) have been closed. 2 forms remained outstanding for investigations completed close to year end, with managers not having had chance to complete and return them by 31st March 2025. One of these has now been returned after year-end.

The Complaints Team will continue to follow up the outstanding forms until all of them have been returned and any learning is highlighted and implemented.

Learning outcomes from the forms completed and returned by year end have been categorised and are shown in figure 17 below.

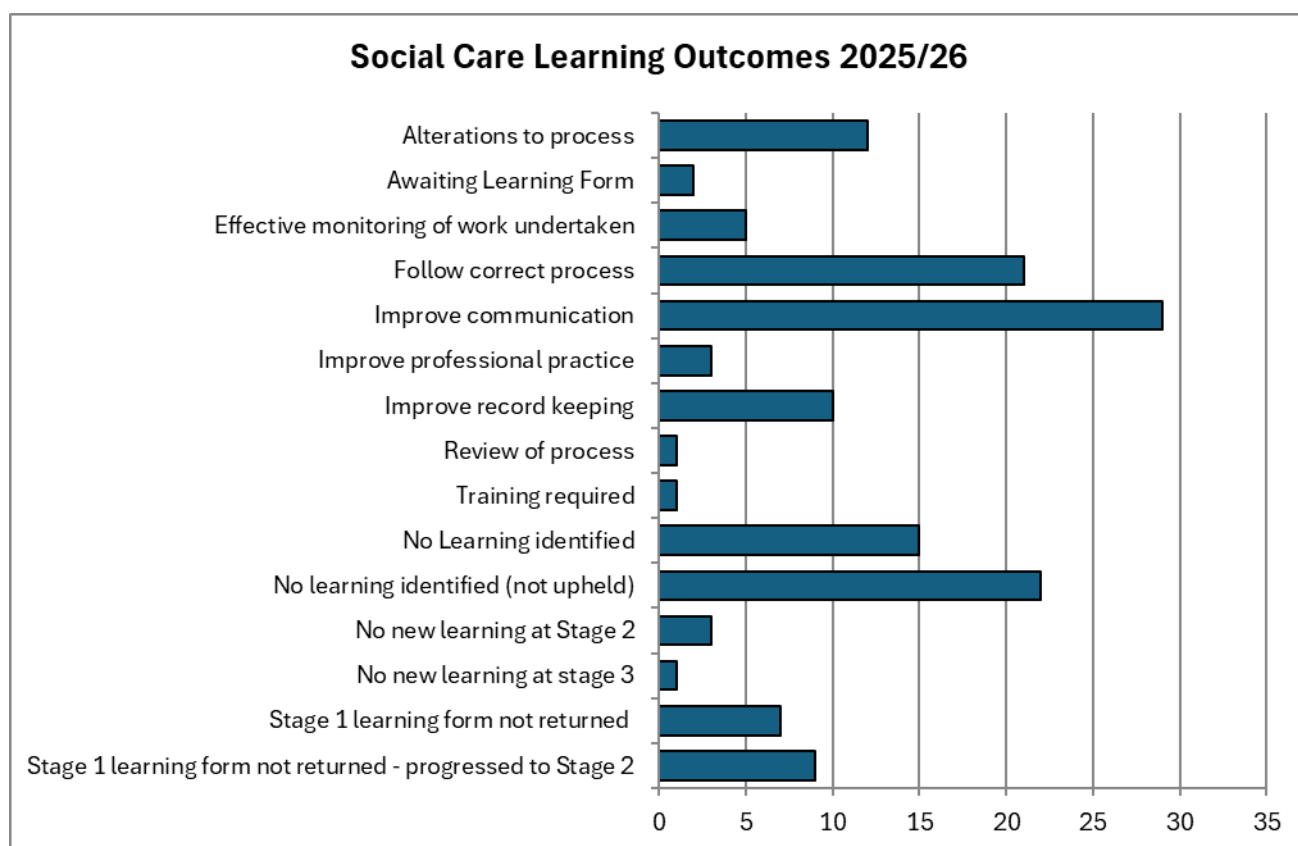


Fig 17

- 21.1.3 As shown above in figure 17, the main area highlighted for improvement has been to improve communication. Other areas highlighted for improvement are to follow the correct process, make alterations to processes and to improve record keeping.
- 21.1.4 All learning issues highlighted either already have or will be addressed efficiently and mapped by the Complaints Team, through to implementation.
- 21.1.5 Some examples of the types of learning that have been identified and put into place and used to inform service improvements are demonstrated below:
- *Following a complaint about a Social Worker's interaction with a family, learning issues highlighted were:*
 - It is important that people who wish to make an anonymous referral are informed right from the start, that the information contained in their referral may make them identifiable. Individuals to be immediately made aware of the potential implications in raising certain types of concerns.
 - Learning for the individual worker that social workers should not visit children without consent of parents, unless the children would be at significant risk otherwise.
 - Ensure that assessments are repeated only when absolutely necessary, preferring to use exiting information, to avoid families having to repeat their information and wait for an outcome.

- *Following complaints about the lack of communication from social work teams, learning issues highlighted were:*

- Any neurodiversity or learning needs must be taken into consideration when communicating with parents and carers.
- LCS records need to be up to date, and information located correctly within the system. Revise/reissue expectations in respect of LCS with all staff.
- Social worker will ensure he respond to non-urgent emails within 5 working days and return phone calls within 24 hours.

- *Following complaints about the completion of assessments, the learning issues highlighted were:*

- Ongoing supervisions to ensure that any barriers or changes to family time with parents are discussed and also communicated by the social worker with parents and that this is clearly recorded.
- A copy of the updated assessment is sent to parents for their information and deliberation.
- The young person's wishes and views should be clearly recorded about family time with parents by the allocated social worker when gained regularly.

21.1.6 Learning from complaints is discussed by investigating managers with both individuals (where appropriate) and their teams and is also shared with the relevant service area by heads of service through wider management meetings, so that all areas of Children's Services can learn from the issues arising.

Where applicable, these issues are also shared with the Workforce Development Team in order that, where necessary, they can be mapped and addressed through staff training and supervision.

21.1.7 In 2026/27, the Complaints Team will produce a separate learning report for implemented learning which will be circulated to the assistant directors, heads of service and managers listing the learning under each team. This will provide an overview of all learning for Children's Social Care Services for which, after a period of implementation, team managers will be required to highlight the difference the learning has made in practice.

21.2 Learning from complaints for Learning & Achievement

21.2.1 During 2025/26 the Complaints Team has also sent learning forms to the investigating managers in Learning & Achievement for each complaint responded to.

There were 4 SEND learning forms outstanding at the end of 2024/25 which have all now been returned during 2025/26. 103 new learning forms were sent to SEND managers in 2025/26 and by the end of this reporting period 106 (99%) had been completed and returned. The one outstanding form was issued for an investigation completed close to year end with managers not having had chance to complete and return them by 31st March 2026. In addition, 2 learning forms were outstanding at the end of 2024/25 for other areas of Learning & Achievement, all of which have now been returned. 24 new forms were sent to other areas of Learning & Achievement during 2025/26 and at the end of the reporting period, 25 (99%) had been completed and returned. The one outstanding form was issued for an investigation completed close to year end with managers not having had chance to complete and return them by 31st March 2026.

The Complaints Team will continue to follow up the outstanding forms until all of them have been returned and any learning is highlighted and implemented.

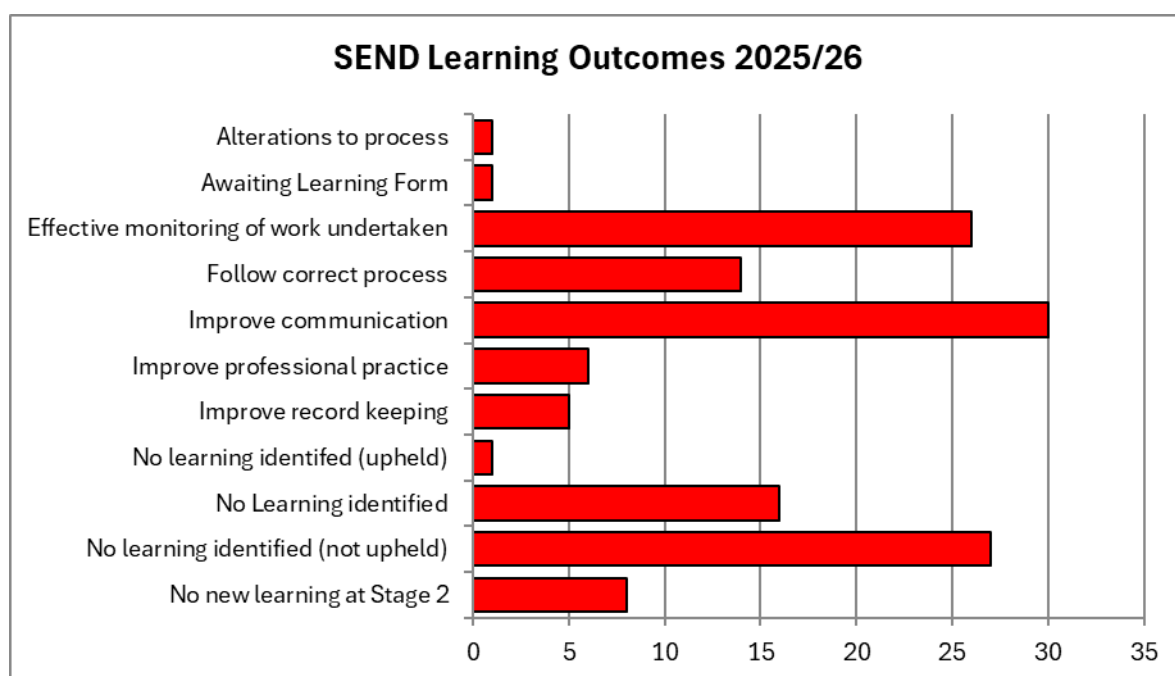


Fig 18

21.2.2 As shown above, the main areas highlighted for improvement were to improve communication, followed by effective monitoring of work undertaken and follow the correct process. All learning issues highlighted by investigating managers are tracked by the Complaints Team until implementation is confirmed.

21.2.3 Some examples of the types of learning that have been identified and put into place and hence used to inform service improvements are demonstrated below:

- *Following a complaint about the provision in an EHCP, the learning highlighted was:*
 - EHCP Officers to ensure provision is in place. If it raised by a young person or parent that provision is not in place this must be investigated and provision implemented in a timely manner.

- When working on an EOTIC/S case make sure all provision in Section F is being delivered through the package of education.
- Keep in contact with parent to keep them updated on progress if you are continuing to work on provision being put in place.
- *Following a complaint about the delay in completing an EHCP, the learning highlighted was:*
 - Ensure robust procedures are in place for the monitoring of annual review paperwork being returned to the Local Authority. The caseworker hub now has a robust system in place to track and monitor annual reviews. Notifying settings of annual reviews due in advance and following up with settings when the annual review has been held but the LA have not received the paperwork.
 - EHCP Officers to be made aware of LA expectation to ensure actions are taken promptly when made aware of a providers services finishing and the provision still be required by the young person. Referral for provider to be made and sent for authorisation. Follow up with Commissioning for updates on progress and keep parent updated.
 - Officers to ensure all provisions in Section F to be implemented. If this requires an external provider such as SALT and/or OT this must arranged as soon as possible to avoid gaps in provision being delivered.

22. Compliments for Children's Services

- 22.1 112 compliments were received for Children's Services during 2025/26. This is a slight decrease compared with the 113 received in 2024/25 but should be considered in line with a decrease of 12% in service users. These included 54 professional and 58 service user compliments as shown in figure 19 below:

Social Work Team	Professional	Service User	Grand Total
Care Experienced Team	5	2	7
Child We Care For Team	6	2	8
Children with Disabilities Team		1	1
Children's Assessment Team	2	1	3
Early Help		2	2
Exploitation and Missing Team	6	2	8
MASH Team	1	1	2
Safeguarding and Support - Team 1	7	1	8
Safeguarding and Support - Team 2	5	1	6
Safeguarding and Support - Team 4	1		1
Youth Offending Team	4	1	5
Grand Total	37	14	51

Learning & Achievement Service	Professional	Service User	Grand Total
Children's Public Health	2		2
Education Improvement Team	1	1	2
E-HCP Team	10	28	38
E-H Inclusion Team		1	1
Family Support Service	3	7	10
Planning, Performance & Commissioning	1		1
School Transport		4	4
SISS Team		3	3
Grand Total	17	44	61

Fig 19

22.3 Below are some examples of compliments received in the year:

22.2.1 Service User compliments

Care Experienced Team

Hi my name is XX I'm 25 now and have had YY as my PA since I was 17 I just wanted to say that she has really impacted my life. I am such a better person, and she has helped me learn coping mechanisms deal with finances and cope with my mental health lot better throughout my life. YY is honestly the most professional helpful and caring PA. I cannot thank her enough. She is honestly amazing. I am sad to lose her, but I know she will help young people throughout her career. She changes my life for the better. Thank you so much YY, you were simply the best!

Safeguarding & Family Support Team 1

Thank you for everything, although no one wants social services you have made it not so scary and bad, you've been supportive and understanding, you have reassured me and made it a whole lot easier. Thank you so much and I hope to see you soon.

Safeguarding & Family Support Team 2

I don't normally do things like this however I feel compelled to email you to let you know how wonderful caring and really special BB is. BB goes above and beyond of what is expected of her in her role as XX and YY's social worker. The journey as a foster carer to these beautiful boys has been made so much easier working alongside BB. She deserves so much recognition; these children and any others she may work with are always at the forefront of BB's mind. I value BB so much, both me and ZZ cannot speak any more highly of her.

Children's Assessment Team

"We as a family just wanted to email you to say she is a credit to Solihull Children's Services. She is amazing, she is non-judgmental, she listens, and she acts. She was amazing with myself and my husband and also our three children who actually looked forward to seeing her when she came around. She goes above and beyond."

Children with Disabilities Team

XX's mother explained about previous negative experience with social workers and the effect of this on her and her son.

She was though full of praise for the social worker's approach and how she worked to engage with XX and herself in the light of the above and to rebuild a positive working relationship between social care and her family.

Early Help

I wanted to take a moment to share my sincere appreciation for the amazing support I've received. She has been incredibly helpful, understanding, and truly dedicated in her role as a family support worker.

Child We Care For Team

I've been meaning to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for all the incredible work you've done with us over the past year. I honestly can't find the words to fully describe the freedom you've helped unlock for P. You've given her not just the ability to move forward, but also the tools to truly process everything she's experienced—so she can thrive and grow in the best possible way. It's hard to imagine where she'd be without your support, guidance, and unwavering belief in her. If only every child could have a Sam when they first enter the care system—your approach is truly extraordinary. We feel incredibly lucky to have had you in her life, and while we're sad that our time together has come to an end, we're beyond thankful for the positive impact you've made. Thank you for everything.

EHCP Team

"... she is a total breathe of fresh air! She is so knowledgeable, dedicated and supportive. She is proactive, honest and forthright. For the first time during this process, I feel supported, listened to and positive that someone is on my son's side. She has shown to be genuine and I know I will get an honest, knowledgeable answer. I appreciate all the support she has given me and continues to provide.

SISS Team

I cannot begin to say thank you for everything you have done for us - words just aren't enough! The support you have given XX is nothing short of life changing and I genuinely couldn't have gotten through this last 18 months or so without you. We're going to miss you so very much. Keep being you - keep being the voice for those kids who can't use their own. You truly are amazing."

22.2.2 Professional compliments

Care Experienced Team

A manager left a compliment after reading feedback about a team member stating "you're an amazing social worker and an asset to our service. All your young people are very lucky to have such a caring and passionate social worker :-)"

Safeguarding & Support Team 1

A team manager left a glowing compliment for a member of the team stating "So proud of her, she is currently in court beaming and proud as a peacock (as she should be) because the child's solicitor has stated in the courtroom that her Parent Assess 'could not be challenged has no holes in it'- well done so proud of you!"

Children's Assessment Team

'The one-to-one support provided by them has been exceptional. She has built a strong and trusting relationship with the family and despite the challenges they are

facing, she has remained consistently supportive in her work with them. Their empathy and compassion are a credit to them both and to SMBC.'

Exploitation & Missing Team

CC has persistently, consistently and creatively sought to engage with XX. XX has experienced considerable violence and the related trauma. CC has developed a trusted adult with XX to the point where she has felt comfortable to disclose about previously unknown to us child exploitation, then relayed this to the appropriate professionals and is now continuing to work with them to safeguard and engage with XX. She is then a vital part of the professional network, professional meetings, the wraparound support and the interventions for XX.

Child We Care For Team

A lovely compliment from staff member stating "just wanted to reach out and pass on my thanks for the way, him and his team have gone above and beyond to make the arrangements for her moving into his service today happen. She spent time with the staff yesterday as part of the transition plan and matching and this went really well. I can't thank the team enough! It's great to be part of such a child focused and passionate team. I'm looking forward to working closely with the service to support many more of our children in the coming months."

Youth Offending Team

Staff member left compliment stating "I wanted to take a moment to highlight the outstanding support provided and management provided by her over my last two duties with her. I think she is incredibly hard-working, exceptionally meticulous and great at communicating. Just wanted to send a song of praise — her dedication, reliability, and leadership stand out and I wanted to take a moment to recognise her. I really appreciate her support and wanted to ensure that her efforts did not go unnoticed."

EHCP Team

Compliment from staff member explaining "Could you please pass onto your manager how impressed I am as a SENDCO with your support and how proactive you are. I appreciate how hard you work and think this should be recognised."

- 22.3 Learning from compliments, as well as complaints is something that staff in Children's Services can use in order to share good practice and highlight what has worked well for those staff involved. This can then be considered and used appropriately by other Children's Services staff to enhance service provision.

23. Maintaining high standards in Children's complaints processing

- 23.1 During 2025/26, the Complaints Team have continued to work hard to ensure that any improvements made to the administration of complaints in previous years are maintained and where appropriate, improved upon and have continued to do all that they can to ensure that the processing of Children's Services complaints is of the highest standard.
- 23.2 Detailed conversations with prospective complainants both by telephone and e-mail and which continue, where required, throughout the complaint, ensure that customers feel listened to and reassured that their concerns will be dealt with. This approach is consistent with the report from the LGSCO entitled "Running a

complaints system,” which highlights that “Features of an effective complaints procedure includes early direct contact with the person making the complaint and continued contact through the complaints process.”

- 23.3 A number of concerns have been resolved outside of the formal complaints process with the agreement of the complainant. The Complaints Team have managed 96 such cases for Children's Services in 2025/26, helping to ensure that concerns are resolved as quickly as possible; whilst all but 79 of the 195 complaints investigated during 2025/26 have been resolved at Stage 1 of either the Statutory or Corporate process. This is an indication that high standards and continued customer liaison have a positive impact on the quality of responses provided to complainants, aided significantly by the quality checking process provided by the Complaints Team. This has also had a positive impact on the number of requests by complainants to progress to the next stage in the complaints process.
- 23.4 When it is apparent to complainants that their complaint has been taken seriously and thoroughly investigated, with apologies made where appropriate and where the response is sufficiently thorough for them to understand how the outcome has been reached and that Children's Services has taken any appropriate learning from the complaint; then it is much more likely that complainants will be satisfied with the response they have received and less likely to request an escalation of their complaint.
- 23.5 Throughout complaint investigations, the Complaints Team have maintained positive relationships with existing Children's Services staff and also always aim to build new and positive relationships with staff taking up new positions in the Children's Services & Skills Directorate.
- 23.6 The efficient records management system used by the Complaints Team to record complaint details ensures that any member of the Complaints Team can, at any time, establish the current status of a complaint along with the detail of any correspondence that has taken place in relation to that complaint.
- 23.8 Customer feedback is sought following each complaint via an on-line questionnaire (also available on request in printed format) which has been developed and published on the Smart Survey website. Complainants/their representatives are invited to feedback their comments concerning their experience of the Complaints Procedure. This in turn, will feed into the learning and improvement process.

As part of this process the Council seeks to gather equality information from service users to help them check that we are treating people fairly and to identify any issues we might need to address.

- 23.9 During 2025/26 the Complaints Team received the following feedback:

23.9.1 Feedback from Complainants

- *Dear XX, thank you for your kind consideration and help*
- *“... everything has been explained clearly to me in the letter and they sent it in time. Thank you.”*

- *I particularly appreciated the opportunity to discuss my concerns and the exact nature of my complaint with the lady who contacted me by telephone. She was most empathetic and objective. After that I felt quite comfortable that the issues raised were understood and would be dealt with in an appropriate and professional manner.*
- *The complaint was handled very professionally and my concerns were listened to and acknowledged and I received a reply and communication about the complaint within the time scale advised.*
- *Your summary of my complaint is exemplary. Thank you for your concise and accurate representation. I appreciate the time you've taken to look into this as well as the evidence submitted.*

23.9.2 Feedback from professionals

- *CLT spoke very highly of the Complaints Team's work and acknowledged the pressures that you have been working under in relation to Children's and Adults Complaints and was keen to find ways to support you in any way possible. They commended XX for attending meetings with them with a cheerful demeanour in spite of all these challenges.*
- *Thanks XX, you are a superstar 😊*
- *... As in previous cases, your minutes are by far the best we have seen from any of the LA's and Trusts I have done Stage 3's with. Having the confidence that you will capture the conversations accurately means I can concentrate on chairing the meetings.*
- *Thank you so much for your assistance it made it so much easier to complete*

24. Reporting on Complaints

- 24.1 The reporting process to senior management is an important part of the complaints process in Solihull. This is essential if the issues raised in complaints and the learning from them, is to have a positive impact on practice. Any improvements which are identified, however minor, are built into the process which assists senior staff to easily identify whether there is a common issue being raised by complainants, so that it can be reviewed and dealt with appropriately, in order to improve the service where required and prevent further complaints.
- 24.2 The Respond database used for recording complaints is an essential tool when providing accurate performance reporting and has allowed the Complaints Team to continue to provide in-depth reporting to management at all levels, including numbers of complaints received under each process (at which stage and for which teams), issue type and numbers and investigation timescales, along with outcomes and the number of learning forms that have been distributed, completed and returned and whether the learning has been implemented. The benefits of this have been outlined throughout this report.
- 24.3 Detailed reports for heads of service, the Senior Leadership teams and the Directorate Leadership Team are produced on time and at regular intervals (both

monthly and quarterly). These highlight areas needing attention and have been an integral part of the complaints service provided by the Complaints Team in 2025/26.

Accurate recording on the Respond database also enables one-off reports to be produced efficiently and as requested by managers, where complaint processing and monitoring suggests that there are issues that need attention in specific areas of Children's Services.

- 24.4 Heads of service and directors receive monthly reports of live complaints, enabling them to track performance against timescales and intervene if there is a risk that a complaint will not be dealt with within the desired time limit.
- 24.5 Quarterly complaints reports, detailing activity and performance, categories of complaint and learning and outcomes by service area and team, highlight any emerging trends. This ensures that managers can identify trends and again intervene early if a problem is highlighted.
- 24.6 Ombudsman activity / responses are also reported to CLT (Corporate Leadership Team) on a half-yearly basis and any new complaints referred from the LGSCO are reported immediately to the Director / appropriate Assistant Director. Any adverse outcomes are notified to the Chief Executive as they are received.

The Link Officer role is situated within the Children's & Adults Complaints Team and hence the team have a role in the collation of information and oversight of Council wide Ombudsman responses to ensure that responses to the Ombudsman are within the timescale requested by the Ombudsman.

25 Looking ahead to 2026/27

- 25.1 In 2026/27, ongoing training sessions will be organised for appropriate staff who are required to respond to complaints and who are new to Solihull. In addition, one-to-one training is always available to investigating managers and the Complaints Team are always happy to assist and provide advice and guidance to managers on an on-going basis.

26 Conclusion

- 26.1 During 2025/26, the Complaints Team have continued to work closely with Children's Services staff to try to ensure that as many responses as possible meet the appropriate timescales and that complaint responses are of a high quality. The quality of responses at Stage 1 has remained high, as evidenced by the fact that requests for Stage 2 investigations remained low.
- 26.2 The quality of stage 1 complaint responses has continued to have a positive impact on the requests for escalation and hence the numbers of complaints progressing to investigation by the LGSCO.
- 26.3 Detailed and quality reporting to senior management has continued with the Complaints Team providing a detailed breakdown of the issues complained about, so that learning and subsequent actions taken; can be even more focussed and hence have a bigger impact on service improvement.

- 26.4 The numbers of learning forms being returned in 2025/26 has remained high. Learning data from 2025/26 will be formatted into spreadsheets and distributed to senior staff and the appropriate team managers, highlighting learning and implementation dates, both on a service wide and team-by-team basis, so that managers can comment on the differences that learning has made to practice. The evidence is then collated by the Complaints Team, and this is available to inform service improvement.
- 26.5 During 2026/27, as in previous years, the Complaints Team will continue to review its practice in accordance with feedback from both complainants and Children's Services and will then work with managers and staff to make any changes that are essential, to enhance overall performance.

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