

# Customer Feedback Annual Report

## Children's Services

### 2024/25

Feedback and Insight Team, Shropshire Council  
June 2025



# 1. Introduction

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The report covers Children's Services formal feedback and representations for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The report details the comments, compliments and complaints reported to, and formally recorded by Shropshire Council's Feedback and Insight Team. The annual report is designed as a public document, and in addition to annual reporting, regular internal reporting is carried out. This regular monitoring of formal feedback enables any issues to be addressed early and focuses attention on ongoing improvement.

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

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

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

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

- Speak to a member of staff
- Telephone Customer Services
- Email: [customerfeedback@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerfeedback@shropshire.gov.uk)
- Fill in the form on the Council's website: <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/feedback>

## Definitions

**Complaint:** A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals. Family members and advocates may make a complaint on behalf of one of our customers. We will ask for consent to ensure that the complaint is not being made against the customer's wishes.

**Service request:** A request that the organisation provides or improves a service, fixes a problem or reconsiders a decision.

**Compliment:** Many people get in touch with a compliment when the information or support they have received has exceeded their expectations. It is helpful to learn when a service has been provided well or when a member of staff has done a great job. We record unsolicited compliments (we don't formally record positive feedback generated through feedback forms or between staff).

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

### Feedback Received

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

**Telephone:** 0345 678 9000

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

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

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



### Acknowledgment

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



### STAGE 1

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



### STAGE 2 - Review

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

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



### STAGE 3 - Panel

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



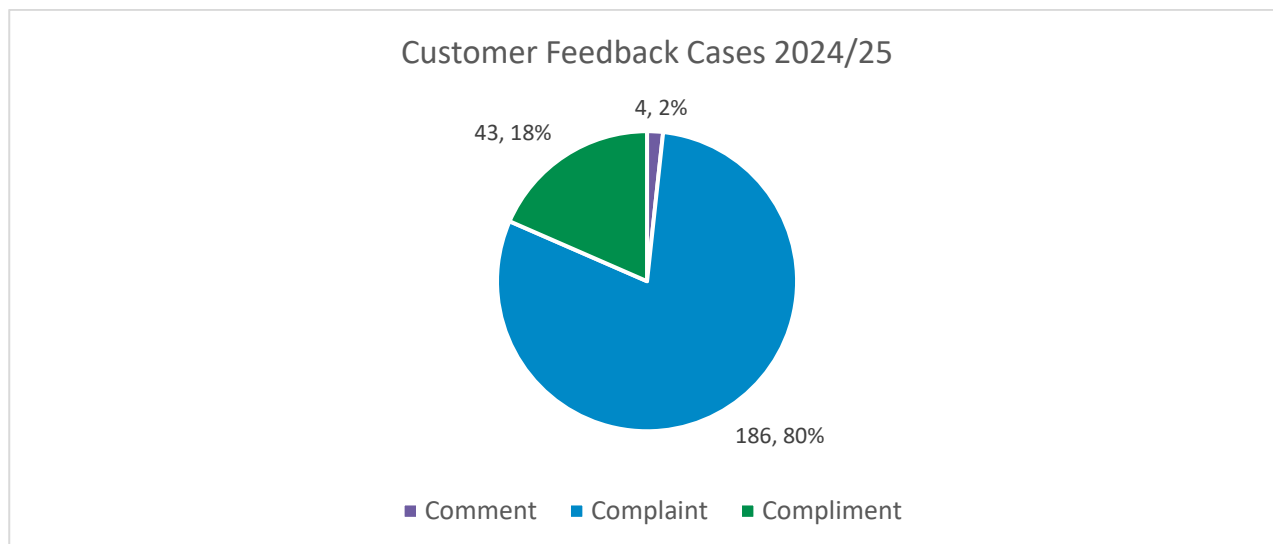
**Ombudsman** If a complaint cannot be resolved locally it can be investigated by the Ombudsman. The Council has a timescale of 28 calendar days to provide a response to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO). Responses are often complex, lengthy and require a large volume of appendices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

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

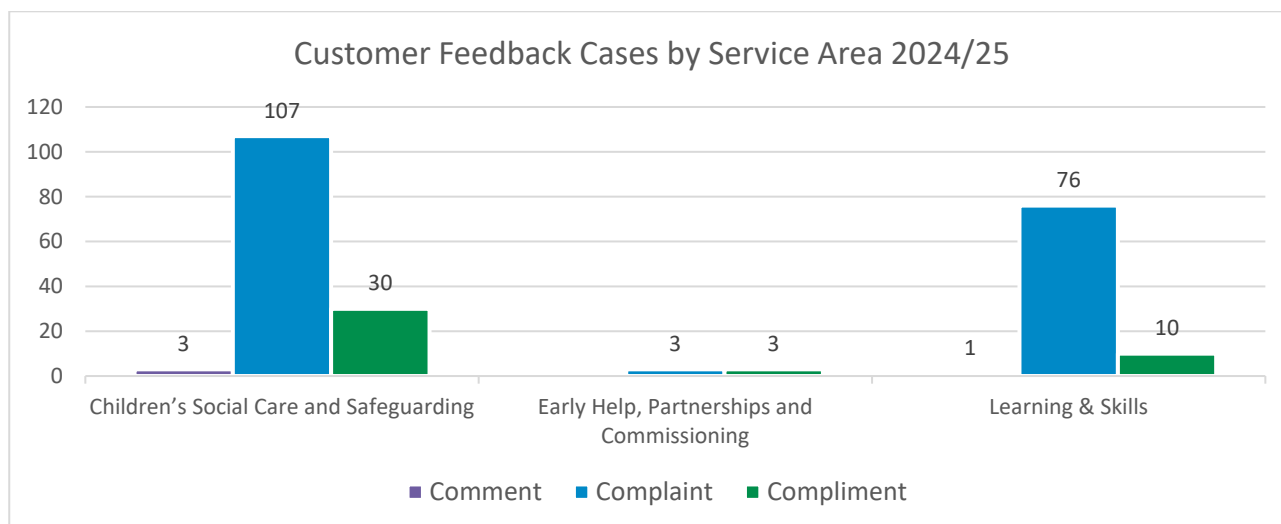
### 3. Customer Feedback 2024/25

In 2024/25 there were 233 cases of feedback recorded for Children’s Services. There were:

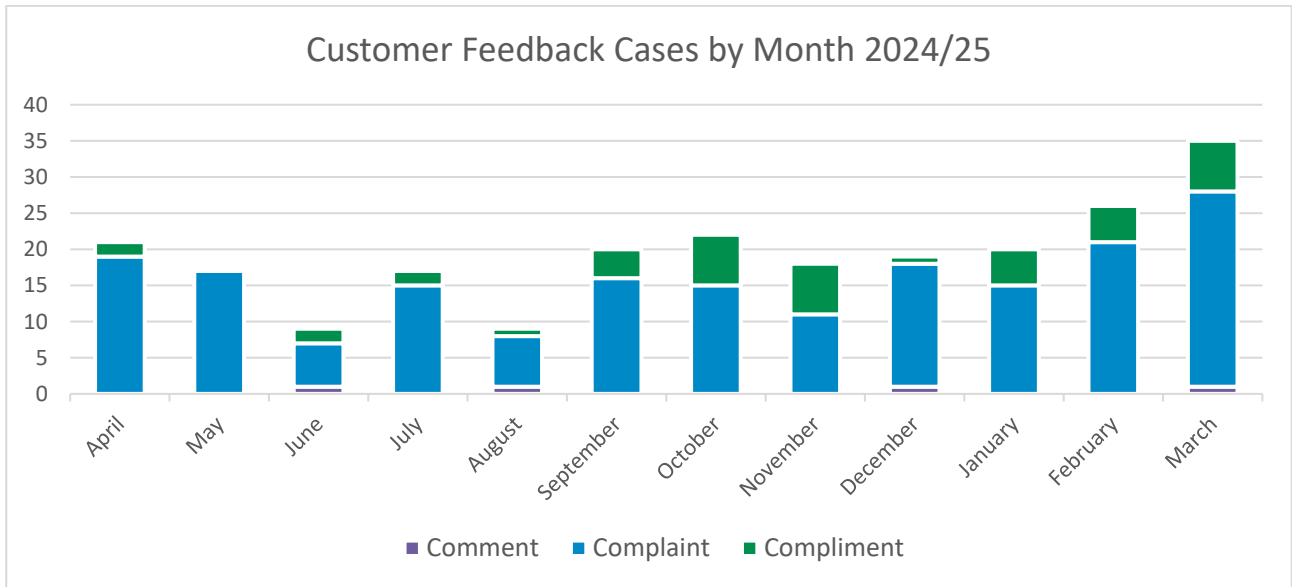
- 43 compliments
- 4 comments or other types of enquiry
- 186 complaint cases



Shropshire Council undertook a significant organisational restructure towards the end of the financial year. It should be noted that the data within this report reflects the structures that were in place in 2024/25 and not the current organisational structures. The chart below illustrates how feedback was spread across the service areas. The chart shows that children’s social care and safeguarding, as the largest area of service provision, receives more feedback.



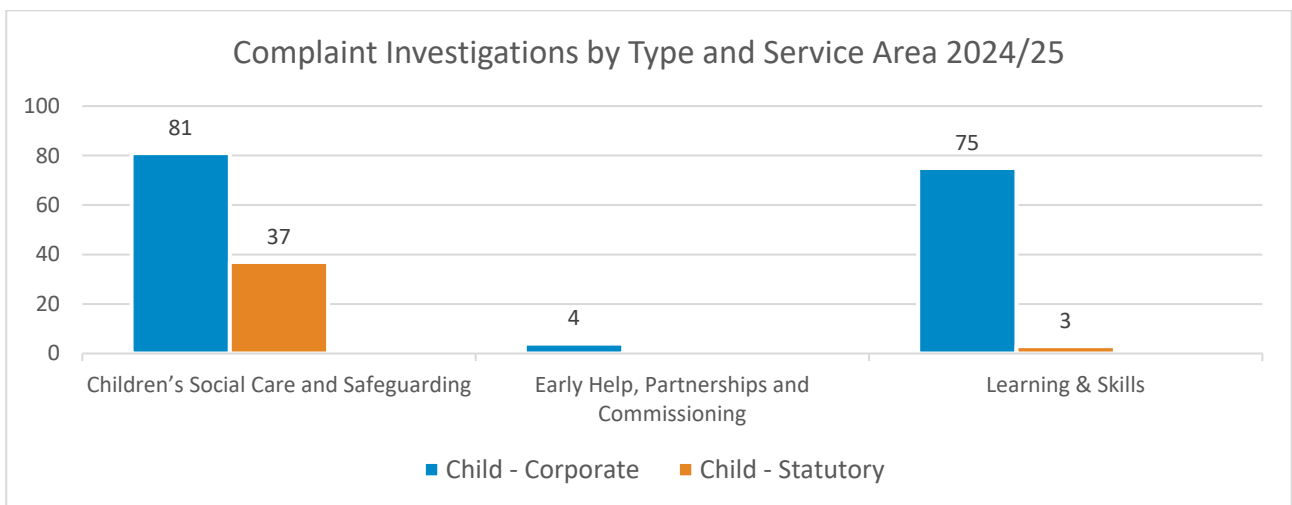
The average number of customer feedback responses recorded per month during 2024/25 was 19.4 (the average was 12 last year showing an increase). February and March saw higher than average cases of feedback, a very different pattern to the year before because the overall pattern appears to be towards an increase. It will be important to review data for 2025/26 to see if the upward trend continues. June and August were the months with the least feedback. Monthly feedback volumes were significantly greater in quarter 4 (quarter 4 is often the quarter with the greatest volumes of feedback but the increase was 72% more than quarter 1).



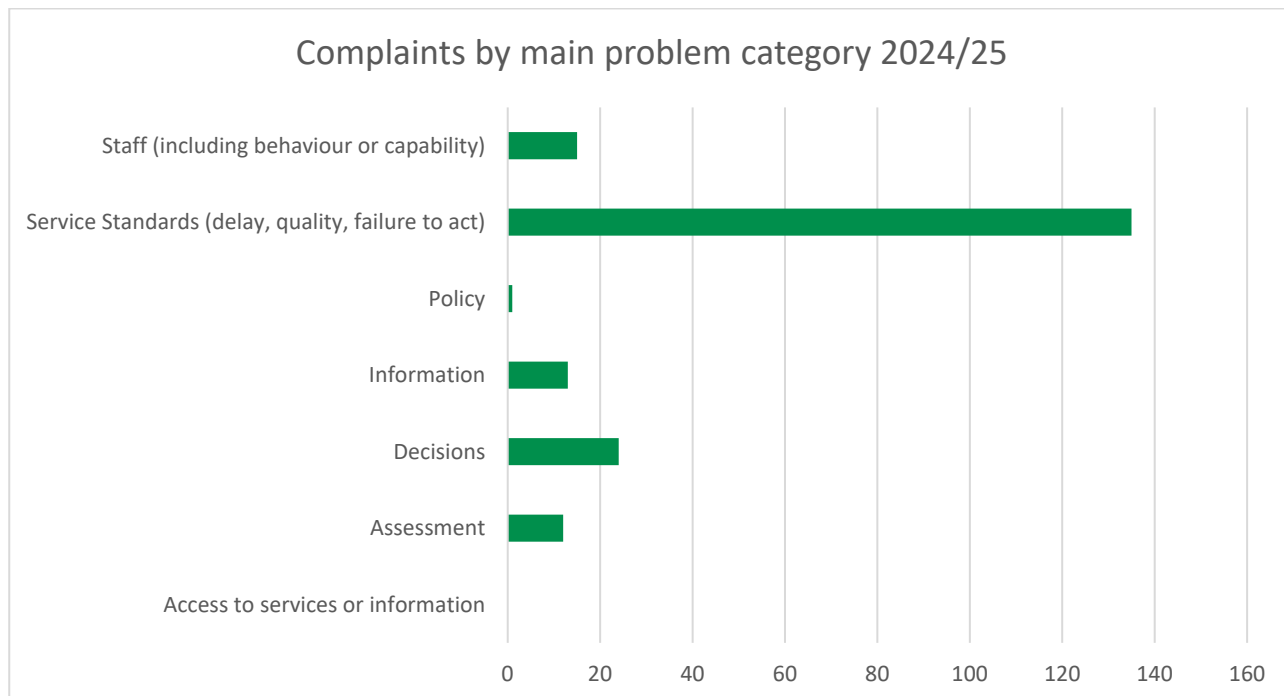
Most customer feedback recorded takes the form of complaints rather than comments or compliments (this may be due to recording practice, with staff members less likely to more formally report a compliment, although reporting of compliments has increased since the previous year). Of all the customer feedback recorded, 80% of cases were complaints.

Complaints are considered in more detail at the investigation stage and the data we use to consider performance is based on information captured within complaint investigations. There were 186 complaint cases and 242 complaint investigations (a small number of complaints were withdrawn or closed prior to investigation and other cases covered multiple teams/services and multiple stages of the process, so resulted in more than one investigation).

Of the 242 complaint investigations carried out within the year, 200 were carried out within Children's Services. 160 were corporate (80% of all complaints investigations) and 40 were statutory complaints (20%). 193 were stage 1 complaints. It should be noted that these totals differ very slightly from the council wide corporate annual report (due to differences in the way this is reported and the work of services outside of Children's Services). The process on page 3 highlights the statutory complaints process and timescales for children's services. 40 complaints relating to the support provided to children were carried out by services located outside of Children's Services (including special educational transport, customer services, the Feedback and Insight Team and Adult Services).



The main problem category for complaints received during 2024/25 were concerns relating to service standards, this includes sub-categories covering poor quality of work/service, failure to provide a service/take action, poor quality of work/service, delays, communication (failure/poor), and concerns over inappropriate/ incorrect action. There weren't any complaints related to access to services and only one complaint about policy/procedures. This suggests good performance in these areas.

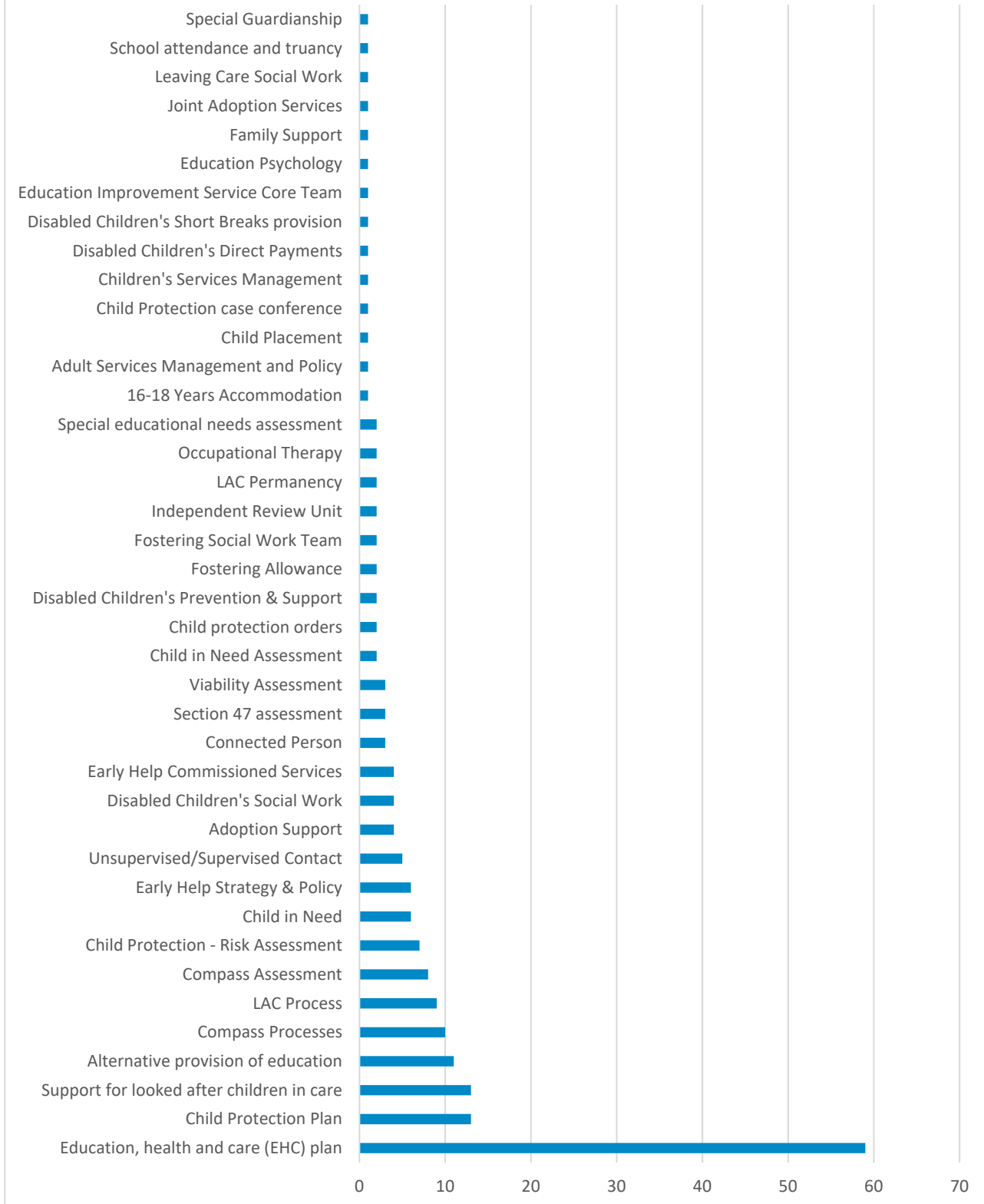


In addition to 'problem category' recording, work also takes place to try and determine themes within complaints. These themes can support proactive work to address concerns early and try to minimise numbers of complaints on similar topics. There are a large number of different themes due to the huge range of different services offered by Children's Services. The chart provided on the next page displays the themes recorded for Children's Services complaints in 2024/25 with more common themes including Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans, Child Protection Plans, support for looked after children in care, alternative provision of education, Compass processes, LAC process and Compass Assessment.

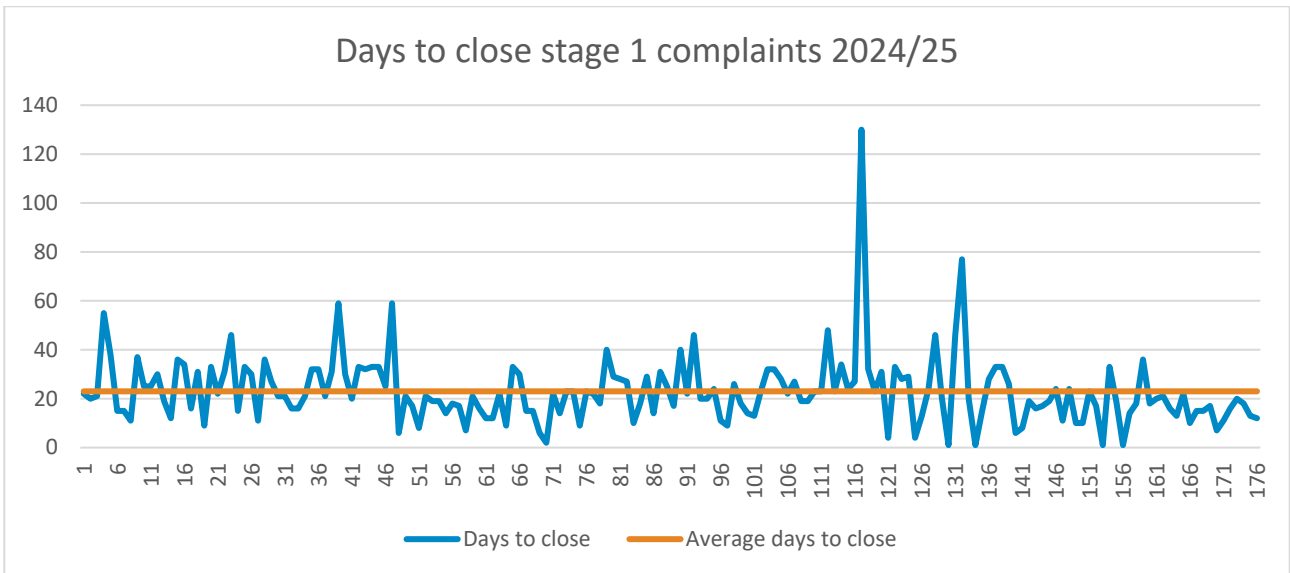
The data highlights that there are repeat complainants making regular complaints and remaining in touch with Shropshire Council over long periods of time. There can be challenges managing these cases when customers have received a response but remain persistent on the same/similar issues. 32 of the complaints were made by customers with more than one complaint within the year at stage 1. 3 of the complainants requested 3 or more complaint investigations during the year.

Over the last 12 months there have been more examples of inappropriate behaviour/language used by complainants including behaviours designed to intimidate those council staff working to try to address complaints within service areas and complaint officers within the Feedback and Insight Team. This issue is also considered within the corporate annual report, but it is an important feature within the provision of the complaints processes and system that needs to be acknowledged and managed.

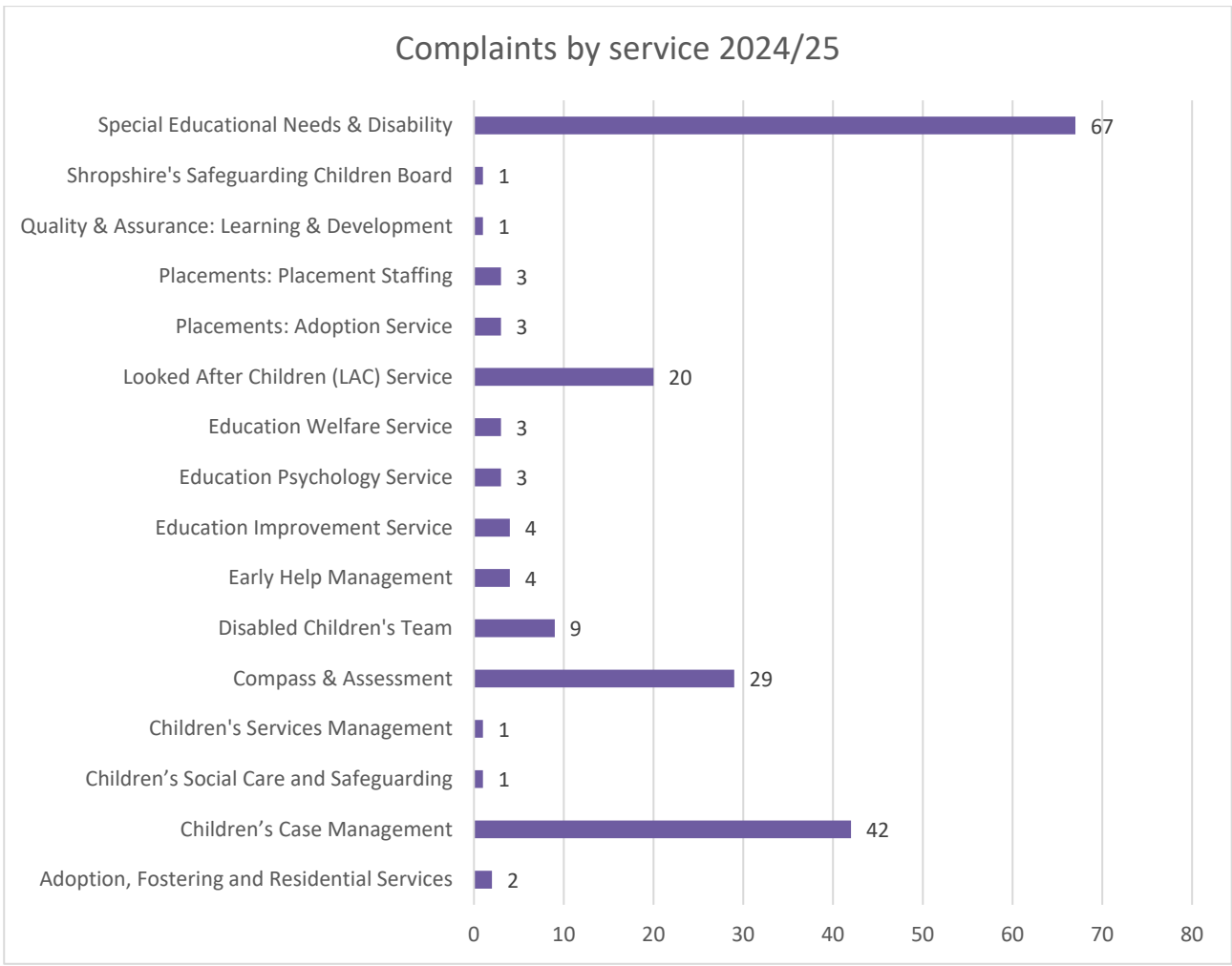
## Complaints by theme 2024/25



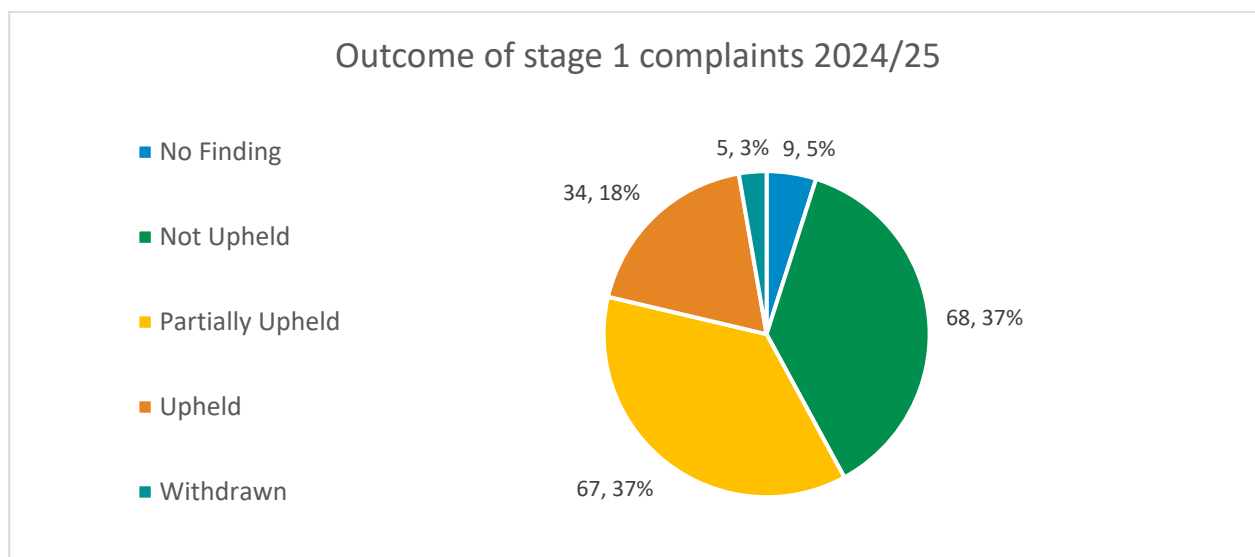
During 2024/25 Children's Services took an average of 23 days to close corporate stage 1 complaints (Shropshire Council's current timescale is 30 working days). Statutory stage 1 complaints took an average of 23 days to close suggesting that too many cases extended beyond the initial 10 working days timescale. Over the last year, days to close performance has been an area of focus within regular performance monitoring. Performance will continue to be monitored.



The analysis of complaints by team highlights that complaints are largely spread across teams (as are compliments) but some teams/ services (perhaps those with more complex services and policy) do see more complaints. In line with a nationally reported trend, Shropshire Council has seen an increase in complaints for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities services (SEND) (35% of the Children’s Services complaints in 2024/25). Children’s Case Management Teams, due to the nature of their work handled 42 of the complaints within the year. There have been increases in complaints for Compass and Assessment and the Looked After Children’s Service.



In addition to numbers of cases and time to respond, it is very important to consider the outcome of the complaints made. Of the 183 stage 1 complaint investigations closed within the year 18.6% were upheld, 36.6% were partially upheld and 37.2% were not upheld. Other complaints were withdrawn or resulted in no finding.



Shropshire Council's data shows that during 2024/25 there were 12 complaints relating to looked after children. During the year none of the complaints were made by children themselves but some worked closely with an advocate or other responsible adult to make a complaint.

In addition to understanding the outcome of stage 1 complaints it is important to consider how many complaints progress beyond stage 1. During 2024/25, 41 complaint cases progressed beyond stage 1 to stage 2 and stage 3. 16 were considered by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. More cases are progressing beyond stage 1 compared to the previous year.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's report for 2024/25 considers complaints referred to the Ombudsman within the year (so this will include complaints referred to Shropshire Council in the previous year). The Ombudsman considered 79 cases and assessed/decided on 31, 15 were investigated in full. Of the total 79, 16 were for Education and Children's Services. Of those, 4 were upheld, 1 was not upheld, 5 were closed after initial enquiries, 1 was incomplete/invalid and 5 were referred back to Shropshire Council for local resolution.

## 4. Annual Comparisons

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
<p><b>Number of compliments – no change</b></p> <p>In the last financial year (2024/25) Shropshire Council received 43 compliments for Children’s Services, more than the last 2 years and close to the 2021/22 total. This suggests that reporting issues have been resolved within the service area.</p>	25	25	43
	Performance has returned to usual levels after improved reporting to the Feedback and Insight Team for recording.		
<p><b>Number of complaint investigations – similar</b></p> <p>The number of complaint investigations for Children’s Services has remained fairly stable in 2024/25 between the figures reported for the last 2 years. The complexity of complaints has increased, with more requiring multiple investigations, either at stage 1 or because they progress beyond stage 1. Numbers will continue to be monitored regularly, through the year and through quarterly reporting.</p>	180	222	200
	Children’s Services have seen a decrease in the number of complaint investigations at stage 1 but increases at stage 2.		
<p><b>Days to close – partly improved</b></p> <p>The average number of working days Children’s Services took to respond to stage 1 complaints in 2024/25 was 23 working days (an improvement on last year). However, there are too many cases exceeding statutory timescales (statutory cases also took an average of 23 working days despite the 10-day initial timeframe (with a maximum 20 working days).</p>	33 working days	29 working days	23 Working days
	Days to close performance has improved since last year but monitoring will continue due to an increase in more complex cases.		
<p><b>Outcome of complaints – upheld rate reduced</b></p> <p>There has been some improvement with a reduction in the number of complaints fully upheld. However, this is a difficult performance measure because low levels of upheld cases may suggest a reluctance to identify fault and look for learning. Too many cases upheld suggests problems in service delivery. It should be noted that 37% were partially upheld, 37% were not upheld and others resulted in a withdrawal or no finding outcome.</p>	15%	33%	19%
	There has been a reduction in upheld complaints. This suggests some improvement although this is contradicted by the increase in stage 2 complaints.		
<p><b>Cases progressing beyond Stage 1 – Increased</b></p> <p>An increase in the complexity of complaints and increasing customer dissatisfaction has led to more complaints progressing beyond stage 1 of the statutory children’s and corporate complaints processes. It is essential that stage 2 cases are not generated due to a lack of stage 1 response. In addition, the Ombudsman reported that they considered 16 children’s and education services cases related to Shropshire Council in 2024/25. 4 of the cases were upheld.</p>	13	29	41
	The number of complaints progressing beyond stage 1 has increased significantly.		

## 5. Example Compliments

Shropshire Council's Children's Services received 43 compliments in 2024/25. Examples of the compliments recorded are shown below.

Compliment for a Compass Help and Support Team Social Worker: *"...I don't have enough words to thank him enough for his kindness and his positive support that he brings to every visit. My kids are always so comfortable and open when he is around. I would like to compliment his support and hard work for my family."*

Compliment for an Independent Review Officer: *"You are an amazing Independent Reviewing Officer, just wish there were more like you...."*

Compliment for a Stepping Stones Outreach Worker: *"[Name removed] has been amazing, without her support I would have failed. It just worked and that is why we worked together so long. It wasn't just about support around money and budgeting, it was support for me and someone to talk to. It was important to have someone to talk to. Communication with my son is so much better too, she helped to mediate and calm it down at the start."*

Compliment for a Disabled Children's Social Worker: *"We're writing at what to us feels like a really significant point in our lives. X turns 18 this month which means a move from the Disabled Children's Team to Adult Services. X is now at the most settled we have seen him, thanks in no small part to the efforts of the staff at the Disabled Children's Team, whether it has been those we have had direct contact with (Social Workers like [Names removed]) or indirectly people like the admin staff. To each of these people we want to say a very heartfelt thank you. We're glad to have had your support on this journey. We can't repay your hard work, compassion and kindness but we can acknowledge just what an important part of our lives you have been."*

Compliment for a Disabled Children's Social Worker: *"After a terrible experience with a previous social worker for my son, [name removed] was given our case and has managed to restore my faith. She has made massive progress, kept me informed every step of the way and I can tell it's not just a job she actually wants to help and cares. Thank you, I am sad to hear this is just a temporary position."*

Compliment for a Looked After Children Social Worker: *"We love [Name removed], we get on really well with her, she's like one of the family, we know she always does her best for us, she's always there at the end of the phone, she is passionate, she puts in the extra mile for us, she is always bringing us treats."*

Compliment for Targeted Youth Support: *"Thank you both for coming in over a number of weeks to work with some of our Year 9 male students. From the feedback received from students and staff involved the boys have enjoyed the "Below the Belt" workshops which aim to support young men whose education may be impacted for a range of reasons including attendance, risk taking or presenting with challenging attitudes and behaviours. I am pleased that the workshop is underpinned by a collaborative approach with school to provide these students with improved opportunities to remain engaged in education. From the student feedback I am aware the boys would like more opportunity to have this type of support in place in school. Once again, many thanks and I look forward to working with you further in school to promote positive opportunities for our young people."*



## 6. Example Complaints

Shropshire Council's Children's Services received 186 complaints and carried out 200 complaints investigations during 2024/25. Some example complaints have been included to illustrate the way complaints are received and the nature of the issues raised. All complaints have been anonymised and personal details removed. In some cases, wording may have been changed very slightly to ensure anonymity (with steps taken not to alter the point being made within the complaint). Please note that sometimes complaints arise due to a lack of understanding and not all of the examples below will have been upheld after investigation.

Complaint relating to SEND Support Services. "My son has been studying at [name of school removed] since November 2023. The headteacher has made repeated requests to the local authority for funding for therapy sessions for him. Unfortunately, to date she has not received any confirmation of a decision on this matter. The CAMHs consultant recommended either Art Therapy or Play Therapy. Since my son needs these therapy sessions to correct his behaviour in the school environment, I ask that this issue be considered as soon as possible. Please provide a response to my request within the timeframe established by law."

Complaint relating to SEND Support Services: "I am writing to make a formal complaint about my son's assessment for an EHCP. This has been going on for a very long period of time, and it's about time it was finalised. It is getting extremely frustrating now. Why is it still unresolved? Please accept this email as my formal complaint, and I wish this matter to be investigated."

Complaint relating to the Education Psychology Service: "I am writing as a parent to formally complain about Shropshire Local Authority's failure to provide the speech and language provisions outlined in the EHCP....The lack of communication and coordination between the LA and Speech and Language to enable the school to implement the sessions after training shows a disregard for the SEND code of practice. She is being denied essential therapy crucial for her development and wellbeing..."

"[Name removed] states that there has been a lack of contact with her regarding her children's welfare since they were removed from her care earlier in the year. She also states that she has been trying to arrange contact with them, but no one is updating her or arranging it."

Complaint relating to Compass and Assessment: "Despite a previous complaint about not hearing from the relevant department about a carers assessment I have not had an acknowledgement or a response to resolve the concerns. All I had was phone from targeted early help to ask a question."

Complaint relating to the Looked After Children (LAC) Permanency Team: "[Name removed] is writing to complain about a foster carer and the amount of contact he is given with his children despite now being clean from drugs and alcohol."

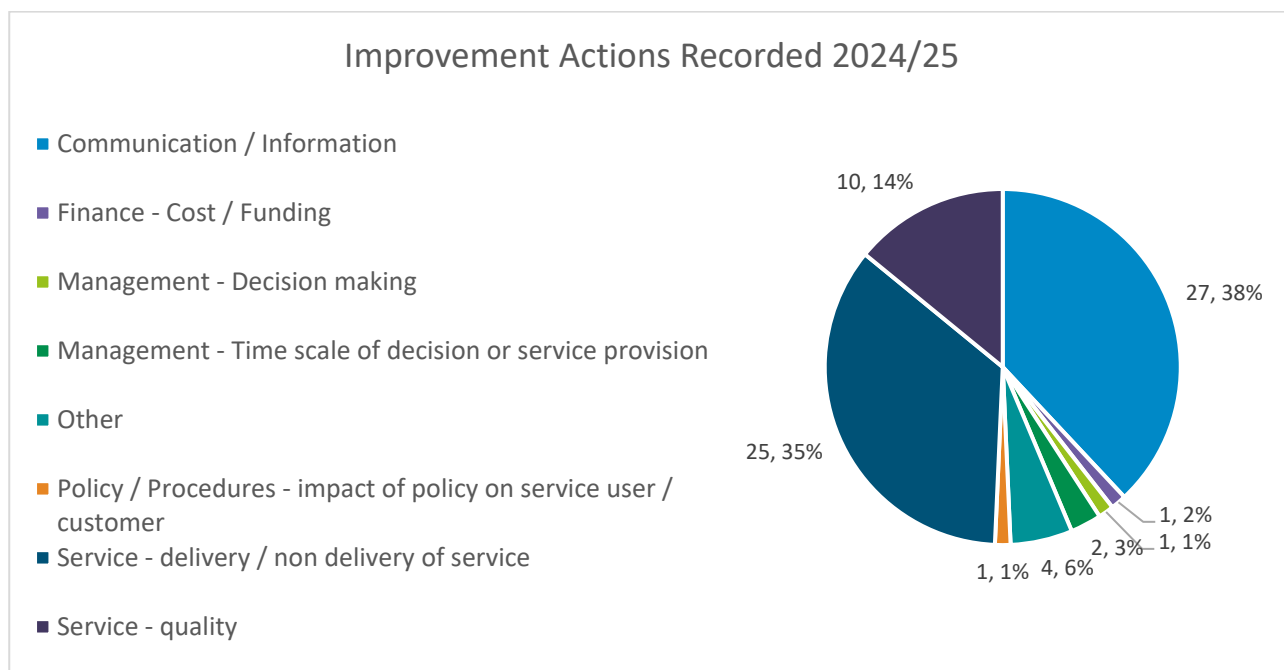


## 7. Learning and Actions

Shropshire Council's Children's Services recorded learning and/or actions against 71 cases (61%) of closed cases that were upheld or partially upheld in 2024/25. Learning and actions should be recorded when a case is upheld or partially upheld and some fault can be found. For many cases not upheld there will not be any learning or actions to implement.

Of the learning points recorded in the year, 43% relate to an apology, 43% related to learning concerning communication and/or the provision of additional information or explanation, and 7% changing or reviewing a policy or procedure. A small number also linked to action to enforce a decision.

There were more improvement actions recorded and the chart below highlights that a significant number of actions were linked to increased communication or the provision of information (38%). 35% related to actions to deliver a service, and 14% to improving service quality. The remaining actions were less common and included decision making, timescales and financial actions.



Complaints performance monitoring considers the main problem experienced, but this does not do justice to the complexity of issues that can be raised within a complaint and investigated. Reading complaints in detail highlights that although a complaint may relate to a specific service or concern about lack of a service, there may be other issues such as lack of communication, the way someone felt, or perception of someone's attitude towards them.

## 8. Example Learning and Actions

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

Changes in funding of transport arrangements has made it difficult for a mother to see her son. To address this the social worker will ensure provision of a travel ticket prior to travel to prevent any further family time needing to be cancelled. An apology was offered because the ticket was not provided prior to the contact taking place.

Following a complaint relating to the conduct of a social worker, a new social worker has been put in place, but lessons have been learnt from the practice of the previous social worker and the need for management and oversight. Actions included communication improvements and improved clarity of information provided.

Following a complaint about deductions from Special Guardianship Payments (SGP) Shropshire Council were already reviewing the SGO allowance policy and will be making changes. The proposal is that child benefit is no longer deducted from an allowance while a special guardian is also in receipt of means tested, income related benefits.

Following a complaint relating to a social worker the complaint investigation found some delays in making arrangements for time with the family, at the time when the children moved to their current placement. This was considered an issue of learning.

Following a complaint relating to communication between the family and their social worker, the investigation found that the social worker had not always provided a timely response. She has been asked to address this and the investigator hoped that would result in a noticeable improvement and better experience of the service.

Following a complaint relating to a parent not having family time with their children, the investigation found that the actions were not in line with the care plan for the children. A change of family time supervisor was agreed, and actions planned to reinstate family time immediately and to ensure more continuous communication and offer of support.

The investigation found that the social worker had said they would make contact at the end of the week but was then absent from work, so the communication did not happen. There is learning linked to the need to manage communications and expectations. An apology was made for the lack of communication that had taken place.

## 9. Progress Update

The table below summarises progress achieved against the recommendations made in the last annual report. A council-wide update is provided within the Annual Customer Feedback Report.

	Action	Progress Made
1	The promotion of early resolution of concerns and remedies at an informal stage. Having conversations early can help to resolve concerns without the need for formal investigation.	A few teams have adopted an approach that attempts to resolve concerns early or remedy complaints so that they do not require investigation. However, there remains work to do to roll this out more widely. There are regular examples of delays in providing service action once a complaint has been made. Complaints should not delay action to resolve concerns.
2	To promote best practice in stage 1 complaint handling and responses with an emphasis on quality to reduce the need for complaints to progress to stage 2 or beyond.	Quality in complaint investigation and response varies significantly across Children's Services and further work is required to adopt a more widespread approach to good practice complaint handling. The increase in case escalations indicates that this objective has not been achieved and that further attention will be required in 2025/26.
3	Communication must form an area of focus for 2024/25. A significant proportion of complaints refer to a lack of reply to emails and phone calls rather than any failure to provide a service.	There appears to have been some noticeable improvement in this area. Although communication concerns still feature within some complaints overall communication concerns do not now feature as a dominant problem category. The number of complaints about communication have reduced by around 60%. This progress is very helpful and is very likely linked to the reduction in upheld findings.
4	A recommendation is that Children's Services staff work to communicate their roles clearly to avoid complaints that relate to the work of other services or elements outside of service scope.	Good progress has been made against this action in the last year. There appears to have been a significant reduction in complaints with elements falling outside of Shropshire Council's areas of responsibility and a reduction in complaints linked to other services such as the police. Clear explanation of roles, responsibilities and service scope/provision can prevent this issue reappearing in future years.
5	As a result of pressures more complaints are highlighting delays and more complaints are upheld. Work will continue to identify the areas of pressure and opportunities to minimise risk or recurrence.	In 2024/25 there has been a very slight reduction in complaints where the dominant problem is delay, showing some improvement. Unfortunately, service pressures mean that this issue has not been resolved in full. Higher volumes of complaints can be seen in teams where staff shortages and increasing demand have been a concern. It is recommended that managers retain oversight of this issue.
6	A growing proportion of upheld complaints through the year have identified changes in social worker and lack of robust case handover as the cause of concerns.	Workforce and recruitment actions have resulted in a clear improvement. Poor handover between social workers and social workers leaving roles, used to be a commonly cited problem in complaints in previous years but in 2024/25 there are very few mentions of this issue.
7	The top complaint theme for Children's Services relates to Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. This should be an area of focus for 2024/25.	Unfortunately, significant demand has meant that EHCPs and reviews continue to feature very strongly as the top, and dominant, theme of complaints in 2024/25. Recent recruitment could help to relieve pressures in this service area and improvement in 2025/26 is anticipated.

## 10. Actions and Recommendations

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Complaints performance for Shropshire Council's Children's Services has remained relatively stable since the previous year but there remains room for improvement. The increasing number of cases escalating through the statutory and corporate complaint processes is a significant concern and has financial implications for children and young people's services. Recommendations for 2025/26 include:

- 1. Focus on areas of pressure:** The top complaint theme for Children's Services in 2024/25 relates to Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans and SEND support services. The complaints suggest a lack of capacity within the service to meet demand. It is recommended that managers consider the resources and support for the EHC plan process. This has recently involved hiring additional staff, but further actions could include providing specialised training, and improving coordination between different teams involved in the process. There may be a need to implement strategies to manage demand more effectively, such as prioritising urgent cases and streamlining processes.
- 2. Focus on Response Quality:** Without significant change the Feedback and Insight Team is not large enough to quality check all complaints and checks should not be required if all complaints investigators are committed to producing good quality stage 1 responses. Work is recommended to find ways of improving quality. Investigators will need to be reminded of the importance of referring to policies, law, good practice and ensuring clear communication relating to responsibilities.
- 3. Continue to Focus on Response Times:** Continue efforts to reduce the average response time for stage 1 complaints and significantly reduce the number of complaints being responded to out of timescale. Corporate complaints will need to be responded to within shorter timeframes under the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (10 working days) and a focus must be retained on responding to all statutory complaints within the national timescales set out.
- 4. Complaint Progression:** A focus should be on trying to reverse the annual increases in the proportion of complaints escalating beyond stage 1. Stage 2 complaints have increased significantly in the last year. This focus will link to quality and remedies.
- 5. Make use of guidance on remedies:** There is a growing expectation by the Local Government and Social care Ombudsman that more complaints should be remedied at the local level and that all local authorities should have a local remedies policy in line with the national document provided by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The Feedback and Insight Team will lead work on this area, and it is recommended that all teams within Children and Young People adopt early resolution approaches more consistently. This could involve empowering staff to make decisions that can resolve issues before they escalate.
- 6. Learning and actions:** The evidencing of learning and actions within complaint responses is important and must now be included clearly within Annual Reports. Children and Young People's services are asked to clearly report learning and service changes as a result of complaints to the Feedback and Insight Team (Complaints). It is also recommended that all investigators within Children and Young People ensure that, at individual case level, all findings and learning points are communicated clearly to the complainants within response letters.
- 7. Communicate guidance on reasonable adjustments:** The Feedback and Insight Team will support work on this area. It is recommended that all teams within Children and Young People remind staff members of their responsibilities to offer reasonable adjustments. Recording and reporting of the reasonable adjustments offered as part of the complaints process will also be required.

8. **Third Party Complaints:** As part of Shropshire Council's response to the Ombudsman's Code, consideration will need to be given concerning complaint handling arrangements with third party providers. Although work will need to take place within Commissioning and centrally, providers linked to the provision of services for Children and Young People must be reminded of their responsibilities in relation to complaint handling.
  
9. **Address inappropriate customer behaviour:** It is recommended that a zero-tolerance policy for inappropriate behaviour towards staff is adopted. The Unreasonably Persistent and Vexatious Customers Procedure may be used where appropriate. Although the majority of children, young people and the adults who care for them are polite and respectful, a small minority adopt inappropriate behaviours. Managers and staff need to be reminded that safety and wellbeing are essential in retaining the workforce. Abuse, bullying and harassment towards staff members is unacceptable and there are clear procedures in place for reporting and addressing incidents.

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