



# Children's Social Care Statutory Representations Procedure

Annual Report  
2023-2024





### **3. Outline of the Complaints Procedure**

- 3.1 A complaint may be generally defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child or young person, which requires a response. Children and young people often express complaints as 'problems not being sorted out'.
- 3.2 The concerns of children and young people should be listened to. If a child or young person wishes to make a complaint, local authorities are required to provide them with information about advocacy services and offer help to obtain an advocate.
- 3.3 Solving the problems that generate complaints should be at the forefront of the



- All Complaint outcomes are shared directly with the practitioner, manager, and group manager in all individual cases to share learning and follow up on actions.
- Safeguarding Quality Assurance close the loop to ensure actions are completed from Complaints by tracking these to conclusion.
- WCF have undertaken a series of Private Fostering Workshops, these were co-produced between the Advanced Social Work Practitioner Team and the Private Fostering Lead, these were delivered to staff across Social Care.
- A service wide presentation on learning from complaints was completed in June 2023 to our Social Care End to End leadership team.
- WCF have identified that it is essential that the strengths of a family situation need to be included as part of assessments.
- WCF need to ensure that when visits are cancelled, that the reason for this is added to a case note on the case file.
- Social Workers need to ensure that they are providing feedback to parents following targeted visits around issues a parent has raised.
- For Section 47 enquiries, to consider the amount of people present as this can be very overwhelming for a child.

## 5. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaints

5.1 There were 6 made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) in the year.

- 1 for Through Care
- 2 for Safeguarding
- 3 for Children with Disabilities Team

5.2 There were 7 by the LGO in the year. Please note that some may have been received in the previous year and some investigations were on-going at the end of the year.

- 1 was about Through Care
  - Closed after initial inquires: Out of Jurisdiction
  
- 3 were about Safeguarding
  - 2 were Closed after initial inquires: No further action
  - 1 was closed after initial inquires: Out of Jurisdiction
  
- 3 were about the Children with Disabilities Team
  - 2 were closed as the complaint was made to the Ombudsman prematurely
  - 1 was Upheld: Maladministration & Injustice

5.3 As an outcome of some of the complaints, Worcestershire Children First agreed to make some ex-gratia payments. Payments this year totalled £1250.



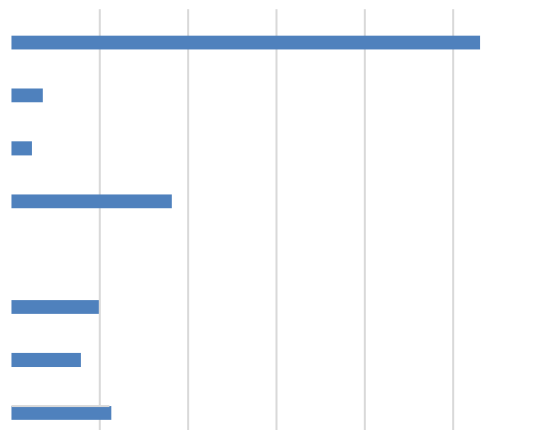


- 7.2 The number of stage 1 complaints received is slightly higher than last year. It is worth noting that 14.68% of these were not progressed. This can be for a number of reasons, such as the complaint not being about a service Worcestershire and duplicate complaints

## 8. Nature of Completed Complaints

- 8.1 We have seen a 13% reduction in the amount of complaint points that have been raised. There has been a significant change in the amount of complaint points in relation to Delay in service, from 34.2% last year, to 18.37% this year. We have seen an increase in the number of complaint points relating to Quality and appropriateness of service, rising from 4.3% last year, to 19.21% this year.

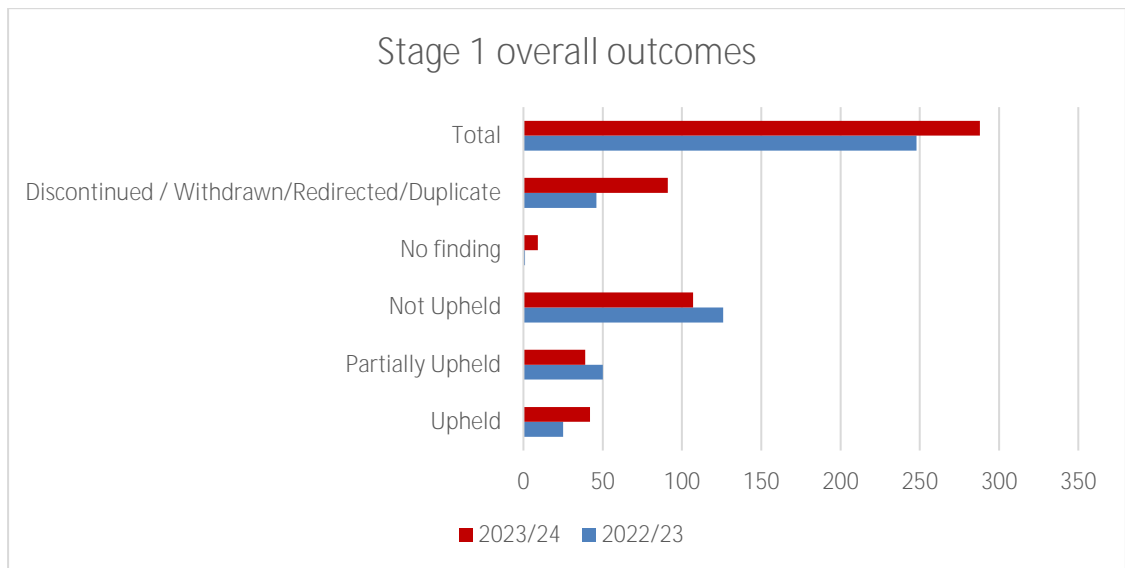
NB The nature of complaints will be higher than the amount of complaints responded to as the below table includes each complaint point raised.



## 9. Stage 1 Overall Outcomes

9.1 These are the overall outcomes for the Stage 1 complaints that have been completed this year. This will be different to the number received as some will have been raised in the previous year but completed in 2023/2024, as well as some that have been raised but may currently still being investigated.

Stage 1 Outcomes	2022/23	%	2023/24	%
Upheld	25	10%	42	14.5%
Partially Upheld	50	20.2%	39	13.5%
Not Upheld	126	50.8%	107	37%
No finding	1	0.5%	9	3%
Discontinued / Withdrawn/Redirected/Duplicate	46	18.5%	91	32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>100%</b>



## **10. Stage 2 Outcomes**

- 10.1 These figures are for all Stage 2 complaints completed during this reporting year. Some may have been received in the previous year and some investigations were on-going at the end of the year.

## 11. Review Panels (Stage 3)

- 11.1 11 Review Panel Hearings were held during 2023/24. 1 was in relation to Fostering, 2 for Safeguarding, 4 for Children with disabilities team, and 4 in relation to the Through care team.
- 11.2 In all of the cases, the Panel were satisfied with the stage 2 investigations and made some additional recommendations such as:
- That WCF arrange to meet with the complainant to discuss information that the complainant felt was incorrect on their files. If anything is found to be inaccurate, for this to be corrected.
  - For contracts of expectations that are drafted by WCF to consider all parties in
  - That a meeting be arranged between WCF and the complainant to try and restore communication.
  - A written apology to be provided to the complainant and to arrange a meeting to engage with the complainant to assist with reconciliation.
  - WCF to review their current policy content regarding direct payments and consider if clarification is required and if they would want to publish criteria of what direct payments can and cannot be used for.
  - A meeting to be arranged by WCF with the complainant to ensure that contact arrangements are clear and p

12.4 Overall, 96% of all stage 1 Complaints have been dealt with in the required timescales. This is slightly lower than 2022/23, but we must also take in to account a 3.5% increase in complaints received. The reasons for complaints going over the 20 working day timescale include the complexity of the complaint, staff absence when interviewing and reallocation of complaints to a different Senior Officer due to staff absence/capacity.

### 13. Stage 2 Timescales

13.1 The timescale at Stage 2 is 25 working days with a maximum extension to 65 working days, which includes sign off of the Investigator's Report by Senior Management.

<b>Timescales of Stage 2 Complaint Resolutions</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>
Within 65 working days	83%	92.68%
More than 65 working days	17%	7.32%

13.2 This has improved again this year, up to 92.68%, with those going over the timescale reducing from 17% to 7.32%.

13.3 This is a notable achievement as we responded to 25% more than the previous year.

### 14. Stage 3 Timescales

14.1 Once a Review Panel has been requested it should be held within 30 working days.

11 Review Panels took place during this reporting period. All of these were held outside of this timescale.

There were a number of reasons why time. Some examples of these are:

- Lack of response from the complainant once the stage 3 had been requested
- The complainants agreeing to a date but then having to postpone
- Difficulty in arranging a date that the complainant, panel members, WCF staff, the Investigating officer, Independent Person can all attend.

15.2 8 children and young people (0-17) raised complaints and were offered an advocate if they were not already represented by one.

## 16. Compliments

16.1 Compliments have come from people independent of the local authority. There is an increase of nearly 30% in compliments received.

Service Area	2022/2023	2023/2024
Children with Disabilities	1	0
Fostering & Kinship	2	5
QA and Independent Review	10	13
Safeguarding Area	49	32
Family Front Door	11	20
Supporting Families First/Targeted Early Help	6	19
Through Care	12	31
Care Leaver and Outreach	1	2
Other	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>122</b>

16.2 The following are a selection of the compliments received:

From a parent about a Social Worker:

*"It's very hard to say goodbye to a Social Worker like you. Thank you for our every meeting and conversation, you understand the feelings of a mother and her love to children. I wish you all the best."*

From a parent about a Social Worker:

*"Just wanted also to say thank you so much for all your help & support through all of this with [redacted] & myself. You've been absolutely brilliant & couldn't have done it without you. I really appreciate everything you've done."*

From a parent about a Social Worker:

*"Thank you for everything you have done for [redacted], he is really lucky to have you as a social worker, and a huge thank you for all the support you have given me and my family."*

Family Court Advisor about a Social Worker

*"I had the good fortune of being at the family home yesterday when [redacted] undertook an unannounced visit. [redacted] was excellent with both [redacted] and [redacted] and it was clear they have a very good relationship with her, and that she has a good working relationship with [redacted]. [redacted] has*

*been excellent and keeping me in the loop, and any questions I've had she has already had an answer prepared.  
It has been nice to see a case that is being managed so well by a social worker, but also with such sensitivity and upon the basis of good relationships."*

From a parent about a Social Worker:

*"I'm sure you're already aware but he has been a phenomenal Social Worker! His personality has fit so organically with ours and has given a boy with a lot of emotional needs the ability to open up, trust and laugh with him, he's listened to every little self-doubt I've had, mediated between myself and [REDACTED] maternal family and supported me as much as he's supported K, if he's half as valued with other families as he is here they'll be lucky indeed."*

From a Special Guardian about a Social Worker:

*"Just wanted to let you know how happy I am that the SGO was granted in my favour. It's been an incredible journey these last 5 years, with many difficult times. However, I have been so lucky to have such amazing, professional social workers (and everyone else in the background) supporting me. Social Services are only in the press/media when they get things wrong but people don't see how hard you all work. Not only supporting kinship carers, the children involved but also supporting [REDACTED] to try to get the children home. Honestly, you are unsung heroes! So now onto the next chapter of our incredible journey but before I go, I would like to personally thank you all, especially my current SW [REDACTED] and everyone else that's been involved, including yourself & a special thanks to [REDACTED] was there in my darkest, most frustrating times and got me through...she helped me be the carer I am today. I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and continue with all your hard work...not all heroes wear capes x"*

Comments on this report are welcomed and requests for further information should be directed to:

The Consumer Relations Officer (Children's Social Care Services)

Consumer Relations Unit  
County Hall  
Spetchley Road  
Worcester  
Worcs  
WR5 2NP  
Tel: 01905 844096

This document can be made available in other languages and alternative formats (large print, audio tape, computer disc and Braille) by contacting the Consumer Relations Unit on telephone number 01905 844096.