

Cardiff Council Social Services Annual Complaints Report



April 2021 – March 2022



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1. Introduction and Background

Every year Cardiff Council has a duty under the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 to produce and publish an Annual Report regarding the operation of their Social Services Complaint procedures. This report provides a summary of statistical information relating to complaints and representations dealt with during the period April 2021 to March 2022.

Cardiff Council Social Services takes a positive approach to all complaints, concerns and issues raised and works with individuals and teams to identify and put in place suitable outcomes for individuals as well as taking the opportunity to learn lessons from complaints raised where expected standards have not been met.

2021 saw all Social Services teams continue to work under Covid regulations, managing the impacts of the Pandemic and this impacted on how people were supported by services. By proactively communicating with those individuals who utilise services it has been possible to better manage issues prior to them becoming complaints and there has been a positive response to this approach.

Complaints are a key source of intelligence enabling understanding, learning and reflection in respect of people's experience of Social Services. There has been a change in how complaints are managed across Social Services in Quarter 3 of 2021/22. New dedicated complaints teams have been set up individually under Adult Services and Children's Services. This has been done to ensure:

- Increased specialism of the complaint's teams supporting complaints management.
- Positive leadership to manage individual complaints.
- More focused action plans from complaints for the different directorates.
- Increased monitoring, evaluation and analysis of complaints received.

As at the end of March 2022 recruitment is underway to employ two permanent posts to support complaints and engagement opportunities within Adults Services. These posts will sit under the current Complaints Manager. Children Services have successfully recruited to 4 posts to support complaints. The Complaints teams are supported by Senior Managers in each Service and by the Corporate Complaints Team.

2. The Process

Cardiff Council has a Social Services Complaints policy that is based on the principles of the Welsh Government Legislation; The Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014

Receipt of all the complaints received are required to be acknowledged within the statutory timescale of two working days. In some cases, issues raised fall outside the responsibility of Social Services and in these instances, the Complaints Officer liaises with the appropriate Service Area or Agency.

The Adult and Children's Social Services complaints process has two stages:

Stage One: Local Resolution – The emphasis at this stage of the process is to resolve the complaint by means of discussion and problem solving. The complainant will be offered a discussion about the issues they have raised, and this can either be done by telephone, or face to face in an attempt to resolve the issues. This must be done within 10 working days of the receipt of the complaint.



Following this discussion and any further investigation that is necessary, a written response will be provided within 5 working days.

Stage Two: Formal Consideration – If the complainant remains dissatisfied after completion of stage one, they may request that the complaint proceeds to stage two of the process. This involves a formal independent investigation of the complaint with a report being produced by the investigating officer appointed to the case. The timescale for dealing with this stage is 25 working days from agreement of the issues to be reviewed.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the stage two investigation, they may progress their complaint to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales. All individuals accessing services receive information regarding how to raise a complaint, the 2 stages for handling complaints within social services and how to contact the Ombudsman.

3. Members Enquiries

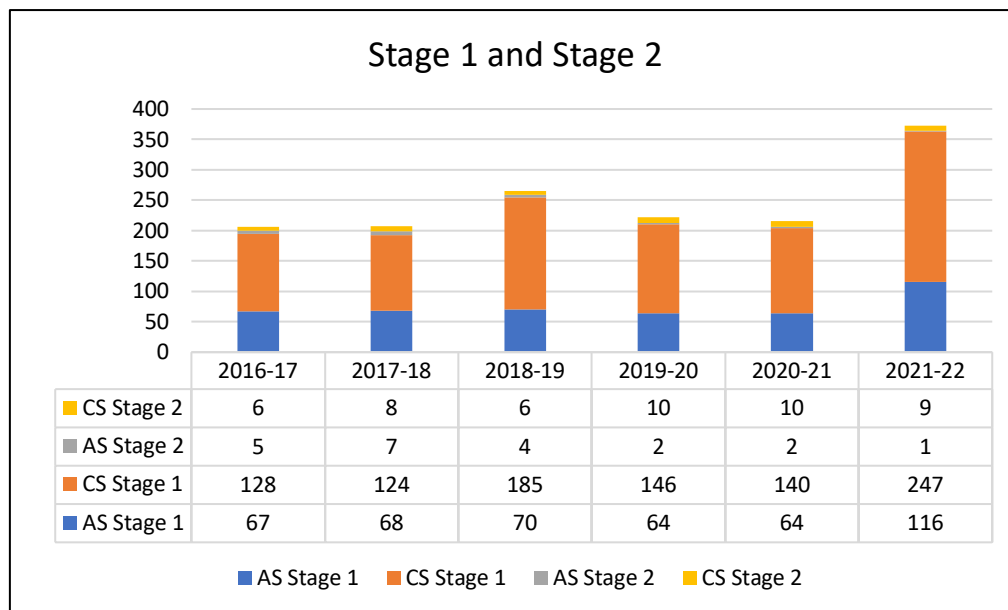
The Representations and Complaints Procedure does not preclude the right of an individual to approach their Local Councillor, Assembly Member or Member of Parliament. They undertake an important role in handling concerns and queries that an individual constituent may have. Collectively, these are called Member Enquiries and can range from requests for services, comments and queries to complaints.

Social Services receives concerns from elected members through 3 means: 1) directly through the Cabinet Office, or 2) through the HALO portal, or 3) by direct email. All methods of contact are managed in the same way by Social Services. Whilst they do not form part of the formal recorded complaints data, the number are collated to be able to understand further patterns of concerns being raised as well as to identify pressures on the complaints system.

Between April 2021 and March 2022 124 Members Enquiries were received in Adult Services and 58 in Children's Services.



4. Customer Feedback



Adult Services - Overview

Adult Services have seen an increase in complaints coming into the service between 2020-2021 where we received 64 complaints, and 2021-2022 where there has been a significant increase to 116. Reasons for this significant increase include:

- We support more people – year on year there is an increase in the number of people supported by adult services.
- Independent Living Services are now part of Adult Services, providing support through our ‘front door’, including occupational therapy services and our First Point of Contact Teams.
- We are listening to our citizens; supporting them to raise concerns and complaints in a more co-productive way, listening to what people are saying and offering individuals the opportunity to discuss complaints at an earlier stage
- We are recording better; our recording of complaints in adult services has been changed to fit more closely with the Ombudsman reporting structure. We are understanding the main reasons for concerns being raised and recording these through a number of identified Themes and categories. This will ensure that learning outcomes in the future can be better realised and will support better quarterly and annual reporting of complaints

Children’s Services - Overview

Children’s Services have seen an increase in complaints received in 2021-2022, with 247 received compared to 140 in 2020-2021. Reasons for the increase include:

- Children’s Services support more young people, with an increase compared to previous years in the number of young people open to Children’s Services.



- Young people are encouraged to voice their views and concerns, with increased support in accessing advocacy services or raising complaints directly

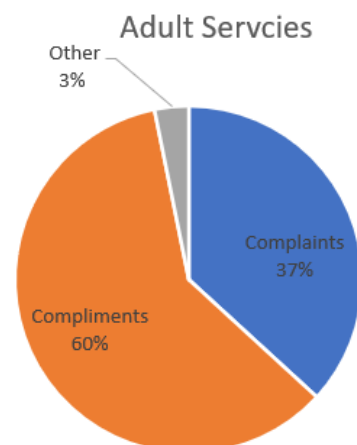
Adult Services Annual Comparison

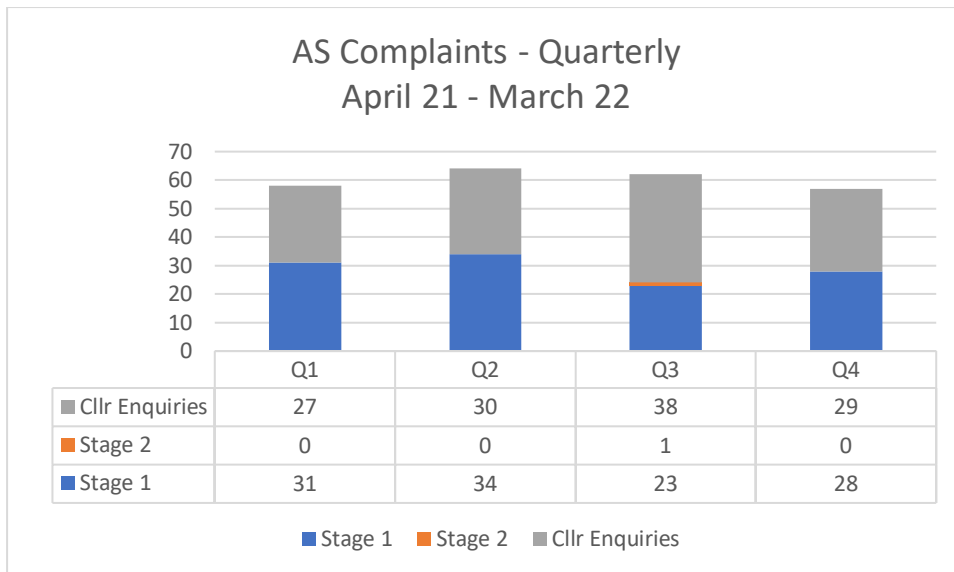
A review has been undertaken considering data from the previous 2 years figures. As stated above Adult Services has seen an increase in the number of compliments and complaints received, partly due to the inclusion of the Independent Living Services (ILS) in October 2021, which previously sat within the Housing and Communities directorate.

The easing of the Covid pandemic has also resulted in an increase in the number of complaints being received. During the pandemic citizens and families have provided increased amounts of support to loved ones themselves, to reduce the cross-infection rates of covid among older and clinically vulnerable people. However, as people have gone back to working in offices and away from home, and furlough arrangements have ended, families have been less able to continue providing this support. This resulted in a surge in demand for social work assessment and care provision, which together with a lack of supply in the care market, which has been experienced nationally, placed extreme pressure on services. . As a result, citizens are waiting longer for referrals into services and for assessments to be completed and this is generating more complaints to the service.

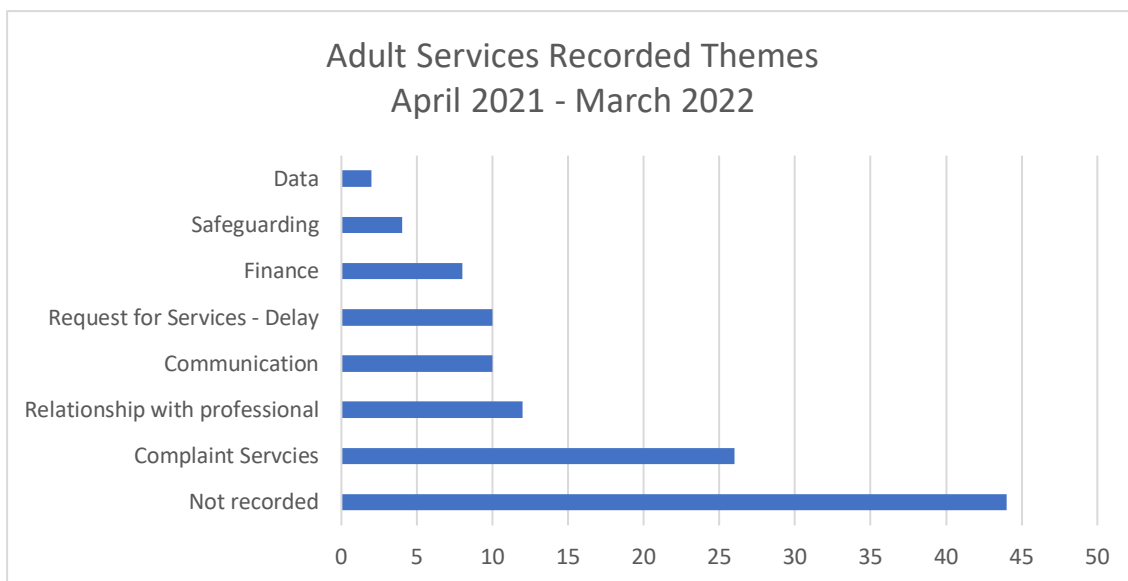
In total 315 cases of feedback have been received from citizens and this comprises of:

- **116 Complaints**
- **189 Compliments**
- **10 Appeals, queries or issues (non-complaints)**

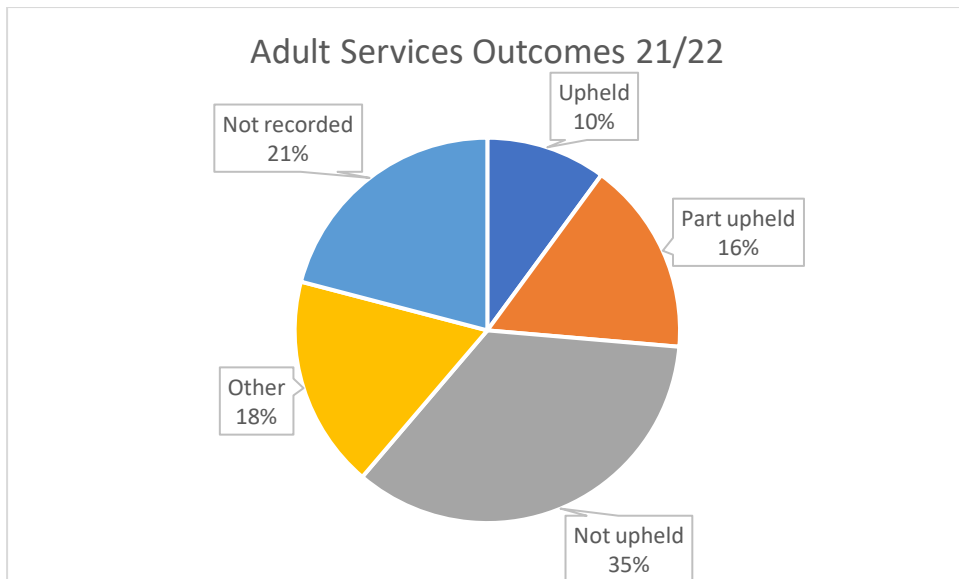




In November 2021 the adult services team introduced a thematic approach to recording complaints that reflected more closely the reasons people were contacting the service. This will be developed further in the following year to better support our understanding of why people complain and will form the foundations of further work to be undertaken alongside the Quality Assurance Manager, Social Work Teams and operational Managers.



On review only 10% of all complaints received into the service in 2021-22 were upheld and 35% not upheld. However, the previous system allowed for multiple other options to be included which meant the reports did not align with corporate reporting priorities and where learning was more difficult to identify.



Adult Services will be introducing clearer reporting of outcomes for individual complaints in line with the Ombudsman return requests from April 2022. There will be 4 outcome options:

Upheld – where the main point of the complaint is upheld, even if smaller areas are not upheld

Not Upheld – where a complaint is either not upheld at all, or a smaller part of the complaint is upheld

Not Applicable – when a response is regarding a councillor enquiry or a complaint has been withdrawn or abandoned, such as when an individual is involved in a Court of Protection process

Progress to Stage 2 – where a complainant is unhappy with the initial outcome and a stage 2 investigation is triggered.

The team will also be developing links with the Quality Assurance team to develop learning outcomes for teams from upheld and where appropriate non-upheld complaints which will support with best practice initiatives.

Children Services Annual Comparison

Children’s Services have received a total of 399 cases of feedback comprising of:

- **247 Complaints**
- **152 Compliments**

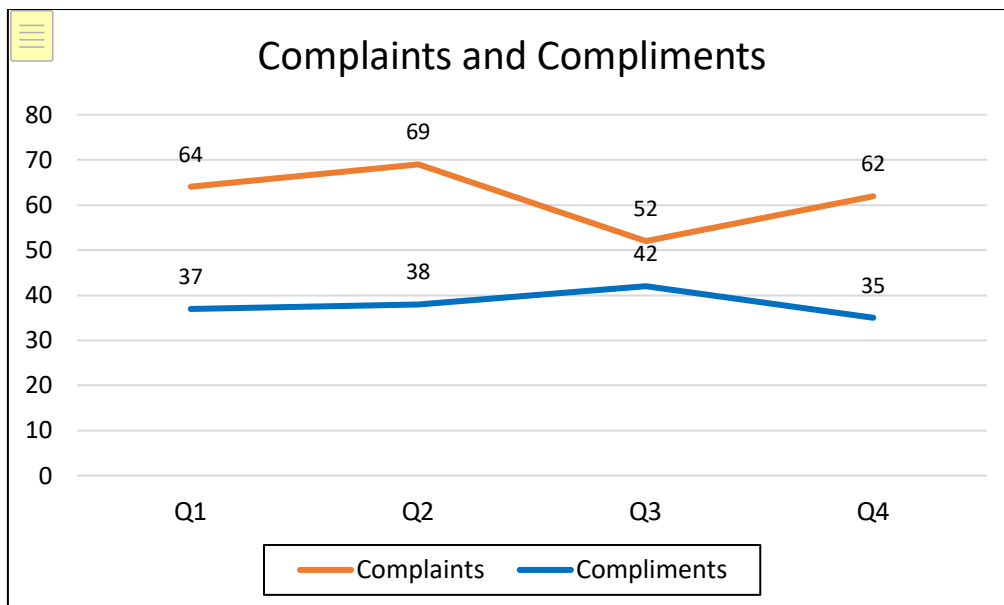
The 247 complaints received in 2021/22 represents 6% of the total children, young people and families (4119) that were supported.

2021/22 saw an increase in complaints recorded for Children’s Services, with 247 received compared to 140 in 2020/21.

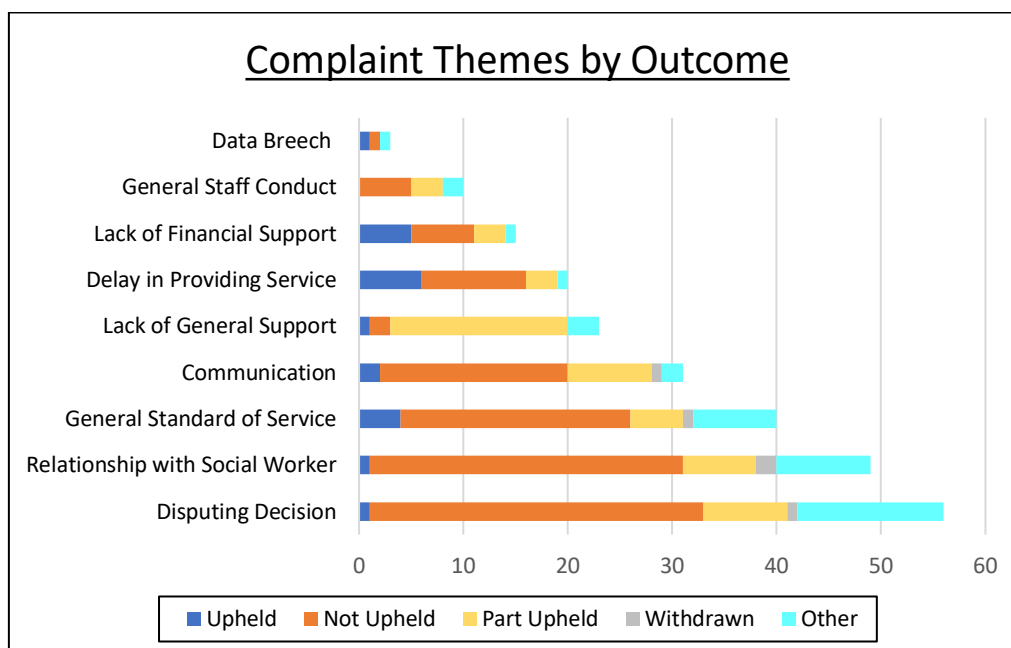


Whilst Covid-19 has continued to have an impact across Children’s Services, additionally, young people are better supported by advocates to raise complaints and concerns and are encouraged to share their views.

152 compliments were received in 2021/22. This is a decrease compared to the previous year (178), but a significant increase from 2019/20, when 91 were received.



Complaint Themes

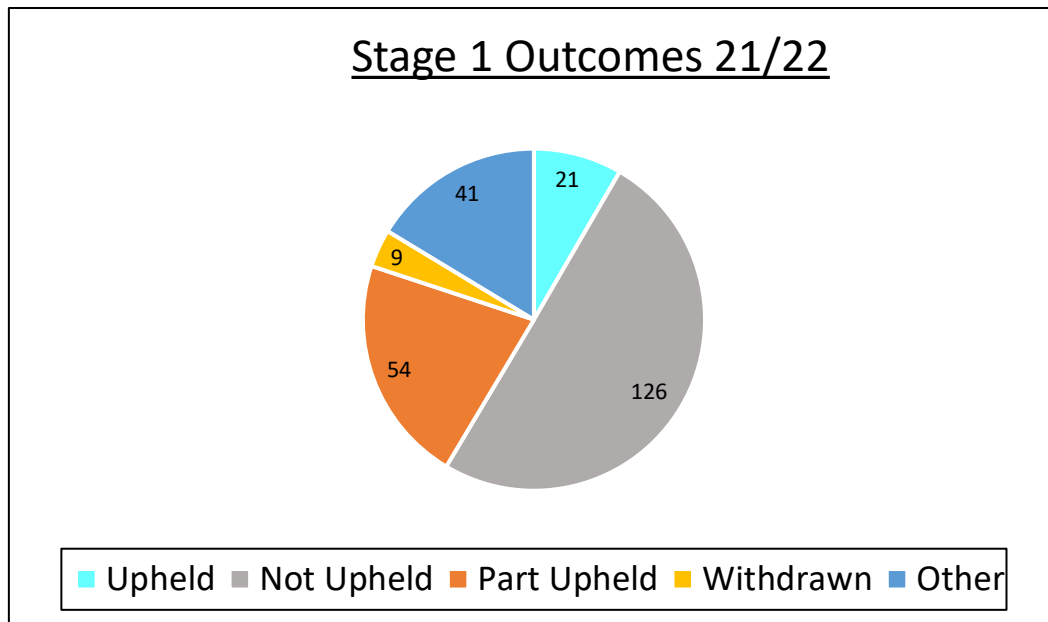


‘Disputing Decision’ was the most dominant theme to Children’s Services complaints throughout 2021/22, accounting for 23% of complaints made. Due to the nature of the work in Children’s Services, decisions must be made in the best interest of the young person. Complaints included disputing the decision to remove a child from their parent’s care, or to move a looked after child from their placement.

'Relationship with Social Worker' was the second most common theme, accounting for 20% of complaints made. Again, due to the nature of the work in Children's Services, difficult decisions must be made by social workers in the best interests of the young person, and this can lead to challenging relationships between social workers and those making a complaint.

'General Standard of Service' accounted for 16% of complaints made. This theme broadly covers dissatisfaction with the service received from Children's Services, including complaints that involved multiple allegations covering the other themes outlined, that represented perceived poor overall service.

Complaint outcomes

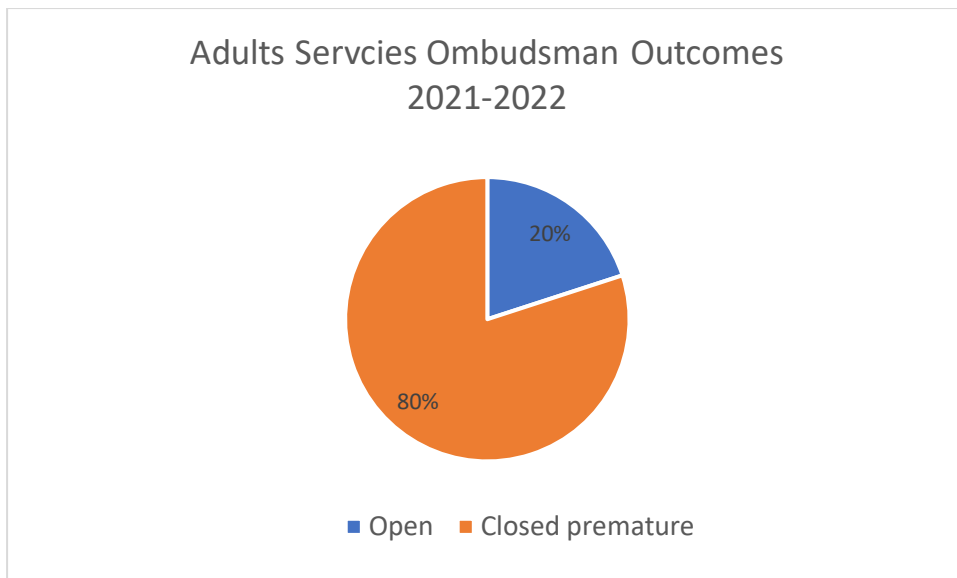


Just 9% of stage 1 complaints received by Children's Services in 2021-2022 were upheld. 22% were part-upheld, with the majority (51%) not upheld. 2% were withdrawn and the remaining 16% were categorised as 'other'; this category includes complaints which, for example, were in court, or had no consent.

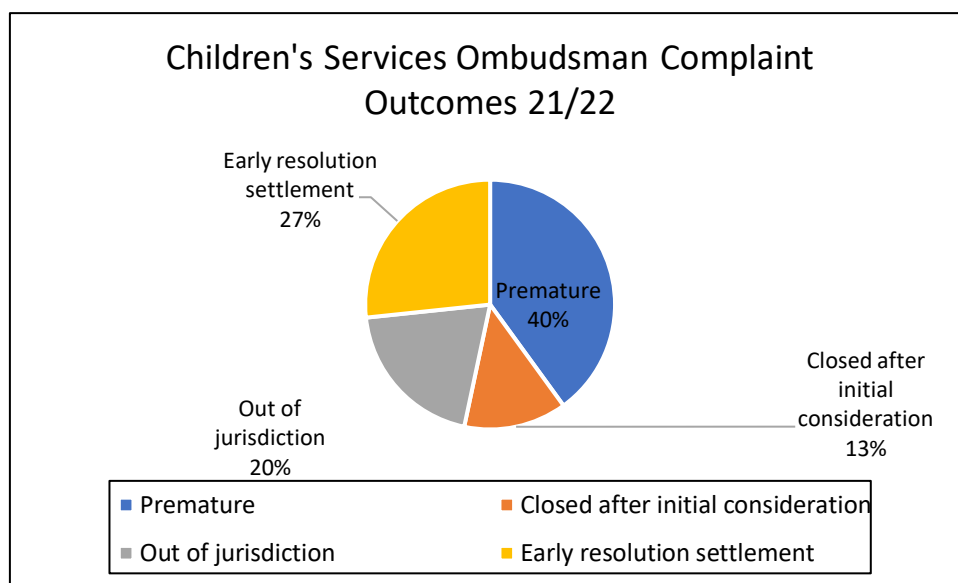
Going forward, clearer categorisation has been implemented. This will better reflect the number of complaints received and their outcomes, as well as making it easier to learn from complaints.

Of the 9 stage 2 complaints received, 2 were upheld, 4 part-upheld, and 3 are ongoing.

Ombudsman Complaints



Adult Services had 5 complainants approach the Ombudsman last year. One of these remains open and the other 4 were closed due to premature contact



Just 15 complainants approached the Ombudsman in 2021-22 about Children's Services. Of the complaints, 6 were premature, 2 were closed after initial consideration, 3 out of jurisdiction and 4 reached an early resolution settlement, by completing ombudsman's recommendation. None reached formal investigations that led to reports.

5. Lessons Learnt

Throughout the complaints investigation process, complainants' views and desired outcomes are collected as part of the learning process and fed back to the relevant teams as required. This ensures that services are shaped by those who use them, and that Adult and Children's Services can learn from complaints received.

Adult Services have identified that the recorded main reasons for people complaining is an issue with their service, poor relationships with professionals and communication complaints. The service area recognises that changes are required in the way services are delivered and in how the team communicate with service users and their loved ones.

Adult Services will be introducing two new Complaints and Engagement Officer posts to support the development of better feedback pathways for citizens.

A review of staffing structures within Adult Services is underway to ensure that the teams are able to offer effective services and to help aid recruitment and retention of staff.

Case Study – Adult Services; Lessons Learnt

The Complaints Team were contacted by a concerned relative of an individual who was living in a residential home in Cardiff. Due to the Covid restrictions monitoring visits had not been undertaken in the same way they had prior to Covid, which had limited some of the early interventions the team would have identified through regular visiting previously.

The concerns raised were escalated to the Operational Management team who shared this with colleagues in University Health Board who were still visiting the home to undertake medical care of residents. The Health team made enquiries on their next visit and it was identified that there were a number of issues of concern that needed to be addressed. Adult Services developed a plan with the residential home to ensure that they were able to meet the standards expected and improve the care for people living there.

Following these concerns an escalation plan was developed and a small team identified who could quickly be mobilised to support homes that were causing concern including registered managers, care staff, safeguarding support and support from other areas of the Council including building maintenance, to be able to step in at short notice when issues arose in a residential setting. A matrix was also developed to identify the care settings that were considered to be at risk from information provided from Safeguarding Referrals, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) referrals, information from staff at the home and covid outbreak information. The matrix allowed the Adult Services Contracts Team to be able to step in at an earlier stage, identify and mitigate risk and ensure that collaborative working was achieved between multiple agencies to ensure the safety of all living and working in the residential home.



Children’s services are committed to reviewing practise when complaints are identified to ensure that the service acts on feedback to ensure other families are not impacted in the same way.

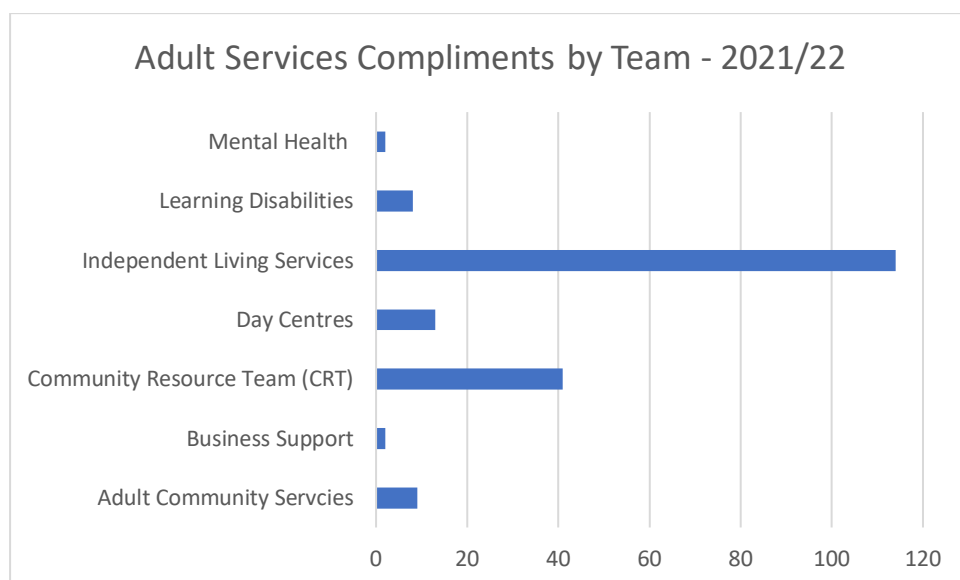
For example, a complaint was received in 2021-2022 from a parent regarding contact with Children’s Services following an incident at the family home. The complaint highlighted that following initial contact with Children’s Services, a letter was received signposting to support for parental conflict. The complainant felt that this did not accurately reflect their situation, as the incident centred around another member of the extended family, and not both parents. The complainant didn’t want to see such mistakes repeated for other families, and a meeting was arranged between them and the Operational Manager to further discuss their concerns.

This complaint was upheld, and as part of the learning process the Operational Manager discussed the outcome with the team concerned to ensure that there was clearer reason and insight into risks before such letters were sent.

6. Compliments

Adult Services Compliments Data

Adult Services receives compliments from people accessing services and their families as well as from other professionals. When compliments are received these are shared with the Director and feedback is provided directly to the individual or team receiving the compliment and their Operational Manager. Cardiff Social Services believes it is very important to highlight positive feedback to staff and to share this with staff teams.



Some of the feedback from the people we support in Adult Services

“K has been wonderful – I cannot fault her. She’s given us the help we needed. Me and my brother were struggling to care for mum, providing 24/7 care for 3 weeks and we asked her for help. K gave us the support we needed quickly. She has always told us what she was doing and why it was needed”.

Feedback from a family member regarding Care Management Social Worker

Service user was very complimentary about the social work service he has received from the allocated Social Worker. He was very satisfied with the individual Social Worker – said that she was always professional and very helpful, he has respect for her. She has helped him with day to day matters and acts fast when he asks for help with a problem.

Feedback from a Service User regarding Hospital Social Worker

“it’s been amazing to work with someone who has shown us such empathy”.

Feedback from a Service User regarding MHSOP Social Worker

On speaking to a Mr R today he would like to pass on his thanks to the outstanding carers that visited him.

Feedback from a Service User regarding CRT Care Staff

Feedback from other Professionals in Adult Services

I am really pleased with the outcome for Mrs C and wanted to thank you very much for all your considerable effort and commitment to getting to this point - it feels very positive for OC and for family, and I really appreciate your hard work

Feedback from a Court Representative regarding Learning Disabilities Social Worker

Just to say you’re doing a fine job, making a difficult situation seem easy. A number of people in the Health Team have commented recently on how efficient you are and how easy it is to work with you.

Feedback from a Health Colleague regarding Learning Disabilities Social Worker

Children’s Services Compliments Data

When compliments are received, they are shared with the individual concerned as well as the Director and the relevant Operational Manager.



Children's Services received 152 compliments in 2021-2022; these were received from a variety of individuals, including young people, families, foster carers and other professionals.

This is a very positive result, and the team will continue to look for ways to collect positive feedback to ensure that the excellent service provided by Children's Services is recorded and highlighted.

Some Feedback from the people we support in Children's Services

(Mother) couldn't have spoken more highly of (SW), and said she cried when you stopped working with her and she felt like you made such a big difference to hers and Mason's life. She also said because of the positive experience she had with you she is no longer fearful of Children's Services and would always be happy to work with us if it was needed in the future. She was happy for me to tell you this and she said she is just so grateful that she had you working with them

To my surprise, JW asked that the Bail Support Team continue to have daily contact with him and his family as he has found it beneficial to see us and speak with us daily. Judge F commented how he felt that the YJS and especially the Bail Support Team have clearly helped JW to comply with all of his bail conditions and he would like us to continue to work with JW.

Dear X, where do I begin? You have been supporting me during probably the most hectic times of my life. I can't ever thank you enough. You encourage me to try and recognise my worth and set boundaries. Despite my hesitance you were perpetually patient with me. I have never met someone so determined, reliable and caring as you (probably why you're so good at your job). Whenever I reached a low point this year I would remind myself how I wouldn't want to waste your efforts as well as considering how far I had come. Thank you believing in me when it felt like nobody else did.

Feedback from other Professionals in Children's Services

I just wanted to send an email to reiterate our previous conversation regarding the support provided by both young people's social workers, S and H. They both hold positive reports with not only the young people, but with myself and the team too. The communication is always effective, and we speak on a weekly basis to ensure we are robust in the support and quality of care that we provide to all our young people.

I would like to acknowledge and thank K for her excellent support regarding our young person L. K provided timely and helpful advice and support and it is clear that she is committed to supporting young people. The professional manner in which K dealt with our queries must be commended. I look forward to working with K in the future.

The court has been impressed by the hard and detailed work that has been undertaken by the social worker who should be commended for her efforts on behalf of the children. This is not a case where the LA has been dilatory in their assessments or support of this family nor where a care order is needed to make the LA take the risks in this case seriously.

7. Future Developments

Introduction of HALO

Whilst the current picture is that of individual Service Areas recording and managing complaints via a number of legacy systems, work is underway to procure a single, corporately owned CRM which will bring together all Compliments, Complaints and Members' Enquiries in one central location.

This should facilitate a more efficient passage for correspondence as there will be a view of the progress of the response at all stages, including sign off and approval.

The rollout is anticipated to take place in the summer of 2022 and will offer simplified reporting via a suite of inbuilt reports and a consistency of data capture.

Adult Services Review and Changes to our complaints monitoring

Following a review in October 2021 of how we were recording complaints, categories have been identified so that patterns of issues, compliments and complaints can be better identified and to support the development of more in-depth reporting. Due to this being introduced in quarter 3 the complaints manager has used the latter part of the year to ensure that this reflects the themes of correspondence being received and this will be formally introduced from April 2022. The themes and categories identified are as follows:

Stage 1/Stage 2	
Themes	Categories
Compliment	Service
	Team
	Individual
Complaint - Services	Delays - all
	Direct Payments set up
	OT/Physio
	CRT
	MH Services
	LD Services
	Day services
	Disputing Decision
	Residential Care services
	Domiciliary Care services
Other	
Complaint - Relationships with professionals inc conduct	Relationship with Social Worker / SWA
	Relationship with Agency
	Relationship with OT
	Relationship OTHER
Complaint - Communication breakdown	Communication (that does not fall into another category)
Complaint - Accident or injury	ANY
Complaint - Safeguarding	ANY
Complaint - Finance	ANY
Complaint - Data	Breach of Confidentiality



Issue - Data	Inaccurate information
Issue (non-complaint)	ANY
Request	Request for services

Children’s Services changes to complaints processing and recording

Changes have been made to the way in which complaints are recorded and processed, in order to achieve quicker resolution, and better reflect the number of complaints received and their outcomes.

As of May 2022, we have introduced a ‘fast track request for service’; when contacting the Children’s Services Complaints Team, complainants are asked whether they wish to request a call back from a social worker or a team manager to informally resolve their concerns before progressing to a formal complaint investigation. This has led to a reduction in the number of complaints received and to quicker resolution of grievances.

Additionally, clearer categorisation of complaint themes and outcomes has been introduced to reduce the number recorded as ‘other’, better reflecting the nature and outcome of complaints.

8. Equalities

Cardiff Council is committed to ensuring that all people we come into contact with, both customers and employees are treated equally and fairly between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. We are required by law in Wales to adhere to the Equality Act 2010 and Cardiff Council remains committed to completing the tasks identified in the Council’s Equality Inclusion Strategy 2020-2024.

These objectives identified within the strategy aim to remove barriers, promote equality of opportunity, promote good relations and improve our performance in meeting our duties. Our objectives are:

- Objective 1 - To develop and deliver services which are responsive to Cardiff’s inequality gap
- Objective 2 - To lead the way on equality and inclusion in Wales and beyond.
- Objective 3 - Cardiff is accessible to everyone who is living, visiting or working in the city.
- Objective 4 - To build an inclusive and representative organisation

Cardiff Council have also committed to continue to improve and monitor equality and diversity across all services through:

- Delivery of our Capital Ambitions programme
- Pledge to Zero Racism Wales
- Development of Cardiff’s Race Equality Taskforce
- Become a UNICEF Child Friendly City
- Development of a Citizen’s engagement strategy
- Commitment to Cardiff becoming a Living Wage City
- Embed our Dementia Friendly City status
- Continue to develop our five Employee Equality Networks
- Deliver equality training packages through Cardiff Council’s Academy for all staff



Throughout the next year equality monitoring in Complaints services across the council will be introduced. This will ensure that we have a reliable record of people complaining who wish to share any protective characteristics and will support us in monitoring against our corporate objectives.

