



Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Annual Complaints and Compliments Report

Adult and Children's Services

2024-25

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Every year the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) publishes an annual complaints and compliments report, which gives an overview of the complaints the Council has received and how they were dealt with. RBWM welcomes customer feedback, as it helps to identify and address problems for customers, and to improve services. This report, covering the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, details all compliments and complaints made by or on behalf of customers that are investigated under the:
 - Adults Statutory Complaints process
 - Children's Statutory Complaints process
 - Children's Corporate Complaints process
 - RBWM's Formal Corporate Complaints policy
- 1.2. Whilst Local Authorities are required under statute to report complaints submitted on Adults and Children's services, they are not required to produce an annual report on complaints relating to corporate activities, however the Compliments and Complaints team produces an annual report detailing the volumes of all complaints and compliments, including insights into response rates and the reasons for complaints. This allows the Council to assess how residents experience the Council in its entirety and can inform service improvement. The annual compliments and complaints report is discussed and considered by the Executive Leadership Team and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3. This report provides an overall summary of the contacts into RBWM, but only provides detailed information relating to the Children's and Adult's complaints and compliments. A separate report relating to Formal Corporate complaints has been produced and is available here [Annual Report - 2024-25 Formal Corporate](#)

2. Summary of Council-wide activity

- 2.1. In 2024/25 the Complaints & Compliments team received 1,922 contacts from customers. This is an 14.8% increase in contacts to the compliments and complaints team from 2023/24 (1,674), which is attributed to an increase in both service requests and complaints which were later withdrawn, as compared to the previous year. There was a concerted effort during the year to log first time contact as service requests, to assist the services with tracking and monitoring. We therefore don't believe that these numbers represent an uptick in service requests, just an increase in those being formally logged.
- 2.2. The total volume of complaints progressed through Stage 1 of the complaints process was 258 in 2024/25, a decrease of 15.1% on 2023/24 (304). Stage 2 and 3 complaints are escalations of Stage 1 and are therefore not counted as new complaints.
- 2.3. Table 1 summarises the total volume of complaints at Stage 1 over the year, that were recorded by the Complaints and Compliments team; these have been broken down by outcome. The table contains a comparison to 2023/24 (in brackets):

Table 1: 2024/25 Summary of complaints at Stage 1 (2023/24 in brackets)

Process	No. of complaints	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	No Finding	In progress at the time of reporting	Responded to within timescales
Adults Statutory	33 ↓ (37)	13%↓ (23%)	22%↓ (31%)	63%↑ (46%)	3%↑ (0%)	1	84% ↑ (77%)
Children's Statutory	8 ⇔ (8)	13%⇔ (13%)	50%⇔ (50%)	38%⇔ (38%)	0%⇔ (0%)	0	88%↑ (63%)
Children's Corporate	69 ↓ (79)	16%↑ (12%)	36%↓ (40%)	48%↓ (49%)	0%⇔ (0%)	0	68%↓ (74%)
RBWM Formal Corporate	148 ↓ (180)	23%↑ (21%)	26%↓ (29%)	50%⇔ (50%)	1%↑ (0%)	7	72%↑ (56%)
Overall	258 ↓ (304)	19%↑ (18%)	29%↓ (33%)	51%↑ (49%)	1%↑ (0%)	8	73%↑ (64%)

Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) letter

2.4. The Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) received 52 complaints and enquiries about the Council in 2024/25 (Appendix A), a decrease on 2023/24 (55). Table 2 details the breakdown as:

Table 2: LGSCO complaints received

Service	Complaints and enquiries
Adult Care Services	14
Corporate & Other Services	3
Education & Children's Services	13
Highways & Transport	8
Housing	8
Planning & Development	6
Total	52

2.5. Of these 52 complaints and enquiries received, the LGSCO went on to investigate 15. Appendix A shows the LGSCO's summary of these.

3. Statutory Adults complaints received

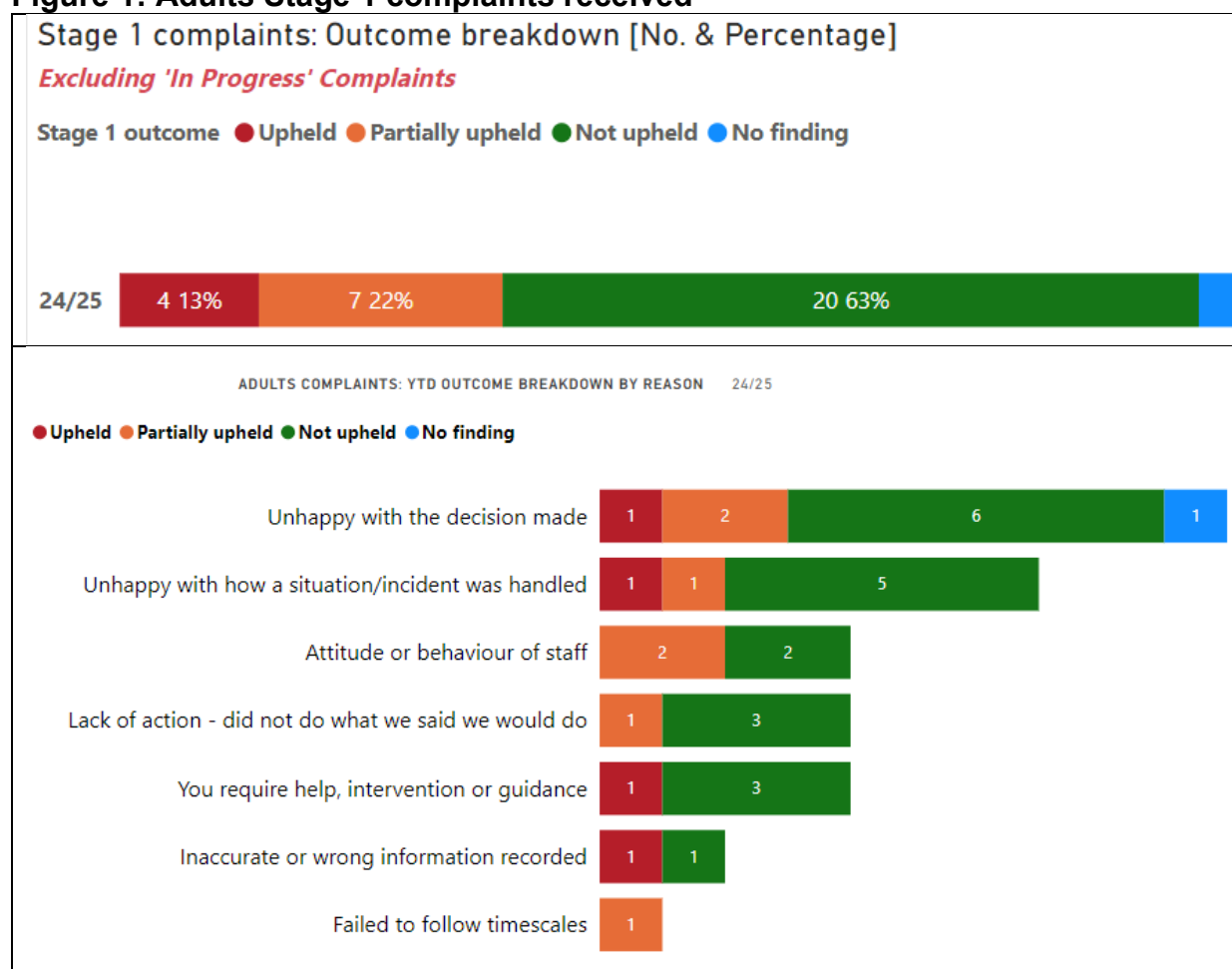
Stage 1 complaints received

3.1. 33 Adults' complaints were received in 2024/25, a 10.8% decrease on 2023/24 (37). The greatest proportion of Stage 1 Adults complaints were not upheld (63%), compared to 2023/24, where the greatest proportion of complaints were either upheld (23%) or partially upheld (31%). Figure 1 shows the greatest number of complaints

were due to the customer being 'unhappy with the decision made' and that the majority of these (60%) were not upheld.

3.2. The number of complaints received in Adult Social Care, particularly in relation to charging decisions, has been notably high. This trend is consistent with national patterns and reflects the complexity and personal impact of financial assessments for care services. While the majority of these complaints are not upheld, following investigation, their volume highlights the importance of ensuring that policies are clearly communicated and consistently applied. Charging decisions often involve detailed statutory guidance and individual financial circumstances, which can understandably lead to concern or challenge. The fact that most complaints are not upheld demonstrates that the decision-making processes are legally sound and appropriately documented. However, it is recognised that the experience of navigating care charges can be distressing for residents and families. The team are therefore committed to improving how they explain decisions, provide early support, and ensure that individuals feel heard and respected throughout the process.

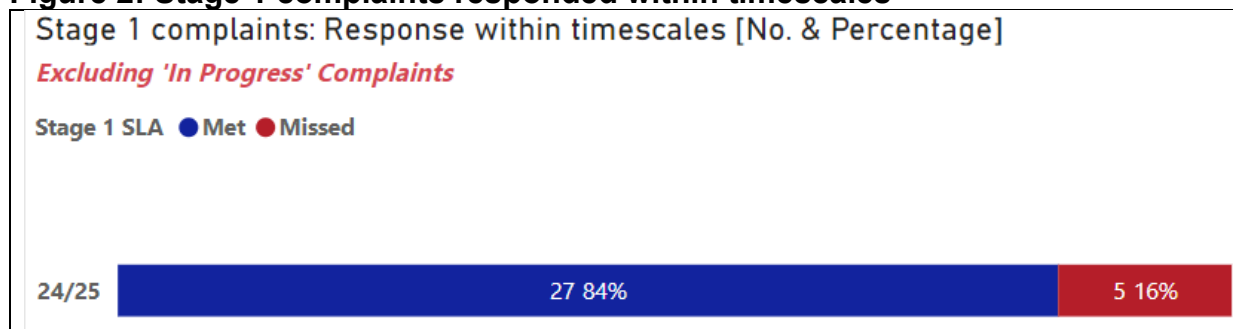
Figure 1: Adults Stage 1 complaints received



Stage 1 timescales

3.3 Of the 32 Adults complaints dealt with, 84% of them were responded to within timescales, which is an increase on 2023/24 (77%). See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Stage 1 complaints responded within timescales



4. Adults Services compliments received

- 4.1 In 2024/25, Adults received 37 compliments; a 33.9% decrease on 2023/24 (56) but similar numbers to the previous year, 2022/23 (38). The transition of Adult Social Care into RBWM, and the change of processes, will have had an impact upon how compliments are recorded. We are continuing to develop how these will be captured in the future. A selection of this year's compliments are quoted in Figure 3, to give an idea of some of the positive feedback received.

Figure 3: Sample of compliments received in 2024/25

“I will never forget how kind and helpful you were to us when we needed help. All of your clients are very lucky to have you.”

“I cannot thank you enough for all the help and support you gave to me and dad to enable him to stay and die at home, surrounded by his family and own belongings, in the place he loved. This year was incredibly tough for dad, and after his long stay in hospital in August he was never quite the same. He was a very special man who lived his entire life in Cookham, and thanks to you and the team you work with, he was treated with kindness and dignity and his wishes were listened to. I am sure it was not easy making this happen and I just want you all to know how much it meant, not just to dad, but to me and the wider family and all his friends. Thanks to all of you dad was able to say good bye to the people he loved and have the best possible end of life, something he so deserved. So thank you, and I will always be grateful, you did not just help dad, you helped me too, I can rest easy that his wishes were fulfilled and his final days were how they should have been.”

“I would like to make you aware of an employee in the transition to adult social services for adults with learning disabilities who is absolutely amazing. [...] first visited us at the end of October and I cannot tell you what a godsend she has been. She has restored my faith in humanity. She is kind, understanding, has our best interests at heart, communicates what is going on, always follows up and is such a lovely, friendly person. I am so grateful that she is my son's social worker. Nothing is too much trouble. She is constantly actioning, making referrals, sorting and helping. She goes above and beyond and knowing that she is there to help is wonderful and really helps reduce stress. I can't thank her enough and I hope her manager understands what a great job she does.”

“what was very good was [...] kept us up to date at each stage. She also managed expectations very well. So because of that it felt efficient and pretty speedy. [...] was exceptional, both email communication and phone contact was good. When she said she would get back to us she would. [...], despite mum being unable to make any decisions or contribute to the process, always made mum feel included. This was massively important to us. She has a very human and warm demeanour, hugely appreciated in such a role.”

5. Lessons learned from Adults Services complaints

5.1 An important part of the complaints process is capturing the learnings and embedding good practice across the Council. Following are the opportunities for learning that have been identified by Adult Services:

Adult Social Care

To ensure that learning from complaints is actively embedded across Adult Social Care, we have introduced a structured approach to sharing insights and driving improvement:

As part of our quarterly Adult Social Care staff forums, we now include a dedicated session to share learning from complaints received in the previous quarter. This promotes transparency, reflection, and continuous improvement across teams.

In addition to workforce development, we are also applying learning from complaints to systems and process improvements. For example:

Hospital Discharge Pathways-

Feedback highlighted confusion and concern from families regarding discharge arrangements. In response, we have worked collaboratively with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to review and clarify discharge pathways.

Improvements include:

Enhanced communication with families at key transition points.

Updated guidance for staff to ensure consistent messaging.

Targeted training to improve staff confidence and knowledge in discharge planning.

Charging and Financial Information-

A significant proportion of complaints related to financial assessments and care charges. Although most were not upheld, they revealed a need for clearer information and better support.

Actions taken:

Development of new information leaflets to explain charging policies in plain language, that includes information on making a complaint.

Delivery of staff training focused on financial processes and communication.

Strengthened signposting to advice and advocacy services.

Workforce Learning and Development-

We are currently reviewing our Learning and Development offer for Adult Social Care staff in response to themes emerging from complaints.

This includes:

Enhanced training on communication, particularly around sensitive decisions.

Refresher sessions on statutory duties, person-centred practice, and complaint handling.

Embedding reflective learning from complaints into team meetings and supervision.

These actions aim to ensure that staff are well-equipped to deliver high-quality, compassionate care and that learning from complaints is used proactively to improve practice across the service.

6. Children's Complaints received (Statutory and Corporate)

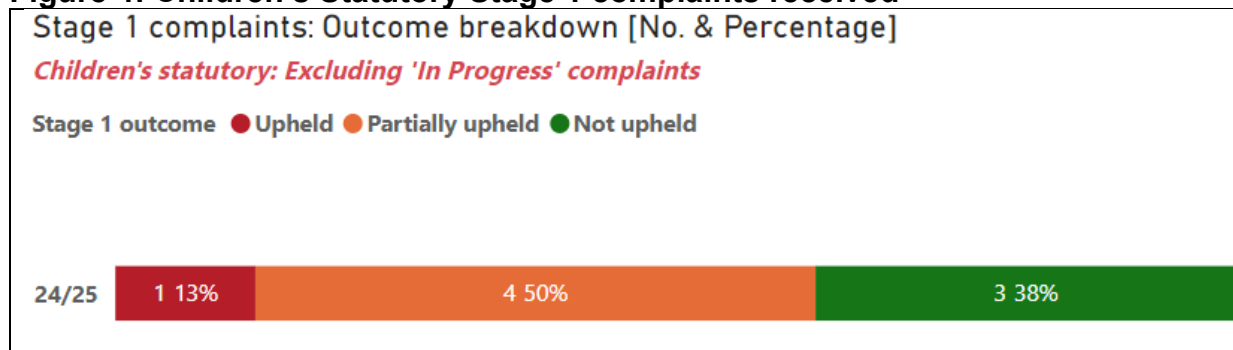
6.1. This section relates to only Children's complaints, both Statutory and Corporate.

Stage 1 Children's Statutory complaints received

6.2. 8 Children's Statutory complaints were received in 2024/25, the same number as in 2023/24.

6.3. Half of Stage 1 Children's Statutory complaints (50%) were partially upheld. Figure 4 shows the greatest number of complaints were due to the customer being 'unhappy with how a situation/incident was handled' and that equal numbers of these (50%, 50%) were partially upheld and not upheld.

Figure 4: Children's Statutory Stage 1 complaints received

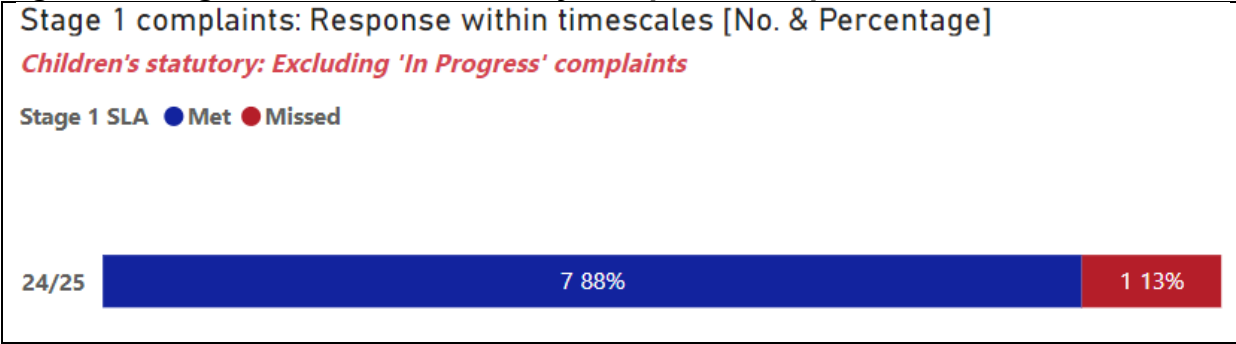




Stage 1 Children's Statutory timescales

6.4. Of the 8 Children's Statutory complaints received, 88% of them were responded to within timescales, which is an increase on 2023/24 (63%). See Figure 5.

Figure 5: Stage 1 Children's Statutory complaints responded within timescales



Stage 2 Children's Statutory complaints received

6.5. Of the 8 Stage 1 Statutory children's complaints, two progressed to Stage 2. One of these was partially upheld and the other was not upheld.

Stage 3 Children's Statutory complaints received

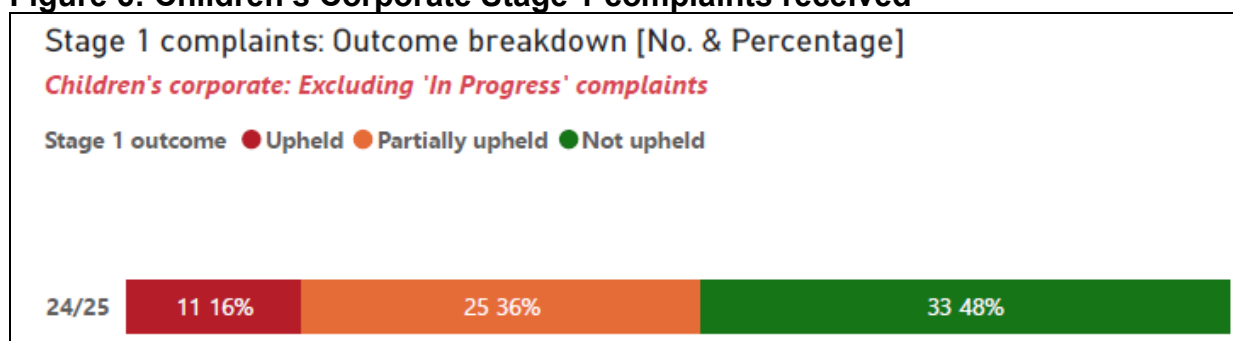
6.6. One Stage 3 Statutory children's complaint was investigated in 2024/25, following Stage 1 and Stage 2 processes completed in 2023/24. This was carried out by an independent panel, as is the process, within the required timescales and was upheld.

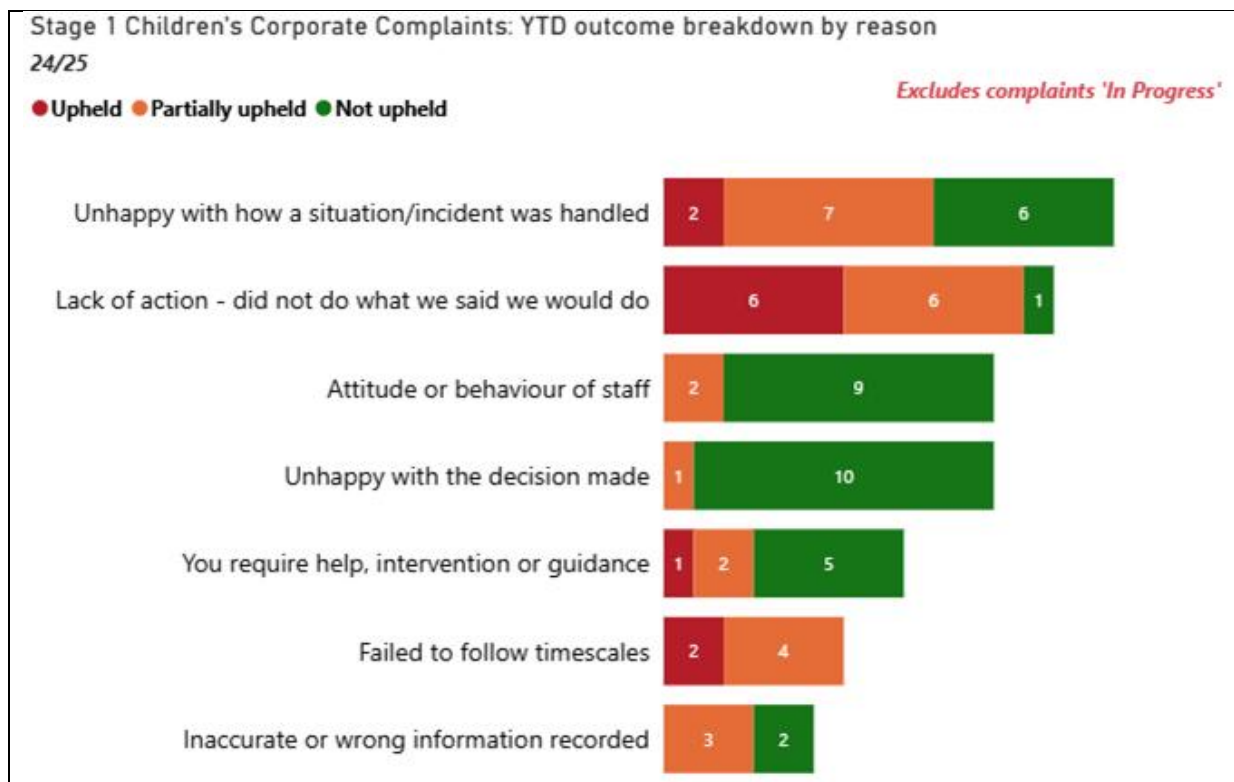
Stage 1 Children's Corporate complaints received

6.6 69 Children's Corporate complaints were received in 2024/25, a decrease on 2023/24 (79) and 2022/23 (74).

6.7 The majority (48%) of Stage 1 Children's Corporate complaints were not upheld. Figure 6 shows the main reason for complaints was because of 'unhappy with how a situation/incident was handled' and this can be attributed to concerns from families where statutory intervention is perceived to be unwarranted and managed in a way that they do not believe to be collaborative or inclusive to all parents, including those non-resident parents.

Figure 6: Children's Corporate Stage 1 complaints received

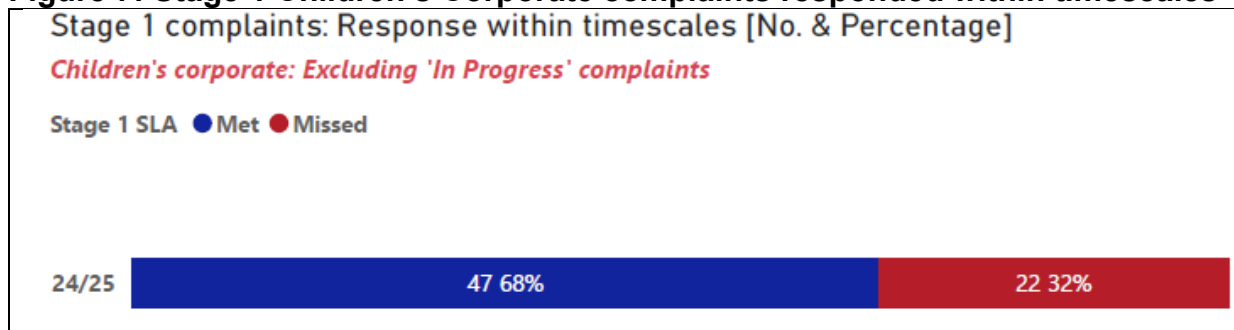




Stage 1 Children's Corporate timescales

6.8 Of the 69 Stage 1 complaints received, 68% were responded to within timescales, which is a decrease on 2023/24 (74%). See Figure 7.

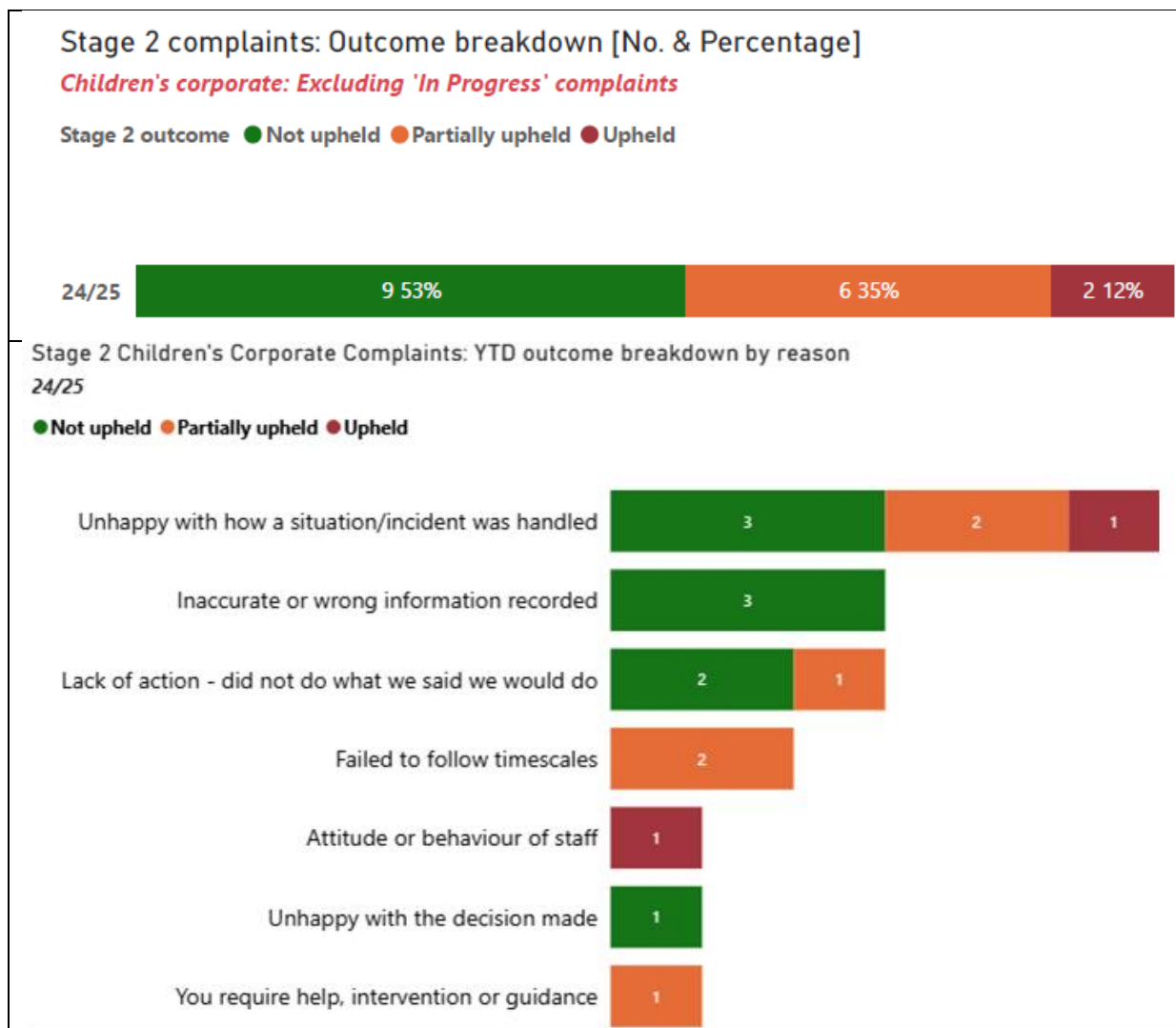
Figure 7: Stage 1 Children's Corporate complaints responded within timescales



Stage 2 Children's Corporate complaints received

6.9 Figure 8 shows that of the 69 Stage 1 Statutory children's complaints, 17 progressed to Stage 2, of which 53% were not upheld. The primary reasons were 'unhappy with how a situation/incident was handled'.

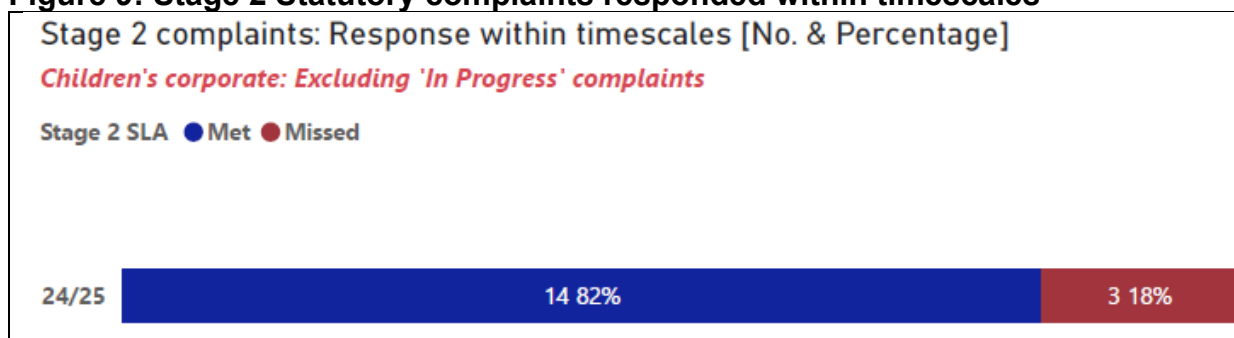
Figure 8: Outcomes of Children's Corporate Stage 2 Children's complaints



Stage 2 Children's Corporate complaints timescales

6.10 Of the 17 Stage 2 Children's Corporate complaints received, 82% were responded to within timescales (Figure 9). This is a great improvement on 2023/24, when 37% of the 19 Stage 2 Children's Corporate complaints were responded to within timescales.

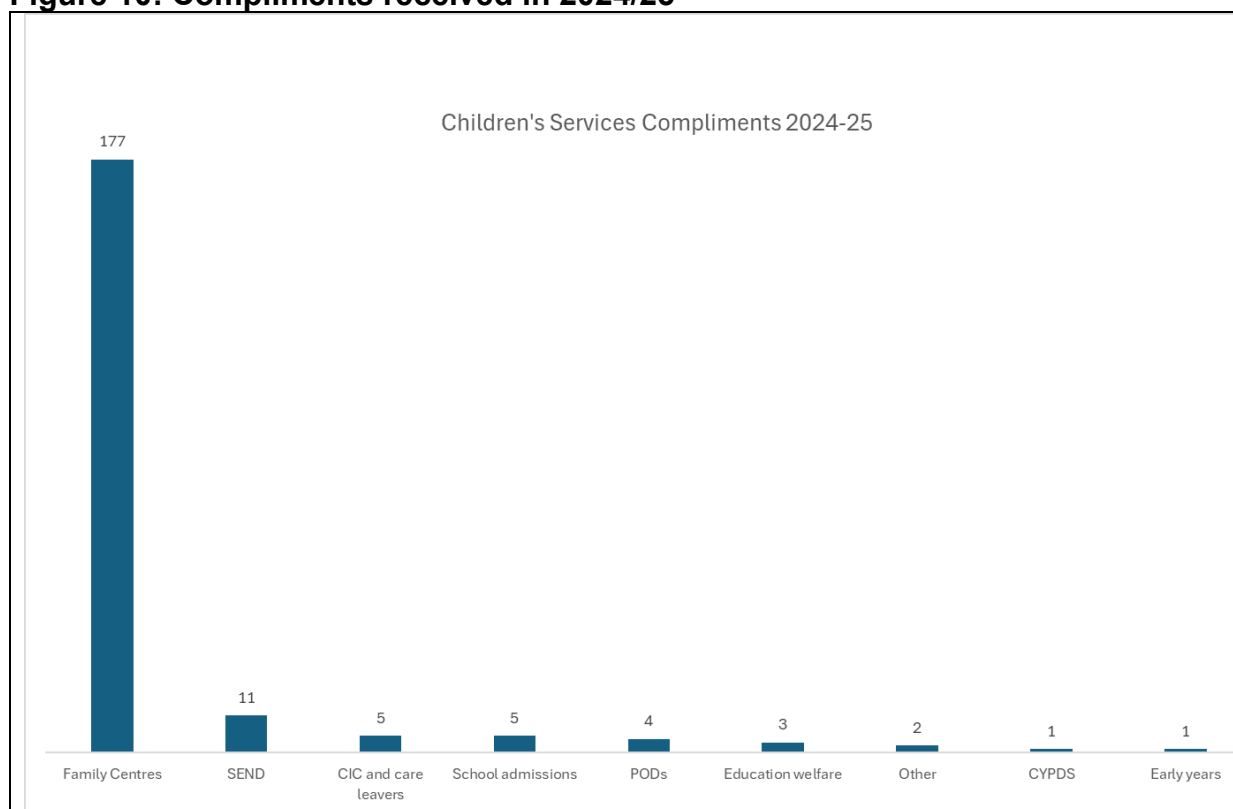
Figure 9: Stage 2 Statutory complaints responded within timescales



7. Children's Services compliments received

7.1 In 2024/25, Children's Services received 209 compliments, an increase on 2023/24 (74). This increase is due to an improvement in staff sharing compliments received with the complaints team, particularly Family Centres and is evidence of our continued excellent work with our families. Figure 10 sets out the volume of compliments received and details the teams in receipt of the most compliments. It also shows a selection of quotes from this year's compliments, to give an idea of some of the positive feedback received.

Figure 10: Compliments received in 2024/25



“I am just emailing to give my feedback from the support I have received from [...] for the past 2 years. Firstly I want to say it is a fantastic service you provide and the support from [...] has been incredible. As a first time parent to a sen child I was at a bit of a loss it was all new to me and I didn’t understand what was available to me and where to turn so when I was referred to [...] it was a god send. [...] has a wealth of knowledge and could point me in the right direction of where to go and who to talk to and have everything put in place to help XX on her journey. Although we haven’t been in constant contact with [...] she has always been there on the end of the phone whenever needed and to have that support is just so needed it’s a very scary position a sen parent finds themselves in when trying navigate finding the right schools and the right fit for your child and [...]’s knowledge and help was as I say a godsend this service is soo needed for our children and us and I cannot thank [...] enough for all her help nothing is ever too much.”

“My husband and I would like to send our heartfelt thank you for the fabulous sessions you have with our son XX, he has benefited immensely and we are so happy that he's had the opportunity to take this drug awareness course, thanks for all your effort and support”

“We would like to extend our deepest thanks for the tireless work and unwavering support you have provided to help our son reach where he is today. When XX left us as a young boy, we felt helpless, unable to do all the things parents wish to do for their child. However, you embraced him as your own and did everything we could have ever hoped for. For that, we are eternally grateful for your kindness, generosity, and humanity. The work you do for people in need, like our son, is truly incredible. Over the past ten years, you have become like family to him; constant source of support and encouragement. Without your support, belief, and determination to help XX, his success in studies would have been impossible. As his parents, it’s difficult to express the depth of our appreciation and gratitude.”

“I wanted to say thank you to all of you for your help, perseverance, tolerance, kindness and your time, in helping to get XX the support he needs. [...] Thank you for not giving up and for your continued patience and kindness, particularly also to me during what was an exceptionally difficult time. [...] Thanks to the team at AfC for coming to the party and tipping the balance in XX's favour for specialist support. [...] Without sounding over dramatic, but probably failing, I feel that you have all saved a life. XX's life. And I thank you”

*“[...] has been nothing short of fantastic. Her compassion, non-judgemental approach and comforting presence has been invaluable during what has been an emotional time for the family. Although we still worry about XX's future, [...] has significantly lightened our burden since her arrival, transforming what once felt like a bleak outlook into one with hope.
Thanks!”*

8. Lessons learned from Children's Services complaints

- 8.1 An important part of the complaints process is capturing the learning and embedding good practice across the Council. Listed below are some of the learnings from the Children's complaints:

Children's Social Care & Early Help

In the last year there has been some significant learning across our services in response to some complaints in particular:

- We have continued to embed regular workshops/meetings between the Complaints/ Compliments Team and service staff
- Regular meetings continue to take place between the Deputy Director and Complaints/ Compliments Team which is supporting oversight and tracking of complex and overdue complaints
- Our training offer to AfC staff is shaped and influenced through learning from complaints and we continue to review the themes and individual
- actions/recommendations and capture this in our mandatory training offer to all staff.
- In response to learning from specific complaints we have recently held a Whole Service Event for all staff across children's social care focusing on learning from child safeguarding practice reviews and local learning reviews.

Support and Safeguarding Service and Early Help

- Ensure that all parents who hold parental responsibility, including non-resident parents are communicated with equally and in a timely manner.
- Ensure that we are communicating in a fair, timely, collaborative and constructive strength-based manner with parents when we are involved in their family life.
- Ensure we are providing reports and minutes of meetings and plans in a timely manner to all parents holding parental responsibility.

SEND Team

- We have recruited additional team members to enhance communication and reduce delays.
- We have implemented an escalation process for instances where paperwork from external partner agencies is not received in a timely manner.
- We have conducted 'whole team' learning sessions focused on key policies to improve overall service delivery.
- We are committed to running face-to-face drop-in coffee mornings for parents and carers, providing an opportunity to meet the team and ask questions.
- We have implemented an additional mechanism for parents, carers, and young people to provide feedback on the service.

School Transport

- Timescales for processing applications have been reviewed and adjusted. This information is available to all applicants via the website and via email taglines from the Transport team.

- Customer Service Centre staff have been briefed regarding timescales and are better equipped to discuss expectations with parents.
- Online forms for fare paying passengers have been updated to reflect the availability of spare seats and manage expectations.

9. Lessons learned – final summary

- 9.1. The Council welcomes and recognises the importance of compliments and complaints as well as wider customer feedback. We use this in discussion at our leadership meetings and to help drive our services forward. Our complaints processes and procedures are regularly reviewed, and whilst found to be compliant a small number of improvements have been made.
- 9.2 The council has a statutory duty pursuant to s.3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness” commonly known as “the best value duty”.

In the [Best value standards and intervention statutory guidance](#) the following characteristics are defined as “characteristics of a well-functioning authority”:

- The authority has an effective and accessible complaints process and provides appropriate redress
- Lessons are learned from complaints.

The following is an indicator of potential failure:

- A high rate of upheld complaints made to Ombudsmen and the lack of an action plan(s) to address areas of concern.

- 9.3 In their Annual Value for Money the Council’s external auditor, Grant Thornton provided the following Value for Money Recommendation:

“We recommend that the Council should ensure that it learns from its experience of Local Government Ombudsman complaints, for example by considering options for satisfactory remedies when it becomes aware of complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman and takes action on lessons to be learned from such complaints.”

The Council is currently working towards adopting the LGSCO code (this is an action which is set out in the 25/26 AGS action plan which was agreed at A&G Committee in June 2025). The adoption of the Code will support a more systematic and transparent approach to complaint handling and service improvement. This will include reviewing remedies and ensuring that lessons learned from Ombudsman findings are embedded into practice to prevent recurrence and improve outcomes for residents.

10. Appendix A: LGSCO Annual Review 2025 letter

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

21 May 2025

By email

Mr Evans
Chief Executive
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council

Dear Mr Evans

Annual Review letter 2024-25

I write to you with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2025. The information offers valuable insight about your organisation's approach to complaints, and I know you will consider it as part of your corporate governance processes. We have listened to your feedback, and I am pleased to be able to share your annual statistics earlier in the year to better fit with local reporting cycles. I hope this proves helpful to you.

[Your annual statistics are available here.](#)

In addition, you can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read the public reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

In a change to our approach, we will write to organisations in July where there is exceptional practice or where we have concerns about an organisation's complaint handling. Not all organisations will get a letter. If you do receive a letter it will be sent in advance of its publication on our website on 16 July 2025, alongside our annual Review of Local Government Complaints.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

In February we published [good practice guides](#) to support councils to adopt our [Complaint Handling Code](#). The guides were developed in consultation with councils that have been piloting the Code and are based on the real-life, front-line experience of people handling complaints day-to-day, including their experience of reporting to senior leaders and elected members. The guides were issued alongside free [training resources](#) organisations can use to make sure front-line staff understand what to do when someone raises a complaint. We will be applying the Code in our casework from April 2026 and we know a large number of councils have already adopted it into their local policies with positive results.

This year we relaunched our popular [complaint handling training](#) programme. The training is now more interactive than ever, providing delegates with an opportunity to consider a complaint from receipt to resolution. Early feedback has been extremely positive with delegates reporting an increase in confidence in handling complaints after completing the training. To find out more contact training@lgo.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Complaint overview

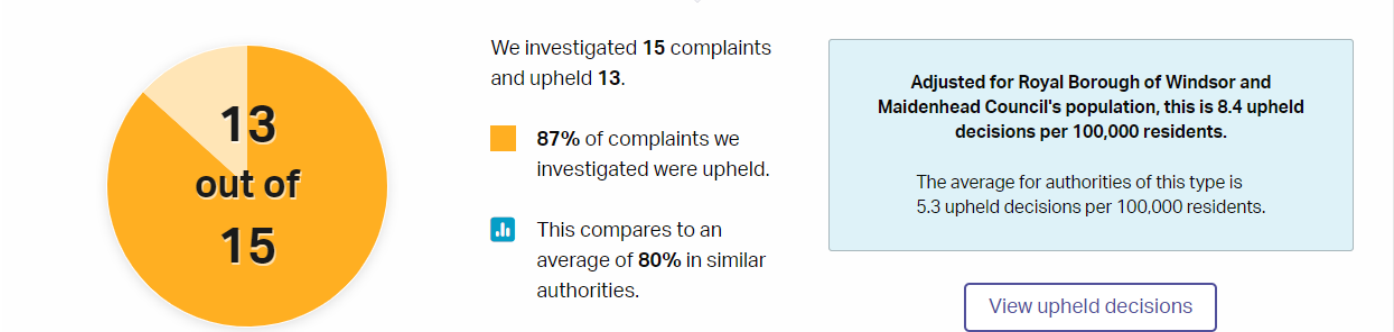
2024 / 2025

Between 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, we dealt with 52 complaints. Of these, 7 were not for us or not ready for us to investigate. We assessed and closed 30 complaints. We investigated 15 complaints.

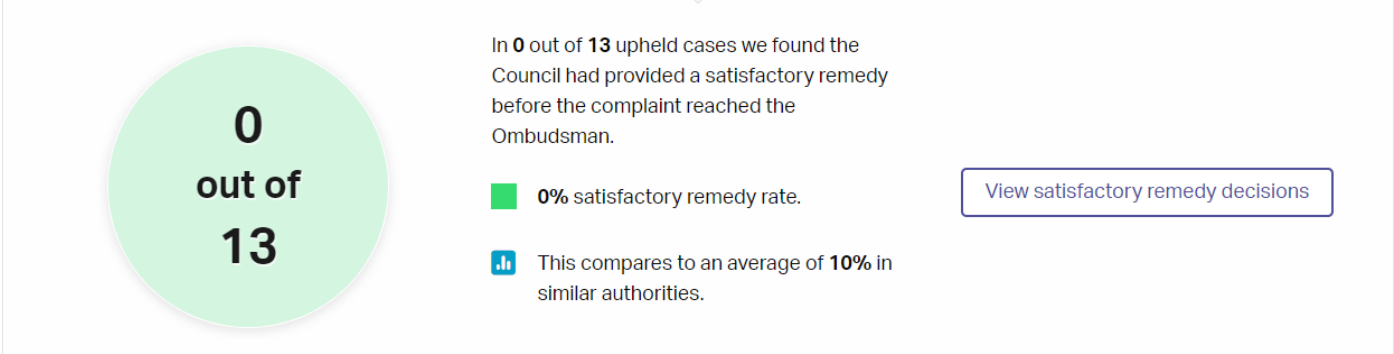
[More about this data](#)

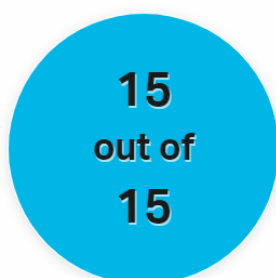


Complaints upheld



Satisfactory remedies provided by the Council





We recorded compliance outcomes in **15** cases.
In **15** cases we were satisfied with the actions taken.

 **100%** compliance rate with recommendations.

 This compares to an average of **100%** in similar authorities.

11. Appendix B: Council's complaints processes

The stages of the Council's process is detailed in the table below:

Stages	Adult services complaints	Children's services complaints	Formal Corporate complaints	Not within the formal complaints process
Stage 1	Statutory No specific timescale but aim to respond within 10 working days. Response from Service Manager or higher.	Statutory Up to 10 working days. Can agree extension for a further 10 working days. Response from Head of Service.	Up to 20 working days. Can agree extension for a further 10 working days. Response from Head of Service.	N/A
Stage 2	N/A	Statutory 25-65 working days. Completed by independent complaints investigators and report produced. Adjudicating letter in response to report completed by Children's Director of Social Care.	Up to 20 working days. Review of stage 1 complaint and response by Director.	N/A
Stage 3	N/A	Statutory Stage 3 independent panel. Up to 70 working days. Panel of three independent members who produce a report. Letter in response to the report completed by the Directors of Children's Services.	N/A	N/A
LGSCO	Can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman	Can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman	Can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman	N/A
Alternative appeal process	N/A	N/A	N/A	Customer given timescales for response

