



# **Annual Social Services Complaints & Compliments Report**

**2022-23**

### 1. Background and Context

- 1.1 Social Services aims to provide quality services to the public of the City and County of Swansea. There may be, however, times when things go wrong and a service user or someone sufficiently concerned with their welfare, may wish to complain.
- 1.2 Swansea Council's Social Service Complaints Policy has been established in accordance with The Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and The Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014.
- 1.3 The above regulations are made under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. They bring the complaints handling process for Social Services in line with the Welsh Government Model Concerns and Complaints Policy and Guidance, and the NHS Complaints Procedure Putting Things Right.
- 1.4 This policy also encompasses the requirements of the Children Act 1989, the Adoption of Children Act 2002, the Community Care Act 2014 and is in accordance with guidance issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970.
- 1.5 Each Local Authority is required to produce and publish an annual report regarding the operation of their Social Services Complaints Procedures. This report contains statistical information and analysis relating to complaints, comments and compliments dealt with during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

### 2. Our Complaints Procedure

- 2.1 The law says that you have a right to get your views heard about Social Services.
- 2.2 The following people can use the procedure:
  - People using social care services provided by the Council.
  - People using social care services purchased or contracted by the council.
  - A representative, relative or friend, properly nominated by a service user or acknowledged as appropriate to act in a service user's best interest when they lack capacity or have died.
- 2.3 Firstly, you should tell the staff member who provides support about what you feel is wrong so they can try to put things right for you.
- 2.4 Stage 1 – Local Resolution
  - 2.4.1 When we receive your complaint, you will get an acknowledgement within 2 working days. We will contact you to discuss your complaint within 10 working days. This could be via phone or if you prefer we can have a

face-to-face meeting. Once we have discussed your complaint and the matter has been resolved, we will write to you within 5 working days of the resolution date, confirming the outcome.

2.4.2 Most complaints are resolved at this stage, and it is usually the quickest and most straightforward way to deal with issues.

### 2.5 Stage 2 – Formal Consideration

2.5.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved at the informal stage, your complaint will progress to stage 2. This stage will be carried out by someone not directly involved with the service you are complaining about. During the investigation the Complaints Officer will keep you advised and informed of developments.

2.5.2 You are not obliged to take up the offer of a discussion at local resolution stage; you have the right to request a formal investigation from the very beginning if you wish. However, as this is a longer process than local resolution, we recommend trying to resolve matters through local resolution first.

2.5.3 When your complaint is investigated at stage 2, we will write to you within 5 working days of receiving your request for a formal investigation, to make sure we understand all the details of your complaint and the outcome you would like to achieve. We will ask you to confirm that this is accurate and will also give you details of the Independent Investigator.

2.5.4 The date on which you confirm the detail of your complaint is called the 'start date' and we have 25 working days from this date to complete the investigation and send you a written response.

2.5.5 If we are unable to achieve this deadline, we will write to you and tell you why there is a delay and when you will receive the response. This will be as soon as possible after the 25 working day deadline and no later than 6 months from the date we received your complaint.

### 2.6 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

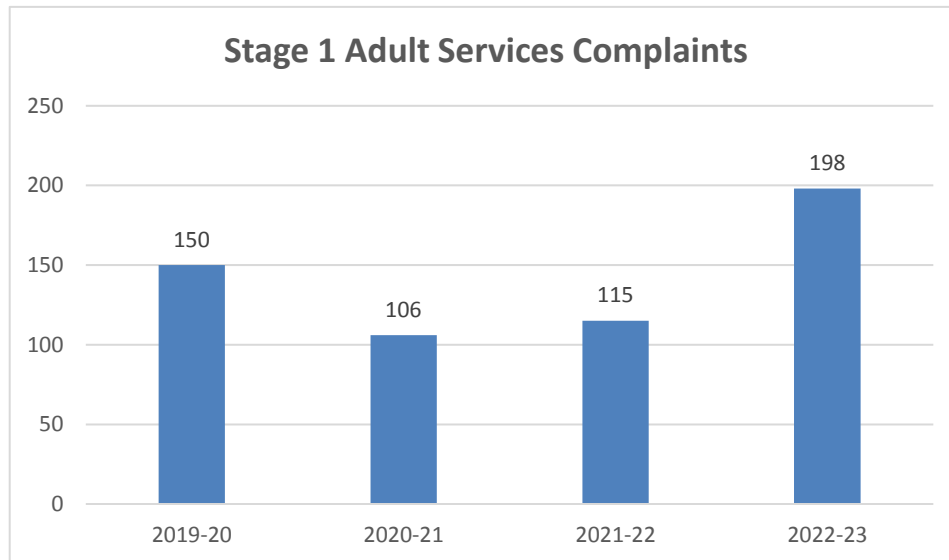
2.6.1 If you are still unhappy after the conclusion of the Council process you can complain to the Ombudsman.

### 2.7 Advocates

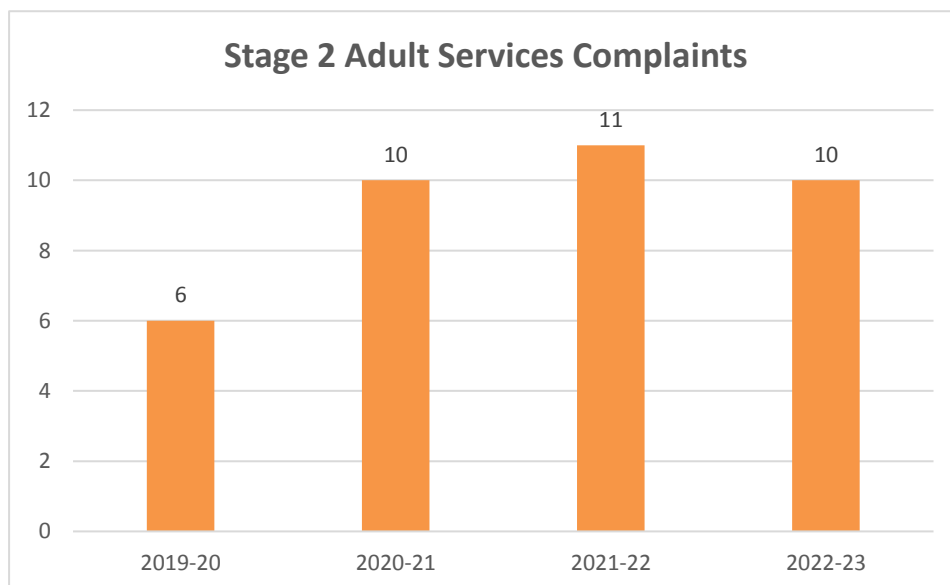
2.7.1 Our staff will aim to help you to make your concerns known to us. If extra assistance is needed, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help.

### 3. Adult Services Complaints to Swansea Council 2022-23

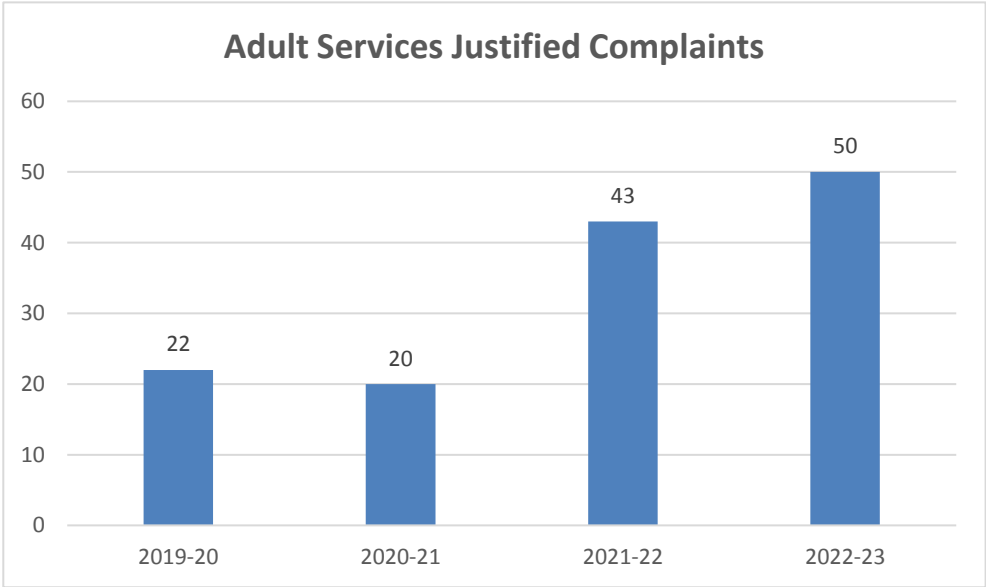
- 3.1 A total of **198** Stage 1 Adult Services complaints were recorded for 2022-23. This is a 72% increase on the previous year when 115 were recorded and a 32% increase on pre-pandemic levels. 27% (54) complaints were all from the same complainant. The level of stage 1 complaints is mainly due to the increasing demand and the pressure on services, leading to delays in the provision of care. This increase is also being seen across other Councils in Wales.



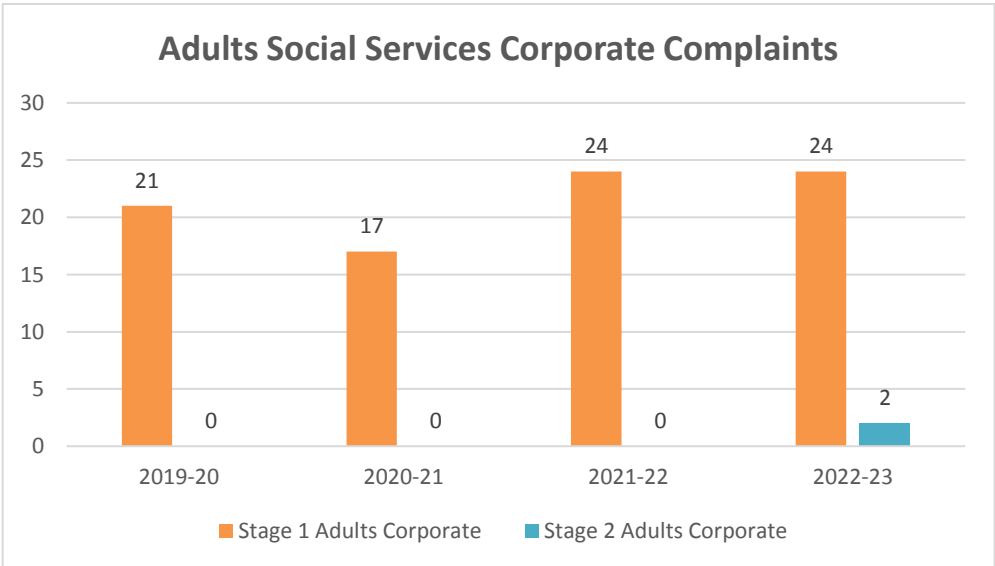
- 3.2 A total of **10** Stage 2 complaints were recorded for 2022-23. This is one fewer than last year and the same number received in 2020-21.



3.3 Of all complaints received, **50** were justified compared with 43 for the previous year.



3.4 Corporate complaints relate to the business administration within Adult Services as opposed to Social Care Services. **24** stage 1 Corporate Complaints relating to Adult Services were received, which is the same number as last year. Two further stage 2 complaints were Corporate Complaints.



**4. Outcomes of Stage 2 Complaints for Adults Services 2022-23**

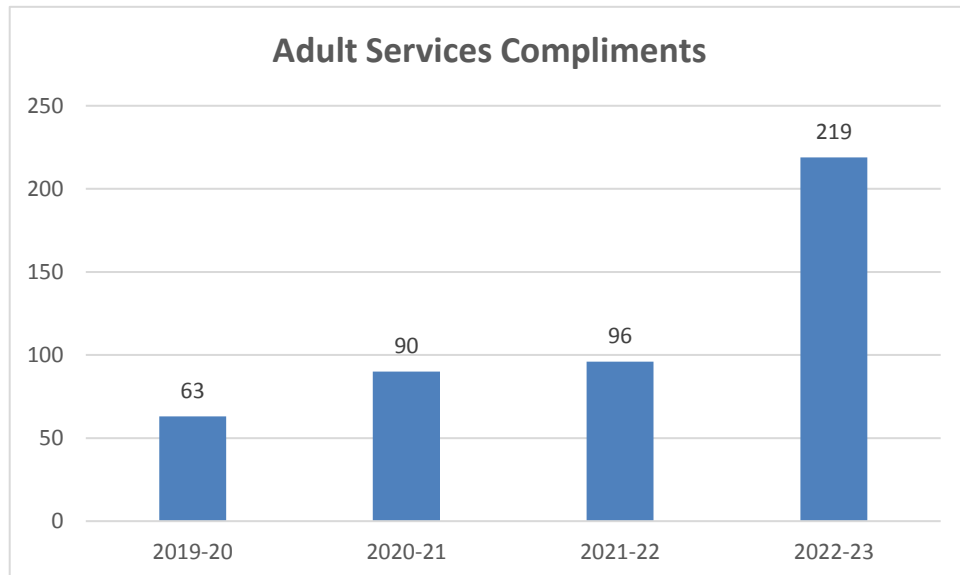
4.1 The table below provides the outcomes for the ten stage 2 complaints and two stage 2 Corporate Complaints:

## Appendix B

Complaint	Outcome
<b>Adult Services</b>	
Contracting: Unhappy with care costs levied due to care of Dad in home	Justified
Community Initial Assessment Team (CIAT): Social worker not advising of care costs in relation to third party fees	Not Justified
Contracting: Poor practice and failings in the duty of care by care home	Not Justified
Direct Payments Team: Complainant not informed that contribution to care had increased and allowed a huge debt to accrue	Not Justified
Contracting: Joint complaint with Carmarthenshire – neglectful care of wife at care home.	Not Justified
Maes Glas Residential Services: Various complaints regarding son's care management at placement	Partially Justified
Maes Glas Residential Services: Various complaints regarding son's care management at placement	Partially Justified
Transition Team: requested respite facility not able to provide medical care for son	Partially Justified
Financial Assessments/Safeguarding: Financial matters regarding capital, income and house sale. Discontinued as the investigating Officer was unable to confirm the specific detail of this complaint	Discontinued / out of remit
Learning Disability Team / Contracting / Safeguarding: Numerous complaints regarding safeguarding, supported living management and the social work team care management	Ongoing
<b>Adult Services Corporate Complaints</b>	
Community Long Term Social Work Team: Breach of confidentiality	Not Upheld
Common Access Point: Poor communication from CAP with concerns of a neighbour	Partially Upheld

5. Compliments Adult Services 2022-23

5.1 Adult Services saw a significant **128%** increase in compliments in 2022-23.



5.2 These are some examples of compliments received by the Adult Services teams:

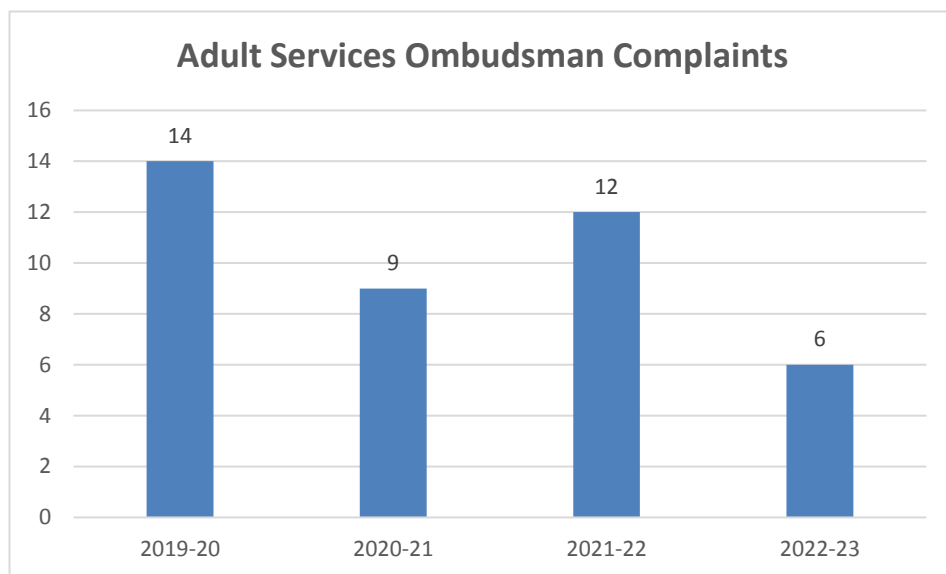
**Common Access Point Social Workers:** received special thanks from the partner of a service user eager to show their gratitude. The partner said: "Over the last six months, I have had a lot of contact with Social Services over the care of my partner. I want to thank all those involved, especially the workers I cannot praise highly enough - They could see I was at the end of my mental and physical strength and did all they could to help me. So, thank you once again."

**Social worker from the Community Initial Assessment team:** The daughter said: "We have read your Assessment and have nothing to add other than what an extremely insightful synopsis of our family. I humbly thank you again for all your help and kindness in this difficult time for my mother and me."

**A Social Worker** received terrific feedback from the daughter of a service user going through a difficult transition to a care home. The daughter said: "I want to let you know how well my family and I have been supported by my mum's Social Worker, X. Mum is now settled happily in Hengoed Park. The stress of mum's situation was extremely difficult to cope with, but X calmly and efficiently supported us through it. Also, care home staff said they had great confidence in X to bring the situation to a positive conclusion. We can't thank her enough."

**6. Complaints Closed by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales for Adult Services 2022-23**

- 6.1 The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) publishes the annual letters to all Councils on its website. The letter highlights activities undertaken by the Ombudsman's office during the year and the Council's performance.
- 6.2 In 2022-23 the Ombudsman annual letter showed the PSOW received and closed six Adult Services complaints, which is a 50% reduction on last year and the lowest figure for the past four years.



- 6.3 Not all the Ombudsman figures in the annual letter relate to the year in which they were received, as investigations can take time to complete. In 2022-23 the Council received 14 enquiries about Adult Services complaints from the Ombudsman's office. Eleven were not investigated, one was referred to Health, one was able to be resolved quickly and one was withdrawn.

**7. Adult Services Complaints Key Performance Indicators 2022-23**

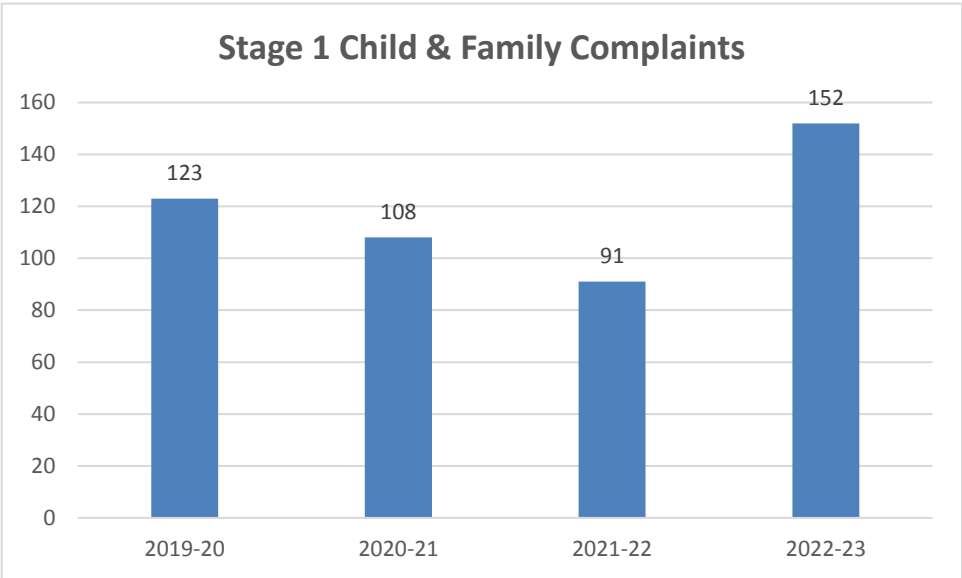
- 7.1 The table below shows overall performance by Adult Services on responding to complaints within the timescales stipulated in the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy.
- 7.2 Despite the pressure of increasing demand on both Adult Services and the Complaints Team, delays are kept to a minimum wherever possible and within the Council's control.



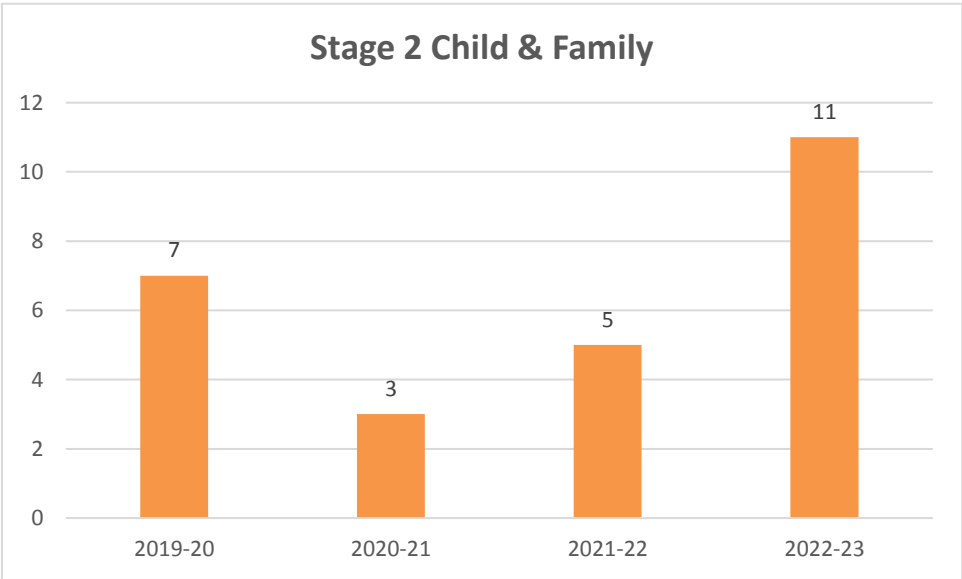
Key Performance Indicator	Comment / Management Actions
<b>96%</b> (189) of stage one social services complaints acknowledged within 2 working days	9 complaints not acknowledged within 2 working days
<b>77.27%</b> (153) of stage one social services complaints discussed with complainants, i.e. appointments with a Social Services Officer or Complaints Officer within 10 working days of acknowledgement	Delays due to capacity within the teams
<b>88%</b> (158) of stage one responded to within 5 working days of discussion	Delays due to capacity within the team. Some delays also due to being unable to reach complainants
<b>100%</b> (10) of stage two complainants receiving a written summary of the complaint within 5 working days	No delays – or within agreed timeframe with complainant
<b>80%</b> (8) of stage two complaints responded to within 25 working days, or within any extension approved by the Director of Social Services.	All extensions agreed with Director of Social Services One is still ongoing and has exceeded the timeframe the Director can agree to.
<b>95.8%</b> (23) stage 1 corporate complaints responded to within 10 clear working days (no requirement for a discussion)	Delay due to capacity within service department
<b>50%</b> (1) stage two corporate complaints responded to within 20 clear working days, or within any extension agreed with the customer.	Delay due to staff capacity in Complaints Team

## 8. Child & Family Services Complaints to Swansea Council 2022-23

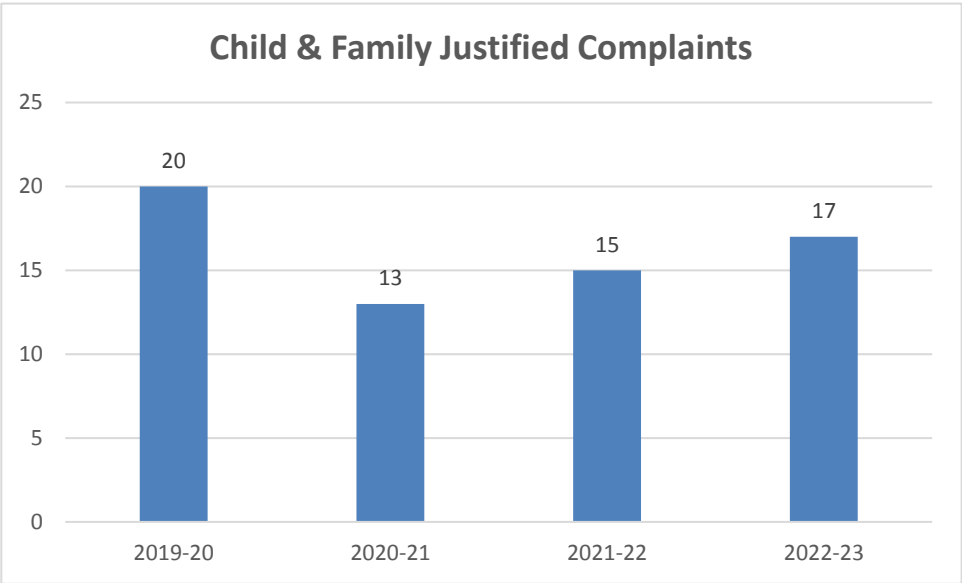
8.1 A total of **152** Stage 1 Child & Family Services complaints were recorded for 2022-23. This is a 67% increase on the previous year when 91 were recorded and a 23% increase on pre-pandemic levels. This is the highest number of stage 1 complaints in the past four years mainly due to the increasing demand and the pressure on services. This increase is also being seen across other Councils in Wales. There were ten complaints from the same complainant.



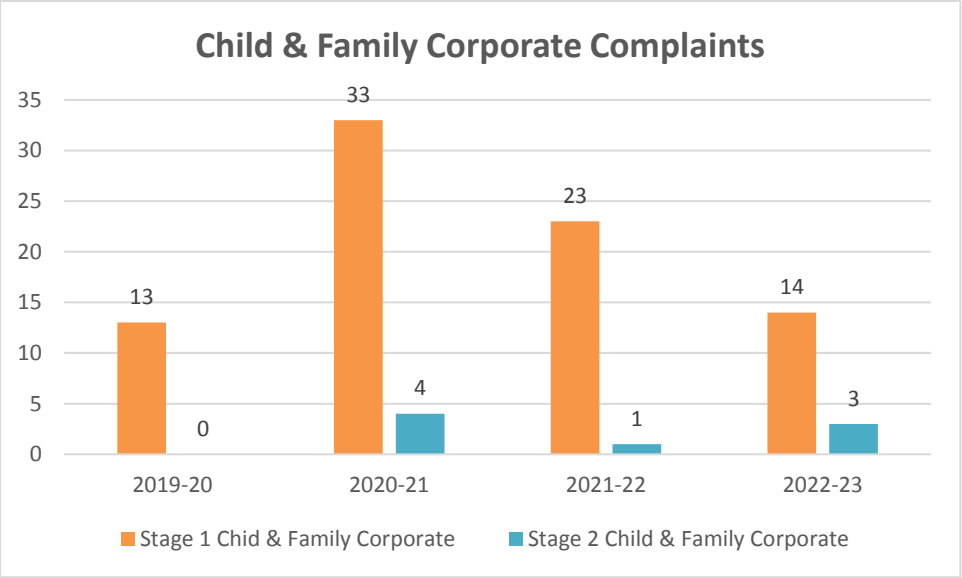
8.2 A total of **11** Stage 2 complaints were recorded for 2022-23. This is six more than last year and the highest number over the past four years.



8.3 Of all complaints received, **17** were justified compared with 15 for the previous year.



8.4 Corporate complaints relate to the business administration within Child & Family Services as opposed to Social Care Services. **14** stage 1 Corporate Complaints relating to Child & Family Services were received, which is a 39% reduction compared with last year and the lowest number in the last three years. Three further stage 2 complaints were Corporate Complaints.



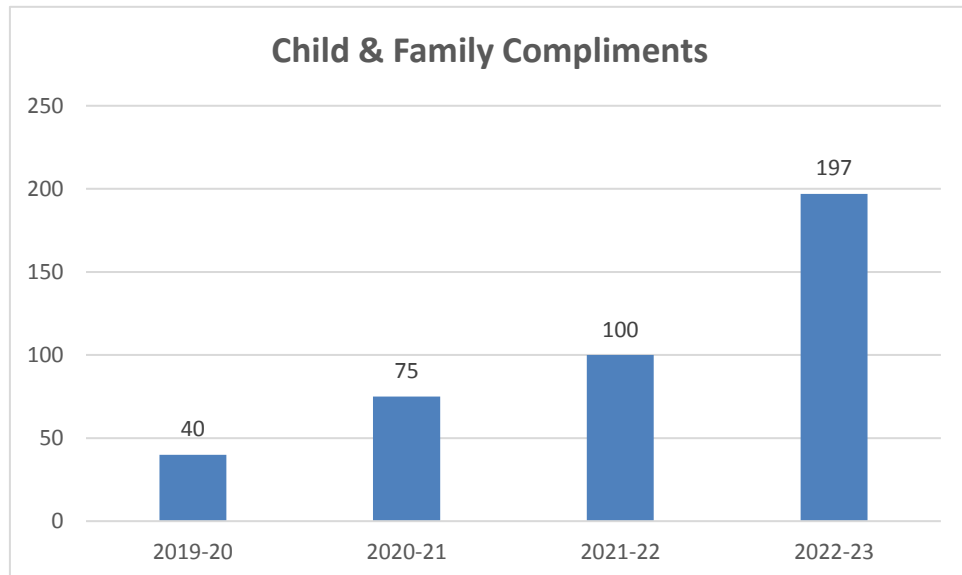
## 9. Outcomes of Stage 2 Complaints for Child & Family Services 2022-23

9.1 The table below provides the outcomes for the eleven stage 2 complaints and three stage 2 Corporate Complaints:

Complaint	Outcome
<b>Child &amp; Family Services</b>	
Looked After Children Team: IRO notes being incorrect and stage 1 response did not address concerns.	Justified
BAYS: Request to move not granted, unhappy with social work assessment.	Not Justified
Child and Family general: Historical complaint - Social Services did not act to safeguard her when in LA care	Not Justified
Independent Review Officer Team: Poor communication from the team and not invited to reviews.	Not Justified
Friends and Family: Disagreed with the lack of financial support	Not Justified
BAYS: Via an advocate - young person unhappy with the actions taken by Social Services	Not Justified
IAA: Disagreement with Social Services decision not to allow family contact.	Not Justified
Child Disability Team: Via an advocate - Delay in receiving passport.	Not Justified
Looked After Children Team: Unhappy with accusations and contact not promoted.	Partially Justified
Friends and Family: Unhappy with contact/ placement breakdown and factually incorrect minutes.	Partially Justified
Child and family general: Historical complaint regarding parent returning to family home. Discontinued as legal action taken.	Discontinued
<b>Child &amp; Family Services Corporate Complaints</b>	
Penderry Team: Concerns not being listened to and poor communication.	Partially Justified
Penderry Team: Checks carried out without consent	Justified
Penderry Team: Inappropriate comments made by social worker.	Not Justified

**10. Compliments Child & Family Services 2022-23**

10.1 Child & Family Services saw a significant **97%** increase in compliments in 2022-23.



10.2 These are some examples of compliments received by the Child & Family Services teams:

**The Supervised Contact team** received a lovely poem in a Christmas card and a box of chocolates from a grateful family. The card read: "I don't know how to thank you enough. For me, this time has been so tough. But you listen to me, and you understand, and are always there with a helping hand. So, thanking you is a must. The depth of gratitude you must trust. Thank you all so very much." Another family member added: "Thank you all for being the best."

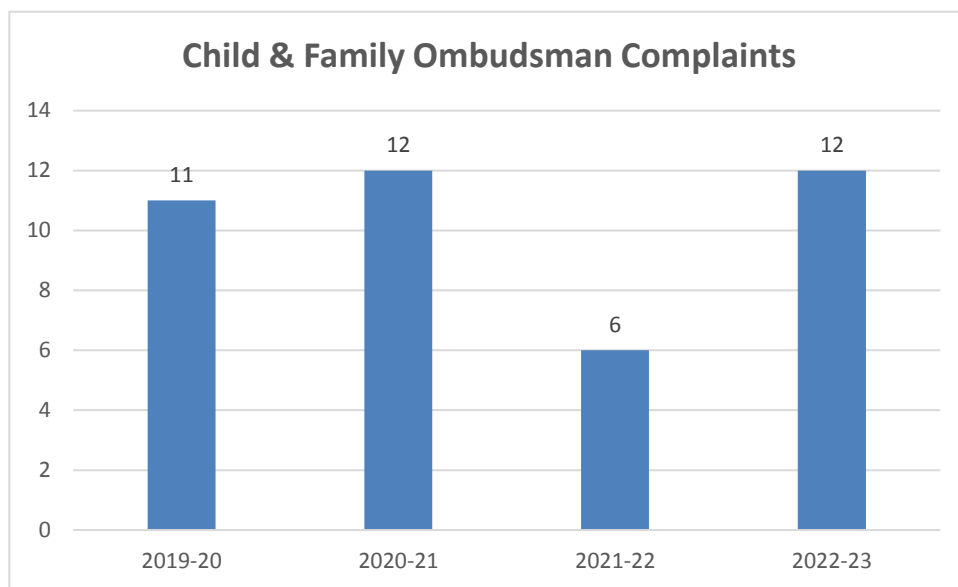
**An Independent Domestic Violence Advocate** received positive feedback from South Wales Police regarding their great working relationship in response to domestic abuse incidents. The South Wales Police representative said: "Thank you for your massive support and all the knowledge from listening to you speak to the victim about the situations she has been put into. I can now better understand the sheer number of domestic abuse cases I attend."

**Newly Qualified Social Worker X** has received praise from the solicitor of a mother she is working with to support her son. The solicitor complimented X on her patience and hard work, resulting in a positive outcome.

**11. Complaints Closed by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales for Child & Family Services 2022-23**

11.1 The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) publishes the annual letters to all Councils on its website. The letter highlights activities undertaken by the Ombudsman’s office during the year and the Council’s performance.

11.2 In 2022-23 the Ombudsman received and closed twelve Child & Family Services complaints, which is double last year’s figure of 6 and the same number closed in 2020-21.



11.3 Not all the Ombudsman figures in the annual letter relate to the year in which they were received, as investigations can take time to complete. In 2022-23 the Council received 15 enquiries about Child & Family Services complaints from the Ombudsman’s office, none of which were investigated.

**12. Child & Family Services Complaints Key Performance Indicators 2022-23**

12.1 The table below shows overall performance by Child & Family Services on responding to complaints within the timescales stipulated in the Council’s Corporate Complaints Policy.

12.2 Despite the pressure of increasing demand on both Child & Family Services and the Complaints Team, delays are kept to a minimum wherever possible and within the Council’s control.

Key Performance Indicator	Comment / Management Actions
93% (141) stage 1 social services complaints acknowledged within 2 working days .	A small number of delays due to the volume of workload and capacity within the team
76% (118) of stage one social services complaints discussed with complainants, i.e. appointments with a Social Services Officer or Complaints Officer within 10 working days of acknowledgement.	Delays due to capacity within the team. Some delay also due to being unable to reach complainants
75% (115) of stage 1 Social Services complaints responded to within 5 working days of discussion.	A small number of delays due to the volume of workload and capacity within the teams
100% (10) of stage two complainants receiving a written summary of the complaint within 5 working days	No delays – or within agreed timeframe with complainant
100% (10) of stage two complaints responded to within 25 working days, or within any extension approved by the Director of Social Services.	All extensions agreed with the Director
79% (11) stage 1 corporate complaints responded to within 10 clear working days (no requirement for a discussion)	Delay due to responding officer
100% (4) of stage two corporate complaints responded to within 20 clear working days, or within any extension agreed with the customer.	

### 13. Learning from Complaints across Social Services

- 13.1 Adult Services and Child & Family Services both use complaints, comments, and compliments from the public to continuously improve processes and services.
- 13.2 Complaints via the Ombudsman are discussed with Heads of Service and the relevant Principal Officer. The Complaints Officer responds to the PSOW on the actions undertaken by Swansea Council and any lessons learned. Once actions were completed, the complaint is closed on the system, recording the outcome and any lessons learned.
- 13.3 Adult Services undertake quality reviews through a Quality Improvement Group and Continuous Improvement Group to understand where learning and changes can be made as a result of complaints.
- 13.4 The Child & Family Services Learning and Innovation Team routinely takes the learning from complaints to inform the content of briefings, peer

learning sessions, and content of training; as well as regularly sharing themes in the Child & family newsletters.

- 13.5 The Complaints Service receives an Internal Audit every three years to ensure it is undertaking its functions correctly. The internal audit of Complaints began at the end of 2022-23 and concluded in 2023-24 with the overall assurance level of substantial.