



APPENDIX B

Complaints and Compliments in Practice

Complaints process:

We have changed the way we manage our stage 1 complaints. QA Practitioners have been undertaking stage 1 complaint investigations since this was trialled in November 2024, and the process was revised in collaboration with the Complaints Department in March 2025. The new process is provided as appendix 1 to this paper.

This ensures that the complaint is allocated to an experienced social worker who is not directly involved with the case. This provides a certain level of independency from the team in which the complaint originates. Complainants have responded to the involvement of QA Practitioners positively and engaged well in the process.

Staff who are subject to a complaint are now provided with guidance on the process, the expectations of them within the complaints process and welfare information.

If children/young people raise a complaint they are offered an advocate, a face to face meeting with the QA Practitioner and we ensure that any written communication is age appropriate and understandable. They are regularly updated and given the opportunity to have the QA Practitioner meet with them to share the outcome letter, to ensure that they have fully understood.

All final response letters to complainants are quality assured by the Service Manager for QA or Service Director before being sent out to ensure a thorough investigation has been undertaken, robust rationale is included, outcomes are appropriate and proportionate, and recommendations are achievable and realistic.

Any actions or recommendations arising from the stage 1 outcome are tracked by the QA Practitioner to ensure that they are completed within an agreed timeframe. Examples may include recommendations for a reflective supervision to take place to discuss the learning from the complaint between the Team Manager and Allocated Social Worker and/or rectifying an action; so for example, ensuring meeting minutes are provided.

Complaint outcomes

The 24/25 complaints annual report provides an overview of complaint outcomes and learning.

As of 25/26 the service will be producing a Quarterly analysis report which will also be used to understand complaints within our service.

Summary of Learning from Q1 compliments and complaints

- A Quarterly Learning from Complaints and Compliments bulletin is circulated to all staff in children's services. This celebrates our external compliments and raises awareness of our key learning areas for improvement and development from complaints. The quarter 2 report is included as appendix 2 to this paper.
- This report highlights good practice and any learning from our complaints to be addressed through training and development.

- Our current programme of workshops mirror the key learning themes from complaints.
- Workshops are held by the QA Practitioners and are bite size sessions to ensure staff have availability and capacity to attend. Workshops currently on offer:

- Voice of the Child and Purposeful Visits
- Engaging Fathers and Men
- Threshold Training
- SMART Planning and Safety Plans
- Chronology, Genogram and Case Summaries
- Confirmatory Bias
- Professional Curiosity

- Feedback from staff around the workshops has been positive and we report on this separately.
- Bi-monthly meetings are held with the QA Team and the Academy to share learning from complaints and audits to ensure that our training package is robust and we are working collaboratively to develop our Training Needs Analysis.
- We ensure that any actions or recommendations arising from complaints are completed, the Complaints Department track and alert the service to actions outstanding to ensure that we are closing the loop on actions/recommendations.

Financial payments:

- The complaints process is not the route to financial compensation. A claim for this applies only when families believe that the LA has failed to protect a child or convened a child's human rights. However, in some instances, we will make a nominal payment through the complaints process where we think there is a specific financial way to address something to achieve a satisfactory complaint outcome. An example of this is a young requesting that she would like to receive a financial payment for her negative experience, which included not being supported to have her 18th birthday celebration in the way that she wanted to. This was due to the challenge the service faced in providing her with appropriate accommodation to start her young adult life. We acknowledged that we didn't work well with her to agree a positive plan of support as she left our care.

Next Steps:

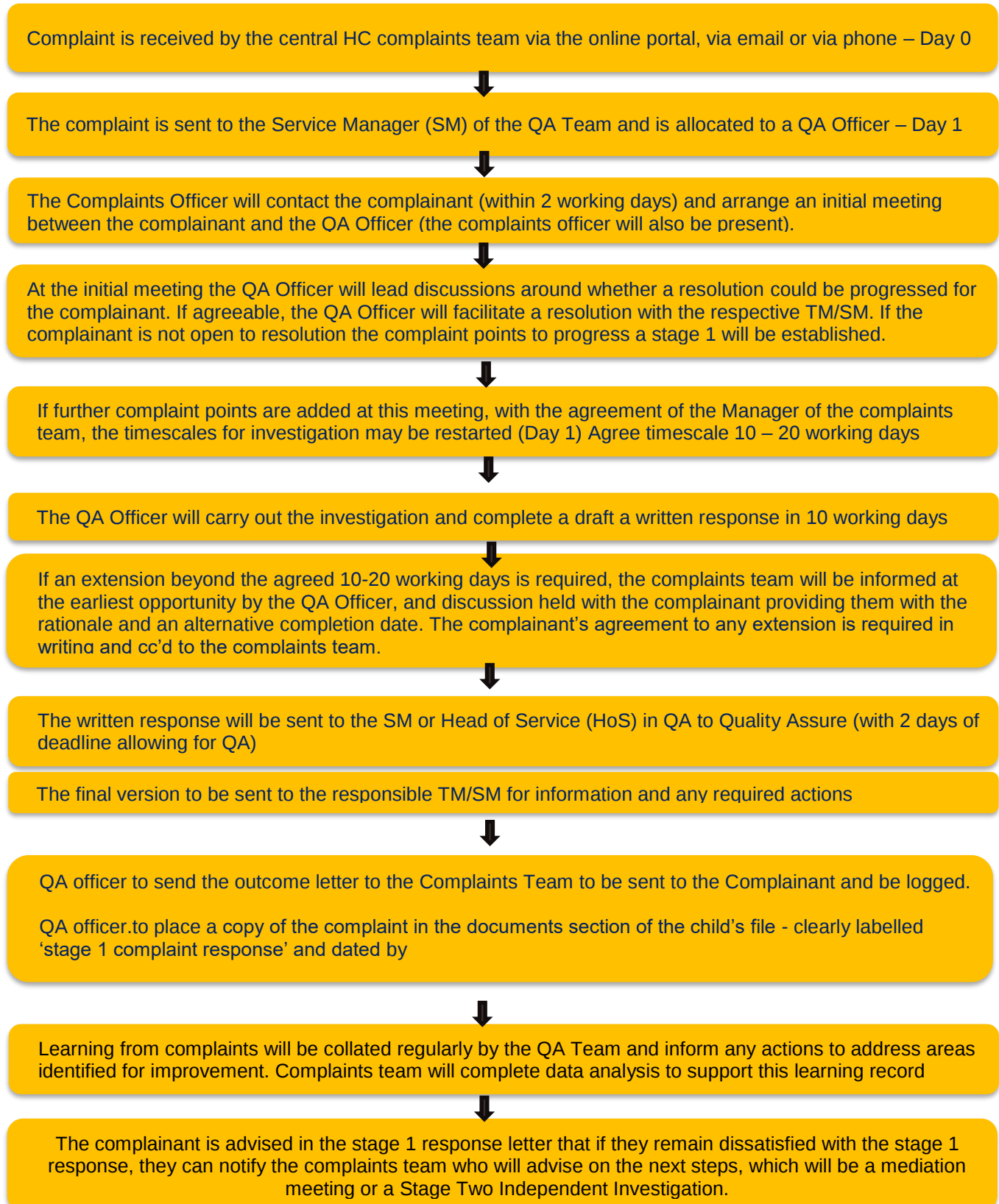
-We will be ensuring that we closely monitor our compliments through the development of categories information, to better understand what parents and young people are finding valuable and positive about the way that we work with them.

-The service user feedback we receive from the monthly case file audits includes compliments and complaints. Complaints we address through the audit process however compliments received also need to be recognised for balance, and these need to be recorded, shared with individual staff and celebrated.

- The complaints service record overall complaint outcomes however complaints can contain several elements which have different outcomes. We will be working with the complaints team to ensure that we are able to track the category of each complaint point so we can better understand the quality of our service.
- The QA Service will continue to produce Quarterly Complaints and Compliments Bulletins for staff to keep momentum of learning and improvement.
- Workshops and training will continue to be informed by complaint outcomes and tailored accordingly.

Appendix 1

Children's Services: Complaints Flow Chart (March 2025)



Appendix 2



Learning from Complaints: Quarterly Bulletin

This bulletin is for **quarter 1 (1st April 2025 – 30th June 2025)** and provides a summary of good practice and learning identified from our complaint investigations at stage 1.

😊 Good Practice Identified:

- Assessments are accurate and interpretation of information is well documented through analysis.
- Phone calls and emails have been recorded and easily located on case files.
- We have seen an appropriate and proportionate response to concerns around domestic abuse.
- There is good evidence of information sharing and joined up working with our partner agencies.
- Work undertaken with partners/fathers is undertaken within realistic timeframes, demonstrating inclusiveness.
- The correct procedures and thresholds have been correctly identified, when responding to referrals (MASH)
- The level of professionalism of our staff can be clearly seen within the complaints process.
- There is evidence of analysis and reflection around children's lived experience, demonstrating impact.

Learning from Complaints:

- Ensuring that we consistently demonstrate professional curiosity.
- To ensure that there is a clear timeframe for children in, or leaving care, to have their belongings provided to them.
- Ensuring that in our assessments/reports we distinguish between facts and allegations.
- Making sure we record how questions from a parent have been responded to
- Consistently engaging fathers/partners throughout our involvement.
- To increase the involvement of multi-agency partners in discussions around housing and sharing information about risks in the local community.
- Ensuring that the language we use is clear and understandable for children and families.
- Making sure that we routinely triangulate information to be clear about its authenticity.
- Ensuring that we are timely in completing our assessments.
- To make sure that we are translating documents when an interpreter is required so that the young person has a written record to refer to that they understand.

- Quality assuring our assessments and reports to avoid factual inaccuracies and typing/grammar errors.
- Making sure managerial oversight is recorded on the case file in a timely way.

Compliments

Our compliments evidence our good practice. We have received 31 external compliments in Q1. Examples of these are:

“I would just like to thank you for the lovely CLA meeting letter for Martha. Its really well written up in a way that Martha can understand whilst still being factual”.
(compliment for Bonnie Tasker; IRO)

“Louise is the best social worker so far because “she listens” and “doesn’t criticise me”.
(Compliment for Louise Welsby from a young person)

“I look forward to a closure of all proceedings and just being able to enjoy family time with my children as brilliant as children services in Hereford have been I have thoroughly enjoyed working with all staff and have felt supported at all times so I just wanted to say thank you again you have been brilliant” (Compliment received from a parent)

“Amazing; always available when I needed to speak with her; professional but approachable; included our wishes and feelings in the assessment; was able to build a positive relationship with me and the child quickly; always did what she said she would do; was always reliable with appointments and visits & made a positive difference to our family.” (Compliment for Claire Hargest; Social Worker)

Resources and Training:

We have a number of workshops which are useful for staff, which address the learning themes identified, and we would encourage practitioners to access these for their own learning and development (CPD) and to ensure that we are continually improving our practice.

15/7/2025 10-12	Safety & SMART Planning	• Understanding what makes a good outcome focussed, child centred SMART plan and developing that plan for families. • Contingency planning • What is a safety plan • Formulating a safety plan
29/7/2025 10-12	Confirmatory Bias	• Understanding the impact of fixed thinking and confirmatory bias in practice, how to recognise and prevent this.
5/8/2025 10-12	Voice of the Child & Purposeful Visits	• As above
7/8/2025 10-12	Chronology, G and CC	• To confirm practice expectations about content and use of chronologies, Genograms and Case Summaries • Learning from audits – what good looks like

26/8/2025 10-12	Threshold training	• Understanding Thresholds • Applying the Levels of Need using case scenarios • Complex cases/neglect and threshold
28/8/2025 10-12	Professional Curiosity	• To strengthen our understanding of what professional curiosity is. • To explore the barriers and enablers to professional curiosity in practice.

Please book through the CYPQA@herefordshire.gov.uk.

‘The Restorative Practice Approach’ is being implemented across our service and will also support practice. Make sure you have completed the training available and consider how you are embedding this approach in practice. Training can be booked on here: [Herefordshire Safeguarding Partnership - Learning Management System](#)

“The relationship between the social worker and the family is the most powerful tool for change. Never underestimate the empowering effect of human connection. All you need is that one person, who understands you completely, believes in you and makes you feel loved for what you are, to enable you to thrive”

