

West Dunbartonshire
Health & Social Care Partnership

Annual Complaints Report 2023/2024

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Contents

Introduction	2
Model Complaints Handling Procedures	2
SPSO Performance Framework	3
Appendix 1: Stage 2 Complaints	6

Introduction

West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) aims to provide the best services possible for our citizens, however there will be instances where people feel dissatisfied with, or let down by, the service they receive. As an organisation we value any and all feedback we receive. Making a complaint to the HSCP gives us the opportunity to put things right for individuals and to improve our services. By investigating complaints and looking at any trends or patterns in complaints received, we can identify areas for improvement, gaps in service provision, training needs within the organisation or where particular groups may be experiencing similar dissatisfaction with our services. Often complaints can give us a fresh perspective: identifying issues or problems which we, working within the organisation, have not fully considered from a service user's point of view.

How we handle our complaints is essential to restoring positive relationships with people who feel let down by our services. This report will outline how we handled complaints during the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

Model Complaints Handling Procedures

All public authorities in Scotland are required to produce, operate and report on a Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) in line with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's MCHP and Performance Framework.

There are two stages to both the Council and NHS MCHPs:

Stage 1 Frontline Resolution

We aim to respond to complaints quickly. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, or immediate action to resolve the problem. We will respond to a stage 1 complaint within five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If the person making the complaint is not satisfied with the response they are given at this stage, they can choose to take their complaint to stage 2.

Stage 2 Investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at stage 1 and have been escalated to stage 2; and those complaints that clearly require investigation and so are handled from the onset as stage 2.

For a stage 2 we will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days and provide a full response as soon as possible, normally within 20 working days. If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will inform the person making the complaint of our revised time limits and keep them updated on progress.

Complaints about the functions and operation of West Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership Board are dealt with through the HSCP Board's MCHP which was developed during 2020/21 and was approved by the Board at their meeting on 26th November 2020. The HSCP has a duty to report on any complaints managed under the HSCP Board's MCHP. There were no complaints received about the functions of the HSCP Board during 2023/24.

When a complaint is received by West Dunbartonshire HSCP about our services, and not the functions of the HSCP Board, a decision is taken whether to process the complaint under either West Dunbartonshire Council's MCHP or NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde's MCHP, depending on which service areas are covered. For example a complaint about service provided by Children's Social Work Services would be managed under the Council's MCHP but a complaint about a Psychiatry service would be managed under the NHS MCHP. West Dunbartonshire Council and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde will include these HSCP complaints in their Annual Complaints Reports however in the interests of openness and transparency and to fully reflect on the HSCP's handling of complaints they will also be included in this report.

SPSO Performance Framework

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) has developed a standardised set of complaints performance indicators which organisations are required to use to understand and report on performance in line with the MCHP. The consistent application and reporting of performance against these indicators will also be used to compare, contrast and benchmark complaints handling with other organisations, and in doing so will drive shared learning and improvements in standards of complaints handling performance.

Indicator 1: Learning From Complaints



Complaints are routinely reported to our Senior Management Team, through the HSCP's Clinical and Care Governance meetings and within the HSCP's Quarterly Performance Reports to our Audit and Performance group. These reports cover volume of complaints, compliance with timescales and outcomes by service area. Further detail at this level is available at Appendix 1. Detail is also provided about the nature of each complaint by theme and any actions taken as a result of the complaint investigation and resolution.

During 2023/24 learning from complaints contributed to the following agreed actions:

- A detailed audit of Blue Badge processes initiated in response to the investigation of complaints received by the HSCP. Continue to target Occupational Therapy resources to allow us to reduce the waiting time for the small number of people who require an Independent Mobility Assessment.
- Delays in the process from referral point to receiving a visit from a social worker to be discussed at Community Older People's team meetings.
- Improvement in our clear communication with service users regarding maintenance costs for equipment.
- Voicemail messages to be reviewed and updated. These should clearly advise when the office will next open and provide alternative contact details for assistance out of hours.
- Increased oversight of all active hospital discharge cases by senior social workers.
- All staff involved in a complaint within residential care required to undertake a lessons learned reflective process, monitored under the supervision policy.
- Care plans within the HSCP's residential care homes are now all electronic.
- All HSCP residential care staff trained on reporting incidents and appropriate completion of documentation.
- The need to follow policies and guidelines (moving and handling, falls, escalation) reinforced with all residential care staff.
- Senior staff were reminded of their role in ensuring they are following the correct procedure when reporting an incident.
- Communication with family members where appropriate that a service will cease, decrease and/or change before a change is implemented and this must be clearly recorded within case management and scheduling system for Care at Home.

Indicator 2: Volume of Complaints Received

This indicator counts all stage 1 complaints, whether they were escalated to stage 2 or not, plus all complaints which were treated on receipt as stage 2. West Dunbartonshire HSCP received a total of 290 complaints during 2023/24 however two stage 2 complaints were transferred to be investigated under different policies and procedures and a further stage 2 could not be responded to due to the failure to provide a mandate in relation to a complaint raised on behalf of a third party. This is a 148% increase on the 117 complaints received in 2022/23.

Stage 1 complaints increased from 79 in 2022/23 to 214 in 2023/24. This may be due to improvements in recording however stage 2 complaints also saw a significant increase, from 38 in 2022/23 to 76 in 2023/24. The greatest increase was in complaints relating to Mental Health, Learning Disability and Addictions Services, closely followed by Health and Community Care.



Indicator 3: Complaints Closed Within Timescale

Stage 1 complaints: 214 Stage 1 complaints received. The accurate recording of Stage 1 complaints, their outcomes and timescales across both West Dunbartonshire Council and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde systems is still in development and we are exploring ways to streamline recording and reporting mechanisms and to more accurately and efficiently track timescales.

For those stage 1 complaints that were not referred through the Information Team, who manage complaints, but made directly with frontline services, it would be anticipated that most would be dealt with as they arose however we do not yet have the data to evidence this.

Stage 2 complaints: 48% were closed within 20 working days, 35 of the 73 investigated. Complex complaints that cut across services often take longer to co-ordinate a response. We endeavour to keep people informed of any extension to timescales required to make a full response however this has not been carried out in every case during 2023/24.

Complaints escalated from stage 1 to stage 2: There were no complaints recorded as escalated from stage 1 to stage 2 however it is likely that many of the concerns within stage 2 complaints will have been raised with the service area involved in some form prior to the stage 2 complaints.

Indicator 4: Average Time to Full Response

Stage 1 complaints: Due to the gaps in recording we are unable to report this for stage 1 complaints.

Stage 2 complaints: The average time to full response was 25 working days, one day less than in 2022/23.

Complaints escalated from stage 1 to stage 2: No complaints were recorded as escalated from stage 1 to stage 2.

Indicator 5: Outcomes of Complaints

Stage 1 complaints: Due to the gaps in recording we are unable to report this for stage 1 complaints however those complaints which have not been escalated to stage 2 have been resolved in some way.

Outcome	Stage 2		Escalated to Stage 2	
	Number	%	Number	%
Upheld	5	7%	0	0%
Partially Upheld	14	19%	0	0%
Not Upheld	52	71%	0	0%
Unsubstantiated	0	0%	0	0%
Ongoing	2	3%	0	0%
Total	73		0	

There are a further 3 indicators which are not required to be reported on but are recommended by the SPSO. These relate to raising awareness of complaints handling, lessons learned and identifying any barriers to making a complaint; staff training in frontline resolution, complaints handling and investigations; and customer satisfaction with their experience of making a complaint and their response.

The HSCP is committed to making the complaints experience as easy and accessible as possible and to use our complaints as a valuable resource to improve services for the people of West Dunbartonshire. During 2023/24 we developed an HSCP Complaints Overview presentation with two sessions delivered to our extended management team and to be cascaded to service teams. The Overview covered:

- What is and what is not a complaint
- The value of complaints for the organisation
- The Model Complaints Handling Process
- SPSO Feedback
- Tools to assist with investigating and responding to complaints
- Good practice examples

These sessions prompted some valuable discussions about processes, how to improve the quality of our complaint investigations and responses, how to capture stage 1 complaints and shared learning from complaints and individual team processes.

The presentation has been made available to all HSCP staff on our staff intranet along with a Complaints Toolkit which was also developed during 2023/24 and comprises of an Employee Guide on Complaints Handling, an Investigation Plan template and a Stage 2 Response template. This toolkit will be developed as we identify additional resources.

The HSCP Investigation Plan template has been modelled on the SPSO's Investigation Plan and aims to help investigating officers break down complaints into their component strands, ask the relevant questions of the relevant systems and people, and to detail investigation outcomes and any actions arising and lessons learned from the complaint. Similarly the Stage 2 Response Template is closely aligned to the Investigation Plan to assist and improve the structure and quality of our responses to our citizens. It should also ensure a consistency in valuing the views of our citizens, in respecting the efforts they have had to make to raise their concerns with us, and to apologise where we have failed to meet expected standards.

Alongside this work we carried out an SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment and Recommendation) to analyse the increase in our stage 1 complaints in the first two quarters of 2023/24 compared to the same period in the previous year. The analysis undertaken identified that the majority of the increase was due to changes in recording practice that may mean information being reported is more accurate than before, particularly around Care at Home complaints.

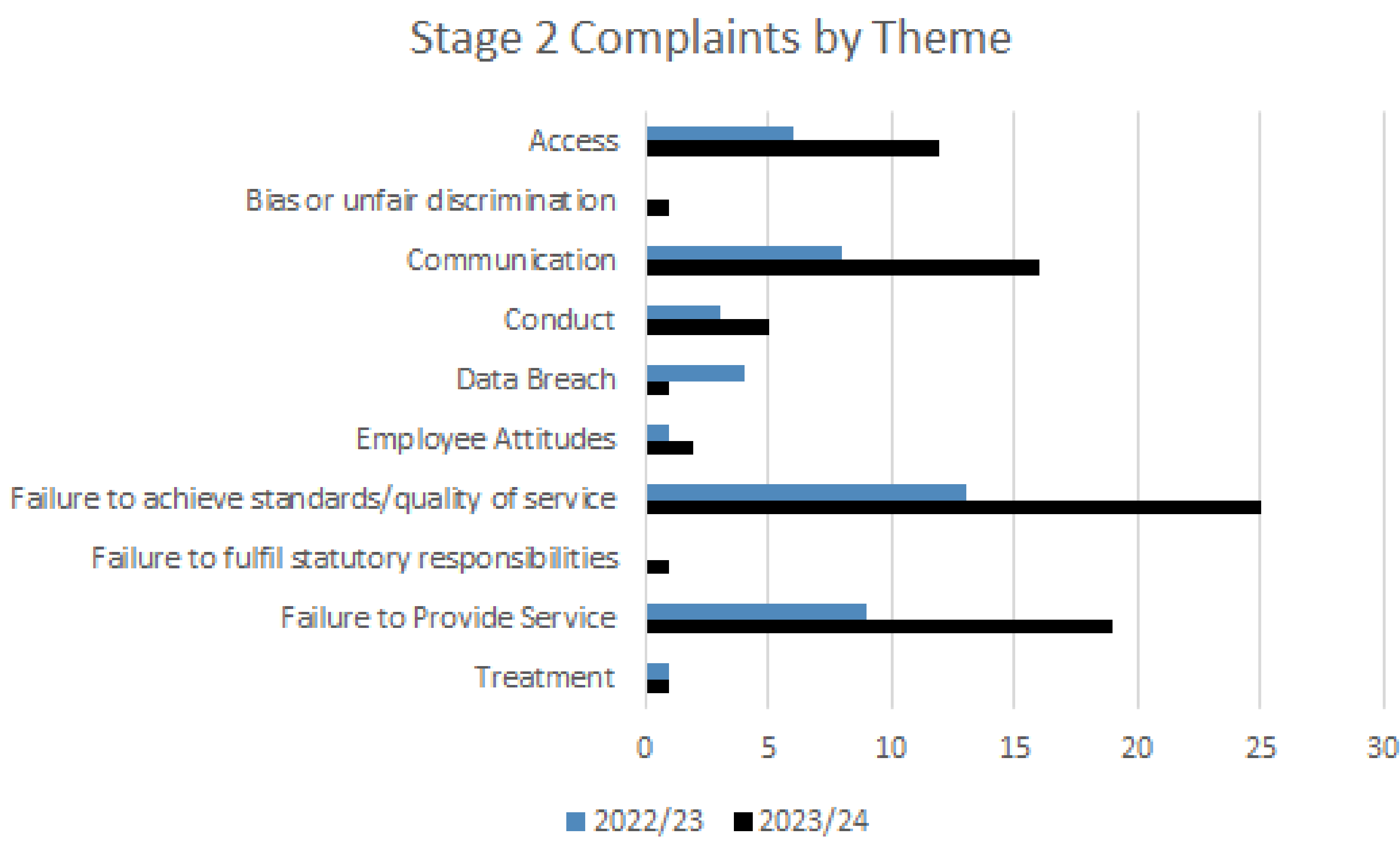
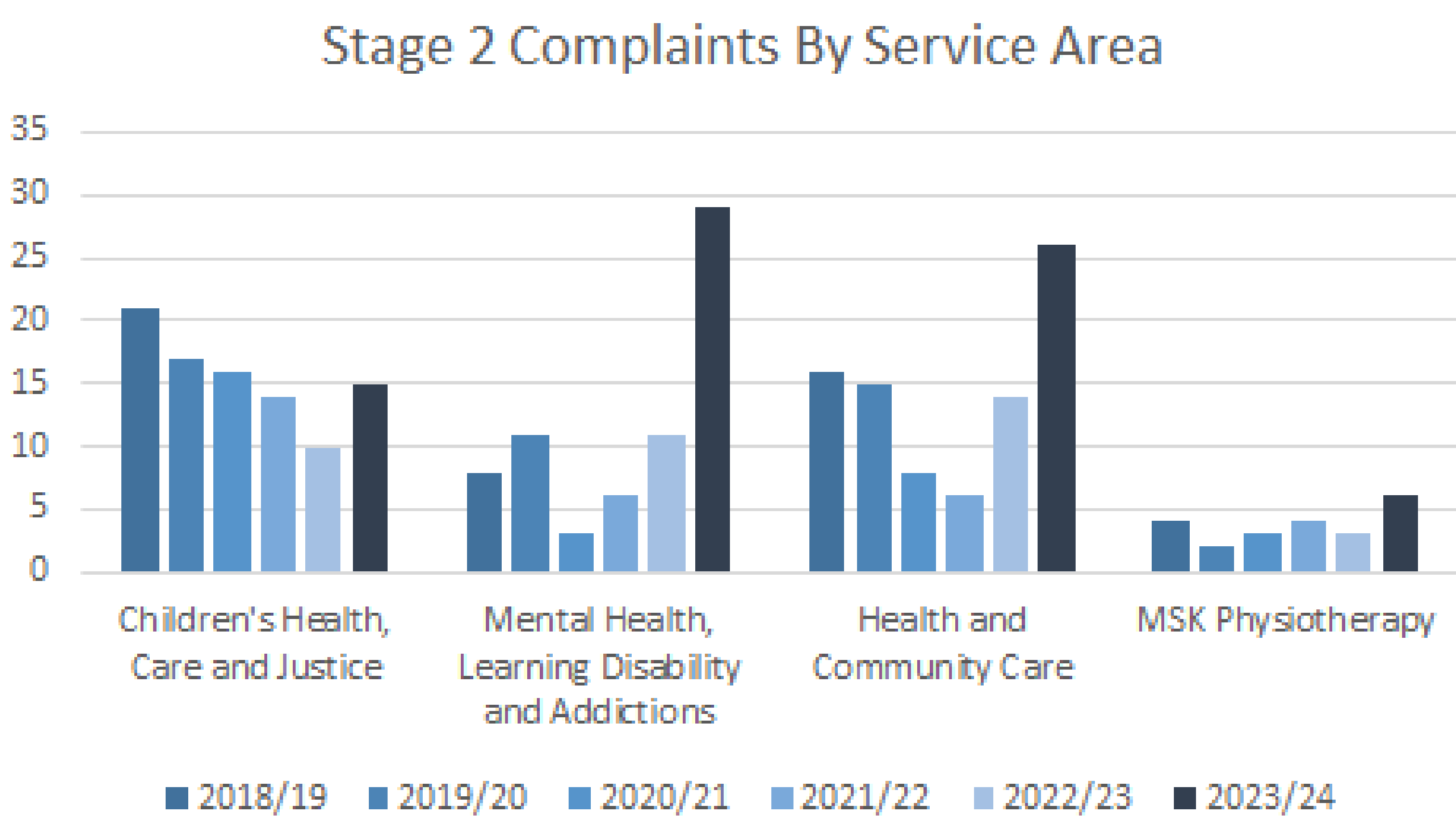
It was recommended that a similar exercise be undertaken for the remaining quarters of 2023/24 to establish whether a pattern becomes apparent or whether the higher level of complaints appears to be a new normal situation given changes in recording procedures. In addition it was recommended that more detailed information and context be provided in our Quarterly Performance Reports to our Audit and Performance Committee including details of which services are receiving complaints.

The analysis demonstrated how challenging reporting stage 1 complaints currently is, given the variation in how complaints can be received by and recorded within the HSCP. The lack of a single central system for managing complaints has led to the use of existing systems as a way of recording complaints which may not be the best fit and has led to a separation in recording between systems.

As a result it was recommended that options around a standardised approach to complaints recording are explored, which would simplify recording processes, complaints management and reporting, potentially including additional information around stage 1 complaints that is not currently reported. This work will begin early 2024/25 in discussions with our partner organisations West Dunbartonshire Council and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

In addition, it has been agreed that complaints, MP/MSP and Councillor enquiries will be included in the HSCP's Weekly/Monthly Performance Dashboards to allow more timely scrutiny of the volume of stage 1 and 2 complaints being received and the service areas they cover to highlight any patterns or areas of concern.

Appendix 1: Stage 2 Complaints



Please note that complaints may cover more than one theme.

Upheld Complaints

Service Area	Themes	Upheld	Partially Upheld
Children’s Health, Care and Justice	Failure to provide service/Failure to achieve standards/quality of service		1
	Failure to provide service	1	
Health and Community Care	Communication	2	1
	Failure to fulfil statutory responsibilities/Failure to achieve standards/quality of service	1	1
	Failure to provide service/Failure to achieve standards/quality of service/Communication		1
	Failure to achieve standards/quality of service	1	6
Mental Health, Learning Disability and Addictions	Access		
	Communication	1	
	Access/Communication		3
	Failure to provide service/Failure to achieve standards/quality of service		
		6	13