



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT

Copy to:  
Helen Hayes MP, Chair, Education Committee  
Florence Eshalomi MP, Chair, Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

26<sup>th</sup> February 2025

**Child protection, SEND and governance crisis at Surrey County Council**

Dear Secretary of State,

Further to our meeting with you on 29<sup>th</sup> January we are writing to express our grave concerns about the performance and governance of the Children, Families and Lifelong Learning Department (CFL) at Surrey County Council, specifically:

**Performance:**

1. **Sara Sharif:** as reported in the national media, there were fifteen missed opportunities by public authorities including CFL over ten years to save her from murder by her father and stepmother. On 15<sup>th</sup> December 2024 the Executive Director of CFL Rachell Wardell OBE stated; “the perpetrators went to extreme lengths to conceal the truth from everyone”. From what we know so far, we reject the narrative that Sara and her family were ‘unknown’ or ‘lost’ to the system - published details of the circumstances of this family evidence that this is demonstrably untrue. It appears that immediate intervention is warranted, such as that necessitated in other incidences of serious institutional failure, to ensure no further children remain at risk. A Local Safeguarding Review alone is wholly insufficient;
2. **Jennifer Chalkley:** Last year the Coroner found that the death by suicide of 17 year old autistic Jennifer Chalkley in 2021 was avoidable. The report details 81 pages of mistakes by multiple local agencies including CFL and CAMHS;
3. **Oskar Nash:** The Coroner found that the death by suicide of 14 year old autistic Oskar Nash in 2020 was avoidable. The report details gross failures and significant missed opportunities by Surrey authorities involved in the care of Oskar Nash including CFL. The parallels between these tragic and entirely preventable deaths, and the ongoing testimonies of our constituents, make it evident that lessons have not been learned;

4. **1,809 Surrey children were out of school** with special educational needs and disabilities SEND for over a third of the time in 2023/24, with devastating consequences for their life chances. Furthermore, our constituents tell us that many of these same children are being denied any alternative education by Surrey County Council, in clear breach of their duties under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996. The scale of this local failure is so severe that the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) required SCC to submit an action plan to prevent further breaches. Yet, testimony from our constituents makes it clear that poor practices continue, putting thousands of vulnerable children's futures at risk.
5. **Surrey County Council** has had more breaches of statutory responsibilities relating to SEND children raised to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSO) than any other in the country for more than two years. To illustrate the scale: in just one week of November 2024, the LGSCO ruled against Surrey County Council seven times for breaching their Section 19 obligations as outlined above. It is our concern that these are not isolated incidents - they appear to represent a systemic pattern of failures that continue unabated despite repeated warnings.

Headteacher after headteacher has testified to us about the appalling state of SEND provision from CFL, including not replying to emails from headteachers for up to three months, let alone parents, and that the lack of appropriate specialist SEND provision, and the denial of sufficient SEND support is disrupting the education of children in state education across Surrey.

#### **Governance:**

1. **Surrey County Council** did not disclose to its Council Scrutiny Committees for over 14 months that it had more breaches of statutory responsibilities relating to SEND children raised to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSO) than any other in the country (Appendix 1). In scrutiny reports, instead of disclosing that Surrey had exponentially more SEND-related complaints escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) than the national average, SCC omitted *any* information about the volume of their complaints as compared to other authorities. The true scale of their outlier performance was only disclosed after the six Surrey Liberal Democrat MPs publicly called them out (Appendix 2).
2. **County Council Leader Tim Oliver OBE** repeatedly claimed in writing to Surrey Liberal Democrat MPs that the council had in fact disclosed their complaint volumes compared against other local authorities during this 14-month period (Appendix 3). Yet, when challenged to show exactly which paragraph disclosed this, he claimed it was disclosed in a paragraph which actually contained no information about volumes. This is self-evidently miss-leading.
3. **Appearing to reclassify complaints as "enquiries"**: Surrey County Council claims that complaints performance has improved in the current year (Appendix 5). However, we have seen evidence that instead, SCC has been reclassifying formal complaints as "enquiries" (Appendix 3 contains four example emails demonstrating this), and worse – suggesting that if a resident persists with a complaint, this may delay their response.
4. **Rising Appeals to SENDIST** – Unlike complaints data, Registered SEND Tribunal (SENDIST) appeal volumes cannot be internally manipulated. The latest figures show that appeals by families against Surrey County Council's SEND decisions have risen by nearly 60% year-on-year, indicating that the performance of this department continues to catastrophically deteriorate. This also indicates that improvements in EHCP timeliness are at the expense of the quality of EHCPs issued, and also, consequently, decisions made about provision requirements and placements. Families

and headteachers alike have testified to us of EHCPs which are unfit for purpose—sometimes with the wrong child’s names, clearly copied and pasted from other EHCPs and behavioural characteristics unrelated to the child nominally referred to by the EHCP. Worse, decisions about provision increasingly appear to bear little relation to the evidence gathered from specialists during assessments leading to significant increases in appeals being registered and leaving children with wholly insufficient provision in the interim.

5. **A leadership culture contemptuous of families in crisis:** In a meeting which all Surrey MPs were invited to on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024 **County Council Chief Executive Terrence Herbert** stated that “Surrey does not have a particular problem with SEND, the issue is that Surrey parents are particularly articulate.” **Deputy Leader Member for Children’s Services, Cllr. Maureen Attewell** stated in a Cabinet meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2025 that Surrey County Council should “... guard, actually guard against hearing only from more articulate parents, often with loud voices, or access to additional resources such as expensive legal representation.”

The choice of language by both executive and elected leaders of the current administration of Surrey County Council implies a deeply troubling attitude—that the exceptional scale of catastrophic failure, complaints, legal challenges, and Ombudsman rulings by the CFLT Directorate in Surrey is not the result of systemic local failure, but rather the consequence of parents being 'too articulate'. It is in galling contrast to the lived experience of hundreds of children and families in crisis detailed in points 2-5 in the performance section above.

Given the above, we have lost confidence in the leadership of Surrey County Council and its care of children.

We have constituent children right now whose lives are at risk, including one 16 year old SEND child who has been hospitalised for 12 suicide attempts and whose desperate mother has had to take Surrey County Council to tribunal ten times to fight for the support that her children are legally entitled to. Yet we understand that in her case, Surrey County Council has still persisted in obstructing her access to essential provision for over two years.

We request that the Secretary of State now directly intervenes with whatever measures necessary to prevent the risk of any further harm to the children, young people and families of Surrey.

Regards,



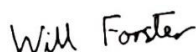
**Chris Coghlan**  
**Dorking & Horley**



**Zöe Franklin**  
**Guildford**



**Al Pinkerton**  
**Surrey Heath**



**Will Forster**  
**Woking**



**Monica Harding**  
**Esher & Walton**



**Helen Maguire**  
**Epsom & Ewell**

# Appendix 1

## 11<sup>th</sup> November 2024 Letter from Surrey Liberal Democrat MPs on comparative complaints data missing from Surrey County Council Scrutiny Committees for fourteen months



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr Tim Oliver  
Surrey County Council Leader  
Surrey County Council  
11 Cockshot Hill  
Reigate  
Surrey  
RH2 8EF

11<sup>th</sup> November 2024

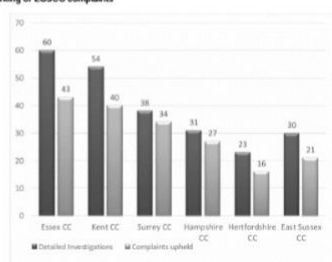
**Re: Missing comparative complaints volumes data from Surrey County Council scrutiny reports when SEND complaints volumes, escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, were at nearly ten times the national average**

Dear Cllr Tim Oliver,

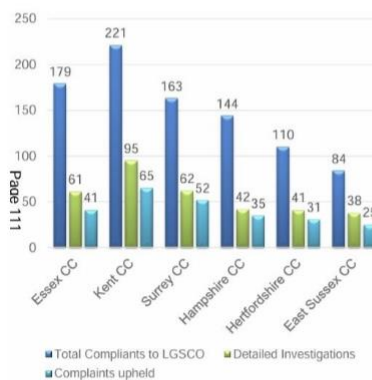
We are writing to understand why complaints data from Audit and Governance Committee reports were missing when complaints escalated to nearly ten times the national average.

Surrey County Council has historically compared its Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) complaint volumes with a select group of large counties to provide context for performance in scrutiny committees, as disclosed in these graphs from reports in 2021 and 2022, when Surrey's performance was broadly in line with its peers:

Annex 5: Benchmarking of LGSCO complaints



[07 – Complaints report 2020-21 – Final.pdf \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)



[Slide 1 \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

However, from June 2023 onwards this comparative volume data was absent from these reports and the Annexes where they are usually disclosed instead stated “none”:

#### Equities and Diversity Implications

49 Ensuring we maintain good complaint handling processes enables our service to remain accessible to all. We continually review ease of access to all three complaints procedures to ensure groups, and people with protected characteristics, are not disadvantaged in any way. Should an equity or diversity issue be identified through a complaint investigation, this will be addressed directly with the service concerned and remedial actions put in place. The learning will also be shared as part of the Council's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

#### Risk Management Implications

50 The complaints process does not have any direct risk management implications; however, complaints do carry a risk to the council's reputation if not handled appropriately. We routinely review and report on complaints data to ensure our processes are effective and to minimise any risk.

#### Next steps:

51 The Audit & Governance Committee to receive information on the operation of the Council's complaints procedures on an annual basis, supplemented with a half-year update and separate report on the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's annual letter.

#### Report contact:

#### Contact details:

#### Sources/background papers:

Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2022/23 for Surrey County Council - available on their website  
Decision Notes available on LGSCO website

#### Annexes:

None

(Public Pack)Agenda Document for Audit and Governance Committee, 22/11/2023 10:00 (surreycc.gov.uk)

County Councillors on the Audit and Governance Committee repeatedly asked for this comparative data to be restored in the meeting minutes June 2023, November 2023 and June 2024 and throughout the next 14 months and each time excuses were made:

In June 2023:

4. The Customer Relations Manager concluded that following the publication of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) Annual Letter in July, the Committee would receive a report in November providing analysis.
5. A Committee member noted that the 30% increase in overall complaints was worrying and noted concern in the decline in response times. He noted that comparative figures with other similar authorities were missing from the report despite being provided in previous years. The Customer Relations Manager clarified that comparative figures with other local authorities would be provided in the report scheduled in November as the benchmarking data would be included in the LGSCO's Annual Letter. She noted the need to focus on why complainants were escalating their complaints and that unnecessary escalations were being reviewed, focusing on the Early Resolution model and Alternative Dispute Resolution. She stated that the complaints team

[Agenda for Audit and Governance Committee on Monday, 5 June 2023, 2.00 pm - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

In November 2023:

area are considered in line with that strategy to actively manage those going forward. The Chairman agreed with that additional recommendation.

15. A Committee member asked whether benchmarking with comparable authorities had been done on the number of complaints percentage wise that had been upheld. The Customer Relations Team Manager noted that data gathering was underway, comparing with bordering authorities in the South East and comparable authorities at a national level. The challenge was that each local authority managed their complaints differently so it was hard to compare complaints recorded and upheld rates, the Council itself had five complaints procedures and of those, two were statutory.

[Agenda item - ANNUAL COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE REPORT - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

In June 2024:

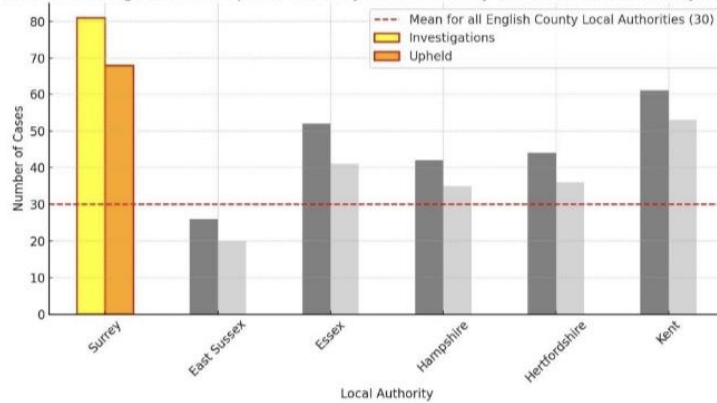
2024/25 Deferred from January, March, June 2024 REPORT OF THE COMPLAINTS TASK AND FINISH GROUP ANNUAL GOVERNANCE	The Committee to receive the results of the Task and Finish Group - action from November's (2023) Committee meeting.	Services Customer Relations Team Manager/Head of Customer Services Director of Law and Governance /
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[Item 5 - Annex B - Work Plan June 2024.pdf \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

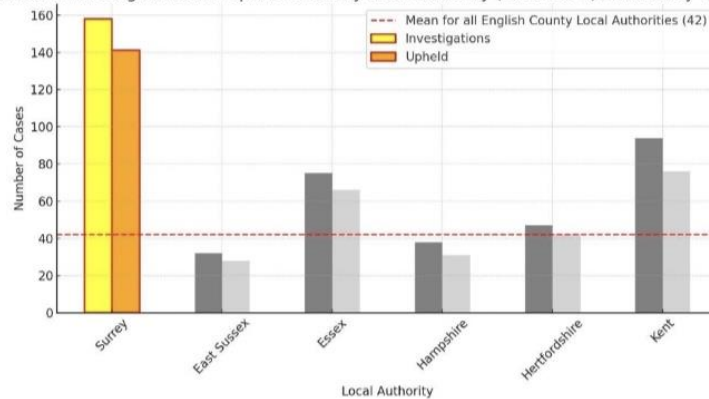
Finally only after the six Liberal Democrat Surrey MPs wrote to you in August 2024 about the alarming level of complaints for special needs provision in Surrey, over ten times the national average, the data reappeared in a different format (p107): [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Audit and Governance Committee, 11/09/2024 10:00 \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

Had the comparative complaint volume data been disclosed to the committee, they would have shown complaints escalated to an alarming rate compared to other local authorities (produced here from publicly available data for 2022/23 and 2023/24):

Number of Investigations and Upheld Cases by Local Authority (2022-2023) with Surrey Highlighted



Number of Investigations and Upheld Cases by Local Authority (2023-2024) with Surrey Highlighted



Data sourced from; [Local government complaint reviews – Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#) (Detailed Investigations; Upheld Complaints)



A more detailed view would have immediately indicated that education-related complaints—predominantly concerning Surrey’s SEND services—were being escalated to the LGSCO at nearly 10 times the national average (per our letter to you on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2024).

To demonstrate the seriousness of this issue, we would refer to the Council’s own description of LGSCO Complaints in September’s Audit and Governance Committee; *“Complaints that are investigated by the Ombudsman represent a significant reputational and financial risk to the council. These are cases where the council has been unable to resolve the complaint through its local procedures, where there is sufficient concern about maladministration or injustice, or where it is in the public interest for the Ombudsman to investigate”*.

This data omission represents a serious breach of governance - it concealed critical deteriorating trends indicating significant outlier performance, therefore indicative of systemic issues in Surrey’s SEND and complaints handling, which should have triggered immediate intervention and investigation.

Instead, the narrative within the reports shows that the Children, Families, and Lifelong Learning Directorate consistently failed to disclose this missing data for **14 months**, despite multiple requests by Councillors for its re-inclusion. Further concerning is that, in place of the missing data, the Directorate repeatedly attributed education complaints to be reflective of "national challenges," even referring to their performance as "static", while the withheld data would have immediately demonstrated that Surrey’s performance was far worse than that of all other Local Authorities. It is our view that the failure to disclose the true extent of these issues prevented Councillors, and stakeholders, including the public, from identifying the systemic failures within Surrey’s services for that time and delayed necessary interventions. Furthermore, it is our view that the selective narrative contained within this report is misleading. We believe this undermines the trust essential for effective governance and scrutiny.

While we note that data has been reinstated since we flagged this issue, there has been no acknowledgment of this breach, its impact, or recognition that it occurred at all. Over the last 2 years, **539 serious complaints were** escalated to the LGSCO about Surrey Council, of which **387 related to education**—10 times the national average—resulting in eight hundred thousand pounds in redress payments for repeated findings of maladministration and injustice by Surrey County Council.

We would request:

1. A detailed independent investigation into the processes that led to the withholding of key data related to complaints, and specifically, whether the public scrutiny report, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023 provided an accurate, transparent description of Surrey County Council performance in relation to LGSCO Complaints and Council complaint handling.
2. An independent review of reporting practices to ensure full transparency in key performance metrics for all Children, Families and Lifelong Learning Committees.
3. An assurance that Councillors are provided with full and timely access to all relevant data, enabling them to effectively discharge their responsibilities for scrutiny.

Given the seriousness of these matters we believe that the credibility of the leadership of the Children, Families, and Lifelong Learning Directorate and Customer Relations teams has been severely damaged.

In a written answer on lack of comparative complaints volume data to all twelve Surrey MPs on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2024 following a question from Chris Coghlan MP, you stated that “we are not withholding any information in this regard.” Please would you review this statement in light of County Councillors stating in scrutiny committee minutes that it was missing?

We trust you agree that these issues demand urgent and decisive action and your personal intervention so that we are able to understand what happened.

We look forward to your prompt response.

Yours sincerely,

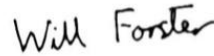
Regards,




**Zöe Franklin**  
**Guildford**



**Chris Coghlan**  
**Dorking & Horley**



**Will Forster**  
**Woking**



**Monica Harding**  
**Esher & Walton**



**Helen Maguire**  
**Epsom & Ewell**



**Al Pinkerton**  
**Surrey Heath**



## Appendix 2

### 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2024 letter on alarming complaint levels on SEND provision at Surrey County Council



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr Tim Oliver  
Surrey County Council Leader  
Surrey County Council  
11 Cockshot Hill  
Reigate  
Surrey  
RH2 8EF

23 August 2024

#### Re: SEND provisions from Surrey County Council

Dear Cllr Tim Oliver,

We are deeply concerned about the crisis in SEND provision in Surrey. We request a meeting with yourself, and the portfolio holder related to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Surrey, Clare Curran, as soon as possible. The SCC SEND team need to be better at communication, and more open and transparent. In some cases, meetings have been cancelled last minute. We would like to understand the steps you will be taking to address this crisis.

Surrey is one of the poorest-performing authorities in the country:

- **Decline in EHCP timeliness** – Timeliness has dropped from 57.6% in 2017 to 16.2% in 2023, compared to a national average of 50.3% [\[1\]](#)
- **Compromise in EHCP quality** - To recover timeliness, there has been a severe compromise in quality of EHCP's, with appeals increasing from 2.5% in 2014 to 4.7% in 2023, one of the highest appeal rates in the country. Parents won 98.3% of these appeals, showing a poor decision-making process. [\[2\]](#)
- **Disproportionately high level of complaints** - 230 cases escalated to the Local Government Ombudsman during 2023, which is 10 times the national average. [\[3\]](#)

Recently, parents of children with Educational, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) received a letter from SCC on 12th August 2024, informing them that they have only until 12th September 2024 to decide on their child's placement preference. Last year, the deadline was March. This is an unacceptably short timeframe for parents to choose their child's school, especially during a time when schools are closed for the summer holidays. We request that you return the deadline for school preference selection to March.

We currently have a meeting scheduled with you and all Surrey MPs; however, this is weeks after the deadline will have passed for these parents. We need a face-to-face meeting urgently.

We await your response.

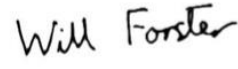
Regards,



**Zöe Franklin**  
**Guildford**



**Chris Coghlan**  
**Dorking & Horley**



**Will Forster**  
**Woking**



**Monica Harding**  
**Esher & Walton**



**Helen Maguire**  
**Epsom & Ewell**



**Al Pinkerton**  
**Surrey Heath**

Full report on the performance of SEND provision can be found at: 'A snapshot of the performance of Surrey County Council's Education Services for vulnerable children with SEND' – Measure what matters.

[1] [Education, health and care plans, Reporting year 2024 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics)

[2] [Tribunal Statistics Quarterly: July to September 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2023)

[3] <https://www.lgo.org.uk/assets/attach/6630/1-Complaints-Received-23-24.xlsx>

### Appendix 3

**From:** Tim Oliver <[tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk)>  
**Date:** Monday, 23 December 2024 at 18:54  
**To:** COGHLAN, Chris (MP) <[chris.coghlam.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:chris.coghlam.mp@parliament.uk)>  
**Cc:** FORSTER, Will (MP) <[will.forster.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:will.forster.mp@parliament.uk)>, HARDING, Monica (MP) <[monica.harding.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:monica.harding.mp@parliament.uk)>, MAGUIRE, Helen (MP) <[helen.maguire.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:helen.maguire.mp@parliament.uk)>, PINKERTON, Al (MP) <[al.pinkerton.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:al.pinkerton.mp@parliament.uk)>, FRANKLIN, Zoe (MP) <[zoe.franklin.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:zoe.franklin.mp@parliament.uk)>, Asmat Hussain <[Asmat.Hussain@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:Asmat.Hussain@surreycc.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** Re: Correspondence

In view of the allegation contained in the last sentence of your letter, which I refute, any further correspondence from you on this issue will be passed to the Monitoring Officer for a response.

Tim

**Tim Oliver OBE**  
Leader Surrey County Council  
[REDACTED]

---

**From:** COGHLAN, Chris (MP) <[chris.coghlam.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:chris.coghlam.mp@parliament.uk)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 23, 2024 5:31 pm  
**To:** Tim Oliver <[tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk)>; COGHLAN, Chris (MP) <[chris.coghlam.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:chris.coghlam.mp@parliament.uk)>  
**Cc:** FORSTER, Will (MP) <[will.forster.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:will.forster.mp@parliament.uk)>; HARDING, Monica (MP) <[monica.harding.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:monica.harding.mp@parliament.uk)>; MAGUIRE, Helen (MP) <[helen.maguire.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:helen.maguire.mp@parliament.uk)>; PINKERTON, Al (MP) <[al.pinkerton.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:al.pinkerton.mp@parliament.uk)>; FRANKLIN, Zoe (MP) <[zoe.franklin.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:zoe.franklin.mp@parliament.uk)>  
**Subject:** RE: Correspondence

**Caution:** This email originated from outside Surrey County Council.  
Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Thank you Tim. however you have not answered the question and what you have answered appears to be misleading. Nowhere in paragraphs 38-40 (pasted below for reference), is *volume* of complaints discussed- which is what I asked- not percentage of complaints upheld which is what you chose to answer about. So your answer that paragraphs 38-40 “indicated that Surrey County Council had more upheld complaints compared to other similar local authorities” is factually incorrect. Instead paragraphs 38-40 indicates that Surrey County Council had a higher percentage rate of complaints upheld compared to similar local authorities, with no mention at all of absolute volumes.

Moreover, the narrative in the report appears to be completely misleading, by focusing on percentage of complaints upheld, rather than absolute volumes, enabled a narrative of “slightly higher than average”, instead of the worst volume of complaints in the country (which made headline news on ITV News at Ten), and specifically that education-related complaints—predominantly concerning Surrey’s SEND services—were being escalated to the LGSCO at nearly 10 times the national average.

It therefore appears that not only were Surrey County Council's scrutiny reports misleading, so the points in our original letter still stand, but also that you have now persisted in providing inaccurate and misleading responses to Members of Parliament.

Regards,

Chris

38 The Ombudsman provides benchmarks against similar authorities within their annual letter and on their website. They benchmark on the percentage of complaints upheld, percentage compliance with Ombudsman recommendations, and the percentage of upheld complaints where they found that the Council had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint escalated to the Ombudsman.

39 For Surrey, 84% of complaints that the Ombudsman took forward for investigation were upheld. This has remained the same when compared to the previous year. In 82% of these cases, the complaint had been upheld under the council's complaint processes before escalation to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will uphold complaints when they find fault, even where the authority previously accepted fault before the Ombudsman investigated. The Ombudsman decision will state simply that the complaint is upheld; this does not reflect whether some elements of the complaint have not been upheld.

40 84% is slightly higher than the average of 82% in similar organisations, and compares to 77% for East Sussex, 79% for Essex, 83% for Hampshire, 82% for Hertfordshire and 87% for Kent. It is of note that the percentages upheld have increased for all the similar local authorities named above, when compared to the previous year. It is recognised that most of the upheld findings relate to services within Children, Families and Life-long Learning.

**From:** Tim Oliver <[tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, December 18, 2024 3:44 PM

**To:** COGHLAN, Chris (MP) <[chris.coghlan.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:chris.coghlan.mp@parliament.uk)>

**Cc:** FORSTER, Will (MP) <[will.forster.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:will.forster.mp@parliament.uk)>; HARDING, Monica (MP)

<[monica.harding.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:monica.harding.mp@parliament.uk)>; MAGUIRE, Helen (MP) <[helen.maguire.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:helen.maguire.mp@parliament.uk)>;

PINKERTON, Al (MP) <[al.pinkerton.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:al.pinkerton.mp@parliament.uk)>; FRANKLIN, Zoe (MP)

<[zoe.franklin.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:zoe.franklin.mp@parliament.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: Correspondence

Dear Chris,

Thank you for your further question.

Please note that the June 2023 and June 2024 reports are the Council's Annual Complaints Performance reports and do not provide detailed information on complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). As previously explained, the LGSCO issues their Annual Reports to Councils in July each year. This is why a separate report on LGSCO performance is considered at the November Audit & Governance (A&G) Committee each year.

The [LGSCO report](#) presented to the November 2023 A&G Committee indicated that Surrey County Council had more upheld complaints compared to other similar local authorities. For further details, please refer to the Benchmarking section of the report (page 47), paragraphs 38 to 40.

I hope that this draws a line under this matter.

Kind regards,

Tim Oliver OBE  
Leader of Surrey County Council



**From:** COGHLAN, Chris (MP) <[chris.coghlan.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:chris.coghlan.mp@parliament.uk)>  
**Sent:** 02 December 2024 18:17  
**To:** Tim Oliver <[tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk)>  
**Cc:** FORSTER, Will (MP) <[will.forster.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:will.forster.mp@parliament.uk)>; HARDING, Monica (MP) <[monica.harding.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:monica.harding.mp@parliament.uk)>; MAGUIRE, Helen (MP) <[helen.maguire.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:helen.maguire.mp@parliament.uk)>; PINKERTON, Al (MP) <[al.pinkerton.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:al.pinkerton.mp@parliament.uk)>; FRANKLIN, Zoe (MP) <[zoe.franklin.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:zoe.franklin.mp@parliament.uk)>  
**Subject:** Re: Correspondence

**Caution:** This email originated from outside Surrey County Council.  
Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Tim,

Thank you for your response. Unfortunately, it still does not address the key concern raised in our original letter.

Let me be very clear:

\*Where, within the June 2023, November 2023, or July 2024 reports, was it clearly stated to councillors or the public that \*\_Surrey County Council had more complaints escalated to the LGSCO than any other local authority?\_\*

Please provide the exact citation and paragraph reference.

Regards,  
Chris

---

**From:** [REDACTED] > on behalf of Tim Oliver  
<[tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 20, 2024 4:00:09 PM  
**To:** COGHLAN, Chris (MP) <[chris.coghlan.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:chris.coghlan.mp@parliament.uk)>  
**Cc:** FORSTER, Will (MP) <[will.forster.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:will.forster.mp@parliament.uk)>; HARDING, Monica (MP) <[monica.harding.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:monica.harding.mp@parliament.uk)>; MAGUIRE, Helen (MP) <[helen.maguire.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:helen.maguire.mp@parliament.uk)>; PINKERTON, Al (MP) <[al.pinkerton.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:al.pinkerton.mp@parliament.uk)>; FRANKLIN, Zoe (MP)

<[zoe.franklin.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:zoe.franklin.mp@parliament.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: Correspondence

Dear Chris,

Please find attached the Leader's response to your letter dated 11 November.

Kind regards,



**Executive Support Officer to Terence Herbert, Chief Executive**  
Leadership Office, Resources Directorate  
Surrey County Council

**NOTE THE ATTACHMENT IS APPENDIX 5**



**From:** COGHLAN, Chris (MP) <[chris.coghlan.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:chris.coghlan.mp@parliament.uk)>

**Sent:** 11 November 2024 12:14

**To:** Tim Oliver <[tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk)>

**Cc:** FORSTER, Will (MP) <[will.forster.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:will.forster.mp@parliament.uk)>; HARDING, Monica (MP)

<[monica.harding.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:monica.harding.mp@parliament.uk)>; MAGUIRE, Helen (MP)

<[helen.maguire.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:helen.maguire.mp@parliament.uk)>; PINKERTON, Al (MP)

<[al.pinkerton.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:al.pinkerton.mp@parliament.uk)>; FRANKLIN, Zoe (MP) <[zoe.franklin.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:zoe.franklin.mp@parliament.uk)>

**Subject:** Correspondence

**Caution:** This email originated from outside Surrey County Council.

Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe

Dear Tim,

Please find attached correspondence on behalf of all six Surrey Liberal Democrat MPs related to the governance issues we previously highlighted.

Office of Chris Coghlan MP

**Chris Coghlan**

Member of Parliament for Dorking and Horley Constituency

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

[chris.coghlan.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:chris.coghlan.mp@parliament.uk)



**NOTE THE ATTACHMENT IS APPENDIX 1**



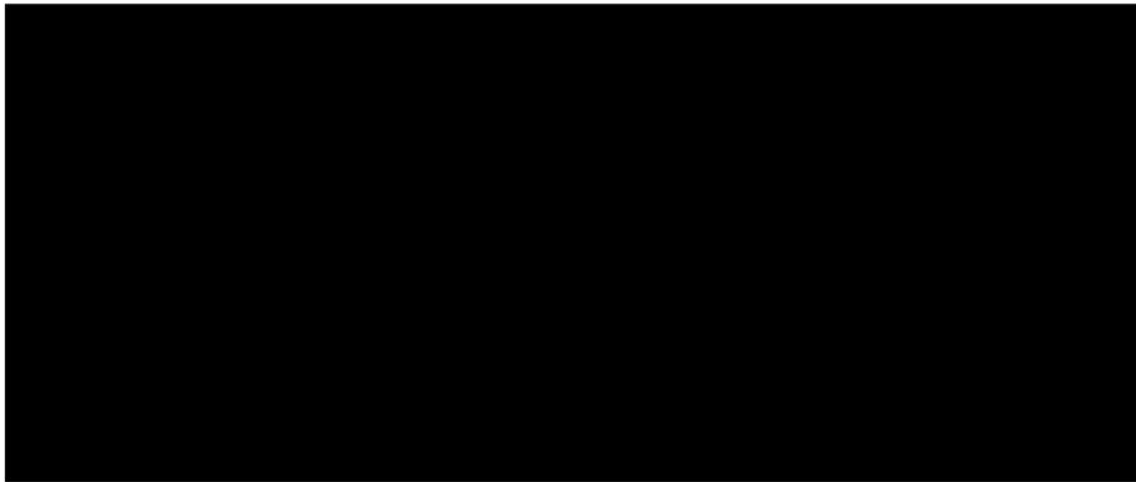
## Appendix 4

### Four example emails showing complaints reclassified to “enquires” apparently to manipulate complaint performance

#### Example 1:



[CaseRef: SUR [REDACTED] CaseRef: [REDACTED] Enquiry [REDACTED]  
response  
5 messages



From: surrey@ctemail.uk <surrey@ctemail.uk>

Sent: [REDACTED] January 2025 [REDACTED]

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: [CaseRef: [REDACTED] CaseRef: SUR [REDACTED] Enquiry [REDACTED]

Date: [REDACTED] 01/2025 Case Reference: SUR [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

I am sorry to read of the concerns you have shared with us relative to your EHCP and I want to thank you for your patience whilst I reviewed the details of your complaint. There are three elements to your complaint from understanding which are summarised below:

- The content of the EHCP, including the dates and signatures which are displaying on the EHCP which was shared [REDACTED] ahead of your annual review which was due on the [REDACTED]



- The alleged concerns in relation to conduct and professional behaviour of your case officer and senior case manager. *I have brought your concerns to the attention of [REDACTED] Area Team Manager to pick up as the line manager. This is because allegations of misconduct and unprofessional behaviour are*

more appropriately managed via our HR Management and Supervision processes. In practical terms the complaint process is intended to explore concerns about procedures and processes. Our HR policies are used to explore concerns about fitness to practice, behaviours, and misconduct. I do need to make you aware that Employee/Employer conversations are confidential so any outcome will not be shared. I will request that the manager confirms the conversation has taken place but no more.

- A request for a change of staff allocated to your case. I need to let you know that we are unable to realistically achieve this in the Corporate Complaints Procedure. This is a management decision; your request will be shared with the relevant manager to respond to as part of this communication.

Your concerns have been raised as an Enquiry and shared with [REDACTED] Area Manager and [REDACTED] Service manager for the North East team as the most appropriate managers to take this forward.

The correct process to escalate operational concerns is via the service management structure as above.

Please be aware that the complaint process runs alongside operational processes and cannot directly intervene with ongoing operational practice decisions. As there is no role for the Corporate Complaints process at this time and we will be closing our involvement. As shared above, please do come back to me if there are residual concerns following the annual review.

You can also consider the below contact options

- Email: [localoffer@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:localoffer@surreycc.gov.uk)
- Telephone: 0300 200 1015 (ask for the local offer team)

SEND-related enquiry or concern, you can call the [Learners Single Point of Access \(L-SPA\)](#) on 0300 200 1015.

SEND Advice Surrey whose link I have included below can provide impartial, confidential, and free support in relation to the EHCP Process and more. [Home - SEND Advice Surrey](#)

Please **reply** with history to this encrypted email delivery service at [surrey@ctemail.uk](mailto:surrey@ctemail.uk) ensuring that the case reference beginning SUR is at the beginning of the subject line. This will automatically attach your email to the correct complaint record.

Warm regards

[REDACTED]  
CFLL Customer Relations Officer

Customer Engagement, Children, Families and Lifelong Learning (CFLL)  
[Surrey County Council](#)

**Where you continue to be dissatisfied with the response to your complaint you can contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman [Home - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#) - [How to Complain - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#).**

Please can I request that any correspondence relating to Enquiries and Complaints that already have an SUR case reference number allocated, are **only** sent to the Case Tracker case management system via [surrey@ctemail.uk](mailto:surrey@ctemail.uk) with the SUR consecutive reference number clearly in the subject line and not to my personal email address or copied to [be.heard@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:be.heard@surreycc.gov.uk)

Date: [REDACTED] January 2024

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your emails of [REDACTED]. I am sorry for the delay in response to your emails, this was due to me being on annual leave over the festive break. Whilst every effort will be made to respond to emails as soon as possible, please do allow 5 working days.

I would like to review your concerns in more depth to consider all the points raised and to decide on the most appropriate way forward and as such I will provide a further response on the [REDACTED].

Thank you for your patience.

Warm regards

[REDACTED]  
CFLL Customer Relations Officer

Customer Engagement, Children, Families and Lifelong Learning (CFLL)

[Surrey County Council](#)

Please **reply** with history to this encrypted email delivery service at [surrey@ctemail.uk](mailto:surrey@ctemail.uk) ensuring that the case reference beginning SUR is at the beginning of the subject line. This will automatically attach your email to the correct complaint record.

**Where you continue to be dissatisfied with the response to your complaint you can contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman [Home - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#) - [How to Complain - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)**

Please can I request that any correspondence relating to Enquiries and Complaints that already have an SUR case reference number allocated, are **only** sent to the Case Tracker case management system via [surrey@ctemail.uk](mailto:surrey@ctemail.uk) with the SUR consecutive reference number clearly in the subject line and not to my personal email address or copied to [be.heard@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:be.heard@surreycc.gov.uk)

---

Sent: [REDACTED] January 2025 [REDACTED]

To: Be Heard ; Rachael Wardell ; Asmat Hussain

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: [REDACTED] Stage 1 Formal Complaint

Good afternoon,

I am extremely disappointed not to have even received an acknowledgment of my complaint sent at the beginning of this week.

Please would you confirm receipt as soon as possible.

Thank you

---

Sent: [REDACTED] December 2024 [REDACTED]

To: [be.heard@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:be.heard@surreycc.gov.uk) <[be.heard@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:be.heard@surreycc.gov.uk)>; [rachael.wardell@](mailto:rachael.wardell@)[REDACTED]

<[rachael.wardell@](mailto:rachael.wardell@)[REDACTED]>; [asmat.hussain@](mailto:asmat.hussain@)[REDACTED] <[asmat.hussain@](mailto:asmat.hussain@)[REDACTED]>


Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: [REDACTED] Stage 1 Formal Complaint

I attach a formal complaint regarding falsification of a legal document and circulation of the same by members of the NE SEND team.

I look forward to receiving a formal complaint response as soon as possible, especially given the seriousness of this issue.

Many thanks



---

This email and any attachments with it are intended for the addressee only. It may be confidential and may be the subject of legal and/or professional privilege.  
If you have received it in error please notify the sender and destroy it. You may not use it or copy it to anyone else.

The content may be personal or contain personal opinions and cannot be taken as an expression of the County Council's position.

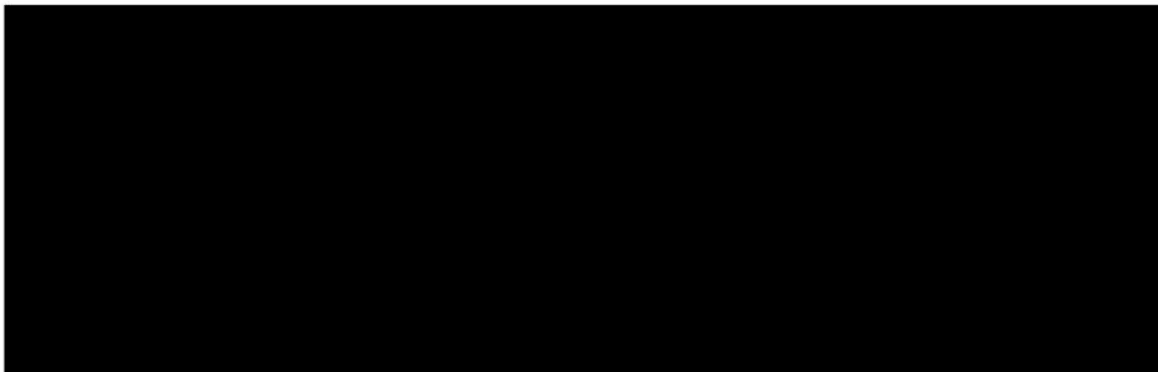
Surrey County Council reserves the right to monitor all incoming and outgoing mail.

Whilst every care has been taken to check this e-mail for viruses, it is your responsibility to carry out any checks upon receipt.

[Visit the Surrey County Council website](#)

---

## Example 2:



**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Date:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** Tim Oliver <tim.olive[REDACTED]>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Fw: Complaint regarding [REDACTED]  
**CaseRef:** SUR[REDACTED] SUR[REDACTED] (Enquiry [REDACTED] response )

Good morning,

I hope you are well.

Please may I ask you for a response to my email dated November 4th?

All relevant details are included within the forwarded thread. As a reminder, the customer relations team re-named my original submission as an enquiry rather than a complaint, and advised that ideally, I should expect a response within 5 days but that it may be longer due to other pressures.

I think that as the date is now 16th December it is reasonable for me to ask for a response.



Sent from [Outlook for Android](#)

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, November 4, 2024 8:00:27 am

---

**To:** Tim Oliver <tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk>

**Subject:** Complaint regarding [REDACTED]  
SUR [REDACTED] (Enquiry [REDACTED] response )

CaseRef: SUR [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Sent from [Outlook for Android](#)



---

**From:** surrey@ctemail.uk <surrey@ctemail.uk>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 24, 2024 12:10:54 pm  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** [CaseRef:SUR [REDACTED] SUR [REDACTED] Enquiry [REDACTED] response

Date: 24/10/2024 Case Reference: SUR [REDACTED]

Dear Ms [REDACTED]

I am sorry to read of the concerns you have shared with us [REDACTED]

Your concerns have been raised as an Enquiry and shared with Tim Oliver's office to be reviewed and responded to.

They will aim to respond to any communications within 5 working days. We acknowledge that this is not always possible if volumes are high.

Please be aware that the complaint process runs alongside operational processes and cannot directly intervene with ongoing operational practice decisions. As such there is no role for the Customer Relations Team at this time and we will be ceasing our involvement.

Where parents have concerns, they can also consider the below contact options

Email: [SEND team contact details | Surrey Local Offer](#)

SEND-related enquiry or concern, you can call the [Learners Single Point of Access \(L-SPA\)](#) on 0300 200 1015.

SEND Advice Surrey whose link I have included below can provide impartial, confidential, and free support in relation to the EHCP Process and more. [Home - SEND Advice Surrey](#)

*Please **reply** with history to this encrypted email delivery service at [surrey@ctemail.uk](mailto:surrey@ctemail.uk) ensuring that the case reference beginning SUR is at the beginning of the subject line. This will automatically attach your email to the correct complaint record.*

Kind Regards  
[REDACTED]

CFLL Customer Relations Team

Children's Families and Lifelong Learning (CFLL) Directorate

Surrey County Council

[How we deal with your complaint - Surrey County Council \(\[surreycc.gov.uk\]\(https://surreycc.gov.uk\)\)](#)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I have attached the relevant part of the meeting for reference.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Customer Relations Team [WebPage for OnLine complaint form](#)  
Link to create [Personal Complaint Account](#)

Team Tel: 01483 519095

*I will aim to respond to any communications within 5 working days.*

*I am working remotely and therefore unable to receive physical items of mail. Any mail sent this way is not able to be processed in the current circumstances.*

***Where you continue to be dissatisfied with the response to your complaint you can contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman [Home - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#) - [How to Complain - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)***

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 22 October 2024 18:16  
**To:** Be Heard  
**Subject:** Stage 1 Complaint

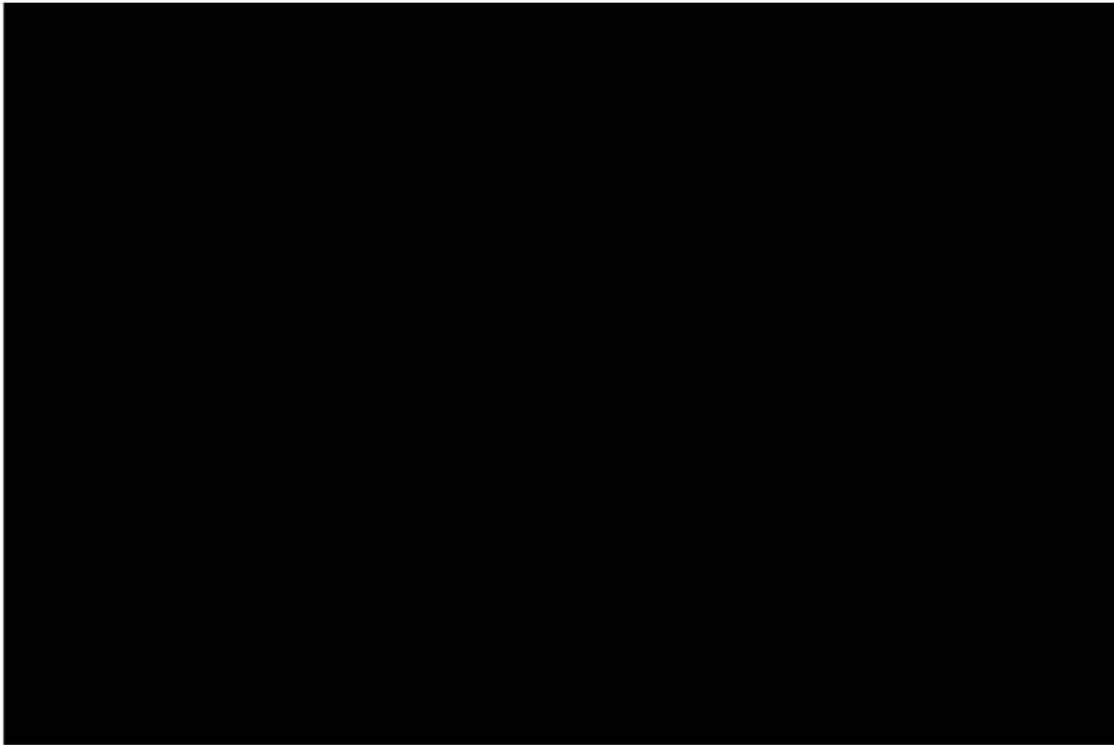
Good afternoon,

I would like to raise a stage 1 complaint regarding the [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

### Example 3



---

**From:** surrey@ctemail.uk <surrey@ctemail.uk>

**Sent:** Friday, October 20, 2023 [REDACTED]

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** [CaseRef:SUR[REDACTED] Case Reference: SUR[REDACTED] - Enquiry [REDACTED] response

Date: [REDACTED] 10/2023 Case Reference: SUR[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

I am sorry to read of the concerns you have shared with us [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Your email shared with Be Heard has been forwarded to me as the Liaison Customer Relations Officer. I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce myself in that capacity and to let you know that my role includes acting as a single point of contact for you.

Your concerns have been raised as an Enquiry and will be raised with the most appropriate manager in the team for them to respond to you. I can see that you have already shared this with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] SEND Senior Case Manager as well.

?

A further week has passed since I sent the below email without response to the Provider.

The Provision will be in jeopardy unless payment is made. ?

---

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: 11 October 2023 [REDACTED]  
To: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Subject: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

I am alarmed to learn that one of the Provisions [REDACTED] which started on 3rd August 2023 has not received ANY payment for their services from Surrey County Council.

This provision has been approved by panel [REDACTED] from within his EHCP.

Please can you respond to me to advise when they will be paid? They are a small business who provided all the required documents prior to commencing sessions [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] I am so disappointed to learn that they are waiting on being paid for their [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

My understanding of your alleged concerns is that:

- [REDACTED] not been paid for provision which started on the 3/08/2023

If you feel I have missed anything please do let me know.

Good practice is that the relevant manager will look into these concerns and respond to you within 10 working days.

Please be aware that the complaint process runs alongside operational processes and cannot directly intervene with ongoing operational practice decisions.

If you have any questions regarding this process during the intervening period, please do not hesitate in contacting me. You can do so by replying to this email.

Please **reply** with history to this encrypted email delivery service at [surrey@ctemail.uk](mailto:surrey@ctemail.uk) **ensuring that the case reference beginning SUR is at the beginning of the subject line.** This will automatically attach your email to the correct complaint record.

Warm regards

[REDACTED]

**CFLC Customer Relations Officer**

Customer Engagement, Children, Families and Lifelong Learning (CFLC)

[Surrey County Council](#)

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Wednesday, October 18, 2023 [REDACTED]

**To:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Be Heard <[be.heard@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:be.heard@surreycc.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** Re: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Caution:** This email originated from outside Surrey County Council.  
Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

**\*\*\*Please can this be actioned Urgently\*\*\***





Please can you advise re this asap, thank you.



## Example 4

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] please ensure that this is given whatever weighting is necessary within your complaints procedure to get this resolved.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** [REDACTED] 2024 [REDACTED]  
**To:** [REDACTED] surrey@ctemail.uk ; [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: [CaseRef:SUR [REDACTED] SUR [REDACTED] Early Resolution [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** surrey@ctemail.uk ; [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: [CaseRef:SUR [REDACTED] SUR [REDACTED] Early Resolution [REDACTED] acknowledgement

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** be.heard@surreycc.gov.uk  
**Sent:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** [CaseRef:SUR [REDACTED] SUR [REDACTED] Early Resolution [REDACTED]

Date: [REDACTED] 2024 Case Reference: SUR [REDACTED]  
Date received: [REDACTED] 2024

Dear [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] The current concerns you are raising relating to the delay  
from September 2024 [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

We can ask the service for a formal stage 1 response but we are of the view that Early Resolution was more appropriate to ensure the funds are with you as soon as possible.

[REDACTED]

Please **reply** with history to this encrypted email delivery service at [surrey@ctemail.uk](mailto:surrey@ctemail.uk) ensuring that the case reference beginning SUR is at the beginning of the subject line. This will automatically attach your email to the correct complaint record.

Many Thanks

[REDACTED]

Customer Engagement, Children, Families and Lifelong Learning (CFLL)

Email received from [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: [CaseRef:SUR [REDACTED] SUR [REDACTED] Early Resolution [REDACTED] acknowledgement

-----

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** be.heard@surreycc.gov.uk

**Sent:** [REDACTED]

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** [CaseRef:SUR [REDACTED] SUR [REDACTED] Early Resolution [REDACTED] acknowledgement

**Date:** [REDACTED] **Case Reference:** SUR [REDACTED]

**Date received:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I am sorry to read of the concerns you have shared with us [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Your email has been forwarded to me as nominated Customer Relations Officer.

The concerns you have shared are being raised with the service as Early Resolution (please find below clarification)

I can see you have already been in contact with some members of the service. I have also shared your concerns regarding this with [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] and asked that they arrange for the Case Officer or Senior Case Manager to update you as a matter of urgency [REDACTED]

Please do not hesitate to contact, if you have any questions about this email.

However, this characterisation does not begin to reflect the reality of the situation and suggests to me that you have failed to take any attention, at all, of the background

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

[REDACTED]

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Given the circumstances, I am now formally requesting that this matter be immediately reclassified properly as a complaint and managed appropriately in accordance with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Code for Complaints. Our first email already constituted an explicit expression of dissatisfaction, and failure to recognise it as such undermines due process

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

[REDACTED]  
 [REDACTED]  
 [REDACTED]

### What is an Early Resolution?

Early Resolution is the operational services opportunity to resolve matters to your satisfaction and where there hasn't been a significant delay (under 10 working days) in a process or procedure and it can be resolved as a business as usual within 5 – 10 working days. A good practice response would be via telephone followed up with an email listing any agreed actions/timescales/advice.

If you feel your concerns have not been resolved, you are welcome to discuss what options may remain with the Customer Relations Officer via the complaints procedure.

It's important to understand that the Corporate Complaints Procedure cannot impact operational decisions; it merely assesses if policies and procedures have been adhered to. The timescale set for your complaint response is not an indication of delays with ongoing operational processes. The complaints procedure is **independent to operational matters** as such these matters continue as normal.

If you already have a SEND case officer, you can contact your local SEND team directly for support or advice.

Email: [localoffer@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:localoffer@surreycc.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0300 200 1015 (ask for the local offer team)

### Other useful Advice

If your query is very complex, you may wish to contact the L-SPA using the [Learners' Request for Support \(0 to 25 years\) form](#).

The Learners' Single Point of Access (L-SPA) offers help and support if you have a concern about the development and/or learning needs of a child in Surrey. [Learners' Single Point of Access \(L-SPA\) | Surrey Local Offer](#). Both parents and practitioners working with children in Surrey are welcome to call the L-SPA. It is open from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, all year round (except Bank Holidays) on 0300 200 1015.

If you have any concerns about a young person, you can also contact the Council's Children's Single Point of Access (C-SPA) for any advice or support they may be able to offer [Report a concern about a child or young person - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

SEND Advice Surrey whose link I have included below can provide impartial, confidential and free support in relation to the EHCP Process and more [SEND Advice Surrey – Providing impartial information, advice and support to parents of children with special educational needs \(Formerly known as 'SSIASS' and 'Surrey Parent Partnership'\)](#)

[How we deal with your complaint - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#) The Corporate Complaints Procedure cannot influence an operational decision; it takes into account whether policies and procedures have been followed. [Complaint Handling Code - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

Please **reply with history** to this encrypted email delivery service [atsurrey@ctemail.uk](mailto:atsurrey@ctemail.uk) ensuring that the case reference beginning SUR is at the beginning of the subject line. This will automatically attach your email to the correct complaint record.

Many Thanks



[REDACTED]

Customer Engagement, Children, Families and Lifelong Learning (CFL)

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: [REDACTED]  
To: [REDACTED]  
Cc: [REDACTED] e Heard  
Subject: URGENT COMPLAINT [REDACTED]  
Importance: High

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## Appendix 5

### Surrey County Council Leader response to 11<sup>th</sup> November Liberal Democrat Surrey MP Letter



Cllr Tim Oliver OBE  
Leader of Surrey County Council

Woodhatch Place  
11 Cockshot Hill  
Reigate  
Surrey  
RH2 8EF  
02085418003

[tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk)

Chris Coghlan,  
Member of Parliament for Dorking and Horley  
[by email]

20<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Dear Chris,

I write in reply to your letter dated 11 November, on behalf of all six Liberal Democrat MPs, raising concerns about missing comparative complaints data in reports to the Council's Audit & Governance Committee, specifically the period between June 2023 to September 2024.

Surrey County Council is fully transparent in its reporting around complaints data, in particular to benchmarking, which goes further than many other local authorities. This is publicly available data and is included in the latest report from September 2024. We benchmark against peer authorities to ensure comparisons are meaningful. This is why the LGSCO also provides national averages for different local authority types e.g. county councils, rather than a total average for all councils. Calculating a national average across all local authorities will not provide an accurate picture of performance or enable meaningful comparisons.

Every year, the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) issues an annual letter to every council in England. This letter summarises the complaint statistics recorded about the council and its performance in responding to Ombudsman investigations for the previous year. This information helps us compare our performance with other similar councils. As you mentioned in your letter, we have always included comparison data in the complaints report that is presented to our Audit & Governance Committee after the LGSCO letter is published.

There was no LGSCO benchmarking data included in the report that went to Audit & Governance Committee on 5 June 2023 because this report pre-dated the release of the LGSCO annual letter for 2022/23 (which was issued to Surrey County Council on 19 July and published on the LGSCO website on 24 July 2023). Therefore, the June report provided an annual update and analysis of the complaints received and responded to by the County Council.

On 22 November 2023, two complaints reports were presented to the Audit & Governance Committee. Firstly, the LGSCO annual performance report including LGSCO benchmarking data. Secondly, the mid-year complaints report. Although separate reports, these were discussed jointly, which is reflected in the meeting minutes quoted in your letter. The LGSCO report did include a benchmarking section containing information comparing Surrey County Council to other local authorities (paragraphs 37-46). It also included links to the publicly available data on the LGSCO website. The benchmarking information in this report was certainly included and presented as a narrative. The mid-year report did not include benchmarking data because the LGSCO had not yet published their data for that period.

Our high value investment programme is now delivering clear performance gains, including ECHP timeliness which has improved significantly, with the proportion of plans being issued on time now well above the national average. We have also caught up on the backlog of Education, Health and Care needs assessments.

We are pleased to say that this recovery work is now leading to a reduction in complaints made to the Council at Stage 1 of its local complaint procedure about delays in completing assessments. Stage 1 and 2 complaint data is reported to the Audit and Governance Committee regularly.

We always welcome scrutiny of all our services, and I have very publicly acknowledged past shortcomings in this area.

However, we are now determined to channel all our energy and focus on the work in the here and now, concentrating on improving outcomes for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities so that they are happy, healthy, safe and confident about their future.

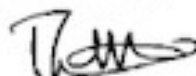
It is unhelpful to the service personnel who are working hard on behalf of children and young people and their families, parents and carers, and the wider community if, despite evidence being provided that shows significant improvement and investment, this issue continues to be politicised. There are widely acknowledged significant system-wide and national issues, in regard to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Within this context Surrey County Council is delivering better in meeting the needs of children than is being currently characterised. This is an appreciable improvement in such a challenging environment reflecting the skill and dedication of the staff involved.

The requests, including for further independent investigation, will therefore not be agreed. Diversion of time, cost and capacity away from the main priority of delivering high quality support and services will be detrimental for children and families. The requirement for replies to correspondence based on unfounded assertions is an example of a draw on resources that diverts attention away from our core purpose and ambition.

I would finally like to express a robust challenge to your assertion that *'the credibility of the leadership of the Children, Families, and Lifelong Learning Directorate and Customer Relations teams has been severely damaged'*. As outlined, the improvement in this area of the service is evident. We welcome scrutiny from professional bodies and peers, and we examine the results of our actions closely. This political campaign is doing a disservice to hard working individuals who dedicate their lives to the wellbeing of children and young people, in pursuit of political point scoring. This is not helping young people with SEND.

I am confident that we have robust oversight measures for our complaints handling performance, are committed to being open and transparent, and are continuously improving our complaints practice to deliver better outcomes for Surrey residents.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Tim Oliver OBE  
Leader of Surrey County Council