

North Lincolnshire Council

Customer Feedback

Annual Report 2021-2022

How Did We Do?



Foreword

Welcome to North Lincolnshire Council's Annual Customer Feedback Report 2021-2022: How Did We Do? This report sets out how we have performed in responding to feedback from our residents. It assists us in meeting our requirements to publish information about the performance of statutory functions for Adults and Children together with feedback from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in their Annual Letter to councils.

We provide residents with a clear and accessible process to share with us both their positive and negative experiences. As a council we encourage a culture of listening and learning where the focus is on early resolution and continuous improvement. Complaints are therefore important – they provide a

voice for our residents and help us to keep customers at the centre of everything we do. Over the last year we have made it easier and quicker to respond to feedback using the latest digital systems, enabling consistent quality responses to customers.

It is pleasing to note that the number of complaints received continues a downward trend for the fifth successive year. However, we recognise that there are times when things go wrong, or where expectations aren't met. Although it is disappointing when we occasionally fall below the expected standard, it is encouraging to recognise that such issues are captured, reviewed and improvements are made, so that our offer can be refined as a direct result of the information residents have provided: You Said – We

Did. Examples of the learning and improvements made can be found throughout this report, together with a wide range of compliments received from customers this year.

I would like to thank our workforce, whose successes once again are reflected in the many positive compliments we have received about their performance.

Councillor Ralph Ogg
Resident Engagement Cabinet Member



Introduction

This report presents a summary of the feedback received from customers for the period 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022, in the form of compliments and complaints.

Its purpose is to support our continuous improvement work and ensure that learning from resident voice feedback is captured and used to help enhance the customer experience we offer as a council.

We have statutory requirements to report on both children's and adults' social services complaints, but we also need to capture and learn from other complaints and compliments to provide a rounded view of customer feedback.

This annual report is therefore important; it provides key insights on how we are performing and as such, it is essential for informing our performance management, business assurance and public engagement objectives.

Overall, the number of complaints received was slightly lower than the previous year, continuing a downward trend in complaints for the fifth successive year.

The percentage of complaints received to the number of residents in North Lincolnshire remains low at 0.2%.

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1. Compliments

We receive compliments in a variety of ways and as well as expressing satisfaction, many of these convey a wider story of needs being met and add a real social value narrative.

Keeping people safe and well

"The staff made me feel valued, kept my dignity as far as they could. I did feel the level of care was of high quality and the staff were very professional." **Adults**

"The care and meticulous diligence afforded to my mum has been brilliant." **Adults**

"This support is very reassuring to us. The swift response has very much made our day." **Adults**

We have received hundreds of compliments in the year regarding the positive outcomes customers received. The following is a selection of the compliments received which illustrate how we are delivering on our council plan priorities:

"We have met lots of nice people since our approval and while going through the process, people in the fostering family are very supportive and willing to help when and where possible. It has been really nice to meet others while doing any training and learn from others and their experiences." **Children**

"Hi, I would like to thank you for everything you have done. You really took the time to listen thoroughly to our concerns, wishes and feelings. Nothing was too much trouble for you, and you were always there professionally to assist me with any problems. I felt comfortable talking to you and you were very understanding about everything." **Children**

"I just want to thank the council who helped deal with a tree in my front garden that had split due to storm Eunice and was in danger of falling onto the road. The person who took my call was very reassuring and the officers that turned up 20 mins later and took the tree down were brilliant." **Highways**

"Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I have no words to express my gratitude and relief. The installation company called, and I just burst into tears of relief. Truly thankful for all your help." **Home Assistance**



Enabling resilient and flourishing communities

"I just wanted to feedback that the work has been completed today and the council have done a great job. The street looks tidy, and we can all walk the pavements safely." [Highways](#)

"How well I have been looked after during the Blue Badge process, it was completed much faster than expected. Fantastic service." [Customer Transactions](#)

Enabling economic growth and renewal

"Our group had an away day at Normanby Hall golf course today. I would like to thank you for a wonderful day. The course was magnificent and a credit to your ground-staff..." [Normanby Hall](#)

"I would like to pass on my appreciation and joy to have such a good case officer to work with in your planning department." [Planning](#)

Providing value for money for local taxpayers

"The Contact Centre were a pleasure to speak to and explained the service extremely clearly, professionally and with a little bit of humour as well!" [Contact Centre](#)

"Thank you so very much for researching and emailing to me these support groups. I really appreciate it. It has been a long time since I've been treated with such kindness and caring." [Scunthorpe Central](#)

"Can I just compliment the officer who repaired our bin the other day. He knocked on the door, explained exactly what he was going to do and then he delivered it back to the spot we agreed once he had finished." [Waste](#)

"Staff made what was essentially a form filling exercise into an empathetic gathering of information." [Adults](#)

"Thank you and all your team for your work and assistance with the grant process, it's much appreciated." [Customer Transactions](#)

"I would just like to take the time to express my gratitude and thanks to your test and trace support payments team, they explained the whole situation in detail with the upmost sympathy and clearest instructions and this made the situation easy, and I was able to provide the missing information." [Test & Trace Support Payments](#)

"Thanks for all your help with my query last week. I really appreciated it." [Finance](#)



2. Complaints

Introduction & Background

This section presents a summary of complaints received for the period 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022.

Our Customer Complaints & Contact Policy is published on our website at: northlincs.gov.uk/complaints. Its purpose is to set out our process for receiving, managing and responding to complaints and other feedback we receive.

Our Customer Standards sits alongside the complaints policy, which present our promise to customers and the standards we aspire to achieve.

Our target is that we will respond to 95% of complaints within the agreed timescale.

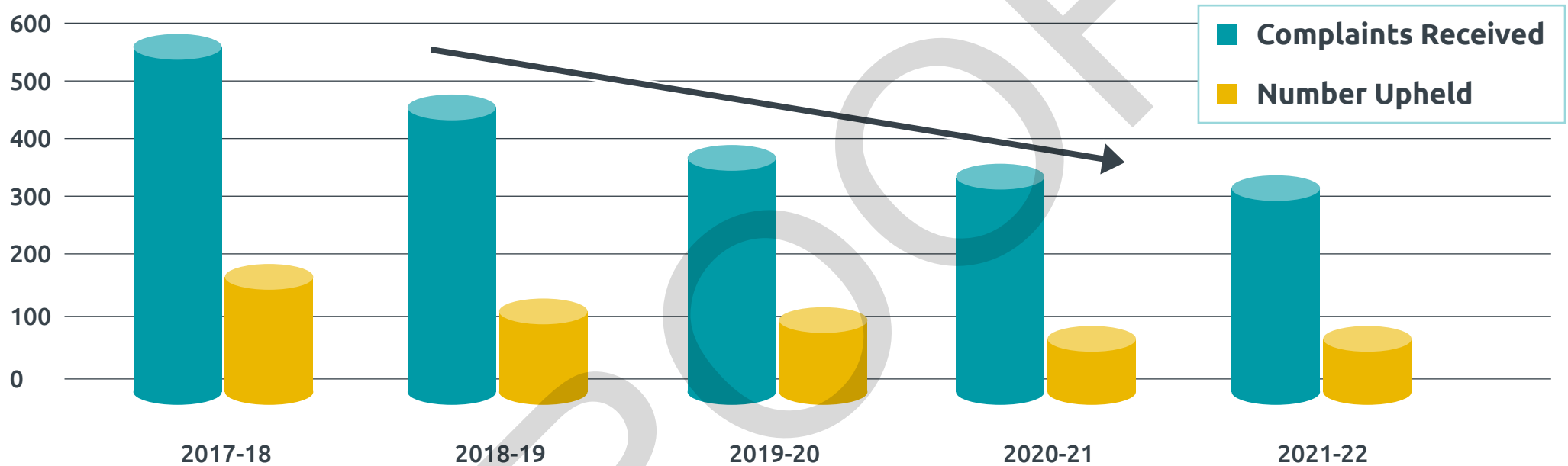
If a customer remains dissatisfied, they may appeal to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LG&SCO).

Customer Complaints Procedure:

- **Stage 1** – the complaint will be acknowledged within 1 working day and responded to by the appropriate manager within 15 working days.
- **Stage 2** – if the customer is not satisfied with the Stage 1 response, they may ask (within working 20 days) for the complaint to be reconsidered. A senior manager will investigate and respond within 25 working days.

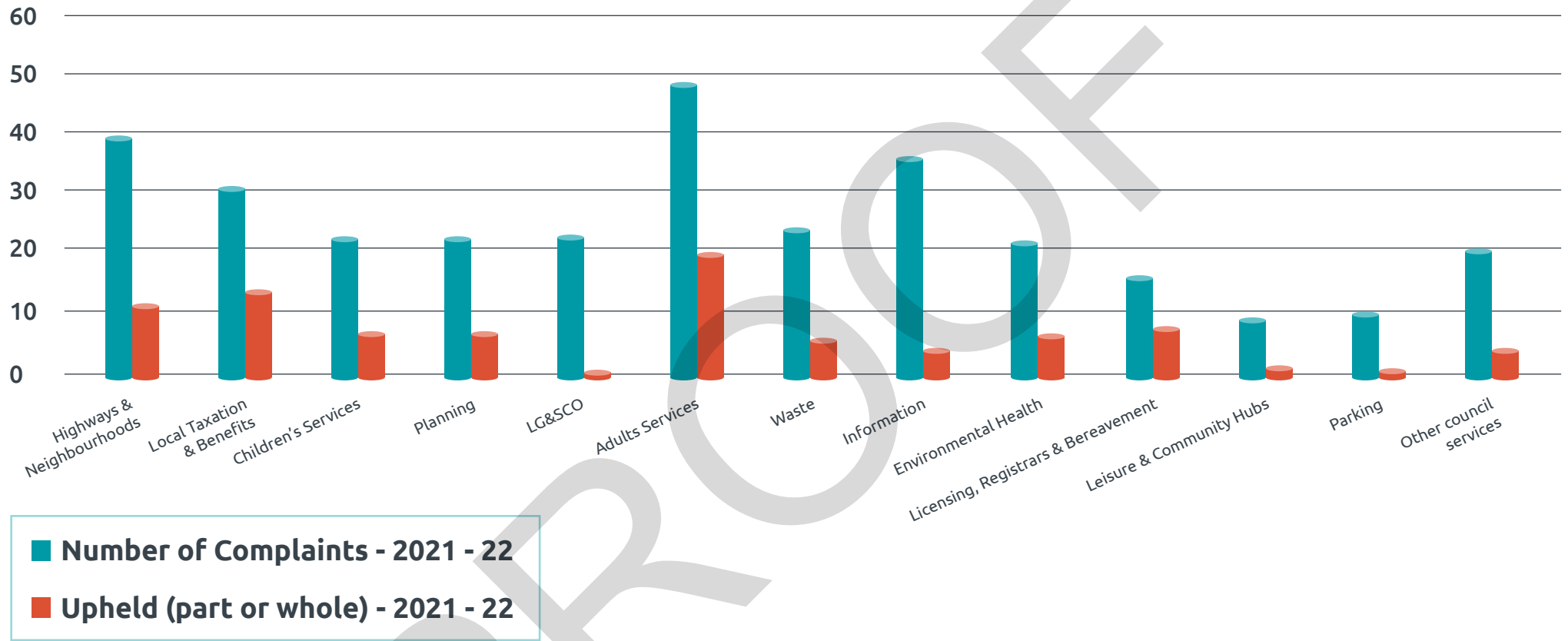


5-Year Trend Of Complaints Received & Upheld



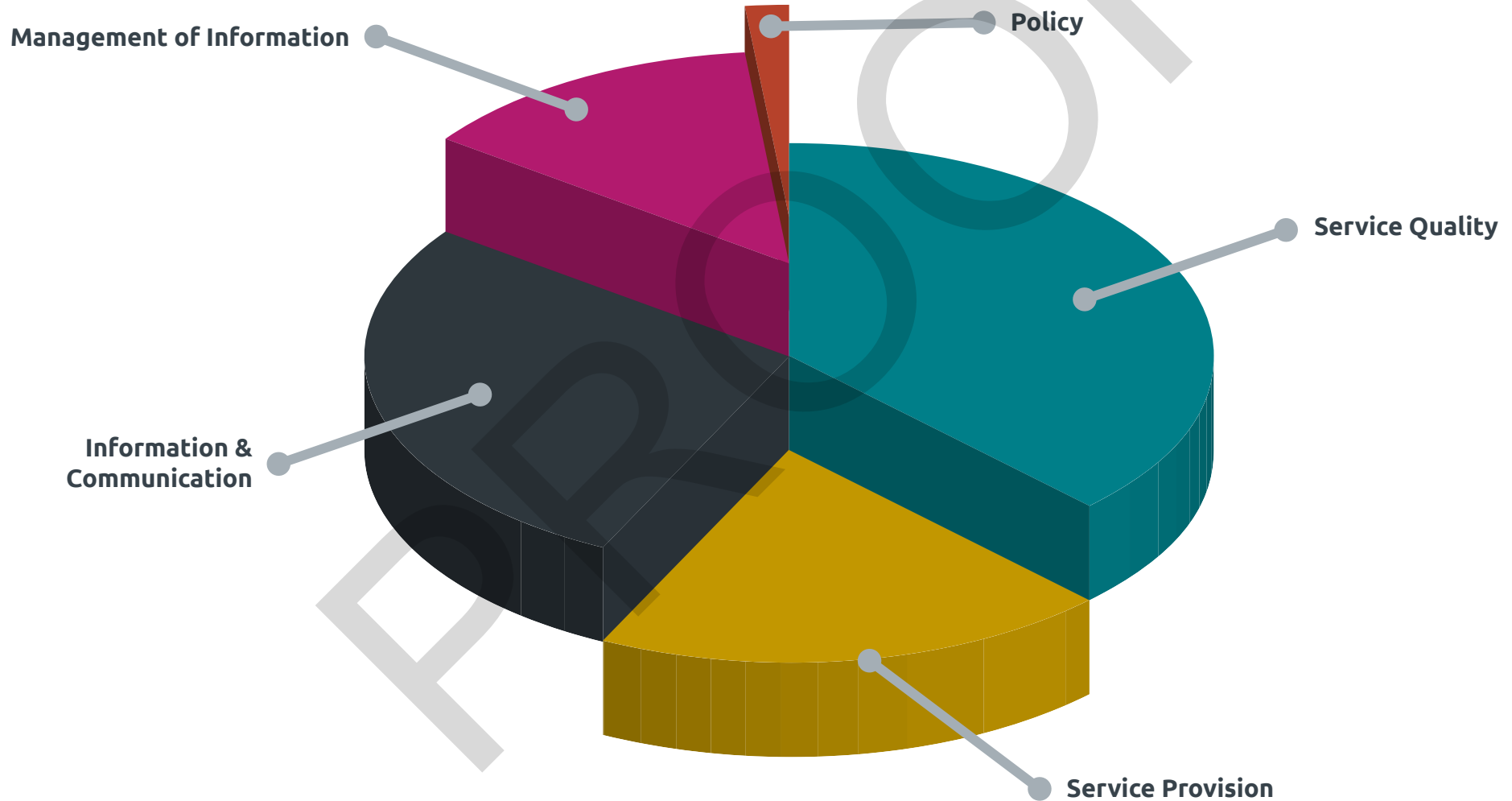
- Complaints have slightly reduced compared to the previous year continuing a downward trend for the fifth successive year, 325 compared to 331 in the previous year.
- 4 in 5 complaints were not upheld following investigation.
- 94% of complaints were responded to within timescale.

Complaints by Council Business Area



The primary complaint issues were:

2021 - 2022



3. You said - We did

Feedback from customers is vital in order for us to continuously improve our offer to residents. The table below summarises customer feedback and the specific actions that we have taken as a result.

Customers Said	We did
We want to stay safe during Covid-19.	We made sure that PPE was available in line with the Government guidelines and that Covid safe operating practices were followed at all sites
The process for reporting safeguarding concerns was not clear or user friendly.	We reviewed our processes and made it easier for safeguarding concerns to be reported.
We would like more support with autism.	We have enhanced our approach to providing autism support for adults.



4. Children's Statutory Complaints

Introduction & Background

This section provides a summary of the complaints received regarding statutory services to children and families for the year 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022.

It outlines the complaints made under the statutory procedure and the actions taken in response. The report makes extensive use throughout of feedback received, as well as insight and learning from professional teams.

The complaints procedure is designed to make sure that issues of concern are responded to without delay and without unnecessary complication. It alerts the council to any issue requiring change, or where there is learning, for the benefit of children, young people or families. As such, it is an important part of the learning and improvement framework.

Since last year's report, we have continued our commitment to strong engagement with people and in particular to strengthen our informal resolution practices. We have embraced the Restorative Practice approach and during the very early stages of a complaint, we have increased our engagement with a complainant. We feel that the reduction in complaints is due to this continuing approach in complaints handling.

The scope of the report is in respect of complaints that have been received under the terms of the 'Children Act 1989, Representations Procedure Regulations (England) 2006'.

The Children Act 1989 places a duty on all councils to establish and publicise a procedure for the consideration of representations and complaints made to them about the services provided to them under the Act.

The Act also requires that local authorities responsible for Children's Services produce and publish an annual report on the statutory complaints and representations procedures.

The Children Act procedure applies to representations about Children's Social Care Services and specifically services that are provided under parts 3, 4 & 5 of the Children Act.

These services include the following provision:

- family support services
- services for children with a disability
- care and protection of children & young people
- services to care leavers
- adoption and special guardianship orders

Some complaints received do not meet the criteria to be dealt with under the statutory process. When this is the case, these are processed through the council's general complaints process.

We want anyone who is involved in the process, in whatever capacity, to have confidence in it; the principles of the procedure are therefore that:

- the procedure is easy to use and understand;
- complaints are dealt with in an objective, open manner;
- the complaint is subject to a thorough scrutiny;
- the process is led by the complainant;
- people involved in the process will get the support they need;
- the process is focused on finding solutions;
- the team is open to learning from the complaints raised.

This procedure will ensure that:

- concerns are taken seriously;
- complaints are dealt with promptly and effectively;
- there is a full response and a clear outcome for complainants;
- complaints are dealt with fairly and even handedly;

- those involved in the process, complainants, the representatives and staff, are treated with dignity and respect;
- there is equality of access and standard of service for all complainants with particular consideration for those people who may find it more difficult to use the process e.g. younger children, people with disabilities, those whose first language is not English, young people on their own behalf, by parents or carers and by any other person that the child wants to represent them, or who has a sufficient interest in the welfare of the child.

The key principles of the complaints procedure are that it is accessible, transparent and fair. We want anyone who has a concern about services to feel

confident that they can raise their concerns and that they will be dealt with in a way that is independent and impartial.

The complaints procedure is regarded as another means of capturing the voice of the child and the family. Whilst it is always hoped that the need to make a complaint would not arise, it is recognised that there will be occasions when, despite best efforts, services do not meet expectations of the people who use them. In those circumstances the complaints procedure offers a framework for hearing what people think of their service, for resolution of concerns and for learning about our provision.

We recognise that it is not always easy for individuals to make a complaint so advice and, where required, support is made available. Children and young people have the assistance and support of the children's advocate if they need it.

Complaints offer the opportunity to look in detail at areas of provision and at practice. In so doing they provide the opportunity to learn about what is working well and also about where services can be developed, and improvements can be made.



There are 3 stages in the statutory children's complaints process, as follows:

Stage 1 - Local Resolution

This stage allows the people most closely involved with the area concerned to deal with the issue that has been raised. This is because usually these practitioners are familiar with issues raised and understand what can be done to resolve it promptly. Complaints at stage 1 should be resolved in 10 working days, however up to 20 working days is allowed for more complex complaints.

Stage 2 - Independent Investigation

If the complainant considers that their complaint has not been resolved at stage 1 they may request to progress it to stage 2. This stage involves the appointment of an Investigating Officer. The Investigating Officer is independent of the area. If the complaint directly involves a child or young person then someone independent of the council, the 'Independent Person' oversees the investigation. The Independent Person provides an extra assurance that the complaint is investigated properly and fairly.

The complainant will get a full report from the investigation, along with the responsible manager's decision. The responsible manager is the senior officer of the area concerned.

The investigation should be completed, and the response sent to the complainant within 25 working days of the date on which the complaint was agreed. If the complaint is complex, or there are reasons why the investigation will take longer there can be an extension, with the agreement of the complainant. This extension must not be later than 65 working days in total from the date the complaint was agreed.

The Investigating Officer will present their report to the Adjudicating Officer (the Principal Officer responsible for the area concerned in the complaint, or someone nominated to act on their behalf) at a meeting which they attend along with the Customer Experience Manager and Independent Person.

The complainant will receive a copy of the Investigating Officer's report, the Independent Person's comments (where necessary) and the Adjudicating Officer's response.

PROOF



Stage 3 - Panel Review

Stage 3 is the final stage of the procedure, if required. It is an independent review of the complaint. A panel of 3 people, who are all new to the complaint and who are independent of the Local Authority, review the information from the Stage 2 investigation. They talk to the complainant, the Investigating Officer and the responsible manager.

The panel review will be held within 30 working days of the request being received. The Chair of Panel will meet with the appropriate Director (or their nominated representative) to explain the panel's conclusion.

They then make recommendations to the Director of the area, who must take them into account in reaching the final decision on the complaint.

Within 20 working days of the panel review the Director will inform the complainant about what action will be taken in response to panel's conclusion.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LG&SCO)

Once the 3-stage statutory process has been exhausted a complainant has the right to take their complaint to the LG&SCO.



Summary of Children's Statutory Complaints

This section of the report provides a summary of the Children's Statutory Complaints that were received within the year 2021-2022.

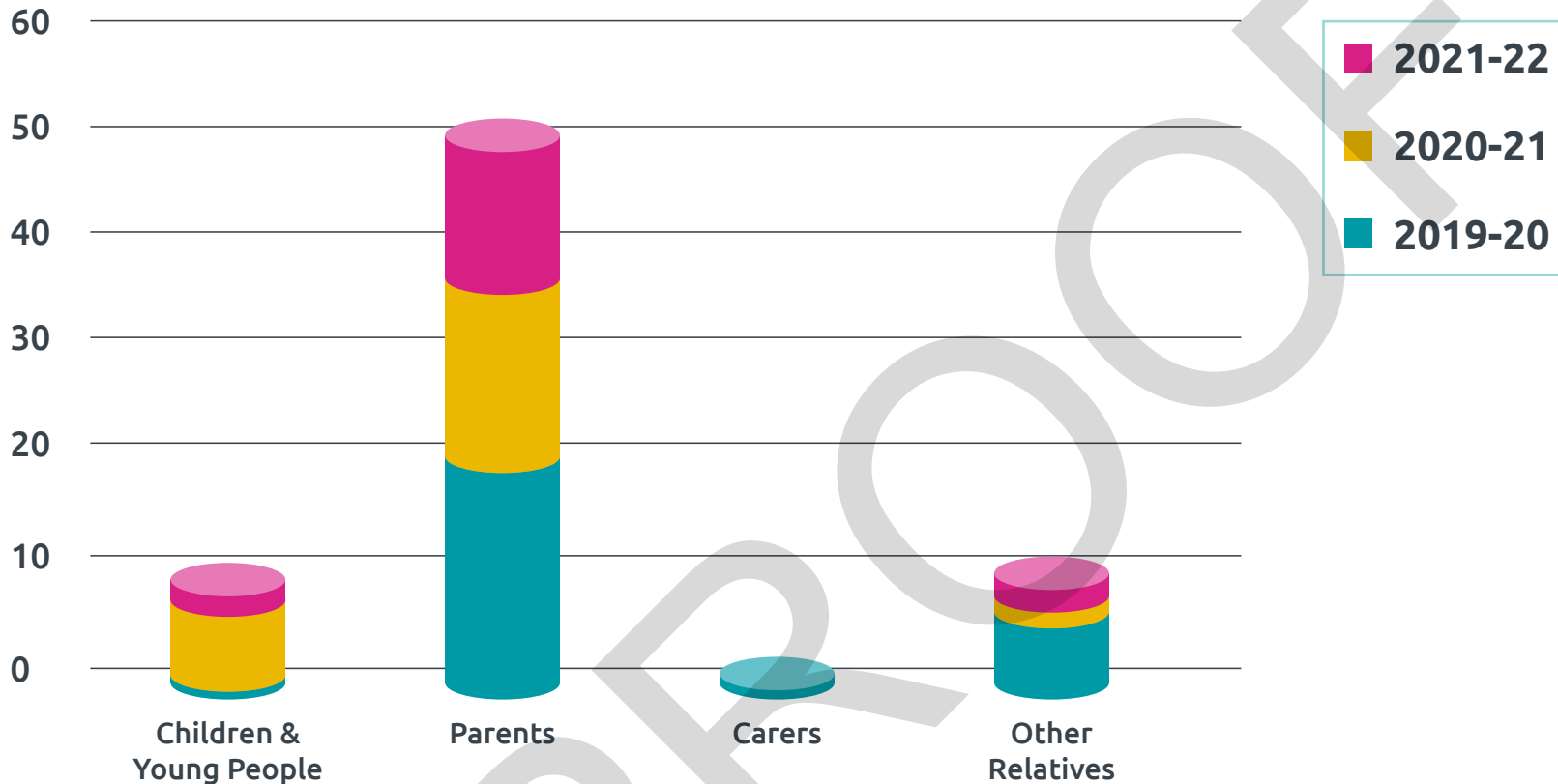
- 20 statutory complaints were received, which is a decrease of 13% compared to the previous year. This is the lowest level of complaints received in the last 5 years.
- In comparison to the number of children and families we work with the number of complaints is very low, representing 2% of all contacts, consistent with the previous year.
- 9 stage 2 complaints were received, consistent with the previous year.
- There were 3 stage 3 complaints received, in the previous year no stage 3 complaints were received.

Complaints made under the Children Act procedure are subject to statutory timescales.

- 90% of complaints were completed within timescale.



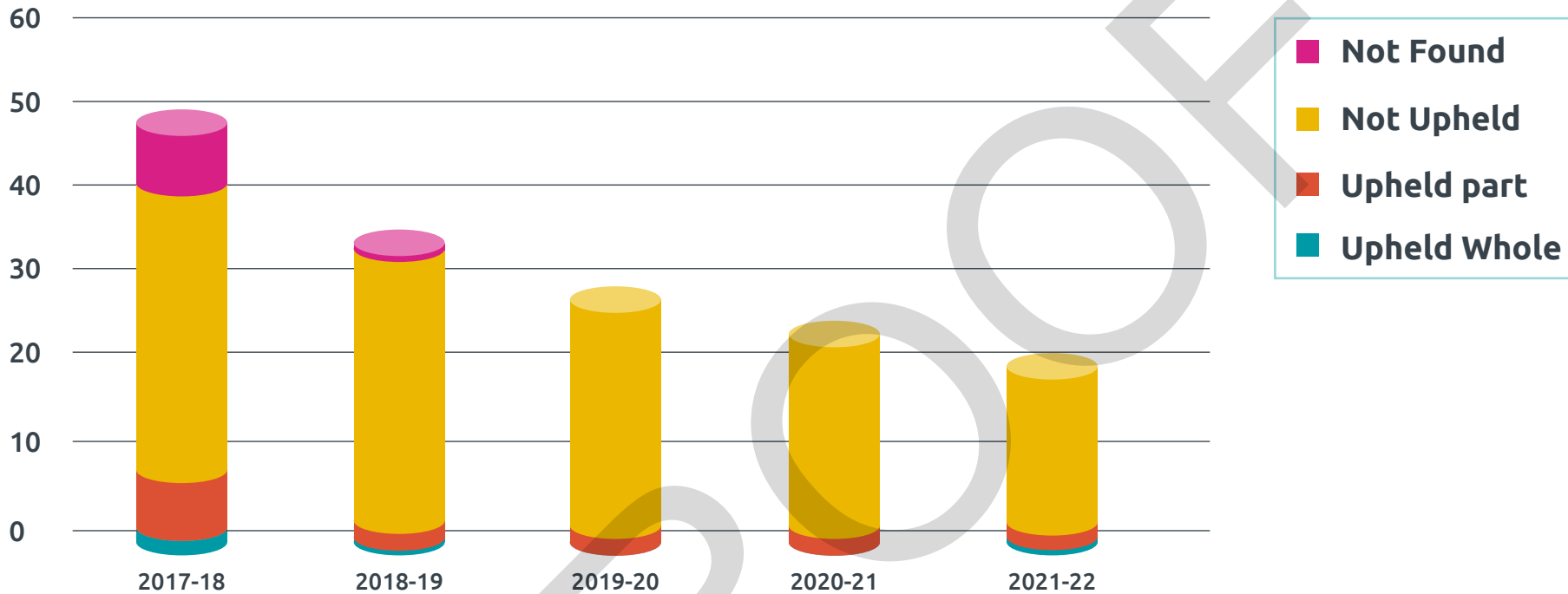
Who made complaints about Children's Services?



- It is of the upmost importance that children and young people can express their concerns through a complaint's procedure. Complaints from children and young people show a different perspective, to the service that is being delivered. Children and young people complain to the council in various ways including use of the council's complaints leaflets, the online complaints form, social media and the children's advocacy service, whose role is to support and advise children through the complaints process.

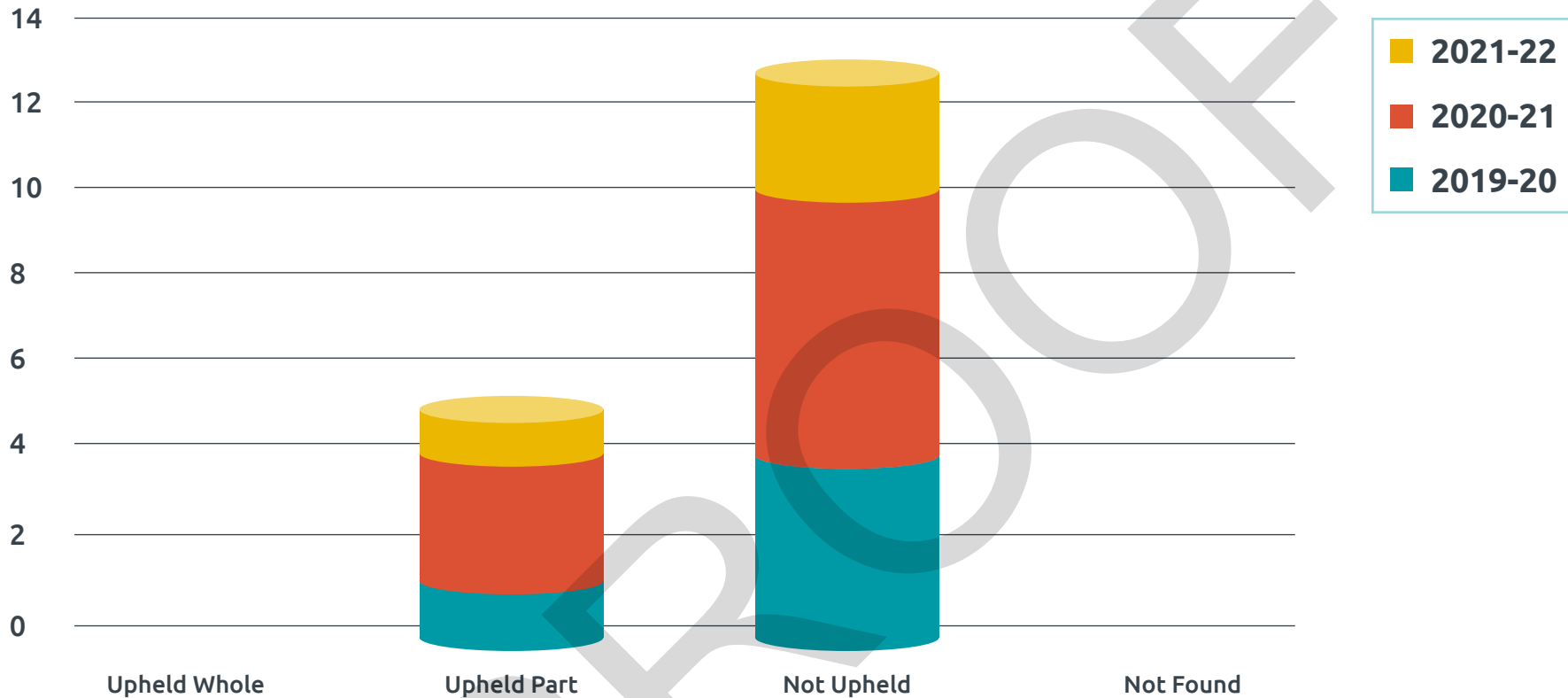
- 75% of the complaints made, were made by parents, compared to 69% in the previous year. Parents complain about the service from the families experience as a whole, or on behalf of their children.
- 10% of complaints were made by children and young people, compared to 22% in the previous year. These complaints have been supported by the children's advocacy service.
- 15% of the complaints were made by other relatives, compared to 9% in the previous year.
- No complaints were made by carers.

How many stage 1 children's complaints were received & upheld?



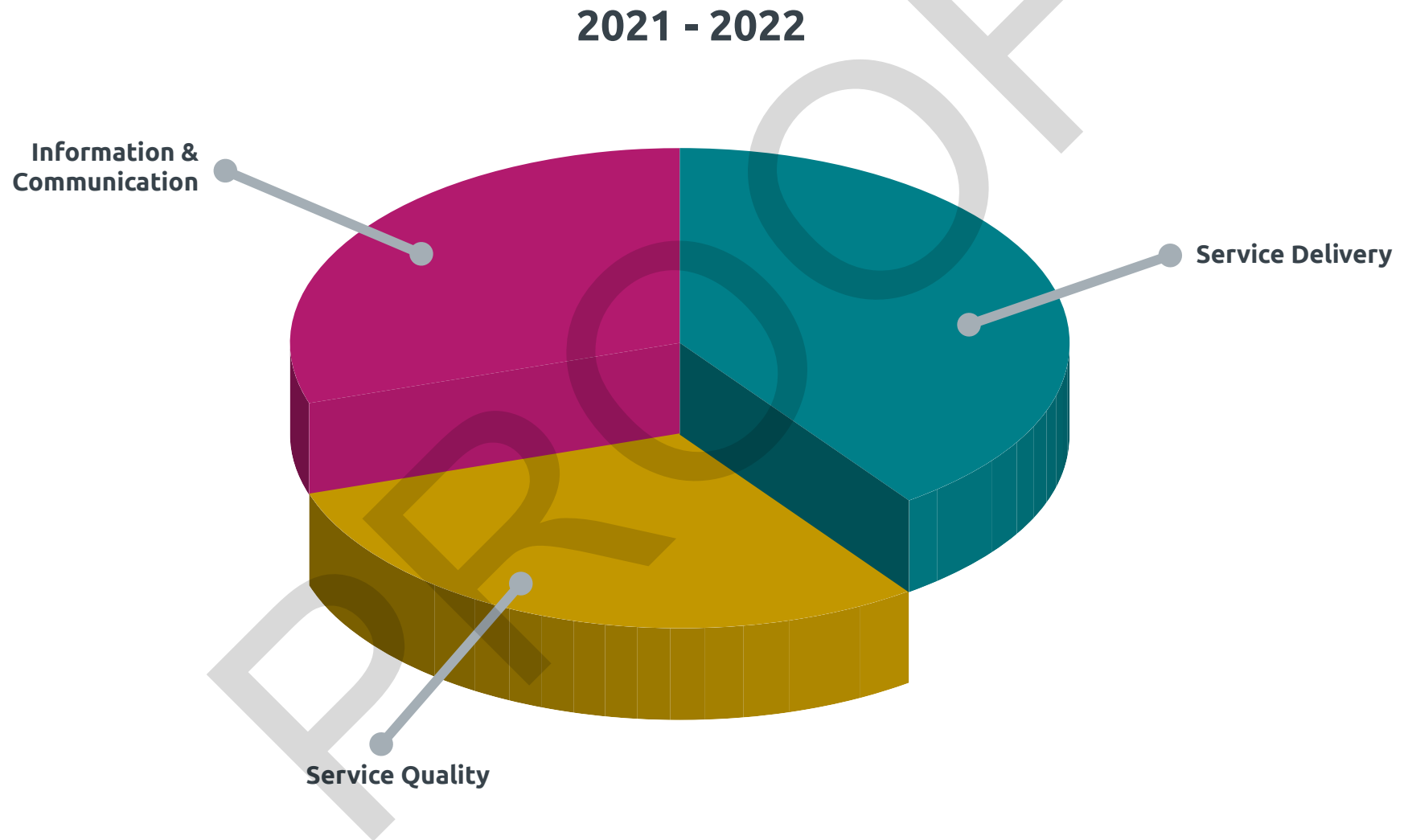
- 75% of complaints received in the year were not upheld, compared to 83% in the previous year.
- 25% of complaints were upheld in whole or in part, compared to 17% in the previous year.

How many stage 2 children's complaints were upheld?



- 9 stage 2 statutory complaints were received which is the same level as the previous year.
- In addition there were 3 Stage 3 complaints investigated, with 1 complaint upheld in part. No Stage 3 complaints were received in the previous year.
- None of the stage 3 complaints were upheld in whole.

What were the complaints about?



Complaints about **Service Delivery** relate to whether the appropriate support has been provided by the relevant team. The complainant may also complain that there has been a failure to provide a service. This category received the highest number of complaints.

Examples of these complaints in 2021-2022 included:

- Social workers performance.
- Delays in response.
- Dissatisfaction with the service received.

Complaints about **Service Quality** occur when there are issues in the quality of the service being delivered.

Examples of these complaints in 2021-2022 included:

- Complaints regarding the quality of social workers' interventions.
- Delays in assessments.

Complaints about **Information and Communication** relate to complainants' concerns that they do not think that they are fully aware of their social workers actions, their plans or are involved in the decision making regarding their family.

Examples of these complaints included:

- Communication issues between families and social workers.
- Expectations not fully understood.

What lessons were learned?

The following are key learning points identified from the children's complaints received during 2021-2022. These have been shared with managers and staff teams to help support best practice.

- Always ensure that expectations are fully understood and recorded.
- Always make personal contact to discuss requests for help and support and explore all the options that are available.
- Ensure assessments are not delayed.
- Ensure effective and timely communication with families.

Information from complaints is shared in a number of ways:

- Meetings with senior managers. These meetings consider specific issues in relation to individual complaints and identify any themes and cross cutting issues. This is an opportunity to learn from complaints and improve our delivery.

- Complaints information is included in regular performance monitoring reports. Teams report on complaints within their routine performance monitoring arrangements, informing them about qualitative aspects of performance and ensuring the information is integral to monitoring and development.

- Sharing specific reports with senior leaders, cabinet members and partner organisations.



5. Adults Statutory Complaints

Introduction & Background

This section sets out the annual complaints report for the year 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022 for Adult Social Care, which has been addressed under the terms of: The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, Making Experiences Count.

It outlines the complaints made under the statutory procedure and the actions taken in response.

The Making Experiences Count procedure applies to social care services that are provided or commissioned by the Local Authority for: people with a learning disability; people with a physical disability and older people.

The statutory procedure that applies for Adults is a two-stage procedure; the first stage rests with the Local Authority, the second stage with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Teams work closely with their users to ensure that people and their families understand what is happening and what will happen following any contact or request for care and support. There may be occasions where concerns and enquiries are raised from both the customer and their family on their behalf. In the first instance, the team will offer to address and resolve any concerns informally. This may stop the need for the customer to make a complaint, as issues are addressed as soon as they occur.

Where a more formal response is required, people are directed to our complaints procedure.

Complaints should be concluded wherever possible within 15 working days of the complaint being received; this can be extended up to no more than 20 working days if the complaint is more complex.

For more complex complaints, or in circumstances where an element of independence is required, complaints are investigated by someone independent of the area, either a manager from another area or someone who is independent of the council.

The investigating officer will report their findings to a senior manager. A full response is supplied to the complainant, and they are kept fully informed throughout the process of the investigation.

The principle in dealing with complaints in one stage is to 'do it once do it right' with the focus on resolution. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response they receive at stage one, then the reason for the dissatisfaction will be reviewed. Where the complaint has been thoroughly investigated and the complainant is unhappy with the outcome then this too will be reviewed to ensure that the outcome is fair and appropriate and that all actions that should be taken have been identified. If the response has been a complete response and no further actions can be taken, then the complainant will be referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for stage 2 of the procedure.

There are several mechanisms for incorporating the views of people, and we encourage citizen voice and support a number of citizen engagement groups, which inform strategic planning and delivery.

The representations procedure for Adult Social Care is also a route by which our customers can let us know what they think about our offer. We recognise the value of hearing people's views and concerns and understands that from time to time, despite best efforts, some circumstances warrant the use of the formal complaint's procedure. In doing so, we seek to ensure that the responses are timely, open and robust so that customers are assured, and teams utilise learning from complaints to improve and develop their offers as appropriate.

It is important that access to the complaint's procedure is as straightforward as possible for anyone who wishes to use it. Information about the procedure is made public on our website.

Advocacy support is available to users and their family when they need assistance with any concerns or complaints they may have with Adult Services.

Summary of Adults Complaints

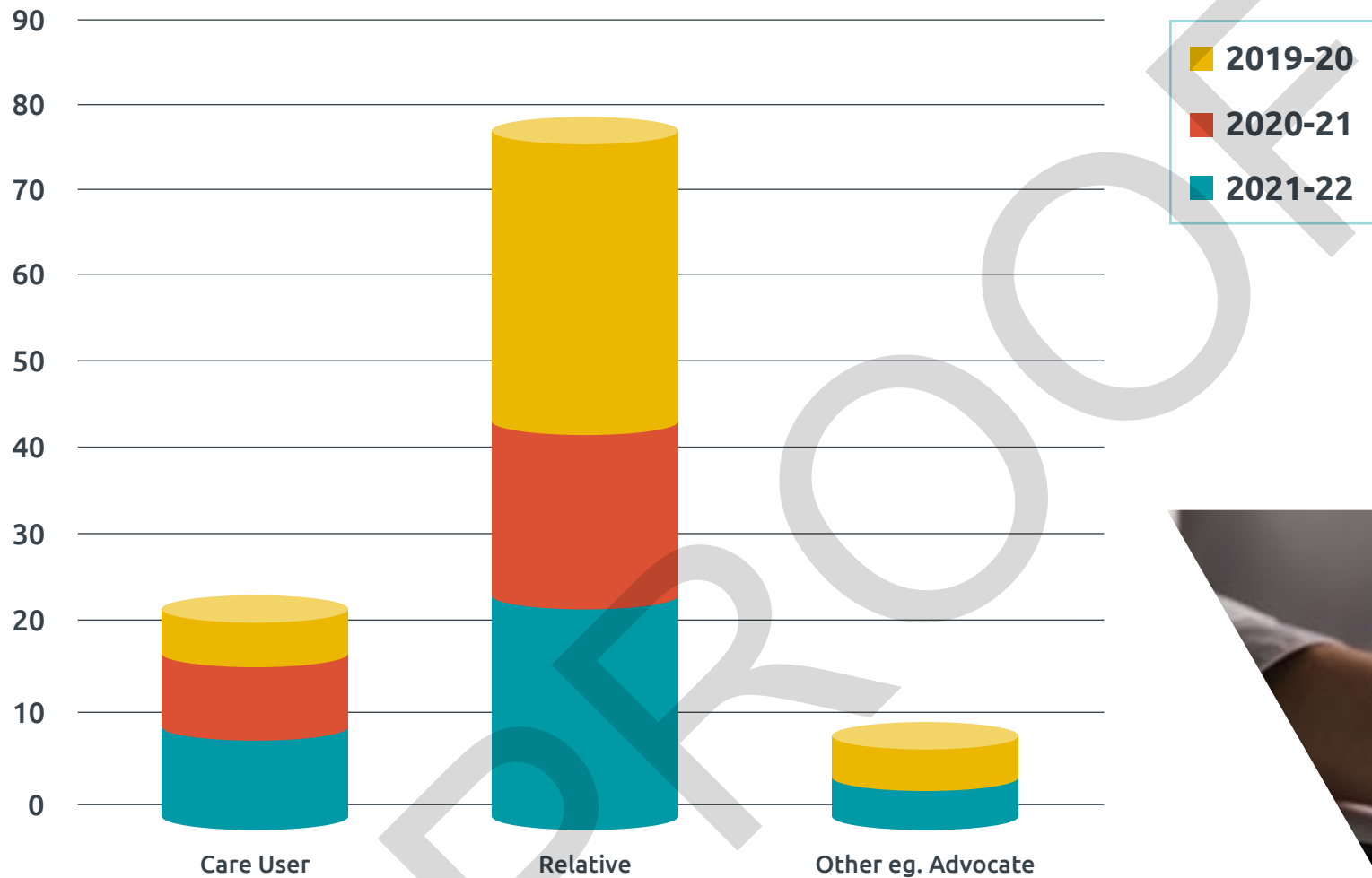
This section of the report provides a summary of the complaints that were received within the year 2021-2022.

- 47 statutory complaints were received for Adults, compared to 26 complaints in the previous year, which is an increase of 21 complaints.
- The percentage of complaints continues at a low level (3%) in comparison to the number of care users. In the previous year, the figure was 1.6%

- Complaints should be concluded wherever possible within 15 working days of the complaint being received; this can be extended up to no more than 20 working days if the complaint is more complex.
- 91% of complaints were responded to within statutory timescales.



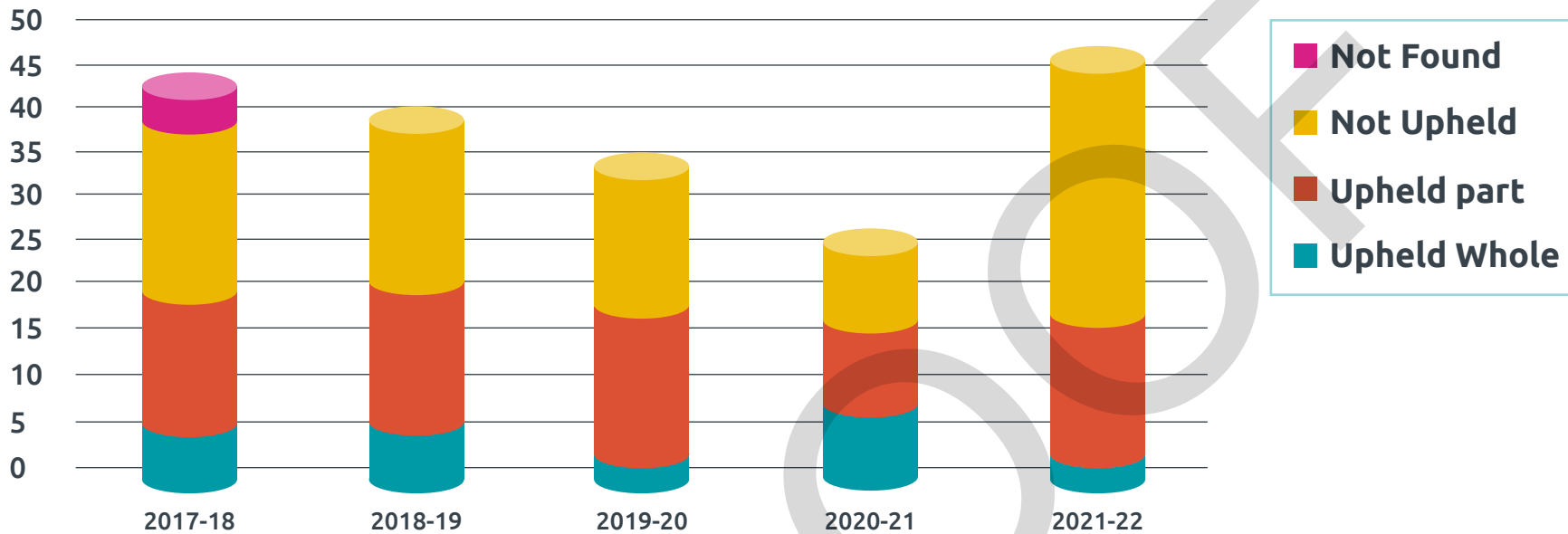
Who made the complaints about adults?



- Consistent with previous years, the majority of complaints have been made on behalf of care users, by their relatives. Care users often depend on their family to provide support to make a complaint.



How many complaints were received & upheld?

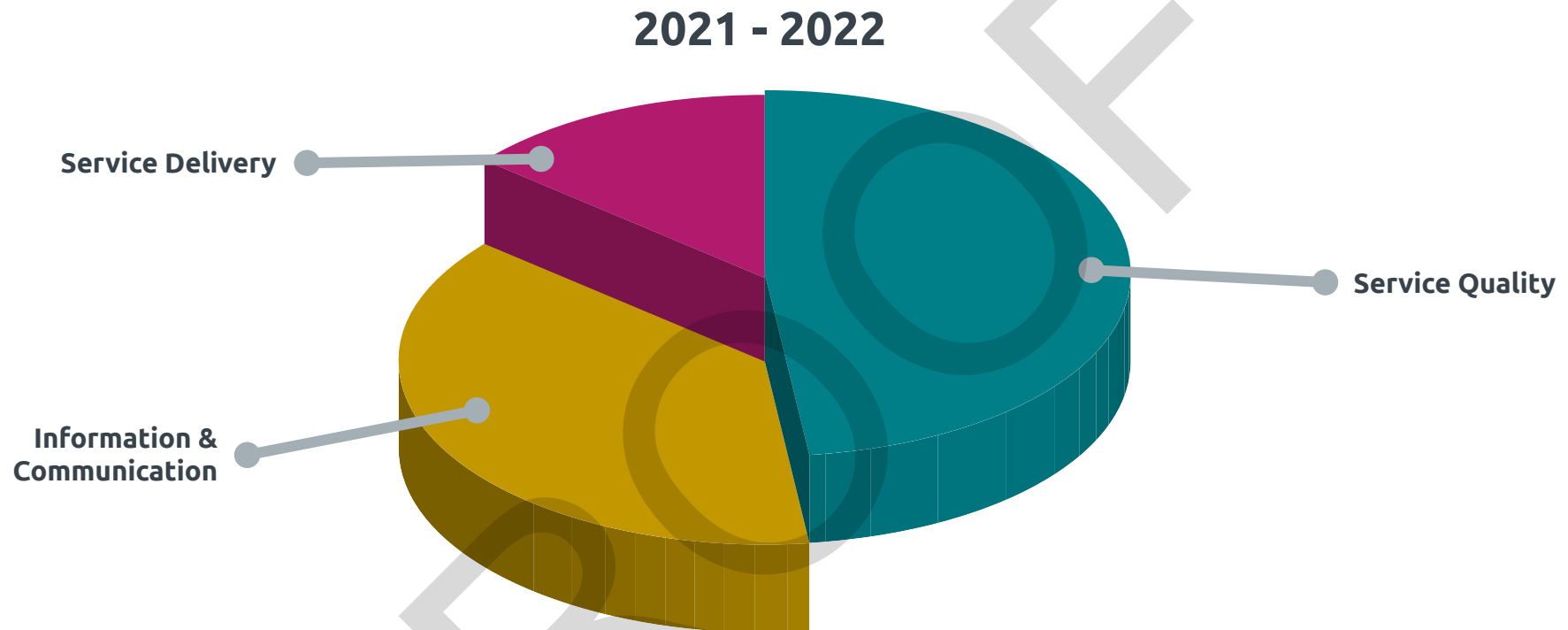


- 62% of the complaints received were not upheld, compared to 35% in the previous year.
- 38% of the complaints were upheld in whole or in part, compared to 65% in the previous year.
- There were no complaints received this year that have been categorised as not found.



What were the complaints about?

The primary complaint issues were:



Complaints about **Service Quality** arise where there are issues, for example delays or inadequate standards, rather than concerns about the nature of the service itself. This was the highest complaint reason in 2021-2022.

Examples of these complaints in 2021-2022 included:

- Quality of care provided by care providers and care homes.

Issues of **Information and Communication** relate to complainants' concerns that they are not made fully aware of the service's actions, plans or decision-making. This was the second highest complaint reason in 2021-2022.

Examples of these complaints in 2021-2022 included:

- Communication issues between families and workers.
- Communication in relation to Hospital discharge procedures and financial information.

Complaints about **Service Delivery** are about whether a support has been provided or what the complainants consider is the failure to provide a response.

Examples of these complaints included:

- Delay in care needs assessment review.
- Care costs that were not expected.

What lessons were learned?

The following developments have been undertaken as a direct result of receiving complaints:

- The process for reporting safeguarding concerns was made clearer and more user friendly.
- Clearer reasons are now provided for contact when writing to request a meeting.
- Discussions to be held in a timely way with individual and family members regarding discharge from hospital and financial contributions information.
- Communication channels with relevant family members to be considered carefully, especially on the death of a person.

- Ensure PPE and equipment are available during assessments, as necessary.
- Ensure that when a meeting is cancelled the attendees are informed as soon as possible.
- Training was provided as appropriate.

Information from complaints is shared in a number of ways:

- Meetings with senior managers. These meetings review complaints to consider specific issues in relation to individual complaints and identifying any themes and cross cutting issues. This is an opportunity to learn from complaints and improve delivery.

- Complaint information is included in regular performance monitoring reports. Teams report on complaints within their routine performance monitoring arrangements, informing the area about qualitative aspects of performance monitoring and team development.
- Sharing specific reports with senior leaders, cabinet members and partner organisations



6. Information Governance Complaints

We have an Information Complaints Policy which is published on our website.

Its purpose is to set out how we will manage complaints relating to information management, data protection and related issues.

There is one stage to the information complaints process.

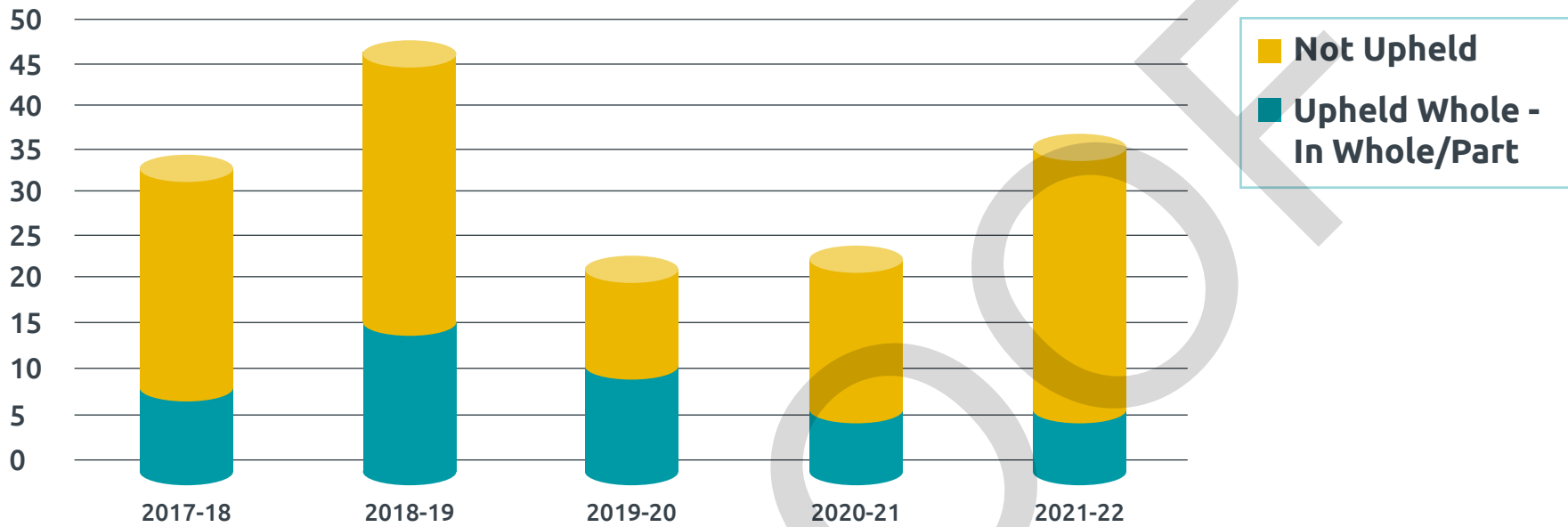
- **Stage 1**- the complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days and responded to within 20 working days, which can be increased to 40 working days if necessary for a thorough investigation.

If the customer remains dissatisfied, they may appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office. The ICO website is at: ico.org.uk

- 36 Information Governance complaints were received compared to 23 complaints in the previous year.
- 71% of complaints were responded to on time compared to 83% in the previous year.
- 4 complainants appealed to the Information Commissioner's Office in 2021-2022.

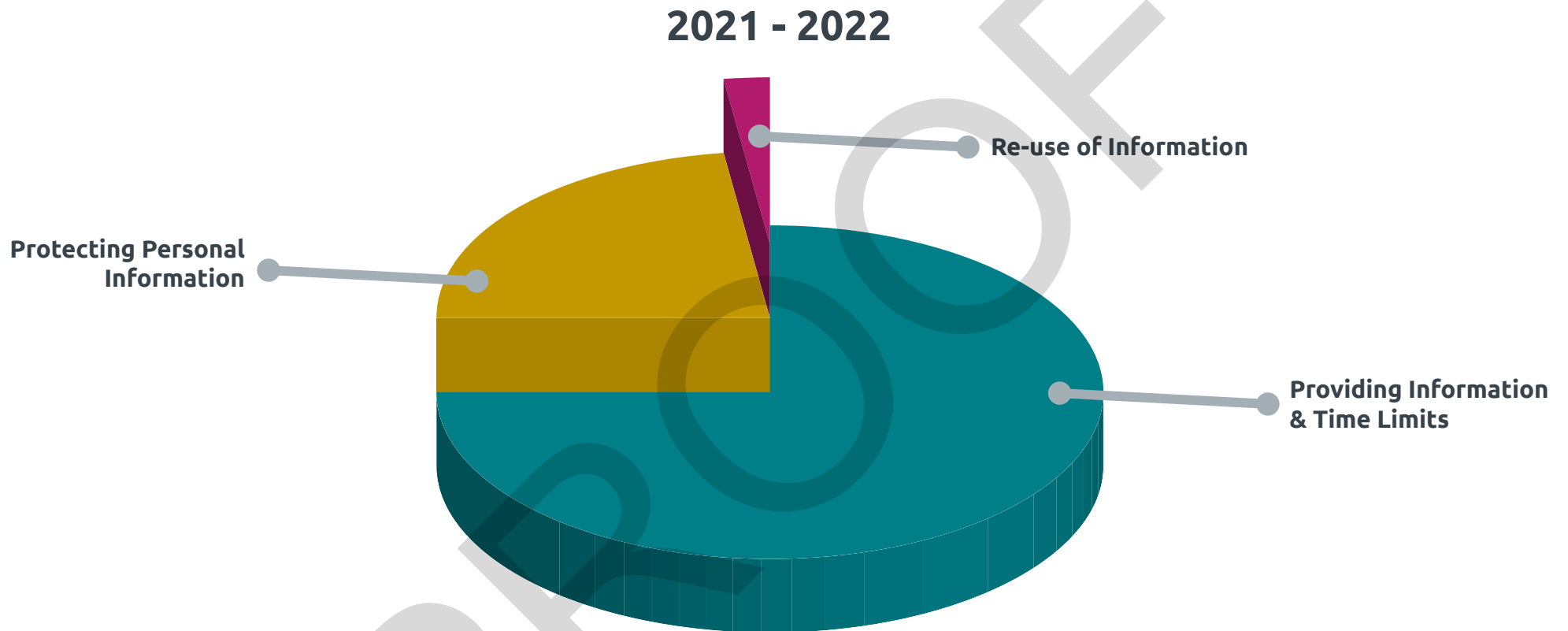


How many complaints were received & upheld?



What were the complaints about?

The primary complaint issues were:



What lessons were learned?

We will:

- Ensure that requests for information are responded to within statutory timescale.
- Ensure correspondence is checked before being sent to ensure it is correct.
- Ensure sufficient clarification is given as to why an exemption is being relied upon to withhold information and the need to ensure all releasable information is released.

7. Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Complaints

Introduction & Background

Complainants who remain dissatisfied after Stage 1 of the Adults statutory complaints procedure, Stage 2 of the council's complaints procedure or Stage 3 of the Children Services statutory complaints procedure may escalate their complaint to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LG&SCO).

LG&SCO Annual Letter:

The LG&SCO produces an Annual Letter each year, which sets out the number of complaints they have received in the year and the decisions they have made. It also provides a comment on our effectiveness in providing remedies and how our performance compares to other councils. The Local Government Ombudsman anonymises cases and publishes the decisions on their website at:

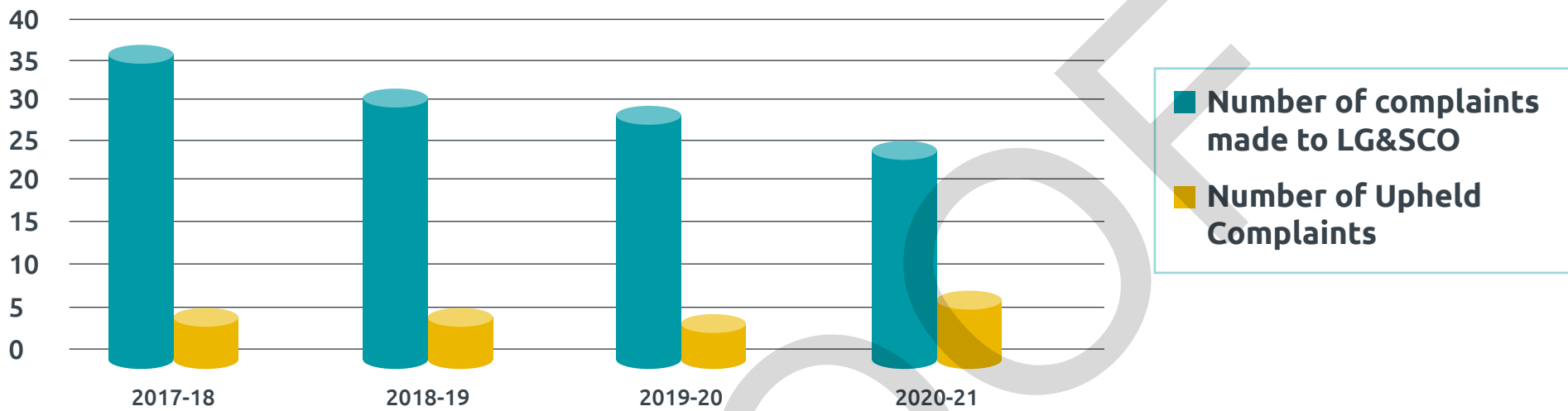
lgo.org.uk/Decisions

In 2021-2022, the LG&SCO notified us of 25 complaints, compared to 29 in the previous year.

The LG&SCO undertook 9 detailed complaint investigations, of which 7 were upheld.



How many complaints were received & upheld?



The LG&SCO confirmed that we complied with 100% of their recommendations in 2021-2022.

What lessons were learned?

- We will ensure that the learning arising from complaints made to the LG&SCO is carried through into our professional practice



8. Conclusion

Complaints provide an opportunity for us to learn from the feedback it receives and to put in place measures that support the continuous improvement of its offer to residents.

Examples of action and improvements implemented include:

- Continuing our restorative practice methods, helping to resolve complaints and issues at the earliest opportunity and apologising when we get things wrong.

- Introducing the use of the latest digital technologies has streamlined processes, enabling greater collaboration, making it easier to deliver consistent quality responses, faster.
- Using the findings from upheld complaints to inform the development of improved training materials and practice guidance.
- Reviewing and addressing the training needs of individual staff.
- Sharing the insights from complaints with senior leaders and relevant cabinet members to inform their development priorities.
- Reviewing and enhancing the information we publish externally to ensure that it is clear, concise and informative.
- Improving our offer to residents as set out in the main body of the report – ‘you said – we did’.