

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

**RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT AND RURAL PARTNERSHIPS  
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
AND ADULTS AND HEALTH CABINET MEMBERS**

**CUSTOMER FEEDBACK ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 To present the customer feedback annual report 2020-21 – *How Did We Do?*
- 1.2 It includes specific detail on the representations received regarding Adult Services and Children Services in line with statutory requirements to report these, together with the findings published in the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Letter

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 This report presents a summary of the customer feedback received during the period 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021. Detailed findings are set out in the accompanying appendix: Customer Feedback Annual Report 2020-21 – *How Did We Do?*
- 2.2 Its purpose is to support our continuous improvement of the council's offer to residents and ensure that the learning from customer feedback is captured and used to inform and enhance customer experience moving forward. This annual report is therefore important; it provides key intelligence and insight on how we are performing as a council against our published customer service standards and as such, it is essential for informing our performance management, business assurance and public engagement objectives.
- 2.3 2020-2021 was an exceptional year and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is reflected in the profile of complaints received, including temporary suspension of business by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman during 2020.
- 2.4 The council received over 300 compliments from residents recognising their satisfaction with the quality of the council's offer and services provided.
- 2.5 The number of complaints received in 2020-2021 is 16% lower than 2019-2020, continuing a positive trend of reducing complaints year on year for the last 4 years. The number of complaints received remains at

a low level in comparison to the number of people who live in North Lincolnshire - equivalent to 0.19%.

- 2.6 There is a statutory requirement to present an annual report on representations and complaints which have been addressed by adults and children's services through their respective processes which are set out in law. The initial stage of the process rests with the local authority and where the principles of timely restorative practice are applied. Subsequent stages require referral to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for independent investigation.
- 2.7 During 2020-21 there were 26 complaints about statutory social care services for adults. This is 9 fewer than the previous year and the lowest number in the last 4 years. The proportion of complaints to service users remains low at 1.6%. The annual report provides a summary analysis of the complaint issues and findings.
- 2.8 During the same period there were 23 complaints about statutory children's services. This is 15% fewer than the previous year and represents 2% of contacts. Further information is set out in the annual report.
- 2.9 Once the council's complaints process has been completed, the complainant has a route of appeal to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. During 2020-21 8 detailed investigations were undertaken by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and of these 4 complaints were upheld (50%) compared to an average of 63% for local authorities. In 50% of upheld cases the ombudsman found that the council had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint had reached them. This compared to an average of 10% for similar councils. In addition the ombudsman found that the council had complied with 100% of their recommendations.

### **3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 3.1 Option 1: Receive and approve the annual report for publishing.
- 3.2 Option 2: To reject the report.

### **4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Option 1: Approving and publishing the annual report will help meet our statutory duties regarding adults and children's services and wider transparency and public engagement objectives.
- 4.2 Option 2: Not publishing the annual report will not meet our statutory duty.

5. **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)**
  - 5.1 As set out above, there is a statutory requirement to publish an annual report relating to complaints and representations about adult and children's services.
  - 5.2 The report will be shared with relevant partner organisations.
6. **OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)**
  - 6.1 None
7. **OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**
  - 7.1 Not applicable.
8. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**
  - 8.1 Not applicable.
9. **RECOMMENDATIONS**
  - 9.1 That the Customer Feedback Annual Report 2020-21 – *How Did We Do?* is received and approved for publication.

DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND PARTNERSHIPS

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Date: 10 August 2021

### **Background Papers used in the preparation of this report**

The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.

Children Act 1989

Children's Social Care Services Statutory Complaints, Compliments and Representation Report – Annual Review 2019-20

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Complaints 2020-21

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# North Lincolnshire Council

Customer Feedback Annual Report  
2020-2021

## *How Did We Do?*



**North  
Lincolnshire  
Council**

# Foreword

Welcome to North Lincolnshire Council's Annual Customer Feedback Report 2020-21: How Did We Do? The purpose of this report is to set out how we have performed in dealing with and responding to feedback from our residents. The report also assists us in meeting the requirements to publish information about the performance of our statutory services for Adults and Children, including feedback from the Local Government & 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 and 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.

It is pleasing to note that for the 4th successive year the number of complaints received has reduced by around 16% compared to the previous 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 that have also been received from customers this year.

Finally, I would like to thank our conscientious and committed workforce, whose success in a challenging year is reflected in the compliments and positive feedback we have received about their performance.

**Councillor Ralph Ogg**  
**Resident Engagement Cabinet Member**



# Introduction

This report presents a summary of feedback received for the period 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021, in the form of compliments, comments and complaints.

Its purpose within the role of governance is to support our continuous improvement work and ensure that learning from customer voice feedback is captured and used to help enhance customer experience.

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 to provide a rounded view of customer feedback.

This annual report is therefore important; it provides key intelligence and insight on how we are performing as a council and as such,

it is essential for informing our performance management, business assurance and public engagement objectives.

2020-2021 was an exceptional year and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been reflected in the profile of complaints received, including temporary suspension of business by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

Overall, the number of complaints received in 2020-2021 is 16% lower than 2019-2020, continuing a positive trend of reducing complaints year on year over the last 4 years.

The percentage of complaints received to the number of residents in North Lincolnshire remains low - 0.19%, compared to 0.23% in 2019-2020.

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# 1. Compliments

The council receives compliments in a variety of ways and as well as expressing customer satisfaction, many of these convey a wider story of needs being met and of real social value.

We have received hundreds of compliments in the year regarding the quality-of-service customers received. The following is a selection of the compliments received:

## Council Tax

*"I just wanted to thank you for the exceptional service & positive customer focused approach you have delivered today. You have been believably helpful & I am amazed by the fabulous service you have provided today. The council is lucky to have such a helpful & positive member of staff as yourself."*

*"I am flabbergasted with the help I have received and would like to thank you all."*

## Customer Contact Centre

*"You are doing an excellent service, checking that people are ok when they are shielding. Bless you all for your care and support."*

*"That is an excellent service you have there, I did not fancy having my new bus pass photo taken with a*

*mask on and did not want to have to remove my mask in public when having my photo done. Very pleased that it can be renewed over the phone by using the same picture, that shows how you are trying to keep us all safe."*

## Waste Management

*"It is the burgundy bins that are getting emptied and due to the wind the bins have blown over, but the crew are up and down the street picking up loose cardboard and plastic that has blown about. The crew are always polite, they are a fantastic crew and very helpful with the elderly."*

*"I would like to thank the bin men as they are key workers, they are doing a fantastic job in these hard uncertain times. I think that the bin men should get some kind of recognition."*

*"All the bin guys have gone above and beyond this year."*

## Handyperson

*"The Handyperson was awfully nice and it was nice to have a pleasant and friendly workman in the house – I am very pleased with the work completed."*



## Highways

*"Your people came out last night because our property was being flooded. They arrived with sandbags and dealt with it really well."*

*"I would just like to say thank you for the road resurface that's was completed today. An excellent job."*

## Children's Services

*"A young person and her parents were extremely thankful of the support provided to them by their social worker and the young person reported that it meant a lot to her that the social worker cared about her and it was clear that it was more than 'just a job' for her."*

*"Thank you for everything you have done for me and helped me get prepared for uni."*

## Adult Services

*"I had to ring out of hours adult social services. Staff were friendly, helpful and knowledgeable and provided an excellent care plan to a patient who was in a difficult situation."*

*"Throughout the process of my mum being assessed, care sought and ultimately her discharge, the staff were incredibly professional."*

*"A very professional service tailored to my needs. I stubbornly wanted no assistance when I was discharged from hospital but now realise, I was wrong and your assistance was invaluable."*

## Libraries

*"I want to say thank you for providing access to BorrowBox and PressReader. Amazing choice, easy to use and both allow voracious readers to be just that! They have been a lifesaver throughout lockdown, and I have really appreciated using them. I keep telling friends about them!"*

*"Many thanks to you and the team for the work in Crowle Library. The new space is completely inspirational and a real asset for the community."*



# 2. Complaints

## Introduction & Background

This section presents a summary of complaints received for the period 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021.

Our Customer Complaints & Comments Policy is published on the council's website at [northlincs.gov.uk/complaints](http://northlincs.gov.uk/complaints). Its purpose is to set out the process for receiving, managing and responding to complaints and other feedback the council receives from residents.

The Customer Service Standards sit alongside the complaints policy, which present our promise to customers and the standards we aspire to achieve.

### Customer Complaints Procedure:

There are two stages to the council's complaints process:

- ▼ **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 20 days) for the complaint to be reconsidered. A senior manager will investigate and respond within 25 working days.

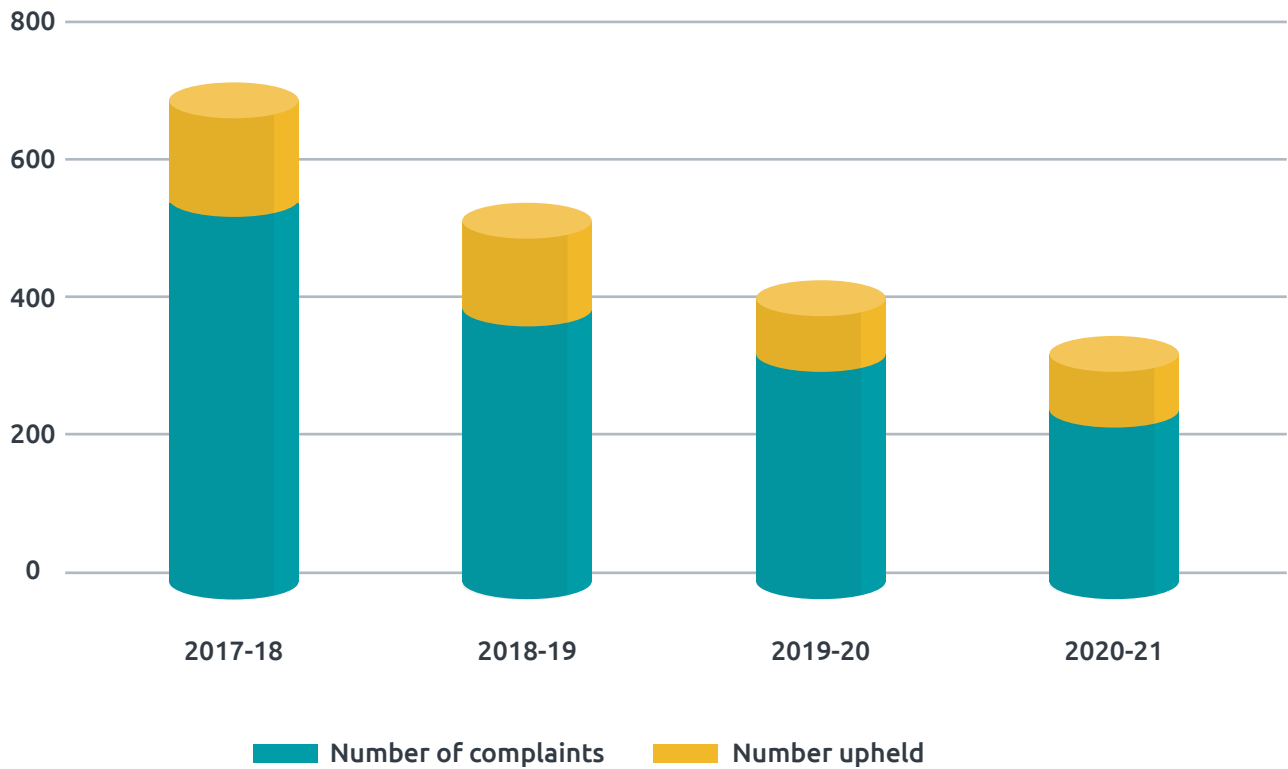
Our target is that we will respond to 95% of complaints within the agreed timescale.

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



## Summary of Complaints

### 4-Year Trend

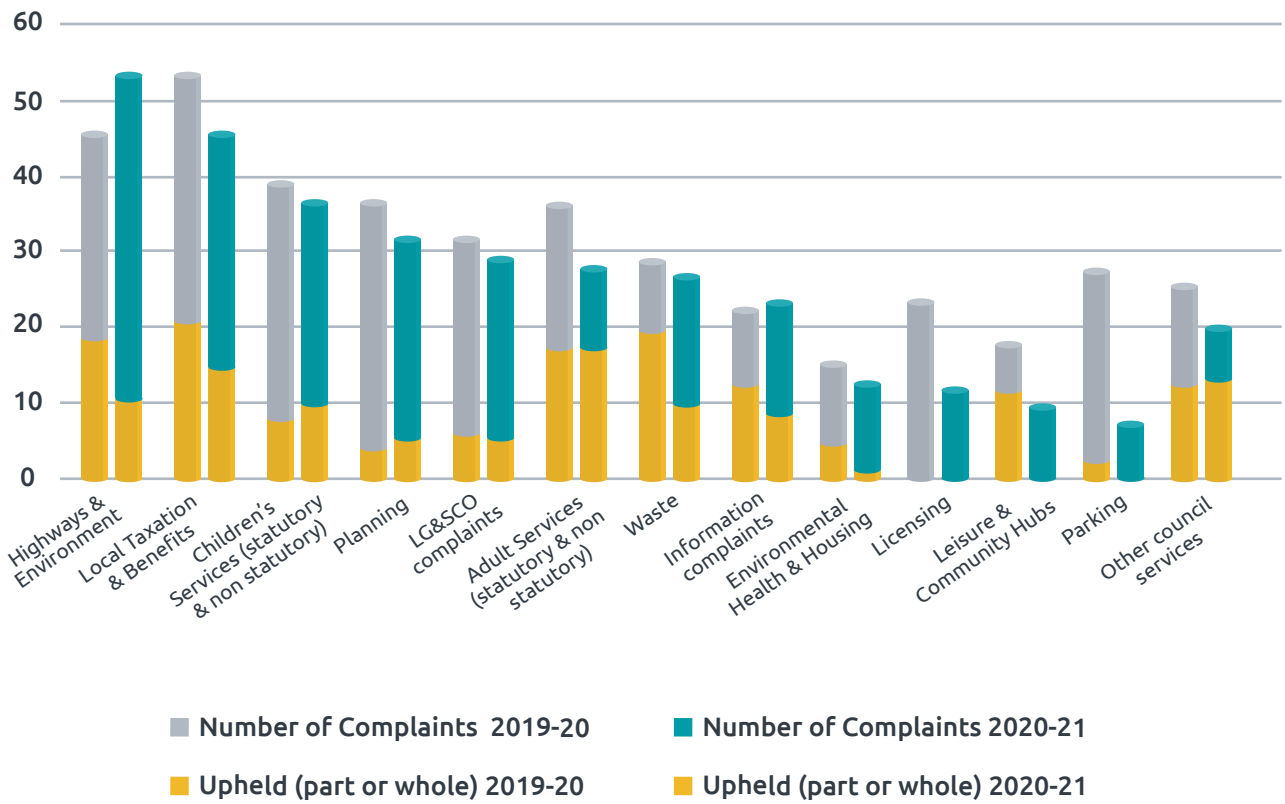


- Complaints have reduced year on year by approximately 20% each year.
- 3 in 4 complaints in 2020-21 were not upheld following investigation.
- 331 complaints were received in 2020-21, compared to 394 in the previous year (these totals include complaints that have been escalated to stage 2, 3 and the LG&SCO as appropriate)
- 49 complaints were escalated to stage 2.
- 9 out of 10 complaints were responded to within timescale.

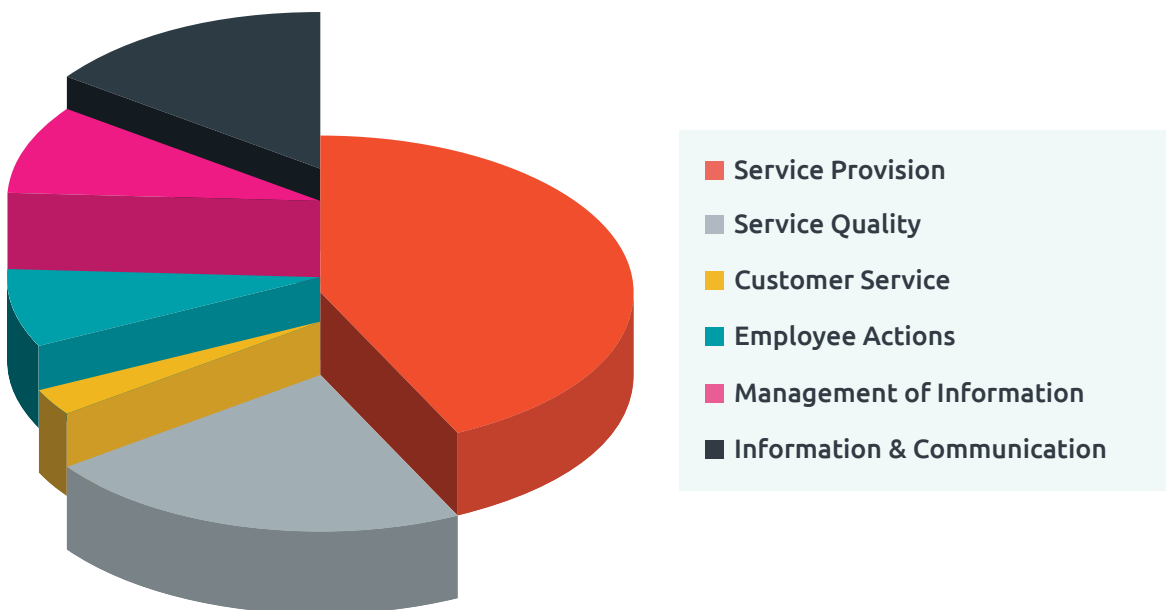


## What were the complaints about?

The complaints were made about the following council business areas:



The primary complaint issues were:



### 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 would like more information on single resident discount for council tax.	We enhanced the information presented through the council's website.
We were unaware of the timeline of our child's Education Health & Care Assessment.	We have invested in a new digital EHC Hub, which will improve the ability to carry out Education Health & Care assessments and review processes in a much more timely and transparent fashion.
We found that you did not have enough public access computers at Scunthorpe Central via a drop-in service during Covid-19 restrictions.	We have made more computers available for public use on a drop-in basis.
Some of your invoices and accompanying letters are too direct and do not show sensitivity, especially in difficult times.	We reviewed and updated our Adult finance letter templates.
Your payment system for parking fines isn't clear and led to payment errors.	We upgraded our payment system to correct this issue.



# 4. Children's Services Statutory Complaints

## Introduction and Background

This section provides a summary of the complaints received regarding statutory services to children and families for the year 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021.

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 to service users or their representatives 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 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 support 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 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 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, 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. The council wants 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.

The council recognises 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 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 days, however up to 20 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.

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

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

### **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 complaints**

This section of the report provides a summary of the complaints that were received within the year 2020-2021.

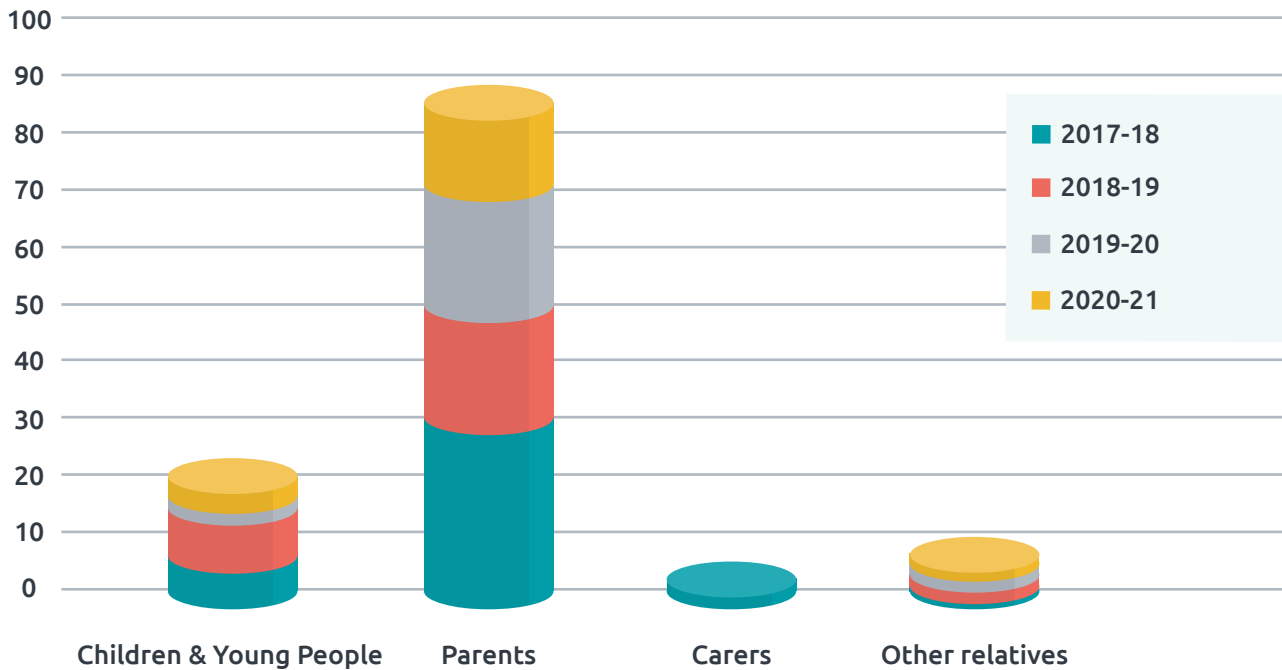
- 23 statutory children's complaints were received in 2020-2021, which is a decrease of 15% compared to the previous year. This is the lowest level of complaints received in the last 4 years.
- In comparison to the number of children and families we work with the number of complaints is very low, representing 2% of all contacts, which is 1% lower than in the previous year.
- 9 stage 2 complaints were received which is an increase of 4 compared to the previous year.

- No complaints were received at stage 3, which is the same level as the previous year.

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

- All complaints were responded to within statutory timescales.
- of the 9 concluded investigations at stage 2, 7 were completed within timescale. 2 of the complaints exceeded timescale due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Who made complaints about children's services?

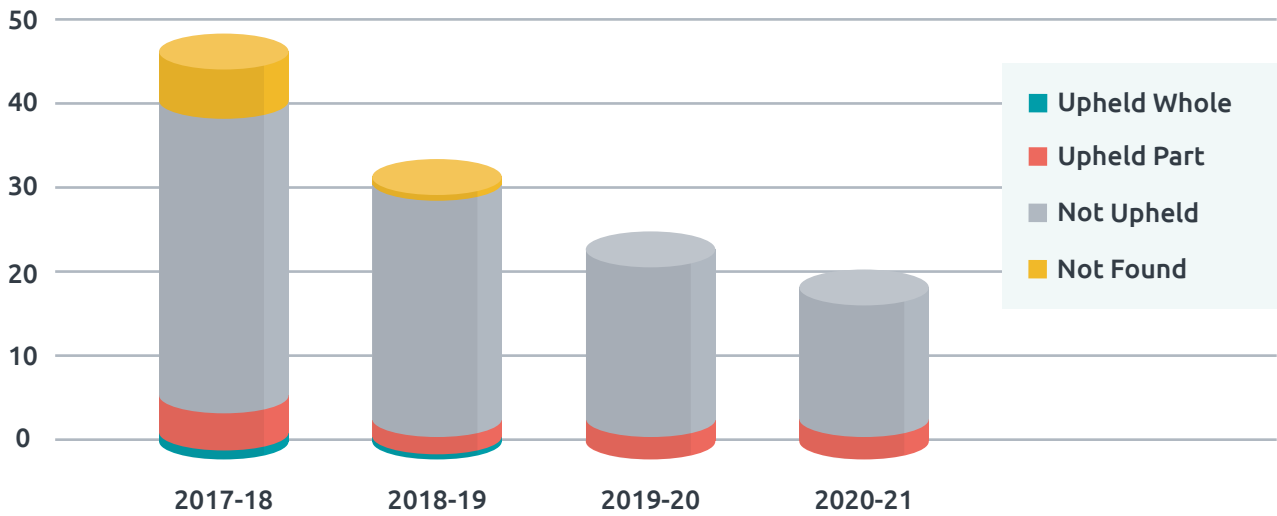


- ▼ 69% of the complaints were made by parents, compared to 73% in the previous year. Parents complain about the service from the families experience as a whole, or on behalf of their children.
  - ▼ 22% of complaints were made by children and young people, compared to 19% in the previous year. These complaints have been supported by the children's advocacy team.
  - ▼ 9% of the complaints were made by other relatives, compared to 8% in the previous year.
  - ▼ No complaints were made by carers, which is the same figure as in the previous year.
- ▼ It is of the utmost importance that children and young people can express their concerns through a complaints procedure. Complaints from children and young people provide a different perspective from a child's view, 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 team, whose role is to support and advise children through the complaints process.



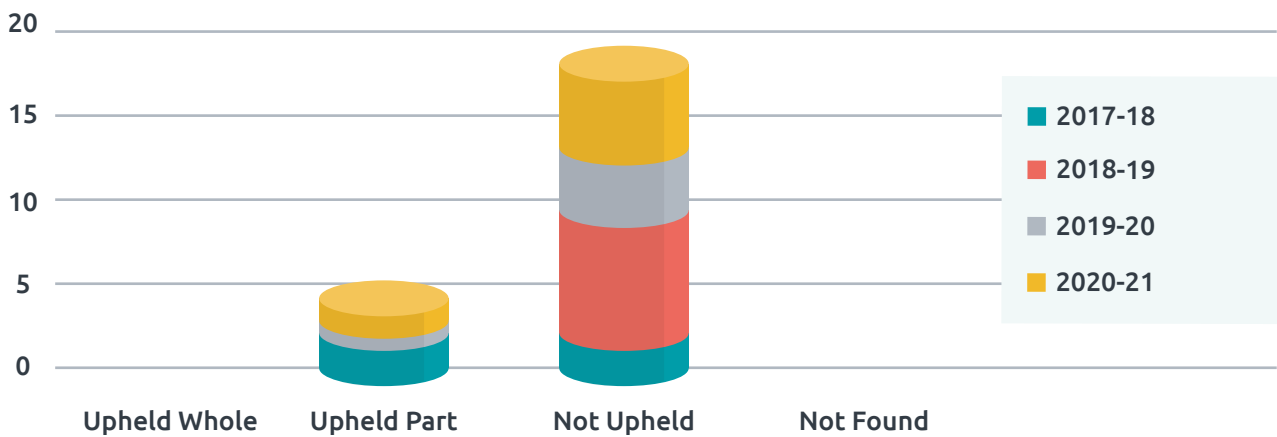


## How many stage 1 children's complaints were received & upheld?



- 83% of complaints received in the year were not upheld, compared to 85% in the previous year.
- 17% of complaints were upheld in whole or in part, compared to 15% in the previous year.
- None of the complaints received this year have been categorised as not found, the same as in the previous year.

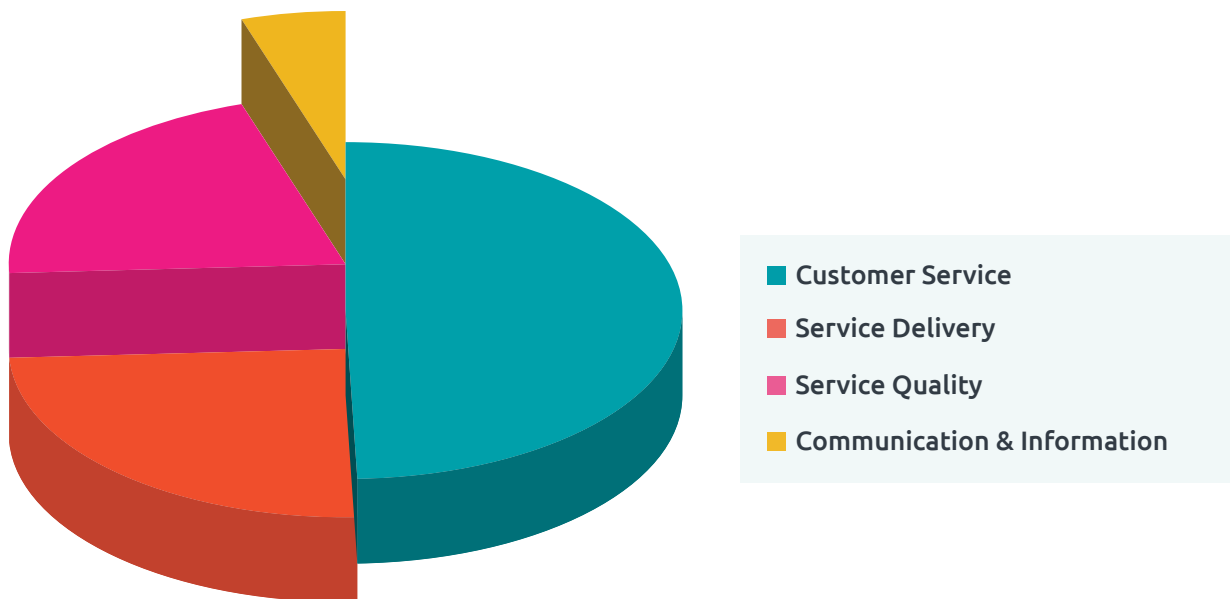
## How many stage 2 children's complaints were received & upheld?



- None of the stage 2 complaints received in the year were upheld in whole, which is the same figure as the previous year.
- No complaints were received at stage 3, which is the same as the previous year.

## What were the complaints about?

The primary complaint issues were:



Complaints about **Customer Service** relate to the attitude and behaviour of members of staff. Complainants can raise concerns about the way that the actions of staff made them feel. This category received the highest number of complaints however it shows a decrease of 4 compared to the previous year.

Examples of these complaints in 2020-21 included:

- ▼ Perceived attitude of a social worker whilst carrying out case work and intervention.
- ▼ Actions and behaviour of a social worker.

Complaints about **Service Delivery** are about 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 second highest number of complaints.

Examples of these complaints in 2020-21 included:

- ▼ Issues with how social workers have performed.
- ▼ 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. This differs from family to family, but for example, it could include complaints about delays in assessments or standards that are below what is expected. There was an increase of 3 complaints in this category compared to the previous year.

Examples of these complaints in 2020-21 included:

- ▼ Complaints regarding the quality of social workers' interventions.

Complaints about **Communication and Information** 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.

## What lessons were learned?

The following are key learning points identified from the children's services complaints received during 2020-21. These have been shared with managers and staff teams to help support best practice.

- It is important that all minutes and notes of meetings are shared in a timely manner.
- Keeping thorough and accurate case notes helps to document and explain the work undertaken with families.
- Great care should be taken when sharing information to ensure it is accurate and timely.

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 our delivery.
- Complaints information is included in regular performance monitoring reports. Teams report on complaints within their routine performance monitoring arrangements, thus informing them about qualitative aspects of performance and ensuring that the information is integral to monitoring and development.
- An Annual Report is presented to the Cabinet Member. Reporting at this level allows for consideration of the implications for wider strategic and policy development.
- This report is shared with partner organisations.



# 5. Adult Services

## Statutory Complaints

### Introduction and Background

This section sets out the annual complaints report for the year 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021 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 council for: people with a learning disability; people with a physical disability and older people.

The statutory procedure that applies in Adult Services 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 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 service 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 will be directed to the council's complaints procedure.

The response is delivered as a letter, email or face-to-face meeting, as appropriate to the individual. 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. These investigations will report to a senior manager on their findings. 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 the council encourages citizen voice and supports 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. The council recognises 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 complaints procedure. In doing so, the council seeks 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 complaints procedure is as straightforward as possible for anyone who wishes to use it. Information about the procedure is made public on the council 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.

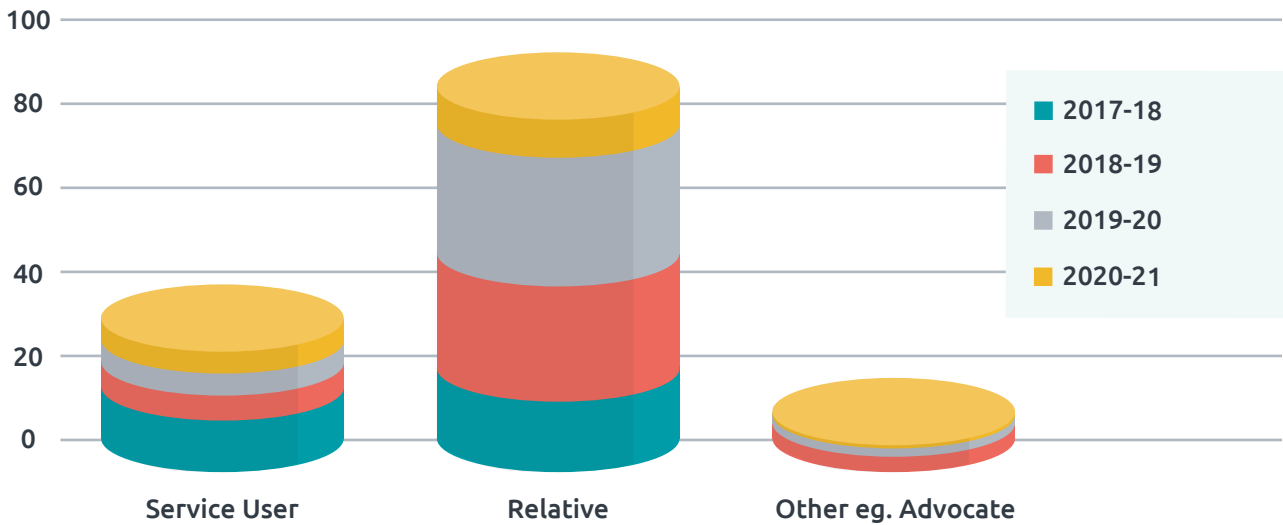
## Summary of Adults complaints

This section of the report provides a summary of the complaints that were received within the year 2020-2021.

- ▼ 26 statutory complaints were received for Adult Services in 2020-2021, compared to 35 complaints in 2019-2020, which is a decrease of 9 complaints. This is the lowest level of complaints received in the last 4 years.
- ▼ The percentage of complaints continues at a low level (1.6%) in comparison to the number of users. In the previous year, the figure was 2%.
- ▼ 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.
- ▼ Of the 26 complaints received 18 were responded to within the 15 working day timescale, which equates to 69%, compared to 66% in 2019-2020.
- ▼ 4 were responded to within 20 working days, which equates to 15.5%, compared to 8% in 2019-2020.
- ▼ The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the timeliness of the council's response.
- ▼ The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman recognised the challenge of the pandemic and provided councils with dispensation and relaxed provisions to enable resources locally to be prioritised.

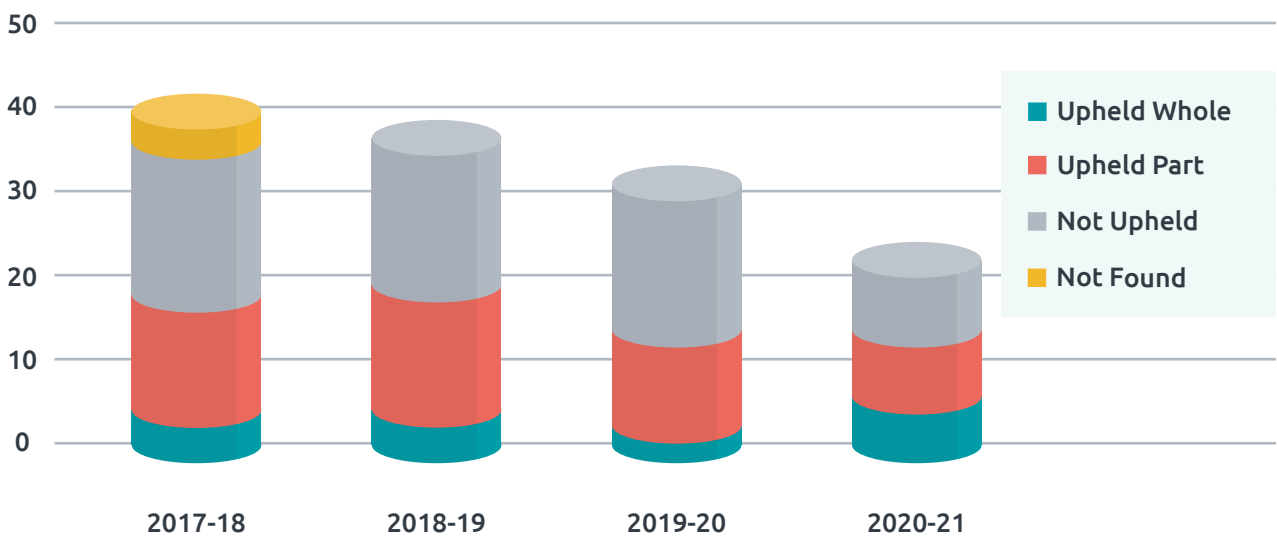


## Who made complaints about adult services?



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

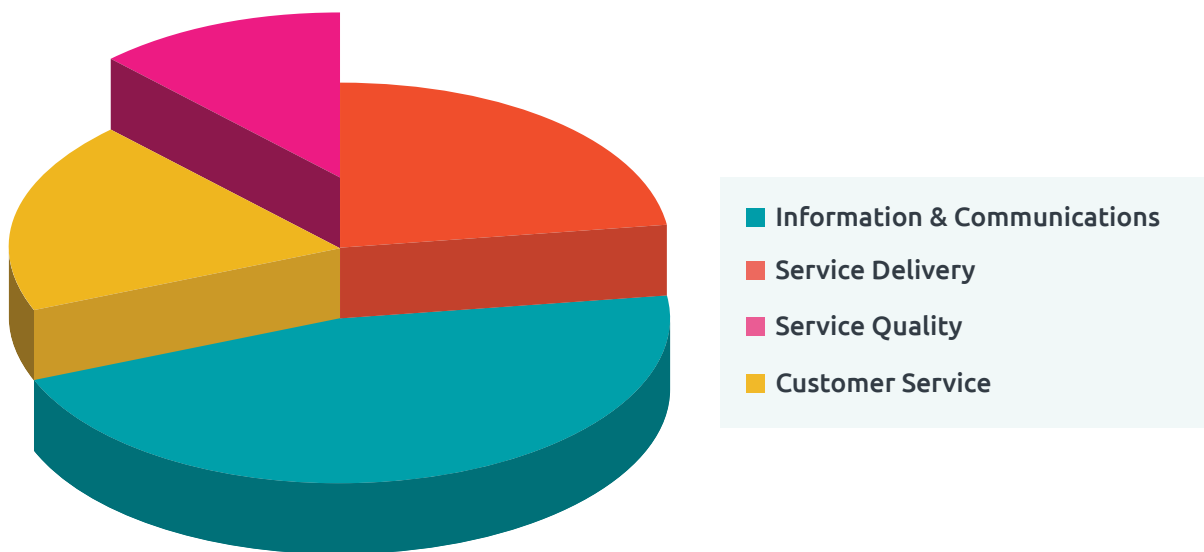
## How many complaints were received & upheld?



- 35% of the complaints received were not upheld, compared to 51% in the previous year.
- 65% of the complaints were upheld in whole or in part, compared to 49% 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 second highest complaint reason in 2020-21.

Examples of these complaints in 2020-21 included:

- ▼ Quality of care provided by care workers and care homes.

Complaints about **Service Delivery** are about whether support has been provided or what the complainants consider is the failure to provide a response. This was the highest reason for complaint and this category has seen an increase of 9 complaints compared to the previous year.

Examples of these complaints in 2020-21 included:

- ▼ Use of prepayment cards.
- ▼ Delay in care needs assessment review.
- ▼ Care costs that were not expected.

Complaints about **Customer Service** relate to the standards received and can reflect the way in which complainants consider they have been treated. These are often the most difficult complaints on which to reach a finding as they concern the way in which an event or situation has been perceived.

Examples of these complaints in 2020-21 included:

- ▼ Perceived attitude of workers.
- ▼ Customer issues during telephone conversations.

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. Complaints about information and communication show a decrease of 4 complaints compared to the previous year.

Examples of these complaints in 2020-21 included:

- ▼ Communication issues between families and social workers.
- ▼ Being charged for a service that was not considered necessary and the perception of having little communication in the care package that was received.
- ▼ Communication in relation to hospital discharge procedures.

Complaints about **Inclusion and Involvement** are around complainants and their families feeling they have not been appropriately involved or have been excluded from processes in which they consider they should have been a part of. There have been no complaints under this category, which is the same position as the previous year.

## What lessons were learned?

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

- Identified need for clearer information in relation to Best Interest meetings and a leaflet was designed to support families to understand the process and what to expect at a meeting.
- Systems were designed to ensure every person living in a care home has an allocated worker, which in turn will enable structured planning of reviews. The system will be fully embedded by July 2021.
- Training given to teams as appropriate.
- All people in short term placements are now allocated to a worker.
- Financial contribution discussions to be held in a way appropriate to the current circumstances of the individual and communication with individual/family member regarding financial contributions to take place after a financial assessment is confirmed.
- The transactional Hub put in place more robust processes to monitor cases.

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 identify 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 and ensuring the information is integral to performance monitoring and team development.
- An Annual Report is presented to the Cabinet Member. Reporting at this level allows for consideration of the implications for wider strategic and policy development.
- This report is shared with partner organisations.





# 6. Information Governance Complaints

The council has an Information Complaints Policy which is published on its website.

Its purpose is to set out how the council will manage complaints concerning to Information management and related issues.

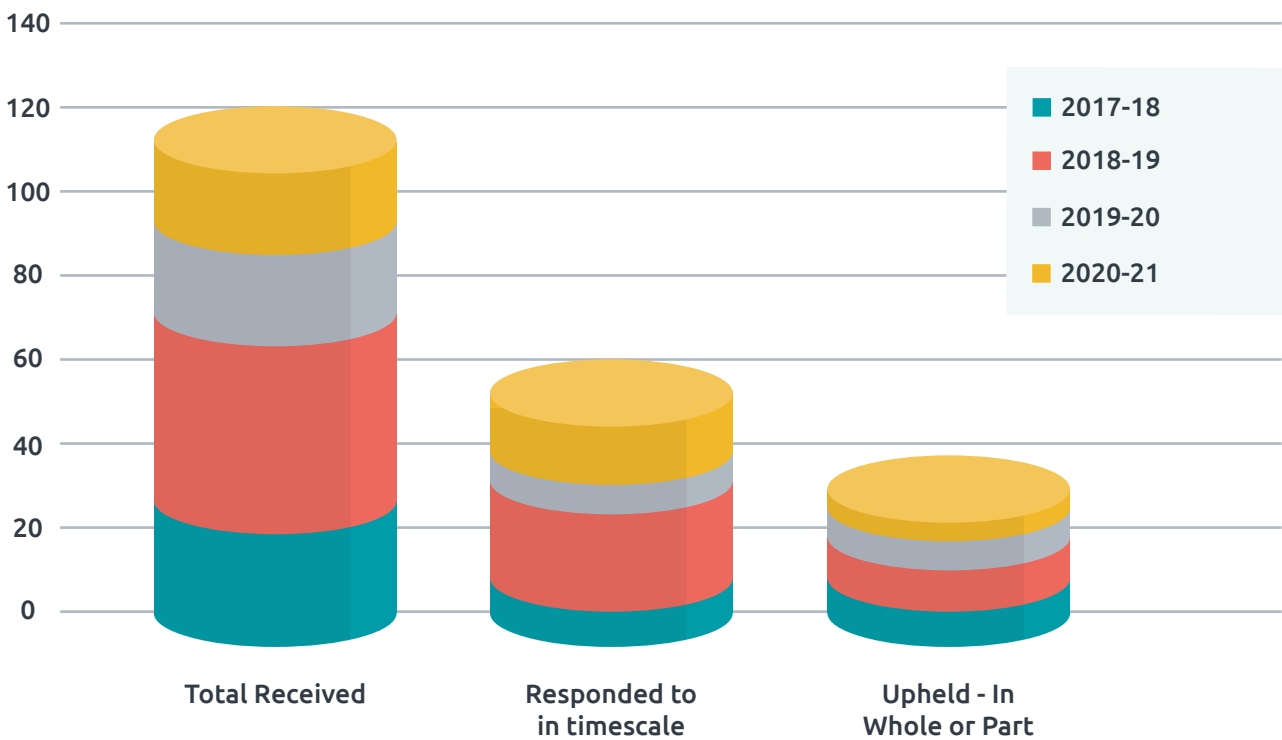
There is one stage to the information complaints process.

- ▼ **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 complex issues.

If the customer remains dissatisfied, they may appeal to the Information Commissioner’s Office. The ICO website is at: [ico.org.uk](http://ico.org.uk)

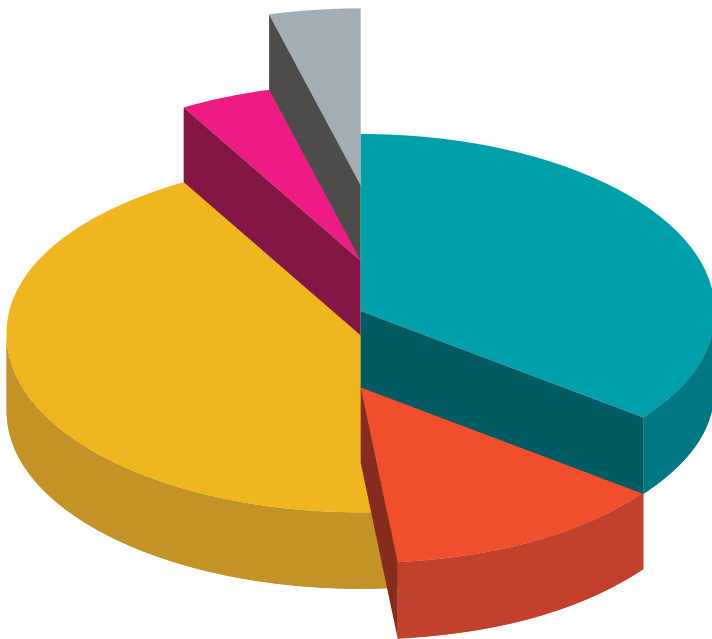
- ▼ 23 Information Governance complaints were received compared to 22 complaints in the previous year.
- ▼ 83% of complaints were responded to on time compared to 45% in the previous year.
- ▼ 4 complainants appealed to the Information Commissioner’s Office in 2020-2021.

## How many complaints were received & upheld?



## What were the complaints about?

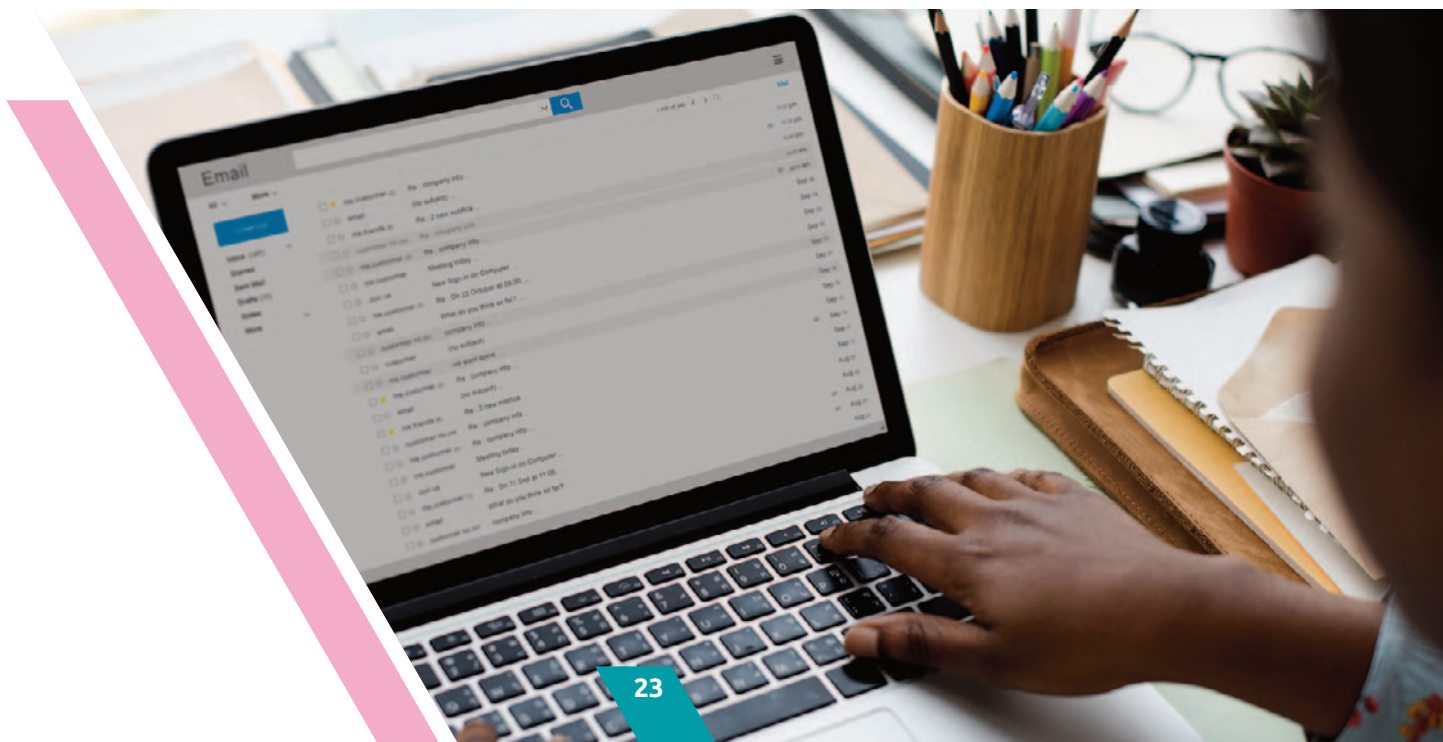
The primary complaint issues were:



- Providing Information
- Time Limits
- Protecting Personal Information
- Other GDPR rights
- Providing Information & Protecting Personal Information

## What lessons were learned?

- ▼ Ensure that correct postal addresses and email addresses are used.
- ▼ Ensure that all information is promptly located when a request for information is received.
- ▼ Ensure that requests for information are responded to within statutory deadlines.



# 7. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaints

## Introduction and Background

Complainants who remain dissatisfied after Stage 1 of the Adults statutory complaints procedure, Stage 2 of the council 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:

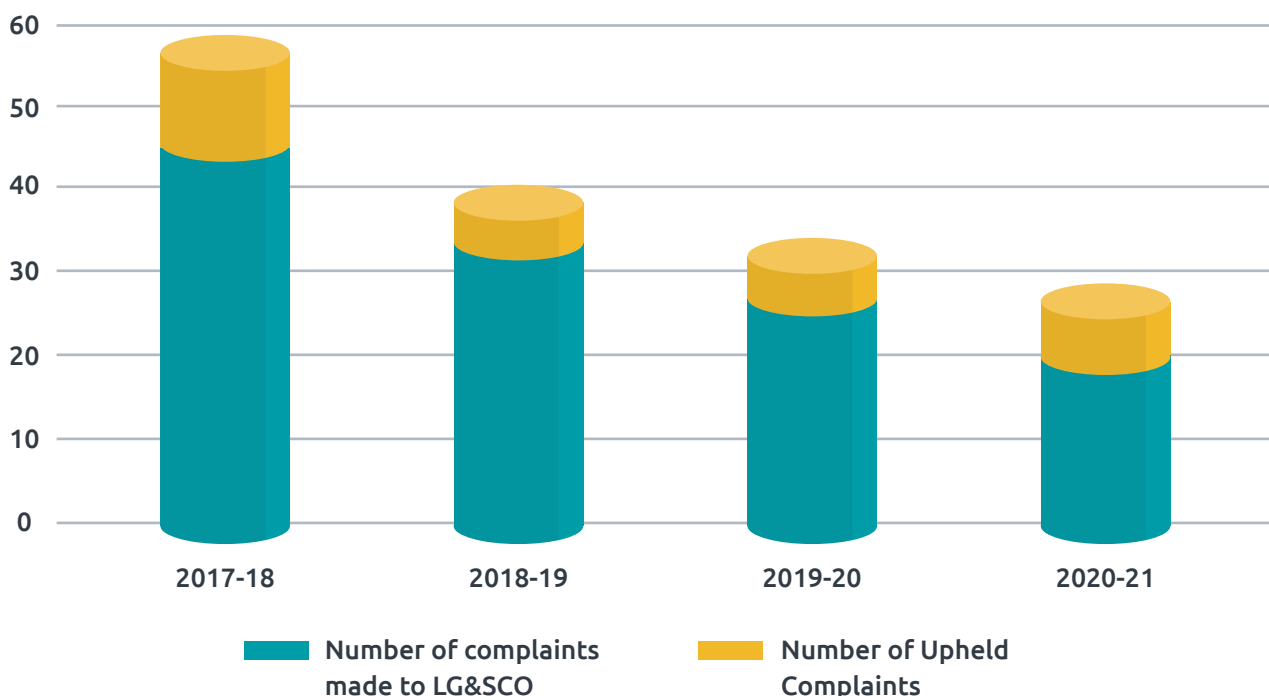
The LG&SCO produces an Annual Letter each year, which sets out the number of complaints they have received in the year and the decisions they have made. It also provides a comment on the council's effectiveness in providing remedies and how our performance compares to other councils.

The Local Government Ombudsman anonymises cases and publishes the decisions on their website at: [www.lgo.org.uk/Decisions](http://www.lgo.org.uk/Decisions).

In 2020-2021, the LG&SCO notified the council of 29 complaints, compared to 31 complaints in the previous year.

The LG&SCO undertook 8 detailed complaint investigations, of which 4 were upheld.

## How many complaints were received & upheld?



We complied with 100% of the LG&SCO remedy recommendations in 2020-2021.

## What lessons were learned?

- The learning from LG&SCO complaints was identified and carried through to our practice.

## 8. Conclusion

Complaints provide an opportunity for the council 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:

- We adopted a Complaint Remedies Framework based on LG&SCO guidance providing a structured approach to considering appropriate remedies as a result of an upheld complaint.
- Continuing to adopt restorative practice methods to help resolve complaints and issues at the earliest opportunity.
- The findings from upheld complaints were actively used to inform the development of improved training materials and practice guidance.
- Procedures and policies have been changed or updated as appropriate.
- The training needs of individual staff have been identified and appropriate training delivered.
- The insight from complaints has been shared with senior leaders to inform their development priorities.
- The information we publish externally was reviewed and enhanced, to ensure that it is clear, concise and informative.
- Changing the way we respond as set out above – ‘you said – we did’.

