

# Annual complaints report

## Executive Management Team: 6 January 2021

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update for 2019/20 on the Council's corporate complaints process, including analysis of complaints received.
- 1.2. This information would normally have been presented to EMT in September (following the receipt of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGO) annual report). It has been slightly delayed as Covid-response work has been prioritised throughout the organisation, with staff having been redeployed to critical response services.
- 1.3. It provides an update on improvements made in line with the revised complaints process agreed by EMT in December 2020 (3.1 to 3.13), as well as improvements that are underway and/or planned (3.14 to 3.29). Information in the LGO's updated guidance on effective complaint handling which was released in October 2020 has informed some of the improvements that are being proposed such as the Council's approach to third party complaint handling and developing regular reporting arrangements to residents and elected members.
- 1.4. It includes analysis on complaints received during 2019/20 (appendix A). However, EMT will want to note that as the revised corporate complaints process was implemented in the fourth quarter of that year, this data will provide limited assurance on the improvements made.
- 1.5. For this reason, this report also includes analysis on complaints received during the first two quarters of 2020/21 (appendix B) as an indication of whether the corporate complaints process is having the intended effect, that is to say to make it easier for residents to complain and ensuring the organisation is learning from these.
- 1.6. Appendix C presents analysis of cases received and decided by the Local Government and Social Care and Housing Ombudsman services.
- 1.7. There are five recommendations arising from this report which are that :
  - The Corporate Complaints Team works with local complaints teams to submit an analysis of departmental complaints to each DMT and the relevant Lead Members quarterly. (See item 3.28)
  - The Corporate Complaints Team submits analysis of all complaints to EMT and Leadership Team (following consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as requested by that Committee) annually. (See item 3.28)
  - The Corporate Complaints Team conducts routine quality assurance 'spot checks' on a sample of responses in each service area in order to provide

corporate assurance that the process is being consistently applied across the organisation. (See item 3.19)

- All contracts for direct service provision with third party providers should include clauses that set out clearly the complaints procedure those providers should follow, points at which complaints should be escalated to the Council and metrics that provide information on complaints handling as part of routine contract monitoring. (See item 3.27)
- Where someone chooses to raise a complaint about a third-party provider with the Council (rather than the third party themselves) the Council will always accept and investigate the complaint and not reroute it to the provider for investigation. (See item 3.27)
- Early in 2021 officers work to implement a corporate two-stage process and 10 day response deadline corporately to reflect the changes to the complaints process required by the Housing Ombudsman. (See Item 3.23)

## 2. Background

2.1. In November 2018 EMT decided that a single, centralised approach to managing and responding to complaints should be introduced. The creation of a Corporate Complaints Team to facilitate this and provide corporate assurance was also agreed.

2.2. The new team was implemented in September 2019.

2.3. In December 2019 EMT agreed to changes to the Council's complaints process as follows:

- The Corporate Complaints Team would become a single point of access for all complaints received online, by phone, email and letter.
- The Corporate Complaints Team would act as an independent investigator and responder to Stage Three complaints
- The response target for all Stages would be 15 days (although the Grenfell Complaints Team would continue to publicise a ten working day target response time for Stage One complaints).
- The 'informal stage' of the complaints process was removed to ensure complaints were not incorrectly classified as service requests and therefore not recorded within this formal process.

2.4. These changes were intended to:

- create an open and transparent complaints process which made it easier for residents to complain;
- ensure all complaints to the Council are recorded and tracked;
- achieve greater consistency in responses to complaints;
- provide independent, corporate assurance on the effective management of complaints; and

- enable the Council to be a learning and listening organisation that makes improvements from the feedback it receives from residents.

### 3. Progress Update

#### ***Our new process: what has changed for residents?***

Residents should now find it easy to complain.

- 3.1. The Council advertises its complaints process on the Council's website. Anyone can submit a complaint either online using a web-based form on the Council's website, by phone using a dedicated number, or by email to a dedicated email address.
- 3.2. Any complaints submitted through these channels are received by the Corporate Complaints Team who is responsible for:
  - ensuring the complaint is recorded in the Council's corporate complaints system;
  - acknowledging receipt of the complaint and confirming the deadline for response; and
  - assigning the complaint to the appropriate team manager for investigation and response.
- 3.3. Additional routes exist for the statutory complaints processes within Adults and Children's services, and for the Dedicated Service though these are also captured on the corporate complaints system for accurate record keeping.

Residents should find that their complaints are consistently and transparently managed within the process.

- 3.4. The removal of the 'informal stage' from the complaints process means that residents can have greater confidence that their complaints are recorded and treated as such, minimising the risk that these may be reclassified as 'service requests' and not recorded for future learning by the Council.

Residents should now feel that there is independent and objective review of their complaints.

- 3.5. There had previously been no consistent approach to the investigation of Stage Three complaints across the organisation. In some services these were escalated to a Director, in others to an Executive Director but in all cases they were dealt with by the service itself.
- 3.6. Under the Council's new process, Stage One and Two complaints continue to be investigated and responded to by the relevant service as the place most likely to be able to understand and respond to any concerns.
- 3.7. Should the complaint escalate to Stage Three, however, it is investigated and responded to by the Corporate Complaints team to ensure an objective, independent review.

- 3.8. All Stage Three responses include information about how the complainant can contact the relevant Ombudsman if they remain unhappy about the outcome of their complaint. This makes sure that residents know they have access to a free and impartial dispute resolution service.

### ***Our new process: behind the scenes***

#### Central recording and monitoring

- 3.9. In December 2019 a new IT system (iCasework) was launched to manage complaints casework across the Council. Complaints submitted online are routed straight into this system so they can be monitored centrally; complaints received via email or telephone are entered manually.
- 3.10. The iCasework system automatically notifies relevant officers that a complaint has been assigned to them and sends regular reminders until the case is closed. It has proved to be an effective tool in ensuring the Council has a comprehensive record of all complaints received as well as information to monitor adherence to the agreed corporate process.
- 3.11. The Corporate Complaints Team are also the link between the Council and Local Government and Housing Ombudsman. As such, the system is also configured to record all Ombudsman casework; from enquiry through to final decisions.

#### Complaints Network

- 3.12. Each service has identified a lead officer to work collaboratively with the Corporate Complaints Team to implement the revised complaints process and ensure the Council continues to make it easier for residents to complain and, importantly, learns from the complaints that residents submit. A 'complaints network' has been established, bringing all these officers together to ensure good collaboration and joint working. This network has a role in helping to improve compliance with the process by sharing good practice, as well as to support and drive service improvements. It will also enable complaints leads to monitor complaint volumes, systemic issues, learning opportunities and develop service improvements that can be adopted Council wide to improve the customer experience.

#### Learning from complaints

- 3.13. When investigating Stage Three complaints, the Corporate Complaints Team work closely with the relevant service to understand what has caused the complaint; and importantly they play a lead role in challenging whether processes and procedures are fit for purpose. The Team applies the Ombudsman's approach to investigation in order to reach their decision and does this by asking three main questions:
- Did things happen as they should have done?
  - If not, how did this affect the customer?
  - How should the Council put things right?

3.14. The new iCasework system also allows us to capture the root causes of complaints in a more consistent and structured way, making identifying trends and potential learning opportunities easier. The system has a pre-defined list of root causes which need to be selected when responding to a complaint at all Stages. The root causes are universal so that Council wide analysis of complaints can be completed.

### ***Improvements currently underway***

#### Casework

3.15. All Council services are recording complaints in the new system (iCasework). The functionality exists for all end-to-end casework relating to each complaint to be carried out within the system, that is to say all communication with the complainant and relevant parties, recording outcomes, corrective actions taken and compensation agreed. Not all officers are using this to its full extent. Further training will need to be rolled out and this will allow for improved quality assurance by the Corporate Complaints Team.

#### IT integration

3.16. Housing Management continue to use their well-developed local CRM casework system for the recording and management of complaints, in parallel with the corporate iCasework system. An integration between the two systems is planned but delayed due to Covid; in the meantime officers from the Corporate Complaints Team and Housing Management have been working closely to ensure there is accurate (albeit duplicated) recording of complaints. Once this integration is delivered a single, central dataset of all complaints will exist.

#### Corporate assurance

3.17. The Corporate Complaints Team have worked with local complaints teams over the past year to support their transition to the new arrangements: offering advice and constructive challenge and, where necessary, sending reminders, holding replies and responses on their behalf. Templates have been provided to help officers follow the process in a consistent way. A framework has also been developed for responding to Ombudsman enquiries and the Corporate Complaints Team quality assure these before submission.

3.18. The Team has also randomly sampled contact received from customers since April 2020 through the complaints process that were reclassified as service requests or marked as an enquiry. Three cases were identified where the contact should, under the agreed criteria, have been recorded as a complaint.

3.19. Going forward, therefore, it is recommended that the Corporate Complaints Team take a more structured approach to quality and corporate assurance. It is proposed that the Team routinely check samples of reports in each service area to ensure that:

- Complaints are accepted and logged and not inappropriately classified as 'service requests';

- Complaints are fully investigated and the root cause identified and understood;
- Responses are of the expected quality; and
- Learning is being collated and fed back into relevant services.

### Training

3.20. Training in the new iCasework system has been delivered to most teams to ensure recording is accurate and reliable. The Corporate Complaints Team have also been providing informal training and support to ensure a consistent understanding of what constitutes a complaint and that the process is understood and followed.

3.21. In light of the Covid pandemic, complaints handling training is being developed on a virtual platform for rollout to the organisation. This will cover how to effectively investigate and respond to complaints, including those that relate to third party providers.

### Sharing good practice

3.22. As the Complaints Network becomes more established, over the coming months, it needs to identify and share good practice across services. Examples of good practice we have identified that can be adopted more widely are contacting the complainant as part of the investigation, and where Directors of a service take more personal oversight of complaints management there is an improvement in the quality complaints handling. The Complaints Network also has a role in promoting and championing training in iCasework and complaints handling generally amongst their respective teams.

## ***Further planned improvements***

### Two stage complaints process

3.23. The Housing Ombudsman has recently introduced a requirement that providers have a two-stage complaints process and that complaints are responded to within 10 days. This needs to be in place by 1 January 2021. Housing Management are implementing the required changes to their process.

3.24. This leaves a question, though, over whether the Council should have a different process and policy for Housing Management complaints than is in place for other services (the corporate policy is a three-stage process with a response timescale of 15 days).

3.25. The notes of the EMT discussion of the new corporate complaints process in December 2018 indicate that at this time it was agreed that “the Council should remain with a three-stage process in the medium term but phase this out to a two stage handling process in the future.”

3.26. EMT is asked to agree that early in 2021 officers work to implement a corporate two-stage process and 10 day response deadline corporately.

#### Third party providers

3.27. The Council is ultimately accountable for services delivered by third party providers. To ensure that this is the case where complaints are made about such services, and in line with the Ombudsman's guidance on good complaint handling<sup>1</sup>, it is proposed that the Council adopts the following practices:

- All contracts for direct service provision concluded with third party providers should include clauses that set out clearly the complaints procedure providers should follow, points at which complaints should be escalated to the Council and metrics that provide information on complaints handling as part of routine contract monitoring.
- Where someone chooses to raise a complaint about a third party provider with the Council (rather than the third party themselves) the Council will always accept and investigate the complaint and not reroute it to the provider for investigation. (The Contract Manager and or the Service Lead will be expected to work in partnership with the third party to investigate and resolve the complaint.)

#### Reporting and oversight

3.28. Routine reporting to departments, EMT and Members needs to be established. The following is proposed:

- The Corporate Complaints Team works with local complaints teams to submit an analysis of departmental complaints to each DMT and the relevant Lead Members quarterly.
- The Corporate Complaints Team submits analysis of all complaints EMT and Leadership Team (following consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as requested by that Committee) annually.

#### Continuous improvement

3.29. We will be working with the Complaints Network to develop and adopt a Complaints Maturity Model. Maturity models are a helpful tool to support improvement because they define and describe the different stages of maturity (or excellence) in a given discipline. By setting out these stages (starting with the lowest where there is a complete lack of systems, processes, procedures and moving through to the highest where all procedures are in place, tested and working effectively) individual teams can determine where they are on this scale and take the necessary steps to move to subsequent levels (and increased professional 'maturity'). Co-creating a complaints maturity model therefore will support self-assessment and service-led improvement in all elements of complaints handling and map out our path to excellence.

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<sup>1</sup> file:///C:/Users/socshpa/Downloads/Good%20complaint%20handling%20-%20FINAL.pdf

## **4. Complaints 19/20**

- 4.1. Appendix A provides analysis of complaints received during 2019/20.
- 4.2. EMT will note that the revised corporate complaints process was introduced towards the end of that financial year. This means that the data and analysis presented in this appendix is drawn from systems and teams across the Council. This makes consistent identification of trends across complaints received – and subsequent learning – more challenging.
- 4.3. It is encouraging, however, that most areas saw an increase in the number of complaints received. It is reasonable to conclude that some of the increase may be a result of the introduction of the corporate complaints process, online form and IT system which has enabled more reliable recording of complaints.

## **5. Complaints 20/21**

- 5.1. Appendix B provides analysis of complaints received during the first two quarters of 2020/21.
- 5.2. We have taken the opportunity to include this not just because of the value of the analysis itself in terms of learning, but also to give some sense of the impact of the new corporate process and system. This is still, to some extent, limited by the lack of an IT integration between the Housing Management case management system and iCasework and so information and analysis in relation to Housing Management complaints for this period is also taken from their local systems. However, the data available now allows easy and pan-organisational analysis of:
  - Complaints received
  - Complaints escalated to subsequent stages
  - The outcome of complaints investigations
  - The service failure that prompted the complaint.
- 5.3. The data for these two quarters indicate that we are on track for an increase in complaints received across all services. Whilst ideally our residents would not find it necessary to complain about our services, this increase should be seen as positive in that it indicates that residents are finding it easier to complain and that these are being more accurately recorded.
- 5.4. It is also noteworthy that only 34 (9%) of complaints were escalated to Stage Two, and 12 (3%) to Stage Three suggesting that most complaints are resolved effectively and to the complainant's satisfaction.
- 5.5. We are also seeing encouraging trends in the proportion of complaints upheld by the Council, indicating that services are open to feedback, recognises when things go wrong and committed to putting things right.
- 5.6. As part of the Council's commitment to ensure that it operates an open and transparent complaints service which is accessible for all of its customers, the

online complaints form invites complainants to provide equality monitoring data. Complainants who choose to raise their complaint by phone, will be offered the opportunity to provide information about their protected characteristics. Providing information is encouraged but not mandatory; and complainants can “prefer not to say” for any specific question.

- 5.7. Response rates are very low and therefore analysis of this data will be provided on an annual basis to ensure it is more meaningful and statistically significant.

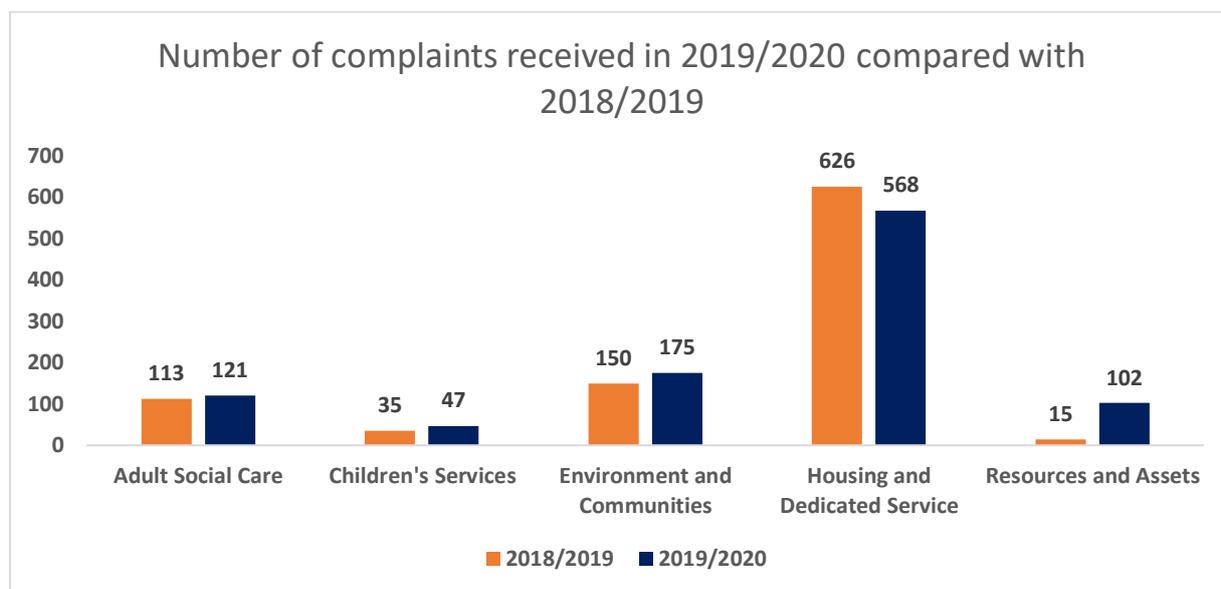
## **6. Ombudsman Findings 19/20**

- 6.1. Appendix C presents the findings of the Local Government and Social Care and Housing Ombudsman services.

## Appendix A – Analysis of Complaints Received in 2019/20

The chart below shows complaint volumes in 2019/2020 and how this compares to 2018/2019.

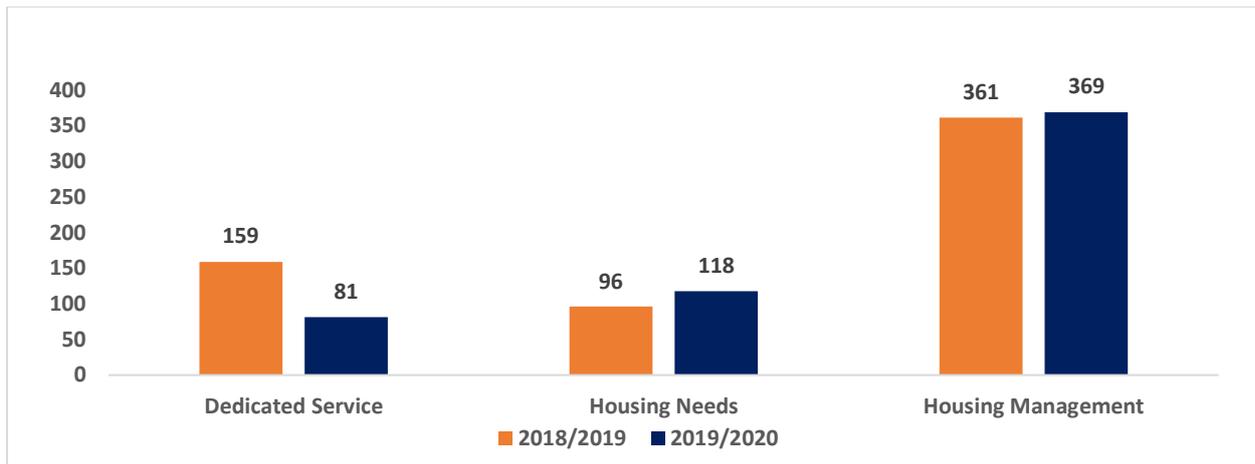
It should be noted that additional statutory complaints reports are produced by Adults and Children’s Services. These reports are ratified by Senior Management and the respective Cabinet Leads. However, this report includes complaint volumes for both statutory and non-statutory issues.



In Adults and Children’s Services, complaints management was and continues to be co-ordinated by a dedicated Team and therefore these services have maintained their approach to recording and responding to complaints. However, larger increases are seen in Environment and Communities and in Resources and Assets (which comprises the Contact Centre and Revenues and Benefits Teams). It is reasonable to conclude that some of the increase may be a result of the introduction of the corporate complaints process, online form and IT system which has enabled more reliable recording of complaints.

Housing and Dedicated Service continue to receive a larger proportion of inbound complaints than other services; this is to be expected with services of this nature. But given the volumes we have presented some more detailed analysis for this directorate in the following chart.

This shows that the overall reduction across Housing and Dedicated Service relates to the Dedicated Service specifically. By April 2019, the Dedicated Service had implemented a more well-defined triaging process which meant that towards the end of the financial year (2019/2020) more complaints were being assigned to Housing Needs or Housing Management to respond. At the same time, the key work service had ended and transition payments had been completed. In the past, complaints about these elements of the Dedicated Service had contributed significantly to the complaint volumes.



Although performance analysis on the volume of complaints and compliance with target response times is important, the real purpose of complaints is to learn and improve. The relevant services have provided the following information in terms of what improvements have been prompted by complaints in 2019/20.

### **Adult Social Care**

The Adult Social Care statutory complaints procedure is a one stage complaints process. It's important to explain that The Department of Health's regulations on statutory complaints stipulate that the timeframe for responding must be proportionate to the seriousness of the complaint and completed within 6 months.

However, Kensington and Chelsea Council use a 10-working day timescale. It should be noted that some delays are unavoidable due to the complexity of the case. Therefore, although only 45% of all complaints were completed within the internal 10-working day timescale, all of them were completed within the statutory six-month timescale.

Adult Social Care Teams upheld or partly upheld 51% of all the complaints received. In these cases, the complainants were all offered an apology and a commitment was made to improve the service. Some of these improvements were:

- 1) *Robust contract monitoring with homecare providers in relation to complaints about recording errors*
- 2) *Improved communication between social work team and service user/representative in light of complaints made.*
- 3) *Reviewed and improved internal assessment processes after a complaint about delay in service provision*

More information about Adult Social Care complaints can be found in the Statutory complaints report. Please contact [hsscusercontent@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:hsscusercontent@rbkc.gov.uk).

### **Children's Services**

Children's Services also saw a small increase in the total volume of complaints received. 26% of all complaints were upheld and 81% of all complaints were responded to within the target response time.

The following actions and or improvements were made in relation to complaints received:

- 1) *Family Services explain to parents/carers the essence of the assessment and record the family's viewpoint within their assessment. The parent(s) and or child are reminded that in the event that they disagree with any information included in the assessment, this will be noted and documented separately on the case file.*
- 2) *The Customer Relationship Team continues to support complainants in drafting their complaint points taking a firm stance on what can be accepted as a complaint and /or desired outcome.*
- 3) *The Customer Relationship Team should review its internal complaints handling process and how it works collaboratively with Children's services during periods of staff absence. This has been demonstrated by:*
  - *Copying managers in when informing the Service of a new complaint*
  - *Flagging the case with the Head of Service when a response has not been received.*
  - *Drafting the response together with the service*

### **Environment and Communities**

As seen in the chart above, this Department has seen larger increase in the number of complaints received over 2018/19 than other departments. As explained previously, the system and corporate approach was implemented late in 2019. Before this, services kept local records of complaints and responses. Therefore, consistent and reliable information about the outcome and timeliness of responses is only available from October 2019 onwards as this is when Environment and Communities adopted the corporate approach and started recording complaints on the new system. Data held in the IT system from October 2019 suggests that 19% of all complaints were upheld or partly upheld and 77% were responded to on time.

It is important to note that Environment and Communities includes many services such as Parking, Transport, Cleaner and Greener Services, Environmental Health and Libraries and Registrars. Therefore, it is particularly relevant to highlight that based on both local and central recording, Parking Services received 82 complaints, which represents 47% of the total volume within this Directorate. The Planning department received 33 complaints which represents 19% of the total volume.

Environment and Communities report that the following actions and or service improvements were made to resolve complaints learn from them:

- 1) *Staff were reminded to review documentation for signatures and redact appropriately.*
- 2) *Managers will ensure staff are advised to be clearer with customers when making informal payment agreements with them to avoid misunderstanding of such arrangements.*
- 3) *Review of the scrap and auction procedure.*
- 4) *Improvement required in the handling of the PCN debt settlement service; notices about the status of cases are required to be sent to the Enforcement agent - recommendations being submitted to the Quality Assurance Manager within this service to enact.*
- 5) *Officers reminded to take pictures during their investigation to evidence their findings.*
- 6) *Waste contractor revisited operations to ensure better face to face customer interaction, with greater empathy.*

## **Dedicated Service**

The Dedicated Service follows a 3-stage process although Stage Three complaints are investigated by an Independent Adjudicator. The service has observed a 49% decrease in complaint volumes. This is promising to see and as explained above, the reduction is closely linked to an improved triaging process and the conclusion of the key work service and transition payments.

Within this area, the following improvements were identified:

- 1) *Departments/services instruct their staff to ensure records of conversations, or any information exchanged should be logged on the system.*
- 2) *To verbally acknowledge that concerns have been received and will be addressed in accordance with procedure;*
- 3) *Provide assurance that residents' concerns were being taken seriously and enhance trust;*
- 4) *To ensure/enquire that full details of concerns raised have been gathered or understood;*
- 5) *To overcome any language barriers that written communication may pose.*

## **Housing Needs**

The Housing Needs Department provide a complaints report to the Leadership Team on complaint volumes and general management of complaints, as well as other requests such as Member Enquiries and Subject Access Requests.

The service has seen an increase in complaint volumes which may be owing to complaints that would previously have been considered under the Grenfell Complaints procedure.

Local reporting indicates that 42% of all complaints were responded to on time and a total of 51% of all complaints were either upheld or partly upheld.

The service reported the following learning opportunities to improve the handling of complaints:

- 1) *A more streamlined approach to managing and drafting responses to complaints is needed to improve compliance with the 15 working day target response time*
- 2) *Report writing training or similar courses should be attended by Managers involved in writing responses to improve the quality and structure of responses*
- 3) *Complaints about repairs within Temporary Accommodation should be amended to set out the responsibilities of the Council, the Landlord and the Agent; whereby the Council will advocate on the resident's behalf*

## **Housing Management**

Housing Management have maintained the way in which complaints are recording on their IT system (Microsoft Dynamics). The service has seen a small increase in complaints. Local reporting indicates that 88% of all complaints were responded to within 15 working days. Overall, 90% of all complaints were upheld during 2019/2020.

Housing Management report the following learning opportunities and service improvements that have been identified in response to complaints:

- 1) *Regular meetings for Repairs, Neighbourhoods, Estates and Complaints. These focus on the specific issues observed and focus on improving the interactions with customer following complaint feedback as well as any feedback received in resident association meetings?*
- 2) *Training to ensure staff treat customers with empathy and compassion. Additionally, Customer Experience officers make direct contact with residents when complaints are received and offer alternative remedies such as: an apology, compensation, flowers or providing alternative works as a gesture of goodwill*
- 3) *In recognition of customer feedback and the need to be flexible around the resident's availability, the Customer Experience Team have also extended their opening hours from 7.30am to 6.15pm*

### **Resources and Assets**

The key Services receiving complaints in this area are the Contact Centre (this includes the Customer Services Centre), Council Tax and Recovery and Enforcement, and the Revenues and Benefits Teams which also include Discretionary Awards and the Accessible Transport Team.

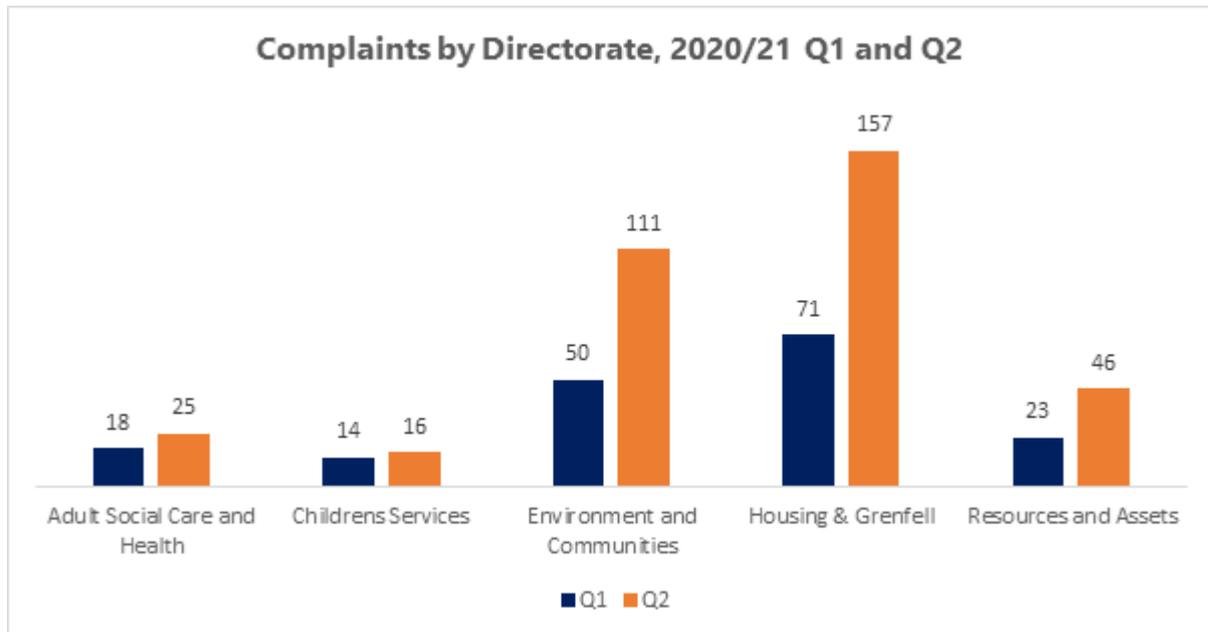
The increase in complaint volumes is more likely to be attributed to central recording of complaints, as before the implementation of the system most complaints were managed via emails and so retrieval of complaints management data in previous years was more challenging. A few learning opportunities have been identified:

- 1) *Review of call recording arrangements within the wider Customer Delivery division*
- 2) *Ensure evidence is reviewed and considered before a Stage 1 response is issued so that it is factually accurate and avoids confusion*
- 3) *System improvements for Council Tax Team*
- 4) *Staff training regarding changes to processes and procedures to ensure the correct information is given to residents*

## Appendix B – Analysis of Complaints for Q1 and Q2 2020/2021

In July 2020, the Council introduced a telephone line dedicated to receiving complaints over the phone. There has been a steady volume of complaints received via this channel and it is difficult to determine whether these complaints would have been received if the telephone line was not available.

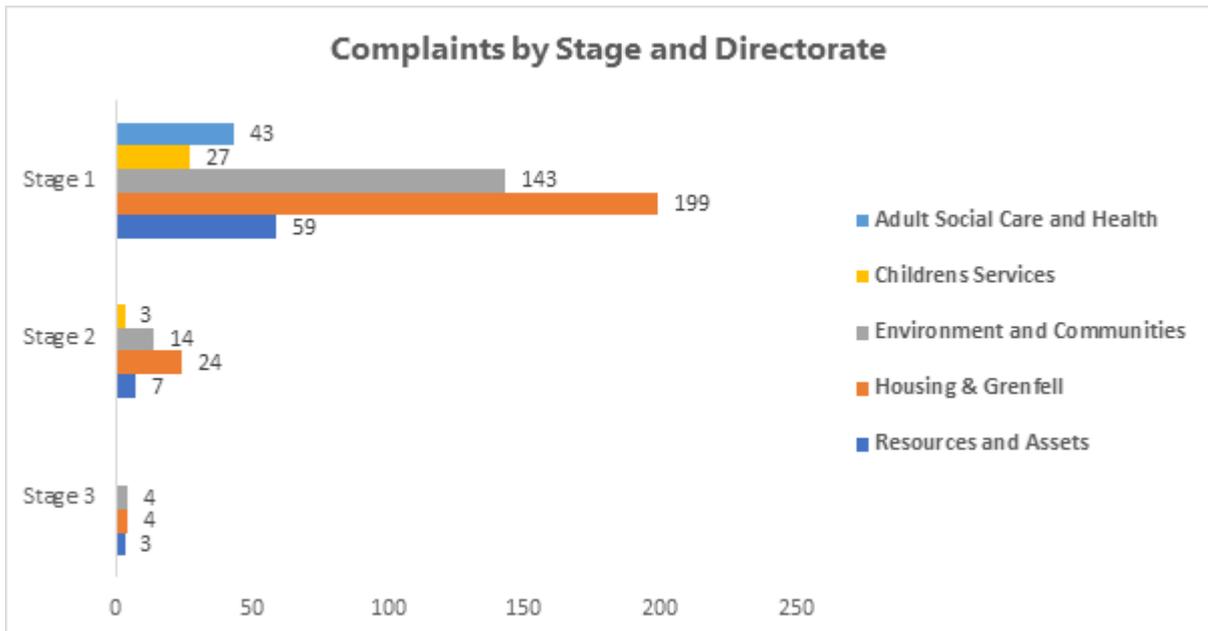
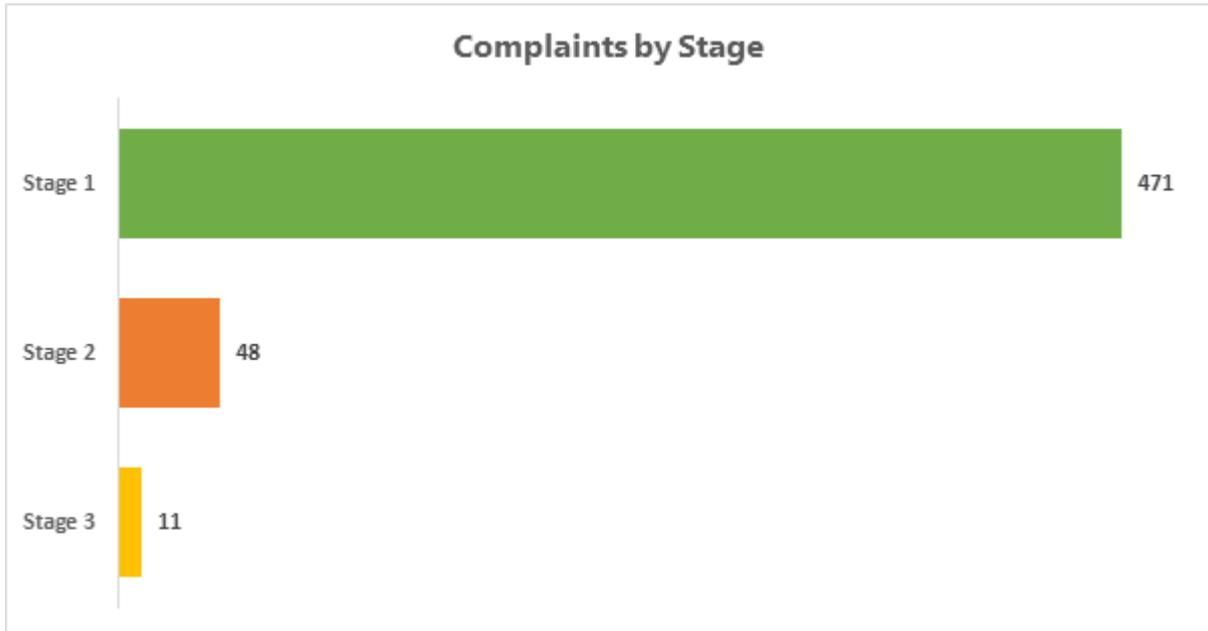
The following table illustrates complaints received in each directorate for the period.



The steady increases in Adult and Children’s Services indicates that service delivery has been maintained throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. The increase in complaints in Environment and Communities was owing to more complaints about:

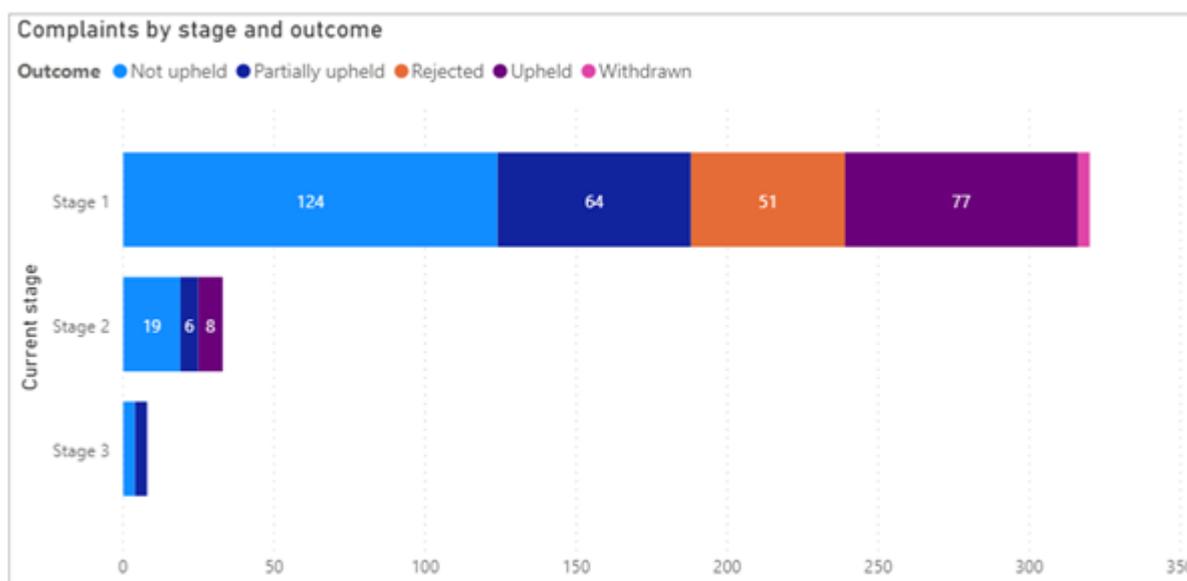
- 1) Noise and nuisance from construction work in the Borough
- 2) Introduction of virtual parking permits; linked to changes in the application process which also accounts for some of the increase in Resources and Assets (specifically the Contact Centre who manage applications and changes to parking permits)
- 3) Changes to the parking permit application process

The following graph depicts complaints received at each stage. Only 34 out of 379 (9%) complaints were escalated to Stage Two (excluding Adult Social Care as there is only 1 Stage in the statutory process). Of these, 12 were escalated to Stage Three. Given that the new complaints system ensures that there are standard paragraphs included in responses setting out next steps and details of how to escalate a complaint, the low volume of complaints being escalated indicates that most complaints are resolved effectively and to the complainant’s satisfaction.



The chart below shows the **outcome** of complaints recorded at each stage.

It has not been possible to include in this chart data on Housing Management complaints; this is due to the lack of integration between the systems.



Housing Management report on the percentage of complaints upheld. In quarter 1 this was 60% and in quarter 2 it was 82%.

Complaints that are upheld indicate there had been some kind of service failure; this could be a communication error, a delay in doing something or a failure to carry out an action. Whilst ideally the Council wants to avoid service failures wherever possible, it should be viewed positively that complaints are being upheld. This indicates that the Council is open to feedback, recognises when things go wrong and are committed to putting things right.

To learn from complaints we need to capture the root cause of the problem which has led to the customer making a complaint. The table below shows the breakdown of issues across all complaints. The system has a pre-defined list of root causes which need to be selected when responding to a complaint at all Stages. The root causes are universal so that Council wide analysis of complaints can be completed.

The chart below includes some of the Housing Management complaint data; this is because some of the complaints received are received via the online complaints form and therefore a complaint record is held within the Corporate IT system. However, across all complaints, the quality of service is the main cause for complaint. It should be noted that most complaints will highlight several root causes, but it is at the Service's discretion to record the main reason for the dissatisfaction.

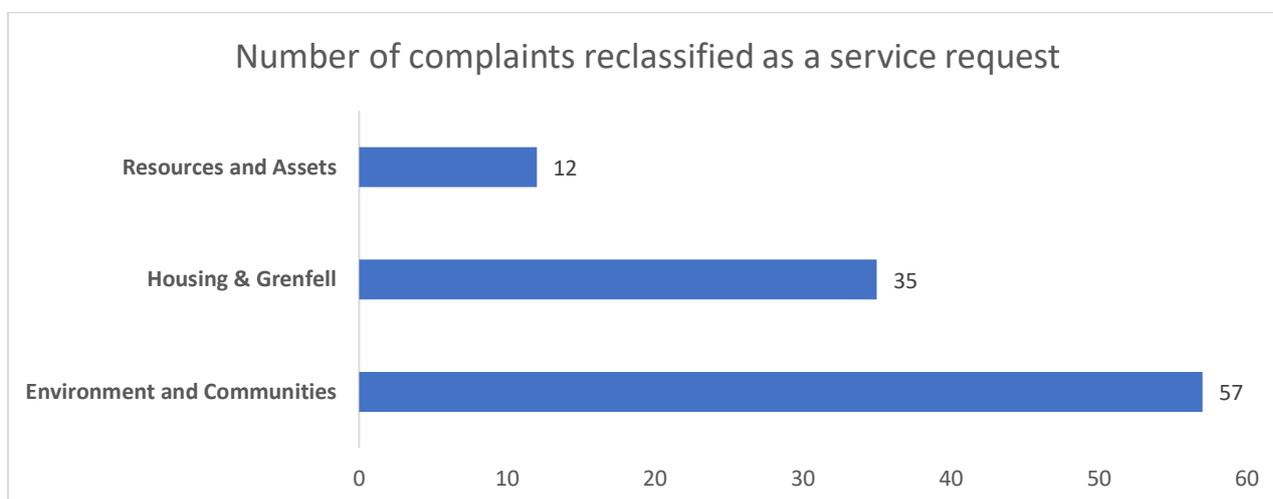
Regarding the quality of service, this is often related to a customer's general dissatisfaction of the Service provided and this is often closely linked with a service delay. For example, residents have complained about the process of applying for a new parking permit or change of vehicle; which is considered to take too long and results in charges whilst waiting for a permit to be issued or amended.

In relation to communications, initial analysis of complaints indicates that customers are unhappy because the Council has either failed to respond to them or delayed a response.

Cause	Count	Percentage
Quality of service	95	27.70%
Communications	53	15.42%
Service failure	53	15.45%

Object to eligibility or assessment decision	49	14.29%
Service delay	29	8.45%
Staff attitude/behaviour	25	7.29%
Withdrawal/change/reduction in service	15	4.37%
Contractor	13	3.79%
Policy Objection	11	3.21%
<b>Total</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>100%</b>

The Corporate Complaints Team has randomly sampled complaints that were reclassified as service requests or marked as an enquiry since April 2020 and the chart below shows the breakdown of volumes by Department.



In total, 104 complaints were reclassified as a service request. 10% of these (11 complaints) were reviewed and the findings were:

- 3 out of the 11 (27%) cases met the criteria to record and respond to the issues as a formal complaint
- In these instances, the customer referenced they had tried to contact the Council to resolve the issue but had not received a response; or that the issue was previously reported and then forgotten about before it was resolved
- In all cases the issues had been resolved and there was an indication that the customer was satisfied with the action taken; however, there is not enough information to support how the lack of communication would be improved

The Corporate Complaints Team will continue to randomly sample such cases and provide feedback to Departments to improve their understanding of the difference between a service request and a complaint.

### ***Learning opportunities from Q1 and Q2 2020/2021***

In response to complaints received in Q1 and Q2, Departments recorded 31 complaints that required a remedy to put things right or identified a learning opportunity which would improve

services in the future. The chart below shows the categories that were selected and the volume of complaints against each item.

The highest volumes indicate that staff training or guidance needed to be given to improve understanding and knowledge of the service being provided so that the customer has the best experience when contacting the Council. There are also examples of poor communication between Council officers and customers which was addressed within this category.

Within the Planning and Waste and Street Scene teams, 5 complaints were recorded as needing an inspection. This related to the need to do a site visit to observe and assess information provided by the customer.

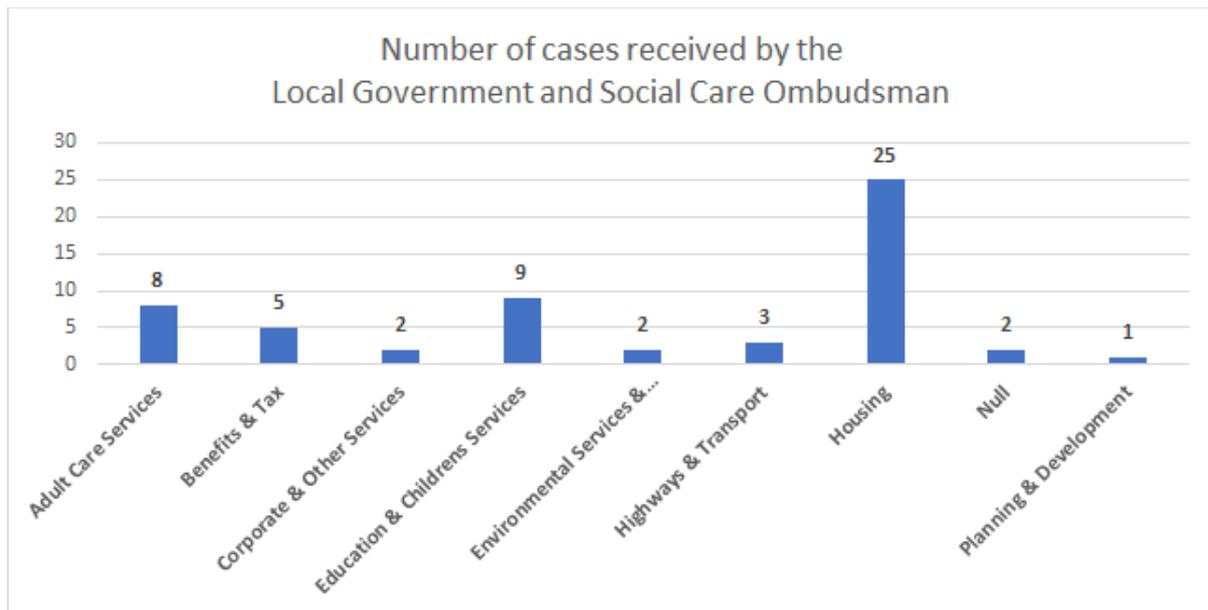
In order to get more meaningful analysis, it is important that Services record corrective actions whenever these are identified. More data in this area will help to address systemic issues that are either Service specific or affecting more than one Service. The Corporate Complaints Team will include this as part of its iCasework training offer.

Arrange staff training or guidance	8
Arrange inspection	5
Change or review equipment	2
Change or review policy or procedure	3
Change or review service	3
Change or review service literature	2
Performance management - staff member	3
Provide additional information or service	3
Take action against contractor or partner	2

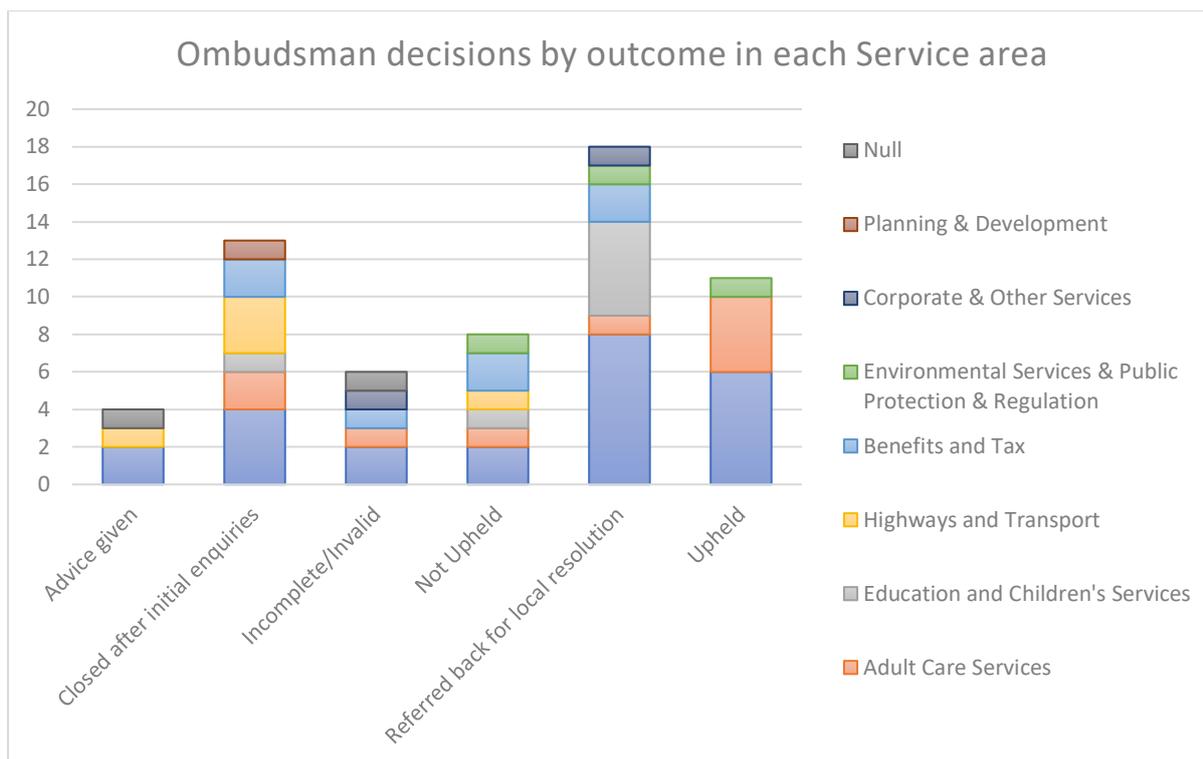
## Appendix C - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman 2019/2020

The section presents analysis of cases received and decided by the Local Government Ombudsman. The data is published in the Ombudsman's annual report to councils` and available on their website.

The chart below shows the volume of cases received by the Ombudsman in relation to each Service. In most areas, volumes are low, except for Housing. It should be noted that this relates to Housing Needs and not Housing Management.



The following chart depicts the outcome of each of the Ombudsman investigations by service area.



\* Null refers to complaints where the Ombudsman had insufficient information to categorise the complaint. In both instances, the customer was signposted back to the Council.

65% of complaints were upheld (11 of the 17 investigations). 5 of these complaints related to the same issue whereby the Council wrongly advertised accommodation as being eligible for a parking permit, when in fact the development did not allow this. The average across similar local authorities is 70%. The Council complied with 100% of the recommendations.

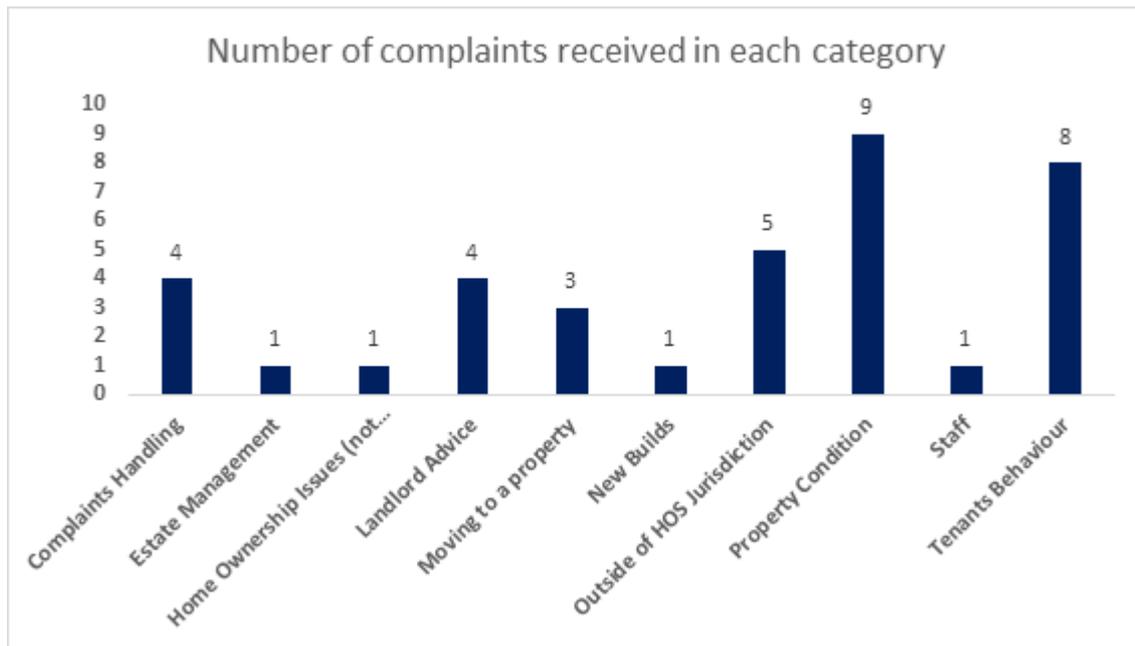
18 of the 58 complaints were referred back to the Council to investigate. This is because the complainant had not engaged with the Council about their complaint or had not exhausted all stages of the complaint procedure. In the Good Complaint Handling guide released by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman they indicate that higher numbers of complaints referred back to the Council could “show that people are not being properly signposted to the local complaints process”.

The Council has made it easier to search for the complaint procedure, offering to receive complaints by phone, email or an online form. It also uses response templates whereby the opening and closing paragraphs are the same, so that all customers receive information about how to progress their complaint if they remain unhappy.

## Housing Ombudsman Service 2019/2020

The Housing Ombudsman received 37 enquiries, which is four less than the previous two years.

The chart below shows how many complaints were received in each category.



The Housing Ombudsman Service aims to resolve most complaints through an alternative dispute resolution approach to complaints. The Council is committed to this and therefore it is promising to see that 84% of complaints were closed without formal investigation. This is 9% higher than the average of all Local Authorities

The Housing Ombudsman Service decided on four complaints as part of a formal investigation. The outcomes are reported in the table below:

Outcome	Volume
No Maladministration	1
Partial Maladministration	2
Maladministration	1