

# Corporate Feedback Report

## Improving our Customer Experience

### Annual Report 2021/22

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# Report summary

This year has seen new challenges both for the Council and for our residents and customers, against the backdrop of COVID 19 and the subsequent aftermath. The increase in the cost of living has put significant pressure on our residents and customers as they seek support. As a result the Council has seen significant demand and increased pressure on its services, particularly during times where swift mobilisation of financial support was required.

The Institute of Customer Service (ICS) are reporting that complaints are increasing across all organisations in the UK and are at their highest ever level, sighting that customers' expectations have changed following the swift mobilisation of businesses during the pandemic, with the pandemic also allowing customers the opportunity to put a lens on their likes and dislikes.

It is therefore positive that this annual feedback report shows that there has been a sustained increase in compliments. Which has continued to increase year on year. The number of residents and customers who have taken the opportunity to give a compliment has increased significantly. Telford and Wrekin Council has seen a 64% increase in compliments in the last 2 years from 290 in 2019/20 to 475 in 2021/22.

In line with the national trend reported by ICS, we have also seen an increase of complaints received across the Council in 2021/22. Corporate complaints increased from 424 in 2020/21, the year of the pandemic, to 702 in the year of which just over half were upheld.

In March 2021 complaints about council policy and anonymous complaints were formally included in our reporting, accounting for 8 complaints and 13 complaints respectively.

When considering the total number of transactions and interactions undertaken by the Council during the year, the data in this report clearly shows that whilst the number of complaints received has increased the numbers received continues to be well within accepted customer service industry standards and appreciably under 1% of all transactions. To provide some context, the Council emptied 10.3 million bin's during 2021/22, and handled 239,837 calls to our Corporate Contact Centre,

resurfaced 49km of roads, replaced 97km of road markings and welcomed approximately 1 million visitors to its Leisure Centres.

The report highlights that the Council continues to manage complaints well, in terms of response timescales, which have remained in line with last year's performance. The positive improvements made evidence that the Council is committed to putting right anything that has gone wrong.

There are areas of opportunity for continued improvement, and the Customer Relationship team will continue to work with senior leadership teams to effectively utilise complaints intelligence and customer feedback to support positive improvements in service delivery.

In January 2021, we launched our new Customer Strategy and Customer Contract documents, which sought to outline our ambitions for the next four years, during which we want to work with our customers to develop quality services that are accessible to all, while making every contact count. Our Customer Strategy can be found here [www.telford.gov.uk/customerstrategyandcustomercontract](http://www.telford.gov.uk/customerstrategyandcustomercontract)

In April 2021 we launched an internal guide for customer service excellence which has been shared with all the workforce as part of a refreshed Customer Service training module. In January 2022, the Council continued its commitment to improve our customers experience by becoming members of the Institute of Customer Services (ICS). We aim to work with the ICS to reinforce our Customer Strategy actions, and continue to analyse our customers' journeys to improve our services. Membership also allows us to benchmark the Council against similar organisations and share ideas. Our first business benchmarking survey was completed by customers in May/June 2022. As this was our first survey it was viewed as starting point from which we could measure our improvement over the next 3 years.

Early indications suggest that we have a strong starting point from which to improve, scoring 72.1 on the UK Customer Service Index, a strong score particularly when compared to the average for other local councils which scored 64.4. For Customer effort we scored 4.2 (the lower the score the better), which was strong score compared with the average for other local councils, which was 6.1. Our score also exceeded the average for Public Services with a score of 5.8 and also the average for all organisations across the UK with a score of 5.2, this includes companies such as Amazon, Pets at Home and

Jet 2. A low customer effort score is clear indicator that improvement to our online offer and service access has worked. A snapshot of the results can be found at page 17.

During 2021/22 the Customer Insight Programme has seen a number of projects completed including a revisit to the pantomime at The Place Theatre and a deep dive review of the Wellbeing Independence Partnership. Digital reviews continued which included new websites such as TW Council Leisure and Apps such as MyTelford. We also recommenced our snapshot reviews in 2021/22, after they were put on hold due to the pandemic. This has seen over 23 front facing buildings reviewed by our Mystery Customers and Senior Management Team in order to identify improvements that could be made to our customer's first impression of our buildings and services.

The Customer Insight Programme now has 175 volunteers who have registered with us as Mystery Customers in order to undertake assignments. We have seen a 38% increase in Mystery Customer volunteers during 2021/22, this is in part due to the teams attendance at some of the Safer Stronger Community events, where we targeted recruitment in areas of the borough that did not have a representation of volunteers.

Since April 2021, posters have been located in all front facing buildings asking our customers to comment on the service that they received. These short surveys can be accessed by scanning a QR code on a smart phone or via a website link. They are designed to take a maximum of 30 seconds to complete. These surveys continue to be deployed with posters most recently being placed at the Independent Living Centre and Sky Reach in Telford Town Park. Any comments received as part of these surveys are shared with services instantly so they can consider if improvements can be made.

Our Customer Insight Programme continues to proactively identify and remedy concerns. It also continues to deliver organisational intelligence to drive transformation and continuous improvement by identifying trends and enhancements that could be made to customers' experience of our services. For more information about the Customer Insight Programme, please go to page 12.

Highlights 2021/22

<p>Over <b>170</b> <b>volunteers</b> registered to be Mystery Customers</p>	<p>Average of <b>12 days</b> to respond to corporate complaints</p>	<p>UK Customer Satisfaction Index Score of <b>71.2</b> <small>(UKCSI for other local Councils 64.4)</small></p>
<p>Complaints remain under <b>1%</b> of all transactions</p>	<p><b>99</b> completed <b>Mystery Customer</b> assignments completed</p>	<p><b>81%</b> of corporate <b>complaints</b> responded to in 15 working days</p>
<p><b>100%</b> LGSCO* recommendations completed</p>	<p>A total of <b>475</b> <b>Compliments</b> received</p>	<p><b>21%</b> increase in Compliments</p>

# Purpose of the Report

- To give Members and Officers an overview of Telford and Wrekin Council's corporate customer feedback, including complaints and compliments, from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. This includes highlighting areas of positive performance and those for development.
- To outline the key developments and planned improvements to customer feedback processes operated by the Council.
- To consider how learning from customer feedback can be used to gain a better understanding of the experience customers are having while accessing council services, drive improvement by acting on the feedback received, prioritise quick wins and ensure that longer-term actions feed into the Customer Strategy, and continue to develop and improve the services we provide.

# Background

The Customer Relationship team co-ordinates complaints relating to three separate complaints processes. These are:

1. The Adult Social Care Statutory Process, reported separately in the Adult Statutory Complaints Annual Report 2021/22
2. The Children's Social Care Statutory Process, reported separately in the Children's Statutory Complaints Annual Report 2021/22
3. The Corporate Complaints Process. These are complaints relating to other services provided by the Council where there is no statutory complaints procedure

In addition, the team deals with a wide range of interactions with customers that do not go on to become formal complaints. These include general enquiries, MP Enquiries, Leader and Cabinet Member Enquiries, comments and suggestions, as well as any matters that are exempt from consideration under our complaints policies.

We recognise that our customers have a range of experiences when contacting us, working with us and using our services. Some of these experiences are positive, and we want to recognise and celebrate where good practice is evident, while others fall short of our standards, where it is essential that we learn from them. As an organisation, we provide customers with a mechanism to feedback to us both positive and negative experiences, and encourage a culture of learning, where the focus is on resolution and continual improvement. Whenever possible, we take immediate action to put things right at the first point of contact, and if this can't be done, we operate a robust complaints procedure.

Above all, the way we deal with customer feedback is based on our co-operative values, as published on the Council website [www.telford.gov.uk/info/20268/co-operative\\_council/779/our\\_co-operative\\_values](http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20268/co-operative_council/779/our_co-operative_values) and the following key principles:

- Customer focus – listening to what people tell us and seeing things from the customer's perspective
- Responsiveness – acting on what people say to us
- Promptness – making sure people get answers in good time
- Transparency – dealing openly and honestly with problems
- Proportionality – making sure that the resolution fits the complaint
- Learning – making sure complaints result in changes and improvement

Our policies are also published on the website [www.telford.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.telford.gov.uk/complaints) . A complaint is defined within the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure as:

**'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standards of service, action or lack of action or decisions taken by the Council, or the way in which council employees carry out their duties'**

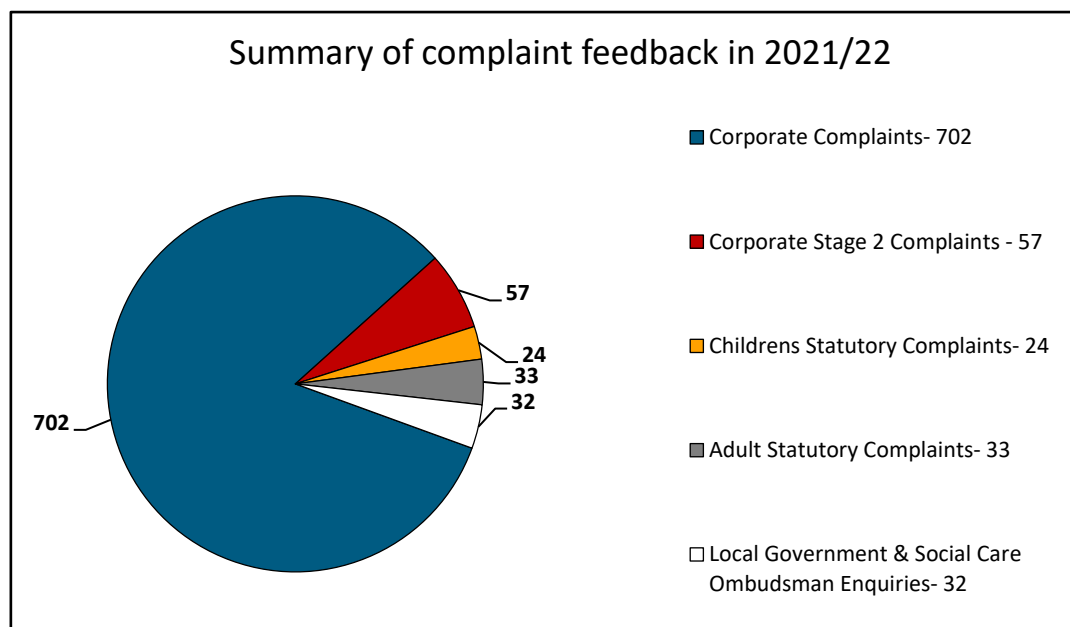
Telford and Wrekin Council operates a two-stage process for all corporate complaints. Complaints recorded under the formal procedure (and dealt with in this summary report) do not include those 'first time' representations that were effectively requests for a service and so dealt with as such. Accordingly, a new report of a missed bin collection or a broken swing, for example, would not be registered and dealt with as a complaint but instead as a service request. Of course, in the event that the Council failed to respond to this request appropriately, this may then generate a complaint. Appeals against decisions that have separate appeal routes are not dealt with as complaints.

For more information regarding corporate complaints in 2021/22, please go to page 18 of this report.



The charts below show the feedback received by the Customer Relationship team in 2021/22:

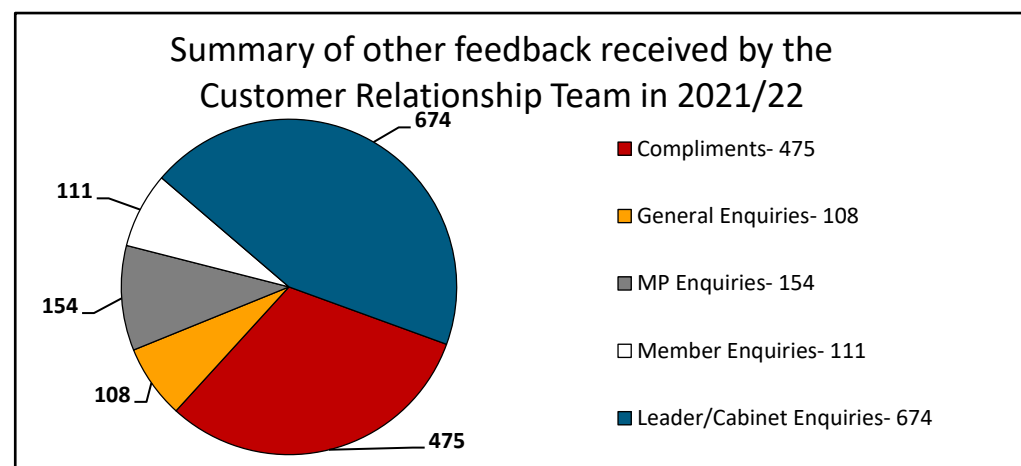
**Chart 1: Summary of complaint feedback in 2021/22**



Our customers' behaviour is changing, with more of them now contacting the team via digital methods such as emails and web forms, with 1020 completed in 2021/22 an 8% increase on the 948 in 2020/21 and a 45% increase on the 702 in 2019/20. The team also took a total of 1,563 telephone calls over this period a 33% increase on the 1,179 received in 2020/21. The volume of contacts received by the team totalled 2,370 in 2021/22 this is a 39% increase on the 1,702 in 2020/21 and a 58% increase from the 1,504 in 2019/20 and reflects the increased ease of contacting the team.

Both digital and voice contacts have increased in year. The Institute of Customer Services is reporting that there has been a significant change in customer behaviour in the last two years. Customers want to be able to interact across different channels and two years ago organisations were looking towards a digital future. During and since the pandemic, nationally voice contacts have gone up, particularly around emotional and difficult topics, and this trend is expected to continue.

**Chart 2: Summary of other feedback in 2021/22**



# Compliments

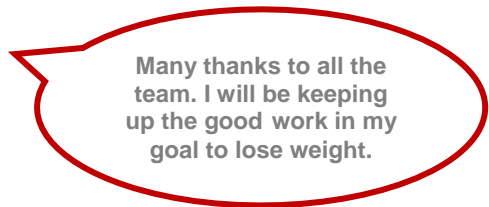
In 2021/22, there was a 21% increase in the number of compliments received. This amounts to a total of 475 instances in 2021/22, amounting to an increase on the 392 received in 2020/21. Telford and Wrekin Council has seen a 64% increase in compliments in the last 3 years from 290 in 2019/20 to 475 in 2021/22.

Compliments are logged and copied to Directors and Line Managers. This is recognised at service level through team briefs/ meetings and individual ‘one-to-one’s.

The Chief Executive also makes regular ‘shout-outs’ about staff who have gone above and beyond in his weekly emails.

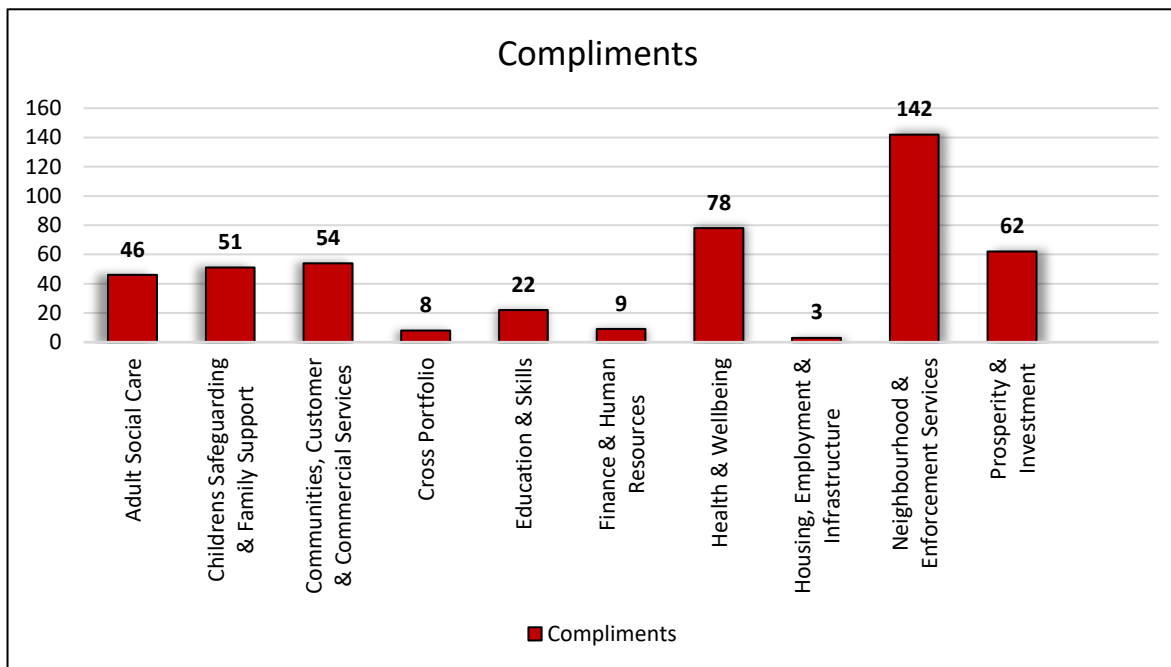
The chart to the right highlights the compliments received for each directorate.

This year, Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services (142) and Health & Wellbeing (78) received the most compliments. The majority of the compliments for Neighbourhood and Enforcement Services were related to the refuse crews. The Healthy Lifestyles team received the majority for Health and Wellbeing



Prosperity & Investment also received a significant increase in compliments when compared with 2020/21 (17).

**Chart 3: Number of compliments received in 2021/22 by directorate**



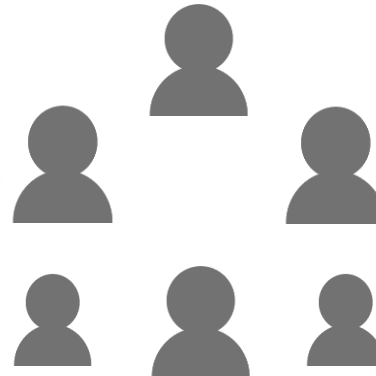
Here are some examples of compliments received during the year:

*"As time has passed Dan has been a continued source of support, together with Hayley...over the period I have known them they have consistently demonstrated exemplary 'customer;' support."*

Highways Engineering

*"I would like Adrian to be recognised for the extremely helpful response to our request to manage a hedge at the front of our house. He kept in contact with us, listened and collaborated with other members of the council teams to complete the work. He was patient and considerate with all the residents in the drive."* Green Space Infrastructure

*"Thank you so much for the past year, for your listening ear, voice of reason and patience! You saved our sanity! Thanks is really insufficient, just a word but we really are grateful!"* Strengthening Families



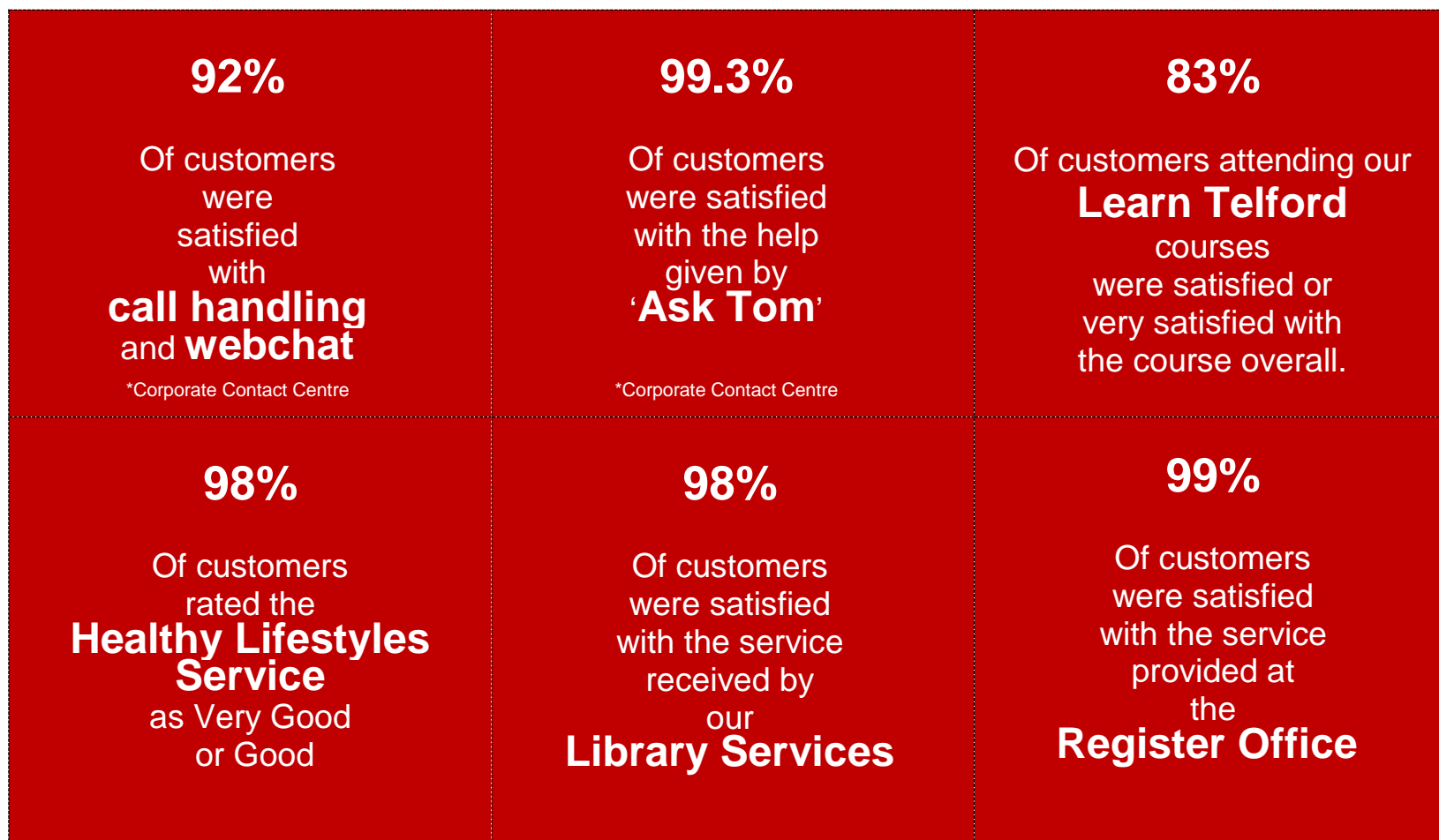
*"I have recently found myself in a fab position to be able to pay my debt off and the first thing I did was ring Paul to let him know and to thank him so much for all the help he has given me over the years. Paul's kindness made a huge difference to me and made me want to pay my debt off for myself and also for him."* Revenues Services

*"We would like to say a huge thank you for your help and support during the time you were our social worker, we have made a lot of progress and our life has improved dramatically since you became our social worker and we are very grateful for your hard work, dedication and commitment, thank you."* Adult Social Care


*"My son became ill, experienced several convulsions and stopped breathing, using the training you provided I was able to offer CPR until emergency services arrived and my little boy is now safely home. We are grateful for the training and so much more!"* Careers

# Customer Insight Programme

Our Customer Insight Programme was launched in October 2019 with the aim of helping us review our services from customers' perspective. The programme is designed to deliver organisational intelligence to drive transformation and continuous development by identifying trends and improvements that could be made to enhance customers' experience of our services. Some key customer satisfaction results from across our services in 2021/22 include:



The Customer Insight Programme now has 175 volunteers who have registered with us as Mystery Customers in order to undertake assignments. We have seen a 38% increase in volunteers during 2021/22, this is in part due to the teams attendance at some of the Safer Stronger Community events, where we targeted recruitment in areas of the borough that did not have a representation of volunteers.



*“Remarkably professional, friendly and knowledgeable about the activities available”*

In April 2021 we recommenced our deep dives into services and reviewed the Wellbeing Independence Partnership (WIP), a council commissioned service comprising of a group of agencies who work together to deliver advice, information and guidance to residents of Telford and Wrekin. The partnership brings together the Telford and Wrekin CVS, Carers Centre, Age UK and Taking Part. Our review highlighted that;


**85%** of Mystery Customers and service users had a good overall experience with the WIP

**100%** of customers stated that they would use the WIP service again

**83%** of customers advised they would recommend the WIP to a friend or family member.

Recommendations were made and implemented for example Mystery Customers commented that the images on the website were blurred, these have now been replaced.

During the pandemic in March 2020, all face to face Customer Insight assignments were put on hold, this included the Snapshot Reviews of our front facing buildings. In January 2022 the Snapshot Reviews were refreshed and relaunched covering 22 of our front facing buildings which includes First Points, libraries, leisure centres and receptions.



*“Fantastic customer service, really impressed with the level of service. Outstanding.”*

Snapshot reviews are designed to gain insight into the initial look and feel of our buildings and the impression that this gives to our customers. So far 15 front facing locations have been reviewed by Customer Insight Officers, Mystery Customers and our Senior Management Team who have gathered insight on overall satisfaction, customer service, interior and exterior appearance and accessibility.

The Customer Insight Officers have also started to carry out Everything Speaks reviews of these locations. Everything Speaks reviews look at any detail that could impact on our customer's experience from broken equipment, unprofessional formatting of displays or litter. It must be noted that these reviews are not restricted to just physical locations. We have encouraged our workforce to continually think about the image that is given to our customers and report any Everything Speak observations and recommendations to their managers.

## Usability Testing

Alongside the Snapshot reviews the programme has also completed further digital reviews and Mystery Customers have had the opportunity to test some new apps before go live including the new MyTelford app and MyTLC app. These online reviews and user ability testing were taken up positively by Mystery Customers and provide actionable insights that support the community's digital access to the Council. Mystery Customers also had the opportunity to review the new TW Council Leisure Website.

**99** assignments have been completed across the Customer Insight programme since April 2021

**89%** of Mystery Customers were satisfied with their experience when using the Council's services.

## QR Code Satisfaction Surveys

Since April 2021, posters have been located in all front facing buildings asking our customers to comment on the service that they received. These short surveys can be accessed by scanning a QR code on a smart phone or via a website link. They are designed to take a maximum of 30 seconds to complete. These surveys continue to be deployed with posters most recently being placed at the Independent Living Centre and Sky Reach in Telford Town Park. Any comments received as part of these surveys are shared with services instantly so they can consider if improvements can be made.

**77%** of customers were satisfied with the service provided at these locations during 2021/22

# You said, We did

Our vision is to work with our customers to develop quality services that are accessible to all and to make every contact count.

Feedback plays a vital role in our continuous development to make our customer service of the highest standard. Feedback is received via complaints, enquiries, through our Customer Insight Programme and also from instant, real-time QR code feedback surveys, which have been introduced into many of our buildings - including libraries and leisure centres.

Please find below some of this feedback from 2021/22 and the actions that we have taken as a result.

You said	We did
There are large queues at the bar in The Place Theatre	Bar sales are now available online before arrival and also the online app has been introduced to order and pay to avoid queuing.
Images in the Wellbeing Independence Partnership webpages were blurry	These images have now been replaced
It was not possible to return to the TW Leisure website after visiting the Ice Rink, Ski & Snowboard Centre and Town Park sites	Navigation has been amended to allow return to the site.
That images on the TW leisure website were stock images and also there was a lack of videos	The images on the site are now a combination of stock images and real images of the facilities. And videos have been added to the website
The concessionary memberships policy did not include PIP (Personal Independence Payment) as eligible for a concessionary membership	The Policy has now been updated to include PIP
Healthy Lifestyles Team could do with later appointments	There are now extended and increased evening clinic hours throughout the week.
The website advises not to leave items for bulk collection that are wet	Guidance has been updated to advise ways of reducing risk of items getting waterlogged

Our website did not contain information regarding recycling all types of plastic and their codes	Plastic codes are now included on the websites A-Z directory
The how to guide on My Telford could do with audio instructions	All How to use guides have audio instructions on the videos
On My Telford there does not appear to be anywhere to report overflowing bins	This can now be found under the word 'overflow'
Customers commented that advertising banners on our webpages were distracting and flickered.	Advertising banners are no longer used on our webpages.
The Compliments online form was taking too long to complete.	This form has been reviewed and shortened.
The Webchat icon was not considered prominent enough on our website.	The Webchat icon is now prominently displayed on our website Homepage.
Death certificates should be issued via recorded postage	Certificates are now issued via first class recorded delivery

For further examples of You said, We did please visit [www.telford.gov.uk/yousaidwedid](http://www.telford.gov.uk/yousaidwedid)

Additional examples of improvements that have been made following complaints can be found from page 28 for this report.



# ICS Business Benchmarking

In January 2022 the Council became members of the Institute of Customer Services (ICS), as part of this membership we are able to benchmark our services against organisations across the UK. We completed our first survey in June 2022 some of the key results from survey are details below;

## UK Customer Satisfaction Index Score:



72.1

This is a strong score for the Council's first benchmarking survey, particularly when compared to the average for other local councils which was 64.4, however we are just short of the 73.4 average achieved by other public services, which includes, local Fire Services, Ambulance Services, Police Services. The average for all organisations across the UK is 78.4, this includes Amazon, Pets at Home and Jet2.

## Net Promoter Score:



16.1

This is another strong score for a first benchmarking survey, particularly when compared to the average for other local councils which was -21.6 (a negative indicating a significant proportion of customers who would not promote the service (detractors) against those that would promote the service (promoters)). We have also exceeded the average for public services with a score of 14.0.

## Customer Effort:



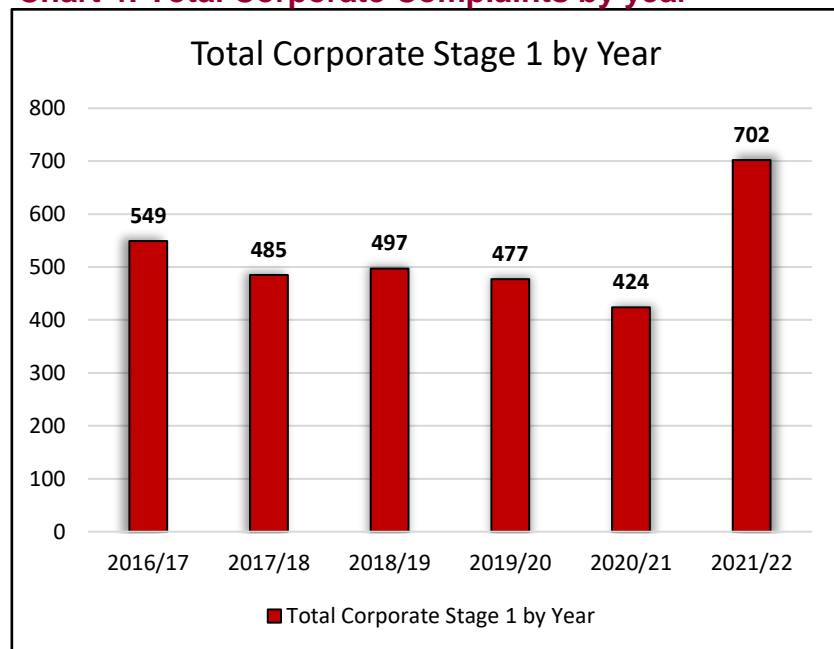
4.2

This score reflects the effort our customers have to make to access our services (the lower the score the better). This is an excellent score in this respect, particularly when compared to the average for other local councils which was 6.1, we have also exceeded the average for Public Services with an average of 5.8 and also the average for all organisations across the UK which is 5.2. This is a clear indicator that improvement to our online offer and service access has worked.

# Corporate Stage One Complaints 2021/22

In the year 2021/22, there were 702 corporate Stage One complaints (those dealt with by more than one service simultaneously are counted as a single complaint) from 676 complainants. This is an increase on the number received in 2020/21 (424) the first year of the pandemic.

**Chart 4: Total Corporate Complaints by year**



Of these 702 complaints, 57 were escalated to Stage Two of our procedure and 18 corporate complaints were the subject of Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman enquiries (please note that some of these may have been for Stage One complaints prior to 2021/22). 7 of the 18 complaints subject to enquiries resulted in detailed investigations.

There has been an increase in Stage Two complaints this year from the 29 in 2021/22, and the 49 seen in 2019/20.

Stage	Number of complaints
One	702
Two	57
LGSCO	18

For further information regarding Stage Two complaints, please see page 26.

For further information regarding Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman enquiries, please see page 30.

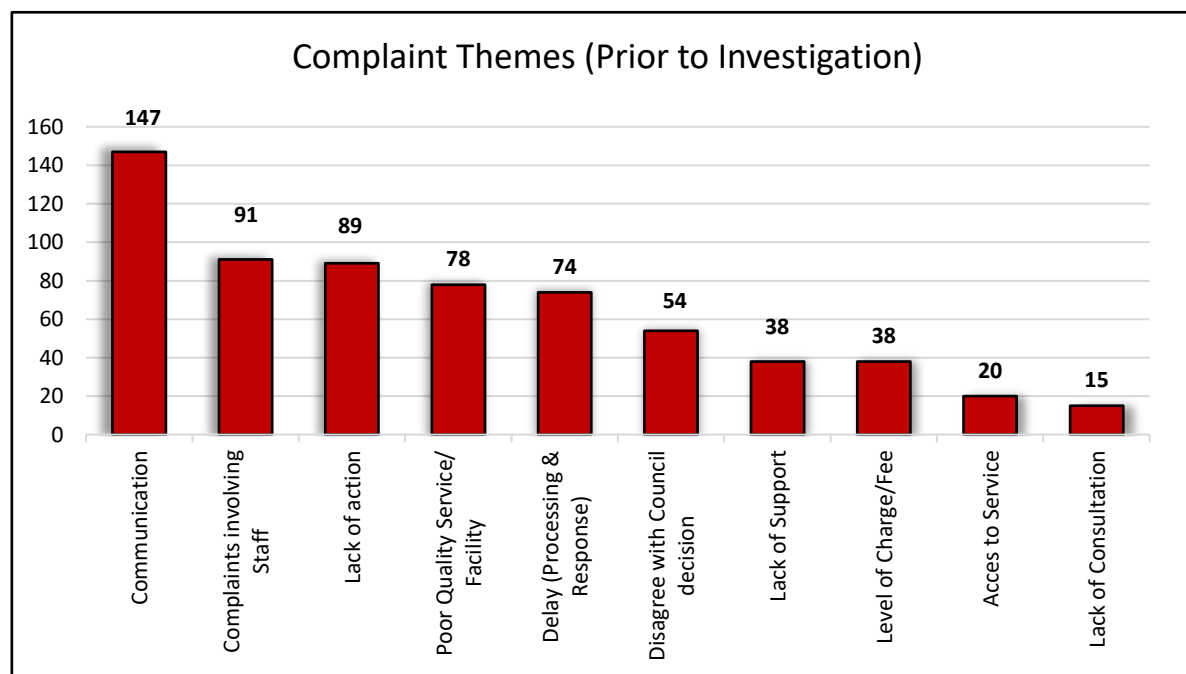
### Customer Access Channels and Digital Contact (Stage One Corporate Complaints):

Complaint channel	Number of complaints
Email	333
Web form	139
Telephone	210
Letter	19
In person	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>702</b>

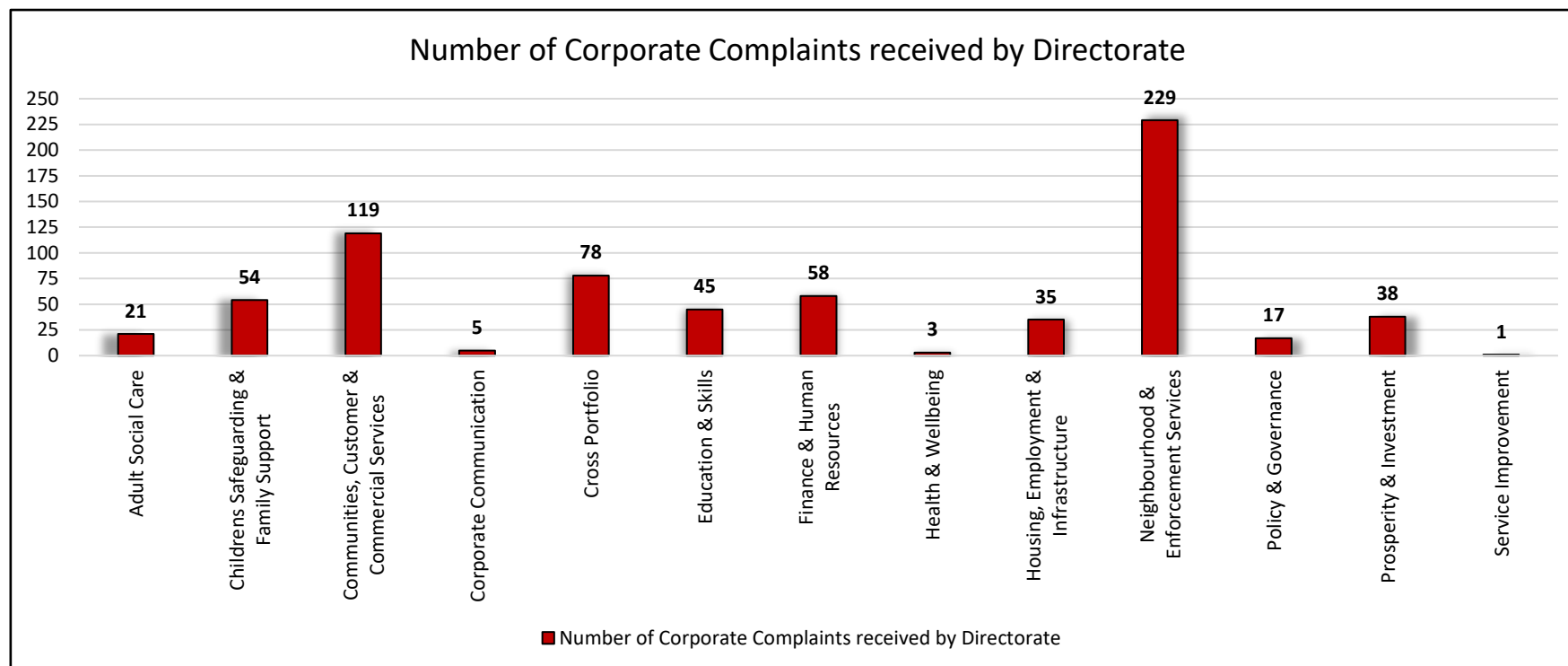
In 2021/22, 67% of corporate complaints were received via a digital access channel, which includes via our online complaints form and emails directly to the Customer Relationship team.

### Complaint Themes:

Chart 5: Corporate complaint themes 2021/22



This chart shows the top 10 complaint themes for 2021/22. This is compiled from all complaints received prior to investigation. Further analysis of upheld themes can be found later in this report. Communication and complaints involving staff and our contractors accounted for the majority of complaints received, representing an element of 34% of the complaints.

**Chart 6: Number of Corporate Complaints received by directorate**

Complaints have increased across the majority of directorates with Health & Wellbeing being the only exception. The Directorate that received the highest number of complaints was Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services (229). This is an increase on the 155 received in 2020/21. Given the millions of customer interactions that take place through Waste, Highways, Grounds Maintenance, Public Protection, Community Safety and Enforcement, this figure still represents a very low number. The second highest number of complaints were received about Communities, Customer & Commercial Services (119). This is an increase on the 57 received in 2020/21 during which the majority of the facilities under this directorate such as the theatre, Caf  s, school catering and leisure centres were closed. Complaints received represent a small percentage against the volume of interactions across this directorate and the council as a whole.

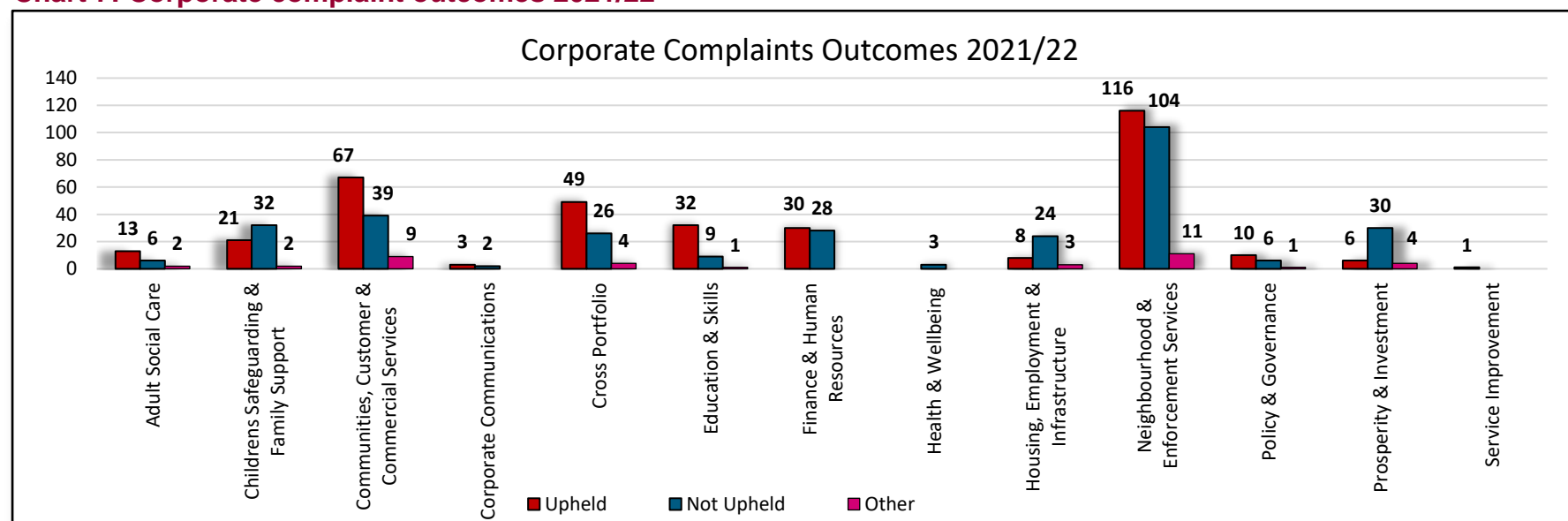
# Stage One Complaint outcomes

Of the 702 Stage One complaints that have been responded to in the year, 51% (356) were upheld. This is where services acknowledged that they could have done better, this is an increase on 42% (180) in 2020/21. This indicates that there has been an increase in cases where we have acknowledged that we could have done better. 44% (309) of Stage One complaints were not upheld and 5% (37) were either withdrawn, out of jurisdiction or resolved by the service.

The highest number of upheld complaints were in Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services (116) and Communities, Customer & Commercial Services (67) which is not unexpected given that these directorates received the highest number of complaints 229 and 115 respectively.

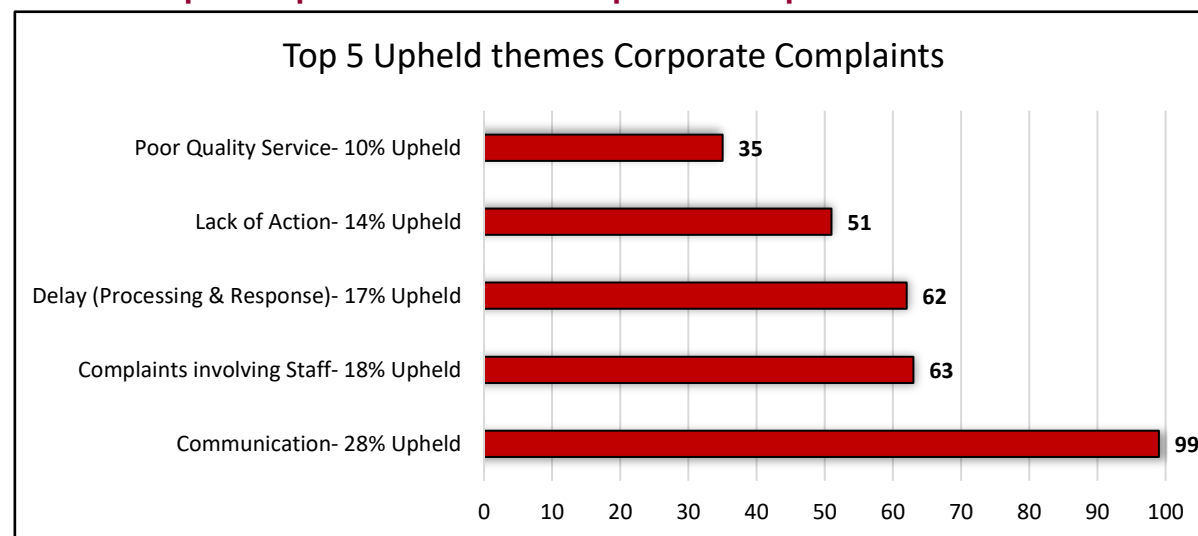
The outcomes by directorate can be seen in the following chart. This has been broken down into upheld, not upheld and other. 'Other' can include service resolved, dealt with through courts, out of jurisdiction or withdrawn.

**Chart 7: Corporate complaint outcomes 2021/22**



The top five upheld themes identified corporately at Stage One were:

**Chart 8: Top five upheld themes for corporate complaints**



356 complaints were upheld, the top five themes being:

**Communication** was a theme within 28% of the complaints upheld, with the issue crossing many different services. Generally, the concerns raised involved inadequate/ lack of communication, no response, no updates to customers if there was a delay and call backs not being completed. The majority of these complaints received an explanation and apology.

**Complaints involving Staff** was a theme with 18% of the complaints upheld. Complaints naming staff covers a variety of concerns, including a lack of support from individual officers, no identification shown when attending a property, how a member of staff spoke to a customer and the general behaviour of staff, whether face-to-face or over the phone. There were a number of upheld issues highlighted for the Council's contractors and also driver conduct, which included obstructive parking and blocking roads. As part of contract management all complaints are required to be investigated by contractors and in some instances this results in formal disciplinary investigations. In the cases upheld, an apology was given, the officers were spoken to by their Managers and additional training given.

**Delay (Processing & Response)** was a theme within 17% of the complaints upheld. This was where there was a delay in information being sent which included reports for comments and also minutes from meetings. A delay in responding to customer enquiries and a delay in processing some assessment/ account for example personal budgets, Blue Badge, Council Tax and Parking Permits.

**Lack of Action** was a theme within 14% of the complaints upheld. This is where no response or action taken and timescales had not be kept to. There were delays in completion of jobs which led to a perceived lack of action by contractors. There were no trends in Service Areas for this concern and it was seen to cut across all Directorates. In the cases upheld, an explanation, apology and service were provided.

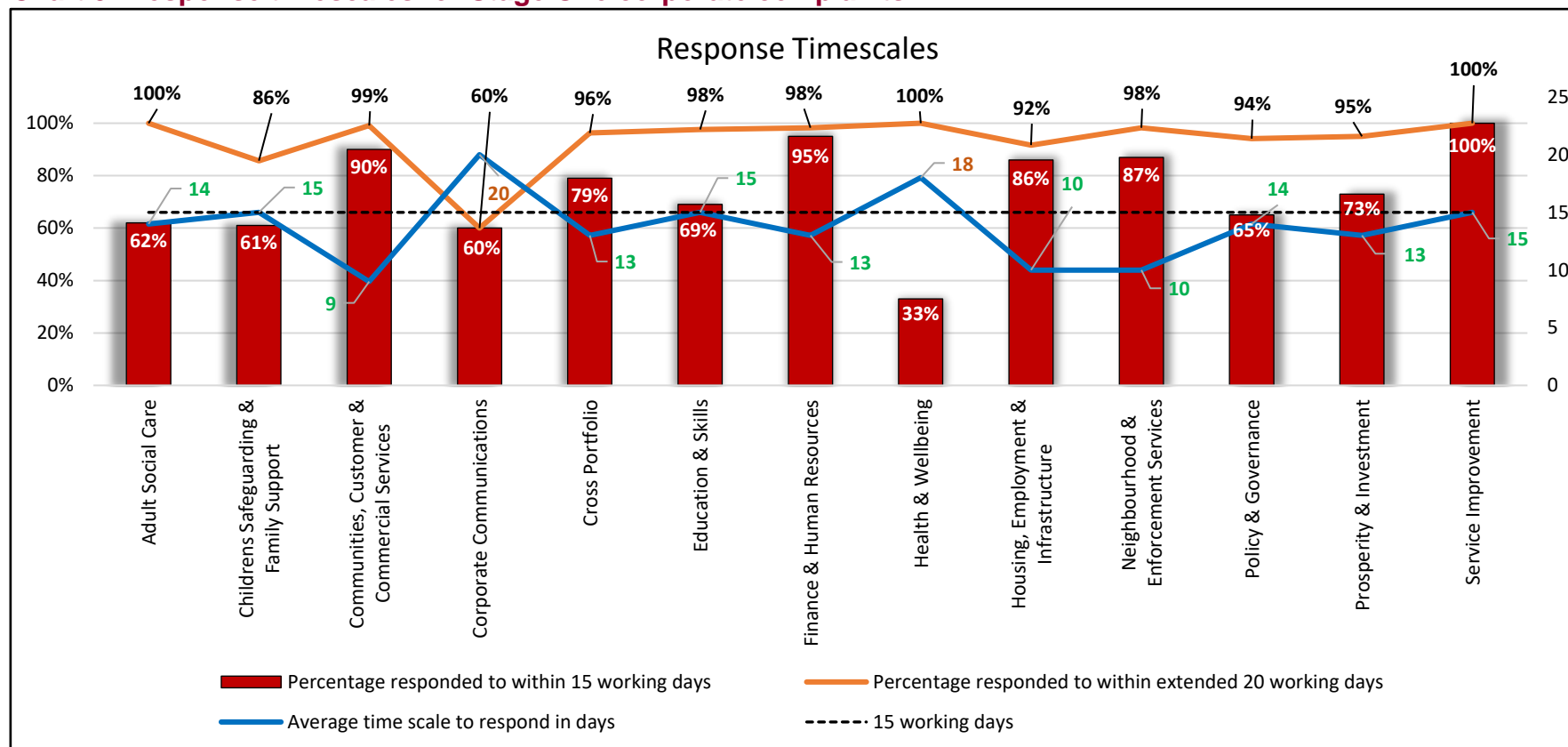
**Poor Quality Service/ Facility** was a theme within 10% of the complaints upheld. Again, this issue crossed many different services; however, a number were related to service being below standard expected, this included equipment not working, cleanliness and communication regarding service availability, responses not provided to the quality expected, handling of post and repairs required within some buildings, and call drop outs on contact centres. A number were related to waste services. These upheld complaints were raised via Contract Management with our contactors. In the cases upheld, an explanation, apology and service were provided.

# Timescales for responses at Stage One

The Council’s Corporate Complaints Policy states that Stage One corporate complaints should be responded to within 15 working days. This may be extended in exceptional circumstances by a further five days. The following chart shows the percentage of complaints responded to within 15 working days by directorate and also the average number of days for each to respond to corporate complaints at Stage One.

The data indicates that, in the main, directorates are meeting the corporate timescale of 15 working days, which is excellent.

**Chart 9: Response timescales for Stage One corporate complaints**





During 2021/22 the Council has managed to respond to corporate complaints in an average of 12 days, which is well within the 15 working day timescale. Given the increase in complaints received the Council continues to perform well in terms of response timescales.

81% of complaints were responded to within the 15 working day timescale, broadly in line with the 82% achieved in 2020/21. Our local target is to respond to 90% of corporate complaints within 15 working days.

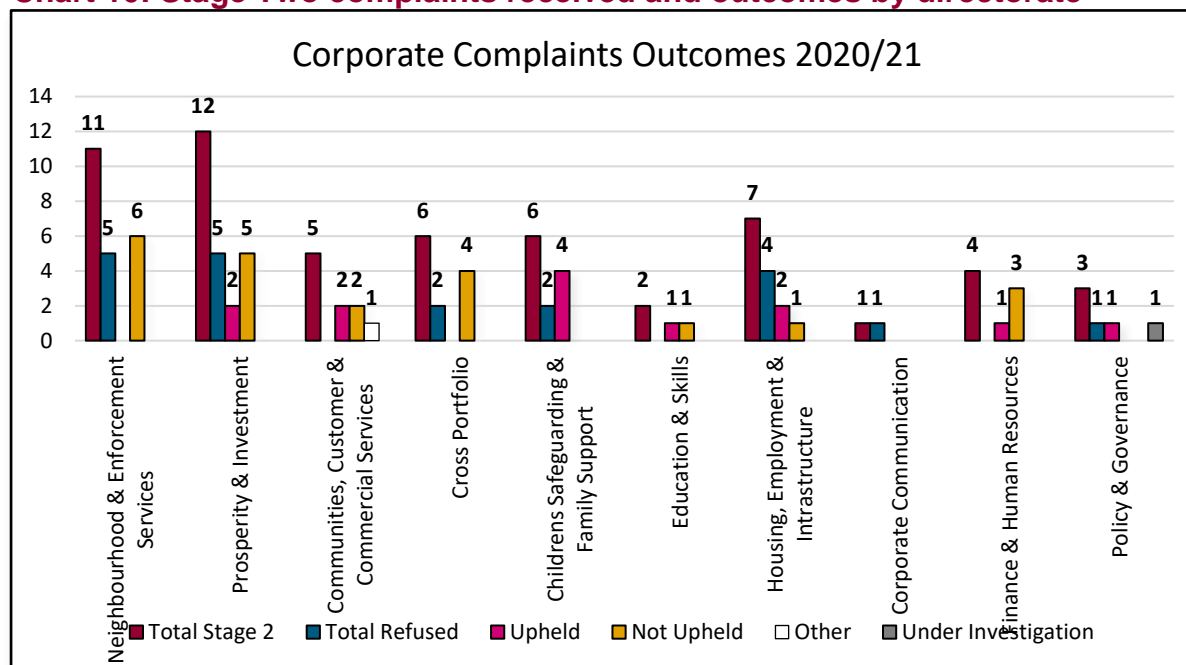
Finance & Human Resources and Communities, Customer & Commercial Services met this target during the year.

Other directorates also saw an improvement in their percentage responded to in 15 working days and also the average working days to respond across the year. Adult Social Care saw a significant improvement in the average days to respond from 24 days in 2020/21 to 14 days this year increasing the percentage responded to in 15 working days from 44% to 62% this year. Likewise, Children's Safeguarding and Family Support saw an improvement from 19 days in 2020/21 to 15 days in 2021/22 and also an increase in the percentage responded too from 41% to 61% in the year.

# Corporate Stage Two complaints

During 2020/21, 57 corporate Stage One complaints progressed to Stage Two of the process. This represents an increase on the 29 that progressed in 2020/21. All investigations have now been completed.

**Chart 10: Stage Two complaints received and outcomes by directorate**



A higher volume of Stage Two complaints were seen in Prosperity & Investment (11) and Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services (12). Health & Wellbeing, Adult Social Care, had no complaints escalated to Stage Two in 2021/22, they are therefore not detailed in Chart 10.

Out of the 57 complaints, it was considered that 20 had already been addressed fully at Stage One or the desired outcome that the complainant was seeking was not achievable by progressing their complaint further, i.e. there would have been no added value

in taking the complaint through to a full Stage Two investigation. These complaints were responded to in an average of 12 working days. The aim is to respond to Stage Two escalation requests within 10 working days, so the average is just outside of this timescale. Of the 57 Stage Two complaints, 36 resulted in full investigations, compared to the 20 investigated in 2020/21. 23% of full investigations were upheld, 1 Stage Two complaint was withdrawn. The average number of working days taken to complete a full investigation was 41 working days. This is an increase on the 29 days taken in 2020/21. This figure has been affected by the volume of stage two complaints received and also the complexity of these complaints and significant correspondence received by complainants in relation to these cases. This figure, however, is still within the extended timescale of 65 working days as outlined in the complaints policy.

# Learning and outcomes from Corporate Complaints

Although they provide an overall picture of our services, we should not, however, be looking purely at the numbers. We should also be focusing on the learning we have undertaken from these complaints.

Complaints are a valuable source of information that can help to identify recurring or underlying problems and potential improvements. We know that numbers alone do not tell us everything about attitudes towards complaints and how they are responded to locally. Arguably, it is of greater importance to understand the impact that complaints have had on people and to learn the lessons from them to so as to improve the experience of others.

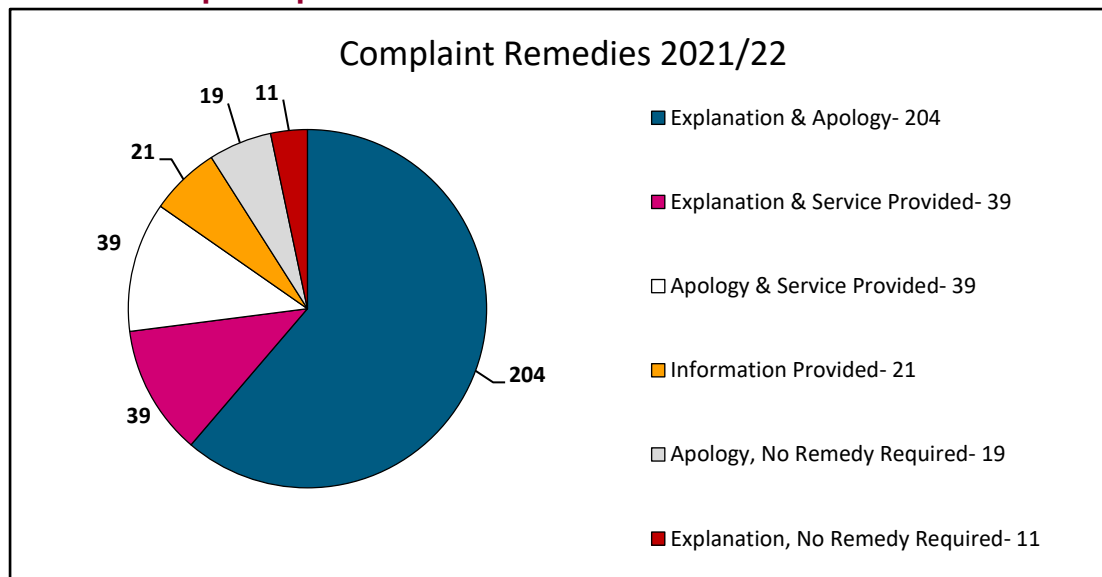
Lessons can usually be learned from complaints that were upheld, but also in some instances where no fault was found but the Council recognises that improvements to services can still be made.

Occasionally, during the course of an investigation, issues will be identified that need to be addressed over and above the original complaint. The Customer Relationship team will then work with services to ensure that they address the “bigger picture” so that that residents receive the best possible service from the Council.

## **Remedial actions taken from resolve complaints at Stage One in 2021/22**

All 358 complaints where fault was found have been reviewed by the Customer Relationship team to ascertain what action the relevant department has taken, both in remedying the fault and identifying any wider learning to avoid such issues recurring in the future.

Remedial action typically consists of both individual redress (e.g. an apology or carrying out overdue work) and wider actions that may affect many other customers. On some occasions, the fault has already been remedied - so the complaints process is used to ensure that the appropriate action has been taken.

**Chart 11: Top complaint remedies 2021/22**

Of the remedies recorded against corporate complaints in 2021/22:

- 57% were to provide an explanation and an apology
- 11% were to provide an explanation and the service was provided
- 11% were to provide an apology and service was provided
- 6% were to provide an explanation and no remedy was required

## Positive Improvements

Throughout the year, we record the learning identified from each complaint in order to build up a picture of common themes or trends. Learning from corporate complaints is considered alongside that from statutory complaints as part of our quality assurance activities.

Below are some examples of positive changes that have resulted from learning from complaints:

- Review of procedures related to unacceptable behaviour from customers at Leisure centres
- Procedures related to TLC cards have been reviewed at Oakengates Leisure
- There has been a review of processes with Idverde and in particular the use of the Pride in our Community contact email address, in order to improve communication.

- The website has been updated with further information regarding Free School Meals and Early Years Pupil Premium
- Notices have been reviewed in Bus Stops of their operational times to avoid confusion

**“It was nice to see that it was taken seriously and improvements continue to happen so the issue doesn’t happen again.”**

- Contractors have been warned about parking in bus stops and laybys, when on breaks
- Reminder to Enforcement agents to place accounts on hold whilst they are investigating a complaint
- Training has been provided to officers on Individual Voluntary Arrangements and when accounts should be put on hold
- There has been changes made in the Family & Friends team so that social workers undertaking private fostering work will have increased support and additional training

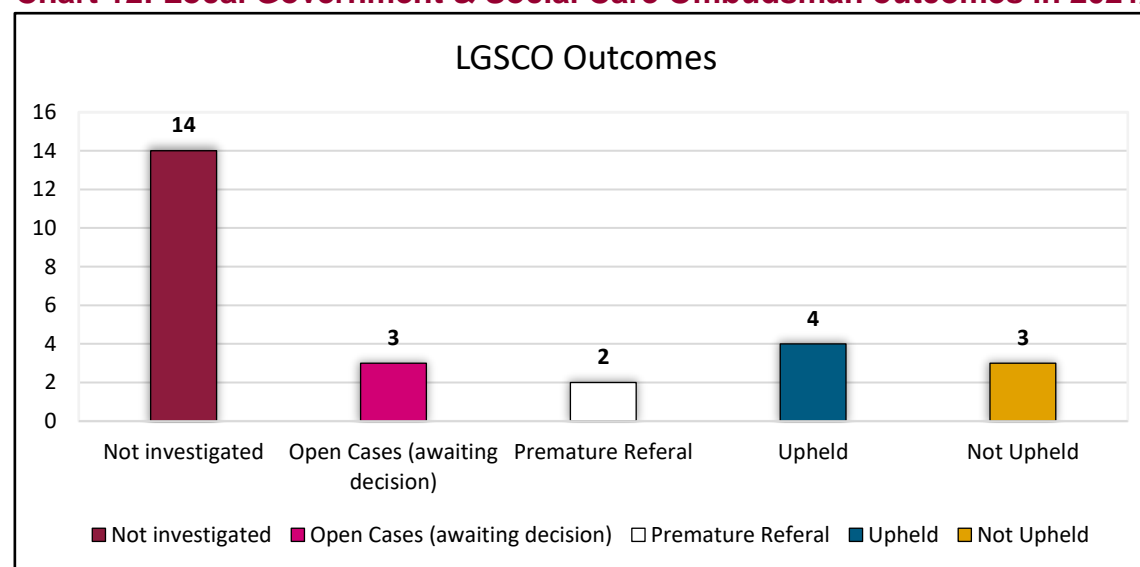
**“Just thank you for the support! As soon as I opened the complaint I got the answer in the next day...Thank you!”**

- There has been a review of appointment arrangements at Darby House to ensure that staff and visitors are aware of up to date arrangements.
- Notes taken over the phone regarding complaints are shared with customers for approval by email
- Planning team will request that permitted development applications are accompanied with detailed drawings and elevations
- The Home Improvement Agency will consider adding information to the Wellbeing Assistance Grant application form or correspondence to advise that they expect applicants to intend to remain in their current property for at least 5 years
- Responses to complaints that require password protection when emailed will be sent via second class recorded delivery if a hard copy responses is required

# Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman enquiries

The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) has the authority to investigate complaints when it appears that our own process has not resolved them. Complainants can refer their complaint to the LGSCO at any time, although the Ombudsman will generally refer them back to us if they have not been through our process first. In exceptional circumstances, the Ombudsman will look at things earlier; this usually being dependant on the vulnerability of the person concerned. During this period 32 enquiries were forwarded to the LGSCO. 11 enquiries related to statutory complaints which are detailed in the Adult Statutory and Children's Statutory Complaint Reports. Three were related to School Appeals and 18 to Corporate Complaints.

**Chart 12: Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman outcomes in 2021/22**



Of the 18 corporate complaint enquiries, two remain open awaiting a decision.

The Local Government Ombudsman undertook 7 detailed investigations into corporate complaints, four of which were in respect of complaints escalated in 2020/21 these were upheld. Three detailed investigation were also not upheld.

Telford & Wrekin Council has taken learning from the upheld decisions, and 100% of recommendations made by the LGSCO have been completed.

More information regarding the Council's performance and LGSCO decisions can be found at: [www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre](http://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre).

# Oversight and support provided by the Customer Relationship Team

The Customer Relationship team continues to support Service Areas to both manage and learn from complaints. The key services they offer are:

1. To manage and support the Council's approach to customer intelligence, ensuring we effectively manage and learn from our interactions with customers
2. Provide support to services concerning all aspects of customer insight and obtaining feedback
3. Perform in-depth and snapshot reviews of our services, our key physical front doors and digital front door
4. Provide services with complaints advice and support, including support with persistent and unreasonable complainants
5. Provide reports on the quality of complaint responses and make recommendations for improvement
6. Act as a critical friend to challenge service practice
7. Provide advice on drafting comprehensive responses to complaint investigations
8. Continue to escalate overdue complaints to Directors
9. Provide regular dashboards/ complaints samples to Directors, and performance is reported monthly to the Senior Management Team

## Customer Relationship Team priorities for 2022/23

During 2022/23, the Customer Relationship team will focus on a number of key priorities:

- Continue to roll out the Customer Insight Programme, Mystery Customer Snapshot Reviews and Mystery Customer Website Reviews, with the view to proactively reduce complaints
- Continue to drive an improvement in the percentage of complaints responded to within timescales from 81% to 90%

- Continue to provide a quarterly and monthly reporting dashboard of performance data to senior management so that improvement can be driven forward continuously during the year
- Continue to improve and add to the resources available to managers when responding to complaints and other correspondence, while encouraging self-help
- Work to maintain low levels of maladministration findings by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman
- Continue to develop a new customer service training package
- Organise Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman complaint training for managers
- Work with the Institute of Customer Service to further improve our customers' experience.