

Corporate Feedback Report

Improving our Customer Experience

Annual Report 2022/23

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Report summary

This year has seen continued challenges both for the Council and for our residents and customers, against the backdrop of the cost of living crisis which 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.

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 95% increase in compliments in the last 4 years from 290 in 2019/20 to 566 in 2022/23.

We have also seen a decrease in the complaints received across the Council in 2022/23. Corporate complaints decreased from 702 in 2021/22, to 601 in the year of which 42% were upheld. Complaints about council policy and anonymous complaints accounted for 6 complaints and 9 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 the number of complaints 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 10.6 million bins' during 2022/23, handled 268,241 calls to our Corporate Contact Centre, resurfaced 17km of roads, replaced 45km of road markings, surfaced 96,000 square meters of footpaths, filled 3,022 potholes and welcomed approximately 1 million visitors to our events.

The report highlights that the Council continues to manage complaints well, in terms of response timescales, which have improved by 1 day compared 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.

We are now at the halfway point of our Customer Strategy that was launched in January 2021. The strategy 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. In September 2022, an updated Strategy was approved, this outlined the actions that had been completed so far including launching a new online Customer Service Essentials training course for all staff with an emphasis on Everything Speaks and publicising examples of customer feedback which has led to service changes. More information regarding the actions completed and our Customer Strategy and updated Strategy can be found here www.telford.gov.uk/customerstrategyandcustomercontract.

As part of these actions, we also held refresher complaint handling training for 62 managers, facilitated by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The LGSCO trainer commented on the Council's good performance when responding to complaints, the quality of the complaint information on website and how clear the Council's website is for those wanting to make a complaint. The course was welcomed, and managers found it useful and would improve the way that they handled complaints going forward. Further courses are to be organised later in the year for those managers that were unable to attend.

The Strategy also outlined that we would pilot a programme for senior managers to go back to the floor to observe customer experience first-hand. In June 2022, the Back to the Floor programme was launched and saw all Senior Managers go back to the floor, more information on the outcomes of this programme can be found on page 17.

In January 2022, the Council continued its commitment to improve our customers experience by becoming members of the Institute of Customer Services (ICS). During our first year of membership with the institute we asked our customers to complete a benchmarking survey. As this was our first survey it was viewed as a starting point from which we could measure our improvement over the next 3 years. The results of the benchmarking survey indicated a strong starting point from which to improve. A snapshot of the results can be found at page 19.

The benchmarking survey was followed up by a workforce survey which sought to measure our workforce's engagement with our customer strategy, culture and processes. The results of this survey were benchmarked with other organisations in the Local Government Sector, which includes local Fire Services, Ambulance Services, Police Services and Councils. Telford and Wrekin Council achieved an index score of 75.12 against other local government sectors who achieved an average of 70.28. The score for all sectors, was just over two points ahead with 77.45, this includes companies such as Amazon, Pets at Home and Jet 2. Key responses from our workforce highlighted that "The Directors/Senior managers believe that great customer service is extremely important to our business performance" and "Our organisation has a vision, a mission and goals that encourage and deliver great customer service." In terms of credibility the Council scored 80.3 surpassing all sectors in this area who had a score of 79.31. A snapshot of the results can be found at page 20.

During 2022/23 the Customer Insight Programme has seen a number of projects completed including the Snapshot reviews which has seen over 23 front facing buildings reviewed by our Mystery Customers and Senior Management Team to identify improvements that could be made to our customer's first impression of our buildings and services. More information regarding this work can be found at page 12.

The Customer Insight Programme now has 186 volunteers who have registered with us as Mystery Customers to undertake assignments. We have seen a further 6% increase in Mystery Customer volunteers during 2022/23. In June 2022 as part of National Volunteer Week we organised a thank you event for our volunteers, during which we outlined what had been achieved since the start of the programme and received feedback of ways that the programme could be improved.

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. We continue to seek opportunities of where these surveys can be deployed with posters most recently being placed at Arthog and Arthog Outreach. Any comments received as part of these surveys are shared with services instantly, so they can consider if improvements can be made and improvements are then reported as part of You said, We did. Examples of You said, We did improvement can be found at page 15.

Highlights 2022/23

<p>Over 186 volunteers registered to be Mystery Customers</p>	<p>Average of 11 days to respond to corporate complaints</p>	<p>UK Customer Satisfaction Index Score of 71.2 <small>(UKCSI for other local Councils 64.4)</small></p>
<p>Complaints remain under 1% of all transactions</p>	<p>84 completed Mystery Customer assignments</p>	<p>80% of corporate complaints responded to in 15 working days</p>
<p>100% LGSCO* recommendations completed</p>	<p>A total of 566 Compliments received</p>	<p>95% increase in Compliments since 2019/20</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 2022 to 31 March 2023. 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 2022/23
2. The Children's Social Care Statutory Process, reported separately in the Children's Statutory Complaints Annual Report 2022/23
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 cannot 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 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 . A complaint is defined within the Council’s Corporate Complaints Procedure as:

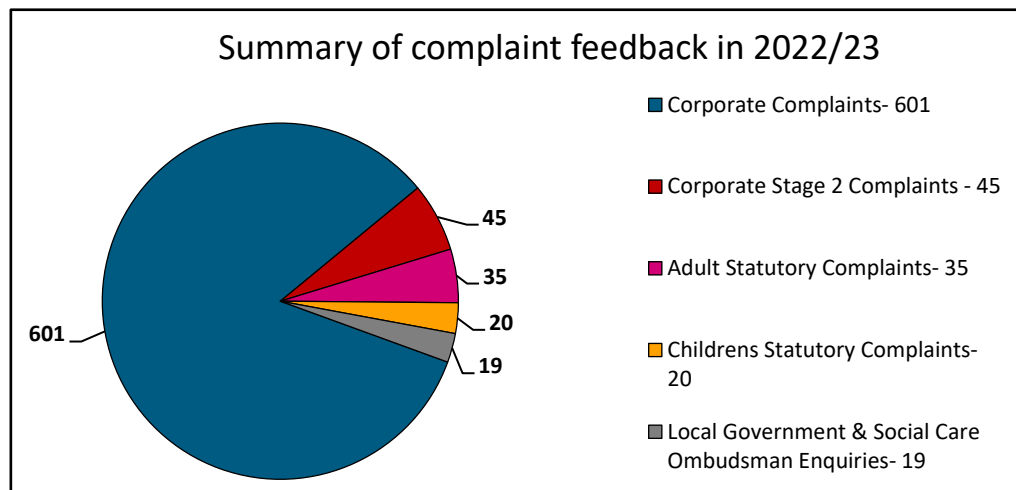
‘an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standards of service, action or lack of action or decisions taken by the Council, or the way in which council employees carry out their duties’

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 2022/23, please go to page 21 of this report.

The charts below show the feedback received by the Customer Relationship team in 2022/23:

Chart 1: Summary of complaint feedback in 2022/23



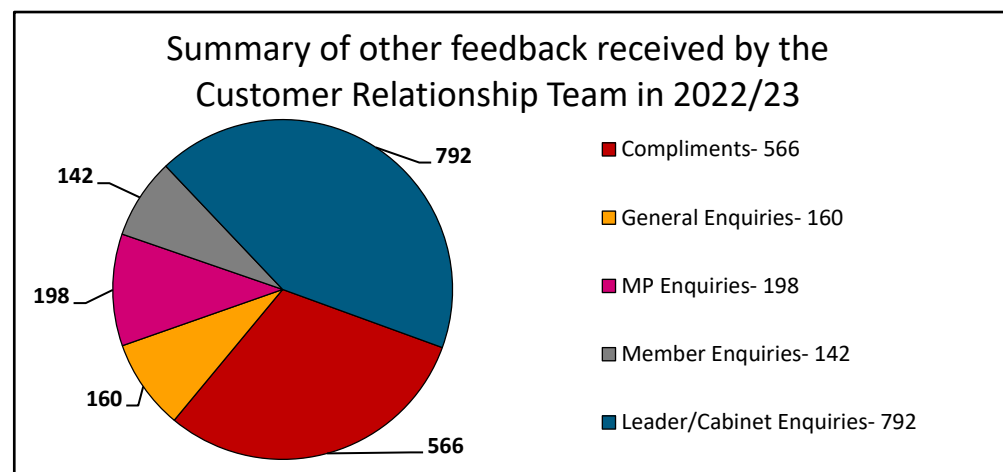
Our customers' behaviour continues to change, with more of them now contacting the team via digital methods such as emails and web forms, with 1,281 received in 2022/23, a 26% increase on the 1,020 in 2021/22. The team also took a total of 1,683 telephone calls over this period an 8% increase on the 1,563 received in 2021/22. The volume of direct contacts received by the team totalled 3,274 in 2022/23 a significant increase of 33% on the 2,370 received in 2021/22 there has been a sustained increase in contacts since 2019/20 and reflects the increased ease of contacting the team.¹

Both digital and voice contacts have increased in the year.

The Institute of Customer Services is reporting that there has been a significant change in customer behaviour in the last two years.

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 2022/23



¹ This is based on logged cases and telephone calls received. This figure does not include all communication received that has not been formally logged or shared with other teams to action.

Compliments

In 2022/23, there was a 19% increase in the number of compliments received. A total of 566 instances were received in 2022/23, an increase on the 475 received in 2021/22. Telford and Wrekin Council has seen a 95% increase in compliments in the last 4 years from 290 in 2019/20 to 566 in 2022/23.

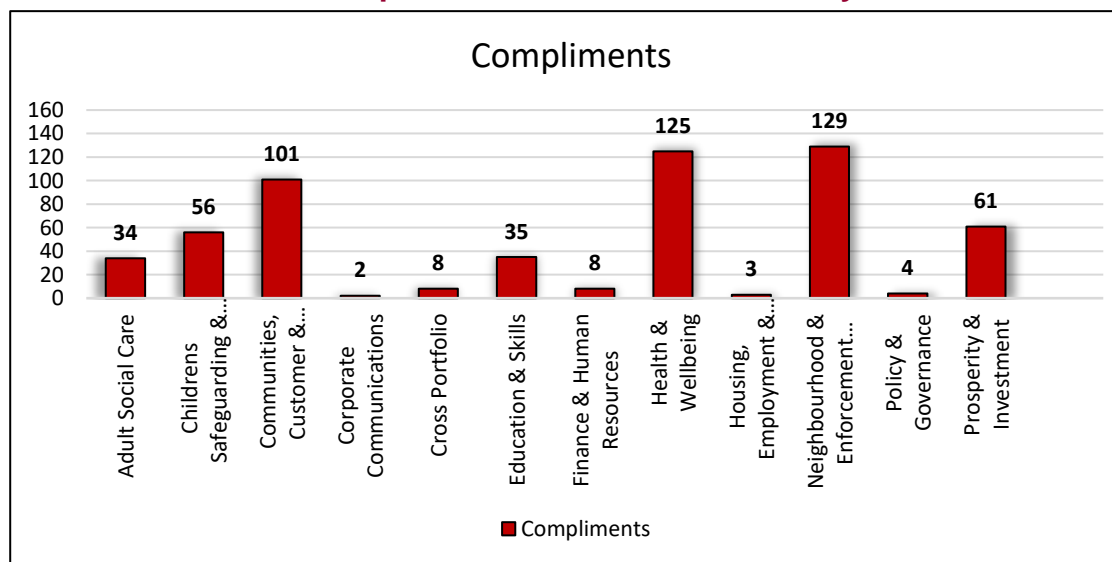
Compliments are logged and copied to Directors and Line Managers. This is recognised at service level through team briefs/ meetings and individual ‘one-to-ones’.

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 (129) and Health & Wellbeing (125) received the most compliments. The majority of the compliments for Health and Wellbeing were related to the Healthy Lifestyles team and for Neighbourhood and Enforcement Services 48 were related to the refuse collection crews and Household Recycling Centres.

Chart 3: Number of compliments received in 2022/23 by directorate



“I’ve been to Hortonwood Recycling Centre a few times in the last week and all the staff there have been so friendly and helpful...”

Prosperity & Investment also received a significant increase in compliments from 17 in 2021/22 to 61 in the year.

Here are some examples of compliments received during the year:

"We would all like to thank you very much for all your assistance. I would just like to say again how thankful we all are for Telford and Wrekin helping us to make the garden a better place for William, he loves it."

Housing Improvement Team

"When issues have arisen, they have been dealt with quickly and, importantly, Chris has provided excellent communication in explaining the root cause and solution. I would appreciate if you would pass on my comments to whoever you feel is appropriate to commend Chris on his exemplary 'customer' service."

Traffic Engineering

"I found Judith to have very good interpersonal and communication skills, in particular active listening. She was patiently able to hear the views and needs from both mum and I and to help us to provide a balanced view on how to maximise the care from the carers, with whom mum has a very good relationship. Mum reported that she is very happy with the outcome and feels empowered as a result"

Adult Social Care

"I would appreciate it you would also pass on my thanks to Sally. She was understanding, patient and helpful when I was explaining my frustrations"

Customer Contact Centre

"I was recently assessed to be a family and friends foster carer by Sophie. My family had recently been through a very traumatic experience, and we were nervous about being assessed. Sophie treated us with respect and dignity throughout the assessment, she took the time to listen to me and gave me a safe space to express my thoughts."

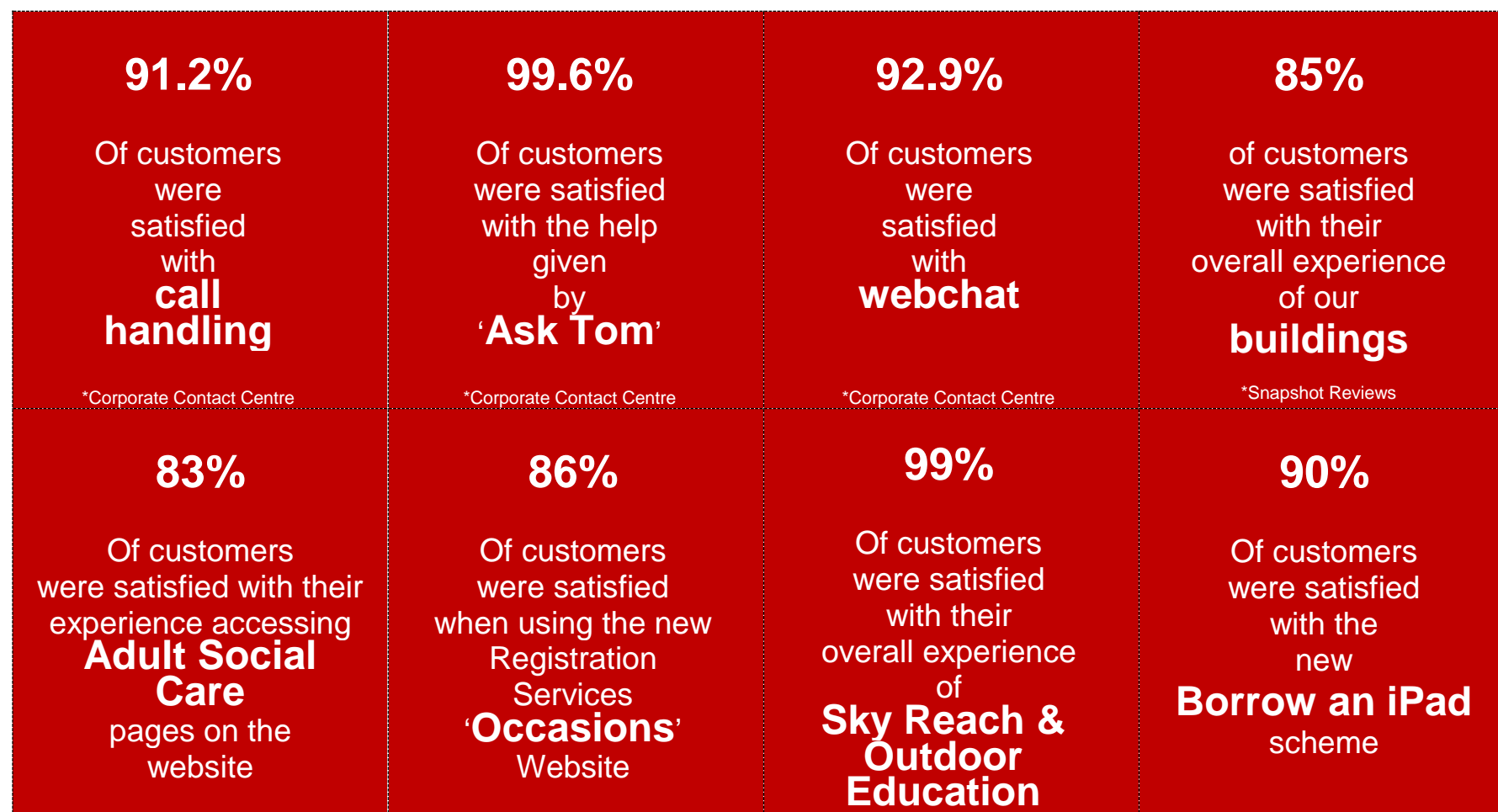
Fostering - Family & Friends

"We have worked with several local authorities, schools and children's residential care companies and I can honestly say I have yet to meet someone with the same drive and passion as Michelle has. So I wanted to say, Thank you for everything you do Michelle. Everything you put your hand to just goes so well and has such an impact. I only hope that Telford knows how lucky they are to have such a child centred, hardworking employee."

Virtual School

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 2022/23 include:



The Customer Insight Programme now has 186 volunteers who have registered with us as Mystery Customers in order to undertake assignments. We have seen a 6% increase in volunteers during 2022/23, this is not as much of an increase experienced in previous years however the team hope to complete further recruiting activity in the coming year.



“Overall a positive experience can only be an easy way of doing things for all concerned.”

In January 2022 Snapshot reviews were launched which are designed to gain insight into the initial look and feel of our buildings and the impression that this gives to our customers. 23 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. Insight provided both positive feedback and improvement opportunities which were reported to each service area in a report with recommendations.

94% of customers said that the location was accessible for customers of all needs, lifts were in operation, clean, easy to locate with available staff to help.

94% of customers said that staff were visible, well presented and provided excellent customer service.

94% of customers felt they were Covid safe in our buildings.

Recommendations were made and implemented for example Mystery Customers commented that both Darby and Addenbrooke House receptions were found to have poster glue residue on the exterior windows, this has been removed.

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.



“The staff were really passionate about their work and highly knowledgeable. Outstanding customer service confident and friendly.”

Usability Testing

Alongside the Snapshot reviews the programme has also completed further digital reviews this included Mystery Customers testing the Adult Social Care pages on the website. They also had opportunity to review the newly launched Registration Services 'Occasions' website. These online reviews and user ability testing were taken up positively by Mystery Customers and provide actionable insights that improves digital access to the Council. Mystery Customers also tested the 'Borrow an iPad' scheme at Southwater One Library, this scheme received positive feedback with some Mystery Customers requesting for it to be available in other Libraries. This scheme is now available at other libraries across the borough.

Testing was also carried out on how easy it was for our customers to contact us using Text Relay services, this piece of work identified that some of the branching options on the corporate contact centre telephones could be improved to ensure that customers could have an improved experience.

84 assignments have been completed across the Customer Insight programme since April 2022

QR Code Satisfaction Surveys

Since April 2021, posters have been located in all front facing buildings asking our customers to comment on the service and experience that they receive. 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. Any comments received as part of these surveys are shared with services instantly so they can consider if improvements can be made.

87% of customers were satisfied with the service provided at these locations during 2022/23 a 10% increase from 2021/2022

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 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 2022/23 and the actions that we have taken as a result.

You said	We did
Customers attempting to contact the number on the website for Telford Business Services found their call directed to Adult Social Care Services.	This has been rectified on the website. All calls for the Telford Business Service are now received directly.
A customer looking for work experience for their child for July 2023 found that the dates on our website were not up to date.	We have changed and updated the information on our website about work experience.
At Telford Ice Rink, it was identified that queues at busy times were obstructing both the entrances and customers trying to find out what was happening.	Feather banners are now in use to support queue management during busy periods.
A customer commented that Telford Ice Rink had no signs to indicate that lockers are available.	Signage is now in place for lockers.
A customer raised with us that the ceiling in Wellington and Civic Leisure Centre had holes and damp staining.	The ceiling tiles have been replaced with new ones
One of the hand dryers in the Horsehay Golf and Fitness Centre female toilets was damaged and had chipped paintwork.	This hand dryer has been replaced with a new one.
Signage for the reception was not being displayed professionally at the Woodlands Children and Family Centre.	The sign has been replaced with a new professional-looking one that includes the council logo.

A customer raised to us that there was no accessibility signage to help customers identify the ramps at Wellington and Civic Leisure Centre.	An accessibility sign is now located on site to direct customers to the ramp.
One of the accessibility buttons to open the external doors at Wellington Register office was reported not to be working.	The accessibility button has now been fixed.
Customers raised to us that the wall and garden next to Wellington Register Office appeared to be harbouring rubbish and that the area needed tidying-up.	We have put a new contract in place for maintenance of the plants and landscaping of the garden. Plants are tended-to every two months and the grounds are maintained every two weeks during the summer.
It was highlighted to us that the soap dispensers were empty across all the toilet sinks at Telford Ice Rink.	New soap dispensers have now been installed and stocked.
Customers raised to us that the accessibility button at the Telford Town Park Visitor Centre only opened one of the doors into the building.	The button has been fixed and now opens both doors.
A customer contacted us to say that they were struggling to get through to the Transport team as their phone lines were only open between 11am and 1pm.	The telephone lines for the Transport team are now open from 9am to 3pm.

For further examples of You said, We did please visit www.telford.gov.uk/yousaidwedid

Additional examples of improvements that have been made following complaints can be found from page 31 of this report.

Back to the Floor Programme

The Council's Customer Strategy was launched in January 2021, which included the aim for senior managers to go 'back to the floor' to observe customer experience first-hand, for example listening to calls in the corporate contact centre or working alongside staff and serving customers in front facing roles.

In terms of insight an employee is never as useful to an organisation as in their first week as they view services with a fresh pair of eyes. Insight can be eroded as you become familiar and used to the way a service works. It is an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the experience our customers are having when accessing services and improve the experience by acting on feedback received, prioritising quick wins and ensuring that longer-term actions feed into the Customer Strategy. It is also an opportunity to involve customers and employees in improving services. Senior managers arranged to complete one session over 6 months.

In June 2022, the Back to the Floor programme was launched, which saw the Senior Management Team visiting front facing services, which included.

- Independent Living Centre (ILC),
- Telford Theatre,
- Fleet Services,
- Revenues Services,
- Occupational Therapy,
- Private Sector Housing,
- Housing,
- Job Box,
- Education settings,
- Family Connect,
- Development Management
- Corporate Contact Centre (CCC)



Chief Executive, David Sidaway visiting the CCC

David Sidaway's session with the CCC, prompted all the wider Senior Management Team to attend a session with the CCC.

Some of the outcomes because of the piece of work include.

- There was a need to improve communication and the flow of information between the Customer Service Team and Library Team, so that they can handle first point enquiries efficiently.
- A quick win was to ensure that any calls from the Freephone at the libraries are automatically prioritised when received into the Corporate Contact Centre.
- Highlighted the importance of Occupational Therapists discussing and considering assistive and digital technology in every conversation.
- Highlighted the importance of how other teams can support with promotion and communication regarding the Independent Living Centre.
- Identified some areas of improvement for front of house and back of house at Telford Theatre. Importance of rotating marketing items and plan a regular walk through of the venue from a customer viewpoint.
- Highlighted the volume of emails received into the contact centre and the need to explore if other access channels for customers are promoted so that customers are aware of the appropriate self-service channels. Further communication has commenced regarding self-service such as My Telford and Ask Tom.
- Observed how the application of thresholds for the Family Connect calls was applied to the increased volumes received into the service since the pandemic. Thresholds are being reviewed to ensure that the team are looking at the right contacts and not having to spend considerable time on screening.
- Identified that communication within educational settings was a key theme in the feedback, as a result the Education noticeboard has been revised and this has had a positive impact.



Executive Director, Angie Astley visiting the ILC



ICS Business Benchmarking and ServCheck

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 Business Benchmarking survey in June 2022, asking our customers about their experiences, some of the key results from survey are detailed 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 must 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 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.

In December 2022, a workforce survey (ServCheck) was completed which sought to measure our workforce's engagement with our customer strategy, culture and processes. The results of this survey were benchmarked with other organisations in the Local Government Sector, which includes local Fire Services, Ambulance Services, Police Services and Councils. Some of the key results from the survey are detailed below;

ServCheck Index Score:

75.1

This is a strong score for the Council's first workforce survey, particularly when compared to the average for other local government sector organisations, which is 70.28. The average for all sector organisations across the UK is 77.45, this includes organisations such as Amazon, Pets at Home and Jet2.

Strategy & Culture: Credibility Score:

80.3

This is another strong score for a first workforce survey, particularly when compared to the average for other Local Government Sectors, which was 71.9. We have also exceeded the average for all sector organisations who achieved an average score of 79.3.

Key responses from our workforce;

"Our organisation has a vision, a mission and goals that encourage and deliver great customer service"

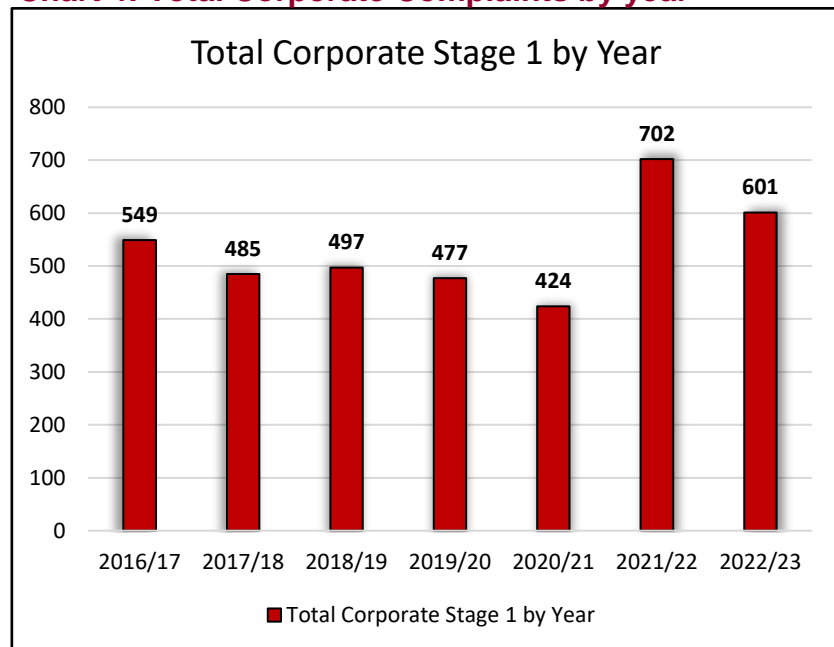


"The Directors/Senior Managers believe that great customer service is extremely important to our business performance"

Corporate Stage One Complaints 2022/23

In the year 2022/23, there were 601 corporate Stage One complaints (those dealt with by more than one service simultaneously are counted as a single complaint) from 584 complainants. This is a decrease on the number received in 2021/22 (702)

Chart 4: Total Corporate Complaints by year



Of these 601 complaints, 44 were escalated to Stage Two of our procedure and 17 corporate complaints were the subject of Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) enquiries (please note that some of these may have been for Stage One complaints prior to 2022/23). 8 corporate complaints subject to enquiries resulted in detailed investigations, please note that four of these remained outstanding with the LGSCO on 31 March 2022.

There has been a decrease in Stage Two complaints received this year from the 57 in 2021/22 to 44.

Stage	Number of complaints
One	601
Two	44
LGSCO	17

For further information regarding Stage Two complaints, please see page 29.

For further information regarding Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman enquiries, please see page 34.

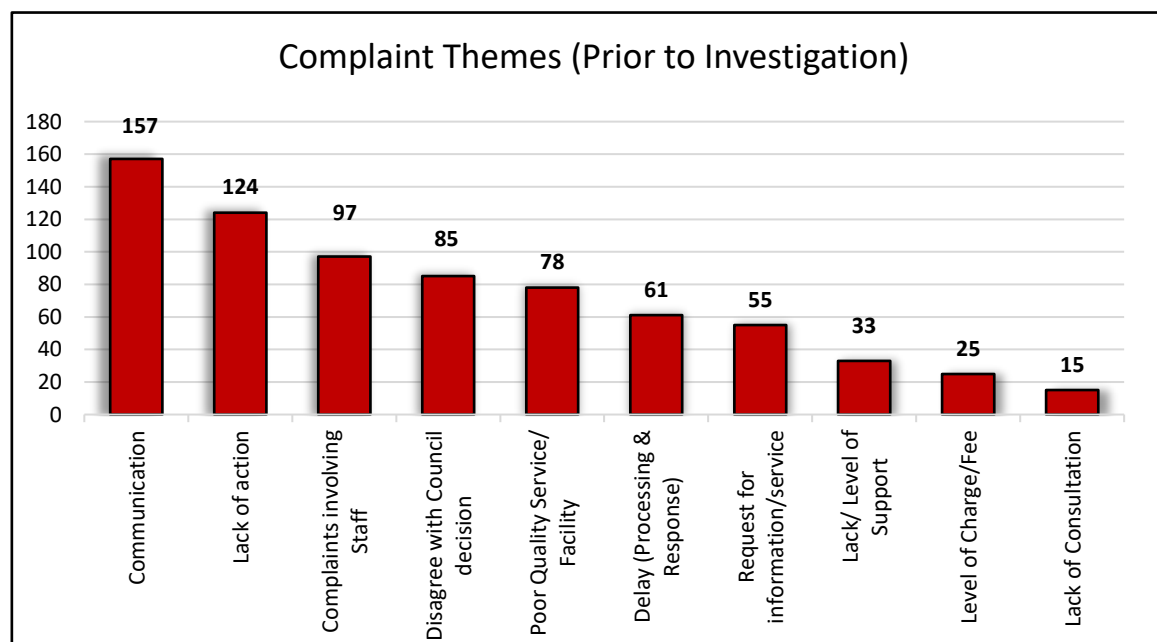
Customer Access Channels and Digital Contact (Stage One Corporate Complaints):

Complaint channel	Number of complaints
Email	319
Web form	110
Telephone	150
Letter	22
Total	601

In 2022/23, 71% 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. This is a 4% increase on the 67% in 2021/22. Indicating that more customers are accessing the team via digital channels.

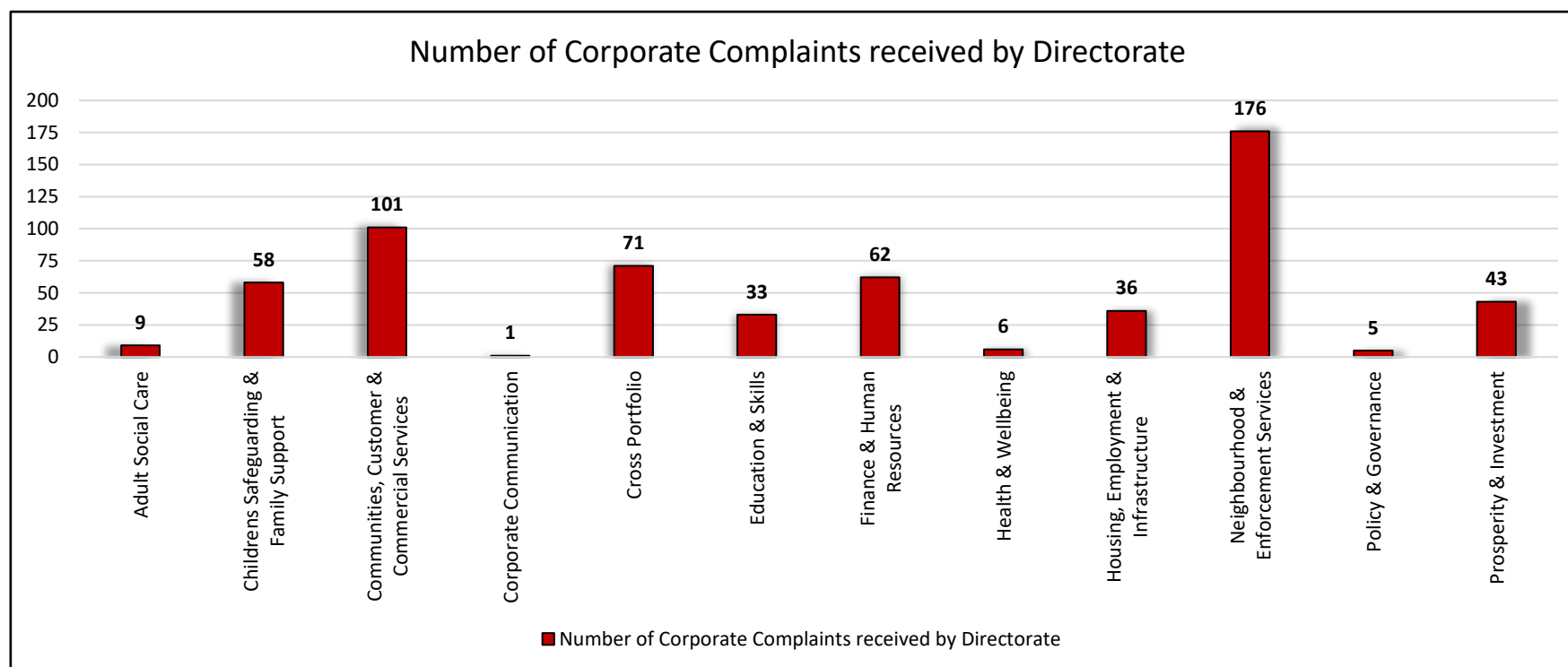
Complaint Themes:

Chart 5: Corporate complaint themes 2022/23



This chart shows the top 10 complaint themes for 2022/23. This is compiled from all complaints received prior to investigation. Further analysis of upheld themes can be found later in this report at page 24.

Communication and Lack of action accounted for the majority of complaints received, representing an element of 47% of the complaints.

Chart 6: Number of Corporate Complaints received by directorate

Complaints have decreased across the many of the directorates with Health & Wellbeing, Children’s Safeguarding & Family Support, Finance & Human Resources, Prosperity and Investment, and Housing, Employment & Infrastructure being the exceptions. The Directorate that received the highest number of complaints was Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services (176). This however is a significant decrease on the number received in 2021/22 (229). 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 by Communities, Customer & Commercial Services (101) this again is a reduction on the number received in 2021/22 (119). Complaints received represent a small percentage against the volume of interactions across this directorate and the council as a whole.

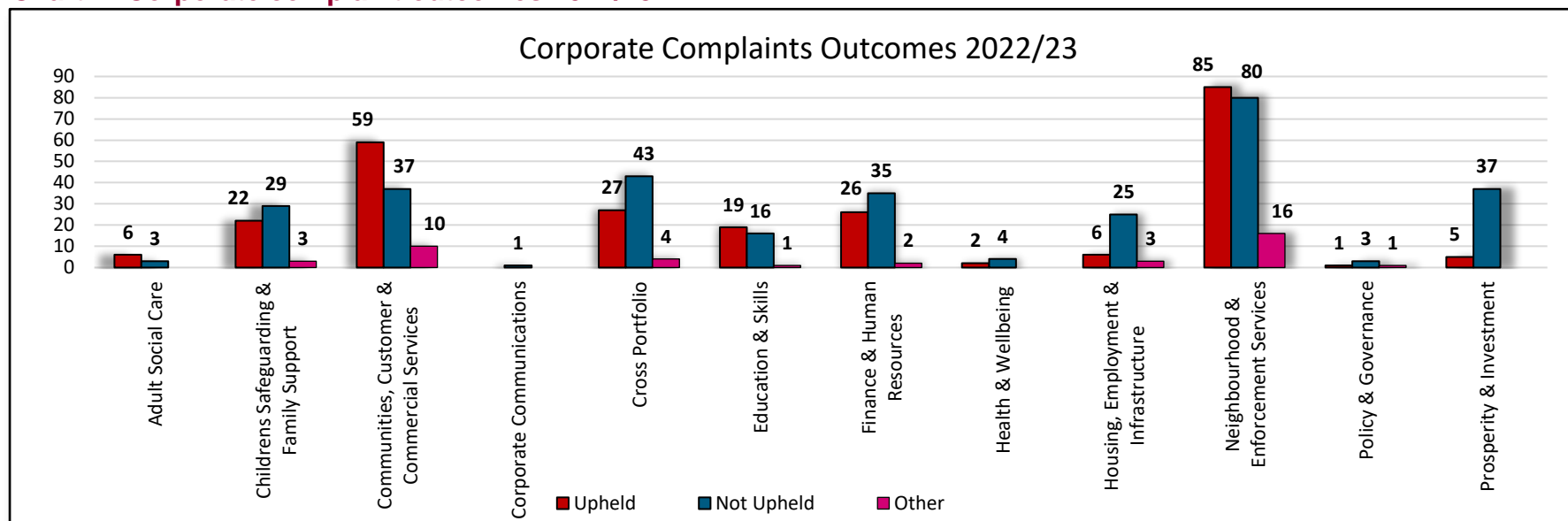
Stage One Complaint outcomes

Although 601 complaints were received in year, 611 have been responded to within the year the additional cases remained outstanding on 31 March 2022. Of the 611 Stage One complaints that have been responded to in the year, 42% (258) were upheld. This is where services acknowledged that they could have done better, it must be noted that this is a significant percentage reduction compared to the 51% (356) that were upheld in 2021/22. 51% (313) of Stage One complaints were not upheld and 7% (40) were either withdrawn, out of jurisdiction or resolved by the service.

The highest number of upheld complaints were in Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services (85) and Communities, Customer & Commercial Services (59) which is not unexpected given that these directorates responded to the highest number of complaints 106 and 181, respectively. The highest percentage of upheld complaints were in Adult Social Care (67%) which accounted for 6 complaints. The low number of corporate complaints received by Adult Social Care has impacted this percentage.

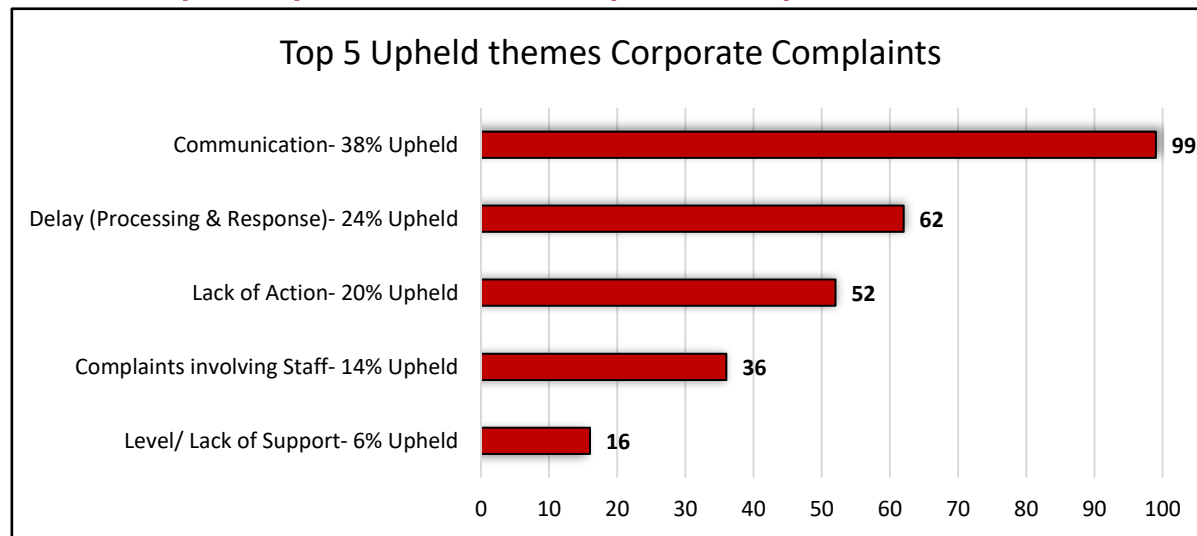
The outcomes by directorate can be seen in the following chart. This has been broken down into upheld, not upheld and other. 'Other' can include service resolved, dealt with through courts, out of jurisdiction or withdrawn.

Chart 7: Corporate complaint outcomes 2022/23



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

Chart 8: Top five upheld themes for corporate complaints



258 complaints were upheld, the top five themes being:

Communication was a theme within 38% of the complaints upheld, with the issue crossing many different services. 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. Most of these complaints received an explanation and apology. Reminders have been issued

to officers to ensure that they keep customers updated.

Delay (Processing & Response) was a theme within 24% of the complaints upheld. This issue crossed many different services focused on cases where there was a delay in information being sent which included reports for comments, minutes from meetings and certificates. A delay in responding to customer enquiries and processing some assessments/ accounts, paying invoices and arranging appointments. In the cases upheld an explanation and apology was given.

Lack of Action was a theme within 20% of the complaints upheld. Again, this issue crossed many different services focused and cover cases where no response or action was taken, and timescales had not been kept to. There were delays in completion of jobs which led to a perceived lack of action by contractors. Delays in processing and responding also resulted in a perceived lack of action. 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.

Complaints involving Staff was a theme with 14% of the complaints upheld, this is a reduction on the 18% in this theme for 2021/22. Complaints naming staff covers a variety of concerns, including a lack of support from individual officers, how a member of staff spoke to a customer and the general behaviour of staff, whether face-to-face or over the phone, poor timekeeping and where staff actions fell short of our expectations. There were some upheld issues highlighted for the Council's contractors, which included obstructive parking. 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.

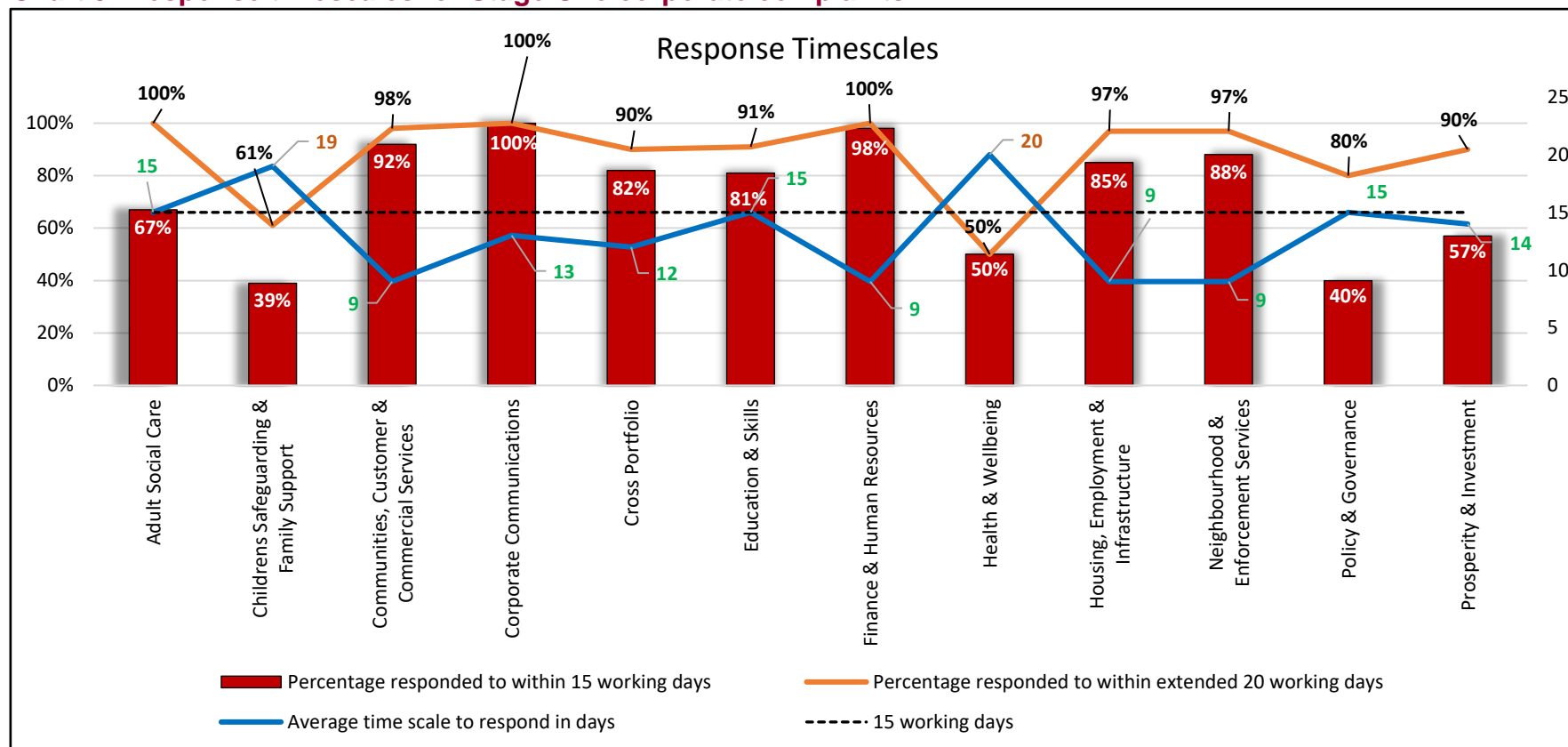
Lack/level of Support was a theme within 6% of the complaints upheld. Again, this issue crossed many different services; and related to a number of differing issues including workers absence resulting in lack of support, lack of financial support, failure to signpost customers to appropriate services, failure in worker transition and support, and failure to support customers accessing services. In the cases upheld an explanation and apology were given.

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 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 2022/23 the Council has managed to respond to corporate complaints in an average of 11 days, which is well within the 15 working day timescale and an improvement on the 12 days achieved in 2021/22.

80% of complaints were responded to within the 15 working day timescale, broadly in line with the 81% achieved in 2021/22.

Our local target is to respond to 90% of corporate complaints within 15 working days, we will continue to work towards this target. Finance & Human Resources, Communities, Customer & Commercial Services and Corporate Communications met this target during the year.

Other directorates also saw an improvement in their percentage responded to within 15 working days and the average working days to respond across the year. Adult Social Care saw a broadly consistent average number of days to respond of 15 working days from 14 days in 2021/22 again increasing the percentage responded to in 15 working days from 62% to 67% this year, demonstrating continuous improvement over three reporting years.

However, Children's Safeguarding and Family Support has seen an increase in timescale to 19 working days returning to the average for 2020/21 from the 15 days in 2021/22. There has also been a decrease in the percentage responded to within 15 working days from 61% to 39% in the year. The timescales and percentages were impacted by a number of complex cases that took time to investigate and provide a comprehensive response covering all aspects raised. The service continues to monitor timescales and will be exploring how improvements can be achieved in Quality Assurance Meetings.

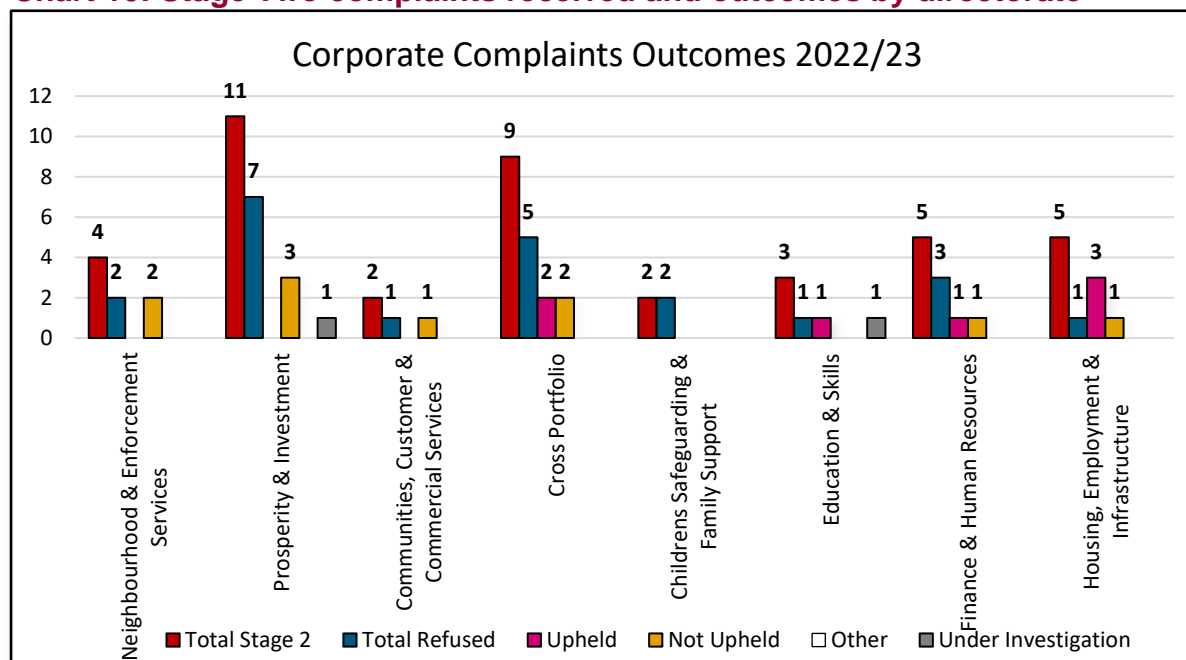
Likewise, the percentage of responses sent within 15 working days for Policy and Governance also reduced in year from 65% in 2021/22 to 40% in 2022/23. These percentages however were impacted by the low number of complaints received and some complex cases that took some time to investigate and respond to.

It must be noted that the average number of days to respond across all directorates did not exceed the extended timescale of 20 working days. In addition to this more directorates had achieved over 80% of responses being sent within 15 working days, when compared to 2021/22.

Corporate Stage Two complaints

During 2022/23, 41 Corporate Stage One complaints progressed to Stage Two of the process. This represents a decrease on the 57 that progressed in 2021/22. There are two stage two corporate complaints that are still under investigation.

Chart 10: Stage Two complaints received and outcomes by directorate



A higher volume of Stage Two complaints was seen in Prosperity & Investment (11). Four of the cross portfolio cases were also related to Prosperity and Investment.

There has been a significant decrease in the volume of Stage Two complaints for Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services in 2022/23 from 12 in 2021/22 to four in year. Likewise for Children's Safeguarding and Family Support reducing to two, down from 6 in 2021/22. Three of the Cross Portfolio complaints related to Neighbourhood & Enforcement

Services, and two related to Children's Safeguarding.

Adult Social Care, Corporate Communication, Health & Wellbeing, and Policy & Governance had no complaints escalated to Stage Two in 2022/23, they are therefore not detailed in Chart 10. However, Policy & Governance had elements associated with two Cross Portfolio Complaints.

Out of the 41 complaints, it was considered that 22 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 16 working days and the customer advised to approach the Local Government Ombudsman if they remained dissatisfied. The aim is to respond to Stage Two escalation requests within 10 working days, so the average is outside of this timescale. This figure has been affected by the complexity of these complaints, a number of complaints being received at the same time and requirement for further information to complete the review.

Of the 41 Stage Two corporate complaints, 19 resulted in full investigations, compared to the 36 investigated in 2021/22. 17% of full investigations were upheld. It took an average of 28 working days to complete a full investigation. This is a decrease on the 41 days taken in 2021/22. This figure is also still within the extended timescale of 65 working days as outlined within 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 improve the experience of others.

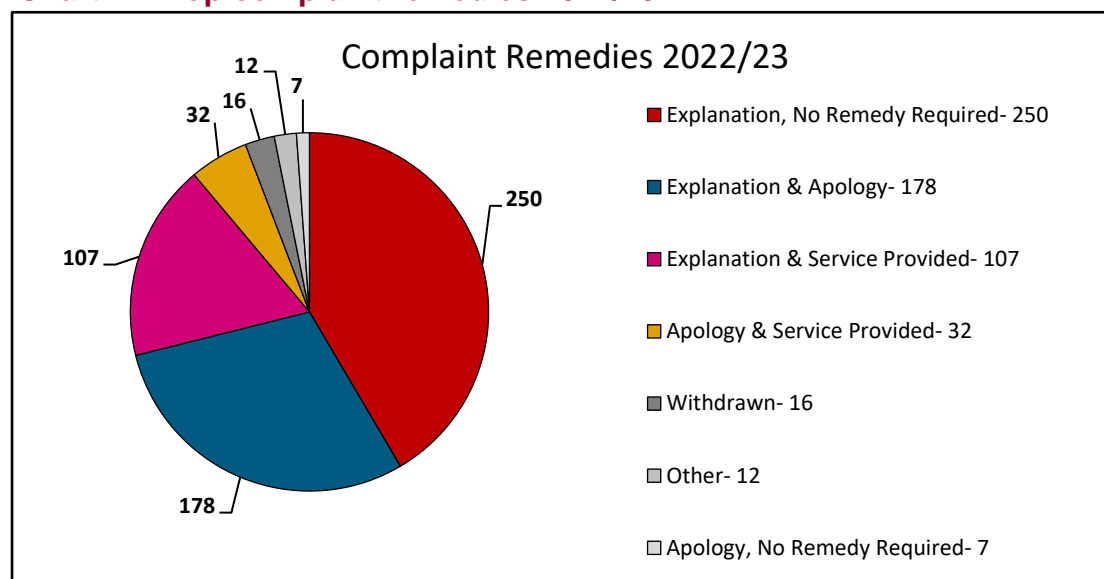
Lessons can usually be learned from complaints that were upheld, but also in some instances where no fault was found but the Council recognises that improvements to services can still be made.

Occasionally, during 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 residents receive the best possible service from the Council.

Remedial actions taken from resolve complaints at Stage One in 2022/23

All 258 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 2022/23

Of the remedies recorded against corporate complaints in 2022/23:

- 41% were to provide an explanation and no remedy was required
- 29% were to provide an explanation and an apology
- 18% were to provide an explanation and a service was provided
- 5% were to provide an apology and a service was provided

Positive Improvements

Throughout the year, we record the learning identified from each complaint 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:

- Communication and timekeeping issues have been addressed with instructors, and coordinators will provide a timelier update to parents if there are any problems
- Procedures at Telford Theatre have been amended to remind bookings not to encourage customers to stand until the end of the show
- Procedures related to TLC cards have been reviewed at Leisure Centres

- Review of procedure on how to manage the swim bands at Oakengates swimming pool to reduce potential risks going forward
- The end to end Fly tip process has been reviewed and additional training has been provided to our contractors
- Technical issues with the MyTelford application have been resolved
- Any swimming classes that now fall on a bank holiday will have the day credited back to their accounts so that customers are not penalised for having swimming class on any bank holidays in the calendar year
- Liaison has taken place between the legal team and other officers to ensure a two way understanding of roles and responsibilities in respect of assessments, consents to data sharing and the requirements of the court
 - Cubicles have been reviewed at Abraham Darby Leisure Centre to ensure that all defects are recorded for fixing or replacement
 - There is now a full catering offer available at the 19th Hole Bar and Restaurant at Lawley and Horsehay Village Golf and Fitness Centre
 - Collection crews have been reminded that they should not be collecting at school pick up and drop off times
 - Pool timetables have been reviewed at Wellington Leisure Centre to ensure there is a break in-between public swimming and swimming lessons, so that there is a clear separation between lessons
- The Council Tax direct debit Reminder text message wording has been revised to be more customer centric
- Transport team have developed a new system for transport cases where parents and carers can provide feedback about arrangements prior to approval

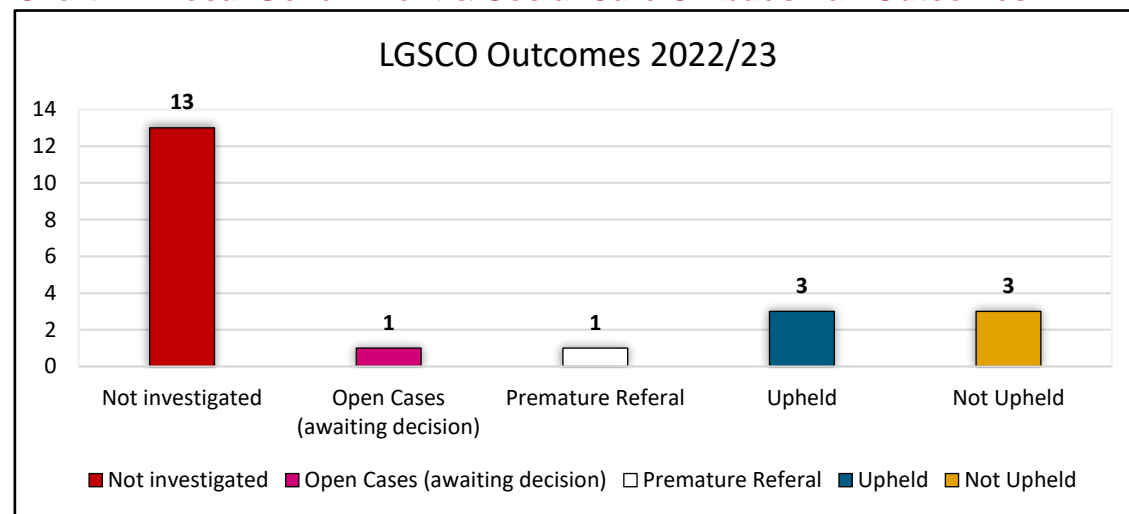
“I would like to express my appreciation of the diligent and understanding way in which you dealt with my complaint.”

“thank you so very much for being so understanding and really listening to what we had to say, ... you have so much empathy and compassion.”

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 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 19 enquiries were forwarded to the LGSCO. Two enquiries related to statutory complaints which are detailed in the Adult Statutory and Children's Statutory Complaint Reports. One statutory complaint remained outstanding form 2021/22.

Chart 12: Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Outcomes



Of the 17 corporate complaint enquiries, one remains open awaiting a decision. Four decisions remained outstanding on 31 March 2022, these decisions were received in the year and are included in the figures detailed in chart 12.

The Local Government Ombudsman undertook 8 detailed investigations into corporate complaints, four of which were in respect of complaints escalated in 2021/22. Of the 9 detailed investigations of these three were upheld. Three detailed investigations into corporate complaints

were 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.

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 2023/24

During 2023/24, the Customer Relationship team will focus on a number of key priorities:

- Continue to roll out the Customer Insight Programme 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 80% 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
- Develop a bespoke online complaint handling course
- 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 further Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman complaint training for managers
- Work with the Institute of Customer Service to further improve our customers' experience.