

Appendix A- Corporate Feedback Report

Improving our Customer Experience

Annual Report 2023/24

Contents

Report Summary.....	3
Highlights 2023/24.....	5
Purpose of the report.....	6
Background.....	6
MP/Leader/Cabinet and Member Enquiries.....	9
Compliments.....	10
Customer Insight Programme	13
You said, We did.....	16
Corporate Stage One Complaints 2023/24.....	18
Stage One Complaint Outcomes.....	21
Timescales for responses at Stage One.....	25
Corporate Stage Two complaints in 2023/24.....	27
Learning and outcomes from Corporate Complaints.....	29
Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman enquiries.....	33
Office for Local Government (OFLOG) Metrics.....	34
Complaints from Council Tenants.....	35
Oversight and support provided by the Customer Relationship team.....	36
Customer Relationship team priorities for 2024/25.....	37

Report summary

This year has seen continued challenges both for the Council and for our residents and customers, against the continued backdrop of the cost of living crisis which continues to put significant pressure on our residents and customers as they seek support. As a result, the Council continues to see significant demand and increased pressure on its services, particularly during times where swift mobilisation of financial support is 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 in 2023/24. Telford and Wrekin Council has seen a 120% increase in compliments in the last 5 years from 290 in 2019/20 to 639 in 2023/24 and a 13% increase since 2022/23 (566).

We have also seen an increase in the complaints received across the Council in 2023/24. Corporate complaints increasing from 601 in 2022/23, to 659 in the year, of which 42% were upheld. Complaints about council policy and anonymous complaints accounted for 2 complaints and 11 complaints, respectively. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman states that complaints should not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-published and accessible complaints procedure.

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 10.7 million bins during 2023/24, issued approximately 160,000 council tax bills, handled 212,074 calls to our Corporate Contact Centre, laid 68,000 metres of road markings, cleaned 14,000 gullies, surfaced 88,000 square meters of footpaths, filled 3,694 potholes, had 65,023 attendees at the theatre and welcomed approximately 3.2 million visitors to Telford.

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 from 11 working days to 10 working days. In addition, 87% of responses have been sent within the 15 working day timescale that applied in 2023/24, a 7% increase on the 80% achieved in 2022/23.

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 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. We aim to complete a further benchmarking survey in 2024/25 to measure our progress. The feedback from this survey will also be used to inform our new customer strategy which we will publish in 2024/25. More information regarding the actions completed and our Customer Strategy and updated Strategy can be found here www.telford.gov.uk/customerstrategyandcustomercontract.

During 2023/24 the Customer Insight Programme has seen a number of projects completed including a review of our website in relation to Cost of Living, Revenues and information about Parks, a physical review of our parks and a review of the Transport service. More information regarding this work can be found at page 12. The Customer Insight Programme now has 214 volunteers who have registered with us as Mystery Customers to undertake assignments. We have seen a further 15% increase in Mystery Customer volunteers during 2023/24.

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 the Independent Living Centre and our new Community Hubs. 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 16.

Highlights 2023/24

<p>Over 214 volunteers registered to be Mystery Customers</p>	<p>Average of 10 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>72 completed Mystery Customer assignments</p>	<p>87% of corporate complaints responded to in 15 working days</p>
<p>100% LGSCO* recommendations completed</p>	<p>A total of 639 Compliments received</p>	<p>13% increase in Compliments since 2022/23</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 2023 to 31 March 2024. 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 2023/24
2. The Children's Social Care Statutory Process, reported separately in the Children's Statutory Complaints Annual Report 2023/24
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:

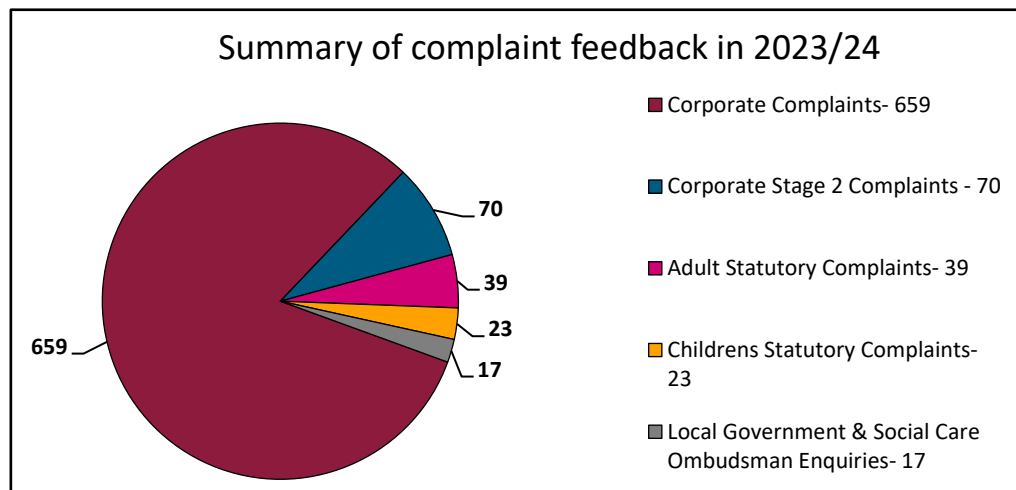
‘an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standards of service, action or lack of action or decisions taken by the Council, or the way in which council employees carry out their duties’

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 also not dealt with as complaints.

For more information regarding corporate complaints in 2023/24, please go to page 18 of this report.

The charts below show the feedback received by the Customer Relationship team in 2023/24:

Chart 1: Summary of complaint feedback in 2023/24

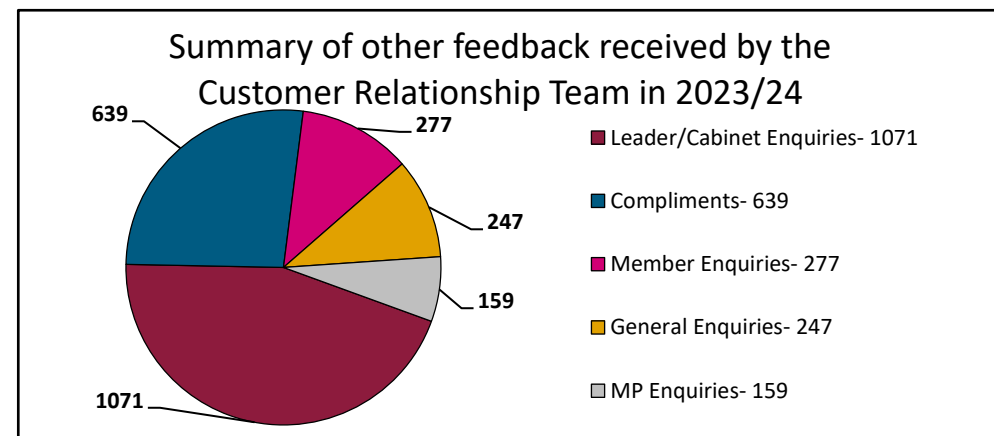


Our customers' behaviour continues to change, with more of them now contacting the team via digital methods such as emails and web forms, with 1,499 received in 2023/24, a 17% increase on the 1,281 in 2022/23. The team also took a total of 1,372 telephone calls over this period an 18% decrease on the 1,683 received in 2022/23. The volume of direct contacts from customers totalled 3,049 in 2023/24 a marginally in line with the 3,110 received in 2022/23¹. Separately, contacts from Councillors and MP's have continued to increase, with 1,507 received during the year compared to 1,132 in 2022/23, a 33% increase.

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 2023/24



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.

MP/ Leader/Cabinet and Member Enquiries

During 2023/24 the number of enquiries received from democratically elected members increased by 33%.

MP Enquiries:

We aim to respond to enquiries from MP's within 10 working days.

During 2023/24 a total of 159 MP enquiries were received. MP enquiries were responded to in an average of 8 working days.

Leader Enquiries:

A total of 525 enquiries were received from constituents via the Leader of the Council, Cllr Shaun Davies. The average number of days to respond to these enquiries was 3 days.

Cabinet Member Enquiries:

Enquiries from Cabinet Members amounted to 546. The average number of days to respond to these enquiries was 3 days.

Member Enquiries:

277 enquiries were received from Ward Members during 2023/24, these were responded to in an average of 5 days.

Compliments

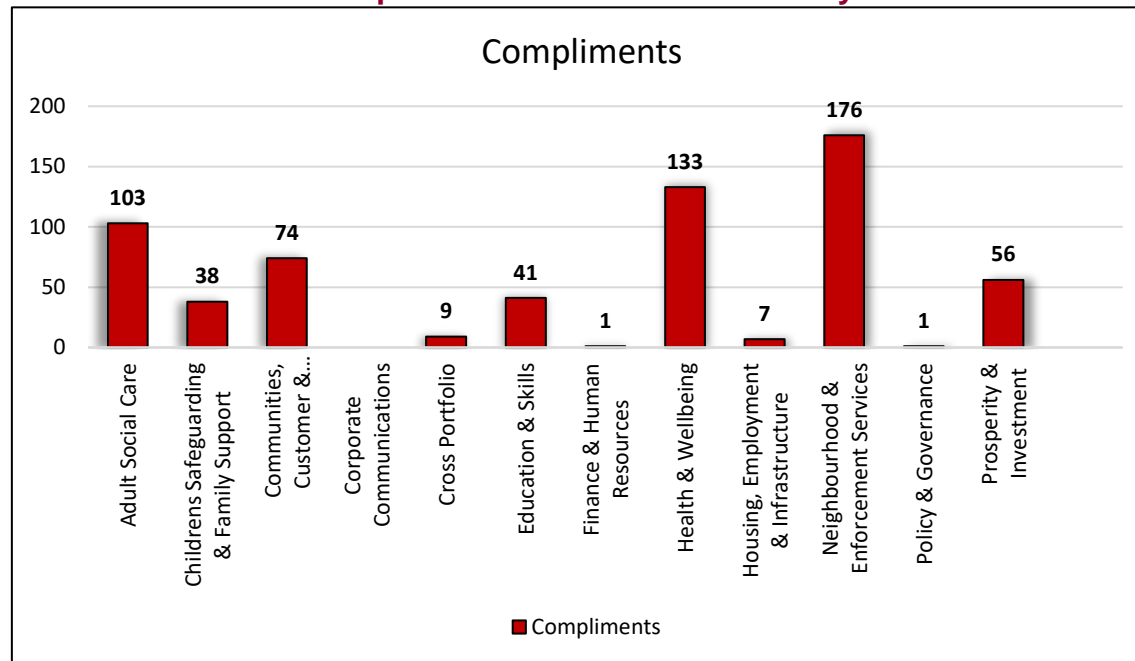
In 2023/24, there was a 13% increase in the number of compliments received. A total of 639 instances were received in 2023/24, an increase on the 566 received in 2022/23. Telford and Wrekin Council has seen a 120% increase in compliments from 290 in 2019/20 to 639 in 2023/24. Compliments are logged and copied to Directors and Line Managers. This is recognised at service level through team briefs/ meetings and individual 'one-to-ones'.

Where a member of staff has gone above and beyond they may be awarded a Chief Executive Commendation to celebrate their achievement. An excellent customer service is also celebrated at our annual Employee Awards. Some examples of where employees have gone above and beyond can be seen below;

Chief Executive Commendation	Chief Executive Commendation	Customer Care Award Winners 2023
<p data-bbox="248 692 815 1107">Following a customer collapsing and suffering a sudden cardiac arrest after a swimming activity, the staff on-site, along with an off-duty nurse, recognised quickly the customer was in Cardiac Arrest and began CPR almost immediately. Following a shock from the Leisure Centres Defibrillator, which had been applied almost immediately, the customer's heart was restarted.</p> <p data-bbox="371 1166 685 1193">Wellington Leisure Centre</p>	<p data-bbox="846 692 1435 1326">An elderly gentleman came into Darby House reception as he believed that's where his appointment was. The customer was deaf so had everything in writing in relation to the meeting but had got a bit confused. The team on reception were able to track down who the customer was meeting and identified that the meeting was at the Hub at Southwater. They attempted to give directions but soon realised that he needed further assistance so one of the Reception Team escorted the customer to the meeting ensuring that the customer arrived at the appointment correctly and waited with him until the person he was meeting with came down to greet him.</p> <p data-bbox="999 1385 1283 1412">Darby House Reception</p>	<p data-bbox="1467 692 2101 895">The Highways Capital Programme team deliver a large number of high value projects throughout the year and always manage to deliver these projects with limited impact and excellent customer services.</p> <p data-bbox="1467 906 2101 1412">One of the team's recent major projects was the regeneration of Market Street in Wellington which had the possibility of being extremely disruptive and of having a huge impact on residents and businesses in Wellington. This team went out of their way to meet face to face with residents, businesses and the Town Council to explain the proposals, listen to comments and make changes that looked to accommodate their needs. This meant they were fully aware of what was happening and were able to react to any concerns.</p>

The chart to the right highlights the compliments received for each directorate during 2023/24.

Chart 3: Number of compliments received in 2023/24 by directorate



This year, Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services (176) and Health & Wellbeing (133) received the most compliments. Both saw an increase on the number received the year before. Adult Social Care also saw a significant increase in compliments from 34 in 2022/23 to 103 in the year, 36 of which were for the community social work teams.

“Thank you for being so wonderful during these last few weeks. Your approach to the very difficult discussions we had with Mum were done with understanding, compassion and kindness but also honest and professional. Your approach has been client centred, putting Mums needs and wellbeing as the priority.”



Here are some examples of compliments received during the year:

"My Daughter went to Madeley Academy and found the bus stop shelter has been installed...On behalf of my family and other Madeley Academy students, Would like to thank you for such a wonderful support from your side / council side Please convey our sincere thanks for whoever has made this happen!"

Passenger Transport Team

A parent looking for a lost child came into Southwater One, child missing since early hours. Member of staff spots a child on the cameras, she thought a lone child in the rain loitering by the fountains was reason enough to check it out...Asked him his name and he confirmed he was the child, he agreed to come inside SW1 out of the rain and we sat him down and chatted with him while we called the parents. He didn't want any food or drink until the officer mentioned hot dogs and then he perked up so she rushed over to the stand and got him one and that kept him there long enough for the parents to come out...

To say the parents were extremely grateful is a huge understatement. It was exemplary that she spotted him in such poor weather conditions and then took swift action.

Neighbourhood Enforcement Team

"... You were friendly, approachable and very professional, always transparent when giving us the facts. You listened to our concerns and made sure the care assessment was a true reflection of my Mum's needs. Your communication was excellent and you kept us updated throughout the process. I feel you have achieved the best outcome for my Mum with the resources that you have. Your hard work and dedication is very much appreciated by my family."

Adult Social Care

"I would like to say a massive thank you to everyone involved in repairing our little road. Thank you again so much, my car will be happy again too"

Highways

"I just wanted to drop you a message to say you're amazing with you coming into my life and the kids life you brought me back to myself, and gave me so much confidence that I can achieve anything you have been amazing and whatever family you are helping hope they see how amazing you are, coming into my life was the best thing ever"

Strengthening Families

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 2023/24 include:



The Customer Insight Programme now has 214 volunteers who have registered with us as Mystery Customers to undertake assignments. We have seen a 15% increase in volunteers during 2023/24, this is a bigger increase than we have experienced in previous years and the team will continue to promote the recruitment of the programme in the coming year.

72 assignments have been completed across the Customer Insight programme since April 2023 with an **87%** satisfaction score overall.

Parks and Open Spaces

Our 'Parks' assignment completed in August 2023 had the most responses to date. The assignment consisted of three parts: Reviewing available information pre-visit, the visit, and reporting issues via MyTelford. Visits were made to Apley Wood, Dale End, Dawley, Hartshill, Bowring, Granville Country Park and Telford Town Park. We were overwhelmed with the general cross-section of participants, particularly those who have specific accessibility needs. We were also delighted with the insights shared through a case study who came to us through the Making It Real Board. Some of the quick wins included the removal of graffiti, clearing of rubbish, mending a broken fence and replacing broken and out of date notices and maps. Spelling mistakes online have been corrected and the website has been updated with better parking information and plans to include public transport.

Service have advised they will revisit budgets within the next 10 months to accommodate other recommendations such as installing handrails. Accessibility audits will also be completed for all parks within the next 12 months and websites will be updated accordingly.

96% of customers felt the park they visited was clean and well looked after

87% of customers advised the Parks were accessible.

87% of customers were satisfied with parking facilities

100% of customers considered the car parking facilities to be accessible to the park itself



“Generally the park is a very nice place to go with plenty of amenities which are well maintained”



“Very helpful nice people to talk with”

First Point Roadshows

In October 2023, we commenced our First Point Roadshow programme. This programme was introduced as an opportunity for our residents to access a face to face service to obtain advice, make enquiries, and raise issues and get help to access

services. Our aim was to visit each ward within 12 months, which was achieved by the end of March 2024. These sessions were widely promoted.

Digital Reviews – Cost of Living and Revenues

The Mystery Customer programme has also completed further digital reviews during the year, this included Mystery Customers testing the Cost of Living pages on our Telford & Wrekin website. As a Local Authority, we want to make sure that all our residents are aware of the help available and can easily access the information. Our aim was to identify any enhancements or improvements that could be made. Revenues also received a digital review this year and received recommendations which will be considered in the coming year. Mystery Customers with a varying degree of experience were invited to take part.

Transport Telephone Reviews

Mystery Customers also took part in an assignment during the year testing telephone access to the Transport Team. Customers tested access before and after a new contact centre was introduced. Mystery Customers will be asked to revisit this area in 2024/25 following some further improvements that have been made, to ensure that the access to this service continues to improve.

Real time Customer Feedback

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. All completed surveys are reviewed by services to identify any improvements that can be made. Any improvements are then detailed on our 'You said, We did' page, more information regarding this detailed below.

78% of customers were satisfied with the service provided at these locations during 2023/24

Satisfaction surveys are also now on our Contact Centre telephone lines, Ask Tom and web chat, satisfaction levels can be seen in the table on page 13.

*"Thanks for the info
really helpful,
amazing, good job."
(Ask Tom)*

*"Very quick and
helpful thank you"
(Web chat)*



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 2023/24 and the actions that we have taken as a result.

You said	We did
More than one customer asked if alcohol-free beer could be made available for purchase at Telford Theatre.	Telford Theatre now sells alcohol-free beer and lager.
Several customers indicated that they would like to see a tool on our website that could quickly answer common questions about Leisure Services.	Common enquiries regarding Leisure Services can now be answered by the council's digital assistant, Ask Tom .
The user-friendliness of our Leisure websites was being highlighted as a concern by customers in complaints.	Three new websites have been launched that have been reviewed by Mystery Customers and received a high-level of satisfaction from them.
A customer raised concerns about the condition of the showers at Oakengates Leisure Centre.	The showers have now been fixed and all remedial work is complete.
Some customers reported a delay in receiving death certificates by post.	Death certificates are now sent by First Class post.
Customers have raised concerns about queues at the bar during show intervals at Telford Theatre.	A new online ordering service has been introduced that allows customers to order their drinks before the show, which are then delivered to their seats. ²

² Please note that Telford Theatre is now closed until Winter 2026, this service will continue when it reopens.

Concerns were raised regarding a wildflower verge.	Our cutting regimes have been amended to ensure that flowers are maintained and not cut back.
Customers of our Healthy Lifestyle service have requested that appointments after 5pm be made available.	Extended and increased evening clinic hours are now available throughout the week, offering appointments for those that need them after 5pm.
Customers have enquired whether Leisure Services customers in receipt of a Personal Independence Payment could be made eligible for concessionary membership.	Our Concessionary Policy has been updated to include customers in receipt of a Personal Independence Payment.
Communal containers were being mixed with recycling and non-recyclable waste.	Service assessed communal containers and swapped them for more suitable ones. Veolia also completed engagement with residents of the area.
Wellington Civic and Leisure the health suite had a strong odour, and the spa pool was out of order.	The Health Suite smell has been addressed and the spa pool is in working order.
At Bowring Park, the information about the parking was not complete as it failed to mention the newer additional parking which is adjacent to the tennis courts	The website has now been updated to reflect this information
Southwater One Multi-storey carpark not accessible to WAV (Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle) due to height restrictions	More information has been added to the car park section e.g. height restrictions

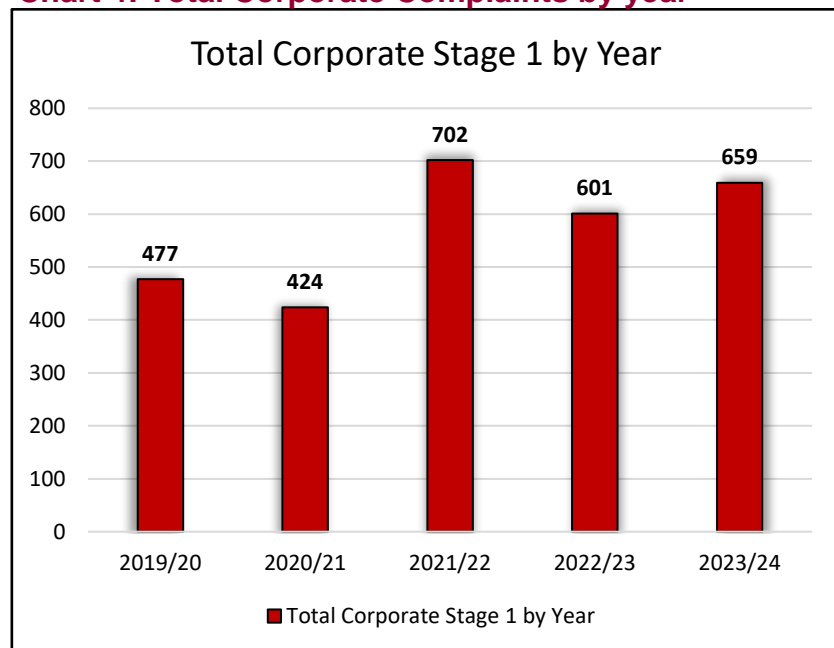
For further examples of 'You said, We did' please visit www.telford.gov.uk/yousaidwedid

Additional examples of improvements that have been made following complaints can be found from page 29 of this report.

Corporate Stage One Complaints 2023/24

In the year 2023/24, there were 659 corporate Stage One complaints (those dealt with by more than one service simultaneously are counted as a single complaint) from 619 complainants. This is an increase on the 601 received in 2022/23.

Chart 4: Total Corporate Complaints by year



Of these 659 complaints, 70 were escalated to Stage Two of our procedure and 12 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 2023/24). One corporate complaint was subject to a detailed investigation, two cases remained outstanding with the LGSCO on 31 March 2024. 9 cases were not investigated by the LGSCO.

There has been an increase in Stage Two complaints received this year from the 44 in 2022/23 to 70.

Stage	Number of complaints
One	659
Two	70
LGSCO	17

For further information regarding Stage Two complaints, please see page 27.

For further information regarding Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman enquiries, please see page 33.

During the year, 10 Stage 1 complaints were refused, this is because they were subject to court proceedings or a Tribunal process. One complaint was refused as it was related to historic matters.

32 further complaints were refused because they were for other organisations, these complaints were appropriately signposted.

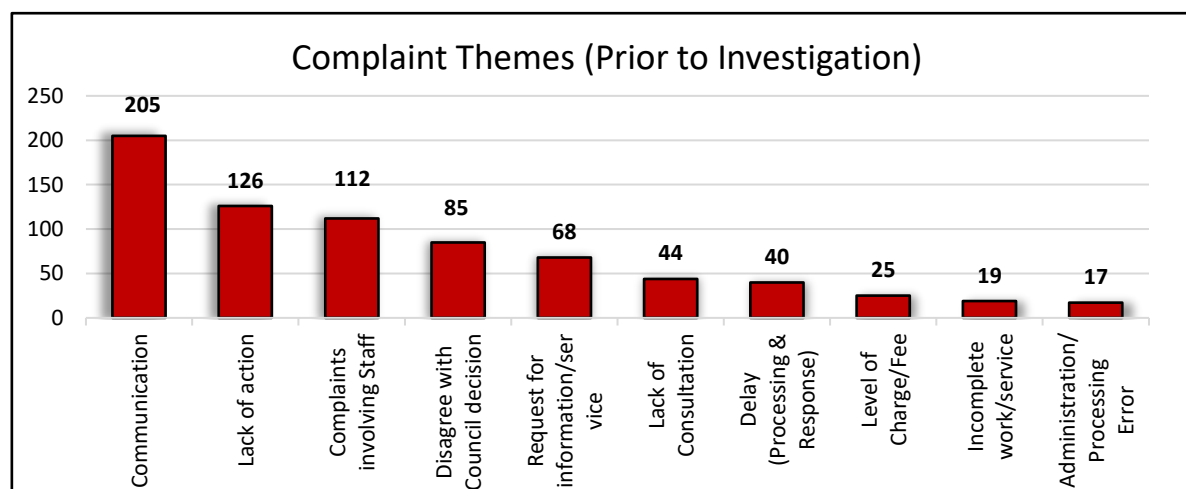
Customer Access Channels and Digital Contact (Stage One Corporate Complaints):

Complaint channel	Number of complaints
Email	215
Web form	275
Telephone	157
Letter	11
In Person	1
Total	659

In 2023/24, 74% 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 3% increase on the 71% in 2021/22, indicating that more customers continue are accessing the team via digital channels.

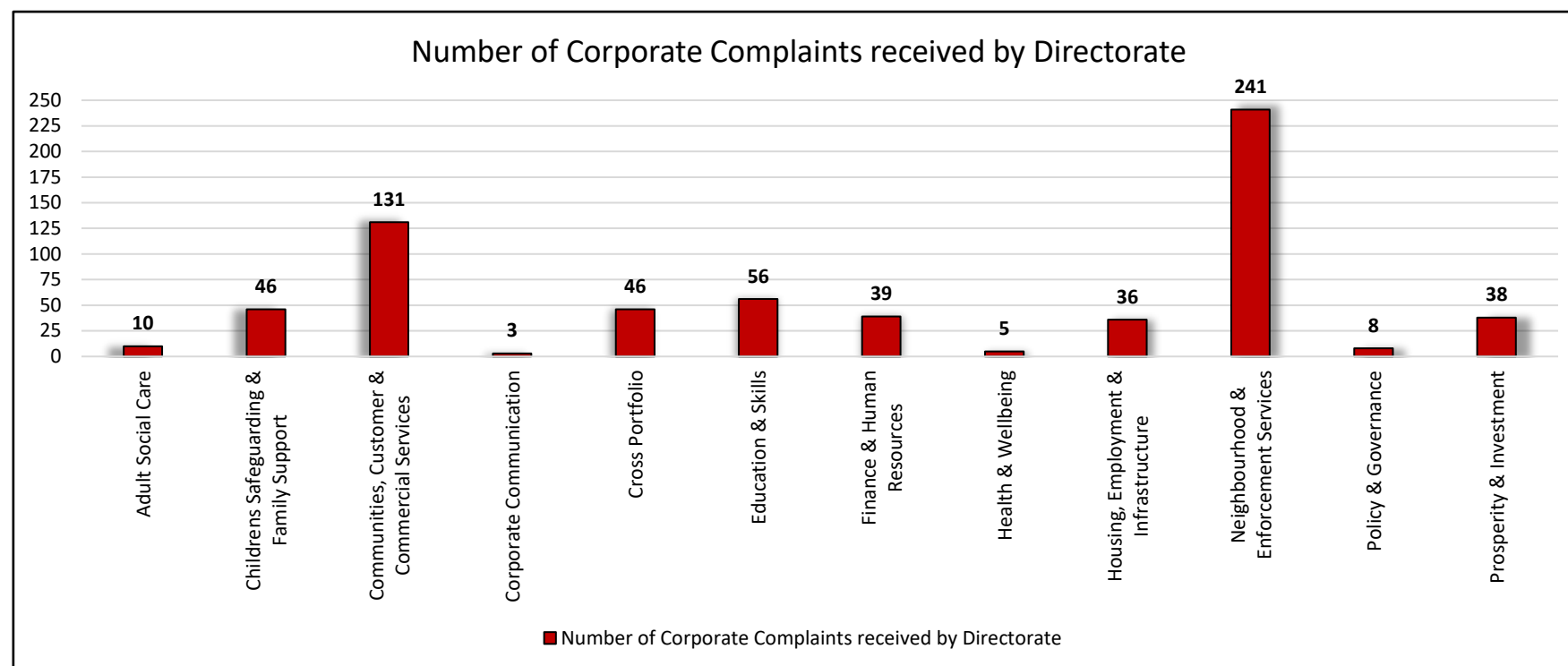
Complaint Themes:

Chart 5: Corporate complaint themes 2023/24



This chart shows the top 10 complaint themes for 2023/24. This is compiled from all complaints received prior to investigation. Please note that some complaints may have multiple themes and may even have some themes that are the same across a number of teams. Communication and lack of action accounted for the majority of complaint themes, representing 30% of all issues raised.

We have a complaint policy for Complaints involving Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). During 2023/24 no complaints were received and handled under this policy. From May 2024 the Policy and procedure for these cases has been combined into one corporate complaint procedure. For more information please see our reference guide on 'How we respond to complaints involving Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)' which can be found here [Complaints procedures - Telford & Wrekin Council](#). Further analysis of upheld themes can be found later in this report at page 22.

Chart 6: Number of Corporate Complaints received by directorate

Complaints have decreased across Children’s Safeguarding & Family Support, Prosperity & Investment and Finance & Human Resources. However, in the main there was an increase in complaints, the highest number of complaints was for Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services (214) with a 22% increase on the number received in 2022/23 (176). 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 (131) a 30% increase on the number received in 2022/23 (101). Education & Skills was a 70% increase in complaints during the year (56) compared with the 33 received in 2022/23. However, complaints received represent a small percentage against the volume of interactions across the directorates and the council as a whole.

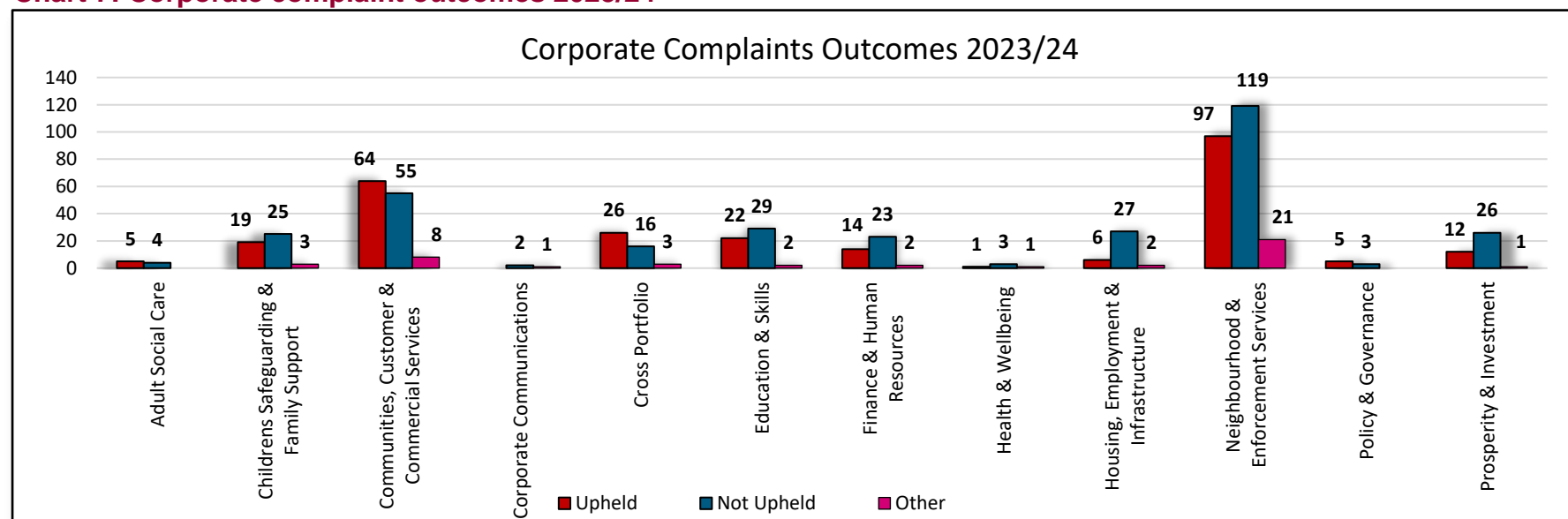
Stage One Complaint outcomes

Although 659 complaints were received in year, 647 have been responded to within the year. The additional cases remained in progress on 31 March 2023. Of the 647 Stage One complaints that have been responded to in the year, 42% (271) were upheld. This is where services acknowledged that they could have done better, and this figure is in line with the 42% of upheld in 2022/23. 51% (332) of Stage One complaints were not upheld and 7% (44) were either withdrawn, dealt with through courts, resolved by the service.

The highest number of upheld complaints were in Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services (97) accounting for 41% upheld and Communities, Customer & Commercial Services (64) which accounted for 50% upheld. This is not unexpected given that these directorates responded to the highest number of complaints. The highest percentage of upheld complaints were in Policy and Governance (63%) which accounted for 5 complaints.

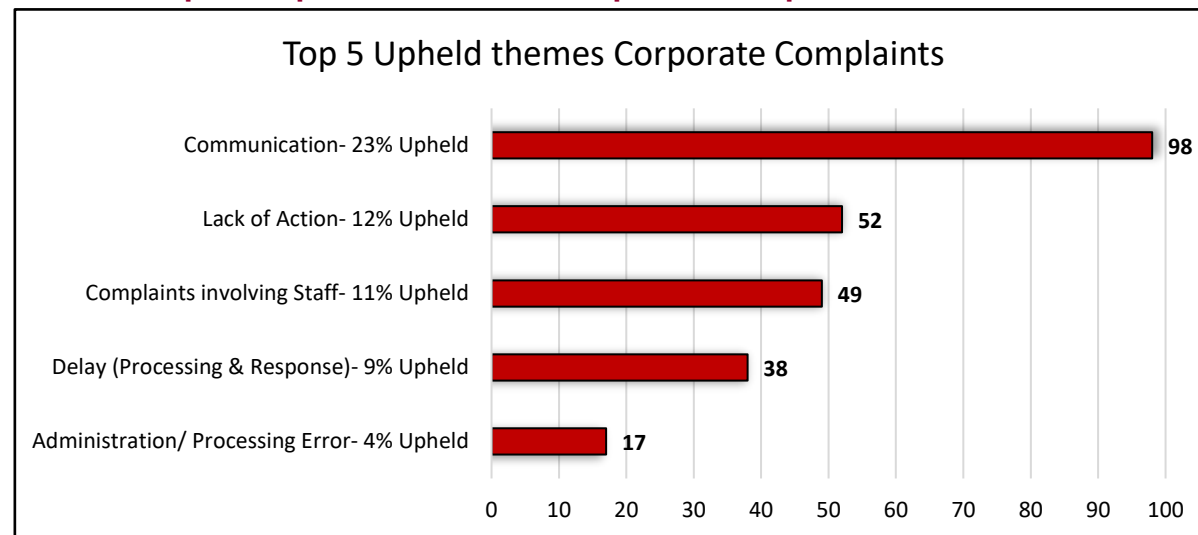
The outcomes by directorate can be seen in the following chart. This has been broken down into upheld, not upheld and other. 'Other' can include service resolved, dealt with through courts, out of jurisdiction or withdrawn.

Chart 7: Corporate complaint outcomes 2023/24



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

Chart 8: Top five upheld themes for corporate complaints



258 complaints were upheld, some complaints had multiple issues. Across the upheld complaints there were 434 upheld issues.

Please note: For the purpose of this report the percentages upheld is displayed as a percentage of the upheld issues 434.

The top five upheld themes include:

Communication was a theme within 23% of the complaints upheld, a reduction on the 38% in 2022/23, 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, or officers unable to attending meetings
- Call backs not being completed
- It also included failure to communicate full information around procedures and processes
- Communication in a timelier manner
- Lack of communication around changes to services or issues affecting services.
- Incorrect information provided
- Failure to update customers on outcomes of decisions.

Reminders have been issued to officers to ensure that they keep customers updated, services have also made changes to procedures around keeping customers updated. Most of these complaints received an explanation and apology.

Lack of Action was a theme within 12% of the complaints upheld, a reduction on the 20% in 2022/23. This issue crossed many different services and covered cases where;

- No response or action was taken,
- Timescales had not been kept to and records were not updated as per processes.
- Delays in processing and responding also resulted in a perceived lack of action.
- There were delays in completion of jobs by contractors and instances where jobs had been closed incorrectly 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. Issues with contractors have been picked up via contract management processes.

Complaints involving Staff was a theme with 11% of the complaints upheld, this is a reduction on the 14% in 2022/23 and a sustained reduction over the last 3 years in this theme since 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 have been picked up via contract management processes. Issues were also raised relating to driver actions in relation to buses. In the cases upheld, an apology was given, and actions to prevent a repeat of the incident undertaken.

Delay (Processing & Response) was a theme within 9% of the complaints upheld this is a reduction on the 24% in 2022/23. 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, processing some assessments/ accounts, payments for support, paying invoices and arranging appointments.

- There were some delays in passing information between teams under processes which led to a delay for the customers.

In the cases upheld an explanation and apology was given.

Processing/ Administrative Error was a theme within 4% of the complaints upheld. This issue crossed many different services; and related to a number of differing issues including errors updating systems, which impacted customers, such as;

- Incorrect figures used in assessments
- Failure to close records
- Failure to update notes
- Errors transferring records/ memberships
- Assessment start/ end dates
- Incorrect discounts applied and
- Information missing in documents.

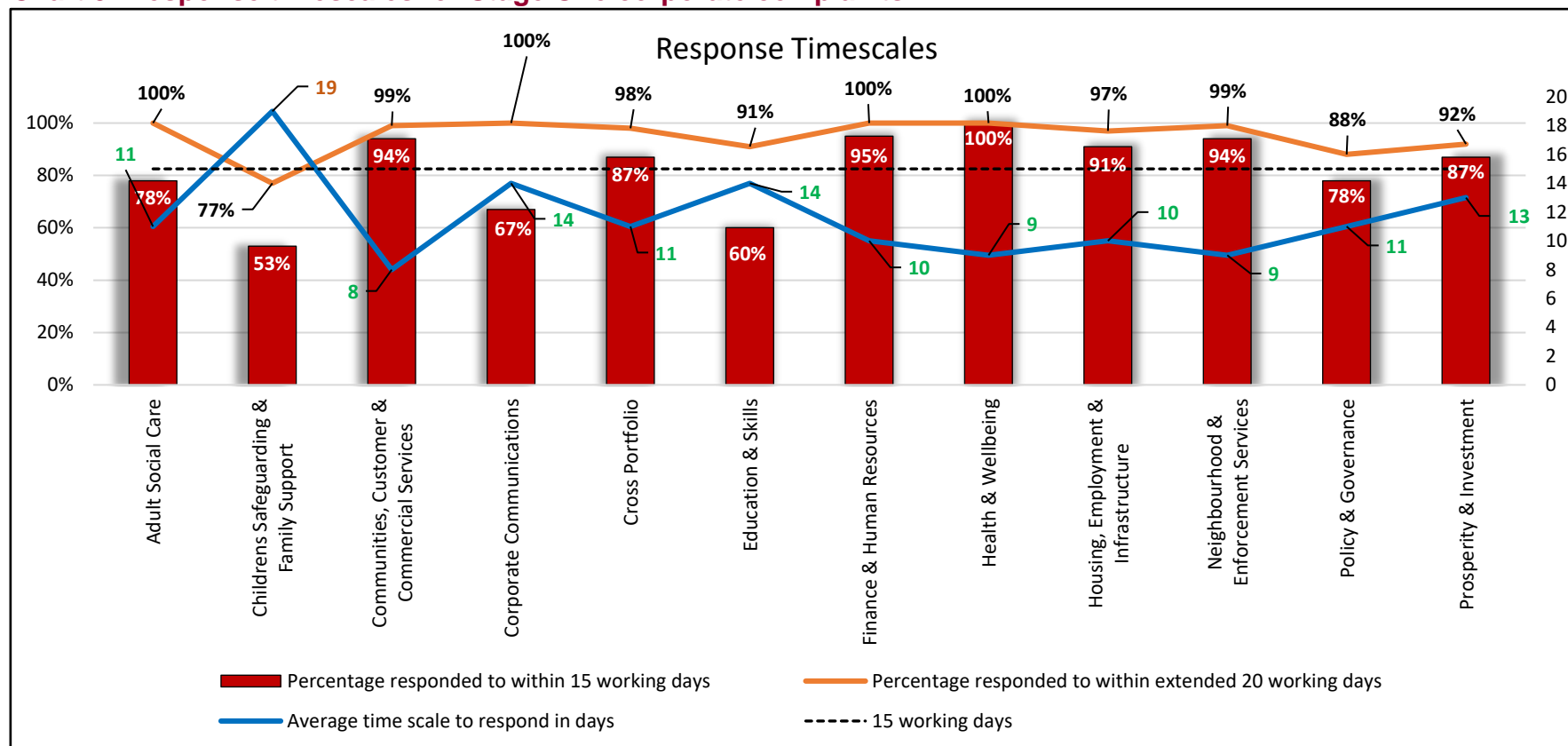
In the cases upheld an explanation and apology were given.

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 2023/24 the Council has managed to respond to corporate complaints in an average of 10 days, which is well within the 15 working day timescale and an improvement on the 11 days achieved in 2022/23. 87% of complaints were responded to within the 15 working day timescale, a significant improvement on the 80% achieved in 2022/23.

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, Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services, Communities, Customer & Commercial Services, Health & Wellbeing, and Housing, Employment and Infrastructure met this target during the year.

Other directorates also saw an improvement in the percentage responded to within 15 working days for example Prosperity and Investment saw an improvement from 57% in 2022/23 to 87% in the year. Children's Safeguarding & Family Support improved from 39% in 2022/23 to 53% in 2023/24. The service continues to monitor timescales and will continue to explore how improvements can be achieved in Quality Assurance meetings.

Adult Social Care also increased the percentage of responses sent in 15 working days from 67% to 78% which also saw the average number of days to respond improve from 15 working days to 11 working days, demonstrating continuous improvement over four reporting years.

Education & Skills saw a reduction in responses sent in 15 working days from 81% in 2022/23 to 60% in the year. This is in part due to the increased number of complaints the Special Educational Needs (SEN) service has received in the year (31), a 37% increase on the number they received the year before (19). Measures have been put in place to support complaint handling within the service to improve these timescales going forward including regular meetings with the director to review all outstanding cases and learning. Corporate communications also saw a reduction in responses sent in 15 working days from 100% in 2022/23 to 67% in the year, the small number of complaints in this area have affected this.

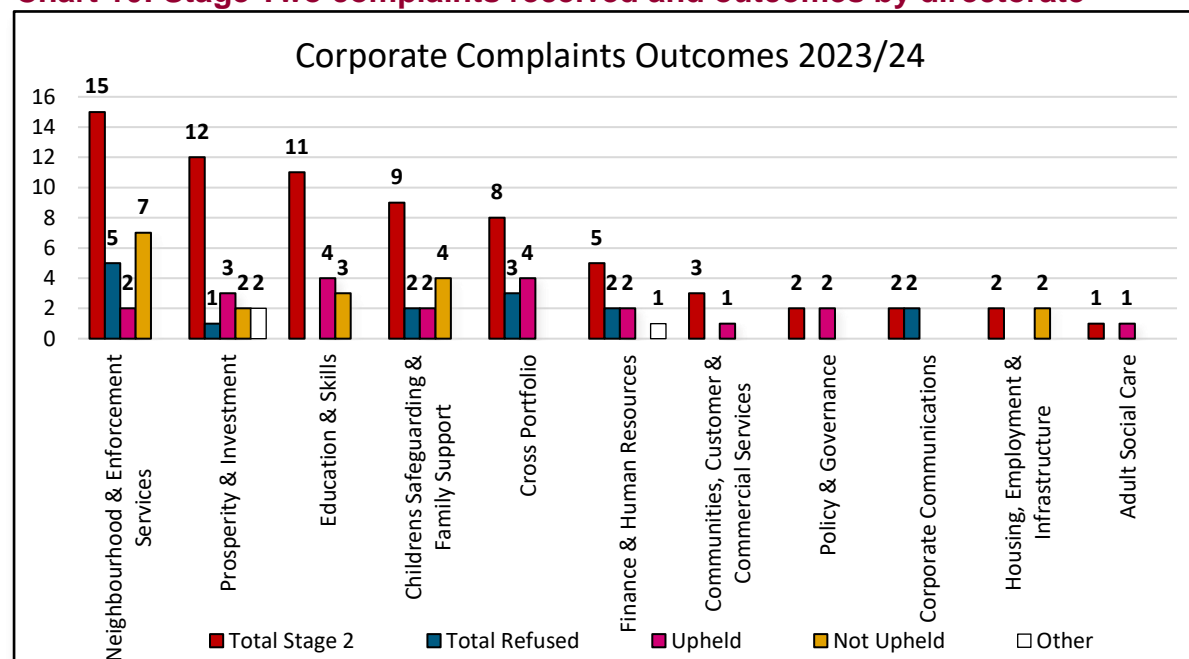
It must be noted that the average number of days to respond across all directorates did not exceed the extended timescale of 20 working days. However, 26 complaints were sent outside of the Council's extended 20 working day timescale.

With effect from May 2024 our complaint procedure was amended, which included stage 1 initial timescales reducing from 15 working days to 10 working days, in line with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's complaint handling code.

Corporate Stage Two complaints

During 2023/24, 70 Corporate Stage One complaints progressed to Stage Two of the process. This represents a 71% increase on the 41 that progressed in 2022/23. 57 Stage two investigations have been completed, there are 13 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 Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services (15) compared to 4 in 2022/23. Six of the Cross Portfolio cases were also related to Neighbourhood & Enforcement areas including Transport and Neighbourhood Enforcement.

Likewise, Education & Skills also saw an increase in stage 2 complaints from 3 in 2022/23 to 11 in the year. All related to Special Educational Needs (SEN). Three of the Cross Portfolio complaints related to Education &

Skills SEN, and three also included elements relating to the Customer Contact Centre.

Health & Wellbeing was the only directorate that did not have a case escalated to Stage Two in 2023/24, they are therefore not detailed in Chart 10.

Out of the 70 complaints, it was considered that 15 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 8 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 within this timescale.

Of the 57 Stage Two corporate complaints completed, 42 resulted in full investigations, compared to the 19 investigated in 2022/23. 50% of full investigations were upheld. It took an average of 43 working days to complete a full investigation. This is an increase on the 28 days taken in 2022/23. This figure is still within the extended timescale of 65 working days as outlined within the complaints policy. 4 complaints did exceed the 65 working day timescale during the year. The increase in timescales has been affected by the significant increase in stage 2 complaints being received, the complexity of these complaints and requirement for further information to complete the investigation.

In line with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's complaint handling code the timescales at stage 2 investigations have also changed with effect from May 2024 from 25 working days up to 65 working days to the revised 20 working days to 40 working days.

Learning and outcomes from Corporate 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.

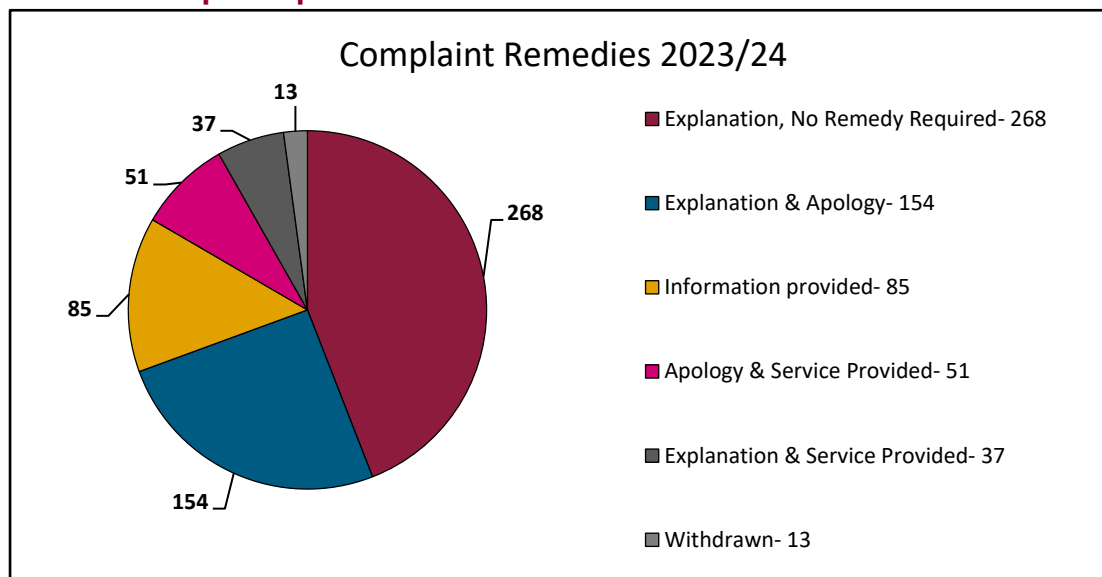
Lessons can usually be learned from complaints that were upheld, but also in some instances where no fault was found but the Council recognises that improvements to services can still be made.

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 resolved complaints at Stage One in 2023/24

All 271 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 2023/24

Of the remedies recorded against corporate complaints in 2023/24:

- 41% were to provide an explanation and no remedy was required
- 24% were to provide an explanation and an apology
- 13% information was provided
- 8% 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:

- Procedures related to support plans have been reviewed by Adult Social Care. Quality assurance of all support plans is now completed by team leaders and senior social workers. All workers have also been advised to not copy forward and that they should be checking and updating previous assessments

- Internal processes have been reviewed in relation to the issuing of postal vote packs. Staff have been advised to ensure that they check their email filter twice daily to ensure that no requests are missed. The council will also now consider hand delivering packs in some circumstances
- Darby House Reception has been refurbished which has included the installation of lowered accessible desk and automatic doors
- The front of house team at the theatre have been upskilled regarding product availability at the bar



“She diligently listened to my situation and by passing my concerns to the correct department, resulted in positive action, for which I am very grateful.”

- Cleaning schedules have been reviewed to ensure that regular deep cleaning is undertaken and completed especially in wet changing areas at Leisure Centres. Duty Mangers will also do regular checks of changing rooms particularly prior to swimming lessons which follow school swimming
- Collection crews have been reminded to not block access with returned containers
- Review of family connect procedures to ensure that customers are provided with full information around information sharing during initial phone calls
- Additional signage has been introduced at the Wellington Leisure Centre changing village instructing parents to not leave clothes in cubicles and to also ensure that group changing rooms are open and available to use
- The Neighbourhood Enforcement Team have received conflict resolution training
- Template letters used by the Democracy Team have been reviewed
- Advisors to request an earlier monitoring date at the home where education provided (Elected Home Education), which will form part of the annual report. The monitoring note from the visit will be shared with both parents. Monitoring visits will also be offered to both parents and parents will be asked to contribute to discussions relating to the future education provision of the children

- An 'Independent School' option has been added to the transport portal
- A new process has been introduced for Child in Need review meetings, which identifies all information to be provided and signed for when a support plan is agreed
- Review of approvals process for transport, ensuring that team are aware of what approvals are required and the processes around this
 - Reviewed the direct referrals script for housing, this has been shared with social landlords to ensure that advice provided is consistent and correct
 - Review of the timescales and preparation for support plans renewals and reassessments

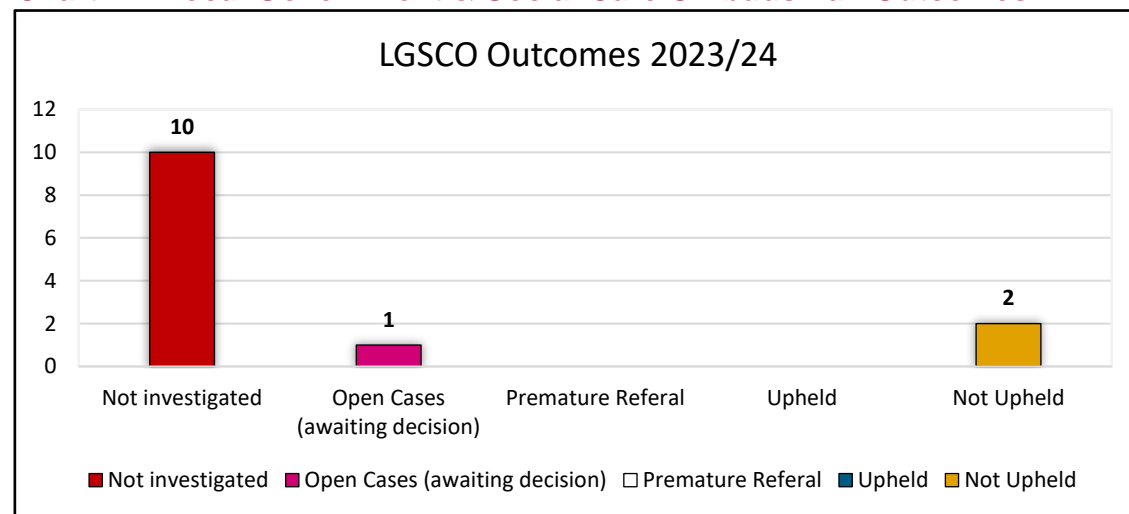
"I would like to thank you and your colleagues for all that you did. You went above and beyond to try and help."



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 17 enquiries were forwarded to the LGSCO. Five enquiries related to statutory complaints which are detailed in the Adult Statutory and Children's Statutory Complaint Reports.

Chart 12: Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Outcomes



Of the 12 corporate complaint enquiries, one remains open awaiting a decision.

One decision remained outstanding on 31 March 2023, the decision was that this case was not upheld and it is included in the figures detailed in chart 12.

The LGSCO undertook one detailed investigation into corporate complaints, which was completed during the year, and this was not upheld. In 9 cases the LGSCO said it was not investigating.

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.

Office for Local Government (OFLOG) Metrics

The Office for Local Government has introduced a set of metrics to provide insight on performance for local authorities within England.

One of the metrics is the number of upheld Ombudsman complaints per 10,000 population.

This metric uses complaints data published by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and population data published by the Office for National Statistics.

There were 3 detailed investigations completed by the LGSCO during 2023/24, for corporate and statutory complaints. 2 cases were not upheld and 1 case was upheld. Therefore, the percentage of Ombudsman complaints upheld for 2023/24 is 33%.

Based on a population of 188,871 the number of complaints per 10,000 population is 1.74, an improvement on the 2.33 achieved in 2022/23.

Complaints from Telford and Wrekin Tenants

In September 2020 Telford and Wrekin Council became a registered provider of social housing. As a registered provider we currently have 23 properties.

Complaints from our tenants are handled under the Complaint procedure for Council Tenants, this procedure sets out that stage 1 complaints will be responded to within 10 working days and stage 2 complaints will be responded to within 20 working days.

Please note: With effect from 1 April 2024 this procedure will be incorporated with the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy and Procedure in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Service complaint handling code which requires organisations to have one complaint policy.

In 2023/24 the Council received 0 complaints from its tenants.

No cases were escalated to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) during the year and there were no findings of non-compliance with the HOS Complaint Handling Code in 2023/24.

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 2024/25

During 2024/25, 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
- Develop Mystery Customer Assignments that will be completed by the Communities Scrutiny Committee, Senior Management Team and Mystery Customers. The feedback will be used to inform our new Customer Strategy from 2025
- Continue to drive an improvement in the percentage of complaints responded to within timescales from 87% to 90%
- Support services to meet new timescales outlined within our new complaint policy in line with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman Service's complaint handling codes
- Complete necessary self-assessments and continue to ensure compliance with the complaint handling codes
- 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 & Housing Ombudsman Service
- 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 and complete our second benchmarking and workforce survey's in Autumn 2024
- Update the Customer Service Strategy and relaunch in 2025