

# Annual Customer Feedback Report

## Telford & Wrekin Council

### 2019-20



Protect  
Care and Invest  
to create a  
better borough





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# Report Summary

This annual feedback report shows that this year the Council has seen a 16% increase in the number of compliments and positive feedback received. In addition to this the number of Corporate Complaints received has decreased, this is a trend that has continued for the last 5 years. When considering the total number of transactions received by the Council over the year the data in this report clearly shows that the number of complaints received against transactions falls well within the accepted customer service industry standards and well under 1% of all transactions. The Council continues to manage complaints well and is committed to putting right anything that has gone wrong.

With effect from 1 April 2019 a number of new contracts commenced, particularly in respect of grounds and cleansing and highways. The number of complaints received this year indicates that the management of the transition to the new contractors went well and over the year the number of complaints have reduced.

The number of complaints received reduced in the last quarter of 2019/20, during a time when the Council was responding to the unprecedented flooding in Ironbridge Gorge and the start of the Covid 19 pandemic. Managers were taken from their day to day roles in order to respond to the emergency, and yet all still managed to respond to customers complaints. It is therefore a remarkable achievement that response timescales over the year were significantly reduced.

The absence of any significant findings of fault by the Ombudsman suggests that complaints are being dealt with in line with the Council's values of openness, honesty, fairness and respect.

However, it is vital that managers remain equipped and committed to responding effectively and that the organisation is able to draw the learning for future cases.

Notwithstanding this, there remain clear opportunities to improve in a number of areas 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 to service delivery.

In October 2019 the Council launched a new Customer Insight Programme which seeks to proactively identify and remedy concerns before a customer has to complain. The programme is designed to deliver organisational intelligence to drive transformation and continuous improvement by identifying trends and the improvements that could be made to improve the customer experience of our services.

Two in depth reviews have been completed since October 2019 focusing on the Soft Play and The Place@Oakengates. A Council wide 'Snap Shot' assessment of our key front doors also commenced in February 2020. For more information regarding the Customer Insight Programme please see Page 10.



# Highlights of 2019/20

\*Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Over <b>100</b> <b>Volunteers</b> registered to be Mystery Customers	Average of <b>11 days</b> to respond to Corporate Complaints	Complaints responded to <b>3 days quicker</b> on average in 2019/20 than in 2018/19.	<b>16%</b> increase in positive feedback
Complaints under <b>1%</b> of all transactions	A total of <b>290</b> Compliments & Positive Feedback received	<b>81%</b> corporate complaints responded to in 15 working days	<b>42</b> completed Mystery Customer Assignments
<b>5%</b> reduction in upheld corporate complaints	<b>Improvement</b> on response timescales <b>across all directorates</b>	<b>100%</b> LGSCO* recommendations completed	<b>4%</b> reduction in corporate complaints



# 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 2019 to 31 March 2020. This includes highlighting areas of positive performance and areas 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 with accessing our Council Services, drive improvement by acting on the feedback received, prioritising quick wins and ensuring that longer-term actions feed into the customer service strategy and that we continue to develop and improve the Council services we provide.

# Background

The Customer Relationship Team co-ordinates complaints relating to 3 separate complaints processes, they are: –

- i) Adult Social Care statutory process, reported separately in the Adult Statutory Complaints Annual Report 2019-20.
- ii) Children's Social Care statutory process, reported separately in the Children's Statutory Complaints Annual Report 2019-20.
- iii) Corporate Complaints process – these are complaints relating to other services provided by the Council where there is not a 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, comments and suggestions as well as any matters which 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, and it is essential that we learn from them. As an organisation, we provide people with a mechanism to feed back to us both positive and negative experiences and encourage a culture of learning, where the focus is on resolution and continual improvement. Where possible, we take immediate action to put things right at the first point of contact, and where this is not possible, we operate a robust complaints procedure.



Above all the way we deal with complaints will be based on our co-operative values

[https://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20268/co-operative\\_council/779/our\\_co-operative\\_values](https://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 published on the Telford and Wrekin website:

<http://www.telford.gov.uk/complaints>

A complaint is defined within the Council’s Corporate Complaints procedure as:

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

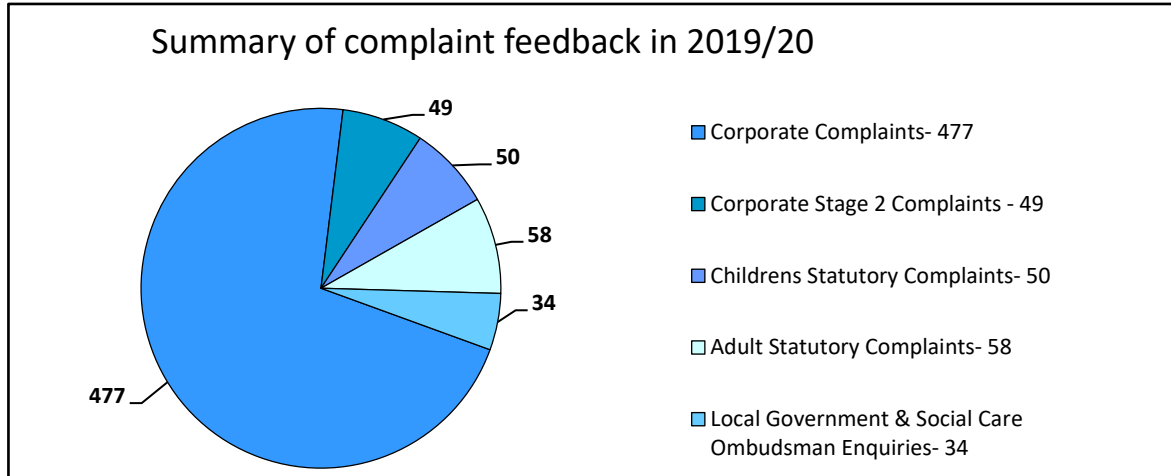
Telford and Wrekin Council operates a two stage process for all corporate complaints.

Complaints recorded under the formal procedure (and dealt with in this summary report) do not include those ‘first time’ representations which were effectively requests for a service and dealt with as such. Accordingly, a new report of a missed bin, or a broken swing, for example, would not be registered and dealt with as a complaint, but as a service request. Of course, in the event that the Council failed to respond to the ‘request’ appropriately, then that may generate a complaint. Appeals against decisions that have a separate appeals routes will not be dealt with as complaints.



The charts below show the feedback received by the Customer Relationship Team in 2019/20.

**Table 1: Summary of complaint feedback in 2019/20**



The volume of contacts received by the team totalled 1504 in 2019/20. The team also took a total of 2118 telephone calls over this period.

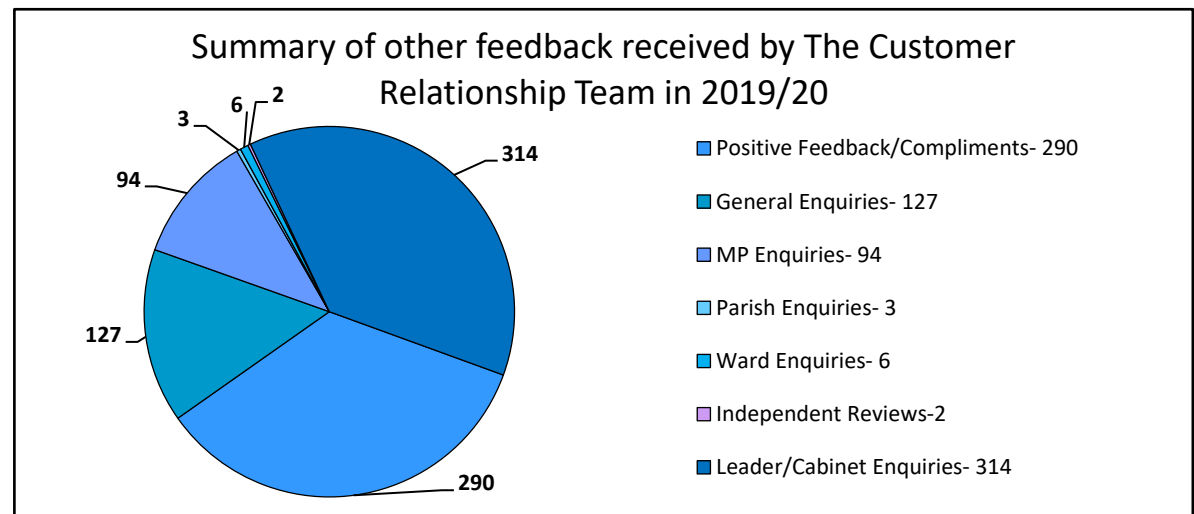
The number of calls has dropped significantly since 2018/19 (3345) and this is a reflection of the team no longer having a backlog of cases, proactively chasing responses and keeping customers updated.

Parish Enquiries are now registered via the Councils Customer Contact Centre. Ward Enquiries are requests for service from Ward members following their annual ward reviews.

Telford and Wrekin Council is a growing borough which has seen its population increase from 171,159 in June 2015 to 177,799 in June 2019. The Council has also attracted more visitors to its local parks, leisure centres and theatre in 2019/20. There has been an increase in customer interactions across the authority.

In this reporting year the Council has also faced many challenges including the flooding in the Ironbridge Gorge and the unprecedented Covid 19 Pandemic. It has also celebrated with an 'Outstanding' Ofsted report for Children's Services and our Shared Lives Team also received an 'Outstanding' rating.

**Table 2: Summary of other feedback in 2019/20**





# Compliments & Positive Feedback

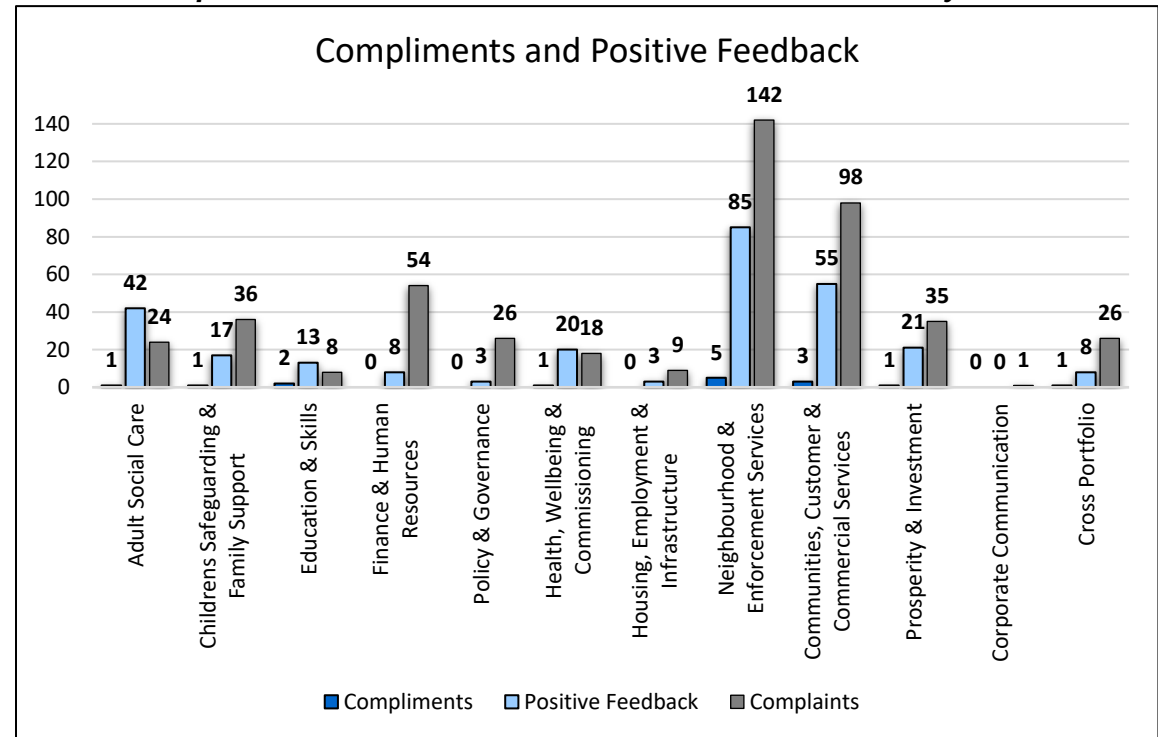
In 2019/20 there was a 16% increase in the combined number of compliments and Positive Feedback received. Receiving a total of 275 instances of positive feedback in 2019/20, this is a significant increase on the number received in 2018/19 which was 137 and it is not surprising that Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services (85), and Communities, Customer & Commercial Services (55) received the most due to the front line nature of these service areas.

We have received a total of 15 formal compliments in 2019/20. This is a decrease on the number received in 2018/19 as it reflects the new process that was introduced in 2017 where compliments which are a simple 'thank you' for providing a service are now sent to the employee and their line manager and not logged as a formal compliment. As these are high in volume, they are now logged as positive feedback only. A compliment is only logged where a service or officer has gone **'above and beyond'** their role.

We will be reviewing our definitions of Compliments and Positive Feedback in 2020/21.

The chart below highlights the compliments and positive feedback against the number of complaints received for the Directorate.

**Table 3: Compliments and Positive Feedback received in 2019/20 by directorate**



It is positive to see that Adult Social Care, Education & Skills and Health, Wellbeing & Commissioning each had more positive feedback and compliments than the total number of complaints that they received.



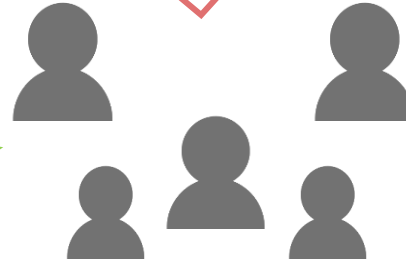
Please find below some examples of compliments received during the year:

*"I've called to say thank you to the Council and thank you to the bin men I had forgotten to put the bin out for collection this morning and the crew spotted this and emptied it for me." Domestic Refuse*

*Thank you so much for the very special ceremony you conducted for us... your words were so well chosen – thoughtful, sensitive and completely us! Registration Services*

*...the painstaking and detailed work carried out by your officers, was from my point of view fantastic. I wanted to make sure that you knew what an absolutely fantastic job they had done. Trading Standards*

*I was very impressed by a member of staff called Nigel...he needs to mentor others in sharing what I consider to be, an exceptional persona, which is highly suited to children with special needs. Nigel is indeed an unsung hero in my book. Madeley Snowboard & Ski Centre*



*I just wanted to put in writing my personal appreciation for the hard work of the Council in achieving a deliverable planning permission...our experience has been defined by timely responses (often outside of normal working hours) and pragmatic advice. Planning- Decision Making*

Please find below some examples of positive feedback received during the year:

*I just wanted to express my thanks and gratitude to the library staff at Southwater and Wellington libraries over the past two weekends, who so kindly hosted me and a group of authors for a Meet the Author events. Libraries*



*Just wanted to pass on 'kind thanks' ...for your help with getting ...the grant for the wet room the adaptation has now been completed and they are very happy and they wanted to say thank you. Housing*



## Customer Insight Programme

A Customer Insight Programme was launched in October 2019 with the aim to review our council services. The programme is designed to deliver organisational intelligence to drive transformation and continuous improvement by identifying trends and the improvements that could be made to improve the customer experience of our services.

The Customer Insight Programme has also resulted in over **100** volunteers registering to become Mystery Customers and undertake Mystery Customer Assignments.



Trends and improvements are identified through Customer Insight activities for example Mystery Customer Assignments, Customer Insight Walkthroughs, Telephone Quality Checks, Website reviews, Exit Surveys and the learned outcomes from complaints. As part of this work we are also engaging with specific groups of residents to obtain feedback regarding the accessibility of our services. A report is completed and seeks to highlight successes but also identify areas for improvement. Recommendations are intended to assist and complement decision making to improve the customer's experience of the service going forward.

The culture of the council is focused on the customer's experience, our services use other forms of feedback including Net Promoter Score and surveys to complement the Customer Insight Reviews constantly ensuring that the service is maintained and improved. Our Adult Social Care directorate also have a 'Making it Real' board, made up of residents that use their services. The directorate consult on changes and improvements to service and they also get feedback on what residents would like to see as part of the service.


Since the launch a pilot and two live Customer Insight Reviews have taken place, at the Soft Play and the Christmas Pantomime. Since October 2019 a total of 42 Mystery Customer Assignments were completed and 149 exit surveys completed. Some results for the soft play included,

**83%** of customers were satisfied with their experience at the Soft Play.

**99%** of customers felt that the Soft Play was safe and secure.

**91%** of customers said they had a good customer service at the Soft Play.

Improvements completed following recommendations include;



*"Been really nice and kids have enjoyed themselves"*

*"Toilets were clean and working. No further action was required – accessible for all."*



The vending machine options have been reviewed to ensure that there are more healthy options. A water fountain has now been installed for when the café is not open. Signage has been erected confirming that customers can bring their own food to the facility.

Many other recommendations were made following the valuable customer feedback. Recommendations are now on a work schedule to be completed over the next 12 to 18 months. Once actioned they will be reported through our 'you said, we did' articles.

Some results for The Place@Oakengates included,

**94%** of customers were satisfied with their experience at 'The Place'.

**83%** of customers said the accessibility was good at 'The Place'.

**95%** of customers said they had a good customer experience at 'The Place'.

Improvements completed following recommendations include;

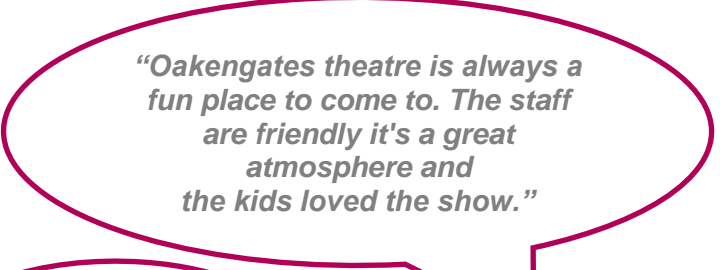
New toilet paper dispensers have been installed, staff will also now check the toilets during the performance to make sure they are tidy and well stocked. Military discounts have now been introduced and will be offered at the £15.00 discounted rate for the Pantomime.

Many other recommendations were made following valuable customer feedback. Recommendations are now on a work schedule to be completed over the next 12 to 18 months.


## Mystery Customer Snapshot Reviews:

A Council wide 'Snap Shot' assessment of our key front doors also commenced in February 2020, with **53** reviews completed so far, unfortunately this project and our in depth Customer Insight Reviews have had to be placed on hold due to the impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic which led to all facilities being closed. This has led to a change in emphasis and we now have a new project to review the Council's digital front door. Mystery Customers will again be asked to carry our assignments to test the Council's website and homepage.

Customer Insight feedback will be summarised and presented in future annual reports.



*"Oakengates theatre is always a fun place to come to. The staff are friendly it's a great atmosphere and the kids loved the show."*



*"Cater for disabilities, Facilities good"*

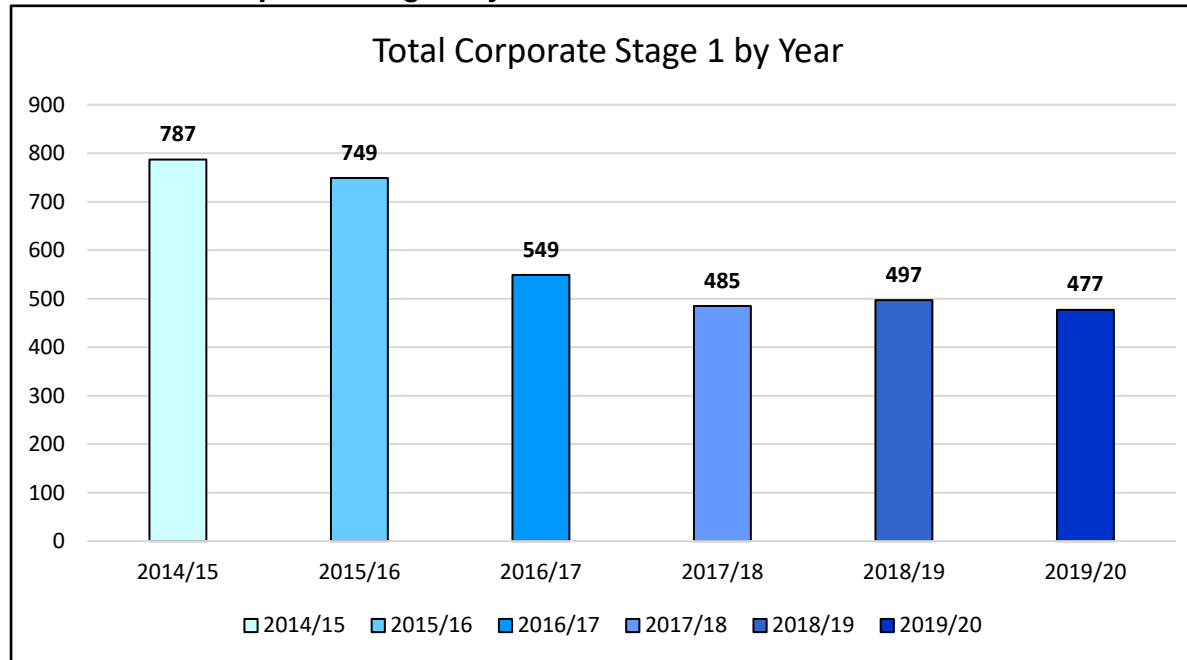




## Corporate Stage One Complaints

In the year 2019/20 there were 477 corporate stage one complaints (those dealt with by more than one service at the same time are counted as one complaint). In 2018/19 we received 497 and in 2017/18 we received 485. It is excellent to see that the number of complaints received in 2019/20 has decreased to the lowest number we have seen in 6 years. The table below shows comparisons of the number of complaints over the last 6 years.

**Table 4: Total Corporate Stage 1 by Year**



It is pleasing to report that the number of complaints continues to remain at a reduced level when compared to the numbers received in 2014/15 which saw complaints rise to over 750.

From these 477 complaints, 49 were escalated to Stage Two of our procedure and 34 were the subject of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman enquiries (please note some of these may have been for Stage One complaints prior to 2019/20). There has been a slight rise in Stage Two complaints this year raising from 47 in 2018/19 to 49 in 2019/20. There has also been an increase in complaints progressing to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman 2019/20 saw 34 progress, an increase from 23 in 2018/19.

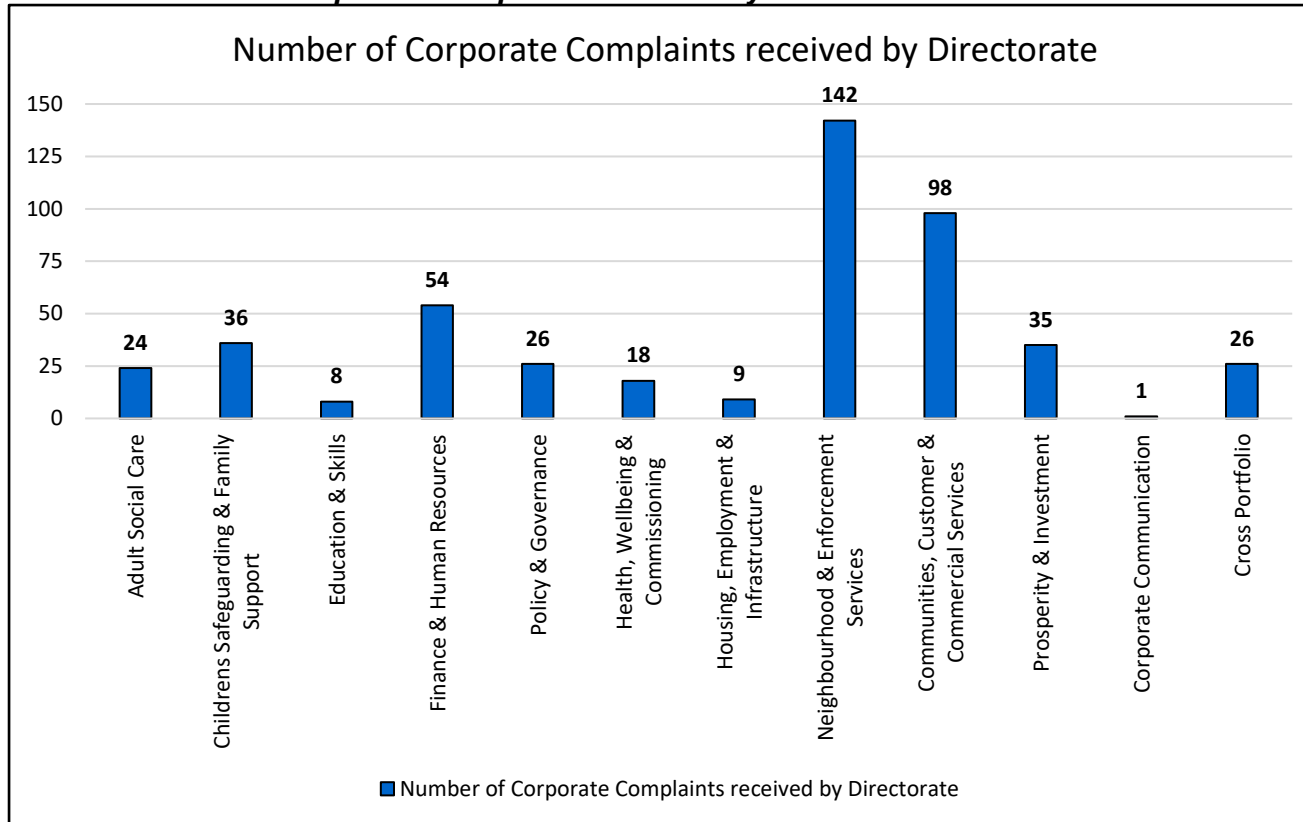
Stage	Number of Complaints
1	477
2	49
LGO	34

For further information regarding Stage Two complaints please go to page 17.

For further information regarding Local Government Ombudsman enquiries, please go to page 21.



**Table 5: Number of Corporate Complaints received by Directorate**



The directorate that received the highest number of complaints was Neighbourhood and Enforcement Services at 142, however given the number of customer interactions that take place through waste, highways, grounds maintenance, public protection, community safety and enforcement this is to be expected.

The second highest number of complaints were received in Communities, Customer and Commercial Services at 98, given the number of interactions that take place within the Councils Customer Contact Centre and Leisure Facilities, this is also to be expected.

For further analysis see Corporate Service Performance 2019/20.

Of the 477 Stage One complaints that have been completed, 43% (201) were upheld, this is where services have acknowledged that we could have done better, this is an improvement on the 48% (239) in 2018/19. This improvement indicates that there has been a reduction in cases where we could have done better. 43% (202) of the complaints were not upheld, 14% (68) of the complaints were either withdrawn, out of jurisdiction or resolved by the service.

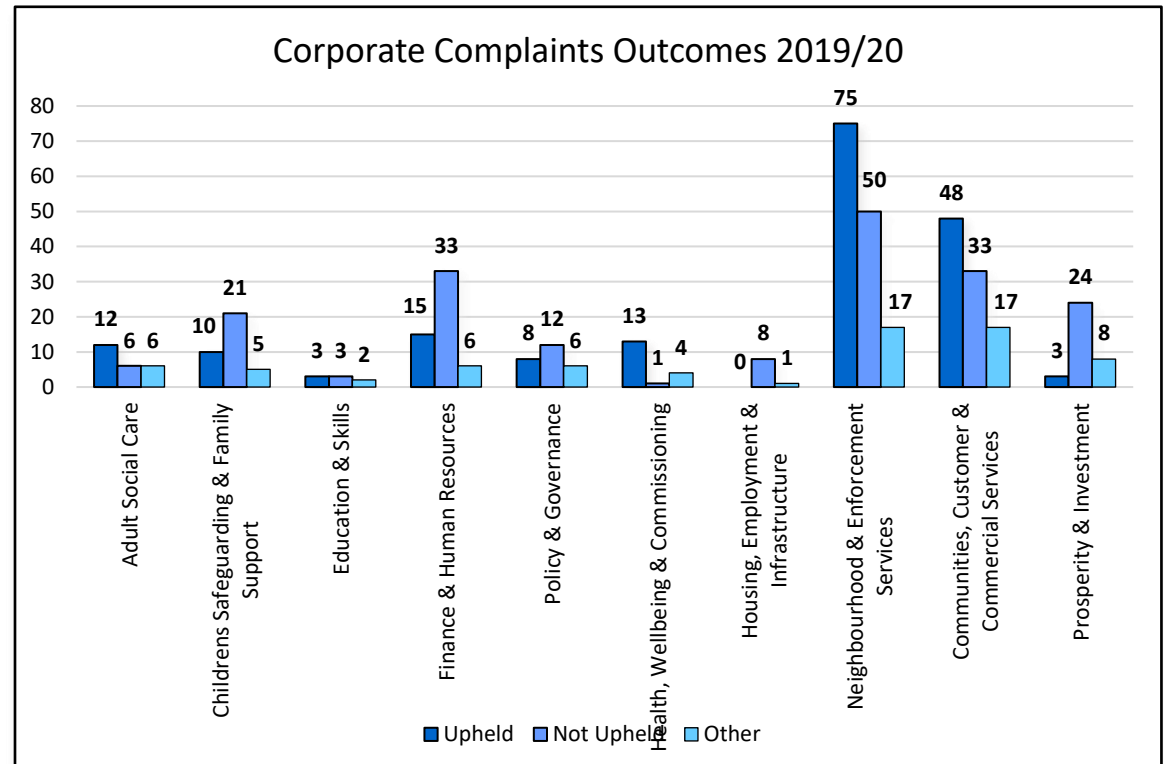


The most upheld complaints are within Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services (75) and Communities, Customer and Commercial Services (48) based on numbers.

**Table 7: Percentage of Complaints upheld by Directorate**

Directorate	Percentage of complaints upheld
Health, Wellbeing and Commissioning	72%
Cross Portfolio (Directorate)	54%
Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services	53%
Adult Social Care	50%
Communities, Customer & Commercial Services	49%
Education & Skills	38%
Policy & Governance	31%
Finance & Human Resources	28%
Children's Safeguarding & Family Support	28%
Prosperity & Investment	9%
Housing, Employment & Infrastructure	0%
Corporate Communication	0%

**Table 6: Corporate Complaints Outcomes 2019/20**

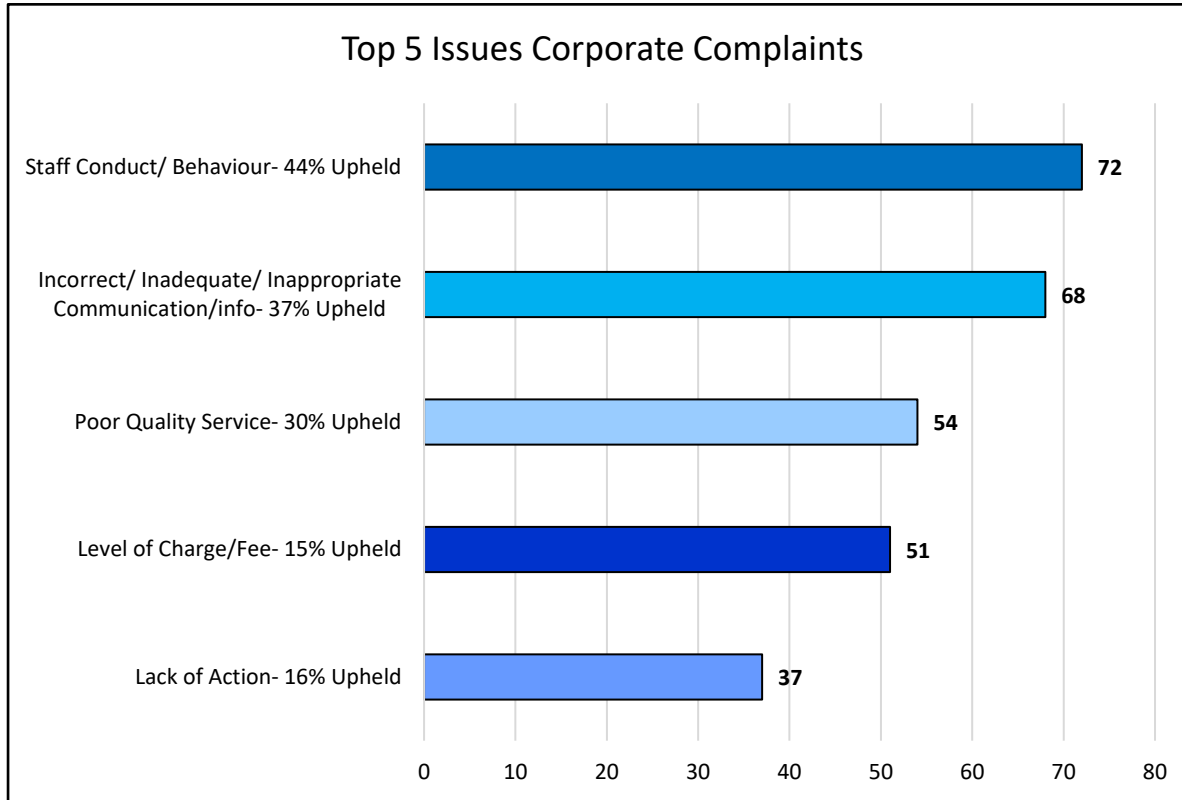


However, when looking at the percentage of upheld complaints against number of complaints received this shows that based on the number of complaints received Health and Wellbeing had the highest number upheld at 72%.



The top 5 issues identified corporately at stage one were;

**Table 8: Top 5 Issues Corporate Complaints**



These areas also saw the most upheld complaints.

**Staff Conduct/Behaviour-** Staff conduct and behaviour covers a variety of concerns including lack of support from individual officers, no identification shown when attending a property, how a member of staff has spoken to a customer and general behaviour of staff both face to face and over the telephone. In the cases upheld an apology was given and the officers were spoken to by their line managers and additional training given.

**Incorrect/ Inadequate/ Inappropriate Communication/ Information-** This issue crossed many different services, generally the concerns raised involved records not been updated correctly which resulted in notices being issued, Services not making contact with customers to provide an update and not returning calls. The majority of these complaints received an explanation and apology.

**Poor Quality Service-** This issue again crossed many different services, however a number were related to waste services and refuse collections. In the cases upheld an explanation and apology was provided.

**Level of Charge/ Fee-** This included complaints raised against Council tax and Business Rates charges, leisure facility charges, Financial Case Management charges and public protection charges. The remedies for these complaints were to offer an explanation with no remedy required or an apology and explanation for any error that had taken place.

**Lack of Action-** This is occasions where the customer complained because they had received no response, there were no trends in service areas for this concern and it cut across all directorates. In the cases upheld an explanation, apology and service was provided.

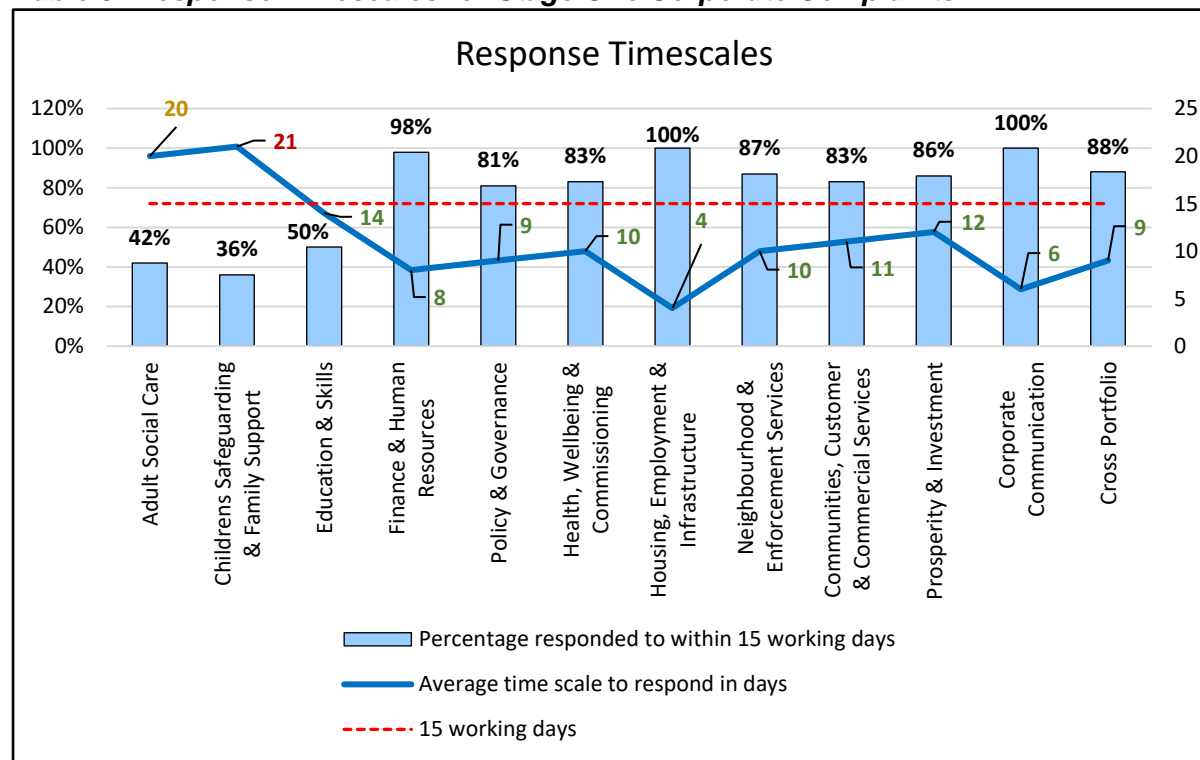


# Timescales for Responses at Stage One

The Council's Corporate Complaints Policy states that Stage 1 Corporate complaints should be responded to within 15 working days. This may be extended in exceptional circumstances by a further 5 days. The following chart shows the percentage of complaints responded to within 15 working days by directorates and also the average number of days for each service to respond to corporate complaints at stage one.

The data indicates that in the main directorates are managing to meet the corporate time scale of 15 working days, which is excellent.

**Table 9: Response Timescales for Stage One Corporate Complaints**



However, Adult Social Care and Children's Safeguarding & Family Support each have an average timescale of 20 and 21 working days respectively, which is just on and over the extended target. It should be noted that this is a significant improvement on the timescales that were achieved in 2018/2019 (28 and 29 days respectively) this is excellent and the services should be congratulated on this achievement.

Response times was an area that the Customer Relationship Team confirmed they would be focusing on in 2019/20, both by progress chasing responses in a timely manner and escalating to senior managers within the respective service areas, where needed. Along with services it is evidence that these efforts have provided a positive outcome.

Overall, the Council is managing to respond to corporate complaints within an average of 11.25 days, which is well within the 15 working day timescale and a significant improvement on the 14.45 days achieved in 2018/19. 81% of complaints were responded to within the 15 working day time scale an improvement on 74% achieved in 2018/19 and 71% achieved in 2017/18.

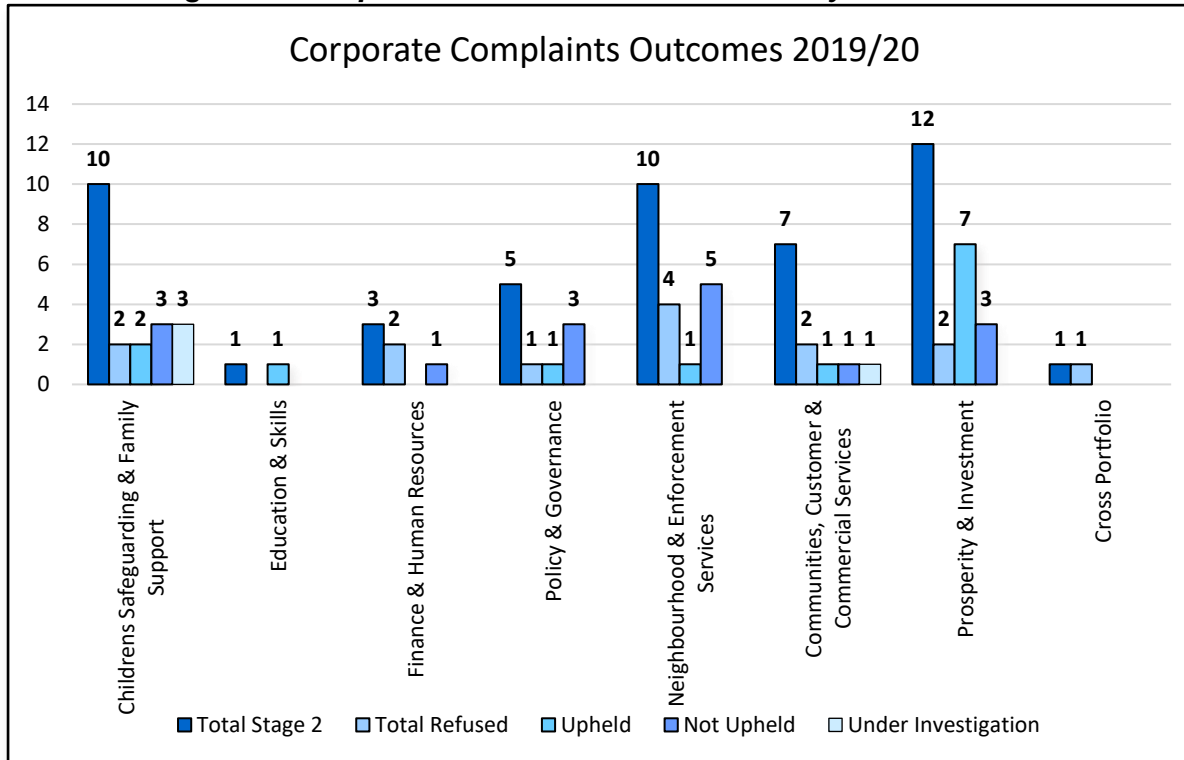
For further information and analysis regarding the five directorates who received the most complaints please go to Appendix A. Appendix A also includes dashboard data for the remaining five directorates, corporate communications and Cross Portfolio complaints.



# Corporate Stage Two Complaints

During 2019/20, 49 (10%) Corporate Stage One complaints progressed to Stage Two of the process. Four of the stage two complaints are currently under investigation.

**Table 10: Stage Two Complaints Received and Outcomes by Directorate**



A higher volume of Stage Two Complaints were seen in Prosperity and Investment, Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services, and Children’s Safeguarding & Family Support this financial year. Prosperity & Investment had 7 of its 12 Stage Two Complaints upheld.

Health, Wellbeing & Commissioning and Housing, Employment & Infrastructure, and Corporate Communications have had no complaints escalated to Stage Two in 2019/20, they are not detailed in table 19.

Out of the 49 complaints, it was considered that 14 had already been addressed at Stage One or the desired outcome that the complainant was seeking was not achievable by progressing their complaint further. There would be no added value in taking the complaint through to a full Stage Two investigation.

These complaints were responded to in an average of 12 working days. The aim is to respond to Stage Two escalation requests within 10 working days. Delays were experienced due to waiting for further information from service areas or for approval from senior management.

Of the 49 Stage Two complaints 35 resulted in full investigations, this is a 51% increase in the full Stage Two Investigations (17) completed in 2018/19. This can be attributed to an increase in multiple complaints regarding planning decisions and also more complex issues requiring a full investigation to ensure all avenues had been explored. 37% of full investigations were upheld.

The average number of days to complete a full investigation was 24 working days. This is within the corporate target to complete investigations within 25 days.



# Learning from Corporate Complaints

However, we should not be purely looking at numbers although they do provide an overall picture of the services. We should be focusing on the learning we have taken from these complaints.

Complaints are a valuable source of information which can help to identify recurring or underlying problems and potential improvements. We know that numbers alone do not tell everything about the attitude towards complaints and how they are responded to locally. Arguably of more importance is to understand the impact those complaints have on people and to learn the lessons from complaints to improve the experience for others. This was echoed by Michael King, The Local Government Ombudsman who said it is not about *'how often you are getting it wrong, but how good you are at putting it right'*.

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 be made.

Occasionally during the course of an investigation issues will be identified that need to be addressed over and above the original complaint. The Customer Relationship Team will work with services to ensure that they see the "bigger picture" to ensure that residents receive the best possible service from the Council.

## Remedial actions taken from resolved complaints at Stage One 2019-20

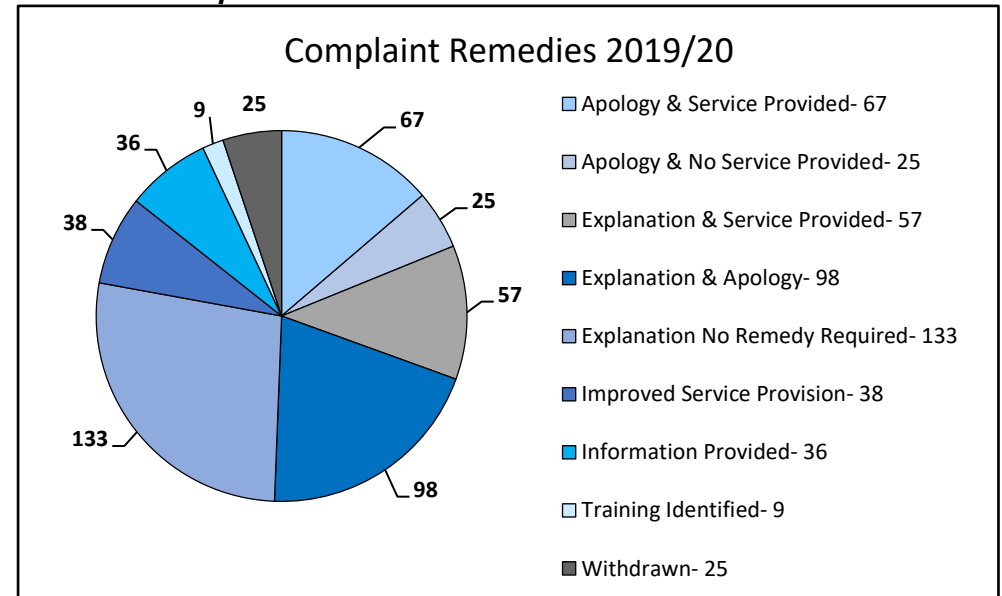
All of the 206 complaints, where fault has been found, have been reviewed by the Customer Relationship Team to ascertain what action the relevant department has taken, both in remedying the fault, and any wider learning to avoid such issues occurring in the future.

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

Of the remedies recorded against Corporate Complaints in 2019/20;

- 21% were to provide an explanation and an apology.
- 28% was to provide an explanation and no remedy was required.
- 12% was to provide an explanation and service was provided
- 14% was to provide an apology and service was provided.

**Table 11: Complaint Remedies 2019/20**





## Positive Improvements

Below are examples of positive changes that have resulted from learning from Stage One complaints;

- A review of the Empty Property form has resulted in a new option for the customer to return the review form online, in addition to a paper option, seeing an improvement to the way that customers notify us of changes.
- Where incorrect information had been provided to a customer, this has been fed back to officers and training given.
- Improvements have been made with new bookings for transport. Emergency contact names and numbers will be obtained and the drivers will be familiar with the run and the area.
- Our contactors have adjusted the steering on a collection vehicle following a complaint involving damage to property.
- Additional training has been given to officers regarding communication over the telephone and how to manage calls effectively.
- Instructors have been reminded to ensure that they prepare before an exercise class to ensure that there is no delay at the start. Broken equipment has been fixed and all equipment is operational. Leisure centres will ensure that there is enough equipment for those booked on a class.
- Contractors have been informed of additional areas that were not subject to routine grass or hedge cutting.
- The Waste Team have reviewed their processes and going forward they have allocated a report to a specific officer, to avoid error. A change has also been made to the Bulky Waste Collection app and there is now a pop up warning message when you press the 'Make Payment' Button.
- Cleaning rotas and techniques have been reviewed at leisure facilities and continue to be monitored. A deep clean has been carried out at the swimming pools and the staff have been spoken to and reminded about thoroughly cleaning the drains.
- A procedure has been introduced at Leisure Centres regarding disabled bays. Signage has also been placed around sport centres asking for customers to park appropriately in the bays. Spot checks are now also taking place.
- Library Officers have been reminded to check all envelopes at the end of the day before shredding them.
- An Unacceptable and Inappropriate Behaviour Procedure has been approved.

“YOU SAID”

“WE DID”



- A group has been set up by Commissioning with members of each provider to improve communication by meeting regularly to discuss matters.
- Collection crews have been asked to specifically return blue bags to their collection points.
- The Councils Website has been updated to ensure that it includes information regarding making an insurance claim against the council and that a property claim form must be completed.

Below are examples of positive changes that have resulted from learning from Stage Two complaints;

- There have been occasions where officers were reminded of the importance of providing accurate information to customers.
- Officers have been reminded of the importance of undertaking thorough Stage 1 complaint investigations, ensuring that all points raised are addressed and that they are responded to in line with the timescales defined within the complaints procedure.
- Where the planning service have been made aware of a disability, they will ask if the customer agrees to it being recorded on the record, to ensure that customers receive any additional support they may require during the process.
- Further information has been added to the, 'Change in Circumstances' page, on the website about Universal Credits to ensure the process is clear to customers. Benefit Officers also reminded of the importance of signposting customers to the correct organisations for financial support e.g. DWP.
- The elections team will categorise emails in their inbox to prevent them from being incorrectly filed into sub folders.
- Revenues Officers have been reminded of the importance of checking that individuals are the partner of the liable person prior to adding them as a joint liable party on the Council Tax bill.
- Benefits Officers to ensure that minimum income notification letters are sent, where applicable.
- The corporate complaints procedure has been reviewed to ensure that it includes detail about when a holding complaint response might be required.
- Planning Officers have been reminded of the importance of notifying Customer Relationship Team at the earliest convenience, if they are unable to investigate a complaint which relates to a planning application which is being determined. This is to ensure that the customer is notified in a timely manner.
- Services should keep Customer Relationship Team updated of the progress of complaints and if there is likely to be a delay – when the response is likely to be available to send. This is to ensure that they are able to update the customer accordingly.

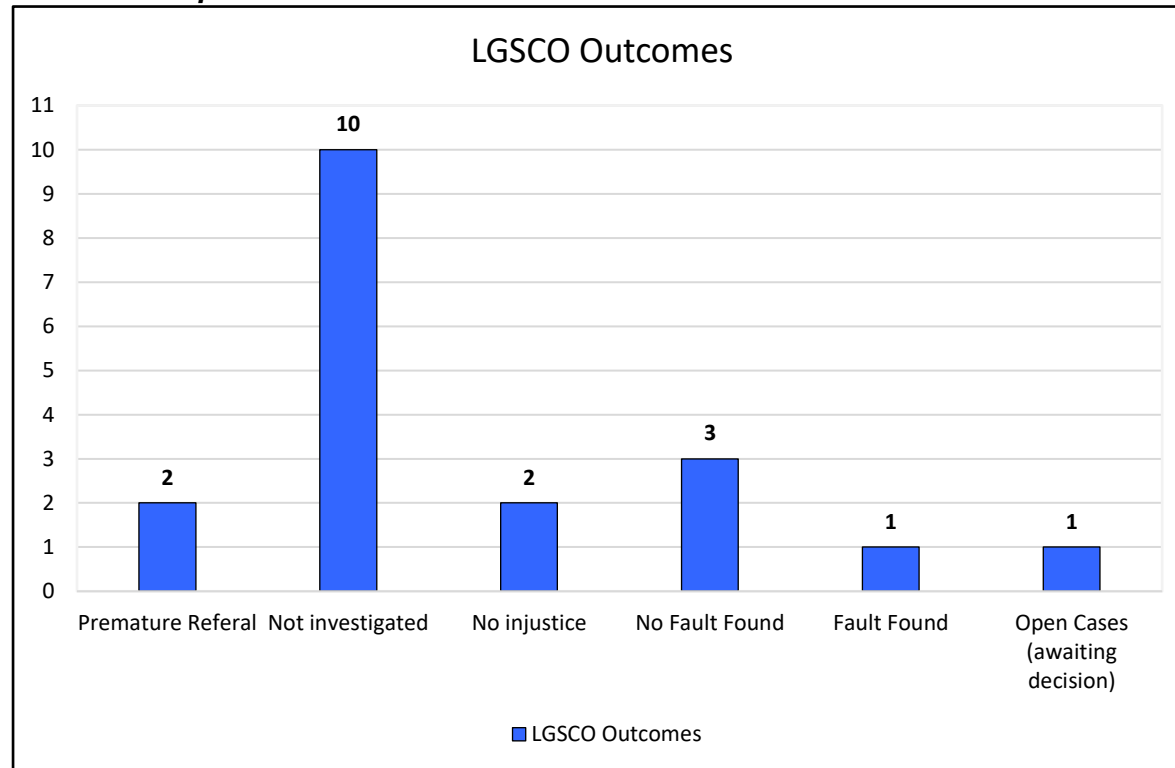


## Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman enquiries

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) has authority to investigate when it appears that our own complaints process has not resolved the complaint. Complainants can refer their complaint to the Ombudsman at any time, although they will generally refer all complaints back to us, if they have not been through the complaints processes first. In exceptional circumstances the Ombudsman will look at things earlier; this is usually dependant on the vulnerability of the person concerned.

During this period 34 complaints were forwarded to the LGSCO, 19 related to corporate complaints.

**Table 12: Corporate LGSCO Outcomes**



Of the 19 corporate complaints one is still open awaiting a decision.

There was one finding of fault for corporate complaints in 2019/20. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman found that the Councils was at fault for not making further enquiries before placing a vehicle in storage, when it had been purposefully moved. Following this finding notice templates have been updated to provide clarity, procedures have also been reviewed.

100% of recommendations made by the LGSCO have been completed by Telford & Wrekin Council.



## Concluding comments

The data held in this report highlights that there has been a 6% reduction in the formal customer feedback received in 2019/20. Although there has been an overall reduction in the number of complaints received, the number of compliments and positive feedback has increased.

Each service must continue to ensure that complaints are prioritised to both ensure that our customers receive a response not only within our timescales but that each service has used each complaint to inform continued service improvements.

Whilst the number of complaints received is small in comparison to the number of transactions we need to learn from any errors that have been made.

In 2020/21 the focus must be on continuous learning from complaints, even in cases where the complaint is not upheld and there is no fault found. In these cases we need to consider if there is a point in the customers journey that could be improved in order to prevent the complaint and future complaints, for example improved communication or access channels.

All complaints are an opportunity to learn and improve the service we provide.

Every upheld complaint should have organisational/ resolution actions, services should be actively looking for these when investigating.

Actions will be monitored going forward and services will be challenged for any learning on all complaints including those not upheld, this is to ensure that positive changes are made to the customer's experience when doing business with the Council.

Feedback from our Customer Insight Programme has also added to this the customer feedback received in 2019/20 and the programme will continue in 2020/21 to ensure that we are being proactive in trying to prevent the complaints and improving our customers experience.



## Oversight and support provided by Customer Relationship Team

The Customer Relationship Team continues to support service areas to both manage and learn from complaints. The key services offered by the team are;

1. To manage and support the organisation's approach to customer intelligence ensuring we effectively manage and learn from our interactions with customers.
2. Provide support to services regarding all aspects of customer insight and obtaining feedback.
3. Perform in depth and snapshot reviews of our services, our key front doors and digital front door.
4. Provide services with Complaints advice and support, including support with persistent and unreasonable complainants.
5. Quality Assurance of complaint responses.
6. Acting as a critical friend to challenge service practice.
7. Assistance in drafting comprehensive responses to complaint investigations.
8. Continue to escalate overdue complaints to Directors.

## Customer Relationship Team priorities for 2020/21

During 2020/21 the Customer Relationship Team will focus on a number of key priorities;

- Continue to roll out the Customer Insight Programme, Mystery Customer Snapshot Reviews, and Mystery Customer Website Reviews with the view to proactively reduce complaints.
- Perform a review of how we obtain customer feedback across the Council, mapping what feedback different services gather, ensuring that we obtain feedback from all demographics.
- Use customer feedback to inform a new customer strategy.
- Drive an improvement in the percentage of complaints responded to within timescales from 81% to 90% by the end of 2020/21.
- Obtain approval for the reviewed and updated complaint policies.
- Continue to provide a dashboard for quarterly reporting providing Senior Management with quarterly data, so that improvement can be driven forward continuously during the year.
- Continue to improve and add to the resources available for managers, when responding to complaints and other correspondence and encourage self-help.
- Work to maintain low levels of maladministration findings by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- Review the definitions and process for Compliments and Positive Feedback to ensure that the feedback is reflected fairly.

# Corporate Service Performance 2019/20

## Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services

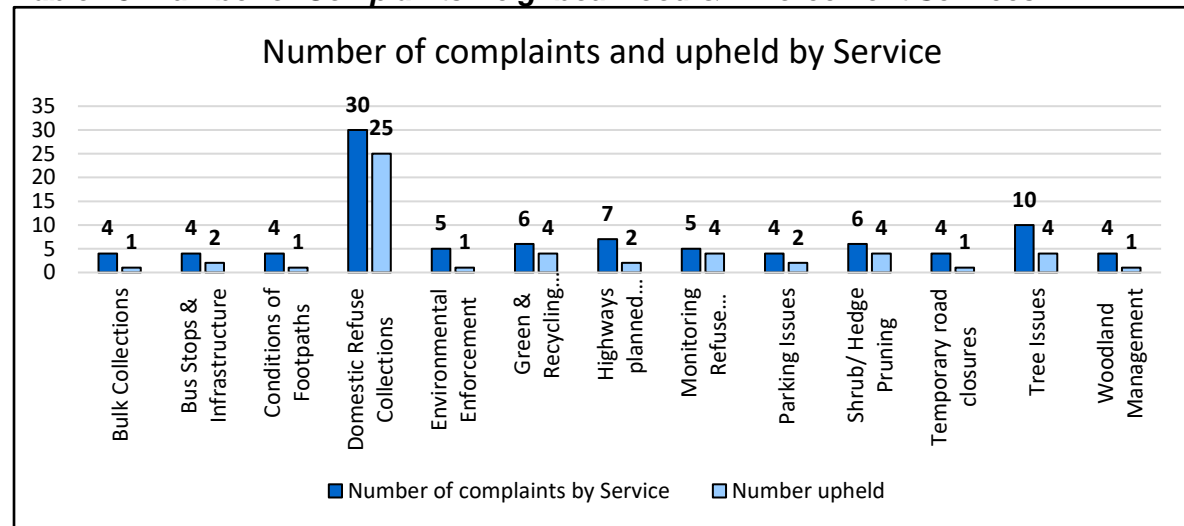


The majority of Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services are customer focused front line services who have millions of interactions with customers during the year. Our Waste Services emptied approximately 8.3 million refuse bins across the borough in 2019/20. Furthermore 99.94% of bin collections were completed on time across all waste services. Our Neighbourhood Services facilitated emptying 2401 public litter bins in 2019/20 and over 10,000,000 square metres of ground was cleansed and maintained in the year.

The majority of complaints were received by Domestic Refuse Collections. The chart below provides the number of complaints received by service where over three complaints have been received.

Domestic Refuse Collections received 30 complaints, 25 of which were upheld, this was due to a variety of issues including, whole

**Table 13: Number of Complaints Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services**





street and individual missed collections, collection changes in September 2019 and the introduction of food waste collections.

Tree issues received 10 complaints four of which were upheld, issues included no notification of works, disagreement with hedge removal, timescale to action did not meet customers' expectations. Incorrect tree removal, fencing not repaired as agreed including job closure notice and incorrect advice provided regarding fence repairs.

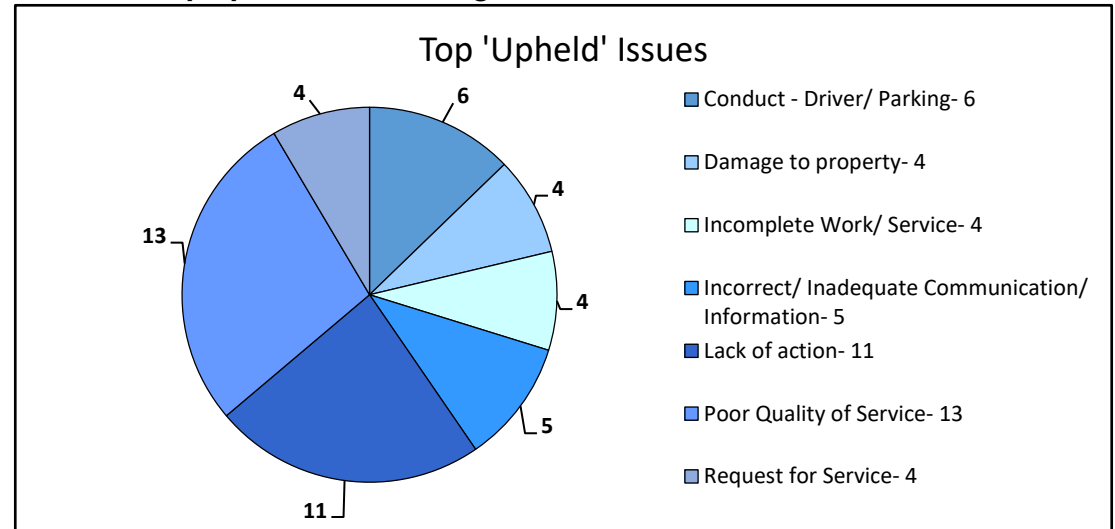
The main 'Upheld' issues for Neighbourhood & Enforcement Service accounting for 49 complaints out of the 75 upheld, were as follows;

Whilst 53% (75) of complaints were upheld this is extremely low compared to interactions that took place.

It should be noted that 13 complaints that were upheld related to poor quality service, these complaints were against waste services particularly Domestic Refuse Collections involving missed collections, changes to timetables and food waste collections, this included missed collections, no bags, and a caddy not received. The number of complaints received by waste has significantly reduced in the last quarter of 2019/20 indicating that there has been an improvement in this area.

Lack of action is also highlighted (11), this is another area that requires monitoring. These complaints involved a delay in action i.e. repairing street lighting or fencing and undertaking works. In situations where there is a delay in carrying out actions customers should be updated and expectations managed.

**Table 14: Top upheld issues- Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services**





# Communities, Customer & Commercial Services

**98**  
Complaints

**49%**  
Upheld

Average number of days to respond  
**11** days

**16**  
exceeded 15 days

Highest number of days to respond  
**45** days

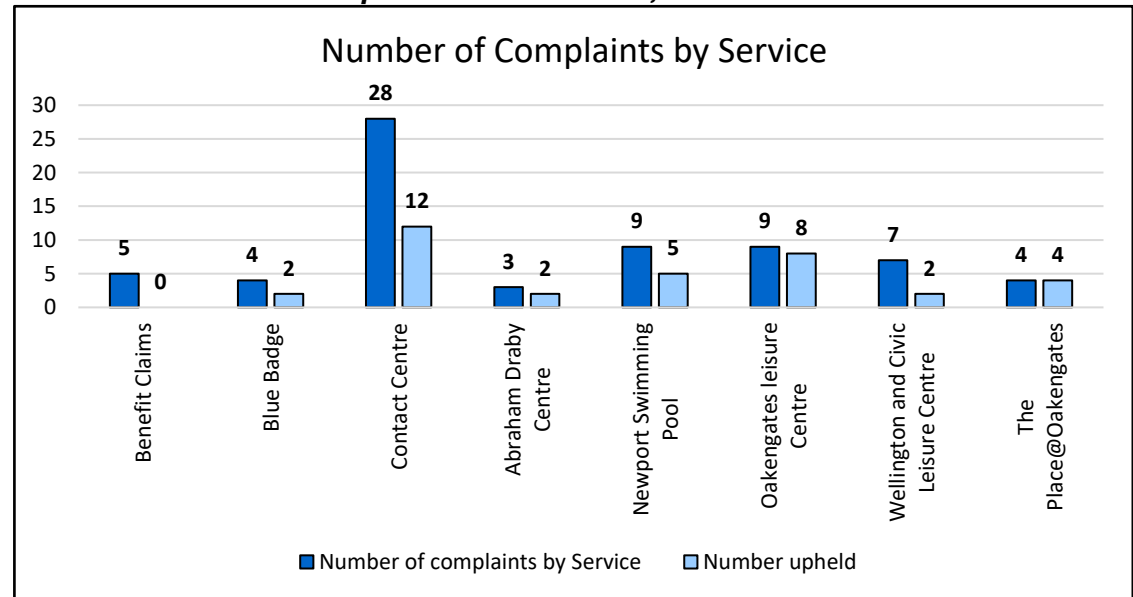
**58**  
Total Compliments/  
Positive Feedback

The chart below provides the number of complaints received by service where over three complaints have been received. The majority of the complaints related to the Contact Centre.

Leisure Services again received over one million visitors to its leisure facilities which include, Wellington and Civic Leisure Centre, Telford Ice Rink and Oakengates Leisure Centre. The town park also welcomed approximately 700,000 visitors in 2019/20. The total number of customer contacts received and dealt with by our Customer Contact Centre in 2019/20 totalled 278,194.

Of the upheld complaints the main service areas were the Customer Contact Centre (28) who had 12 complaints upheld, 5 of the upheld complaints related to staff conduct and behaviour, including tone, attitude, unhelpfulness and incorrect advice provided. Three complaints related to unanswered calls and three related to incorrect/ inadequate communication with incorrect information being provided.

**Table 15: Number of Complaints Communities, Customer & Commercial Services**



The Place@Oakengates received four complaints all of which were upheld. The issues raised included value for money of the VIP experience, lack of action regarding conduct of service users, and also a booking error and staff conduct. Training was identified for staff and an apology and service was provided.

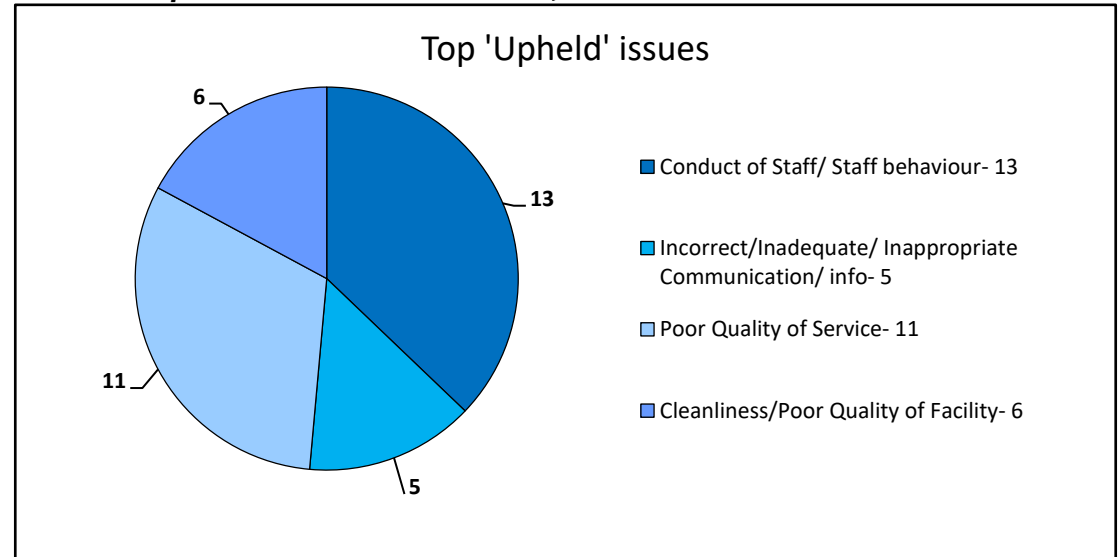


The top five 'upheld' issues for the directorate were as follows;

It should be noted that 13 complaints that were upheld related to staff conduct/ behaviour, 5 of which were for the Contact Centre, where officers tone and behaviour with customers was deemed to be not that which would be expected. The Contact Centre has been working hard to eliminate these concerns and has developed service standards for telephone calls and given officers additional training. Team Leaders have been working closely with the officers involved to prevent reoccurrences going forward which often just requires some guidance on how to deal with customers in certain challenging situations. Each incident was investigated and responded to by the line manager.

Other areas of the directorate also had upheld complaints related to staff conduct/ behaviour this included Leisure facilities and Registration Services. Staff conduct has been raised with each member of staff and training provided.

**Table 16: Upheld Issues- Communities, Customer & Commercial Services**



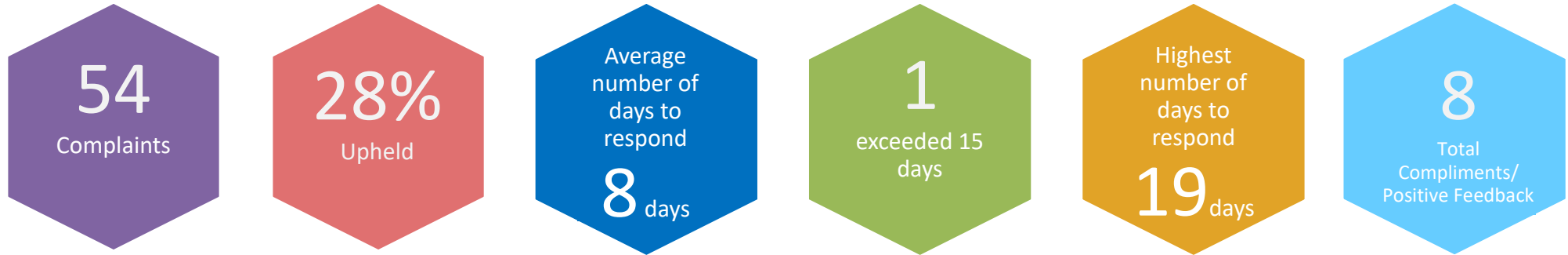
The instances recorded for poor quality service vary, but this area did include classes being cancelled without notice, instructor cover and communication regarding instructor changes, staff knowledge and incorrect forms being issued.

The number of complaints received about cleanliness and poor quality facilities for our leisure services have reduced this year which is excellent and reflects the work that has been undertaken by the services to improve the customer's experience of the facilities.

Incorrect/ inadequate/ inappropriate Communication information included instances where follow up actions were not completed, No further communication, letters sent in error, incorrect name used on correspondence and correspondence sent to an incorrect address.



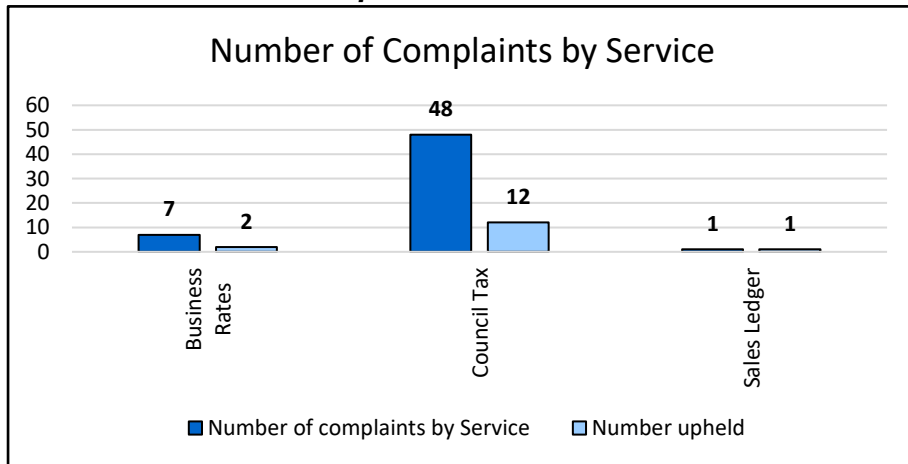
# Finance & Human Resources



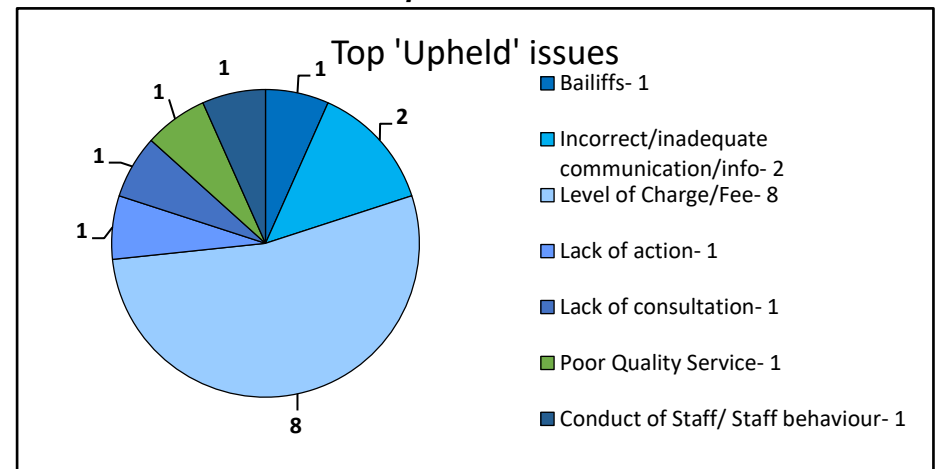
In 2019/20 126,503 paper Council Tax and Business Rates bills were issued and over £89,196,832 was collectable during the year.

Of the 54 complaints received by the Revenues Service 15 were upheld, two for Business Rates and 12 for Council Tax and one for Sales Ledger. In respect of Council Tax 7 of the 12 were related to the level of charge/fee and two were related to Incorrect/ Inadequate/ Inappropriate Communication/ Information where recovery notices had been issued incorrectly. The upheld complaints relating to Business Rates related to Incorrect/ Inadequate/ Inappropriate Communication/ Information a summons was issued incorrectly and the level of charge/fee.

**Table 17: Number of Complaints Finance & Human Resources**



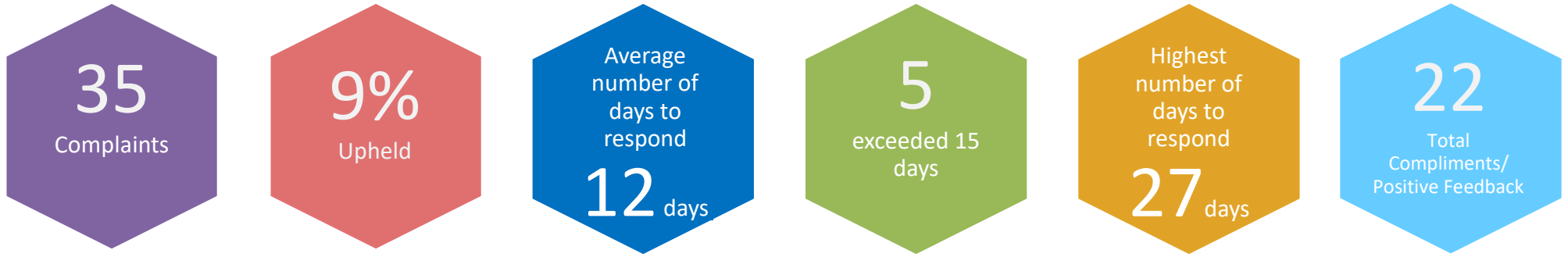
**Table 18: Number of Complaints Finance & Human Resources**



There were 8 issues related to the level of charge/fee. There were no other trends related to this directorate.

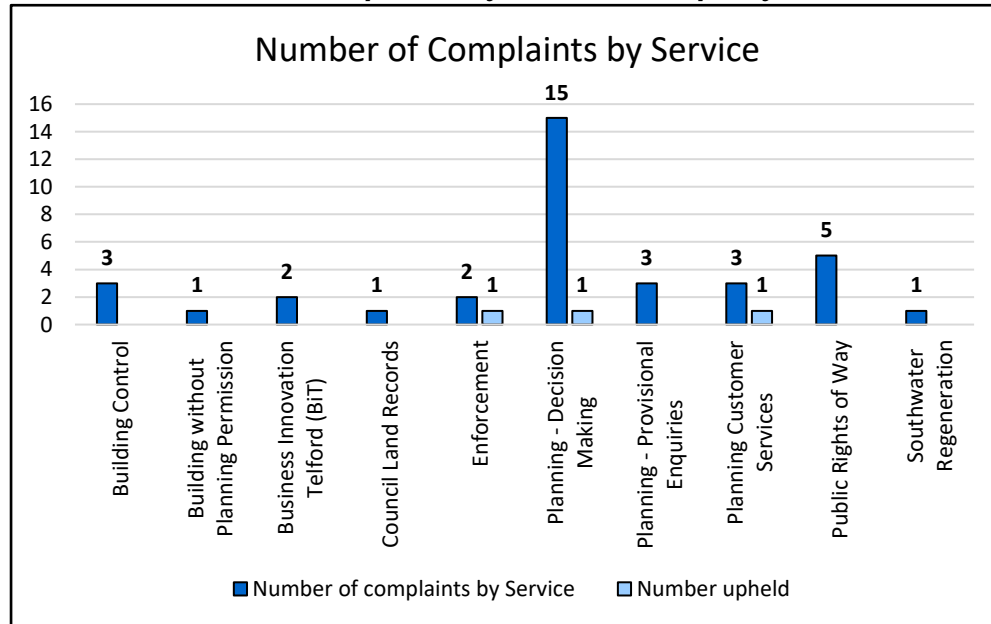


# Prosperity & Investment



The majority of the complaints were related to planning decisions and customers raising concerns regarding the process and procedures that led to the decision.

**Table 19: Number of Complaints by Service- Prosperity & Investment**



The majority of complaints were against Planning- Decision Making (15) only one of these complaints was upheld and this was related to staff conduct/behaviour. A number of multiple complaints regarding individual planning decisions and processes have been received this year.

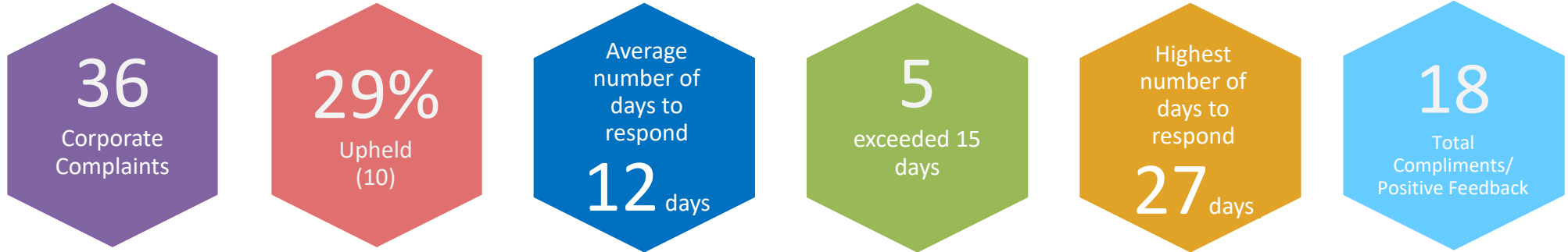
12 complaints progressed to Stage Two of the Corporate Complaints Policy in 2019/20, 7 of which were upheld at Stage Two. The Stage Two complaints were completed by Investigating Officers Independent of the Council. Learning has been identified and is detailed in page 20. Only three of the complaints were upheld at stage one of the Corporate Complaints Process.

Whilst this service has a number of complaints raising concerns regarding planning decisions only three complaints were upheld, on closer examination of the complaints the reasons that they were upheld was in the main due to conduct of staff/ staff behaviour (2) or lack of action (1).

There were no clear trends in this area.

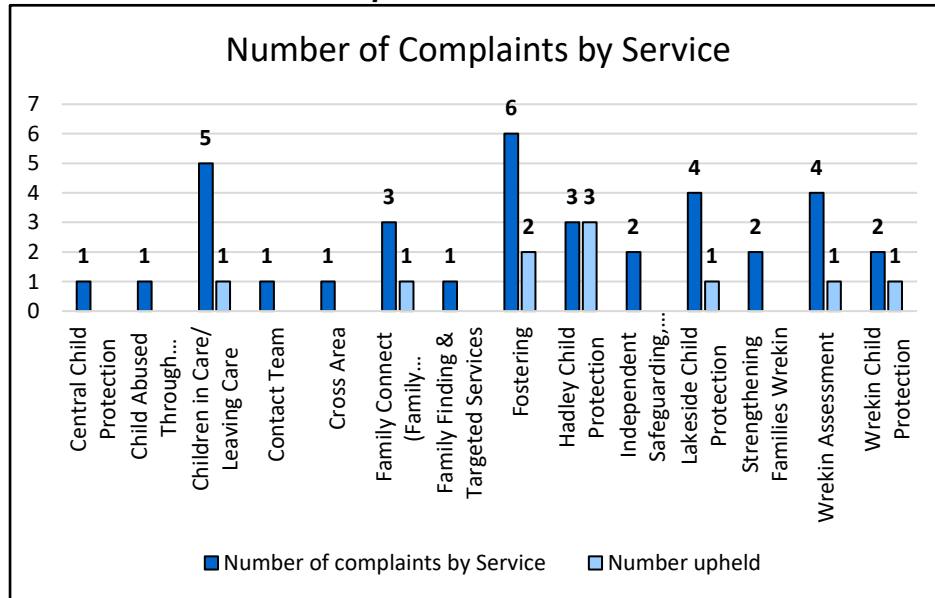


# Children's Safeguarding & Family Support



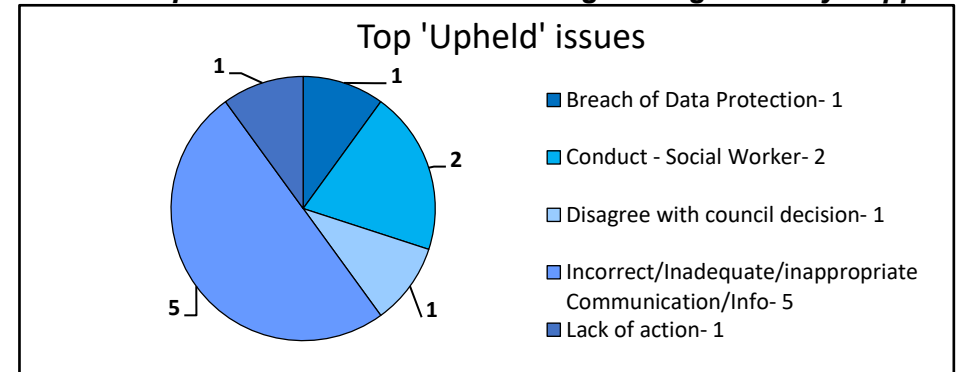
The majority of complaints were related to Fostering and Children in Care/ Leaving Care. Fostering complaints raised issues such as conduct of staff/behaviour, Incorrect/ Inadequate/ Inappropriate Communication/ info and disagreement with a charging policy. Children in care/leaving care complaints highlighted issues such as conduct of staff/behaviour, disagreement with council decision and Incorrect/ Inadequate/ Inappropriate Communication/ info. Involving lack of response from staff and disputed records following a subject access request. Three of the upheld complaints were in Hadley Child Protection, of the upheld complaints two related to Incorrect/ Inadequate/ Inappropriate Communication/ info involving information shared at a meeting and lack of communication and one related to lack of action.

**Table 20: Number of Complaints**



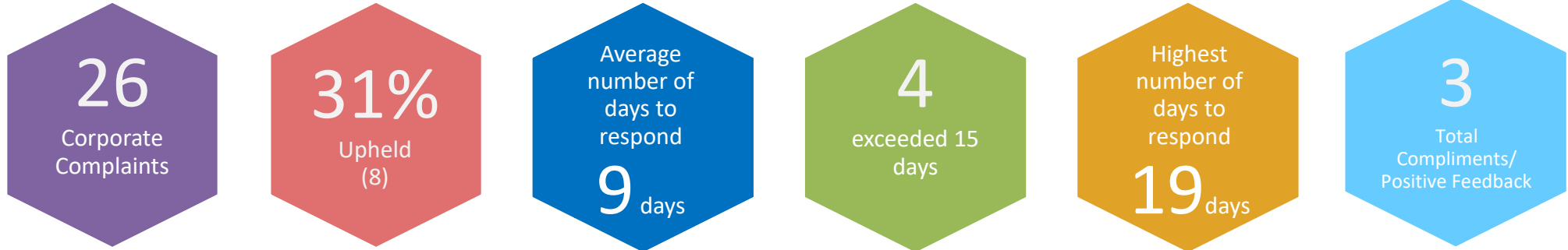
There were no further trends related to this directorate.

**Table 21: Upheld Issues- Children's Safeguarding & Family Support**

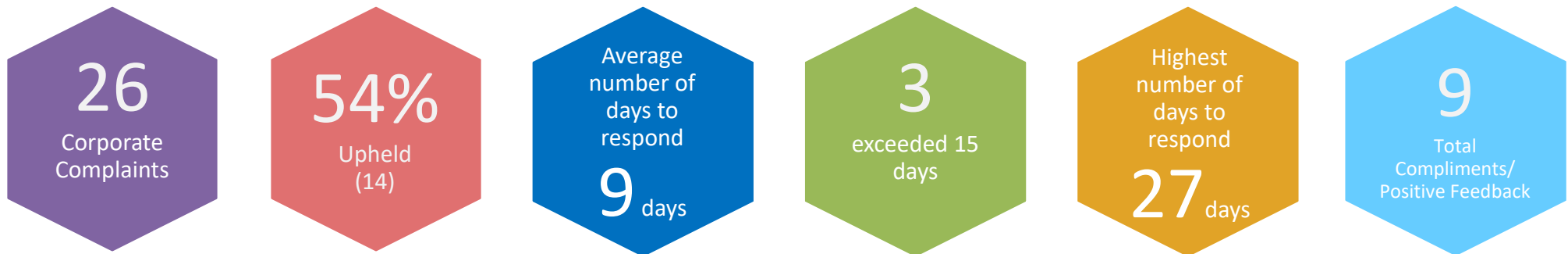




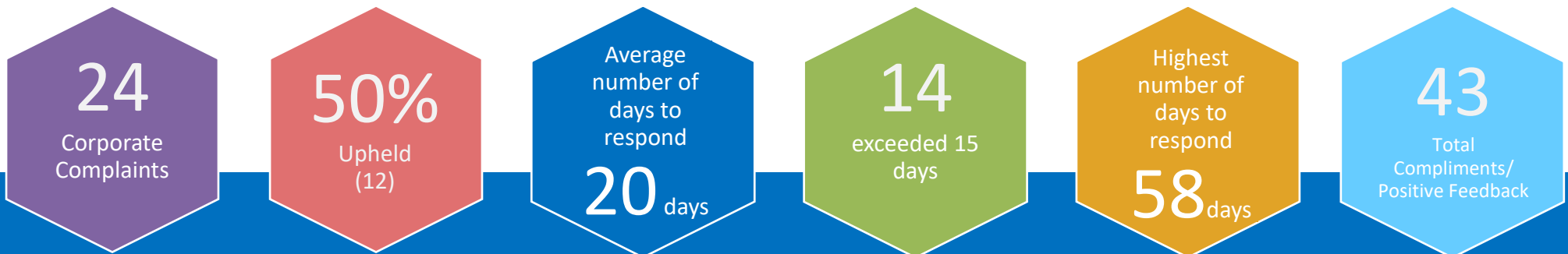
## Policy & Governance



## Cross Portfolio

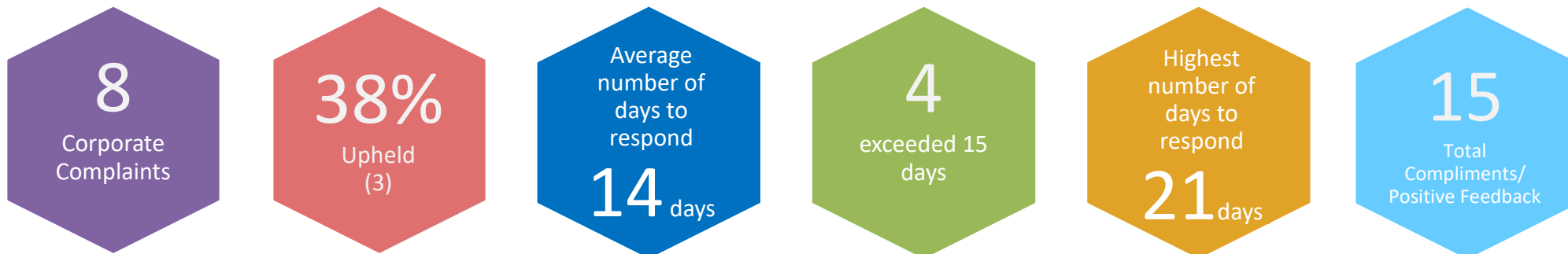


## Adult Social Care

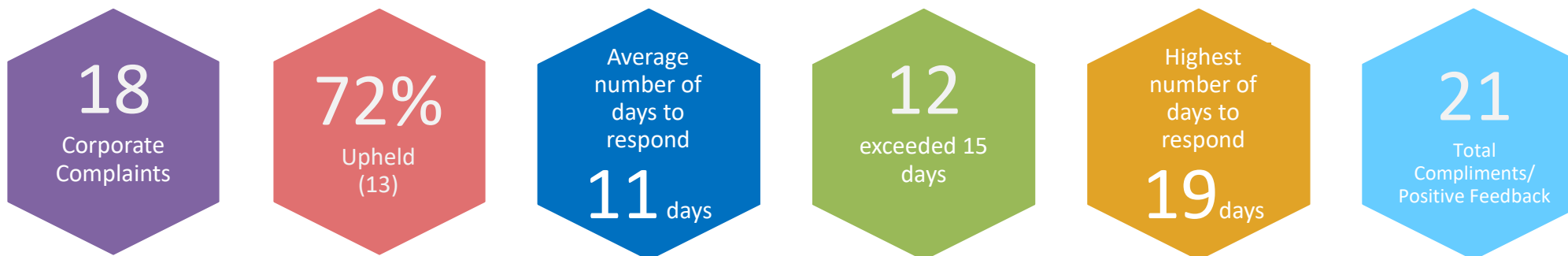




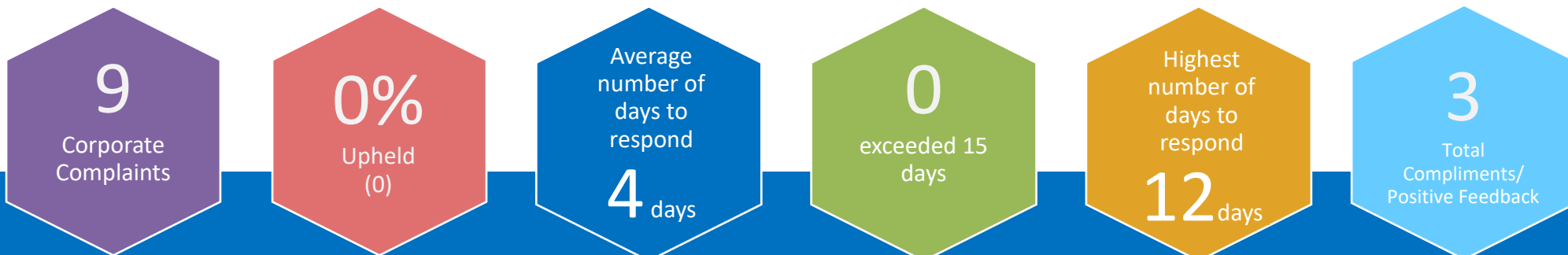
## Education & Skills



## Health, Wellbeing & Commissioning



## Housing, Employment & Infrastructure





## Corporate Communication

