

Annual Report: Compliments and Complaints

1st April 2024 - 31st March 2025

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1. Introduction

Rotherham Council has an ongoing commitment to being open and accountable, listening to the views of residents and communities and placing them at the heart of its services. Customer feedback through formal complaints and the way that the Council responds to complaints are vital indicators of the overall performance of the organisation. When the Council cannot resolve a problem straight away, our residents have the safety net of a formal complaint procedure through which they can find a resolution.

The Council can then also use the information gathered from the record of formal complaints, to consider how it delivers services. The Council is able to analyse trends, identifying learning and service improvements. This can then be used to improve customer care and make changes where necessary to our policy and procedures.

In 2024/25, the number of complaints received was slightly below the number recorded in the previous year (2023/24) and the third highest received in the last five years.

Overall, in terms of the complaints' procedure, the Council continued to maintain a high level of performance and improved the quality of service offered to residents via our learning from complaints process (see sections 5 to 9 of the report). There is a continued commitment to providing high quality, timely responses to formal complaints and the Council continues to learn and improve, based on the feedback received. Performance was just below the Council Plan target, with 81% of complaints being resolved in time.

The purpose of this report is to outline the complaints and compliments that the Council received between the 1st April 2024 and the 31st March 2025, highlighting key themes and trends. The report also explains how the Council has performed against the required standards and includes case studies demonstrating how services have learnt from complaints received. This is arguably the most important aspect of the complaints' process.

Feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board continues to be considered as part of these reports and in respect of the Council's handling of complaints throughout the year. The questions and queries raised are noted and subject to consideration.

Although customer feedback provides a valuable insight into how the Council is performing, complaints and compliments figures do not reflect the full picture. This report should, therefore, be understood within the context of the number of customers interacting with each service and any changes to those services that occurred within 2024/25.

In addition to this Annual Report, the Council's complaints data features throughout the Council's Performance Management Framework from the Council Plan through to frontline teams. Complaints information is included within service-level performance reports and is considered alongside other key performance indicators,

by performance officers, senior managers, and service leaders to inform service and process improvements. The Complaints Manager also attends Directorate Leadership teams to ensure there is strategic oversight and holds specific lessons learnt workshops, so staff understand and take preventative action to avoid further issues.

Furthermore, building on the key developments in 2024/25, priority areas of focus in respect of the Council's response to formal complaints, for next year will include:

- Work to improve performance to complaint procedure timescales, to make sure it meets Council Plan target of 85%. This includes the continued roll out of new reporting dashboards so that managers have direct access to their complaint information.
- Continue to increase the number of compliments recorded across the Council, the Complaints Team will continue to work with managers to ensure that the process for recording and reporting compliments is improved.
- The Complaints Team will complete a self-assessment every 12 months, to ensure compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and from April 2026 the new Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- Improved Housing Services online complaint information to include more resources for tenants, including learning from complaints case studies and advice and guidance about making a complaint.
- New internal "intranet" online information for Council staff to allow them to improve the way they investigate and respond to complaints. Including new staff guidance documents to improve the way the Council investigate complaints.
- Continue to seek ways to deliver training to front line staff to allow them to understand the role and purpose of the complaint procedures.
- Continue to provide bespoke training for Investigating Managers to allow them to provide a better investigation and response to formal complaints.
- Continue to work with management meetings across the Council to help them find service improvement from complaint investigations and to ensure that all learning is considered and the service improvements are recorded.
- The Complaints Team will work with Council directorates to determine if there is anything more that can be done to resolve a complaint after notification that an Ombudsman investigation has been received.

2. Key Headlines – 2024/25

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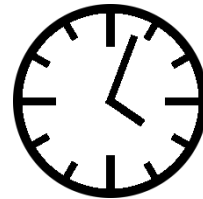
1198 complaints were received compared with 1212 in 2023/24, this is a decrease of 1%.

1309 compliments were received compared with 902 in 2023/24, this is a 45% increase.



More complaints were upheld. 369 or 31% were upheld in 2024/25 compared to 294 or 25% in 2023/24.

Fewer complaints were responded to within timescales. 81% in 2024/25 compared with 82% in 2023/24.



8 complaints were investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman. This is a 33% increase from 2023/24 when 6 were investigated.

Fewer complaints were received regarding the quality of service. 373 compared to 405 in 2023/24, which is an 8% decrease.



A 22% decrease in complaints regarding the behaviour and attitude of staff. 133 compared with 170 in 2023/24.

More complaints were responded to in time by:

Adult Services (77% from 75%).
R+E (85% from 79%).
Assistant Chief Executive (67% from 60%).



Fewer Complaints were responded to in time by:

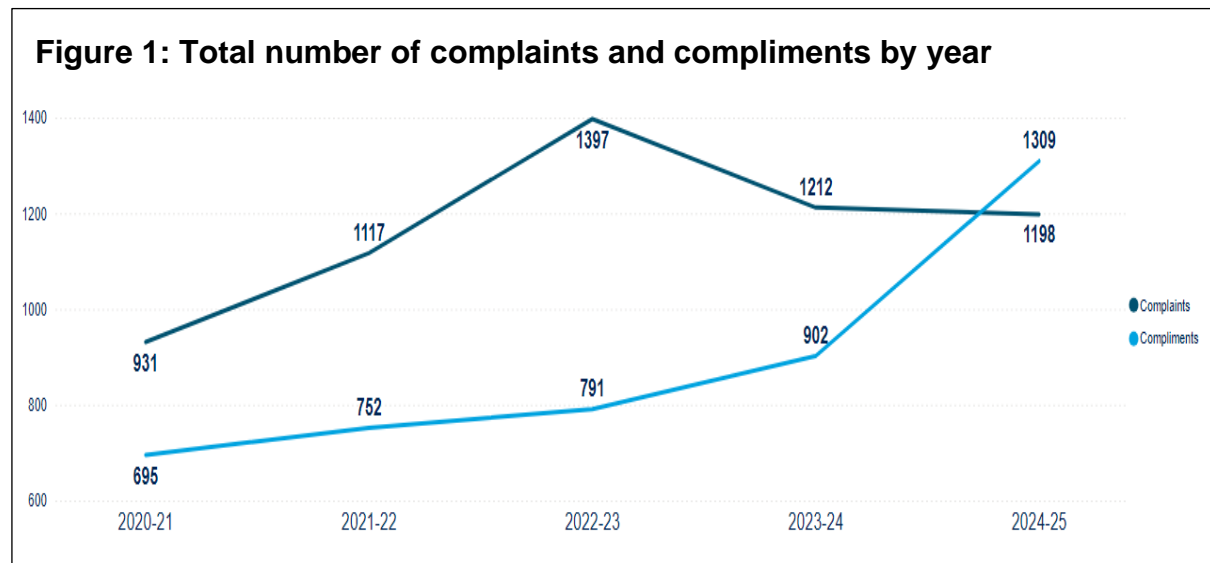
Housing Services (76% from 81%).
CYPS (79% from 89%).
Finance and Customer Service (88% from 91%).

More escalations through the complaint procedure. 43 or 4% were escalated to stage 2 compared to 37 or 3% in 2023/24.



3. Overview

3.1 Summary



In 2024/25, the overall number of complaints received by the Council decreased by 1%, going from 1,212 in 2023/24 to 1,198. This maintains the trend of a declining number of complaints from the 1,397 that were received in 2022/23. However, the overall number of complaints received in 2024/25 is still the third highest number received in the last five years.

It also should be noted that in the first three months of 2025/26, 324 complaints were received compared to 281 in the same period in 2024/25, which is a 15% increase. Therefore, the downward trend of the last two years has not continued into the current year and an overall increase in 2025/26 is anticipated given this performance.

The Council provides a wide variety of services to over 276,000 residents. In this context, 1,198 complaints are only a fraction of the number of customer interactions occurring each year. For example, the Council received more than 1.3m new web visitors in 2024/25.

The number of compliments recorded by the Council increased, from 902 in 2023/24 to 1,309 (an increase of 45 percent), a year-on-year increase. This is the greatest number of compliments received in the last five years and means that the Council received more compliments than complaints. This is the first time in the last five years that compliments received have exceeded the numbers of complaints received.

Continued efforts by Council Services to capture more of the positive feedback of residents is reflected in this increase. There is significantly better engagement of staff in the process of recording the compliments they received; staff have responded to requests that they make sure that all the compliments they receive are recorded.

It is recognised that both compliments and complaints procedures need to be easy and accessible for customers to allow them to provide valuable feedback.

A breakdown on the numbers of complaints received and how much they changed, by directorate or service is as follows:

- The largest absolute increase was in Regeneration and Environment from 373 to 468, a percentage increase of 25%.
- The second largest increase was in Children and Young People's Services from 64 to 95, a percentage increase of 48%.
- Adult Care Services also increased from 64 to 69, a percentage increase of 7%.
- Finance and Customer Services slightly increased, from 91 to 92, a percentage increase of 1%.
- Housing Services saw the largest decrease in complaints from 615 to 471, a percentage decrease of 23%.
- Assistant Chief Executive's directorate also decreased, from 5 to 3.
- Public Health remained unchanged at zero complaints received.

The following diagrams (Figure 2 and 3) show the breakdown of complaints and compliments by Directorate in 2023/4 and 2024/25. Housing and Adult Care are shown separately as they have different complaint procedures in respect of the complaints received, due to the legislative and Ombudsman requirements governing them.

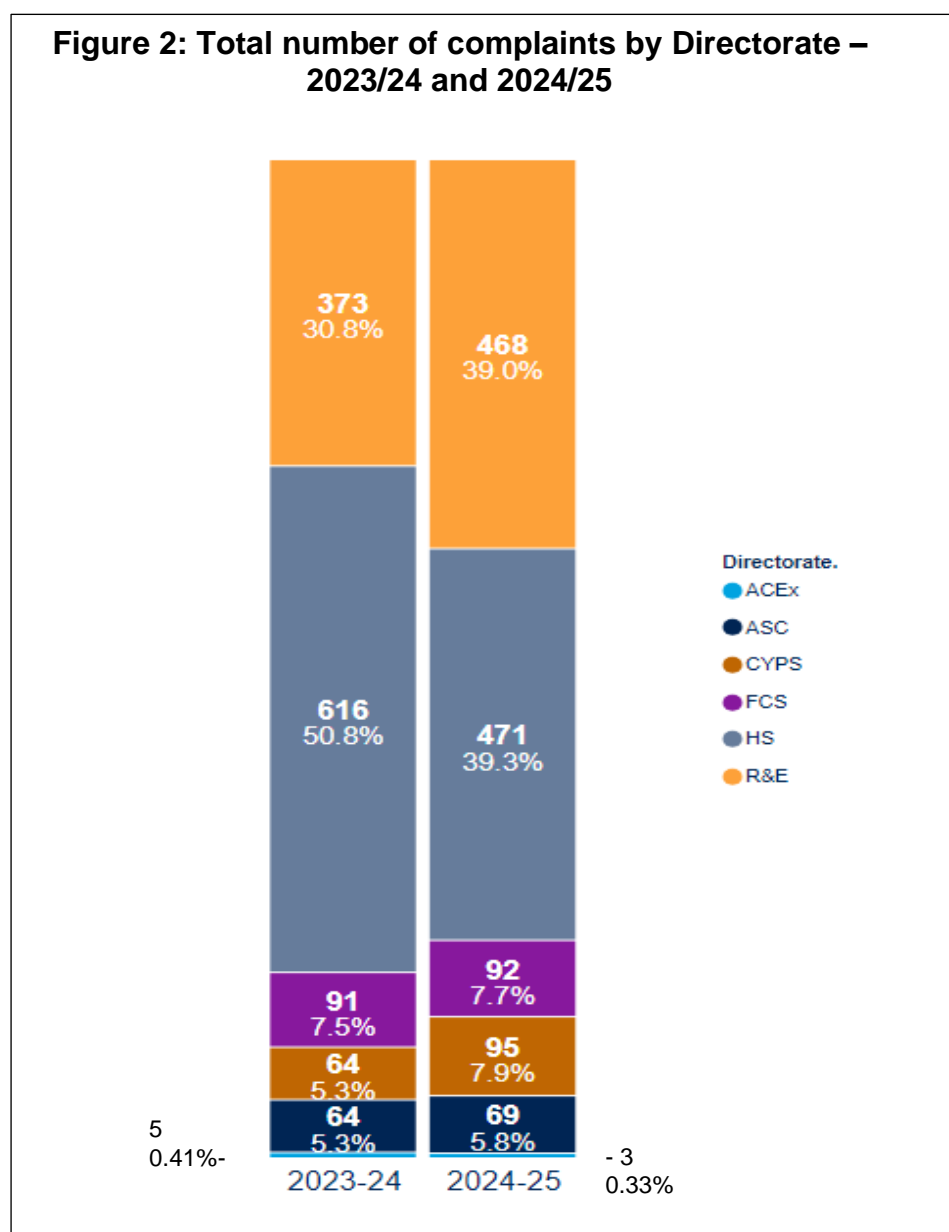


Figure 2 shows that the two highest areas for complaints were Housing Services and Regeneration and Environment. This is consistent with previous years' figures, as these areas typically receive the highest volume of complaints. They deal with the largest number of customers and are responsible for a high number of service transactions over the year.

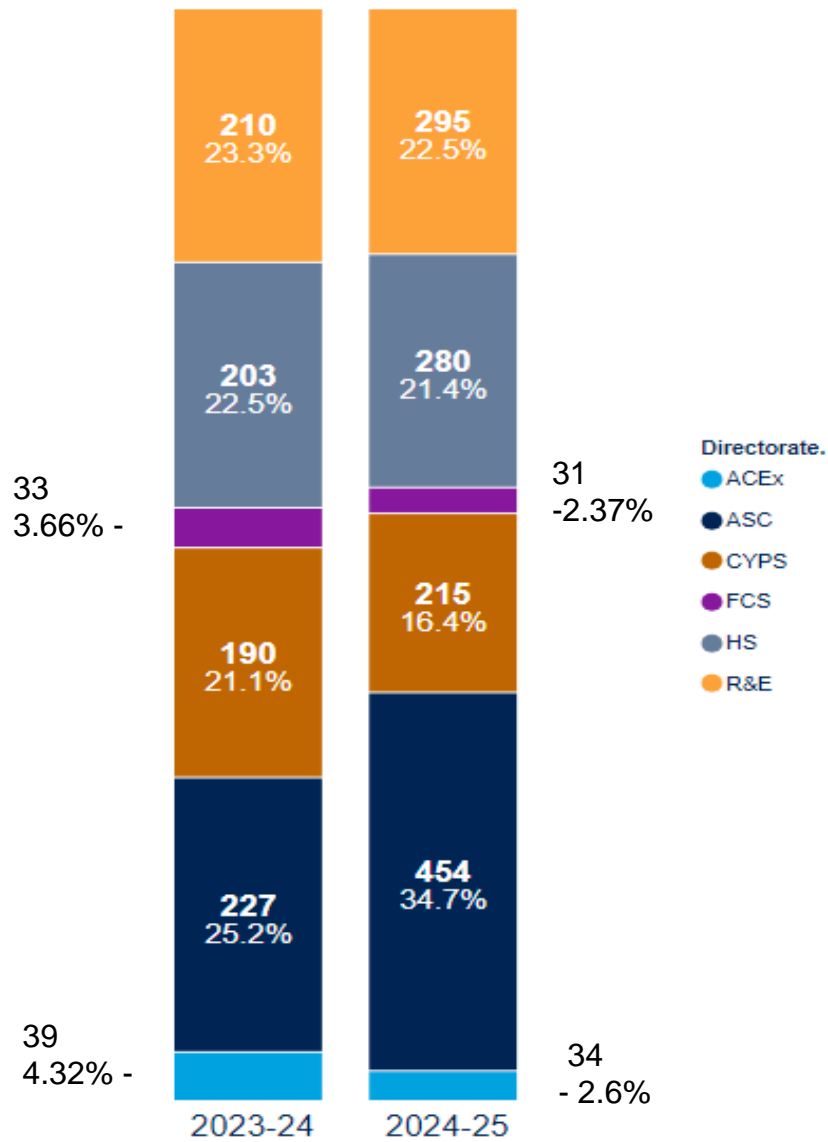
The number of complaints received generally correlates with the number of residents that are served by the directorate. Therefore, a directorate receiving a higher volume of complaints is not necessarily reflective of poor performance and should be understood within the context of services provided.

The increase in Regeneration and Environment complaints was primarily due to an increase in Waste Management complaints, from 165 to 267. The other notable increase in complaints was in Children and Young People's Services, where complaints in their Education Health and Care Assessment Team (EHCAT) increased from 14 to 24 and First Response Services increased from 8 to 14. Please see sections 6 and 7 for further information. The small increase in Adult Care was due to an increase in Specialist Services from 8 to 16 complaints received and Provider Service from 8 to 10 received.

Regarding the number of compliments received, most departments saw an increase with Adult Care services seeing the biggest absolute increase with 227 more received, followed by Regeneration and Environment, with 85 more received and Housing Services with 77 more received.

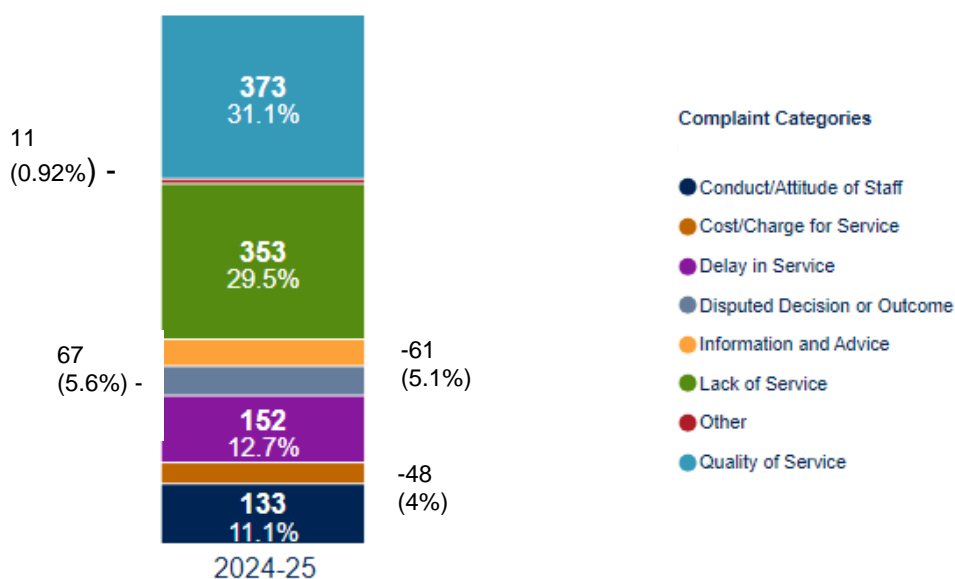
The scale of this increase is very positive and illustrates that there can be a better engagement in the compliment process by staff, to make sure that all positive feedback is captured including feedback from satisfaction surveys.

Figure 3: Total number of compliments by Directorate – 2022/23 and 2023/24



As part of the process of monitoring and handling customer feedback, the Complaints Team is responsible for categorising complaints based on the subject matter. The following diagram outlines the categories of complaints received in 2024/25:

Figure 4: Total number of complaints by category – 2024/25



The largest number of complaints received was in connection with the quality of service with 373, equating to 31.1% of all complaints received. Complaints within this category have decreased in absolute terms from the 404, equating to 33%, of all complaints, that were received in 2023/24.

Lack of service accounted for the second highest category of complaints, with 353 of all complaints received (equating to 29.5%). Complaints within this category have increased from 309 (equating to 25%) in 2023/24.

The third highest category of complaints was conduct/attitude of staff at 133 of all complaints received (equating to 11.1% of all complaints). Complaints within this category have decreased from 170 in 2023/24.

The numbers of complaints in the categories of quality of service and lack of service were significant across all directorates. In terms of the 373 complaints received regarding the quality of service, 51% were in Housing Services which accounted for 192 complaints received. Furthermore, 70 of these were received in Housing Property Services (who are responsible for programmed works and repairs inspections) and another 70 of these were received in relation to repair contractors, (see section 5.2).

The majority of the complaints categorised as lack of service were within Regeneration and Environment, with 226 of the 353 total complaints in this category (see section 7). Of the number received this can be further broken down with 176 in the Street Scene department, of which 138 were in Waste and Recycling.

In addition to reporting against general subject areas there is a need to report complaints in more detail to directorate and service management teams. To assist with this level of reporting, additional complaint classifications were developed, reviewed

at year end, and updated. These are service specific and more accurately reflect the types of complaints received for the various areas of the Council.

Examples of the most common complaint types recorded by this classification are as follows:

- No service provided / action taken
- Delay in service being provided/action taken
- Quality / standard of work
- Conduct
- Missed appointment/service
- Application / assessment outcome or decision
- Attitude
- Lack of communication
- Dispute over liability or debt
- Damage to property
- Incorrect / inaccurate written or verbal advice
- Lack of enforcement action / sufficiency of enforcement action
- Lack of information / advice
- No response to enquiry
- Refusal to provide service/take action
- Data protection / information security
- General practice / competence
- Lack of financial support / eligibility
- Application of policy
- Delay in response to enquiry
- Policy
- Appeal / inappropriate enforcement action
- Delay in application/assessment

For further detail around individual directorate complaint trends, please see sections 5 to 11 of this report.

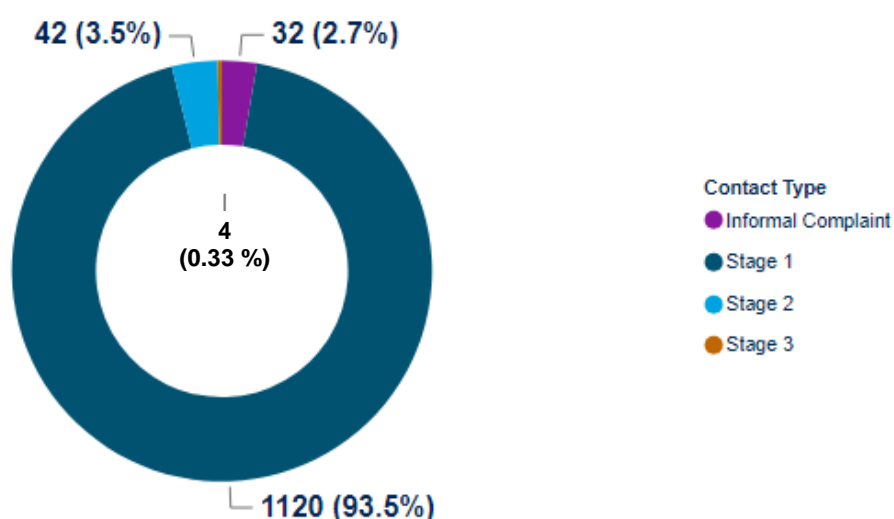
It should also be noted that more complaints were upheld in terms of the percentage of complaints responded to. This is where the Council has investigated and found a problem with the service provided, with 369 or 31% of all complaints, upheld. In contrast, 294 or 24% of all complaints were upheld in 2023/24 and 443 or 32% were upheld in 2022/23. Sections 5 to 11 contain more detail of upheld complaints by directorate and how the Council has learnt from upheld complaints.

3.2 Dealing with Complaints

The Council follows four different complaints' procedures: Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care, Housing and the Corporate Complaints Procedure. The Social Care complaints procedures are legislative and have individual statutory requirements about how complaints are dealt with.

A relatively small proportion of complaints are not taken through the formal complaints procedure (referred to as informal complaints). These are complaints that are in relation to council policy or decisions that have been formally approved in Cabinet. In these cases, the complaint is not taken through the formal procedure as it cannot be upheld, however all complainants receive a formal (written) response. This report includes these complaints in the overall total figures. In 2024/25, this amounted to only 32 (3%) out of a total of 1,198 complaints. This is a slight increase on 2023/24 when this was 26 (2%) out of a total of 1,212 complaints.

Figure 5: Percentage of complaints escalating through the complaint procedures

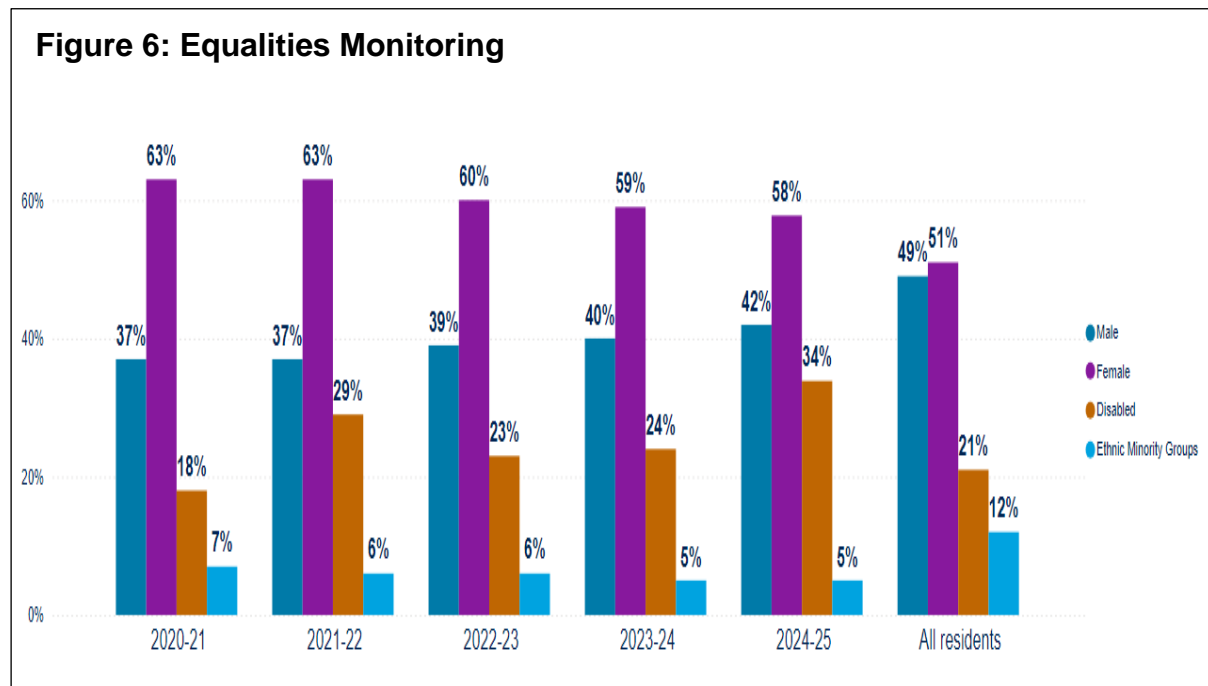


The diagram above outlines the number of complaints that reached the various stages of the complaints procedures.

The extent to which complaints escalate through the complaints procedure is an important measure, as it is preferable to find resolutions for customers at the earliest possible stage in the process. As shown in figure 5, the majority of complaints (93.5%) were resolved at Stage 1, only 42 or 3.5% of all complaints, were escalated to Stage 2, compared with 37, or 3%, in 2023/24. Only 4, or 0.33%, of all complaints received were considered at Stage 3, which is a Members Review Panel for corporate complaints.

3.3 Equalities Monitoring

The Council collects equalities information via its online complaints' webform. This entails collecting the demographics of customers making formal complaints. This information is then used to ensure that the complaints process is fair and accessible for all customers.



- All resident data based on 2021 census
- Complaints information was captured on the online complaints form

The information received indicates that significantly more female customers complained about Council services in 2024/25, and this is a consistent trend over the last five years. All directorates recorded a higher number of female complainants. For example, in Housing Services the percentage of female complainants was 55% and Regeneration and Environment it was 64%.

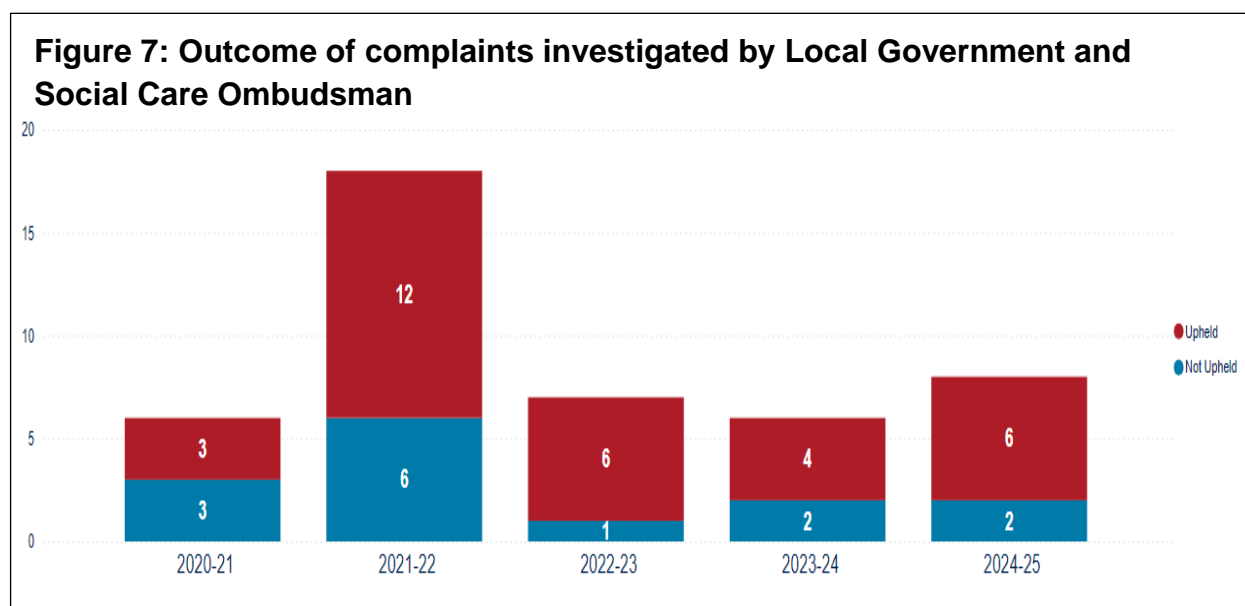
It is also noted that numbers have increased for those customers who are disabled, which is above the average for all residents. That is 34% of those complainants who have completed the online form compared to 21% total resident population. In addition, the number of customers in ethnic minority groups who have made a complaint has remained at the same proportion and is lower than the average 'all residents' figure. This represents 5% of those complainants who have completed the online form compared to 12% of the total resident population.

3.4 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

If complainants are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint as investigated through the Council's Complaints Procedure, they can escalate their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). 47 complaints enquiries were directed to the LGSCO in 2024/25 (46 received in 2023/24) and of these, the

LGSCO investigated 8 (6 were investigated in 2023/24). This is within the range of average numbers escalating to the Ombudsman, following an unprecedented number investigated in 2021/22, which was mainly due to the Ombudsman working through a backlog of cases caused by their temporary closure during the height of the pandemic.

Figure 7 (see below) illustrates the number of complaints considered by the Ombudsman over the last five years. It shows that there have been 45 complaints investigated by the LGSCO, between the financial years of 2020/21 and 2024/25 with a five-year average of 9 per year.



In 2024/25, more complaints were investigated, and more complaints were upheld by the LGSCO than in the previous year. 8 investigations compared to 1,198 complaints is 0.7% of formal complaints received that have escalated to the LGSCO.

6 complaints out of the 8 investigations were upheld, which means that the Ombudsman found fault and agreed with the complainant. This equates to an upheld rate of 75%, which is a stronger performance than the Ombudsman's figure of the average upheld rate of similar authorities at 81%. 3 upheld complaints were in Children and Young People's Services, 3 were in Adult Care services and 2 in Planning and Building Control.

Appendix 1 outlines the LGSCO decisions for the Council for 2024/25 and how these compare with 15 statistical neighbouring councils. In 2024/25, the Council is in the top quarter in terms of the numbers investigated and the numbers upheld. It ranks as third out of 15 of the total investigated and third out of 15 of those complaints that were upheld. In the previous year, 2023/24, the Council also benchmarked in the top quartile for the number investigated and number upheld (4th out of 15 for both).

Furthermore, it shows that the majority of complaints that were brought to the LGSCO (52 considered and decided in 2024/25), were deemed invalid or incomplete and referred back for local resolution or closed after initial enquiries. This, along with

the relatively low number of investigations (0.7 % escalation rate) positively reflects that the Council's complaints procedures are working effectively, to find fair and appropriate local resolutions.

3.5 Housing Ombudsman

From April 2013, the Housing Ombudsman has dealt with all complaints from tenants regarding social housing. There were 4 decisions made by the Housing Ombudsman in 2024/25 and they were all upheld in part. In comparison, there were 4 decisions in 2023/24, and they were also all partially upheld.

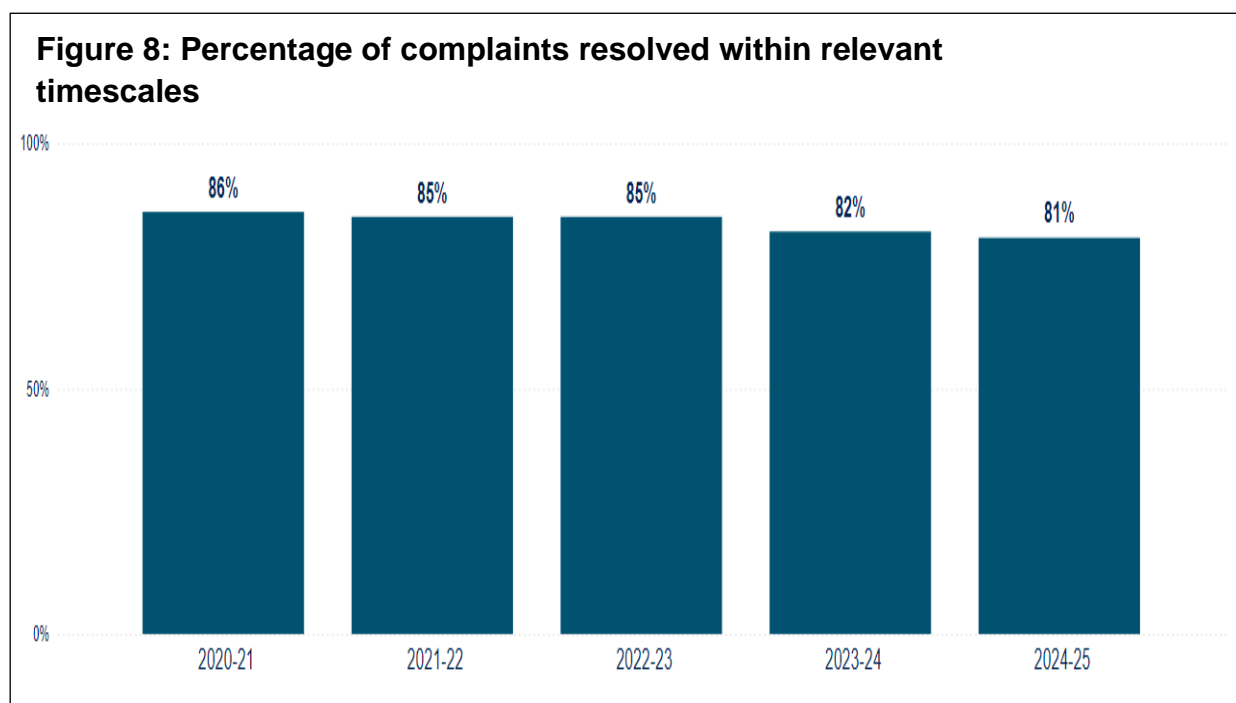
The complaint issues in these decisions were regarding property condition complaints handling, occupancy rights and estate management.

4. Performance

4.1 Performance Overview

Performance against the time allowed by the formal complaints procedure is monitored through regular (weekly, monthly, and quarterly) performance reports presented to Council Directorate Leadership Team meetings and Service Management Team meetings.

The following graph compares the overall Council performance against timescales for the past five years:



Performance has decreased to 81% of complaint responses within the target timescale in 2024/25. It is slightly below the five-year average of 84% and did not meet the Council Plan target of 85%. Across the Council, 4 out of 7 service areas did not meet target. There will be further efforts made across all those Council services who did not meet the target of performance to timescales, see sections 5 to 9 for the details of the service areas' individual performance.

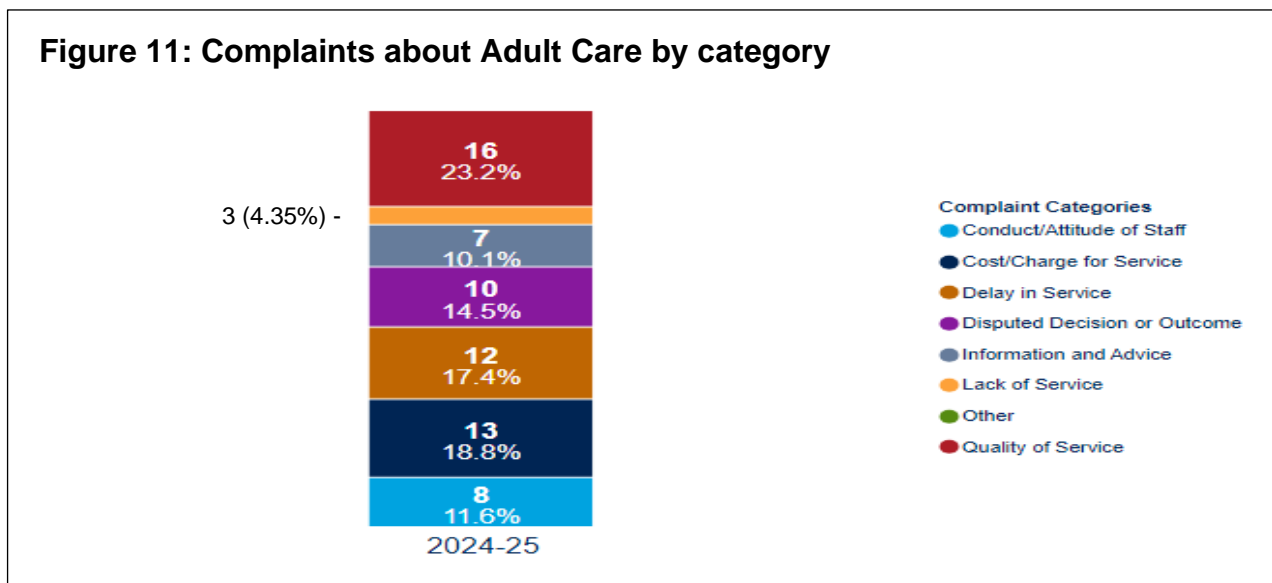
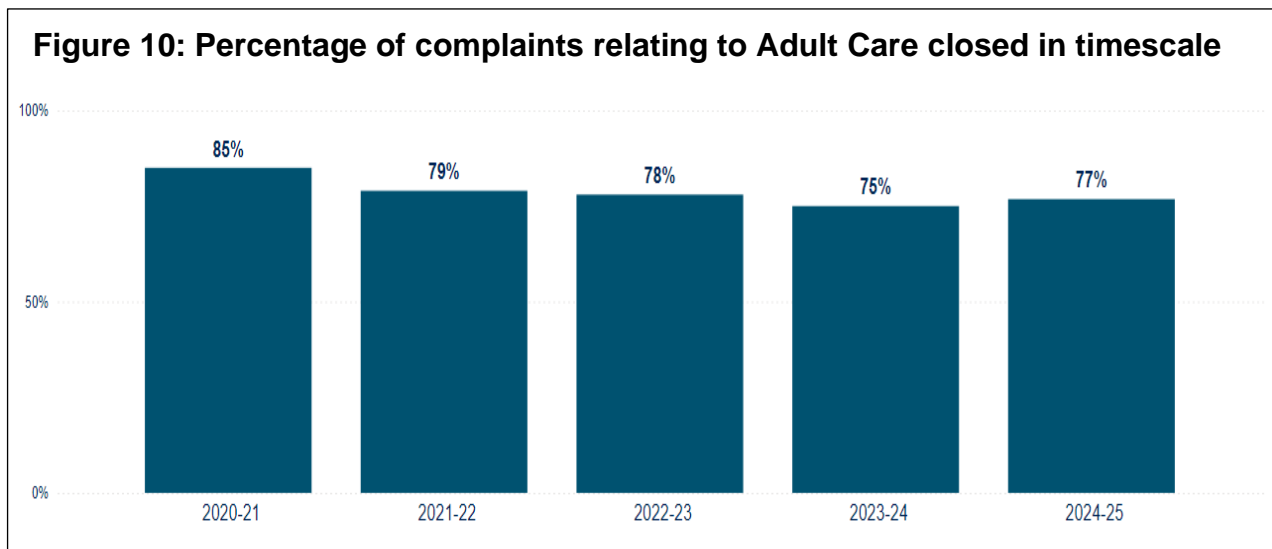
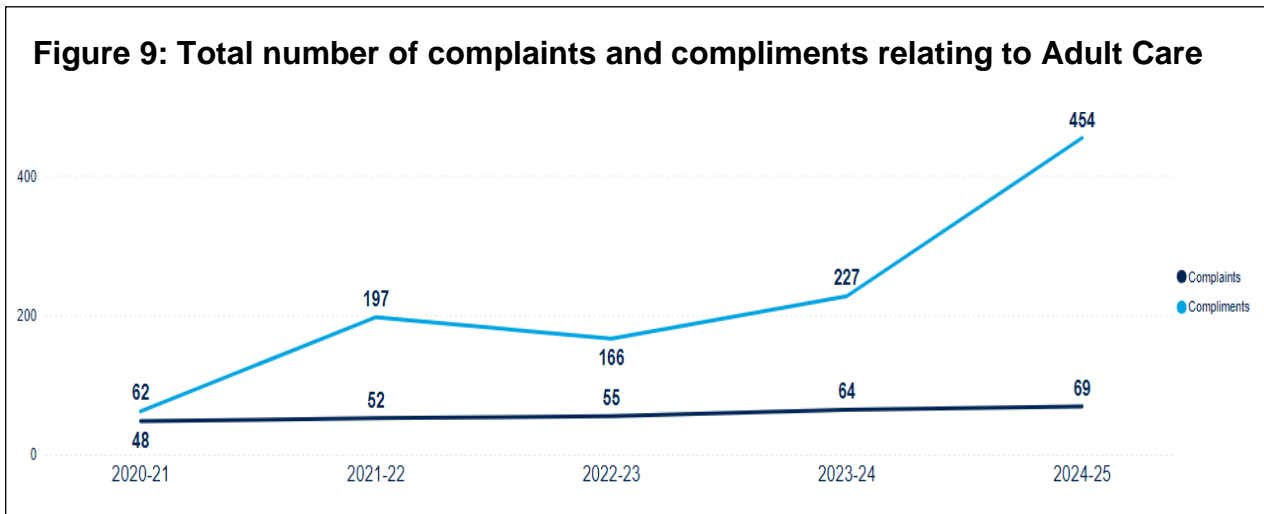
4.2 How we are improving

Improving the way that complaints are dealt with requires a whole Council approach, with services prioritising complaints and making improvements based on the feedback from customers. Therefore, it is the responsibility of every service to make responding to complaints and learning from customer feedback a priority.

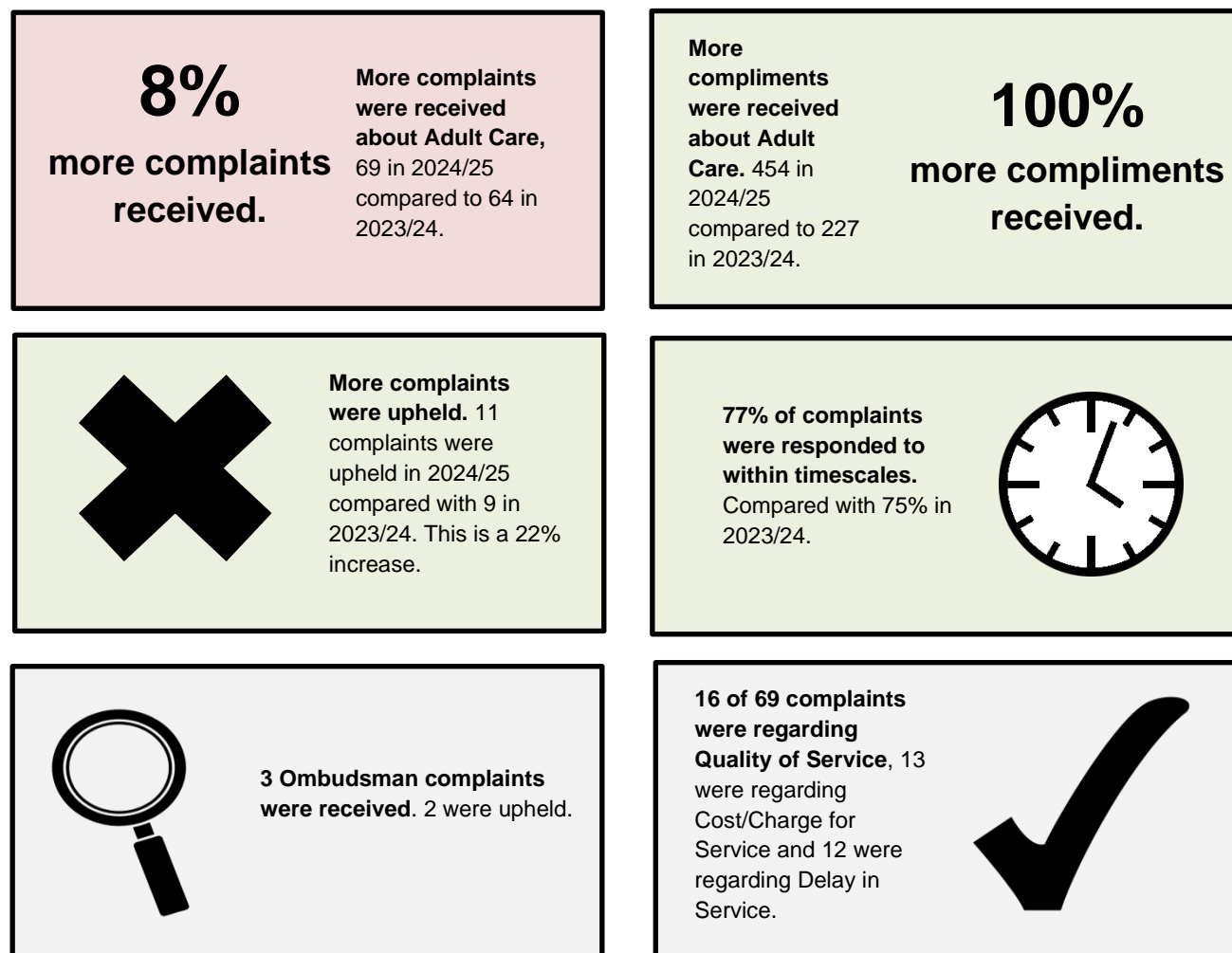
A number of service improvements have been made over the year based on feedback from our customers. Key themes of service improvements have included the training and performance management of staff, reviews of processes and policies and the revision of communication materials. Examples of case studies where service improvements have been made based on complaints, are outlined within each directorate section.

5. Adult Care, Housing and Public Health Directorate

5.1 Adult Care



5.1.1 Key Headlines



Prevalent themes which emerged specifically within upheld and partially upheld complaints for adult services complaints were:

- Dispute over liability or debt
- Application / assessment outcome or decision
- Delay in service being provided / action taken
- Lack of information / advice
- Delay in application / assessment

There was an increase in the number of formal complaints regarding Adult Care of 8%, with 69 received in 2024/25, compared to 64 2023/24. In terms of the Services and Teams within Adult Care, the largest increase in complaints received was in Specialist Services, increasing from 8 to 16 complaints received. The second largest increase in complaints was in Provider Services (*Residential and home care services*) which increased from 8 complaints received in 2023/24 to 10 in 2024/25.

The Access and Prevention Service has had the largest decrease, 50%, from 18 in 2023/24 to 9 in 2024/25. This was mainly as a result of a decrease in the number of complaints received in the Hospital Social Work Team from 12 in 2023/24 to 6 in 2024/25.

Other Services saw a small decrease in complaints received, Locality Social Work Teams (*responsible for Care Act assessments in the community*), reduced to 26 complaints in 2024/25 from 28 complaints in 2023/24. The types of complaints they received were regarding the outcome of assessment, delay and communication / information and advice.

Examples of some of the compliments received for Adult Care in 2024/25:

Compliment for Access and Prevention Service. *"They have been excellent and really supportive in ensuring the correct level of care is provided. Their help has been really appreciated we'd be lost without the care and support given"*

Compliment for the Localities Service. *"Just wanted to point out, that I know it's 'just your job' but I think you have a real sense of understanding and compassion. You've been a star so far and really understanding, so thank you."*

Compliment for an Assessment Coordinator. *"Thank you so much for all your help in this difficult time for our family. Your guidance through the process was greatly appreciated"*

Compliment for a Social Worker. *"Thank you so much for how you have supported us through the last couple of months, it has been a breath of fresh air working with you"*

5.1.2 Lessons Learned

Adult Care made several service improvements based on customer feedback in 2024/25. An example of these improvements is outlined in the case study below:

The Complaint

A resident complained about a payment plan arranged to pay care home rent arrears. She believed she was not liable for the debt and was also dissatisfied with the manner in which she was treated.

What did the Council do?

Following a thorough investigation, it was confirmed that the resident was not responsible for payment. As a result, the Council agreed to refund all payments made toward the arrears. Additionally, a request for compensation was approved.

To address the concerns raised, the following actions were taken:

The Revenue and Payments team have received customer service training where needed.

The Council acknowledged that it had failed to properly assess the resident's financial situation over the 8-year period and did not act appropriately.

The debt recovery process will be reviewed, with particular focus on how payment plans are set up.

Staff training procedures were also reviewed to ensure employees are equipped to handle sensitive calls, especially those involving bereavement.

Who is better off?

Residents facing similar circumstances, particularly during bereavement, will benefit from improved customer service and more thorough financial assessments before any debt recovery actions are taken.

5.2 Housing Services

Figure 12: Total number of complaints and compliments relating to Housing Services

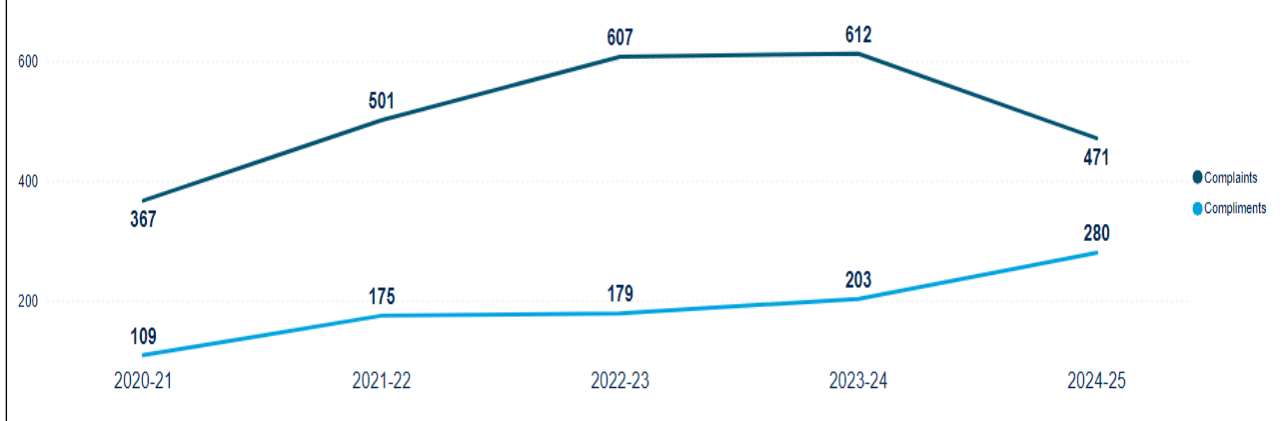


Figure 13: Percentage of complaints about Housing Services closed within timescales

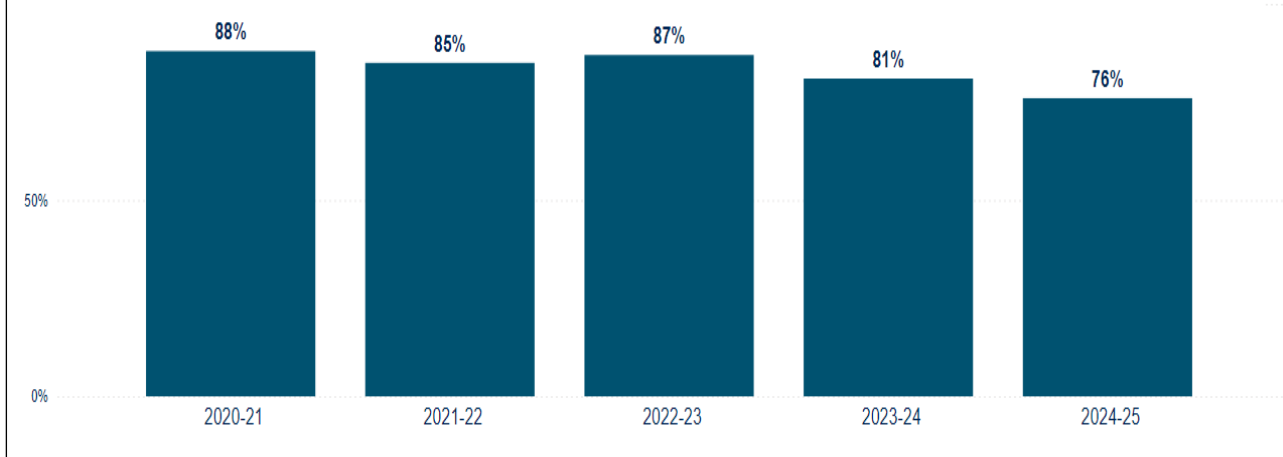
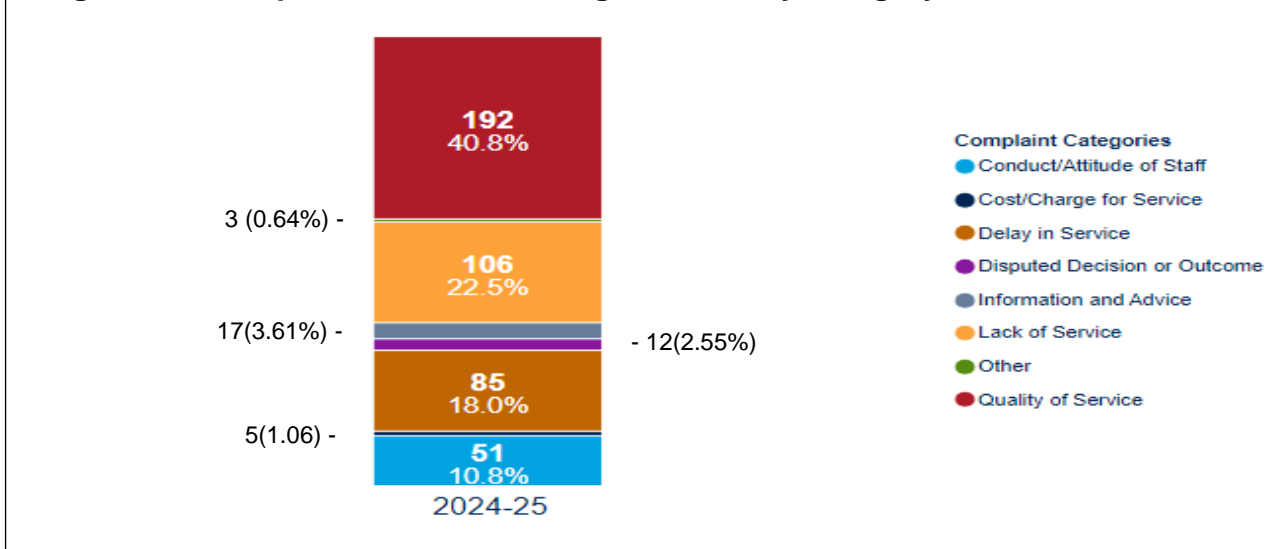


Figure 14: Complaints about Housing Services by category



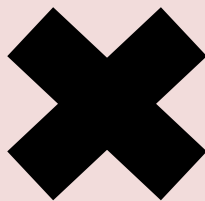
5.2.1 Key Headlines

23%
less complaints
received

Less complaints about Housing Services were received, 471 in 2024/25 compared with 615 in 2023/24.

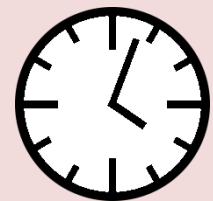
Compliments have increased, 280 in 2024/25 compared to 203 in 2023/24.

38%
more compliments
received



Higher proportion of upheld complaints
25% (117 upheld) in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24 21% (131 upheld).

75% of complaints were responded to within timescales. This is a decrease from 81% in 2023/24.



4 Ombudsman complaint decisions were received. **They were all upheld in part.**

192 (or 41%) complaints were regarding quality of service, 106 were regarding a lack of service and 85 were regarding a delay in service



Themes which emerged specifically within upheld and partially upheld complaints for Housing Services complaints were:

- Quality of service provided.
- Lack of service provided.
- Delay in service being provided.
- Conduct / Attitude of staff.

41% of all complaints received were categorised as the quality of service (192) provided. Two other common themes were complaints regarding a lack of service provided 23% (106) and a delay in service 18% (85).

Complaints received for Housing Services decreased by 23%. This is against the trend of a decrease of 1% in the total number of complaints the Council received

All Housing Services with the exception Strategic Housing and Development (increase of 1) saw a decrease in the number of complaints received during 2024/25 compared to 2023/24. Housing Income saw the greatest decrease in complaints, reducing by 70%, from 2023/24 to 2024/25 (77 to 23).

Housing and Estates also saw a 38% decrease in complaints from 2023/24 to 2024/25 (136 to 85). 51% (43) of these complaints were categorised as relating to a lack of service being provided. Another common theme identified from the 85 complaints that the Service received was regarding the quality of service provided, which accounted for 19% (16) of complaints.

Examples of some of the compliments received for Housing Services in 2024/25:

"I would like say how comfortable the operatives made me, and my son feel yesterday especially a lovely young lad called XXXXX. My son has complex needs and XXXX spoke to him and my son actually spoke back to him and he doesn't even speak to his teachers. He asked if we would be ok for him to use his drill as my son is Autistic and he doesn't like loud noise. He kept checking on us to ensure we were ok with the noise and also the dust. I want to give them credit for being amazing. They kept my property clean and tidy as well, very respectful lads they did a brilliant job, thank you"

"I would like to say a huge thank you for everything you have done to help me and my son to secure a flat. We are so grateful to not only you but your team. You have gone above and beyond helping us including answering all of my questions and being there to listen to my concerns and worries without judging me. You and your team probably don't get the credit you deserve; you guys do such an amazing job behind the scenes. It was a pleasure having you as my officer. Please carry on with the amazing work that you do. You guys do make a difference to people. Thank you once again."

"Staff were incredibly professional, empathetic, and efficient, we truly appreciate the timely communication, clear explanations, and the overall warmth shown by everyone involved. Keep up the excellent work! You are truly making a difference, and I'm confident many others will benefit from your outstanding service"

5.2.2 Lessons Learned

Housing Services has added to its change and improvement programme 2024/25 by introducing a tenant learning from complaints panel.

Background

The purpose of the panel is to build an effective partnership between tenants and the RMBC Complaints team to improve how the Council is learning from tenants' complaints.

What does the panel do?

Provide tenants with the opportunity to analyse real complaints and give feedback on how they feel the Council responded.

Provide an opportunity for tenants to examine and challenge Housing Services performance in relation to learning from complaints.

Council officers share with the panel how their feedback has been used and the positive difference it can make to tenants.

The Council uses the feedback captured from the panel to develop services and report into senior management. The Council works with Rotherfed to share with the group how their feedback has been used. Rotherfed informs the wider tenant population about the impact the panel has had on improving services and how complaints are responded to.

The panel meets every three months.

Who is better off?

This will benefit all current and future Council tenants.

Learning from Complaint examples.

The following topics were discussed by the panel and report into housing management meetings:

- *Communication breakdowns*
- *Contractor and sub-contractor conduct*
- *Property condition and voids*
- *Respect for tenant's homes*
- *Accessibility and inclusion*
- *Accountability and follow-through*

5.3 Public Health

It is a statutory requirement to report annually on the complaints received for Public Health. Please note that the Public Health team predominantly commission services and it is the commissioned service providers who will respond to any formal complaints via their own complaint procedures. The information below relates to compliments and complaints responded to by Public Health directly under the Council's Complaints Procedure.

5.3.1 Key Headlines

- **No** complaints were received. (**None** in 2023/24)
- **No** compliments were recorded. (**1** in 2023/24)
- **No** complaints were upheld. (**None** upheld in 2023/24)
- **No** complaints were investigated by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

5.3.2 Complaints

None received

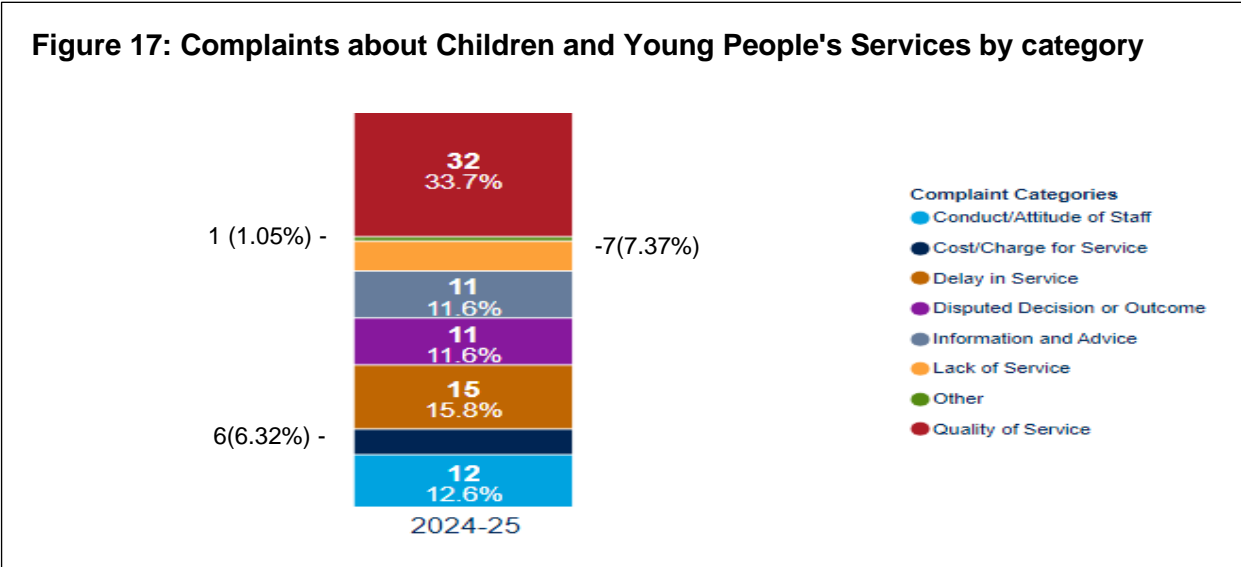
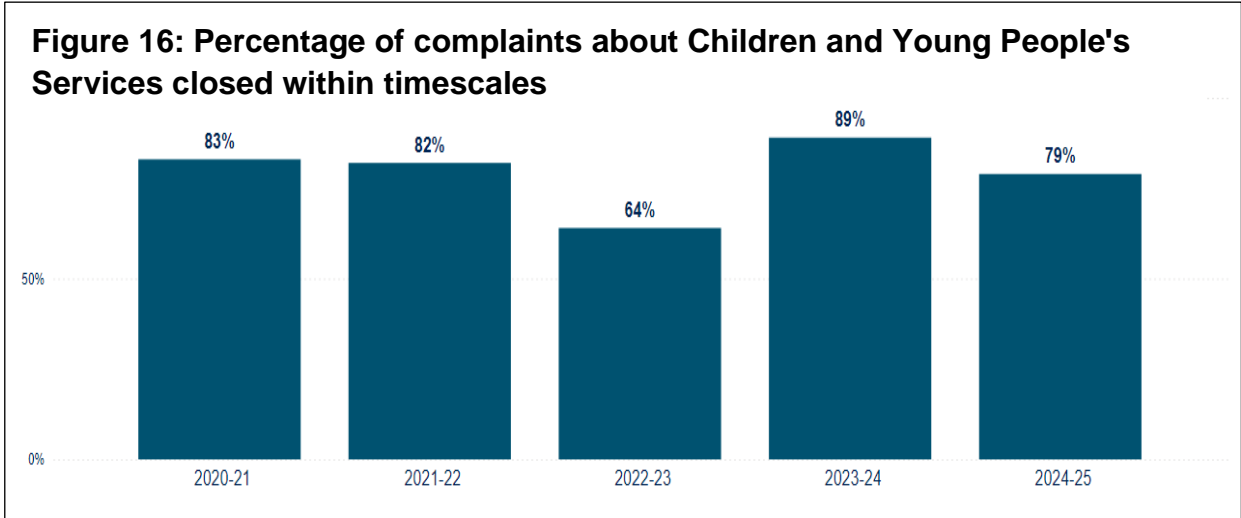
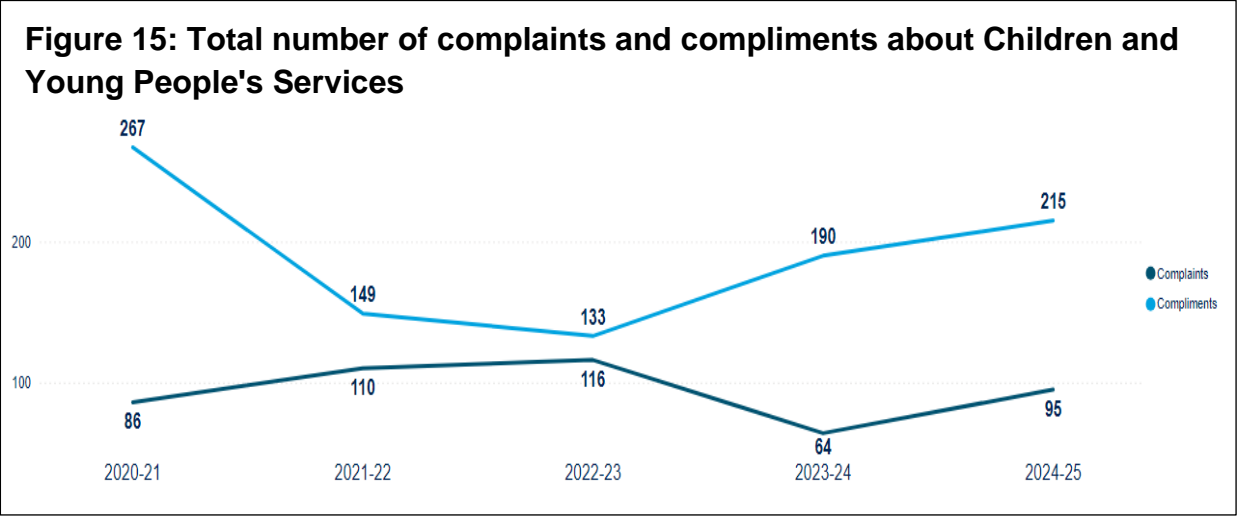
5.3.3 Compliments

None received

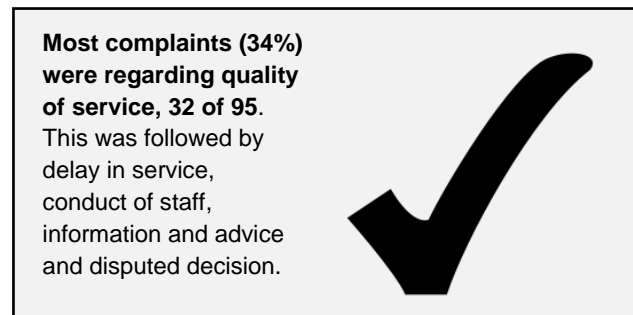
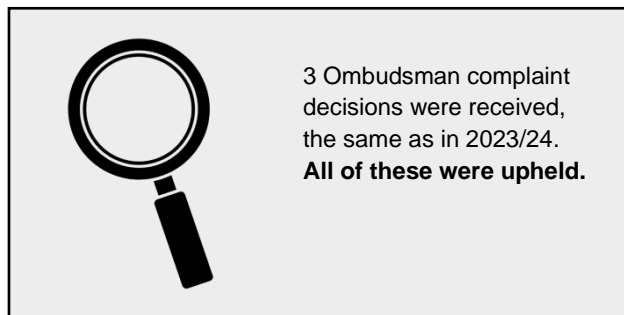
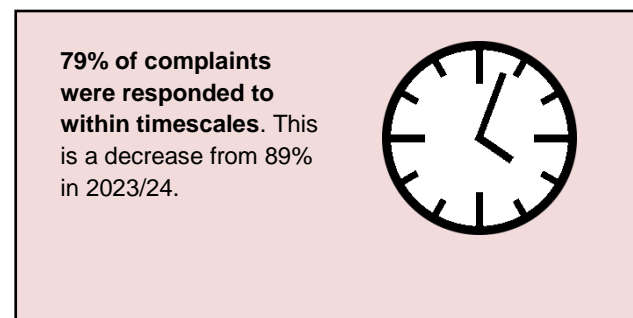
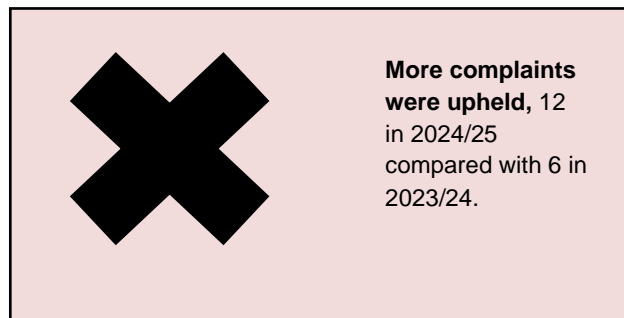
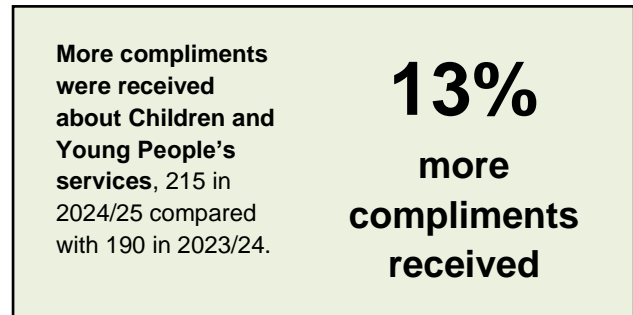
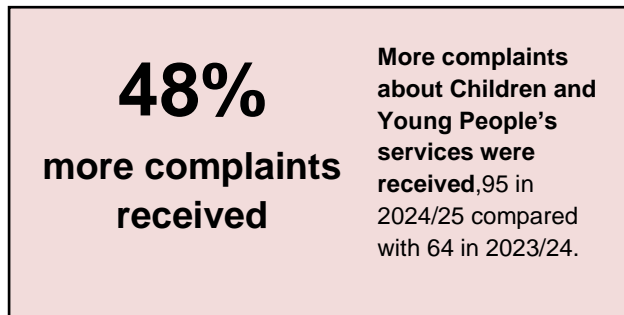
5.3.4 Service Requests

None received

6. Children and Young People’s Services Directorate



6.1 Key Headlines



Prevalent themes which emerged specifically within upheld and partially upheld complaints for Children and Young People's Services complaints were:

- Delay in service being provided / action taken
- Quality / standard of work
- Lack of information and advice

The increase in the number of formal complaints of 48% percent, is against the overall Council trend of a decrease of 1% in the total number of complaints received. The largest increase in complaints received was in the Inclusion Service, increasing from 15 to 30 complaints received. This Service includes the Education Health and Care Assessment process which increased from 14 complaints received in 2023/24 to 27 received in 2024/25. The second largest increase was in the Front Door of the Service, increasing from 8 in 2023/24 to 14 in 2024/25. The Children in Care service also increased from 2 in 2023/24 to 7 in 2024/25.

Other services saw a small decrease in complaints received, Locality Social Work Teams, reduced to 19 complaints in 2024/25 from 35 complaints in 2023/24. The largest decrease in this Service was one Locality Team reducing from 9 in 2023/24 to 2 in 2024/25.

In terms of Ombudsman investigations received, 3 were received and all were upheld. The upheld complaints were regarding delay and outcomes in respect of the statutory complaints procedure. Either a delay in investigation or delay in completing suggested outcomes.

Examples of some of the compliments received for Children & Young People's Services in 2024/25:

Compliment for FAB team. *"I am always grateful of the hard work and support the FAB team offer me, but I feel the staff member has gone above and beyond with one of my families"*

Compliment for Safeguarding. *"The member of staff has been honest and respectful towards the customer and has definitely helped her in particular to build up a network of support. The customer is happy with the plan and feels she has been included in planning throughout"*

Compliment for Inclusion service. *"She was kind and explained everything to me that was happening. She reassured me it wasn't me and that social care had to be protective and help me and my daughter. I would score her a 10, it was all perfect to be fair"*

Compliment for a social worker. *"They feel she's one of the best social workers they've worked with, and they've been foster carers for a long time! She's really fought for the best interests of the children, supported them through caring for the children, always been efficient in her support and contact with them, and generally just been great!"*

6.2 Lessons Learned

Children and Young People's Services made several service improvements in 2024/25 following feedback from customers. An example of this is outlined in the case study below.

The Complaint

A parent contacted the Council with concerns regarding his son's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Although an updated draft of the EHCP had been uploaded to the Council's online hub, the parent was not informed of this and was unaware that the hub even existed. The hub is typically used to host draft plans for 15 days, allowing parents time to review and provide feedback.

What did the council do?

The Council acknowledged the oversight and took immediate steps to resolve the issue. Staff explained the purpose of the online hub to the parent, provided access, and as a further step, arranged a face-to-face meeting to review the EHCP together with the parent. A full apology was issued, and the Council accepted responsibility for the error.

To prevent similar issues in the future, the Council updated its process to ensure that:

Parent email addresses are now linked to EHCPs on the hub.

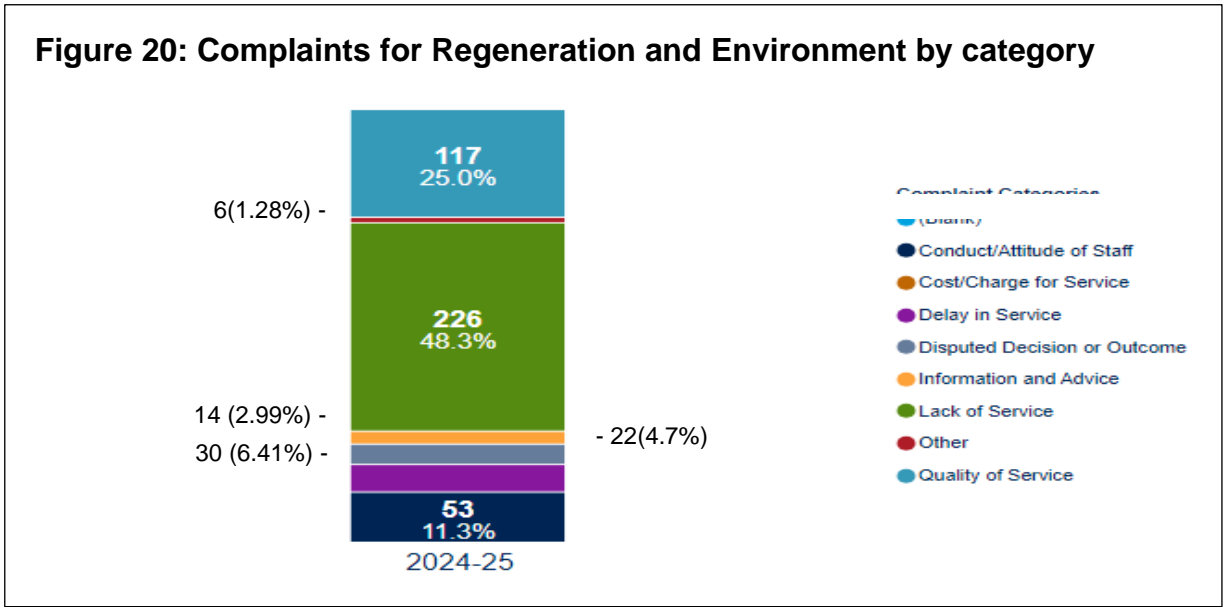
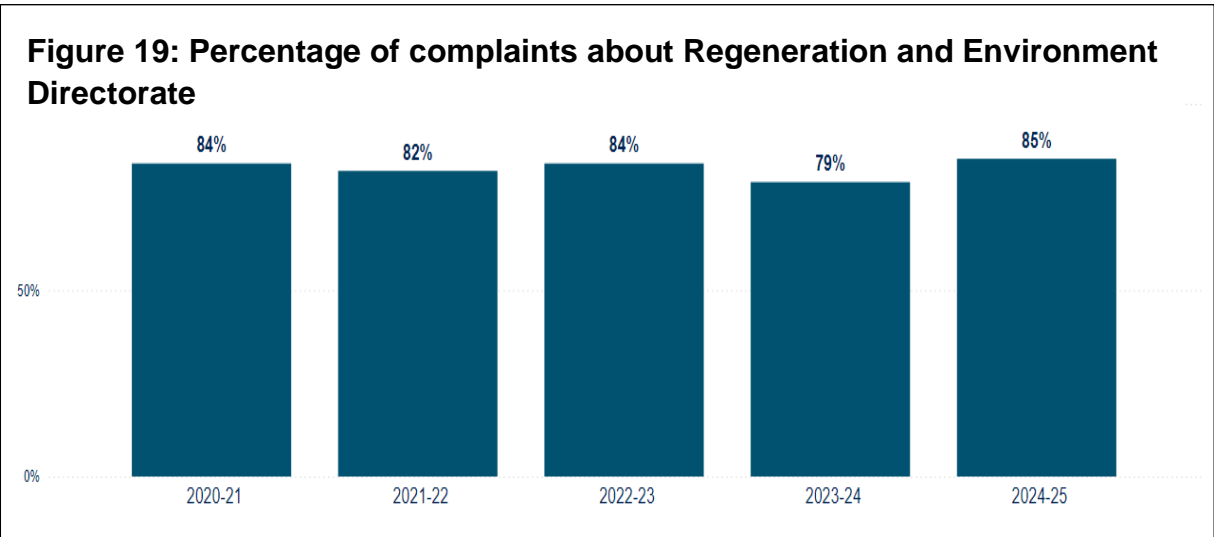
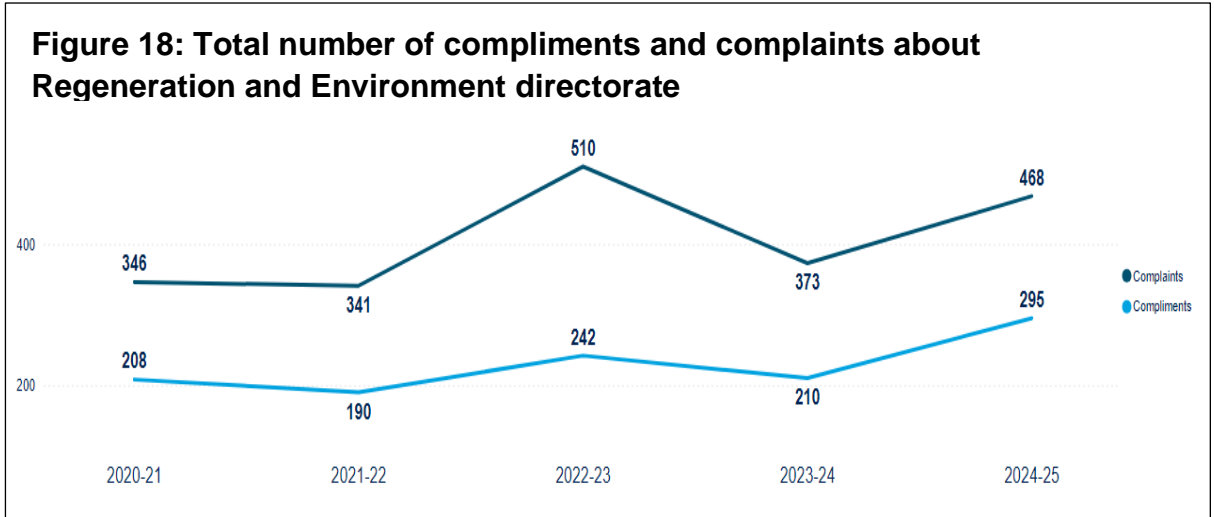
Parents are automatically notified when a draft or final plan is uploaded.

Parents are added to the hub before any plan is submitted.

Who Is Better Off?

EHCPs are vital to families, and this improvement ensures that parents are now fully informed and involved in the process. Any parent with a child who has an EHCP can be confident they will be added to the online hub and notified of any updates or submissions.

7. Regeneration and Environment Directorate



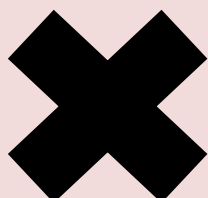
7.1 Key Headlines

25%
more
complaints
received

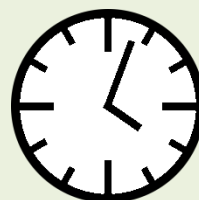
More complaints about the Regeneration and Environment Directorate were received, 468 in 2024/25 compared with 373 in 2023/24.

40%
more
compliments
received

More compliments were received about the Regeneration and Environment Directorate, 295 in 2024/25 compared with 210 in 2023/24.



More complaints were upheld, 211, or 45%, in 2024/25 compared with 141, or 35%, in 2023/24.



More complaints were responded to within timescales. 85% in 2024/25 compared with 79% in 2023/24.



2 Ombudsman complaint decisions were received. 1 was upheld and 1 was not upheld. 1 was received in 2023/24.



48% of complaints were regarding lack of service, equating to 224 of 467 complaints closed. 119 complaints were regarding the quality of service.

Prevalent themes which emerged specifically within upheld and partially upheld complaints for the Regeneration and Environment Directorate were:

- Missed bin collections and complaints about bins not being returned to the correction location.
- Lack of enforcement or sufficient enforcement action in respect of noise, rubbish, fly-tipping and other anti-social behaviour.
- Issues relating to the planning application process and the response to alleged breaches of planning control.

The largest number of complaints were regarding domestic waste and recycling collections in the Waste Management service, with 247 complaints received. This has increased significantly from 185 received in 2023/24 and is the biggest contributing factor in the increase in the number of complaints for the Directorate as a whole. Complaints for this service predominantly fell into the category of 'lack of service', reflecting the theme outlined above.

The second highest number of complaints received in the Directorate, Regulation and Enforcement with 37 complaints received, an increase from 33 received in 23/24.

The 3rd highest was Planning and Building Control received 29, a decrease from 30 received in 23/24. Followed by Highways receiving 25, a decrease from 32 received in 23/24 and Leisure Tourism and Green Spaces also receiving 25, an increase from 22 received in 23/24.

The Ombudsman complaint that was not upheld was regarding how the Council has responded to a planning enforcement issue. The upheld complaint was regarding the time taken to respond to a complaint about how the Council had handled permission in respect of a development.

Examples of some of the compliments received for the Regeneration and Environment Directorate in 2024/25:

"I would like to thank all concerned with the gritting of our road today. I rang this morning to explain our difficulties the road was treacherous, and we are all elderly. The lady on the phone was very kind and someone came out this afternoon. It will make such a difference to people with appointments. Thank you from all of us."

"I quite honestly was expecting to be told that there was no action to be taken because of the area where the problem is occurring. The gentleman who phoned me up made me aware that this was not the case, and he was very informative about what action was being taken. It was such a relief to know that the council are actually listening to the genuine concerns people have in this area about the level of household rubbish being discarded around the place."

"I didn't expect to have our bins collected today with the adverse weather, but I wanted to express my gratitude for them still coming round. I was outside scraping my car and cleaning our path when they emptied our bin, and the gentleman was so polite when handing my bin back. I know this may seem small, but I appreciate the polite attitude and then being so helpful bringing my bin to my gate when the weather is so poor."

7.2 Lessons Learned

The Regeneration and Environment Directorate made several service improvements based on customer feedback in 2024/25. An example of these improvements is outlined in the case study below:

The Complaint

Complaints were received about delays in the Council taking enforcement action where the Council was investigating alleged breaches of planning control and delays in ensuring that actions agreed by the Planning Department, as part of the planning enforcement process, were completed or followed up.

What did we do?

The Council carried out a review into its practice and procedure for monitoring planning enforcement cases to identify how to ensure that actions that are agreed are undertaken, and concerns resolved. The Council also considered how this aligned with its Planning Enforcement Plan and other information, which is provided to residents.

A new process has been set up within the system used by the Planning Service to record cases. The new process records dates for action such as the submission date for a planning application or date by which agreed actions must be completed by an applicant. If these dates are not achieved, then the case is escalated to a Senior Officer and discussed in case review meetings so that it can be determined how to pursue this further in a timely manner.

Who is better off?

Members of the public who report alleged breaches of planning control can have confidence that the Council is monitoring the progress of investigations into alleged breaches and will take action to resolve cases in a timely manner without unnecessary delays.

8. Finance and Customer Services

Figure 21: Total number of complaints and compliments about Finance and Customer Services

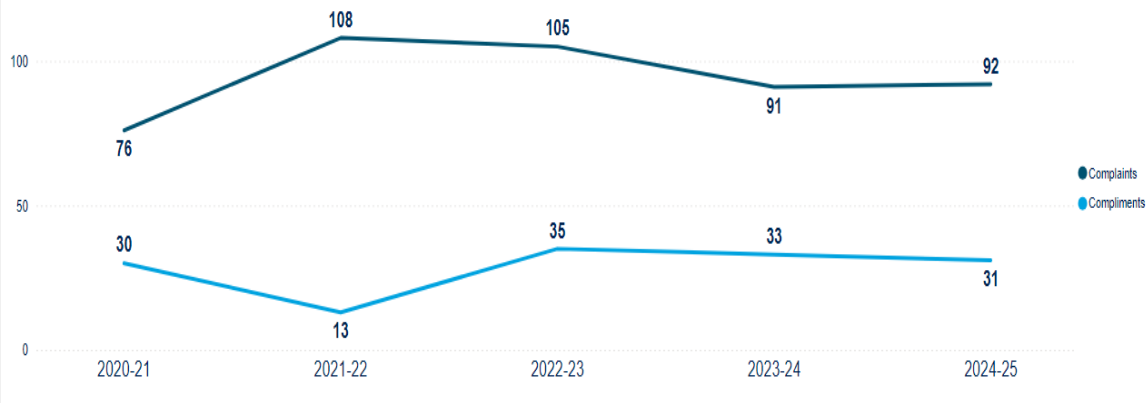


Figure 22: Percentage of complaints about Finance and Customer Services closed within timescales

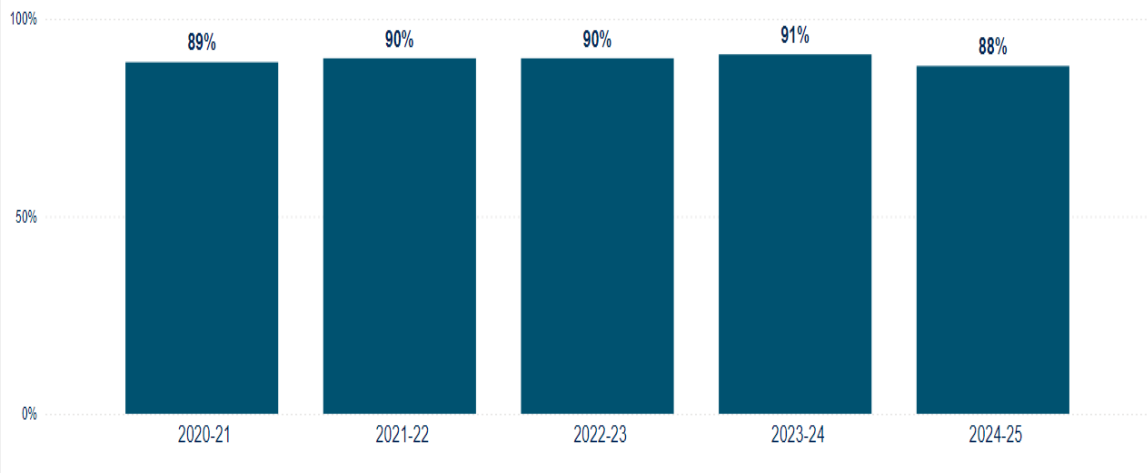
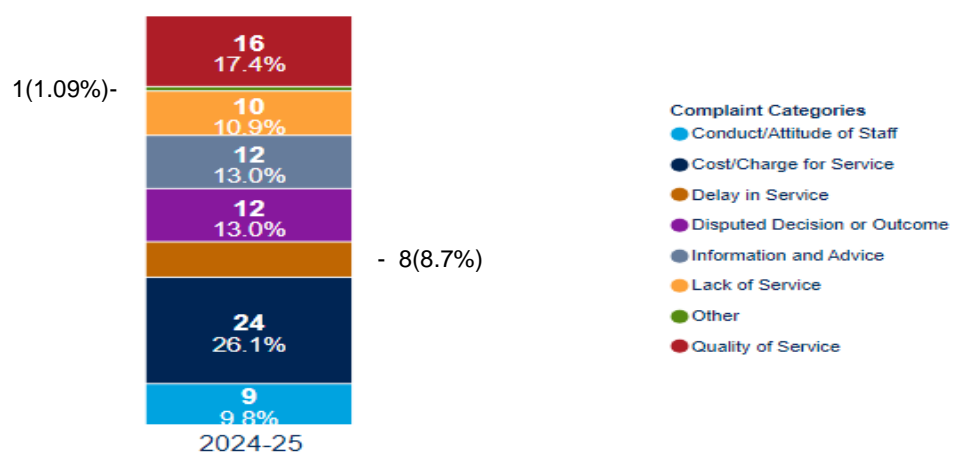


Figure 23: Complaints about Finance and Customer Services by category




8.1 Key Headlines

1%
more complaints received

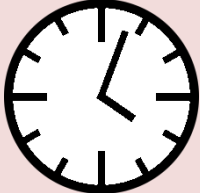
The number of complaints received about Finance and Customer Services, increased slightly, to 92 in 2024/25 compared with 91 in 2023/24.

6%
less compliments received


Fewer compliments were received about Finance and Customer Services, 31 in 2024/25 compared with 33 in 2023/24.



More complaints were upheld, 16, or 17%, in 2024/25 compared with 15, or 16%, in 2023/24.




88% of complaints were responded to within timescales. This is a decrease from 91% in 2023/24.



0 Ombudsman complaint decisions were received.

26% of complaints were regarding cost / charge of service (24 out of 92) and 17% were regarding quality of service (16 out of 91).



Themes which emerged specifically within upheld and partially upheld complaints for Finance and Customer Services were:

- Disputes regarding Council Tax liability and errors in administration of Council Tax accounts.
- Accuracy of advice provided by Customer Service Advisors

The Directorate saw no significant change in the number of complaints received this year and the proportion of complaints for individual services also only changed slightly.

58% of complaints received related to Financial Services and 24% of complaints related to Customer Services.

In addition, 8 complaints were received for Legal Services mainly relating to Registration and Bereavement Services and 4 complaints were received for Property and Facilities Services, which mainly related to cleaning services.

Examples of some of the compliments received for Finance and Customer Services in 2024/25:

"I really appreciate this worker going the extra mile to help get things sorted. She was kind, helpful and efficient in solving our problem and we were grateful to have someone in person to deal with this"

"I just wanted to say it's taken a while to gather the courage to ring but I wanted to let you know how wonderful and helpful you were."

"I would just like to acknowledge my appreciation of the Staff working in the Blue Badge department, with dealing with my enquiry, last week and this morning & afternoon. Thank you for your help and support it has made a difference!"

"I wanted to pass on my thanks. We had a lovely chat, and she didn't make me feel rushed to get off the phone. It was lovely talking to a human being that was empathetic to my needs. Please pass on my thanks. It's fantastic that you have people like this in the Council. The Council should be proud of this I know you don't hear it enough. It's lovely to be able to make a phone call and not be pushed online. Keep up the great work."

8.2 Lessons Learned

Finance and Customer Services made several service improvements in 2024/25 following the feedback from customers. An example of these is outlined in the case study below:

The Complaint

A customer complained about their experience when attending Riverside House to register a bereavement. They felt that the office near to the interview rooms was too noisy and disruptive when sensitive interviews were being carried out.

What did we do?

Staff who work in the vicinity of the interview rooms were reminded to maintain low noise levels and to be aware of the sensitive nature of interviews, which are taking place.

Additional internal signage was introduced and a reminder was sent to alert other staff members of the need to maintain low noise levels when visiting the office area.

Noise levels are regularly monitored to ensure that staff continue to adhere to the requirement to keep noise at a low level.

Who is better off?

Customers visiting Riverside House to register a birth or bereavement should now have a better experience and one that acknowledges the sensitivity and nature of the service being provided.

9. Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate

9.1 Key Headlines

- 3 complaints were received (5 in 2023/24)
- 34 compliments were recorded (39 in 2023/24)
- 1 was a stage 1 complaint. 1 was a Stage 2 complaint. 1 was an informal complaint.
- 1 complaint was upheld (1 upheld in 2023/24)
- No Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman decisions
- 67% of complaints were resolved within timescales (60%, in 2023/24)

9.2 Complaints

The subject matter of each complaint received is listed below:

Communications and Marketing

An issue regarding social media coverage across the borough

HR – Consultancy

2 complaints received regarding delays in processing ill health retirement and the financial impact arising from this. 1 complaint was at Stage 1 and 1 at Stage 2.

9.3 Compliments

Examples include:

Change and Innovation. *"I've always enjoyed working with you. What fantastic colleagues they are! Really engaging, friendly and knowledgeable."*

Democratic Services. *"I would just like to thank you for everything you did regarding my neighbour."*

Neighbourhoods - North Area

"I've got to place on record our appreciation for the tremendous enthusiasm you bring to everything we do. You're so dynamic in your thinking and ideas it's infectious. You are a pivotal part of making things come together."

Policy, Performance and Intelligence

"She has been a valuable asset in what at times have been very challenging circumstances. As per usual she has been professional, capable and a pleasure to work with."

10. Next Steps, 2025/26

During 2024/25, although the numbers of complaints decreased slightly from the previous year's total there is still a continuing challenge facing the Council and pressure on the delivery of services.

The need to provide excellent services to customers that are efficient and cost effective is fundamental to the management of the Council. Therefore, it is vital that complaints are responded to in a timely manner and the complaints procedures work effectively for both customers and staff.

The following are the planned actions in 2025/26, to ensure that the way the Council deals with complaints and responds to customer feedback continues to improve.

Key actions include:

- Complaints Team self-assessment completed every 12 months, to ensure compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and from April 2026 the new Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.
- New complaint satisfaction survey to be piloted in Housing Services.
- Improve online complaint information regarding Housing Services, to include more information for tenants such as learning from complaints case studies and advice and guidance about making a complaint.
- New internal "intranet" providing online information for Council staff to allow them to improve the way they investigate and respond to complaints.
- Continuing review of all customer complaint literature, including website information, easy read guidance and information for children and young people to improve access to the complaint procedures for all residents.
- New staff guidance documents to improve the way we investigate complaints.
- Continue to seek ways to deliver training to front line staff to allow them to understand the role and purpose of the complaint procedures.
- Continue to provide bespoke training for investigating managers, strengthening their skills to undertake a better investigation and response to formal complaints.
- Continue to work with management meetings across the Council to help them find service improvement from complaint investigations, and to ensure that all learning is considered and the service improvements are recorded.
- The Complaints Team will work with services across the Council to identify if there is anything more that can be done to resolve a complaint after notification that an Ombudsman investigation has been received.

- Work to improve performance to complaint procedure timescales, to meet the Council Plan target of 85%. This includes the continued roll out of new reporting dashboards so that managers have direct access to their complaint information.
- Continue to increase the number of compliments recorded across the Council, the Complaints Team will continue to work with managers to ensure that the process for recording and reporting compliments is improved.
- Roll out of a new complaint management IT system to improve the way complaint web form enquiries are responded to.

11. Appendix 1: Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman decisions 2024/25, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and statistical neighbours

Authority Name	Invalid or Incomplete	Advice Given	Referred Back for Local Resolution	Closed after Initial Enquiries	Not Upheld	Upheld	Total Investigated	Total	Uphold rate (%)	Average uphold rate (%) of similar authorities
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council	3	7	17	23	1	6	7	57	86%	81%
Halton Borough Council	3	1	7	18	2	6	8	37	75%	80%
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council	6	4	13	21	2	6	8	52	75%	81%
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	2	1	5	14	0	8	8	30	88%	81%
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	4	1	28	38	1	7	8	79	100%	80%
Telford & Wrekin Council	4	0	6	11	3	6	9	30	67%	80%
Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council	8	3	28	23	2	8	10	72	60%	81%
Stoke-on-Trent City Council	4	4	13	35	2	8	10	66	80%	81%
Wakefield City Council	4	2	13	37	4	6	10	66	80%	80%
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council	5	2	21	15	4	9	13	56	69%	81%
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	7	2	17	26	2	11	13	65	85%	81%
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council	4	4	21	23	0	13	13	65	100%	81%
St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	4	2	12	26	2	12	14	58	86%	81%
City of Doncaster Council	6	2	23	29	1	14	15	75	93%	81%
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	6	15	29	53	4	14	18	121	78%	81%