

ANNUAL REPORT COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

1st APRIL 2018 - 31st MARCH 2019



www.rotherham.gov.uk/complaints

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I. INTRODUCTION

Rotherham Council is committed to being a responsive organisation that listens to customers and treats everyone with respect. Therefore, both customer feedback and the way that the Council responds to this feedback are vital indicators of the overall performance of the organisation.

The Council aims to maintain a high level of performance and improve the quality of service offered to customers. This includes providing high quality, timely responses to complaints, and continuing to learn and improve, based on the feedback received. Performance improved significantly in 2018/19, with 87% of complaints being resolved within relevant timescales, which was the strongest performance of the past five years and exceeded the Council Plan target of 85%.

All Councils need to provide complaint procedures to respond to customer concerns in an open and transparent way within defined timescales. The purpose of this report is to outline the complaints and compliments that the Council received 1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019, highlighting key themes and longer term trends. The report also explains how the Council has performed against the required standards and, crucially, includes case studies demonstrating how services have learnt from complaints received. This is arguably the most important aspect of the complaints process.

It should also be noted that the changes introduced last year to the format and overall presentation of the report following feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board have been maintained in this report. In addition, as recommended by the Council's Equality and Diversity Peer Review in 2017, information is now captured and reported on the demographics of complainants.

Whilst 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, key developments that occurred within 2018/19 and the quarterly performance reports on the Council Plan.

Furthermore, building on the key developments in 2018/19, priority areas of focus for 2019/20 will include:

- Increasing the number of compliments recorded. The Complaints Team will promote the procedure for recording compliments and support Directorates to ensure that more of the compliments received are properly recorded and reported.
- Addressing current and upcoming issues, using complaints as direct customer feedback to make immediate service improvements. For example, for 2019/20 this includes mitigating the impact of changes to the garden waste collection service for customers.
- Reviewing the way that the Council considers learning from complaints to ensure that each complaint enquiry is fully considered and used to positively develop services.

2. KEY HEADLINES – 2018/19



1,275

Fewer complaints were received.
(1,275 in 2018/19 compared with 1,304 in 2017/18, which is a decrease of 2%.)

Fewer compliments were received.
(844 in 2018/19 compared with 1,064 in 2017/18, which is a decrease of 20%.)



More complaints were upheld; at 305 or 25%.
(260 or 24% upheld 2017/18.)

More complaints were responded to within timescales.
(87% in 2018/19 Compared with 79% in 2017/18.)



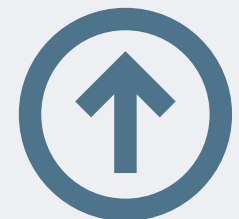
14 complaints were investigated by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
(five in 2017/18 in comparison.)

Fewer complaints around quality of service.
(a decrease of 15%)



A similar number of complaints regarding actions of staff.
(a decrease of 1%)

More complaints relating to Housing Services and Finance and Customer Services.



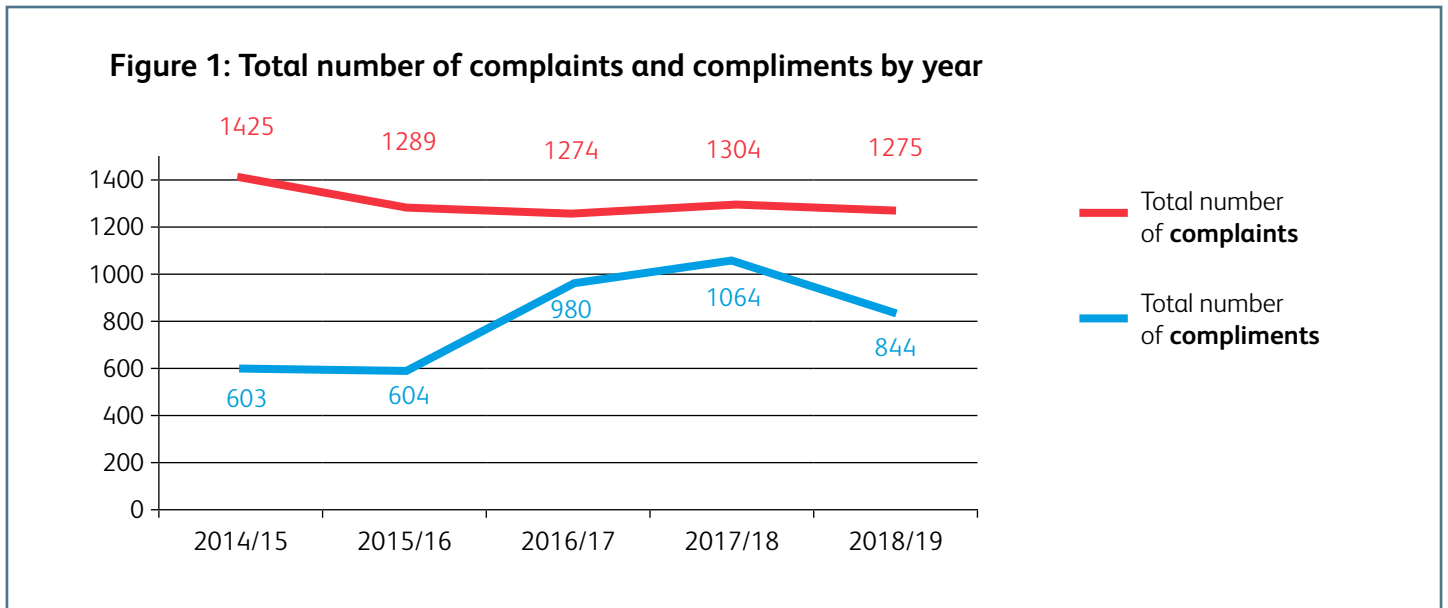
Fewer complaints relating to Adult Care Services, Children's and Young People's and Regeneration and Environment Services.

Fewer escalations through the complaint procedure.
(55 or 4% compared to 62 or 6% in 2017/18.)



3. OVERVIEW

3.1 Summary



In 2018/19, the overall number of complaints received by the Council decreased by 2%, going from 1,304 in 2017/18 to 1,275. This moderate decrease has brought it close to the numbers recorded between 2015 and 2017, following last year's increase.

Furthermore, the Council provides a wide variety of services to over 264,700 residents. In this context, 1,275 complaints is only a fraction of the number of customer interactions occurring each year. See Appendix Two which provides an indication of the number of customer contacts received through the Council's customer service centres.

The number of compliments recorded by the Council also decreased, from 1,064 in 2017/18 to 844 (a decrease of 20%). The numbers of compliments dropping could be seen as customers being less satisfied with the services provided by the Council considering the increase in the numbers in the last few years. However, it may be that, although compliments continue to be received by staff they are not being passed on to be recorded. Therefore, there will be a renewed effort to publicise the compliments reporting process across the council.

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

The decrease in complaints has been across most departments. Children and Young People's Services recorded the biggest decrease at 22% followed by Adult Care Services at 14%. Regeneration and Environment Services also decreased but by only 3%. Against this trend was Housing Services who recorded a small increase at 3%. Further details are available within each of the Directorate sections of the report.

Subsequently, there was a decrease in compliments received for most areas.

The following diagrams show the breakdown of complaints and compliments by Directorate in 2017/18 and 2018/19.

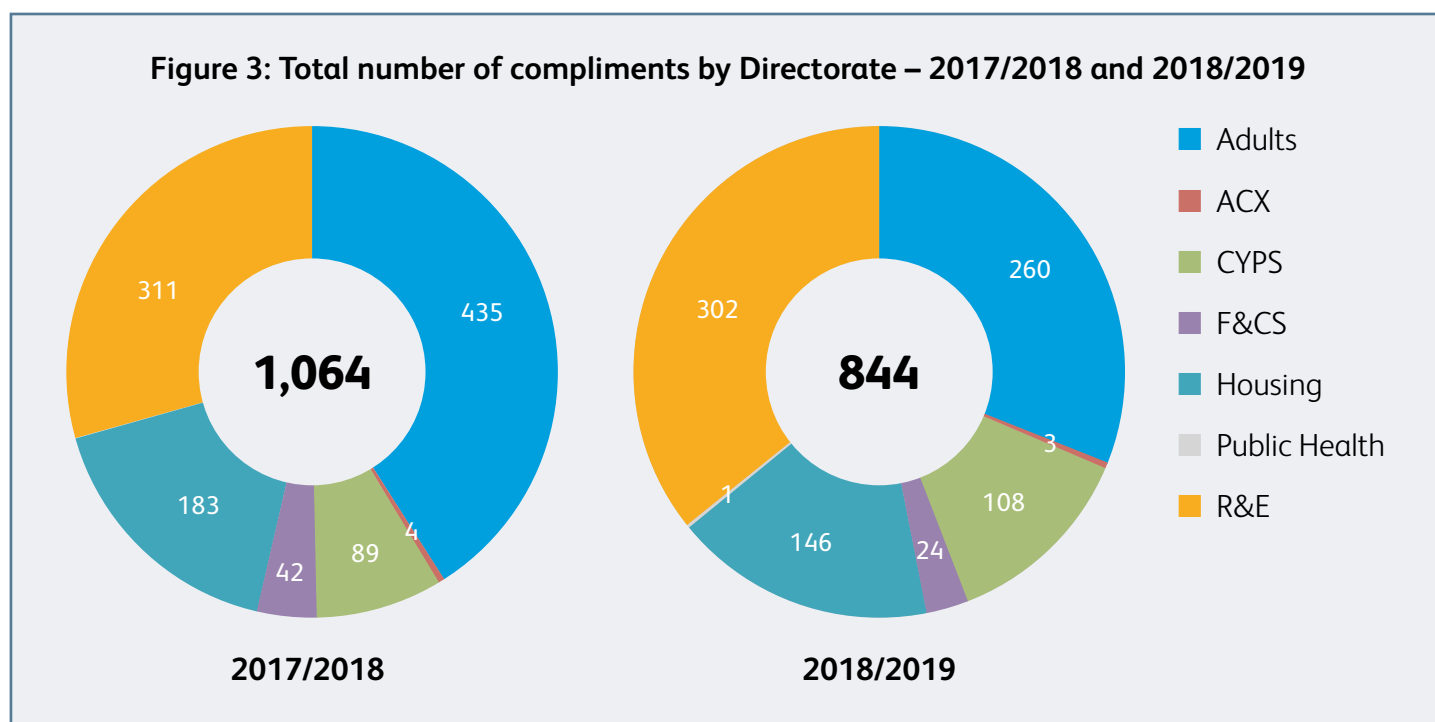
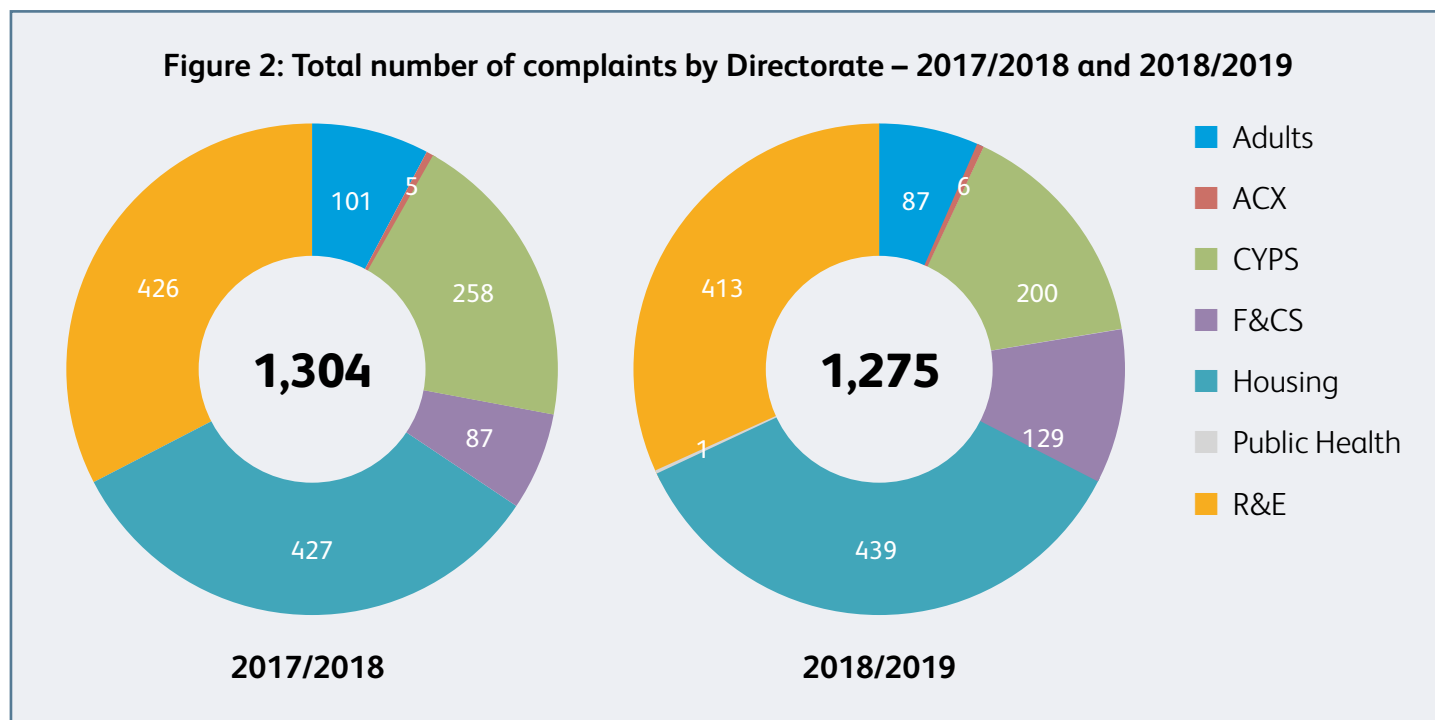
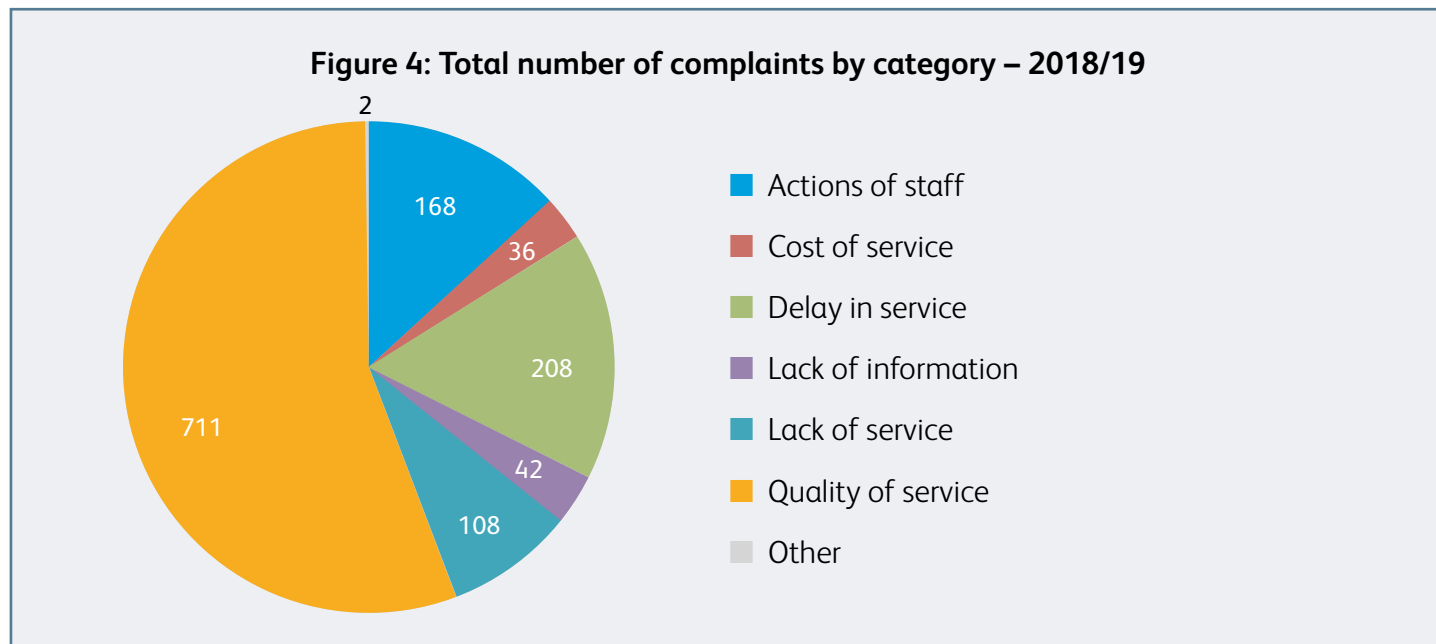


Figure 2 demonstrates that the two highest areas for complaints were Housing Services, and Regeneration and Environment Services, followed by Children and Young People’s Services. This is consistent with previous years’ figures, as these three areas typically receive the highest volume of complaints.

It is also evident from these diagrams that some areas receive a lower volume of overall customer feedback. With the exception of Finance and Customer Services, this tends to correlate to the number of customers 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.

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 2018/19:



Approximately 55% of all complaints were categorised as quality of service. Complaints within this category have decreased from 839 (in 2017/18 to 711 in 2018/19 (a decrease of 15%).

Delay in service also accounted for the second highest category of complaints, with 208 complaints (or 16% falling into this category). Although the numbers of complaints in categories quality of service and actions of staff were significant across all Directorates, the majority of the complaints categorised as delay in service were again within Housing Services, with 138 of the 208 complaints in this category (see section 7).

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, as recommended in the 2017/18 Annual Complaints report. These are service specific and more accurately reflect the types of complaints received. Examples of the most common complaint types recorded by this classification are as follows:

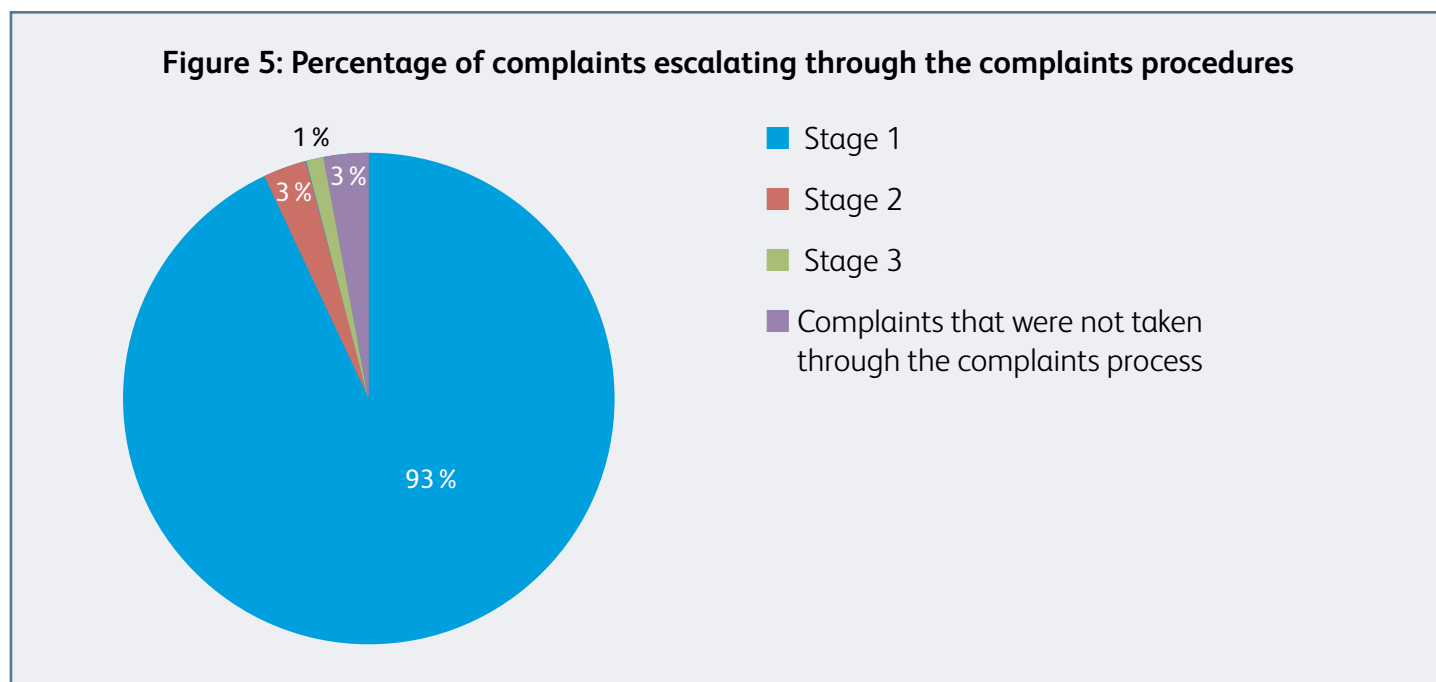
- Missed bin/non-collection
- Repair delay
- Anti-social behaviour management
- Boiler/heating issues
- Appointments – missed/late
- Brown bin collections
- Care outcomes
- Street work issues

For further detail around Directorate complaint trends please see sections 5 to 11 of the report.

3.2 Dealing with Complaints

The Council follows four different complaints procedures: housing, children's social care, adult social care and the corporate complaints procedure. The former three complaints procedures are legislative and have individual statutory requirements about how complaints are dealt with.

A relatively small portion of complaints are not taken through the formal complaints procedure – (formally 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 response. This report includes these complaints in the overall total figures. In 2018/19, this amounted to only 38 out of a total of 1,275 complaints.



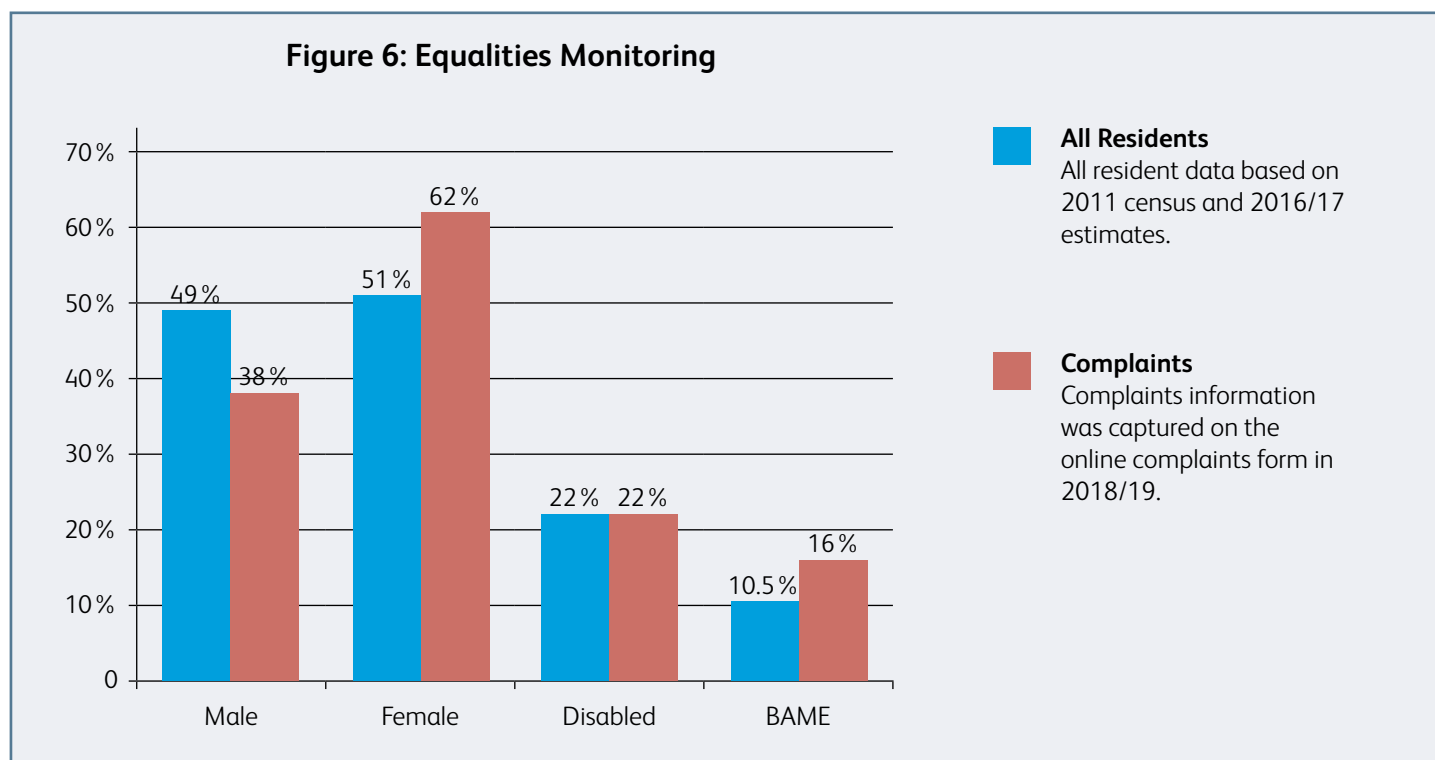
The diagram above outlines the number of complaints that reached the various stages of the complaints procedures.

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. As shown in figure 5, the vast majority of complaints (93%) were resolved at stage 1 (only 44 were escalated to stage 2, compared with 52 in 2017/18).

Additionally, of the 1,237 complaints that were taken through the Council's formal complaints procedures, more were upheld in 2018/19 (305 or 25% compared with 260 or 24% in 2017/18).

3.3 Equalities Monitoring

Following the Council’s Equalities and Diversity Peer Review in October 2017, it was agreed to start recording the demographics of customers making formal complaints. This information will be used to ensure that the complaints process is fair and accessible for all customers.



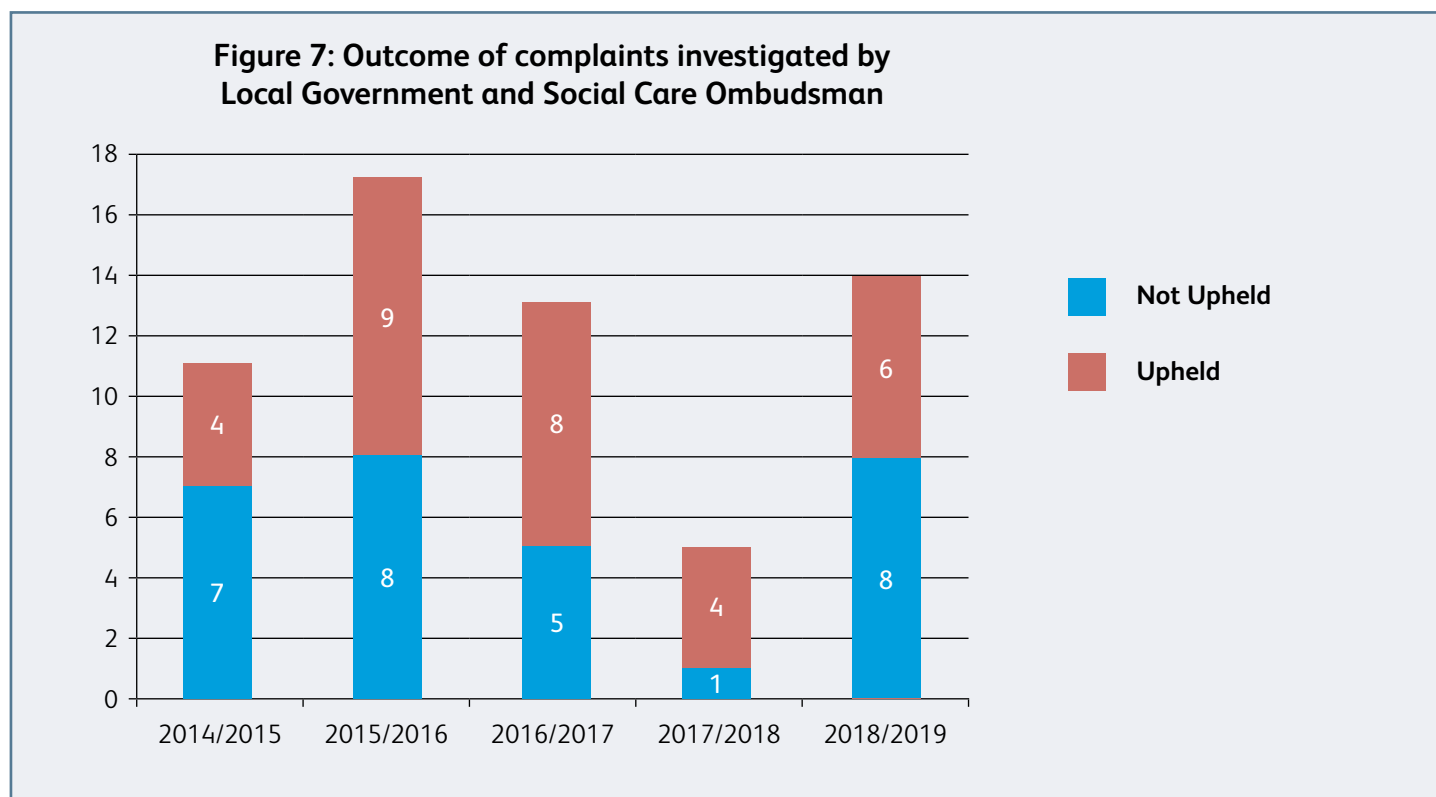
The information received indicates that more female customers complained about Council services in 2018/19. All Directorates apart from Finance and Customer Services recorded a higher number of female complainants. For example in Housing Services the percentage of female complainants was 66% and Regeneration and Environment it was 58%.

It is also noted that there is parity in the numbers for those customers who are disabled and a slightly higher proportion of BAME customers have made a complaint compared to the all residents figure.

The Complaints Team will continue to develop and monitor the information in 2019/20; and will be able to provide more detailed analysis in respect of complaint trends and protected characteristics during the year.

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 procedures, they can involve the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). 60 complaints and enquiries were directed to the LGSCO in 2018/19, and of these 60, the LGSCO investigated 14. Figure 7 (see below) provides some context; on average, approximately 12 complaints were investigated by the LGSCO per year between the financial years of 2014/15 and 2018/19.



In 2018/19 more complaints were investigated and more complaints were upheld by the LGSCO than in the previous year. This is slightly above the five year average of 12 and is the highest number since 2015/16. This is in part explained by the time taken by the LGSCO to investigate complaints meaning that complaints are often received in one year and the investigation completed in the following year. This is illustrated by the fact that five out of the 14 decisions received in 2018/19 were received in the first quarter of 2018/19 whilst the investigation started in the final quarter of the previous year.

Appendix one outlines the LGSCO decisions for the Council for 2018/19 and how these compare with 16 statistical neighbour Councils. In 2018/19, the Council had more than the average number of complaint investigations compared to its statistical neighbours. However, it had a good upheld rate at 43%, based on the total investigated (57% were not upheld). This placed the Council 3rd out of 16 Councils.

Furthermore, it shows that the majority of complaints that were brought to the LGSCO (60 considered) were deemed invalid or incomplete, referred back for local resolution or closed after initial enquiries. This along with the relatively low number of investigations reflects positively that the Council's complaints procedures are working effectively to find fair and appropriate local resolutions.

Of the six complaints that were investigated and upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, three were in Children and Young People's Services, one was in Adult Care Services, one was in Regeneration and Environment Services and another was in Housing Services.

3.5 Housing Ombudsman

From April 2013, the Housing Ombudsman has dealt with all complaints regarding social housing. There were five decisions made by the Housing Ombudsman in 2018/19 (Please note, two decisions made were simply to advise that the complaints were outside of their remit to adjudicate). There was only one complaint upheld.

The upheld complaint was regarding repairs to a council property and responses through the complaints process leading up to the Ombudsman investigation. Only issues relating to delays in response to the complaint were upheld.

4. PERFORMANCE

4.1 Performance Overview

Performance relating to complaints is monitored via the Council Plan and reported to the Strategic Leadership Team and Cabinet on a quarterly basis. The plan includes the following actions and measures:

Priority 3 – A strong community in a clean, safe environment

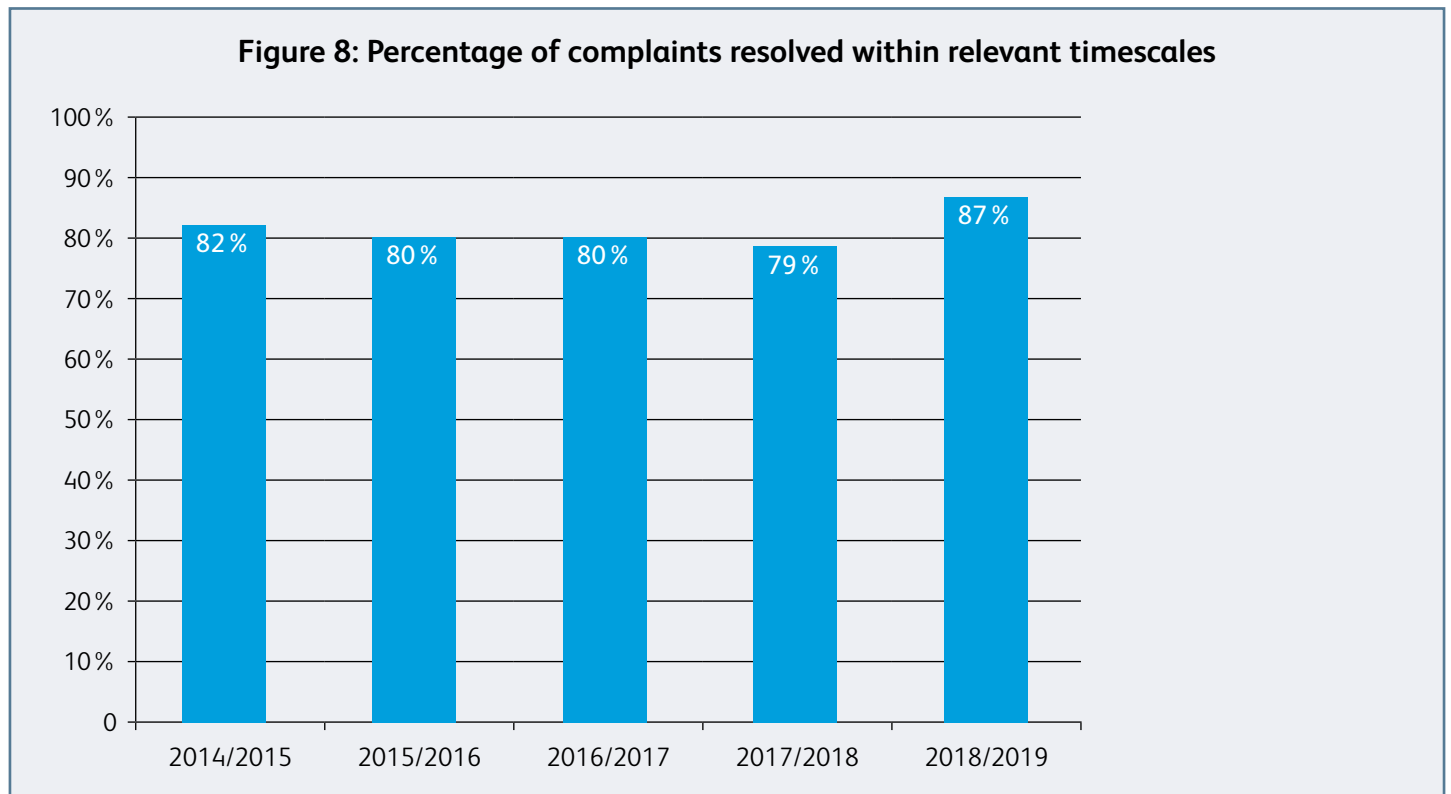
- Action – Deliver a cleaner, greener Rotherham to ensure that it is a safe and attractive place to live, work and visit
 - o Measure 3.B3 – Total number of customer contacts by service area and overall total – Service areas include a) Street Cleansing, b) Grounds Maintenance, c) Litter, d) Waste Management. Contacts measured are: i) Official complaints, ii) Compliments received, iii) Service Requests
 - o Target – 10% reduction (target around 190 cumulative) in the number of official complaints received

Priority 5 – A modern efficient council

- Action – Treating customer complaints with respect and dealing with them in an efficient and outcome-focused way
 - o Measure 5.C1 – % of complaints closed within timescale (cumulative)
 - o Target – 85% target

Performance is also monitored through service plans and regular (weekly, monthly and quarterly) performance reports are presented to 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 exceeded the Council Plan target (85%) for the first time, at 87% of complaint responses within target timescale. This is also the best performance in the last five years. (79% were responded to within timescales in 2017/18). An effort has been made across all Council services to improve performance to timescales, with additional focus in Children's Safeguarding and Waste Management. In addition, there has been weekly complaint performance reporting to Directorate Management Teams and quarterly reporting to Strategic Leadership Team via the Council Plan.

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.

Further work will be undertaken in 2019/20 to continue to improve the approach to dealing with complaints. This is outlined in the 'Next Steps, 2019/20' section at the end of this report.

5. ADULT CARE SERVICES

Figure 9: Total number of complaints and compliments relating to Adult Care Services

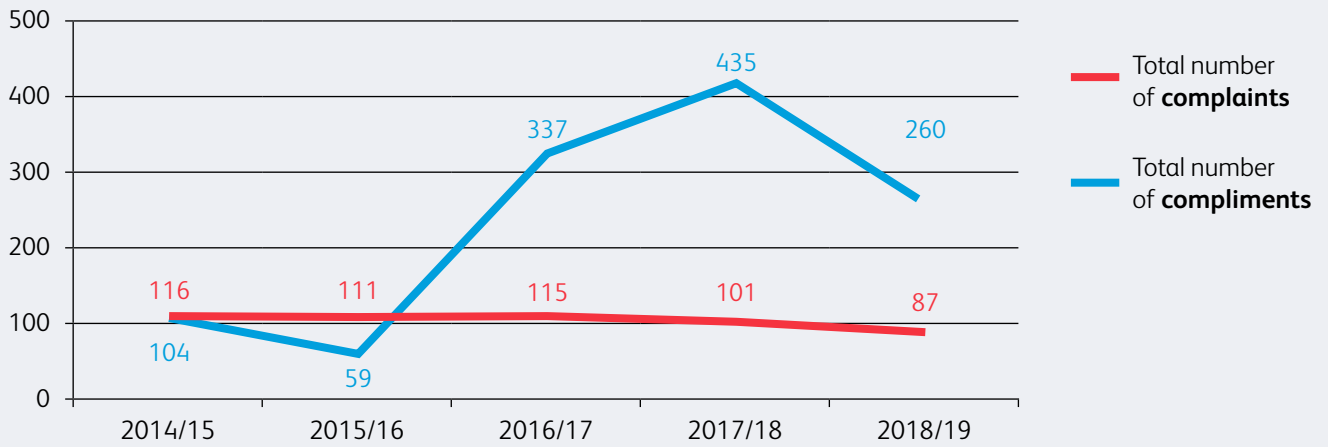


Figure 10: Percentage of complaints relating to Adult Care Services closed in timescales

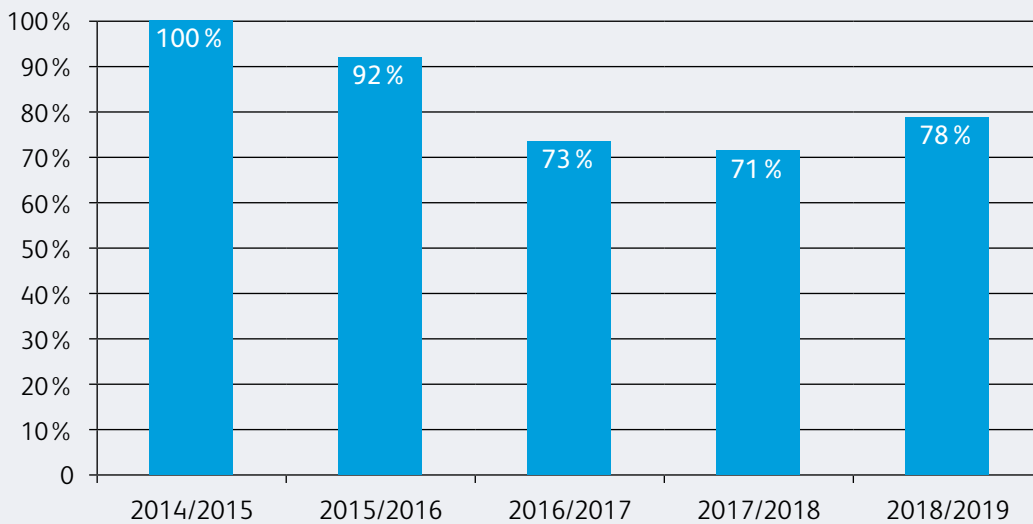
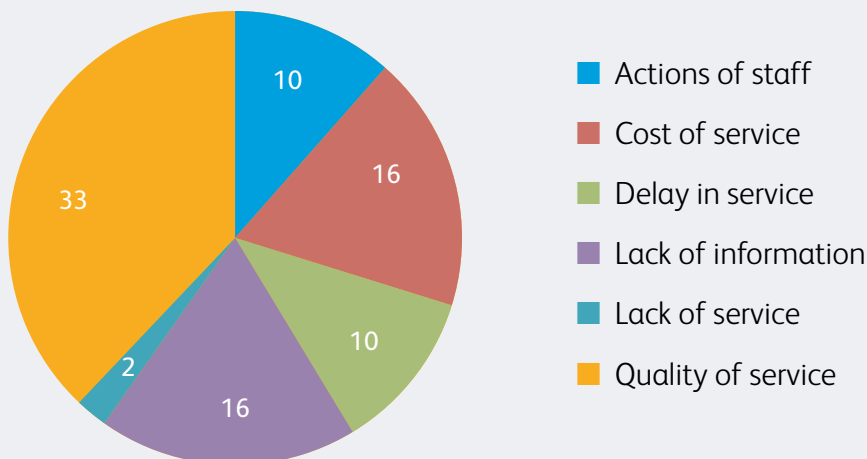


Figure 11: Complaints about Adult Care Services by category



5.1 Key Headlines

14%

fewer
complaints
received

Fewer complaints about Adult Care Services were received.
(87 in 2018/19 compared with 101 in 2017/18.)

Fewer compliments were received about Adult Care Services.
(260 in 2018/19 compared with 435 in 2017/18.)

40%

fewer
compliments
received



Fewer complaints were upheld.
(14 in 2018/19 compared with 25 in 2017/18.)

78% of complaints were responded to within timescales.

This is slightly above the Council average of 77% but falls short of the Council Plan target of 85%.



Two Ombudsman complaint decisions were received.

Neither were upheld.

Nearly half of complaints were regarding quality of service.

(30 of 79 complaints.)



Prevalent themes which emerged specifically within upheld and partially upheld complaints for Adult Care Services complaints were:

- Lack of contact and poor communication by Social Workers.
- Assessment outcomes; disagreement with the amount or type of support offered.
- Issues around the cost of care and information provided in respect of financial issues.

Examples of some of the compliments received for Adult Care Services in 2018/19:

“The lady who came to see me was very pleasant, extremely helpful and understanding”

“The member of staff was easy to talk to and willing to help whenever she can, she had great understanding and empathy”

“The member of staff is the most caring, supportive and “real” social worker we have ever had. She’s methodical, she keeps us updated at every opportunity, and she juggles her schedule to meet ours. In our opinion she’s an absolute diamond.”

5.2 Lessons Learned

Adult Care Services made several service improvements based on customer feedback in 2018/19. An example of these improvements is outlined in the case study below:

The Complaint

A number of customers complained about problems experienced through the discharge process. Including the level of information provided and other communication problems.

What did we do?

Individual complaints were addressed and action was taken so that staff improved practice around information and advice.

In addition, in 18/19 the service was subject to redesign to address problems experienced through the discharge process. The service now has a single referral process which improves the persons experience in terms of communication with appropriate professionals supporting a timely and effective discharge.

Who is better off?

Customers and their families now receive better information through a more straightforward process and communication is improved. The improvements to the discharge process were recognised at the HSJ awards, where the Integrated Discharge Team was awarded the Acute Service Redesign Award.

Adult Care Services are also working on the following key service improvements:

- Developing a Wellbeing Forum that provides high support, high challenge, consistency and quality assurance of case decisions.
- Developing and implementing new operating policies and procedures.
- Improving practice and quality assurance including case file audits.
- Delivering a workforce development plan that includes legal literacy training to support practitioner confidence and competence in relation to statutory duties under the Care Act.
- Implementing a new target operating model that will improve the adult care pathway.

6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

Figure 12: Total number of complaints and compliments about Children and Young People's Services

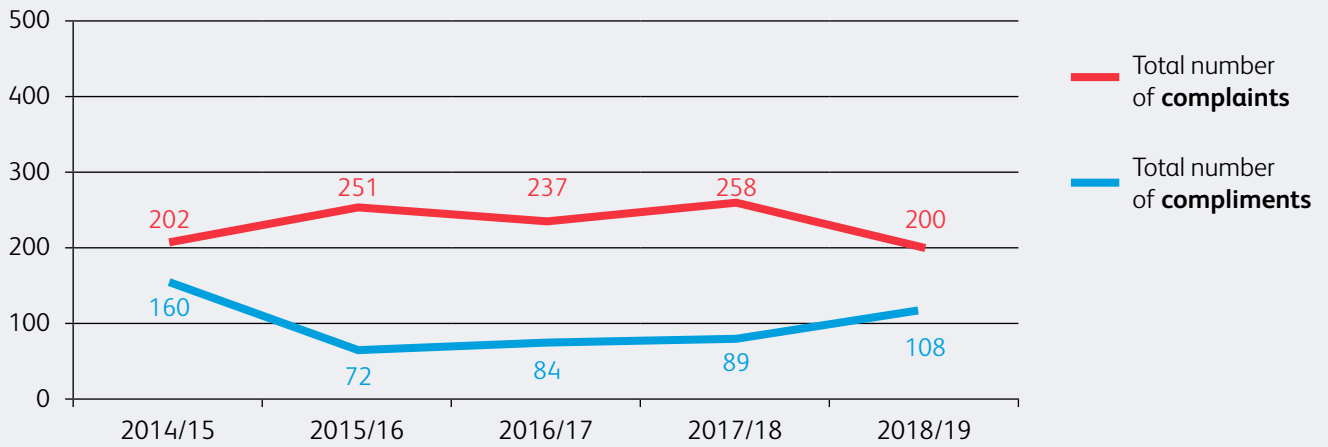


Figure 13: Percentage of complaints about Children and Young People's Services closed within timescales

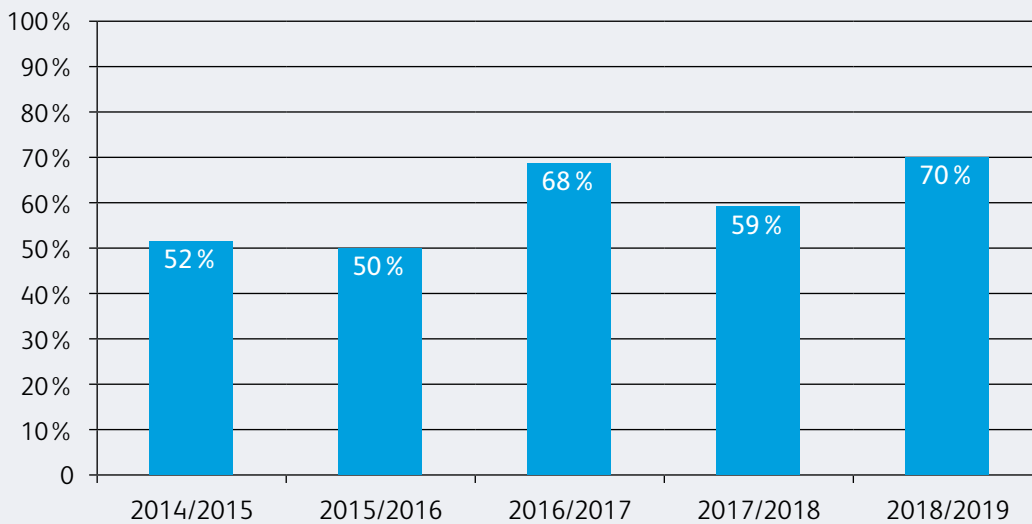
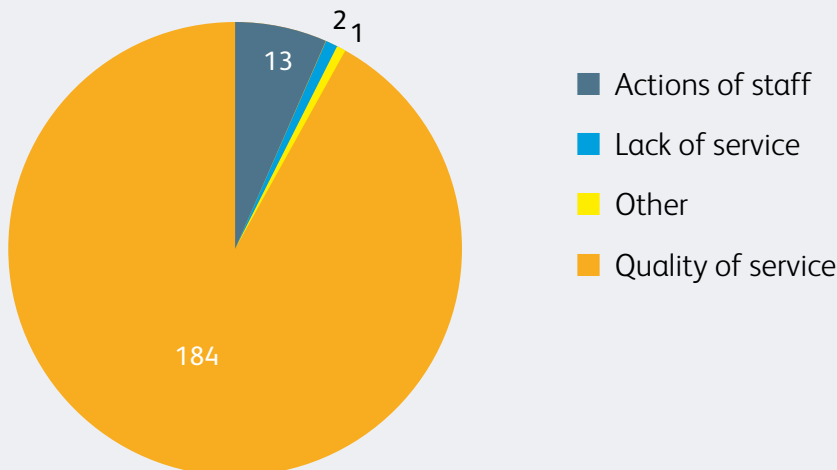


Figure 14: Children and Young People's Services – complaints by category



6.1 Key Headlines

22%

fewer
complaints
received

Fewer complaints about Children and Young People's services were received.

(200 in 2018/19 compared with 258 in 2017/18.)

More compliments were received about Children's and Young People's services.

(108 in 2018/19 compared with 89 in 2017/18.)

18%

more
compliments
received



Fewer complaints were upheld.

(23 in 2018/19 compared with 33 in 2017/18.)

70% of complaints were responded to within timescales.

This is below the Council average of 77% but an increase on last year.



Three Ombudsman complaint decisions were received.

One was upheld and two were not upheld.

Most complaints were regarding quality of service.

(184 of 200 complaints.)



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

- Dissatisfaction around the sharing of information
- Lack of contact and communication
- Delays and lack of progress
- Unhappy with decisions made

Examples of some of the compliments received for Children & Young People's Service in 2018/19:

"The Social Worker went way above the requirements of her role and I cannot thank her enough for this for her help with my daughter. She is calm, honest, open, friendly and inclusive. Both my daughters view her as a friend and this is testament to her fantastic attitude, caring nature and professional approach."

"I would like to let you know that I have been working with the Social Worker for the past ten months and it was a pleasure working with her, not only has she supported my young girl but she has been a great support to me and has always gone the extra mile to make sure I have been ok. She is a credit to you and your team and I am hoping I will work with her in the future."

"The support worker was very helpful and understood everything I was going through. She sat and listened to my problems and helped so much. Very helpful, polite and friendly also the service has helped a great deal."

6.2 Lessons Learned

Children and Young People's Services made several service improvements in 2018/19 following the feedback from customers. An example of this is outlined in the case study below:

The Complaint

A child who was placed with a family member was not placed for adoption with the Early Permanency Planning (EPP) carers. The complaint was received from the EPP carers as a result of the child not being placed with them.

What did we do?

A reflective learning session was held with the Principal Social Worker, Adoption and Court and Permanency Team Manager and EPP champions to review the actions from the complaint and lessons learnt.

From that CYPS relaunched and completed a refresher training event on EPP in May 2019. This was delivered to Social Workers in the Adoption Team, Court and Permanency Teams and colleagues within the Legal Team. This training considered the matching process for when making EPP placements, the professional's role in this and messages that are given to EPP carers regarding their role and associated risks with EPP, in that there is not a guarantee that the child will remain in their care or be placed for adoption with them.

A leaflet has now been produced to give to EPP carers when we are considering matching to reiterate the verbal information that is given them about their specific role as EPP foster carers (not adopters at this stage) and the uncertainty that they may experience during the Court proceedings.

Who is better off?

As a result of the reflective learning and training sessions, EPP carers will be presented with the risks involved at the outset which will ensure that anyone entering into this type of carer arrangement is fully conversant with the uncertainty it may bring.

7. HOUSING SERVICES

Figure 15: Total number of complaints and compliments relating to Housing Services

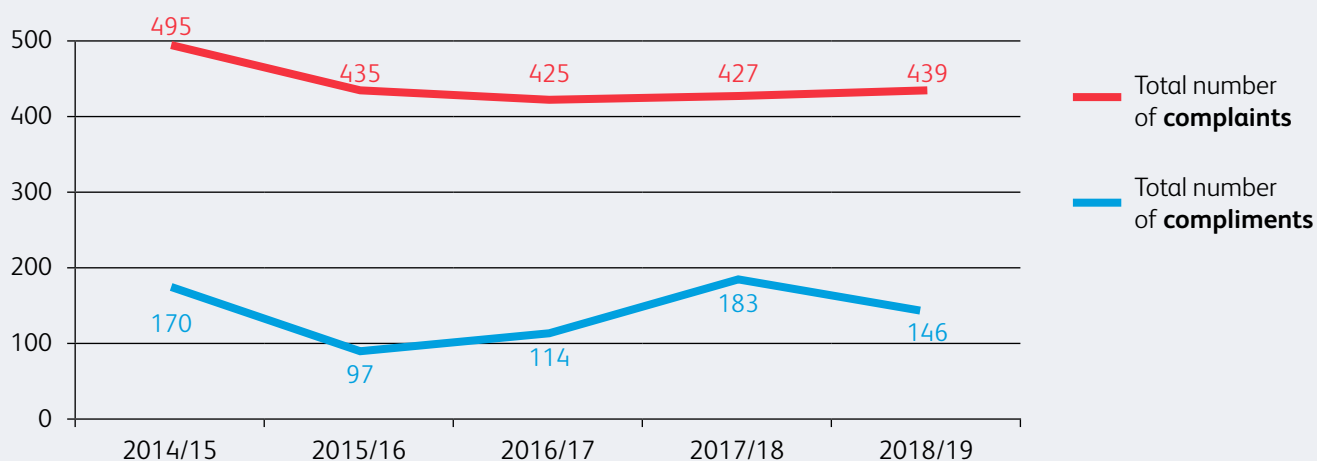


Figure 16: Percentage of complaints closed within timescales

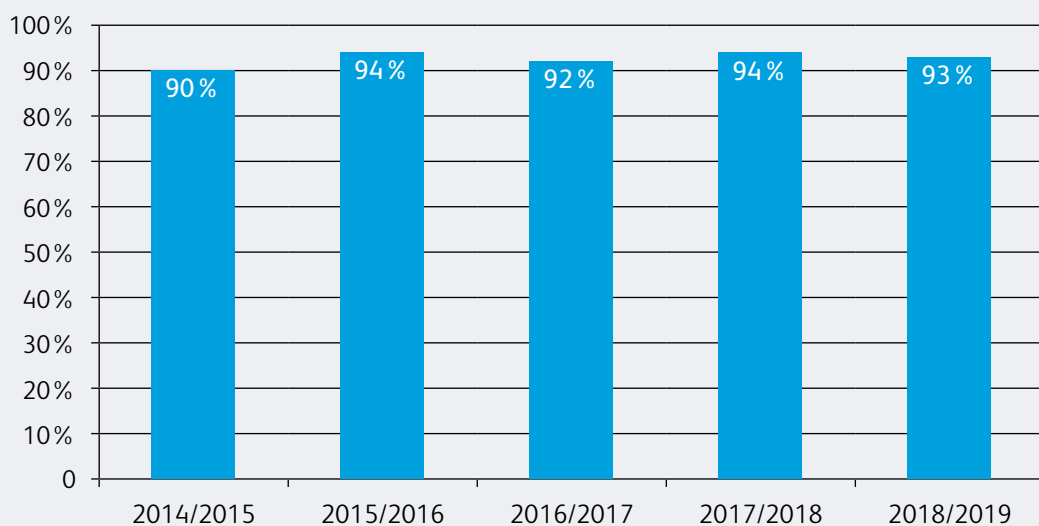
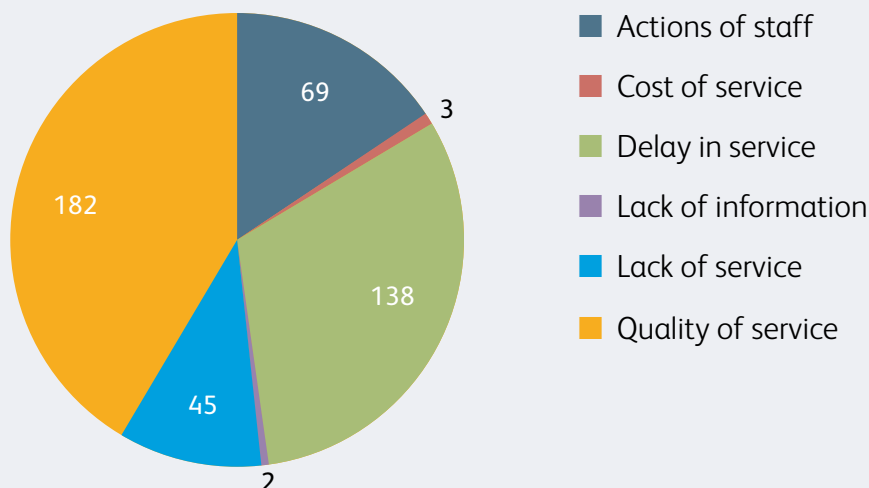


Figure 17: Housing Services complaints – by category



7.1 Key Headlines

2.8%

more
complaints
received

More complaints about Housing Services were received.
(439 in 2018/19 compared with 427 in 2017/18.)

Fewer compliments were received about Housing Services.
(146 in 2018/19 compared with 183 in 2017/18.)

20%

fewer
compliments
received



More complaints were upheld.
(129 in 2018/19 compared with 120 in 2017/18.)

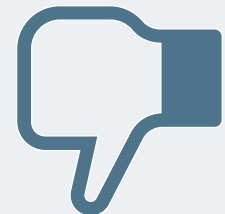
93% of complaints were responded to within timescales.

This is significantly above the Council average of 77% and the Council Plan target of 85%.



Eight Ombudsman complaint decisions were received.
One was upheld.

Almost half of complaints were regarding quality of service.
(182 of 439 complaints.)



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

- Issues relating to repairs
- Delays in service
- Linked to both issues and most complaints is the need to improve communication between services and customers. This includes raising customer awareness of policies and feeding back to customers while investigations and works are in progress.

Examples of some of the compliments received for Housing Services in 2018/19:

“She is a brilliant worker. She is so knowledgeable.”

“Thank you for all your help in quickly arranging the repair of the back door and bathroom window after a break in.”

“She has been outstanding with her contribution to arrange and rearrange visits with myself and being persistent and dogmatic in her approach.”

7.2 Lessons Learned

Housing Services made several service improvements based on customer feedback in 2018/19. An example of these improvements is outlined in the case study below:

The Complaint

A family suffered a two week delay replacing a boiler in January. The delay was mainly due to the sub-contractor not having the correct contact details, not pursuing the lack of contact thoroughly and then the need to erect scaffolding when an appointment was attended. An apology was made and resident compensated.

What did we do?

- To prevent this problem happening again the following changes have been made;
- If a customer has not been successfully contacted by the second day, the contractor will visit the property and if this fails they will contact the Council to raise their concern.
- The initial boiler fault sheet has been changed to include a section for assessing whether scaffolding is required to ensure that such issues are identified at the earliest opportunity.
- The Gas Team have liaised with the Contact Centre Supervisors to ensure that they are constantly checking current contact numbers, as the initial repair job had the wrong landline number which created the problem.
- The Gas Team are ensuring that the most up to date telephone number is added to the replacement boiler job sheet when it is sent to the contractor.

Who is better off?

Customers requiring a replacement boiler will receive a quicker more reliable service.

8. REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICES

Figure 18: Total number of compliments and complaints about Regeneration and Environment Services – 2018/19

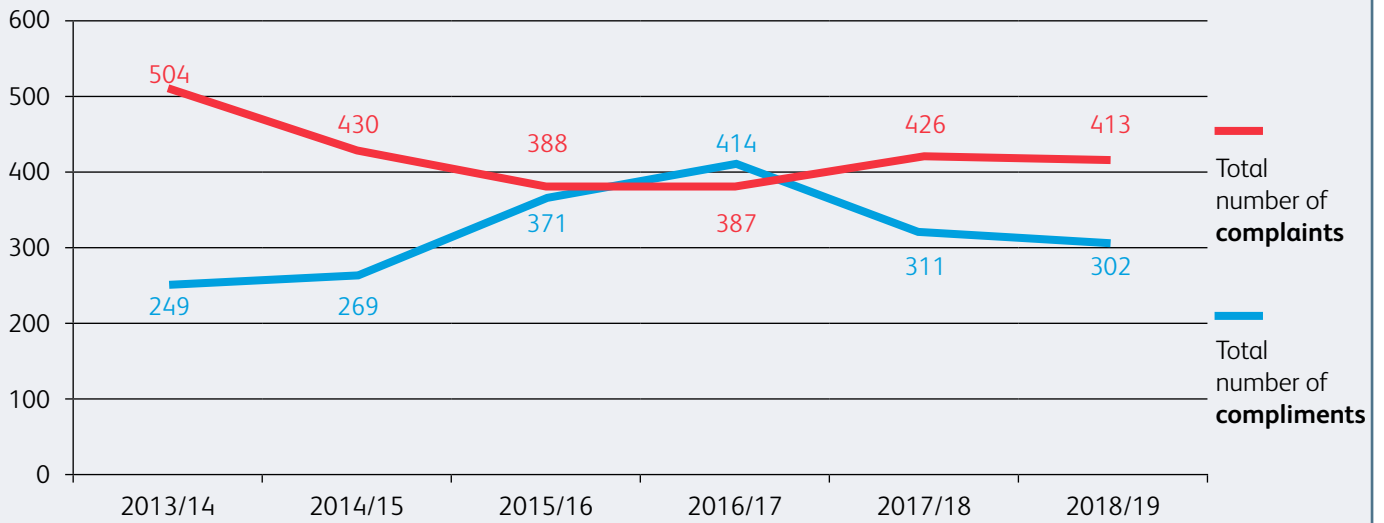


Figure 19: Percentage of complaints about Regeneration and Environment Services closed within timescales – 2018/19

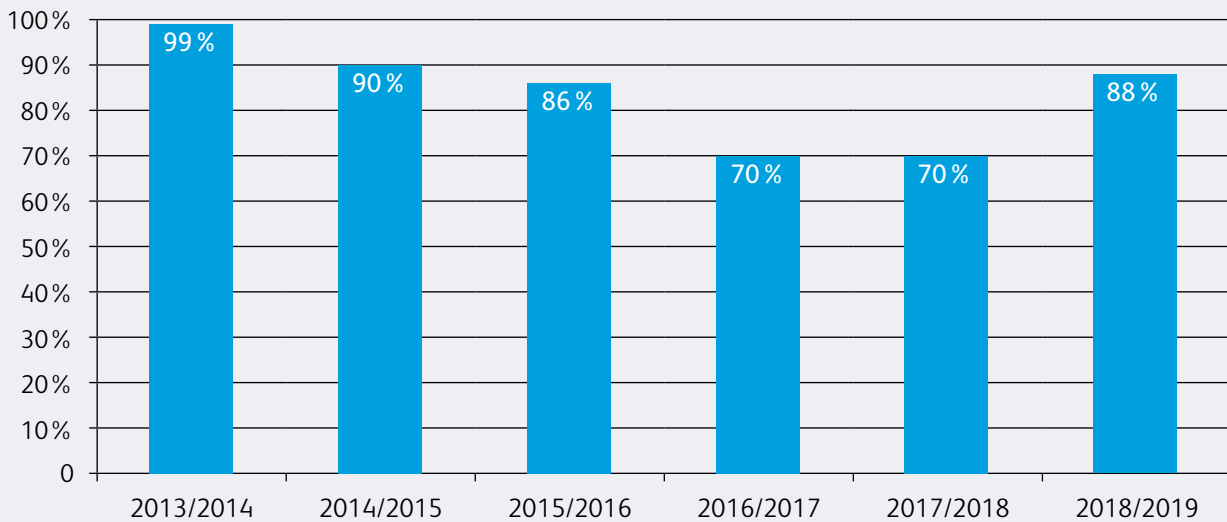
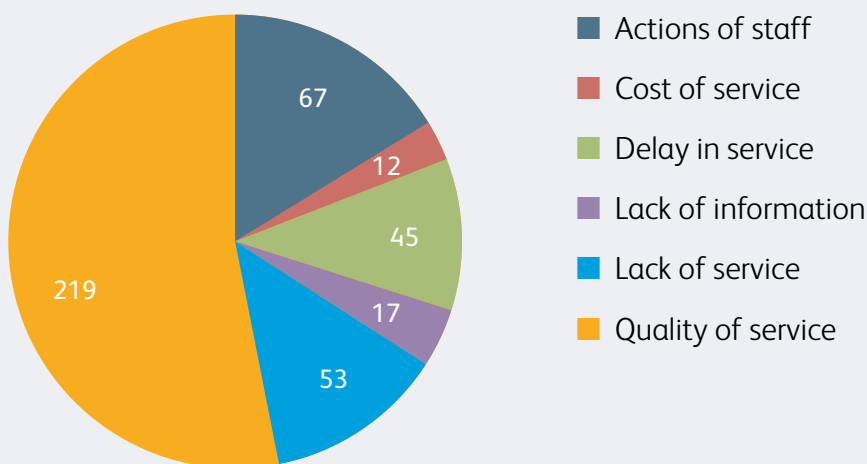


Figure 20: Complaints for Regeneration and Environment by category – 2018/19



8.1 Key Headlines

3%

fewer
complaints
received

Fewer complaints about Regeneration and Environment Services were received.

(413 in 2018/19 compared with 426 in 2017/18.)

Fewer compliments were received about Regeneration and Environment Services.

(302 in 2018/19 compared with 311 in 2017/18.)

3%

fewer
compliments
received



More complaints were upheld.

(107 in 2018/19 compared with 75 in 2017/18.)

More complaints responded to within timescales.

(88% in 2018/19 compared with 78% in 2017/18.)



Four Ombudsman complaint decisions were received.

One was upheld and three were not upheld.

Over half of complaints were regarding quality of service.

(219 of 413 complaints.)



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

- Waste management issues including missed bin collections and bins not being returned.
- Conduct of staff across all services.

Examples of some of the compliments received for Regeneration and Environment Services in 2018/19:

“The men who collected our bin were a credit to the Council and it appeared that they both enjoyed their jobs. They were very polite and spoke to both me and my grandson (aged 2) - who was watching as our bin was emptied.”

“Thank you very much for your help with regards to my noise complaint.”

“The information was perfect and the fact that I received this information back so quickly and out of normal service hours was wonderful.”

8.2 Lessons Learned

Regeneration and Environment Services made several service improvements based on customer feedback in 2018/19. An example of these improvements is outlined in the case study below:

The Complaint

A complaint had been received around the refusal to accept a fridge which a customer wished to take to a Household Waste Recycling Centre.

What did we do?

The customer was advised that the fridge could not be accepted due to it containing ammonia which is a hazardous substance and these types of fridge being classed as industrial waste. It was confirmed that the operative had acted correctly.

It was agreed however, that the information on the leaflet and online could be made clearer in respect of the restrictions around disposal of fridges.

The information on our website was subsequently updated to state that commercial-type fridges or freezers and ammonia fridges are not accepted at Household Waste Recycling Centres.

Who is better off?

Customers now receive accurate advice regarding the disposal of fridges and the restrictions which apply; as well as advice regarding the disposal of a number of common items via an A-to-Z guide on the Council website.

9. FINANCE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

NB. The comparison for Finance and Customer Services is based on the previous two financial years only, due to the fact that these services formerly sat within another Directorate.

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

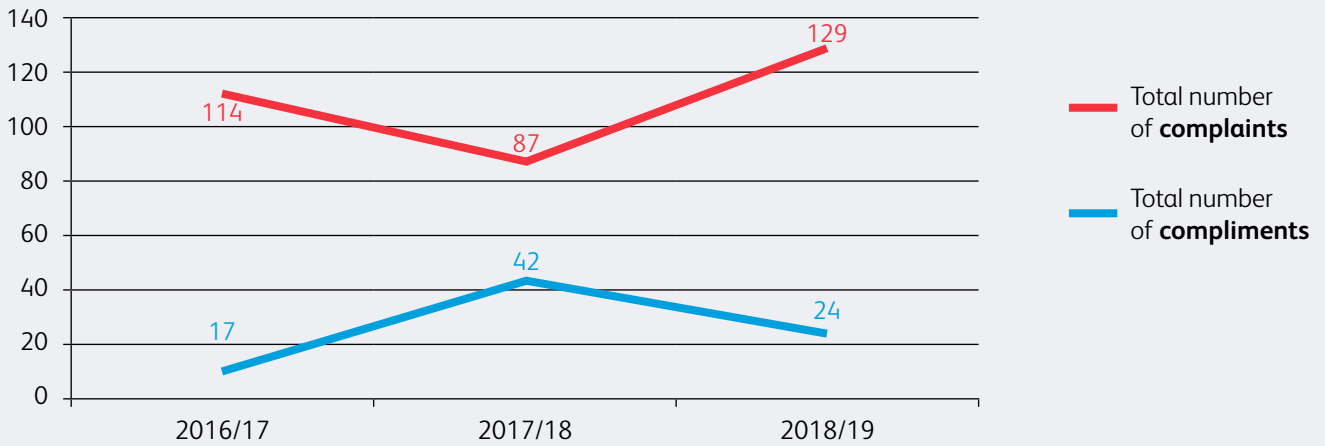


Figure 22: Percentage of complaints about Finance and Customer Services closed within timescales

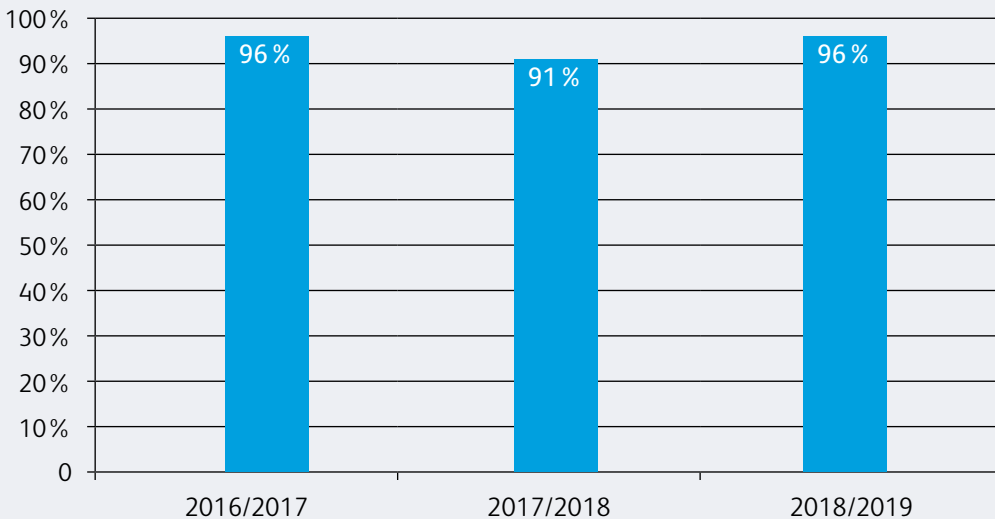
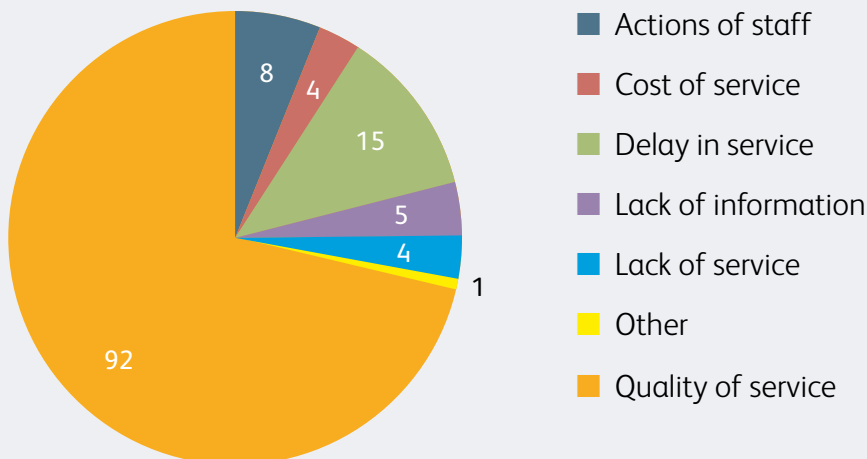


Figure 23: Finance and Customer Services – complaints by category



9.1 Key Headlines

48%

more
complaints
received

**More complaints
about Finance and
Customer Services
were received.**

(129 in 2018/19
compared with
87 in 2017/18.)

**Fewer compliments
were received about
Finance and
Customer Services.**

(24 in 2018/19
compared with
42 in 2017/18.)

42%

fewer
compliments
received



**More complaints
were upheld.**

(32 in 2018/19
compared with
seven in 2017/18.)

**96% of complaints
were responded to
within timescales.**

This is slightly above
the Council Plan
target of 85 %.



**No Ombudsman
complaint decisions
were received.**

**84% of complaints
were regarding
quality of service.**

(92 of 129 complaints.)



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

- Call waiting times for customer services.
- Conduct of staff particularly when handling telephone enquiries to Customer Services, Council Tax and Housing Benefit.
- Errors with the administration of Council Tax and Housing Benefit accounts

Examples of some of the compliments received for Finance and Customer Services in 2018/19:

“Customer said if there was survey at the end of the call she would receive 100%. She was awesome – polite, patient and calm.”

“Customer commented how easy it is to deal with/contact us. She has properties in other boroughs and she is always held on the phone for ages.”

“Thank you for your continuous support over the weekend, it means a lot to know that you are there supporting us at such a busy time and making yourself available to support you.”

9.2 Lessons Learned

Finance and Customer Services made several service improvements in 2018/19 following the feedback from customers. An example of these is outlined in the case study below:

The Complaint

A number of customers complained about delays in being able to contact the Council's Customer Services to enquire about the new garden waste collections service.

What did we do?

A significant factor in management of volume of calls was that letters which were sent to households regarding the new garden waste service were sent over a 3-week period. The introduction of the service received unprecedented demand which resulted in increases calls volumes. The letters generated a high volume of telephone calls to the Council over a short period of time.

The mail out for the further changes to waste collection services was staggered over a longer period of seven weeks so that the volume of telephone calls was distributed over a longer period of time as well as additional members of staff being recruited to deal with the volume of enquiries.

Who is better off?

Customers were able to successfully contact the Council with enquiries regarding the garden waste collection service and the Council received fewer complaints as a result.

10. ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DIRECTORATE

The comparisons for the Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate is based on the previous two financial years only, due to the fact these services formerly sat within another Directorate. The Directorate is mainly comprised of services internally supporting the council, the largest service area being Human Resources. The majority of services within the Directorate only have limited contact with customers and due to the nature of services they provide they will not generate a lot of complaints or compliments.

As such, information on what was received in 2018/19 is provided in summary below.

10.1 Key Headlines

- One more complaint was received (six in 2018/19 compared with five in 2017/18).
- One less compliment was recorded (three in 2018/19 compared with four in 2017/18).
- Five complaints were taken through the formal complaints procedure, three Stage One complaints and two Stage Two complaints.
- Two complaints were partially upheld (two upheld 0 part upheld in 2017/18).
- No complaints were investigated by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- 40% of complaints were resolved within statutory timescales (two out of five in time).

10.2 Complaints

The subject matter of each complaint received is listed below:

Democratic Services

- The Council's petition scheme and decisions to decline consideration of petitions submitted. (Investigated again at Stage Two).

Neighbourhoods

- The creation of a local community group and the management of its finances. (Investigated again at Stage Two).
- Unhappy with the response by a member of staff in respect of their concerns about ASB in their local area.

Policy and Partnerships

- Unhappy with the Council's use of the Laser Credit Union Ltd.

10.3 Compliments

Three received

Neighbourhoods

- “I just wanted to say a personal thank you for everything that you have done and doing for our little group. There is no way without you it would be as successful as it is now.”

Democratic Services

- “Thank you for your help this morning which has seen instant action. A risk assessment has been completed and the matter has been dealt with swiftly. You are an ambassador for the council. Your approach to his concerns has resulted in matters being dealt with quickly and all the officers that he has been in contact with today have been effective and efficient in their work. Well done!”

Performance, Intelligence and Improvement

- “Thank you for the ongoing support in regard to voluntary work and for understanding and supporting me when needed.”

10.4 Lessons Learned

Democratic Services

- The complaints received about the Council’s petition scheme informed a review of the scheme and the processes involved. This included considering making the list of exclusions more descriptive, the time taken to respond and the information provided if a petition is rejected.

Neighbourhoods

- Complaints were made about a local community group. Although not upheld there was general reflection on how the service supports local groups and what level of support they require.

II. PUBLIC HEALTH

It is a statutory requirement to report annually on the complaints received for Public Health Services. Please note that the Public Health department predominately 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 to complaints responded to by the Public Health services directly under the council's complaint procedure.

One complaint was received in 2018/19. It was regarding the tendering process relating to the provision of sexual health services. The complaint was responded to in time and was not upheld.

One compliment was recorded in 2018/19. Substance Misuse Team "Very big thank you... ..I have learnt so much in my time spent in rehab, and now have the tools to cope and excel in day to day living, and living is something I am certainly doing every day now. My hope has been restored and I have much faith in my future."

12. NEXT STEPS, 2019/20

During 2018/19 although the overall number of complaints decreased, the landscape that the Council operates within remains challenging. Change continues to be made to the delivery of services in response to the critical need to manage budget savings. This could have a negative impact on the public perceptions of the Council and it is therefore important that customer expectations are managed and complaints responded to in a timely manner.

Further steps will be taken in 2019/20 to ensure that the approach the Council takes to dealing with complaints and responding to customer feedback continues to improve. Key actions will include:

- Introduction of a new case management system in the Complaints Team. This will include a full review of the processes around formal complaints and compliments.
- Comprehensive audit of all complaint guidance, including the policy, guide to officers, the internet pages and the intranet.
- Review of all customer complaint literature, including website information, easy read guidance and information for children and young people.
- Ensure that the annual complaints report/updates on complaints data are shared at the highest level and that consideration of complaints is included in strategic Council wide improvement discussions.
- Developing the training offer for officers who sit outside of the Complaints Team. This will include the development of a simple e-learning training course for front line staff to allow them to understand the role and purpose of the complaint procedures.
- Focus more on the lessons learned from upheld complaints and how these can be addressed effectively.
- Work to improve performance within statutory timescales.
- Creation of a new easy read complaint response template for social care complaints.
- Commence procurement exercise for Children's Social Care Independent Officers. This is expected to reduce cost and improve performance to timescales.
- Creation of a Council and NHS Complaint Managers group in Rotherham.

APPENDIX ONE

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman decisions 2018/19, 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	Uphold Rate (%)	Total investigated	Average uphold rate (%) of similar authorities
Telford and Wrekin Council	2	0	12	8	5	2	29	29	7	55
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council	2	0	26	10	5	4	47	44	9	61
Halton Borough Council	0	0	15	16	5	4	40	44	9	55
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council	2	5	26	14	4	5	56	56	9	61
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	3	0	16	20	2	9	50	82	11	61
St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	0	1	15	13	6	5	40	45	11	61
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	4	0	14	18	5	6	47	55	11	61
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council	2	5	13	16	6	6	48	50	12	61
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	3	0	15	12	8	5	43	38	13	55
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council	3	2	26	15	8	6	60	43	14	61
Wakefield City Council	4	3	28	27	8	6	76	43	14	61
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	1	5	34	18	4	13	75	76	17	61
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council	2	1	27	21	10	8	69	44	18	61
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council	5	1	37	21	8	11	83	58	19	61
Stoke-on-Trent City Council	5	2	33	38	7	15	100	68	22	55
Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council	2	1	27	16	5	24	75	83	29	61

APPENDIX TWO

Customer contacts 2018/19

Below is a summary of the customer contacts received during 2018/19 via some of the Council's key customer services (within Riverside House and localities). It should be noted that this document does not provide a comprehensive overview and those listed are only a proportion of the customer contacts which the Council received.

Face to face

Appointment New Claim/COA	206
Benefit Queries	1,678
Blue Car Badges	4,054
Casual Caller	65,360
Concessionary Travel	1,173
Council Tax	3,070
Forms and Evidence	4
Housing	13,419
Licensing	7,901
Non Domestic Rates	61
Parking Services	354
Planning and Building	92
Rothercard	85
Total	97,457

Cashiers	19,743
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Property shop	10,974
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Total	128,174
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Telephony

Contact Centre Calls	693,603
Adult Care Services	253,321
Children's Services	314,982
Council Tax	97,391
Recovery	44,436
Benefits	57,773
Property Shop	910
Housing Advice	52,513
Planning	12,088
Building Control	13,803
Licensing	16,828
Total	1,557,648

Self-serve

Email accounts	56,740
Automated Payments	62,722
E forms	187,077
Kiosk	65,431
Pay Point	224,199
Internet Payments (Incl PayPal)	108,119
Unique Web Visitors	1,236,182
Total	1,940,470

Overall total	3,626,292
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