

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 21ST OCTOBER, 2019

REFERENCE FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE: 3RD SEPTEMBER, 2019

“239 CORPORATE COMPLAINTS 2018/19 ANNUAL REPORT (MD) –

The Council adopted the Welsh Government's Model Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy in July 2013. There was a two-stage process, Stage 1 and Stage 2. Complaints at Stage 1 were seen as informal resolution and should be responded to within 10 working days. Stage 2 complaints were seen as formal complaints and should be responded to within 20 working days. After that the complainant was advised to contact the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW), if they remained unhappy.

All Corporate Complaints and Compliments were recorded on Oracle CRM and fed into the Complaints and Compliments Dashboards. These excluded Social Services complaints which were resolved via a different procedure and were reported separately, but a summary of performance had been included for information.

The Audit Committee, within its terms of reference, monitored the performance of Corporate Complaints and made recommendations to Cabinet/and or Council as appropriate.

While the Council saw an increase in total number of complaints raised (420) compared to 2017/18 (296), the fact that 93% of these were resolved at Stage 1 indicated that the Council were undertaking effective investigation and resolution.

The percentage of complaints resolved within target time scales remained consistent with the previous year at 56.7% (2017/18 56.8%), however this was significantly reduced on the 2016/17 performance of 75%.

Since the reporting period the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) had received additional powers which included the creation of a Compliance Standards Agency with a remit to monitor local authority performance in relation to volumes and types of complaints received, cause of complaints and how quickly complaints were resolved.

During the year the PSOW received 24 complaints relating to the Council, significantly fewer than the 36 which was the expected average based on population size and fewer than the 30 received in 2017/18. No complaints were taken into consideration by the PSOW during the year.

This report detailed complaint performance for Directorates for 2017/18 and included performance trends since 2014/15.

Social Services received a total of 105 complaints and enquiries during the same period. Members noted that Social Services complaints and enquiries were subject to a separate reporting process. A summary of Social Services complaints performance was included in Appendix A.

Environment and Housing upheld the highest percentage of complaints in full at 44.7%, however this was part of a downward trend from 49.7% in 2014/15. Managing Director and Resources upheld 22.1% during the year while Learning and Skills did not uphold any complaints in full and part upheld 1 of the 5 received by the Directorate.

Overall for the Council the percentage of enquiries upheld in full remained relatively consistent at around 40% over the past 5 years, while there was an increasing trend for the percentage not upheld over the period (32% - 40%) and there was a corresponding downward trend for complaints with an outcome of part upheld.

Despite services being able to monitor their own complaint performance since September 2016, the percentage resolved within target remained relatively low at 56.7%. This was broadly in line with performance in 2017/8 of 56.8% but significantly lower than the 75% achieved in 2016/17.

The Learning and Skills Directorate resolved the highest number of complaints within target at 80%, with the Managing Director and Resources and Environment and Housing at 58.8% and 55.9% respectively.

This area of performance was likely to come under increasing focus with the establishment of the PSOW Compliance Standards Authority. Councils would be required to provide quarterly data on the numbers, types and outcome of complaints together with speed of response.

67% of complaints did not have a recorded cause. Unfortunately the level of confidence in data relating to the causes of complaints for the Council overall was low as a result. This was a significant decrease in recording from the previous year which stood at 36.2%.

For Learning and Skill 0% of complaints had a recorded cause (2017/18 63.6%), Managing Director and Resources 52.6% (2017/18 77.2%) and Environment and Housing 29.6% (2017/18 58.8%).

This performance was reflected in recording of learning outcomes with 65.6% of complaints having no learning outcome recorded. Where outcomes were recorded the most popular was "Review Service Standards" at 17.3% of all complaints, followed by Staff Training at 11.2%.

Appendix B provided Members with a copy of a letter received from the PSOW setting out the Council's performance in relation to Ombudsman complaints, the new powers of the Office and requesting an update on the Council's consideration of these matters. It was recommended that following consideration by Audit Committee and Cabinet, the Managing Director write to the PSOW to provide a copy of this report, appendices and relevant minutes to demonstrate this.

During the period the PSOW received 24 complaints from Vale of Glamorgan residents. This was circa 33% less than the PSOW would expect based on population size and 6 fewer than in 2017/8.

No complaints were taken into investigation by the PSOW during the year although 4 complaints were resolved through the Early Resolution process.

The year saw a significant increase in complaints received via the Welsh Language Commissioner rising from 1 in 2017/18 to 10. Of these 4 were currently awaiting the outcome of the Commissioners investigations, 2 were in the process of being resolved, 3 had not been investigated and 1 was being contested.

Overall the analysis of performance indicated that complaint investigation and performance was meeting customer expectations, although given the increasing reporting requirements from the PSOW the Council needed to consider how it would improve performance in relation to how quickly it responded to complaints against target time scales.

A Committee Member stated that in relation to complaints, 67% of cases did not have a Cause for Concern recorded. In reply, the Head of Policy and Business Transformation stated that this was a concern and was as a result of the usability of the Oracle CRM system. He added that reporting on a Directorate basis would address the issue of irregular operational scrutiny. This would be progressed in line with the Public Services Ombudsman's suggestion around outcomes and causes, which needed to be properly categorised, so work would be undertaken to refine the list as information would have to be reported externally.

A Committee Member then raised two queries. The first was in relation to the format of the Annual Report which needed to be clearer and in larger font. The second query related to the letter from the Public Services Ombudsman and concerns around Town and Community Councillors that were 'twin-hatted'. The Member queried whether this letter would be sent to the Community Liaison Committee. In reply, the Head of Policy and Business Transformation stated; that he would check whether the letter had been circulated, and that the format of the report would be reviewed for next year's Annual Report.

In reply to a query regarding the length of time to respond to complaints and instances where there had been an extension, a Member queried how many had not met targets, and were there reasons for the delays or was it down to a lack of resources. In reply, the Head of Policy and Business Transformation stated that this area needed further work, with complaints at Stage 1 to be responded to within 10 working days, and Stage 2 to respond to within 20 working days. These were the standards used across Wales. It had been recognised that the CRM system could allow for an adjustment to show that there had been agreed to extend the response time. Therefore, consideration was needed as to whether the system could capture this information.

A Committee Member requested further information which provided details of the complaints made to the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office. It was agreed that

this would be sent via email. In addition, information regarding Corporate Complaints within target for 2015/16 would also be sent via email.

Having considered the report, it was

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the contents of the report and appendices be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Audit Committee continues to receive an annual update in relation to Corporate Complaints and Compliments.
- (3) T H A T the report (including appendices) and comments of the Audit Committee be referred to Cabinet for its consideration.

Reasons for decisions

(1&2) To ensure effective monitoring of Corporate Complaints as an indicator of citizen satisfaction with services provided.

(3) In order that Cabinet can be apprised of the report and the comments made by the Audit Committee.”

Attached as Appendix – Report to Audit Committee: 3rd September, 2019

Meeting of:	Audit Committee
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday, 03 September 2019
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	All Scrutiny Committees
Report Title:	Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2018/19
Purpose of Report:	To allow consideration of corporate complaints received from customers and the Public Service Ombudsman Annual Letter for the corresponding period
Report Owner:	Managing Director
Responsible Officer:	Managing Director
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	There are no matters in this report which relate to an individual ward
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for executive decision
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council adopted the Welsh Government's Model Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy in July 2013. There is a two-stage process, Stage 1 and Stage 2. Complaints at Stage 1 are seen as informal resolution and should be responded to within 10 working days. Stage 2 complaints are seen as formal complaints and should be responded to within 20 working days. After that the complainant is advised to contact the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW), if they remain unhappy. • All Corporate Complaints and Compliments are recorded on Oracle CRM and feed in to the Complaints and Compliments Dashboards. These exclude Social Services complaints which are resolved via a different procedure and are reported separately. • The Audit Committee has within its terms of reference to monitor the performance of Corporate Complaints and to make recommendations to Cabinet/and or Council as appropriate. • While the council saw an increase in total number of complaints raised (420) compared to 2017/18 (296), the fact that 93% of these were resolved at Stage 1 indicates that the council are undertaking effective investigation and resolution. 	

- The percentage of complaints resolved with target time scales remained consistent with the previous year at 56.7% (2017/18 56.8%), however this is significantly reduced on the 2016/17 performance of 75%
- Since the reporting period the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW has received additional powers which include the creation of a Compliance Standards Agency with a remit to monitor local authority performance in relation to volumes and types of complaints received, cause of complaints and how quickly complaints are resolved.
- During the year the PSOW received 24 complaints relating to the council, significantly fewer than the 36 which is the expected average based on population size and fewer than the 30 received in 2017/18. No complaints were taken into consideration by the PSOW during the year.

This report details complaint performance for directorates for 2017/18 and including performance trends since 2014/15.

Recommendations

1. That Audit Committee note the contents of the report and appendices.
2. That Audit Committee continues to receive an annual update in relation to Corporate Complaints and Compliments.
3. That the report (including appendices) and comments of the Audit Committee be referred to Cabinet for consideration. Following Cabinet's consideration that the Managing Director writes to the PSOW and provides a copy of this report, appendices and minutes to demonstrate the outcome of the Council's considerations and actions with regards complaints.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. 2. To ensure effective monitoring of corporate complaints as an indicator of citizen satisfaction with services provided
3. In order that Cabinet can be apprised of the report and the comments made by Audit Committee and the PSOW is provided with the information requested in the letter contained at Appendix B.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council operates a two stage process for handling complaints from residents. Should the complainant remain unsatisfied at the end of this process they are advised to contact the PSOW.
- 1.2 The contents of this report are generated from data entered on to Oracle Customer Relationship Management system by Customer Relations and service based staff.

- 1.3 Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee receives quarterly updates in local performance indicators relating to complaint handling, including those escalated to the PSOW.
- 1.4 Operational Managers have been provided with a real time dashboard to enable them to better monitor and manage complaints relating to their own services.
- 1.5 An annual complaints and compliments report has been produced for the 5 financial years since 2014/15 and detailed performance information is included at Appendix A to this report.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 Of the 420 complaints received during the year 391 were resolved at stage 1 and 29 at stage 2 of the process. Although this is an increase on 2017/18 of 126, the percentage resolved at Stage 1 has also increased from 86.4% to 93.1% (2016/17 85.92%). This is a good indication that the complaints have been investigated consistently well and effectively.
- 2.2 Complaints were not received equally across all services. 82.62% of complaints received related to Environment and Housing directorate, 16.19% for Managing Director and Resources and 1.19% for Learning and Skills.
- 2.3 Social Services received a total of 105 complaints and enquiries during the same period. Members will note that Social Services complaints and enquiries are subject to a separate reporting process. A summary of social services complaints performance is included in Appendix A.
- 2.4 Environment and Housing upheld the highest percentage of complaints in full at 44.7%, however this is part of a downward trend from 49.7% in 2014/15. Managing Director and Resources upheld 22.1% during the year while learning and Skills did not uphold any complaints in full and part upheld 1 of the 5 received by the directorate.
- 2.5 Overall for the council the percentage of enquiries Upheld in Full has remained relatively consistent at around 40% over the past 5 years, while there is an increasing trend for the percentage Not Upheld over the period (32% - 40%) and there is a corresponding downward trend for complaints with an outcome of part Upheld.
- 2.6 Despite services being able to monitor their own complaint performance since September 2016, the percentage resolved within target remains relatively low at 56.7%. This is broadly in line with performance in 2017/8 of 56.8% but significantly lower than the 75% achieved in 2016/17.
- 2.7 The Learning and Skills directorate resolved the highest number of complaints within target at 80%, with MD and Resources and Environment and Housing at 58.8% and 55.9% respectively.
- 2.8 It is significant to note that no complaints have been raised by complainants regarding the time taken to respond to complaints over the past 3 financial years. This suggests that while targets have been missed, customer expectations

are being met and that outcomes may be a more important indicator than the speed of response to complainants

- 2.9** This area of performance is likely to come under increasing focus with the establishment of the PSWO Compliance Standards Authority. Councils will be required to provide quarterly data on the numbers, types and outcome of complaints together with speed of response.
- 2.10** Currently these performance measures are reported by the Policy and Business Transformation service for the council as a whole. The Council should consider allocating local Performance Indicators for directorates and/or specific services to encourage ownership of these performance measures.
- 2.11** 67% of complaints did not have a recorded cause. Unfortunately the level of confidence in data relating to the causes of complaints for the council overall is low as a result. This is significant decrease in recording from the previous year which stood at 36.2%.
- 2.12** For Learning and Skill 0% of complaints had a recorded cause (2017/18 63.6%), Managing Director and Resources 52.6% (2017/18 77.2%) and Environment and Housing 29.6% (2017/18 58.8%)
- 2.13** This performance is reflected in recording of learning outcomes with 65.6% of complaints having no learning outcome recorded. Where outcomes are recorded the most popular is "Review Service Standards" at 17.3% of all complaints, followed by Staff Training at 11.2%.
- 2.14** Appendix B provides Members with a copy of a letter received from the PSOW setting out the Council's performance in relation to Ombudsman complaints, the new powers of the Office and requesting an update on the Council's consideration of these matters. It is recommended that following consideration by Audit Committee and Cabinet, the Managing Director writes to the PSOW to provide a copy of this report, appendices and relevant minutes to demonstrate this.
- 2.15** During the period the PSOW received 24 complaints from Vale of Glamorgan residents. This is circa 33% less than the PSOW would expect based on population size and 6 fewer than in 2017/8.
- 2.16** No complaints were taken into investigation by the PSOW during the year although 4 complaints were resolved through the Early Resolution process.
- 2.17** The year saw a significant increase in complaints received via the Welsh Language Commissioner rising from 1 in 2017/18 to 10. Of these 4 are currently awaiting the outcome of the commissioner's investigations, 2 are in the process of being resolved, 3 have not been investigated and 1 is being contested.
- 2.18** Overall the analysis of performance indicates that complaint investigation and performance is meeting customer expectations, although given the increasing reporting requirements from the PSOW the council needs to consider how it will improve performance in relation to how quickly it responds to complaints against target time scales.

- 2.19** The report at Appendix A provides Members with an overview and detailed performance information regarding complaints and compliments. The report also provides an overview of proposed actions to address related matters that will be progressed during 2019/20.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

Effective management of complaints and compliments is an important element of ensuring the Council meets its well-being objectives and contributes to the way in which resources are used within service areas to deliver key council services.

Listening to and understanding complaints is a key source of the "voice of the customer", what they need from us and involving them in decisions about how we deliver services and demonstrates how customers are involved in the development and delivery of services.

Learning from complaints is a key way in which the council can develop services that meet the changing needs of residents and are sustainable in the long term. By learning from complaints, services can be improved to prevent complaints reoccurring in the future.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales has powers to require the council to compensate complainants financially should it be found guilty of maladministration. Effective investigation and management of complaints will minimise the risk of this happening.

Employment

- 4.2** There are no matters in this report relating to employment matters. Training is available to staff to ensure understanding of the complaints process. It is proposed that an e-learning module be developed to further enhance staff understanding and awareness.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.3** There is no statutory requirement to adopt the Model Concerns and Complaints Policy and Guidance for Public Service providers in Wales. However the Welsh Government and the PSOW has commended its adoption.
- 4.4** The Council's complaints process is promoted online and via leaflets at reception points. Complaints can be registered on the website, using the mobile app, by post and by telephone. This ensures that all residents are aware of and have access to the complaints process irrespective of age, gender, belief or disability.

5. Background Papers

Appendix A - Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2018/19

Appendix B - Public -Service Ombudsman For Wales Annual Letter 2018/19

Corporate Complaints – Annual Report 2018 / 19

ANNUAL DIRECTORATE TOTALS

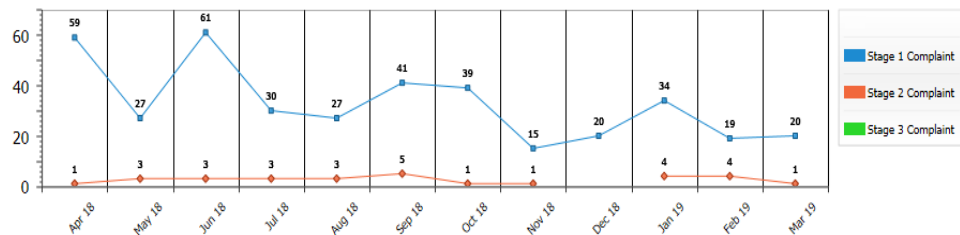
Environment & Housing: 347

Learning & Skills: 5

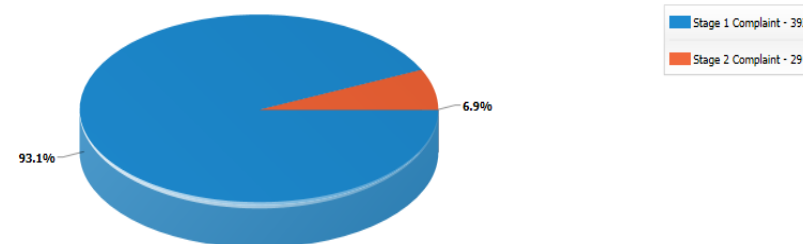
Managing Director & Resources: 68

Total: 420

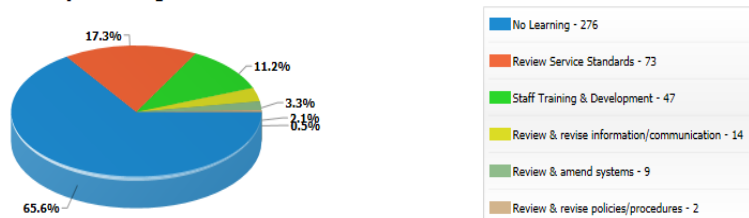
Monthly Complaints



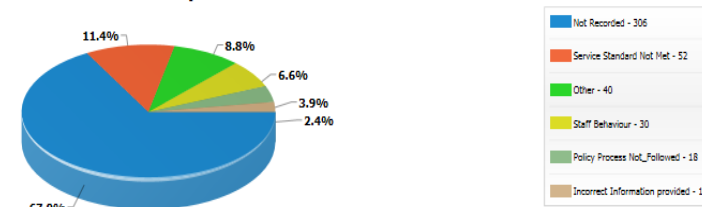
Complaint Resolution Stage



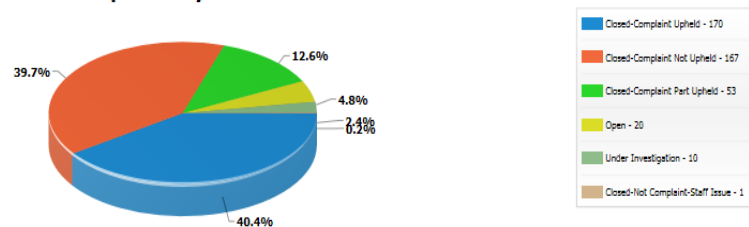
Key Learning Points



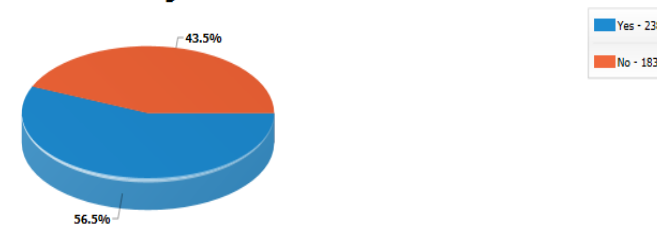
Cause Of Complaint



Complaints by Outcome



On Target



Vale of Glamorgan Council – Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2018/19

Executive Summary

The Council adopted the Welsh Government's 2 stage Model Concerns and Complaints Policy on 1 July 2013. There is a two-stage process, Stage 1 and Stage 2. Complaints at Stage 1 are seen as informal resolution and should be responded to within 10 working days. Stage 2 complaints are seen as formal complaints and should be responded to within 20 working days. After that the complainant is advised to contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW), if they remain unhappy.

This is the fifth annual Report on Corporate Complaints under this Policy. This Report details all formal complaints recorded on the Oracle CRM system for the Council (**excluding Social Services**) that were handled through the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy during the financial year 2018/19. Complaints Dashboard information for 2018/19 is also included for each Directorate at Appendices 1, 2 and 3. The figures are correct as 12 August 2019. The figures for 2017/18 are indicated in brackets throughout the report for comparison. Complaints handled through alternative, statutory, processes are excluded from this Report.

The number of compliments received and recorded during 2018/19 (**excluding Social Services**) is also set out in the Report.

The Council received **391 Stage 1** and **29 Stage 2 Corporate Complaints** during 2018/19. This is a total of **420** (294 in 2017/18), which is an increase of **126** complaints compared to the previous year. Analysis indicates that corporate complaints are investigated well and effectively by the Council with **93.1%** (86.4% in 2017/18) of complaints being resolved at Stage 1. This is an improvement of **6.7%** compared with the 2017/18 performance.

56.7% (56.8% in 2017/18) of Stages 1 and 2 complaint investigations were **completed within target** response timescales. It is worth noting, however, that there have been no customer complaints regarding the time taken to respond to complaints during the year indicating that we are meeting customer expectations.

Since September 2016 it has been possible for services to monitor their own complaint performance using real time information from the Complaints Dashboard. This has improved management information on complaints. Despite this the performance of replying to complaints within the target time has reduced by nearly 20% in the last two years. (In 2016/17 the response time was 75.1%).

This performance area will come under increased scrutiny with the creation of the PSOW **Compliance Standards Authority** which will require all local authorities to regularly report on whether they have met speed of response guidelines.

The Customer Complaints Officer post was made redundant on 1 May 2018 and while some activities were ceased, work has been absorbed within other roles.

Of the 420 corporate complaints in **2018/19**, 347 or **82.1%** (210 or 71.4% in 2017/18) were received by the **Environment and Housing** directorate. **Waste Management** generated 188 Stage 1 and 6 Stage 2 complaints i.e. a **total of 194** (a total of 77 in 2017/18) during the period representing **56%** (36.6% in 2017/18) of the directorate total and **46% (26.1% in 2017/18)** of the Council total. Compared to 2017/18 the **Waste Management** service has received 117 more complaints. During 2018/19, the highest number of complaints for this service was received during the months of April, September and October 2018, which were 31, 27 and 31 respectively.

However when examining Waste Management's compliance to replying within the target time for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints it is higher than the Council as a whole, **ie 70%** (57% in 2017/18) on target compared to **56.5%**. Therefore their performance has improved by **13%** compared to 2017/18, despite having 117 more complaints.

Learning and Skills received the fewest number of complaints, **totalling 5** (4 Stage 1 and 1 Stage 2) in 2018/19 (14 in 2017/18) or **1.19%** (4.7% in 2017/18) of the total. The Stage 2 complaint related to School Improvement team, while the Library service and School Admissions received 2 stage 1 complaints each.

Managing Director & Resources received **59** Stage 1 Complaints and **9** Stage 2 complaints (this compares to 57 Stage 1 and 13 Stage 2 in 2017/18). Customer Relations accounted for 15 Stage 1 and 1 Stage 2 complaints with Financial Services receiving 25 and 3 respectively. For the directorate as a whole **58.8%** were responded to within target; compared to the Corporate figure of **56.5%**. However they achieved a target rate of 75.7% in 2017/18, which is **reduction of 16.9%** on their 2018/19 performance. **40.4%** (35% in 2017/18) of all recorded corporate complaints were fully upheld, while **39.7%** (41.8% in 2017/18) were not upheld.

67% (36.2% in 2017/18) of complaints did not have the cause of the complaint recorded. This figure is **31%** higher than in 2017/18 so further investigation will need to be undertaken to identify the cause of this shortfall. 'Service Standards not met' accounted for **11.4%** and 'other' accounted for **8.8%** of the causes of complaints. (In 2017/18 the top two causes were 'other' at 20.1% and 'Service Standards not met' at 14.8%.) Discrimination, as a cause of complaint, started to be monitored in January 2017. There were none recorded during 2018/19, however 2 were recorded in 2017/18. One related to Waste Management and the other Human Resources. Neither complaint was upheld.

'No learning' was recorded against **65.6%** (59.9% in 2017/18) of complaints. The main key learning point categories were Review Service Standards – **17.3%** and Staff Training and Development – **11.2%**. (In 2017/18 the top two learning points recorded were Staff Training at 21.1% and Review and Revise Information/Communication at 10.9%.)

Public Services Ombudsman Complaints, Welsh Language Complaints and Social Services Complaints

24 (30 in 2017/18) complaints in respect of this Council were received by the PSOW during 2018/19, which is a reduction **of 6** comparing the previous year. Based on population size the PSOW would expect this council to have received 37 complaints during the reporting period. 4 complaints were resolved through **Early Resolution** and 3 were considered to be **Premature**. No complaints were taken into investigation during 2018/19. Two Section 21 Reports (found guilty of maladministration) were issued against the Council during 2018/19. These related to complaints from previous years. One involving Social Services and one Planning.

A total of 10 formal complaints were received via the Welsh Language Commissioner (1 in 2017/18). Of the 10 investigations 3 were terminated by the Welsh Commissioner, the Council is currently awaiting the results of 4 investigations, two are in the process of being resolved and one is being contested.

The 10 formal complaints are not recorded on Oracle CRM so are not reflected in the total of **420**. (Although going forward it is possible to record them on Oracle CRM should this be deemed appropriate.)

Social Service representations and complaints are dealt with under the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014.

As at 31 March 2019, 63 complaints were received, which is slightly higher than the previous year where there were 53 complaints. Of these 63 complaints, 28 were for Adult Services, 31 were for Children and Young People Services and 4 related to the Resource Management and Safeguarding Division. 38% of the complaints were resolved within the designated timescales. During this period, no complaints were referred onto the Ombudsman for investigation.

The table shown below provides a full breakdown of all compliments, enquiries and complaints received during 2018/2019.

Service Division	Enquiries	Complaints Stage 1	Complaints Stage 2	Ombudsman	Responded to in Timescales	Total Complaints and Enquiries Received
Adult Services	23	27	1	0	11	51
Children and Young People Services	13	31	3	0	10	44
Resource Management & Safeguarding	6	4	0	0	3	10

The majority (42) of complaints received during 2018/19 were in relation to the quality or level of service available. The other areas of complaint related to either staff, charges for service or other. The table below provides a breakdown of the nature of complaints by Division.

Type of Complaint	Adult Services	Children and Young People Services	Resource Management and Safeguarding	Total Complaints by Nature of Complaint
Charges for services	1	-	-	1
Lack of response	-	1	-	1
Quality/level of service	17	26	4	47
Staff complaint	7	4	-	11
Unhappy with care provided	-	-	-	-
Communication	-	-	-	-
Other	3	-	-	3

During 2018/19 a summary of Social Services key lessons learnt include:

- The importance of confirming who you are speaking to when you return a call.
- Ensuring that data held on our system is up to date and accurate.
- Explaining to family members the rationale behind decisions.
- Clearly explaining to family members the implications of court proceedings, so that they understand the process.
- Checking that service users understand charging policies.
- Explaining our quality monitoring and duty processes.
- Effectively communicating with service users any changes to appointments.
- Ensuring confidential information is not sent to wrong address.
- The importance of effective and timely communication with service users and families.
- Remaining professional at all times when dealing with families.
- Returning phone calls in a timely manner.
- Observing confidentiality with service users.
- The need to be mindful of any care proceedings.
- Providing written responses following verbal messages/information.

Performance Commentary

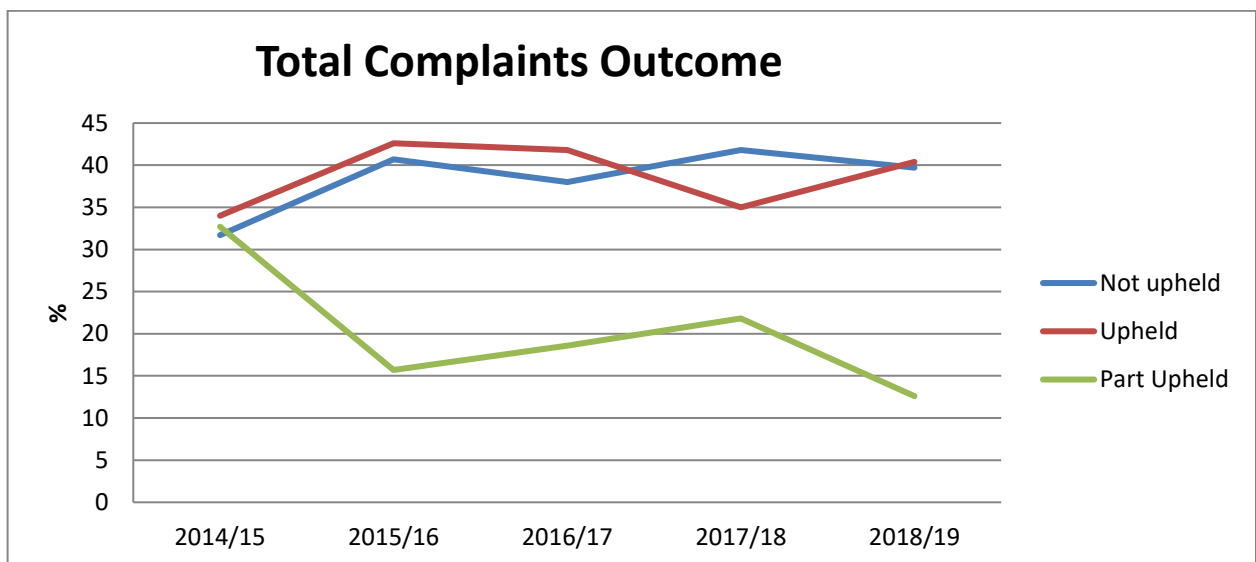
The average number of complaints received per month is **35**. (24.5 in 2017/18). Peak demand was in June 2018 with 64 complaints. November 2018 showed the lowest number of complaints received, at 16. With regards to Stage 2 complaints – there is an average of **2.4 per month**. This compared to an average of 3.3 per month in 2017/18.

Learning and Skills resolved the lowest number of complaints at Stage 1 at **80%**. However this is based on receiving only 4 Stage 1 complaints. Managing Director & Resources resolved **86.8%** complaints at Stage 1. Environment and Housing resolved **94.5%** of complaints at Stage 1 in 2018/19. This compares to 88.1% in 2017/18, which is a **6.4%** improvement.

Directorate	Percentage (%) Resolved at Stage 1				
	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Learning & Skills	80	85.7	90.9	77.8	91.3
Managing Director & Resources	86.6	81.4	77.5	80.3	96.9
Environment & Housing	94.5	88.1	90.2	90.7	87.7
TOTAL	93.1	86.4	87.7	88.3	91.3

Environment and Housing had the highest percentage of ‘Upheld’ complaints at **44.7%**. Managing Director & Resources had the second highest percentage at **57.4%**. Learning and Skills had the highest of ‘Not Upheld’ complaints at **60%** but this was based on a total of only 5 complaints.

The following provides an overview of the total complaints received by the Council and the result of subsequent investigations.



The following breaks down, by directorate, the total complaints received and the result of subsequent investigations.

Directorate	Not Upheld (%)	Upheld (%)	Part Upheld (%)
Learning & Skills			
2018/19	60	0	40
2017/18	28.6	35.7	35.7
2016/17	54.5	27.3	18.2
2015/16	0	44.4	55.6
2014/15	31.7	34	32.7
Managing Director & Resources			
2018/19	57.4	22.1	11.8
2017/18	51.4	30	18.6
2016/17	56.3	26.3	17.5
2015/16	53.9	18.4	27.6
2014/15	23.7	15.3	61.1
Environment & Housing			
2018/19	36	44.7	12.4
2017/18	39.5	36.7	21.9
2016/17	32.7	46.7	18.6
2015/16	38.3	49	11.4
2014/15	37.4	49.7	9.8
	Not Upheld (%)	Upheld (%)	Part Upheld (%)
Total (excluding Social Services)			
2018/19	39.7	40.4	12.6
2017/18	41.8	35	21.8
2016/17	38	41.8	18.6
2015/16	40.7	42.6	15.7
2014/15	31.7	34	32.7

Based on historical data available for the all services in scope 55% of complaints are deemed to have validity either in whole or in part.

The percentage of complaints resolved within target time scales for the Council stands at **56.5%**. This is a 0.3% reduction in performance, compared to the previous year and this is a **18.6% reduction** when considering the performance in 2016/17.

Directorate	Resolved within target (%)	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Learning & Skills	80	71.4	90.1	66.7	73
Managing Director & Resources	58.8	75.7	82.5	77.6	87
Environment & Housing	55.9	50.5	72.5	73.4	62
Council	56.5	56.8	75.1	74.2	73

There is a **25%** variation across directorates in this performance area. Learning and Skills performance was **80%**, an 8.6% improvement based on 2017/18. Managing Director & Resources achieved the second highest percentage of complaints resolved within target at **58.8%**; however this is a reduction of 16.9% on the previous year. The corporate average is **56.5%**.

What were the causes of complaints?

There may be more than one cause of a complaint. The Oracle CRM system is set up to reflect this. In total, the cause of complaint was recorded in only **33.1%** (63.8% in 2017/18) of cases. This is a reduction of **30.7%** compared to 2017/18. **67%** were not recorded and represents an area for improvement going forward. More information of this type being recorded will provide a greater insight into what customers want from our services and how we might be able to improve to reduce the number of complaints being received in the future.

Reasons for the generation of complaints are categorised as:

- Incorrect Information provided
- Other
- Policy / Procedure Not Followed
- Service Standards Not Met
- Staff Behaviour
- Discrimination (since January 2017)

Where recorded the highest reason for the cause of complaints at council level is Service Standards Not Met at **11.4%**. Staff Behaviour was down to **6.6%** from 13.9% in 2017/18. The least frequent cause was Incorrect Information provided at **2.4%** (6.7% in 2017/18).

Where recorded, the most frequent cause of complaint in Environment and Housing was Service Standards Not Met at **10.1%** (in 2017/18 the most frequent cause was Other at 24.9%). Learning and Skills did not record the cause of the complaint for any of their 5 complaints (in 2017/18 the most frequent cause was Service Standards not met and Staff Behaviour both at 18.2%). In Managing Director & Resources the most frequent cause related to Service Standards not met at **18.4%** (in 2017/18 – it was Service Standards not met at 20.7%).

The following table sets out the reason for complaints being received by each directorate.

Area	Year	Incorrect Info provided (%)	Other (%)	Policy / Procedure not Followed (%)	Service Standards not met (%)	Staff Behaviour (%)	Not recorded (%)	Discrimination (%)
Learning & Skills	2018/19	0	0	0	0	0	100	0
	2017/18	13.6	0	13.6	18.2	18.2	36.4	0
	2016/17	17.6	11.8	11.8	5.9	29.4	23.5	-
	2015/16	12.5	0	18.8	18.8	12.5	37.5	-
	2014/15	0	0	100	0	0	0	-
Managing Director & Resources	2018/19	1.3	14.5	9.2	18.4	9.2	47.4	0
	2017/18	12	12	13	20.7	18.5	22.8	1.1
	2016/17	17.2	14.7	12.1	10.3	25.9	19.8	-
	2015/16	10.6	11.7	9.6	12.8	16	39.4	-
	2014/15	2	35.8	37.3	2.9	3.9	18.1	-
Environment & Housing	2018/19	2.9	7.7	6.1	10.1	6.1	70.4	0
	2017/18	4	24.9	5.3	12.2	11.8	41.2	0.4
	2016/17	4.8	8.7	3	6	7.5	70.1	-
	2015/16	6.5	8.6	11.8	8.3	21	43.8	-
	2014/15	7.5	5.2	2.9	4	5.2	75.1	-
Total	2018/19	3.9	8.8	3.9	11.4	6.6	67	0
	2017/18	6.7	20.1	7.8	14.8	13.9	36.2	0.6
	2016/17	8.4	10.3	5.6	7.1	12.8	55.9	-
	2015/16	7.6	9.1	11.6	9.6	19.6	42.5	-
	2014/15	4.4	21.4	21.9	3.4	4.4	44.4	-

What was learnt from the complaints?

Actions taken as a result of complaints broadly reflect the causes. Key Learning Points are categorised as:

- Review & Amend Systems
- Review & Revise Information / Communication
- Review & Revise Policies / Procedures
- Review Service Standards
- Staff Training & Development
- No Learning (previously Not Applicable)

A total of **65.6%** (59.9% in 2017/18) of complaints had no learning point recorded. This is 5.7% higher than in 2017/18. These responses are mostly associated with complaints that were not upheld. Whilst there is sufficient data on which to analyse the corporate response to complaints, more information would provide for a higher level of confidence in drawing conclusions from this data.

Managing Director & Resources had the largest percentage of complaints with no learning at **73.5%** (45.7% in 2017/18), whereas the lowest figure was Learning and Skills at **60%** (42.9% in 2017/18).

Where there was learning from complaints (in **34.4%** of complaints) the information at a Council level shows 2 main areas, namely Review Service Standards at **17.3%** (2.7% in 2017/18) and Staff Training and Development at **11.2%** (21.1% in 2017/18). Comparing the performance in 2017/18 to 2018/19 there was an increase in the Review Service Standards of **14.5%** and a decrease in Staff Training and Development of **9.9%**. The others at Council level in 2018/19 varied between **3.3%** (Review/Revise Information/Communication), **0.5%** (Review/Revise Policies/Procedures) and **2.1%** (Review/Amend Systems).

Review Service Standards was the highest figure in Environment and Housing at **19%** (3.3% in 2017/18), which showed an increase of 15.7%. Review Service Standards was the lowest in Learning and Skills at **0%** (0% in 2017/18). In 2017/18 the highest figure for Environment and Housing had been Staff Training and Development at 15.7%; this had reduced to **11.2%** in 2018/19.

Learning and Skills had the highest figure relating to Review & Amend Systems of **40%** (compared to 7.1% in 2017/18) but this is based on a total of 5 complaints.

The following table sets out, by directorate, the learning points raised as a result of investigating complaints.

Area	Year	No Learning (%)	Review Systems (%)	Review Information (%)	Review procedures (%)	Review Service Standards (%)	Staff Training (%)
Learning & Skills	2018/19	60	40	0	0	0	0
	2017/18	42.9	7.1	14.3	14.3	-	21.4
	2016/17	54.5	9.1	27.3	9.1	0	0
	2015/16	66.7	11.1	11.1	0	0	11.1
	2014/15	66.7	0	16.7	0	0	16.7
Managing Director & Resources	2018/19	73.5	0	2.9	1.5	10.3	11.8
	2017/18	45.7	0	12.9	2.9	1.4	37.1
	2016/17	60	6.3	12.5	5	2.5	13.8
	2015/16	64.5	6.6	5.3	1.3	0	22.4
	2014/15	33.6	2.3	55	2.3	0	6.9
Environment & Housing	2018/19	64	2	3.5	0.3	19	11.2
	2017/18	65.7	1	10	4.3	3.3	15.7
	2016/17	42.2	2.9	7.2	2	25.8	19.9
	2015/16	41	5.5	4.1	6.2	1.4	41.7
	2014/15	39.3	8.6	10.4	2.5	1.2	38
Council	2018/19	65.6	2.1	3.3	0.5	17.3	11.2
	2017/18	59.9	1	10.9	4.4	2.7	21.1
	2016/17	46.1	3.8	8.8	2.8	20.4	18.1
	2015/16	46.5	5.9	4.5	5.1	1.1	37
	2014/15	37.3	5.7	30	2.3	0.7	24

Lessons Learned

The top issue for customers when making a complaint is service standards which works out at 50% of the complaints received. The second highest area is staff training and development at 32%.

Conclusion

The number of recorded Corporate complaints has increased by **127** since 2017/18 and the 2018/19 figure of **420** the highest since Corporate complaints have been recorded on Oracle CRM. The reasons for this increase need to be investigated. One reason, however could be down to customers being more aware of the Corporate Complaint Policy and Process, and are more likely to make a complaint.

The statistics for 2018/19 indicate that complaints are generally being handled well in that only 6.9% are being escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2. This indicates a high level of customer satisfaction with Stage 1 investigations. Complaints to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales have been reducing over the last 3 years. In 2018/19 no complaints to the Ombudsman regarding this Council were taken into investigation. Both are an improvement in performance.

However the areas for concern are that the response times in respect of the 10 and 20 day targets are getting worse and comparing the figures in 2014/15 to 2018/19 it has gone from 73% to 56.5%, respectively. In addition when complaints are being closed down on Oracle CRM information in respect of the cause of the complaint is not being recorded properly. The reasons for this will need to be identified and action taken to improve performance for 2019/2020.

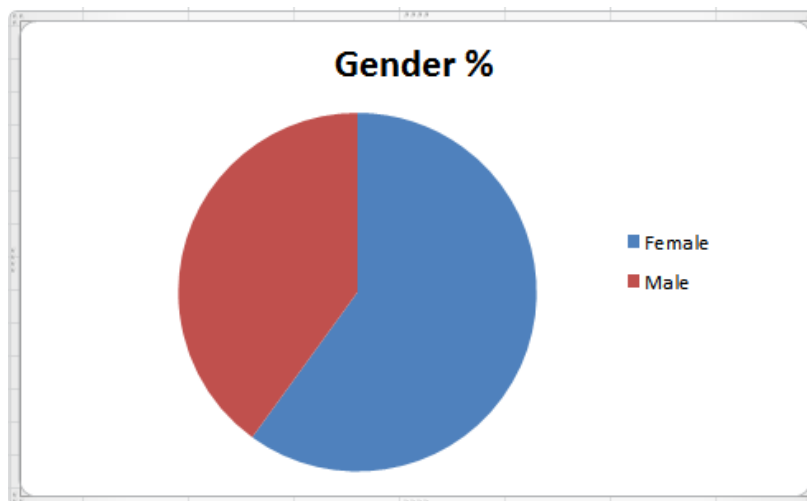
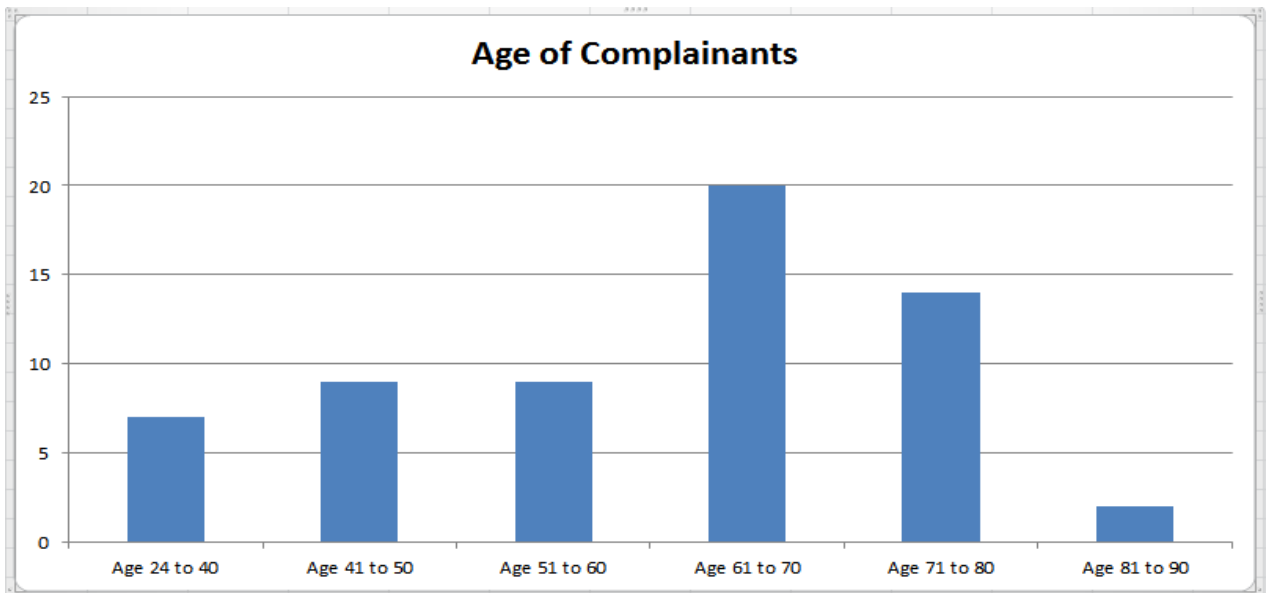
The Council's Complaints Dashboard is able to capture, monitor and report on its performance in handling complaints. There is an ability to identify the areas of the council that is driving complaints, identifying their cause and the steps taken by services to reduce reoccurrence.

Equality Survey

An Equality Survey of complaints was undertaken in January 2019. It was sent to 400 people who had made a complaint during 1 April to 31 December 2018. As of the date of this report 67 responses have been received.

Of those who provided data, the average age of complainants was 60, with 78% being aged 50 or over. 1 complaint was received from a customer aged in their 20's. In 2016, when the last survey was sent, 1 person had made a complaint in the age group 17 to 26 years. To reflect this, an App to record Corporate Complaints was issued by the council. It was anticipated that this form of contact might encourage younger people to submit complaints. 60% of complaints were received from Females (67% in 2016) and 30% from customers whose day to day activities were limited by some form of disability.

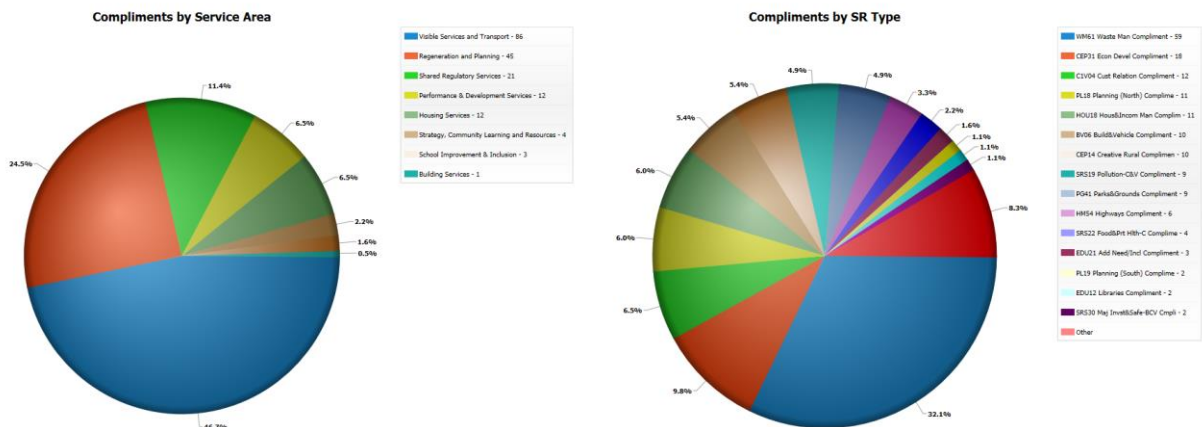
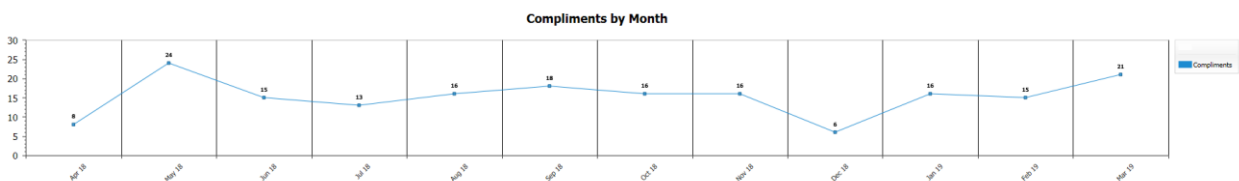
9% described their ability to speak Welsh between Competent and Fluent. Promotional work will be undertaken in 2019/20 to ensure that under-represented groups, and in particular younger citizens, are aware of the complaints process and how it can be accessed.



Compliments

Compliments can be recorded using Oracle CRM. The compliments received from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 are set out below by Service Request Type and Service Area. During 2018/19 a total of **184** (232 in 2017/18) compliments were received and recorded. The Service Areas that had the top 3 number of compliments are listed, namely Environment and Housing received 86 compliments, which was 46.7% of the total. Regeneration and Planning received 45 (24.5%) and Shared Regulatory Services 21 (11.4%).

The top 3 Service Request Types, in respect of the number of compliments received during 2018/19 were **59** for Waste Management; this is 32.1% of the total recorded. Economic Development received **18** compliments and C1V received **12**, which were 9.8% and 6.5% of the total respectively.



Areas for future work

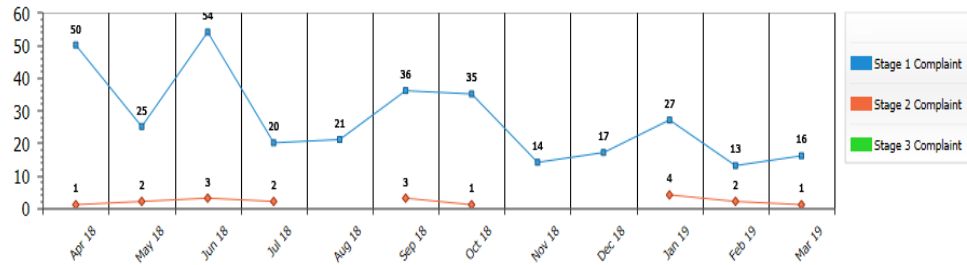
Further work is required to ensure that performance improves going forward. The areas to focus on in 2019/20 are as follows and it is proposed that these issues and actions will be discussed and monitored by the Council's Insight Board:

1. To improve administration of the CRM records to achieve increased confidence in and usefulness of the performance information being reported.
2. Managers to use the Complaints Dashboard to monitor their own performance using real time information and report to their Directorate Management Teams on a regular basis.
3. Consideration be given to the setting of local Performance Indicators relating to speed of response to be allocated to directorates / services.
4. Managers to consider key learning points and causes of complaints to improve service delivery.
5. Means of recording complaints information to be reviewed to ensure compliance with the PSOW Compliance Standards Authority reporting requirements can be met.
6. Managers to identify any training needs in respect of Corporate Complaints.
7. Operational Manager Customer Relations to work with Organisational Development team to create a complaint handling e-learning module.
8. Corporate Communication Team to develop promotional campaign to ensure that under-represented groups are aware of the complaints process and how it can be accessed.

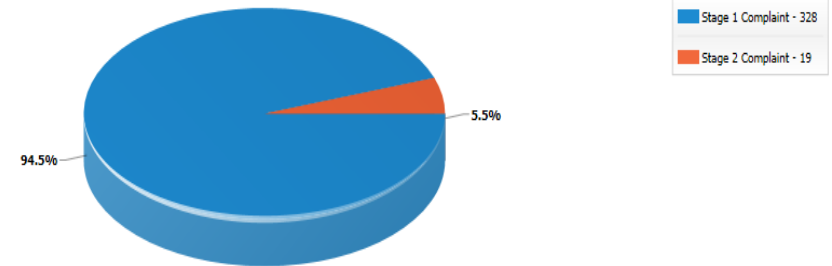
The following appendices provide overviews of key performance information for each directorate.

APPENDIX 1 - Environment and Housing 2018-19

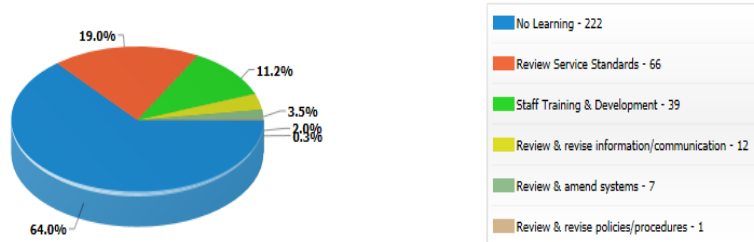
Monthly Complaints



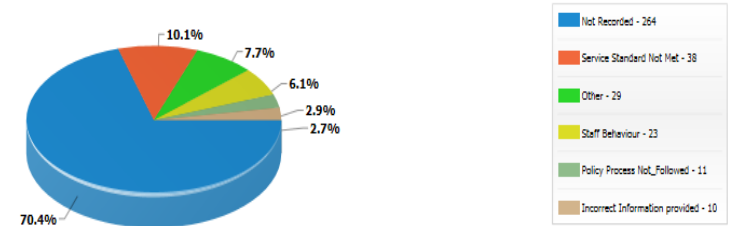
Complaint Resolution Stage



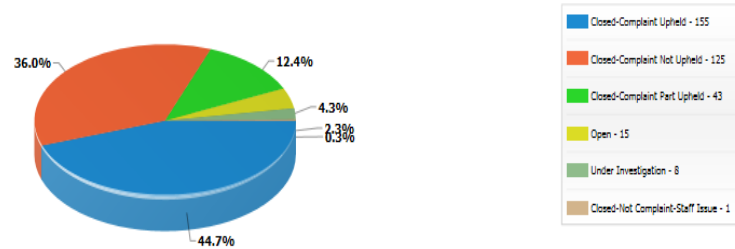
Key Learning Points



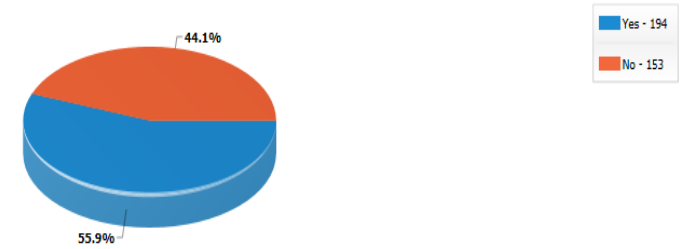
Cause Of Complaint



Complaints by Outcome

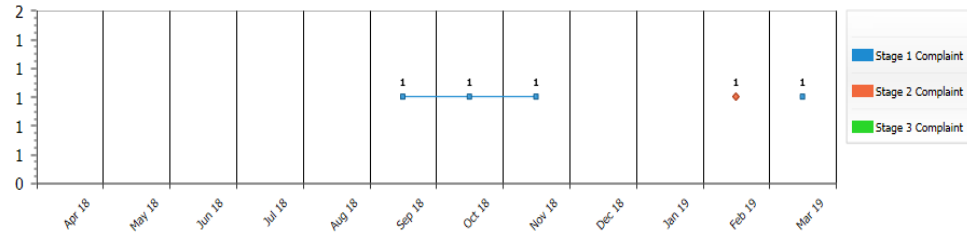


On Target

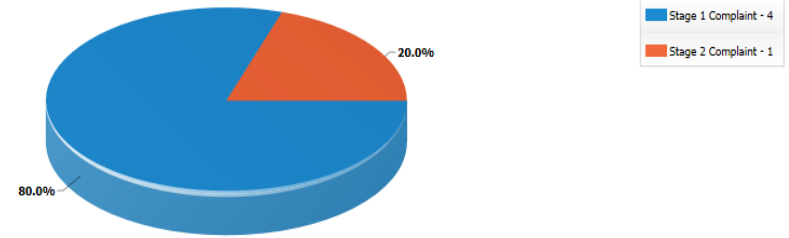


APPENDIX 2 - Learning and Skills 2018-19

Monthly Complaints



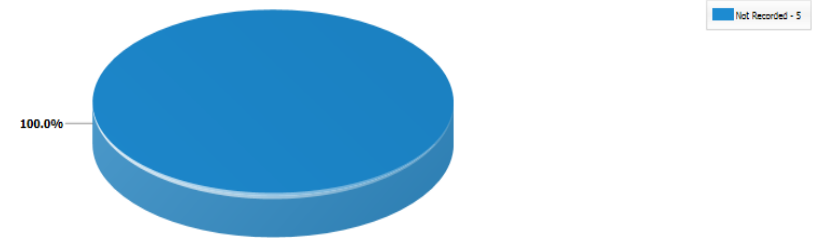
Complaint Resolution Stage



Key Learning Points



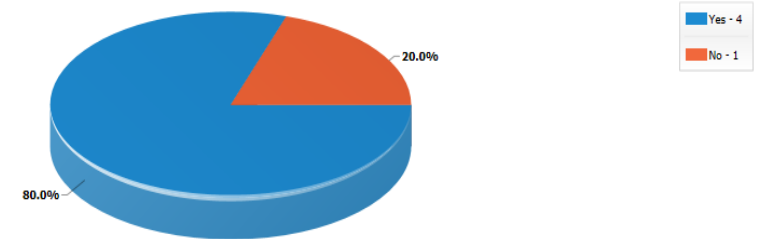
Cause Of Complaint



Complaints by Outcome

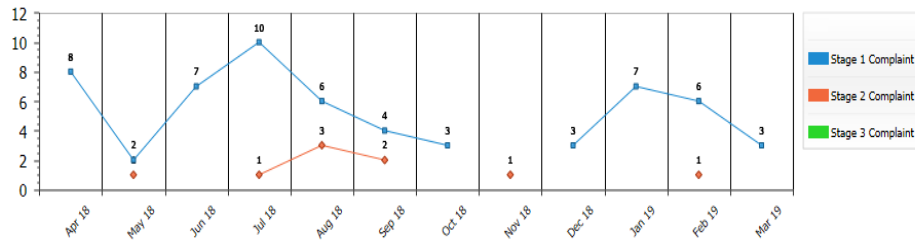


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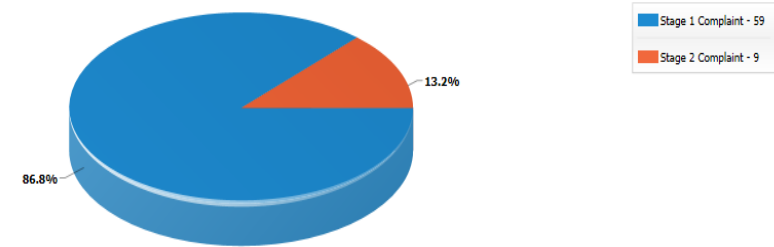


APPENDIX 3 - Managing Director & Resources 2018-19

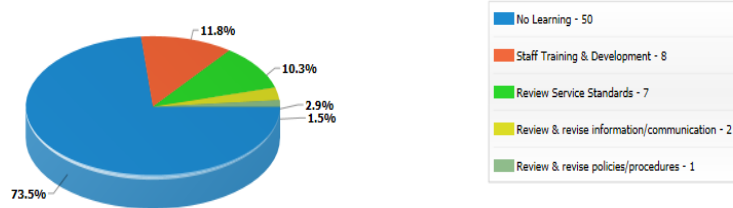
Monthly Complaints



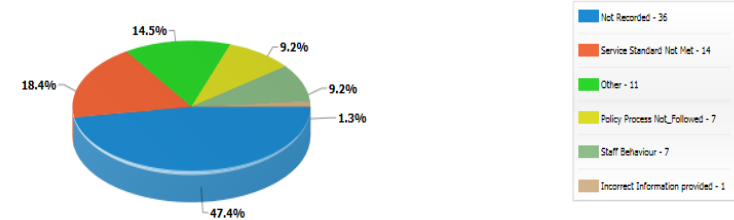
Complaint Resolution Stage



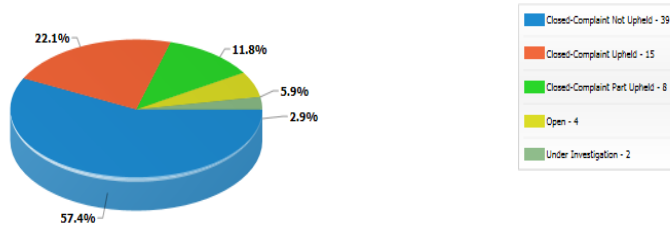
Key Learning Points



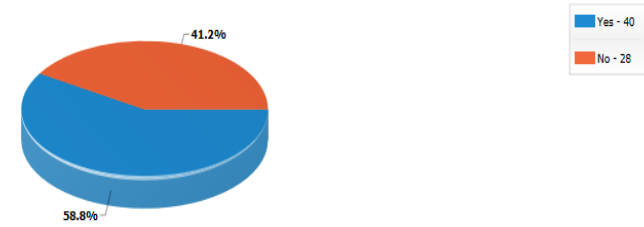
Cause Of Complaint



Complaints by Outcome




On Target




Our ref: NB

Ask for: Communications

 01656 641150

Date: 7 August 2019

 communications
@ombudsman-wales.org.uk

Councillor Neil Moore
Council Leader
Vale of Glamorgan Council

By Email Only
leader@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Dear Councillor John Thomas

Annual Letter 2018/19

I am pleased to provide you with the Annual letter (2018/19) for the Vale of Glamorgan Council. This year I am publishing my Annual Letters as part of my Annual Report and Accounts. I hope the Council finds this helpful and I trust this will enable it to review its own complaint handling performance in the context of other public bodies performing similar functions across Wales.

Whilst overall the number of complaints received relating to local authorities across Wales increased from 794 to 912, I am pleased that local authorities continue to work with my office to resolve many of these complaints at an early stage. This provides complainants with appropriate and timely remedies avoiding the need for my office to fully investigate complaints.

A summary of the complaints of maladministration/service failure received relating to the Council is attached.

Also attached is a summary of the Code of Conduct complaints relating to members of the Council and the Town & Community Councils in your area.

You will note that we received a relatively high number of complaints this year relating to members of Community and Town Councils in the Council's area. However, please be assured that I do not consider that this is indicative of a fall in standards of conduct generally or indeed in the Council itself. I can advise that the majority of these complaints related to an individual Community Council and a position of conflict between its members. In view of the numbers, I consider that there is an opportunity for members of the Council, the Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer to continue to promote awareness and the importance of the Code of Conduct generally with their community council colleagues. Any assistance of this nature would be greatly appreciated.

The Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 has now been introduced. I am delighted that the Assembly has approved this legislation giving the office new powers aimed at:

- Improving access to my office
- Providing a seamless mechanism for complaint handling when a patient's NHS care is inextricably linked with private healthcare
- Allowing me to undertake own initiative investigations when required in the public interest
- Ensuring that complaints data from across Wales may be used to drive improvement in public services for citizens in Wales.

I am very much looking forward to implementing these new powers over the coming year.

Action for the Council to take:

- Present my Annual Letter to the Cabinet to assist Members in their scrutiny of the Council's performance
- Work to reduce the number of cases which require intervention by my office
- Inform me of the outcome of the Council's considerations and proposed actions on the above matters by **31 October 2019**.

This correspondence is copied to the Chief Executive of your Council and to your Contact Officer. Finally, a copy of all Annual Letters will be published on my website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Bennett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nick Bennett
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

CC: Robert Thomas, Managing Director
Tony Curliss, Contact Officer

Factsheet

A. Complaints Received and Investigated with Local Authority average adjusted for population distribution

Local Authority	Complaints Received	Average	Complaints Investigated	Average
Vale of Glamorgan Council 2018/19	24	37	0	1
Vale of Glamorgan Council 2017/18	30	32	4	1
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	8	20	0	0
Bridgend County Borough Council	33	41	0	1
Caerphilly County Borough Council	65	51	1	1
Cardiff Council	115	103	0	2
Carmarthenshire County Council	49	53	1	1
Ceredigion County Council	23	21	0	0
City and County of Swansea	83	70	0	2
Conwy County Borough Council	41	33	2	1
Denbighshire County Council	26	27	1	1
Flintshire County Council	50	44	2	1
Gwynedd Council	32	35	2	1
Isle of Anglesey County Council	31	20	2	0
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	15	17	0	0
Monmouthshire County Council	20	27	0	1
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council	38	40	1	1
Newport City Council	38	43	0	1
Pembrokeshire County Council	35	35	0	1
Powys County Council	67	38	4	1
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	36	68	0	2
Torfaen County Borough Council	12	26	1	1
Wrexham County Borough Council	45	38	3	1
Grand Total	886		20	

B. Complaints Received by Subject

Vale of Glamorgan Council	Complaints Received
Adult Social Services	1
Complaints Handling	3
Environment and Environmental Health	4
Finance and Taxation	2
Housing	3
Planning and Building Control	5
Roads and Transport	5
Various Other	1

C. Comparison of complaint outcomes with average outcomes for Local Authorities, adjusted for population distribution

Local Authority	Out of Jurisdiction	Premature	Other cases closed after initial consideration	Early Resolution / Voluntary settlement	Discontinued	Other Report - Not upheld	Other Report - Upheld in whole or in part	Public Interest Reports
2018/19								
Vale of Glamorgan	7	7	9	3	-	-	4	-
Vale of Glamorgan (adjusted)	7	12	13	5	-	-	1	-
2017/18								
Vale of Glamorgan	9	7	12	3	-	1	-	-
Vale of Glamorgan (adjusted)	6	9	11	4	-	-	1	-

D. Number of cases with PSOW intervention

Local Authority	No. of complaints with PSOW intervention	Total number of closed complaints	% of complaints with PSOW intervention
Vale of Glamorgan Council 2018/19	7	30	23%
Vale of Glamorgan Council 2017/18	3	32	9%
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	2	7	29%
Bridgend County Borough Council	6	36	17%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	8	68	12%
Cardiff Council	19	110	17%
Carmarthenshire County Council	4	48	8%
Ceredigion County Council	5	24	21%
City and County Swansea	10	80	13%
Conwy County Borough Council	5	39	13%
Denbighshire County Council	4	30	13%
Flintshire County Council	16	56	29%
Gwynedd Council	6	35	17%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	5	31	16%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	0	14	0%
Monmouthshire County Council	0	23	0%
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council	4	40	10%
Newport City Council	7	43	16%
Pembrokeshire County Council	6	33	18%
Powys County Council	11	64	17%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	4	34	12%
Torfaen County Borough Council	1	12	8%
Wrexham County Borough Council	8	43	19%

E. Code of Conduct Complaints Closed

Local Authority	Closed after initial consideration	Discontinued	No evidence of Breach	No action necessary	Refer to Standards Committee	Refer to Adjudication Panel	Withdrawn	Total
2018/19								
Vale of Glamorgan	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
2017/18								
Vale of Glamorgan	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2

F. Town/Community council Code of Conduct Complaints

Town/ Community Council	Closed after initial consideration	Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Standards Committee	Refer to Adjudication Panel	Withdrawn	Total
Barry TC	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
St Athan CC	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Sully and Lavernock CC	4	-	-	2	-	-	-	6

Appendix

Explanatory Notes

Section A compares the number of complaints against the Local Authority which were received and investigated by my office during 2018/19, with the Local Authority average (adjusted for population distribution) during the same period.

Section B provides a breakdown of the number of complaints about the Local Authority which were received by my office during 2018/19. The figures are broken down into subject categories.

Section C compares the complaint outcomes for the Local Authority during 2018/19, with the average outcome (adjusted for population distribution) during the same period.

Section D provides the numbers and percentages of cases received by my office in which an intervention has occurred. This includes all upheld complaints, early resolutions and voluntary settlements.

Section E provides a breakdown of all Code of Conduct complaint outcomes against Councillors during 2018/19.

Section F provides a breakdown of all Code of Conduct complaint outcomes against town or community councils.

Feedback

We welcome your feedback on the enclosed information, including suggestions for any information to be enclosed in future annual summaries. Any feedback or queries should be sent via email to communications@ombudsman-wales.org.uk