

Meeting of:	Audit Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 24 September 2020
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	All Scrutiny Committees
Report Title:	Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2019/20
Purpose of Report:	To allow consideration of corporate complaints received from customers and the Public Service Ombudsman's 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. Complaints at Stage 1 should be responded to within 10 working days. Stage 2 complaints should be responded to within 20 working days. Complainants are able to contact the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales, if still unsatisfied. • 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. • The purpose of the policy is to ensure that complainants experience a consistent and fair response. Recording and monitoring of complaints allows the Council to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gain insight into citizens' satisfaction with services provided. ○ Understand how satisfied customers are with how we investigate complaints. ○ Monitor responsiveness to statutory guidance and customer expectations regarding how quickly we complete complaints investigations. ○ Identify potential for improving service by analysing what has been learned from complaints. 	

- Analysis of complaints information for 2019/20 indicates that
 - Complainants are satisfied with how complaints are investigated
 - Underlying trend for complaint volumes are steady
 - Responsiveness in improving
 - Complaint handling is meeting the requirements of statutory bodies
 - An increased focus on learning from complaints is required
- During the year the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) received 30 complaints relating to the Council, significantly fewer than the 37 which is the expected average based on population size and unchanged from those received in 2018/19. Only one complaint was taken into consideration by the PSOW during the year although this has yet to be resolved at the date of this report.
- The Annual Report details complaint performance for Directorates for 2019/20 and includes performance trends since 2014/15.

Recommendations

1. That the contents of the report, Appendix A (Annual Complaints & Compliments Report) and Appendix B (Annual Letter from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales) are noted.
2. That Audit Committee continues to receive an annual update in relation to Corporate Complaints and Compliments.
3. That the report and comments of the Audit Committee be referred to Cabinet for consideration and Cabinet endorses the report as the basis for response to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter (Appendix B).

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 reply to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' Annual Letter.

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 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (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 on 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 six financial years since 2014/15 and detailed performance information is included in the attached report.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 A total of 559 complaints were received during the year, representing a significant increase on the 420 received in 2018/19. However, although complaints increased by 139, 202 are associated with changes in waste recycling arrangements and collection rounds during the year. Excluding complaints

relating to this one-off event the underlying trend is level and comparable to previous years' totals.

- 2.2** A key indicator of how satisfied complainants are with the standard of investigation and the fairness of outcomes is the level of escalation from Stage 1 to Stage 2 of the process. Of the 559 complaints received during the year 522 were resolved at stage 1, with only 37 or 6.6% escalated to Stage 2. This suggests that complainants are satisfied that their issues have been investigated consistently well and effectively.
- 2.3** Complaints were not received equally across all services. 85% of complaints received related to Environment and Housing Directorate, 13% for Managing Director and Resources and 2% for Learning and Skills.
- 2.4** Given the extremely high volume of individual interactions with residents by Environment and Housing services it is not surprising that the highest volume of complaints within the Council are received in this area. While complaint volumes have increased in this area the numbers still represent a very small proportion of the total number of interactions.
- 2.5** Social Services received a total of 115 (2018/19 105) complaints and enquiries during the same period.
- 2.6** Learning and Skills upheld the highest percentage of complaints in full at 54.4% (46% 2018/19). Managing Director and Resources upheld 42.5% (22.1% 2018/19) during the year while Environment and Housing upheld 41.9% of complaints in full. This continues a downward trend from 49.7% in 2014/15.
- 2.7** 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 and there is a corresponding downward trend for complaints with an outcome of part upheld.
- 2.8** Services have been able to monitor their own complaint performance since September 2016 and responsiveness has improved during the year. 68% of complaints were resolved within target compared to 56.7% in the previous year.
- 2.9** Learning and Skills Directorate resolved the highest number of complaints within target, improving their previous performance by 1.8%points to 81.8%. MD and Resources and Environment and Housing each improved the performance in this area at 63% (58.8%) and 68.4% (55.9%) respectively.
- 2.10** It is significant to note that no complaints have been raised by complainants regarding the time taken to respond to complaints over the past four financial years. This suggests that while there is room for improvement customer expectations are being met and that outcomes may be more important than speed of response to complainants.
- 2.11** This area of performance is coming under increasing focus with the establishment of the PSOW Compliance Standards Authority. Councils are now

required to provide quarterly data on the numbers, types and outcome of complaints together with speed of response.

- 2.12** Currently these performance measures are reported by Policy and Business Transformation for the council as a whole. The report indicates that the Council should consider allocating local Performance Indicators for directorates and/or specific services to encourage ownership of these performance measures.
- 2.13** Learning from complaints is a key area for improvement as it provides the opportunity for services to manage customer expectations and make improvements in service delivery where possible.
- 2.14** The percentage of complaints which did not have a recorded cause improved on the previous period from 67% (2018/19) to 61.5%. Despite this the level of confidence in data relating to the causes of complaints for the Council overall remains low.
- 2.15** For Learning and Skills only two or 16.6% of complaints had a recorded cause, Managing Director and Resources 39.7% and Environment and Housing 38.8% (2017/18 58.8%)
- 2.16** This performance is reflected in recording of learning outcomes with 83.4% of complaints having no learning outcome recorded. A further decline on the previous year's performance of 65.6%. Where outcomes are recorded the most popular is "Staff Training" at 8.2% of all complaints, followed by " Review Service Standards" at 5.7%.
- 2.17** During the period the PSOW received 30 complaints from Vale of Glamorgan residents. This is circa 20% less than the PSOW would expect based on population size.
- 2.18** Only one complaint was taken into investigation by the PSOW during the year although the outcome has not yet been reached. The Annual Letter from the PSOW requires the Council to respond to a series of questions regarding the handling and learning from complaints. Following consideration by Cabinet, this report and appendices will be provided to the PSOW to answer these questions.
- 2.19** The year saw a significant decrease in complaints received via the Welsh Language Commissioner dropping from 10 in 2018/19 to one. This complaint was not investigated.
- 2.20** Outcomes from complaints received by the PSOW and Welsh Language Commissioner indicate that the Council is meeting the requirements of these statutory bodies in relation to the investigation and resolution of complaints.
- 2.21** The lack of information recorded regarding the cause of and lessons learned from complaints means that the Council is unable to evidence improvements made to individual service provision or to formulate corporate wide responses to address recurring and persistent issues.
- 2.22** Overall the analysis of performance indicates that complaint investigation and performance is meeting customer expectations. Responsiveness is improving and outcomes from escalated issues indicate that we are meeting the requirements and expectations of statutory bodies in relation to complaint handling.

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

INVOLVEMENT - 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

LONG TERM - Learning from complaints is a key way in which the council can develop services that meet the changing needs of residents and are sustainable. Similarly services can be improved to PREVENT complaints occurring in the future and improve access to and delivery of services.

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.

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 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales have 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

None.

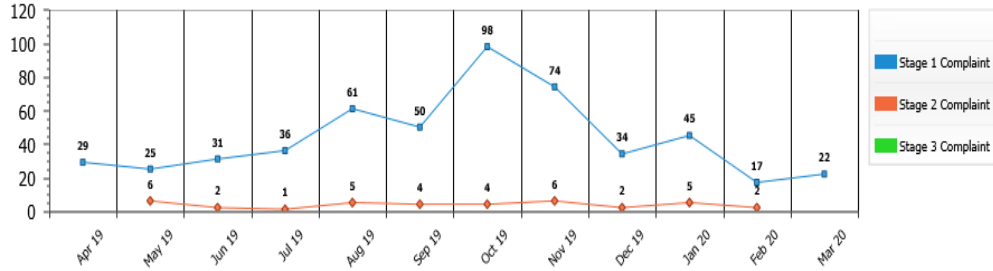
Corporate Complaints – Annual Report 2019 / 20

ANNUAL DIRECTORATE TOTALS

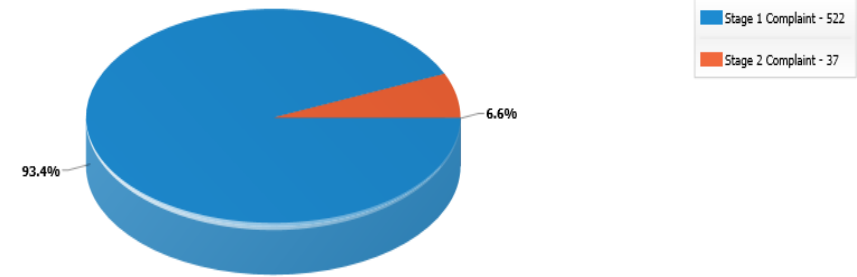
Environment & Housing: 475 (347)
 Managing Director & Resources: 73 (68)

Learning & Skills: 11 (5)
 Total: 559 (420)

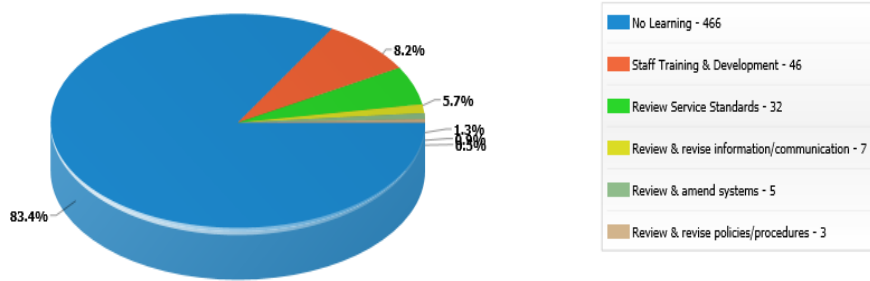
Monthly Complaints



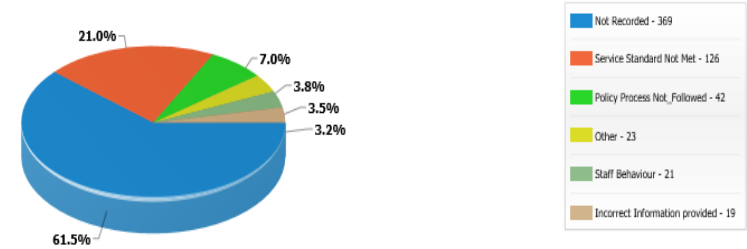
Complaint Resolution Stage



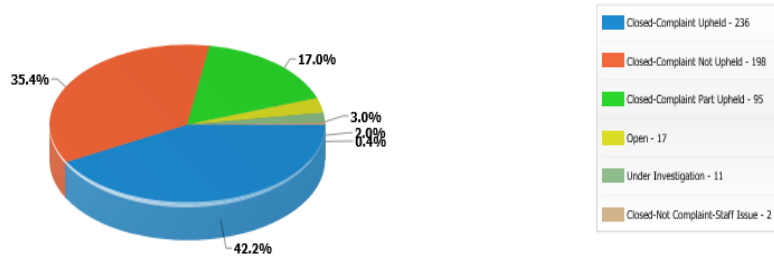
Key Learning Points



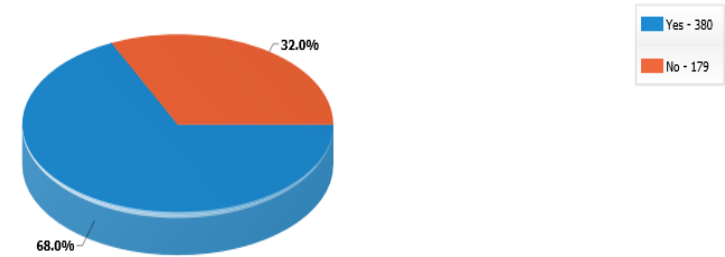
Cause Of Complaint



Complaints by Outcome



On Target



Vale of Glamorgan Council – Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2019/20

Executive Summary

This is the sixth annual Report on Corporate Complaints under the current Policy. This Report details all formal complaints recorded on the Oracle CRM system for the Council (**excludes Social Services**) that were handled through the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy during the financial year 2019/20. Complaints Dashboard information for 2019/20 is also included for each Directorate at Appendices 1, 2 and 3. The figures are correct as 18 August 2020. The figures for 2018/19 are indicated in brackets throughout the report for comparison. Complaints handled through alternative, statutory, processes are excluded from this Report.

A summary of Public Services Ombudsman for Wales complaints, complaints received from the Welsh Language Commissioner and Social Services complaints is provided for completeness (page 4).

The number of compliments received and recorded during 2019/20 (**excluding Social Services**) is also set out in the Report.

The statistics portray a continuing positive picture of how the council deals with complaints.

- **Complainants are satisfied** with how their complaints are investigated – 94.1% were resolved at Stage 1
- **Responsiveness is improving** – percentage of investigations completed within target improved from 56.7% to 68%
- **Complaint volumes are steady** – excluding 202 complaints directly related to significant changes to waste management processes, underlying complaint volumes fell to 357 from 420 (2018/19)
- **Complaints are meeting requirements of statutory bodies** – neither the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales or the Welsh Language Commissioner found against the council during the year.
- **An increased focus on learning from complaints is required** – only 17% of complaints have a learning outcome recorded.

The Council received **522 Stage 1** and **37 Stage 2 Corporate Complaints** during 2019/20. This is a total of **559** (420 in 2018/19), which is an increase of **139** complaints compared to the previous year. Analysis indicates that corporate complaints are investigated well and effectively by the Council with **93.4%** (93.1% in 2018/19) of complaints being resolved at Stage 1

68% (56.7% in 2018/19) 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 corporate 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. As a result the performance of replying to complaints within the target time has increased by nearly **11.3%points** in the last year. (In 2018/19 the response time was 56.7%).

This performance area is coming under increased scrutiny as the PSOW **Compliance Standards Authority** requires all local authorities to regularly report on whether they have met speed of response guidelines.

A quarterly report is submitted to the Ombudsman providing a breakdown of departmental complaints. This report includes the response times and the number of open complaints from the previous reporting period.

Of the 559 corporate complaints in **2019/20, 475 or 85%** (347 or 82.1% in 2018/19) were received by the **Environment and Housing** directorate. **Waste Management** generated **381** (188) Stage 1 and **15** (6) Stage 2 complaints i.e. a **total of 396** (a total of 194 in 2018/19) during the period representing **83.4%** (56% in 2018/19) of the directorate total and **70.8% (46%** in 2018/19) of the Council total. It should be noted that these services undertake an extremely high volume of interactions with residents and while complaint volumes have increased they still remain a small proportion of the total number of interactions.

Compared to 2018/19 the **Waste Management** service has received 202 more complaints. During 2019/20, the highest number of complaints for this service were received during the months of October and November 2019 (76 and 67 respectively). This coincides with the introduction of significant changes to the service in the Western Vale area.

The Waste Management service's compliance to replying within the target time for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints is better than the Council as a whole at **75.8%** (70% in 2018/19) on target compared to **68%**. Performance has improved by **5.8%points** compared to 2018/19, despite having 202 more complaints.

Learning and Skills received the fewest number of complaints, **totalling 11** (8 Stage 1 and 3 Stage 2) in 2019/20 (5 in 2018/19) or **1.97%** (1.19% in 2018/19) of the total. The Stage 2 complaints related to School Improvement and School Admissions, while libraries received 4 Stage 1 complaints the remaining 4 Stage 1 complaints related School Improvement and School Admissions.

Managing Director & Resources received **67** Stage 1 Complaints and **6** Stage 2 complaints (this compares to 59 Stage 1 and 9 Stage 2 in 2018/19). Customer Relations accounted for 37 Stage 1 and 1 Stage 2 complaints with Financial Services receiving 20 and 2 respectively. For the directorate as a whole **63%** were responded to within target; compared to the Corporate figure of **68%**. The Directorate's performance improved on the previous year when 59.7% of complaints were responded to within target.

41.8% (40.4% in 2018/19) of all recorded corporate complaints were fully upheld, while **58.2%** (39.7% in 2018/19) were not upheld.

In total **61.5% (67% in 2018/19)** of complaints did not have the cause of the complaint recorded. This figure is **5.5%points** lower than in 2018/19. 'Service Standards not met' accounted for **21%**, Policy and Process not followed **7%**, **3.5%** Staff Behaviour and 'other' accounted for **3.8%** of the causes of complaints. (In 2018/19 the top two causes were 'other' at 8.8% and 'Service Standards not met' at 11.4%). Discrimination, as a cause of complaint, started to be monitored in January 2017. There was 1 recorded during 2019/20, and 0 were recorded in 2018/19.

'No learning' was recorded against **83.4%** (65.6% in 2018/19) of complaints. The main key learning point categories were Staff Training – **8.2%** and Review Service Standards – **5.7%**. (In 2018/19 the top two learning points recorded were Review Service Standards 17.3% and Staff Training at 11.2%).

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

30 (24 in 2018/19) complaints in respect of the Council were received by the PSOW during 2018/19, which is an increase of **6** on the previous year. Based on population size the PSOW would expect the council to have received 37 complaints during the reporting period. **4** complaints were resolved through **Early Resolution** and **3** were considered to be **Premature**. **15** were out of jurisdiction and **5** were other cases closed after initial consideration. There were **4** cases with PSOW intervention (15% of the total). **1** complaint was taken into investigation during 2019/20 and is yet to be resolved.

A total of 1 complaint was received via the Welsh Language Commissioner (10 in 2018/19), which was subsequently cancelled.

The 1 complaint is not recorded on Oracle CRM so it is not reflected in the total of **559**.

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 2020, 52 complaints were received, which is lower than the previous year when there were 63 complaints. Of these 52 complaints, 14 were for Adult Services, 30 were for Children and Young People Services and 8 related to the Resource Management and Safeguarding Division. 46% of the complaints were resolved within the designated timescales. During this period, 4 complaints were referred onto the Ombudsman.

The table shown below provides a full breakdown of all enquiries and complaints received during 2019/2020

Service Division	Enquiries	Complaints Stage 1	Complaints Stage 2	PSOW	Responded to in Timescales	Total Complaints and Enquiries Received
Adult Services	23	13	1	0	10	37
Children and Young People Services	32	23	7	4	9	66
Resource Management & Safeguarding	4	7	1	0	5	12

During 2019/20 the highest number of complaints received by type of complaint were in relation to staff (11), followed by complaints about the quality/level of service (9), unhappy with the care provided (9) and charges for service (8). 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	3	0	5	8
Lack of response	0	1	0	1
Quality/level of service	5	3	1	9
Staff complaint	2	9	0	11
Unhappy with care provided	2	7	0	9
Communication	1	3	0	4
Other	0	1 (stage 2 re outcome of assessment)	1 (delay to work being carried out at residential home)	2

During 2019/20 a summary of Social Services key lessons learnt include:

- The importance of effective communication with families and service users.
- Ensure service users and families understand the charging process in relation to residential placements.
- Ensure any commitment to respond to calls/letters/emails is followed up.
- The importance of clearly explaining rationale for making decisions and checking it has been understood.
- The importance of responding to concerns/enquiries promptly to avoid escalation.
- The importance of staff acting professionally at all times.
- Ensure service users/families understand the limitations of our resources and services e.g. in relation to waiting times for assessments.

During 2019/20 28 compliments were recorded; a selection of those compliments is set out below.

Compliment selection

'We are very grateful for X's expert handling of a case' 'he acted in the person's best interests and cooperated with us, listened to us and helped us manage a crisis'.

'Thank you for your help and kindness'

'Many thanks, I really appreciated your help'

'You have been extremely helpful'

'Thank you for the excellent support afforded to my father by social services' and the 'care and attention provided'

'Thank you for the help provided it will make a huge difference to my daily hygiene needs'

'Thank you for your help with navigating all the red tape and formalities in finding Mum her new home'.

'I was really in crisis regarding child care I had no where to turn was thinking leaving employment was my only option from being turned away from so many child minders and settings. I went to my sons school for help they put us in contact with Vale Family Information Service which has worked so hard on our behalf with constant updates all the way especially A.'

'I attended the Subgroup yesterday. Both B and C spoke with me about the very positive contribution you have made to the workgroups. It was great for the service to receive such positive feedback.'

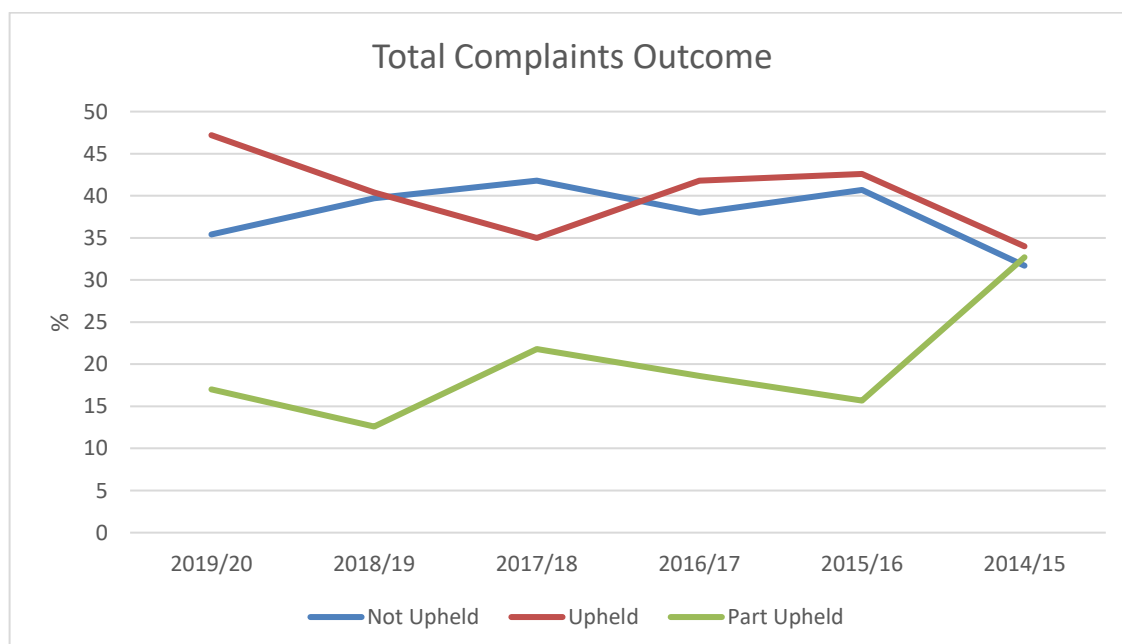
Performance Commentary

The average number of corporate complaints received per month is **46**. (34 in 2018/19). October 2019 had the highest number of complaints made in a single month with 98 complaints. February 2020 showed the lowest number of complaints received, at 17. With regards to Stage 2 complaints – there is an average of **3 per month**. This compares with an average of 2.4 per month in 2018/19.

Learning and Skills resolved the lowest number of complaints at Stage 1 at **72.7%**. However, this is based on receiving only 8 Stage 1 complaints. Managing Director & Resources resolved **91.8%** complaints at Stage 1. Environment and Housing resolved **94.1%** of complaints at Stage 1 in 2019/20. This compares to 94.5% in 2018/19.

Directorate	Percentage (%) Resolved at Stage 1					
	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Learning & Skills	72.7	80	85.7	90.9	77.8	91.3
Managing Director & Resources	91.8	86.6	81.4	77.5	80.3	96.9
Environment & Housing	94.1	94.5	88.1	90.2	90.7	87.7
TOTAL	93.4	93.1	86.4	87.7	88.3	91.3

Learning and Skills had the highest percentage of complaints upheld in full or part at **81.8%** but this was based on a total of only 11 complaints. Managing Director and Resources had the second highest percentage at **61.7%**. Environment and Housing had the lowest percentage at **58.3%**.



Directorate	Not Upheld (%)	Upheld (%)	Part Upheld (%)
Learning & Skills			
2019/20	18.2	54.4	27.3
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			
2019/20	30.1	42.5	19.2
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			
2019/20	36.6	41.9	16.4
2018/19	36.0	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)			
2019/20	35.4	42.2	17.0
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

NB: At the time of this report some complaints received during 2019/20 have not yet been resolved.

The percentage of complaints resolved within target time scales for the Council stands at **68%** (56.5%). This is a 11.5% point improvement in performance, compared to the previous year.

Directorate	Resolved within target (%)					
	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Learning & Skills	81.8	80	71.4	90.1	66.7	73
Managing Director & Resources	63	58.8	75.7	82.5	77.6	87
Environment & Housing	68.4	55.9	50.5	72.5	73.4	62
Council	68	56.5	56.8	75.1	74.2	73

Learning and Skills performance was **81.8%**, a 1.8% point improvement based on 2018/19. Environment and Housing achieved the second highest percentage of complaints resolved within target at **68.4%**; this is an increase of 12.5%points on the previous year. The corporate average is **68%**.

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 **34.7%** (33.1% in 2018/19) of cases. This is an increase of **1.6%points** compared to 2018/19. **61.5%** 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 (**61.5% were not recorded**) the highest reason for the cause of complaints at council level is Service Standards Not Met at **21%**. Staff Behaviour was down to **3.5%** from 6.8% in 2018/19. The least frequent cause was Incorrect Information provided at **3.2%** (2.5% in 2018/19).

Where recorded the most frequent cause of complaint in Environment and Housing was Service Standards Not Met at **23.1%** (in 2018/19 the most frequent cause was Service Standards Not Met at 10.5%). Learning and Skills most frequent cause was Incorrect Information Provided and Staff Behaviour both at **3.8%** (in 2018/19 the cause of complaint was not recorded). In Managing Director & Resources the most frequent cause related to Service Standards not met at **10.3%** (in 2018/19 – it was Service Standards not met at 18.4%).

Area	Year	Incorrect Info provided (%)	Other (%)	Policy / Procedure not Followed (%)	Service Standards not met (%)	Staff Behaviour (%)	Not recorded (%)	Discrimination (%)
Learning & Skills	2019/20	8.3	0	0	0	8.3	83.3	0
	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	2019/20	6.4	6.4	9	10.3	7.7	60.3	0
	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	2019/20	2.5	3.5	6.9	23.1	2.7	61.2	0
	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	2019/20	3.2	3.8	7	21	3.5	61.5	0
	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 **83.4%** (65.6% in 2018/19) of complaints had no learning point recorded. This is 17.8%points higher than in 2018/19. These responses are mostly associated with complaints that were 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.

Environment and Housing had the largest percentage of complaints with no learning at **88.8%** (61.8% in 2018/19), whereas the lowest figure was Learning and Skills at **27.3%** (60% in 2018/19).

Where there was learning from complaints (in **11.1%** of complaints) the information at a Council level shows 2 main areas, namely Review Service Standards at **4.8%** (17.3% in 2018/19) and Staff Training and Development at **5.5%** (11.2% in 2018/19). Comparing the performance in 2018/19 to 2019/20 there was a decrease in the Review Service Standards of **12.5%** and a decrease in Staff Training and Development of **5.7%**. The others at Council level in 2019/20 varied between **1.3%** (Review/Revise Information/Communication), **0.5%** (Review/Revise Policies/Procedures) and **0.8%** (Review/Amend Systems).

Staff Training and Development was the highest figure in Environment and Housing at **5.5%** (19% in 2018/19), which showed a decrease of 13.5%. Review and Revise Policies and Procedures the lowest in Managing Director and Resources at **1.4%** (1.5% in 2018/19). In 2018/19 the highest figure for Environment and Housing had been Review Service Standards at 19.7%; this had reduced to **4.8%** in 2019/20.

Learning and Skills had the highest figure relating to Staff Training and Development of **27.3%** (compared to 40% in 2018/19) but this is based on a total of 11 complaints.

Area	Year	No Learning (%)	Review Systems (%)	Review Information (%)	Review procedures (%)	Review Service Standards (%)	Staff Training (%)
Learning & Skills	2019/20	27.3	18.2	18.2	0	9.1	27.3
	2018/19	60	40	0	0	0	0
	2017/18	42.9	7.1	14.3	14.3	0	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	2019/20	56.2	4.1	4.1	1.4	11	23.3
	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	2019/20	88.8	0	0.4	0.4	4.8	5.5
	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	2019/20	83.4	0.9	1.3	0.5	5.7	8.2
	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 staff training and development and the second highest area is service standards.

Conclusion

The number of recorded Corporate complaints has increased by **139** since 2018/19. The 2019/20 figure of **559** is the highest since Corporate complaints have been recorded on Oracle CRM. One of the main reasons for this increase is due to the introduction of new recycling procedures. There has been an increase of complaints with standards of service not met 126, (52 in 2018/19). Policy and Procedure not followed increased to 42 (18 in 2018/19). Staff behaviour has decreased to 21 (30 in 2018/2019).

Customers are more aware of the Corporate Complaint Policy and Process and are more likely to make a complaint.

The statistics for 2019/20 indicate that complaints are generally being handled well in that only 6.5% 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 2019/20 there was only one complaint to the Ombudsman regarding this Council that was investigated.

The areas of concern are that what has been learnt from complaints has not been recorded in the majority of instances and complaints are not being resolved within the target times. In addition, when complaints are being closed on Oracle CRM, information in respect of the cause of the complaint is not being recorded properly. This is important to enable action to be taken to prevent them in the future. A reminder of the importance of monitoring complaints will be communicated corporately. The use of the Complaints Dashboard is key to identifying areas that need to be addressed. The number of complaints shown on Complaints Dashboard are also reported to the Ombudsman on a quarterly basis. Focusing on the importance of capturing information and recording the outcomes will improve performance for 2020/2021.

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 has not taken place to date due to COVID 19. An online Equality Survey is available for members of the public to complete following the submission of the online complaints form. As of the date of this report 22 responses have been received.

Of those who provided data, there 50% were male, 36% were female and 14% preferred not to say. The following age range completed the online form (2 people did not provide the information):

18 to 25 - 1 person

26 to 35 - 1 person

36 to 45 - 1 person

46 to 55 - 5 people

56 to 65 years – 4 people

66 to 75 – 7 people

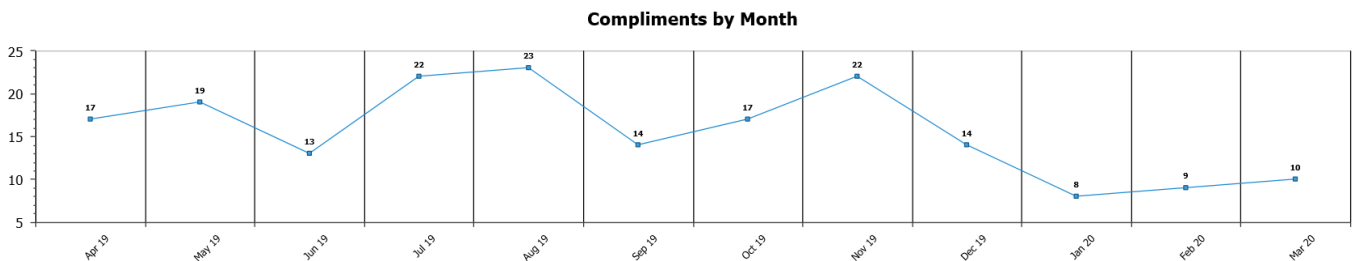
75+ - 1 person

78% of the complainants were aged 46 or over. Only 2 complaints were received from customers aged in their 20 to mid-30s. To reflect this, an App to record Corporate Complaints was issued by the council, it was also added to the online Complaints Form for completion. It was anticipated that this form of contact might encourage younger people to submit complaints. Further promotional work will be undertaken in 2020/21 to ensure that under-represented groups, and in particular younger citizens, are aware of the complaints process and how it can be accessed. 32% of the complaints were from customers whose day to day activities were limited by some form of disability.

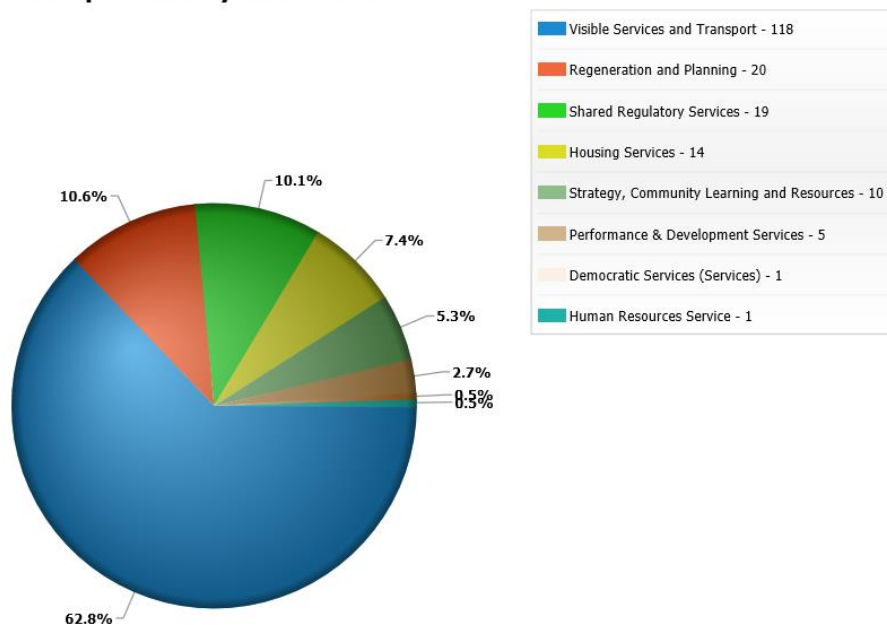
Compliments

Compliments can be recorded using Oracle CRM. The compliments received from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 are set out below by Service Request Type and Service Area. During 2019/20 a total of **166** (184 in 2018/19) compliments were received and recorded. The Service Areas that had the top 3 number of compliments are listed, namely Environment and Housing received 118 compliments, which was 62.8% of the total. Regeneration and Planning received 20 (10.6%) and Shared Regulatory Services 19 (10.1%).

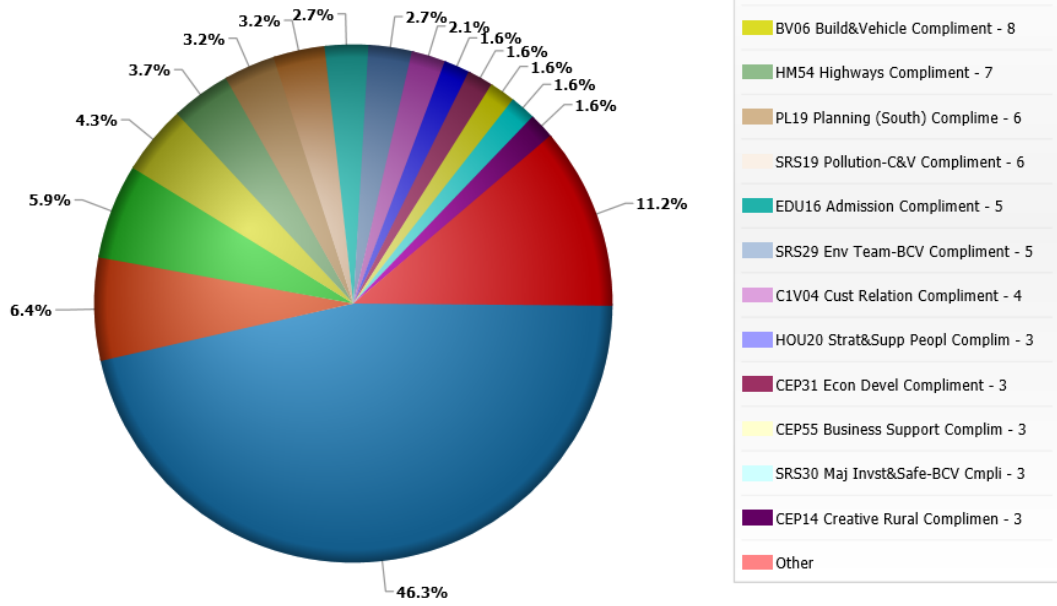
The top 3 Service Request Types, in respect of the number of compliments received during 2019/20 were **87** for Waste Management; this is 46.3% of the total recorded. Parks and Grounds received **12** compliments and Housing and Income Management received **11**, which were 6.4% and 5.9% of the total respectively.



Compliments by Service Area



Compliments by SR Type



Areas for future work

Further work is required to ensure that performance improves going forward. Previous recommendations and comments from the 2018/2019 Annual Complaints Report and are highlighted below:

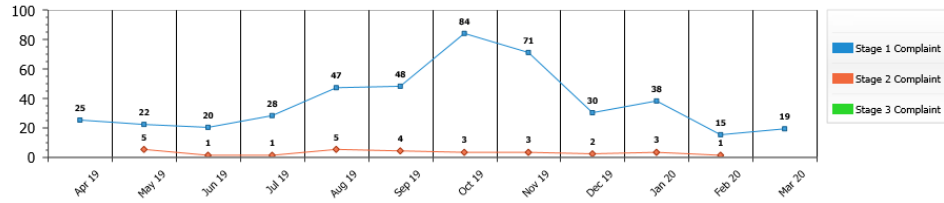
1. To improve administration of the CRM records to achieve increased confidence in and usefulness of the performance information being reported
Training is provided to CSRs, further work is required within departments to ensure the successful capture of the relevant information
2. Managers to use the Complaints Dashboard to monitor their own performance using real time information and report to their Directorate Management Teams on a regular basis.
A reminder is to be circulated by the Managing Director highlighting the importance of monitoring performance and reducing the number of complaints
3. Local Performance Indicators relating to speed of response to be allocated to directorates / services to reflect
Updates are to be provided to Managers to ensure complaints are monitored and addressed within timescales
4. Managers to consider key learning points and causes of complaints to improve service delivery
Further work is required to ensure the information is captured and recorded.
5. Means of recording complaints information to be reviewed to ensure compliance with the PSOW Compliance Standards Authority reporting requirements can be met.
A new reporting tool has been issued by the PSOW. PSOW complaints are recorded on Oracle and identified with a unique service request. Training is now available on handling complaints that is provided by the PSOW
6. Managers to identify any training needs in respect of Corporate Complaints
The PSOW have set up some guidance on the handling of complaints. Courses are available via Teams and are to be scheduled throughout 2020. There is no charge for the courses provided by the PSOW
7. The Operational Manager Customer Relations will liaise with Organisational Development team to create complaint handling elearning module.
The PSOW have attended the offices and provided handling complaints course outlines that are available for staff to book training. At present they are working on an elearning module which should be available later in the year
8. Corporate Communication Team to develop promotional campaign to ensure that under-represented groups, and in particular younger citizens, are aware of the complaints process and how it can be accessed.
The use of the mobile app has been promoted and details of the complaints process is also available online. There has been an increase in the use of Social Media which has also targeted the younger citizens.

The areas to focus on in 2020/21 are as follows:

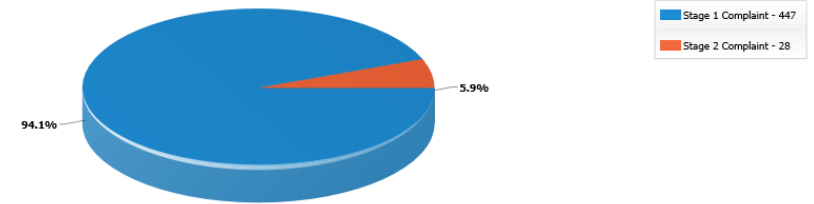
1. Increase the awareness of the Corporate Complaints Dashboard
2. Roll out Complaints Handling training provided by the PSOW
3. Provide guidance on recording the complaint outcomes on Oracle

APPENDIX 1 - Environment and Housing 2019-20

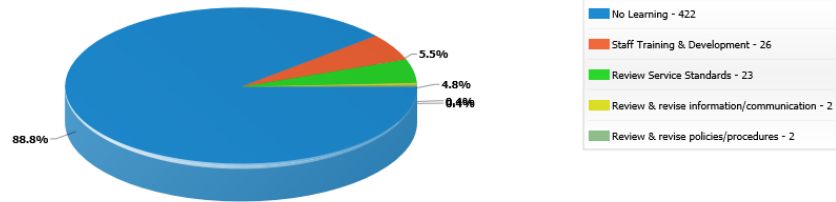
Monthly Complaints



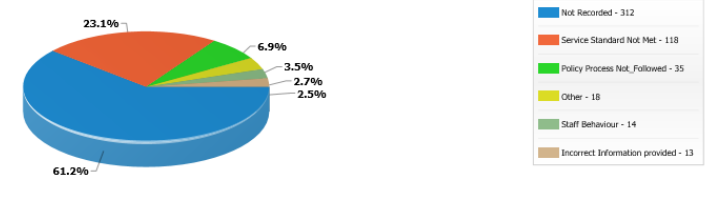
Complaint Resolution Stage



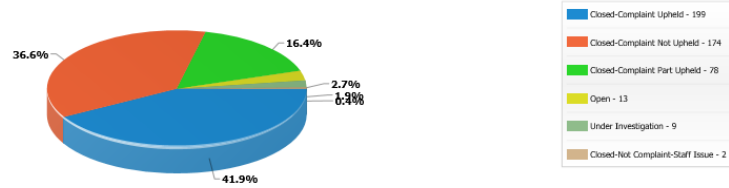
Key Learning Points



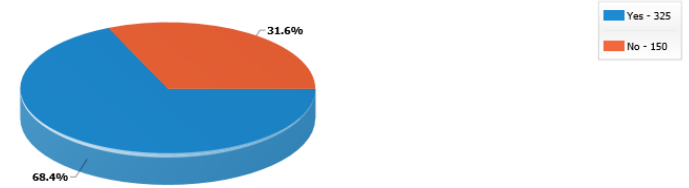
Cause Of Complaint



Complaints by Outcome

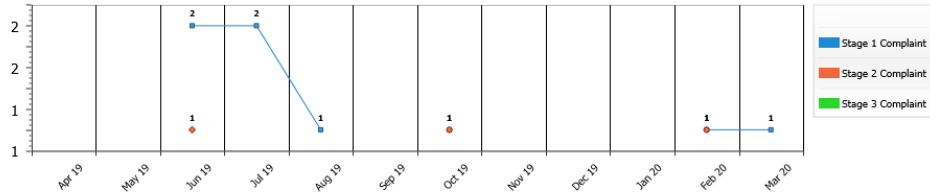


On Target

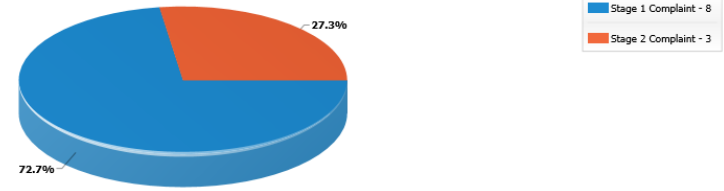


APPENDIX 2 - Learning and Skills 2019-20

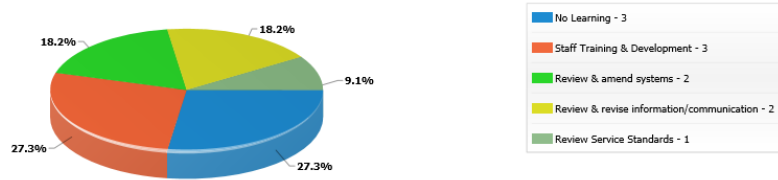
Monthly Complaints



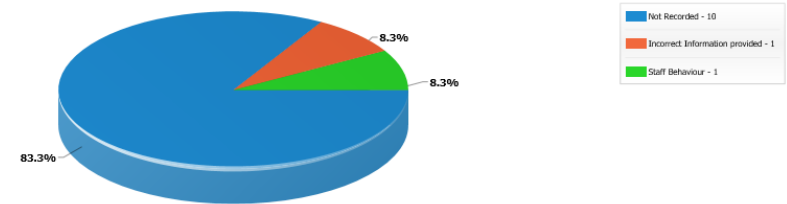
Complaint Resolution Stage



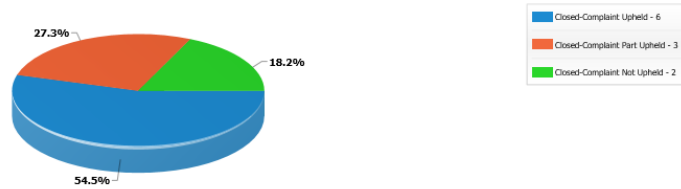
Key Learning Points



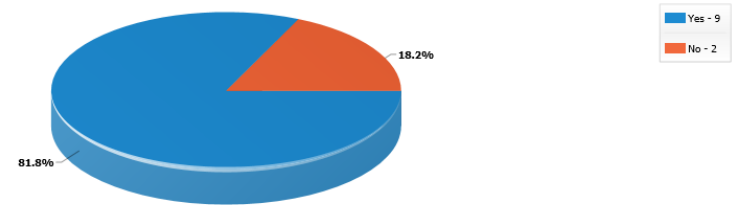
Cause Of Complaint



Complaints by Outcome

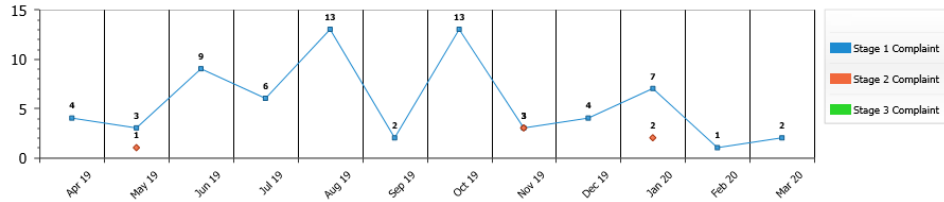


On Target

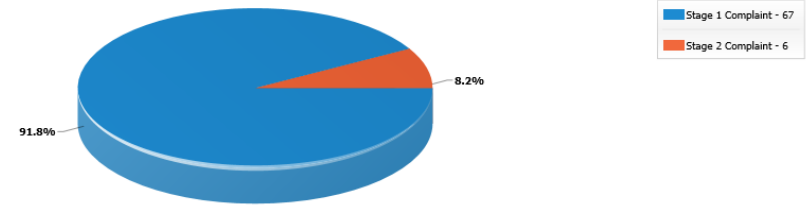


APPENDIX 3 - Managing Director & Resources 2019-20

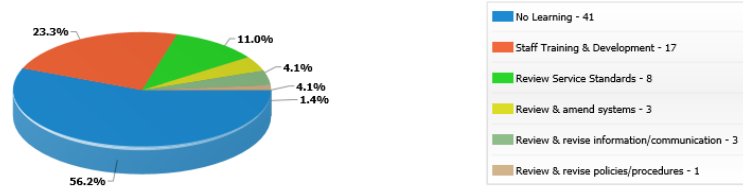
Monthly Complaints



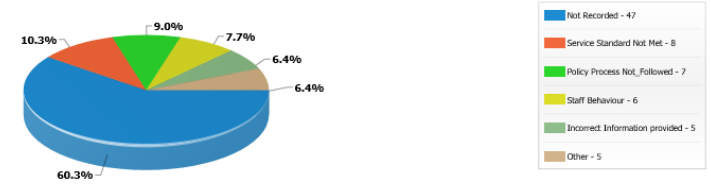
Complaint Resolution Stage



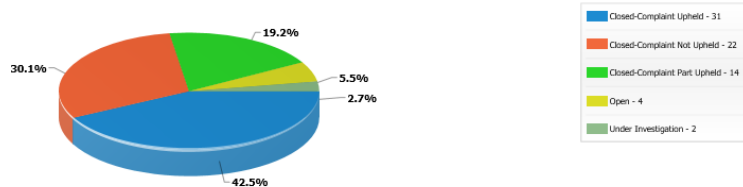
Key Learning Points



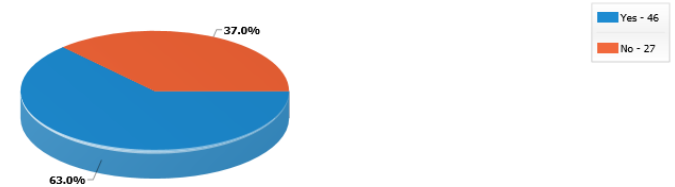
Cause Of Complaint



Complaints by Outcome




On Target




Our ref: NB

Ask for: Communications

 01656 641150

Date: 7 September 2020

 Communications
@ombudsman-wales.org.uk

Councillor Neil Moore
Council Leader
Vale of Glamorgan Council

By Email Only
leader@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Dear Councillor Moore

Annual Letter 2019/20

I am pleased to provide you with the Annual letter (2019/20) for Vale of Glamorgan Council.

I write this at an unprecedented time for public services in Wales and those that use them. Most of the data in this correspondence relates to the period before the rapid escalation in Covid-19 spread and before restrictions on economic and social activity had been introduced. However, I am only too aware of the impact the pandemic continues to have on us all.

I am delighted to report that, during the past financial year, we had to intervene in (uphold, settle or resolve early) a smaller proportion of complaints about public bodies: 20% compared to 24% last year.

We also referred a smaller proportion of Code of Conduct complaints to a Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales: 2% compared to 3% last year.

With regard to new complaints relating to Local Authorities, the overall number has decreased by 2.4% compared to the previous financial year. I am also glad that we had to intervene in a smaller proportion of the cases closed (13% compared to 15% last year). That said, I am concerned that complaint handling persists as one of the main subjects of our complaints again this year.

Amongst the main highlights of the year, in 2019 the National Assembly for Wales (now Senedd Cymru Welsh Parliament) passed our new Act. We are now the first ombudsman's office in the UK to have full and operational powers to drive systemic improvement of public services through investigations on our 'own initiative' and the Complaints Standards role.

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During 2019/20, we have engaged intensively with Local Authorities on this issue, starting to exercise our new Complaints Standards powers.

Local Authorities in Wales submitted data about the complaints they handled to the Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) for the first time in 2019/2020, revealing much more about the complaints landscape in Wales.

The data submitted for 2019/2020 shows:

- Over 13,000 complaints were recorded by Local Authorities – 4.25 for every 1000 residents.
- Nearly half (42%) of those complaints were upheld in full or in part.
- About 80% (79.51%) were investigated within 20 working days.
- About 7% (6.91%) of all complaints ended up being referred to PSOW.

The CSA will work with public bodies to ensure the data submitted is an accurate representation of complaints being submitted by service users.

A summary of the complaints of maladministration/service failure received relating to your 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.

Action for the Council to take:

- Present my Annual Letter to the Cabinet to assist members in their scrutiny of the Council's performance.
- Engage with my Complaints Standards work, accessing training for your staff and providing complaints data.
- Inform me of the outcome of the Council's considerations and proposed actions on the above matters by 30 November.

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

Yours sincerely



Nick Bennett
Ombudsman

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

Factsheet

A. Complaints Received

Local Authority	Complaints Received	Complaints received per 1000 residents
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	17	0.24
Bridgend County Borough Council	34	0.23
Caerphilly County Borough Council	49	0.27
Cardiff Council*	122	0.33
Carmarthenshire County Council	42	0.22
Ceredigion County Council	31	0.42
Conwy County Borough Council	29	0.25
Denbighshire County Council	32	0.34
Flintshire County Council	61	0.39
Gwynedd Council	37	0.30
Isle of Anglesey County Council	26	0.37
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	13	0.22
Monmouthshire County Council	16	0.17
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council	22	0.15
Newport City Council	39	0.25
Pembrokeshire County Council	25	0.20
Powys County Council	72	0.54
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	39	0.16
Swansea Council	92	0.37
Torfaen County Borough Council	5	0.05
Vale of Glamorgan Council	30	0.23
Wrexham County Borough Council	33	0.24
Wales	866	0.28

* inc 1 Rent Smart Wales

B. Complaints Received by Subject

Vale of Glamorgan Council	Complaints Received	Complaints Percentage Share
Benefits Administration	1	3.33%
Children's Social Services	2	6.67%
Complaint Handling	4	13.33%
Education	1	3.33%
Environment and Environmental Health	2	6.67%
Finance and Taxation	1	3.33%
Housing	7	23.33%
Planning and Building Control	6	20.00%
Roads and Transport	3	10.00%
Various Other	3	10.00%

C. Complaint Outcomes

(* denotes intervention)

Complaints Closed	Premature/ Out of Time/Right to Appeal	Out of Jurisdiction	Other cases closed after initial consideration	Early Resolution/ voluntary settlement*	Discontinued	Other Reports- Not Upheld	Other Reports Upheld - in whole or in part*	Public Interest Report *	Grand Total
Vale of Glamorgan Council	15	3	5	4	0	0	0	0	27
Percentage Share	55.56%	11.11%	18.52%	14.81%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	

D. Number of cases with PSOW intervention

	No. of interventions	No. of closures	% of interventions
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	1	17	6%
Bridgend County Borough Council	1	34	3%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	6	50	12%
Cardiff Council	21	120	18%
Cardiff Council - Rent Smart Wales	-	1	0%
Carmarthenshire County Council	6	46	13%
Ceredigion County Council	4	30	13%
Conwy County Borough Council	6	34	18%
Denbighshire County Council	2	32	6%
Flintshire County Council	8	57	14%
Gwynedd Council	4	39	10%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	3	28	11%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	2	15	13%
Monmouthshire County Council	2	15	13%
Neath Port Talbot Council	4	25	16%
Newport City Council	4	38	11%
Pembrokeshire County Council	7	29	24%
Powys County Council	14	71	20%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	5	40	13%
Swansea Council	4	93	4%
Torfaen County Borough Council	1	5	20%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	4	27	15%
Wrexham County Borough Council	4	33	12%
Grand Total	113	879	13%

E. Code of Conduct Complaints Closed

County/County Borough Councils	Closed after initial consideration	Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Standards Committee	Refer to Adjudication Panel	Withdrawn	Total
Vale of Glamorgan	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

F. Town/Community Council Code of 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
St Donats Community Council	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Sully and Lavernock Community Council	3	-	2	-	1	-	-	6

Appendix

Explanatory Notes

Section A provides a breakdown of the number of complaints against the Local Authority which were received during 2019/20, and the number of complaints per 1,000 residents (population).

Section B provides a breakdown of the number of complaints about the Local Authority which were received by my office during 2019/20. The figures are broken down into subject categories with the percentage share.

Section C provides the complaint outcomes for the Local Authority during 2019/20, with the percentage share.

Section D provides the numbers and percentages of cases received by the PSOW 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 2019/20.

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