



## **Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2021/22**

## Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the compliments and complaints received by Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. During this period, 63,848 'official' interactions with the public were recorded and 86 compliments and 29 complaints were received, although one complaint was for another fire and rescue service and the second was a repeat complaint therefore not included in the final count.

Whilst the numbers of compliments and complaints received were low in proportion to the 'official' interactions, the Service reviews all feedback to support continuous improvement.

The recording and dissemination of compliments provides an opportunity for the Service to hear about the experiences of service users and the views of the public. This information is shared with individual staff / departments and the wider workforce. The number of compliments recorded for 2021/22, was 86 an increase of 45 on the previous year which demonstrates that the new reporting process is embedded. Further analysis of compliments received is presented in section 3 of this report.

Similarly, to compliments, the complaints process allows for expressions of dissatisfaction to be reported and investigated identifying any instances of substandard performance or conduct, the analysis of which can support potential areas for improvement. Of the 27 complaints received, 7 (35%) were upheld following investigation. Further details and analysis of complaints is offered in sections 4 -10, including a breakdown by department (Figure 4), cause and outcome (Figure 5).

Other developments during the year include the publication of the new 'Managing Compliments and Complaints' policy and procedure, enhancements to the intranet page and effective compliant handling training provided to Station Manager or corporate equivalent by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO). Further details can be found in section 11.

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Service is committed to providing the highest quality of service to the communities of Tyne and Wear and recognises feedback as an essential component of continuous improvement. Feedback offers critical reflection of performance against standards and may describe activities undertaken to an exceptional standard or identify areas for improvement.
- 1.2 Feedback in the form of praise aids the Service to evidence where it is performing well and enables staff to be recognised for their efforts. Equally, whilst the Service strives for operational excellence, there may be occasions where it does not deliver to the standards expected and when this occurs, welcomes the opportunity to investigate, correct and learn from circumstances of underperformance to avoid these occurrences happening again.

### 2. Introduction

- 2.1 Staff regularly interact with the public and during 2021/22, 63,848 'official' interactions were recorded which comprised of 32,810<sup>1</sup> calls to the Control Room, an increase of 6,255 on 2020/21 and 17,894<sup>2</sup> incidents attended, an increase of 2,752. In addition, 11,975<sup>3</sup> Safe and Well Checks and 1,169<sup>3</sup> fire safety audits were conducted. This figure is 16,675 higher than 2020/21, primarily because the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic reduced the number of face-to-face activities due to Government applied restrictions.

Feedback was received through a variety of methods including verbally in person or by telephone, in writing by card, letter, email, text, social media or via the Services' website. For 2021/22, 125 contacts were received into the complaints and compliments mailbox, which comprised of 86 compliments, 29 complaints and 10 other contacts representing a 62% increase on the previous year (78). The details can be viewed below in figure 1 below:

---

<sup>1</sup> Source: Mobilising system for calls, 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Source: IRS incident data, 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Source: CFRMIS for Safe and Well data and Fire Safety Audits, 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022.

Figure 1: Contacts received 2021/22

Contact	Count
<b>Compliments</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Complaints</b>	<b>29</b>
TWFRS	27
TWFRS - repeat complaint rejected	1
External - NFRS	1
<b>Other contacts</b>	<b>10</b>
General enquiry	3
Employment matter <sup>4</sup>	2
Smoke alarm replacement / disposal	2
Claim – vehicle / property	2
Social media comments – personal account	1
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>125</b>

- 2.2 Of the 29 complaints received, 27 were investigated and the remaining two were not due to the following:
- In October 2021, a repeat complaint was received, which had been previously investigated in 2020, and an appeal heard which represented the Services' final decision on the matter. As no new evidence was provided and the internal complaint process had been exhausted, the complainant was signposted to seek independent advice and / or contact the LGO.
  - In December 2021, a complaint was sent in error to the Service which was for Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS), and was redirected.
- 2.3 The 10 'other contacts' received comprised of three general enquires about a fire hydrant obstruction notice, the hazards associated with linseed oil and the Fire Cadets programme. The remaining seven contacts were two vehicle / property damage claims, two post-employment matters, two queries about smoke alarm replacement / disposal and the final contact was about comments on social media made by a member of staff. As no name, details of the comment(s) or social media platform and / or any additional information was presented the Service was unable to investigate this matter. The member of the public was written to twice to seek further details however, no response was received therefore this contact was closed.
- 2.4 It should be noted that although two claims were categorised as 'other contacts' three claims were processed during 2021/22, the third claim was categorised as a complaint as the complainant was not happy with the original repair undertaken by frontline staff. The two claims were dealt with as claims as neither claimant wished to raise a complaint against the Service.

### 3. Compliment analysis 2021/22

- 3.1 The Service defines compliments as '*praise given by a service user or partner for a service provided, or to thank an individual, team or department for their actions*'. Therefore, interdepartmental compliments have not been included within this report.
- 3.2 Although the Service has seen an increase in the reporting and recording of compliments during 2021/22, when compared with the number of 'official' interactions recorded (63,848) this figure remains low. It is likely that more compliments were received however; have not been disseminated beyond the recipient and / or their department.

<sup>4</sup> Includes applications, grievances, pensions and employer liability claims.

3.3 The 86 compliments received illustrate the breadth of the work undertaken by staff, which primarily focuses on the Service's core functions as detailed in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. For the purpose of this report, compliments have been grouped together into Covid-19 response, prevention activities, emergency response, work with the third sector and good deeds undertaken by staff on and off duty. Below is an overview of extracts derived from some of the compliments received:

3.3.1 During 2021/22, the Service continued to receive compliments from service users, the public and partners in recognition of the work conducted in support of the Covid-19 response. This included praise for support with the vaccination programme, processing laboratory test samples and supporting schools and the wider community with lateral flow testing and kit supplies. Examples include:

- *"Thank you very much Nicola from the fire service for the 1st vaccine! @Tyne\_Wear\_FRS Doing a great job! Thank you very much for everything you're all doing :)"* **Service user**
- *'Thank you so much for the support with the door to door testing. Your staff were fantastic responding quickly and flexibly and the response on the doorstep was just brilliant. Just shy of 1300 tests in two days is a superb outcome. It is another great example of strong partnership working in North Tyneside.'* **North Tyneside Council.**
- *"Thanks once again for the assistance from your staff. We couldn't have done it without you. Thank you for your kind words re the school and I shall pass this on to the Head."* **Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust**
- *"Thank you once again to you and your colleagues for your help this week, it has been much appreciated. We completed 361 tests with 5 positives, so definitely a worthwhile exercise."* **Churchill Community College**
- *"Thank you on behalf of myself, neighbours and colleagues on the excellent service that you have supplied. The ability for myself to collect the lateral flow testing kits on behalf of the fore mentioned has been in my view a life saver. A number of persons that I have given the lateral flow tests supplied by the Tyne and Wear Fire services have in fact tested positive. The availability of the test kits and the willingness of persons to participate in the testing has been instrumental in combating this disease. You are doing a fantastic job, early detection certainly reduces the risk of spread and once again many thanks for your service to the community."* **F&I Group**
- *"We've enjoyed having the Fire Brigade volunteers at the Nightingale. They have done a great job and are very much part of our wider team. Thank-you so much for supporting our activity here, we are very grateful to the Fire Service. We really appreciate everything your employees have done, they have all been brilliant with our patients."* **Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**
- *Our sincerest thanks to all staff and volunteers within Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service, for their continued hard work, dedication and support they have demonstrated in keeping our communities including Washington safe during such unprecedented times, and additionally when they have responded to all issues and challenges associated with the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic. There's no doubting the Coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the true value of this work, and demonstrated just how much gratitude we owe to all of our "key workers" including all Fire and Rescue personnel and volunteers within Tyne and Wear, indeed, the Nation applauded the efforts of all of our "key workers" during the peak of the crisis, and there remains strong public support here in Washington that staff and volunteers from Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service rightly receive the recognition that they deserve."* **Washington Area Committee Sunderland City Council**
- *"The whole vaccination rollout, and more recently the push to get as many boosters in people's arms as possible by the end of the year, has been a real partnership effort with*

*many organisations and volunteers pulling together to help keep people safe. The support of Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service in getting the clinic at Newcastle Eagles under way so quickly has been key, and demonstrates what can be achieved when partners work together".* **Newcastle City Council**

- *"I just wanted to drop you a line to say many thanks for the fantastic support from TWFRS in providing some of your staff to help in the ICHNE lab. I really appreciate it. With the reduced demand for PCR testing and the success of our recent recruitment round I understand conversations have already started between our respective teams about drawing the TWFRS support to a natural conclusion soon."* **Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**

3.3.2 One of the core function of the Service is to promote fire safety and prevention, which involves delivering interventions to support safer and healthier communities. A number of thank you comments were received from service users and their families following a Fire Safety Audit, Safe and Well Check and / or smoke / carbon monoxide alarm replacement. Some of these compliments show positive interactions with those or family members with protected characteristics<sup>5</sup> such as the elderly or those with a disability. Feedback about how staff treated people fairly, with dignity and respect, demonstrate the Service's commitments to its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010. Examples include:

- *"Thank you for arranging the installation of my replacement fire alarm. I am much happier now that I know the system is working correctly. Your officers were a pleasure to meet and were very pleasant dealing with my hearing problems."* **Service user**
- *"I have this week, used the services of the local fire and rescue service. I must say I am amazed at the courtesy, efficiency and friendliness of the staff concerned. I had a lady ring up and did a safety check over the telephone, absolutely first class. Today I had a young man coming and provided me with new smoke alarms etc and his attitude and helpfulness was absolutely superb. Thank you very much for all your help and care."* **Service user**
- *"My mam (82) rang Sunderland Fire Station yesterday to say her ceiling smoke alarm was on the blink. At 9pm an engine pulled up outside her house and a firefighter replaced the alarm. "We were just passing, so we thought we'd drop in," he said. My mam's dead chuffed."* **On behalf of a service user**
- *"I just wanted to thank you for attending my house so promptly last night when I reported my carbon monoxide alarm going off. You were very efficient and reassuring and I am very grateful."* **Service user**
- *"Ms X said the issues she was having with her son have completely changed now, since his chat with our member of staff and she was fulsome in her praise of how things had improved and how marvellous the lady who visited was and how she interacted with her son."* **Service user**
- *"We are extremely pleased and grateful. Your service was great and the delivery of the specialist alarms...thank you for listening to our concerns and making the special arrangements. You and [name] have shown a lot of compassion, patience and professionalism, especially considering how difficult a query it was. We are very touched, not just grateful that you offered a lot more than we expected. All the best to you both and everyone in the team who contributed."* **Service user**

3.3.3 A number of compliments received were from service users or neighbours in relation to the extinguishing of fire in a home, vehicle or at a business property and focussed on the prompt response, swift actions and professionalism of the crew involved. For example:

---

<sup>5</sup> Nine protected characteristics age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

- *“Just wanted to thank the lads and lasses at Gosforth Fire Station last night for their swift action in attending a fire below our premises. Although our friends and neighbours premise is damaged we suffered smoke damage only. We have all services needed to continue to look after our clients. Although the next few days will be supporting our friends and neighbouring business through this who have a greater challenge. Thanks again to the Fire Service you were amazing.”* **Service user**
- *“Thank you very much for the prompt, superb service putting out the fire in the field behind our house.”* **Service user**
- *“Can I just thank you on the swift action of your crew who attended a fire at a neighbour’s house on Friday evening. If it had not have been for your crew this could have been a lot worse for occupants and myself. Thank you.”* **Member of the public**
- *Crews were called to a fire at a home where the dog was inside the kitchen and needed to be rescued. “She spent a few days with the vet making sure her oxygen levels were normal after breathing in the smoke but now she is back to her normal self, I can never thank the firefighters enough for saving her.”* **Service user**
- *“I would just like to say a massive thank you to the crew who attended when my car was set on fire in the early hours of Saturday morning...all the crew were lovely and managed to save some of my belongings from the car. Please pass on my thanks.”* **Service user**
- *“Thank you so much to the two crews that attended my emergency today. Thankfully, it wasn’t the full blown car fire that I feared it might become, but your Firefighters never once made me feel silly or guilty for calling you. They were an absolute credit to you, not only dealing with the incident, but me too. When they turned up must have been the first time to have a proper think, and it just overwhelmed me. Your crews were fantastic and never made me feel guilty. To them, it might have just been another shout, but to me, they were my heroes. Thank you so much.”* **Service user**
- *“I just want to say what a great job you all did in [address] with that house fire. It isn’t always possible to come out with a happy ending and unfortunately on this occasion not everyone could be saved. With the speed and professionalism of your response you may have prevented further damage and loss of life.”* **Member of the public**

3.3.4 The Service provides a wide range of services, which includes responding to road traffic collisions, the technical rescue of people and animals and / or responding to life-threatening medical emergencies alongside ambulance colleagues.

- *“Today marks 1 year since the Fire Service evacuated my ill husband from our 1st floor flat so he could be admitted to hospital. Sadly, he passed away and whilst your team members have never been out of my thoughts, I’m conscious that I have yet to thank you for the immense efforts of so many of your team over around an 18 hour period. I’m so sorry that I can’t recall names but wish to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who showed such compassion and dignity to [name] in what turned out to be his last few days. I will never forget the expertise and professionalism and would hope this thanks can be circulated to as many of those involved as possible. You provide an amazing service in times of great need and I am forever humbled - thank you.”* **Service user**
- *“Well done to fire personnel medically treating the woman parked in @AldiUK in @SunderlandUK at 10.30 today. Professionalism personified.”* **Member of the public**
- *Thank you to the crew from Birtley who attended my mother’s property...to gain entry and who started preliminary CPR until paramedics arrived when found collapsed. Despite your heroic efforts, she was sadly too far gone and passed away. Thank you so much for your efforts, your professionalism and compassion.”* **Service user**



- *"I just felt compelled to message and say what amazing people you are at Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service. Driving to pick my husband up from work tonight I became aware of people stopping and looking up at the Tyne Bridge and to a person who was clearly experiencing massively challenging life circumstances. There was a discreet team of Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service staff both on the bridge, over the bridge and on the ground below...all calm, collected and supporting. It must take a special sort of person to have such focus and determination, and confidence in the care of others. Just from an ordinary member of the public, thanks for everything you do, risking your own lives to improve and secure the lives of others. You're astounding and amazing all in the same breath."* **Member of the public**
  - *"We just want to say a massive thank you to the team from Hebburn fire station who rescued [name] from underneath the sofa tonight. Bizarre circumstances but very controlled throughout."* **Service user**
  - *"...Your teams were heavily involved in an unusual and challenging rescue. I would like to express a very big thank you to your colleagues who attended the scene...I know that your colleagues acted swiftly and with great care to help preserve life today. I know that you will be very proud of their input as always (and rightly so). Please pass my personal thanks to all involved and to their managers."* **North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust.**
  - *"I would like to leave gift for crew that tried with so much patience and kindness in rescuing and resuscitating my mum's dog."* **On behalf of a service user**
- 3.3.5 Below are examples of praise received from third sector organisations where staff have supported work in the community and included the loading of essential goods for transport to the Ukraine, the replanting of trees and a donation of surplus supplies:
- *"Without the help of the firefighters we couldn't have moved a fraction of the items that we have done today. It has been overwhelming. In total we've transported about four lorry loads of materials weighing approximately 100-tonnes. They will be greatly received by the people of Ukraine. The urgent supplies are to be dispatched to residents who are seeking refuge in Poland, and also to communities in Ukraine itself."* **Newcastle Polish Centre**
  - *"Thank you so much for the support from you and your team in looking after the Cato Street Trees. Thankfully 19 of the 23 trees are healthy enough to replant on Wednesday 17th. Please pop along if you can make it as you have been instrumental in keeping them safe and healthy enough to be replanted."* **Southwick Altogether Raising Aspirations**
  - *"Thank you @Tyne\_Wear\_FRS for kindly donating 40 re-robing packs which include waterproof trousers, jackets, warm socks and rubber shoes. The packs will be used for children attending outdoor activities in the coming months to help keep them warm and dry."* **Love Amelia charity**
- 3.3.6 What is really positive to see is the contribution staff make to society, above and beyond their duties both on and off duty and without such feedback many of these good deeds would go unnoticed. A number of thank you messages were received from members of the public and partners about support received while seeking assistance at a community fire station or during a time of need:
- *"I just wanted to pass on a huge thanks to the staff at [name] Fire Station who took in a...female...(and her puppy) who was fleeing domestic violence and very shaken up. They sat with her, gave her a cuppa and called police while she waited for me to collect her. Thank you so much for given her a safe place."* **Partner**
  - Mrs X collapsed in the street near the fire station. Mrs X sent a card to the station to thank crews. **Member of the public**

- *“Thank you for looking after me when I tripped and fell on the bus.”* **Member of the public**
- *“Myself and a group of friends were on our annual Christmas cycle ride to Newcastle for lunch, when one of our groups bikes slid on a patch of ice coming up the cycle path around 200 metres from Wallsend Fire Station, causing him to fall and in the process, badly fracturing and dislocating his ankle.. We immediately called for an ambulance, but were told it could be up to 2 hours, which given the location and temperature of about 3 degrees, wasn't ideal news. Thankfully a crew was on station and once I had explained the situation they put a running call in and came straight to the scene. The extra hands, blizzard blanket and other warm blankets and the use of a long board as well as fire tunics to cradle the injury helped massively and the concern the crew showed and the support they provided was incredible. We would all like to extend our sincere thanks to the crew from Green Watch, for their help, support and assistance yesterday, as without them, things would have got a lot more difficult, a lot quicker.”* **Member of the public**
- Mr X presented himself at the station as he was feeling unwell (after getting off the bus) and telephoned the following day to praise the staff involved, who provided assistance and arranged for an ambulance. He wanted to let staff know he was feeling much better and to thank them for their *“professionalism and help”*. **Member of the public**
- *Mr X called to say that he had an accident on Durham Road near the Board Inn Sunderland and an off duty firefighter either on his way to / from work had stayed with him and comforted him he would like to say thank you.* **Member of the public**
- *“Whilst changing a tyre under flood lights in a park and ride on the edge of York at about 6pm Friday evening a couple offered to help, it was much appreciated and a great help with Steve and I making light work of a heavy tyre well organised by Karen. We know [name] works for Newcastle fire service but no other details, if he can be traced we would like them to be thanked for such a kind act it was much appreciated.”* **Member of the public**
- *“Massive shout out to the woman from @Tyne\_Wear\_FRS who offered to pay for my dinner today when I was at work, such a kind gesture, I had to say no though, the world needs more people like her, gutted I didn't get her name.”* **Member of the public**
- *“I was taking a picture of my (fire engine-mad) toddlers in front of one of your parked fire engines today at [location] and the firefighters got out and let my kids see the equipment they use and what it looks like inside the vehicle. They weren't allowed inside the vehicle due to Covid, but got to peer in with my holding them up. Just wanted to pass along what a big impact this small gesture had on them, and how great it is that your service members went out of their way on their break to engage with the public like this. Real asset to the organization. Thank you and if possible please pass along my thanks to the station.”* **Member of the public**

3.4 All compliments reported to the Governance Advisor are published on the compliments and complaints intranet page and reported quarterly to the Corporate Governance Board.

#### 4. Complaints analysis

4.1 The Service categorises complaints as *‘an expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action by one or more members of the public. This may be about the standard of our service provided by us or on our behalf, or the manner in which it was provided’*.

4.2 There are four stages a complaint may pass through to attain a resolution:

4.2.1 Internally a complaint can be resolved by:

- front line resolution
- a formal investigation
- an appeal to the Chief Fire Officer

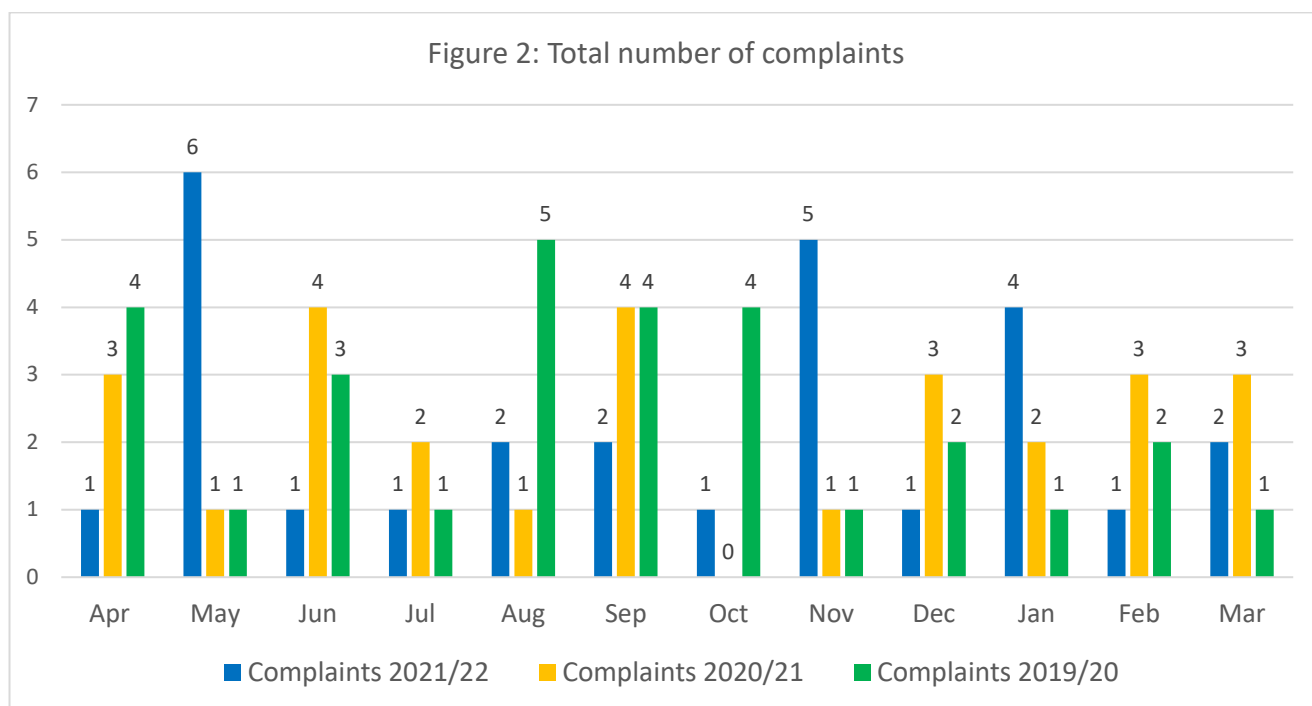


4.2.2 Externally a complaint can be resolved by the LGO.

4.3 The scope of the analysis is the 27 complaints received and investigated during 2020/21. No anonymous complaints were received during this period.

4.4 It should be noted that one complainant requested that their complaint be withdrawn. The complainant had been disappointed with the initial response received from the crew however, were later complimentary and requested that no further action be taken in relation to this complaint. The Area Manager approved this withdrawal request and a letter was sent to formally notify the complainant that their request had been actioned.

## 5. Volume of complaints received



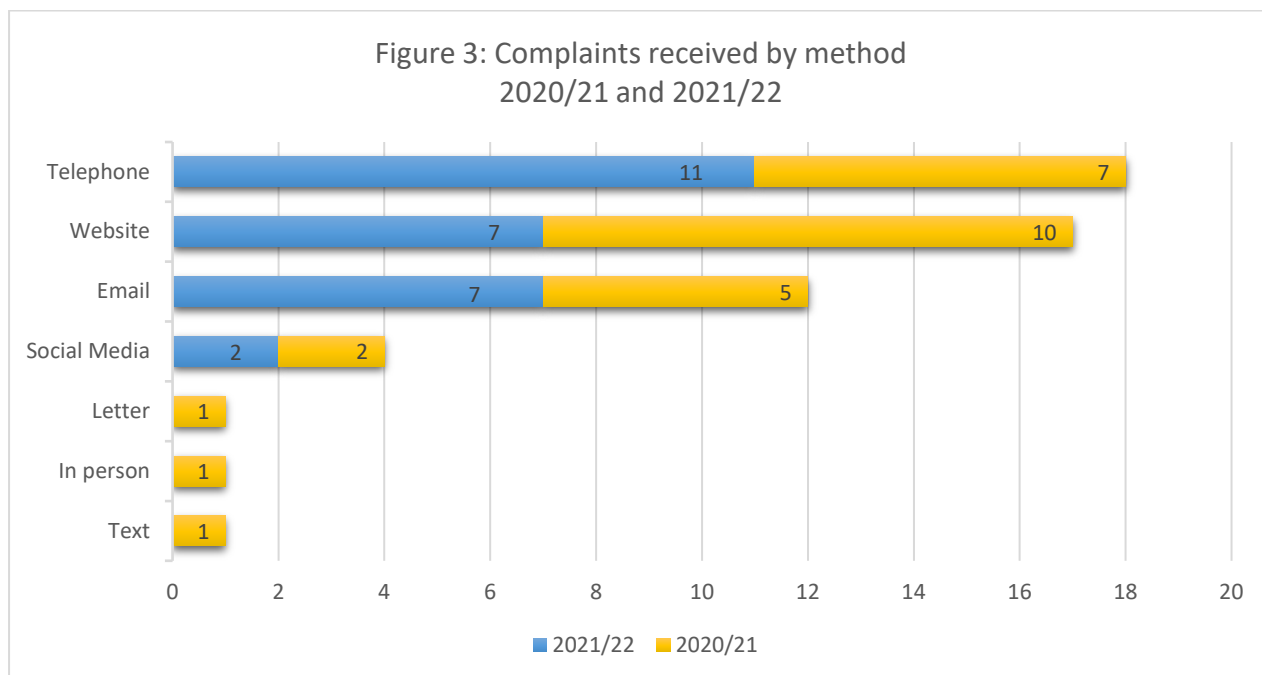
5.1 Figure 2 illustrates the number of complaints received by month for the last three financial years where the number of complaints received was consistent with 27 for 2020/21 and 2021/22 and 29 for 2020/20. The pandemic does not appear to have positively or negatively affected the number of complaints received by the Service.

5.2 During 2021/22, 1-2 complaints were received per month, with the exception of May 2021 (6) November 2021 (5) and January 2022 (4) and overall the number of complaints received each month was lower than the two previous reporting years. In May 2021, the Service received its highest number of complaints for a single month. Having reviewed the data there does not appear to be any rationale for this as the source and reason for each complaint differed. Similarly, with the peak in complaints received during November and January, only one complaint was impacted by bonfire night and another by Storm Corrie therefore there are no trends in terms of the timing in which complaints were reported other than complainants preferring to report their concerns on the day or within 24 hours of the matter arising.

5.3 The appeal stage is the final stage of the Service's complaint process and one appeal was received during 2021/22, which was not upheld. Where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal they are signposted to the LGO. During 2021/22, no LGO complaints were received.

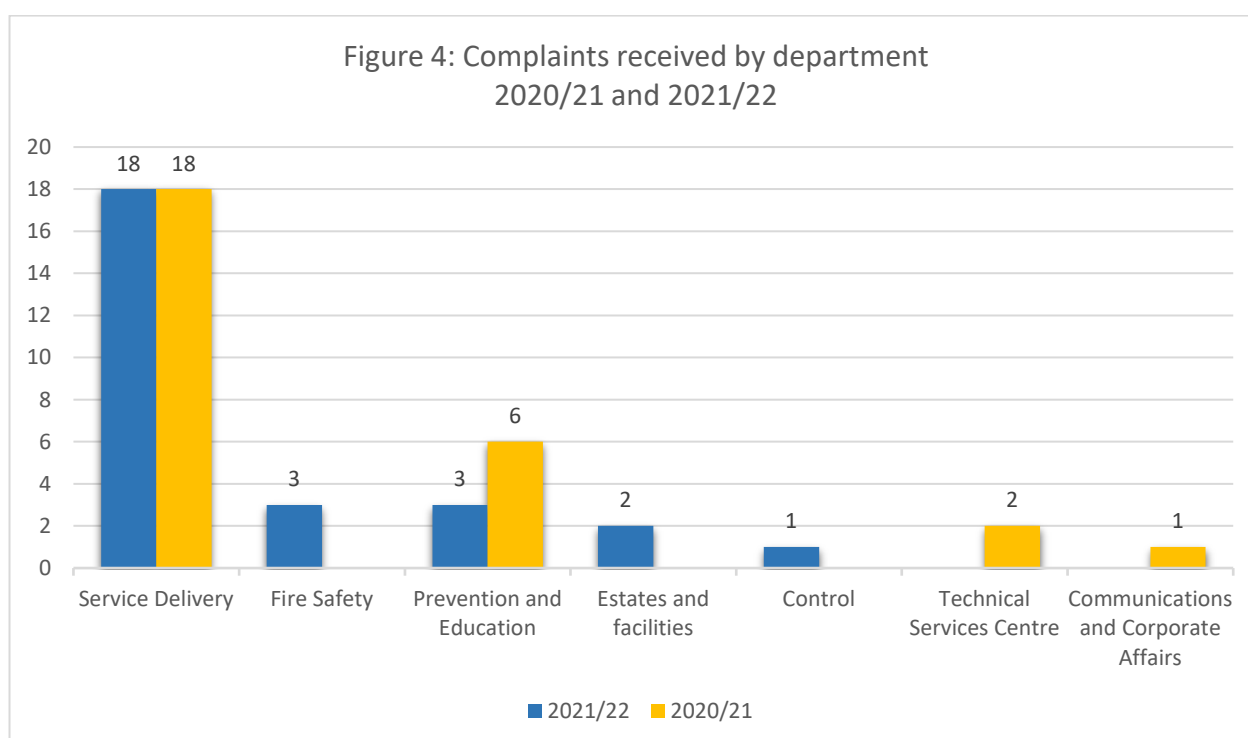
## 6. Complaints by method of contact

6.1 The following sections of this report will focus on the last two financial years as there is no data comparison for 2019/20, as this data was not coded for reporting purposes.



- 6.2 Figure 3 illustrates, that during 2021/22 the preferred method for reporting a complaint was by telephone (11), closely followed by the website (7) and email (7). Although there was an increase in the reporting of complaints by telephone compared with 2020/21 (7), 59% of complaints were received without the complainant having to speak to a member of staff (i.e. via social media, email and the website) this is an 11% decrease on the 2020/21.
- 6.3 The seven complaints received by telephone during 2020/21, were received in office hours 9-5, and this year saw four complaints being received out of hours via the Control Room. The remaining complaints reported by telephone were received by Business Services (4), the PO Suite (1), a Station Manager (1) and Administrator (1).
- 6.4 During 2020/21, there were seven methods of communication used to report complaints and for 2021/22, this reduced to four, as complaints were not received by letter, in person or by text.

## 7. Complaints received by department



- 7.1 Figure 4 shows complaints by department with the highest volume of complaints attributed to the largest department within the Service, Service Delivery. Service Delivery staff attended 17,894 incidents during 2021/22, the largest volume of face-to-face contact recorded within the 63,848 'official' interactions. The Service employ 936<sup>6</sup> staff and of that figure 553 work within the Service Delivery function, equating to 59% of the workforce.
- 7.2 Unlike 2020/21, the Service received complaints about Fire Safety (3), Estates and Facilities (2) and Control (1). There was a 50% reduction in the number of complaints received about Prevention and Education (3) and no complaints were made about the Technical Services Centre or Communications and Corporate Affairs during 2021/22.

## 8. Complaint causes and outcomes

- 8.1 Identifying the principal cause of a complaint is helpful to support analysis and provides an instructive way to understand where the Service may need to target improvement actions. Figure 5 below shows complaints by cause and the outcome.
- 8.2 During 2021/22, 7 (35%) of complaints were fully or partly upheld, a decrease of 13% on 2020/21 and of that percentage, 4 (55%) were fully upheld and 3 (45%) partly upheld.
- 8.3 A complaint may be upheld if the Service or staff member were found to have not acted in line with our values and code of conduct, provided a poor service or their action or decision may have had a negative impact on an individual. A complaint is partly upheld when the Service or staff member may have got some things wrong, but not all the issues that were complained about.

Figure 5: Complaints by cause and outcome

Causes of complaints	Total complaints	Upheld	Partly upheld	Not upheld	Withdrawn
On duty conduct	14	2	3	8	1
Inconsiderate parking	2	1		1	
Social media - personal	2			2	
Damage to property	1	1			
Forced entry	1			1	
Off duty conduct	1			1	
Non-attendance at an incident	1			1	
Siren use / noise	1			1	
Neighbour dispute / fire report	1			1	
Communication issue	1			1	
Lack of community consultation	1			1	
Partner data sharing	1			1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1</b>

- 8.4 Complaints are divided into 12 categories, with the highest number of complaints being about on duty conduct (14) which formed 52% of the total number of complaints. However, following investigation, only 2 (14%) of on duty conduct complaints were upheld and 3 (21%) were partly upheld. Where a complaint was upheld or partly upheld an apology was provided, an explanation of why it happened and the action(s) taken to put the matter right to avoid it happening again.
- 8.5 The other 11 categories make up 48% of the complaints received and aside from those complaints about inconsiderate parking and property damage all other complaint categories were not upheld. One inconsiderate parking complaint was upheld and the single complaint about property damage was also upheld.
- 8.6 During 2021/22 the Service upheld 7, (35%) of complaints (fully and partly) a decrease of 13% on the previous year where 48% of complaints were upheld. One reflection on this outcome is that

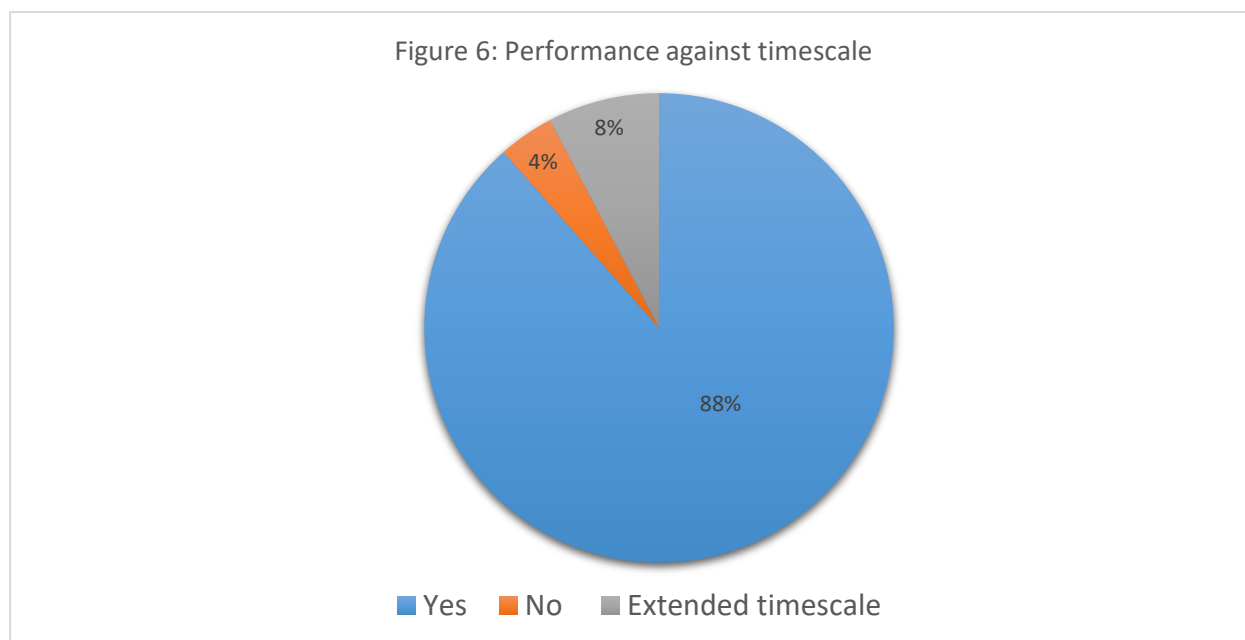
<sup>6</sup> Source: Core HR, 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022.

as the Service collects a significant amount of data for example, recorded Control calls, incident logs, vehicle trackers, appliance CCTV footage and body worn cameras, this makes it easier to gather reliable evidence to challenge and disprove complaints. Equally, this intelligence is used to investigate why things have gone wrong and what can be done to support putting them right.

- 8.7 An overview of the complaints received is published on the compliments and complaints intranet page and reported quarterly to the Corporate Governance Board.

## 9. Complaint performance against timescales

- 9.1 The Service aims to respond to complaints within 28 days, unless the complaint is complex in nature and / or additional time is required to support the investigation process. Figure 6 below shows performance against this timescale.



- 9.2 During 2021/22, 23 (88%) of complaints were responded to within 28 days. The three complaints closed beyond 28 days were done so because one required support from the legal department at Sunderland City Council therefore prolonged the process. The second was closed within 28 days but then reopened when the complainant requested to submit additional evidence. The third complaint was closed a short time after the 28 days which was due to the investigating officer being absent.
- 9.3 The withdrawn complaint has not been included in this count as there is no outcome to report.

## 10. Complaint benchmarking

- 10.1 To benchmark the Service's complaint data, contact was made with the other metropolitan fire brigades to request the sharing of information. However, as a number of brigades report their figures annually in December rather than March a direct comparison was not able to be undertaken. In addition, those which did report year end figures in March, at the time of writing this report the data was unavailable for public release.
- 10.2 The only complaint data attained from this exercise was the number of complaints received for quarter three / year end which ranged between 17 and 78 complaints.

## 11. Developments in 2021/22

- 11.1 The new compliments and complaints policy and procedure was approved by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) in February 2022 and implemented during March 2022.

- 11.2 The Service's website now has a compliments and complaint tile on the home page making it easier for the public to submit their compliments or complaints.
- 11.3 The narrative on the external web page '*say thank you or make a complaint*' has been updated to align with the new policy and procedure. The LGO recently reviewed the Service's website and provided positive feedback about how easy it was to make a complaint.
- 11.4 Two effective complaint handling training sessions took place in March 2022 with the LGO and 34 staff at Station Manager or corporate equivalent level participated in the training which covered:
- defining and analysing complaints;
  - planning investigations;
  - evaluating information and making sound decisions;
  - communicating decisions effectively and;
  - resolving and learning from complaints.
- 11.5 In total, 52 staff have participated in this training; this figure includes members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) who undertook this training in May 2021. A reserves list has been devised for the remaining / new members of SLT, Station Manager or corporate equivalent and future training will be planned. There are also plans to arrange a training session for the ELT.
- 11.6 Internally the compliments and complaints intranet page has been enhanced to include guidance materials to support investigating officers with their investigations, in addition to the regular reporting of data.

