

CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE

Quarterly Report

Compliments, Complaints & Feedback

**For the period:
July - September 2020**

Introduction

The impact of Covid-19

During the pandemic we have attempted to handle complaints through our normal processes. Where this has not been possible, priority has been given to complaints that relate to Safeguarding or Social Care.

We have not always been able to meet our usual timescales for response, especially in those cases where complaints involve service areas which have seen officers and resources deployed elsewhere in an effort to ensure the council's vital services remained operational.

There have been also been some cases where complaint investigations have had to be stood down. Customers have been kept informed and have shown patience and understanding of the unique circumstances presented to the council by the pandemic.

This report from the Complaints and Feedback Team covers Q2 (July – September 2020). This report brings together all compliments and complaints received by the council.

Together for Children (TfC) provide a six-monthly report on complaints regarding Children's Services, which is presented to the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee for detailed analysis. To ensure the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee has a complete overview of complaints made about council services, the report from TfC will be appended to the Compliments, Complaints & Feedback report in Q2 and Q4.

As TfC reports on a six-monthly basis it is not possible to include information in the quarterly graphs. However, where complaints are made to the Local Government Ombudsman regarding TfC they are included in the relevant Scrutiny report.

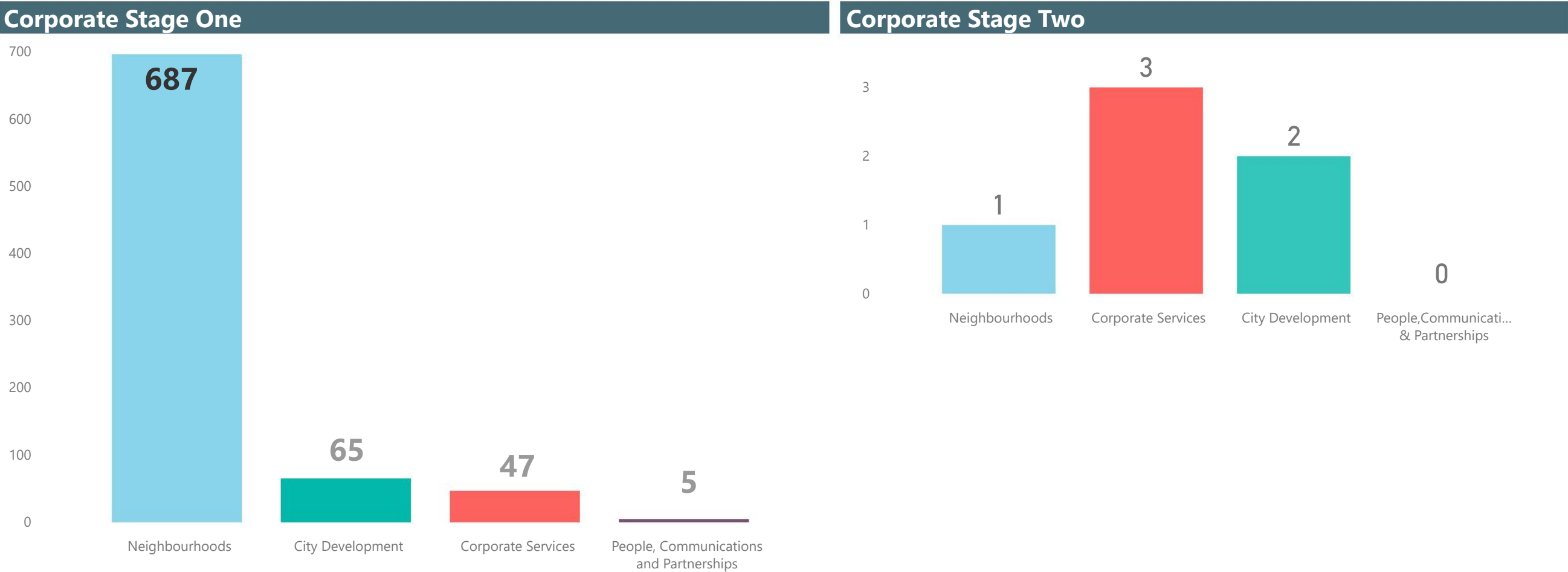
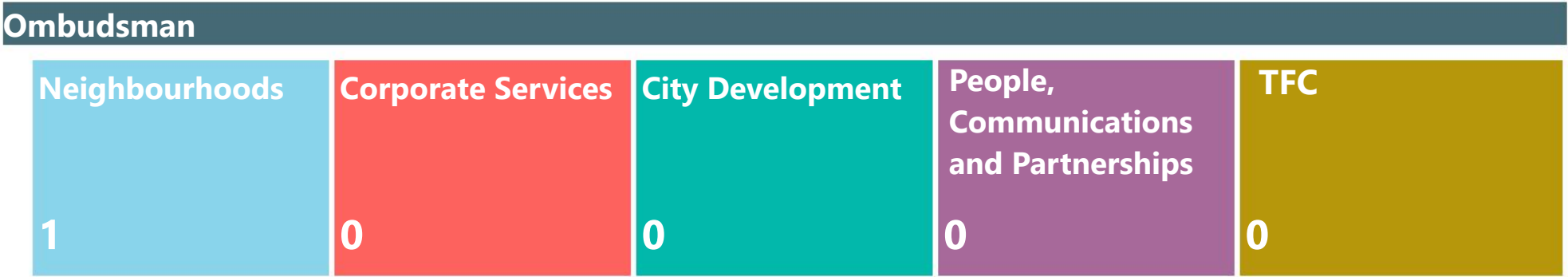
Sunderland Care and Support's report regarding complaints received about its service will be appended to Compliments, Complaints & Feedback report on a quarterly basis.

Part A of the report includes statistical data, which is presented in an updated, easy to view format.

Part B of the report provides information on the different Compliments and Complaints Procedures that are used by the council to handle customer feedback.

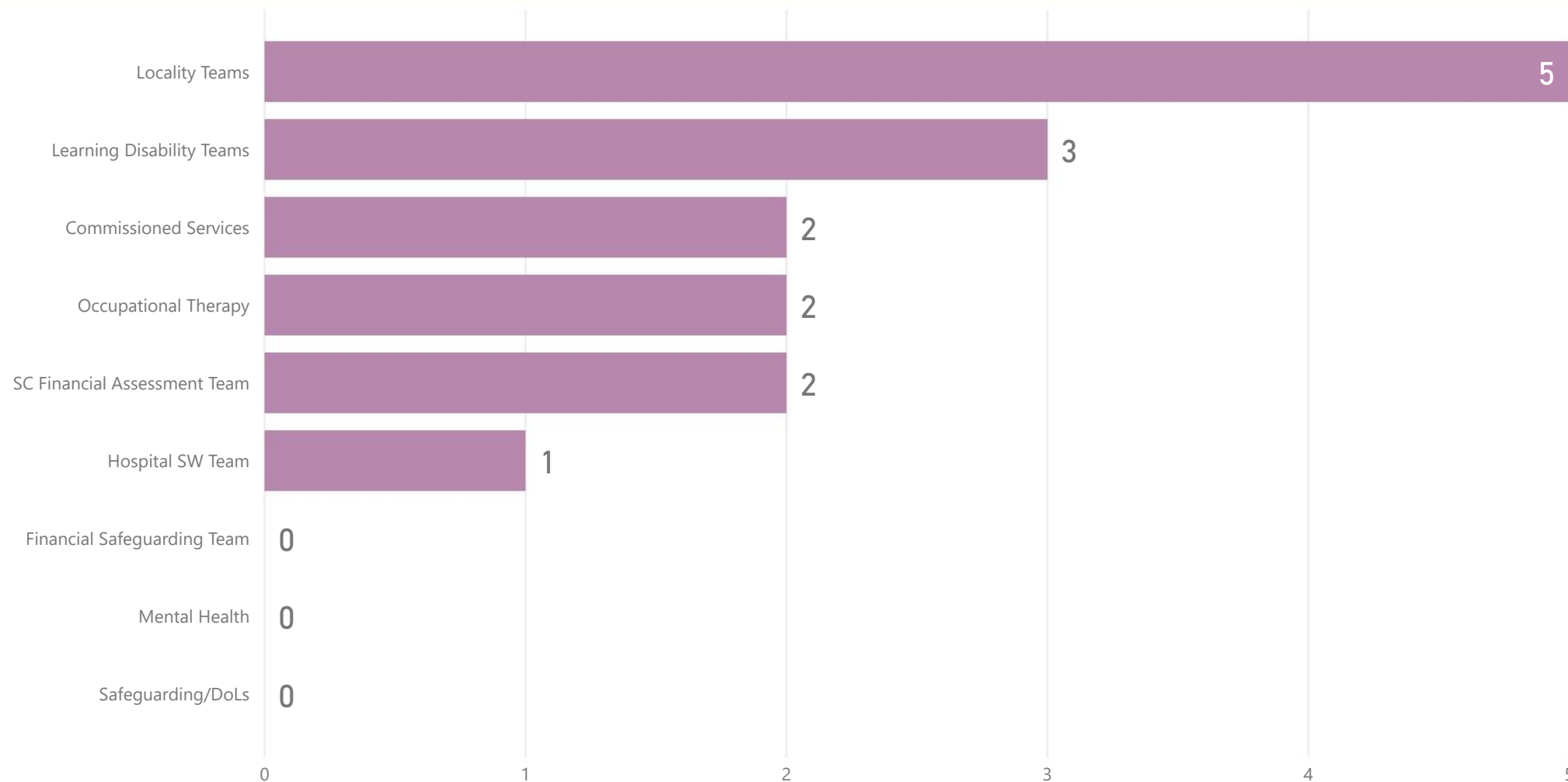
Part C of the report includes further information on each service area within separate appendices.

Complaints Overview



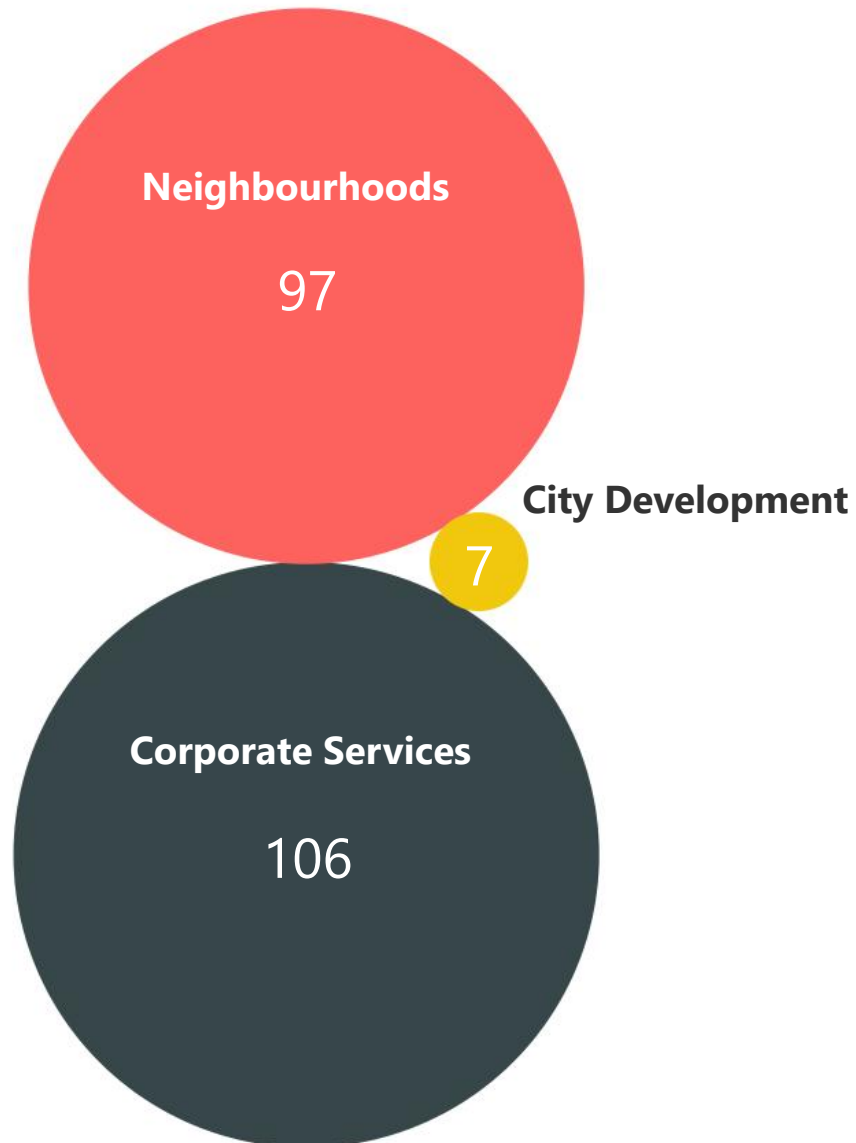
Complaints Overview

Neighbourhoods - Adult Statutory Social Care - 15



Compliments

Compliments



I just would like to say that the new permit system in place at the Beach Street Household recycling was a good experience. Less waiting time in queues and helpful staff. Please consider implementing this system all the time.

My family's sincere thanks to you and your team, you can be proud of them. The care, expertise, and understanding has been exemplary.

The appointment system for council tips is excellent. Works well for both residents and staff working at the depot. Please retain this system after Covid-19 is over.

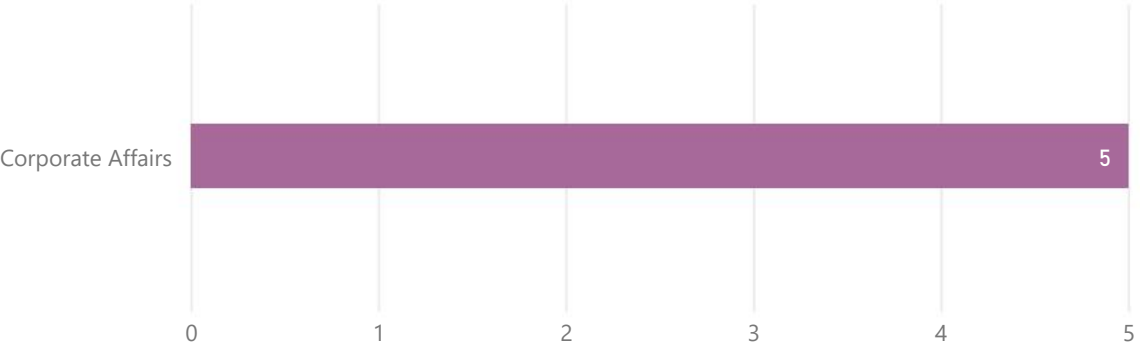
The officer was extremely helpful and kind in dealing with a blue badge application. She went the extra mile. I can't thank her enough and she is a credit to your department.

The Bin collector is very pleasant, always gives a wave and a smile and is helpful. Customer is very grateful.

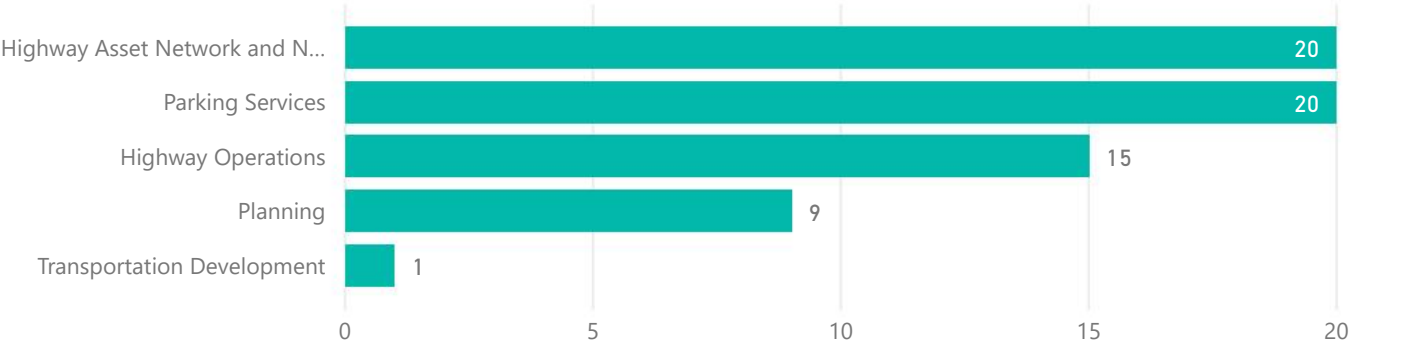
I reported overgrowth of bushes and trees in an area of Washington and would like to say a HUGE thank you to you for getting the issue resolved. The area is now safe to walk and looks 100% clean and tidy. Keep up the good work because the service is excellent

Corporate Complaints Breakdown for Stage 1

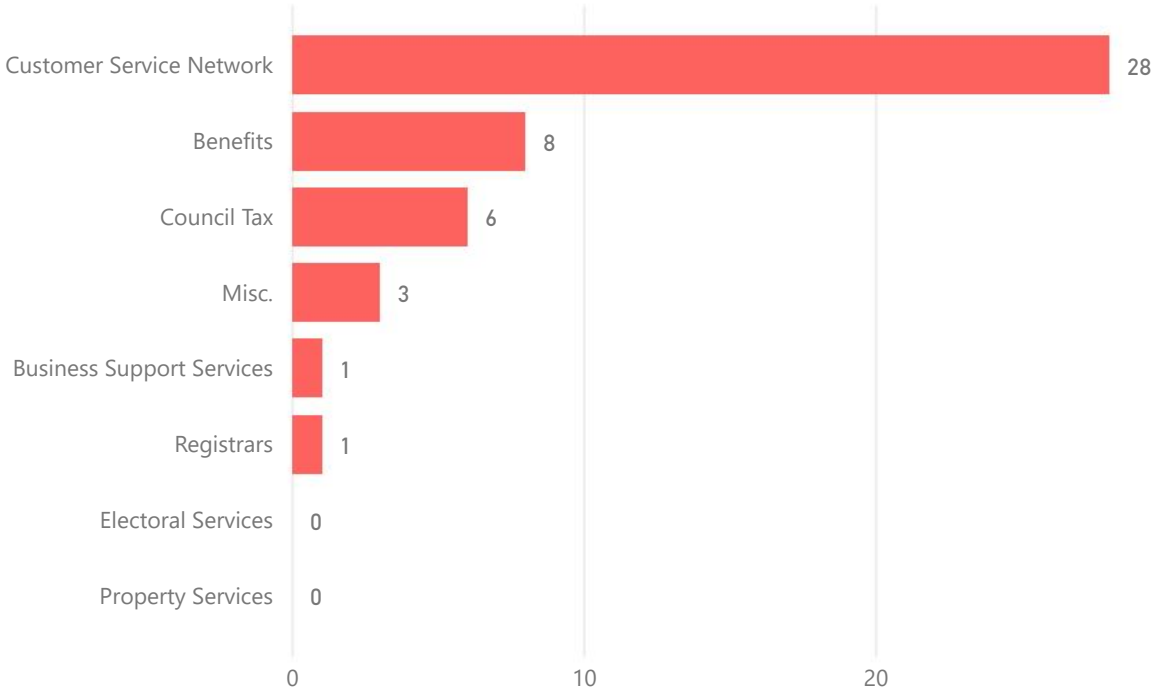
People, Communications and Partnerships - 5



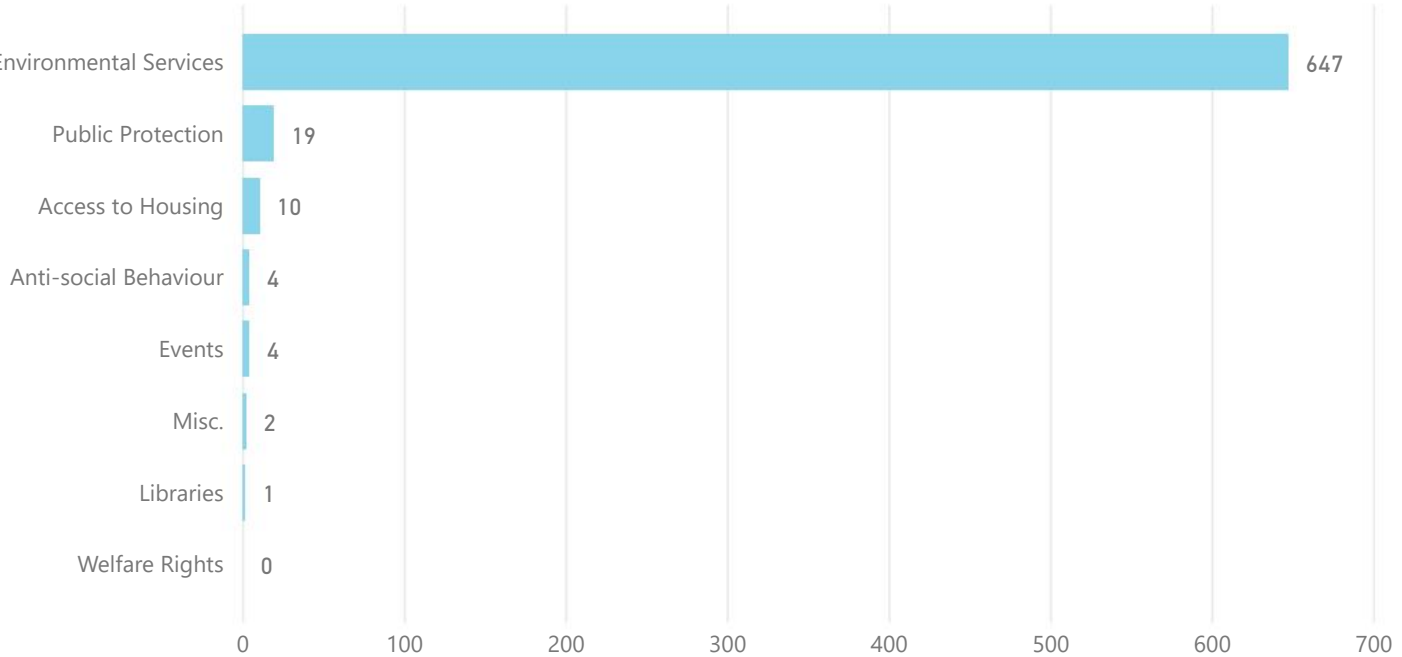
City Development - 65



Corporate Services - 47



Neighbourhoods - 687



PART B

Compliments

Compliments tell us what people like best about the services they receive. They also allow us to use this information to build those features into our services where possible and this helps us to continually improve levels of customer satisfaction. Compliments are logged centrally through the Complaints and Feedback Team.

Information on compliments is attached as **Appendix 1**

Complaints made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

The Ombudsman has a statutory responsibility for investigating complaints of maladministration about local councils. The Ombudsman will usually only consider a complaint after it has been through the council's complaints procedure and the customer remains unhappy. Complaints from the Ombudsman are made against the council including those about Children's Services.

The Ombudsman provides the council with an annual Review Letter which is a summary of statistics on the complaints made to them regarding the council for the financial year. Information includes the number of complaints and enquiries received; decisions made; and the council's compliance with any recommendations.

Information on Ombudsman complaints is attached as **Appendix 2**

Corporate Complaints Procedure

How the procedure works:

There are two stages to the council's Corporate Complaints Procedure;

Stage One: These are dealt with by the Directorate and should be completed within 25 working days. All responses advise the complainant that if they remain dissatisfied, they can refer their complaint to the Complaints and Feedback Team for review.

Stage Two (Review): Where customers remain dissatisfied with the response to their stage one complaint, they can request a review be undertaken by the Complaints and Feedback Team. Complainants are advised that, should they remain dissatisfied with the response at stage two, they can ask the Ombudsman to consider their complaint.

Information on Corporate complaints is attached as **Appendix 3**.

Statutory Procedures

Health and Social Care Complaints Procedure

Legislation & Regulations

The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 provides for a single complaints process for all health and local authority *adult social care services* in England.

How the procedure works:

There is one stage to the Health and Social Care Complaints Procedure.

One Stage (Local Resolution by the Council): local resolution is about the council trying to resolve complaints quickly and as close to the source as possible. We acknowledge complaints within three working days and arrange for an appropriate manager to consider the issues and provide a response to the complainant.

Most complaints can be dealt with and resolved satisfactorily at the local resolution stage, however, if this is not the case, any unresolved concerns can be referred to the Ombudsman.

Information on Adult Statutory complaints is attached as **Appendix 4**

Sunderland Care and Support

Sunderland Care and Support is a Local Authority Trading Company, formed in December 2013, wholly owned by Sunderland City Council. The company has a board of directors appointed by the council (as the shareholder of the holding company).

Sunderland Care and Support offers care and support 24/7 to more than 6,000 vulnerable customers across a wide range of services including: Supported Living schemes for people with a Learning disability, Mental Health needs; Autism or challenging behaviour; Day Services and Short Break care services; Intermediate Care and Reablement services; Sunderland Telecare; Community Equipment Service; and Home Improvement Agency.

How the procedure works:

Complaints are dealt with under the Health and Social Care Complaints Procedure. Some eligible complaints may fall outside this procedure and these complaints are considered as a corporate complaint.

A report from Sunderland Care and Support regarding all complaints received and handled by them in Q2 is attached as **Appendix 5**

Children's Services Statutory Complaints

Legislation & Regulations

Statutory regulations were introduced by the Department for Education in 2006 entitled '*Getting the Best from Complaints – Social Care Complaints and Representations Procedure for Children and Young People*' to deal with complaints and representations made to Children's Services by children and young people (the regulations and guidance cover complaints and representations made by children and young people).

On 1 April 2017 *Together for Children*, the new company responsible for Children's Services in Sunderland came into operation. The statutory duty to deliver services for children remains with the council, who commissions the company to deliver services.

How the procedure works:

There are three stages to Together for Children's Complaints Procedure;

Stage One: An emphasis is placed on local problem solving. Complaints are acknowledged within three working days and responded to within 10 working days (with a possible extension to 20 working days in total).

Stage Two: If dissatisfied a complainant can progress their complaint to stage two. An investigation is undertaken by an Investigating Officer who has not been involved with the case. An Independent Person must be appointed to oversee the investigation, and these are commissioned externally. Investigations should be completed within 25 working days, although an extension of up to 65 working days is allowed.

Stage Three: This is an Independent Review Panel, comprising of an independent chair and two independent panel members. A panel must take place within 30 working days of receiving the request from the complainant. If a complainant remains dissatisfied, they can request a further investigation by the Local Government Ombudsman.

The 6-monthly report from Together for Children is attached as **Appendix 6**

Appendix 1: Compliments

Compliments tell us what people like best about the services they receive. They also allow us to use this information to build those features into our services where possible and this helps us to continually improve levels of customer satisfaction.

	2018-19	2019-2020	2020-21
Q1 -Apr-Jun	126	152	245
Q2 - Jul-Sep	184	176	210
Q3 - Oct-Dec	170	120	
Q4 - Jan-Mar	134	115	
	614	563	455

The table below shows the service areas where complaints were received during Q2

	Q2
Adult Services	24
Council Tax	2
CSN	93
Environmental Health	0
Environmental Services	64
Events	4
Highways / Network Management	7
Housing Benefits	0
Housing Options	9
Libraries	0
Misc.	5
Parking Services	0
Registrars & Bereavement (Incl. Business Support)	2
	210

Some examples of compliments received in Q2

Adult Services

Can I pass on my thanks for the work you have done - it was frustrating and without your timely intervention I'm not sure where we would be?

I just wanted to write to you to say thank you very much for everything you did. You have really made a difference to his life. Thank you so much from both of us we really appreciate your help.

My family's sincere thanks to you and your team, you can be proud of them. The care, expertise, knowledge and understanding has been exemplary. Full marks to all!

I would like to say a BIG THANK YOU to Adult Social Services staff who were able to arrange nursing home care for my mother-in-law within an incredibly fast 5 days from first contact to resolution. We will be forever grateful for their professionalism, support and kindness.

City Wide Services

Just wanted to say that we had a great experience at Beach Street Depot, staff were very friendly, and the new permit scheme means you can be in and out in under 10 minutes. Very effective and efficient.

The appointment system for council tips is excellent. Works well for both residents and staff working at the depot. Please retain this system after Covid-19 is over.

Council Tax

I would like to pass on thanks as service received has been amazing. The officer also provided general advice with regards to other things I may be able to claim and helped sort out my arrears

Customer Service Network

The officer was extremely helpful and kind in dealing with a blue badge application. She went the extra mile. I can't thank her enough and she is a credit to your department.

I would like to thank the officer for her excellent customer service. Her attention to detail and customer support was phenomenal.

The lady who helped me on the phone was very helpful and very understanding and made me feel at ease when speaking to her.

I would like to say the service is great and 10 out of 10

Council are handling things well under current circumstances -dealing with the virus and keeping services going

Derwent Hill

We wanted to give some feedback from our fantastic little stay on your camp site a few weeks ago. I was impressed by the fact that you were only allowing a maximum of 28 people at the camp site and hearing how busy the whole of the area was, this was important to us. The facilities are great, the location spot on and just what we needed after being 'cooped up' at home for a few months.

Environmental Services – Cleansing and Ground Maintenance

A massive thank you to the cleansing staff who came to remove the rubbish dumped in the back lane. Thank you again

I reported overgrowth of bushes and trees in an area of Washington and would like to say a HUGE thank you to you for getting the issue resolved. The area is now safe to walk and looks 100% clean and tidy. Keep up the good work because the service is excellent

I visited our Sea Front today, walking from Roker to Seaburn and was very impressed with the cleanliness of the beaches, and the staff who were working there.

Environmental Services – Refuse

Happy with how quickly and efficiently the response was and how nice the staff were.

Ordered a black caddy on Wednesday and replacement was delivered and placed in the Bin on Friday.

The Bin collector is very pleasant, always gives a wave and a smile and is helpful. Customer is very grateful.

Environmental Services – Trees

A thank you to the team who came to remove trees. They were very efficient and cleaned up after them. Customer very pleased with the work that was carried out.

Highways

Thank you for your help in resolving the issue with the main pothole repair. It had made a huge difference to the noise levels in our home. Thank you once again for your help.

Please pass my thanks to everybody involved with my footway crossing application. The office staff and those carrying out the construction were a pleasure to deal with and I am very happy with the work that was carried out.

Housing Options

A thank you to the officer for being caring, compassionate and professional

Thank you to the team for getting my accommodation, thank you for everything

Registrars

Just to say thank you for making our day so special.

I must thank you for what you did today for us. You pulled out all the stops and went the extra mile on our behalf. Once again thank you.

Appendix 2

Complaints dealt with by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

There was **1** complaint concluded by the Ombudsman for Q2. The table below shows the number of complaints together with comparative data for the previous year.

	<i>Number of complaints 2018-19</i>	<i>Number of complaints 2019-20</i>	<i>Number of complaints 2020-21</i>
Q1	5	6	4
Q2	10	11	1
Q3	6	6	
Q4	6	15	
	27	38	5

The table below shows the number of complaints concluded in each quarter for each Directorate.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
City Development	2	-			2
Corporate Services	-	-			0
Neighbourhoods (Adult Social Care)	1	1			2
Neighbourhoods (other)	1	-			1
People, Communications & Partnerships	-	-			0
Together for Children	-	-			0
	4	1			5

The table below shows the total number of complaints received for each Directorate to date, how many of those complaints the Ombudsman chose to investigate; and from those investigations how many were upheld.

	Total Complaints made to the Ombudsman	Number closed after initial enquiries	Number Investigated by Ombudsman	Outcome of Investigation	
				Number upheld	% upheld rate
City Development	2	2			
Corporate Services	-				
Neighbourhoods (Adult Social Care)	2	1	1	0	0
Neighbourhoods (other)	1	1			
People, Comms. & Partnerships	-				
Together for Children	-				
Total	5	4	1	0	0

The Ombudsman's reference is included in brackets and the full report can be found on their website; www.lgo.org.uk.

Complaints closed after initial enquiries in Q2 (0)

Detailed Investigations in Q2 (1)

Adult Social Care (Sunderland City Council – 19 020 520)

A complaint about the standard of care received in a care home commissioned by the council.

Outcome: The Ombudsman discontinued their investigation because legal action has been commenced against the care home by the complainant.

Appendix 3 – Corporate Complaints

Stage One

The table below shows the number of Stage One corporate complaints together with comparative data for the previous two years.

	<i>Number of complaints 2018-19</i>	<i>Number of complaints 2019-20</i>	<i>Number of complaints 2020-21</i>	% change from same period last year	% responded to within timescale
Q1	1,951	704	636	-9%	95%
Q2	1,389	770	804	+4%	98%
Q3	592	684			
Q4	499	502			
	4,431	2660	1440		

The 804 complaints received this quarter are broken down into Directorates in the table below;

	City Development	Corporate Services	Neighbourhoods	People, Communications & Partnerships	Total
Q1	41	45	541	9	636
Q2	65	47	687	5	804
Q3					
Q4					
	106	92	1228	14	1440

Neighbourhoods

Service Area	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Environmental Services	520	647			1167
Libraries	0	1			1
Access to Housing	2	10			12
Anti-social Behaviour	2	4			6
Welfare Rights	0	0			0
Public Protection	14	19			33
Events	1	4			5
Misc.	2	2			4
	541	687			1228

Complaints in respect of Environmental Services make up 94% of the complaints made against the Neighbourhoods Directorate this quarter. The table below provides a breakdown of the service areas within Environmental Services.

Environmental Services	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Refuse: <i>non/late delivery of bins & caddies/missed bins</i>	419	519			938
Bereavement: <i>maintenance of cemeteries/ crematorium</i>	5	8			13
Street Cleaning: <i>fly tipping/dog bins</i>	61	75			136
Trees, fixed play, trade waste: <i>grass cutting/ tree pruning</i>	20	14			34
Enforcement: <i>Fly tipping/littering/dog fouling</i>	1	8			9
Waste Management: <i>Beach Street Depot – staff attitude/permits</i>	14	23			37
	520	647			1167

Refuse Complaints

Of the 647 complaints received for Environmental Services, 519 (80%) were about issues to do with refuse collection. This should be viewed in context; in any quarter the council will service approximately 1.6 million containers, therefore this number of complaints represents only 0.03% of activity for this service area.

The table below contains a breakdown of complaints about refuse.

	<i>Number of Complaints for 2018/19</i>	<i>Number of Complaints for 2019/20</i>	<i>Number of Complaints for 2020/21</i>	<i>% change from previous year</i>
Q1	1,606	433	419	-3%
Q2	1,012	464	519	+11%
Q3	358	454		
Q4	253	232		
	3,229	1583	938	

City Development

Service Area	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Planning & Property	3	9			12
Infrastructure & Transport	21	36			57
Parking	17	20			37
	41	65			106

Infrastructure & Transport

Complaints about this service area were regarding road resurfacing, footway repairs, traffic calming/restrictions and potholes. Complaints regarding Infrastructure and Transport have risen in Q2 from 21 in Q1.

Corporate Services

Service Area	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Council Tax	7	6			13
Customer Service Network	17	28			45
Benefits	6	8			14
Property Services	4	0			4
Business Support Services	3	1			4
Registrars	5	1			6
Electoral Services	0	0			0
Misc.	3	3			6
	45	47			92

Complaints regarding the Customer Service Network (CSN) make up 60% of complaints made during this quarter. Again, the number of complaints should be viewed in context. The CSN handled 336,493 contacts this quarter; 28 complaints represents a dissatisfaction rate of 0.008%

Stage Two - Review

Where customers remain dissatisfied with the response to their stage one complaint, they can request a review be undertaken by the Complaints and Feedback Team.

6 Reviews have been concluded in this quarter.

The internal timescale for completing Reviews is 25 working days. More complex cases may require further time to complete with the aim of within 65 working days.

Stage 2 Reviews	Number of Reviews 2018/19	Number of Reviews 2019/20	Number of Reviews 2019/20	% responded to within 25-day timescale	% responded to within 65-day timescale
Q1	4	5	3	0%	100%
Q2	8	7	6	67%	33%
Q3	6	8	-		
Q4	6	11	-		
	24	31	9		

The reviews were in respect of services within the following Directorates;

Directorate	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2020/21	Comparison Figures for previous year 2019-20
City Development	2	2			4	12
Corporate Services	-	3			3	7
Neighbourhoods	-	1			1	12
People, Communications & Partnerships	1	0			1	0
	3	6			9	31

Outcome of Stage 2 Reviews

Complaint Outcomes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2020/21	Comparison Figures for previous year 2019-20
Upheld in full	-	-			0	3
Upheld in part	-	3			3	10
Not Upheld	3	3			6	16
Unsubstantiated	-	-			0	0
Not Eligible	-	-			0	1
Withdrawn	-	-			0	1
	3	6			9	31

Reviews partly upheld in Q2 (3)

Economic Regeneration - customer unhappy with the length of time it had taken to sort out issues regarding a rent relief grant.

Outcome - partly upheld

The review concluded that the council had reached the correct decision but that there had been some delay attributable to both parties.

Housing Benefit – a complaint that the council had failed to follow the correct procedure in respect of how it processed a Housing Benefit application

Outcome - partly upheld

The review concluded that there had been a procedural error which had resulted in the appeal process not being followed correctly. Ultimately the correct decision was reached, and there had been no significant delay in this being attained. Apologies for the error had already been made to the complainant.

Planning – the complainant was unhappy that delegated decision contained a measurement error, along with the initial submitted plans, in respect of neighbour's garden room development

Outcome - partly upheld

There was an error in the delegated report relating to a floor area calculation and this part of the complaint had been upheld with apologies offered. Resubmitted plans included correct dimensions. The review concluded that this was a technical error that had no bearing upon the final decision to grant planning permission and it could find no evidence of any injustice to the complainant.

Appendix 4: Adult Social Care

The table below shows the number of complaints received together with comparative data for the previous two years. **15** complaints received in Q2 regarding adult social care services.

	<i>Number of complaints 2018-19</i>	<i>Number of complaints 2019-20</i>	<i>Number of complaints 2020-21</i>	<i>% change from same period last year</i>	<i>% responded to within timescale</i>
Apr-Jun	14	24	10	-58%	80%
Jul-Sep	38	21	15	-29%	87%
Oct-Dec	18	20	-		
Jan-Mar	23	16	-		
Total	93	81	25		

The complaints were about the following issues;

Nature of Complaints	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2020/21	<i>Comparison Figures for previous year 2019-20</i>
Actions of worker	3	2			5	21
Assessment Disagreement	-	1			1	10
Care Practice Issues	1	1			2	1
Communication	2	1			3	11
Delay	1	1			2	6
Equipment Issues	-	-			0	2
Finance	-	5			5	13
Lack of Choice	-	-			0	5
Quality Issues	2	2			4	9
Actions of residents					0	2
Lack of help/support	1	2			3	1
	10	15			25	81

The complaints were made regarding the following service areas;

Service Area Involved	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2020/21	<i>Comparison Figures 2019-20</i>
Mental Health Service	2	-			2	5
Hospital SW Team	1	1			2	6
Learning Disabilities Service	1	3			4	14
SW Locality Teams	4	5			9	23
Occupational Therapy Service	1	2			3	13
Financial Assessment Team	-	2			2	5
Commissioned Services	1	2			3	10
Financial Safeguarding Team	-	-			0	4
Safeguarding Adults/ Deprivation of Liberty	-	-			0	1
	10	15			25	81

Outcome of complaints

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2020/21	Comparison Figures for previous year 2019-20
Upheld in full	2	2			4	11
Upheld in part	2	-			2	19
Not Upheld	4	8			12	39
NE/WD/OTH**	1	2			3	5
Ongoing	1	3			4	7
**not eligible/withdrawn/other	10	15			25	81

In Q2 there were 2 complaints (13%) that had some element upheld or partly upheld;

- *A complaint regarding quality issues with a home care provider, namely the irregularity of visits.*

Remedy/Learning Outcomes: The Provider advised of a number of steps it had taken to improve the service they provided to the customer. The customer was happy with the outcome and confirmed the service provided to them had improved.

- *A complaint about an alleged outstanding account from a home care provider*

Remedy/Learning Outcomes: Following receipt of the complaint the Provider undertook a comprehensive review which confirmed errors had been made regarding an outstanding balance. An apology and explanation were provided to the customer.

Appendix 5:

Sunderland Care and Support

REPORT TO SUNDERLAND CITY COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

SUNDERLAND CARE AND SUPPORT LIMITED (SCAS)

COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS Q2 2020-21 (JULY-SEPTEMBER 2020) UPDATE

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update to Sunderland City Council's Scrutiny Coordinating Committee on recent performance activity in relation to SCAS compliments and complaints.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Council's Scrutiny Coordinating Committee are requested to note the contents of the report.

3 OUR APPROACH

- 3.1 Sunderland Care and Support Limited takes pride in the high-quality services we provide our customers.
- 3.2 We pro-actively welcome both positive and negative feedback from all of our customers and view this as our opportunity to learn and to improve; and recognise that such feedback helps us to corroborate the standard of service our customers receive.
- 3.3 This reporting period has been quite extraordinary given that it covers the end of what is thought to have been the initial peak and the beginnings of a second wave of the Global Covid-19 Pandemic. But despite this unprecedented scenario, the Company has continued to deliver within what have been extremely challenging circumstances, using creative means to ensure that we have supported our customers both in the community and in and out of the hospital pathway.

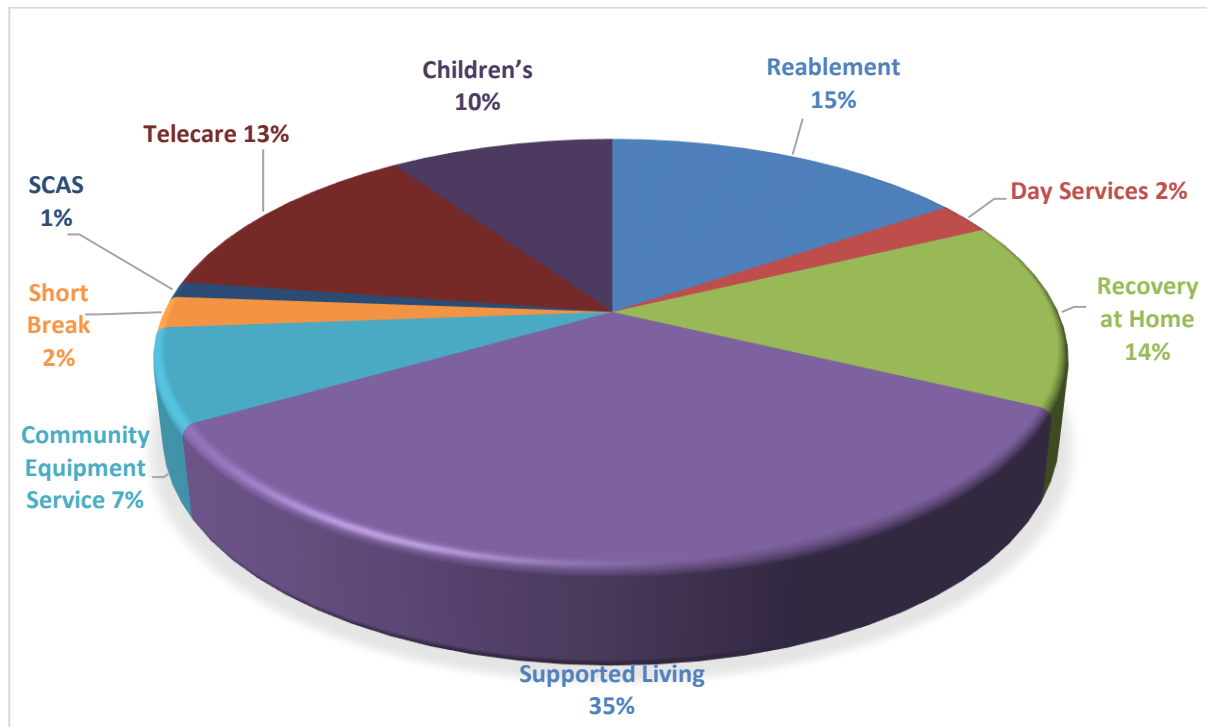
4 COMPLIMENTS

- 4.1 It is of note, that despite the pandemic, a total of **84 compliments** were received from **1st July to 30th September 2020**; only around 3.7% (7) less than were noted over the previous reporting period (91)

4.2 It was also noted that the number of compliments received during the quarter were only 8.7% (8) less overall than had been recorded over the same period in the previous year; and only around 12.7% (12) less than the average (mean) of compliments noted over the previous 12-month period (96).

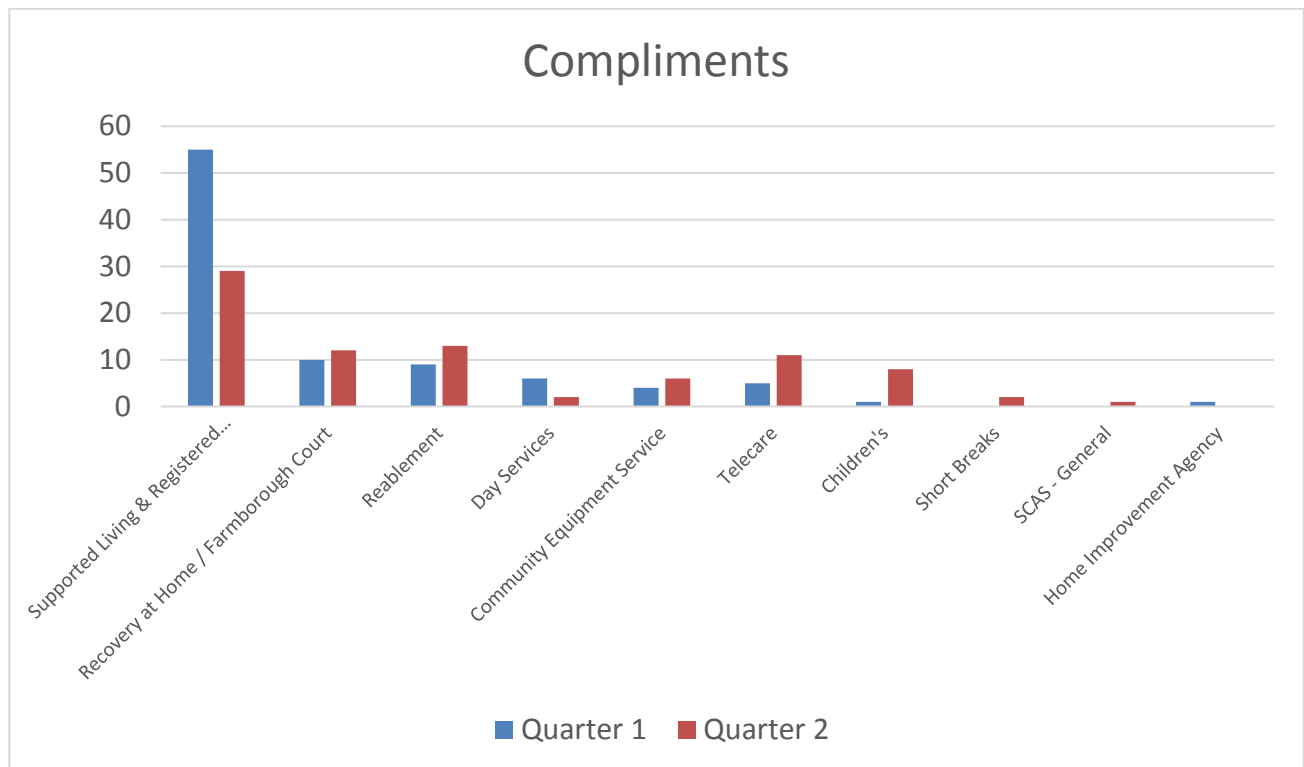
4.3 Quarter 2 Compliments Breakdown - Distribution

Compliments received during the quarter were distributed across the following service areas:



- **Supported Living & Registered Accommodation:** 29 (35%) – **twenty-six fewer** than the previous quarter
- **Reablement:** 13 (15%) – **four more** than the previous quarter
- **Recovery at Home / Farmborough Court:** 12 (14%) – **two more** than the previous quarter
- **Telecare:** 11 (13%) – **six more** than the previous quarter
- **Children's:** 8 (10%) – **seven more** than the previous quarter
- **Day Services:** 2 (2%) – **four fewer** than the previous quarter
- **Community Equipment Service:** 6 (7%) - **two more** than the previous quarter
- **Short Breaks:** 2 (2%) – **two more** than the previous quarter
- **SCAS - General:** 1 (1%) – **one more** than the previous quarter
- **Home Improvement Agency:** zero (0%) – **one fewer** than the previous quarter

4.4 Q2 Compliments Breakdown - Previous Quarter Comparison



During the quarter, the City has been experiencing the impact of the Global Covid-19 Pandemic, therefore we wouldn't have expected to see as many customers taking the time to offer their feedback.

It is therefore of significance that our Supported Living & Registered Accommodation services received the most compliments for a second consecutive quarter (despite a near two-fold decrease in the number of compliments received for that Service Area); and that 70% of our Service Areas services saw an increase in compliments received during the quarter.

4.5 Q2 Compliments Breakdown - Synopsis

Praise during the quarter was extensive, highlights of which included:

- **Supported Living** – recognition for the dedication of staff during lockdown
- **Recovery at Home / Farnborough Court** – thanks for the 'kindness and care shown' by the team
- **Reablement** – thanks for 'the 5-star service' provided by 'fantastic staff'
- **Day Services** – recognition for the 'amazing' work of staff
- **Community Equipment Service** – recognition of the 'gold standard' of service provision
- **Telecare** – appreciation for the 'wonderful' service' and 'amazing care'
- **Children's** – thanks for the 'kindness and care' of team members
- **Short Breaks** – high praise for the care provided

4.6 Customer Satisfaction Consultations

It is of note that our Children's and Supported Living Services received four positive responses from customers and their families via proactive customer satisfaction consultations during the reporting period.

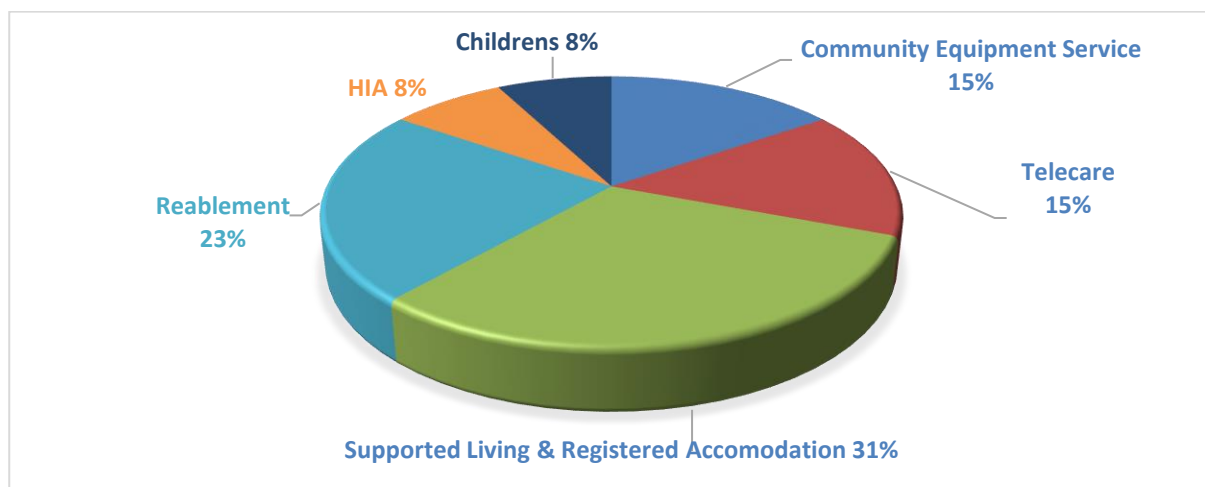
5 COMPLAINTS

5.1 It is of note, that despite the Pandemic, only 13 complaints were received by the Company from 1st July to 30th September 2020, representing a slight 7.7% increase in the number of complaints received vs. figures for the previous period (12).

5.2 Figures for the quarter were also found to represent a near 73% reduction (35 less) in complaints than were recorded over the same period during the previous year (48); and around 28% (5) less than the average (mean) of complaints noted over the previous 12 month period (18)

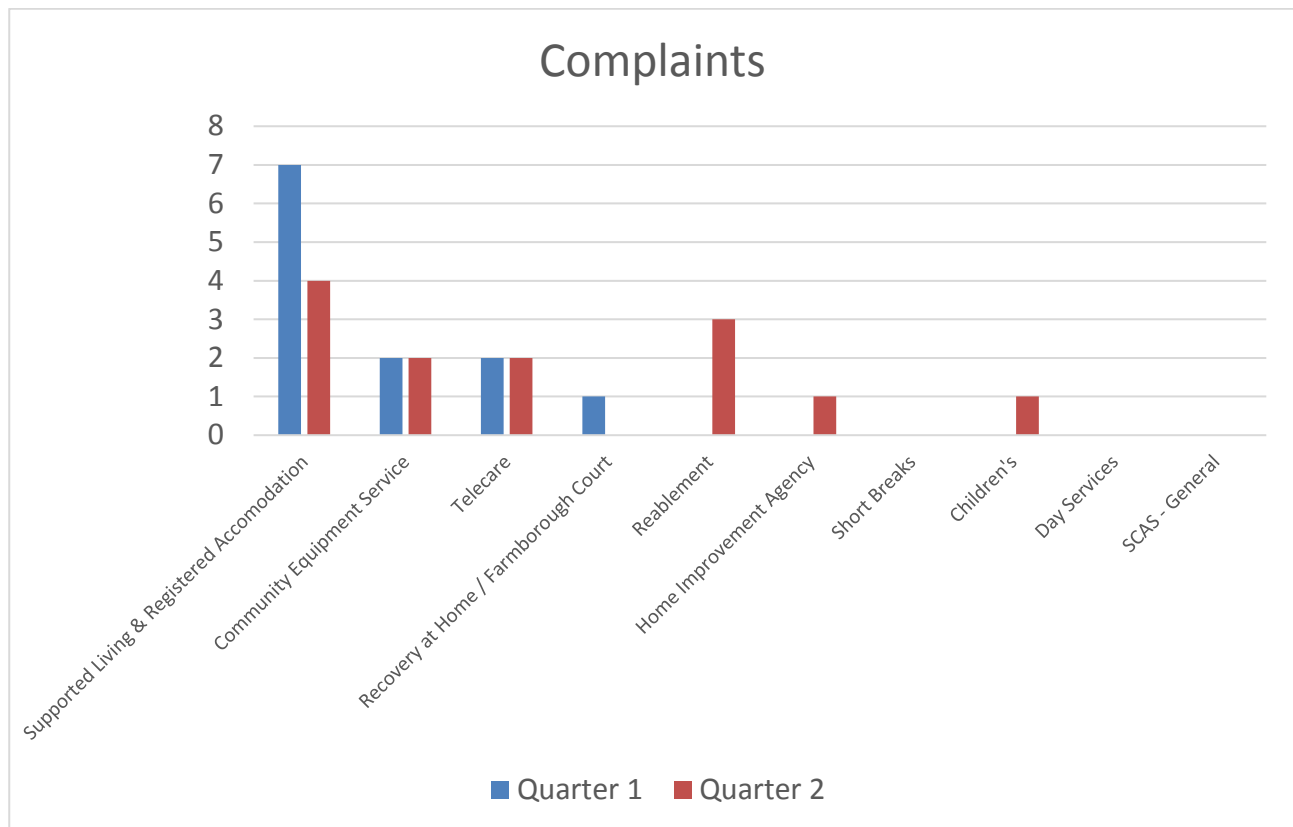
5.3 Q2 Complaints Breakdown – Distribution

Complaints received during the quarter were distributed across the following service areas:



- **Supported Living & Registered Accommodation: 4 (31%)** – **three fewer** than the previous quarter
- **Reablement: 3 (23%)** - **three more** than the previous quarter
- **Community Equipment Service: 2 (15%)** – **no change** from the previous quarter
- **Telecare: 2 (15%)** – **no change** from the previous quarter
- **Home Improvement Agency: 1 (8%)** – **one more** than the previous quarter
- **Children's: 1 (8%)** – **one more** than the previous quarter
- **Recovery at Home / Farmborough: 0 (%)** - **one less** than the previous quarter
- **Short Break: zero** – **no change** from the previous quarter
- **Day Services: zero** - **no change** from the previous quarter
- **SCAS - General: zero** - **no change** from the previous quarter

5.4 Q2 Complaints Breakdown - Previous Quarter Comparison



It is of note that around 70% of Service Areas either received zero complaints or significantly fewer complaints than seen during the previous quarter, with only three Service Areas noting a slight increase for the period.

Also of note was that our **Supported Living & Registered Accommodation** services saw nearly a **two-fold decrease** in the number of complaints received.

Our **Recovery at Home Service** saw **zero complaints** during the period (down one from the previous quarter), and the number of complaints received by our **Telecare and Community Equipment Services** were both seen to have remained at the levels reported for the previous period (x2)

However, it is worth bearing in mind that due to the impact of the Global Covid-19 Pandemic the Company would not have expected to see as many customers taking the time to offer their feedback.

5.5 Q2 Complaints Breakdown - Resolution

Of the complaints received during the period around **61% (x8) were not upheld**, 8% (x1) were upheld in-part, 23% (x3) were upheld in-full and 8% (x1) was in the process of being resolved under our (Step 1) Informal complaints procedures.

There were **no** complaints requiring (Step 2) Formal or (Step 3) External resolution noted during the period.

6 COVID-19 REPORTING

- 6.1 Throughout the reporting period the company have continued to operate within the scope of our Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy despite experiencing what is thought to be the beginnings of a second wave of the Global Covid-19 Pandemic.

It is of note that our monthly complaints clinics are now held using MS Teams in order to ensure social distancing is observed

**Together for Children
Customer Feedback Six Month Summary Report
April 2020- September 2020**



HIGHLIGHT SUMMARY

What are our key achievements?

- We have received 140 compliments and 67 messages of positive feedback so far this year from children, young people, families and professionals.
- We have successfully helped 53 customers to receive satisfactory resolutions to their issues or concerns informally, without having to initiate a complaint.
- Overall the number of complaints received so far this year has reduced by 43% with many of our services seeing a decrease in the number of complaints.
- The number of complaints relating to our largest service area, child protection has decreased by 63% when compared with the same period in the previous year.
- We have reduced compensation payments in relation to upheld complaints.
- The amount of compensation being paid out by TfC has reduced as a result of fewer upheld complaints and a reduction in the severity/impact of those upheld situations.

What are our areas of focus?

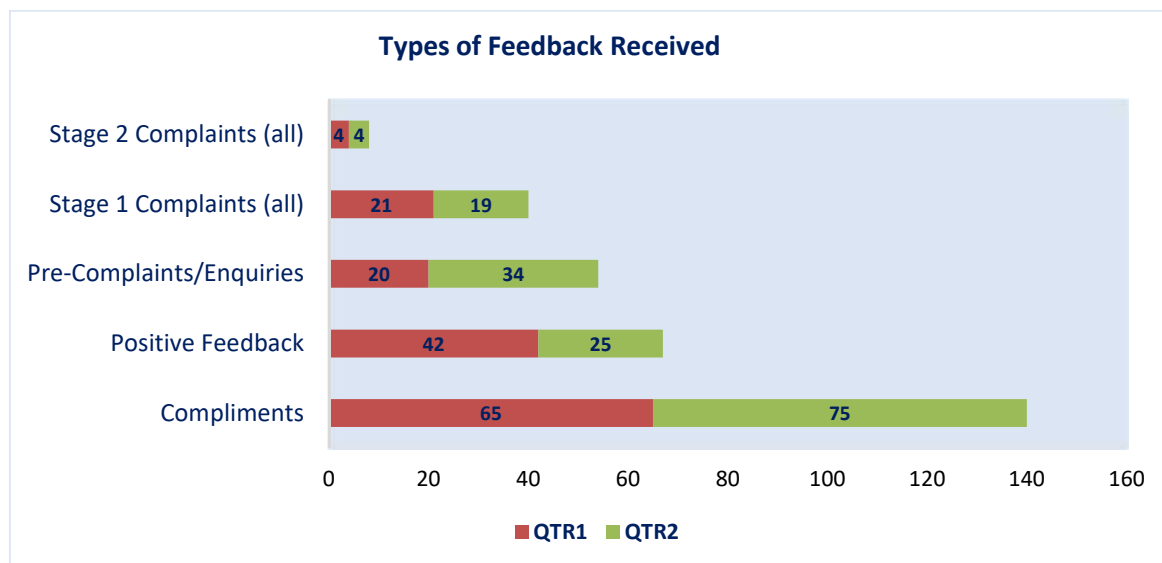
- Decreasing the number of non-statutory complaints.
- Continue to improve the timeliness of stage 1 responses to prevent complaints escalating to stage 2.
- Improving stage 2 investigation and adjudication timescales.
- Continue to address the causes of complaints relating to communication/contacts.
- Analysing in more detail, emerging complaint themes.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. This report covers the period 1st April to 30th September 2020. Together for Children (TfC) welcomes all forms of feedback as a way of improving service delivery to children, young people and families. The report provides an overview of customer feedback received in the last six months, identifying topics and trends in relation to complaints information and areas of organisational learning that have taken place in response to feedback received.

2. SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

- 2.1. The Customer Feedback Team are responsible for receiving, recording and responding to feedback received from children, young people and families regarding services delivered by Together for Children. The following graph shows the different types of feedback received in quarters one and two.



3. COMPLIMENTS & POSITIVE FEEDBACK

- 3.1. We have received 140 compliments and 67 positive feedback comments in the last six months from children and young people, parents and other family members, foster carers, external professionals and staff within TfC. *(TfC define compliments as a comment that praises the actions of an individual or a team and positive feedback as comments that are more in depth, detailed or specific; relating to an activity or an event).*
- 3.2. Compliments are communicated to workers and management structures of the relevant teams and is used to congratulate workers and teams and to inform service developments and best practice. Compliments are also shared more widely with the Senior Management Team and the TfC Communications Manager, so all staff can be recognised for their dedication and hard work. Below are some examples of the compliments we have received in the last six months:

Business Support, Social Care

- “Just a quick email to say how wonderfully helpful our business support, XXX has been during the current situation we have found ourselves in with Covid 19. I have been under pressure to get court stuff in, cases transferred etc and she has went above and beyond, even keen to help on her days off. All too often we hear of when things haven’t went right, but XXX is an example of when people have went the extra mile and this has been a real support not only to me, but also the team”.

Cared for Children Service

- “I have been working with social worker, XXX since December 2019 with the E/H family. I would like to pass on some positive feedback for XXX. XXX has been a pleasure to work with and my work with her is exactly how joined up working should be. She shares information timely and is always contactable, this has ensured

this family have the support they need. I have observed XXX to have built positive working relationships with both XXXX (mum) and I know from their feedback that they have appreciated all of her hard work”.

Child Protection Service

- “We first met XXX on the (date) when the children were placed with us, she has always been available for advice, help and as we entered this uncertain times her help has been invaluable. She has kept in touch to check on the children and has gone by far above and beyond what anyone could expect. We wanted to contact you, cause at this time we are thanking nhs workers and felt we had to say a huge Thank you, for having someone doing her job in such a caring way. Both me and XXXX come from a corporate background and always found only time anyone contacted us was to complain. I worked in payroll for a large company for 16 years and had two "thank yous". Sometimes that's all we get in our job, so we wanted to email you to say how much XXX has helped us. The kids have an amazing amazing social worker!! “.

Fostering Service

- “I am completing the above FCR paperwork and currently going through my notes. I just wanted to share with you both that they were VERY complimentary of TfC. They reported a very good professional working relationship with XXX and the children’s current SW which they feel is very important for positive outcomes. They feel TfC has gone from strength to strength and are particularly enjoying the varied training on offer, XXX was very impressed with the Solihull training reporting that XXXX and XXXXX were amazing. Just thought it would be nice to share. 😊“.

Children’s Independent Reviewing Team

- “Hi (Team Manager) it is a little late and I should have sent you this before the lock down. I was in a ICPC meeting with XXX who was the Chair and it was one of the best Signs of safety meeting I had attended. It was quick, efficient and also extremely well managed. I hope you are well and hope you don't mind me emailing you but it is so good to attend meetings that are well managed. Keep well and safe”.

Early Help

- “Just wanted to drop a quick email to let you know of a conversation I had today with the mum of the above children, EH worker is XXX. It was such a refreshing call to hear how positive the mum is finding the support she is receiving from XXX. We frequently hear from families how professionals from an array of agencies, including social services, are not listening or supporting them. This was the complete opposite with XXX, she was described as, ‘absolutely brilliant,’ and the mum feels she can tell XXX anything”.

Children’s Homes

- “Just want to say a big thank you for all your support throughout the time XXX has been in the care of (Children’s Home). He has returned to his father’s care with the support of all the staff behind him through these very difficult times. He is doing really well and is so happy. Once again just a big thank you for your continued support with everything”.

Anti-Social Behaviour Service

- “I would like to thank you and XXX on behalf of Sunderland Home Grown CIC and the community which has benefited from XXX volunteering with us. He has provided a delivery service to the local community in Sunderland which without him being on site we would have found very difficult to do. As we work with predominantly with adults with disabilities and the more older community most of our customers have been given 12 weeks isolation. The opportunity to do deliveries has been greatly appreciated from all involved. This has made a huge contribution to many peoples good mental health in this very trying times. We have maintained all health and safety requirements throughout this period and continually monitor the current situation with Government guidelines. XXX continues to make a great contribution while we have lock down for the most vulnerable in the community. Thank you so much and I understand you will want him back at some point. I look forward to when everything is back to normal and you can visit us again, kettle will be on”.

SEND Service

- “Hi there.. Just wanted to say Thank you for your help in gaining the ehcp for XXX. It is much appreciated the time and effort that was put in by yourself and colleagues during this testing time. I am grateful and excited about what lies ahead for XXX and his chances to achieve and prosper and thrive within the school setting”.

Connexions Service

- “The work XXX has been doing to support the careers provision here at Washington Academy has been outstanding. As a new Careers Leader her input has been invaluable. XXX has been in constant contact with our targeted students which has enabled me complete our intended destinations quickly despite the current pandemic. I am certain that XXX has gone above and beyond her usual job role and hours to make sure we have everything we need”.

Children with Disabilities Service

- “To XXX, You have made such a difference in our lives. We will always be grateful. Your support & help kept our heads above water. Good luck for the future, Love XXXX and XXXXX”.

4. PRE-COMPLAINTS & ENQUIRIES

- 4.1. Pre-complaints are where enquiries, issues and or concerns presented by individuals are dealt with through informal resolution. Whilst customers are provided with information about the complaints process and their rights to complain, we aim to achieve informal resolution where appropriate and when in the best interests of customers. The table below shows the pre-complaint data for quarters one and two:

Pre-Complaints & Enquiries	Q1 (Apr – Jun)	Q2 (Jul – Sep)	Total	
Number Received	20	34	54	↓
Percentage resolved as Pre-Complaint or Enquiry	95%	100%	98.1%	↑
Percentage Escalated to Stage 1	5%	0%	1.9%	↑

- 4.2. We received 54 pre-complaints in the last six months. Through responding to issues or concerns at the outset, we have helped 53 of our customers to receive satisfactory resolutions informally with just 1 (1.9%) escalating to a formal stage one complaint. Overall, the number of customers contacting the service with pre-complaint enquiries has decreased by 23 when compared to the first six months of the previous year and the percentage of those customers who have received a satisfactory response through the pre-complaints process has increased by almost 5%.

5. COMPLAINTS PROCESS

- 5.1. The Complaints Process for Statutory Children’s Services follows the statutory guidance. This is a 3-stage process as follows:
- **Stage One** – the initial stage of the process is investigated by the appropriate Team Manager. The service must respond within 10 working days, however an extension up to 20 working days can be requested for more complex cases.
 - **Stage Two** – on receipt of the response to their stage one complaint, complainants have 20 working days to request their complaint is progressed to stage two if they are unhappy with the initial outcome. At this stage, an Investigating Officer will be appointed to investigate the complaint and it can take up to 65 working days to complete.

- **Stage Three** – if the complainant remains unhappy with the outcome of the stage two complaint, they have 20 working days to request their complaint progresses to stage three. The review should take place within 30 days of the request. At stage three, a review panel will be appointed to review the complaint. This will consist of three independent people who will make recommendations to the Director of Children's Services.

- 5.2. If the Complainant remains unhappy, they can raise their complaint with the Local Government Ombudsman.
- 5.3. Any complaints that do not relate to Statutory Children's Services, are handled under the Non-Statutory Complaints Procedure which consists of two formal stages. Non-statutory complaint figures are included in this report.

6. COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

- 6.1. The table below shows the number of complaints we received across each stage of the complaints process:

Complaints Stage	Q1 (Apr – Jun)	Q2 (Jul – Sep)	Total	
Statutory:				
Stage One	18	10	28	↓
Stage Two	4	2	6	↓
Stage Three	1	2	3	↑
Non-Statutory:				
Stage One	3	9	12	↑
Stage Two	0	2	2	↑
Total	26	25	51	↓

- 6.2. Overall in the first six months of the year we received 51 complaints compared with 90 in the first six months of 2019-20 which shows a decrease of 43.3%. 37 were statutory complaints and 14 were non-statutory.
- 6.3. We received 40 statutory stage one complaints compared with 72 in the same period of 2019-20 which shows a decrease of 44.4%.
- 6.4. 16 stage two complaints were received in the first six months of 2019-20 compared with eight this year which shows a decrease of 50%. Two statutory complaints progressed to stage three in 2019-20 compared with three this year.

Number of Complaints by Young People:

- 6.5. The table below shows the number of complaints from young people received in the first six months of 2020/21 at each stage of the complaints process. There were two complaints received in total which is five less than the same period in the previous year.

Complaint Stage	Q1	Q2	Total	
Stage One (all)	1	1	2	↓
Stage Two (all)	0	0	0	↓
Stage Three	0	0	0	→
Total	1	1	2	↓

7. STAGE ONE COMPLAINTS

- 7.1. The table below shows the number of stage one complaints received by service area.

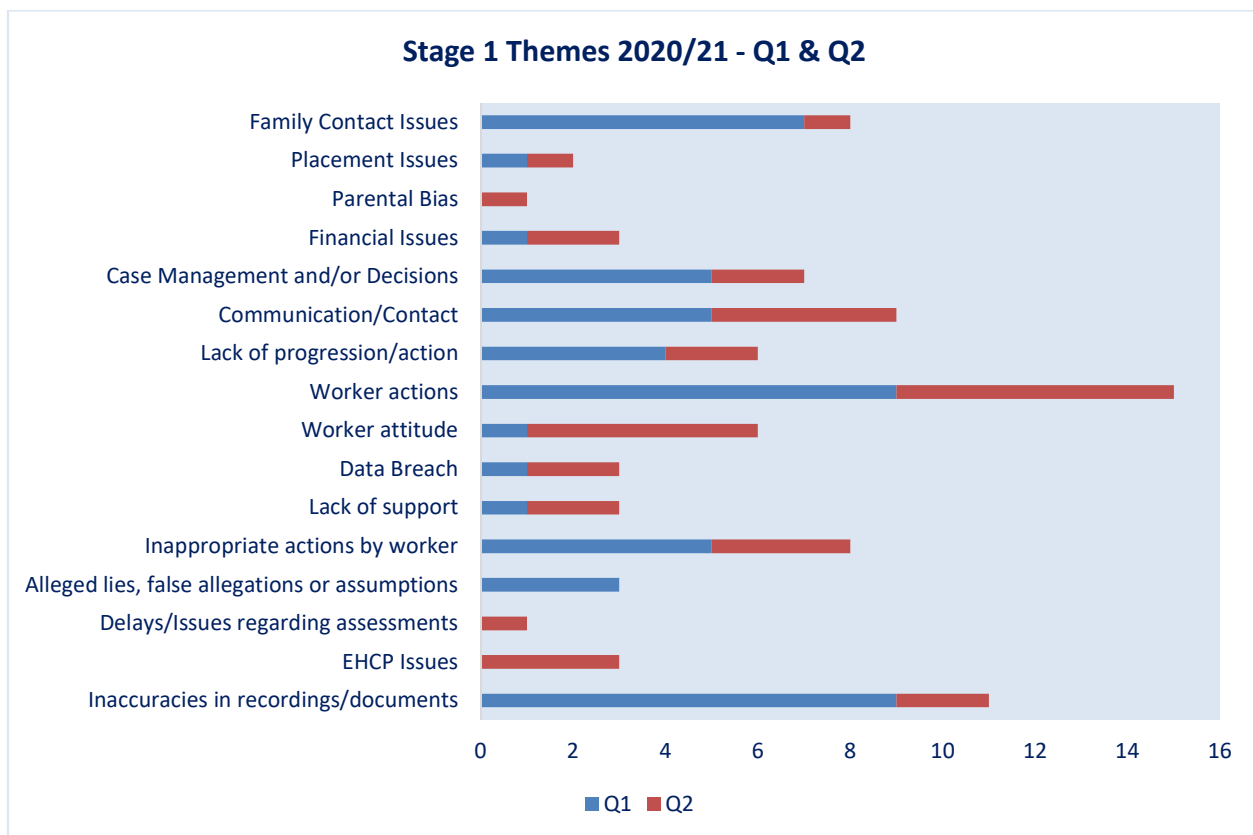
TEAM	Qtr1	Qtr2	Total	
Supported Lodgings	0	1	1	↑ (+1)

TEAM	Qtr1	Qtr2	Total	
Connected Carers	1	0	1	↑ (+1)
Adoption Service	0	1	1	↑ (+1)
Assessment Service	6	5	11	↑ (+1)
Child Protection Service	6	6	12	↓ (-20)
Early Help Service	2	1	3	↑ (+2)
ICRT Service	2	0	2	↓ (-1)
Cared for and Permanence Service	1	0	1	↓ (-11)
Next Steps Service	1	1	2	↓ (-3)
SEND Service	1	2	3	↓ (-3)
Assessment Service and IRO Service	0	1	1	↑ (+1)
Assessment Service, Child Protection Service and ICRT	1	0	1	↑ (+1)
Early Help Service & Education	0	1	1	↑ (+1)
Children with Disabilities Service	0	0	0	↓ (-2)
Fostering Service	0	0	0	↓ (-2)
TOTAL	21	19	40	↓ (-32)

- 7.2. 30% of stage one complaints received in the first six months of this year relate to the child protection services. This is to be expected as child protection is the largest service area and due to the nature of work carried out within this service. There has however been a 62.5% decrease in the number of complaints relating to this service from 32 to 12 when compared with the same period in the previous year.
- 7.3. 27.5% of complaints received in the first six months relate to the assessment service equating to 11 which is an increase of one compared with the previous year. The number of complaints received in the Cared for & Permanence service has significantly decreased from 12 to 1 (91.7% decrease) when compared with the previous year and SEND (non-statutory) complaints have halved from six to three.

Themes:

- 7.4. The main themes of the complaints received at Stage one in 2020-21 are shown in the table below:



- 7.5. Complaints relating to worker actions, inaccuracies in recordings, and communication issues make up the top three themes across the first two quarters of 2020-21. This shows a slight difference when compared to the top three themes in the previous year (communication, lack of progression or action and actions taken by workers).
- 7.6. The number of complaints relating to worker actions are in line with number received the previous year, showing a slight increase from 14 to 15. This has now become the top theme at stage 1. The number of complaints relating to inaccuracies in recordings has increased from 8 to 11 when compared with the first six months of the previous year and this now appears in the top three themes, in position two.
- 7.7. Complaints relating to communication issues has shifted from being the top theme in the previous year to the third highest theme so far in 2020/21. The number of complaints regarding communication issues has reduced significantly with an 81% decrease. Complaints relating to lack of progression or action has also seen a significant decrease of 77.8% and has slipped out of the top three themes.
- 7.8. The reduction in the number of complaints overall together with a notable shift in the top three themes demonstrates the positive impact of learning from complaints and proactivity addressing emerging themes. In addition, having a stable workforce across all teams is allowing stronger and more trusting relationships to develop between families and their workers which is contributing to an overall reduction in complaint numbers.

Timeliness of Response to Stage One Complaints:

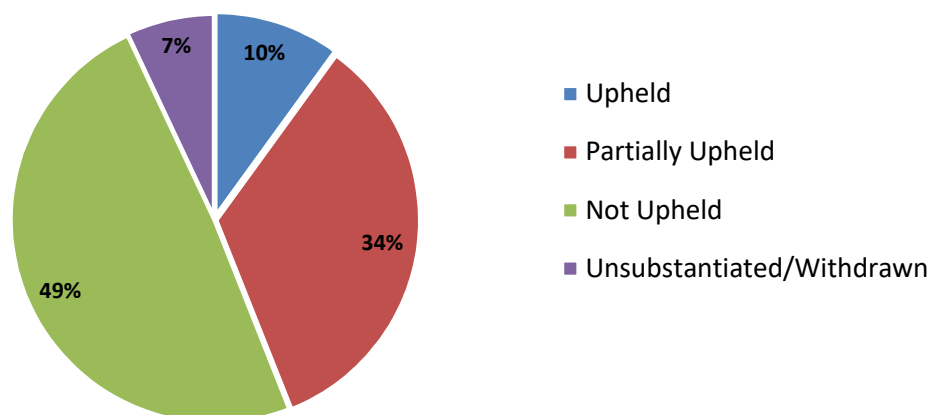
- 7.9. In the first six months of 2019-20, the response time to statutory stage one complaints has increased to 54.8% responded to in timescale from 46.8% when compared to the same period in the previous year. The response time to non-statutory complaints in timescale has increased from 0% to 55.6% when compared to last year.
- 7.10. Quarter one saw the largest increase with statutory response times increasing by almost 17% and non-statutory increasing by 100%. Quarter two however has seen a reduction in timeliness to 38.5% for statutory complaints.

Complaint Stage	% of stage 1 complaints responded to in timescale		
	Q1	Q2	YTD

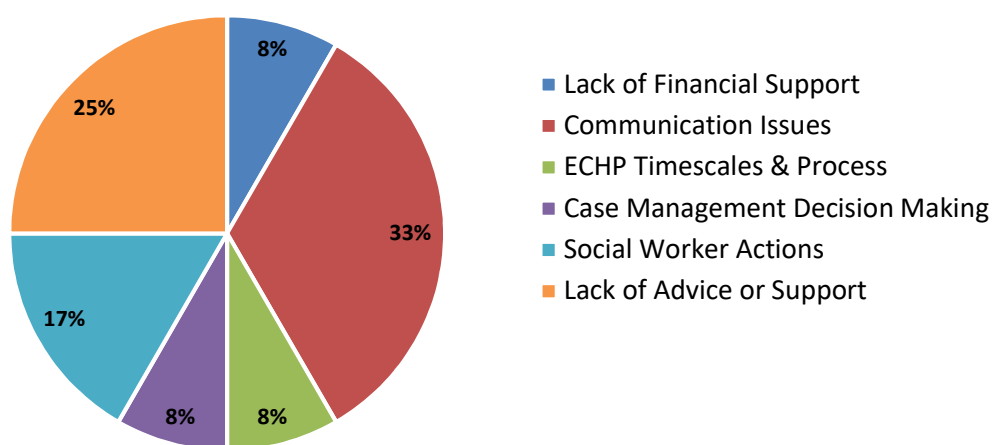
Statutory stage 1 complaints (Timescale 10-20 working days)	66.7% ↑	38.5% ↓	54.8% ↑
Non-statutory stage 1 complaints (Timescale 10-20 working days)	100% ↑	50% ↑	55.6% ↑

Stage One Complaint Outcomes:

7.11. There were 117 elements of complaint identified within stage one complaints that have concluded in the first six months of 2020-21. The outcomes of those stage one complaint elements are shown below.



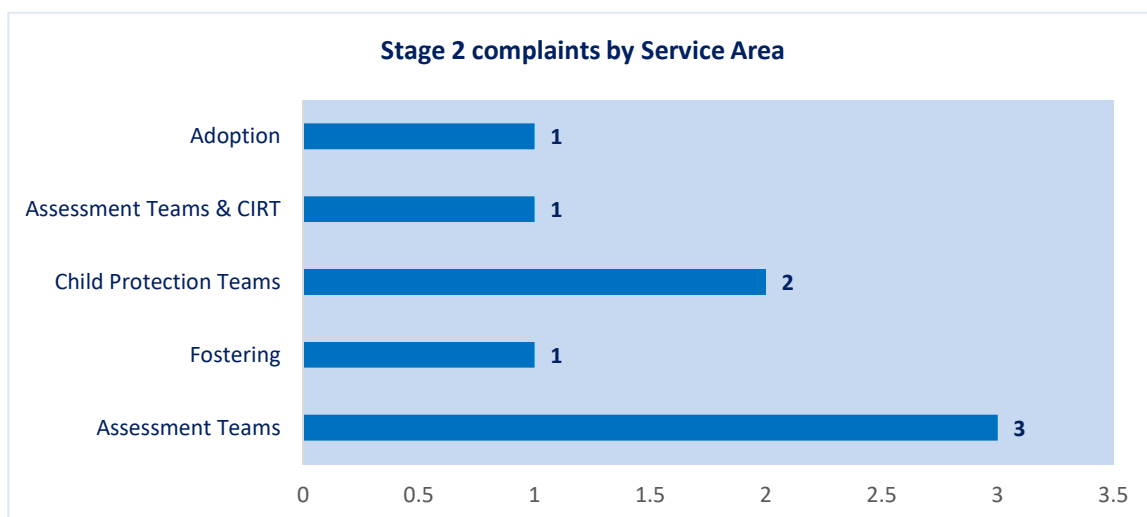
7.12. Most complaint elements equating to 49% were not upheld and a further 7% were unsubstantiated or withdrawn. 34% of elements were partially upheld and 10% were upheld. The chart below shows the main reasons for complaint elements that were upheld.



7.13. Of the 12 elements that were upheld, 33% related to lack of/poor communication between the service and family, 25% related to lack of advice or support whilst 17% related to social worker actions.

8. STAGE TWO COMPLAINTS AND STAGE THREE REVIEWS

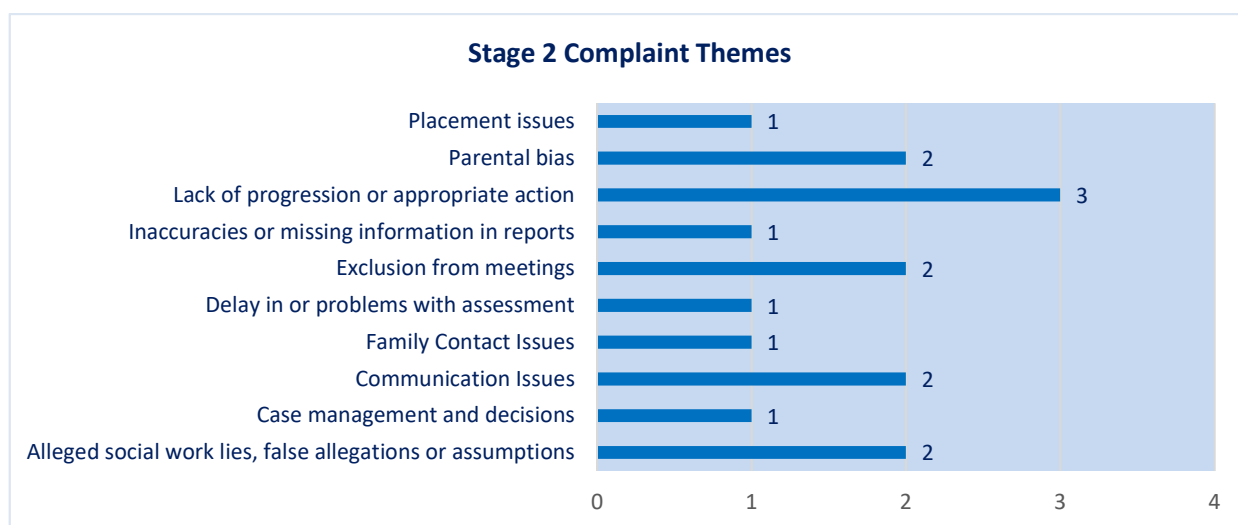
8.1. The table below shows the number of all stage two complaints received by service area in the first six months of 2020-21.



- 8.2. The majority of stage two complaints received so far in 2020-21 relate to the Assessment and child protection services. The two non-statutory stage 2 complaints relate to the Adoption Service and the Child Protection Service. Overall, we have received 50% fewer stage 2 complaints when compared with the previous year.

Themes:

- 8.3. The main themes of the complaints received at Stage two so far in 2020-21 are shown in the table below (*note one complaint can have multiple themes*):



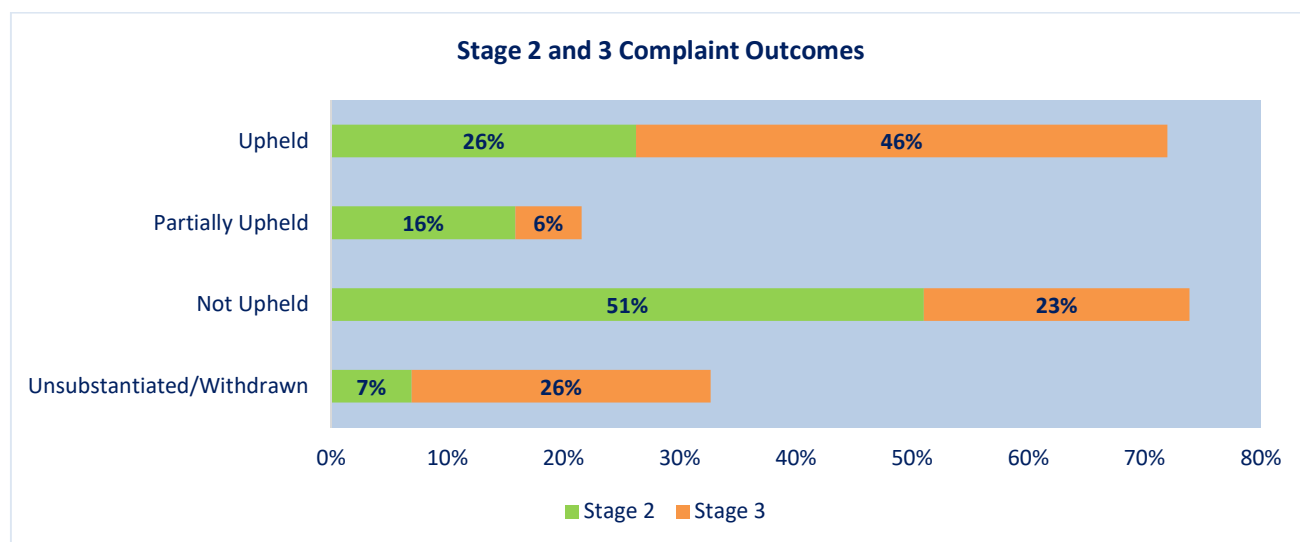
- 8.4. The majority of stage 2 themes identified relate to lack of progression or action, parental bias, exclusion from meetings, communication and alleged social work lies, false allegation or assumptions. It is worth noting that five of the eight stage 2 complaints are still being investigated by Independent Investigating Officers and for that reason the Customer Feedback service will not receive the finalised themes until the complaint's reports have been completed.

Timeliness of Response to Stage Two Complaints:

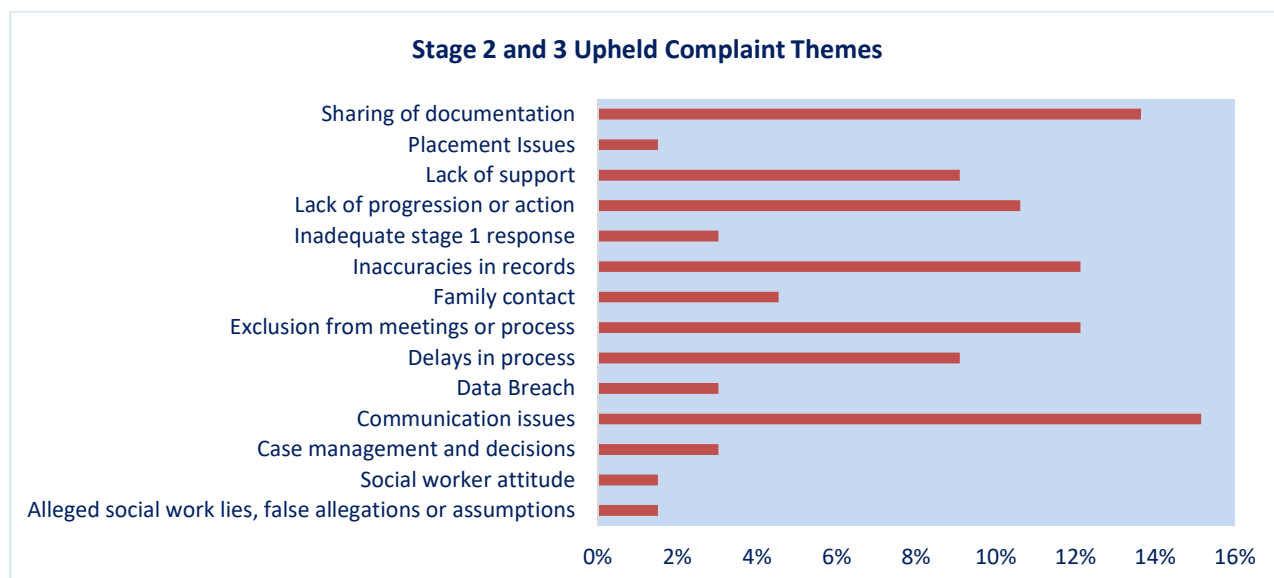
- 8.5. In the first six months of 2020-21, 12 statutory stage two complaints were concluded together with three non-statutory complaints (*figures differ to numbers received, as there were complaints open at the start of the year from 2019/20 and complaints that remain open moving into 2020-21*). One of the stage two complaints was completed within the 65-day timescale. The average days taken for investigation and adjudication of the 15 complaints was 129 days against a target of 65 days. The average number of days for investigating complaints was 75 and the average days for adjudication was 42.

Stage Two and Three Complaint Outcomes

- 8.6. There were 202 elements of complaint identified within all stage two complaints that concluded in the first six months of 2020-21 and 35 elements concluded at stage three (statutory). The outcomes of those stage two and three complaint elements are shown below.



- 8.7. At stage two, the majority of complaint elements equating to 51% were not upheld and a further 7% were unsubstantiated or withdrawn. 16% of elements were partially upheld and 26% were upheld.
- 8.8. At stage three a higher majority of elements were upheld equating to 46% with a further 6% partially upheld. 23% were not upheld and 26% were unsubstantiated or withdrawn.
- 8.9. Since April 2020, of the 35 elements that went to Stage three panels only one outcome was changed by the panel. The main subject areas of elements upheld at stage two and three are as follows:



- 8.10. Comparing upheld elements with the previous year, there are several themes that are reoccurring such as communication, inaccuracies in records and lack of progression or action. However due to the individualised nature of complaints it is difficult to say if the reasons for reoccurring themes are due to limited impact of recommendations or if it is due to other reasons. Sharing of documentation and exclusion from meetings or process are new themes when compared with the previous year. To assist with the analysis of themes, the upheld elements identified in both stage two investigations and stage three panels are reviewed regularly by

Children's Social Care Senior Management Team. The Customer Feedback Team identifies any reoccurring complaint elements and feeds this back to the relevant services.

9. OMBUDSMAN REFERRALS

- 9.1. There have been no complaints highlighted to the Customer Feedback Team by the Local Government Ombudsman so far this year.

10. COST OF COMPLAINTS

- 10.1. The total cost of investigating claims in the first two quarters of 2020-21 is £41,182 compared with £18,850 for the same period in 2019/20. The variance is due to a change in process whereby we request invoices for external Investigations at an earlier stage rather than waiting for the investigation to end before receiving an invoice. This change takes account of the investigations that could potentially continue for several months and will provide a more accurate financial position. Taking account of this change the overall expenditure for the year is expected to be on par with 2019/20.
- 10.2. So far this year the compensation costs paid in relation to upheld complaints has totalled £350 compared to £2,725 for the same period in the previous year as a result of fewer upheld complaints and a reduction in the severity/impact of those upheld situations.

11. ABUSIVE, UNREASONABLE PERSISTENT OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINANTS

- 11.1. There have been no recorded Abusive, Unreasonable Persistent or Vexatious Complainants in the first six months of 2020-21 although two customers have received letters regarding the content and frequency of their communications to our services.

12. LEARNING & IMPROVEMENT

- 12.1. Together for Children are committed to getting it right for the families in Sunderland. To do this we continue to drive improvement from learning from the complaints and compliments raised. An action plan is maintained by the Customer Feedback Team which includes actions and recommendations from stage two investigations and stage three panels. The action plan is closely monitored by the team. Reminders are sent to managers with responsibility for the recommendations each month and reported into Senior Management Team meetings to ensure that the learning is shared across the whole service.
- 12.2. In the last six months we have been making progress to address the recommendations in the 2019/20 Annual Customer Feedback Report. So far workshops have taken place with children's social care management to identify ways of improving the timeliness of responses to complaints at stages 1 and 2 and to address the top three themes for upheld complaints.
- 12.3. As a result of the first workshop we have started a pilot relating to the management of stage 1 responses whereby all stage 1 complaints will be managed by the Customer Feedback Team rather than individual services. We will be able to determine from the pilot if this change will improve the timeliness, quality and consistency of stage 1 responses. The pilot started towards the end of September and we be able to assess the impact of the change within the next few months.
- 12.4. Although the pilot is in its infancy, by discussing some of the challenges in relation to timeliness and sharing ideas regarding learning and improvement, we have seen in the first six months of this year a significant decrease in the number of complaints, particularly within individual teams. We have also seen a significant decrease in the top three themes at stage 1. We have further work to do to improve timeliness at stage 2 although there has been a slight improvement to date.

- 12.5. We will continue to work through the remaining recommendations set out in the Annual Report to identify further improvement activity and to explore more possibilities. From analysing the themes in the first six months of this year, it is apparent that some new themes are emerging. The Customer Feedback Service will proactively work with services to analyse these themes to identify learning and improvement opportunities.