

CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE

Quarterly Report

Compliments, Complaints & Feedback

**For the period:
April – June 2021**

Introduction

This report from the Complaints and Feedback Team covers Q1 (April – June 2021).

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 services will be appended to Compliments, Complaints & Feedback report on a quarterly basis.

The report also contains information about the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter to the council.

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

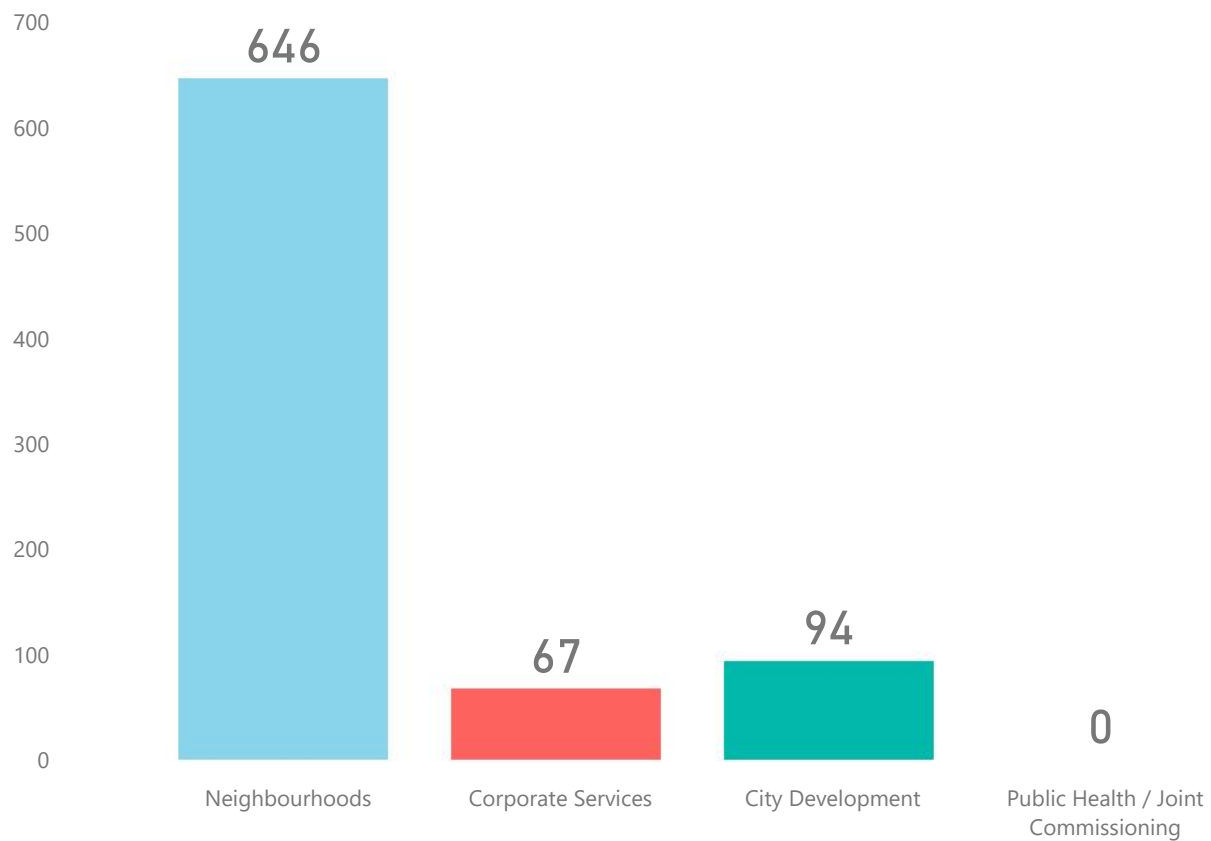
Part B of the report provides information on the different Compliments and Complaints Procedures that are used by the council to handle customer feedback.

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

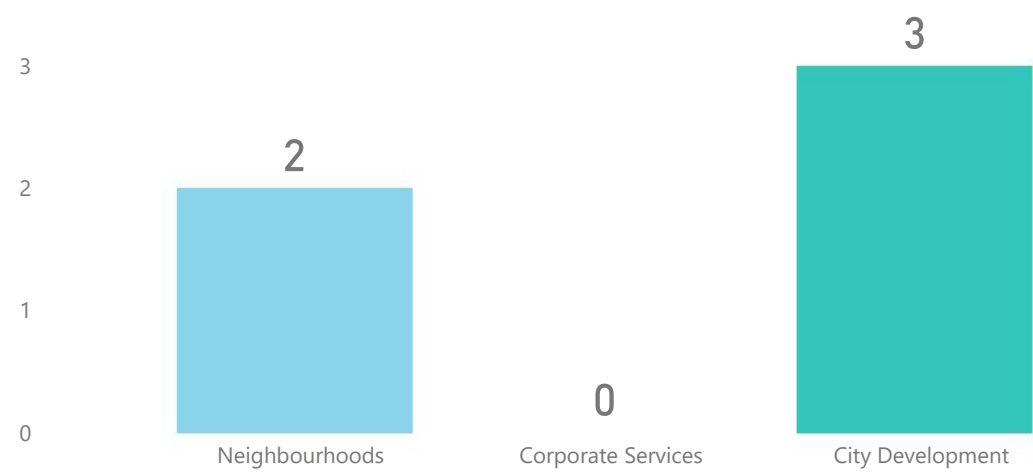
Complaints Overview

Ombudsman - 4				
Neighbourhoods	Corporate Services	City Development	People, Communications and Partnerships	TFC
0	0	2	0	2

Corporate Stage One - 807

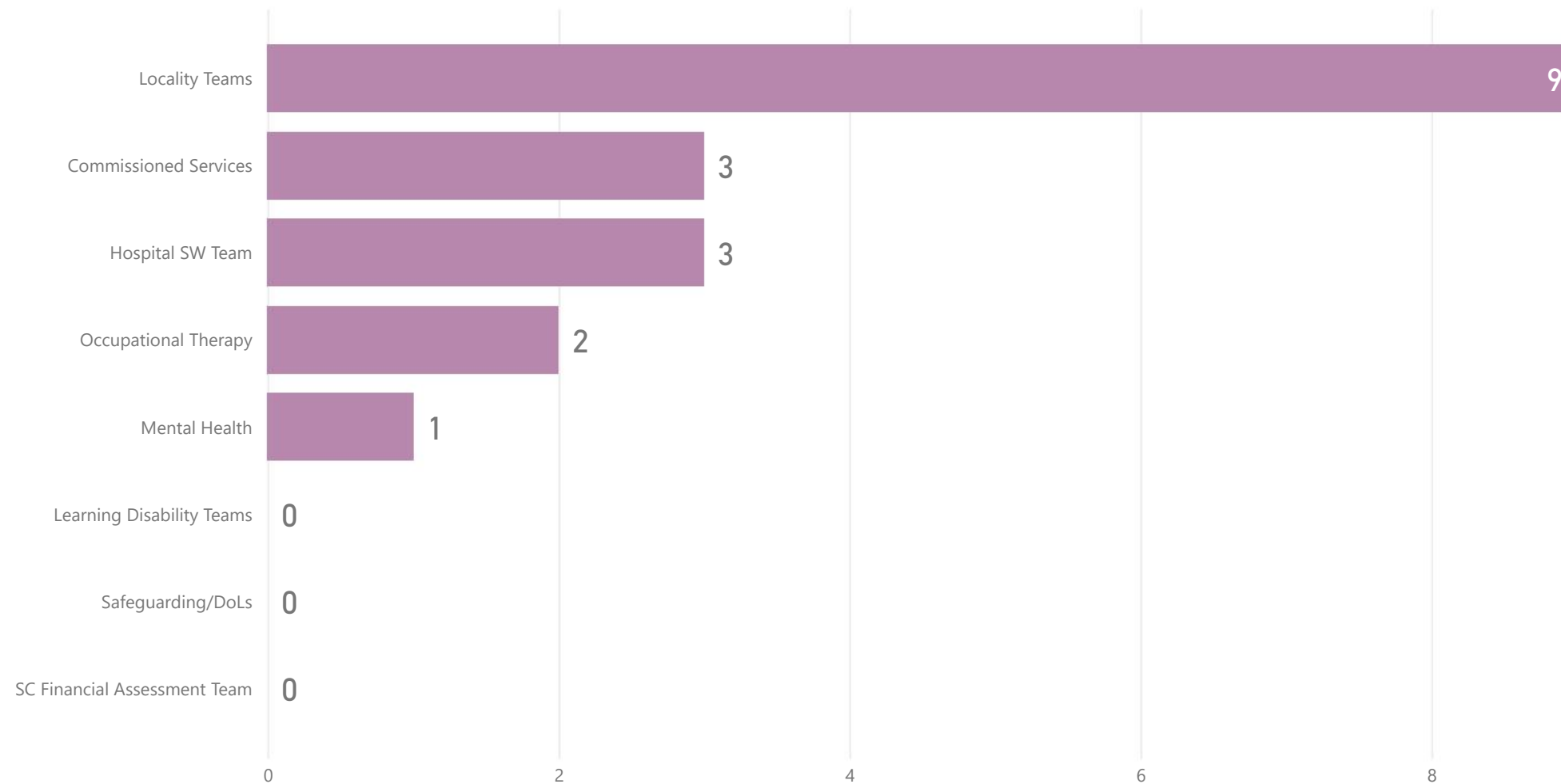


Corporate Stage Two - 5



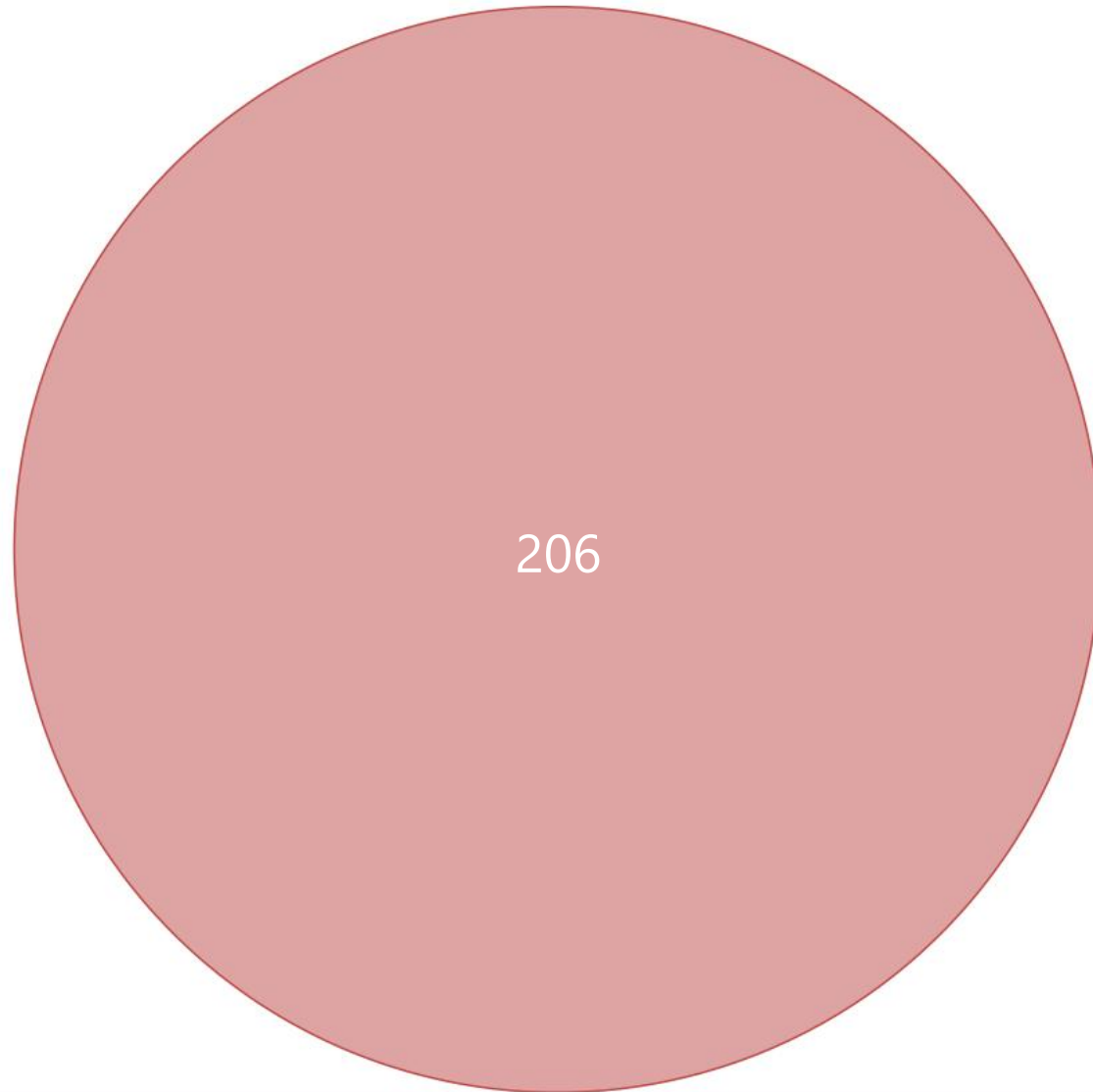
Complaints Overview

Neighbourhoods - Adult Statutory Social Care - 18



Compliments

Compliments - 206



Thank you for your help with my mam, I couldn't have done it without the backing of some fantastically dedicated people employed by our local authority in Adult Social Care

The lady who dealt with me (at the contact centre) was superb and not only resolved my issue gave me great advice going forward, thank you to her.

Customer would like to pass on her thanks to the pest control operative who visited her property today for treatment of mice, he was very helpful

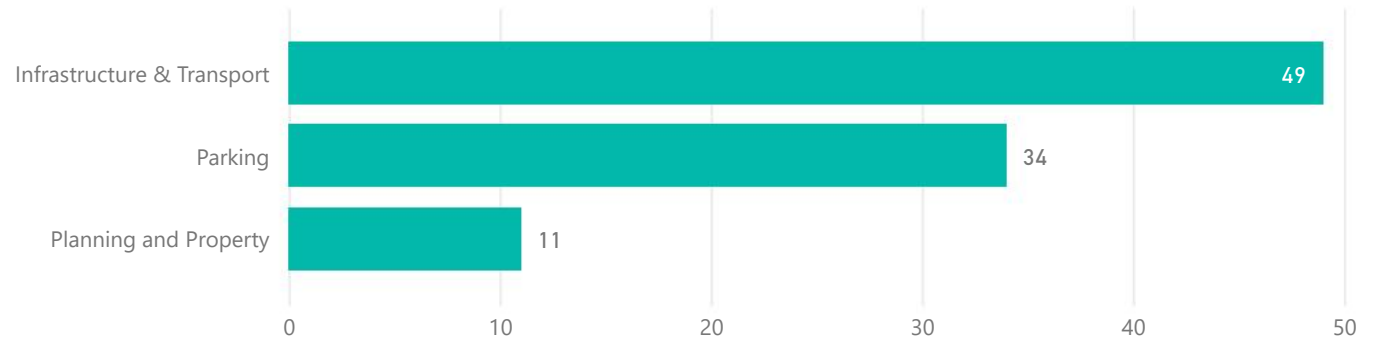
Thank you for the speed of service on the removal of our unused brown garden bin, many thanks to the crew member who collected this morning, very helpful and friendly

Customer would like to thank the litter pickers / street cleaners who keep the town centre tidy. They are really appreciated.

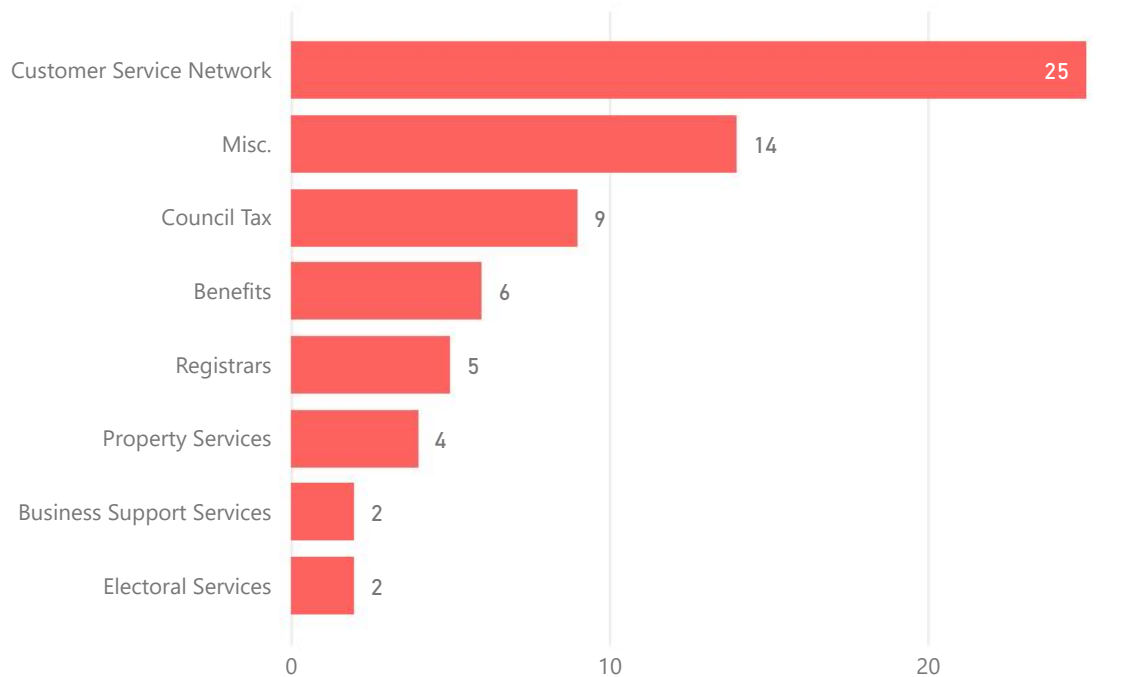
Customer would like to thank the traffic warden for doing a good job today paroling this area

Corporate Complaints Breakdown for Stage 1

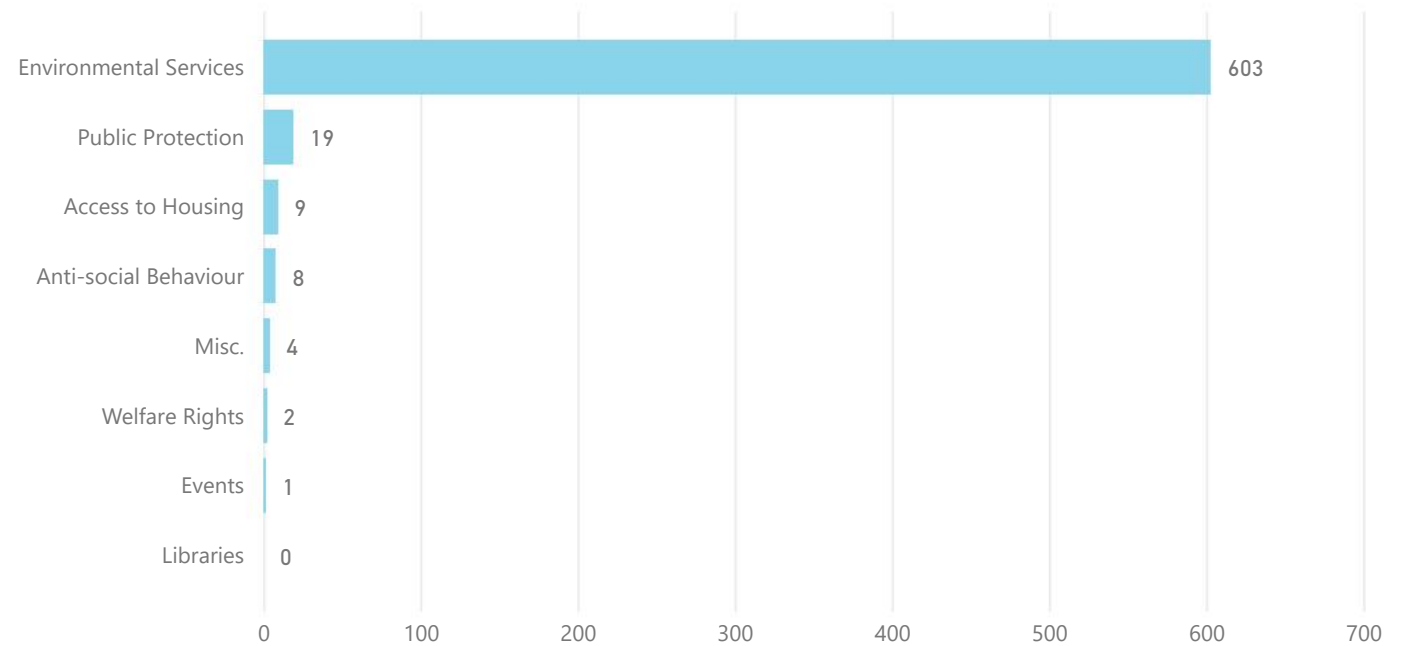
City Development - 94



Corporate Services - 67



Neighbourhoods - 646



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.

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

The Ombudsman provides the council with an annual Review Letter which is a summary of statistics about 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 about the Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter is attached as **Appendix 2a**

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 relevant service area 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 about 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 about Adult Statutory complaints is attached as **Appendix 4**

Sample of complaints received

At the previous Scrutiny Overview Committee, a request was made that future reports contain examples of the types of complaints received by the council. This would enable members to gain a sense of the content of the complaints, similar to what is already provided regarding compliments

A sample of complaints received is attached as **Appendix 5**

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 the service in Q1 is attached as **Appendix 6**

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.

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.

	2019-2020	2020-21	2021-22
Q1 - Apr-Jun	152	245	206
Q2 - Jul-Sep	176	210	
Q3 - Oct-Dec	120	273	
Q4 - Jan-Mar	115	181	
	563	909	

The table below shows the service areas where compliments were received during Q1

	Q1
Adult Services	16
Anti-Social Behaviour	3
Council Tax	2
CSN	74
Environmental Health	5
Environmental Services	63
Events	0
Highways / Network Management	11
Housing Benefits	3
Housing Options	5
Libraries	0
Misc.	11
Parking Services	5
Planning	2
Registrars & Bereavement	6
	206

A sample of compliments received in Q1

Adult Services

Thanks again for letting me rant and trying to sort things out. You are by far the best Social Worker we have had. It has been the toughest year ever for our family so hopefully things will eventually get back to normal.

I would like to thank the OT for her input into the Blue Badge process for my mum. She was so understanding and supportive throughout the assessment for my mums Blue Badge. It makes all the difference

Thank you for your help with my mam, I couldn't have done it without the backing of some fantastically dedicated people employed by our local authority

Anti-Social Behaviour Team

I really appreciate your calls they really kept me going and it really helped speaking to everyone

This a fantastic positive step, especially given that the lines of communication between all parties was fraught to say the least! Thank you for all your advice and help with this

Council Tax

Thank you so much for all your help to explain how CTS worked and sorting out the council tax refund

Customer Service Network (CSN)

The service I received on the phone was perfect

The lady who dealt with me was superb and not only resolved my issue gave me great advice going forward, thank you to her

I feel she went above and beyond her duty to help resolve my enquiry. I would like to thank you for your help and excellent customer experience. thanks again

The staff member was clear, helpful and listened, he also showed understanding and was helpful.

Lady on phone was very helpful talked me through what I had to do - could not have done it without her, very pleased with the service I got

Derwent Hill

I just wanted to thank you for taking care of my son while he was with you this week with his school. He has enjoyed every minute and has made memories which will last a lifetime!

Environmental Health

Customer would like to pass on her thanks to the pest control operative who visited her property today for treatment of mice, he was very helpful

Customer said that the lads that went out were fantastic and the service is really worth it

Environmental Services – Cleansing and Ground Maintenance

I reported a dog fouling issue in my area and requested dog signs up to try help the situation. the environmental officer rang me to keep me posted which was unexpected but good and the signs were put up in very good time and I can already see a difference. Thank you.

I reported graffiti at the side of my property, and it was removed within 3 days. Cannot fault the property service

Customer would like to thank the litter pickers / street cleaners who keep the town centre tidy. They are really appreciated

Environmental Services – Refuse

Customer called to thank the crew today for taking away the rubbish after an ongoing issue. They were a great bunch of lads and have done an excellent job.

Thank you for the speed of service on the removal of our unused brown garden bin, many thanks to the crew member who collected this morning, very helpful and friendly

Customer had reported bin as missed, was very happy that staff came out to empty bin yesterday for him, wanted to say thank you for the quick return and service

Highway Asset Network and Network Management

Thank you so much for your very prompt reply and the kindness you have shown. I really appreciate the fact you have gone to the trouble to speak to Highways on my behalf. If this Country could rely on more people like yourself, we would be a Nation to be proud of

Highway Operations

Excellent work thanks, I reported the damage to the footpath, and it was sorted in a matter of days. Thanks for your assistance in this matter

Housing Benefits

Worker helped to complete an online application on behalf of my mam after my dad passed away, she was very helpful and a star she also informed council tax so I did not have to make more phone calls she done it all

Housing Options

I just wanted to send a message to thank you for everything you have done. I've been sick with worry for months and can see some light at the end of the tunnel

Parking Services

Customer rang to thank the camera car for patrolling her street yesterday morning, and was very grateful for their attendance

Customer would like to thank the traffic warden for doing a good job today paroling this area.

Planning

The worker has consistently been very helpful regarding queries I have had around a planning submission. While the outcome wasn't what I had hoped for he has suggested other routes which I could explore, going beyond what could reasonably be expected

Registrars and Bereavement

Many thanks for a delightful and well organised ceremony

Welfare Benefits

Customer wanted to express his thanks from the bottom of his heart for all the help and support he has had from this dept as well as the customer service staff in the CSN. They have been more than helpful, and he is so thankful for the help he has received

Welfare Rights

Thank you for the support and understanding during a stressful time. The worker helped compiled a case that was put before the DWP in the courts and was successful

Appendix 2

Complaints dealt with by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

There were 4 complaints concluded by the Ombudsman for Q1. The table below shows the number of complaints together with comparative data for the previous year.

	<i>Number of complaints 2019-20</i>	<i>Number of complaints 2020-21</i>	<i>Number of complaints 2021-22</i>
Q1	6	4	4
Q2	11	1	
Q3	6	7	
Q4	15	7	
	38	19	4

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)	-				0
Neighbourhoods (other)	-				0
People, Communications & Partnerships	-				0
Together for Children	2				2
	4				4

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	-		100%
Corporate Services	-	-	-		
Neighbourhoods (Adult Social Care)	-	-	-		
Neighbourhoods (other)	-	-	-		
People, Comms. & Partnerships	-	-	-		
Together for Children	2	-	2	2	
Total	4	2	2	2	

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

Detailed Investigations in Q1 (2)

Together for Children (19 018 285) – a complaint about a failure in policy and procedure and not meeting timescales.

Outcome: *Upheld – maladministration and injustice. The Ombudsman found that the Council's remedy from its statutory complaint's investigation did not adequately remedy the injustice suffered.*

Remedy Action: *Increase financial remedy.*

Together for Children (20 009 665) – a complaint that the Council failed to provide the support detailed in an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) for a year.

Outcome: *Upheld – maladministration and injustice. The Ombudsman found that whilst some provision had been received during this time, the provision did not meet the detailed requirements of Section F of the EHCP.*

Remedy Action: *Increase financial remedy and provide an extra six nights of respite.*

Appendix 2a

Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter 2019-20

Introduction

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has a statutory responsibility for investigating complaints of maladministration about local Councils. The Ombudsman writes to local authorities annually to feed back on their performance in dealing with complaints that the Ombudsman has received about them. The aim of the letter is to provide the Council with information to help it improve complaint handling, and to inform the improvement of local services for the public.

Mr Michael King, Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for England has issued his annual review letter to the Council. A copy is attached at the back of this appendix.

Complaints made to the Ombudsman

Table 1 shows the breakdown of the 34 complaints that were received at the Ombudsman regarding Sunderland City Council. The table also provides a comparison to the previous year's figures.

Table 1	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Adult Care	13	5	13	7
Benefits & Council Tax	7	5	9	3
Corporate & Other	2	8	4	5
Education & Children	30	15	21	12
Environmental Services & Public Protection	11	4	9	2
Highways & Transport	4	9	9	1
Housing	1	2	2	2
Planning & Development	3	6	6	2
Other	0	1	1	0
Total	71	55	74	34

Table 1a: compares the numbers of complaints received by the Ombudsman for Council's in the Northern Region for 2020-21.

Table 1a	Adult Care	Benefits & C/Tax	Corporate & other	Children's Services	Environ. Services	Highways	Housing	Planning	Other	Total
Durham	22	3	5	22	13	7	2	23	0	97
Northumberland	13	9	5	11	5	4	1	21	1	70
South Tyneside	9	1	4	9	5	1	5	5	1	40
Newcastle	11	5	3	3	8	5	4	0	0	39
Gateshead	3	0	3	9	2	4	5	8	2	36
Sunderland	7	3	5	12	2	1	2	2	0	34
North Tyneside	3	2	0	10	2	1	6	5	0	29

Decisions made by the Ombudsman

The Ombudsman then made decisions on 31 complaints. This is a different figure to the number received at the Ombudsman (34).

Table 2 sets out how these 31 complaints were decided. It also provides information on the previous year's figures for comparison.

Table 2	Incomplete or Invalid	Advice Given	'premature' complaints	Closed after Initial Enquiries	Detailed investigations	Total
2020-21	0	0	12	16	3	31
2019-20	6	2	30	27	11	76
2018-19	3	0	27	14	13	57
2017-18	4	1	31	20	11	67

Of the 31 complaints on which the Ombudsman came to a decision:

- 12 were referred back to the Council for local resolution, we term these 'premature'. These complaints are dealt with through the appropriate complaint's procedure. To avoid double counting we do not include these numbers in our own Ombudsman statistics but rather count them against the complaint procedure utilised.
- **19 complaints** were received from the Ombudsman at the Council. These are shown in the Ombudsman figures provided for *closed after initial enquiries* (16) and *detailed investigations* (3) as shaded in the table.

For information, *closed after initial enquiries* cases are those where the Ombudsman has made an early decision not to investigate the complaint. Sometimes the complaint will be outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction for example where issues are already been considered through a court process.

Complaints received at the Council

Mr King emphasises in his annual letter that the statistics reflect the data held by his organisation and may not necessarily align with the data held by the Council. That is the case with the figures presented in this report.

Table 3 provides a comparison regarding the numbers of complaints received at the Ombudsman compared to those forwarded to the Council.

Table 3	Adult Care	Benefits & C/Tax	Corporate & other	Children's Services	Environ. Services	Highways	Housing	Planning	Other	Total
<i>Complaints received at the Ombudsman</i>	7	3	5	12	2	1	2	2	0	34
Complaints forwarded to the Council	6	1	3	4	2	1	0	2	0	19

Information on these 19 complaints has been reported to the Committee over the course of the previous year through the Complaints & Feedback Team quarterly reports.

Table 3a: compares the number of complaints received from the Ombudsman by Council's in the Northern Region.

Table 3a	Closed after initial enquiries	Detailed Investigations	Total
Durham	43	29	72
Northumberland	22	22	44
Gateshead	9	16	25
Newcastle	7	14	21
Sunderland	16	3	19
South Tyneside	11	7	18
North Tyneside	9	8	17

Detailed Investigations

For the period 2020-21 the Ombudsman carried out 3 detailed investigations regarding Sunderland City Council. Each of the complaints were about Adult Social Care with 1 of the investigations been upheld.

Table 4: provides comparative data regarding the number of detailed investigations carried out by the Ombudsman for Council's in the Northern Region together with upheld rates.

Table 4a	Total	Not Upheld	Upheld	<i>Uphold Rate (%)</i>	Average uphold rate (%) of similar authorities
Durham	29	8	21	72%	63%
Northumberland	22	12	10	45%	63%
Gateshead	16	10	6	38%	72%
Newcastle	14	4	10	71%	72%
North Tyneside	8	2	6	75%	72%
South Tyneside	7	4	3	43%	72%
Sunderland	3	2	1	33%	72%

Compliance with recommendations

The Ombudsman recommends ways for authorities to put things right when faults have caused injustice and it monitors authorities regarding their compliance with its recommendations. The Ombudsman notes that failure to comply is rare and a compliance rate below 100% should be viewed as a cause for concern.

For the year 2020-21 Sunderland City Council has recorded a 100% compliance rate.

Satisfactory remedy provided by the authority

The Ombudsman encourages the early resolution of complaints and credit authorities that accept fault and find appropriate ways to put things right.

In respect of upheld cases the Council had not provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman. This compares to an average of 11% in similar authorities. However, this should also be viewed in the context of only 1 complaint being upheld by the Ombudsman for the year 2020-21.

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

By email

Mr Melia
Chief Executive
Sunderland City Council

Dear Mr Melia

Annual Review letter 2021

I write to you with our annual summary of statistics on the decisions made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman about your authority for the year ending 31 March 2021. At the end of a challenging year, we maintain that good public administration is more important than ever and I hope this feedback provides you with both the opportunity to reflect on your Council's performance and plan for the future.

You will be aware that, at the end of March 2020 we took the unprecedented step of temporarily stopping our casework, in the wider public interest, to allow authorities to concentrate efforts on vital frontline services during the first wave of the Covid-19 outbreak. We restarted casework in late June 2020, after a three month pause.

We listened to your feedback and decided it was unnecessary to pause our casework again during further waves of the pandemic. Instead, we have encouraged authorities to talk to us on an individual basis about difficulties responding to any stage of an investigation, including implementing our recommendations. We continue this approach and urge you to maintain clear communication with us.

Complaint statistics

This year, we continue to focus on the outcomes of complaints and what can be learned from them. We want to provide you with the most insightful information we can and have focused statistics on three key areas:

Complaints upheld - We uphold complaints when we find some form of fault in an authority's actions, including where the authority accepted fault before we investigated.

Compliance with recommendations - We recommend ways for authorities to put things right when faults have caused injustice and monitor their compliance with our recommendations. Failure to comply is rare and a compliance rate below 100% is a cause for concern.

Satisfactory remedy provided by the authority - In these cases, the authority upheld the complaint and we agreed with how it offered to put things right. We encourage the early resolution of complaints and credit authorities that accept fault and find appropriate ways to put things right.

Finally, we compare the three key annual statistics for your authority with similar types of authorities to work out an average level of performance. We do this for County Councils, District Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs, Unitary Councils, and London Boroughs.

Your annual data will be uploaded to our interactive map, Your council's performance, along with a copy of this letter on 28 July 2021. This useful tool places all our data and information about councils in one place. You can find the decisions we have made about your Council, public reports we have issued, and the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

I would encourage you to share the resource with colleagues and elected members; the information can provide valuable insights into service areas, early warning signs of problems and is a key source of information for governance, audit, risk and scrutiny functions.

As you would expect, data has been impacted by the pause to casework in the first quarter of the year. This should be considered when making comparisons with previous year's data.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

I am increasingly concerned about the evidence I see of the erosion of effective complaint functions in local authorities. While no doubt the result of considerable and prolonged budget and demand pressures, the Covid-19 pandemic appears to have amplified the problems and my concerns. With much greater frequency, we find poor local complaint handling practices when investigating substantive service issues and see evidence of reductions in the overall capacity, status and visibility of local redress systems.

With this context in mind, we are developing a new programme of work that will utilise complaints to drive improvements in both local complaint systems and services. We want to use the rich evidence of our casework to better identify authorities that need support to improve their complaint handling and target specific support to them. We are at the start of this ambitious work and there will be opportunities for local authorities to shape it over the coming months and years.

An already established tool we have for supporting improvements in local complaint handling is our successful training programme. During the year, we successfully adapted our face-to-face courses for online delivery. We provided 79 online workshops during the year, reaching more than 1,100 people. To find out more visit www.lgo.org.uk/training.

We were pleased to deliver an online complaint handling course to your staff during the year. I welcome your Council's investment in good complaint handling training and trust the course was useful to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MK', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Michael King
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

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 2019-20</i>	<i>Number of complaints 2020-21</i>	<i>Number of complaints 2021-22</i>	<i>% change from same period last year</i>	<i>% responded to within timescale</i>
Q1	704	636	807	+27%	97%
Q2	770	804			
Q3	684	560			
Q4	502	689			
	2660	2689			

The 807 complaints received this quarter are broken down into Directorates in the table below;

	City Development	Corporate Services	Neighbourhoods	Public Health/ Joint Commissioning	Total
Q1	94	67	646	0	807
Q2					
Q3					
Q4					

Neighbourhoods

Service Area	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Environmental Services	603				
Libraries	0				
Access to Housing	9				
Anti-social Behaviour	8				
Welfare Rights	2				
Public Protection	19				
Events	1				
Misc.	4				
	646				

Environmental Services

Complaints in respect of Environmental Services make up 93% of the complaints made against the Neighbourhoods Directorate this quarter. The table below provides a breakdown of the service areas within Environmental Services.

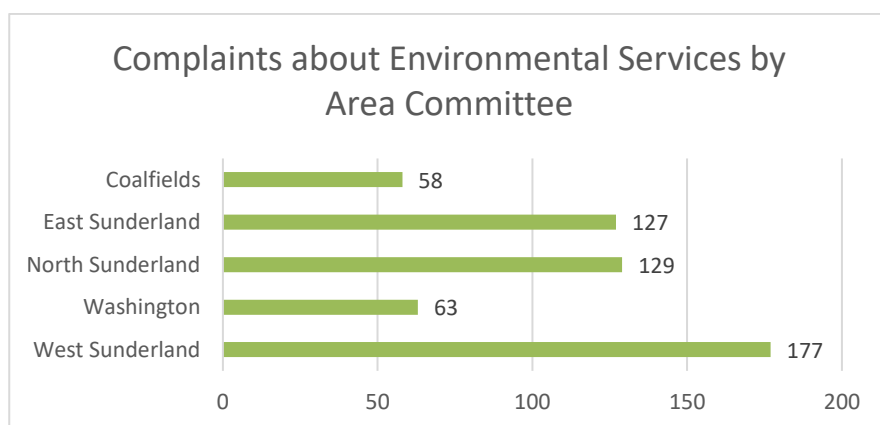
Environmental Services	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Refuse: <i>non/late delivery of bins & caddies/missed bins</i>	477				
Bereavement: <i>maintenance of cemeteries/ crematorium</i>	8				
Street Cleaning: <i>fly tipping/dog bins</i>	76				
Trees, fixed play, trade waste: <i>grass cutting/ tree pruning</i>	17				
Enforcement: <i>Fly tipping/littering/dog fouling</i>	14				
Waste Management: <i>Beach Street Depot – staff attitude/permits</i>	11				
	603				

Refuse Complaints

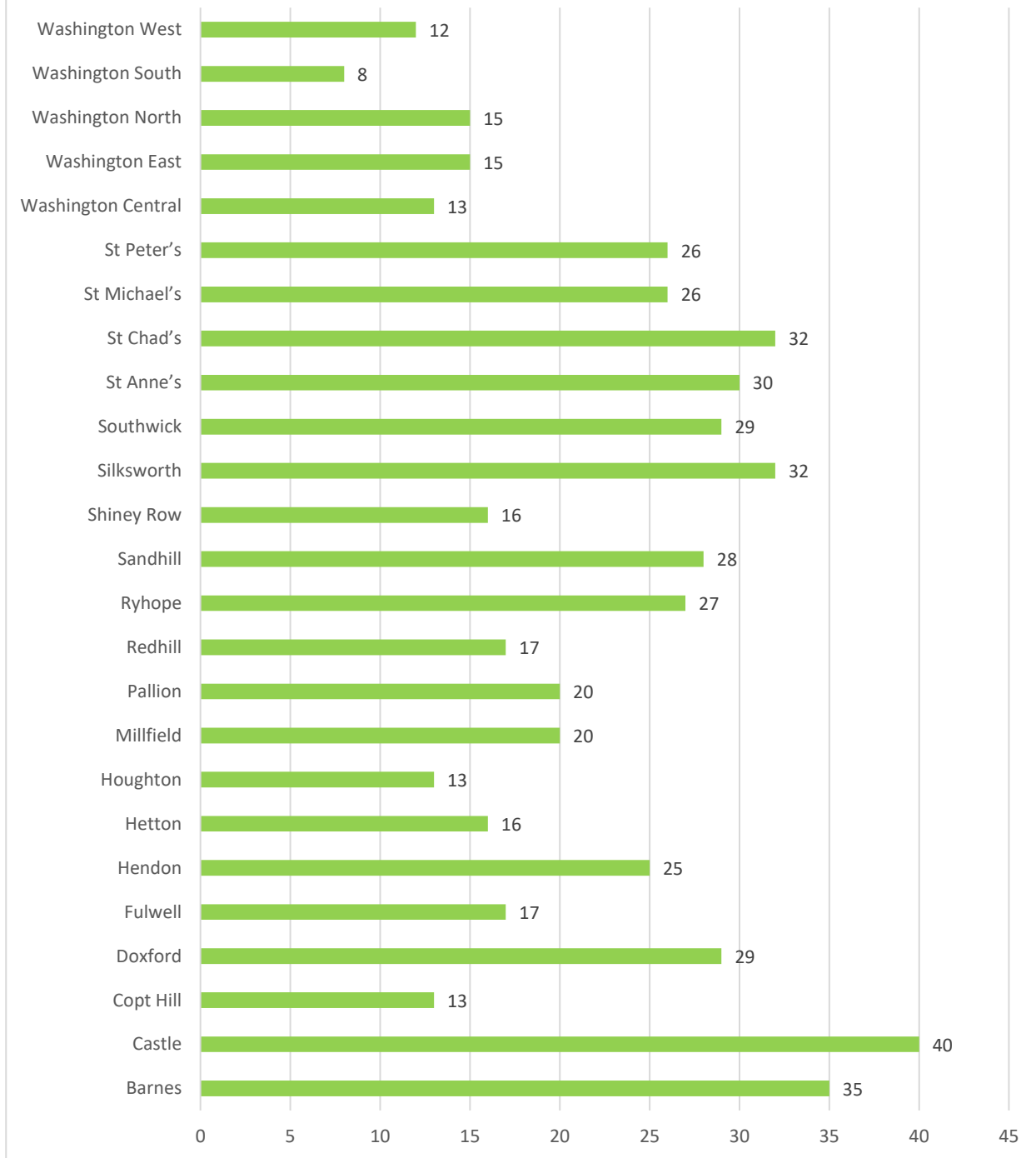
Of the 603 complaints received for Environmental Services, 477 (79%) were about issues to do with refuse collection. This should be viewed in context; in any quarter the council will service approximately 1.6 million containers, therefore this number of complaints represents only 0.03% of activity for this service area. The table below contains a breakdown of complaints about refuse.

	<i>Number of Complaints for 2019/20</i>	<i>Number of Complaints for 2020/21</i>	Number of Complaints for 2021-22	% change from previous year
Q1	433	419	477	14%
Q2	464	519		
Q3	454	340		
Q4	232	398		
	1583	1676		

At the previous Scrutiny Coordinating Committee, a request was made by Members for information to be provided about Environmental Services complaints by Ward area and also by Area Committee. Tables including this information are set out below.



Complaints about Environmental Services by Ward



City Development

Service Area	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Planning & Property	11				
Infrastructure & Transport	49				
Parking	34				
	94				

Planning & Property

Complaints about this service area were regarding issues to do with general Planning issues, failure to follow processes, enforcement action.

Infrastructure & Transport

Complaints about this service area were regarding road resurfacing, footway repairs, traffic calming/restrictions and potholes.

Parking

Complaints about this service area were regarding car parks, the actions of the Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO), and lack of communication and Parking Permits.

Corporate Services

Service Area	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Council Tax	9				
Customer Service Network	25				
Benefits	6				
Property Services	4				
Business Support Services	2				
Registrars	5				
Electoral Services	2				
Misc.	14				
	67				

Council Tax

Complaints about this service area were regarding general issues about Council Tax, incorrect information, Business Rates, payment issues and wrong action taken.

Customer Service Network

Complaints regarding the Customer Service Network (CSN) make up 37% of complaints made during this quarter. Again, the number of complaints should be viewed in context. The CSN handled 373,066 contacts this quarter; 25 complaints represent a dissatisfaction rate of 0.007%. Complaints about this service area were regarding staff attitude, lack of communication and general issues around contact.

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. **5** 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 2019/20	Number of Reviews 2020/21	Number of Reviews 2021/22	% responded to within 25-day timescale
Q1	5	3	5	60%
Q2	7	6		
Q3	8	5		
Q4	11	7		
	31	21	5	

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

Directorate	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Comparison Figures for previous year 2020/21
City Development	3				3	10
Corporate Services	0				-	7
Neighbourhoods	2				2	4
	5				5	21

Outcome of Stage 2 Reviews

Complaint Outcomes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Comparison Figures for previous year 2020-21
Upheld in full	1				1	2
Upheld in part	0				-	6
Not Upheld	2				2	13
Unsubstantiated	1				1	-
Not Eligible	1				1	-
Withdrawn	0				-	-
	5				5	21

Reviews upheld in Q1 (1)

Bereavement Services – a complaint about the destruction of a relative's casket containing ash remains, during preparations undertaken for a further burial within the grave plot.

Outcome: From the outset the council accepted responsibility for the events as set out in complaint and offered unreserved apologies to the family and met all associated costs. To recognise the distress to the family the council has offered a memorial service at a time of the family's choosing and a more lasting memorial in the form of a memorial bench or tree. As an alternative, the cash equivalent to the value of the memorial was also offered.

Appendix 4: Adult Social Care

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

Complaints received in Q1 regarding adult social care services.

	<i>Number of complaints 2019-20</i>	<i>Number of complaints 2020-21</i>	Number of complaints 2021-22	<i>% change from same period last year</i>	<i>% responded to within timescale</i>
Apr-Jun	24	10	18	+80%	56%
Jul-Sep	21	15			
Oct-Dec	20	32			
Jan-Mar	16	19			
Total	81	76			

The complaints were about the following issues;

Nature of Complaints	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	<i>Comparison Figures for pervious year 2020-21</i>
Actions of worker	1				1	17
Assessment Disagreement	2				2	4
Care Practice Issues	3				3	8
Communication	2				2	9
Delay	2				2	4
Equipment Issues	-				-	1
Finance	3				3	14
Lack of Choice	2				2	0
Quality Issues	3				3	8
Actions of residents	-				-	1
Lack of help/support	-				-	10
	18				18	76

The complaints were made regarding the following service areas;

Service Area Involved	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	<i>Comparison Figures for pervious year 2020-21</i>
Mental Health Service	1				1	11
Hospital SW Team	3				3	5
Learning Disabilities Service	-				-	9
SW Locality Teams	9				9	21
Occupational Therapy Service	2				2	8
Financial Assessment Team	-				-	4
Commissioned Services	3				3	17
Financial Safeguarding Team	-				-	-
Safeguarding Adults/DoLs	-				-	1
	18				18	76

Outcome of complaints

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Comparison Figures for previous year 2020-21
Upheld in full	3				3	13
Upheld in part	1				1	12
Not Upheld	5				5	35
NE/WD/OTH**	5				5	14
Ongoing	4				4	2
	18				18	76

**not eligible/withdrawn/other

In Q1 there were 3 complaints (17%) that were upheld in full and information about these is included below.

- ***A complaint relating to the quality, safety and reliability of home care provision.***

The care provider met with the complainant to discuss their concerns and also provided a written response. The council offered its apologies for the poor quality of service, which had clearly fallen below the standard expected. A number of issues were also addressed under the Council's safeguarding procedures.

- ***A complaint about the service provided by a home care agency in particular the length of calls and the quality of care.***

Apologies and explanation offered. The effects of the pandemic had resulted in additional challenges for agencies in delivering care and this had impacted on the service delivered. As an outcome the complainant wanted to know that standards of care would improve. The council's Commissioning Team were aware of the issues raised in the complaint and met regularly with the care agency to monitor the quality of service provided.

- ***A complaint about the council continuing to take a direct debit payment despite the complainant requesting this be ceased. The requested refund was then subject to a delay.***

Administrative errors on the part of the council had resulted in a delay in making the refund payment. Apologies were offered and the refund was processed as a matter of urgency.

Appendix 5: Complaints

A sample of stage one complaints received in Q1 is included below. Outcomes for the complaints varied from not upheld, partially upheld and upheld.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Customer has been having ongoing issues with neighbour, he has been reporting ASB complaints filling in the diary sheets, but he is not getting any feedback as to what is happening, and the noise just continues.

City Wide Services

I've been unable to download a waste permit for Beach Street though I've tried a few times. I think there is a problem with the system

Customer wishes to complain that there's a permit system in place to access the tip site

Council Tax

I contacted yourselves by email in connection about our recent council tax bill. I wanted to question our present band and wanted to know the procedure to do this. But we haven't received a response from yourselves

Customer Service Network:

Trying to make a payment for bulky waste collection, when the payment system put me through to an advocate the advocate cuts me off

Telephoned to discuss council tax direct debit. Stated worker was rude to her and hung up on her before she had finished with her queries. She is not happy with his attitude and the service we have provided

2 queries Track & Trace Payment & Council Tax Advisor did not listen, she was argumentative and did not deal with my query in a manner I thought was appropriate.

Environmental Services

All 3 toilets along the sea front are closed and without any notice on the toilets prior. The customer says that they have been open for months and all of a sudden, they have been closed

Customer rang to report the seagulls in the area where she lives and all of the bird droppings in the area. The back lane, cars and washing are covered in bird droppings. Customer is not happy at the fact the Council will not do anything about it

Roker Park boating lake is an absolute mess. The lake is full of rubbish, grass twigs, etc.

The customer says that none of the bins within Silksworth Park are being emptied as both the dog and litter bins are full, because of this there is a big up of rubbish and dog waste bags being dumped / left around

Customer rang to complain that the signs for the dog control orders have been removed from the beach, he was very annoyed on the phone, and witnessed a dog owner letting her dog foul and did not pick it up.

The customer says that she is reporting rubbish every day in the back lane and feels like enforcement isn't doing anything about it when it's clear it is coming from the business.

Customer says that he believes the brown bin has been split due to the mechanism - customer is disputing having to pay the fee as he believes this has been done overtime by the crew

My bin gets emptied on a Friday. You state on your website that bins must be out for collection by 7.30am. You decide to collect and empty it at 6.48am my bin wasn't out at that time.

Requested trees to be cut back over a year ago and was told that the trees would be pruned back by the end of May 2021 - The trees have still not been cut back

Highway Operations

I've recently been in touch with the council about a cracked paving slab in front of my house It has now been removed and replaced with tarmac. Surely this isn't the correct repair? It looks terrible in the street.

Housing Benefits

Failure to provide any correspondence in regard to track and trace support payments. Despite several promises made over the phone the last 7 times I have called to get a resolution

Housing Options

I requested to be put in a higher band with the allocations team yet that has not been accepted although my son has a disability

Parking

A complaint regarding the lifts in Saint Marys Car park - herself and her husband were unable to call the lift, both from the 2nd floor and the Ground floor

Planning

Customer has been trying to contact the Planning Department but when he has been transferred there has been no one in the office to take his call. Customer has been advised to email and would be called back but again has emailed numerous times and has still not been contacted

Registrars & Bereavement Services

The lady requested and paid for a fast-track birth certificate. This was collected by royal mail from the civic the following day. However, the lady has not received it

Transport Development

The new E-scooters next to the Cambridge pub - people are using them and taking them around the carpark and causing a nuisance driving them around

Appendix 6:

REPORT TO SUNDERLAND CITY COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

SUNDERLAND CARE AND SUPPORT LIMITED (SCAS)

COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS Q1 2021-22 (APRIL-JUNE) 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

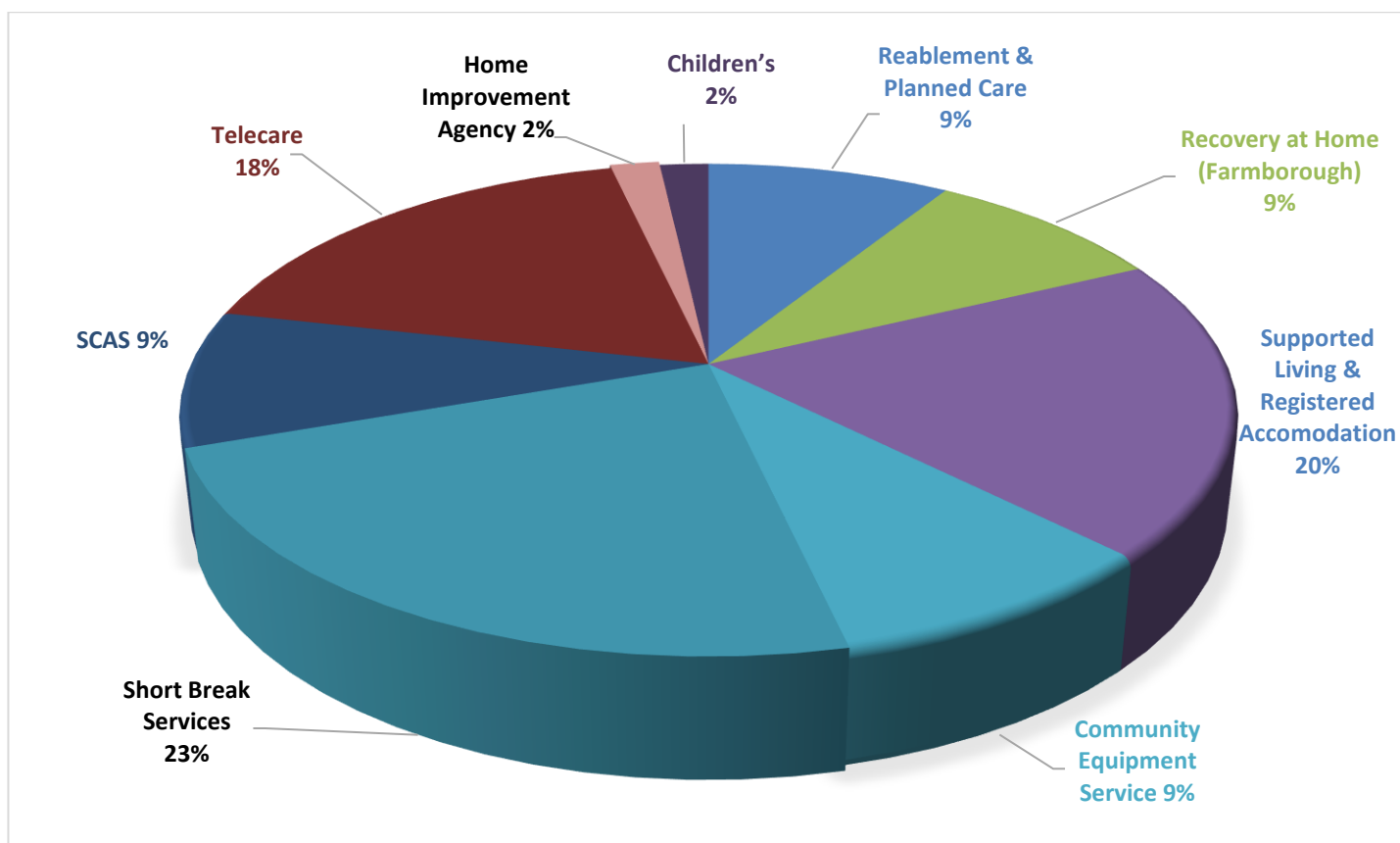
- 3.1 Sunderland Care and Support Limited takes pride in the high-quality services we provide our customers.
- 3.2 We pro-actively welcome both positive and negative feedback from all of our customers and view this as our opportunity to learn and to improve; and recognise that such feedback helps us to corroborate the standard of service our customers receive.
- 3.3 This reporting period has been quite extraordinary given that it covers the Government's third National Lockdown for England.
- 3.4 But despite this 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 a total of **56 compliments** were received from **1st April to 30th June 2021**; nearly **37%** (x15) **greater** than those recorded in the previous quarter (x41); but were around **28%** (x21.5) **lower** than the median average of x77.5 per quarter noted over the year (April 20-March 21) and around **45%** (x46) **lower** than the median average of x102 per quarter noted for the previous year (April 2019-March 2020).

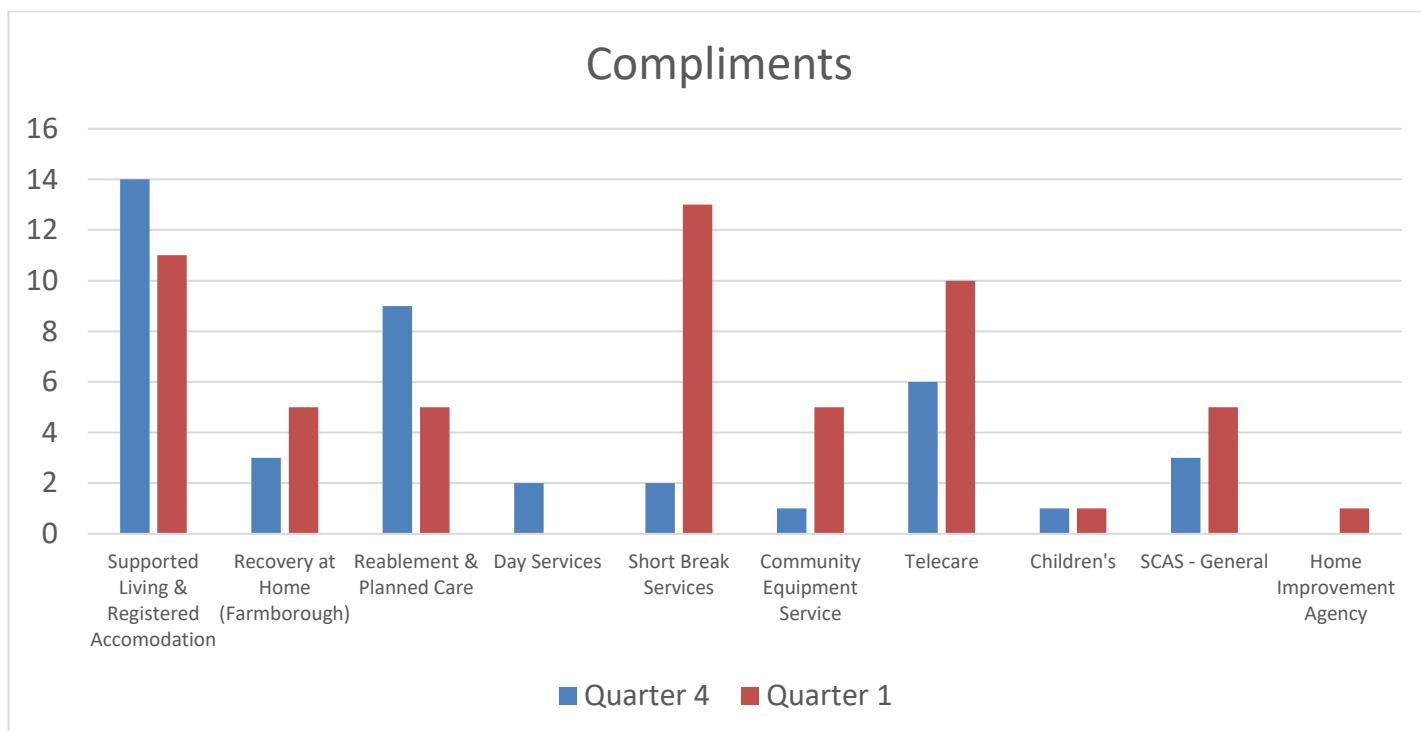
4.2 Quarter 1 Compliments Breakdown - Distribution

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



- **Short Break Services:** 13 (23%) – **eleven more** than the previous quarter
- **Supported Living & Registered Accommodation:** 11 (20%) – **three less** than the previous quarter
- **Telecare:** 10 (18%) – **four more** than the previous quarter
- **Reablement & Planned Care:** 5 (9%) – **four less** than the previous quarter
- **SCAS - General:** 5 (9%) – **two more** than the previous quarter
- **Recovery at Home (Farmborough):** 5 (9%) – **two more** than the previous quarter
- **Community Equipment Service:** 5 (9%) – **four more** than the previous quarter
- **Children's:** 1 (2%) – **no change**
- **Home Improvement Agency:** 1 (2%) – **one more** than the previous quarter
- **Day Services:** 0 (0%) – **two less** than the previous quarter

4.3 Quarter 1 Compliments Breakdown - Previous Quarter Comparison



It is of note that during the quarter, 70% of Service Areas received more compliments or achieved the same number of compliments as received during the previous quarter, with remaining areas only seeing slight reductions in the number of compliments received.

Also, during the quarter, the City has been experiencing the continuing 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.

4.4 Quarter 4 Compliments Breakdown - Synopsis

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

- **Supported Living** – recognition for the 'amazing' service, 'real engagement' and 'personal attention' provided by team members, 'enriching' the lives of their customers
- **Recovery at Home / Farmborough Court** – recognition of the help, understanding and patience of staff
- **Reablement** – thanks for the 'brilliant' care provided by team members supporting the customer to return and remain in her own home
- **Short Break Services** – appreciation for the service provided by 'fantastic' staff doing their 'very best' for customers
- **CES** – a note of thanks in recognition of how 'extremely impressed and grateful everyone was' with the excellent service provided by the team.
- **Telecare** – appreciation of the 'excellent' service & 'peace of mind' provided by staff
- **Children's** – recognition for 'such dedicated staff' 'taking such good care' of customers

4.5 Customer Satisfaction Consultations

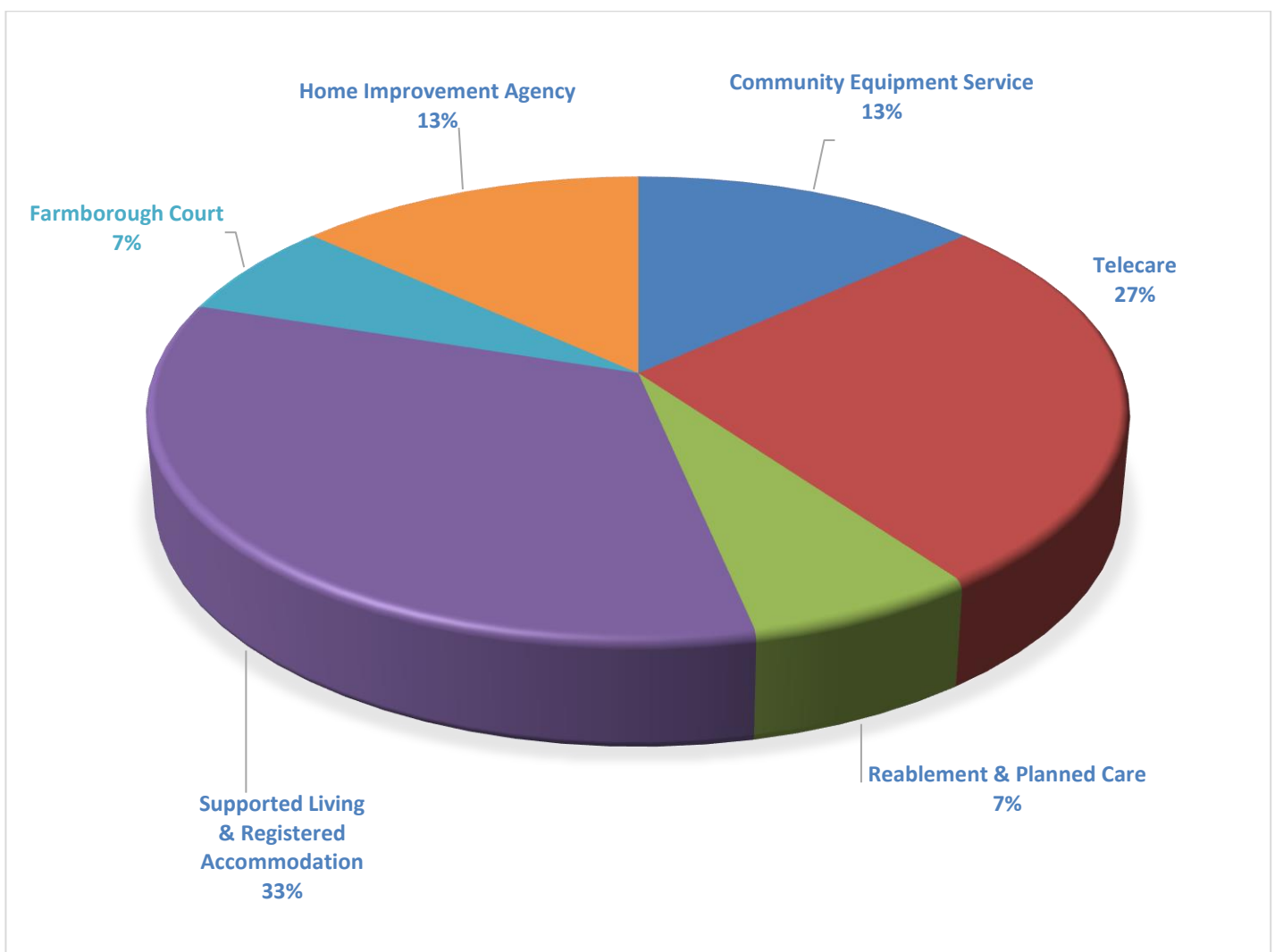
Our Supported Living Services also received **sixteen** positive responses from customers and their families via proactive customer satisfaction consultations during the reporting period.

5 COMPLAINTS

5.1 It is of note, that despite the continuing Pandemic, only **15 complaints** were received by the Company from 1st April to 30th June 2021; around **21% (x4) less** than were recorded over the previous quarter – only around 3.4% (x0.5) greater than the median average of x14.5 per quarter noted over the year (April 20-March 21), but around 61.5% (x24) less than the median average of x39 per quarter noted for the previous year (April 2019-March 2020).

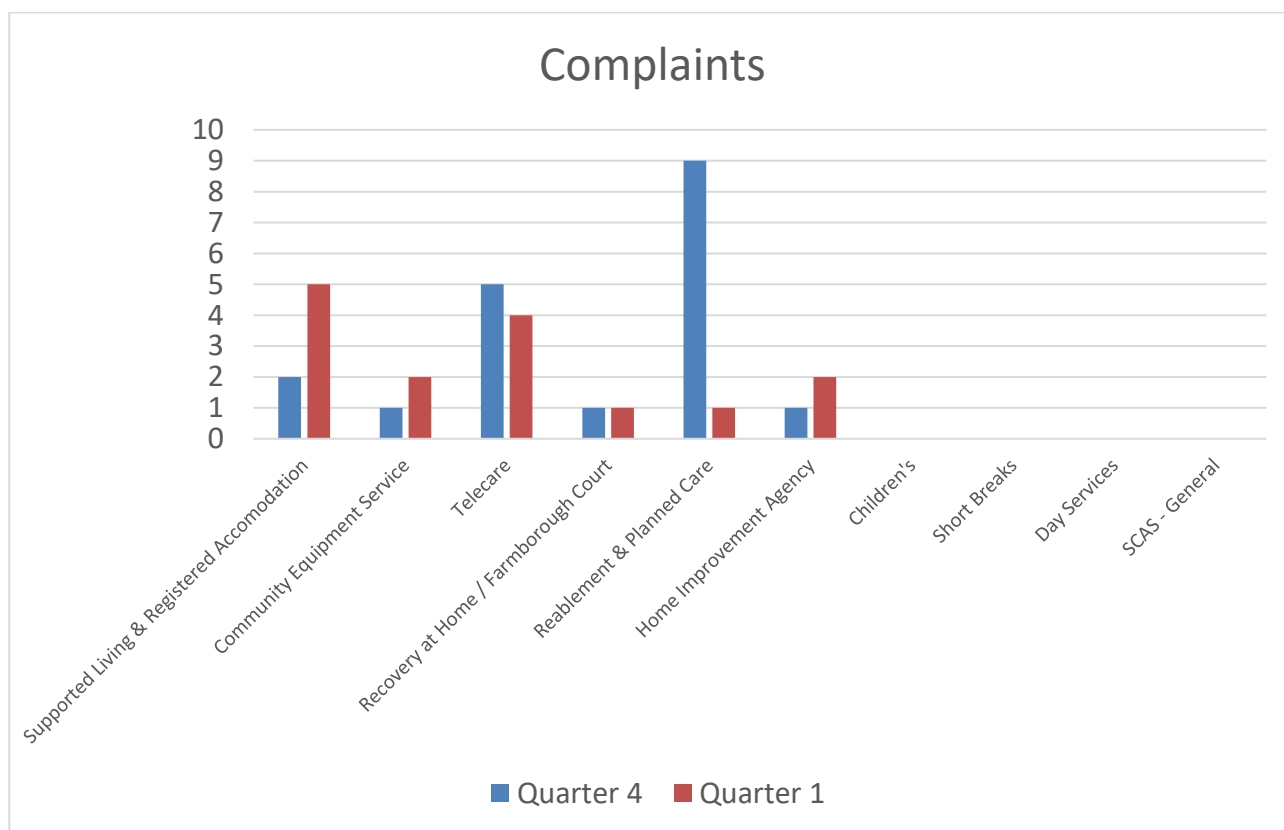
5.2 Quarter 1 Complaints Breakdown – Distribution

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



- **Supported Living & Registered Accommodation: 5 (33%) – three more than the previous quarter**
- **Telecare: 4 (27%) – one less than the previous quarter**
- **Home Improvement Agency: 2 (13%) – one more than the previous quarter**
- **Community Equipment Service: 2 (13%) – one more than the previous quarter**
- **Reablement & Planned Care: 1 (7%) – eight less than the previous quarter**
- **Recovery at Home / Farmborough: 1 (7%) – no change from the previous quarter**
- **Short Break Services: Zero (0%) – no change from the previous quarter**
- **Day Services & Short Break Services: Zero (0%) – no change from the previous quarter**
- **Children's: Zero (0%) - no change from the previous quarter**
- **SCAS - General: Zero (0%) - no change from the previous quarter**

5.3 Quarter 1 Complaints Breakdown - Previous Quarter Comparison



It is of significance that **70% of Service Areas** either received **zero complaints** or **less complaints** than were noted over the previous quarter, with only our **Supported Living & Registered Accommodation, Community Equipment, Telecare, Farmborough Court, Reablement & Planned Care Services** and **Home Improvement Agency** receiving any complaints during the period.

Our **Supported Living & Registered Accommodation and Community Equipment Services** noted slight **increases** in the number of complaints received when compared against figures for the previous quarter.

It is also of note that nearly **29%** of these particular **complaints were not upheld**, with only around **43%** being **upheld in-full**, **14%** **upheld in-part** and the remaining **14%** **in the process of being resolved**.

In contrast, **Telecare** and **Reablement & Planned Care** services noted **reductions** in the number of complaints they received; **Children's, Short Breaks & Day Services** saw **zero complaints** during the period and no complaints were noted for SCAS generally.

However, it is worth bearing in mind that due to the continuing 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.

5.4 Quarter 1 Complaints Breakdown - Resolution

Of **all** complaints received during the period, **nearly 27%** (x4) were **not upheld**, **20%** (x3) were **upheld in-part**, **around 47%** (x7) were **upheld in-full** and nearly 7% (x1) noted to remain in the process of being resolved.

There were only two complaints requiring (Step 2) Formal resolution, no complaints requiring (Step 3) External resolution and no non-SCAS complaints noted during the period.

No non-SCAS complaints were noted during the period.

5.5 Previous Quarters - Complaints Breakdown - Resolution

It was noted that a complaint requiring Step 2 (Formal) resolution from the previous quarter remained open to SCAS 'Tell Us What You Think' Procedures and was in the process of being resolved.

6 CORPORATE ASSURANCE

- 6.1 The Company is committed to be a learning organisation, where improvement is led through open feedback and recognising how we can do things better.
- 6.2 To provide assurance that this is achieved, our formal Complaint Forums, chaired by our Deputy Chief Operating Officer and attended by Senior colleagues, are held each month, to consider all complaints in detail, to identify any common themes and improvement opportunities, and as an opportunity to reflect upon and share lessons learnt across the company.
- 6.3 Recent examples of where this holistic approach has helped us to improve, have included engaging with the neighbours of our Supported Living customers to improve relations; securing additional resources through better partnership working; and a focus on improving the timeliness and pro-activeness of our engagements with complainants.

7 COVID-19 REPORTING

- 7.1 Throughout the reporting period the company have continued to operate within the scope of our Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy despite the continuing impact of the Global Covid-19 Pandemic.
- 7.2 It is of note that our monthly complaints forums are currently held using MS Teams in order to ensure social distancing is observed.