



Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Annual Complaints and Compliments Report **Adult and Children's Services** 2023-24

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Every year the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) publishes an annual complaints and compliments report, which gives an overview of the complaints the Council has received and how they were dealt with. RBWM welcomes customer feedback, as it helps to identify and address problems for customers, and to improve services. This report, covering the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, details all compliments and complaints made by or on behalf of customers that are investigated under the:
 - Adults Statutory Complaints process
 - Children’s Statutory Complaints process
 - Children’s Corporate Complaints process
 - RBWM’s Formal Corporate Complaints policy
- 1.2. Whilst Local Authorities are required under statute to report complaints submitted on Adults and Children’s services, they are not required to produce an annual report on complaints relating to corporate activities, however the Compliments and Complaints team produces an annual report detailing the volumes of all complaints and compliments, including insights into response rates and the reasons for complaints. This allows the Council to assess how residents experience the Council in its entirety and can inform service improvement.
- 1.3. This report provides an overall summary of the contacts into RBWM, but only provides detailed information relating to the Children’s and Adult’s complaints and compliments. A separate report relating to Formal Corporate complaints has been produced and is available here [Annual Report - 2023-24 Formal Corporate](#)

2. Summary of Council-wide activity

- 2.1. In 2023/24 the Council received 1,674 contacts from customers that were initially logged as complaints. This is an 18.9% increase in contacts to the compliments and complaints team from 2022/23 (1,408) but this is most likely explained by a change of internal process in the Complaints and Compliments Team, whereby all contacts are now logged and given reference numbers rather than some being dealt with informally, without being logged. Contacts that were not progressed as complaints were signposted to an alternative means of resolution, for example a service request or via a specific appeals process, such as parking appeals or statutory tribunals, or were withdrawn.
- 2.2. The total volume of complaints progressed through Stage 1 of the complaints process was 304 in 2023/24, an increase of 13.0% on 2022/23 (269). Stage 2 and 3 complaints are escalations of Stage 1 and are therefore not counted as new complaints.
- 2.3. Table 1 summarises the total volume of complaints at Stage 1 over the year, that were recorded by the Complaints and Compliments team; these have been broken down by outcome. The table contains a comparison to 2022/23 (in brackets):

Table 1: 2023/24 Summary of complaints at Stage 1 (2022/23 in brackets)

Process	No. of complaints	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	No Finding	In progress at the time of reporting	Responded to within timescales
Adults Statutory	37 ↑ (16)	23% ↓ (25%)	31% ↑ (19%)	46% ↓ (56%)	0% ↔ (0%)	2	77% ↑ (50%)
Children's Statutory	8 ↓ (11)	13% ↑ (0%)	50% ↓ (82%)	38% ↑ (18%)	0% ↔ (0%)	0	63% ↑ (45%)
Children's Corporate	79 ↑ (74)	12% ↓ (22%)	40% ↓ (41%)	49% ↑ (38%)	0% ↔ (0%)	1	74% ↑ (39%)
RBWM Formal Corporate	180 ↑ (168)	21% ↓ (25%)	29% ↑ (25%)	50% ↑ (47%)	0% ↓ (3%)	17	56% ↑ (45%)
Overall	304 ↑ (269)	18% ↓ (23%)	33% ↑ (32%)	49% ↑ (44%)	0% ↓ (2%)	20	64% ↑ (44%)

Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) letter

- 2.4. The Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) received 55 complaints and enquiries about the Council in 2023/24 (Appendix A), an increase on 2022/23 (49). Table 12 details the breakdown as:

Table 2: LGSCO complaints received

Service	Complaints and enquiries
Adult Care Services	12
Benefits & Tax	2
Corporate & Other Services	1
Education & Children's Services	19
Environmental Services, Public Protection & Regulation	2
Highways & Transport	4
Housing	8
Other	1
Planning & Development	6
Total	55

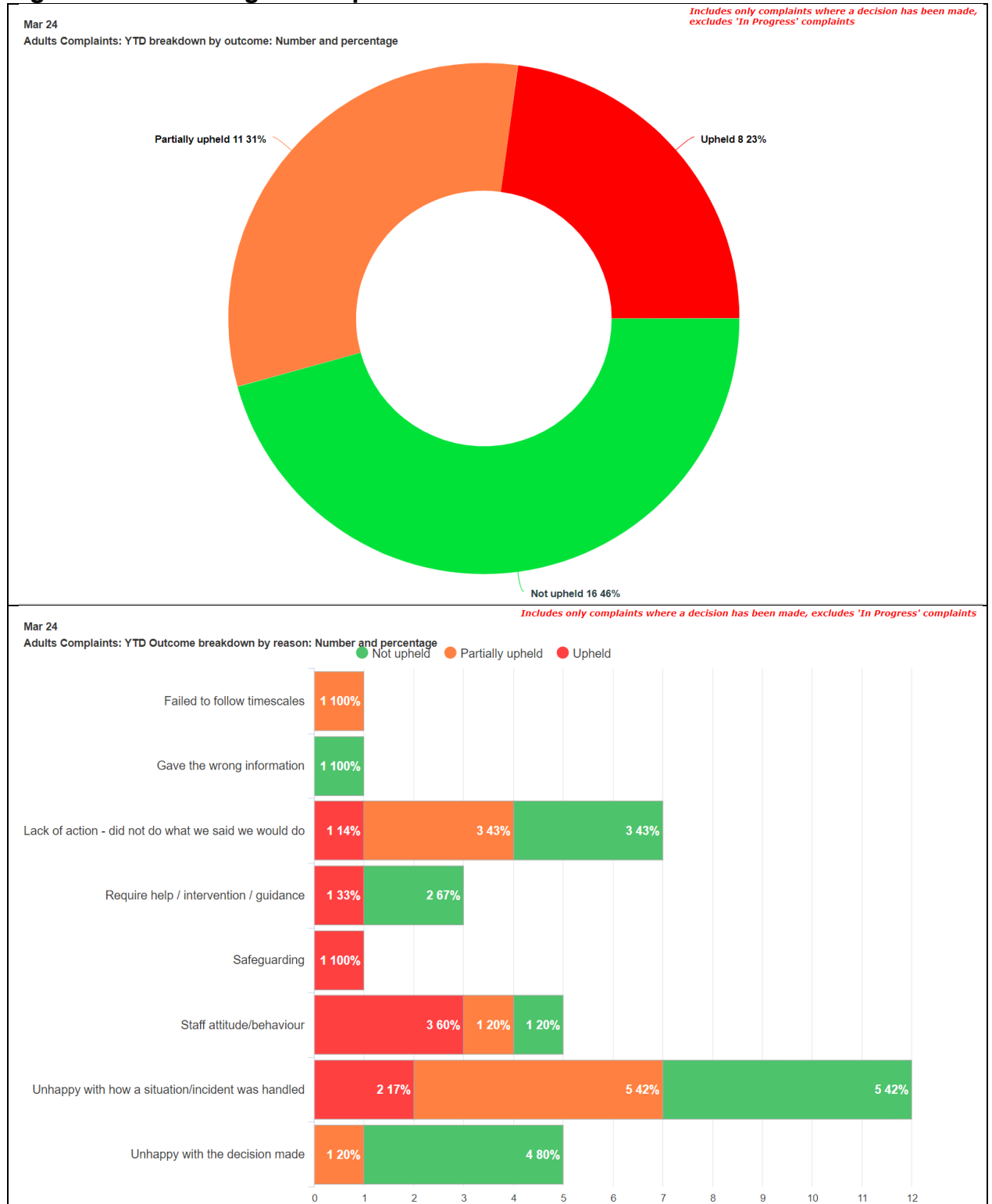
- 2.5. Of these 55 complaints and enquiries received, the LGSCO went on to investigate 12. Appendix A shows the LGSCO's summary of these.

3. Statutory Adults complaints received**Stage 1 complaints received**

- 3.1. 37 Adults' complaints were received in 2023/24, a 131.3% increase on 2022/23 (16). The greatest proportion of Stage 1 Adults complaints were either upheld (23%) or partially upheld (31%). Figure 1 shows the greatest number of complaints were due to the customer being 'unhappy with how a situation/incident was handled' and that a large number of these (42%) were not upheld. The complaints that have been upheld can be attributed to service standards not being met, largely due to poor communication between the customer or their family and the practitioner. All instances concern different

teams/members of staff however it is apparent that where there are two teams or services involved with one person then there is increased probability for communication errors. Where there can be improvements in communication, these have been identified and form part of our actions to learn from complaints. In analysing the complaints, there seems to be an unwillingness or avoidance of having what could be a difficult or uncomfortable conversation. This forms part of the actions to improve communication.

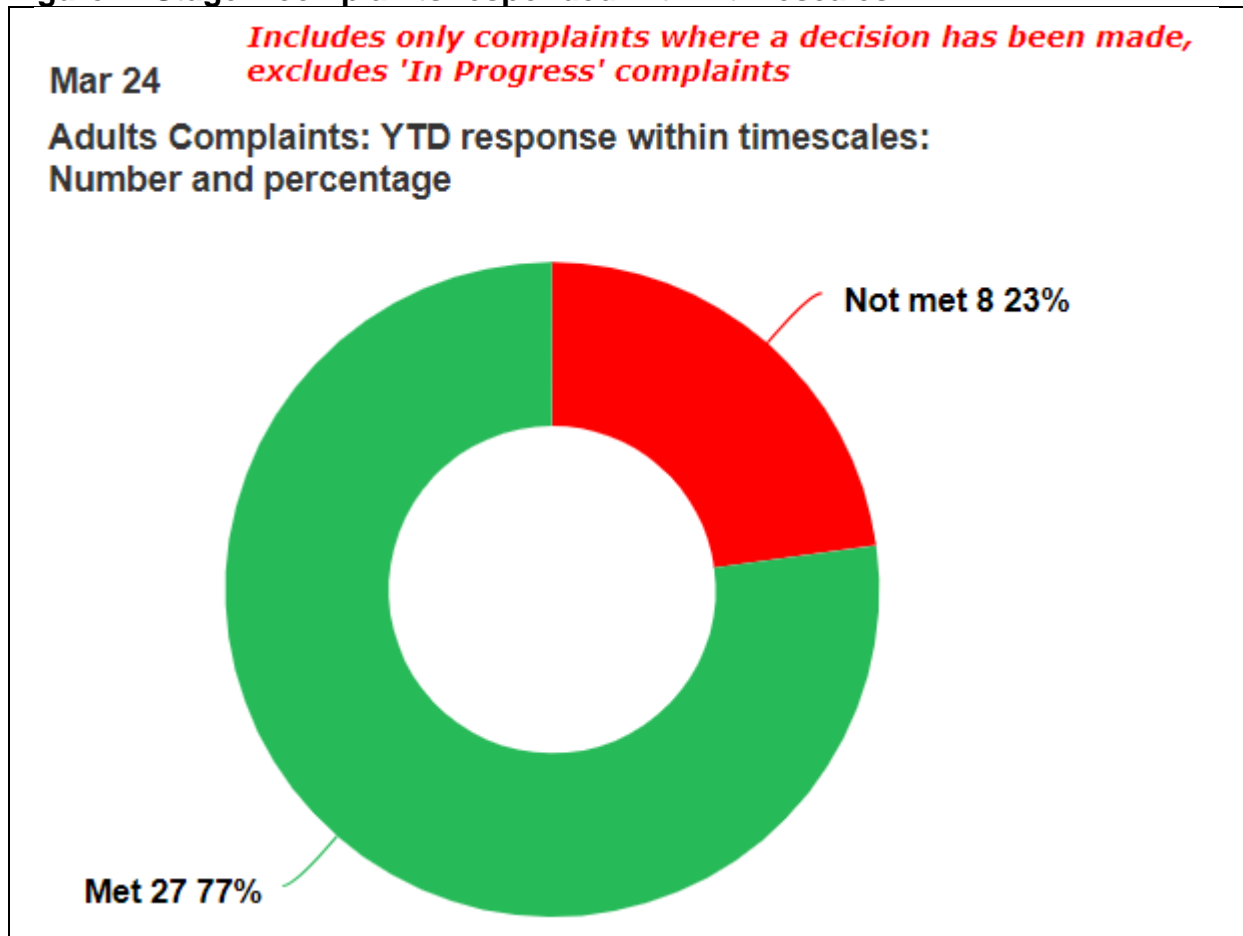
Figure 1: Adults Stage 1 complaints received



Stage 1 timescales

- 3.5 Of the 37 Adults complaints received, 77% of them were responded to within timescales, which is an increase on 2022/23 (50%). See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Stage 1 complaints responded within timescales



4. Adults Services compliments received

- 4.1 In 2023/24, Adults received 56 compliments; a 47% increase on 2022/23 (38). The majority of the compliments cite the professionalism, kindness and helpfulness of staff that worked with them; others thank staff for supporting them through very difficult circumstances. One member of staff working with people with autism received 4 unsolicited compliments. A selection of this year's compliments are quoted in Figure 3, to give an idea of some of the positive feedback received.
- 4.2 The Occupational Therapy Team proactively seeks feedback from customers; we will consider how other teams can learn from the OT team to get more feedback from the people we support.

Figure 3: Sample of compliments received in 2023/24

“[Occupational therapist] was really fantastic help to me and explained everything to me in detail. Brilliant. She listened to everything I said to her. Fantastic skills and took time to check all my needs. I couldn't be more happier with the service that you provide.”

“The [community social work team] couldn’t not have done more. You couldn’t improve this service, 1st Class. We have never met such caring people. All so nice and very good at their jobs”

“Next week it will be a year since [...] moved. I can never thank you enough for the weight that has been lifted off my shoulders. It is such a relief for me to finally to be able to be just a sister and I can’t thank you and the team enough for enabling that.
Thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

“As soon as [staff member] had met and assessed [...]’s needs, she put her recommendations into action. The input from the Occupational Therapists have made a huge difference and had a positive effect on [...]’s life....We feel very fortunate to live in RBWM.”

5. Lessons learned from Adults Services complaints

- 5.1 An important part of the complaints process is capturing the learnings and embedding good practice across the Council. Following are the opportunities for learning that have been identified by Adult Services:

Adult Social Care (Optalis)

- People’s personal finances and the rules about making a contribution to care and support costs are complex. A number of complaints have been made as a result of the customer’s lack of clarity on the rules and how they apply to themselves or family members. As a result, a training programme has been put in place for all practitioners to ensure that they have the accurate information to be able to communicate confidently with people and their families.
- In analysing complaints, communication between staff and customers was found to be the most common cause of complaints particularly where more than one team was involved or the subject matter of the conversation was difficult. In order to support staff to have difficult conversations a session was held in the staff forum, supervision notes will be audited to ensure that they address staff welfare and training and making sure that staff have access to support regardless of where they are working.
- An audit of the quality and timeliness of responses to complaints was undertaken throughout the year. As a result, all complaints are triaged by an Assistant Director and all managers will receive training on handling and responding to complaints.

6. Children’s Complaints received (Statutory and Corporate)

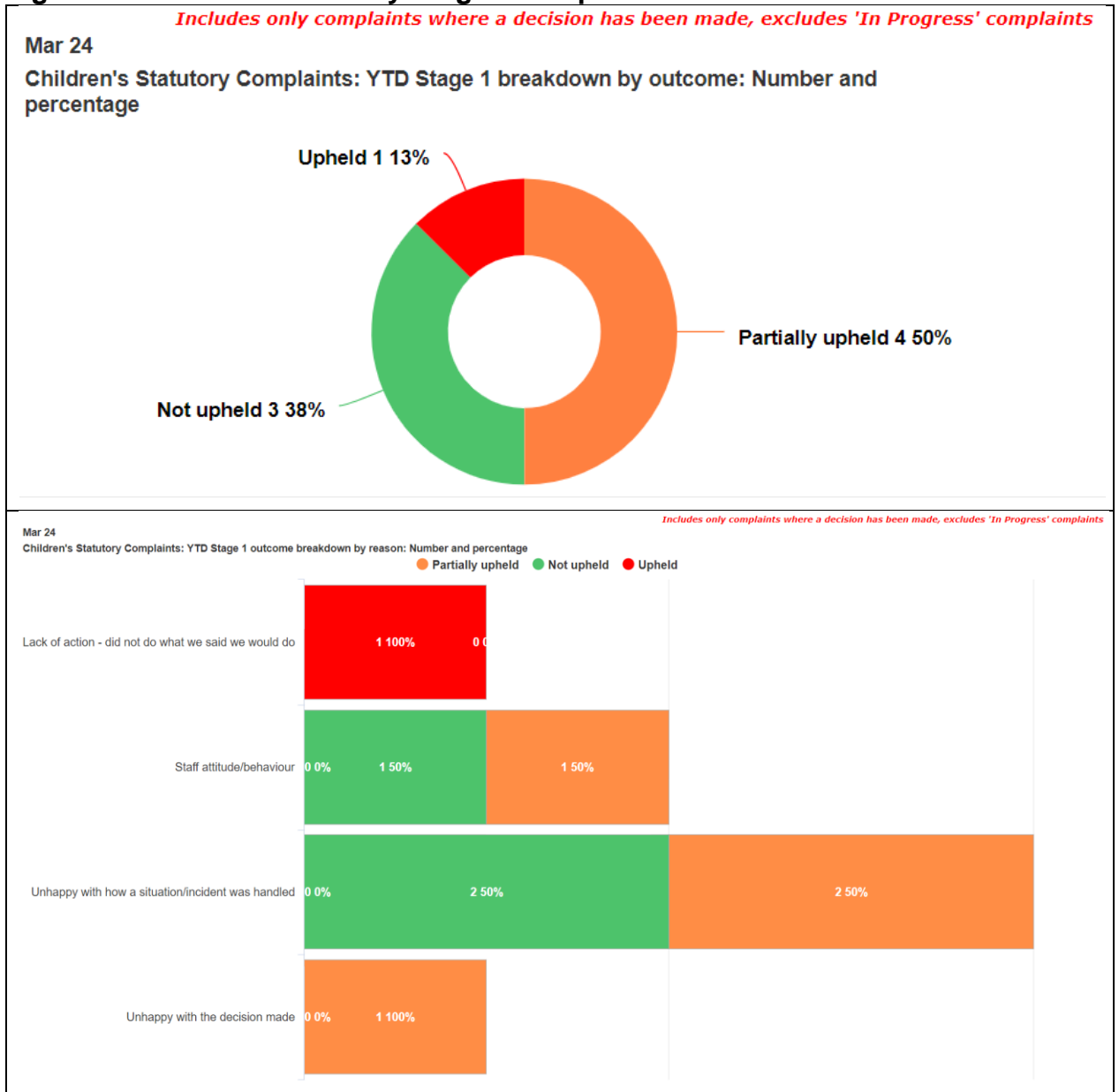
6.1. This section relates to only Children’s complaints, both Statutory and Corporate.

Stage 1 Children’s Statutory complaints received

6.2. 8 Children’s Statutory complaints were received in 2023/24, a slight decrease on 2022/23 (11).

6.3. Half of Stage 1 Children’s Statutory complaints (50%) were partially upheld. Figure 4 shows the greatest number of complaints were due to the customer being ‘unhappy with how a situation/incident was handled’ and that equal numbers of these (50%, 50%) were partially upheld and not upheld.

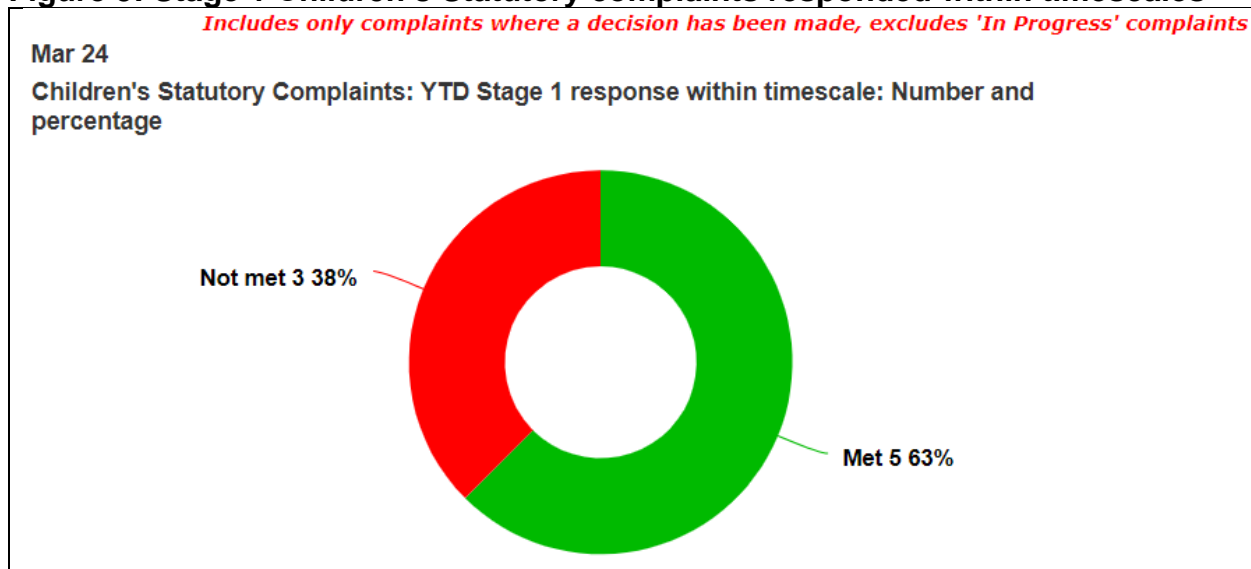
Figure 4: Children’s Statutory Stage 1 complaints received



Stage 1 Children’s Statutory timescales

6.4. Of the 8 Children’s Statutory complaints received, 63% of them were responded to within timescales, which is an increase on 2022/23 (45%). See Figure 5.

Figure 5: Stage 1 Children’s Statutory complaints responded within timescales



Stage 2 Children’s Statutory complaints received

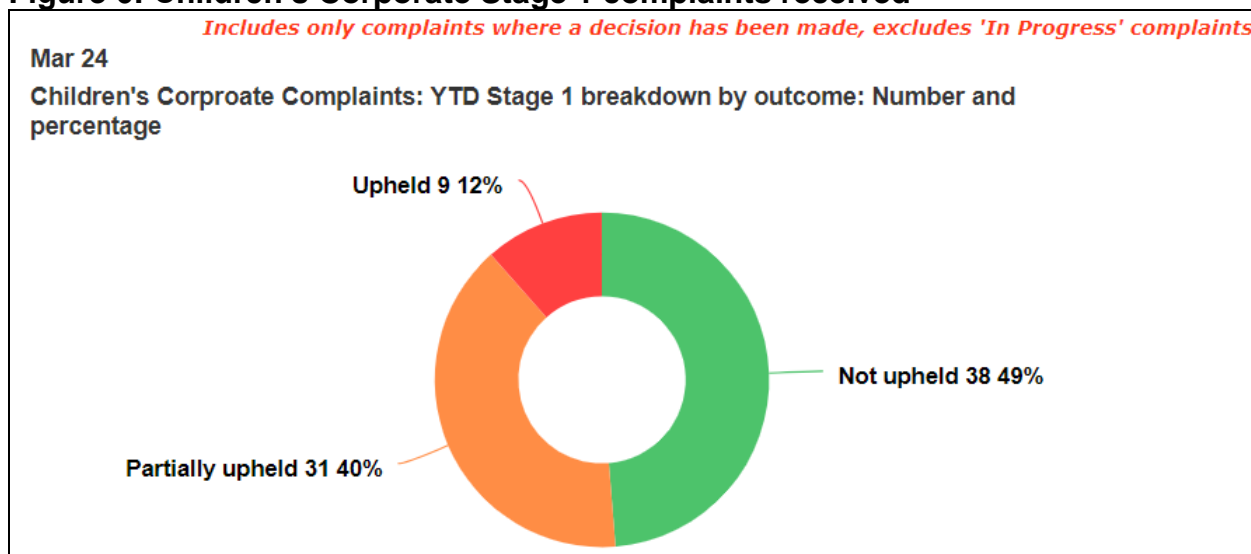
6.5. Of the 8 Stage 1 Statutory children’s complaints, two progressed to Stage 2. One of these was partially upheld and the other had not been decided at the time of this report.

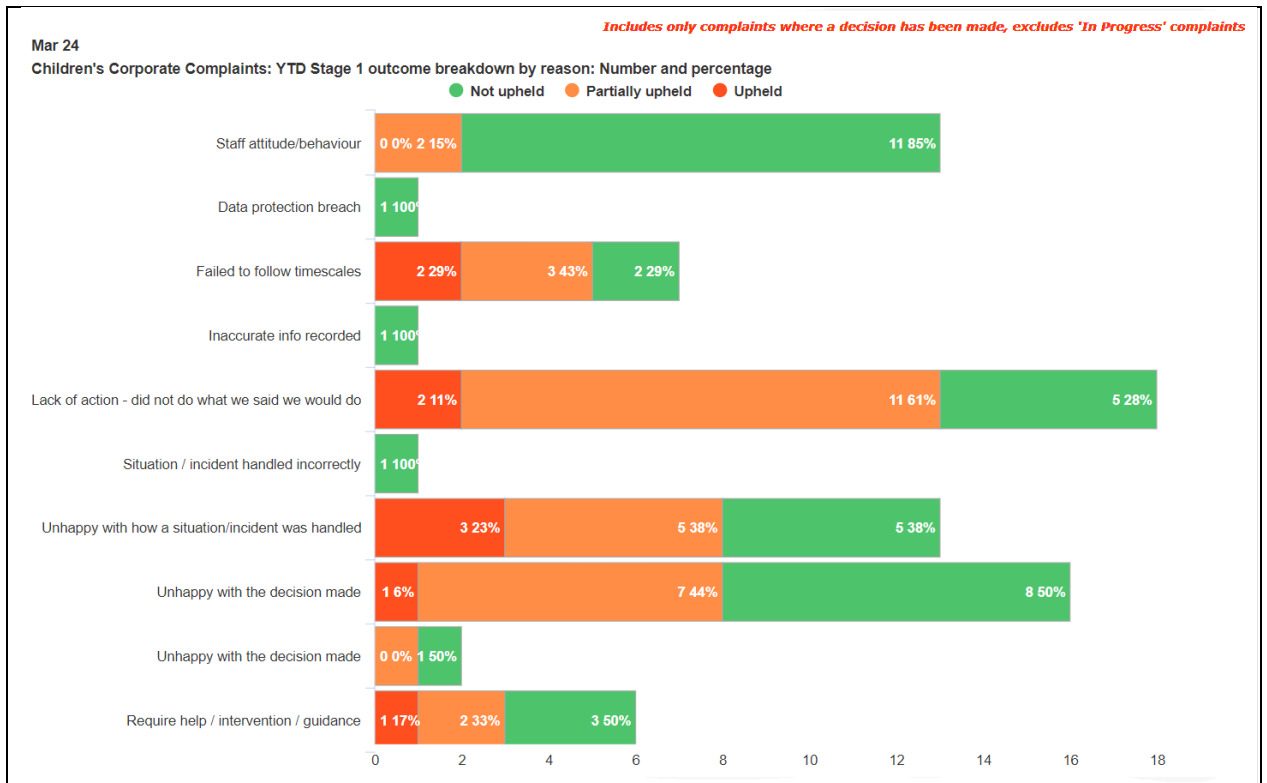
Stage 1 Children’s Corporate complaints received

6.6 79 Children’s Corporate complaints were received in 2023/24, a slight increase on 2022/23 (74).

6.7 The majority (49%) of Stage 1 Children’s Corporate complaints were not upheld. Figure 6 shows the main reason for complaints was because of ‘lack of action – did not do what we said we would do’ and this can be attributed to the increased complexity and number of families that we are working with which has contributed to our ability to consistently meet all the competing demands.

Figure 6: Children’s Corporate Stage 1 complaints received

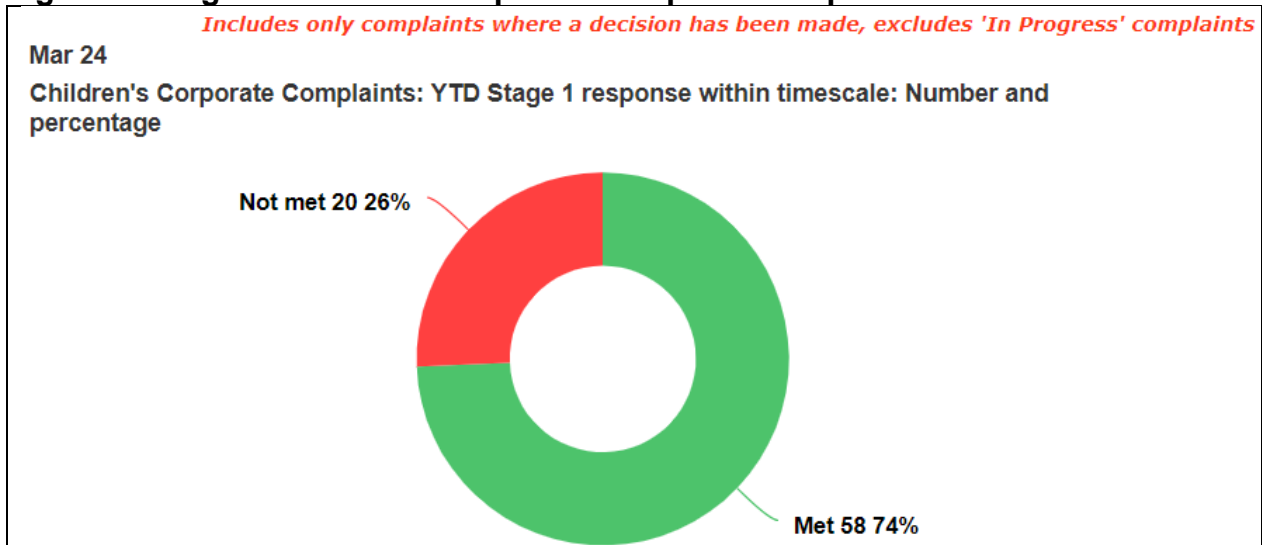




Stage 1 Children's Corporate timescales

6.8 Of the 79 Stage 1 complaints received, 74% were responded to within timescales, which is an increase on 2022/23 (39%). See Figure 7.

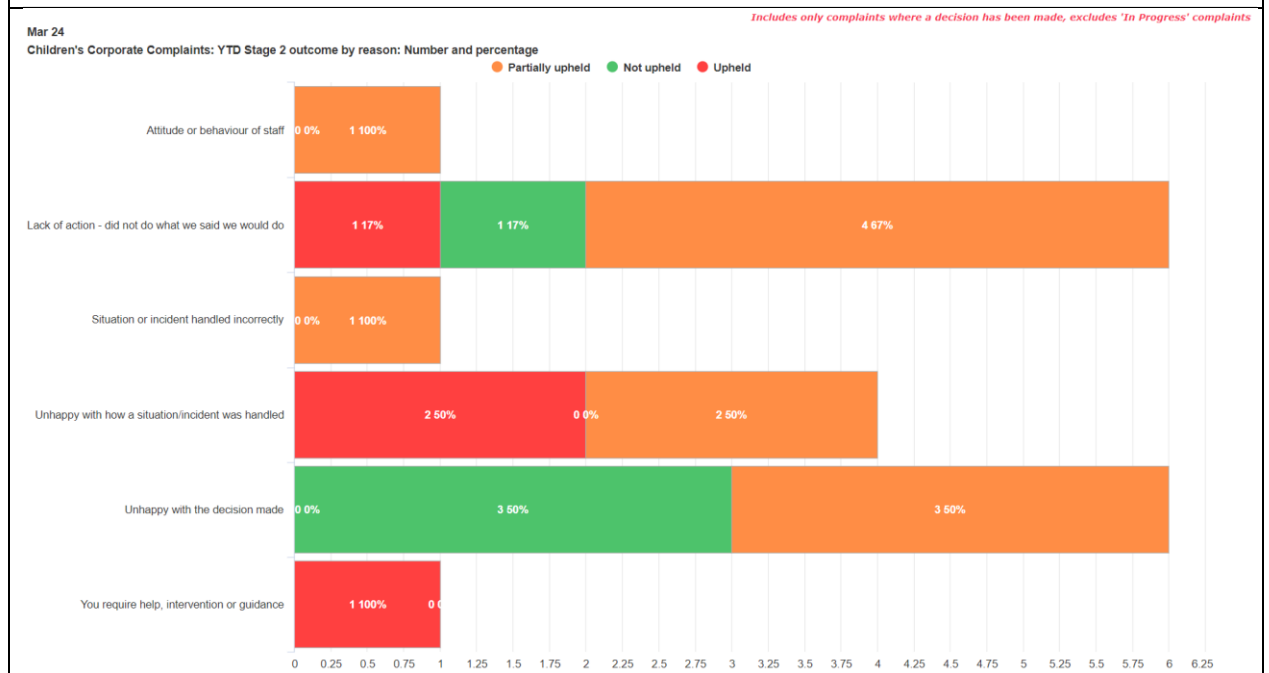
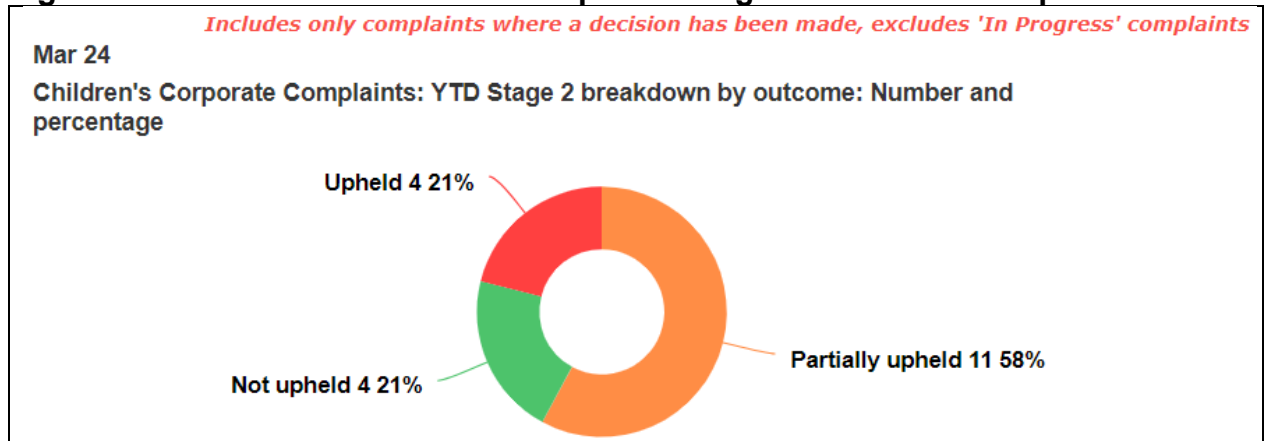
Figure 7: Stage 1 Children's Corporate complaints responded within timescales



Stage 2 Children's Corporate complaints received

6.9 Figure 8 shows that of the 79 Stage 1 Statutory children's complaints, 19 of them progressed to Stage 2, of which 58% were partially upheld. The primary reasons were 'unhappy with the decision made' and 'lack of action – did not do what we said we would do'.

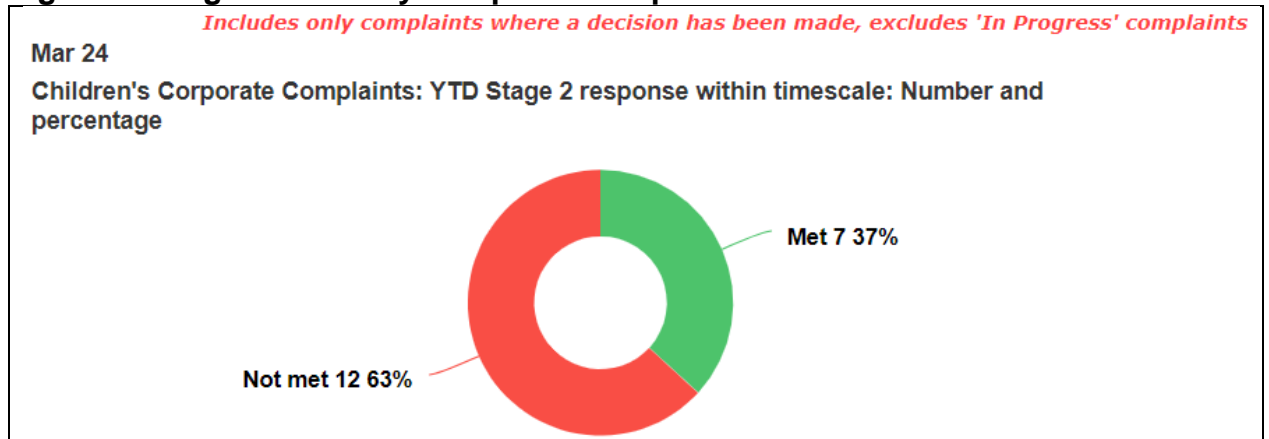
Figure 8: Outcomes of Children’s Corporate Stage 2 Children’s complaints



Stage 2 Children’s Corporate complaints timescales

6.10 Of the 19 Stage 2 Children’s Corporate complaints received, 37% were responded to within timescales (Figure 9). This was due to a combination of complexity of some complaints and staff’s capacity to complete within the agreed timescales.

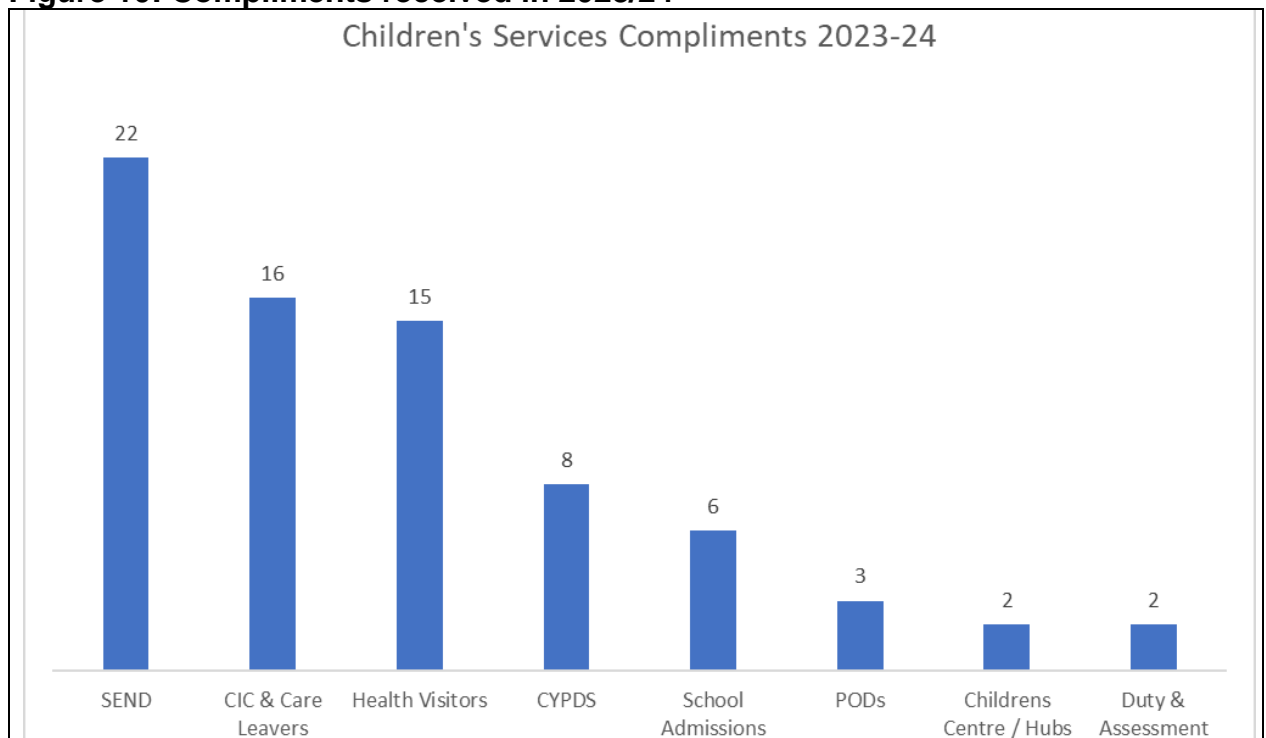
Figure 9: Stage 2 Statutory complaints responded within timescales



7. Children’s Services compliments received

7.1 In 2023/24, Children’s Services received 74 compliments, an increase on 2022/23 (69). This increase is due to an improvement in staff sharing compliments received with the complaints team and is evidence of our continued excellent work with our families. Figure 10 sets out the volume of compliments received and details the teams in receipt of the most compliments. It also shows a selection of quotes from this year’s compliments, to give an idea of some of the positive feedback received.

Figure 10: Compliments received in 2023/24



“I am writing with immense gratitude to express my heartfelt appreciation for the unwavering support and kindness you have extended. Your timely assistance amidst my challenging circumstances [...] has been an immense relief. [...] Your collective support from RBWM has made an indelible impact, transforming an overwhelming situation into a manageable one. I am profoundly grateful for your kindness and the reassurance it has brought during this crucial period. Your all are amazing! THANK YOU !”

“Many thanks for all you're doing for us and [...].....you really are amazing and so dedicated. We do feel very lucky to have you on our side! You're also so wonderful with [...] and she does enjoy your visits (even if she may not show it when you arrive)!”

“I [...] would like to say a massive THANK YOU to our health visitor [...] on behalf of my family too. Your support throughout this journey was incredible. It wouldn’t have been possible without your assistance. I want to express my gratitude for your help and support throughout this difficult time. [...] Thank you for being one of those rare people who are willing to go that extra mile for others, and giving so much of yourself.”

“I have to say that [...]’s family support worker is a credit to your team. I wish every family in need could be supported by someone like her.”

8. Lessons learned from Children's Services complaints

- 8.1 An important part of the complaints process is capturing the learning and embedding good practice across the Council. Listed below are some of the learnings from the Children's complaints:

<p>Children's Social Care & Early Help</p> <p>In the last year there has been some significant learning across our services in response to some complaints in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have continued to embed regular workshops/meetings between the Complaints/ Compliments Team and service staff• Regular meetings continue to take place between the Deputy Director and Complaints/ Compliments Team which is supporting oversight and tracking of complex and overdue complaints• Our training offer to AfC staff is shaped and influenced through learning from complaints and we continue to review the themes and individual actions/recommendations and capture this in our mandatory training offer to all staff.• In response to learning from specific complaints we have recently held two Whole Service Events for all staff across children's social care focusing on SEND and working with separated parent's
<p>Support and Safeguarding Service and Early Help</p> <p>As a result of several complaints, the following training has been provided to staff, including both group sessions and 1:1 sessions in supervision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amendments have been made to our Standards and Expectations document which will be shared and signed by both child and adult (who has parental responsibility) at the start of our contact.• We have worked with staff to reiterate safeguarding procedures including how we make referrals to external partners that may include Police, Children's Social Care and Health.• We have worked with our staff to ensure that we are consistently alerting and sharing relevant information with our Emergency Duty Team.• We continue to monitor and track our performance in relation to regular supervision and have developed a clinical reflective supervision offer for all our staff to support the quality of our supervision.
<p>SEND Team and Children with Disabilities Team</p> <p>As a result of a number of complaints, the following training has been provided to staff, including both group sessions and 1:1 sessions in supervision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We are reviewing our adult transition process in RBWM to enhance and improve how we work with young people on their independence.

- In response to one complaint, we are developing guidance and a transition panel to ensure young people are kept informed through their transition to adult services.

School Transport

- An improved tracking system has ensured that responses are communicated within target timescales.
- The Council's Contact Centre Champion for School Transport regularly attends team meetings to better support communication and the escalation process.
- Online forms have been updated to capture further information that aids the timely and accurate assessment of applications for assistance.

9. Lessons learned – final summary

- 9.1. The Council welcomes and recognises the importance of complaints and all customer feedback. We use this in discussion at our leadership meetings and to help drive our services forward. Our complaints processes and procedures are regularly reviewed, and whilst found to be compliant a small number of improvements have been made.
- 9.2 The team have worked hard with colleagues to make sure that the new CRM system is optimised to support the monitoring, management and reporting of complaints. This will also support a greater focus on learnings from complaint outcomes in the future.

10. Appendix A: LGSCO Annual Review 2024 letter



17 July 2024

By email

Mr Evans
Chief Executive
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council

Dear Mr Evans

Annual Review letter 2023-24

I write to you with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2024. The information offers valuable insight about your organisation's approach to complaints, and I know you will consider it as part of your corporate governance processes. As such, I have sought to share this letter with the Leader of your Council and Chair of the appropriate Scrutiny Committee, to ensure effective ownership and oversight of complaint outcomes, which offer valuable opportunities to learn and improve. In addition, this year, we have encouraged Monitoring Officers to register to receive the letter directly, supporting their role to report the decisions we uphold to their council.

For most of the reporting year, Paul Najsarek steered the organisation during his tenure as interim Ombudsman, and I was delighted to take up the role of Ombudsman in February 2024. I look forward to working with you and colleagues across the local government sector to ensure we continue to harness the value of individual complaints and drive and promote systemic change and improvement across the local government landscape.

While I know this ambition will align with your own, I am aware of the difficult financial circumstances and service demands that make continuous improvement a challenging focus for the sector. However, we will continue to hold organisations to account through our investigations and recommend proportionate actions to remedy injustice. Despite the challenges, I have great confidence that you recognise the valuable contribution and insight complaints, and their swift resolution, offer to improve services for the public.

Complaint statistics

Our statistics focus on three key areas that help to assess your organisation's commitment to putting things right when they go wrong:

Complaints upheld - We uphold complaints when we find fault in an organisation's actions, including where the organisation accepted fault before we investigated. We include the total number of investigations completed to provide important context for the statistic. This year, we also provide the number of upheld complaints per 100,000 population.

Compliance with recommendations - We recommend ways for organisations 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 organisation upheld the complaint and we agreed with how it offered to put things right. We encourage the early resolution of complaints and give credit to organisations that accept fault and find appropriate ways to put things right.

Finally, we compare the three key annual statistics for your organisation with similar authorities to provide an average marker of performance. We do this for County Councils, District Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs, Unitary Councils, and London Boroughs.

Your annual data, and a copy of this letter, will be uploaded to our interactive map, [Your council's performance](#), on 24 July 2024. This useful tool places all our data and information about councils in one place. You can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read the public reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

Your organisation's performance

In last year's letter, concerns were raised about your Council's failure to respond on time to our investigation enquiries. I am pleased to report we have not encountered issues with late responses to enquiries this year.

However, there were four cases where the Council did not complete recommendations within the agreed timescales. In one case, stage three of the Children's complaint process was completed a month late, and in another, a planning enforcement investigation was completed three months after the deadline the Council had agreed. We share recommendations at the draft decision stage of our process and often propose a time period within which we expect any actions to be completed. It is important your Council engages fully with that process and is realistic in either confirming or seeking to negotiate the timeframe required to complete the actions.

I welcome the efforts made to improve the timeliness of responses to our enquiries and invite the Council to apply similar oversight to the remedy process.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

In February, following a period of consultation, we launched the Complaint Handling Code for councils, setting out a clear process for responding to complaints effectively and fairly. It is aligned with the Code issued to housing authorities and landlords by the Housing Ombudsman Service and we encourage you to adopt the Code without undue delay. Twenty councils have volunteered to take part in an implementation pilot over the next two years that will develop further guidance and best practice.

The Code is issued to councils under our powers to provide guidance about good administrative practice. We expect councils to carefully consider the Code when developing policies and procedures and will begin considering it as part of our processes from April 2026 at the earliest.


The Code is considered good practice for all organisations we investigate (except where there are statutory complaint handling processes in place), and we may decide to issue it as guidance to other organisations in future.

Our successful complaint handling training programme continues to develop with new modules in Adult Social Care and Children's Services complaint handling available soon. All our courses include practical interactive workshops that help participants develop their complaint handling skills. We delivered 126 online workshops during the year, reaching more than 1,700 people. To find out more visit www.lgo.org.uk/training or get in touch at training@lgo.org.uk.

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

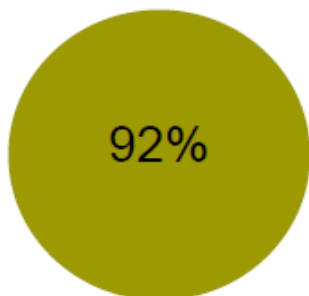
Returning to the theme of continuous improvement, we recognise the importance of reflecting on our own performance. With that in mind I encourage you to share your view of our organisation via this survey: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ombudsman/>. Your responses will help us to assess our impact and improve our offer to you. We want to gather a range of views and welcome multiple responses from organisations, so please do share the link with relevant colleagues.

Yours sincerely,



Amerdeep Somal
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

Complaints upheld



92% of complaints we investigated were upheld.

This compares to an average of **79%** in similar organisations.

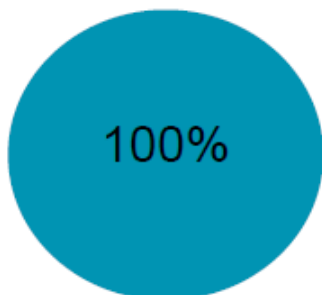
11
upheld decisions

This is 7.1 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents.

The average for authorities of this type is 4.6 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents.

Statistics are based on a total of **12** investigations for the period between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations



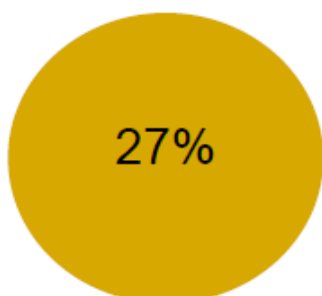
In **100%** of cases we were satisfied the organisation had successfully implemented our recommendations.

This compares to an average of **100%** in similar organisations.

Statistics are based on a total of **9** compliance outcomes for the period between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

- Failure to comply with our recommendations is rare. An organisation with a compliance rate below 100% should scrutinise those complaints where it failed to comply and identify any learning.

Satisfactory remedy provided by the organisation



In **27%** of upheld cases we found the organisation had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.

This compares to an average of **13%** in similar organisations.

3
satisfactory remedy decisions

Statistics are based on a total of **11** upheld decisions for the period between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

11. Appendix B: Council's complaints processes

The stages of the Council's process is detailed in the table below:

Stages	Adult services complaints	Children's services complaints	Formal Corporate complaints	Not within the formal complaints process
Stage 1	Statutory No specific timescale but aim to respond within 10 working days. Response from Service Manager or higher.	Statutory Up to 10 working days. Can agree extension for a further 10 working days. Response from Head of Service.	Up to 20 working days. Can agree extension for a further 10 working days. Response from Head of Service.	N/A
Stage 2	N/A	Statutory 25-65 working days. Completed by independent complaints investigators and report produced. Adjudicating letter in response to report completed by Children's Director of Social Care.	Up to 20 working days. Review of stage 1 complaint and response by Director.	N/A
Stage 3	N/A	Statutory Stage 3 independent panel. Up to 70 working days. Panel of three independent members who produce a report. Letter in response to the report completed by the Directors of Children's Services.	N/A	N/A
LGSCO	Can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman	Can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman	Can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman	N/A
Alternative appeal process	N/A	N/A	N/A	Customer given timescales for response