

**FOR PUBLICATION**

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**GOVERNANCE, ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**14 JULY 2022**

**Report of the Director of Organisational Development and Policy**

**Customer Feedback: Compliments and Complaints 2021/22**

**1. Purpose**

1.1 This report provides an end of year update on complaints and compliments reported to the Council during 2021/22 and trend analysis for the last six years.

**2. Information and Analysis**

2.1 Background

The Council is committed to delivering high quality public services and engages in a very substantial number of transactions with the public each year. A robust compliments and complaints policy, with effective supporting procedures, is a vital way to monitor how well the Council:

- Delivers an equitable service and remedies any injustices.
- Works constructively and sympathetically with its clients to put things right as quickly as possible; and
- Learns how it can do things better

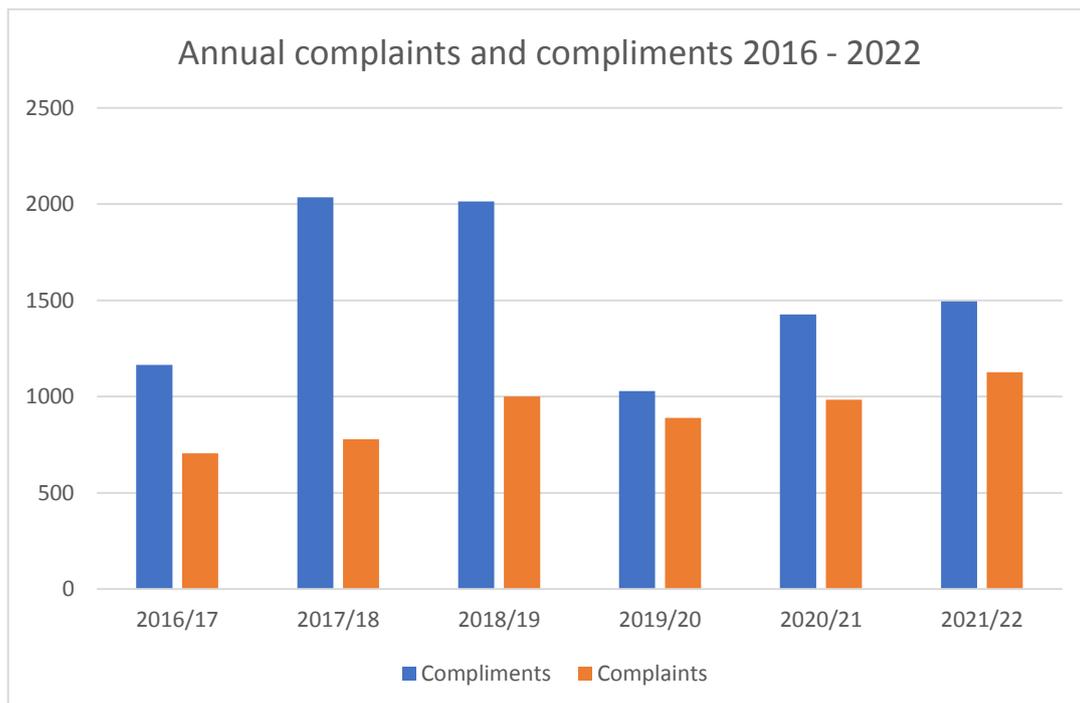
Complaints and compliments data is currently collected through a range of systems within departments. Childrens Services will shortly use the Granicus Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. Place currently use Apex but will move to the Granicus CRM system by September 2022. Adult Social

Care and Corporate Services & Transformation use Mosaic and local systems respectively but will move to the Granicus CRM with a target final implementation date of December 2023. Summary and detailed information from this data has been collected from all departments and is presented below.

## 2.2 Council compliments and complaints

Derbyshire County Council has hundreds of thousands of direct contacts with residents every year. As examples, Call Derbyshire receives around 30,000 calls each month and the Highways team receives over 90,000 enquiries annually. The number of compliments and complaints should be viewed in the context of the bigger picture of resident interaction with consideration that they make up a very small proportion of the contacts received.

A summary of compliments and complaints recorded over the last six years is highlighted below.



### Compliments

Compliments provide important feedback to individual officers and service areas regarding quality of work, the appreciation of clients and the impact of services on people's lives.

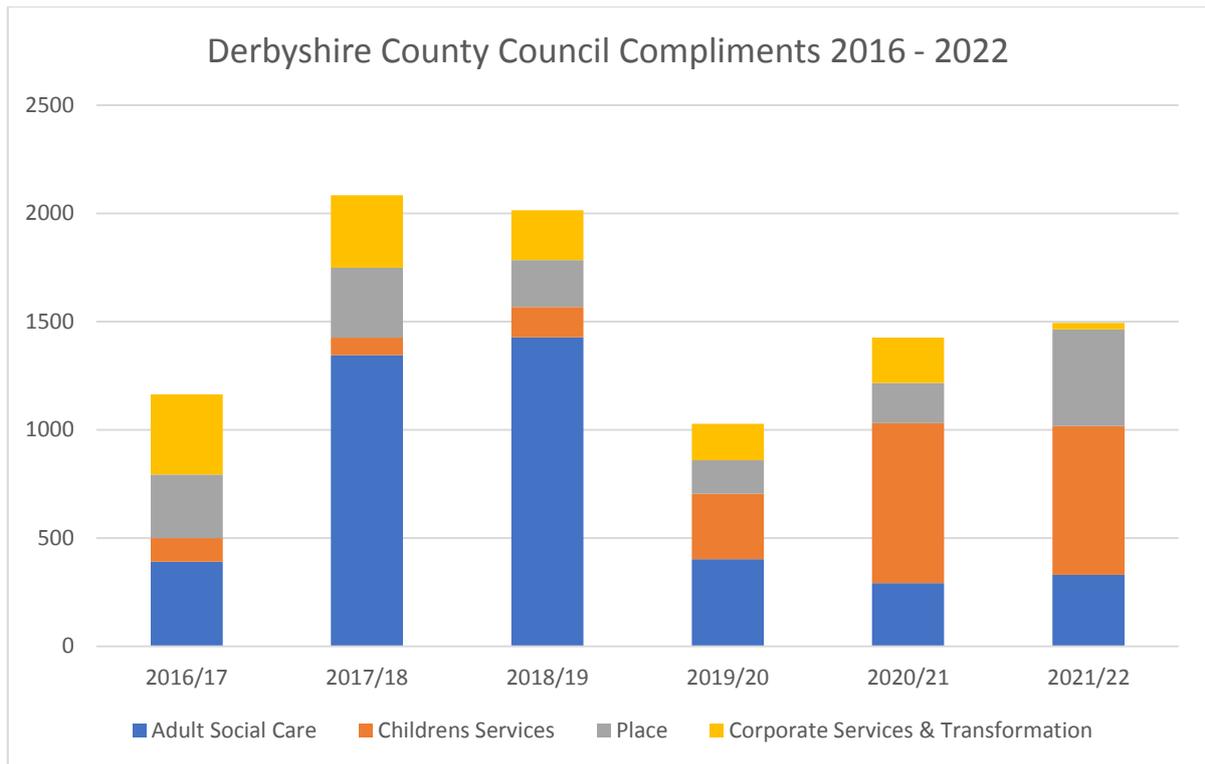
Compliments data has been collected using the following guidelines:

*“Any contact outside of the usual courtesies where a member of the public, person who uses our services or partner agency has been in touch with a specific compliment or expressed the difference our work has made to them.”*

In 2021/22 the Council recorded 1,494 compliments. This is an increase from 2020/21 where 1,426 compliments were recorded. Since 2016/17, the Council has seen an overall increase in recorded compliments received in Children’s Services. Over the same period, there has been a general decrease in the recording of compliments received by Adult Social Care and Corporate Services & Transformation. Place has seen a marked increase in compliments received in the last year: 301 of their compliments relate to libraries and trading standards which has recently transferred into the department from Corporate Services & Transformation, accounting for the respective increases and decreases.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Adult Social Care and Health	390	1,345	1,427	402	292	330
Children’s Services	109	81	140	302	738	687
Place	294	323	218	155	187	447
Corporate Services & Transformation	371	335	229	169	209	30
Derbyshire County Council	1,164	2,036	2,014	1,028	1,426	1,494

*Table 1: Number of compliments received*



## Complaints

The Council's complaints data is collected using the definition of a complaint as outlined in the Corporate Complaints Procedure as follows:

*“An expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet by a service user or their representative which requires a response in writing.”*

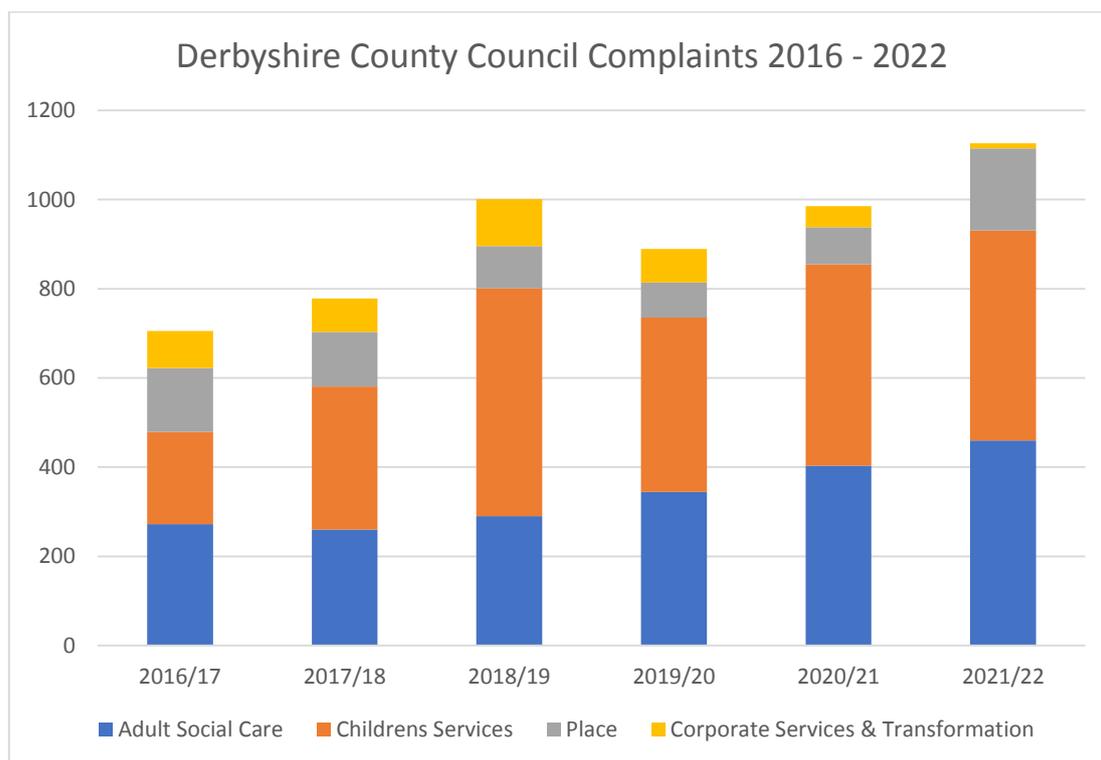
In most cases, the Council deals with and resolves any issues directly with residents and interested third parties without their need to make a complaint. The Council's complaints procedures offer a more formal process where a resident or third party wants to follow this route immediately or is dissatisfied with the initial response.

In 2021/22, the Council received 1,126 complaints. This is an increase from 984 complaints received in 2020/2021. Between 2016/17 and 2021/22, there has been an increase in the number of complaints received by Adult Social Care and Health and Children's Services, with a decrease in complaints in Corporate Services and Transformation between the same period. As with compliments, Place has seen a marked increase in the last year: 67 of Place's complaints relate to libraries and trading standards which have recently transferred into the department from Corporate Services & Transformation, accounting for the decrease in the CST and some of the increase in Place.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
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Adult Social Care and Health	272	260	290	344	403	460
Children's Services	207	321	511	391	452	471
Place	143	122	95	79	83	184
Corporate Services & Transformation	83	75	105	75	47	11
Derbyshire County Council	705	778	1001	889	984	1126

Table 2: Number of complaints received



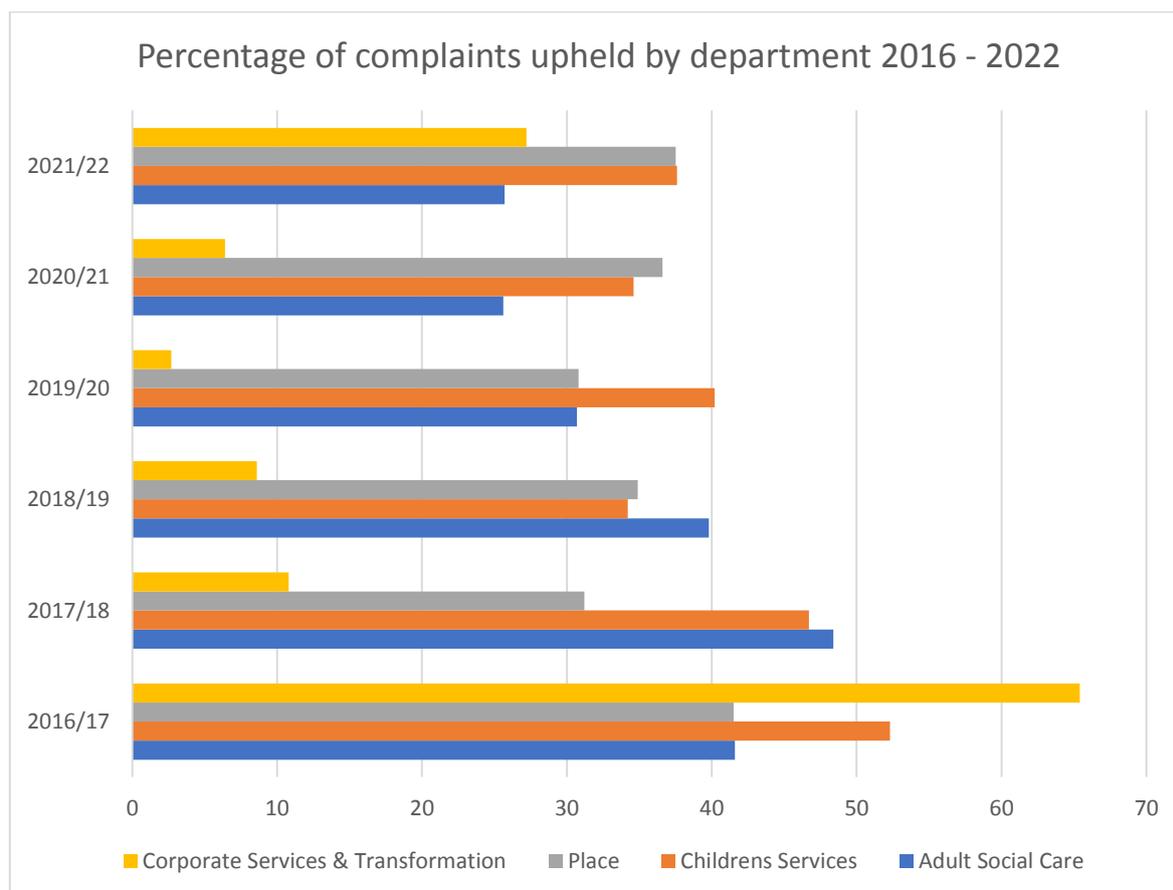
### Complaints received and decisions upheld or partially upheld

In 2021/22, 32.6% of complaints were upheld or partially upheld by the Council. This was a higher percentage of complaints upheld compared to the previous year although the general trend over six years is declining. In 2021/2022, Children's Services upheld the largest percentage of complaints. Corporate Services and Transformation appear to have upheld a much larger percentage of complaints than in previous years but this is because the number of complaints to that department has declined substantially: in reality three out of 11 complaints were upheld. The transfer of libraries and trading standards out of the department may also account for some of the percentage increase in upheld complaints.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
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Adult Social Care and Health	41.6%	48.4%	39.8%	30.7%	25.6%	25.7%
Children's Services	52.3%	46.7%	34.2%	40.2%	34.6%	37.6%
Place	41.5%	31.2%	34.9%	30.8%	36.6%	37.5%
Corporate Services & Transformation	65.4%	10.8%	8.6%	2.7%	6.4%	27.2%
Derbyshire County Council	47.9%	40.5%	33.2%	32.0%	29.9%	32.6%

Table 3: Percentage of complaints upheld by department



### Response times

The Council's policy is to respond to complaints within 28 working days. This target was met for 56.3% of complaints during 2021/22 as set out below. This is a decrease from the previous year when 60.4% of complaints were responded to within target, although there should be some caution as Corporate Services & Transformation 100% result reflects a total of 11 complaints, which has an impact on the overall percentage.

Complaints received by Corporate Services & Transformation in 2021/22 had the highest percentage of complaints responded to within the Council's target (although numbers of complaints are very low as stated above), with Adult

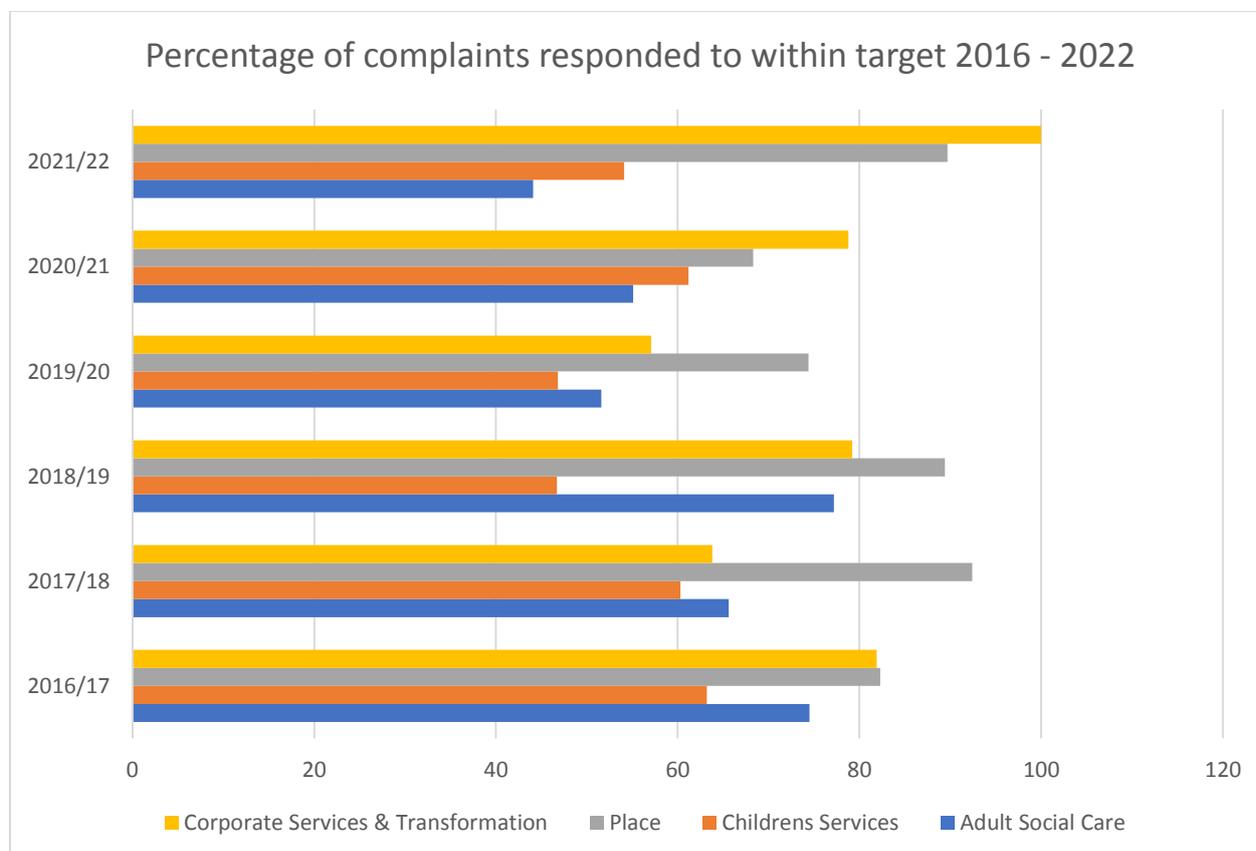
Social Care and Health having the lowest percentage of complaints responded to within target.

It should be noted that the table below includes statutory complaints within Adult Social Care and Children’s Services, which have different response time targets. If these statutory complaints were removed from the figures the response rate within 28 days would be significantly higher (for example, when statutory complaints are removed Children’s Services within 28 target response rate goes up to 86%). As the council’s headline policy is 28 days statutory complaints have been included below to provide an overall view.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Adult Social Care and Health	74.5%	65.6%	77.2%	51.6%	55.1%	44.1%*
Children’s Services	63.2%	60.3%	46.7%	46.8%	61.2%	54.1%*
Place	82.3%	92.4%	89.4%	74.4%	68.3%	89.7%
Corporate Services & Transformation	81.9%	63.8%	79.2%	57.1%	78.8%	100%
Derbyshire County Council	73.2%	67.7%	64.1%	51.9%	60.4%	56.3%

Table 4: Percentage of complaints responded to within 28 day target by department

\* includes statutory complaints which have different target response times



In 2021/22, the average number of days to respond to a complaint across three of the council's departments, within target timescales, was 12 (Adult Social Care it was 16.5 days, Place 12 days and CST 2 days). The nature of many Children's Services complaints means their data is recorded differently:

- Stage 1 complaints (target response within 20 days) - 92% were acknowledged within timescales
- Stage 2 complaints (target response within 65 days) - 42% were responded to before the 65-day initial target date
- Stage 3 - All review panels were convened at a time agreeable to the complainant
- Non statutory complaints (target response within 28 days) - 86% of the 148 formal complaints responded to were responded to within the target.

Where the response was outside the target, the average number of days to respond to a complaint across the Council was 47 days (Place 29 days and Adult Social Care 65 days: the Children's Services annual complaints report should be referred to for specific detail about CS response times).

As statutory complaints are dealt with through specific processes and with specific timescales it is more meaningful to look at the average response times separately rather than as a single average: this approach gives a better view of the council's speed of response where the organisation is not required to act within a statutory framework.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Outside of 28 day target	54.2	63.6	69.3	61.3	54.0	47
Inside of 28 day target	17.1	19.0	14.4	14.8	15.9	12

*Table 5 – Average days to respond to complaints*

### **Complaints by type**

To assist with understanding the reasons why complaints are made, each complaint should be allocated to a single category of complaint, based on the most significant issue raised by the complainant. This helps to identify and understand the nature of complaints and potential weaknesses in service delivery. The list of categories, with examples of issues that fall within each category, is provided in Appendix A.

There is some discrepancy between the overall number of complaints and the total number of complaints that have been categorised. In some cases this is because complaint categories are reported if and when the complaint enters the statutory process, which not all do (Children's Services) and because some do not fit into the main categories reported here. However, there is

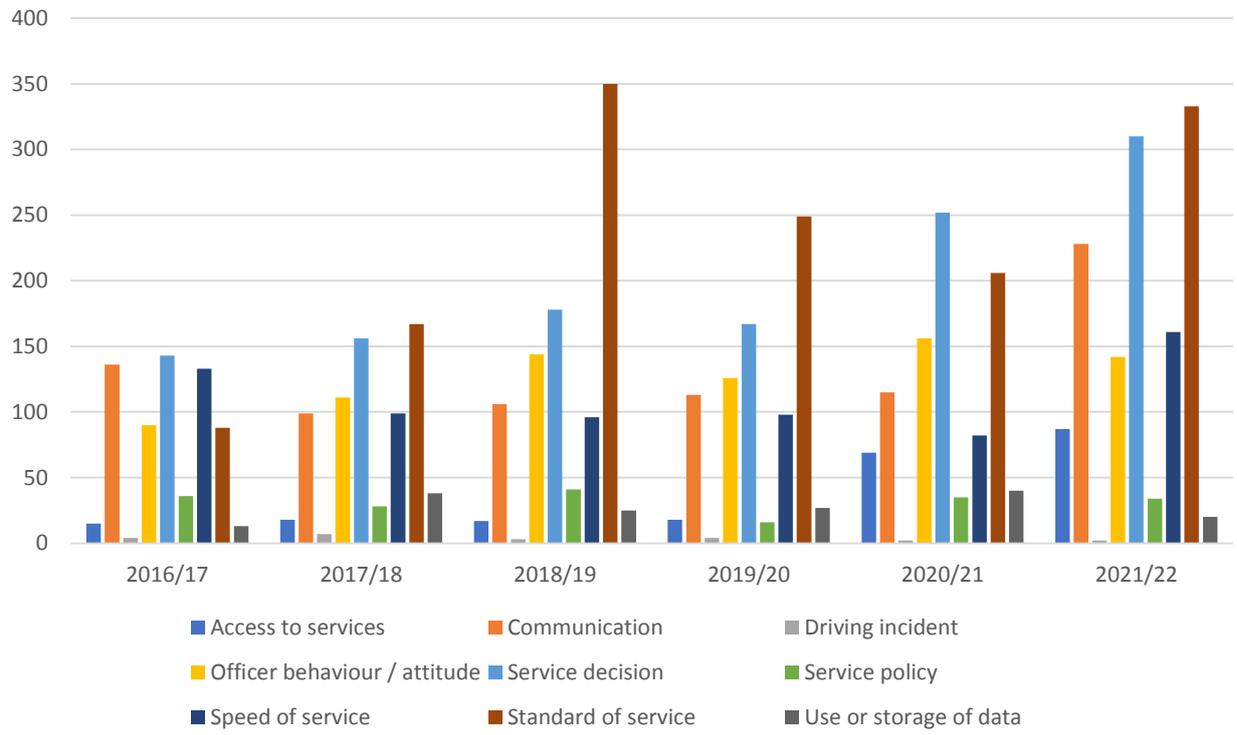
sufficient categorisation information for us to be confident in the areas of higher concern, and departments have more in-depth data to analyse and support their service improvement activity.

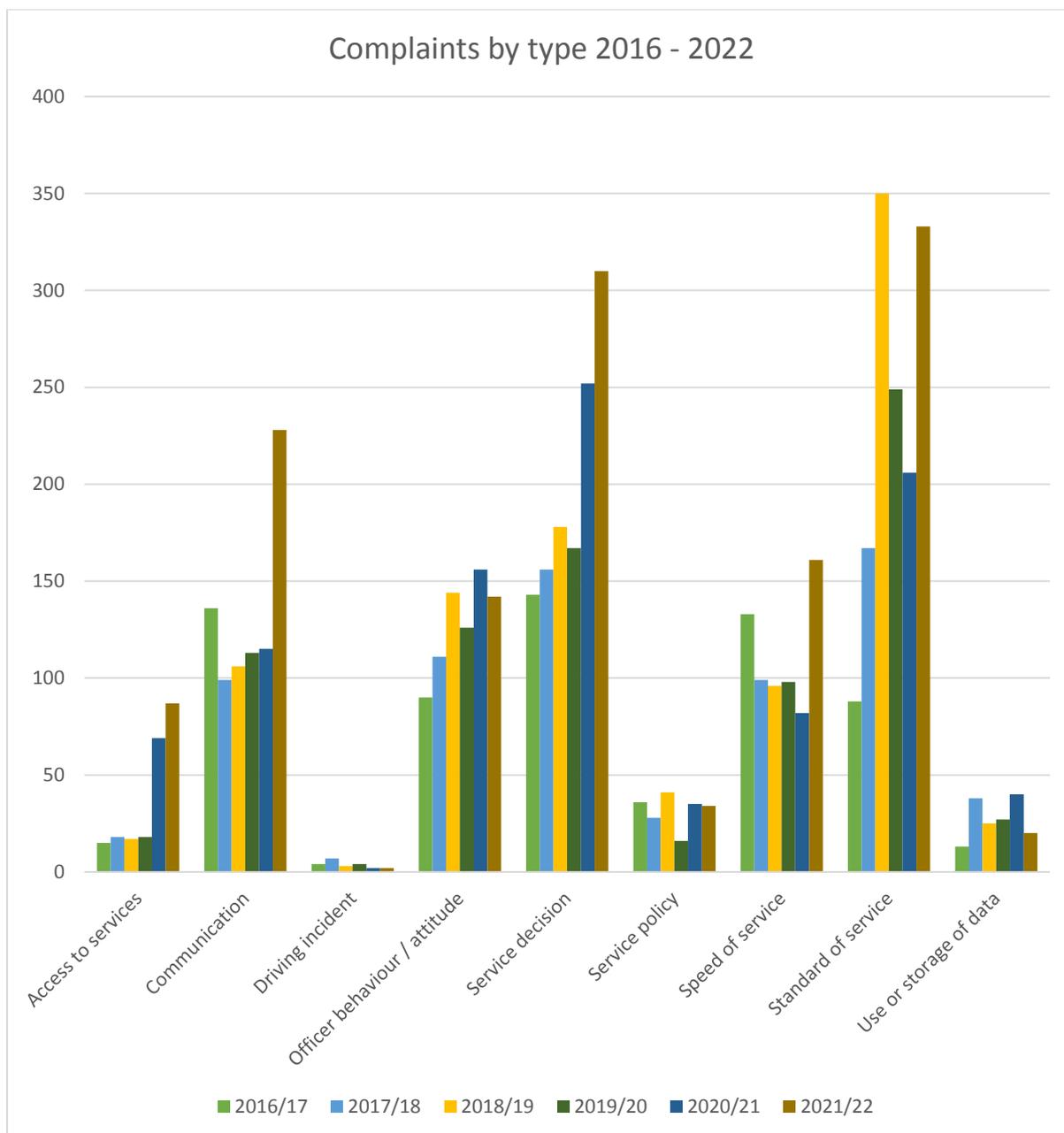
From the data provided, in 2021/22, the Council received 333 complaints in relation to the standard of service, which represents the highest number of complaints received. Access to services and communication have seen a marked increase in complaints in the last two years, as has service decision. Speed of service has seen a significant jump in the last year, largely driven by Adult Social Care figures. It is reasonable to suggest that Covid-19 implications and service pressures due to workforce availability will have contributed to service access complaints, particularly in social care.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Access to services	15	18	17	18	69	87
Communication	136	99	106	113	115	228
Driving incident	4	7	3	4	2	2
Officer behaviour / attitude	90	111	144	126	156	142
Service decision	143	156	178	167	252	310
Service policy	36	28	41	16	35	34
Speed of service	133	99	96	98	82	161
Standard of service	88	167	350	249	206	333
Use or storage of data	13	38	25	27	40	20

*Table 6 – Breakdown of complaints received by type*

Complaints by type 2016 - 2022





## Demographics

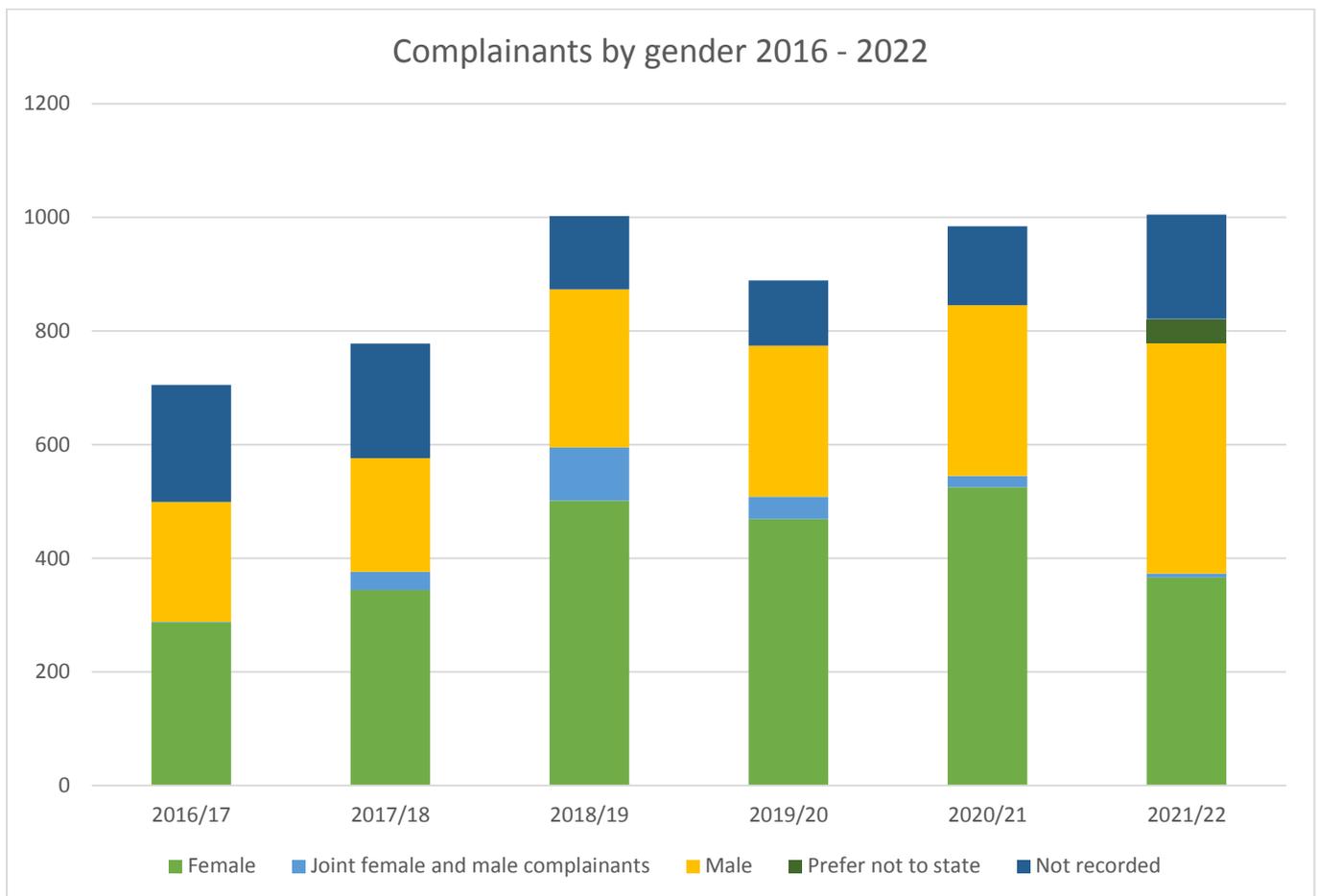
The Council also collects data on the gender of complainants and this information is set out in Table 7 for information. As can be seen in the table and graph in 2021/22, the highest percentage of complaints were male for the first time in six years. Again, this category has not been recorded for every case and this is an optional question in some reporting areas, with few complainants to Place providing the information, presumably as it is not seen as relevant.

It is suggested that the council considers and clarifies why it collects this data and what it is used for. Work is underway between Communications &

Customers and HR to define a new list of identification categories based on best practice.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Female	287	344	501	469	525	366
Joint female and male complainants	1	32	94	39	20	7
Male	211	200	278	266	300	406
Prefer not to state	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	42
Not recorded	206	202	129	115	139	184

Table 7 – Gender of complainants



## 2.3 Learning from complaints

Learning about the root causes of complaints is vital for the continuous improvement of Council services and improvement of the customer experience. Specific actions are undertaken as a result of individual complaints. Where the complaint investigation has identified underlying issues then broader actions have been undertaken to prevent further incidents. In general terms these have included:

- Staff training
- Service and process reviews
- Improved team working
- Reallocation of resources
- Better and more accessible information about services
- Management of client expectations

The new Customer Experience approach will also help to spot areas of concern, improve root cause analysis and support services in improving the experience of residents when interacting with the council.

### ***Children's Services***

In Children's Services, in 2021/22 there were improvements in the timescale of acknowledgement and response times. The biggest improvement was in the area of SEND complaints, with 88% of all complaints responded to formally done so within the required timescale and despite a higher number overall, a lower percentage have escalated for a final response. It does however remain a key priority in 2022/23 to work with front line services to prevent concerns/comments becoming complaints. Given that over half of all complaints investigated are not upheld, it would suggest that relationships with those using services from the council have broken down on some level and emphasis should be in place to rebuild relationships at the earliest level stage and rebuild trust in the council.

### ***Adult Social Care & Health***

The Adult social care department has seen a significant rise in the number of complaints received over the past 2 years. Adult care is one of the departments where users of their services have been significantly affected by the national practice guidance requirements that were regularly updated to ensure both staff and service recipients were kept safe. This resulted in the temporary closure of access to some services and reduced face to face contact.

The department was also one of the first to pilot receiving telephone calls via Microsoft Teams and has remained very accessible throughout the pandemic in spite of the fact that colleagues have been working remotely from home. This may also have contributed to the increase in complaints received during

this period. Adult Care actively promotes its accessibility which is a potential additional contributory factor.

As more systems have moved on line in all areas of life, users of our services are more comfortable and familiar with online contact. This increased online contact, in conjunction with anxiety around access to services for family/friends who receive care. There has been an increase in staff absence relating to covid-19 infection which has impacted on our ability to respond within desired timescales. A review of the systems and support available across the whole complaint, enquiry and compliment services is currently being completed to address and improve this situation.

Examples of lessons learnt:

- Delays in service – There was a delay in an assessment being completed due to a worker leaving. Management process has been improved in reallocation of cases.
- Service Policy – A policy has been identified through a complaint around placements that are rated 'inadequate' with CQC. This is now currently being addressed.
- Communication – There has been a change in an automatic letter that was sent from the hospital discharge team. This was following a complaint raised around a letter about rehabilitation services when the person was palliative. There is now an indicator on a person's record to ensure this letter is not sent out.

### ***Place***

Following a Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) complaint a suggestion has been made relating to how Place deal with unreasonable and persistent type complainants. The LGO investigating officer noted that Place need to be clearer in their communication with residents when they are considering applying the Unreasonable and Persistent Policy. Place were also encouraged to ensure we address inappropriate comments or accusations sometimes made by complainants to make it clear that the council will not tolerate unreasonable behaviour.

Highways complaints are monitored through a Corrective Actions Tracker as part of the Quality Management System for Highways. The tracker is monitored through the Management Review meeting where it was highlighted that an open complaint needed to be addressed before being closed down as complete. The complaint referred to a blocked gulley on a small single track road where a large tanker vehicle was unable to access and so the road had flooded. The lesson learned is that the road has now been added to a programme of work to ensure a handheld machine is used to avoid sending out a larger vehicle that cannot access the gulley and thus delaying the work being carried out.

## 2.4 Feedback procedures and systems

In March 2020, Cabinet agreed that moving forward Customer Feedback (complaints, comments and compliments) would be managed through the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which is currently being implemented through the Channel Shift programme.

The system is now in place for Children's Services (who will run both their old and new systems for a short period of time to build staff confidence) and will be implemented in Place by the end of September 2022. Adult Social Care will follow, which requires integration into the Mosaic system, with Corporate Services & Transformation being implemented last given the disparate nature of complaint management in the department. The current aim is for all departments to be using the system by December 2023.

Once all services are using the CRM system fully automated customer feedback reporting will be available. Until then a mixture of manual and automated reporting will be used, and the Customer Experience team (the new name for the Channel Shift team) will analyse the data to identify trends, areas for process improvement and work with departments to improve the resident's experience of using council services and giving feedback.

## 3. Appendices

3.1 Appendix 1 – Type of complaint descriptors

## 4. Recommendation(s)

That Committee:

a) Notes the content of the report and the latest data.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Type of complaint descriptors**

**Access to service** - Difficulties in finding services, problems with access to buildings, website not working, complex or difficult forms.

**Communications** - Information difficult to find or understand, delays in communication

**Driving incident** - Discourteous or dangerous driving.

**Officer behaviour/attitude** – Inappropriate, impolite, discourteous, unhelpful or rude behaviour.

**Service decision** - Disagreement with a decision to provide, withdraw or limit a service. Disagreement with the process leading to decisions being made.

**Service policy** - Service delivered in accordance with any policy but where there is disagreement with the policy or it is felt it disadvantages or discriminates against an individual.

**Speed of service** - Service outside of published target dates, missed deadlines or outside reasonable client expectation.

**Standard of service** - Not following service standards or policies, products or workmanship not up to reasonable expectations.

**Use or storage of data** - Incorrect client information, information not readily available or lost, not complying with established policies, procedures and Regulations in relation to managing information