

Audit & Governance Committee
26 September 2019

Annual Complaints Performance Report

Purpose of the report:

The purpose of this report is to give the Audit & Governance Committee an overview of the council's complaint handling performance in 2018/19 and to demonstrate how feedback from customers has been used to improve services.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

The Audit & Governance Committee note the report.

Introduction:

1. The council has three complaints procedures; one for Adult Social Care, one for Education and Children's Services and one for all other council services. The procedures for dealing with complaints about children's and adult social work services are set out in statute. The corporate complaints procedure (covering all other council services) is based on best practice. This report gives an overview of complaint management for all three procedures.
2. Adult Social Care and Education and Children's Services produce separate annual reports where more detailed information and analysis about the types of complaints received and outcomes and improvement actions can be found.
3. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) is the final point for complaints about councils and some other organisations providing local public services. Customers can refer their complaint to the LGSCO for external independent investigation if they remain

unhappy; normally once they have completed the council's complaints procedure.

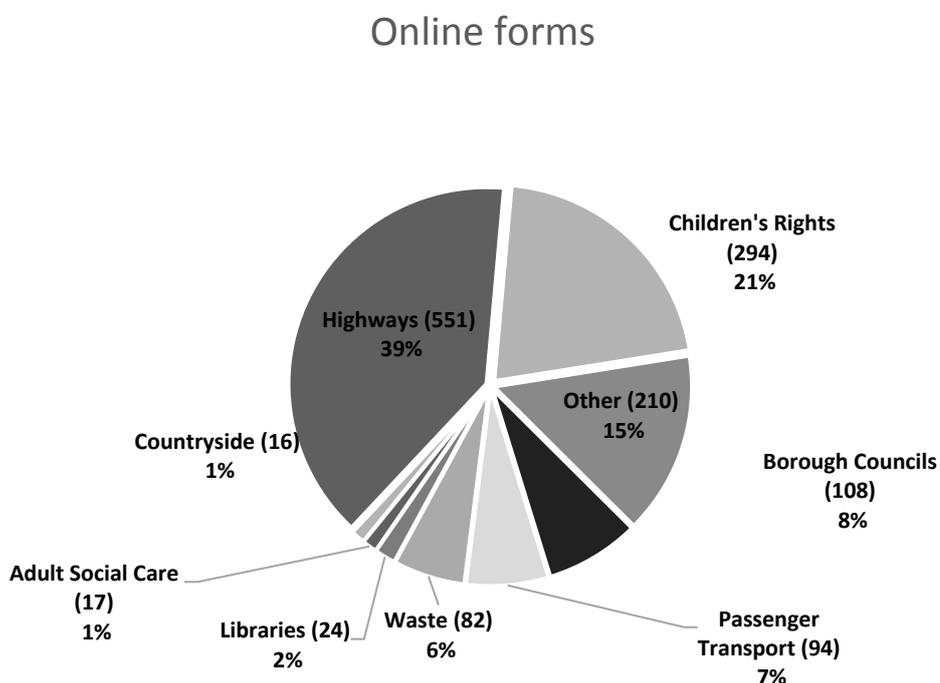
4. This report also sets out LGSCO findings on complaints about Surrey County Council. The LGSCO's figures included in this report are based on those in the LGSCO's Annual Review letter, issued on 24 July 2019.
5. This year, we are also reporting for the first time on complaints made about Surrey County Council's Pensions Service. As well as Surrey County Council, the service administers the pensions function for other local authorities; East Sussex, Hammersmith & Fulham, Hillingdon, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster. Pension complaints are dealt with through a separate complaints procedure and have a separate Ombudsman; The Pensions Ombudsman. The Pensions Service also provides separate reports on complaints received to the respective Pensions Funds.

Background to complaints handling in Surrey County Council:

6. The council recognises that effective complaint handling is critical to delivering good customer service and good outcomes for our residents. As well as putting things right when they go wrong, every complaint presents a potential opportunity to learn and improve and rebuild trust.
7. The volume of complaints does not in itself indicate quality of council's complaint handling performance. The council encourages complaints as it aims to be an open, learning organisation that is responsive to feedback. Low complaint volumes can be a sign that an organisation is not open to receiving feedback.
8. Escalation rates and uphold rates are a better measure of performance, as these indicate where we have been unable to resolve complaints at service level and where fault has been found.
9. Where fault is found improvement actions are put in place to resolve the complaint for the customer and to make sure we improve our service. Specific examples are highlighted in Annex 1.
10. Even if a complaint is not upheld, there is always the opportunity to learn about why the customer has made a complaint, and a need to understand their motives and feelings.
11. Where there is an alternative route for resolution e.g. legal recourse or formal appeal, such matters are not handled under the complaints procedure. For example; data breaches, Special Educational Needs (SEN) tribunals and school transport appeals panel.
12. It is important to capture a balanced view of services and to recognise and learn from good service, which is why compliments received by customers are also recorded and referenced in this report. Examples are given in Annex 2.

- 13. The council has a self-service online complaints form to make it easy for customers to contact us. We also receive a number of service requests through this route, as well as residents commenting on policy decisions. Corporately, we operate an early intervention approach. This means that we assess all feedback received to make sure any enquiries are properly routed to the person or service best placed to help or respond, as well as evaluate whether what the customer has asked for can be achieved without the need to go through the complaints procedure.
- 14. The team proactively works with services to prevent issues escalating where the required advice, information or preferred outcome can be provided quickly outside the complaints procedure. This is to provide a proportionate and resolution focused service; it is not designed to prevent complaints being made. This approach helps distinguish complaints from service requests quickly and makes sure they are properly routed with minimum delay. **1396** customers used this on-line form option in 2018/19.
- 15. Customers used these online forms to provide feedback on a wide range of subjects. The majority of customers used this option for highways issues (551), with the most frequent topic being parking. This was followed by potholes, and then vegetation problems. The next most frequent contact related to Children’s Services (294), then Passenger Transport (94), mainly concerning bus services and bus passes. Waste (82) was next, mainly relating to community recycling centres. We also received a number of enquiries relating to services provided by district and borough councils; the majority relating to residential waste collection. Where appropriate, customers were signposted to the responsible authority.

Figure 1: Online complaint forms

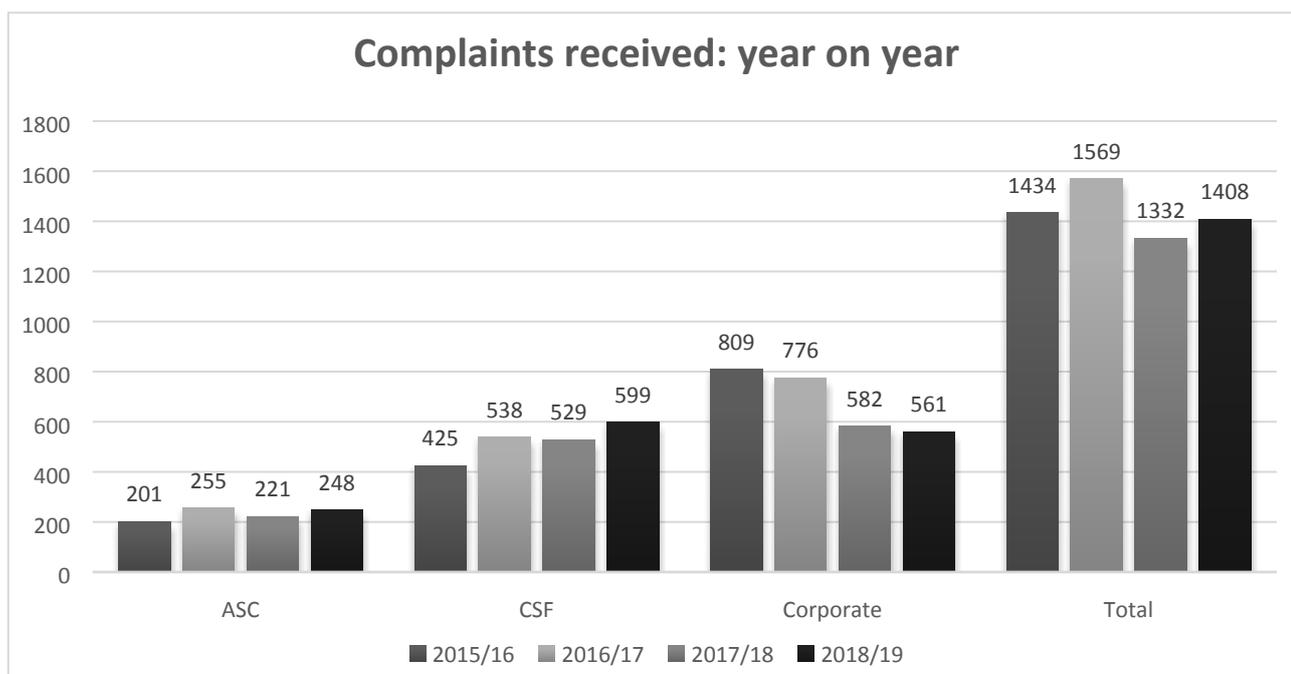


16. **16%** of these contacts were unable to be resolved through early intervention and escalated to the complaints procedure. This was an increase from 9% the previous year.
17. Some of the regular issues reported through the online complaints form, included:
 - Traveller sites and associated concerns about litter, antisocial behaviour etc
 - Waste charges
 - Countryside car parking charges
 - District & Borough Council matters e.g. missed bin collections, street cleaning, neighbour issues
 - Bus services – changes to routes / operators, timetables etc
 - Inconsiderate parking / commuter parking
 - Grass cutting
 - Application issues e.g. bus passes, van permits etc
 - Disabled Bus Pass – changes to times
 - Road closures
 - Insurance claims

Complaint handling performance in 2018/19:

18. During the year 2018/19, the three complaint teams within Surrey County Council received **1,408** complaints; a 6% increase across the board from the previous year (1,332).
19. Breaking this down into the three complaints procedures, Adult Social Care saw a 12% increase, Children's Social Care and Education a 13% increase and all other services a 4% decrease. This reduction suggests the early intervention approach adopted in this area has been successful in preventing the unnecessary escalation of complaints. It also reflects the continuing demand for social care and education services.
20. The increase in complaints relative to Children's Services and Education provision was not unexpected given the changes in thresholds for intervention, specifically in regard to Children with Disabilities.

Figure 2: Total complaints received



21. The most popular subject of complaint for each of the complaints procedures are shown in Figure 3 below. Service specific delivery issues followed by lack of communication were the most frequent complaint categories.

Figure 3: Complaint categories 2018/19

CORPORATE	CHILDREN, SCHOOLS & FAMILIES	ADULT SOCIAL CARE
Roadworks	Unsatisfactory communication	Service quality
Lack of contact	SEND children out of school with gaps in education provision	Financial/funding
Vegetation	Disagreement with decisions against applications for decelerated schools admissions	Dissatisfaction with assessment process
Resurfacing	Transport to and from school for children with Education, Health and Care Plans	Staff behaviour
Other works (pavements, bollards)	Disagreement with outcomes of ICPC	Decision making

Complaint trends & performance:

22. A breakdown of complaints received by Surrey County Council and response times per service for 2018/19, compared to 2017/18, can be found in Annex 3 to this report.
23. The top area of complaint for the council for 2018/19 related to Children's Social Care Services. Previously, the Highways Service traditionally attracted the highest number of complaints due to the high demand on Surrey's roads. Complaints fell in this area in 2018/19, largely due to the early intervention approach and more proactive communications around highway works.
24. An average of 82% of complaints were responded to within timescale across the three procedures, consistent with performance in 2017/18.
25. The complexities of complaints in Children's Social Care continue to impact on their ability to respond within the statutory timescales.
26. Where the council is found at fault, financial redress can be recommended where appropriate. All financial awards are approved by the relevant Head of Service and, if greater than £1,000, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member. The Ombudsman can also recommend financial redress if they find fault following an investigation.
27. There was a decrease in the amount of financial redress paid in 2018/19 compared to 2017/18. Financial redress payments by year are shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Financial Redress year-on-year

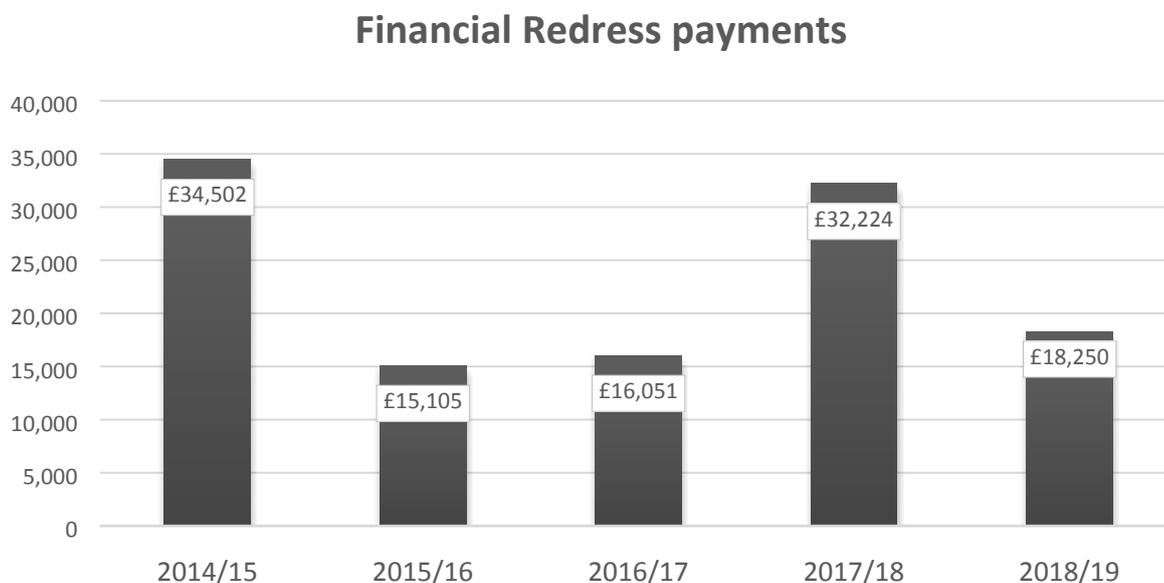


Figure 6: Financial Redress breakdown 2018/19

COMPENSATION 2018/19	
Adult Social Care	£1,200
Children, Schools & Families	£17,035
Corporate	£15
Total	£18,250

28. The three highest payments were:

- £3,750 to compensate for lost provision of 15 school months; restricting communications without good reason, and time and trouble.
- £3,700 to compensate for a child with special educational needs being without a school place for half the school year and for any necessary catch up provision including occupational therapy and speech and language therapy.
- £2,990 to compensate for the costs of occupational therapy, education psychology and speech and language reports for a child with special educational needs, as well as compensation for time, trouble and distress.

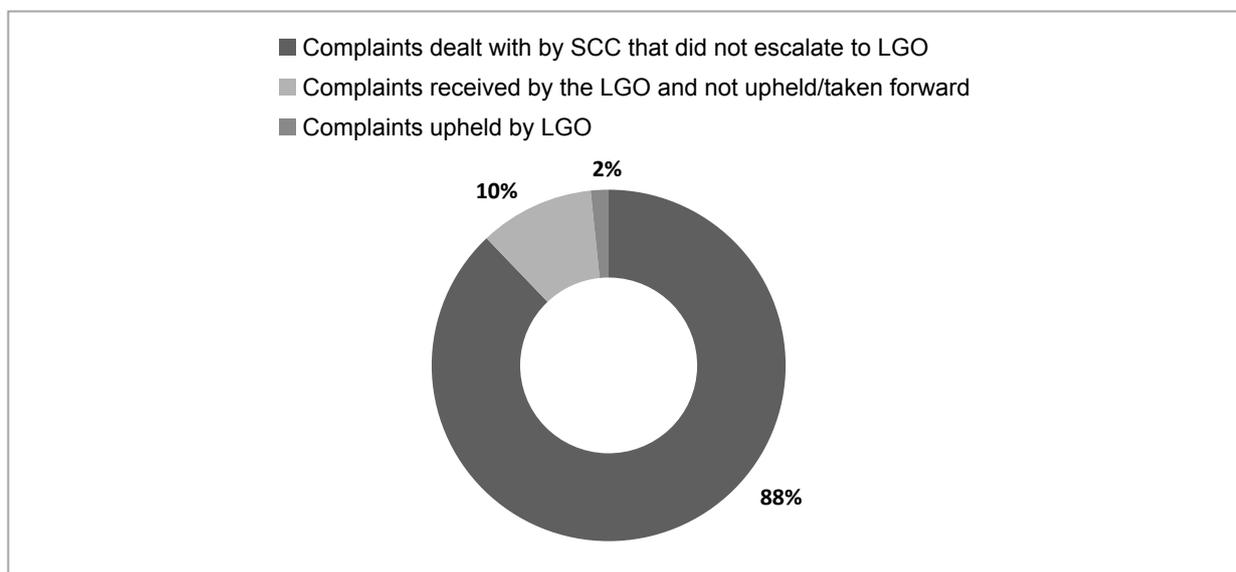
Complaint Escalation:

29. We aim to resolve complaints satisfactorily at the earliest opportunity; however customers can escalate their complaint, both to the next stage of the council’s complaints process (where this option applies) and to the LGSCO for external independent investigation. Escalation rates are a good indicator of how successfully complaints are being handled at point of service.
30. **22%** of complaints (124) escalated to Stage 2 of the council’s corporate complaints procedure in 2018/19; a 5% increase from the previous year. Due to their complexity, a number of complaints have been taken on straight at stage 2 to avoid further frustration for customers. The higher percentage escalation to Stage 2 is also likely to be a feature of our early intervention approach, as more of the feedback being dealt with early would otherwise have ended at Stage 1.
31. Escalation to Stage 2 within Children, Schools and Families increased to **6%**, an increase of 3% from the previous year. This was not unexpected as thresholds for intervention have been realigned as part of the move to the new Family Resilience Model, which focuses on Early Help.
32. Adult Social Care is required by statute to have a one stage complaint procedure. This means that there is not the opportunity to compare escalation rates in Adult Social Care with Education and Children’s Social Care and corporate complaints.

Escalation to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

33. In 2018/19, the Ombudsman received **168** complaints and enquiries about Surrey County Council; 12% of the total number of complaints received by the council. This was a slight increase from 2017/18 (10%); however escalation rates remain broadly consistent. Of the complaints investigated by the Ombudsman, **26** were upheld (2% of the total number of complaints received by the council).

Figure 6: Escalation to the Ombudsman 2018/19



34. Where the Ombudsman has upheld a complaint, this indicates fault on the part of the council in delivering its services and can negatively impact the council's reputation. It is important to learn from complaints upheld by the Ombudsman to identify what went wrong and to put in place measures to make sure a similar situation does not happen again.
35. A breakdown of complaints upheld by the Ombudsman can be found in Annex 4 and Annex 5 to this report; benchmarking of Ombudsman escalation rates with other similar county councils at Annex 6 and examples of upheld and not upheld complaints at Annex 7. The Ombudsman annual statistics are a good benchmarking tool as it is a consistent, independent measure for complaint escalation for all local authorities in England and the Ombudsman is the same final stage for all complaint procedures.
36. As shown in Figure 6, the escalation rate to the Ombudsman was 12% and the uphold rate 2%. The three most common categories of complaint to the Ombudsman were Education and Children's Services, Adult Care Services, and Highways & Transport. 2018/19 saw an increase in the number of complaints the Ombudsman received about Education and Children's Services and it was the top category of complaint about the council.

37. Financial redress was recommended in **54%** of cases upheld by the Ombudsman, a decrease from 59% the previous year.
38. The council had a 100% compliance rate with Ombudsman recommendations and an uphold rate (where the Ombudsman found fault) of 60%. This compared to a national average for county councils of 64%.
39. This year the Ombudsman issued two public reports about Surrey County Council; both related to Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). In his annual letter, he also raised concerns about a lack of timely and full responses to Ombudsman investigations. This has been a particular challenge for Education and Children's Social Care complaints, which are complex in nature. Improvement actions are already underway to address this, which has included a restructure of the Children's complaints team.
40. To improve elected member oversight of Ombudsman complaints, a process has been put in place to notify relevant Cabinet Members about LGSCO cases and decisions. A quarterly anonymised report is also provided to the Monitoring Officer.

Pensions Complaints

41. Figure 7 (below) shows the complaints received for the year 2018/19 for Surrey County Council's Pensions Service.
42. There were no recorded cases of complaints being referred to The Pensions Ombudsman.

Figure 7: Pensions Complaints 2018/19

Fund	Communication	Service Quality	Service Delay	Other	2018/19 Total	2017/18 Total
Hammersmith & Fulham	2	5	8	0	15	19
Hillingdon	3	3	8	0	14	15
Kensington & Chelsea	6	3	7	0	16	16
Surrey	9	18	20	6	53	41
Teachers	0	0	1	0	1	1
Westminster	0	1	0	0	1	12
Westminster/East Sussex				2	2	2
Total	20	30	44	8	102	106

43. Most complaints received were about Surrey County Council's Pension Fund and the main reason for complaint across all the Funds was service delay. Overall, the total number of complaints received was slightly less than the previous year.

Learning from complaints

44. Every complaint presents an opportunity to put things right for the complainant and also for the council to learn and improve. An individual complaint may result in a single action to put that situation right, or multiple complaints about the same issue could indicate a need to more widely review a process or how a particular service is delivered. Specific examples are given in Annex 1.
45. We also implemented 9 service improvements following Ombudsman investigations; these included reviewing a number of procedures.

Compliments:

46. It is important to present a balanced view of services and recognise and learn from good service. Throughout the year Surrey residents and customers have taken the time to contact the council to compliment the standard of service they have received. In 2018/19, the council recorded **1980** compliments about its services; 143 for Education and Children's Services; 701 for Adult Social Care and 1136 for all other council services.
47. We are working to ensure more consistency in recording of compliments e.g. through a standard definition. The Children's complaints team is in particular are looking at ways to ensure compliments are routinely logged when received, which is being promoted and supported by senior leadership. Extracts from compliments received are in Annex 2.

Conclusions:

48. What are we doing well?
 - a) Providing 'soft skills' training for staff to manage difficult conversations and customer complaints.
 - b) Regular reporting on customer relations activity across the three areas to respective leadership and management teams. This has increased transparency and informed changes in service delivery.
 - c) Providing high quality advice and support on general complaint handling across all three areas.
 - d) Focusing on early intervention – corporate Customer Relations team triaging online complaint enquiries to prevent unnecessary complaint escalation.
 - e) Children's customer relations team is developing closer working ties with Quality Assurance Managers both in SEND and Children's Services with a view to informing change in practice and/or service delivery.

- f) Giving guidance on the management of challenging behaviours to help with the delivery of unwelcome messages and to prevent relationships with customers deteriorating.

49. What do we need to continue to work on?

- a) Providing timely and full responses to Ombudsman enquiries. Central guidance has been rolled out, proactive prompting of deadlines is in place and workshops are planned to help set clear and consistent standards and expectations across the organisation in terms of both the quality of information and level of engagement required from services to enable effective responses to the Ombudsman.
- b) Roll-out of a new electronic casework management system for complaints and other customer feedback across all services. This will enable improved self-serve options for customers and will allow the council to capture customer feedback across all services within a single system. The ambition is for this to also include MP and Councillor enquiries.
- c) Sharing of complaints information to enable full responses whilst meeting confidentiality requirements and ensuring the safeguarding and wellbeing of vulnerable people. We continue to work with Information Governance to ensure our approach is appropriate and proportionate.
- d) The Children's Customer Relations Team will:
- work with the new Safeguarding Partnership Board to agree on a revised process for escalating and monitoring disagreements and dissents from both parents and colleagues around Child Protection
 - work with quality managers in SEND and quality assurance officers within the service, sharing learning from complaints to inform change in the future and assist the delivery of support for children and young people
 - work with Admissions & Transport in the light of clearer guidance for families relative to decelerated admissions for school

Financial and value for money implications

50. Payment of financial redress (as outlined in paragraphs 27 and 28 of this report and shown in Figures 5 and 6) is the financial implication of complaint handling. Responding to complaints quickly and getting issues resolved early ensures complaints do not escalate unnecessarily through the process and minimises the requirement to pay financial redress.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

51. Ensuring we maintain good complaint handling processes enables our service to remain accessible to all. We continually review ease of access to all three complaints procedures to ensure particular groups are

not disadvantaged. Should an Equality and Diversity issue be identified through a complaint investigation, this will be addressed with the service concerned.

Risk Management Implications

52. The complaints process does not have any direct risk management implications; however complaints do carry a risk to the council's reputation if not handled appropriately. We routinely review and report on complaints data to ensure our processes are effective and to minimise any risk.

Next steps:

53. The Audit & Governance Committee to receive information on operation of the council's complaints procedures on an annual basis.
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Annexes:

1. Improvements from Customer Feedback
2. Extracts of compliments
3. SCC Complaint Handling performance
4. SCC Complaints upheld by LGSCO
5. SCC Complaints breakdown – referrals to LGSCO
6. Benchmarking of LGSCO complaints
7. Example case studies of LGSCO decisions (upheld vs not upheld)

Sources/background papers:

- Surrey County Council complaints database, Adult Social Care Customer Relations Team, Children's Customer Relations Team.
- Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2018/19 for Surrey County Council - available on their [website](#)
- Decision Notices available on LGSCO [website](#)

Annex 1: Examples of learning identified through customer feedback

1. **Customers said:** A family member complained about the handling of a telephone call by the Emergency Duty Team.
We did: The Adult Social Care Directorate recognised that the call was rushed and lacked empathy. The manager addressed the issue through a reflective practice session, supervision and customer service training.
2. **Customers said:** A service user complained that the care worker visits were unpredictable, did not arrive at the preferred time and were not considerate of his Parkinson's disease.
We did: The manager partially upheld the complaint with a case review and contacted the provider to report the concerns and request they reviewed the practice of the care worker concerned. The care worker was changed to accommodate the preferred call times and a request was made for the new provider to supply the service users with a weekly schedule of the times of their calls and who would be visiting.
3. **Customers said:** A family member complained regarding the choice of a nursing home and the way this had been communicated. She also felt the assessment did not capture her mother's anxiety.
We did: Learning from the complaint was incorporated into training for the staff concerned and into best practice e.g. a telephone call for urgent matters and offering to include additional information from family members in the assessment.
4. **Customers said:** They were unhappy with a delay in amending Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
We did: Arranged training for Special Education Needs staff to make sure they are aware that they must amend EHCPs that are out-of-date in line with statutory timescales rather than assuming a child's need are met because he or she attends a specialist school.
5. **Customers said:** They were unhappy with the way the EHCP was dealt with during the transition to post 18 education
We did: Revised the paperwork to be completed at review meetings to improve how the views of contributors are reflected; Clearly explain in writing the reasons for a Council's proposed placement differing from that of the young person or their parents, with a follow up by SEND case workers to discuss the decision in more detail and explain options in terms of possible next steps.
6. **Customers said:** There was a lack of clarity about responsibility for maintenance of trees on town paths.
We did: A new process was agreed for handling enquiries regarding trees on town paths to make sure the enquiry gets to the appropriate team as quickly as possible.

Annex 2: Extracts of compliments received

I cannot thank everyone in the Guildford team who helped look at my husband enough. All the staff treated him and myself, as well as they'd treat their own families.

I would like to say a BIG thank you to all the staff that work in Social Services in Tandridge. Your time and support has been brilliant and it has enabled dad to have the care that he needed over the past year or so. The team have been incredible, so helpful and always mindful of dad's needs and ours as a family when we needed to communicate with them.

Thank you very much for all the support you have offered to L, and to our family, We are sorry that L has not engaged with you more positively, but we felt nobody could have tried harder to offer her support...As a family we thank you for your professionalism and care that you have given to us.

....a few lines to highlight A's exemplary practice on this case, following the Looked After Children review yesterday. As you are aware, X's placement came to a very abrupt end following concerns raised in relation to the previous carer. A has supported X through what has been his second foster placement breakdown and also engineered a very positive transition to an emergency placement which has now been extended towards a possible placement within extended family , at the end of the current academic year. Throughout above, A has liaised closely with X, his family and school.

My husband and I would like to take this opportunity to write to you so that we may express our heartfelt thanks to A, B, C and D over the past 3 years. Our son Y, received a diagnosis of ASD at 5 years old. Overwhelming psychological distress, sensory hypersensitivity and very high levels of anxiety prevented him from accessing his education in a school environment for the majority of his school years. In 2016 after the breakdown of yet another education setting, A offered us the option of a Personal Budget for Y. We didn't know what this was, we didn't know how it would work, we didn't know if we would even be capable of running a Personal Budget. What we did know though was that we were desperate for Y to access an education that would enable him to study towards and sit iGCSE exams opening up a pathway to college and his hopes of a future career being realised. Agreeing to a Personal Budget for Y allowed us to work directly with you and together we formed a partnership that achieved something truly amazing for our son. ... We just wanted to take some time to say thank you. Thank you for listening to us, for advising us, for allowing us the opportunity of working so closely with you through the Personal Budget, but most of all thank you for believing in Y as much as we do and for giving him this amazing opportunity which we are sure will enable him to become a self-sufficient, independent, confident young man, ready to take up his place in society.

Thank you so much to the staff at Slyfield Recycling Centre who retrieved my keys for me this morning when I idiotically threw them into the bin with my old washing line, not realising they were still in my hand. Apparently this happens a lot. They were very kind and it was much appreciated.

My daughter has individual singing lessons with Surrey Arts. As she is a Young Carer (because her younger brother is autistic), she receives these lessons for free. She loves singing and it has boosted her self-confidence tremendously, to the extent that she successfully auditioned for the lead role in her school's production ...

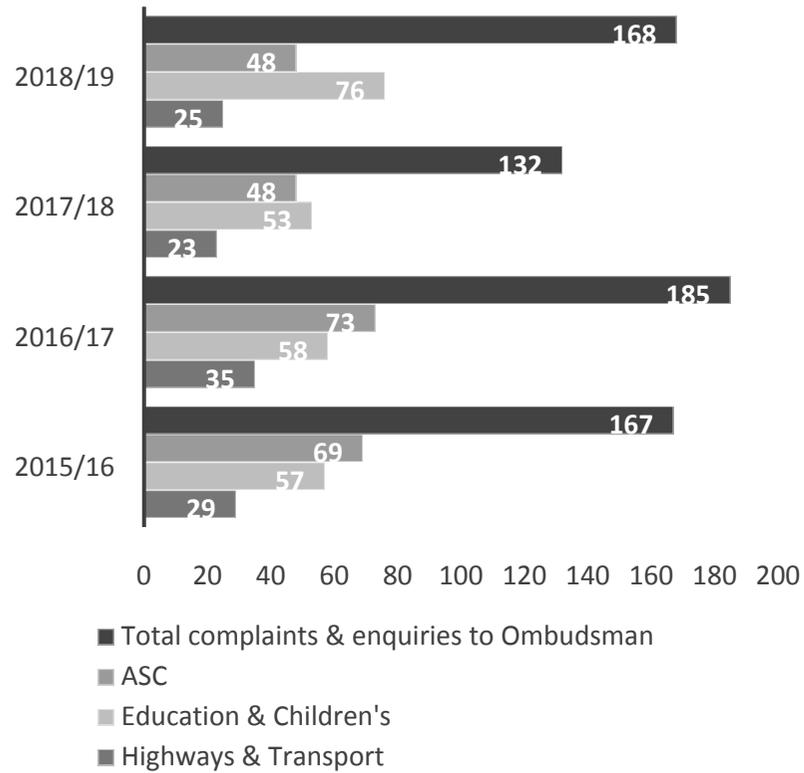
I wanted to write and say a heartfelt thank you to you both for making Rhyme Time the safe and enjoyable environment it is for both mums and their babies. I have attended regularly with both my children now, and cannot thank you enough for being there every week with a song and a smile for us. With both children I suffered with PND, and there were periods of time (which I don't even remember too well) when I would find it difficult to get out and about with my baby doing any "normal" activities as I was so anxious. It was so lovely to know I could turn up to Rhyme Time in any state and you would be there, a familiar setting and face for both me and baby. My kids absolutely love coming to the library now, thanks to you!

Dear Runnymede roundabout improvement team. A big thank you to all concerned for this successfully completed improvement, which has removed a major bottleneck. We are regular users of this roundabout and have watched progress with interest. As soon as the works started the traffic actually seemed to flow better, in spite of construction works being in progress. The completed scheme appears to be working really well and is a huge improvement on the previous conventional roundabout which was sometimes really scary to enter.

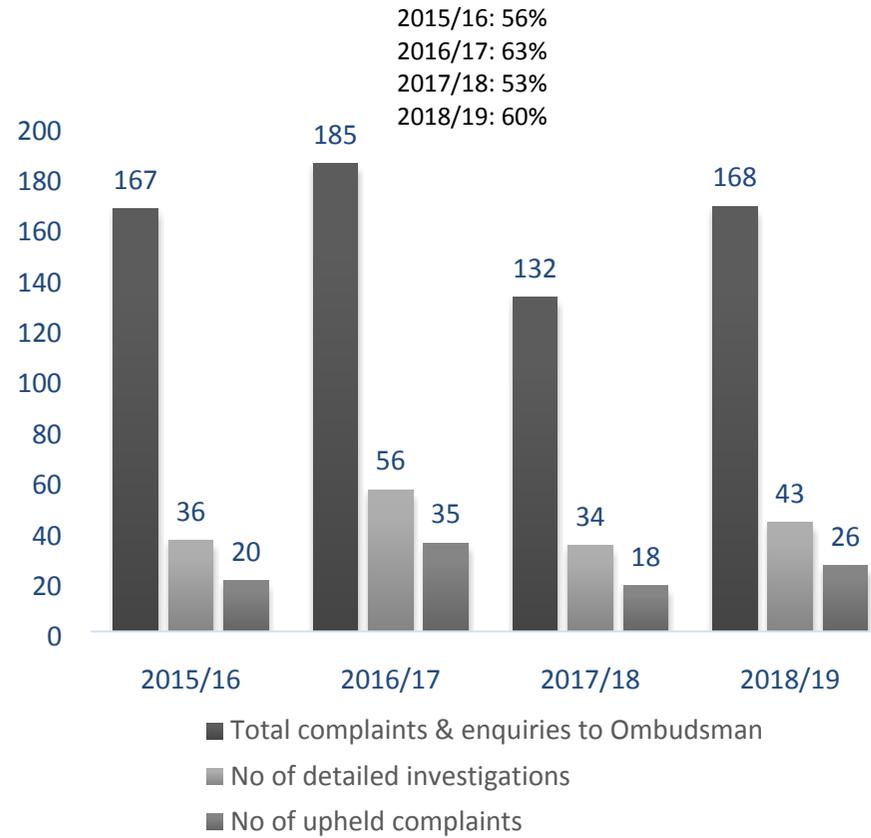
Annex 3: SCC complaint handling performance comparing 2017/18 and 2018/19

Area	Response target	2017/18			2018/19		
		Complaints received	Performance against response target	Escalation rate	Complaints received	Performance against response target	Escalation rate
Corporate	90% in 10 working days	582	83%	17%	561	83%	22%
Adult's Social Care	90% in 20 working days (or longer by agreement)	221	97%	N/A	248	94%	N/A
Schools & Learning and Services to Young People	80% in 10 working days (extendable to 20 if necessary)	121	50% (within 10 working days) 75%(within 20 working days)	3%	147	47% (within 10 working days) 78%(within 20 working days)	6%
Children's Social Care	80% in 10 working days (extendable to 20 if necessary)	408	38%(within 10 working days) 55% (within 20 working days)		452	50%(within 10 working days) 73% (within 20 working days)	
Total/ weighted average		1, 332	83%		1, 408	82%	

Annex 4: Breakdown of SCC Ombudsman complaints



Uphold rates against a county council average of 64%:

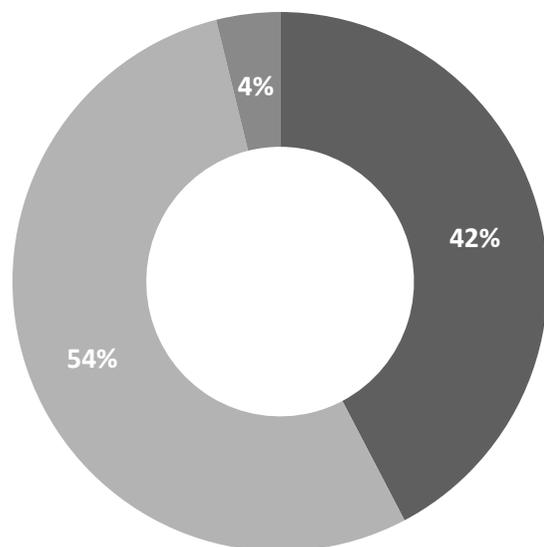


Annex 5: Breakdown of LGSCO Upheld complaints

Complaints upheld by LGO: 26

ASC: 11, Education & Children's: 14, Highways: 1

■ ASC ■ Education & Children's ■ Highways



General areas where the Ombudsman found fault:

ASC:

- Adult Safeguarding – investigation did not follow statutory guidance
- Delays in social care / Occupational Therapy assessments
- Direct payments – failure to provide / inappropriately stopped / delays
- Domiciliary Care – inadequate provision / standards
- Lack of clarity around assessment of need / eligibility for assistance
- Failure to communicate outcome of care and support plan review
- Failure to arrange urgent review of care needs
- Residential care – staff not adequately trained in medication provision
- Care home placement – fault with how a placement was arranged

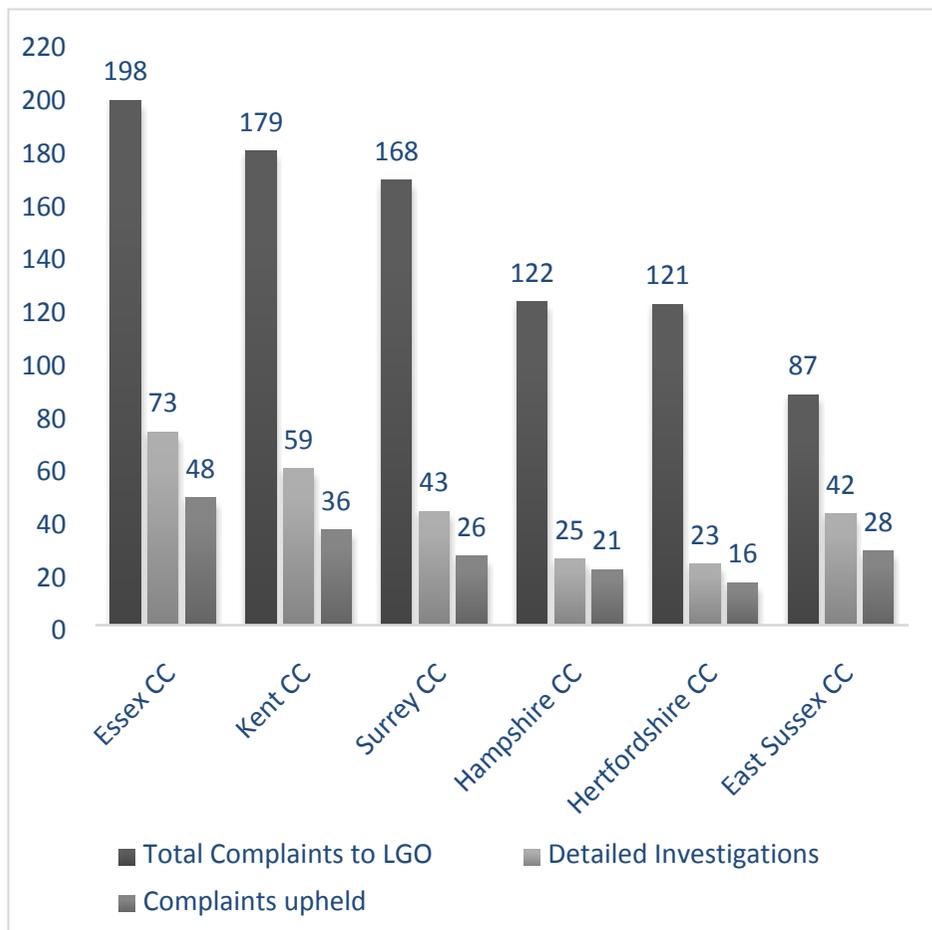
Education and Children's (included 2 public reports):

- SEND – failure to ensure proper provision to meet assessed needs
- SEND – home to school transport
- SEND – transition to post-18 education
- Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) - delays
- Child Protection – lack of communication / information about process
- Complaints handling – statutory children's procedure not followed

Highways & Transport:

- Vehicle crossover (VCO) – failure to advise of time limit to accept agreement to carry out remedial works.

Annex 6: Benchmarking of Ombudsman complaints 2018/19



Points to note from benchmarking:

- SCC had the lowest uphold rate of the sample (60%) and performed better than the national average of 64% for county councils. This was, however, an increase from the previous year (53%). Hampshire County Council had the highest at 84%.
- Top areas of complaint for county councils are: Adult Social Care, Education & Children’s social care and Highways and Transport.
- Education & Children’s social care was the top area of complaint for all benchmarked authorities (complex and emotive), with the exceptions of Essex and East Sussex whose top subject of complaint was Adult Social Care. This year saw an increase in Education & Children’s complaints referred to the Ombudsman for SCC.
- Opportunities to offer early resolutions for Ombudsman complaints should be more actively explored (where appropriate) – SCC did so in only 4% of cases, compared to a national county council average of 9%
- East Sussex had the highest % of complaints progressing to detailed investigation (48%). SCC performs consistently against its peers in this area and was third lowest at 25%.
- SCC had a 100% compliance rate with Ombudsman recommendations (against a national county council average of 99%) and implemented 9 service improvements.
- The Ombudsman raised concerns with SCC, Essex CC and Kent CC about a lack of timely and full responses to LGSCO investigations – this has been a particular challenge for Education & Children’s Social Care complaints and improvement actions have been implemented.

Adult Social Care: Upheld

18 010 777: Mrs X complained that the Council assessed her needs and agreed she had a need to access the bath, but had not provided the required equipment or adaptations to enable her to do this. This had affected her health and wellbeing. The Ombudsman found that the Council was at fault. There was a lack of clarity in how it assessed her needs and eligibility for assistance. This had caused Mrs X confusion and uncertainty. The Council agreed to complete a reassessment of her needs, and pay her £100 to acknowledge the confusion and uncertainty. It also agreed to review its occupational therapy assessment procedures

Adult Social Care: Not upheld

18 002 889: Mr A complained for his daughter Ms B that Surrey County Council did not enable access to advocacy services for Ms B, removed services from Ms B's care package without conducting a review and failed to communicate adequately with NHS services about Ms B's care. The Ombudsman found that there was appropriate advocacy support for Ms B at reviews and assessments and the Council carried out a review before revising her care package and so it acted in line with sections 67 and 27 of the Care Act 2014. The Ombudsman was satisfied there was appropriate liaison with the NHS. The Ombudsman did not uphold this complaint.

Education & Children's: Upheld

17 014 479: Mrs X has complained about how the Council has dealt with her son's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). She says the Council did not finalise the plan within the statutory timescale, failed to properly assess her son and did not ensure the provision detailed in the plan was in place. Mrs X also complained about how the Council has dealt with her complaint and says it has taken over a year to respond to her concerns. The Ombudsman found there had been fault by the Council as it did not complete Y's plan in line with the statutory timescale, failed to put in place the provision in Y's EHCP for September and October. Y has suffered injustice because of the Council's fault as he did not receive the therapies he needed for over a month. Mrs X was also put to time and trouble to make sure her son received the provision he was entitled to. The Ombudsman also found failings in the way the complaint was handled. To remedy the injustice caused, the Council has agreed to apologise to Mrs X and pay her £100 for the time and trouble she has been put to, and to pay £300 to compensate for the missed provision between September and October 2016

Education & Children's: Not upheld

18 013 267: Mrs W complained the Council failed to offer home to school transport to her youngest child, C, even though her older child, B, received it. She appealed the Council's decision but was unsuccessful in achieving the outcome she wanted. The Ombudsman found that there was no evidence of fault by the Council.

Highways & Transport: Upheld

18 003 917: Mr X complained the Council failed to honour an agreement to carry out works to an existing vehicle crossover outside of his and his neighbour's property. The Ombudsman found that the Council had failed to advise Mr X there was a time limit to accept the agreement. To remedy the injustice caused to Mr X, the Council agreed to honour its original offer

Highways & Transport: Not upheld

17 006 554: Mrs S complained that the Council had not resolved problems with highway drainage that have caused her front garden to flood. Mrs S said that after rain, the highway drainage was not good enough and caused a patch of water in her front garden. The Ombudsman found that, when told of the flooding, the Council has carried out more jetting, spoken to the water authority, investigated the cause of the wetspot and planned to carry out more investigation as one of the drains was not emptying correctly. It has also previously offered to put a lip on Mrs S's drive to stop water running down, which Mrs S has refused. The Ombudsman said that they appreciated Mrs S remained dissatisfied, as the Council had said the further investigation was a low priority and there may not be funds to carry out further works. The Ombudsman accepted that Councils has limited resources and has to prioritise which works to carry out. They concluded that there had been minor delays but that the Council has kept the drains clear according to its maintenance schedule and taken appropriate action in response to the reports of flooding. The complaint was not upheld.