



Audit & Governance Committee  
1 October 2020

**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 2019/20 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 22 July 2020.
5. We also report for 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.

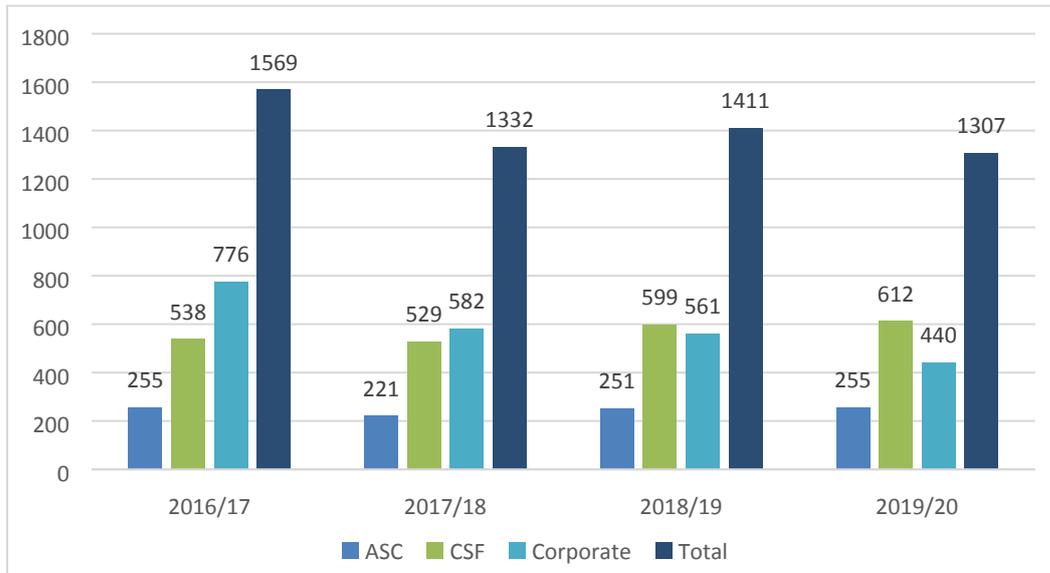
## Early intervention approach

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 Customer Relations 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. Additional work has been undertaken on the website to re-direct complaints that are actually requests for services relating to highways, waste and bus services, and to signpost to district and borough councils (where appropriate eg bin collections) and to the Children's on-line complaint form. As a result of this work, 929 on-line complaint forms were submitted in 2019/20, compared to 1396 in the previous year.
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 (319), with the most frequent topic being potholes, roadworks and parking issues. The next most frequent contact related to Transport (103), mainly relating to bus services, then Waste (93), then Libraries (49). We also received around 83 enquiries relating to services provided by district and borough councils. Where appropriate, customers were signposted to the responsible authority.
16. Some of the regular issues reported through the online complaints form, included:
  - Waste charges
  - Countryside – overgrown footpaths/obstructions
  - Charging for countryside car parking
  - District & Borough Council matters e.g. missed bin collections, street cleaning, neighbour issues, dog fouling
  - Bus services – changes to routes / operators, timetables etc
  - Roadworks/road closures
  - Insurance claims

### Complaint handling performance in 2019/20:

17. During the year 2019/20, the three complaint teams within Surrey County Council received 1,307 complaints; a 7% decrease across the board from the previous year (1,408).
18. Breaking this down into the three complaints procedures, Adult Social Care saw a 1.6% increase, Children's Social Care and Education a 2.2% increase and all other services a 21.6% 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.

**Figure 1: Total complaints received**



19. 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. Over half of the formal complaints (316) were recorded about Children's Services with a further 249 complaints recorded about Education. Figures for formal complaints received has effectively remained stable, there has however been a marked increase in the number of Enquiries received from Cllrs and MPs totalling 848 of which 576 related to Education, primarily SEN. In the previous year we received 799 Enquiries, primarily about SEN. The increase in enquiries reflects customer dissatisfaction with difficult experiences regarding SEN provision.
20. The most frequent subject of complaint for each of the complaints procedures are shown in Figure 2 below. Service specific delivery issues followed by lack of communication were the most frequent complaint categories.

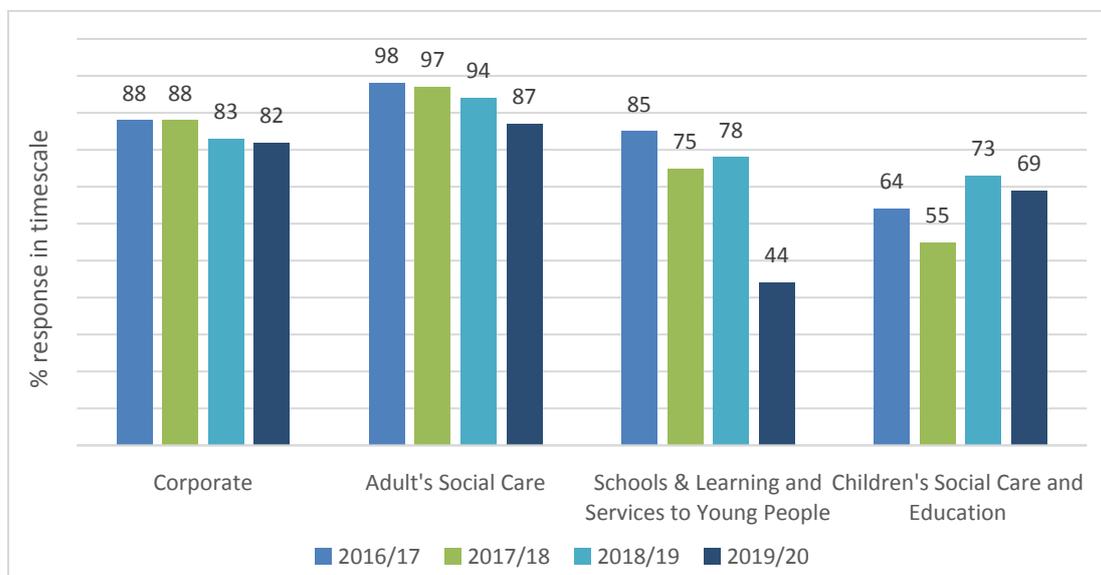
**Figure 2: Complaint categories 2019/20**

CORPORATE	CHILDREN, SCHOOLS & FAMILIES	ADULT SOCIAL CARE
Disruption caused by roadworks	Disagreement with assessment content and outcomes	Dissatisfied with service quality
Overgrown vegetation	Disagreement with contents of court reports	Financial/funding issues
Flooding	Disagreement with outcomes of child protection conferences.	Dissatisfaction with assessment process
Potholes on road surface	Delays in EHCP process/disagreement with content	Poor communication
Parking problems	Children out of education and without alternative provision.	Decision making

**Complaint trends & performance:**

21. The top area of complaint for the council for 2019/20 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 2019/20, largely due to the early intervention approach and the ongoing proactive communications around highway works.

**Figure 3: Performance against response target**

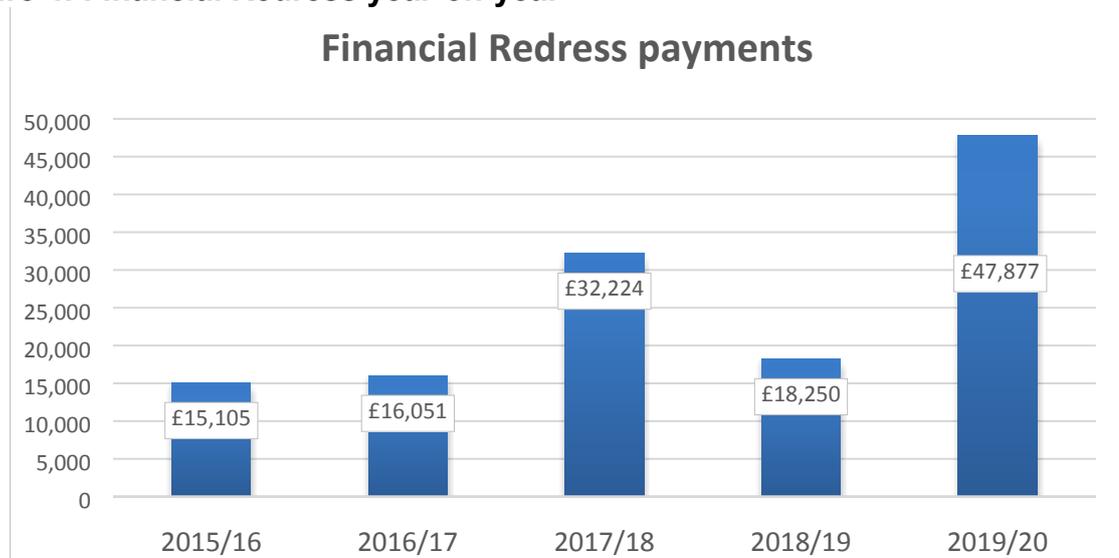


22. For all 3 complaint procedures, the timeliness of responses has declined. For corporate complaints, the target is for 90% of complaints to be

responded to within 10 working days. 82% were responded to within timescale compared to 83% the previous year. For Adults, the target is for 90% response within 20 working days (extension can be agreed) . The figure for this year was 87% compared to 94% in 2018/19. For Children's Schools and Families, the complexities of complaints continue to impact on their ability to respond within the statutory timescales. Their target is to respond to 80% in 10 working days (extendable to 20 if necessary). 44% of School and Learning complaints were responded to in timescale, compared to 78% in the previous year, and for Children's Social Care these figures were 69% within timescale, compared to 73% in 2018/19.

23. Additional resource has been allocated to address the issue within Schools and Learning. A Senior Customer Relations Officer has been assisting the SEN Service in providing timely responses at stage 1 of the process. The impact of this additional resource can be seen in recent months, with over 90 complaints being out of time as at 1 March 2020 and all responses now within timescale (at report date)
24. 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.
25. There was a significant increase in the amount of financial redress paid in 2019/20 compared to 2018/19. The majority of the increase was due to the amount of financial redress paid by Childrens.

**Figure 4: Financial Redress year-on-year**



26. For Childrens, the total paid was £41,182.00 of which £30,550 related to SEN. These payments mainly relate to missed education, time and trouble in the pursuit of the complaint and an acknowledgment of the anxiety this will have contributed to. The remedies were in line with LGSCO recommendations and in all of the cases concerned that were

brought to the attention of the LGSCO, the LGSCO agreed that the remedy offered by the Council was reasonable and proportionate and discontinued their investigation. This has reduced the risk of public reports given that in the previous year there were 3 public reports issued naming SEN Services in Surrey. Totals of financial redress payments for are show below (figure 5).

- 27. For Adults, £3,769.72 of the figure (£6695) was a refund of incorrect charges for residential care and paid directly by the provider.

**Figure 5: Financial Redress breakdown 2019/20**

<b>COMPENSATION 2019/20</b>	
Adult Social Care	£6,695
Children, Schools & Families	£41,182
Corporate	£0
<b>Total</b>	<b>£47, 877</b>

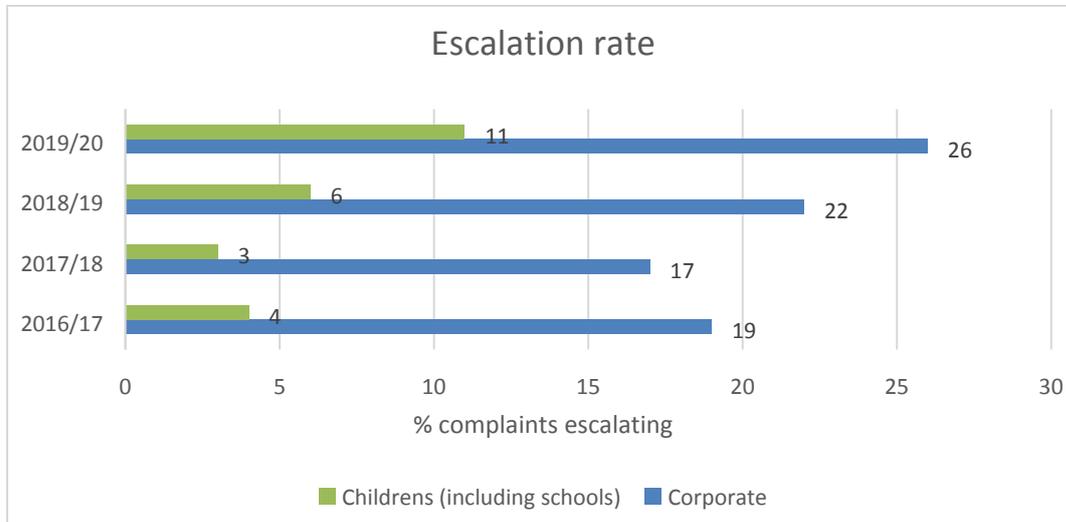
- 28. The three highest payments were:
  - £5,700 Lack of provision and delay in dealing with the complaint, time and travel in pursuit of the complaint and any stress and anxiety that the delay and lack of SEN provision has contributed to
  - £4,500 to for the benefit of Y's education (due to months of missed SALT and OT, and 3 months when no suitable full-time education was provided). £500 for the distress caused to Mrs X.
  - £4,200 In recognition of the faults found by the LGO relative lack of SEN provision and £1200 reimbursement for private tuition.

**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. 26% of complaints (116 out of 440) escalated to Stage 2 of the council's corporate complaints procedure in 2019/20; a 4% increase from the previous year (22%, 124 out of 561). Due to their complexity, a number of complaints have been taken on straight at stage 2 to avoid further frustration for customers.

31. Escalation to Stage 2 within Children, Schools and Families increased to 11% (69), an increase of 5% from the previous year. The majority of these related to the SEN Service which reflected a 14% increase in escalations to the second stage of the process. A significant number of escalations were due to delayed responses at the first stage of the process. This has been addressed with the appointment of a SEN Specialist within the Customer Relations Team who has responded to all stage 1 complaints from March 2020.

**Figure 6: Complaint escalation year-on-year**

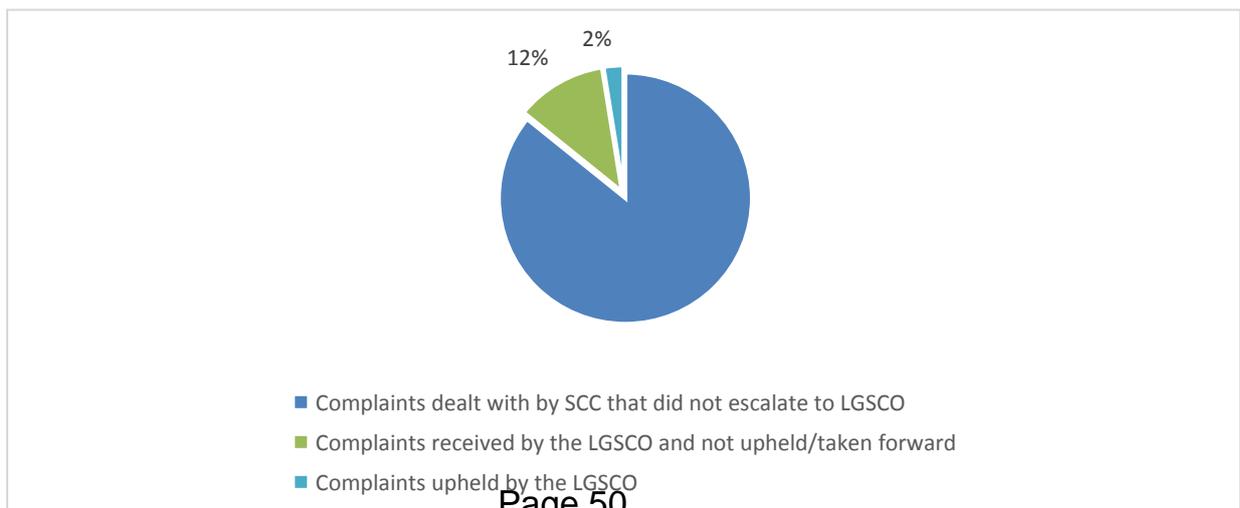


32. Adult Social Care is required by statute to have a one stage complaint procedure. This means that there is not the opportunity to compare escalation rates in Adult Social Care with Education and Children's Social Care and corporate complaints.

#### Escalation to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

33. In 2019/20, the Ombudsman received 185 complaints and enquiries about Surrey County Council; 14% of the total number of complaints received by the council. This was a slight increase from 2018/19 (12%). See Annex 3 for a year on year comparison. Of the complaints investigated by the Ombudsman, 33 were upheld (2% of the total number of complaints received by the council).

**Figure 7: Escalation to the Ombudsman 2019/20**



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. The Ombudsman will uphold complaints when they find some form of fault in an authority's actions, including where the authority accepted fault before the Ombudsman investigation. 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 7, the escalation rate to the Ombudsman was 14%. The three most common categories of complaint to the Ombudsman were Education and Children's Services, Adult Care Services, and Highways & Transport. 2019/20 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 52% of cases upheld by the Ombudsman, a decrease from 54% the previous year.
38. The council had a 100% compliance rate with Ombudsman recommendations and an uphold rate (where the Ombudsman found fault) of 67%. This compared to a national average for county councils of 66%. In 18% of cases, SCC provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman, compared to a national county council average of 9%. This is positive as, in these cases, it was acknowledged that the Council had done all it could to remedy these complaints before they reached the Ombudsman.
39. This year the Ombudsman did not issue any public reports about Surrey County Council. In his annual letter, he 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.

## Pensions Complaints

41. Figure 8 (below) shows the complaints received for the year 2019/20 for Surrey County Council's Pensions Service.
42. There were no recorded cases of complaints being referred to The Pensions Ombudsman.

**Figure 8: Pensions Complaints 2019/20**

Fund	Comms	Service Quality	Service Delay	Other	2019/20 Total	2018/19 Total	2017/18 Total
Hammersmith & Fulham	2	10	5	0	17	15	19
Hillingdon	2	4	9	1	16	14	15
Kensington & Chelsea	3	6	7	1	17	16	16
Surrey	5	28	20	8	61	53	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>91</b>

43. Most complaints received were about Surrey County Council's Pension Fund and the main reasons for complaint across all the Funds were service delay and service quality. Overall, the total number of complaints have increased from the previous year. This should be seen in the context of the circa 25,000 cases processed in the last 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 15 service improvements following Ombudsman investigations; these included reviewing a number of procedures and staff training.

#### 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 2019/20, the council recorded 1986 compliments about its services: 98 for Education and Children's Services; 480 for Adult Social Care and 1408 for all other services. This is consistent with the 1980 compliments recorded in 2018/19.
47. We are working to ensure more consistency in recording of compliments e.g. through a standard definition. Compliments are now routinely captured on the new Case Tracker system; this is being promoted both

within and outside the Council. Extracts from compliments received are in Annex 2.

## Conclusions:

### 48. What are we doing well?

- a) Regular reporting on customer relations activity across the three areas to respective management teams. This has increased transparency and informed changes in service delivery.
- b) Providing high quality advice and support on general complaint handling across all three areas.
- c) Focusing on early intervention – corporate Customer Relations Team continue to triage online complaint enquiries to prevent unnecessary complaint escalation.
- d) Children’s Customer Relations Team has developed a specialist training programme for customer service in Children’s and Education following the recent restructure.
- e) Children’s is working to develop closer ties with Quality Assurance Managers both in SEND and Children’s Services with a view to informing change in practice and/or service delivery. This work has included the temporary appointment of a SEN specialist within the Children’s Customer Relations Team to support the management of complaints about SEN at the earliest opportunity, including responding at the first stage of the complaint process.
- f) Children’s are pulling together firm links with Quality Audit teams in the Directorate to add greater focus to learning derived from complaints
- g) Adults Customer Relations Team works very closely with all the teams to ensure good customer care practice for handling complaints and customer feedback.
- h) All teams provide 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 and proactive prompting of deadlines is in place to help set clear and consistent standards in terms of both the quality of information and level of engagement required from services to enable effective responses to the Ombudsman.
- b) Embedding the recently implemented electronic case work management system for complaints and other customer feedback across all services and complaints teams to ensure it is used to its full capacity to facilitate learning from complaints and monitoring of

complaint handling.

- 7
- c) Developing the reporting functionality of the casework management system to enable consistent reporting across all 3 complaint teams.
- d) The Children's Customer Relations Team will:
- develop a bespoke training package on complaint management focusing on building and maintaining relationships and proactive customer service and improving the timeliness of responses at stage one and to enquiries from the Ombudsman
  - continue to build relationships across the service and improve on performance reporting to ensure learning from complaints is embedded across all services
  - work on use of proactive communications on Surrey webpages including local offer for SEN around any changes in the application of policies and procedures that may affect Surrey residents
- e) The Adults Customer Relations Team will:
- Work on improving our methods of communication with service users and their families/carers to ensure information is clear and provided in a timely manner
  - Developing and embedding a culture of improving services as a result of identified learning from complaints.

### **Financial and value for money implications**

50. Payment of financial redress (as outlined in paragraphs 25 - 28 of this report and shown in Figures 4 and 5) 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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**Report contact:** Sarah E.M Bogunovic, Customer Relations and Service Improvement Manager, Customer Services

**Contact details:** 01372 833871, [sarah.bogunovic@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.bogunovic@surreycc.gov.uk)

**Annexes:**

1. Examples of learning identified through customer feedback
2. Extracts of compliments
3. Complaint escalation to LGSCO
4. SCC Complaints breakdown – referrals to LGSCO
5. SCC Complaints upheld by LGSCO
6. Benchmarking of LGSCO complaints
7. Example case studies of LGSCO decisions (upheld vs not upheld)

**Sources/background papers:**

- Surrey County Council complaints tracker, Adult Social Care Customer Relations Team, Children's Customer Relations Team.
- Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2019/20 for Surrey County Council - available on their [website](#)
- Decision Notices available on LGSCO [website](#)

## Annex 1: Examples of learning identified through customer feedback

**Customer said:** An Adult Social Care service user complained about the lack of support and delay regarding her assessment. A mental capacity assessment should have followed shortly after the review but actions were not followed through when the worker was absent.

**We did:** The team implemented a procedure to ensure all caseloads are reviewed so that any planned activity can be discussed and actions agreed in the absence of the allocated worker. Staff were reminded of the importance of timely communication

**Customer said:** An Adult Social Care service user visited the care home for a tour with a relative but was not asked to sign the visitor's book which resulted in a mix up and confusion about the purpose of the visit.

**We did:** A robust process for signing in is now in place at the care home, to prevent a similar occurrence.

**Customer said:** A parent complained that they felt disadvantaged at not being able to personally present evidence at a school transport appeal hearing

**We did:** We revised our process to ensure that parents are invited to attend in person

**Customer said:** The Eligibility Criteria for accessing support from Children with Disabilities (CWD) Team was confusing and threshold was unrealistic.

**We did:** We revised the eligibility criteria for accessing support from CWD Team and a new document is due to be published.

**Customer said:** The Council's webpages informing on procedures about 'how to complain' the Complaint Process itself were unclear, confusing and 'too many'.

**We did:** We revised the webpages and replaced them with a single page that has appropriate links to third party partnership sites as well as an access point for the on-line complaints form

**Customers said:** A customer complained about delays in the Council issuing a notice for obstructing highway land.

**We did:** Legal and Surrey Highways reviewed how the different Services work together on these issues and agreed procedures for handling of enforcement requests to minimise delays.

## Annex 2: Extracts of compliments received

### ADULTS:

**The Transitions Team:** Thank you for all the hard work you have dedicated to ensuring K's needs are met. Tailfeather was the last piece of the jigsaw, she is happy and benefiting from all of her day services. I am ecstatic as it didn't take long for her to adjust and, knowing she is fulfilled and working towards different projects, rather than stagnating, is such a wonderful feeling.

**Guildford Reablement Team:** We cannot compliment the service enough. Mum was, on discharge from the hospital in a dreadful state, virtually unable to support herself, let alone walk. She has received continuous and courteous care is very grateful for it. Every member of staff who has been involved in her care has been kind and most of all encouraging, helping us to bring her to her present state of health.

**Surrey Heath Integrated Care Team:** I want to thank your team and all your colleagues in social services for all the care, compassion, help and assistance with my dad over the years but especially in the last few months. You guys are the unsung heroes in all these crazy times.

**The Epsom & Ewell Locality Team:** I wanted to say thank you for all the support you have given to the successful launch and running of the Epsom & Ewell Veterans Community Hub. The number of veterans joining us every month are growing rapidly and out of all the hubs and outreaches I attend in the South East, this is definitely the most popular.

**Runnymede Locality Team:** The support that I have received whilst trying to relocate my old friend to a nursing home has been excellent. The worker is very professional, understanding and kind. She listens and then acts which is a quality that is invaluable but often in short supply, and deserves to be recognised for her work.

**Waverley Locality Team:** Words are not enough to thank you for all your help and support during the past many months as we were going through decisions for the care of our dear mother. You have been so patient, caring and supportive, not just towards her but towards us sisters. You have gone well beyond the course of duty to help us with different options and understood every change we had to make. I just wanted to say a big thank you – you are amazing!

### CHILDRENS:

**Occupational Health:** Re bedroom and bathroom adaptation. Again we cannot thank you enough for your efforts and unlimited amount of time and energy you put into this project. You went well above and beyond and it has all been truly appreciated. We wish you all the best

**NW Intervention Team:** I just wanted to say thank you so much for everything you have done for us. I never thought I would say that I would miss a social worker but I have just grown to feel safe and supported just knowing you're there. You have seen me go through the worst time of my life but

because of your positivity I too have learnt to try and see the positive in every situation...however bleak! A life skill that will help me throughout life...I promise I will never give up trying and doing the best for my children.

**Children with Disabilities Team East:** We are a happier family because of this service. Both our children are able to thrive due to this support and it has quite simply been a life saver. Of all the support we receive due to having a disabled child that is out of school, this is by far the most useful and essential service which meets all our child's needs. We are blessed with the most wonderful support worker and are grateful every day to have her touch our lives. Without this service I sometimes wonder if our family would have crumbled under the immense pressure we experience in all areas of our lives on a regular basis. No other service compares to this extremely practical one and I strongly believe it should be extended and more funding input so that other families don't have to suffer alone. Thank you all so much for what you do.

**Day Programme Team HOPE service:** What you do is nothing short of alchemy - you all take the seemingly ordinary and turn it into something extraordinary in a way that really does defy explanation. I realise that X is by no means out of the woods yet, but you have given him what he needs to begin to rebuild his life, delivered with infinite patience, kindness and humour. He's leaving a little older and wiser with the most wonderful skill set.

**NW Adoption Team:** It has been almost a year since our adoption order was granted and I wanted to write to say thank you to your team, especially our assigned social worker X. Our experience of the entire adoption process can only be described as positive and enjoyable. X was outstanding in her interaction with us, making us feel comfortable and creating an environment where we felt able to be honest and open about our lives, relationships, experiences, worries and hopes for our future with regards to adoption. We felt that we were supported throughout and found ourselves looking forward to each meeting and each stage. We feel we can never quite express our thanks enough to X for making what could have been an emotional and challenging period in our lives one that instead we look back on with fondness. It was the most positive start possible to our journey.

**Fostering service:** When X left I was very upset but then you sent me Y and I have to say I couldn't be more pleased. She is such a lovely person, knows so much for such a young person and in the short time I have known her has helped me so much. Last night she sat upstairs with my youngest granddaughter and her social worker and talked to her for ages, (granddaughter had hidden under duvet). Hopefully the outcome will be good today. Please recognise the wonderful work that Y is doing and long may she remain with my family.

## **CORPORATE:**

**CRCs:** Last Wednesday 10th April I took some cardboard boxes to Lyne Recycling Centre. I didn't know but my loose wedding ring had fallen into one of the boxes. By the time I realised what had happened the recycling centre was closed. It was also closed on Thursday and Friday. First thing Saturday morning I turned up and explained what had happened. The staff could not have been more helpful. The JCB was used to move the rubbish until it

unearthed my cardboard box, it was pulled out of the skip and after sorting thru all my rubbish, I finally found my ring. I offered some money to the two guys that helped me, they refused it. They said they were glad to help. A GREAT BIG THANK YOU TO YOU ALL!!!!

**Heritage:** In response to school workshop: Thank you so much for your email and thank you so much for such a super morning at the History Centre. We thoroughly enjoyed the visit and the children (and adults!) learned lots of new information...we have even been down to the war memorial this week to see X name. The time and effort that you had put into the session was very much appreciated.

**Registration:** I attended Camberley registrar office to assist a close friend,, to register the death of his father. We were met by a lady,... From the outset she was extremely sympathetic, helpful and efficient. My friend was dreading the matter and the lady helped him through this difficult and stressful period. Please convey my personal thanks to her for the way that she dealt with the matter.

**Highways:** I called the emergency highways number at about 8.30 on Thursday night as I was becoming increasingly worried about a large pot hole which had suddenly appeared in the road where I live. I thought that it might constitute an emergency as it was deep and quite close to houses opposite. I spoke to a lady who took all the details and gave me a reference number. When I got up in the morning, I went to look at it to check that I'd given its details correctly and was amazed to see that it had been filled in overnight. I couldn't believe how quickly and efficiently my call had been dealt with and just wanted to say a big thank you.

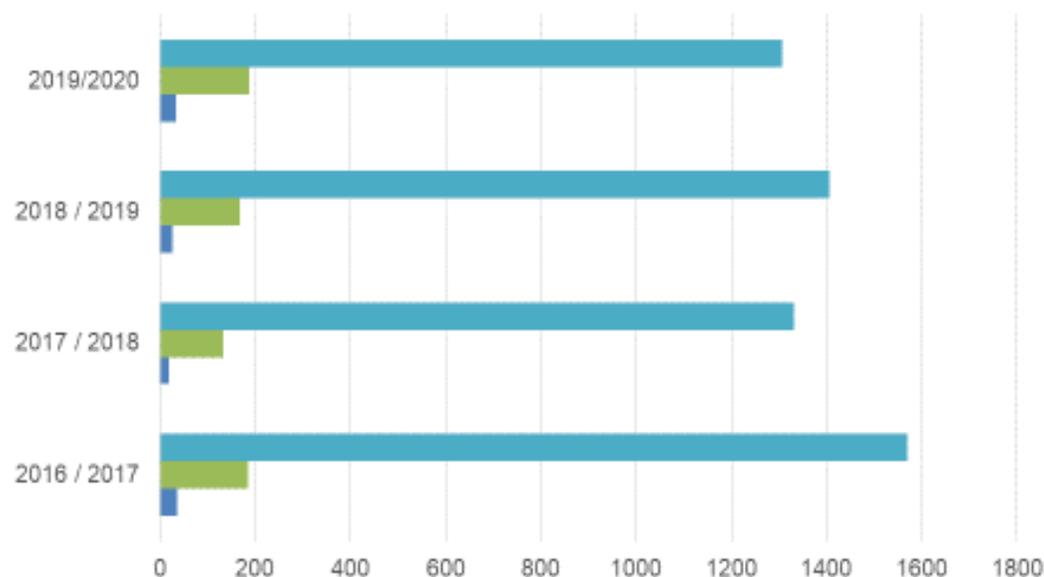
**Libraries:** Caterham Valley Library: I love this library! It is the best one I have been in (45 years old and a frequent/weekly library goer). Fantastic choice of books, up-to-date with lots of fresh-out books. Well laid out, with thoughtful displays that are updated and changed regularly.

**Contact Centre:** I contacted the 03456 009 009 and spoke to a very helpful lady called X with regard to support finding out about a streetworks permit. she was professional, supportive and extremely polite! having rang around at least 2 different departments she helped me with progressing my query. in short an absolute pleasure to deal with!

## SCC complaints and escalation to Ombudsman 2016-2020

Escalation rate:

2019/20: 14%  
 2018/19: 12%  
 2017/18: 10%  
 2016/17: 12%

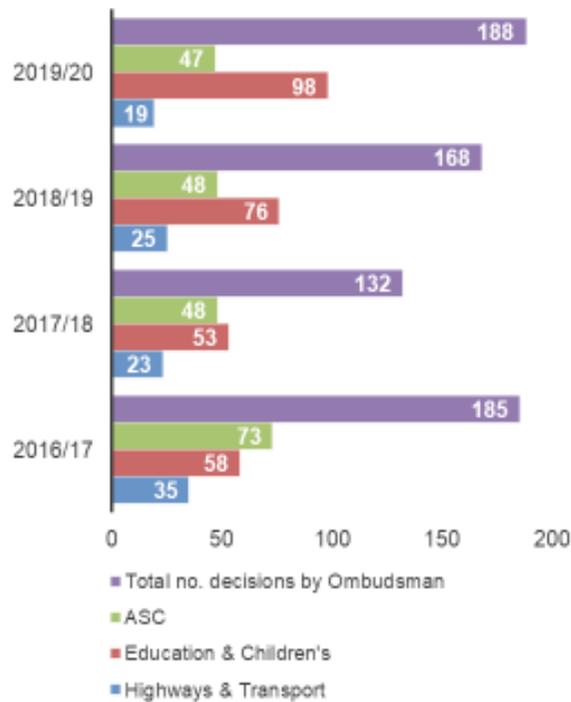


	2016 / 2017	2017 / 2018	2018 / 2019	2019/2020
Total Complaints received by SCC	1569	1332	1407	1307
Escalated to Ombudsman	185	132	168	188
Upheld by Ombudsman	35	18	26	33

Annex 4: SCC Complaints breakdown – referrals to LGSCO

# SCC Data Breakdown

**Top 3 areas of complaint to Ombudsman**



**Detailed investigations & upholds**

**Uphold rates** against a county council average of 66%:  
 2016/17: 63%; 2017/18: 53%; 2018/19: 60%  
 2019/20: 67% (of these, 18% had appropriate remedies in place, prior to LGSCO)



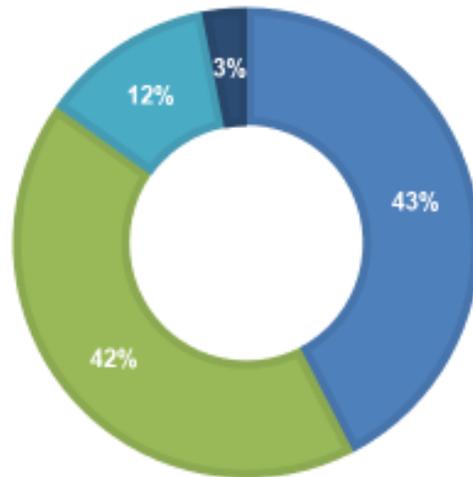
## Annex 5: SCC complaints upheld by LGSCO

# Breakdown of upheld complaints 2019/20

### Complaints upheld by LGO: 33

ASC: 14  
Education & Children's: 14  
Highways: 4  
Corporate & Other Services: 1

■ ASC ■ Education & Children's ■ Highways ■ Corporate



Financial redress recommended in 52% of upheld cases (17 cases)

### General areas where the Ombudsman found fault:

#### ASC:

- Assessment and care plans – inadequacies in reviews of care needs; failures in transition planning
- Charging: overcharging for care; failures in communications
- Direct payments – delay in responding to complaint
- Domiciliary Care – failure to ensure care was delivered in line with eligible needs
- Residential care – failure in the council's handling of safeguarding concerns about the care providers actions..
- Care home placement – fault with how a placement was arranged
- Safeguarding - failure to make appropriate safeguarding referrals

#### Education and Children's:

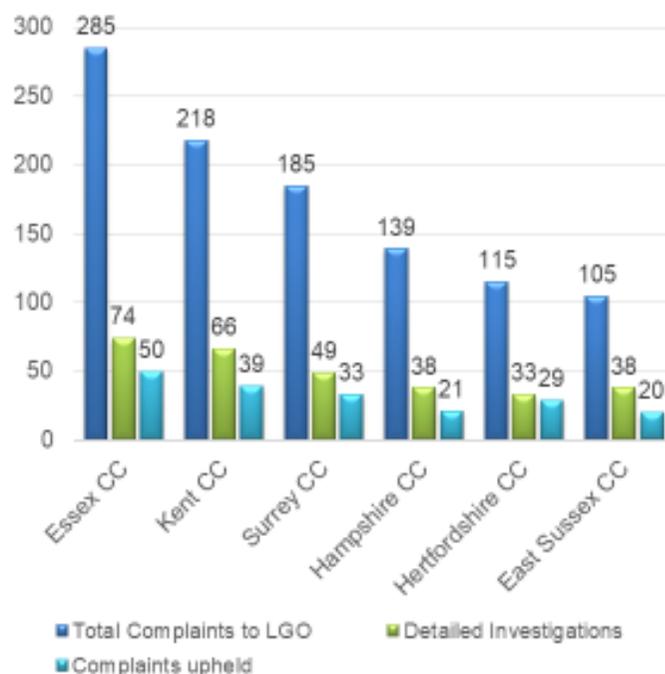
- SEND – failure to provide suitable alternative education; delay in re assessment of needs; delay in issuing EHCP
- Child Protection – lack of communication
- Alternative provision - failure in support
- Complaints handling – failure to follow statutory children's complaints procedure
- Disabled Facilities Grant - failure to take responsibility to resolve problems with works to a family home
- School transport: failure to consider parent and child's needs; failures in decision making on free school transport

#### Highways & Transport

- Poor communication and delays in contact
- Parking review - unable to provide full evidence of decision making

Annex 6: Benchmarking of LGSCO complaints

# Benchmarking 2019/20



### Points to note from benchmarking:

- Surrey County Council had the uphold rate at 67%, (against a county council national average of 66%). Hertfordshire County Council had the highest at 88%.
- Where complaints had been upheld, Surrey had the highest rate for provision of a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman (18%)
- Top areas of complaint for county councils are: Adult Social Care, Education & Children’s and Highways and Transport
- Education & Children’s was the top area of complaint for all benchmarked authorities, with the exceptions of Essex and East Sussex whose top subject of complaint was Adult Social Care.
- East Sussex had the highest % of complaints progress to detailed investigation (36%). SCC and Essex were the lowest at 26%.

## **Annex 7: Example case studies of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman decisions 2019/20 (upheld vs not upheld)**

### **Adult Social Care: Upheld**

19 005 901: The complaint concerned failures in the domiciliary care provided by an agency arranged and funded by Surrey County Council. The complaint was: support hours were not delivered; one carer was abusive; the care was terminated by the agency when a complaint was made; the complaint responses were inadequate; staff at the agency prevented Mr D having an advocate at a meeting. The Ombudsman found that the Council had failed to ensure Mr D's care was delivered in line with his eligible needs and recommended that the Council apologise and pay Mr D £1000.

### **Adult Social Care: Not upheld**

19 003 355: Mr B complained on behalf of his friend Ms X that the Council has assessed her as ineligible for care and support. As a result it will not now fund the five hours weekly support which her housing provider previously provided. The Ombudsman did not uphold the complaint, concluding that the evidence showed that the Council had assessed Ms X in line with the guidance, reviewed her needs accordingly and reached a decision based on the assessment and on relevant information from the housing provider.

### **Education & Children's: Upheld**

19 004 969: Mrs X complained the Council failed to provide suitable educational provision for her daughter and delayed in dealing with her complaint. Mrs X said this caused her daughter to fall behind with her education and her behaviour to deteriorate. From the evidence provided, the Ombudsman found fault with the Council as it failed to provide adequate educational provision for Mrs X's daughter. The Council agreed to the Ombudsman's recommendations to remedy the injustice caused.

### **Education & Children's: Not upheld**

18 014 395: Ms G complained that the Council had failed to make any educational provision for her son, Y, apart from around three weeks online and home tuition since he was permanently excluded from primary school in 2017. The Ombudsman found that there was no fault by the Council in relation to the action it took to provide Y with education between May 2017 and January 2019. The Ombudsman cannot look at education provision from January 2019 because Ms G exercised her right to appeal to the SEN Tribunal at that time.

### **Highways & Transport: Upheld**

19 010 536: Mr and Mrs X complained about the way the Council handled an issue with a tree on their land. They said the poor communication and delay caused them unnecessary distress and worry. The Ombudsman has found fault with the Council for delaying a site visit. They did not consider this to have caused a significant injustice to Mr and Mrs X.

## Highways & Transport: Not upheld

18 014 797: Mr B complained about the way the Council has handled a drainage problem on Mrs A's land. He said the Council incorrectly installed a drainage pipe and agreed to carry out works to the driveway which it is now refusing to do. The Ombudsman found that officers correctly investigated the issue and Mr B's concerns. Mr B also complained that the Council had said in 2014 that it would undertake some works, but now said that the works would not be done. The Ombudsman concluded that, although it raised Mrs A's and Mr B's expectations by agreeing to carry out the work in 2013-15, the Council is entitled to change its mind. It has explained the reasons for its decision to not carry out the works. The Ombudsman concluded that there are no grounds to criticise that decision.