



Audit & Governance Committee
20 September 2021

Annual Complaints Performance Report

Purpose of the report:

To give the Audit & Governance Committee an overview of the Council's complaint handling performance in 2020/21 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 law. 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. Regular performance reports are shared with service managers and leadership teams.
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.
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 21 July 2021.

5. We also report on complaints made about Surrey County Council's Pensions Service. As well as Surrey County Council, the service administers the pensions function for three other local authorities, London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham; London Borough of Hillingdon; and the City of Westminster. The service did also provide pensions administration for East Sussex County Council and the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea but the administration for these Pension Funds moved back in house during 2020/21. Pension complaints are dealt with through a separate complaints procedure and have a separate Ombudsman, The Pensions Ombudsman. The Pensions Service provides separate reports on complaints received to the respective Pensions Funds.

Background to complaints handling in Surrey County Council:

6. 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 the quality of the Council's complaint handling performance. 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 because these indicate where complaints were not resolved at service level and where fault has been found.
9. Where fault is found, 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 to understand their motives and feelings.
11. Where there is an alternative route for resolution e.g. appeals process, the matter will not be considered through 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 Resolution

13. We have an online complaint form to make it easy for customers to contact us when it suits them. We receive a number of service requests through this route, as well as residents commenting on policy decisions.

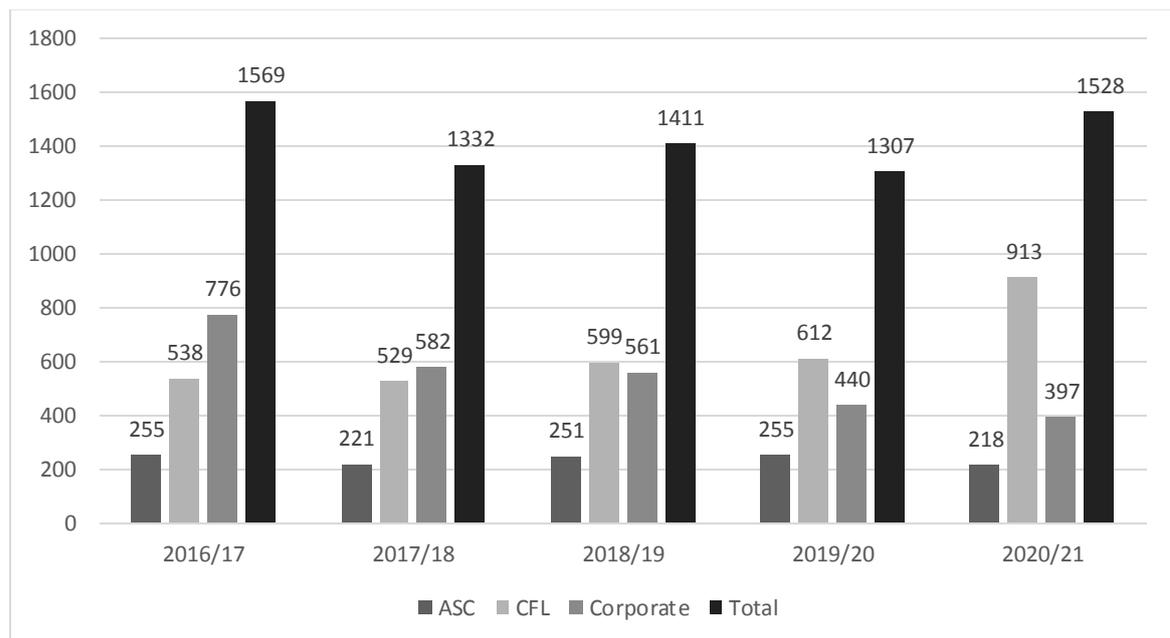
While our online form is popular, we recognise not everyone has access to, or can use, digital services. This is why we have other ways to contact us, such as by telephone.

14. Corporately, we operate an early resolution approach and proactively review all complaints to make sure any enquiries are properly routed to the person or service best placed to help or respond. We also evaluate whether what the customer has asked for can be achieved without the need to go through the complaints procedure.
15. 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.
16. 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 better guide customers wanting to make service requests. 912 online complaint forms were submitted in 2020/21, compared to 929 in the previous year.
17. The majority of customers used the online form for highways issues (372), with the most frequent topic being potholes, roadworks, and parking issues. The next most frequent contact related to Waste (187), then Transport (80); the majority relating to bus services. We also received around 125 enquiries relating to services provided by district and borough councils. Where appropriate, customers were signposted to the responsible authority.
18. Some of the regular issues reported through the online complaints form, included:
 - Waste charges
 - Countryside – overgrown footpaths/obstructions
 - District & Borough Council matters e.g. missed bin collections, street cleaning, neighbour issues, dog fouling
 - Bus services – changes to routes / operators, timetables etc
 - Property – reports about lighting / alarms / generators
 - Trading standards- reports about businesses not complying with COVID-19 rules
 - Highway enquiries re roadworks/road closures
 - Insurance claims

Complaint handling performance in 2020/21:

19. During the year 2020/21, the three complaint teams within Surrey County Council received **1,528 complaints**: a 17% increase across the board from the previous year (1,307).
20. Breaking this down into the three main areas, Adult Social Care saw a 14.5% decrease, the Children and Education Customer Relations Team saw a 49% increase and all other services a 10% decrease.
21. During 2020-21, the Children and Education Customer Relations Team received a total of 913 complaints. 424 of the complaints recorded related to Children's Services, with a further 308 complaints were recorded about Education. 181 complaints about Home to School Transport were handled under the corporate complaints procedure.

Figure 1: Total complaints received



22. The top area of complaint for 2020/21 related to Children's Social Care Services (424). During 2019/20 the Children's, Families and Lifelong Learning Directorate introduced a new casework management system to enable families to record their own complaints online, which has been increasingly used during 2020/21. Over the past five years, the number of complaints about Children's Services has remained relatively stable, increasing by 12.8% over the period. In Education Services, the trend has been 'up' overall with an increase of 83% over the period. This is not unexpected and is reflective of the challenges being faced nationally by SEND Services.

- 23. During 2020/21, we received a significant increase in the number of contacts about Home to School Transport. In 2020/21, 134 of the 181 complaints about Home to School Transport were received during the period July to October 2020. Most of these related to children holding Education Health Care Plans.
- 24. This increase was due to a change in the application of the transport policy, as well as the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic restrictions, which meant families faced delayed provision of transport. This led to 804 enquiries, of which 134 escalated into complaints. As a result, an improvement plan for the full end-to-end Home to School transport process is in the process of being delivered.
- 25. 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 2020/21

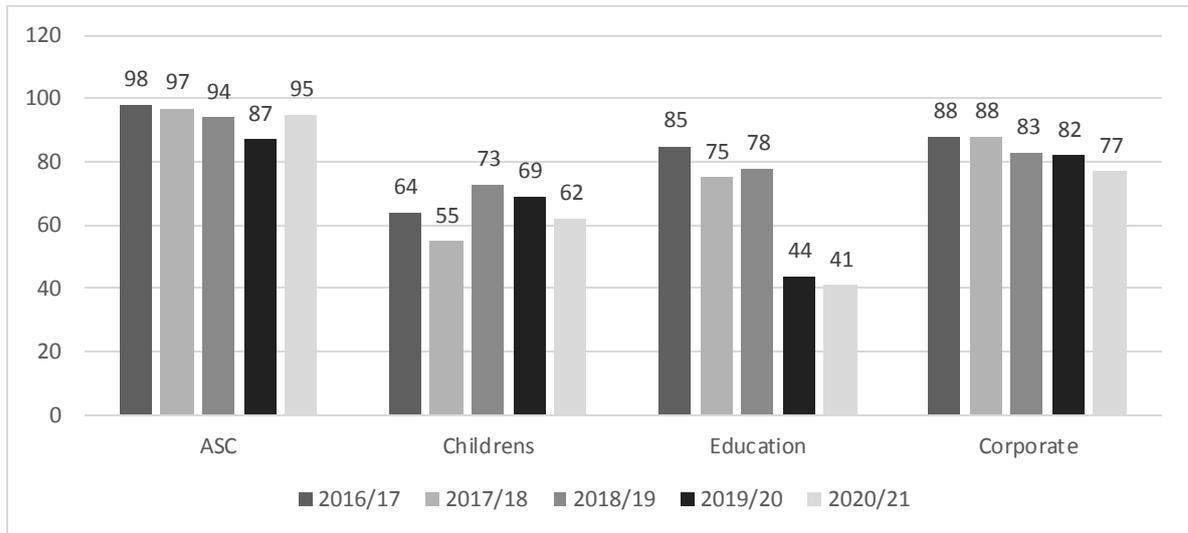
CORPORATE	CHILDREN, SCHOOLS & FAMILIES	ADULT SOCIAL CARE
Roadworks/resurfacing	Disagreement with assessment, content, and outcomes	Staff conduct, the assessment process, and issues linked to service provision
Trees/overgrown vegetation	Children out of education and without alternative provision	Financial/funding issues
Flooding	Delays in responding to Annual Reviews for children with EHCP	Dissatisfaction with assessment process
Potholes on road surface	Delays in EHCP process/disagreement with content	Poor communication
Waste sites	Children not meeting the criteria for support from Children with Disability Services	Decision making

Complaint trends & performance:

- 26. For corporate complaints, the target is for 90% of stage 1 complaints to be responded to within 10 working days. 77% were responded to within timescale, compared to 82% the previous year.
- 27. For Adult Social Care, the target is for 90% response within 20 working days (extension can be agreed) . The figure for this year was 95% compared to 87% in 2019/20.

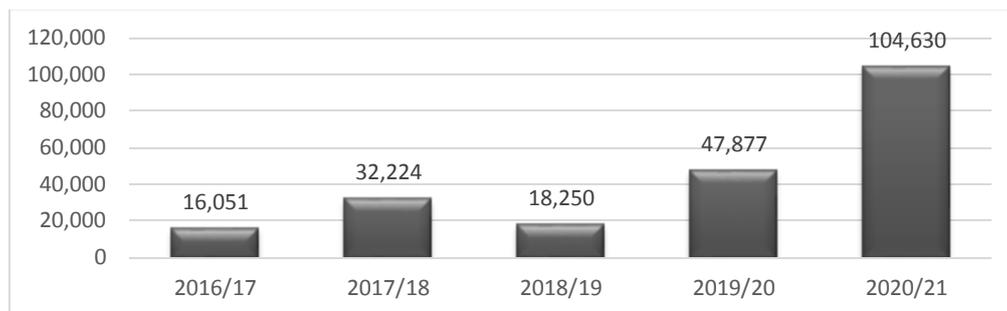
28. For Children's, Families and Lifelong Learning, the complexities of complaints continue to impact the ability to respond within the statutory timescales. The Directorate is working towards 80% compliance within 10 working days (extended to 20 working days if necessary). 41% of Education complaints were responded to in timescale, compared to 38% in the previous year. For Children's Services 62% were within timescale, compared to 69% in 2019/20.

Figure 3: Performance against response target



29. The Council's complaints function continued as normal throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the challenges faced by front-line staff and the focus on delivering essential services for residents did impact response times and available resource. The longer response times for Children's Services was not unexpected because of the increasingly complex nature of concerns shared by families, particularly during the height of the pandemic.
30. Where fault is found following a complaints investigation, 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.
31. There was a significant increase in the amount of financial redress paid in 2020/21 (£104,630.15) compared to 2019/20 (£47,877).

Figure 4: Financial Redress payments year-on-year



32. For Children's, the total paid was £75,560.25 of which £22,727.42 were payments directed by the LGSCO and £52,832.83 were remedy payments agreed by the Council.
33. Of the LGSCO directed payments £17,807.42 related to SEND and £4,920.00 related to Children's Social Care.
34. Of the £52,832.83 local remedy payments:
 - £19,757.50 related to Education Services (this includes one single payment of £7,067 for a SEND case involving a child missing education)
 - £11,201.00 related to Home to School Transport
 - £21,874.33 related to Children's Services. This includes two payments (£6524 and £4600) where the Southwark Judgment was not applied correctly leaving two care leavers at risk. It also includes a single payment of £6,000 relating to a breach of confidentiality.
35. The Council also reimbursed parents a total of £86,748.60, due to the difficulties related to Home to School Transport during the Autumn academic term beginning September 2020. This meant some parents/carers had to transport their children themselves for a period of time. This was included in the service budget.
36. For Adult Social Care, the total paid was £28,669.90, of which £28,069.00 were payments directed by the LGSCO, and £600.00 were remedy payments agreed by the Council. The £28,069.00 payments directed by the Ombudsman included payments for the following two complaints:
 - A payment of £11,200 as reimbursement for monies paid to the care provider as an 'unofficial' third party top up payment.
 - A payment of £10,798 to refund the cost of unpaid support that the service ser self-funded, time and trouble payment, and a payment to a family member for the payments she missed out on due to the Council's actions.

37. Totals of financial redress payments for are show below (figure 5).

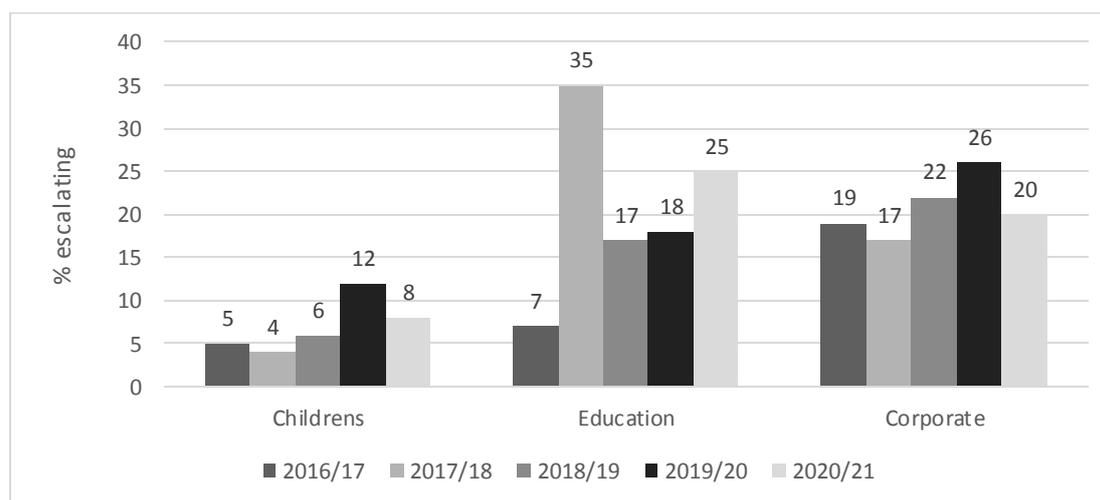
Figure 5: Financial Redress breakdown 2020/21

COMPENSATION 2020/21	
Adult Social Care	£28,669.00
Children, Families & Learning	£75,560.25
Corporate	£400.00
Total	£104,630.15

Complaint Escalation:

38. We aim to resolve complaints 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.
39. 20% of complaints (78 out of 397) were escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2 of the Council’s corporate complaints procedure in 2020/21; a 6% decrease from the previous year (26%). Due to their complexity, 28 complaints were taken on straight at stage 2 to avoid further frustration for customers.
40. During the 2020/21 financial year, 8% of complaints about Children’s Services escalated to the second stage of the complaint process. This was a decrease of 4% from the previous year. 25% of complaints about Education Services escalated to the second stage, an increase of 7%.

Figure 6: Complaint escalation year-on-year

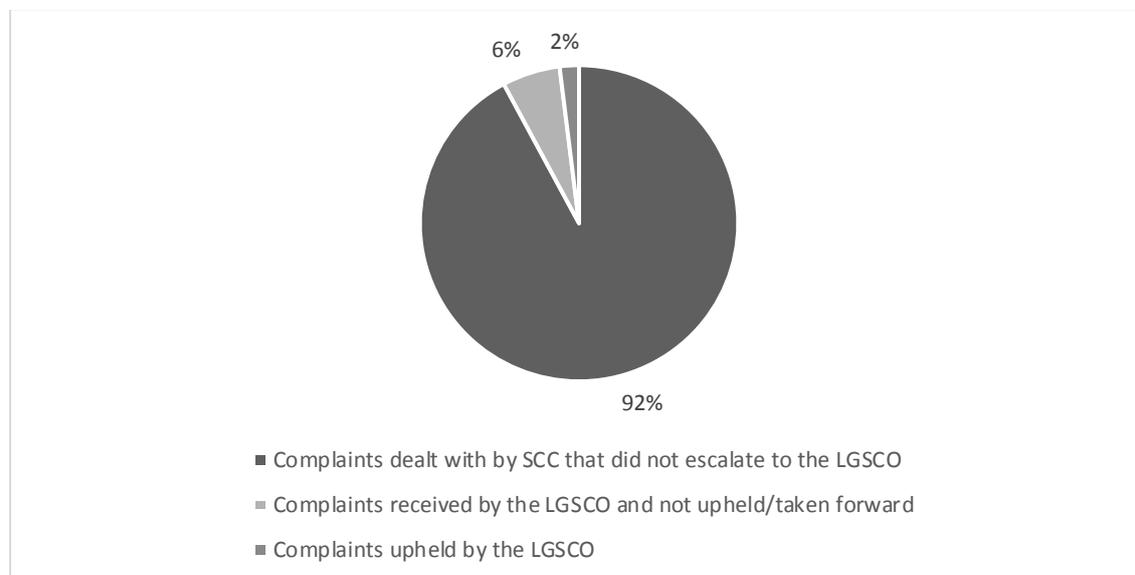


41. Adult Social Care is required by law to have a one stage complaint procedure. This is why there is no escalation rate for Adult Social Care complaints.

Escalation to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

42. In 2020/21, the Ombudsman received 125 complaints and enquiries about Surrey County Council; 8% of the total number of complaints received by the County Council. This was a decrease from 2019/20 (14%). Of these 125 enquiries, the Ombudsman issued 119 decisions. It should be noted that the Ombudsman paused their casework between end of March and late June 2020 to allow authorities to concentrate their efforts on frontline services during the pandemic. This will have had an impact on their data. See Annex 3 for a year-on-year comparison.
43. Only a very small number of the complaints we receive escalate to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The vast majority are successfully resolved and responded to by us.
44. Only 30% of the total number of enquiries the Ombudsman received about Surrey County Council progressed to an investigation. Of these 38 complaints, 34 were upheld (89%). This compares with an average of 71% for similar authorities. In over half of the cases where the Ombudsman found fault, we had already upheld the complaint through our own procedures. In some cases, the Ombudsman confirmed the remedy we had already offered the customer to resolve the complaint.

Figure 7: Escalation to the Ombudsman 2020/21



45. Where the Ombudsman has upheld a complaint, this indicates fault on the part of the Council in delivering its services. This can also include cases where the authority accepted fault before the Ombudsman investigation. We aim to learn from upheld complaints to identify what went wrong and to put in place measures to make sure a similar situation does not happen again.

46. Benchmarking of Ombudsman escalation rates with other similar county councils can be found at Annex 5 to this report and examples of complaints upheld and not upheld by the Ombudsman at Annex 6. 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.
47. As shown in Figure 7, the escalation rate to the Ombudsman was 8%. The three most common categories of complaint to the Ombudsman were Education and Children's Services, Adult Care Services, and Highways & Transport. Education and Children's Services was the top category of complaint about Surrey County Council. Upheld complaints included: not giving notice of an increase in care home charges; delays in carrying out needs assessment; failure to provide suitable educational provision; delays with Education, Health and Care Plan process; failure to provide appropriate advice for young people missing education; failure with process and decisions around home to school transport; communication failure relating to the implementation of a parking permit scheme.
48. Financial redress was recommended in 79% of the cases upheld by the Ombudsman, an increase from 52% the previous year. For some financial remedies, the Ombudsman was ratifying or agreeing the remedy offered at stage 2 of the Council's complaints procedure.
49. This year the Ombudsman issued two public reports about Surrey County Council. The first concerned provision of school transport to a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) moving to post 16 education. The second public report detailed failings in the end-of-life care provided to an individual by a care home; a placement which the Council had arranged and funded. Both reports were considered by Surrey County Council's Cabinet.
50. Surrey County Council has a 100% compliance rate with implementing Ombudsman recommendations.
51. 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

52. Figure 8 (below) shows the complaints received for the year 2020/21 for Surrey County Council's Pensions Service.
53. There were no recorded cases of complaints being referred to The Pensions Ombudsman.
54. Most complaints received were about Surrey County Council's Pension Fund, which is to be expected given that it is the largest of the Funds.

Overall, the total number of complaints have decreased from the previous year.

Figure 8: Pensions Complaints 2020/21

Fund	Comms	Service Quality/Delay	Other	2020/21 Total
Pensions	5	3	42	50
Hammersmith & Fulham	0	3	1	4
Hillingdon	0	0	4	4
Kensington & Chelsea	0	0	2	2
Westminster	1	0	2	3
Surrey	14	10	10	34
Total	20	16	61	97

Learning from complaints

55. 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 review how a service is delivered. Specific examples are given in Annex 1.
56. We also implemented 18 service improvements following Ombudsman investigations; these included reviewing a number of procedures and staff training.

Compliments:

57. 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 compliment the standard of service they have received. In 2020/21, the Council recorded 2123 compliments about its services: 116 for Children and Family Service, 53 for Education; 455 for Adult Social Care and 1,499 for all other services. This is an increase on the 1988 compliments recorded in 2019/20.
58. We are working to ensure more consistency in recording of compliments e.g. through a standard definition. Compliments are now routinely captured on our casework management system and this is being promoted both within and outside the Council. Extracts from compliments received are in Annex 2.

Conclusions:

59. 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 resolution – actively reviewing initial enquiries to prevent unnecessary complaint escalation.
- d) 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.
- e) Children’s Customer Relations Team has introduced a new e-learning package and created and published a SharePoint site for colleagues to access up-to-date information on effective complaints management.
- f) Children’s Customer Relations Team has developed Service Level Agreements with front-line services and increased the exchange of information between Quality Assurance Teams and the Customer Relations Team to inform practice delivery.
- g) Children’s Customer Relations Team has arranged the delivery of an LGSCO training course for over 150 officers on Effective Complaints Management.
- h) The Adults Customer Relations Team has produced a new complaints leaflet, together with an ‘Easy Read’ version which is widely circulated.
- i) Training has been delivered throughout the year for Adult Social Care Managers and practitioners on handling complaints and responding effectively.
- j) The Adult Social Care Customer Relations Team has provided advice and guidance to the In-House Home managers that transitioned back to the Adult Social Care Directorate and supported the newly created Learning Disability and Autism and the Mental Health services.
- k) The Adults Customer Relations Team continues to lead on most joint complaints with the NHS and works in partnership with health partners to address and resolve complaints
- l) 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.

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

- a) Training and support to create a strong customer ethos that cuts through each part of the organisation – putting our customers at the heart of what we do everyday
- b) Drive changes to behaviours and the way we work to build better relationships with our customers and support improved collaboration and engagement
- c) Reduce the financial impact of complaints by getting things right first time more often and make sure all staff feel empowered and have the time to respond positively to customer complaints
- d) Showcase good practice and share more widely the learning from complaints
- e) Embed the electronic case work management system for complaints and other customer feedback across all services to use it to its full capacity to provide better oversight and monitoring
- f) Developing the reporting functionality of the casework management system to enable consistent reporting across all three complaint teams
- g) The Children's Customer Relations Team will:
 - Redesign their webpage
 - Review and publish information leaflets for families
 - Introduce an Early Resolution approach in line with the corporate model
- h) The Adults Customer Relations Team will:
 - Continue to support teams, specifically with effective complaints handling and ongoing training, to ensure quality responses with a focus on putting things right.
 - Continue to develop and embed a culture of improving services, as a result of identified learning from complaints.

Financial and value for money implications

61. Payment of financial redress (as 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

62. 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

63. 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:

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

Report contact: Sarah E.M Bogunovic, Head of Customer Strategy & Futures

Contact details: Tel: 07977266706, 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. Benchmarking of LGSCO complaints
6. 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 2020/21 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: The family complained that they were not informed by the Council that there would be a charge for the Sitting Service and had not received the financial assessment. They felt that staff were not helpful in their communication when discussing this matter. The findings supported the complaint.

We did: All staff were reminded of the importance of discussing financial assessments and charges for services early on when talking to service users and their families/carers.

Customer said: Complaint regarding the poor quality of communication and errors and inadequate record keeping. The investigation found fault with the quality of some of the communication with the family and the case recording was not satisfactory

We did: Discussed with each staff member regarding the need for accurate and timely communication to families and advised them of findings of complaint investigation. Process for follow up actions in safeguarding cases has been reviewed to ensure regular meetings with the NHS safeguarding lead take place, to ensure timely follow up on the request for reports and information from health, and training and reflective session held for practitioners on the safeguarding process and outcomes.

Customer said: Foster carer complained about delays in applications for passports for children in care

We did: We revised our process to ensure that social workers follow clear guidelines to avoid delays.

Customer said: Parent complained that there was no clear published process that informed parents on how to apply for respite care when a child is not open to social care, specifically the CWD Service

We did: We revised the information available to parents and published this on the SEND Local Offer webpage.

Customer said: The customer complained about a change of hours for pavement works which resulted in some works taking place at night without advanced warning to local residents.

We did: We amended the procedure for the local Structural Repair Programme to ensure all relevant teams within the council were aware of any proposed changes in hours of planned works.

Customers said: A customer complained about ongoing overgrown vegetation and trees from a neighbouring property

We did: We reviewed the wording of vegetation cards issued to private landowners to make clear that there is an ongoing responsibility on private landowners to regularly maintain the trees/hedges on their property throughout the year so that they do not obstruct the highway.

Annex 2: Extracts of compliments received

ADULTS:

Waverley Locality Team: I am writing as I wanted to express my great thanks and compliment one of your members of staff, X, who was allocated to work with my parents in April 2020. X has been such a true professional. She has been supportive, shown great kindness to both my parents and my brother and me. Given us good clear advice and just got on with what needed to be done during a time of great uncertainty, changes and challenges. I cannot thank her enough for what she has done and feel so lucky she was chosen as my parents Social Worker.

Learning Disability team: I just needed to let you know how very grateful we are to X for her invaluable help during this year. My son was removed from his placement in February and X was assigned to his case. (Not an easy one!!) She has been dedicated and professional throughout with a solid and friendly attitude - **nothing** has been too much trouble for her. Despite my endless calls and emails she has been so patient and her "can do" attitude has really helped us through. She really has gone far and above what was expected of her and due to her hard work and commitment my son has been successfully placed in a lovely house.

Team at St Peter's Hospital: Thank you for all your hard work during my mother's spell in hospital. I was regularly kept up to date throughout, at a time when information was hard to come by due to the Coronavirus. X was supportive and professional and made what was a difficult situation easier by being clear and always at hand. She didn't speak about 'a patient', she spoke about my mother, and so I felt that she cared and understood what I was going through.

Elmbridge Locality Team based at Walton Community Hospital: My family and I appreciate the support you gave us and the hard work and effort you put in to finding the right care for our mum/grandmother. We know that it was really difficult initially for you to get a clear understanding and assessment of her needs, especially with the gaps in resources / communication caused by the pandemic but still you managed to work things out and kept us informed as to what was happening. Thanks to you, she is in a lovely nursing home.

Epsom & Ewell Reablement Team: Thank you on behalf of my Mum. Getting Mum out of hospital and looking after her at home would not have been possible without the kindness and professionalism of the team. With the virus threatening us all, they were cheerful and caring which made Mum feel safe. She came home unable to walk, depressed and unable to hold a cup. With the help of your team she is now walking with support, eating well, washing, dressing, and going upstairs to her own bed.

Arundel House: I want to acknowledge the fantastic care and support staff at Arundel House have offered my sister and the residents during this difficult period. The communication has been excellent, which is vital when I'm unable to visit. If there is anything you can do to acknowledge the work they do, please do so.

CHILDREN'S & EDUCATION:

Fostering Service: I wanted to thank you, this is a very stressful time for the family and no matter how busy you have been, you have taken the time and listened and advised when I needed it. I can't thank you enough.

NW Assessment Team: Quote from a parent after reading assessment 'I have read through this and I can see that you have been extremely thorough. It is encouraging to know that there are people like you looking out for the best interest of children'

SE Family and Safeguarding Team: I think you've been a breath of fresh air. You have no idea how much I appreciate the time you have taken to talk with me and to spend the time watching how the girls interact with me. No one else has done that so I'm 100% happy with what you are doing so far.

HOPE service: We just wanted to take a moment to express to you and all the staff at Hope, our gratitude to you for continuing to support us in this risky time. We recognise that you are putting yourselves at risk for our wellbeing and it's hard to express our gratitude. Would you please pass this message to all at Hope - I'm especially keen that all staff hear the message for example cleaning staff, admin staff and non-front-line staff as well as all the education and support team. Thank you all for your help and support and please stay safe.

NE SEND: just wanted to thank you again for all your hard work supporting us and X in the EHCP/school placement process. We are thrilled she can stay at [place] where she is happy and safe and thriving. We really appreciate everything you have done to help secure this placement. I also wanted to let you know how very impressed Y have been with your work and have more than once told us how lucky we are to have you as X's caseworker. We couldn't agree more. Thank you again

EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICE - NORTH EAST: Thank you so much, we will always be so grateful to you for giving X this chance in life, I have just let X know and he is so happy, so thank you so much, Enjoy the rest of the summer.

CORPORATE:

CRCs: Visit to the Lyne Lane Centre this week, I was overawed by the appearance, organisation, cleanliness, and welcoming staff. An outstanding effort by all concerned. Congratulations and thank you for a very pleasant experience.

Surrey History Centre: Thank you for your help and kindness during my search. I have found the last resting place of my Grandfather, and I plan to "reunite" my Mother with her Father once we get this awful pandemic behind us!

Registration: I recently ordered a full copy of my birth certificate, which I need here in X to register for health care and, therefore, go on the list for vaccination. It arrived with my daughter in Scotland 4 days later, and she was

able to scan it ...I had accepted there could be a delay because of COVID, so to get this certificate so quickly was a real bonus. Just as there are human consequences when government departments are slow and inefficient, so there are also very personal benefits when you are quick and helpful. It has made a real difference to have this so speedily. Please pass on my sincere gratitude and congratulations to the department involved....

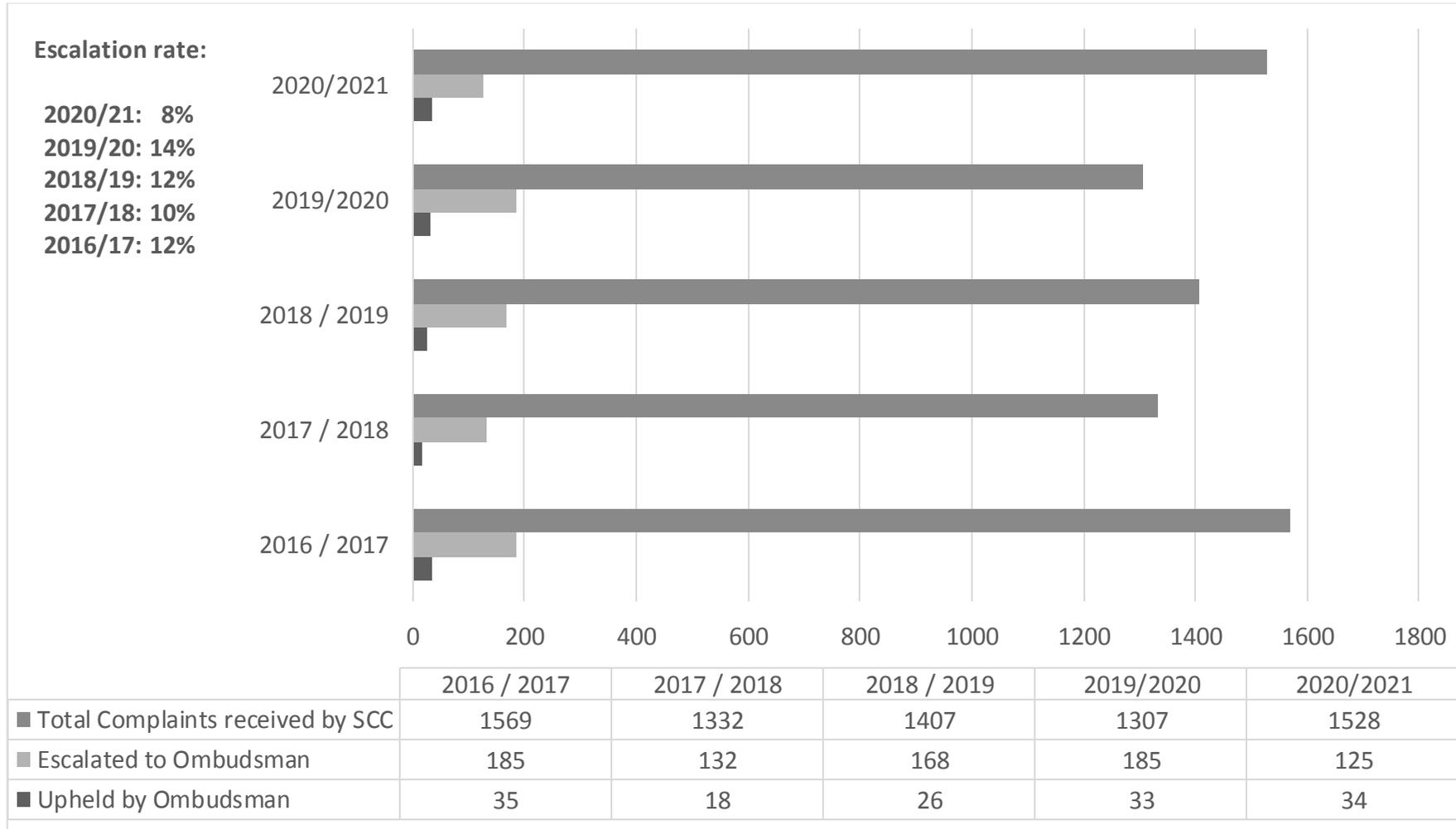
Highways: I reported that drivers had collided with a lamp post in a road named Rozeldene in Hindhead last week. To my surprise an engineer came out within 30 minutes to check that the lamp post was ok. Then just this morning I have found that another engineer has been out to concrete in the bottom of the lamppost, and I am now assuming that the case has been dealt with. This is extremely efficient and timely, and I can't remember the last time I have received such good service. Well done highways Team!

Libraries: Library Direct Home Service: Can I just say, whilst you are on the phone that this service has been a lifeline to me, I've felt very isolated and this is what has kept me going, please pass on my thanks

Contact Centre: I just wanted to give feedback on the excellent service I received from X at your contact centre this morning. Not only was he polite, friendly and helpful on the phone, he managed it well. He tried to get me an immediate answer and when he couldn't he took my details to call me back. He called me back promptly, and although he couldn't get hold of the department, explained the situation and gave me the email address to contact them. He also then followed up with an email to ensure I had the correct details. He went the extra mile, by offering talk to my young daughter who wanted to talk on the phone, to keep her happy whilst I was speaking to him. I thought this call was an example of excellent customer service, and I am thankful for the service I received today.

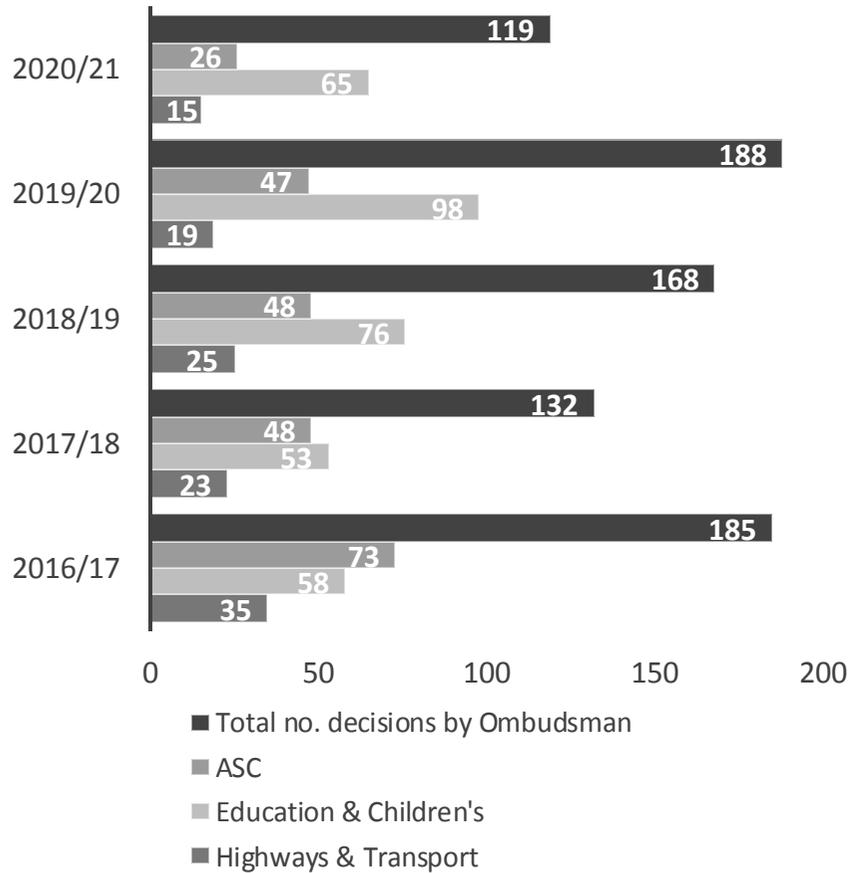
Countryside re resurfacing of a bridleway: May i say a BIG THANKYOU from myself and everyone at X ... what an improvement.. we love it... I know it's not yet finished but we are all so grateful, There has also been so many passing comments from other users.. bike riders and walkers.. it is so much nicer and much safer. Thank you so much.. and to you personally X thank you so much for your regular updates and great communication. Thankyou....really much appreciated from us all

Annex 3: Complaint escalation to LGSCO

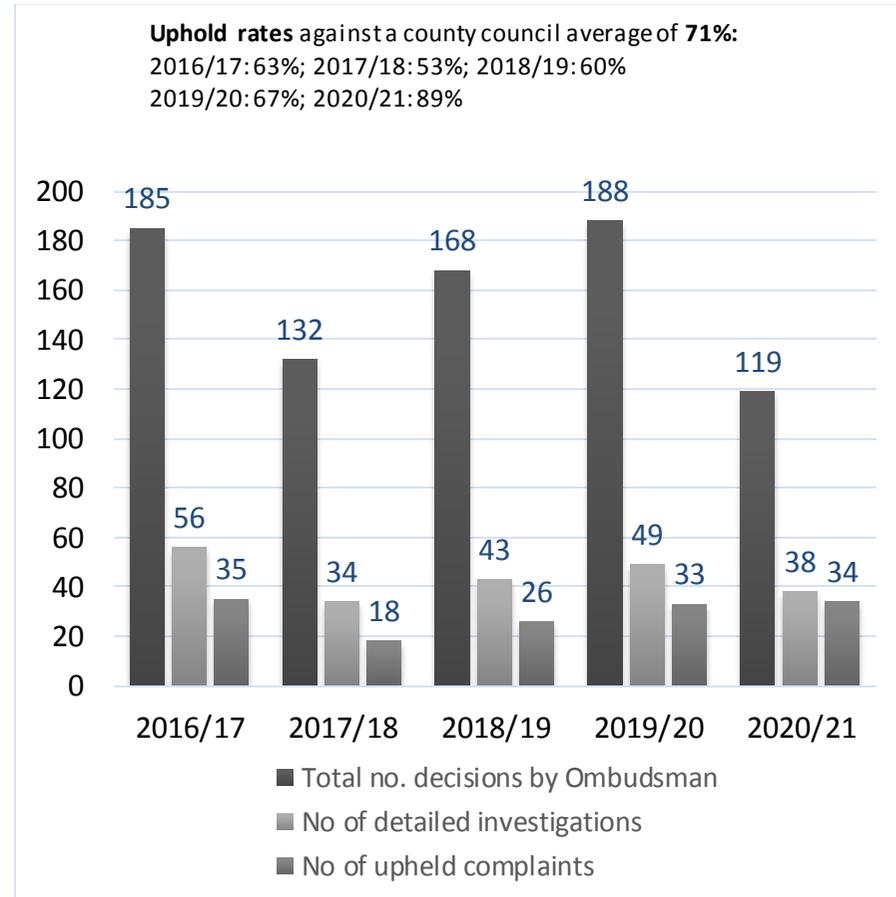


Annex 4: SCC Complaints breakdown – referrals to LGSCO

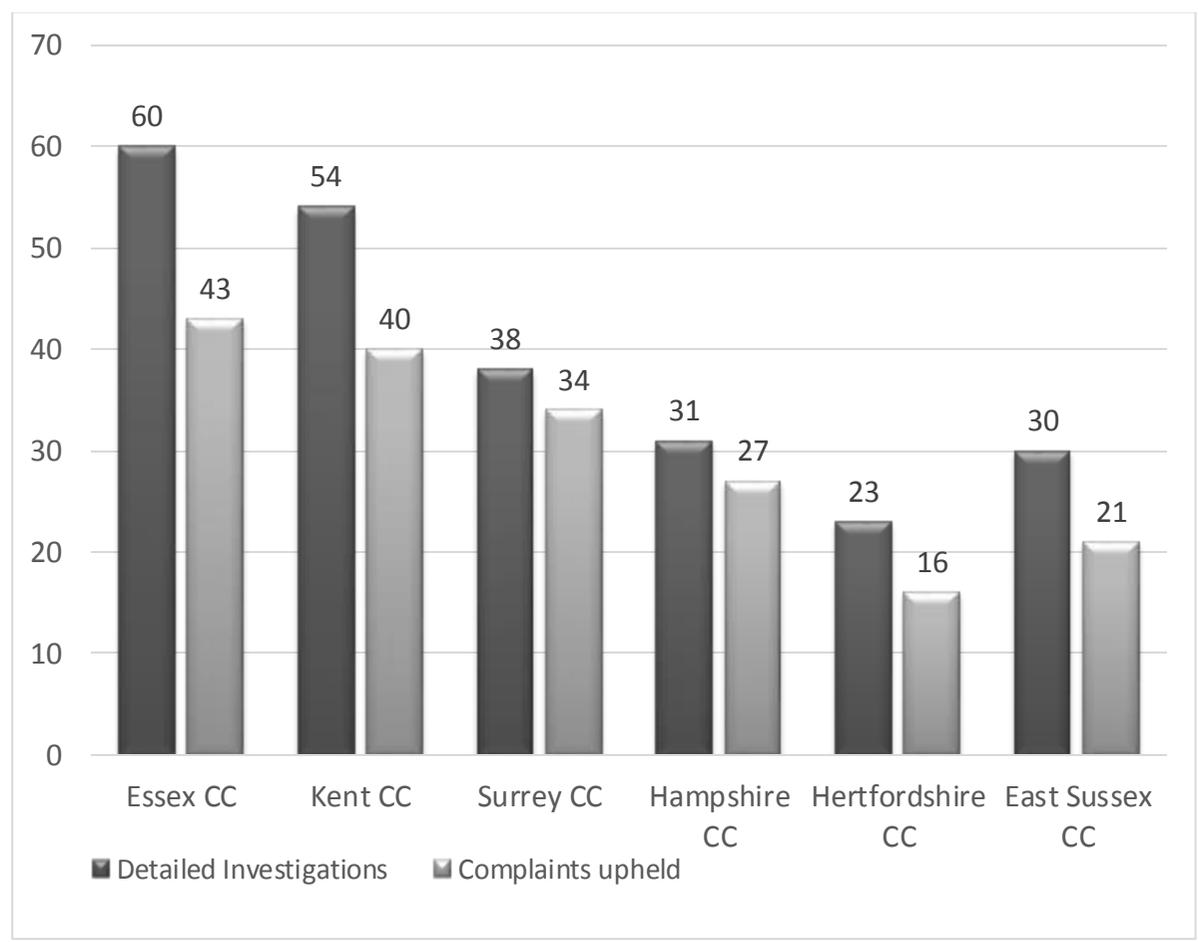
Areas of complaint



Number of detailed investigations and complaints upheld



Annex 5: Benchmarking of LGSCO complaints



Annex 6: Example case studies of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman decisions 2020/21 (upheld vs not upheld)

Adult Social Care: Upheld

20 004 804: The Ombudsman found that the Council was at fault in the way it handled an increase in a person's residential care fees. It fettered its discretion by adhering to a rigid interpretation of its fee guidelines, and also allowed an informal third-party top-up arrangement, both of which conflict with the statutory guidance. The Council agreed to remedy this by reimbursing the money paid via this arrangement.

Adult Social Care: Not upheld

20 000 375: Ms Y complained the Council has not completed a satisfactory review of the suitability of a care home to meet her father's care needs. She said this meant she was left with uncertainty about whether the family should be required to pay a top-up fee for his current care home. The Ombudsman was satisfied with the way the Council carried out the review and did not uphold the complaint.

Education & Children's: Upheld

20 006 738: Miss X complained that the Council responded inappropriately on learning she had made an allegation to police about a former partner. She says the Council's handling of her complaints was inadequate and that the Council has placed demands on her that affect her ability to find future employment. The Ombudsman found that the Council was at fault. The Council agreed to hold a fresh investigation into Miss X's complaints and to provide a financial remedy for the delay and for Miss X's time and trouble.

Education & Children's: Not upheld

19 018 548: The complainant Mrs C said the Council was at fault in its decision to refuse her son free transport to school. The complainant said this has led to stress for the family, as she felt she was taking a risk taking him to school herself. The Ombudsman said it does not decide whether the Council should provide transport for Mrs C's son as this is the Council's job. The Ombudsman said it would check the Council made its decision properly, and could not question Council decisions made without fault, no matter how strongly Mrs C disagreed. The Ombudsman concluded that it found no evidence of fault with the Council's decision to refuse Mrs C's son free school transport.

Highways & Transport: Upheld

19 016 004: Mrs C complained the Council failed to consider or include a grassed communal area when introducing a parking permit scheme and refused to quickly amend the scheme or put in place posts to prevent vehicle access. Mrs C said some residents were parking on the grassed area to avoid buying a parking permit and damaging it which was unfair to residents who bought a permit. The Ombudsman has found some fault in the provision of incorrect information to Mrs C about whether the grassed area was included

in the permit scheme but noted that the Council quickly provided the correct information. The Ombudsman upheld the complaint because of this fault but did not consider this caused Mrs C an injustice requiring a remedy.

Highways & Transport: Not upheld

20 010 406: Ms X complained about the Council's refusal to force Heavy Goods Vehicles to use a by-pass instead of the road where she lives. The Ombudsman decided not to investigate this complaint. The Ombudsman said that Council is the highway authority, and it must decide what traffic management measures to introduce. The Ombudsman said it could not question whether a council's decision is right or wrong just because the complainant disagrees with it. The Ombudsman was satisfied that the Council properly considered Ms X's request but was not obliged to act on it.