
Corporate and Statutory Complaints Annual Report

2023/2024

April 2024

Introduction

This report provides an analysis of corporate and statutory complaints received by Lincolnshire County Council during the year 2023/2024. A countywide overview will determine any recurring themes across the council and additional analysis per service area will aim to pinpoint any specific areas of work.

The report also provides recommendations to the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) on how services, inclusive of Customer Relations, can be improved. CLT should consider these recommendations, and where possible agree how these can be implemented.

Corporate and Statutory Complaints Process

Lincolnshire County Council's corporate and Adults complaints process has two formal stages, with statutory Children's complaints having three. When an individual contacts the Customer Relations Team to raise their concerns, early resolution is attempted in order to address the concerns at first point of contact. These early resolution cases are referred to as contacts within this report.

If early resolution is not possible a contact will then enter the formal process at stage 1. Once a response has been provided, those complainants wishing to escalate their complaint to the next stage must advise the Complaints Manager of the reasons they remain dissatisfied. For corporate and Adults complaints a further internal investigation is undertaken. Once complete, and a response sent, the complainant may contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

For Children's statutory complaints an escalation to stage 2 requires the commissioning of an independent investigator. Their investigation will be overseen by another independent officer and once complete, the council will respond based on their findings. Should a complainant question the findings and councils' response they can request that the investigation be reviewed by an independent panel; this being stage 3 of the statutory process. Once a panel has convened and a response provided the complainant may contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

This year has seen decisions from the LGSCO impact the complaints process. As a result of national complaints, the LGSCO advised that Local Authorities must now accept complaints in regard to contracted providers and investigate these as part of its own complaints process.

Countywide Overview

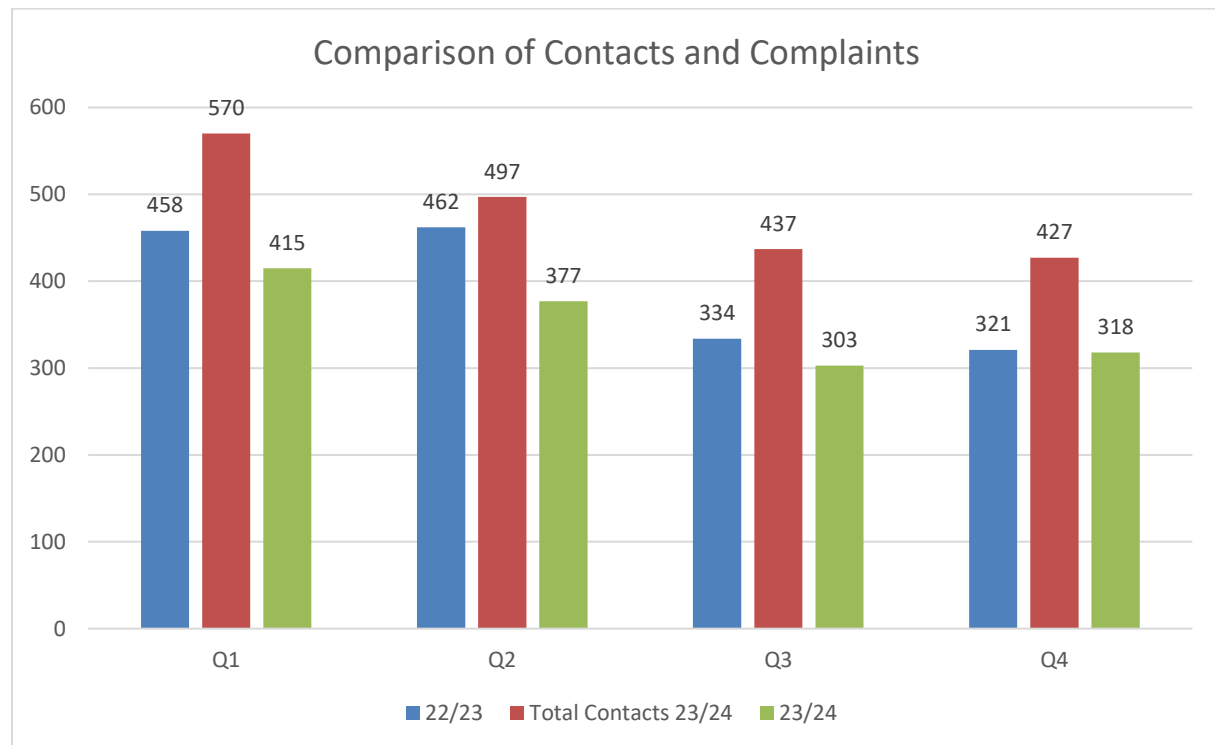
2023/2024 saw 1931 contacts received from the public; to express dissatisfaction with the services they had been provided. Of these 1931 contacts 1413 went on to enter the formal complaints process, with the remaining 518 being resolved to the customers satisfaction, and requiring no further action or investigation, through early resolution. This equated to 27% of all contacts received.

The first quarter of the year saw a significant increase in the number of contacts received compared to the beginning of the previous year. This number declined over the final three quarters of the year.

Overall, there was an increase of 2% in the number of contacts received by the authority in comparison to the previous year with a decline of 10% in the number of contacts entering the formal

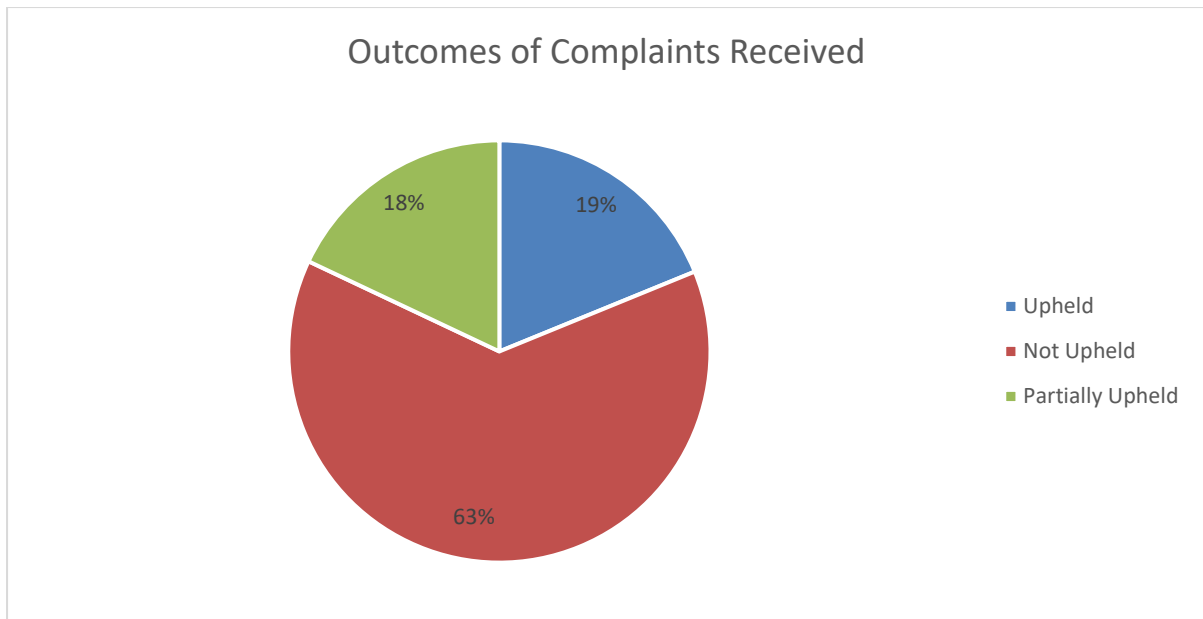
complaints process. Throughout the year a renewed focus has been placed on the informal resolution of cases, as an increase in overall contacts received had seen a reduction in this.

The following shows the total number of complaints received in 2022/2023, the number of contacts received in 2023/2024 and the number of those contacts entering the formal complaints process in 2023/2024.



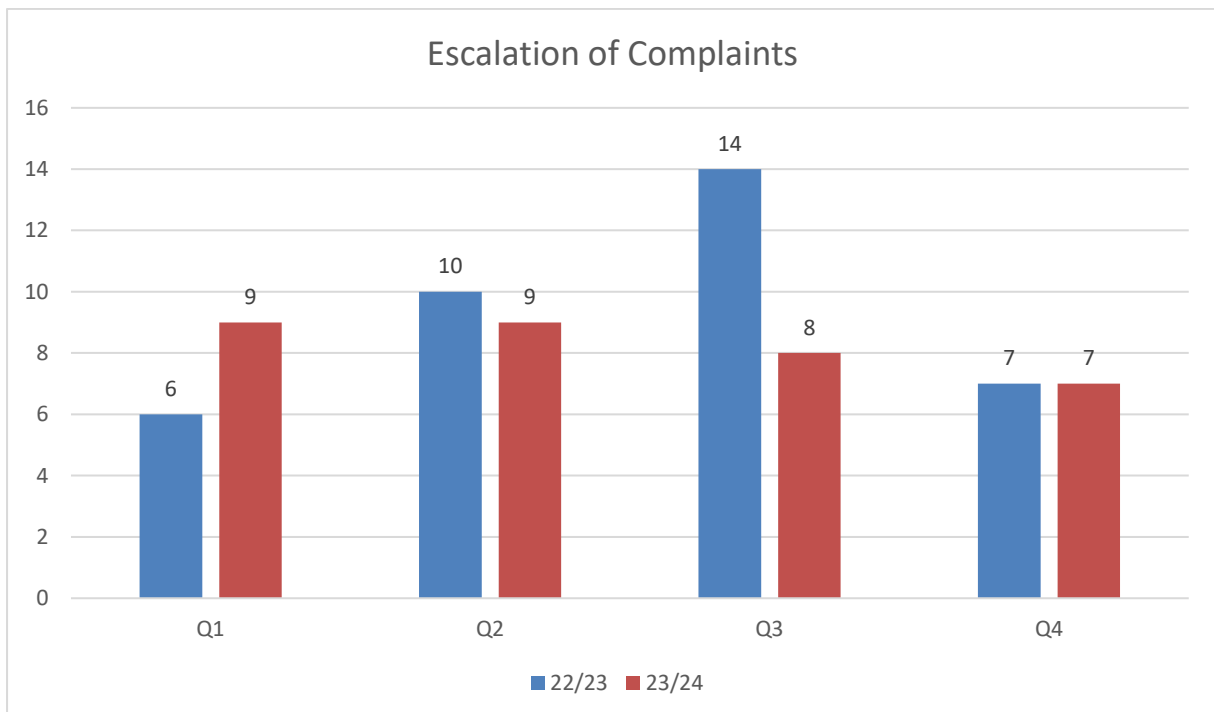
For all services, complaints which have been found to be either fully or partially upheld, have been analysed further to determine if there are any common factors which can be improved for future service provision. It is these cases that are being used to make recommendations to services on things which require work and/or improvement.

The following shows the overall outcomes of all formal complaints in 2023/2024.



In total 266 (19%) complaints were upheld throughout the course of the year with 254 (18%) partially upheld.

2023/2024 saw 33 cases escalated to the next stage of the complaints process. Of these 33 cases, 3 case were within the Children's statutory complaints process. Two of these cases remain open at the time of writing this report. This figure is a decrease in comparison to the previous year, which is to be expected given the overall decline in the number of complaints entering the formal process.



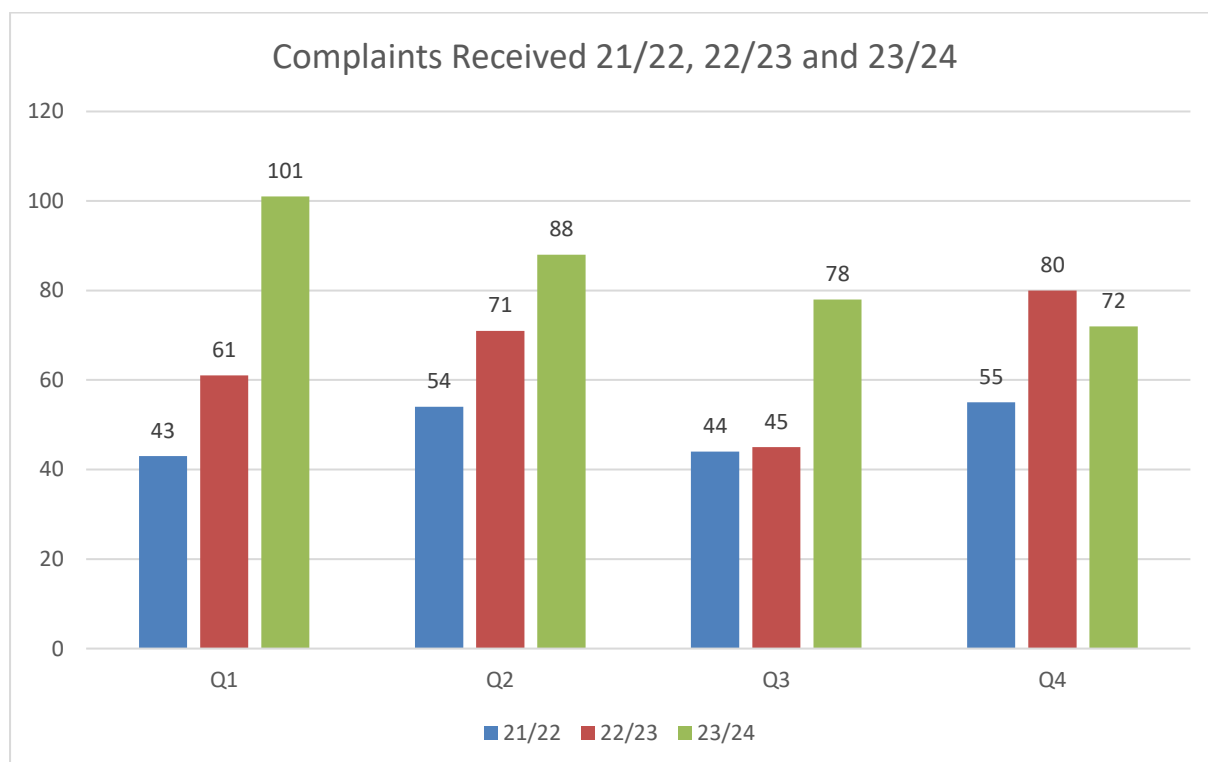
Overall escalated cases decreased by 10%. This aligns with the percentage decrease in the number of contacts which entered the formal complaints process.

Children's Services

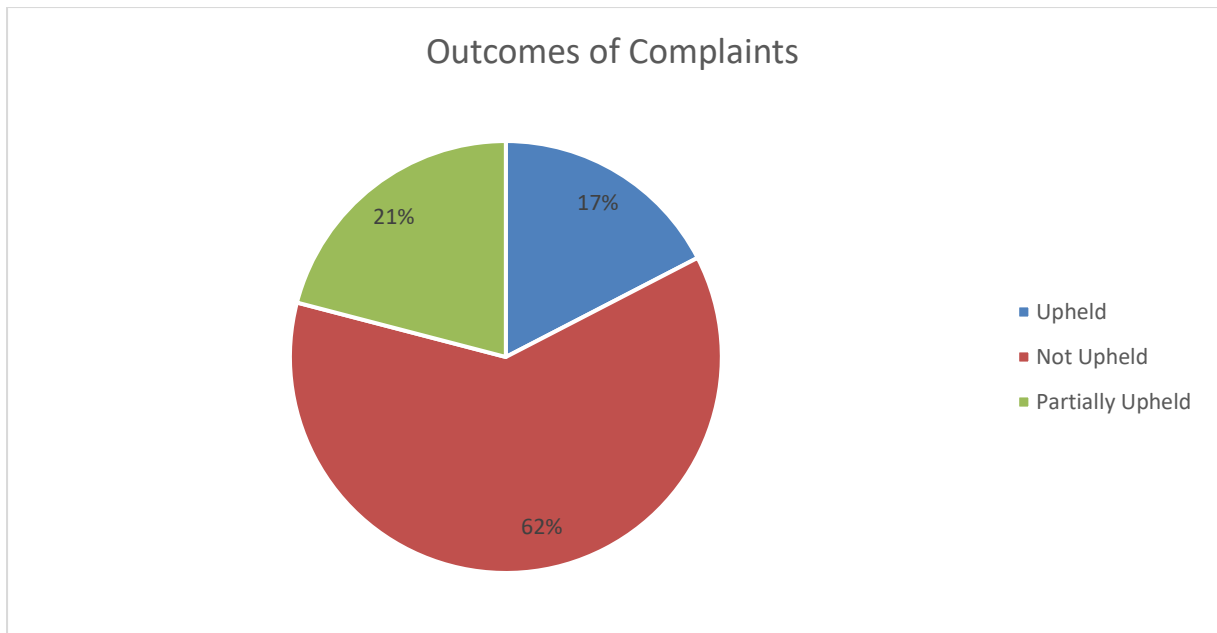
A total of 368 contacts were received in 2023/2024 in relation to Children's services, both corporate and statutory, from the public expressing dissatisfaction with the services being provided. Of these, 339 entered the formal complaints process. The remaining 29 were resolved early to the satisfaction of the customer, equating to 8% of all contacts received.

Overall, the year saw an increase of 32% in the number of cases entering the formal process, with a 21% increase in the overall number of contacts received.

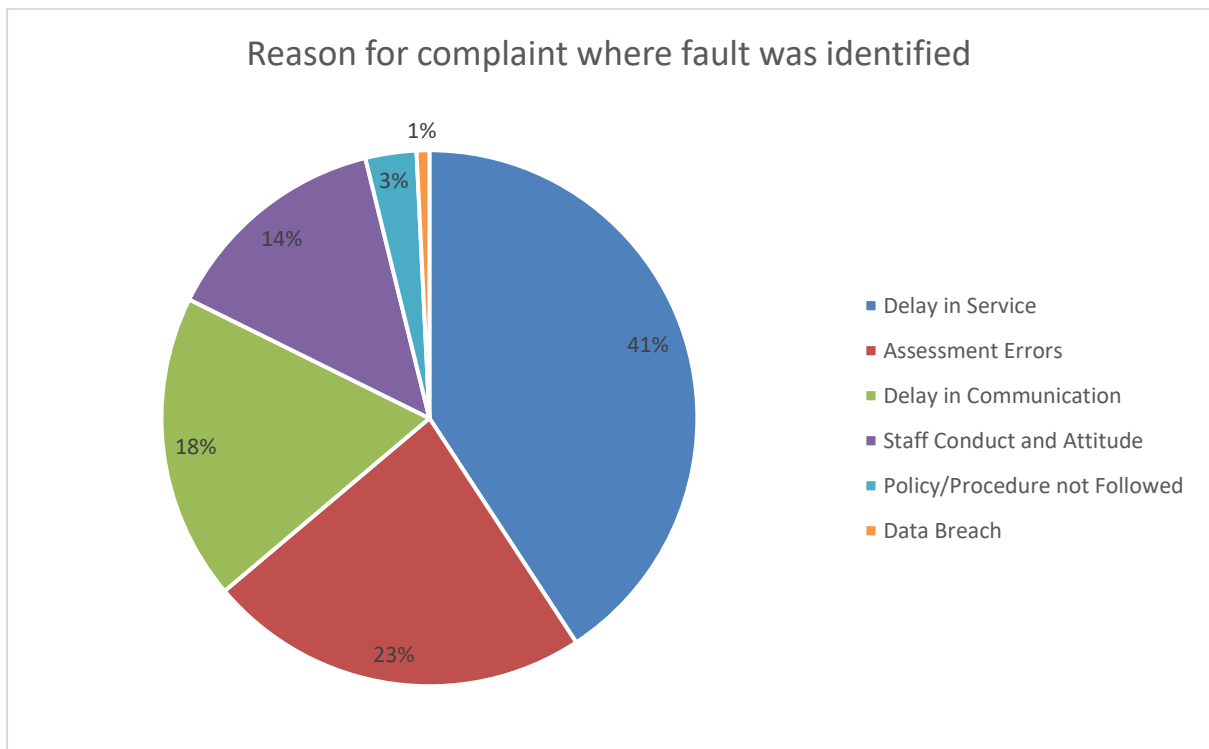
The following shows the comparison of formal complaints received in 2021/2022, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 at Stage 1.



Of the 339 cases which entered the formal complaints process, 209 (62%) cases found no fault in the way in which services were delivered. 71 (21%) cases were partially upheld, and 59 (17%) cases were upheld.



Analysis was undertaken on those complaints partially or fully upheld in order to determine if there were any trends or common factors. The following shows the reasons of all upheld complaints and the aspects of those complaints partially upheld, where fault was found.



Delays in service were seen throughout the year. This increased in the third quarter with a slight decline in the fourth.

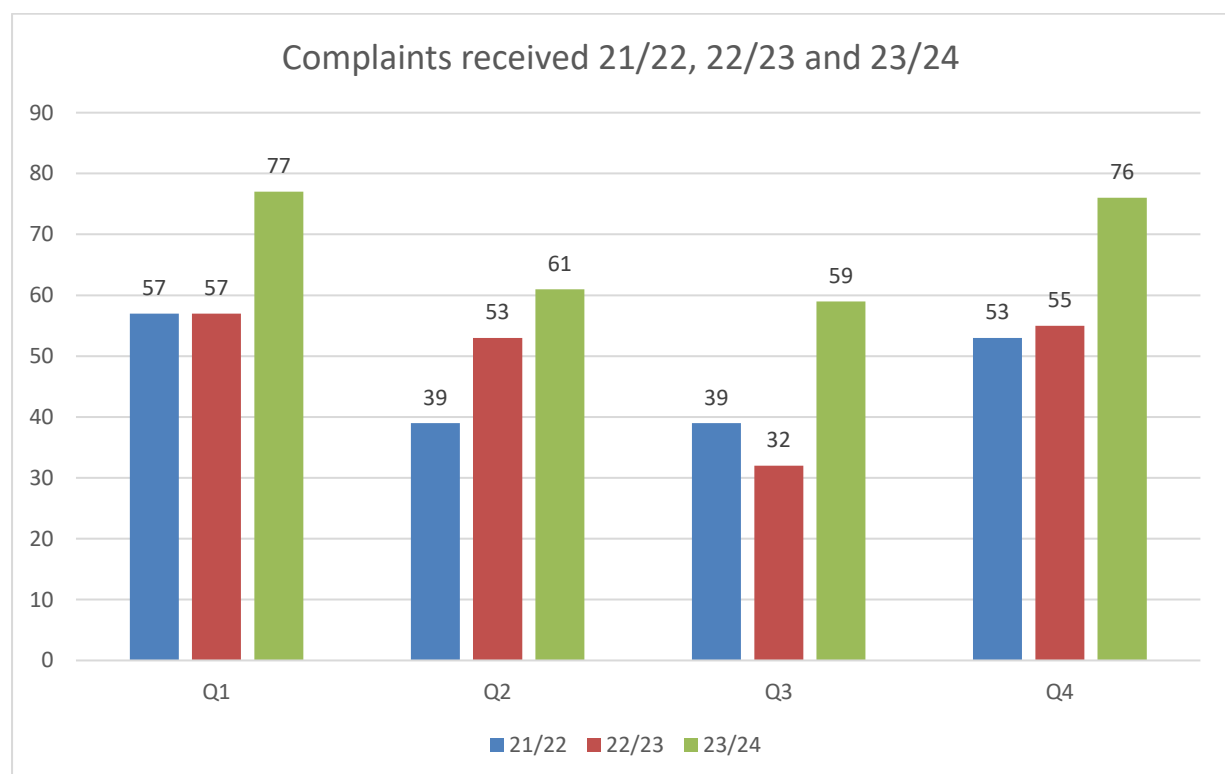
Lack of communication remains one of the largest impacting areas where standards are not being met. This remains an area where improvements are being implemented.

Adults Care & Community Wellbeing

In 2023/2024 the service saw 287 contacts received from the public to express dissatisfaction with the services delivered. Of these 273 entered the formal complaints process. The remaining 14 were resolved early to the satisfaction of the customer which accounts for 5% of all contacts received in the area.

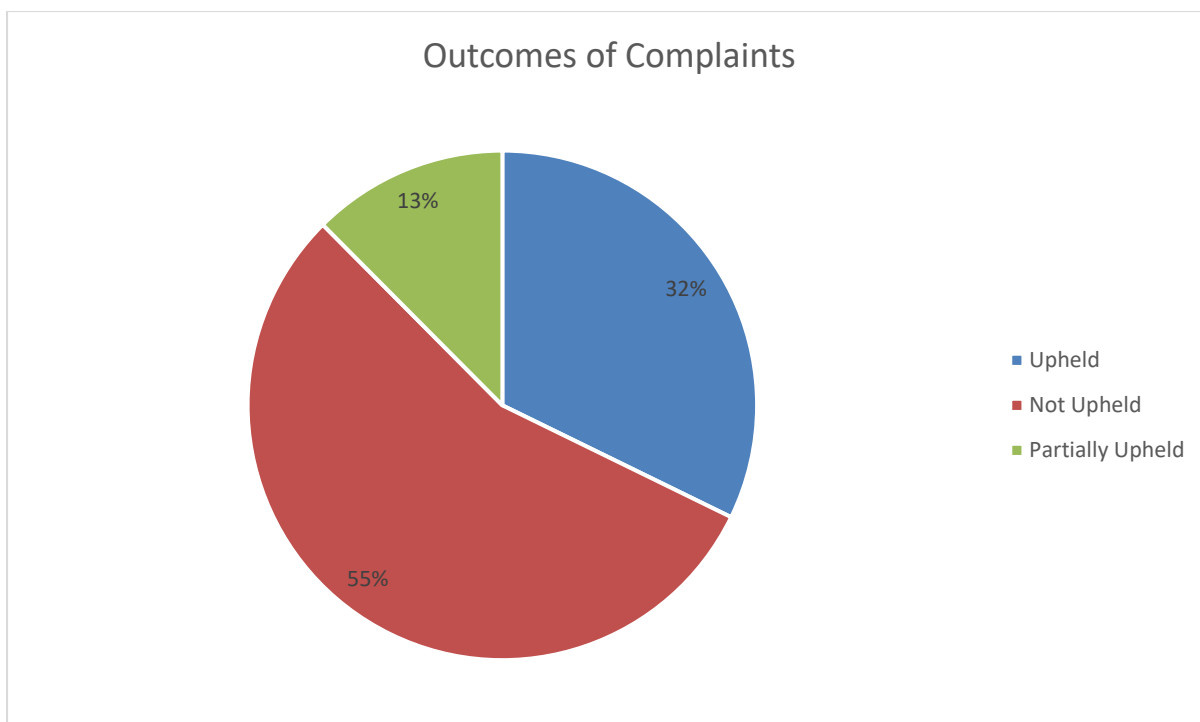
Overall, this area has seen 27% increase in the total number of contacts received in comparison to the previous year, with a 38% increase in the number of cases entering the formal complaints process.

The following shows that comparison of formal complaints received in 2021/2022, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 at Stage 1.



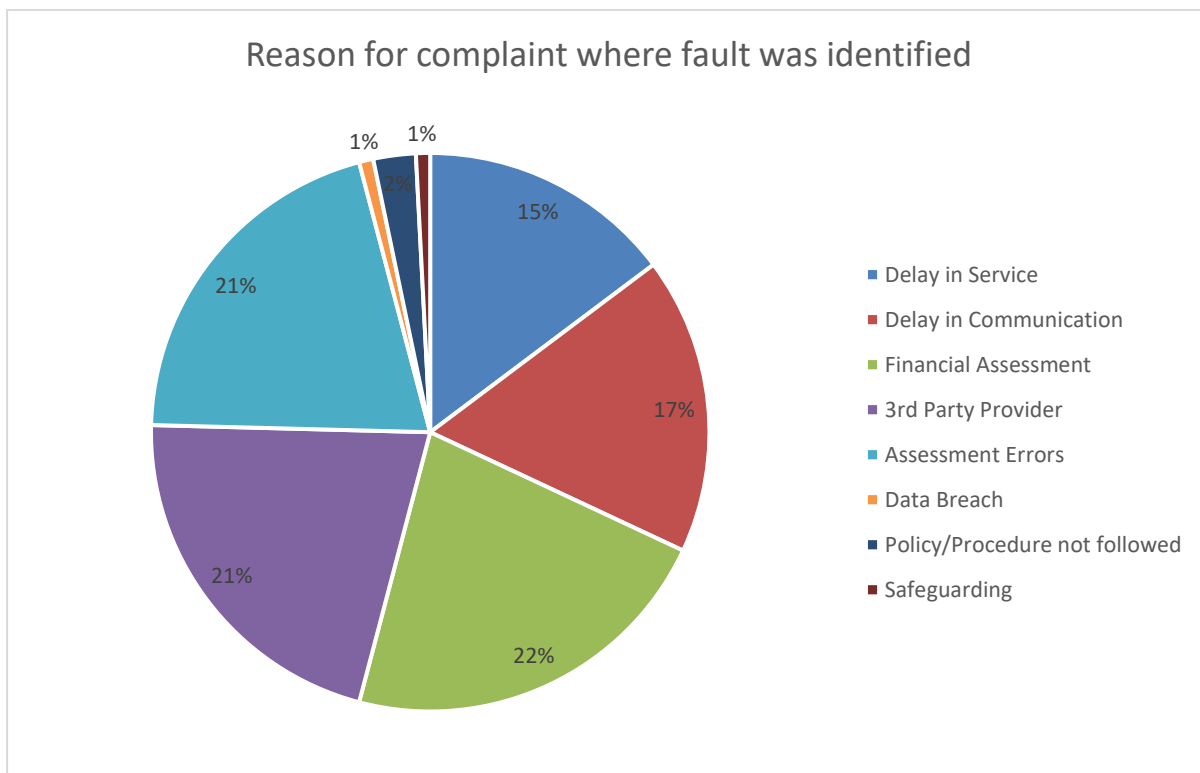
When looking at the outcome of complaints in this area 88 (32%) complaints were upheld and 34 (13%) complaints partially upheld. The remaining 151 (55%) identified no fault in the services which were delivered.

The following shows the outcomes of all complaints in this area.



Analysis was undertaken on those complaints partially or fully upheld in order to determine if there were any trends or common factors. This data was then provided to relevant staff within the service for additional review and decision on any areas of improvement.

The following shows where fault was found in complaints that were upheld and the founded aspects of those complaints that were partially upheld.



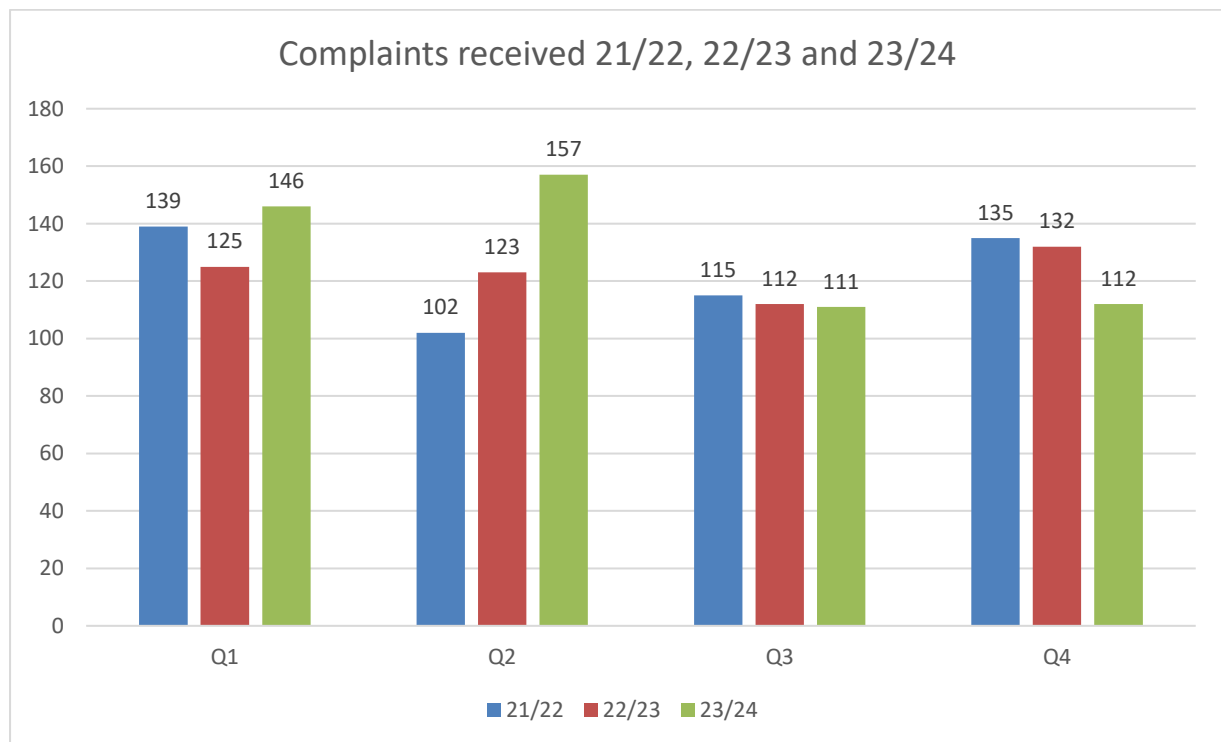
The main repeat areas of concern raised throughout the year were delays in communication, assessment outcomes, financial assessment outcomes and complaints relating to services provided by commissioned 3rd parties.

Highways and Transport

The year saw 897 contacts received from the public to express dissatisfaction with the services received in this area. Of these 526 entered the formal complaints process over the course of the year. The remaining 371 were resolved early to the satisfaction of the customer, which accounts for 41% of all contacts received.

Overall, the area saw an 8% increase in the number of contacts received and a 7% increase in the number of contacts which entered the formal complaints process.

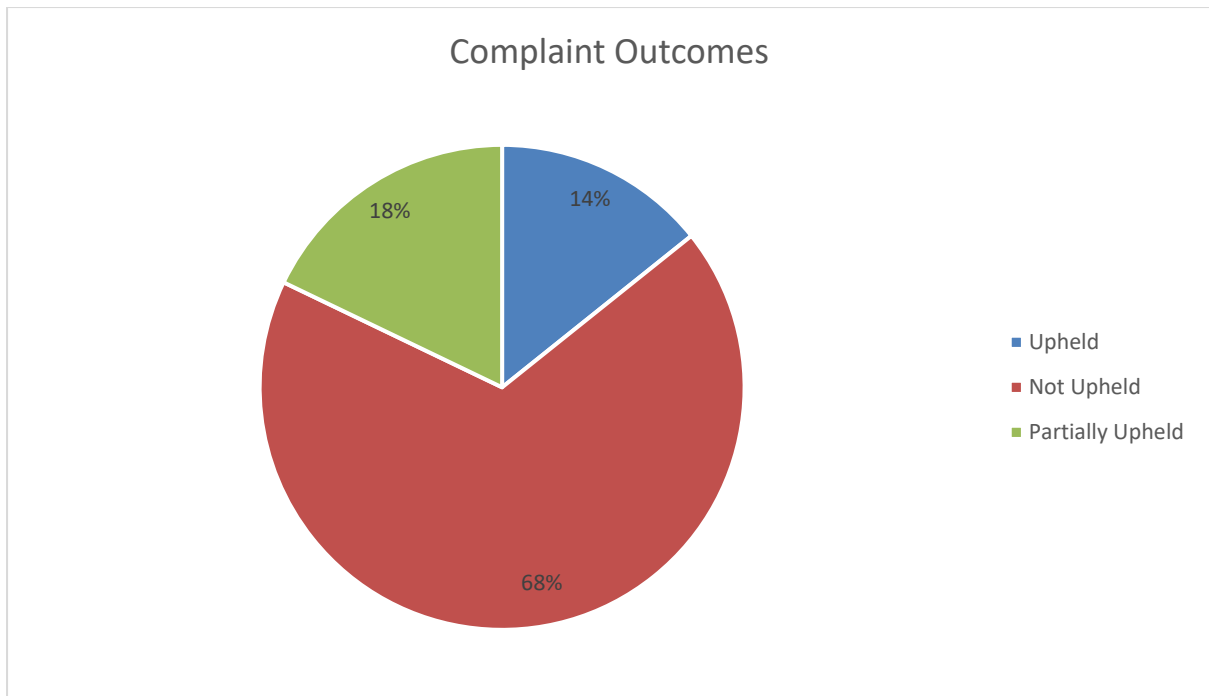
The following shows that comparison of formal complaints received in 2021/2022, 2022/2023 and 2023/24 at Stage 1.



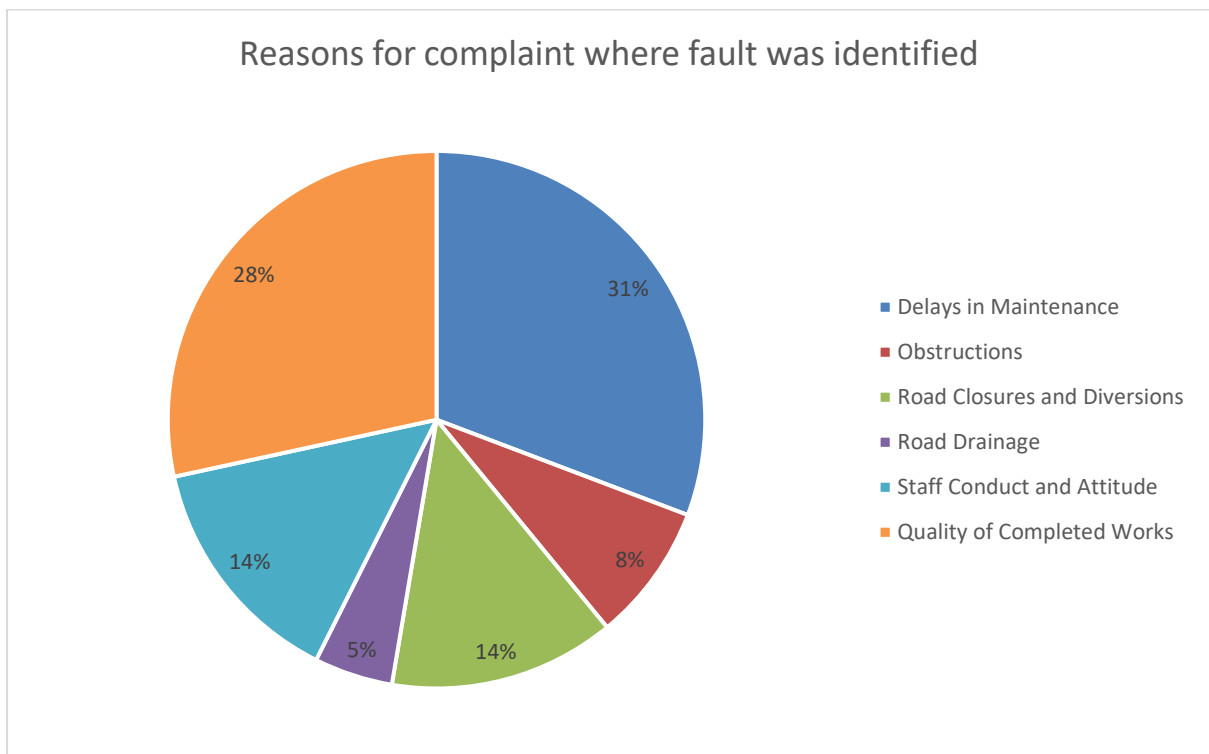
The year saw the number of cases entering the formal complaints process increase in the first two quarters with a substantial decline in the second two quarters. A large portion of these cases focused on the condition of roads and repairs required.

Analysis was undertaken on those complaints partially or fully upheld in order to determine if there were any trends or common factors.

The following shows where fault was found in complaints that were upheld and the aspects of those complaints partially upheld.



121 (23%) of all cases were either upheld or partially upheld. The following shows a break down for those complaints in which the service was not to the quality or standard expected.

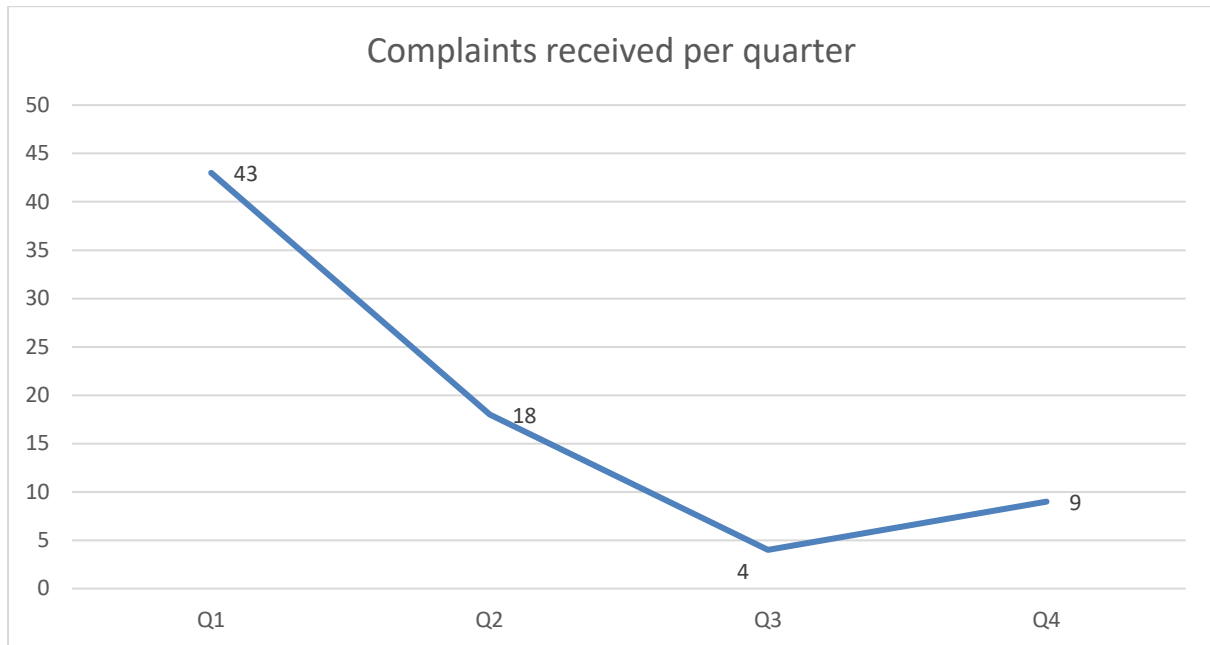


The largest area where fault was found was around delays in/lack of service, followed by complaints regarding the quality of works completed.

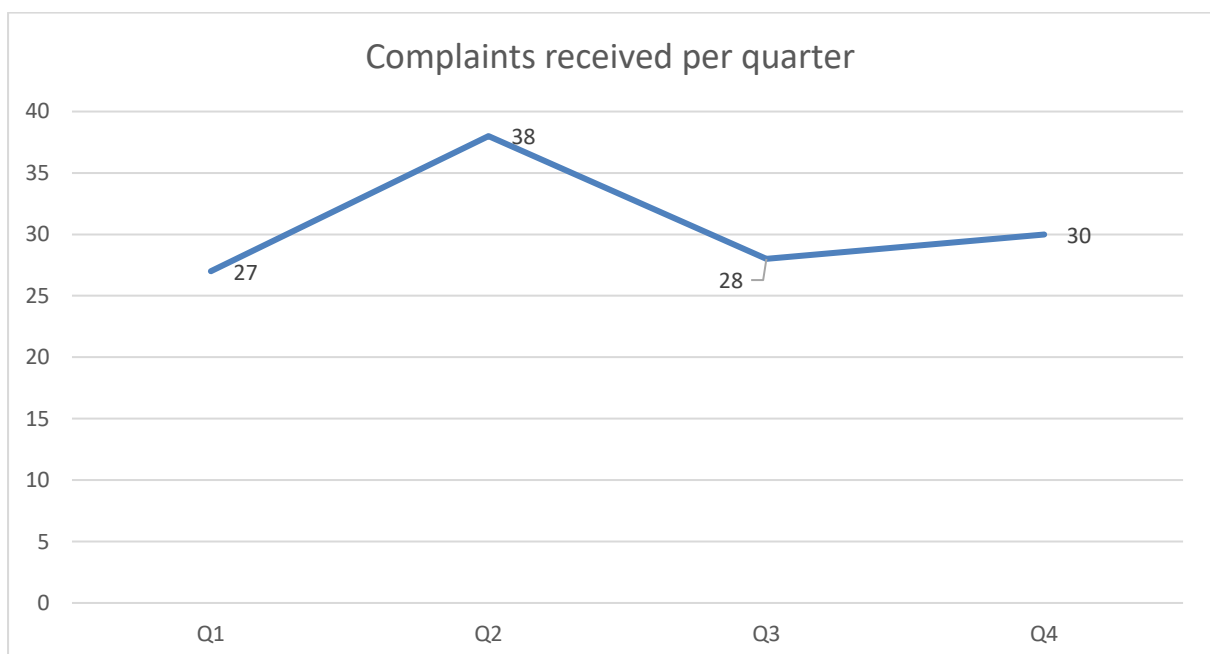
It should be noted that complaints in relation to this area declined over the last two quarters of the year, with Q2 seeing the highest volume of complaints progressing to a Stage 1.

Areas of Note

Waste Services have seen a significant decline throughout the year which only 74 complaints as seen in the below graph (in 2022/23 there were 142 complaints received). Given the significant decline additional analysis was not required as no trends in the numbers in the final two quarters were seen.



Transport has also seen a decline in comparison the previous year to the levels as seen in the following.



The majority of the complaints received in this area related to educational travel. There has been significant decrease in the number of cases received, 123 complaints, in comparison to 2022/2023 with 270 complaints. In total 3 cases were escalated to the 2nd stage of the complaints process in the year, however none of the cases were upheld upon further investigation.

Conclusion

Whilst we strive to bring down the dissatisfaction with services being delivered, the increase in contacts received provides additional data from which we are able to learn and improve.

With the introduction of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Code of Practice there will be changes in how data and outcomes are reported from 2024 onwards for corporate complaints. This includes our inability to undertake Early Resolution with customers, meaning all cases where there is evidence of dissatisfaction, as opposed to a request for service, will progress directly into a stage 1. The impact of the Code of Practice will be fully monitored and reported on going forward. The Local Authority's complaints process will also be updated to reflect other changes as a result of the Code.

As a result of Independent Investigations, it has been noted that record keeping in some service areas within the council could be improved. It is strongly advised staff are reminded that accurate record keeping is vital, ensuring all work completed on cases, particularly those within Children's Services and Adult Care, is accurately recorded and detailed on case records.

**The remainder of cases not included in the above report are a variety of area's including Recruitment, Fire and Rescue and HR.*