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# Corporate and Statutory Complaints Annual Report

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2021/2022

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April 2022

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## **Introduction**

This report provides an analysis of corporate and statutory complaints received by Lincolnshire County Council during the year 2021/2022. 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, 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 will be 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 to this has been provided complainants wishing to escalate their complaint to the next stage must advise the Complaints Manager of the reasons that 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 has advised that Local Authorities must now accept complaints in regards to contracted providers and investigate these as part of its own complaints process.

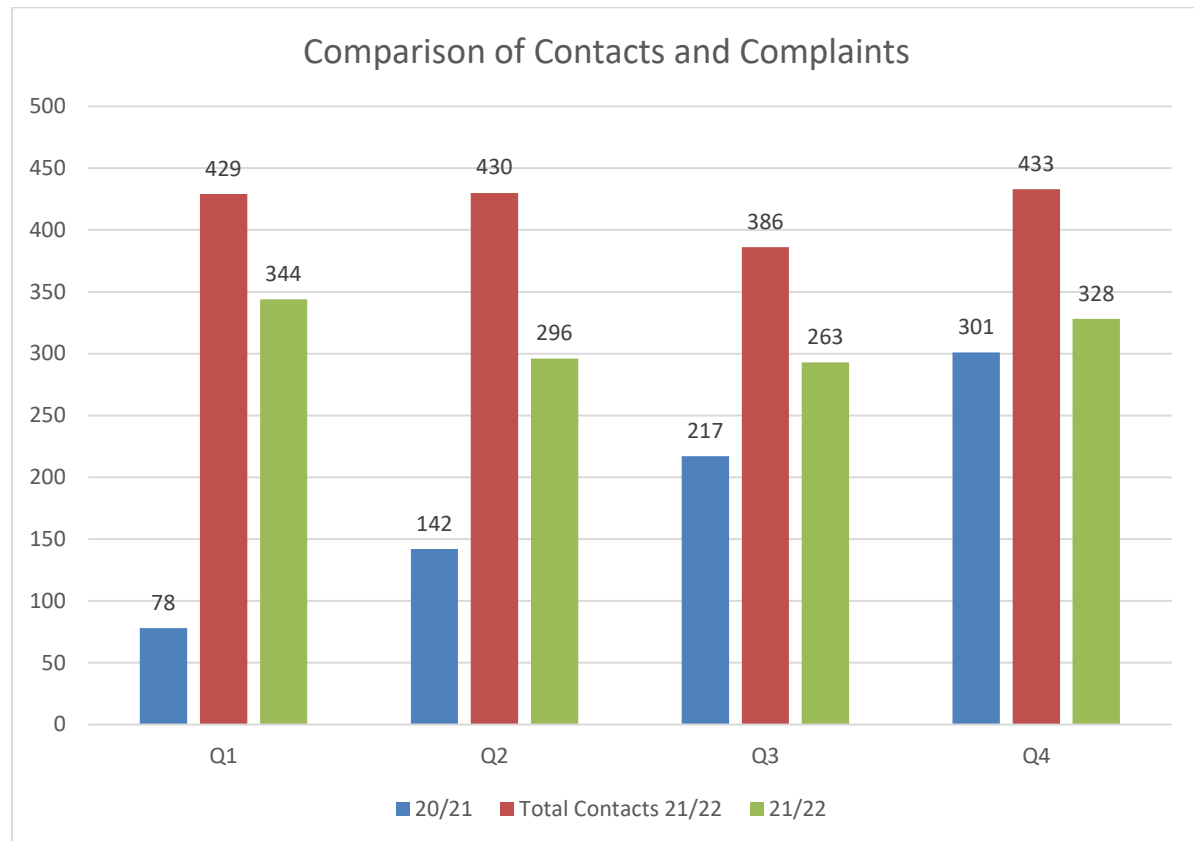
## **Countywide Overview**

21/22 saw 1678 contacts received from the public; to express dissatisfaction with the services they had been provided. Of these 1678 contacts 1231 went on to enter the formal complaints process, with the remaining 447 being resolved to the customers satisfaction, and requiring no further action or investigation, through early resolution. This equated to 26% of all contacts received.

The substantial increase in contacts received from midway of the previous year has not seen a reduction. We are however seeing a variation in the number of contacts being resolved informally to the customers satisfaction, with a drop in the number of cases by 24%. Overall, there was an increase of 26% in the number of contacts received by the authority in comparison to the previous year with an increase of 67% in the number contacts entering the formal complaints process. The

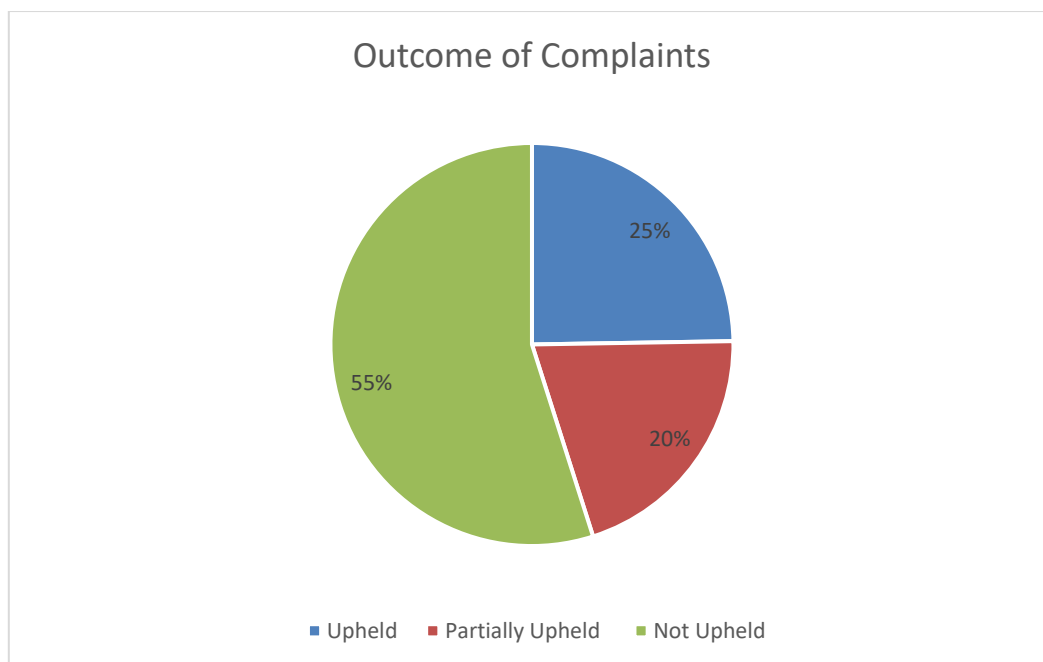
higher volume of contacts could be a contributing factor to the decrease in cases resolved informally. A renewed focus needs to be placed on early resolution of cases.

The following shows the total number of complaints received in 20/21, the number of contacts received in 21/22 and the number of those contacts entering the formal complaints process in 21/22.



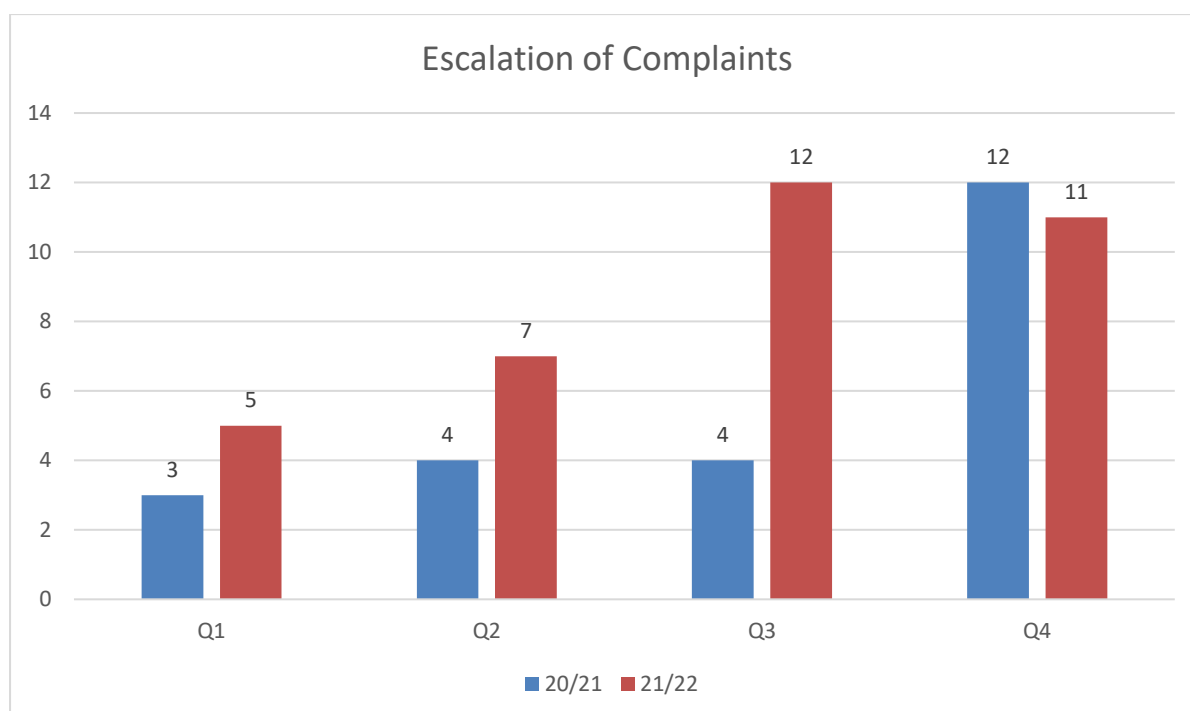
For all services, complaints which have been found to be either fully or partially upheld, have been analysed further to determine if there are any common factors which can be improved for future service provision. It is these cases that are now being used to make recommendations to services on things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

The following shows the overall outcomes of all formal complaints in 21/22.



In total 301 complaints were upheld throughout the course of the year and 251 were partially upheld. With an increase in the overall number of cases entering the complaints process it is to be expected that the cases in which fault was found would also increase.

21/22 has seen 35 cases escalated to the next stage of the complaints process. Of these 35 cases 1 case is within the Children's statutory complaints process. This case remains open at the time of writing this report. This figure again is an increase in comparison to the previous year, which is also to be expected given the overall increase.



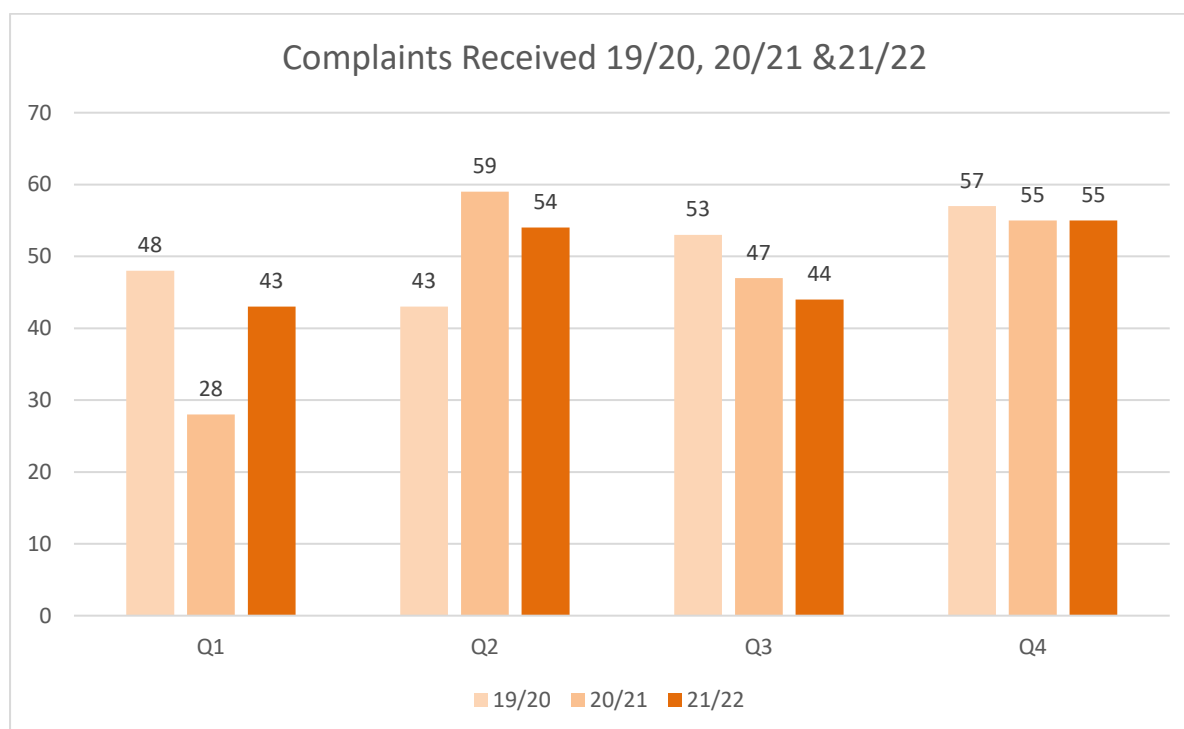
There was an increase seen each quarter with this levelling over the final two quarters. Overall escalated cases increased by 52%. However, given the significant increase in the number of formal complaints, escalated cases overall remain low.

Previously requests for escalation were determined by the originating service area, however this responsibility has now moved to the Complaints Manager to ensure these meet the policy requirements and compliance with LGSCO best practice.

### **Children's Services**

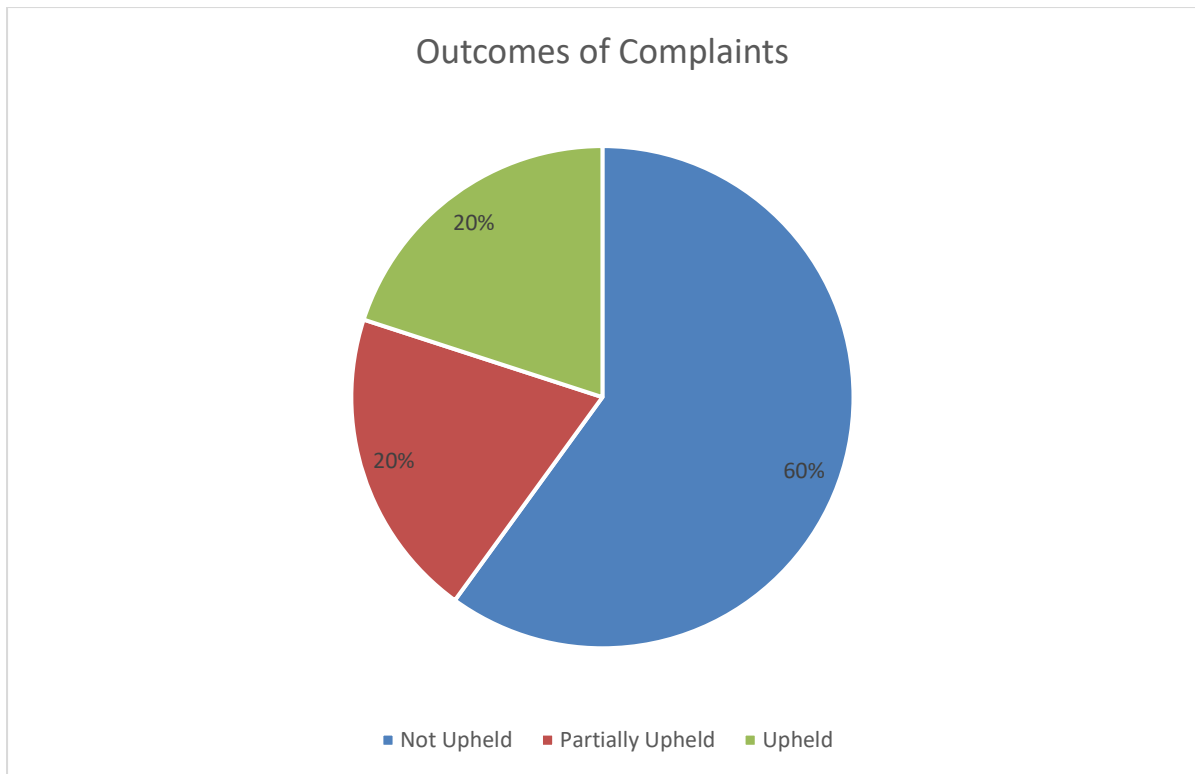
Children's Services continue to take a remedial approach to its complaints. This has resulted in the area being consistent in the number of cases which were resolved informally in comparison to the previous year.

A total of 257 contacts were received in 21/22 in relation to Children's services, both corporate and statutory, from the public expressing dissatisfaction with the services being provided. Of these 195 entered the formal complaints process. The remaining 62 were resolved early to the satisfaction of the customer. This number accounts for 24% of all contacts received. Overall, the year saw an increase of 3% in the number of cases entering the formal process, consistent with the increase in the number of contacts received. The following shows that comparison of formal complaints received in 19/20, 20/21 and 21/22.

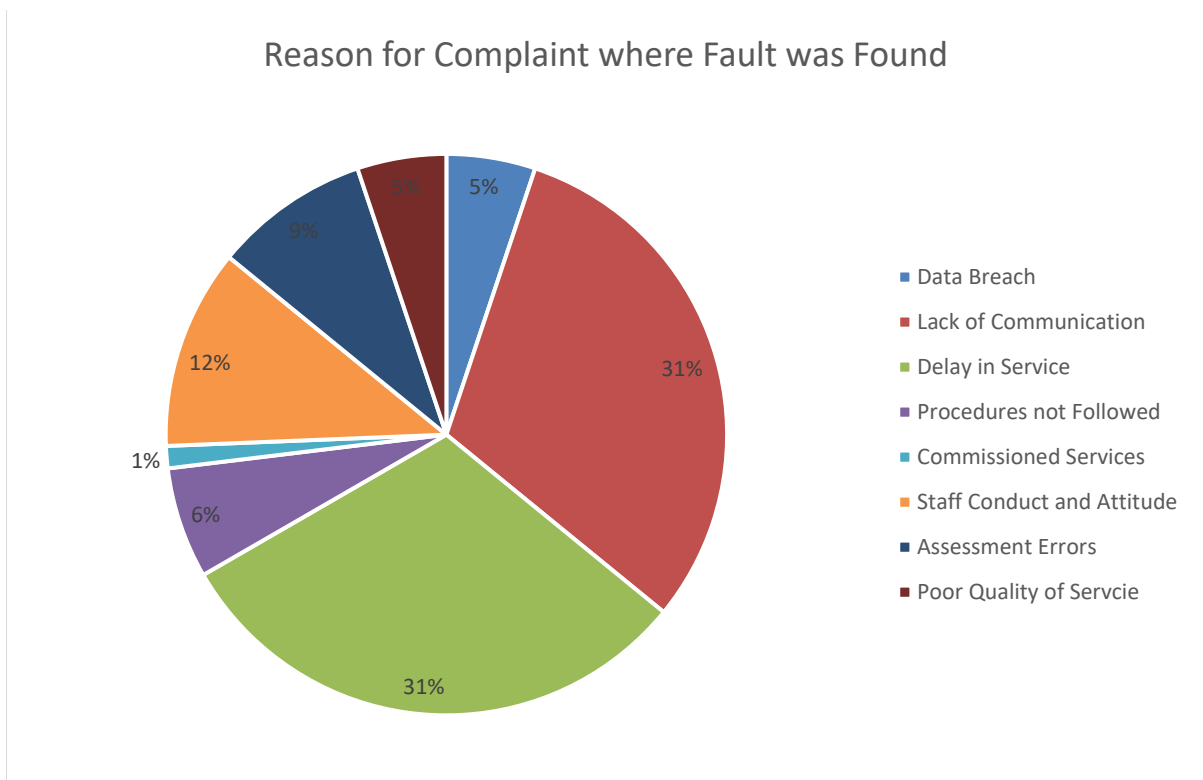


There have been no significant fluctuations in the number of cases, quarter on quarter.

Out of the 195 cases which entered the formal complaints process, 117 cases found no fault in the way in which services were delivered. 39 cases were partially upheld and 39 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 largely in the first two quarters. This was expected at the time given the national situation at the time. This figure has seen a drop in the last two quarters.

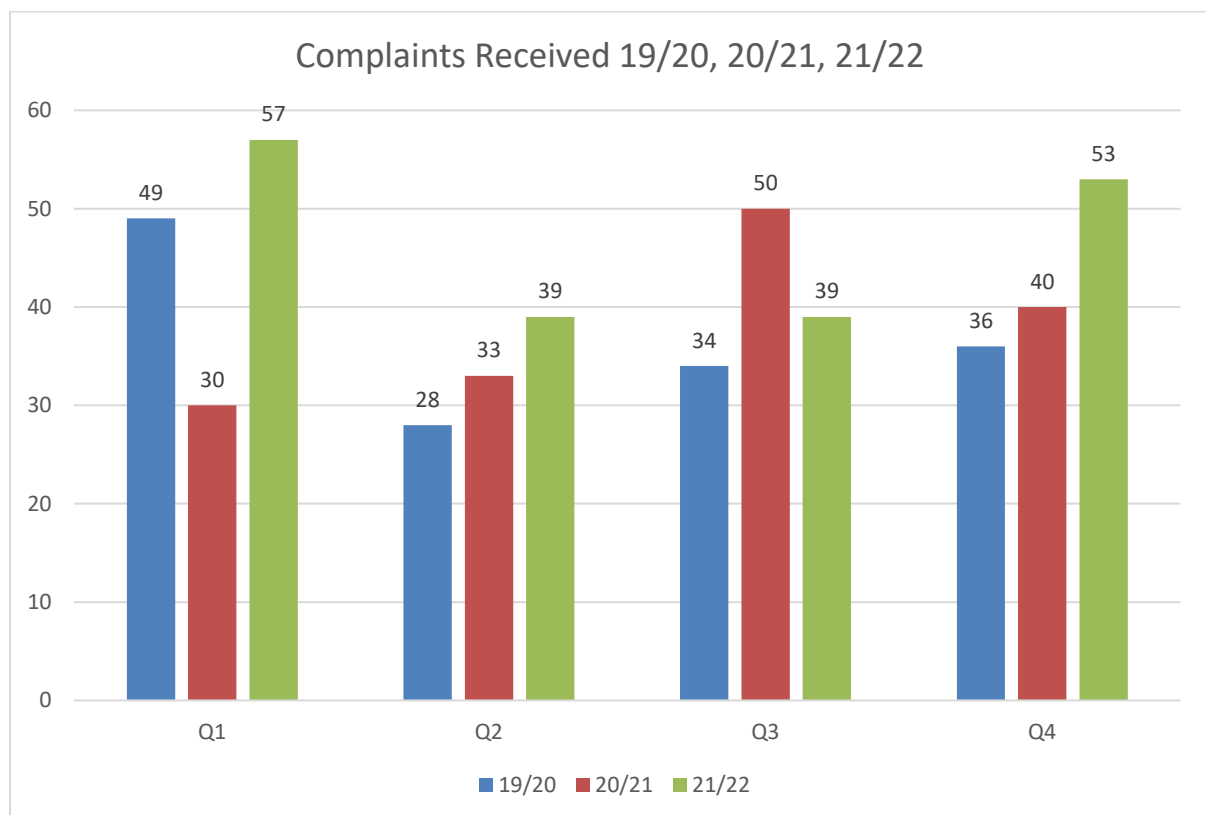
Lack of communication remains one of the largest impacting areas where standards are not being met. This remains an area where improvements are being implemented.

### **Adults Care & Community Wellbeing**

In 21/22 the service saw 234 contacts received from the public to express dissatisfaction with the services delivered. Of these 188 entered the formal complaints process. The remaining 46 were resolved early to the satisfaction of the customer. This number accounts for 20% of all contacts received in the area.

Overall, this service area has seen the lowest increase in comparison to the previous year, with an 11% increase, and has maintained similar numbers in regard to informal resolution of complaints.

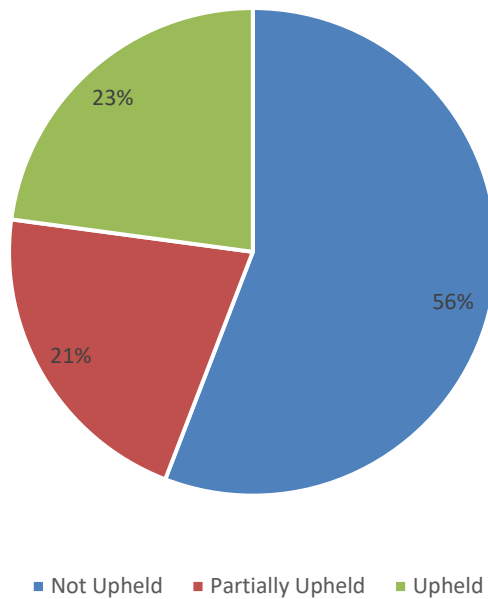
The following shows that comparison of formal complaints received in 19/20, 20/21 and 21/22.



When looking at the outcome of complaints in this area the year saw 43 complaints upheld and 40 complaints partially upheld. The remaining 105 saw no fault in the services which were delivered.

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

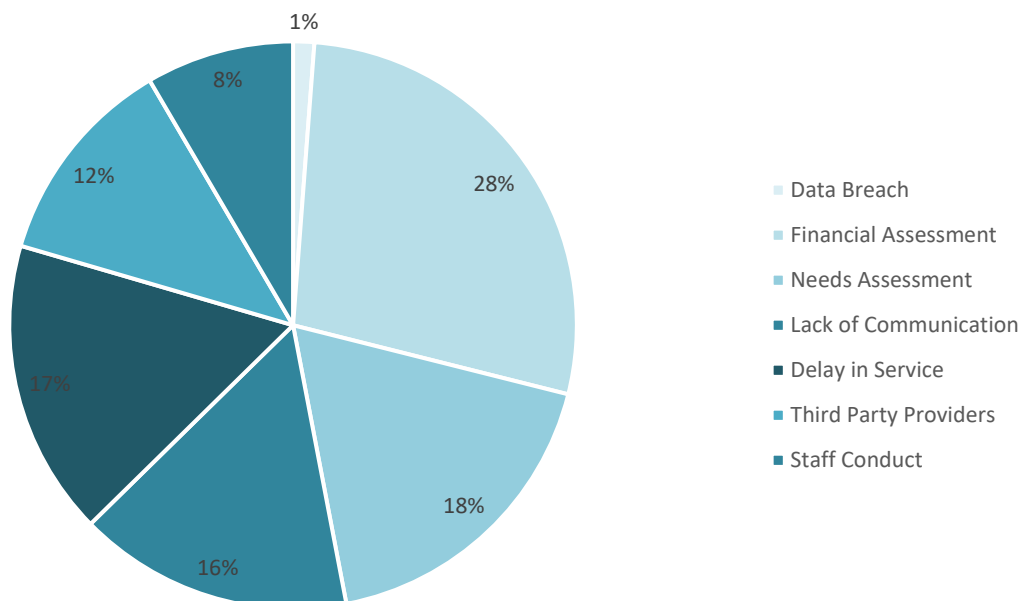
### Outcomes of Complaints



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 areas of improvement.

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

### Reasons for Complaint where Fault was Found





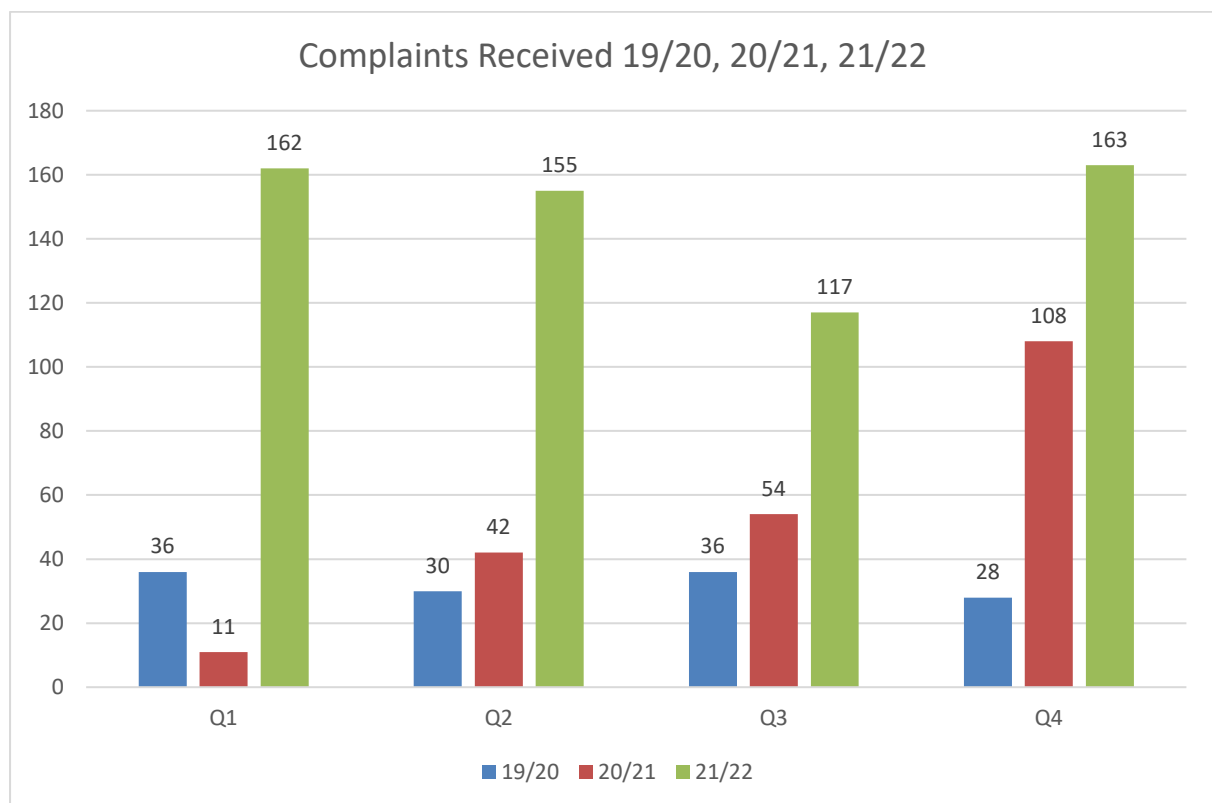
Financial assessments and charges accounts for just under a quarter of all upheld and partially upheld complaints in this area. This matter is already being addressed by the service area with a review of the information it shares with service users and families being completed in order to ensure complete transparency and clearer information.

A lack of communication, delays in service and disagreeing with the outcome of Needs Assessments had similar figures.

### **Highways and Transport**

The year saw 848 contacts received from the public to express dissatisfaction with the services received in this area. Of these 597 entered the formal complaints process over the course of the year. The remaining 251 were resolved early to the satisfaction of the customer. This number accounts for 29% of all contacts received.

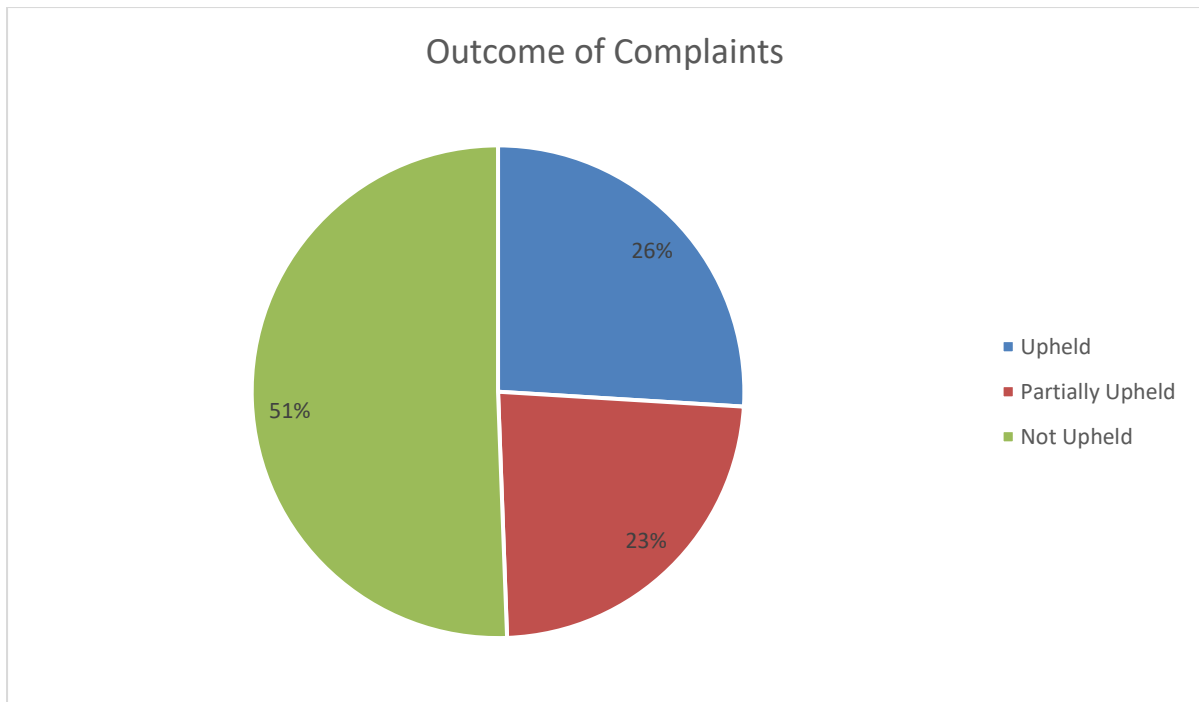
The following shows that comparison of formal complaints received in 19/20, 20/21 and 21/22.



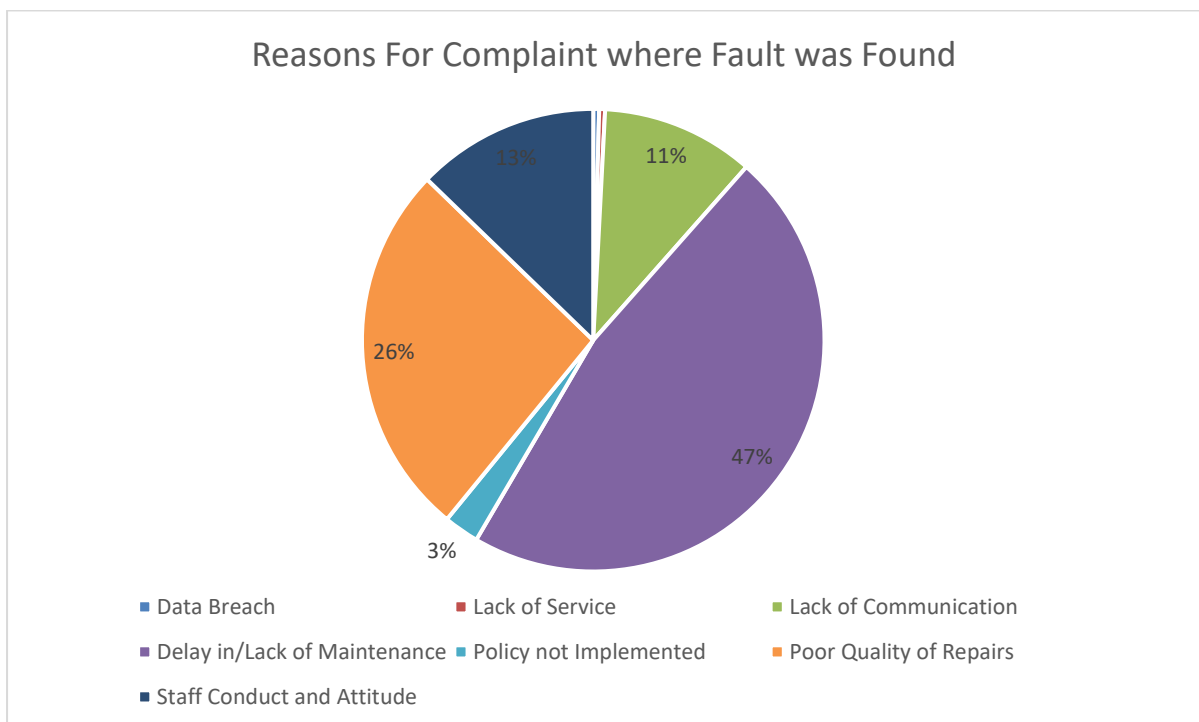
The year has seen the number of cases entering the formal complaints process increase by 179%. A large portion of these cases focused on the condition of roads and repairs required.

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.



49% 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.

Additionally, there has been an increase in the number of complaints around the quality of work completed with 64 of these cases being upheld or partially upheld.

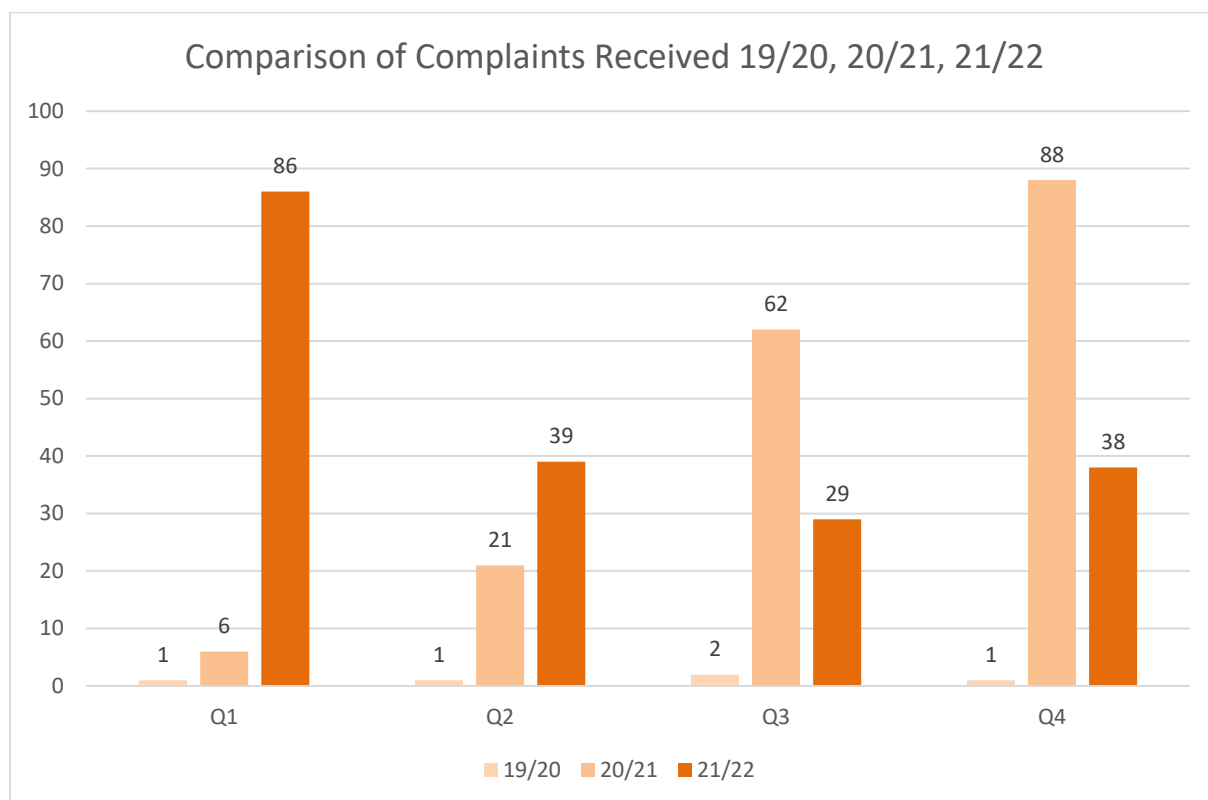
91% of cases upheld or partially upheld around staff conduct were in relation to on site workers.

### Household Waste Recycling Centres

Waste services continues to receive high numbers of complaints in comparison to its pre-pandemic levels. 21/22 saw 250 contacts received from the public expressing dissatisfaction with the service. Of these contacts 192 cases entered the formal complaints process: an 8% increase in comparison to the previous year.

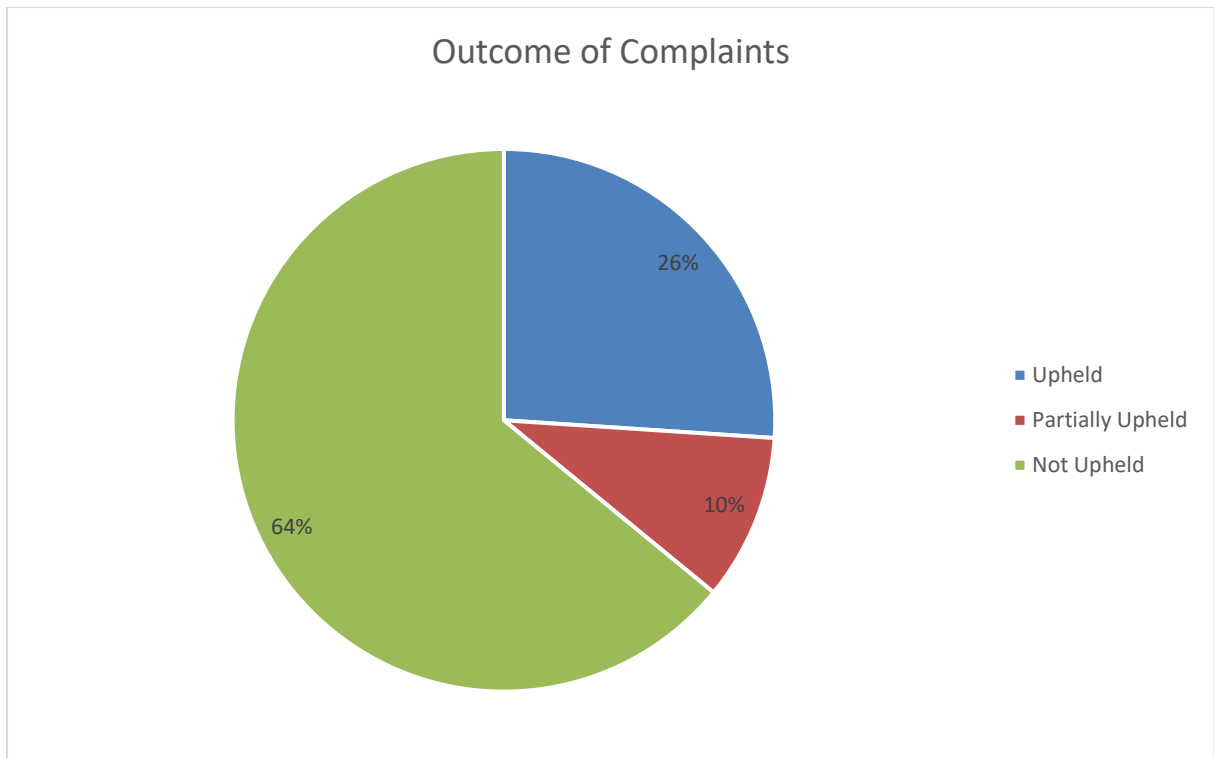
A total of 58 contacts were resolved informally in early resolution; this is a 44% decrease in comparison to the number resolved informally in the previous year.

The following shows the number of complaints received per quarter compared to the previous year.

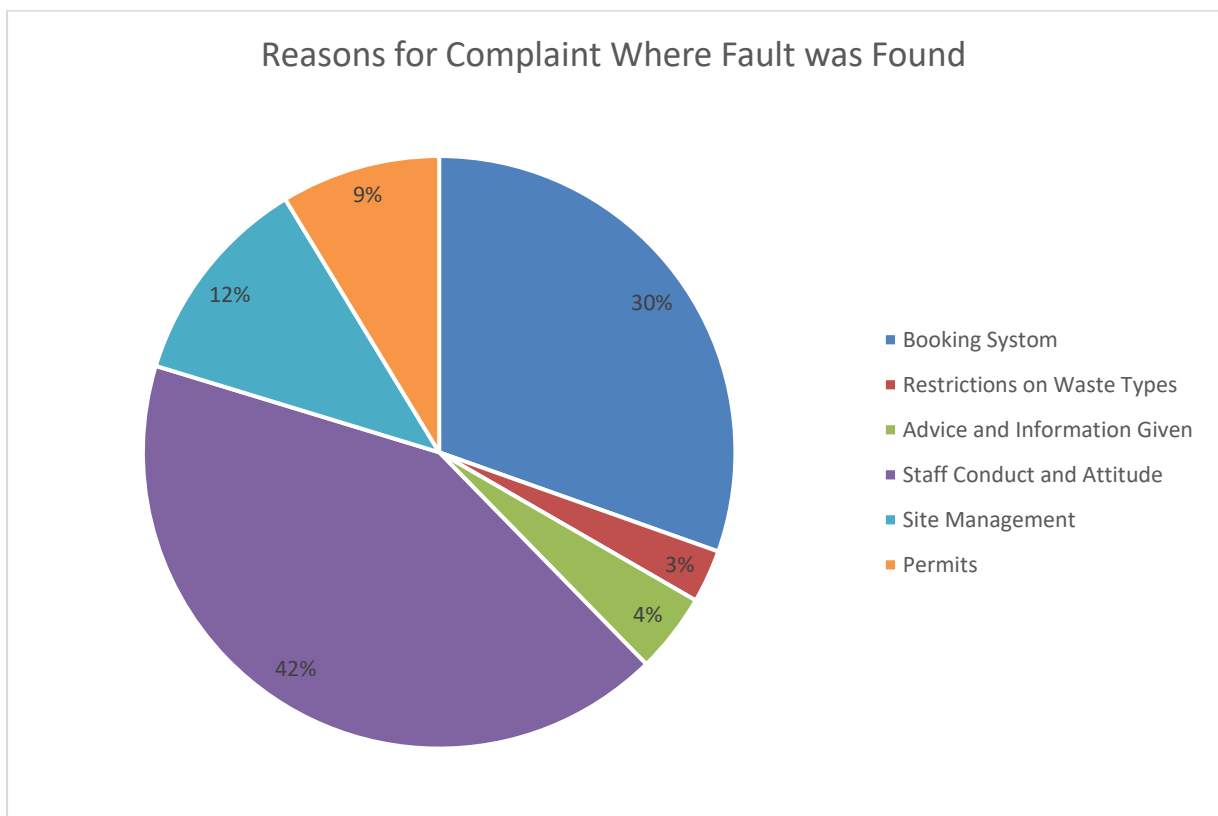


The first quarter was very much consistent with the numbers seen in the last quarter of the previous year. We have seen the volume come down in the second, third and fourth quarters. Given the significant decrease, averaging 62%, between the first quarter and the remainder of the year, this can be taken as an indication of the challenges the service were faced with settling and being addressed.

When looking at the outcomes of these complaints a total of 50 complaints were upheld in full. 19 of the complaints raised found some fault in the way in which the service had been delivered, so were partly upheld, with the remaining 123 not upheld. This breakdown is shown below.



Analysis was undertaken on those complaints partly or fully upheld in order to determine any common themes and trends. The following shows where fault was found in complaints that were upheld and the aspects of those complaints partly upheld.



Cases associated with the booking system are from the beginning of the year and this no longer remains an issue. The area which has seen the highest number of concerns is around the conduct of staff working on site. Given that this issue has been consistently raised via complaints in both this year and the previous year it is recommended that where staff require additional training in regard to the expectations of how customer service should be delivered, this is provided at the earliest opportunity.

## **Conclusion**

As restrictions resulting from the pandemic have been eased, services are seeing a return in most areas to pre-pandemic delivery levels. This has had its own challenges. In addition, it is of note that there is an increased focus in respect of the provision of public services.

Whilst we strive to bring down the dissatisfaction with services being delivered the increase provides additional data from which we are able to learn and improve. As a result of the figures, and as mentioned earlier in this report, it is vital that a renewed focus be placed on early resolution of concerns.

Whilst historically not included within reports an area currently being monitored is timescales in responding to complaints being met. This has not been an area of concern previously as compliance rates have been extremely positive. However, with difficulties faced this year this compliance has seen a steady decline and is being monitored closely, with a drive to improve this figure. Currently this data is being shared with relevant Heads of Service in order to achieve this. Should this area continue to see a decline in figures information will be provided in future reporting, given this is an area where the LGSCO are able to find fault with the council.

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