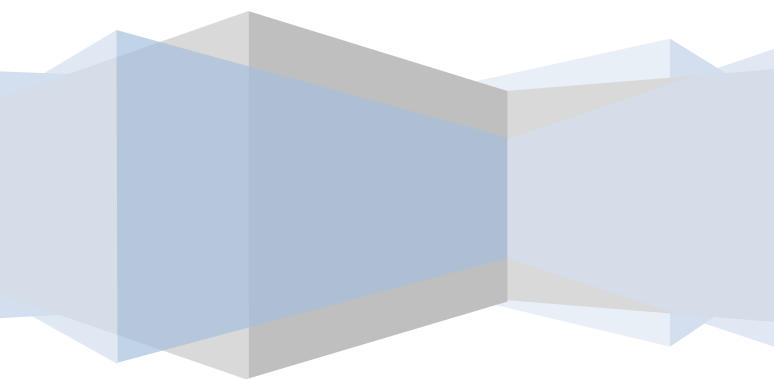


Complaints Handling Annual Report



2019/20

Contents

1.	Chief Executive's Foreword	3
2.	Introduction.....	3
3	Executive Summary.....	4
4	Complaints Performance Indicators.....	5
4.1	Indicator 1.....	5
4.2	Indicator 2.....	6
4.3	Indicator 3.....	9
4.4	Indicator 4.....	11
4.5	Indicator 5.....	13
4.6	Indicator 6.....	14
4.7	Indicator 7.....	17
4.8	Indicator 8.....	18
4.8.1.	Learning Outcomes	18
5.	Scottish Public Services Ombudsman/Benchmarking . Error! Bookmark not defined.	
6.	Summary	22
	Appendix.....	23

1. Chief Executive's Foreword

Scotland's public sector has a duty to the people it serves, and part of that duty involves responding positively to complaints. This annual report serves three purposes: to comply with a national requirement to report against a suite of eight Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) Performance Indicators (PIs); internally to inform management to help us learn from complaints and improve services; and externally to provide information and feedback to the public who engaged with us during the complaints process.

In this report you will find details of how we have performed in dealing with complaints, the outcomes of some investigations and how we have changed our services as a result. I am pleased to see many work practices modified as a result of a complaint, which I feel shows we are listening to the public when they're not happy.

Naturally, not every complaint is upheld, but clearly, they are all addressed at either frontline stage or through a more detailed, thorough investigation within respective timescales including authorised extensions. We take our commitment to the SPSO framework seriously and I am confident that our customer care will continue to improve as a result of complaints we receive.

Roddy Burns
Chief Executive

2. Introduction

- 2.1** This Complaints Handling Annual Report summarises the council's performance in terms of handling customer complaints received between 01 April 2019 and 31 March 2020.
- 2.2** The 2019-2020 reporting period provides the seventh full year of data under the new model Complaints Handling Procedure. This annual report is presented in accordance with the National Performance Framework, which was published in August 2013. The Complaints Standard Authority developed a suite of eight performance indicators in association with the Local Authority Complaint Handlers Network on which we are represented. These indicators are a valuable source of information about council services as this helps to identify recurring or underlying problems, derive learning from complaints and highlight potential areas for improvement.
- 2.3** The council always aims to provide the highest possible quality of service to our community, but we recognise that there are times when we get things wrong and we fail to meet the expectations of our customers. The council welcomes feedback as it provides information that helps services learn from complaints and to modify and improve the way services are delivered. Complaints are viewed as a positive communication tool and are encouraged.

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction, by one or more members of the public, about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

- 2.4** Our complaints procedure has two stages:

- **Stage one** – 'frontline resolution': we will always try to resolve complaints quickly, within five working days, and in exceptional circumstances extend for a further five days.
- **Stage two** – 'investigation': if customers remain dissatisfied with our stage one response, they can escalate their complaint to stage two. Complaints that are complex or need detailed investigation from the outset can be looked at immediately at stage two. These complaints will be acknowledged within three working days and a written response provided within twenty working days; this can be extended in exceptional circumstances.

- 2.5** Following completion of our complaints process, if a customer remains dissatisfied, they can ask the SPSO to consider their complaint further and we advise them of this entitlement.

- 2.6** In support of the Complaints Handling Procedure, the council has a Complaints Management System enabling us to record, track and report on complaints information across all services. Within this system, we record how we have dealt with and responded to complaints.
- 2.7** Monitoring complaints information, the preparation and publication of quarterly reports and this annual report helps to provide a clear basis for identifying service failures ('learning from complaints') and information on how effectively the council is handling complaints ('complaints performance').
- 2.8** The Performance Indicators covered in this report provide a tool that the council and the public can use to judge objectively how well complaints are being handled and how they inform service improvement activity.
- 2.9** The complaints performance data in this report will also inform our Annual Public Performance Report summarising our performance against the Statutory Performance Indicators.
- 2.10** Compliance with the Complaints Handling Procedure is monitored by Audit Scotland in conjunction with the SPSO and in line with the principles of the Best Value Shared Risk Assessment arrangements.
- 2.11** A new two stage statutory social work complaints process was introduced on 1 April 2017 and social work complaints administered under the new process have been included in this annual report.

3 Executive Summary

- 3.1** Some Improvements have been made in complaints performance in relation to stage one complaints in recent years although closing them off within 5 working days has decreased:
- complaints received being closed off at stage one
79.9% in 2019-20, being just short of 80.7% in 2018-19 versus 71.5% in 2016-17 and the poorest performance of 45.7% in 2014-15.
 - stage one complaints being upheld
38.2% in 2019-20 versus 30.9% in 2018-19.
 - stage one complaints closed off within the five working day target
71% in 2019-20 versus 77% in 2018-19 and 99% in 2016-17.

This shows that we dealt with complaints at the point closest to service delivery in most cases.

- 3.2** Feedback received through the complaints survey was mainly critical in nature. Many complainants expressed dissatisfaction about the outcome of their complaint as opposed to the complaint handling process itself which the survey is designed to test.
- 3.3** Complaints received has shown an increasing trend over the previous three years. This year the rate has risen to 7.7 per 1,000 population compared to 6.4 in 2018-19 and 5.75 in 2017-18. Note that the rate across Scotland in 2019-20 was 10.34 per 1,000 population.

We continue to provide quarterly data to the Local Authority Complaint Handlers Network along with 30 other councils (one council does not submit data) for benchmarking purposes. The network has identified that differences in council recording practices adversely impact on the ability to benchmark on a national basis.

Education and Social Care services have reversed the trend and are no longer resolving most of their complaints through stage two. Only 40% were closed at stage 2 in 2019-20 compared to 57% in 2018-19. It is still likely that there has been under recording of minor complaint issues within

Community Care who recorded 25 complaints in 2019-20, slightly less than the 27 recorded in 2018-19. The appointment of an Education complaints officer has contributed to a 46% increase in Schools and Curriculum Development recorded complaints with 52 complaints recorded in 2019-20 compared to 28 in 2018-19. The complaints officer provided guidance and specific training sessions to social work staff involved in complaint handling, with the aim of increasing their recording of minor complaints.

3.4 Performance in resolving stage two complaints within the 20-working day timescale remains the same. This year, as in 2018-19, 53% were completed on time meaning that almost half of all stage two complaints were responded to out with the timescale. While this is an improvement on the 36% recorded in 2017-18, it falls below levels attained in 2016-17 (61%) and 2015-16 (62%). Of those being closed off beyond 20 working days, there has been a vast improvement in authorised extensions, up to 46% in 2019-20 verses 16% in 2018-19 and 17% in 2017-18.

3.5 Gaining approval to extend our response times beyond the five working day timescale was an area where improvement was made. In 2019-20, 33% of all overdue complaints received an authorised extension compared to 22% in 2018-19. The complaint officer holds quarterly meetings with department complaint administrators and carries out weekly complaint report monitoring with the aim of further improving on authorised extensions of stage 1 and stage 2 complaints.

4 Complaints Performance Indicators

The aim of the model Complaints Handling Procedure is for as many complaints as possible to be resolved at the frontline (i.e. at stage one) with as few as possible requiring progression to investigation (i.e. stage two) in order to improve both the customer's experience and the council's service provision.

The SPSO Performance Indicators provide the minimum requirement for a local authority to self-assess, report on performance and to undertake benchmarking activities. These indicators are:

- Indicator 1 – complaints received per 1,000 of population
- Indicator 2 – closed complaints
- Indicator 3 – complaints upheld, partially upheld and not upheld
- Indicator 4 – average times
- Indicator 5 – performance against timescales
- Indicator 6 – number of cases where an extension is authorised
- Indicator 7 – customer satisfaction
- Indicator 8 – learning from complaints

A breakdown of 2019-20 figures for relevant indicators will be explained in this section together with 2018-19 figures and some data from previous years to allow for benchmark comparisons. A breakdown of indicator figures for services is included as an appendix.

4.1 Indicator 1

This indicator records the total number of complaints received by the council. This is the sum of the number of complaints received at stage one (frontline resolution) and the number of complaints received directly at stage two (investigation). To allow for a fair comparison across all 32 councils in Scotland, the figure of complaints per 1,000 of population is used.

Table 1: Number of complaints received by Moray Council (per 1,000 population)

Complaints received by Moray Council	2018-19	2019-20
Total number of received	611	738

Population (mid-year population estimate)	95,520	95,820
Number of complaints per 1,000 population	6.4	7.7

*Some of the complaints dealt with during the period relate to complaints raised before April 2019, and some raised in March 2020 would be unresolved before the end of March 2020. So, there will not be a direct correlation between numbers received and numbers responded to.

Compared to the 2018-19 figures, there has been an increase of 20.8% in the number of complaints received and a slight increase of around 0.3% in the population size. Consequently, the number of complaints per 1,000 population has increased by 20.4% compared to 2018-19 (Table 1).¹

The majority of complaints continue to be received by Environmental Services (76%). Complaints to Direct Services, one of the services that has the most direct contact with Moray residents, has shown an 21% increase since 2018-19. Similarly, the other service with direct contact with residents, Housing & Property Service has recorded an increase of 25% compared to 2018-19.

The increase in complaints recording reflects public confidence in reporting matters. Another factor may be staff reductions impacting on our ability to deliver our services.

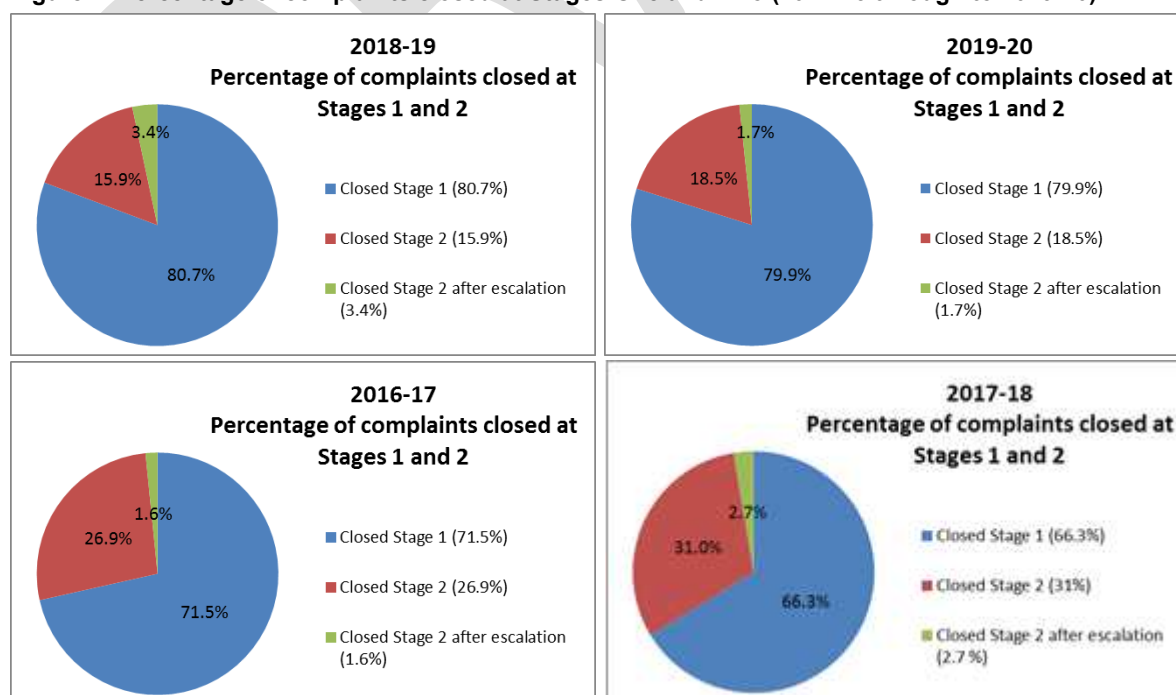
4.2 Indicator 2

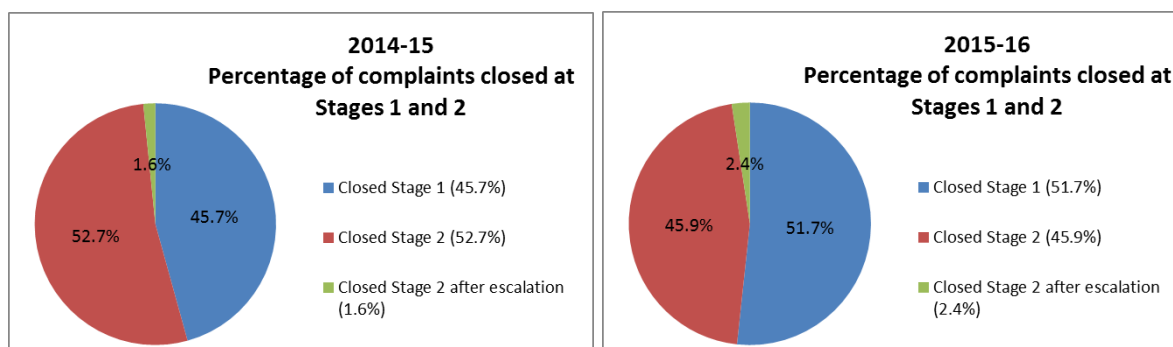
This indicator provides information on the number of complaints closed at stage one and stage two as a percentage of the 725 closed complaints (note that there were 738 complaints received with 13 not closed during the reporting period). The term 'closed' refers to a complaint that has had a response sent to the customer and at the time no further action is required.

This indicator will report:

- the number of complaints closed at stage one as % of all complaints
- the number of complaints closed at stage two as % of all complaints
- the number of complaints closed at stage two after escalation as % of all complaints

Figure 1: Percentage of complaints closed at Stages One and Two (2014-15 through to 2019-20)





During 2019-20 four-fifths of complaints were dealt with at frontline resolution stage compared to one-fifth dealt with at the investigation stage. This maintains the improvement in performance since 2014-15 when fewer than half of all complaints were resolved at this stage (45.7%).

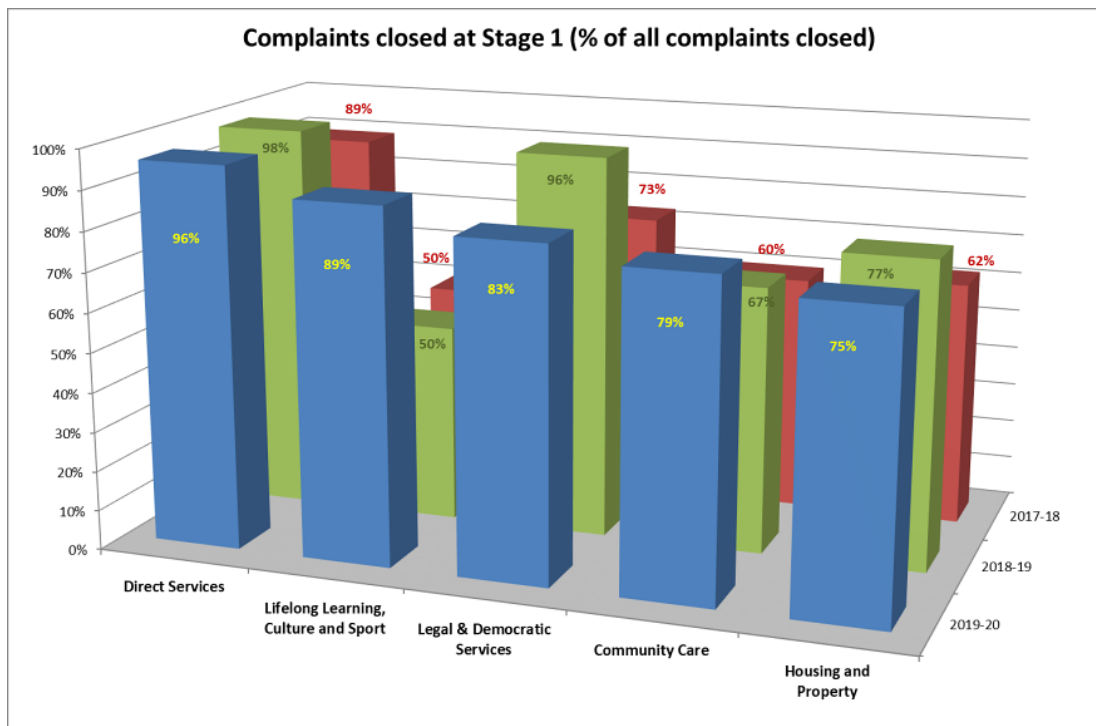
It is heartening to see that most complaints continue to be dealt with at frontline, as suggested by the SPSO's guidance on the Complaints Handling Procedure to "take every opportunity to resolve service users' complaints at the first point of contact if at all possible." Continued emphasis is placed on highlighting the complaints model to individual services at the quarterly Complaints Administration Group meetings and providing complaints handling inputs to department staff, including the sharing of best practice to improve effective.

As in previous reporting periods Environmental Services continues to receive the most complaints – 553 (76%). This is to be expected as they are responsible for busy service provision such as roads, waste management and planning where complaints often arise. Education and Social Care were the next highest – 123 (17%); Corporate Services – 47 (6%) received the remaining complaints. (See Figure 23 – Appendix).

Direct Services continue to lead the way in resolving complaints at frontline – 298 (96%). In 2019-20 Housing and Property continued their improvement of recent years and resolved 161 (75%) of complaints at frontline, which compares favourably to the 46% resolved at frontline in 2015-16. Community Care have built upon their performance in recent years. In 2016-17 all 10 of the complaints raised concerning Community Care were dealt with at stage two, whereas in 2019-20 the majority were dealt with at frontline (20 complaints equivalent to 80%).

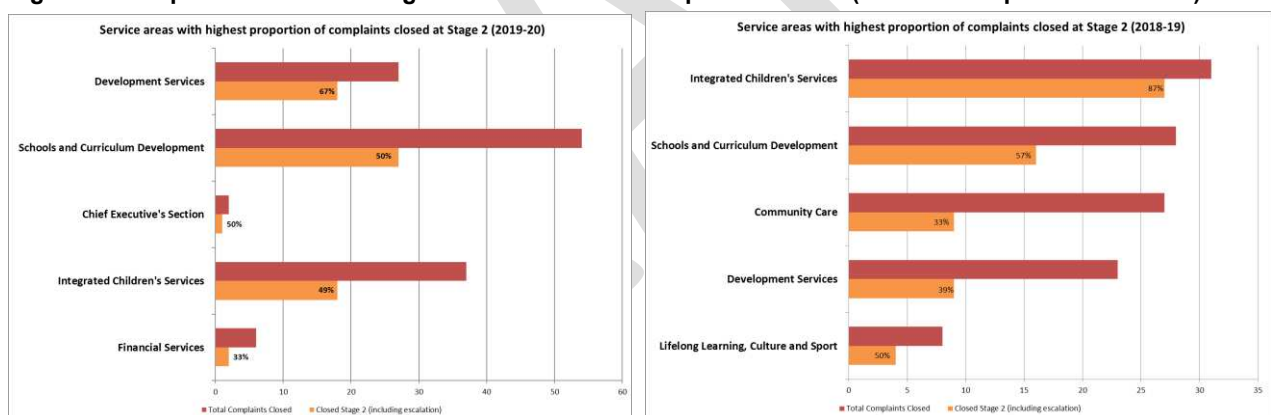
One service resolves most complaints at the investigation stage; Development Services (67%), although it should be noted the relatively low number of complaints this service receives in comparison to Direct Services & Housing and Property.

Figure 2: Complaints closed at Stage One as a % of all complaints closed (2017-18 through to 2019-20)



18 out of 37 Integrated Children's Services complaints (49%) were dealt with at stage two; a marked drop since 2018-19 (87%). 27 out of the 52 Schools and Curriculum Development (50%) complaints were resolved at stage two (Figure 3); similar to the proportion in 2018-19 (57%).

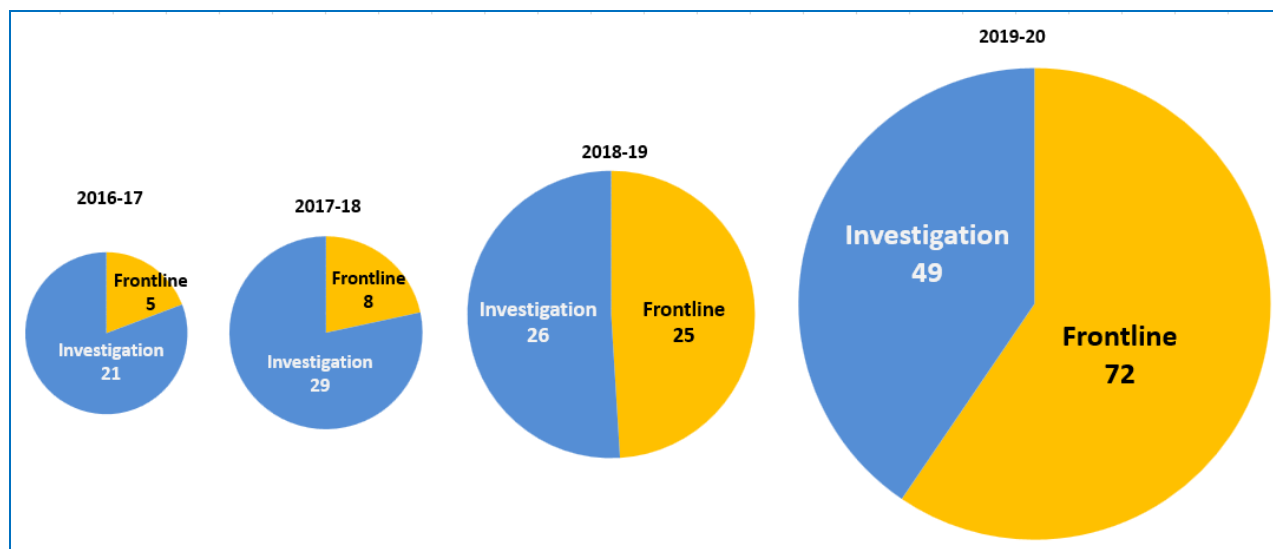
Figure 3: Complaints closed at Stage Two as a % of all complaints closed (2019-20 compared to 2018-19)



Stage two complaints often involve speaking with several witnesses, meeting with complainants and liaising with partner agencies. In such circumstances, concluding these enquiries and providing a written response to a complainant normally exceeds five working days.

There were two and a half times more complaints against Schools and Curriculum Development compared to 2018-19, suggesting the focus on increasing awareness of the complaints handling procedure has had some success. Furthermore, the work to emphasise the importance of resolving complaints at Stage 1 – frontline has seen a marked increase in the proportion closed at Stage 1 (59% in 2019-20 compared to 49% the previous year, and 16% in 2014/15).

Figure 4: Schools and Curriculum Development complaints resolved (2016-17 through to 2019-20)



4.3 Indicator 3

There is a requirement for a formal outcome (upheld, partially upheld or not upheld) to be recorded for each complaint.

This indicator will report:

- the number of complaints upheld at stage one as % of all complaints closed at stage one
- the number of complaints not upheld at stage one as % of all complaints closed at stage one
- the number of complaints partially upheld at stage one as % of all complaints closed at stage one
- the number of complaints upheld at stage two as % of all complaints closed at stage two
- the number of complaints not upheld at stage two as % of all complaints closed at stage two
- the number of complaints partially upheld at stage two as % of all complaints closed at stage two
- the number of escalated complaints upheld at stage two as % of all escalated complaints closed at stage two
- the number of escalated complaints not upheld at stage two as % of all escalated complaints closed at stage two
- the number of escalated complaints partially upheld at stage two as % of all escalated complaints closed at stage two

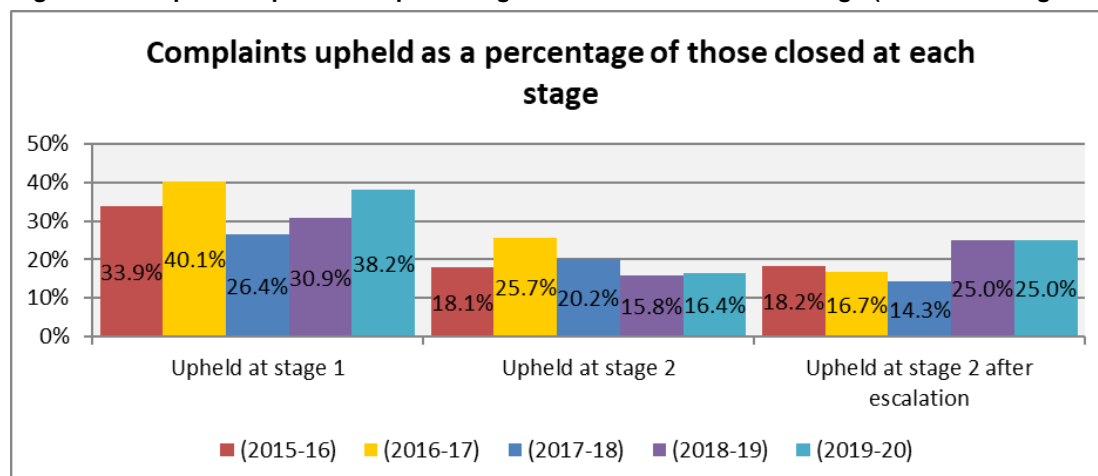
A complaint is defined as 'upheld' when it is found to be true or confirmed. A 'partially upheld' complaint results when there are several complaint issues raised and some, but not all, of them are upheld. Complaints are 'not upheld' when they are found to be untrue; that the service provided was of a reasonable standard in line with typical expectations; or if a request for services was misdirected as a complaint. The council reviews all complaints and each customer is contacted to confirm to them whether their complaint has been 'upheld', 'partially upheld' or 'not upheld' together with an explanation of the findings.

Over half (52%) of frontline (stage one) complaints were 'upheld', or 'partially upheld' (Figures 5 & 6) in 2019-20, a 13% increase on 2018-19. In 2016-17 the proportion was 47.8%, and in 2015-16 it was 46%, compared to just one-quarter in 2014-15. This proportion demonstrates that mistakes are being acknowledged, apologies given with learning and improvement outcomes sought and implemented.

For stage two complaints 'upheld' or 'partially upheld' at the investigation stage, the proportion in 2019-20 of 48%, was similar to previous years. Indeed, over the past 5 years the proportion of stage two complaints (including after escalation) has been consistently been between 40% and 50%.

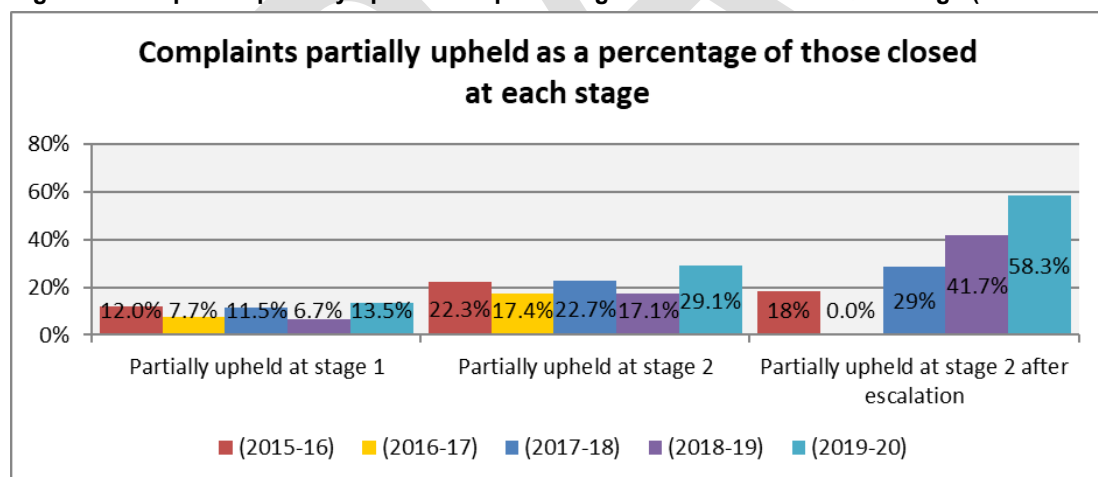
Upheld Complaints

Figure 5: Complaints upheld as a percentage of those closed at each stage (2015-16 through to 2019-20)



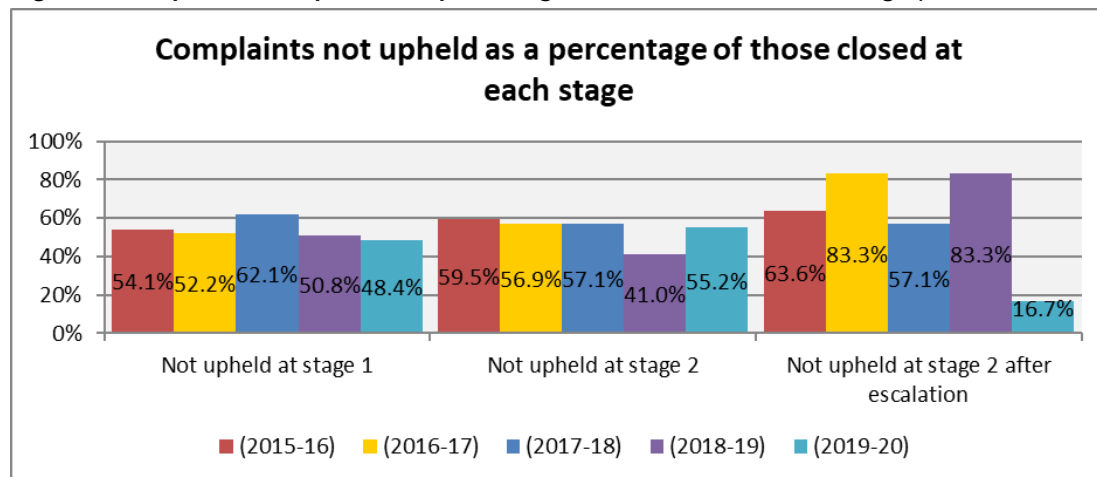
Partially Upheld Complaints

Figure 6: Complaints partially upheld as a percentage of those closed at each stage (from 2015-16 to 2019-20)



Not Upheld Complaints

Figure 7: Complaints not upheld as a percentage of those closed at each stage (from 2015-16 to 2019-20)



For all the complaints closed during 2019-20, at both stages one and two, 51% were fully 'upheld' or 'partially upheld' overall, similar to 2018-19 (50.5%). This shows that many customers continue to raise concerns with service provision and, although the majority of complaints are not upheld, a significant proportion of all complaints require us to review and improve the way services are being delivered.

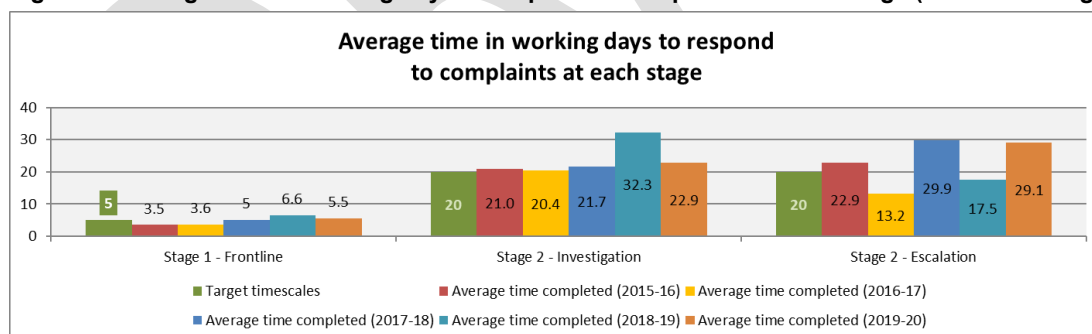
4.4 Indicator 4

This represents the average time in working days to close complaints at stages one and two of the model CHP.

This indicator will report:

- the average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage one
- the average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage two
- the average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation

Figure 8: Average time in working days to respond to complaints at each stage (2015-16 through to 2019-20)



The average time taken to respond to frontline complaints remains just exceeding the SPSO's target 5 working day timescale (5.5 days). The number of frontline complaints closed on time increased to 410 compared to 372 in 2018-19. However, the proportion that was closed within 5 days (71%) was close to the proportion of 77% in 2018-19 (Figure 9).

The average time for resolving stage two investigation complaints was lower in 2019-20 at 22.9 days, compared to 32.3 days in 2018-19; outside the Complaint Handling Procedures' guidelines. The time taken on average to resolve the escalated stage two investigations was up to 29.1 days, an increase from 17.5 days in 2018-19 and closer to the highest figure of 29.9 days in 2017-18.

Although the majority of frontline complaints are dealt with within 5 working days, the proportion exceeding the maximum extension period of 10 working days rose to 7%, more than double the

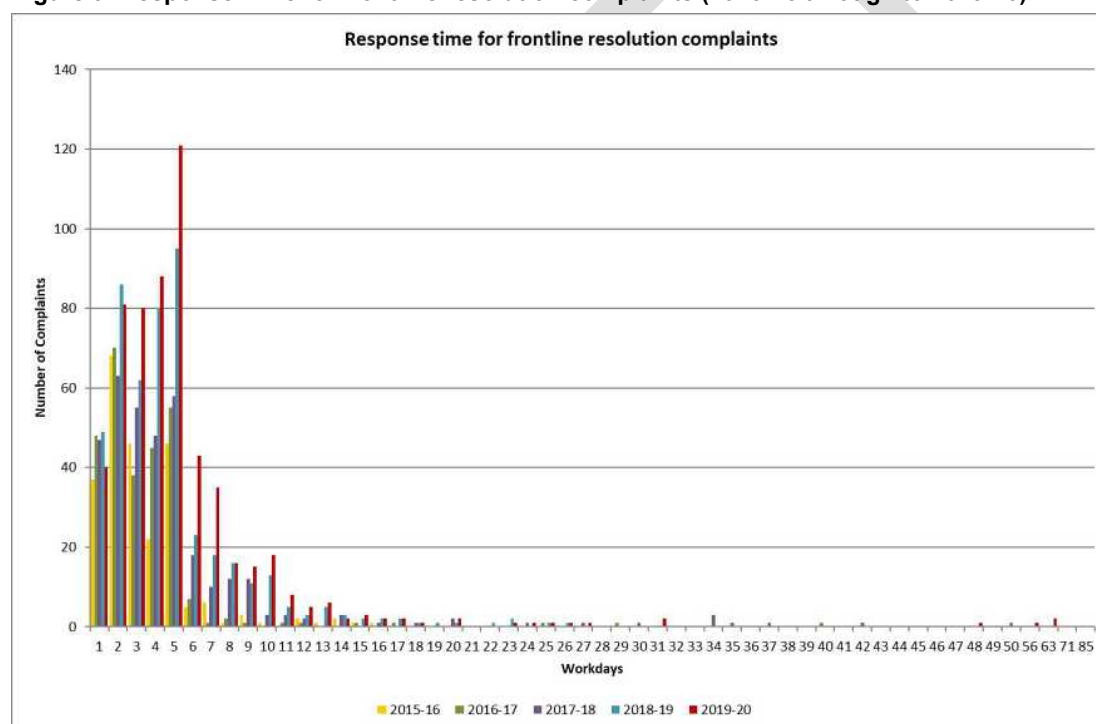
3% in both 2016-17 and 2015-16. Those complaints extended should have been closed as a frontline resolution complaint (stage one) and escalated to investigation (stage two).

In the past 3 years the number of frontline complaints that take longer than 5 working days to close has been much higher than in previous years, and the trend is increasing. In 2016-17 there were 18 complaints that took longer than 5 days to resolve, 23 in 2015-16 and 30 in 2014-15. However, in 2017-18 there were 77 overdue frontline complaints, in 2018-19 the number rose significantly to 111, and in 2019-20 this figure rose again to 169, which may be indicative of the increasing workload on staff and the continuing pressures on services.

Five services account for the majority taking longer to resolve than the SPSO guidance: 75 complaints relating to Direct Services, 34 for Housing & Property Services, 13 for Community Care, 12 for Legal & Democratic Services and 10 for Integrated Children's Services. The frontline complaint that took the longest time to resolve (63 working days) was raised against Integrated Children's Services.

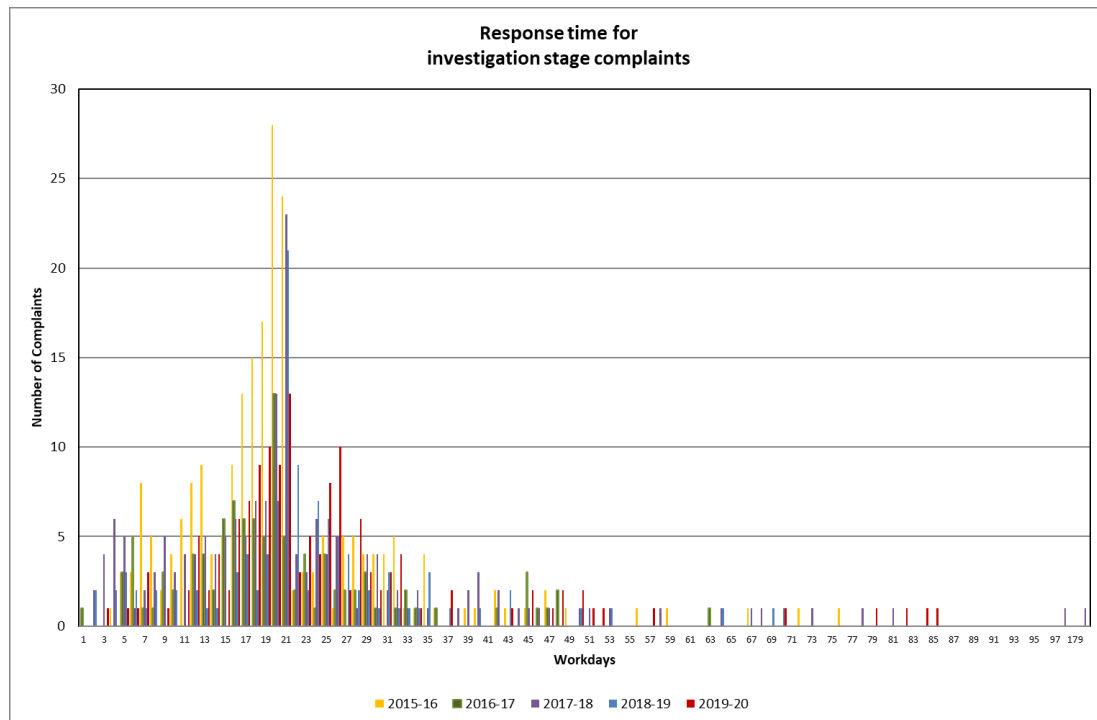
Weekly monitoring continues to take place with complaint administrators for relevant departments being reminded to ensure they follow the correct database timeline process for stages.

Figure 9: Response Time for frontline resolution complaints (2015-16 through to 2019-20)



The majority (52%) of the investigations were responded to within the 20-day timescale or within agreed extension periods (Figure 10). Of the 145 complaints closed at stage two (investigation and escalated), 69 (48%) took longer than the target response time. Integrated Children's Services complaints often require investigation of lengthy and complicated issues. This accounted for 10 of their 18 investigations taking more than 20 days to complete. In 2017-18 one of the Schools and Curriculum Development investigations took 179 days to resolve; the longest of all complaints to be closed during the 5 years for which data has been collected. However, the longest resolution time in 2019-20 was much reduced at 84 days. This was an investigation into a complaint made against Community Care.

Figure 10: Response time for Investigation Stage Complaints (including Escalated Investigations) (2015-16 through to 2019-20)



4.5 Indicator 5

The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the set timescales of five and 20 working days.

The model Complaints Handling Procedure requires complaints to be closed within five working days at stage one and 20 working days at stage two. This indicator will report:

- the number of complaints closed at stage one within five working days as % of total number of stage one complaints
- the number of complaints closed at stage two within 20 working days as % of total number of stage two complaints
- the number of escalated complaints closed within 20 working days as a % of total number of escalated stage two complaints

The analysis provided for Indicator 4 is equally applicable for this indicator.

Table 2: Indicator 5 - Closure timescales (2014-15 through to 2019-20)

Performance Against Timescales		Number of complaints closed at stage one within 5 working days as a %	Number of complaints closed at stage two within 20 working days as a %	Number of escalated complaints closed at stage two within 20 working days as a %
2019-20	Total no. of complaints	579	134	12
	No. of complaints within timescales	410	71	6
	Meeting target times	71%	53%	50%
2018-19	Total no. of complaints	482	95	20
	No. of complaints within timescales	372	50	9
	Meeting target times	77%	53%	45%
2017-18	Total no. of complaints	482	177	20
	No. of complaints within timescales	271	63	4
	Meeting target times	56%	36%	20%
2016-17	Total no. of complaints	274	103	6
	No. of complaints within timescales	271	63	5
	Meeting target times	99%	61%	83%
2015-16	Total no. of complaints	242	215	11
	No. of complaints within timescales	219	133	7
	Meeting target times	90%	62%	64%
2014-15	Total no. of complaints	224	258	8
	No. of complaints within timescales	195	146	8
	Meeting target times	87%	57%	100%

Despite the support given to services by the Complaints Officer in the past 2 years the Council has not improved its performance for closing frontline complaints within the target times; 71% compared to 99% in 2016-17. Note, however, that in 2016-17, there were just 274 complaints, which is less than half of the total for 2019-20. This increasing additional volume and a reducing workforce may be contributory factors to the delay in responding. The services have also struggled to close stage two complaints within 20 working days (53% compared to 67% in 2017-18). Our performance for escalated complaints varies significantly from year to year due to small sample sizes. However, closing just one half of such complaints on time in 2019-20 is disappointing. Performance issues continue to be discussed with complaint administrators and highlighted through quarterly management reports. Closer monitoring and reinforcement was and will continue to be done to try and improve further on this performance.

4.6 Indicator 6

The number and percentage of complaints at each stage where an extension to the five or 20 working day timeline has been authorised.

The model Complaints Handling Procedure allows for an extension to the timescales to be authorised in certain circumstances. This indicator will report:

- the number of complaints closed at stage one where extension was authorised, as a % of all complaints at stage one
- number of complaints closed at stage two where extension was authorised, as a % of all complaints at stage two

This is an area where there is still room for improvement, but there has been a significant increase in the number of frontline extensions being approved (33% in 2019-20 compared to 10% or lower in earlier years).

Table 3: Indicator 6 – Extensions (2014-15 through to 2019-20)

Number of cases where an extension is authorised		% of complaints at stage one where the extension was authorised	% of complaints at stage two where the extension was authorised
2019-20	Total no. of overdue complaints	158	68
	No. of complaints with authorised extensions	52	31
	Percentage with extensions	33%	46%
2018-19	Total no. of overdue complaints	111	56
	No. of complaints with authorised extensions	24	9
	Percentage with extensions	22%	16%
2017-18	Total no. of overdue complaints	77	63
	No. of complaints with authorised extensions	4	11
	Percentage with extensions	5%	17%
2016-17	Total no. of overdue complaints	42	37
	No. of complaints with authorised extensions	4	11
	Percentage with extensions	10%	30%
2015-16	Total no. of overdue complaints	23	86
	No. of complaints with authorised extensions	1	13
	Percentage with extensions	4%	15%
2014-15	Total no. of overdue complaints	18	63
	No. of complaints with authorised extensions	1	24
	Percentage with extensions	6%	38%

The council always aims to respond to complaints as quickly as possible. There are, however, times when a complaint is particularly complex, and it is identified that a thorough investigation of the issues will require time out with the prescribed timescales. In these situations, the council

agrees with a complainant to extend the timescale for closing the complaint and will detail the reasons such as having to interview several potential witnesses and for a need to gather reports from a variety of sources. A senior manager must always approve such an extension before it is granted, and this is recorded with revised time limits on our complaints database.

However, as the data in Table 3 testifies, many complaints taking longer than the stipulated times still do not receive such approvals.

Figure 11 gives a breakdown by service where frontline complaints were extended without authorisation. As can be seen 52 overdue frontline complaints (33%) had authorised extensions mainly by the Housing and Property team, and Direct Services. None of the complaints resolved in more than 5 days at frontline by Community Care received an authorised extension.

Similarly, figure 12 gives a breakdown by service where complaints were extended without authorisation for investigations. For the second consecutive year Housing and Property Services had the highest proportion of authorised extensions for investigations that took longer than 20 working days to resolve with 15 out of 20 (75%). Schools and Curriculum Development had the next highest number with 8 out of 13 (62%).

Despite the revised complaints database, which was introduced in April 2017, the expectation that this would allow for closer monitoring to identify complaints that have extended beyond 20 days without authorisation continues to prove challenging. Senior management are still being notified of such cases and administrators reminded weekly to update the database, but there is still scope for improvement.

Figure 11: Frontline complaints not responded to in stipulated timescales, without authorised extensions (2019-20)

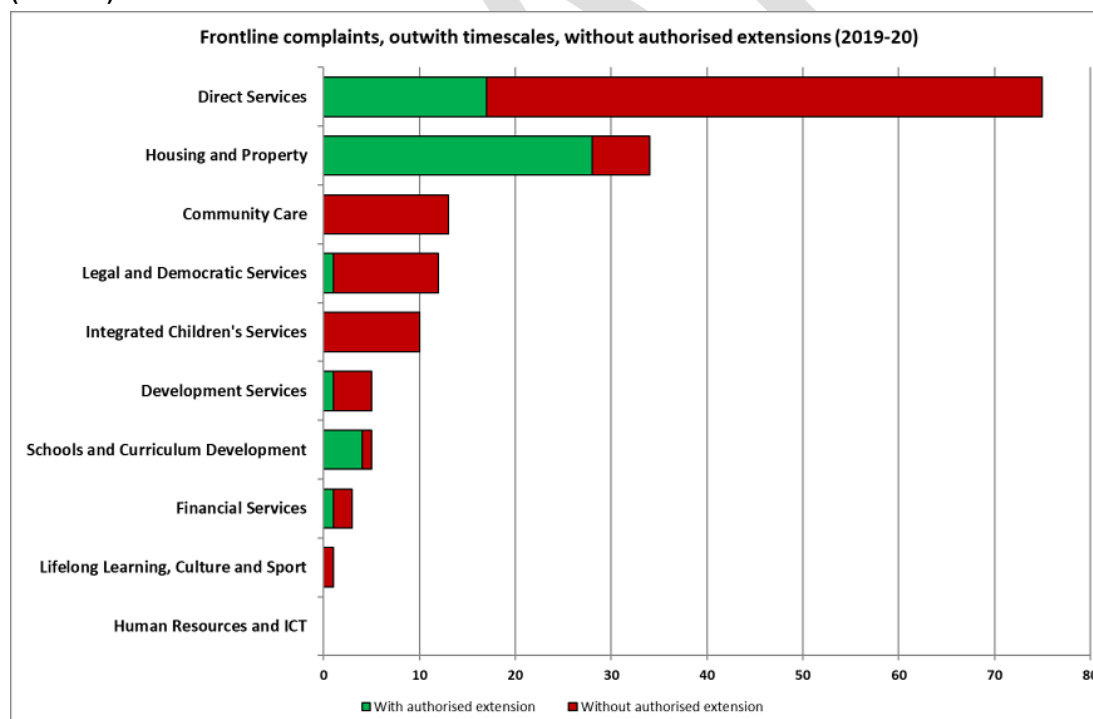
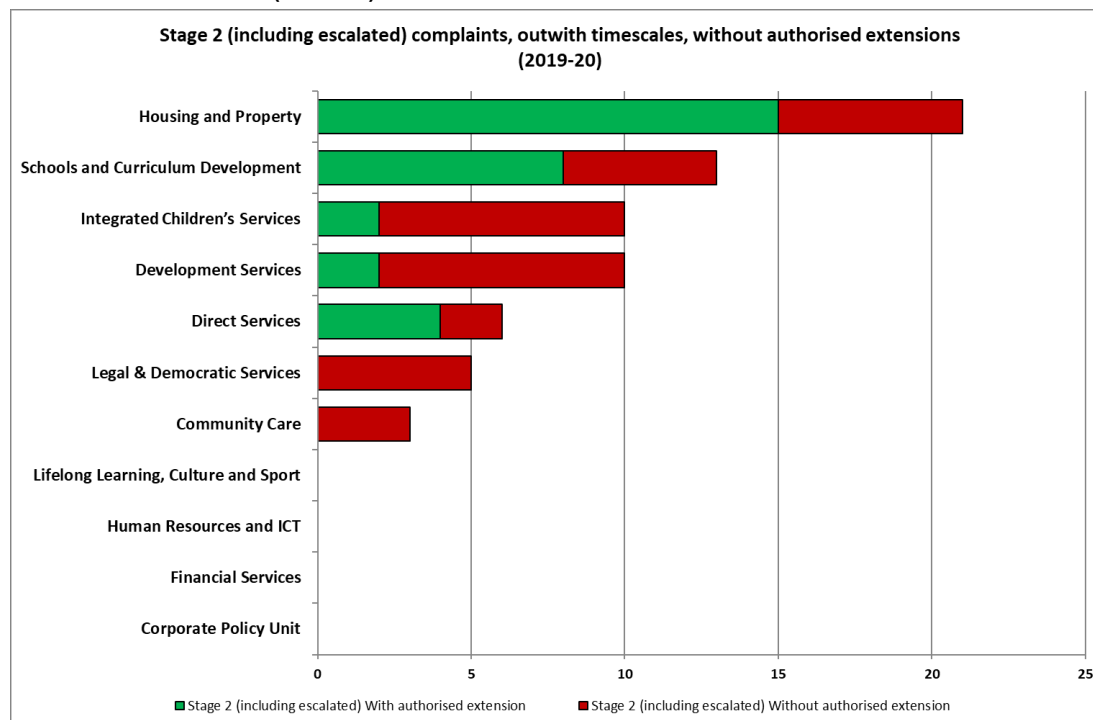


Figure 12: Stage two (including escalated) complaints not responded to in stipulated timescales, without authorised extensions (2018-19)



4.7 Indicator 7

The SPSO requires a statement to report on customer satisfaction with the complaints service provided.

A customer satisfaction survey was sent out to customers with the aim of helping the council focus on areas where improvements or change could be made to our complaints handling procedure and service provision.

In assessing customer satisfaction within the complaints service, complainants are asked to consider:

- how satisfied they were with the way their complaint was handled
- how easy the complaints process was to follow
- how well we complied with the CHP
- how well we provided service delivery, timeliness and information
- how professional the attitude of staff was

The SPSO currently requires a statement to report on customer satisfaction with the complaints service provided although this is currently being reviewed as part of the SPSO revision of the Model Complaint Handling Procedure. A brief report is included on customer satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction Feedback Survey

Complaints Handling Customer Feedback Surveys were sent to every complainant when they were informed of the outcome of their complaint. In 2019-20, 505 surveys were sent out, 345 by email and 160 by post. We received 23 postal responses and 43 online responses, giving an overall poor survey response of 66. This was a 54% decrease from 2018-19.

Arising from the survey, the main dissatisfactions are:

- not contacting customers to confirm complaints and outcomes sought;
- not updating customers;
- not adhering to policy timescales;

- not taking the issues seriously;
- not apologising for poor service provision;
- having to chase up a response;
- only receiving a single sentence response;
- staff rudeness;
- poor work by contracted service providers

In 2019 -20, some positive feedback comments were received. These included:

- several customers expressed their satisfaction on how customer service staff dealt with them;
- one customer praised the very thoughtful reply to their reported concern;
- one customer expressed their satisfaction that following making their complaint, a good service was quickly provided;

4.8 Indicator 8 – Lessons learned: a statement outlining changes or improvements to services or procedures as a result of the consideration of complaints.

The council has a clear commitment to listen to our customers and act on their feedback. Learning from complaints is a continuous process that helps the council to resolve common issues and further improve the services that are provided. The council is continually working on learning from complaints and implementing changes to working practices as a direct result of investigating complaints.

4.8.1. Learning Outcomes

Managers review complaints that are upheld or partially upheld to determine if change or improvement would prevent re-occurrence. When a complaint is upheld or partially upheld, the remedies offered will generally fall into one or more of the following four categories:

- **Redress** – Putting things right where they have gone wrong, admitting where mistakes have been made.
- **Reimbursement** – Covering vouched actual costs incurred as a direct result of mistakes made by the council.
- **Reinforcement** – Recognising that a correct council policy/procedure has not been followed or we have fallen short of what could be expected. Training and instructing staff to prevent re-occurrence.
- **Revision** – Reviewing current practice to amend and improve working practices.

The Complaints Management System has a specific learning outcome section for managers to complete when complaints are closed. Where they have been upheld or partially upheld, any learning outcomes and service improvements are recorded.

Complaints Officer monitoring and database processing by Complaint administrators have ensured that more detailed closures are being recorded. The below information provides a quarterly breakdown of completion of the learning outcomes section in the complaints database.

Quarter 1	<i>Upheld</i>	<i>Partially Upheld</i>	<i>Not Upheld</i>
Number of Complaints Closed	72	29	103
Learning Outcomes Completed	71 (98.6%)	26 (89.7%)	Nil

Quarter 2	<i>Upheld</i>	<i>Partially Upheld</i>	<i>Not Upheld</i>
Number of Complaints Closed	58	33	86
Learning Outcomes Completed	57 (98.3%)	29 (87.9%)	Nil

Quarter 3	<i>Upheld</i>	<i>Partially Upheld</i>	<i>Not Upheld</i>
Number of Complaints Closed	58	28	83
Learning Outcomes Completed	56 (96.6%)	28 (100%)	Nil

Quarter 4	<i>Upheld</i>	<i>Partially Upheld</i>	<i>Not Upheld</i>
Number of Complaints Closed	54	32	88
Learning Outcomes Completed	53 (98.1%)	30 (93.8%)	Nil

2019/20	<i>Upheld</i>	<i>Partially Upheld</i>	<i>Not Upheld</i>
Number of Complaints Closed	242	122	360
Learning Outcomes Completed	237 (97.9%)	113 (92.6%)	Nil

For the majority of complaints that were upheld or partially upheld a learning outcome was recorded on the complaints database (350 out of 364 complaints, equivalent to 96.2%).

The following is a summary of some learning outcome actions taken to change a procedure or policy in resolving complaints that were upheld or partially upheld in 2019-20:

Table 4: Actions taken in response to complaints upheld (2019-20)

Department	You said...	We listened and took action on the following upheld complaints...
Legal and Democratic Services	We failed to carry out the necessary checks resulting in us wrongly suspending a claim you submitted.	In upholding your complaint, we apologised and revised our process to ensure that, in future, appropriate checks would be made prior to considering suspensions. We resolved the issue to your satisfaction and you thanked us for this.
Financial Services	Your personal information was accidentally released in published documents.	In partially upholding your complaint, we apologised and put arrangements in place to ensure all relevant staff are provided with advice on suitable redaction methods. We included a procedure where all similar correspondence would be checked over by a manager prior to publishing.
Housing and Property	Through an appointed contractor, we made some housing repairs but failed to complete others within agreed timescales.	In partially upholding your complaint, we apologised and arranged for the completion of the outstanding repairs. We met with the contractor who agreed to put a more co-ordinated process in place so that all repairs followed an agreed customer schedule within set timescales.
Community Care	We misunderstood your request for alternative accommodation.	In partially upholding your complaint, we apologised and met with you to address the misunderstanding and we agreed a solution with you.
Integrated Children's Services	We provided a lack of foster carer support when you asked for help to go through review reports to help your understanding of them.	In partially upholding your complaint, we apologised and revised our process for providing support to foster carers. Staff were briefed on this new process.
Schools and Curriculum Development	We failed to deal timeously and effectively with reported parental concerns relating to your child.	In upholding your complaint, we apologised and reviewed our systems for communication and protocols relating to reported parental concerns, particular for longer running concerns where a number of parental communications have been received. We also reviewed our recording processes and provided staff training.

In 2019-20, the Local Authority Complaint Handlers Network continued to benchmark across all 32 councils. 1 council didn't provide their annual data so results were drawn from the remaining 31 councils.

The below tables provide some information on how Moray Council compares with overall recorded complaint national statistics:

Complaints Received	2018-19	2019-20
Moray Council	611 (1%)	738 (1.3%)
Nationally	56,178	56,119

Complaints Received Per 1000 Population	2018-19	2019-20
Moray Council	6.40	7.7
Nationally	10.36	10.34

Complaints Closed	2018-19	2019-20
Moray Council	597	725
Nationally	54,782	54,562

Nationally there was a 1% reduction in the number of complaints recorded in 2019-20. In contrast, Moray Council had a 21.4% increase in complaint recording demonstrating continued public confidence in reporting complaints.

Average Time in Working Days – Stage one	2018-19	2019-20
Moray Council	4.8	5.5
Nationally	7.1	10.2
Average Time in Working Days – Stage two	2018-19	2019/20
Moray Council	22.2	22.9
Nationally	29.9	23.9

Nationally, many Councils do not meet their target of resolving stage one complaints within 5 working days with a 43.7% increase in the time taken from 2018-19. Moray Council marginally failed to achieve the 5 working day target and increased the average time taken to resolve frontline complaints by a 14.6% in 2019/20.

Both nationally and locally the stage two complaints target times of 20 working days were not met although nationally significant improvement was made. Moray Council had a 3% increase compared to nationally where a 20% reduction was made. This could be indicative of reducing staff numbers and, for Moray Council, the increase in the number of complaints dealt with.

6. Summary

The council is committed to customer service and values feedback from our service users. Customer views and experiences are important to us as they help us to understand what we do well and identify where we need to improve. We want our customers to feel that their feedback is valued, that we will listen and act on lessons learned in order to improve service provision. Use of digital technology complements written survey requests providing additional opportunity to receive public feedback. A higher percentage 65% were received online.

Only by utilising the Complaint Handling Procedure and adhering to the robust performance management framework, will we learn from complaints, improve services and increase customer confidence in our service provision. Staff are making good use of the new database to demonstrate learning from complaints. Our Complaints Officer continues to highlight the importance of this to services through complaint administrator meetings and staff training.

It is importance that we aim to deal with complaints quickly, keep complainants informed and advise them what to do if they remain dissatisfied. Staff training, intranet guidance and Complaints Officer monitoring is used to help achieve this aim. The complaints section in the Moray Council website provides the public with policies, reports and general information on how a complaint can be reported and dealt with.

The results of the complaints survey were the lowest yet with a 9% return rate some however some useful feedback was given. It remains the case that satisfaction with the complaints handling process appears to be influenced by how satisfied the customer was with the outcome of their complaint. We used the easy-to-use online option and sent paper copies; however, this produced a similarly low number of survey responses meaning we were restricted in assessing the effectiveness of it as a learning tool. We will continue to use both online and hard copy methods for our survey.

Welcoming, recording, managing and resolving complaints in an effective manner will increase public confidence in our application of the Complaint Handling Procedure and afford us opportunity to learn and improve our service provision.

APPENDIX

Please note that due to rounding, some totals may add up to slightly more or less than 100%.

Table A: Indicator 2 – Complaints closed at stage one and stage two as a percentage of all complaints closed

Indicator 2 by service	2018-19				2019-20			
	Stage 1 – Front line resolution	Stage 2 – Investigation	Stage 2 – Escalated Investigation	Total	Stage 1 – Front line resolution	Stage 2 – Investigation	Stage 2 – Escalated Investigation	Total
All Council	482 81%	95 16%	20 3%	597	579 80%	134 18%	12 2%	725
Chief Executive's Office	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0	1 50%	1 50%	0 0%	2
Chief Executive's Section	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0	1 50%	1 50%	0 0%	2
Corporate Policy Unit	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0
Community Planning & Development	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0
Corporate Services	46 88%	6 12%	0 0%	52	38 81%	8 17%	1 2%	47
Financial Services	2 50%	2 50%	0 0%	4	4 67%	2 33%	0 0%	6
Human Resources and ICT	1 33%	2 67%	0 0%	3	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0
Legal and Democratic Services	43 96%	2 4%	0 0%	45	34 83%	6 15%	1 2%	41
Environmental Services	398 88%	35 8%	18 4%	451	468 85%	76 14%	9 2%	553
Development Services	14 61%	8 35%	1 4%	23	9 33%	18 67%	0 0%	27
Direct Services	251 98%	3 1%	2 1%	256	298 96%	11 4%	2 1%	311
Housing and Property	133 77%	24 14%	15 9%	172	161 75%	47 22%	7 3%	215
Education and Social Care	38 40%	54 57%	2 2%	94	72 59%	49 40%	2 2%	123
Community Care	18 67%	8 30%	1 4%	27	20 80%	5 20%	0 0%	25
Integrated Children's Services	4 13%	26 84%	1 3%	31	19 51%	17 46%	1 3%	37
Lifelong Learning, Culture and Sport	4 50%	4 50%	0 0%	8	8 89%	1 11%	0 0%	9
Schools and Curriculum Development	12 43%	16 57%	0 0%	28	25 48%	26 50%	1 2%	52

Table B: Indicator 3 by service – The number of complaints upheld/partially upheld/not upheld at each stage as a percentage of complaints closed in full at stage one

Indicator 3 by service – Stage 1	2018-19				2019-20			
	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Total	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Total
All Council	149 31%	39 8%	294 61%	482	221 38%	78 13%	280 48%	579
Chief Executive's Office	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%	1
Chief Executive's Section	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	0 0%	0 0%	1 100%	1
Corporate Policy Unit	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0
Community Planning & Development	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0
Corporate Services	14 30%	10 22%	22 48%	46	14 37%	5 13%	19 50%	38
Financial Services	1 50%	0 0%	1 50%	2	1 25%	0 0%	3 75%	4
Human Resources and ICT	0 0%	0 0%	1 0%	0	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0
Legal and Democratic Services	13 30%	10 23%	20 47%	43	13 38%	5 15%	16 47%	34
Environmental Services	123 31%	23 6%	252 63%	398	190 41%	59 13%	219 47%	468
Development Services	0 0%	5 36%	9 64%	14	0 0%	2 22%	7 78%	9
Direct Services	61 24%	4 2%	186 74%	251	98 33%	42 14%	158 53%	298
Housing and Property	62 47%	14 11%	57 43%	133	92 57%	15 9%	54 34%	161
Education and Social Care	12 32%	6 16%	20 53%	38	17 24%	14 19%	41 57%	72
Community Care	3 17%	5 28%	10 56%	18	3 15%	10 50%	7 35%	20
Integrated Children's Services	0 0%	0 0%	4 100%	4	7 37%	1 5%	11 58%	19
Lifelong Learning, Culture and Sport	2 50%	0 0%	2 50%	4	1 13%	1 13%	6 75%	8
Schools and Curriculum Development	7 58%	1 8%	4 33%	12	6 24%	2 8%	17 68%	25

Figure 20: Stage one – % of Complaints Upheld, Partially Upheld, and Not Upheld (2014-15 through to 2019-20)

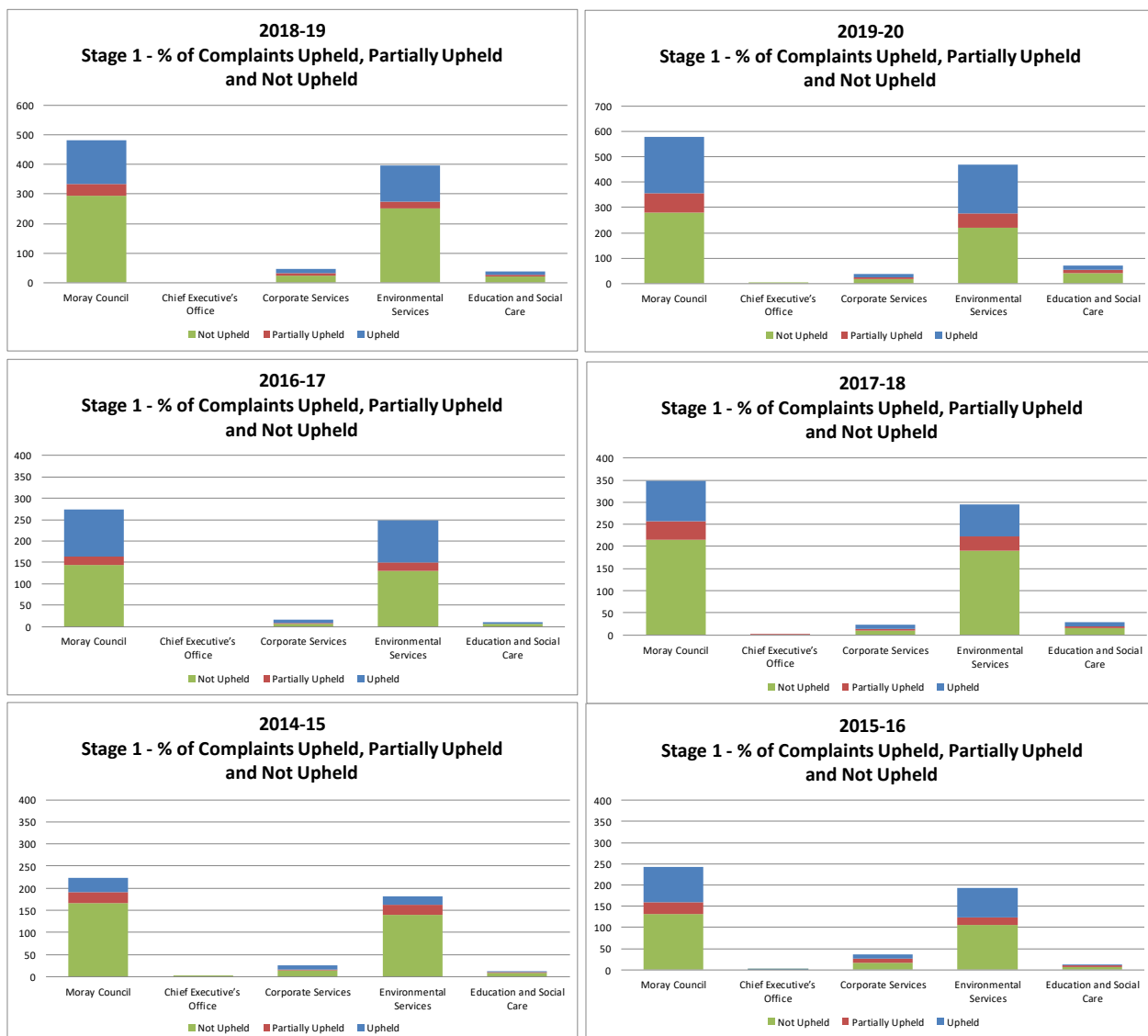


Table C: Indicator 3 by service – The number of complaints upheld/partially upheld/not upheld at each stage as a percentage of complaints closed in full at stage two (including escalated complaints)

Indicator 3 by service – Stage 2 (including escalated)	2018-19				2019-20			
	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Total	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Total
All Council	20 17%	30 26%	65 57%	115	46 17%	76 28%	146 54%	268
Chief Executive's Office	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	0 0%	1 50%	1 50%	2
Chief Executive's Section	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	0 0%	1 50%	1 50%	2
Corporate Policy Unit	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0
Community Planning & Development	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0
Corporate Services	1 17%	0 0%	5 83%	6	4 25%	3 19%	9 56%	16
Financial Services	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%	2	1 33%	0 0%	2 67%	3
Human Resources and ICT	0 0%	0 0%	2 100%	2	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0
Legal and Democratic Services	1 50%	0 0%	1 50%	2	3 23%	3 23%	7 54%	13
Environmental Services	6 11%	14 26%	33 62%	53	29 18%	43 27%	85 54%	157
Development Services	0 0%	3 33%	6 67%	9	3 9%	13 38%	18 53%	34
Direct Services	0 0%	0 0%	5 100%	5	2 10%	5 25%	13 65%	20
Housing and Property	6 15%	11 28%	22 56%	39	24 23%	25 24%	54 52%	103
Education and Social Care	13 23%	16 29%	27 48%	56	13 14%	29 31%	51 55%	93
Community Care	0 0%	6 67%	3 33%	9	3 38%	0 0%	5 63%	8
Integrated Children's Services	10 37%	7 26%	10 37%	27	6 17%	12 33%	18 50%	36
Lifelong Learning, Culture and Sport	2 50%	0 0%	2 50%	4	1 50%	0 0%	1 50%	2
Schools and Curriculum Development	1 6%	3 19%	12 75%	16	3 6%	17 36%	27 57%	47

Figure 21: Stage two – % of Complaints Upheld, Partially Upheld, and Not Upheld (2014-15 through to 2019-20)

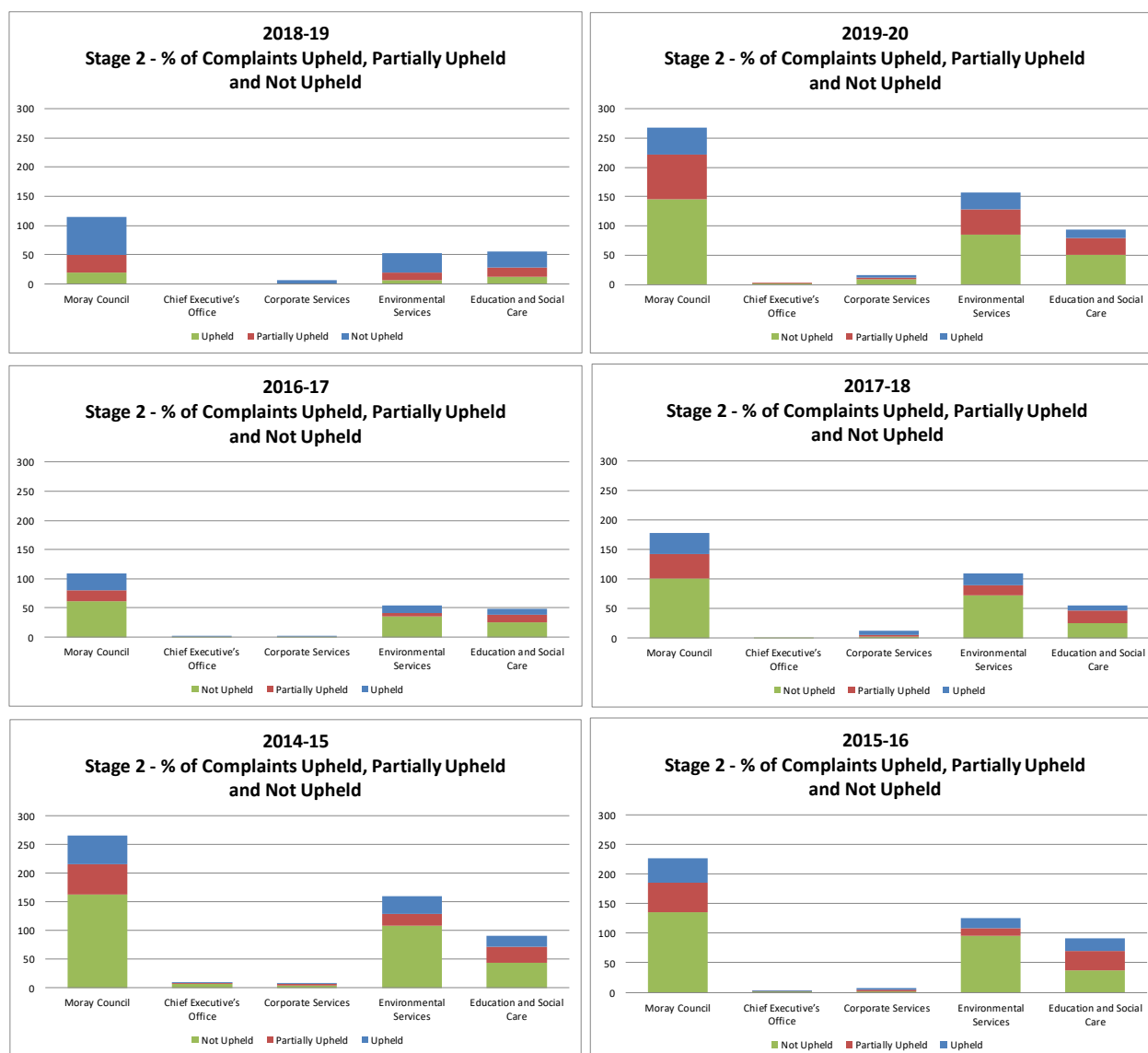


Table D: Indicator 4 by service – The average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage

Indicator 4 by service	2018-19			2019-20		
	Stage 1 – Front line Resolution	Stage 2 – Investigation	Stage 2 – Escalated Investigation	Stage 1 – Front line Resolution	Stage 2 – Investigation	Stage 2 – Escalated Investigation
Target timescales (number of working days)	5	20	20	5	20	20
All Council	4.8	22.2	21.5	5.5	22.9	29.1
Chief Executive's Office	n/a	n/a	n/a	2.0	5.0	n/a
Chief Executive's Section	n/a	n/a	n/a	2.0	5.0	n/a
Corporate Policy Unit	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Community Planning & Development	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Corporate Services	4.5	18.2	n/a	5.2	18.3	81.0
Financial Services	1.5	20.0	n/a	5.0	13.0	n/a
Human Resources and ICT	1.0	13.5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Legal and Democratic Services	4.7	21.0	n/a	5.3	20.0	81.0
Environmental Services	4.6	19.0	19.1	5.0	22.1	26.0
Development Services	5.9	22.8	20.0	11.4	23.4	n/a
Direct Services	4.5	14.3	22.0	4.9	20.6	25.5
Housing and Property	4.7	18.3	18.6	4.7	21.9	26.1
Education and Social Care	6.7	24.7	43.0	9.1	25.2	17.0
Community Care	9.8	26.0	34.0	12.0	38.0	n/a
Integrated Children's Services	4.8	26.6	52.0	14.3	22.1	13.0
Lifelong Learning, Culture and Sport	3.3	20.8	n/a	3.9	17.0	n/a
Schools and Curriculum Development	3.9	22.0	n/a	4.6	25.2	21.0

Figure 22: Average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage (2014-15 through to 2019-20)

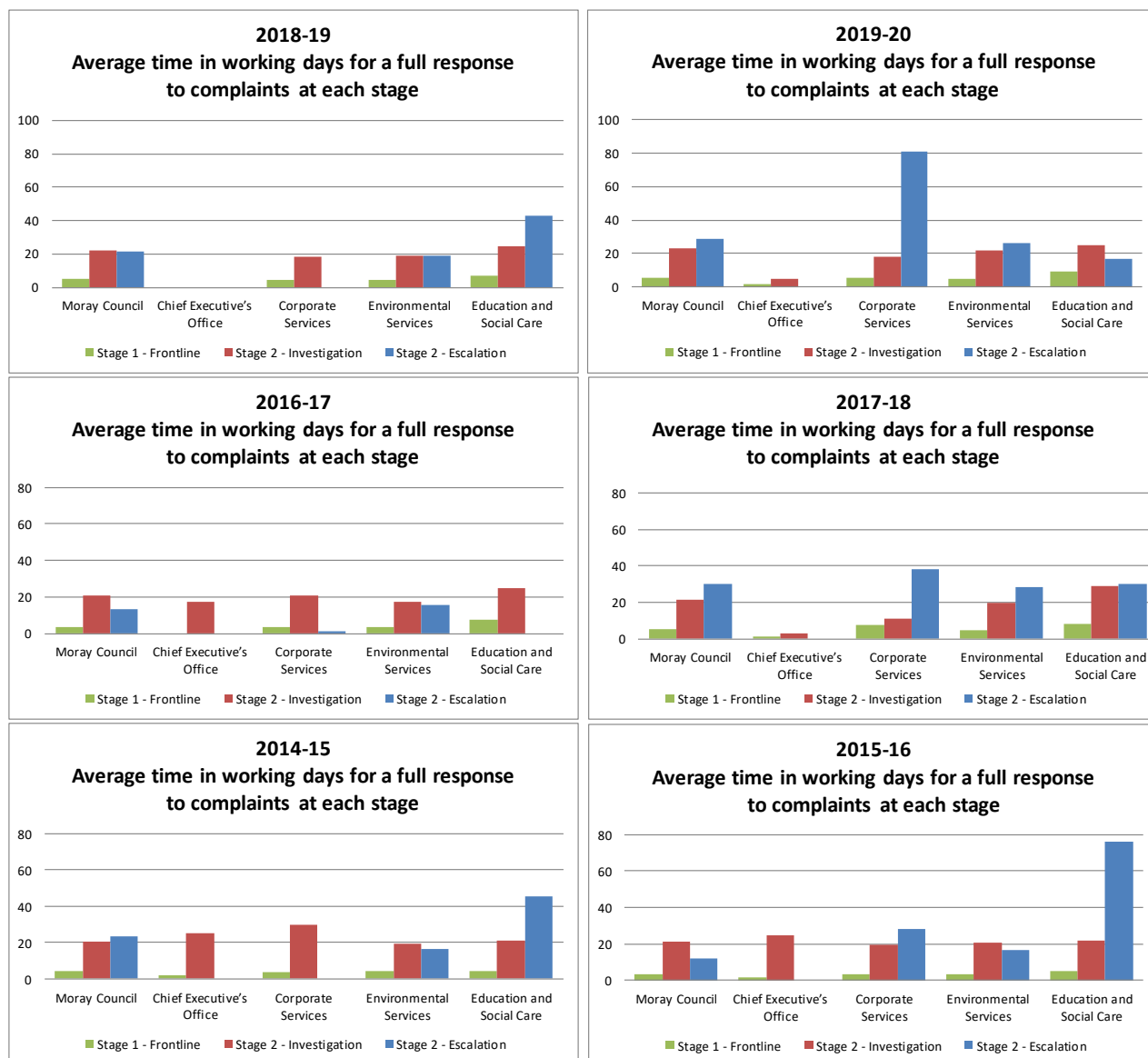


Table E: Average Time in working days to respond to complaints at each stage

Average Time in working days to respond to complaints at each stage	2018-19			2019-20		
	No. of complaints	Total time (workdays)	Average time (workdays)	No. of complaints	Total time (workdays)	Average time (workdays)
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage one	482	3185	6.6	579	3185	5.5
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage two	95	3067	32.3	134	3067	22.9
Average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation	20	349	17.5	12	349	29.1

Table F: Indicator 5 by service – The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the set timescales of five and 20 working days

Indicator 5 by service (Refer to Table A for Totals)	2018-19			2019-20		
	Stage 1 – Front line Resolution	Stage 2 – Investigation	Stage 2 – Escalated Investigation	Stage 1 – Front line Resolution	Stage 2 – Investigation	Stage 2 – Escalated Investigation
Target timescales (number of working days)	5	20	20	5	20	20
All Council	372 64%	50 38%	9 75%	410 71%	71 53%	6 50%
Chief Executive's Office	0 0%	0 n/a	0 n/a	1 100%	1 100%	0 n/a
Chief Executive's Section	0 0%	0 n/a	0 n/a	1 100%	1 100%	0 n/a
Corporate Policy Unit	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a
Community Planning & Development	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a
Corporate Services	34 89%	3 38%	0 0%	23 61%	4 50%	0 0%
Financial Services	2 50%	1 50%	0 n/a	1 25%	2 100%	0 n/a
Human Resources and ICT	1 n/a	1 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a	0 n/a
Legal and Democratic Services	31 91%	1 17%	0 0%	22 65%	2 33%	0 0%
Environmental Services	317 68%	23 30%	9 100%	344 74%	43 57%	5 56%
Development Services	11 122%	5 28%	1 n/a	4 44%	8 44%	0 n/a
Direct Services	202 68%	2 18%	0 0%	214 72%	6 55%	1 50%
Housing and Property	104 65%	16 34%	8 114%	126 78%	29 62%	4 57%
Education and Social Care	21 29%	24 49%	0 0%	42 58%	23 47%	1 50%
Community Care	4 20%	3 60%	0 n/a	6 30%	2 40%	0 n/a
Integrated Children's Services	3 16%	10 59%	0 0%	9 47%	7 41%	1 100%
Lifelong Learning, Culture and Sport	4 50%	2 200%	0 n/a	7 88%	1 100%	0 n/a
Schools and Curriculum Development	10 40%	9 35%	0 0%	20 80%	13 50%	0 0%

Table G: Overdue complaints with formal extensions or holding letters issued

Overdue complaints that have holding letters issued, or been granted a formal extension – by service (Refer to Table A for totals)	2018-19			2019-20		
	Stage 1 – Frontline Resolution	Stage 2 - Investigation	Stage 2 - Escalated Investigation	Stage 1 – Frontline Resolution	Stage 2 - Investigation	Stage 2 - Escalated Investigation
Total number of complaints investigated	482	95	20	579	134	12
Total number of late responses	111	45	11	158	62	6
All Council	24 22%	4 9%	5 45%	52 33%	27 44%	4 67%
Chief Executive's Office	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a
Chief Executive's Section	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a
Corporate Policy Unit	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a
Community, Planning & Development	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a	- n/a
Corporate Services	- n/a	0 0%	- n/a	2 n/a	0 0%	0 n/a
Financial Services	- n/a	0 0%	- n/a	1 33%	0 n/a	- n/a
Human Resources and ICT	- n/a	0% 0%	- n/a	- n/a	0 0%	- n/a
Legal and Democratic Services	- n/a	0 0%	- n/a	1 8%	0 0%	- n/a
Environmental Services	1 2%	2 16.7%	4 44%	46 40%	17 52%	4 100%
Development Services	1 25%	1 33%	- n/a	1 20%	2 20%	- n/a
Direct Services	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	17 23%	3 60%	1 100%
Housing and Property	0 0%	1 12.5%	4 57%	28 82%	12 67%	3 100%
Education and Social Care	23 58%	2 7%	1 50%	4 14%	10 40%	0 0%
Community Care	23 62%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	- n/a
Integrated Children's Services	0 0	2 13%	1 100%	0 0%	2 20%	- n/a
Lifelong Learning, Culture and Sport	- n/a	0 0	- n/a	0 0%	0 100%	- n/a
Schools and Curriculum Development	0 0%	0 0%	- n/a	4 80%	8 67%	- n/a

Note: N/A indicates that a service had no overdue complaints at that particular stage

Table H: Percentage of complaints by department (2014-15 to 2019-20)

Given the types of service provided by each department, it is not surprising that the proportion of complaints dealt with by each department in 2019-20 is broadly similar to previous years. Environmental Services has the most direct contact with users of council services and receives the lion's share of complaints.

Figure 23: Percentage of complaints by department (2014-15 to 2019-20)

