



Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report

1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013

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Introduction

This report provides an analysis of the complaints, compliments and comments received by the Council during 2012/13 under the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure (the procedure). The purpose of the report is to identify topics and trends in relation to complaints; identify areas of organisational learning that have taken place over the past year as a result of the complaints received and make further recommendations based on trend data to improve services. The report also highlights those areas of good practice within the Council and seeks to identify topics and trends in relation to comments made by members of the public so that the Council can also take action where appropriate to improve services.

In addition to the statistical information presented in this report it is important to recognise the work of the Complaints and Information Governance (CIG) Team that underpins this in terms of promoting an organisational culture in which complaints are recognised, accepted, owned and resolved as efficiently and as close to the point of service delivery as possible. The development of an organisational culture in which complaints are viewed as a positive means of engagement has enabled the Council to deliver high levels of customer satisfaction with complaints handling. It will also enable the Council to continue to collect accurate information on complaints in order to identify topics and trends and improve services accordingly.

Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure

The procedure sets out how the Council will deal with all complaints, compliments and comments received with the exception of those received in relation to adult and children's social care services, social housing, public health and Members which will be dealt with under separate procedures.

The procedure has two stages. Stage 1 is a local resolution stage where we try to resolve those complaints that cannot be resolved immediately as part of our day to day business. Stage 1 complaints are dealt with locally, that is within the service being complained about. We aim to resolve the majority of complaints at Stage 1 of the procedure.

Stage 2 is a formal investigation stage where complaints will usually be investigated by the Complaints and Information Governance Manager or another officer independent of the service being complained about.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following a Stage 2 investigation they may refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Public Information and Accessibility

We are committed to making sure that everyone has equal access to all our services. To help make sure the Council's complaints procedures are easily accessible we have produced two leaflets (one for children and young people and one for adults) covering all Council services to reflect the single point of access for complainants within the Council. The leaflets are available in all Council buildings. They have been written in line with the Plain English Campaign standards. The title is written in the most

commonly used community languages and it contains details on how to access the information in other formats, for example, large print, audio and Braille.

Information is available on the Council's website which contains an electronic form people can use to make a complaint, pay someone a compliment or pass comment on Council services. People may make a complaint in any format they wish. This can be in writing, email, via the web, over the phone, in person or by any other reasonable means.

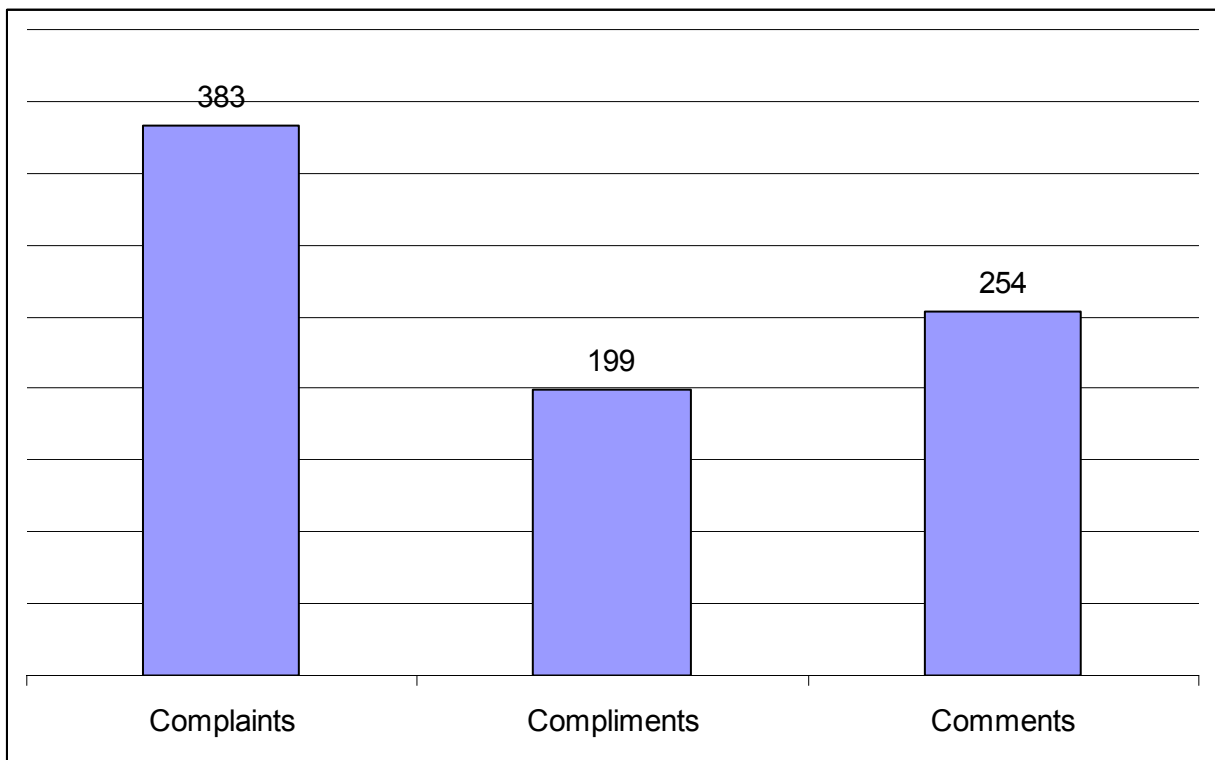
The Complaints and Information Governance Manager can arrange advocates and interpreters (including British Sign Language interpreters) where appropriate.

Complaints Information and Organisational Learning

Overview of Complaints, Compliments and Comments

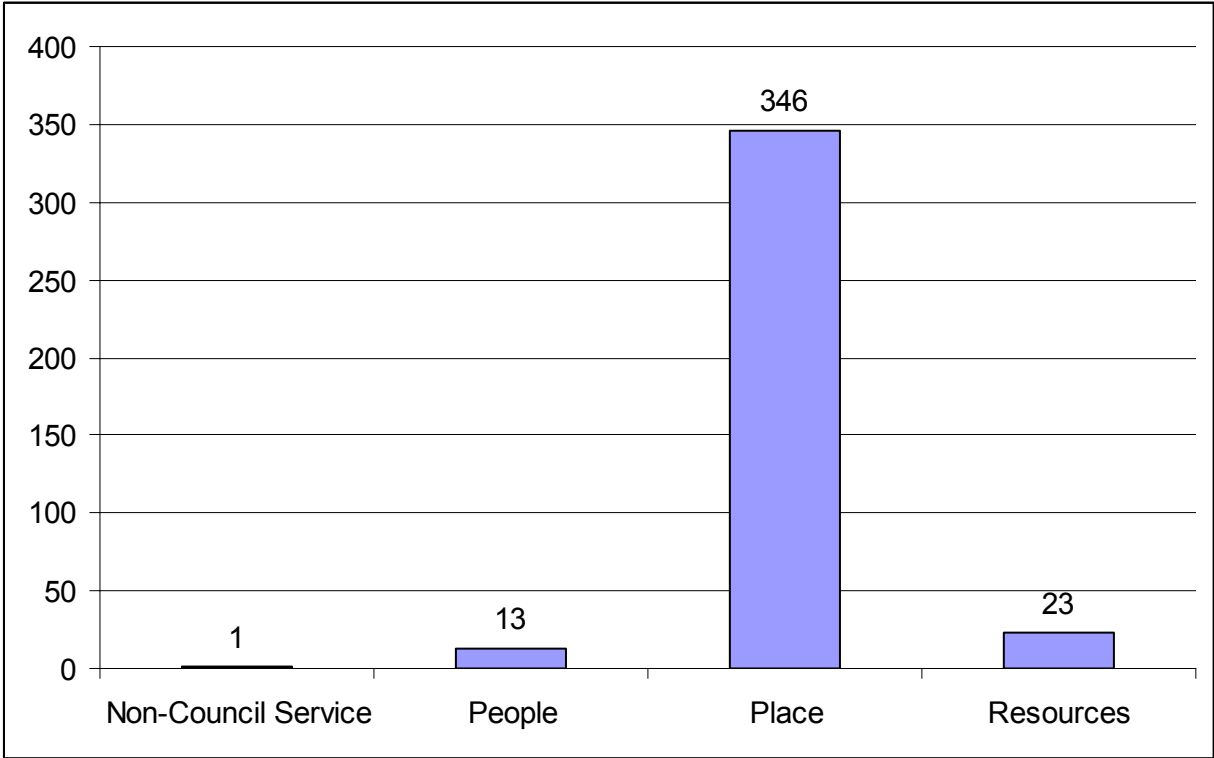
Between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013 the Council received a total of 836 representations under the procedure, a decrease from 895 in 2011/12. The Council received 383 complaints, a decrease from 429 complaints in 2011/12. While there was a decrease in the number of complaints received compared to the previous year the Council still received more complaints than it did in 2010/11 (330). 376 complaints were initially dealt with at Stage 1 of the procedure while seven were initially dealt with at Stage 2. Fifty one stage 1 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 following a Stage 1 investigation. In total 58 complaints were investigated at Stage 2, a slight decrease from 60 in 2011/12 which coincides with the overall reduction in the number of complaints received. The Council also received 199 compliments, a reduction from 267 in 2011/12 and 254 comments, an increase from 199 received in 2011/12. The increase in comments received is as a result of people's dissatisfaction with changes to Council policy in light of the current financial challenges faced by the Council.

Total Complaints, Compliments and Comments



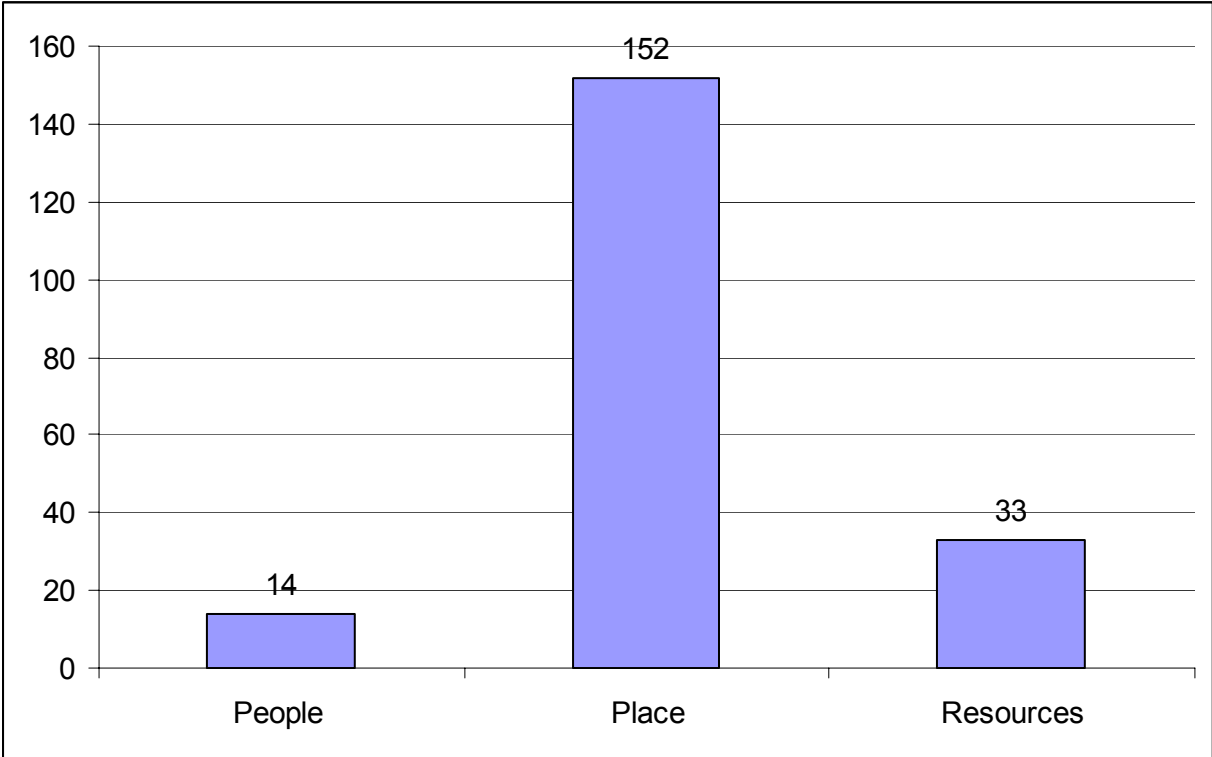
A breakdown of the total number of complaints, compliments and comments received by each department is provided below.

Complaints by Department

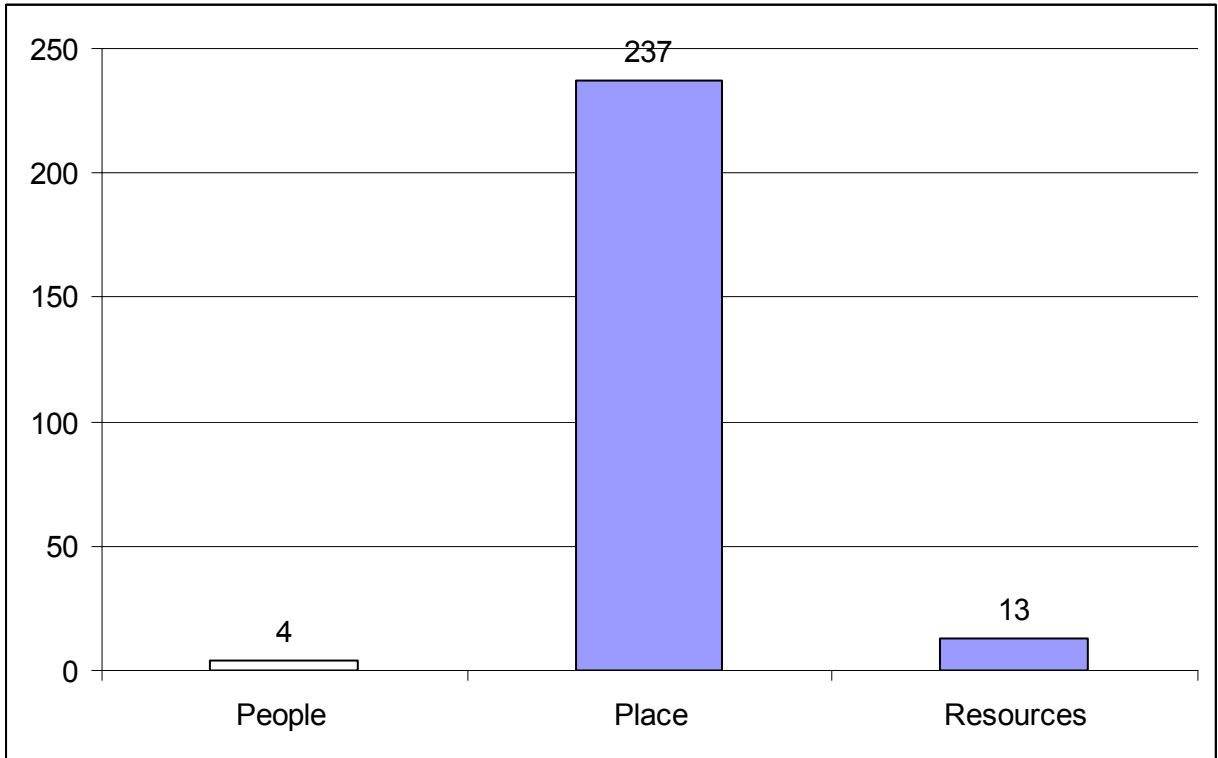


- *People = Services for People*
- *Place = Services for Place*
- *Resources = Resources Group*

Compliments by Department



Comments by Department

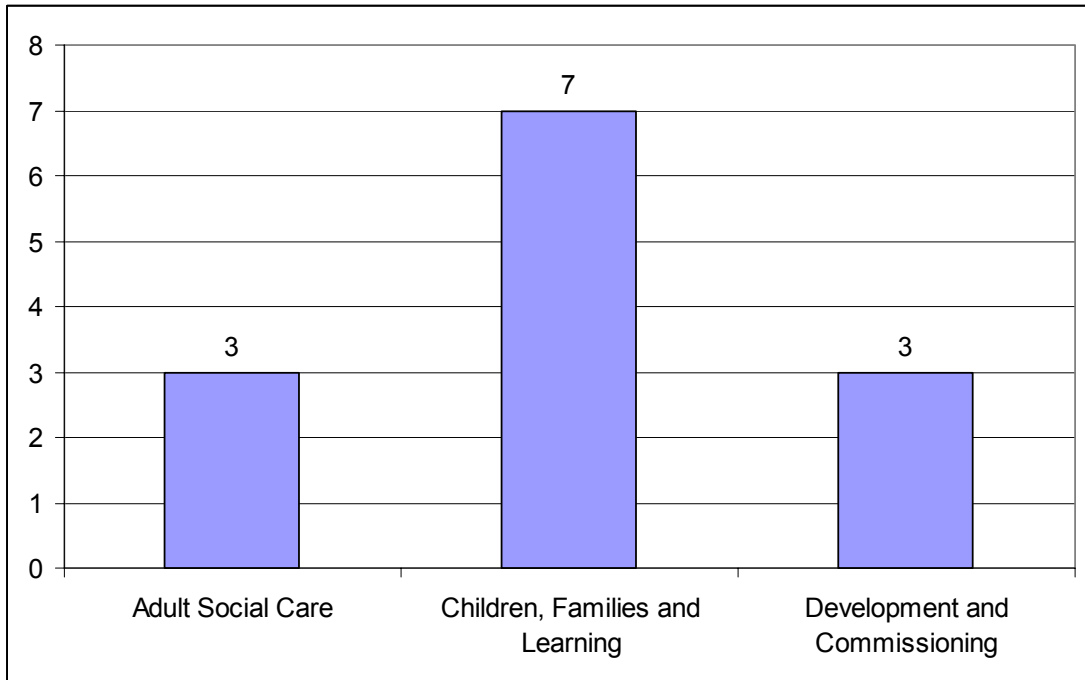


Complaints, Compliments and Comments by Department

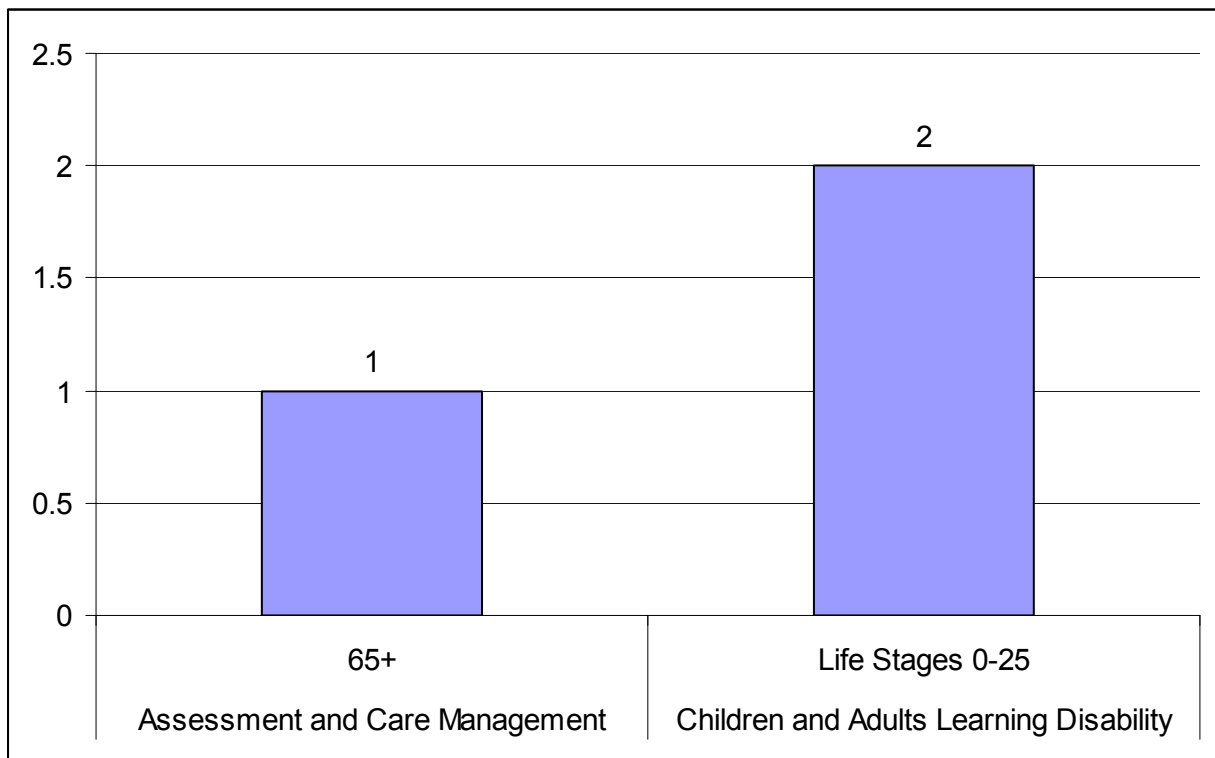
Services for People

Complaints by Service Area/Team

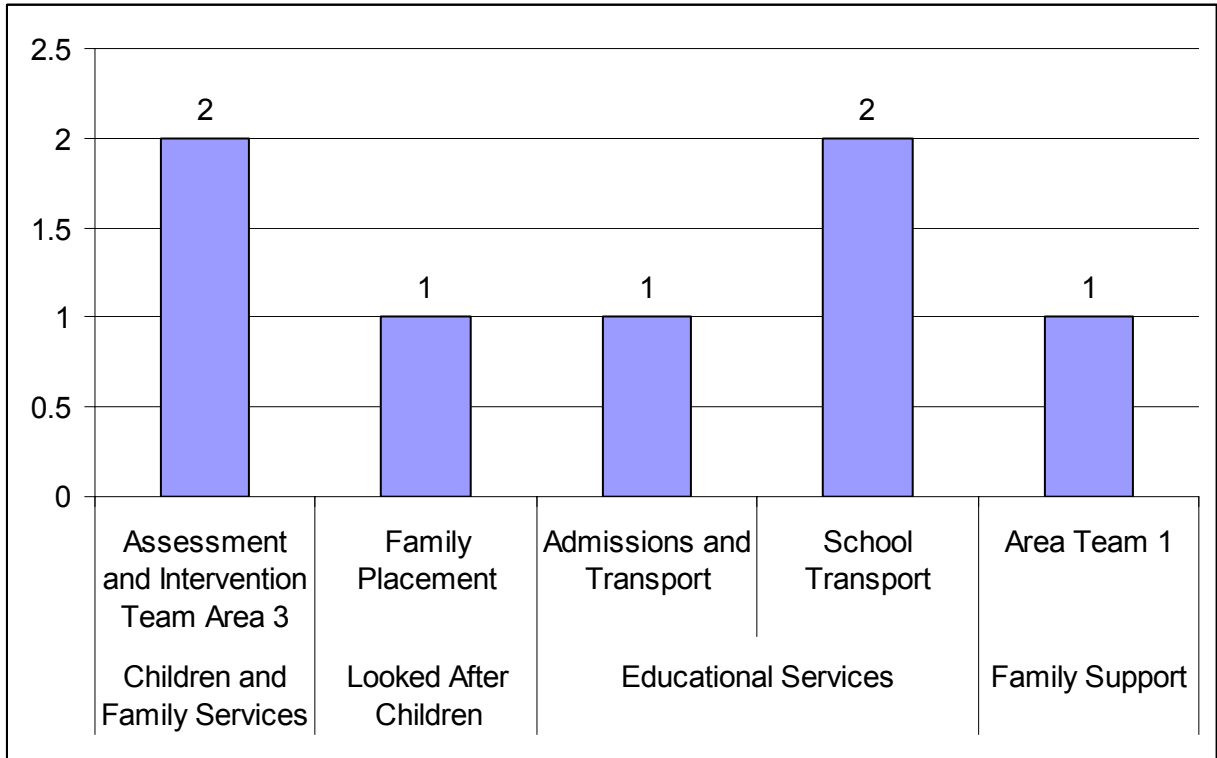
Overview



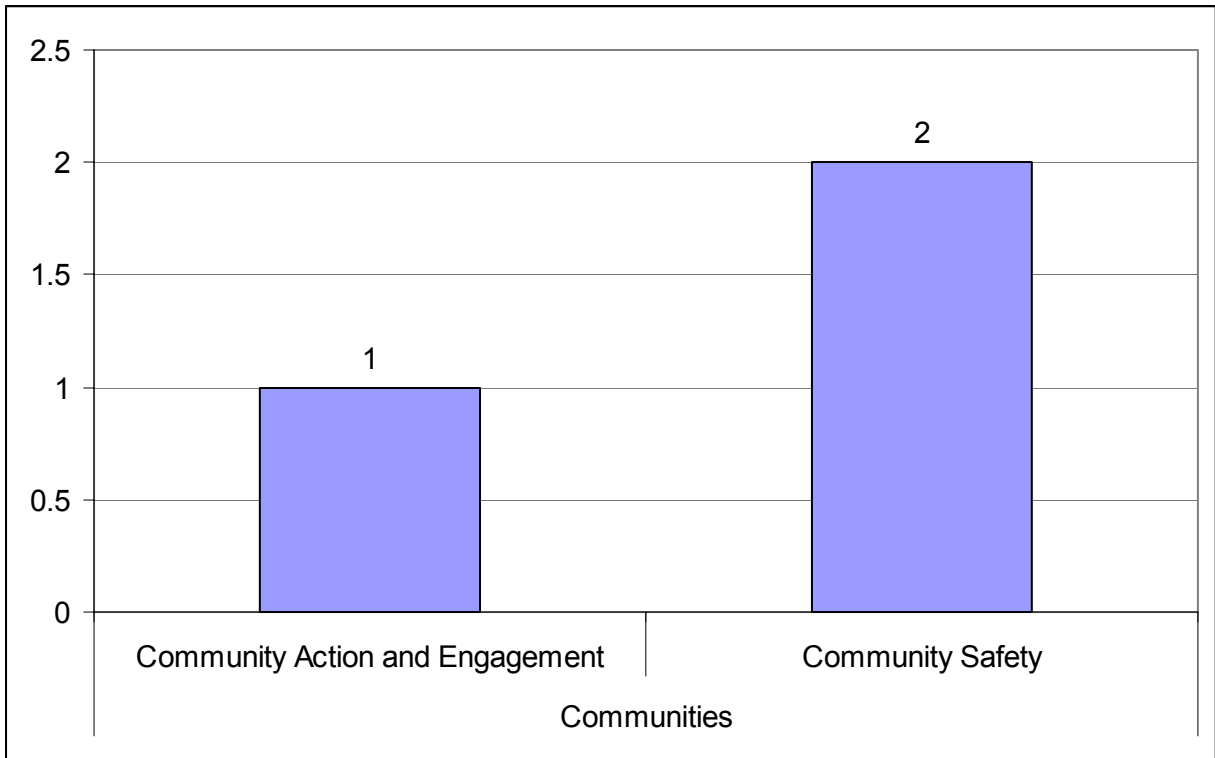
Adult Social Care



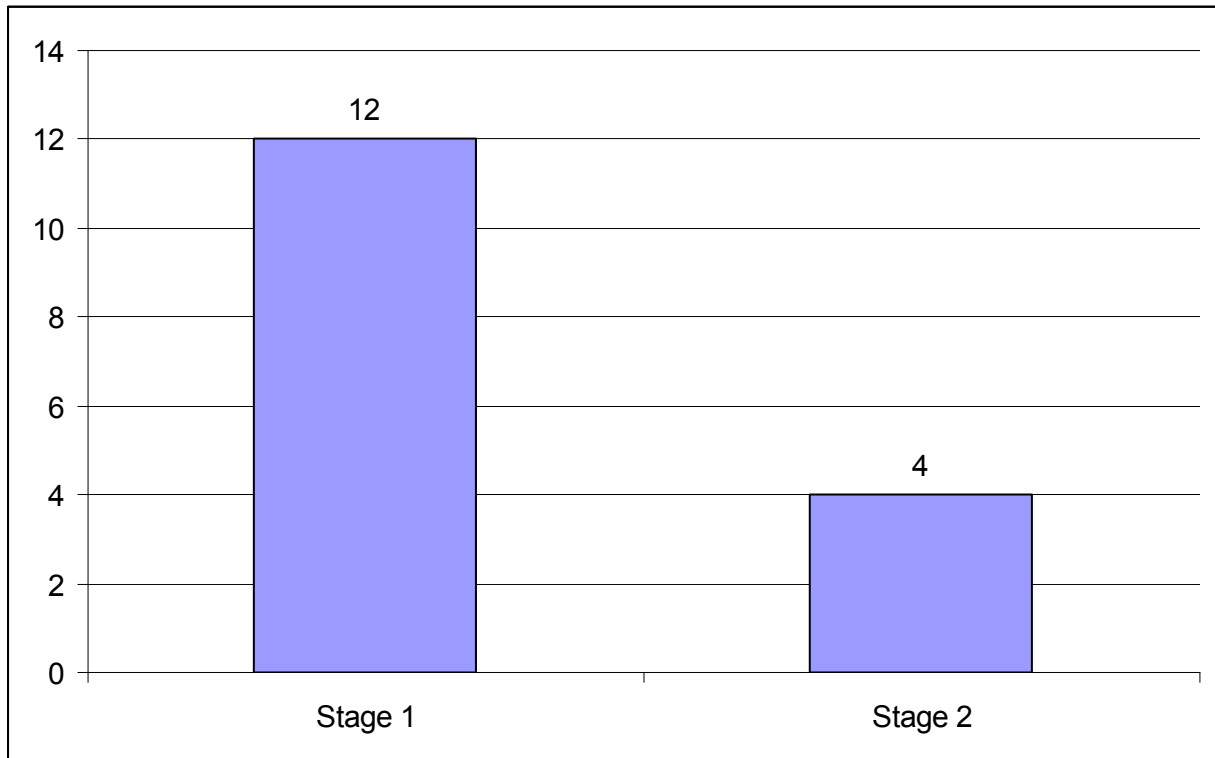
Children, Families and Learning



Development and Commissioning



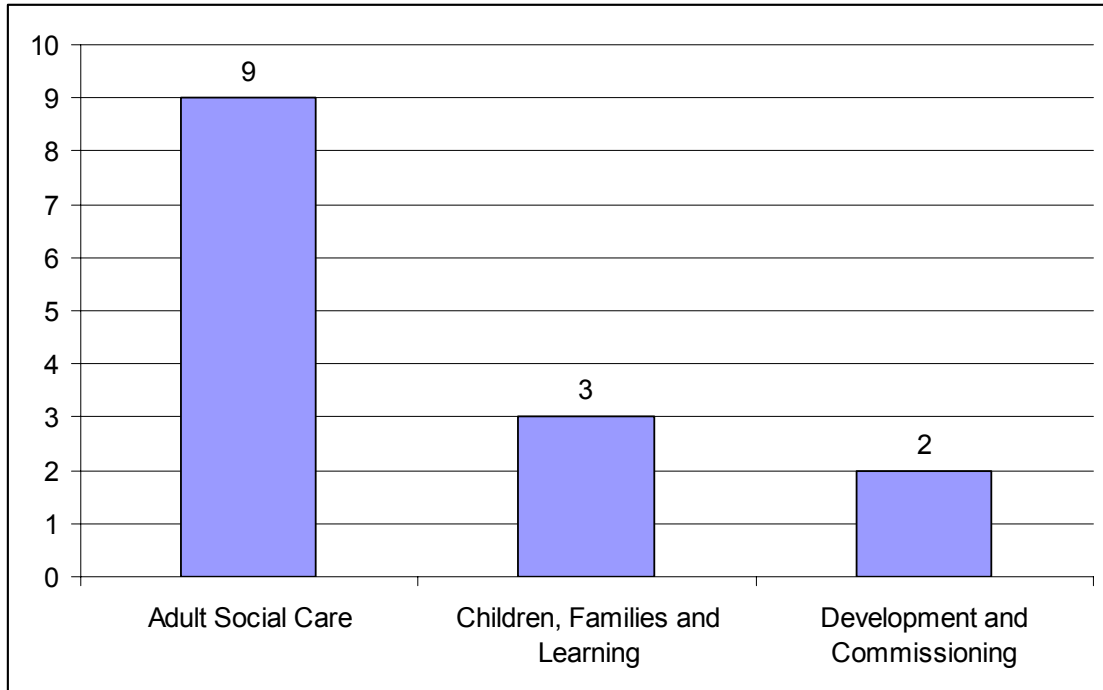
Complaints by Stage



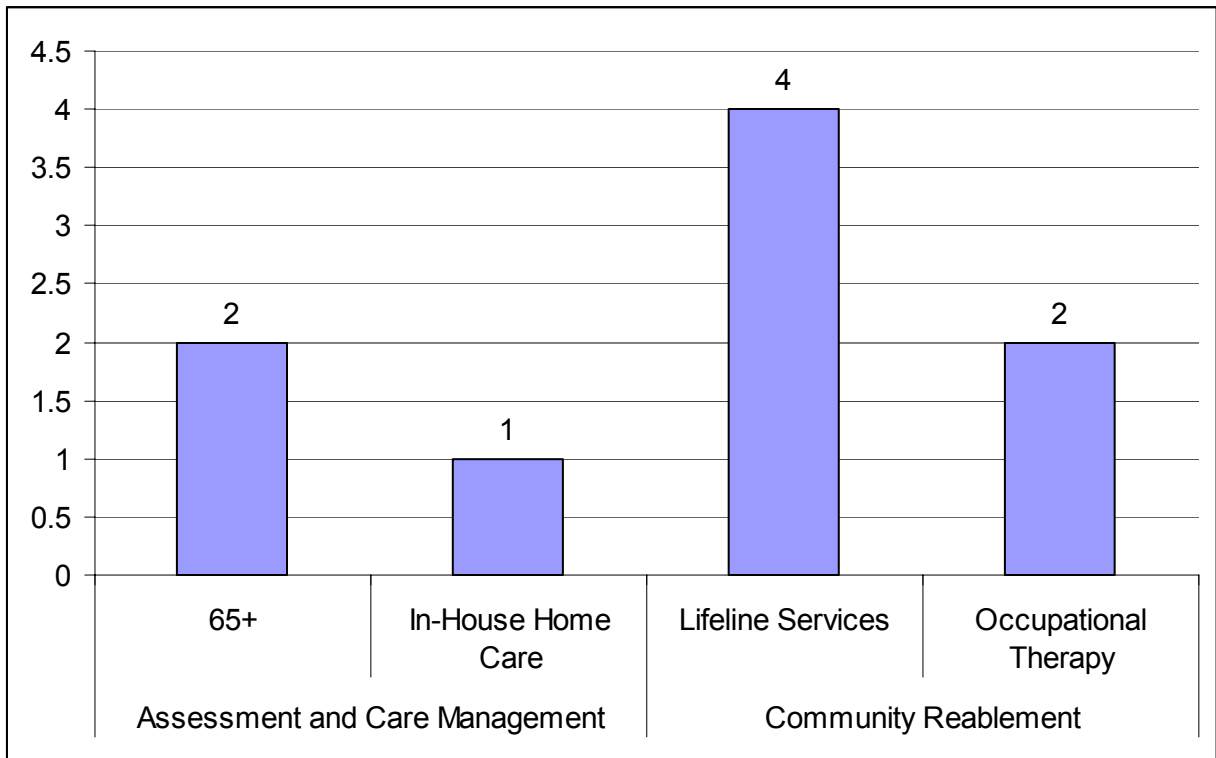
The above graph shows the number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints received by Services for People during 2012/13.

Compliments by Service Area/Team

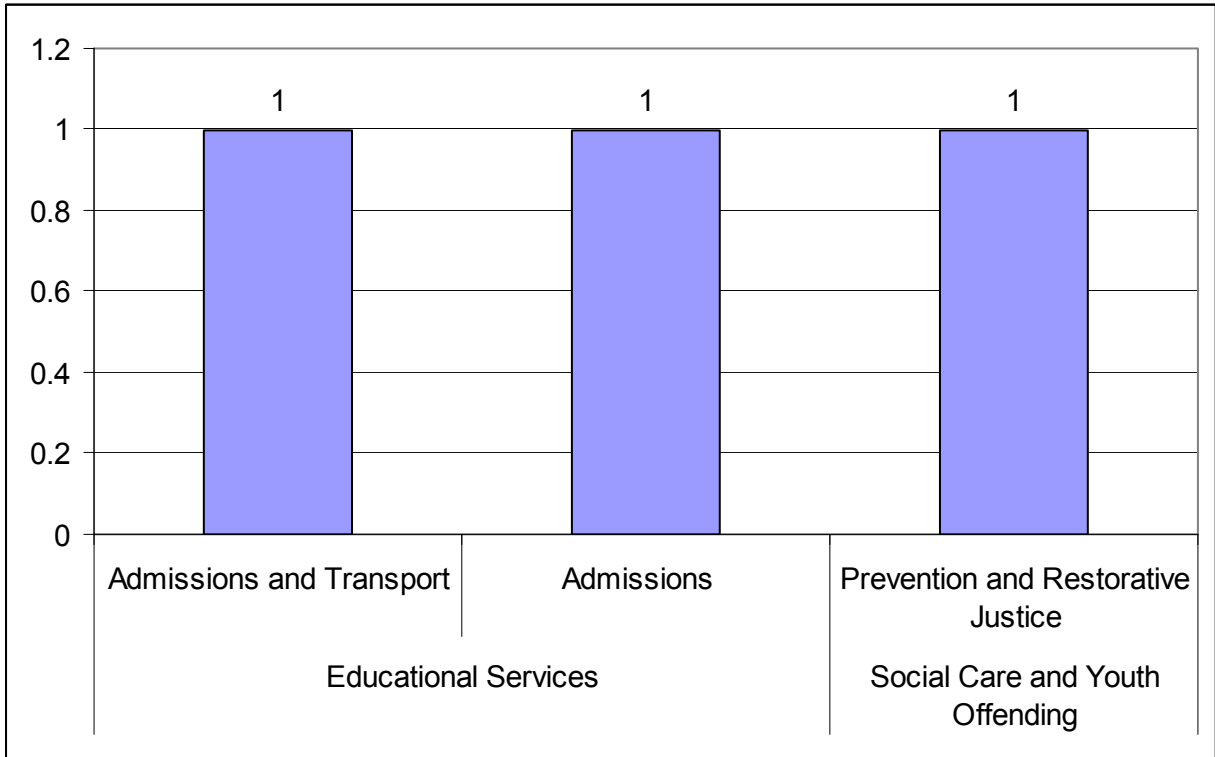
Overview



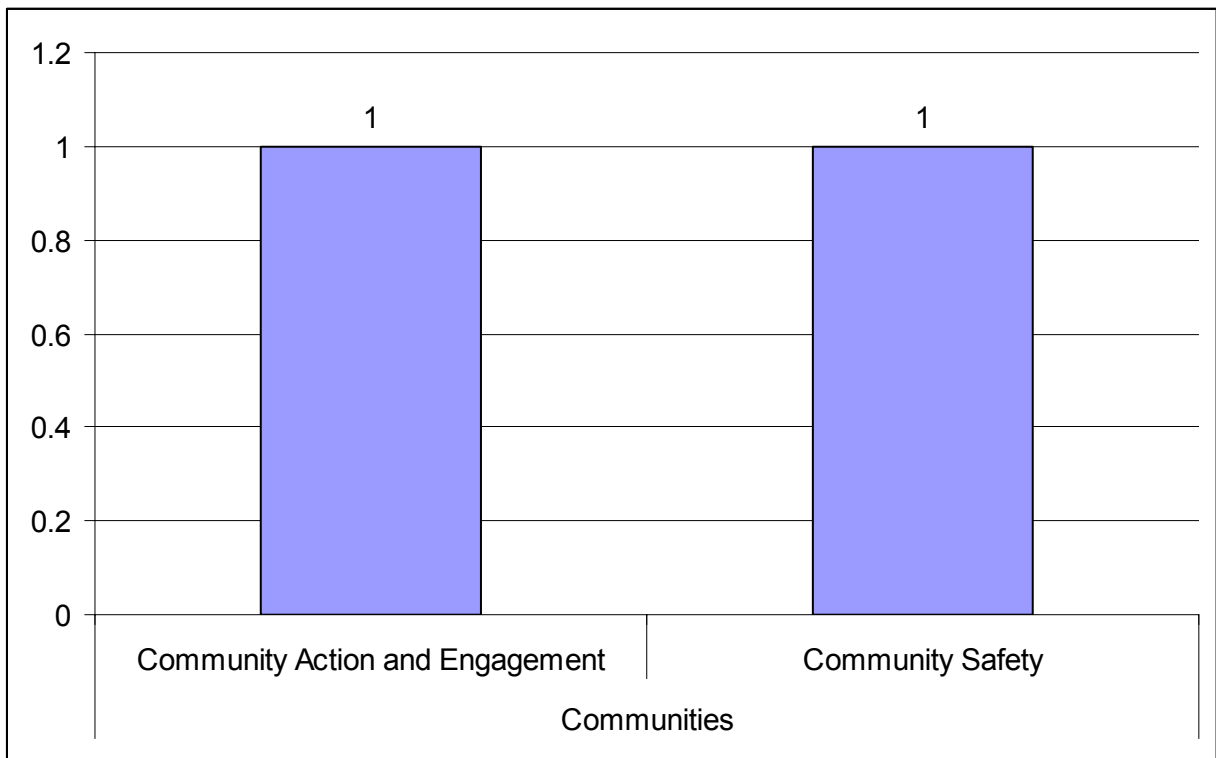
Adult Social Care



Children, Families and Learning

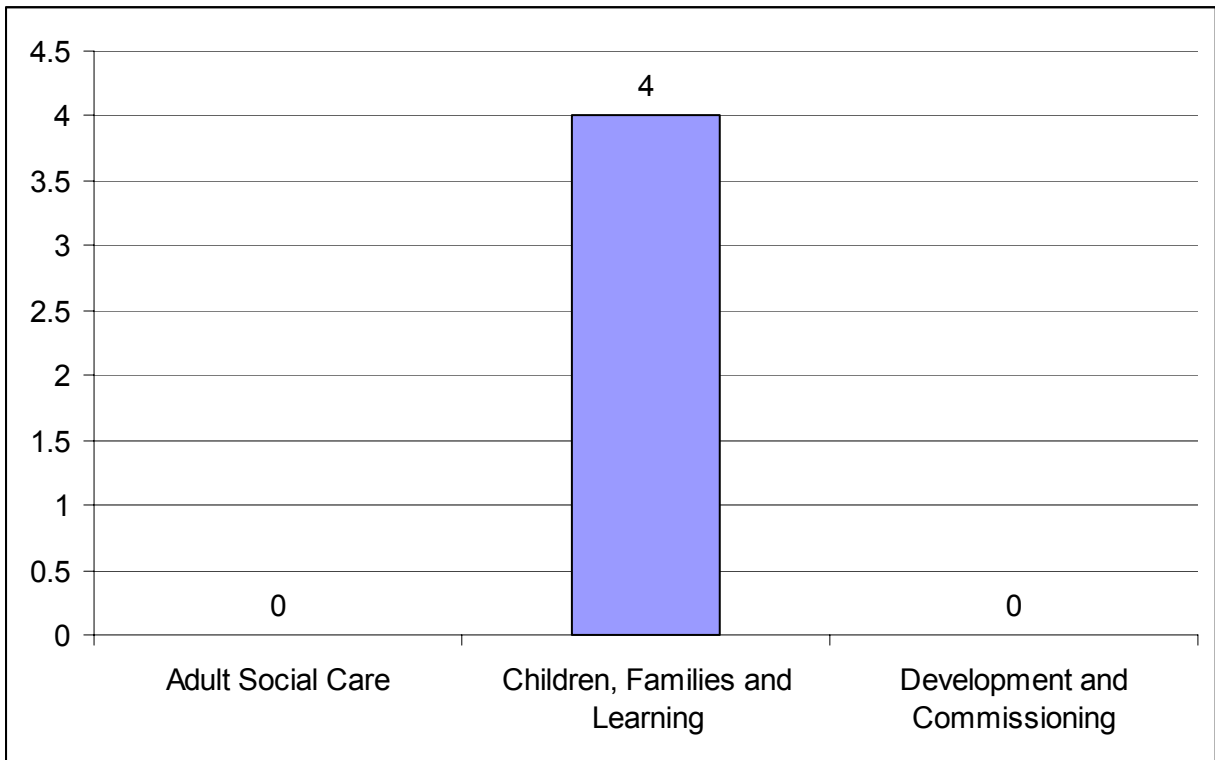


Development and Commissioning

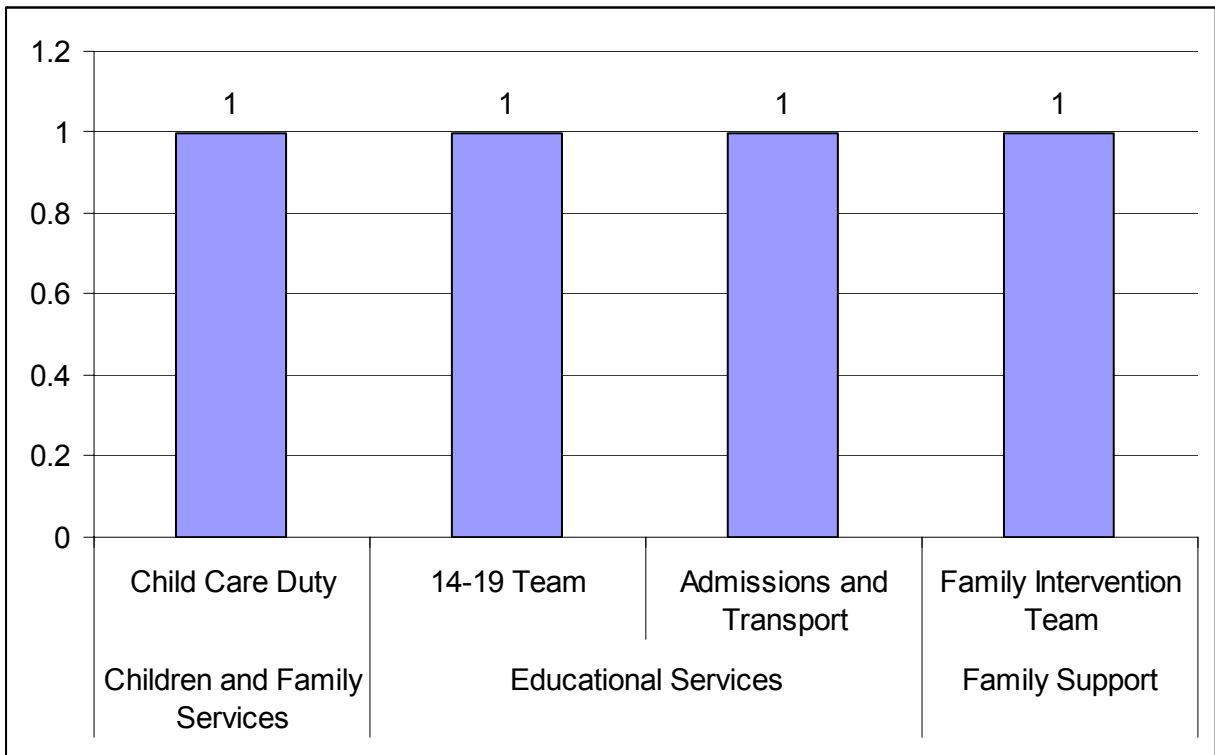


Comments by Service Area/Team

Overview



Children, Families and Learning



Complaints by Outcome

Stage 1

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
People	0	0	0	0	0	0
Adult Social Care	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assessment and Care Management	0	0	0	0	0	0
65+	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for 65+	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Assessment and Care Management	0	0	0	1	0	1
Children and Adults Learning Disability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Life Stages 0-25	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Life Stages 0-25	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Children and Adults Learning Disability	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Adult Social Care	0	1	0	1	0	2
Children Families & Learning	0	0	0	0	0	0
Children & Family Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assessment and Intervention Teams	0	0	0	0	0	0
Area 3	0	0	0	1	1	2
Total for Assessment and Intervention Teams	0	0	0	1	1	2
Children Looked After	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Placement	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Children Looked After	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Children & Family Services	0	1	0	1	1	3
Educational Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Placement & Assets	0	0	0	0	0	0
Admissions & Transport	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Placement & Assets	0	1	0	0	0	1
School Place Planning, Assets & Transport	0	0	0	0	0	0
School Transport	0	0	2	0	0	2
Total for School Place Planning, Assets & Transport	0	0	2	0	0	2
Total for Educational Services	0	1	2	0	0	3
Family Support	0	0	0	0	0	0
Area Team 1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Area Team 1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Family Support	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Children Families & Learning	0	2	2	2	1	7
Development & Commissioning	0	0	0	0	0	0
Communities	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community Action and Engagement	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total for Community Action and Engagement	0	0	1	0	0	1
Community Safety	0	0	1	0	1	2
Total for Community Safety	0	0	1	0	1	2
Total for Communities	0	0	2	0	1	3
Total for Development & Commissioning	0	0	2	0	1	3
Total for People	0	3	4	3	2	12
Total	0	3	4	3	2	12

Stage 2

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
People	0	0	0	0	0	0
Adult Social Care	0	0	0	0	0	0
Children and Adults Learning Disability	0	0	0	0	0	0
Life Stages 0-25	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Life Stages 0-25	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Children and Adults Learning Disability	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Adult Social Care	0	1	0	0	0	1
Children Families & Learning	0	0	0	0	0	0
Educational Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Placement & Assets	0	0	0	0	0	0
Admissions & Transport	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Placement & Assets	0	0	0	1	0	1
School Place Planning, Assets & Transport	0	0	0	0	0	0
School Transport	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for School Place Planning, Assets & Transport	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Educational Services	0	1	0	1	0	2
Total for Children Families & Learning	0	1	0	1	0	2
Development & Commissioning	0	0	0	0	0	0
Communities	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community Safety	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Community Safety	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Communities	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Development & Commissioning	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for People	0	3	0	1	0	4
Total	0	3	0	1	0	4

The above table shows the number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints determined by the Council during 2012/13.

Organisational Learning

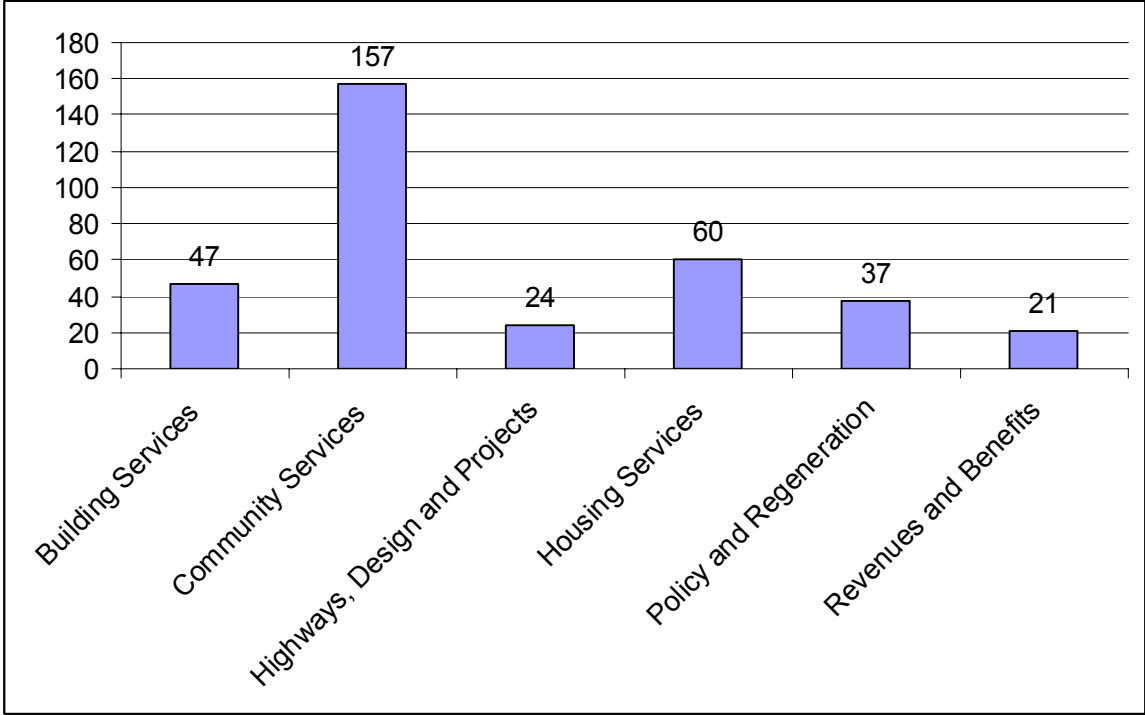
In order to improve the service we provide as a result of a complaint for Admissions and Transport we amended our Common Application Form (CAF), our Application to Transfer a Pupil Between Two Darlington Schools form and our School Admissions Appeal Application form to ensure the person completing the form is asked to provide details of any other person(s) with parental responsibility.

Complaints, Compliments and Comments by Department

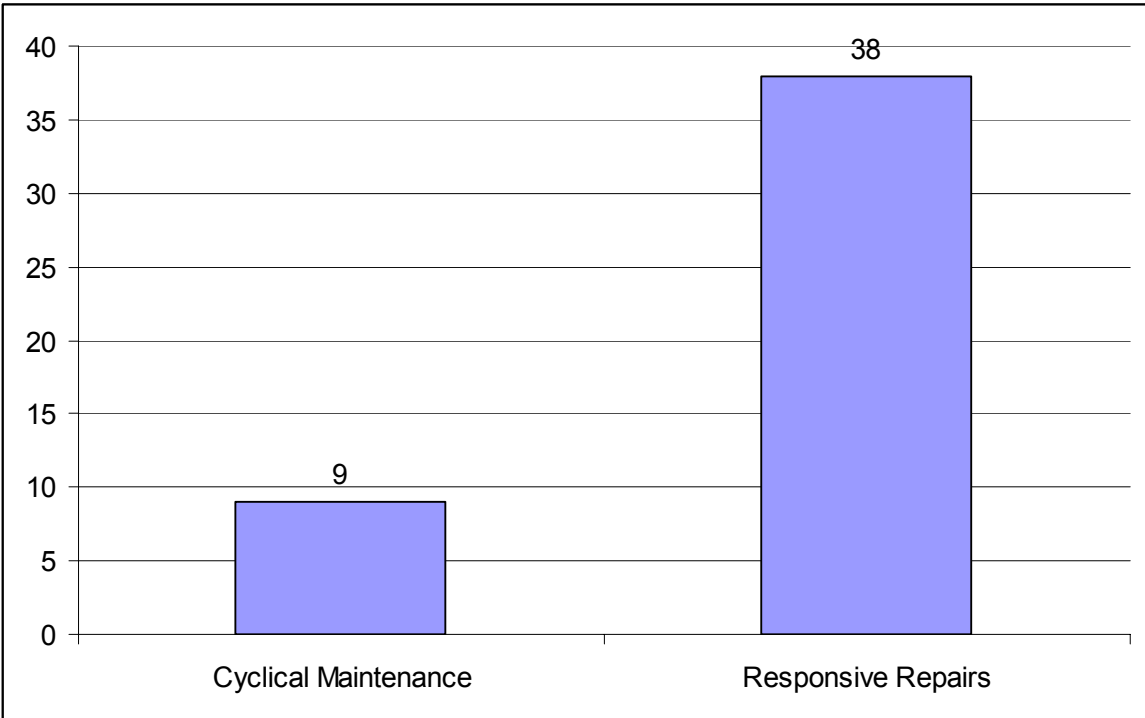
Services for Place

Complaints by Service Area/Team

Overview



Building Services



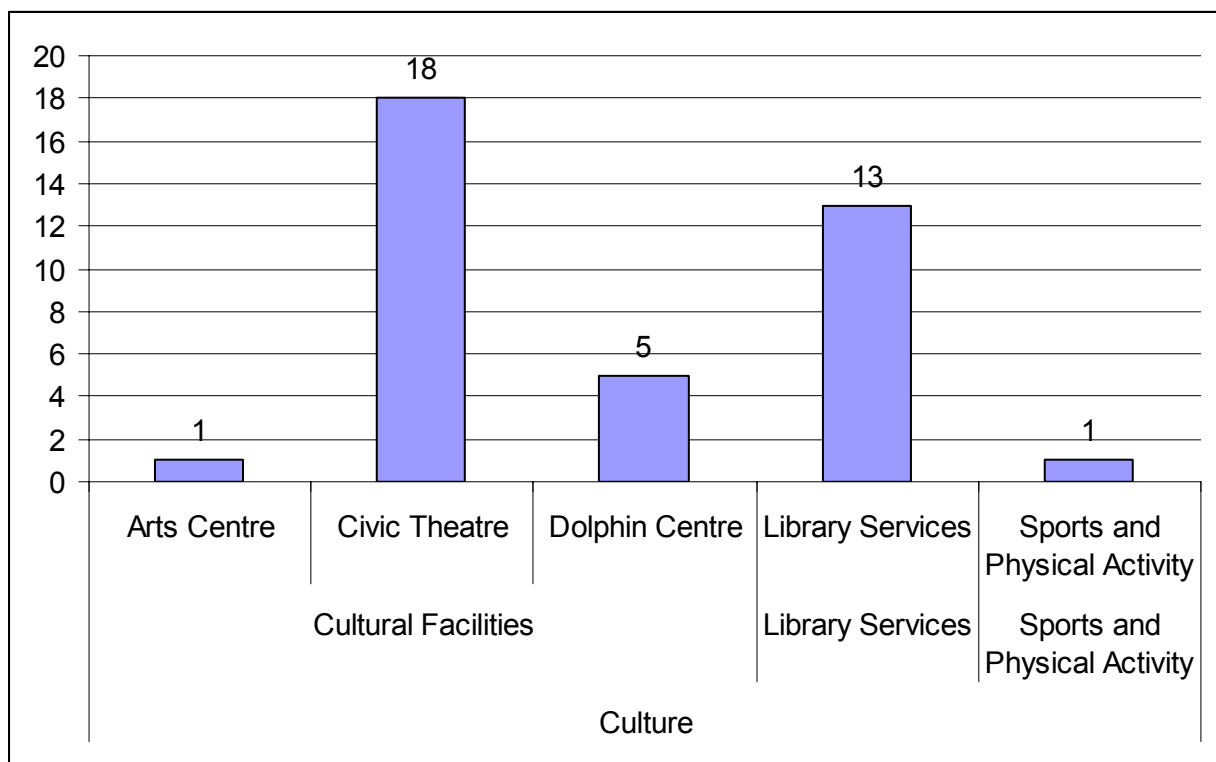
The complaints for Responsive Repairs primarily related to delays in undertaking, the quality of and communication in relation to repair work. Boiler repairs were the most common cause of complaint. This is an increase from 27 complaints in 2011/12. As Building Services and Housing combined received approximately the same number of complaints as they did in 2011/12 this increase may be as a result of improved accuracy when logging complaints about repairs.

Community Services

Community Services - Commercial Services

Commercial Services received two complaints both of which related to Markets.

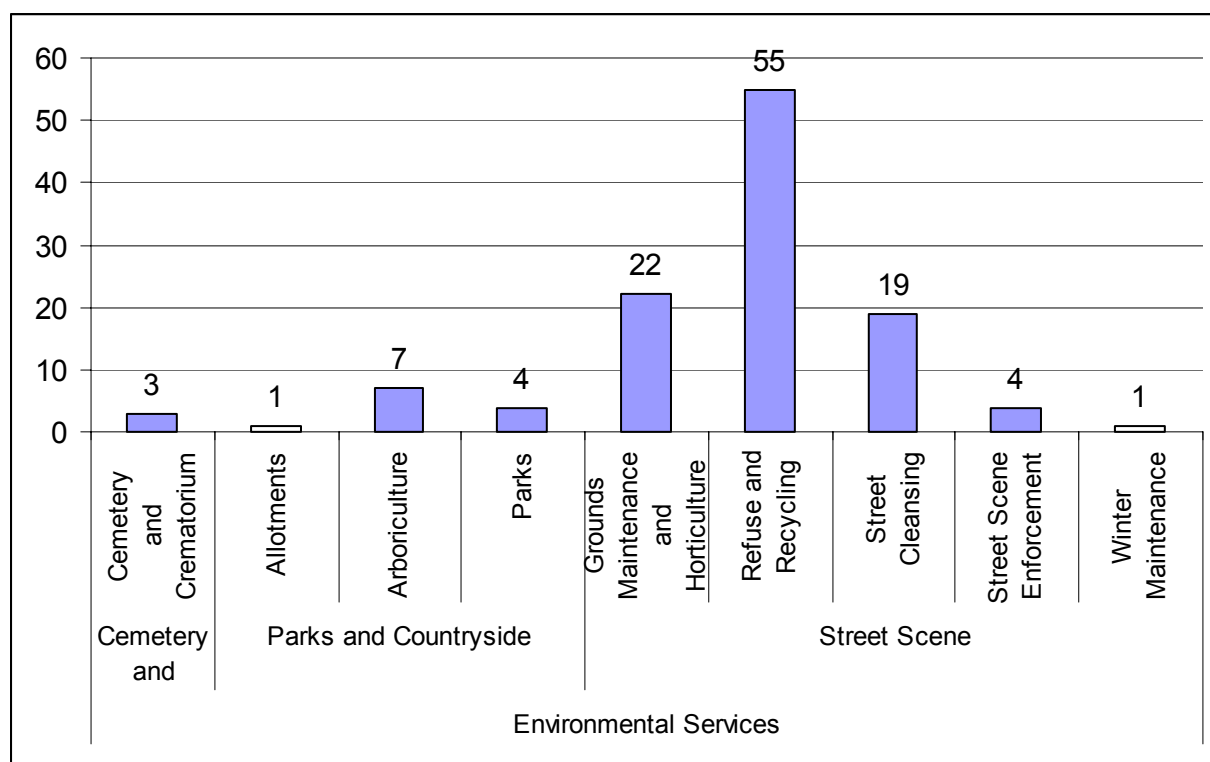
Community Services - Culture



Complaints about the Civic Theatre ranged from the quality of the performance to dissatisfaction with ticket booking, seating and sound quality.

Complaints about the Library Services included complaints about changes to Baby Rhyme Time, the lack of Book Start Sessions and problems with the on-line library service.

Community Services – Environmental Services



The most common complaints received by Grounds Maintenance and Horticulture concerned grass cutting, weeds and hedge trimming.

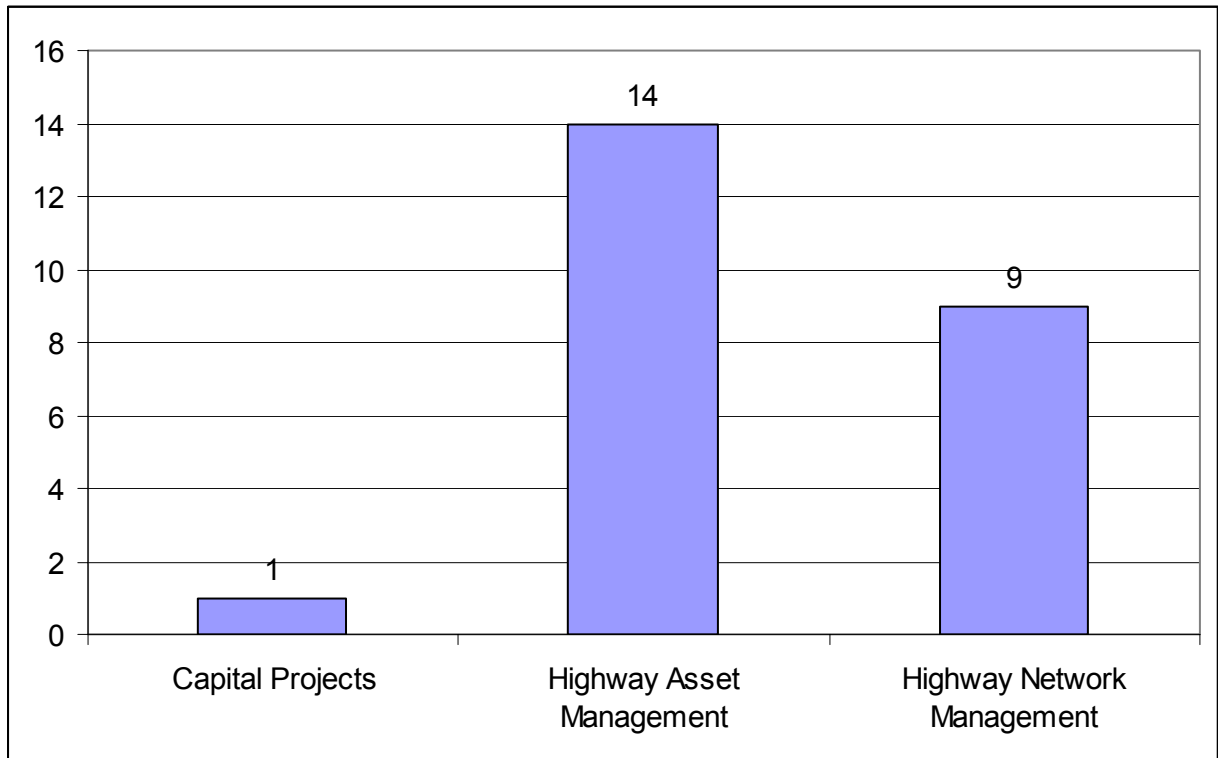
The Council saw a reduction in complaints for Refuse and Recycling during 2012/13. 55 complaints compared to 70 in 2011/12. Complaints about missed refuse and recycling collections, including assisted collections, were down as were the number of people who expressed their dissatisfaction with the Council's decision to no longer provide a recall service. More people did however complain that operatives did not clean up after refuse was spilt during collections.

The most common complaints for Street Cleansing were that work was either not undertaken in general or after being reported by a member of the public or that it was not undertaken to a reasonable standard.

Community Services - Transport and Building Cleaning

One complaint was received for Transport and Building Cleaning.

Highways, Design and Projects



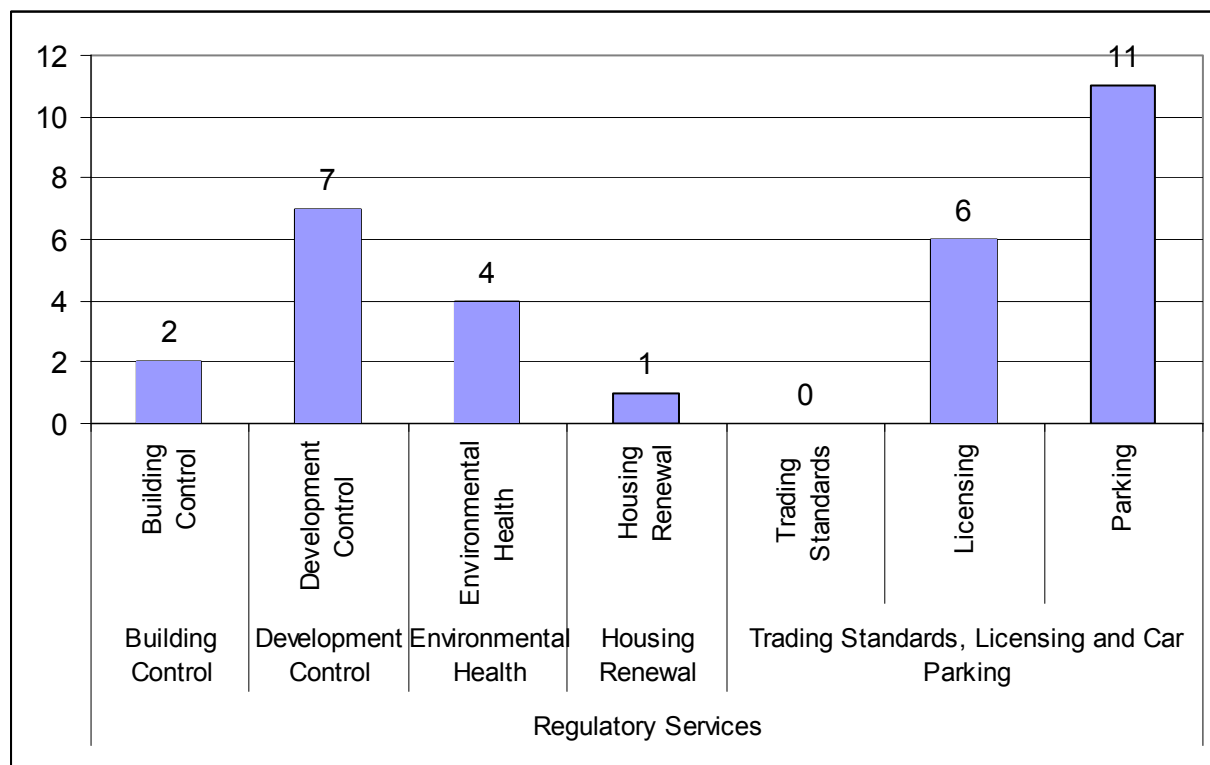
Complaints for Highway Asset Management covered items such as blocked drains, verge hardening and the installation of bollards.

Policy and Regeneration

Policy and Regeneration - Programme and Projects

One complaint was received for Programme and Projects.

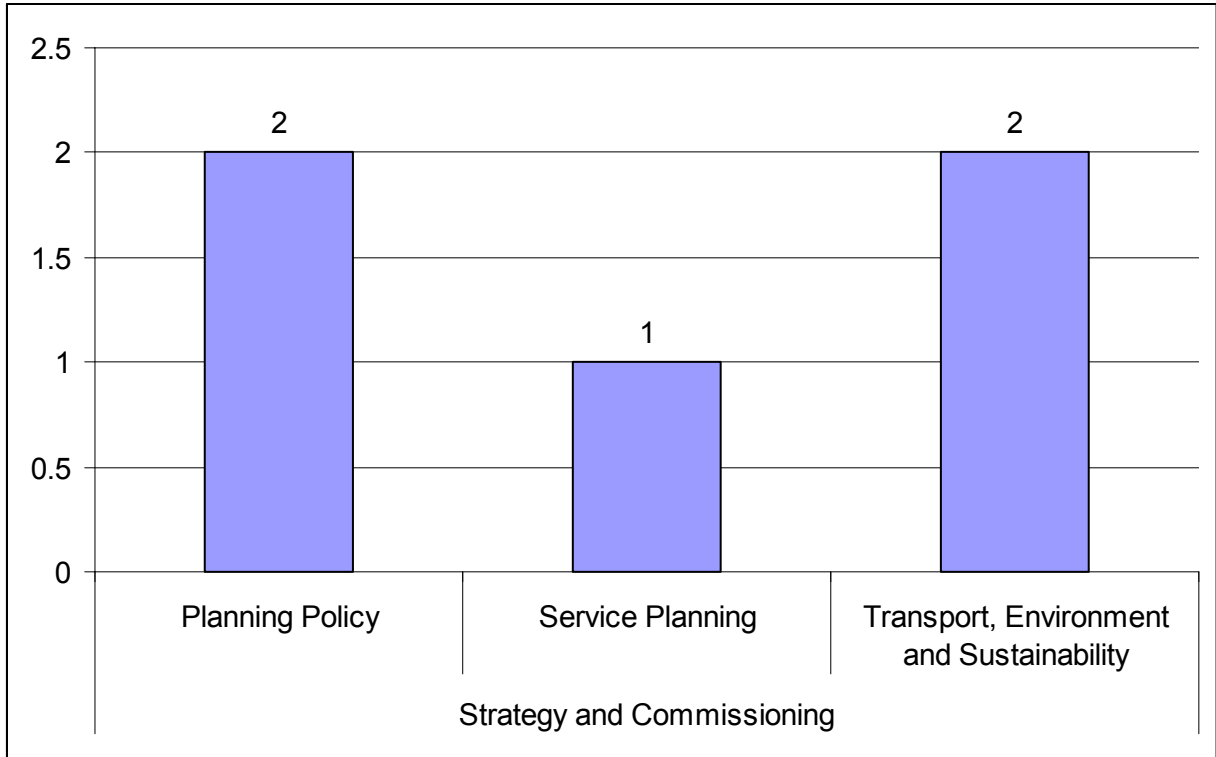
Policy and Regeneration - Regulatory Services



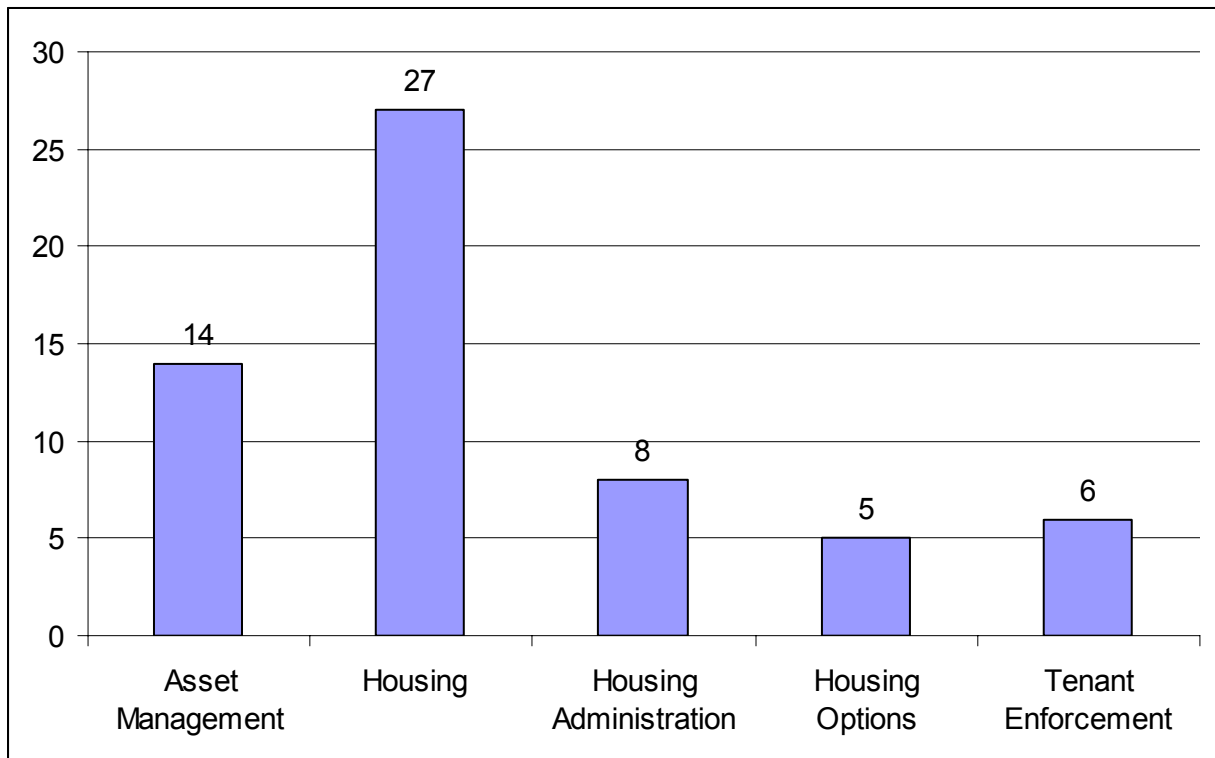
Development Control saw a significant decrease in the number of complaint received from 21 in 2011/12 and 30 in 2010/11. Of the complaints received only two concerned dissatisfaction with the manner in which planning applications were processed. While there was a decrease in the number of planning applications received this decrease was not as significant as the decrease in the number of complaints received suggesting other factors have contributed to this trend. While not the only factor it is likely that actions taken as a result of complaints in previous years have been effective in reducing the likelihood of the same types of complaints being made.

Complaints about Parking concerned issues including dissatisfaction with the attitude of Civil Parking Enforcement Officers, an alleged breach of Data protection and problems using the appeals procedure.

Policy and Regeneration - Strategy and Commissioning



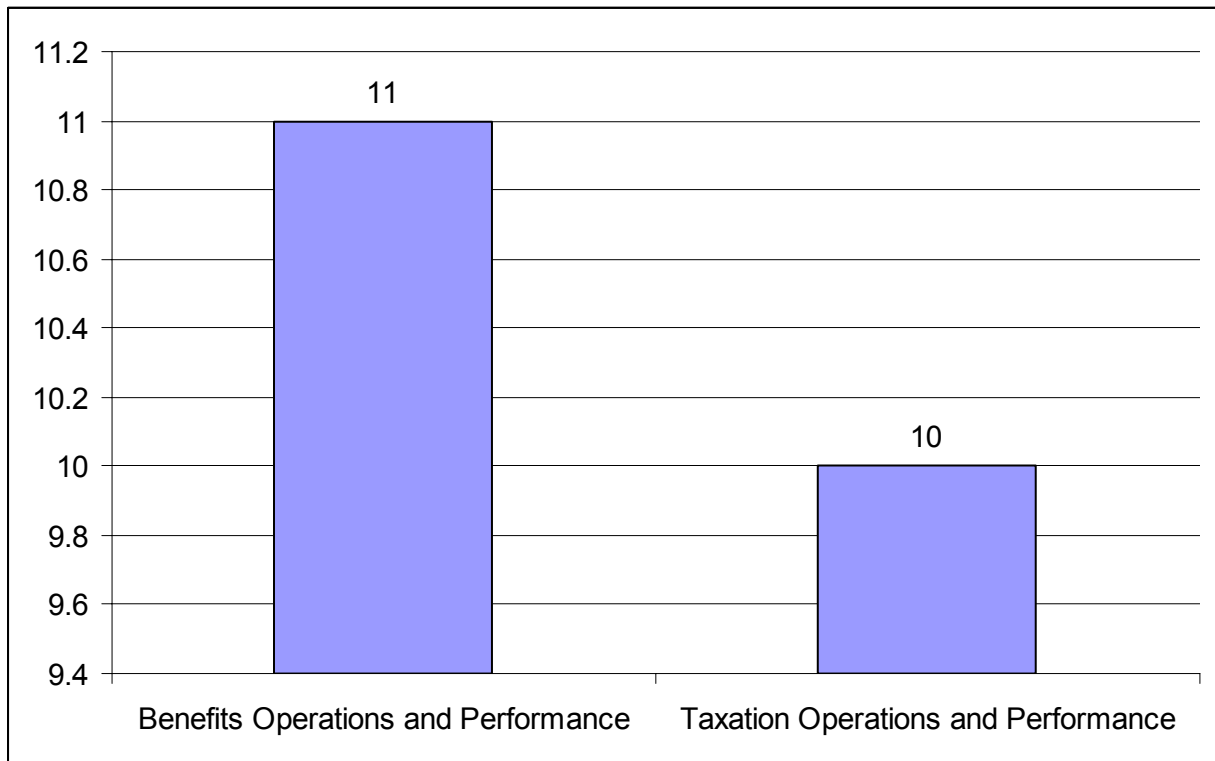
Housing Services



Housing saw a significant reduction in the number of complaints received from 66 in 2011/12. Complaints about repairs were still the most common cause of complaint. As Housing and Building Services combined received approximately the same number of complaints as they did in 2011/12 this reduction may be as a result of improved

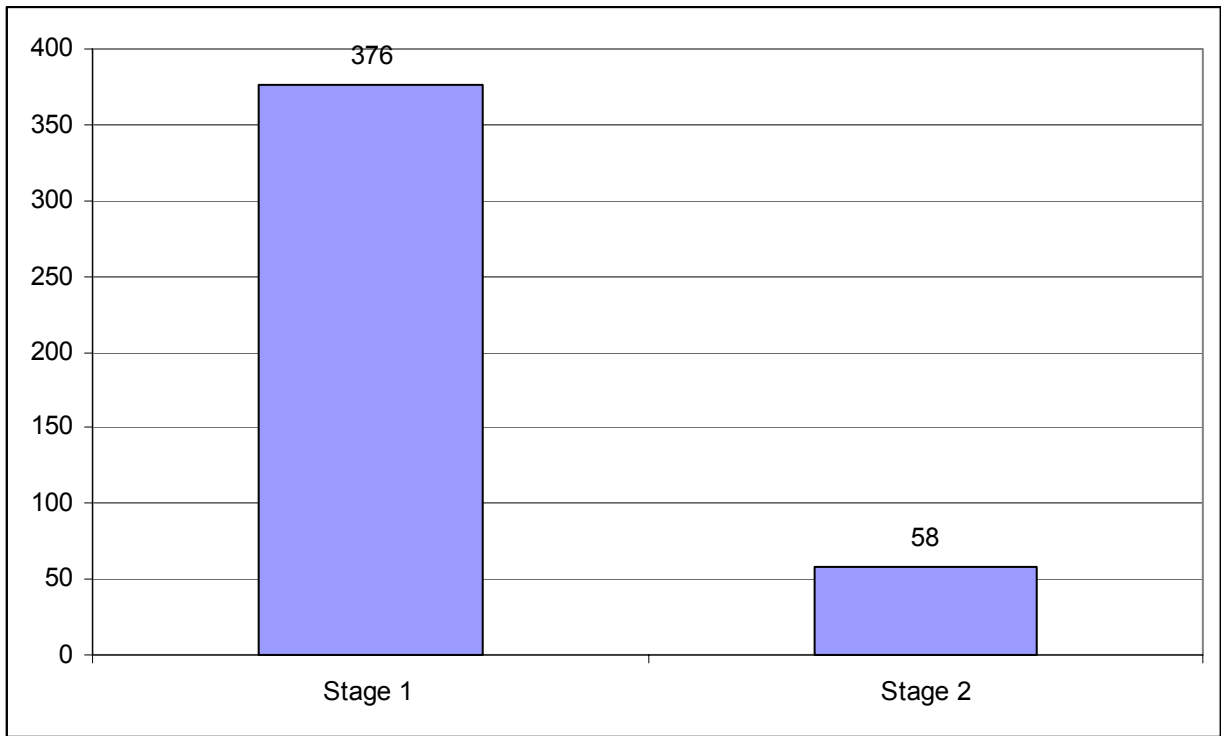
accuracy when logging complaints about repairs. Other issues complained about included complaints about practice and dissatisfaction with the compass (the Common Allocations Policy).

Revenues and Benefits



Complaints about Benefit Operations and Performance included complaints about waiting times in the Customer Contact Centre, advice provided, problems with individual cases and an alleged breach of Data protection.

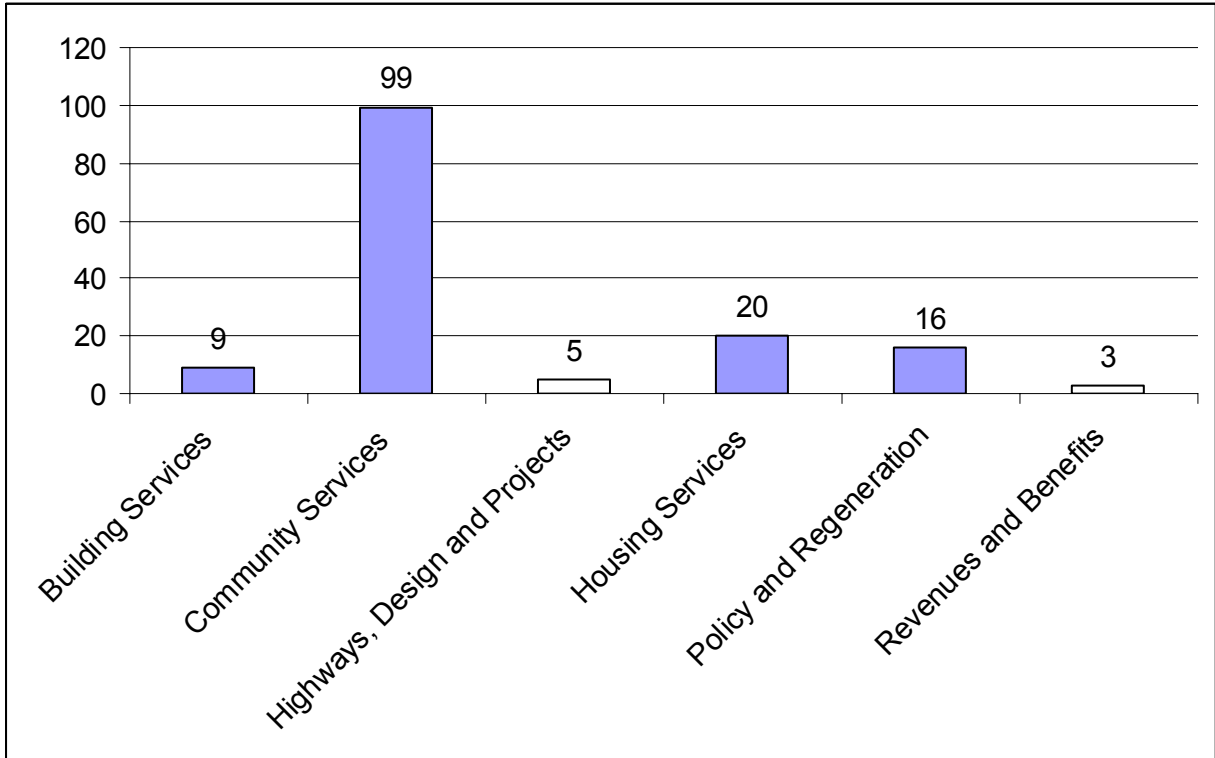
Complaints by Stage



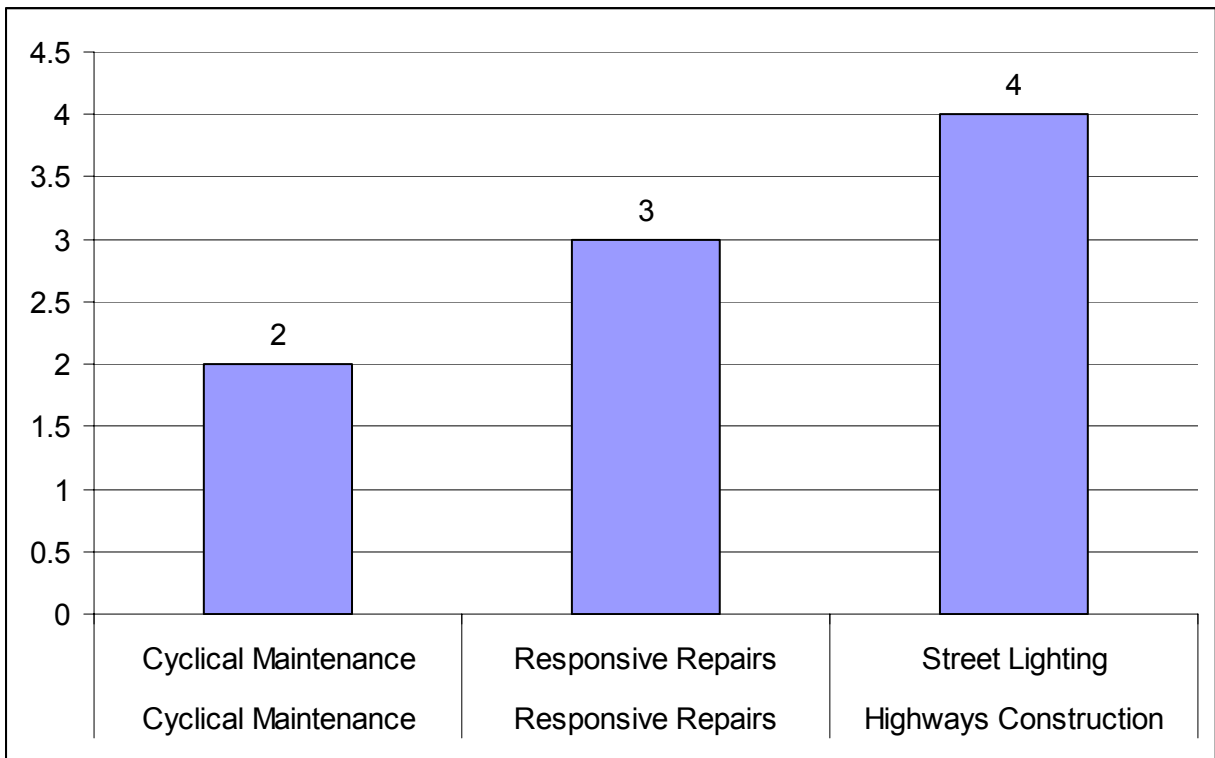
The above graph shows the number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints received by the Council during 2012/13.

Compliments by Service Area/Team

Overview



Building Services

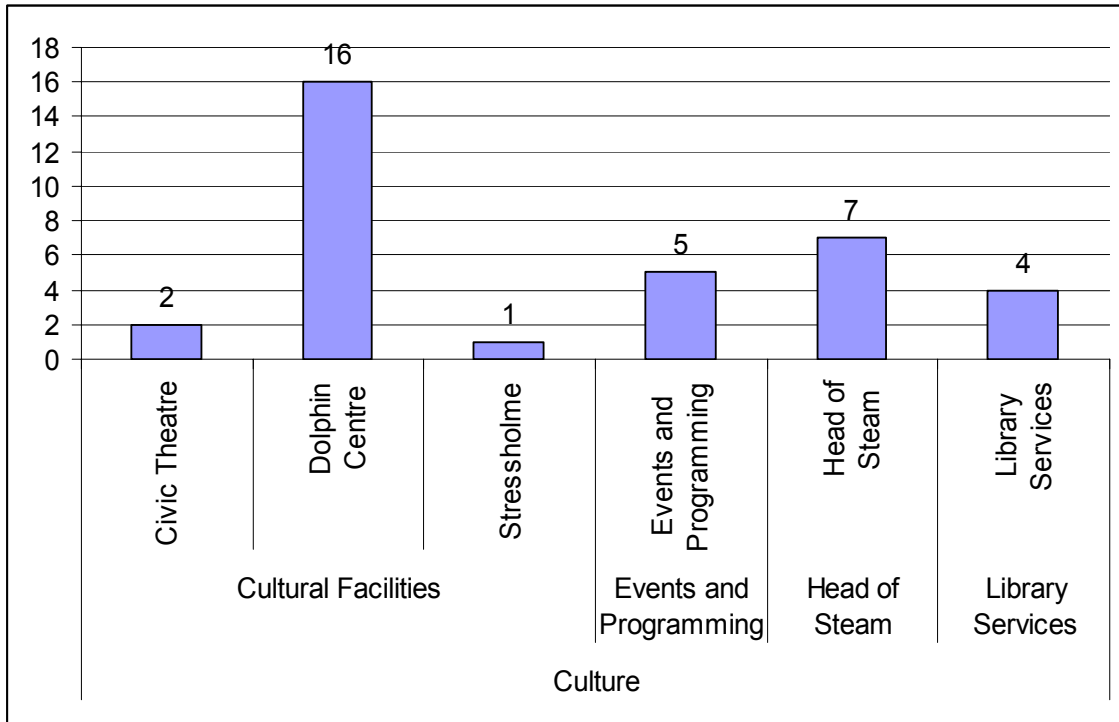


Community Services

Community Services - Commercial Services

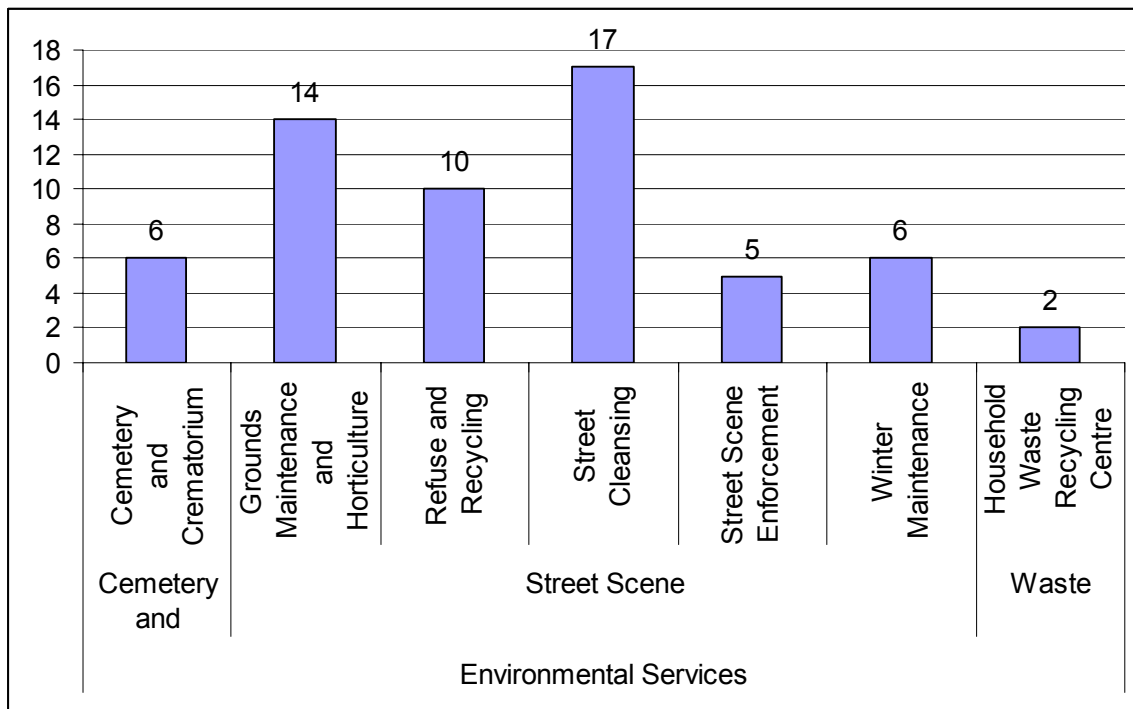
Three compliments were received for Dolphin Centre Catering.

Community Services - Culture



The compliments for the Dolphin Centre included compliments for staff, facilities, catering and events.

Community Services – Environmental Services

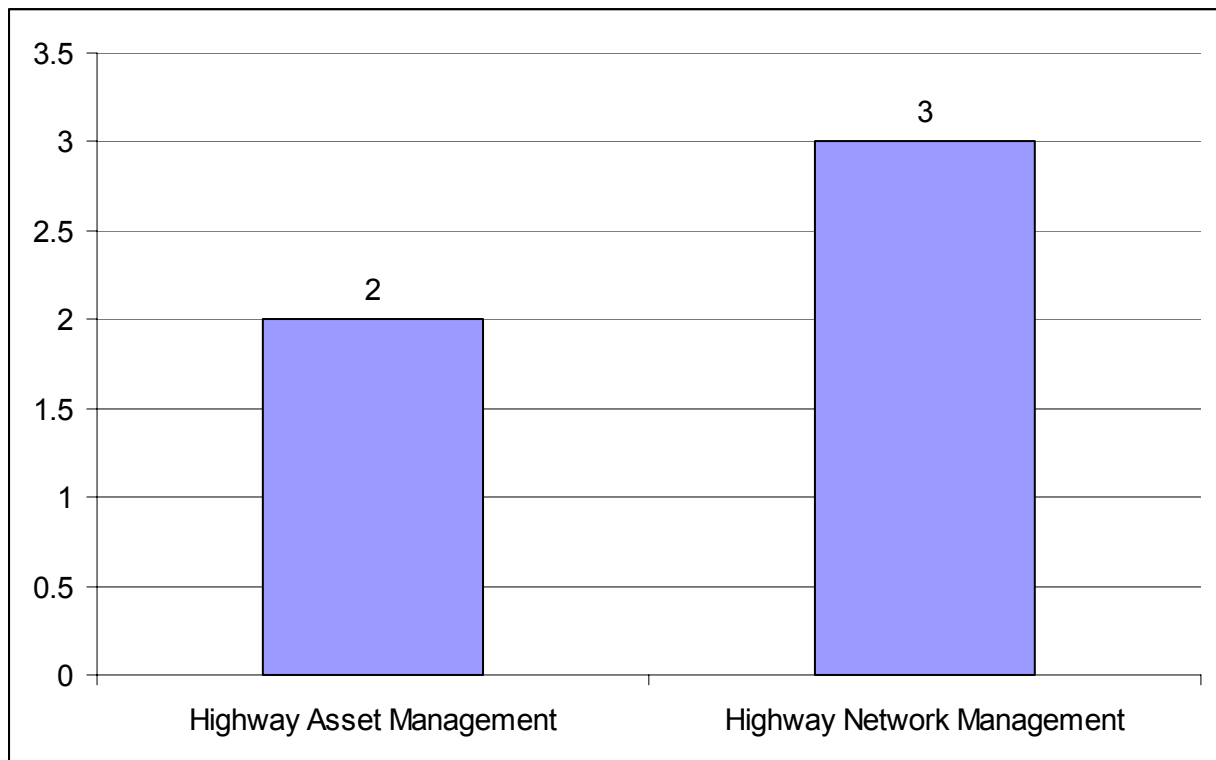


The compliments for Ground Maintenance and Horticulture, Refuse and Recycling and Street Cleansing concerned the general high quality of service provided.

Community Services – Transport and Building Cleaning

One compliment was received for Transport and Building Cleaning.

Highway, Design and Projects

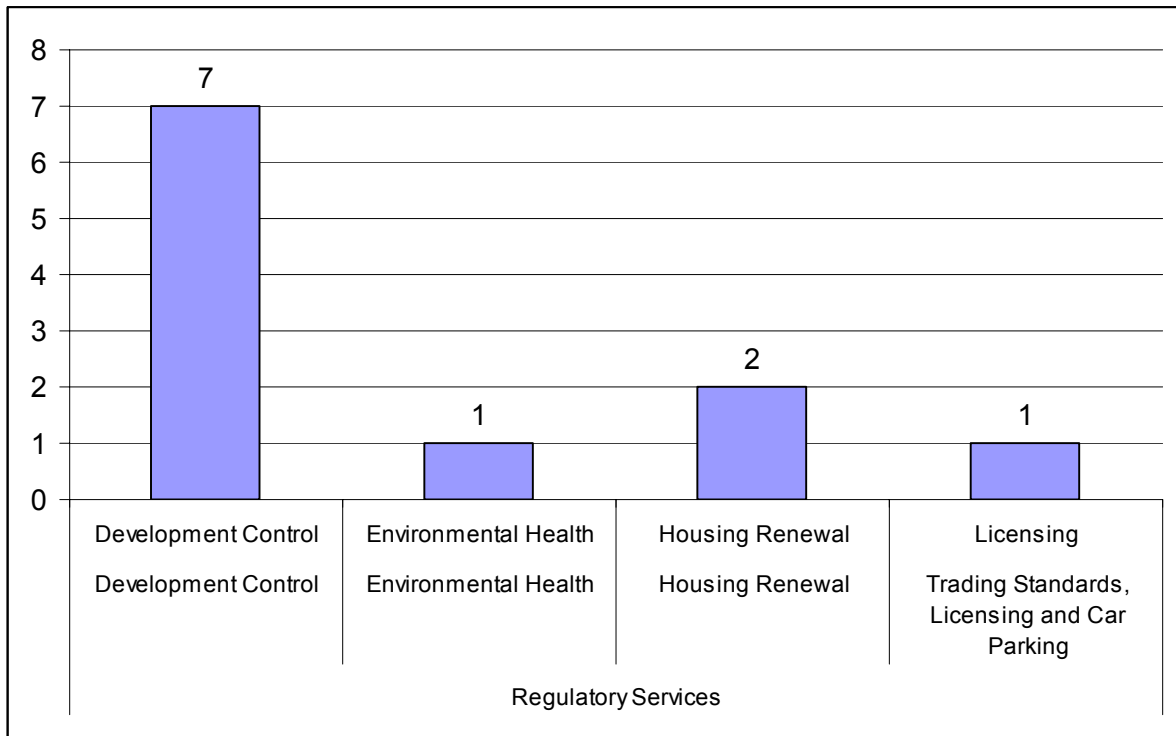


Policy and Regeneration

Policy and Regeneration – Programmes and Projects

One compliment was received for Sustainable Transport.

Policy and Regeneration – Regulatory Services



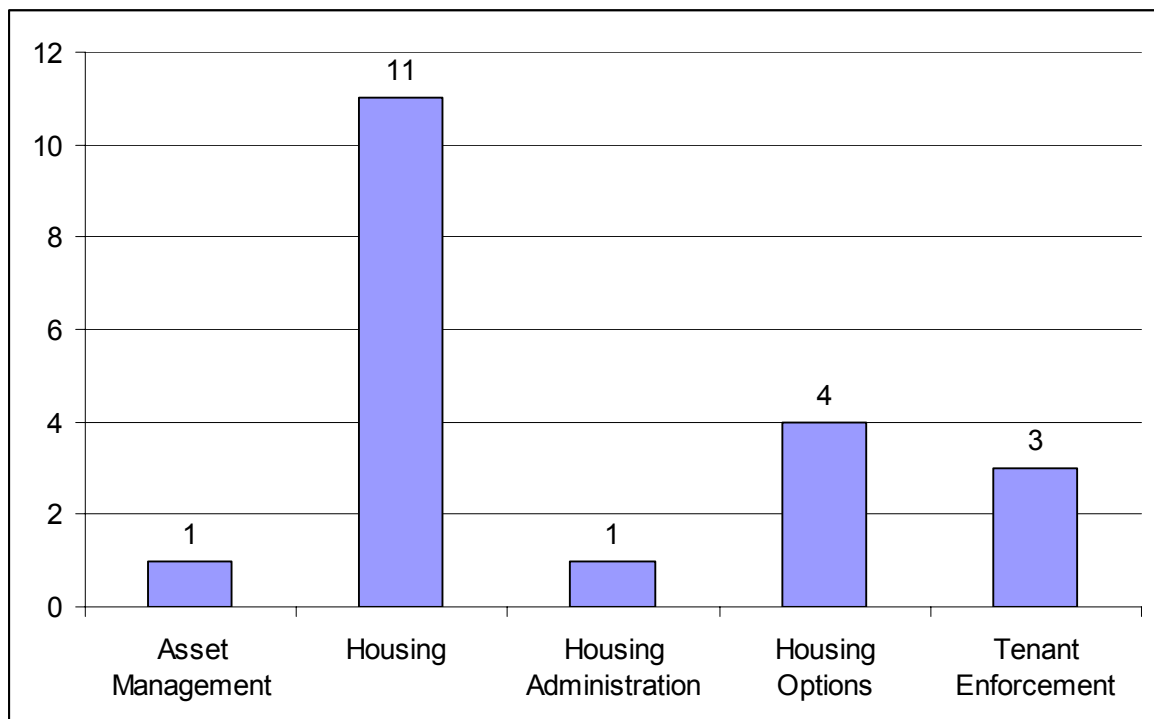
Policy and Regeneration – Strategy and Commissioning

One compliment was received for Transport, Environment and Sustainability.

Policy and Regeneration – Town Centre

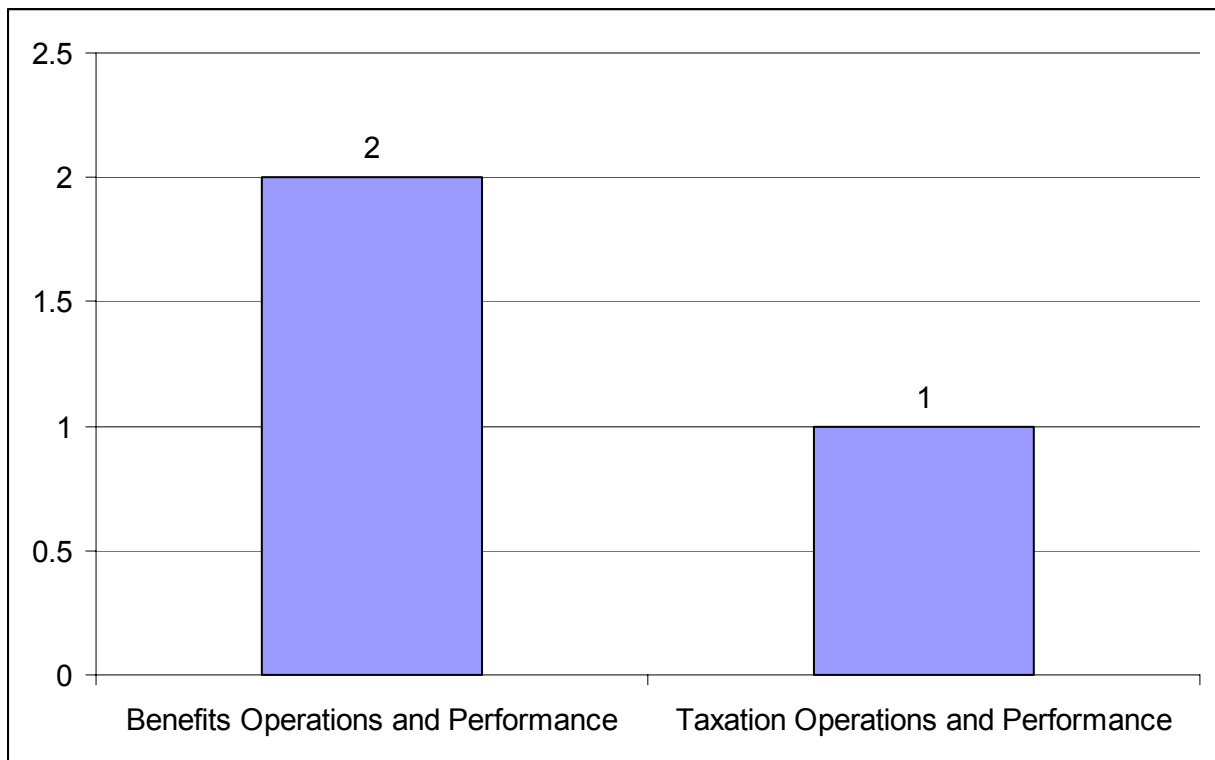
Three compliments were received for Town Centre.

Housing Services



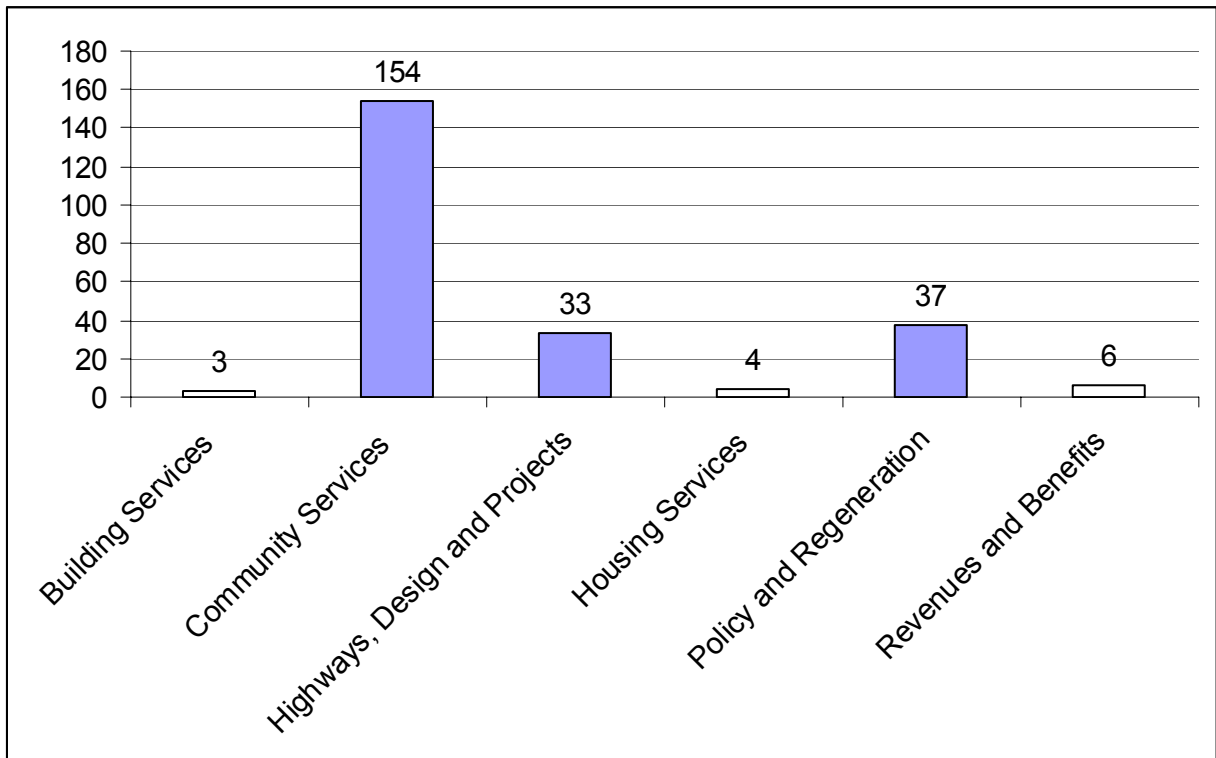
One compliment for Housing concerned Ted Fletcher Court and another Rockwell House, the rest were for the level of support provided by individual members of staff.

Revenues and Benefits

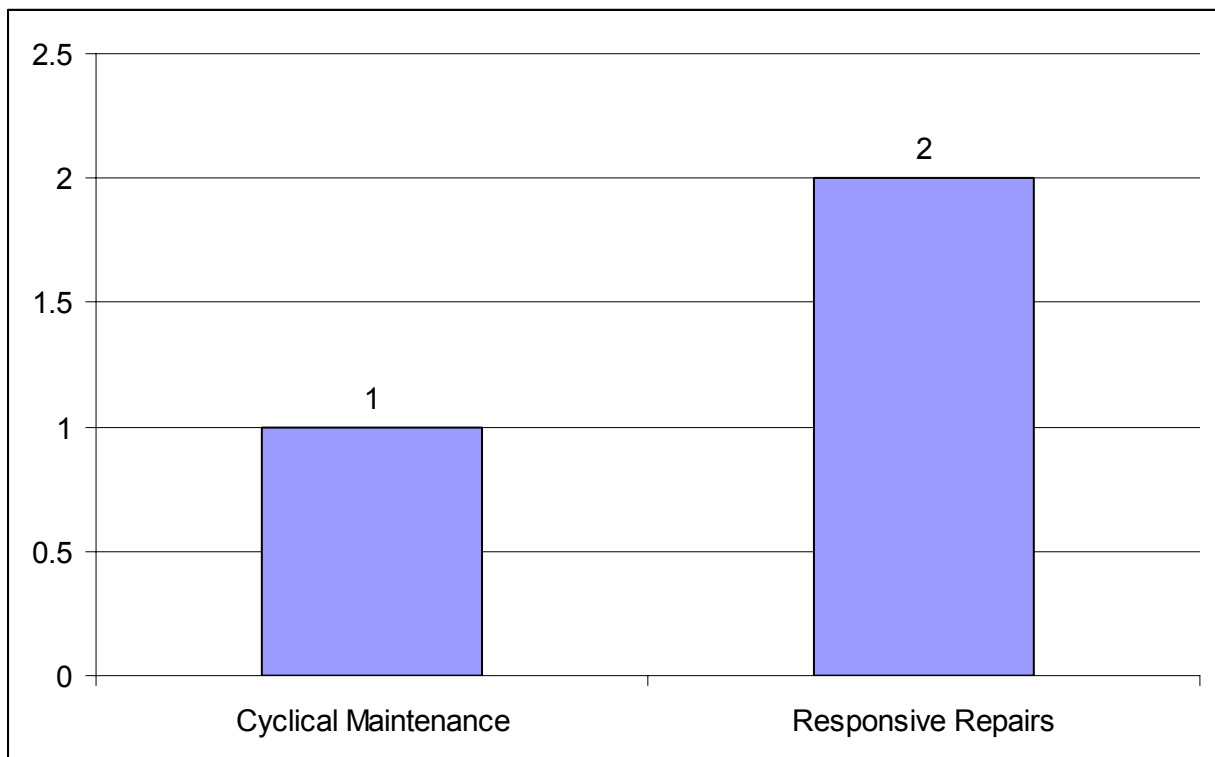


Comments by Service Area/Team

Overview



Building Services

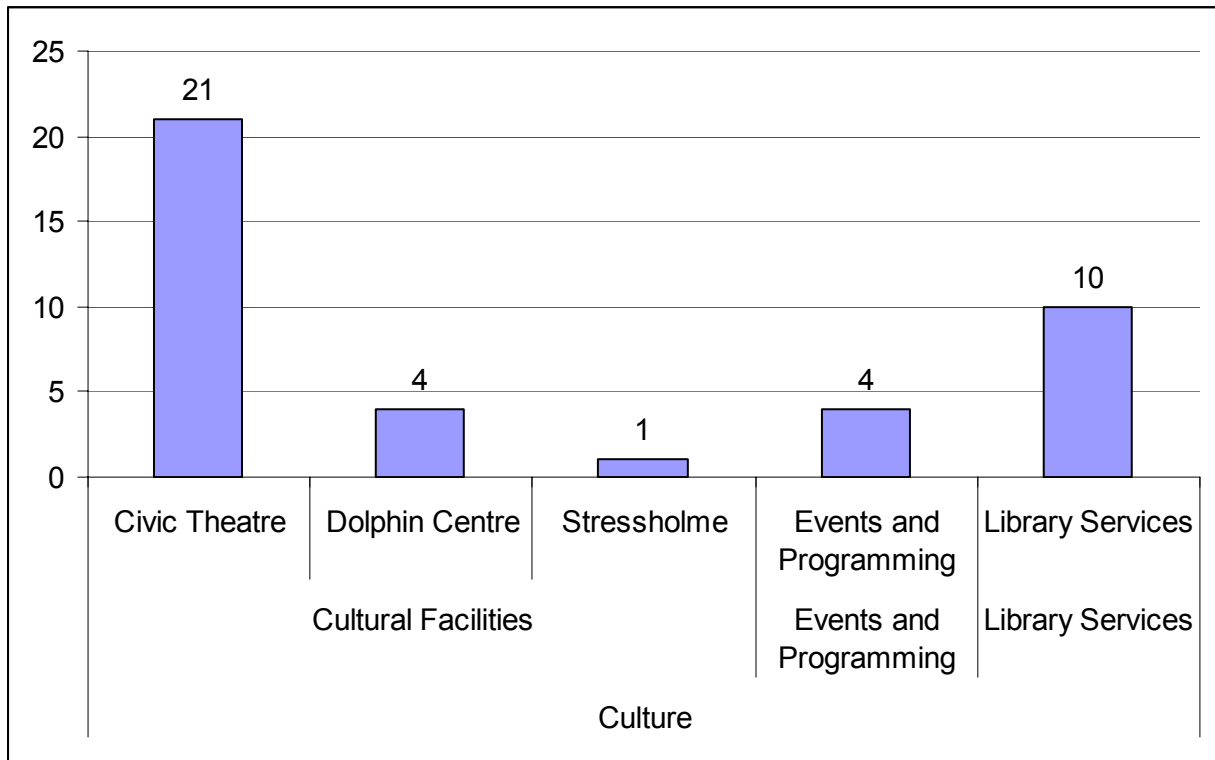


Community Services

Community Services - Commercial Services

One comment was received for Markets.

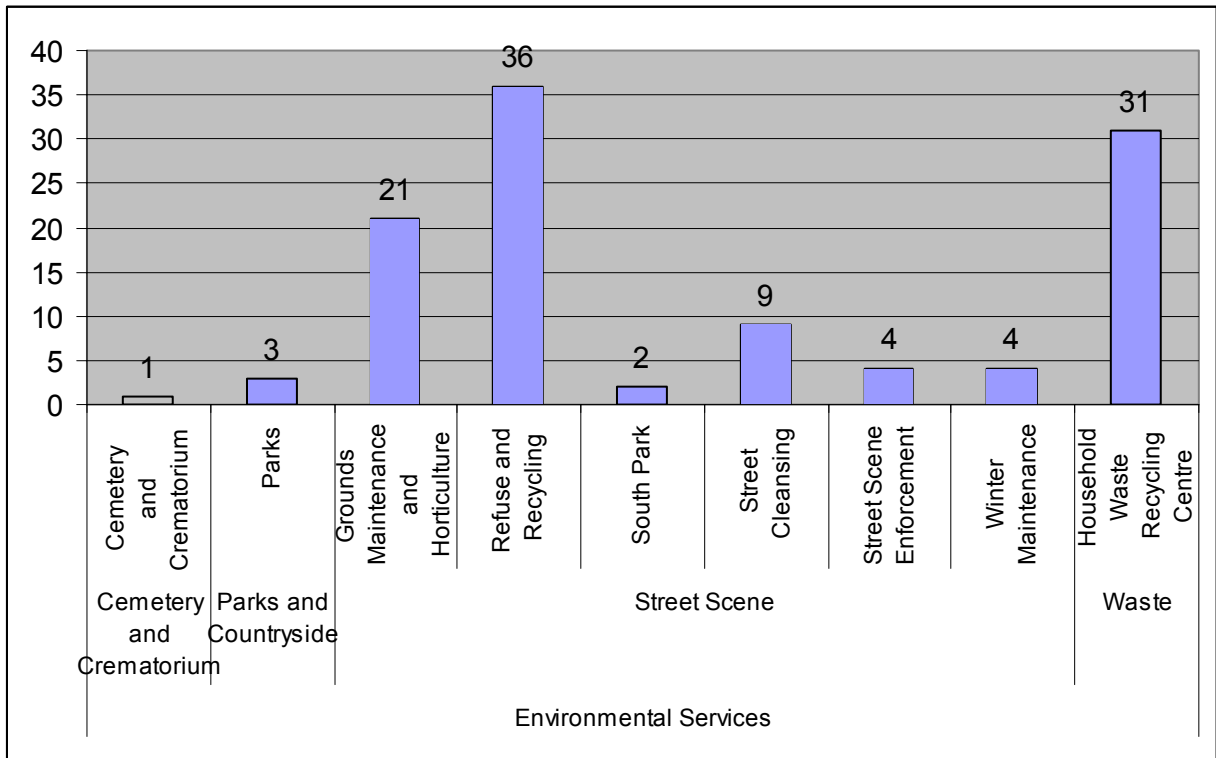
Community Services - Culture



The vast majority of comments for the Civic Theatre related to dissatisfaction with performances.

The most common comments about the Library Service concerned Baby Rhyme Time and the coffee machine not working at Central Library.

Community Services – Environmental Services



The majority of comments for Grounds Maintenance and Horticulture related to grass cutting.

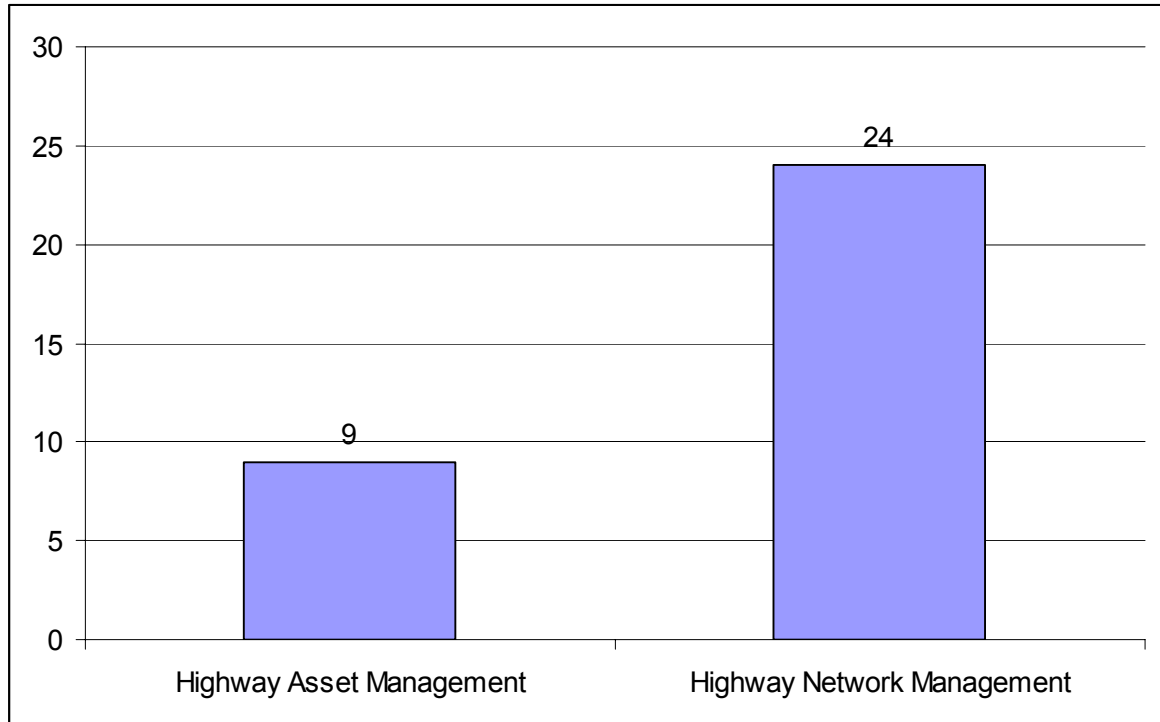
The most common comments in relation to Refuse and Recycling concerned the introduction of wheeled bins, other comments concerned missed collections and the Council no longer offering a recall service for refuse and recycling.

The majority of comments for the Household Waste Recycling Centre concerned the changes introduced, specifically the introduction of the height restriction and permit scheme.

Community Services – Transport and Building Cleaning

Two comments were received for Transport and Building Cleaning.

Highway, Design and Projects



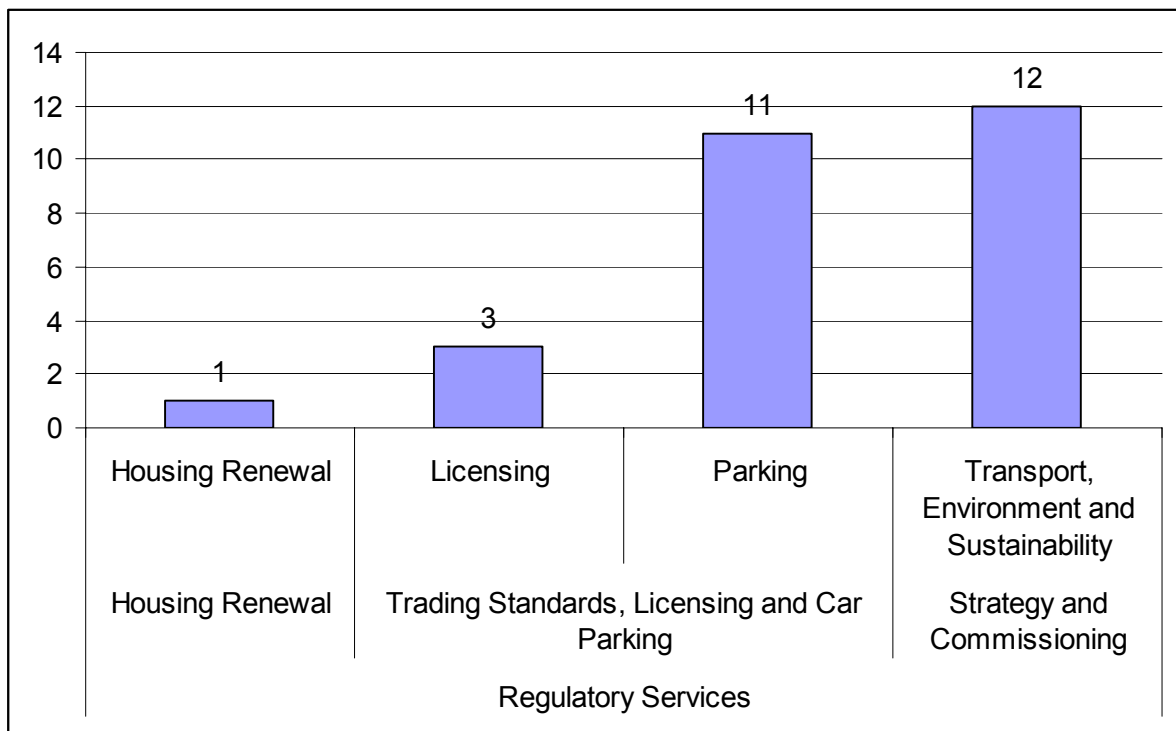
There were no discernable themes among the comments received for Highway Network Management.

Policy and Regeneration

Policy and Regeneration – Programmes and Projects

Seven comments were received for Sustainable Transport.

Policy and Regeneration – Regulatory Services



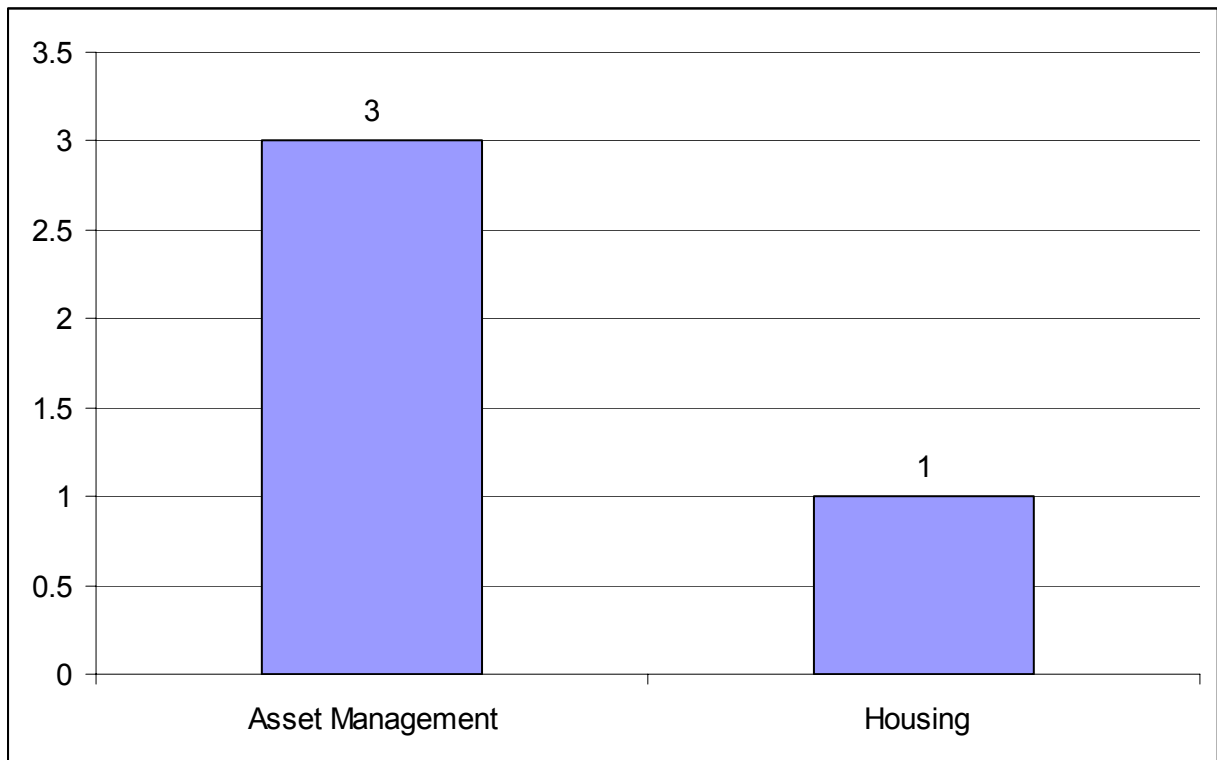
There were no discernable themes in relation to the comments received for Parking.

The comments for Transport Environment and Sustainability concerned the introduction of the £5 charge for trades people to park in residents parking zones and the introduction of Sunday parking charges. The decision to introduce parking charges on a Sunday was reversed by Councillor Bill Dixon the Leader of Darlington Borough Council using his Executive Powers.

Policy and Regeneration – Town Centre

Three comments were received for Town Centre.

Housing Services



Revenues and Benefits

Six comments were received for Taxation Operations and Performance.

Complaints by Outcome

Stage 1

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Place	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cyclical Maintenance	0	3	1	3	0	7
Total for Cyclical Maintenance	0	3	1	3	0	7
Responsive Repairs	1	4	3	21	2	31
Total for Responsive Repairs	1	4	3	21	2	31
Total for Building Maintenance	1	7	4	24	2	38
Total for Building Services	1	7	4	24	2	38
Community Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Commercial Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Markets	0	2	0	0	0	2
Total for Markets	0	2	0	0	0	2
Total for Commercial Services	0	2	0	0	0	2
Culture	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cultural Facilities	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arts Centre	0	0	0	1	0	1
Civic Theatre	1	10	1	6	0	18
Dolphin Centre	0	1	2	2	0	5
Total for Cultural Facilities	1	11	3	9	0	24
Library Service	0	10	2	1	0	13
Total for Library Service	0	10	2	1	0	13
Sports and Physical Activity	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Sports and Physical	0	0	0	1	0	1
Activity						
Total for Culture	1	21	5	11	0	38
Environmental Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cemetery and Crematorium	0	0	1	1	1	3
Total for Cemetery and	0	0	1	1	1	3
Crematorium						
Parks and Countryside	0	0	0	0	0	0
Allotments	0	0	1	0	0	1
Arboriculture	0	2	3	1	0	6
Parks	0	4	0	0	0	4
Total for Parks and	0	6	4	1	0	11
Countryside						
Street Scene	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grounds Maintenance and Horticulture	0	7	2	12	0	21
Refuse and Recycling	4	7	2	39	1	53
Street Cleansing (including gullies)	0	4	1	14	0	19
Street Scene Enforcement	0	2	0	1	0	3
Winter Maintenance	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Street Scene	4	21	5	66	1	97
Total for Environmental Services	4	27	10	68	2	111
Transport and Building Cleaning	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Transport and Building	0	1	0	0	0	1
Cleaning						
Total for Community Services	5	51	15	79	2	152
Highways, Design and Projects	0	0	0	0	0	0
Capital Projects	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Capital Projects	0	0	0	1	0	1
Highway Asset Management	0	6	4	3	1	14
Total for Highway Asset	0	6	4	3	1	14
Management						
Highway Network Management	1	1	2	5	0	9

Total for Highway Network Management	1	1	2	5	0	9
Total for Highways, Design and Projects	1	7	6	9	1	24
Housing Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asset Management	1	6	2	4	1	14
Total for Asset Management	1	6	2	4	1	14
Housing	0	8	4	11	3	26
Total for Housing	0	8	4	11	3	26
Housing Administration	1	1	1	5	0	8
Total for Housing Administration	1	1	1	5	0	8
Housing Options	0	4	0	0	1	5
Total for Housing Options	0	4	0	0	1	5
Tenant Enforcement	0	2	0	0	4	6
Total for Tenant Enforcement	0	2	0	0	4	6
Total for Housing Services	2	21	7	20	9	59
Policy and Regeneration	0	0	0	0	0	0
Programme & Projects	0	0	0	0	0	0
Project Development	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total for Project Development	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total for Programme & Projects	0	0	1	0	0	1
Regulatory Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Control	0	1	0	1	0	2
Total for Building Control	0	1	0	1	0	2
Development Control	0	6	0	1	0	7
Total for Development Control	0	6	0	1	0	7
Environmental Health	1	3	0	0	0	4
Total for Environmental Health	1	3	0	0	0	4
Housing Renewal	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Housing Renewal	0	1	0	0	0	1
Trading Standards, Licensing & Car Parking	0	0	0	0	0	0
Licensing	0	5	0	1	0	6
Parking	1	5	0	3	1	10
Total for Trading Standards, Licensing & Car Parking	1	10	0	4	1	16
Total for Regulatory Services	2	21	0	6	1	30
Strategy & Commissioning	0	0	0	0	0	0
Planning Policy	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Planning Policy	0	1	0	0	0	1
Service Planning, Perf. Imp. & Partnerships	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total for Service Planning, Perf. Imp. & Partnerships	1	0	0	0	0	1
Transport Environment & Sustainability	0	0	0	0	2	2
Total for Transport Environment & Sustainability	0	0	0	0	2	2
Total for Strategy & Commissioning	1	1	0	0	2	4
Total for Policy and Regeneration	3	22	1	6	3	35
Revenues & Benefits	0	0	0	0	0	0
Benefits Operations & Performance	0	3	0	7	1	11
Total for Benefits Operations & Performance	0	3	0	7	1	11
Taxation Operations & Performance	0	6	1	1	1	9
Total for Taxation Operations & Performance	0	6	1	1	1	9
Total for Revenues & Benefits	0	9	1	8	2	20
Total for Place	12	117	34	146	19	328
Total	12	117	34	146	19	328

Stage 2

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Place	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Responsive Repairs	0	1	0	2	0	3
Total for Responsive Repairs	0	1	0	2	0	3
Total for Building Maintenance	0	1	0	2	0	3
Total for Building Services	0	1	0	2	0	3
Community Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Culture	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cultural Facilities	0	0	0	0	0	0
Civic Theatre	0	1	1	0	0	2
Dolphin Centre	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Cultural Facilities	0	2	1	0	0	3
Total for Culture	0	2	1	0	0	3
Environmental Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Parks and Countryside	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arboriculture	0	0	0	0	1	1
Parks	0	0	3	0	0	3
Total for Parks and Countryside	0	0	3	0	1	4
Street Scene	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grounds Maintenance and Horticulture	0	2	0	2	1	5
Refuse and Recycling	1	2	0	1	1	5
Street Cleansing (including gullies)	0	2	0	2	0	4
Total for Street Scene	1	6	0	5	2	14
Waste	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Waste	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Environmental Services	1	6	3	6	3	19
Total for Community Services	1	8	4	6	3	22
Highways, Design and Projects	0	0	0	0	0	0
Highway Asset Management	0	1	1	0	0	2
Total for Highway Asset Management	0	1	1	0	0	2
Highway Network Management	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Highway Network Management	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Highways, Design and Projects	0	2	1	0	0	3
Housing Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asset Management	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total for Asset Management	0	0	1	0	0	1
Housing	0	0	1	3	0	4
Total for Housing	0	0	1	3	0	4
Housing Administration	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Housing Administration	0	1	0	0	0	1
Housing Options	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Housing Options	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Housing Services	0	2	2	3	0	7
Policy and Regeneration	0	0	0	0	0	0
Regulatory Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Control	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total for Building Control	0	0	1	0	0	1
Development Control	0	2	1	0	0	3
Total for Development Control	0	2	1	0	0	3
Environmental Health	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total for Environmental Health	0	0	1	0	0	1
Trading Standards, Licensing & Car	0	0	0	0	0	0

Parking						
Licensing	0	2	0	1	0	3
Parking	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Trading Standards, Licensing & Car Parking	0	3	0	1	0	4
Total for Regulatory Services	0	5	3	1	0	9
Strategy & Commissioning	0	0	0	0	0	0
Planning Policy	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total for Planning Policy	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total for Strategy & Commissioning	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total for Policy and Regeneration	0	5	4	1	0	10
Revenues & Benefits	0	0	0	0	0	0
Benefits Operations & Performance	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Benefits Operations & Performance	0	0	0	1	0	1
Taxation Operations & Performance	0	2	1	0	0	3
Total for Taxation Operations & Performance	0	2	1	0	0	3
Total for Revenues & Benefits	0	2	1	1	0	4
Total for Place	1	20	12	13	3	49
Total	1	20	12	13	3	49

The above table shows the number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints determined by the Council during 2012/13.

Organisational Learning

Following a complaint for Development Control about information sent via email being stopped by our spam filter as a result of the content, despite it being legitimate, the Council rolled out eSafe Web Quarantine software for all Council officers. This software allows officers to see a list of those emails stopped by the spam filter as a result of their content and release any legitimate emails inadvertently quarantined.

Following a complaint about an emailed objection to an application for a license not being received for the same reason as that set out above, Licensing staff have ensured they now make use of the above mentioned eSafe Web Quarantine software.

Following a complaint for Benefits Operations and Performance it was agreed that when we send a letter to individual requesting they bring documents into the Council we will advise that Monday mornings are usually our busiest time of the week and if possible they should try to avoid visiting us then as they are likely to have to wait for a considerable period of time to hand in the documentation. Customer Services Advisors were also reminded that where a customer advises they cannot wait to see a Benefit Assessor due to health reasons, we are able to make appointments.

Following a complaint to Highways the importance of ensuring complaints are dealt with in accordance with the Council's complaints procedure(s) was reiterated with staff.

Following a complaint about the Customer Contact Centre it was agreed that Customer Services Advisors would provide their full name to customers.

Following a complaint for Council Tax the Council agreed to amend our reminders and final notices and to avoid any confusion include the date by which payment should be made in the notice.

Following a number of complaints for Parking it was agreed that we would tailor our response letters to individual parking appeals, rather than use a standard letter, as this had caused further dissatisfaction particularly on those occasions where the Penalty Charge Notice was issued in error.

Following a complaint for Parking the Council developed a policy on the use of body worn video cameras.

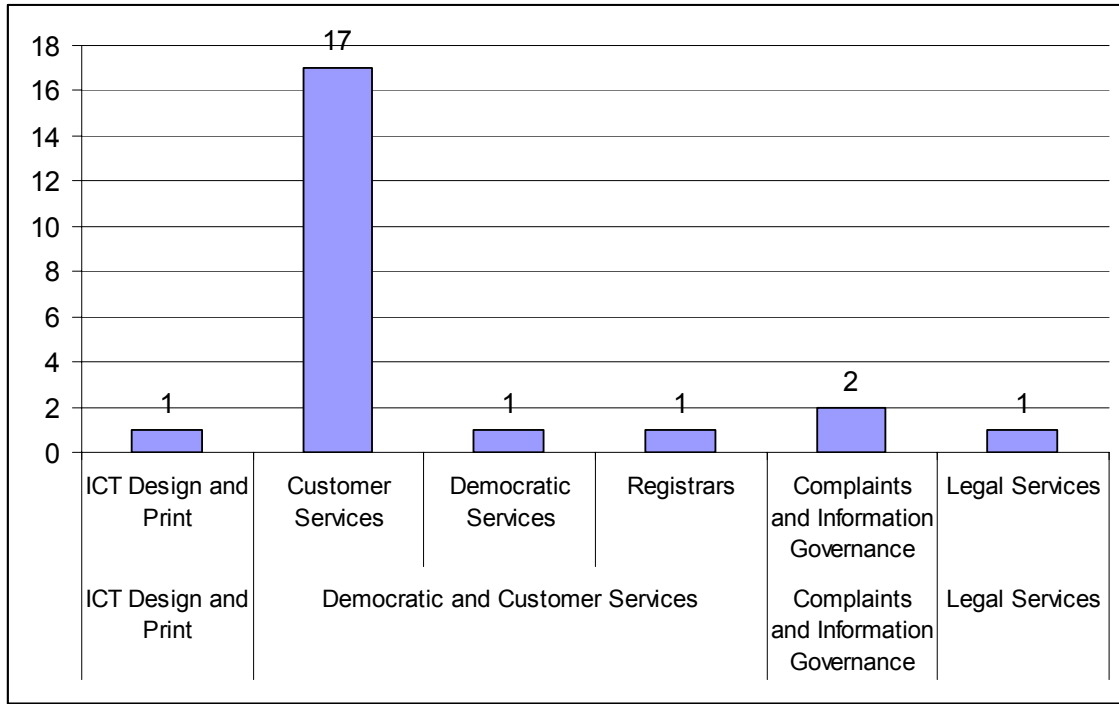
Further recommendations

Building Services are to take action to improve the response time, co-ordination and quality of Responsive Repairs particularly in relation to boilers.

Complaints, Compliments and Comments by Department Resources Group

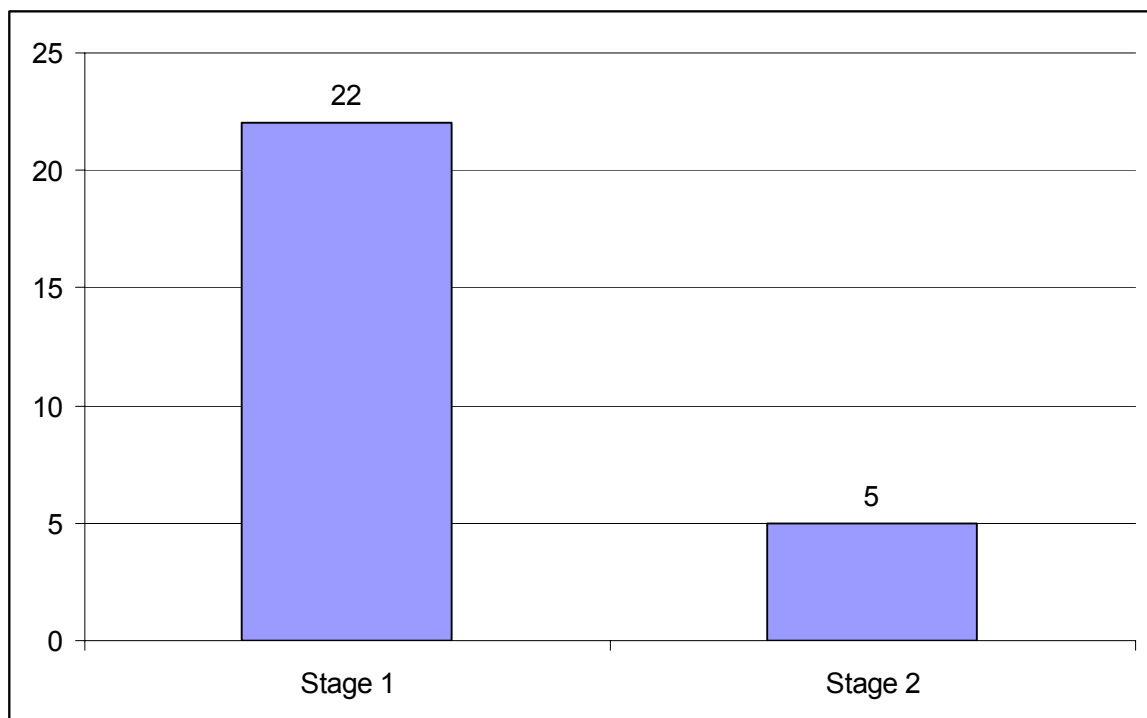
Complaints by Service Area/Team

Overview



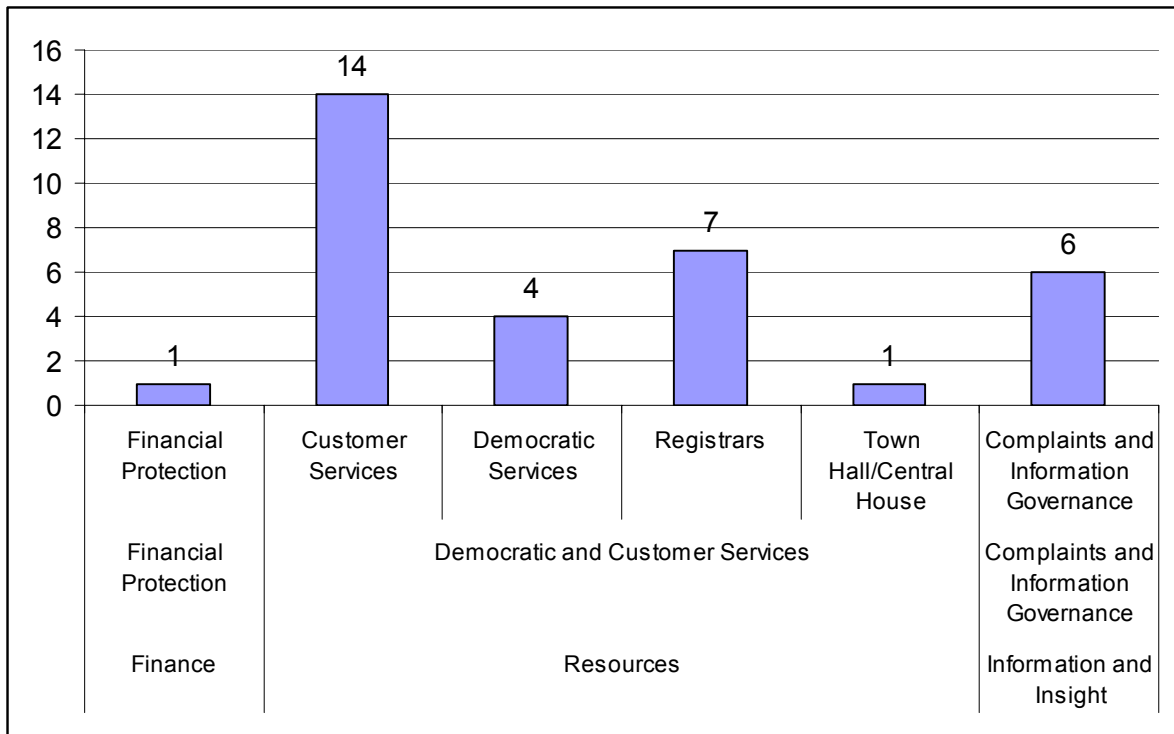
The complaints for Customer Services related to waiting times on the telephone and in person when visiting the Customer Contact Centre as well as the general level of service and the quality of advice provided.

Complaints by Stage



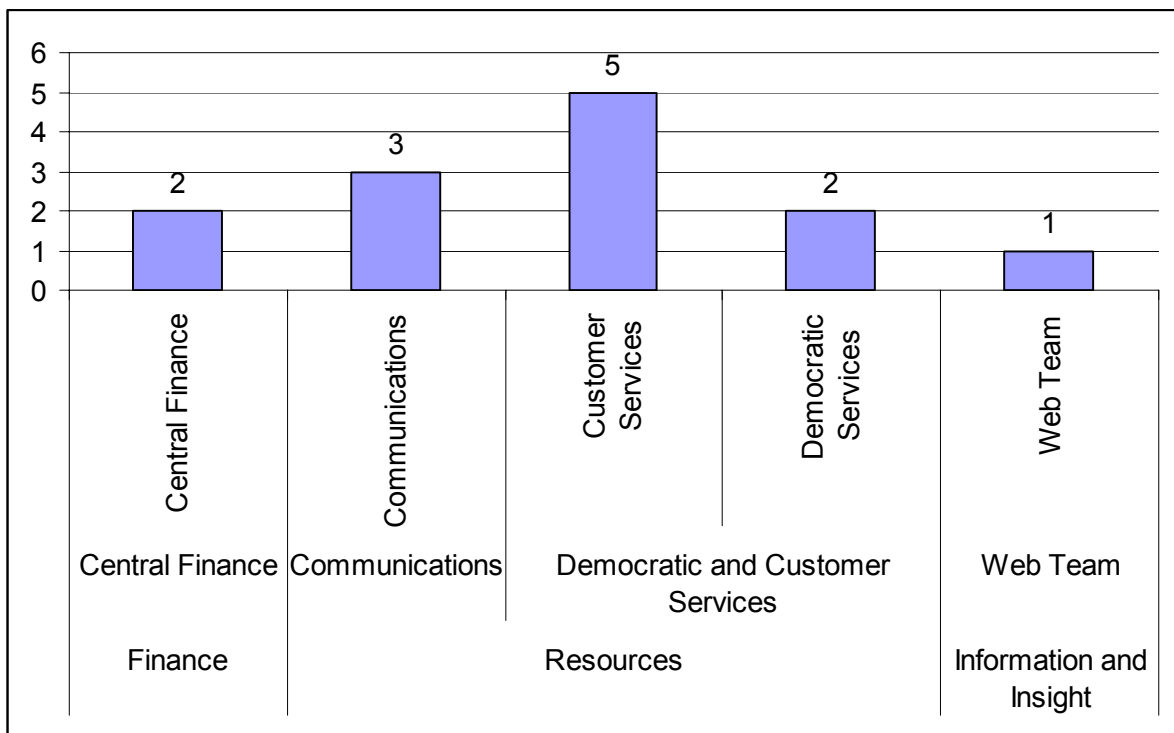
The above graph shows the number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints received by the Council during 2012/13.

Compliments by Service Area/Team



The compliments for Customer Services related to the prompt, professional and helpful service provided in relation to housing, Council Tax, bulky waste collections, fly tipping and Blue Badges.

Comments by Service Area/Team



Complaints by Outcome

Stage 1

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Resources	0	0	0	0	0	0
ICT/Design and Print	0	0	0	0	0	0
ICT/Print and Design	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for ICT/Print and Design	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for ICT/Design and Print	0	1	0	0	0	1
Resources	0	0	0	0	0	0
Democratic & Customer Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Customer Services	3	4	0	9	0	16
Total for Customer Services	3	4	0	9	0	16
Registrars	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Registrars	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Democratic & Customer Services	3	4	0	10	0	17
Services						
Information & Insight	0	0	0	0	0	0
Complaints and Information Governance	0	0	1	1	0	2
Total for Complaints and Information Governance	0	0	1	1	0	2
Total for Information & Insight	0	0	1	1	0	2
Legal Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Property	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Property	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Legal Services	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Resources	3	5	1	11	0	20
Total for Resources	3	6	1	11	0	21
Total	3	6	1	11	0	21

Stage 2

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Resources	0	0	0	0	0	0
Resources	0	0	0	0	0	0
Democratic & Customer Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Customer Services	2	0	0	0	0	2
Total for Customer Services	2	0	0	0	0	2
Democratic Services	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Democratic Services	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Democratic & Customer Services	2	1	0	0	0	3
Services						
Information & Insight	0	0	0	0	0	0
Complaints and Information Governance	0	0	2	0	0	2
Total for Complaints and Information Governance	0	0	2	0	0	2
Total for Information & Insight	0	0	2	0	0	2
Total for Resources	2	1	2	0	0	5
Total for Resources	2	1	2	0	0	5
Total	2	1	2	0	0	5

The above table shows the number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints determined by the Council during 2012/13.

Organisational Learning

Following a complaint for Customer Services about inaccurate advice given in relation to Council Tax training was provided to staff to avoid a re-occurrence.

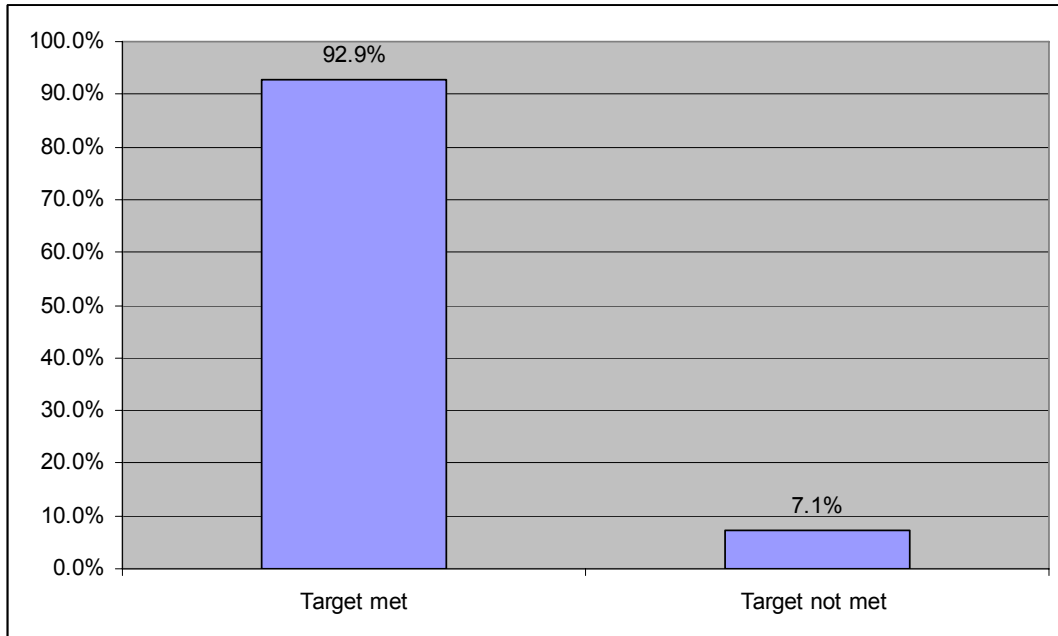
Following a complaint for Registrars the induction training was revised to include how to approach bereaved families and also how to explain the process of a death registration when the death needs to be referred to the Coroner.

Following a complaint for the Complaints and Information Governance Team the issue of ensuring acknowledgements clearly set out how we intend to deal with a matter where we do not consider it to fall within the remit of the complaints procedure was raised with the team.

Performance against the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure

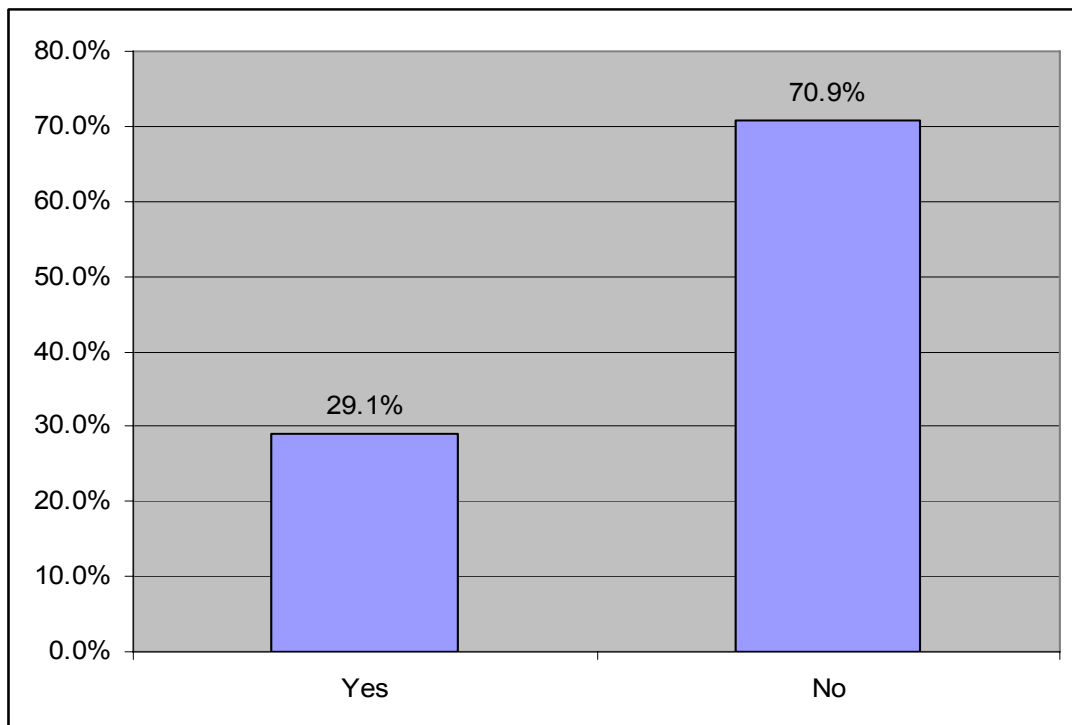
Stage 1

Performance against Stage 1 acknowledgement target (3 working days)



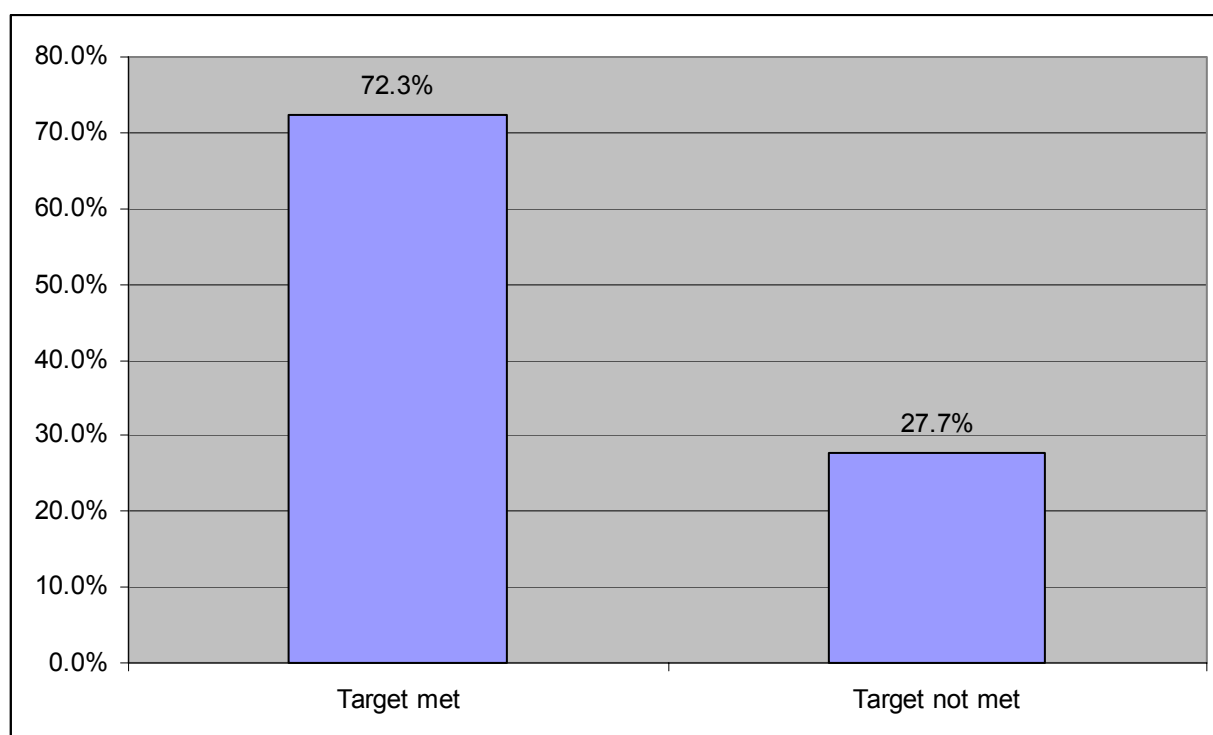
The most common reason that the Stage 1 acknowledgement target was not met was because the complaint was not forwarded to the CIG Team on the day of receipt. Information is provided in the procedure practice guidance on how officers can ensure complaints reach the CIG Team in time to be acknowledged and the CIG Team addresses the issue individually with officers each time it occurs.

Performance against Stage 1 contact complainant target (5 working days)



Following a year on year improvement over the past three years, peaking in 2011/12 at 50.38%, 2012/13 saw a significant decline in the number of complainants being contacted by the responding officer to discuss their complaint. This has resulted in a number of complaints being made about the Council failing to adhere to its own complaints procedure. While it has also resulted in some complaints being unnecessarily escalated to stage 2 as a result of the responding officer failing to understand/address all of the complainant's issues, feedback from officers is that where the matter is straight forward it is not always necessary to contact the complainant. In light of our experience since introducing the procedure in 2009 we intend to revise the procedure to say that where appropriate officers should contact the complainant within 5 working days to discuss their complaint.

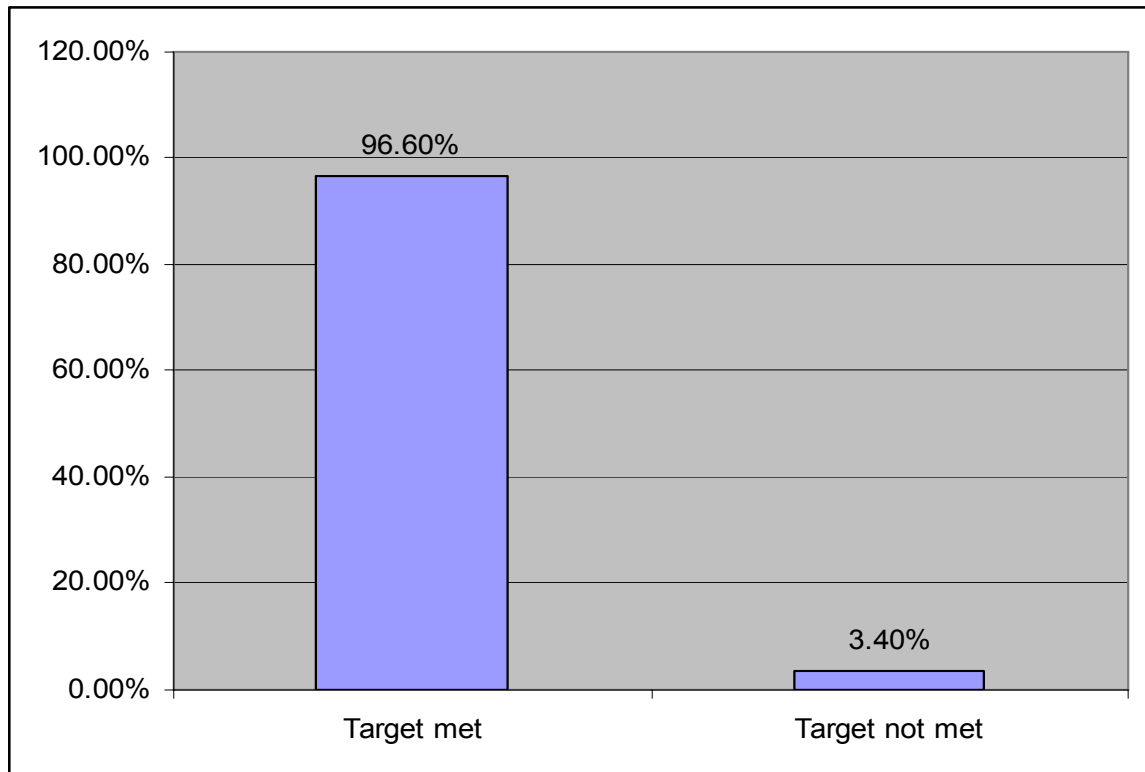
Performance against Stage 1 response target (20 working days)



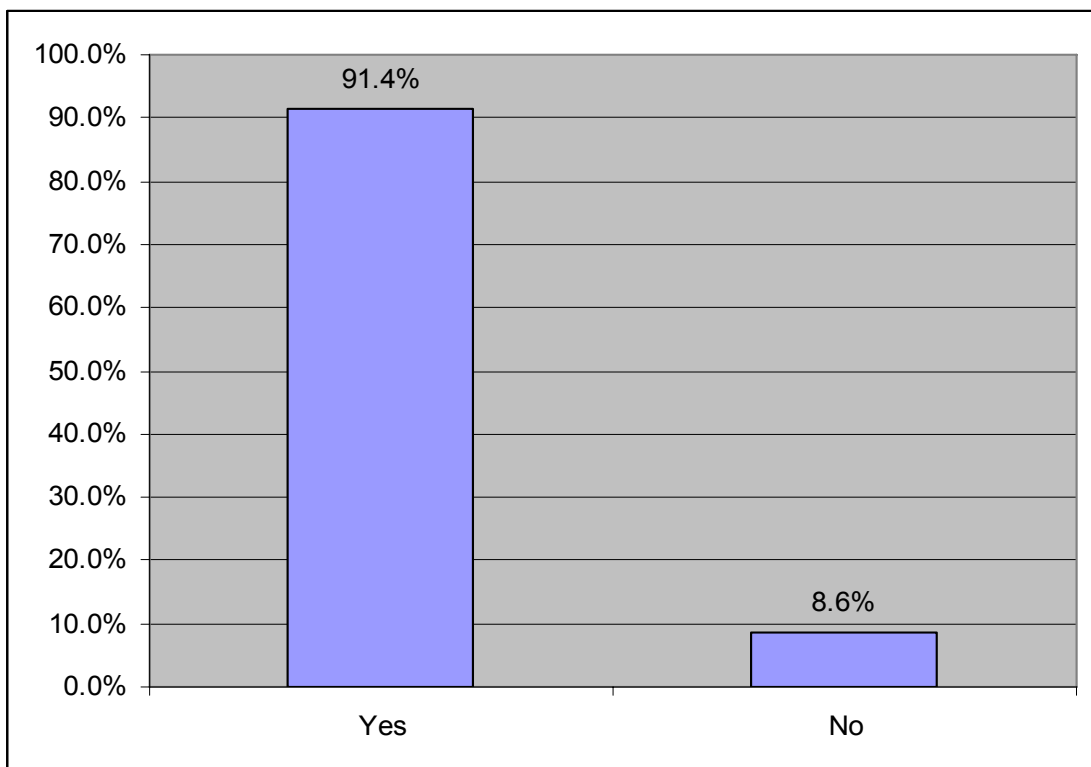
There was a reduction in the number of complaints responded to within timescale from 78.9% in 2011/12. Anecdotally this is symptomatic of the reduction in the number Council staff and the associated increase in workload experienced by officers. While it is important that officers work to the timescales it is recognised that this is not possible in all cases and that process should not necessarily come before successfully resolving the matter to the complainant's satisfaction. Where it is not going to be possible to meet the timescale the responding officer should agree an extension with the complainant and maintain a dialogue throughout the course of the investigation.

Stage 2

Performance against Stage 2 acknowledgement target (3 working days)

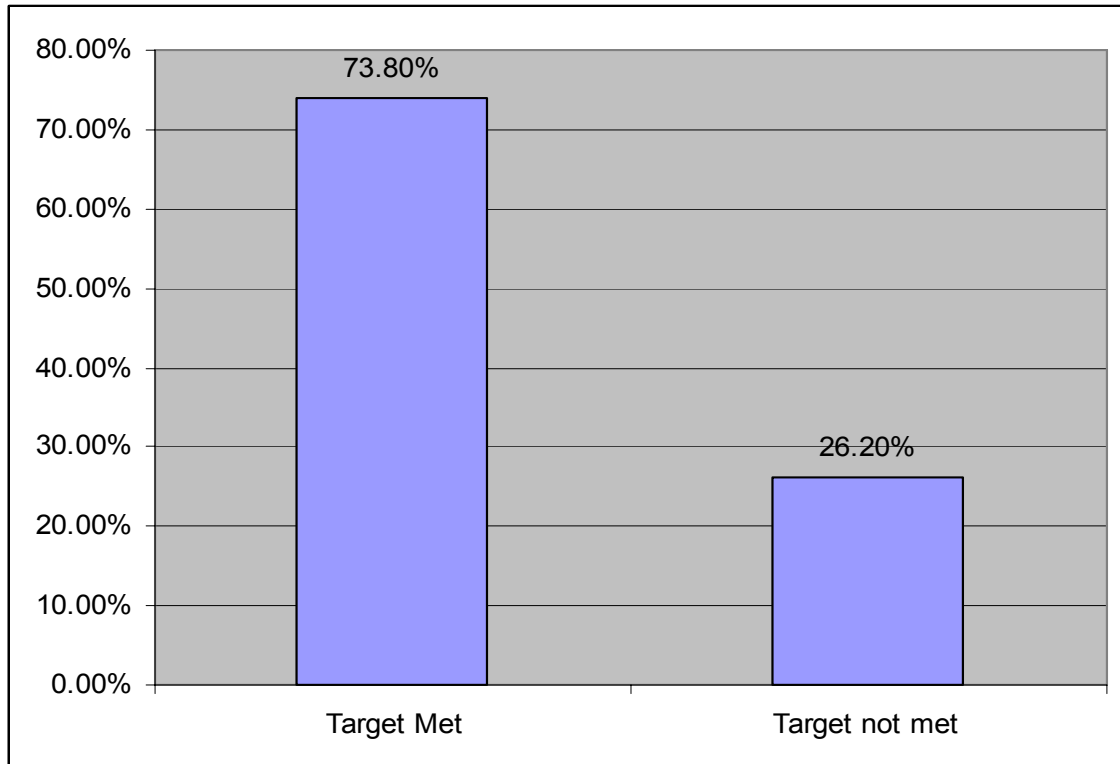


Performance against Stage 2 contact complainant target (5 working days)



In one case where no contact was made it was because the matter was straight forward and it was not necessary to contact the complainant, in the other cases it was because either the complaint had expressly asked not to be contacted or because the investigating officer was unable to make contact with the complaint.

Performance against Stage 2 response target (25 working days)



This was an increase from 70.90% in 2011/12. Those investigations not completed within the 25 working day target were not done so due to the complexity of the case or officers/complainants being on annual leave/holiday. In the vast majority of cases where it was not possible to respond to the complaint within timescale an extension was agreed with the complainant.

Performance against Local Performance Indicators

Number of Stage 1 complaints escalated to Stage 2

Target for 2012/13 - 52

Actual for 2012/13 - 51

Target met ✓

Number of maladministration decisions by the Local Government Ombudsman

Target for 2012/13 - 0

Actual for 2012/13 - 0

Target met ✓

Full details of decisions made by the Local Government Ombudsman in relation to complaints regarding Darlington Borough Council were reported to Cabinet on 4 December 2012 and 4 June 2013.