



**Housing Complaints,
Compliments and
Comments
Annual Report
2017/18**

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Introduction

This report provides an analysis of the complaints, compliments and comments received by the Council during 2017/18 under the Housing 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 any areas of good practice and seeks to identify topics and trends in relation to comments made by members of the public so that the Council can 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. This also enables the Council to collect accurate information on complaints in order to identify topics and trends and improve services accordingly.

Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure

The procedure sets out how the Council will deal with complaints, compliments and comments received about the Council as a social landlord (as well as in respect of its ownership and management of leasehold housing).

The procedure has three 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 Investigator or Complaints Manager.

Stage 3 is a mandatory stage between the Council and the Housing Ombudsman. This is referred to as the 'designated person' or 'democratic filter'. The designated person or democratic filter can be an MP, a local Councillor or a recognised Tenant Panel. In Darlington we have a recognised Tenant Panel (from here onwards referred to as the Tenants' Complaints Panel).

Should a tenant remain dissatisfied with the Council's response to their complaint, they will be required to refer the matter to the 'designated person' or 'democratic filter'. The 'designated person' or 'democratic filter' may help resolve the complaint directly, refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman or decide to do neither. If the 'designated person' or 'democratic filter' decides not to take any action the complainant will be entitled to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman

directly. The complainant will also be able to approach the Housing Ombudsman directly in cases where eight weeks have elapsed since the Council's response to their complaint at Stage 2 of the procedure.

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.

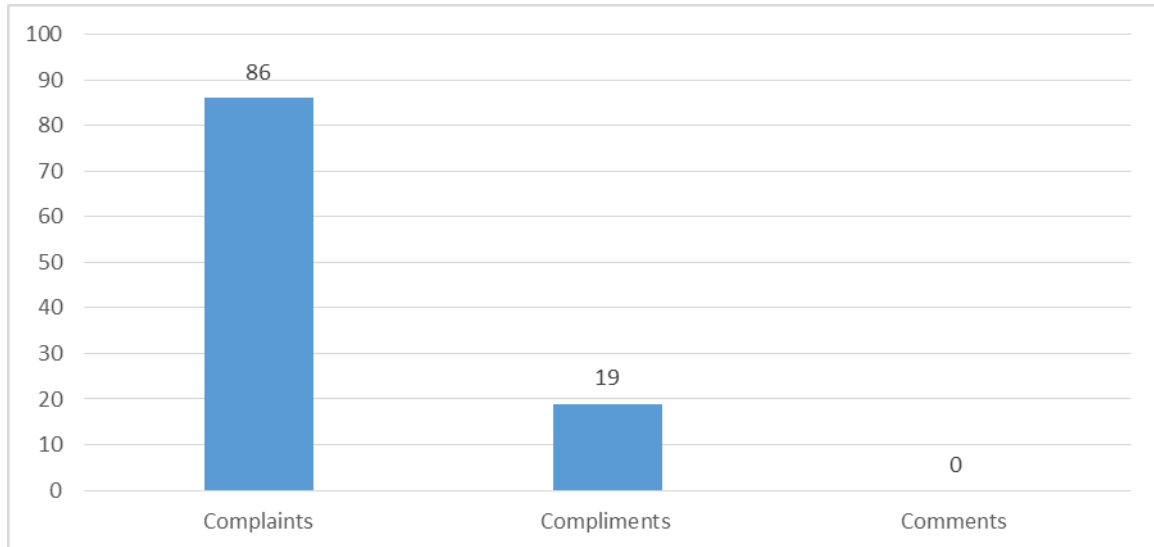
Information is available on the Council's website which contains an electronic form people can use to make a complaint, pay someone a compliment or pass comment on Council services. People may make a complaint in any format they wish. This can be in writing, email, via the web, over the phone, in person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

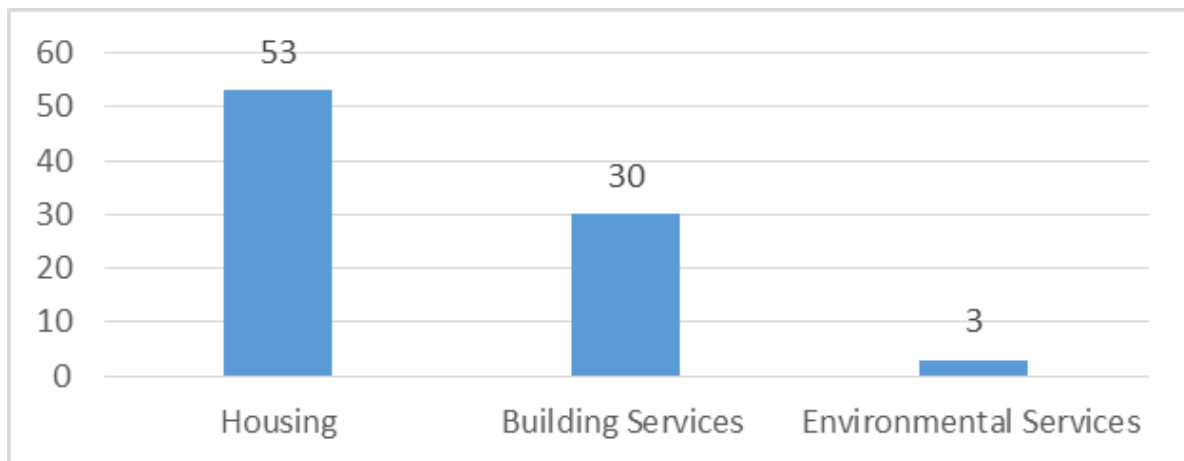
Overview of Complaints, Compliments and Comments

Total Complaints, Compliments and Comments



Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 the Council received a total of 86 complaints under the procedure, the same number as in 2016/17. A total of 18 complaints were considered at Stage 2, compared to 14 in 2016/17. All 18 were initially dealt with at Stage 1. 0 complaints were considered at Stage 3, as was the case in 2016/17. The Council also received 19 compliments under the procedure, a reduction from 34 in 2016/17 and 0 comments compared to 3 in 2016/17.

Complaints by Service

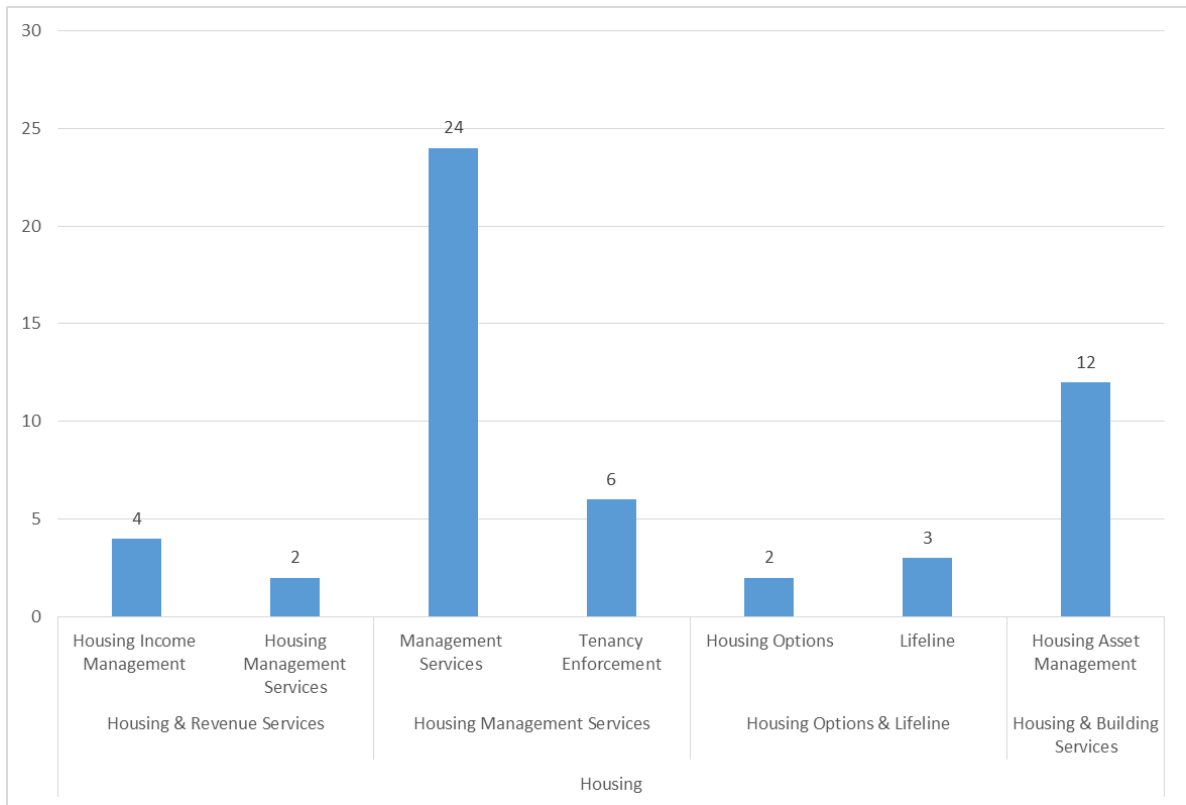


Housing received 53 complaints, compared to 54 in 2016/17.

Building Services received 30 complaints, compared to 31 in 2016/17.

Environmental Services received 3 complaints, compared to 1 in 2016/17.

Complaints by Team – Housing Service

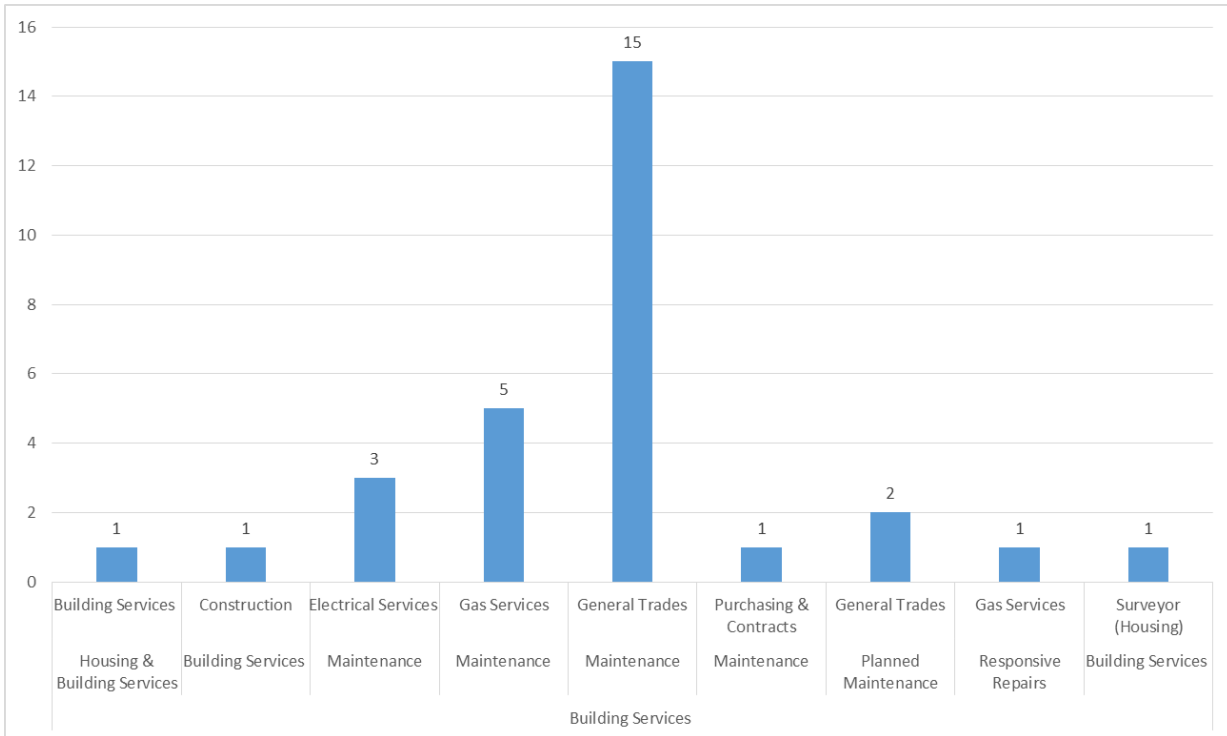


Housing Management Services/Management Services received 26 complaints, a decrease from 36 in 2016/17.

Housing Asset Management received 12 complaints, an increase from 9 in 2016/17.

Tenancy Enforcement received 6 complaints, an increase from 3 in 2016/17.

Complaints by Team – Building Services



Maintenance, Electrical Services received 3 complaints, an increase from 2 in 2016/17.

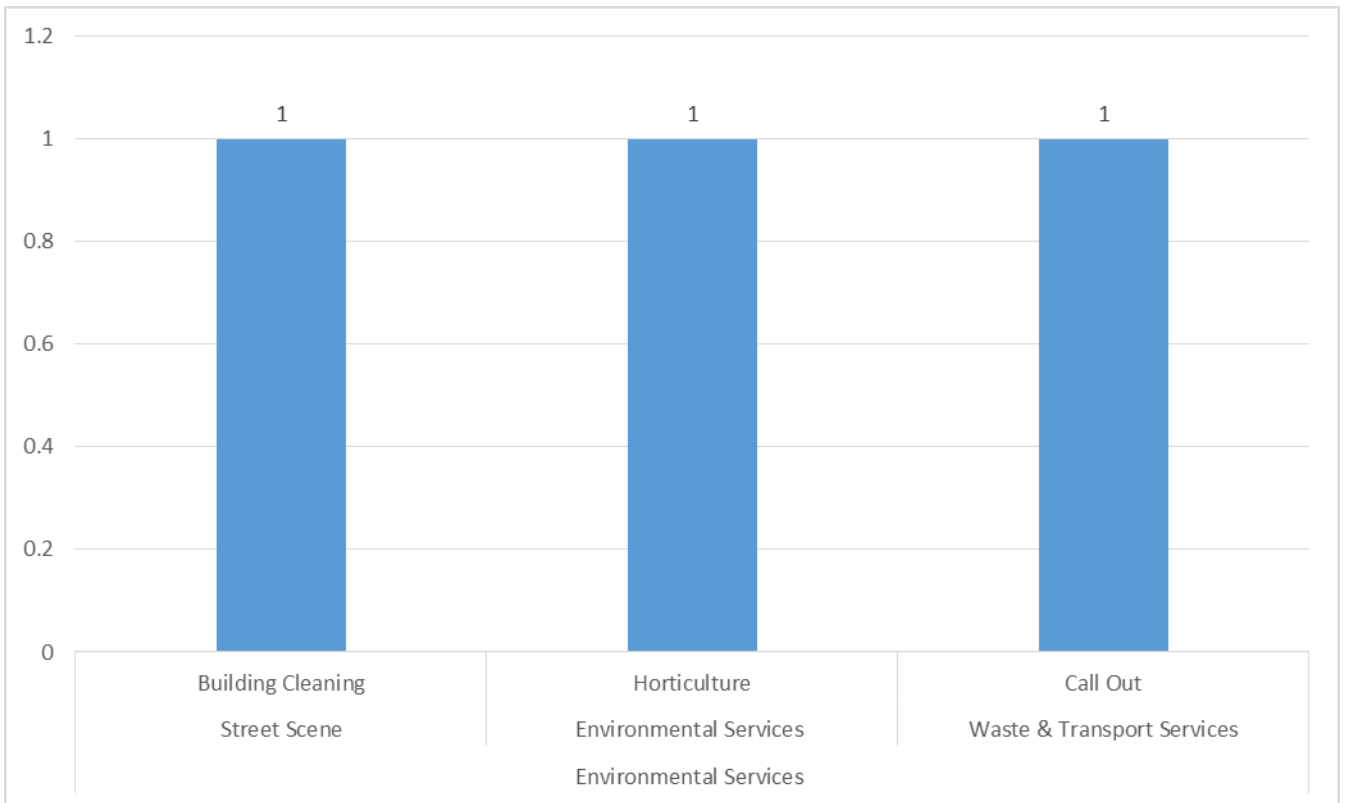
Maintenance, Gas Services received 5 complaints, compared to 4 in 2016/17.

Maintenance/Planned Maintenance, General Trades received 17 complaints, an increase from 8 in 2016/17.

Responsive Repairs, General Trades did not receive any complaints, a decrease from 7 in 2016/17.

Responsive Repairs, Gas Services received 1 complaint, a decrease from 9 in 2016/17.

Complaints by Team - Environmental Services



Compliments by Service Area/Team



Housing received 8 compliments, a decrease from 22 in 2016/17. This reduction can be accounted for by more accurate recording (*During 2016/17 some compliments were recorded under this procedure, rather than correctly under the Council's Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure*).

Building Services received 11 compliments, the same number as in 2016/17.

Housing Management Services/Management Services received 6 compliments, a reduction from 9 in 2016/17.

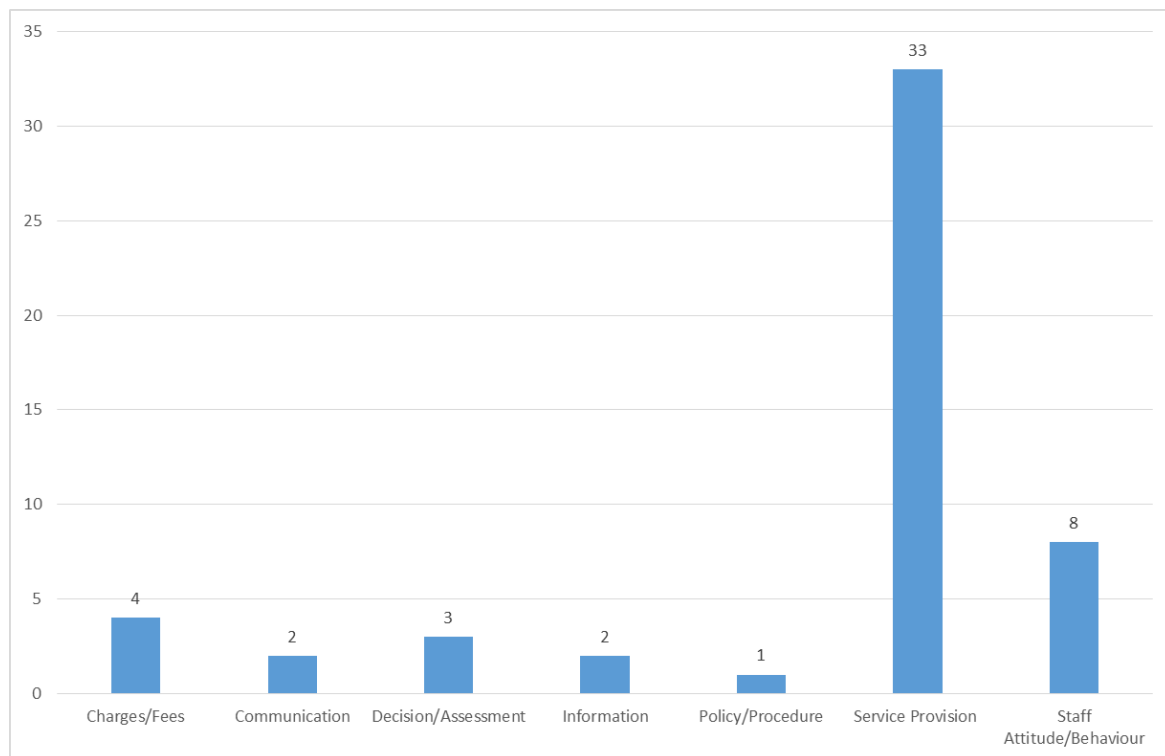
General Trades received 8 compliments, an increase from 4 in 2016/17.

Comments by Service Area/Team

The Council did not receive any comments during 2017/18 a reduction from 3 in 2016/17.

Complaints by Issue

Housing Services

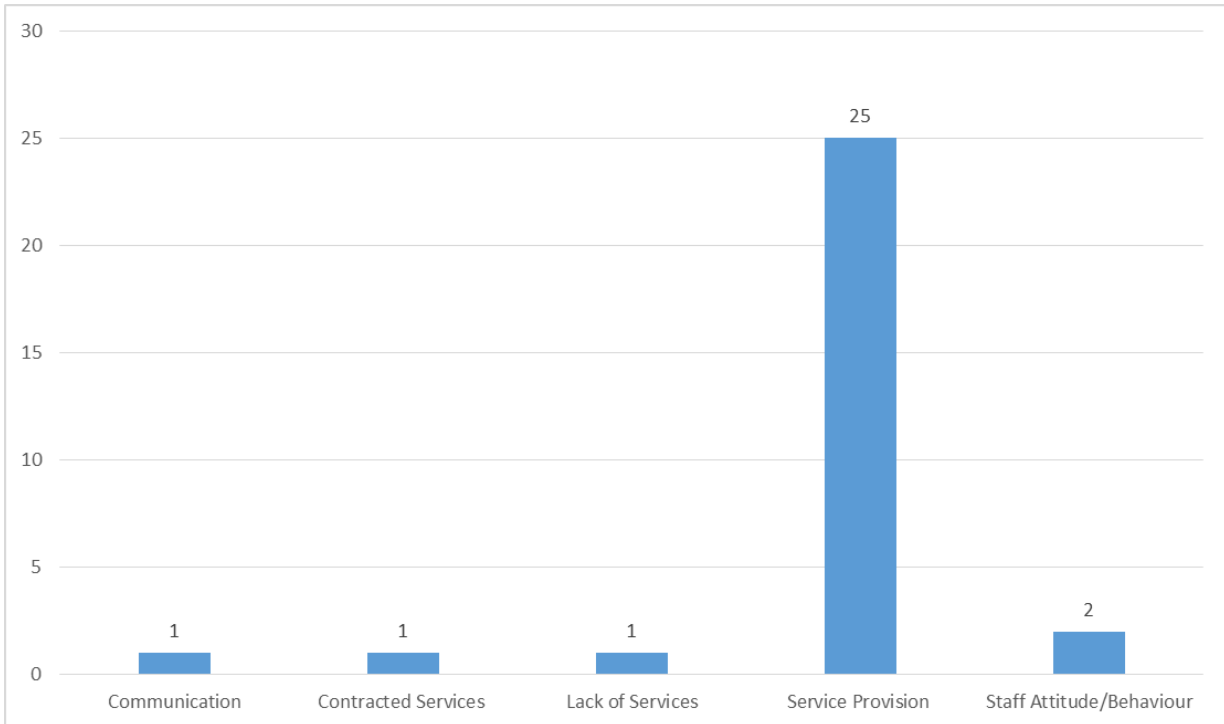


Housing received 2 complaints about communication, a reduction from 12 in 2016/17.

Housing received 33 complaints about service provision, an increase from 22 in 2016/17.

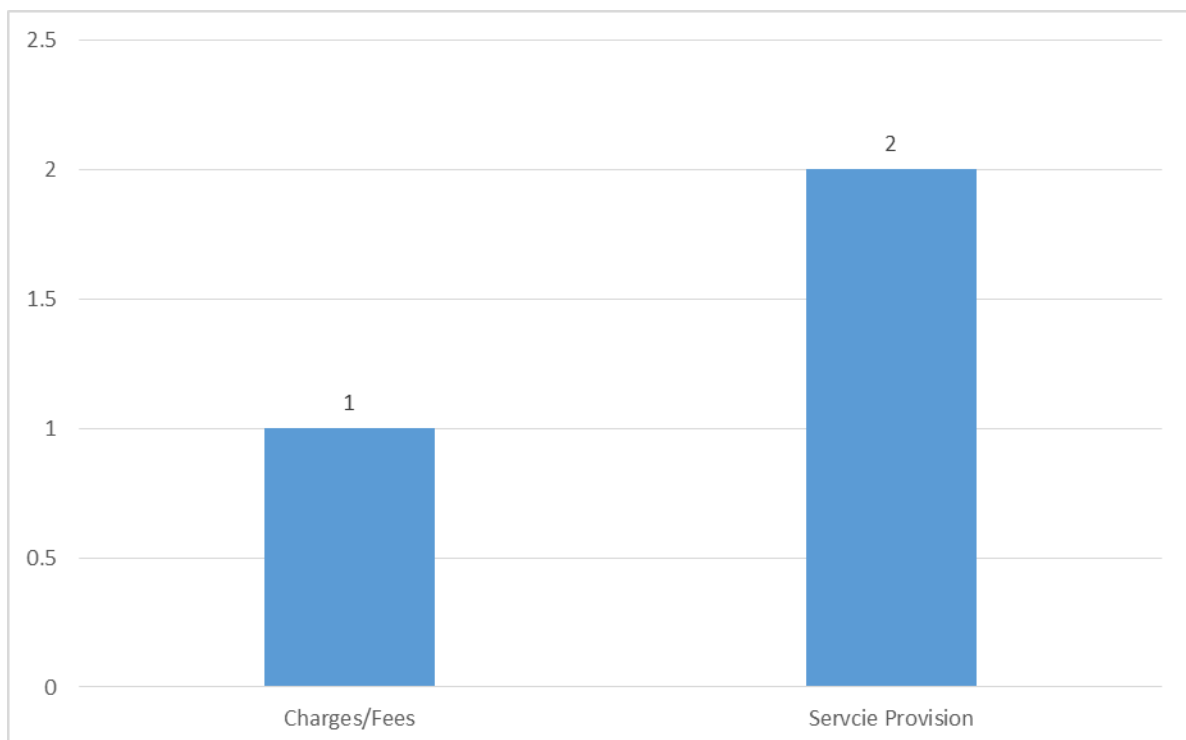
Housing received 8 complaints about staff attitude/behaviour, a decrease from 11 in 2016/17.

Building Services



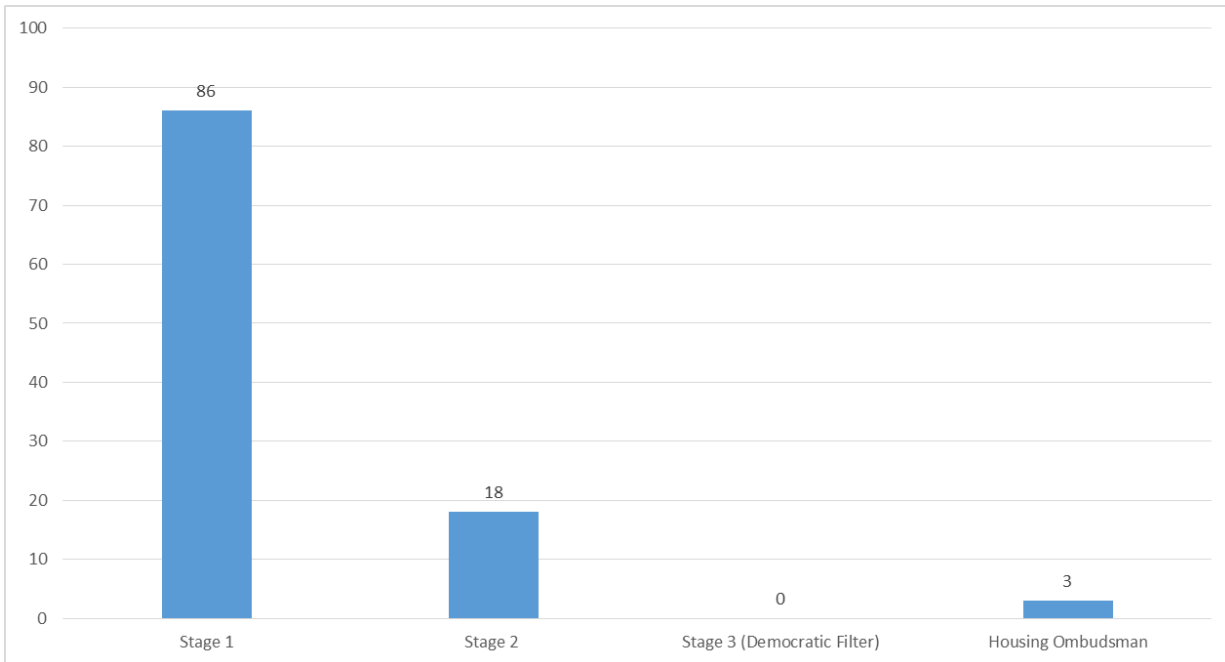
The issues for Building Services remained the similar to the issues raised during 2016/17. There was an additional complaint about a contracted service and 25 complaints about service provision compared to 27 in 2016/17.

Environmental Services



Complaints by Stage

The below graph shows the number of complaints received at each stage of the procedure during 2017/18.



The Council received the same number of Stage 1 complaints as it did in 2016/17. 18 were escalated to Stage 2, an increase from 14 in 2016/17. 3 were escalated to the Housing Ombudsman, an increase from 0 in 2016/17.

Complaints by Outcome

The below tables show the decisions reached on complaints during 2017/18. Some of the complaints determined during 2017/18 were received during 2016/17, hence them being logged against former services/teams.

Stage 1

Service Area/Team	Escalated to Stage 2 (No S1 Response)	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Neighbourhood Services & Resources	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Horticulture	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Street Scene	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Cleaning	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Call Out	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Environmental Services	0	0	2	0	1	0	3
Housing & Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Construction	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Electrical Services	0	1	2	0	0	0	3
Gas Services	0	0	3	1	1	0	5
General Trades	0	0	5	2	7	0	14
Purchasing & Contracts	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Maintenance	0	1	10	3	9	0	23
Planned Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Electrical Services	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
General Trades	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Total for Planned Maintenance	0	0	2	0	1	0	3
Responsive Repairs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gas Services	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Total for Responsive Repairs	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Surveyor (Housing)	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total for Surveyor (Housing)	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total for Building Services	0	1	13	4	12	0	30

Housing & Revenue Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing Income Management	0	1	0	2	1	0	4
Total for Housing Income Management	0	1	0	2	1	0	4
Housing Management Services	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Management Services	0	1	9	8	2	1	21
Tenancy Enforcement	0	0	3	1	2	0	6
Total for Housing Management Services	0	1	13	10	4	1	29
Housing Options & Lifeline	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing Options	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Lifeline	0	0	2	0	0	1	3
Total for Housing Options & Lifeline	0	0	3	1	0	1	5
Total for Housing & Revenue Services	0	2	16	13	5	2	38
Housing Asset Management	0	2	5	0	2	0	9
Total for Housing Asset Management	0	2	5	0	2	0	9
Housing Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing Management	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Total for Housing Management	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Total for Housing Services	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Total for Housing & Building Services	1	5	35	17	19	2	79
Total for Neighbourhood Services & Resources	1	5	37	17	20	2	82

Stage 2

Service Area/Team	Closed With No Response	Escalated to Stage 2 (No S1 Response)	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Neighbourhood Services & Resources	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing & Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Planned Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Electrical Services	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Planned Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Housing Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asset Management	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	4
Total for Asset Management	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	4
Housing Management	0	0	0	3	3	1	0	7
Total for Housing Management	0	0	0	3	3	1	0	7
Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Housing Services	0	0	0	6	5	1	0	12
Total for Housing & Building Services	0	0	0	6	5	2	0	13
Total for Neighbourhood Services & Resources	0	0	0	6	5	2	0	13
Total	0	0	0	6	5	2	0	13

Stage 3

The 'designated person' or 'democratic filter' did not determine any complaints during 2017/18.

Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman determined one complaint during 2017/18, the outcome of which was no maladministration.

Full details of those complaints determined by the Housing Ombudsman are included in the Cabinet reports of 5 December 2017 and 9 October 2018 entitled [Review of Outcome of Complaints Made to Ombudsman](#).

Organisational Learning

All resolution and organisational learning actions identified as a result of complaints are assigned to a responsible manager and progress against those actions is monitored by the Complaints Manager. In addition to those actions taken to resolve individual complaints, several service improvements were made following complaint investigations during 2017/18. Some examples of these are detailed below.

Following a complaint for Building Services, General Trades it was agreed that training would be provided for staff to ensure repairs were highlighted to tenants and appointments booked prior to them moving into a property.

As the result of a complaint for Housing & Revenue Services, Housing Management Services it was agreed the Housing Management Officer would be reminded of the practice and procedure in relation to termination of tenancies.

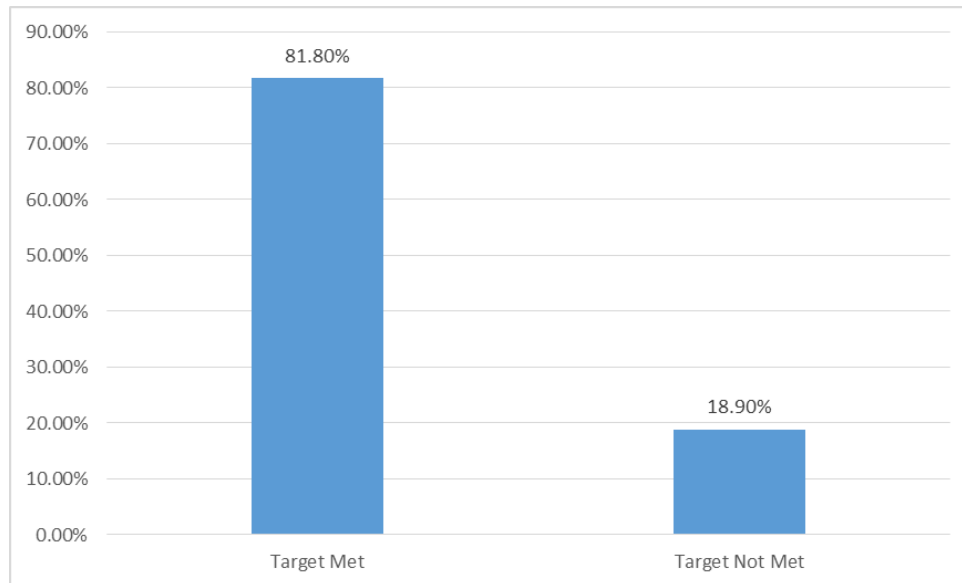
Following a complaint for Housing & Revenue Services, Housing Income Management, a member of staff was reminded of the need to maintain a professional telephone manner.

Performance against the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure

The below graphs show performance in relation to those complaints acknowledged and responded to during 2016/17.

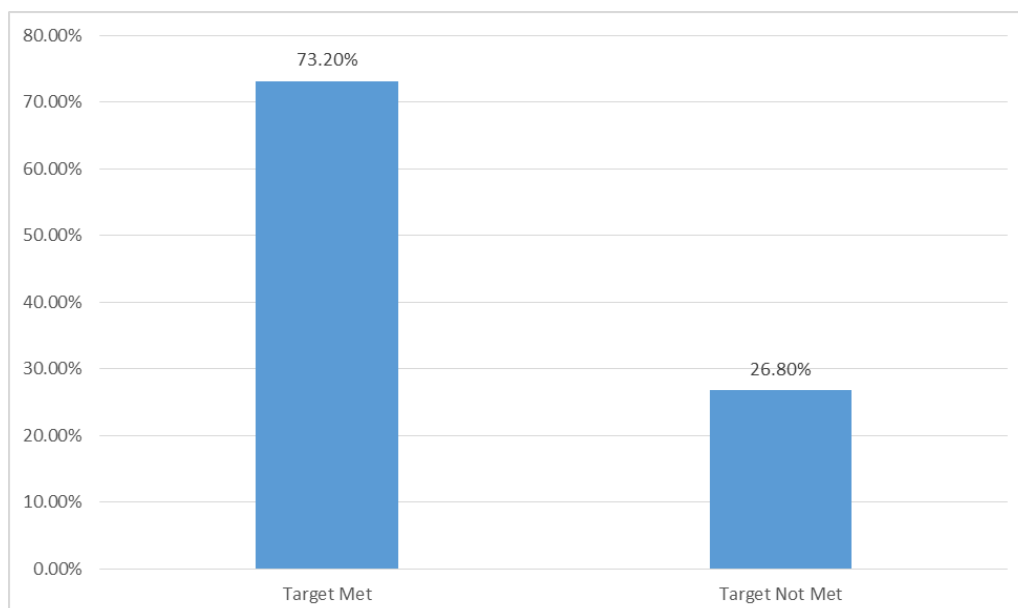
Stage 1

Performance against Stage 1 acknowledgement target (3 working days)



This was a decrease from 98.80% in 2016/17.

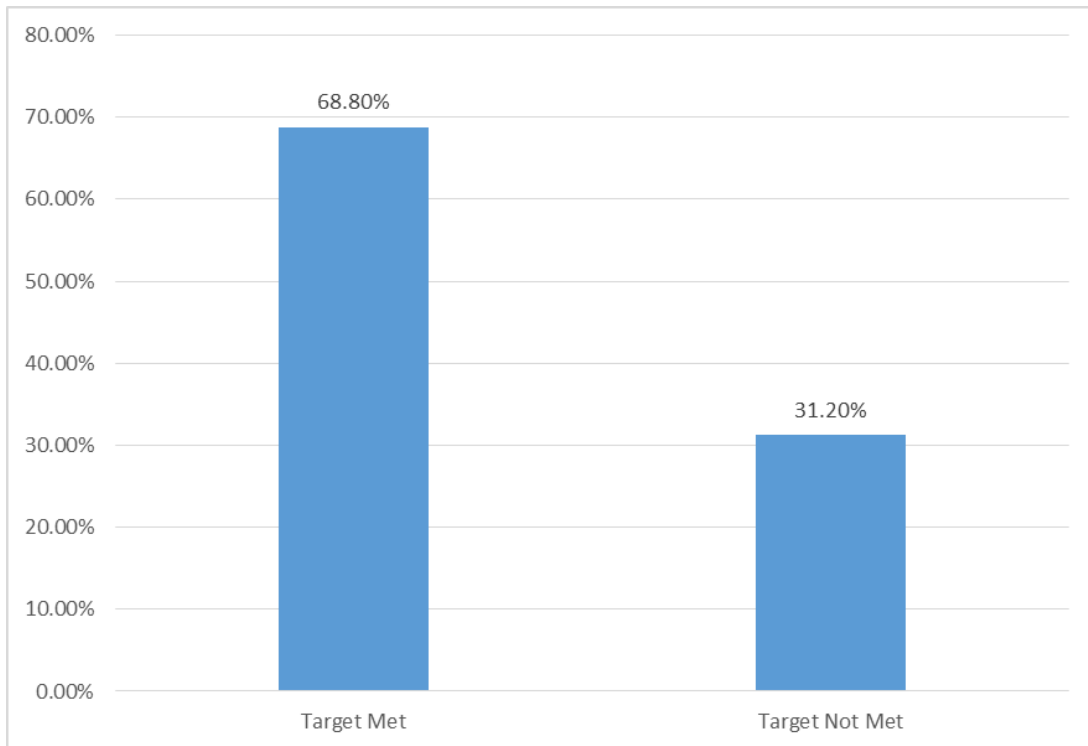
Performance against Stage 1 response target (25 working days)



This was an increase from 55.7% in 2016/17.

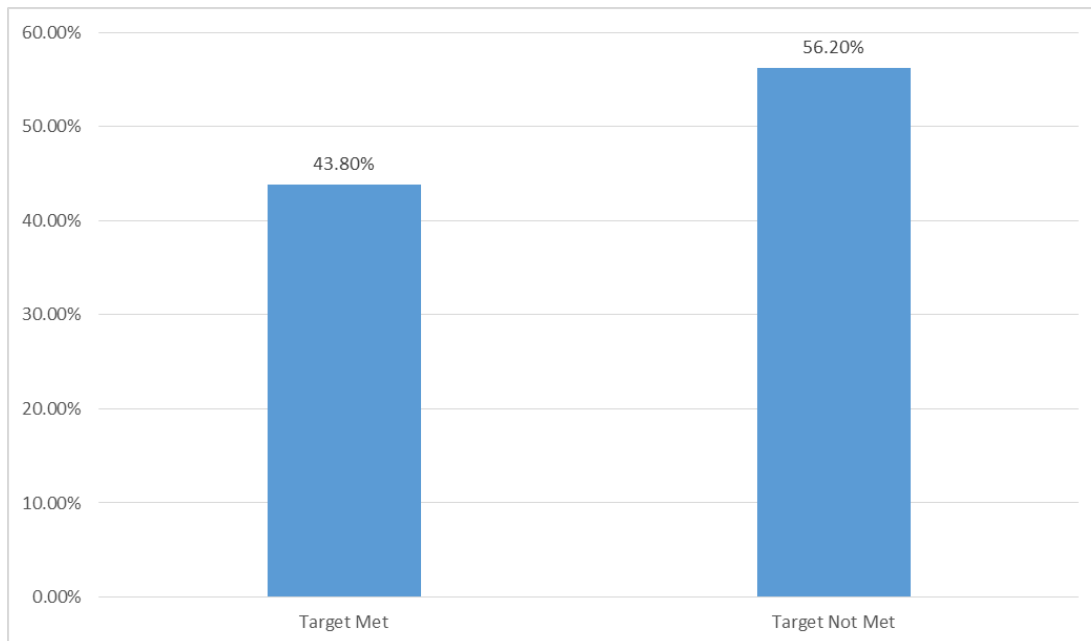
Stage 2

Performance against Stage 2 acknowledgement target (3 working days)



This was a decrease from 100% in 2016/17.

Performance against Stage 2 response target (30 working days)



This was a decrease from 66.70% in 2016/17. In the majority of cases where it was not going to be possible to respond within timescale an extension was agreed with the complainant in accordance with the provisions of the procedure.