



**Housing Complaints,
Compliments and
Comments
Annual Report
2015/16**

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Introduction

This report provides an analysis of the complaints, compliments and comments received by the Council during 2015/16 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 and Information Governance Manager or another officer independent of the service being complained about.

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.

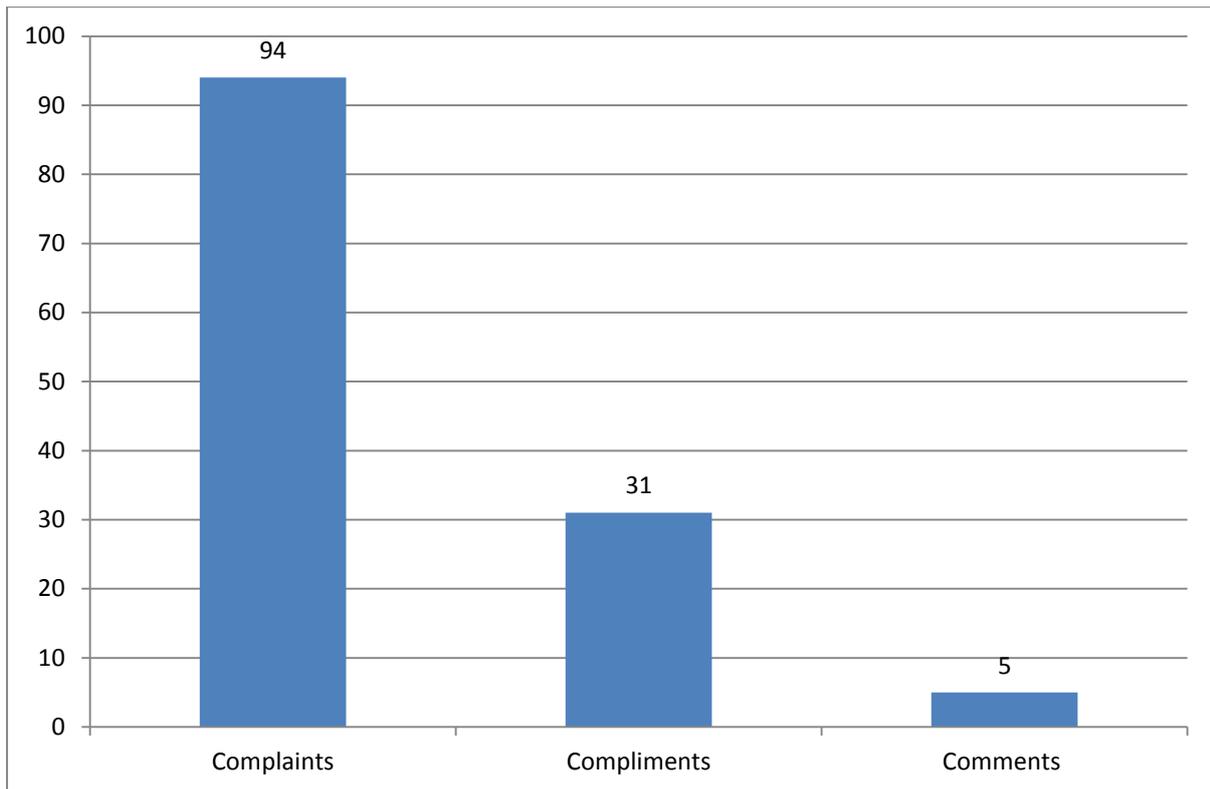
Information is available on the Council's website which contains an electronic form people can use to make a complaint, pay someone a compliment or pass comment on Council services. People may make a complaint in any format they wish. This can be in writing, email, via the web, over the phone, in person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

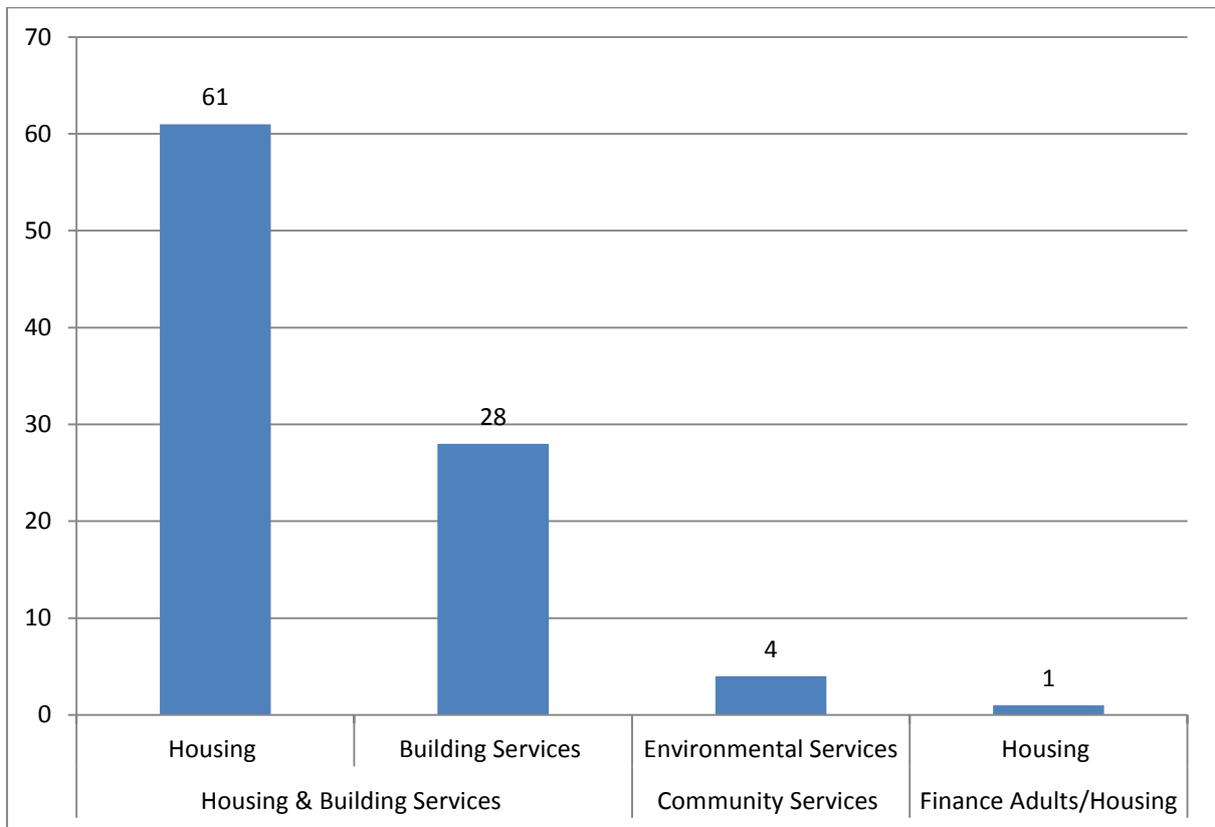
Overview of Complaints, Compliments and Comments

Total Complaints, Compliments and Comments



Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 the Council received a total of 94 complaints under the procedure compared to 106 in 2014/15. A total of 15 complaints were considered at Stage 2, compared to 13 in 2014/15. All 15 were initially dealt with at Stage 1. 0 complaints were considered at Stage 3, compared to 2 in 2014/15. The Council also received 31 compliments under the procedure compared to 47 in 2014/15 and 5 comments compared to 9 in 2014/15.

Complaints by Service



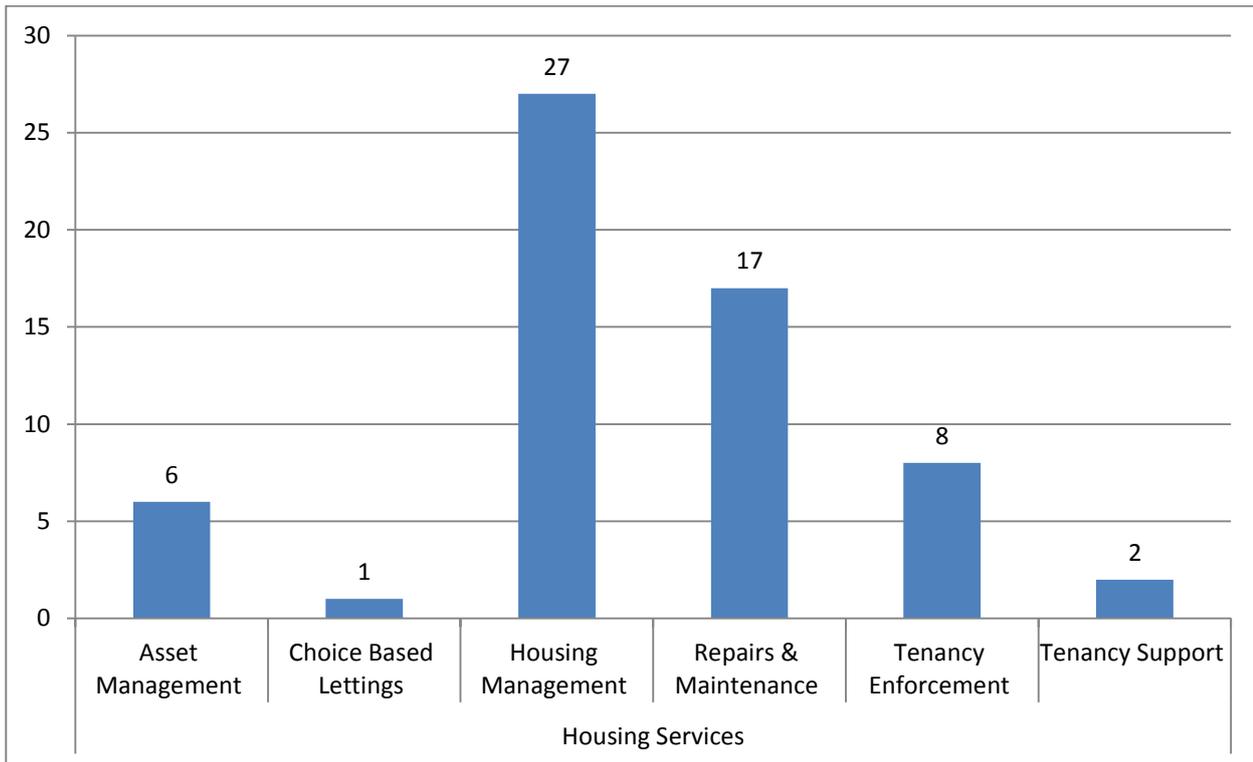
Housing received 61 complaints, compared to 58 in 2014/15.

Building Services received 28 complaints, compared to 43 in 2014/15.

Environmental Services received 4 complaints, compared to 5 in 2014/15.

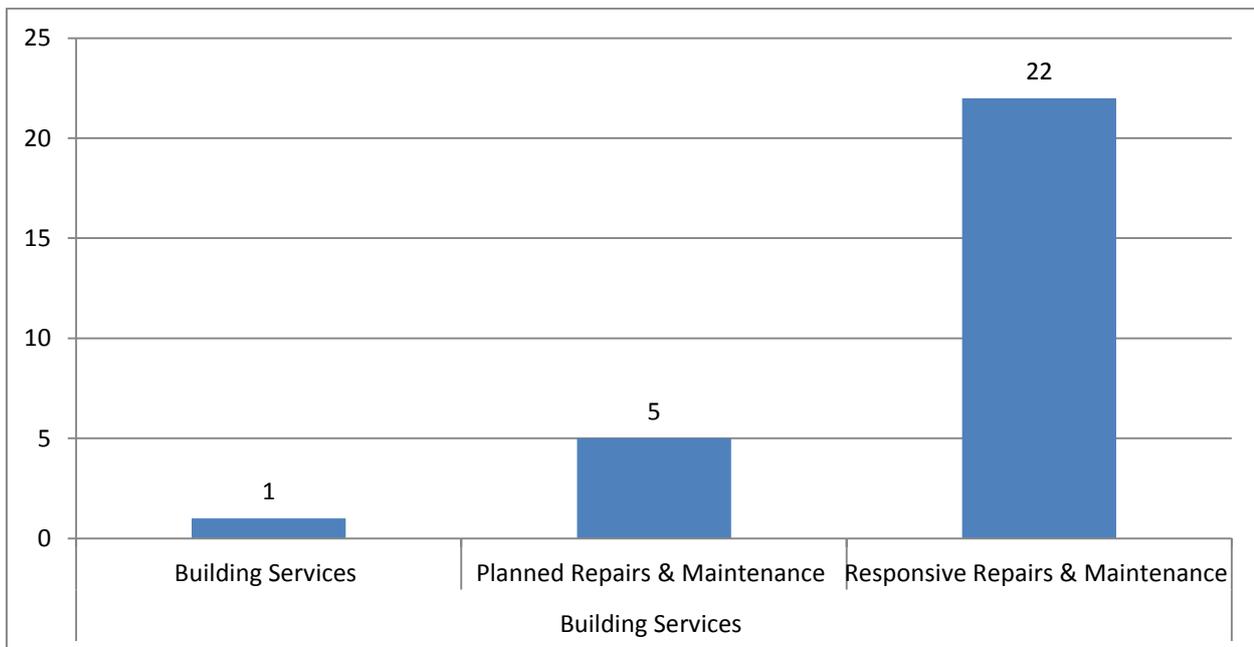
Finance Adults/Housing received 1 complaint, compared to 0 in 2014/15.

Complaints by Team – Housing Services



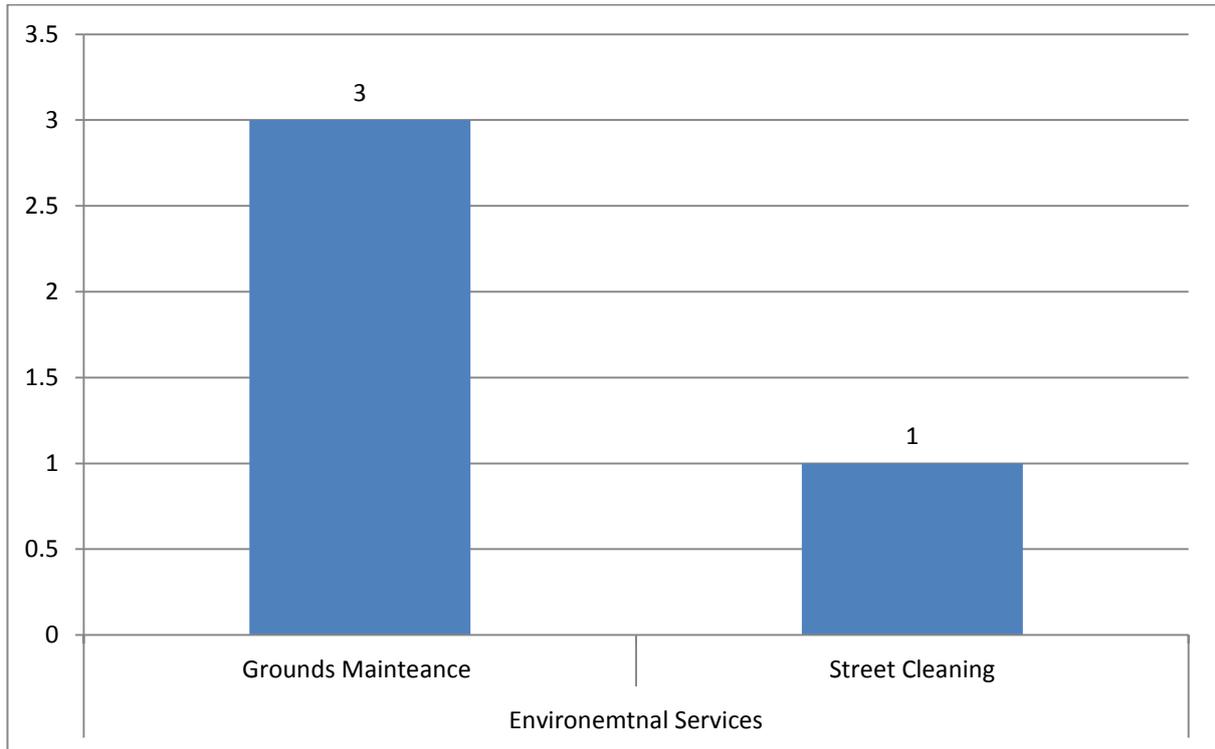
Delays in undertaking and the quality of repair work remained the most commonly complained about issues.

Complaints by Team – Building Services



Delays in undertaking and the quality of repair work remained the most commonly complained about issues.

Complaints by Team - Environmental Services

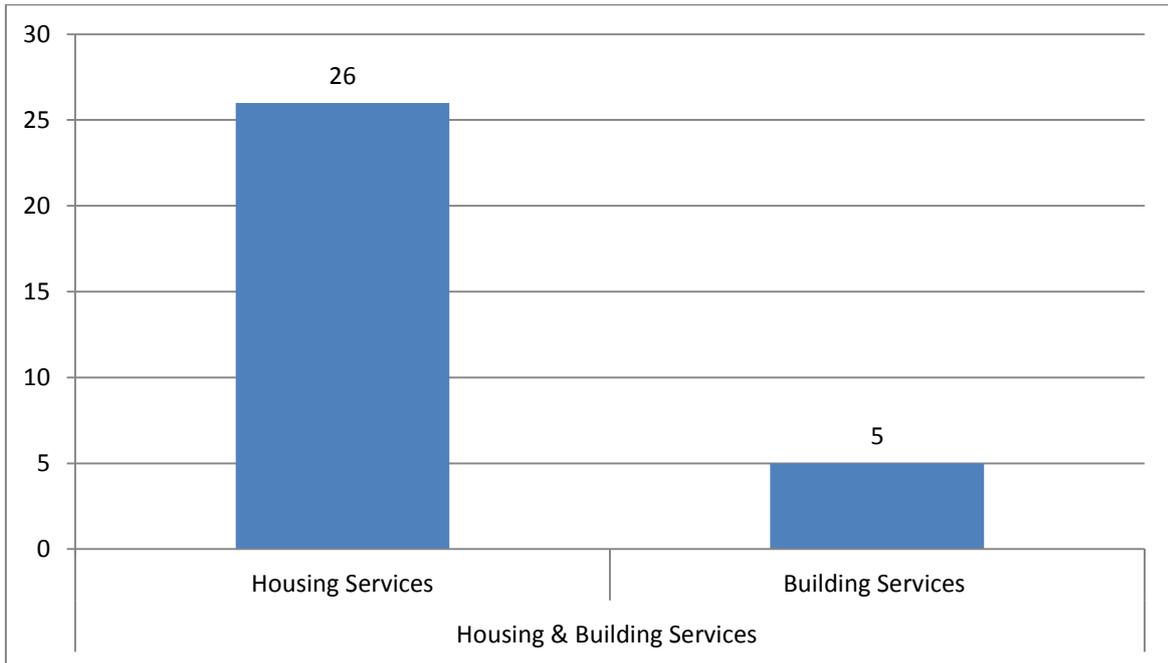


There were no discernable themes in the complaints received for Environmental Services.

Complaints by Team – Finance Adults/Housing

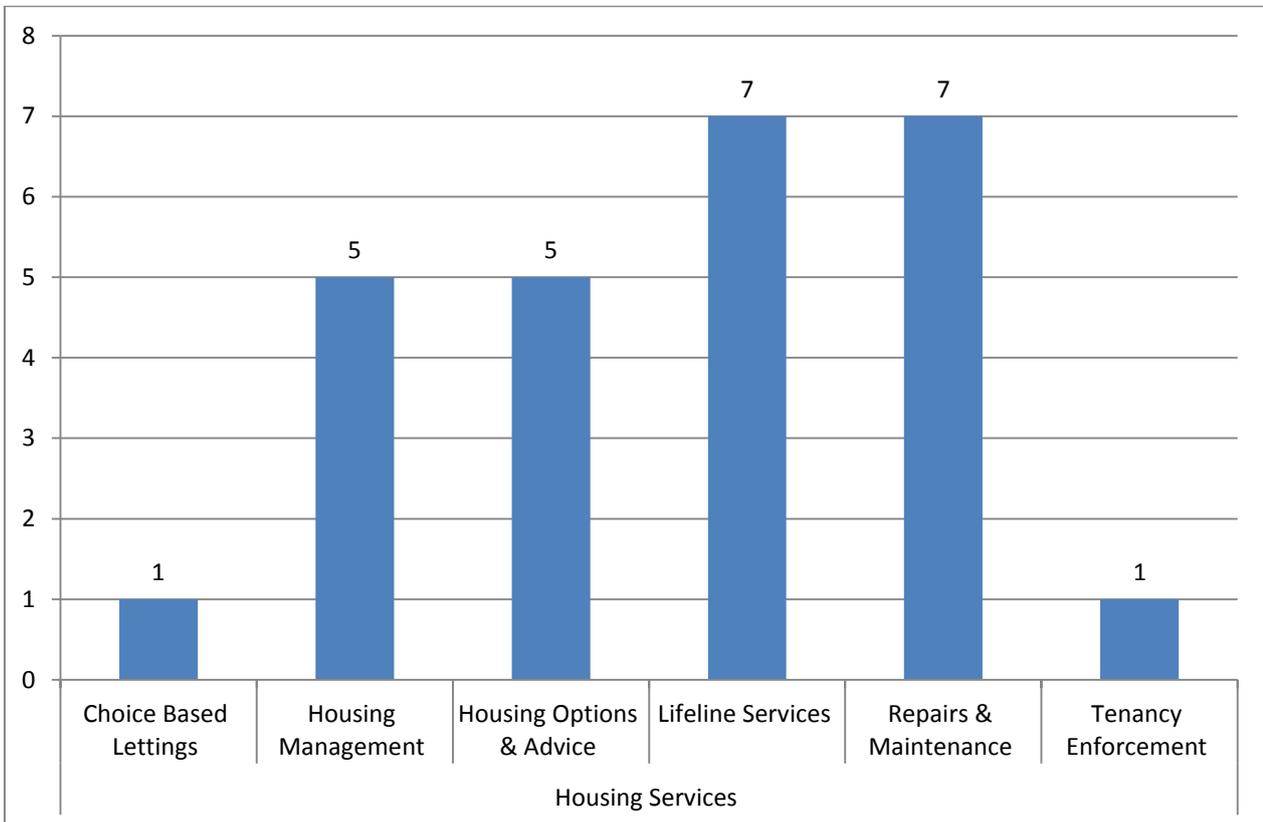
1 complaint was for Housing.

Compliments by Service

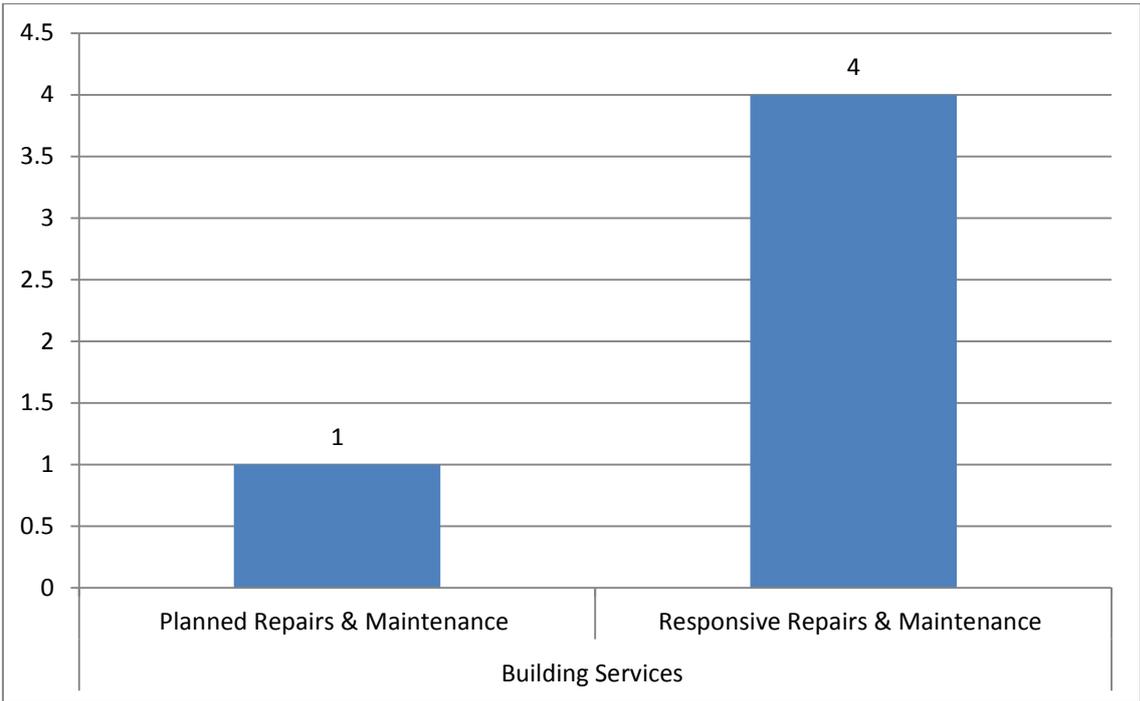


Compliments were primarily for the level of service provided and the friendly and helpful attitude of staff.

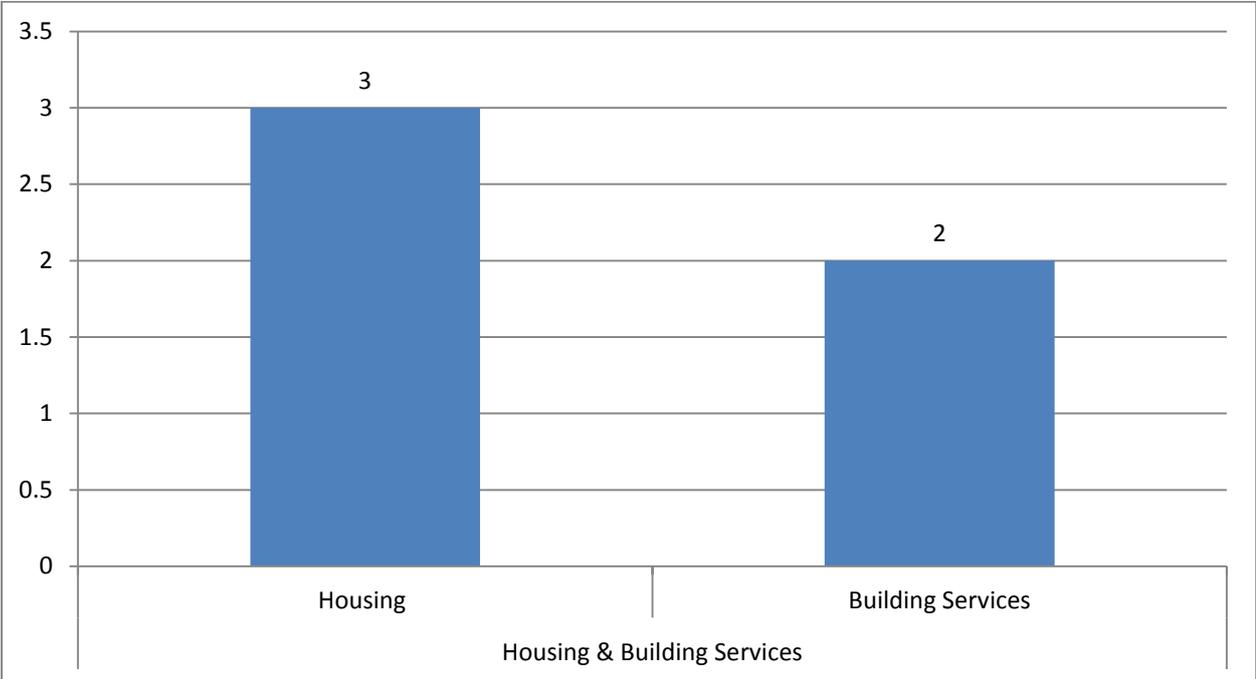
Compliments by Team – Housing Services



Compliments by Team – Building Services



Comments by Service



There were no discernable themes in the comments received for Housing & Building Services.

Comments by Team – Housing Services

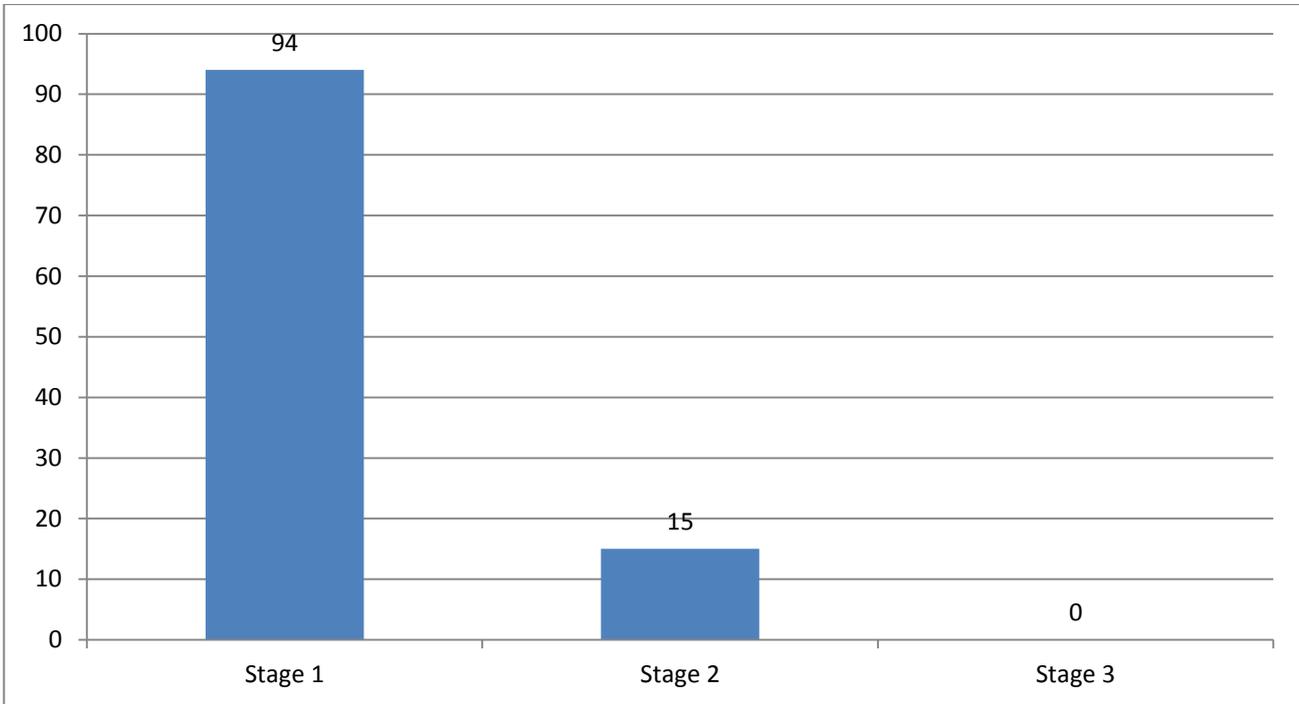
The 3 comments received were for Asset Management.

Comments by Team - Building Services

The 2 comments received were for Responsive Repairs & Maintenance

Complaints by Stage

The below graph shows the number of complaints received at each stage of the procedure during 2015/16.



Complaints by Outcome

The below tables show the decisions reached on complaints during 2015/16. Some of the complaints determined during 2015/16 were received during 2014/15, hence them being logged against former departments.

Stage 1

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
Community Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Environmental Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grounds Maintenance	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	4
Total for Grounds Maintenance	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	4
Street Cleaning	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Street Cleaning	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Environmental Services	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	5
Total for Community Services	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	5
Finance & Human Resource Management	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Finance Adults/Housing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total for Housing	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total for Finance Adults/Housing	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total for Finance & Human Resource Management	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Housing & Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Planned Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	5
Total for Planned Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	5
Responsive Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	5	3	14	0	22
Total for Responsive Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	5	3	14	0	22
Total for Building Services	0	0	0	7	3	17	0	27
Housing Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asset Management	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	4

Total for Asset Management	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	4
Choice Based Lettings	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Choice Based Lettings	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Housing Management	0	1	3	10	4	6	2	26
Total for Housing Management	0	1	3	10	4	6	2	26
Repairs & Maintenance	0	1	2	2	2	7	3	17
Total for Repairs & Maintenance	0	1	2	2	2	7	3	17
Tenancy Enforcement	2	0	1	4	1	1	1	10
Total for Tenancy Enforcement	2	0	1	4	1	1	1	10
Tenancy Support	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	3
Total for Tenancy Support	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	3
Total for Housing Services	2	2	8	18	9	16	6	61
Total for Housing & Building Services	2	2	8	25	12	33	6	88
Total for Neighbourhood Services & Resources	2	2	9	27	12	35	7	94
Place	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
Service and Repairs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gas Fitter	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Gas Technician	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total for Service and Repairs	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Site Supervisor	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Plumber	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total for Site Supervisor	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Total for Building Services	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Total for Housing & Building Services	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Total for Place	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Total	8	2	9	27	12	35	7	100

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
Community Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Environmental Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grounds Maintenance	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Total for Grounds Maintenance	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Total for Environmental Services	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Total for Community Services	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Housing & Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Planned Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Planned Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Responsive Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Total for Responsive Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Total for Building Services	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	3
Housing Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing Management	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	5
Total for Housing Management	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	5
Repairs & Maintenance	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	5
Total for Repairs & Maintenance	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	5
Tenancy Enforcement	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	3
Total for Tenancy Enforcement	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	3
Total for Housing Services	0	2	3	4	3	1	0	13
Total for Housing & Building Services	0	2	3	5	3	3	0	16
Total for Neighbourhood Services & Resources	0	2	3	6	3	4	0	18
Total	0	2	3	6	3	4	0	18

Stage 3

The 'designated person' or 'democratic filter' determined 0 complaints during 2015/16.

Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman determined one complaint during 2015/16. The complaint was partially upheld and related to the standard/level of repairs undertaken to a tenant's flat following a flood.

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 2015/16. Some examples of these are detailed below.

A section was added to the Council's Furnished Tenancies Procedure 2015 regarding ability to pay and what happens if tenants arrears are not managed.

The Council has introduced new procedures to ensure that operatives state within the job records whether a no access card has been provided and jobs recorded as no access will be reviewed to identify if works could have been completed in the absence of the tenant.

The Council agreed to clarifying what is meant by 'a reasonable offer of accommodation' to applicants who bid on major voids.

Officer's refreshed their knowledge of the proper procedure for dealing with anti-social behaviour complaints.

The Complaints Management database was updated to ensure that all Stage 2 complaints are automatically assigned to the Complaints Manager for investigation.

The Council agreed to ensure the issue of disability is properly considered when making decisions to grant/refuse permission for drive crossings due to the proximity of a tree.

Further Recommendations

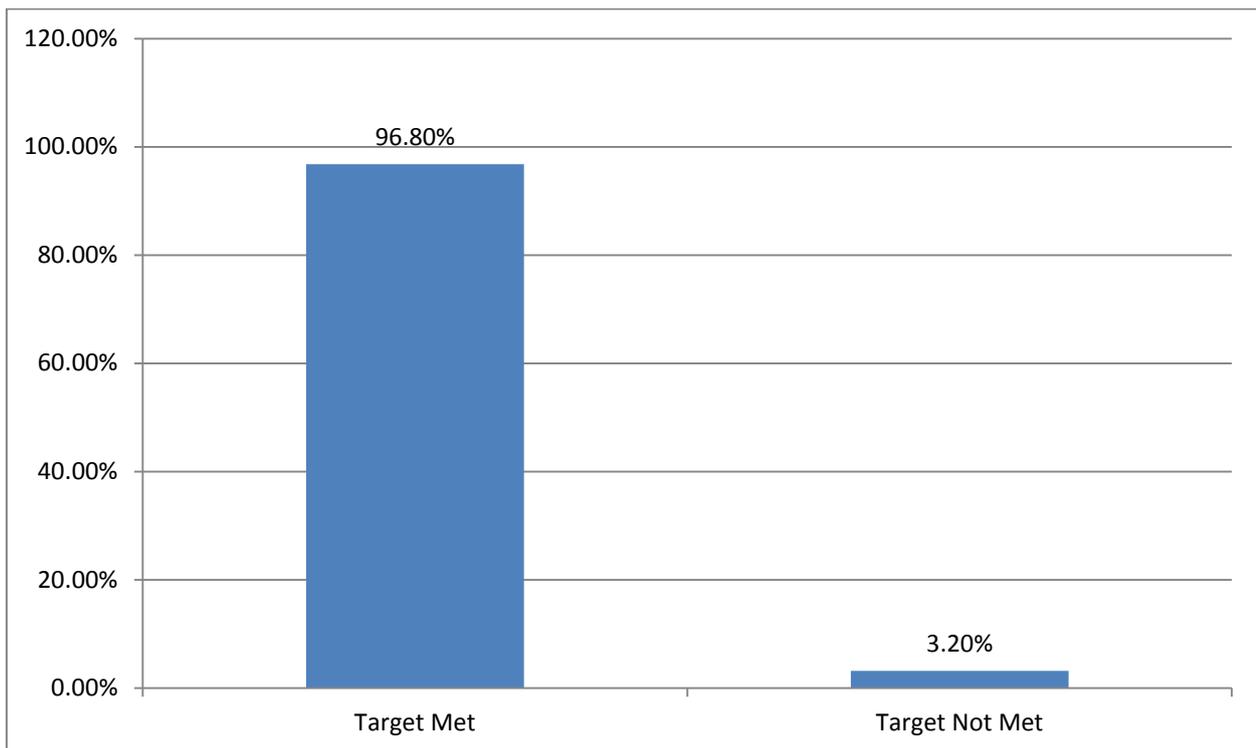
As previously recommended, the timeliness of responding to complaints or agreeing an extension when it is not going to be possible to respond within timescale should be addressed with Housing and Building Services staff.

Performance against the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure

The below graphs show performance in relation to those complaints acknowledged and responded to during 2015/16.

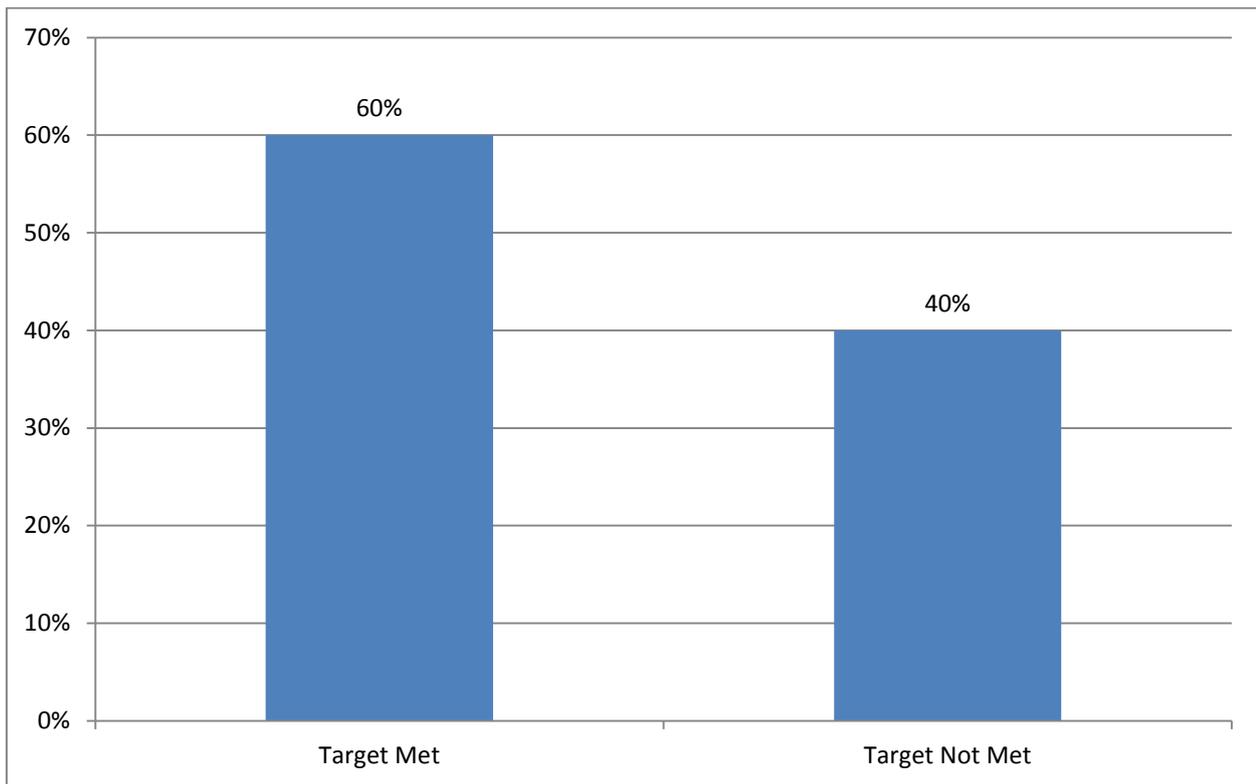
Stage 1

Performance against Stage 1 acknowledgement target (3 working days)



This is an increase from 93.65% in 2014/15.

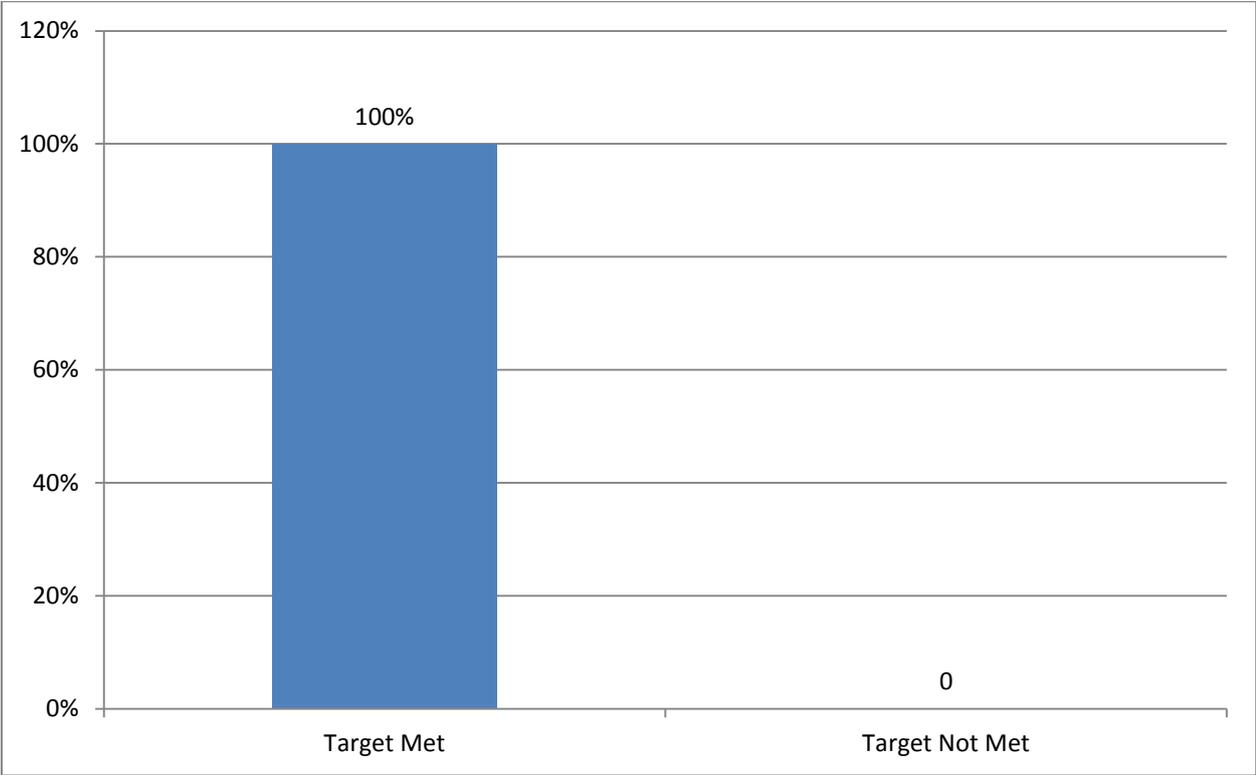
Performance against Stage 1 response target (25 working days)



This is an increase from 57.30% in 2014/15. 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, in accordance with the procedure, the responding officer should agree an extension with the complainant and maintain a dialogue throughout the course of the investigation.

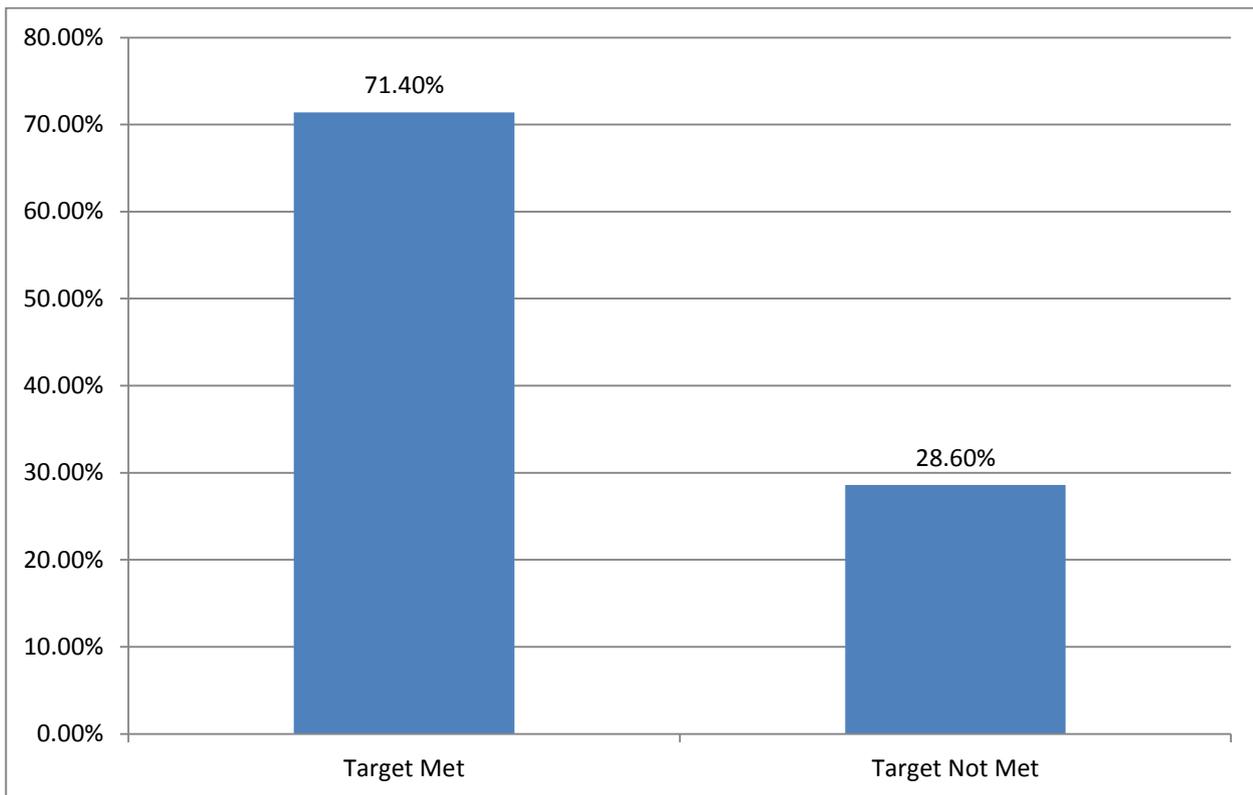
Stage 2

Performance against Stage 2 acknowledgement target (3 working days)



This is an increase from 92.90% in 2014/15.

Performance against Stage 2 response target (30 working days)



This is an increase from 16.70% in 2014/15. The increase in performance was in part due to the overall reduction in complaints received by the Council and the revised timescales. 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.