

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 1ST APRIL, 2019

REFERENCE FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE: 25TH FEBRUARY, 2019

“751 CORPORATE COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18 (MD) –

The Council adopted the Welsh Government's Model Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy in July 2013. There was a two-stage process, Stage 1 and Stage 2. Complaints at Stage 1 were seen as informal resolution and should be responded to within 10 working days. Stage 2 complaints were seen as formal complaints and should be responded to within 20 working days. After that the complainant was advised to contact the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW), if they remained unhappy

All Corporate Complaints and Compliments were recorded on Oracle CRM and fed in to the Complaints and Compliments Dashboards.

Corporate Management Team received reports on the performance of corporate complaints. (Social Services complaints performance was reported to Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee).

Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee received quarterly updates on local performance indicators relating to complaints handling.

The Audit Committee had within its Terms of Reference to monitor the performance of Corporate Complaints and to make recommendations to Cabinet / and or Council as appropriate.

There were a total of 294 complaints logged during 2017/18 compared 393 in 2016/17, a reduction of 99 complaints. It was noted that the number of complaints for 2016/17 was inflated by 90 complaints being raised in August 2016 for Waste Management during changes in waste and recycling collection days across the Vale.

The percentage of complaints escalated to Stage 2 (as shown in Appendix A to the report) showed a slight increase from 14.08% (2016/17) to 15.75% (2017/18). However, the percentage of complaints escalated to Stage 2 for the nine months to 31st December, 2018 reduced to 6.25% out 320 Stage 1 complaints recorded. Overall, the relatively low number of complaints escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2 would indicate that the Council was investigating and resolving complaints effectively.

During 2017/18, 210 complaints were received for the Environment and Housing Directorate (2016/17 – 303); 70 complaints for the Managing Director and Resources Directorate (2016/17 – 79) and 14 for the Learning and Skills Directorate (2016/17 –

11). Each Directorate experienced a sharp increase in complaints received during Quarter 4 2017/18, with 38 in January, 33 in February and 50 in March 2018.

The percentage of complaints Not Upheld had been relatively consistent standing at 38% in 2016/17, 41.8% in 2017/18 and 36.5% for 2018/19 to 31st December, 2018. During the same periods the percentage of complaints Upheld was 41.8%, 35% and 41.5% respectively.

Overall the percentage of complaints resolved within the 10/20 working day deadlines fell from 75% in 2016/17 to only 56.8% in 2017/18. There had been a slight improvement during the first nine months of 2018/19 to 57.1%. Even though no complaints were received during 2016/17 and 2017/18 relating to the speed of response to complaints (and only one during 2018/19 to date) this remained an area of focus for future work.

Following a query from a Member as to how the officers were going to plan to improve the timeliness of responses and that more informative data capture of identification of calls should be gathered, Members were informed that there was an ongoing issue in respect of timeliness. Although the system was identifying a delay in response, it was uncertain whether this represented a real delay for customers or was as a result in delayed administration of the CRM system. It was noted that a further report would be presented to the Corporate Management Team in May in order that Directors could consider response rates. It was also noted that further training of officers to ensure the capture of the detail of the complaints received had also been undertaken.

Having regard to the 20% drop, a Member queried whether there was a particular reason for this, being advised by the Operational Manager that in essence the percentage drop had been equally spread across all Directorates, there was no specific issue that had been pinpointed.

Having regard to the Council no longer having a Corporate Complaints Officer, the Chairman queried whether a business case should be developed in order that the service could be improved and that a Corporate Complaints Officer position is addressed. Complaints should also be reviewed as an opportunity to improve services, not always seen as a threat. In response, the officer advised that the work previously undertaken by the Complaints Officer role was in relation to the small number of Stage 2 complaints and in dealing with PSOW issues. This work had been redistributed within Customer Relations. Responsibility for investigating Stage 1 complaints lay with all service areas. Managers had been provided with a real time dashboard to help manage the workload, but further tracking opportunities could be considered to assist with improving performance.

Having considered the report, it was subsequently

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the contents of the report be noted.

(2) T H A T the Audit Committee continues to receive an annual update in relation to Corporate Complaints and Compliments.

(3) T H A T the report and the comments of the Audit Committee be referred to Cabinet for its consideration.

Reasons for decisions

(1&2) To ensure effective monitoring of corporate complaints.

(3) In order that Cabinet can be apprised of the report and the comments made by the Audit Committee.”

Attached as Appendix - Report to Audit Committee: 25th February, 2019

Name of Committee:	Audit Committee
Date of Meeting:	23/02/2018
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Corporate Performance and Resources
Report Title:	Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2017/18
Purpose of Report:	To advise Audit Committee of the performance of Corporate Complaints and Compliments during 2017/18
Report Owner:	Tony Curliss
Responsible Officer:	Managing Director
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	There are no matters in this report which relate to an individual ward
Policy Framework:	1. This is a matter for executive decision
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council operates the Welsh Governments 2-stage Model Concerns and Complaints Policy • All corporate complaints (excluding Social Services complaints) are recorded on Oracle CRM software and the data in this report is generated from that system • The council continues to handle Corporate Complaints effectively with a relatively small number escalating from Stage 1 to Stage 2 (15.75%). In addition only 31 complaints were made to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales. Of these only 4 were investigated and upheld. • An Equality Survey of complaints undertaken in January 2019 indicates that complaints were mainly received from those 50 years and over (78%). 56% of complainants were female and 36% from those whose day to day activities are limited through disability. 12% of respondents described their ability to speak Welsh as between Competent and Fluent., • Corporate complaints in 2017/18 fell compared to the previous year from 393 to 292 • The number of complaints escalated to stage 2 showed a slight increase to 15.75% from 14.08%. For the first 9 months of 2018/19 this figure fell significantly to 6.25%. • The number of complaints received by directorate during 2017/18 was; Environment & Housing - 210 (2016/17 303); Managing Director & Resources - 70 (79); Learning & Skills - 14 (11). • 62% of complaints were upheld either in whole or in part during 2017/18 compared to 63.5% in 2016/17 	

- The percentage of complaints resolved within target timescales fell during 2017/18 to just 56.1% compared to 75% the previous year. This is despite functionality being employed to facilitate delayed administration of CRM records.
- The cause of complaint was recorded in circa 64% of incidents. Failing to meet Service Standards (14.8%) and Staff Behaviour (13.9%) continued to be the most common causes of complaint in 2017/18.
- Work to improve complaint handling will focus on improving:

Administration of CRM records to increase confidence in reported performance against target time scales

Promotional work to ensure that under-represented groups, and in particular younger citizens, are aware of the complaints process and how it can be accessed.

1. Recommendation

- 1.1** That Audit committee notes the content of this report
- 1.2** That Audit Committee continues to receive an annual update in relation to corporate complaints and compliments

2. Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1** To ensure effective monitoring of corporate complaints is undertaken

3. Background

- 3.1** The Council adopted the Welsh Government's Model Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy in July 2013. There is a two-stage process, Stage 1 and Stage 2. Complaints at Stage 1 are seen as informal resolution and should be responded to within 10 working days. Stage 2 complaints are seen as formal complaints and should be responded to within 20 working days. After that the complainant is advised to contact the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW), if they remain unhappy.

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- 3.2** All Corporate Complaints and Compliments are recorded on Oracle CRM and feed in to the Complaints and Compliments Dashboards.
- 3.3** Corporate Management Team receives reports on the performance of corporate complaints. (Social Services complaints performance is reported to Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee).
- 3.4** Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee receives quarterly updates on local performance indicators relating to complaints handling.
- 3.5** The Audit Committee has within its terms of reference to monitor the performance of Corporate Complaints and to make recommendations to Cabinet/and or Council as appropriate.
- 3.6** An effective complaints system plays a key role in ensuring that members of the public receiving or seeking a service from the Council have any concerns or complaints dealt with effectively. In addition, any compliments are captured and so that good practice and service can be shared with staff.
- 3.7** The complaints process enables staff to acknowledge when mistakes have been made. Put them right effectively and apologise, where appropriate and learn lessons from complaints and use the information we gain to improve our services.
- 3.8** In May 2018 the Council's Customer Complaints Officer post was deleted to achieve savings targets. The role of Contact Officer for the Ombudsman has been undertaken by the Operational Manager Customer Relations.

4. Key Issues for Consideration

- 4.1** There were a total of 294 complaints logged during 2017/18 compared 393 in 2016/17, a reduction of 99 complaints. It should be noted that the number of complaints for 2016/17 was inflated by 90 complaints being raised in August 2016 for Waste Management during changes in waste and recycling collection days across the Vale.
- 4.2** The percentage of complaints escalated to Stage 2 (see appendix A) showed a slight increase from 14.08% (2016/17) to 15.75% (2017/18). However, the percentage of complaints escalated to Stage 2 for the nine months to 31 December 2018 reduced to 6.25% out 320 Stage 1 complaints recorded. Overall, the relatively low number of complaints escalated from stage 1 to stage 2 would indicate that the Council is investigating and resolving complaints effectively.
- 4.3** The average number of Stage 1 complaints logged per month decreased during 2017/18 to 21, from the 2016/17 average of 29. However for the 9 months to 31 December 2018 the average showed a sharp increase to 36.
- 4.4** Taking into account Stage 2 complaints, monthly averages totalled 25, 33 and 28 respectively.
- 4.5** During 2017/18 210 complaints were received for the Environment and Housing Directorate (2016/17 303); 70 complaints for the Managing Director & Resources Directorate (2016/17 79) and 14 for the Learning & Skills Directorate (2016/17

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11). Each directorate experienced a sharp increase in complaints received during Q4 2017/18, with 38 in January, 33 in February and 50 in March 2018.

- 4.6** The percentage of complaints Not Upheld has been relatively consistent standing at 38% in 2016/17, 41.8% in 2017/18 and 36.5% for 2018/19 to 31 December 2018. During the same periods the percentage of complaints Upheld was 41.8%, 35% and 41.5% respectively.
- 4.7** Overall the percentage of complaints resolved within the 10/20 working day deadlines fell from 75% in 2016/17 to only 56.8% in 2017/18. There has been a slight improvement during the first 9 months of 2018/19 to 57.1%. Even though no complaints were received during 2016/17 and 2017/18 relating to the speed of response to complaints (and only 1 during 2018/19 to date) this remains an area of focus for future work.
- 4.8** Previously services have fed back that delayed administration of CRM records was a major cause of poor performance against target time scales. However, functionality has been developed and staff trained on capturing actual date of complaint resolution and performance remains below desired levels.
- 4.9** During 2017/18 the percentage of complaints closed with no identification of cause reduced to 36.2% compared to 55% the previous year. However performance in this area fell during the first 9 months of 2018/19 to 61%.
- 4.10** Where recorded Service Standards Not Met is consistently identified as a cause of complaint increasing from 7.1% in 2016/17 to 14.8% in 2017/18. Staff behaviour was also frequently identified as a cause of complaint at 12.8% and 13.9% for 2016/17 and 2017/18 respectively.
- 4.11** The percentage of complaints where no learning outcome has been recorded increased from 46.1% in 2016/17 to 59.9% in 2017/18. The most commonly recorded learning is the need for staff training, accounting for 18.1% of complaints in 2016/17 and 21.1% in 2017/18.
- 4.12** Since September 2016 it has been possible for services to monitor their own complaint performance using real time information from the Complaints Dashboard. This should provide for a better foundation for improved management of complaints in the future.
- 4.13** During 2017/18 31 complaints in respect of this council were received by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) compared to 41 for 2016/17. 4 Section 21 Reports were issued by the PSOW 2 of which related to the same complaint from different customers. 3 Section 21 reports related to Planning issues and 1 to Children's Social Services. No Section 16 Reports were issued during 2017/18. No Section 16 or 21 Reports were issued against the Council during 2016/17.
- 4.14** Of the other PSOW complaints received during 2017/18 26 were not investigated, 4 because the customer had not exhausted the Council's Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy. 3 complaints were resolved through the "Early Resolution" process and did not require an investigation.

- 4.15** An Equality Survey of complaints was undertaken in January 2019 and as of the date of this report 50 responses have been received. Of those who provided data, the average age of complainants in 2018 was 60, with 78% being aged 50 or over. Only 1 complaint was received from a customer in their 20's. 56% of complaints were received from Females and 36% from customers whose day to day activities were limited by some form of disability. 12% described their ability to speak Welsh between Competent and Fluent.
- 4.16** During 2017/18 a total of 232 compliments were received of which 170 were received by Environment & Housing Directorate. This compares figures of 438 and 144 respectively for 2016/17. (See Appendix B)
- 4.17** The key area for future work in 2019/20 is to improve administration of the CRM records to achieve increased confidence in and usefulness of the performance information being reported. Further promotional work needs to be undertaken to ensure that under-represented groups, and in particular younger citizens, are aware of the complaints process and how it can be accessed.

5. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 5.1** An effective complaints policy that encourages learning can contribute towards the development of services that meet the needs of our citizens. In this way, citizens can be involved in improving services and ensuring that they meet long term needs. The ability to identify causes of complaints and/or service failure also presents an opportunity to design in service features which have a preventative impact. This is particularly true for services that which are involved in wellbeing issues.

6. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 6.1** Costs are accrued to the Directorate such as production of complaints leaflets and staff time. However, the costs have been managed within the budget for this area of work

Employment

- 6.2** There are no employment considerations relating to the subject of this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 6.3** There is no statutory requirement to adopt the Model concerns and Complaints Policy and Guidance for Public Service Providers in Wales. However the Welsh Government and PSOW have commended its adoption.

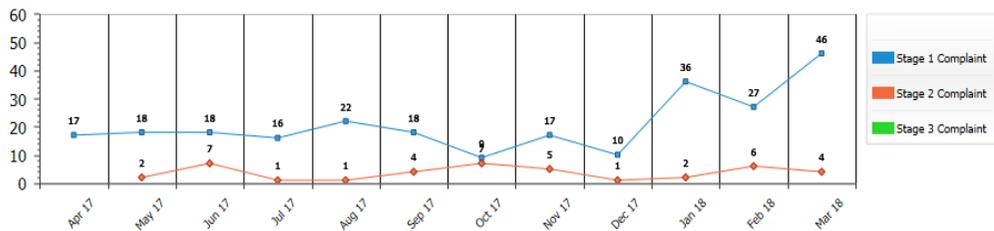
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- 6.4** All citizens are able to access the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy. An equality survey is sent to complainants asking for feedback on the eight protected characteristics.

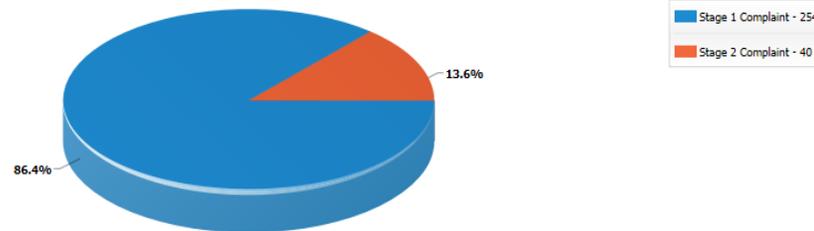
7. Background Papers

OTNone

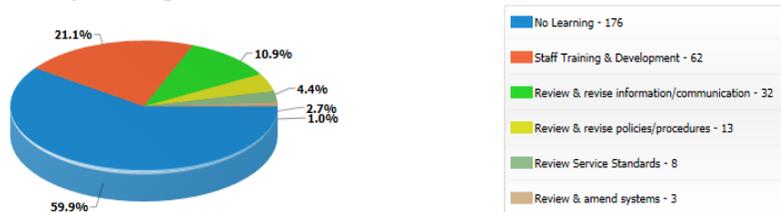
Monthly Complaints



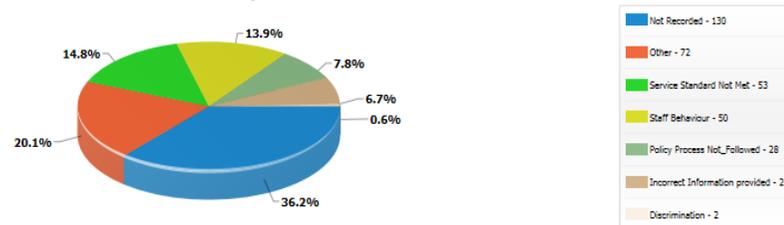
Complaint Resolution Stage



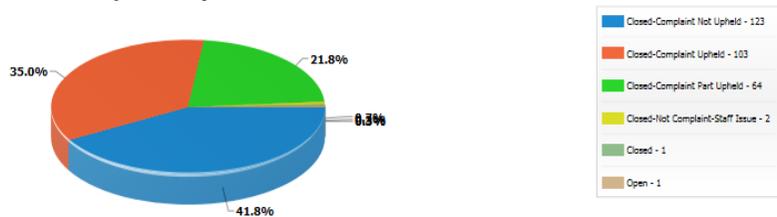
Key Learning Points



Cause Of Complaint



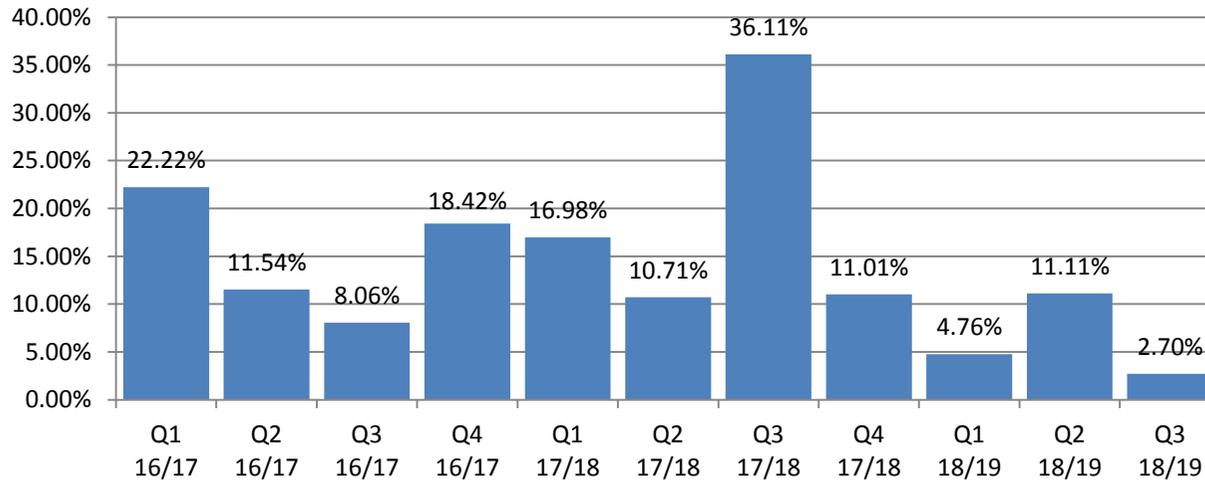
Complaints by Outcome



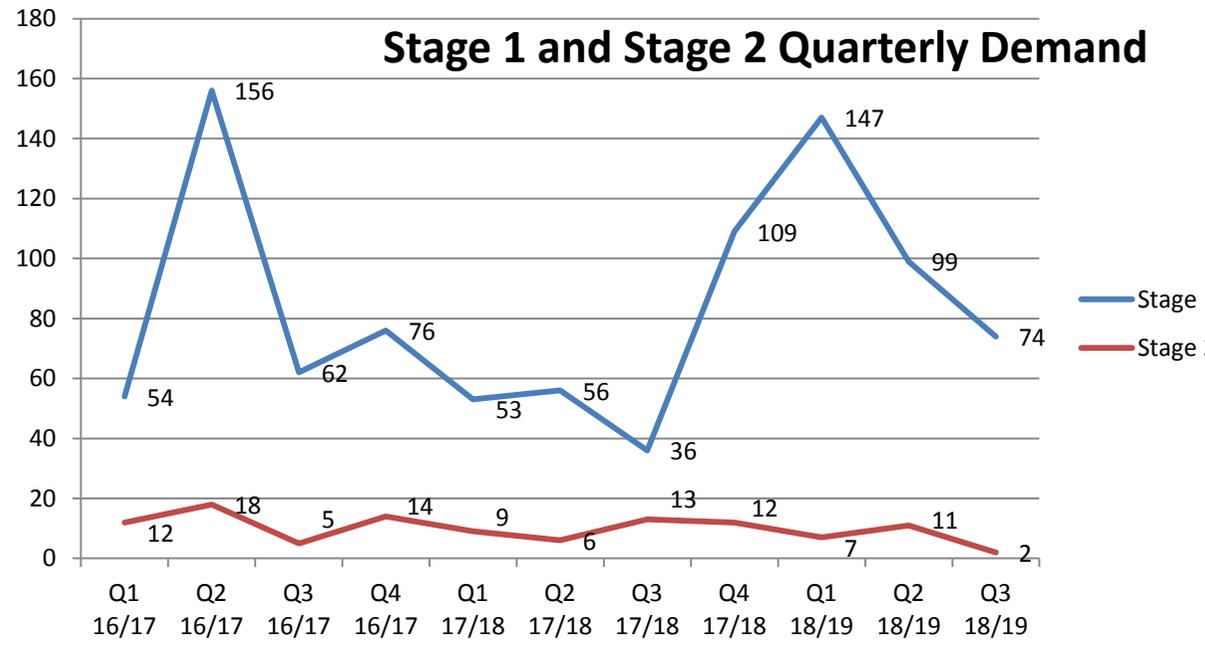
On Target

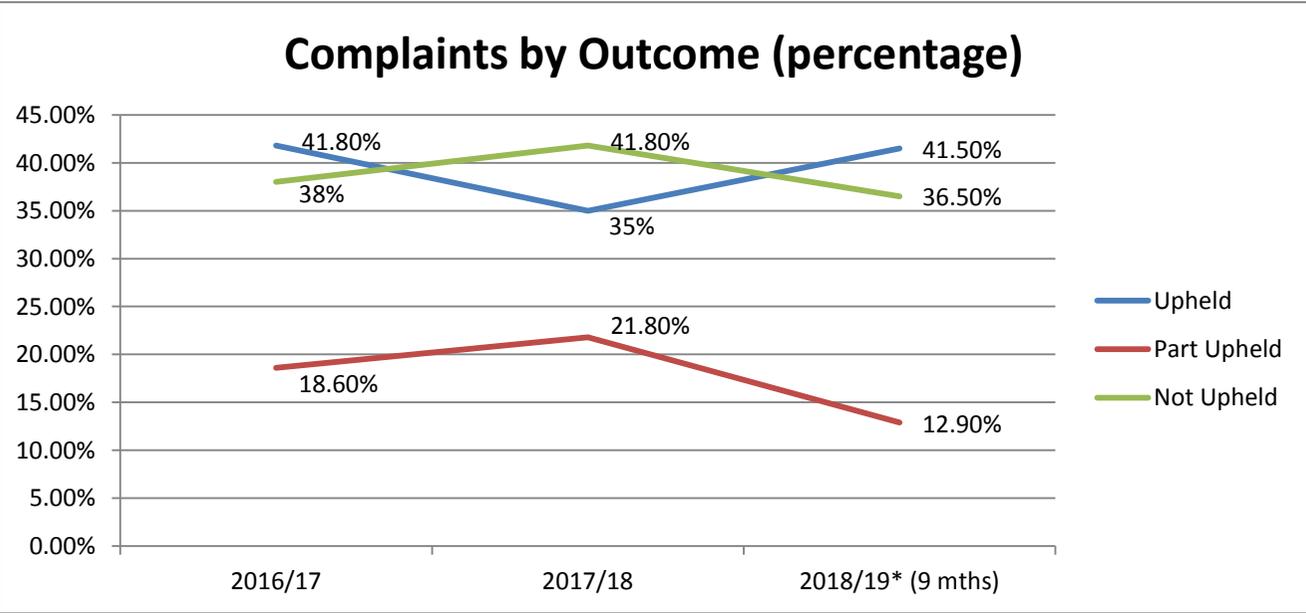
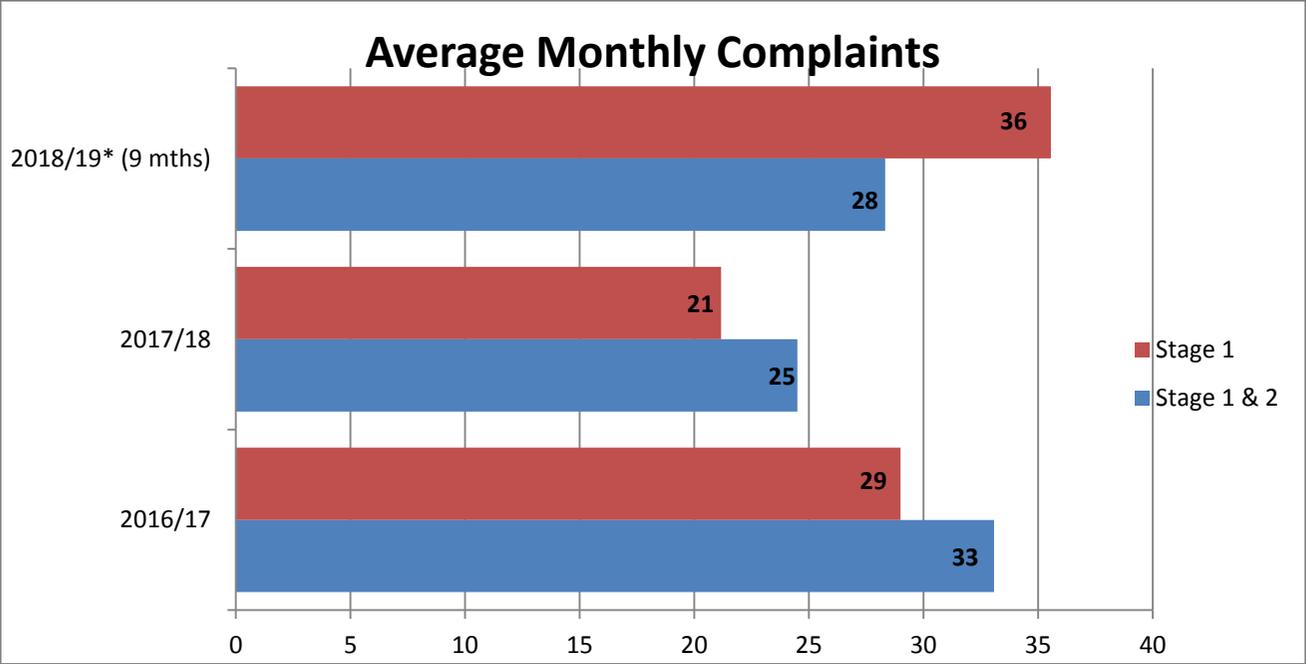


Percentage Escalated to Stage 2



Stage 1 and Stage 2 Quarterly Demand



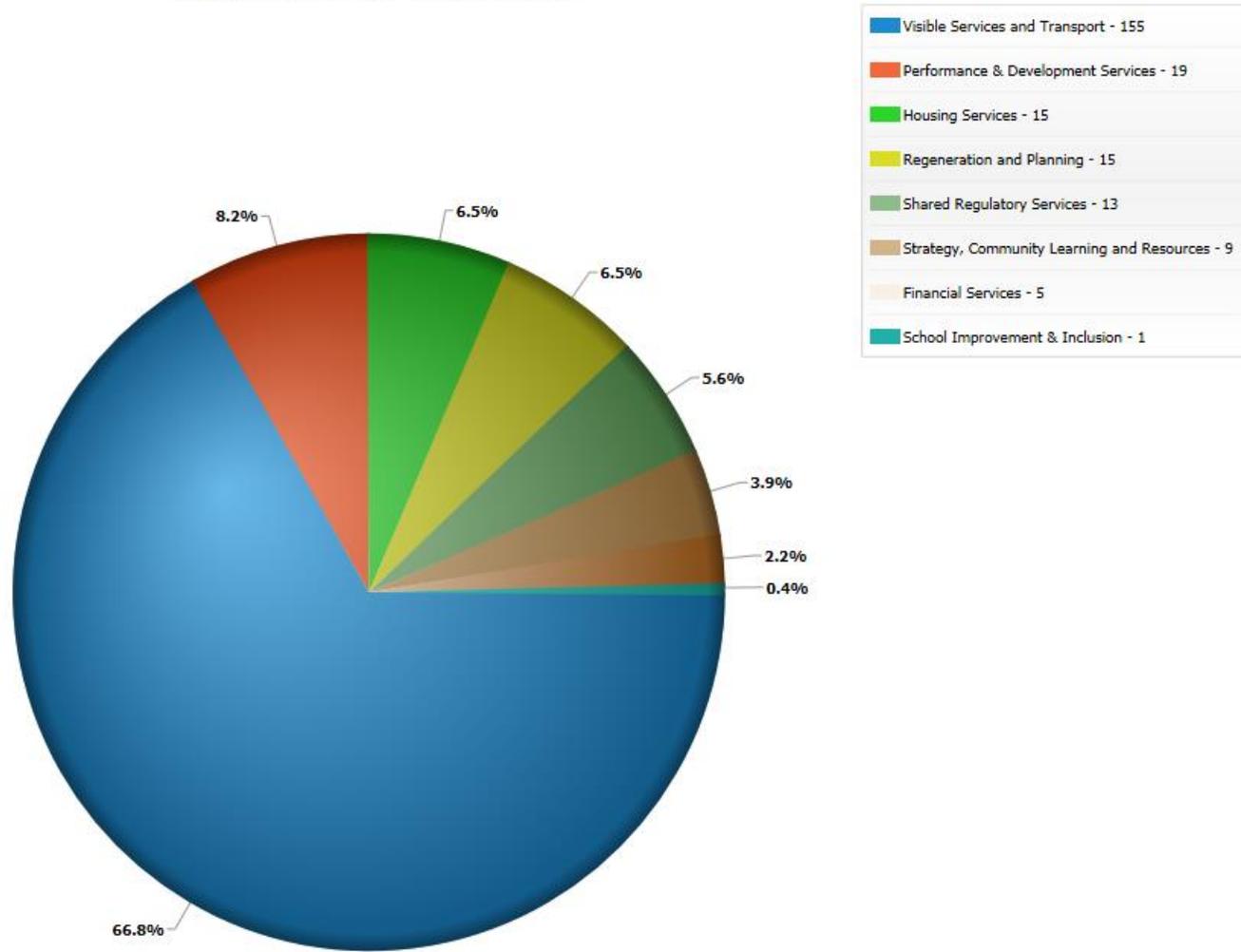


Compliments Received by Service Area

Appendix B

Financial 2017/18

Compliments by Service Area



Financial 2016/17

Compliments by Service Area

