Agenda Item No: 13

Meeting of:	**Cabinet**
Date of Meeting:	**Thursday, 19 November 2026**
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Resources Scrutiny Committee
Item which the Chair has decided is urgent (Part I) **(If yes, why)**	Not applicable
Urgent Decision Procedure Used (15.14 of the Constitution) **(If yes, why)**	Not applicable
Item Type	Part I
Report Title:	Review of Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy
Portfolio Holder:	Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources
Strategic Leadership Team:	Chief Executive
Lead Officer:	Operational Manager (and Statutory Head of) – Democratic Services

1. What is this report about?

1.1. The report requests Cabinet to approve the amendments made to the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy following the recent review, and if in agreement, to refer the matter to Governance and Audit Committee for consideration.

1.2. Amendments made to the policy following the review are limited and seek to improve clarity of information and to ensure that contact details are up to date. There have been no changes to the processes and procedures for managing complaints.

1.3. The Council adopted the Welsh Government's Model Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy in July 2013. Complainants who remain unsatisfied after Stages 1 and 2 of the Policy can refer their complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) and as this process remains unchanged, the Council's adoption of the same remains the case.

1.4. Audit Wales also undertook a review of the Council's approach to Corporate Complaints, with the findings published in December 2025. Cabinet and Governance and Audit Committee have been sighted upon the response to this audit, which has also informed the revisions undertaken.

1.5. Although the guidance has not changed and the process for dealing with complaints remains unaltered, it is important to note that the purpose of the policy is to ensure that complainants' experiences are consistent and that a fair response is given to raising concerns. However, a regular review of the policy is required for the following reasons:

1.5.1. Continuous Improvement - updating the policy can help reflect lessons learned and enhance effectiveness.

1.5.2. Relevance and Clarity - as the Council develops roles, procedures and contact points may change. Regular reviews keep the policy accurate, clear and relevant to current operations.

1.5.3. Citizen Trust and Transparency – a well-maintained policy demonstrates to our residents that we value feedback and take complaints seriously, building trust and improving relationships.

Using AI (Artificial Intelligence) to make a complaint

1.6. A new section has been added to the Complaints Policy to clarify the Council's position on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) when preparing complaints. The amendment confirms that complainants may use AI tools to assist in drafting submissions and that complaints will not be treated differently solely because AI has been used.

1.7. The revised policy makes clear that complainants remain responsible for the accuracy, authenticity and relevance of the information provided. Where complaints contain unclear, inconsistent, inaccurate or potentially misleading information, the Council may request clarification or supporting evidence. The policy also confirms that complaints containing fabricated or manipulated information may be considered under the Council's provisions for unreasonable, malicious or vexatious complaints.

Handling of Social Media Complaints

1.8. A new section clarifies the Council's approach to concerns and complaints raised via social media. While social media is not a formal complaints channel, concerns raised through official Council accounts may be resolved informally or signposted to the Corporate Concerns and Complaints process.

1.9. The policy confirms that formal complaint investigations will not normally be conducted through social media, and that individuals may be required to use established complaints channels. It also provides for the management of inappropriate social media content and repeated commentary in accordance with relevant Council policies.

1.10. The change aims to support the appropriate use of emerging technologies while safeguarding the integrity, fairness and effectiveness of the Council's complaints process.

Anonymous Complaints

1.11. A new section has also been included to explain the Council's approach to anonymous complaints. The policy confirms that the Council will normally accept anonymous complaints where the information provided suggests there may have been a failure in service delivery, maladministration, a breach of policy, misconduct, fraud, safeguarding concerns, or other matters affecting the public interest. The decision whether to investigate an anonymous complaint, and the scope of any investigation, will be determined by the Council having

regard to the nature of the allegations, the evidence available, and the ability to conduct a fair and proportionate investigation.

Easy Read version

1.12. An additional document has been prepared to complement the policy. A slimmed down easy read version has been produced, which covers the key aspects of the policy. The policy itself maintaining the detailed explanation of how the Council handles complaints. The Council is committed to ensuring that everyone can access and use its complaints process. We recognise that people have different communication needs and that not everyone finds standard documents easy to understand. To ensure the Council's complaints service is fair, accessible and inclusive, this Easy Read version of the Corporate Complaints Policy. It uses clear language, straightforward explanations and visual aids to help people understand how to make a complaint and what they can expect from us. This supports our commitments under the Equality Act 2010, the Council's Citizen Charter and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Complaints Standards.

2. What are the Recommendations?

	Recommendations – What and How?	**Reason for Recommendation – Why?**
2.1	That, subject to Recommendation 2.2, Cabinet approves the revised Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy.	To enable an updated Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy to be approved.
2.2	That the report and revised Policy are referred to Governance and Audit Committee for consideration, with any recommendations referred back to Cabinet. Should there be no recommendations from Committee, this report and policy will be agreed.	The Local Government and Elections (Wales) act (2021) requires Governance and Audit Committee to review and assess the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively and to make reports and recommendations in relation to the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively. In order that Cabinet can be apprised of the report and the comments made by Governance and Audit Committee.

3.0 What is the background to this report?

3.1 The Council adopted the Welsh Government's Model Concerns and Complaints Policy in 2013 and continues to operate a two-stage process for handling complaints from residents. Should the complainant remain unsatisfied at the end of this process they are advised to contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).

3.2 The purpose of the policy is to ensure that residents have a positive, fair and consistent experience of addressing concerns and complaints with Council services. The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act (2021) requires Governance and Audit Committees to review and assess the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively. A complaints and compliments report has been produced for consideration by that committee (and its predecessor) annually since 2014-15.

3.3 In May 2021, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales confirmed that the Council's policy complied with the Model Policy. No changes to the process of managing complaints since that review are therefore necessary.

3.4 A light touch review of the policy has been undertaken. That review has ensured that the information contained within the policy remain relevant and that there is clarity for residents on how best to raise a concern and ensure that it is handled effectively. The review has been undertaken in conjunction with the Council's Monitoring Officer, the Information Manager and Data Protection Officer and the Equalities and Welsh Language Officer, whilst also drawing on learning from Public Service Ombudsmen for Wales and other Local Authorities.

4.0 What issues are there to be considered?

4.1 Appendix A presents the updated Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy for Cabinet consideration together with the Easy Read version. As a result of the review described above, several updates have been made to the policy as described in the following paragraphs.

4.2 New sections have been introduced to clarify how concerns and complaints raised through social media will be managed, how the Council handles complaints that are anonymous and the Council's position in relation to AI. Details are set out above in the earlier paragraphs of this report. The amendment recognises that residents may use the Council's official social media channels to express dissatisfaction or raise concerns about services. However, social media is not considered the primary route for submitting formal complaints.

4.3 The policy sets out that concerns raised via social media may be addressed informally, referred into the Corporate Concerns and Complaints process, or require further information before investigation. Where personal or confidential information is involved, the Council will seek to move discussions to a private communication channel.

4.4 The revised policy confirms that formal complaint investigations will not normally be conducted through social media and that comments posted on social media will not automatically be treated as formal complaints. Individuals may be directed to use the Council's established complaints channels where formal consideration is required.

4.5 The amendment also provides guidance on managing ongoing complaint matters on social media, including the Council's ability not to respond to repeated commentary where a matter is already under investigation or has been fully considered. It further clarifies that abusive, threatening, defamatory or otherwise inappropriate content may be removed and managed in accordance with the Council's Social Media Policy and Policy on Unacceptable Actions by Citizens.

4.6 The Council allows people to use AI tools to help draft complaints and will not treat complaints differently because AI was used. However, the complainant remains fully responsible for ensuring that all information submitted is accurate, truthful, relevant and reflects their own experiences.

4.7 If a complaint contains unclear, inconsistent or inaccurate information, the Council may request clarification or supporting evidence. Complaints that appear to include fabricated, misleading or manipulated content may affect how the complaint is handled and could be considered under policies relating to unreasonable, malicious or vexatious complaints.

4.8 To ensure a fair investigation, any AI-generated content should accurately represent the complainant's concerns, circumstances and desired outcomes. This approach aims to balance the benefits of AI technology with the need to maintain a fair, effective and trustworthy complaints process.

4.9 The substantive complaints processes and procedures remain unaltered following the review of the policy and the Council continues to apply the Welsh Government's Model Concerns and Complaints Guidance.

4.10 Amendments made to the policy relate to improving clarity of information to reduce the number of issues raised inappropriately through the policy and reduce the risk of delay in addressing issues and concerns.

5.0 How has evidence been used to inform the report, including the views of others?

5.1 The proposed policy amendments have been informed by emerging guidance and good practice on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in public services and complaint handling, together with a review of approaches adopted by other Local Authorities. The changes also reflect the increasing use of social media and AI tools by residents when interacting with the Council and raising concerns.

5.2 The amendments have been developed to provide clarity for both complainants and officers, ensuring the Complaints Policy remains fit for purpose, transparent and aligned with current communication methods, while maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of the complaints process. Internal consultation has been undertaken with relevant service areas responsible for complaints handling, governance and digital communications.

6.0 What are the next steps if the recommendations are approved?

6.1 Subject to approval, the revised Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy will be formally adopted and published on the Council's website.

6.2 Relevant guidance, procedures and staff communications will be updated to reflect the changes, including the new provisions relating to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and complaints raised through social media.

6.3 Officers involved in complaints handling will be made aware of the amendments to ensure a consistent approach to implementation.

6.4 The updated policy will then come into effect from the approved implementation date and be applied to all new complaints received thereafter.

7.0 How does this report support Vale 2030 and Reshaping?

7.1 The proposed amendments support the Vale 2030 Corporate Plan and the Council's Reshaping Services principles by ensuring that the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy remain modern, accessible and responsive to changing customer expectations. The introduction of provisions relating to Artificial Intelligence (AI) and social media reflects evolving digital communication methods and supports the delivery of efficient, customer-focused services.

7.2 The changes promote transparency, accountability and continuous improvement by providing clear processes for receiving, managing and responding to feedback and complaints, helping the Council to learn from customer experiences and improve service delivery. They also support the Council's commitment to digital innovation while maintaining fair, effective and proportionate governance arrangements.

8.0 How does this demonstrate the Five Ways of Working?

8.1 Listening to and understanding complaints is a key source of the "voice of the customer", what they need from the Council and involving them in decisions about how the Council delivers services.

8.2 Learning from complaints is an important way in which the Council can develop services that meet the changing needs of residents and are sustainable. Similarly, services can be improved to prevent complaints occurring in the future and improve access to and delivery of services.

8.3 Vale 2030 includes commitments to improving customer service and engagement with our communities. Learning from and effectively handling complaints is a key element of this work.

9.0 Resources

9.1 There are no direct resource implications as a result of this report. It is hoped that the updates provide further clarity regarding the use of Council's complaints policy which will make its use and access easier.

10.0 Finance

10.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

10.2 The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales has powers to require the Council to compensate complainants financially should it be found guilty of maladministration. Effective investigation and management of complaints will minimise the risk of this happening.

11.0 Workforce

11.1 There are no matters in this report relating to employment matters.

12.0 Legal and Equalities

12.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and is available in Appendix B.

12.2 Under part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, section 115, Governance and Audit Committee are given statutory functions, with effect from 1st April 2021, to "review and assess the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively" and "make reports and recommendations in relation to the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively".

12.3 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 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales have commended its adoption.

12.4 The Council's complaints process is promoted online and via leaflets at reception points. Complaints can be registered on the website, by post, by email, in person, by telephone and using the RNIB Relay service. The Council also supports British Sign Language. This ensures that all residents are aware of and have access to the complaints process irrespective of age, gender, belief or disability.

13.0 Key Contacts

13.1 **Who are the primary officers to contact with any comments and/or queries on the report?**

Lead Officer: Evelyn Morgan Information Manager and Data Protection Officer dpo@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk	Democratic Services Officer: James Langridge-Thomas Operational Manager Democratic Services Jlangridge-thomas@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix A – Annual Corporate Complaints and Compliments Report 2025/26

Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Documents

Audit Wales, Vale of Glamorgan Council – Corporate complaints – Supporting service improvement, December 2025

VALE of GLAMORGAN
BRO MORGANNWG

Annual Corporate Complaints and Compliments Report

2025/26

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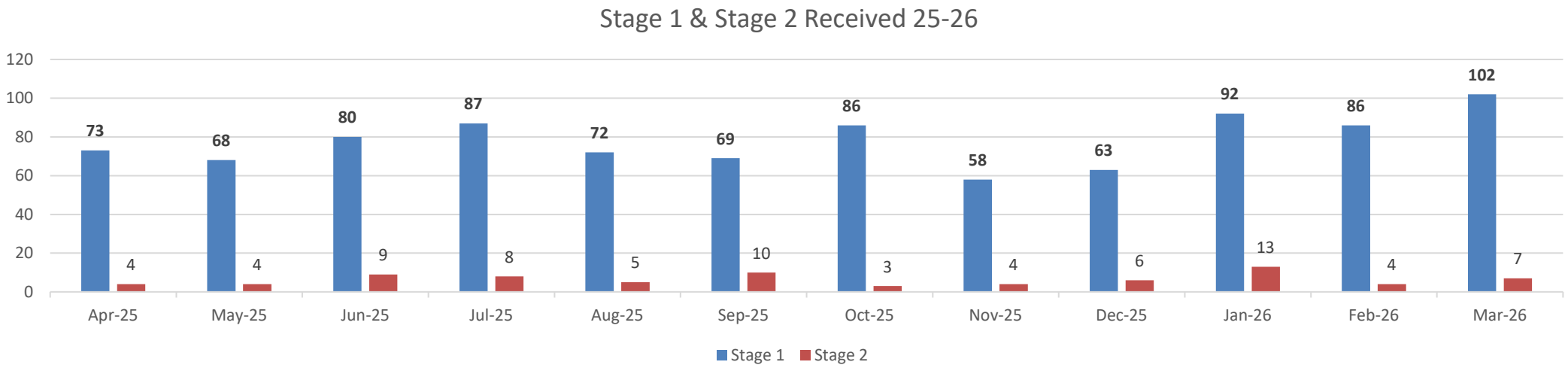
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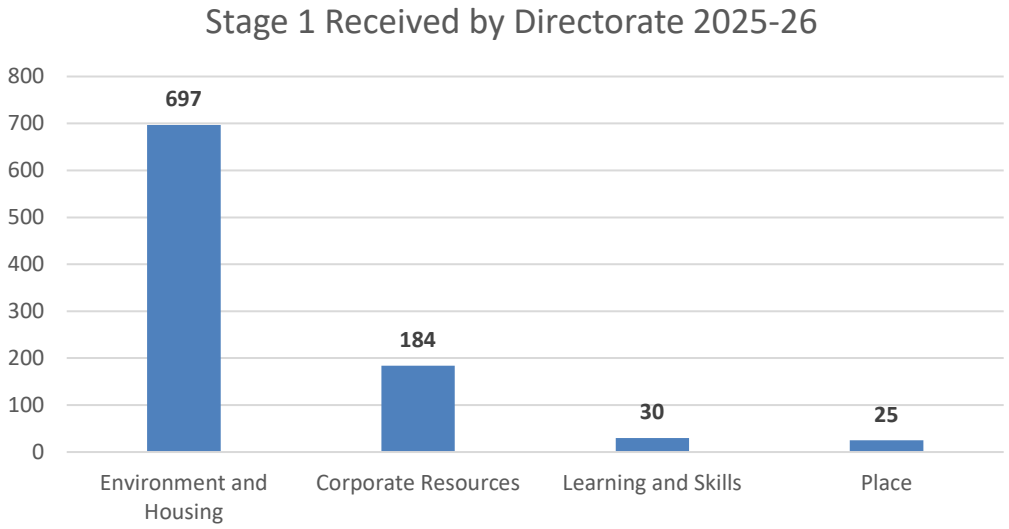
This report details all formally recorded complaints investigated through the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy between 01 April 2025 and 31 March 2026.

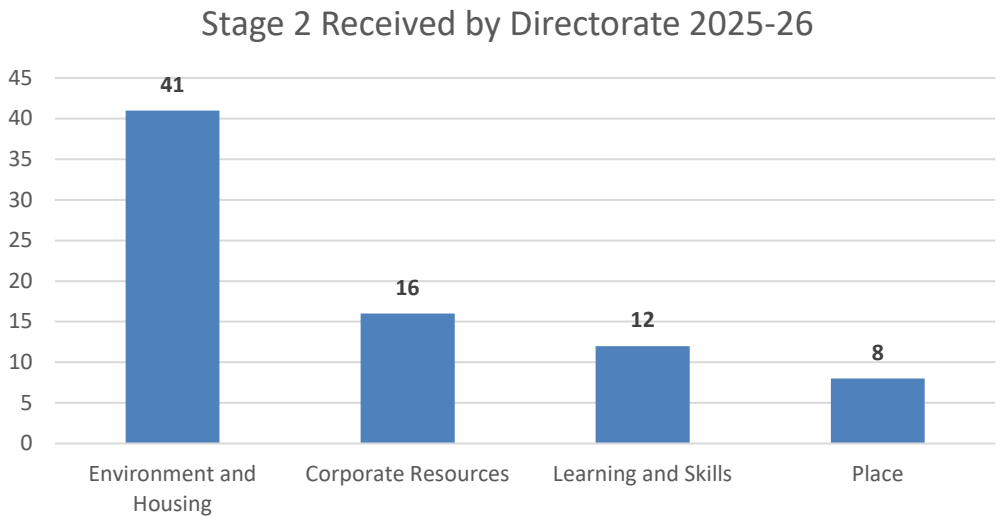
Social Services complaints are investigated under Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and are reported separately.

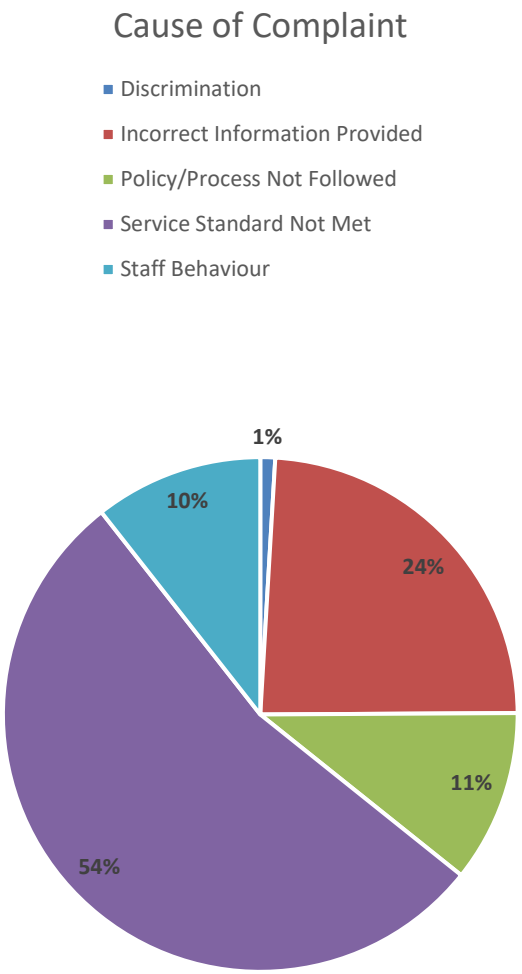
A summary of complaints raised with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW), Welsh Language Commissioner and Social Services is provided for completeness and context.

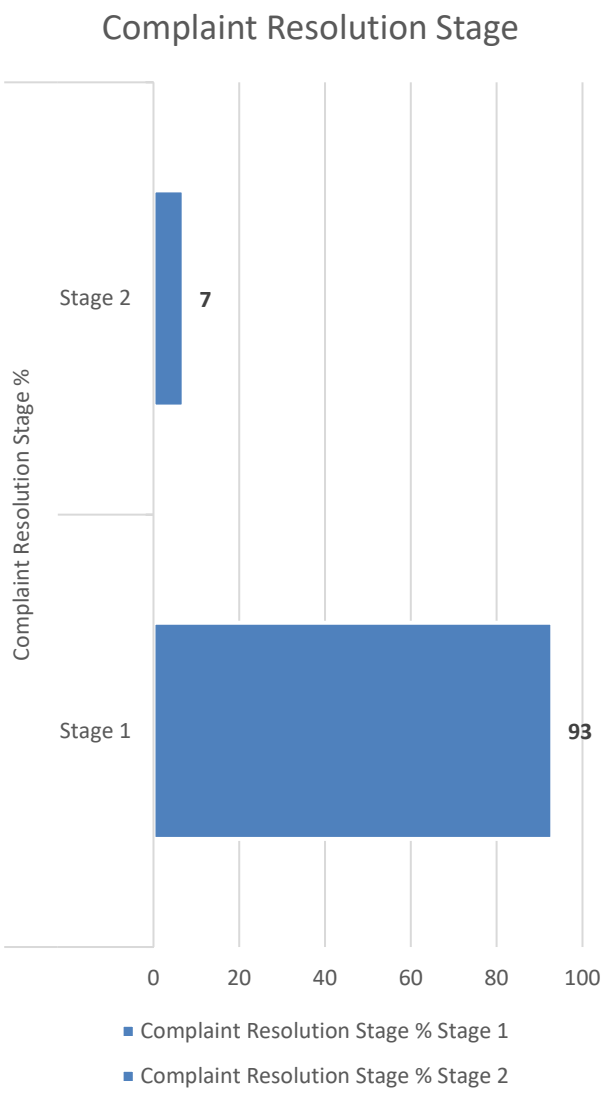
Council Corporate Complaints Performance 2025/26

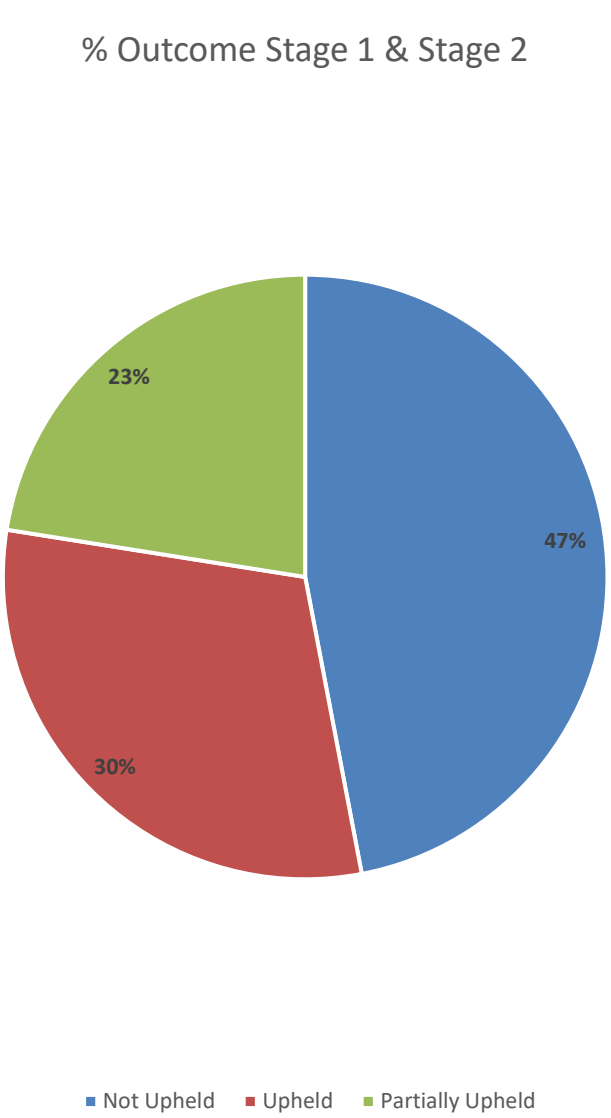







Cause of Complaint
Discrimination
Incorrect Information Provided
Policy/Process Not Followed
Service Standard Not Met
Staff Behaviour
1%
24%
11%
54%
10%


Complaint Resolution Stage
Complaint Resolution Stage %
Stage 2
7
Stage 1
93
0
20
40
60
80
100
Complaint Resolution Stage % Stage 1
Complaint Resolution Stage % Stage 2


% Outcome Stage 1 & Stage 2
23%
47%
30%
Not Upheld
Upheld
Partially Upheld

Executive Summary

The number of complaints received during the year was 936, a reduction from 944 in 2024-25), which was the highest level we have recorded in Vale of Glamorgan. This demonstrates the pressure our frontline teams are experiencing, especially those delivering high volume, customer facing services in meeting the needs of our residents. While some of the increase is linked to residents using our online systems more confidently, the data also shows that we are not consistently meeting expectations around timeliness and reliability.

Feedback submitted directly by complainants gives us a clearer picture of what residents are experiencing. Of the complaints received, 39% related to delays or services not being delivered as expected, a reduction on the previous year's figure of 51.6%. A further 50% felt they didn't get adequate updates on their complaint. This suggests that many residents do not feel kept informed about the progress of their enquiry or the services they have requested.

These insights point to important opportunities for improvement. They show the need for a targeted review of service performance, with a focus on whether current service levels remain appropriate and achievable. They also highlight the value of more proactive communication with residents, particularly when delays occur or service delivery changes.

By addressing these themes, we can improve residents' experiences, reduce repeat contact, and support teams to deliver a more consistent and reliable service.

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) has collected complaints performance data through the Complaints Standards Authority since 2019. To help compare councils fairly, the data is presented as the number of complaints received per 1,000 residents.

During 2025-26, the PSOW received 1,704 complaints about local authorities across Wales. This is a 27% annual increase and 67% more when compared to 3 years ago.

Across Wales, the highest rate recorded in 2025/26 was **12.44 complaints per 1,000 residents** and the lowest was **1.72**. Over the five-year period up to 2025/26, the Council moved from having the **4th highest** complaints rate in Wales to the **3rd highest**, reflecting the growing pressure on our services and the increasing visibility of issues reported by residents.

Responsiveness remains an area for improvement, with only **33%** of complaints resolved within target timescales. However, PSOW data shows that **86%** of the Vale of Glamorgan Council complaints were resolved within **three months**, the Welsh local authority average is **98%**. This suggests that while we need to improve timeliness in the early stages, we continue to meet wider expectations for resolving complaints in a reasonable period.

These insights highlight the need for continued focus on service resilience, clearer communication with residents, and timely responses to enquiries. They also show that while the number of complaints is rising, the quality and fairness of our investigations remain consistent with national standards.

Performance Highlights

Tables and charts of detailed statistical data providing an overview of performance are included in appendices. Please see below summary:

- The **long-term trend of increasing numbers of complaints continues.** The 936 complaints received in 2025/26 has slightly reduced from 2024/25 (944). A total of 1153 (1281 24/25) complaint forms were received, of those 202 (220 24/25) were raised as service requests and 184 were either cancelled or withdrawn by the complainant.

- During the period the council received **8.83 complaints per 1,000 residents**, ranked **3rd highest** for local authorities in Wales. The previous year was 9.99 complaints per 1,000 residents (PSOW Complaints Standards Authority).

- **Environment & Housing** directorate generated the highest number of complaints at 703, with **Waste Management receiving 22% of all complaints** made to the Council.

- **150 Compliments** were recorded with **Environment & Housing** directorate receiving the majority of 100, followed by Corporate Resources 31 and Place 4. This figure excludes compliments received by Social Services.

- **Responsiveness decreased** – the percentage of investigations **completed within timescales was 30%** a reduction from 2024/2025 **45%,** 2023/2024 **59%,** 2022/23 **59%,** 2021/22 **61%** and 2020/21 **64%**. However, it should be noted that during 2025/26, an exercise was undertaken whereby service areas were required to close historic complaints on the system (dating back to 2022), which were already resolved by the service area. If these entries were to be removed from the reporting dataset, this would mean **43%** of investigations were completed in timescales during the year.

- PSOW Complaints Standards Authority data shows **86% of complaints were resolved within 30 days,** comparing to the Welsh **local authority average of 98%.**

- **Most complaints are resolved at Stage 1** – only 7% of complaints were escalated to Stage 2, a minor increase from 4.7% in 2024/25

- **Recording of the Cause and Lessons Learned from complaints has improved** with 100% recorded since complaints administration moved to the new GovService software application in August 2022. The main cause of complaints is **"Service Standards Not Met"** representing 54% of reasons recorded.

- A survey sent to 276 complainants in July 2026 received 34 responses and indicates that **improving response times** as the best way of **providing a more positive experience for residents.** Only **39%** of respondents felt that the time taken to respond to complaints was satisfactory compared to 30% in 2024/25 and 45% in 2023/24. Further details are available in Appendix C.

- Social Services provided 6 **examples of how services have been improved** because of lessons learned from complaint investigations during 2025/26, with further details available in Appendix I.

- **Complaints are meeting the requirements of statutory bodies** – Complaints made to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) increased to 79 (2024/25 - 61) (2023/24 - 77) (2022/23 - 49) and (2021/22 - 61). None were investigated, although 6 (7.5%) were resolved through the Early Resolution process. There were 6 Welsh Language Commissioner complaints during the year, for further detail please see appendix A and G.

- The **Unacceptable Actions by Citizens Policy** was applied to one resident during the year.

Activities undertaken to improve complaint handling, administration and reporting during the year includes:

- Complainants have been surveyed to obtain direct feedback and insight about their experience of making a complaint. A total of 276 complainants were emailed the survey. A total of 34 responses were received. Surveys will be sent to complainants every quarter where responses will be reviewed, with findings used to inform future improvement activity.

- A Stage 1 Complaints Dashboard has been made available for Managers across the Council to monitor progress. This highlights the number of open complaints and response times. The figures do not include cancelled or withdrawn complaints at present. Please see appendix J for further details.

- A SharePoint page has been created on the Council's intranet, StaffNet, to hold all relevant complaints polices, complaints training materials, historical annual reports, complaints bulletins and Ombudsman data.

- Complaints process enhancements on Granicus include options to send back to C1V to reallocate to another service area and the option to withdraw/cancel complaints at allocation stage. A change of investigator at investigation stage has also been recently implemented.

- A form has been developed for investigators to provide responses for lessons learnt, as outlined within appendix I.

Performance Summary

Complaints Process Survey (See Appendix C)

In July 2026, the Council undertook a survey to obtain feedback on performance for Complaints. 276 complainants were emailed the survey, with a total of 34 (12.4%) responses were received.

Key insights include:

- 65% of complaints were made online using the Council's webform
- 50% of complainants felt they did not receive adequate updates on the progress of their complaint.
- 48% of respondents felt the response was timely
- 73% of respondents used the website to find out how to make a complaint
- 55% of respondents said they would consider using the online complaints form in the future

A total of **10 examples of service improvements** (Appendix I) being made as a result of learning from complaint investigations during 2025/26 were provided. A majority were Social Services followed by Corporate Resources and Learning and Skills.

Total number of **corporate complaints received decreased** from **944 to 936**, challenging the long-term trend of increasing numbers for Stage 1 and Stage 2.

The **percentage of Stage 1 complaints escalated to Stage 2 has increased to 7% (77)** compared to 4.7% (44) in 2024/25 and 7.6% (67) in 2023/24.

The **Environment and Housing Directorate continues to drive the highest volume** of complaints, with numbers **increasing from 739** in 2024/25 **to 744** (Stage 1: 703 Stage 2: 41) during 2025/26.

The **Waste Management** service handled the highest number of complaints at 210 including Stage 2s representing 28.5% of the directorate total and **20.7% of the total for the Council**.

The **Corporate Resources** directorate reported **184 Stage 1 and 16 Stage 2** complaints, an increase of 11 on 2024/25 (189).

Place had the fewest complaints at **25 Stage 1** and **8 Stage 2**.

Learning and Skills directorate showed an increase in complaints with from 24 in 2024/25 to 42 in 2025/26.

Complaint Outcomes (Appendix D)

93% of all complaints were resolved at Stage 1, a decrease on the previous year's performance of 96%. Environment and Housing directorate recorded the highest proportion escalated to Stage 2.

Across Wales, the proportion of complaints upheld by local authorities has been rising over the last four years, increasing from **41.12% in 2022/23** to **45% in 2025/26**. During the same period, the percentage of upheld complaints in the Vale decreased from **66.67% to 44%**. As a result, the Vale has moved from having the **5th highest** rate of upheld complaints in Wales to the **9th highest**.

This indicates that in many cases, our investigations are confirming resident concerns. It also highlights important opportunities to strengthen service delivery, address recurring issues earlier, and ensure that learning from complaints is consistently applied across all directorates.

The Learning and Skills directorate upheld the lowest number of complaints **5.4%** (20.8% 2024/25) and Corporate Resources upheld the highest number of complaints at **40.4%** (48.8% 2024/25).

Responsiveness (Appendix D)

Meeting response times for Stage 1 complaints continues to be a significant challenge for the council, with performance against targets in 2025/26 continuing a deteriorating trend.

During 2025/26 the percentage of **Stage 1 complaints resolved within the 10-working day target was 30%** (40% 2024/25). However, PSOW data shows that **86%** of the Vale of Glamorgan complaints were resolved within **three months**, with the Welsh local authority average of **98%**.

53.5% of Stage 2 complaints received were investigated within the 20-working day target, akin to the 55% during 2024/25.

Learning and Skills directorate achieved the highest percentage of Stage 1 and 2 cases completed within target timescales at **54.1%**.

Repeat Complaints

There was a total of 172 complaints submitted by 78 complainants that submitted more than one complaint. Of those, there were **57 repeat complaints during 2025/26**. The highest repeat complaints were for Waste Management with a total of 19 repeat complaints, followed by Building Services (9), Council Tax (7), Housing Services (7), and Highways (6).

What is causing complaints? (Appendix E)

Failing to meet service standards remains the most common reason recorded on the complaints system, **accounting for 54% of the total.** This significantly exceeds the next most common cause of Incorrect Information Provided at 24%, Staff Behaviour at 10.5% and Policy/Procedure Not Followed at 11%. **Allegations of discrimination accounted for 1%** of all complaints.

Content analysis of complaint forms during the year indicates that the most common causes of dissatisfaction related to Waste and Recycling Services, Housing Repairs,

Council Tax Administration, Highways Maintenance, and Communication. The service area percentages are as follows:

- Waste Management - 22%
- Highways - 13%
- Council Tax - 12.7%
- Housing - 12.4%
- Education - 2.4%; and
- Other service areas combined - 37.5%.

Across service areas, complainants frequently highlighted **delays**, **missed appointments or collections, difficulties contacting services, and a perceived lack of communication regarding progress and outcomes.** These themes indicate that improvements in customer communication, ownership of enquiries, complaint handling, and service reliability continue to represent key areas for organisational learning and service improvement.

Learning Outcomes (Appendix F)

The percentage of complaints with learning outcomes recorded has increased significantly since the implementation of Granicus.

Review and revise information/communication was the most popular outcome at **35%** followed by Staff Training at **32%** and Review Service Standard at **24%**.

Complaints made to statutory bodies. (Appendix A, G and H)

The number of complaints made to the **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales** (PSOW) **increased during the year to 87** compared to the historic high of 77 during 2023/24.

No complaints were taken into investigation during the period although **6 were resolved through the Early Resolution** process.

During the period 6 Complaints were received by the **Welsh Language Commissioner**.

Public Services Ombudsman Complaints

87 (64 in 2024/25 inclusive of Code of Conduct) complaints in respect of the Council were received by the PSOW during 2025/26, which is an increase of **23** on the previous year. Inclusive were 8 Code of Conduct complaints.

Of these complaints, the outcomes were as below:

Early Resolution	6
Out of Jurisdiction	14
Premature Complaint	27
Closed after Initial Consideration	31

There were no complaints taken into investigation during 2025/26; however 6 complaints were resolved through the Early Resolution process.

Details of the Ombudsman interventions are in Appendix H.

Through the PSOW Early Resolutions process (Appendix A) **the council made time and trouble payments totalling £200.**

Social Services Complaints

Social Services representations and complaints are dealt with under the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014.

As of 31st of March 2026, 129 Stage 1 Complaints were received which is higher than in the previous year where a total of 77 were received. Out of the 129 complaints received, 38 were for Adult Services, 80 were for Children and Young People Services and 7 related to the Resource Management and Safeguarding Division. Of the complaints received, 4 complaints relating to Children and Young People Services and 2 relating to Adult Services progressed to a Stage 2

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Service Division	Contacts	Complaints Stage 1	Complaints Stage 2	PSOW	Responded to in Timescales (%)	Total Complaints/Enquiries Received
Adult Services	17	38	2	6	57	55
Children and Young People Services	21	80	4	8	33	101
Resource Management & Safeguarding	29	7	0	1	85.7	36

For further information related to social services complaints please see appendix B.

Accessibility and Equality Survey

An online Equality Survey is available for members of the public to complete following the submission of an online form using GovService. As of the date of this report 123 responses have been received. Of those who provided data, 67% were female and 33% were male. The following age range completed the online form (2 people didn't provide the full information):

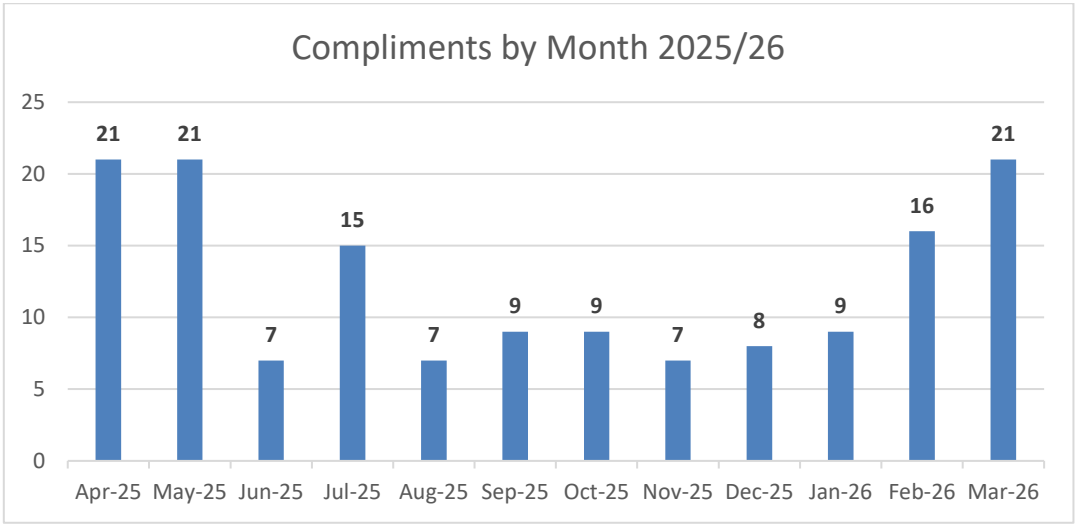
Service Provided	15 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75+
Aspire 2 Own	3	12	6	3	5		
Homelessness	9	8	9	3	2	1	
Housing Services				3	4		
Adult Services	1	4	1	1	2	2	2
Complaints				2	1	1	
Telecare		1	1		3	5	21
Blue Badge				1	1		5
Total	**13**	**25**	**17**	**13**	**18**	**9**	**28**

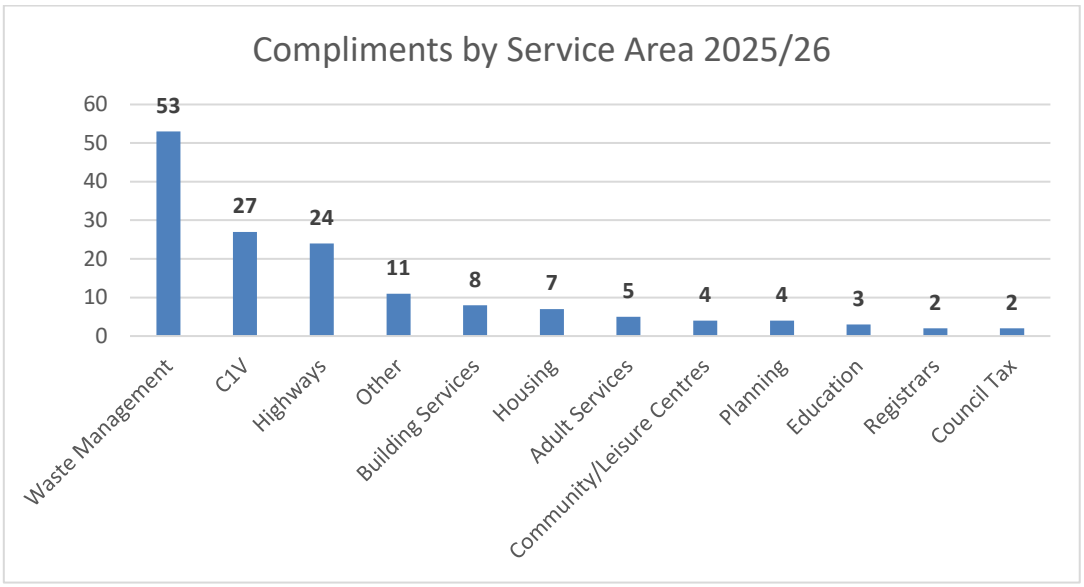
55% of the responses were aged 45 or over. Only 13 responses were received from customers between 15 and 24, despite the ability to record Corporate Complaints online. 61% of the responses were from customers whose day-to-day activities were limited by some form of disability. 5.5% of the responses speak Welsh and 27% have limited Welsh knowledge.

Compliments

The council received a total of **150 compliments** during the reporting period. The majority of compliments were recorded **for Environment & Housing at 100**, which includes 53 for Waste Management, 7 for Housing, 24 for Highways, 2 for Parks and Cleansing and 8 for Building Services. In addition, 31 compliments were received for Corporate Resources and 4 for Place.

Compliments April 2025 to March 2026





Audit Wales Review of Corporate Complaints – Supporting Service Improvement

In November 2025, Audit Wales published its findings from a review of the Council's Corporate complaint's function, which examined the Council's approach to handling complaints, including the updated complaints policy and arrangements to process and respond to complaints in line with this policy. They also looked at how it monitors and learns from complaints.

The Audit highlighted several areas which had been developed since the previous audit of 2022 but subsequently also made five recommendations:

R1 - To strengthen complaints handling and support the implementation of the Council's new policy, the Council should:

1.1. undertake an equalities impact assessment for the updated complaints policy and, if necessary, update the policy to ensure the Council meets its obligations under the public sector equalities duty

1.2. integrate key elements of the Council's Policy on Unacceptable Actions by Citizens and the Council's social media policy, so complaints investigators can deal with vexatious and malicious complaints and social media commentary quickly and consistently; and

1.3. improve signposting on how to make a complaint, to help the public to find this information more easily

R2 - The Council should improve the functionality of its IT system for complaints handling by:

2.1. configuring the system to recognise where complaints have been reassigned to a new owner, to ensure all complaints are handled in a timely way

R3 - The Council should improve the impact of staff training on complaints by:

3.1. ensuring all complaints handlers are suitably trained and kept updated on changes to the complaints system, processes and policy

R4 - The Council should improve its monitoring and learning from complaints by:

4.1. improving the annual report on complaints to clarify learning and service improvements as a result of complaints; and

4.2. including Council benchmarking data in the Annual Complaints report as well as PSOW data to maximise the opportunity to share best practice with members of the Governance and Audit Committee and improve complaints handling

This audit, alongside the subsequent management response, were considered by Governance and Audit Committee on 23rd January 2026.

The response has informed several improvement activities as highlighted in the quarterly reporting against regulatory recommendations, which is received by Governance and Audit Committee on a quarterly basis, with a further update in the next iteration of this annual report.

Areas for Future Improvement

During 2026/27, the Council will focus on targeted improvement activity in response to complaint themes identified through performance analysis and findings of Audit Wales. Particular attention will be given to improving communication, reducing service delays, strengthening organisational learning and addressing concerns within high-volume service areas such as Waste Management, Housing, Highways and Council Tax.

Progress against the action plan will be monitored quarterly through service performance reviews and corporate complaints reporting, ensuring that learning from complaints results in measurable service improvements and an enhanced customer experience. A cross-Council Complaints Monitoring Team will be established to oversee complaint trends across all service areas, identify opportunities for service improvement, and coordinate organisational learning. The team will also review recurring complaint themes and work with services to improve the information

available on the Council's website, helping residents access guidance and resolve common issues without the need to raise a complaint.

Other areas of work include:

1. Continue delivering recommendations from the complaint survey report to improve the complainant experience of making a complaint.

2. Update the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy and update the website to ensure complainants have clear guidance on making a complaint to prevent premature complaints made to the Ombudsman.

3. Work with complaint investigators to maximise functionality of complaints management system to ensure complaints are handled effectively and in a timely way.

4. Ensure that all complaints handlers receive further training on effective complaint handling, how to use the complaints system, complaint processes and the revised policy.

5. Work with colleagues across the authority to improve recording and visibility of service improvements created through learning from complaints.

6. Use data from complaint handling and other data sets, such as customer satisfaction survey results, to develop improved insight into the resident experience of accessing council services and use this to inform the Council’s service planning processes.

7. Work with the digital service to further develop real time reporting of complaints for service managers so that they have the information needed to manage the complaint investigation process and identify opportunities for service improvement.

Appendix A

Public Services Ombudsman Complaints

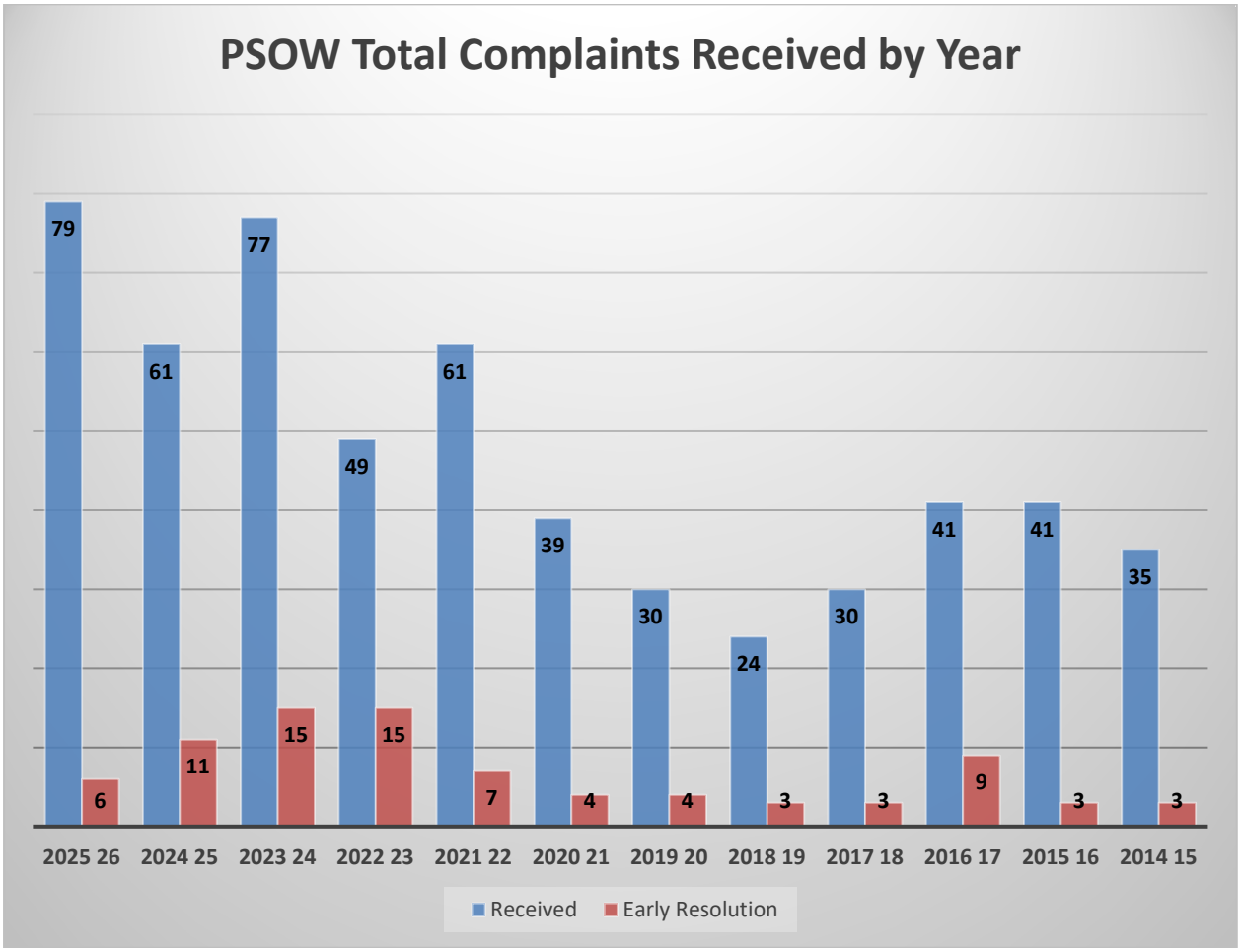
Received Complaints

87 (64 in 2024/25) complaints in respect of the Council were received by the PSOW during 2024/25, which is an increase of **23** on the previous year. This figure is inclusive of 8 Code of Conduct complaints.

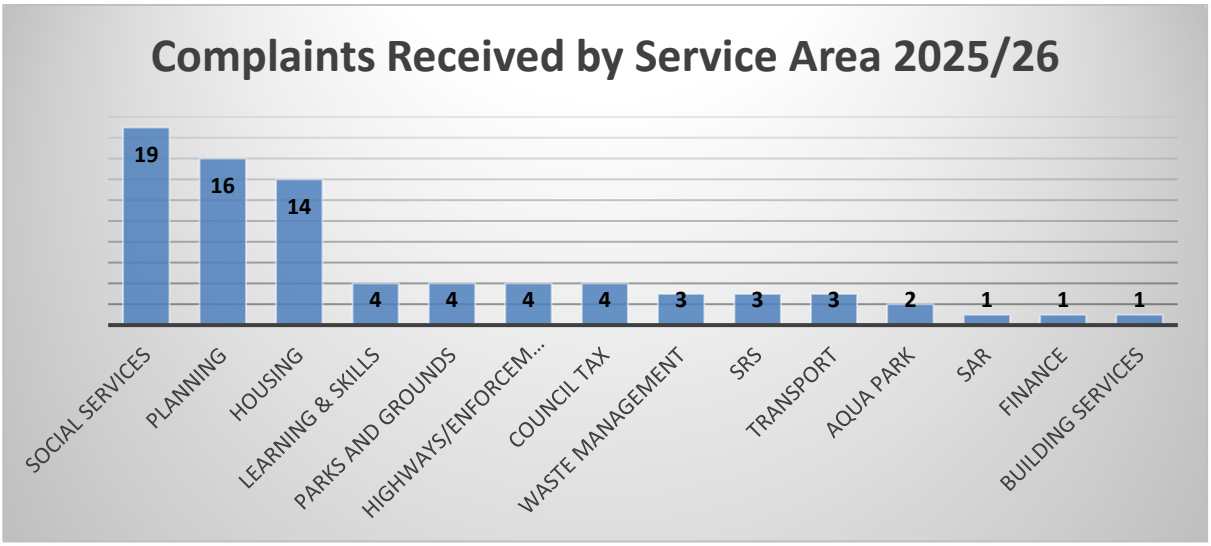
Closed Complaints

Early Resolution	6 – (2024/25 - 11)
Out of Jurisdiction	14 – (2024/25 -19)
Premature Complaint	27 – (2024/25 -15)
Closed after Initial Consideration	31 – (2024/25 -17)

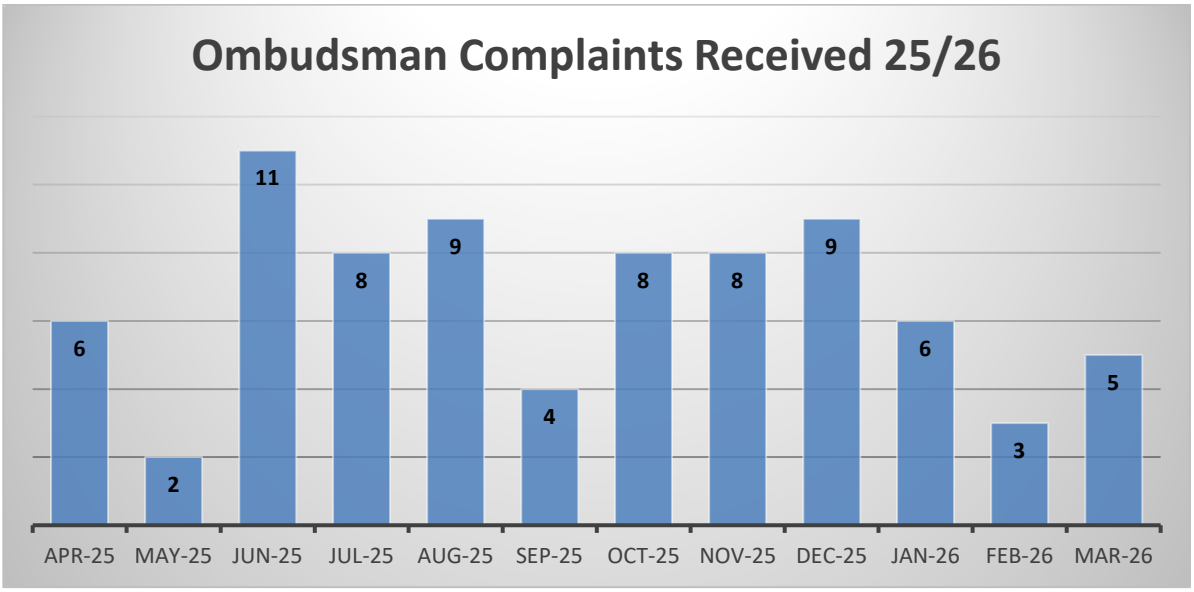
Ombudsman Complaints Received by Year Vs Early Resolutions (not inclusive of Code of Conduct cases)



Ombudsman Complaints by Service Area

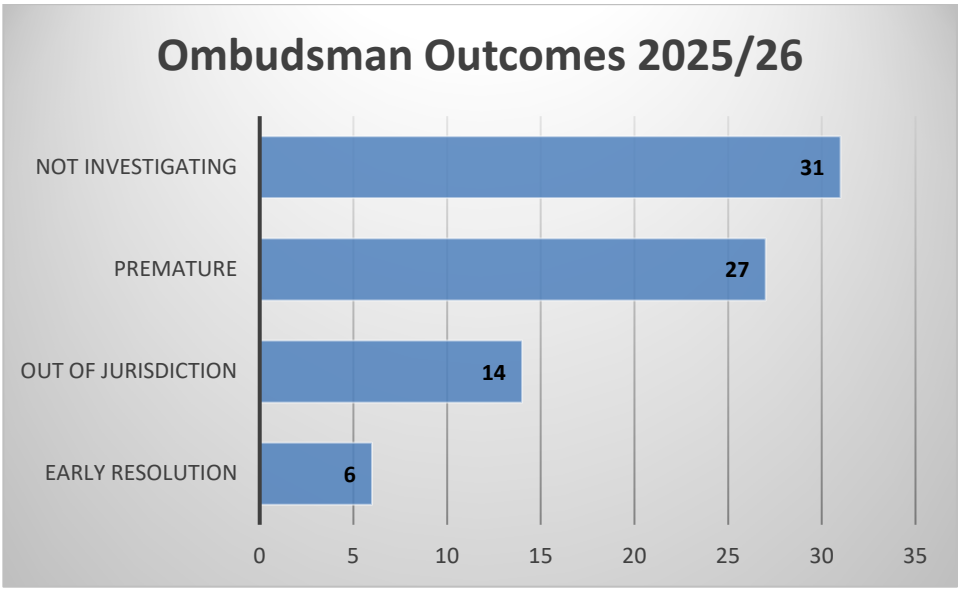


Ombudsman Complaints Received by Month



June 2025:	**August 2025:**	**December 2025:**
Parks & Grounds x 2	Planning x 2	Housing x 2
Planning x 2	CYPS x 2	Parks and Grounds x 2
CYPS x 3	Parks and Grounds x 1	Planning x 1
Housing x 2	Council tax x 1	Waste Management x 1
SRS x 1	Finance x 1	CYPS x 1
Learning and Skills x 1	Housing x 1	SRS x 1
	Learning and Skills x 1	School Transport x 1

Ombudsman Complaints Closed



There were no complaints taken into investigation during 2025/26, however 6 complaints were resolved through the Early Resolution process.

Through the PSOW Early Resolutions process the council made time and trouble payments totalling £200.

Appendix B

Social Services Complaints

Social Services representations and complaints are dealt with under the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014.

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Resource Management & Safeguarding	29	7	0	1	85.7	36

During the reporting period, the highest number of complaints received related to the quality or level of service, accounting for 76 complaints. This was followed by communication concerns (35 complaints), concerns regarding rude or discourteous staff (30 complaints) and concerns disputing decisions (29 complaints).

Other complaints received related to unhappiness with costs or financial support (17 complaints), availability of services (9 complaints), serious allegations, including assault, theft, neglect, abuse and safeguarding concerns (9 complaints), delays in providing services (5 complaints), and discrimination (2 complaints).

The table below provides a breakdown of the nature of complaints by service division:

Type of Complaint	Adult Services	Children and Young People Services	Resource Management and Safeguarding	Total Complaints by Nature of Complaint
Quality/level of service	26	35	15	76
Communication	5	27	3	35
Rude Discourteous staff	6	22	2	30
Disputing Decisions	5	22	2	29
Availability of Services	6	1	2	9

Type of Complaint	Adult Services	Children and Young People Services	Resource Management and Safeguarding	Total Complaints by Nature of Complaint
Unhappy with costs/financial support	7	5	5	17
Delay in Providing Service	3	2	0	5
Serious allegations including: Assault, Theft, Neglect, Abuse & Safeguarding	2	6	1	9
Availability of services	6	1	2	9
Discrimination	0	2	0	2

**Complaints may raise more than one area of concern; therefore, the total number of issues recorded exceeds the total number of complaints and contacts received.*

In terms of the main lessons learned over the 2025/2026 period, I would summarise them into the following main points:

Contacts

During 2025–2026, analysis of contacts received across services highlighted recurring issues relating to communication, clarity of processes and expectation-setting.

Key themes identified from contacts during 2025–2026 include:

- Timeliness and quality of communication, particularly the need for clearer and more regular updates to citizens.
- Lack of clarity about processes and thresholds, especially where matters could not progress through the formal complaints process due to court proceedings, safeguarding considerations or consent.
- Expectation-setting at first contact, as unclear signposting often led to repeat contact or escalation.

These themes reinforce the importance of clear, timely communication and early explanation of statutory processes to improve customer experience and reduce unnecessary escalation.

Social Services Stage 1 Complaints

Key themes identified from Stage 1 complaints include:

- Quality and timeliness of communication, particularly the need for clearer updates, explanations of decisions and improved consistency of contact.
- Disputing decisions, especially where decisions were made within statutory or policy frameworks and complainants required clearer explanations of thresholds and rationale.
- Service delays and coordination, often linked to capacity pressures, allocation timescales and transitions between teams.
- Expectation-setting, as a number of complaints arose where citizens did not fully understand processes, timescales or the scope of the complaints procedure.

These themes reinforce the importance of clear communication, early explanation of decision-making and consistent service standards to reduce escalation and improve the experience of complainants.

Social Services Stage 2 Complaints

Learning from Stage 2 complaints this year highlights the importance of clearer understanding across services regarding which matters are appropriate to progress to Stage 2**,** helping to ensure consistency and manage expectations.

Learning from Stage 2 complaints this year identified the importance of supporting staff where investigations involve multiple practitioners and additional complexity, including language expectations. Feedback highlighted that concerns around Welsh language use affected staff confidence and created a perceived barrier to communication. While independent scrutiny remains essential, this learning emphasises the need for early, appropriate support for staff involved in complex Stage 2 investigations**.**

This includes timely engagement from the Complaints Team, such as facilitated briefings or reflective discussions, to support staff wellbeing and reinforce learning.

As part of our commitment to Quality Assurance, we have developed a Stage 2 Investigation Recommendation Action Tracker. This tool is used to monitor and follow up on recommendations made by external investigators. Regular meetings are held with relevant service area managers to review these recommendations, agree on action plans, and set clear completion dates. This process ensures that all recommendations aimed at improving our services are not only implemented but also properly tracked. It reinforces our commitment to continuous improvement and accountability.

The Vale of Glamorgan Social Services recognises the important role that the Quality Assurance Team plays. The Quality Assurance Team continues to capture and record learning from complaints alongside feedback and participation from children, young people and their families, which forms part of a developing improvement plan.

Social Services Objectives for 2026/2027

Building on the lessons learned from complaints and contacts received during 2025–2026, the following objectives have been identified to strengthen complaint handling, improve service delivery and ensure learning is translated into meaningful service improvements.

1. Improve Communication and Engagement

- Reinforce expectations around timely communication, regular updates and person-centred engagement.
- Encourage early conversations with individuals and families where concerns are emerging to prevent issues escalating into formal complaints.
- Promote the use of resolution meetings as a routine part of the complaints process where appropriate, ensuring individuals feel heard and involved in achieving outcomes.

2. Strengthen Timeliness and Access to Services

- Continue monitoring delays relating to assessments, service provision and complaint responses.
- Improve management oversight of outstanding actions and complaint investigations.
- Ensure individuals are kept informed where delays occur and provided with clear timescales and explanations.

3. Improve Recording, Documentation and Decision-Making

- Promote clear and accurate case recording to ensure decision-making processes are transparent and evidenced.
- Strengthen audit trails to support accountability and improve the quality of complaint investigations.
- Share learning from complaints where poor or incomplete recording has contributed to dissatisfaction or confusion.

Compliments

During 2025–26, Social Services received 245 compliments, marking an increase from the 184 received in 2024–25

Compliments play a vital part in understanding what we are doing well and enable us to share this experience across the breadth of our services. It also provides a means through which we can celebrate and praise the efforts and dedication of our staff. The compliments related to a range of services and support citizens received. The compliments often named specific staff where they felt the individual had gone over and above what was expected of them.

Better understanding the service user experience in relation to what they value and what matters most to them, will not only enable us to build a better picture of how our services are performing, but will help to reinforce sense of pride in our work.

Outlined below is a breakdown of all compliments by Division.

Service area	**Number of compliments**
Children and Young People Services	109
Adult Services	84
Resource Management & Safeguarding	52
Total number of compliments	245

Outlined below is a snapshot of some of the compliments we have received over this past year.

AS - Longer Term Care Service

I just wanted to say a big thank you to you both for all your support for C particularly over recent months. I appreciate it's not been the easiest of times for a number of reasons. I Just wanted to let you know that I visited C yesterday and it was a really positive experience. I'm really pleased to say she settled in really well and is enjoying the company of her two lovely house mates (who are ladies of a similar age).

CYPS - Child Health And Disability Team

You were totally amazing yesterday. Your kindness, gentle and empathetic approach helped turn a traumatic incident into a meaningful one and I will be eternally grateful.

RMS- Residential Services Staff at Ty Dyfan

A resident who attended the meeting accompanied by her husband, he spoke with genuine appreciation about the thoughtful efforts of the staff. He described how they had arranged a memorable and intimate Valentine's Day celebration, complete with a beautifully dressed table for two. The setting included fresh flowers, wine, personalized cards, and a delicious three -course meal, all of which created a truly special and romantic experience for the couple. He also shared how much it meant to him to be welcomed to join his wife for Christmas lunch, expressing gratitude for the warmth and inclusivity shown by the team.

Appendix C

Complaints Process Survey

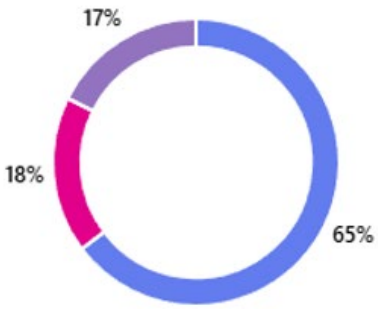
In July 2026 a total of 276 emails were sent to complainants that raised a complaint between January 2026 and June 2026 to review user feedback on the current complaints processes offered by the Vale of Glamorgan Council. A total of 34 responses have been received (12.3%).

The data collected included:

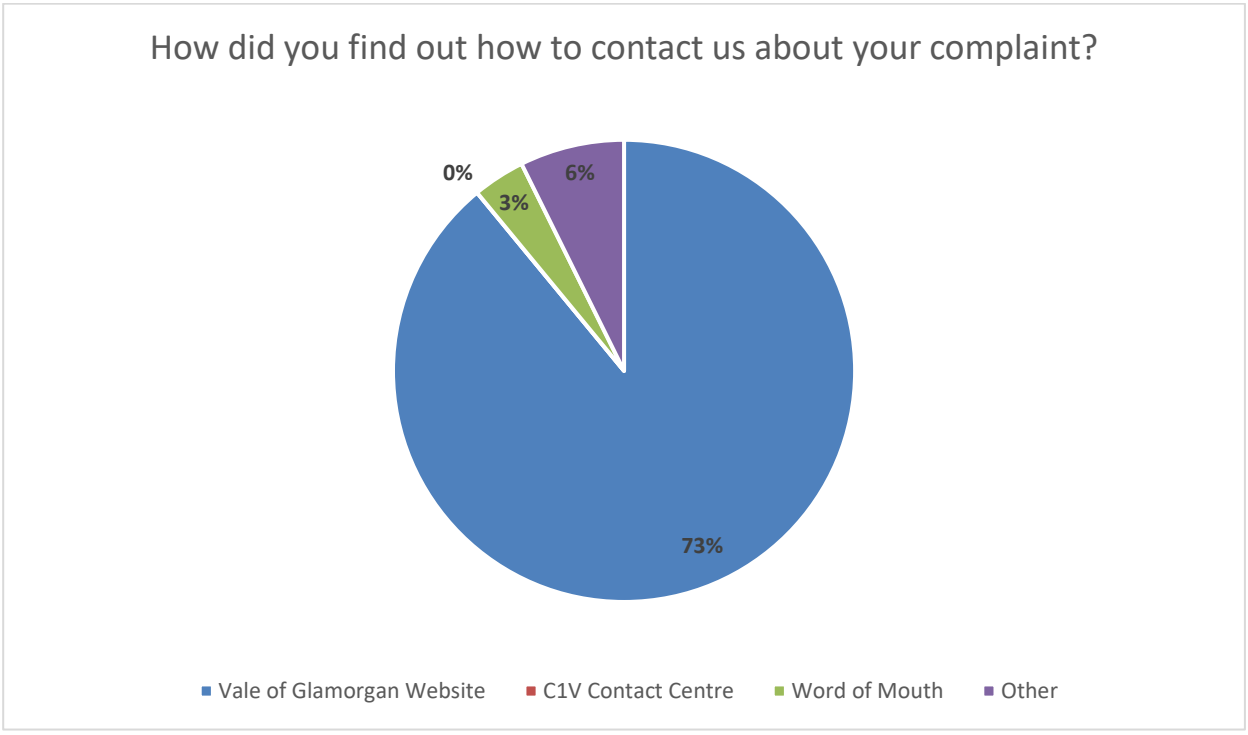
- Overall user Experience
- Channel choice
- Timescales
- Communication
- Future behaviours

Of the 34 responses 65% of complainants made their complaint online, 18% by phone and 17% by email.

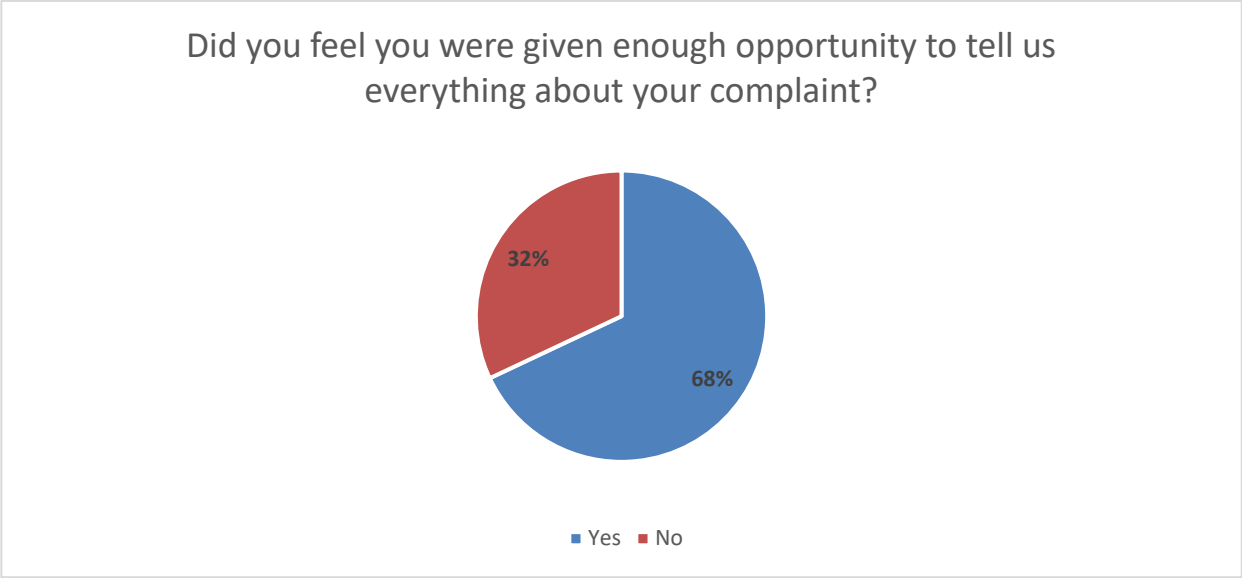
Online	22
By phone	6
In person	0
Other	6



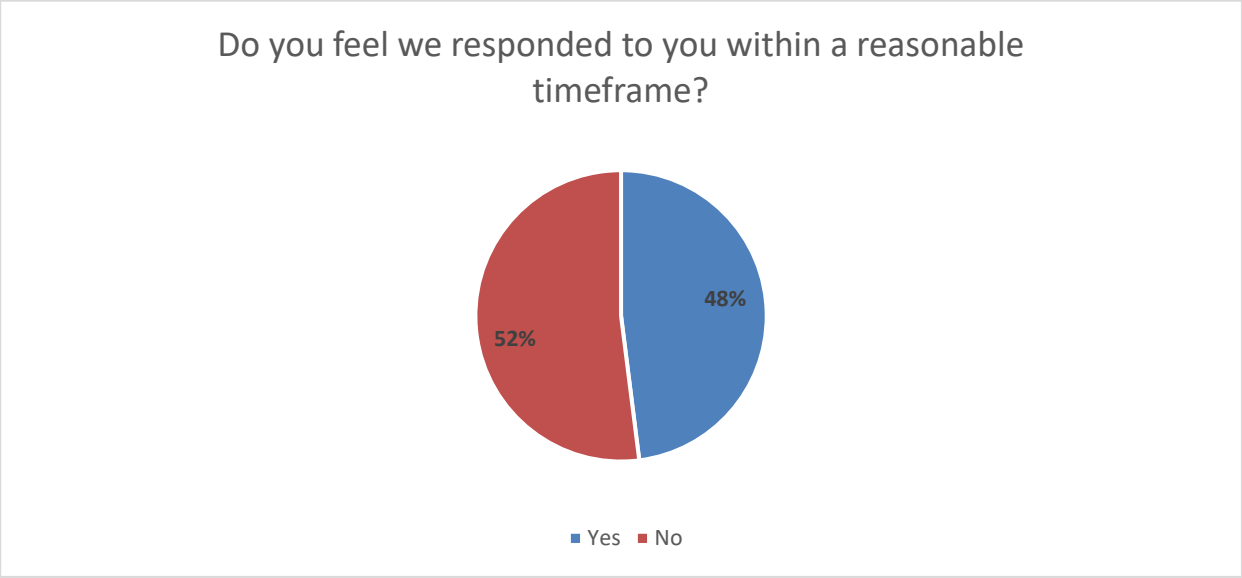
73% of complainants found the information on how to make a complaint on the website.



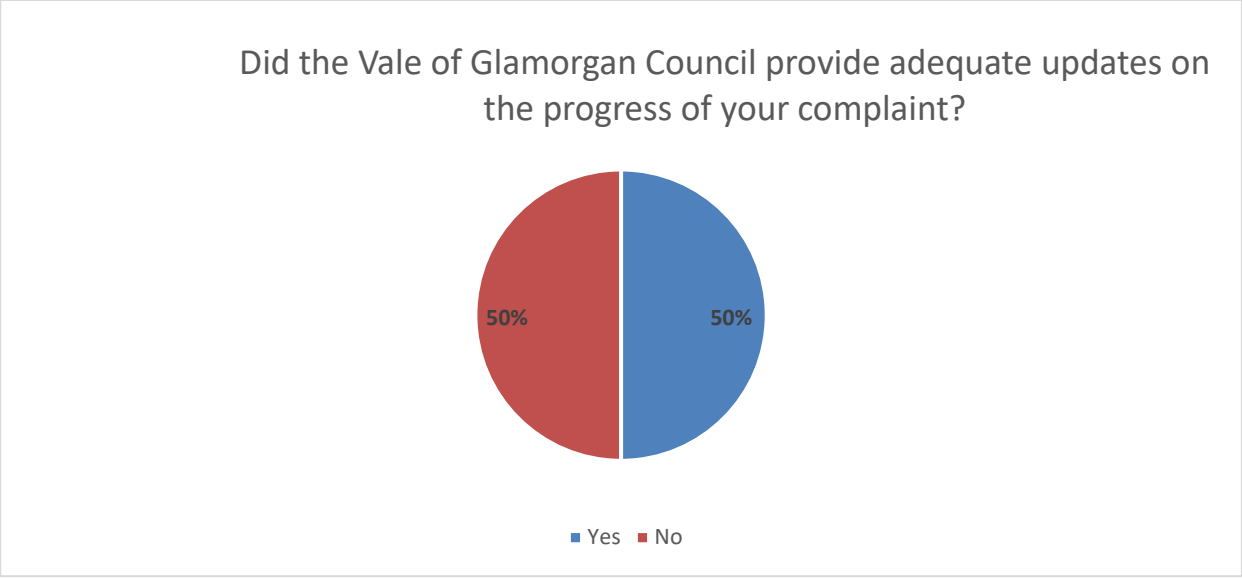
68% of complainants felt they were given enough opportunity to tell us everything about their complaint.



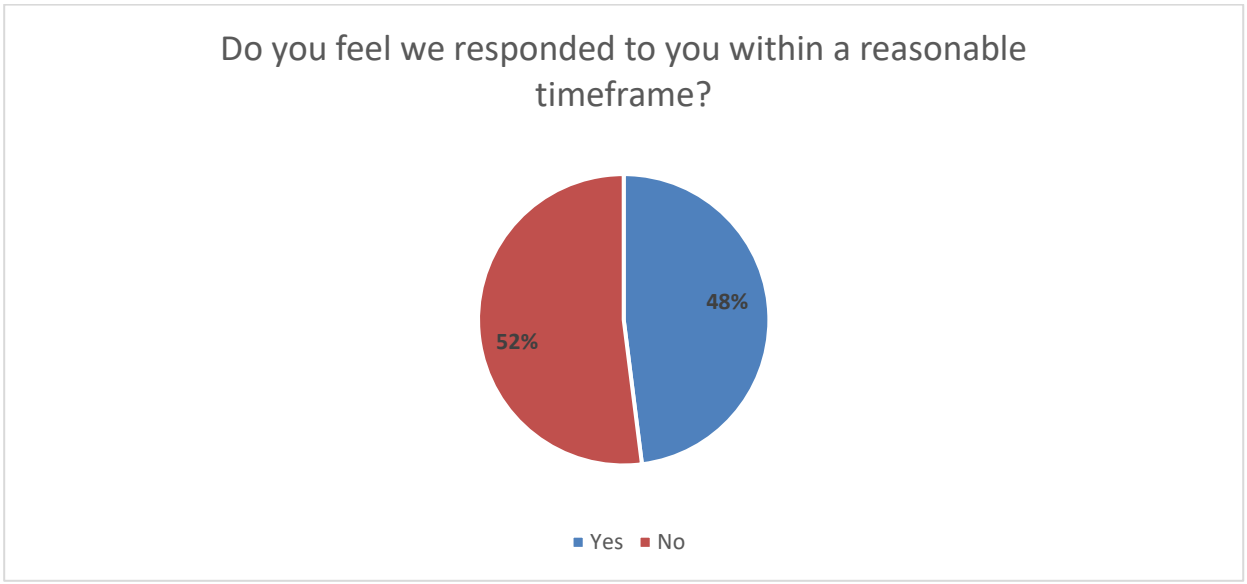
Only 39% of the complainants felt the response time was satisfactory.



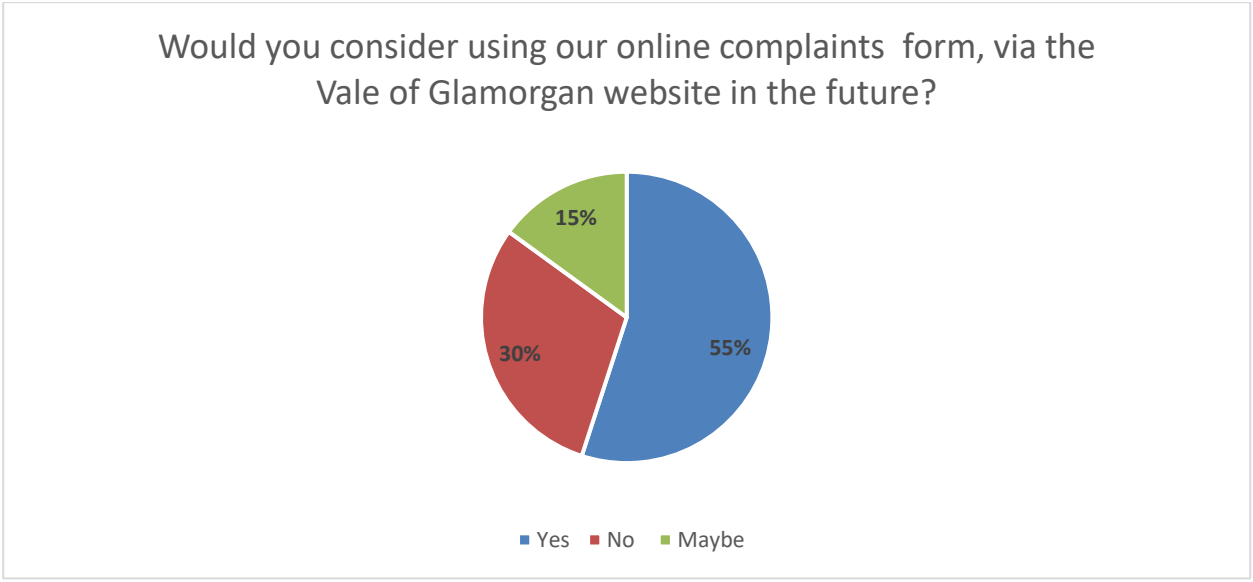
50% of the complainants felt they didn't get adequate updates on their complaint.



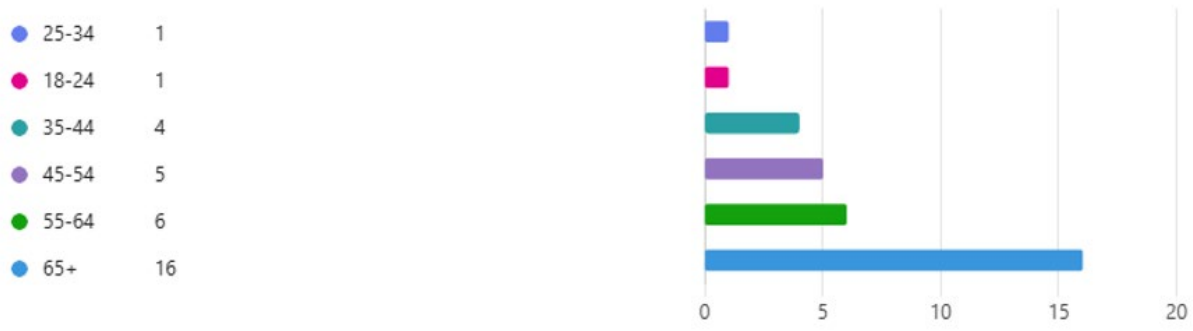
48% felt that the council responded within a reasonable timescale.



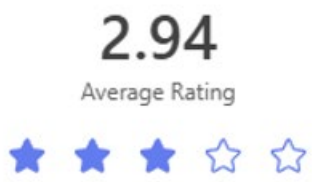
55% (44% previously) of complainants would consider using the online complaints form in the future.



47% (41% previously) of complainants were over the age of 65.



33% were satisfied with the overall process of making a complaint.





General Responses on how to improve the Complaints Process

The feedback contains predominantly negative comments relating to complaint handling and customer service within the Council. While a small number of respondents acknowledged positive experiences or satisfactory responses, the feedback was predominantly negative and highlighted several recurring themes within the complaints process.

Key issues identified:

Communication: The most common concern was a lack of updates, poor communication, and delays in responding to complaints.

Accountability: Respondents reported uncertainty about who was responsible for handling their complaint and a perceived lack of ownership.

Complaint Resolution: Many felt their concerns were not fully addressed and that complaints did not result in meaningful action or service improvements.

Customer Service: Some comments referenced poor staff attitudes, lack of empathy, and unprofessional interactions.

Listening to Customers: Several respondents felt their concerns were not properly understood or considered.

Positive Feedback

Although limited, several comments were positive:

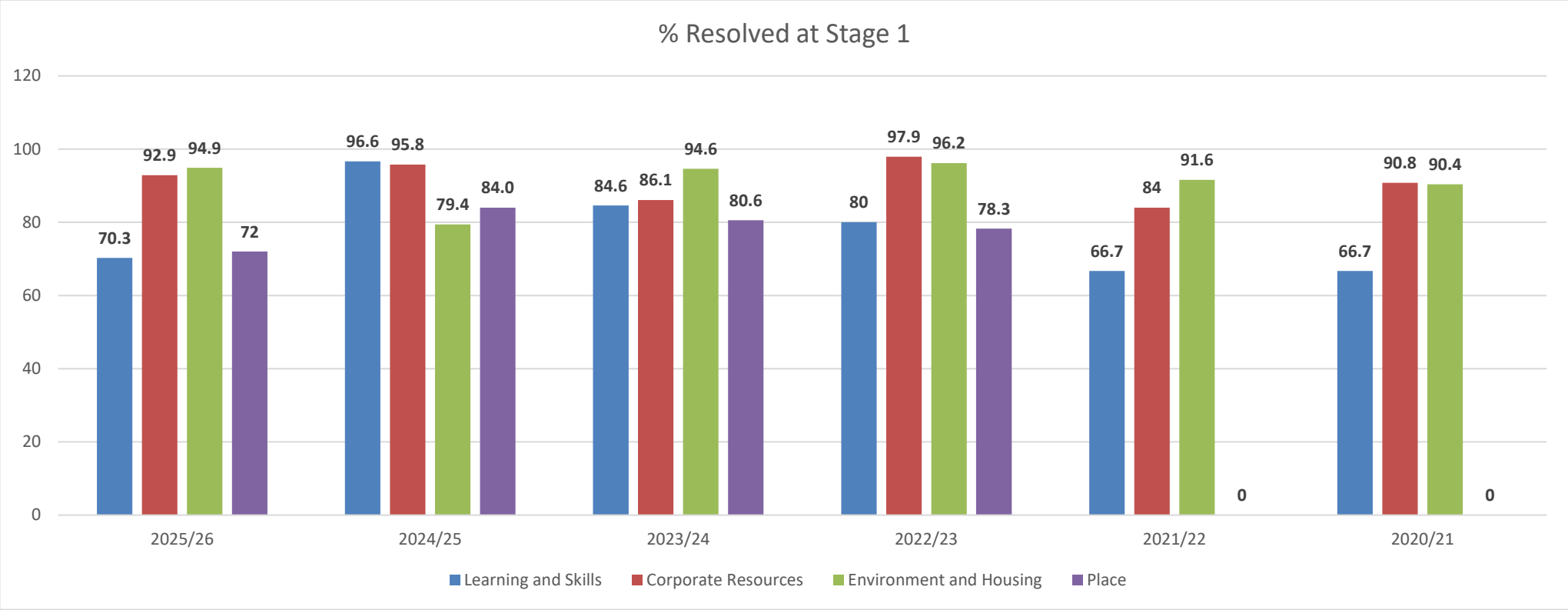
One respondent praised a contractor's performance, stating that they performed better than the usual grounds maintenance contractor.

One respondent stated: "I had a reply and that was what I wanted thank you.
Another noted they received a courteous response and apology regarding their complaint.

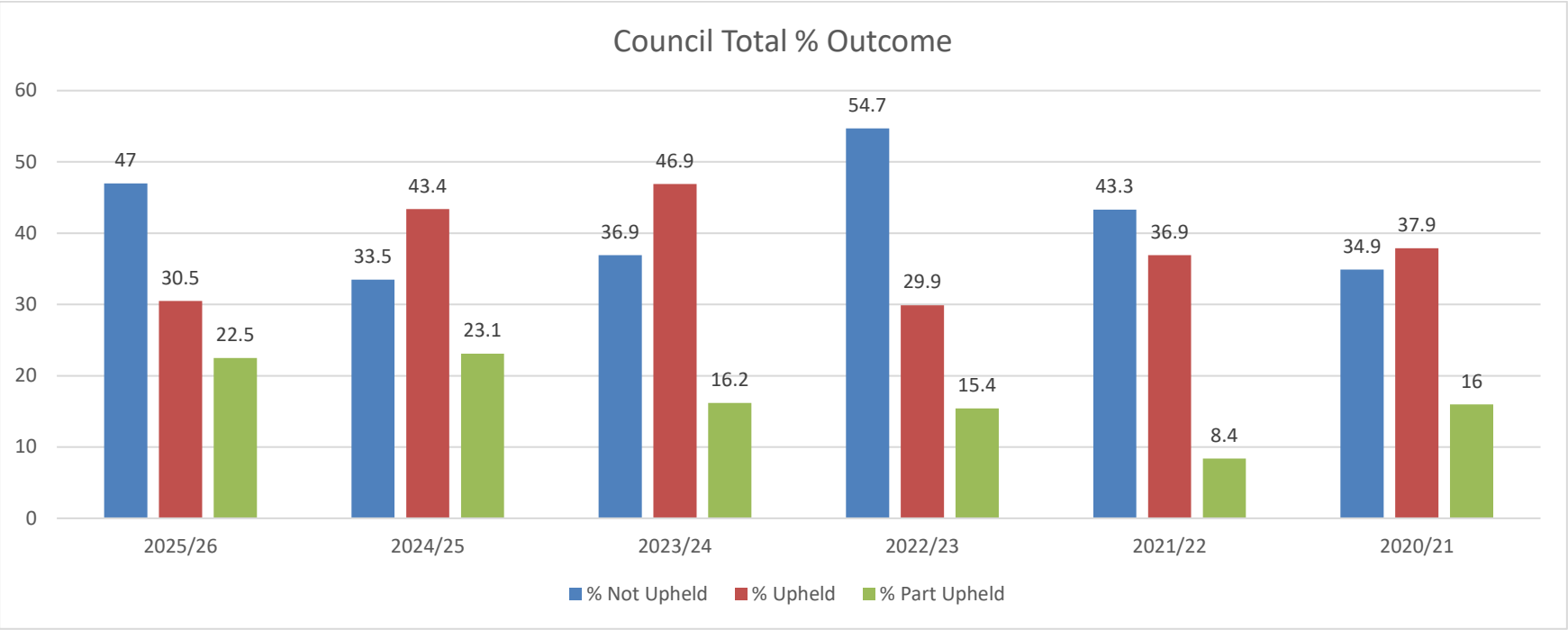
The feedback highlights a clear gap between customer expectations and experiences of the complaints process. The primary concern is not always the original service issue but how complaints are subsequently handled. Improved communication, stronger accountability, and clearer demonstrations of corrective action are likely to deliver the greatest improvement in customer satisfaction and confidence in the complaints process.

Appendix D - Statistical Performance

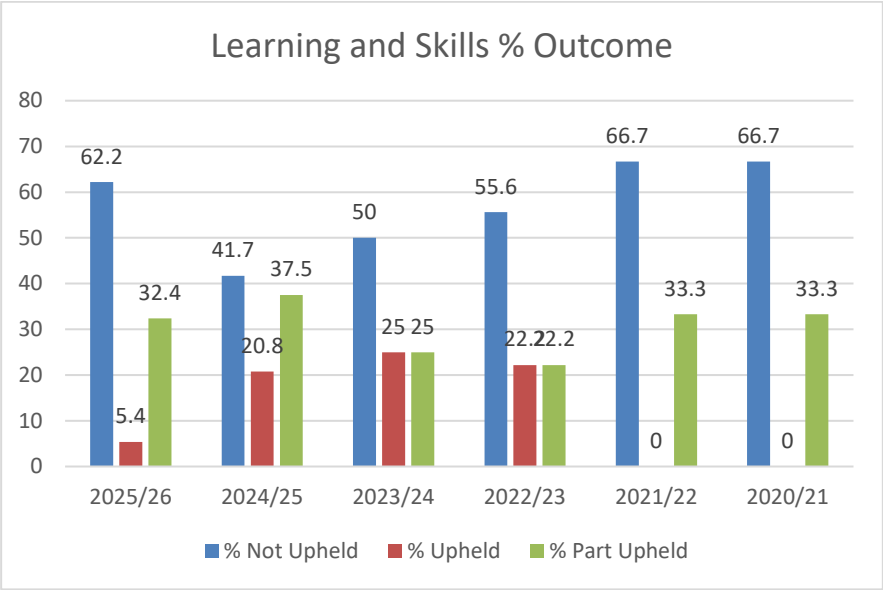
Complaints Resolved at Stage 1

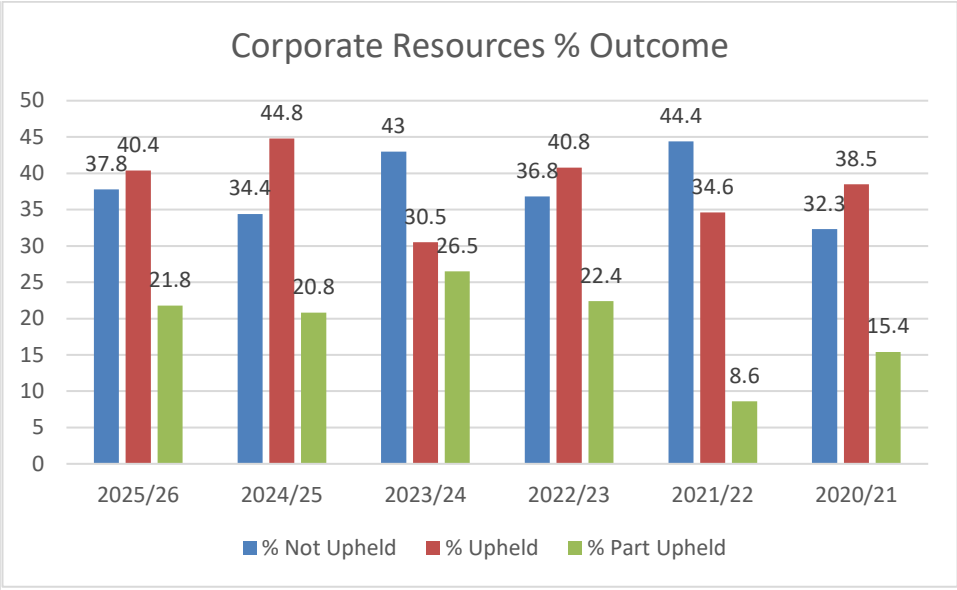


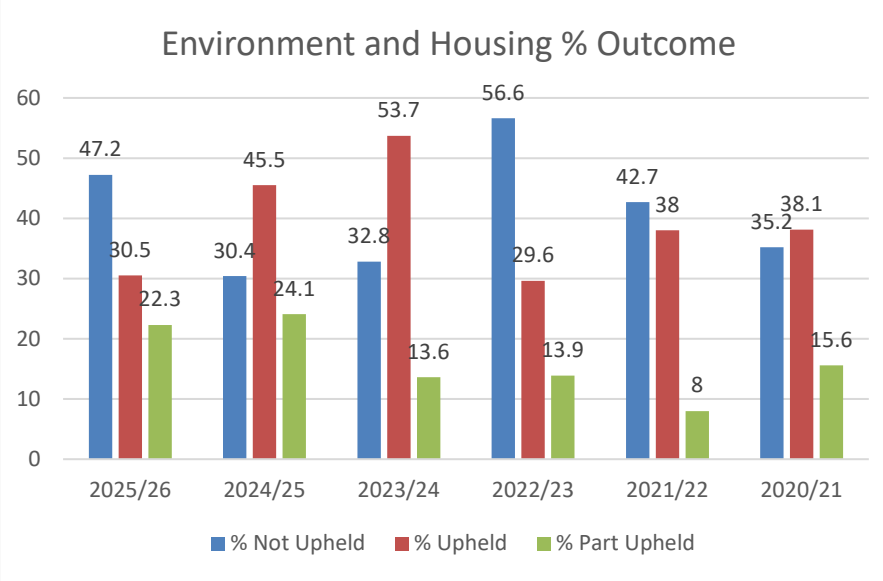
Stage 1 and Stage 2 Complaints Outcome

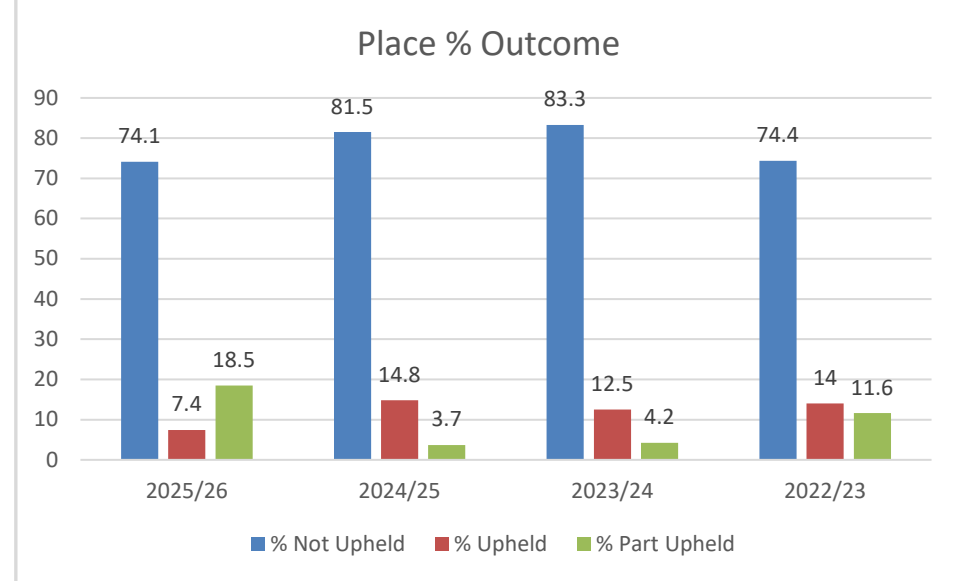


Stage 1 and Stage 2 Complaints Outcome

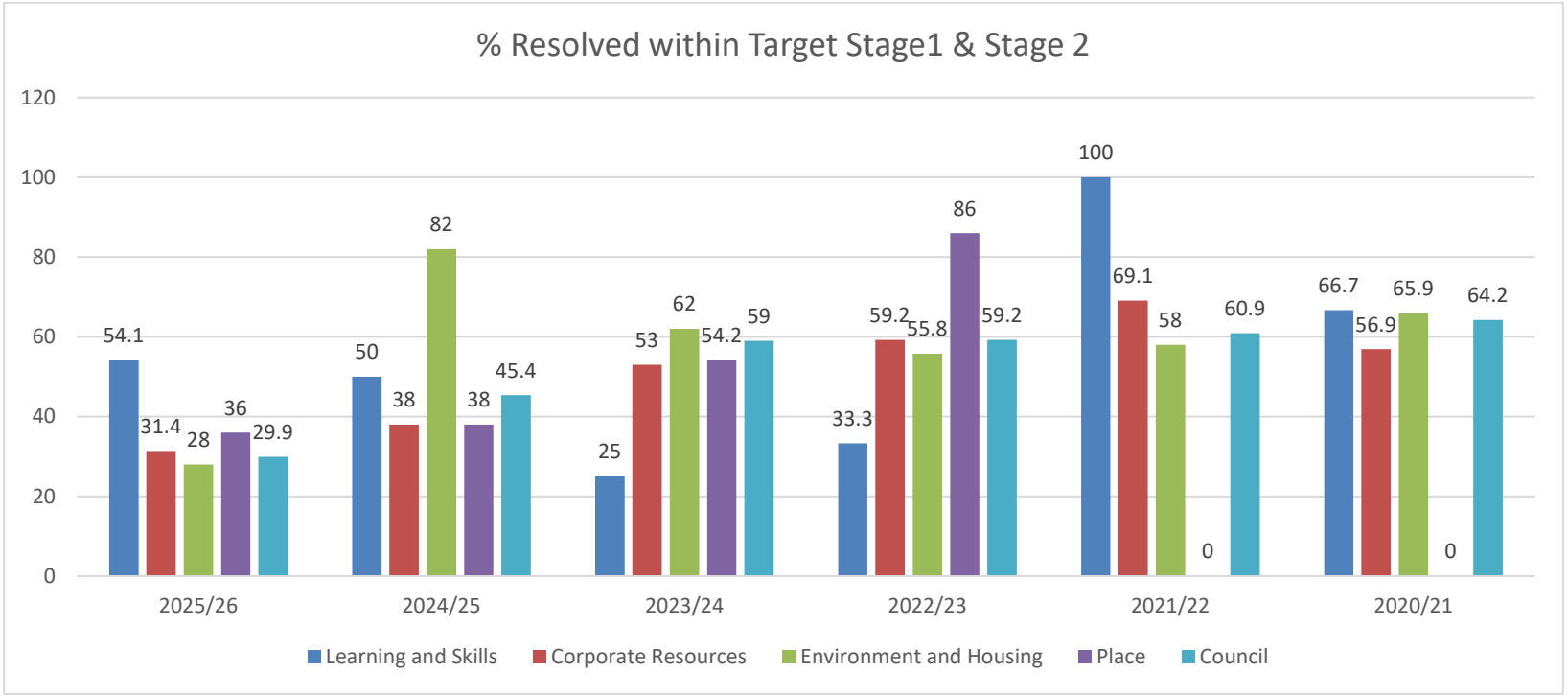




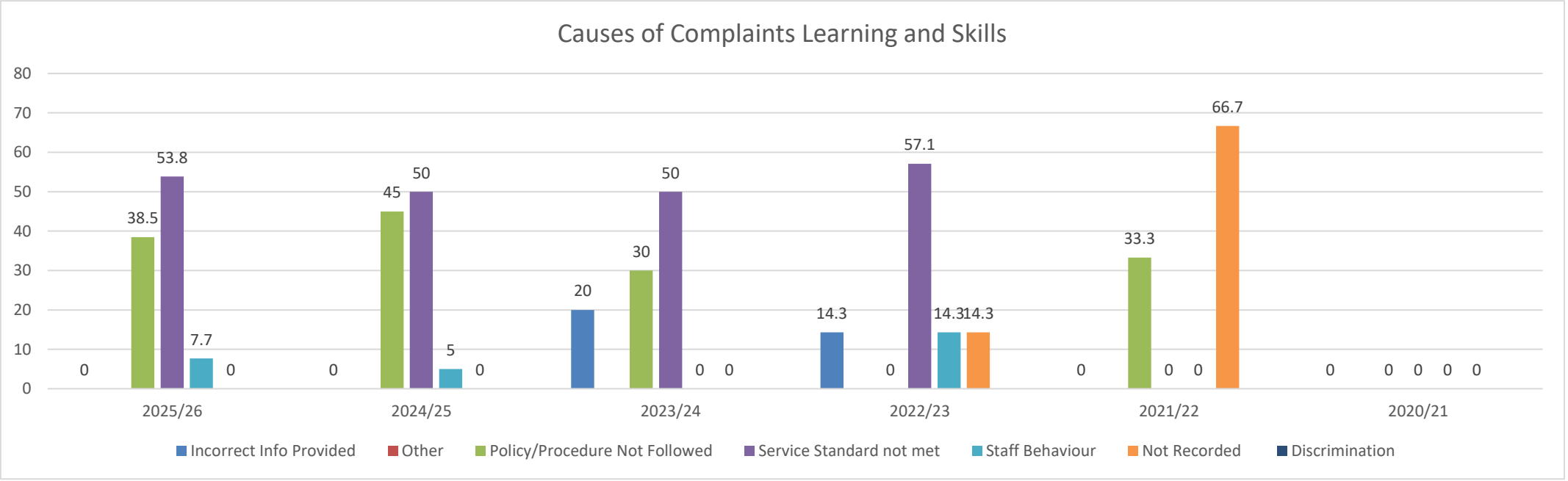


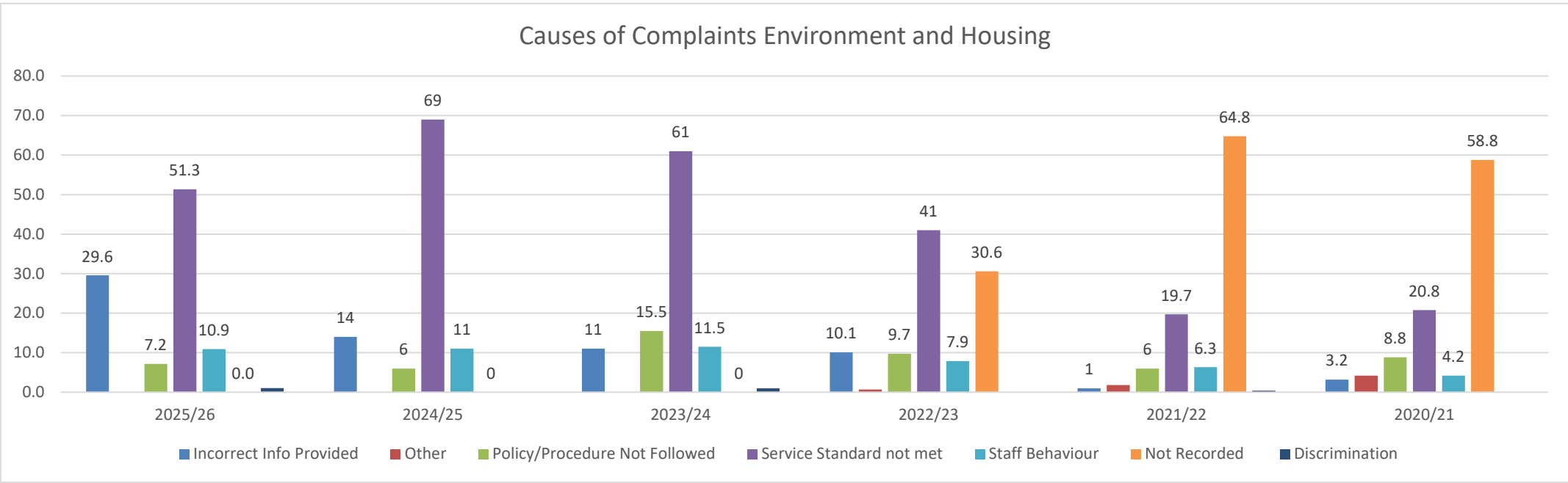


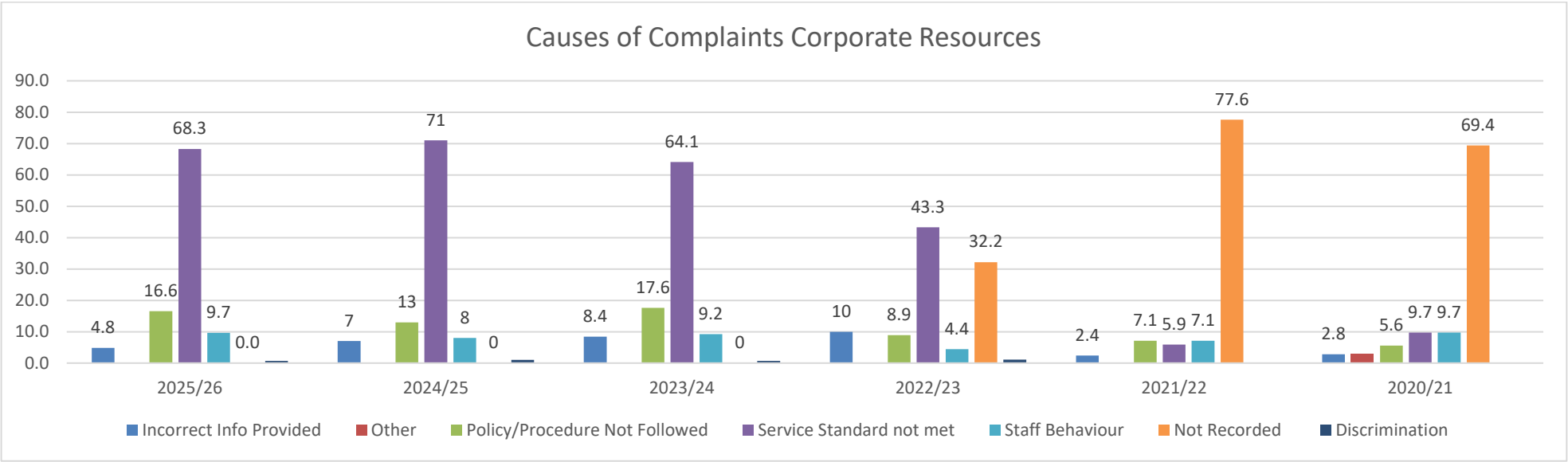
Complaints Resolved within Target



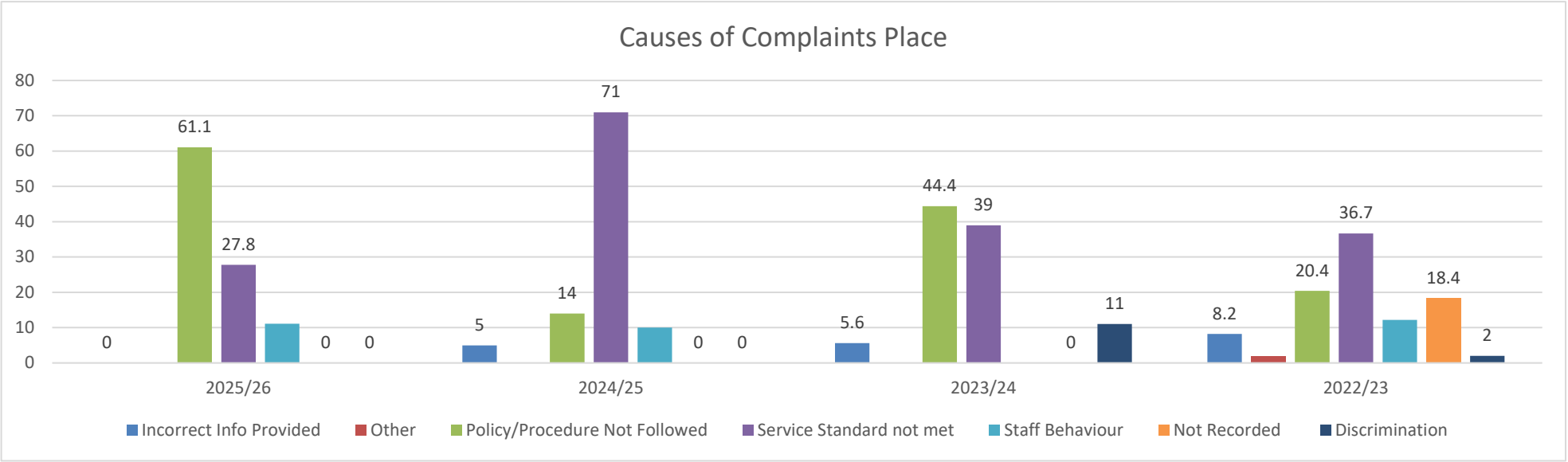
Appendix E - Causes of Complaints

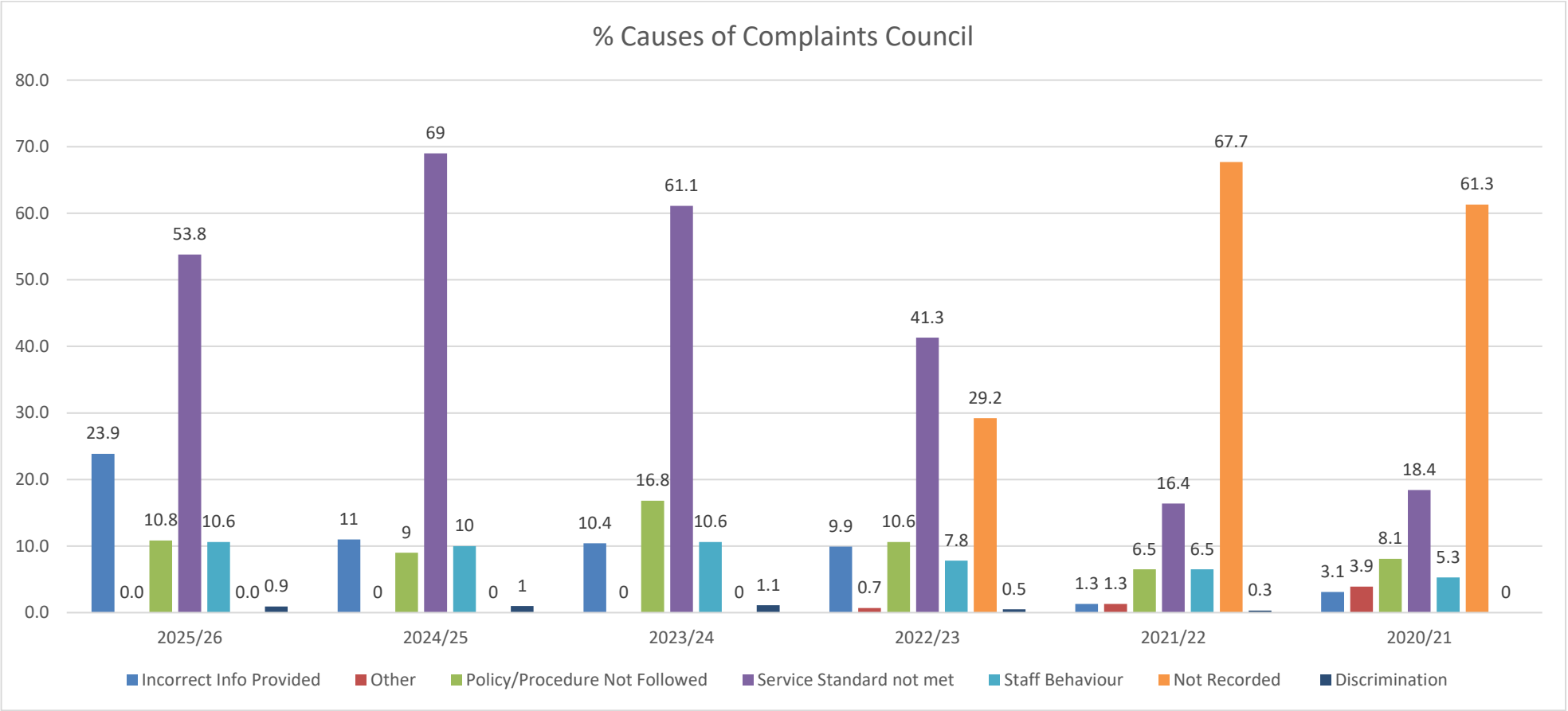




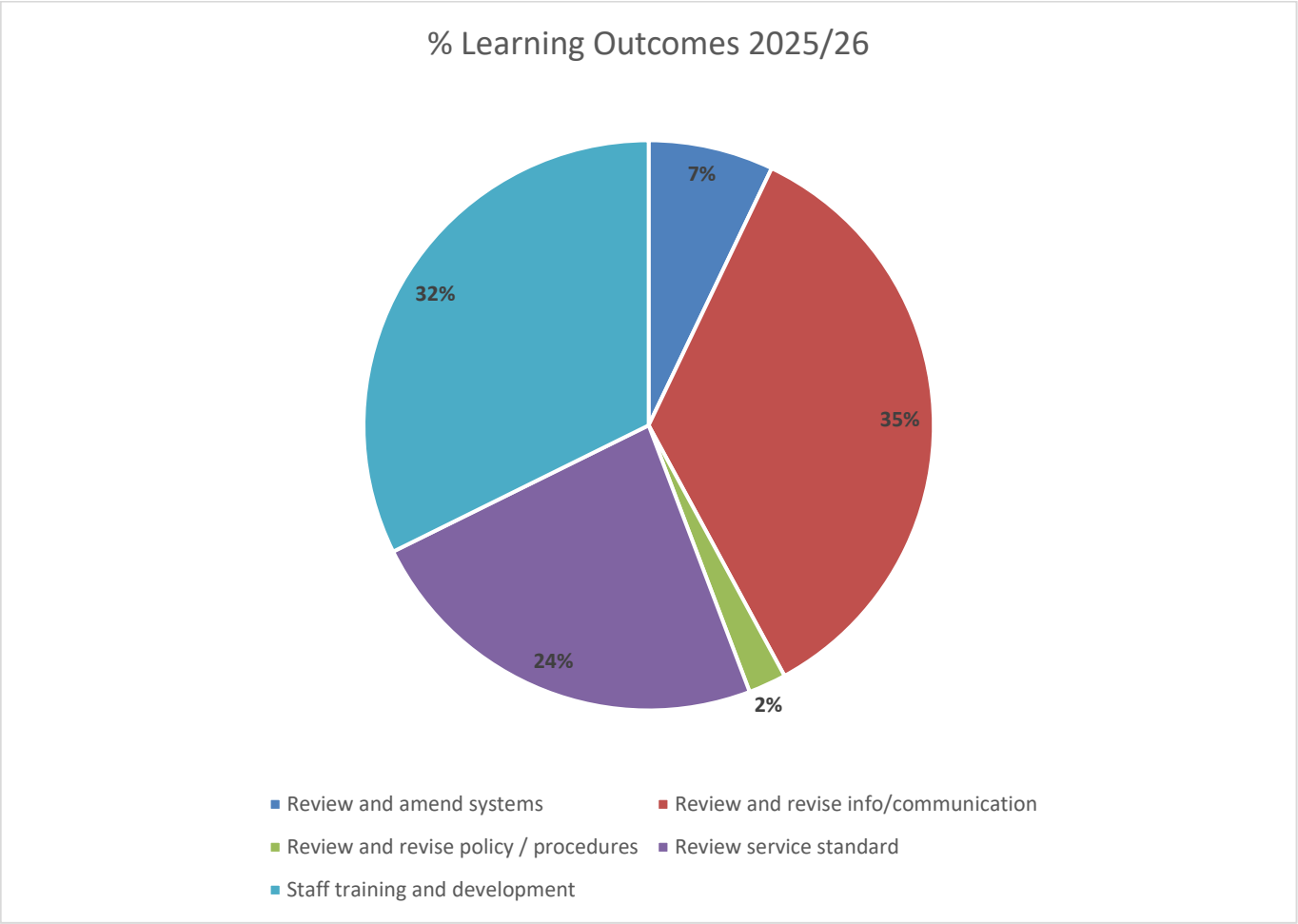


(Place separated from Resources reporting 2022/23)

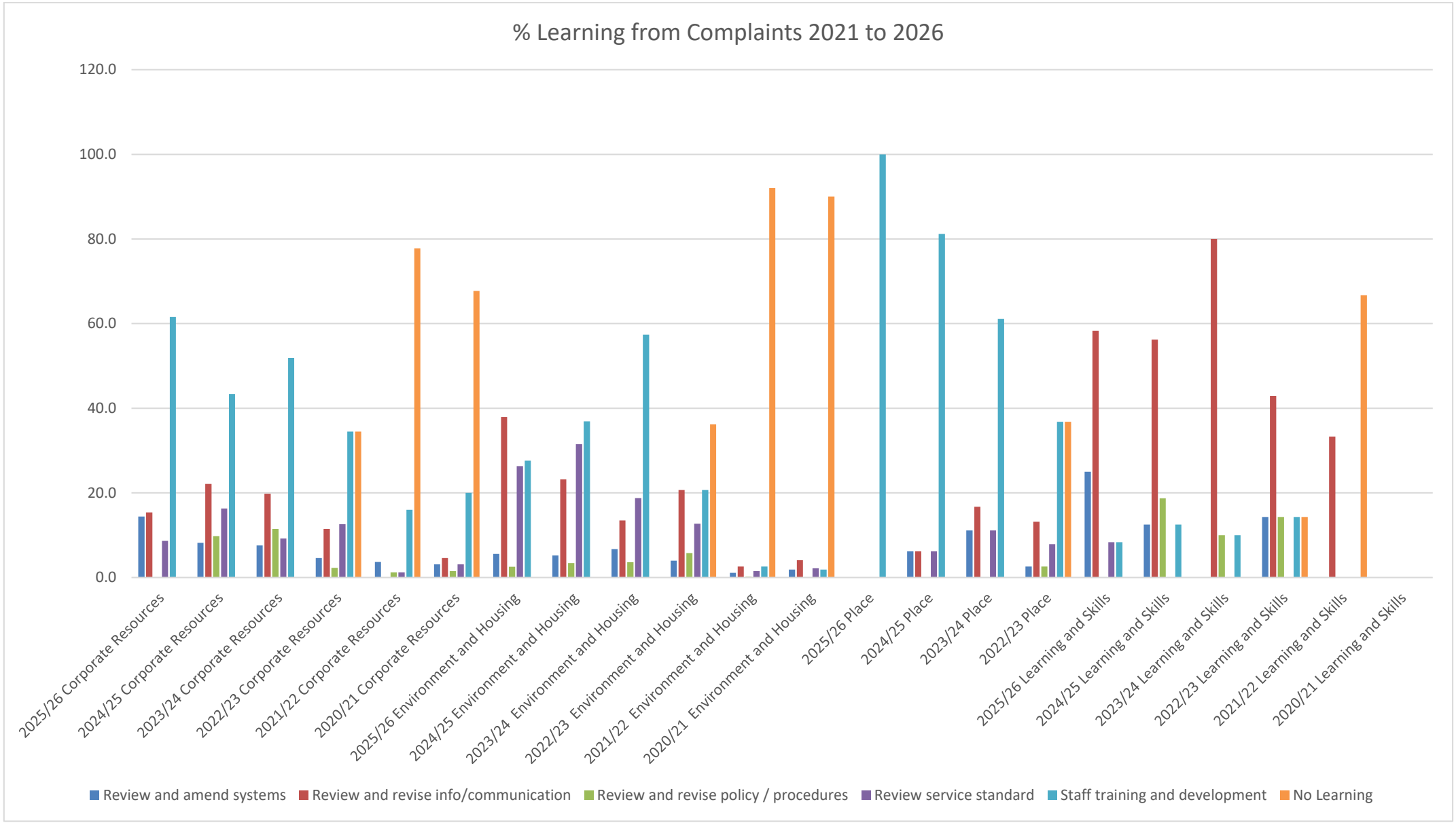



% Causes of Complaints Council
80.0
70.0
60.0
50.0
40.0
30.0
20.0
10.0
0.0
2025/26
2024/25
2023/24
2022/23
2021/22
2020/21
23.9
0.0
10.8
53.8
10.6
0.0
0.9
11
0
9
69
10
0
1
10.4
0
16.8
61.1
10.6
0
1.1
9.9
0.7
10.6
41.3
7.8
29.2
0.5
1.3
1.3
6.5
16.4
6.5
67.7
0.3
3.1
3.9
8.1
18.4
5.3
61.3
0
Incorrect Info Provided
Other
Policy/Procedure Not Followed
Service Standard not met
Staff Behaviour
Not Recorded
Discrimination

Appendix F – Learning from Complaints



(Place separated from Resources reporting 2022/23)



Appendix G - Welsh Language Complaints - April 2025 to March 2026

Complaints from the Welsh Language Commissioner:

1 x Social Services (CYPS)

1 x Customer Relations Online Portal

1 x Freedom of Information Response

Direct Complaints from Customers:

1 x Social Services (CYPS) also submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner

1 x Neighbourhood Services Public Convenience Signs

1 x Highways Road Signs

Complaints made online:

1 x Customer Relations Granicus Web Content, also submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner

Further details on the complaints can be found Welsh Language Monitoring Report on the website:

Appendix 1 - Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report 2025-26

Appendix H – Public Service Ombudsman Interventions (Summary)

Planning 202502358 - 30/07/2025

Mr A complained that Vale of Glamorgan Council had issued a building completion certificate for his property despite the building not meeting fire safety standards.

The Ombudsman decided that, for six months, the Council had not responded to Mr A's request for his complaint to be considered at stage 2 of its complaints procedure. The Ombudsman decided to settle the complaint without an investigation.

The Ombudsman sought and gained the Council's agreement to write to Mr A within 1 week to acknowledge receipt of his request for a stage 2 complaint investigation and apologise for not doing so sooner. The Council agreed to provide Mr A with a full response to his complaint within 4 weeks.

Waste Management 202505157 - 12/11/2025

Mrs Q complained that the Vale of Glamorgan Council failed to respond to her complaint concerning its refusal to provide purple waste bags.

The Ombudsman found that the Council logged Mrs Q's complaint as a service request and when attempts to contact her by telephone were unsuccessful, it failed to follow up with a letter. This caused additional frustration and uncertainty for Mrs Q. The Ombudsman decided to settle the complaint without an investigation.

The Ombudsman sought and gained the Council's agreement to formally log a complaint and, within 2 weeks, respond to it. It will include an apology and an offer of £50 financial redress for the time and trouble of making the complaint.

Adult Social Services 202506271 - 17/11/2025

Mrs X complained that Vale of Glamorgan Council failed to provide a stage 2 complaint response.

The Ombudsman found that, while the Council provided a stage 1 complaint response, it did not inform the complainant of their right to pursue the matter to the stage 2 procedure. The Ombudsman said this caused uncertainty and frustration for Mrs X. The Ombudsman decided to settle the complaint without an investigation.

The Ombudsman sought and gained the Council's agreement, within 1 week, to notify Mrs X that the Council will begin to consider her complaint under the stage 2 procedure and inform her that a response will be issued within 7 weeks. The Council also agreed, within 7 weeks, to issue the stage 2 complaint response that will include details of what
action will be taken, an apology and explanation for the delays and for not informing Mrs X of her right to escalate the matter and a financial redress offer of £150 in recognition of the delays.

SRS 202507465 - 15/01/2026

Mr B complained that Vale of Glamorgan Council refused to accept his complaint regarding his concerns about water quality.

The Ombudsman found that the Council had refused to accept Mr B's complaint. She said that this caused frustration and uncertainty to Mr B. She decided to settle the complaint without an investigation.

The Ombudsman sought and gained the Council's agreement to write to Mr B with an apology for the failure to log his concerns as a complaint and issue a properly considered Stage 1 complaint response within 3 weeks.

Adult Social Services 202508912 - 12/03/2026

Mrs A complained that following her complaint to Vale of Glamorgan Council it failed to provide a Stage 2 complaint response.

The Ombudsman found that whilst the complaint was escalated to Stage 2 procedure, Mrs A had not received the final Stage 2 response. The Ombudsman said this caused uncertainty and frustration for Mrs A and decided to settle the complaint without an investigation.

The Ombudsman sought and gained the Council's agreement to, within 6 weeks, issue the final Stage 2 complaint response, apologise and provide an explanation for the delay.

Building Services 202510365 - 17/03/2026

Mr B complained that he had raised a repair complaint but that no one had come to inspect or repair it. He said the concrete at the top of the path had broken down and was causing a slip/trip hazard.

The Ombudsman found that the breakdown of the concrete had been raised at the same time as several other issues, and that it seemed to have gotten lost amongst the correspondence about Mr B's other concerns. The consequence of this was not only that there appeared to have been a failure of communication, it also, potentially, amounted to a failure to inspect and carry out necessary repairs.

The Council agreed that, within 1 month, it would arrange an inspection appointment to review the status of the concrete path and reach a decision as to whether a repair is required. It also agreed to apologise for not having addressed this issue previously.

Appendix I – Learning from Complaints

Directorate	Complaint	Name of Service	How the service has improved	How the impact is being monitored
Social Services	A couple of families challenged us on the start date of charging for the service. Charges are set by Welsh Government rather than locally. Reablement is free but long-term care is chargeable, some people assumed that the charges would only start when they changed provided	VCRS Charging Policy	We have made our documentation much clearer and added a field to show date charges start from and ask the person to sign the form to say they understand this. we have also briefed staff to ensure they fully explain the charging process.	Monitoring for any further complaints in this area / on this topic
Corporate Resources	Part of the complaint was where the customer was querying her entitlement to CTRS and how a change in income would affect this. This query came through to the CTax team who advised the customer that she had zero CTax to pay as she was on full benefit. Although this information was correct, no consideration was given to the hypothetical question on how her income would affect her entitlement.	Exchequer	Both the Benefits and CTax teams have been reminded that they need to look at the full picture when replying to customers and to liaise with the other teams where necessary.	Monitoring of increased contact and liaison between the teams which is evident so far. This should then see a reduction in complaints.
Corporate Resources	A customer that had signed up to ebilling but when it came up time to review the case as their child was turning 18 we'd sent a discount app out in the post which took a while to be received and then returned due to the postal issues.	Council Tax	All staff have been reminded to use electronic means of communication where possible to speed up the process.	Monitoring of electronic comms.

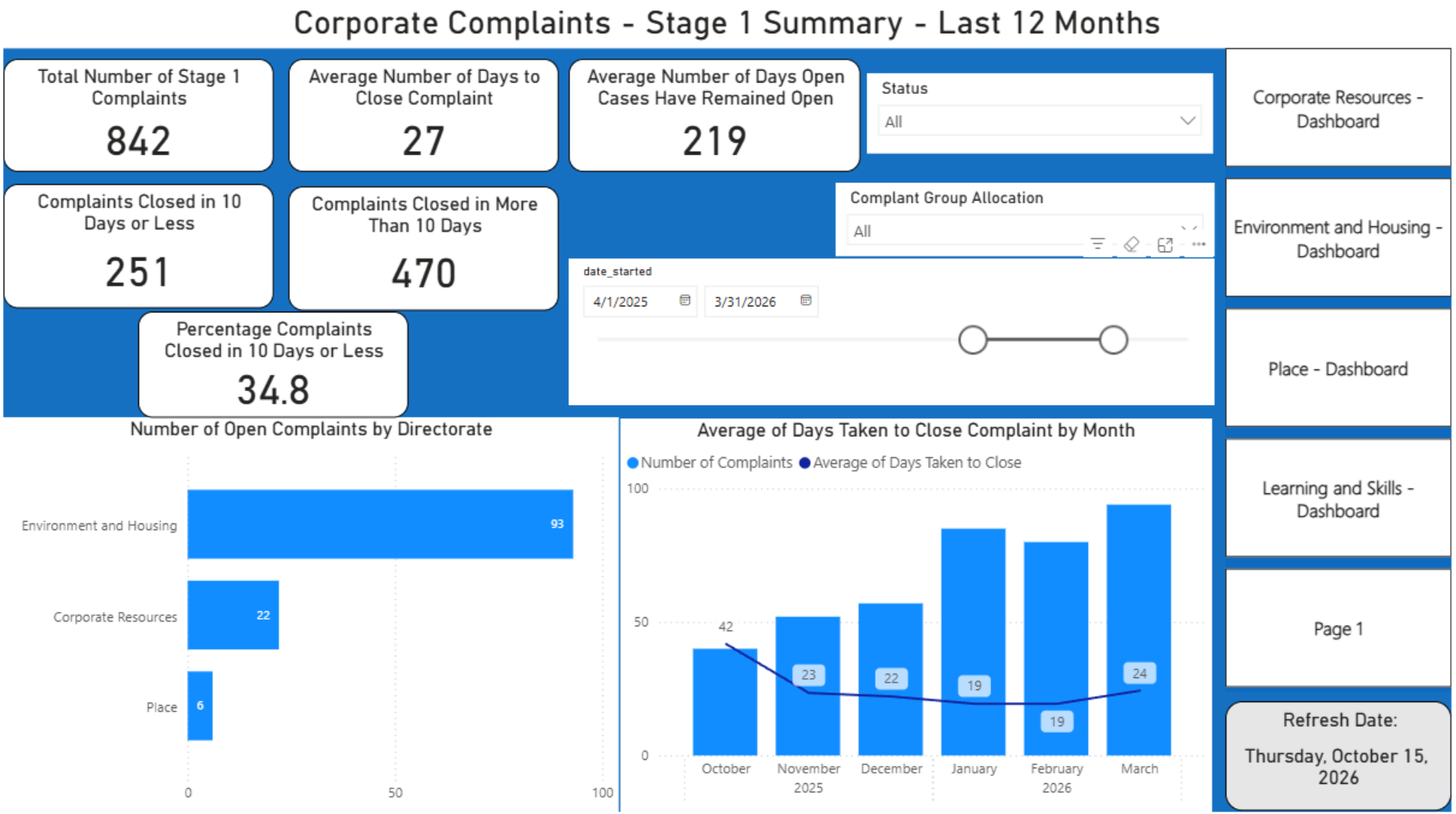
Directorate	Complaint	Name of Service	How the service has improved	How the impact is being monitored
	In the meantime we'd removed the single person's discount effecting what was due to be paid. Given they were an ebilling customer their argument was we should have emailed as standard and that would have made the whole process far easier.			
Learning and Skills	Applicants for school places complained that the distance measurements that we had calculated were incorrect and requested that they be investigated and recalculated. The complainant requested that members of the team visit a particular route in order for it to be considered as a safe-walking route and added to the GIS mapping system as such.	School Access & Organisation Team	Following an investigation into the Shortest Safe-Walking Route Distance Calculations, it was discovered that a section of the particular housing development which had been recently constructed was missing from the safe-walking routes available in the mapping software and needed to be added to the GIS. The school admissions team liaised with the School Transport team, whom are responsible for updating and maintaining the safe-walking routes available in the GIS. This was to ensure that the affected housing development was added to the safe walking routes available, as well as any other new housing developments across the county. The school admissions team will be vigilant when calculating home-to-school distances for all of the applications they received and will notify the school transport team of any affected areas.	The school transport team are going to ensure that the safe-walking routes are regularly maintained and updated accordingly, particularly for those new housing developments within the area that will need to be added as they are constructed.
Corporate Resources	Error in evaluating tender bids due to human error in transposing scores and weighing inconsistency with the tender brief.	Property	A new digital tool has been developed that allows for multiple marking by different officers which helps to ensure that transposing errors don't occur. The digital spreadsheet uses	Any errors identified during the 3 stage checking process are highlighted to me as Head of Service. So

Directorate	Complaint	Name of Service	How the service has improved	How the impact is being monitored
			"Loop" to import each officers scores. The spreadsheet has been set up and tested to ensure accuracy. We have also introduced a 3 stage checking process with 3 different team members checking calculations. This should ensure that future risk of error in scoring bids is very minimal.	far, there have been no anomalies to report.
Social Services	A complaint was received regarding the information provided when an individual accessed support through the VCRS team. The individual queried the date recorded as the start of their long-term support and felt it did not accurately reflect their circumstances. Although documentation had been signed confirming an understanding of the period of free support available, the difference in understanding of the start date led to confusion regarding support and charging arrangements.	Social Services Complaints	The VCRS team has amended the consent form to ensure individuals are aware of the date their free period of care begins and when it will end. The team has also updated the information booklet to provide clearer information about the service, helping individuals better understand the support available and any applicable timescales.	Managers will review feedback and any future complaints relating to charging and support dates. Audits of consent forms and case records will be undertaken to ensure the revised information is being consistently provided and understood by individuals accessing the service.
Social Services	Ombudsman compliance queries highlighted concerns regarding delays in complaint handling and instances where complaint timescales were not consistently met. The queries identified a need to strengthen monitoring arrangements and oversight of	Social Services Complaints	A review of complaints monitoring processes was undertaken to strengthen oversight of complaint timescales and compliance requirements. Lessons learned informed the development of improved monitoring arrangements and preparations for the introduction of the Granicus complaints management system from April 2026.	Effectiveness will be monitored through regular reviews of compliance with complaints timescales, management oversight of complaint performance, and monitoring of Ombudsman compliance queries. Trends

Directorate	Complaint	Name of Service	How the service has improved	How the impact is being monitored
	complaints to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.			and recurring issues are analysed to identify whether improvements are resulting in better compliance and a reduction in delays.
Social Services	A Welsh-speaking family raised concerns that their language needs were not consistently met. This included delays between English and Welsh communications and arrangements for meetings. The concerns were escalated to the Welsh Language Commissioner, resulting in an agreed action plan to strengthen Welsh language provision across services.	Social Services Complaints	Welsh language considerations have been strengthened across Social Services to promote equitable access and improve the experience of Welsh-speaking individuals and families. Simultaneous Welsh interpretation will now be provided for all meetings where Welsh is required, ensuring people can participate in their preferred language. Welsh-language documents will also be issued at the same time as English versions to provide timely and equal access to information. Learning from the complaint and resulting action plan has been shared through the Social Services newsletter to raise awareness and support consistent practice across all teams.	Managers will monitor any future Welsh language complaints or concerns and review whether the new arrangements are being implemented consistently. Any issues identified will be addressed through management oversight and ongoing service improvement.
Social Services	A complaint was received from a family regarding eligibility for support for a young person who was not open to the Children's Health and Disability Team (CHAD). During the complaint process, it was identified that the eligibility criteria and associated policy available to families were out of date, which created confusion regarding the support	Social Services Complaints	The complaint provided an opportunity to review and strengthen the information available to families. The CHAD eligibility criteria and associated policy have been reviewed and updated to ensure they accurately reflect current practice and provide clear guidance regarding eligibility for services. Learning from the complaint and the subsequent Ombudsman investigation has also been shared with staff to reinforce the importance of following the	The updated eligibility criteria and policy are now subject to regular review. Review dates are recorded on policies and monitored by the policy officer to ensure documents remain current and accurate. Managers will also monitor any future complaints relating to eligibility criteria

Directorate	Complaint	Name of Service	How the service has improved	How the impact is being monitored
	available and how decisions were made.		statutory complaints process and relevant regulations when responding to complaints.	and complaints handling to identify any further learning or opportunities for improvement.
Social Services	A resident was accidentally given a flu vaccination in error. The investigation identified a failure in the checking and verification process before the vaccine was administered.	Social Services Complaints	The service responded promptly by reviewing the circumstances and implementing additional safeguards to further enhance resident safety. Two staff members now accompany the nurse during vaccination visits, and resident records, consent forms and identification details are checked and verified before any vaccination is administered. This strengthened verification process supports safe practice, improves oversight and reduces the likelihood of similar errors occurring in the future.	Managers will monitor compliance with the revised vaccination procedure through regular audits, spot checks and supervision. Any incidents, near misses or complaints relating to medication or vaccination administration will be reviewed to assess the effectiveness of the enhanced verification process. Learning from ongoing monitoring will be used to support continuous improvement and ensure resident safety remains at the centre of practice.

Appendix J – Corporate Complaints Stage 1 Dashboard (not including cancelled)



Equality Impact Assessment
Including the Welsh Language and Socio-economic Duty

1. What are you assessing?

Corporate Concerns and Complaint Policy

2. Who is responsible?

Name	James Langridge-Thomas Evelyn Morgan Amanda Pocknell	**Job Title**	Operational Manager Democratic Services Information Manager and Data Protection Officer Deputy Data Protection Officer
Team	Information Governance Team Democratic Services	**Directorate**	Corporate Resources

3. When is the assessment being carried out?

Date of start of assessment	February 2026

4. Describe the proposal?

Equality Impact Assessment
Including the Welsh Language and Socio-economic Duty

What is the purpose of the proposal?

This assessment reviews the accessibility and equality implications of the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy (May 2025). The policy outlines routes for raising corporate complaints, exclusions, access channels, timeframes, and the approach to learning and governance.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear, fair and accessible route for members of the public to raise concerns or complaints about Council services and to secure timely, proportionate remedies and Council learning.

Equality Impact Assessment
Including the Welsh Language and Socio-economic Duty

Why do you need to put it in place?

Local authorities in Wales are required to operate a corporate-wide complaints process based on the Model Concerns and Complaints Policy issued by the Complaints Standards Authority for Wales, which sits within the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW). This requirement applies to all public service providers in scope, including all 22 Welsh Principal Councils. The policy framework is issued under statutory powers in the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 and must be reflected in each council's corporate arrangements.

A clear complaints policy directly protects and benefits service users. It sets out what people can expect when something goes wrong and helps ensure they are treated fairly, consistently and respectfully. Key benefits for service users include:

1. Clarity and accessibility

A complaints policy explains how to raise a concern, who to contact, and what will happen next. This is especially important for people who may feel unsure, stressed or disadvantaged when dealing with public services. Clear routes reduce confusion and make it easier for all to be heard, not just the most confident service users who regularly interface with the Council. The policy also provides clarity on the different pathways complaints may take, as social services, schools, Members and Welsh language have their own arrangements in place.

2. Fairness and consistency

Service users can be confident that complaints will be handled in the same way, regardless of which service area or officer is involved. A corporate policy reduces the risk of "postcode" or "department-by-department" differences, and helps to ensure resolutions are based on evidence and standards rather than personalities or discretion.

3. Timely responses and accountability

Policies set timescales and stages, so service users know when they should expect a response and what to do if they remain dissatisfied with the initial outcome. This aims to avoid people being ignored or left waiting indefinitely and makes the Council accountable for how it treats complainants.

4. Respect and dignity

A good complaints policy reinforces that raising a complaint is acceptable and legitimate. This reassures service users that they will not be blamed, disadvantaged, or treated unfairly for raising their concerns, which is particularly important for vulnerable individuals or those who are frequent users of council services.

5. Access to redress and explanation

Through a complaints process, service users can receive:

- an explanation of what happened
- an apology where appropriate
- corrective action or redress where appropriate

This aims to be transparent about any situation, and restore trust and confidence, even where the original decision cannot be changed.

6. Improved services for the future

Complaints highlight what is not working in practice or where there are areas which may require improvement. By collecting and analysing complaint data, Councils can learn from service users' experiences and improve services, using this information as a key evidence base for future improvements, meaning users benefit from changes driven by real feedback.

7. Transparency and trust

Publishing a complaints policy demonstrates openness. Service users can see that the Council is willing to be challenged about decisions, promoting trust in local government and reinforcing democratic accountability.

In summary, the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy is required to ensure the Council provides a fair, transparent and legally compliant process for handling complaints. It sets out how residents can raise concerns, ensures accessibility and Welsh language compliance, clarifies responsibilities and timeframes, supports vulnerable residents, and strengthens organisational learning, governance and accountability. For service users, it provides reassurance, fairness, voice, and protection. It ensures that concerns are not just heard, but handled properly, and that residents are central to improving how council services operate.

Do we need to commit significant resources to it (such as money or staff time)?

We do not expect this policy or its associated EIA mitigations to require significant additional financial or staffing resource. Most actions can be delivered within existing service budgets and staff teams as part of routine compliance with various equality legislation and Welsh Language Standards. Where minor costs arise (e.g., accessible formats, interpreter use, pre-paid envelopes, or digital accessibility fixes), these are proportionate and manageable. They are also necessary in relation to other Council initiatives and strategies.

Equality Impact Assessment
Including the Welsh Language and Socio-economic Duty

What are the intended outcomes of the proposal?

Intended outcomes:

- Early, informal resolution, where appropriate (Stage 1).
- A proportionate, evidence-based investigation where required (Stage 2).
- Consistent, reasoned decisions and remedies ("putting things right").
- Protection from disadvantage or victimisation for raising concerns.
- Service improvement through learning and governance reporting.

Who does the proposal affect?

Members of the public, who receive or seek services from the Council, including individuals acting through representatives or advocates.

Key exclusions (handled via separate routes as outlined on the Council's complaints webpade) include:

- Social Services
- Councillor conduct
- School's procedures,
- Data protection/information rights processes
- Fraud/corruption reporting.
- Decisions in respect of which there is a separate right of appeal or review, e.g. planning appeals, council tax reviews and issues with access to legal redress via Magistrates court

Groups affected:

- Residents
- Service users (including children and young people).
- Local Businesses.
- Carers, advocates, and representatives acting with consent/authority.
- Welsh speakers and people who require communications in alternative formats.
- Council staff who receive, record, investigate and respond to complaints.
- Partner bodies/contractors where complaints relate to services delivered on the Council's behalf.
- Council staff raising issues and seeking protections under Whistleblowing legislation

- Those less likely to engage digitally or cannot engage digitally for economic or health reasons.

Will the proposal affect how other organisations work?

This process will have no direct impact upon how other organisations work. However, a significant amount of the Council's work is undertaken in partnership, meaning that there may be a need to involve other organisations in investigations and subsequent improvement activity.

Will the proposal affect how you deliver services?

The policy will create more consistent, accessible, bilingual, customer focused and accountable services that are accessible to all across the Council. It ensures legal compliance, improves responsiveness, strengthens learning to inform future improvement activity, supports staff, and enhances the experience for residents -focused and accountable services

Will the proposal impact on other policies or practices?

Yes. The Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy will impact a range of other Council policies and practices. It interacts directly with Welsh Language Standards, data protection processes, the Unacceptable Actions by Citizens Policy, Social Services complaints procedures, school complaint procedures, fraud/corruption reporting and Social Media policy. It also influences corporate customer service standards, performance reporting frameworks, and internal service workflows. These impacts are positive and support clearer routing, stronger compliance, and more consistent service delivery across the Council.
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Can you change the proposal so that it further promotes equality of opportunity and fosters good relations?

This proposal was originally strengthened following consultation in 2017 and at that time it was strengthened to ensure that it more explicitly promoted equality of opportunity and fostered good relations between different groups. The following enhancements were incorporated:-

- **Clearer commitment to equality and inclusion:** The proposal now reinforces that all individuals, regardless of protected characteristic, will have fair and equitable access to the process by the other enhancements within this secition.
- **Stronger accessibility measures:** We have expanded the section on reasonable adjustments, ensuring that people with disabilities, language needs, or communication barriers can fully engage without disadvantage and should experience the same standard of complaints management.
- **Improved support for under-represented and vulnerable groups:** The revised proposal introduces additional safeguards and support options for individuals who may otherwise face barriers in raising concerns.
- **Enhanced Welsh language provision:** Strengthened wording now demonstrates our commitment to treating Welsh and English equally, contributing to positive

community relations and cultural inclusion.
- **Access to a British Sign Language interpreter**
- **Promotion of good relations through transparency and respect:** The proposal now further emphasises respectful communication, culturally sensitive practice, and measures that encourage trust and confidence across diverse communities.
- **Equality monitoring and learning:** We have introduced a voluntary equality monitoring element to help identify and address any disparities, ensuring continuous improvement and informed service development, which will be analysed regularly.

These changes helped ensure that the proposal not only met statutory equality duties but actively contributed to reducing barriers, promoting fairness, and strengthening relationships between the Council and the communities.

Whilst there has not been any direct engagement about this policy, since 2017 there have been a number of consultation and engagement activities in service areas across the Council which have touched upon themes relevant to the Corporate Complaints Policy. Greater details are set out below. What these later consultations highlight are that the overarching themes from the earlier consultation remain relevant and that the actions implemented remain relevant.

Vale 2030 Corporate Plan Consultation

The Vale 2030 Corporate Plan consultation highlighted the importance of community engagement, accessibility, transparency and listening to residents' views. These themes are relevant to this EIA as the Corporate Complaints Policy provides a key mechanism for residents to raise concerns, provide feedback and contribute to service improvement.

The consultation reinforces the policy's contribution to the Corporate Plan objectives of Being the Best Council We Can Be and Supporting and Protecting Those Who Need Us, supporting the need for accessible, bilingual, fair and accountable complaint handling arrangements.

The consultation identified inequalities, cost-of-living pressures and barriers to participation as continuing challenges, alongside the need to support vulnerable people and strengthen engagement with communities. This supports the EIA's assessment that reasonable adjustments, Welsh language parity and supported access remain important considerations, together with mitigating barriers linked to digital exclusion and socio-economic disadvantage through multiple access routes and free support.

While the consultation did not specifically address complaints monitoring, it reinforces the importance of understanding residents' experiences, identifying barriers and using feedback to improve services. This supports ongoing monitoring, organisational learning and consideration of equality information to ensure the complaints process remains accessible, relevant and responsive.

The Corporate Plan also reaffirms the Council's commitment to equality, inclusion and the Welsh language, reflecting and reinforcing the actions and safeguards identified within this EIA.

Digital Strategy Consultation (2023 to 2028) which informed digital accessibility, multiples access channels and mitigation of digital exclusion within complaints processes

The Digital Strategy Consultation (2023–2028) is directly relevant to the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy EIA, particularly in relation to digital accessibility, the provision of multiple access channels, and mitigation of digital exclusion. The EIA evidence and mitigations rely on established Digital Strategy principles that services will not be "digital only", that assisted and non-digital routes remain available, and that reasonable adjustments are embedded by design. These commitments support the EIA's conclusions on accessibility, proportionality and equality of outcome. They highlight that the actions as implemented were relevant and that it is important for the policy to keep abreast with changes digitally in order to ensure that all of its affected groups continue to be able to access the policy.

Annual Delivery Plan consultation which reinforced the need for clear customer routes, responsiveness and learning loops aligned to performance reporting. This is directly reflected in this EIA via the assessment of complaint access routes, exclusions, signposting and accessibility. Responsiveness through clear timescales and stage resolution and learning loops together with structured data collection and reporting mechanisms via Corporate Governance arrangements.

Place making and RLDP consultations highlighted the importance of place-based engagement, inclusion of seldom heard groups and the importance of accessible feedback mechanisms. The importance of place-based engagement highlighted through place-making and RLDP consultations are reflected in this EIA's focus on locally accessible complaint routes, non-digital access options and support for residents engaging about services affecting their communities. It reflects RLDP consultation priorities around inclusion of seldom-heard groups through explicit consideration of vulnerable, digitally excluded and under-represented residents, and through commitments to reasonable adjustments, advocacy and enhanced monitoring. The consultation emphasis on accessible feedback mechanisms is addressed in this EIA through commitments to clear communication of outcomes, user feedback, equality monitoring and transparent reporting via the Annual Complaints Report.

In summary, the priorities identified through place-making and RLDP consultations are reflected in this EIA for the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy. The EIA addresses place-based engagement through locally accessible complaint routes, inclusion of seldom-heard groups through targeted support and reasonable adjustments, and accessible feedback mechanisms through clear outcomes, equality monitoring and corporate reporting arrangements.

The Council has also undertaken a recent Task and Finish Scrutiny work reviewing

misinformation, which entailed significant engagement with community groups and expert witnesses who interact with residents from a variety of backgrounds. Findings from this included how to ensure legitimate public concerns could be misinterpreted, practical steps to engage with habitual service users, how to communicate and navigate scenarios where particular groups are disadvantaged to ensure community cohesion. The work also identified the need to balance proactive communication with the competing factors of group think and individual personal concerns. A number of recommendations for improvement have been identified as part of this report. This is reflecting in the EIAs focus of dealing with residents' concerns, being preventative before it reaches this stage and working with residents to develop a learning culture with an open narrative to make improvement.

How will you achieve the proposed changes?

The Council will continue to achieve through updates to policy wording, template revisions, bilingual and accessible communication enhancements, improved staff guidance/training, trauma-informed approaches, free interpreting, and strengthened performance monitoring through enhancing how complaints are embedded within the Council's governance structure. These actions can be delivered within existing structures, staff expertise and budgets, and build on the systems already described in the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy. Informed approaches, free interpreting, and strengthened performance monitoring can be delivered within existing structures, staff expertise and budgets, and build on the systems already described in the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy.

Who will deliver the proposal?

Delivery of future change will be led by Democratic Services, supported by the Equalities Team, Welsh Language Officer, Digital/Web teams, Contact Centre, Service Complaint Leads, Information Governance, and Performance & Insight, and Digital Transform team. However, all service areas will play a pivotal role in ensuring that effective complaints practices are embedded.

Strategic oversight will be overseen by the Council's Insight Board and the Council's Senior Leadership Team, with democratic governance through Cabinet, Scrutiny alongside annual reporting to the Council's Governance and Audit Committee. These areas already play defined roles within the complaints process, as set out in the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy, enabling implementation to take place within existing structures.

How will you know whether you have achieved the proposal's purpose?

We will know the purpose is achieved when residents experience a more accessible, inclusive and fair complaints process; this includes:
when complaints are resolved more effectively and within policy timescales;
-when Welsh language and equality requirements are consistently met;
-when fewer complaints escalate;
-when services implement learning from complaints consistently to inform improvement activity; and
-when corporate reporting demonstrates improved outcomes across protected and

vulnerable groups.

These measures align with the monitoring and governance arrangements already required in the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy:
-language and equality requirements are consistently met;
-when fewer complaints escalate;
-when services implement learning; and when corporate reporting demonstrates improved outcomes across protected and vulnerable groups.

These measures align with the monitoring and seeking complainants views of their experience as well as gathering equalities information and ensuring groups with protected characteristics are included in these factors.

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5. What evidence are you using?

The evidence used includes the detailed provisions within the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy itself—such as access routes, alternative formats, Welsh language duties, support for vulnerable groups, clear timeframes, and governance structures—as well as operational complaint data, statutory equality and Welsh language duties, Ombudsman standards, local demographic needs and other consultation exercises as set out earlier in this document. Together, this evidence provides an understanding of how different groups may experience the policy and informs the identified impacts and mitigations. Alongside this, Gunning Principles (below), established from historic court cases, have also been applied to support thinking:

- **Principle 1**: Consultation must take place when the proposals are still at a formative stage. You must not have already made up your mind.
- **Principle 2**: Sufficient reasons must be put forward to allow for intelligent consideration and response. Have people been given the information and opportunity to influence?
- **Principle 3**: Adequate time must be given for consideration and response. Is the consultation long enough bearing in mind the circumstances?
- **Principle 4**: The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account when finalising the decision.

Have you complied with the duty to engage as described above and are you sufficiently informed to proceed?

Yes	✓	**No**	

Engagement (with internal and external stakeholders)

Engagement with internal and external stakeholders—such as Customer Relations, Equalities, Welsh Language Officers, Digital Teams, Contact Centre staff, Information Governance, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, and Welsh language and accessibility partners—has informed this assessment. The Council is mindful of the diverse needs of its service users and seeks to ensure that the policy supports fair, accessible and inclusive complaint handling across the Vale of Glamorgan. This engagement is an organic and ongoing process.

Consultation (with internal and external stakeholders)

Consultation has involved internal services responsible for delivering and overseeing the complaints process—Customer Relations, Equalities, Welsh Language, Digital, Contact Centre, Service Managers, Information Governance, Senior Leadership Team, Cabinet and Scrutiny—as well as external stakeholders including residents.

National data and research

National data and research show significant increases in complaint volumes, rising expectations for fairness and accessibility, high demand on public services, and a need for strong equality and Welsh language compliance in complaint handling. Evidence from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, national accessibility standards, ONS equality research, and UK wide performance analysis all support strengthening the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy to ensure it is accessible, inclusive, timely, and effective.-wide performance analysis all support strengthening the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy to ensure it is accessible, inclusive, timely, and effective.

Local data and research

Local data and research used to inform this assessment includes the Vale of Glamorgan's own complaints trends, case escalations, accessibility requests, Welsh language requirements, and learning from previous cases. Local data indicates an increase in complaints which has been highlighted by the adaptation of its online presence since 2022 and a recent escalation of the use of AI highlights that complaints have become more sophisticated in their detail. The content of the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy itself also provides evidence—such as multiple access routes, alternative formats, Welsh language compliance, support for vulnerable groups, and established reporting mechanisms to Senior Leadership Team, Cabinet and Scrutiny—which demonstrates how residents currently engage with the process and where equality barriers or opportunities for improvement exist.

6. How robust is the evidence?

Does it show what the impact will be (positive and negative)?

Positive

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What are the gaps?

The evidence used for this EIA includes national research, alongside statutory equality and Welsh language duties, Ombudsman reports, recognised accessibility standards, and established local operational practices. Whilst enhanced local quantitative data would further strengthen the assessment, the current evidence is sufficiently comprehensive to identify impacts, propose mitigations, and ensure the policy promotes equality and good relations.

The evidence base has several gaps, including the absence of local demographic data on complainants, limited information on digital exclusion, incomplete Welsh language usage data, no equality related outcome analysis, and little qualitative insight from residents or staff. While the policy provides strong procedural and accessibility commitments, and national research provides robust context, the local evidence base would be strengthened by systematic monitoring of equality related indicators, Welsh language usage, reasonable adjustments, and user experience feedback, related outcome analysis, and little qualitative insight from residents or staff.

While the policy provides strong procedural and accessibility commitments, and national research provides robust context, the local evidence base would be strengthened by systematic monitoring of equality-related indicators, Welsh language usage, reasonable adjustments, and user experience feedback.

What will you do about this?

To address the identified evidence gaps, the Council will strengthen equality monitoring, improve data collection on accessibility and language needs as part of its data capture process, gather more qualitative user feedback to be analysed, enhance Welsh language tracking, analyse equality trends in complaint outcomes, and introduce routine demographic and channel usage data collection. We will also engage more systematically with advocacy groups and frontline staffand develop an evidence dashboard to support ongoing monitoring. This will ensure the complaints process is continuously improved, inclusive, and informed by robust data-usage data collection.

A monitoring report on the application of the policies will be considered by the Senior Leadership team and Governance and Audit Committee after implementation annually thereafter. This will include equalities monitoring data.

What monitoring data will you collect?

The Council will collect comprehensive monitoring data across access routes, Welsh language use, equality and diversity, reasonable adjustments, complaint outcomes, timescales, user satisfaction and learning actions. This aligns with the policy's requirements for six monthly and annual reporting to Public Service Ombudsmen Wales, and responds to national evidence showing rising complaint volumes and the importance of fairness, accessibility and inclusion in public services.

How often will you analyse and report on this?

The Annual Complaints Report will be presented to Governance and Audit for assurance, and published accordingly

Where will you publish monitoring data and reports?

The Annual Complaints Report will be presented to Governance and Audit for assurance, and published accordingly.

7. Impact

Is there an impact?

The complaints process is expected to have a positive impact on all protected groups by providing a clear, fair and accessible mechanism for raising concerns, challenging discrimination, and improving service delivery. The main equality considerations relate to ensuring that the process is accessible to all individuals, including those who may require reasonable adjustments, alternative communication formats, translation or interpretation support. Appropriate safeguards are in place to maintain confidentiality and ensure all complaints are handled fairly and consistently.

The main mitigations in place are:

- Providing information in accessible and alternative formats.
- Offering translation and interpretation services.
- Making reasonable adjustments for disabled complainants.
- Providing multiple routes for submitting complaints (online, telephone, email, letter, in person).
- Monitoring complaints data to identify any disproportionate impacts on protected groups.

If there is likely to be an impact, what is it?

Socio-economic Disadvantage

The complaints process is expected to have a positive impact on people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage by providing an accessible route to raise concerns and seek resolution. The process does not create barriers for individuals who have limited digital access, lower literacy levels, financial constraints, or reduced access to support services.

The main mitigations in place are:

- Multiple ways to make a complaint.
- Clear, plain language.
- Advocacy or support where appropriate.

Human Rights

Depending on the nature of the complaints, relevant human rights may be:

- Right to respect for private and family life.
- Freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
- Freedom from discrimination in the enjoyment of Convention rights.
- Right to an effective remedy through fair and transparent procedures.

The complaints process is expected to have a positive impact on human rights by promoting fairness, accountability, transparency and access to redress. To maximise these benefits, complaints will be handled promptly, confidentially and in a manner that is accessible to all individuals.

Welsh Language

The complaints process is expected to have a positive impact on the Welsh language by enabling individuals to raise complaints and receive responses in Welsh. The process should ensure that Welsh and English language services are available on an equal basis and that complainants are not disadvantaged by their language choice.

Protected Characteristic	Potential Positive Impacts	Potential Risks/Negative Impacts to Consider
Age	Provides people of all ages with a clear route to raise concerns about services and seek redress. Can help identify age-related discrimination or poor service experiences.	Older people or younger people may face barriers if processes rely heavily on digital access or use complex language.
Disability	Enables disabled people to raise concerns about accessibility, discrimination or failure to make reasonable adjustments. Complaints information can help improve service	Complaint procedures may be inaccessible if information is not available in alternative formats, communication support is unavailable, or reasonable adjustments are not

	accessibility. Will need to review process to ensure it is accessible by BSL users.	offered. This includes for people using BSL.
Gender reassignment	Provides a mechanism for reporting discrimination, harassment or poor treatment related to gender identity. Supports organisational learning and improvement.	Individuals may be reluctant to complain if they lack confidence that their privacy and dignity will be protected.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Ensures people are treated fairly regardless of their marital or partnership status and can raise concerns where they believe they have been treated differently.	Generally low risk, but processes should ensure fair and consistent treatment for all complainants.
Pregnancy and Maternity	Allows individuals to raise concerns regarding barriers to accessing services, discrimination, or failures to accommodate pregnancy and maternity-related needs.	Complaint mechanisms must be accessible for people who may have caring responsibilities, limited time, or health-related needs.
Race	Supports the reporting and investigation of discrimination, racism, cultural insensitivity and language-related barriers. Can help identify trends and improve inclusion.	Language barriers may prevent some individuals from engaging effectively with the process unless interpretation or translation support is available.
Religion	Provides a route for individuals to raise concerns about discrimination, harassment or failure to accommodate religious observance or beliefs.	Individuals may lack confidence in the process if they do not believe complaints will be handled impartially.
Sex	Enables concerns relating to sex discrimination, harassment or unequal treatment to be identified	Some individuals may be reluctant to complain about sensitive issues if confidentiality

	and addressed.	arrangements are unclear.
Sexual Orientation	Provides a mechanism for reporting discrimination, harassment or exclusion based on sexual orientation. Supports a more inclusive service environment.	Individuals may be concerned about confidentiality or being inadvertently "outed" through the complaints process.
Socio-economic disadvantage	Provides people experiencing poverty or financial hardship with a mechanism to challenge poor service, unfair treatment, or barriers to accessing services. Helps the Council identify whether services are disproportionately disadvantaging people on lower incomes. Can highlight systemic issues affecting vulnerable communities and support service improvements.	People on low incomes may have limited access to digital technology if complaints are primarily submitted online. Individuals may be less able to engage with lengthy or complex complaints procedures due to work, caring responsibilities, literacy levels, or lack of access to advice and advocacy. Costs associated with making a complaint (for example, travel, phone calls, or printing documents) could act as a barrier.
Human rights	Promotes fairness, accountability and transparency. Supports the right to be treated with dignity and respect. Provides a mechanism for individuals to have their concerns heard and considered. Helps identify potential breaches of rights and improve organisational practice.	Delays in responding to complaints may undermine confidence in the process. Lack of accessibility could prevent some individuals from effectively exercising their rights. Failures in confidentiality or data protection could impact an individual's privacy.
Welsh language	Enables Welsh speakers to raise complaints and	If complaints information or correspondence is not

	receive responses in Welsh if they choose. Demonstrates compliance with Welsh Language Standards and supports equal access to services. Improves confidence among Welsh-speaking service users that their concerns will be understood and addressed appropriately.	available in Welsh, Welsh speakers may be disadvantaged. Delays in providing Welsh-language responses could create unequal experiences. Lack of awareness among staff of Welsh language requirements could impact service quality.

How do you know?

Explain this for each of the relevant protected characteristics as identified above.

As outlined above

What can be done to promote a positive impact?

Explain this for each of the relevant protected characteristics as identified above.

A positive impact can be promoted by strengthening accessibility, enhancing Welsh language provision, reducing digital exclusion, providing trauma informed and culturally sensitive support, improving interpreting provision, expanding monitoring and transparency, supporting vulnerable groups, fostering a culture of learning, and communicating rights clearly. These actions build directly upon commitments already present within the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy, ensuring the process is fair, inclusive and responsive to all members of the community

What can be done to lessen the risk of a negative impact?

Explain this for each of the relevant protected characteristics as identified above.

Negative impacts can be mitigated by a positive culture around the important role that complaints play in an organisation, strengthening accessibility, enhancing Welsh

language parity, reducing digital exclusion, providing free communication support, improving trauma informed practice, preventing misrouting, strengthening monitoring, improving communication, supporting staff with training, and expanding assistance for vulnerable groups. These actions build on commitments already within the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy and ensure that all residents can access the process fairly and without disadvantage This also accords with the Council's Customer Charter and Brilliant Basics agenda, **.**

Is there a need for more favourable treatment to achieve equal outcomes? **(Disability only)**

Favourable treatment in several areas will achieve equal outcomes. This includes providing enhanced support for disabled people, Welsh speakers, young people, residents with limited English, digitally excluded residents, people facing socio-economic disadvantage, and those experiencing trauma or vulnerability. These measures are lawful, proportionate and in many cases mandated under the Welsh Language Standards and the Equality Act. They ensure that all residents can access and navigate the complaints process fairly, as intended in the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy.

Will the impact be positive, negative or neutral?

Explain this for each of the relevant protected characteristics as identified above.

Overall, the impact of the Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy is predominantly positive. The policy enhances accessibility, strengthens Welsh language rights, improves fairness and transparency, and supports vulnerable groups through multiple contact methods, alternative formats, and clear investigation procedures. Some potential negative impacts—particularly relating to digital exclusion, language barriers, and inconsistent staff practice—can be fully mitigated through improved monitoring, proactive adjustments, training and stronger Welsh language implementation.

Administrative elements of the policy, such as definitions and exclusion lists, have a neutral impact.-language rights, improves fairness and transparency, and supports vulnerable groups through multiple contact methods, alternative formats, and clear investigation procedures.

Some potential negative impacts—particularly relating to digital exclusion, language barriers, and inconsistent staff practice—can be fully mitigated through improved monitoring, proactive adjustments, training and stronger Welsh language implementation.

8. Monitoring ongoing impact

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Date you will monitor progress and outcomes Annuallyas previously outlined
Measures and outcomes that you will monitor • Frequency of policy application • Characteristics of citizens to who the policy is applied to ensure no conscious or unconscious bias • Datasets as outlined within the Council's Annual Complaints Report
Date you will review implemented proposal and its impact Annually

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9. Further action as a result of this equality impact assessment

Possible Outcomes	Say which applies
No major change	✓
Adjust the policy	
Continue the policy	
Stop and remove the policy	

10. Outcomes and Actions

Recommend actions to Senior Leadership Team No direct actions required from Senior Leadership Team. However, a session has been undertaken to adviseupon their roles and responsibilities within the complaints management process.
Outcome following formal consideration of proposal by senior management team Not applicable

11. Important Note

Where you have identified impacts, you must detail this in your Cabinet report when seeking approval for your proposal.

12. Publication

Where will you publish your approved proposal and equality impact assessment? Vale of Glamorgan Complaints Public webpage Staffnet

13. Authorisation

Approved by (name)	Tom Bowring
Job Title (senior manager)	Director of Corporate Resources
Date of approval	2nd November 2026
Date of review	2nd November 2027