Corporate Customer Feedback Overview Report
Financial years 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21.

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to detail the four types of customer feedback which have been received by Warwickshire County Council during financial years 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 including volume, efficiency of processing and outcome for the customer.

Background

Warwickshire County Council (WCC) has a well-established and comprehensive customer feedback handling process which is detailed in the Corporate Complaints Policy https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/complaints. There are two statutory procedures used in People Directorate – Adult Social Care complaints procedures, and Children's Social Care complaints procedures, as well as the use of the corporate General complaints procedures for issues which do not fall within these statutory procedures. The systems in place confirm that we want to hear from people when we get things right, and when we could do things better. This helps us to:

- Understand what services people value and why
- Share best practice
- Make sure we learn and continually improve how we provide services to our customers
- Recognise and reward when our staff "go the extra mile".

Our customer feedback is handled and kept within a specialist ICT customer feedback management system called 'Contact Us'. Most of our feedback is received digitally, through the WCC website, where customers can choose to register, or submit their feedback anonymously. Contact Us is not a dedicated case management system and has some flaws in relation to allowing the Council to get the best value from customers' feedback, however this is being addressed.

We encourage all staff to respond quickly and clearly to any concerns that are raised by individuals or groups. We want all our customers to feel confident that their views will be taken seriously, and that there will be no repercussions if they need to raise genuine concerns.

The Council aims to resolve customer's complaints at the earliest opportunity and with the minimum of formality wherever possible. However, we follow the statutory requirements for complaints about Children and Family services, which gives customers the potential to have their issues considered at three internal stages if required, before referring to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) if they remain dissatisfied.
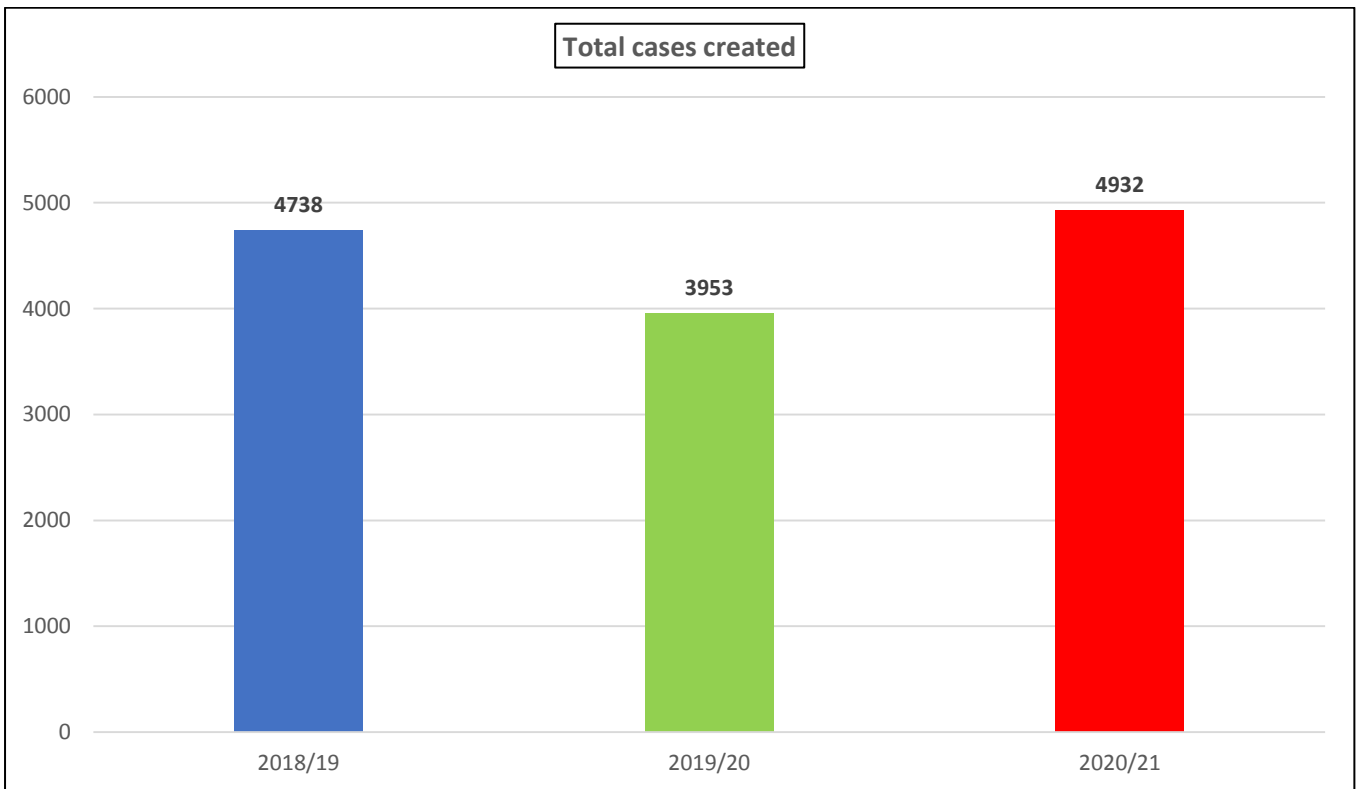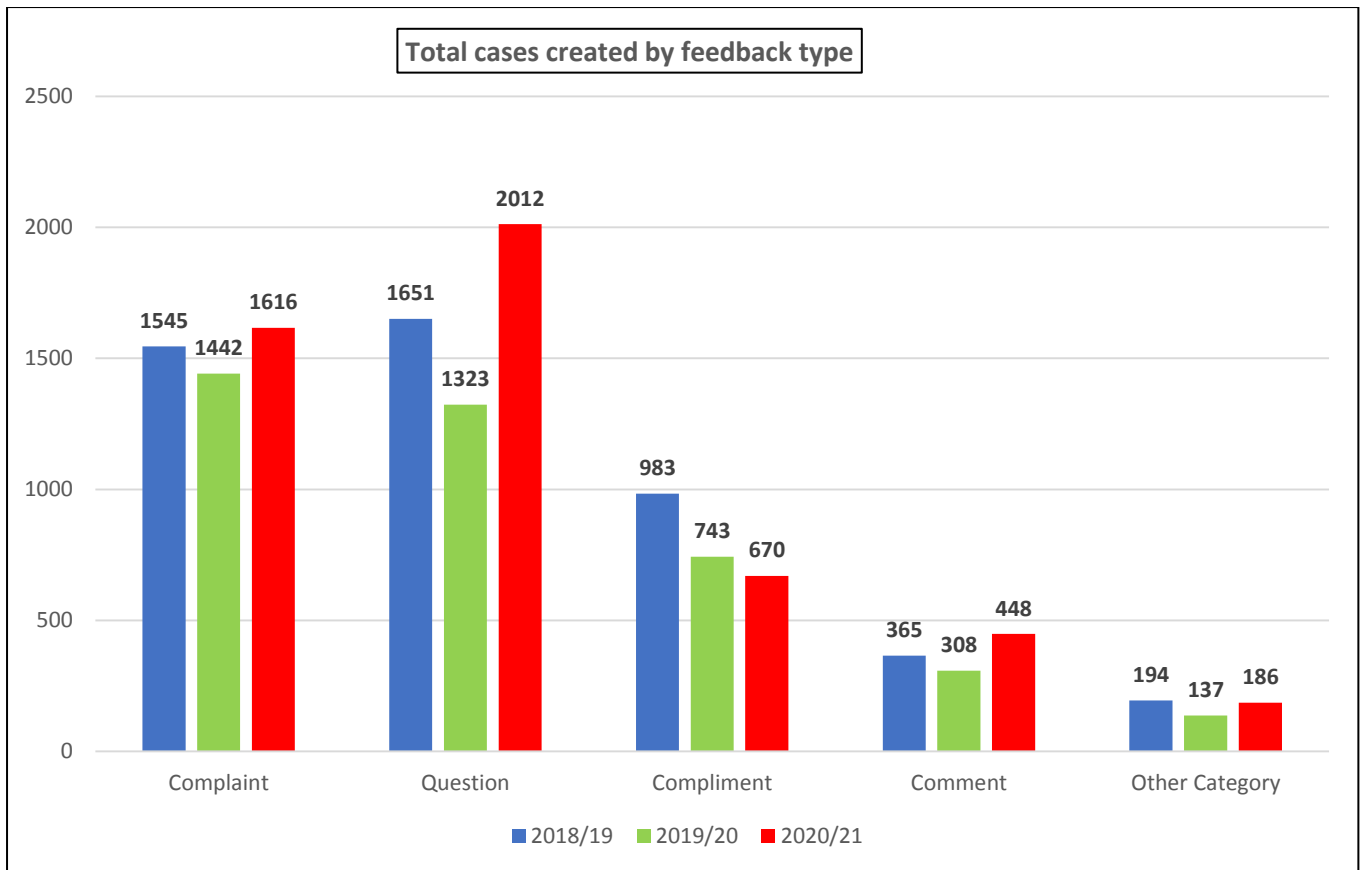
This report will detail and analyse the following:

- Volume -

- o All feedback cases created during the period: compliments, complaints, questions and comments that have been received by all services across the organisation
- o Cases processed and closed within the period

- Timeliness – Feedback closed within the appropriate SLA
- Complaint issues
- Outcomes and remedies for customers
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)
- Learning from feedback

Feedback received

Feedback is always welcomed from customers of the Council's services. The tables below detail the number of cases received during the periods of this report and the breakdown by volume of the 4 types of feedback.

Total cases created

Year	Total cases created
2018/19	4738
2019/20	3953
2020/21	4932

Total cases created by feedback type

Feedback type	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Complaint	1545	1442	1616
Question	1651	1323	2012
Compliment	983	743	670
Comment	365	308	448
Other Category	194	137	186

Cases created are all feedback cases that have been received within the period. This does not include cases that were created in the previous year which had not been closed in the same financial year. The total number of cases created during 2020/21 (4,932) is an increase of 24.8% on 2019/20 (3,953). 2019/20 saw a decrease of nearly 17% on the previous year (4,738).

Each feedback type saw a reduction in cases created during 2019/20 compared to 2018/19:

- Complaints reduced by 6.6% although Resources directorate saw an increase of 15.6%.
- Compliments reduced by over 24% with People directorate receiving almost 75% of all compliments assigned to teams during 2019/20.
- Questions reduced by almost 20% although questions to People directorate increased by just over 8%
- Comments reduced by almost 16%, however Communities directorate received almost 65% of all comments asigned to teams during 2019/20.

However during 2020/21 the trend, apart from compliments, has seen an increase in feedback compared to 2019/20:

- Complaints have increased by over 12% across the authority, with 2020/21 being the highest volume in the past 3 years:
  - o Communities complaints are up by almost 51%
  - o Resources complaints have decreased by almost 3%
  - o Peoples complaints have reduced by almost 2%
  - o Complaint cases received that were not assigned to teams decreased by almost 27%.

- Compliments have fallen during the past 3 years, 2018/19 (983) to 2020/21 (670) by over 31%, the lowest volume in the past 3 years:
    - Although complaints to Communities have increased they have seen an almost 9 fold increase in compliments
    - Resources compliments have reduced by over 84%
    - People have seen a reduction in compliments of over 8%
    - Compliments not assigned to a team have also reduced by almost 34%.

- Questions to the authority have increased dramatically over the past year up 52% on 2019/20, the highest volume in the past 3 years:
    - Communities had the greatest increase and also the largest volume during 2020/21 (1,163). This is an increase of 69% on the previous year
    - Resources received 246 questions which is an increase of over 90%
    - People received 191 questions an increase of almost 58%
    - Questions not assigned also increased by 7% from 385 in 2019/20 to 412 in 2020/21.

- Comments to the authority rose by over 45% in 2020/21 and are at the highest volume in 3 years:
    - Most comments were received by Communities Directorate, 239 which is an increase of over 143% on the previous year.
    - Resources received an increase of 64%
    - People received an increase of almost 43%
    - Comments not assigned reduced by 20%.

The above analysis can be seen in the graph below:

Feedback received by directorate
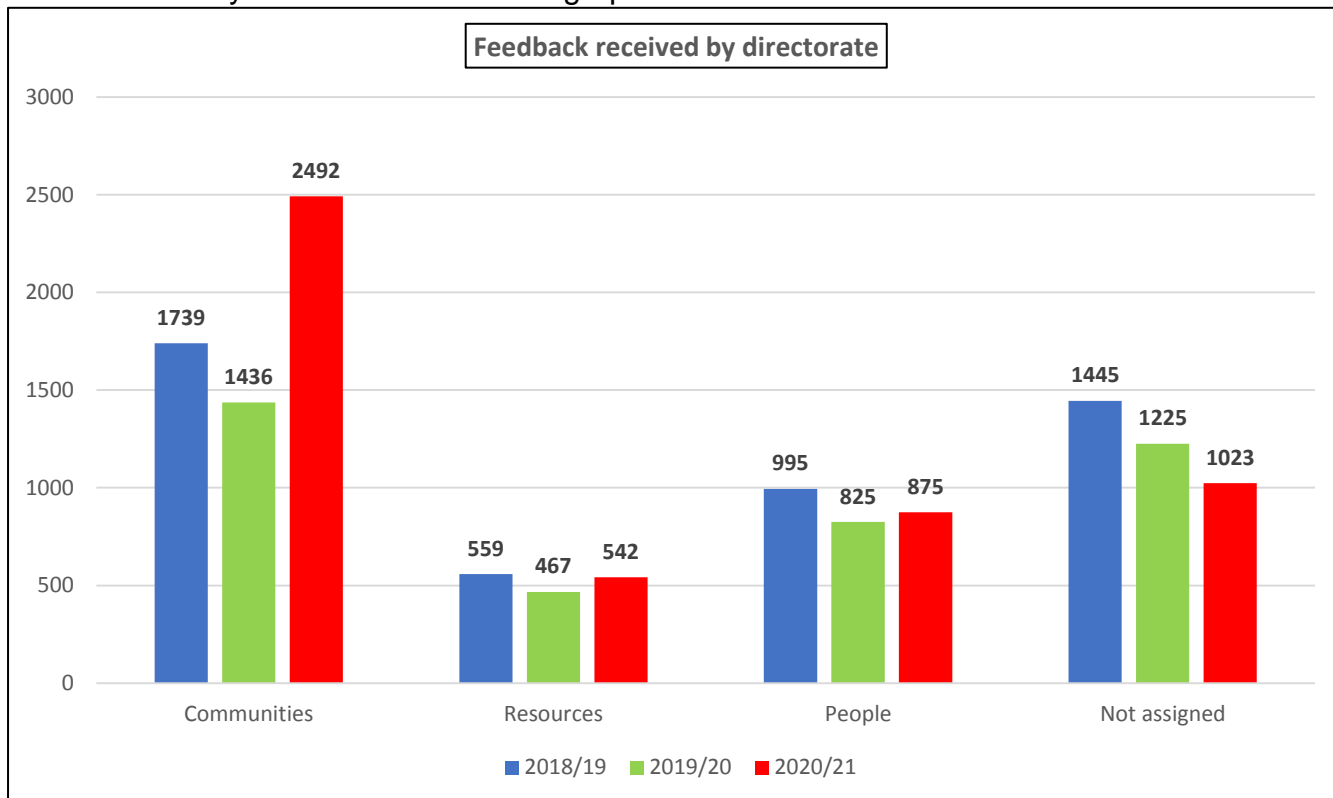
Customers have a choice of channels to provide their feedback: digitally via a self account they can set up through the WCC website, telephone, face to face at an outlet or by post.

The table below details the gowth in digital channel use for feedback over the past 3 years.

Percentage of cases created* via customer self-account by feedback type			
Type of feedback	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Complaint	69%	66%	63%
Question	99%	99%	99%
Compliment	19%	15%	23%
Comment	93%	85%	82%
Other category	83%	83%	79%
Total	**77.14%**	**69.08%**	**68.93%**

* Note that cases created is different from cases closed.

Customer use of the digital channel to provide feedback differs across each directorate. 'Other category' are cases that provide additional information on closed or open cases.

The Communities directorate during 2020/21 received 89% of its feedback digitally whereas People Directorate received 40% of feedback digitally.

The table below details the percentage use of the digital channel by directorate over the past 3 years.

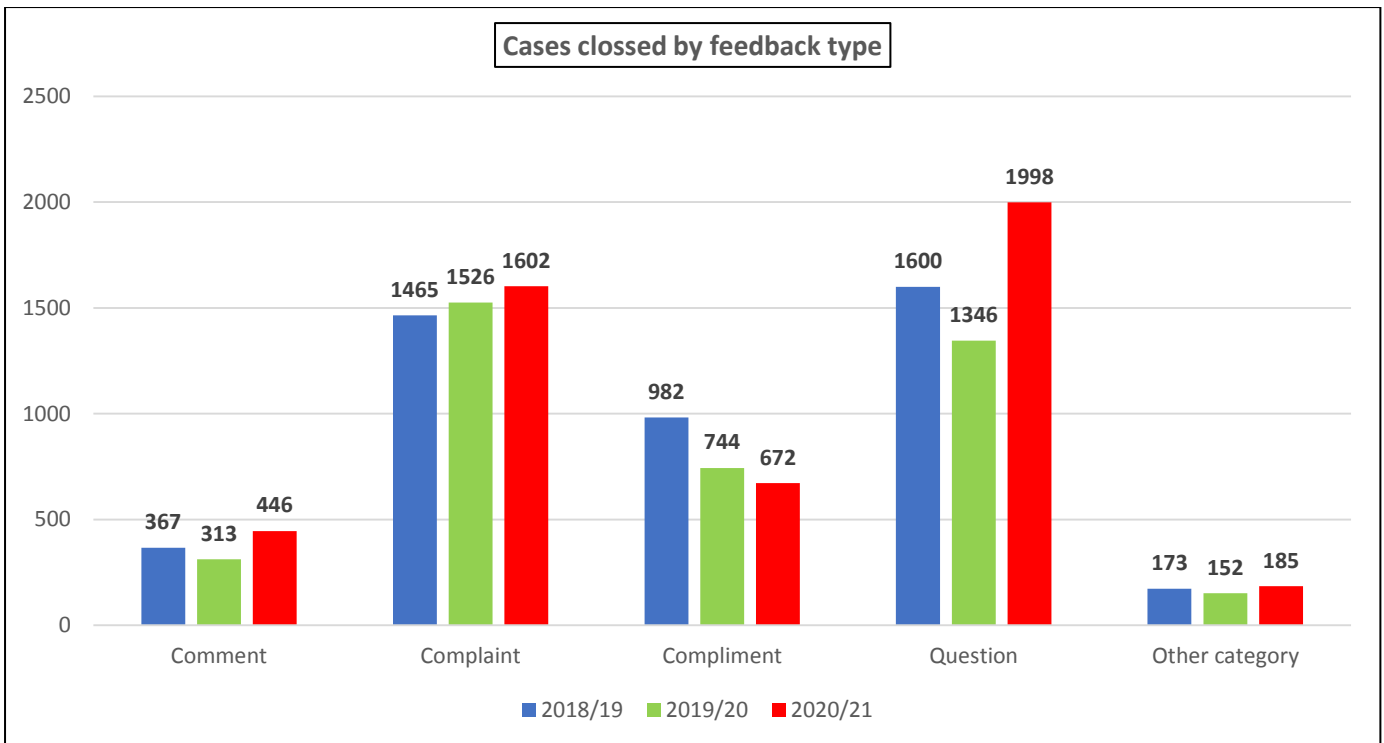| Percentage of cases created* via customer self-account by directorate			
Directorate	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Communities	86.03%	86.63%	88.76%
People	21.11%	29.82%	40.00%
Resources	53.31%	51.18%	70.48%
Not assigned a team/closed at triage	89.13%	83.35%	85.14%
Total	69.48%	69.57%	77.35%

* Note that cases created is different from cases closed.

Cases closed

All cases received into Contact Us have to be processed prior to closing in the system. There are 2 different types of processing required:

1. A complaint or question relating to WCC and/or its services requires processing and a response provided to the customer within an agreed timescale (Service Level Agreement) As set out in our complaint policy link here , Customer Care Charter and Standards link Customer care or in legislation.

2. Feedback received within the system which is not with regard to WCC or the services it delivers or not appropriate for the system requires a specific response (generally signposting) to the customer.

The chart below details the number of cases that have been processed and closed over the past 3 years. During 2020/21 there was just over a 20% increase in cases closed on the previous period and an increase of almost 7% on 2018/19.

Cases clossed by feedback type

Feedback type	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Comment	367	313	446
Complaint	1465	1526	1602
Compliment	982	744	672
Question	1600	1346	1998
Other category	173	152	185

It should be noted that cases closed during a period represent those that have been processed, however there were existing cases which were carried over from the previous financial year, just as there were cases received but not processed by the end of the period.

Timescales

Cases Closed at Initial Triage

WCC has specific SLA's for timeliness of response to feedback classed as a question or a complaint, customers do not receive a response to comments or compliments made. Where a response is required, most of these cases are dealt with by the appropriate Directorate team. However, there are cases which are submitted digitally by customers via their self-account that are either not for WCC or not appropriate for the Contact Us process. These cases are:

1. Services delivered by another authority, a district or borough or another organisation
2. The reporting of an initial service request, generally highways related
3. Anonymous submission of question or complaint whereby it is not possible to fully process and respond to the customer.
4. Or can be answered by the Customer Relations Team immediately

Cases which fall into the above categories are closed at initial triage and the customer responded to accordingly. These cases are referred to as 'not assigned a team/closed at triage'. **All these cases are closed within the SLA**. In addition, comments and compliments do not require a response to the customer and are generally processed and closed at triage.

Cases closed

Complaints	2018/19			2019/20			2020/21		
	Number of Cases	Within SLA	%	Number of Cases	Within SLA	%	Number of Cases	Within SLA	%
Communities	636	535	84.12	577	510	88.39	843	738	87.54
People	281	99	35.23	378	114	30.16	308	130	42.30
Resources	136	81	59.56	185	111	60	171	99	57.90
Total assigned	**1,053**	**715**	**67.90**	**1,140**	**735**	**64.47**	**1,322**	**967**	**73.15**
Not assigned to a team	412	411	99.76	386	386	100	280	279	100
Total	**1,465**	**1,126**	**76.86**	**1,526**	**1,121**	**73.46**	**1,602**	**1,246**	**77.77**
Questions									
Communities	819	702	85.71	713	645	90.46	1,146	1,050	91.62
People	102	77	75.49	119	89	74.79	200	152	76
Resources	177	129	72.88	132	100	75.76	247	188	76.11
Total assigned	**1,098**	**908**	**82.69**	**964**	**834**	**86.51**	**1,593**	**1,390**	**87.26**
Not assigned to a team	502	502	100	382	382	100	405	405	100
Total	**1,600**	**1,410**	**88,13**	**1,346**	**1,216**	**90.34**	**1,998**	**1,795**	**89.83**
Comments									
Communities	116	100	86	102	94	92	239	221	92
People	14	11	79	14	9	64	21	16	76
Resources	74	68	92	40	37	93	62	52	84
Total assigned	**204**	**179**	**88**	**156**	**140**	**90**	**322**	**289**	**90**
Not assigned to a team	163	163	100	157	157	100	124	124	100
Total	**367**	**342**	**93**	**313**	**297**	**95**	**446**	**413**	**93**
Compliments									
Communities	35	33	94	18	17	94	151	148	98
People	515	512	99	357	354	99	327	322	98
Resources	107	106	99	102	102	100	16	14	88
Total assigned	**657**	**651**	**99**	**477**	**473**	**99**	**494**	**484**	**98**
Not assigned to a team	325	325	100	267	267	100	178	178	100
Total	**982**	**976**	**99**	**744**	**740**	**99**	**672**	**662**	**99**

The table above details the responsiveness of each directorate to customer feedback during 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21. It is important to note that questions and complaints for People Directorate are not all processed within the directorate; the Customer Service Centre - Supporting People Team, the Financial Assessment Team and the Commissioning Support Unit are service areas within the Resources Directorate that are responsible for investigating and responding to certain People Directorate complaints.

Cases closed after assignment to teams

- During 2020/21 there was an increase of over 36% of cases assigned to teams on the previous financial year and 24% higher than during 2018/19.

- Of the 2,915 cases (complaints and questions) assigned 81% (2,357) of cases were closed within the appropriate SLA (73.15% of complaints and 87.26% of questions) which is an increase of over 6% on 2019/20. There is no SLA performance target for questions however the target for complaints is 70%.
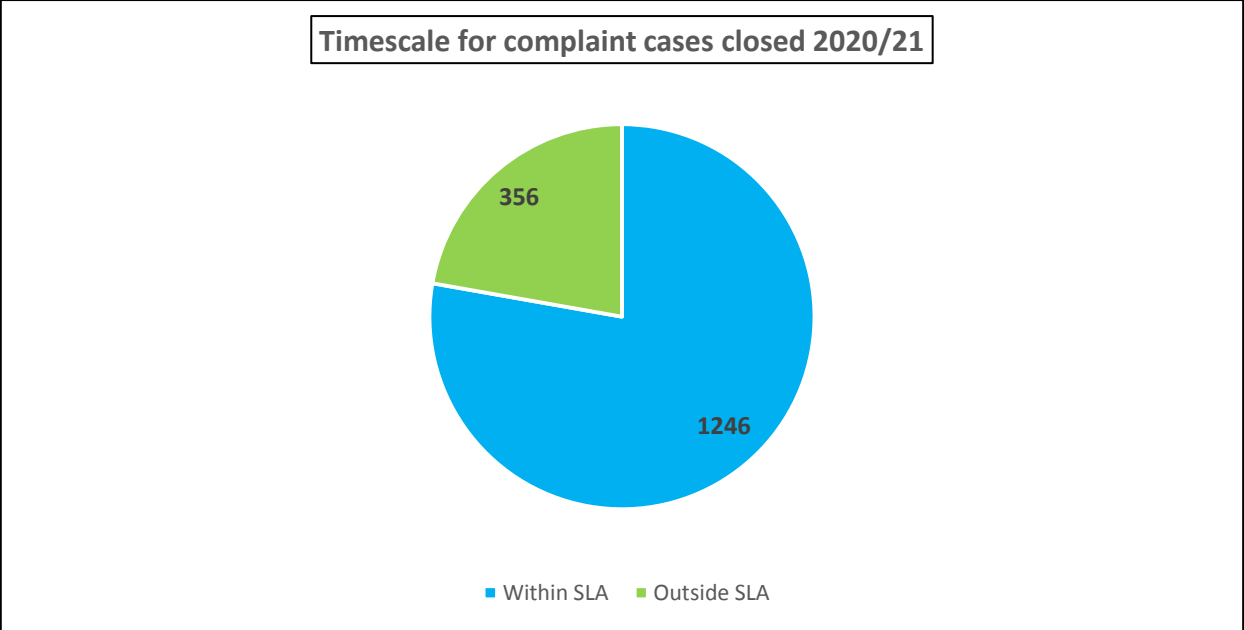
Complaints

Closed cases

During 2020/21 there were almost 5% more complaint cases closed than during the previous year and over 9% more than during 2018/19.

Total complaint cases closed

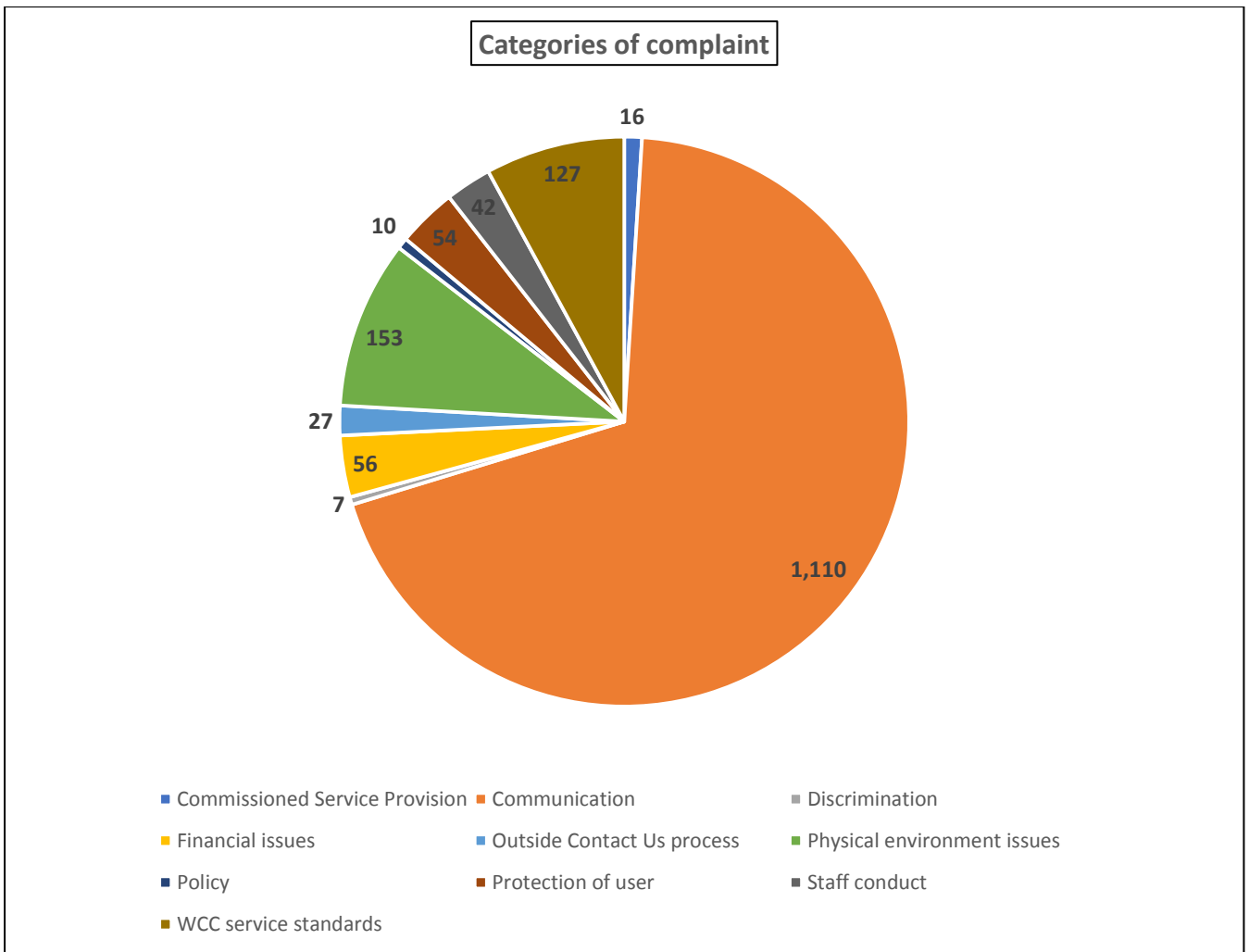|	
1465	1602
	1526

■ 2020/21 ■ 2019/20 ■ 2018/19
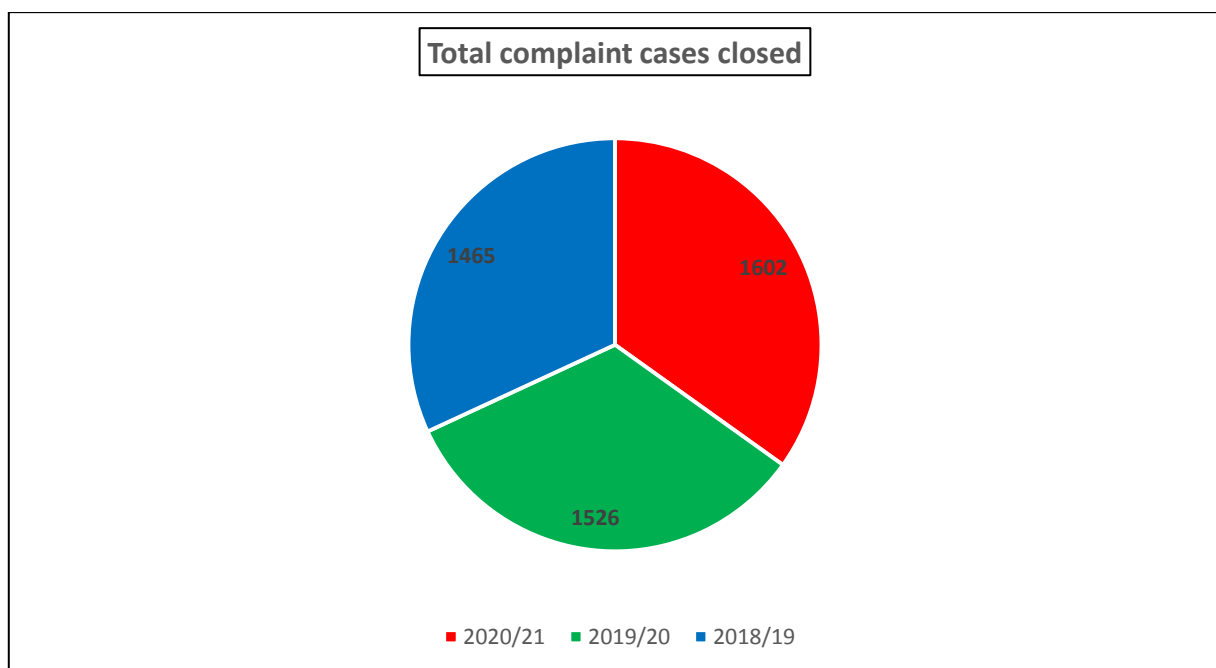
Of the 1,602 complaint cases processed during 2020/21, 1,246 cases achieved the service level agreement (i.e. timeliness requirement), which means that 77.77% of complaints were managed within required timescales. This is an increase of over 4% from the previous financial year and achieves the authority's target of 70%.

Timescale for complaint cases closed 2020/21

356

1246

■ Within SLA   ■ Outside SLA

Categories of complaint

Most of the complaints raised focused on perceived issues with: WCC service standards, physical environment issues, communication and staff conduct. However, Contact Us currently only allows the selection of one complaint reason for each complaint raised therefore this may not provide a holistic view of all issues.

The diagram below shows the closure categories of all complaints processed during 2020/21.

Categories of complaint

Legend:
- Commissioned Service Provision
- Communication
- Discrimination
- Financial issues
- Outside Contact Us process
- Physical environment issues
- Policy
- Protection of user
- Staff conduct
- WCC service standards

Closure categories of complaint by Directorate 2020/21

When a complaint is processed and closed the investigating officer or triage officer must assign a reason to the complaint. Of the 1,602 complaints processed the table below details the categories assigned at closure either by Directorate or when closed at triage. During 2020/21 69% of complaints closed were categorised as communication issues. However, during the previous financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20 'WCC service standards' was the highest reason for complaints with 30% and 33% respectively. During all 3 financial years the second highest closure reason was 'Physical Environment Issues' ranging from 26% during 2018/19, 23% 2019/20, falling to 9.5% in 2020/21.

Closure category	Communities	Fire & Rescue	People	Resources	Not assigned a team/closed at triage	Total by category
Commissioned Service Provision	2	-	12	2	-	16
Communication	663	4	189	93	165	1,110
Discrimination	3	-	-	3	1	7
Financial issues	16	-	19	10	11	56
Outside Contact Us process	8	-	2	1	16	27
Physical environment issues	71	-	3	11	68	153
Policy	5	-	-	2	3	10
Protection of user	5	-	36	8	5	54
Staff conduct	14	-	12	13	3	42
WCC service standards	56	-	35	28	8	127

Outcome and remedy for customers

Complaints closed by outcome			
Closure Outcome	Total 2018/19	Total 2019/20	Total 2020/21
No outcome provided	12	18	133
All: Transferred	34	24	61
Complaint: Deemed to be Withdrawn	23	43	35
Complaint: Inconclusive	38	54	58
Complaint: Not upheld	202	203	169
Complaint: Partially Upheld	112	158	121
Complaint: Upheld	79	98	130
Complaint: Withdrawn by Customer	17	21	20
Question: Answered	499	447	463
Question: Partially Answered	14	19	31
Question: Unable to Answer	23	55	101

The above data shows:

- The percentage of complaints not upheld has reduced over the past 3 years: 19.2% in 2018/19, 17.8% 2019/20 and 12.8% in 2020/21.
- Complaints that have been upheld either fully or partially have fallen from 22.5% in 2019/20 to 19% in 2020/21.
- The percentage of questions answered as part of a complaint has fallen from over 47% during 2018/19, down to 39.2% in 2019/20 and 35% in 2020/21.

Complaints closed by Remedy			
Remedy	Total 2018/19	Total 2019/20	Total 2020/21
Apology	217	241	218
Change in Policy	4	2	3
Change in Process	36	19	26
Explanation Provided	776	829	773
Financial Remedy	13	10	11
Service Provided	247	282	372

There can be more than one remedy to a complaint, but most of customers' issues have been resolved - at least partially - with an explanation. During 2020/21 an explanation was provided as a remedy in 48% of cases closed, 55% during 2019/20 and 53% in 2018/19. A further significant proportion have been resolved by providing an apology or delivery of a service.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

There were 21 complaints and enquiries received by the LGSCO in respect of Warwickshire County Council during the financial year 2020/21. Full details of the areas these related to and the outcome is as follows:

Area	Upheld	Not upheld	Closed after initial enquires
Adult Social Care	3	1	3
Education	2	1	2
Children Social Care	1		1

Right of way			1
Transport		1	2
Planning			1
COVID19			1
Other			1

Further information is available on the LGSCO website here

The table below details the areas of complaints and enquiries which were received by the LGSCO in respect of Warwickshire County Council in the period relating to this report.

More details relating to the 47 received during 2019/20 can be found in the report to Cabinet 10 September 2020 here

Regarding the 35 complaints and enquiries made to the LGSCO during 2018/19 further information is available on the LGSCO website here

Area	2018/19	2019/20
Adult Social Care	9	17
Corporate & other services	2	5
Education & Children's Services	13	17
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	-	1
Highways & Transport	7	5
Planning & Development	2	1
Other	2	1
Total	35	47

Learning from complaints

Putting things right where they have gone wrong and learning from issues raised is the most important part of our customer feedback process. Where there are opportunities for learning and change beyond the individual complaint raised, we look carefully at how best to do this and consider:

- improving training and support for staff
- reviewing guidance and communication
- reviewing and improving policies, procedures and processes

As mentioned, the current complaints case management system, Contact Us, is under review due to failings around the level of information it captures, as well as its ability to manage information in a user-friendly, customer-centric way. Much of the detail in relation to learning from our customers' feedback therefore has been captured outside the system. There is a field 'Lessons learned' within Contact Us which should be completed by the investigating officer once the complaint has been closed however on most occasions this field is used for case notes, is marked N/A or is left blank.

However, from the responses captured on the system the main categories of learning have been recorded as follows:

- Poor communication by officers both internally and with the customer
- Better planning required
- Staff training needed
- Improve the timescale for processing and closing complaints – Work has been initiated on this point with recommendations from stage 2 reports being shared and monitored with the appropriate services to ensure these are actioned and lessons learnt.

Summary

Understanding our customers and their views is key to delivering the best possible service, which is something Warwickshire County Council is committed to striving to achieve.

Managing the timeliness of our responses is a high priority and this will be helped by a new case management system as it will give us greater visibility.

Customers have a right to take their complaints to the LGSCO if they remain unhappy. Therefore, while we aim to resolve issues as early as possible, it is an objective to ensure that our suggested/offered outcomes are appropriate so that the Ombudsman does not disagree with our decision, rather than to aspire to have less complaints taken to that stage.

Maureen Oakes

June 2021.