Corporate Customer Feedback Overview Report - Appendix

Financial year 2021/22.

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 year 2021/22 including volume, efficiency of processing and outcome for the customer.

Background

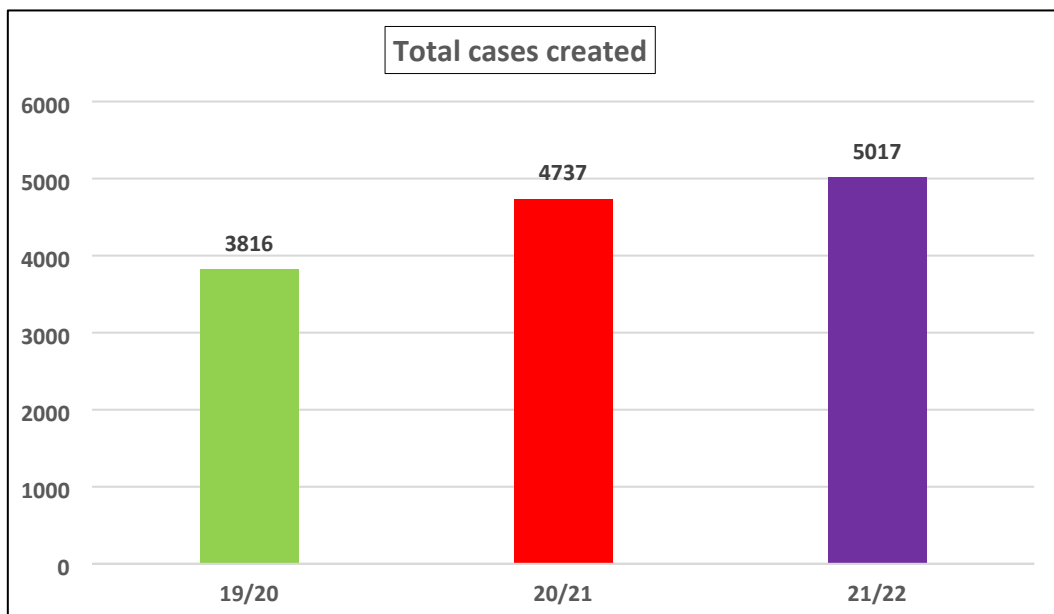This report will detail and analyse the following:

- Volume -
  - All feedback cases created during the period: compliments, complaints, questions and comments that have been received by all services across the organisation
  - Cases processed and closed within the period
- Timeliness – Feedback closed within the appropriate Service Level Agreement
- Complaint issues
- Outcomes and remedies for customers
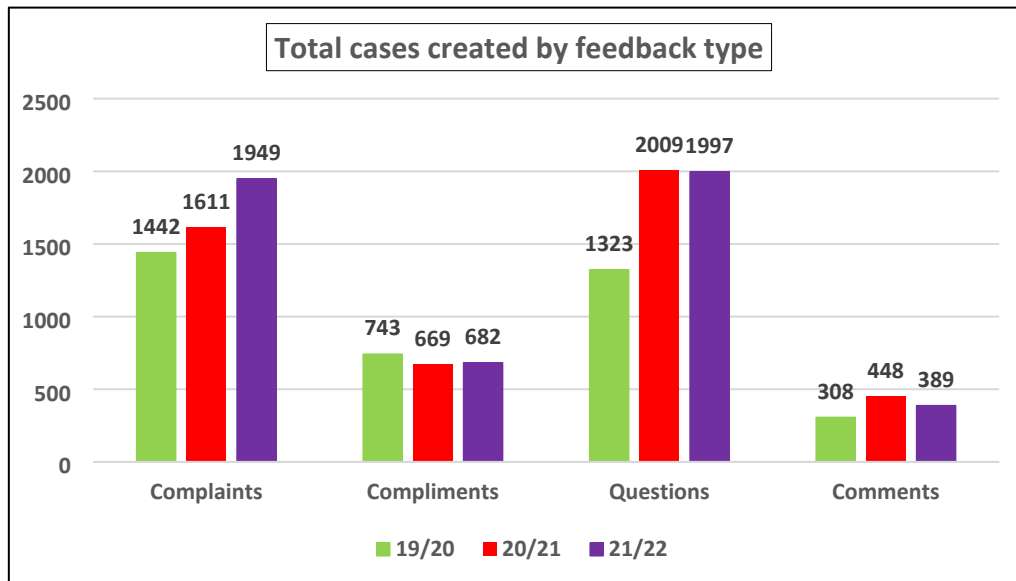- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)
- Learning from feedback

Overview of performance

Volume

Feedback is always welcomed from customers of the Council's services. The tables below detail the number of cases received during the financial years 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 and the breakdown by volume of the 4 types of feedback.

The total number of cases created during 2021/22 was 5,017 which is an increase of almost 6% on the previous year.

Total cases created

Year	Total cases created
19/20	3816
20/21	4737
21/22	5017

Total cases created by feedback type

	Complaints	Compliments	Questions	Comments
19/20	1442	743	1323	308
20/21	1611	669	2009	448
21/22	1949	682	1997	389

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.

Summary of volume of cases created during 2021/22:

- Complaints increased by almost 21%, although Communities directorate saw a decrease of nearly 12% during 2021/22.
- Compliments increased by 2% with People directorate receiving 69% of all compliments assigned to teams during 2021/22.
- Questions reduced by 0.6% with questions to Communities directorate decreasing by over 34% on the previous financial year
- Comments reduced by just over 13%, with Communities directorate receiving over 71% of all comments assigned to teams during 2021/22.

During 2021/22 the trend, apart from complaints, has seen the volume of feedback compared to 2020/21 remaining at similar levels:

- Complaints have increased by almost 21% across the authority, with 2021/22 being the highest volume in the past 3 years:
  - o Communities complaints are down by almost 12% on the previous financial year
  - o Resources complaints have increased by over 56% on 2020/21
  - o Peoples complaints have increased by 44%
  - o Complaint cases that are categorised as 'other' that is, processed by the Customer Relations Team amount to almost 25% of complaint cases created.

The above analysis can be seen in the graph below:

Feedback received by directorate
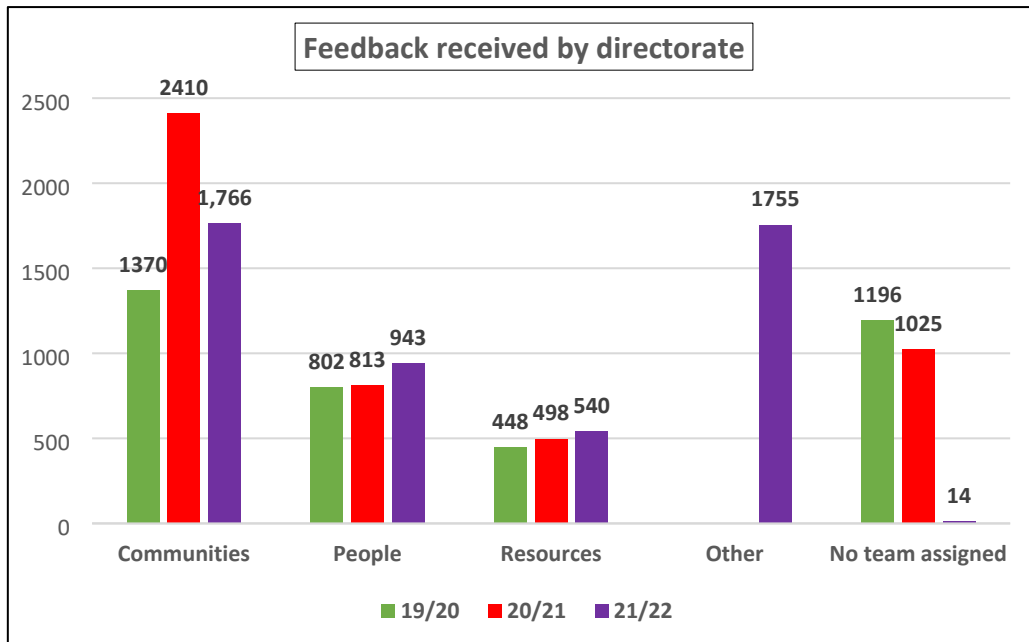
The 'other' category has been introduced this year and are cases that are not assigned to a directorate team but are those cases that have been processed by the Customer Relations Team.

Cases created via self account

Customers have a choice of channels to provide their feedback: digitally via a self account which 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	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Complaint	66%	69%	61%
Question	99%	99%	99%
Compliment	15%	19%	23%
Comment	85%	93%	93%
Total	**69%**	**77%**	**74%**

* Note that cases created is different from cases closed.

2021/22 has seen a decrease in the proportion of complaints created via a self-account and a fall in the overall usage of self-accounts by 3% on the previous year.

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	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Communities	87%	89%	80%
People	30%	40%	38%
Resources	51%	70%	59%
Not assigned a team/closed at triage/other	83%	85%	92%
Total	**70%**	**77%**	**74%**

* Note that cases created is different from cases closed.

During 2021/22 the Communities directorate received 80% of its feedback digitally whereas People Directorate received 38% of feedback digitally.

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 2021/22 there was just over a 3% decrease in cases closed (4,746) on the previous financial year (4,903).
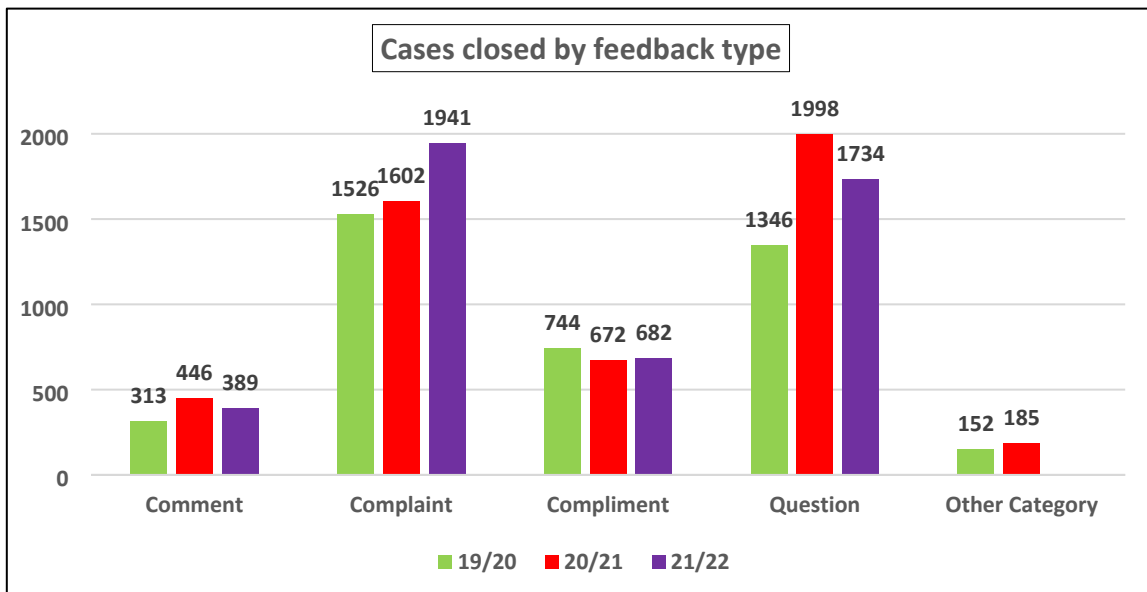
*For 2021/22 the 'other' category definition has changed and therefore is not comparable to previous years.

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 current period.

Timescales

Cases Closed at Initial Triage

Warwickshire County Council has specific Service Level Agreement'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 Warwickshire County Council 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 Service Level Agreement**. In addition, comments and compliments do not require a response to the customer and are generally processed and closed at triage.

Cases closed within the Service Level Agreement (SLA)

The table below details the responsiveness of each directorate to customer feedback during 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22. 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.

	2019/20			2020/21			2021/22		
Complaints	**Number of Cases**	**Within SLA**	**%**	**Number of Cases**	**Within SLA**	**%**	**Number of Cases**	**Within SLA**	**%**
Communities	577	510	88%	843	738	88%	763	625	82%
People	378	114	30%	308	130	42%	434	206	47%
Resources	185	111	60%	171	99	58%	238	150	63%
Total assigned	**1,140**	**735**	**64%**	**1,322**	**967**	**73%**	**1,439**	**981**	**68%**
Not assigned to a team / Other	386	386	100%	280	279	100%	502	482	96%
Total	**1,526**	**1,121**	**73%**	**1,602**	**1,246**	**78%**	**1,941**	**1,464**	**75%**
Questions									
Communities	713	645	90%	1,146	1,050	92%	766	702	92%
People	119	89	75%	200	152	76%	158	128	81%
Resources	132	100	76%	247	188	76%	222	189	85%
Total assigned	**964**	**834**	**87%**	**1,593**	**1,390**	**87%**	**1,146**	**1,019**	**89%**
Not assigned to a team / Other	382	382	100%	405	405	100%	851	831	98%
Total	**1,346**	**1,216**	**90%**	**1,998**	**1,795**	**90%**	**1,997**	**1,850**	**93%**

|	2019/20			2020/21			2021/22		
Comments									
Communities	102	94	92%	239	221	92%	119	106	89%
People	14	9	64%	21	16	76%	21	19	90%
Resources	40	37	93%	62	52	84%	27	25	93%
Total assigned	**156**	**140**	**90%**	**322**	**289**	**90%**	**167**	**150**	**90%**
Not assigned to a team / Other	157	157	100%	124	124	100%	222	220	99%
Total	**313**	**297**	**95%**	**446**	**413**	**93%**	**389**	**370**	**95%**
Compliments									
Communities	18	17	94%	151	148	98%	125	121	97%
People	357	354	99%	327	322	98%	329	323	98%
Resources	102	102	100%	16	14	88%	22	21	95%
Total assigned	**477**	**473**	**99%**	**494**	**484**	**98%**	**476**	**465**	**98%**
Not assigned to a team / Other	267	267	100%	178	178	100%	206	206	100%
Total	**744**	**740**	**99%**	**672**	**662**	**99%**	**682**	**671**	**98%**

Complaints

Closed cases

During 2021/22 there were over 21% more complaint cases closed than during the previous year and over 27% more than during 2019/20.
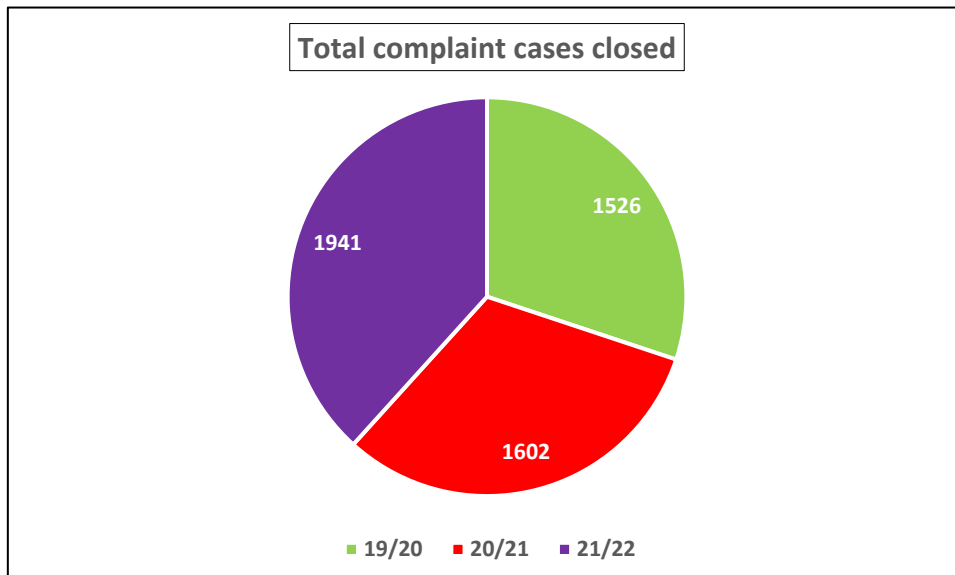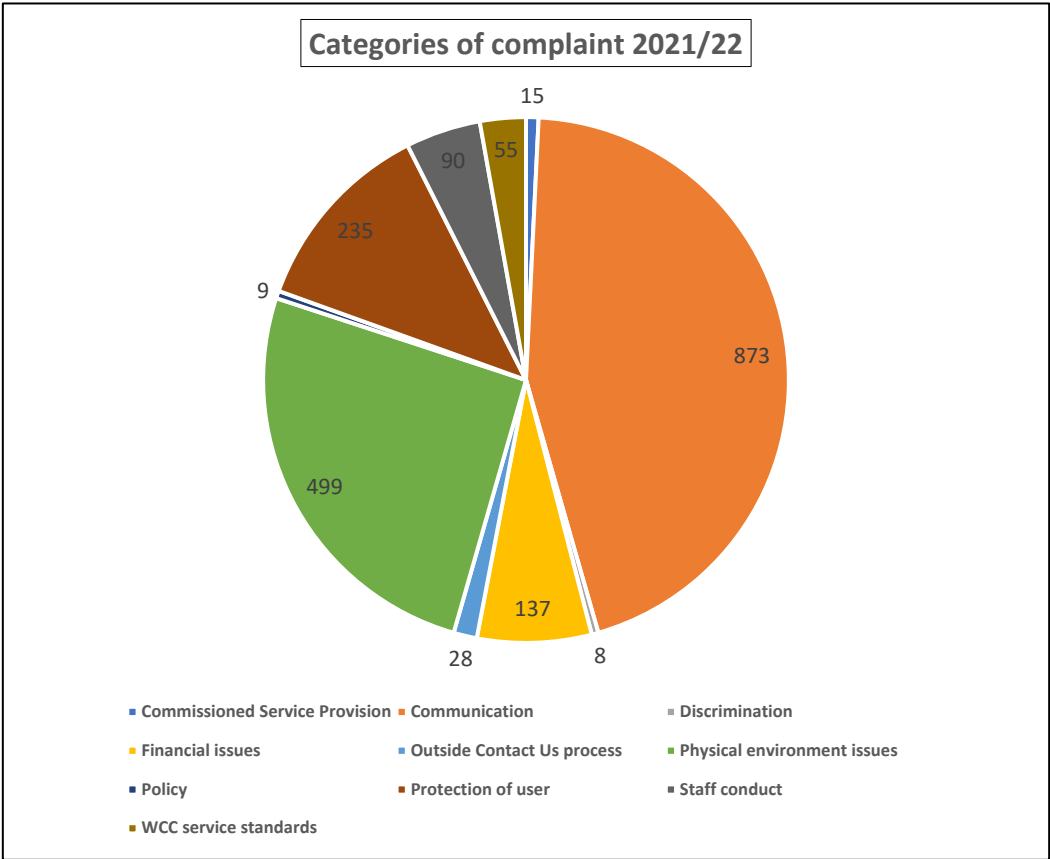

Of the 1,941 complaint cases processed during 2021/22, 1,464 cases achieved the service level agreement (i.e., timeliness requirement), which means that over 75% of complaints were managed within required timescales. This achieves the authority's target of 70%.

Timescale for complaint cases closed 2021/22

477 (Outside SLA)
1464 (Within SLA)

■ Within SLA ■ Outside SLA
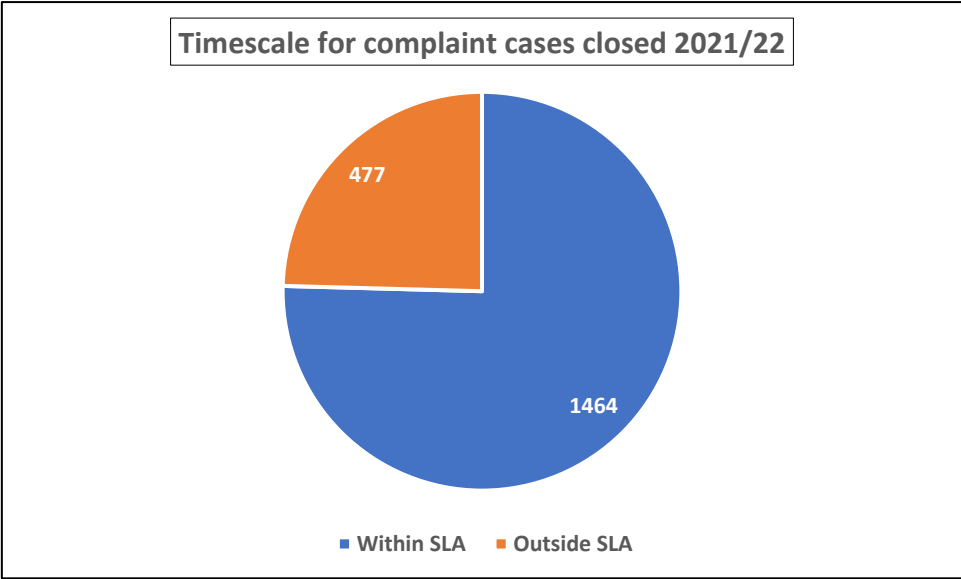
Complaint issues

Most of the complaints raised focused on perceived issues with communication, physical environment issues, and protection of users. 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 2021/22.

Categories of complaint 2021/22

15
90
55
235
9
499
28
137
8
873

■ 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 2021/22

When a complaint is processed and closed the investigating officer or triage officer must assign a reason to the complaint. Of the 1,941 complaints processed the table below details the categories assigned at closure either by Directorate, by the Customer Relations Team or when closed at triage.

During 2021/22 45% of complaints closed were categorised as communication issues which was the highest category for complaint. Communication was also the highest category in 2020/21 when it was almost 70%. During all 3 financial years the second highest closure reason was 'Physical Environment Issues' ranging from over 26% during 2021/22, 10% in 2020/21, and 23% in 2019/20.

Complaints by Category			
Category	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Commissioned Service Provision	35	16	15
Communication	219	1,110	873
Discrimination	4	7	8
Financial issues	69	56	137
Outside Contact Us process	78	27	28
Physical environment issues	353	153	499
Policy	74	10	9
Protection of user	39	54	235
Staff conduct	146	42	90
County Council service standards	510	127	55

Outcome and remedy for customers

Complaints closed by outcome			
Closure Outcome	Total 2019/20	Total 2020/21	Total 2021/22
No outcome provided	18	133	654
All: Transferred	24	61	37
Complaint: Deemed to be Withdrawn	43	35	11
Complaint: Inconclusive	54	58	79
Complaint: Not upheld	203	169	300
Complaint: Partially Upheld	158	121	189
Complaint: Upheld	98	130	140
Complaint: Withdrawn by Customer	21	20	16
Question: Answered	447	463	453
Question: Partially Answered	19	31	16
Question: Unable to Answer	55	101	46

The above data shows:

- The percentage of complaints not upheld has increased from 10.5% in 2020/21 to 15.5% in 2021/22.
- Complaints that have been upheld either fully or partially have increased slightly from 16% in 2020/21 to 17% in 2021/22.
- The percentage of questions answered as part of a complaint has fallen from 29% in 2019/20 and 2020/21 to 23% in 2021/22.

Complaints closed by Remedy			
Remedy	**Total 2019/20**	**Total 2020/21**	**Total 2021/22**
Apology	241	218	316
Change in Policy	2	3	6
Change in Process	19	26	27
Explanation Provided	829	773	875
Financial Remedy	10	11	11
Service Provided	282	372	403

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 2021/22 an explanation was provided as a remedy in 45% of cases closed, 48% during 2020/21 and 54% in 2019/20. A further significant proportion have been resolved by providing an apology or delivery of a service.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

In the year 2021/22 the LGSCO received 54 complaints and enquiries and closed off/completed 58 complaints in respect of the Council (which included a number of complaints received by the LGSCO in the previous year). In 14 cases the complainants were referred back to the Council for local resolution; in 3 cases advice was given to the complainant by the LGSCO; and in 3 cases the complaint or enquiry was incomplete or invalid. Therefore, whilst the LGSCO concluded 58 complaints or enquiries only 38 were counted as a complaint decision by the LGSCO with 19 being closed after initial enquiries and 19 complaints being subject to full investigation by the LGSCO, 14 of which were upheld whilst 5 were not. This means that the LGSCO upheld 74% of the complaints it investigated against the Council which is slightly higher than the average for similar local authorities in this period (71%).

In respect of the 38 complaint decisions made by the LGSCO in this period, the details of the areas these related to, and the outcome is as follows:

Area	Upheld	Not upheld	closed after initial enquires
Adult Social Care	6	4	2

Education	5	0	5
Children and Families	3	1	7
Environment Services			4
Other			1

Further information is available on the LGSCO website here

Learning from feedback

Putting things right where they have gone wrong and learning from issues raised is the most important part of our customer feedback process.

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

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.

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.