

# **Annual Customer Feedback Report** **2023/2024**



City of  
**Stoke-on-Trent**

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## Executive Summary

Listening to the experiences and feedback of those who live, work and visit the city helps us to ensure we can learn and improve to continue to provide high quality services. The city council encourages feedback from our residents about the services we deliver. Residents' feedback helps us to understand what we are doing well and where we need to make improvements. The Customer Feedback Team encourage services to learn from the feedback they receive and to implement changes and improvements to ensure that the services we deliver are the best that they can be. 2023-2024 saw an increase of 396 stage one corporate complaints compared to 2022-2023. The number of stage two corporate complaints also increased compared to 2022-2023. This year, 123 stage two corporate complaints were considered which equates to 7.7% of all corporate complaints received escalating to this stage. With regard to statutory complaints about social care services, there has been a reduction of 23 adult statutory complaints compared to 2022-2023 and a reduction of 18 children's statutory complaints for the same period.

In 2023-2024 the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman received 83 enquiries about city council services. Out of the 83 enquiries, 16 were taken forward for detailed investigation, and 13 were upheld. Last year the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman changed their investigation processes which has contributed towards an increase in the average uphold rate across all complaints. Comparing individual council uphold rates against the average rate shows that 81% of investigated complaints were upheld, compared with an average of 79% in similar authorities.

The Housing Ombudsman Service determined 4 cases of maladministration against the city council for the period 2023-2024 and 1 case of severe maladministration, this is an increase on the previous year which saw 2 complaints being upheld by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

The number of MP Enquiries received in 2023-2024 reduced by 12% this year compared to 2022-2023 but remains consistently high, showing that there is still an increased demand for this service.

There has been an improvement in the adherence to timescales for all types of feedback this year. The Children's Social Care directorate has made the most improvement in the time it takes for them to respond to corporate complaints within 10 days, increasing from 40% in 2022-2023 to 82% for 2023-2024. This can in part be attributed to the work done as part of the Transformation Project by the Customer Feedback Team which has improved the reporting to senior management in conjunction with the scheduled automatic reminders. The Project also changed the way in which feedback is directed to Directorates, all feedback is directed to a Single Point of Contact email box which the Heads of Service are responsible for, ensuring that the feedback reaches the correct team quicker.

## **Our Process**

The Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Procedure is set out to handle feedback in relation to all services with the exception of services which fall under statutory regulations, for which there are separate complaints processes that exist for social care services for children and for adults.

### **Corporate Complaints**

The Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Procedure has two stages.

Having a two-stage procedure ensures that our customers get a speedier response to their concerns.

The Customer Feedback Team has robust measures in place to encourage responses to complaints in a timely way, including sending officers reminders of forthcoming response dates, notifying officers when complaints have gone overdue and escalating matters to senior officers where required. A weekly summary of all open complaints is shared with the Executive Assistants to be cascaded to Heads of Service.

### **Stage 1 Process**

Heads of Services approve stage 1 complaint responses. The Investigation Officer is encouraged to complete a thorough investigation and provide the complainant with a detailed response of their findings. The majority of complaints should be resolved at stage one with any resolution actions and identified learning being implemented by the Investigating Officer. The timescale to respond to stage one complaints is 10 working days, however this can be extended if required for more complex investigations.

### **Stage 2 Process**

In cases where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the response they have received at stage one of the corporate complaints, comments and compliments procedure, they can request that a stage two investigation is carried out. Stage two investigations are carried out by a Customer Feedback Officer from the Customer Feedback Team. This officer is independent of the service that is the subject of the complaint. A written response is provided to the complainant which is also signed off by the Director of the service. The Director is also responsible for ensuring that any recommendations, learning and service improvements are implemented and fed back into the service. Stage two investigations should be completed within 20 working days, but can be extended if required.

## **Statutory Complaints Process**

### **Children's Social Care**

The Children's Social Care Complaints procedure is fully compliant with the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2005 and the accompanying guidance 'Getting the Best from Complaints'.

Staff are actively encouraged to resolve concerns at the first point of contact as quickly and clearly as possible. Where a concern cannot be addressed at an informal level, it can be escalated to the complaints process which has three stages.

### **Stage 1 Local Resolution**

Stage one complaint investigations are usually undertaken by a Head of Service. It is expected that the majority of complaints should be resolved at this stage. The Customer Feedback Team encourage Strategic Managers to complete a thorough investigation into the concerns raised within the complaint and ensure that a detailed and robust response is provided. The timescale allowed to respond to a stage one complaint is 10 working days. This timescale can be extended up to 20 working days for more complex investigations with the agreement of the complainant.

### **Stage 2 Independent Investigation**

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at stage one of the complaints procedure, or has not received a response within the prescribed stage one timescale, they may request that their complaint is escalated to stage two. Stage two investigations are carried out by an Investigating Officer who is independent of the Local Authority. An Independent Person is appointed to oversee the complaint investigation and ensure that the investigation is open, transparent and fair. The Independent Investigating Officer and Independent Person each produce a report of their findings and any recommendations for the Local Authority. The Assistant Director - Children's Services acts as the Adjudicating Officer on behalf of the Local Authority and provides a formal response to the complainant. The Adjudicating Officer should also ensure that any recommendations and learning are implemented. Stage two investigations should be completed within 25 working days and can be extended up to 65 working days if required with the agreement of the complainant.

### **Stage 3 Review Panel**

Where a complainant remains dissatisfied following receipt of the outcome of their stage two complaint they may request that an independent review panel is held to review the handling of their complaint. The panel is made up of a chair person and two panel members, all of whom are independent of the local authority. The panel is attended by the Independent Investigating Officer, Independent Person and the Adjudicating Officer at stage two and is clerked by a member of staff from the Customer Feedback Team. The Customer Feedback Team Manager attends as advisor to the panel. The panel chair person must provide a report to the Local Authority within 5 working days of the panel hearing. The Director of Children's Services then considers the panel's findings and produces the Local Authority's response to the complaint within 15 working days.

### **Adult Social Care and Providers**

The Adult Social Care Complaints and Representations Procedure is designed to comply with the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service

Complaints (England) Regulations 2009. Adult Social Care staff are encouraged to pursue first-point resolution in relation to the concerns of service users. Where problems cannot be resolved this way or a more detailed investigation is required, the service user can make a formal complaint. This is referred to as a Local Resolution and is usually undertaken by a Team Manager. As the commissioner of services, the local authority also has a responsibility to investigate complaints about provider services where the service user does not wish for the provider to undertake a complaints investigation themselves.

### **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman Service**

Once a complainant has exhausted the local procedures, they have the opportunity to approach the relevant Ombudsman service to request that their complaint is investigated. Complainants can approach the Ombudsman directly to make their complaint at any stage, though they will usually be expected to have exhausted all stages of the city council's own complaints procedure before the Ombudsman will carry out an investigation. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman looks at individual complaints about councils and provides an impartial service. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman considers complaints about all council services with the exception of some housing complaints. The Housing Ombudsman Service look at complaints about housing where there is a landlord-tenant relationship between the council and the complainant. Both Ombudsman Services aim to respond to the majority of complaints they receive within 12 months. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman issues an annual letter which details the complaints they have received about each local authority's services and the outcome of their investigations, this is included in Appendix A of this report. The Housing Ombudsman only issues an annual letter to the local authorities with findings of maladministration for 5 or more complaints. The city council has never received an annual letter from the Housing Ombudsman.

## **Corporate Complaints**

### **Corporate Complaints - Stage One**

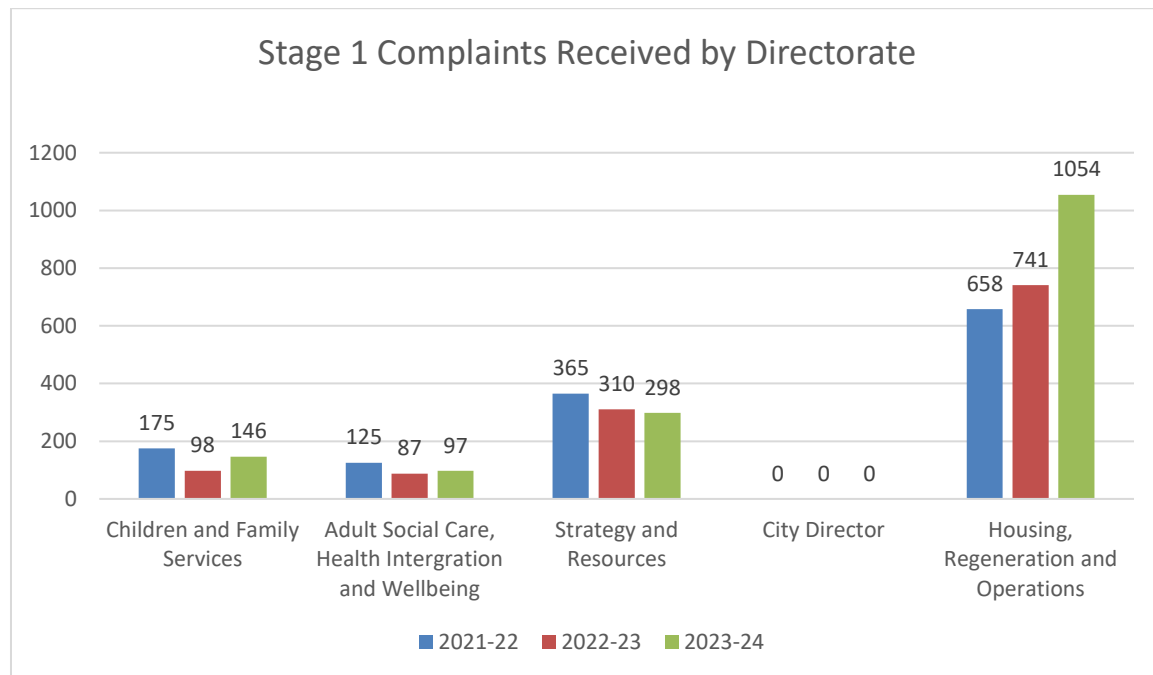
There has been an increase in the number of corporate complaints recorded in 2023-2024 compared to recent years, as you will see in the table below. In 2023-2024 the number of corporate complaints received was at its highest level for the last 3 years.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of corporate stage 1 complaints received</b>
2021-2022	1323
2022-2023	1199
2023-2024	1595

The chart below shows the number of corporate complaints received by each of the city council's directorates in 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 for comparison.

As shown in the chart below there has been an increase in the number of stage one complaints received by all directorates except for Strategy and Resources, which has seen a reduction in complaints for the second time in a row. The largest increase is for Housing, Regeneration and Operations which has seen an increase of 313 complaints compared to 2022-23. This increase is in part due to the Disrepair Claims that are logged as stage 1 corporate complaints and make up 43% of the increase.

Complaints about Housing Repairs are not detailed in this report.



### What kind of complaints are we getting?

Each complaint is allocated an 'issue nature' which aims to summarise the nature of the concerns raised and these are grouped under the following headings:

- Communication and Information
- Conduct of an Officer
- Discrimination
- Policy
- Service Delay
- Service Failure

Each complaint can be allocated multiple issue natures. The majority of corporate complaints received by the city council during 2023-24 related to Service Delay and Service Failure. The majority of complaints for Strategy and Resources was Communication and Information. The following table shows stage one complaints by issue nature and by directorate for 2023-24.

2023-2024 Stage 1 Complaints with an Issue nature of;

Directorate	Communication and Information	Conduct of an Officer	Discrimination	Policy	Service Failure	Service Delay
Adult Social Care, Health Integration and Wellbeing	20	17	0	15	18	27
Children and Family Services	43	10	0	25	4	64
Housing, Regeneration and Operations	119	121	0	219	287	335
City Director	0	0	0	0	0	0
Strategy and Resources	151	43	0	37	30	37
<b>Totals</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>463</b>

### How many complaints are we upholding?

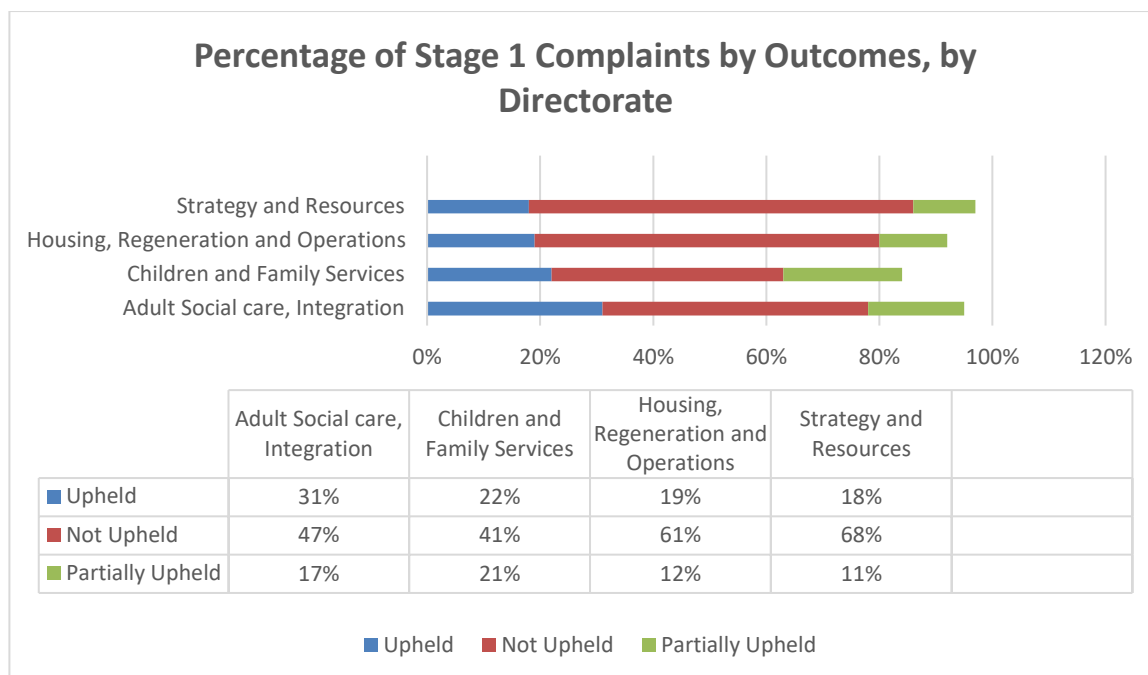
Of the 1,595 corporate complaints that we received across the authority:

- 60% were Not Upheld. This means on the basis of the evidence available the complaint could not be supported.
- 20% were Upheld. This means it was confirmed that a service has not been delivered in accordance with policy, standards or good practice.
- 13% were Partially Upheld. This is where the findings and conclusions of the investigation only partly uphold the complaint. Some complaints have more than one issue to be considered and a mix of outcomes for each issue will result in a 'partially upheld' complaint.
- 7% had another recorded outcome, for example the complaint was withdrawn, or escalated to another stage of the complaint's procedure without a stage one outcome being set.

For 2023-24 these outcomes are largely consistent with the previous year.

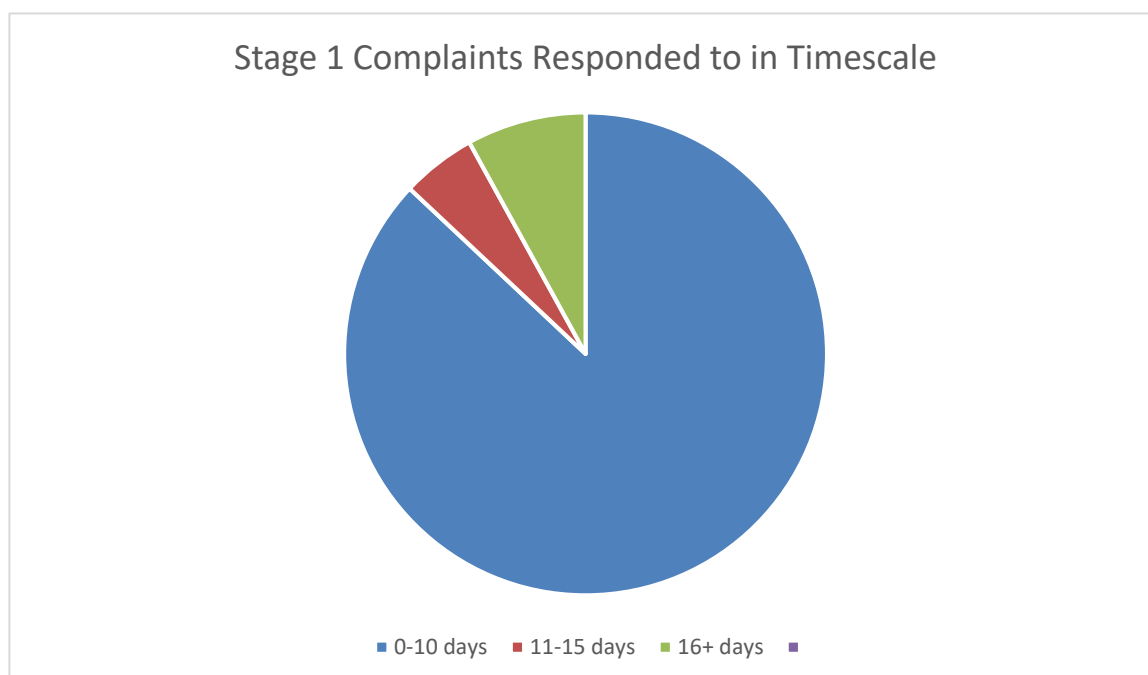
The next graph shows the percentage of stage one complaint outcomes broken down by directorate for 2023-24.





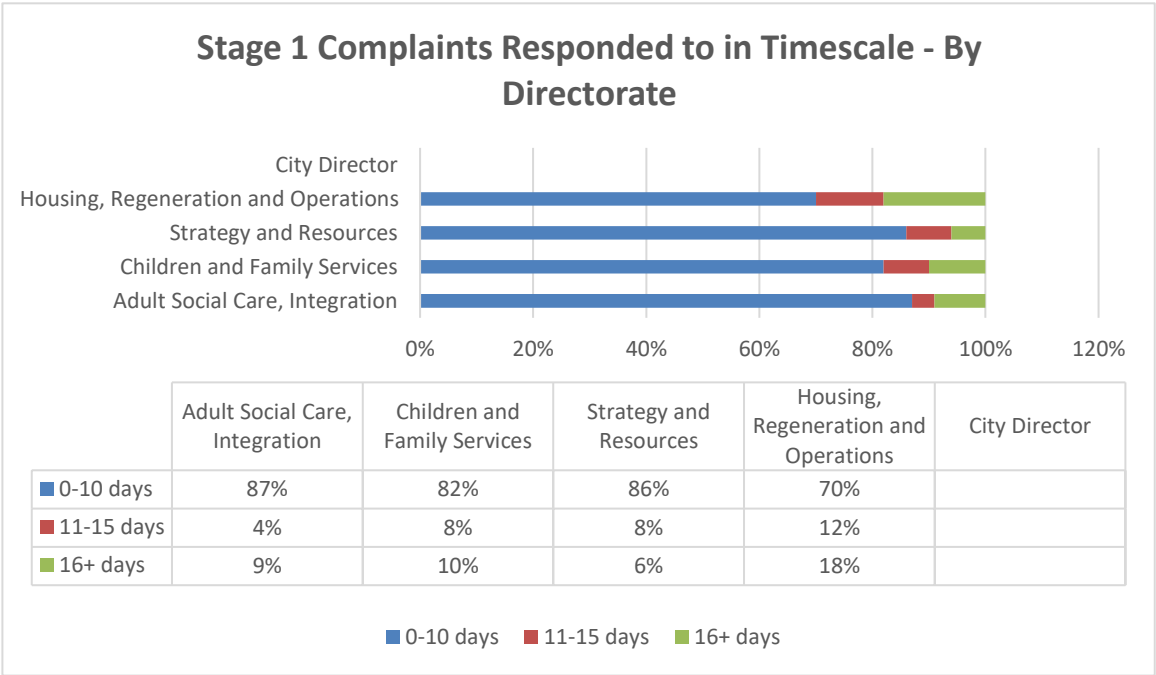
## How fast are we responding?

The Corporate Complaints Procedure allows 10 working days for stage one complaints to be resolved. In some cases where it is not possible to meet this timescale, it can be extended, however performance is still measured against the original 10 working day timescale. During 2023-24, 87% of all corporate stage one complaints were responded to within timescale which is an increase of 11% compared to last year's performance.



The Customer Feedback Team carries out a robust follow up process for overdue complaints, escalating them for the attention of senior management and reporting regularly on performance timescales. Where complaints will take longer than 10

working days to investigate, the Customer Feedback Team endeavour to keep the customer informed of any delay. The next graph shows the response timescales for corporate stage one complaints by directorate.

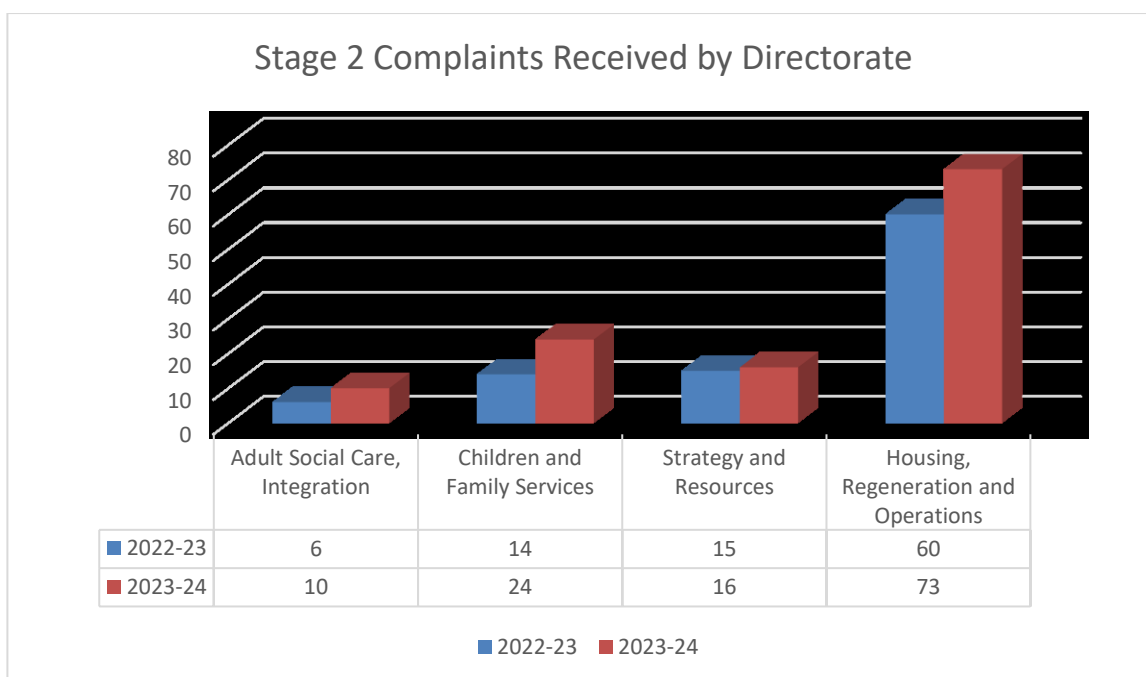


### Corporate Complaints – Stage Two

There has been an increase of 28 corporate stage two complaints received in 2023-24 compared to last year, up from 95 in 2022-23 to 123 in 2023-24, this is the highest figure since 2019-20.

As with corporate stage one complaints, corporate stage two complaint outcomes are categorised as Not Upheld, Partially Upheld or Upheld. Also, some requests for a stage two investigation are refused or withdrawn by the customer.

The next chart shows the breakdown of stage two complaints received by directorate. There has been an increase across all directorates.



41% of the stage two complaints investigated were either upheld or partially upheld at stage two of the complaints procedure. This can sometimes be due to complainants introducing additional issues which may not have been explored at the original complaint investigation at stage one.

The Corporate Complaints procedure allows 20 working days to respond to stage two complaints. It is important, as with stage one complaints, that a thorough investigation is undertaken and, in some cases, there has been a need to extend the deadline with the customer so that the investigation can be completed.

During 2023-24, 26% of stage two complaints exceeded the 20 working day timescale. Where complaints took longer than 20 working days to resolve, complainants were kept informed of the progress of the investigation and the reasons for the delay.

## Children's Social Care Complaints

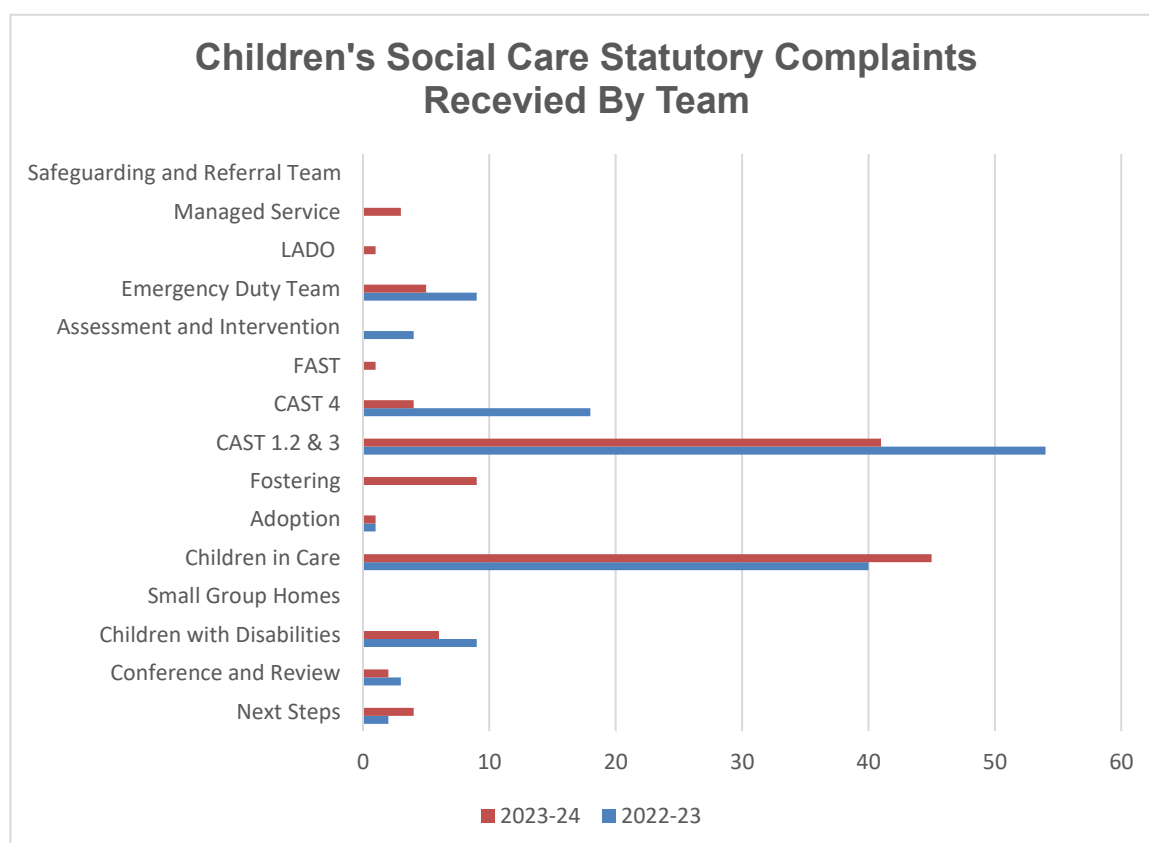
This section of the annual report provides information relating to complaints received by the city council about Children's Social Care in the period 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. The number of statutory complaints received about Children's Social Care should be balanced against the number of families receiving support and services in the city.

Figures for 2023-24 show:

- Approximately 60,164 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in Stoke-on-Trent.
- At 31 March 2024, there were 3,472 cases open to Children's Services.
- At 31 March 2024, 1156 children and young people were being looked after by the local authority.

This means that the statutory complaints received in 2023-24 regarding the service are from approximately 3.4% of all service users.

There has been a reduction in statutory complaints received this year, from 140 in 2022-23 to 119 in 2023-24. The chart below shows the trend in statutory complaints across teams over the last two years. This year there has been another steady increase in the number of complaints for the Children in Care Team, this has been an emerging trend for the last three years.



### What kind of complaints are we getting?

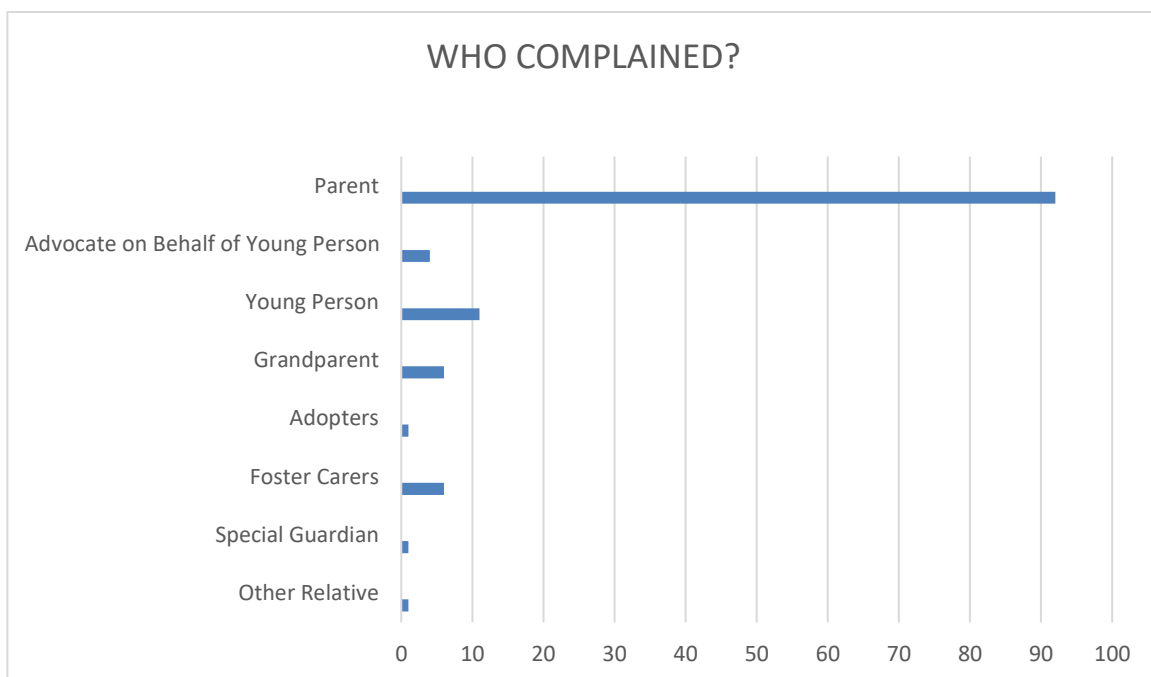
The most frequent statutory complaints about Children's Social Care in 2023-24 continue to relate to communication issues, although there is a reduction of 20 complaints in this area compared to 2022-23. There has been an increase this year in complaints relating to lack of support offered to children and young people and their families and also an increase in issues concerning the attitude and conduct of staff.

The following table shows the most common stage one complaint issues by nature for 2023-24 and 2022-23 for comparison.

Issue Nature	No of Complaints 2022-23	No of Complaints 2023-24
Confidentiality	1	0
Placement Change	0	2
Lack of Consistency	0	0
Financial	0	0

Change in Worker	10	6
Outcome of Decision/Assessment	17	18
Poor Communication	49	29
Attitude/Conduct of Staff	18	21
Lack of Support	10	19
Contact Issues	9	12
Delay/Failure to Keep Informed	0	7
Other	26	5

### Who complained?



The majority of complaints received in 2023-24 were again made by parents, with 75% of all complaints being made by this group. This has reduced compared to 2022-23 which saw 93% of complaints being made by parents. 9% of complaints were made by Young People compared to 2022-23 when we received no complaints by this group. More work is planned alongside CAFS to update the avenues available to this group to ensure that submitting feedback is easily accessible for the young people of the city.

### How many complaints were upheld

Of the 119 Children's Stage 1 Statutory complaints that we received:

- 23% were Not Upheld. This means on the basis of the evidence available the complaint could not be supported.
- 20% were Upheld. This means it was confirmed that a service had not been delivered in accordance with policy, standards or good practice.
- 34% were Partially Upheld. This is where the findings and conclusions of the investigation only partly upheld the complaint. Some complaints have more than

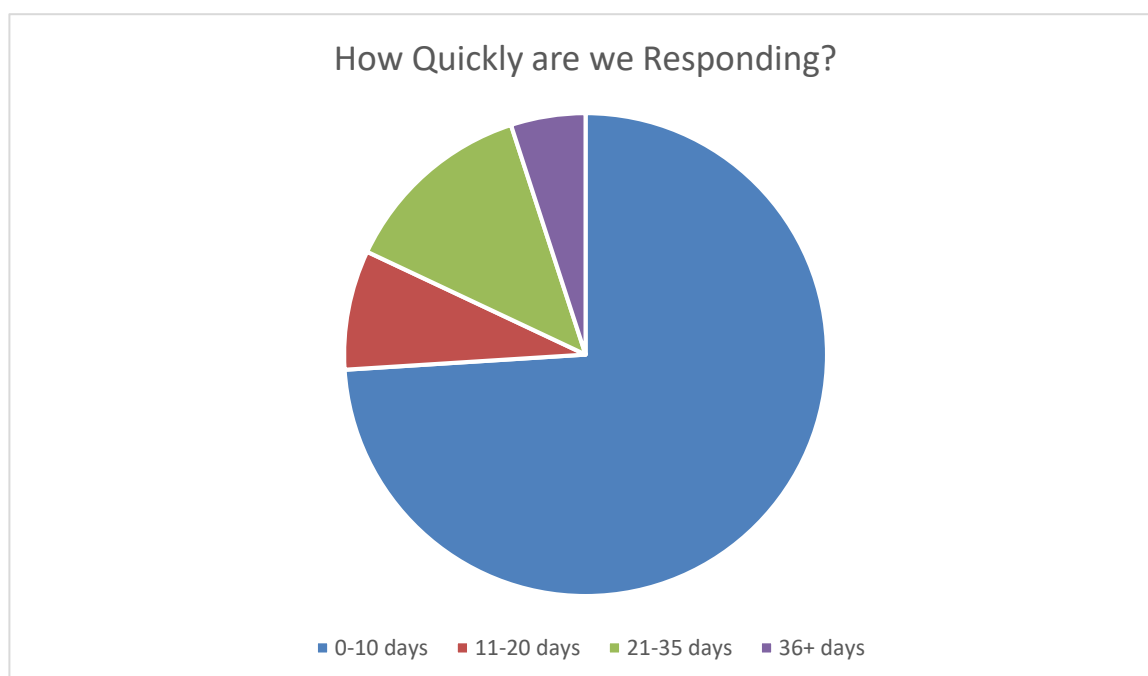
one issue to be considered and a mix of outcomes for each issue resulted in a 'partially upheld' complaint.

- 16% had another recorded outcome, for example the complaint was withdrawn.
- 7% were out of jurisdiction for investigation.

In 2023-24 there was a 3% decrease in the volume of complaints upheld in full, and the numbers of complaints that were out of jurisdiction for investigation decreased by 4% on the previous year.

### How fast were we responding?

The next chart shows the percentage of time taken to respond to children's stage 1 complaints, of which 74% were responded to within 10 days, an increase of 20% compared to 2022-23. Weekly overdue reports are shared with the Heads of Service which is helping to drive up the 10 day response timescale. This is the highest figure since 2019.



### How many complaints were escalated

During 2023-24, 4 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 of the statutory complaints procedure. This is due to the work being carried out by children's services, where more contact is made with the complainant, from when the complaint is received to when a response is provided. The complaints were all partially upheld.

Year	Number of Children's Social Care Complaints – Stage 2
2022-23	2
2023-24	4

In 2023-24 zero complaints were escalated to stage 3 of the Children's Social Care Complaints process.

## Corporate Complaints relating to Children's Social Care

### Corporate Complaints – Stage One

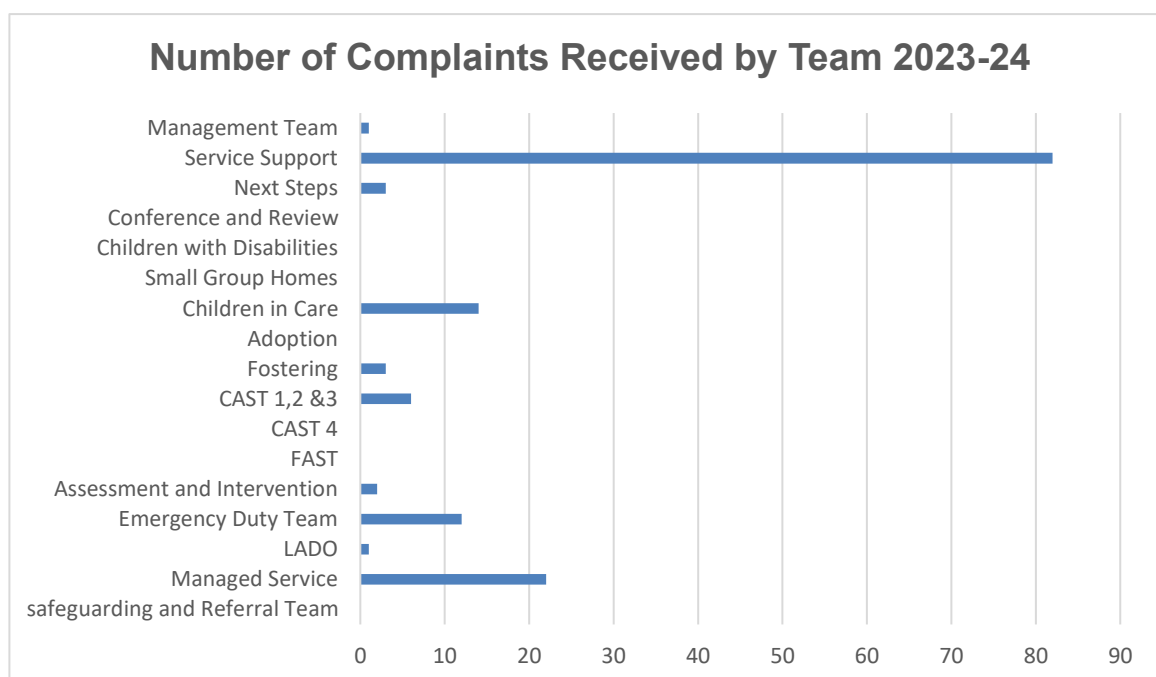
Complaints that do not meet the criteria to be considered under the Statutory complaints process may be considered under the council's corporate complaints process. For example, a complaint made by an adult about how they have been treated by Children's Services.

The table below shows the number of complaints about Children's Social Care that were considered at stage one of the corporate complaints procedure in the last 2 years.

Year	Number of Children's Social Care Complaints – Corporate Stage 1 Process
2022-23	37
2023-24	146

The large increase in corporate complaints for the period 2023-24 compared to 2022-23 is due to the fact that some complaints that were logged as statutory during 2022-23 should have been investigated under the corporate complaints procedure. During 2023-24 we have sought to correct this and as we have noted previously, the number of statutory complaints for this period has decreased compared to 2022-23.

The following chart gives a breakdown of the corporate complaints received by each team in 2023-24.



### What type of Complaints were we getting?

Issue Nature	No of Complaints 2022-23	No of Complaints 2023-24
Communication and Information	18	39
Conduct of an Officer	16	10
Discrimination	0	0
Policy	0	26
Service Delay	3	52
Service Failure	4	19
Total	<b>41</b>	<b>146</b>

The most noticeable comparison is the reduction of complaints concerning officer conduct, even with the increase of complaints for 2023-24 the number for this issue nature reduced by 6, compared with 2022-23. The other noticeable difference is that in the period 2022-23 there were 0 complaints concerning policy rising to 26 for the period 2023-24.

### How many complaints were upheld

Of the 146 corporate complaints that we received about Children's Social Care:

- 41% were Not Upheld. This means on the basis of the evidence available the complaint could not be supported.
- 22% were Upheld. This means it was confirmed that a service had not been delivered in accordance with policy, standards or good practice.
- 21% were Partially Upheld. This is where the findings and conclusions of the investigation only partly upheld the complaint. Some complaints had more than one issue to be considered and a mix of outcomes for each issue resulted in a 'partially upheld' complaint.
- 16% were withdrawn at the request of the complainant.

### How fast were we responding?

The Corporate Complaints Procedure allows 10 working days for complaints to be resolved.

During 2023-24, 82% of all Corporate Stage 1 complaints relating to Children's Social Care were responded to within timescale, compared to 40% for the period 2022-23.





## Corporate Complaints relating to Children's Social Care – Stage Two

In 2023-24 saw 23 (15.7%) corporate complaints about Children's Social Care escalated to stage 2 of the corporate complaints procedure. This was the highest number since 2018. 78% of these complaints concerned the Special Educational Needs Monitoring and Assessment Service (SENMAS)

The complaint issues predominantly concerned communication and timeframes so with that in mind the SENMAS Communication Pledge was launched, with a refresh planned for September 2024.

SENMAS identified a number of other historical issues during the early part of 2023 and started to address them by introducing further service improvements:

- Restorative practise training was rolled out across the whole team during 2023 and the SENMAS Compliance Officer is working restoratively to reduce stage 2 escalations.
- Capacity within the SENMAS Team has been increased.
- The number of Educational Psychology Assessments has been increased
- Educational Psychology Assistants have been recruited.

The impact of these improvements will become more noticeable as the new processes start to embed.

## How many Complaints were Upheld?

Of the 23 corporate stage 2 complaints that we received about Children's Social Care:

- 5 were Upheld. This means it was confirmed that a service had not been delivered in accordance with policy, standards or good practice.
- 5 were Not Upheld. This means on the basis of the evidence available the complaint could not be supported.

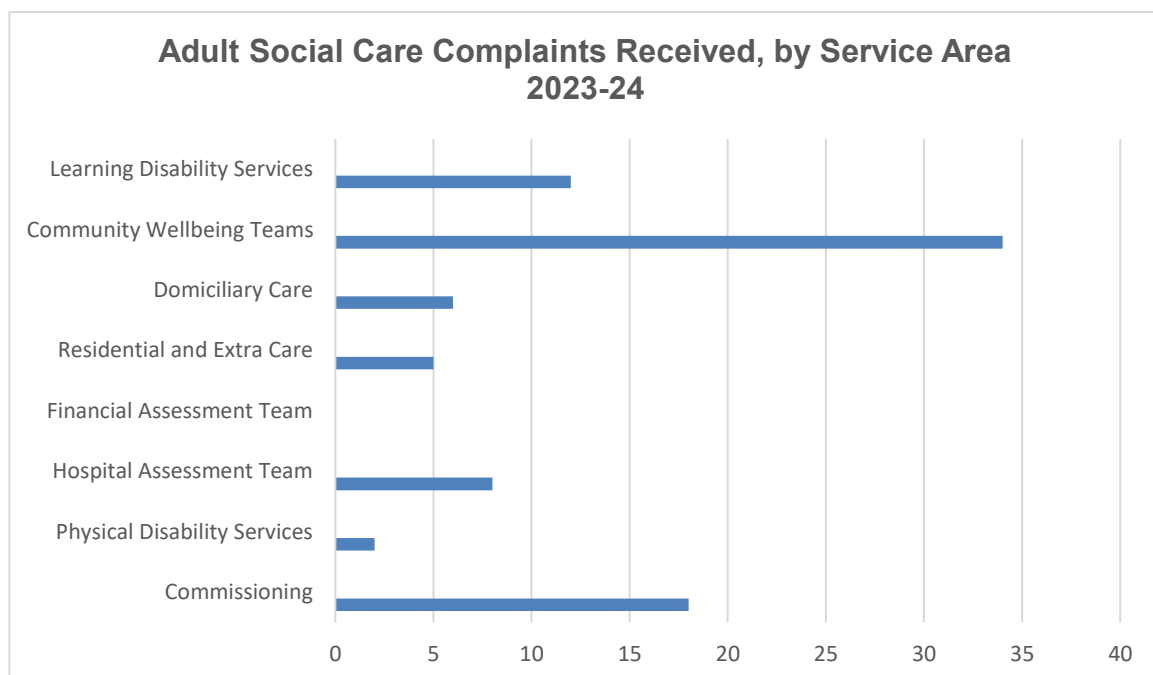
- 5 were Partially Upheld. This is where the findings and conclusions of the investigation only partly upheld the complaint. Some complaints had more than one issue to be considered and a mix of outcomes for each issue resulted in a 'partially upheld' complaint.
- 2 were withdrawn at the request of the complainant.
- 6 were refused on the basis that a further investigation would not have changed the outcome.

## Adult Social Care Complaints

2023-24 saw a reduction of 23 complaints compared to 2022-2023.

Year	Number of complaints
2022-23	108
2023-24	85

The following graph shows the number of complaints received by service area in 2023-24



### What kind of complaints were we getting

The primary issue raised by complainants in 2023-24 was outcome of decision/assessment accounted for 33% of all complaints received, communication provided for 24% of complaints, and communication accounting for 23% of complaints.

The largest decrease was in the number of complaints for the conduct/behaviour of staff.

The following table shows the number of stage 1 complaints by nature for 2023-24 and 2022-23 for comparison.

<b>Issue Nature</b>	<b>No of Complaints 2022-23</b>	<b>No of Complaints 2023-24</b>
Conduct/Behaviour of Staff	21	11
Communication	23	20
Delay/Failure to keep Informed	4	4
Financial	0	0
Non-adherence to Procedure	2	3
Outcome of Decision/Assessment	31	28
Quality of Service Provided	27	19
Total	108	85

### **How many complaints were upheld**

Of the 85 complaints in relation to Adult Social Care that we received:

- 17% were Upheld. This means it was confirmed that a service had not been delivered in accordance with policy, standards or good practice.
- 19% were Partially Upheld. This is where the findings and conclusions of the investigation only partly upheld the complaint. Some complaints have more than one issue to be considered and a mix of outcomes for each issue resulted in a 'partially upheld' complaint.
- 46% were Not Upheld. This means on the basis of the evidence available the complaint could not be supported.
- 18% had another recorded outcome, for example the complaint was withdrawn.

### **How fast were we responding?**

While the regulations governing complaints about Adult Social Care allow for up to 6 months to complete an investigation, there is an expectation under the local procedure that complaints are resolved sooner unless otherwise agreed with the complainant. 82% of complaints were responded to within 20 days.

## **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Service**

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) issues an annual letter detailing complaints received from within the local authority area. This is attached to this report at Appendix A. This letter outlines the topic of each complaint or enquiry received by the LGO and provides a summary of the outcomes reached.

In 2023-24 the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman received a total of 83 complaints about Stoke-on-Trent City Council and carried out detailed investigations into 16 (19%) of these complaints. 15 (18%) of those complaints were upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. This equates to 5 upheld cases per 100,000 residents, the average for authorities similar to Stoke-on-Trent City Council is 4.6 per 100,000 residents.

In 23% of upheld cases the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman found that Stoke-on-Trent City Council had provided a satisfactory remedy before the

complaint had reached them. This compares to an average of 13% in similar authorities.

Where the Ombudsman found fault with the actions of the council, it can direct us to undertake some remedial action. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman made 10 recommendations for remedial action in 2023-24 and the city council successfully implemented 100% of these recommendations.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's summary of each upheld decision are presented below, further details of these complaints can be found on the decisions page of the LGO website: [www.lgo.org.uk/decisions](http://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions)

<b>Complaint</b>	<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Findings</b>
1	Housing, Regeneration and Operations	Mr X said the Council failed to properly assess his homelessness application and its housing duties and failed to properly assess his application for a discretionary housing payment. We found the Council was at fault for failure to fulfil its homelessness duties causing him to miss out on accommodation. This caused Mr X frustration, uncertainty, distress and put him to the time and trouble of complaining. We have not made a finding about Mr X's application for a Discretionary Housing Payment. The Council has agreed to our recommendations to remedy the injustice.
2.	Education and Children's Services	There was a failure to secure special educational provision in an EHC plan from December 2020. This was fault and led to a young person missing out on therapy at a vital stage of their education. The Council will provide a payment to acknowledge the impact of the fault, secure provision and make service improvements. The Complaint is upheld
3.	Housing, Regeneration and Operations	Miss D complained about the Council's failure to address her concerns about bad behaviour within a Market where she has a stall and how it handled her complaint. We found no fault in how the Council considered Miss D's concerns, we cannot therefore criticise its decisions not to take more action. However, it was a fault for causing unnecessary delays in its complaints handling. The Council agreed to apologise and make payment for the injustice this caused her
4.	Education and Children's Services	Ms X complained the Council delayed completing her son's Education Health and Care Plan and provided poor service,

		resulting in missed education and distress. We did not investigate matters prior to September 2021 or matters linked to Ms X's appeal. We found the Council at fault for delay and poor service. We recommended it provides Ms X with an apology, pays her £300 for distress and uncertainty, pays her £100 for time and trouble and acts to prevent recurrence.
5.	Education and Children's Services	There was fault by the Council. It took too long to respond to Miss B's complaint. It did not consider properly whether changes to the timetable would have a significant impact on Miss B's son and whether this was dealt with in accordance with his Education, Health and Care plan. The Council's shortcomings caused distress and frustration. The Council should take the action recommended to remedy the complaint.
6.	Education and Children's Services	There was fault by the Council in how it arranged a suitable education for Mrs B's son. It took too long to issue the Education Health and Care (EHC) plan. It did not retain sufficient oversight to make sure it was meeting its duty to provide an education when it became clear that Mrs B's son was not attending school. The Council also took too long to deal with Mrs B's complaint about this. I have recommended a remedy.
7.	Adult Social Care	There was fault by the Council. The Council did not take account of all the available information when deciding there had been deprivation of assets. Reconsidering the decision remedies the injustice to the family.
8.	Housing, Regeneration and Operations	Mr X complained the Council failed to provide him with accommodation and he has slept in his car since February 2023. Mr X also said restrictions placed on him were unfair. Mr X said this has affected his physical and mental health and he is homeless. There was fault in the way the Council delayed accepting a homeless duty and this caused Mr X frustration and distress. The Council should apologise, make a financial payment and issue guidance to staff.

## **Housing Ombudsman Service**

The Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) investigate complaints about Stoke-on-Trent City Council where the issues raised are in connection with its function as a landlord.

The Housing Ombudsman found 4 cases of maladministration against the City Council for the period 2023-2024 and 1 case of severe maladministration. These resulted in a review of the Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Procedure plus a review of the Repairs Policy and record keeping. The City Council apologised to each customer and a total of £5773.48 was paid out in financial compensation. Recommendations for service improvements from the Housing Ombudsman determinations have been included within the Service Improvement and Transformation Plans for Housing Services.

The HOS annual letter detailing complaints received from within the local authority area has not yet been published for the period 2023-24.

## **Learning from Complaints**

The city council encourages feedback from our residents about the services we deliver. Residents' feedback helps us to understand what we are doing well and where we need to make improvements.

The Customer Feedback Team encourage services to learn from the feedback they receive and to implement changes and improvements to ensure that the services we deliver are the best that they can be.

The following table provides an example from each Directorate of the learning that was identified from complaints in 2023-24.

<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Feedback</b>	<b>Learning</b>
Adult Social Care, Health Integration and Wellbeing	Customer contacted out of hours to enquire about help for the homeless and was told there was no support available that evening.	Staff will deliver information and advice on all available support even if it can't be accessed at the time of the call.
Housing, Regeneration and Operations	An increase in the number of damp and mould cases being reported.	A dedicated damp and mould team has been established.
Strategy and Resources	The IT system was automatically transferring credits for businesses that had a credit on one account but owed money on another account	The automatic transfer has been removed for businesses and an instruction has been issued to staff to manually transfer credits.
Children and Family Services	Education, Health and Care Plan not updated following a Tribunal Order.	Tribunal officer must complete a thorough face to face handover with allocated case officer to ensure any changes made to an Education, Health and Care Plan are recorded and followed up within the expected timeframes following a Tribunal Order.

## Comments

Comments are defined as those contacts made to the city council which are not expressing dissatisfaction, but may, for example, be a suggestion as to how services could be improved.

They may also be a general statement about policies or practices.

Each comment received is passed to the appropriate service for response within 10 working days.

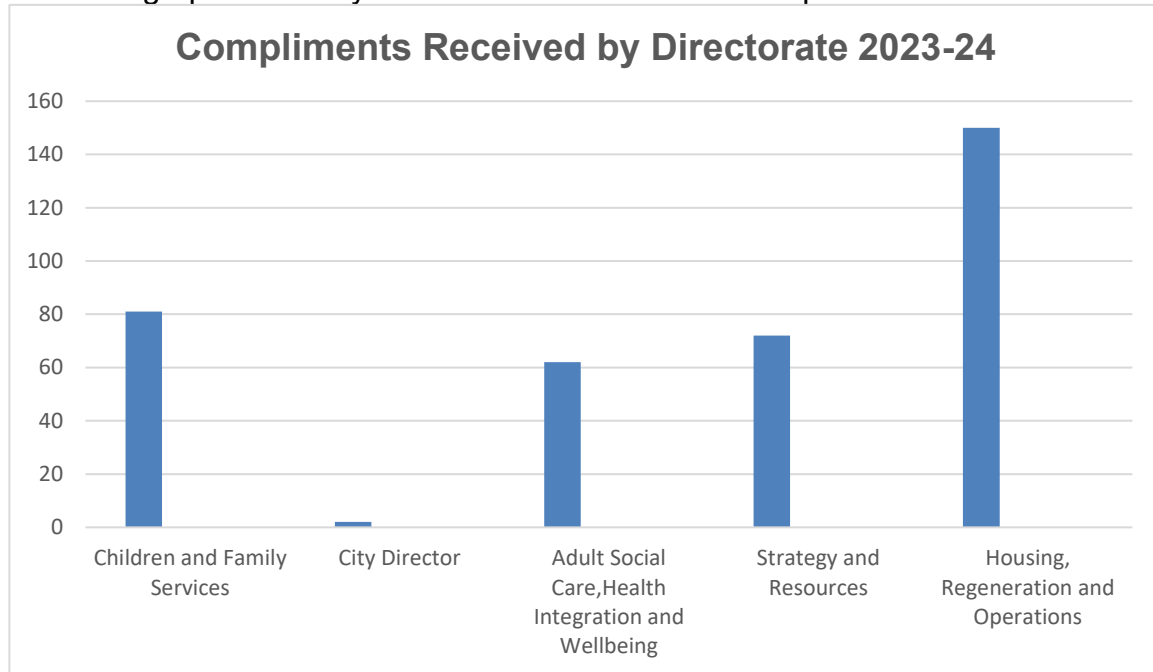
The total number of comments received in 2023-24 was 399, which was a decrease of 108 comments. 507 comments were received in 2022-23.

## Compliments

The total number of corporate compliments recorded in 2023-24 was 367.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Compliments Received</b>
2022-23	523
2023-24	367

The next graph shows by directorate the number of compliments recorded in 2023-24



### What our Residents and Customers said

Examples of the corporate compliments that were received in 2023/24:

- We were just wondering how long you will be involved for, because you have been amazing and we are so grateful for everything you have done. We have had a lot of social workers and I can honestly say you will go so far and you must climb the ladder
- I am writing to thank the Adult Social Care team for the prompt and useful support given to my brother when he returned to his home. It made all the difference to his well-being. Thank you
- After waiting on hold today for 57 mins I probably wasn't going to be in the best of moods to discuss my Council Tax. I spoke to X at 1 pm who immediately put my mind at rest. She was fully informed, kind to myself and assured us that our query would be dealt with within a particular timescale. She then went out of her way to inform us of how to contact the Council in future by email. Thank you, a very pleasant young lady.
- I am writing to you regarding the above person {housing Officer}. I wish to thank X for her excellent help invaluable knowledge, her 'listening capability' in her interview technique and sincerity, in helping me in the past few days. She has proved herself to me at least, to be a great asset to Stoke on Trent Council. She is clearly a person who likes to assist others' in their time of great need. I thank you for your immediate action in my case.
- Can I please just take this opportunity to send my gratitude for all the hard work you and the team did yesterday, you not only supported X but us as a family as well



through a very difficult day. We are extremely grateful for organising the bungalow and the new property going forward.

- I just wanted to send an email as recognition to X and Y who work in the right to buy team. They are both very professional, knowledgeable, polite and very helpful. They are an asset to you company and I will be recommending the right to buy scheme to other people based on the service provided. You two are AMAZING - thank you both so much for you time and support. Many Thanks,

## MP Enquiries

The Customer Feedback Team also handles correspondence sent by Members of Parliament on behalf of their constituents.

The number of enquiries and service requests received has remained consistently high for the past five years.

In 2023-24 the city council received 1,644 MP Enquiries.

The table below indicates the numbers of enquiries received from each constituency in the city. A small number were received from MPs outside of the city.

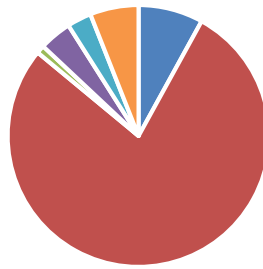
Constituency Area	Number of Enquiries Received
Stoke-on-Trent South	795
Stoke-on-Trent Central	230
Stoke-on-Trent North	614
Out of Area MPs	5

The city council aims to respond to MP Enquiries within 10 working days and achieved 49% compliance with this timescale in 2023-24.

The Customer Feedback Team has maintained a good working relationship with constituency casework officers to ensure enquiries are responded to comprehensively.

As seen in previous years and due to the nature of the work under taken in the Directorate, Housing Regeneration and Operations, it continued to receive the majority of MP Enquiries in 2023-24, receiving 78% of all enquiries.

## MP Enquiries



- Unitas
- Housing, Regeneration and Operations
- City Director
- Strategy and Resources
- Adult Social Care, Health Integration and Wellbeing
- Children and Family Services