

Annual Complaints Report 2020



Executive Summary

This annual report details the level of complaints received in relation to services delivered by the Council for the last financial year 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020. The council received 927 complaints in the 2019/2020 financial year, as well as managing 623,174 customer transactions over the same period. Only 0.1% of transactions were the subject of complaints. Council Services have agreed to share the lessons learned from complaints at meetings of our senior management.

Three of these complaints were investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman, and two were upheld.

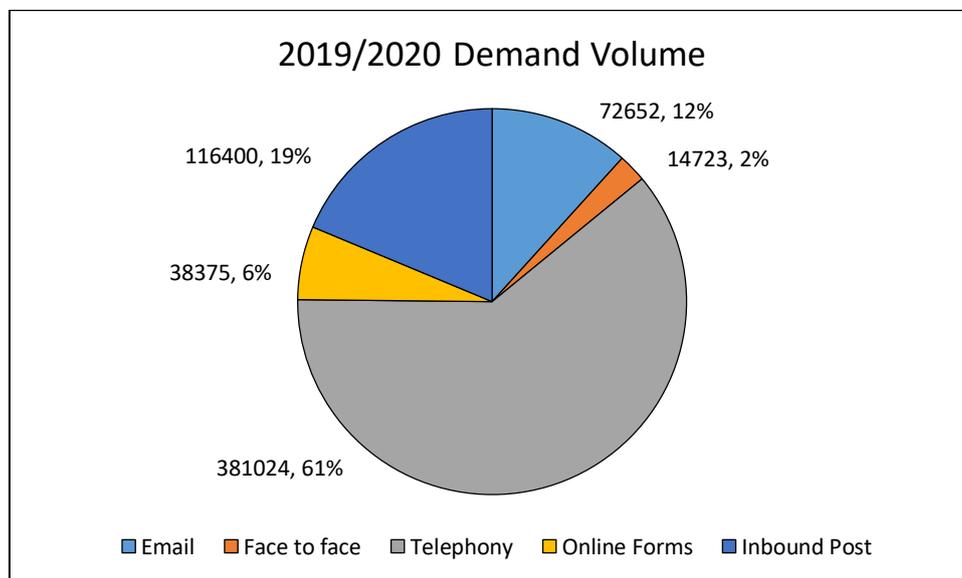
Background

The council has a Three-Stage Complaints Management Process as set out in the Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy. This approach enables the authority to do everything it can to resolve complaints in line with agreed policies and procedures prior to any referral to the Local Government Ombudsman.

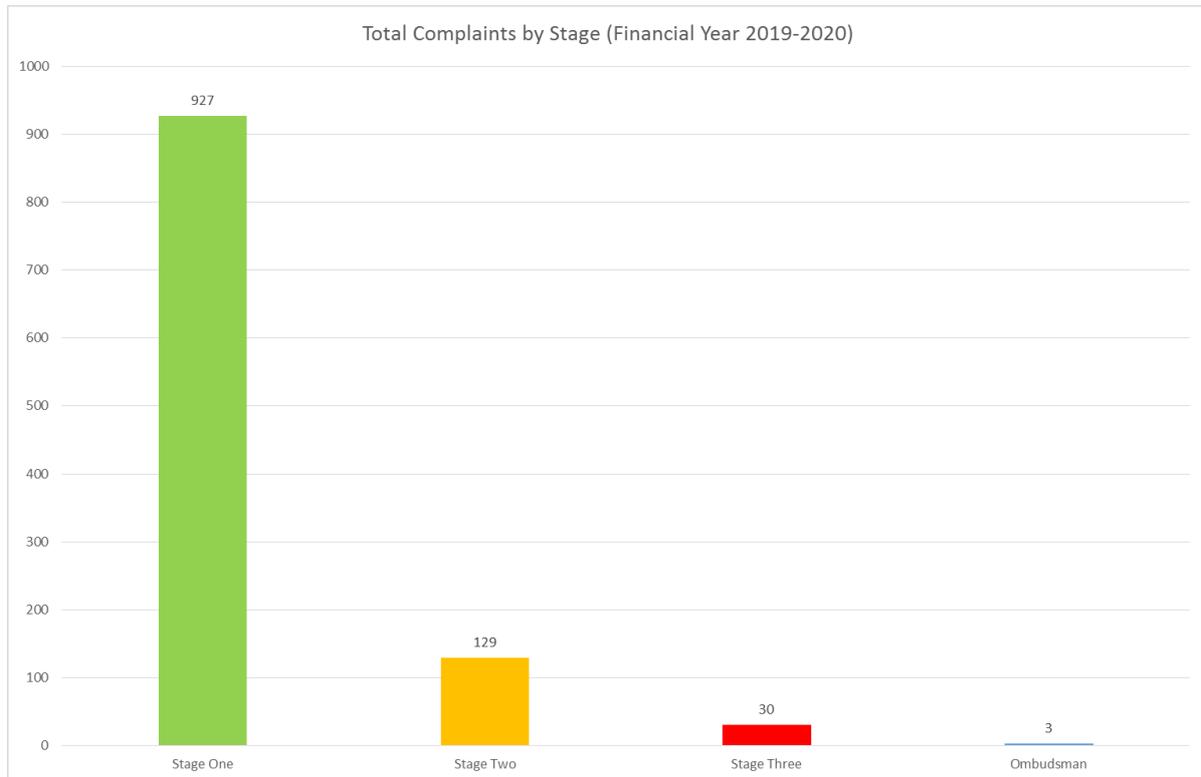
We use a Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) to record all complaints to the organisation, enabling greater categorisation of complaints and segmentation per service area. This helps with detailed analysis, enabling us to learn from complaints received.

Complaints in Context

The 623,174 customer transactions over the financial year include contact by telephone, email, correspondence, online forms, and face to face visits. It is broken down as follows.



Number of new complaints



Out of the total of 927 complaints, 129 were escalated from stage 1 to stage 2, and 30 were escalated from stage 2 to stage 3 over the course of the year.

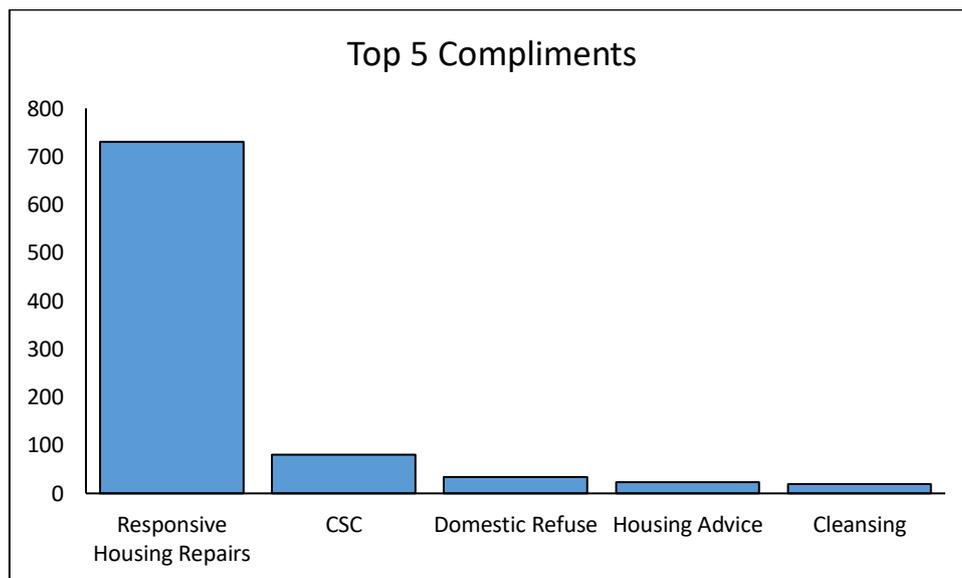
Top 5 Complaint Categories

Category	Number of Complaints	As a percentage of total complaints received
Housing Repairs	349	37.32%
Domestic Refuse	115	12.40%
Arboriculture Support	52	5.61%
Housing Advice	45	4.85%
Project Management	39	4.21%

The above table shows the top 5 services receiving complaints. These are also the service areas carrying out very high volumes of customer transactions.

Compliments

A total number of 1057 compliments were received in the financial year 2019/2020.



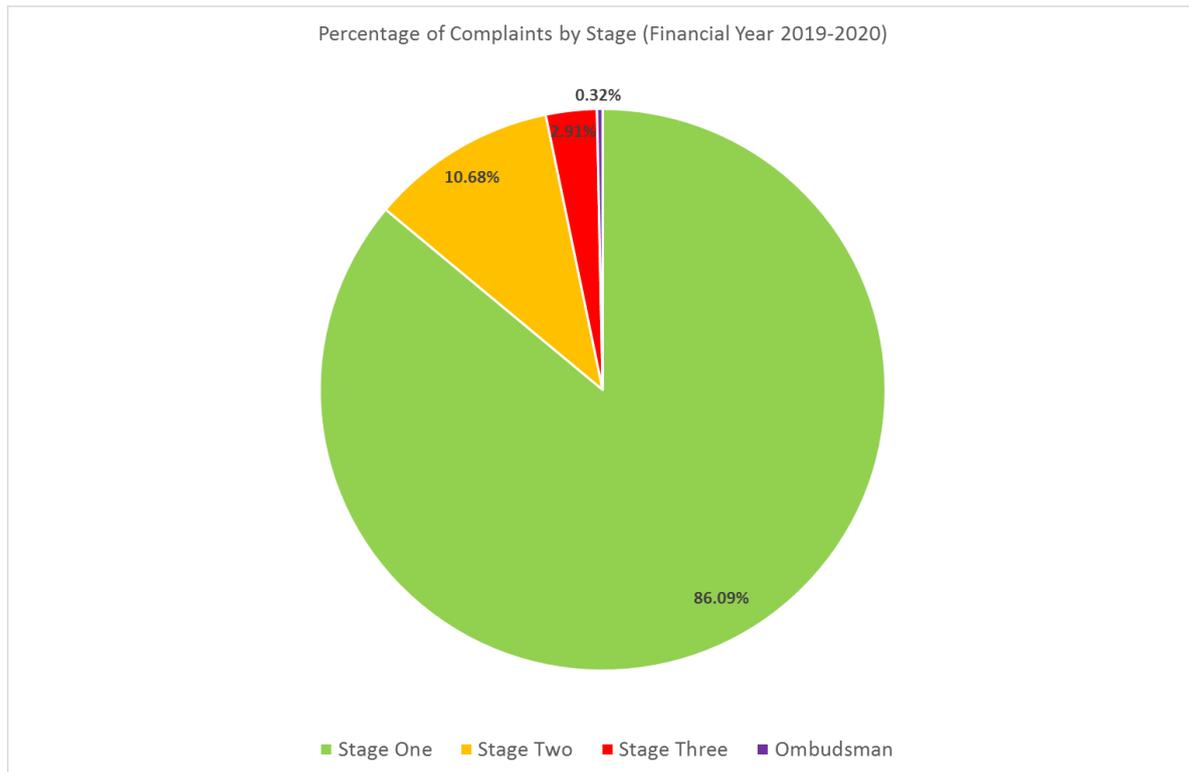
The above graph shows the top 5 services receiving compliments. Housing Repairs and Refuse appear in both the most complimented and the most complained about categories.

Matters Investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman

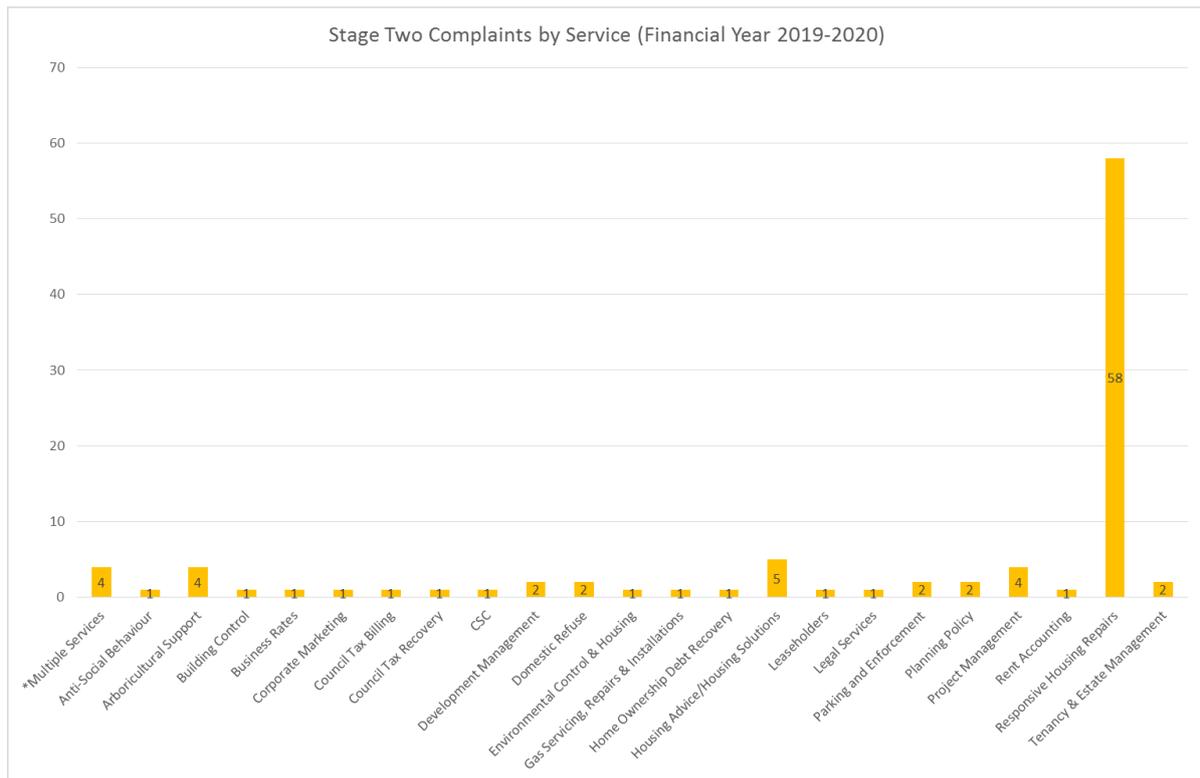
In the 2019 to 2020 financial year we had three matters investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman or Housing Ombudsman. These were: An Anti-Social Behaviour issue that was found in the council's favour and two Housing Repairs issues that were both upheld by the Housing Ombudsman.

Reasons for the escalation of Complaints.

Of the total 927 Complaints logged in 2019-2020 Financial Year 14% of matters were escalated beyond Stage One, to either Stage Two, Three, or the Ombudsman.



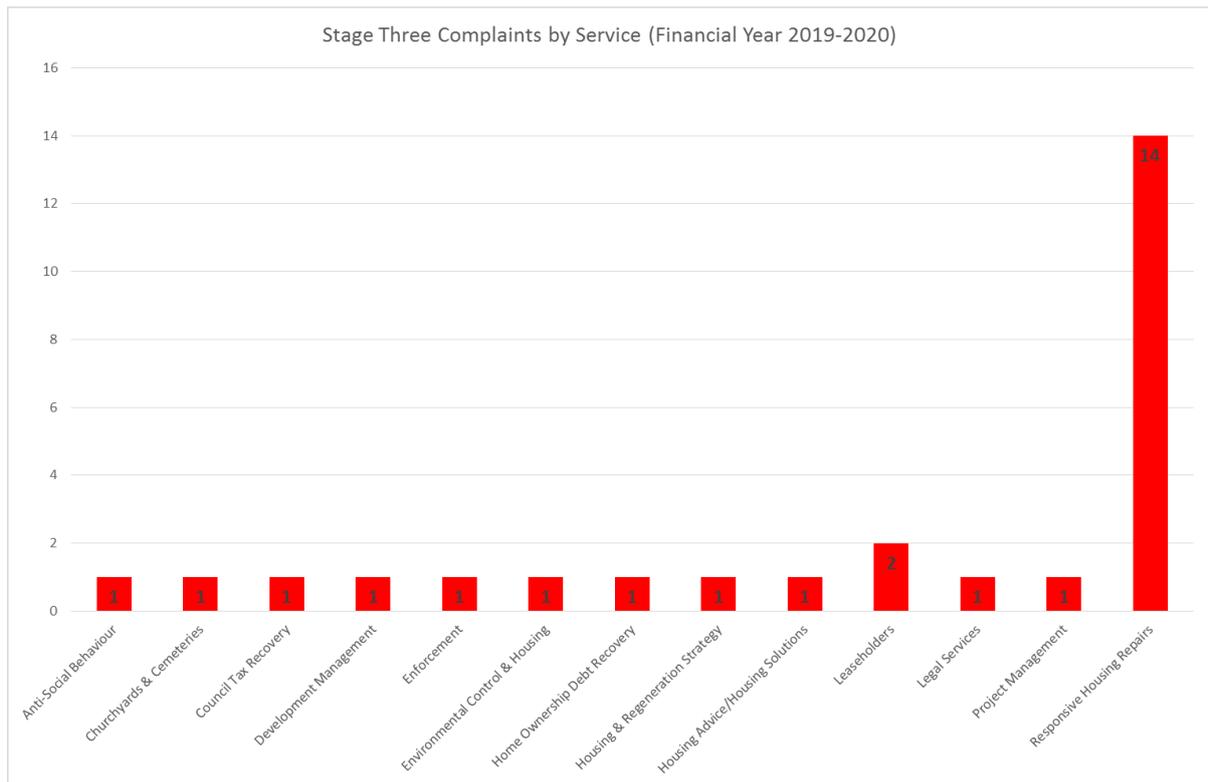
When we look at the Stage Two escalations we can see that the greatest proportion of these rest with Responsive Housing Repairs with 58. Upon examining the reasons for escalation the most frequent reason given by complainants was that works promised to take place in the response to the Stage One Complaint were not undertaken on the appointment date, that our contractor Morgan Sindall failed to adequately communicate with the complainants to arrange follow-on works or that the customer was not satisfied with the quality of workmanship on the completed repairs.



The second greatest number of escalations to Stage Two were for Housing Advice/Solutions who received 6 complaints at Stage Two. The reasons given for these escalations are predominantly complainants disputing information provided in the response at Stage One or being dissatisfied with the decision of the Officer regarding their housing application.

Arboricultural Support received 4 escalations to Stage Two which were mostly complainants disputing the decision of our Arboricultural Officers on the scale of work required to trees, or whether work was required at all.

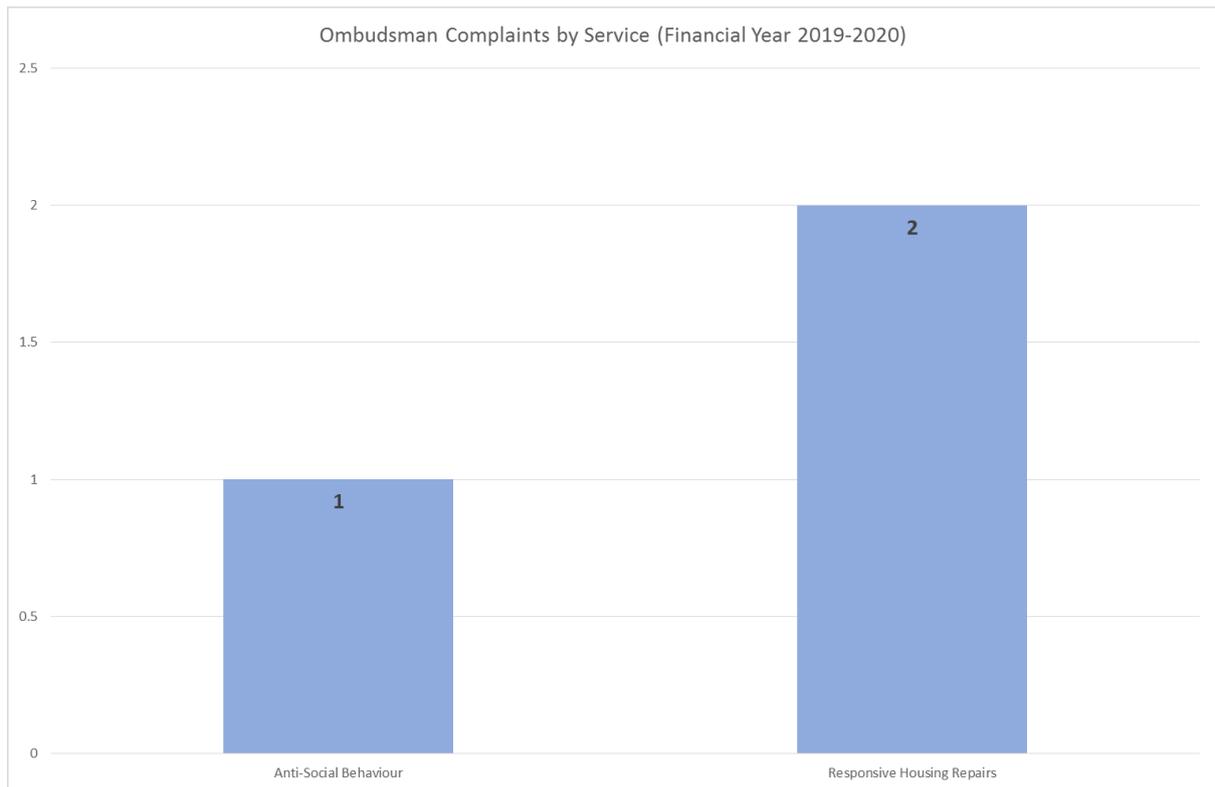
Project Management also received 4 complaints at Stage Two. One of these was due to incorrect documentation being provided to a complainant following a request and the others were to do with delays and poor communication from our contractors to arrange follow-on works.



When we look at the complaints escalated to Stage Three we again see that Responsive Housing Repairs received the greatest number with 14 in total.

The reasons provided by complainants for escalation were that information given in the response at Stage Two was incorrect or continued delays and poor communications when arranging repairs.

Our Leaseholders Team received 2 Stage Three Complaints, the first of these was disputing the findings of the investigating Officer at Stage One and Two. The other complainant was also disputing the decision of an investigating Officer at Stage Two regarding Service charges applied to the leaseholder.



With regard to the three matters that were escalated to the Housing Ombudsman we are not provided reasons from the Ombudsman for escalation, just the findings of their investigations.

The first Ombudsman Complaint was an escalation of a matter for our Anti-social Behaviour Team. This was not upheld by the Ombudsman and no fault was found with the Council's handling of the complaint.

The second Ombudsman Complaint was for our Housing Repairs Team and was found in favour of the complainant with a decision that compensation needed to be paid.

The third and final Ombudsman Complaint of the 2019-20 Financial Year was also for Responsive Housing Repairs. This was again decided in favour of the complainant with compensation due because of poor handling of the complaint by the Housing Repairs Team and delays and poor service from our contractors in completing repairs to leaks within the property.

Lessons learned from complaints – You Said, We Did

We welcome and recognise the importance of complaints and all customer feedback. We use this in discussion at our leadership meetings and to help drive our services forward.

Our complaints processes and procedures have been audited and while found to be compliant a small number of improvements have been highlighted that we have begun to take forward. This includes the centralisation of the complaint's management processes under the responsibility of the customer services centre and its management team. This will ensure a consistent methodology to the reporting, investigation and response to all complaints made to the council. We also anticipate the realisation of further efficiencies in terms of performance monitoring and the ability to react earlier to patterns and trends highlighted within the complaints reported.

End of Report