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# Corporate and Statutory Complaints Annual Report

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2022 to 2023

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April 2023

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## Introduction

This report provides an analysis of corporate and statutory complaints received by Lincolnshire County Council during the year 2022 to 2023. A countywide overview will determine any recurring themes across the council and additional analysis per service area will aim to pinpoint any specific areas of work.

The report also provides recommendations to the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) on how services, inclusive of Customer Relations, can be improved. CLT should consider these recommendations, and where possible, how these can be implemented.

## Corporate and statutory complaints process

Lincolnshire County Council's corporate and Adults complaints process has two formal stages, with statutory children's complaints having three. When an individual contacts the Customer Relations Team to raise their concerns, early resolution will be attempted in order to address the concerns at first point of contact. These early resolution cases are referred to as contacts within this report.

If early resolution is not possible a contact will then enter the formal process at stage 1. Once a response to this has been provided complainants wishing to escalate their complaint to the next stage must advise the Complaints Manager of the reasons that they remain dissatisfied. For corporate and Adults complaints a further internal investigation is undertaken. Once complete, and a response sent, the complainant may contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

For Children's statutory complaints an escalation to stage 2 requires the commissioning of an independent investigator. Their investigation will be overseen by another independent officer and once complete, the council will respond based on their findings. Should a complainant question the findings and councils' response they can request that the investigation be reviewed by an independent panel; this being stage 3 of the statutory process. Once a panel has convened and a response provided the complainant may contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

This year has seen decisions from the LGSCO impact the complaints process. As a result of national complaints, the LGSCO has advised that Local Authorities must now accept complaints in regard to contracted providers and investigate these as part of its own complaints process.

## Countywide overview

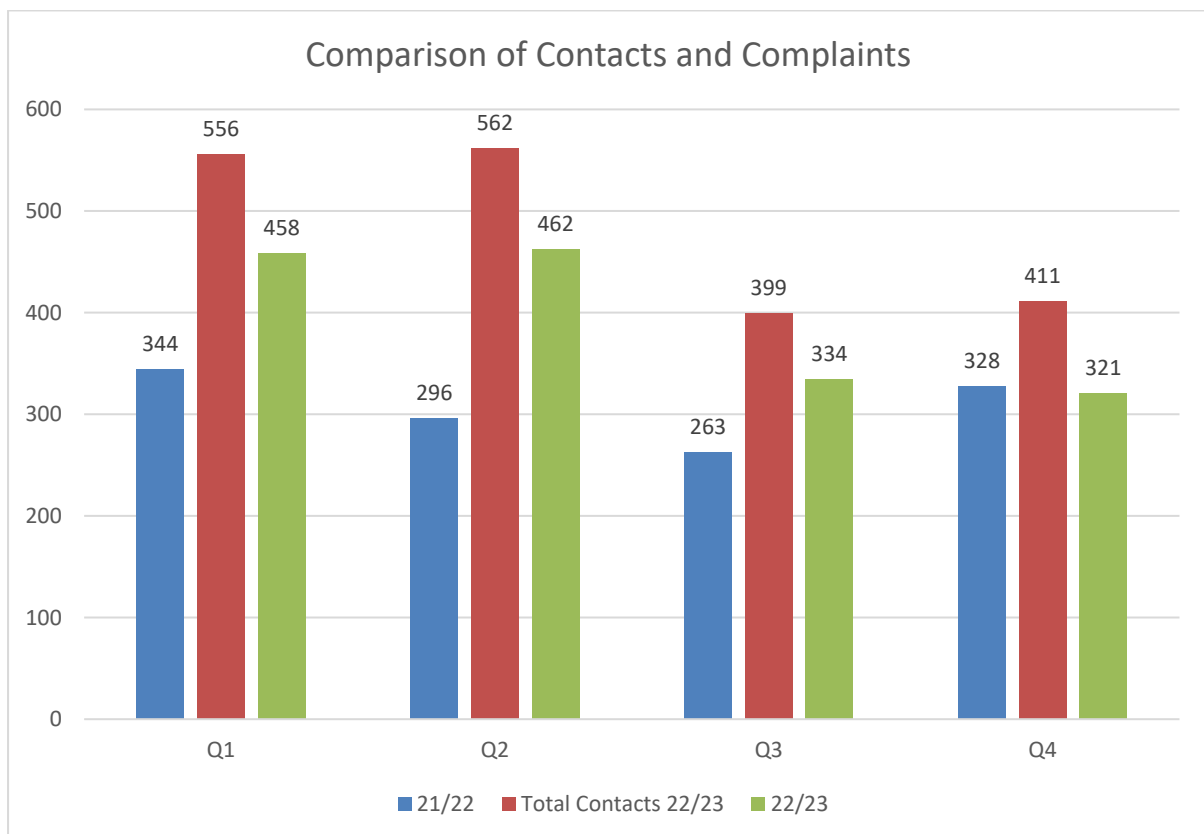
2022 to 2023 saw 1928 contacts received from the public; to express dissatisfaction with the services they had been provided. Of these 1928 contacts 1575 went on to enter the formal complaints process, with the remaining 353 being resolved to the customers satisfaction, and requiring no further action or investigation, through early resolution. This equated to 18% of all contacts received.

The first two quarters of the year remained consistent with significant increase in numbers of contacts seen since the beginning of the previous year. This number has seen a slight reduction over the final two quarters of the year. Overall, there was an increase of 15% in the number of contacts received by the authority in comparison to the previous year with an increase of 28% in the number contacts entering the formal complaints process. Throughout the year a renewed focus has been

placed on the informal resolution of cases, as an increase in overall contacts has seen a reduction in this. Overall, we have seen a decrease of 21% in the number of cases resolved in early resolution.

The following table shows

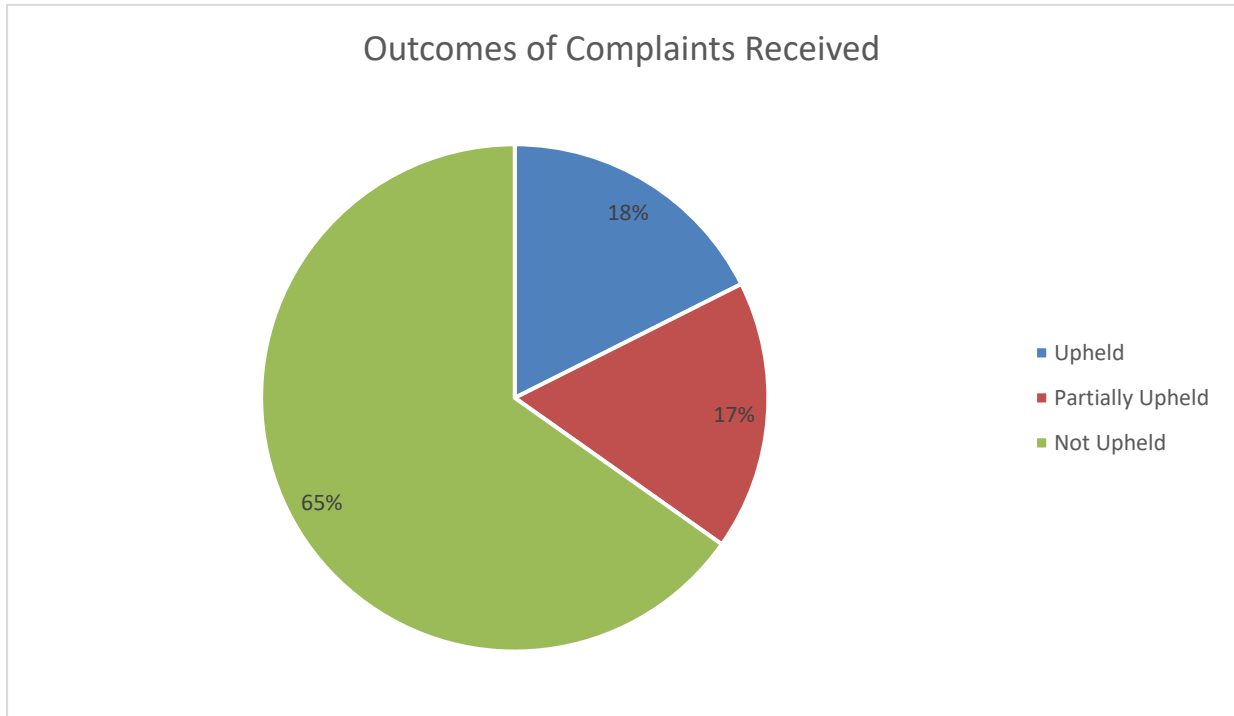
- the total number of complaints received in 2021 to 2022: quarter 1 344, quarter 2 296, quarter 3 263, quarter 4 328
- The number of contacts received in 2022 to 2023: quarter 1 556, quarter 2 562, quarter 3 399, quarter 4 411
- Those contacts entering the formal complaints process in 2022 to 2023: quarter 1 458, quarter 2 462, quarter 3 334, quarter 4 321



For all services, complaints which have been found to be either fully or partially upheld, have been analysed further to determine if there are any common factors which can be improved for future service provision. It is these cases that are now being used to make recommendations to services on things which require work and improvement.

The following chart shows the overall outcomes of all formal complaints in 2022 to 2023.

- Complaints upheld 18%
- Complaints partially upheld 17%
- Complaints not upheld 65%

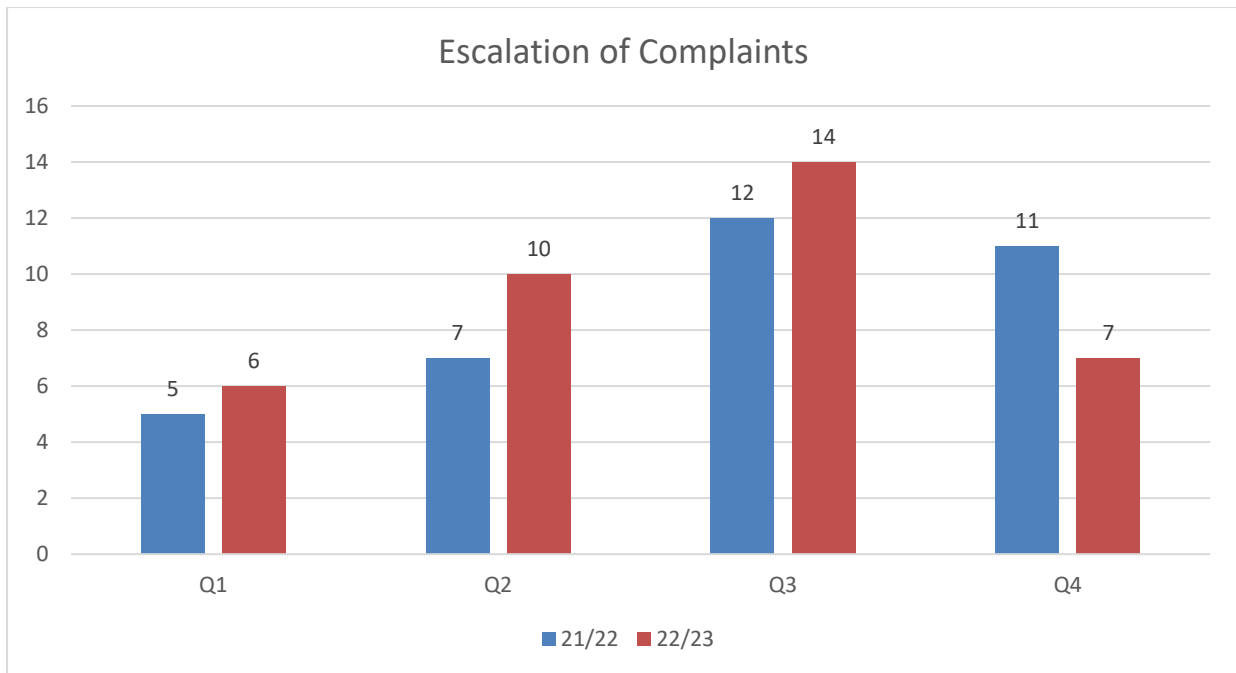


In total 277 complaints were upheld throughout the course of the year with 271 partially upheld. Given the increase in the overall number of cases entering the complaints process, cases where fault was identified has seen a decrease in comparison to the previous year of 8%.

The following table details the escalation of complaints in 2022 to 2023 which details a total of 37 cases being escalated to the next stage of the complaints process; quarter 1 6, quarter 2 10, quarter 3 14 and quarter 4 7. This compares to the number of escalations in 2021 to 2022 which shows a total of 35, quarter 1 5, quarter 2 7, quarter 3 12 and quarter 4 11.

Of the 37 cases in 2022 to 2023, 3 cases were within the Children's statutory complaints process. One of these cases remains open at the time of writing this report. This figure is an increase in comparison to the previous year, which is to be expected given the overall increase.

During 2022 to 2023 there was an increase seen in the first 3 quarters with this declining in the final quarter. Overall escalated cases increased by only 6%. Given the significant increase in the number of formal complaints, escalated cases overall remain low.



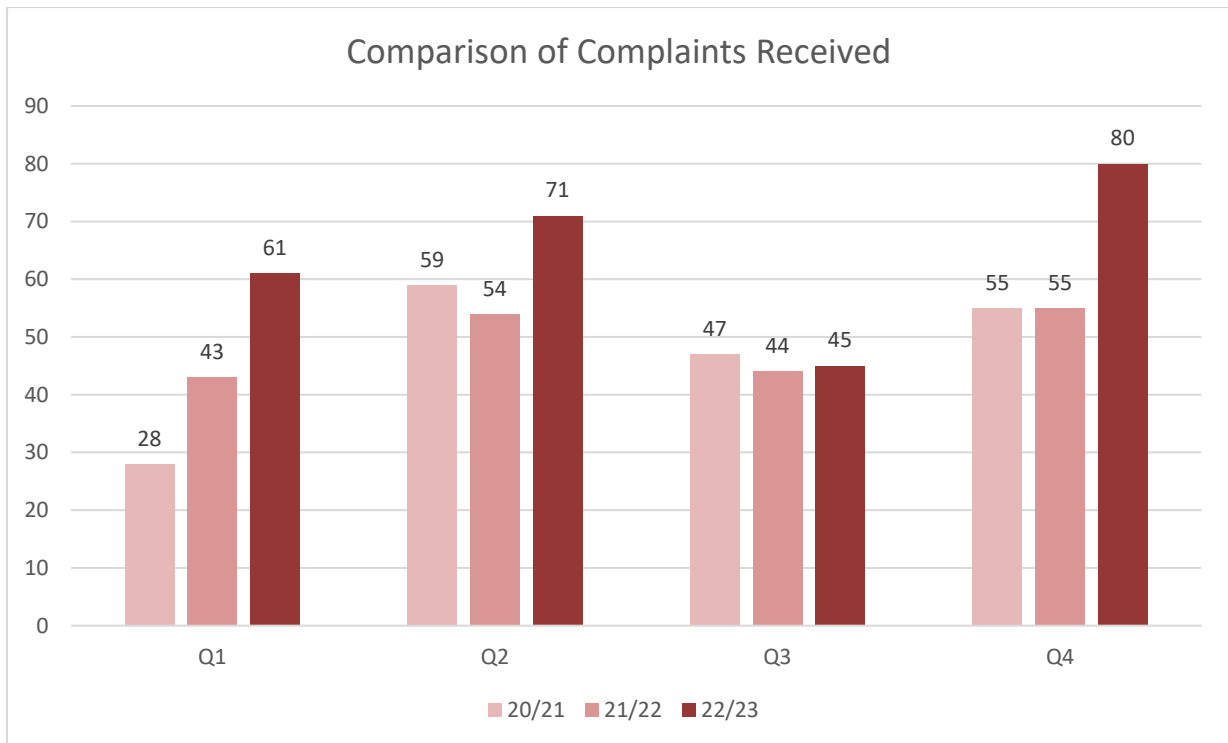
## Children's services

A total of 304 contacts were received in 2022 to 2023 in relation to Children's Services, both corporate and statutory, from the public expressing dissatisfaction with the services being provided.

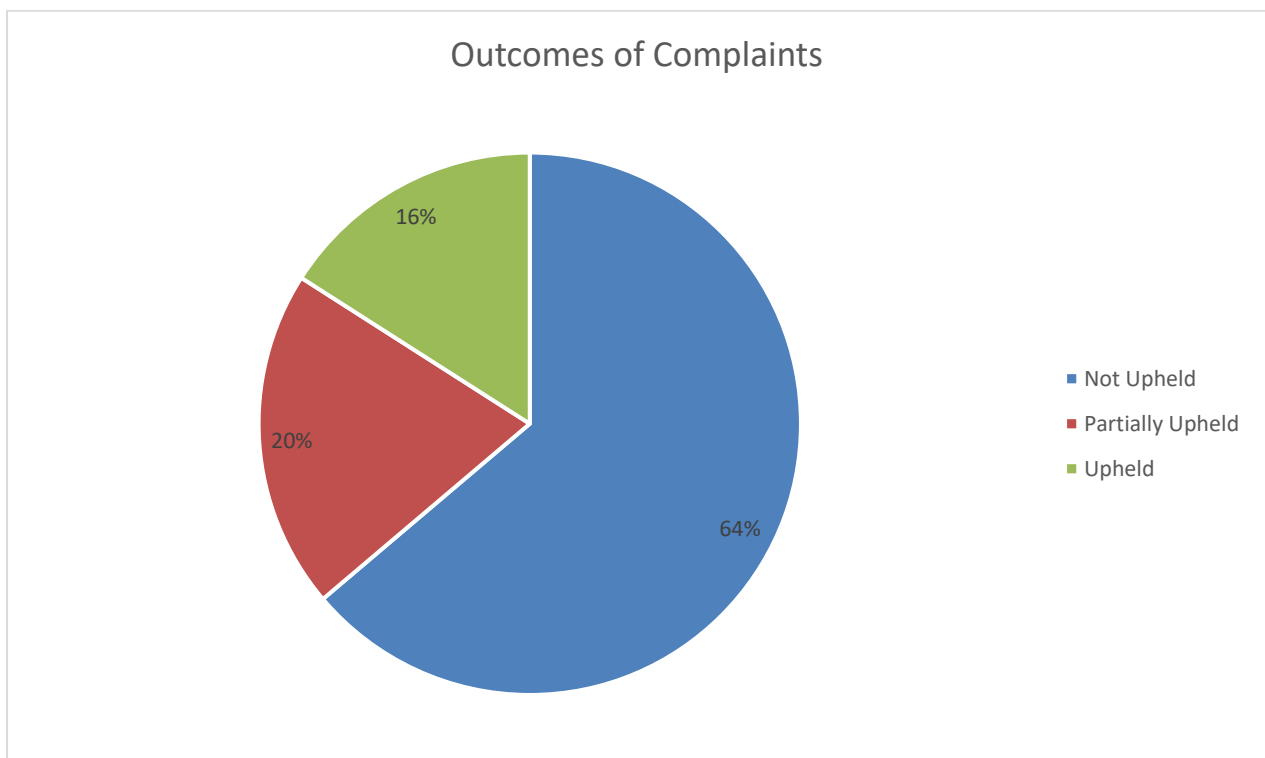
Of these, 257 entered the formal complaints process. The remaining 47 were resolved early to the satisfaction of the customer. This number accounts for 15% of all contacts received. Overall, the year saw an increase of 32% in the number of cases entering the formal process, with a 18% increase in the overall number of contacts received.

The following table shows the comparison of formal complaints received in Children's Services over the last 3 years:

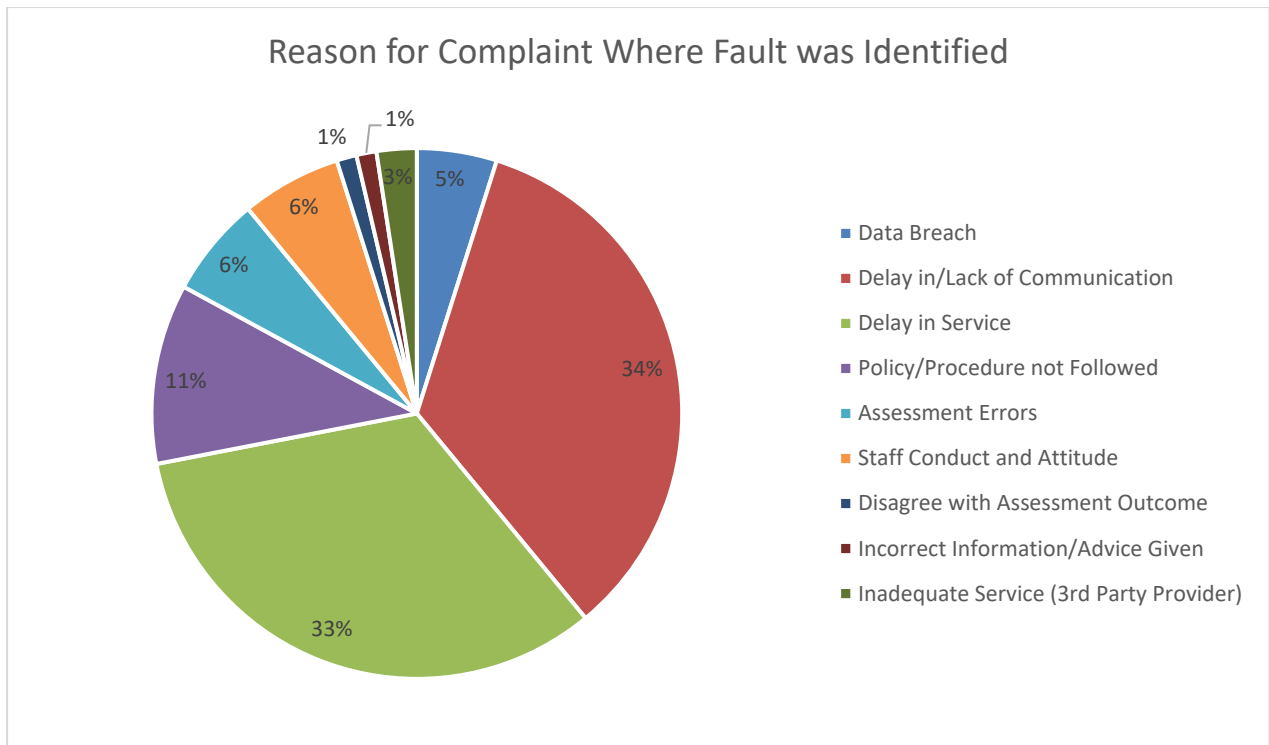
- the total number of complaints received in 2020 to 2021 was 189: quarter 1 28, quarter 2 59, quarter 3 47, quarter 4 55
- the total number of complaints received in 2021 to 2022 was 196: quarter 1 43, quarter 2 54, quarter 3 44, quarter 4 55
- the total number of complaints received in 2022 to 2023 was 257: quarter 1 61, quarter 2 71, quarter 3 45, quarter 4 80



The following table show of the 257 cases which entered the formal complaints process, 164 cases (64%) found no fault in the way in which services were delivered. 52 cases were partially upheld (20%), and 41 cases were upheld (16%).



Analysis was undertaken on those complaints partially or fully upheld in order to determine if there were any trends or common factors. The following chart shows the reasons of all upheld complaints and the aspects of those complaints partially upheld, where fault was found.



Delays in service were seen in the first two quarters. The numbers declined in the third quarter with a slight increase in the fourth. A total of 33% of complaints were related to delays in service.

Lack of communication remains one of the largest impacting areas where standards are not being met representing 34% of at fault cases. This remains an area where improvements are being implemented.

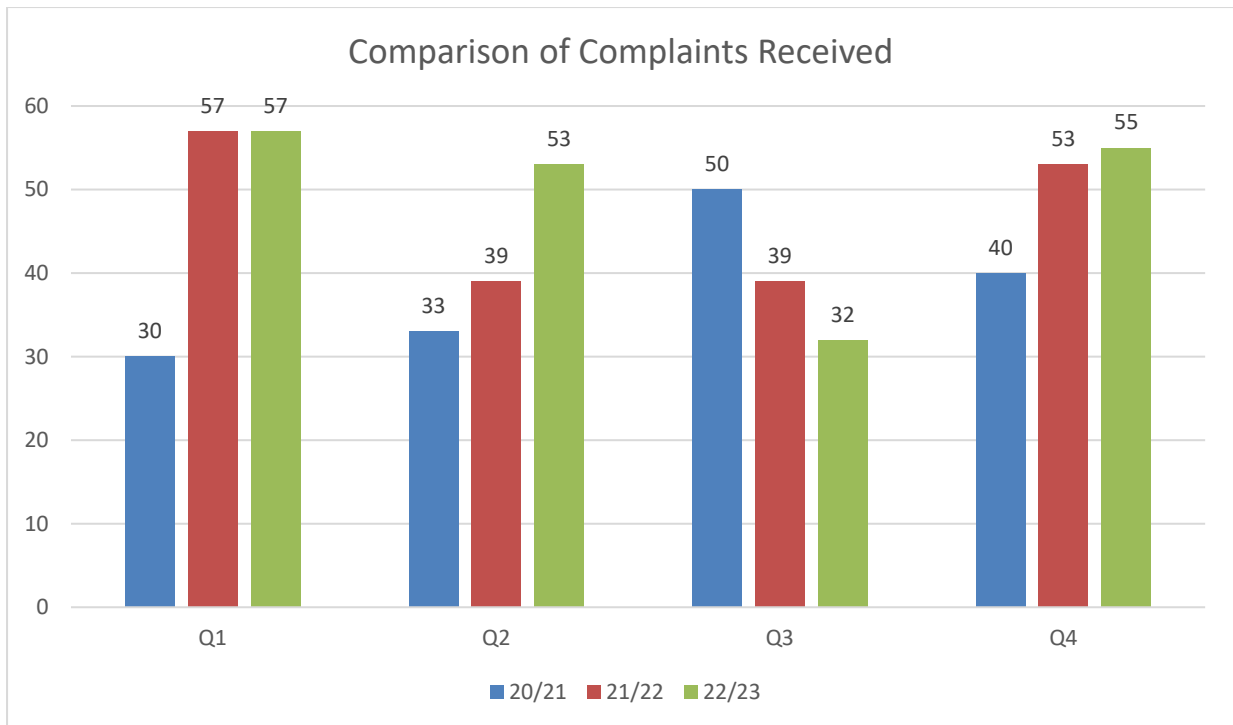
## Adults care and community wellbeing

In 2022 to 2023 the service saw 226 contacts received from the public to express dissatisfaction with the services delivered. Of these 197 entered the formal complaints process. The remaining 29 were resolved early to the satisfaction of the customer. This number accounts for 13% of all contacts received in the area.

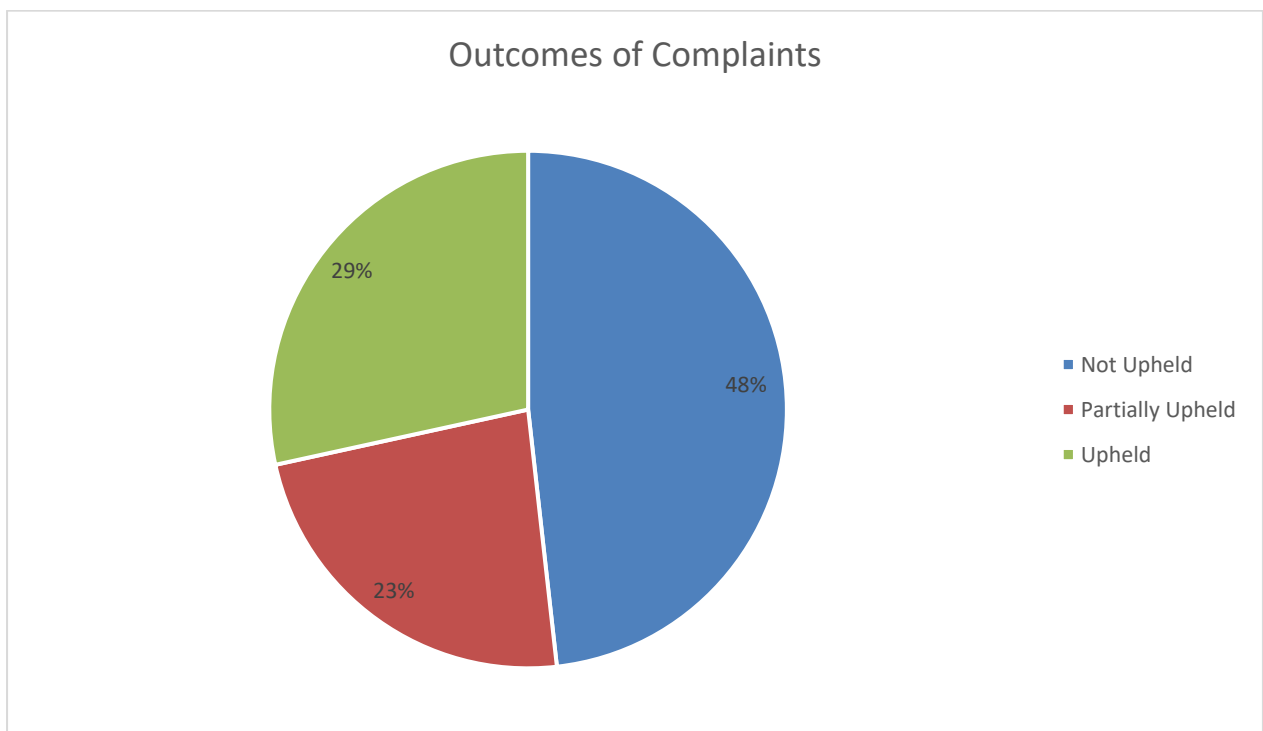
Overall, this service area has seen the lowest overall increase in comparison to the previous year, with a 5% increase, and has maintained similar numbers in regard to informal resolution of complaints.

The following table shows the comparison of formal complaints received in Adult Care and Community Wellbeing over the last 3 years:

- the total number of complaints received in 2020 to 2021 was 153: quarter 1 30, quarter 2 33, quarter 3 50, quarter 4 40
- the total number of complaints received in 2021 to 2022 was 188: quarter 1 57, quarter 2 39, quarter 3 39, quarter 4 53
- the total number of complaints received in 2022 to 2023 was 197: quarter 1 57, quarter 2 53, quarter 3 32, quarter 4 55



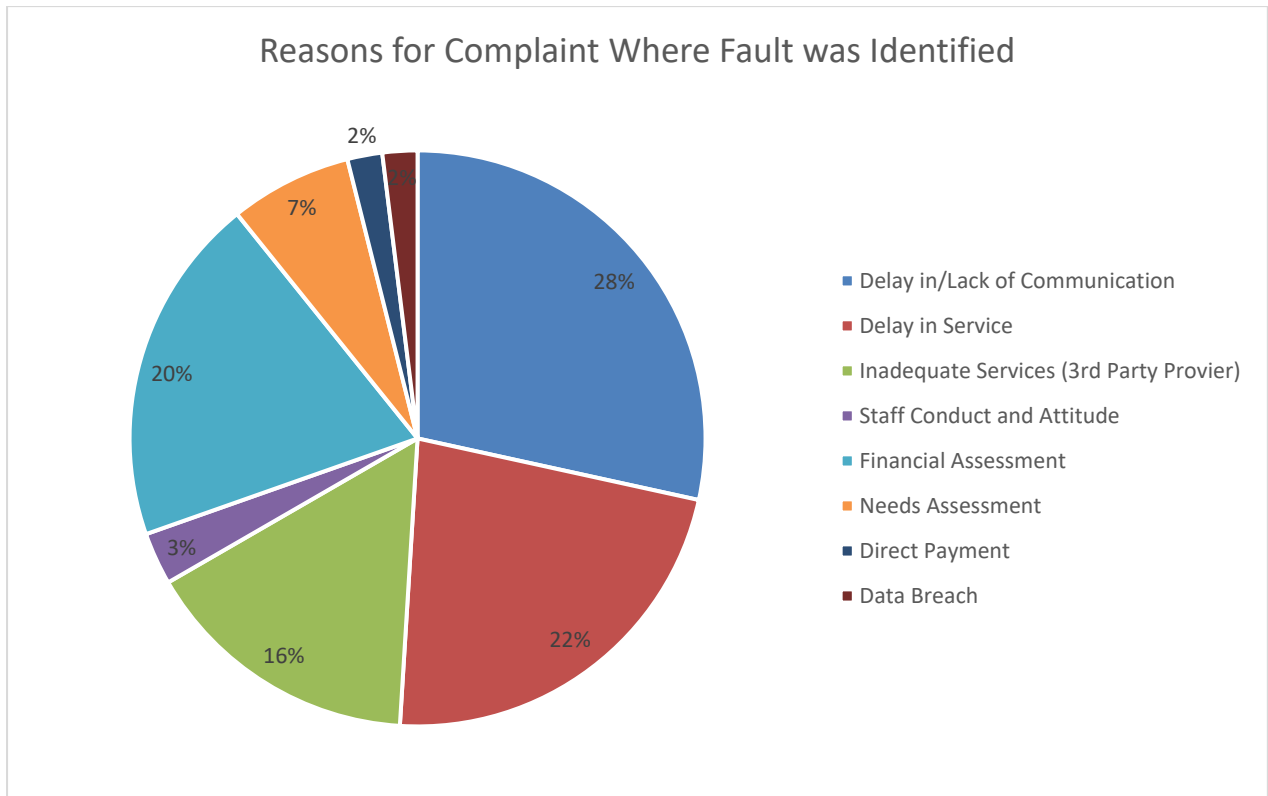
The following chart shows the outcomes of all complaints in this area. During the year 2022 to 2023 Adult Care and Community Wellbeing had 56 complaints upheld (29%) and 46 complaints partially upheld (23%). The remaining 95 saw no fault in the services which were delivered (48%).



Analysis was undertaken on those complaints partially or fully upheld in order to determine if there were any trends or common factors. This data was then provided to relevant staff within the service for additional review and decision on areas of improvement.



The following chart shows where fault was found in complaints that were upheld and the founded aspects of those complaints partially upheld.



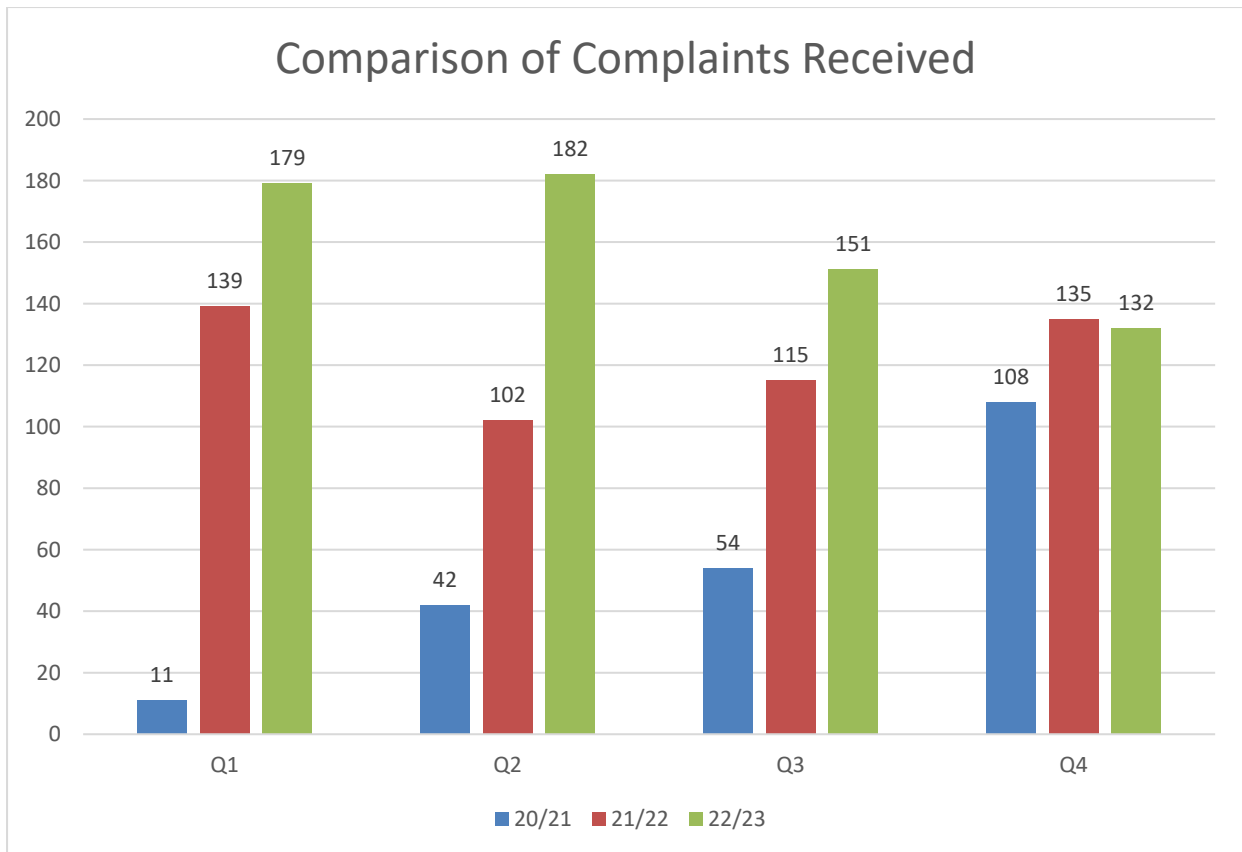
The main repeat areas of concern raised throughout the year were delays in communication (28%), delays in service (22%), Financial assessment outcomes (20%) and service provided by commissioned 3<sup>rd</sup> parties (16%).

## Highways and transport

The year saw 840 contacts received from the public to express dissatisfaction with the services received in this area. Of these 644 entered the formal complaints process over the course of the year. The remaining 196 were resolved early to the satisfaction of the customer. This number accounts for 23% of all contacts received.

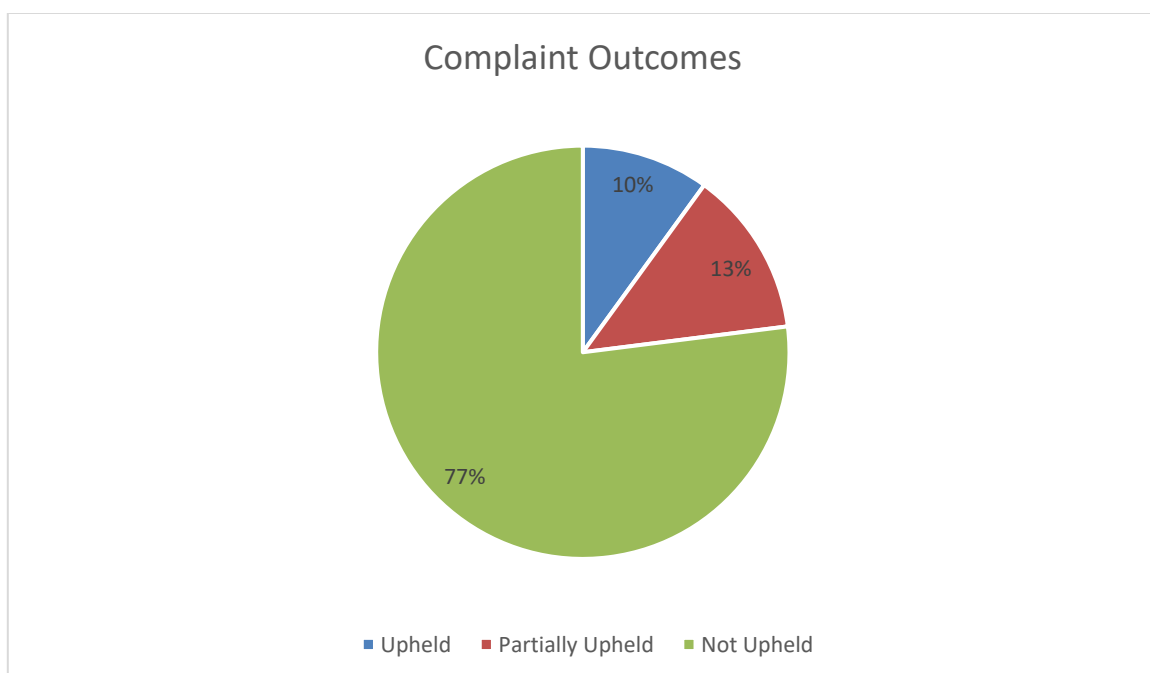
The following table shows the comparison of formal complaints received in Highways and Transport over the last 3 years:

- the total number of complaints received in 2020 to 2021 was 215: quarter 1 11, quarter 2 42, quarter 3 54, quarter 4 103
- the total number of complaints received in 2021 to 2022 was 491: quarter 1 139, quarter 2 102, quarter 3 115, quarter 4 135
- the total number of complaints received in 2022 to 2023 was 644: quarter 1 179, quarter 2 182, quarter 3 151, quarter 4 132

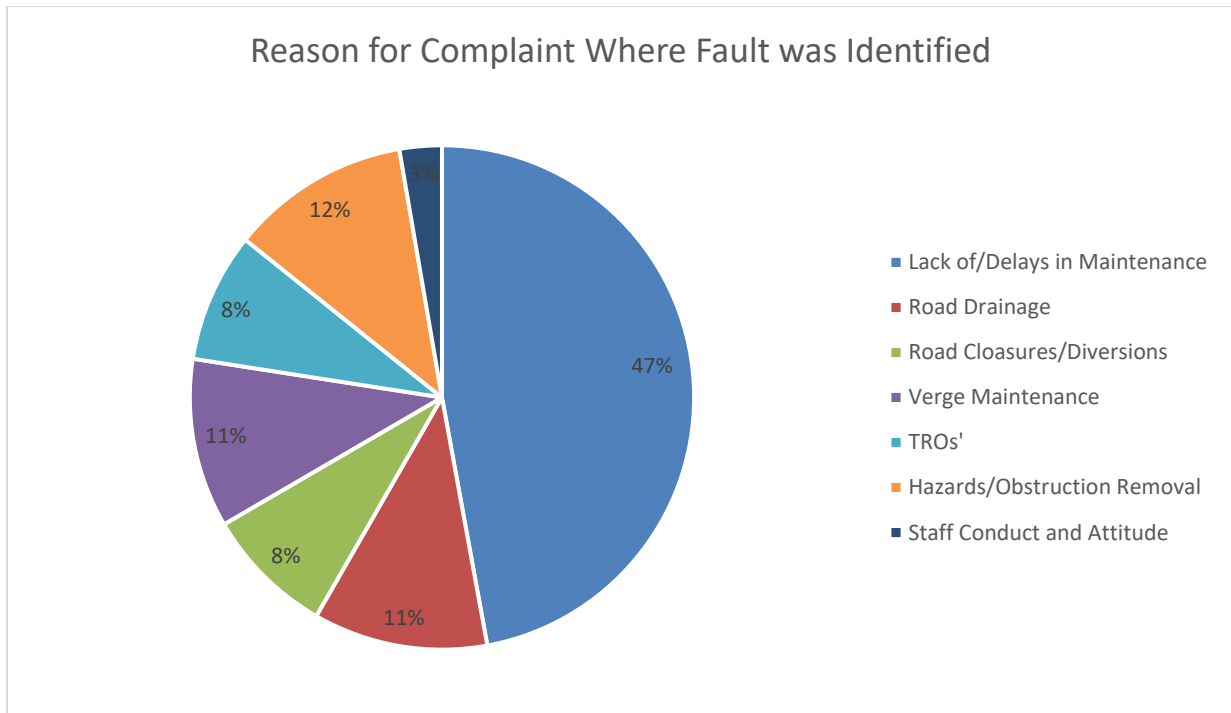


The year has seen the number of cases entering the formal complaints process increase in the first two quarters with a decline in the second two quarters. A large portion of these cases focused on the condition of roads and repairs required.

Analysis was undertaken on those complaints partially or fully upheld in order to determine if there were any trends or common factors. The following chart shows 23% of the 644 cases were either upheld (10%) or partially upheld (13%) with 77% not being upheld.



The following chart shows a break down for those complaints in which the service received was not to the quality or standard expected.



The largest area where fault was found was around delays in/lack of service (47%).

Additionally, there has been an increase in the number of complaints around the removal of hazards/obstructions (12%).

## Household waste recycling centres

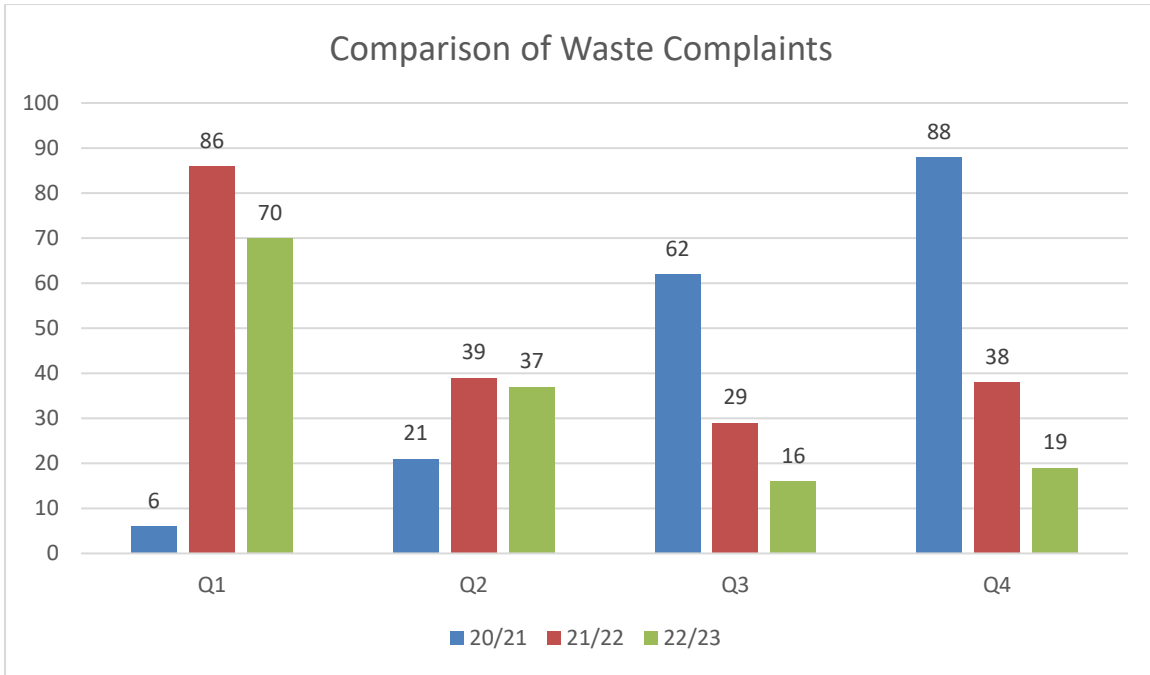
Waste Services inclusion in this report is to provide an insight into the significant improvements seen in the area in comparison to the large numbers seen at the beginning of the year and in the previous year. Service has seen a significant decline in the number of complaints received and should this downward trend remain, its inclusion in this report is unlikely to continue.

This year saw 163 contacts from the public to provide feedback, report issues or to express dissatisfaction with the service. Of these contacts 142 cases entered the formal complaints process: a 26% decrease in comparison to the previous year.

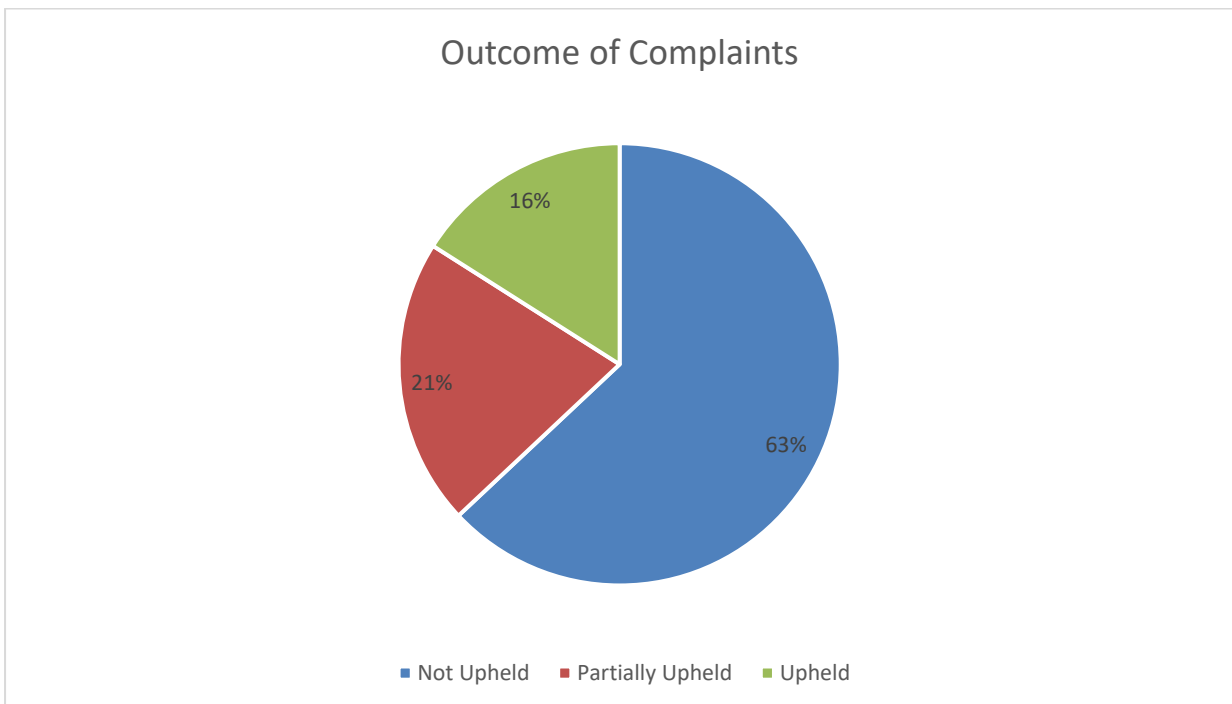
A total of 21 contacts were resolved informally in early resolution (13%).

The following table shows the comparison of formal complaints received in Household Waste Recycling Centres over the last 3 years:

- the total number of complaints received in 2020 to 2021 was 177: quarter 1 6, quarter 2 21, quarter 3 62, quarter 4 88
- the total number of complaints received in 2021 to 2022 was 192: quarter 1 86, quarter 2 39, quarter 3 29, quarter 4 38
- the total number of complaints received in 2022 to 2023 was 142: quarter 1 70, quarter 2 39, quarter 3 29, quarter 4 19



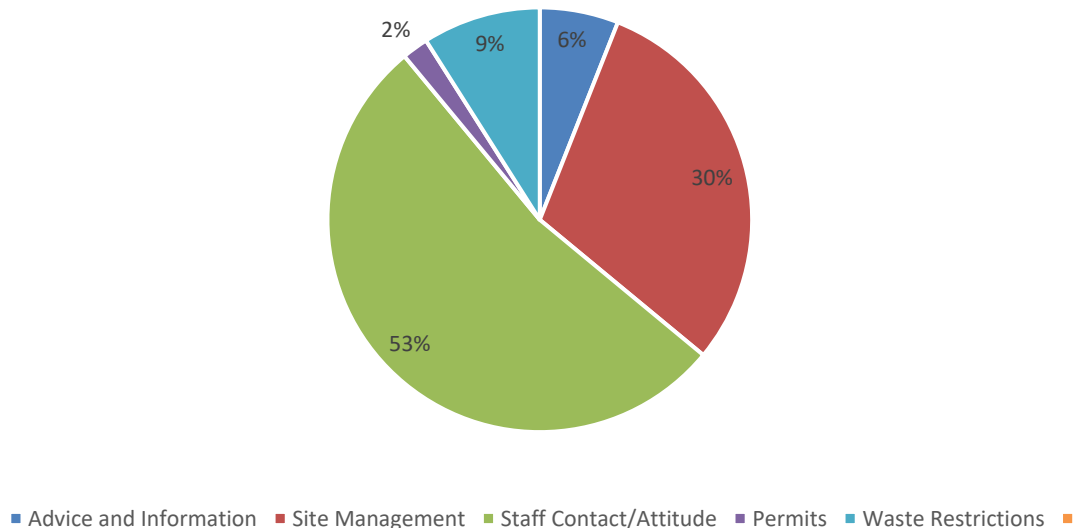
The following chart details the analysis of the outcomes of complaints for 2022 to 2023. A total of 23 complaints were upheld (16%) in full with 30 complaints partially upheld (21%) and the remainder 89 were not upheld (63%).



Analysis was undertaken on those complaints partly or fully upheld to determine any common themes and trends.

The following shows where fault was found in complaints that were upheld and the aspects of those complaints partly upheld.

### Reasons for Complaint where Fault was Found



The main area of concern where fault was identified throughout the year was regarding the conduct of staff on site (53%), this is countywide and not specific to a single site. However, over the year, we have seen the numbers of concerns regarding staff drop. This is a result of additional training being provided to contractors on site and accountability within service to appropriately address these issues when they arise. The second highest area was in respect of site management (30%).

## Conclusion

Whilst we strive to bring down the dissatisfaction with services being delivered the increase provides additional data from which we are able to learn and improve. As a result of the figures, and as mentioned earlier in this report, it is vital that a renewed focus be placed on early resolution of concerns. This work is on-going, and we have seen the impact of this within the fourth quarter.

Whilst historically not included within reports an area currently being monitored is timescales in responding to complaints being met. This has not been an area of concern previously as compliance rates have been extremely positive. However, with difficulties faced this year, this compliance has seen a steady decline and is being monitored closely, with a drive to improve this figure. Currently this data is being shared with relevant Heads of Service in order to achieve this. Should this area continue to see a decline in figures information will be provided in future reporting, given this is an area where the LGSCO are able to find fault with the council.

*Note: The remainder of cases not included in the above report are a variety of areas including Recruitment, Fire and Rescue and HR.*