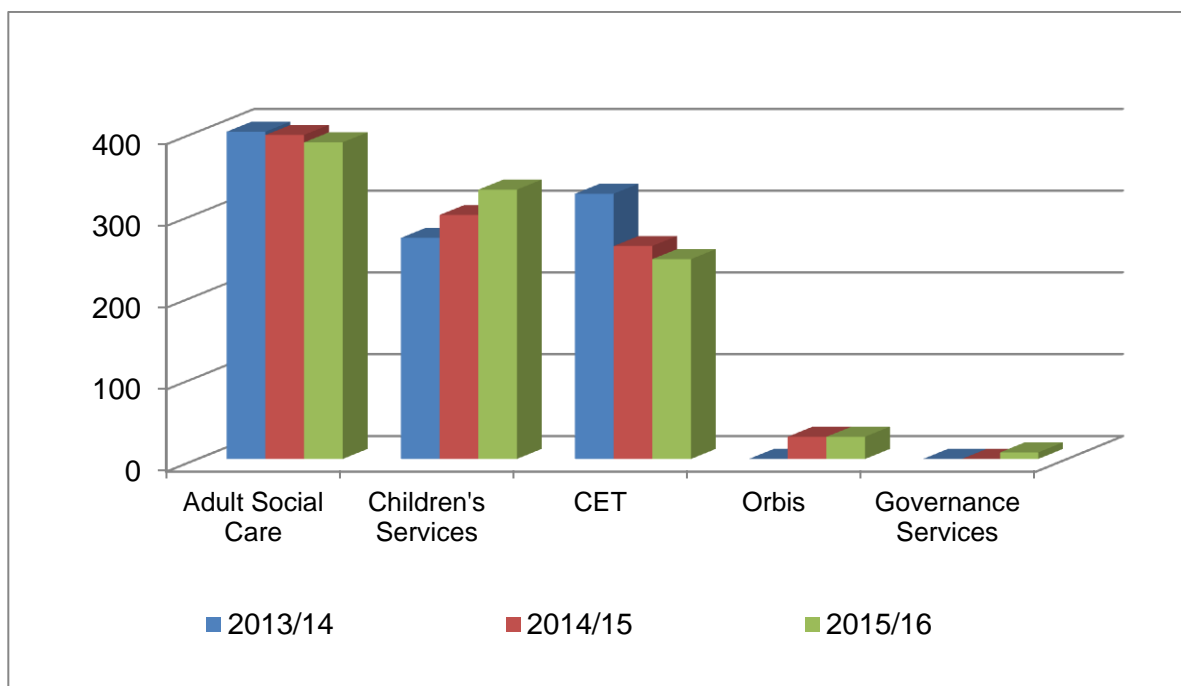


Summary of complaints by department

1. Summary

1.1 The chart below shows the number of complaints received this year by department compared with 2013/14 and 2014/15. The County Council received 995 complaints in 2015/16 compared with 981 complaints in 2014/15, which represents a 1.4% increase. Complaint levels remain quite constant overall, with an increase of around 10% in complaints about Children’s Services. Comparisons of complaints and compliments between departments are not valid due to the nature of the different services provided by each department.



2. Adult Social Care

	2015/16	2014/15	Change
Number of complaints received	387	396	↓2.3%
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	157	148	↑6.1%
Number of compliments	2498	1740	↑43.6%

2.1 Summary

2.1.1 There was a slight drop (9 fewer) in the complaints received about Adult Social Care services compared to last year, which represents a 2.3% decrease. However there was a small increase in the number of complaints being upheld or partially upheld, and an increase in the complexity of issues, where there are a number of elements and services involved. In 2015/16 41% of complaints were upheld/partially upheld compared to 37% in 2014/15.

2.1.2 The top three themes of complaints related to:

- The outcome and some delay in assessments

85 complaints related to assessment functions and 27 (32%) were upheld or partially upheld. Complaints about the outcome of financial and social care assessments, however, have fallen significantly since last year (75% and 34% respectively). This might be a result of last year's review of the financial assessment process and the introduction of a more person-centred approach to safeguarding and assessment and care, and support planning by social care practitioners.

- Staff attitude and behaviour

Of the 49 complaints recorded 18 (37%) complaints were upheld or partially upheld. Most of these complaints related to the manner, attitude or the appropriateness of staff. Often people felt that either their circumstances or views had not been considered appropriately or sufficiently within the care management process.

- Provision of service, mainly regarding delay and quality

46 complaints were recorded and 20 (43%) of the complaints about the provision of service were upheld.

2.2 Action taken to improve the service

2.2.1 As expected, themes arising from complaints have mirrored some of the challenges faced by the department. For example, a 43% increase in complaints was recorded for Strategy, Commissioning and Supply Management. This reflects the national and local challenges facing home care providers. Work is being done at all levels of the market to increase capacity, including increasing the capacity of the Joint Community Reablement Team.

2.2.2. Some delays in processes appear to be as a direct consequence of implementing the new case recording for clients and carers. Work is ongoing to ensure the pathways are amended as the issues arise.

2.2.3 Early in the year the department also reviewed its handling of complaints to ensure the process was client and carer focused, including a review of its:

- Information leaflet
- Practice Guidance
- Enquiries, explanations and written communication to ensure plain English, a one council approach and resolution focus
- Use of local resolution meetings and agile technology

2.2.4 The complaints team supported managers to achieve excellent practice standards. Managers have appreciated this more proactive support and general feedback has been positive, with a 22% decrease in the number of complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman during 2015/16.

2.3 Compliments

2.3.1 The Adult Social Care department continues to receive far more compliments about its services than complaints and the number of compliments received has increased by 44% compared to last year.

2.3.2 The comments clearly show that people really valued the support they received and in many cases they describe it as life changing. People appear to have particularly valued Carers Services (564 compliments), Learning Disability Directly Provided Services (323) and the support provided by the Neighbourhood Support Team (275).

2.4 Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

2.4.1 The table below sets out the LGO findings for complaints about Adult Social Care.

Year	Investigations		Closed after initial enquiries	Invalid/incomplete	Referred back	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld				
2015/16	19	14	13	5	15	66
2014/15	15	22	7	1	13	58

2.4.2 Please note 15 (45%) of the complaints investigated related to complaints received in the previous year.

2.4.3 Of the 66 complaints reported, 33 (50%) were investigated and of these 19 (58%) were upheld. The issues covered were wide-ranging and no themes have emerged. This is the first time however that the number of upheld complaints is higher than those not upheld. A detailed analysis of these findings will be provided in Adult Social Care's Annual Complaints Report. The report is available from mid-September and published on the Council's website: [Comments, compliments and complaints annual report](#). This report is provided under the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations, 2009.

3. Children's Services

	2015/16	2014/15	Change
Number of complaints received	329	298	↑10.4%
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	157	162	↓3%
Number of compliments	496	397	↑25%

3.1 Summary

3.1.1 Children's Services received a total of 329 complaints during the reporting period, an increase of 10.4% from last year. Specifically, the number of complaints from adults at Stages 1-3 rose from 287 to 315 but remained static at 14 for children and young people. In 2015/16 48% of complaints were upheld/partially upheld compared to 54% in 2014/15.

3.1.2 The top three themes for complaints made to Children's Services related to:

- Decisions - 35% of complaints were expressing dissatisfaction with a decision taken by the department. When the causes of the complaints were analysed there was a link between the quality of information and advice given, and the degree to which expectations had been set and managed. Specific examples included a complaint about the decision to carry out an assessment that the court had ordered, where the complainant felt that it was Children's Services choosing to carry out the additional work rather than acting upon an order of the court. When the reason for the report was clarified the complainant was happy for the assessment to proceed. Learning generally has been identified here about the importance of being clear from the outset and ensuring expectations are set and managed sympathetically.
- Quantity - 18% of complaints were about the quantity or amount of a service or financial provision. A key area was around parents being unhappy with the amount of contact they were having with children where there had been private law proceedings. Learning themes were identified here around how clear the department is with parents when court orders have been put in place privately to agree contact.
- Delay – 14% of complaints made reference to delay as a theme, with delays to the Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) being a specific area of concern. This has been a target area carried forward from the previous reporting year and teams have worked on a more customer focussed approach designed to catch more complex cases early to ensure they are more effectively managed as well as introducing a system to proactively contact families where cases are nearing their deadline to advise and discuss a way forward.

3.2 Action taken to improve the service

3.2.1 It has been important for Children's Services to not only use the learning that we draw from complaints as a springboard for service improvement, but also to help shape our digital services moving forward. The Complaints Team have reviewed the way they operate to filter all calls to their service through the Family Information Service. This change was effective from 1 April and early data suggests that this had led to a reduced number of complaints as the Family Information Service have been able, through advice and signposting, to help resolve the concern there-and-then. The Complaints Team have now moved over to a cloud-based case handling system to log and respond

to feedback and complaints. This has led to a more streamlined service, which will enable the department to provide better customer service to those service users who wish to provide feedback or make a complaint as well as enabling better Agile working.

3.2.2 Within front line teams the department has used the learning taken from complaints to produce a revised guide to parents who are working with staff through the EHCP process. This has been designed in plain English to help parents navigate the process and ensure there is a clear explanation of timescales involved, what is required from parents, and what can be expected from the ISEND Assessment & Planning Team. In social care teams, as a result of complaints made, training is being revised to take account of themes around the timeliness and quality of information provided as well as revising practice guidance around dealing with complex cases.

3.2.3 Children’s Services is working on a training workshop for managers to further embed the learning culture to ensure that every complaint is an opportunity to develop and improve the service.

3.3 Compliments

3.3.1 The department received 1.5 compliments for each complaint received. Moving forwards the Children’s Services Complaints Team plans to work with the data team to analyse volumes of complaints/compliments against the amount of work that individual teams deal with. The purpose of this is to better contextualise complaints as a measure of overall satisfaction. Whilst the number of complaints/compliments for a specific team can be measured, this needs to be set in the context of the overall levels of contact with customers by each team. Large teams who deal with thousands of families may receive a larger number of complaints than a small team dealing with small numbers, but looking at the rate of complaints will provide a better understanding of satisfaction or otherwise. Contextualising the number of complaints by no means diminishes the significance of complaints which are always important to analyse. However, it would help reveal where the proportion of complaints is high relative to the overall contacts, to raise awareness and focus improvements within teams where this may not have been picked up before so specifically.

3.4 Local Government Ombudsman

3.4.1 The table below sets out the LGO findings for complaints about Children’s Services:

Year	Investigations					
	Upheld	Not upheld	Closed after initial enquiries	Invalid/ incomplete	Referred back	Total
2015/16	5	4	9	2	13	33
2014/15	4	4	8	0	12	28

3.4.2 Of the 33 complaints received by the Ombudsman 13 (39%) were referred back for local resolution and of the 9 complaints investigated 5 (56%) were upheld.

3.4.3 There are no themes among these complaints. However there will be further analysis in the Children’s Services Annual Complaints Report. The report is published on the Council’s website at the end of September: [Children’s Services Annual Complaints Report](#). This report is required under The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

4. Communities, Economy & Transport (CET)

	2015/16	2014/15	Change
Number of complaints received	244	260	↓6.2%
Number of complaints upheld	54	85	↓36.5%
Number of compliments	619	569	↑8.8%

4.1 Summary

4.1.1 The number of complaints received in CET reduced by 6.2% from 2014/15 to 2015/16. In 2015/16 22% of complaints were upheld/partially upheld compared to 33% in 2014/15.

The following is a breakdown of the number of complaints received by service:

Services	Not Upheld	Other	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Grand Total
Grand Total	174	16	36	18	244
Highways	99	10	23	10	142
Transport & Operational Services	38	1	6	3	48
Communities	18	4	4	1	27
Planning & Environment	11	1	2	3	17
Customer & Library Services	7		1	1	9
Other – mis-categorised (for Music Service)	1				1

4.1.2 The breakdown of complaints by service generally remains the same as 2014/15. In particular, there was a reduction of complaints regarding the Bexhill-Hastings Link Road from 28 complaints in 2014/15 to 11 complaints in 2015/16, as construction work neared completion. The new road, the Combe Valley Way, was opened to traffic on 17 December 2015.

4.1.3 There was a reduction in Customer & Library Services complaints from 28 in 2014/15 to 9 in 2015/16 due to the Library and Information Service bringing their procedures in line with the corporate complaints procedure. It was identified that issues were being resolved locally within the service, but were being reported that they had been through the formal complaints procedure.

4.1.4 In general, the number of complaints continues to decrease across the services. This is due to staff engaging more with their customers and residents to resolve issues directly before they feel it's necessary to move into the formal complaint process. For 2015/16 the breakdown of the themes of complaints is as follows:

- 126 (52%) complaints relate to the quality of the services that have been delivered.
- 67 (27%) complaints were about the department's decisions based on its policies.
- 29 (12%) complaints were about communication or lack of communication with customers and services users.
- 22 (9%) were about the attitude of staff or contracted staff.

4.2 Action taken to improve the service

4.2.1 By the nature of the range of services, the subject matter of the complaints is varied. Actions taken are quite specific, some particular examples where improvements were made are:

- Improving and managing the level of work expected from our contractors (9) such as:
 - Clarifying procedures with road closures and renewal of bus passes
 - Being clear about the quality of work we expect when work has been left in poor condition and requiring contractors to correct work at their own expense, where necessary.
 - Explaining how to better communicate with residents about work being carried out, for example, before and during road works
- Correcting technical errors on the website immediately when notified of the issues (3). When this meant that the customers could not carry out their transactions, we honoured their transactions regardless.
- Changing our processes where they are not working (2): for example, improvements were made between the Rights of Way team and Highways contract centre team to work more closely in order to get reports updated faster for the public to view on the website.

4.3 Compliments

4.3.1 Compliments recorded have increased from 569 in 2014/15 to 619 in 2015/16. The breakdown of the number of compliments received by service is as follows:

Services		
Communities	11	2%
Planning & Environment	34	5%
Transport & Operational	57	9%
Customer & Library Services	75	12%
Waste	125	20%
Registration Service	138	22%
Highways	179	29%

4.3.2 Staff within CET have been reminded how to log compliments in order to start reporting quarterly to the Departmental Management Team. This will ensure managers and staff find out what we're doing right and what we can learn from the feedback.

4.4 Local Government Ombudsman

4.4.1 The table below sets out the LGO findings for complaints about CET:

Year	Investigations		Closed after initial enquiries	Invalid/ incomplete	Referred back	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld				
2015/16	3	4	3	2	3	15
2014/15	1	0	11	1	5	18

4.4.2 7 (47%) of the 15 complaints received have been investigated and 3 have been upheld (20%). There is no common theme between the three upheld complaints, these were:

- A customer was refused a residence parking permit, but fault was found in the way the Council considered and refused the application. In the time it took to correct this, the customer was caused inconvenience, avoidable time and trouble. The Council agreed to pay the customer £250 to recognise the inconvenience, time and trouble caused through the delay. The Council also agreed to inform other residents in that particular development that they are eligible to apply for a permit.
- The Council was found to be at fault by a lack of investigation into nuisance caused by traffic calming feature outside a citizen's home. This caused an injustice to the citizen and the Council agreed to remedy the injustice by arranging an independent expert to investigate whether a significant disturbance existed and the cause. The survey was carried out, but no noise was found to be at excessive levels.

The Council has also agreed to take action to ensure officers always make a written record when carrying out surveys and inspections.

- A partially upheld complaint was due to a delay in responding and completing works when we said we would, an apology was given.

5. Orbis

	2015/16	2014/15	Change
Number of complaints received	27	27	-
Number of complaints upheld	13	11	↑18%
Number of compliments	0	0	-

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 The number of complaints received for Orbis remained static from 2014/15 to 2015/16. In 2015/16 48% of complaints were upheld/partially upheld compared to 41% in 2014/15. The partially upheld and upheld complaints received regarding services in Orbis were:

- Issues with payments (10) for care costs such as unclear or incorrect charges, delays or incorrect payments, and wording of billing letters.
- A partially upheld complaint regarding an employee's overpayment.
- An upheld complaint regarding the behaviour of a staff member in Personnel.
- A partially upheld complaint regarding a customer's private telephone number displayed to the public.

5.1.2 For 2015/16 the breakdown of the themes of the 27 complaints is as follows:

- 9 (33%) complaints relate to the quality of the services that have been delivered.
- 8 (30%) complaints were about the service's decisions based on its policies.
- 9 (33%) complaints were about communication or lack of communication with customers and services users.
- 1 (4%) were about the attitude of staff or contracted staff.

5.2 Action taken to improve the service

5.2.1 There were no common themes or actions to be drawn from the partially upheld and upheld complaints.

5.2.2 As specified in the Orbis partnership Inter Authority Agreement (IAA), *Orbis must have a process in place to log any complaints or any complimentary feedback received from any Customer or member of the public with regard to the Services provided under this Agreement. The Orbis log shall be in line with the Councils' policies and procedures in place and as updated.* The coordinated Orbis process is currently in development and options are being considered, through engagement across the partnership including with the Corporate Complaints Team at ESCC.

5.3 Compliments

5.3.1 No compliments were logged in 2015/16. As part of the work to develop an Orbis process in place to log any complaints or any complimentary feedback, ideas are being explored to give an accessible facility to give compliments.

5.3.2 During 2016, some Orbis teams have introduced a customer feedback survey linked to emails that staff send to their customers. This approach will be reviewed as part of exploring options.

5.4 Local Government Ombudsman

5.4.1 There were no LGO complaints made for this department in 2015/16.

6. Governance Services

	2015/16	2014/15	Change
Number of complaints received	8	0	-
Number of complaints upheld	4	0	-
Number of compliments	1	1	-

6.1 Summary

6.1.1 The partially upheld and upheld complaints received regarding services in Governance Services were:

- An upheld complaint involved Councillors requesting that ESCC stop pursuing debt from a client until the client received payment from a negligence pay out.
- A partially upheld complaint where a client was unhappy with the behaviour of a staff member in the legal team.
- A partially upheld complaint due to a client who was unhappy that the recording of an appeal hearing did not work.
- A partially upheld complaint where a customer made a complaint via their MP who was unable to lodge an appeal as the online form was not working, after several attempts.

6.2 Action taken to improve the service

6.2.1 There were no common themes or actions to be drawn from the four partially upheld and upheld complaints.

6.3 Compliments

6.3.1 One compliment was received in 2015/16 thanking a staff member for their extra effort when helping a member of the public.

6.4 Local Government Ombudsman

6.4.1 The table below sets out the LGO findings for complaints about “Corporate & Other”¹ services:

Year	Investigations		Closed after initial enquiries	Invalid/incomplete	Referred back	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld				
2015/16	1	0	5	0	1	7
2014/15	0	1	1	2	0	4

6.4.2 There was one LGO upheld complaint:

- A customer requested a review of a complaint. When Legal Services requested (by telephone) that the review be carried out by Brighton and Hove City Council, no record of this request was made, which was considered bad practice. It was agreed Legal Services keep a record of such requests to other authorities in the future.

7. Chief Executive’s Office

7.1 There were no complaints or compliments logged in 2015/16 about services provided by the Chief Executive’s Office (CE Office).

7.2 Complaints are often addressed to the Chief Executive or Leader, and so are received through the CE Office. However, the complaints are about issues with services provided by departments rather than the CE Office itself, so these are recorded by the relevant department and are part of their figures.

¹ This is titled “Corporate & Other” in the LGO’s report. There is a degree of uncertainty if these fall under Governance Services or Orbis as the Council is not notified about details and themes of the complaints not investigated.