

Governance Committee

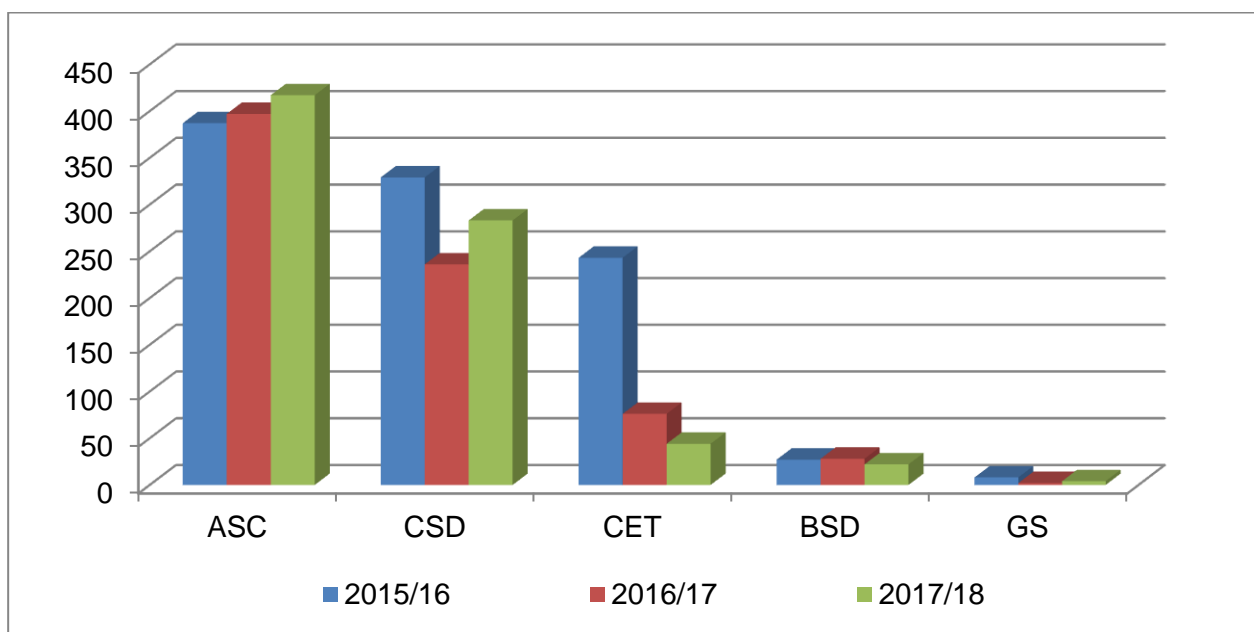
18 September 2018

Appendix 2 Complaints and compliments by department 2017/18

1. Summary

1.1 The chart below shows the number of complaints received in 2017/18 by department compared with 2016/17 and 2015/16. The Council received 770 complaints in 2017/18 compared to 739 complaints in 2016/17, which represents an increase of 4%.

1.2 Both Adult Social Care and Children’s Services had increases in complaints last year, and Communities, Economy and Transport and Orbis (ESCC only) had decreases. Please note 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

	2017/18	2016/17	Change
Number of complaints received	417	397	↑5.0%
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	196	194	↑.01%
Number of compliments	1444	1363	↑5.9%

2.1 Summary

2.1.1 There was a 5% increase in the complaints received about Adult Social Care (ASC) services compared to last year. However, slightly fewer complaints were upheld or partially upheld. In 2017/18 47% of our complaints were upheld or partially upheld compared to 49% in 2016/17.

2.1.2 ASC recorded a higher number of compliments this year, and like last year, the department received almost 350% more compliments about its services than complaints.

2.2 Action taken to improve the service

2.2.1 This section provides analysis of the top three themes of complaints for ASC in 2017/18 and actions and recommendations related to these themes.

2.2.2 The highest number of complaints (106) related to assessment functions and 42 (40%) of these were upheld or partially upheld. These concerned:

- Assessments for social care support with 61 complaints received and 29 (48%) upheld or partially upheld
- Financial assessments to identify the amount someone pays towards their care with 24 complaints received and 10 (42%) upheld in full or part
- Mobility Assessments for a Blue Badge with 14 received and 3 (21%) upheld
- Occupational Therapy Assessments with 7 received and 4 (57%) upheld in full or part

2.2.3 Of these 106 complaints, 61 (58%) were about disputing the outcome or decision of the assessment. With stringent application of national eligibility criteria and financial guidance people felt their individual circumstances had not always been considered.

2.2.4 There were a further 60 complaints about the provision of service and 23 (38%) of these were upheld or partially upheld. There were often a range of issues falling across a number of services, including independent providers. Whilst the quality of services falling below expectation was still an issue, this along with delay, was far less prevalent. The level of actual delivery of care compared with the charge for care was a recurrent issue. These issues, in part, could be attributed to the capacity limitations within the independent sector home care market. The department continues to take steps to increase home care capacity and availability, both in-house and in the independent sector, to try to address a shortfall that is a national problem.

2.2.5 Often issues relating to the quality and charges for social care services were presented to the department on receipt of an invoice. In all, 51 complaints were recorded about invoicing, but often involved other concerns. There were 35 (69%) complaints upheld in full or in part. Complainants raised multiple issues about information, timeliness, quality, delay and/or poor communication about charges and the payment of charges. Limitations in recording multi-faceted complaints mean it has not been possible to provide exact quantitative data about secondary areas of concerns. There were 17 (33%) complaints recorded for Orbis Accounts Receivable Team (Business Services Department) and although more complaints involved errors in invoicing, these are not recorded for Orbis and are included within the ASC return.

2.2.6 Issues about invoicing and charges were often compounded when there was a shortfall in communication. Learning was about how we presented and delivered information and this was generally addressed at practitioner and team level.

2.2.7 Organisationally, the Department has committed to review its current service delivery model to further streamline the ASC process and ensure more proportionate assessment. There is a desire to look at more creative options for service delivery, and to move towards the 'Three Conversations Model' which is being used in other Local Authorities across the UK. It is felt strongly that a less process led approach and the opportunity to work differently with clients and carers, would be well received across all staff groups and would have an impact on our service delivery overall.

2.2.8 Other actions taken to improve services in 2017/18 were:

- To improve responsiveness, an Integrated Locality Team changed how priority cases were allocated.
- Another Integrated Locality Team identified and implemented actions to improve safeguarding partnership working. This included improving communication and how they work with providers when safeguarding issues are raised.
- A Community Learning Disability Team improved their annual review booking system. This now includes ensuring parents/relatives/carers are invited to the review, in liaison with providers.
- The Direct Payments Team improved their processes to provide more information to people about their payments to reduce arrears building up on their accounts.
- A provider of Direct Payments changed their phone system. They now have three options and one of those options takes you directly through to the local office. With these options they no longer go through to an answerphone, but have a queue system. This is better as all calls are answered and people have shorter waiting times.

- The Blue Badge Team amended their guidance to clarify that people who have moved out of the area need to make a new application, rather than a renewal, and this process takes eight to ten weeks.
- The Financial Assessment Team improved their processes and communication, introducing a review system for scanning of peoples' information, to ensure it is recorded and acted on.
- Shared Lives, The Transitions Team and Children's Services are developing a formal structure for paying carers when people under 18 years of age receive a service.

2.3 Compliments

2.3.1 ASC has continued to receive far more compliments about its services than complaints. People's comments clearly show how much they have valued support, often referred to as both life changing and affirming.

2.3.2 This year people appear to have particularly valued our Joint Community Rehabilitation Service (333), Carers Services (210) and Learning Disability Directly Provided Services (124).

2.4 Local Government & Social Care 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	Advice given	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld					
2017/18	9	13	6	3	11	0	42
2016/17	6	3	11	1	6	1	28

2.4.2 There has been a 50% increase in the complaints received by the LGO (from 28 complaints in 2016/17 to 42 in 2017/18) and the detailed investigations show:

- 144% increase in complaints investigated, from 9 to 22 complaints
- 50% increase in the complaints upheld, from 6 to 9 complaints

2.4.3 Further analysis for Adult Social Care of the LGO complaint will be provided in the department's Annual Complaints Report. The report will be available later in the year 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

	2017/18	2016/17	Change
Number of complaints received	283	236	↑ 19.9%
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	78	78	↔ 0.0%
Number of compliments	281	408	↓ 31.1%

3.1 Summary

3.1.1 Children's Services received a total of 283 complaints during the reporting period, an increase of 19.9% from last year. The main increase was in complaints from adults on behalf of young people which rose from 216 to 266, an increase of 23.1%. The number of complaints from children and young people dropped from 20 to 16. In 2017/18, 27% of complaints were upheld/partially upheld compared to 32% in 2016/17. Digital channels now account for 84% of complaints related contact, down from 88% last year.

3.2 Action taken to improve the service

3.2.1 Children's Services continues to use the learning from complaints and how people contact us as a tool in improving the services offered by the department and in improving our digital offer

through our website. We have continued to track key themes and complaint types to make enhancements to our call and complaint handling process. We have reduced misdirected enquiries significantly through evidence-based changes to our call handling system, meaning customer get to the right person the first time more often.

3.2.2 We are observing an emerging trend of complaints becoming measurably more complex. This trend has been noted over the last two reporting years.

3.2.3 Actions taken to improve services in 2017/18 include:

Actions taken to improve services in 2017/18 include:

- A review of all correspondence to ensure clarity in processes for parents/carers by the Early Years' Service.
- Training for Early Years' Service has been updated to remind staff of the importance of parents/carers remaining fully informed and understanding the service's involvement with their child. The training also focused on special consideration which needs to be given to parents for whom English is a second language and parents with learning difficulties.
- The development of CLASS+ to support families/carers of young people with ASD/Social communication difficulties with home based concerns. The service aims to provide support and training to enable families/carers to build their understanding of the strengths and challenges faced by children and young people with autism and to develop greater confidence in how to support them.
- More regular review of referral pathways to the Child Missing Education team to ensure that the links in the IT system remain live and all referrals are received by the team. The team has also created links with other services to allow for cross checking of information on other systems.
- Revising our internal processes to ensure a more proactive relationship to ensure that relevant teams are aware of emerging communication campaigns. We have also put in place measures with our systems to allow for easier and more efficient management of bulk correspondence without compromising customer experience.
- Co-produced with the LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children Board) new guidance for young people aged 16 and 17 who are facing homelessness. This was based on an identified gap in information provision in this crisis situation and the potential for harm and distress to a particularly vulnerable client group.

3.3 Compliments

3.3.1 The total number of compliments received throughout the year is down from 408 to 281, and the ratio of compliments per complaint is down 1.7 to 1.0. With decreasing resources it may be that the logging of compliments is not prioritised in service teams. Moving forward we will continue to share the positive messages coming through the compliments with key members of staff so that this can be learnt from in the same way as we learn from complaints.

3.4 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

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

Year	Investigations		Closed after initial enquiries	Invalid/incomplete	Referred back	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld				
2017/18	6	4	7	3	14	34
2016/17	15	7	6	1	11	40

3.4.2 Of the 34 complaints, only 10 complaints were investigated and of those 6 (60%) were upheld.

3.4.3 There will be further analysis of these complaints in the Children's Services Annual Complaints Report. The report will be published on the Council's website later in the year: [Children's](#)

4. Communities, Economy & Transport (CET)

	2017/18	2016/17	Change
Number of complaints received	44	76	↓42.1%
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	12	20	↓40.0%
Number of compliments	964	716	↑34.6%

4.1 Summary

4.1.1 There has been a significant drop in complaints received in CET in 2016/17 and 2017/18. A reduction in complaints has occurred across all CET services, but has been particularly significant in Highways. This is due to the way highways complaints are being handled since the new contractor for East Sussex Highways took over on 1 May 2016. Previously, initial complaints about highways had been logged as corporate complaints at too early a stage; this was in large part because the Highways Contact Centre was part of the Customer Services Team and it was common for initial complaints simply to be escalated to a corporate complaint as a way of resolving them, without the correct triage to ascertain that the service had sought to resolve the issue directly with the customer first.

4.1.2 Under the new highways contract complaints are initially dealt with by the contractor as the service provider, as this provides a direct opportunity for the contractor to seek to quickly resolve the issue with the customer. If the complaint remains unresolved the customer is able to raise this as a corporate complaint to the Customer Services Team. This is in line with the Corporate Complaints Policy where services always seek to resolve the concern or issue directly, and with how other contracted-out services (e.g. the Veolia contract) handle initial complaints from dissatisfied customers.

4.1.3 It has been a successful year in keeping the number of complaints down and resolving issues within service areas. The majority of complaints are regarding policy, where we have to explain difficult decisions to the public, often driven by tough choices around spending diminishing resources, and where the customer's personal involvement in those concerns are more likely to make them dissatisfied with a decision they do not agree with. These types of complaints are not upheld. Overall the number is very low in relation to the amount of interaction we have as a department with customers.

4.1.4 This reduction is the result of two key factors: (i) teams are effectively managing a large number of enquiries, challenges and informal complaints from customers within their services, and the quality of these responses means that customers better understand our policies and procedures and are not, therefore, raising formal complaints; and (ii) staff are applying the complaints procedures correctly by ensuring that the service area deals with a customer's problem or concern directly as the first point of resolution.

4.2 Action taken to improve the service

4.2.1 The proportion of complaints that were upheld or partially upheld in 2017/18 is 27%, which remains a similar proportion to the previous year at 26%. The majority of partially and fully upheld complaints were regarding communications (8 complaints, 67%), half of which were about information or explanations provided to the customer that should have been clearer; the other half were where no response was provided or delayed responses were provided. Three complaints were regarding quality of work carried out, where it was recognised that work should have been at a better standard, and one regarding staff attitude, where staff communication with a customer was unacceptable, and staff member was provided with training and performance is being monitored.

4.2.2 The following are areas where improvements were made as a result of upheld and partially upheld complaints:

- Staff recognised that we need to be more proactive and also to consider the circumstances from the customers' points of views, paying attention to what the customers need to hear and when. One team improved their logging and response procedures, and another carried out training on how to provide timely responses which are relevant to the specific issues the customers are facing, not a general response.
- Some acknowledgements and responses were being missed and some customers were not being kept informed, resulting in enquiries being escalated to corporate complaints. Awareness was raised with managers about the need to adhere to response times for enquiries and complaints. Teams were instructed to review enquiries as soon as they are allocated so that staff can adequately plan time to respond within the customer service standards. This also includes keeping customers informed if a full response cannot be provided in the normal timeframe.
- Due to a number of contacts made to the Highways Team and one complaint upheld regarding the communications about large scale roadworks being carried out, a review was carried out by senior management and lessons learnt have been identified on how to communicate with the public in future regarding large scale roadworks. In relation to the works where the complaint was received, the team also received a number of compliments regarding the quality of the work and that they had finished early.

4.3 Compliments

4.3.1 Compliments recorded for CET have increased from 716 in 2016/17 to 964 in 2017/18. Within the year, the Highways Team had improved how they capture their compliments received, for example by social media, phone calls or comments made by the public to staff working out on the network, which has increased the total number of compliments.

4.3.2 Compliments continue to be high, which indicates that teams continue to deliver high quality services and show their commitment to customers. Compliments for CET services fall into six main categories:

- Work and repairs carried out: Customers appreciated quick and effective works and repairs. They appreciated the quality of the work, commitment from staff, and how work that was carried out improves their accessibility and experience of their activities.
- Appreciation of staff helping on a specific query, issue or concern. This includes taking the time to help with and answer queries; providing thoughtful and considered responses; doing that extra bit to help; helping in difficult situations or circumstances; listening; and finding a resolution for issues or concerns.
- Staff keeping the customer informed and up-to-date with the progress of their enquiries.
- Fast responses to customers' enquiries and actions taken.
- Quality of service and staff in general
- Facilities or activities offered.

4.4 Local Government & Social Care 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				
2017/18	1	2	6	1	0	10
2016/17	-	1	4	-	4	9

4.4.2 Three (30%) of the 10 complaints were investigated and one was upheld.

5. Orbis (ESCC only)

	2017/18	2016/17	Change
Number of complaints received	22	28	↓21.4%
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	14	22	↓36.4%
Number of compliments	42	20	↑110%

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 The number of complaints received for Orbis (ESCC only) has reduced by 21.4% and the percentage of upheld and partially upheld has decreased also by 36.4%. All complaints, but one, were related to invoicing and charges in relation to ASC care costs. ASC also recorded 17 complaints for Orbis Accounts Receivable Team as explained in section 2.2.5 above. There are often issues relating to social care and financial assessments received by ASC which have multiple issues regarding information, timeliness, quality, delay and/or poor communication about charges and the payment of charges. These were not recorded under Orbis and are included within the ASC return. Due to multiple issues, these are difficult to separate out to one department or the other. Please see section 2.2.5 and 2.2.6 for further information.

5.1.2 The 14 upheld or partially upheld complaints were all related to invoicing and charging of care costs.

5.2 Action taken to improve the service

5.2.1 For the Accounts Receivable Team, in response to the partially upheld or upheld complaints, the main area identified for improving was communications with clients. This included keeping the clients informed and providing full, clear explanations in all correspondence.

5.3 Compliments

5.3.1 There has been an increase of 110% of compliments received which has been an excellent result. These are all regarding the Accounts Receivable Team (except one for Personnel). These compliments were related to how helpful and efficient the staff were on this team and how much customers appreciated it.

5.4 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

5.4.1 There were no LGO complaints made about services in this department in 2017/18.

6. Governance Services

	2017/18	2016/17	Change
Number of complaints received	4	2	↑100%
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	0	1	-
Number of compliments	0	0	-

6.1 Summary

6.1.1 The four complaints for 2017/18 for Governance Services involved Communications, Democratic Services, and two regarding Legal Services.

6.1.2 There were no complaints partially or fully upheld for Governance Services in 2017/18.

6.2 Action taken to improve the service

6.2.1 No actions or improvements were drawn from these complaints.

6.3 Compliments

6.3.1 No compliments recorded in 2017/18.

6.4 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

6.4.1 There were no LGO complaints made about services in this department in 2017/18.

7. Chief Executive's Office

7.1 Complaints are often addressed to the Chief Executive (CE) 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 form part of their figures and analysis.

8. Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman - other complaints

8.1 One remaining LGO complaint for 2017/18 was listed where a decision was made but not investigated by the LGO. This was categorised under "other services". As this complaint was not investigated, we are uncertain where this falls as the Council is not notified about details of the complaints not investigated. It was closed after initial enquiries by the LGO.

Year	Investigations		Closed after initial enquiries	Invalid/incomplete	Referred back	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld				
2017/18			1			1