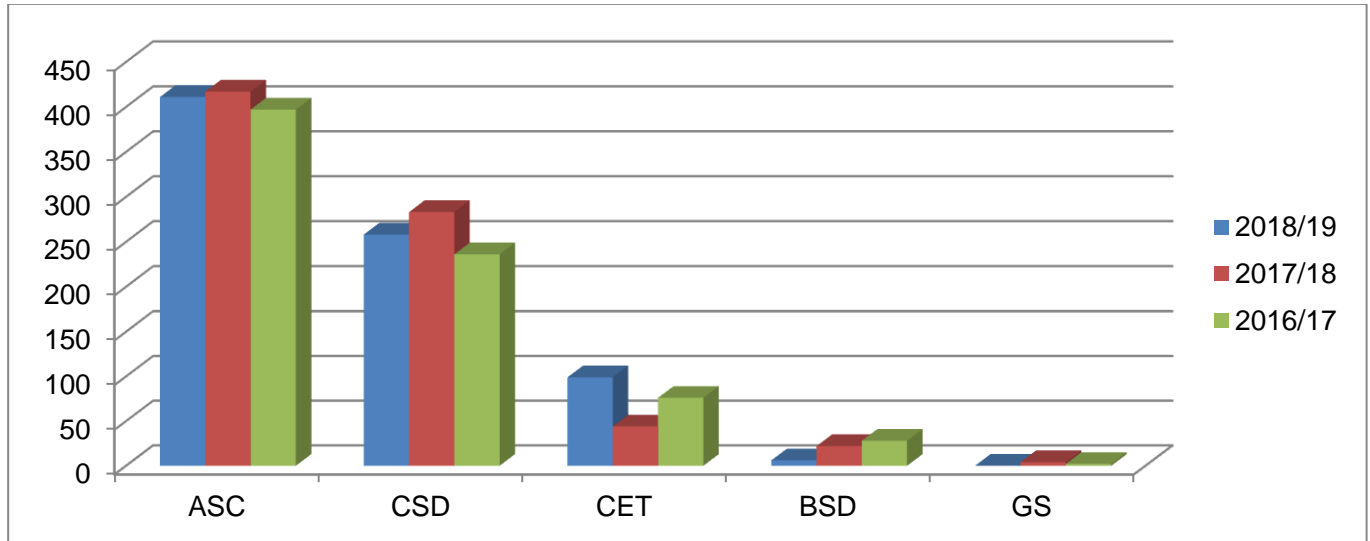


**1. Summary**

1.1 The chart below shows the number of complaints received in 2018/19 by department compared with 2017/18 and 2016/17. ESCC received 774 complaints in 2018/19 compared to 770 complaints in 2017/18, which represents an increase of 0.5%. Please note comparisons of complaints and compliments between departments are not valid due to the nature of the different services provided by each department.



1.2 The following table presents the number of Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) complaints for ESCC where decisions were made and the percentages of upheld complaints compared to national rates for 2018/19, 2017/18 and 2016/17. LGSCO complaints by department are represented in the sections below.

Year	Investigated	Upheld	Not upheld	Not investigated	Total	ESCC uphold rate %	National uphold rate %
2018/19	41	28	13	49	90	68%	58%
2017/18	35	16	19	53	88	46%	57%
2016/17	32	21	11	47	79	66%	54%

**2. Adult Social Care**

	2018/19	2017/18	Change
<b>Number of complaints received</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>↓1.4%</b>
<b>Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>↓8.7%</b>
<b>Number of compliments</b>	<b>1375</b>	<b>1444</b>	<b>↓4.8%</b>

**2.1 Summary**

2.1.1 There was a slight (1.4%) decrease in the complaints received about Adult Social Care (ASC) services compared to last year, and 44% of complaints were upheld or partially upheld, which is less than in 2017/18, when 47% of complaints were upheld in full or part.

2.1.2 The proportion of complaints reported by clients themselves increased significantly to 43% from 24% in 2018/19. Clients appear to feel more confident to let us know when they feel that something is not right. Increased use of email and the availability of an online complaints process may have encouraged this shift.

2.1.3 ASC target response times were down significantly this year, with only 49% of complaints achieving a response within 10 to 20 working days, compared with 68% in 2017/18. Partly, this was as a result of implementing a new electronic records system where response times were recorded retrospectively and sometimes the dates did not record accurately. It may however also be an indicator of the impact of having a reduced number of managers and the competing demands on their time.

2.1.4 ASC recorded fewer compliments this year, although 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 2018/19 and actions related to these themes.

2.2.2 There were 114 complaints received about the provision of services provided or commissioned by ASC. This is significantly higher than last year where 60 complaints about the provision of services were recorded. There were 44 complaints (38%) upheld or partially upheld. The dominant theme related to the quality or standard of ASC services falling below expectation or an inadequate service provided by a third party provider, such as home care agencies or residential care homes.

2.2.3 Like last year, often issues relating to the quality and charges for social care services were presented to the department on receipt of an invoice. Where it was found that the services had fallen below expectation or had not been received as planned, charges were sometimes reimbursed or waived.

2.2.4 Extensive work has been undertaken to try to ensure people are aware of potential charges but closer working with NHS services can confuse people or create a barrier to accept that most ASC services are subject to a client contribution. Work is ongoing to ensure timely and relevant information is provided and that this is recorded in case notes.

2.2.5 The next highest complaint category related to assessment functions with 98 recorded for this year and 32 (32%) either upheld or partially upheld.

- There were 70 complaints related to assessments for social care support, with 23 (33%) upheld or partially upheld. Almost half of these complaints challenged the outcome or decision of the assessment.
- Financial assessments received 20 complaints with 3 (15%) upheld in full or part, and 60% of these complaints were about the outcome of the assessment to identify the amount someone pays towards their care.
- Blue Badge mobility assessment outcomes recorded 8 complaints, with 2 (25%) partially upheld. No themes were apparent.

2.2.6 Stringent application of national eligibility criteria and financial guidance did leave some people feeling that their individual circumstances had not always been considered. Where complaints were upheld, assessment outcomes were reviewed and individual actions taken to ensure the service provided met clients' and carers' identified needs.

2.2.7 The third biggest area of complaints related to reported shortfalls in staff actions and behaviour such as attitude, respect and confidentiality. There were 35 complaints received with 40% (14) of these complaints upheld or partially upheld. In these instances, supervision and/or further training was provided to support staff to reflect on and develop their practice.

2.2.8 Other actions taken to improve services in 2018/19 included:

- The integration of ASC Occupational Therapists into district and borough councils to improve the processing of Disabled Facilities Grants.

- Developing a new service for adults whereby people are assessed in an environment similar to home rather than a hospital setting, which it is hoped patients will find more beneficial and will improve hospital discharges.
- The Blue Badge service has implemented an automated messaging service that updates Blue Badge applicants at every stage of the process by email or text.
- A provider of falls detector equipment undertaking a review of its falls detector batteries in partnership with the Council.
- A review of both the content and frequency of chase letters when writing to the family/estate of deceased clients
- A review of the system where Direct Payments accounts transfer from Children's to Adult Services, to avoid delays
- A review of the processes involved with invoicing clients in extra care housing to ensure better accuracy and flow

## 2.3 Compliments

2.3.1 ASC has continued to receive far more compliments (1375) about its services than complaints (411). 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 work by our Carers' Services (468), Joint Community Rehabilitation Service (140), and Integrated Locality Teams (124).

## 2.4 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

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

Year	Investigations		Closed after initial enquiries	Invalid/incomplete	Referred back	Advice given	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld					
2018/19	14	7	8	5	5	0	39
2017/18	9	13	6	3	11	0	42

2.4.2 There has been a 7% decrease in the complaints to the LGSCO (from 42 complaints in 2017/18 to 39 in 2018/19). The number of complaints investigated has remained steady from 22 in 2017/18 to 21 complaints in 2018/19. There has been an increase of complaints upheld, from 9 in 2017/18 to 14 complaints in 2018/19.

2.4.3 Further analysis for Adult Social Care of the LGSCO complaints 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

	2018/19	2017/18	Change
Number of complaints received	258	283	↓ 8.8%
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	50	78	↓ 35.9 %
Number of compliments	178	281	↓ 36.7%

### 3.1 Summary

3.1.1 Children's Services received a total of 258 complaints during the reporting period, a decrease of 8.8% from last year. Complaints from adults on behalf of children dropped from 266 to 222, a decrease of 16.5%. The number of complaints from children and young people dropped from 16 to 3 a decrease of 81.3%. In previous years, complaints from young people have related to domestic matters within children's homes. This large drop may represent a greater number of issues being dealt without a formal complaint being logged. In 2018/19, 19% of complaints were upheld/partially

upheld compared to 27% in 2017/18. Digital channels now account for 89% of complaints related contact, up from 84% last year.

### **3.2 Action taken to improve the service**

3.2.1 Children's Services (CS) 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.

3.2.2 A new corporate complaints handling system was implemented during summer 2018 and allows for greater visibility and monitoring of key themes through regular automated reporting. We continue to develop meaningful complaint insight data which is shared with key stakeholders to ensure efficient processes and avoiding duplication. For example, we share information with our Information Governance Team to prevent case work being duplicated as well as notifying Assistant Directors weekly of cases with Ombudsman involvement. Both of these reports are automated and highly efficient.

3.2.3 Actions taken to improve services in 2018/19 include the following:

- Within Children's Social Care we have improved the notification process when a court order comes to an end. This followed feedback that the involvement ending was not clear and that greater clarity was welcomed by parents when CS involvement had ceased.
- We have also revised the joint-working process covering complaints regarding schools safeguarding to better clarify lines of responsibility and provide clarity to service users. The headline policy has not changed, and schools remain responsible for managing their own complaints, however we have simplified the referral routes when a complaint may include a safeguarding referral that needs to be assessed within our school safeguarding team.
- Additionally, following feedback from complaints we have revised key policies around fabricated and induced illness and are working to update the pan-Sussex procedures relating to this issue.
- Within our ESBAS service, improvements have been made to the attendance management process where revised guidance has been provided for staff around the home visit protocol: where a door knock takes place, practitioners must record whether the child has actually been seen. As part of this guidance, it is now policy and procedure that practitioners will ask to see the child on a visit if they have not been seen at school for a considerable time and no contact has been received from parents to professionals.
- Within our ISEND Assessment & Planning Team, the staff induction programme has been reviewed to take account of learning from themes raised in feedback and complaints. In addition, revised training and guidance has been issued relating to statutory processes, which historically have been a theme of complaints to the service. A revised staff supervision process is in place and all managers have received the appropriate training to maximise staff performance.
- Within the Communication, Planning & Performance service, we used data from complaints to review and prioritise changes and improvements to online web content. Specifically we have taken learning around the school admissions process to ensure the clearest picture is given to parents at the point of applying to reduce the likelihood of becoming dissatisfied at a later date and needing to complain.
- We have revised and updated our guidance for complainants at Stages 2 and 3 of the statutory process to ensure clarity and ease of access. We have also invested time in updating our revised complaints system to ensure better handling of complaints through the process.

### **3.3 Compliments**

3.3.1 The total number of compliments received throughout the year is down from 281 to 178, and the ratio of compliments per complaint is down from 1.0 to 0.7. For the second year in a row, the volume of compliments has reduced. To try and address this we have implemented a new simpler process for logging complaints and have reinstated a monthly reminder to service delivery teams to send in their compliments for logging. 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 LGSCO findings for complaints about Children’s Services:

Year	Investigations		Closed after initial enquiries	Invalid/ incomplete	Referred back	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld				
2018/19	12	5	2	3	12	34
2017/18	6	4	7	3	14	34

3.4.2 Of the 34 complaints, 17 complaints were investigated and of those 12 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 Services Annual Complaints Report](#). This report is required under The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

## 4. Communities, Economy & Transport (CET)

	2018/19	2017/18	Change
Number of complaints received	99	44	↑125.0%
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	34	12	↑183.3%
Number of compliments	690	964	↓28.4%

### 4.1 Summary

4.1.1 There has been an increase of complaints received in CET in 2018/19. This was reported to and noted by the Departmental Management Team in CET during the year, recognising that the department would exceed the previous year’s total number of complaints half way through 2018/19. However, CET continues to receive a relatively low number of complaints in general, and also in proportion to the level of requests for services and enquiries that CET receives each year.

4.1.2 There were some particular changes in services which caused the increase for 2018/19. The following provides descriptions of these areas and the number of complaints they accounted for in 2018/19:

- Customers unhappy with the new policy on grass cutting frequency (11).
- Customer dissatisfaction and issues around the implementation of a new system by NSL for parking, also resulting in an increase in telephone calls (9).
- Complex drainage issues and assessment processes, coupled with poor communications (8).
- Issues around introducing changes to bus services for Transport Services (8).

4.1.3 The highest number of complaints was regarding policy, a trend which remains year on year. These complaints are 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 don’t agree with. These types of complaints are not upheld. Based on the volumes of our customer contacts, however, the overall number of complaints would suggest that customers have been largely satisfied with the responses and explanations provided in relation to our policies which guide the delivery of our services.

4.1.4 For 2018/19, there has been an increase in complaints regarding quality. These complaints related to the areas listed in 4.1.2. However, they still remain in low numbers and should be considered relative to the number of enquiries received by our services.

### 4.2 Action taken to improve the service

4.2.1 There were 34 fully or partly upheld complaints out of 99 (34%) for 2018/19, which is more (in both absolute and percentage terms) than the previous year with 12 complaints fully or partly upheld (27%). There were more fully or partly upheld complaints regarding quality and communications in 2018/19. The following provides details about these complaints and what actions were taken to make

improvements. These also provide a brief summary of some themes and trends that were drawn out during the year and improvements that were made:

- Complaints were fully or partly upheld when customers were not given information, information was unclear, they were not kept informed (including where the issue was resolved), or there was a lack of response. These showed how important it is to customers to be kept informed at all stages of their contact with the Council. Staff were reminded in Q1 and Q2 of our commitment to the Customer Promise, drawing attention to the importance and benefits of good communications.
- Similarly, customers made complaints which were upheld when there were complex cases in Highways which involved several teams and assessment stages, resulting in delays and poor communications. There was a commitment to improve the issues and discussions involved all levels of management and relevant teams in Highways on how to improve internal communications and escalate potentially complex issues. New procedures were put into place in the Highways Contact Centre to monitor, recognise, and escalate potential issues, and also to keep customers informed during assessments and planning stages, where sometimes contact can 'go quiet'.
- Some customers were unhappy with having to use the new online parking system as well as experiencing some technical issues with it. This created a spike in calls to NSL's helpline and customers were finding it difficult to get through on the telephone number. NSL worked quickly to correct some of the major issues with the online system. NSL have brought in additional staff resources to deal with the increase in calls.

### 4.3 Compliments

4.3.1 There were 690 compliments recorded for CET in 2018/19, these have decreased from 964 in 2017/18. There was a spike in compliments received in 2017/18 due to Highways improving how they captured their compliments, for example by social media, phone calls, and comments made by the public to staff working out on the network. Also, another contributing factor was the public showing their appreciation for the gritting of roads during the snowfall and freezing temperatures in the winter months in 2017/18. Numbers of compliments in service areas within CET continue to be similar to those in previous years, excluding the spike in Highways in 2017/18.

4.3.2 Compliment numbers overall 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 LGSCO findings for complaints about CET:

Year	Investigations		Closed after initial enquiries	Invalid/incomplete	Referred back	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld				
2018/19	2	1	8	-	3	14
2017/18	1	2	6	1	0	10

4.4.2 Three (21%) of the 14 complaints were investigated and two were upheld. One upheld complaint was due to misinformation to the public regarding a consultation; it concluded maladministration but no injustice caused, and no remedy recommended. The other upheld complaint was due to maladministration and injustice caused, recommending financial redress. The financial redress was carried out and a series of initiatives were put in place to improve the processes for agreeing work, which were particular complex and involved multiple teams and the contractor. In addition, further customer service training was carried out to provide a more unified process (and voice) when communicating with customers.

## 5. Orbis (ESCC only)

	2018/19	2017/18	Change
<b>Number of complaints received</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>↓72.7%</b>
<b>Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>↓78.6%</b>
<b>Number of compliments</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>N/A</b>

### 5.1 Summary

5.1.1 The number of complaints received for Orbis (ESCC only) has reduced by 72.7% and the percentage of upheld and partially upheld has decreased by 78.6%. These complaints have greatly reduced due to work carried out to make improvements by ASC and Accounts Receivable Team to invoicing and charges in relation to ASC care costs, as explained in section 2.2.8.

### 5.2 Compliments

5.3.1 There have been no compliments (bar one) logged this year for Orbis (ESCC only). There has been a breakdown in the process that should be in place to log compliments received. An investigation will take place to identify this issue and resolve it urgently in order to report on compliments for 2019/20.

### 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

	2018/19	2017/18	Change
<b>Number of complaints received</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Number of compliments</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-</b>

### 6.1 Summary

6.1.1 There were no complaints for Governance Services in 2018/19.

### 6.2 Action taken to improve the service

6.2.1 As there were no complaints logged no actions have been noted.

### 6.3 Compliments

6.3.1 No compliments were recorded in 2018/19.

### 6.4 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

6.4.1 There were no LGO complaints made about services in this department in 2018/19.

## 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.