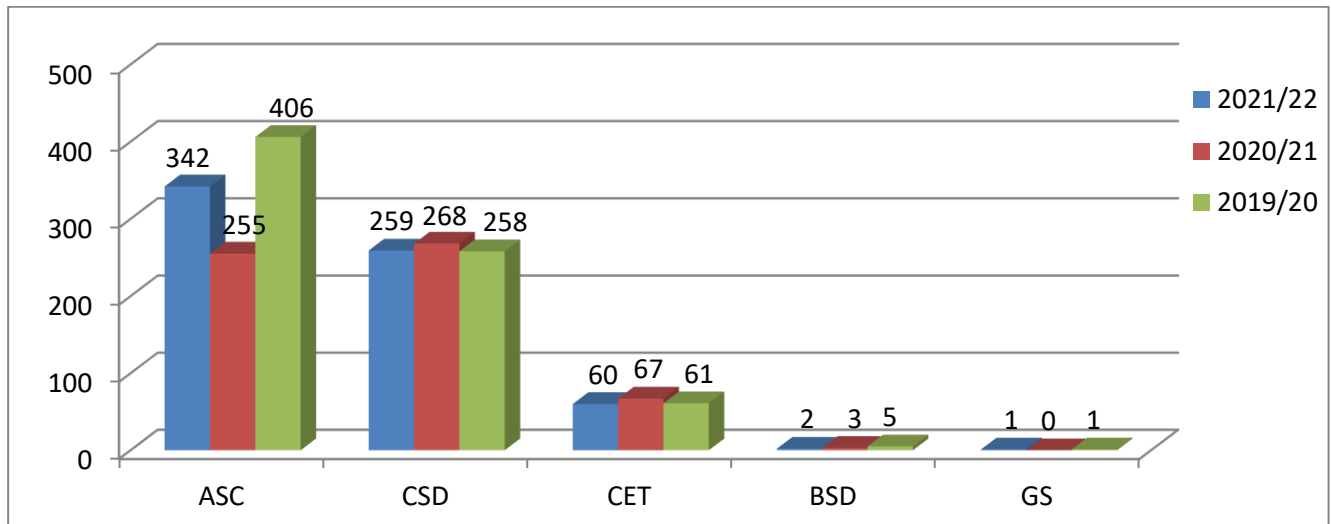


Appendix 2 Complaints and compliments by department 2021/22

1. Summary

1.1 ESCC received 664 complaints in total in 2021/22 compared to 593 complaints in 2020/21 which represents an increase of 12%. The increase is due to number of complaints increased in Adult Social Care from the lower number of complaints recorded in the pandemic. The following chart shows the number of complaints received in 2021/22 by department compared with 2020/21 and 2019/20. 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 similar authorities for the last three years. The percentage of upheld complaints for ESCC is below the average of 71% for similar authorities.

Year	Investigated	Upheld	Not upheld	Not investigated	Total	ESCC uphold rate %	Average County Council uphold rate %
2021/22	38	25	13	51	89	66%	71%
2020/21	30	21	9	38	68	70%	71%
2019/20	38	20	18	62	100	53%	66%

1.3 For upheld complaints there were 40 remedies that ESCC carried out which were met with 100% satisfaction with compliance. The following is a breakdown of the remedies to provide:

- Apology (15)
- Financial Redress (12): avoidable distress / time (8), quantifiable loss (1), loss of service (3)
- New appeal, review or reconsidered decision (3)
- Procedure or policy review / change (5)
- Training and guidance (2)
- Services / Information / advice to person affected (2)
- Services/information to others affected (1)

2. Adult Social Care and Health

	Change	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Number of complaints received	↑ 34%	342	255	406
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	↑ 3%	146	102	159
Number of compliments	↑ 15%	950	823	1431

2.1 Summary

2.1.1 Adult Social Care recorded a total of 342 complaints during the reporting period, an increase of 34% from last year. We have seen an increase in complaints compared to the lower figures recorded during the pandemic. These have not reached pre-pandemic levels which were generally just over 400. The complexity of cases, which is defined by the number of services and organisations involved, has increased.

2.1.2 43% of complaints were upheld or partially upheld, an increase of 3% from last year. Similar to last year, the main areas of concern recorded across the department were delay or failure to do something, disagreement with decisions in relation to assessment outcomes, and disagreement with charges for services.

2.1.3 ASCH has continued to receive more compliments (950) about our services than complaints (342). The ratio per compliment to complaint is 2.8.

2.2 Action taken to improve the service

2.2.1 Adult Social Care continues to use learning points from complaints to improve services. We have developed a systematic approach to ensure all learning and action points are undertaken as identified. This has included working with Orbis colleagues to ensure debt recovery processes are initiated or reinstated when a complaint is upheld.

2.2.2 We have also continued to strengthen our complaints duty function to provide a person centred and resolution focussed approach, helping to resolve matters before going into the complaints process.

2.2.3 Actions taken by ASCH to improve services during 2021/22 include the following:

- A team dedicated to managing work of a self-neglect nature, has been instigated to ensure a robust, multi-agency response these situations in the future.
- A new check in our payment process was introduced to reduce the risk of fraud.
- A review was undertaken to ensure that providers are paid when an individual's return of a signed copy of a service agreement is delayed.
- ASCH staff will complete a self-assessment relating to inclusive behaviour with their line manager during the annual appraisal process, starting in June 2022. This will inform individual, team, and departmental, learning and development needs by helping us to understand our communities better and create a more inclusive environment for our staff.

2.3 Compliments

2.3.1 Compliments provide valuable information about the quality of our services and identify where they are working well. The sincere expressions of gratitude we have received show how much services are valued by the people who use them and their families and friends. This year people have particularly praised our Neighbourhood Support and Mental Health Teams, older peoples directly provided services and our Support with Confidence Scheme across the county.

2.4 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

2.4.1 The table below sets out the LGSCO findings for complaints about ASCH.

Year	Investigations		Closed after initial enquiries	Invalid/incomplete	Referred back	Advice given	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld					
2021/22	17	4	7	4	6		38
2020/21	10	6	6	2	4	1	29
2019/20	10	10	12	5	7		44

2.4.2 Further analysis for ASCH 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

	Change	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Number of complaints received	↓ 3%	259	268	258
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	↑ 4%	91	84	80
Number of compliments	↓ 3%	326	335	231

3.1 Summary

3.1.1 Children's Services received a total of 259 complaints during the reporting period, a decrease of 3% from last year. Complaints from adults on behalf of children reduced from 263 to 246, a decrease of 6.5%. The number of complaints from children and young people reduced from 7 to 1. In previous years, complaints from young people have related to domestic matters within children's homes. This reflects a general trend of issues being dealt with without a formal complaint being logged. In 2021/22, 35% of complaints were upheld/partially upheld, last year 31% of the complaints were upheld/partially upheld.

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.

3.2.2 Actions taken to improve services in 2021/22 include the following:

- **Social care practice** - We have noted an increase in complaints where a parent has objected to statements made by social workers in reports. Whilst it has been common practise to offer to add objections to the file, to ensure expectations were properly managed early, this process has been described in our complaints policy so that parents complaining can be reassured early that their disagreement can be properly recorded.
- Additionally, we have reviewed our policy and signposting information when there have been complaints about Section 7 court-ordered reports to ensure we are as clear and transparent as possible as to the most appropriate way for clients to challenge information that is contested.
- **Gathering consent from third parties** - We identified an issue with complaints received from adults on behalf of other adults whereby obtaining consent was proving complex and adding to the distress of the complaint.
- We reviewed the process and have introduced a simplified pathway which takes the customer through a simple workflow to obtain consent in the best way based on the customer's circumstances. For example, if a client has a printer and smart phone the workflow will take them down a route whereby the client prints, signs and photographs the form and ID documents before attaching them to the complaint. For clients who do not have the above technology, a printed form can be requested and posted to the client for them to complete and return.
- Given the highly sensitive and personal information that we process through the complaints process it is vital that we are only sharing with those people who have been formally authorised to act on behalf of other adults or older children.
- Within our ISEND service, greater consideration has been given to when older young people may need to give consent. It is not uncommon for young people with SEN and disabilities to be represented by their parents well into adulthood, so the approach has been implemented sensitively to allow for parents to continue to represent their child but in a way that involves and includes the young person.
- **Notifying parents of allegations** - An issue was identified whereby allegations made against parents were not communicated in a timely way when there was no further action to be taken. It was noted that this would cause distress and so our processes have been updated to ensure that

any allegation was communicated to parents, even if it was assessed as no further action being required.

- It is important to note that whilst the Data Protection Act 2018 brought in enhanced responsibilities on public bodies, there remain areas of work where consent is not required. However, that clients are notified of their personal information being processed, even if their consent is not needed. For example, within a safeguarding process, consent to undertake certain actions is not required however the individual concerned should be notified. This change to our process will not only ensure greater compliance with current legislation but will be more transparent to clients who are subject to social care involvement.

3.3 Compliments

3.3.1 The total number of compliments logged were 326 in 2021/22. This is 3% lower than the 335 compliments received in 2020/21. This small reduction is not unexpected as the total number of complaints has also reduced by the same amount. We 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	Advice given	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld					
2021/22	8	9	11	2	7	1	38
2020/21	8	2	3	1	7	1	22
2019/20	10	6	10	3	14		43

3.4.2 There is further analysis of these complaints in the Children's Services Annual Complaints Report. The report has been published on the council's website: [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)

	Change	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Number of complaints received	↓7.5%	62	67	61
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	↓ 13%	18	28	22
Number of compliments	↓ 16%	430	510	516

4.1 Summary

4.1.1 There were 62 complaints received in CET in 2021/22 compared to 67 complaints in 2020/21, and 61 in 2019/20. Although 2021/22 continued to see changes in how services were delivered to the public due to the Covid-19 response and some services received high influxes of enquiries from customers regarding changes to services, there has been no impact on the number of complaints received in 2021/22 for CET. The number of complaints continue to be low, and this reflects how successful staff have been in effectively managing a huge number of enquiries, challenges, and informal complaints from customers.

4.1.2 In 2021/22, roughly half of the complaints for CET were in relation to customers voicing dissatisfaction with decisions and delivery of services based on Council policy, a trend which remains

year on year. Of these, none were fully or partly upheld. There were 18 fully or partly upheld complaints which was 29% of complaints received in 2021/22, a 13% decrease from the last year.

4.2 Action taken to improve the service

4.2.1 Actions taken to improve services in 2021/22 include the following:

4.2.2 Just under half of the fully or partly upheld complaints were in relation to poor communication. This is a common theme for our complaints and potentially avoidable and a high level of scope to get things right for customers. We continually monitor communications issues in order to identify where we can improve the customer experience and effectiveness of service delivery. To remedy these complaints, apologies were given and clear and full responses provided. Improvements were made by providing staff training on improving communications with customers and ensuring appropriate handover and cover for staff annual leave.

4.2.3 Just over half of the complaints fully or partly upheld were regarding the poor quality of work or services in 2021/22. These covered administrative and processing errors and mishandling of communications and procedures. In all cases, apologies and further responses were given, and where possible, mistakes were corrected. Improvements to service delivery were made by further staff training on business procedures and processes, improving communications and information provided to customers, and resolving queries from customers.

4.2.4 Work continued in 2021/22 to address the increase of persistent complainants who contact services directly and / or the CET Directorate multiple times about the same or slightly altered queries. Improvements were made for some services handling high volume of enquiries by streamlining administrative processes and responding more efficiently and providing simpler contact points for the customer to contact the service.

4.2.5 Standard paragraphs for responses to customers were also reviewed, focusing on reducing content, using Plain English, and reviewing technical content, all improving the readability and accessibility. The improved standard paragraphs will improve the customer experience and it is hoped they will reduce the scope of customers coming back for additional clarity.

4.3 Compliments

4.3.1 There were 430 compliments logged in CET in 2021/22, compared to 510 compliments in 2020/21. Compliment numbers overall continue to be high, which indicates that staff continue to deliver high quality services and show their commitment to customers. This year almost half of the compliments were about the quality of service, which showed their gratitude to the staff for the services they provided.

4.3.2 There is often a fluctuation in numbers of compliments received due to factors such as events, promotions, or particular works taking place. Although the number has decreased this year, it shows a great result given that some services were closed or reduced to the public for significant amounts of time during this year, due to Covid-19 lockdown requirements.

4.4 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

4.4.1 The table below sets out the LGSCO findings for complaints about CET. No complaints in relation to CET, where decisions were made in 2021/22, were investigated. The total number of complaints where decisions were made remain similar to previous years.

Year	Investigations		Closed after initial enquiries	Invalid/incomplete	Referred back	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld				
2021/22	0	0	8	1	1	10
2020/21	2	1	7		3	13
2019/20	0	2	2	1	5	10

5. Business Services

	Change	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Number of complaints received	↓33%	2	3	5
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	-	1	1	2
Number of compliments	n/a	n/a	26	1

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 There were two formal complaints for Business Services in 2021/22, which one was upheld due to lack of communications with the customer. An apology was given, and the service provision provided. There were no themes to draw out from this small number of complaints.

5.2 Compliments

5.2.1 No compliments from external, individual customers were reported on departmentally for Business Services in 2021/22.

5.3 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

5.3.1 The table below sets out the LGSCO findings for complaints about Business Services. There were no investigated complaints in 2021/22 out of the complaints where decisions were made.

Year	Investigations		Closed after initial enquiries	Invalid/incomplete	Referred back	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld				
2021/22			3			3
2020/21	1		1			2
2019/20						0

6. Governance Services

	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	Change
Number of complaints received	1	0	1	-
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	0	0	0	-
Number of compliments	n/a	n/a	n/a	-

6.1 Summary

6.1.1 There was one complaint logged for Governance Services in 2021/22, which was not upheld.

6.2 Compliments

6.2.1 No compliments were recorded in 2021/22.

6.3 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

6.3.1 There were no LGSCO complaints investigated about Governance Services in 2021/22.

7. Chief Executive's Office

7.1 Customers often address their complaints to the Chief Executive (CE) or Leader and so they 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.