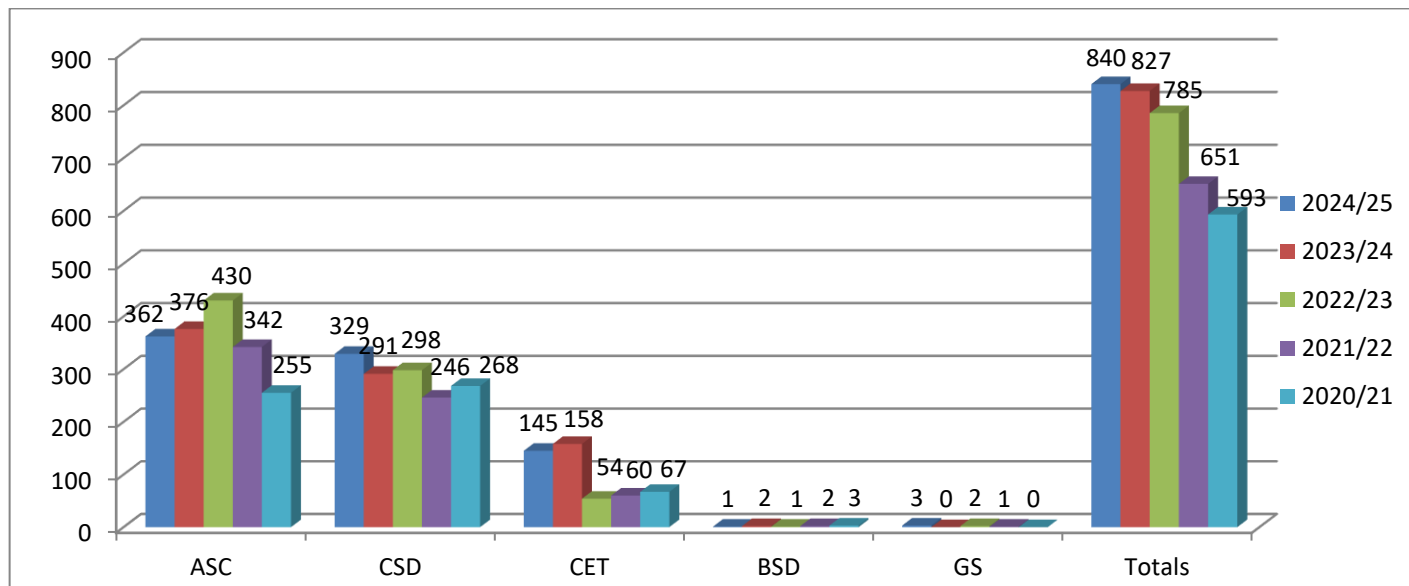


21 October 2025

Appendix 3 Complaints and compliments by department 2024/25

1. Summary

1.1 The Council received a total of 840 complaints in 2024/25 compared to 827 complaints in 2023/24, which represents an increase of 1.5%. The following graph shows the number of complaints received over the last five years by department, and in total. 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 total 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 five years. There were 21 upheld complaints for ESCC, and where there were remedies recommended by the LGSCO, ESCC received 100% satisfaction with compliance with these recommendations (as reported by the LGSCO at [East Sussex County Council - LGSCO](#)).

Year	Investigated	Upheld	Not upheld	Not investigated	Total	ESCC uphold rate %	Average County Council uphold rate %
2024/25	28	21	7	78	106	75%	89%
2023/24	32	28	4	54	86	88%	85%
2022/23	26	20	6	58	84	77%	80%
2021/22	38	25	13	51	89	66%	71%
2020/21	30	21	9	38	68	70%	71%

2. Adult Social Care and Health

	Change	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23
Number of complaints received	↓4%	362	376	430
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	↑4%	175	168	218
Number of compliments	↑14.5%	2,651	2,268	1,512

2.1 Summary

2.1.1 Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) recorded a total of 362 complaints during the reporting period, down from 376 the previous year. In 2023/24, 45% of complaints were upheld/partially upheld, this year 48% were upheld/partially upheld.

2.1.2 Demand on services continues to rise and complaints continue to be multi-faceted, across services, providers, and organisations. The biggest area of complaints related to the provision of service (127), which was 35% of all the complaints received. There were 57 complaints relating to the provision of service which were upheld or partially upheld. Of these, 21 complaints were in relation to the service not being to the quality or standard expected.

2.1.3 The second biggest area of complaints related to assessments (65), which was 18% of all complaints received. There were 30 complaints relating to assessments which were upheld or partially upheld. Of these 9 complaints were in relation to a delay.

2.1.4 We have continued to strengthen our complaints duty function to provide a person centred and resolution focussed approach. The aim is to resolve matters before going into the complaints process. This year we resolved 570 enquiries through this triage approach.

2.1.5 ASCH has recorded the highest ever number of compliments over a year, with 2,651 expressions of thanks and heartfelt praise for care and support services. There are significantly more compliments (2,651) about our services than complaints (362). The ratio per compliment to complaint is 7:3 compared with 6:1 last year. Our Joint Community Rehabilitation Service recorded over 1,500 compliments (1,638). This was followed by our Carers Break/Dementia Service (293) and then our Shared Lives & Supported Accommodation (SAILS) teams (182).

2.2 Action taken to improve the service

2.2.1 Information recording

- Discuss with staff the importance of accurate recording.
- Remind the team to ensure that the correct procedures are followed when people's cases are being closed, and that all actions are completed before closure or if the worker is leaving the team.
- Remind staff members to be more explicit in their recordings and state where there is a minimum contribution subject to the full financial assessment.
- Ensure more robust recording systems are in place to document that charging information is shared.
- Remind the team and workers concerned, of the importance of both sending written information about charging and recording they have done so.
- Guidance which includes people (where they are able to) signing a form to say they have received financial information, and us not agreeing funding (unless urgent) until this has been done.
- Discuss with the worker the importance of updating assessments accurately and checking prior to sending out.
- Take forward as a reminder/learning point with the team that when undertaking an assessment or review, the allocated worker refers to previous notes and assessments, to gain some background information and consider any changes in care and support needs and service provision.
- Ensure the information about client's preferred communication format is identified within our finance systems.
- Review systems for checking and cross-referencing people's addresses on financial recording systems.
- A process in place to prevent incorrect figure on correspondence happening again.

2.2.2 Invoicing

- Process put in place to manage communications where a late invoice will be sent out.

- Issues with late submission of invoices have been picked up with the provider to impress the importance that invoices should be sent through in a timely manner for payment to be made.
- The need for vigilance to ensure old invoices that ASC are liable for are reviewed before any invoice is sent to the adult.

2.2.3 Contract closure

- Remind staff to ensure all open contracts that require closing are closed appropriately and in a timely manner.
- Prompt to be added to the panel process to check when there is a change in circumstances any open contracts have been requested to close.

2.2.4 Contact and responsiveness

- Apology for the frustration caused regarding the number of teams and phone numbers given to resolve the query. Feedback will help us to improve our services and avoid this from happening in future.
- Apology for the delay in allocating and responding to phone messages.
- Processes put in place to ensure that inboxes and cases are monitored when workers are unavailable, and for duty workers to also action and follow up calls and tasks, which is overseen by a manager.

2.2.5 Delays

- Review has been carried out to improve timescales for completing financial assessments.
- Review systems to ensure improvements are made where capital drop assessments are required, and people are updated about timescales.
- Using a Duty booking system to enable people in capital drop situations to be assessed in a timelier manner.

2.2.6 Safeguarding

- Domestic Violence (DV) checklist has been devised and shared by the Safeguarding Development Team specifically around DV planning.

2.2.7 External providers

- Remind staff to let ASCH know when changes to a package of care are requested.
- Improve system and practice for carers logging in and out.

2.3 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

2.3.1 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					
2024/25	8	5	12	7	3	1	36
2023/24	13	2	8	1	8		32
2022/23	6	3	8	3	7	1	28

2.3.2 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	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23
Number of complaints received	↑13%	329	291	298
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	↑5%	155	148	153
Number of compliments	↑112%	1052	496	332
Number of Member enquiries received	↓27%	174	238	224

3.1 Summary

3.1.1 Children's Services received a total of 329 complaints during the reporting period. This is up from 291 complaints received in 2023/24. As this year included the general election, the rise in complaints could be attributed to the fall in MP enquiries. People may have used the complaint route when the MP route was unavailable to them during the period immediately before and after the election. During the pre-election period, MPs could not raise enquiries on their constituents' behalf. Further, in East Sussex six of the seven MPs elected were new. This meant they needed to recruit staff and set up offices. This could be linked to a fall in MP enquiries. This year we handled 174 MP enquiries. This is a significant drop from the 238 MP enquiries we received in 2023/24. Overall, the total number of contacts fell. We received 958 complaints, member enquiries and enquiries. This is down from 990 received in 2023/24.

3.1.2 The number of complaints from children and young people increased from four to nine. The sample size is too small to be of statistical significance, although we do know that whilst formal complaints from young people are rare, our children's residential settings receive and resolve lower-level issues outside the regulated process. Three young people made complaints with the help of an advocacy service. This is available to any child or young person who wants to complain about a service they have received from us.

3.1.3 In 2024/25, 47% of complaints were upheld/partially upheld. This is slightly less than the 51% upheld or partially upheld 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. The Customer Relations Manager regularly meets with senior managers and quality assurance leads across Children's Services to share outcomes from complaints and associated corrective actions. This ensures that learning is logged and tracked and that what we learn from complaints is having a positive impact on the services that the Council delivers. Below are examples of learning themes identified, and improvement actions taken as a result of complaints.

3.2.2 Actions taken to improve services in 2024/25 include the following:

Social care

Disagreement with family assessments

- We continue to see complaints from people expressing disagreement with the information and professional judgements within Family Assessments. Complaints about family assessments often include multiple points of disagreement.
- Last year we introduced a step for ensuring that parents could share their views when they had received the completed assessment. We also reviewed our processes for

dealing with this type of complaint. Rather than enter into a lengthy, potentially adversarial complaints process, we now set up a meeting between the complainant and relevant social care manager to discuss any areas of disagreement with the assessment. This means a speedier resolution with clarity around what, if anything, will be changed. It means the complainant also has a clearer understanding of any professional judgements within the assessment.

- Further, every customer who complains about a family assessment is given the opportunity to add their statement to the records, to be read alongside the original information. This ensures that families' views are fairly heard and recorded.

Education

SEND Assessment and Planning

- In 2024/25 the SEND Assessment and Planning Team experienced a high level of statutory demand in November and December. This was for Education, Health, and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNAs). We have a statutory duty to decide whether to assess or not and to let families know our decision within six weeks from request.
- When the six-week period ended over the Christmas period, statutory timescales were missed in a small number of cases. Families who requested an EHCNA in the later part of the year told us that they were expecting decisions to be communicated to them over the Christmas period, including on Christmas Day and Boxing Day.
- We looked at why there was an increase in requests over this period, as this had not happened before. It is good practice not to submit requests during the summer holidays which may explain some of the increase. Schools and families may also have waited for children to settle into the new academic year before requesting an EHCNA.
- As a result of the complaints, we have changed the process for keeping families up to date on progress of EHCNAs. To manage expectations, when we can see that EHCNA demand is increasing, we now proactively explain to families that they will not receive a decision within 6 weeks where this is the case. We expect this to only be an issue over the Christmas period. While disappointing for the families, it means that we are clear and upfront from the beginning of the process about timelines. We aim for families to feel informed and to have clear communication so they can raise any issues with staff they are working with, rather than feeling they need to complain.

3.3 Compliments

3.3.1 In addition to the complaint-related contacts received, we also logged 1,052 compliments. Despite the increase in complaint-related contact, the high rise in compliments indicates that customers are also having positive experiences.

3.3.2 This is 112% higher than the 496 compliments received in 2023/24. This increase can be attributed to a change in how compliments are collected. Compliments are often shared informally making them harder to collect and record centrally. Last year, new systems were implemented to ensure that each division within the department was reliably sharing positive feedback. The changes were embedded this year. The sharp increase indicates that staff are now aware that it is important to recognise compliments and share them so they can be recorded and recognised.

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					
2024/25	12	2	28	1	6		49
2023/24	13	2	14		7		36
2022/23	11	2	15	1	10		39

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	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23
Number of complaints received	↓ 8%	145	158	54
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	↓ 14%	81	94	15
Number of compliments	↑ 25%	339	270	409

4.1 Summary

4.1.1 There were 145 complaints received and completed in CET in 2024/25, compared to 158 complaints received in 2024/25. Of the 145 complaints in 2024/25, 81 were fully or partly upheld which was 56% of complaints, compared to 59% of complaints upheld in 2023/24.

4.1.2 For 2024/25, there were 38 complaints upheld or partly upheld in relation to issues with the quality of the service delivery and 42 complaints regarding poor communications with our customers.

4.1.3 There were 30 (37%) upheld complaints in 2024/25 regarding claims being made to Highways. In 2023/24, it was 49% of the upheld complaints and it was a new area of concern for customers. Complaints that are logged about claims only address the communications and any processing issues, not the outcome of the claims (which is handled by an appeal process). These complaints about claims were upheld due to lack of responses, delays in processing, and errors in handling the claims. The number of complaints regarding claims has steadily decreased through the year of 2024/25, with one upheld in Q4, 2024/25.

4.1.4 There were 17 (21%) complaints upheld about Highways due to lack of communications to customers' queries regarding repairs needing to be carried out.

4.1.5 There were 24 (30%) complaints for Highways regarding quality of delivery of service. Some themes of these complaints were incomplete, incorrect information or conflicting or poor explanations causing confusion for the customers or not addressing their concerns. Other areas were regarding insufficient work being carried out. The remedies for these complaints were providing correct information or explanations, and where needed, further work carried out to resolve the issues fully.

4.1.6 In 2024/25, 7 (9%) complaints regarding Home to School Transport, were upheld due to incorrect information regarding transport arrangements, errors with payments, and lack of communications. These complaints related to where new transport and payments arrangements were being embedded.

4.2 Action taken to improve the service

4.2.1 The following are actions taken to improve services in 2024/25 as a result of complaints.

4.2.2 Highways Claims Team

- The team reviewed their responses in order to provide more thorough and improved explanations due to the complaints about poor communications.
- Where complaints were regarding claim outcomes which was based on incorrect information, it was discussed with team members to identify where the errors were made in order to avoid them occurring in the future.

4.2.3 Home to School Transport Team put additional measures in place to prevent any delays in payment occurring in future due to their complaints.

4.2.4 East Sussex Highways Contact Centre Team

- Improvements were made to communications by updating the standard template wording on the team's 'no reply' email responses so that the emails included instructions on how to log onto the website customer account in order to respond or make further queries.
- It is recognised that it is not always productive to invite customers to respond to matters which have been resolved (and where there is no further help or explanation that can be provided to them); however, evidence showed that some customers had further queries which needed addressing. There is also standard template wording providing customers instructions on how to log a complaint if they remain unhappy.
- Work was carried out in the Contact Centre to improve communications between teams in ESCC and the Contact Centre in order to make it clearer to customers who will help them and who will provide information to them about any ongoing work.

4.2.5 Improvements to Highways corporate webpages

- Improvements were made to the Highways webpages on the ESCC corporate website (eastsussex.gov.uk) in order to update and remove the duplication between the ESCC and Balfour Beatty websites, ensuring key information is maintained on just one website.
- Policies have been made more accessible and easier to navigate and read.
- The number of pages has been significantly reduced to simplify the user experience.
- User engagement analysis was carried out in order to optimise and improve visibility of the reporting process, recognising that reporting a problem is the primary user journey.
- These changes make it easier for users to find the information they need quickly and efficiently. Customer feedback will continue to be monitored.

4.3 Compliments

4.3.1 There were 339 compliments logged in CET in 2024/25 compared to 270 compliments in 2023/24. Compliment numbers continue to be higher than the number of complaints, which indicates that staff continue to deliver high quality services and show their commitment to customers. The following are some themes of the compliments received in 2024/25:

- Customer appreciated being kept informed, including about resources available.
- The dedication and inspiration of staff in supporting individuals to improve their circumstances.
- Customers were grateful for work carried out and the improvement to their surroundings and environment.
- Individuals appreciated the professionalism, care and consideration of staff they interacted with.
- They appreciated staff being welcoming, friendly and willing to help with their needs.

4.3.2 There is often fluctuation in numbers of compliments received due to factors such as events, promotions, and works or developments taking place. For 2024/25, the number of compliments increased for the teams of Culture, Employability & Skills, and Waste.

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				
2024/25	1		14	1	3	19
2023/24	2		12	1	2	17
2022/23	2	1	11			14

4.4.2 One complaint was upheld by the LGSCO in relation to CET services. Although this complaint was upheld, it was not investigated by the Ombudsman. This was due to the Ombudsman identifying that ESCC had taken satisfactory action to address the complaint already.

5. Business Services

	Change	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23
Number of complaints received	-	1	2	1
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	-	1	2	1
Number of compliments	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

5.1 Summary

5.1.1 One complaint was upheld for Business Services in 2024/25 regarding lack of communications. An apology was given, and the customer was contacted by the relevant team.

5.2 Compliments

5.2.1 No compliments from external individual customers were reported departmentally for Business Services in 2024/25.

5.3 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

5.3.1 There was one complaint registered with the LGSCO in 2024/25 regarding Business Services, but it was closed after its initial enquiries and not investigated.

6. Governance Services

	Change	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23
Number of complaints received	-	3	0	2
Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld	-	0	0	0
Number of compliments	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

6.1 Summary

6.1.1 There were three complaints logged for Governance Services in 2024/25 and none of them were upheld.

6.2 Compliments

6.2.1 No compliments were recorded in 2024/25.

6.3 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

6.3.1 There was one complaint registered with the LGSCO in 2024/25 regarding Governance Services, but it was closed after its initial enquiries and not investigated.

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.