

Annual Customer Feedback Report 2024-2025

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Purpose of the Report

To provide an overview of Stoke-on-Trent City Council's corporate and statutory customer feedback, including complaints and compliments, from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The report also fulfils the statutory responsibility of the local authority to publish an annual report for complaints about children's and adults social care.

Background and Introduction

The experiences and feedback of those who live, work and visit the city helps us to ensure we can learn and improve to continue to provide high quality services. The city council encourages feedback from our residents about the services we deliver. Residents' feedback helps us to understand what we are doing well and where we need to make improvements. The Customer Feedback Team encourage services to learn from the feedback they receive and to implement changes and improvements to ensure that the services we deliver are the best that they can be

The Customer Feedback Team co-ordinates complaints relating to three separate complaints processes. These are:

1. The Adult Social Care Statutory Process
2. The Children's Social Care Statutory Process
3. The Corporate Complaints Process. These are complaints relating to other services provided by the Council where there is no statutory complaints procedure.

In addition, the Customer Feedback Team also deal with enquiries from MPs. We recognise that our customers have a range of experiences when contacting us and using our services. Some of these experiences are positive, and we want to recognise and celebrate where good practice is evident, where others fall short of our standards it is essential that we learn from them. As an organisation, we provide customers with a mechanism to feedback to us both positive and negative experiences and encourage a culture of learning, where the focus is on resolution and continual improvement. Our intention is to put things right at the first point of contact but where this cannot be done, we operate a robust complaints procedure.

There has been a 13.5% decrease for the period 2024-25 in the number of recorded compliments compared to 2023-2024, giving a total of 318. We define a compliment as feedback from a customer to a member of staff for service which goes above and beyond their expectations. Compliments are shared with Line Managers and regularly reported at performance meetings, we have recently reminded all staff to ensure that any compliments they receive are logged.

2024-2025 saw an increase of 240 stage one corporate complaints giving a total of 1805 compared to 1595 in 2023-2024.

The number of stage two corporate complaints also increased compared to 2023-2024. This year, 224 stage two corporate complaints were considered which equates to 12% of all corporate complaints received escalating to this stage.

With regard to statutory complaints about social care services, there has been an increase of 26 adult statutory complaints compared to 2023-2024 and a reduction of 60 children's statutory complaints for the same period.

In 2024-2025 the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman dealt with 66 complaints. Of these, 21 were not ready for them to investigate. They assessed and closed 35 complaints and investigated 10. Of these investigations 8 (80%) were upheld and we complied with 100% of their recommendations. Comparing individual council uphold rates against the average rate shows that 80% of investigated complaints were upheld, compared with an average of 80% in similar authorities.

The Housing Ombudsman Service determined on 3 cases which saw findings of service failure and maladministration against the city council for the period 2024-2025. This is a decrease on the previous period which saw 4 determinations by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

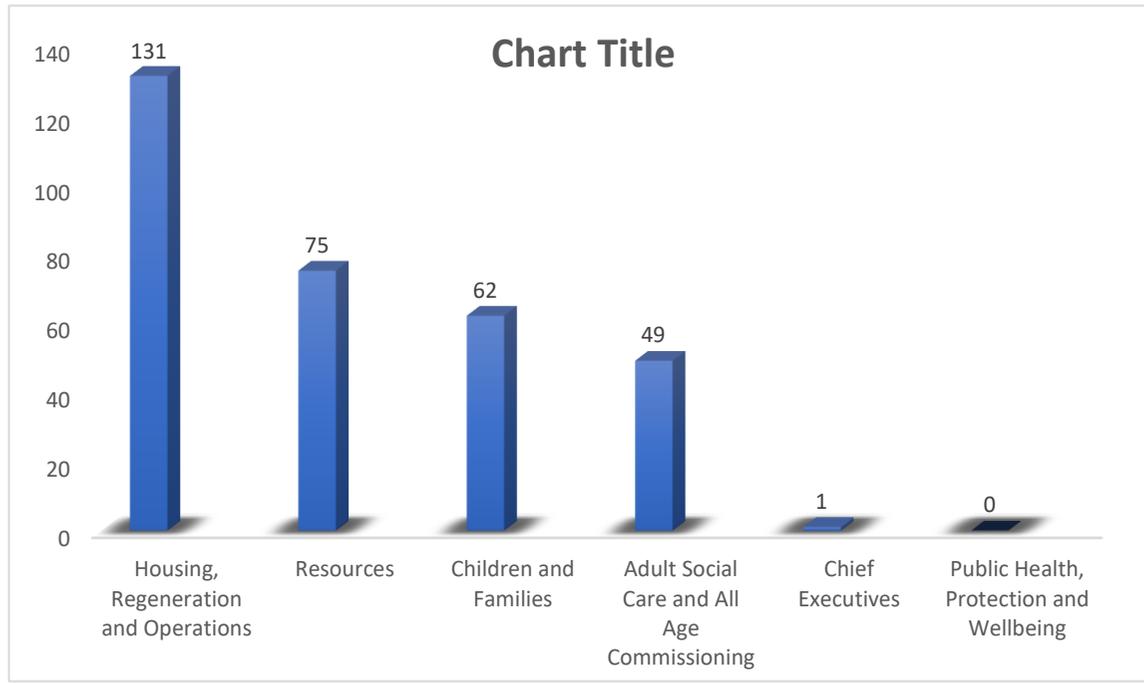
During 2024-2025 we received 705 MP Enquiry which is a 57% reduction on the 1644 received in 2023-2024. This could in part be attributed to the General Election in July 2024 which was preceded by a period of Purdah.

Public Health, Protection and Wellbeing have been the best performing directorate for the period 2024-2025 with 95% of their complaints being responded to within 10 days. Followed by the Resources directorate at 75%.

Compliments

The total number of corporate compliments recorded in 2024-25 was 318.

The chart below highlights the compliments received for each directorate during 2024/25



The Telecare, Lifeline and Rehabilitation service received the most compliments in the Adult Social Care and All Age Commissioning directorate with 35%.

Children in Care teams received the most compliments in the Children and Families directorate with 21%

The Contact Centre and Customer Management received the highest number of compliments in the Resources directorate with 63%.

Environmental services received the most compliments in the Housing, Regeneration and Operations directorate with 36%

We appreciate all of our residents who have taken the time this year to let us know when we've done a good job. Thank you to all the staff involved.

daughter called to thank staff for their involvement in changing provider. She said the 'difference is night and day' and that she 'can't thank you enough' She went on to point out that customer is so happy that she was reduced to tears.

Mrs said 'your service was wonderful for me and my husband and you are all wonderful, thank you'.
Telecare & Lifeline Services

We went to Stoke Library on 20/3/24 to renew our bus passes and register for the brown bin collection. The 2 people we spoke to were super helpful and dealt with the bus passes. We were asked to do the bin reg on line. We were told we would get the passes and bin sticker in about 1 month. The sticker came early this week and the bus passes today.

I am leaving some feedback on the very recent completion of groundworks at Bucknall New Road ST1.

The council undertook a massive groundwork scheme that has changed the appearance on BNR dramatically by removing old fence/boarding and installing low level timber fencing that now allows views along the length of the green open space.

The work was carried out quickly and very professionally using machinery and manual labour with no disruption to any-one and the end result is excellent. The labour force meticulously cleared the ground/space over and over until it was left completely clear of all kinds of vegetation and discarded rubbish.

Big thanks to the team the councillors and the Council for somehow finding the funds to carry out the work. BNR is a very busy road leading to the centre of Stoke and this work has now enhanced its appearance opening up land previously abandoned.

Well done all

Corporate Stage 1 Process

A complaint is defined within the Stoke-on-Trent corporate complaints policy as:

'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, its own staff, those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.'

In April 2024 the Housing Ombudsman Service introduced a statutory Complaint Handling Code. The city council owns approximately 1700 council properties and the Handling Code sets out guidance to ensure that complaints are being handled fairly and appropriately. The code sets out a number of indicators to measure how well the city council is performing.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman plan to also start monitoring compliance against the Code from 2026/27. IT improvements are already underway to ensure that the Customer Feedback Team can capture all of the necessary data to show our compliance against the code.

76% of the stage 1 complaints for the period 2024-25 were logged, acknowledged and resolved within 15 days of receiving the complaint.

63% of stage 2 complaints were logged, acknowledged and resolved within 25 days of the complaint being escalated.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council operates a 2 stage complaints process for all corporate complaints. Our Corporate Complaints and Compliments Policy is published on the website.

Heads of Service approve stage 1 complaint responses. The Investigation Officer is encouraged to complete a thorough investigation and provide the complainant with a detailed response of their findings. The timescale to respond to stage one complaints is 10 working days, however this can be extended if required for more complex investigations.

Corporate Stage 2 Process

In cases where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the response they have received at stage one of the corporate complaints and compliments procedure, they can request that a stage two investigation is carried out.

Statutory Complaints Process

Children's Social Care

The Children's Social Care Complaints procedure is fully compliant with the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2005 and the accompanying guidance 'Getting the Best from Complaints'. 3 Staff are actively encouraged to resolve concerns at the first point of contact as quickly and clearly as possible. Where a concern cannot be addressed at an informal level, it can be escalated to the complaints process which has three stages.

Adult Social Care and Providers

The Adult Social Care Complaints and Representations Procedure is designed to comply with the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service 4 Complaints (England) Regulations 2009. Adult Social Care staff are encouraged to pursue first-point resolution in relation to the concerns of service users. Where problems cannot be resolved this way or a more detailed investigation is required, the service user can make a formal complaint.

Stage 1 Local Resolution

Stage one complaint investigations are usually undertaken by a Head of Service. It is expected that the majority of complaints should be resolved at this stage. The Customer Feedback Team encourage Strategic Managers to complete a thorough investigation into the concerns raised within the complaint and ensure that a detailed and robust response is provided. The timescale allowed to respond to a stage one complaint is 10 working days. This timescale can be extended up to 20 working days for more complex investigations with the agreement of the complainant.

Stage 2 Independent Investigation

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at stage one of the complaints procedure, or has not received a response within the prescribed stage one timescale, they may request that their complaint is escalated to stage two. Stage two investigations are carried out by an Investigating Officer who is independent of the Local Authority. An Independent Person is appointed to oversee the complaint investigation and ensure that the investigation is open, transparent and fair. The Independent Investigating Officer and Independent Person each produce a report of their findings and any recommendations for the Local Authority. The Assistant Director - Children's Services acts as the Adjudicating Officer on behalf of the Local Authority and provides a formal response to the complainant. The Adjudicating Officer should also ensure that any recommendations and learning are implemented. Stage two investigations should be completed within 25 working days and can be extended up to 65 working days if required with the agreement of the complainant.

Stage 3 Review Panel

Where a complainant remains dissatisfied following receipt of the outcome of their stage two complaint they may request that an independent review panel is held to review the handling of their complaint. The panel is made up of a chair person and two panel members, all of whom are independent of the local authority. The panel is attended by the Independent Investigating Officer, Independent Person and the Adjudicating Officer at stage two and is clerked by a member of staff from the Customer Feedback Team. The Customer Feedback Team Manager attends as advisor to the panel. The panel chair person must provide a report to the Local Authority within 5 working days of the panel hearing. The Director of Children's Services then considers the panel's findings and produces the Local Authority's response to the complaint within 15 working days.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman Service

Once a complainant has exhausted the local procedures, they have the opportunity to approach the relevant Ombudsman service to request that their complaint is investigated. Complainants can approach the Ombudsman directly to make their complaint at any stage, though they will usually be expected to have exhausted all stages of the city council's own complaints procedure before the Ombudsman will carry out an investigation. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman looks at individual complaints about councils and provides an impartial service. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman considers complaints about all council services with the exception of some housing complaints. The Housing Ombudsman Service look at complaints about housing where there is a landlord tenant relationship between the council and the complainant. Both Ombudsman Services aim to respond to the majority of complaints they receive within 12 months. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman issues an annual letter which details the complaints they have received about each local authority's services and the outcome of their investigations, this is included in Appendix B of this report. The Housing Ombudsman issues an annual letter to the local authorities with 5 or more findings of maladministration. This is included in Appendix C of this report.

Corporate Stage 1 Complaints 2024/25

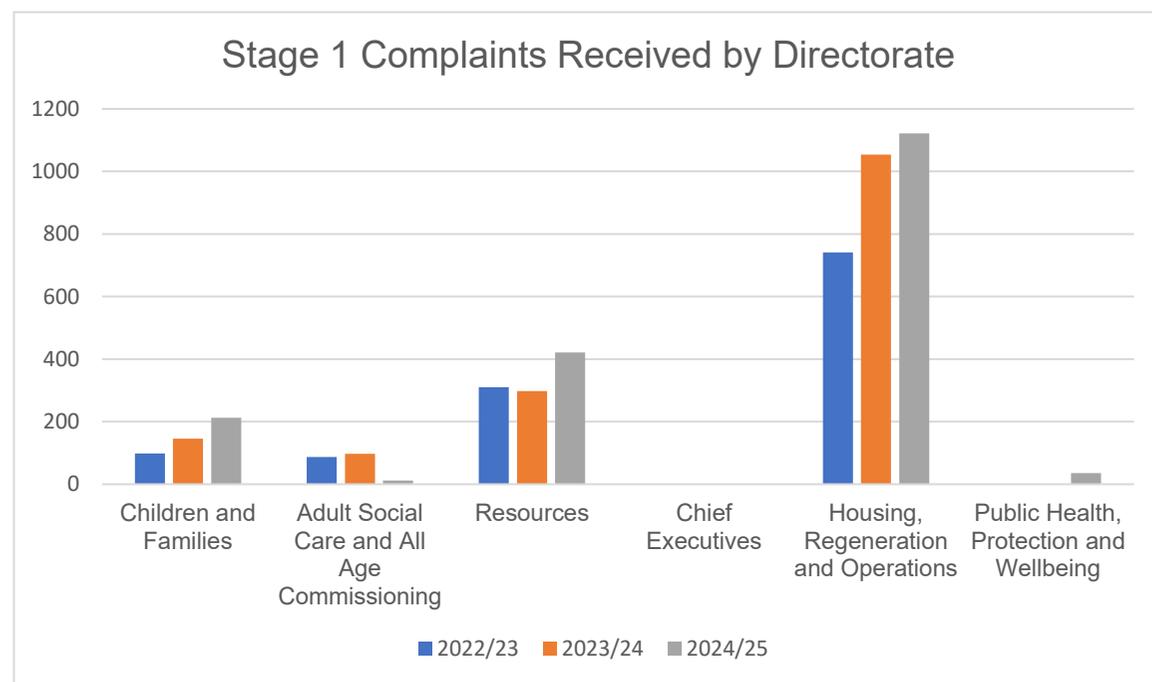
In the year 2024/25, there were 1805 corporate Stage One complaints (those dealt with by more than one service simultaneously are counted as a single complaint) from 1595 complainants. This is a 13% increase on 2023/24.

Just 14 of the 1805 complaints were refused, which was less than 1%. They were refused either because there were ongoing court proceedings or because there was a right of appeal or tribunal.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman state that the number of complaints should not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-published and accessible complaints procedure.

The chart below shows the number of corporate complaints received by each of the city council's directorates in 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 for comparison. As shown in the chart below there has been an increase in the number of stage one complaints received by all directorates except for Adult Social Care and All Age Commissioning, which has seen a reduction in the number of complaints. Public Health, Protection and Wellbeing is a new directorate which was previously part of Adult Social Care, but, even if both of these were added together, the number of stage 1 complaints for these 2 directorates is still less than the previous period. The largest increase is for Resources which has seen an increase of 123 complaints compared to 2023-24. 65% of the complaints for this directorate were for Revenues and Benefits with communication being the highest issue nature at 45%. The directorate with the highest number of complaints is still Housing, Regeneration and Operations. This directorate has the highest number of complaints at 463, with 39% of these being housing disrepair claims from Solicitors on the basis of 'no win no fee'.

Complaints about Housing Repairs are not detailed in this report.



What kind of complaints are we getting?

Each complaint is allocated an 'issue nature' which aims to summarise the nature of the concerns raised and these are grouped under the following headings:

- Communication and Information
- Conduct of an Officer
- Discrimination
- Policy
- Service Delay
- Service Failure

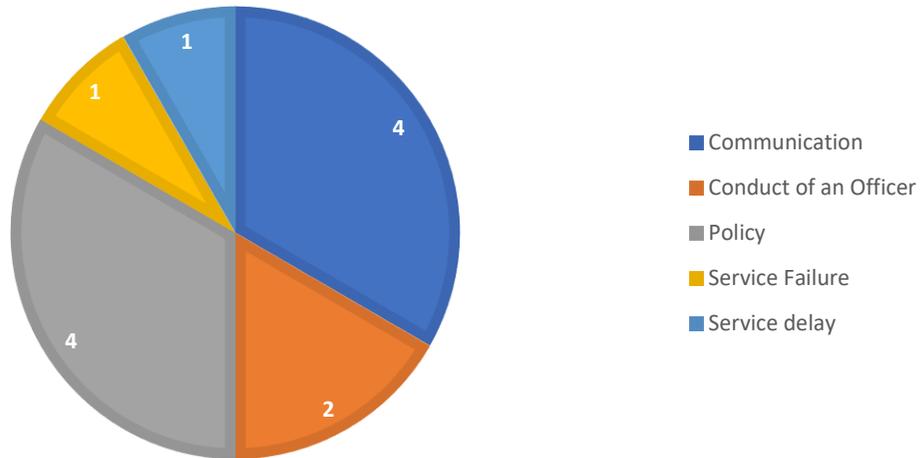
A complaint can be allocated multiple issue natures and be dealt with by more than one service area but it will still only be counted as one complaint. The majority of corporate complaints received by the city council during 2024-25 related to Service Delay and Service Failure which is the same as the previous year.

The following table shows the stage one issue natures (prior to investigation) for each directorate for 2024-25. There were no complaints during 2024-25 for the category of discrimination. Chief Executives directorate received just 1 complaint during 2024-25 for the category of Service Failure.

2024-2025 Stage 1 Complaints for each directorate;

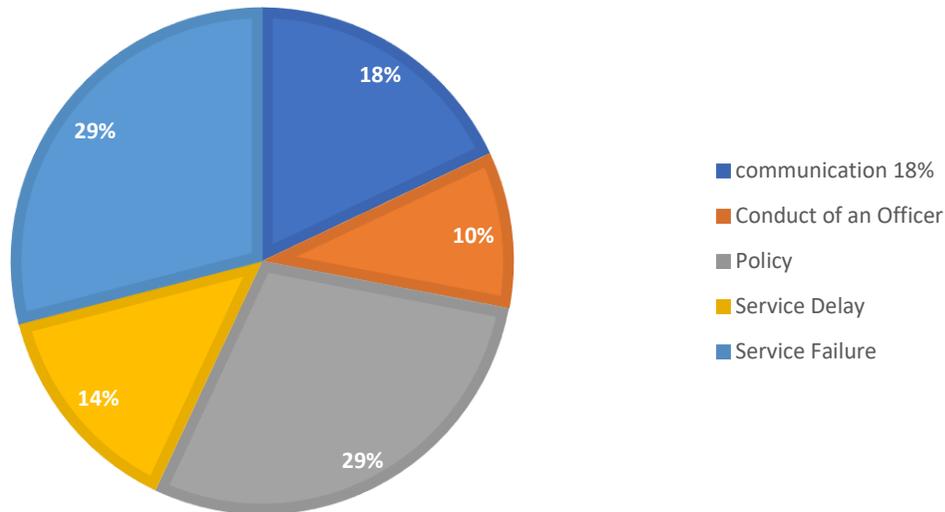
I hope you are well I 'm not feeling so good at the minute but first things first I want to thank you so much for what you tried so hard to do for my Mum... I think you are such an amazing person. You are the one person through all this that actually listened to us and I'm so disappointed you haven't now got my mum's case. I know you would have got us through this. You are such a lovely person and I'm so sad we won't be seeing you now.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND ALL AGE COMMISSIONING



For comparison, for the period 2023-24, the main areas of complaint were Service Delay at 28%, followed by Communication at 21%.

PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND WELLBEING



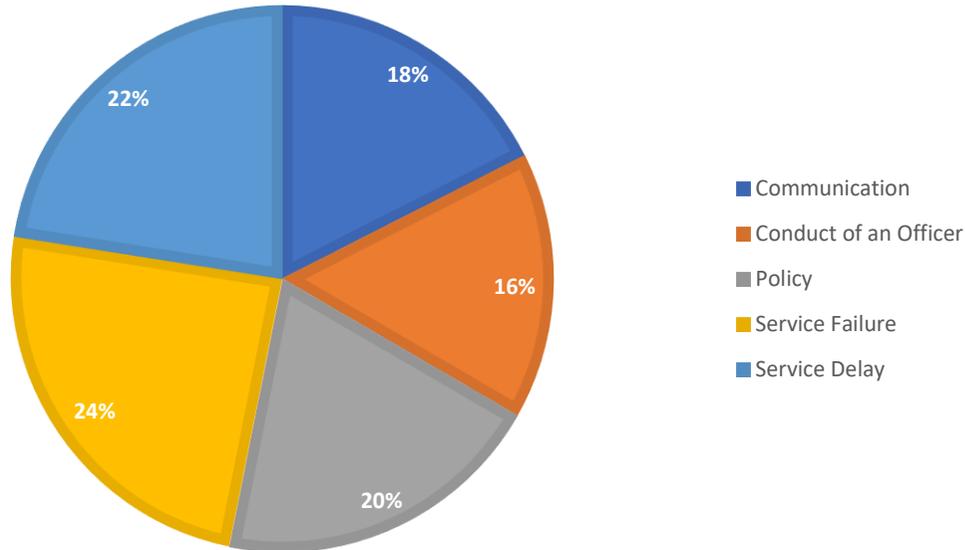
I am writing to congratulate you on the new Butterfly Dreams children's garden at Carmountside Cemetery and Crematorium. The brick work, bedding area and overall concept is a credit to you and the gentleman I have seen working on it recently. I feel sure it will give great comfort to those who need to visit it another first class addition to this first class cemetery and crematorium.

For the period 2023-24 this directorate was part of Adult Social Care so there are no figures for comparison.

I visited Burslem park for the first time today with my two young grandsons and loved it

I was particularly pleased the beautiful original drinking water fountain worked (on a hot day - very welcome) The grass was cut and there were two thrushes (I think ?!) plus other birds that the boys happily spotted . The Indie Cafe was open and we had tea and sandwiches (but sadly no ice creams available) . The only thing that looked a bit grotty was the round water feature opposite the cafe had rubbish in it and the water looked particularly dirty and unhealthy. Shame it isn't working or safer hygiene wise to

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

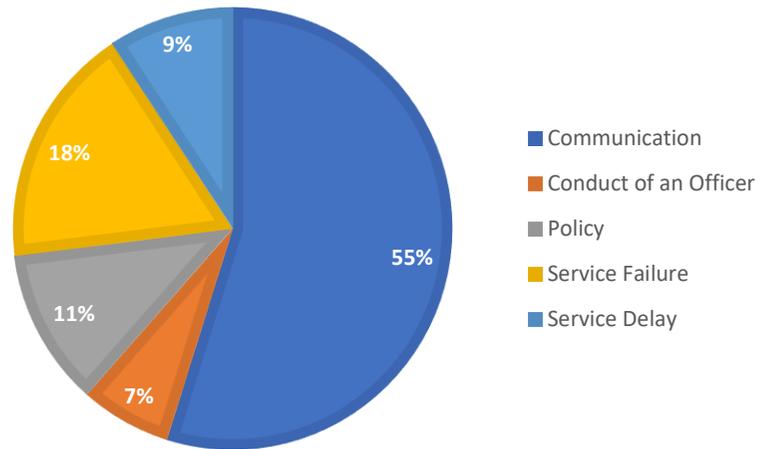


I just want to let you know how much my boys and myself love coming to the library. We all enjoy our visits here whenever we come, and the library has helped them to love books and reading. We really appreciate everything there is on offer here, thank you so much.

For comparison the main areas of complaint for the period 2023-24 was service delay at 44%, followed by Communication at 29%.

I just wanted to let you know that she was absolutely wonderful. She showed care, compassion and is working so hard to try and help this family. She is having to go round and round in circles with them, but she is doing it with such professional conduct that I think she needs recognising for her hard work. She has such patience, and you can see she is exploring anything and everything to help them.

RESOURCES



I would like to say a huge thank you for the help and support that was offered by Maxine today she is an amazing person and has helped me so much at a time that I needed help.

She has made a difference to my day and she helped me so much and helped me

She is a valuable member of your team and I would like to say Thank you for all her hard work and she is a star

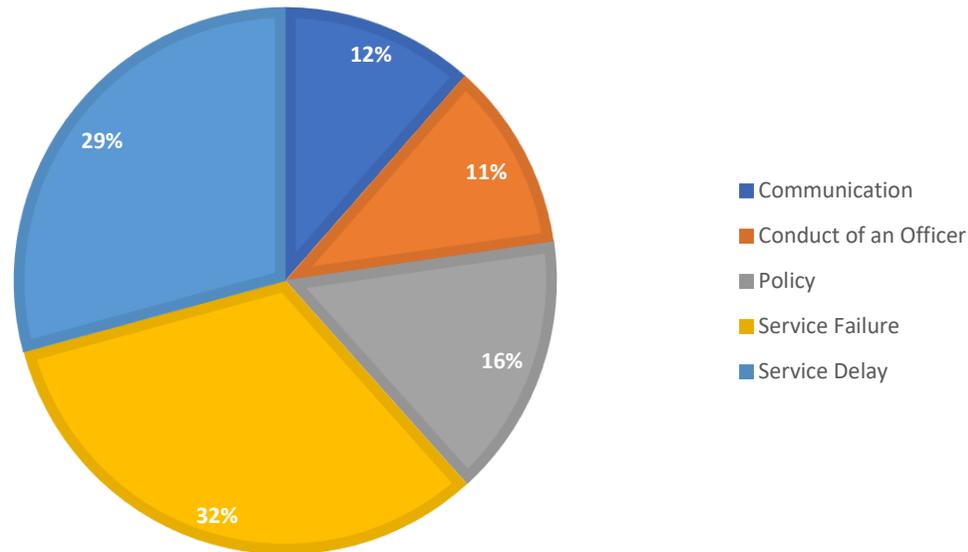
For comparison, for the period 2023-24, the main area of complaint was Communication at 51%, followed by Conduct of an Officer at 14%.

Bentilee Library Staff,

Thank you all for always being so kind and caring, especially at your amazing Tuesday and Friday childrens' sessions. We are so lucky to have such an amazing, wonderful Library in our neighbourhood.

Thank you all!

HOUSING, REGENERATION AND OPERATIONS



For comparison, the main areas for complaint for the period 2023-24 were Service Delay at 31%, followed by Service failure at 27%.

How many complaints are we upholding?

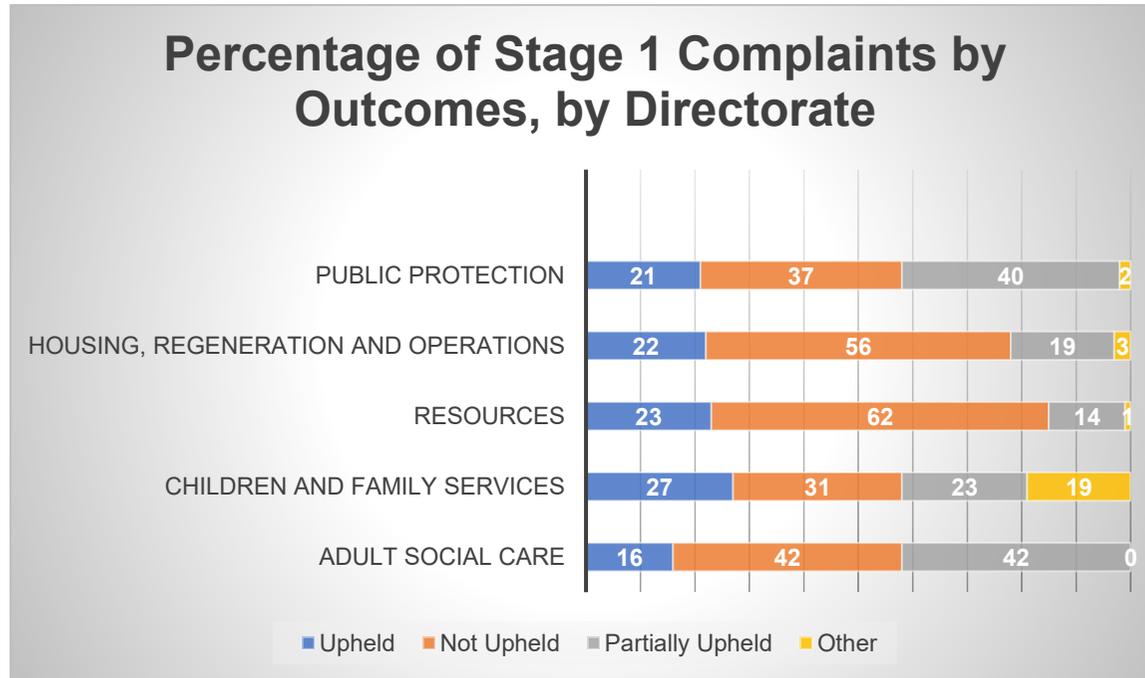
Of the 1,805 corporate complaints that we received across the authority:

- 54% were Not Upheld. This means on the basis of the evidence available the complaint could not be supported.
- 22% were Upheld. This means it was confirmed that a service has not been delivered in accordance with policy, standards or good practice.
- 19% were Partially Upheld. This is where the findings and conclusions of the investigation only partly uphold the complaint. Some complaints have more than one issue to be considered and a mix of outcomes for each issue will result in a 'partially upheld' complaint

Thanks again for your help. If I could impose upon you to send my good feedback to the refuse collection team who cover Bucknall New Road. It is because during the awful weather last week they still managed to empty my bins and return them safely to my property.

- 5% had another recorded outcome, for example the complaint was withdrawn, or escalated to another stage of the complaint's procedure without a stage one outcome being set.

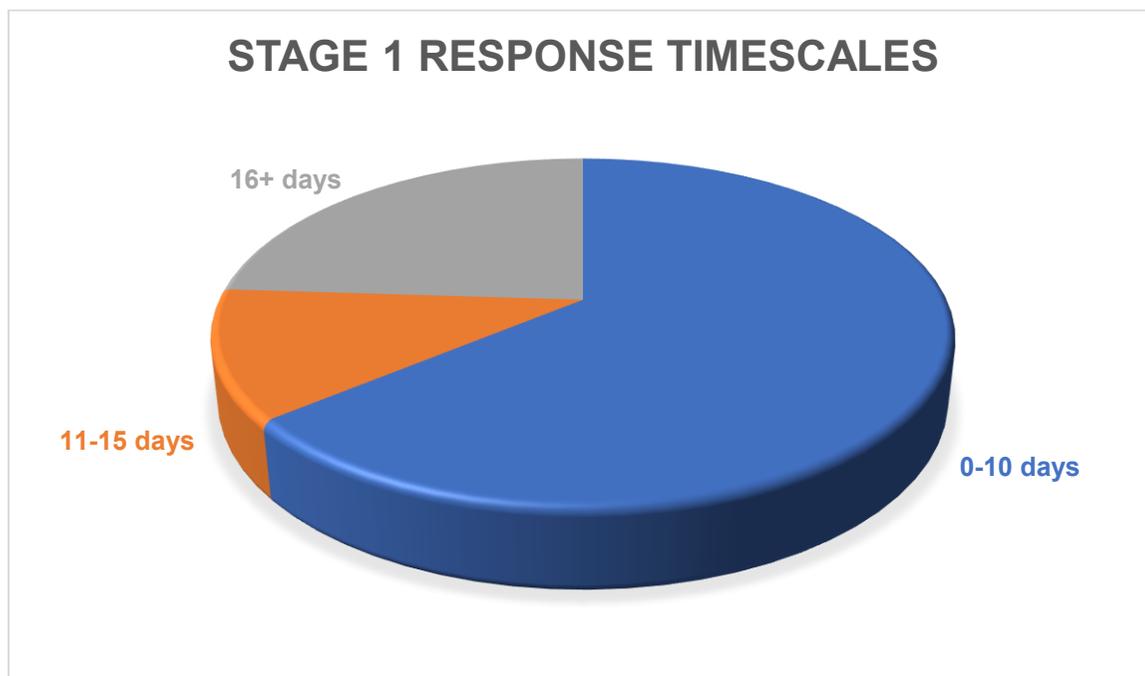
For 2024-25 these outcomes are largely consistent with the previous year. The next graph shows the percentage of stage one complaint outcomes broken down by directorate for 2023-24



How fast are we responding?

The Corporate Complaints Procedure allows 10 working days for stage one complaints to be resolved. In some cases where it is not possible to meet this timescale, it can be extended, however performance is still measured against the original 10 working day timescale. During 2024-25, 64% of all corporate stage one complaints were responded to within timescale which is a decrease compared to last year's performance. There has been a change in the way that we record timescales which could account for the difference in performance. Complaint handling training is scheduled for 2025-26 which should see an improvement in this area for

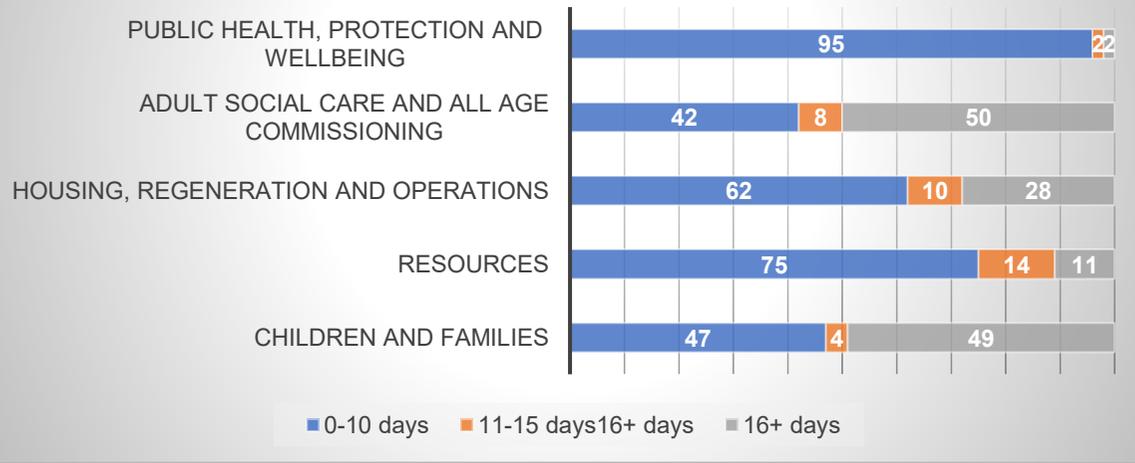
next year. Where complaints will take longer than 10 working days to investigate, the customer is informed of the reasons for the delay and the new deadline date. Complaints are not extended beyond a further 10 working days



The Customer Feedback Team carries out a robust follow up process for overdue complaints, escalating them for the attention of senior management and reporting regularly on performance timescales.

The next graph shows the response timescales for corporate stage one complaints by directorate. The 1 complaint for the Chief Executives directorate was responded to in excess of 16 days.

Percentage of Stage 1 complaints responded to in timescale - by directorate

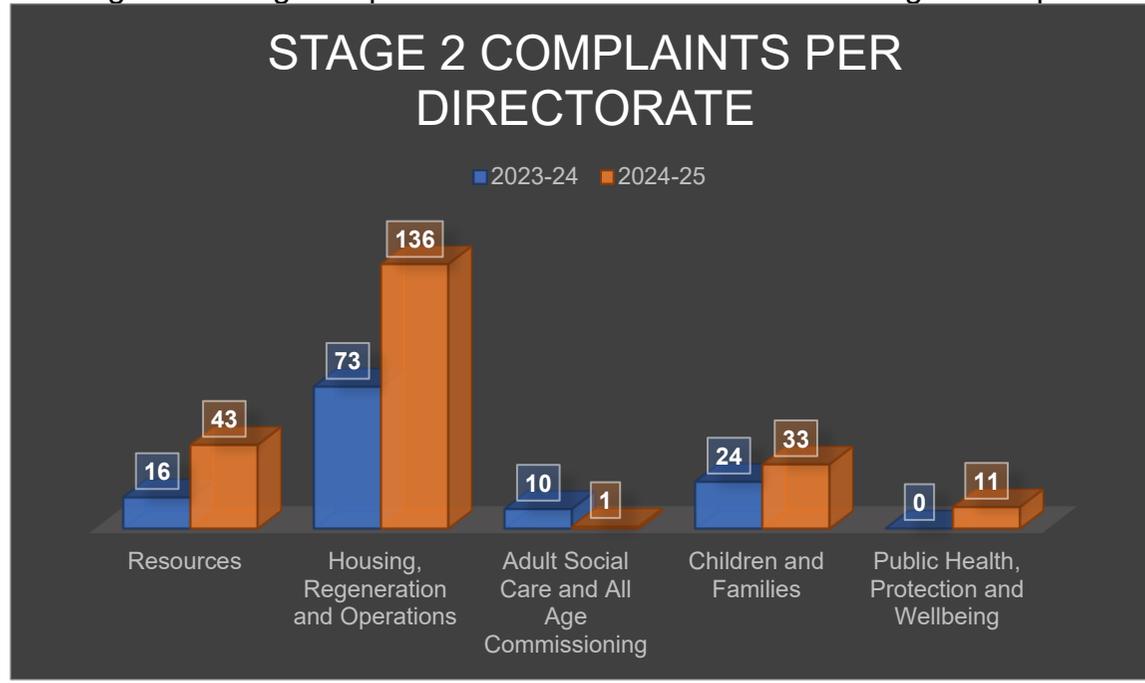


Corporate Stage 2 Complaints

There has been an increase of 101 (82%) of corporate stage two complaints received in 2024-25 compared to last year, 224 is the highest figure since 2019-20. As with corporate stage one complaints, corporate stage two complaint outcomes are categorised as Not Upheld, Partially Upheld or Upheld. Also, some requests for a stage two investigation are refused or withdrawn by the customer. 13% of stage 2 requests were refused or withdrawn during this period. One complaint was withdrawn because the customer was offered a remedy that they were satisfied with before the stage 2 investigation had started.

The next chart shows the breakdown of stage two complaints received by directorate. There has been an increase across all directorates except Adult Social Care and All Age Commissioning, this is because of the new Public Health, Protection and Wellbeing directorate. If the 2 directorates were still together the number of stage 2 cases for this year would have been almost the

same as the previous year. Housing, Regeneration and Operations had the largest increase of 63 stage 2 escalations of which 30% are stage 2 housing disrepair claims. 74% of the Resources stage 2 complaints were for Revenues and Benefits.



35% of the stage two complaints investigated were either upheld or partially upheld at stage two of the complaints procedure. This can sometimes be due to complainants introducing additional issues which may not have been explored at the original complaint investigation at stage one.

The Corporate Complaints procedure allows 20 working days to respond to stage two complaints. It is important, as with stage one complaints, that a thorough investigation is undertaken and, in some cases, there has been a need to extend the deadline with the customer so that the investigation can be completed.

During 2024-25, 43% of stage two complaints were resolved within 20 days. Where the investigation was more complex and took longer than 20 working days to resolve, complainants were kept informed of the progress of the investigation and the reasons for the delay.

Children's Social Care Complaints

This section of the annual report provides information relating to complaints received by the city council about Children's Social Care in the period 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025.

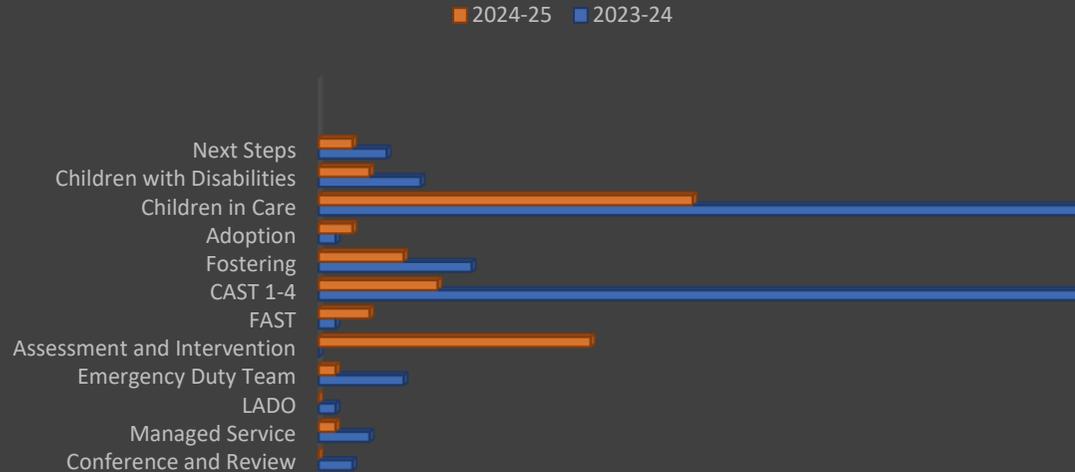
The number of statutory complaints received about Children's Social Care should be balanced against the number of families receiving support and services in the city. Figures for 2024-25 show:

- Approximately 62520 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in Stoke-on-Trent.
- At 31 March 2025, there were 2850 cases open to Children's Services.
- At 31 March 2025, 1063 children and young people were being looked after by the local authority.

This means that the statutory complaints received in 2024-25 regarding the service are from approximately 2.1% of all service users. There has been a 49% reduction in statutory complaints received this year, from 122 in 2023-24 to 62 in 2024-25. There was, however, an increase of 47% in the number of children's complaints which fall under the corporate process.

The chart below shows the trend in statutory complaints across teams over the last two years.

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE STATUTORY COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY TEAM



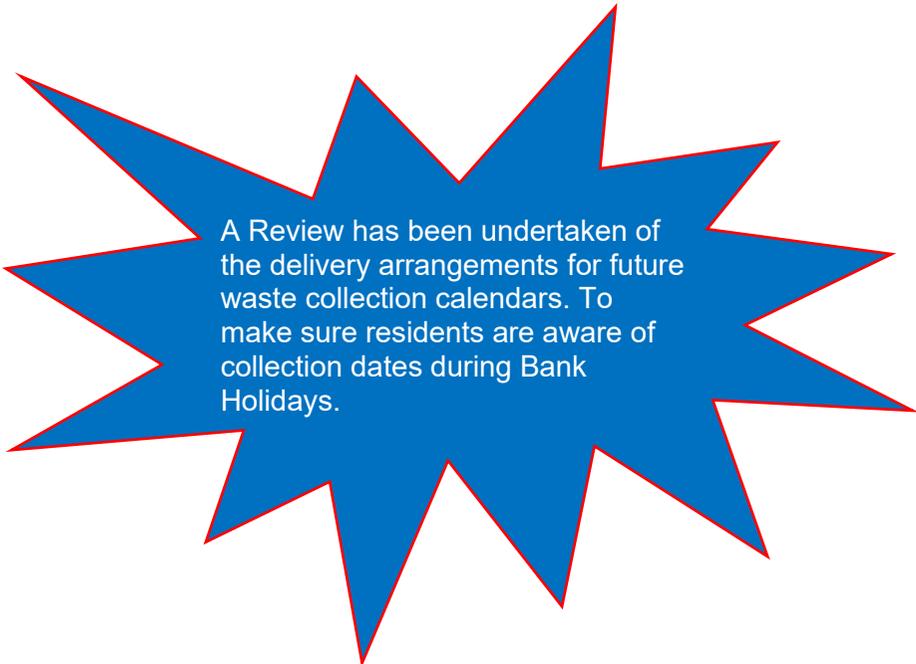
Thank you for the Road Sweeper they did an excellent job, along our road (opp the Crem behind the edge) yesterday (May 16th). We also have the pavement sweeper too and both are really appreciated. Thank you again.

I want to thank the team responsible for the consideration they have shown to residents for the traffic management during the works taking place on Lysander Road, Meir Park. I live on the estate and there has been very little disruption to the traffic flow. The works have been well thought out with minimum disruption during the road layout changes.

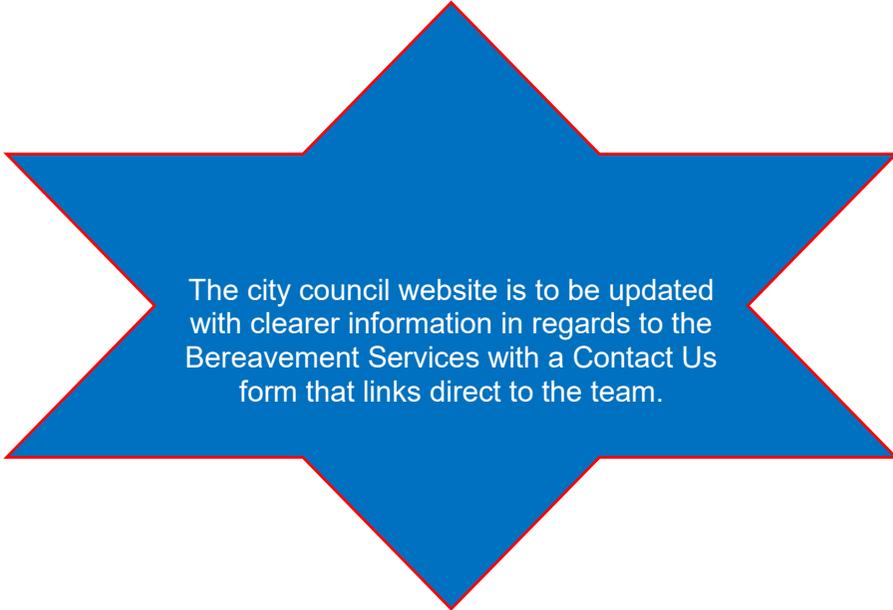
What kind of complaints are we getting?

The most frequent statutory complaints about Children's Social Care in 2024-25 is a lack of support, although there is a reduction of 4 complaints in this area compared to 2023-24. The following table shows the most common stage one complaint issues by nature for 2023-24 and 2022-23 for comparison.

Issue Nature	Number of complaints 2023-24	Number of complaints 2024-25
Incorrect information	0	1
Conduct of an Officer	22	7
Service Failure	7	1
Disagree with decision	19	0
Change in worker	6	2
Communication	30	8
Confidentiality	0	1
Contact	12	6
Other	7	11
Outcome of an Assessment	0	10
Support	19	15
Data Breach	0	0

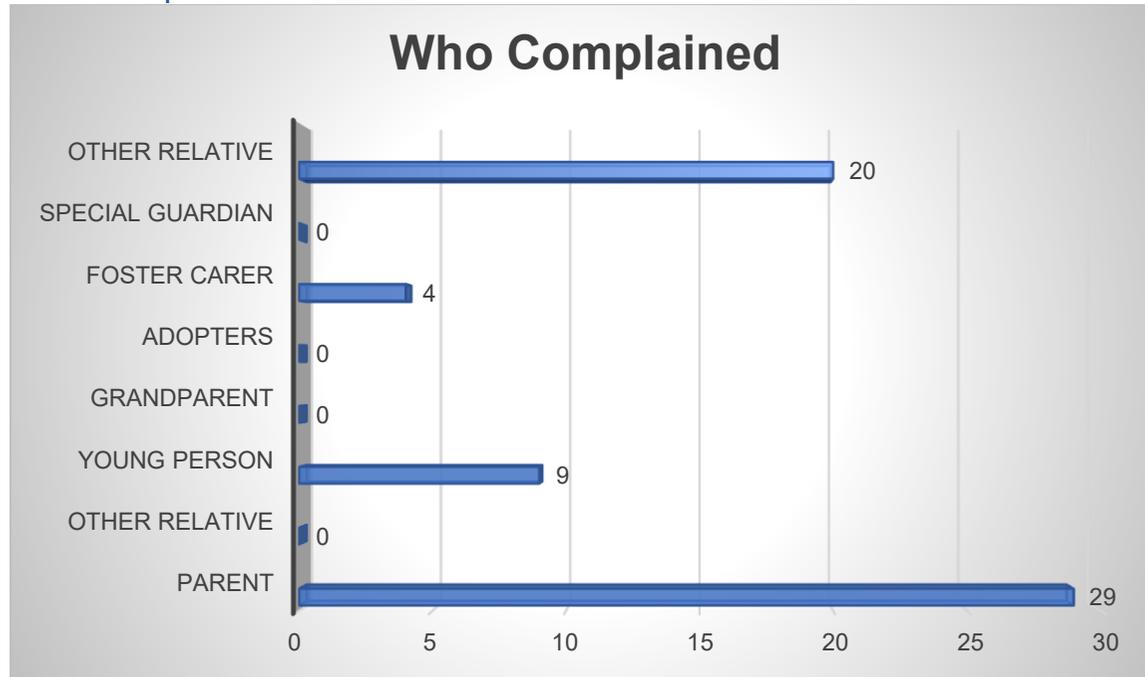


A Review has been undertaken of the delivery arrangements for future waste collection calendars. To make sure residents are aware of collection dates during Bank Holidays.



The city council website is to be updated with clearer information in regards to the Bereavement Services with a Contact Us form that links direct to the team.

Who Complained?



The majority of complaints received in 2024-25 were again made by parents, with 47% of all complaints being made by this group. This has reduced compared to 2023-24 which saw 75% of complaints being made by parents. 15% of complaints were made by Young People compared to 2023-24 when we received 9% and the previous period when we received no complaints at all by this group. This increase is mainly due to the ongoing work by CAFS to update the avenues available to ensure that submitting feedback is easily accessible for the young people of the city.

How many complaints were upheld

Of the 62 Children's Stage 1 Statutory complaints that we received:

32% were Not Upheld. This means on the basis of the evidence available the complaint could not be supported.

20% were Upheld. This means it was confirmed that a service had not been delivered in accordance with policy, standards or good practice.

26% were Partially Upheld. This is where the findings and conclusions of the investigation only partly upheld the complaint. Some complaints have more than one issue to be considered and a mix of outcomes for each issue resulted in a 'partially upheld' complaint.

12% had another recorded outcome, for example the complaint was withdrawn.

10% were out of jurisdiction for investigation.

How fast were we responding?

The next chart shows the percentage of time taken to respond to children's stage 1 complaints, of which 90% were responded to within 10 days, an increase of 20% compared to 2023-2024. Weekly overdue reports are shared with the Heads of Service which has helped to drive up the 10 day response timescale.

How many complaints were escalated

During 2024-25, 2 (3%) of the stage 1 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 of the statutory complaints procedure, which is 50% less than the period 2023-24. This is due to the work being carried out by children's services, where more contact is made with the complainant, from when the complaint is received to when a response is provided. 1 of the complaints was partially upheld and the other was not upheld.

In 2024-25, 0 complaints were escalated to stage 3 of the Children's Social Care Complaints process.

Corporate Complaints relating to Children’s Social Care

Corporate Complaints – Stage One

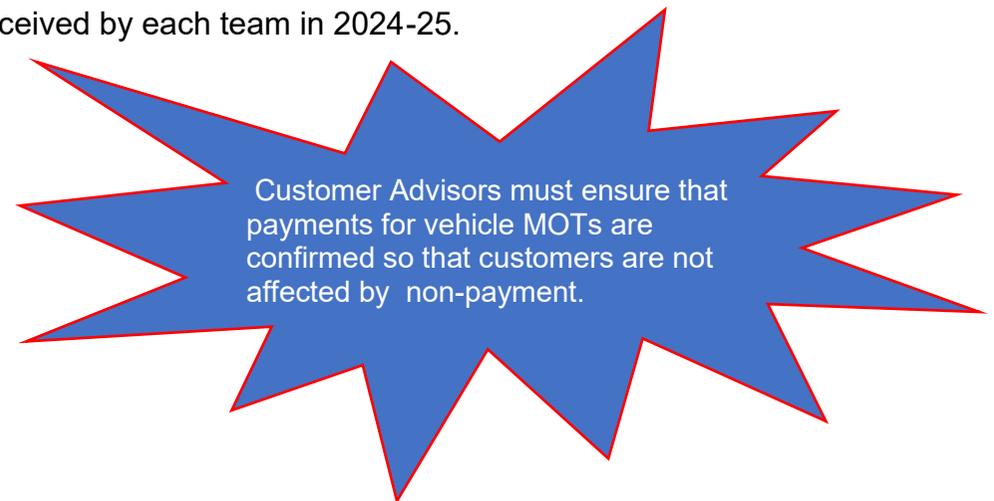
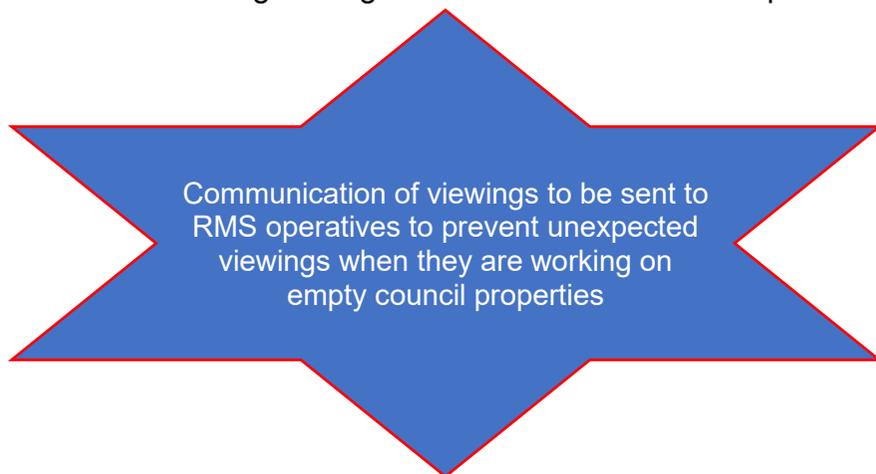
Complaints that do not meet the criteria to be considered under the Statutory complaints process may be considered under the council’s corporate complaints process. For example, a complaint made by an adult about how they have been treated by Children’s Services.

The table below shows the number of complaints about Children’s Social Care that were considered at stage one of the corporate complaints procedure in the last 3 years.

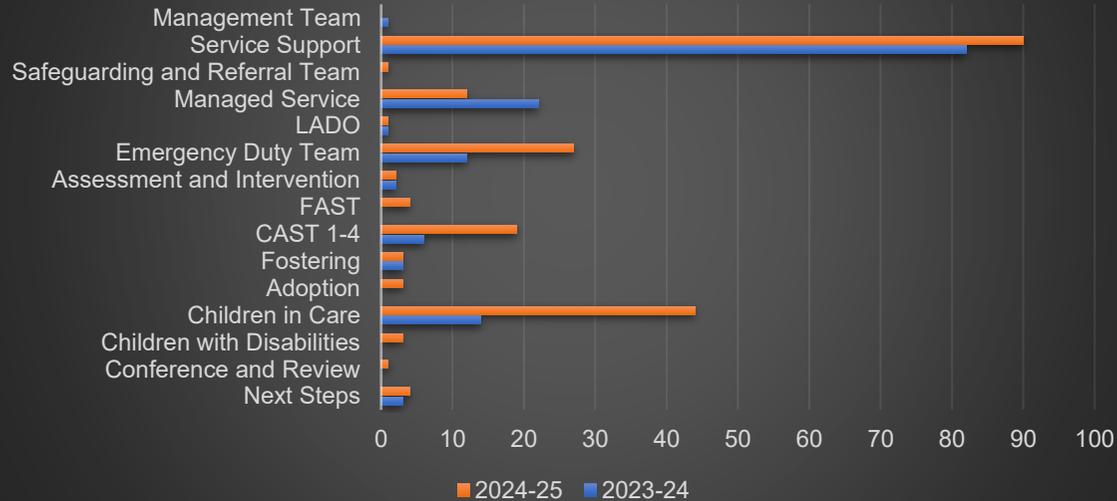
Year	Number of Children’s Social Care Complaints – Corporate Stage 1 Process
2022-23	37
2023-24	146
2024-25	213

2024-25 has seen a 46% increase in the number of stage 1 corporate complaints compared to 2023-24, it’s the highest number in 8 years. This means that the corporate complaints received in 2024-25 regarding the service are from approximately 7.5% of all service users.

The following chart gives a breakdown of the corporate complaints received by each team in 2024-25.



Number of Complaints Received by Team 2023-24



What type of complaints were we getting?

Issue nature	Number of complaints 2023-24	Number of complaints 2024-25
Communication and Information	39	45
Conduct of an Officer	10	38
Discrimination	0	0
Policy	26	52
Service Delay	66	21
Service Failure	19	58
Total	160	214

The most noticeable comparison is the increase in complaints during 2024-25 concerning officer conduct, 4 (10%) of these type of complaints were upheld and 8 (21%) were partially upheld with 8 of those complaints being made by parents. There has been a 68% decrease in the number of complaints for service delay but an increase of 67% in service failure with 16 (27.5%) being upheld.

How many complaints were upheld

Of the 214 corporate complaints that we received about Children's Social Care:

- 32% were Not Upheld. This means on the basis of the evidence available the complaint could not be supported.
- 28% were Upheld. This means it was confirmed that a service had not been delivered in accordance with policy, standards or good practice.
- 24% were Partially Upheld. This is where the findings and conclusions of the investigation only partly upheld the complaint. Some complaints had more than one issue to be considered and a mix of outcomes for each issue resulted in a 'partially upheld' complaint.
- 16% were either withdrawn at the request of the complainant or refused due to being in court proceedings.

How fast were we responding?

The Corporate Complaints Procedure allows 10 working days for complaints to be resolved. During 2024-25, 47% of all Corporate Stage 1 complaints relating to Children's Social Care were responded to within timescale the majority of the complaints were responded to in excess of 16 days (49%)

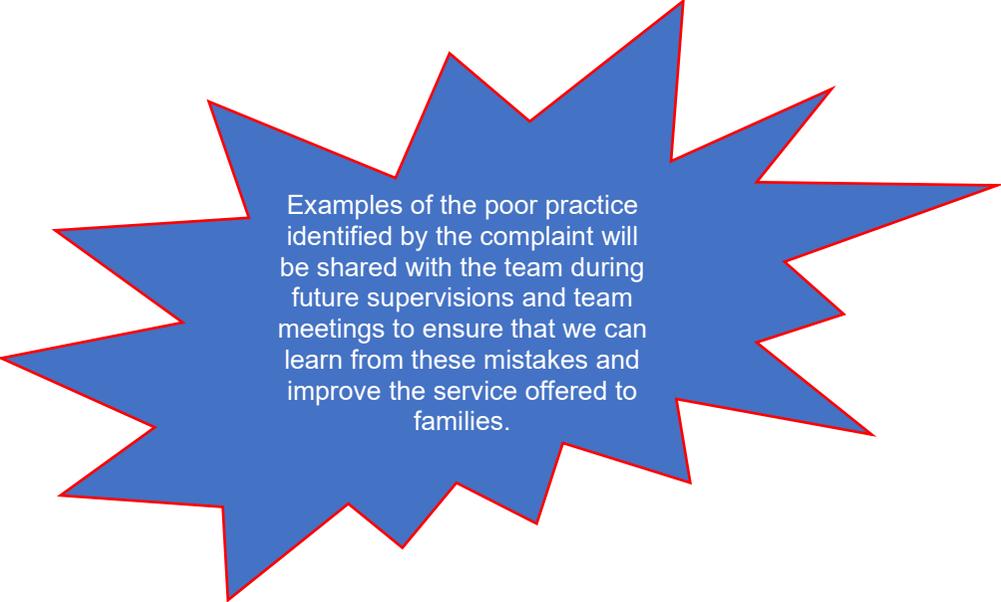
Corporate Complaints relating to Children's Social Care – Stage Two

In 2024-25 saw 30 (14%) corporate complaints about Children's Social Care escalated to stage 2 of the corporate complaints procedure. This is an increase of 7 cases compared to 2023-24. 60% of these complaints concerned the Special Educational Needs Monitoring and Assessment Service (SENMAS), compared to 78% for the period 2023-24. 39% of these complaints concerned Special Educational Needs Transport of which just 1 complaint was upheld.

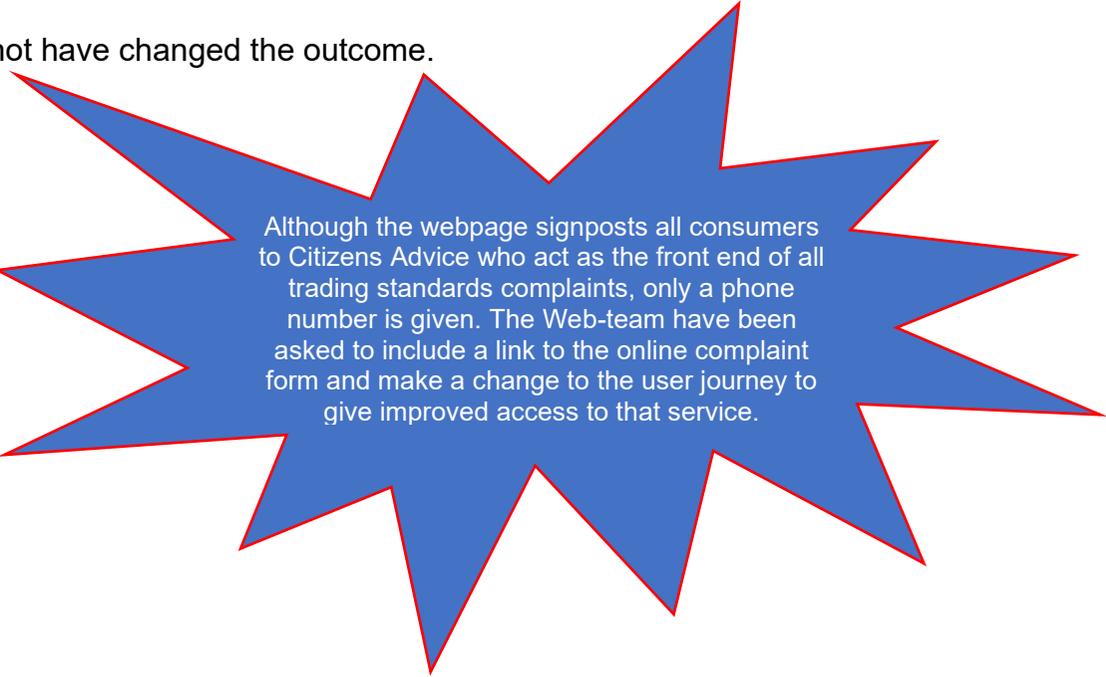
How many Complaints were Upheld?

Of the 30 corporate stage 2 complaints that we received about Children's Social Care:

- 9 were Upheld. This means it was confirmed that a service had not been delivered in accordance with policy, standards or good practice.
- 7 were Not Upheld. This means on the basis of the evidence available the complaint could not be supported.
- 6 were Partially Upheld. This is where the findings and conclusions of the investigation only partly upheld the complaint. Some complaints had more than one issue to be considered and a mix of outcomes for each issue resulted in a 'partially upheld' complaint.
- 8 were refused on the basis that a further investigation would not have changed the outcome.



Examples of the poor practice identified by the complaint will be shared with the team during future supervisions and team meetings to ensure that we can learn from these mistakes and improve the service offered to families.



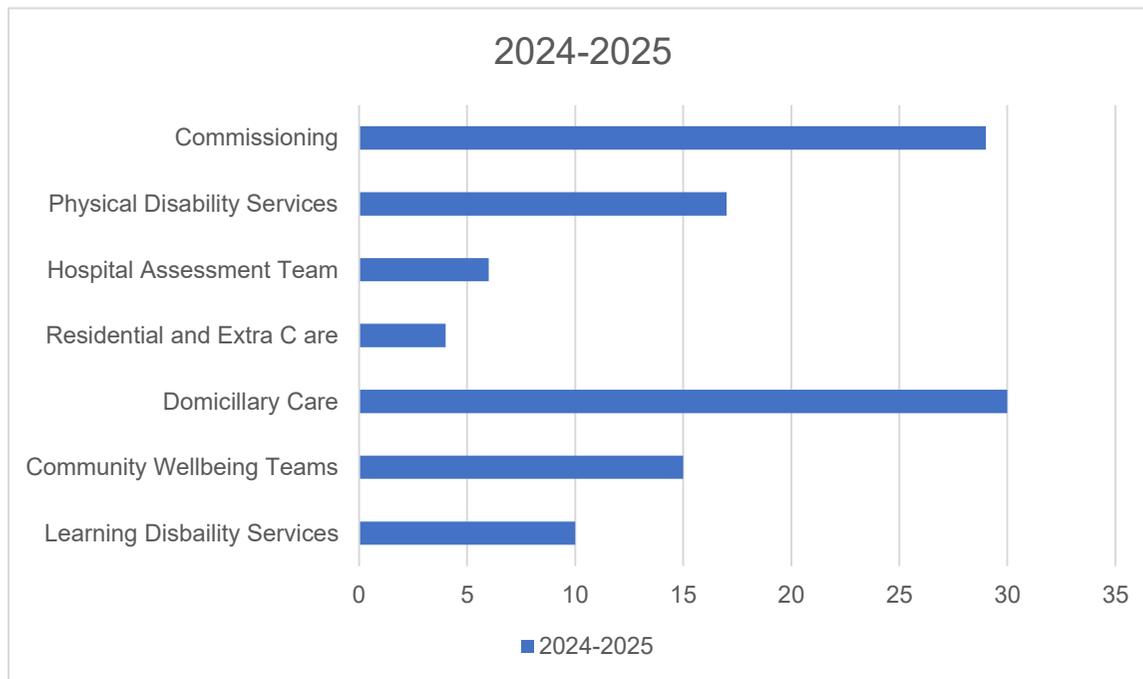
Although the webpage signposts all consumers to Citizens Advice who act as the front end of all trading standards complaints, only a phone number is given. The Web-team have been asked to include a link to the online complaint form and make a change to the user journey to give improved access to that service.

Adult Social Care Complaints

2024-25 saw an increase of 26 complaints compared to 2023-24.

Year	Number of Complaints
2023-24	85
2024-25	111

The following graph shows the number of complaints received by service area in 2024- 25:



What kind of complaints were we getting?

The primary issue raised by complainants in 2024-25 was outcome of decision/assessment accounted for 39% of all complaints received, this was the main issue nature last year too. Communication provided for 25% of complaints. The following table shows the number of stage 1 complaints by nature for 2024-25 and 2023-24 for comparison.

Issue nature	Number of Complaints 2023-24	Number of Complaints 2024-25
Conduct/behaviour of staff	11	8
Communication	20	28
Delay/failure to keep informed	4	9
Financial	0	1
Non-adherence to procedure	3	1
Outcome Decision/Assessment	28	41
Quality of service provided	19	23
Total	85	111

How many complaints were upheld?

Of the 111 complaints in relation to Adult Social Care that we received:

- 27% were Upheld. This means it was confirmed that a service had not been delivered in accordance with policy, standards or good practice.
- 29% were Partially Upheld. This is where the findings and conclusions of the investigation only partly upheld the complaint. Some complaints have more than one issue to be considered and a mix of outcomes for each issue resulted in a 'partially upheld' complaint.
- 35% were Not Upheld. This means on the basis of the evidence available the complaint could not be supported.
- 9% had another recorded outcome, for example the complaint was withdrawn.

How fast were we responding?

While the regulations governing complaints about Adult Social Care allow for up to 6 months to complete an investigation, there is an expectation under the local procedure that complaints are resolved sooner unless otherwise agreed with the complainant. 84% of complaints were responded to within 20 days, this is similar to the period 2023-24 when 82% were responded to within this timeframe.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Service

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) issues an annual letter detailing complaints received from within the local authority area. This is attached to this report at Appendix B. This letter outlines the topic of each complaint or enquiry received by the LGO and provides a summary of the outcomes reached. In 2024-25 the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman dealt with 66 complaints about Stoke-on-Trent City Council compared to 83 complaints for the period 2023-24. Detailed investigations were carried out into 10 (15%) of these complaints. 8 (80%) of those complaints were upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. This equates to 3 upheld cases per 100,000 residents, the average for authorities similar to Stoke-on-Trent City Council is 5.3 per 100,000 residents. In 25% of upheld cases the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman found that Stoke-on-Trent City Council had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaints had reached them. This compares to an average of 10% in similar authorities. Where the Ombudsman found fault with the actions of the council, it can direct us to undertake some remedial action. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman made 4 recommendations for remedial action in 2024-25 and the city council successfully implemented 100% of these recommendations. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's summary of each upheld decision are presented below, further details of these complaints can be found on the decisions page of the LGO website: www.lgo.org.uk/decisions

Complaint	Directorate	Findings
1	Highway Repair and Maintenance	We will not investigate this complaint about highway repair and maintenance because we are satisfied with the actions the Council has taken and agreed to take.
2	Special Educational Needs	Mrs X complains about the Council not sending her a copy of her child's education, health and care plan and not providing her child with a suitable education. The Council is at fault for failing to ensure a suitable education was being provided to Mrs X's child and for not communicating with her effectively about her child's plan. The Council has agreed to remedy the injustice caused by the fault
3	Special Educational Needs	We upheld Ms X's complaint about a failure to secure special educational provision in her child Y's Education, Health and Care Plan. This caused a loss of educational provision, avoidable frustration, uncertainty and time and trouble. The Council will apologise, provide a copy of the action plan setting out how Y will receive catch-up provision, provide a copy of a specialist assessment, and make Ms X a payment of £200 to reflect her avoidable distress and time and trouble.

Complaint	Directorate	Findings
4	Adult Social Care	Miss X complained about the Council's failure to act when she made several safeguarding complaints regarding the care her son received. We found the Council was at fault for not updating Miss X with its decision. This caused her significant distress. To address this injustice caused by fault, the Council has agreed to make several recommendations to address this injustice caused by fault.
5	School Transport	We found fault with the Council's initial decision to end Mrs D's daughters' Personal Travel Budget for home to school transport and to provide them with shared transport instead. It failed to show discussions it claimed it had with her about it. There is no injustice which needs remedying.
6.	Adult Social Care	We will not investigate Mrs X's complaint about the Council's handling of her care package. The Council has agreed to remedy the injustice by apologising and taking action to provide Mrs X with the support agreed in her care plan. Further it will make a symbolic payment for the frustration, distress and uncertainty caused.
7.	Adult Social Care	Ms X complained about the standard of care her mother Mrs Y received when the Council organised respite care at The Old Vicarage Nursing Home. We find the Council at fault regarding the way the care provider managed a cyst on Mrs Y, and subsequently investigated Ms X's concerns. This caused injustice in the form of distress and frustration. We recommend the Council apologise and makes a symbolic payment.

Housing Ombudsman Service

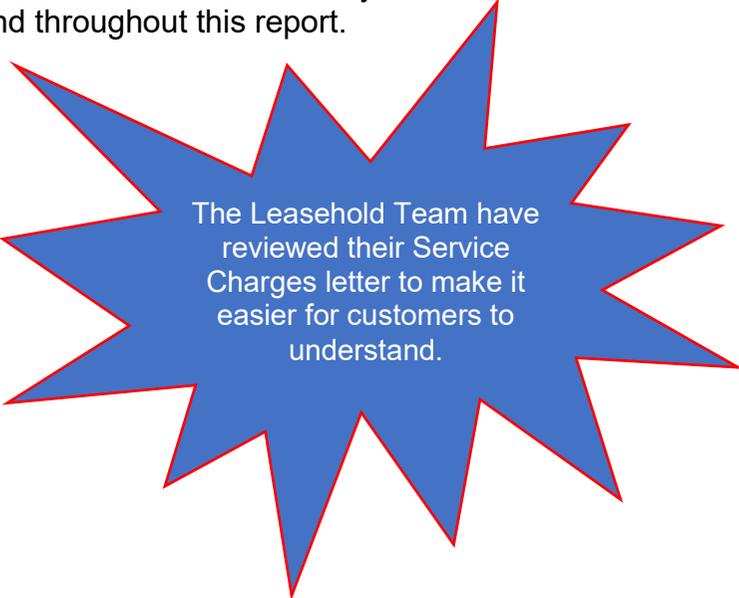
The Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) investigate complaints about Stoke-on-Trent City Council where the issues raised are in connection with its function as a landlord. The Housing Ombudsman investigated 3 cases and made 5 findings of maladministration against the City Council for the period 2024-2025. The Annual Letter is attached to this report at Appendix C.

Complaint	Findings
1.	<p>In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, the Ombudsman finds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Service failure in the landlord's handling of the resident's concerns about the back door to her property.b. Service failure in the landlord's complaint handling. <p>Within 4 weeks from the date of this report, the landlord is to provide a written apology to the resident to acknowledge the failings identified in this report.</p> <p>Within 4 weeks from the date of this report, the landlord is to pay £150 to the resident, broken down as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. £100 in recognition of the distress and inconvenience caused to the resident through delays in diagnosing and resolving the issues with the door.b. £50 in recognition of the distress and inconvenience caused to the resident by a lack of appropriate and timely redress in its complaint responses, and delays in providing the stage 2 complaint response.
2.	<p>In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was maladministration by the landlord in its handling of required remedial works and cleaning following the installation of cavity wall insulation at the resident's property. In accordance with paragraph 52 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, there was maladministration by the landlord in its complaint handling.</p> <p>Within four weeks of the date of the report, the landlord must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Apologise to the resident in writing for the failings identified in this report.b. Pay the resident total compensation of £775 (the landlord can deduct from the total any amount it has already paid). This is made up of <p>£600 in recognition of the financial detriment, delays, distress and inconvenience caused to the resident by the landlord's handling of remedial works and cleaning following the installation of cavity wall insulation at the resident's property.</p> <p>£175 in recognition of the complaint handling failures and the time, trouble, and inconvenience caused to the resident.</p>

Complaint	Findings
	c. Pay the compensation directly to the resident. d. Make an appointment with the resident to carry out an inspection of the property to assess and agree what areas of the property still require cleaning to remove any remaining fibres.
3	Resident decided to pursue her repairs via the Courts and the Housing Ombudsman closed their case.

Learning from Complaints

The city council encourages feedback from our residents about the services we deliver. Residents' feedback helps us to understand what we are doing well and where we need to make improvements. The Customer Feedback Team encourages services to learn from the feedback they receive and to implement changes and improvements to ensure that the services we deliver are the best that they can be. Some of the learning that has been identified during investigations has been included below and throughout this report.



The Leasehold Team have reviewed their Service Charges letter to make it easier for customers to understand.



Housing repairs have reviewed their processes to ensure that surveyors are involved as soon as repairs are reported, to prevent further delays.

Comments

Comments are defined as those contacts made to the city council which are not expressing dissatisfaction, but may, for example, be a suggestion as to how services could be improved. They may also be a general statement about policies or practices. Each comment received is passed to the appropriate service for response within 10 working days. The total number of comments received in 2024-25 was 450, which was an increase of 51 comments. The main directorate receiving comments is Housing, Regeneration and Operations this has been the same for the past 4 years.

MP Enquiries

The Customer Feedback Team also handles correspondence sent by Members of Parliament on behalf of their constituents. The number of enquiries and service requests received has remained consistently high for the past five years. In 2024-25 the city council received 705 MP Enquiries. This is 939 less than last year, this is due to the General Election and the preceding period of Purdah. A small number were received from MPs outside of the city. 558 of the enquiries for 2024-25 were for the Housing, Regeneration and Operations directorate with 21% of the enquiries relating to housing allocation. Each Enquiry received is passed to the appropriate service for response within 10 working days.