



**Housing Complaints,  
Compliments and  
Comments  
Annual Report  
2016/17**

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## **Introduction**

This report provides an analysis of the complaints, compliments and comments received by the Council during 2016/17 under the Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure (the procedure). The purpose of the report is to identify topics and trends in relation to complaints; identify areas of organisational learning that have taken place over the past year as a result of the complaints received and make further recommendations based on trend data to improve services. The report also highlights any areas of good practice and seeks to identify topics and trends in relation to comments made by members of the public so that the Council can take action where appropriate to improve services.

In addition to the statistical information presented in this report it is important to recognise the work of the Complaints and Information Governance (CIG) Team that underpins this in terms of promoting an organisational culture in which complaints are recognised, accepted, owned and resolved as efficiently and as close to the point of service delivery as possible. This also enables the Council to collect accurate information on complaints in order to identify topics and trends and improve services accordingly.

## **Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure**

The procedure sets out how the Council will deal with complaints, compliments and comments received about the Council as a social landlord (as well as in respect of its ownership and management of leasehold housing).

The procedure has three stages. Stage 1 is a local resolution stage where we try to resolve those complaints that cannot be resolved immediately as part of our day to day business. Stage 1 complaints are dealt with locally, that is within the service being complained about. We aim to resolve the majority of complaints at Stage 1 of the procedure.

Stage 2 is a formal investigation stage where complaints will usually be investigated by the Complaints and Information Governance Manager or another officer independent of the service being complained about.

Stage 3 is a mandatory stage between the Council and the Housing Ombudsman. This is referred to as the 'designated person' or 'democratic filter'. The designated person or democratic filter can be an MP, a local Councillor or a recognised Tenant Panel. In Darlington we have a recognised Tenant Panel (from here onwards referred to as the Tenants' Complaints Panel).

Should a tenant remain dissatisfied with the Council's response to their complaint, they will be required to refer the matter to the 'designated person' or 'democratic filter'. The 'designated person' or 'democratic filter' may help resolve the complaint directly, refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman or decide to do neither. If the 'designated person' or 'democratic filter' decides not to take any action the

complainant will be entitled to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman directly. The complainant will also be able to approach the Housing Ombudsman directly in cases where eight weeks have elapsed since the Council's response to their complaint at Stage 2 of the procedure.

## **Public Information and Accessibility**

We are committed to making sure that everyone has equal access to all our services. To help make sure the Council's complaints procedures are easily accessible we have produced two leaflets (one for children and young people and one for adults) covering all Council services to reflect the single point of access for complainants within the Council. The leaflets are available in all Council buildings. They have been written in line with the Plain English Campaign standards. The title is written in the most commonly used community languages and it contains details on how to access the information in other formats, for example, large print, audio and Braille.

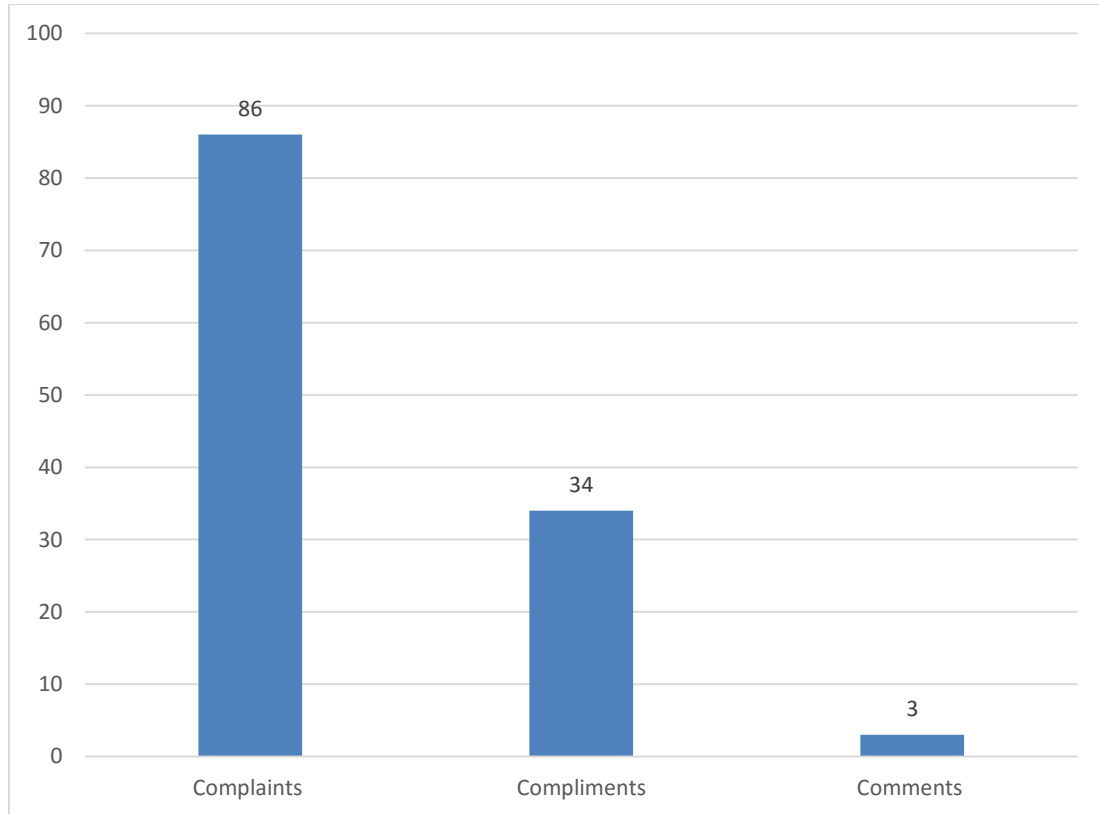
Information is available on the Council's website which contains an electronic form people can use to make a complaint, pay someone a compliment or pass comment on Council services. People may make a complaint in any format they wish. This can be in writing, email, via the web, over the phone, in person or by any other reasonable means.

The Complaints and Information Governance Manager can arrange advocates and interpreters (including British Sign Language interpreters) where appropriate.

# Complaints Information and Organisational Learning

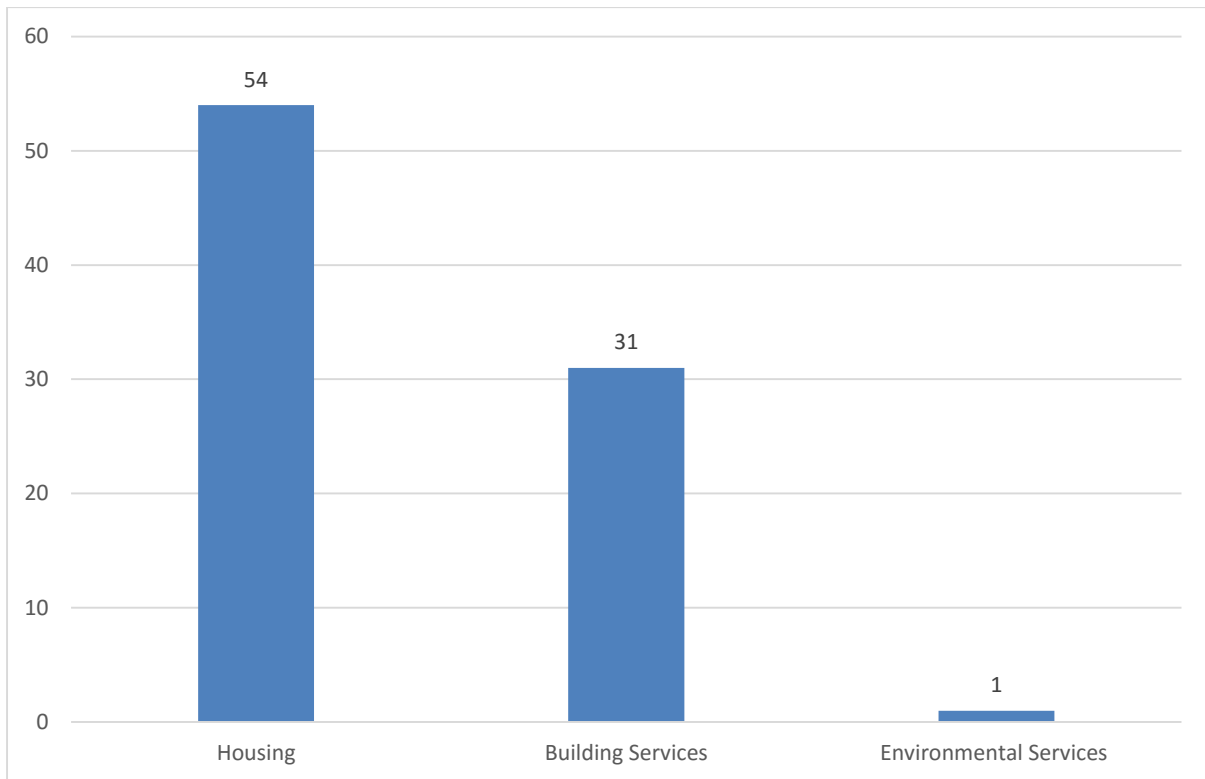
## Overview of Complaints, Compliments and Comments

**Total Complaints, Compliments and Comments**



Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 the Council received a total of 86 complaints under the procedure compared to 94 in 2015/16. A total of 14 complaints were considered at Stage 2, compared to 15 in 2015/16. All 14 were initially dealt with at Stage 1. 0 complaints were considered at Stage 3, as was the case in 2015/16. The Council also received 34 compliments under the procedure compared to 31 in 2015/16 and 3 comments compared to 5 in 2015/16.

### Complaints by Service

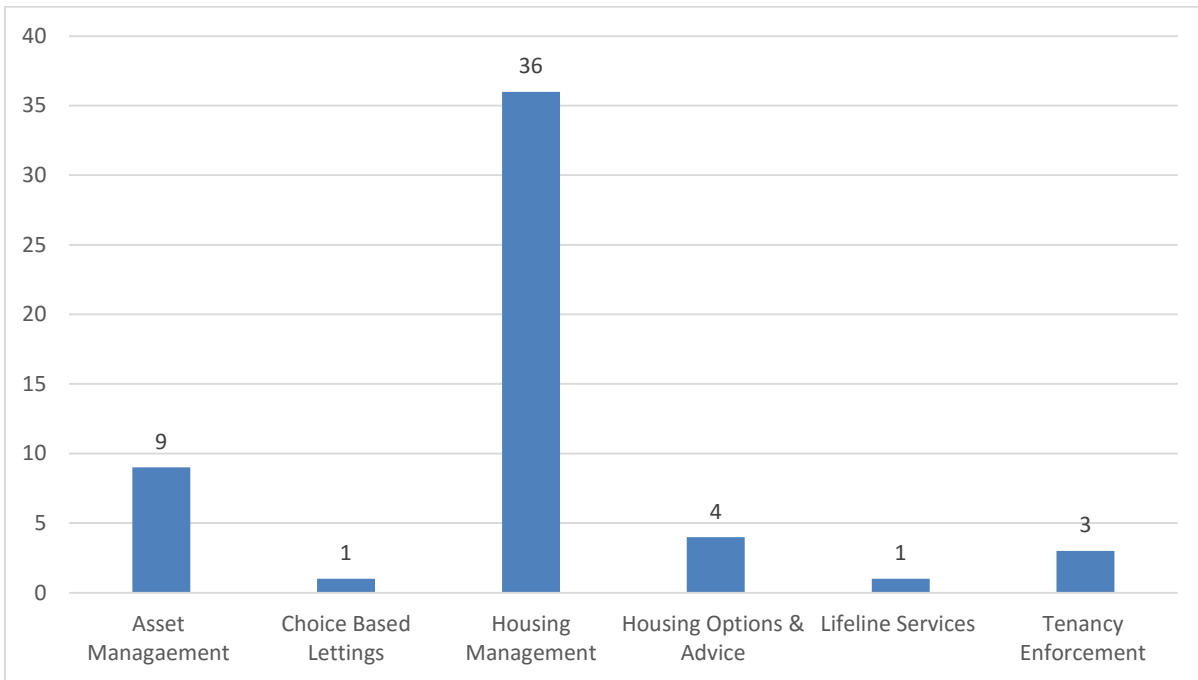


Housing received 54 complaints, compared to 61 in 2015/16.

Building Services received 31 complaints, compared to 28 in 2015/16.

Environmental Services received 1 complaint, compared to 4 in 2015/16.

## Complaints by Team – Housing Services



Asset Management received 9 complaints, an increase from 6 in 2015/16.

Choice Based Lettings received 1 complaint, as was the case in 2015/16.

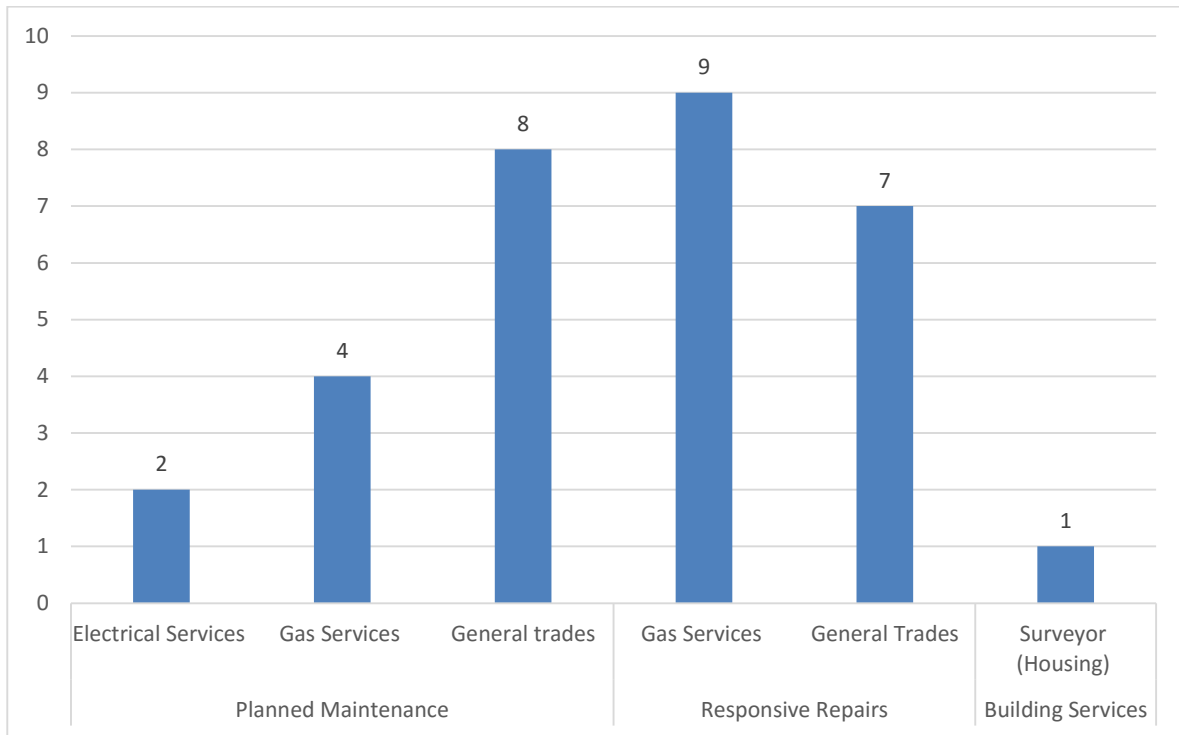
Housing Management received 36 complaints, an increase from 27 in 2015/16.

Housing Options & Advice received 4 complaints, an increase from 0 in 2015/16.

Lifeline received 1 complaint, an increase from 0 in 2015/16.

Tenancy Enforcement received 3 complaints, a decrease from 8 in 2015/16.

## Complaints by Team – Building Services



Planned Repair and Maintenance received 14 complaints, an increase from 5 in 2015/16.

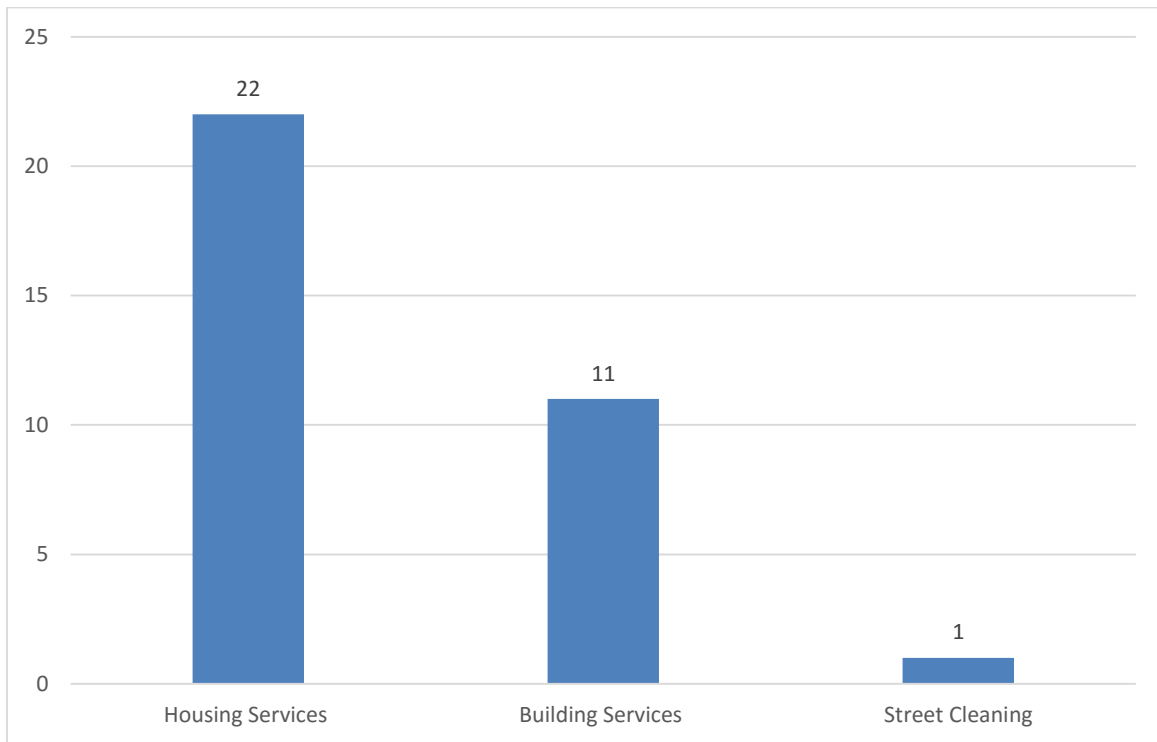
Responsive Repairs & Maintenance received 16 complaints, a decrease from 22 in 2015/16.



## Complaints by Team - Environmental Services

Street Cleaning received 1 complaint, the same as in 2015/16.

## Compliments by Service

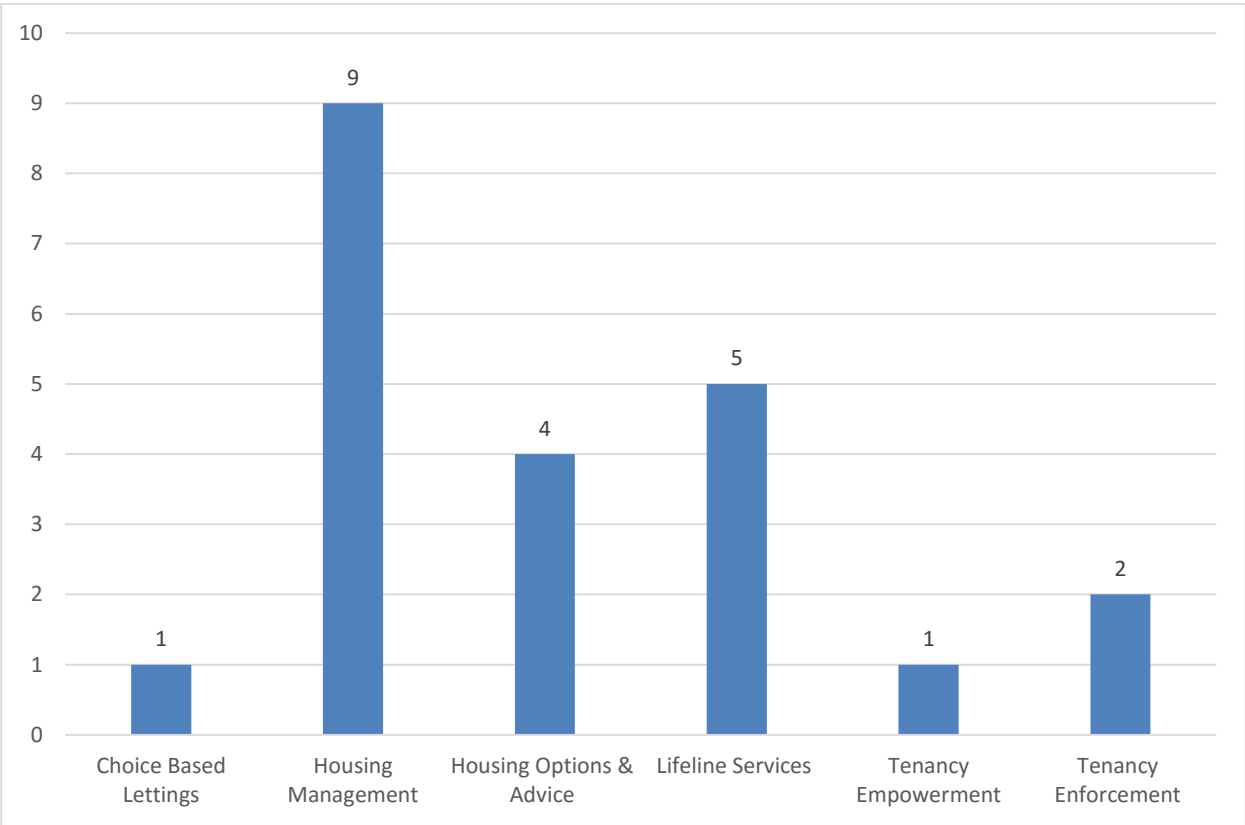


Housing Services received 22 compliments, a decrease from 26 in 2015/16.

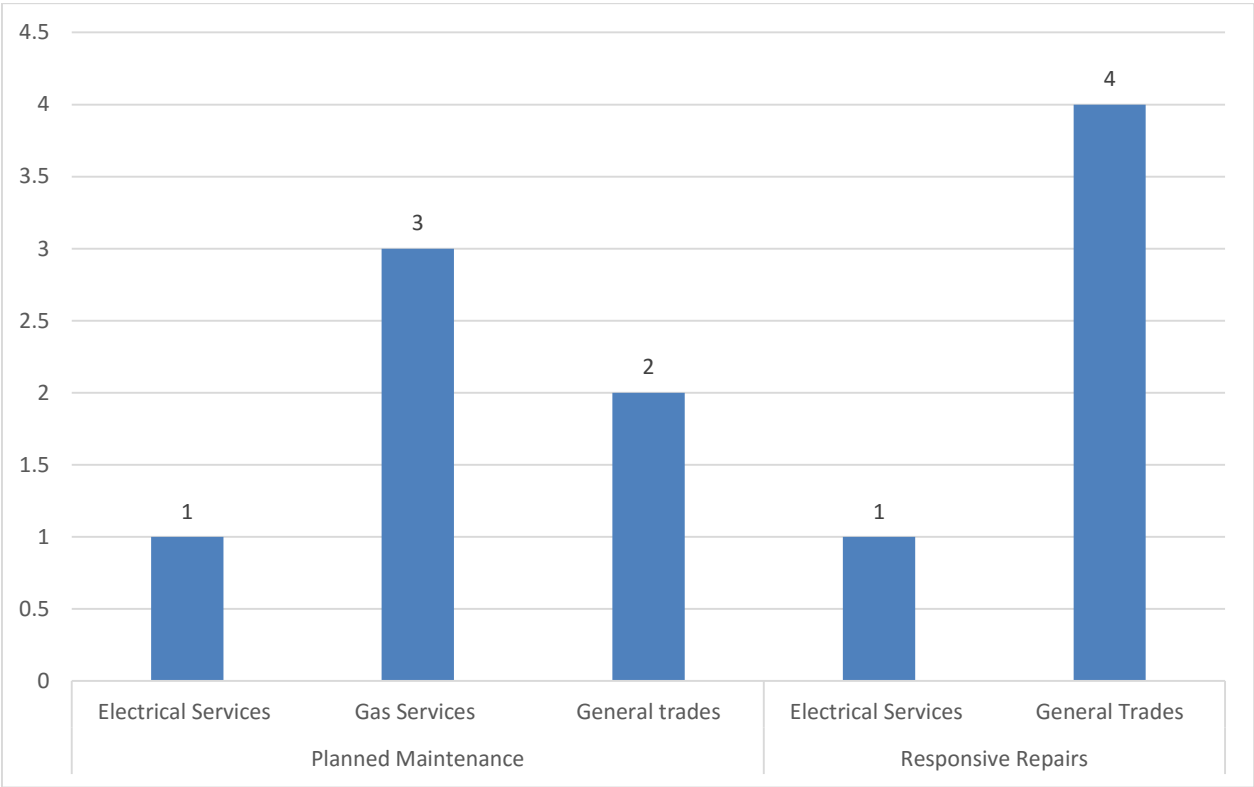
Building Services received 11 compliments, an increase from 5 in 2015/16.

Street Cleaning received 1 compliment, an increase from 0 in 2015/16.

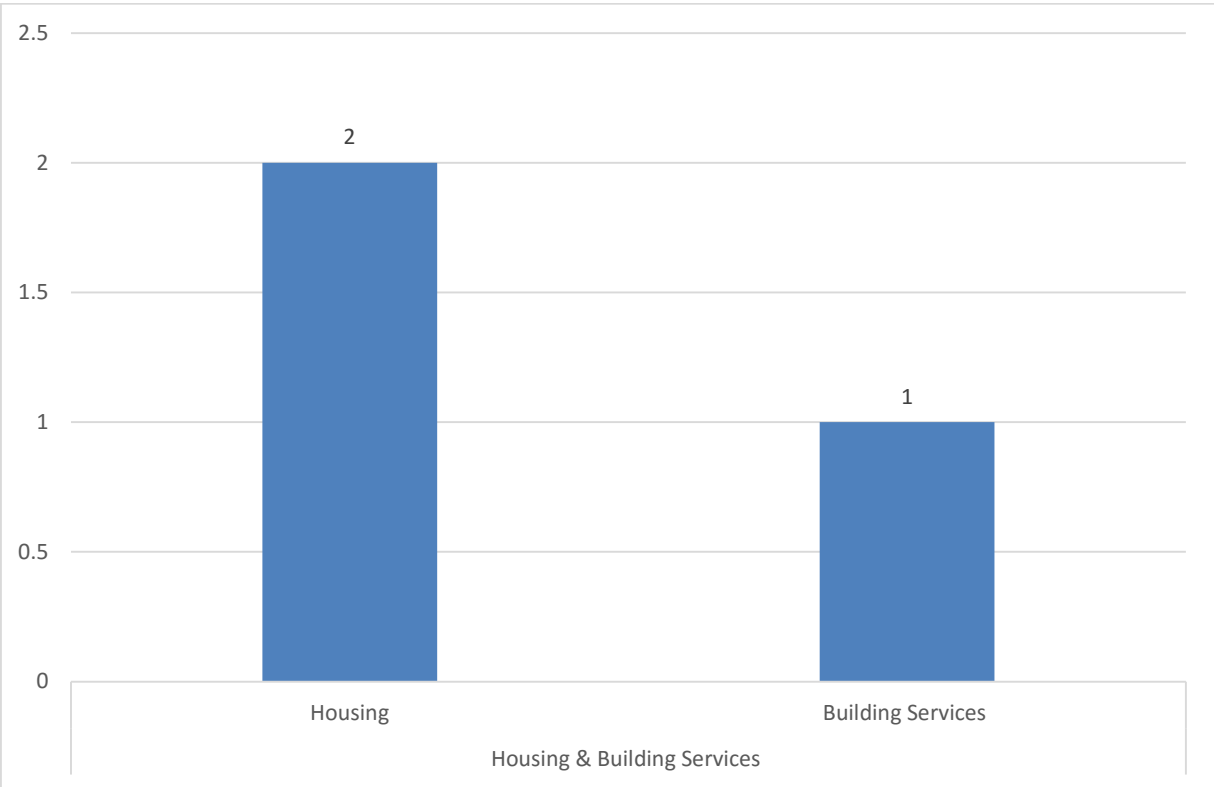
### Compliments by Team – Housing Services



### Compliments by Team – Building Services



**Comments by Service**



**Comments by Team – Housing Services**

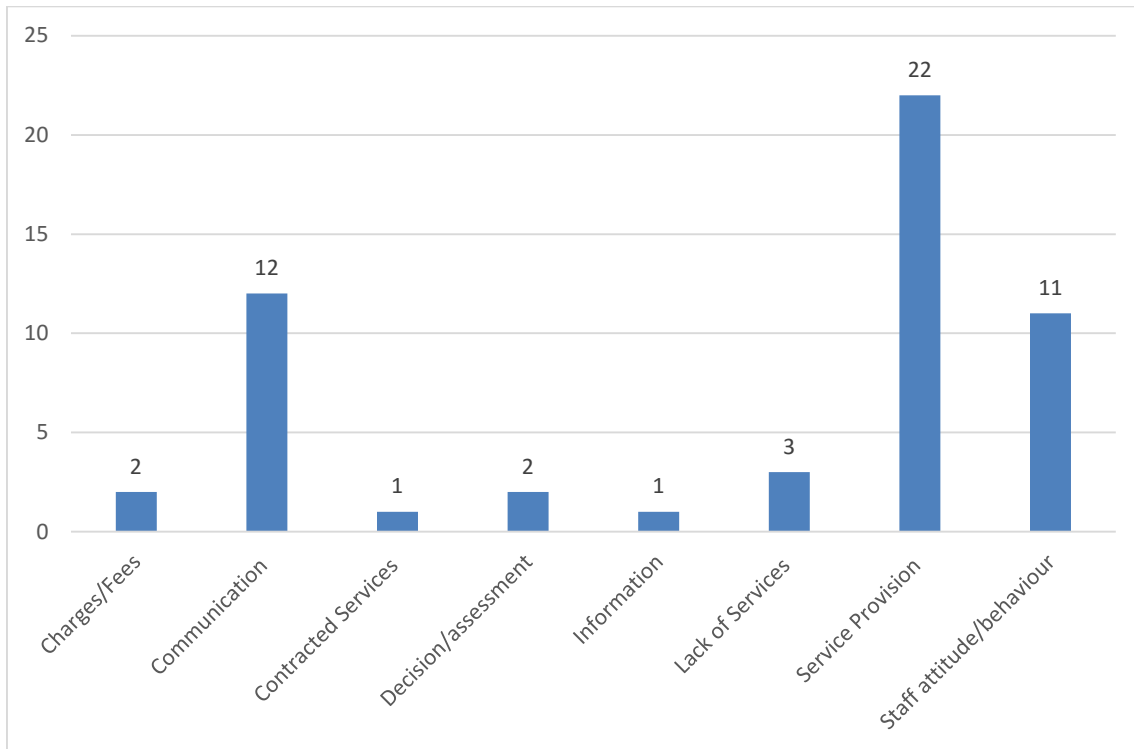
1 comment was for Housing Management and 1 was for Housing Options & Advice.

**Comments by Team - Building Services**

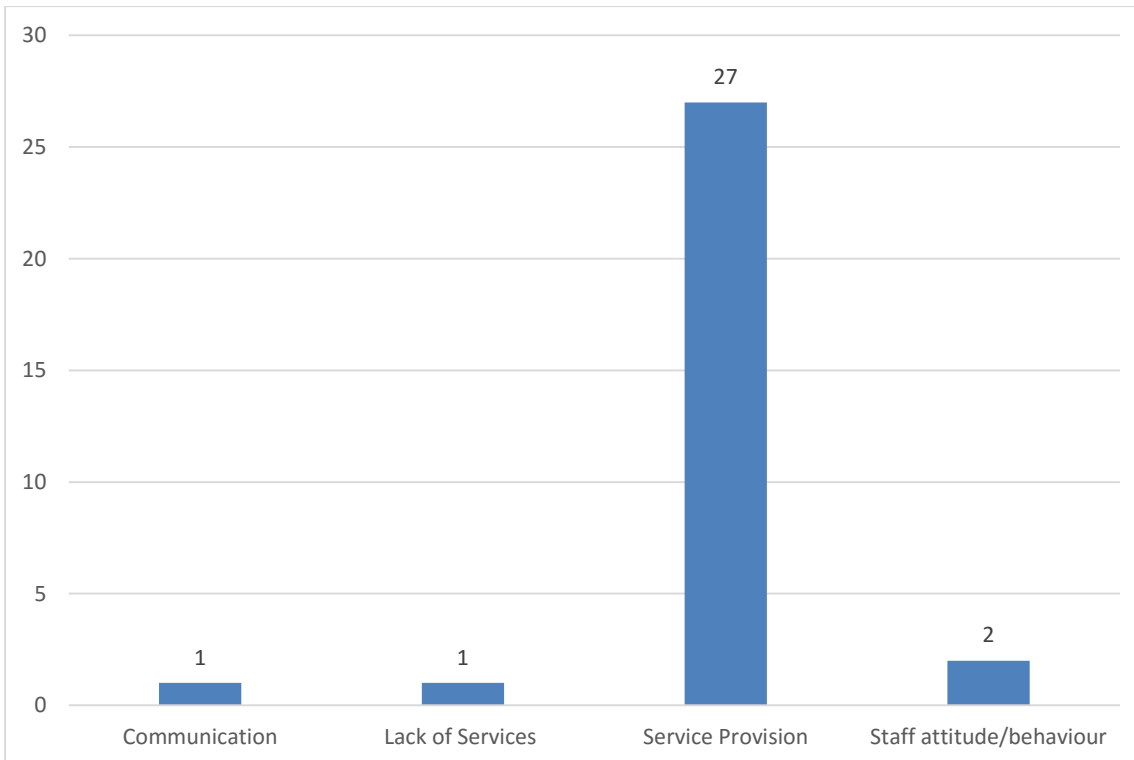
The 1 comment received was for Responsive Repairs, General Trades.

## Complaints by Issue

### Housing Services

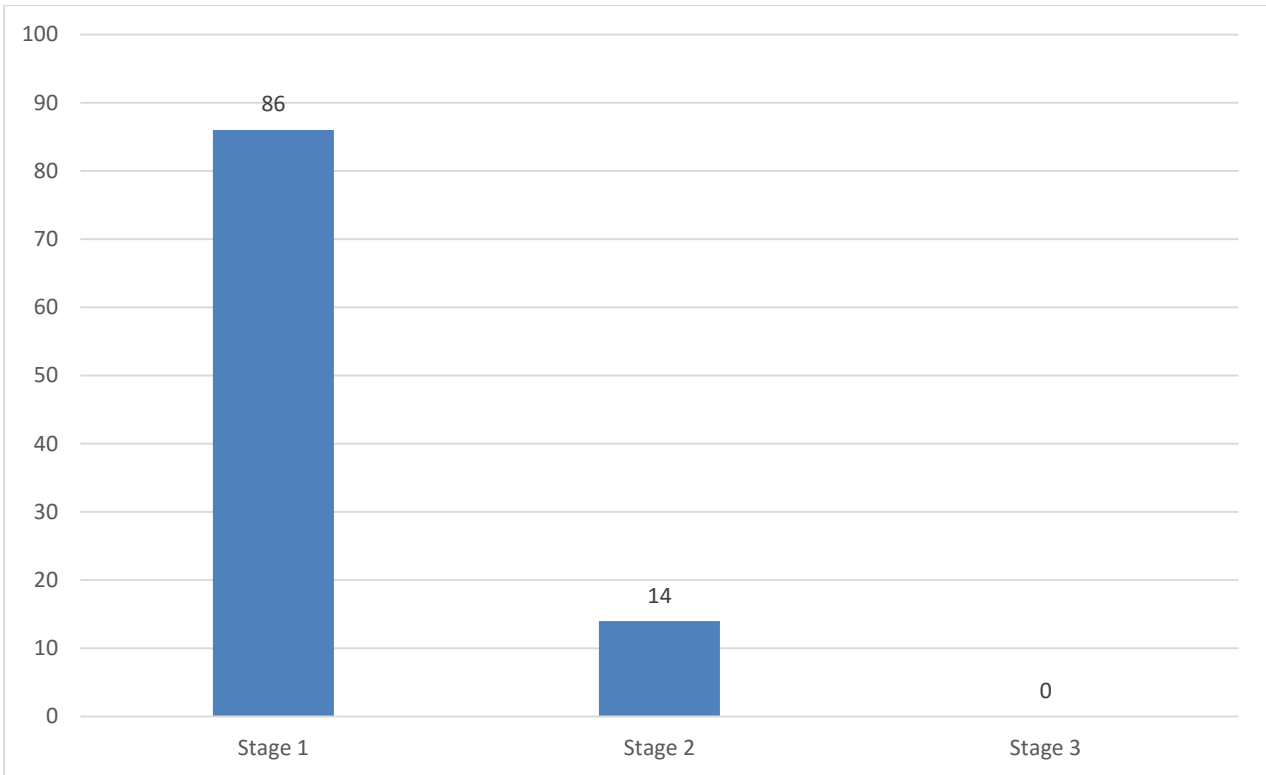


### Building Services



## Complaints by Stage

The below graph shows the number of complaints received at each stage of the procedure during 2016/17.



## Complaints by Outcome

The below tables show the decisions reached on complaints during 2016/17. Some of the complaints determined during 2016/17 were received during 2015/16, hence them being logged against former services/teams.

### Stage 1

Service Area/Team	Closed With No Response	Escalated to Stage 2 (No S1 Response)	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Neighbourhood Services & Resources	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Environmental Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Street Cleaning	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total for Street Cleaning</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total for Environmental Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total for Community Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Housing & Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Planned Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Electrical Services	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Gas Services	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4
General Trades	3	0	0	0	1	4	1	9
<b>Total for Planned Maintenance</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>
Planned Repairs & Maintenance	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Total for Planned Repairs &amp; Maintenance</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Responsive Repairs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gas Services	1	0	0	3	0	5	0	9
General Trades	1	0	0	2	1	2	1	7
<b>Total for Responsive Repairs</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>
Responsive Repairs & Maintenance	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
<b>Total for Responsive Repairs &amp; Maintenance</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>
Surveyor (Housing)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Total for Surveyor (Housing)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total for Building Services</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>40</b>

Housing Services	0		0	0	0	0	0	0
Asset Management	3	0	0	3	5	1	1	13
<b>Total for Asset Management</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>
Choice Based Lettings	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total for Choice Based Lettings</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Housing Management	3	0	2	12	10	10	3	40
<b>Total for Housing Management</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>40</b>
Housing Options & Advice	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	3
<b>Total for Housing Options &amp; Advice</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
Lifeline Services	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total for Lifeline Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Repairs & Maintenance	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	5
<b>Total for Repairs &amp; Maintenance</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>
Tenancy Enforcement	2	0	0	1	1	0	1	5
<b>Total for Tenancy Enforcement</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total for Housing Services</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Total for Housing &amp; Building Services</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Total for Neighbourhood Services &amp; Resources</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>109</b>

## Stage 2

Service Area/Team	Closed With No Response	Escalated to Stage 2 (No S1 Response)	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Neighbourhood Services & Resources	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing & Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Planned Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Electrical Services	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
<b>Total for Planned Maintenance</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total for Building Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Housing Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asset Management	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	4
<b>Total for Asset Management</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>
Housing Management	0	0	0	3	3	1	0	7
<b>Total for Housing Management</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>
Repairs & Maintenance	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total for Repairs &amp; Maintenance</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total for Housing Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Total for Housing &amp; Building Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Total for Neighbourhood Services &amp; Resources</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>



### **Stage 3**

The 'designated person' or 'democratic filter' did not determine any complaints during 2016/17.

### **Housing Ombudsman**

The Housing Ombudsman determined one complaint during 2016/17. The complaint was partially upheld and related to Problems arising from damp proofing work.

## **Organisational Learning**

All resolution and organisational learning actions identified as a result of complaints are assigned to a responsible manager and progress against those actions is monitored by the Complaints Manager. In addition to those actions taken to resolve individual complaints, several service improvements were made following complaint investigations during 2016/17. Some examples of these are detailed below.

It was agreed Lifeline Services would create a robust recording system to ensure that all lock change requests are recorded and 'signed off' on completion and that random quality audits will be carried out to ensure compliance. It was also agreed that Tenancy Management would review their void management processes to ensure that a mastered lock is fitted to all void properties benefitting from either a full warden service or mobile warden service and ensure keys for the mastered locks are issued to the ingoing tenant.

Housing agreed to ensure they make it clear whether an applicant had a disability, when requesting an estimate for a pavement crossing and hardstand.

## **Further Recommendations**

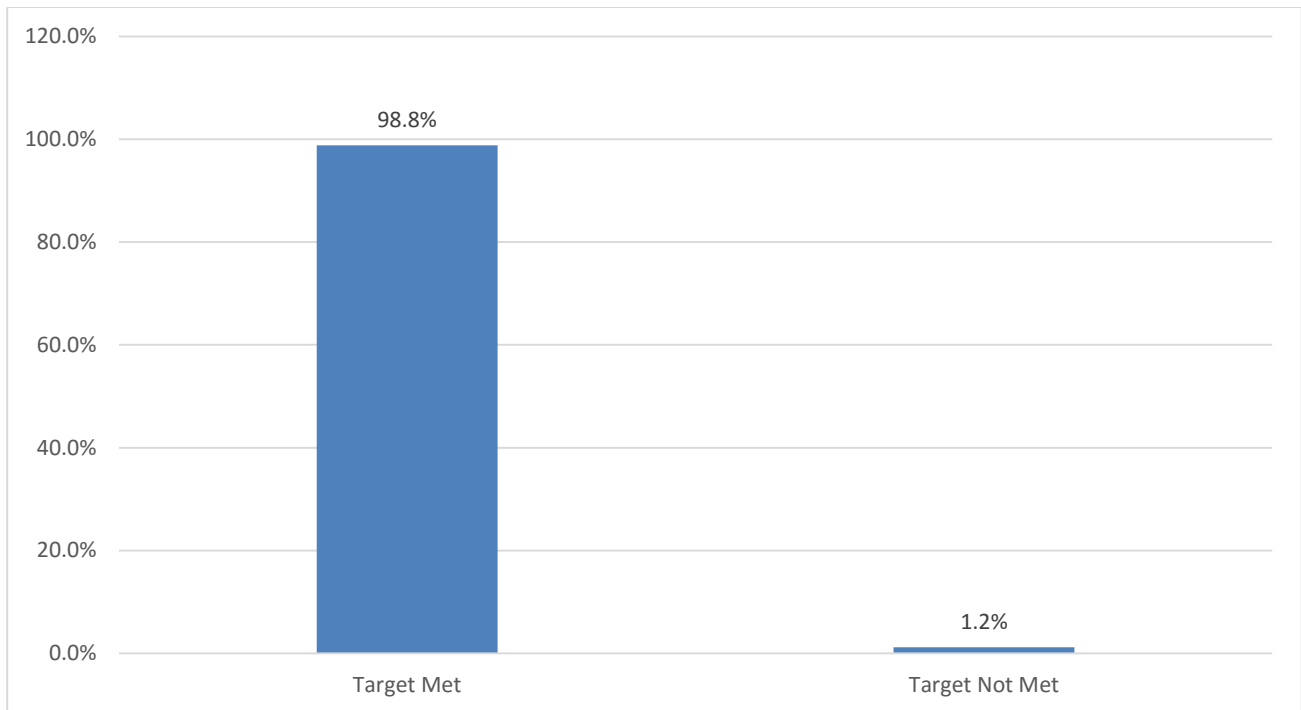
As recommended in the 2015/16 annual report, the timeliness of responding to complaints or agreeing an extension when it is not going to be possible to respond within timescale should be addressed by Housing and Building Services staff.

## Performance against the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure

The below graphs show performance in relation to those complaints acknowledged and responded to during 2016/17.

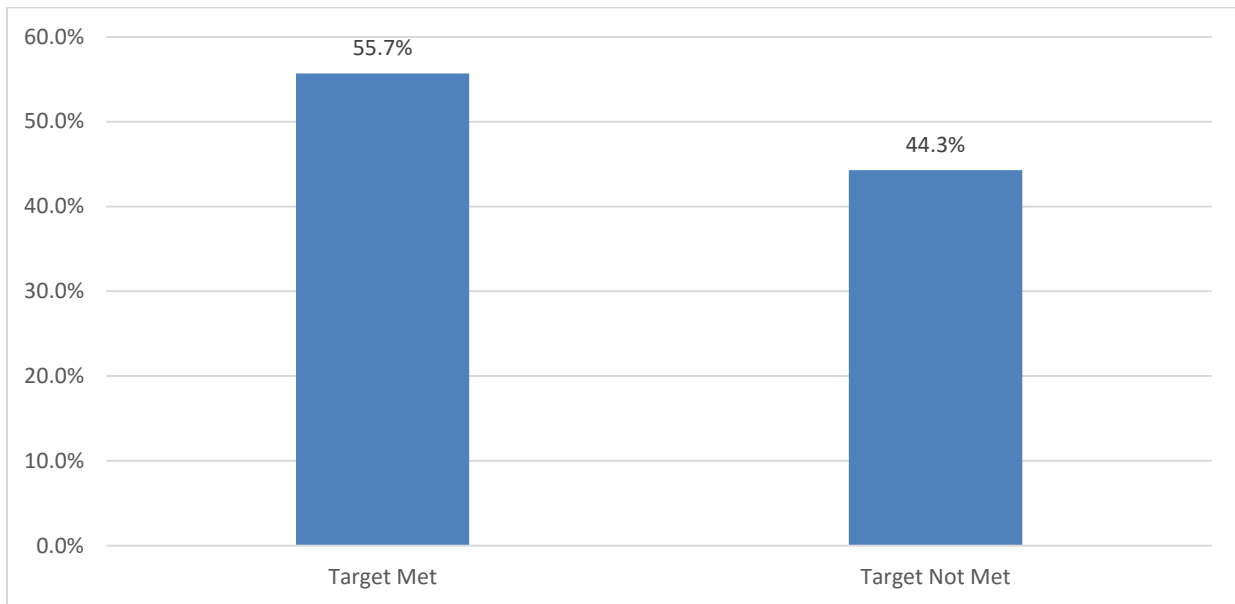
### Stage 1

#### Performance against Stage 1 acknowledgement target (3 working days)



This is an increase from 96.80% in 2015/16.

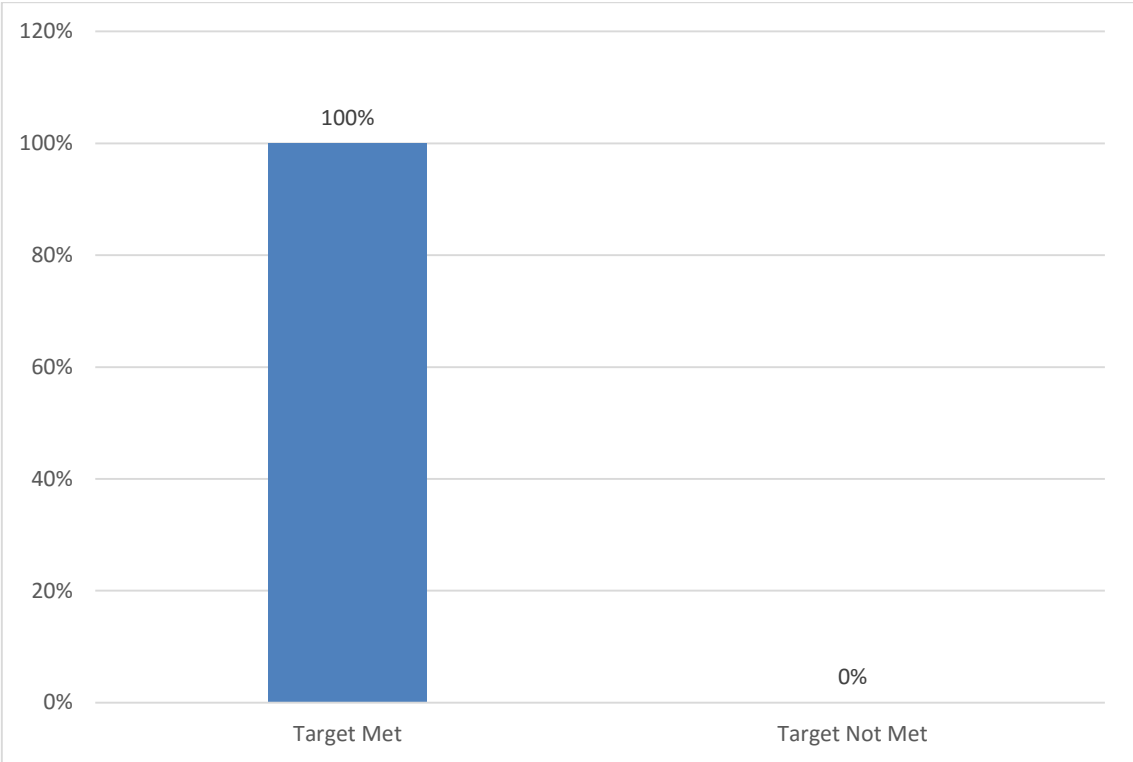
### Performance against Stage 1 response target (25 working days)



This is an decrease from 60% in 2015/16. While it is important that officers work to the timescales it is recognised that this is not possible in all cases and that process should not necessarily come before successfully resolving the matter to the complainant's satisfaction. Where it is not going to be possible to meet the timescale, in accordance with the procedure, the responding officer should agree an extension with the complainant and maintain a dialogue throughout the course of the investigation.

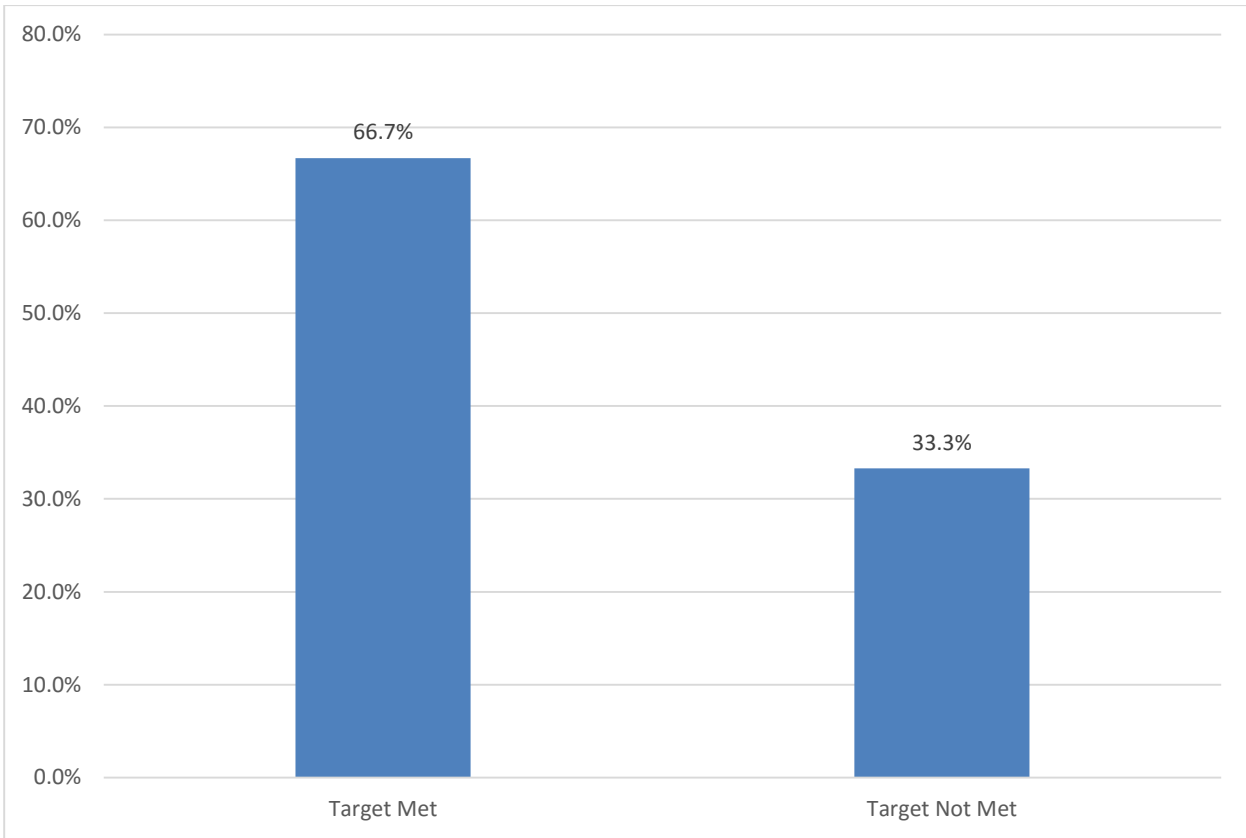
**Stage 2**

**Performance against Stage 2 acknowledgement target (3 working days)**



This is the same figure as in 2015/16.

### Performance against Stage 2 response target (30 working days)



This is a decrease from 71.40% in 2015/16. In the majority of cases where it was not going to be possible to respond within timescale an extension was agreed with the complainant in accordance with the provisions of the procedure.