



**Housing Complaints,  
Compliments and  
Comments  
Annual Report  
2018/19**

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## **Introduction**

This report provides an analysis of the complaints, compliments and comments received by the Council during 2018/19 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 Investigator or Complaints Manager.

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 do not currently 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.

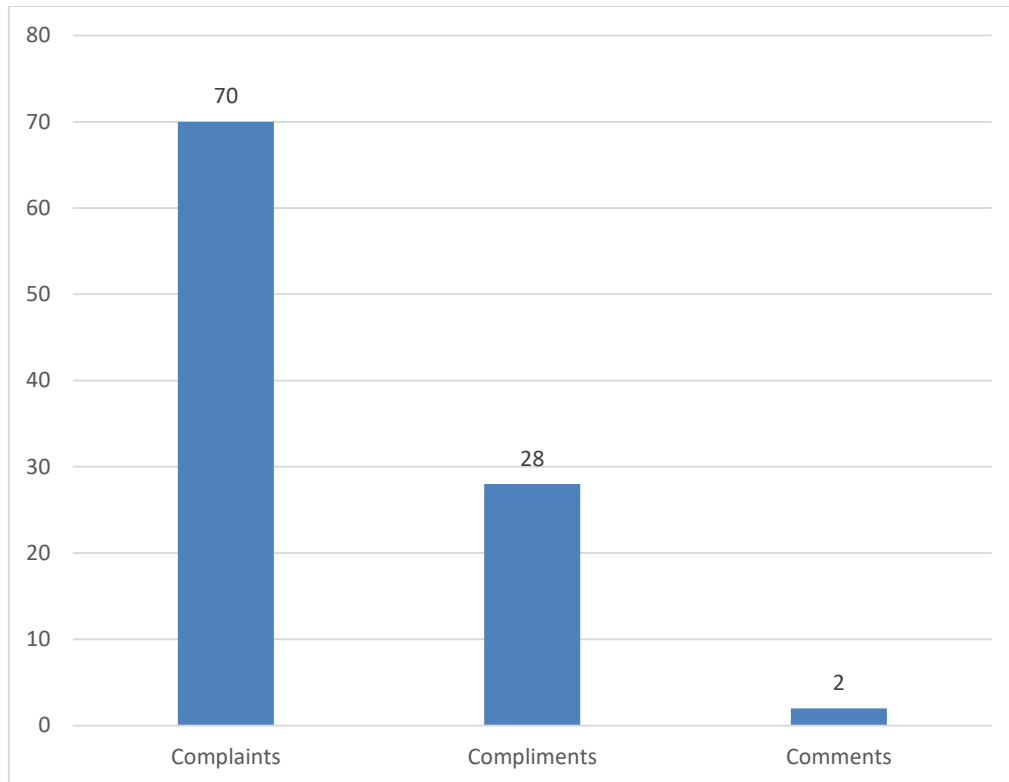
Information is available on the Council's website which contains an electronic form people can use to make a complaint, pay someone a compliment or pass comment on Council services. People may make a complaint in any format they wish. This can be in writing, email, via the web, over the phone, in person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

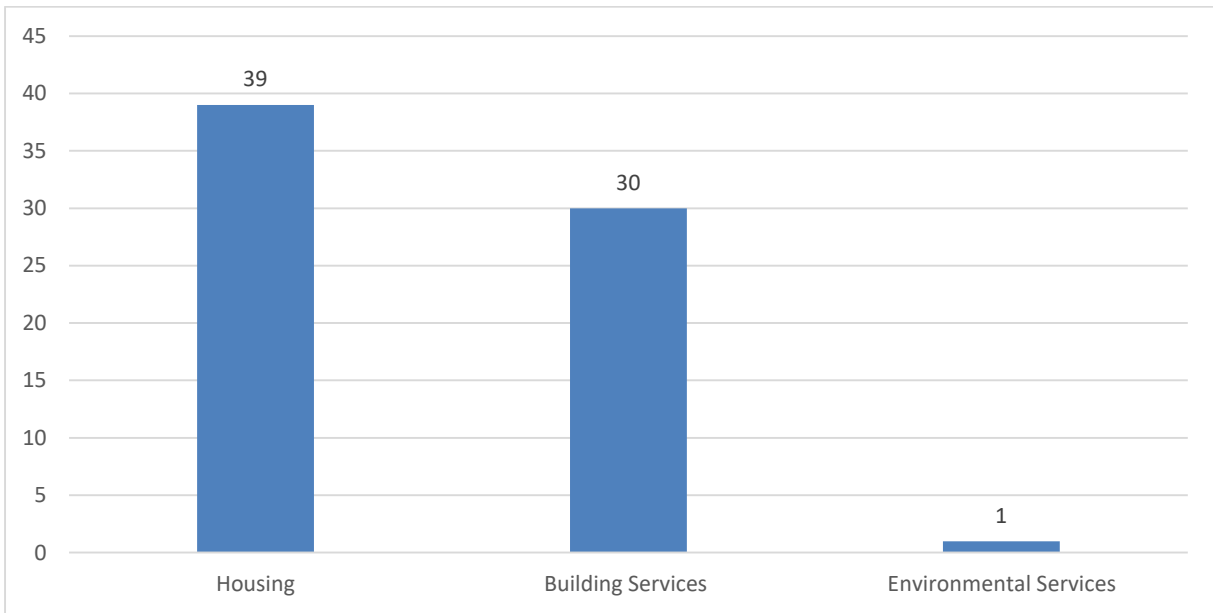
**Total Complaints, Compliments and Comments**



Between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019 the Council received a total of 70 complaints under the procedure, a reduction from 86 in 2017/18. A total of 10 complaints were considered at Stage 2, a reduction from 18 in 2017/18. Nine of the Stage 2 complaints were initially dealt with at Stage 1. No complaints were considered at Stage 3, as was the case in 2017/18.

The Council also received 28 compliments under the procedure, an increase from 19 in 2017/18 and two comments and increase from zero in 2017/18.

### Complaints by Service

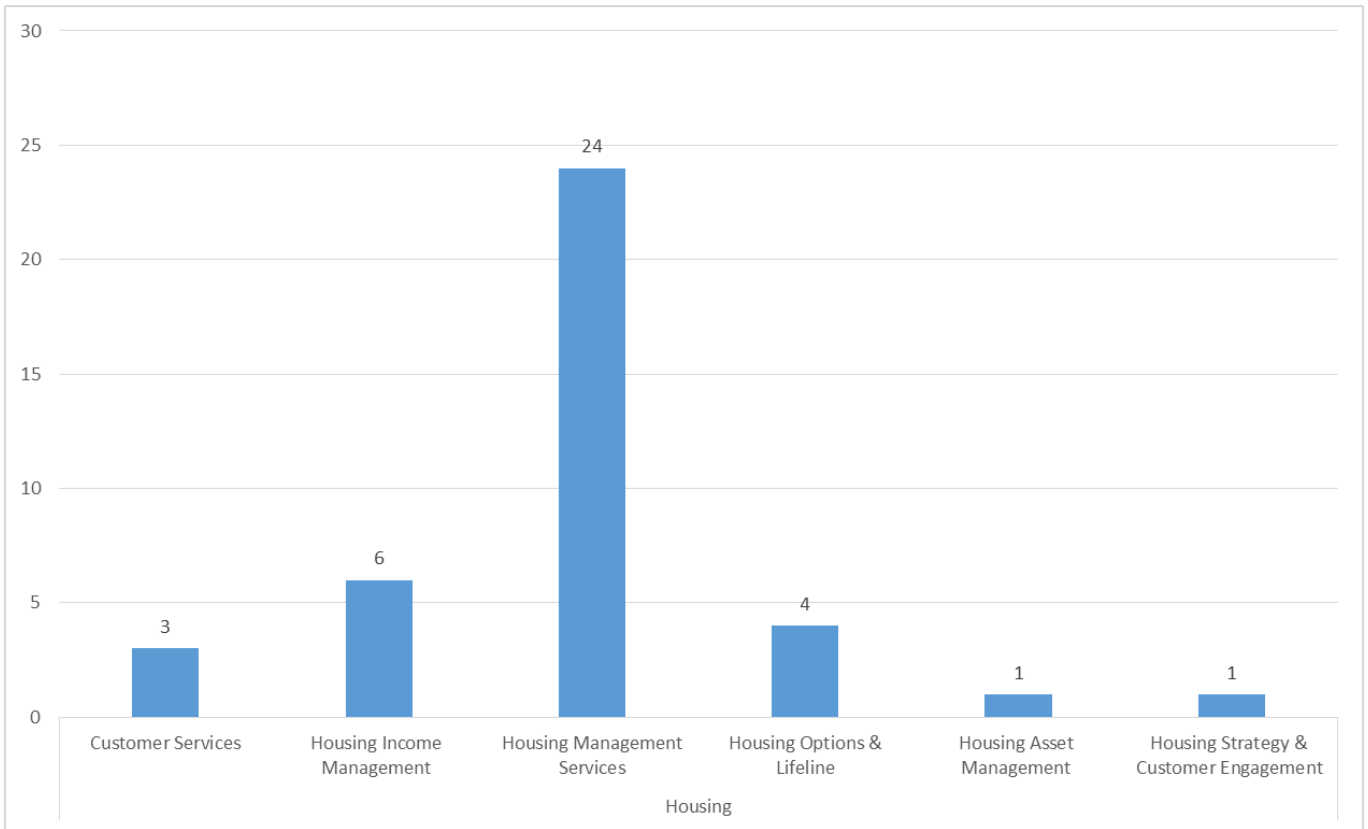


Housing received 39 complaints, a decrease from 53 in 2017/18.

Building Services received 30 complaints, the same number as in 2017/18.

Environmental Services received one complaint, the same number as in 2017/18.

### Complaints by Team – Housing Service



Customer Services received three complaints, an increase from zero in 2017/18.

Housing Income Management received six complaints, an increase from four in 2017/18.

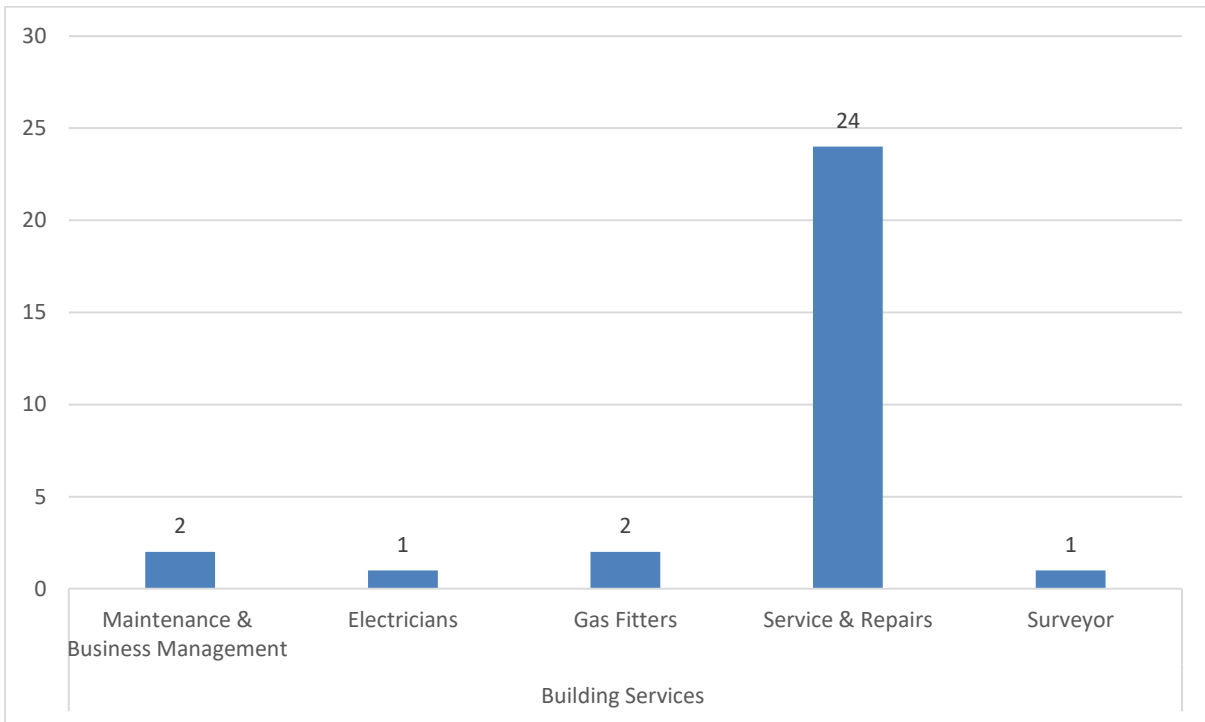
Housing Management Services received 24 complaints, a decrease from 26 in 2017/18.

Housing Options & Lifeline received four complaints, a decrease from five in 2017/18.

Housing Asset Management received one complaint, a significant reductions from 12 in 2017/18.

Housing Strategy & Customer Engagement received one complaints, an increase from zero in 2017/18.

### Complaints by Team – Building Services



Maintenance & Business Management received two complaints, an increase from zero in 2017/18.

Electricians received one complaint, a decrease from three in 2017/18.

Gas Fitters received two complaints, a decrease from five in 2017/18.

Service & Repairs received 24 complaints, an increase from 17 (General Trades) in 2017/18.

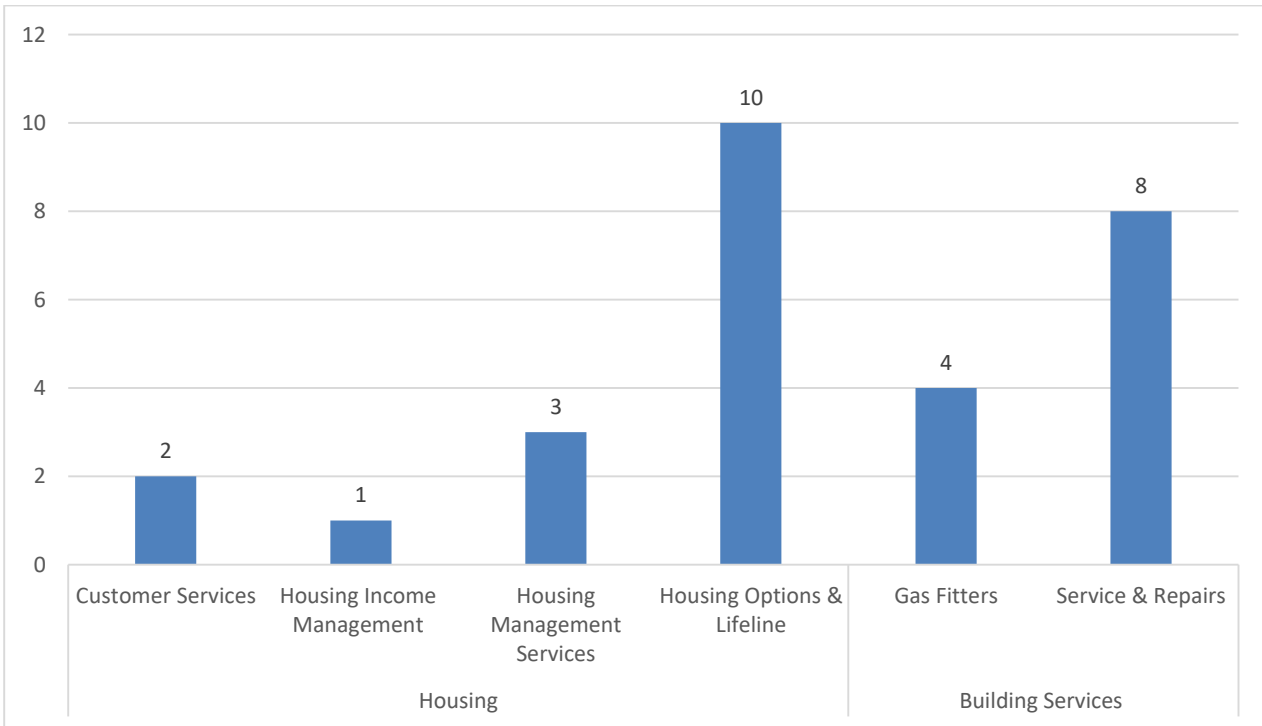
Surveyor received one complaint, the same number as in 2017/18.

### Complaints by Team - Environmental Services

Arboriculture received one complaint, an increase from zero in 2017/18.



### Compliments by Service Area/Team



Housing received 16 compliments, an increase from eight in 2017/18.

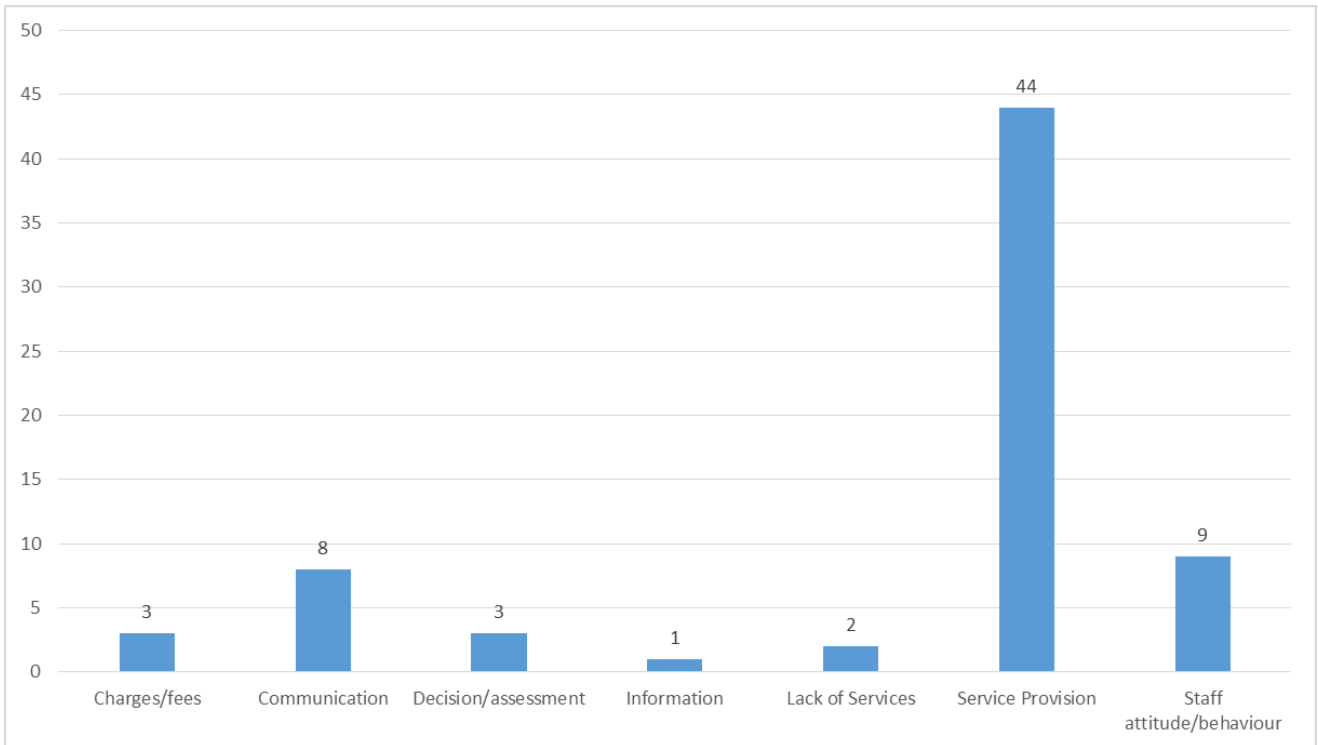
Building Services received 12 compliments, an increase from 11 in 2017/18.

### Comments by Service Area/Team

The Council received three comments during 2018/19, an increase from zero in 2017/18.

Two were for Building Services, Service & Repairs while the other was for Building Service, Gas Fitters.

### Complaints by Issue



Three complaints concerned charges/fees, compared to four in 2017/18.

Eight complaints related to communication, an increase from three in 2017/18.

Three complaints related to decisions/assessment, the same number as in 2017/18.

One complaint related to information, compared to two in 2017/18.

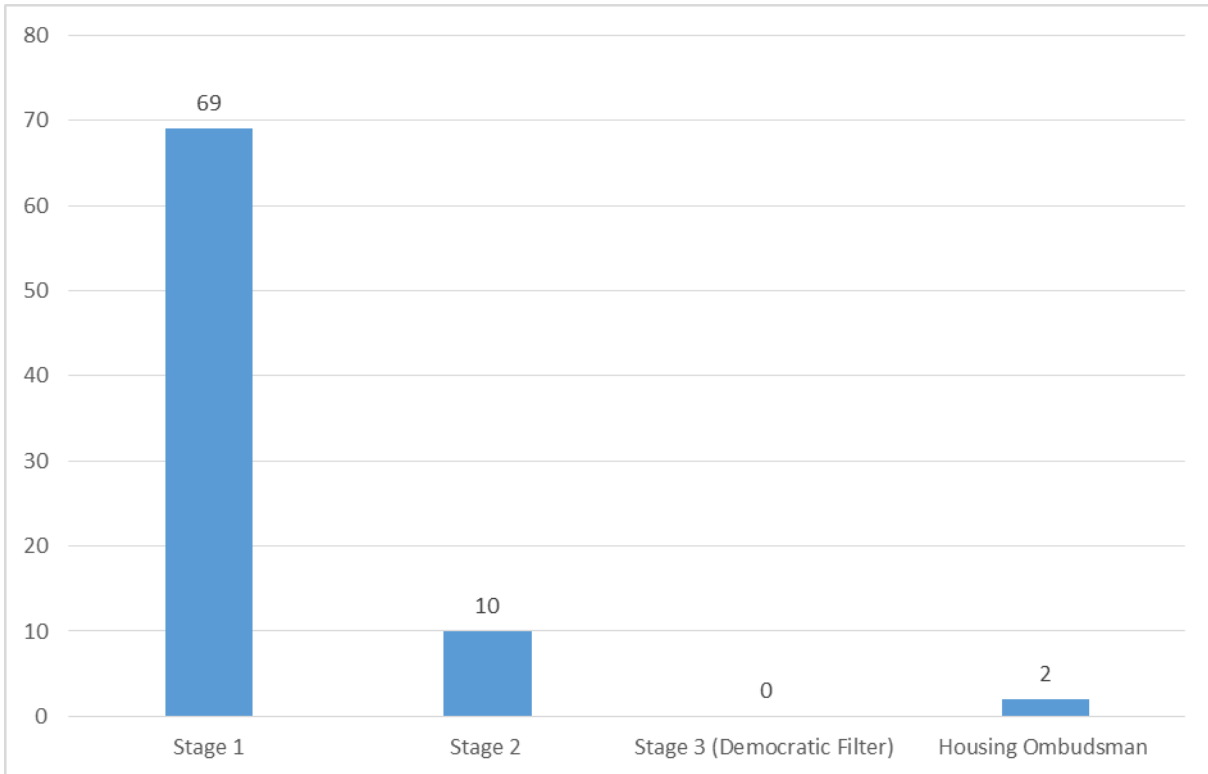
Two complaints were about a lack of services, an increase from zero in 2017/18.

44 complaints related to Service Provision, an increase from 33 in 2017/18.

Nine complaints related to staff attitude/behaviour, compared to eight in 2017/18.

### Complaints by Stage

The below graph shows the number of complaints received at each stage of the procedure during 2018/19.



The Council received 69 Stage 1 complaints, a reduction from 86 in 2017/18.

Nine were escalated to Stage 2, and one was investigated directly at Stage 2. A total of 10 complaints were considered at Stage 2, a reduction from 18 in 2017/18.

Two complaints were escalated to the Housing Ombudsman, a reduction from three in 2017/18.

## Complaints by Outcome

The below tables show the decisions reached on complaints during 2018/19. Some of the complaints determined during 2018/19 were received during 2017/18 and the first quarter of 2018/19, prior to the Council's structure change, hence them being logged against former services/teams.

### Stage 1

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Environmental Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arboriculture	0	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Total for Arboriculture</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total for Environmental Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total for Community Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Housing & Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Maintenance & Business Management	0	0	0	1	0	1
Electricians	0	1	0	0	0	1
Gas Fitters	0	0	0	1	0	1
<b>Total for Maintenance &amp; Business Management</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
Service & Repairs	2	4	2	10	0	18
<b>Total for Service &amp; Repairs</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>
Surveyor	0	0	0	1	0	1
<b>Total for Surveyor</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>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>22</b>
Housing & Revenue Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Customer Services Housing (Tel)	1	2	0	0	0	3
<b>Total for Customer Services Housing (Tel)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
Housing Income Management	0	2	1	0	1	4
<b>Total for Housing Income Management</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
Housing Management Services	2	7	6	5	1	21

<b>Total for Housing Management Services</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>21</b>
Housing Options & Lifeline	0	1	1	0	0	2
<b>Total for Housing Options &amp; Lifeline</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Total for Housing &amp; Revenue Services</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Total for Housing &amp; Building Services</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Total for Economic Growth &amp; Neighbourhood Services</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>53</b>
Neighbourhood Services & Resources	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing & Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Services	0	0	0	1	0	1
Maintenance	0	0	0	1	0	1
Gas Services	0	1	0	0	0	1
General Trades	0	1	0	1	0	2
<b>Total for Maintenance</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Total for Building Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>
Housing & Revenue Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing Income Management	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total for Housing Income Management</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Housing Management Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Management Services	0	2	1	1	0	4
<b>Total for Housing Management Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>
Housing Options & Lifeline	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing Options	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total for Housing Options &amp; Lifeline</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total for Housing &amp; Revenue Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>
Housing Asset Management	0	1	1	1	0	3
<b>Total for Housing Asset Management</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
Housing Strategy & Customer Engagement	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total for Housing Strategy &amp; Customer Engagement</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total for Housing &amp; Building Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Total for Neighbourhood Services &amp; Resources</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>68</b>

## Stage 2

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Environmental Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arboriculture	0	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Total for Arboriculture</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total for Environmental Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total for Community Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Housing & Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing & Revenue Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing Management Services	0	4	1	0	0	5
<b>Total for Housing Management Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total for Housing &amp; Revenue Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total for Housing &amp; Building Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total for Economic Growth &amp; Neighbourhood Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>
Neighbourhood Services & Resources	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing & Building Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing & Revenue Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing Management Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Management Services	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total for Housing Management Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total for Housing &amp; Revenue Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Housing Asset Management	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total for Housing Asset Management</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Housing Services	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing Management	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total for Housing Management</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>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

<b><i>Total for Housing &amp; Building Services</i></b>	<b><i>0</i></b>	<b><i>3</i></b>	<b><i>0</i></b>	<b><i>0</i></b>	<b><i>0</i></b>	<b><i>3</i></b>
<b><i>Total for Neighbourhood Services &amp; Resources</i></b>	<b><i>0</i></b>	<b><i>3</i></b>	<b><i>0</i></b>	<b><i>0</i></b>	<b><i>0</i></b>	<b><i>3</i></b>
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>0</i></b>	<b><i>7</i></b>	<b><i>2</i></b>	<b><i>0</i></b>	<b><i>0</i></b>	<b><i>9</i></b>

### Stage 3

The 'designated person' or 'democratic filter' did not determined any complaints during 2018/19.

### Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman determined four complaint during 2018/19, an increase from one in 2017/18.

Full details of those complaints determined by the Housing Ombudsman are included in the Cabinet reports of 11 December 2018 and 19 September 2019 entitled [Review of Outcome of Complaints Made to Ombudsman](#).

## **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 2018/19 and are detailed below:

Following a complaint for Gas Fitters further training was undertaken to enable them to carry out a fumes investigations effectively.

Following a complaint for Housing Management Services it was recommended that Housing Services consider requiring signed confirmation when tenants verbally confirm that all personal belongings have been removed before ordering sanitisation of the property and that their practice is line with Section 41 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous) Act 1984.

Following a Housing Ombudsman complaint for Housing Management the Council agreed that in some limited circumstances it would disclose the reasons another resident qualified for a repair when the complainant did not.

Following a complaint for Service and Repairs a section was included in the tender documentation regarding communication with residents, and how this will be effectively managed.

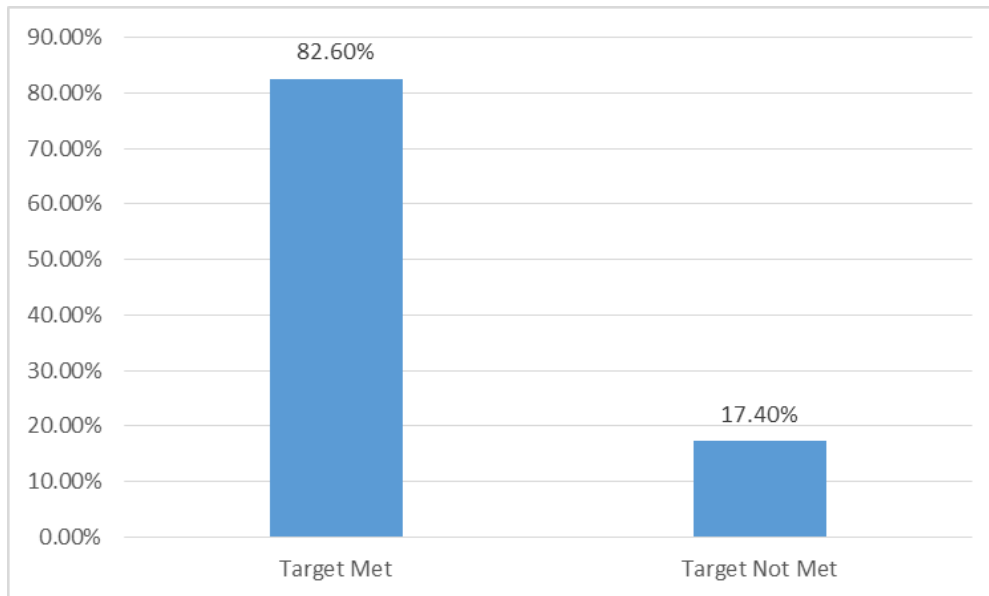


## Performance against the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure

The below graphs show performance in relation to those complaints acknowledged and responded to during 2018/19.

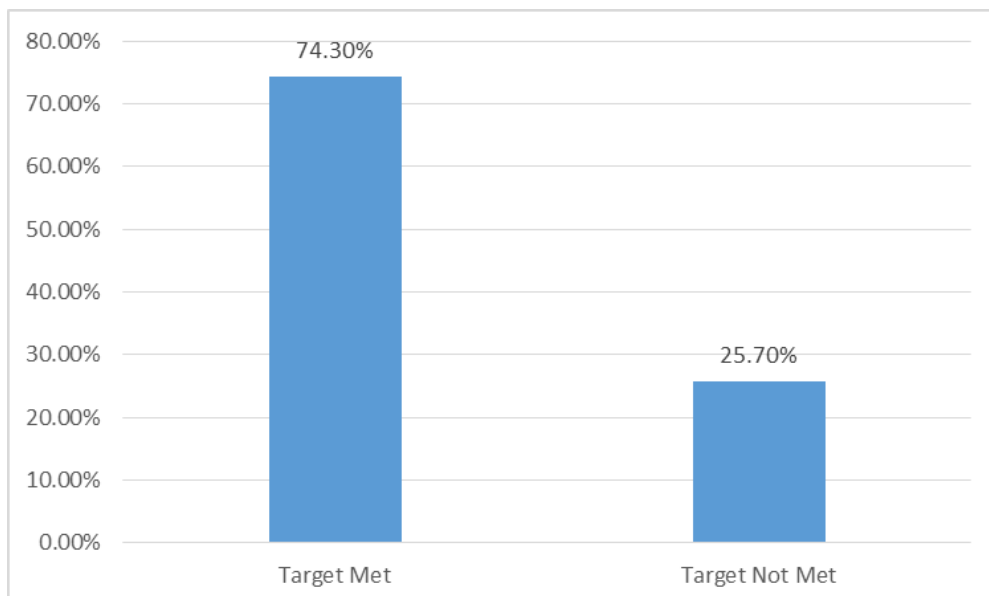
### Stage 1

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



This was an increase from 81.80% in 2017/18.

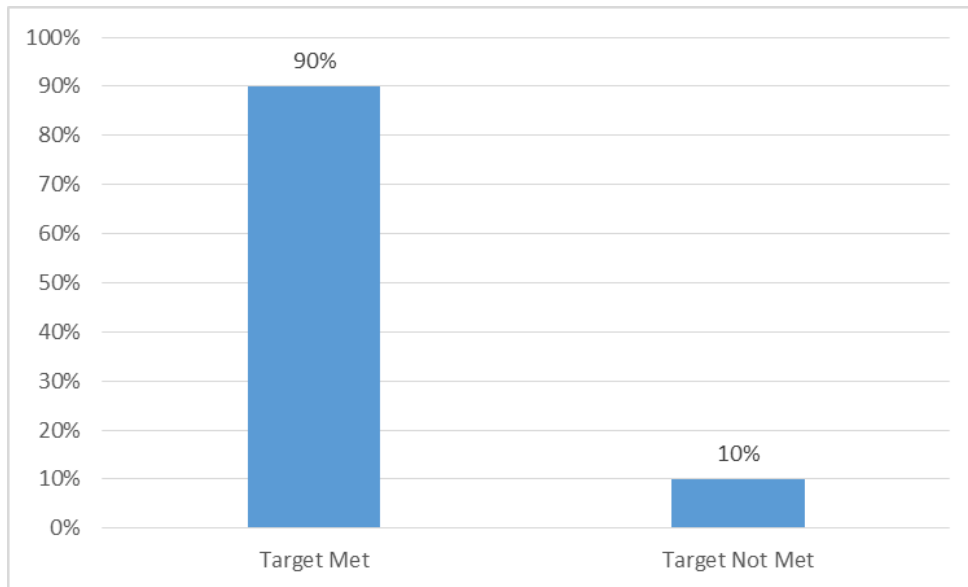
#### Performance against Stage 1 response target (25 working days)



This was an increase from 73.3% in 2017/18.

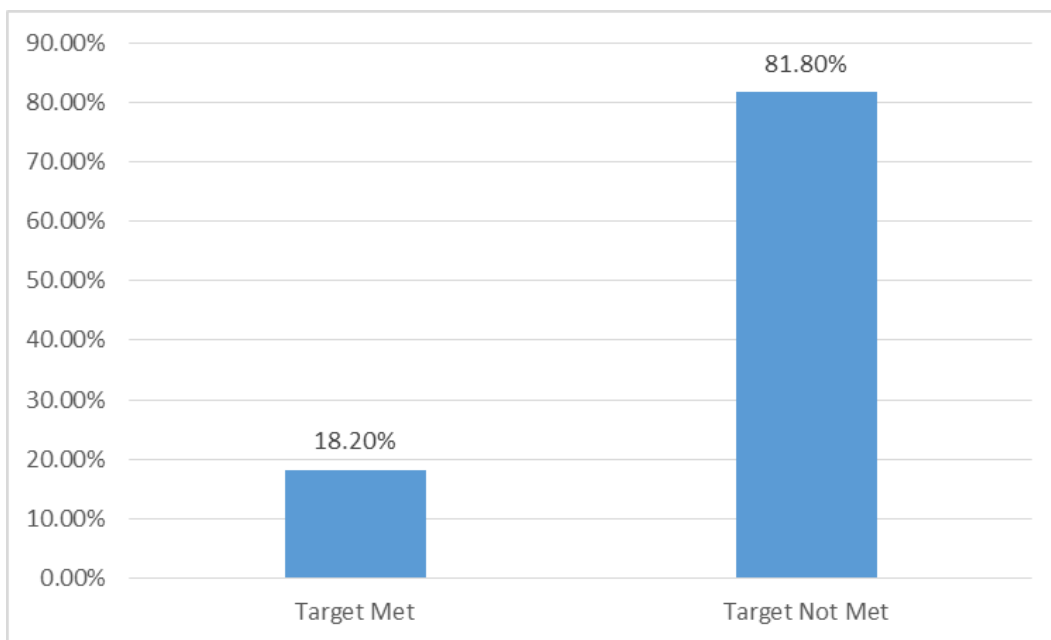
## Stage 2

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



This was an increase from 68.8% in 2017/18.

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



This was a decrease from 43.80% in 2017/18.

### Further recommendations

The Council should work to improve performance against the Stage 1 and 2 response targets.