

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 23 JUNE 2021
REPORT ON: ANNUAL REPORT ON COMPLAINTS
REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
REPORT NO: 158-2021

1. PURPOSE

To report on complaints dealt with in 2020/2021, with comparisons to previous periods, and on action which continues to be taken to learn from complaints.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee notes:

- (i) the key performance indicators on complaints closed between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, with trends from previous periods;
- (ii) examples of the volume of transactions the Council had with customers and citizens during the year, as a context for the number of complaints;
- (iii) examples of how complaints have been used to improve services;
- (iv) results of the satisfaction survey sent to people who made complaints in 2020/2021, with trends from previous periods;
- (v) examples of compliments received about Council services.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The model Complaints Handling Procedure for Local Authorities requires that regular reports are produced for elected members. This report covers complaints made during the year from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.
- 4.2 In terms of performance management, the report includes performance on key complaint handling indicators (Appendix One) and results from satisfaction surveys sent to those who made complaints (Appendix Four). The report also gives examples of how we have used complaints to improve processes, another requirement of the model procedure (Appendix Three).
- 4.3 Appendix Two includes infographics illustrating just part of the range and number of transactions the Council had with customers and citizens during the year, providing a context for the number of complaints received.
- 4.4 Appendix Five gives examples of compliments received about Council services.
- 4.5 From 1 April 2021, changes have been made by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman to the model Complaints Handling Procedure which will affect some of the performance information which is included in reports to Committee. A full report detailing the changes was submitted to members in November 2020 and future performance reports will reflect these changes.
- 4.6 Members should also note that a standard satisfaction survey on complaint handling has been agreed by the Scottish Local Authorities Complaint Handlers Network, so future reports will include the results of the questions in that survey rather than the ones used by Dundee City Council to date. Using the standard survey will allow benchmarking with other Scottish Councils.

5. OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

5.1 Key issues to highlight from the detailed information in the Appendices include:

- The number of complaints recorded in 2020/2021 was 505, down compared to the previous year's figure of 666, a pattern reflected across Councils generally due to the coronavirus restrictions.
- The % of Stage 1 complaints closed within the target time of 5 days is very slightly up on the previous year (67.7% compared to 67.3%), although the average number of days taken to close complaints increased to 5.6 compared to 4.5 in 2019/2020. Performance on complaint handling was therefore maintained at an acceptable level despite the challenges of the pandemic. During the second half of the year, performance on the average number of days taken to close complaints improved compared to the first half of the year, as officers got used to new working arrangements.
- The % of Stage 2 complaints closed within the target of 20 days increased to 65.4% from 62.5% in the previous year, although the average number of days taken to close complaints at this stage rose from 23 to 27 days. A small number of complex cases taking a long time to resolve can skew this average.
- The % of complaints not upheld at both stages has increased.
- Failure to provide a service (which on detailed analysis often turns out to be a delay in providing a service, rather than not providing it at all) remains the most common reason for complaint.
- Surveys of those who have complained continue to show that the factors on which satisfaction is lowest is with the time taken to deal with complaints, being kept up-to-date on progress and being given a clear explanation of the decision. Officers dealing with complaints will continue to be encouraged to address these aspects.

5.2 All of these issues will continue to be raised through discussion of complaints at Council Management Team, the Complaints Review Group and within individual services. The examples given in Appendix Three show that there is a commitment to learn from complaints and to improve processes to prevent the same issues recurring, in addition to those complaints which lead to managers speaking to individual employees or arranging training for teams.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 This report has been subject to an assessment of any impacts on equality and diversity, fairness and poverty, environment and corporate risk. There are no major issues.

6.2 The complaints recording database includes a feature that asks those dealing with complaints to note whether any complaints relate to an equalities issue - age, disability, gender, LGBT, race or religion. During 2020/2021, 3 such complaints were recorded - all relating to disability. These cases have been drawn to the attention of the Council's Equality and Fairness Officers who have no concerns about how these were dealt with.

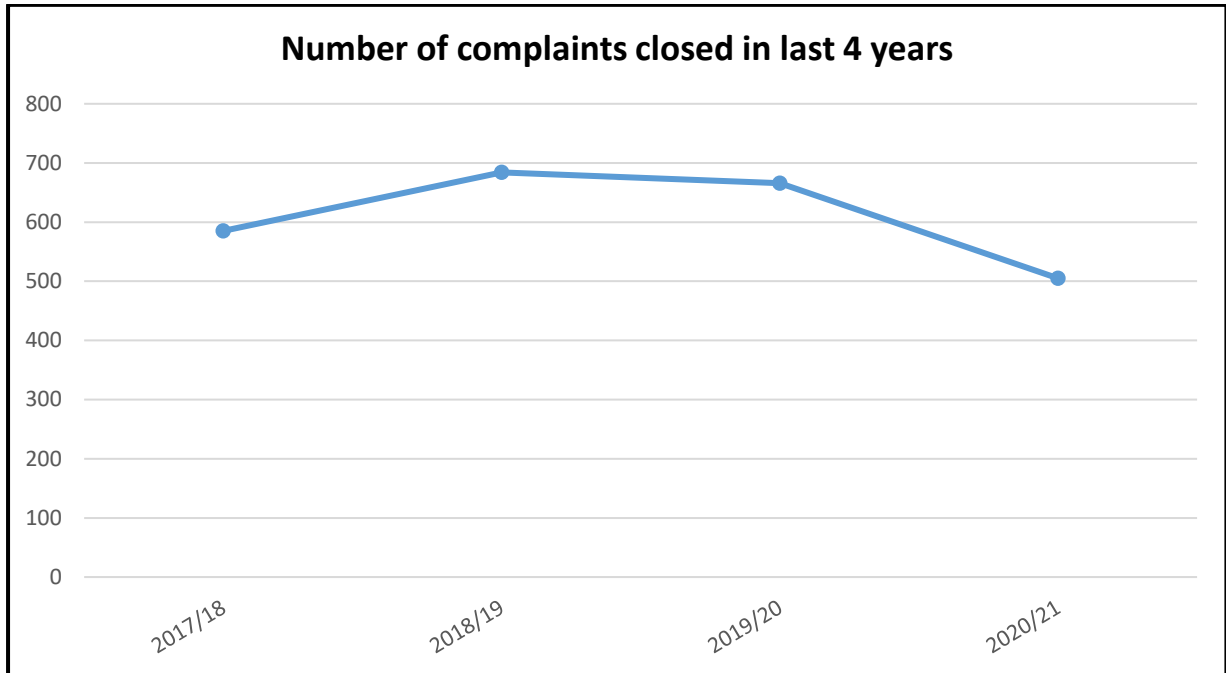
7. CONSULTATIONS

7.1 The Council Management Team was consulted in the preparation of this report.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

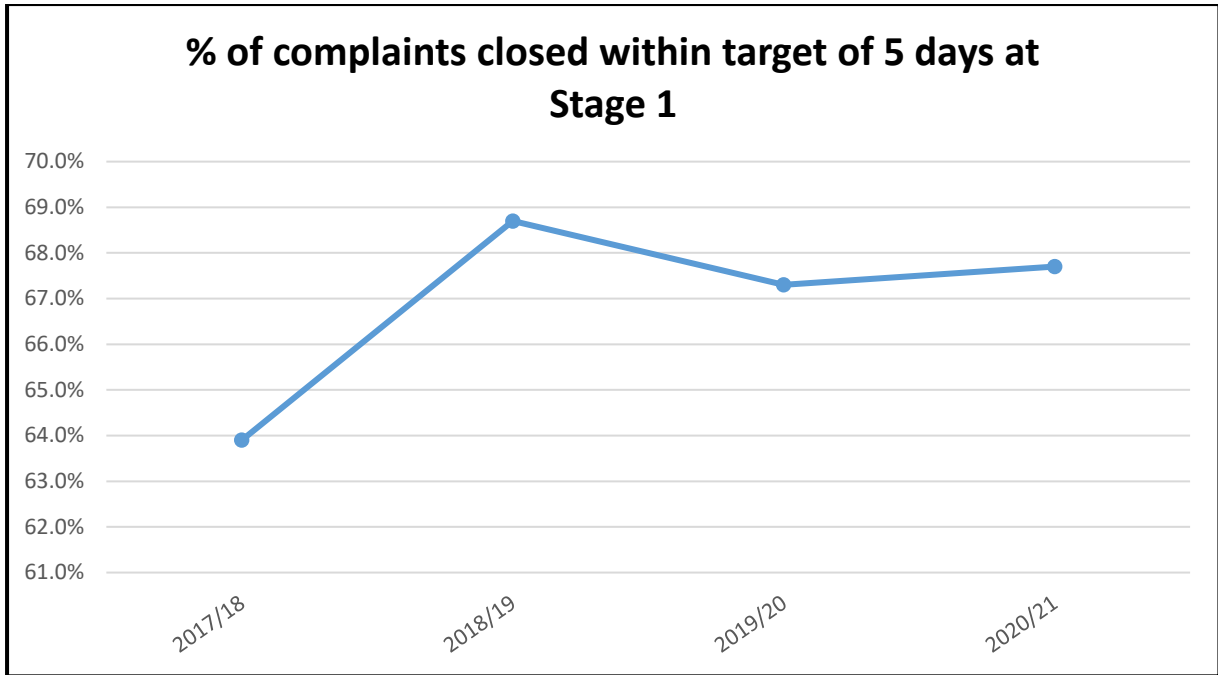
None.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



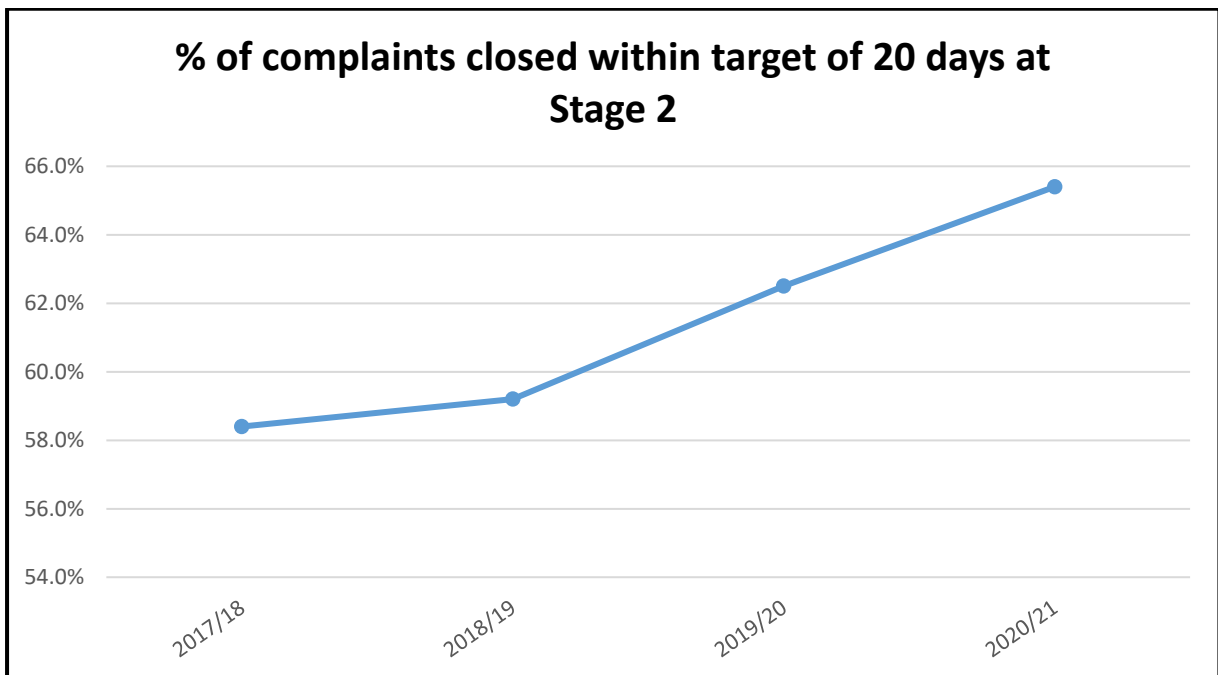
Breakdown by Service

Service	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Corporate Services	90	89	71	80
Children & Families				
- Education	124	125	98	41
- Children's Services	16	46	43	30
- Criminal Justice	4	3	8	3
Neighbourhood Services				
- Housing & Communities	108	180	177	130
- Environment	145	153	136	129
- Community Safety & Protection	N/A	N/A	22	19
City Development	59	50	56	48
Chief Executive's	1	6	4	2
Dundee Health & Social Care Partnership: Social Work	38	32	51	23
Totals	585	684	666	505



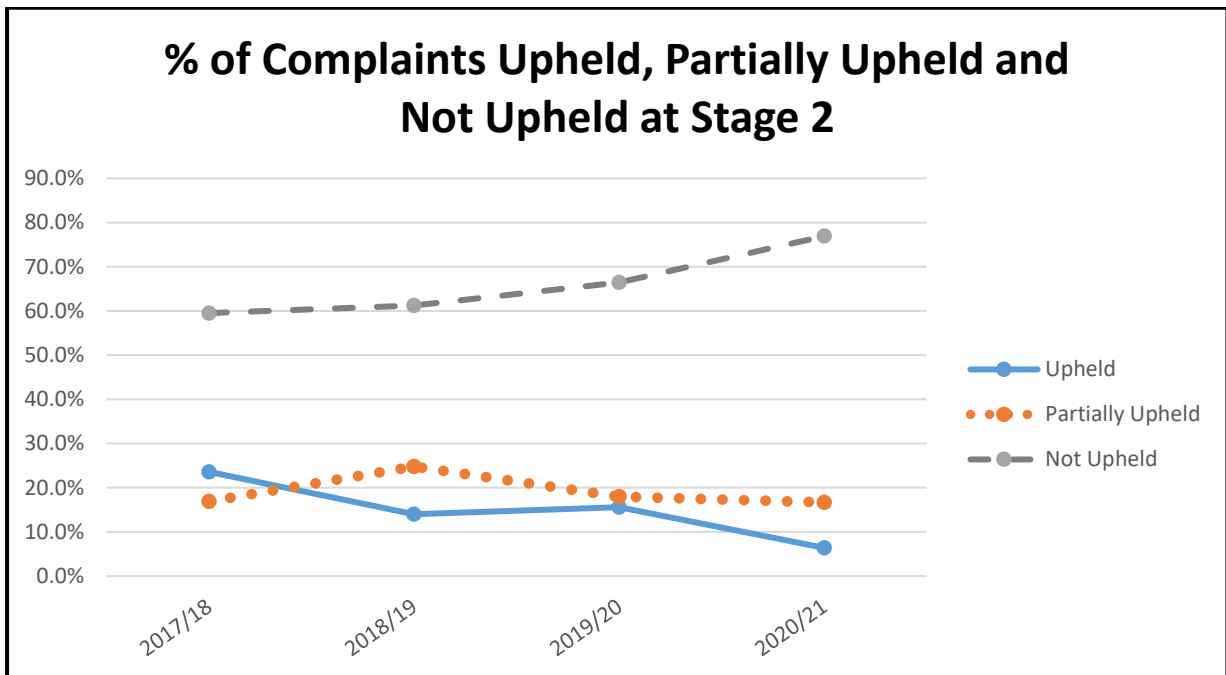
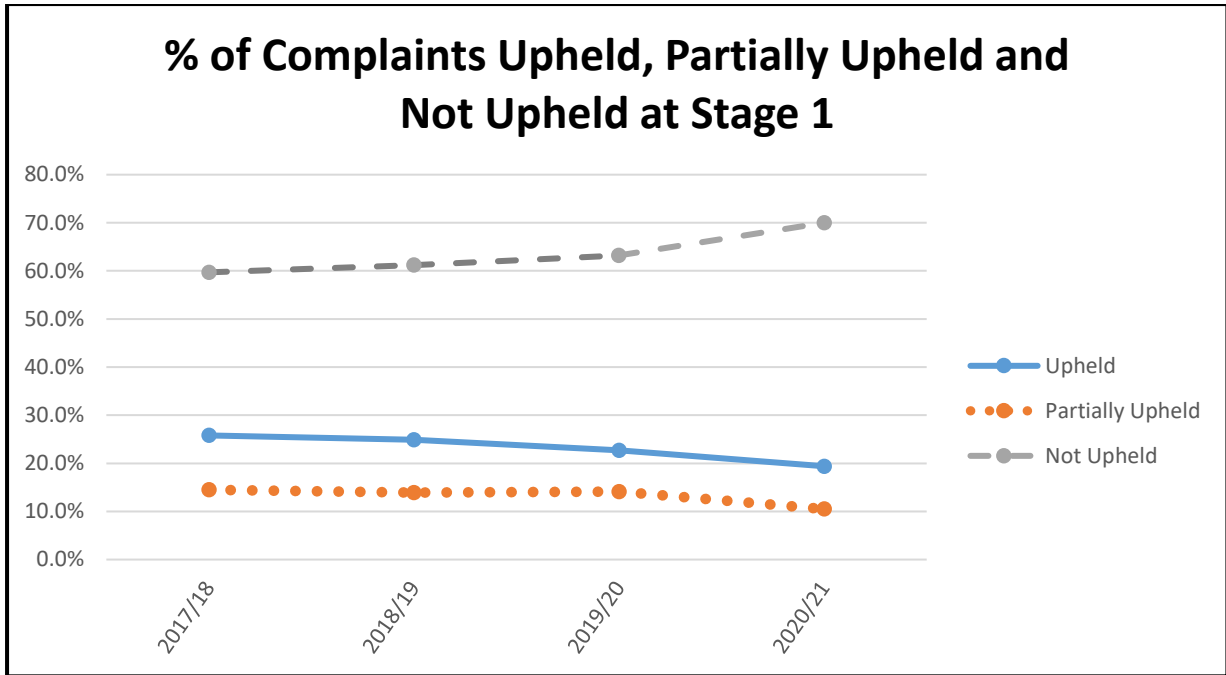
A further 9.4% of complaints in 2020/2021 were dealt with within an extended target time.

The average number of days taken to close complaints at Stage 1 in 2020/2021 was 5.6, compared with 4.5 in 2019/2020, 5.2 in 2018/2019 and 8.0 in 2017/2018.



A further 19.2% of complaints in 2020/2021 were dealt with within an extended target time.

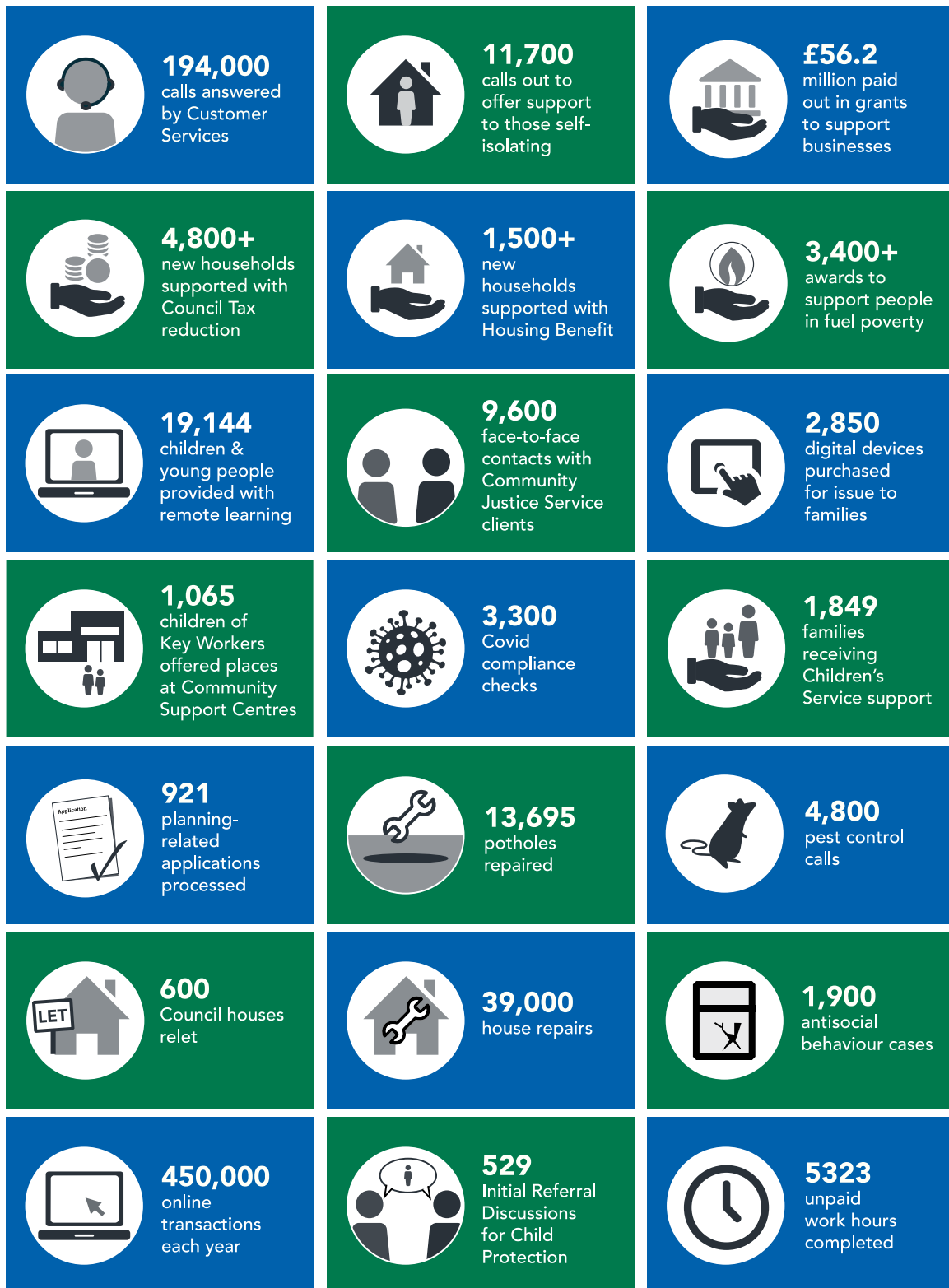
The average number of days taken to close complaints at Stage 2 in 2020/2021 was 27.0, compared with 23.0 in 2019/2020, 19.3 in 2018/2019 and 24.5 in 2017/2018.



Complaints by Nature

Nature of Complaint	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021
Delay in responding to enquiries and requests	10.9%	13.8%	16.3%	18.2%
Failure to meet our service standards	19.7%	21.5%	17.8%	15.5%
Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff	29.4%	25.1%	24.8%	20.3%
Failure to provide a service	25.3%	21.1%	25.6%	24.6%
Dissatisfaction with our policy	8.3%	12.3%	11.2%	14.1%
Failure to follow the proper administrative process	6.3%	6.2%	4.3%	7.3%

EXAMPLES OF RANGE AND SCALE OF TRANSACTIONS WITH THE PUBLIC IN 2020/21



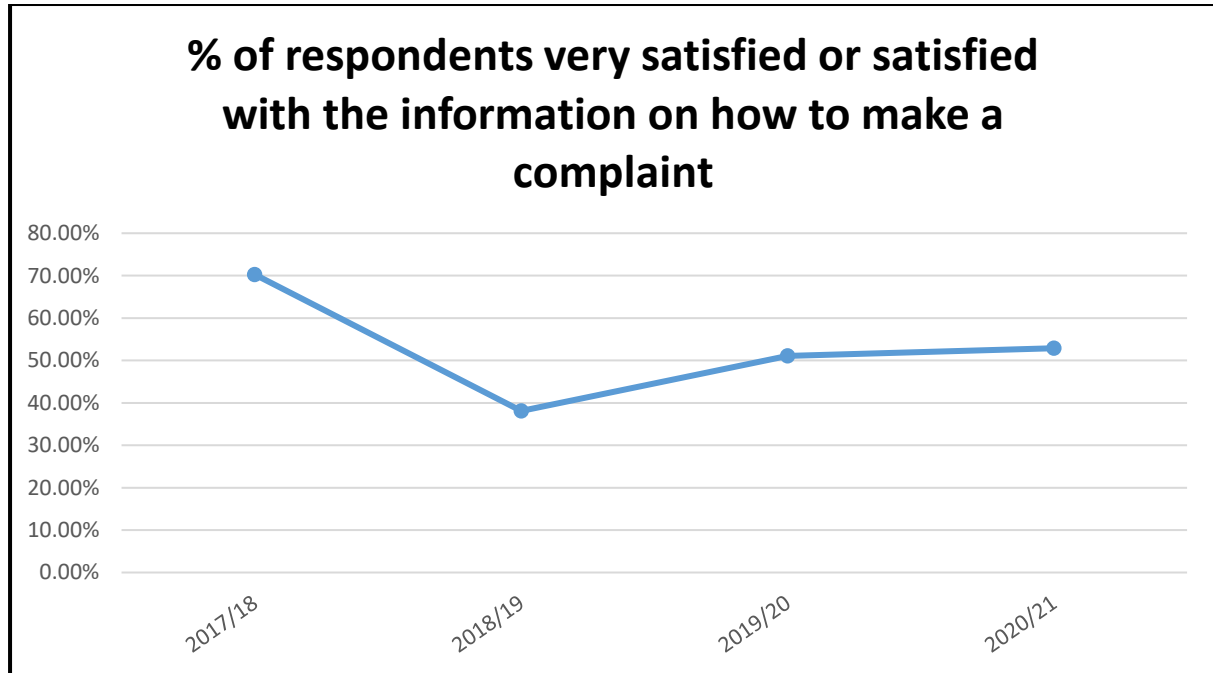
LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS:**EXAMPLES OF HOW COMPLAINTS HAVE BEEN USED TO DRIVE PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS**

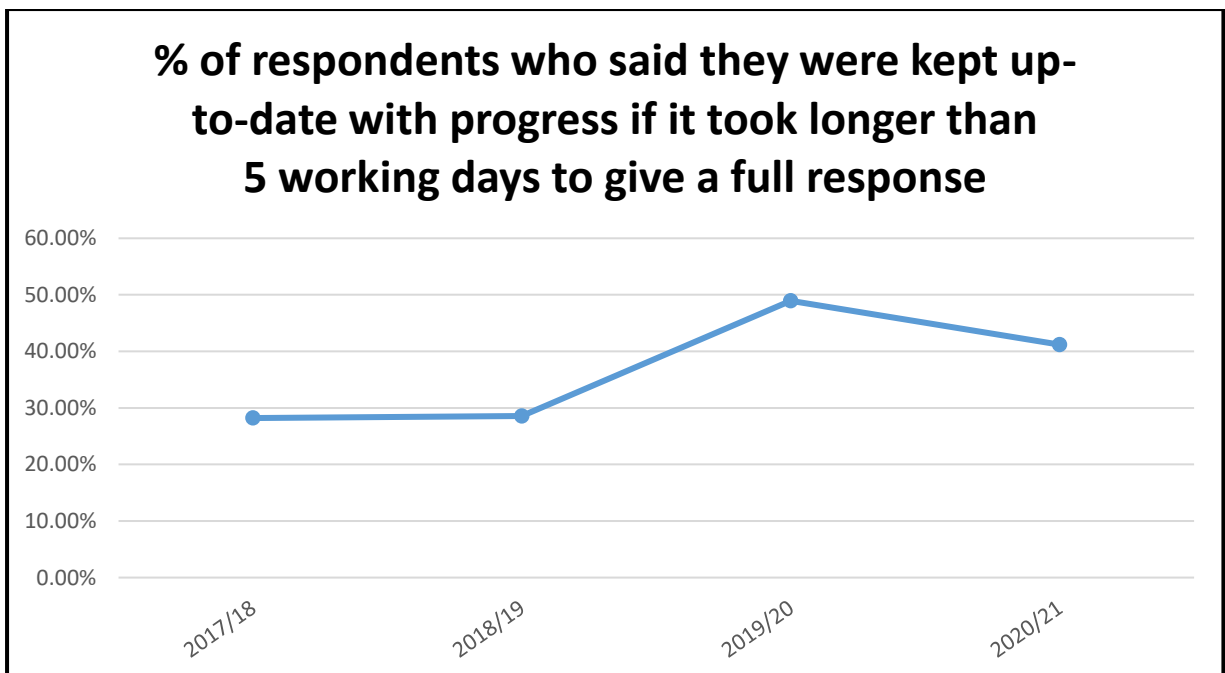
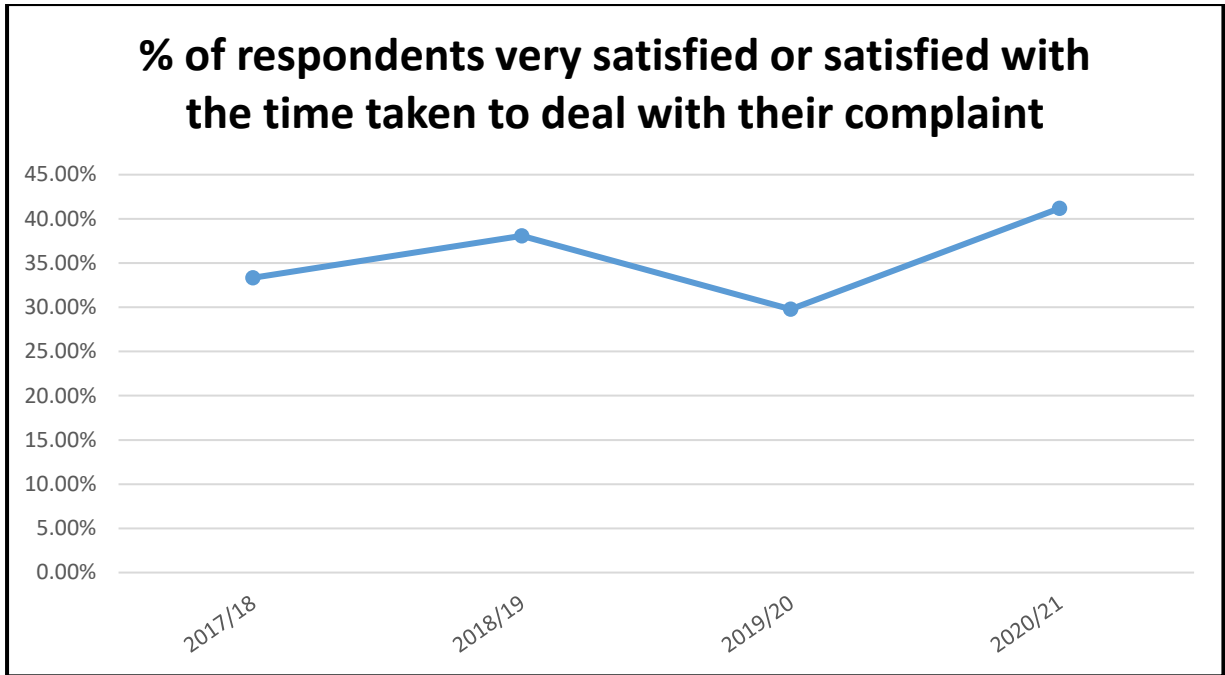
Officers closing off complaints as upheld or partially upheld are asked to identify planned service improvements, designed to prevent similar issues recurring. These often involve speaking to individual employees if errors have been made or arranging training for teams on correct use of procedures and customer care standards. However, we are particularly keen to use complaints to identify process improvements and below are some examples of that being done in 2020/2021:

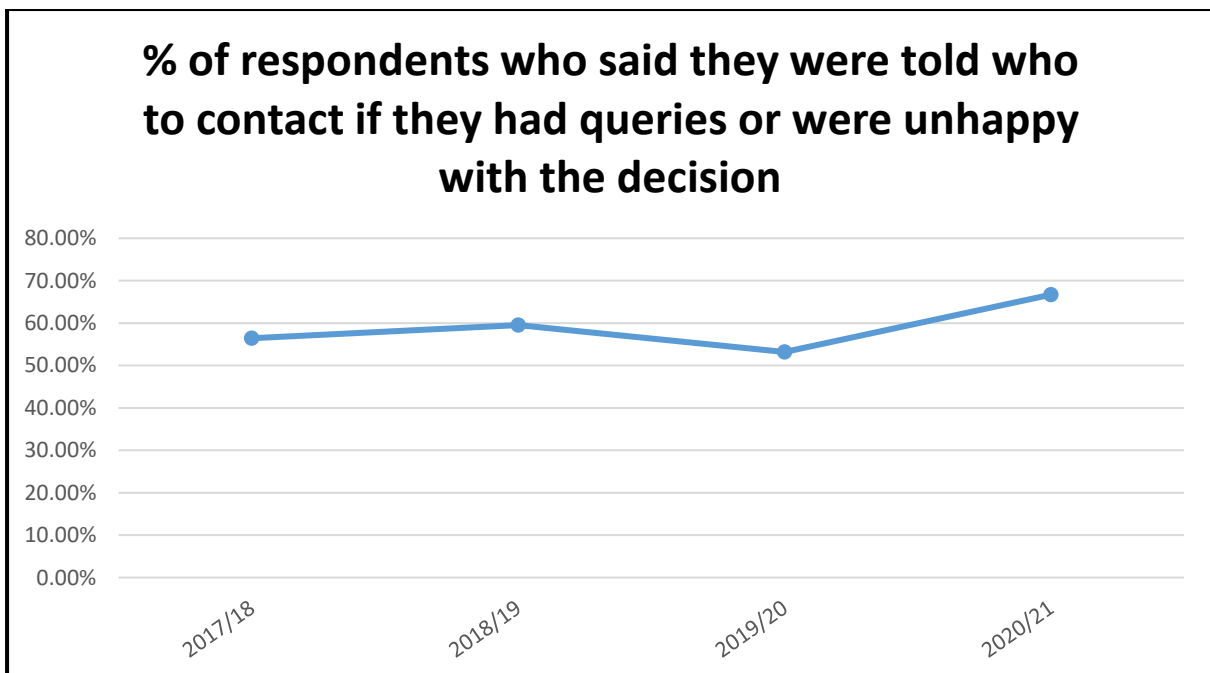
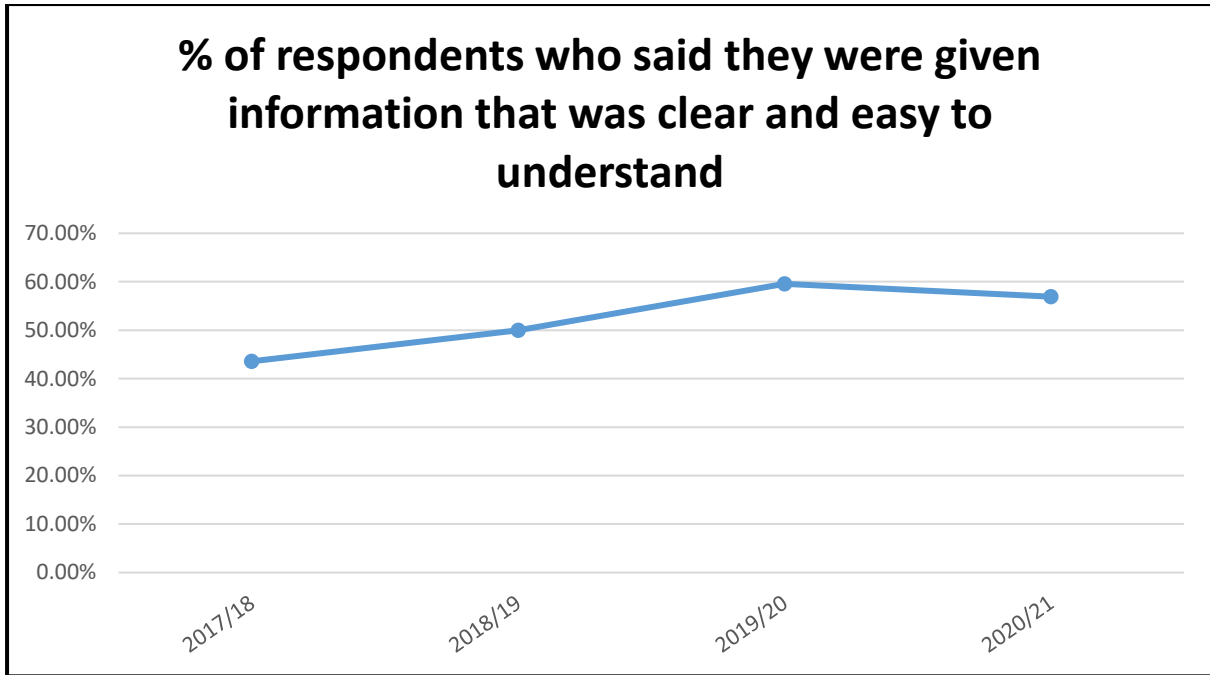
A customer complained that	We listened, we acted
They didn't get a call back after phoning about a food parcel delivery.	A check box will be added to the new Mosaic forms for Advice Services to confirm if a client wishes a call back or e-mail response and this will require another member of the team to confirm it has been done.
There hadn't been sufficient communication about, or involvement in, decisions about medication for their child while in care.	Improvements will be made to the recording of contacts, including with parents and medical professionals, to clearly set out discussions, outcomes and responsibility for decisions.
Meals delivery drivers had been parking inconsiderately.	A service-wide message was sent to all meals service staff and displayed on noticeboards.
She hadn't received notification of changes to entitlement to Housing Benefit and Council Tax reduction.	Notification letters which had not been produced due to COVID-19 have been re-started.
She had missed out on a potential offer of housing due to confusion about providing ID.	Guidance has been issued to Lettings and Housing Options Officers about verifying ID and eligibility as part of homelessness assessment procedures.
There had been a lack of communication about work required to address dampness.	Communications with tenants prior to, during and on completion of specialist works will be reviewed.
There had been a delay receiving her pension following retirement.	Further internal controls have been introduced along with a review of the internal AVC process.
They had been given insufficient notice of a meeting about a child.	An improved communication method has been adopted for inviting family members to reviews.
A member of staff supporting a service user was not keeping receipts of cash spent.	A Protocol on supporting clients with money matters was completed and provided to the Learning Disability Care Management Team.
A school had not responded correctly to a medical incident and had not followed the medical protocol.	Medical protocols have been reviewed and parents of children with such protocols will be asked to update them yearly.

SATISFACTION WITH COMPLAINTS HANDLING

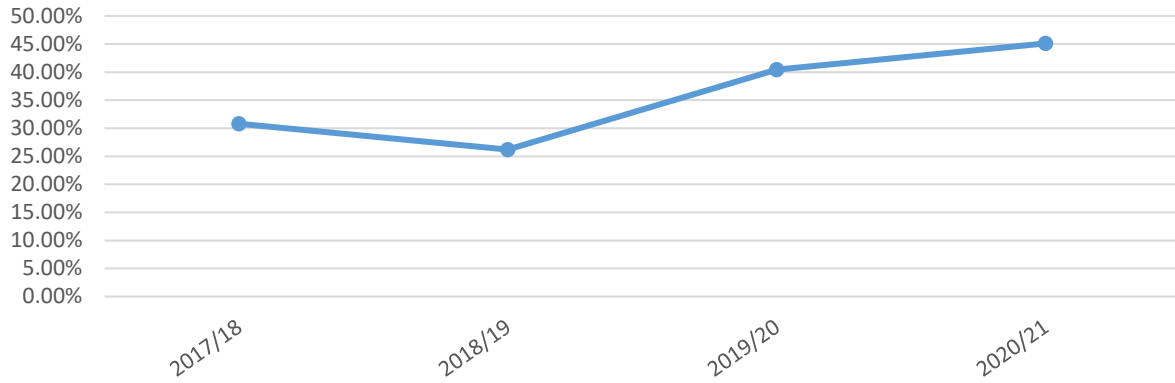
The model Complaints Handling Procedure requires the Council to report on a measure of customer satisfaction with its complaints process. To do this, officers issue quarterly surveys. Result trends are shown in the charts below. Since the survey sample consists entirely of people who have made a complaint, many of which are not upheld, it may not be surprising that satisfaction levels are generally not high. The aim is to increase the % of respondents who acknowledge that the process of dealing with their complaint was satisfactory, even if they did not get the outcome they desired.



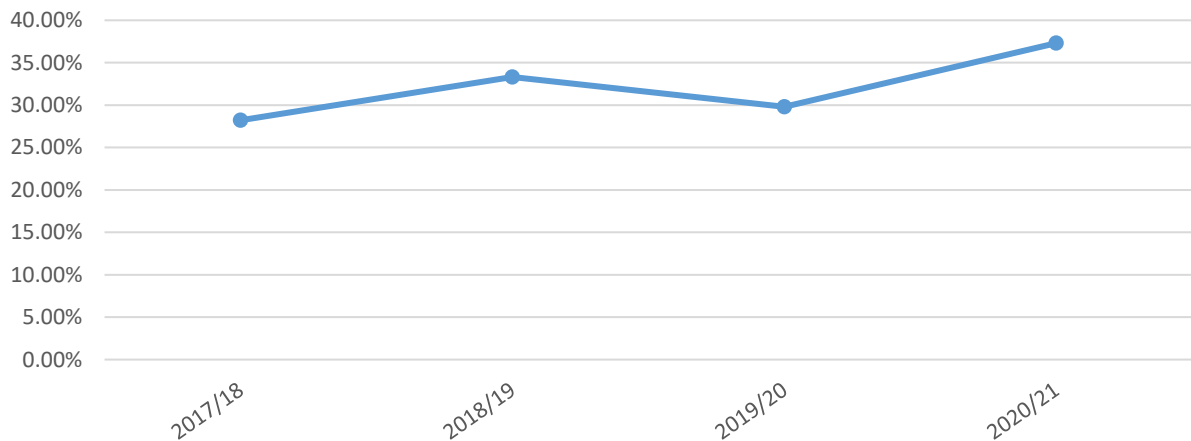




% of respondents very satisfied or satisfied that, even if they did not get the outcome they wanted, their complaint was taken seriously by the Council



% of respondents very satisfied or satisfied that they were given a clear explanation of the reason for the Council's decision



COMPLIMENTS

Elected members suggested that it would be useful to include in this report examples of compliments which have been received about Council services during the same period.

There is a 'Tell Us About Good Service' form on the Council's website, and below are some examples of the compliments which were submitted using that form between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021:

- A big thank you to all workers trying to keep our city up and running and in touch with the latest developments. I really appreciate it all and hope you all stay safe and well. Thank you.
- I would like to congratulate the bin men on their excellent service they continue to provide in difficult circumstances.
- (Also about bin collection) I would like to say thank you. I can only imagine how hard it is for your service just now but I appreciate what you are doing.
- Dealt with a lovely helpful girl today. She was working from home, was very helpful regarding bin permit and new bins. Delightful to speak to and a credit to Dundee City Council, very impressed.
- I'm glad you're not cutting the grass in the older part of the cemetery. It will give the wild flowers and the wee creatures a chance to thrive.
- (Member of staff) has a wealth of knowledge, polite and instrumental in ensuring that the correct agreement was sent.
- Thank you for fixing our roof. What lovely men that came to do the job, well done.
- Son and I received a fantastic service from one of your employees at the recycling centre. He was very approachable and accommodating, nothing was too much trouble for him. We left feeling extremely satisfied.
- Thank you for your speedy response to my questions about grass cutting at the back of my house. The grass has now been cut.
- I requested a replacement concession card and wish to say thank you for your prompt service.
- I reported online that my shower wasn't working and wasn't expecting the fast, efficient response in a matter of a day. Customer service was 5 star, both tradesmen were efficient, I was very impressed.
- I have had the most amazing support from two workers in repairs and housing support. They have been so helpful, understanding and kind. Always on hand to help me and I don't know how I would got through the entire thing without them.
- Please pass on our thanks to the lads that collected the brown/garden waste bins, extremely helpful.
- X was very helpful and sympathetic and helped me find the right department.
- Called your office about rubbish and broken glass left by teenagers in kids park. Your staff were there within 2 hours clearing it and did a fantastic job.
- Massive thank you to the team @TaysideContracts for keeping everyone safe when using the Coldside Community Cupboard.
- Tayside Contracts do an excellent job ... and often go that extra mile to help where they can.

- Thank you and the team for an excellent response to our request for a kerb to be dropped. The men worked through heavy rain and did a fine job.
- The contractors made a first class job resurfacing the road.
- The painter who decorated my living room and bathroom did an excellent job and was an extremely nice person. Many thanks.
- I'd like to express my excitement about the new electric cycle scheme being implemented throughout the city. Everyone I have met with (admittedly not that many due to Covid restrictions) have shared my enthusiasm for this scheme and most are non-cyclists. The fact that an electric scheme was chosen shows me that Dundee City Council really are committed to this idea and to the encouragement of a greener way to travel/live as despite being a keen cyclist, I am not the quickest - I'm looking forward to zipping up Dundee's infamous hills however. I really hope this scheme works and it shall remain for long time to come.
- Thank you very much for putting the bottle bank back in position and removing the danger that it posed after vandals put it in the middle of the road. Well done.
- Pleased to see improvement at the Dudhope Castle recycling site. We visited today and it was tidy with no rubbish or foodstuffs lying about. I hope this can be maintained to ensure that recycling is a safe and hygienic experience.
- (About hedge trimming) You have done this many times before and it always makes a massive difference to keeping the place looking tidy.
- I reported an uncovered stop value outside a property and it was replaced with such efficiency. Thank you for such a speedy response in such challenging times. Also pass on my thanks to the team who empty the black bins - I had forgotten to put the bin out one day recently and when I heard the lorry was running down the drive (quite a long one) and might not have made it. However one of the staff saw what was happening and signalled to indicate that it was okay and came and collected my bin while I walked the rest of the way to collect it once emptied. This simple act of kindness went a long way that day. Please pass on my thanks to him and the team; a credit to the Council, showing compassion responding to what he saw and not ignoring it. Thank you.
- Man from Pest Control who collected my beloved cat after she passed away was very nice. He was very sympathetic and just made me feel better.
- Thank you for gritting at our home - it's not often the gritters come round so much.
- Whilst walking my dog I fell on black ice. Two meals on wheels ladies came to help me up and held my dog. This was difficult as I have arthritis in my knees and hips my walking stick didn't help but these two magnificent women deserve all credit for caring enough to save me. Thank you so much.
- Thank you so much for the very quick response to my complaint about clearing rubbish.
- Just to say thanks to the Housing Repair team and plumber and electrician who installed my new shower in an emergency job following my old shower failure. These are testing times we all have to endure but thanks for the job and good service.
- The driver of the small gritting truck entering my street saw little old me (70yrs+) struggling on ice, trying to spread grit from my small trundle cart. He salted my pavement and threw handfuls on the steep drive so I could get home safely. Medal.
- (From a councillor on behalf of residents) I would like to pass on the thanks that I have received from the residents of both Kettins and Kinrossie Terraces for your efforts gritting these streets and filling the grit bins today. Please extend these thanks, along with my own, to the full team working on our winter maintenance programme.

- Very pleased to see improvement being made to the pavement at the entrance to Trottick Ponds to assist pedestrians crossing (Emmock Road/Harestane Road end).
- Thank you very much to the team who look after the toilets at Broughty Ferry beach. The toilets are always clean, tidy and well stocked with toilet paper, hand sanitizer etc. Thank you.
- I sent an email this morning concerning the snow on my street as I had to cancel a radiotherapy session because I could not get my car out. I just want to thank you for sending a plough to clear the street around my house. I can now resume my treatment.
- I would like to say a big thank you to the employee from the environmental department that works the Mill O'Mains area. My car had been stuck for 4 days but since I had a doctor's appointment I tried digging it out of the snow. X must have seen me struggling and came across and helped dig me out with his snow shovel and when I came home he moved even more snow so I could get back in. Would like to say a big thank you for what he did and we're very grateful. Not all heroes wear capes. Excellent staff member you have there.
- Thank you so much for clearing out the wrapping plastic and paper from bin area. It is now fully accessible. Also thank you for clearing out the storage area which was full of household items and glass. Excellent service.
- Refuse collector gentleman came out to collect my garden waste bins today. I commented to him that I had requested an extra burgundy bin. Later this afternoon I noticed he had delivered this. Great service. Please pass on my thanks to him.
- Just want to say a quick thank you to the staff especially the Housing Department. I submitted two online queries, one of which was related to faulty lights in the common close and another of fly tipping in the communal gardens. The matter of the faulty lights was rectified so quickly and the fly tipping cleared away at speed! Thanks for the hard work the staff put in for keeping our community clean and safe and for their continued excellent service.
- I complained about debris on Seafield Road earlier this week and I wanted to thank you for your speedy response to clear it the next day. It's much appreciated! Thank you.
- The hedges have been trimmed and again a wonderful job done. This year even shorter than before which is great! They will look even more lovely when the leaves grow back this spring.
- I would like to praise a man who works in the laundry service. He was a perfect public servant and was very professional, while demonstrating empathy and patience. He reminded me that there are a lot of unsung heroes working away, helping to keep things moving so that Dundonians can enjoy the services the Council provides. I cannot praise him strongly enough.

In addition to the compliments made on the online form, social care services often receive comments, thank you cards etc direct from service users' families and care managers. Here are examples of comments received between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021:

The Oakland Centre normally provides a wide range of day centre activities and social interaction for older people who have dementia, other illnesses/disabilities or are experiencing social isolation. While the centre was closed, they introduced an outreach team to continue to support their most vulnerable service users. Here are some of the comments received about that service from relatives and care managers:

- "Extremely grateful for the support, allows me to get shopping and housework done. My health is poor and if my husband doesn't get outside his behaviours are worse in the house" (carer).
- "Massive help, I am getting respite and husband is benefitting from the visits and support he is getting" (carer).
- "Please thank the outreach SCO for her support with service user, it has made a huge difference in her life" (care manager).
- "Thank the staff for looking after him, an excellent service" (service user's wife).

- “Service user no longer requires prn sedation thanks to the engagement she is now receiving” (care manager).

Menzieshill, Turriff and Janet Brougham residential homes have continued to care for residents during the pandemic and here are some of the comments they have received:

- “From the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank every member of staff for the excellent care my mother received. I am sure she would never have reached her 100th birthday, never mind her 101st, without your care. The help and support I received in her last few days meant a lot and helped me to cope”.
- “The staff showed kindness, compassion, patience and understanding”.
- “Thank you for looking after x so well, especially over the last few challenging months”.
- “It has been a great comfort to have witnessed the exceptional kindness and attention provided for mum’s comfort and welfare needs”.
- “Very grateful for the efforts of all staff for the level of care in looking after our most vulnerable citizens during the pandemic”.
- “Thank you so much for the love and care you gave ... including making her birthdays special and little touches like having her family photos in front of her”.
- “The care and compassion you all show is amazing”.
- “The daily updates of how gran was getting on were great. As a family, we were made to feel gran was the only person you were looking after! Even the doctor mentioned how well she was being looked after”.
- “Special thanks for the amazing compassion, care, comfort and companionship that was shown to mum”.
- “We will be eternally grateful for the exceptional care and love shown by all the staff to mum. Knowing she was happy and content gave us all great comfort”.

Here is an example of a letter received by the Mackinnon Centre about their respite stay service:

- “X was really happy with his respite stay ... the staff were fantastic and so accommodating with my calls and didn't make me feel it was a big issue me constantly checking up, and I'm glad that they called about anything they were unsure about too ... the week he was at respite made a huge difference to us and I really managed to catch up on some rest. Your team are all so so friendly and are a credit to you. I was so nervous and anxious about this stay and they really helped put me at ease”.

Dundee and Angus Independent Living and Community Equipment Store was included in a thank you letter to a number of services involved in the care of a person following discharge from hospital:

- “Thank you for the excellent care you helped arrange for mum. All aspects of her care have been exceptional and the entire experience has been very positive. The care has been seamless and deserves to be acknowledged”.

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