

**ITEM No ...8.....**

**REPORT TO:** SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 9 DECEMBER 2020  
**REPORT ON:** BI-ANNUAL REPORT ON COMPLAINTS  
**REPORT BY:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
**REPORT NO:** 285-2020

**1. PURPOSE**

To report on complaints dealt with in the first half of 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 30 September 2020, with trends from previous periods;
- (ii) examples of the volume of transactions the Council has with customers and citizens 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 the first half of 2020/2021, with trends from previous periods;
- (v) examples of compliments received about Council services.
- (vi) a summary of complaints about the Council received by and determined by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman during 2019/2020.

**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 closed between 1 April and 30 September 2020.
- 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 has with customers and citizens, providing a context for the number of complaints received.
- 4.4 Appendix Five gives examples of compliments received about Council services.
- 4.5 Changes are being 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 these reports to Committee. A report detailing the changes will be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee in December.

- 4.6 The format of this report has been updated from previous years, with more use of graphics and bullet point lists to highlight key information and trends as clearly as possible.

## 5. OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

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

- The number of complaints recorded in the first half of 2020/2021 was lower than normal (210 compared to 296 in the first half of 2019/20), reflecting in particular the early period of coronavirus restrictions including the closure of schools.
- Performance in terms of the % of complaints closed within the target time dipped in the first half of 2020/2021 compared to 2019/2020. For stage 1, the % meeting the 5 day target was 66.9% compared to 67.3%, while for stage 2 the % meeting the 20 day target was 59.4% compared to 62.5%. We have indicated to people making complaints that these might not always be responded to as quickly as normal as officers were involved in work relating to the emergency or working away from normal offices and colleagues.
- The % of complaints fully upheld at both stages (19.1% at stage 1 and 3.1% at stage 2) was lower than the 2019/2020 figures (22.7% at stage 1 and 18.0% at stage 2)
- 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) has remained, the most common reason for complaint.
- Surveys of those who have complained continue to show that the two factors on which satisfaction is lowest is with the time taken to deal with complaints and being given a clear explanation of the decision. Satisfaction levels with all questions in the survey have improved in the first half of 2020/2021 compared to 2019/2020. Full details are given in Appendix 4, but examples include the % satisfied with the time taken to deal with complaints going up from 29.78% to 48.10% and the % satisfied that their complaint had been taken seriously going up from 40.43% to 51.90%

- 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 do show that there is a commitment to learn from complaints and 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. STATISTICS FROM THE SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICE OMBUDSMAN

- 6.1 The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman normally sends an annual letter to all Councils around October each year, providing statistics on complaints made to them. They have not issued the annual letter this year in the usual format, as they are currently considering a new interactive way to display the figures on their website. However, we have managed to obtain the information below on the complaints about the Council which were received by and determined by the Ombudsman during 2019/2020.

- 6.2 24 complaints were received about Dundee City Council in 2019/2020 - 10 about Housing, 5 about Social Work, 2 each about Roads and Transportation and Finance, and 1 each about Environmental Health and Cleansing, Legal and Admin and Planning. 2 complaints were categorised as 'subject unknown'. The number of complaints received about the Council represents 1.8% of those received by the Ombudsman about all local authorities in the year, compared to the previous year's figure of 2.8%.

- 6.3 26 complaints about the Council were determined by the Ombudsman during 2019/2020, compared to 36 in 2018/19. The additional 2 cases must have been received during 2018/19 but not determined until 2019/20. Of these 26 cases:

- 5 were recorded as not duly made
- 4 were listed as premature

- 2 were out of jurisdiction
- 1 was 'outcome not achievable'
- 1 was recorded as resolved
- 11 were 'proportionality'

Only 2 complaints reached the 'investigation' stage, the same number as in 2018/2019. In both of these cases, part of the complaint was not upheld and part was upheld. Issues on which complaints were upheld concerned an assessment about the care needs of a child and the backdating of kinship care payments. All actions requested by the Ombudsman in these cases have been implemented.

## **7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 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 the first half of 2020/2021, there was just one case recorded, relating to disability. This complaint has been drawn to the attention of the Service Manager with responsibility for equality and diversity and he has no concerns about how it was dealt with.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

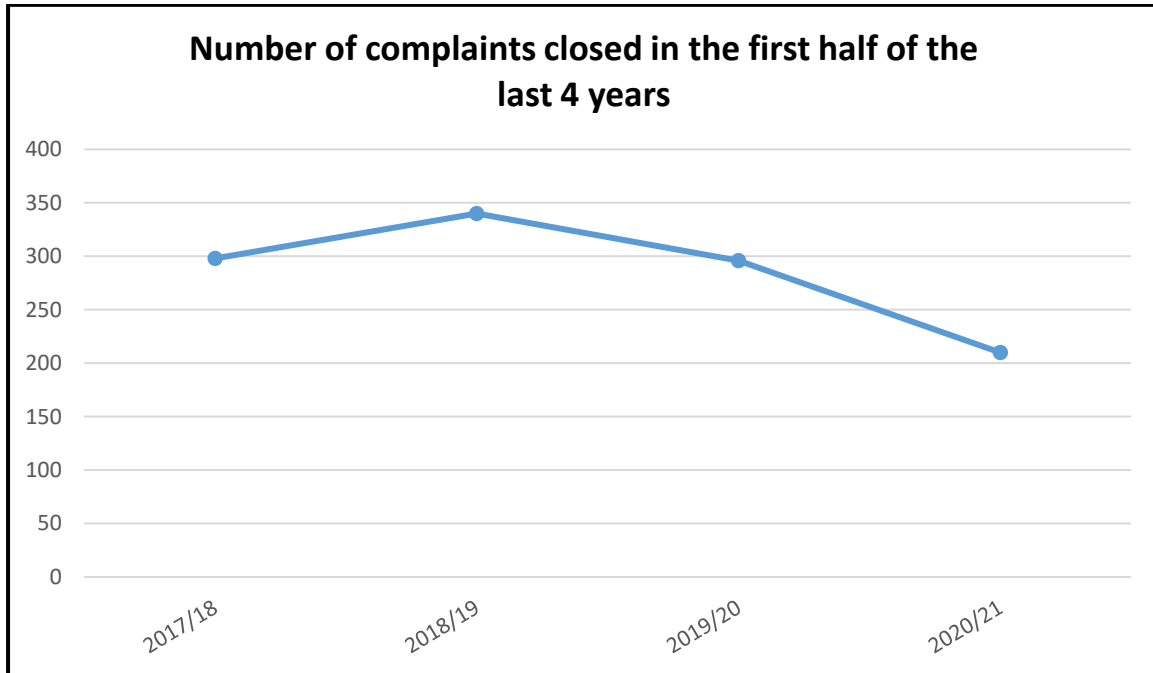
The Council Management Team was consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

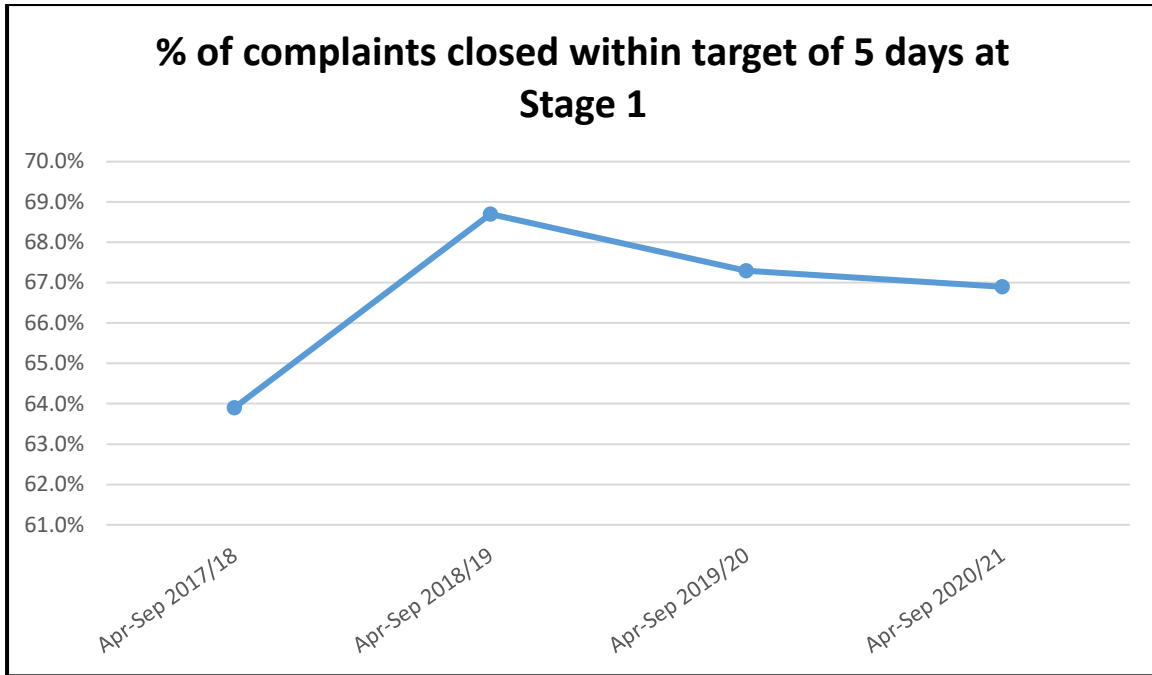


## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



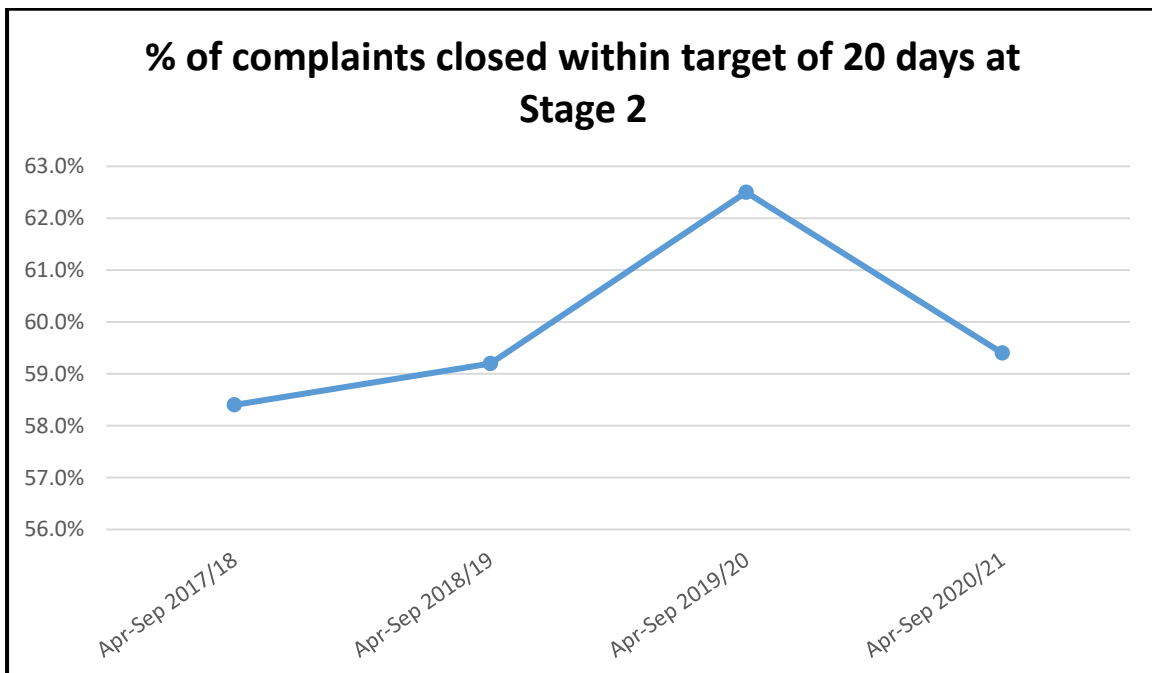
## Breakdown by Service

Service	Apr-Sep 2017/2018	Apr-Sep 2018/2019	Apr-Sep 2019/2020	Apr-Sep 2020/2021
<b>Corporate Services</b>	43	51	35	36
<b>Children &amp; Families</b>				
- Education	44	47	47	7
- Children's Services	10	21	22	19
- Criminal Justice	2	1	5	0
<b>Neighbourhood Services</b>				
- Housing & Communities	64	93	78	49
- Environment	95	79	58	61
- Community Safety & Protection	N/A	N/A	7	12
<b>City Development</b>	18	29	19	15
<b>Chief Executive's</b>	1	4	2	1
<b>Dundee Health &amp; Social Care Partnership: Social Work</b>	20	15	23	10



A further 9% of complaints in the first half of 2020/2021 were dealt with within an extended target time.

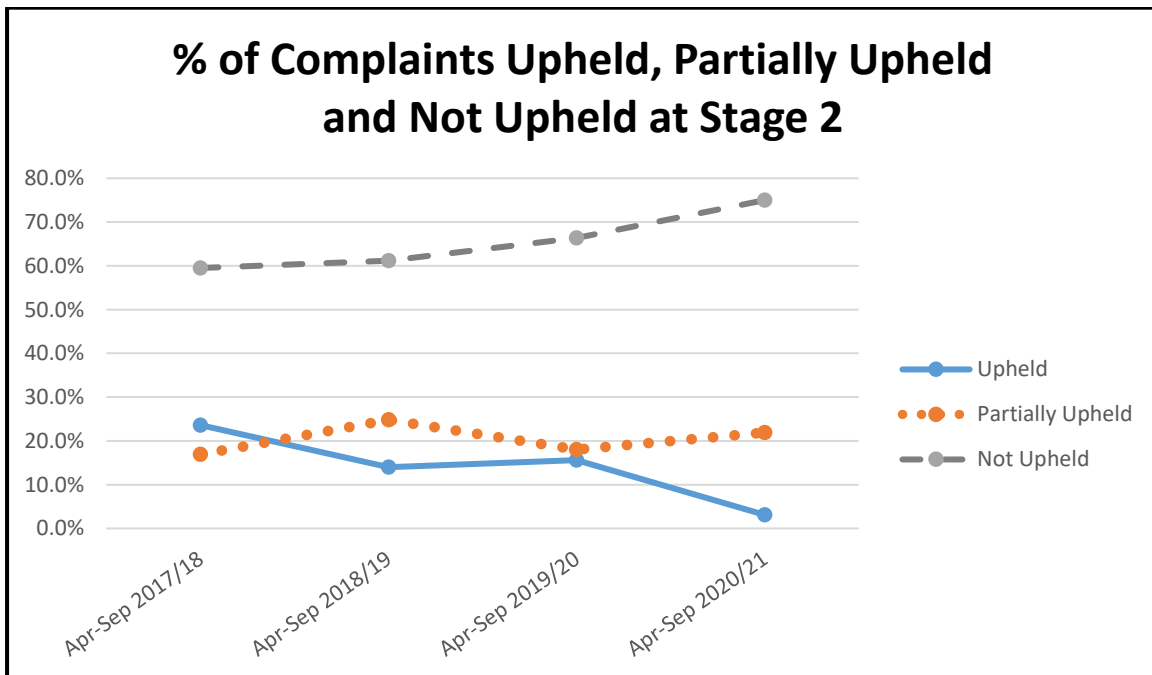
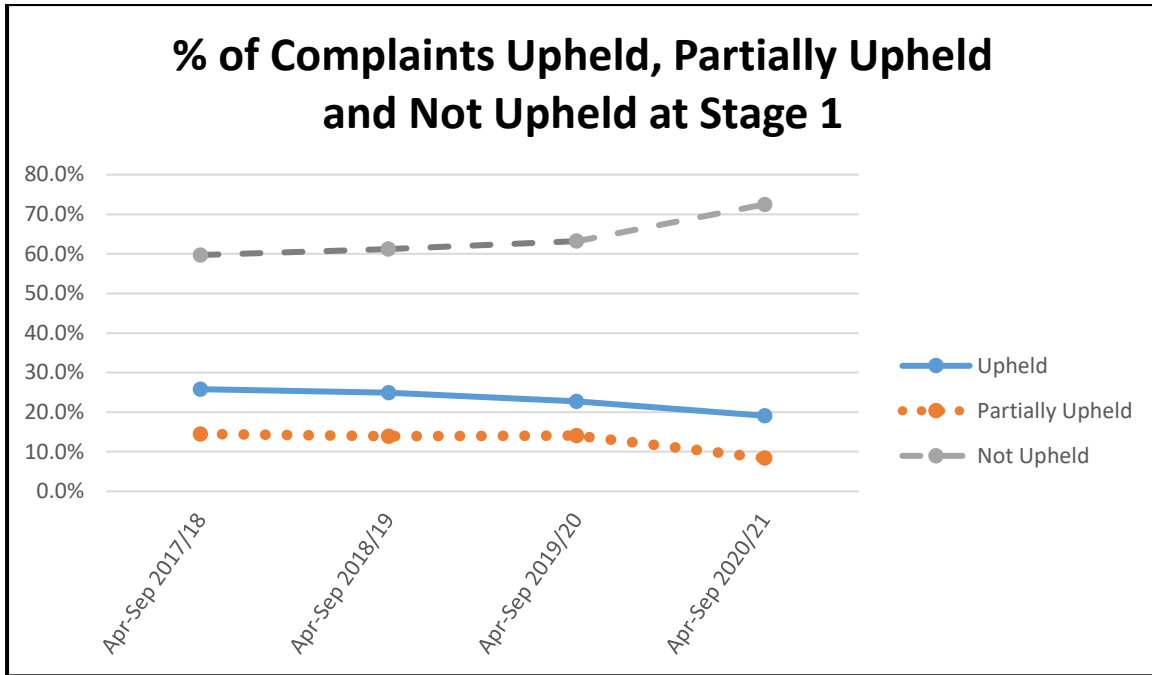
The average number of days taken to close complaints at stage 1 in the first half of 2020/2021 was 6.1, compared with 4.5 in 2019/2020, 5.2 in 2018/2019 and 8.0 in 2017/2018.



A further 19% of complaints in the first half of 2020/2021 were dealt with within an extended target time.

The average number of days taken to close complaints at stage 2 in the first half of 2020/2021 was 30.9, compared with 23.0 in 2019/2020, 19.3% in 2018/2019 and 24.5 in 2017/2018.

**NOTE:** Both the 5 day and 20 day targets are designed to drive improvement in prompt responses to complaints, rather than absolute standards that every case is expected to meet. We do continue to reinforce the importance of responding promptly to complaints.



#### Complaints by Nature

Nature of Complaint	Apr-Sep 2017/2018	Apr-Sep 2018/2019	Apr-Sep 2019/2020	Apr-Sep 2020/2021
Delay in responding to enquiries and requests	10.9%	13.8%	16.3%	11.2%
Failure to meet our service standards	19.7%	21.5%	17.8%	13.1%
Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff	29.4%	25.1%	24.8%	23.8%
Failure to provide a service	25.3%	21.1%	25.6%	27.1%
Dissatisfaction with our policy	8.3%	12.3%	11.2%	15.9%
Failure to follow the proper administrative process	6.3%	6.2%	4.3%	8.9%

## Examples of Council Transactions





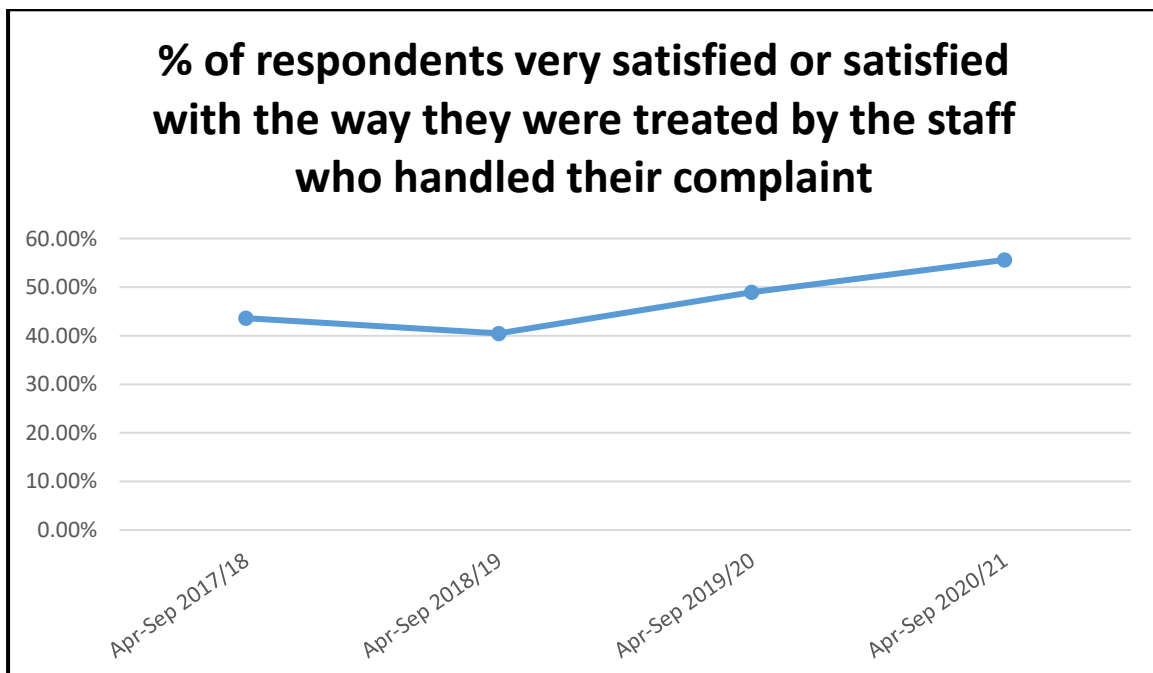
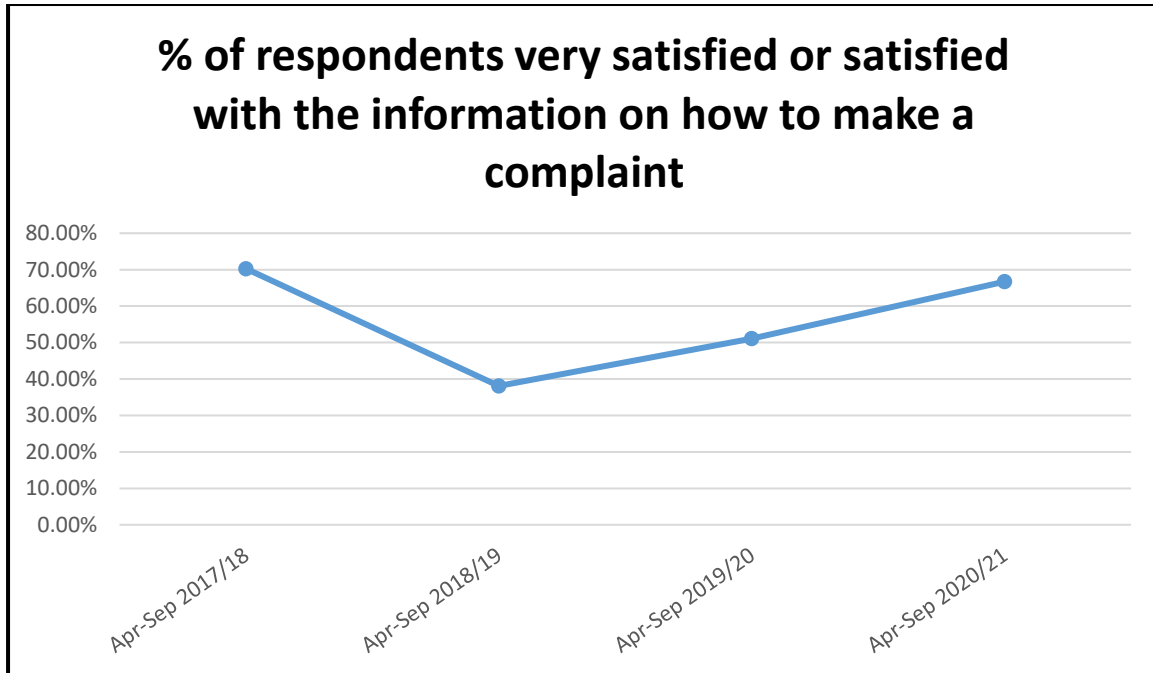
**LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS:****EXAMPLES OF HOW COMPLAINTS HAVE BEEN USED TO DRIVE SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS**

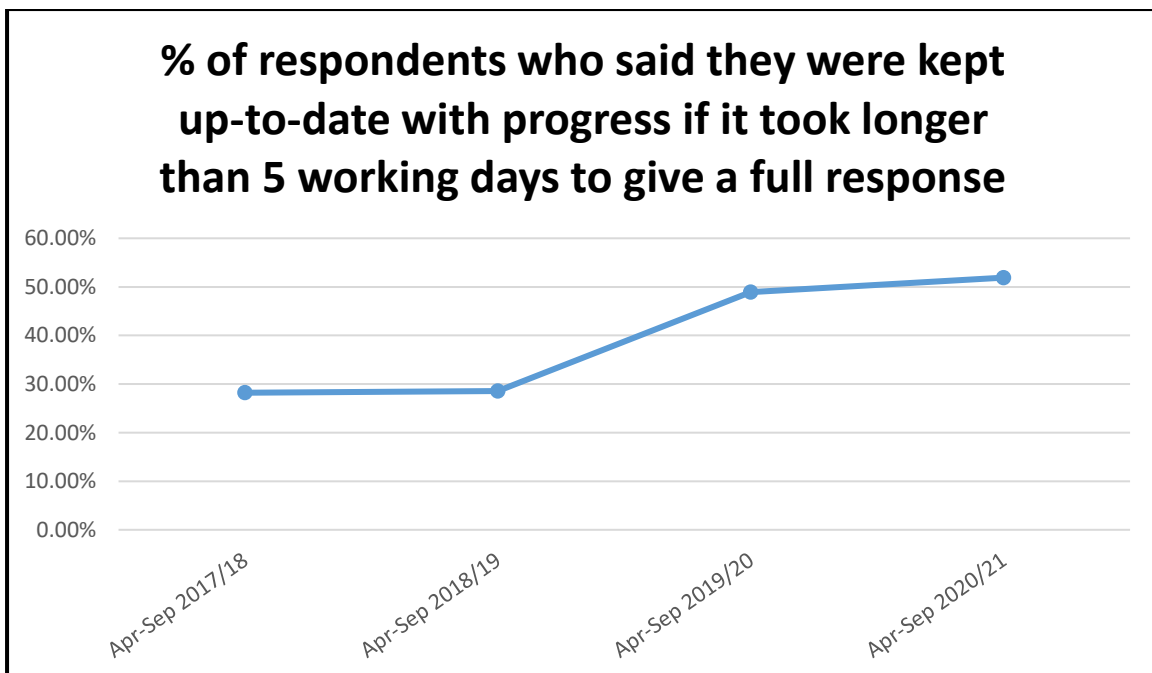
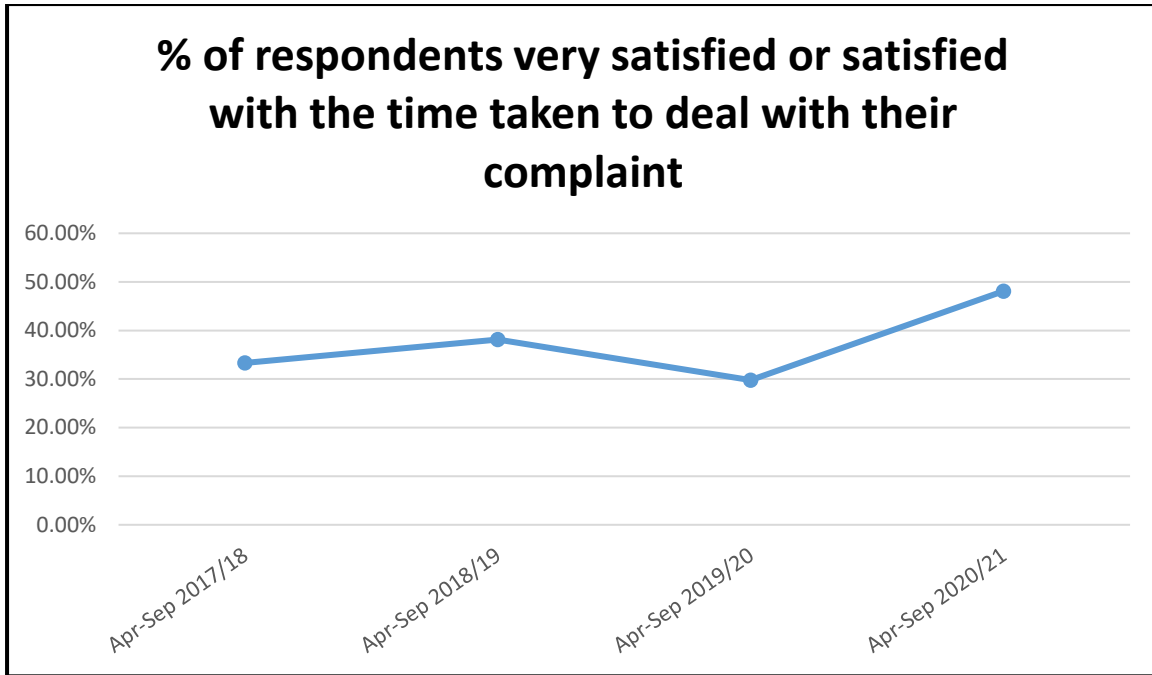
Anyone closing off a complaint as upheld or partially upheld is asked to identify planned service improvements, designed to prevent similar issues recurring. These often involve speaking to individual employees or arranging training for teams on correct use of procedures and customer care standards. Below are some examples of how complaints were used to identify process/service improvements during the first half of 2020/2021:

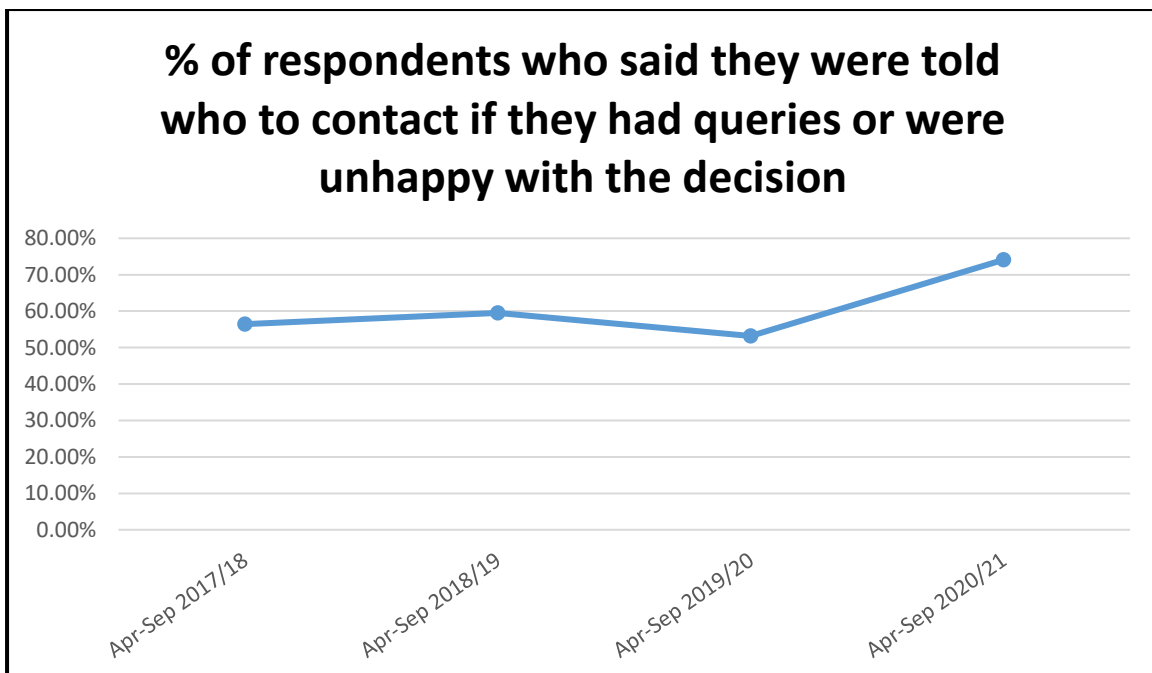
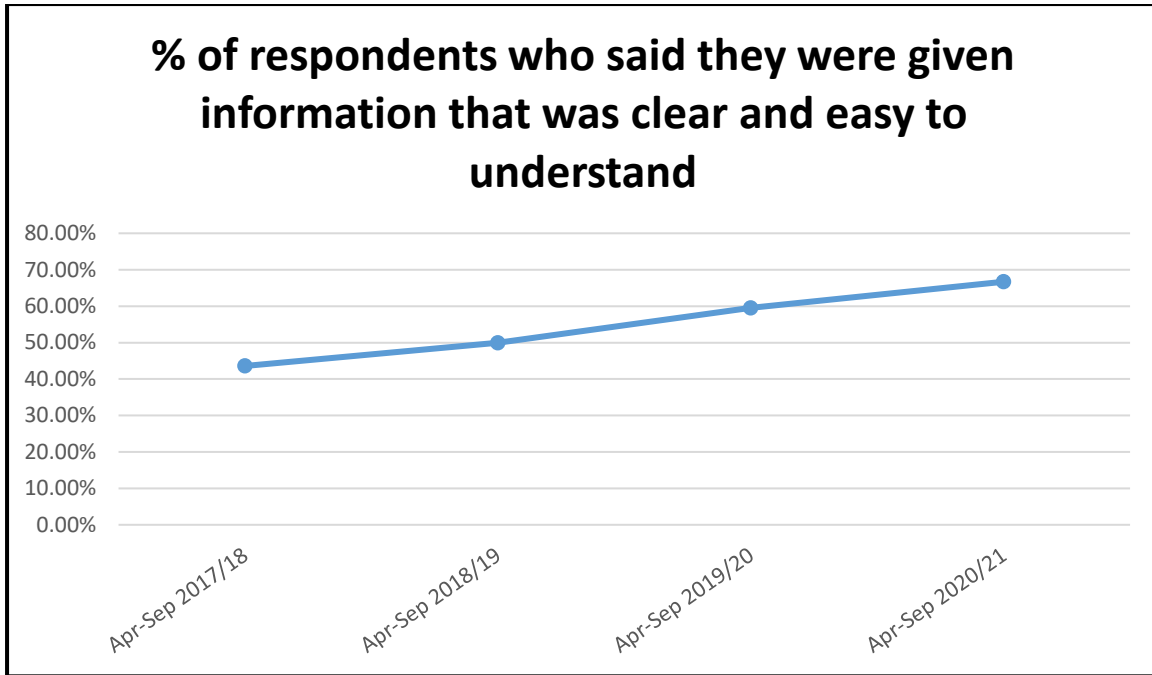
A customer complained that .....	We listened, we acted .....
They didn't get a call back after phoning about a food parcel delivery.	A check box will be added to the new Mosaic forms for Advice Services to confirm if a client wishes a call back or e-mail response and this will require another member of the team to inform 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 in 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.

## SATISFACTION WITH COMPLAINTS HANDLING

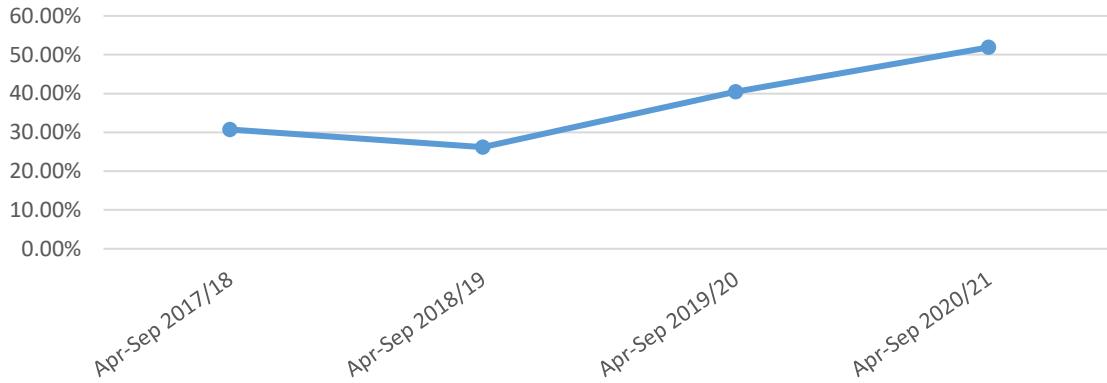
The model Complaints Handling Procedure requires the Council to report on a measure of customer satisfaction with its complaints process. To do this, we issue regular surveys. Result trends are shown in the charts below. Since the survey sample consists entirely of people who have made a complaint, many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



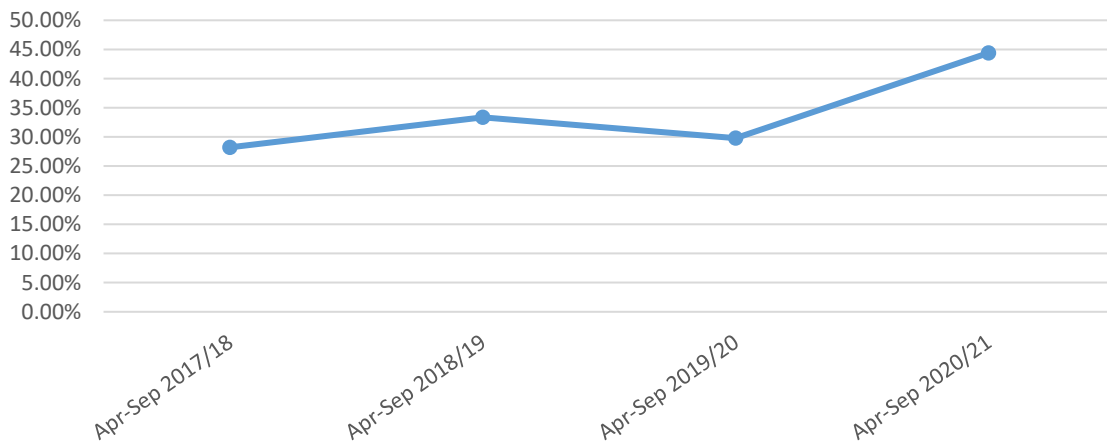




**% of respondents very satisfied or satisfied that, even if they did not get the outcome they wanted, their complaint was taken seriously by the Council**



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



## COMPLIMENTS

Members suggested that it would be useful to include in this report examples of compliments which have been received about Council services.

Below are some examples of the compliments which were submitted during the first half of 2020/2021 on the 'Tell Us About Good Service' form on the Council's website:

- I wish to say 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 get 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.

In addition to the compliments made online, social care services often receive comments, cards etc direct from service users' families and care managers.

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. The centre has been closed since March but they started 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).

Menziesshill, Turriff and Janet Brougham residential homes have continued to care for residents during the pandemic and here are some of the comments they received in the first six months of 2020/21:

- "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 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, never mind her 101<sup>st</sup>, 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".

