

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 26 JUNE 2019
REPORT ON: ANNUAL REPORT ON COMPLAINTS
REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
REPORT NO: 189-2019

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To analyse complaints statistics for 2018/2019, with comparisons to previous periods, and to report on the action which continues to be taken to ensure that complaints are handled well and to learn from complaints.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee notes:-

- (a) the key performance indicators on complaints closed between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, with trends from previous periods;
- (b) the latest update from the Complaints Review Group which meets quarterly to check the quality of complaints handling and to promote learning and process improvement from complaints;
- (c) the results of the satisfaction surveys sent to everyone who made a complaint closed during each quarter of 2018/2019, with trends from previous surveys;
- (d) the information on compliments received through the website.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Since 1 October 2012, the Council has been operating the model Complaints Handling Procedure for Local Authorities as required by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. Part of that procedure is that regular reports are produced for the Council's management team and elected members.
- 4.2 This latest report covers complaints closed during the year from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, and includes performance on key indicators as well as the results of the satisfaction surveys sent to all those who made complaints closed during each quarter, with charts showing the trends compared to previous periods.
- 4.3 The report also updates Committee on the work of the Complaints Review Group which meets quarterly to check that the complaints handling procedure is being followed correctly and to promote learning from complaints and ensure that the intelligence and insight gathered from complaints is translated into process improvements.

- 4.4 The aim of this report is to analyse performance where people have used the Council's complaints process. There has been discussion previously at Committee about issues raised with Councillors, rather than through the complaints system, and paragraph 6.9 of this report provides information on the latest 'snapshot' survey of members aimed at ensuring that useful information from such contacts is captured.
- 4.5 This report also provides information on compliments received from service users who have used the 'tell us about good service' form on the Council's website.

5. COMPLAINTS STATISTICS: 1 APRIL 2018 - 31 MARCH 2019

5.1 In 2018/2019:

- 684 complaints were closed (up from 585 last year). By service, the number of complaints recorded were:

<u>Service</u>		<u>2018/19</u>	<u>(2017/18)</u>
Corporate Services	-	89	(90)
Children & Families	-		
- Education	-	125	(124)
- Children's Services	-	46	(16)
- Criminal Justice	-	3	(4)
Neighbourhood Services	-		
- Housing	-	180	(108)
- Environment	-	153	(145)
City Development	-	50	(59)
Chief Executive's	-	6	(1)
Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership (Social Work only)	-	32	(38)

A breakdown of each service's figures is given in Appendix One.

- 68.7% of complaints at the frontline stage were closed within the target of 5 working days (up from 63.9% the previous year) and a further 8.2% within an extended target time.
- the aim of the Complaints Handling Procedure is for as many complaints as possible to be resolved at the frontline stage (stage 1) with as few as possible going for further investigation (stage 2). During 2018/2019, our ratio of complaints dealt with at the various stages was:
 - frontline 77.0%
 - opened at investigation stage 15.9%
 - escalated to investigation stage 7.1%
- 59.2% of complaints at the investigation stage were closed within the 20 working days target and a further 29.3% within an extended target time.
- the average number of working days taken to close complaints was 5.2 days at the frontline stage (compared to 8.0 days in 2017/18) and 19.3 days (compared to 24.5 days last year) at the investigation stage (combining 'opened at' and 'escalated to' figures). The Ombudsman has emphasised that the 5 and 20 day targets are designed to drive improvement rather than absolute standards which must be complied with. It is acknowledged that some complaints take longer to resolve and that missing the targets is not regarded as a 'fail'. In particular, complaints relating to schools tend to take longer to resolve as they often involve arranging meetings with parents or investigations according to agreed procedures for teachers.
- at the frontline stage, 24.9% of complaints were upheld and a further 13.9% were partially upheld.
- at the investigation stage, 14.0% were upheld and 24.8% were partially upheld.

- the percentage of complaints recorded in each category is shown below (with the figure for 2017/2018 in brackets):

- delay in responding to enquiries and requests	-	13.8%	(10.9%)
- failure to meet our service standards	-	21.5%	(19.7%)
- treatment by, or attitude of, a member of staff	-	25.1%	(29.4%)
- failure to provide a service	-	21.1%	(25.3%)
- dissatisfaction with our policy	-	12.3%	(8.3%)
- failure to follow the proper administrative process	-	5.4%	(5.2%)
- refusal to give advice or answer questions	-	0.8%	(1.1%)

Complaints categorised as relating to treatment by or attitude of staff continue to be the highest group. The Complaints Review Group (which normally reviews a random sample of complaints) has looked specifically at 'staff attitude' complaints and found that a high proportion of the complaints had not been upheld, this decision sometimes being assisted by the investigating officer being able to listen to a recording of a telephone conversation to confirm that the member of staff had behaved appropriately. This is borne out by analysis of the % of complaints upheld, which is lower in the case of 'staff' complaints than the average. While 24.9% of stage 1 complaints were upheld overall, the % upheld for complaints relating to staff attitude and behaviour was much lower at 13.6% (partially upheld staff complaints were 19.4% so above the overall 13.9% figure). While action has been and will continue to be taken where members of staff do not give a good standard of customer service, this review (along with the very positive scores in the annual consumer survey for the courtesy, friendliness and helpfulness of staff) does not suggest any widespread concern about the attitude or behaviour of employees.

The other categories of complaints with a high % of cases are 'failure to meet service standards' and 'failure to provide a service'. Detailed analysis suggests that the root cause of these is generally a service not being satisfactorily implemented as quickly as the customer expected.

- 57 people made more than one complaint during 2018/2019 - 39 made two complaints, 9 made three complaints and 9 made four or more complaints.

5.2 To put the number of complaints received into context, the Council manages a huge volume of transactions with customers. For example, in a typical year we:

- manage around 12,500 Council houses and relet around 1,200 of these.
- carry out around 55,000 repairs and deal with over 1,500 reports of anti-social behaviour.
- put out over 210,000 Council Tax bills and reminders - adding benefit notifications and other letters takes the total of Revenue transactions to over 350,000.
- educate over 18,000 pupils (over 3.2 million 'pupil days') and process around 1,700 placing requests.
- process around 2,500 applications for various education benefits.
- carry out over 1,100 food inspection visits, around 400 occupational health and safety visits and around 7,000 pest control visits.
- service over 6 million different types of recycling and residual waste containers.
- provide home care to over 1,800 people and residential care to 1,200 service users.
- receive almost 1,600 requests under Freedom of Information Legislation and Environmental Information Regulations.
- register around 4,000 births and deaths and conduct around 600 weddings.

- receive over 120,000 service requests on our website (job applications, requests for wheelie bins, book renewals etc).
- process over 200,000 online payments through our website valued at around £150 million.
- process over 1,000 Building Warrant applications and almost 1,000 planning applications, and investigate around 130 planning enforcement complaints.
- maintain over 500 Km of roads and almost a million Km of footpaths, and travel about 30,000 Km treating priority roads in the winter.
- provide free school transport to over 1,000 pupils, making 400,000 trips per school year.
- process over 12,000 recruitment applications via the Talentlink portal.
- deliver 3,700 adult learning opportunities and deliver a youth work programme to almost 3,500 young people.
- have over 29,000 attendances at community centre activities by children aged 5-10.
- have 8,000 attendances at community events.

5.3 Key quarterly trends from the analysis of performance indicators are shown in the charts in Appendix Two. Note that the figures for each quarter will not necessarily add up to the annual totals reported - complaints are only counted once although their status may change during the year eg a complaint may be counted as a stage 1 in one quarter but be counted as a stage 2 in a subsequent quarter, and in the annual statistics, if it has been escalated. This avoids double counting.

6. LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

6.1 A Complaints Review Group, made up of complaints administrators from a number of services and officers with a remit for performance and improvement from the Chief Executive's service, meets every quarter to review a sample of complaints and check if these were well recorded, investigated and responded to. The group also looks at all 'open' complaints which are beyond the target date for response, and at the planned service improvements identified by officers when they close complaints as upheld or partially upheld. A key aim is to identify any lessons learned from complaints which can be used as intelligence, translating the insight gained from complaints into practical action which can help to prevent the same issues recurring.

6.2 The group continues to find evidence that complaints are generally being recorded, investigated and responded to well, along with evidence that complainants are being contacted to keep them informed of progress if complaints are taking longer than the target number of days to investigate. The group does still see some cases where targets have been missed, complainants have not been advised about escalating complaints if still dissatisfied and clearer explanations and apologies could have been given where complaints were upheld but these are discussed with complaints administrators and good practice is encouraged. The importance of dealing with complaints quickly, keeping complainants informed and advising complainants what to do if still dissatisfied continues to be emphasised to staff through guidance on the intranet, reminder messages on the complaints system, emails and a programme of training sessions.

6.3 The Complaints Review Group has assessed the effectiveness of the Council's complaints handling arrangements using a Performance Assessment Tool developed by the Complaints Standards Authority within the Ombudsman's service. This tool allows organisations to assess their performance in relation to six themes of good practice and to identify any areas requiring improvement action. As a result of the initial assessment, the following priorities have been identified:

- repeat the training programme implemented when the model Complaints Handling Procedure was introduced, and ensure that training continues to be refreshed on a 3-year cycle.

- ensure that dealing with complaints is among the competencies considered in Employee Performance and Development Reviews for relevant staff.
 - make further efforts to establish the 'root cause' of complaints and ensure that any improvements made in response to individual complaints are communicated across the service and the Council. In particular, the Performance Assessment Tool highlights the importance of identifying key themes from complaints and being able to demonstrate improvement actions as a result.
 - make sure that independent advice agencies are aware of the Council's procedures so can advise and assist complainants where required.
 - ensure that reports such as this are cascaded to staff involved in dealing with complaints.
- 6.4 A programme of refresher training on complaints handling has been carried out, with 70 officers who investigate complaints having attended sessions on our procedures, targets and good practice in investigating and responding to complaints. Further sessions are being planned.
- 6.5 Most of the 'planned service improvements' identified as a result of complaints during 2018/2019 involved speaking to individuals about errors or arranging training for teams to remind them of procedures and customer care standards. However, over the year there were also a number of service improvements identified, for example:

The complaint was	We listened, we acted
The notification letter about a rent increase showed the deduction for Housing Benefit but not the Discretionary Housing Payment.	The letters telling tenants about changes to charges are to be reviewed to avoid confusion.
There was a delay in response to enquiries sent to the Corporate Appointee mailbox.	Email processes fully reviewed and a checking system in place to ensure action taken.
They were not notified of plans for roof replacement work.	Ways of working revised to improve communication with residents.
Different action should have been taken when a child was injured at school.	Health and Safety guidelines reviewed and clear information given to head teachers.
They were not given enough notice of change to bin collection calendar.	Calendar distribution for 2019 planned earlier than in previous years to let residents plan.
Repeated calls had to be made about missed bin collections in street.	Route changes implemented to better balance workloads between crews.
Parent had received messages saying son was absent when either in school or had reason for being off.	School's attendance procedures reviewed.
Tenant complained of delay dealing with roof leaks.	New process agreed among staff for elevation to urgent roof repair programme.
Unhappy with how staff member had dealt with problem with payment machine at a car park.	Staff advised to give clearer explanation of issue. All car park operatives to attend World Host training on customer care.
Benefit applicant concerned about length of time held on phone and inability of reception staff to help with application.	Frontline staff given further guidance on facility for people to make online applications.

- 6.6 The electronic complaints recording system also has a feature which sends an automatic 'follow-up' email to those who record planned service improvements when closing complaints. The aim is to ensure that these improvements are implemented. Officers are prompted to give further updates a month after the complaint was closed, and until the improvement action is complete, and these are also reviewed by the Complaints Review Group.
- 6.7 Analysis of complaints will be used systematically to inform decisions on topics for STEP reviews. STEP (Systems Thinking Empowers People) is the Council's approach to service improvement based on the principles of lean service and customer insight, and it is felt that this approach lends itself well to learning from complaints and improving processes to prevent recurrence. As part of the BOLD programme, plans are being developed for a regular improvement group that would help people set up STEP/Service Design projects to address the root causes of complaints.
- 6.8 We also learn from complaints about other authorities. Each month the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman issues a newsletter highlighting complaints and, where these concern local government, we draw these reports to the attention of relevant services to ensure they are aware of any criticisms of other Councils or examples of good practice.
- 6.9 Analysing complaints is just one of a wide range of methods the Council uses to gather feedback from the people who use its services, in order to drive continuous improvement. Because councillors have so much interaction with customers and service users, we are keen to ensure that feedback from these contacts, which would help to identify improvements, is not missed. In 2017, we piloted a short survey giving members the opportunity to identify the most common subjects raised by constituents and any suggestions for Council processes or policies which, if improved, would reduce the number of issues raised with them. This survey has now been carried out a further three times. The most common themes highlighted by members in the most recent survey were housing, bins, roads and anti-social behaviour. Suggestions for improvements which might reduce the number of complaints from constituents included:
- a more reactive helpline/contact process so problems are directed to the relevant team and are sorted promptly.
 - prompt responses to members' queries in line with response time guidelines.
 - clear explanations of processes, including good customer relations when problems can't be easily fixed.
 - enhanced response to boiler breakdowns at weekends.
 - keeping people who have made complaints informed.

These issues will be raised with the Council Management Team.

One member welcomed that the development of a case management system which allows members to track cases is underway.

Members, on average, generally felt that around half of the issues raised with them matched the definition of 'complaints'. Of these, the most common mentions were for:

- delay in responding to enquiries and requests
- failure to provide a service
- standard of service

Staff attitude or behaviour was among the least common reasons for complaints.

All who replied were, in general, satisfied with the speed and quality of response to issues raised on behalf of constituents.

It is proposed to continue to give all members the opportunity to give similar feedback around April and October each year, with a view to including the results in the bi-annual and annual reports to Scrutiny Committee.

7. SATISFACTION WITH THE COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

- 7.1 The model Complaints Handling Procedure requires that the Council reports on a measure of customer satisfaction with its complaints process. To achieve this, we issue surveys to people who have made a complaint in the previous three months.
- 7.2 Trends in satisfaction are highlighted in the charts in Appendix Three. Since the survey sample always consists entirely of people who have made complaints about the Council, the majority of which are not upheld, it is not surprising that satisfaction levels are not always high. Samples each quarter are also small, so caution needs to be exercised in drawing conclusions from one quarter's results.
- 7.3 Points to note from the survey trends include the need to continue to reinforce the importance of:
- responding quickly to complaints, and keeping complainants informed when that is not possible.
 - giving complainants information and explanations that are clear and easy to understand, and assuring them that their complaint has been taken seriously even if they didn't get the outcome they wanted.
- 7.4 It is recognised to be very difficult to get complainants to comment objectively on the complaints process, as distinct from the outcome, where their complaint was not upheld or did not result in the action they wanted. Nevertheless, our aim is to increase the % of complainants who acknowledge that the process of dealing with their complaint was satisfactory, even if they did not get the outcome they desired.
- 7.5 Performance will continue to be monitored and messages about good complaints handling will continue to be reinforced. Overall trends since the Council adopted the model Complaints Handling Procedure are positive, but those responding to the survey still indicate high levels of dissatisfaction with certain aspects of how we have dealt with their complaints so efforts to improve will continue. It should be noted, however, that overall levels of customer satisfaction with contact with the Council remain high, as evidenced by the results of the annual citizen survey. In particular, the survey continues to show high satisfaction with the friendliness, courtesy and helpfulness of employees.

8. COMPLIMENTS

- 8.1 During discussion on 2017's annual report, members suggested it would be useful to include information on compliments received.
- 8.2 There is now a facility to record compliments on the 'tell us about good service' link on the Council's website, and below are examples from over 50 comments recorded during 2018/2019. Some of these have previously been reported to Committee as part of the six-monthly update considered in December 2018:
- Reinstatement of white line at our driveway after road resurfacing was completed very promptly.
 - Compliments about the drivers of the 'Blether Bus'.
 - I compliment your road repair department for the very speedy and efficient way they dealt with the pothole reported by me. Well done.
 - Pass on my sincere thanks and appreciation to one of your staff dealing with benefit payments - was very helpful, understanding, intelligent and kind. Answered my questions and gave me a clear understanding of what she had done and what would happen next.
 - Just been to parents and carers meeting regarding Braeview. Would like to say how amazed and positive I left this meeting. The work put in by the Council, teachers and all involved blows me away. The head teacher is so passionate about the school and her kids.

- The quality of care and expertise shown by the Enablement Team in Corso Street is amazing. Please pass on my thanks and praise for their efficiency, expertise, cheerfulness and tireless dedication. They are all, without exception, a credit to you.
- Many thanks for very prompt clear up of the dumped rubbish. Greatly appreciated.
- Would like to give a compliment to the bin man in our local area - such a happy person, always polite and says "hi", really puts a smile on our face.
- Would like to commend one of your gardeners for his honesty. Lost my purse until the gardener was cutting the drying green and found it in the grass. Very grateful. My faith in humanity has been restored.
- The bin men on this round are brilliant. My son loves lorries. He waves and shouts at all the blue bin men actually take him on. They wave and 'thumbs up' to him every time.
- Staff collecting the bins yesterday morning were polite, friendly and even took a second to wave to my baby son who is obsessed with bin lorries.
- Very pleased with new bin collection routine. I now recycle much more plastic and, as a result, very rarely fill my landfill bin.
- Quick response in having bin emptied - a big thank you.
- Would like to thank staff for their assistance in locating the grave of my grandparents. They were extremely helpful and professional which I very much appreciated.
- Just want to praise the great service I have received in exchanging my small blue bin to a larger one. Seamless is how I would describe the process. Credit where credit is due.
- I will go so far as to say the service within landlord registration is exceptional.
- Thank you parks department for the banisters recently placed at the steps.
- A big thank you for the prompt service in fixing our entry door to the block. Not only can my disabled wife now open the door herself but your team went above and beyond and fitted grab rails so she can now get into the back garden. A big well done to you all.
- Workman came to fix gas heater and tried everything he could until it was sorted. Well done!
- Wanted to compliment the foresters who removed two trees this morning for a job well done. The work was completed efficiently and the area cleaned up before they left. Staff to be proud of.
- Many thanks for arranging a prompt clear up, it is much appreciated.
- Huge well done to the young lad who worked tirelessly and meticulously tidying and clearing the shrubs on the path on 31 December. He worked all day on his own without supervision and has done an absolutely amazing job.
- I was very surprised to receive a letter concerning the repair to my cistern under the heading 'Right to Repair'. The plumber was fast and efficient and completed the job in no time at all and I certainly have no complaint about the whole process from my initial email to you reporting the fault and to job completion and this letter offers me £30! Unbelievable! I would be happy if you would either keep the money or make a donation to the children's ward in Ninewells. Thank you very much.
- I would like to compliment the Design Team for the playpark in Menzieshill for the outstanding climbing frames.
- A big thank you for the speedy attention to overhanging branches.

- I recently enquired about recycling bins in the area surrounding my flat and I just wanted to say I had an absolutely amazing customer service experience with the man who helped me. He is clearly so passionate about the environment. It was great to meet someone so eager to help me out. He is an absolute asset to your team and if he reflects what the rest of the staff are like, I can honestly say Dundee City Council is one of the best in Scotland.

9. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 The complaints recording system includes a feature that asks complaint handlers to highlight any complaint relating to an equalities issue - age, disability, gender, LGBT, race or religion. In 2018/2019, eight such complaints were recorded, seven relating to disability issues and one to gender. These cases have been drawn to the attention of the Council's Equality and Diversity Co-ordinator, and he had no concerns about how they were dealt with.

10. CONSULTATIONS

The Council Management Team was consulted in the preparation of this report and agrees with its contents.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

David R Martin
Chief Executive

28 May 2019

BREAKDOWN OF DATA ON KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR 1/4/2018 TO 31/3/2019

Corporate Services													
Stage	Total		Within Target		With Extension		Upheld		Not upheld		Partially upheld		Average days to resolve
	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	
Frontline	80	89.9	63	78.8	4	5.0	30	37.5	40	50.0	10	12.5	3.6
Opened at Investigation	6	6.7	1	16.7	5	83.3	2	33.3	4	66.7			14.6
Escalated to Investigation	3	3.4	2	66.7	1	33.3	2	66.7			1	33.3	15.0

Children and Families - Education/Schools													
Stage	Total		Within Target		With Extension		Upheld		Not upheld		Partially upheld		Average days to resolve
	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	
Frontline	69	55.2	27	39.1	8	11.6	18	26.1	30	43.5	21	30.4	11.7
Opened at Investigation	50	40.0	37	74.0	6	12.0	6	12.0	30	60.0	14	28.0	20.4
Escalated to Investigation	6	4.8	6	100.0					4	66.7	2	33.3	4.4

Neighbourhood Services - Housing													
Stage	Total		Within Target		With Extension		Upheld		Not upheld		Partially upheld		Average days to resolve
	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	
Frontline	142	78.9	108	76.1	16	11.3	40	28.2	83	58.5	19	13.4	3.7
Opened at Investigation	9	5.0	7	77.8	1	11.1	2	22.2	4	44.4	3	33.3	13.0
Escalated to Investigation	29	16.1	20	69.0	2	6.9	4	13.8	18	62.1	7	24.1	14.8

Neighbourhood Services - Environment													
Stage	Total		Within Target		With Extension		Upheld		Not upheld		Partially upheld		Average days to resolve
	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	
Frontline	150	98.0	115	76.7	9	6.0	38	25.3	100	66.7	12	8.0	4.1
Opened at Investigation	1	0.7			1	100.0					1	100.0	41.7
Escalated to Investigation	2	1.3	2	100.0					2	100.0			12.9

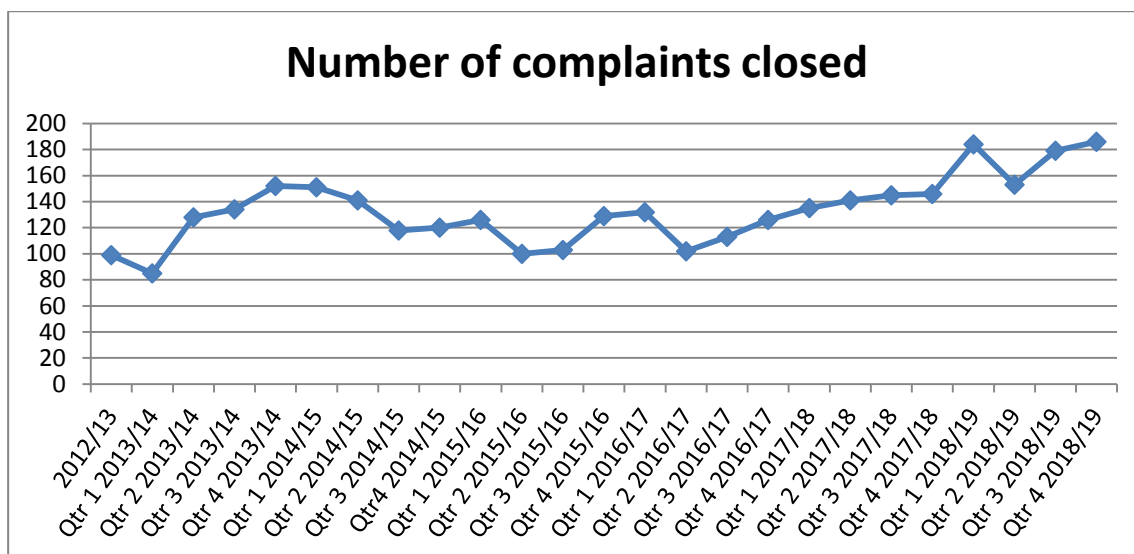
City Development													
Stage	Total		Within Target		With Extension		Upheld		Not upheld		Partially upheld		Average days to resolve
	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	
Frontline	43	86.0	30	69.8	1	2.3	2	4.7	37	86.0	4	9.3	3.8
Opened at Investigation	4	8.0	1	25.0	2	50.0			4	100.0			15.8
Escalated to Investigation	3	6.0	2	66.7	1	33.3	1	33.3	1	33.3	1	33.3	11.6

Chief Executive's													
Stage	Total		Within Target		With Extension		Upheld		Not upheld		Partially upheld		Average days to resolve
	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	
Frontline	4	66.7	4	100.0					4	100.0			1.0
Opened at Investigation	1	16.7	1	100.0					1	100.0			3.0
Escalated to Investigation	1	16.7	1	100.0			1	100.0					11.0

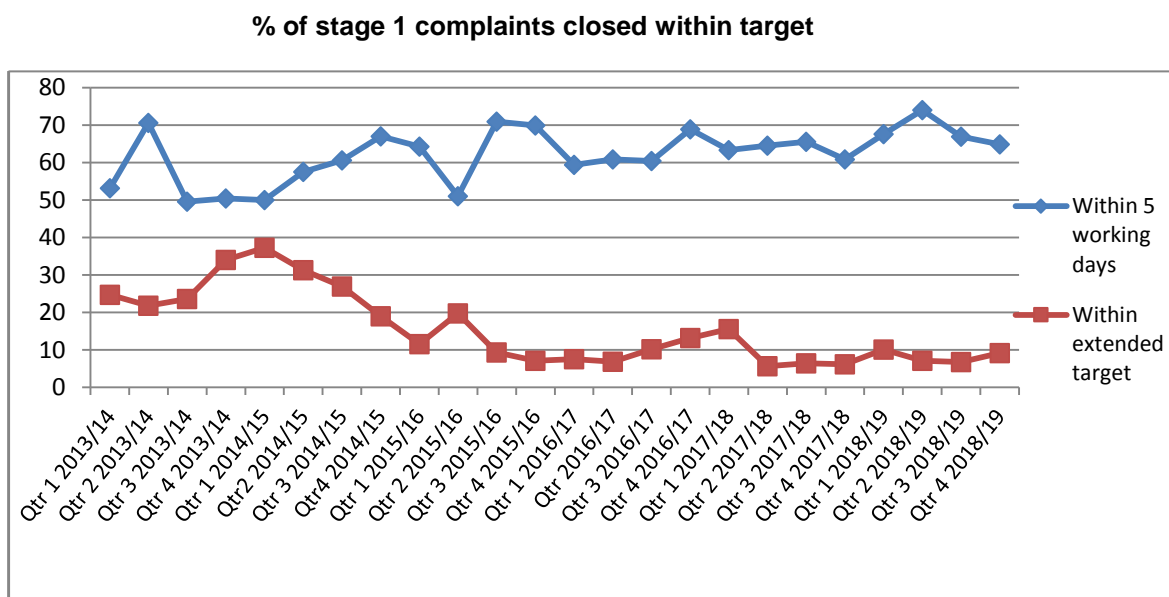
Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership (Social Work Complaints only)													
Stage	Total		Within Target		With Extension		Upheld		Not upheld		Partially upheld		Average days to resolve
	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	
Frontline	19	59.4	6	31.6	2	10.5	3	15.8	13	68.4	3	15.8	10.8
Opened at Investigation	12	37.5	4	33.3	6	50.0	2	16.7	7	58.3	3	25.0	26.3
Escalated to Investigation	1	3.1			1	100.0			1	100.0			21.1

Totals													
Stage	Total		Within Target		With Extension		Upheld		Not upheld		Partially upheld		Average days to resolve
	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	Count	% age	
Frontline	527	77.0	362	68.7	43	8.2	131	24.9	323	61.3	73	13.9	5.2
Opened at Investigation	109	15.9	59	54.1	40	36.7	14	12.8	67	61.5	28	25.7	21.5
Escalated to Investigation	48	7.0	34	70.8	6	12.5	8	16.7	29	60.4	11	22.9	14.3

COMPLAINTS STATISTICS

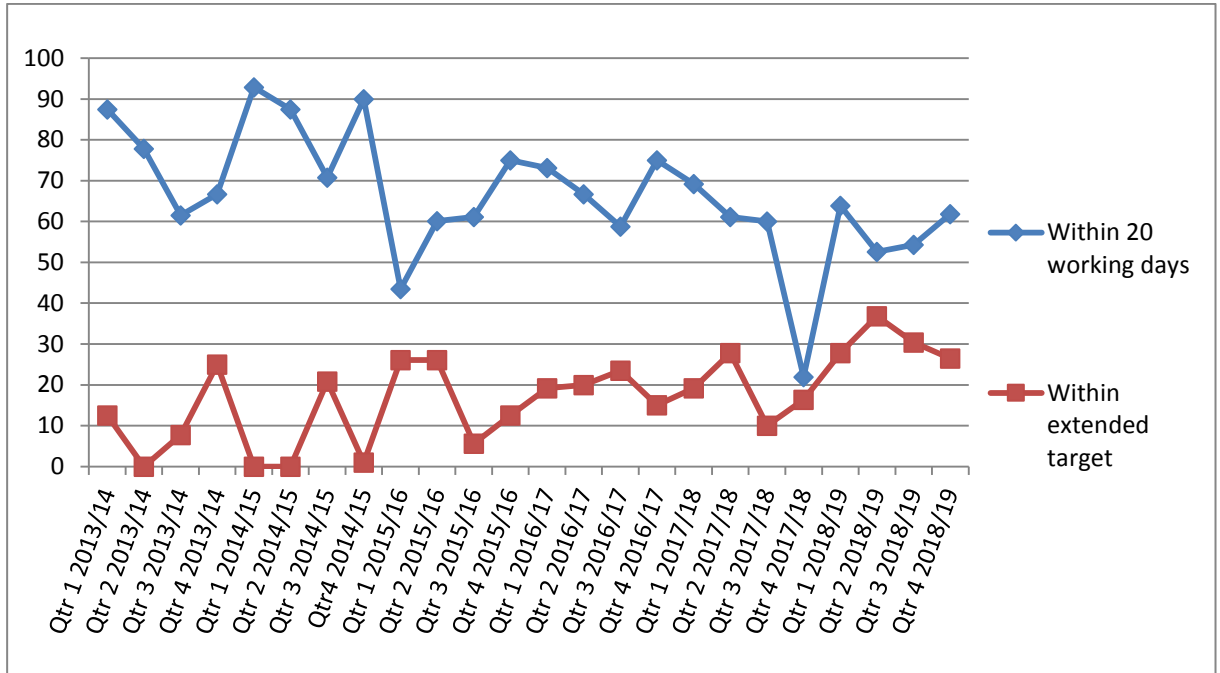


While the overall trend has risen since 2012, we believe this reflects greater use of the electronic complaints recording system rather than any increase in actual dissatisfaction. The Council should continue to emphasise that it welcomes complaints as a valuable source of customer feedback and an opportunity to identify improvements, rather than something negative.



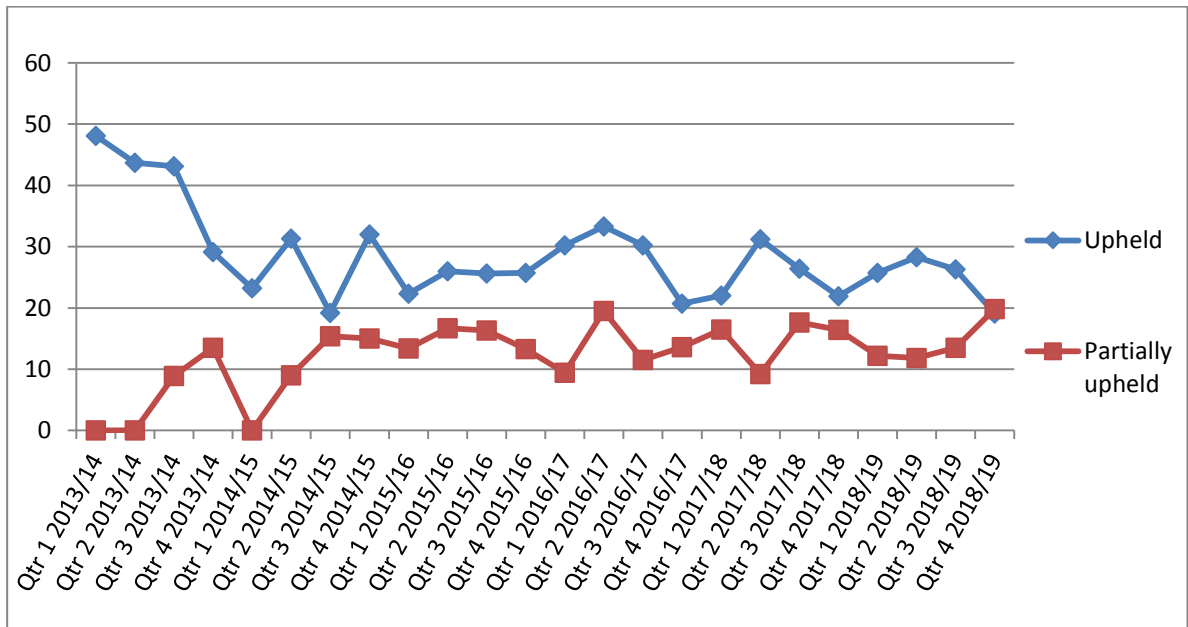
We continue to emphasise to staff the importance of responding to complaints within target (or contacting customers to agree extended targets if a quick response is not possible).

% of stage 2 complaints closed within target



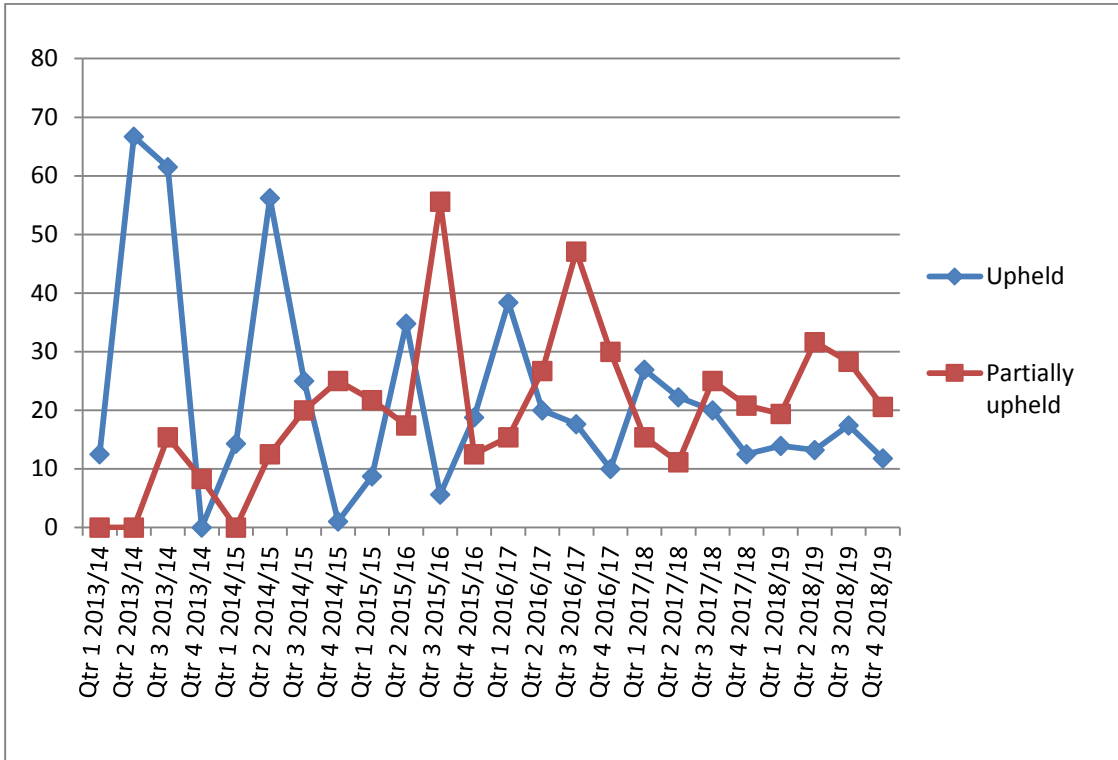
A very small number of complaints go to stage 2, so % figures will fluctuate considerably from one quarter to the next due to individual cases. Chief officers and managers receiving stage 2 complaints have been reminded that these should be acknowledged within 3 days as well as responded to within 20 days or an agreed extended target timescale.

% of stage 1 complaints upheld and partially upheld



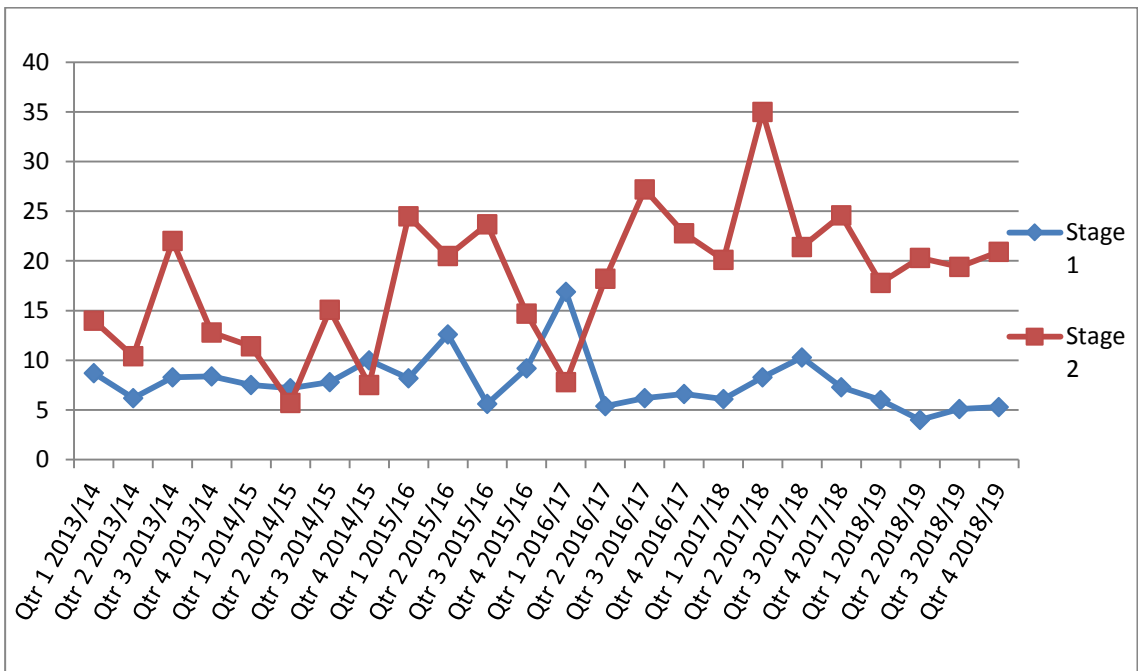
'Partially' upheld was not originally included as an option in the indicators specified by the SPSO, so these figures are only available from 1 October 2013. The % of complaints being upheld or partially upheld appears reasonable.

% of stage 2 complaints upheld and partially upheld



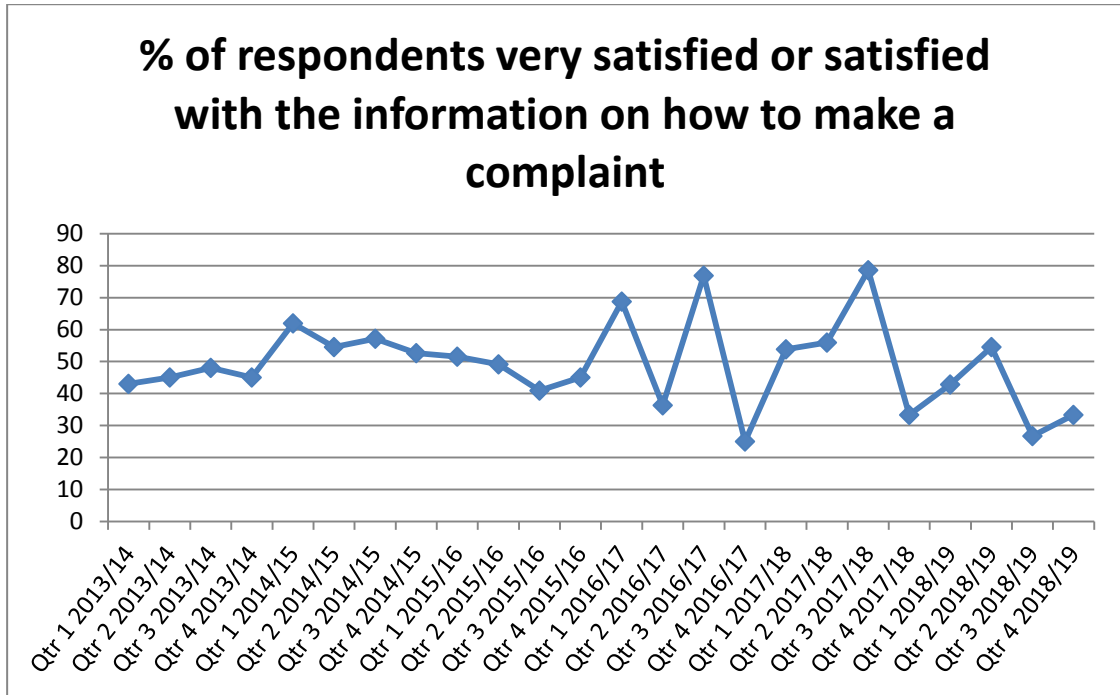
A very small number of complaints go to stage 2, so % figures will fluctuate considerably from one quarter to the next due to individual cases.

Average number of days to close complaints

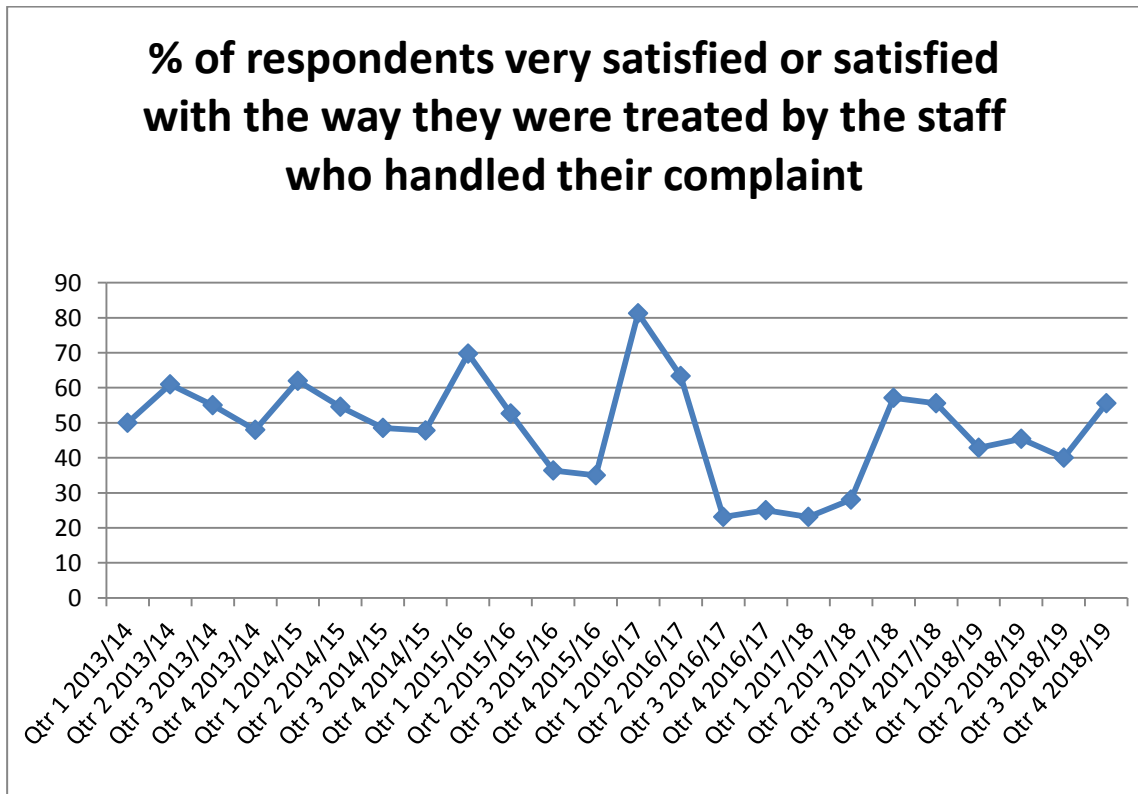


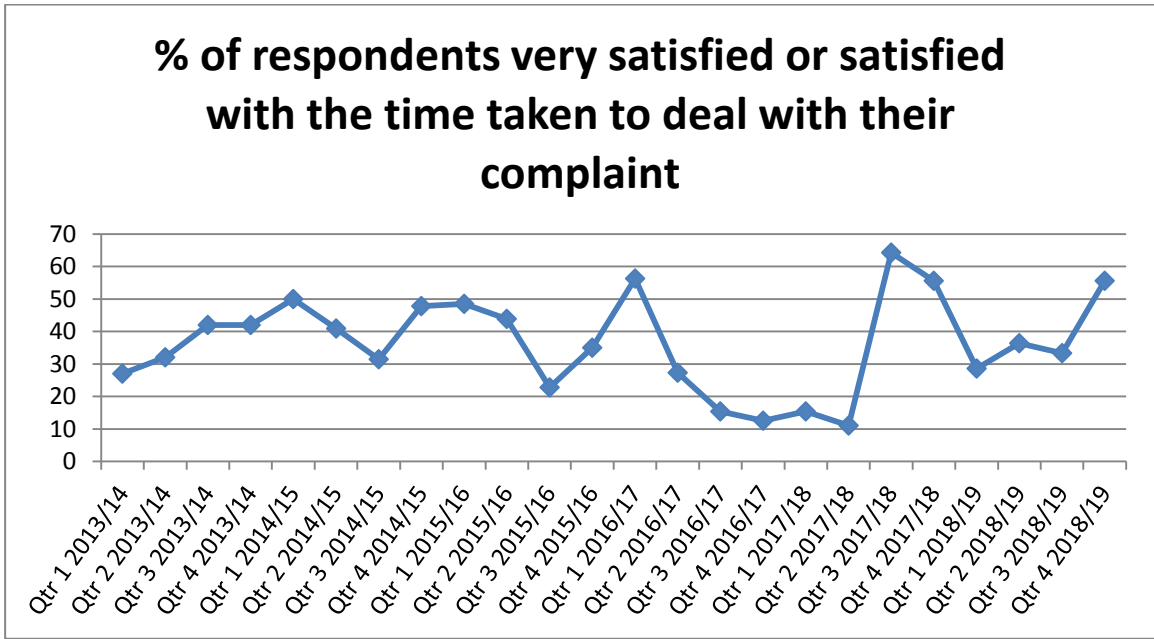
All services should aim to respond quickly to complaints, although it is acknowledged that some are complex and resolving these is likely to drive up the 'average number of days to close' performance.

RESULTS OF SATISFACTION SURVEY OF THOSE WHO MADE COMPLAINTS

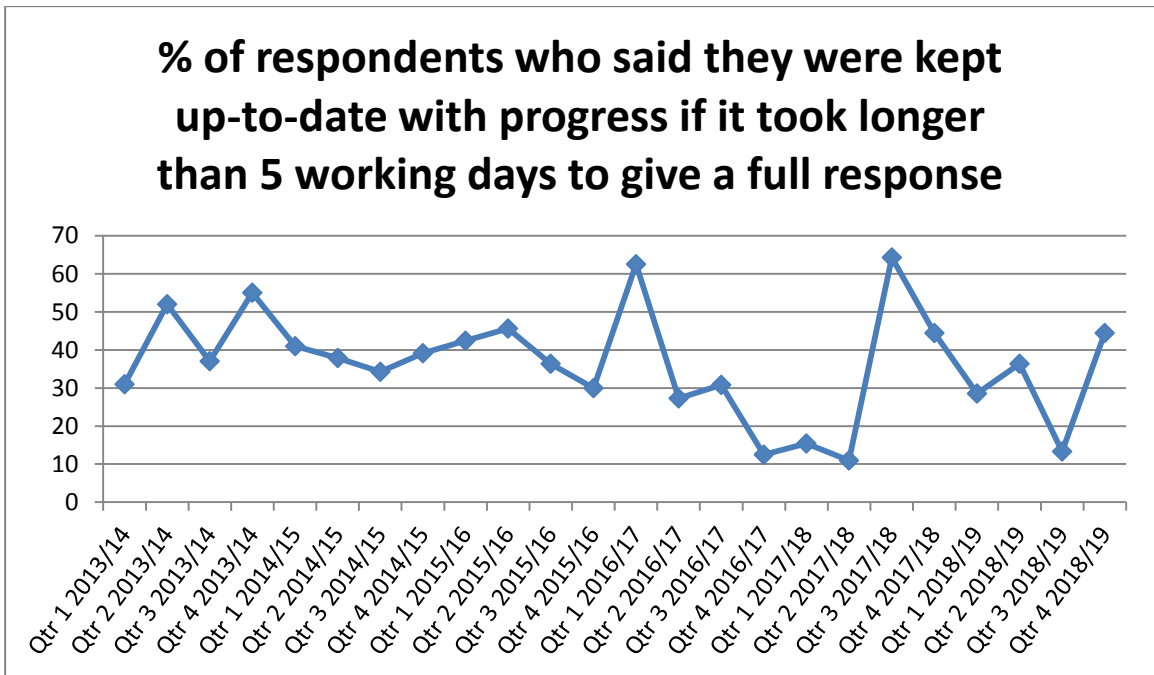


We will review the availability of complaints leaflets in offices and check that the information on the website about making a complaint remains prominent and clear.

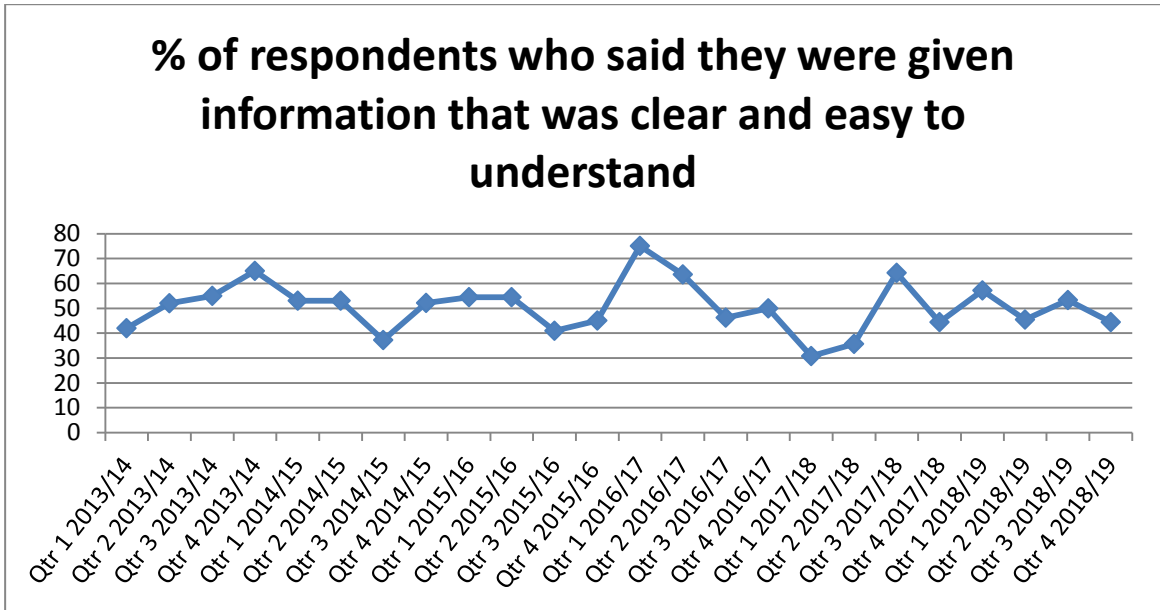




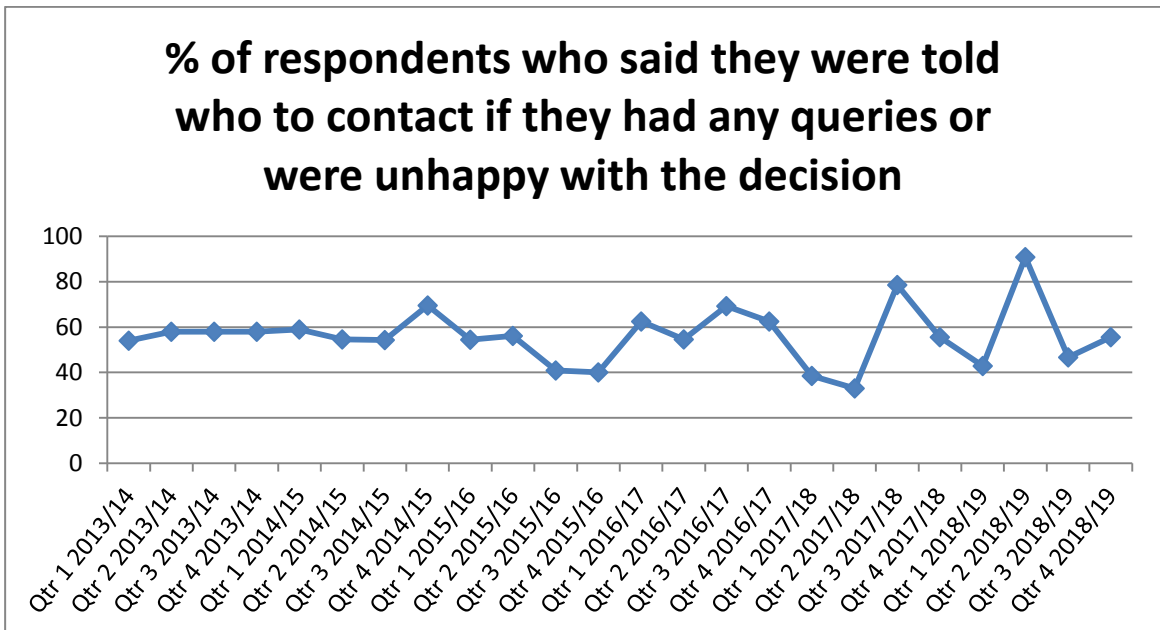
Chief officers have been asked to continue to reinforce to officers the importance of dealing with complaints as quickly as possible, and explaining to customers where this is not possible.



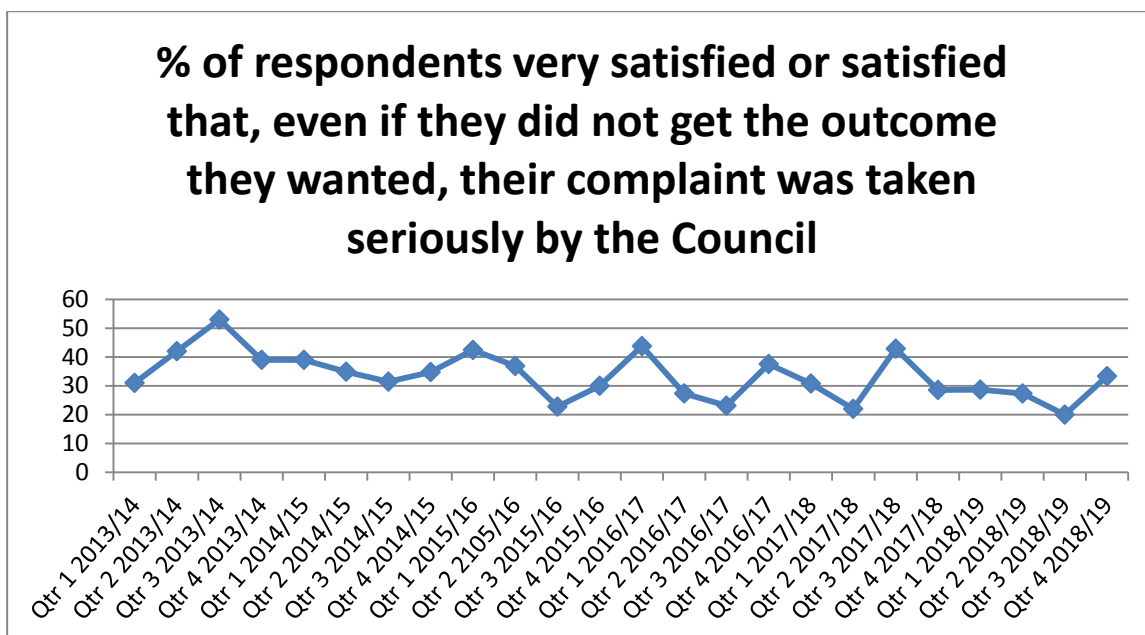
Chief Officers have been asked to reinforce to staff the importance of keeping complainants up-to-date with progress on complaints which take longer than the target number of days to resolve.



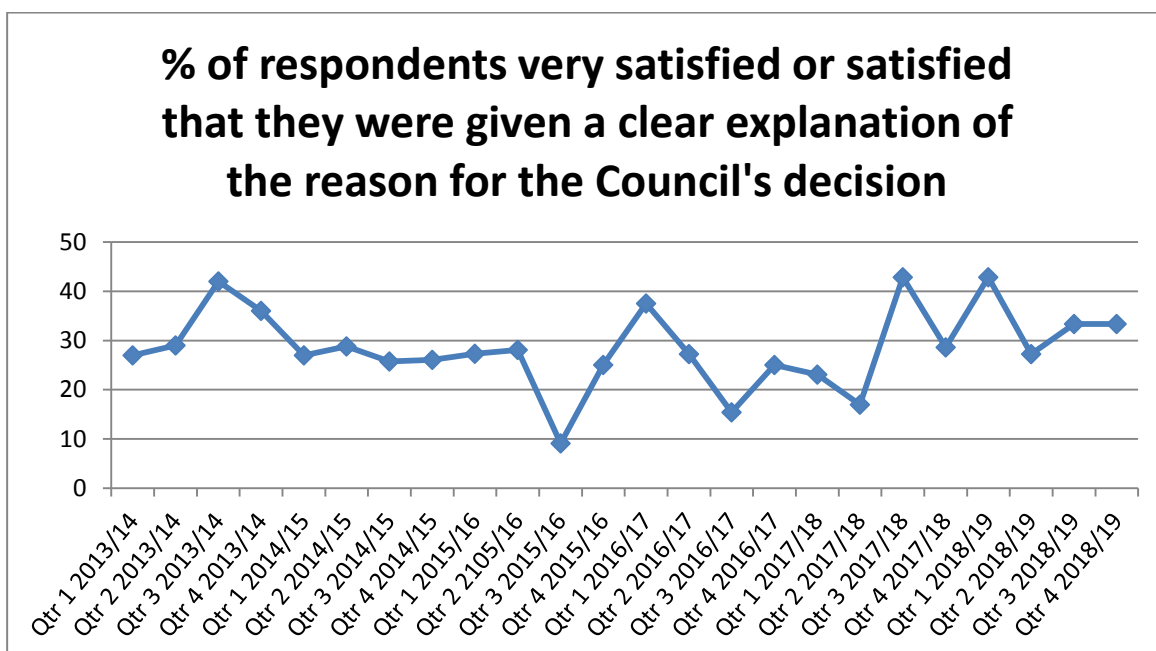
We continually reinforce to staff the importance of using plain English and techniques such as bullet points, headings etc to make complex explanations easier to read and understand.



It should be clear to all complainants who to contact in every case. We continue to reinforce the importance of telling complainants who to contact if dissatisfied with a response, and to monitor a sample of cases to check this is being done.



A third of respondents in the latest survey said they were 'very dissatisfied' that their complaint had been taken seriously. Although based on a small sample, this suggests that we still need to make more effort to assure complainants that their concerns have been taken seriously even where their complaint is not upheld.



We will continue to emphasise to staff the importance of clearly explaining decisions on complaints, although it is acknowledged that this result will be affected by people's feelings on the outcome of their complaint.