

# Annual Customer Feedback Report 2021-22

Blackpool Council



# Customer Feedback Report 2021/22

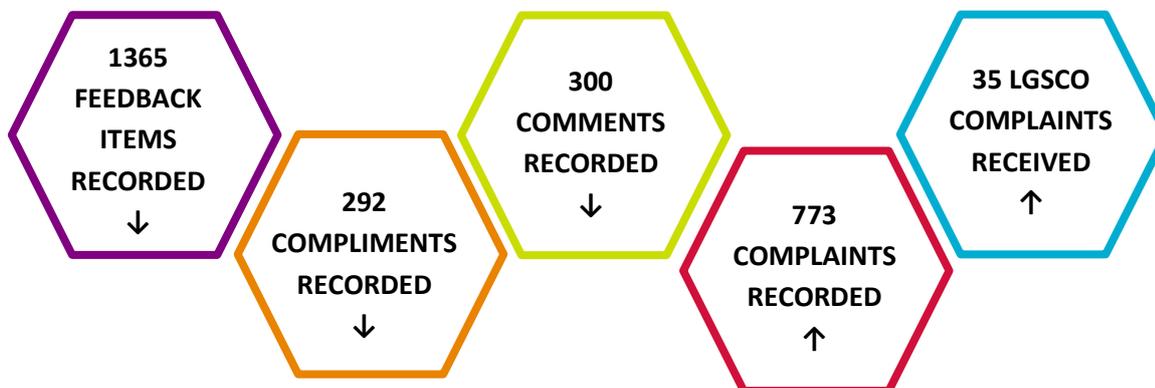
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## 1. KEY HEADLINES 2021-22



There has been a 45% decrease in compliments recorded compared with 2020/21

The directorate with the highest proportion of compliments recorded is Adult Services (37%)

There has been an 11% increase in complaints recorded compared with 2020/21

The directorate with the highest proportion of complaints is Community and Environmental Services (40%)

64% of the complaints, which have been fully considered, have met the allocated timescale

38% of complaints, which have been fully considered, were upheld or partially upheld in some element

In line with the previous year, the majority of complaints recorded relate to the themes 'Staff Conduct/Treatment of Customer' (23%) and 'Quality of Service' (22%)

The number of complaints received by LGSCO has increased compared with 2020/21\*

9 LGSCO complaints progressed to formal investigation stage (26%)

4 of 9 complaints formally investigated by the LGSCO were upheld (44%)

**NB:** The above figures do not include feedback received for Blackpool Coastal Housing and any other external organisations which have a separate procedure for handling customer feedback.

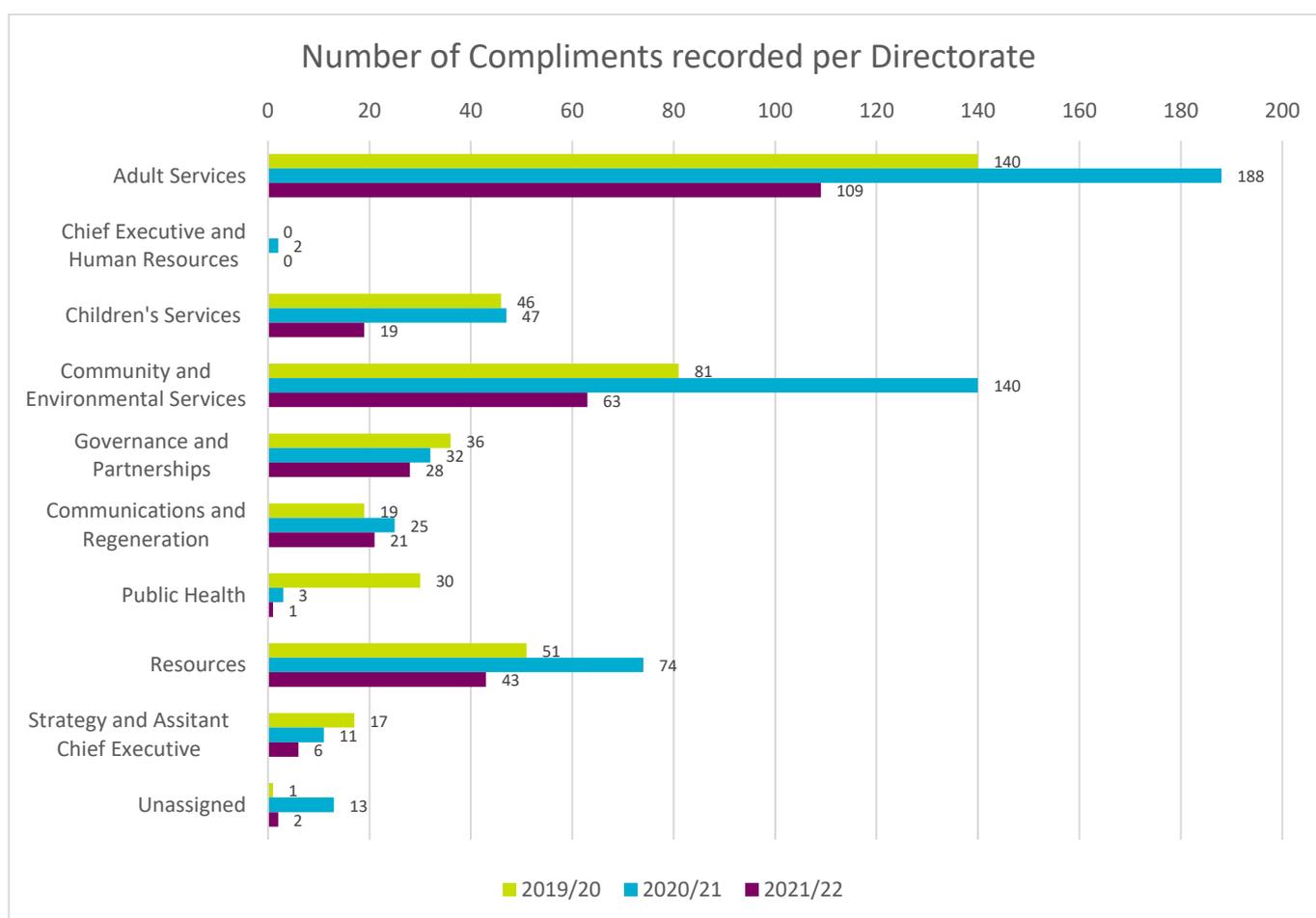
In the 2020-21 year, the Covid-19 pandemic caused some unusual trends in recorded feedback. \*The LGSCO also received and decided fewer complaints than normal because it stopped accepting new complaints for three months due to Covid-19. This should be considered when comparing this year's figures to the previous year.

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## 2. COMPLIMENTS

Compliments are extremely important and help to highlight the areas we are improving in or maintaining levels of high quality service. Therefore, all compliments are passed on to the relevant staff member(s) and service manager to ensure that good practice is commended and to help boost staff morale.

In total, **292** compliments were recorded in 2021/22. The graph below shows a breakdown of the compliments recorded by directorate:



The number of compliments received has decreased considerably (-45%) compared with 2020/21. This is disappointing to see, as last year we did see the highest number of compliments recorded in a year. During the first year of the Covid Pandemic, there was observed recognition from the public of the hard work and dedication of our key workers, and this may have accounted for the high numbers of compliments received last year.

Individuals and teams that are mentioned in recorded compliments are highlighted in a monthly news item on 'the Hub' and on the digital signage around the Council offices. We hope to provide recognition to staff for all their hard work and dedication and raise awareness on the importance of logging all customer feedback.

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In line with the previous year, over a third of the compliments received during the year were for Adult Services (37%), with Community and Environmental Services following (22%).

Feedback for Adult and Children's Services is coordinated by the Customer Relations Team, which ensures that positive feedback from service users is captured and reported on a regular basis. Combine this with the nature of the services provided and the size and nature of the work of the department and this inevitably leads to a higher number of compliments recorded. It must however be noted that front line services also bear the brunt of many complaints received.

The lower level of compliments for other departments is not necessarily representative of poor quality service in these areas. Some departments carry out a higher proportion of back office duties, which can often result in less interaction with the public and therefore less opportunity to receive external feedback. Services are encouraged to report internal positive feedback, as well as compliments from service users.

Certain teams remain particularly good at recording compliments received; however, there are services that rarely pass on compliment data for reporting purposes. The reported figures may therefore not be a true reflection of compliments received by Council services and can only show the number of compliments which are officially recorded.

Below is a small selection [*randomly selected*] of the many compliments received during this period:

*Thank you for all your care, commitment and compassion, all your staff show to my mum, it's a great relief when she is with you, and the difference is amazing. I wish you had rooms because I would send her to you permanently. [ADULT SERVICES: Care and Support, Day Services]*

*Child A and B speak extremely highly of their allocated Social Worker. They have both expressed repeatedly that she is the best Social Worker they have ever had, noting that she listens to them, takes on board their wishes and that she will sort out any issues that arise. They are both delighted to hear that [Social Worker] is to remain their Social Worker moving forward and the foster carers have also echoed the positive comments of the boys. I commend [Social Worker] for her hard work with A and B; she has demonstrated a great commitment to ensuring the best possible plan is in place for them and has made great efforts to nurture a positive working relationship with them, something it is not always easy for a Social Worker to do. [CHILDREN'S SERVICES: Children's Social Care: Our Children Teams]*

*"Hello, I would just like to say we attended the library session today at the park. My children absolutely loved it! They were so excited telling their daddy when he got home from work and really appreciated the books they received! The event was really well planned and thought through for all ages! Thank you very much." [COMMUNICATIONS AND REGENERATION: Libraries]*

*Customer had phoned yesterday to reporting fly tipping in the alley to the side of her property, she wanted to thank us for the fast response, one day after she called, and for removing all the rubbish. [COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES: Waste & Recycling]*

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*"We would like to say a very big thank you, you've done us proud, it was lovely. The decorations were lovely and you were lovely. I would recommended your wedding chapel to the public to get married in. You made us feel so welcome and made our boys feel special that evening. Thank you again, so proud of you all."*

**[GOVERNANCE AND PARTNERSHIP SERVICES: Registrars]**

*Care Home Manager thanked all at Public Health for their support and guidance with a COVID-19 enquiry.*

**[PUBLIC HEALTH: Public Health Commissioned Service]**

*A service user writes: "thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything you have done for me. The council have been so so helpful to me in my situation I'm sitting here with tears in my eyes. I thought it was over for me, but the angels at Blackpool Council helped me through this bad situation. I thank you all for all your kind help in this matter."* **[RESOURCES: Debtors and Creditors]**

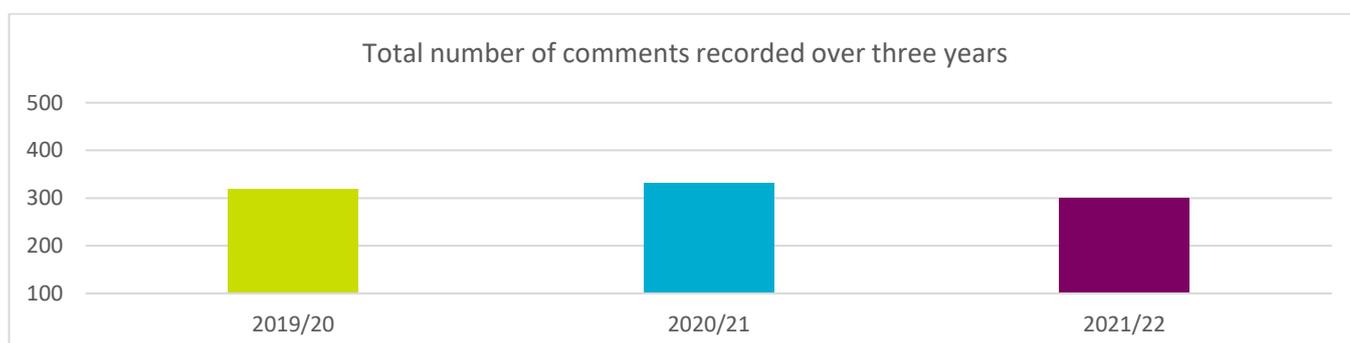
*Well what a road has been to get here but I am over the moon - I move in on Tuesday next week and the girls are so excited it's finally time. I can't thank you all enough for being there for me and assisting with all the housing needs from start to finish. Knowing there are people there who genuinely care has made a huge difference to me and knowing that from Tuesday we will truly be warm, secure and safe is just everything to me. I hope for a long and happy tenancy. Take the best care and thank you again for your time, care, patience and support.* **[STRATEGY AND ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Housing Options]**

*Hello, my congratulations to your council on promoting LGBT rights! A very noble effort that our ancestors would be proud of! We also have excellent road crossings here in [area] that are in colours. Long may it continue!* **[Unallocated]**

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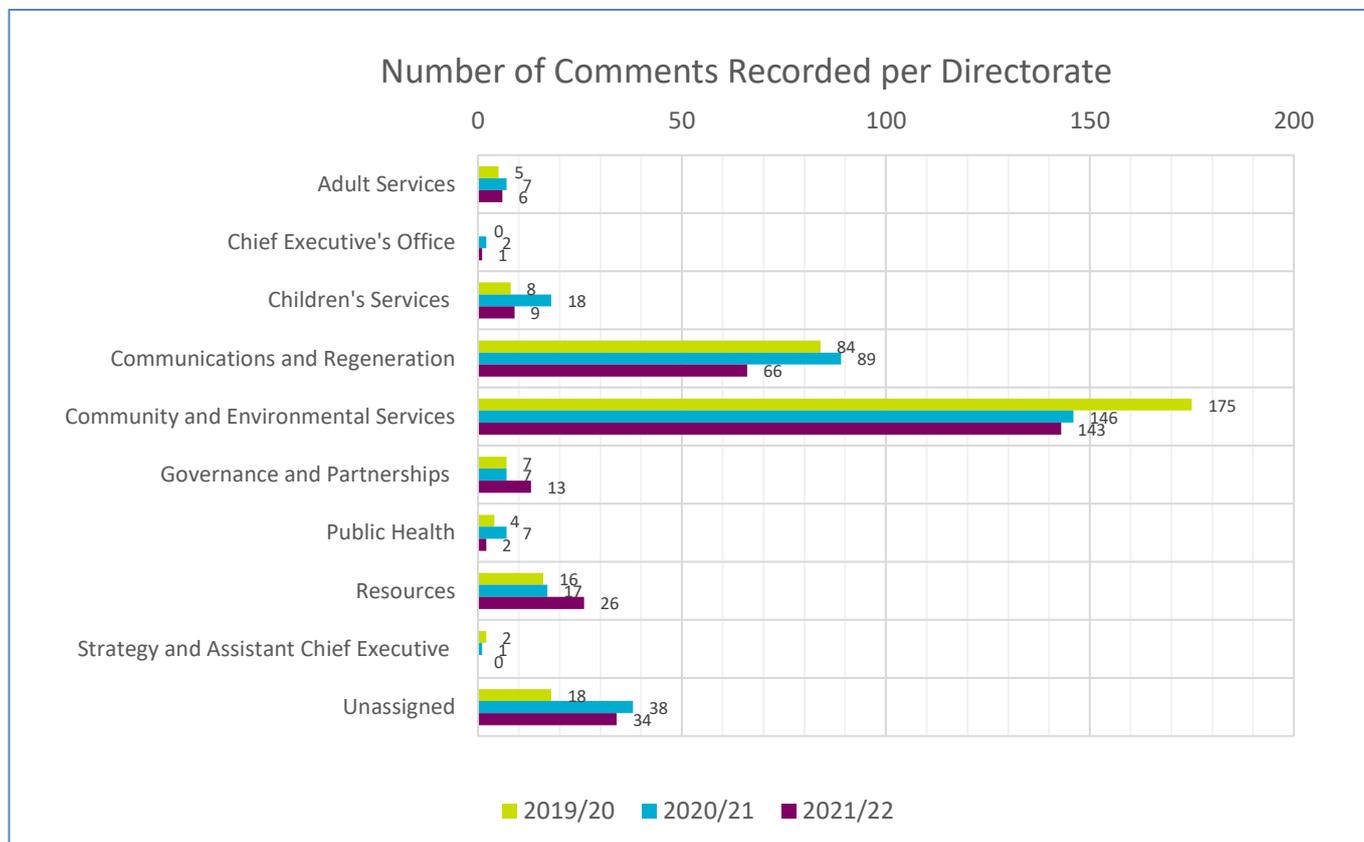
## 3. COMMENTS

Comments are equally as important as complaints as they can help to shape and improve the quality of the services we provide. In addition ensuring that comments are dealt with and acted upon appropriately can avoid escalation to formal complaints. In total, 300 comments were received in 2021/22 this is consistent with the previous year.



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The graph below shows the breakdown of the comments received by Directorate:



The Community and Environmental Services department continues to receive the most comments; with a high proportion of the directorate’s comments for Highways and Transport services, Street Cleansing, Waste and Public Protection and these are mainly initial requests for service. Comments are usually received via the online feedback form directly from service users.

There has been an 18% decrease in comments received for Community and Environmental Services over the last three years. There has been a significant amount of channel shift work around creating alternative ways for customers to report issues and submit requests for service and this work continues to influence the number of comments logged.

Services do not tend to record all comments received, as these are mainly dealt with as ‘general business;’ therefore, the figures may not be a true reflection of all comments received by Council services and can only highlight the number of comments that have been formally recorded.

Below are some examples of comments received during the year:

*We recently visited Blackpool for a short break we stayed at a really good hotel and were treated very well. My main reason for writing is that on wanting a walk on front and then to beach we found it was all*

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*step/seating areas. This was ok for one of our party but the other two would not be able to get down these steps on to the beach for a walk. Is there a reason why there are no handrails at regular spaces on these steps? This is unsuitable for anyone with disabilities or even young children with disabilities. Could you please consider putting some handrails from prom down these steps/seating so that all can enjoy beach walks and children to play in the sands? [COMMUNICATIONS AND REGENERATION]*

*Being an electric vehicle owner. I have noticed Blackpool is falling way behind other areas for public fast charging points. I have contacted my Councillor with no response. Do you know if there is going to be any public meetings regarding EV charging? I would like to help and get involved. [COMMUNICATIONS AND REGENERATION]*

*Customer wants to suggest 3D crossings on the promenade. He would like to suggest local students design them, to keep the monies spent within Blackpool. Also, that Mooky the clown opens the crossings if we decide to go ahead. Customer lives in Scotland but is bringing this up with us as we are an 'innovative council.' [COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES]*

*Can you repair the lockers please in the Moor Park Pool site? It's the lockers in the changing rooms for the pool. I've had a jacket stolen from a changing room (not this one) in the past, so like to know my belongings are secure. Many thanks" [COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES]*

*Resident would like to leave feedback in regards to the postal vote pack that he was sent out. The resident states this is the first time using this service as he received a sticker on his bin to advise of the service. As the resident is now in a wheelchair all the time he found that this service would be beneficial for him. The resident has receives his postal pack but finds it very difficult to understand as it stated voting for police crime commissioner but gave options for local councillor elections. Resident is left unsure of how to complete his vote and unable to speak to the relevant team for assistance. The resident wanted to leave feedback that the postal vote form should be made simpler to understand and also easier to speak to someone on the phone. [GOVERNANCE AND PARTNERSHIP SERVICES]*

*Your website is not very good to use when trying to make a council tax payment on a mobile phone, it's just took me 30 minutes to find where to pay [RESOURCES]*

*Resident wanted to leave feedback as he has been trying to get through to an advisor since 9am. Each time he tried to get through he was told after a long automated message that there was no one available and the call was ended. Resident had concerns that as the message took over 1 minute, customers who pay per minute to make the phone call would then be charged for another full minute to be told no one was available. Resident had to make several attempts today to get through and had he have to pay per minute this would have cost him. [RESOURCES]*

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## 4. COMPLAINTS

### 4.1 Types of Complaint

The Council has a three-stage process for dealing with corporate complaints:

- Stage 1** Investigation by the service
- Stage 2** Review by the relevant Director / Assistant Director
- Stage 3** Review by the Complaints Panel on behalf of the Chief Executive (if appropriate)

The table below shows the number of **corporate complaints** logged for each stage during the period.

Stage	Total	
Stage 1	543	96%
Stage 2	21	4%
Stage 3	0	0%
	<b>564</b>	

The small number of Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints received suggests that the majority of Stage 1 complaints are dealt with effectively, therefore preventing complaints from escalating. However, it is also possible that there were complaints escalated to Stage 2, but these were not logged on the Feedback System.

There have been a small number of Stage 2 complaints where the complainant has requested escalation to Stage 3; however, it has been decided that it would not be beneficial for the Council to hold a Stage 3 Panel to review the matter further and we have recommended that the complainant contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. There are many reasons why Stage 3 would not be appropriate, some of the main reasons are listed below:

- The complaint was upheld at Stage 2 and further consideration would not help the complainant in terms of offering any further outcome
- The complaint is about a Council Policy and further consideration would not benefit the complainant in terms of offering any further outcome
- A review at Stage 3 would not seek to question the merits of a suitably qualified officer's decision to take action
- The outcome that the complainant is seeking could not be reached through a Stage 3 review

A Stage 3 complaint Panel consists of 3/4 senior officers, Chaired by the Director of Governance and Partnerships and the Customer Relations Manager as the Panel Officer. If we are aware that a further review at Stage 3 would not provide a different outcome or the outcome sought by the complainant, it would be a poor use of Council resource to continue to Stage 3.

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In 2021/22, **209** complaints were received relating to Adult or Children's Social Care statutory duties. Complaints of this nature are dealt with under separate statutory procedures, with different stages to the process and are not included in the figures above. The below sections do however **include** the Adult and Children's Social Care statutory complaints. *For further detail on Adult and Children's Services feedback, please refer to the separate Social Care annual reports.*

### 4.2 Directorates and Service Areas

The number of complaints logged has increased this year, by 11%, but numbers are still not as high as previous years. For comparison, the previous three years are shown in the table below.

<b>Complaints logged by Directorate</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2018/19</b>
Adult Services	<b>64</b>	75	106	138
Chief Executive and Human Resources	<b>2</b>	0	0	2
Children's Services	<b>182</b>	173	175	166
Community and Environmental Services	<b>311</b>	312	336	455
Governance and Partnerships	<b>9</b>	5	9	15
Communications and Regeneration	<b>91</b>	53	87	126
Public Health	<b>3</b>	2	4	1
Resources	<b>77</b>	57	101	138
Strategy and Assistant Directorate	<b>18</b>	12	14	9
Unassigned	<b>16</b>	8	4	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>773</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>1056</b>

The table below shows the services with the highest number of complaints recorded in 2021/22:

<b>Complaints - Service</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	2020/21	2019/20	<i>% change since 20/21</i>
Children's Social Care	<b>142</b>	158	148	-10%
Waste and Recycling	<b>115</b>	167	122	-31%
Public Protection	<b>72</b>	52	51	38%
Parking	<b>66</b>	31	65	113%
Highways and Transport (delivery)	<b>52</b>	34	72	53%
Adult Social Care	<b>43</b>	27	40	59%
Council Tax	<b>42</b>	18	54	133%

Whilst there has been an overall increase in the number of complaints logged, there are a number of services which have seen a noteworthy reduction in the number of complaints logged since 2020/21 and these can be seen in the table below:

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Complaints - Service	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	% reduction since 20/21
Economic Development	2	8	2	-75%
Care and Support	2	7	3	-71%
Corporate - Resources	7	23	23	-70%
Business Rates	9	20	5	-55%
Schools Standards and Effectiveness	3	5	2	-40%
Adult Services Commissioning	11	16	34	-31%
Waste and Recycling	115	167	122	-31%
Children's Social Care	142	158	148	-10%

The reduction could be down to a number of factors, some of which are outlined below:

- Further work on channel shift giving customers and service users alternative routes for reporting issues.
- The successful implementation channel shift projects and the implementation of new processes in services to manage the customer contact.
- Some services received a higher than average number of complaints last year which was predominantly due to the pandemic. This year's figures have returned to a more typical level.
- The implementation of changes based on previous feedback and the continuous improvement to services.
- The correct use of the customer feedback system, and matters that do not fall within the complaints procedure being downgraded to comments.
- An increase in customer feedback monitoring by the Customer Relations Team to ensure that services are logging feedback appropriately.
- Better communication with service users on the alternative routes available for reporting concerns.
- We do have to also consider that services have not recorded some complaints received on the customer feedback system

A full breakdown of the number of complaints received by service area can be found in [Appendix A](#).

### 4.3 Complaint Themes

The table below highlights the main complaint themes. Following the same trend as the previous years, the majority of all complaints received (79%) relate to the following four themes:

Theme	2021/22	Total	
Council Action	134	17%	↑ 41%
Lack of Action	132	17%	↑ 27%
Quality of Service	167	22%	↑ 6%
Staff Conduct/Treatment of Customer	177	23%	↑ 3%
	610	79%	

Staff Conduct/Treatment of Customer, has overtaken 'Quality of Service' as the most common complaint theme. This theme is used if a customer's complaint focuses on the attitude or unprofessional conduct of a Council officer

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or if their complaint is focused on being unfairly treated/disadvantaged by a service when no other theme is predominant.

If a complaint has a number of aspects to it, it is often difficult to highlight one particular theme; therefore, 'Quality of Service' tends to be used.

The new feedback system, currently in development, will provide a greater number of theme subcategories and the ability to choose more than one theme. This will help us to clearly identify and target trends for learning and monitoring purposes.

## 4.4 Response Timescales

We aim to respond to the majority of complaints at Stage 1 within 10 working days. If the complaint is going to take longer than this to complete, the Complainant will be informed of an expected date for response; this may be in the form of an interim letter.

If a complaint timescale has to be extended, the complaint will be classed as 'not meeting timescale;' the only exception to this is if the Complainant causes the need for extension, for example, by providing further information during the investigation process or if a meeting with the complainant is required and the complainant is unable to meet within the initial time frame.

Complaints relating to Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care are covered by separate statutory legislation, and different timescales apply. The complaint system allows timescales to be amended based on what procedure is being followed.

Fully Considered Complaints	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Responded to within the initial timescale	426	429	484
Not responded to within the initial timescale	243*	210	260
<b>Total</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>639</b>	<b>744</b>

\*includes all 24 outstanding complaints

In 64% of cases a response was sent to the Complainant within the initial timescale. This is slightly lower than the previous year 67%, however, it must be noted that the global pandemic affected services significantly and services were operating beyond their normal capacity, we aimed to manage the Complainants' expectation around timescales during this unprecedented time and initial timescales were often extended to account for this. As normal service resumed over the last year, the procedural timescales have also been reinstated.

General reasons for timescales not being met include:

- Increasing workloads on restricted resources means that it is not always possible to prioritise complaint responding / investigation within some service areas;
- Senior officers availability to respond within relevant timescales;

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- Complex investigation work required, which may include multi-agency communication, can prolong the time it takes to respond to complaints;
- Key members of staff being unavailable to respond to complaints due to sickness or annual leave;
- Multiple complaints from the complainant regarding the same or different matters can cause delays in the investigation process; and
- Difficulties in being able to contact complainants using the contact details supplied can sometimes mean we are unable to inform them of the outcome of their complaint.
- The capacity of the Customer Relations Team to carry out regular monitoring of outstanding cases and to work with services to ensure that the majority of complaints are responded to on time.
- The failure to close cases down on the system once dealt with.

Further work will be undertaken to improve compliance with response timescales.

### 4.5 Outcomes

The table below details the outcomes of fully considered complaints during this period.

Outcome	2021/22		DoT*	2020/21 %
Upheld	85	13%	↓	17%
Partially Upheld	170	25%	↓	28%
Not Upheld	390	58%	↑	55%
Outstanding	24~	4%	↑	1%
	<b>669</b>			

\* Direction of travel in numbers compared to 2020/21

~ Outstanding as of 01.08.2022

If a complaint is upheld or partially upheld it means that there was fault found – there is at least one element identified that could have been done better. It is reassuring to see that the percentage of not upheld complaints has increased since last year.

Outcomes and actions taken as a result of a complaint are not often recorded on the customer feedback system, and this does make reporting difficult. Some of the general reasons for complaints being upheld over the year are detailed below:

- A lack of action and / or lengthy delays in delivering a service following a request from a customer;
- Errors in service delivery, such as not following correct policies and procedures;
- Failure to communicate with customers, for example, not informing them of a change of policy or action that has been taken in response to an earlier request;
- A combination of minor issues, which have overall resulted in a poor experience for the customer; and

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- Staff attitude / behaviour towards customers, ranging from poor customer service to the use of rude or unprofessional language.

## 4.6 Lessons Learned

Learning and reflection from individual complaints and the sharing of learning within the organisation, is a key part of the complaint process. Following the completion of the complaint process, managers are asked to identify any learning from the complaint, either for their own staff or team or with implications across the Directorate. Learning should also be shared through 1-1's and team/service meetings. It should be noted that not all complaints yield lessons to be learned, however each case should be reviewed to ensure that any learning points are recorded and actioned where applicable. It must be noted that the complaint process is one of several ways in which services obtain valuable feedback to learn, improve and share best practice.

Below are some general examples of learning and actions taken, as a result of complaint reviews:

- Staff training to be provided
- Reminders to staff of duties and responsibilities
- The development of easy to read information for service users
- Internal review of service to be carried out
- A review of the information provided to service users
- A reminder to staff about the importance of effective communication
- Concerns to be addressed at monthly review meetings
- A review of staffing levels
- A review of current processes and procedures to see if improvements can be made

The customer feedback system does allow services to record if lessons have been learned and the detail of what actions have been taken as a result of the complaint; however this is not part of the system that services regularly use and only in 30% of the upheld or partially upheld complaints this year have actions been recorded on the system.

We will continue to encourage the review of complaints to ensure that we learn from the feedback provided by our customers. However, the ability of services to take the time to review complaints and implement changes to improve services will be continually inhibited by the increasing demand on services and the pressure on existing resources.

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## 5. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

The LGSCO provides an [interactive map of council performance](#) on its website. The map shows annual performance data for all councils in England and links to LGSCO published decision statements, public interest reports, annual letters and information about service improvements that have been agreed by each council

This tool provides a useful snapshot of the service improvement recommendations that each authority has agreed to. It also highlights the wider outcomes of LGSCO investigations to the public, advocacy and advice organisations, and others who have a role in holding local councils to account.

The key highlights of the LGSCO data can be found in this report, however should you wish to explore the information in more detail please visit <https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance/blackpool-borough-council/statistics>

The LGSCO statistics focus on three key areas that help to assess an organisation's commitment to putting things right when they go wrong:

- **Complaints upheld** – The LGSCO upholds complaints when fault is found in an organisation's actions, including where the organisation accepted fault before the LGSCO investigated. The data includes the total number of investigations completed to provide important context for the statistic.
- **Compliance with recommendations** – The LGSCO recommends ways for organisations to put things right when faults have caused injustice and monitor their compliance with our recommendations. Failure to comply is rare and a compliance rate below 100% is a cause for concern.
- **Satisfactory remedy provided by the authority** - In these cases, the organisation upheld the complaint and the LGSCO agreed with how it offered to put things right. The Ombudsman encourages the early resolution of complaints and credits organisations that accept fault and find appropriate ways to put things right.

Finally, the LGSCO compares the three key annual statistics for an organisation with similar authorities, to provide an average marker of performance. They do this for County Councils, District Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs, Unitary Councils, and London Boroughs.

In the 2020-21 year the LGSCO received and decided fewer complaints than normal because the Ombudsman took the unprecedented step of temporarily stopping its casework, in the wider public interest, to allow authorities to concentrate efforts on vital frontline services during the first wave of the Covid-19 outbreak. This should be considered when making comparisons with previous year's data.

The statistics provided by the LGSCO may not necessarily align with the data that the authority holds. For example, LGSCO numbers include enquiries from people that were signposted back to the authority and some of these may choose not to pursue the matter further with the Council.

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## 5.1 Complaints Received by the LGSCO

Throughout 2021/2022, thirty five complaints were referred to the LGSCO by a Complainant.

The table below shows the number of complaints received by the LGSCO over the last three years, broken down by service area.

Complaints and Enquiries Received	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	DoT*
Adult Care Services	9	6	9	↑
Benefits and Tax	4	1	0	↓
Corporate and Other Services	2	5	2	↓
Education and Children's Services	19	3	10	↑
Environmental Services, Public Protection and Regulation	5	4	7	↑
Highways and Transport	2	1	1	=
Housing	1	3	3	=
Other	0	0	1	↑
Planning and Development	3	3	2	↓
	<b>45</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>35</b>	

\* Direction of travel compared to 2020/21

## 5.2 Decisions made by the LGSCO

The table below shows a breakdown of the decisions made by the LGSCO over the last three years. [Appendix B](#) contains a definition of the types of decision made.

Decision Type		No. of Complaints		
		2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Complaints investigated by LGSCO	Complaint upheld	6	2	4
	Complaint not upheld	3	5	5
Complaints not investigated by LGSCO	Closed after initial enquiries	8	6	11
	Premature decision - Advice given	1	1	1
	Premature decision - Referred back for local resolution	22	10	15
	Incomplete / invalid	2	2	2
		<b>42</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>38</b>

Some Complainants prefer to contact the LGSCO in the first instance. The LGSCO will determine whether this is a premature complaint which must be directed back to the Council to investigate and respond to in the first instance or if they will commence an investigation based on the information provided by the Complainant.

Eleven of the complaints were closed after initial enquiries and further information regarding the reasons for this can be found in [Appendix B](#).

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Of the thirty eight complaints reviewed by the LGSCO in 2021/22, nine cases progressed on to the formal investigation stage. 44% of the complaints reaching this stage were upheld. This is a reassuring figure compared to an average of 64% in similar authorities.

## 5.3 Compliance and Remedy

In 100% of cases the LGSCO was satisfied Blackpool Council had successfully implemented its recommendations. This compares to an average of 99% in similar authorities.

In 0% of upheld cases the LGSCO found Blackpool Council had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman. This compares to an average of 12% in similar authorities.

In addition to remedy by apology and financial redress, the LGSCO has the power to recommend service improvements where a fault or maladministration by the Council has caused injustice to a Complainant. Service improvements agreed and implemented by Blackpool Council in 2020/21 can be explored in [Appendix C](#).

Senior management review these cases to explore the reasons why the complaints have been upheld and identify any actions that can be taken to reduce the number of upheld complaints in the future. As the majority of remedies and services improvements were recommended by the LGSCO, senior management will explore whether the Council missed opportunities to resolve complaints through the use of remedies at an earlier stage in the complaints process.

## 5.4 Public Reports

The LGSCO can also issue Public Reports for specific cases. There are many reasons why the Ombudsman might issue a public report. The main reason is because they believe that it is in the public interest to highlight particular issues or problems. They might also issue a public report because what went wrong is significant or because of the impact on the complainant/service user is significant. The Ombudsman will always issue a public report if an organisation does not agree with their findings or recommendations, or put things right to our satisfaction.

The Public Reports are issued to help to ensure that Councils, and other organisations providing public services, remain accountable to people who use those services. By highlighting the learning from complaints it helps to improve services for others. Blackpool Council has not been issued with any Public Reports in 2021/22.

## 6. Actions

There are a number of actions arising from the review of customer feedback:

- Further work should be undertaken with departments to encourage all Council services to use the customer feedback system.
- Further work should be undertaken with departments to ensure that feedback is appropriately and correctly recorded on the customer feedback system.
- Exploration of the use of KPI's to monitor complaint compliance across the Council

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- Exploration of the causes of complaints, especially within the Staff Conduct / Treatment of Customer and Quality of Service themes.
- Further work should be done to encourage services to capture learning where appropriate so that services can be improved as a result.
- Further work to explore how we can share standard learning from complaints on a regular basis across the Council
- Services should consider providing satisfactory remedy to fault and injustice identified in line with the Ombudsman's guidance on remedies.

## 7. Looking Forward

Next year will focus on improving the recording and handling of complaints and the quality of responses; encouraging learning from complaints and compliments; and developing a robust mechanism for sharing lessons learnt, best practice and potential development. The Senior Leadership Team will support with this piece of work and will identify any key areas for improvement.

The Customer Relations Team will continue to offer support to staff acting as investigating officers to improve the timeliness and quality of responses, whilst aiming to reduce the need for secondary or follow up enquiries. The team is looking at developing a training programme for officers and managers with the intention for this to be rolled out over the next year. The team will review existing arrangements for complaints handling within directorates following recent restructures and will explore ways in which insight gained from customer feedback can be used to improve services.

A new council-wide customer feedback system is in the pipeline, with the aim of providing a more user-friendly, straight forward approach of logging feedback. The systems improved reporting tools will allow essential feedback data to be provided to services on a more regular basis. It is hoped that the new system will empower services to take better control of complaint and feedback management and provide additional subcategories for complaint themes, so that trends can be clearly identified and acted upon. The work on the new system was intended to be completed in 2020, unfortunately the process has been significantly delayed due to the Covid response taking priority and the capacity of the Customer Relations Team. It is hoped that we will be able to go live with the new system towards the end of 2022.

Services are encouraged to continue to work with the Customer Relations Team, in order:

- To ensure that we acknowledge the importance and value of complaints and all customer feedback.
- To ensure that all feedback is appropriately and correctly recorded on the Customer Feedback System to enable greater accuracy in the analysis of data
- To ensure that complaints are handled in line with the Council's Customer Care Standards and any other relevant legal and policy requirements.
- To provide and detail a clear route by which customers can raise concerns about the service they have received from the Council.

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- To ensure complaints are dealt with fairly, promptly, and sensitively.
- To learn from our mistakes and use feedback from customers to continuously improve services.
- To provide a satisfactory remedy to fault and injustice before the complaint reaches the Ombudsman.
- To use insight gained from compliments to share best practice.

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## APPENDIX A – BREAKDOWN OF COMPLAINTS RECORDED\* BY SERVICE AREA

KEY: ■ Same / Reduction ■ Increase <10 ■ Increase >10 or 101%

*Last year's figures are provided in the RAG box*

Department	Service	Total	RAG
<b>Adult Services</b>	Adult Social Care	43	27
	Corporate - Resources	7	23
	Care and Support	2	7
	Commissioned Services - Adults	11	16
<b>Chief Executive's Office</b>	Exec Support	1	0
	HR, Policy, and Comms	1	0
<b>Children's Services</b>	Children's Social Care	142	158
	Commissioned Services – Children's	2	0
	Early Help for Children and Families	12	5
	SEND and Educational	10	1
	School Standards and Effectiveness	3	5
	Business Support and Resources	1	1
<b>Community and Environmental Services</b>	Coastal Services	0	0
	Facilities Management	0	0
	Highways and Transport (delivery)	52	34
	Transport Council Fleet	3	1
	Integrated Transport	7	3
	Leisure	11	6
	Parks and Open Spaces	17	14
	Public Protection	72	52
	Street Cleansing	34	35
	Waste and Recycling	115	167
<b>Governance and Partnership Services</b>	Cemeteries and Crematorium	1	0
	Coroner Services	0	0
	Customer Relations	1	1
	Governance Services	0	1
	Information Governance	1	1
	Legal	2	0
	Registrars	4	2
<b>Communications and Regeneration</b>	Arts	1	0
	Beach Patrol	0	0
	Building Control	1	0
	Communications	0	0
	Economic Development	2	8
	Growth and Prosperity	3	3
	Heritage	0	0

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	Highways and Transport (policy)	0	0
	Learning, Adult and Community	0	0
	Libraries	2	3
	Parking	66	31
	Planning	5	6
	Tourism	11	2
<b>Public Health</b>	Public Health	3	2
	Community Engagement	0	0
	Public Health Commissioned Service	0	0
<b>Resources</b>	Benefits	9	8
	Business Rates	9	20
	Council Tax	42	18
	Customer First	15	9
	Debtors and Creditors	0	1
	Finance	0	0
	ICT	0	0
	Property and Asset Management	2	1
	Risk and Insurance	0	0
<b>Strategy and Assistant CEX</b>	Housing Options	18	12
<b>Unknown/Unallocated**</b>	Unknown/Unallocated	16	10

*\*Complaints recorded includes cases which were withdrawn following review.*

*\*\*Unknown/Unallocated includes 1 for Adult Services and 11 for Children's Services which could not be assigned to a specific service.*

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## APPENDIX B – LGSCO Further Exploration

### Definitions

**Upheld** - Where the LGSCO has decided that the Council is at fault in how it acted and that this fault may or may not have caused an injustice to the Complainant, or where the Council has accepted that it needs to remedy the complaint.

**Not upheld** - Where the LGSCO has investigated a complaint and decided that the Council was not at fault.

**Advice given** - Where the LGSCO advises a Complainant that their complaint does not fall within their jurisdiction or where the complaint has already been investigated by the LGSCO and therefore cannot be investigated again.

**Closed after initial enquiries** - Where the LGSCO has made an early decision that they could not or should not investigate a complaint (for example, the matter was subject to the scrutiny of the court), or where there is little or no injustice to a Complainant that would necessitate an LGSCO investigation of the matter, or where an investigation could not achieve anything, either because the evidence shows at an early stage that the Council was not at fault or the outcome a Complainant wants is not one the LGSCO could achieve.

**Incomplete / invalid** - These are complaints where the Complainant has not provided the LGSCO with enough information to be able to decide what should happen with their complaint, or where the Complainant no longer wishes to pursue their complaint.

**Referred back for local resolution** - These are complaints which have been referred back to the Council by the LGSCO because the Council has not had an opportunity to resolve the issues through its own complaints procedure.

### 2021-22: Complaints closed after initial enquiries

- **26B(2) not made in 12 months** - The Ombudsman has exercised discretion not to investigate. The complainant did not come to the Ombudsman within 12 months of becoming aware of the matter
- **Not warranted by alleged injustice (x2)** - The personal injustice caused is not sufficient to warrant the Ombudsman's involvement
- **Sch 5.1 court proceedings** - The Ombudsman cannot investigate the complaint. The matter is or has been considered by a court
- **No worthwhile outcome achievable by investigation (x2)** - The Ombudsman will not investigate as we do not believe we can achieve a worthwhile outcome by investigating
- **26(6)(c) Court remedy (x2)** - The Ombudsman will not investigate as the complainant has/had a remedy against the council via any court of law
- **Other Agency better placed (x2)** - The Ombudsman will not investigate as we believe there is another agency better placed to resolve the issue
- **Other reason not to investigate** - The Ombudsman will not investigate and the reason is outlined in our final decision statement (LGSCO reference for this complaint is 21004398, should you wish to review the reasons given on the LGSCO website, section: Decisions)

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## APPENDIX C – LGSCO Service Improvements

Five service improvements were agreed and implemented by Blackpool Council in 2021/22.

Service Area	Service Improvements	Satisfaction with Compliance
Education and Children's Services	Procedure or policy change/review Provide information/advice	Remedy completed late
Environmental Services and Public Protection and Regulation	Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Procedure or policy change/review	Remedy complete and satisfied
Adult Care Services	Apology Financial Redress: Quantifiable Loss	Remedy complete and satisfied
Adult Care Services	Provide training and/or guidance	Remedy complete and satisfied
Education and Children's Services	Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Provide services to person affected	Remedy complete and satisfied

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## Approved By:

Name	Title	Date
Joceline Greenaway	Head of Life Events	22.08.22
Mark Towers	Director of Governance and Partnerships	23.08.22
Corporate Leadership Team	n/a	30.08.22