



# Formal Complaints – Quarter 3 Summary

Quarterly Report

2020-'21



# Formal Complaints – Quarter 3 | Executive Summary

Complaints focus group starting to show positive results, better recording and more early resolution of complaints.

## Business Context for Q3

Establishment of Complaints Focus group is starting to show results:

- ✓ Early intervention and resolution of complaints, preventing unnecessary escalation
- ✓ Better reporting - resulting in a rise of early resolution cases reported, 52 in Q3 compared to 4 in Q2 (see breakdown of Q3 below)
- ✓ Directorate reps taking ownership to input into their slides – thank you to all reps for their comments
- ✓ Progressing actions to address the insight highlighted within this report, (see slide 11)

The rise in complaints for Q3 compared to Q2, is also due to demand for Housing repairs over the winter - COVID restrictions and social distancing meant contractors have not been able to complete as many maintenance calls per day. This has led to customer dissatisfaction.

Most formal complaints related to how the reasoning/justification for decisions was communicated, especially in relation to care assessments.

Directorate	Formal	Early Resolution
ASC	7	1
CIC	3	10
Children's Services	23	8
Place & Growth	22	24
Resources & Assets	23	9

## What is the learning...

Clear communication and accessible information about process and procedures for residents will help to better manage expectations, particularly around limits of the Council's statutory powers.

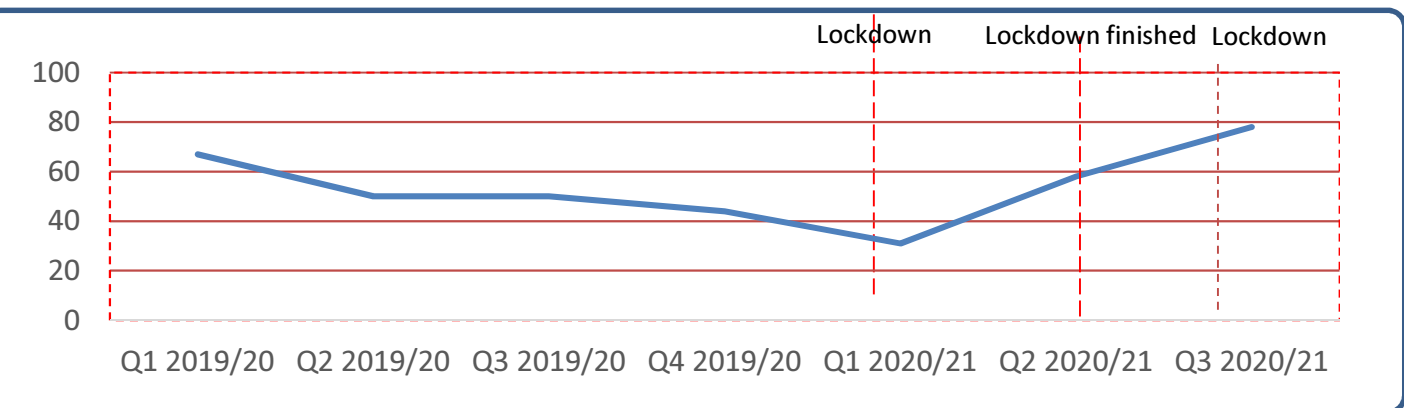
Seasonal pressures normally experienced (Heating maintenance call outs) have been exacerbated by Covid 19 restrictions.

## What is the action...

- Complaint owners to proactively communicate where residents can influence on decisions and be clear on those where they cannot.
- Children's Services have introduced a complaints learning log to identify what actions can initiate tangible improvements in service.
- Complaint owners to focus on root cause analysis to understand what mitigation can be done in future.
- Housing to engage with contractors to manage call out delays and customer expectations.

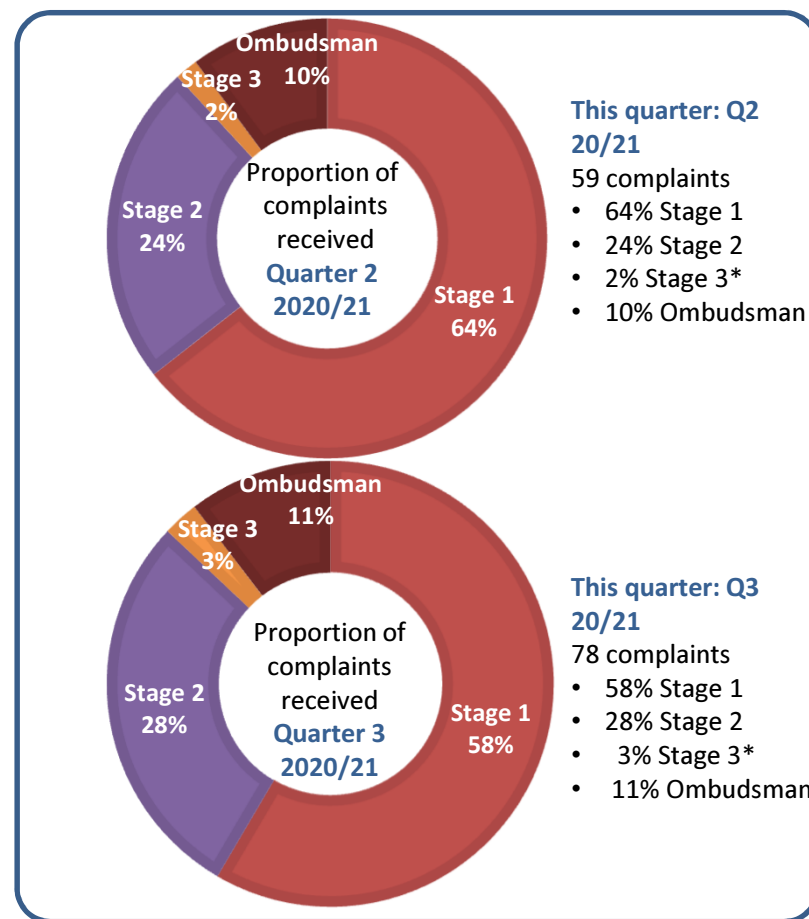
# Formal Complaints - Quarter 3 | Volumes

Compared to Quarter 2, Quarter 3 saw a rise in the number of formal complaints by 32%. Increase due to complaints for Housing repairs where contractors were not able to complete as many maintenance calls in one day.



15

Period	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3*	Ombudsman	Total	Direction of Travel
Q1 2019/20	48	10	0	9	67	N/A
Q2 2019/20	41	7	0	2	50	Improved
Q3 2019/20	38	10	0	2	50	Static
Q4 2019/20	34	4	0	6	44	Improved
Year end 2019/20	161	31	0	19	211	N/A
Q1 2020/21	20	7	1	3	31	Improved
Q2 2020/21	38	14	1	6	59	Stabilising
Q3 2020/21	45	22	2	9	78	Worsening
Year end 2020/21						

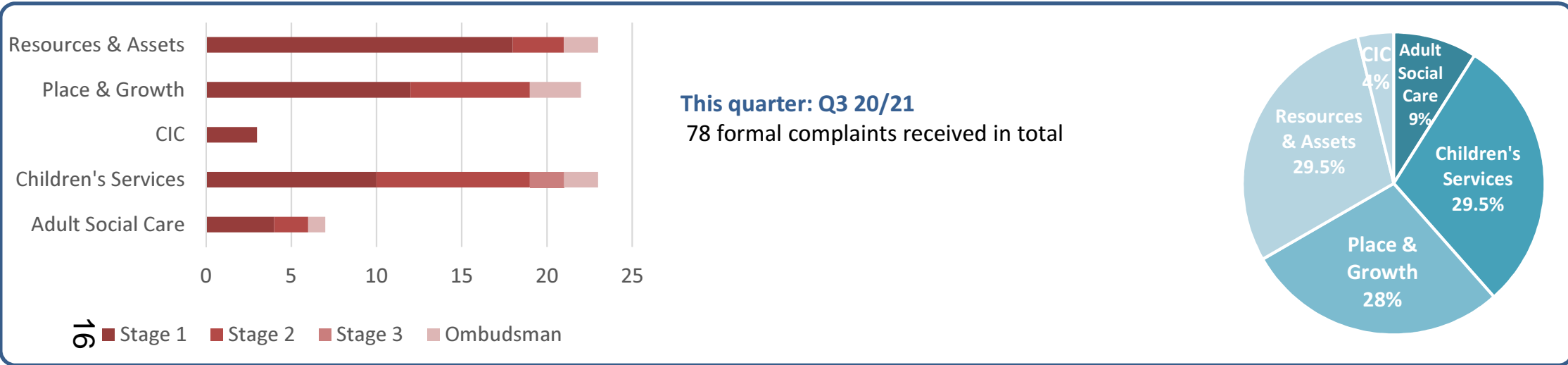


There was an increase of complaints at Stage 2, this may have arisen because of premature signposting to escalate by Services. Key themes for escalation by residents were inadequate communication, and lack of transparency in decision making.

Contact by the Ombudsman related to 3 decisions not to investigate, 3 currently being assessed, 1 being investigated, 1 upheld and 1 not upheld. On the 1 case upheld, the Council was found at fault for delay in the management and progression of the complaint.

# Formal Complaints - Quarter 3 | Directorates

4 directorates have seen an increase in the number of complaints this quarter, recurring issues feature around lack of communication and transparency of decision making.

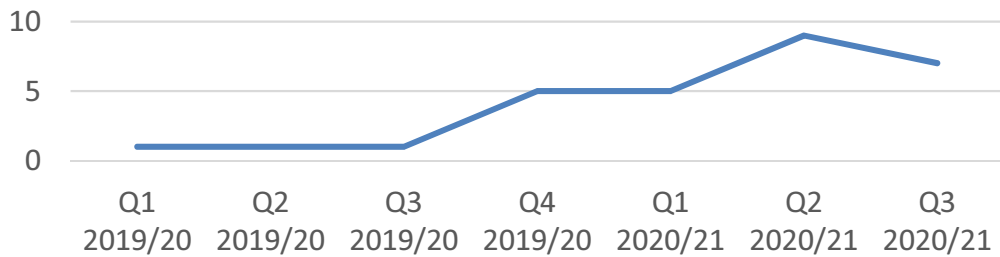


- Of the 4 Stage 1 **ASC** complaints, 1 escalated to Stage 2. Concern was expressed over how the Service justified and communicated their decisions regarding changes in care provision.
- Of the 11 Stage 1 **Place and Growth** complaints, 6 escalated to Stage 2, with 1 from the previous quarter. Dissatisfaction centred on transparency of decision making. Residents also felt there was a lack of communication regarding the progress made on Traffic Regulation Order consultations.
- Of the 17 Stage 1 **Resources & Assets** complaints, 3 escalated to Stage 2. 1 was withdrawn and 1 was partly upheld for a failure to communicate clearly the assessment decision. The re-introduction of lockdown measures impacted how maintenance call outs were carried out. This had a knock on effect in how many site jobs could be completed. Dissatisfaction was also expressed on behalf of residents by advocates. This related to how housing needs assessments were carried out.
- Of the 3 Stage one **CIC** complaints, 2 related to the quality of Service received and 1 dissatisfied with the web pages for Blue Badge applications. Quality of service was around lack of services available in the town centre during relaxation of the 2nd lockdown.
- The 10 Stage 1 **Children's** complaints, were evenly spread between Corporate and Social Care. The 9 Stage 2's comprised of 4 Social care with 2 of these carried over from the previous quarters. 1 of these was escalated in the quarter to Stage 3 with 1 other a carry over from the previous quarter. Parents were dissatisfied with delays in assessments for EHC plans and initial assessments and conduct of Social Workers. 2 complaints centred on the CTU policy of not offering part refunds for annual bus fares when, due to lockdown, when schools were forced to shut.

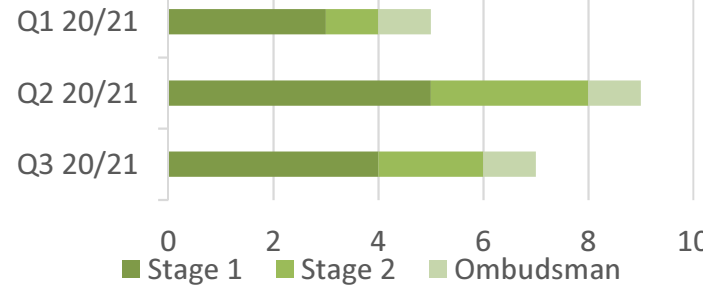
# Formal Complaints - Quarter 3 | ASC

A reduction in complaints for this quarter. Complaints were around effective communication and documentation of concerns and decisions.

Total complaints



Complaints per stage



Last quarter: Q2 20/21

9 complaints

- 5 Stage 1
- 3 Stage 2
- 1 Ombudsman

This quarter: Q3 20/21

7 complaints

- 4 Stage 1
- 2 Stage 2
- 1 Ombudsman

## How did we receive the complaints?



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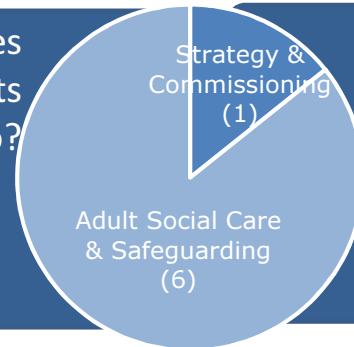
Via letter



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Via email

## Which services were complaints submitted to?



## What were our residents dissatisfied with?

Assessment Decision



3

Quality of Service



2

Lack of communication

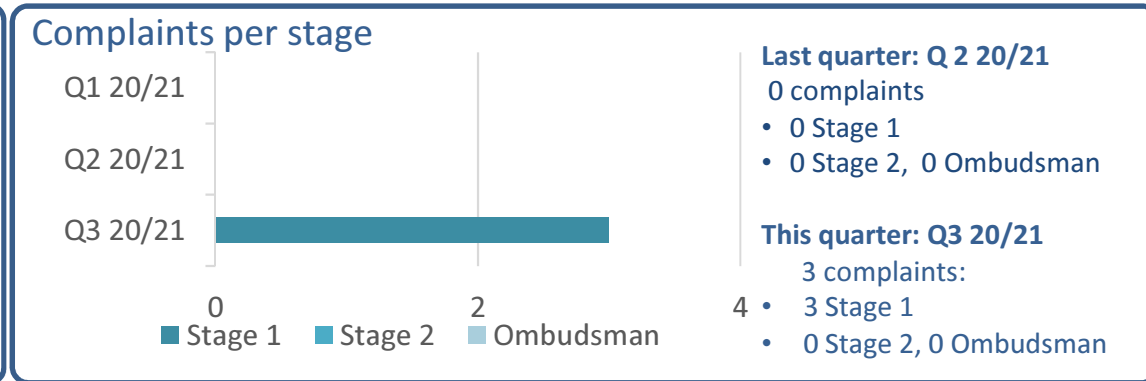
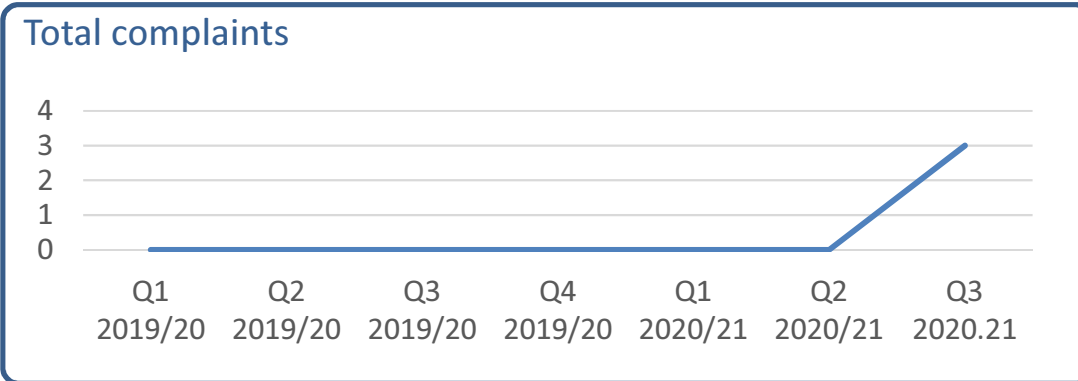


2

- The Service were able to resolve 1 complaint outside the formal complaints process.
- Several complaints related to professionals reaching an assessment decision at odds with the customer's family. The Service have acknowledged in some instances learning have been had. These mainly focus on the need to:
  - Communicate effectively with the client
  - Ensure communication of decisions has been documented and conveyed to external partners
  - Ensure reporting of significant concerns and events. For example, inadequate hospital discharge, falls and safeguarding.
- Frustration with the Service in not updating or consulting with next of kin about decisions.
- Complaint regarding the financial support offered to a carer and decision not to provide respite calls.

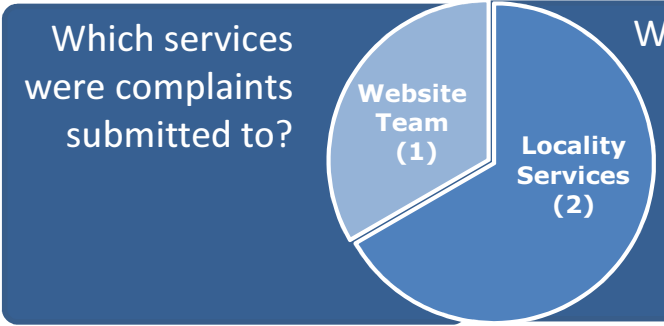
# Formal Complaints - Quarter 3 | Communities, Insight & Change

Most complaints for this quarter have been addressed by early resolution, where a call to the complainant helped to identify and resolve issues quickly.



### How did we receive the complaints?

- 0 Via letter
- 3 Via email



### What were our residents dissatisfied with?

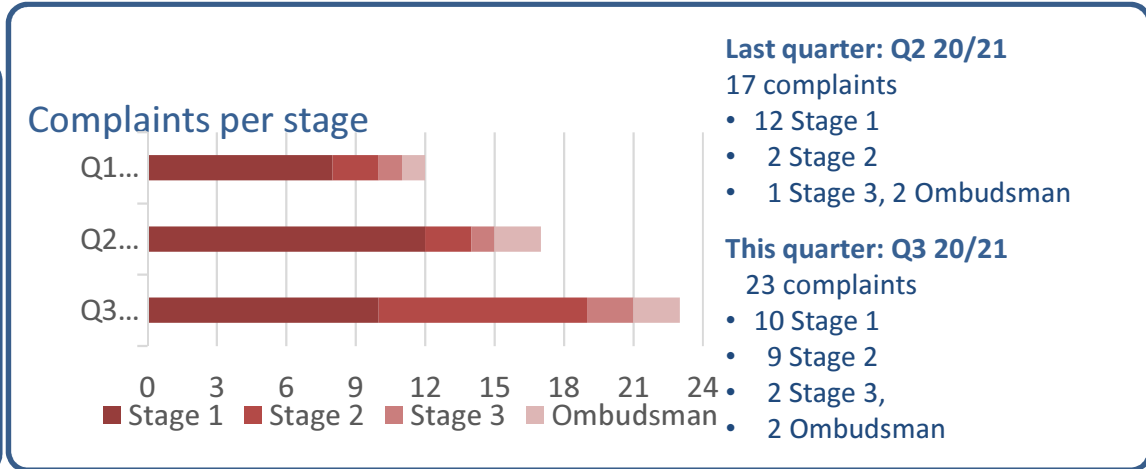
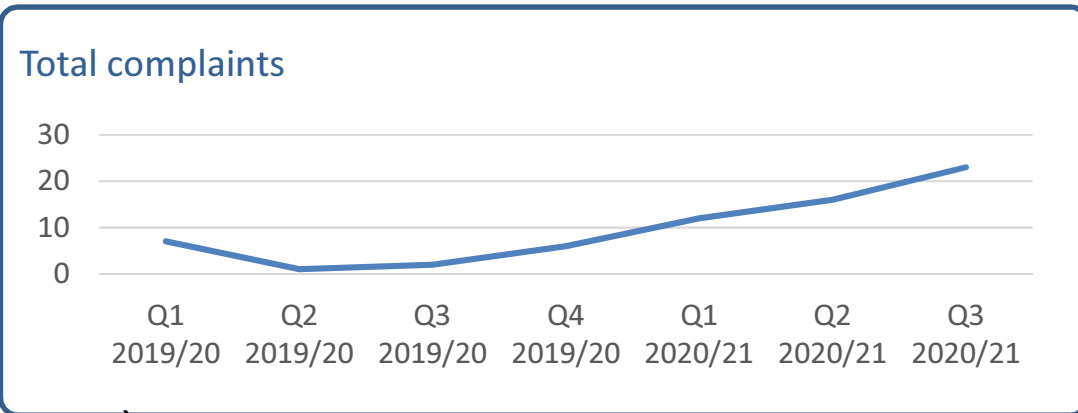
- Decision: 1
- Lack of communication: 0
- Quality of Service: 2

- 10 complaints received, were resolved outside the formal complaints process.
- Of the 3 Stage one **CIC** complaints, 2 related to the quality of Service received and 1 dissatisfied with the web pages for Blue Badge applications. Quality of service was around lack of services available from libraries and the closure of toilets in the town centre, during relaxation of the 2nd lockdown.

**Actions taken:** Improvements have since been made to the Blue Badge application process and web pages

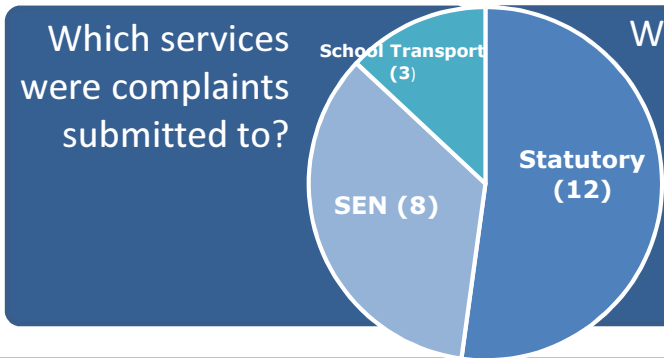
# Formal Complaints - Quarter 3 | Children's Services

An increase in complaints for this quarter due to better understanding and reporting of the complaints process in the SEN team. Complaints Manager now in post and taking ownership for reporting on all Children's complaints.



### How did we receive the complaints?

- 0** Via letter
- 23** Via email



### What were our residents dissatisfied with?

- 14** Assessment Decision
- 3** Inaccurate Records
- 6** Staff Attitude

8 complaints received were resolved outside the formal corporate and social care complaints process.

Dissatisfaction with the SEN team, related to delays in the annual review process and provision of EHCPs. Root cause seem to stem from staff changes, new allocations and delays from the setting in relation to a placement. The Team Manager now initiates an informal root cause analysis approach to understand what mitigation can be done in the future.

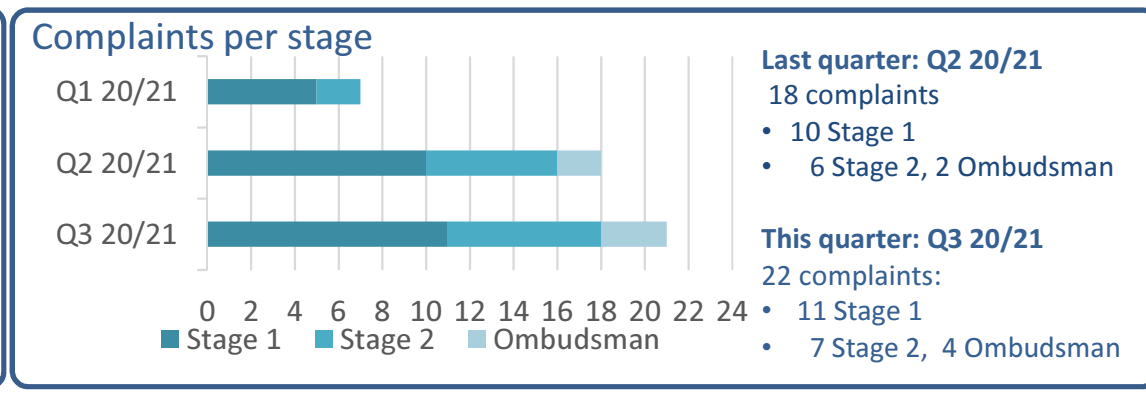
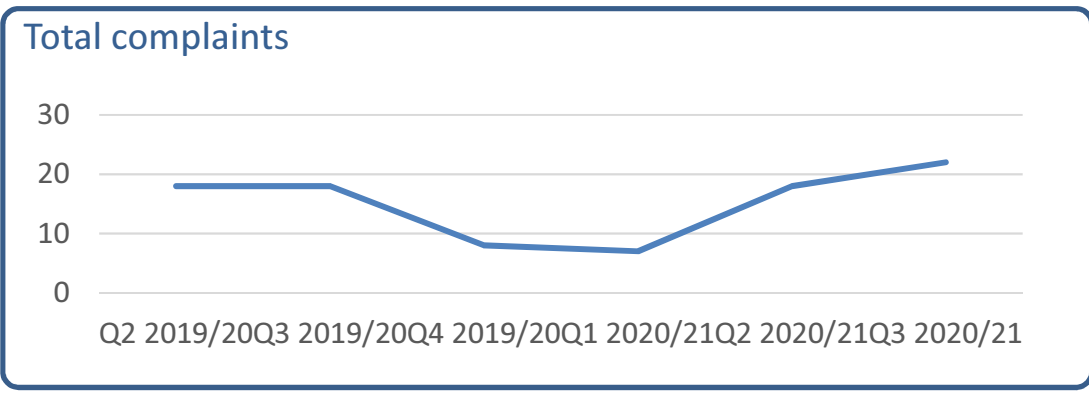
For Children's Act complaints, dissatisfaction was mixed between disputes around the accuracy of information captured through assessments, decisions coming out of assessments, and dissatisfaction with service user engagement with our staff. The Children's complaints manager has introduced a complaints learning log to identify what actions can initiate tangible improvements in service.

The 2 Stage 3 complaints, resulted in the Panel recommending improvements to procedures. The service are actioning the recommendations.

The Ombudsman investigation reached a final decision in favour of the complainant. The Service has agreed to the recommended actions which includes a financial payment.

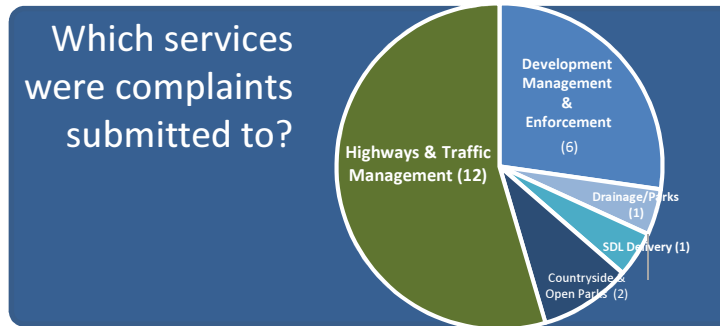
# Formal Complaints - Quarter 3 | Place & Growth

Highways have seen an increase in complaints around traffic regulation orders, due to people being at home more and noticing issues in their area.



### How did we receive the complaints?

**0** Via letter  
**22** Via email



### What were our residents dissatisfied with?

**13** Decision/lack of transparency  
**4** Inadequate communication  
**4** Road safety policy  
**1** Quality of Service

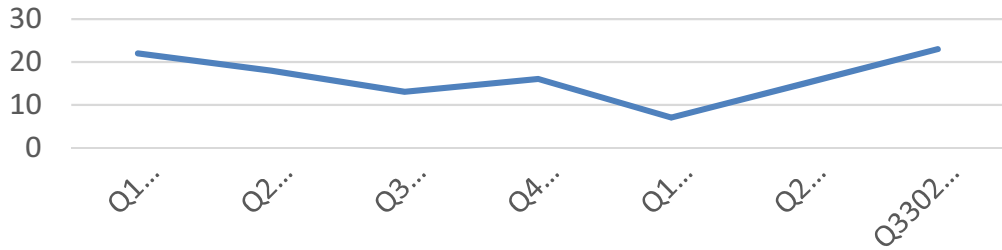
- 24 complaints were resolved outside the formal complaints process.
- Complainants disappointed with Traffic Management responses to requests for greater traffic controls. As part of the learning around drafting responses, the TM team is taking a more structured approach to dealing with complaints and writing responses. Including;
  - Acknowledge the issue from the customers point of view
  - Empathise over the impact this has on the customer and/or wider community
  - Inform the customer of what the Council can do, within its statutory, technical, environmental and political (STEP) framework
  - Commit to monitoring, future review and ongoing service improvement
- In response to Planning complaints, the Service is drafting information for neighbours in relation to householder planning applications to put on the web site. This will assist in better management of resident expectations.
- 4 ombudsman cases – 2 for Development Management are being assessed, 1 Highways case was not investigated and 1 for Flood Management found no fault.



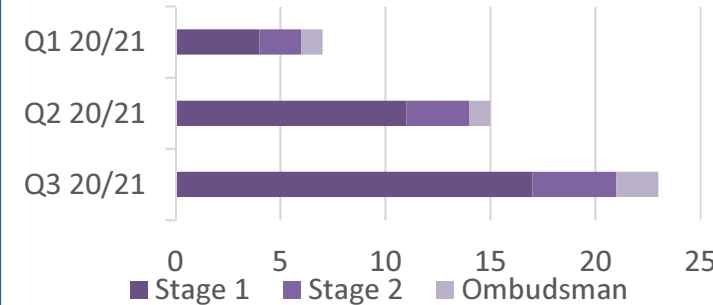
# Formal Complaints - Quarter 3 | Resources & Assets

Lockdown and social distancing measures impacted on how Housing maintenance calls were addressed. This had a knock on effect in how many call outs could be completed, resulting in an increase in complaints.

Total complaints



Complaints per stage



**Last quarter: Q2 20/21**  
15 complaints;  
11 Stage 1  
3 Stage 2, 1 Ombudsman  
**This quarter: Q3 20/21**  
23 complaints:  
• 17 Stage 1  
• 4 Stage 2  
• 2 Ombudsman

21

## How did we receive the complaints?



0

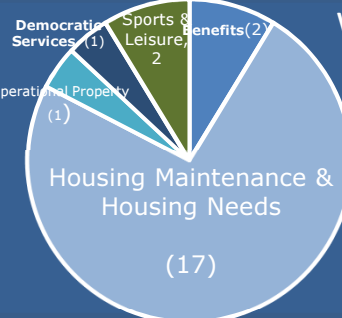
Via letter



23

Via email

## Which services were complaints submitted to?



## What were our residents dissatisfied with?



Decision

6

Quality of Service



10

Lack of communication



7

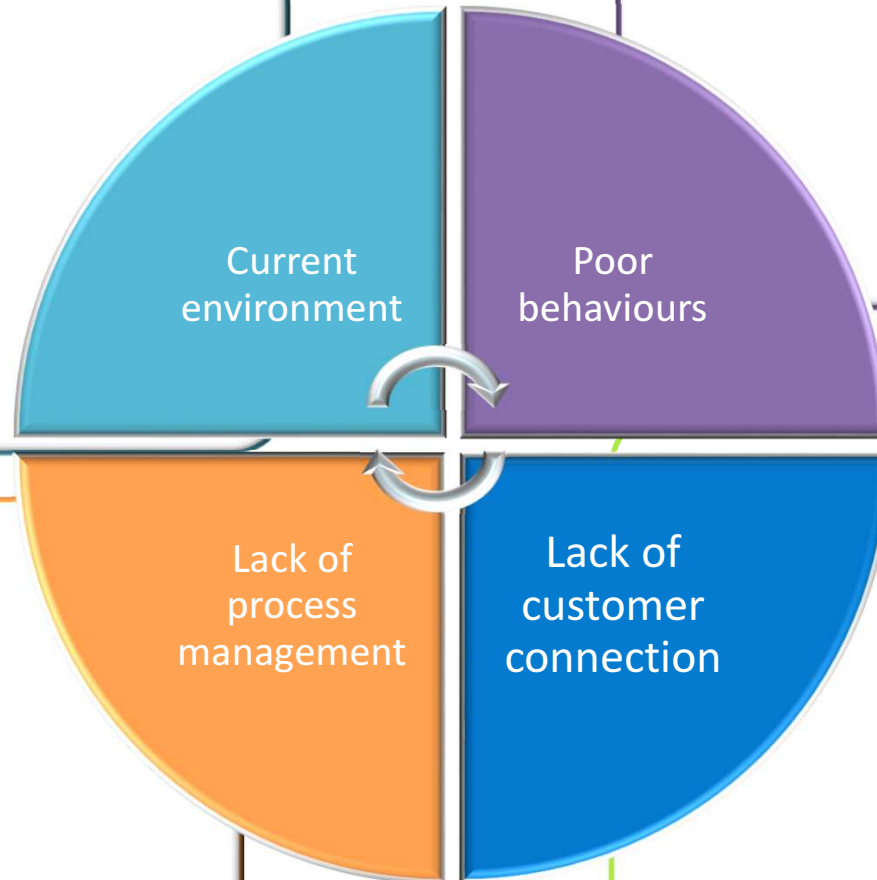
- 9 complaints were reported to have been resolved outside the formal complaints process.
- Of the 17 Stage 1 Resources & Assets complaints, 3 escalated to Stage 2. 1 was withdrawn and 1 was partly upheld for a failure to communicate the assessment decision clearly.
- The re-introduction of lockdown measures impacted how maintenance calls were completed. This had a knock on effect in how many site jobs could be attended. Dissatisfaction was also expressed on behalf of residents by advocates. These complaints related to how housing needs assessments were carried out around transparency of decisions.
- The Ombudsman advised it would not investigate 1 complaint as it had no legal remit to investigate the organisation of elections. The Ombudsman declined to investigate 1 other case as resolution to disputes concerning Housing benefit assessments, follows an appeal to the Benefits Tribunal..

# Formal Complaints - Quarter 3 | Insight

The Complaints Focus Group are progressing actions to address the insight highlighted.

- Lockdown measures impacted how many home maintenance visits could be made for tenants.
- The experience of lockdown has made residents more aware of daytime working week neighbourhood issues. For example, traffic and parking. Whilst in the previous quarter this concerned relaxing regulations, this quarter saw a demand for greater regulation.

25  
22



- Failure to document events and/or what occurred at meetings. This meant decisions weren't fully transparent or in line with guidance and procedure.

- Care and safeguarding decisions often involve several stakeholders. Occasionally, delays in awaiting a decision from one partner is not followed up by the service case owner. As a result, causes delay and ultimately a lack of service provision for the customer.

- Emails issued by the customer fail to reach the inbox despite receiving an auto acknowledgement.
- Lack of timely contact by the case owner in service, has frustrated customers.

# Complaints Focus | Progress

The complaints focus group was established back in September. The priority for the next quarter is to focus on key areas of work:

23

1. Better recording of complaints, for both formal and early resolution cases
2. Rebranding of complaints ethos and information into a *'Voice of the Customer'* theme – internal and external
3. Redrafting and branding of the complaints policy, including clearer definitions around what is a service request versus a complaint
4. New online complaint webpage and form, designed to give the customer all the information they need in one place
5. Better triaging of complaints received via the online form, before being directed to the appropriate team
6. Clearer internal communication around how to deal with complaints, using the directorate reps and improved tools to help teams
7. Training on how to deal with complaints, including the right communication methods, promotion of empathy and using plain English when writing responses



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