

# Compliments, Comments and Complaints Annual Report 2022/23

## Contents

Compliments, Comments and Complaints Annual Report 2022/23 .....	1
Executive Summary .....	2
Actions for Improvement 2023/24 .....	4
Background .....	5
Compliments .....	6
Compliments (Corporate) .....	6
Compliments (Social Services).....	6
Comments .....	7
Complaints (Corporate) - Summary .....	8
Complaints (Corporate) - Stage 1 and Stage 2 Split by Quarter .....	8
Complaint Analysis by Ward.....	10
Complaints (Corporate) - Stage 1 .....	11
Complaints (Corporate) - Stage 2.....	11
Complaints (Social Services) .....	12
Complaints (Social Services) - Stage 1 .....	12
Complaints (Social Services) - Stage 2 Independent Investigations .....	12
Complaints to Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) .....	13
Complaints (Corporate) Ombudsman.....	13
Complaints (Social Services) Ombudsman .....	13
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) Annual Letter 2022/23 .....	13
PSOW Code of Conduct Complaints Regarding Councillors .....	14
Service Development .....	15
Lessons Learned .....	15
Actions for Improvement.....	15

# Executive Summary

## Background

- The Council has a statutory requirement to process Corporate Complaints in line with the Customer Feedback Policy Compliments, Comments and Complaints and a statutory obligation in line with the All-Wales Statutory Social Services Complaint Handling Process
- This is the third Annual Compliments, Comments and Complaints Report which provides statistics and insights into Complaint Handling arrangements for Newport City Council
- The Council values customer feedback and uses it as an opportunity to improve the services that we provide.
- We use information from complaints to ensure good outcomes, and the more complaints we accurately record, the more able we are to do this.
- In April 2023, the My Council Services system was updated to reflect the Newport City Council restructure. 2023/24 Complaints Annual Report will reflect this essential update.
- The absence of complaints does not necessarily indicate excellent services – just as an increase in complaints does not necessarily indicate poor services.
- Complaints are logged in line with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) All-Wales Model Complaints policy.

## Compliments (Corporate)

- 106 Corporate Compliments were recorded in 2022/2023, compared with 175 received in 2021/22
- A heightened awareness due to the training provided should result in more compliments recorded into 2023/24

## Compliments (Social Services)

- 36 compliments were received for Social Services during 2022/23, compared to 33 received in 2021/22.
- Work will commence in Quarter 4 2023/24 to deliver complaint workshops to teams

## Comments

- 2693 comments were received 2022/23 compared with 4,267 received in 2021/22.
- We predicted in 2021/22 we would expect this figure decrease and notably there has been a 63% reduction in comments received for 2022/23.
- In July 2022 it was identified many service requests were being recorded incorrectly as a comment.
- We reviewed the customer journey and refined the process.
- The review resulted in a shorter customer journey. The requests are now sent directly to the service area, and not counted as a comment.
- This benefits service areas by providing a more accurate assessment of service demand, based on amounts of service requests logged.
- 1,416 of the 2693 comments received in 2022/23 were requests for service or missed collections
- We can expect this figure to decrease further in 2023/24, as we have recently removed the option of submitting service requests via the complaints form so that these are categorised correctly.

## Complaints (Corporate)

- 612 corporate complaints were received in 2022/23 – 341 Stage 1, 46 Stage 2 and 225 complaints refused in line with policy.
- 88% of corporate complaints were resolved at stage 1.
- Corporate stage one complaints: 341 complaints resolved in 2022/23 compared with 271 complaints resolved in 2021/22. 25.8% increase since 2021/22
- Corporate stage two complaints: 46 complaints resolved in 2022/23 compared with 31 complaints resolved in 2021/22. 48.4% increase since 2021/22

- This increase is indicative of complaint recording process refinement and alignment with the PSOW model complaint handling policy.
- We are moving in the right direction and as a result of the implementation of the revised [Newport City Council Customer Feedback Policy, Compliments, Comments and Complaints](#) all complaints are recorded. Complaint figures are expected to increase as a result of this.
- We recognise that accurate complaint reporting is essential and since reviewing processes our figures have increased and we will continue to monitor under reporting and work with service areas to ensure complaints are captured and recorded.
- Where the PSOW identify low complaint rates per population size, they have the power to investigate procedures and can declare Authorities non-compliant.

### **Complaints (Social Services)**

- 73 Social Services Complaints received for 2022/23: 20 Stage 1, 5 Stage 2, 48 complaints were refused in line with Policy.
- Social Services stage 1 Complaints: 20 complaints resolved in 2022/23 compared with 50 complaints resolved in 2021/22. 60% decrease in complaints received since 2021/22
- Social Services stage 2 Complaints: 5 Stage 2 complaints were resolved in 2022/23 compared with 3 Stage 2 complaints resolved in 2021/22. 67% increase in complaints received since 2021/22
- It should be noted that the number of Stage two Social Services complaints received in 2022/23 were still relatively small, with only 5 received.
- We note that Social Services complaints are lower than corporate complaint figures and will be working closely with managers in Social Services in Quarter 4 of 2023/24.

### **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW)**

- The PSOW reviewed 37 corporate complaints and 5 Social Services complaints. None were upheld.
- 8 of the 42 complaints required early resolution - this is where the PSOW asks us to take some further action to resolve based on their guidance.

### **Communications and Awareness Raising**

- Complaints Handling training was delivered to 120 officers with ongoing delivery planned.
- Key stakeholders have been identified and prioritised, our closest working colleagues have worked with us to ensure that they understand and follow process.
- Further 3 sessions scheduled for delivery in October 2023.
- Induction Programme for new starters includes complaint handling processes.
- Process reviews have taken place with colleagues in Business Support Team, Contact Centre, Refuse & Waste and Wastesavers
- We will be reporting 6 monthly to senior managers through CMT for oversight and discussion.

### **Policy update**

- The Feedback Policy: Compliments, Comments and Complaints was reviewed and updated. This was approved by Cabinet in March 2023. Changes included:
  - Policy streamlined and condensed
  - Processes outlined for Corporate & Social Service
  - Reduced timescales for corporate complaints
- Standardised complaint template responses are now in place.
- The Unacceptable Actions Policy review has commenced as per the update given to Governance and Audit Committee in March 2023. Research has taken place with colleagues in other LAs. Wider consideration is required to ensure that restrictions placed upon customers' interaction with the Council is proportionate, reviewed and NCC staff and members are protected in line with HR Policies and Health & Safety

- Our [Corporate Plan](#) outlines the importance of the views of communities and service users and this policy is one of the ways we support this.

## **Reporting Functions and recording**

- Aligning My Council Services (MCS) closure categories with the complaint refusal reasons as outlined in the 'Feedback Policy: Compliments, Comments and Complaints'
- Reduction of categories for closing complaints
- Analysis of historical data highlighted many service requests had been logged as comments – notably in 2022/23 there has been a significant decrease of 73% in comments since 2021/22.
- New forms have been developed which allow residents to log service requests directly to Waste and Recycling.
- Service area restructure updated for Compliments, Comments and Complaints in April 2022

## **Equalities**

- Optional equalities form introduced in April 2023. Residents can complete this form via MCS. Early analysis of completed forms has identified that contact with the Complaint Resolution Team was made predominantly by White residents aged between 25-34

## **Service Development highlights for 2022/23**

- The Customer Feedback Policy: Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy was reviewed, updated and approved by Cabinet
- Reviewed our customer journey pathway and streamlined processes which will benefit customers and colleagues when they are engaging with us
- Delivery of online training workshop to over 120 officers
- Collaboration with managers to improve services and processes
- Induction documentation for new Newport City Council officers updated to include complaint handling guidance

## **Actions for Improvement 2023/24**

Below outlines the actions that the team will be undertaking in 2023/24 to improve the delivery of the service.

- Further development of My Council Services system to maximise its effectiveness for reporting
- Continue to rollout training for officers.
- Develop councillor complaint handling awareness session
- Identify under reporting of complaints and implement procedures to capture and record
- Work with colleagues in residential settings to align their complaint procedures with the revised Customer Feedback Policy
- Reviewing Independent Investigators contract documentation with colleagues from the All-Wales Complaints Officers Group
- Unacceptable Actions by Customer Policy review
- Work with Customer experience review to determine what lessons can be learned

The report detail can be found below:

## Background

The Council values customer feedback and uses it as an opportunity to improve the services that we provide. The Council has a statutory requirement to process Corporate Complaints in line with Customer Feedback Policy: Compliments, Comments and Complaints and also a statutory obligation in line with the All-Wales Statutory Social Services Complaint Handling Process. The policies and procedures in place for Compliments, Comments and Complaints comply with the legislative requirements of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and associated standards, specifically ensuring that the Council promote the 'Active Offer'. Social Services statutory requirements remain in operation alongside the Corporate Policy to ensure they are aligning with Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014, ("the Regulations").

This is the third report to the Committee. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Compliments, Comments and Complaints for Newport City Council for the year 2022/2023 and how these are managed. Data is separated to provide detail for Corporate and Social Services Compliments, Comments and Complaints. The report contains Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) statistics and details where action is required by the Council to address weaknesses and make improvements.

Complaints data recording is captured through the Council's primary Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system called 'My Council Services'. Compliments, Comments and Complaints are submitted through various channels; customers can log these via the Newport City Council My Council Services App, via email or through the Contact Centre. These are acknowledged via My Council Services by the Complaints Resolution Officers and all correspondence is stored securely in one place.

In April 2023, the My Council Services system was updated to reflect the Newport City Council restructure. 2023/24 Complaints Annual Report will reflect this essential update.

In line with best practise, the Council accepts corporate complaints provided they are submitted within 6 months. This is because it is better to look into concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind, which enables a thorough investigation to take place. We may, in exceptional circumstances, look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this. We would, however, ask for evidence as to why these concerns were not brought to the Council's attention earlier. In any event, regardless of the circumstances, we will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than three years ago. Social Services Complaints are accepted within a 12-month period, per the guidance produced by Welsh Government on handling Social Services' complaints.

The Complaints Resolution Team collaborate with and provide support to all service areas to enable them to compile complaint responses appropriately. We ensure that timescales are adhered to and work proactively with service areas to implement lessons learned.

Service development information outlining progress made in 2022/23 is provided and Actions for Improvement are set out for 2023/24. In 2022/23, The Complaint Resolution Team continuously evaluated and reviewed processes. This resulted in a more consistent approach to complaint recording and handling in both corporate and social services, without compromising the equity of support provided to the service areas.

As a result of the implementation of the revised [Newport City Council Customer Feedback Policy, Compliments, Comments and Complaints](#) all complaints are recorded. Complaint figures are expected to increase as a result of this. Where the PSOW identify low complaint rates per population size, they have the power to investigate procedures and can declare Authorities non-compliant.

# Compliments

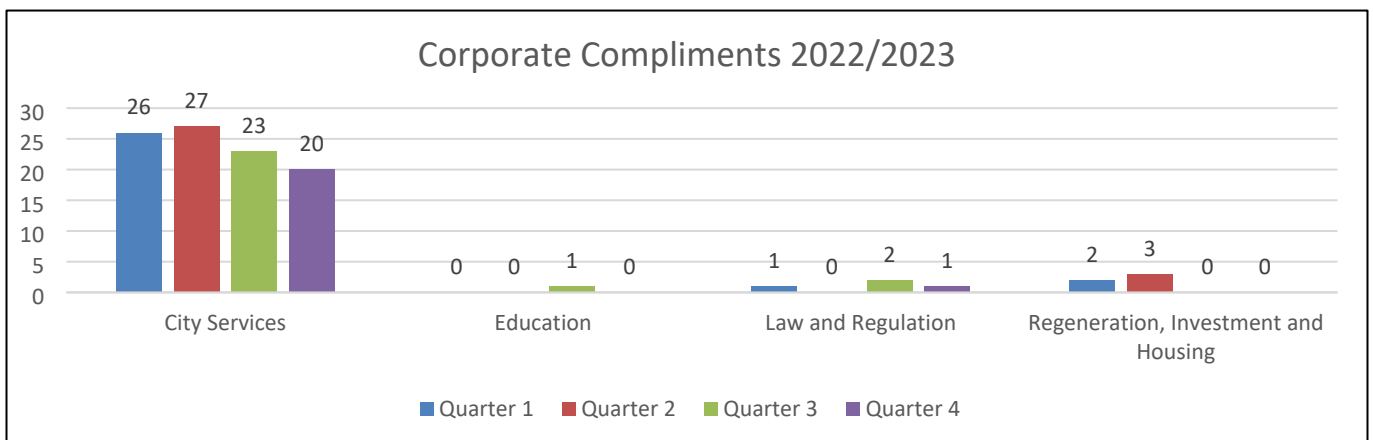
## Compliments (Corporate)

A total of 106 Corporate Compliments were recorded in 2022/2023, a 39% decrease since 2021/22. The opportunity to provide positive feedback is accessible to residents using improved webforms, the Council app or directly through customer accounts.

City Services received most of these compliments which is largely due to the high visibility of these services to the public and the high number of interactions with residents.

We anticipate an increase in the number of compliments captured for 2023/24, as a result of training delivered to service areas where participants were informed of how to share compliments with the Complaint Resolution Team for recording.

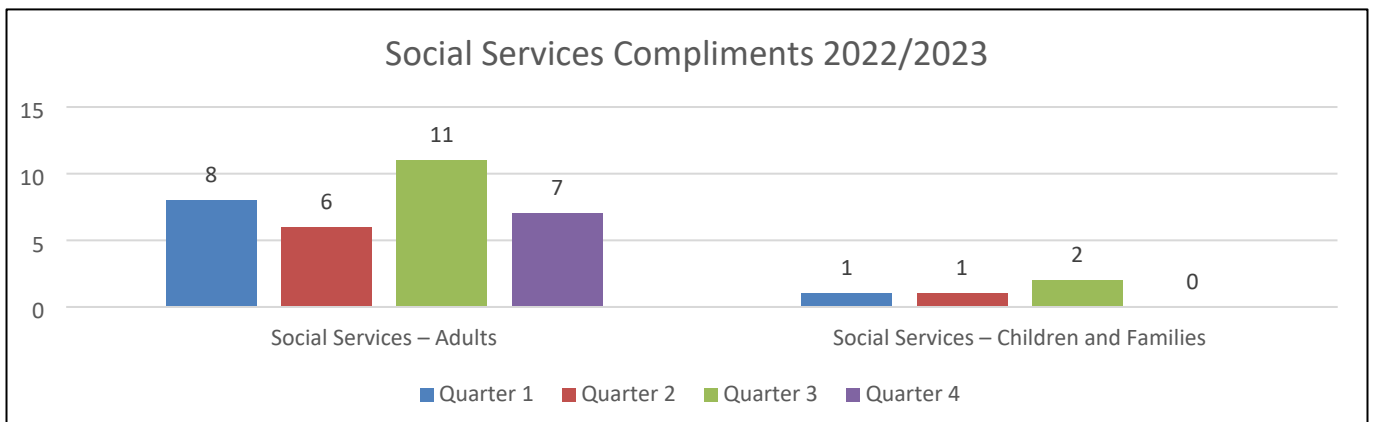
The graph below represents the number of compliments received by service area per quarter.



## Compliments (Social Services)

A total of 36 compliments were received for Social Services during 2022/23. A 9% increase since 2021/22. 88% for Adult Services and 11% compliments for Children’s Services were received during this timeframe. Compliments received for care packages delivered at home, Occupational Therapy support services.

The graph below shows the breakdown by quarter:



# Comments

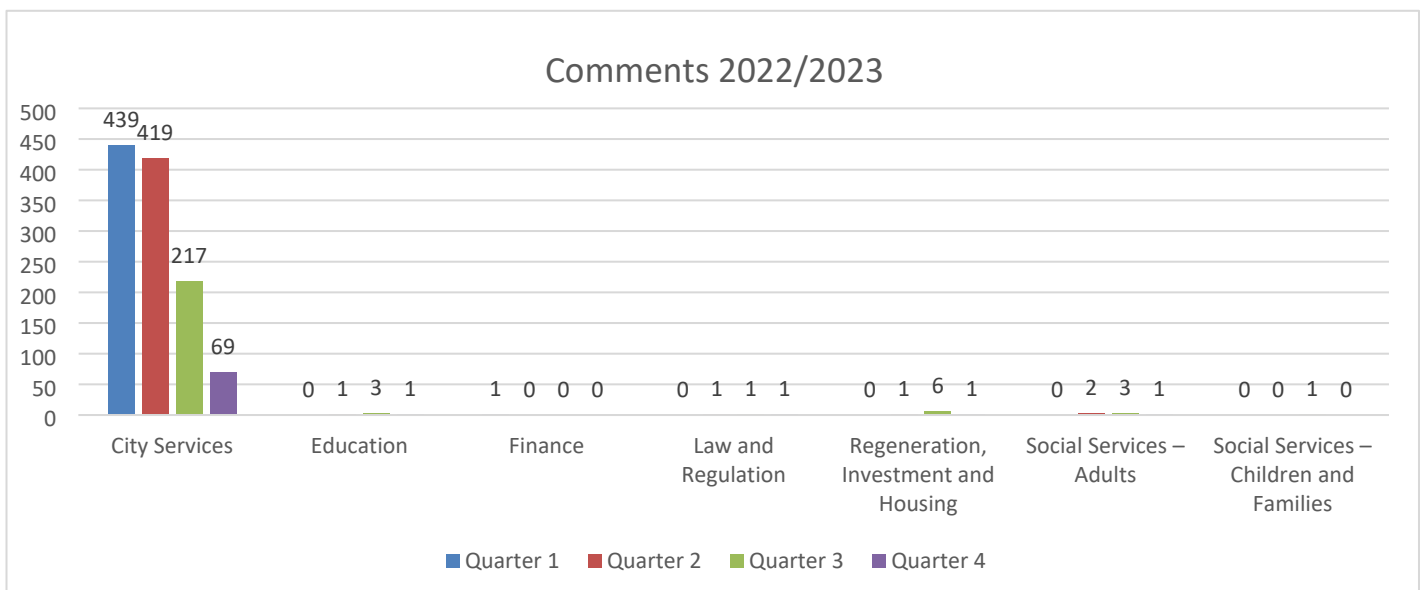
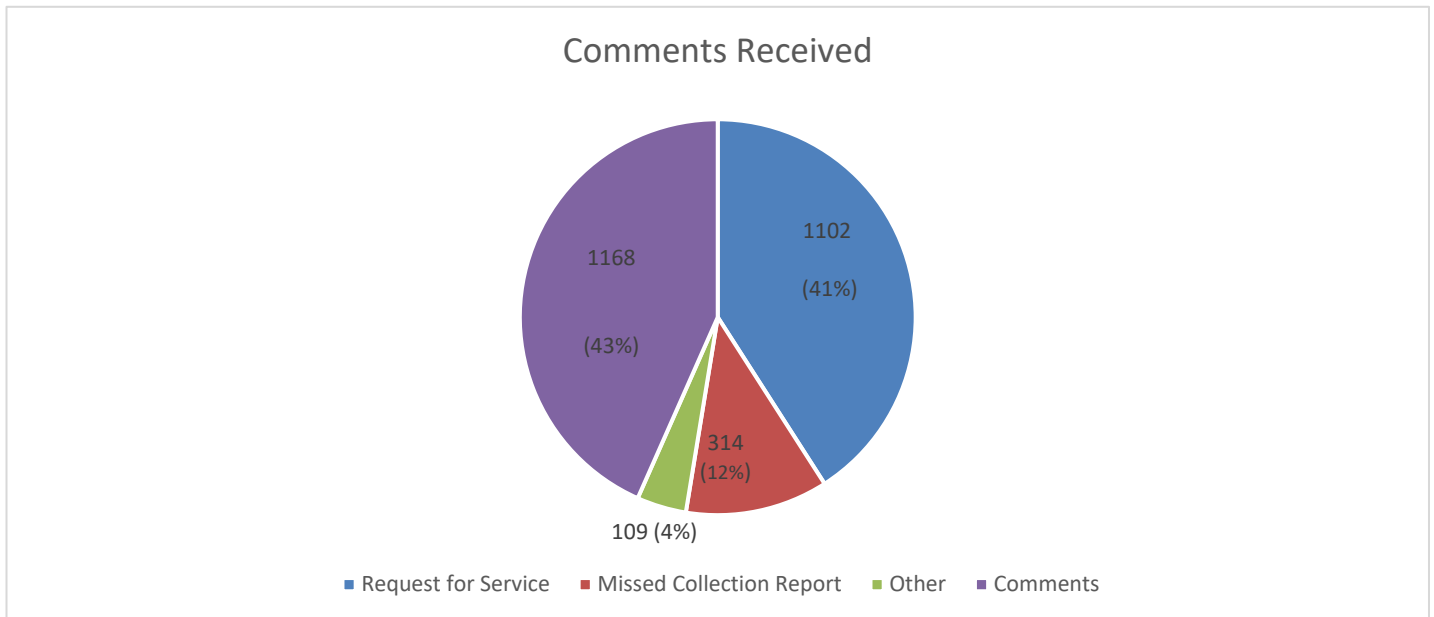
2693 comments were recorded during 2022/23. This is a 63% decrease since 2021/22.

In July 2022 it was identified many service requests were being recorded as comments. We reviewed the customer journey and refined the process. A new form was introduced in November 2022 for the Waste and Refuse team. By adapting the process, it enabled the Contact Centre to direct missed collection reports directly to the Waste and Refuse team.

This resulted in a shorter customer journey and, for reporting purposes, will demonstrate a more accurate assessment of service demand. This form was adopted by Wastesavers in March 2023.

Noted in the graph below 1,416 of the 2693 comments received in 2022/23 were requests for service or missed collections, 53%. This figure will decrease in 2023/24, as we have recently removed the option of submitting service requests via the complaints form so that these are categorised correctly.

109 duplicate comments were received, 4% - shown in graph as other.



## Complaints (Corporate) - Summary

Year	Stage 1 Complaint	Stage 2 Complaint	Stage 2 Complaint %	Ombudsman Complaint	Ombudsman Complaint %
2018/2019	271	28	9.36%	38	14%
2019/2020	354	33	8.53%	31	8.76%
2020/2021	261	39	9.50%	14	7.73%
2021/2022	271	31	11.44%	24	8.85%
2022/2023	341	46	11.88%	47	12.14%

## Complaints (Corporate) - Stage 1 and Stage 2 Split by Quarter

Quarter	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4		Total
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 1	Stage 2	
City Contact Centre	6	0	3	0	7	1	3	1	21
Communications and PR	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Communities First	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Complaints Team	0	0	1	0	3	0	11	1	16
Council Tax	6	1	5	0	6	2	9	1	30
Democratic Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Education Welfare Team	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Electoral Registration	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Grounds Maintenance	4	0	1	1	3	0	3	0	12
Highways	2	0	0	5	6	1	7	4	25
Household Waste Recycling Centre	3	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	7
Housing, Planning and Regeneration	1	2	1	0	9	1	17	4	35
Licensing	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
Non-Domestic Rates (Business Rates)	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Parking and Road Safety	2		1		5	1	0	0	9
Parks and Cemeteries	1	1	1	1	0	1	4	2	11
Planning / Building Control	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	5
Public Protection	0	0	1	0	3	1	3	1	9
Recycling Services	4	0	3	0	35	0	16	0	58
Refuse and Waste	33	0	27	0	24	0	19	1	104
School Transport	2	0	0	0	5	0	1	0	8
Special Educational Needs	0	0	3	1	0	1	0	1	6
Street Cleaning	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	0	5
Street Lighting	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Transport and Roads	3	0	2	0	4	1	3	1	14
Website	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	<b>68</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>387</b>

Statements below from service areas where complaint numbers are larger.



**Refuse, Waste and Recycling** - Newport City Council and Newport Wastesavers collects residual waste, garden waste, 6 separate recycling streams (cans and plastic, paper and card, glass, small electrical items, textiles, food waste) and hygiene waste from over 70,000 households on at least a fortnightly or three weekly schedule and received just 162 total complaints.

Over 40% of complaints received relate to missed collections of waste or recycling containers, followed by a quarter of complaints relating to the untidy return of containers to the kerbside after emptying into the collection vehicle. Complaints regarding litter make up only 1% of complaints received.

In 2023 NCC has reduced the frequency of residual and garden waste collections from every 2 weeks to every 3. Complaints regarding the change in collections policy amounted to 10% of those received.

**City Services** - The severe weather conditions during recent winters and in particular this winter has no doubt taken its toll on the adopted network. Greater than average reports of pothole repairs have been received than previous years and the level of customer complaints continues to increase. The lack of capital investment is a contributing factor on the condition of the adopted network. This has been echoed in both local and national press.

Operatives continue to work in difficult weather conditions to make sure the roads are safe in what has been a challenging year. We continue to work in reducing the pothole backlog.

**Council Tax** – This is one of the Council services that touches every household in the city at some point in the year. Correspondence issued includes the initial Council Tax bill, sent at the beginning of March to every household in Newport. If payments aren't received, then reminders, final reminders and final notices are sent to households. During these times, call wait times would often be lengthy, leading to complaints. In addition to this, call volumes increased due to additional financial assistance the Council was providing to residents in the form of to the cost-of-living payments that were administered on behalf of Welsh Government, leading again to increased demand across the service.

**Housing, planning and regeneration** - Complaints within Housing focused on delays in response times and assessment timescales, as well as homeless people, and those at risk of homelessness, requesting that their cases be prioritised. These complaints reflect the unprecedented housing pressures faced by Newport and councils across the UK. The service recognises the impact that these issues have on people in housing need and are committed to process of Transformation to improve services.

**Contact Centre** - Customer Service complaints during the period 2022/2023 were influenced by a number of factors, including a higher than average attrition rate, permanent reduction in staff numbers and the requirement to move a number of staff to Civic Centre Main Reception, which reopened once the lockdown was lifted. This meant there have been fewer staff on the phonedlines resulting in increasing wait times.

## Complaint Analysis by Ward

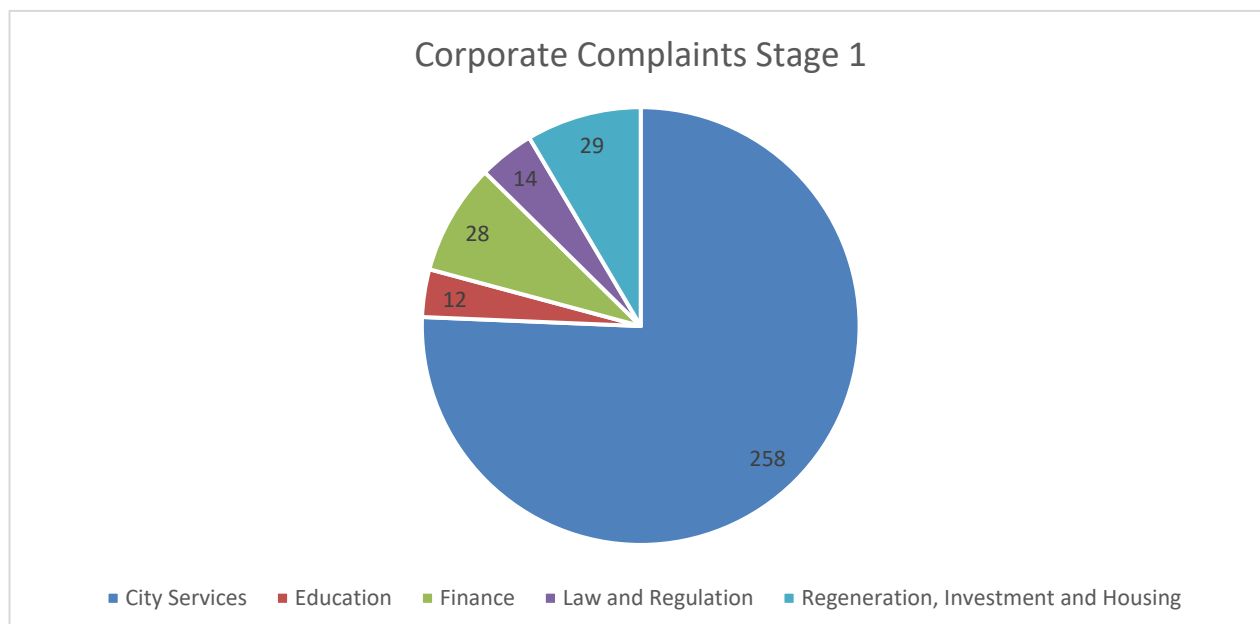
This is the first time we have been able to analyse complaints by ward. This is at high level only at this stage and we plan to do more analysis on data from 2023/24, now we have improved the quality of the underlying data. At high level the range of the number of complaints by ward is from 7 to 59. If we factor in population, we have a range of 1.3 to 6.4 complaints per 1,000 residents.

Ward	Number of complaints	Population	Complaints per 1,000 Residents
Allt-Yr-Yn	59	9,192	6.4
Alway	15	8,830	1.7
Beechwood	15	7,890	1.9
Bettws	23	8,132	2.8
Bishton and Langstone	13	6,253	2.1
Caerleon	17	7,768	2.2
Gaer	14	9,133	1.5
Graig	20	6,274	3.2
Llanwern	14	5,196	2.7
Lliswerry	24	11,911	2.0
Malpas	10	7,746	1.3
Pillgwenlly	12	8,974	1.3
Ringland	14	8,344	1.7
Rogerstone East	9	3,791	2.4
Rogerstone North	7	4,852	1.4
Rogerstone West	10	3,037	3.3
Shaftesbury	23	5,250	4.4
St. Julians	20	8,844	2.3
Stow Hill	14	5,373	2.6
Tredegar Park and Marshfield	37	11,394	3.2
Victoria	13	8,263	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>156,447</b>	<b>2.4</b>

Please note that this is less than all complaints as some complaints were made from addresses outside of Newport City Council's boundary so are not included here.

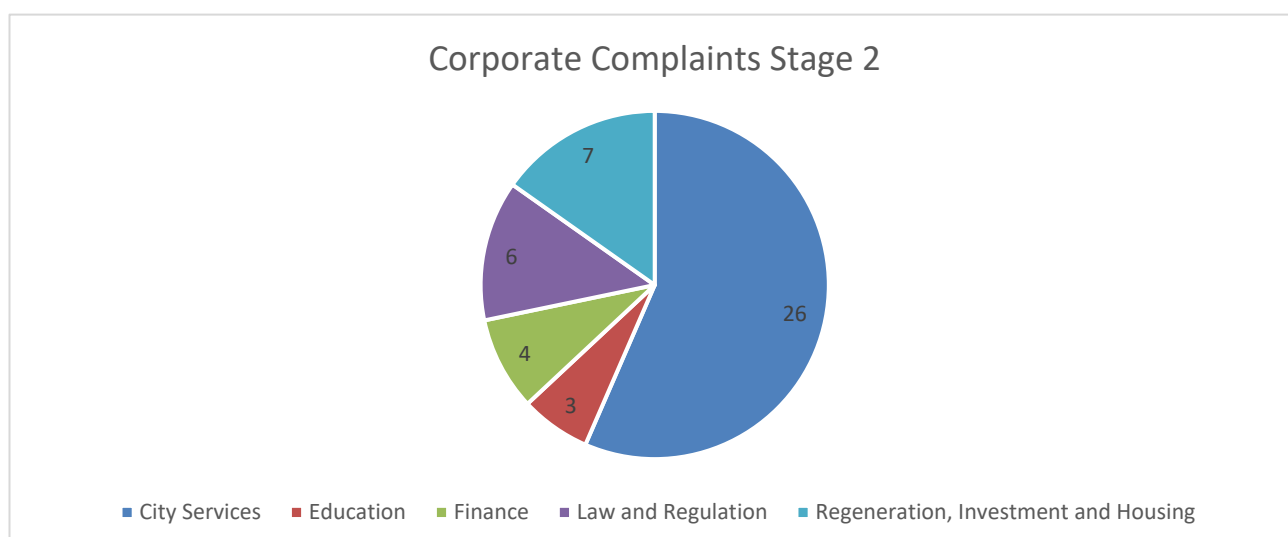
## Complaints (Corporate) - Stage 1

- The breakdown below represents a total of 341 stage one complaints by service area for 2022/23, compared with 271 complaints resolved in 2021/22, 25.8% increase. 88% of corporate complaints were successfully resolved at stage 1.



## Complaints (Corporate) - Stage 2

The breakdown below represents a total of 46 stage 2 complaints received by service area for 2022/2023. Compared with 31 complaints resolved in 2021/22. 48.4% increase



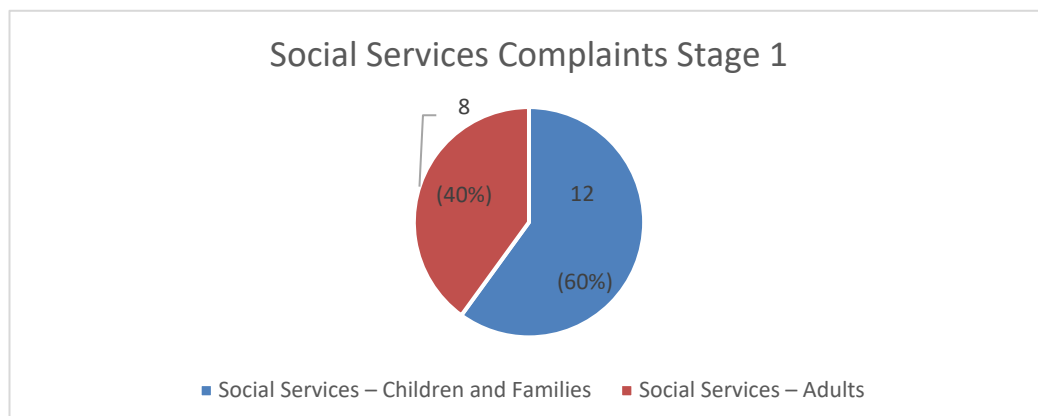
225 Corporate complaints were refused after assessment in line with Customer Feedback Policy, reasons included: -

- Attention of another agency, e.g. Newport City Homes, police
- Dealt with under a separate process - Disciplinary/ HR Processes/ Compensation claim
- Out of timescale, over 6 months

## Complaints (Social Services)

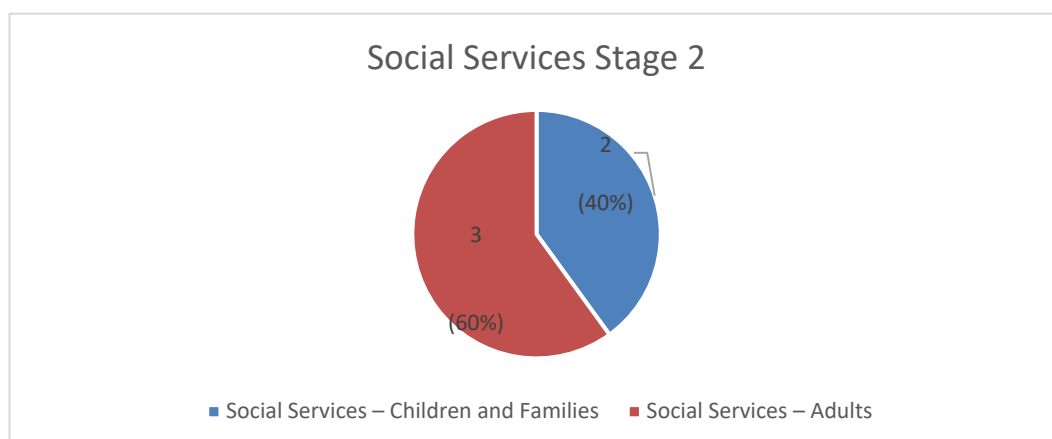
### Complaints (Social Services) - Stage 1

The chart below represents a total of 20 Stage 1 complaints received in 2022/2023 compared with 50 stage 1 complaints resolved in 2021/22, decrease of 60%. The highest number of complaints received involved People with Learning Disabilities Team.



### Complaints (Social Services) - Stage 2 Independent Investigations

There was a total of 5 formal stage 2 Social Services complaints received in 2022/2023, compared with 3 Stage 2 complaints resolved in 2021/22, 67% increase.



48 Social Services complaints were refused after assessment, reasons included: -

- Safeguarding concerns
- Premature
- Legal proceedings underway

# Complaints to Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW)

## Complaints (Corporate) Ombudsman

During 2022/2023, the Ombudsman reviewed 37 corporate complaints, 7 of which were resolved at Early Resolution Stage. The remainder were closed for a variety of reasons including complaints being premature or out of jurisdiction. No Ombudsman complaints were upheld. Further details are in the table below.

PSOW prefer to be able to put things right for a complainant at an early stage. If it appears from their initial review of a complaint that something has gone wrong and that there is an obvious solution, the caseworker will often contact the Council and ask it to carry out one or more actions to resolve the matter. If the Council agrees, then the case will be closed without an investigation. PSOW expects the Council to provide evidence on the actions agreed to resolve the complaint)

To follow is a summary of a few complaints where early intervention measures took place.

- *Newport City Council was asked to apologise to complainant for a delay in responding to a complaint.*
- *Newport City Council were asked to apologise for damage caused to property and issue costs of £750 as financial redress for the avoidable inconvenience caused.*
- *Newport City Council were asked to waiver replacement fees for deed certificate.*
- *There were two instances whereby the PSOW asked Newport City Council to make contact with the complainant and reassess their complaint.*

## Complaints (Social Services) Ombudsman

During 2022/2023, 5 Ombudsman Social Services complaints were made, of which 1 was resolved at Early Resolution stage. The 4 remaining were closed as premature, and for decisions made to not investigate.

Summary of Social Services Complaint Early Intervention measure noted below.

- *Newport City Council was asked to formally investigate complaint and provide detailed information regarding financial charges applied in an educational setting for provision of support services.*

## Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) Annual Letter 2022/23

PSOW intervention rate for 2022/23 for Newport City Council was 17% compared with 11% in 2021/22. Notably, across all statutory bodies in Wales, 1,020 complaints were referred to PSOW regarding local authorities last year - a reduction of 11% compared to the previous year.

The table below represents complaint outcomes made by the PSOW for 2022/23.

Newport City Council Complaint Outcomes PSOW	Number	Percentage
Out of Jurisdiction	5	10%
Premature	19	40%
Other Cases closed after initial consideration	14	29%

Early Resolution/Voluntary settlement	8	17%
Discontinued	1	2%
Other Reports - Not Upheld	1	2%
Other Reports - Upheld	0	0%
Public Interest Reports	0	0%
Special Interest Reports	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>

(Total number received is 48, however the **Out of Jurisdiction and discontinued complaints** are not included therefore the number of PSOW complaints investigated is 42 as detailed below)

The table below includes some measures including comparisons with previous years

Year	New Complaints Received by NCC	Received per 1000 Residents	Cases with PSOW Intervention	% of Interventions
2020/21	31	0.20	5	17%
2021/22	40	0.26	4	11%
2022/23	42	0.26	8	17%

## PSOW Code of Conduct Complaints Regarding Councillors

Code of Conduct complaints regarding City Councillors and Community Councillors are dealt with under a separate ethical standard's regulatory framework. In accordance with Part III of the Local Government Act 2000, all complaints about breaches of the Member Code of Conduct are referred to the Ombudsman to consider whether any breach has been committed and, if so, whether that breach is serious enough to warrant any sanction. Serious breaches are then investigated and reported to either Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales. Standards Committee have the power to suspend a Councillor for up to 6 months and the Adjudication Panel can suspend for up to 1 year or disqualify for up to 5 years.

All Code of Conduct complaints received by the Ombudsman are reported to Standards Committee, on an anonymised and confidential basis, and they are also notified of the reasons why the Ombudsman has decided not to accept or investigate the complaints. Standards Committee also receive a copy of the Ombudsman's Annual letter and they submit an Annual Report to full Council in November, which includes a summary of these complaints. Each quarter all local authorities in Wales report to the Ombudsman. Further details are included within the [PSOW Annual Letter](#).

The Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) continued its work with public bodies in Wales last year, with more than 50 public bodies now operating within their model policy. They have also provided more than 400 training sessions since starting, with local authorities, in September 2020. They continue to publish complaints statistics into their second year, with data now published twice a year. This data allows us to see information with greater context – for example, last year 4% of Newport City Council's complaints were referred to PSOW.

PSOW continue to express that authorities and other organisations should not view complaints as negative. If complaints are too low questions may be asked around whether our processes are clear enough and whether customers are given enough opportunities and access points to raise these concerns. PSOW do not provide benchmarking, however they will support Local Authorities with advice and guidance.

We will continue to engage with the PSOW Complaints Standards work, accessing training for our officers, fully implementing the model policy, and providing complaints data.

## Service Development

The Council is committed to developing the service provided to meet the legislation and to meet the expectations of residents who wish to submit their feedback.

Progress made in 2022/2023:-

- The Customer Feedback Policy: Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy was reviewed, updated and approved by Cabinet. This is aligned to guidance issued by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
- Delivery of online training workshop to over 120 officers. These hour-long sessions included: - Policy overview, outline of the complaints handling process, an opportunity for staff to ask questions and receive guidance, discussion around a complaints case study.
- Induction documentation for new Newport City Council officers now includes details of complaint handling, and an introduction to the processes involved.
- Streamlined processes for residents in submitting requests
- Reduced options available when closing complaints and this has improved the quality of data being extracted.
- Worked with the Strategic Equalities Group which will continue throughout 2023/24 – included optional equalities questions for all residents when submitting feedback
- Supported service areas with streamlining and improving processes to reduce complaints.
- Reviewed our customer journey pathway and made some adjustments which will benefit customers and colleagues when they are engaging with us.

During 202/2024, we will continue to work with service areas and refine our processes with My Newport Team and support colleagues in relevant service areas. The Council will also be commencing work on examining the customer experience and understanding the Council's strengths and weaknesses towards enabling people to complete transactions online, in person and also signposting to the other organisations to access the services they need.

## Lessons Learned

- Working closely with service areas identifying reoccurring issues, themes and making changes to improve.
- Reducing callback requests by encouraging service areas to update customer notes on My Council Service system.
- More service area engagement to increase level of understanding in terms of the Ombudsman's powers and what they are looking to achieve.
- More supplier engagement to increase level of understanding of the Ombudsman. This is a significant piece of work that will be rolling year on year.

## Actions for Improvement

Below outlines the actions that the team will be undertaking in 2023/24 to improve the delivery of the service.

- Further development of My Council Services system to maximise its effectiveness for reporting.
- Continue to rollout training for officers.
- Develop councillor complaint handling awareness session.
- Identify under reporting of complaints and implement procedures to capture and record.
- Work with colleagues in residential settings to align their complaint procedures with the revised Customer Feedback Policy.
- Reviewing Independent Investigators contract documentation with colleagues from the All-Wales Complaints Officers Group.

- Unacceptable Actions by Customer Policy review.
- Work with Customer experience to determine what lessons can be learned.