

Cardiff Council

Annual Complaints & Compliments Report 2020/21



1. Reason for this report

To report to the Cabinet on the operation of the corporate complaints procedure between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021. The statistics for corporate complaints are set out by service area.

A complaint is defined within the Council as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of action by the Council, or its staff, affecting an individual customer or group of customers.”

Complaints recorded under the corporate complaints procedure do not include ‘first time’ representations which are effectively requests for a service and dealt with as such. A new report of a pothole or a missed bin for example, would not be registered as a complaint, but as a request for service. Of course, in the event that we failed to respond to the ‘request’ appropriately, then that may generate a complaint.

The number of compliments received and recorded during 2020/21 is also set out in this report. Many people get in touch with a compliment when the information or support they have received has exceeded their expectations. We like to recognise compliments alongside any complaints. It is good for us to say ‘thank you’ to our teams and staff too.



2. Our complaints procedure

The Council's complaints procedure reflects guidance given in the Welsh Government Model Policy and Guidance Paper for Handling Complaints. This was further supported by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Complaints, comments and compliments can be made face-to-face or by telephone, email, letter or by using the online form found on the Council's website.



Complaint received. A complaint can be registered via any Council venue and once received, should be forwarded to the Service Area Complaints Manager. Every Council service area has a lead officer for complaints. The Complaints Manager will ensure complaints are acknowledged and recorded and facilitate the investigation of the complaint in accordance with the corporate complaints procedure.

Acknowledgment. The Complaints Managers will aim to acknowledge complaints within 5 working days. At this stage, we can let the customer know who is dealing with their complaint and our understanding of what the customer's complaint entails. We can also let the customer know that a full response will follow within 20 working days of our receipt of the complaint.

Full response. At the end of an investigation, a response should be produced depending on how a customer has indicated they prefer to be contacted. The response should include the outcome of the investigation as well as any necessary action taken for service improvement. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales states that the aim of every formal investigation should be to "investigate once, investigate well". Advice will also be included on the full response on what the complainant should do if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome – to contact the Ombudsman.

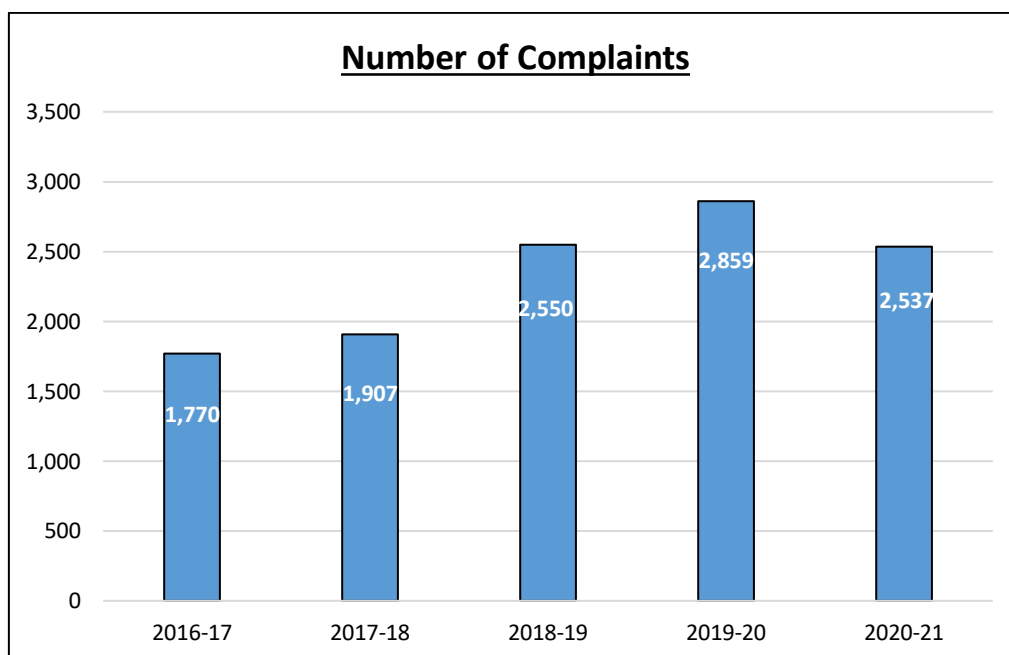
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. Complaints that progress to the Ombudsman will have been thoroughly investigated by the service area. If a complainant remains dissatisfied, it is for the Ombudsman to assess whether there is any evidence of service failure or maladministration not identified by the Council.



3. Complaints for Cardiff Council in 2020-21

A total of **2,537** complaints were recorded during 2020/21. This is an **11.2%** decrease from the previous year, when 2,859 complaints were recorded.

Year	Number of complaints
2020-21	2,537
2019-20	2,859
2018-19	2,550
2017-18	1,907
2016-17	1,770



Complaints received per 1,000 of population			
	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Cardiff population (estimate)	362,756	366,903	369,202
Total number complaints received	2,550	2,859	2,537
Number of complaints received per 1,000	7.0	7.8	6.9

The population of Cardiff is estimated at 369,202. In 2020/21, Cardiff Council handled 2,537 complaints from customers, meaning that an average of 6.9 complaints were received per 1000 residents.



4. Complaints breakdown for Cardiff Council

A total of 2,537 complaints were recorded during 2020/21. This is an 11.2% decrease from the previous year, when 2,859 complaints were recorded.

A breakdown of the number of complaints received by service area can be found below.

Service Area	Number of complaints 2019/20	Number of complaints 2020/21
Waste	1256	1479
Housing	543	433
Parks & Harbour Authority	76	129
Traffic & Transportation	130	105
Finance	163	103
Customer & Digital Services	104	66
Neighbourhood Services	110	60
Customer & Digital Services	104	66
Highways Maintenance	63	42
Economic Development	50	25
Education	26	39
Bereavement & Registration	23	25
Planning	20	23
HR	2	6
Governance & Legal Services	15	2
Arts and Theatres	294	0*
Total	2859	2537

*Our Arts and Theatre venues (St David's Hall, New Theatre) have been closed to the public during 2020/21 while they adhere to the advice provided by the UK Government. This has had a notable impact on the number of complaints received.

NB Complaints for Social Services are recorded under their statutory complaints procedure rather than the corporate complaints procedure. Information on this can be found as an appendix at the end of this report.

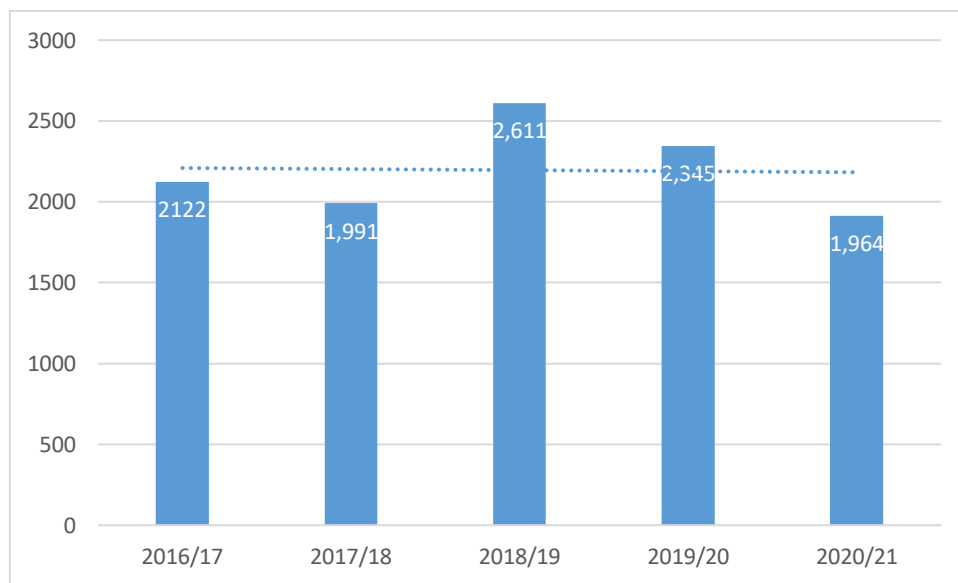
Service Area	Number of complaints 2019/20	Number of complaints 2020/21
Adult Services	64	64
Childrens Services	146	140



5. Compliments for Cardiff Council in 2020-21

A total of 1,964 compliments were recorded during 2020/21. This is an 16.2% decrease from the previous year, when 2,345 compliments were recorded.

Year	Number of compliments
2020/21	1,964
2019-20	2,345
2018-19	2,611
2017-18	1,991
2016-17	2,122



Compliments received per 1,000 of population

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Cardiff population (estimate)	362,756	366,903	369,202
Total number compliments received	2,611	2,345	1,964
Number of complaints received per 1,000	7.2	6.4	5.3

The population of Cardiff is estimated at 369,202. Cardiff Council handled 1912 compliments from customers, meaning that an average of 5.2 compliments were received per 1000 residents.



6. Compliments breakdown for Cardiff Council

As an organisation, we receive many positive comments about our staff and the services we provide. Knowing where things are working well and are appreciated is as important to capture as knowing where things are perhaps not working. We therefore keep a record of the compliments we receive as well as the complaints. Good practice and learning can then be circulated across the Council.

A breakdown of the number of compliments received by service area can be found below. We have also provided examples of the types of compliments received over the following pages.

Service Area	Number of compliments 2019/20	Number of compliments 2020/21
Housing	613	703
Waste Collections	137	394
Customer & Digital Services	465	274
Economic Development, Parks & Harbour Authority	216	213
Neighbourhood Services	48	138
Planning, Transport & Environment	87	117
Bereavement & Registration Services	312	72
PPE	N/A	49
Track, Trace & Protect	N/A	3
Finance	11	1
Arts & Theatres	449	0*
Education & Lifelong Learning	3	0
Governance & Legal Services	4	0
Total	2,345	1,964

*Our Arts and Theatre venues (St Davids Hall, New Theatre) have been closed to the public during 2020/21 while they adhere to the advice provided by the UK Government. This has had a notable impact on the number of compliments received.

NB Similar to complaints, compliments for Social Services are recorded under their statutory procedure rather than the corporate complaints procedure. Information on this can be found as an appendix at the end of this report.

Service Area	Number of compliments 2019/20	Number of compliments 2020/21
Adult Services	48	44
Childrens Services	91	178



During 2020/21, 1,964 compliments were recorded; a selection of those compliments is set out below.

Bereavement Services

“Yesterday, with you, at the crematorium, was a peaceful, dignified & heartfelt send off for my wee sister & on behalf of (the family), I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for helping to make one of the hardest days of my life, a pleasant, dignified & truly “special” one!”

Connect to Cardiff

“Hello Cardiff Council, I just want to say thank you for doing a fantastic job at keeping people informed and responding to niggling enquiries like my own (where are the bags!) in such a timely manner. It's not an easy job at this time but your updates and commitment to continuing your service haven't gone unnoticed. I hope you receive more positive feedback. We're very lucky to have a council that has been so accommodating during these, ugh, dare I say it "unprecedented times". We're all struggling but I take my hat off to your team who have kept it together and delivered exceptional service. Well done you. Keep up the good fight.”

Finance – Council Tax

“I made an online payment for my council tax and then filled out the form to have my remaining instalments. I completed the form at about 8 am Monday morning. Within a few hours, I had someone call me to explain what my new payments would be and generate a new bill. He was friendly, helpful and I was just so surprised to get a call so quickly. I'm really grateful for how the council have handled this, especially at a time where I am sure you're staff are very stretched and working in some difficult circumstances. Thank you :)”

Housing – Caretaking Services

“Since opening the rough sleepers' provision at The Parade, they have worked tirelessly and have gone well above and beyond what could be reasonably expected of them. They have kept the hostel looking immaculate, and have maintained excellent professional boundaries with our customers, something that can be difficult to manage in a small project with limited staff areas. They have sought out duties that are outside of their job description to ensure that our service really looks the part, and do so every day if there is time. Examples of this are painting the façade of the hostel that was previously quite scruffy, clearing out the drainage system outside the hostel to prevent flooding, and helping to attach items to the wall to allow for storage etc. I could write a very long list! They have worked flat out, every day, to the moment they go home, and we would've really struggled to have hit our high standards so quickly without their efforts.”



Housing – Housing Options

“We’ve been here over a year now! We are so so happy! I just wanted to say how grateful we are for all your help & guidance. I have seen such a massive improvement in my eldest & the fact that she feels so at home & safe has had a massive impact on that!”

Housing – ILS

“Invaluable input. Knowledge & understanding from carer/client perspective has been insightful. Your presentation was of such high standard we would like to use it with other Local authorities/OT departments to demonstrate accessibility.”

Libraries

“I’ve said it before, but (if you can’t say it at Christmas, when can you?!) @Radyr_Library have been amazing throughout the pandemic! Diolch yn fawr for keeping my children’s imagination & love for books alive! Merry Christmas to all of you!”

Environmental Enforcement

“I wanted to say my own thanks to (council staff) for phoning me today to update me about the fly tipping by the Scout Hall off Ferry Rd. It sounds like there is enough evidence to take action, which is great. I’d also like to pass on my thanks to our local Enforcement Officer, for all the work he’s doing to stop fly tipping by the bins in Stockland Street Community Planter and on the bus stop near my house on Clive St. He’s phoned me a few times to give me updates on all the work he’s doing to catch those responsible and stop it happening. It’s great that the Council team are so conscientious and committed.”

Parks

“I, like my fellow Heath residents fully appreciate this wonderful park (especially during this COVID-19 Period) and thank all the members of Parks department for all that they do in maintaining not only Heath Park but all our splendid Parks and Gardens throughout the city. It is very much appreciated”.

Planning, Transport & Environment

“Since lockdown, I’ve used my bike some days to get to work (due to reduced public transport services) and would like to thank you for work done/being done on cycle routes. The cycle route from the Taff trail into Cardiff behind Talybont/beside Blackweir is good, and even better today for someone having been out sweeping away the leaves. In addition, I noticed that the Taff trail path has been widened slightly (holes filled in) near the Western Avenue underpass. So, thank you - these small changes (and keeping the routes clear of debris) are appreciated.”



PPE

“We would like to thank the Council for all the PPE support we have been receiving-masks, aprons and visors. You have been most reactive and prompt in helping us to keep both our carers and clients safe.”

“Well done to the whole team!...It’s an unseen job but we’ll never know just how many lives the bits of PPE and sanitiser etc have saved!”

“Please can I take this opportunity, on behalf of all my staff, to thank your whole team for your hard work this year. You've kept us so well stocked up, as well as informed, and you've been so helpful whenever there's a slight problem. The drivers are always really jolly as well. It might be a behind-the-scenes task, but it's definitely been a success and so important to everyone's safety and wellbeing. Thanks - and I hope you all get some rest over the summer.”

Rent Smart Wales

“Mr. advised that he has always had good service from the contact centre in every call he has made, and we are the best, most polite contact centre he has ever dealt with.”

Waste Collections

“This morning, my cycling companion was involved in a fall from his bike close to busy traffic lights on Lansdowne Road, Cardiff. Shortly after, two Council employees passed in their pick up truck. They slowed down, offered help, then joined us, offered First Aid and rang 999. Their prompt help meant that I could focus on taking care of my friend. Shortly afterwards, two WPCs on patrol arrived and so the Council employees were able to get on with sorting the bins on their scheduled round. My cycling companion was taken to UHW by the police officers and was discharged later with stitches but no serious injuries. It is impossible to underestimate the positive impact they had on what could have been a very nasty situation and they couldn't have represented their team and the Council better. We did thank them at the time but we hope that you will be able to pass on our gratitude more formally.”

Waste – Street Cleansing

“Resident emailed to say a quick thank you to 2 absolute gents *(council officers) who knocked his door with a nice surprise. They'd been emptying the street bins ... and had noticed a pile of cards among the rubbish. They looked to see if they were anything important. The cards belonged to his partner - they were in her purse, which was stolen recently. One of the cards was her driving licence. (Council officers) were so polite and really helpful, and they said they'd keep an eye out for the purse when they emptied the van. They didn't hold much hope of it turning up, but the offer was really appreciated. His partner is really grateful, too, and can't believe they found these cards, including quite a few discount and membership cards. Once again, massive thanks to these guys - they are a good reflection of the council.”



7. Complaints to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 2020/21

A key indicator of how satisfied complainants are with the standard of investigation and the fairness of outcomes is the number of complainants that escalate their complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

The Ombudsman closed **100** cases involving Cardiff Council compared to 120 cases in 2019-20. The Ombudsman received 25 premature complaints (defined as when the Council has not had a reasonable opportunity to deal with the complaint itself).

A further 33 cases were declined because the Ombudsman was satisfied with action proposed or taken by the Council. 23 cases were closed by voluntary settlements during 2020/21. These are redress proposals (an apology / change of process / time and trouble payment) which enable cases to be closed without the need for full investigation. Of the 100 cases, 3 proceeded to investigation during 2020-21, all of which were upheld.

The Ombudsman closed the cases for the following reasons:

	2019-20	2020-21
Complainants had not exhausted the Council's complaints process - they were referred back to the Council	40	25
Cases closed by the Ombudsman after initial consideration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e.g. no evidence of maladministration or service failure • no evidence of hardship or injustice suffered by the complainant • little further would be achieved by the Ombudsman pursuing the matter 	44	33
Cases declined because Ombudsman was satisfied with action proposed or taken by Council (Quick-Fix / Voluntary Settlement)	21	23
Cases out of Ombudsman's jurisdiction	11	16
Cases withdrawn by complainant	0	0
Complaint led to an Ombudsman's report – complaint upheld	0	3
Complaint led to an Ombudsman's report – complaint not upheld	4	0
Total	120	100



Ombudsman Complaints - a yearly comparison

The table below shows the total number of complaints made to the Ombudsman regarding Cardiff Council over the last five years.

Year	
2020-21	100
2019-20	120
2018-19	110
2017-18	123
2016-17	133

Investigations leading to reports

The Ombudsman issues a report if he finds that a complainant has suffered hardship or injustice through the Council's maladministration or service failure.

Under the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005, the Ombudsman can issue one of two types of report following an investigation into a complaint by a member of the public: Section 16 and Section 21.

Section 16 Report

The first type of report is known as a Section 16 report. This is issued when the Ombudsman believes that the investigation report contains matters of public interest. The Council is then obliged to publicise the report at its own expense. For the ninth consecutive year, the Ombudsman issued 0 Section 16 reports against Cardiff Council.

Section 21 Report

The Ombudsman can issue a Section 21 report if the Council agrees to implement any recommendations he has made and if he is satisfied that the case does not raise matters of public interest. The Ombudsman issued 3 Section 21 reports during 2020-21, all of which were upheld.



8. Learning from complaints

Complaints provide valuable feedback and are viewed by our staff as a positive opportunity to learn from experiences in order to drive continual organisational improvement and prevent similar things happening again.

Our complaints handling procedure helps us to address a customer’s dissatisfaction and may also prevent the same problems that led to the complaint from arising again. For our staff, complaints provide a first-hand account of the customer’s views and experience, and resolving complaints early saves resources and creates better customer relations.

Every Council Service Area has a lead officer for complaints and Corporate Complaints Workshops have been set up to look at common issues relating to complaints handling, including standardising responses to customers, collecting customer views and developing templates.

Some of the actions we take in response to complaints might appear to be small but they can make a big difference. The following are examples - big and small - of what we have done as a result of learning from complaints

Area	Complaints analysis	Service improvement
Bereavement Services	Following the increased use of the webcast service, some negative comments were received regarding the quality and positioning of the system.	As the system had not been overly used previously, the audio visual company were called to site and immediate remedial works undertaken which has seen these complaints cease.
Economic Development	The complainant was disappointed with the lack of public toilets open within the City Centre in January 2021.	An apology was given to the complainant and they were informed that the Council would update the website to include locations of public toilets currently open within the City Centre. This would help to make the public aware of the limitations of opening toilets during Covid, before venturing into the Centre.
Housing –	The complainant was disappointed with the garden in their new property, having only seen a glimpse of the garden, as they viewed the property over video, due to Covid.	The Voids Manager agreed that potential tenants should be able to view gardens fully, as part of the viewing video, so took measures to ensure that the garden was shown fully for all future video viewings.



<p>Planning, Transport & Environment</p>	<p>It had been standard practice for Pay & Display refunds to be provided via cheque, which could be time consuming and frustrating for the person who had requested the refund. This could at times lead to a formal complaint being lodged.</p>	<p>This issue has now been resolved with new software being in place and refunds being provided electronically where applicable.</p>
<p>Revenues</p>	<p>A customer was not happy at being chased for payment of Council Tax, when she was a full time student and therefore assumed she was exempt from payment. A Class N Student Exemption is only applicable when a property is wholly occupied by full time students; in some cases, it is possible for a full time student to be liable for Council Tax. Council Tax Student Certificates are sometimes incorrectly referred to as Council Tax Exemption Certificates.</p>	<p>A reminder was issued to Council Tax and Connect to Cardiff staff that they should only be referred to as Council Tax Student Certificates. Any references to Council Tax 'Exemption' Certificates were removed from the Council's website.</p>
<p>Revenues</p>	<p>A customer received an annual bill in the name of her late mother in the week of her funeral service, which caused the family distress. This was a system issue caused by the timing of annual bills which meant only in year bills were suppressed.</p>	<p>This issue was raised with the Council tax manager to look into the small window when this can happen and address going forward.</p>
<p>Waste</p>	<p>There have been an increase in complaints during 2020/21 and we recognise that it is essential that moving forward we reduce missed collections in order to address this.</p>	<p>Waste Collections have prioritised steps to address this matter - more information on this can be found on page 15.</p>



9. Complaints by area

Waste Collections

Service Area	2019/20	2020/21
Waste Collections	1,256	1,479
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	988 (78.66%)	921 (62.27%)

2020-21 has been an unprecedented year with the COVID-19 pandemic having a significant impact on the waste collection service. A number of staff were affected by the need to shield during the peak times of the pandemic; and significant numbers were affected by the need to isolate due to presenting symptoms of the virus, having contact with positive cases, or being positive themselves.

The above factors have led to an impact on collections in the following areas:

- Irregular crews on rounds to cover those that were off due to the above.
- Delays in being able to recruit and train up agency staff to increase numbers to cover shortages.

In the first quarter of 2020/21, garden waste collections were suspended. This meant a greater availability of staff to cover absences. In July, compost collections were re-introduced through to the start of November and an increase in complaints during these months mirror this. From November to January, complaints dropped again in line with the suspension of garden waste collections.

On week commencing 22nd February 2021, a new way of working was introduced with collections now taking place across 4 days on a single shift between 6am and 3:45pm. The service had anticipated an increase in complaints during this period as this change 'bedded in' and crews became familiar with their new rounds.

When considered relative to the number of waste collections that are carried out across the City every year (in excess of 25 million), maintaining services during a global pandemic, and introducing a new way of working, the number of complaints received is considered to be extremely low.

Going forward, it is hoped the following priorities will assist in reducing missed collections, and therefore the number of complaints received:

- To continue the rolling replacement of our vehicle fleet with access to newer and more reliable vehicles.
- To maintain the distribution of clear and concise information to residents in relation to any disruption or change to service.
- To utilise our back office waste management technology 'Collective' to effectively manage collection schedules. This in turn will provide up to date real-time information to residents via the App and Web on the status of their waste collections.



Planning, Transport & Environment

Service Area	2019/20	2020/21
Highway Maintenance	63	42
Planning (including Building Control)	20	23
Traffic & Transportation	130	105
Total	213	170
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	188 (88.26%)	151 (88.82%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	167 (78.4%)	134 (78.82%)

The number of complaints received during 2020/21 has been greatly impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic and the subsequent restrictions of movement, which has resulted in their being a drop in formal complaints received by 43 (25.29%)

Highway Maintenance received **42** complaints for 2020/21. This is a decrease of 21 when compared to the previous year when 63 complaints were recorded.

The highest number of complaints related to Maintenance Operations where 16 complaints were received for 2020/21 compared with 14 in the previous year. The largest number of complaints were concerning blocked drains (9). It should be noted that once a blocked drained has been reported, a drainage crew will attend the location and cleanse/flush the drain accordingly. Also, when there are torrential downpours, the cause of flooding can sometimes be attributed to the drain reaching its capacity and not any actual blockages to the drain.

The second highest number of complaints received related to Potholes and Paving (12 complaints). This is a significant decrease of 17 on the previous year when 29 complaints were received, and can be attributed in part to the restrictions in place. The majority of complaints related to the time taken to repair a pothole, although it should be appreciated that due to the unique circumstances this year, it has not always been possible to repair highway defects in the usual timely manner.

Traffic & Transportation received **105** complaints for 2020/21, which is a decrease of 25 from the total (130) for 2019/20.

The highest number of complaints related to Covid-19 Social Distancing / Recovery measures where 20 complaints were recorded. The main reason for the complaints were due to the loss of parking spaces / road diversions that resulted from the social distancing measures put in place.

Civil Parking Enforcement received 10 complaints compared to 18 the year before. The fall in complaints can also be attributed to the restrictions that have been in place for certain periods of 2020/21, and also because motorists are now more aware of the increased enforcement of moving traffic offences such as yellow box



junctions and also bus lanes, and have started to alter their driving habits accordingly. Training is also provided to CPE Officers to deal with difficult situations.

Road Safety Schemes have seen a slight decrease in complaints during 2019/20, with 11 complaints received compared to 14 for the year before. Although these comments are logged as complaints, essentially the information is classed as feedback to the scheme and included as part of the post-scheme monitoring process. These comments are a valuable aid when assessing if any adjustments are required to a scheme.

The **Planning Service** received **23** complaints in total for 2019/20. This is a slight increase of 3 on the previous year where 20 complaints were recorded. These complaints covered a range of issues relating to planning applications, the planning consultation process, planning decisions and compliance with Building Regulations. This figure is small considering that Development Management determines approximately 3,000 planning applications per year. Many of these applications will require negotiating with multiple parties to discuss contentious issues and securing decisions using either Delegated Powers or by reporting through the Planning Committee. Planners also investigated approximately 501 Enforcement Cases where planning permission had not been granted, developments had not complied with permissions granted, and unauthorised and alleged unauthorised developments had been undertaken.

Bereavement & Registration

Service Area	2019/20	2020/21
Bereavement & Registration	18	25
Cardiff Dogs Home	5	0
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	23 (100%)	25 (100%)

Bereavement and Registration Services actively encourages the bereaved and all Registration Service users to contact them should they experience any issues with any burial, cremation, marriage or registration service as these are such significant events where there can be no errors.

Complaints are received by email, via C2C, in writing and also via Bereavement Services' reception area where service monitor forms are completed. All complaints are recorded on a database and dealt with as soon as possible and always within the timescale. Service Provision Questionnaires are sent to all those who use Bereavement and Registration Services which provides an additional avenue for people to advise us of any issues with the services they have received.

It is important to note that due to the high number of visitors to the service – with over 4,000 funeral services per annum, approximately 500,000 visitors to our sites, 9,000



registrations for births and deaths, and 1,500 marriages – the complaints are very minimal. Additionally Citizenship Ceremonies are also organised by the Register Office.

Bereavement and Registration Services is a 'right first time' service in which our customers, the bereaved, or those carrying out life changing events are our ultimate priority. Customer requests and comments via service monitor forms and questionnaires are scrutinised and service standards have been developed to inform the public. From these standards, monthly performance data is monitored to ensure that we are meeting our commitments to Cardiff's citizens. Annually our level of customer satisfaction averages 99%.

Bereavement Services' complaints reported would equate to under 0.01% of all visitors and service users to our offices and sites. Visitors often come to us in quite a vulnerable state and at differing points in their grieving process. This can mean that small issues may become of increased importance to them and we actively encourage families to communicate their needs with Bereavement Services via service monitor forms. These are then monitored via our monthly statistics and at operational meetings. Trends in service requirements are then considered at this point as well. Where an error has occurred we will also proactively apologise in writing to the family concerned to try and stop an issue escalating.

Registration Services is also an area in which our citizens are undertaking life changing events and as such we have to respond to their needs with sensitivity and understanding. We also register deaths at University Hospital of Wales and work with the team there to ensure that any issues are dealt with in a timely manner. Again, questionnaires are sent out to all service users to proactively seek their comments. All life events can prove challenging for those undertaking the registration of a death or birth or arranging a marriage.

Nearly all of the positive comments and feedback concerning the services received at the Register Office are based around ceremonies. These can be ceremonies at Approved Venues, Register Office ceremonies and Citizenship ceremonies. Here the comments are all praising the staff; their knowledge and experience and the way that those interacting with the service are put at ease especially at such life changing moments. The work of the staff and their understanding make these days truly special and memorable. Similarly positive feedback concerning public interactions with staff is also apparent in Bereavement Services where staff often go the extra mile to ensure that a funeral or service that is delivered is done so in a sympathetic and understanding way.

Cardiff Dogs Home:

There were **no** recorded complaints for Cardiff Dogs Home which again is a front line service.

Covid-19 context:

This year has been particularly challenging for all of these vital front line services, which have remained open and operational throughout the pandemic. Bereavement



and Registration Services have had to react with speed to the various changes in legislation during the pandemic and to how they are able to provide such vital front line services. Within the figures, for context, there have been a small number of complaints in response to the pandemic changes and all of these have been discounted as unjustified as they are out of the control of the service areas to change. For example, the registration of deaths is currently being carried out over the telephone and various services such as weddings, and the registration of births were suspended for some time leading to an initial backlog of 2500 birth registrations.

There has been an immeasurable impact upon the services delivered; from the ceasing of all non-essential services to the delivery of 24 hour working at the crematorium. Additional staff were redeployed to the section in order to manage the gates and access to the sites and then to manage social distancing in the car parks. Two additional staff were redeployed to the administration office and a number of staff were available to assist our grave digging staff at the various operational cemetery sites. At the crematorium staff were redeployed to provide resilience in the chapels and also the crematory. Due to the increased need to provide funeral services (an increase of 675 funeral services), funeral times were shortened from 45 minutes to 30 minutes. With reduced numbers of mourners allowed to attend funerals there has been an exponential increase in the numbers of families choosing to have the funeral service webcast. When restrictions have allowed we have facilitated families to attend our cemeteries. Procedures have been put in place to ensure that additional services, such as the scattering of cremated remains and burial of cremated remains could occur.

Education & Lifelong Learning

Service Area	2019/20	2020/21
Education	27	39
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	20 (74.1%)	35 (89.7%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	13 (48.2%)	25 (71.4%)

The **Education & Lifelong Learning** Directorate received **39** formal complaints in 2020/2021, an increase from the 27 recorded in 2019/20, but still fewer than the 44 recorded in 2018/19.

The increase in complaints is largely down to differences in how complaints are logged within Education. Although school complaints have to be investigated under school complaints procedures (see note below), in some cases it's not initially clear whether the complaint would have any part that the local authority would need to investigate. In order to ensure that complaints are tracked, complaints were logged and were later closed when it was clear that they needed to be made to the appropriate school for investigation.



Of the 39 complaints received, 35 of the complaints were acknowledged within five working days. This is an improvement on the previous year.

The Directorate responded in full to 71.4% of the complaints received within 20 days of receipt, which is a marked improvement on the previous year. A further 5 complaints (12.8%) were replied to less than a week past their initial due date.

Some complaints received were complex and required further liaison with schools and Chairs of Governors, which caused a delay in some cases. We will aim to improve the number of responses sent to expected timescales this year.

The most common reason for complaining was in relation to Schools, which made up 38.5% of all complaints received. Of internal services, the most common area for complaint was Admissions, which received 23.1% of complaints received (5 for a delay in admissions and the remaining 4 for families not being offered the school of their choice), followed by 15.4% for Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision and support. 12.8% of complaints received were in relation to Covid (places in hub provisions, Free School Meal vouchers) which we would not have received in a normal year.

We will continue to improve the management of complaints over the next year to support good customer service in the Directorate. This includes systematic review at Education Management Team to ensure that timescales are met. We will consider complaints alongside correspondence and freedom of information requests to identify areas of improvement for Education.

It is important to note that under Section 29(1) of the Education Act 2002, governing bodies of all maintained schools are required to establish procedures for dealing with complaints relating to the school or to the provision of facilities or services. The Local Authority does not have a role in investigating or resolving complaints about schools. The Welsh Government has issued guidance to support schools in dealing with complaints entitled Complaints Procedures for School Governing Bodies in Wales (Welsh Government circular no 011/2012). Within the guidance, it is the responsibility of the Local Authority to satisfy itself that all schools it maintains have adequate complaints procedures in place and that these are published. A governing body complaints procedure may, with the agreement of the local authority, include a stage for the local authority to consider the complaint. However, the statutory responsibility for dealing with a complaint remains with the governing body.

Economic Development

Service Area	2019/20	2020/21
Economic Development	50	25
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	50 (100%)	25 (100%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	49 (98%)	21 (84%)



Parks & Harbour Authority	76	129
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	74 (97.3%)	126 (97.67%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	70 (92.1%)	94 (72.86%)

During 2020/21 Economic Development received **154** complaints which comprise of **2** for City Centre Management, **4** for Strategic Estates, **2** for Venues and Tourism (this includes Cardiff Castle, the Events team, Cardiff Caravan Park and the Norwegian Church), **8** for Economic Development, **3** for Major Events, **6** for Property Services (previously Facilities Management) and **129** for Parks.

We have had an increase in complaints for Parks during the year, as during lockdown many people were using their local parks and green areas for their daily exercise. However, there has been a decrease in complaints for Economic Development, as due to Covid, there were no events run in Cardiff during the summer months; usually, complaints are received about road closures due to the events.

Environmental Enforcement

Service Area	2019/20	2020/21
Environmental Enforcement	110	60
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	91 (82.73%)	44 (73.33%)

During the pandemic, essential services for environmental enforcement were prioritised in line with the Business Continuity Plan from April to June. These priorities included removal of fly tipping, and supporting waste collections services for excess waste presentation. From June, all environmental enforcement work resumed.

Complaints, reports via the app and requests for service continued to be managed during this time and clear communication on waste collection services was widely promoted.

We are pleased to note that, during this time, the number of complaints for Environmental Enforcement significantly reduced with a decrease of 45.5% compared with 2019/20. Proactive working and essential service activity has shown a reduction in complaints. The App and reporting systems in place to support citizens of Cardiff has enabled the public to report matters in a more effective manner and reduce the volumes of complaints for service.



Performance monitoring is captured in key performance indicators and dashboards for activity in areas of Cardiff, which is monitored on a monthly basis. This assists in resource requirements in areas and identifying hotspots.

Arts & Theatres

Service Area	2019/20	2020/21
Arts & Theatres	294	0
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	294 (100%)	0
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	294 (100%)	0

Arts and Theatres contains two of the city’s biggest arts venues, St David’s Hall and the New Theatre. As both venues have been closed due to Covid since mid-March 2020, no complaints have been received for the period April 2020 – March 2021. Staff have endeavoured to do everything possible to reschedule shows so that our customers can enjoy the diverse entertainment that they have booked tickets for.

Resources

Service Area	2019/20	2020/21
Revenues	163	103
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	132 (80%)	80 (78%)

During the financial year 2020/21, there was a 37% decrease in complaints received by the Revenues Complaints Department. The majority of this can be attributed to Covid-19, where recovery action was paused and there was more goodwill towards local authorities who continued to provide essential services throughout the pandemic.

There has been a slight decrease in the amount of complaints acknowledged and responded to within corporate timescales. At the beginning of the pandemic, available resources were targeted towards achieving the Council’s key priorities and this has affected the figures accordingly. The Quality/Training Department consists of 2 FTE posts, one member left his post at the end of the 2019/20 financial year and recruitment has been on hold since due to the problems associated with the pandemic and the resulting reduction in complaints received.



The amount of complaints received has increased significantly since January 2021, with the remaining post holder being supported by management in recording and responding to complaints. It is hoped that with the vacant post being filled and improved working practices, the figures should improve significantly going forward.

Customer & Digital Services

Service Area	2018/19	2019/20
Customer & Digital Services	104	66
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	100%	100%

Customer & Digital Services includes a number of key frontline services including Connect to Cardiff and Rent Smart Wales. **Connect To Cardiff (C2C)** has received 24 complaints which is a decrease of 29% compared to the 34 received last year.

Of the 24 complaints received, 13 were not upheld and 2 partially upheld, leaving 9 that were considered as having genuine grounds for complaint. Following investigation of each upheld complaint, full feedback and (where necessary) refresher training was carried out to enhance the services we provide. C2C are constantly striving to provide a fully rounded customer journey for every customer whether it be via the telephone or our multiple digital channels.

We work closely with our Stats and Support Team to analyse performance, such as the time a customer waits. This ability allows us to 'drill down' right to the heart of our customer journey and understand any points of failure and/or improvement opportunities without the need to rely on customer/staff accounts in order to inform a decision.

Customer Service Training was launched in 2019 and re-started in August 2020 after a short break due to the pandemic, this not only had a positive impact on C2C and its customers, but also other departments across the council.

Several members of the team attended complaints handling training with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales whereby the useful information gleaned was filtered into team meetings and training sessions enhancing the skills we use across the centre.

Rent Smart Wales saw a significant decrease in the number of formal complaints received in 2020/21. Primarily this has been down to the global pandemic, as for a significant period of the year, Rent Smart Wales suspended enforcement action. 20% of all complaints received by Rent Smart Wales relate to actions undertaken by our Enforcement team. 2020/21 also saw a number of upgrades to our website. As with any release, this had a number of errors that we have worked hard to resolve, but while this was being worked on five formal complaints were made about these



errors. Now that these have been resolved, we expect to see a decrease in complaints of this nature in 2021/2022.

24/7 Services received 16 complaints in 2020/21, compared to 12 the previous year. The service has received an increase in customers for our Meals on Wheels service, along with a rise in the number of Civic and School buildings within Cardiff for both key holding and alarm response for both Fire and Intruder ARC (over 200 sites).

During the pandemic, resources were limited due to staff sickness and shielding which impacted on service levels and led to services being put on hold to ensure emergency services and support continued for existing customers. Processes and procedures also had to be updated to suit the new way of working, as a number of staff were and still are adhering to homeworking. In spite of the challenges faced, the service has received a relatively low increase in the number of complaints received.

Governance & Legal

Service Area	2019/20	2020/21
Governance & Legal	15	2
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	100%	100%

2 complaints were received for **Governance & Legal** during 2020/21, a decrease of 13 complaints when compared to the previous year. Both complaints were received for Electoral Services.

Housing & Communities

Service Area	2019/20	2020/21
Housing & Communities	543	433
Landlord Services	137	194
Responsive Repairs Unit	233	171
Assessment & Support	102	30
Hubs & Community Services	40	16
Regeneration, Development & Enabling	8	13
Preventative Services	11	9
Libraries	9	0
Adult Community Learning	3	0



Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	518 (95.4%)	392 (90.5%)
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As with other directorates, Housing & Communities saw an overall decrease in the number of formal complaints received in 2020/21, primarily, due to the global pandemic. Additionally, eviction action was suspended and some departments stopped home visits other than for emergencies. This was to protect both staff and tenants, resulting in fewer interactions with customers.

Conversely, during the pandemic, resources were limited due to staff sickness, shielding and redeployment of staff, which impacted on service levels, leading to some additional complaints. Furthermore, a number of complaints were received specifically relating to Covid measures, such as the PPE worn by staff when visiting someone's home.

2020/21 has not been a typical year and has been a very challenging period. The Housing & Communities directorate has a dedicated team dealing with complaints and remains committed to learning from complaints and improving the service for all its customers.

10. Welsh Language Complaints

During 2020-21, a total of 6 complaints were received by the Council from the public in relation to the Welsh Language Standards. Whether the complaints were received in English or Welsh, they were dealt with in accordance with the corporate complaints procedure.

11. Priorities for 2021/22

We will continue to review the complaints service through 2021/22 and make any necessary changes to ensure that our complaints process remains customer-focused and that the Council is providing the best service possible. Below are some of our priorities this coming year so that we can achieve these goals.

Council-wide complaints system

An internal audit conducted by the Council's internal audit team identified the lack of a central repository for all complaints. Currently, each directorate is recording data using a variety of systems. Therefore, during 2021/22, we will be working towards implementing a Council-wide complaints system. This will also result in improved consistency of data entry across the organisation. The Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) was created as a result of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) 2019 Act and part of the CSA's duty is to collect and publish specific data from local authorities. A central complaints repository will help us in this regard.



