



Cardiff Council

Annual Feedback Report

2019/20



Gweithio dros Gaerdydd, gweithio gyda'n gilydd
Working for Cardiff, working together

Foreword

Welcome to our 2019/20 Annual Feedback Report, a document that details the complaints and compliments received by the Council during the previous financial year.

By the end of the 2019/20 financial year, Council operations were starting to become significantly and profoundly affected by the COVID-19 virus. This report has subsequently been delayed due to the demands of the pandemic.

Following this learning experience, there will be no such delay next year and our Annual Feedback Report 2020/21 will follow promptly in the summer of 2021. In this summer's report, I will present further information about how we responded during one of the most challenging years imaginable, though our most up to date suggests there will be a decrease in complaints when compared to 2019/20.

Bringing it back to the period this report covers – 1st April 2019 until 31st March 2020 – the number of complaints received rose from 2,550 in the previous year to 2,859. Whilst we always want to provide services that lead to the fewest complaints possible, we welcome engagement from our citizens about both positive and negative experiences of Council services. Consideration of these complaints and compliments is an opportunity to learn and improve. We continue to want it to be as easy as possible to access our complaints process, through a variety of channels, and for every complaint to be properly recorded, so that the greatest amount of feedback is received.

While complaints to the Council have increased, the number of complainants that then proceeded to take their complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has remained relatively static (pages 12-13). We feel this represents the trust that our customers have in us as a council to “investigate once, investigate well”.

It is also clear that our complaints service is committed to continuous improvement. In particular, I welcome the increased amount of work we have carried out to share the lessons learned from the complaints we have received. This report is illustrated with examples of how we as a council have learned from complaints (pages 14-16).

Finally, the priorities for the complaints service can be found at the end of this report (pages 27-28). Going forward, regular data will need to be provided by the council to enable the Ombudsman's Complaints Standards Authority to identify trends and patterns in public service delivery. We welcome this as a positive move and hope that it will further emphasise our commitment to being an organisation that values complaints as tools for feedback, learning and improvement.

As always, I would like to finish this foreword by taking this opportunity to thank our staff who work with complaints across the council and for the service they provide every day to the citizens of Cardiff.

Councillor Chris Weaver - Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation and Performance



1. Reason for this report

To report to Cabinet on the operation of the corporate complaints process between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020. The statistics for corporate complaints are set out by Directorate.

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 process do not include ‘first time’ representations which are effectively requests for service and are 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 2019/20 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 process

The Council's complaints process 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 Directorate 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.

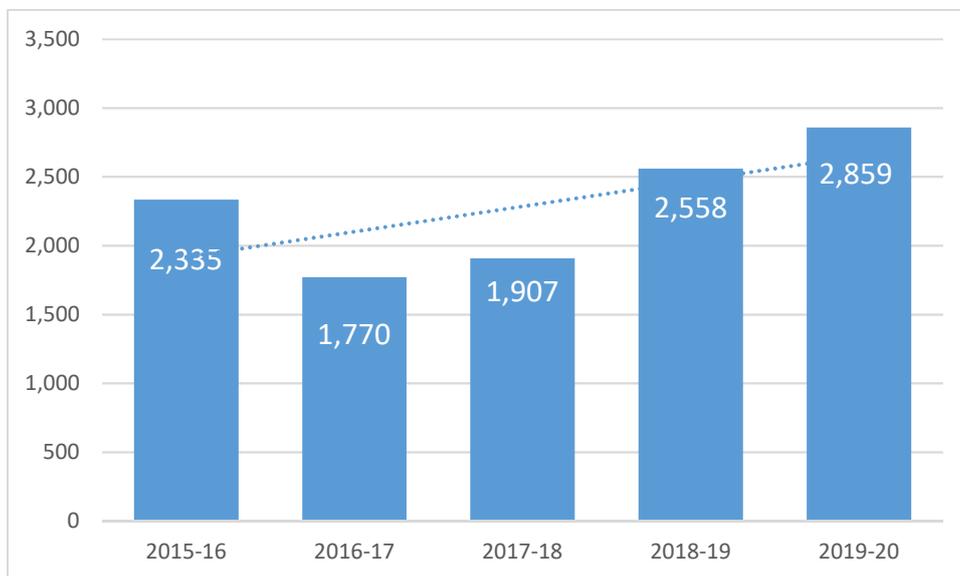
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. Complaints that progress to the Ombudsman will have been thoroughly investigated by the service area. If a complainant remains dissatisfied, it is for the Ombudsman to assess whether there is any evidence of service failure or maladministration not identified by the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



3. Complaints for Cardiff Council in 2019-20

A total of **2,859** complaints were recorded during 2019/20. This is a 12.1% increase from the previous year, when 2,550 complaints were recorded.

Year	Number of complaints
2019-20	2,859
2018-19	2,550
2017-18	1,907
2016-17	1,770
2015-16	2,335



Complaints received per 1,000 of population

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Cardiff population (estimate)	361,168	362,756	366,903
Total number complaints received	1,907	2,550	2,859
Number of complaints received per 1,000	5.3	7.0	7.8

The population of Cardiff is estimated at 366,903 (Source: <https://statswales.gov.wales>). In 2019/20, Cardiff Council handled 2,859 complaints from customers, meaning that an average of 7.8 complaints were received per 1000 residents.



4. Complaints breakdown for Cardiff Council

A total of 2,859 complaints were recorded during 2019/20. This is a 12.1% increase from the previous year, when 2,550 complaints were recorded.

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

Service Area	Number of complaints 2018/19	Number of complaints 2019/20
Waste Collections	890	1256
Housing & Communities	479	543
Arts & Theatres	291	294
Finance	120	163
Traffic & Transportation	141	130
Neighbourhood Services	253	110
Customer & Digital Services	104	79
Parks & Harbour Authority	81	76
Highways Maintenance	42	63
Economic Development	65	50
Education	44	26
Bereavement & Registration	24	23
Planning	13	20
Governance & Legal Services	2	15
HR	1	2
Total	2550	2859

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

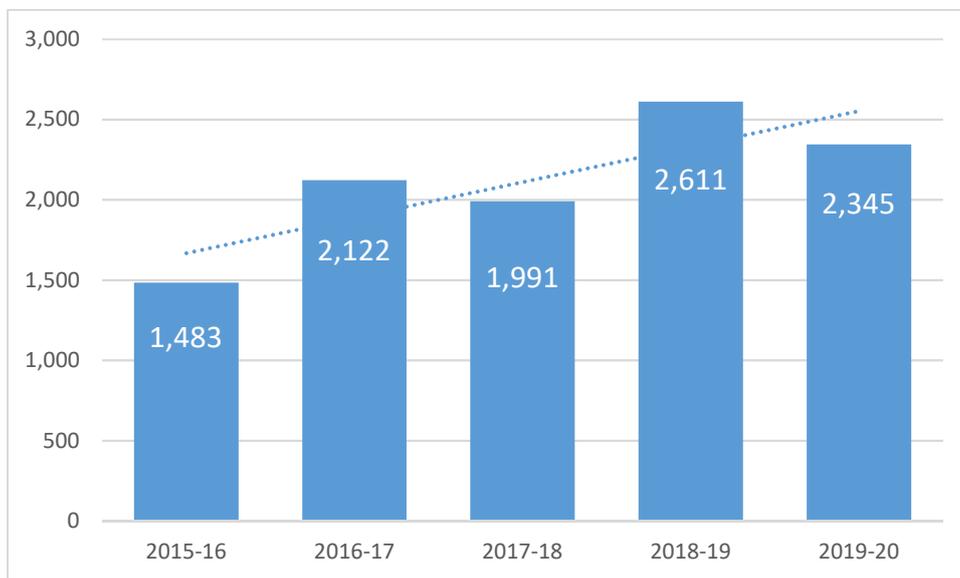
Service Area	Number of complaints 2018/19	Number of complaints 2019/20
Adult Services	70	64
Childrens Services	185	146



5. Compliments for Cardiff Council in 2019-20

A total of 2,345 compliments were recorded during 2019/20. This is a 10.2% decrease from the previous year, when 2,611 compliments were recorded.

Year	Number of compliments
2019-20	2,345
2018-19	2,611
2017-18	1,991
2016-17	2,122
2015-16	1,483



Compliments received per 1,000 of population

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Cardiff population (estimate)	361,168	362,756	366,903
Total number compliments received	1,991	2,611	2,345
Number of complaints received per 1,000	5.5	7.2	6.4

The population of Cardiff is estimated at 366,903 (Source: <https://statswales.gov.wales>). In 2019/20, Cardiff Council handled 2,345 compliments from customers, meaning that an average of 6.4 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 2018/19	Number of compliments 2019/20
Housing & Communities	703	613
Arts & Theatres	477	449
Customer & Digital Services	472	465
Bereavement & Registration Services	180	312
Waste Collections	217	137
Economic Development	131	115
Parks & Harbour Authority	161	101
Neighbourhood Services	140	48
Planning, Transport & Environment	98	87
Finance	25	11
Education & Lifelong Learning	4	3
Governance & Legal Services	3	4
Total	2,611	2,345

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 at the end of this report.

Service Area	Number of compliments 2018/19	Number of compliments 2019/20
Adult Services	21	48
Childrens Services	98	91



During 2019/20, 2,345 compliments were recorded; a selection of those compliments is set out below.

Arts & Theatres

“I attended the classic rock show recently with my younger brother who has autism and ADHD. We had a wonderful time and all of the staff were amazing. In particular, a volunteer made us very welcome and ... spoke to the manager and found somewhere to relocate us if needed. She made the experience so good for myself and my brother who doesn't get to access the arts often due to his disabilities so I just wanted to let management know that she went above and beyond her role and deserves a high commendation for her work that night”

Bereavement Services

“Thank you for your very understanding and caring way you conducted every part of my brother's service. It was something I didn't expect you went the extra mile and it made the world if difference. The service was so compassionate and I will look back with fond memories and a lifted heart.”

Citizen Hub

Letter from service user published on WalesOnline – service user had visited Central Library Hub on two occasions to order bus passes and did not wait more than 5 minutes at either visit. "The Service is excellent with very courteous and competent staff"

Connect to Cardiff

Customer called to pass on a compliment for a member of staff and said that X was an absolute star on the call. Customer said that call centre agents don't get the recognition they deserve so wanted to pass this compliment on, when he calls other call centres he doesn't often experience such good service and wanted to feedback on his positive experience.

Economic Development – Events team

“I just thought I'd drop you a quick note to say well done, congratulations and thank you to yourself and all the team for making our debut at Cardiff Food and Drink Festival such a fantastic and memorable event. From start to finish the organisation was top class, the staff were all friendly and couldn't do enough to help. Even the setting up and breaking down was completely hassle free and well organised (not the usual bunfight of most events!) and the people of Cardiff were a total pleasure to deal with and our product was most certainly very well received”

Electoral Services

“I just wanted to take a moment to ... pass on my personal thanks to you all for the incredible work you did to deliver the General Election in 2019. A December election was never going to be an easy challenge ... but each and every one of you went over and above to ensure the day was a success”



Finance - Recovery

“I was under a great deal of stress regarding recovery of a moving traffic ticket...family circumstances and my own health made this impossible to deal with and pay. I put in a complaint as a last resort and X from recovery has turned this into a huge compliment! X has been fantastic, calmly and professionally explaining everything for me...I just wanted to give her a big thank you and let the council know what an asset to them they have!”

Harbour Authority

“The event was a complete success and it was a thoroughly enjoyable day for both competitors and spectators. Hopefully the Varsity Boat Races will come back to Cardiff in a few years’ time and I wish you every success with it. It has been one of the highlights of my year so far”

Highways

“Credit when it's due. Met your fabulous guys repairing the potholes in the Heath this morning. I was very impressed with the professional and industrious way they carried themselves. Thank you, pleasure to meet you chaps.”

Housing – Anti-Social Behaviour team

“To everyone at the department, we wish to express our deepest gratitude for all the help you have given us during this dramatic period in our lives. We doubt if you ever fully appreciate what it meant to us to have your support, and the knowledge that you were there to help us through our deepest and darkest moments. We never thought that we would have relied on people as much as we have in this case, and you have come through with flying colours. You have all been there as a team in a situation which we found ourselves drowning in depression and self-doubt. We cannot express our gratitude enough. Thank you all.”

Housing – Independent Living Services

“Thank you for everything! From the initial first phone call right through to the completion of work and services, and the phone calls to check, we were so happy with everything. I would just like to mention the workmen who carried out the work, very clean and efficient, I can't praise them enough. You couldn't have done anything better.”

Libraries

“This library is just what the community needs – a comprehensive range of books, good groups and events and lovely people. Happy days!”

Neighbourhood Services

“I passed some of your employees late morning today. They were in a truck that had a cage on the back and appeared to be delivering something. Both employees had gotten out of their van (whilst leaving it safely) to assist an older lady whose car had broken down and was causing an obstruction at the lights. It was lovely to see



people who were happy to work outside of their job description to help a citizen who was in a tricky situation when no one else had stopped. Please pass on to them that what might seem like a small act of kindness was noticed. I was going to stop and help the lady, but when I noticed that they were Council staff I felt happy that she was in safe hands. Employees of the month for both of them please Cardiff Council”

Parks

“I would like to compliment the parks department on their fast service and for keeping our children safe. I sent an email yesterday morning about the brambles sticking out of the bowling green. Today it’s now home time and they have all gone. Thank you for all your hard work and efforts. I also complained before about an extremely bad over grown hedge and you dealt with this. I am so thankful to have such a great team of guy/girls working at Cardiff Council”

Planning, Transport & Environment

“I am a Cardiff resident and I just wanted to say "thank you" to you and all your many staff. Today is bin collection day in my part of Cardiff and I was looking at the sheer number of bins lined up along my very long road. For each and every bin, there is a family that relies on the early-risers who take our rubbish away. It occurred to me that, although so many residents benefit from their efforts, your staff probably don't get the thanks they deserve for all the hard work they do. So I am getting in touch to say thanks. For keeping the roads running. For keeping the parks clean. For teaching our children. For providing housing for those who need it. For making books available to us all in libraries. For checking up on vulnerable people who might otherwise be overlooked. And, yes, for collecting the bins each week. As a community, we perhaps don't say "thank you" enough. But your hard work is noticed, it's appreciated, and it makes a big difference to all the people who benefit from it. So thank you - and keep it up”

Rent Smart Wales

"Thank you ever so much, What a pleasurable experience this has been I was expecting lots of turmoil and bureaucracy, you have made this brilliant for me, thank you ever so much I am very grateful"

Telecare

“Thank you – once again in incredibly difficult and challenging circumstances – your teams continued to deliver our emergency out of hours service with a professional approach – and where very much needed a sense of humour shared with our staff– and supportive and understanding of the challenges being faced by the duty officers, operational teams and of course yourselves. It is very much appreciated – please share this message of thanks to you and the team”

Waste Collections

Customer called to say thank you very very much for collecting general waste from the property. Customer is on the Assisted Lift service and would like to say a huge thank you to the crews for collecting her waste.



7. Complaints to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 2019/20

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 **120** cases involving Cardiff Council compared to 110 cases in 2018-19. The Ombudsman received 40 premature complaints (defined as when the Council has not had a reasonable opportunity to deal with the complaint itself).

A further 44 cases were declined because the Ombudsman was satisfied with action proposed or taken by the Council. 21 cases were closed by voluntary settlements during 2019/20. 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 120 cases, only 4 proceeded to investigation during 2019-20, all of which were not upheld.

The Ombudsman closed the cases for the following reasons:

	2018-19	2019-20
Complainants had not exhausted the Council's complaints process - they were referred back to the Council	27	40
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 	45	44
Cases declined because Ombudsman was satisfied with action proposed or taken by Council (Quick-Fix / Voluntary Settlement)	19	21
Cases out of Ombudsman's jurisdiction	19	11
Cases withdrawn by complainant	0	0
Complaint led to an Ombudsman's report – complaint upheld	0	0
Complaint led to an Ombudsman's report – complaint not upheld	0	4
Total	110	120



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	
2019-20	120
2018-19	110
2017-18	123
2016-17	133
2015-16	143

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 eighth 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 **4** Section 21 reports during 2019-20, all of which were not 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
Arts & Theatres – St David’s Hall	A complaint was received about the lack of facilities regarding the elevators and escalators at St David’s Hall and that the complainant found access to be difficult.	A Conditions Survey has been commissioned to help identify all works needed in order to renovate the hall and bring it up to current standards regarding access.
Bereavement Services	Bereavement Services have received some negative comments regarding the Gardens of Remembrance.	These comments have led to the development of a phased plan of improvements to all of the gardens, starting with Gorse and Ilex Gardens this year.
Cardiff Dogs Home	Analysis of complaints and other customer feedback has shown that there is some confusion among customers about the rehoming process and timescales.	Staff will ensure they follow the rehoming procedures fully and record relevant information at each stage. Communication with customers is key and communication needs to be clearer both on the telephone and in person. Staff from Cardiff Dogs Home have also received Customer Service training to further develop their skills in dealing with the public in often difficult circumstances.



Area	Complaints analysis	Service improvement
Connect to Cardiff	On the rare occasion there are complaints about a member of staff, Connect to Cardiff are able to utilize the centre's call recording software.	Any upheld complaints regarding members of staff can be managed effectively with the benefit of call recordings being available for staff to hear and work through a plan of rectification with either one of our full time coaches or a Team Leader.
Economic Development – Major Events	Complaint received from complainant who was unhappy with being unable to park on two occasions at Pontcanna fields' car park, due to it being used for a cricket event.	The complainant was advised to look out in advance for signs, and if they had a specific enquiry to contact the Council's Events team so they can confirm if there are any known events taking place that could impact on parking availability.
Housing – Voids (Vacant Repairs)	When Council properties are empty (between tenants), there is a Voids team that get the property up to a standard before it is re-let. A number of complaints were received from the new tenants who find problems that hadn't been identified/rectified by Voids.	The Voids team have conducted work to improve the inspection process to ensure that it is more thorough.
Planning, Transport & Environment	Complaints concerning the condition of a road or footway can often involve a Liability Claim. Previously the service area has replied to the defect that has been reported and provided details for the Insurance Section so that a claim form can be sent to the complainant. This on occasion has caused the complaint to be escalated as the complainant would expect both issues to be dealt with at the same time.	To resolve this issue the service area has discussed the matter with Corporate Complaints and Connect to Cardiff, which has resulted in a Liability Claim form now automatically being sent to the customer where a defect is reported and a claim is being made.



Area	Complaints analysis	Service improvement
Rent Smart Wales	The Rent Smart Wales system was updated and caused a number of system errors, causing customers to complain about the lack of contact/updates complainants received.	We have worked with developers and our contact centre to proactively contact cases where an error has prevented progress and advise them of timescales and development.
Revenues	A complaint was received due to the length of time taken to process an application for discount in respect of somebody who was deemed to be Severely Mentally Impaired.	Although the application was addressed within a reasonable timescale, based on correspondence being dealt with in date order. It was considered that these type of applications should perhaps be prioritised above other correspondence. A recommendation was made and agreed for future applications to be prioritised.
Revenues	An attachment of Earnings was taken in addition to full payment previously being made by other methods, resulting in a complaint.	Although this would be an uncommon situation, a new daily list is now being produced to identify such occurrences and a work instruction distributed to mitigate such incidents. Letters have also been adjusted to advise debtors to inform the Council that if any additional payments are made against their debt.
Waste	There have been an increase in complaints during 2019/20 and we recognise that it is essential that moving forward we reduce missed collections, particularly assisted collections.	Waste Collections have introduced a four-fold plan to address this matter - more information on this can be found on page 16.



9. Complaints by area

Waste Collections

The number of complaints received by Waste Collections has increased by 41% from 890 in 2018/19 to **1256** in 2019/20.

Service Area	2018/19	2019/20
Waste Collections	890	1256
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	774 (87.1%)	988 (78.66%)

Whilst in-cab technology has been introduced to assist with ensuring collections are completed as scheduled, we are still experiencing a high number of missed collections, particularly assisted collections. In addition, due to the ageing fleet and resourcing issues, we did experience a number of delayed collections during 2019/20, whereby collections were not completed as scheduled.

There has also been a significant number of new properties built in Cardiff over the last year, and Waste Management has experienced access issues to some of these sites resulting in further non-collection complaints.

The number of complaints is considered to be extremely low when the volume of waste service delivery is taken into account. With approximately 170,000 address points currently serviced citywide, over 538,000 waste collections are carried out weekly – which is equivalent to over 25 million collections a year. Additionally, Waste Management also provided education to residents, bulky waste collection services and delivery/repair services across the City, as well as access to two household waste recycling centres during the 2019/20 period.

Waste recognises that it is essential that moving forward the number of missed collections needs to be reduced, particularly assisted collections. The plan to address this is -

- ✓ Introduce a new way of working which includes a single shift between 6am and 3.45pm. This will result in an easier to maintain fleet, as well as increase our ability to complete collections on the scheduled day. Alongside this, we will monitor completion of rounds from an operational control room to ensure work is reallocated where required to make sure it is completed on the day.
- ✓ Rolling replacement of the vehicle fleet, resulting in newer, more reliable vehicles.
- ✓ Develop an improved customer requests and complaints process to reduce any possibility of duplication and streamline the service – as outlined in the team plan objective for waste collections for 2020-2021.
- ✓ Introduce headsets for food waste loaders: Currently food waste loaders are regularly away from the vehicle and therefore the driver cannot alert them to the assisted collections that are highlighted on the in-cab device. Headsets provide a way for the driver to communicate assisted collections to the loader.



Planning, Transport & Environment

Service Area	2018/19	2019/20
Highway Maintenance	42	63
Planning (including Building Control)	13	20
Traffic & Transportation	141	130
Total	196	213
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	183 (93.3%)	188 (88.26%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	151 (77.1%)	167 (78.4%)

Highway Maintenance received 63 complaints for 2019/20. This is an increase of 21 on the previous year when 42 complaints were recorded.

The highest number of complaints received was again related to Potholes and Paving (29 complaints). This is an increase of 13 on the previous year when 16 complaints were received. Again, like previous years, the majority of complaints were concerning the quality of the pothole repair, although this is often attributable to the repair only being temporary to make the area safe and serviceable until a permanent repair can be provided. A number of complaints also concerned the time taken to repair a pothole. Unfortunately, due to the sheer number of potholes reported, there may be a delay between the defect being reported and the time taken to repair the pothole, however, officers do endeavour to repair/make safe any defect as soon as possible.

Maintenance Operations received 14 complaints in 2018/19 compared with 8 in the previous year. The largest number of complaints were concerning blocked drains (8). It should be noted that once a blocked drained has been reported, a drainage crew will endeavour to attend the location within 48hrs to 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.

Traffic & Transportation received 130 complaints for 2019/20, which is a decrease of 11 from the total (141) for 2018/19.

The highest number of complaints again related to Penalty Charge Notices (25 complaints received by the service area). The main reason for the complaints were that their appeals against the charge had been rejected. The issuing of a penalty charge notice is a legal process and all appeals received against the issue of a notice are dealt with using the correct legislative process. There has also been a large number of complaints received concerning resident parking policy (17), especially with regards to the non-entitlement of resident parking permits for new build properties.



Civil Parking Enforcement received 18 complaints. This is again a decrease from the 28 complaints that were received in 2018/19. The fall in complaints of this nature is likely to be because motorists are now more aware to 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 14 complaints received compared to 17 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 20 complaints in total for 2019/20. This is an increase of 7 on the previous year where 13 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	2018/19	2019/20
Bereavement & Registration	24	18
Cardiff Dogs Home	N/A	5
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	24 (100%)	23 (100%)

There were 18 recorded complaints via emails and letters for **Bereavement & Registration Services** in 2019/20 compared to 24 in 2018/19, and 5 recorded complaints for **Cardiff Dogs Home**.

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 we cannot afford to make 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 and equate to under 0.01% of all visitors to our sites.

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%.

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. In 2019-20, 28 instances of this nature were recorded and 8 instances via questionnaire responses. 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.

Education & Lifelong Learning

Service Area	2018/19	2019/20
Education	44	26
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	41 (93.1%)	19 (73.1%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	31 (70%)	13 (50%)



The **Education & Lifelong Learning** Directorate received 26 formal complaints in 2019/2020, a decrease from the 44 recorded in 2018/19.

The most common reason for complaining was in relation to School Admissions, accounting for half of all complaints received. Of the 26 complaints received, 19 of the complaints were acknowledged within five working days. This is a reduction on the previous year. Many of the complaints that were not formally acknowledged within the timescale were being dealt with, but there was unfortunately a delay with them being formally logged. Process improvements within Education mean that we expect to be able to report an improved figure for 2020/21 for acknowledging within timescale. The Directorate responded in full to 50% of the complaints received within 20 days of receipt, which is a reduction on previous years. Further work will take place over the coming year to improve this result.

Of the complaints which were responded to outside of the 20 working day timescale, some issues were dealt with promptly by officers, but took longer to be logged via the official route, so the timescale does not necessarily reflect the customer having faced a delay in having their issue resolved. Some complaints were sent directly to the Director of Education as correspondence in the first instance, which can result in some delay. The result of these processes has an impact on the Council meeting its complaint timescales. When this occurs, the Directorate will send an interim reply explaining the reasons for delay and when the complainant can expect a response.

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	2018/19	2019/20
Economic Development	65	50
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	64 (98.5%)	50 (100%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	65 (100%)	49 (98%)



Parks & Harbour Authority	81	76
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	76 (93.8%)	74 (97.3%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	77 (95.1%)	70 (92.1%)

During 2019/20, **Economic Development** received 126 complaints which is a notable decrease on the 146 recorded during 2018/19. The complaints comprised of 4 for City Centre Management, 10 for Strategic Estates, 9 for Venues and Tourism (this includes Cardiff Castle, the Events team, Cardiff Caravan Park and the Norwegian Church), 23 for Major Events, 4 for Property Services and 76 for **Parks & Harbour Authority**.

The legacy and benefit to Cardiff of hosting major events is significant and feedback from many has been overwhelmingly positive. When considering the number of high profile projects and the amount of regeneration activity across the city, the number of complaints received for 2019/20 is still a very encouraging result

Service Area	2018/19	2019/20
Neighbourhood Services	253	110
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	231 (91.3%)	91 (82.73%)

110 complaints were received for **Neighbourhood Services** which comprises of; street cleansing, education and enforcement & fly tipping. This is a 56.5% decrease from the previous year when 253 complaints were recorded.

We are pleased to note that the number of complaints received by Neighbourhood Services have significantly reduced compared with 2018/2019. This indicated that the actions taken to improve the service's reporting processed have been effective.

Neighbourhood Services are now proactively monitoring performance using Power BI analytics service and Local Environment Audit & Management System (LEAMS) to identify and target hotspots. In addition to this, the introduction of Cardiff's 'log it report it' app for the reporting of general cleansing and fly-tipping issues have improved the customers experience.



Service Area	2018/19	2019/20
Arts & Theatres	291	294
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	291 (100%)	294 (100%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	291 (100%)	294 (100%)

Arts and Theatres contains two of the city's biggest arts venues, St David's Hall and the New Theatre. Complaints for Arts and Theatres have slightly increased from 291 in 2018/19 to 294 in 2019/20.

100% of complaints received an acknowledgement within 5 working days with the same number receiving a full response within 20 working days.

A large variety of shows take place within Arts and Theatres and it is important to note that the majority of complaints for this service area can be classified as 'customer preference' rather than service failure; for example, the department receives complaints about shows not being to the customer's personal taste. It is also noted that the numbers of complaints regarding the behaviour of other audience members is increasing and is likely indicative of wider issues within society, and not due to poor service provision.

Resources

Service Area	2018/19	2019/20
Revenues	120	163
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	79.1%	80.4%

163 complaints were logged by the **Revenues** Complaints Department in what was a particularly challenging year. This represents an increase of 35.8% on the number of complaints received when compared to the previous year. A large percentage of these can be attributed to the robust stance in pursuing debtors for outstanding Council Tax and Parking Fines. Of the 163 complaints, 131 were responded to within 20 days.

The team has two full time posts responsible for logging, investigating and responding to complaints. This is in addition to maintaining quality procedures and providing Revenues training for the department, C2C and the Hubs. Unfortunately one member of staff had a period of long term sickness from April through until July 2019; 12 late responses could be attributed to this period of absence. This member of staff left the department in early March 2020, leaving a vacant post, this was further compounded by COVID 19, where resources were allocated to help achieve



Council priorities. A further 12 late responses could be attributed to this situation. Of the 32 late responses, 14 were answered within 22 days.

Improvements within the department and staff dedication have ensured that overall there has been an annual increase in the actual number of responses issued within 20 days, despite reduced resources and increased pressures.

Service Area	2018/19	2019/20
Customer & Digital Services	104	79
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, 24/7 Services and Rent Smart Wales. **Connect to Cardiff (C2C)** has received 34 complaints which is a slight increase when compared to the 23 complaints received in 2018/19. Of the 34 complaints received, 17 were not upheld and 3 only partially upheld, leaving 14 that were considered as having genuine grounds for complaint.

Of the upheld complaints, any regarding members of staff are managed effectively with the benefit of call recordings being available for staff to hear and work through a plan of rectification with either one of our full time coaches or a Team Leader.

To further reduce complaints, our Stats and Support Team work closely alongside C2C on a daily basis and can produce accurate and timely data to the second, such as the time a customer waits to be answered or when a customer was actually passed to colleagues in the back office of our service area partners to be assisted further. This affords the ability to drill down right to the heart of the customers concerns and understand any points of failure without the need to rely on customer/staff accounts in order to form a decision.

Rent Smart Wales was introduced in November 2015, with the enforcement provisions being implemented from November 2016. From a complaints perspective, an increase in compliance and enforcement activity would ordinarily be expected to lead to an increase in the number of complaints. It is very pleasing therefore that the number of complaints received has halved when compared to the previous year, Rent Smart Wales receiving 35 complaints compared to 70 in 2018/19.

24/7 Services provides support, security and reassurance 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to over 4,500 citizens across Cardiff. These services include Telecare, Meals on Wheels, Alarm Response Centre (ARC), Concierge and Locality Wardens.

Complaints for 24/7 Services have remained relatively static with just 10 complaints recorded during 2019/20, compared to 11 received in 2018/19.



Governance & Legal

Service Area	2018/19	2019/20
Governance & Legal	2	15
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	100%	100%

15 complaints were received for **Governance & Legal** during 2019/20, an increase of 13 complaints when compared to 2018/19. The main reason for the increase in the number of complaints is as a result of the 2019 General Election, which resulted in an increase in activity for the team with relatively short notice to prepare. The Electoral Services Team administer elections in 4 parliamentary constituencies with a total electorate of 279,820 in 2019 and supported 191,244 electors to cast their vote. Taking the above into account, the number of complaints received is very minimal.

All complaints have been investigated and action taken to improve. This includes improved training plans for temporary staff. Despite this increase in complaints, many positive comments were received from candidates, agents and the electoral commission regarding the professional delivery of the election in Cardiff.

Housing & Communities

Housing & Communities received a total of **543** complaints in 2019/20, which is an increase on the 464 complaints received in 2018/19.

Service Area	2018/19	2019/20
Housing & Communities	479	543
Assessment & Support	103	102
Hubs & Community Services	44	40
Landlord Services	119	137
Preventative Services	6	11
Regeneration, Development & Enabling	5	8
Responsive Repairs Unit	184	233
Libraries	17	9
Adult Community Learning	1	3
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	464 (96.9%)	518 (95.4%)



Housing & Communities continue to treat complaints in a positive way, looking at each one thoroughly to establish exactly what (if anything) has gone wrong. In addition to doing everything possible to resolve individual complaints, officers will always look at any changes that can be made following a complaint.

The detailed reasons for complaints are monitored at monthly meetings by the Director of Adults Social Services, Communities and Housing and other relevant staff. Any patterns, such as the types of errors being made, can then be addressed and the appropriate action taken to ensure best practice; for example, changes made to procedure or standard letters being amended.

The role of the specialised Housing Complaint Officers has expanded as hoped and they now deal with complaints relating to a number of housing teams including Landlord Services (including Social Lettings, Anti-Social Behaviour and Tenancy Management), Hubs and the Responsive Repairs Unit. This allows for a consistent and thorough approach to all complaint investigations and their roles continue to evolve.

Overall, the number of complaints has gone up slightly, but this appears to be purely the natural fluctuation that is to be expected. Having looked at the figures and the reports, there is no specific reason that can be identified. An increase in the number of complaints about Landlord Services is primarily due to an increase in complaints about the Social Lettings Unit. This may be as a result of changes to the Allocations Policy. The policy is now based on housing need rather than time served on the list and as such is much fairer. However, there are inevitably some people who have become less likely to be housed as a result of the change.

The largest proportion of complaints was about Responsive Repairs who are responsible for responsive repairs for 13,721 Council properties. 233 complaints were received and, while any level of complaints remains of concern, it should be noted that the amount of complaints is less than 0.40% of the approximately 57,000 repairs carried out in 2019/20 in total. With at least 92% of repairs being carried out by the in-house workforce and 91% of appointments made, customer satisfaction with the Responsive Repairs service remains high as is demonstrated by good feedback in the annual tenant survey.

10. Welsh Language Complaints

During 2019-20, a total of 13 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

We will continue to review the complaints service throughout 2021 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, 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.

Improved complaints reporting

The Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) 2019 Act will require Local Authorities to report on its complaints performance twice a year. This, in addition, to the ad-hoc requests from senior management for complaints performance data, emphasises the importance of a council-wide repository for complaints that can produce council-wide data quickly. To meet the requirements of the act, in addition to the Annual Complaints Report, the Corporate Complaints team will produce a second report to take to Informal Cabinet at the six-month period. This increased reporting will enable our complaints team to conduct frequent trend analysis of the main reasons complaints are made and this could lead to possible and timely improvements.

Improved compliments recording

There continues to be a concern that the good service provided every day by officers within the Council is not being represented. The complaints team will look at ways of updating our recording procedure to ensure our compliments are captured and that we are continuing to take on board what our customers want. Staff will also be reminded that it is important to report compliments as well as complaints. Compliments provide very helpful feedback and provide us with a flavour of what works well and what people using our services really value. Furthermore, a section receiving larger numbers of complaints can appear to be a concern until a consideration of compliments highlights that there is a more balanced view of the service overall.

Guidance document for handling complaints and compliments

The Comments, Complaints and Compliments Policy provides process information for stakeholders, however we are working towards updating our guidance policy for Service Area Complaints Officers. This guidance policy will define how complaints and compliments should be identified, recognised, recorded and reported for improved consistency across the organisation.



Training from the Ombudsman

Since the publication of this report, many of the Service Area Complaints Officers have attended free training provided by the aforementioned Complaints Standards Authority. This training has covered a wide range of topics and has been very warmly received. More Complaints Officers will be attending this training in 2021.

Customer Service training

Whilst the Complaints Standards Authority and Corporate Complaints Team will continue to provide specific training on complaint handling, we will also promote the popular Customer Service training offered by Customer & Digital Services. Whether we are working with external or internal customers, great service is crucial in how we operate across the council and ultimately, can result in decreased complaints and costs.

