

Cardiff Council

Annual Complaints & Compliments Report 2023/24

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STRONGER
FAIRER
GREENER



1. Reason for this report

To report to the Cabinet on the operation of the corporate complaints procedure between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024. The statistics for corporate complaints are set out in the report by service area.

A complaint is defined within Cardiff Council as:

An expression of concern or dissatisfaction made by one or more members of the public regarding Cardiff Council's actions, or lack of action, or the standard of service it provided following an initial request for service.

A complaint is not:

- *A first-time report of an occurrence that needs Cardiff Councils attention or an initial request for service.*
- *A formal review or appeal against a decision.*
- *A way of asking for a change to legislation or a policy decision.*
- *A means for lobbying groups/organisations to promote a cause.*
- *A broad and general expression of dissatisfaction with little to no specifics or that does not relate specifically to Cardiff Council's actions, or lack of action, or the standard of service it provided.*

As noted, 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 2023/24 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. Once a complaint is made, whether via Connect to Cardiff (C2C) over the telephone or via the designated form on the council website, or received by the Corporate Complaints Team, this will be logged directly into HALO (our Council-wide system) and assigned to the appropriate service area for efficiency. It is the responsibility of the service area to then ensure complaints are acknowledged and to facilitate the investigation of the complaint in accordance with the corporate complaints procedure. If a complaint is received at a face-to-face venue, these will be forwarded to service area leads who will record the complaint within HALO directly.

Acknowledgment. The responsible officer within the service area is required 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. Our policy states that we aim to provide a response to a customer's complaint within 20 working days of our receipt of the complaint. If a complaint is particularly complex, the responsible officer should let the customer know that it may take longer to investigate their complaint and when they should expect to receive a response.

Full response. At the end of an investigation, a response should be issued 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.

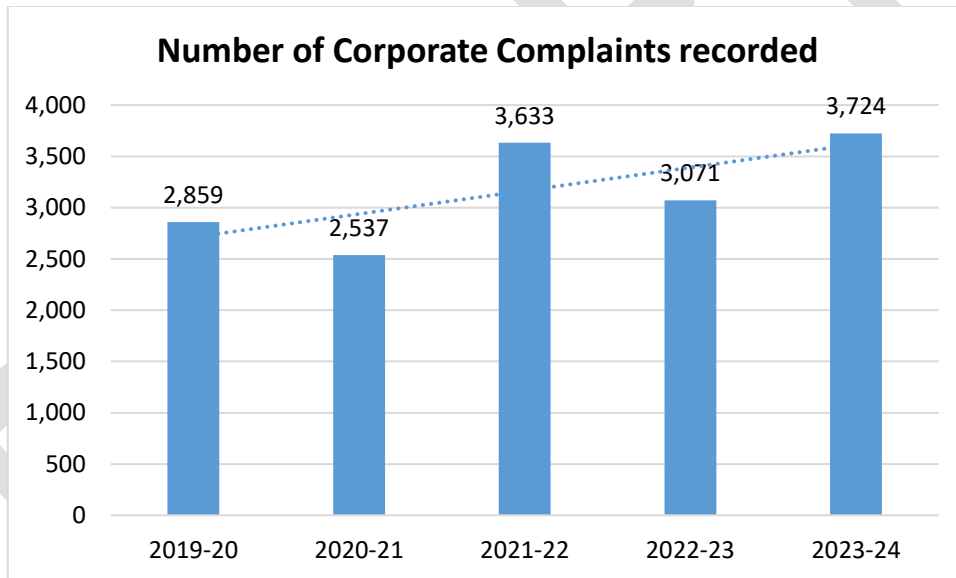
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. Complaints that progress to the Ombudsman will have been thoroughly investigated by the service area. If a complainant remains dissatisfied, it is for the Ombudsman to assess whether there is any evidence of service failure or maladministration not identified by the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



3. Complaints for Cardiff Council in 2023-24

A total of 3,724 complaints were recorded during 2023/24. This is an 21.3% increase from the previous year, when 3,071 complaints were recorded.

Year	Number of complaints
2023-24	3,724
2022-23	3,071
2021-22	3,633
2020-21	2,537
2019-20	2,859



4. Complaints breakdown for Cardiff Council

A total of 3,724 complaints were recorded during 2023/24. This is an 21.3% increase from the previous year, when 3,071 complaints were recorded.

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

Service Area	Number of complaints 2022/23	Number of complaints 2023/24
Street Scene	1,324	1,760
Housing & Communities	934	1,093
Traffic & Transportation	241	325
Finance	174	180
Customer & Digital Services	142	129
Education	89	62
Highways Maintenance	54	55
Economic Development	33	37
Parks & Harbour Authority	30	35
Planning (including Building Control)	28	25
Bereavement & Registration (including Cardiff Dogs Home)	11	18
Governance & Legal Services	8	4
HR	2	1
Total	3,071	3,724

This report does not consider Social Services complaints. Complaints for Social Services are recorded under their statutory complaint's procedure. However, a breakdown of the number of complaints received by Social Services (at both Stage 1 and 2) can be found below.

Service Area	Number of complaints 2022/23	Number of complaints 2023/24
Adult Services	123	103
Children's Services	242	229



5. 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 as understanding where things are not working. We therefore also keep a record of the compliments we receive as good practice and learning can then be circulated across the Council.

As of August 2024, all compliments received by the council are logged via HALO for consistency and transparency.

A total of 1,241 compliments were recorded during 2023/24, a small decrease from 2022/23, when 1,265 compliments were recorded.

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 throughout the report.

Service Area	Number of compliments 2022/23	Number of compliments 2023/24
Customer & Digital Services	302	503
Housing & Communities	329	200
Street Scene	308	167
Economic Development, Parks & Harbour Authority	118	149
Planning, Transport & Environment	121	126
Bereavement & Registration Services	79	88
Education & Lifelong Learning	3	5
Governance & Legal Services	2	3
Finance	3	0
Total	1,265	1,241

This report does not consider Social Services compliments. However, a breakdown of the number of compliments received by Social Services can be found below.

Service Area	Number of compliments 2022/23	Number of compliments 2023/24
Adult Services	158	442
Children's Services	180	174



6. Complaints to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 2023/24

Though a customer can approach the Ombudsman at any time, the Ombudsman would usually expect a customer to have exhausted the Council’s complaints procedure before approaching her office.

An important measure of complainant satisfaction with the quality of investigations and perceived fairness of outcomes is the number of complaints escalated to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. In the 2023-24 period, the number of escalated complaints remained relatively consistent, with the Ombudsman closing 144 cases involving Cardiff Council, compared to 143 cases in 2022-23.

We can also consider the cases themselves as an indicator of how well the Council handles complaints. **Of the 144 cases closed by the Ombudsman’s office, just 28 were identified as requiring further action by the Council as an Early Resolution Settlement.** 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 144:

- 31 were closed by the Ombudsman as premature – that is, the Council had not had a reasonable opportunity to deal with the complaint itself.
- 57 cases were closed as the Ombudsman was satisfied with the action taken by the Council.
- 28 cases were closed by voluntary settlements during 2022/23. 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, and,
- 28 cases were considered by the Ombudsman to be ‘out of jurisdiction’.

The Ombudsman closed the cases for the following reasons:

	2022-23	2023-24
Complainants had not exhausted the Council's complaints process - they were referred back to the Council	30	31



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 	71	57
Cases declined because Ombudsman was satisfied with action proposed or taken by Council (Early Resolution Settlement)	23	28
Cases out of Ombudsman's jurisdiction	19	28
Cases withdrawn by complainant	0	0
Complaint led to an Ombudsman's report	0	0
Total	143	144

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	Number of cases closed by Ombudsman
2023-24	144
2022-23	143
2021-22	159
2020-21	100
2019-20	120
2018-19	110

The number of cases closed by the Ombudsman regarding Cardiff Council has remained remarkably consistent over the past two years (2022-23 and 2023-24), with only a slight increase of one case, from 143 to 144. This consistency suggests that the Council has been effectively managing public concerns and maintaining steady performance in handling complaints.

Furthermore, compared to the peak in 2021-22, when 159 cases were closed, there has been a noticeable decrease in the number of complaints in the most recent years. This decline indicates that the Council has likely taken successful steps to address underlying issues, leading to fewer complaints being escalated to the Ombudsman.



These positive comments highlight the Council's consistency, improvement, and resilience in handling complaints, despite various challenges over the years.

Investigations leading to reports.

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

Legislative changes to the powers of the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales came into force as a result of the Public Services Ombudsman Act 2019, giving the Ombudsman greater investigative powers.

2 cases proceeded to investigation during Q4 of 2023-24. However, at the time of publication, the Ombudsman had yet to reach a decision on these cases and therefore the results will be published in next years' annual complaints report.

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7. Learning from complaints

Complaints provide valuable feedback and should be viewed as an opportunity to learn from experiences and drive continual organisational improvement to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

Our complaints handling procedure helps us to address a customer's dissatisfaction and may also prevent the same problems 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 quarterly to look at common issues relating to complaints handling, including complaints data, timescales and learning from complaints. The meetings are chaired by the Corporate Complaints team and attendance from each service area is compulsory, enabling officers to learn from the Complaints "Group" and receive peer support.

Some of the actions we take in response to complaints might appear to be minor but they can make a big difference. Examples - big and small - of what we have done as a result of learning from complaints can be found throughout the report. To help services areas track these learning opportunities efficiently, the closure process for all complaints cases within HALO has a mandatory field that captures any lessons learned.



8. Complaints by area

Street Scene

Service Area	2022/23	2023/24
Street Scene	1,324	1,760
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	999 (75.5%)	1,046 (59.4%)

Service Area	Total complaints closed within timescales				Complaint outcome	
	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
2022-23	999	305	21	0	1,240	85
2023-24	1,046	691	23	0	1,714	46

The above shows an increase in the number of complaints for Street Scene from 1,324 complaints in 2022/2023 to 1,760 in 2023/24. The cause for this is likely in part due to the industrial action that took place in 2023, causing delays to collections. Additionally, a significant change to waste collections occurred in 2023/24, with the rollout of the Kerbside Sort/Segregated Waste scheme for recycling. This involved placing many households on new/additional waste receptacles for their recycling collections, which saw residents having to separate their recycling into separate bags/caddies for collection. This was a big change and a lot of households found it to be challenging, which in turn caused an influx in complaints. At the beginning of the rollout, there were a few teething problems, including issues with deliveries and collections, however those have since been ironed out and resolved. The third stage of the rollout began in Quarter 1 2024 and there has not been a significant rise in complaints regarding the segregated waste scheme, suggesting improvements have been made within the delivery and collections teams surrounding the scheme and that lessons have been learned.

Compliments

- ✓ "I'm always one for sharing success and when people do things brilliantly, and I have to give a shout out to Cardiff Council for their information booklet outlining changes



to our recycling. The change means slightly more inconvenience for me as a householder but because it's so well explained, they have my buy in. They have clearly explained - 1. The why - key to getting people to buy into your message 2. What's changing - clarity on the impact of the change is essential 3. What's not changing - eliminate unnecessary worry by highlighting what will stay the same 4. Clear do's and don't's - the page that outlines the "yes please" and the "no thank you" gives people certainty and clarity that they are doing the right thing."

- ✓ A BIG thank you to the Blitz team in Coburn Street. They do a fantastic job every week going behind the dustcarts on bin day. The street looks like a hurricane has hit until they pick up all the rubbish , usually rotting food, all over the street . I really appreciate them and their hard work

Planning, Transport & Environment

Service Area	2022/23	2023/24
Highway Maintenance	54	55
Planning (including Building Control)	28	25
Traffic & Transportation	241	325
Total	323	405
Number / Percentage of complaint responded to on time	254 (78.6%)	362 (89.4%)

Service Area & Financial Year	Total complaints closed within timescales				Complaint outcome	
	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
Highway Maintenance 2022-23	44	8	2	0	16	38
Highways Maintenance 2023-24	50	5	0	0	5	50
Planning (including Building Control) 2022-23	7	17	2	2	0	28



Planning (including Building Control) 2023-24	12	11	2	0	0	25
Traffic & Transportation 2022-23	203	24	11	3	35	206
Traffic & Transportation 2023-24	300	20	5	0	25	300

Highway Maintenance received 55 complaints for 2023/24 which is an increase of one from the previous year. Of the 55, 37 complaints related to Asset Management. Complaints were received concerning carriageway/footway defects including alleged delays in the repair of carriageway/footway defects and also for the quality of the repairs themselves. It should be noted that although interim repairs may not look aesthetically pleasing, they are effective in making the area safe until permanent repairs can be undertaken.

Resurfacing works received 10 complaints with the majority of complaints being regarding vehicles being removed so that works could be undertaken (advance warning is given when works are undertaken in an area), or the cancellation/delay in works being carried out, which is usually due to adverse weather conditions.

Maintenance Operations received eight complaints. In all cases, once a blocked drain 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 exceeding its capacity and not any actual blockages to the drain. Leaves fall can all contribute to the drains being blocked.

Traffic & Transportation received 325 complaints for 2023/24 which is an increase of 84 on the previous year.

Of the 325 complaints, 120 were for Transport Policy & Projects and Road Safety Schemes and this can be attributed to the large increase in schemes and initiatives which are currently being implemented across Cardiff. Although these comments are logged and treated 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 Roath recreation scheme was the scheme that received the most complaints, a lot of these complaints focussed on resident distress that the conservation areas were being changed.

There was a decrease in Highway Licensing and Streetworks Applications and Enforcement complaints this year (30 reduced from 40). This decrease in complaints can be contributed to businesses and the general public being more aware of the licensing criteria for areas such as



table & chair licences, vehicle crossovers, abandoned vehicles, and skips. The businesses using these licences are more aware of how activities on the highway should be stored which leads to less complaints from the public regarding e.g. tables and chairs stored incorrectly. This information is readily available on the Council website and allows businesses / residents to make an informed decision before making any appropriate application or report.

The Resident Parking Permit Team received 102 complaints, and the majority of these complaints related to the legislation governing the permit scheme, and in particular the criteria regarding permit eligibility. There has also been an increase in price for parking permits, which has resulted in complaints about the increase.

Finally, the Civil Enforcement Team received 73 complaints for 2023/24. The majority of these complaints were regarding the perceived lack of enforcement in certain areas. It should be noted that all enforcement reports received are collated and used to enable the Civil Parking Enforcement Team to prioritise problems and tackle specific areas of concern whilst officers are undertaking their patrols.

Compliment

“My wife, myself and friends were visiting your fine city when my wife and I came out of a shop across from the castle. One of your parking enforcement officers approached us and asked if we needed assistance (We may have looked lost or confused). We inquired his opinion on pubs and restaurants. Later that evening we followed his advice and visited The Old Arcade. We had a fabulous time and met some great locals in which we talked the evening away. It was a great time. Enroute back to our hotel we met your city worker again, by chance. We thanked him for his recommendation. We just want to let you know you have a great employee to which we are very thankful”.

Learning from Complaints

A large number of complaints have previously been received concerning the criteria for abandoned vehicles. Although a vehicle may be parked in a location for a certain length of time, it does not necessarily mean it is abandoned. This can result in complaints being made against the Council as residents are not aware of the legislation that has to be followed before a vehicle can be considered abandoned. This issue has been alleviated to a certain extent with the introduction of a dedicated web page for abandoned vehicles, where all the relevant information (for what is classed as an abandoned vehicle) can be found.



Bereavement & Registration

Service Area	2022/23	2023/24
Bereavement & Registration	11	17
Cardiff Dogs Home	0	1
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	11 (100%)	18 (100%)

Service Area & Financial Year	Total complaints closed within timescales				Complaint outcome	
	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
Bereavement & Registration 2022-23	11	0	0	0	6	5
Bereavement & Registration 2023-24	17	0	0	0	12	5
Cardiff Dogs Home 2022-23	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cardiff Dogs Home 2023-24	1	0	0	0	0	1

There were 17 complaints for Bereavement and Registration in 2023/24 compared to 11 in 2022/23. 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 via Bereavement Services' website and its 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 they have experienced.



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. Furthermore, Citizenship Ceremonies are also organised by the Register Office. Complaints reported would equate to under 0.01% of all visitors and service users to our offices and 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 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%.

Service users often come to us in quite a vulnerable state which can mean that small issues may become of increased importance to them. Service Monitor Forms are completed and then monitored for service trends via our monthly statistics and at operational meetings. Where an error has occurred, we will also proactively apologise in writing to the family concerned to try and stop an issue escalating or a complaint being received.

Registration Services is also an area in which our citizens are undertaking life changing events and as such we must respond to their needs with sensitivity and understanding. Death registration appointments are now being offered at Thornhill Cemetery Enquiries Office which has been welcomed by service users. Additionally, the relocation of the service from City Hall to Insole Court and Glamorgan Archives has been very positively received.

Nearly all 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, 88 instances of positive feedback concerning public interactions with staff were received 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.

Compliment

Many thanks for your welcome and support for Dad's certificates this afternoon. Your super efficiency, courtesy and diplomacy were very much appreciated. Good wishes to you and your team...

Many thanks to you, the Superintendent Registrar and the Registrar for our wonderful Wedding Ceremony at Insole Court on Saturday. You looked after a nervous couple very professionally. Our guests commented on how beautiful the Ceremony was. The glorious



weather – pre-arranged of course! – was a bonus. Thank you again for your time and efforts on our behalf.

Learning from complaints

During January 2024 filming was arranged at Thornhill. Whilst there was no issue with the filming as the crematorium was closed for the day, some visitors were not happy with the film crew being on site and the way in which they were directed when visiting. In hindsight one of the lessons learned will be for staff to be present with the film crew’s co-ordinators to ensure that there is a more empathetic presence on site.

Education & Lifelong Learning

Service Area	2022/23	2023/24
Education	89	62
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	74 (83.1%)	53 (85.5%)

Financial Year	Total complaints closed within timescales				Complaint outcome	
	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
2022-23	79	10	0	0	4	80
2023-24	53	9	0	0	9	53

The **Education and Lifelong Learning** Directorate received 62 formal complaints via the Council’s Corporate Complaints procedure in 2023/2024. This is a decrease from the 89 recorded in 2022/2023.

A number of complaints required further investigation and input from other stakeholders resulting in a delay in responding, the Directorate will always make complainants aware of any delays.

The largest area of complaints received was for Admissions with 18 cases received. These concerned parents unhappy that they did not receive their chosen school and were followed up following the formal admissions process.



The second biggest area was school transport (8) and as above, guidelines were issued to parents to illustrate the guidelines on this. Schools Organisation Programme received 6 complaints, as did the Inclusion team.

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. The move to HALO has improved tracking and monitoring process and the support from Corporate Complaints is valued. Complaint figures are also reported weekly to EMT to ensure timely and quality responses are being achieved.

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.

Compliments

The Directorate receives a number of compliments from a range of service users via email, telephone and social media channels. One of the compliments received in 2023-24 is for the Directorate's Youth team:

'Please see two feedback statements one from a parent who's daughter was involved in a film making project this summer and another from a young person from America who was volunteering on the same project as part of a youth exchange;

Parent – "(My daughter) had a great time on the course. She surprised me how well she settled and got involved, also learning new skills and being out of her comfort zone. After an extremely difficult year at school she's probably not attended a full school day in the last 6 months, yet she attended the entire course and left home every day full of smiles and enthusiasm and came home with lots to tell. Something I haven't seen in a long time. It shows that with the right team around her, understanding of her difficulties and nature she is able to achieve well and to the best of her ability... this being all thanks to you and the team at Cardiff Youth Service. I'm so grateful and so impressed with what you offer"



Young person – “My trip to Wales was an unforgettable experience that left a profound impact on my life. It was not just a journey; it was an opportunity to change the lives of young people, an experience of bonding with the incredible individuals in my group, and a chance to immerse myself in the Welsh culture. From the moment I arrived, I instantly felt a sense of belonging and home. This trust and support from the staff gave me the confidence to make a real impact on the lives of the youth we were working with. As someone with Welsh roots, exploring the beautiful country held deep personal significance for me. I am not in contact with my father, who was born in Wales, making this trip a truly meaningful connection to my heritage. It was a journey of self-discovery and cultural exploration that I will forever be grateful for. Throughout the trip, I not only learned valuable skills but also made lasting friendships with the wonderful people I met. This experience helped me gain clarity about my future, and now I am eagerly counting down the days until I can return. Cardiff Youth Service, here I come! I can't wait to work with them in the future and continue making a positive impact on the lives of young people in Wales.”

Economic Development

Service Area	2022/23	2023/24
Economic Development	33	37
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	27 (81.8%)	33 (89.2%)
Parks & Harbour Authority	30	35
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	23 (76.7%)	30 (85.7%)

Service Area & Financial Year	Total complaints closed within timescales				Complaint outcome	
	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
Economic Development – 2022-23	27	6	0	0	16	17
Economic Development – 2023-24	33	4	0	0	27	10



Parks & Harbour Authority – 2022-23	23	7	0	0	13	17
Parks & Harbour Authority – 2023-24	30	5	0	0	19	16

During 2023/24, **Economic Development** received 37 complaints, a small increase from the 33 complaints received during 2022/23. Complaints were evenly spread out between different teams across Economic Development. These teams include Events, Cleaning and Security, Cardiff Castle, Major Projects. There has been a noticeable decrease in complaints in the second half of the financial year with 26 complaints received in Quarters 1 and 2 and 11 in Quarters 3 and 4.

There was also a small increase in the number of complaints received by Parks & Harbour Authority (30 in 2022/23 to 35 in 2023/24). There was an increase in grass cutting complaints due to mechanical issues. The department were under operational pressures due to issues leaving us with 1 'ride on' for a couple of weeks covering a vast area. This meant that there was a delay in cutting some areas.

Compliment

"I wanted to express my appreciation for all that the city warden team are doing on our behalf they truly are incredible and deserve recognition for all they do on a daily basis

I work in Cardiff but additionally I do voluntary work which means I am on the streets of Cardiff centre at least twice a week early in the morning...this has enabled me to observe firsthand the difficult challenges they face and how valuable this team truly are. It's hard to express how much they are needed and how their presence alleviates the concerns of those visiting Cardiff."

"Whenever there is a problem with trees, bushes, etc in our area I report it via the website or app and the response time is fantastic and the work is carried out so thoroughly. My husband and I volunteer with Love where you Live and each year, when your employees come to cut the shrubs in the little park opposite our house we ask them to make a small path through the hedge for us to be able to get in and pick up the litter (bottles, cans, vaping machines, etc). They are always so helpful and they are here again today and once again they have cut out a little path for us to get to the area where the rubbish builds up. The speed of your response every time I contact you and the standard of work makes a huge



difference to where we live. On behalf of all of us who live around here, a huge thank you to all of you in parks.”

Learning from complaints

A complainant attended the Blondie gig at Cardiff Castle but was disappointed by the lack of arrangements for accessibility for people with disabilities. The complainant described having to queue and that this had exacerbated their mobility problems.

The Promotor of the event were quickly contacted and, after consideration, the South Gate was designated for future events and for accessible customers.

Revenues

Service Area	2022/23	2023/24
Revenues	174	180
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	173 (99.4%)	176 (97.8%)

Financial Year	Total complaints closed within timescales				Complaint outcome	
	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
2022-23	173	1	0	0	46	128
2023-24	176	4	0	0	46	134

The number of complaints recorded by **Revenues** during the financial year increased from 174 in 2022/23 to 180 in 2023/24. A large proportion of complaints received have not been investigated as they relate to policy or working procedures – notably in relation to long term empty properties and the premium charge.

Response rates have dropped to circa 98% being responded to within corporate timescales. This was to be expected as it is not always possible to provide 100% of responses within 20 days, and the department was also without a staff member for 6 months, due to one of the



two Training & Quality Officers leaving their post. Though the response rate has slightly dropped, there has been a positive trend over the past few years from 78% in 2020/21, 80% in 2019/20, to 95%, 99% and 98% in the last three financial years. This can be attributed to continued improved working practices and complaints management.

The number of complaints upheld was broadly similar to the previous year. When complaints not investigated are stripped out, this equates to around 33% of complaints either upheld or partially upheld. This can mostly be attributed to difficulties in getting through to C2C and increased backlogs in the Revenues Department, with the Council still struggling with customer service levels.

In terms of learning from complaints, most cases upheld were relating to delays, of the remaining few most were isolated and attributed to human error. One complaint which was upheld identified misleading information provided on confirmation letters sent where Direct Debit instructions had been transferred to a customer's new account. The wording on the letter was updated as an outcome of the complaint.

Customer & Digital Services

Service Area	2022/23	2023/24
Customer & Digital Services	142	129
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	124 (69.3%)	123 (95.3%)

Service Area & Financial Year	Total complaints closed within timescales				Complaint outcome	
	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
Connect to Cardiff (C2C) 2022-23	43	0	0	0	29	14
Connect to Cardiff (C2C) 2023-24	38	0	0	0	26	12
Rent Smart Wales 2022-23	76	20	0	0	77	19
Rent Smart Wales 2023-24	88	6	0	0	23	71



24/7 Services 2022-23	3	0	0	0	0	3
24/7 Services 2023-24	3	0	0	0	1	2

Connect To Cardiff (C2C) received 129 complaints during 2023/24. In order to provide some context, during this same period C2C handled a total of 337,720 customer interactions.

- 260,827 calls
- 47,417 webform response
- 16,426 webchats
- 7852 chatbot hand-offs
- 9,721 social media responses

It is clear therefore that vast majority of citizens accessing C2C are happy with service received and this is further evidenced in the 140 compliments received.

Of the 129 complaints received:

- No responses were issued outside of the corporate deadline and SLA was achieved in all cases.
- No cases were referred to the Public Services Ombudsman of Wales. This is in line with our aim to ‘investigate once, investigate well’ and is indicative of the time taken to provide full and comprehensive responses in the first instance.

The most common theme among complaints has been the time taken to answer calls with resource limitations being identified as the major cause due to budget reduction and a reduction in headcount. This has been a contributory factor to the drive to reduce demand across traditional channels and help citizens to switch on to self-service options. Over the past 12 months, C2C has conducted a full-service review in line with Cardiff Council’s Corporate Plan and its digital agenda. Where digital solutions are available or can be developed, traditional channels may be scaled back. This ensures more phone availability for customers who need to discuss complex issues, while standard reports or requests can be made via self-service.

Currently, digital-only reporting/booking covers:

- Waste Management: Initial reports of flytipping, graffiti, street cleaning, booking bulky item collections, and slots at household waste recycling centres.
- Council Tax: Change of address for self or tenant, and single person discount applications.



The review will continue to facilitate digital where possible and reduce wait times further.

Where staff members are referenced in upheld complaints, standard practise consists of asking them to listen to the calls in question or review the transcripts of all chats so they can put themselves in the shoes of the complainant. Whilst all staff within C2C are mandated to complete as corporate Customer Service Level 1 training and Effective Written Communication training as well as local training within C2C, we still have to equate for 'the human element' and the default position is to refresh this training and support the individual on a 121 basis. We recognise that delivering customer service excellence is the core of what we do and we support the maintenance of this ethos via consistent quality monitoring.

Compliment examples

"Good morning. I phoned the council this morning to discuss my council tax. I spoke to AS. I explained to AS that I lost both parents sometime ago and I am therefore responsible for their home, council tax etc in addition to my own home. I work parttime and I'm struggling to pay the council tax on both properties. The main reason I am contacting you is to pass on my thanks and appreciation to AS. He was the most polite, kind and understanding person I've had the pleasure of dealing with in a long time. I am so moved by his attitude I felt I had to send this email. Please ensure his manager has sight of this email. And again, thanks to AS for this kind words, understanding and empathy"

"I would like to pass on my thanks to a member of your C2C team, KL. I had a query with my bill and the service and support she provided was excellent. She not only investigated my query whilst I waited, she also checked to confirm information and actioned things within 5 minutes, calling me back to advise. An absolutely excellent service!"

"Really helpful, great call and wished all calls were like that and that easy. Left the call thinking about how lovely experience it was"

Rent Smart Wales

During 2023/24, Rent Smart Wales has been able to build on the progress of previous years, having moved out of our first busy renewal period and the first year of the implementation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016. The number of complaints received by Rent Smart Wales for 23/24 is in the same region as the volume from the previous year, however we have made significant reductions of complaints being answered out of time.

The Contact Centre has made good progress with last year's recruitment issues, which has meant less complaints regarding customer service. We have also seen an increase in the number of complaints coming from tenants and third parties who believe there has been a lack of enforcement action taken by Rent Smart Wales against landlords and agents. We



believe this is due to increased awareness of landlord responsibilities after the implementation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016.

Based on the complaints received, we have continued to review our communications to ensure a good balance between legal messages about the need to comply and supporting users. For example, we have made changes to the correspondence sent out to tenants to make the process more transparent for members of the public who give evidence during an enforcement investigation.

Compliments

- “Thank you for your assistance today, I’ve phoned Rent Smart Wales for many many years and you’re always very helpful.”
- “I’m incredibly grateful to you for your help and support on this issue you have been efficient and informative if only all government departments worked as quick as you do less than one day for a response is very impressive.”

24/7 Services received just 3 complaints during 2023/24, which is a 62.5% reduction compared to 2021/22 when 18 complaints were received. Of the 3 complaints, 2 related to our Telecare service and 1 for Meals on Wheels. Considering the level of coverage provided by these services, this is a positive result.

Housing & Communities

Service Area	2022/23	2023/24
Housing & Communities	934	1,093
Number / Percentage of complaints responded to on time	32 (3.4%)	922 (84.4%)

Financial Year	Total complaints closed within timescales				Complaint outcome	
	20 working days	After 20 working days but within 3 months	After 3 months but within 6 months	After 6 months	Upheld	Not upheld
2022-23	32	283	613	6	326	608



2023-24	922	170	1	0	475	618
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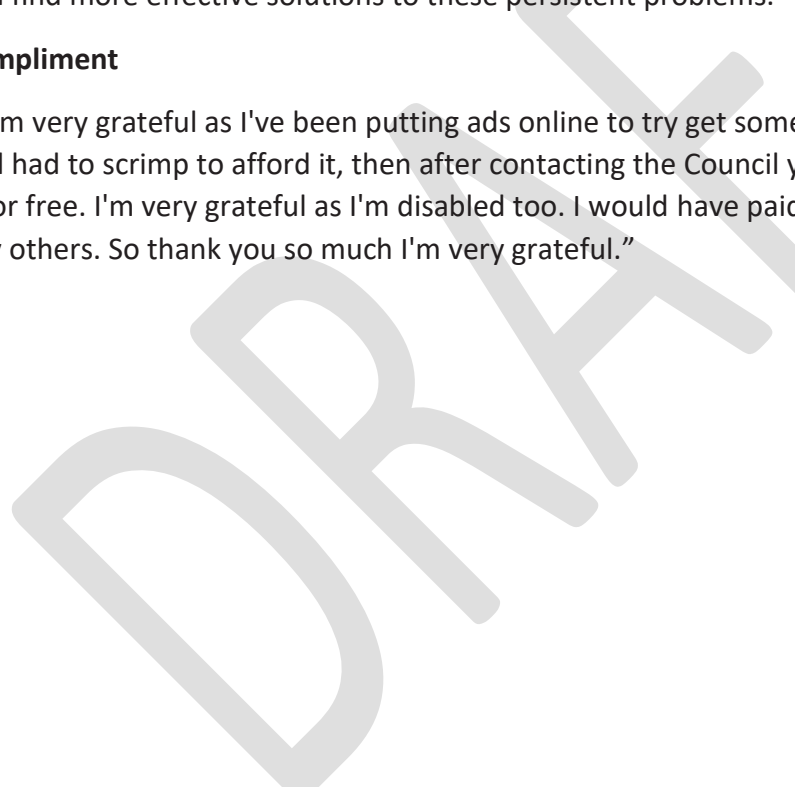
Housing & Communities experienced an increase in complaints during 2023/24 as 1,093 complaints were recorded, compared to 934 in 2022/23.

A substantial portion of this increase can be attributed to delays related to the Responsive Repairs Unit (RRU) as well as a surge in complaints concerning issues of dampness and mould. These two categories have now become the largest sources of complaints by a considerable margin, reflecting ongoing challenges in addressing these critical areas.

The sharp rise in damp and mould-related complaints, in particular, indicates a growing concern among contract-holders about the impact of these issues on their living conditions. Addressing this trend will likely require a more focused effort to improve response times and find more effective solutions to these persistent problems.

Compliment

“I am very grateful as I've been putting ads online to try get someone to sort my garden out and had to scrimp to afford it, then after contacting the Council you guys came out and did it for free. I'm very grateful as I'm disabled too. I would have paid £100 or more if I had to pay others. So thank you so much I'm very grateful.”



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