

Corporate and  
Statutory  
Complaints Data  
Review

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Quarter's 1 and 2  
2019/2012

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Audit Committee – 10th Feb 2020

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## Update

After the insourcing of the complaints function in March 2019 several changes were implemented in the future functionality of the team. This has included a thorough review of the resourcing of the team, a change in the case management system being utilised and the regularity and detail within reporting.

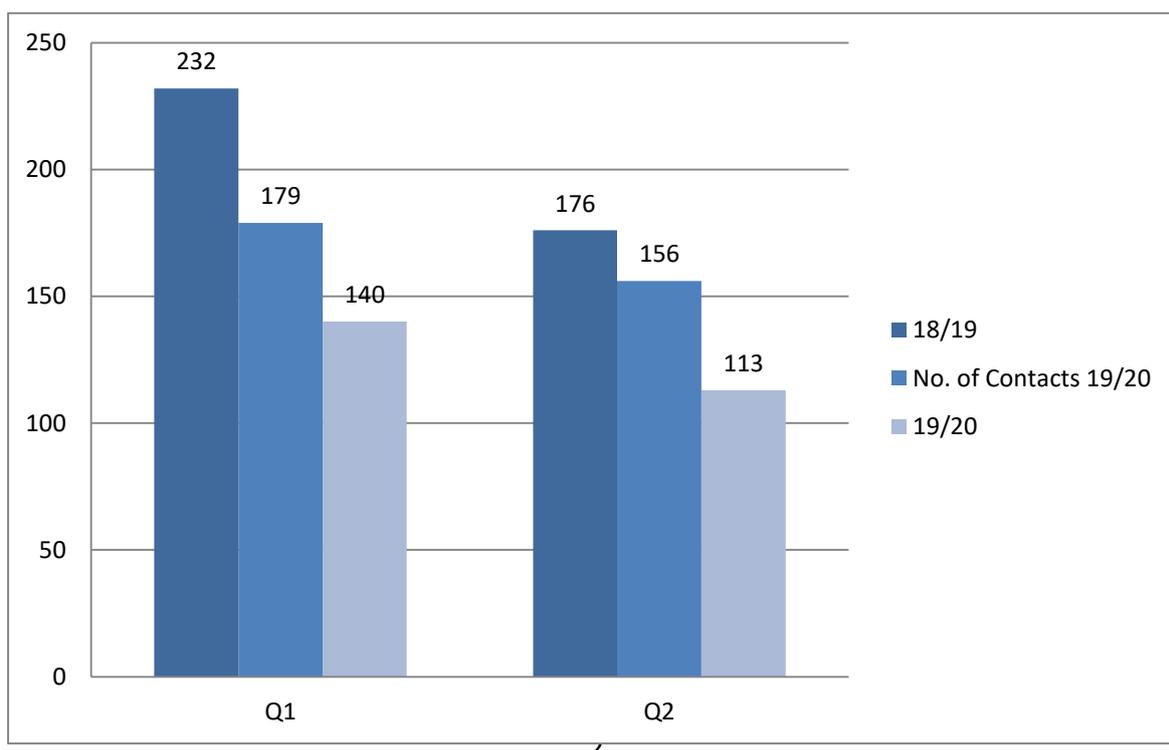
A vital additional step has now been included within the process, this being the introduction of early resolution for customers on contact before entering the formal process. This step has seen a huge reduction in the number of contacts from customers entering the formal complaints process and is being achieved in areas where we are able to meet the customer's desired outcome by liaising with the relevant service.

Reports are produced regularly with a significantly higher amount of detail than has been provided previously. Reports produced now include an overview of the numbers received and the outcomes of these but also provide service areas with insight into any trends that have been sighted within these and recommendations as to how these can be prevented in future.

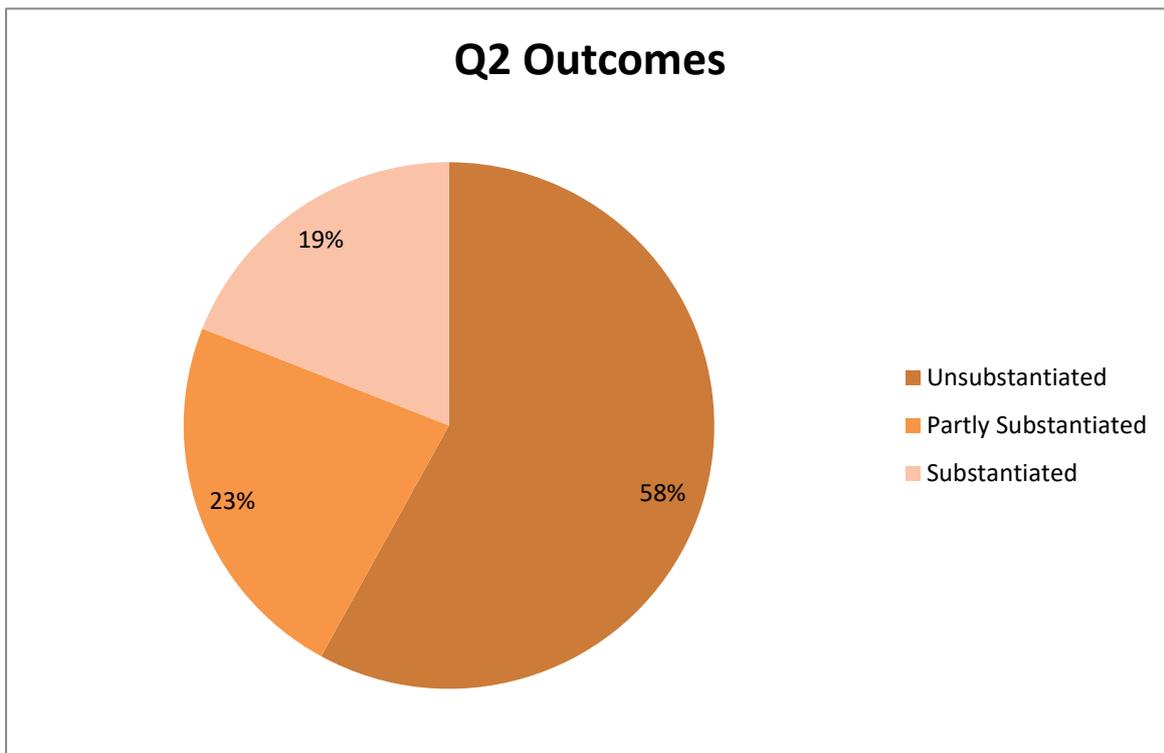
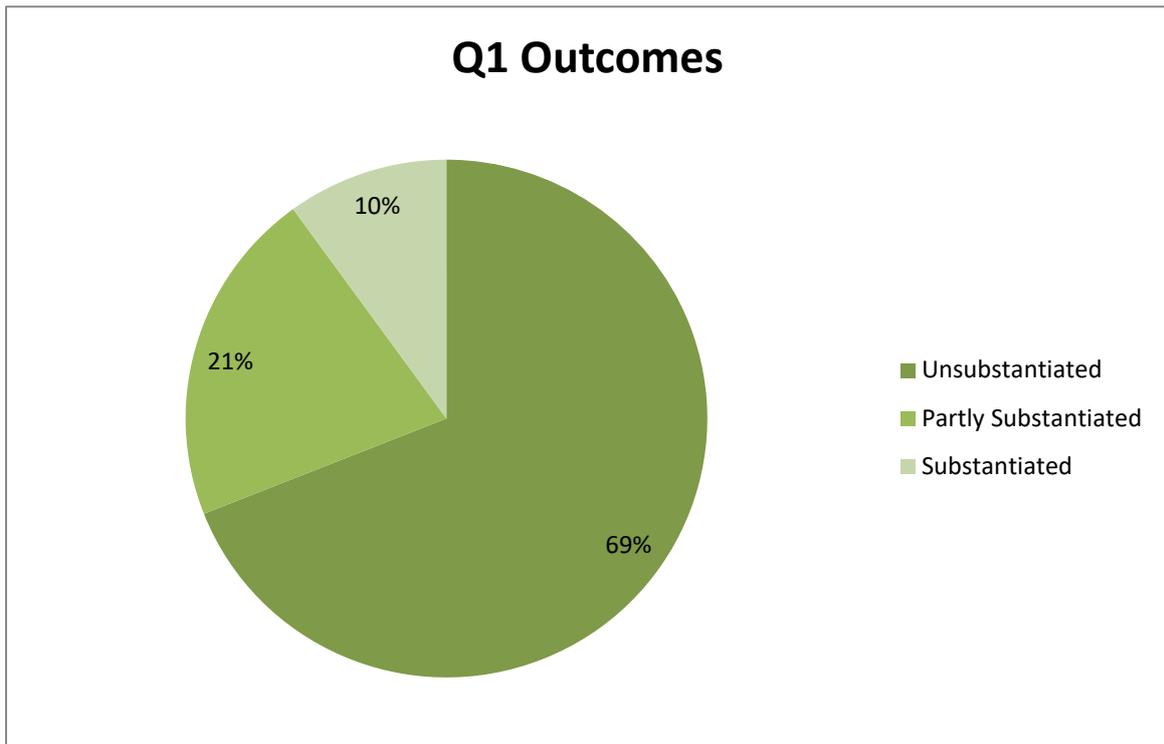
## Countywide Overview

In Q1 and Q2 of 19/20 a total of 335 contacts were received from the public, unhappy with services that had been provided to them. Of these 335 contacts 253 proceeded to enter the formal complaints process with the remaining 82 being resolved, to the customers satisfaction, and needing no further action or investigation, equating to 24% of all contacts.

The first quarter of 19/20 saw a 39% decrease in complaints compared to the first quarter of the previous year. The second quarter of 19/20 saw a 35% decrease in comparison to the same quarter of the previous year and a 19% decrease in comparison to Q1 of 19/20. The below shows the total number of complaints received in the first two quarters of the previous year, the total number of contacts received in the first two quarters of this year and the number that actually entered the formal complaints process.



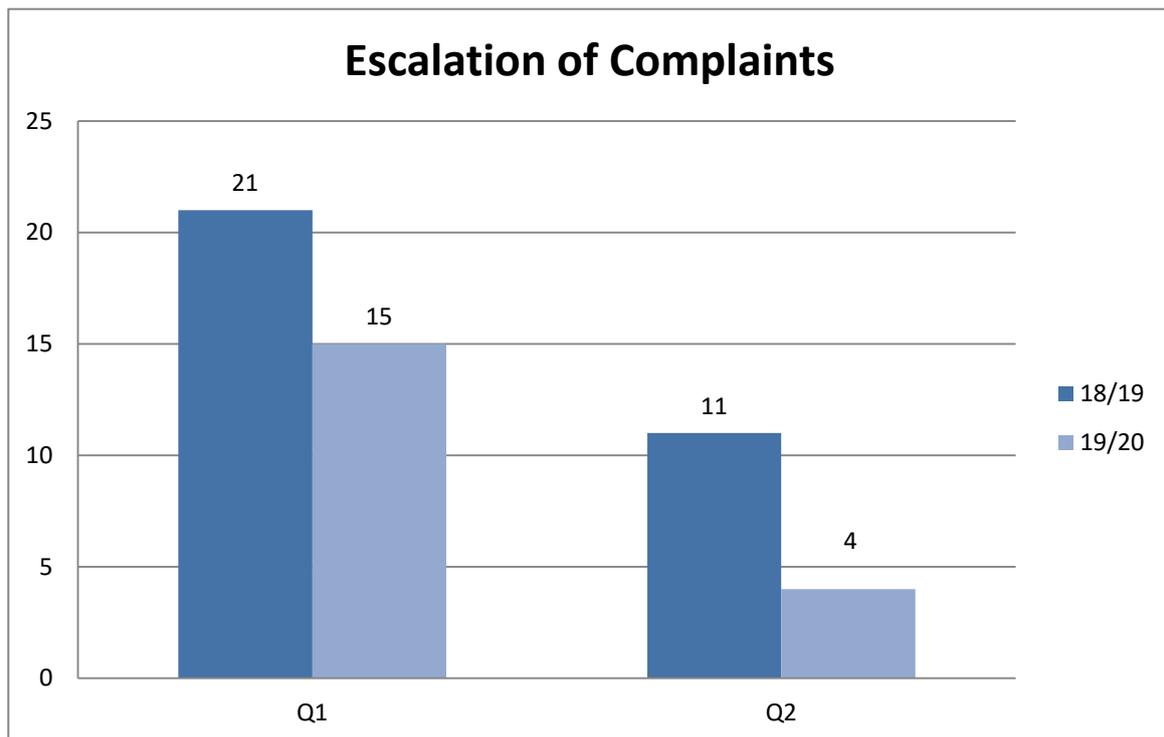
The following shows the overall outcomes of all formal complaints in the first two quarters;



For all services, complaints which have been found to be either fully or partly substantiated, have been analysed further in order to determine if there are any common factors which can be improved for future service provision. It is these cases that are now being used to make recommendations to services on things which require work and improvement.

The first quarter saw 30 cases partly substantiated and 13 cases substantiated in full. The second quarter saw an increase in the number for cases being substantiated, this being 21 cases and 26 cases partly substantiated. This ability to look critically at our services is enabling us to continue improvement, reflected in the recommendations made in quarterly reports and the steps taken by services to address common trends.

During the first quarter of this year 11 cases were escalated to the next stage of the complaints process. This decreased even further in the second quarter with only 4 escalations. Both quarters see a significant fall in escalations in comparison to the same quarters of the previous year. Q1 has seen a 47% decrease and Q2 a 73% decrease.



This is a reflection on the work undertaken by staff across services to appropriately investigate complaints and take remedial action where necessary. All requests for escalations are subject to the complaints policy guidelines and in addition early resolution to prevent escalation is also undertaken.

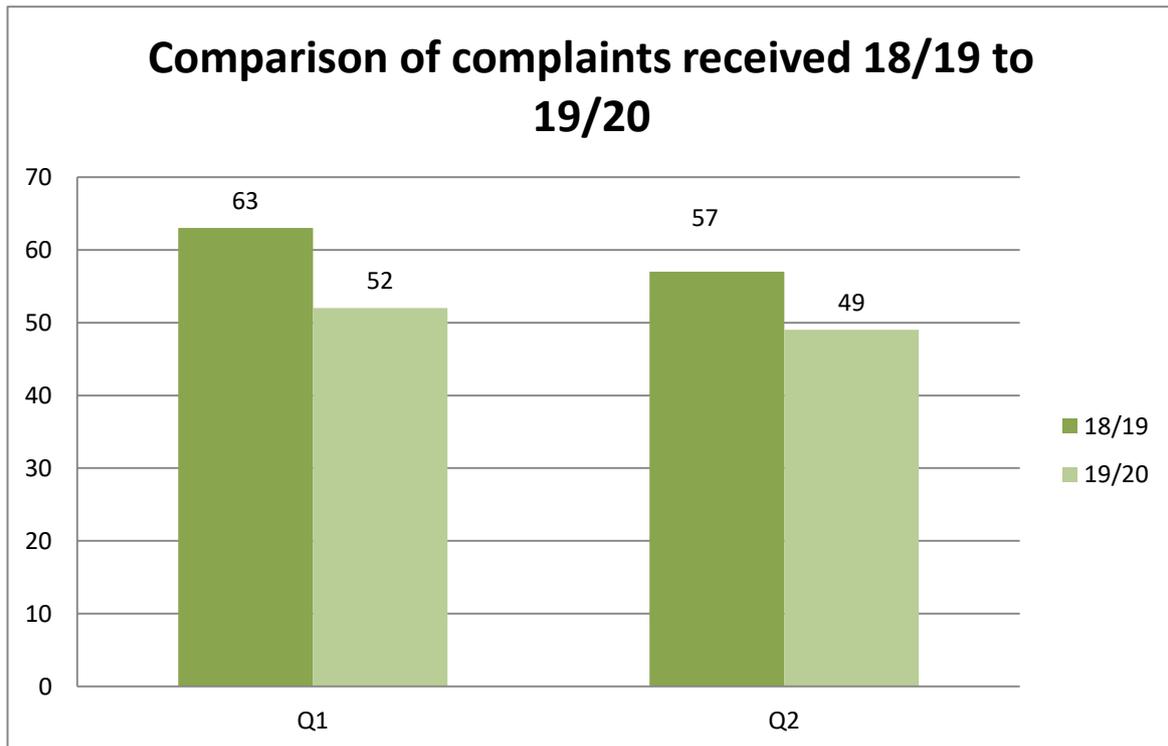
It should be considered that these significant improvements are a direct result of the ownership of complaints now remaining the responsibility of the Customer Relations team and services ability to work with the team to take remedial action where necessary.

### **Children's Services**

Children's have continued to take a proactive approach in the handling of complaints. This includes actively meeting with complainants, significantly aiding in the number of contacts resolved early and the number of complaints effectively investigated, cutting down on both the overall number that entered the formal process and the number of complaints escalated due to dissatisfaction with the outcome of a stage 1.

124 total contacts were received from the public in relation to Children's Services. of these, 101 entered the formal complaints process overall in the first and second quarters of 19/20. The remaining 23 were resolved early to the satisfaction of the customer. This number accounts for 18% of all contacts received. When broken down by quarter the number of contacts which avoided entering the formal process also significantly increased from Q1 to Q2. Q1 saw 14% of contacts resolved early with Q2 seeing 22% of contacts resolved early.

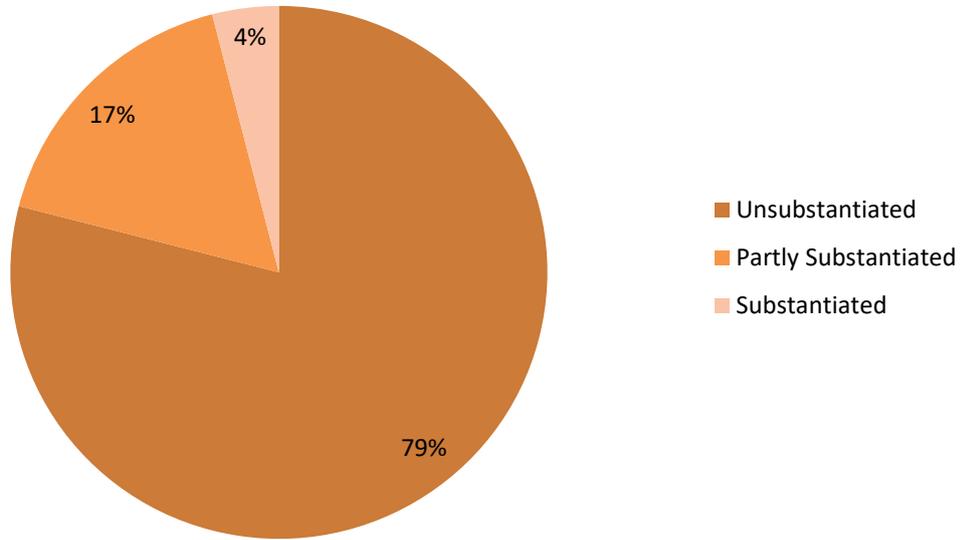
Both quarters saw a drop in the number of complaints entering the formal complaint stage from the same quarters of the previous year.



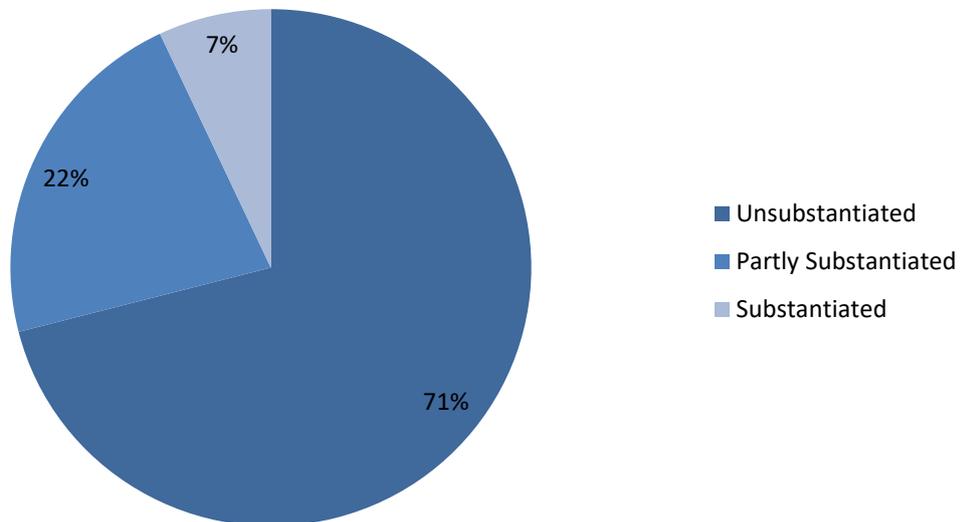
When looking at the outcomes of these complaints it is positive to see that the number of complaints found to be either substantiated or partly substantiated remains fairly low. It is also encouraging that this has remained consistent throughout both quarters. Overall Q1 saw 9 complaints partly substantiated and 2 complaints substantiated with Q2 having 11 partly and 3 substantiated.

The following show the outcomes of complaints for both quarters;

## Children's Services Q1 Outcomes

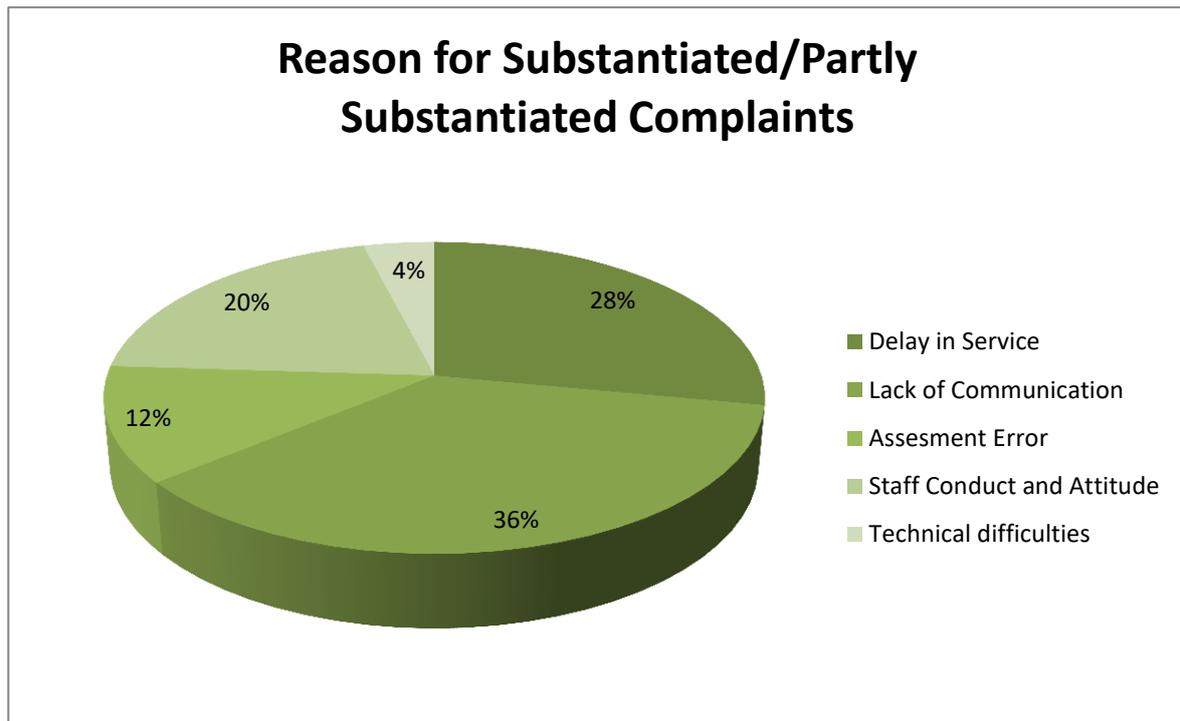


## Children's Services Q2 Outcomes



Analysis was undertaken on those complaints partly or fully substantiated in order to determine if there were any trends or common factors. This data was then used to give recommendations to the service in areas which they should seek to improve and what could be introduced to meet this.

The following factors in complaints that were substantiated and the aspects of those complaints partly substantiated where fault was found.



With a lack of communication accounting for over a third of all fully or partly substantiated complaints for the service recommendations have been made on how this can be improved.

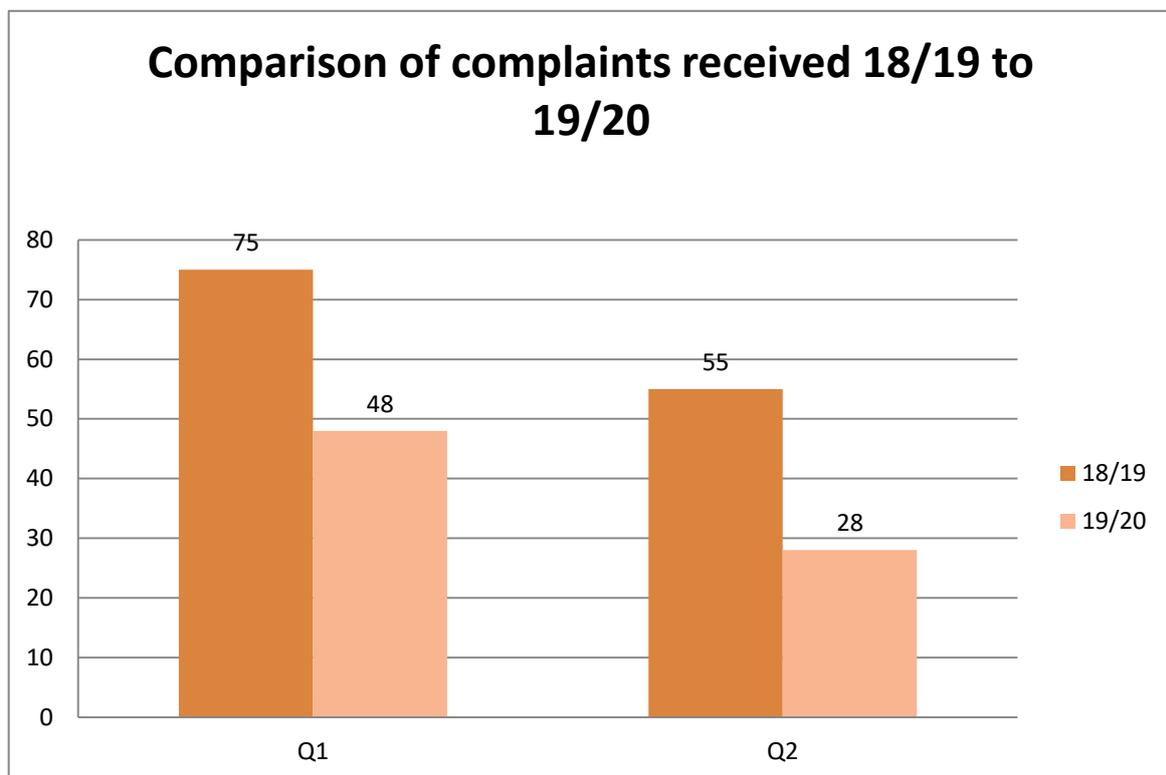
With further analysis it is noted that staff do not have a fixed guideline for how often contact should be maintained with families they are working with. With this mind the criteria can vary for what would be considered a 'normal' amount of time for there to be no contact. It has been recommended to service that they implement a clear guideline for staff as to how often it is expected that contact should be made with individuals receiving a service. This will provide staff with clear standards and enable families to be aware of what they can expect in terms of the regularity of communication.

After communication it was also noted that there was a significant portion of complaints, where fault was found, which were due to a delay in service being provided. Further analysis of these complaints suggested that over half of these could also have been avoided if there had been consistent and clear communication throughout. With work already being undertaken by Quality Assurance in putting this guideline in place it is hoped that there will be a decrease in the number of complaints raised due to a lack of communication with a potential knock on effect for those complaints raised in relation to delays. Consistent and regular communication will allow individuals to be regularly updated on when a service will be delivered to them

### **Adult Care & Community Wellbeing**

Adult services have seen a significant decline both in the number of contacts being received from the public and the number of these contacts entering the formal complaints process. This initial decline from the previous year can be attributed to the analysis which was already being undertaken by the service, and the use of this in informing policy and/or procedural changes.

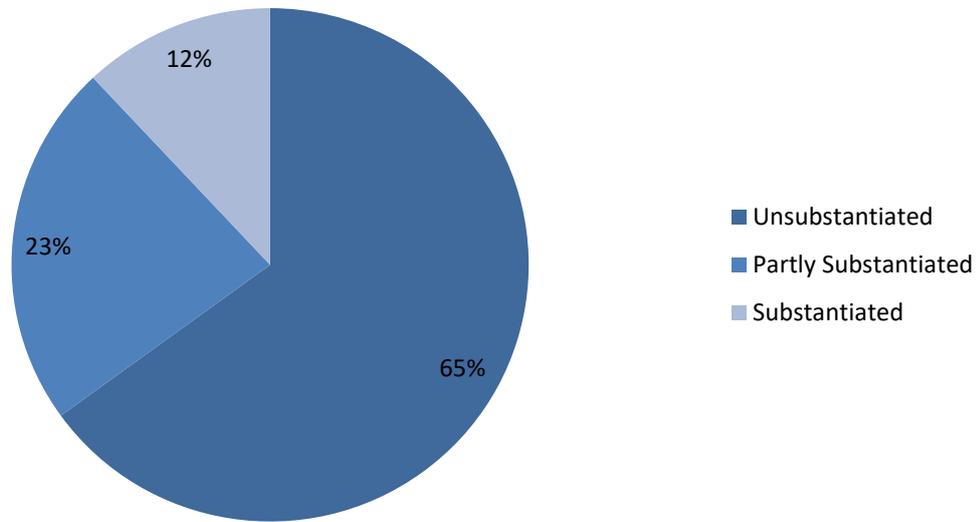
Over the first two quarters of this year 98 total contacts were received in relation to dissatisfaction with services provided by Adult services. Of these 76 became formal complaints with the remaining 22 being resolved to the customer's satisfaction early. This accounted for 23% of all contacts received. As mentioned, the area has seen a significant drop in comparison to the same quarters of the previous year but a decline is also evident in the figures from the first to the second quarter.



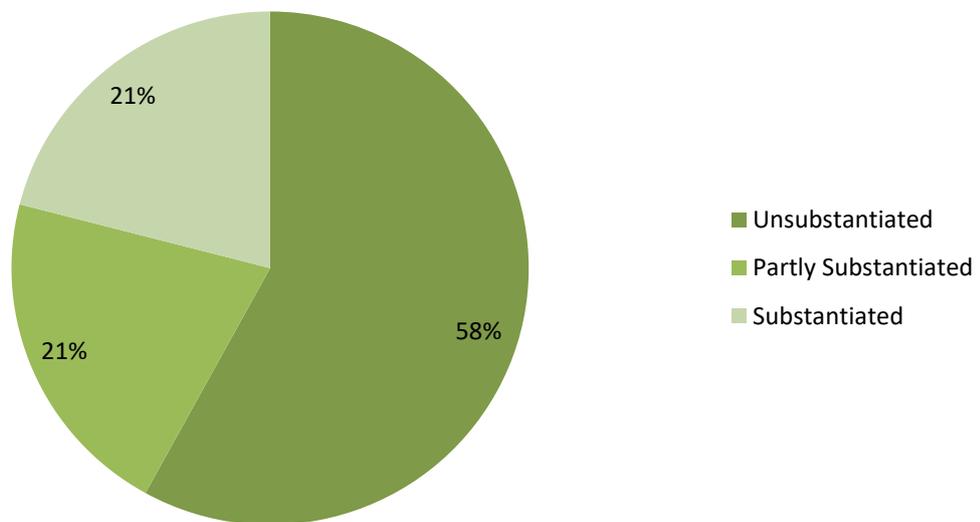
Quarterly reporting is still completed by staff within service, with figures and additional details being provided by the complaints function. This is currently inconsistent with other service areas however with additional data being provided by the Customer Relations Team this is now moving in the same direction.

As with children's services all outcomes of complaints have been recorded. There was consistency over these quarters in the number of complaints found to be substantiated with a drop in complaints found to be partly substantiated from the first quarter to the second quarter. Overall both quarters saw 6 complaints substantiated. 11 complaints were partly substantiated in the first quarter dropping to 6 in the second quarter.

### Adult Care Q1 Outcomes

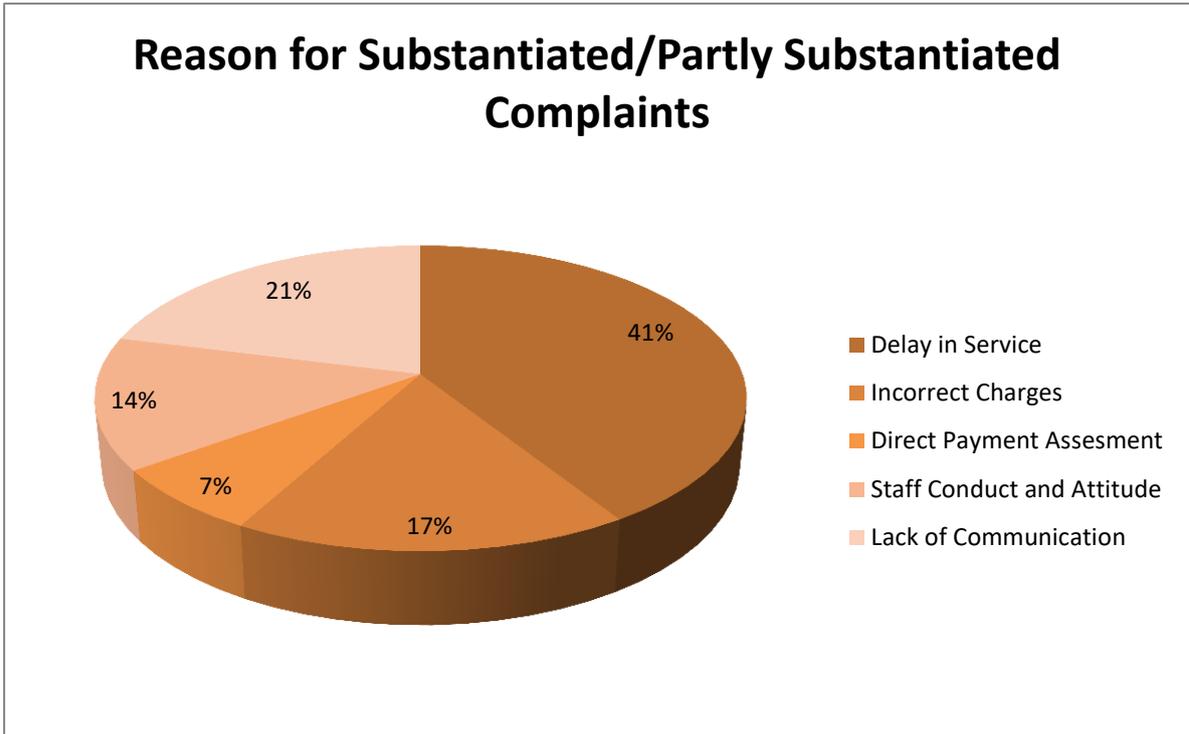


### Adult Care Q2 Outcomes



Further analysis has been undertaken on those complaints where fault was found. As reporting by adult services is done by their own staff these recommendations have been made to those individuals in order that they may be included within quarterly reports. The following shows a breakdown of the areas where fault was found within the service.

## Reason for Substantiated/Partly Substantiated Complaints



With a delay in service accounting for almost half of all those complaints found to be substantiated or partly substantiated and a lack of communication accounting for a fifth of these, comparisons can be drawn with children's services. It is recommended that service are more transparent about any delays that customers may face. This can be achieved through regular communication, as recommended to children's services. Adults should also consider implementing an expected timeframe for communication to be maintained with individuals receiving service.

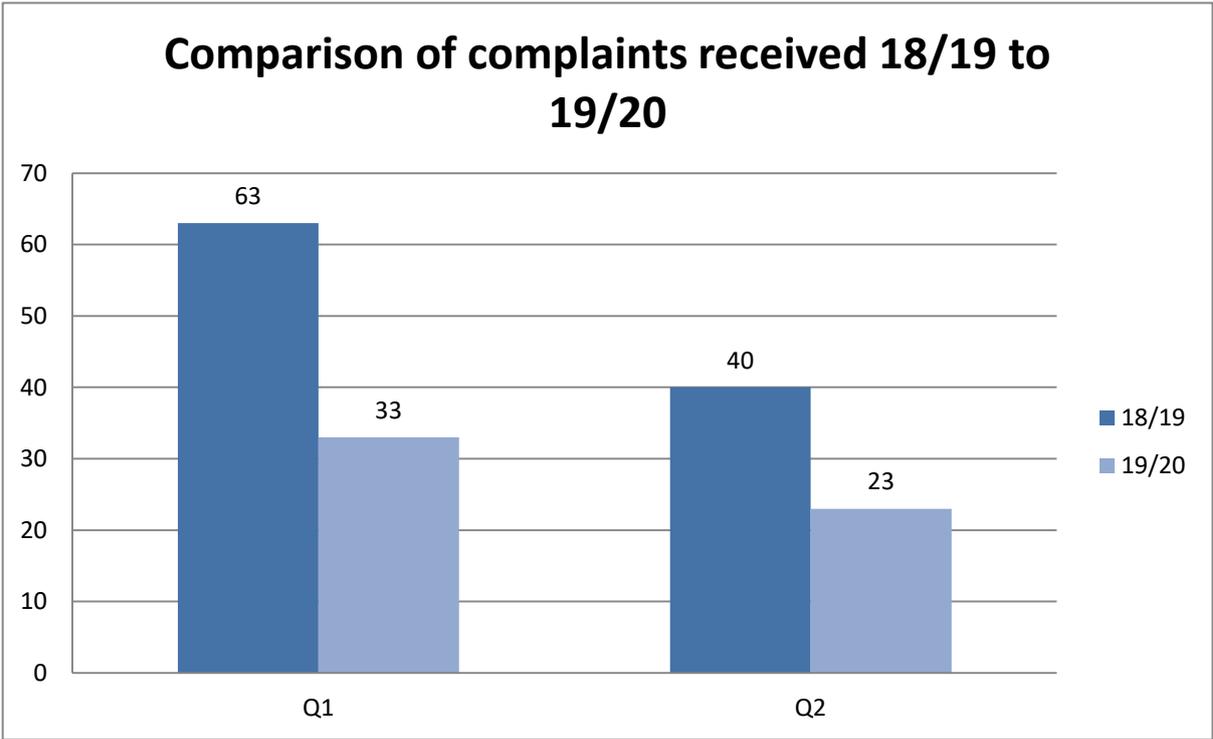
With an increasing demand on the service it is to be expected that there will be delays. When considering that there are almost 30,000 individuals accessing the service the number of complaints received, and the number of these where fault is found, is less than 1% of this number.

In addition staff within the service are undertaking further analysis on any complaints received about contracted services. This allows for the monitoring of contracts and the ability to ensure that we continue to provide the best service, whether these are contracted externally or provided by the authority directly.

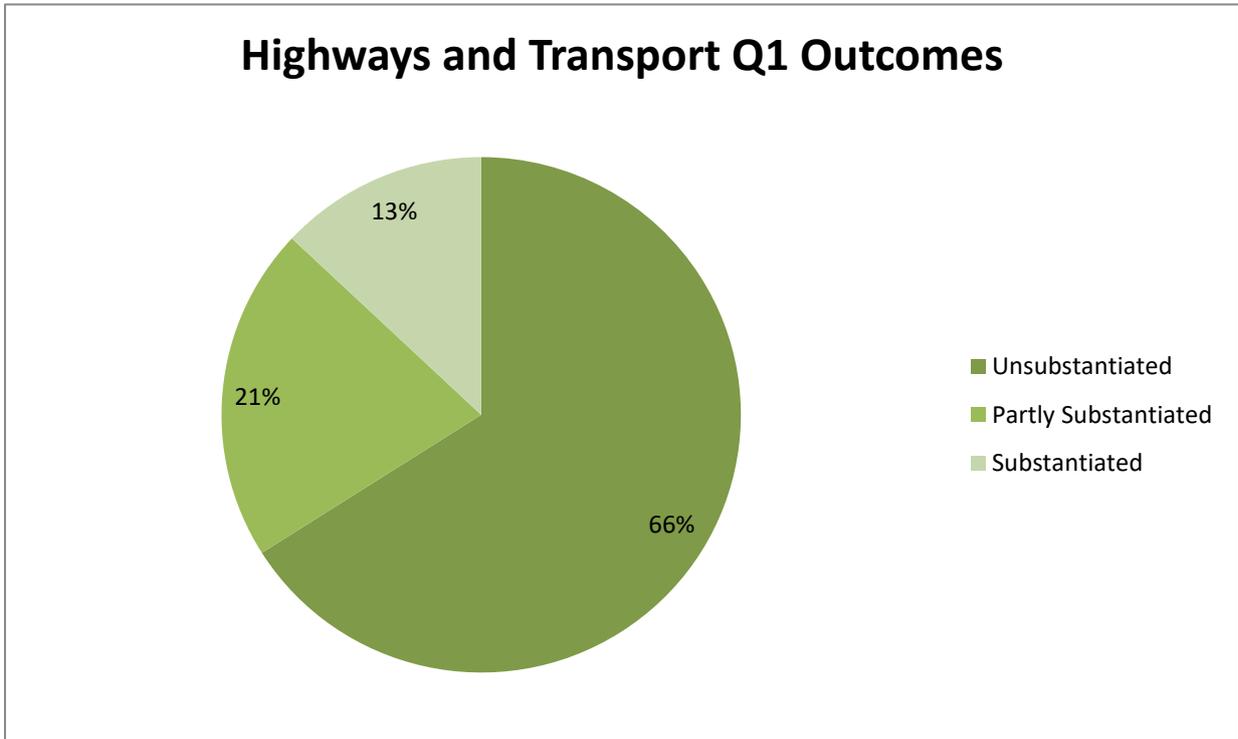
### **Highways and Transport**

This area has made significant strides in its approach to complaints and has seen an exceptional level of improvement. The service and its staff have been particularly positive about the new procedure which has been put in place through the new policy and the approach of the Customer Relations team. A total of 81 contacts were received over the first 2 quarters from the public to express dissatisfaction with the service. 28% of the contacts received in the first quarter were resolved without entering the formal complaints process. This increased to 34% of all contacts in the second quarter.

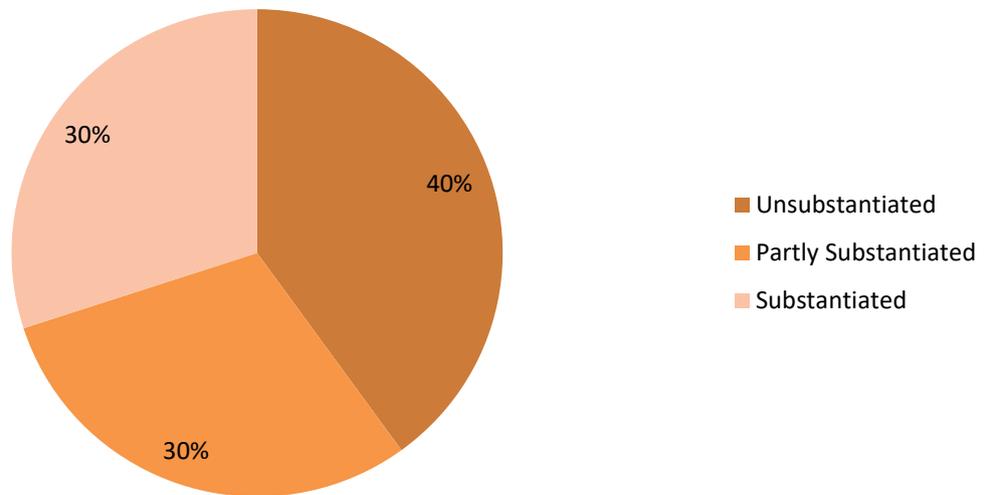
Q1 saw a 47% decline in complaints when compared to the same quarter of the previous year. Consistently, Q2 saw a 42% decrease in comparison to the same quarter of the previous year.



The following reflects the outcomes of those complaints found to be substantiated or partly substantiated;



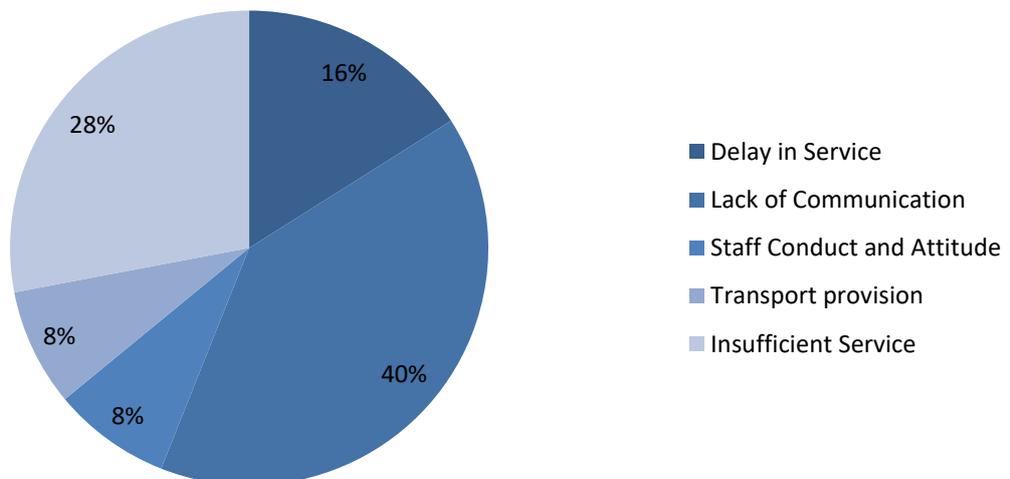
## Highways and Transport Q2 Outcomes



Although an increase can be seen in the number of complaints being substantiated or partly substantiated it should be considered that this area has had only 1 escalation to stage 2. The services ability to look at itself critically and acknowledge where things could be improved are a huge contributing factor to this very low level of escalations.

Further analysis of those complaints where fault was found showed the following;

## Reason for Substantiated/Partly Substantiated Complaints



Delays in service and an insufficient service were the two main areas where it was recognised that there was fault. Complaints in relation to delays could potentially have been improved with increased communication with the individuals who raised issues.

In regards to those complaints where it was acknowledged that there was an insufficient service; 9 out of 11 were due to the messages received by the individual on FixMyStreet. It has been recognised that where a fault does not meet our intervention level or is already on the planned works this message is not filtered down to the customer. At this stage the only message which appears is 'No Further Action' despite workers putting detailed notes on the back office of why no further action will be taken.

Service has already recognised this gap and are working with Business Support to introduce a method by which this information can be relayed to the customer, in order to better inform them as to why no further action will be taken. The services ability to adapt its processes in order to benefit the public can also be seen through its Customer Engagement and Liaison Strategy. Significant work has been done by the service (AD and Senior Management) in putting this strategy together and implementing this throughout the service. Roadshows were held whereby this message could be filtered down to all staff in this area. The introduction of this has seen a significant improvement not only in the number of complaints received but in the clarity of responses being provided to customers.

With the introduction of more detailed answers being provided via FixMyStreet in the future it is hoped that this number will continue to trend downwards.

#### **Environment and Planning**

With the relatively small number of complaints in this area both quarters have been considered together. In total 12 contacts were received from the public to express dissatisfaction with this area. Of these contacts 67% were resolved without entering the formal process. The team have been extremely proactive in working with the Customer Relations Team in trying to resolve issues for customers and this is clear from the figures.

4 complaints were recorded for this area. of these 2 were unsubstantiated and 2 were partly substantiated. Of the 2 where fault was found by the service both were in relation to a delay in service and were remedied as a result of the complaint. This area saw no escalations to the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of the process.

#### **Trading Standards**

One complaint was received for this area. This related to matters which had been dealt with in court and there remain ongoing enquiries into this matter.

#### **Public Protection and Communities**

Similarly to Environment and Planning there were a relatively low number of complaints in relation to this area and so both quarters have been considered together. Overall 14 contacts were received for Fire and Rescue, Archives and Library Services, Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership and Registration and Coroners services. Of these 14, 3 were resolved outside of the complaints process leaving 11 within the process. 6 of these were unsubstantiated with the remaining 5 being either partly or fully upheld.

4 of these were due to a lack of communication from various offices and adds to the trends spotted across other service areas.

\*The remaining complaints which have not been factored into these figures were for various areas including HR and recruitment services and delays in pension etc.

### **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman**

The first half of this year saw 7 complaints made to the LGO. Of these 2 had not completed the authorities internal process and were referred back to the authority in order for this to be completed.

The remaining 5 were considered by the LGO. 3 of these were raised against Children's Services (1 corporate children's and 2 statutory children's) and 2 were raised against Adult Services, both statutory. Of the 3 raised in relation to Children's services the LGO has agreed with the authorities findings for 2 of these cases, the remainder is still open to the LGO and under investigation. This case has completed 2 stages of the complaints process but did not enter the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage for statutory complaints as no request was received. Details of this case and the authorities finding have been sent for further consideration.

Of the 2 complaints raised for Adults services one remains with the LGO who are still considering the evidence submitted by the authority. The other was made by an individual known to the authority for repeat complaints. The LGO have referred this back to the authority as no stage 2 was completed for this individual. In order to appropriately manage the individual under the authorities vexatious complainant procedure a meeting has been offered to the individual in order to appropriately manage expectations and set clear boundaries on acceptable behaviour.

It is expected that there will be an increased interest in complaints regarding the SEND service due to an entire team within the Ombudsmans office being dedicated to this area in the near future. This has arisen due to the increase in the number of complaints raised in relation to this service, nationally.

A more detailed report from the LGO will be available at the end of the financial year.

### **Conclusion**

Significant improvements have been made by services across the council and this is reflected in the figures reported on. Recommendations have been made to individual service areas as mentioned and the end of the year will include a summary of what steps have been taken in order to address the recommendations. Work should continue on our ability as an authority to recognise errors made and all areas are encouraged to be more transparent with this. Improvements can only be made where we are able to acknowledge that an area may be lacking and identifying how we can improve this.

It is clear that a common theme throughout all services is that of delays and a lack of communication. The authority should seek overall to be more realistic with customers when advising of what can be expected from the service being provided. As mentioned earlier, all staff should be given clear guidelines on how regularly they should update and contact any individuals who are awaiting the receipt of a service, giving both parties realistic expectations.

It is also recommended that all quarterly reporting be completed using data held by the complaints function in order that this is an accurate reflection of complaints received and the consistency and reliability of this information.

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