



**Doncaster  
Council**



# **Complaints and Compliments Annual Report for 2020/21**

## **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to summarise complaints and compliment information for 2020/21 for Doncaster Council and partners. This includes the Council, Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST), St Leger Homes of Doncaster (SLHD) and Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust (DCLT).

The aim of complaint procedures is to resolve any dissatisfaction promptly, effectively and transparently and to inform service improvements to prevent service users experiencing the same issues in the future. The Council, DCST, SLHD and DCLT all have complaint policies and procedures. They also have officers who are responsible for ensuring the complaint and compliment processes are followed and are available to support customers and staff to ensure that making a complaint is as easy as possible for all concerned. These officers also ensure we respond to enquiries and investigations from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

The Council's definition of a complaint is:

***“An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action taken by the Council or their staff, which affects a customer or a group of customers”***

The aim of the complaint procedure is to resolve any dissatisfaction promptly, effectively and transparently and to assist with service improvements. All councils have a duty to provide available access to residents to report concerns and must investigate and respond within a reasonable and defined timescale.

## **2. Complaints Procedure**

The following Complaint Procedure relates to all the organisations; however, DCST also have an additional statutory procedure, which is detailed later in this section.

### **Early Resolution**

Complaints that can be fully resolved to the complainant's satisfaction within 3 working days is the Council's preferred method of dealing with complaints. We aim to deal with the majority of complaints by early resolution. However, the Council will need to deal with some complaints through a formal investigation approach due to their complexity.

### **Stage 1 – Local Resolution**

At this stage, a senior officer within the service area will investigate the complaint and send a full response to the complainant within 10 working days. In the event a complaint cannot be responded to in full by this time then the customer must be updated and an extension recorded with a new due date. Any extensions agreed should be shared with the Customer Experience team who will be monitoring the progress of each complaint.

## **Escalated Complaint Investigation**

A complainant can request an escalated complaint investigation if they are unhappy with the outcome of the Stage 1 response. The Customer Experience team will review whether there has been any additional information provided by the complainant that would warrant a further review. An independent senior officer would conduct the investigation. Their role is to ensure that a thorough investigation is carried out and a full response provided to the complainant within 20 working days (or a pre agreed timescale) of their latest communication. The Escalated investigation is the end of the Council's complaints procedure, there is no further right to appeal to the Council following the final response.

## **Local Government Social Care Ombudsman**

Following a full investigation, a complainant can approach the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The LGSCO will not usually investigate a complaint unless it has been dealt with through the Council's complaint procedure first and exhausted the internal complaints procedure. The option to approach the LGSCO is the third and final stage of the complaints procedure and is the final point of contact to attempt resolution of a complaint.

St Leger Homes may also receive applications from The Housing Ombudsman specific to their functions. DCLT do not have an Ombudsman, therefore any Stage 3 complaints are investigated and responded to by their Chief Executive.

## **Outcome and Resolution**

There are three main categories for classifying the outcome of a complaint, which are as follows:

- *Upheld*: This is where we agree with the concerns raised and as a result, have put measures in place to improve service delivery going forward.
- *Partially Upheld*: We agree with some of the issues identified but not all.
- *Not Upheld*: There has been no evidence found to support the allegations of concern.

In cases where a complaint is upheld or partially upheld, an apology is always given for the faults that have occurred. In some instances, the investigator of the complaint may recommend that training be carried out for relevant staff members to ensure any knowledge gaps are addressed.

There may also be instances whereby complainants are offered a gesture of goodwill for time and trouble in making their complaint. This can be monetary or an appropriate gift. In most cases where a fault has been identified and a recommendation made, the Customer Experience Officer will monitor this to ensure any agreed action is taken.

The LGSCO can ask a Council to:

- Apologise to a customer;
- provide a service a customer should have had;
- make a decision the Council should have done before;
- reconsider a decision the Council did not take properly in the first place;
- improve the Councils procedures so similar problems do not happen again; or
- make a payment to the customer.

The LGSCO do not have legal powers to enforce the organisations they investigate to follow their recommendations however it would be unlikely that an organisation would fail to do so.

## **DCST Statutory Complaint Procedure**

The majority of representations that the Trust receives regarding the functions of children's social care fall under the statutory complaints procedure. The procedure is defined in The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006. The statutory procedure allows for children and young people "to make representations, including complaints about the actions, decisions or apparent failings of a local authority's children's social services provision. Complaints that do not fall under the statutory complaints procedure are generally those matters that do not relate to children's social care involvement or services that are not provided directly by children's social workers.

### **Statutory Stage 1 - Local Resolution**

The aim is to resolve as many complaints as possible by the local team at this early stage. The local Team Manager should discuss the complaint with the complainant and attempt to address the issues as quickly as possible. They should exchange information and thinking behind decisions and try to agree a way forward. This should take up to 10 working days, with a maximum extension of up to 20 working days for complex complaints or due to staff availability.

### **Statutory Stage 2 – Investigation**

When a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, they may request that the Customer Experience Manager escalate their complaint to a statutory Stage 2 investigation. The Customer Experience Manager will then make a decision on whether or not to escalate the complaint to Stage 2 based on the evidence provided by the complainant.

If the Customer Experience Manager does not agree to escalate the complaint to Stage 2, they write to the complainant and explain why they have made this decision. The complainant is advised of their right to contact the LGSCO if they are unhappy with this decision.

The investigation is conducted by an external Investigating Officer who is accompanied by an external Independent Person (whose role is to ensure that the investigation is open, transparent and fair). Both officers complete a report with their

recommendations following the investigation, which is passed onto a senior manager within the Trust (Adjudicating Officer) for the adjudication process. The Adjudicating Officer is a senior manager who does not have management responsibility for the service area that has been complained about.

The Adjudicating Officer then considers the reports and responds to the complainant on behalf of the Trust. A copy of the Investigating Officer and Independent Person's reports are also shared with the complainant at this stage. The Stage 2 process should be completed within 25 working days, although this timescale can be extended to 65 working days for complex complaints.

### **Statutory Stage 3 – Review panel**

Following a full Stage 2 investigation a complainant can request that their complaint is considered further by a review panel (Stage 3). The Customer Experience Manager will make a decision on whether or not to escalate the complaint to Stage 3 based on the evidence provided by the complainant.

If the Customer Experience Manager does not agree to escalate the complaint to Stage 3, they write to the complainant and explain why they have made this decision. The complainant is advised of their right to contact the LGSCO if they are unhappy with this decision.

The review panel should be held within 30 working days of the request. Within 5 working days of the review panel meeting the Independent Chair will send a letter to the Chief Executive outlining the panel's findings and recommendations. The Chief Executive will then provide the Trust's final response within a further 15 working days. The whole process should take a maximum of 50 working days.

### **3. Key Headlines 2020/21**

#### **Complaints Received across all Organisations**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Stage 1 2019/20</b>	<b>Stage 1 2020/21</b>
DMBC	620	460
SLHD	832	845
DCST	134	151
DCLT	966	321
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2552</b>	<b>1777</b>

### Escalated Complaints across all Organisations

Organisation	Stage 2 2019/20	Ombudsman 2019/20	Stage 2 2020/21	Ombudsman 2020/21
DMBC	34	6	22	4
SLHD	41	1	25	2
DCST	0	2	1	0
DCLT			87	7 (Chief Exec Review rather than Ombudsman)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>13</b>

### Compliments Received across all Organisations

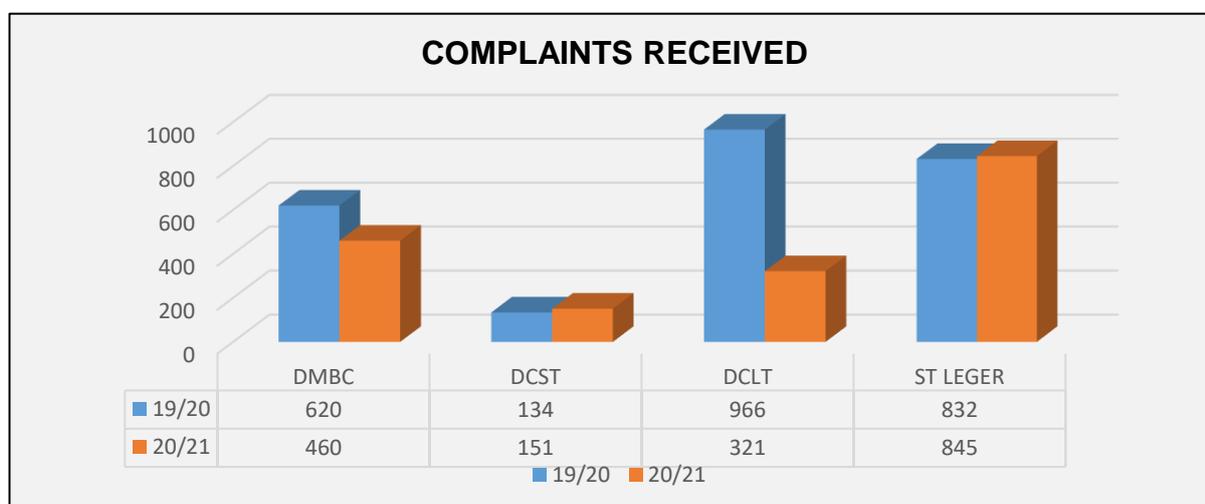
Organisation	Compliments 2019/20	Compliments 2020/21
DMBC	346	423
SLHD	203	107
DCST	243	265
DCLT	57	28
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>849</b>	<b>823</b>

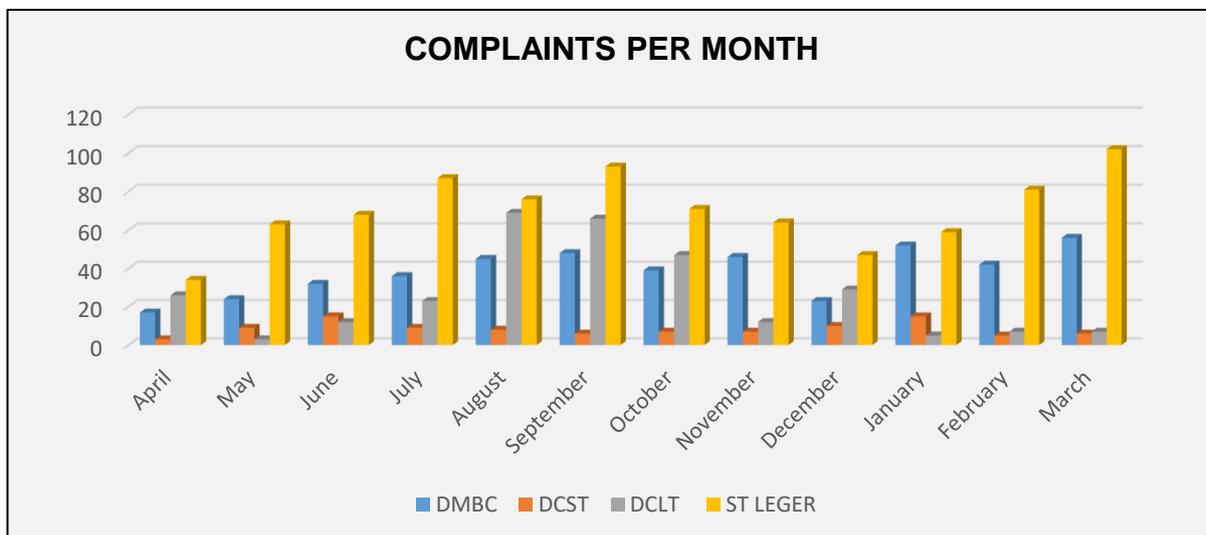
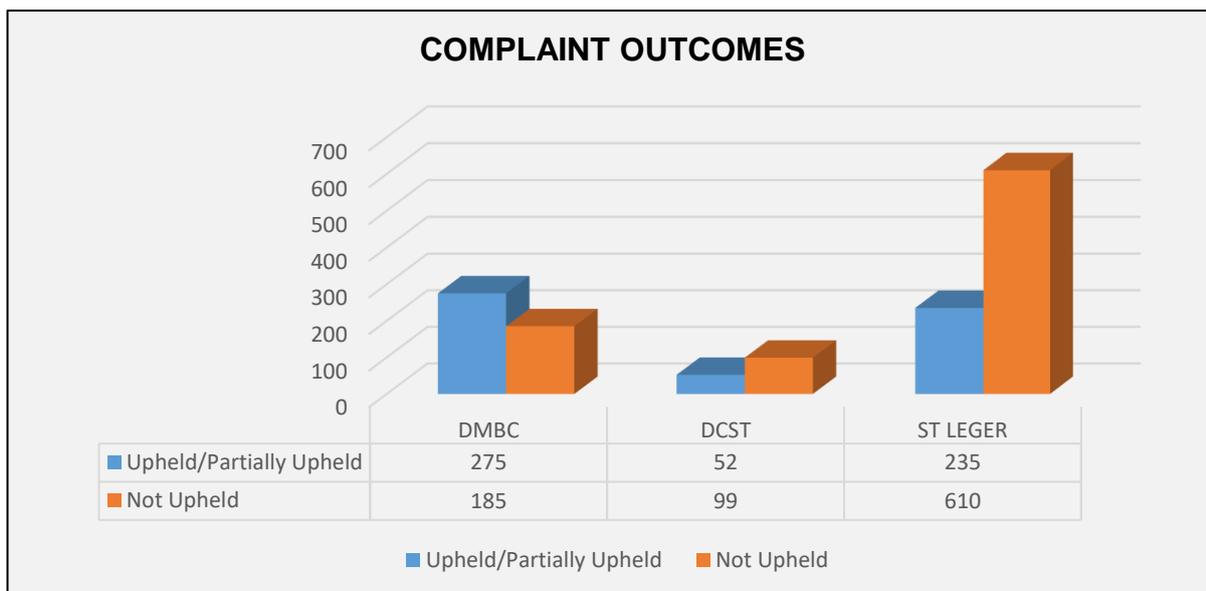
#### 4. High Level Analysis

Across all the organisations in 2020/21, we saw a reduction in the number of complaints received by a cumulative 775, resulting in 1,777 compared to 2,552 in the previous year. However, there was an increase in complaints to DCST and SLHD.

Complaints also took longer to respond to on average due to many staff working on the Covid response.

Below the accompanying graphs are comments from each sector discussing these figures in more detail.





## Doncaster Council

Monthly trends for 2020/21 are understandably different to previous years. Due to the pandemic resulting in closures of businesses, residential lockdowns and reductions on services across the authority, we have seen the number of complaints being submitted by residents fall drastically.

From April 2020, we have seen the numbers of complaints logged each month rise and concluded the year on a figure we would deem as average based on previous annual reports.

We began the year with just 17 complaints logged in April 2020 to a figure of 56 in March 2021. During March, we received 5 complaints about the Household Waste and Recycling Centres, 4 of which were related to the traffic management systems that were in place at the time.

## **St Leger Homes**

Monthly trends for 2020/21 are not comparable to previous years, due to the impact of COVID.

- Quarter 1 saw a large decrease in complaints compared to 2019/20, which is accredited to the COVID-19 lockdown.
- Quarter 2 saw complaints increase, some of which were related to the impact of COVID-19 on their services, such as lack of supplies, but some could have been prevented through better communication.
- Quarter 3 saw a decrease in complaints compared to 2019/20
- Quarter 4 saw a 7% increase in complaints compared to last Quarter 4 in 2019/20.

Lack of information and staff actions continue to be a theme in upheld complaints for both Property Services, Housing and Customer Services. Lack of information in explaining what is required to be able to complete a repair and returning calls as requested.

## **Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust**

Overall feedback during the year has seen a significant decrease of 645 complaints compared to the previous year; however, this will mainly be attributed to the fact that much of the trusts facilities have been closed for a large proportion of the year.

Looking at data over the full year, the volumes of complaints received remained in line with the closure of centres, followed by the stepping up of services again and the subsequent closures that followed. Significant peaks can be seen at two main points in the year. The first being in April 2020 when the country was first heading into the COVID crisis. During this period, the mass majority of the complaints related to membership payments and pre-booked activity. At this point, there was a lot of uncertainty about what would happen with payments already committed through direct debit and members quite rightly wanting reassurance that they would not be paying whilst the gyms were closed. This same level of feedback was not received on subsequent lockdowns, we believe that this is in part, because communications were more proactively planned and that customers and members were more accustomed to what would happen.

The second peak in complaints appears to be a combination of two contributing factors. Firstly, it was during the summer months where we traditionally see an increase in footfall to DCLT venues, which in turn leads to an increase in customer complaints. Secondly, it coincided with the reintroduction of swimming lessons. Due to a reduction in the available capacities for swimming pools and the fact that some facilities remained closed, DCLT were unable to accommodate everybody back into swimming lessons. Of those that could return, many were unable to have the time slot that they had previously, this led to an increase in the number of complaints that were received.

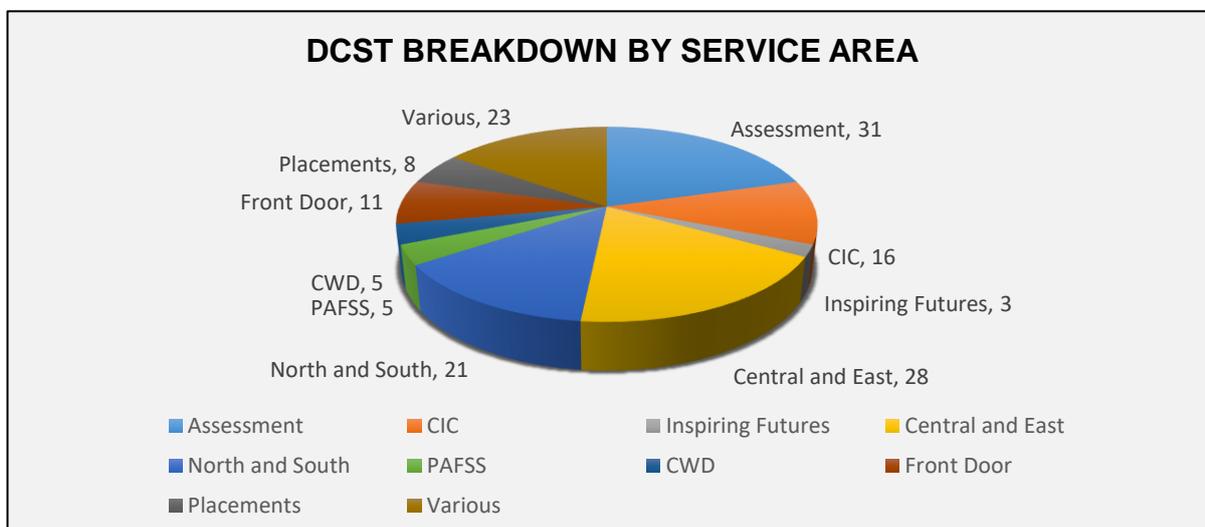
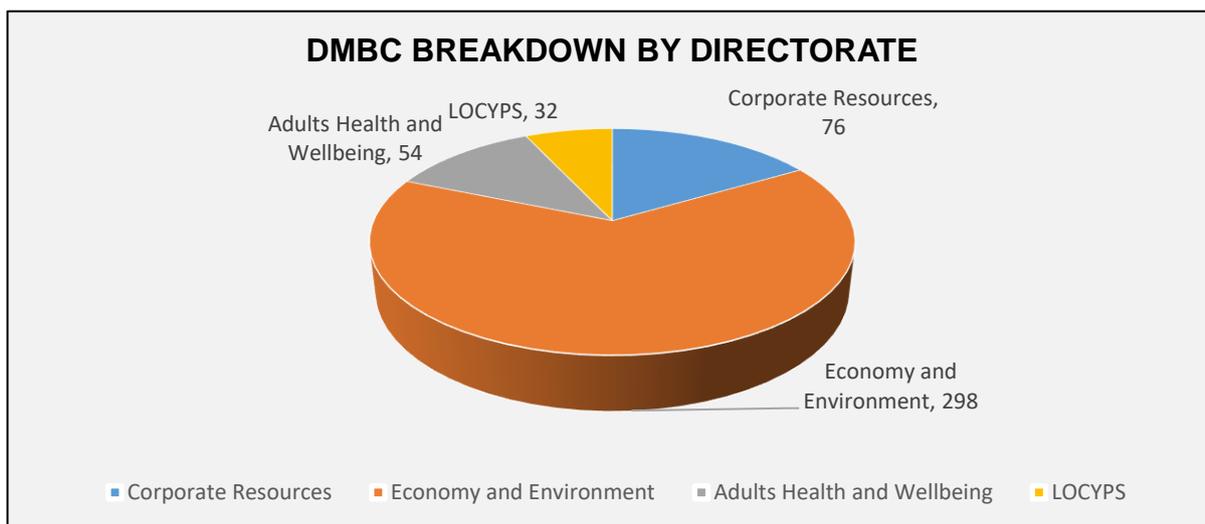
## Doncaster Children’s Services Trust

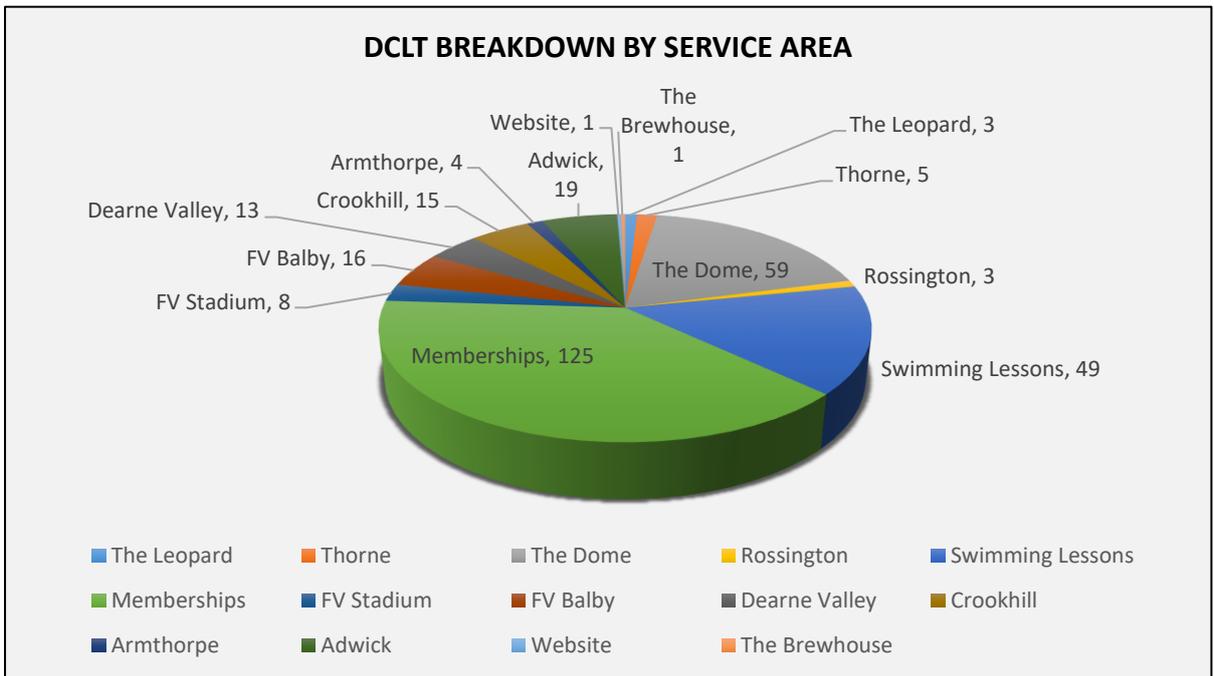
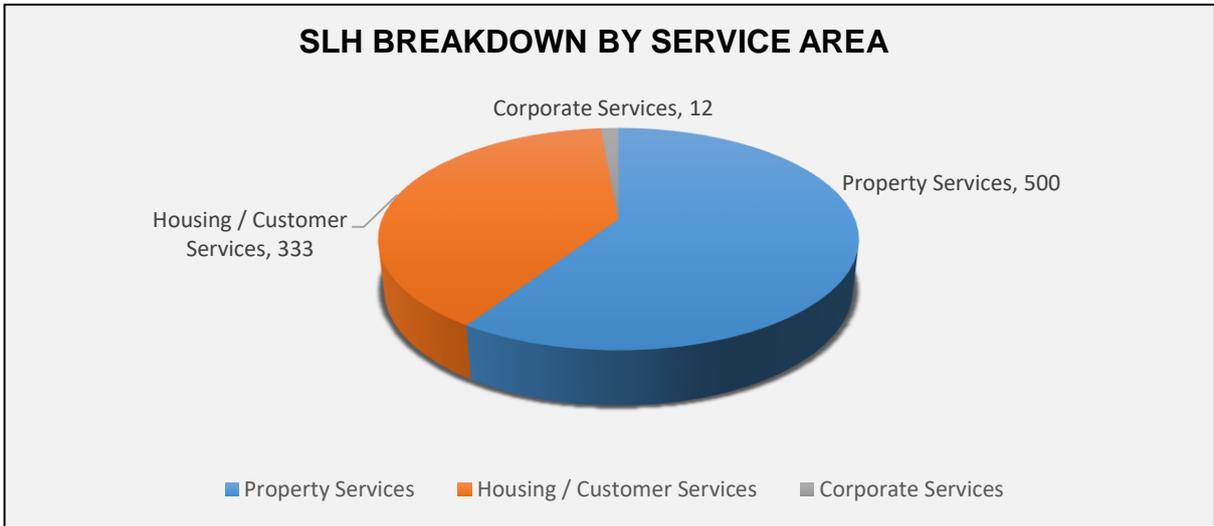
During the reporting year 283 contacts were logged which were received from 225 different people. This is a 24% increase from 2019/20 when there were 229 contacts from 167 different people and an increase of 35% of people contacting the Trust.

One of the reasons for the increase in contacts in 2020/21 is due to the higher number of people making repeat contacts. In 2020/21, the Trust received 2 or more contacts from 38 people, which is a 19% increase from 2019/20 when 32 people made 2 or more contacts.

71% of corporate Stage 1 complaints were dealt with within timescales. This is a decrease from 2019/21 when 91% were dealt with within timescale. Covid-19 had a direct impact on timescales for complaint handling in 2020/21 due to staff availability. This was either because the manager providing response or the person being complained about were not available. On occasion, the delay was due to the pressure on resources, including covering for staff absence, so more time was needed to respond to complaints.

### 5. Complaint by Service & Organisation

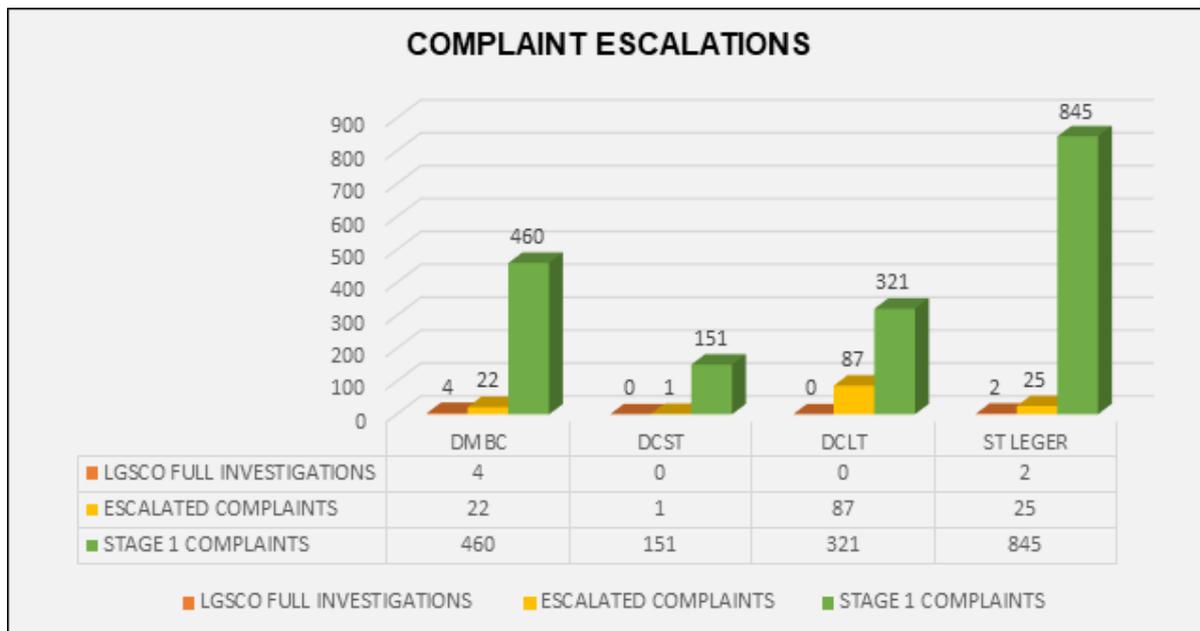




## 6. Escalated Complaints

Although the majority of all complaints will be investigated and resolved at the first stage of the complaints procedure, if a customer still feels aggrieved or they have additional evidence they wish to provide they can request that their complaint is escalated to Stage 2 of the complaint procedure.

The Stage 2 investigations are carried out internally. If they are still dissatisfied with the response from their Stage 2 investigation, they may then proceed to an independent investigation by the LGSCO. The figures relating to these investigations are as follows.



### **Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)**

As a final stage to the complaints procedure, complainants have the right to approach the LGSCO following an unsatisfactory Stage 2 response. The LGSCO will direct the customer back to the Local Authority if the complainant has not yet given the Council the opportunity to resolve the complaint through our complaints procedures. The LGSCO may also pass the complaint back to the council if they consider that there is more that could be done to resolve the complaint.

The LGSCO will request necessary information from us for review and then will contact the Council should they decide that the matter falls within their jurisdiction and wish to investigate further. The LGSCO investigate malpractice or poor service and are instructed to comment on or request changes council policies.

The LGSCO publish an annual review letter every year, which details the complaints that they have received for each authority.

During 2020/21 across DMBC, SLHD and DCST, the LGSCO carried out a total of 6 investigations.

Doncaster Council did invite residents dissatisfied with Business Grant decisions to approach the LGSCO should an appeal be rejected by the Council. These figures have been tracked separately and amount to an additional 7 LGSCO cases being investigated solely for Business Grant appeals. Of these the LGSCO awarded one customer £100.00 compensation for uncertainty caused during the decision making process.

During 20/21, St Leger Homes paid £7000 during the course of 20/21. This consisted of compensation payments to customers and related legal costs.

**Appendix 2** includes the LGSCO Annual Letter relating to Doncaster and shows very good performance in comparison to other local authorities.

## **6. Lessons Learned and Service Improvements**

### **Doncaster Council**

The services, which saw the largest reduction in complaints during the last financial year, were:

- Waste and Recycling.
- Adults Health and Well Being
- LOCYPS

**Waste and Recycling** saw a reduction in complaints of more than 20%. Although these services have been impacted in terms of reduced staff numbers and early cancellations of the green bin collection over the course of the winter months due to the pandemic, we can see that the customer service data also tells us that missed bin reports remain low compared to previous years.

SUEZ, the Waste and Recycling Team and the Business Analysis & Digital Teams have continued to improve the IT systems and processes with CCTV on almost all SUEZ collection vehicles, which can track assisted pullouts, bins that have not been presented by the resident, failed collections and any reports of damage caused by the collection vehicles. The footage and data in this system is immediately available for the teams to check if a customer reports an issue.

The Waste and Recycling Team have commenced fortnightly operation meetings with SUEZ to identify any trends or issues, which enables them to put solutions in place more efficiently and effectively. The Waste & Recycling Team continue to work closely with the Customer Experience Team to ensure that a considerable proportion of complaints are investigated the same day with a view to immediately resolving the matter for the customer.

**Adults Health and Well Being** have seen a 30% reduction in overall complaints. Occupational Therapy, responsible for the majority of complaints the previous year, received just three new complaints for the entire of 2020/2021.

The Adults Health and Wellbeing Directorate have implemented a change as to how complaints are distributed. With the assistance of the Information Co-ordinator there is now a much more efficient process to pin point the exact team within the directorate responsible for each individual complaint. This ensures the correct Head of Service has visibility of their complaints within the first 24 hours of DMBC receiving them.

The Customer Experience Team attend the quarterly management meetings for the Communities Team, the Adult Social Care Team and the directorate as a whole. This has helped the teams understand the types of complaints they are receiving on a quarterly basis, the response times that they are achieving throughout the year, and

potential trends or patterns in relation to the types of complaints they are receiving and if any particular service team is responsible.

**LOCYPS** have seen the largest reduction in corporate complaints over the course of the last year compared to the previous year. The number of complaints have reduced by over 50%, from 72 complaints to 32 complaints. The reduction is significant considering schools have endured the largest impact due to the pandemic. Although it could be said, that if schools are not open, no complaints would be generated. However, it is likely that concerned parents would have issues in relation to home schooling, COVID procedures and schools reopening safely which may have increased the amount of complaints they received in relation to school process. This however does not appear to be the case.

School Admissions have seen a 65% reduction in complaints in 20/21. A previous system change had negatively affected waiting times and customers were experiencing a lack of communication about their school admission applications. The system changes are now fully embedded within the team, which has resulted in much improved processing times for applications and response times to customers. This has resulted in a reduction in complaints from 29 in 19/20 to 11 in 20/21.

The Customer Experience Team attend LOCYPS quarterly management meetings, working with the team to discuss any complaints they have received, potential concerns and any service improvements they have introduced.

### **St Leger Homes**

Over the course of the last 12 months, St Leger Homes have identified four key areas which customers were expressing a concern of dissatisfaction about when receiving a service. Once these areas were identified, St Leger Homes were quick to put in place actions or training to prevent further complaints and increase satisfaction for the customer.

### **Works Postponement**

St Leger Homes received complaints from customers who were not able to speak to specific officers when telephoning or their calls were not being answered due to the phone line being engaged or officers on leave. In response to these complaints, St Leger Homes have reviewed their telephony system and implemented revised protocols across the organisation to ensure customers always receive a response when telephoning.

### **Communication from Officers**

A number of information and training issues were identified, primarily the content of letters sent to customers regarding deceased tenants and customers reporting a lack of information received in relation to their housing applications or requests for further information. All of these issues were addressed by improving the existing processes, creating more ownership for individual case management and ensuring that all staff involved in these areas received full end-to-end training on the new processes.

## **Asbestos Surveys**

St Leger Homes received complaints concerning the lack of information received regarding asbestos surveys that needed to be carried out. St Leger Homes have since changed their process and communicated this to their joiners and surveyors, ensuring that they explain to customers the work they are carrying out to manage their customers' expectations around timescales.

## **Gas Servicing COVID impact**

St Leger Homes have also had a number of complaints relating to gas servicing because of the impact of the pandemic. The main issues were residents' not comfortable in allowing tradesman into their homes due to the pandemic and the subsequent note that was posted for a missed appointment. Although St Leger Homes have a duty to carry out maintenance on gas appliances and required by law to do so this may have not been communicated effectively with the resident. To prevent this issue happening in the future, if on arrival the customer does not answer the door, all gas fitters now telephone the customer to try and get a response and explain the reason for their visit.

## **Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust**

The single most common theme for complaints being received were around memberships. This is a significant increase from the previous year, when this category did not even feature within the top 10. This of course is directly attributed to the uncertainty around payments for memberships during COVID lockdowns.

An incredibly positive trend, which has been continued from previous periods, has been the reduction of complaints relating to cleanliness of facilities, with only 4 complaints being received, an 86% reduction on the previous year.

Complaints were received from customers relating to the booking system, particularly around the fact that customers had to telephone the contact centre in order to create an account before being able to book online. Because of these complaints, a business case was produced to purchase an upgrade on the software that enables customers to self-register for their own account, meaning that they can register and book a session within a few minutes, without the need to make a telephone call. This has improved the customer experience of making bookings for the gym, fitness classes & swimming across the trust.

Some of the complaints around memberships related to the value for money after reopening, with a small number questioning the value of the membership compared to the restricted provision that was then available. However overall, members are generally happy with their memberships, the complaints were a result of the unknown around a concern that they may have to pay for something that they could not use, which they did not.

## **Doncaster Children's Services Trust**

As with statutory complaints, the Trust welcomes feedback and uses this as an opportunity to learn. Where applicable the manager has used the opportunity when responding to advise what action has been taken, or will be taken because of the learning from the complainants' experience. Complaint Monitoring and Learning Forms are used to track actions that have not already been completed to reduce the risk of repeat complaints or escalation of complaints.

### **Actions of Worker**

Complaints have covered a wide range of topics about social worker behaviour from allegations about the tone of voice or comments made by a social worker, not showing an ID, having an ID on display so that neighbours could see it, feeling that a social worker was biased against them or had lied. Where complaints were upheld managers confirmed that suitable guidance would be given and that the worker would reflect on their practice going forward.

A young person complained how the change in their social worker had been managed and the impact that this had on them. As a result of their complaint, a Lessons Learnt meeting was held which was attended by senior managers across service areas. The outcome of the meeting was that working practices changed to ensure that another young person did not have the same experience in the future. This included decision making around a social worker changing and joint meetings to ensure a smooth transition.

Complaints were received that calls had not been returned, on occasion it was evidenced that attempts had been made to contact people, where this was not possible to evidence an apology was provided and the manager confirmed that it would be addressed with the worker involved. There were also complaints that documents had not been sent directly to a parent, the manager apologised and provided copies of the documents with the complaint response and ensured that in future documents went directly to the parent.

### **Family Time Arrangements**

There was a 150% increase in complaints where family time was the main presenting reason for the complaint (5 in 2020/21, 2 in 2019/20). Of the 5 complaints received, 1 was upheld.

During the year, there have been different restrictions put in by the government for face-to-face contact and the Trust has adhered to government guidance on these matters and this has inevitably affected family time arrangements. When restrictions started to lift, there was pressure put on the resources available, such as Beechfield Family Time Centre where supervised family time takes place, which meant it has not been possible to allow families the same amount of time to see their children as was in place pre Covid-19. The Trust recognises the importance of family time and social workers have proactively worked with families to support contact with their children through other sources when face to face was not an option, such as face time and

telephone calls. It is fair to conclude that without taking such a proactive approach to family time there would have been significantly higher complaints in this area.

### **Poor Communication**

A parent complained that they repeatedly had to explain their connection to a child when they tried to make a referral. The Team Manager apologised and raised with staff in a team meeting the importance of ensuring that records are kept up to date to ensure information received from parents is available immediately.

Because of a complaint from a young person about their placement the issue of the Trust being notified about complaints raised by young people in placements, this was addressed with the Placement Finding Team. The opportunity was taken to remind providers of the importance of ensuring the Customer Experience Team was aware of any complaint raised by a young person so that the complaint could be logged and any agreed action monitored.

Adapted working practices to proactively supply people with weekly updates when they were waiting for a decision to be made. This would include advising people that a decision had not been made, as this would take away the need for people to constantly get in touch with the office for an update. It was also agreed that if a decision had been made ahead of the next scheduled update, the person would be advised at that point rather than waiting for the scheduled update.

## **8. Pandemic Driven Complaints**

### **Business / Self Isolation Grants**

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government introduced a number of Business Support grants and self-isolation grants, which were administered mostly by the Revenues & Benefits Team in Doncaster Council but also by Business Doncaster in the Council. Additional Restrictions Grant was also provided to Sheffield City Region by the government initiating further agreed grants to be administered locally. The eligibility criteria for these grants were set by either central government or the Sheffield City Region, therefore a complaint to the Council was not relevant, however the Council decided to put a process given there was no route to complain.

The application process for the grants generated 182 complaints/request for review from customers, residents and business owners, whose applications were unsuccessful. This generally occurred because of not meeting the eligibility criteria of a particular scheme or failure to provide the required information or evidence. Of these reviews, 31% were successful, often assisted by the supply of additional information from the applicant. The Customer Experience Team centrally managed these requests for a review and escalated further requests for a review via the LGSCO and related enquiry.

Across these schemes, grants have so far been paid worth £106,509,957 to local businesses, with 24,099 awards having been made for these schemes alone. A

further 4,445 applications have also been received for the Self-Isolation scheme, of which 1,347 have been paid, resulting in £727,500 being paid to isolating individuals.

As some grant schemes, including the Restart Grant scheme remain available to new applications until 30 June 2021, such complaints and requests for review via this channel are expected to continue into July 2021.

## **9. General Customer Contact**

As well as complaints, we can also look into what our customers have been reporting to us either directly on the website or during interactions with the Council's Customer Service Team. This, when compared to the previous year, is a good indicator of which departments have improved their service and where there are still areas of concern that are affecting our residents.

The information below compares the data included within last year's report to the number of reports made during 2020/2021.

The key area that we discussed in last year's report were:

- Missed Bin Collections
- Pothole Reports
- Fly Tipping

These remain the largest service teams in respect of customer contact to the Council.

### **Waste and Recycling**

<b>Missed Bin Reports 2019/2020</b>	<b>Missed Bin Reports 2020/2021</b>
5,640	6,827

As we can see the total number of missed collection reports from residents has increased by 1,187. This is still a vast improvement on the figure reported during the 2018/2019 financial year, which was over 13,000 in total. As mentioned last year, the Waste and Recycling Team had implemented handheld devices for the operators to improve service delivery across the borough. Although the figures have increased slightly this year, we are still seeing the benefit of these changes.

It would be fair to assume that the pandemic and the effect that had on the number of staff available and the delivery of Council Services may well have affected our ability to provide the standard of service delivery that would be expected in a 'normal' 12-month period.

## **Pot Hole Reports**

<b>Pot Hole Reports 2019/2020</b>	<b>Pot Hole Reports 2020/2021</b>
2,930	2,145

During 2020/2021 Doncaster Council received 2,145 report of potholes from residents. This figure is similar to what we have seen in previous years although is a reduction from the 2,930 reports we had received during 2019/2020.

The data tells us that the majority of the reports came during the first 3 months of 2021 which this period accounting for over half of the total number of reports. As previously discussed, the majority of 2020 we experienced periods of 'lockdown' with many businesses, schools and other amenities closed or working to reduced staff and hours. This has obviously affected the number of road users within the borough and therefore less residents in a position to identify and report potholes.

## **Fly Tipping / Dumped Rubbish**

<b>Fly Tipping Reports 2019/2020</b>	<b>Fly Tipping Reports 2020/2021</b>
10,626	12,556

During 2020/2021, we have seen an increase in fly tipping reports (18%) across the borough. 12,556 reports have been made by residents in comparison to 10,626 the previous year.

Doncaster Council has had periods throughout the year whereby our services have been impacted, resulting in a reduced number of staff available to deliver services and the period of time the Household Waste and Recycling Centres have been closed may have impacted the amount of dumped rubbish across the borough.

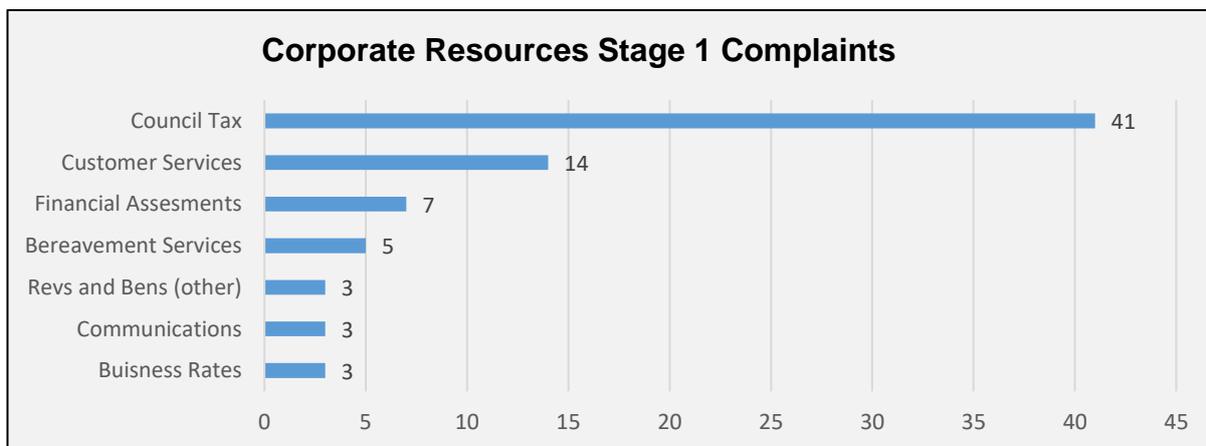
As part of the Council budget setting process for 21/22 additional resources were provided to bolster the capacity to deal with the backlog and responsiveness of the service.

## 10. Doncaster Council by Directorate

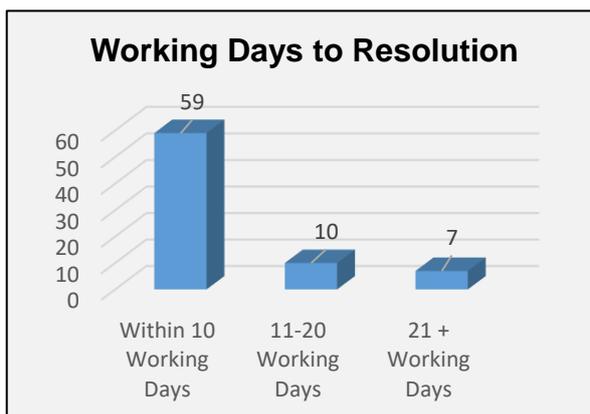
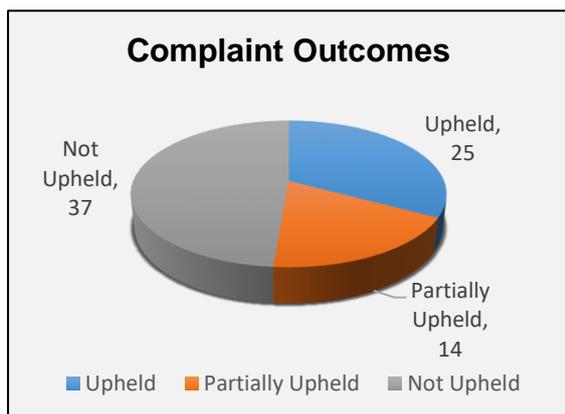
### Corporate Resources

The Corporate Resources Directorate received 76 corporate complaints in 20/21.

The Council Tax department have received the majority of these complaints accounting for 41 of these. During the initial stages of the pandemic, no recovery action was undertaken for either Council Tax or Business Rates. When recovery action resumed in September it resulted in an increase in complaints from residents who were unaware that they were in arrears and were unhappy with the lack of previous communication. This occurred despite the previous communication of a payment holiday if required from April to June and a gentle letter sent to all behind in their payments reminding them to bring up to date before the full recovery process was resumed.



Across the Directorate, 78% of all customer complaints were responded to within the timescale of 10 working days. Of those where the timescale was extended due to the complexity of the complaint, customers were notified of the new response date.



### **Escalated Complaints**

Corporate Resources received 7 escalated complaints during 2020/21, 3 of which were for Council Tax from customers who previously had their stage 1 complaint answered and not upheld.

The average timescale for responding to all escalated complaints that were received within this directorate was 18 working days, within the 20 working day target.

Of all Corporate Resources complaints that were received last year, 2 customers sought advice from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

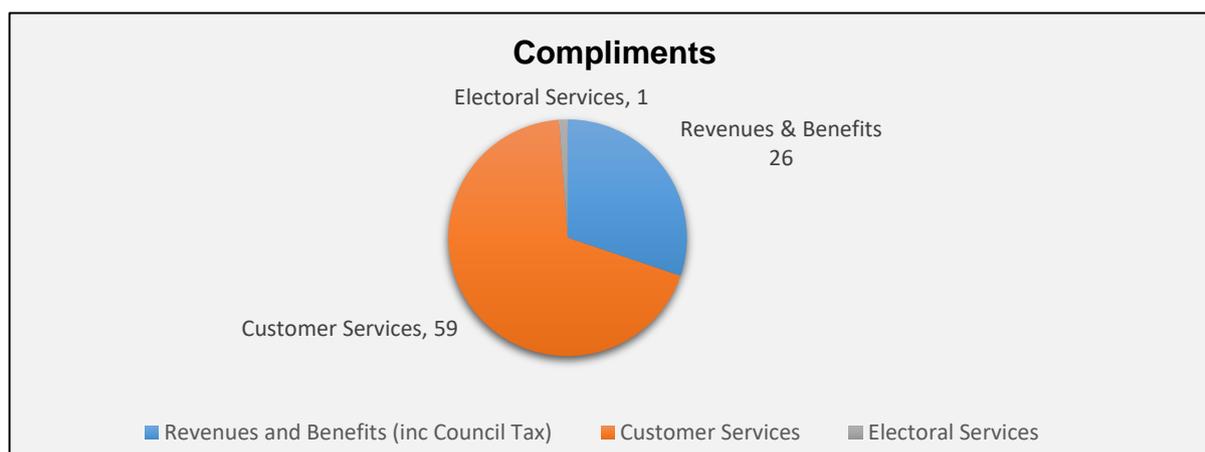
A summary of the LGSCO decisions;

1. Upheld – Refusal of a Blue Badge application. The LGSCO commented that the council failed to properly consider Mrs X's medical conditions when assessing her application for a blue badge. It also failed to undertake a mobility assessment.

2. Not upheld – Procurement. Mr X complains about the Council's calculation of support for his business, by way of supplier relief, resulting in financial loss and distress. The LGSCO found no fault in the Council's decision-making process.

## Compliments

Doncaster Council have received in total 423 compliments, of which 86 were for teams across Corporate Resources. The breakdown of the directorate is below.

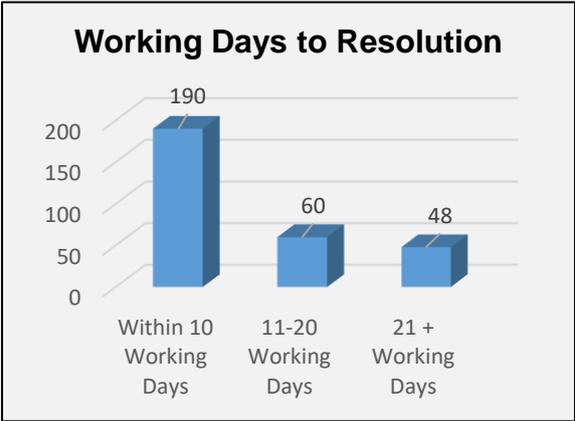
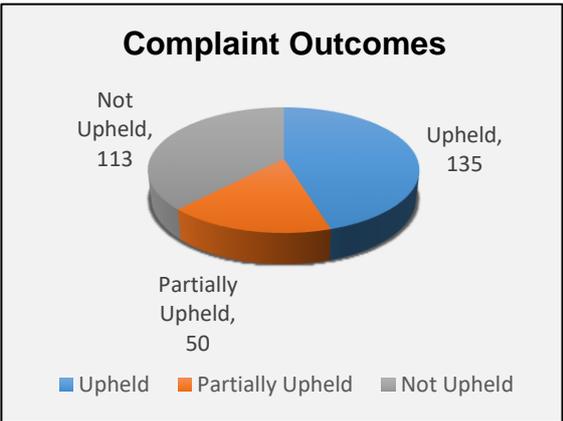
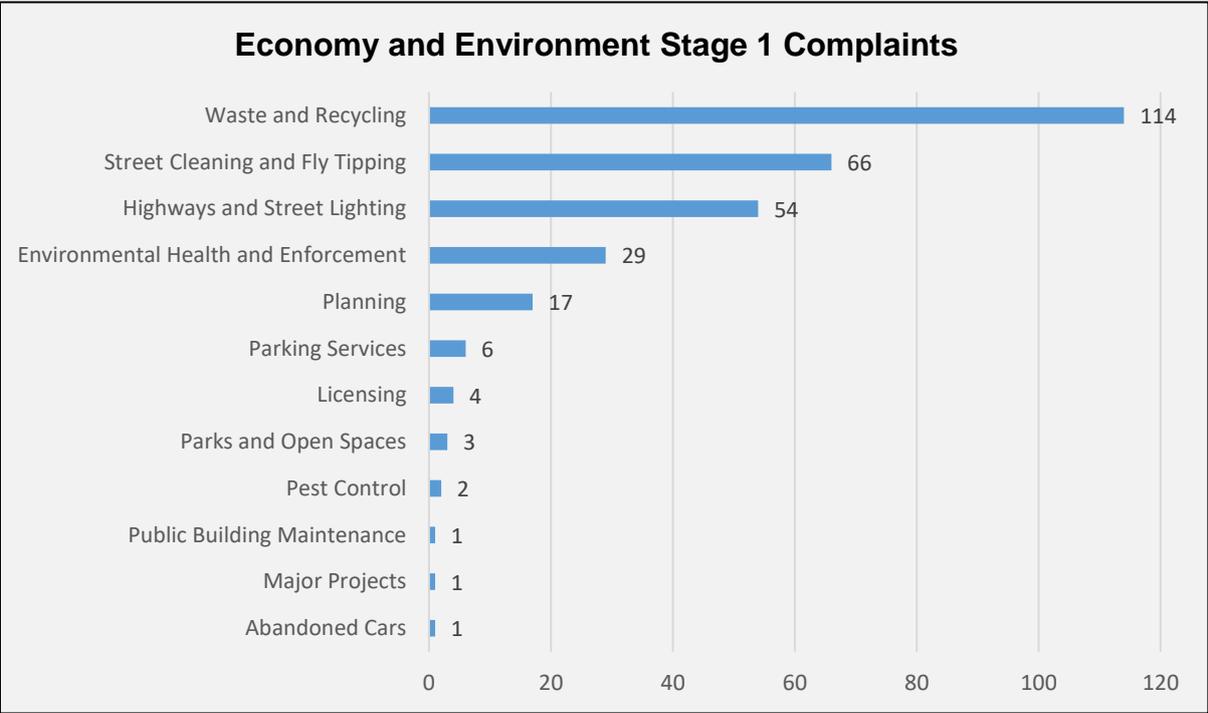


services that received the most complaints were those which have the largest impact on the majority of the residents in the borough, Waste and Recycling, Highways and Street Lighting, Street Cleaning and Fly Tipping. These three services equated for 79% of all complaints received for this directorate.

These 3 services received a combined 46 fewer complaints than the previous year, however many services were either stopped or restricted during the early part of the year due to the pandemic. This caused an increase, particularly noticeable in Q4 in which we received more than 33% of the overall figure in this period alone.

For Economy and Environment the main complaint themes throughout the year were:

- Staff attitude / behaviour (waste contractors & enforcement agents)
- Closure and subsequent traffic management arrangements at HWRC



**Escalated Complaints**

Economy and Environment received 10 escalated complaints during 2020/21. Of these, 6 were either upheld or at least partially upheld following a further investigation.

The average timescale for responding to escalated complaints within this directorate was 19 working days.

Of all Economy and Environment complaints that were received and responded to over the course of the last year, only 1 customer had a finalised LGSCO decision, which was not upheld

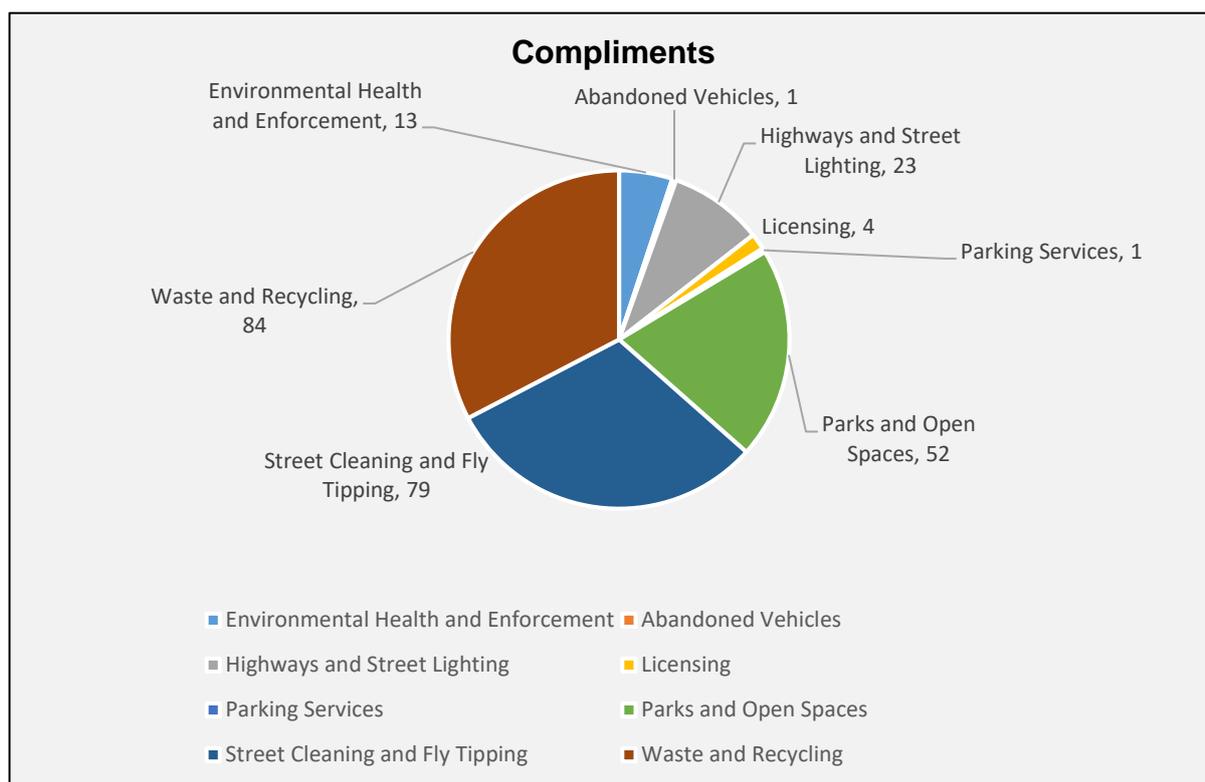
A summary of the LGSCO decision;

Not upheld - Mr X complained the Council had followed the incorrect process in its attempt to change a bridleway into a byway open to all traffic to allow vehicles to access a Council owned car park. The Ombudsman did not investigate this complaint

further. The Planning Inspector had held a public inquiry into the Council's decision to buy the land using compulsory purchase powers and the Ombudsman has no jurisdiction to consider matters already considered by the Planning Inspector. Mr X has also raised matters they had considered in a previous complaint, which was disputing points of law, which the courts are better placed to decide, rather than the LGSCO.

## Compliments

Doncaster Council have received in total 423 compliments, of which 257 (60%) were for teams across Economy and Environment. The breakdown of the directorate is below

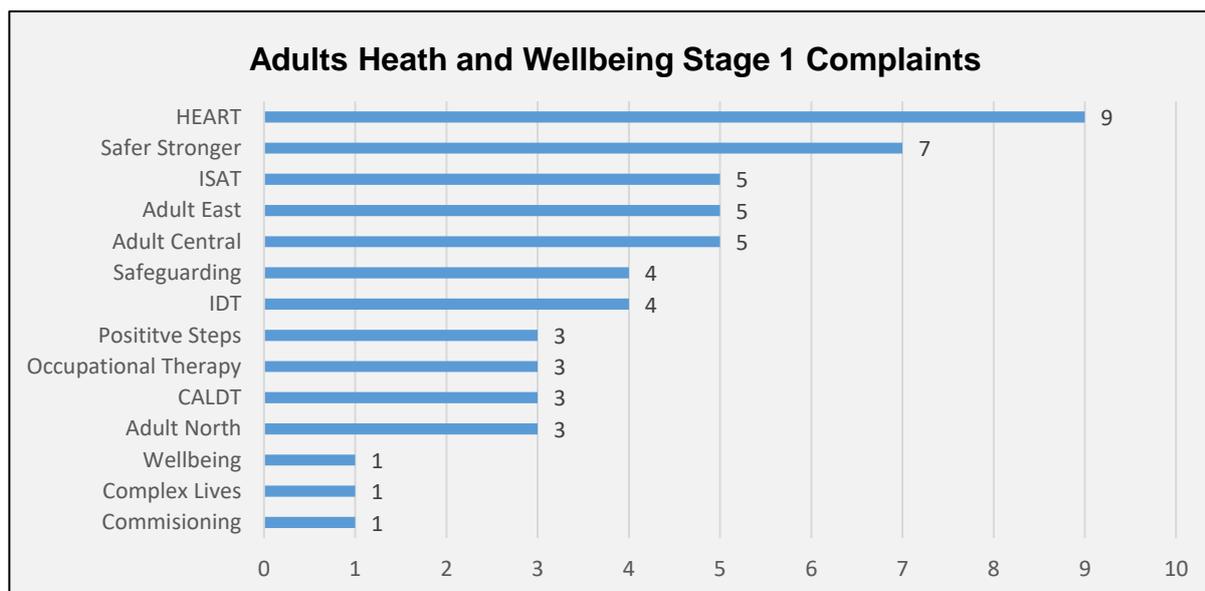


## Adults Health and Wellbeing (AHWB)

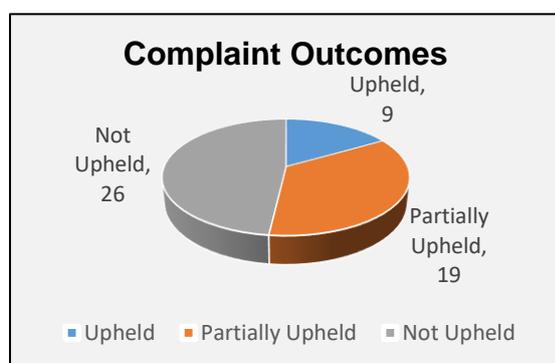
AHWB received 54 complaints in 20/21, with Adult Social Care receiving 28 of these complaints and Communities receiving 26.

The departments, which generated the majority of complaints throughout the year were, HEART, ISAT and Safer, Stronger Communities, which accounted for 21 of the overall figure. The main issues customers were reporting were, increased costs for HEART services, communication issues when attempting to either contact the service team or when awaiting contact and home appointments (either missed appointments or PPE concerns from residents on arrival).

Below is a full breakdown of all Adult Health and Wellbeing complaints received throughout 2020/21.



Across the Directorate, 41% of all customer complaints were responded to within the corporate timescale of 10 working days. Most complaints in this area are of a complex and sensitive nature and can be difficult to carry out a full investigation and respond within the 10 working days. If a complaint response is going to take longer, customers are regularly contacted throughout and often invited to attend a face-to-face meeting to discuss their concerns on more of a personal level. This can again have an effect on the timescales as we allow the customer to choose a time that suits their requirements.



### Escalated Complaints

AHWB received 4 escalated complaints during 2020/21. Three associated with Adult Social Care and 1 complaint for communities. The average timescale for responding to all escalated complaints within this directorate was 23 working days. Of all AHWB complaints that were received and responded to over the course of the last year, just 1 customer sought advice from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). This case is still active and being investigated by the LGSCO.

A summary of the LGSCO complaint;

Mr X complaint is about the Adult Social Care aspect of his mother's care. This includes capacity issues, safeguarding investigations, confidentiality issues and best interest meetings.

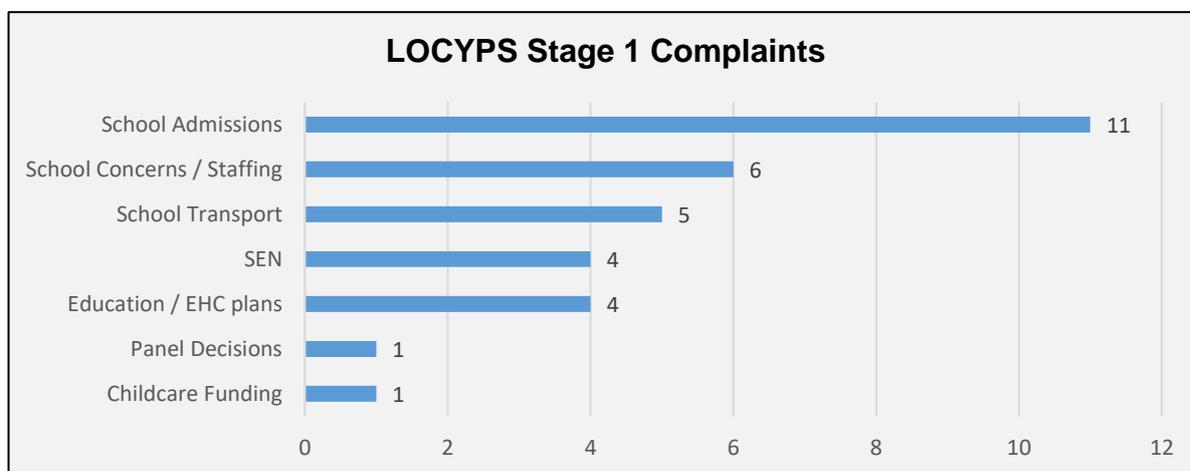
### **Compliments**

Doncaster Council have received in total 423 compliments, of which 76 were for teams across Adults Health and Wellbeing. Due to available options provided to customers to choose from when logging compliments on the Doncaster Council website we are unable to breakdown the service areas.

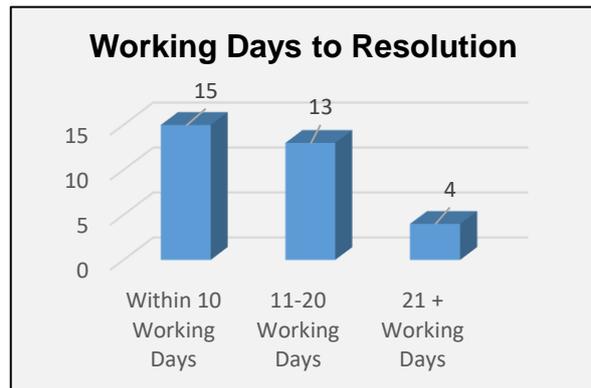
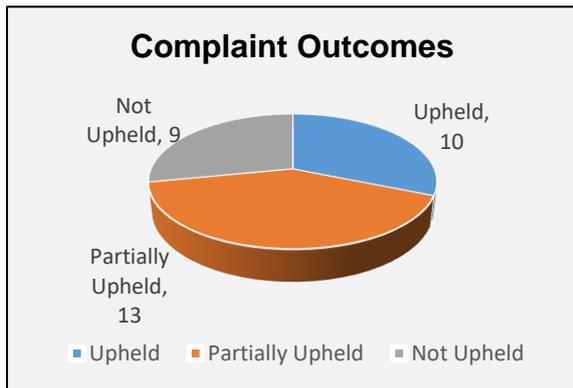
### **Learning Opportunities for Children and Young People (LOCYP)**

LOCYP received 32 complaints in 20/21. The main themes were School Admissions (11 complaints) where parents were concerned that their child had not been allocated a place in their preferred school or that their child had not received formal education for a period of time due to delays in processing. Due to the nature of these complaints, all 11 of these complaints were received between August and December 2020.

Of the 11 School Admission complaints, which were recorded, 10 were either upheld or partially upheld indicating that the customers concerns were valid and warranted an investigation from Doncaster Council. This number of school admissions complaints is however, a large reduction from last year's total of 29.



Across the Directorate, 47% of all customer complaints were responded to within the timescale of 10 working days. Given the nature of the complaints being dealt with, the investigations can be complex and before a complaint is resolved, particularly in the cases of school admissions, a final resolution must be achieved which can exceed the 10 working days. Although the outcome may take longer than the expected timeframe, customers are always contacted with regular updates throughout this period.



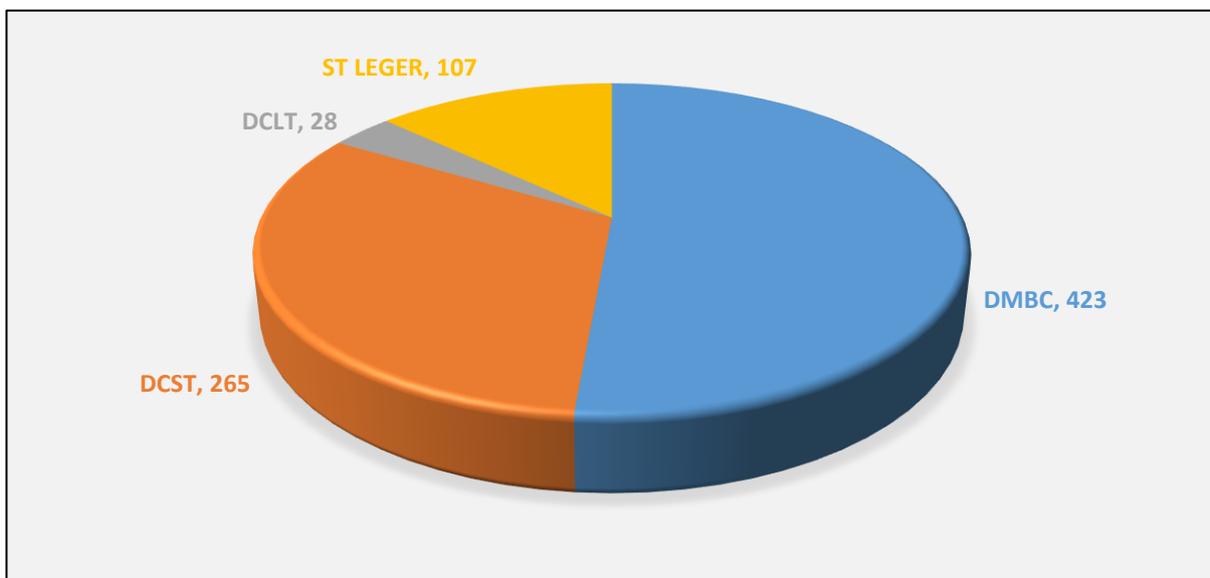
### Escalated Complaints

LOCYP received just one Stage 2 escalated complaint throughout 2020/21. This was related to a parent declaration form. This was investigated both as a stage 1 and stage 2 complaint and on both occasions, the complaint was not upheld.

### Compliments

Doncaster Council have received in total 423 compliments, of which 4 were for teams across LOCYP. It is felt that this is because any compliments are more likely to be given to schools directly rather than through Doncaster Council. Within the coming year we will work with the schools to keep a central record of any formal compliments received across the borough.

### 11. Compliments Across all Organisations



## Doncaster Council

*"A customer rang us back to say that the chemist will now be taking over the delivery of her prescription, but she wanted to ring and say thank you to the hub as we have been helpful since the beginning with her prescriptions".*

*"A customer wanted to pass on her thanks to everyone in our team for being so helpful all the time and continuing to work so hard even during the pandemic. She said we must often get people who can be angry about situations and towards us, so she wanted to make sure she passed on her thanks in case we do not hear it often enough."*

*"Hi, I've just been contacted by a lovely woman named XXX who has phoned to check on my wellbeing as I am now in the clinically extremely vulnerable category for Covid-19. She enquired as to whether I was feeling supported during the pandemic and had everything I needed, even giving me information for priority food delivery slots. I think it's a fantastic service and support for the community and really shows that the council cares about its residents!"*

*"I would like to leave a massive heart felt compliment for the community hub, sorry if this is the wrong place but I'm desperate to give these lovely people some feedback. My cash is all in the bank and I cannot get a delivery slot with a supermarket yet as I have been missed off the initial high risk list due to an administrative error somewhere along the line. I attend 2 hospitals for treatment and I think with the current climate and how unusually busy they are, each thought the other hospital had done this, so was a genuine error. Anyway, in the meantime of this being corrected, I was running out of food. So I was put in touch with the Hub. They have been truly amazing with me, I have had 2 food parcels and a cleaning pack from them which have all been excellent value. Today my food parcel was delivered within half an hour of me ordering it. I honestly have no idea how I would've managed without this service... it's really touched me. I want to thank everyone, the lovely people I speak to on the phone, who simply can't do enough for me."*

*"Just had a lovely lady on the phone, she just wanted to say THANK YOU to us all for doing a great job and that she received her Food Parcel today and she is really happy with what she's got. It has made her life easier. She is really thankful that we are providing this service to everyone!"*

*"My wife and I visited the DMBC offices today in order to renew my blue badge. We were greeted by 2 very nice ladies just inside the doorway who took our contact details and that was very reassuring. Our temperature was checked which was another reassuring measure and then directed to desk number 6. The young man at desk 6 was extremely polite and explained the process very clearly and he was very efficient. He was very "customer friendly" and knowledgeable. Finally, we were shown out of the building by a very friendly security man who, seeing me on crutches, ensured the doorway was both open and safe. Our visit was a safe and smooth one and it only remains to say that all the staff we encountered today are a credit to DMBC".*

*"Staff have had a great working relationship with Morrison's store for some time and prior to Covid, staff were in store regularly conducting community led support talks with local residents. Recently our local ward councillors approached us with regards to the possibility of providing food parcels for Balby south residents who may find themselves on hard times due to the current Covid restrictions and loss of earnings. Morrisons were suggested as a supermarket we could link with due to the community work they already do and the link within Balby south. Staff facilitated a meeting with Morrison's to discuss the possibility of making this happen and Morrison's were very pleased to be on board with this and suggested they could make up a box for us to view and that they may be able to provide something in the shape of free delivery/ discount. A further meeting was held with local ward councillors, Family hub manager for central and Morrisons and an agreement was reached where Morrison's will provide free delivery and give 15% discount on every box purchased."*

*"Customer commented that they were extremely happy with the service and couldn't speak highly enough of how reliable and good we are. She and the rest of the team were especially pleased at how we had adapted our service during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular the introduction of using Microsoft Teams for video interpreting appointments. This is ideal for them and not something they have access to with The BigWord or other interpreting services. It has ensured that they have been able to continue to provide their critical services, in order to support the local residents that need it. She rated us 11/10 for the service!"*

*"I am a childminder in Mexborough and have been open all through this covid19 situation. How I have done this is through the support I have had from early years team and the funding team. Without all their hard work I don't think I could have got through it. They phoned me on a regular basis asking if I was ok and did I have any problems".*

*"This is not a complaint but a compliment about one of your staff. XXX Benefits Manager. She has been absolutely fantastic in helping me since contracting Covid back in November. I have been off work since November due to contracting serious Covid and am still currently off work still with the bad after effects of it all. XXX was fantastic in getting my £500 isolation grant decision overturned and her continued help throughout. I would like to thank her and say she is a credit to Doncaster Council".*

## **St Leger Homes**

*"A tenant called us to say that the quality of service she received from XXX during her gas servicing appointment was exceptional. She said that "he respected her wishes when it came to Covid social distancing, was polite, clean and well mannered." The tenant was very impressed and happy to have him in her home"*

*"A customer got in touch to compliment XXX, XXX and XXX for the outstanding job they did on her garden. The customer said: "They have done an amazing job, everyone worked hard and nothing was too much trouble for them. Now I can sleep at night because of their wonderful work – it's a pleasure looking at my garden now!"*

*"The East Area Rents Team received a compliment for supporting a family after their daughter lost her job which left them struggling to pay bills. The team put measures in place to help the family catch up with their rent arrears and the family said "this is a huge load off their minds, we are so grateful"*

*"A vulnerable customer contacted us to thank XXX for the welfare check telephone calls she has made to him throughout lockdown. XXX has been in regular contact to see if he needs anything and make sure that he is OK, and the customer told us that he "really appreciates what she has done for him."*

*"A customer's carer called us to leave a compliment for XXX after he attended to remove an old gas fire. The carer said: "He kept the area very clean, was very professional and did a great job. XXX was very good with the tenant, who has dementia, and I want to thank him for taking out and capping the fire in a professional, clean way."*

*"A tenant visited our Adwick Office in person to leave a compliment for XX. The man said that XX had helped him to move into a new property after he had suffered from Anti-Social behaviour at his previous address. The gentleman said: "I just wanted to say thank you to her for helping me".*

*"A customer got in touch to compliment XX on the way she had handled a complaint that had been made. The customer said: "XX was amazing and remained professional throughout all her dealings with me"*

*"A tenant got in touch to thank XX for taking the time to listen and talk to her when she was feeling in a very low mood. The tenant said: "XX went out of his way to try and keep me calm until my carer arrived. He made me feel like St Leger Homes cares about me".*

## **Doncaster Children's Services Trust**

*"Through Covid you have kept in touch every week without fail, We've found ways around keeping within the social distancing rules. ... You didn't stop doing things face to face visits and you used the facetime calls, It was better than messaging or over a phone call it was nice to do it face to face and still got that time with you"*

*"I just wanted to thank you for everything you have done for me and how you have made a difference to my life, and I really appreciate it, I would also like to thank all the staff for helping me get through these last few weeks and during the virus lockdown. I can't thank you and your staff enough."*

*"... I don't know if you'll remember me as it has been a few years ....I just wanted to thank you for everything you helped me with and wanted to tell you how far I have come all thanks to your help! I am now .....qualified and am in full time employment .... I wouldn't be where I am now if it wasn't for you and your constant support! ...."*

*"It has been the best 18 months of my life, it has made me evaluate my life and to think before I act. If I could live my life over again I would do things much differently. I have learnt that just because you have made mistakes you don't have to punish yourself forever."*

*"Thank you for all you have done for them and ultimately for us giving us a beautiful family. On a professional note you have been amazing and extremely reliable, dedicated and hardworking in getting things right for us all."*

*"I think it's right that on behalf of the Court, its acknowledged that you and Worker B have been going above and beyond to support this placement .... and have shown a real commitment to putting the children first; as an example, ... in recognition of what's best for Child B she gave up her own free time. I know it's what you're all doing every day on other cases, but it's particularly notable to me that the past weeks have been gruelling in terms of social care responding to crises, and not once did either of you falter in your commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the children"*

*"Worker D has been fantastic keeping me updated every step of the way so far. I really am grateful, especially during these current circumstances when we are not seeing the kid week to week."*

*"I just wanted to say Thank you for your involvement with Child C and family ....I really appreciate the steps forward that have been made during this time and I am sure family do to. There have been many positive changes to their situation and I am sure they feel much more part of the Doncaster community. I know Social Work is undervalued immensely in society due to the media but your kind, organised but assertive approach has been valuable."*

## **Doncaster Council Leisure Trust**

*"One of your staff telephoned me to ask how I was, what a lovely thing to do. I live on my own and the call was welcome a lovely young lady and it was a pleasure to talk to her and much appreciated. Thank you for caring."*

*"So sorry to see the Dome gym has had to be shut due to lockdown. The staff, the layout and the manner of fellow members has been 1st class throughout the recent opening. Nothing else could have been done to keep everyone safe and it's been a pleasure to be a regular gym user. I look forward to resuming my attendance whenever it is safe to do so. Thank you"*

*"Thank you so much. I work for NHS so bit of a miracle I've not caught covid before now but feeling pretty rough. You guys have done a great job keeping people safe during lock down, when I visited the pool with my son in the summer I was so impressed and the staff were so nice."*

*"I did leave verbal feedback as well today but just to follow up on my comments from earlier. I've been coming to the Dome nearly every week since you reopened after lock down and I have to say how fantastic the staff have been. I've felt incredibly safe with the covid measures put in place. But not only that the staff take an interest. I was a lifeguard for 7 years so quite often watch staff in any water based activities we do. Many of the lifeguards have spoken to either myself or my 7-year-old daughter while we have been waiting for the slides or as we have been leaving. Often at leisure centres you can spot a "weak link", the person that is daydreaming, the person who's bored and doesn't want to be there, this isn't the case at the Dome. All of your staff are engaged and are doing a fab job. To be honest coming today was a rushed decision (we had already been once this week!), but we had to squeeze another swim in before you shut. I expected today to feel a bit different, the announcement yesterday must have caused uncertainty amongst staff. However your staff still had smiles on their faces and there was the usual positive energy around. I really hope you get to reopen soon, we are going to miss our visits."*

*"I just wanted to write a quick note to say thank you so much for all the hard work you are putting in to keep The Dome open and as safe as possible at the moment. We have visited twice, from Sheffield and on both occasions have been really impressed with the cleaning and reduced numbers. If you are able to pass direct feedback, all the lifeguards on this morning at 9am were exceptionally friendly and helpful, particularly the man supervising the toddler pool and the two people in the medium pool. Very friendly and helpful"*

*"My daughter had her first swimming lesson since Lockdown on Saturday morning. I just wanted to say how great it was. I was a bit nervous about bringing her, but the staff were very helpful, they put my mind at rest and showed us where to go and what to do. The one way system worked well. My daughter was happy I was able to stay and watch, she is doing Stage 1. There was only 2 in her class. It was easy to maintain social distancing. I just want to thank the centre and the staff for making it a successful return. She very much enjoyed her lesson and we are looking forward to coming back next week. Thank you :)"*

*"The campsite was great with lots to do with the children. We enjoyed the water activities and the parks was great for the kids"*

*"I would like to pass on my heartfelt thanks to the help and support you've provided to my mum today. She is in her 70s and has a number of lung problems, placing her in a vulnerable position. I live in Warwickshire and have been trying to get an online food delivery for her, which has been impossible. In desperation, I tried to find some local support and came across your webpage. I called the number and spoke to a wonderful gentleman to who I explained our situation and he told me how they could help. He took the payment over the phone, which means my mum doesn't have to worry about it and she promptly received a food box, full of things she can use. The whole thing has brought me to tears, tears of joy after worrying so much. My mum was so happy with everything in the box. Thank you"*

*"Friendly staff, good sized pitches. Great location, showers and toilets were cleaned regularly and in excellent condition. There was a choice of onsite activities you could pay for."*

## **12. Unreasonable Behaviour Policy**

In a small number of cases, we experience service users acting in an unreasonable way when accessing Council services. This could be when they have a complaint, pursuing their complaints in a way that can impede the investigation of their complaint, or taking up a disproportionate amount of Council time and resources.

Therefore in July 2019, our previous Persistent Complainants Policy was replaced by an Unreasonable Behaviour Policy to improve the way we deal with this situation, ensure we are making the best use of council tax payers money and to protect staff.

The aim of this policy is to give officers more transparent guidance in helping them identify circumstances where a service user or complainant's behaviour could be classed as unreasonable and to aid their decisions in how to appropriately respond to such behaviour. Not all unreasonable behaviour is persistent and can be on and off in its nature (such as an act of aggression or violence etc.) and so the new policy provides more scope for officers to manage any behaviour deemed unreasonable regardless of how many times we receive contact from an individual.

Since the launch of the new policy, we have seen a significant increase in communication between service teams and the Customer Experience Officers to discuss behaviour experienced that officers feel is unreasonable. There has been very positive feedback from officers across the Authority in relation to how the policy provides guidance and options when a worker feels that their relationship with a customer has become difficult.

There are currently 27 individuals on the Unreasonable Behaviour register and the way in which their behaviour is being managed differs vastly, ranging from complete barring of attending the One Stop Shop (due to acts of violence) or appointing a Single Point of Contact to try to streamline communication from an individual in an effort to help them.

The Customer Experience Officers have a tracking system to record all residents whose behaviour is deemed unreasonable and they are responsible for reviewing this decision within a reasonable timeframe, which is always set out to the resident from the onset. They are also responsible for keeping a central record of all letters/emails and other communication sent out or received from those residents relating to the policy.

### **13. Priorities for 2021/22**

The past year has been challenging for all areas within the four organisations included in this report due to the ongoing pandemic. It should not be underestimated the amount of extra work, capacity and resilience required by all staff over an extended period. However, it has meant that all have worked more closely and collaboratively.

The key priorities for the year ahead are to continue working closely with our partners to ensure that the management of complaints is consistent across all four areas. This will not only benefit our working relationships but also provide the customer with a clearer understanding of our joined up processes with a much more straightforward route to first contact resolution.

As a Council, we will again focus on both the lessons learned from this past year to take forward to improve our services we provide to our residents, but we will also capture any new trends that may be significant and look to make relevant changes within each department or organisation in real time to improve the customer journey.

As always the focus is to improve on the total complaint numbers coming in by learning from this year's data, and not only be driven by the number but also to ask ourselves "what have we changed which has had this effect?" and "what else can we do for Doncaster people?"

**Steven Jones**  
**Customer Experience Officer**