



# Report to The Standards and General Purposes Committee

**Date:** 14 July 2022

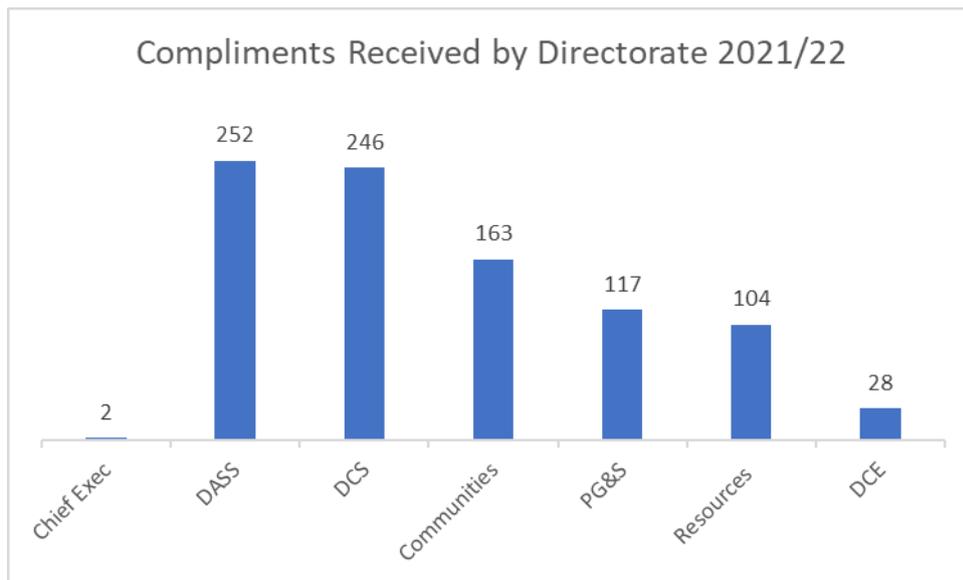
**Title:** Compliments and Complaints Annual Report

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**Recommendations:** This report is presented for consideration by the Committee and once signed off will be published on the Council's website as is required.

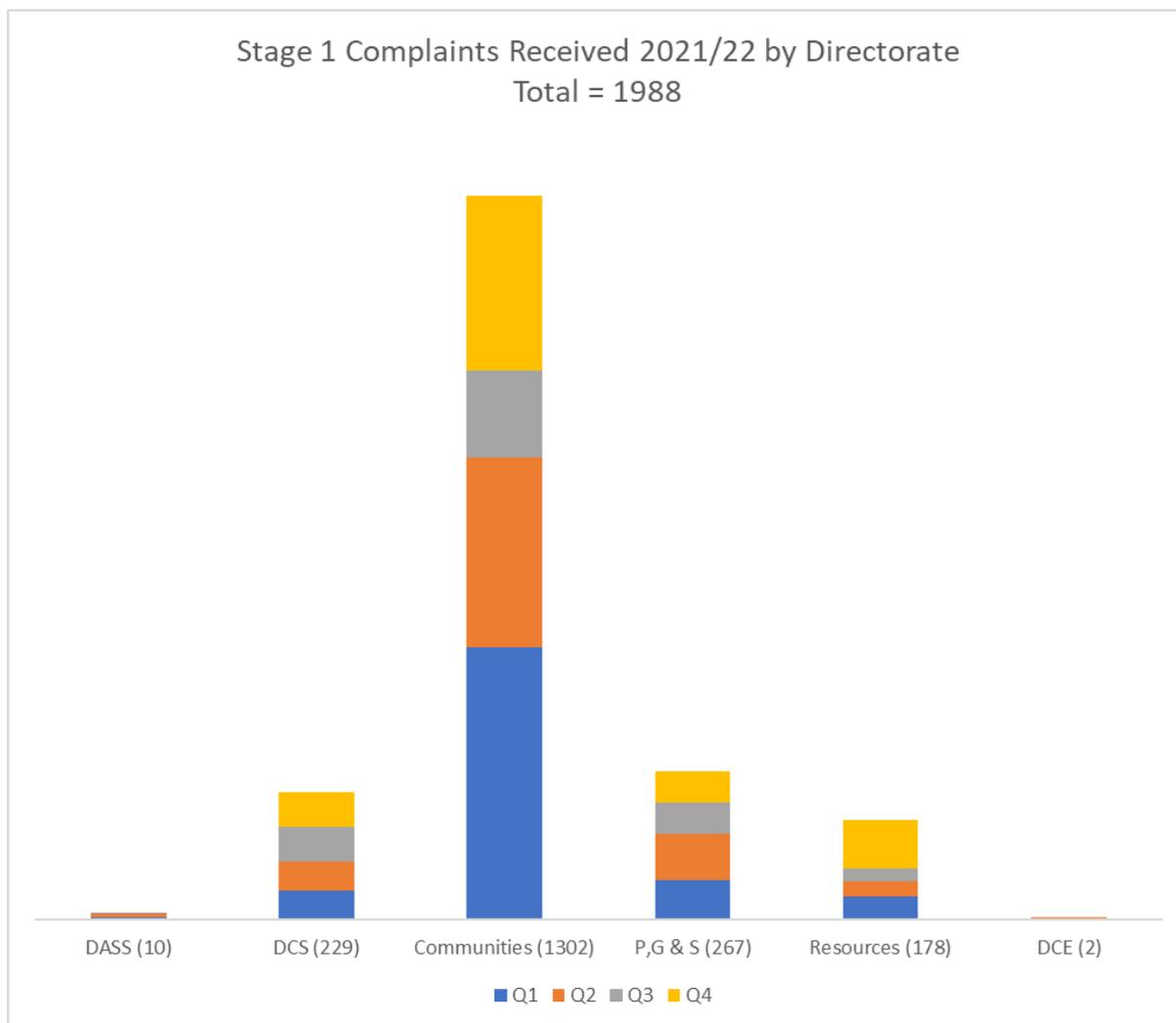
- 1.1 This is the second annual report for compliments and complaints for Buckinghamshire Council.
- 1.2 The information contained in this report is for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.
- 1.3 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's annual review letter will likely be issued to authorities in July for 2021/22. For this reason, there is no ombudsman case information in this report. An update on this area will be issued later in the year.

## 2. Compliments



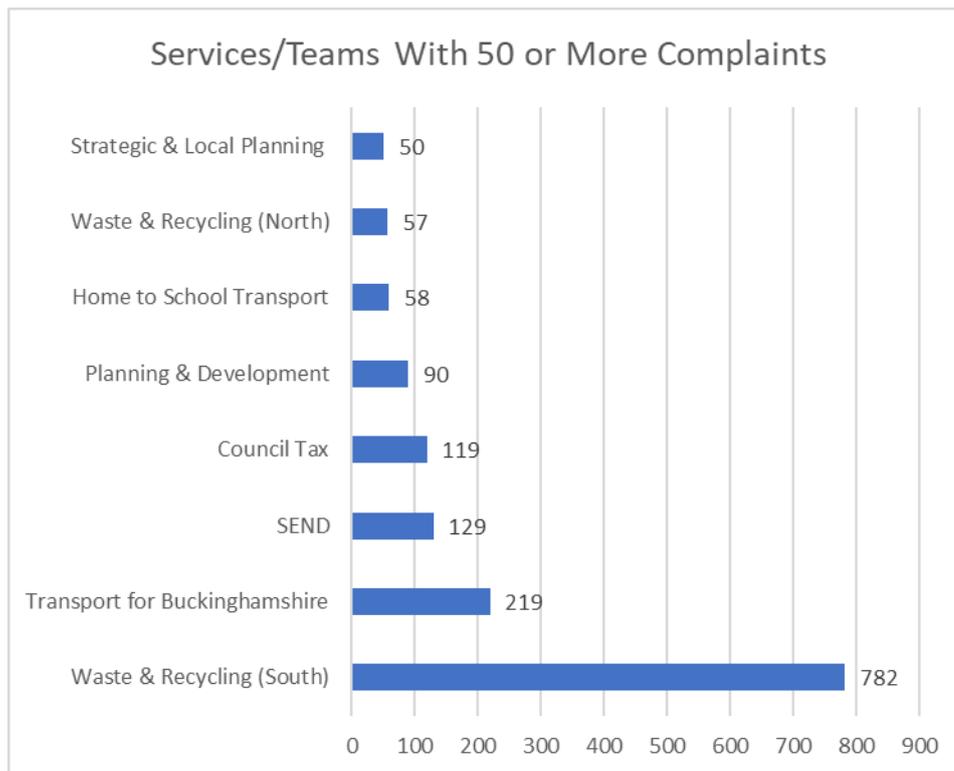
- 2.1 The graph above shows that a total of 912 compliments were received for the Council during 2021/22.
- 2.2 This is decrease from the previous year when 1029 compliments were received approximately 90 of these were in relation to the pandemic specifically.
- 2.3 The majority of compliments are thanking officers for their contributions to individual situations. Particularly in areas like social care and SEND.
- 2.4 Compliments are shared with services so that they can be passed on to individuals.

### 3. Stage 1 Corporate Complaints



- 3.1 This graph shows the number of complaints managed through the corporate complaints process. 1988 stage 1 complaints have been received during 2021/22 which compares to 2099 received during 2020/21.
- 3.2 The highest number of complaints was for Communities and specifically for the Southern Waste and Recycling Team who received 859 stage 1 complaints for the year. For context in the south of the county the Waste and Recycling Service deal with 344,100 collections each week.
- 3.3 SEND had 129 stage 1 complaints and for context during 2021/22 the number of Education, Health & Care Plans maintained by Buckinghamshire increased by 10% to 5415.
- 3.4 Planning and Development Management had 173 complaints. It is helpful to note that the Council received 7,177 planning applications for 2021/22 and that the total number of decisions made during this period was 6,740.

- 3.5 Revenues and Benefits had 135 complaints. The context here is that we are dealing with approximately 230,000 council tax properties.
- 3.6 The Corporate Complaints Policy states that we will attempt to respond to complaints within 20 working days.
- 3.7 Where a complaint takes longer than 20 working days to answer the Complaints and Improvements Team will write to the complainant and explain that there is a delay.
- 3.8 The average response time for Stage 1 Corporate Complaints for 2021/22 is 21 working days.
- 3.9 The graph following shows the areas with the most stage 1 complaints (above 50).



- 3.10 The highest number of complaints received were for the Waste and Recycling Team (South) with the majority of these being received in the first two quarters of the year. This compares to 994 received in the previous year and the majority of these complaints were about the quality of service received generally with underlying communication problems for the customer but can be further broken down as follows:

- Missed waste collections (all containers)
- Failure to put right a reported missed collection
- Online reporting system being marked as closed before the matter is resolved
- Delays in the delivery of ordered containers

3.11 Transport for Buckinghamshire received 219 stage 1 complaints which is an increase from the previous year (209). Complaints were made for the following reasons:

- Communications issues – online reports being close down on Fix My Street before the matter is resolved to the customer's satisfaction
- Delays in completing works
- The outcome of a decision to not carry out works such as repairs to the pavement or roads
- The quality of service provided where customers are either unhappy with how we have carried out a task such as a road closure or the repair of a road

3.12 SEND received 129 complaints which is an increase from 72 for the previous year. The issues being complained about are as follows:

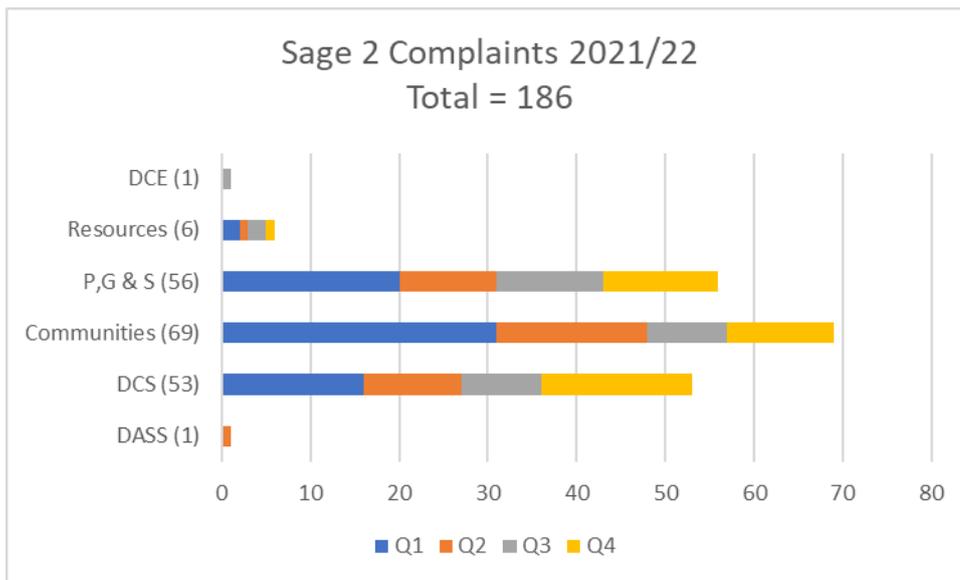
- Communication with customer including failing to reply to customer's correspondence in a timely manner and delays in issuing EHCP's

3.13 The Council Tax Team received 119 complaints which is an increase on 55 for the previous year. There was an issue with the Council Tax system being updated which lead to the majority of these complaints being received during quarter three and four. The issue encountered included poor communication and delays in issuing refunds.

3.14 The complaints about other areas are a mixture of communication issues and disagreements over decisions.



#### 4. Stage 2 Corporate complaints



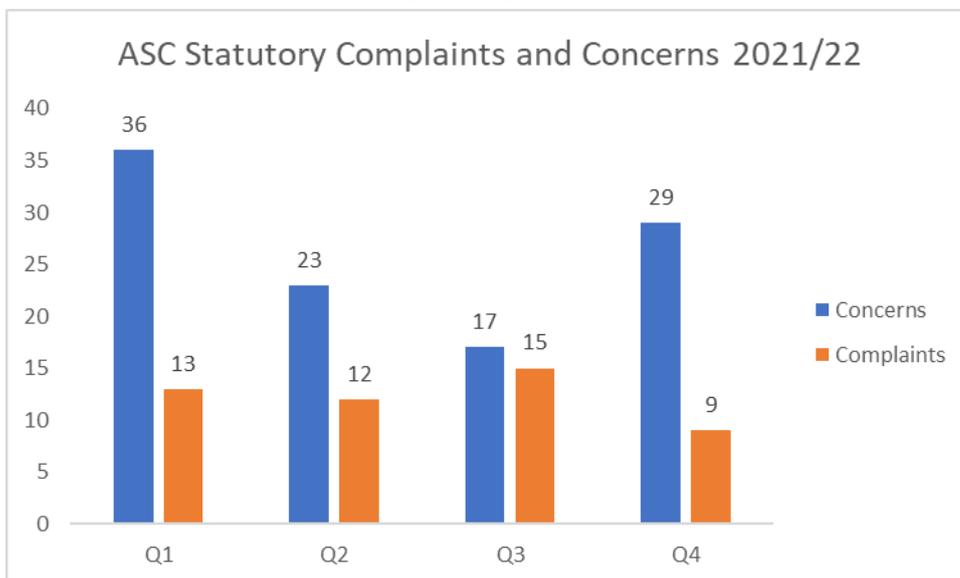
4.1 Stage 2 of the corporate complaints process involves an in-depth review of the stage 1 response carried out by stage 2 officers who work within the Complaints and Improvements Team.

4.2 The above graph shows the number of stage 2 complaints received between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022. 186 Stage 2 complaints were considered in total and this represents an escalation rate of 9.35% from stage 1 complaints.

4.3 This compares to 172 stage 2 complaints received during 2020/21.

4.4 The average response times for Stage 2 Corporate Complaints for 2021/22 is 42 working days.

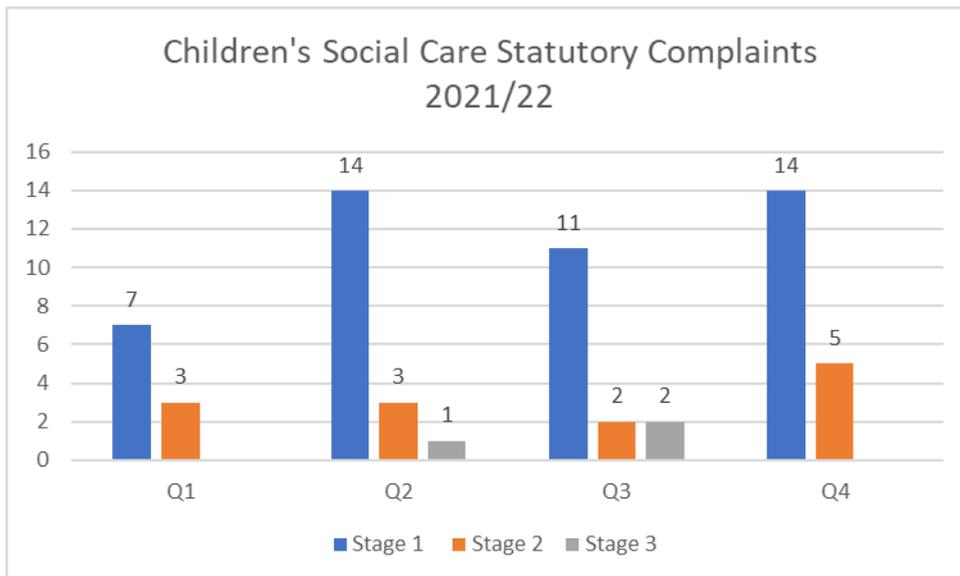
#### Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints



- 4.5 The ASC statutory complaints process is a one stage process that encourages local resolution to resolve issues within 48 hours. The complaints process usually begins once the Concern Stage has been exhausted.
- 4.6 The graph above shows 49 ASC statutory complaints were received during the year which is slightly more than the previous year when 44 were dealt with. The pre-complaint stage is called the Concern Stage, during which, if agreed with the complainant, the service area has 48 hours to resolve issues informally. During the year we dealt with 105 concerns compared with 75 for the previous year.
- 4.7 Whilst the statutory timescale allows up to six months to issue a final response to the complaint, the Council has set a local standard of 28 calendar days during which time most complaints are expected to be resolved.
- 4.8 The average response time for 2021/22 was 28 days which was met in spite of additional pressures that the service dealt with including the impact of the pandemic.
- 4.9 The average response times for the concerns received was 2 days.

## **5. Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints**

- 5.1 The Children's Statutory Complaints process has 3 stages. Stage 1 is the local resolution stage and involves the service responding in writing to the complaint. Stage 2 is an independent investigation of the complaint which is carried out externally. The resulting report feeds into the formal response which is completed by the relevant Service Director. Stage 3 is an independent review panel.
- 5.2 The following graph shows that there were 46 (28) cases received at stage 1 of the process, 13 (7) of which escalated to a stage 2 and in turn 3(1) escalated to a stage 3. The previous year's figures are shown in brackets.
- 5.3 Stage 1 of the Children's Statutory Complaints Process has a target of 10 working days, but this can be extended to 20 working days in certain circumstances; usually where the complaint is complex.
- 5.4 The average response time for responding to a stage 1 complaint for 2021/22 was 20 working days.



## 6. Next Steps and Review

- 6.1 This report is due to be seen at the Standards and General Purposes Committee on 14 July.
- 6.2 More in-depth reporting will now be prepared for individual directorates and will be shared with Corporate Directors.
- 6.3 Once the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has issued his annual review letter regarding the complaints they have seen for Buckinghamshire Council another report detailing those complaints will be prepared. The letter usually arrives towards the end of July.
- 6.4 Directorates have provided a number of examples of good practice in dealing with concerns and complaints at an early stage before they become formal corporate complaints. We have established an officer task and finish group to look at how we may embed that good practice in all Directorates with advice and support to staff on ensuring timely and effective early interventions and a personal approach as part an improvement of the Council's responsiveness to those who raise concerns.

## 7. Annual Review of the Corporate Complaints Policy

- 7.1 The Monitoring Officer has requested that we review the corporate complaints policy and update any changes within the next month.