

# North Yorkshire County Council

## Executive

30 November 2021

### Annual Report on Complaints and Compliments

#### Report of the Chief Executive

#### 1.0 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To fulfil the statutory requirement to report on complaints received from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and to provide information on compliments and complaints received by the Council during the year 2020/21.

#### 2.0 Background

- 2.1 This report provides an overview of performance in relation to complaints and includes the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman annual letter to the Council, which is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The annual complaints report also supplements the details reported in the Quarterly Performance report to Executive.

#### 3.0 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

- 3.1 The annual letter from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) was published on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2021. This is attached at Appendix 1. No comments were made about North Yorkshire County Council's performance.
- 3.2 Between March and June 2020, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the LGSCO did not accept new complaints and stopped investigating existing cases. This should be considered when comparing figures from previous years.
- 3.3 Although the number of investigations dropped to 42 this year, it should be recognised that most ombudsman cases involve an increasingly large amount of work due to complexity.
- 3.4 14 ombudsman complaints were upheld this year, though one case required no further action, one was already remedied by the Council and for one case there was no injustice caused.
- 3.5 We continue to use information from complaints to identify service improvements. For example:
- Improving procedures, such as re-wording for clarity, or more significant changes to ensure best practice or prevention of delay
  - Working with care providers to improve service quality
  - Staff training to improve performance and ensure good quality record keeping

	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
LGSCO investigations received	42	48	52	55	54

<b>2020/21 LGSCO Statistics</b>	
LGSCO investigations received	42
Compliance with LGSCO recommendations	100%
<b>Decisions Made</b>	
<b>Upheld</b>	<b>14</b>
Upheld: maladministration and injustice	11
Upheld: maladministration and injustice – no further action	1
Upheld: not investigated – injustice remedied during council complaints processes	1
Upheld: maladministration, no injustice	1
<b>Not Upheld</b>	<b>5</b>
Not upheld: no maladministration	4
Not upheld: no further action	1
<b>Closed after initial enquiries</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Not investigated</b>	
Premature enquiries (not yet investigated by NYCC – referred back for local resolution)	10
Incomplete or invalid	1

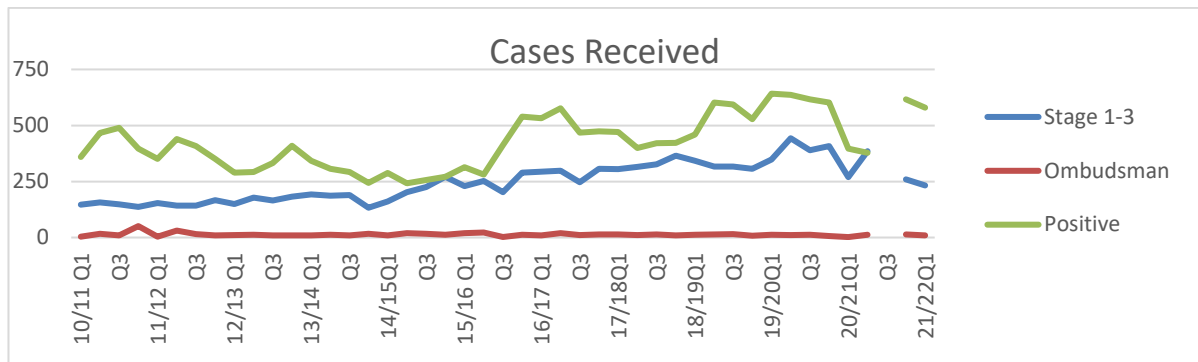
#### 4.0 Commendations, Compliments and Stage 1-3 Complaints

##### 4.1 Summary

Following the introduction of a new complaints recording system in October 2020, it became apparent that the data was unreliable. The numbers for 2020/21 therefore include data for quarters 1, 2 and 4 only.

	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2016/17</b>
<b>Commendations received</b>	23	15	5	7	18
<b>Compliments received</b>	1369	2510	2286	1866	2052
<b>Stage 1-3 complaints received *</b>	914	1583	1289	1315	1151
<b>Adults Stage 1 complaints</b>	216	445	317	310	231
<b>Adults complaint reviews</b>	55	54	-	-	-
<b>Children's Stage 1 complaints</b>	43	76	84	134	164
<b>Children's Stage 2 complaints</b>	4	3	5	8	6
<b>Children's Stage 3 complaints</b>	3	1	3	0	1
<b>Corporate Stage 1 complaints</b>	575	1040	869	836	730
<b>Corporate Stage 2 complaints</b>	18	18	10	20	16
<b>Corporate Stage 3 complaints</b>	-	-	1	7	3
<b>Stage 1-3 dealt within timescales</b>	84%	83%	81%	84%	71%
<b>Stage 1-3 upheld or partly upheld</b>	38%	39%	38%	35%	35%

\*Please note the three complaints procedures have different numbers of stages associated with them: adult social care, 1 formal stage and 1 complaint review (since Oct 19); children's social care, 3 stages; corporate, 2 stages (since Jan 18).



#### 4.2 Complaints Root Causes and Teams

Top Root cause		
Cause	2020/21	2019/20
Service and care	26%	31%
Disagree with decision	20%	18%
Communication	15%	16%
Environment	12%	15%
Covid-19	9%	1%

Top Teams		
Team	2020/21	2019/20
Highways Operations	31% (329)	33% (523)
HAS Care & Support	15% (154)	18% (280)
Waste & Countryside	10% (106)	7% (102)
HAS Resources	8% (79)	5% (73)
CYPS Safeguarding	6% (58)	5% (84)

#### 4.3 Analysis

- 4.4 The Council recognises that complaints give the opportunity to learn from instances where our services have fallen short of our usual standards. In recent years, many complaints have tended to be more complex and time consuming. Due to pressure on resources, officers ensure that complaints are only accepted and investigated where they fall within prescribed guidelines. For example, should someone complain about a policy decision, this would not be investigated had that decision been made following correct procedure.
- 4.5 The number of commendations/compliments has fluctuated over time, though there has been an uplift since records begin, with 1222 received in 2010/11 Q1, 2 and 4, and 1392 in the same quarters in 2020/21. However, even taking into account no data available for quarter 3, this year there was a significant drop in positive contacts (1392 2020/21; 2525 in 2019/20), mostly due to the suspension of registration services in 2020, in particular weddings, due to Covid-19.
- 4.6 The number of complaints received has also increased over time (to be expected against the background of greater need/expectations against fewer resources), with 438 Stage 1-3 complaints received in 2010/11 Q1, 2 and 4 and 914 for the same quarters in 2020/21. This year however, (notwithstanding no quarter 3 data) there was a dip in cases received across the Council, particularly during the first lockdown period, quarter 1.
- 4.7 The 'top teams' receiving complaints are often those services that affect a large proportion of the population (e.g. highways) or are very emotive (such as social care).
- 4.8 This year the percentage of stage 1-3 complaints completed within set timescales increased by 1% to 84%. This is an area where teams seek to improve and it can be seen that over time this has been the case.
- 4.9 The upheld rate has decreased slightly to 38%, in line with previous years.
- 4.10 The number of complaints investigations received from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has dropped to 42 (48 last year). Investigations stopped in quarter 1. These resumed in June and has had a small effect on numbers.

4.11 There is a slight change for complaints root causes, where Covid-19 has of course, been included as a new category, making up 9% of cases.

4.12 No themes that would suggest particular areas of concern were identified.

<b>5.0 Recommendation</b>
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5.1 That the contents of this report be noted.
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Richard Flinton  
Chief Executive

County Hall  
Northallerton  
5<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Report Author – Dani Reeves  
Presenter of Report – Councillor Greg White

**Background Papers** – None

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – LGSCO Annual letter