

Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2024 / 2025

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Introduction

A complaint, for the purpose of this report, is defined as:

An expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Herefordshire Council, our staff or contractors.

An enquiry, for the purpose of this report, is defined as:

An act of asking for information.

A service request, for the purpose of this report, can be defined as:

A formal request that a member of the public, client or service user makes, asking a service provider to provide them with something that would be useful in the business's day-to-day operations.

A compliment, for the purpose of this report, is defined as:

A polite expression of praise.

Purpose of the Report

This report provides information on complaints and feedback received by Hereford Council for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 that relate to all services within the Council, excluding children's social care. Complaints about that specific service area is managed by a different statutory processes and are subject to separate scrutiny.

What is the Corporate Complaints Procedure?

The aim of the Corporate Complaints Procedure is to make sure that:

- complaints are dealt with to a fair and consistent standard
- the Council responds to complaints in a reasonable timescale
- outcomes from complaints are documented and shared throughout the Council
- a 'do it once do it right' approach is taken to complaints

The Council has based its complaints procedure on guidance set out in the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's 'Guidance on Running a Complaints System 2009'. The guidance explains the principles underpinning a successful complaints procedure:

What is a Complaint?

An expression of dissatisfaction about a council service (whether that service is provided directly by the council or by a contractor or partner) that requires a response. It is important to note that there are exclusions within the Corporate Complaints Procedure and not all complaints will be addressed under this procedure, even if the resident has identified their concerns as a complaint. The following are examples of exclusions under this procedure:

- First time request for service
- Certain highways issues
- Suggestions for improvements to council services
- Council action or lack of action that affects more than one individual, such as local highways or community issues
- Claims for damages
- Matters where an alternative and more appropriate course of action exist

Complaints regarding work other organisations carry out on the council's behalf may be investigated by the organisation concerned or the council team commissioning that service in the first instance, however, final stages of the complaints process will be managed by the Complaints Team. This includes organisations such as Hoople Ltd, Balfour Beatty Living Places, FCC, ACE adoption, adult social care providers and bailiffs.

This policy also covers second stage appeals for financial assessment for adult care and support charges.

The Role of the Complaints Team

The Corporate Complaints Procedure covers a wide range of Council services and infrastructure that are accessed and used by Herefordshire residents on a daily basis. The Complaints Team are responsible for assessing complaints and feedback about these services and screen each one to identify the most suitable way to address the issues raised.

Classification of Complaints and Feedback:

Service requests:

Any new issues such as highways defects, parking problems or rights of way concerns are not considered under the Corporate Complaints Process and will be referred to the Council's relevant service.

Examples can include:

- Notification of a new highways problem that has not been reported before
- Update on an existing issue
- Requests to re-open a closed report
- Problem parking on a residential street
- Blocked footpath that is a right of way
- Notify the Council of a claim for damages

Enquiry/Comment/Not Eligible for Corporate Complaints Procedure):

A notable portion of matters received by the Complaints Team fall under these categories. The team will log and contact the service to obtain a response for the resident. Types of feedback for this category are:

- Roadworks causing delay or disruption/diversion route
- Follow up/query in respect of highways reports
- Standard of works completed
- A general comment or observation about a Council service
- Disagreement with a decision that has been made in line with council policy
- Suggestions for improvement
- Issues that affect a number of people, not an individual

Informal Resolution:

Complaints that are identified as Informal Resolution must be about issues that are eligible for the Corporate Complaints Procedure and can be resolved quickly and without the need for detailed investigation. There must be evidence of potential service failure but not to the extent that requires a formal investigation. The service must respond directly to the resident and endeavor to reach a suitable resolution. For example:

- Delay in receiving library book
- Problems with renewing Blue Badge or Bus Pass
- Difficulties in accessing online services

Formal Complaint:

An issue will be considered under the formal complaints procedure whereby there is evidence of potential service failure and that this has impacted directly on the person who is making the complaint. These can include:

- Blocked drain has not been inspected despite being reported to the Council. The situation has worsened, and water is encroaching on the resident's property
- Roadworks have prevented a resident accessing their property
- Changes to the lighting provision outside a property has resulted in the light shining directly into the resident's property and impacting on their day to day living
- Works not carried out despite being advised that they would take place
- Conduct of a member of staff towards a resident
- Affected resident not included in consultation of local project
- Evidence of an application for a service not considered properly

The Complaints Team will define the issues that require investigation from the information submitted by the complainant. This assists the process by:

- Identifying the key issues that require investigation
- Ensuring that each complaint is considered separately and provides the complainant with a clear decision as to whether their complaint has been upheld or not
- Captures themes and trends for reporting purposes

It is important that a complaint is dealt with via the correct process from the beginning to avoid any potential future maladministration. Issues that are not eligible for handling under the formal complaint's procedures will be directed as appropriate.

Complaints are directed to the relevant service area, and progress is monitored to ensure that a response is provided within corporate timescales. Complaints are responded to at the point of service delivery giving the service area subject of the complaint the opportunity to respond to any concerns raised about it. The manager of the service is also best placed to provide a knowledgeable and comprehensive response to the complaint. They can identify where things have gone wrong and propose a suitable remedy to the complainant.

The Complaints Team do not usually provide a response to complaints unless in exceptional circumstances. This is to provide the resident with confidence that the team offers an impartial service that can support them in making representation to the Council. The team provides advice to persons wishing to use these procedures and offers staff members support and guidance on how to appropriately handle and respond effectively to complaints about the Council.

Learning From Complaints

All officers investigating and responding to complaints are encouraged to document any identified learning that has arisen from the investigation in order that this information can be used to improve existing practices. Sharing details of the complaint and investigation are also done in team meetings to allow teams to contribute to future service improvements.

It is expected that in all circumstances, complaints are investigated properly and that complainants are treated fairly and with empathy. An apology will often be offered in recognition that the resident will have felt sufficiently aggrieved to contact the council to make a complaint, even in cases whereby the complaint has not been upheld.

Collation of Data

Complaints are collated on a bespoke database, e-case, that records details of the service subject of the complaint, the nature of the complaints raised, the outcome and remedies/learning.

Making a Complaint

In line with the Council's digital strategy, residents can contact the Complaints Team via a designated email address and online form. However, we do recognise that in certain circumstances, residents wish to have a conversation with the team and therefore we also have a direct telephone line which is available Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

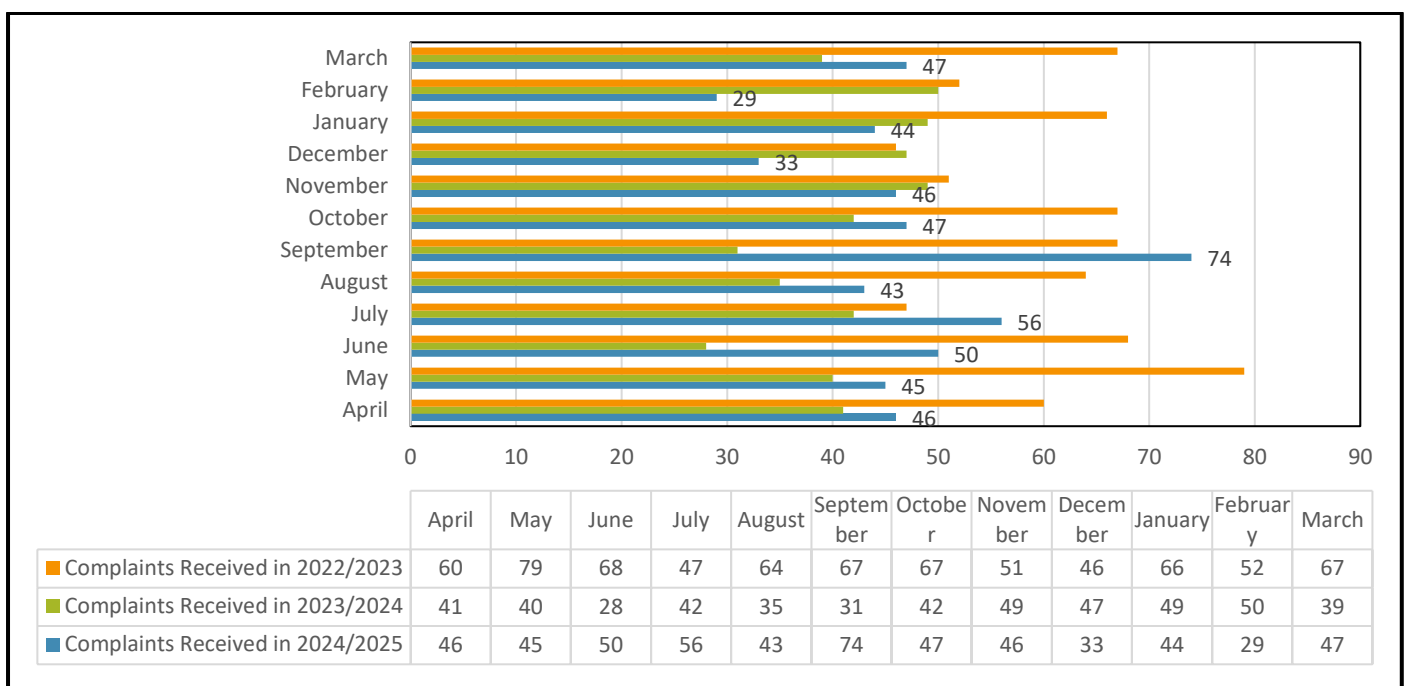
Performance Metrics

Complaints and compliments have been categorised into each directorate.

There were **560** complaints processed through the Corporate Complaints Policy, an increase in comparison to 483 received the previous year

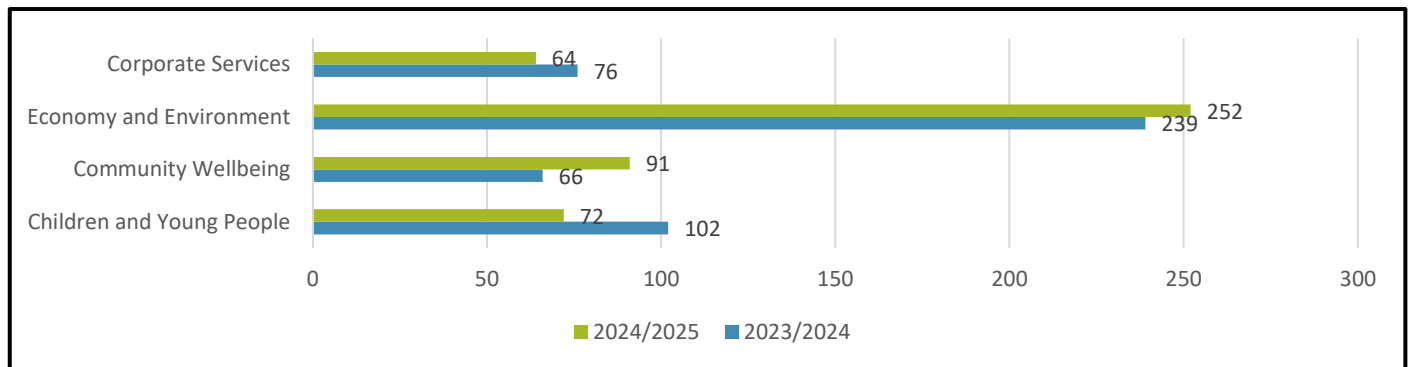
NB: complaints about Community Wellbeing and Children's Services are reported and analysed separately but will be captured in the data within this report

The chart below shows complaints received, by month, in reporting year 2024/2025, compared to reporting year 2023/2024. Analysing the complaint data over the past three years reveals some interesting trends. In 2024/2025, the number of complaints fluctuated throughout the year, with a noticeable peak in September with 74 complaints. Comparing this to the previous year, we see a generally lower complaint volume, though November, January, and February also saw higher numbers. The 2022/2023 period generally had the highest complaint volumes, particularly during the months of May and June. Overall, complaint numbers appear to have decreased from 2022/2023 to 2023/2024, with the current year showing a pattern somewhere in between these two prior years. Further investigation doesn't indicate that there is a particular area of concern or reason for complaints.



Children and Young People experienced a decrease in complaints, moving from 102 in the previous year to 72 in the current year, suggesting potential improvements in service delivery and/or communication. On the other hand, Community Wellbeing saw an increase in complaints, rising from 66 to 91, warranting further investigation into the underlying causes, the complaints team have worked closely with Community Wellbeing senior managers to understand the trends. Economy and Environment complaints remained relatively stable, fluctuating slightly from 239 to 252, this number is to be expected given the diverse range and number of services within this directorate. Finally, Corporate Services also demonstrated a decrease in complaints, decreasing from 76 to 64, perhaps indicating enhanced efficiency or customer service practices.

NB: Please note that the data shown under the Children and Young People's directorate fall under the corporate policy not the Children's Statutory Policy, this data is reported separately.

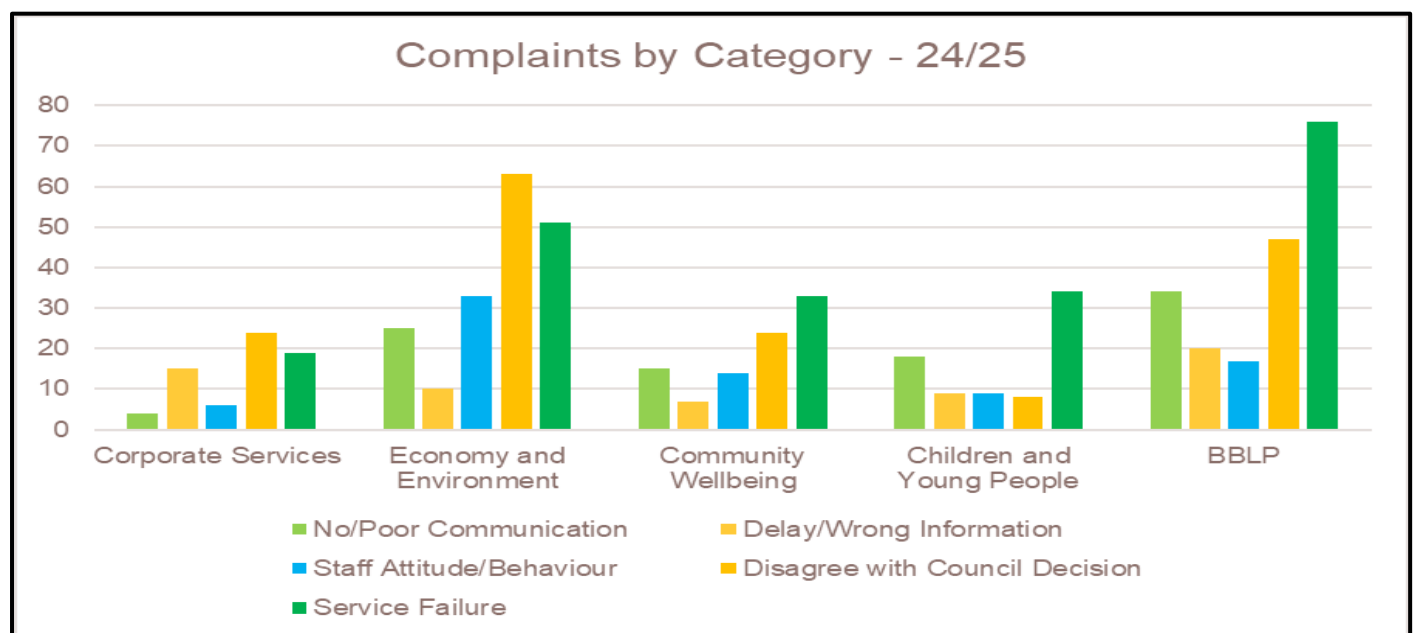


Complaints by category

Categories of complaint follow the most common categories for complaint identified by the Complaints Team when processing complaints.

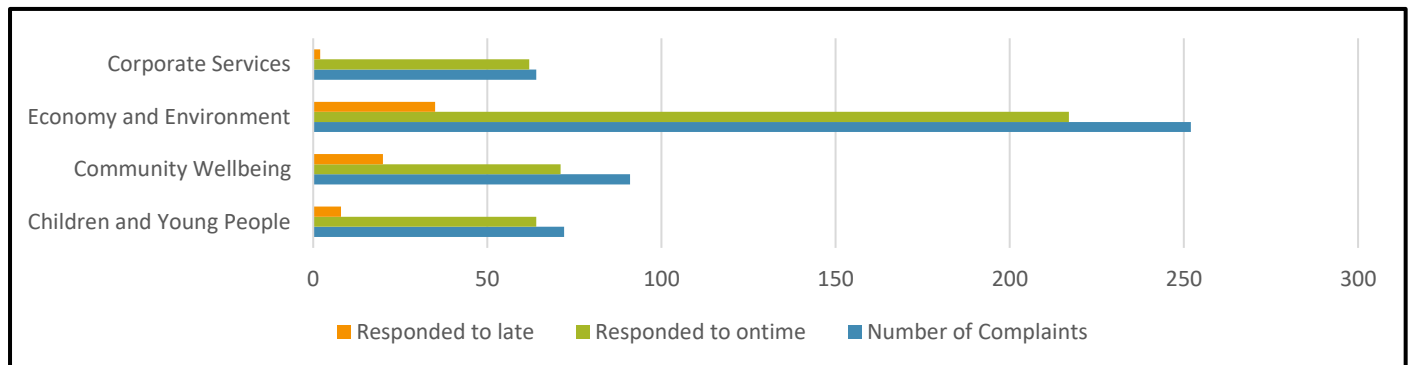
The graph below shows the volume of complaints received this year by category per directorate:

Service Failure can be seen to be the highest area of complaints throughout the year, with 29% of complaints being categorised as this, followed by Disagree with Council Decision with 26% of complaints. It's positive to see that the lowest number of complaints continues to be categorised as 'delay / wrong information' and 'no / poor communication', as these have previously been areas of concern.



Timeliness of Responses:

Reviewing complaint response timeliness across each directorates reveals interesting patterns. Corporate Services demonstrates the highest efficiency, with nearly all (62 out of 64) complaints addressed on time. Children and Young People follows closely, responding to 64 out of 72 complaints within the designated timeframe. While Economy and Environment handles the largest volume of complaints (252), their on time response rate is also substantial, with 217 resolved promptly, though they also account for the highest number of late responses at 35. Looking at this by percentage however, Community Wellbeing shows the lowest on time percentage, addressing 71 out of 91 complaints on time, suggesting potential challenges in meeting deadlines within this directorate (22% being late), although they handle a mid-range number of complaints. The data suggests a correlation between the volume of complaints and the number of late responses, but Corporate Services' efficiency highlights that high volume isn't the sole determinant of timeliness.



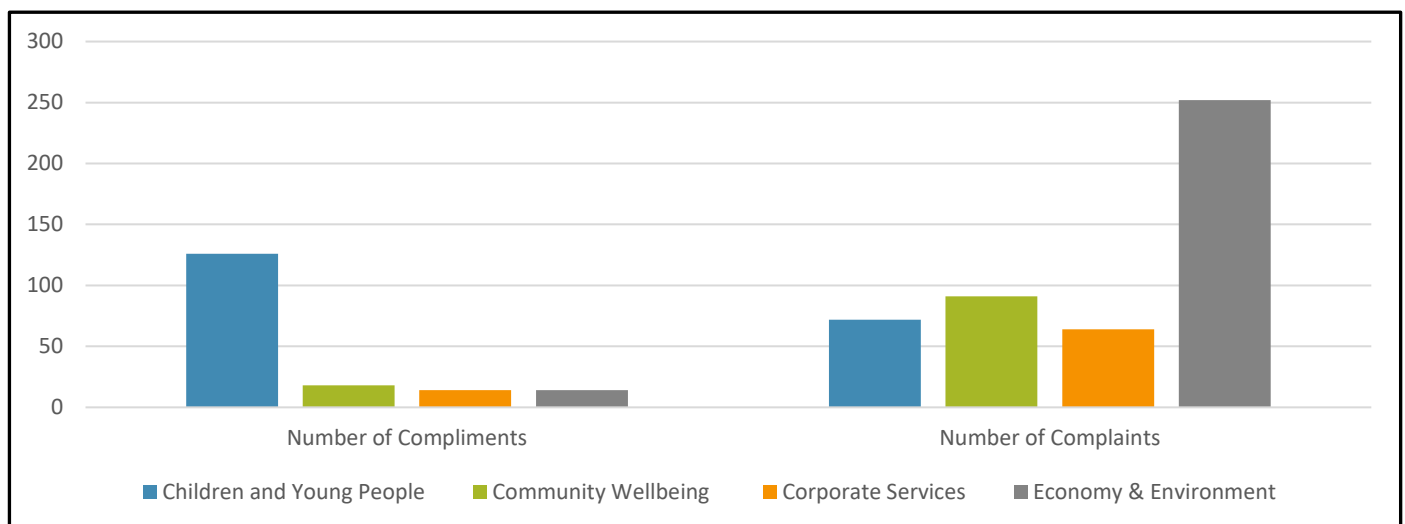
	Number of Complaints	Ontime	Late	% late
Children and Young People	72	64	8	11%
Community Wellbeing	91	71	20	22%
Economy and Environment	252	217	35	14%
Corporate Services	64	62	2	3%

Compliments

A compliment, for the purpose of this report, is defined as:
A polite expression of praise.

Since implementing the compliments@herefordshire.gov.uk email, we have received a high number of external compliments, particularly in the Children and Young People Directorate, this is widely promoted throughout the directorate. We've received a smaller number of compliments from Community Wellbeing directorate and Corporate Services but this remains limited along with Economy and Environment directorate.

Positive feedback about a service or member of staff can be made in a number of ways such as, by email, phone or directly to a member of staff. We record compliments that show a level of service or actions that go above what would normally be expected. Compliments are only logged if the positive feedback is made by a member of the public. 172 recordable compliments were received during 2024/2025. Unfortunately, in comparison to the number of complaints received the number of compliments does not reflect the positive, effective, work being done by Herefordshire Council services. There is opportunity here to promote and develop the compliments aspect of the service to ensure that positive feedback and praise is being recognised.



Lessons Learnt

When allocating a complaint to an internal investigating officer, along with the response template we sent the below learning template. Previously it was identified that completing two documents when responding to a complaint, given officers workloads, was unreasonable and it was shared as the reason for officers not completing this form. Following this feedback, the learning template was added into the response template, meaning investigating officers can complete all necessary information on one form and return this to the complaints team.

Unfortunately, although we have seen some improvement we are still seeing a significantly low number of forms being returned. Lessons learnt from complaints is a useful tool for continuing and allowing us as a Local Authority to be accountable and continue to improve, without this information we cannot take learning forwards to teams and we expose ourselves to the risk of reoccurring complaints by not acknowledging there may be some depth to the concerns being raised.

Learning Template

Case reference number CCMPT12023/01267	Has an advocate been involved Y/N	What category the complaint was about (Service failure/ Delay / Poor Communication/ Staff Attitude / Wrong Information Given)	Outcome of complaint (Up-held, Not up-held)
What were the underlying causes of the complaint? (e.g. poor record keeping)		What has changed? How will we ensure that this doesn't happen again?	
Was the complaint resolved within agreed timescales? If not, why not			

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

The Ombudsman investigates complaints about the actions taken by or on behalf of a council or authority. The service is independent, free and impartial. The Local Government Act gives the Ombudsman the powers of the High Court to require the production of evidence held or witnesses.

The main statutory functions for the Ombudsman are:

- to investigate complaints against councils and some other authorities
- to investigate complaints about adult social care providers from people who arrange or fund their adult social care (Health Act 2009)
- to provide advice and guidance on good administrative practice.

When investigating a complaint, the Ombudsman will look at whether there has been evidence of fault by the council and any injustice caused to the complainant. Following this the Ombudsman will recommend a proportionate appropriate and reasonable remedy to the complaint.

Enquiries – These instances are where the complainant has approached the Ombudsman with their complaint. The Ombudsman will then contact the Council to ask for further information to consider whether they will carry out a full investigation into the complaint. Should the Ombudsman decide that they will not carry out a detailed investigation, the complaint will be closed.

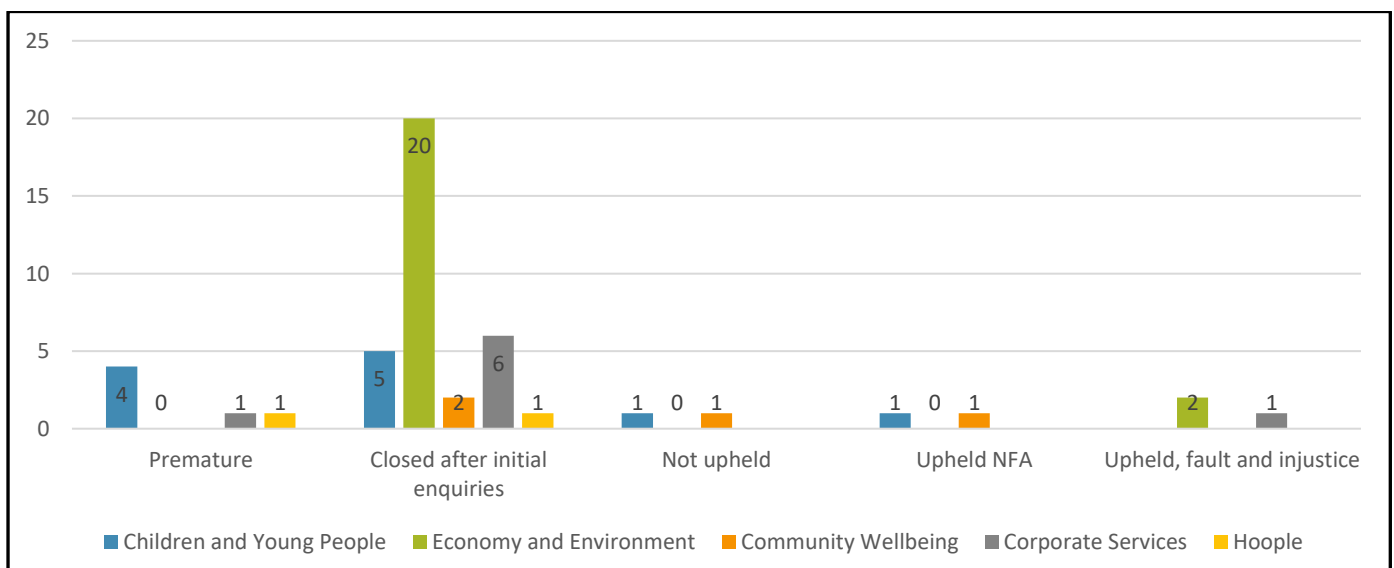
Not Investigating – On occasion, the Ombudsman may receive a complaint that it will not investigate. Reasons for this can be as follows:

- Alternative legal remedy
- Insufficient fault of justice
- Complaint referred to the Ombudsman over one year after the incident subject of the complaint occurred

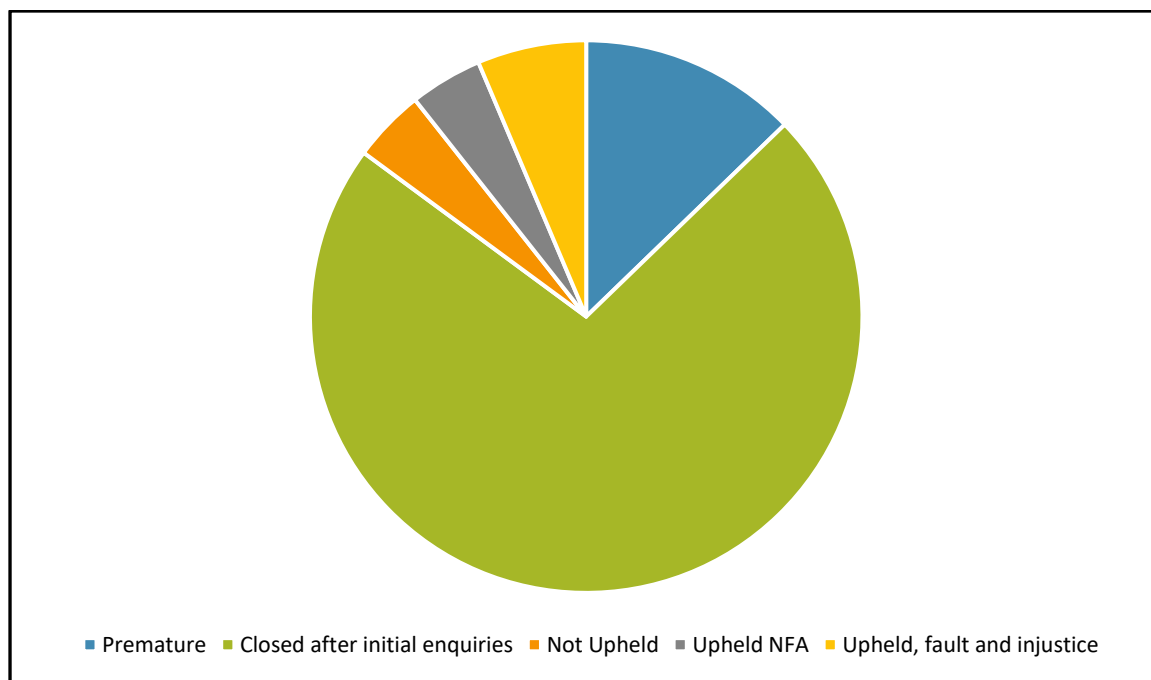
Investigation – An investigation will take place if the Ombudsman is of the view that the issues raised meet the tests set out in its Assessment Code. The Council will be advised of the investigation and the Ombudsman will specify what information it requires from the Council to investigate the complaint. Once the investigation has been completed, Draft Decision will be issued, and the Council and complainant will be invited to comment on this. The Ombudsman will then issue its Final Decision Statement on the complaint which details its findings and any recommendations that it expects the Council to implement. This can include changes to procedure or practice and financial payment to the complainant.

At time of writing this report, **8** open cases being investigated. The LGSCO have received 55 communications from Herefordshire member of the public. These communications relay to the following directorates;

Children and young people, **15**. Economy and Environment, **25**. Community wellbeing, **5**. Corporate services, **8**. Hoople, **2**



62% complaints were closed after initial enquiries and 11% were premature. A minimal 9% of complaints that were investigated, fault was found with the Local Authority with only a third of those upheld being found to have caused fault and injustice (2 complaints).



Nature of complaint	Directorate	LGSCO Decision
CAF Assessment.	Children and Young people	11.04.24 We have decided the complaint is premature. Please contact the complainant and ensure that the complaints procedure is completed
Planning	Economy and Environment	Planning & Development and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action.
Planning	Economy and Environment	Planning & Development and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action.
Care charges	Community well being	Adult Care Services and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - out of jurisdiction.
Council tax	Hoople	Benefits & Tax and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - out of jurisdiction.
Coroner complaint	Corporate Services	Corporate & Other Services and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action
alcohol misuse impacting court	Children and Young people	Education & Children's Services and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action
Service failure 3 stage safeguarding procedures	Children and Young people	30.09.24 Education & Children's Services and the decision as: Upheld:Fault and Injustice.Write to Ms X and apologise for the fault found. The Council should give regard to our guidance on how to make an effective apology. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay Ms X a further £250 in recognition of the distress and injustice caused. • Review how it will ensure that adjudication letters are sent in line with the statutory complaints procedure. • Review how it will ensure that it considers our guidance on remedies for upheld complaints

EHCP, Education	Children and Young people	Was premature then came back to investigate . Education & Children's Services and the decision as: Upheld: Fault and Injustice 01.25To remedy the injustice the Council caused to Ms F, the Council should, within one month of the final decision: a) pay Ms F £300 to acknowledge the distress and uncertainty the Council's faults caused her, including her delayed opportunity to exercise her appeal rights to the SEND Tribunal. The Council should provide us with evidence it has complied with the above
alleged wrongful pre-election political publicity by the Council	Corporate Services	Corporate & Other Services and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - out of jurisdiction.
Lack of communication repeated	Children and Young people	04.09.24 Education & Children's Services and the decision as: Upheld: Fault and Injustice. Apologise to Miss X for the upset and uncertainty caused by its failure to ensure she has contact with Y and Z and respond to her repeated concerns about the lack of contact. We publish guidance on remedies which sets out our expectations for how organisations should apologise effectively to remedy injustice. The organisation should consider this guidance in making the apology. b) Carry out its proposed actions set out in paragraph 25 of this decision, including paying Miss X £500 to recognise the impact of the Council's failings. c) Agree a consistent communication plan with Miss X regarding her contact with Y and Z and with the Council. This should establish when Miss X will receive updates on their progress and when the Council will and will not respond to her communication. The Council should set this out in writing to Miss X once this is agreed.
telephone call with parking	Economy and Environment	We will not investigate Mr X's complaint about a telephone call with a Council officer. This is because it is unlikely an investigation by this office could add to the response already provided via the Council's previous investigation of the matter.
Letter re dog barking	Economy and Environment	Closed after initial enquiries - no further action. We will not investigate this complaint about the Council's actions in sending Ms X a letter advising her it had received a complaint about noise nuisance from dog barking. This is because we are unlikely to find evidence of fault by the Council sufficient to warrant an investigation.
Planning decision	Economy and Environment	Planning & Development and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action.
Delay stage 3 complaint panel	Children and Young people	26.06.24 recorded as premature to LGSCO. 02.12. 24 Final decision. Education & Children's Services and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action
Noise Complaint	Economy and Environment	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation and the decision as: Upheld: Fault and InjusticeTo remedy the injustice caused to Ms D, detailed in paragraph 52, a) provide an apology to her, following the guidance on apologies we set out in section 3.2 of our guidance on remedies (see Guidance on remedies - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Guidance on remedies - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman); b) make a symbolic payment to Ms D of £250 in recognition of the distress caused to her (see section 3.6i of our guidance on remedies). 56. Also, to try and prevent a repeat of the fault identified in this case the Council has agreed within 20 working days of this decision to issue a

		reminder to all staff who investigate potential statutory nuisance of the importance of communication in closing investigations. They should always put a decision in writing with reasons for closing the case.
SAR and monitoring officer letters	Corporate Services	26.11.24 Corporate & Other Services and the decision as: Upheld: Fault and Injustice
Planning safety concerns	Economy and Environment	Planning & Development and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action.
Planning green space	Economy and Environment	08.08.24 Planning & Development and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action
Noise Complaint	Economy and Environment	08.08.24 We have decided the complaint is premature. Please contact the complainant and ensure that the complaints procedure is completed. Reopened 17.10.24. 31.03.25 Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation and the decision as: Upheld: Fault and Injustice
Direct Payments etc	Children and Young people	20.09.24 Education & Children's Services and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action
Not happy with info included with the evidence to be considered by the Land Registration First-Tier Tribunal	Corporate Services	09.08.24 Corporate & Other Services and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - out of jurisdiction.
school admissions	Children and Young people	13.08.24 Education & Children's Services and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - out of jurisdiction.

EHCP, Education	Children and Young people	<p>Upheld: Fault and Injustice 52. To remedy the injustice the Council caused to Ms C and X, the Council should, within one month of the final decision:</p> <p>a) pay Ms C £300 to acknowledge the distress and uncertainty the Council's faults caused her, including her delayed opportunity to exercise her appeal rights to the SEND tribunal;</p> <p>b) pay Ms C £1,200, to use as she sees fit for the benefit of X, to acknowledge the loss of education X experienced as a result of its delay in providing him with alternative educational provision;</p> <p>In total the Council should pay Ms C F £1,500.</p> <p>53. Within three months of the final decision the Council should also:</p> <p>c) remind its SEND staff of the Council's duty to ensure it issues decisions which always sets out appeal rights to parents and young people. This includes when requests for Education, Health, and Care needs assessment or reassessments are received, and a decision has been made.</p> <p>d) review the current staffing levels within its special educational needs team and how it allocates cases. This is to ensure it has sufficient staff available to respond to and action Education, Health, and Care plan assessments and annual reviews within the statutory timescales, including when existing staff leaves or are unexpectedly absent.</p>
New HMP	Economy and Environment	21.08.24 Highways & Transport and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action
Homelessness Forum	Community well being	30.08.24 Corporate & Other Services and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - out of jurisdiction.
kidnapped as a child 13 September 1977- Historic issues	Children and Young people	11.11.24 We will not investigate Mr X's complaint because it is unlikely we could reach a clear enough view now on events so long ago. Allegations of crimes are for the police. It would be disproportionate to investigate the Council's complaint handling in isolation and anyway there is not enough evidence of fault to justify investigating Council's conduct during the complaint process.
misquoted on various occasions and on other occasions children's services have outright lied and written down things he never said	Children and Young people Children in care	<p>15 October 2024</p> <p>Your ref:</p> <p>Our ref: 24 012 286</p> <p>Dear LGSCO Link Officer</p> <p>Thank you for providing information about this complaint.</p> <p>We have decided the complaint is premature. If you could please now consider this complaint further and contact the complainant and ensure that the complaints procedure is completed</p>
Overhanging hedge	Economy and Environment	Highways & Transport and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action
Lack of contact on home visit with police	Children and Young people	09.01.25 Education & Children's Services and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action

Balfour Beatty to account, for failing to adequately maintain the King George V playing fields (known as Bishop's Meadow).	Economy and Environment	22.10.24 Corporate & Other Services and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - out of jurisdiction
Planning enforcement lack	Economy and Environment	05.11.24 Planning & Development and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action
Planning enforcement, loud music	Economy and Environment	29.10.24 Premature from LGO Reopen Jan25
EHCP plan delay and affects of this	Children and Young people	30.10.24 Premature from LGO
Council tax summons	Hoope	29.10.24 Premature from LGO
Planning Enforcement	Economy and Environment	22.11.24 Planning & Development and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action
PROW macadams Lane	Economy and Environment	18.11.24 Highways & Transport and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action
Smoke fire building control	Economy and Environment	Planning & Development and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action.
complaint about a safeguarding matter.	Children and Young people	Education & Children's Services and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - out of jurisdiction
Residents parking permits	Economy and Environment	Highways & Transport and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action
Mash and data breach	Children and Young people	31.03.25 Education & Children's Services and the decision as: Not upheld: No Fault.
Tree BBLP	BBLP	20.12.24 premature 22.01.25 reopened. 14.03.25 Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action,
PCN officer	Economy and Environment	13.01.25 Highways & Transport and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action
Homelessness	Community well being	Under investigation
Care home	Community well being	Adult Care Services and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - out of jurisdiction.
Safeguarding	Community well being	28.3.25 Adult Care Services and the decision as: Not upheld: No Fault
referral in March 2023 and report	Children and Young people	25.02.25 Education & Children's Services and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - out of jurisdiction

Council's handling of a scheme to introduce tenants for her property	Community well being	Housing and the decision as: Upheld: no further action, organisation already remedied
Mash assessment	Children and Young people	Education & Children's Services and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - out of jurisdiction
New build waste bins	Economy and Environment	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action
Question to cabinet	Corporate Services	03.02.25 We have decided the complaint is premature. If you could please now consider the complaint under your complaints procedure, please contact the complainant and ensure that the complaints procedure is completed.
Assessment	Children and Young people	10.02.25 Dear LGSCO Link Officer Thank you for providing information about this complaint. We have decided the complaint is premature. Could you please now consider this under stage two of your complaints procedure
Highway claim	BBLP	05.04.25 Highways & Transport and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - out of jurisdiction
EHCP	Children and Young people	Under investigation
EHCP	Children and Young people	Under investigation
EHCP	Children and Young people	Under investigation
PCN and officer	Economy and Environment	14.03.25 Highways & Transport and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries – no further action
Children in care	Children and Young people	24.02.25 Education & Children's Services and the decision as: Upheld: no further action, organisation already remedied.
Staff attitude	Corporate services	19.02.25 Corporate & Other Services and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action
failing to effectively enforce against numerous unauthorised works and activities at The Majors Arms, Halmonds Frome, Herefordshire	Economy and Environment	Under investigation
decision to approve a planning application	Economy and Environment	12.02.25 Planning & Development and the decision as: Closed after initial enquiries - no further action
Noise Complaint	Economy and Environment	Under investigation
EHCP	Children and Young people	Under investigation

Analysis

Key Messages:

Complaint Volume: Overall complaints increased from 483 to 560 this year. While fluctuations occur monthly, the 2024/2025 figures fall between the higher volumes of 2022/2023 and the lower numbers of 2023/2024. No specific issue is driving the increase.

Directorate Performance:

- Children and Young People: Saw a reduction in complaints, suggesting service improvements.
- Community Wellbeing: Experienced an increase in complaints, requiring focused investigation and strategies.
- Economy and Environment: Complaint numbers remained stable, which is expected given service volume.
- Corporate Services: Achieved a reduction in complaints, potentially due to enhanced efficiency across services.

Complaint Categories: "Service Failure" and "Disagree with Council Decision" are the most common complaint categories. "Delay/wrong information" and "no/poor communication complaints" remain low.

Response Timeliness: Corporate Services demonstrates high efficiency in timely responses. Community Wellbeing has the lowest on-time response percentage, despite a mid-range complaint volume. Economy and Environment has the highest number of late responses which is to be expected based on volume of complaints.

Compliments: Compliments are primarily received through the dedicated email address, with Children and Young People receiving the most. Overall compliment numbers are low compared to complaints, underrepresenting the positive work of the council.

Recommendations:

Targeted Investigation (Community Wellbeing): Conduct a thorough analysis of the specific issues driving the increased complaints within Community Wellbeing. This should involve gathering detailed feedback, identifying root causes, and developing targeted solutions.

Best Practice Sharing: Analyse practices within Children and Young People and Corporate Services to identify strategies contributing to complaint reduction and improved response times. Share these best practices with other directorates, particularly Community Wellbeing.

Address Common Complaint Categories: Develop proactive strategies to mitigate "Service Failure" and "Disagree with Council Decision" complaints. This could involve service process reviews, clearer communication of decision-making processes, and enhanced customer service training.

Improve Timeliness (Community Wellbeing): Investigate the reasons behind the lower on-time response rate in Community Wellbeing. This may involve resource allocation, workflow optimization, or additional training for staff. Consider setting up regular reminder to ensure complaints are responded to within the designated timeframe.

Promote Compliments: Implement a more comprehensive strategy to encourage and capture compliments. This could include:

- Actively promoting the dedicated email address across all directorates and services.
- Training staff on how to proactively solicit positive feedback.
- Providing alternative channels for submitting compliments (e.g. online forms, feedback kiosks).
- Publicly acknowledging and celebrating positive feedback to recognize staff achievements and improve morale.

Data Monitoring and Reporting: Continue to monitor complaint trends and response times across all directorates. Use this data to identify areas for improvement and track the effectiveness of implemented strategies.

Resource Allocation: Ensure adequate resources are allocated to complaint handling, particularly in directorates with high complaint volumes or lower response times.

Further training: Provide further training to those dealing with complaints.

In conclusion, while the number of complaints has decreased since the 2022/2023 period, there is still room for improvement in addressing the root causes of complaints and increasing the number of compliments received. By focusing on best practices, resource allocation, and effective promotion, Herefordshire Council can continue to enhance its services and improve overall satisfaction.