

Non statutory corporate complaints and customer feedback

For the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023



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1 Introduction

This report is for the period 1 April 2022 to the 31 March 2023 and covers corporate (non-statutory) complaints and compliments for all council direct provision and public health commissioned services. It reports on the corporate expressions of dissatisfaction / complaints/ learning and compliments mainly in relation to highways and public health.

This report does not cover the wider activity in responding to customer enquiries by other council teams e.g., the Customer Access Service or the Highways District Lead Team and excludes adult social care and children's complaints which are reported separately in their respective statutory complaints and feedback reports.

The council operates a 2-stage complaint procedure which forms part of the council constitution. It can be found in full on our webpage here:

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/media/920209/corporate-complaints-procedure.pdf>

Not all issues which are reported to the complaints team in the first instance are considered 'complaints'. The matter will usually be considered as a 'routine service issue' if it is a first notification and the council has not had a chance to put the situation right.

This report uses the terminology 'expression of dissatisfaction' (regardless of whether it is a formal complaint or not) for all issues which have been reported by customers to the complaints team.

The Ombudsman

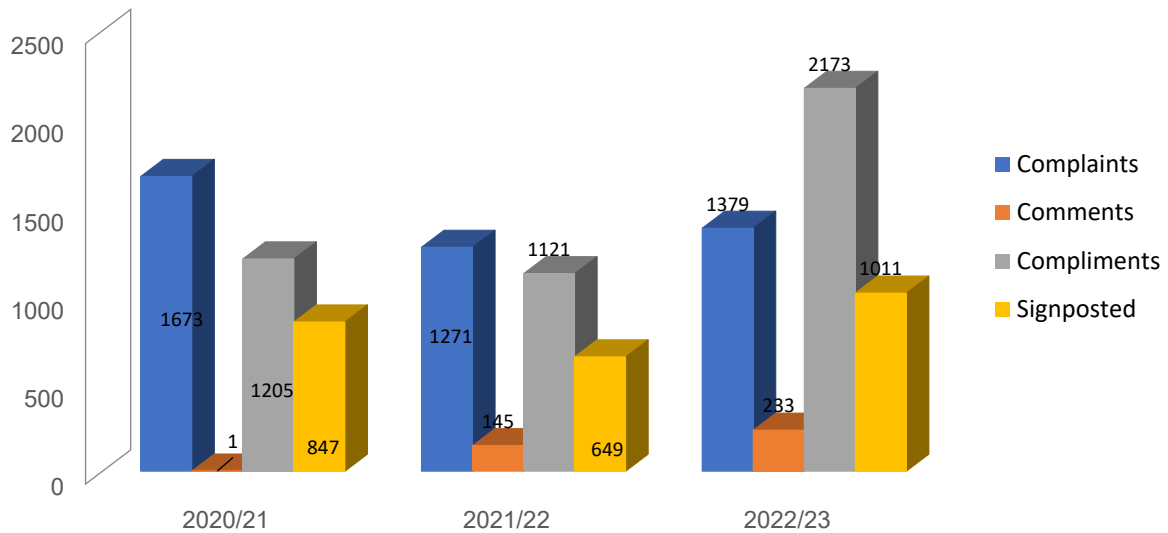
All complainants have the right to approach the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman) for a free and independent investigation if they remain unhappy with the council outcome after Stage 2.

If you require any additional information please contact the Complaints Team on 01772 539414 or email your [request to complaintsandfeedback@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:complaintsandfeedback@lancashire.gov.uk)



2. Summary of Corporate Feedback in 2022/23

Graph 1 - All Corporate Feedback



Graph 1 shows that in 2022/23 a total of 1379 expressions of dissatisfaction (initial complaints) were received. Of these, just 74 formal complaints were eventually made. Therefore 95% of issues were resolved outside of the formal complaint procedure.

Many issues initially reported to the complaints team are signposted outside of the corporate complaint's procedure and / or the council. There were 1011 internally signposted matters (a 56% increase), mainly due to problems with the implementation of a new human resources, payroll, and finance system. There was also an increase in the number of 'views' of the complaint's pages on the LCC website from 9,764 in 2021/22 to 11,296 in 2022/23 (16%).

Out of the 1323 closed matters (17 are still open at the time of writing this report), 63% related to Highways (834 individual matters).

A total of 32 final decisions were made by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman) in 2022/23; 22 and only 3 were upheld.

Learning is outlined in Appendix 2. Improvements have been made to communication with customers with the addition of a new role in Highways as well as new internal processes and public information.



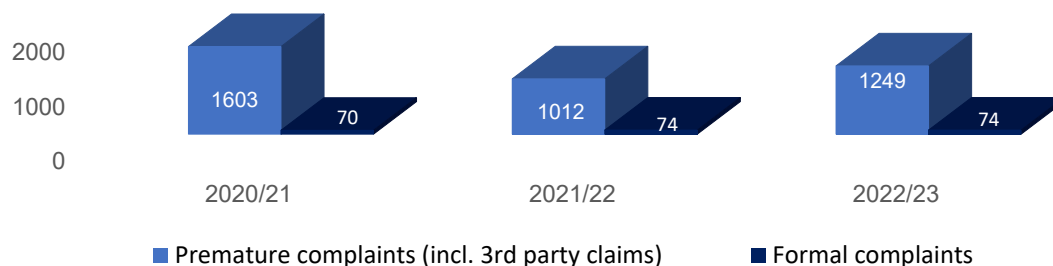
Comments are made when people want to give the council feedback but do not wish to make a complaint. There has been an increase in comments from 145 in 2021/22 to 233 in 2022/23, probably due to better recording.

Compliments have increased by 94% from 1121 in 2021/22 to 2173 in 2022/23 mainly due to better recording and increases in public health feedback. See Appendix 1 for some examples of compliments made for highways, public health, libraries, registration, welfare rights and the appeals and complaints teams.

2.1 Breakdown of feedback

Graph 2 shows of the 1323 closed corporate related matters of dissatisfaction, 94% (1249) were premature complaints and of those, 8% were third party claims, dealt with by our legal teams (78). They were resolved as part of ongoing business matters and by proactive management action. Just under 6% of matters (74) went on to become formal or informal complaints.

Graph 2 - Expressions of dissatisfaction



2.2 What do people make corporate 'complaints' about?

Table 1 overleaf shows a breakdown of all the expressions of dissatisfaction. Highways and Transport continues to be the single most common reason for expressions of dissatisfaction with 834 reports (63%). The reason that Highways and Transport attracts reports of dissatisfaction relates to the considerable size of the network and the fact that these services impact upon the entire population of Lancashire and not just those in direct receipt of council services. This also includes complaints about highways matters dealt with by the Customer Access Service. Although there has been a significant increase of Highways and Transport expressions of dissatisfaction by almost 40% from 597 in 2021/22 this also reflects an increase in reporting rates by the public. The most common reason relates to poor communication and lack of updates.



Table 1

Service area / issue	2022/23
Highways & Transport (Inc Customer Access)	846
Corporate Services	67
Public and Integrated Transport	55
Education & Skills	84
Growth, Environment & Planning	64
Closed after initial enquires. (External organisation)	208
Miscellaneous	16

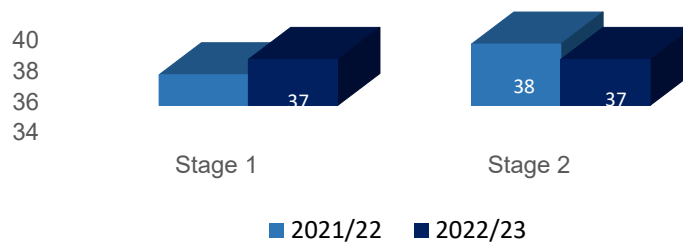
208 matters were eventually closed after initial enquires as they related to external organisations.

In 2021/22, there were 365 enquires signposted to Highways CAS. This increased to 539 in 2022/23 (48%).

2.3 Formal Complaints by Stage

Only 6% of matters raised with the complaints team enter the formal stages. The proportion of formal complaints being resolved at Stage 1 & Stage 2 in 2022/23 is broadly the same as the previous year. Please see Graph 3.

Graph 3- Formal Complaints



31% of complaints were found to have some aspect justified and were therefore either upheld in full or partly upheld.

Most complaints at Stage 2 are not upheld. Of the Stage 2 complaints, 11 were upheld/partially upheld and 26 were not upheld. Of these, 30 were resolved at this final point and 7 went on to the Ombudsman.



2.4 Internal learning from complaints

We aim to learn from the customer voice and improve services as a result of upheld complaints. Many complaints can be avoided by providing regular communication with customers and by being empathetic, clear, factual, and honest in our interactions, as well as doing what we say we will do.

Some of the improvements made as a result of learning from complaints are outlined in Appendix 2.

3. Public Health Commissioned Services

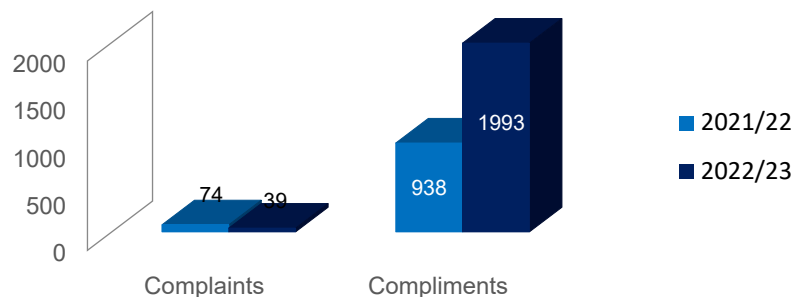
Public Health services are provided to the public through commissioned providers. However, as the council is responsible for the quality of these services, the performance of these contracts is monitored, and providers report back quarterly on their performance. From our perspective, it is important to know about the performance of our contracts and that complaints procedures are accessible to the public.

Some providers are still facing challenges with suitable recruitment to vacant posts due to the rise in cost of living and agencies being able to pay higher salaries.

Graph 4 shows that compliment figures have vastly improved as providers have moved back to business-as-usual following Covid.

- One quarter of compliments were about Positive Action in the Community (PAIC). This service coordinates the delivery of face to face and online youth mental health and suicide prevention training.
- 18% of compliments were from Lancashire & South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust (Quit Squad) who deliver a tobacco and nicotine addiction treatment service, aimed to support people to stop smoking.
- 15% of compliments were from the LCC Blood Pressure Case Finding Service.

Graph 4 - Public Health Feedback 2021/23



Complaints have reduced by 44%. A common complaint theme was around service users' expectations of services offered and those provided within the community.



- Change Grow Live (CGL) Central & North received 14 complaints (36%) each. A number of these complaints related to prescription availability and appointment times and one about gelatine in medication. Improvements to medical information has resulted.
- Learning from complaints focuses mainly on improvements to worker behaviour following feedback.

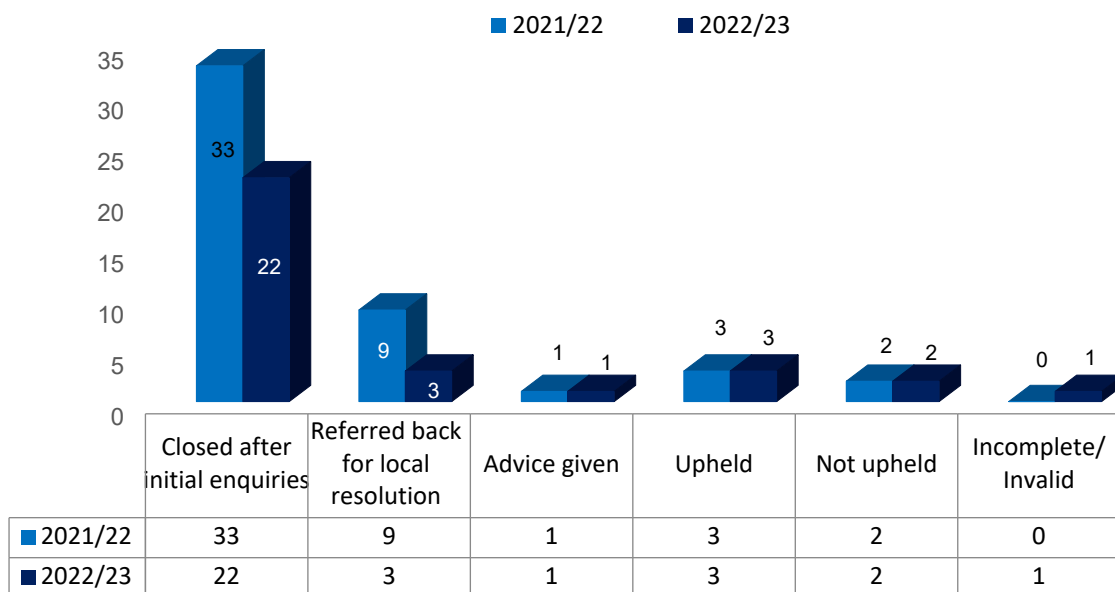
It should be noted that these results may be incomplete as some providers have not submitted their data for the full year despite several requests and this will be followed up with them.

4. Ombudsman Complaints

Sometimes complaints are not upheld at Stage 2, and people remain dissatisfied. In total 32 separate corporate complaints were made by the public to the Ombudsman in 2022/23 (48 separate corporate complaints were closed within the year in 2021/22). This is a decrease of a third on the previous year.

Graph 5 shows the outcome of complaints closed within the year (32 in total). Only 3 complaints were upheld, the same as 2020/21.

Graph 5 - Final outcome of LGSCO complaints



Examples of learning from complaints upheld by the Ombudsman can be seen in Appendix 2. All new processes and recommendations have been approved by the Ombudsman as a result of learning from these complaints.

There were no Ombudsman public reports in 2022/23.



Appendix 1: Examples of Compliments

Highways

With reference to the above complaint, thank you for your prompt response. Not only has the remedial work been carried out in a timely manner the adjacent pavement area has been coned for additional pedestrian safety. Long story short, thank you.

We (myself and 3 friends) used the new cycle path for the first time on Tuesday. We cycle from Lytham to Blackpool and back regularly, and what a difference it made to our outing - it is excellent, and so much safer! The next step would be to deter motorists from parking on the cycle tracks on the remaining part of that "ride", which we find a definite hazard. Please pass on our compliments and thanks to all involved.

Dear council. We would like to compliment the gentlemen who came to drop the kerb at the above address last week. P and his men not only made an excellent job of it but were pleasant, communicative and very courteous of our neighbours as the dropped kerb is on a small road/cul de sac. They always ensured there was room for everyone to pass and moved equipment, without asking, to assist. What a joy to see people with such an excellent work ethic and consideration for others.

....The staff were very friendly and the residents enjoyed the chit chat. If a wagon was in the way, I shouted and they moved it. Traffic management was magnificent and worked fantastic. The next day the tarmac was laid and the pavement kerbs lined up. Medals for everyone who were involved in the reconstruction. Hearty congratulations and if anyone moans to me about roadworks etc. I will tell them of the wonderful work carried out on the reconstruction.

Public Health

A brilliant course, I would 100% recommend to my colleagues, family and friends. My confidence in this topic has increased so much, and the interactive workshops were so engaging. Even though my sector isn't education/ social work it really has given me confidence, and new ideas to tackle what happens in my day-to-day role. Thank you!!

Welfare Rights.

We were delighted with the prompt, professional caring assistance we were given by this service. K was very attentive and rang to check on Dad's progress, his attendance allowance application and to see if there was any further assistance required. First class service. We have received from Lancashire County Council.



Registration Service

I am writing to compliment you on the service I have received from all the staff that I have been in contact with.

From the initial call to K - Ceremonies Officer to J who conducted our Notification of Marriage appointment today all of your staff have provided exemplary service... Without their assistance regarding an outstanding wedding certificate, we would have had the stress of cancelling the Notification of Marriage appointment and thus the ceremony itself which would have had a devastating effect on us both.

Local Government departments sometimes get a bad press, but I have only praise for your officers hence this email. Please pass on our thanks and gratitude to all the staff involved for their professional and compassionate service.

Appeals Team

I found the process emotionally exhausting so I can only image the stress that you all have to bear hearing so many cases. J was an exceptional panel clerk who ensured that the entire process ran smoothly, and A was swift and responsive to emails. I felt genuinely listened to and understood by the independent panel at each hearing who did a fantastic job

Whilst the decisions did not go the way I wanted, our appeals were not allowed, I believe the comprehensive explanations provided are just and fair.

Thank you all once again.

Libraries

I would like our gratitude passed on to your wonderful mobile library van driver 'J'.

I'm afraid we don't know his surname, but my elderly mother and I felt it was important to ensure his employer, LCC, knows what a valued and caring employee they have.

J is very polite, helpful and cheerful. He cannot do enough for us and goes above and beyond. He brightens up my Mother's Day no end and should, in our opinion, receive recognition for his devotion to his customers.

Complaints Team

Thank you very much for your reply and as you know I tried to contact the social work manager whom I can confirm, called me at 10:21 this morning. Happy to say that the meeting has been rescheduled and she has agreed to attend next meeting. Once again thank you to complaints for your genuine helpfulness.



Appendix 2a: Learning from complaints.

The Highways Service has:

- Appointed an additional District Lead Officer to support the resolution of highways complaints, improve responses to Members of Parliament and complainants.
- Increased the use of metal road signs providing intended works information and embraced the use of new technology in the form of QR codes.
- Created new letters and postcards to provide additional information, stating clearly when we expect to return between treatments.
- Implemented a new communication channel with local and parish councillors, to confirm when works are happening in their areas.
- Commissioned an online scheme dashboard to improve information on what we are doing and to provide a clear rationale for the work.
- Undertaken a bite sized campaign to show how we have embraced low carbon recycling schemes. For example: biobinders are a new alternative used in some cases to replace petroleum-based materials for asphalt mixtures to improve our highways and to reduce our carbon footprint.

The Complaints Team:

- Holds regular meetings with the Customer Access and the Customer Access Highways teams.
- Amplifies the customer voice within services to ensure complainants are heard and areas of dissatisfaction are responded to
- Provides training and works closely with all council teams to resolve complaints at the lowest possible level in order to prevent escalation within the complaints process.
- Works with services to identify and embed lessons learnt from upheld complaints.



Appendix 2b: Learning from upheld corporate Ombudsman complaints

1. Regarding a highways complaint about how we dealt with a customer's reports of surface water run-off entering their land from a nearby road, we paid £300 for the injustice and reviewed our decision-making procedure. Highways Managers also undertook a root cause analysis session facilitated by the complaints manager to consider why the communication failures and delays occurred. The root cause was identified as a goodwill gesture offer which went wrong due to a lack of recording and communication. Tablets have now been issued to all inspectors which makes recording much easier, as it can be done in real time.
2. In a complaint about Parking Services and the enforcement actions taken on behalf of the council to recover an unpaid Parking Charge Notice (PCN) and how the Enforcement Agents dealt with the complaint, we provided training to staff dealing with complaints about enforcement of parking notice charges.
3. In a complaint about not being given notice of a road closure the Highways Service has improved communication processes with parish councillors and homeowners both prior and during scheduled works.

