



Knowsley Council

**Have Your Say
Annual Report
2023-24**

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Every year, Knowsley Council publishes an annual report to provide a summary of the complaints and compliments the Council has received and how they have been dealt with.



Feedback from residents and service users is important to the Council.



It is an opportunity to identify and address problems, learn from our mistakes and good practice, and continue to improve what we do.

Why do we produce this report?



To be open and transparent about the complaints we receive, how we have responded, and what we have done to put things right.



To explain what we have learnt from the feedback we have received.



To encourage people to get in touch to tell us about their experiences.

What is a complaint?



A complaint is defined by the Council as an expression of dissatisfaction made about the Council, its services, staff, or an action of an organisation providing a service on behalf of the Council.

The Council's aim is to resolve complaints as quickly as possible, whilst ensuring a thorough and fair investigation.

The Council's 'Have your Say' policy incorporates three areas



Each of these have an escalation stage to allow the complainant an opportunity to request further review if they remain dissatisfied following the first response. Once each stage of the process has been exhausted, the complainant may contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Comments and compliments are also captured through the process, providing service users with further options to engage with the Council and share their views.

The Council's 'Have Your Say' policy and procedures can be found on the Council's website

www.knowsley.gov.uk/have-your-say

Summary of complaints received in 2023-24

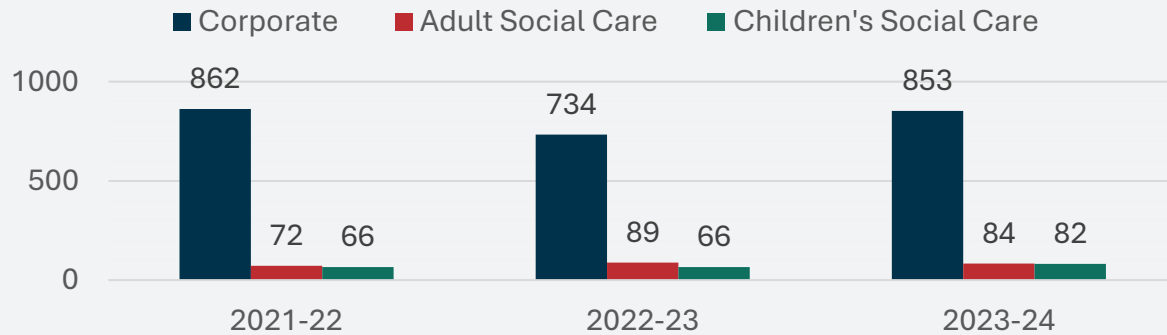
Stage One



Despite the breadth and complexity of Council services delivered and the substantial volumes of interactions each year, in 2023-24, the total number of complaints received was **1019**. This is an increase of 130 from the previous year's total of 889.

The highest volume of complaints are dealt with through the Corporate Complaints process which includes all Council services, apart from Children's and Adult's Social Care.

Complaint volumes



Complaint area	2022-23	2023-24	% change +/-
Corporate	734	853	+16.21
Adult Social Care	89	84	-5.62
Children's Social Care	66	82	+24.24

Overall complaints have increased by 14.62% in the last 12 months.

The Council supports over 159,000 residents from c.71,000 households with a wide range of services. The scale of services offered is significant, over the course of the year an estimated total of 4,443,533 waste, recycling and green waste bins are emptied, Adult Social Care undertook 15,650 assessments for adults and provided support to 4,700 service users and 1,900 carers, and Children's Social Care provided support to 1,894 vulnerable children and their families. In addition, Customer Services have recorded 186,204 visits to libraries, 104,783 calls to the Contact Centre, 30,266 online chats and 431,140 online transactions. This is just a proportion of the hundreds of thousands of interactions the Council has with its residents.

Summary of complaints received in 2023-24

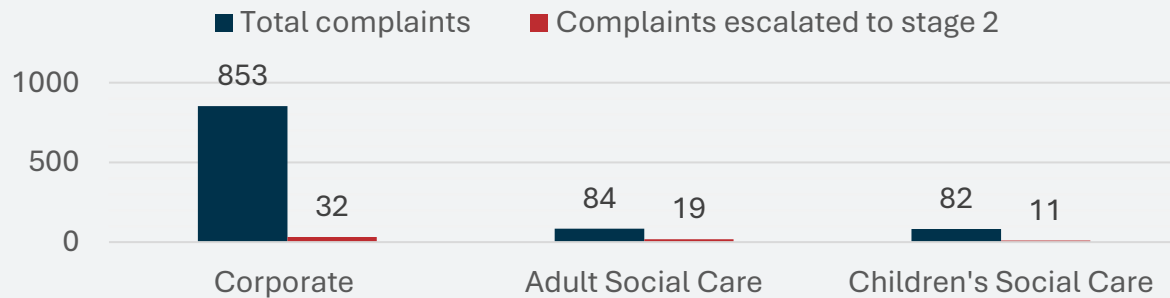
Stage Two



Of the 1019 complaints received, **94% were resolved successfully at the first stage** of the complaints process without the need for further review. This is an improvement on the previous year's result of 92% resolved successfully at stage one.

A total of 64 complaints were escalated to stage two.

Complaints escalated to stage two



Area	Total complaints	Complaints escalated to Stage 2	% of complaints escalated
Corporate	853	32	4
Adult Social Care	84	19	23
Children's Social Care	82	11	13

If a complainant is unhappy with the Council's response to their complaint, the complaint can be escalated to stage two of the complaint's procedure. This provides a further opportunity to review the issues raised by the complainant to ensure that the response at stage one has addressed all the concerns raised within the complaint and that the response is both proportionate and reasonable.

Escalation to stage two does not necessarily mean that there has been any failing on the part of the Council. It can simply mean that the complainant disagrees with the outcome of the stage one complaint.

Stage One Response Times



All complaint processes have an option to extend the timescale should further time be required to investigate the matter thoroughly.

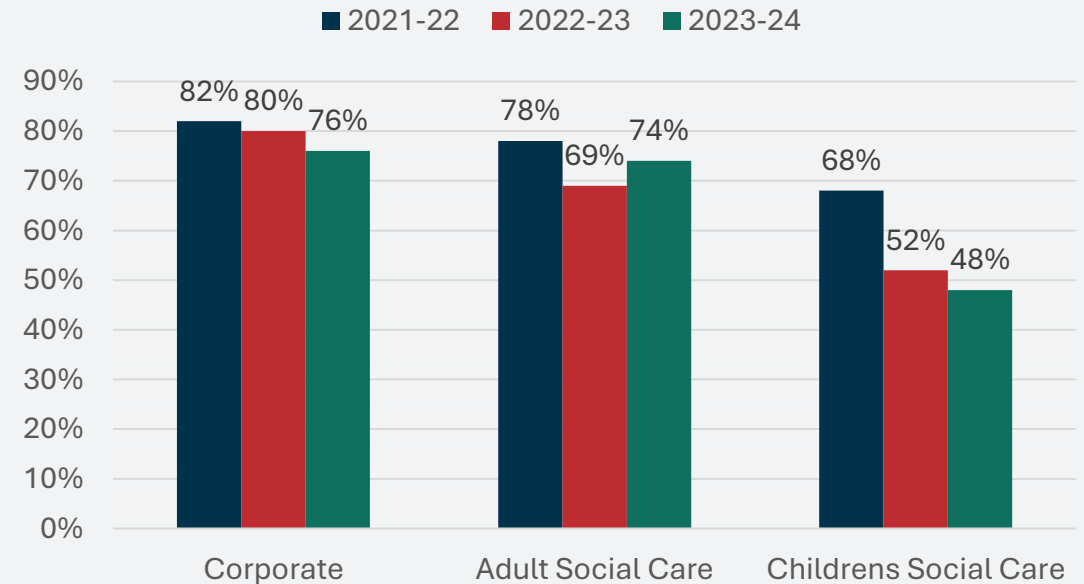
If this is the case, the Council will write to the complainant to explain the reason why and provide the new response date.

Response time targets for stage one complaints

Complaint	Working days
Corporate Complaints	15
Adult Social Care Complaints	15
Children's Social Care Complaints	10

Timeliness of response to Adult Social Care complaints has improved by 5%. However, there is a reduction of 4% in both Corporate and Children Social Care complaint responses compared to the previous year.

Time taken to respond and resolve stage one complaints



Stage Two Response Times



All complaint processes have an option to extend the timescale should further time be required to investigate the matter thoroughly.

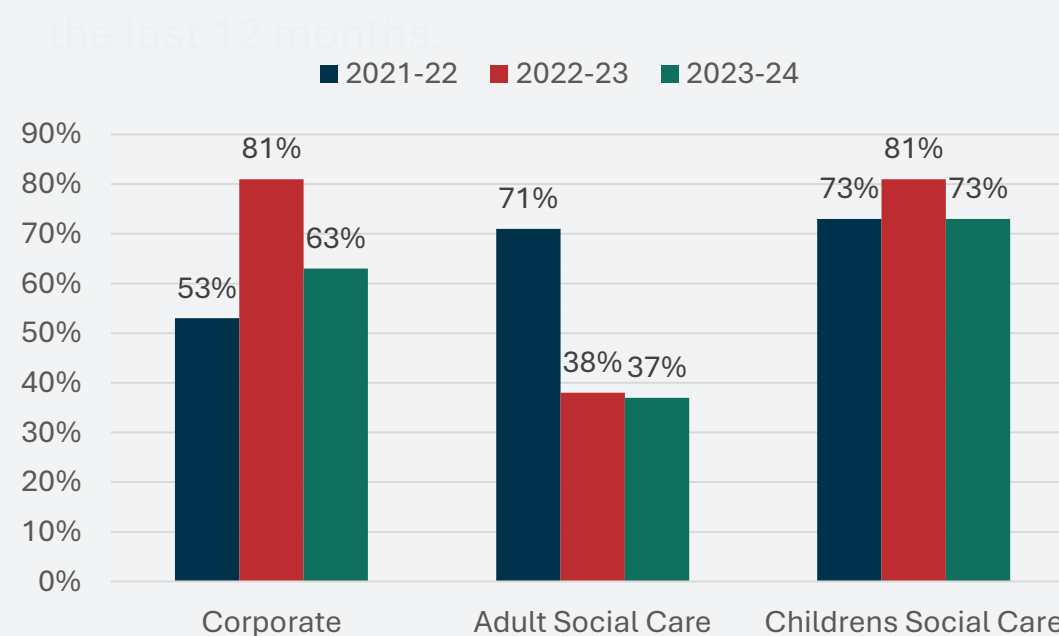
If this is the case, the Council will write to the complainant to explain the reason why and provide the new response date.

Response time targets for stage two complaints

Complaint	Working days
Corporate Complaints	20
Adult Social Care Complaints	20
Children's Social Care Complaints	25

There has been a decrease in response time performance in all complaint areas. However, in comparison to 2021-22, Corporate complaints are in an improved position, with Children's Social Care remaining static.

Time taken to respond and resolve stage two complaints



Timeliness of response



Financial pressures and available resources can at times prevent complaints being resolved as swiftly as they should, as essential services are prioritised.



The timeliness of responses within Adult and Children's Social Care, can, in part, be attributed to continued challenges with workforce sufficiency, including vacancy rates and agency staff turnover within the services that can lead to case transfers and sometimes delay. In addition, the increase in complexity of service demand, and an increase in the number of cases.



The Complaints team continues to work with and support Council services to improve the timeliness and quality of response. This includes meeting with Senior Officers regularly to review performance, address areas of concern, identify improvements to internal complaint management and providing weekly bespoke reports to monitor progress of outstanding complaints. 'Complaint Handling' training is currently being rolled out to all relevant Council officers, with further sessions scheduled during 2024.

Children's Social Care Complaints – Stage Three



Where **stage two** of the **Children's Social Care complaints procedure** has been completed and the complainant remains dissatisfied, it is possible to request further consideration of the complaint by an **Independent Review Panel**.

In 2023-24, 5 complaints progressed through an independent review panel hearing.

The panel provided their findings and recommendations to the Council, which were reviewed, and appropriate action was taken.

The process was completed in full and within the agreed response timescale.

Types of Complaints



The table below provides a breakdown of the **corporate complaint** volumes received by service area.

Area	Volume
Waste Management	231
Licensing	146
Highways	98
Children's Services and Education	90
Revenue and Benefits	45
Street Scene	42
Environmental Sustainability, Parks and Green Spaces	34
Planning/Building Control	24
Strategic Housing	21
Adult Services	21
Environmental Health	14
Insurance	13
Other	8
Elections	5

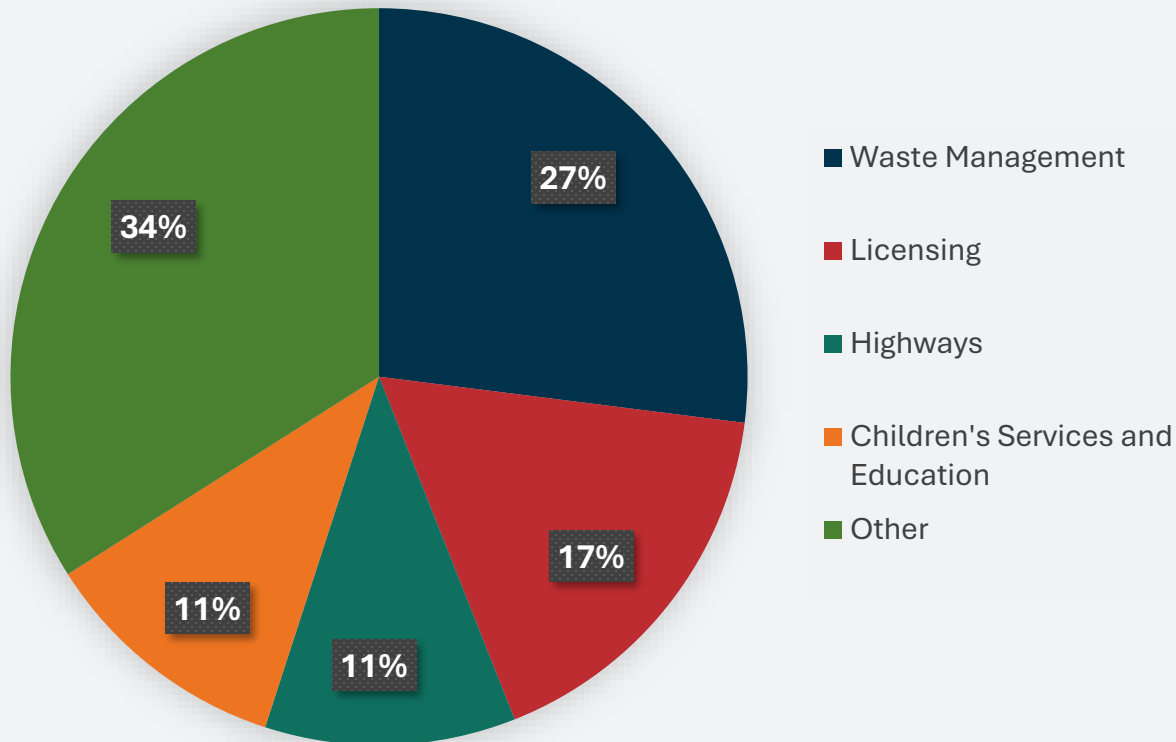
Area	Volume
Property & Development	4
Street Lighting	4
Major Projects	4
FACT	3
Town Centre Management	2
Cultural Museum and Galleries	2
Business Support	2
Human Resources	2
Information Governance	2
Communications	2
Scrutiny & Partnership	2
Business Support	2
Libraries	2
Registration Services	2
Legal Services	2
CCFU & Audit	1
Security Services	1

Corporate Complaints



Below is a summary of the **top 4 services** that received the highest number of corporate complaints

Top 4 Services



As with previous years, the highest number of corporate complaints received related to **Waste Management**. There is a high number of service users, with every household and business in Knowsley accessing the service. The themes included missed collections, delays receiving new bins and bulky collection issues.

Complaints were made to the **Licensing Team** regarding the timescales in dealing with new taxi licence applications. The service continue to experience extreme pressure following a sharp increase in new private hire driver applications. The service area has implemented new procedures to improve performance and the customer experience, with further improvements planned during 2024.

Highways received complaints about potholes, drainage, parking issues and disruption caused by roadworks. There are also complaints disputing the issue of parking enforcement notices.

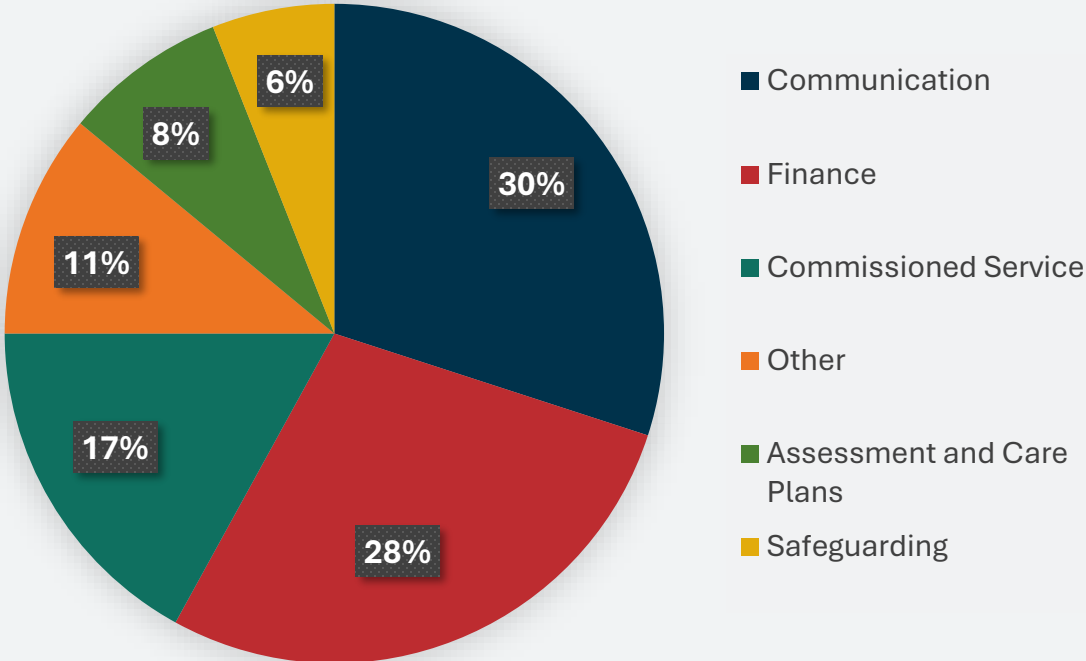
There has been an increase in non-statutory complaints about Education, Health and Care Plans, within **Children's Services & Education**. The categories include delays to care plans being completed, changes of staff, and lack of support with school placements.

Children's Social Care & Adult Social Care



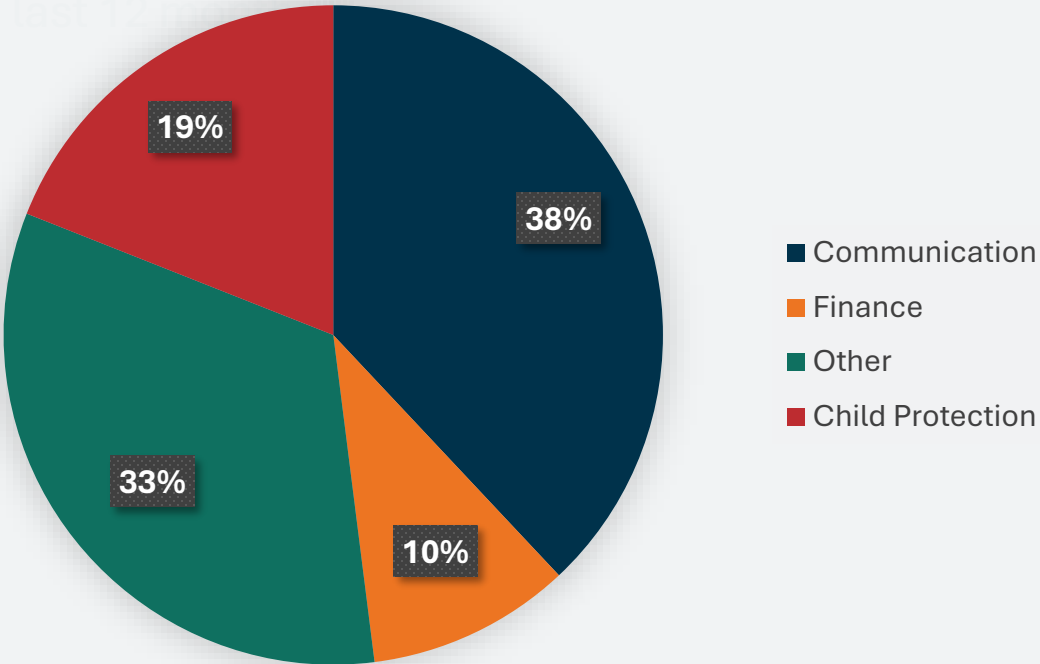
The breakdown of complaints for Children Social Care and Adult Social Care services are below.

Adult Social Care Complaints



Children Social Care Complaints

Over the last 12 months



Themes - Adult Social Care

The largest volume of complaints relate to **communication**. This can be requests for updates on current cases, disagreement with meeting minutes, and delays in receiving assessments or the factual content. This category also contains complaints regarding contact with staff, for example not being able to contact a social worker by telephone, messages not returned, or letters not responded to in a timely manner. This is in part, a result of ongoing challenges associated with workforce sufficiency, including agency staff turnover but one which the Council are committed to addressing via the new processes in place in Adult Social Care, to more effectively manage and learn from the complaints we receive.

Financial complaints relate to the client contribution to their care. This includes people not always knowing what they might be expected to pay at the point their services commence, or in some cases not understanding from the outset that Adult Social Care is a chargeable service. The category also includes the cost of care homes, day services and the amount of disability related expenditure awarded to a service user.

Complaints about a **commissioned service** can include late or missed service calls by a Domiciliary Care Provider, inconsistency with the care assistants supplied, or the requirement of a specialist care worker. Commissioned complaints were also received about residential, nursing, or Elderly Mentally Infirm (EMI) Care Homes. Concerns will be raised due to general care.

Assessments and care plan complaints can be about the delivery of services, for example the reduction in a care package or the delay in providing care. In many of these cases, the changes to care packages have resulted from a change to the person's assessed need. The Council is not required to provide services to meet needs that are not considered eligible under the Care Act 2014.

The outcome of **safeguarding investigations** can result in complaints, whether a safeguarding enquiry reaches the correct threshold for investigation or how the outcome has been communicated to the family.

Many of these complaints are not upheld as complainants are dissatisfied with the decision based on the Adult Social Care Charging Policy or the outcome of the Safeguarding investigation, rather than dissatisfaction of the service received, and they use the complaints process to appeal the decision.

Themes – Children’s Social Care

Most complaints are from parents or carers, rather than the child in care.

The highest volume of complaints received for Children’s Social Care related to **communication**. These complaints include families requiring an update, disagreement with the contents of assessments, sharing of information between agencies, the lack of notice when scheduling meetings or meetings being cancelled at short notice.

Complaints have also been received about contact with social workers, not being able to speak to a social worker by telephone, messages not being returned or letters unanswered. Every attempt is made for a social worker to speak to service users; however, social workers are not predominantly office based and it is not always possible to get in touch immediately as the social worker may be out of the office on a visit. The service face continued challenges with vacancy rates and reliance on agency staff, which can also impact on communications and the number of changes in Social Workers.

Child protection complaints include allegations, placements, the actions and decisions of the Social Workers, assessments and support to children and families during these procedures. The amount of time a child may be placed on a child protection plan or the enforcement of a child protection plan.

Financial complaints relate to any payments provided by Children’s Social Care. This could be a Fostering payment or a Special Guardianship Order payment. Complaints can link to the date of the assessment and payment, whether the qualifying criteria is met or when payments are stopped due to the child reaching the age of 18.

Children’s Social Care manage contact orders, supervisions, and care orders. Complaints can be made about the perceived lack of contact with children, the venue for the contact to take place (i.e., in a children’s centre or in the community) and whether contact is to be supervised. Cancellation of contact visits or change of venue, have also resulted in complaints.

Complaint Outcomes



A complaint is deemed to be upheld if the Council has investigated and finds evidence to support the claim or has had to take action to resolve the issue.

Of the 1019 complaints received at stage one, 34% (345) were upheld or partially upheld. This compares favourably to the previous year's result of 37%. 64 complaints were escalated to stage two, with 34% (22) upheld or partially upheld, compared to a 31% rate in 2022-23. In 674 of the 1019 complaints received during the year (66%), there was no failing on the part of the Council.

Stage one

Area	Total complaints	Total upheld	% upheld
Corporate	853	294	34%
Adult Social Care	84	14	17%
Children's Social Care	82	37	45%
Total	1019	345	34%

Stage two

Area	Total complaints	Total upheld	% upheld
Corporate	33	9	27%
Adult Social Care	19	8	42%
Children's Social Care	12	5	42%
Total	64	22	34%

Learning from complaints



Complaints are important to the Council. Feedback from service users tells us when things have gone wrong and provides an opportunity to learn from our mistakes and seek improvements.

A sample of positive improvements the Council has made is set out below.

You said	We did
There have been delays receiving my savings when I left care placement.	All monies are now requested at the point of placement end by the Art Team, and this is being monitored. A further check of the last financial year of all closed placements to make sure monies have been received took place.
It is difficult to get a placement for my child who requires special educational provision.	The Special Education Needs and Disabilities team (SEND) are working closely with the schools in Knowsley to increase placement opportunities to meet the needs of children and young people with Education Health and Care plans (EHCPs). This work will be detailed in our revised SEND sufficiency strategy which will be published in the new academic year.
I am unhappy with the length of time I've had to wait for a blue badge assessment at the Centre for Independent Living .	We are working hard to reduce the backlog and have recently introduced a new system whereby we are holding two clinics a week to help us do this.
I am having issues with my bins being emptied in bad weather.	The team worked extra hours in the week and on Saturday to catch up on the missed collections. Our management team will ensure that random spot checks are completed on the rounds to ensure that there are no further disruptions to collections.

You said	We did
<p>I am struggling to contact my Social Worker when they are on leave.</p>	<p>A new duty email box was set up and relayed to parents to allow enquiries to be picked up and responded to when allocated social worker is off.</p>
<p>I made my taxi driver application and still had to wait for someone to contact me to make a payment.</p>	<p>We have improved the process for customers and payment can now be made within the online forms.</p>
<p>There has been a delay processing my disability related expense request.</p>	<p>Guidance on the process for consideration of Disability Related Expenditure has been updated and circulated to staff.</p>
<p>The alleyway close to where I live never seems to get cleaned its full of rubbish, and overgrown.</p>	<p>We have cleaned the alleyway and removed any litter and vegetation. A manual litter pick is now scheduled to be completed once a month, and the situation will be monitored over the next few weeks.</p>

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)



The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) **can investigate individual complaints** about councils, to consider if decisions have been made in the right way. A complaint is upheld when fault is found in an organisation's actions.

The LGSCO will make recommendations **to put things right** when faults have caused injustice.

The LGSCO report that they have reviewed internal practices to make best use of the resources they have available. One outcome is to be more selective about the complaints they investigate, prioritising those where it is in the public interest to do so. As the LGSCO are less likely to carry out investigations on borderline issues, they are naturally finding a higher proportion of fault overall.

The LGSCO reported that it had investigated a total of 9 complaints for Knowsley Council in 2023-24, and 6 of those were upheld. Therefore, the percentage of complaints upheld is 67%. This compares **favourably** to 80% of complaints upheld in similar sized authorities.

- 4 Adult Care Services
- 1 Education & Children Services
- 1 Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation

The LGSCO report they are satisfied that Knowsley Council have successfully implemented and complied with **all** recommendations made following complaint investigation (100%).

The Council received an annual review letter from the LGSCO providing a summary of complaint performance for 2023-24.

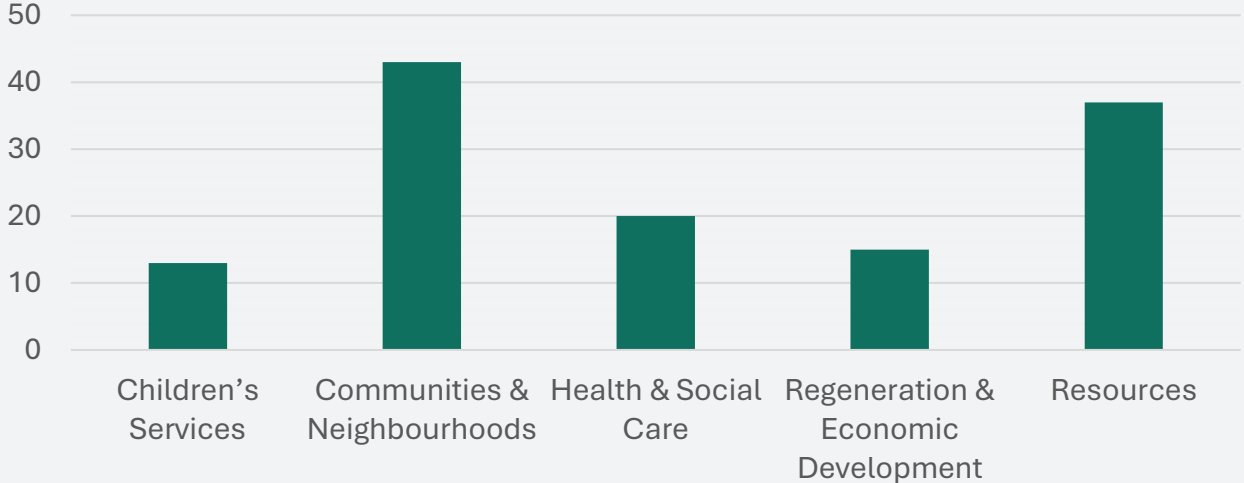
An annual summary of complaint statistics for Councils is published on the LGSCO website on an interactive map called "Your Council's Performance".

[Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

This is a useful snapshot of the service improvement recommendations Knowsley Council has agreed to implement following LGSCO investigations.

Compliments received by department

These compliments were received through the Have Your Say process. There are many other compliments received through different channels and directly to services.



Department	Total
Children's Services	13
Communities & Neighbourhoods	43
Health & Social Care	20
Regeneration & Economic Development	15
Resources	37
Total	128

Below are some examples of the compliments the Council have received during 2023-24

Children's



I just wanted to recognise the hard work one of your social worker's has been doing with families from one of our Knowsley schools. Both cases have been extremely difficult and upsetting for everyone involved; however, your social worker has worked with compassion and dedication to safeguard everyone. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of the wider social care and MASH teams at Knowsley. It is such a hard job, and I think this often goes unrecognised and unappreciated.

Children's



We would just like to thank one of your social workers from children social care for everything she has done for our family. She has been firm but fair and couldn't be happier with how she has managed our case. She took the time to listen to us and engage with us rather than fobbing us off and dismissing our opinions. She has made this situation so much easier for us and couldn't thank her enough.

Adult's



My family & I would like to pass on huge thanks to our social worker. She came to visit me when my daughter contacted social services looking for some help for me. She was very kind & patient with me. Everything she promised to happen did & very quickly too. Knowsley Council has to be the best in the country!

Adult's



I would like to thank your staff member for assisting with my phone enquiry after being passed around – she was very helpful and went out of her way to assist and find out answers to my questions and provide me with an update.

Corporate | Highways



I would just like to pass on my thanks to everyone involved in supporting me and my family earlier today during a flood on Archway Road. Due to a bad storm and very heavy rain the road outside my house started to flood and the in turn water started to run into my garden and reach a level of just under an inch or so short of my front door threshold. Any higher than this and my house would have flooded.

Corporate | Waste



My little boy loves the bin lorry. It's rare he watches them from our house because we are normally at work and nursery but today we got to watch them from his own front door. The fellas were great, waving at him and the driver said hello when they were stopped outside our house.

Corporate | Street Scene



I would like to compliment the road cleaners around Prescot, I personally think do a really good job and keep Prescot clean. Rubbish is removed quickly, I am impressed! Well done to the team!

Corporate | Licensing



Just to say your team in taxi Licensing are always very helpful in sorting out any issues. Nothing is a problem for them, and issues are remedied quickly without a fuss.

Corporate | Registration



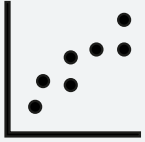
We recently had to register my grandmother's death. I spoke to the team who made a very upsetting time much easier with their help, knowledge and professional caring manner. I was told exactly what to expect when I called. Later, my family encountered the same professional, knowledgeable help and care from the Registrar. I would like to thank the staff for their help at such a difficult time and say what a credit they were to the Council.

Corporate | Contact Centre



I want to tell you what a credit one of your Customer Services Advisor's is to Knowsley Council. I was talking via your chat service because I was struggling applying for a blue badge. The advisor offered to phone me and spent time talking me through the application. He explained what I needed to do. I am very grateful for his help. He was very patient with me and surpassed my expectations of the help I would receive. BIG thank you.

Reporting, monitoring, and driving service improvement



It is important to know when things have gone right and when people are happy with the services they receive. However, when things go wrong, complaints are equally valuable.

Wherever possible, a proactive approach is taken to resolve concerns prior to the issue becoming a formal complaint.

Senior Officers and Service Managers have real time access to view complaints received. This provides an awareness of current issues within the service area, and allows the monitoring of timely investigation, resolution and any action needed to put things right.

Progress against any actions resulting from complaint feedback is monitored by the service area and complaints team. An Annual Complaints Report is produced for Senior Managers and Elected Members.

Work continues to improve the timely resolution of complaints with further training scheduled for teams in 2024. The Complaints Manager is actively monitoring outstanding complaints and supporting staff to ensure a quality response is provided, and remedial action is taken where necessary.

Knowsley Council is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and aims to provide a quality, accessible service. We will continue to monitor feedback, and actively seek ways to use the information we receive to improve our resident's experience.