

Wiltshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

12 September 2024

Standards Committee

3 October 2024

Wiltshire Council Annual Complaints Report 2023-24

Purpose

1. To present the Wiltshire Council Annual Complaints Report 2023-24 (**Appendix 1**).

Background

2. The Annual Complaints Report provides a detailed picture of the council's complaints activity between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. The report does not cover complaints about elected members and the Wiltshire Police and Crime Commissioner, which are reported separately to Standards Committee and the Police and Crime Panel respectively.
3. The Annual Complaints Report presents information about:
 - How promptly complaints were responded to and resolved;
 - How many potential complaints were triaged and resolved informally as service requests;
 - How many complaints and service requests were received overall;
 - Which services we received complaints about;
 - The underlying factors behind identified complaint trends and the measures in place to address them;
 - The outcome of complaints;
 - How many complaints were received, investigated and upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO);
 - How complainants choose to submit their complaints.
4. The Annual Complaints Report presents data covering the last five years to illustrate any trends across these measures.

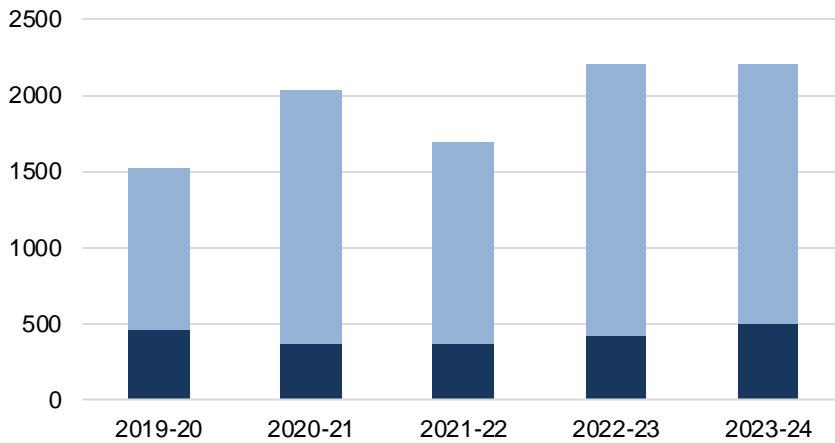
Main Considerations

Annual Complaints Report headlines

5. The key headlines are captured in the Summary of the report at page 3, which is reproduced here:

Annual Report 2023-24 Summary

Complaints and services requests



Since 2022-23...

Service requests

received by the Complaints team have **decreased** by 4%.

Complaints to the council have **increased** by 20%.

Since 2022-23, complaints about...

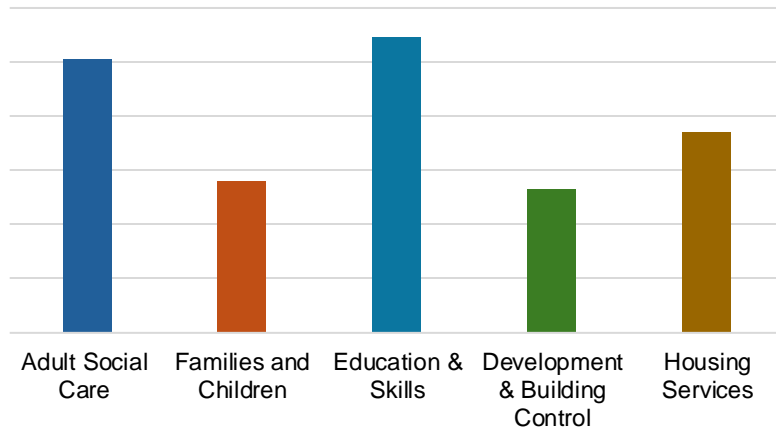
Complaints received by service

Education & Skills

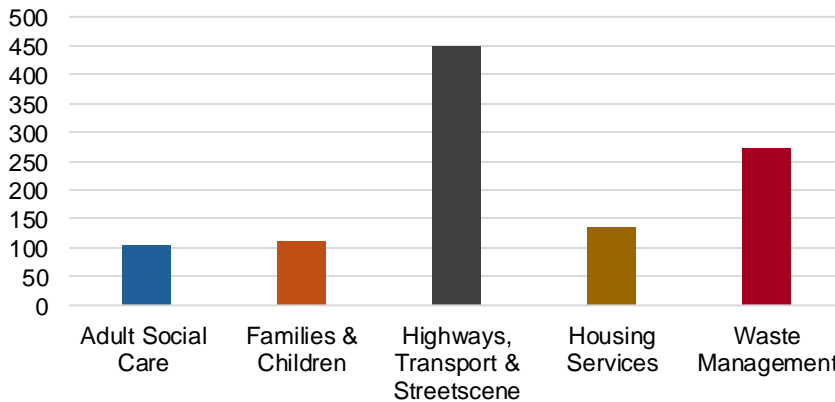
have **increased** by 12%.

Adult Social Care have **increased** by 36%.

Housing Services have **increased** by 106%.



Service requests received by the Complaints team 2023-24



Since 2022-23, service requests to the Complaints team regarding...

Highways, Transport and Streetscene (449) have **increased** by 46%.

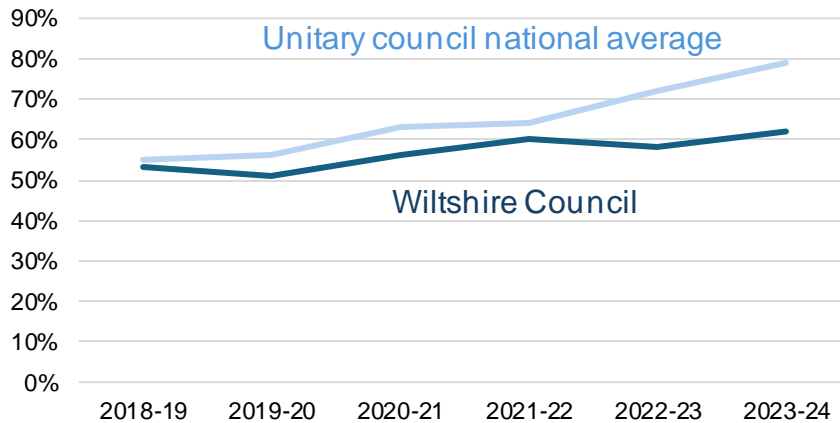
Waste Management have **decreased** by 30%.

Housing Services have **increased** by 40%.

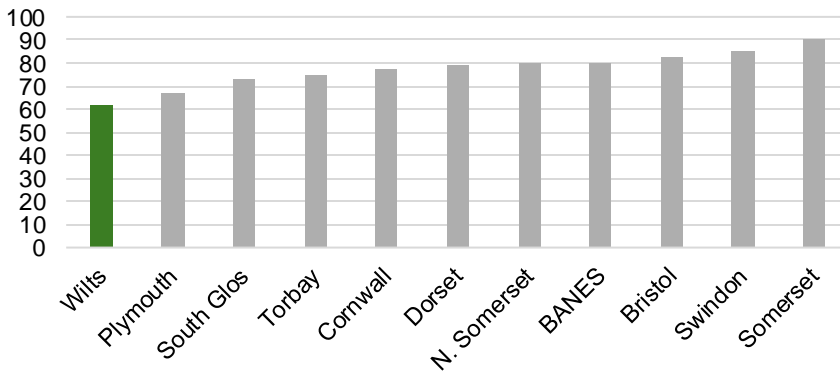
Since 2022-23, the % of complaints about **Wiltshire Council** upheld by the LGSCO **increased** by 2% to 62% (though the actual number **decreased** by 2).

This is significantly **lower** than the 79% average for **unitary councils** nationally.

% Complaints upheld by the LGSCO



% Complaints upheld by the LGSCO South West unitary councils



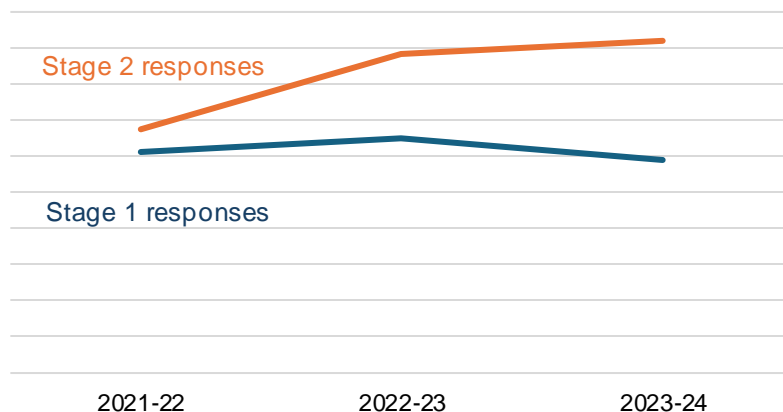
The LGSCO upheld a **lower** percentage of complaints about **Wiltshire Council** than about all other unitary councils in the South West.

Since 2022-23...

The % of **Stage 1** complaint responses provided on time **decreased** from 65% to 59%.

The % of **Stage 2** complaint responses provided on time **increased** from 89% to 92%.

% Complaints responded to within target timescales



Issues identified

6. The analysis and reporting of complaints activity is an important part of a learning culture for the council. Without a detailed picture of complaints activity, elected members and officers are less able to identify and address issues with service delivery.
7. Under the section 'What did we receive complaints about?', the Annual Report breaks down the complaints received regarding key services. It highlights specific issues experienced by some services in 2023-24 including:
 - A high number of complaints relating to requests for statutory Education, Health and Social Care Needs Assessments.
 - A 36% increase in complaints about Adult Social Care, consistent with the increase in demand for those services.
 - A 106% increase in complaints about Housing Services, reflecting activity across the sector and an increase in the promotion, reporting and recording of complaints.
 - A 46% increase in service requests about Highways, Streetscene and Transport, driven by weather conditions of the last two winters and the associated effects on highways condition and incidence of flooding.
 - A 30% decrease in service requests received about Waste Management, reflecting high levels of service reliability, customer-friendly systems for renewing garden waste subscriptions, and effective campaigns promoting changes to waste management services.
8. The Annual Report includes information about the factors behind these trends and the actions in place to address them. Where particular issues have been identified, services will produce actions plans setting out how they will be addressed.

Complaint handling improvement actions

9. Regarding complaints management, a new casework management system will be implemented during October 2024. This will enable more frequent and comprehensive reporting to help officers to identify and resolve issues promptly.
10. The Complaints team continue to deliver training in good complaint handling across the council. Of particular focus is supporting all services to:
 - a) Meet the reduced complaint responses timescales required by the LGSCO, likely to be adopted by the council in October 2024;
 - b) Decrease the percentage of complaints progressing to Stage 2 by providing comprehensive Stage 1 responses that include remedies for fault where appropriate.
11. In Autumn 2024, a facility for the public to submit **complements and comments**, as well as complaints, will be introduced and these will be reflected in next year's annual report. Services will be asked to forward all

complements to the Complaints team so a central log is created and can be reported on.

Proposals

12. To note the Wiltshire Council Annual Complaints Report 2023-24, including any issues identified through complaints data and the actions in place to address these.
13. To note the actions to further improve the council's complaints handling function over the next 12 months.

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Date: 4 September 2024

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Wiltshire Council Annual Complaints Report 2023-24
- Appendix 2 Wiltshire Council's Annual Review Letter 2023-24 – Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman