

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF CUSTOMER FEEDBACK
ANNUAL REPORT**

1ST APRIL 2020 – 31ST MARCH 2021



FOREWORD

This report provides an overview of the operation of the Customer Feedback Scheme (CFS) including details of the level of feedback received as well as developments and improvements to the scheme for the year 2020/21.

This period has been a significantly challenging and unprecedented time for the Council in having to both deploy services specifically in response to flooding and the Covid pandemic and to manage longer term initiatives to support communities and businesses across RCT. New ways of working have been introduced across all services areas with staff working from home and as a result, some of the development planned for CFS has been delayed while the delivery of community support and front-line services has been prioritised.

Service areas and Complaints Co-ordinators have throughout the period and despite the presented challenges, continued to effectively manage customer contacts and complaints with some service areas noted to have made improvements to the consistency of complaint recording and for the second year reducing the number of complaints remaining open at the 6 month period from 2.4% in 2019/20 to 2.2% in 2020/21. 61% of complaints were dealt with in 10 working days compared to 56% in 2019/20. Whilst this may be a small improvement all service areas should be recognised for continuing to effectively manage complaints and customers' expectations as well as make improvements through what has been a difficult year.

The numbers of feedback Items received are consistent with previous years and remain less than 0.3% of overall customer contacts. The total number of contacts made to the council in contrast to 2019/20 fell by approximately 35%. Of those contacts Social Media and web contacts rose by 210% as telephone contact to the council was restricted for a period due to Covid and adjustments to working arrangements. This pattern is also reflected by the Customer Feedback Scheme source of feedback data which evidences a significant rise in use of web form and e-mail as a means of customers providing feedback.

The Customer Feedback and Engagement Team have continued to throughout this period to provide support and monitor complaints activity across all service areas and to provide responses to those complaints that relate to more than one service area (crosscutting).

As the Manager of the team I have liaised with the Complaints Standards Authority to ensure that the Council's revised Customer Feedback policy is compliant with the standard set by the Public Services Ombudsman and the requirements of the Welsh language Act and have begun preparing necessary changes to both the way complaints are received and recorded in readiness for the implementation of a new Customer Record Management System.

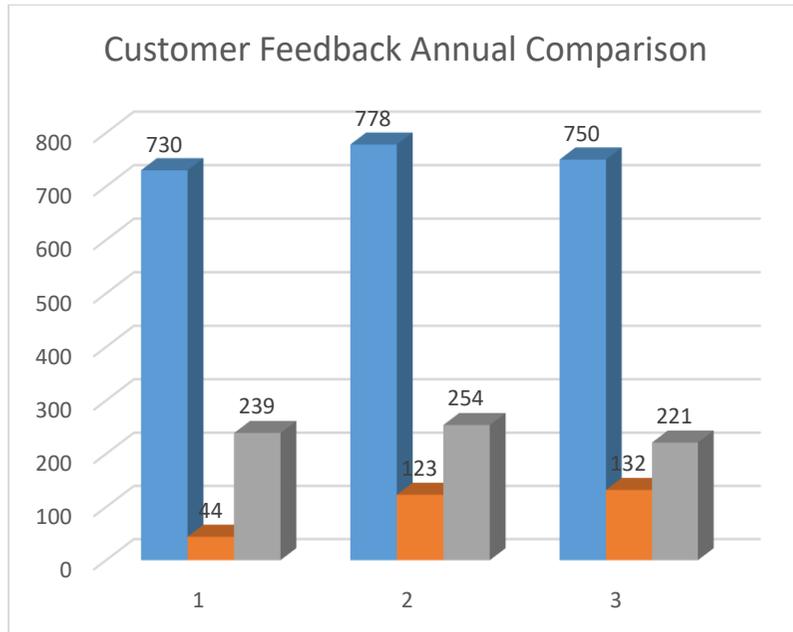
Priorities for the coming year include improving the way in which we use Customer Feedback including social media comments and feedback to customers informing them of improvements that have been made to services and planned developments. This work is being undertaken in conjunction with other colleagues in both the consultation and performance teams.

Jayne Thomas, Service Improvement, Customer Feedback and Engagement Manager

SUMMARY OF CUSTOMER FEEDBACK FOR 2020/21

Service Area	Complaints by Stage		Total complaints	Comments	Compliments	Total
	1	2				
Arts and Theatres	0	0	0	0	0	0
Benefits	9	2	11	2	0	13
Council Tax	55	3	58	8	0	66
Customer Care	7	1	8	3	26	37
Corporate Estates	5	0	5	1	0	6
Cross Service Cases (Multiple services)	21	2	23	0	15	38
Education	43	0	43	2	9	54
E-Access	3	0	3	0	0	3
ESG, Highways and Street care	37	0	37	21	128	186
Information management	1	0	1	0	0	1
Legal (including elections and insurance)	6	0	6	1	1	8
Leisure	13	1	14	4	6	24
Libraries	2	0	2	0	0	2
Parks and Countrysides	27	1	28	10	9	47
Prosperity and Development /Housing	53	13	66	5	17	88
Public Health and Protection	49	7	56	12	5	73
Strategy/Events	1	0	1	1	0	2
Unspecified (no queue)	344	7	351	53	2	406
Cases falling outside of CFS	37	0	37	9	3	49
Totals	713	37	750	132	221	1103

KEY THEMES FOR CUSTOMER FEEDBACK



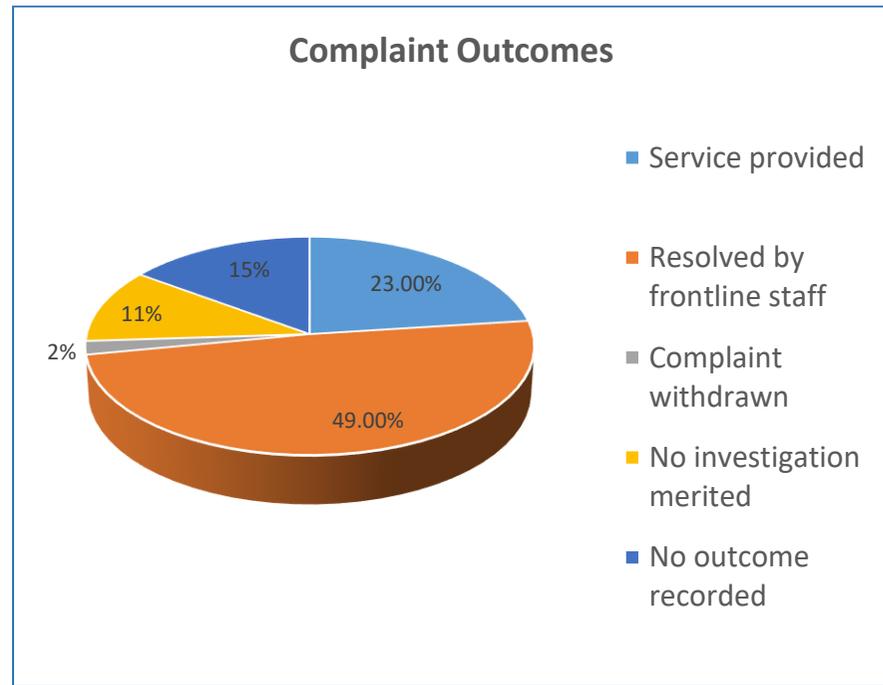
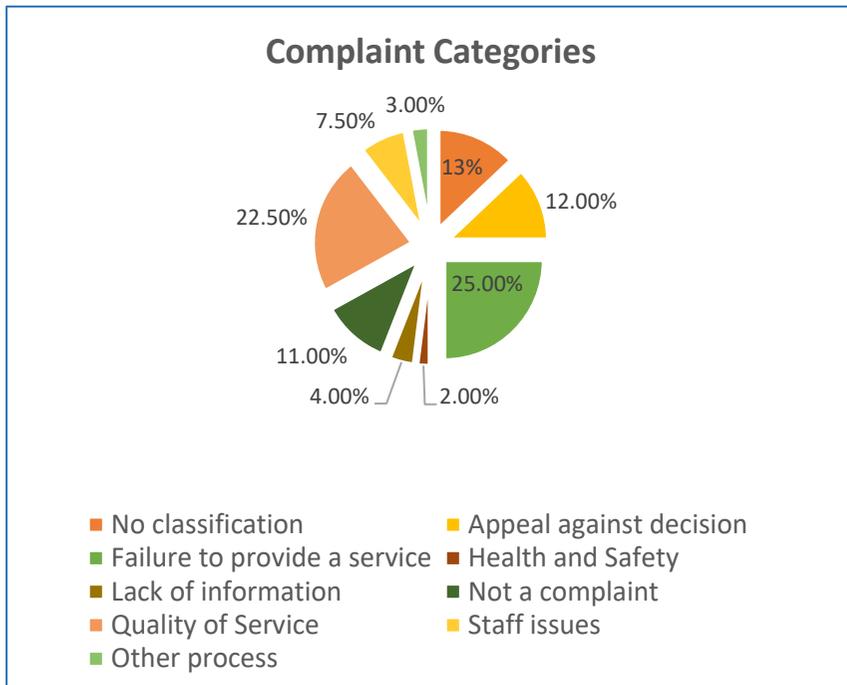
	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
• Complaints	730	778	750
• Comments	44	123	132
• Compliments	239	254	221
TOTAL	1013	1155	1103

Key Themes

- A total of 1103 feedback items were logged for 2020/21. This number is consistent with the previous two years however overall contacts to the Council significantly decreased during this period and this along with closed services may have affected the level of feedback received.
- Customer feedback through the Council’s website remains the preferred option for customers to communicate with 66% of feedback received through this channel. E-mail communication increased from 8.5% in 2019/20 to 20% and this significant rise can be attributed to Covid restrictions and calls in to the contact centre being unavailable for a period of time.
- 37% of feedback items were not allocated to a queue at the point of reporting. These are cases which have been incorrectly allocated and are in the main complaints for Frontline Services. This is an increase on the figure for 2019/20 and may be attributable to the redeployment of CFS key staff to other positions. It is hoped that the return of staff to their key posts and the development of a new record management system will offer greater flexibility and improve the allocation of feedback items after its implementation.

SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS.

In 2020/21 the Council received 750 complaints through the Customer Feedback Scheme 95% of which were resolved at Stage 1 with 5% dealt with at Stage 2. This number remains consistent with the previous 2 years. The following charts detail the category of complaint where these were recorded on the CRM system and the complaint outcome.



NB: Outcome categories have been changed to improve reporting, further changes are anticipated in 2021/22.

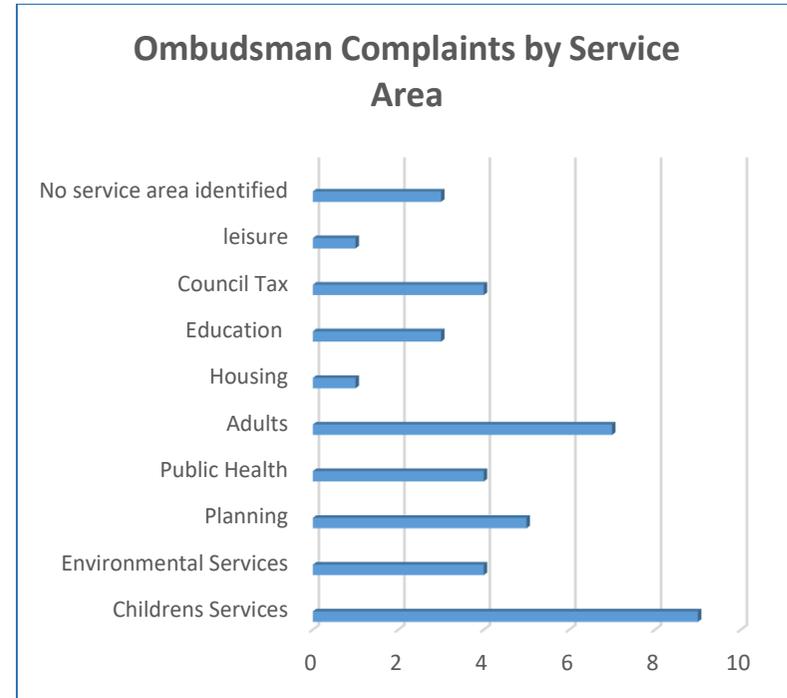
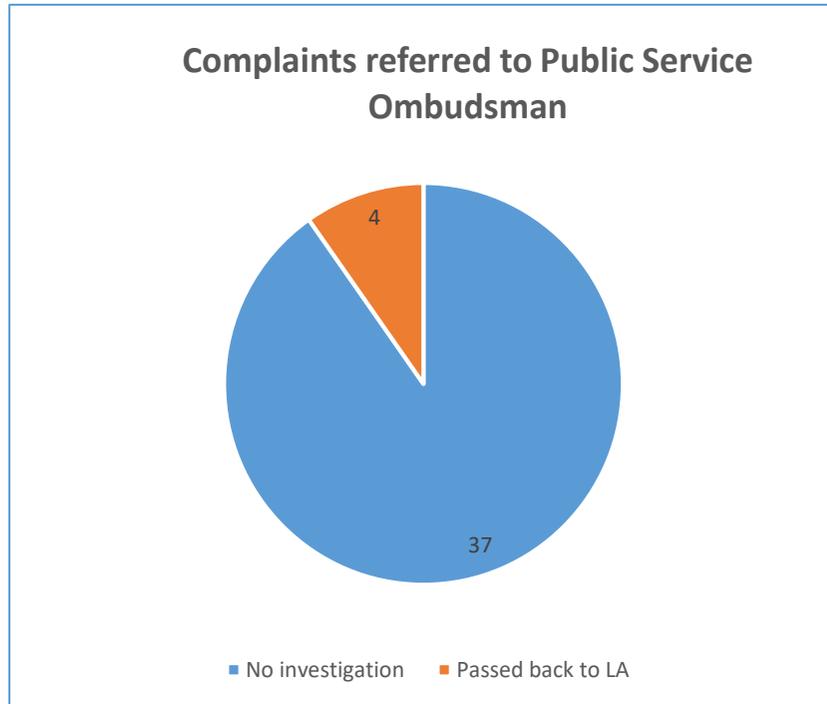
COMPLAINTS KEY THEMES

- 59% of Stage 1 complaints were dealt with within 10 working days with 59.5% of Stage 2 complaints dealt with within the designated 20 working days.
- 45% of complaints were determined to be not upheld with 45% being upheld or partially upheld and 10% having no determination recorded.

*Whilst we continue to record those complaints that are partially upheld the Complaint's Standards Authority no longer accepts this as a valid finding and all partially upheld complaints for their recording purposes will be considered upheld.

- 23% of upheld complaints identified required action to make improvements to services however only 46 (6%) of complaints recorded learning or areas for identified improvements. This is an area for improvement in 2021/22.
- 17 complaints received identified equality issues, 3 identified Welsh language issues and 17 identified issues relation to data protection.
- Education have improved the recording of complaints with 43 Stage 1 complaints reported in contrast to 19 in 2019/20 and 1 in 2018/19.
- 11% of all complaints and nearly 26% of complaints received by the Council Tax/Benefit Dept. were considered and recorded as 'not a complaint' as an outcome. A detailed look at these complaints is required to determine whether changes are required to the way in which customers categorise their feedback at their first point of contact when using the Web form.
- Complaints in this period made up just 0.2% of all customer contacts made to the Council.
- 41 complaints were referred to the Public Services Ombudsman, details of outcomes for these complaints are detailed in the next graph.
- Complaints reporting this year has been affected by the disruption caused by the Covid pandemic and the priority to provide front line services and to support the community along with adapting to home working and the redeployment of complaints co-ordinators to other roles. The management of complaints however has been consistent and this is evidenced by the low number of Stage 2 and Ombudsman complaints.

OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS



KEY THEMES

- The number of Ombudsman complaints received in 2020/2021 (43) remains consistent with the previous two years and not including complaints for Social care represents only 3.5% of the total number of complaints received by the Council.
- There are no identified themes or concerns as to a particular service area or service provision with 37 complaints requiring no investigation and 4 being referred back to the relevant service area for resolution.
- Overall the number of complaints referred to the Ombudsman for RCT represent just 5% of the overall number of complaints made to their office for all councils across Wales.

EXAMPLES OF COMPLAINTS AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

Complaint area	Complaint detail	Service Improvement
Cemeteries	Complaint about appearance of cemetery staff	This element of complaint upheld and staff provided with new uniforms.
Contact Centre	Complaint regarding advice given by advisor on how to make a complaint.	Training for all contact advisors on complaints to be scheduled for 2021/22.
Leisure	Complaint about lack of classes in the Rhondda area	Class programme to be reviewed and increased – achieved October 2020.
Refuse and recycling	Disabled lady unable to access steps to/from house as waste collections blocking access.	Crew advised and alternative collection point to be arranged.
Parks maintenance	Complaint about condition of park following grass cutting. Grass was cut during inappropriate ground conditions resulting in surface mud.	All staff reminded of their training and the need to ensure there is a site inspection to determine suitability of works being carried out.
Transportation	Complaint regarding inappropriate position of bus stop and no consultation with resident affected.	Bus stop signage removed and new location to be subject to wider consultation.

EXAMPLES OF COMMENTS AND COMPLIMENTS

Service Area	Detail of Compliments (Total received 221) Comments (Total received 132)
Education	<i>Thank you for delivering autism awareness for my teams in Communities for Work. The feedback I have had has all been very positive....I am sure it is going to be of great value to our mentors in the future when they are supporting participants.</i>
Council Tax and Welsh language	<i>Customer wished to raise a compliment for Council Tax staff for being helpful and for the level of welsh communication provided stating it was a pleasure to be able to speak with someone in Welsh about his Council Tax query.</i>
Bereavement Services	<i>Customer rung after visit to Aberdare Cemetery and wished to compliment the staff there on how clean and well kept it was. It was spotless and a pleasure to visit there.</i>

Leisure	<i>After setting up the app I booked a gym session....the measures put in place were reassuring and I prefer booking the session as you know how busy or quiet it will be in advance. Thank you</i>
Regeneration and Planning	<i>Thank you very much to all RCT for the grant, how fast it was processed and paid. A big thank you in these times. We are an accident repair centre and still operational.</i>
ESG/flytipping	<i>Reported fly tipping in lane behind house, sorted within days. Geat service, thank you very much to all concerned.</i>
Crosscutting	<i>Mr X would like to say a big thank you to the contact centre/switchboard and mobile library services for continuing the hard work during the pandemic.</i>
ESG/highways	<i>Good Afternoon, I will like it to be noted that on Friday 11th December whilst driving on a country road between Tonyrefail and Penycoedcae, I received excellent public service from two operatives from the Highways Department of RCTCBC. On my way to an appointment in Tonyrefail my car became stuck in a muddy ditch. The two workers, xxx and xxx, pushed the car out of the ditch. Their extremely kind help was gratefully received and I would like to commend them as two outstanding representatives of RCT County Borough Council.</i>
Regeneration and Planning	<i>Can I just say that the access to the current development plan maps and policy documents via the website are excellent. I submit applications to about 12 authorities in Wales and 6 in England, and the system and technology you use is by far the most intuitive. Please don't change</i>
Parks maintenance	<i>Further to meeting with you at my home you ended our conversation by saying that you would arrange for a team to visit the Taff Trail and remove the branch in question. The team arrived just a few days later to cut back the broken branch and remove from my property. All round I was very pleased with the service and advice given and would appreciate if you could pass on my thanks to your line manager as well for the excellent service your department has afforded.</i>
ESG/recycling	<i>Ordered recycling bags online at the weekend - outside my door on Tuesday morning. Brilliant service, thank you.</i>

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS AND PRIORITIES

There is no doubt that the Covid pandemic has had an impact on the levels of customer feedback in 2020/21 and the quality of data that is available on the CFS system. All services have however, continued to respond to customer complaints effectively and have made some improvements in reporting and timescales. The Customer Feedback and Engagement Team will continue to support service areas and monitor the management of customer feedback to ensure that progress continues whilst also ensuring that the Council not only provide customer focused services but use feedback to both understand our customers' needs and to identify where improvements are necessary. Below are some of the priorities for 2021/22:

Complaints Training

Virtual training for staff was provided in 2019/20 by the Complaints Standards Authority however there was some disruption to sessions due to the impact of Covid and services unable to prioritise due to the re-deployment of some front-line staff. It is hoped that sessions will resume later this year and into 2022 when staff across all service areas will have an opportunity to participate.

Improved reporting.

The last 12 months has provided a useful opportunity for the review of improvements that were made to how complaints were logged and categorised and how we capture customer feedback. What we have learnt will inform improvements going forward and how we develop the new Customer Record Management system to ensure it can provide the information we need and through changing our public facing information, better manage our customers' expectations and improve communication.

The Complaints Standards Authority has also, following review, altered the reporting requirements for Local Authorities and this has resulted in further changes to how we log complaint outcomes to ensure we are compliant with their requests. There is still work to be done to ensure that any new system offers the flexibility we need to meet the needs of frontline services and there has been slower progress than anticipated across all areas of developing the Customer Feedback Scheme.

Improved customer feedback

Discussions have begun in relation to how we feedback positive messages to our customers and residents of RCT about how services have responded and improved in response to their feedback. The Customer Feedback team will be part of these discussions and this will be a priority for the service in 2021/22.

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