

Children's Services Department
Compliments, Complaints and Representations Annual Report
1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

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Introduction

Monitoring customer feedback provides us with valuable insight into where we can improve our service provision and/or delivery. The department has developed a culture of listening and learning to drive improvement in services.

This report provides information about statutory and corporate compliments, complaints and representations received during the 12 months from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

A complaint may be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child or young person, which requires a response. Representations may not always be complaints; they might also be positive remarks or ideas that require a response from the local authority.

Complaints relating to children's social care are dealt with under the statutory complaints procedures set out in *The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006* and the accompanying statutory guidance: *Getting the Best from Complaints*. Corporate complaints are in relation to wider children's services provided by the department that are not covered by the statutory framework.

Complaints and representations for children's services are logged and progressed by the complaints manager within the children's services feedback team, (part of the wider quality assurance team). Young people who complain on their own behalf should be offered the service of an advocate to support them for the duration of their complaint.

Following the procurement of the govService customer relationship management system from Granicus, this year has seen detailed work undertaken to implement the system with children's services feedback as an early adopter. This system will bring about a more effective monitoring and handling and make the operation of the complaints function much more efficient. The system will enable the complainant to see the progress of their complaint, generate workflow for response and capture complaints data for better monitoring and analysis.

Compliments

In the period between April 2021 and March 2022, the department received 687 compliments compared to 738 the previous year, a reduction of 6.9%.

While the feedback team receives a range of compliments across children's services, we are aware that some parts of the service may not report compliments centrally, therefore the figures reported here may not capture the full range of compliments to the department. During the period April 2021 to March 2022, the feedback team have continued to make improvements in recording compliments across children's services by separating compliments received from service users and professionals and have recorded more clearly the themes and service areas. We have worked with services to promote the sharing of compliments so these can be recorded centrally. A sample of positive feedback is provided below:

Compliment from young person: *"[social worker] has helped me through my roughest times and always done what's in my best interests. She is always bright and bubbly and gives off a good energy without fail – this always lifts my mood when I'm having a bad day. She really cares and she shows it really well. She is always thoughtful and always puts my needs and feelings first – for example, she knew how stressed out I was about moving from [supported accommodation] and maybe having to live in a children's home for a bit, so she worked her magic and somehow got me to the top of the waiting list at [another supported accommodation provider]...She has really helped me turn my life around and I don't know where I would be today without her."*

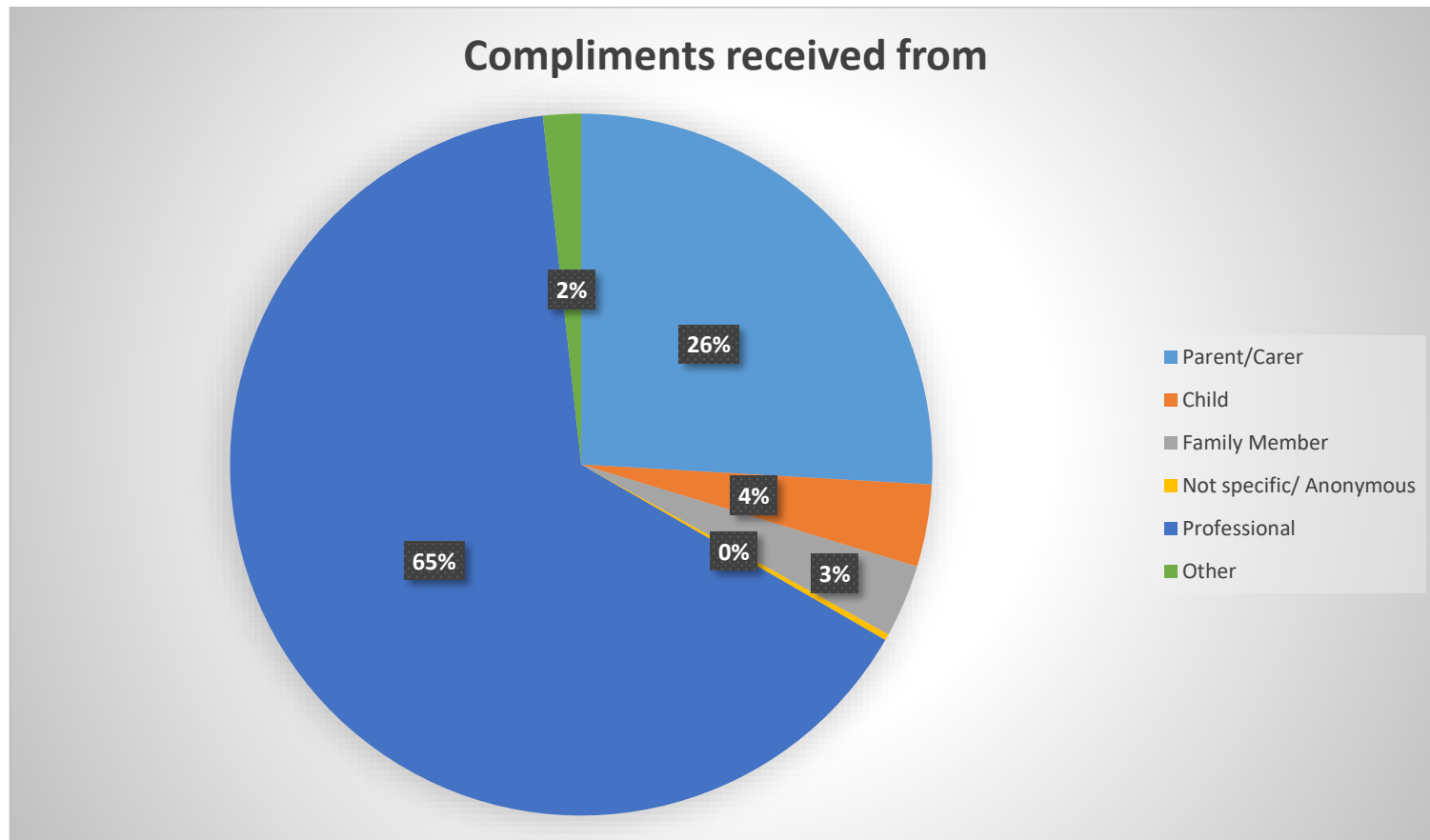
Parent compliment: *'Thank you for the update and the reassurance! We can see a difference in him after he has worked with you which is really positive. The dialogue that we have as adults is really valuable and we are so pleased that he has you as his tutor.'*

Parent compliment for a social worker: *(A Thank You card) "I honestly don't know where to start. Thank you so much for all your help & support. You really have helped us so much! I know I am not the only parent and have learnt so much! It has been a pleasure to have such a kind and loving person to help us as a family"*.

Parent compliment for a social worker: *"The situation that arose with our daughter was scary, upsetting, bewildering and together with my mental health issues was something that I felt so frightened and judged about. Having [the social worker] come to visit turned what was all of the above into a supportive structured plan. Her way with the girls, her kind and approachable nature and the "always there" attitude she has is something quite special. I have always been frightened to ask for help with things like the girls as I felt it made me a bad parent, I do not feel like this now, obviously, the experience can't be said to have been positive, but I can say it was so well handled by [the social worker]"*.

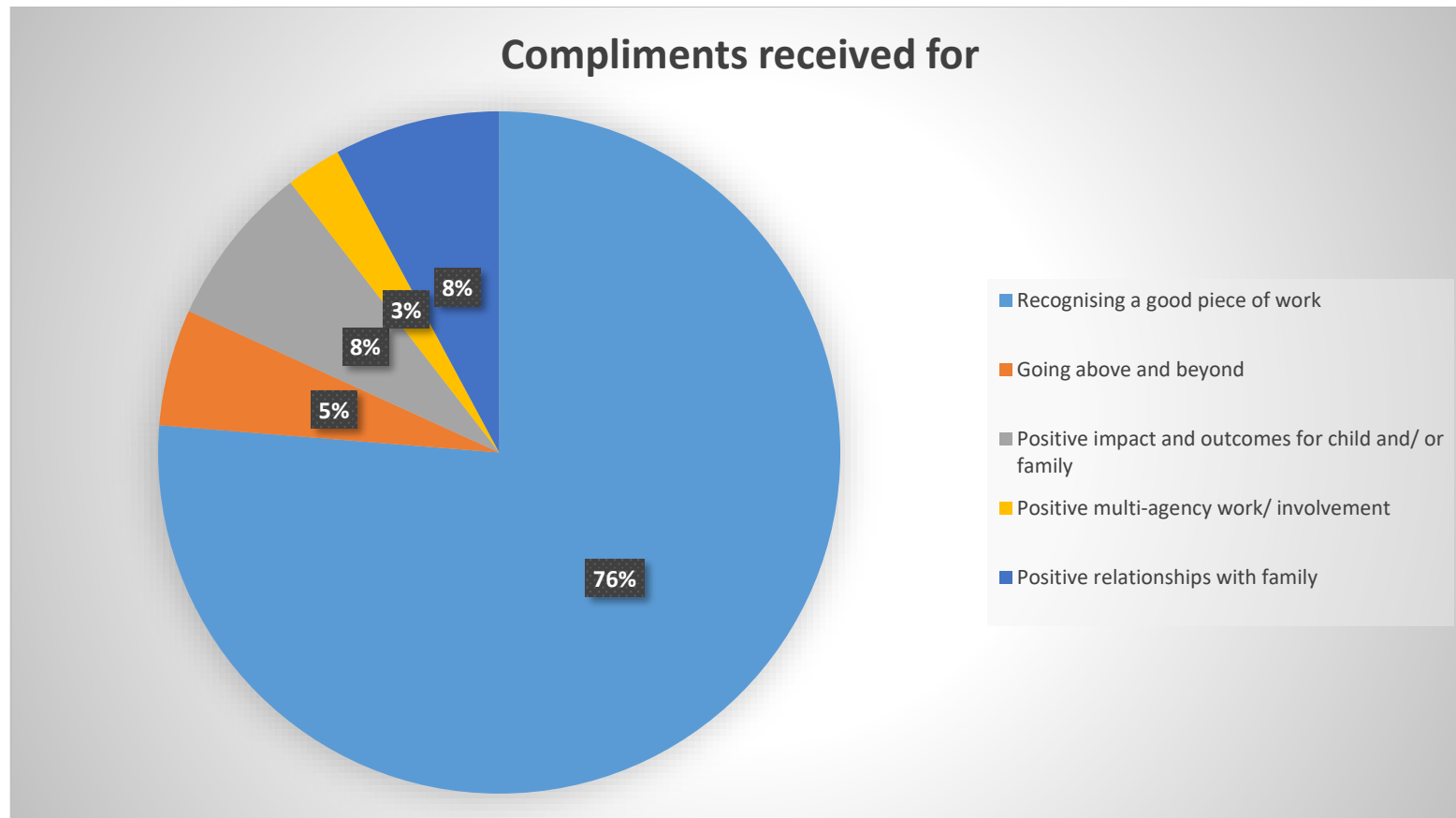
Compliments are received from many sources; the table and chart below show the number of compliments received from parents and carers, directly from children, family members, professionals, and others or anonymous.

Parent/ Carer	Child	Family member	Not specified/ anonymous	Professional	Other
178	26	23	2	446	12



The table and chart below show the number of compliments received by theme.

Recognising a good piece of work	Going above and beyond	Positive impact and outcomes for child and/or family	Positive multi-agency work/ involvement	Positive relationships with family
524	38	53	18	54



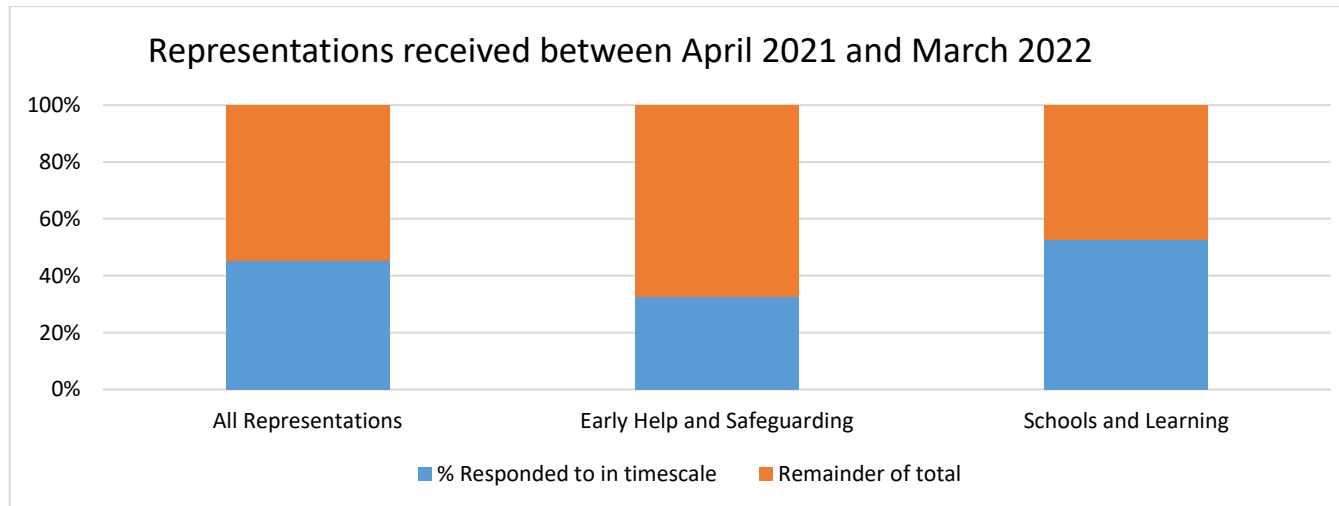
Representations

The feedback team tracks representations made to elected members, MPs, and senior leaders, and ensures that responses are provided via the most appropriate council officer or elected member. Representations may not always be complaints; they might also be positive remarks or enquiries that require a response from the council.

In some cases, a complaint may already have been received or may be made following the representation. Oversight is given to these responses, and the complaints manager records and monitor the progress of the responses.

From April 2021 to March 2022, 306 representations were received compared with 175 last year, a 75% increase. There were 14 other enquiries made to the department that were re-directed to a more appropriate service to provide a response, for example a school or health service. 136 (44%) received a response within the 10-day timescale. 129 were received under the early help and safeguarding directorate, 42 were responded to in a 10 day timescale (33%). 176 were received under the schools and learning directorate, with 93 being responded to in the 10 day timescale (53%). The remaining representation was for the performance, quality, and participation directorate and in relation to the feedback team and received a response within 10 days.

The chart below shows the number of representations responded to within 10 working days.



Statutory Complaints

The statutory framework sets out a three-stage resolution process:

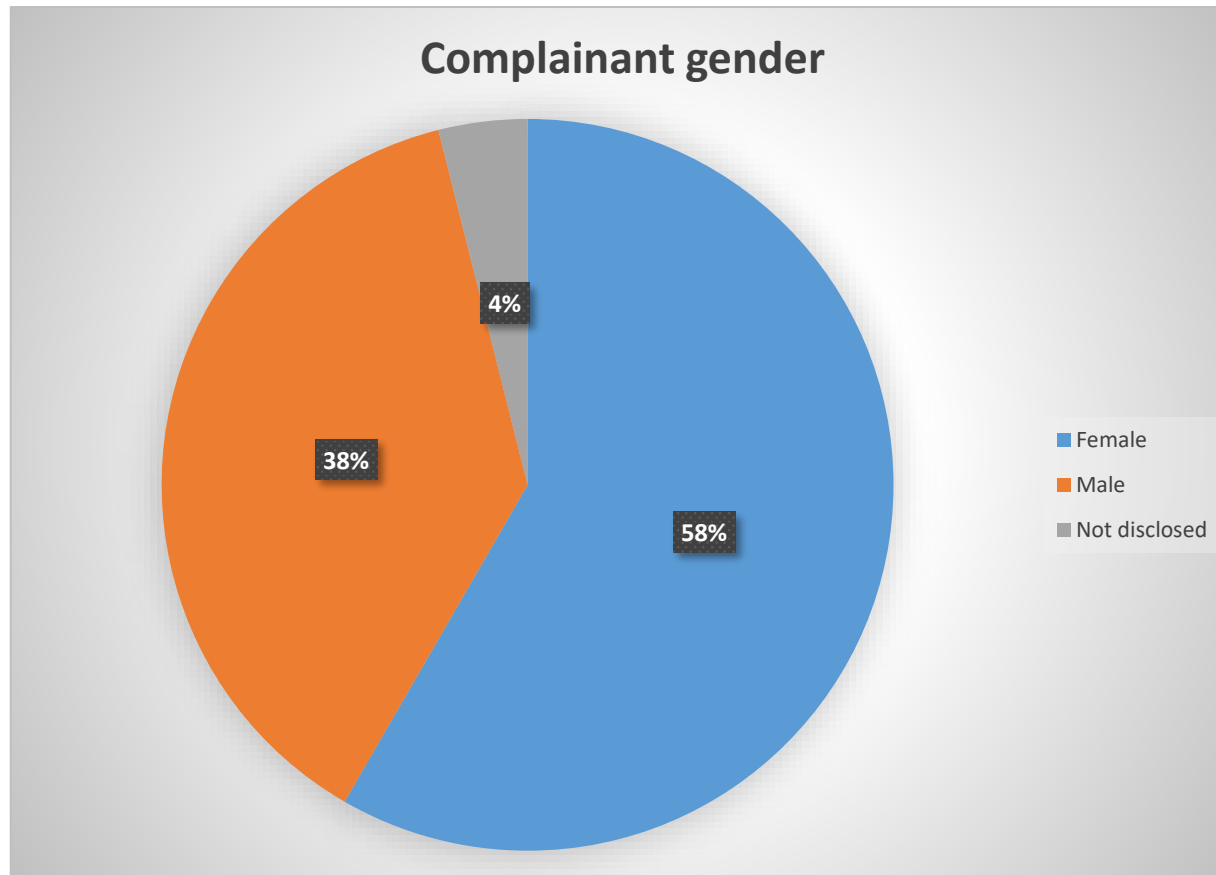
- **Stage 1 – Local resolution**
Complaints at stage 1 should be completed within 10 working days unless the circumstances are deemed complex in which case this can be extended by a further 10 working days.
- **Stage 2 – Investigation**
Where the concern is unable to be resolved locally the complainant has the right to request consideration at stage 2. Consideration of complaints at stage 2 is normally achieved through an investigation conducted by an investigating officer and an independent person. Stage 2 commences either when the complainant requests it or where the complainant and the local authority have agreed that stage 1 is not appropriate. The investigation should be completed, and the response sent to the complainant within 25 working days though this can be extended to a maximum of 65 working days where it is not possible to complete the investigation within 25 working days.
- **Stage 3 – Review panels**
Where the complainant remains dissatisfied following an investigation at stage 2, they can request consideration of the complaint at an independent review panel. The review panel should be held within 30 working days, considers the adequacy of the stage 2 investigation, and makes recommendations to try and achieve resolution. Alternatively, an early referral can be agreed with the complainant to escalate the complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

Statutory Complaints – Stage 1

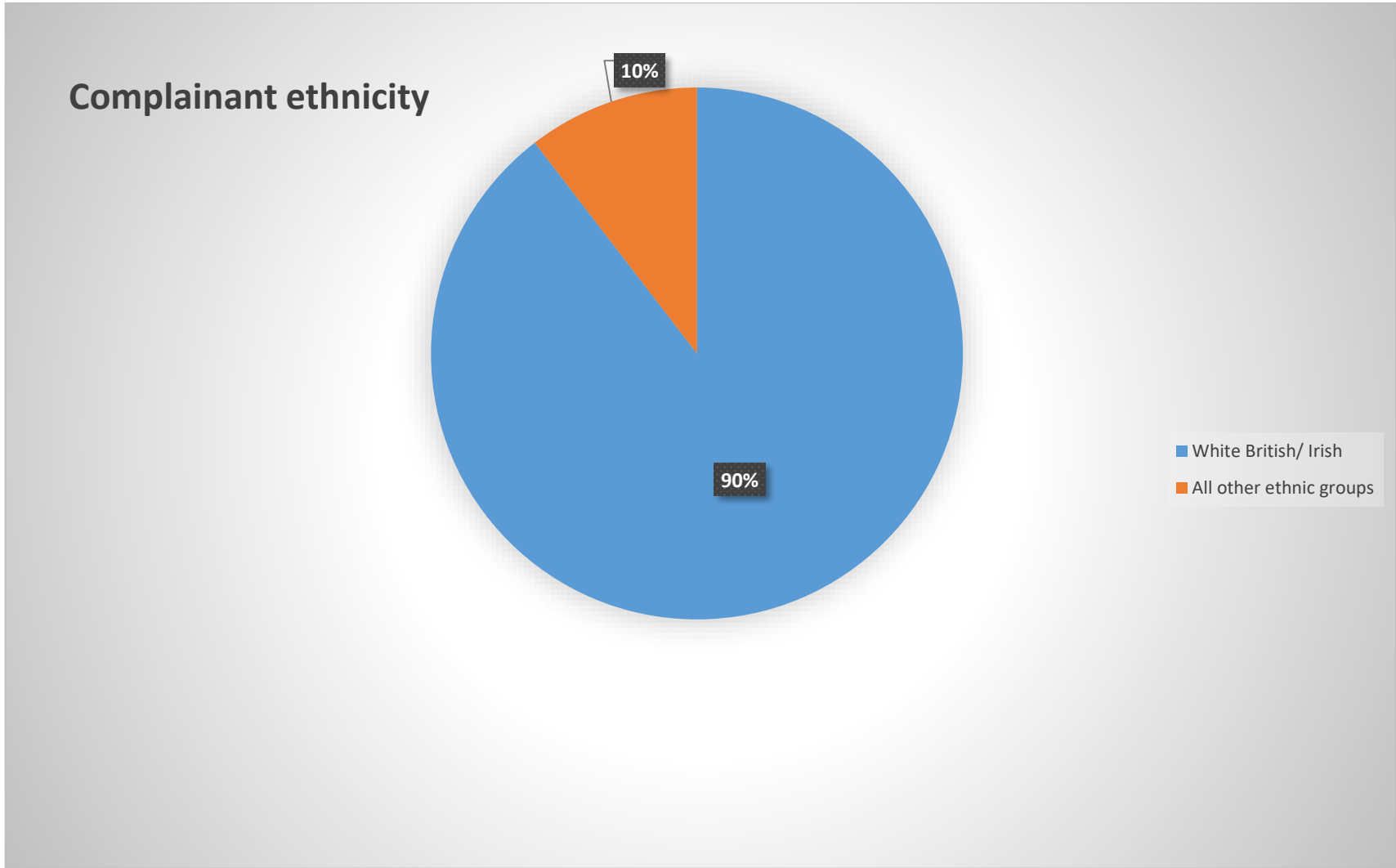
284 enquiries were received between April 2021 and March 2022 regarding statutory services. This represents a 17% decrease in comparison with the 341 received in 2020/21. Of the 284 statutory enquiries received, 204 (72%) proceeded to complete the formal complaint process. This is a decrease from 255 in the previous year. Those enquiries that did not enter the formal complaints process were classed as outside the remit of the complaints process, for example where the person making the complaint did not have the right to do so, by means of parental responsibility, significant interest, or consent or where the complaints were historic, or

where the subject of the complaint was not receiving a service from children's services and therefore was not eligible to be considered under the formal statutory complaints process. Concerns may also have been addressed informally.

The highest number of statutory complaints were received in May 2021 and November 2021.



The above chart shows the percentage of complaints received by gender. The majority of complaints were raised by females or jointly by both female and male carers. The department aims to improve the recording of complainant demographics.

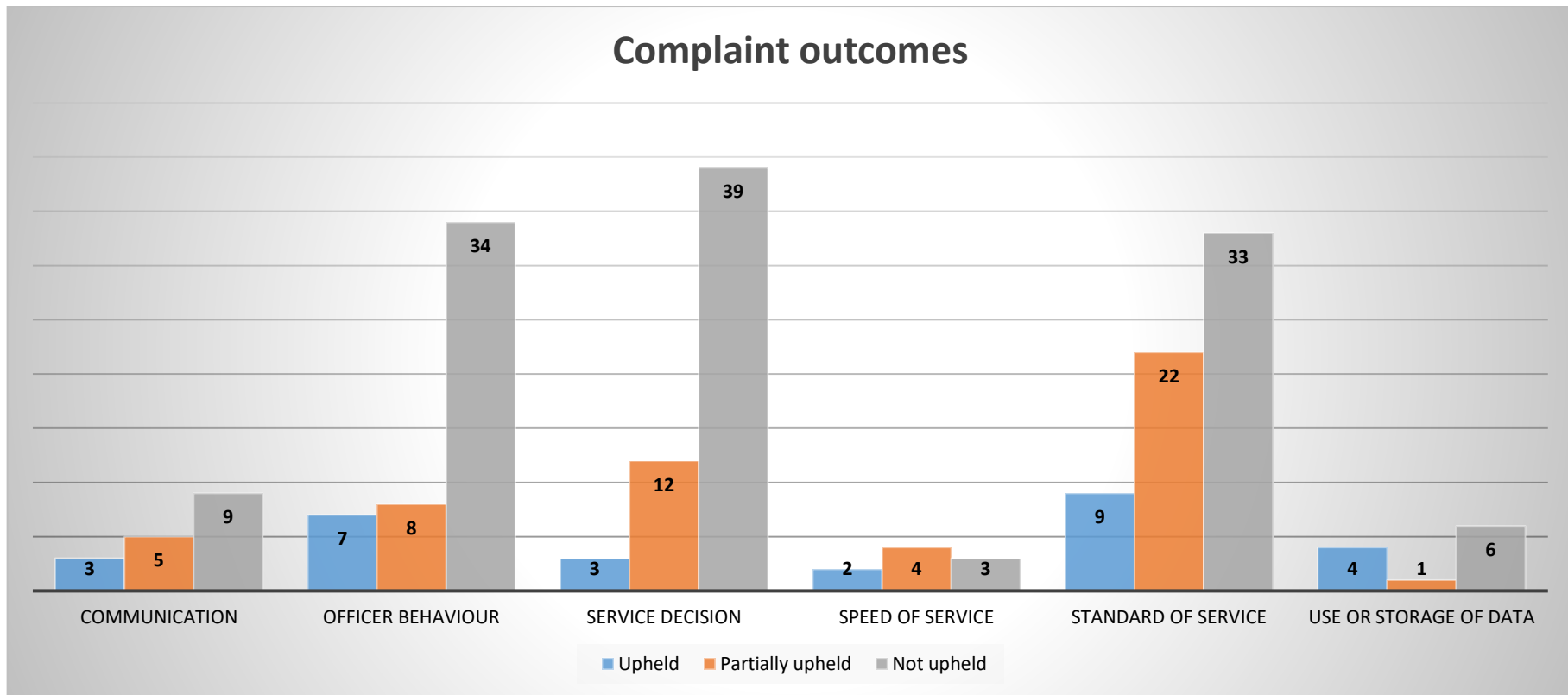


The above chart shows the percentage of complaints received from different ethnicities. The majority of complaints were raised by complainants from a white British ethnic background. The table above does not show those who did not disclose their ethnicity. Within Derbyshire’s 0-17 population, 5.5% are from ‘all other ethnic groups combined’ and 94.5% ‘white’.

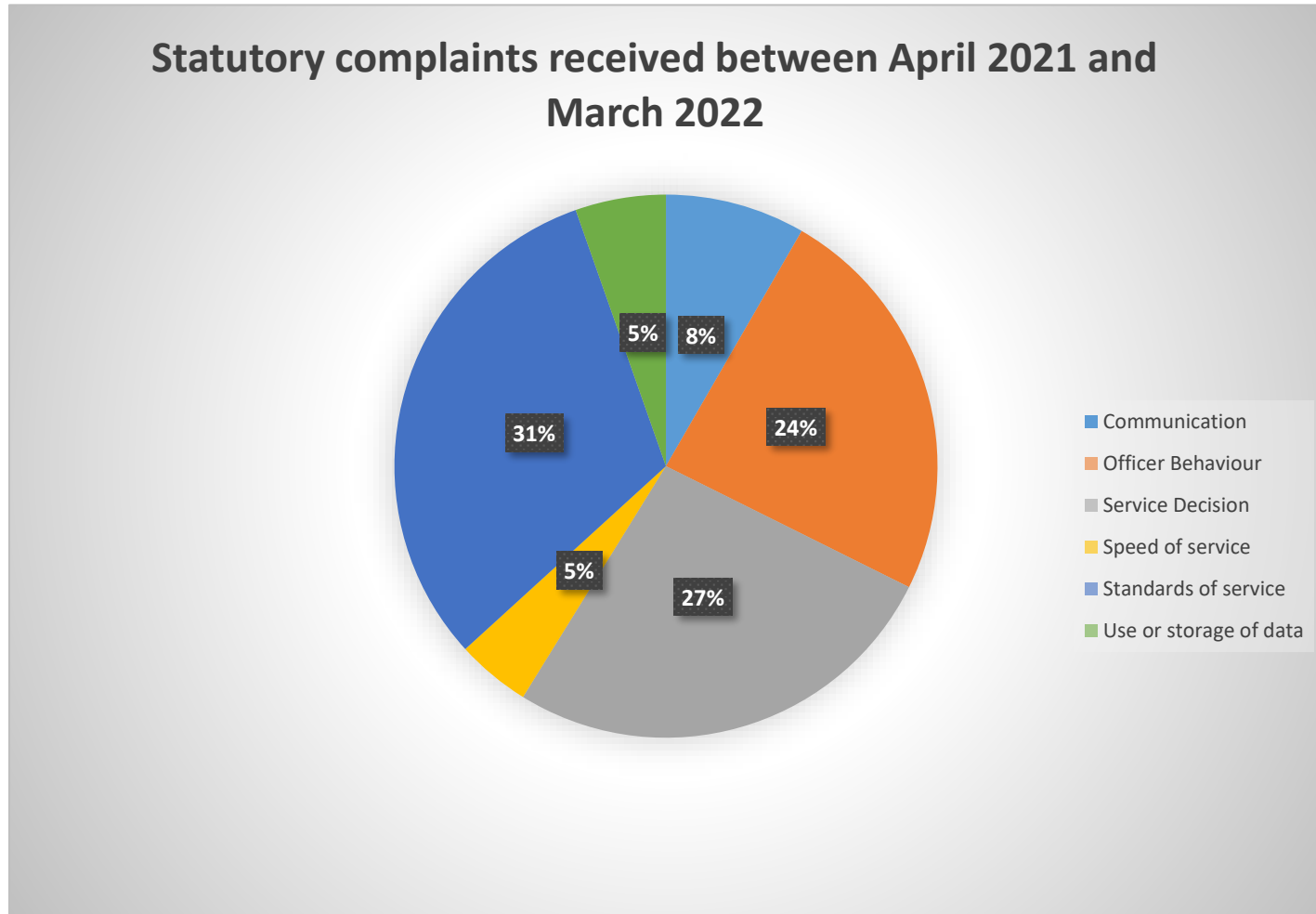
Of the 204 statutory complaints received:

- 187 (92%) were acknowledged within timescales. This represented a decrease on the previous year, when 99% of statutory complaints were acknowledged within timescale
- 128 (63%) of these were responded to within 20 working days, this is an increase from 47% the previous year. 34 (17%) of those were responded to within the shorter timescale of 10 days from receipt of the complaint. This is a slight improvement from 16% the previous year
- No cases were still active at the end of March.
- 28 (14%) were upheld, 52 (25%) were partially upheld and 124 (61%) were not upheld.

	Communication	Officer behaviour	Service decision	Speed of service	Standard of service	Use or storage of data
Total	17	49	54	9	64	11
Upheld	3 (18%)	7 (14%)	3 (6%)	2 (22%)	9(14%)	4 (35%)
Partially Upheld	5 (29%)	8 (16%)	12 (22%)	4 (44%)	22 (34%)	1 (9%)
Not Upheld	9 (53%)	34 (69%)	39 (72%)	3 (33%)	33 (52%)	6 (55%)

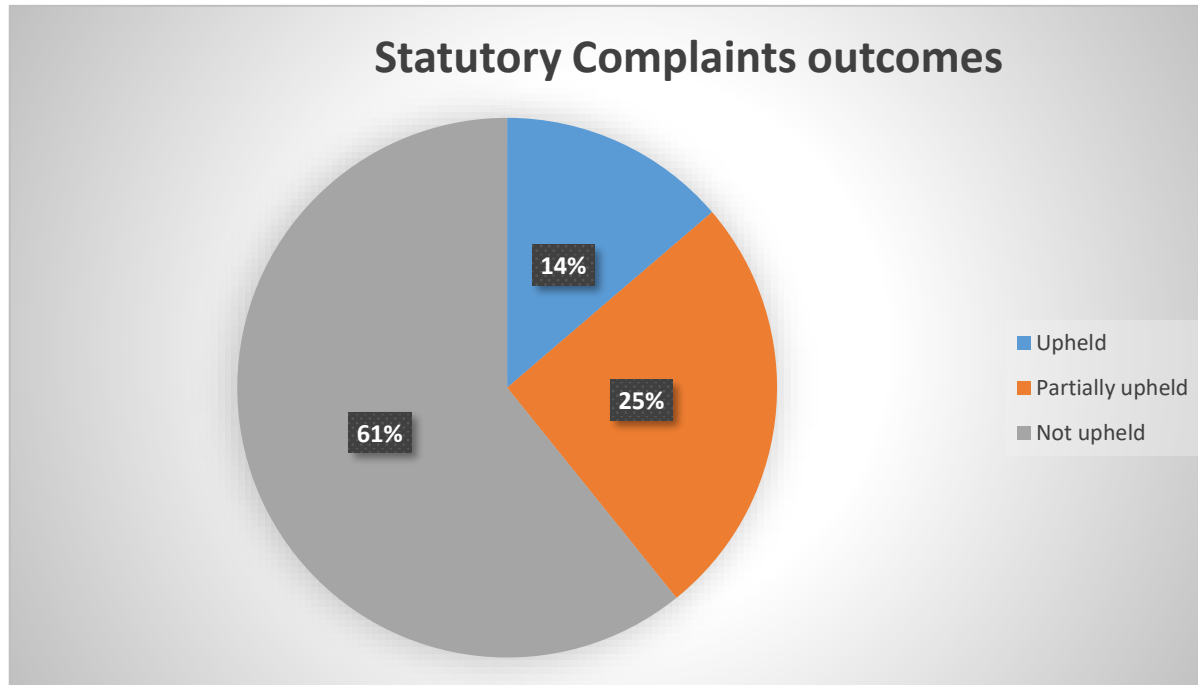


The chart above shows the number of complaints upheld, partially upheld and not upheld by complaint category.



The chart above shows the the complaints received by theme.

The chart below show the outcomes of the statutory complaints.

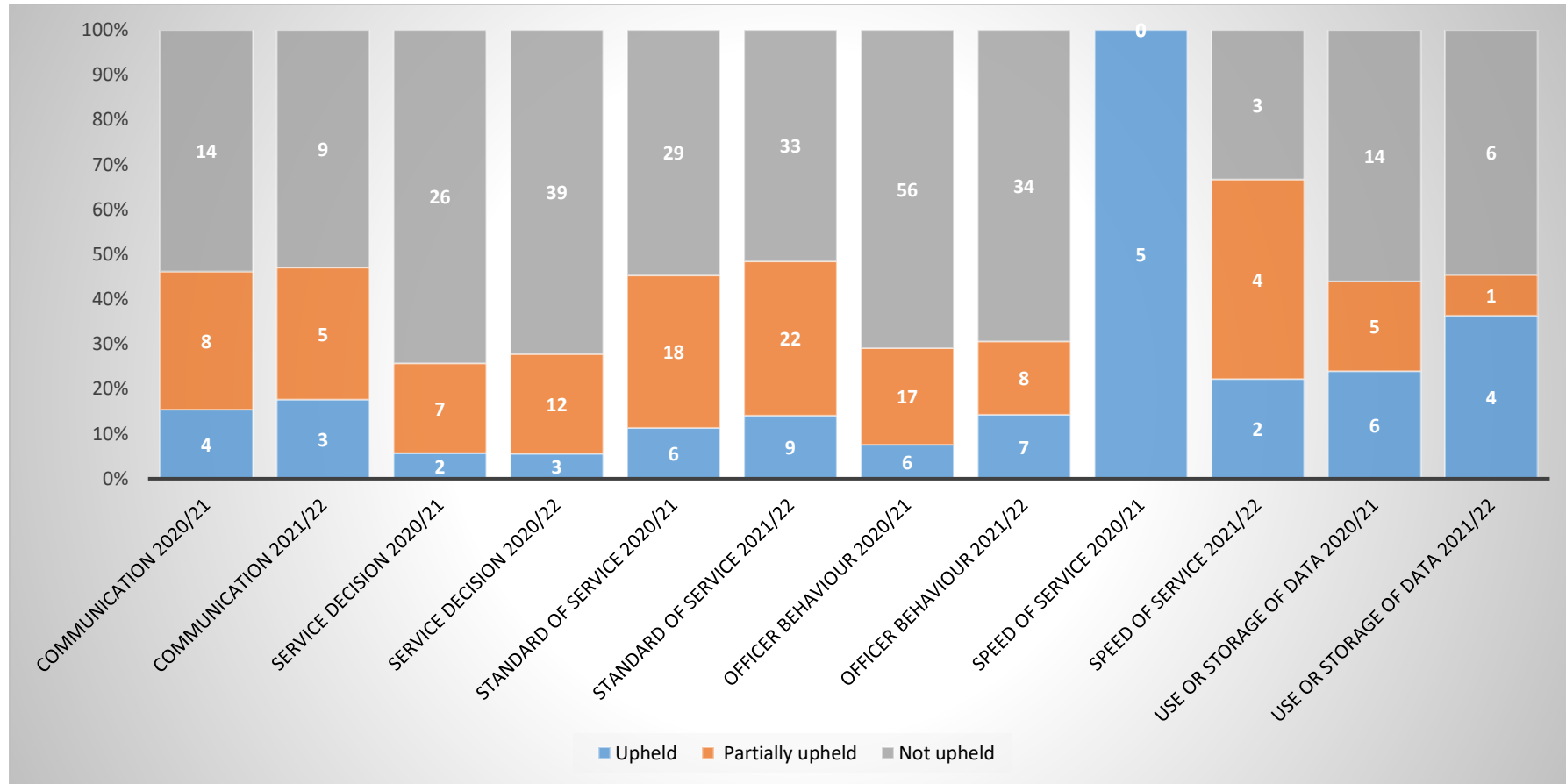


The highest proportion of statutory complaints related to standard of service, with 64 being received in this category representing 31% of all statutory complaints received. 9 of these complaints were upheld, 22 were partially upheld and 33 not upheld. Service decision represented the second highest number of statutory complaints with 54 complaints received in this category representing 26% of all complaints received. Of these: 3 were upheld; 12 partially upheld; 39 were not upheld.

28 complaints were upheld out of the 204 investigated (14%); this is a slight increase compared to the previous year where 12% were upheld. Complaints most likely to be upheld were in relation to the use or storage of data (35%).

52 complaints were partially upheld, representing 25% of the total received. In the previous year, 24% of complaint were partially upheld. The largest number of partially upheld complaints was in relation to the standard of service. This represented 42% of all

partially upheld complaints. The largest percentage of partially upheld complaints in 2021/22 related to speed of service (44%), however there was a lower number of complaints in this category and only represented 8% of all partially upheld complaints.

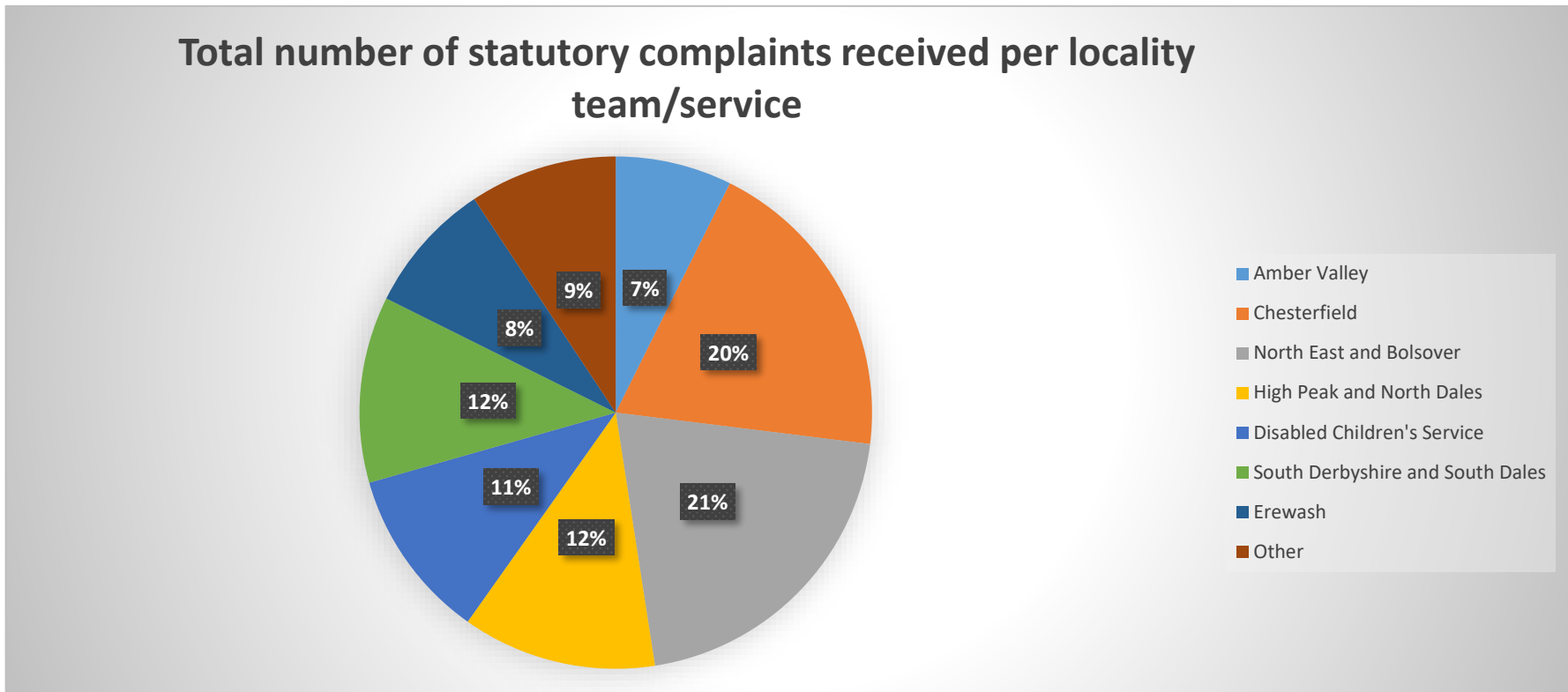


124 complaints were not upheld, meaning that 61% of all complaints investigated were not upheld compared to 58% the previous year. The highest percentage of complaints not upheld were in relation to service decision (72%). This represents 31% of all

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complaints not upheld. This is closely followed by complaints about officer behaviour (69%) This represents 27% of all not upheld complaints. Of the complaints not upheld in 2020/21, 56 (38%) related to officer behaviour.

The chart below shows the percentage of total complaints received and responded to formally by locality team/ service.

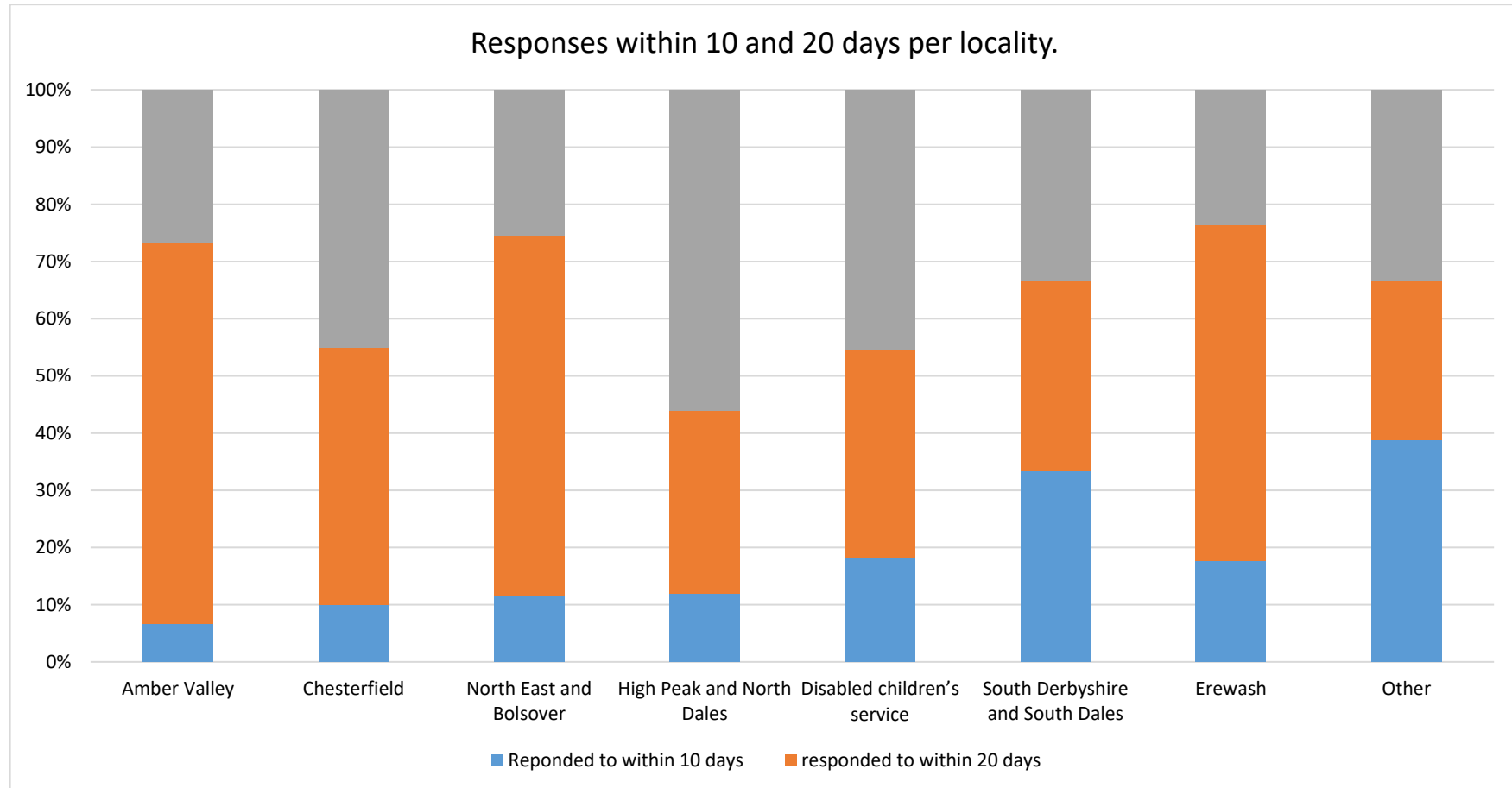


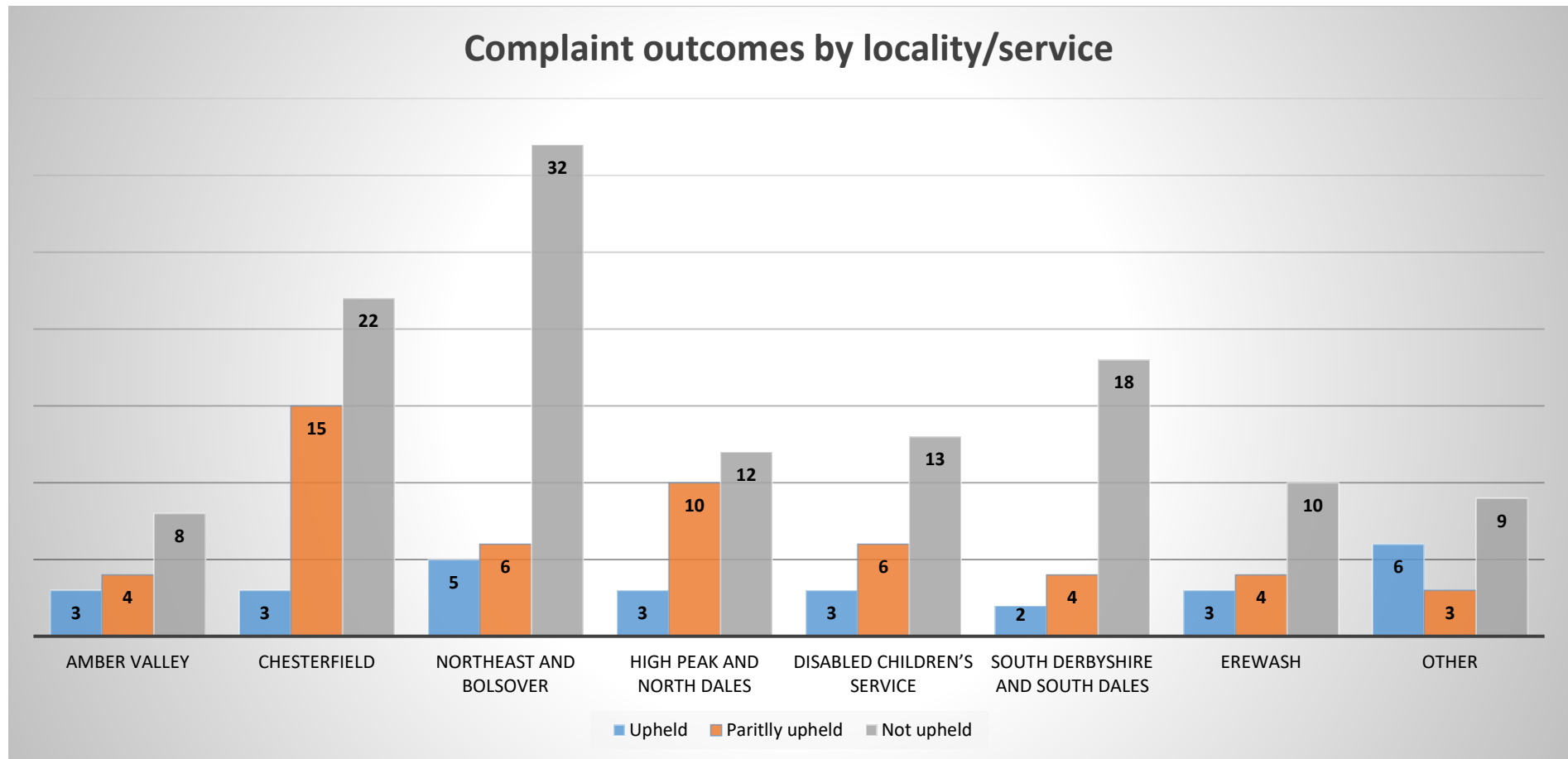
Number of complaints received by locality:

Locality/ Service	Amber Valley	Chesterfield	Northeast and Bolsover	High Peak and North Dales	Disabled children's service	South Derbyshire and South Dales	Erewash	Other
Number of formal complaints	15	40	43	25	22	24	17	18
Responded to with 10 days	1 (7%)	4 (10%)	4 (9%)	3 (12%)	4 (18%)	8 (33%)	3 (18%)	7 (37.9%)
Responded to within 20 days	11 (73%)	22 (55%)	31 (72%)	11 (44%)	12 (55%)	16 (67%)	13 (76%)	13 (72%)
Complaint upheld	3 (20%)	3 (7.5%)	5 (12%)	3 (12%)	3 (14%)	2 (8%)	3 (17.6%)	6 (33%)
Partially upheld	4 (27%)	15 (37.5%)	6	10 (40%)	6 (27%)	4 (17%)	4 (23.5%)	3 (17%)
Not upheld	8 (53%)	22 (55%)	32	12 (48%)	13 (59%)	18 (75%)	10 (58.8%)	9 (50%)
Number that remained open at year end	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Progressed to stage 2	3 (20%)	8 (20%)	8 (19%)	5 (20%)	5 (23%)	6 (25%)	2 (12%)	1 (6%)

Included in the 'other' category are starting point, fostering and adoption services, leaving care service and the child protection service.

The chart below shows the complaints received by locality/ service and those complaints responded to in 10 and 20 working days.





The chart above shows the number of complaints upheld, partially upheld and not upheld by locality/service.

Amber Valley

15 complaints were formally investigated in Amber Valley compared to 20 received the previous year. The reasons for complaints were as follows: 2 regarding communication; 5 regarding officer behaviour; 5 regarding the standard of service; 2 related to a service decision, and 1 regarding the use or storage of data. 3 complaints were upheld, 4 partially upheld and 8 not upheld.

Chesterfield

40 complaints were formally investigated in Chesterfield compared to 44 received the previous year. The reasons for complaints were as follows: 5 were regarding communication; 8 were regarding officer behaviour; 7 were in relation to service decisions; 2 were regarding the speed of service; 14 were in relation the standard of service and 4 were related to the use or storage of data. 3 complaints were upheld, 15 were partially upheld and 22 were not upheld.

Erewash

17 complaints were formally investigated in Erewash compared to 32 received the previous year. The reasons for complaints were as follows: 2 were related to communication; 4 related to officer behaviour; 5 related to service decisions; 1 in relation to the speed of service; 3 about the standard of service and 2 were about the use or storage of data. 3 complaints were upheld, 4 were partially upheld and 10 were not upheld.

High Peak and North Dales

25 complaints were formally investigated in High Peak and North Dales compared to 20 received the previous year. The reasons for complaints were as follows: 2 were in relation to communication; 8 were about officer behaviour; 6 were in relation to a service decision; 1 about the speed of service and 8 were about the standard of service received. 3 complaints were upheld, 10 were partially upheld and 12 were not upheld.

Northeast and Bolsover

43 complaints were formally investigated in Northeast and Bolsover compared to 53 in the previous year. The reasons for complaints were as follows: 2 were about communication; 10 were in relation to officer behaviour; 15 were about service decision; 1 was about the speed of service, 14 were about the standard of service and 1 was about the use or storage of data. 5 complaints were upheld, 6 were partially upheld, and 32 were not upheld.

South Derbyshire and South Dales

24 complaints were formally investigated in South Derbyshire and South Dales compared to 40 in the previous year. The reasons for complaints were as follows: 1 was about communication; 10 were about officer behaviour; 5 were about service decision; 7 were about the standard of service and 1 was about the use or storage of data. 2 complaints were upheld, 4 were partially upheld and 18 were not upheld.

Specialist Safeguarding and Disabled Children's Service

22 complaints were formally investigated in the specialist safeguarding and disabled children's service compared to 22 in the previous year. The reasons for complaints were as follows: 1 related to communication, 1 concerned officer behaviour, 8 were about service decision, 3 were about the speed of service, 8 were about the standard of service and 1 was about the use or storage of data. 3 complaints were upheld, 6 were partially upheld and 13 were not upheld.

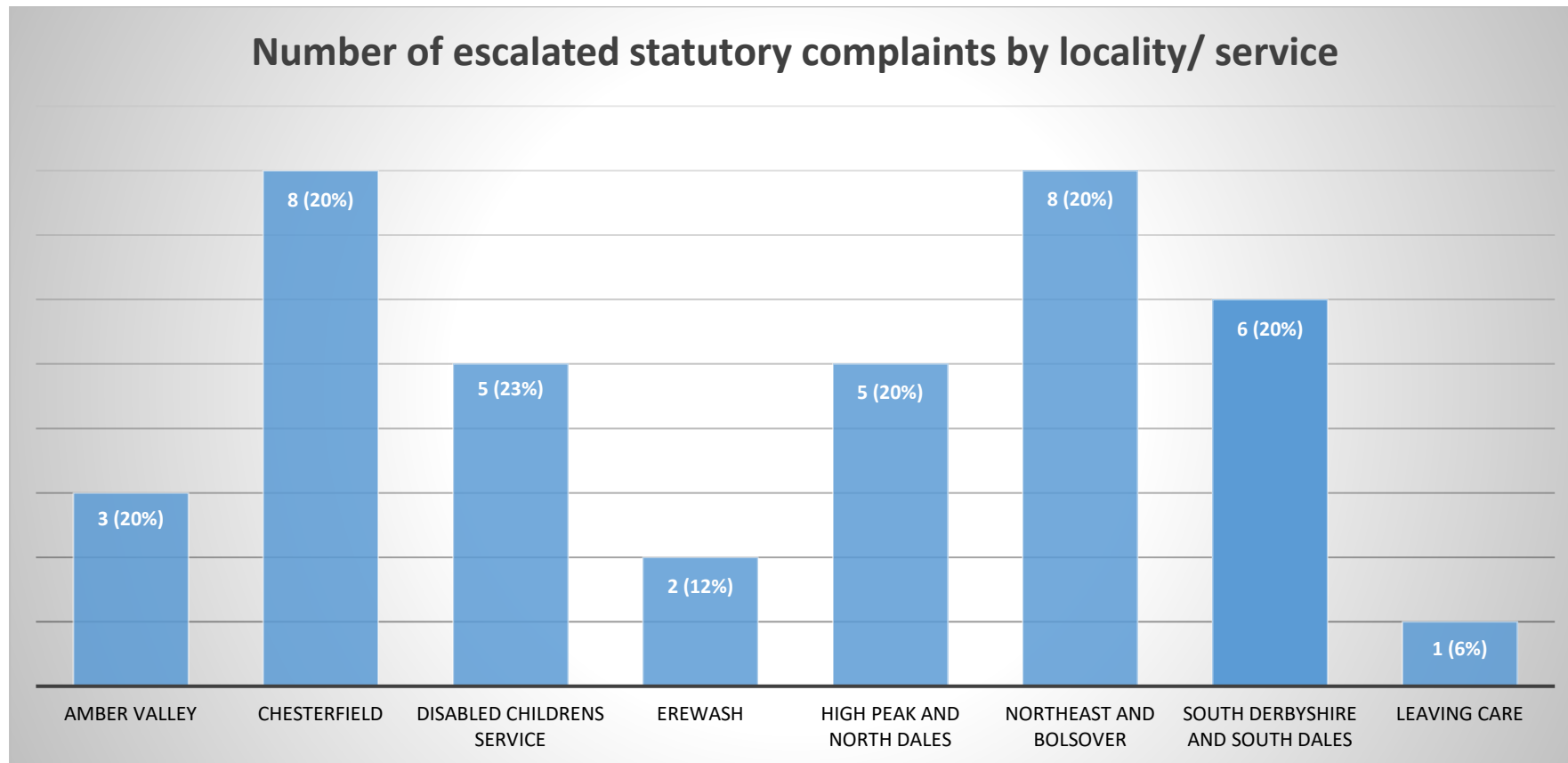
Statutory Complaints – Stage 2

38 requests for escalation to stage 2 of the statutory complaints process were received between April 2021 and March 2022. This represents a 25% decrease from the 52 requests for escalation received in 2020/21. This is a 19% escalation percentage from stage 1 of the process in comparison to 20% the previous year.

Although 38 requests were made, 32 progressed formally to stage 2 investigation with others being resolved prior to the completion of the investigation. Reasons why some stage 2 requests did not proceed to investigation are detailed in the table below. Where a complaint is recorded as on hold, this is because there was another concurrent investigation (for example a court process) which prevented the complaint being investigated in accordance with statutory guidance.

7 of the complaints investigated were responded to outside the extended 65 working day timeframe in 2021/22, in all cases, complainants were contacted, and agreement was sought to extend the target dates for the responses. The reason for the extended timeframe relates to the volume of stage 2 activity, investigating officer capacity and in some cases, the complexity and volume of the information required to undertake a robust investigation. Of the 13 completed stage 2 complaints, 6 (46%) were responded to before the 65-day initial target date, compared to 38% in 2020-21.

Received	On hold	Resolved or withdrawn	Total Investigated	Upheld	Partially upheld	Not upheld	Open at time of report
38	4	5	13	5	3	5	16



Statutory Complaints - Stage 3

4 complaints were heard by a stage 3 panel during 2021/22 compared to 2 requests for a stage 3 panel in the previous year. The department uses independent panel members and panel chairs contracted through a provider of independent social workers.

All review panels were convened at a time agreeable to the complainant and took place on a virtual basis via Microsoft Teams.

In the 4 review panels held, the panel overturned decisions in 2 of the cases, meaning some complaint points were upheld. The panel agreed with the findings in the remaining 2.

Recommendations were made in relation to each specific case, however more wider learning with regards to carer assessments and the provision of support for children who do not meet the criteria for the specialist safeguarding and children's disability service was identified. Recommendations were also made regarding improvements to the stage 2 statutory complaint investigation process.

Corporate Complaints

Under the current policy, attempts should be made to respond to complaints in a timely manner and will usually involve the complaint being:

- Dealt with at the time by the officer receiving the complaint with no need for an additional response
- Passed to the appropriate line manager or senior manager for consideration and response

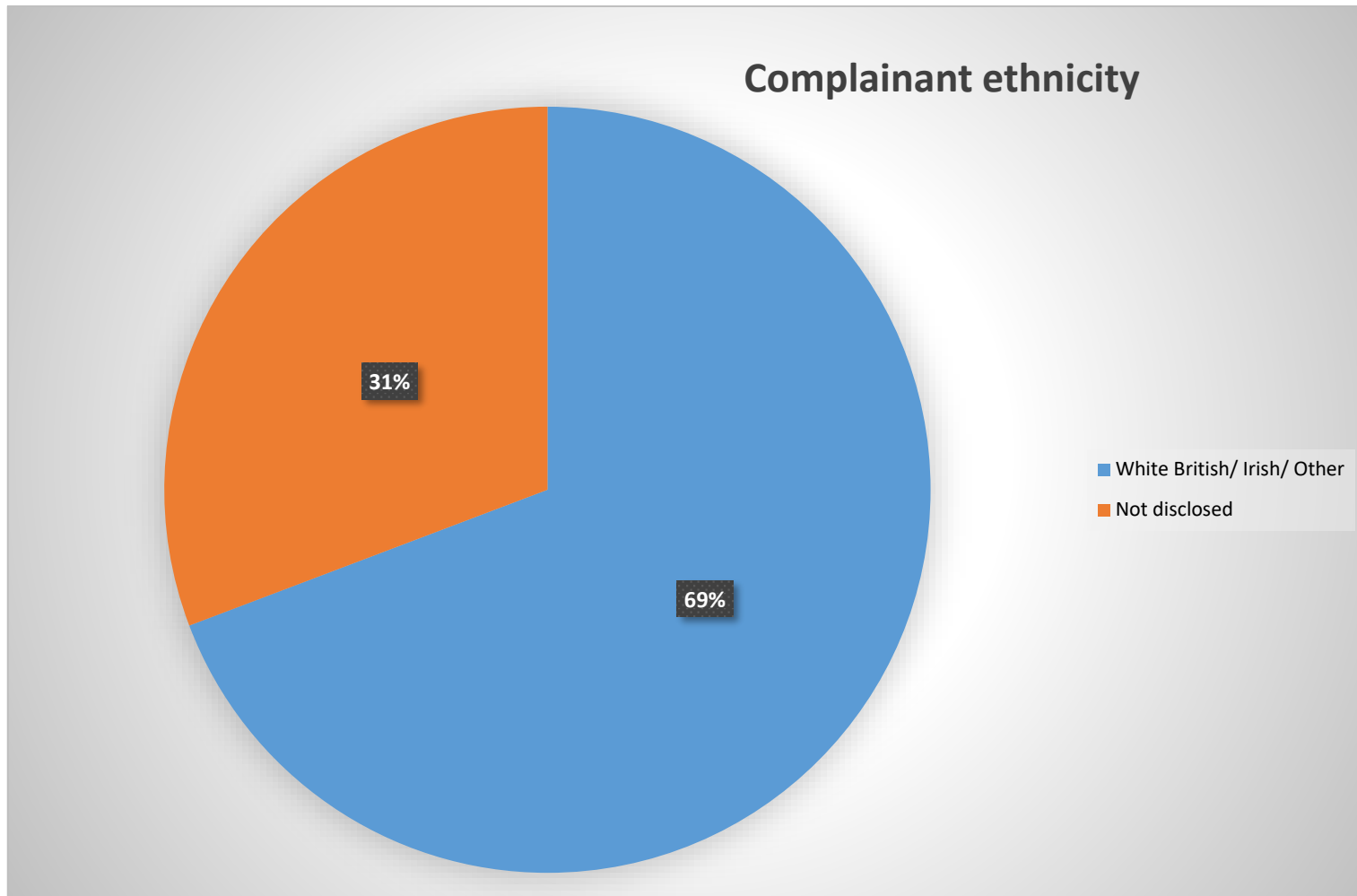
Where the complaint is not resolved at the time, within 3 working days of receipt an acknowledgment will be sent including the expected date for the response. A full response should be made at the earliest possible time and in general this should not exceed the standard target of 28 calendar days. To ensure all the relevant facts are available and enable a full investigation to be carried out the target date can be extended. If the complainant is unhappy with the initial response this may be passed to a senior manager for consideration and a final response provided.

187 enquires were received under the corporate complaints procedure in 2021/22 compared to 111 the previous year: a 69% increase. A total of 148 were investigated and a response provided under the corporate complaint procedure compared to 93 the

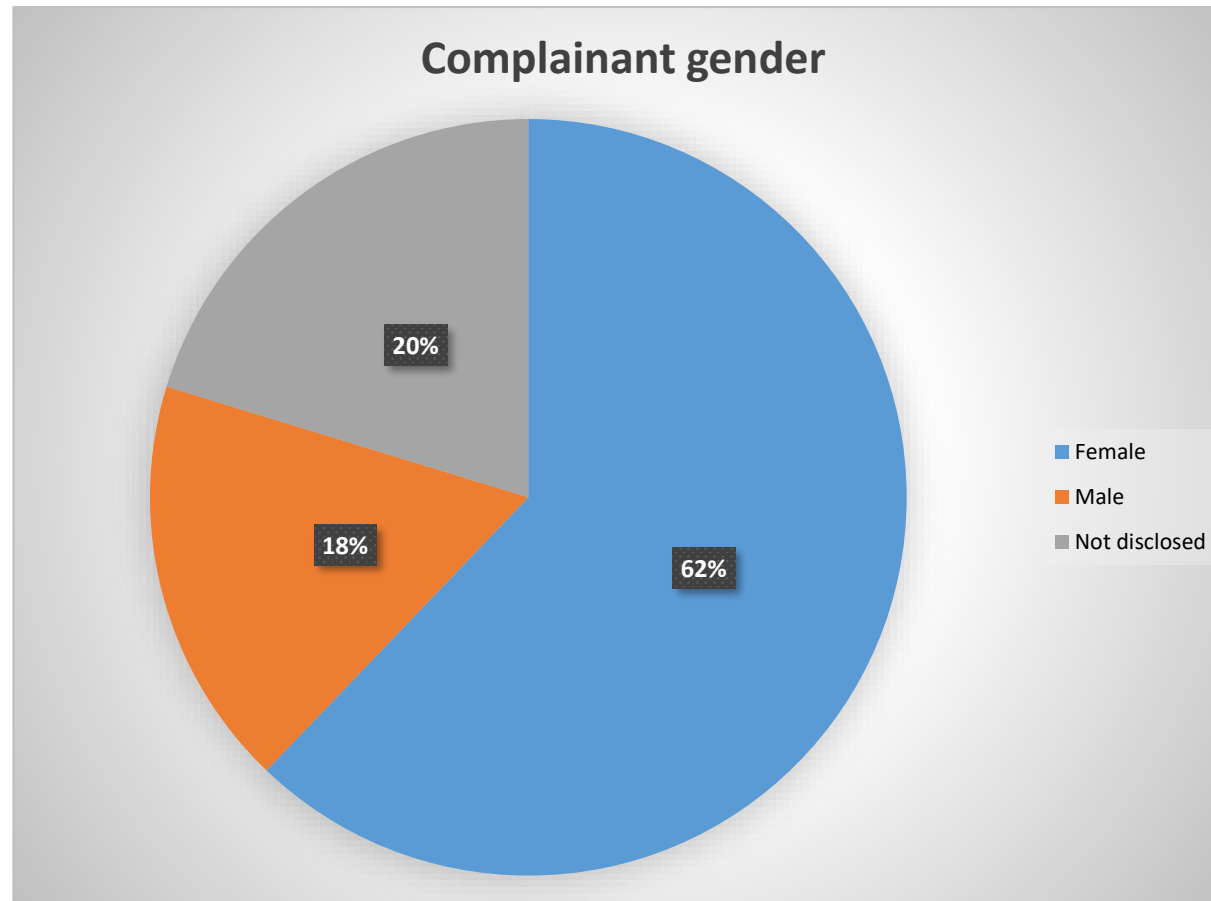
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previous year (A 59% increase). 138 (93%) were acknowledged within 3 days and 127 (86%) were responded to within the target of 28 calendar days. This is an increase from 81% the previous year.

The corporate procedure would be used when issues or concerns resulting in a complaint fall outside of the scope of the statutory procedure; this means that some social care teams have received corporate complaints alongside statutory ones.

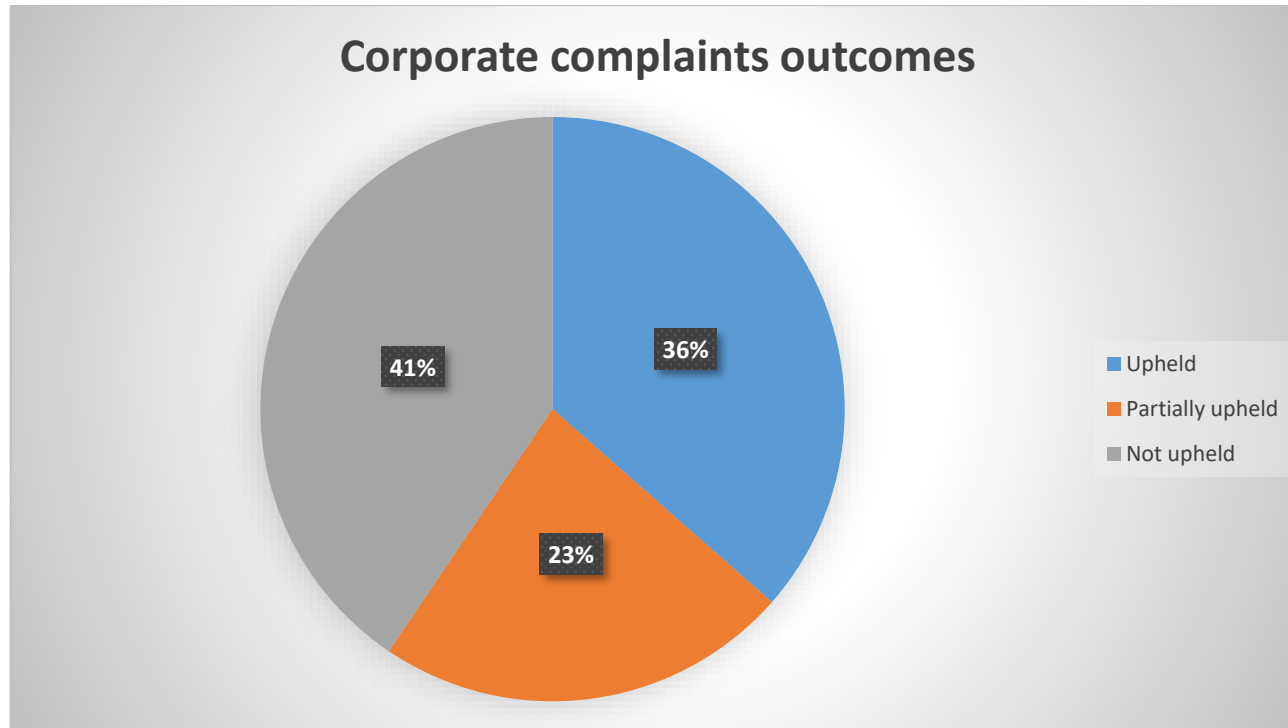


The above chart shows the percentage of complaints received from different ethnicities. The majority of complaints were raised by complainants from a white British background. The table above does not show those who did not disclose their ethnicity. Within Derbyshire's 0-17 population, 5.5% are from 'all other ethnic groups combined' and 94.5% 'white'.



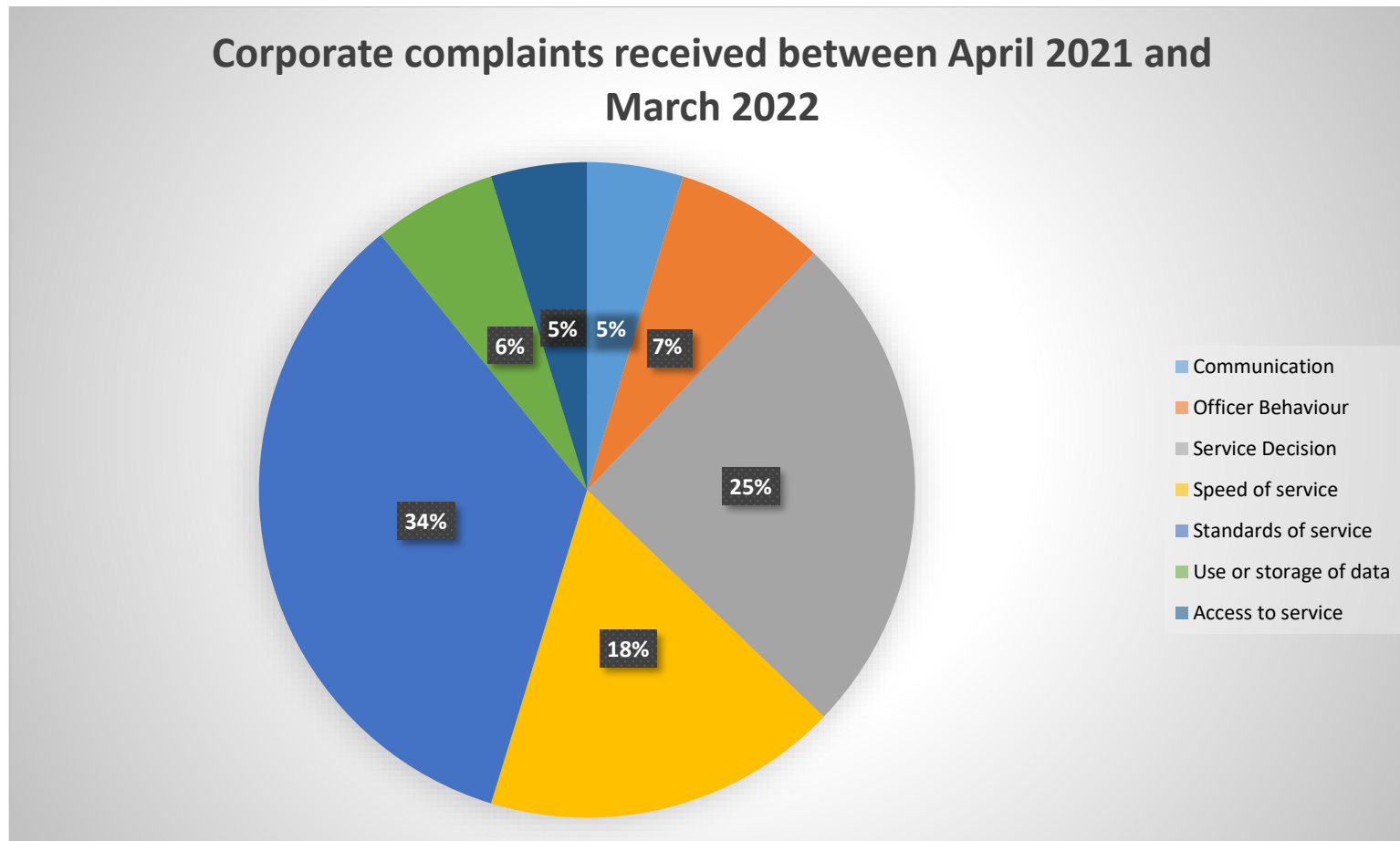
The above chart shows the percentage of complaints received by gender. The majority of complaints were raised by females or jointly by both female and male carers. The council aims to improve the recording of complaints from complainants of different genders.

The chart below shows corporate complaint outcomes.



2021/22	Communication	Access to service	Officer behaviour	Service decision	Speed of service	Standard of service	Use or storage of data
Total	7	7	11	37	26	51	9
Upheld	3 (43%)	1 (14%)	1 (9%)	9 (24%)	17 (65%)	20 (39%)	3 (33%)
Not Upheld	4 (57%)	4 (57%)	7 (64%)	13 (35%)	6 (23%)	21 (41%)	5 (56%)
Partially Upheld	0	2 (29%)	3 (27%)	15 (41%)	3 (12%)	10 (20%)	1 (11%)

The chart below shows the the complaints received by theme.



The highest number of corporate complaints related to the standard of service (51), followed by service decision (37).

Number of corporate complaints received by service:

Locality/ Service	SEND	School placement and transport	Locality teams	Other
Number of complaints	86	21	22	19
Responded to within timescale (28 calendar days)	76 (88%)	20 (95%)	15 (68%)	16 (84%)
Complaint upheld	37 (43%)	4 (19%)	5 (23%)	8 (42%)
Partially upheld	20 (23%)	5 (24%)	6 (27%)	3 (16%)
Not upheld	29 (34%)	12 (57%)	11 (50%)	8 (42%)

Other includes starting point, fostering and adoption, the occupational health service. 86 corporate complaints (58% of the total) related to the SEND service and 76 (88%) of these were responded to within the 28 calendar day timescale.

27 requests to escalate corporate complaints were received. 11 of these remained open at year end 2021/22, and 2 were withdrawn or resolved, therefore 25 (17%) of the total received progressed for a final response. This is 2 more numerically than the previous year, but less as a proportion than the 25% that were escalated in 2021/22.

14 final responses were provided to complainants. 4 were upheld; 3 partially upheld and 6 not upheld. 12 (92%) of the escalated responses were provided within the 90 calendar day corporate timescale.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Complainants who approach the LGSCO are asked to raise their complaint with the council before it will be considered by the Ombudsman. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response following the council's investigation into the matter, the Ombudsman will scrutinise the process used for handling the complaint and provide a response on their findings.

There were 29 LGSCO enquiries from complainants considered between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2022 with 12 progressing to full investigation compared with 46 the previous year (19 of which progressed to full investigation). Of the 29, 8 were premature referrals which required the department's complaints process to be completed before the Ombudsman would consider the complaint. The Ombudsman decided to not investigate a further 9 complaints. The reasons for refusal included complaints being

out of timescale, there being another more appropriate route to address concerns, or the council having already offered an appropriate remedy.

Of the 12 that progressed to full and detailed investigation, 2 of the cases found no fault, 6 found fault and made recommendations, 1 found fault, but made no further recommendations and one investigation was stopped due to the council providing an appropriate remedy. 2 remained open at the end of the year.

Complaints about Services Commissioned by the Local Authority

All commissioned services are required to have their own complaints procedure within the terms of their contract with the council. Ofsted regulate many of these services and set out how they manage complaints regarding these services on their website. All services provided under Ofsted regulation must have an internal complaints procedure, however, where complainants remain dissatisfied with the response provided by the commissioned service, they may use the council's complaints procedures.

When the department investigates complaints about commissioned services regulated by Ofsted it will routinely inform Ofsted of its investigation and outcomes where the case is reviewed or resolved. There were no complaints about a commissioned service in 2021/22.

Learning and Improvement within Children's Services Complaints

The department is committed to learning from complaints and strives to ensure that the complaints procedure is clear, easy to use and drives service improvement. Responding to compliments and complaints appropriately is also key within an organisation with a listening and learning culture. Wherever possible, local resolution will be sought to address the issues raised and reduce escalation through statutory and corporate processes.

During 2021/22 we have seen improvements in the timescale of acknowledgement and response times. The biggest improvement has been seen in the area of SEND complaints, with 88% of all complaints responded to formally being within the required timescale and despite a higher number overall, a lower percentage have escalated for a final response. It does however remain a key priority in 2022/23 to work with front line services to prevent concerns or comments becoming complaints. Given that over half of all complaints investigated are not upheld, it would suggest that relationships with those using services from the council could be strengthened and emphasis should be in place to rebuild relationships at the earliest stage and to rebuild trust in the council.

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2022/23 will also see the continued work to progress the introduction of the customer relationship management system, and it is hoped this will be fully implemented within the next financial year, significantly streamlining the administration of complaints management.