

# Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

## Complaints and Compliments

### 2023/2024 Performance Report

For the period October 2023 to March 2024 inclusive

#### 1. Introduction

As a Local Authority there is a duty to have in place a complaints policy and procedure.

The procedure places the emphasis on the initial local resolution stage (Stage 1) with complainants being offered a discussion to resolve the matter. The second formal stage (Stage 2) provides for independent investigation. If the outcome of Stage 2 does not satisfy the complainant, recourse to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales becomes available.

Citizens making complaints have a right to be listened to properly and have their concerns resolved quickly and effectively. The purpose of this report is to summarise these complaints and how they were dealt with. It will be used to help improve services and learn from what people are telling us. Work to this effect is being undertaken and the next report will include an update if any changes have been implemented as a result. It also highlights the compliments received in recognition of services provided that were above customer expectations.

Whilst this report focuses on a specific period, to enhance our complaints/compliments performance information an interactive dashboard has been developed allowing further insights to be gained. There is a “handy hints” section within it that helps explain how to use the links and the filtering. It is currently filtered to show the reporting period October to March but this can be changed by service area, quarter, year, timescale, stage and outcome to give the desired information. This can help identify trends over the past three years and help with learning and making improvements for the future.

#### How were complaints received during the period?

During October to March, 51 complaints were received across the Council. The methods by which these complaints were received are detailed below. The vast majority were either by email (39%) or by phone (57%). The same two categories formed the majority during the same period in the previous year. The split between email and phone saw a reversal with phone being the largest single method of contact.

Contact Method of Complaint	Number 2023 - 2024	Percentage of Total 2023-2024	Number 2022 - 2023	Percentage of Total 2022-2023	Direction of Change (Number)	Direction of Change (% Total)
Received via post	2	4%	4	6%	↓	↓
Received via email	20	39%	49	68%	↓	↑
Received via social media	0	0%	0	0%	↔	↓
Received face to face	0	0%	0	0%	↔	↑
Received via phone	29	57%	19	26%	↑	↓
Other	0	0%	0	0%	↔	↔
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>↓</b>	

## 2. Feedback Summary October 2023 – March 2024

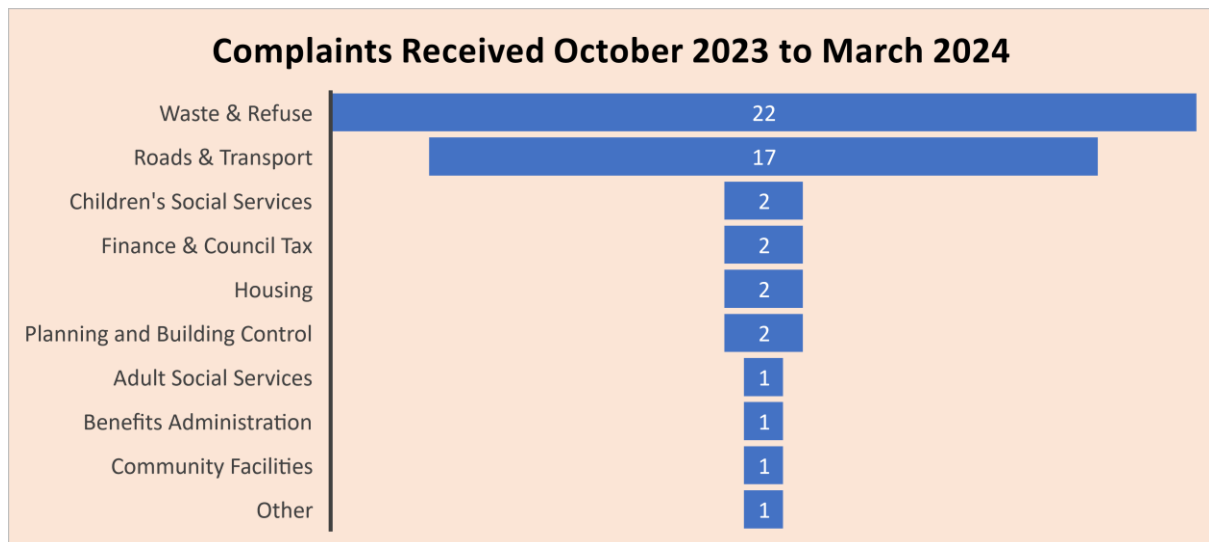
During the period, there have been 84 cases of feedback recorded across the Council. This compares to a total of 86 during the same period of the previous year. It shows a reduction in the number of complaints and an increase in the number of compliments.

Type of Feedback	Number 2023-2024	Percentage of Total 2023-2024	Number 2022-2023	Percentage of Total 2022-2023	Direction of Change (Number)	Direction of Change (% of Total)
Complaints	51	61%	72	84%	↓	↓
Compliments	33	39%	14	16%	↑	↑
Total Feedback	84	100%	86	100%	↓	

## 3. Complaint analysis

### Complaints Received – by service area / section

Of the 51 complaints, **43%** were related to Waste & Refuse, **33%** to Roads & Transport, **4%** each to Children's Social Services, Finance & Council Tax, Housing and Planning & Building Control and **2%** each to Adult Social Services, Benefits Administration, Community Facilities and Other. There were none relating to Complaint Handling, Education or Environment & Environmental Health categories (excluded from the “Complaints Received” chart below)



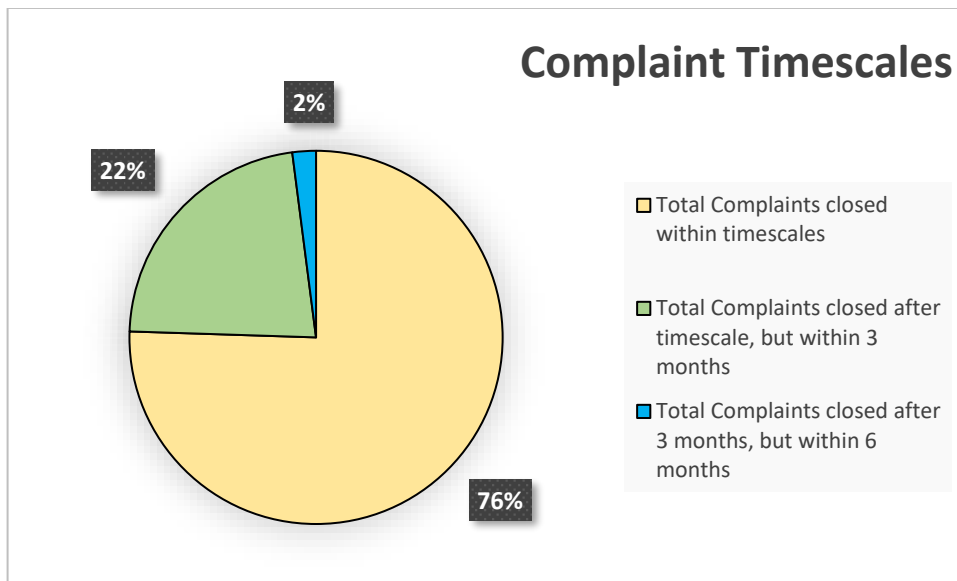
### Complainants

Complaints can be made by any member of the public. The majority of complainants act on their own behalf however if the complainant is unable to report the issue themselves, they can allow someone else to make the complaint on their behalf. The portion of complaints made during the period on behalf of others was around **6%**. This can be split further with around a **third** being made on behalf of parents, a **third** on behalf of other relatives and the remaining **third** on behalf of a friend or neighbour.

## Complaint Timescales

At Stage 1 the initial response will be within 3 working days and an outcome within 10 working days. If the complaint is not resolved and progresses to Stage 2, the aim is for resolution within 20 working days but if a case is complex this may not always be achievable so the complainant would be advised of the reason why and of the likely time needed to investigate and resolve. Complainants receive regular updates on the status of their complaint if, for any reason, we are unable to respond to a complaint within the timescales set in our “Concerns and Complaints” policy.

49 cases were closed (completed) during the period October 2023 to March 2024. Of those, just over three quarters (37) were in timescale. 11 were after timescale but within 3 months. Only 1 was after 3 months but within 6 months. None took longer than 6 months.



Percentage wise, the same period last year saw 44% closed within timescale and 49% closed after timescale but within 3 months, 7% were closed after 3 months but within 6 months. None took longer than 6 months. The numbers involved were 31, 34 and 5 respectively.

## Stage 2 Complaints

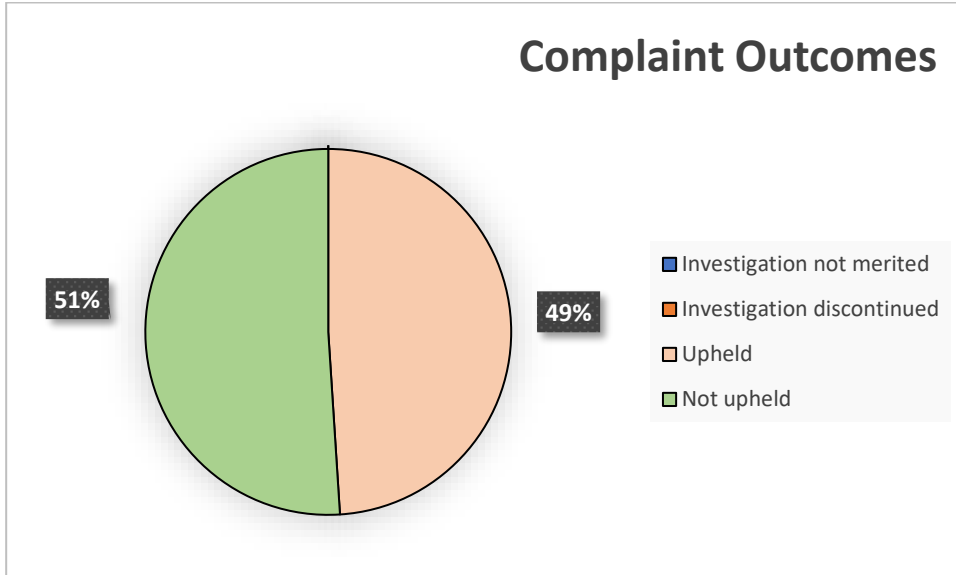
In addition to understanding the outcome and timescale of complaints, it is important to consider how many complaints progress beyond Stage 1. During the period, only 2 (4%) of the 49 completed cases had progressed to Stage 2, meaning that **96%** were resolved locally at Stage 1.

## Complaints Themes

Categorising complaints is difficult because they are wide and varied. Most service areas receive some complaints. Waste related complaints are a common theme. Typically they relate to missed collections and mess left after collections have been made. Highways and Estates also feature a lot, mainly concerning maintenance issues.

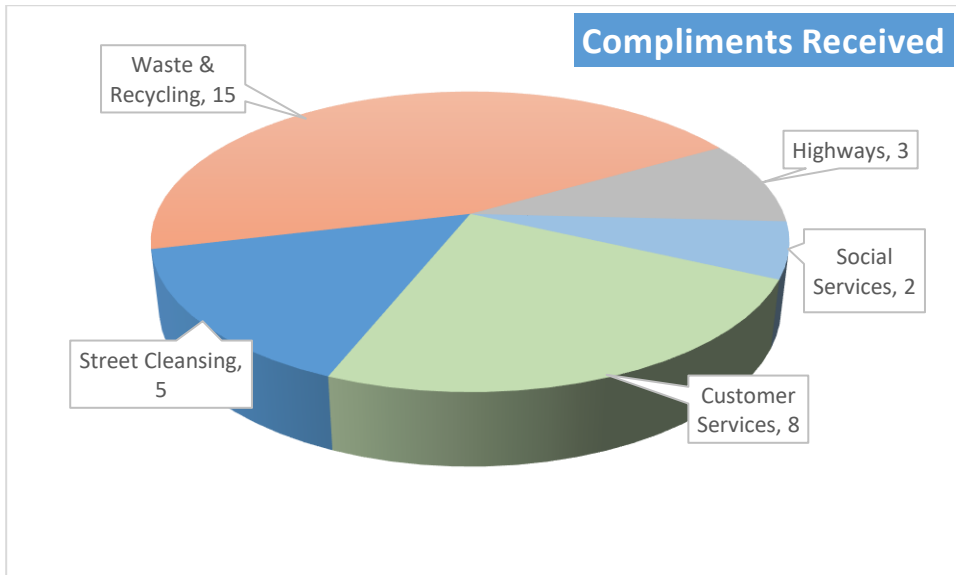
### Complaint Outcomes

Of those 49 complaints that were completed, there was a fairly even split between those upheld and those not. 25 (51%) were upheld, so just over half. 24 were not upheld (49%). None were recorded as either “investigation discontinued “or “investigation not merited”.



### 4. Compliment analysis

The Council received 33 reported compliments during the period October 2023 to March 2024.



The largest area concerned was Waste & Recycling (46%) with Street Cleansing at (15%) and Highways at (9%). This totals 70% of the compliments and compensates for Waste & Refuse and Roads & Transport which totalled 76% of compliments received.

Some quotes:

**Waste & Recycling** – “Lady has been unwell and was late putting refuse out this morning crew member seen she was struggling to get this out before they drove off and took the initiative to stop the lorry and go and assist her as it would of been another 3 weeks before collection. Lady really appreciates this and would like to pass this on to the crew”.

**Waste & Recycling** – " Lady has had a broken leg since May and wanted to state that the recycling crew have been wonderful to her and were to her late husband. Recently she was on the front door and a young lad off the crew passed by her door and asked if she was ok and did she need anything doing. She just wanted to say she was very grateful for the wonderful service and can we pass her thanks on please?".

**Waste & Recycling** – “Ebbw Vale civic amenity site. The crew are fabulous and really helpful and the site is great for residents to get rid of waste”.

**Street Cleansing** – “Lady wanted to pass on grateful thanks to the Contact centre staff and the street cleansing team for the great service she has received whenever she has reported an issue. Prompt and courteous”.

**Street Cleansing** – “Customer had reported an issue a number of weeks ago regarding mess in the back lane behind their property, customer would like to commend the street cleansing team on how effectively and rapidly they rectified the issue”.

**Highways** – “Lady would like to pass on grateful thanks to council staff in the contact centre and Highways. She reported the pavement last Tuesday and they marked it out on Friday. They then did the job this morning. They did a very good job the crew were lovely and tidied up after and felt it important that BGCBC were made aware of the great service she had experienced and wanted to pass on her grateful thanks”.

**Social Services** – “I would like to take the time and pass on my families and my personal thanks to the staff member who was fabulous at helping sort out issues for our late uncle. She dealt with our queries in an absolutely professional manner, but also in a kind and empathetic manner. Thanks ”.

**Customer Services** – “Wanted to say that whenever she rings in she finds staff in Contact Centre always pleasant, polite and helpful”.

Data Sources:

Complaints – Section 40 submissions - Local Authorities - quarterly reports submitted to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

Compliments – “My Council Services”, the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council customer relationship management system (MCS / CRM)