

# Edinburgh Council Complaints Analysis

1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021

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**A Forward Looking Council**



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# Introduction

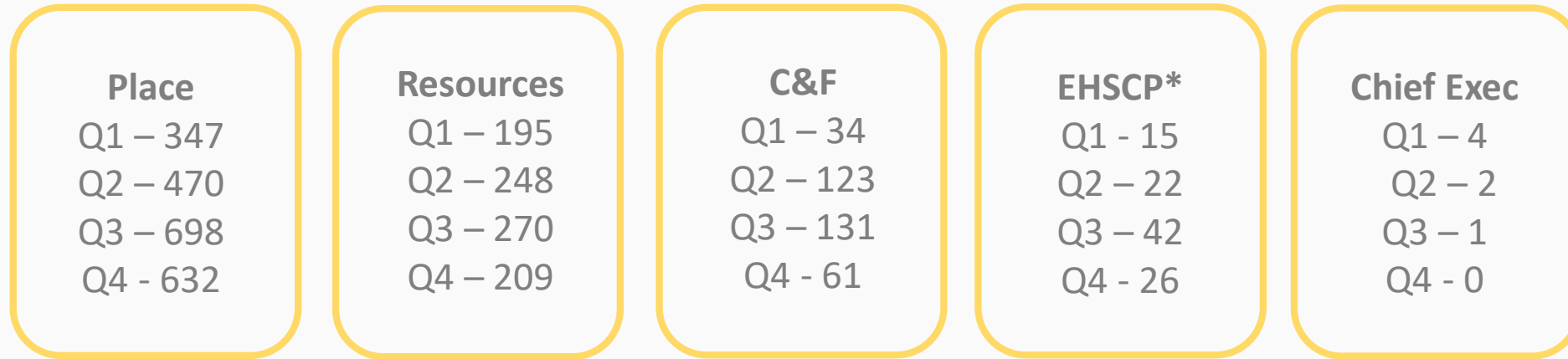
This is the review of the Council's annual complaints performance for 2020-21.

## Key headlines:

- Council services closed 3530 complaints during 2020-21.
- 85% of closed complaints were resolved at Stage 1 (front line resolution).
- Council services answered 62% of complaints within time during 2020-21.
- Council services upheld or partially upheld 64% of complaints closed in 2020-21.
- The number of Edinburgh complaints referred to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman continues to decrease with 32 referrals during 2020-21.
- A revised Complaint Handling Procedure was developed throughout 2020-21 and introduced on 1 April 2021. This included the introduction of revised processes and a new e-learning module.
- The Council's Corporate Complaints Management Group continues to share best practice and identify opportunities to improve complaints management within the Council, including the need to improve service provision through learning from complaints.

## Complaints closed

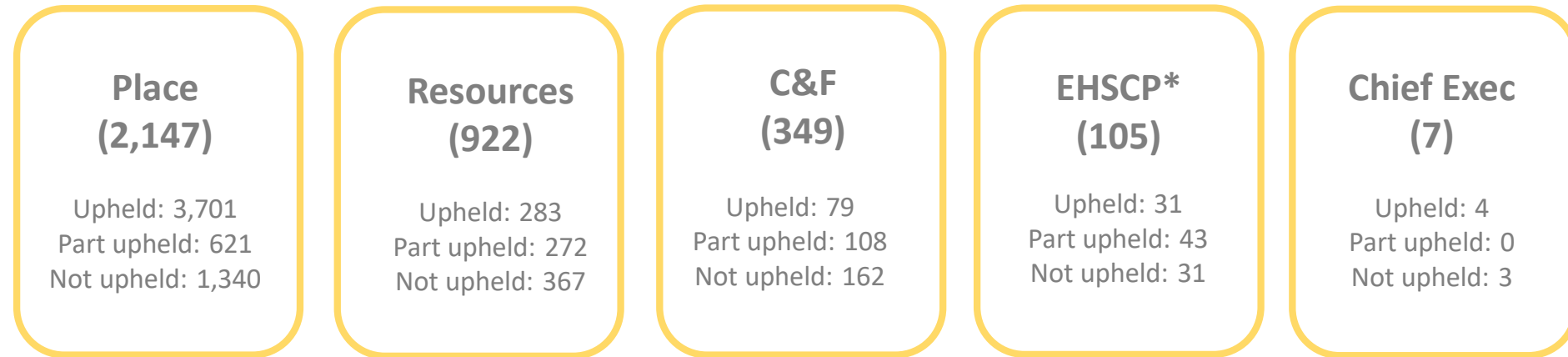
# 3530



- These figures provide information on the number of complaints which were processed and closed by Council services. Overall, there was a 55% decrease in the number of complaints closed during 2020-21 compared with the 7,917 complaints which were closed in 2019-20. This drop can largely be attributed to the impact of Covid which significantly reduced the number and nature of complaints received by the Council during 2020-21.
- During this period 3,947 complaints were received by the Council (7.5 per 1000 of population).
- 3004 (85%) of the total number of complaints closed were frontline resolutions (Stage 1) and 526 (15%) were investigations (Stage 2).

# Complaints upheld or partially upheld

# 2,258



- These figures set the number of complaints which were upheld, partially upheld or not upheld by Council services.
- Overall, the Council upheld or partially upheld 2258 (64%) of complaints from a total of 3530 complaints closed in 2020-21. This is an overall reduction from the 75% of complaints which were upheld or partially upheld in 2019-20.
- Following the development of the Council's revised Complaint Handling Procedure, a new complaint outcome of 'resolved' has been introduced for 2021-22. This means that it is now possible to close a complaint as 'resolved' without deciding whether the complaint should be upheld or not. This outcome can be used where it's possible to agree on an action that will satisfy the customer.

\*EHSCP: Adult Social Work only

# Performance against timescales

	Apr – Mar 2020	Jun – Sept 2020	Oct - Dec - 2020	Jan – Mar 2021	2020/21
Place	36% (124/347)	56% (265/470)	56% (402/698)	43% (396/922)	55% (1187/2147)
Resources	91% (178/195)	83% (209/248)	77% (207/270)	71% (148/209)	80% (742/922)
C & F	35% (12/34)	89% (110/123)	39% (51/131)	97% (59/61)	66% (232/349)
EHSCP	53% (8/15)	41% (9/22)	24% (10/42)	38% (10/26)	35% (37/105)
Chief Executive	50% (2/4)	0% (0/2)	0% (0/1)	N/A	29%(2/7)

- These figures reflect performance against the Stage 1 (5 working days) and Stage 2 (20 working days) timescales set out in the Council's Complaint Procedure. These are based on source data collected from Council recording systems and include any agreed extended timescales.
- When necessary, and with agreement of the customer, timescales can be extended at both Stages 1 and 2. Over the period, 331 (11%) extensions were agreed at Stage 1 and 118 (22.4%) extensions agreed at Stage 2.
- Overall, the Council answered 62% of complaints within time in 2020-21 - a small increase compared with 2019-20 when 58% were responded to within timescales.
- The average recorded period for providing a full response at Stage 1 was 16.6 days and 41.5 days at Stage 2. This is largely due to complaints not being closed on recording systems. Services have been reminded of the need to close complaints promptly.

# Complaints during Covid

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## Impact of Covid on Council Complaints

The Coronavirus pandemic, and the Council's response to it, had a considerable impact on the number and nature of complaints received by the Council.

- Complaints reduced significantly in Q1 and, while increasing, have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. This trend accords with the experience of other Scottish local authorities.
- Some of the factors that influenced the overall drop in complaints were Council decisions made in response to the pandemic. For example, not proceeding with debt recovery for a period, the temporary abolition of parking charges, and the short-term cessation of some collection services, such as garden waste and glass.
- The nature of complaints also changed as a result of different service delivery models. For example, schools received several complaints relating to their digital delivery and virtual learning.
- The need to prioritise resources in response to the pandemic had an impact on performance figures for some services. For example, Adult Social Care Services staff had to prioritise pandemic related work over complaint responses.
- While for figures have decreased, the top three service areas receiving complaints continue to be Waste (993), Customer (958), and Place Development (937).

# Complaints and referrals to the SPSO

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- Once customers have been through Stage 1 and 2 of the Council’s complaints process, they can take their concerns to the SPSO. The SPSO is the final stage for complaints about most Scottish public authorities.
- During 2020-21, there were 32 referrals to the SPSO. These mostly concerned Customer (3), Safer and Stronger Communities (3), Planning and Building Standards (4) and Schools and Lifelong Learning (4). Of those 32 referrals, only one was fully investigated, resulting in an actual decision.
- Due to the coronavirus pandemic, local authority benchmarking data is not yet available for 2020-21. However, previous data revealed that the number of local authority related referrals to the SPSO increased from 1,149 in 2018-19 to 1,308 to 2019-20.

	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2016-17</b>
<b>Referrals:</b>	32	129	133	162	192
<b>Decisions:</b>	1	3	9	27	26

- While the coronavirus pandemic has had an impact with decreased complaint totals during the last year, the figures indicate a continued trend of fewer complaints and referrals being taken to the SPSO about the Council.

# Next Steps

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- The Information Governance Unit and the Corporate Complaints Management Group will continue to promote the revised Complaint Handling Procedure to ensure appropriate levels of awareness and better complaint handling across the organisation.
- The Council will publish information on a quarterly basis about complaint outcomes to build public confidence and trust in the value of complaints and complaining, including the actions taken to improve services.
- The Council will continue to contribute to the work of the Local Authority Complaint Handlers' Network to share best practice and benchmarking information to improve complaint handling and performance in Edinburgh.
- A revised and nationally agreed questionnaire will be introduced to assess customer satisfaction levels and inform improvements when required.
- Discussions are taking place about the wider roll out of the Council's CRM system which should (through time) provide better complaints data to inform service improvements.



For more information regarding Complaints please contact:  
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