

Q2 2018-19 Complaints Report**Report of the Deputy Chief Executive****1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Stockport Council and Stockport Homes welcome feedback from their customers and have accessible, well-publicised complaints processes in place. An intrinsic part of both organisation's culture is to actively seek and learn from customer feedback to improve services. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of complaints, as at the 2nd quarter (July - September).
- 1.2 This report is structured as follows:
- Performance overview
 - Overview of Stage 1 & Stage 2 Corporate Complaints
 - Overview of statutory Adults Social Care Complaints
 - Overview of statutory Children's Social Care Complaints
 - Overview of complaints about Stockport Homes
 - Overview of complaints referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)
 - Overview of complaints referred to the Housing Ombudsman (HO)
 - Lessons learnt as a result of complaints
- 1.3 Within each section, complaints information is provided in relation to:
- Numbers of complaints received
 - Percentage of complaints upheld
 - Percentage of complaints dealt with within agreed timescales

2.0 2ND QUARTER PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS

- 2.1 A total of 142 complaints were raised in the 2nd quarter¹ compared with 118 in the previous quarter. This quarter has seen a rise in Stage 1 Corporate Complaints. Statutory Adult Social Care Complaints also rose sharply this quarter. Underlying the complaints is a growing dissatisfaction with social care charges - a 50% increase. There is a similar increase in complaints about the quality of care provided.
- 2.2 The total of 142 complaints received this quarter is made up of the following:
- 48 Stage 1 Corporate Complaints this quarter, compared with 37 in the previous quarter
 - 17 Stage 2 Corporate Complaints this quarter, compared with 21 in the previous quarter
 - 57 statutory Adults Social Care Complaints this quarter, compared with 39 in the previous quarter
 - 17 statutory Children's Social Care Complaints this quarter, compared with 9 the previous quarter

¹ A total of 100 complaints were received in the 2nd quarter of 2017/18.

- 11 LGSCO complaints this quarter, compared with 12 complaints in the previous quarter
- 3 HO complaints

3.0 PERFORMANCE IN RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS

3.1 Complaints upheld or partially upheld

3.1.1 Stage 1 Corporate Complaints

A total of 9 out of 31 (29%) complaints investigated were either upheld or partially upheld during the 2nd quarter. This compares with 5 out of 21 (24%) complaints investigated were either upheld or partially upheld during the previous quarter.

3.1.2 Stage 2 Corporate Complaints

A total of 5 out of 23 (22%) complaints were either upheld or partially upheld during the 2nd quarter. This compares with 4 out of 22 (18%) complaints investigated that were upheld or partially upheld in the previous quarter, and a further 2 complaints were settled.

3.1.3 LGSCO and HO Complaints

The LGSCO and HO categories, which are used to reflect whether or not a complaint is upheld (fully or partially), are indicated by findings of 'maladministration'. Upheld complaints may show some evidence of maladministration (or fault) but such findings fall short of the serious cases of maladministration which are detailed in full reports issued in the public interest. This quarter, the LGSCO upheld 1 complaint, compared with 2 upheld complaints in the previous quarter (please refer to section 7 of the report).

3.2 Timeliness of complaints handling

3.2.1 The Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure acknowledges the need for complaints to be dealt with in a timely manner but most importantly, that complaints are dealt with fairly and thoroughly. In line with best practice, a timescale of 20 working days is identified at both Stages 1 and 2.

3.2.2 Stage 1

This quarter, 29 out of 32 (91%) complaints being responded to within the agreed timescale, compared with 19 out of 21 (90%) complaints in the previous quarter.

3.2.3 Stage 2

The complexity of issues raised and awaiting information from services led to a drop in response times this quarter with 16 out of 23 (70%) complaints being responded to on time, compared with 16 out of 22 (73%) complaints in the previous quarter.

3.2.4 Table 1 provides a breakdown of complaints received by Directorate at each stage of the complaints process.

TABLE 1: Number of complaints received in 2018/19 (figures for 2017/18 are detailed in italics):

Directorate	Stage 1					Stage 2					LGSCO				
	Q1 18/19	Q2 18/19	Q3 18/19	Q4 18/19	Total YTD	Q1 18/19	Q2 18/19	Q3 18/19	Q4 18/19	Total YTD	Q1 18/19	Q2 18/19	Q3 18/19	Q4 18/19	Total YTD
Services to People (Adults)	40 (24)	58* (28)			98 (52)	1 (-)	1 (-)			2 (-)	- (3)	2 (-)			2 (3)
Services to People (Children's)	15 (14)	28** (14)			43 (28)	2 (5)	1 (2)			3 (7)	4 (2)	5 (3)			9 (5)
Corporate and Support Services	9 (19)	11 (15)			20 (34)	5 (4)	5 (8)			10 (12)	5 (2)	4 (1)			9 (3)
Services to Place	21 (9)	25 (19)			46 (28)	13 (15)	10 (7)			23 (22)	3 (2)	2 (3)			5 (5)
Total	85 (66)	122 (76)			207 (142)	21 (24)	17 (17)			38 (41)	12 (9)	13*** (7)			25 (16)

*This figure is made up of 57 Adults Social Care Complaints and 1 Corporate Complaint

**This figure is made up of 17 Children's Social Care Complaints and 11 Corporate Complaints

***Please note that this figure is higher than the actual number of complaints received (11), as some complaints relate to more than one service i.e. school admissions complaints are split between CSS and Services to People (Children's)

4.0 OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS BY DIRECTORATE

4.1 Services to People (Adults)

- 4.1.1 1 Corporate Complaint was received in the 2nd quarter; the same as in the 1st quarter (the Directorate mainly deals with statutory complaints).

4.2 Statutory complaints

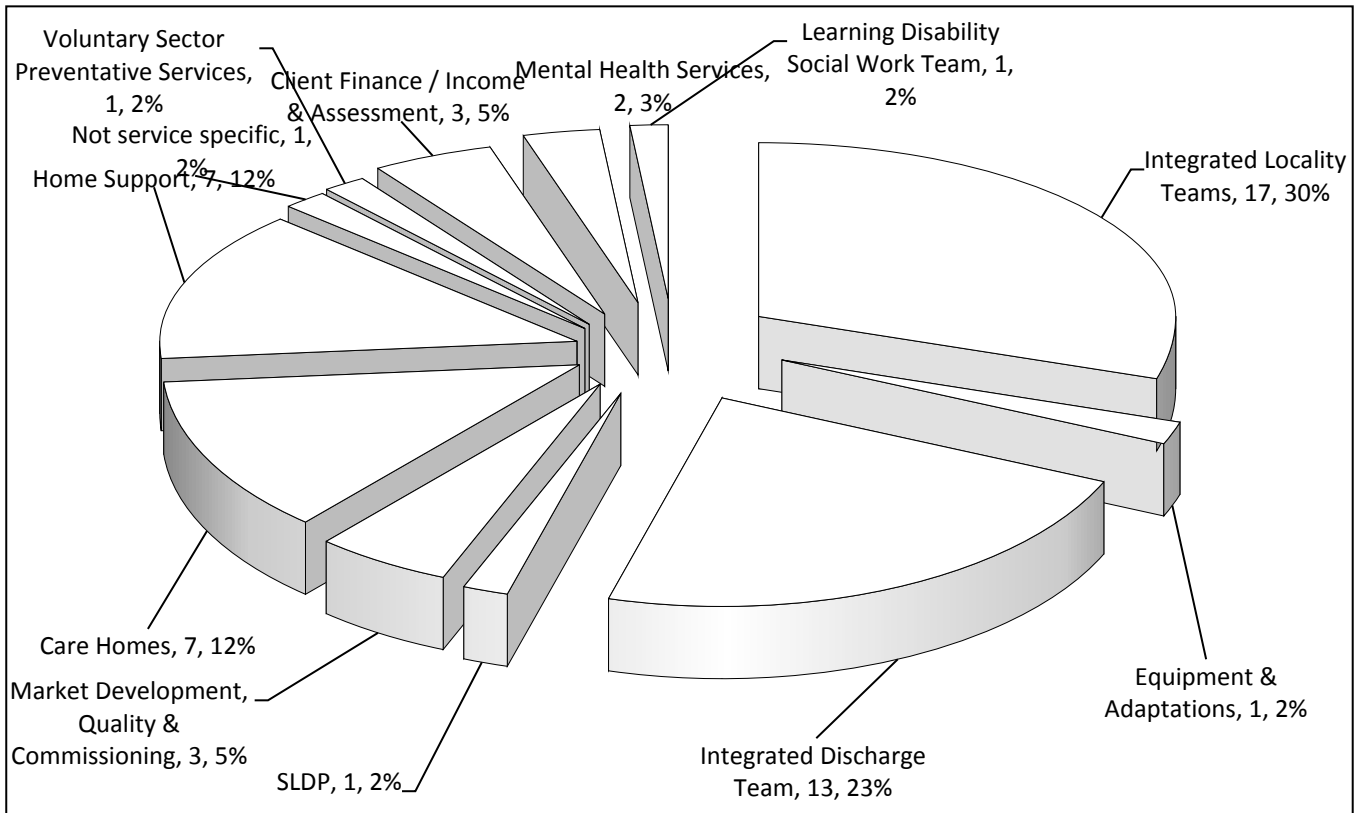
- 4.2.1 A total of 57 Adult Social Care (ASC) Complaints were received during the 2nd quarter², compared with 39 in the previous quarter. Complaints about quality of care and social care charges has resulted in increased complaints for the Directorate. A number of complaints have been as a direct result of complainants querying invoices for payments. The Directorate is considering how best to inform clients about the fact of charges, to reduce the long delay in telling clients about the actual cost and the equally long delay in sending out the first invoice.

TABLE 2: Adult Social Care Complaints

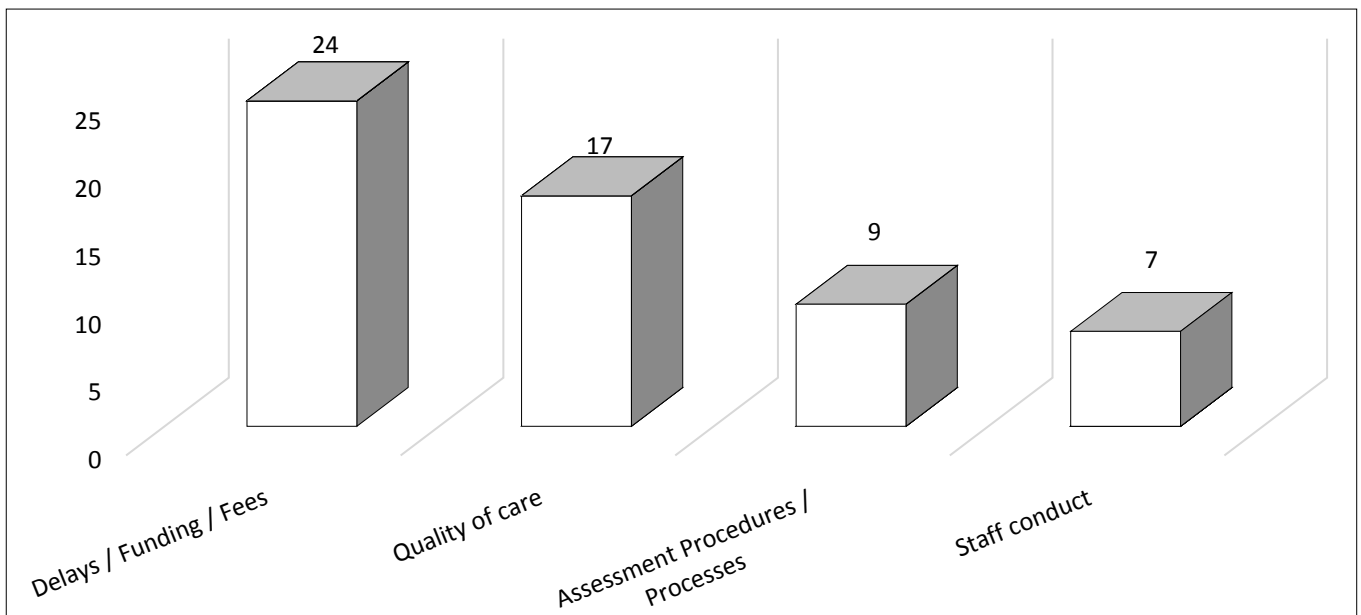
Number of Stage 1 Complaints by Service Area 1 st July to 30 th September		
Service Area	Complaints	%
Integrated Locality Teams (East and West)	17	30%
Equipment & Adaptations	1	2%
Intermediate Tier (Integrated Discharge Team)	13	23%
Mental Health Services	2	4%
Stockport Learning Disability Partnership (SLDP)	1	2%
Learning Disability Social Work Team	1	2%
Market Development, Quality & Commissioning	3	5%
Client Finance / Income & Assessment	3	5%
External ASC Providers (Care Homes)	7	12%
External ASC Providers (Home Support)	7	12%
Voluntary Sector Preventative Services	1	2%
Not service specific	1	2%
Total	57	100%

² 28 complaints were received in the 2nd quarter of 2017/18.

Graph 1 – Breakdown of complaints received by service area in the 2nd quarter:



Graph 2 – Issues giving rise to complaints in the 2nd quarter:



4.3 Services to People (Children's Services)

4.3.1 11 Corporate Complaints were received during the 2nd quarter³, compared with 6 in the previous quarter.

4.3.2 The following table and provides a breakdown of complaints received by service area in the 2nd quarter:

Table 3:

Services to People – Children's	
School Admissions	5
Children's Social Care	1
Children & Young People Directorate	2
Children's Disability	1
Services to Young People	1
Leaving Care Team	1
Total	11

4.3.3 During the 2nd quarter:

- 10 complaints were investigated, of which 2 (20%) were upheld or partially upheld
- All 10 complaints investigated were responded to within the agreed timescale

4.4 Statutory complaints

4.4.1 There were a total of 17 statutory Children's Social Care complaints received in the 2nd quarter⁴, compared with 9 in the previous quarter.

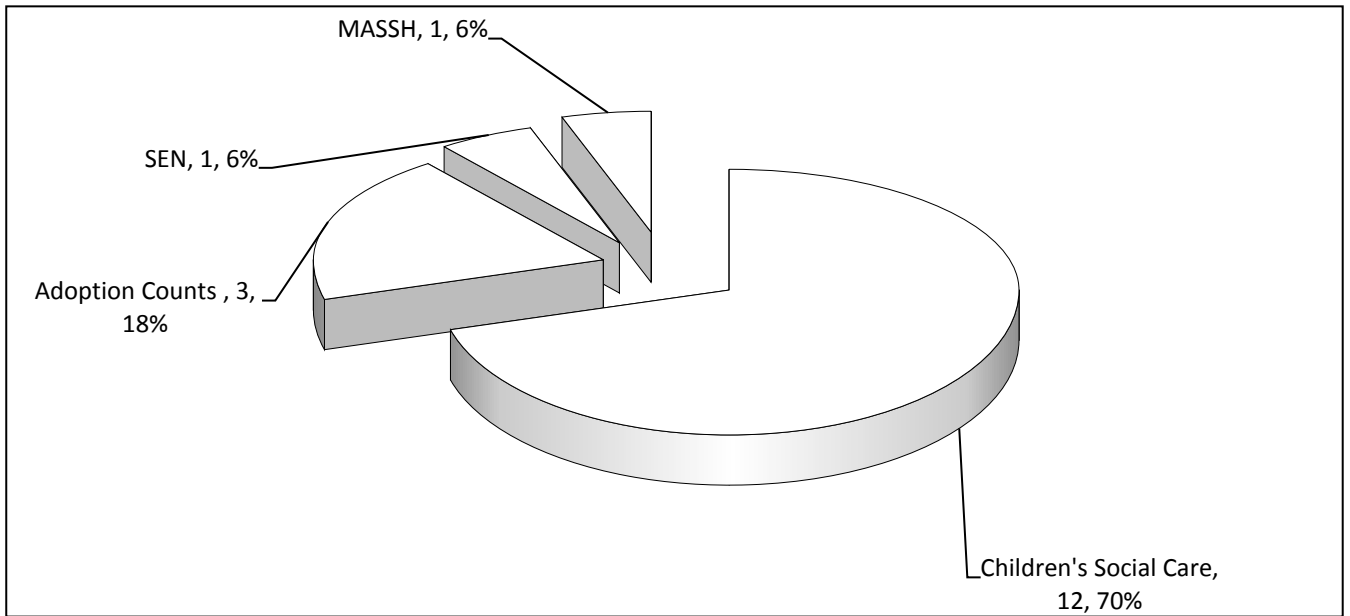
Table 4: Children's statutory complaints received in the 2nd quarter:

Number of Stage 1 Complaints by Service Area		
	1 st July to 30 th September	
Service Area	Complaints	%
Children's Social Care	12	71%
Adoption Counts	3	18%
SEN	1	6%
MASSH	1	6%
Total	17	100%

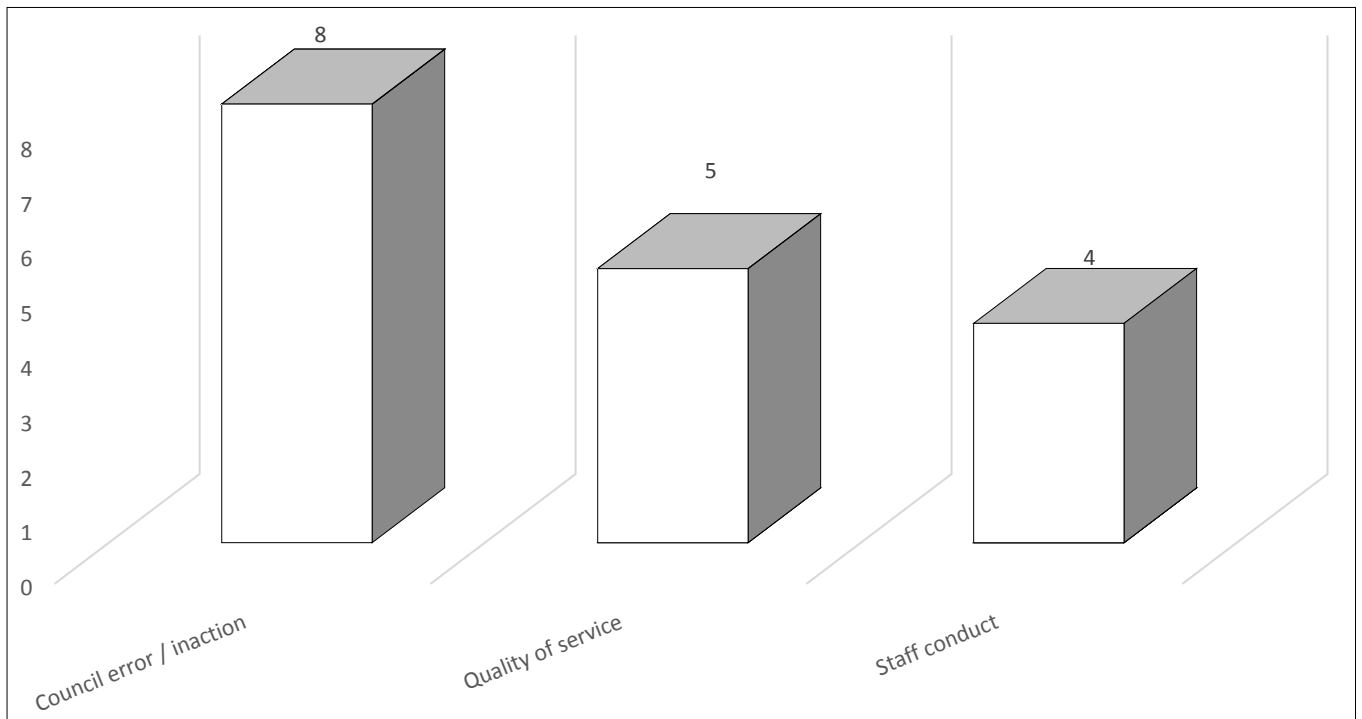
³ 5 Corporate Complaints were received in the 2nd quarter of 2017/18

⁴ 9 statutory Children's Social Care complaints were received in the 2nd quarter of 2017/18.

Graph 3 – Breakdown of complaints received by service area in the 2nd quarter:



Graph 4: Issues giving rise to statutory complaints in the 2nd quarter:



4.5 Corporate & Support Services (CSS)

4.5.1 A total of 11 complaints were received during the 2nd quarter⁵, compared with 9 complaints in the previous quarter.

4.5.2 The following table and provides a breakdown of complaints received by service area in the 2nd quarter:

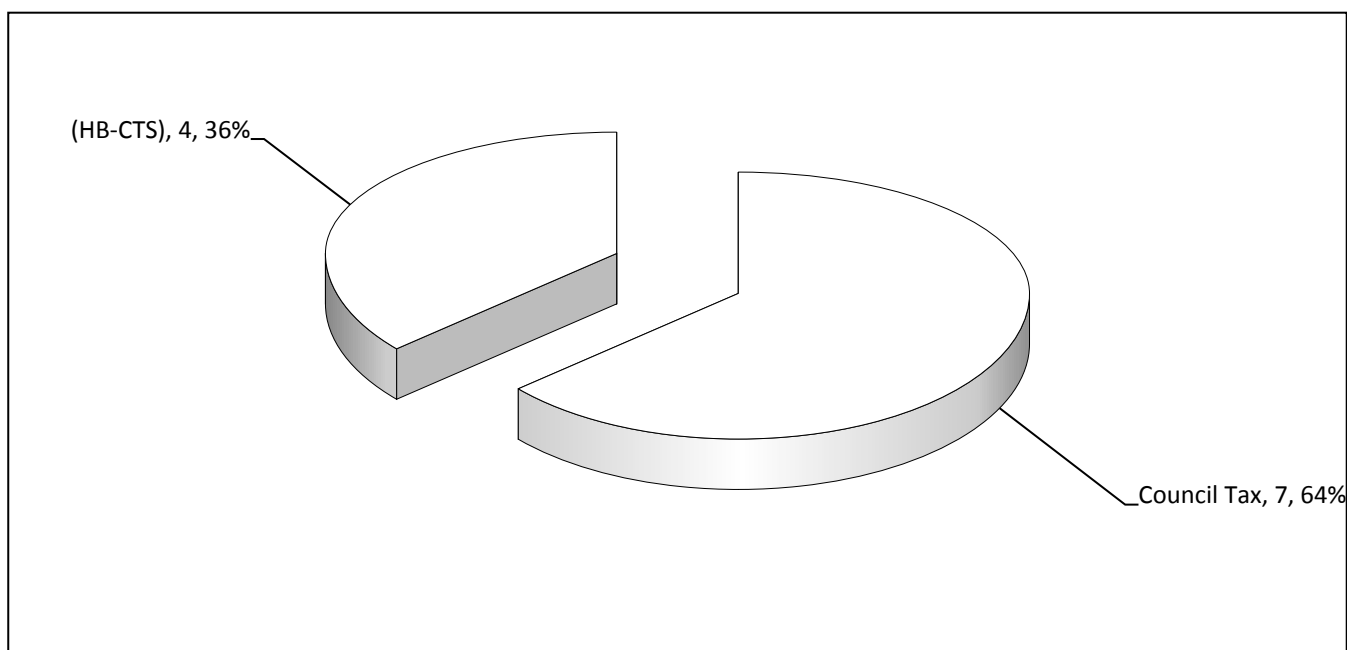
Table 5:

Corporate and Support Services	
Council Tax	7
Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support (HB-CTS)	4
Total	11

4.5.3 During the 2nd quarter:

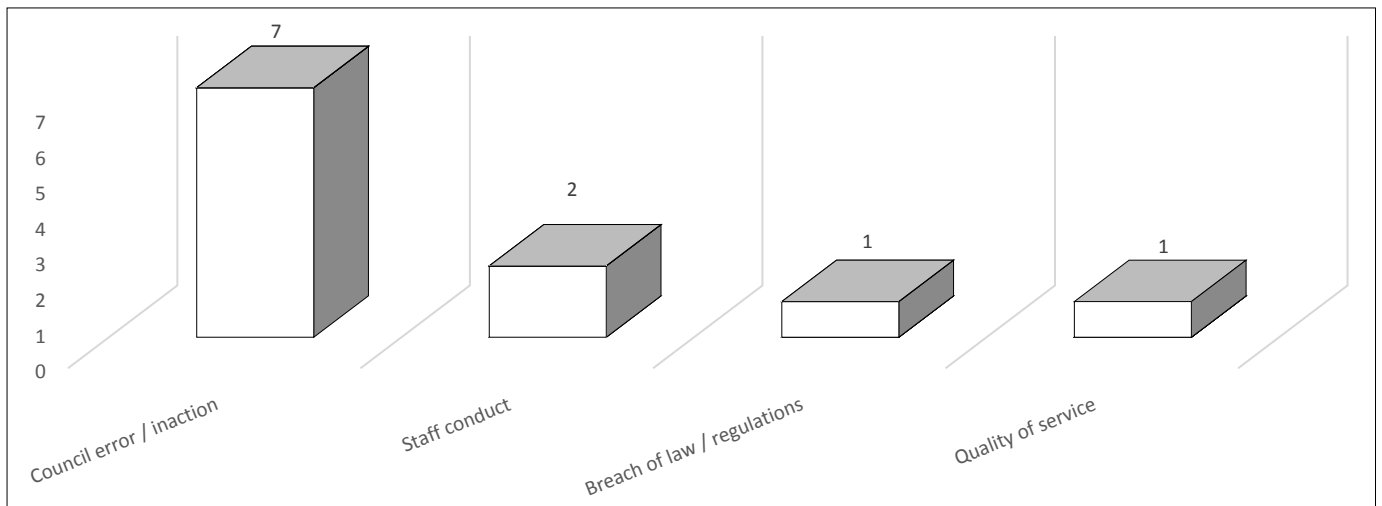
- 11 complaints were investigated, of which 4 (36%) were upheld or partially upheld.
- All 11 complaints investigated were responded to within the agreed timescale.

Graph 5 – Breakdown of complaints received by service area in the 2nd quarter:



⁵ 15 complaints were received the 2nd quarter of 2017/18

Graph 6 – Issues giving rise to complaints in the 2nd quarter:



4.6 Services to Place

- 4.6.1 A total of 25 complaints were received during the 2nd quarter⁶, compared with 21 in the previous quarter. Of particular note, a number of complaints have been made about the Council's decision to return Mill Lane to a lawned cemetery. The Council contacted families who have built gardens over and around their graves asking them to remove items to enable the grounds to be properly maintained. A number of people have voiced their opposition to the policy change and have taken to social media to air their concerns.
- 4.6.2 A number of Stage 1 complaints remain open missing response timescales. This has been flagged up with the relevant services to ensure complaints are responded to in accordance with the timescales stipulated in the 'Corporate Complaints Policy and Procedure.'
- 4.6.3 The following table provides a breakdown of complaints received by service area.

TABLE 6:

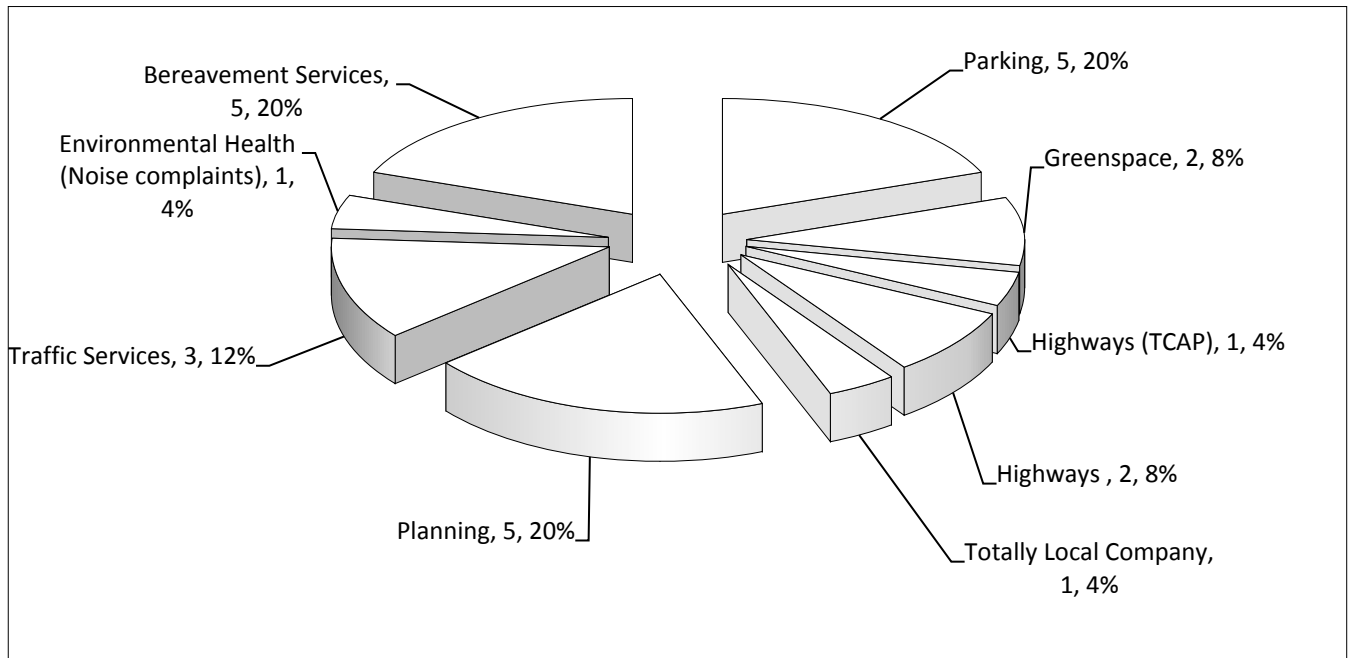
Services to Place	
Parking	5
Greenspace	2
Highways – Town Centre Access Plan (TCAP)	1
Highways	2
Totally Local Company (Parking)	1
Planning	5
Traffic Services	3
Environmental Health (Noise complaints)	1
Bereavement Services	5
Total	25

⁶ 19 complaints were received in the 2nd quarter of 2017/18.

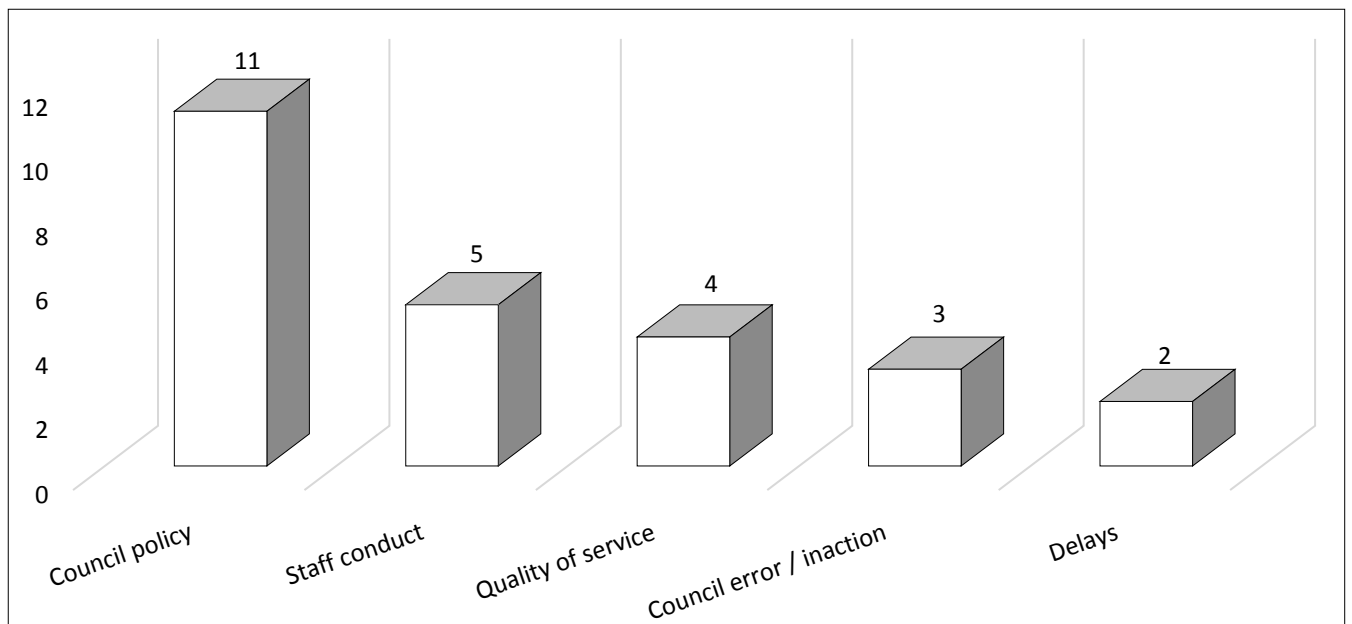
4.6.4 During the 2nd quarter:

- 3 out of 10 (30%) complaints investigated were upheld. 1 further complaint was settled.
- 8 out of 11 (73%) complaints investigated were responded to within the agreed timescale.

Graph 7 – Breakdown of complaints received by service area in the 2nd quarter:



Graph 8 - Issues giving rise to complaints in the 2nd quarter:



5.0 OVERVIEW OF STAGE 2 CORPORATE COMPLAINTS

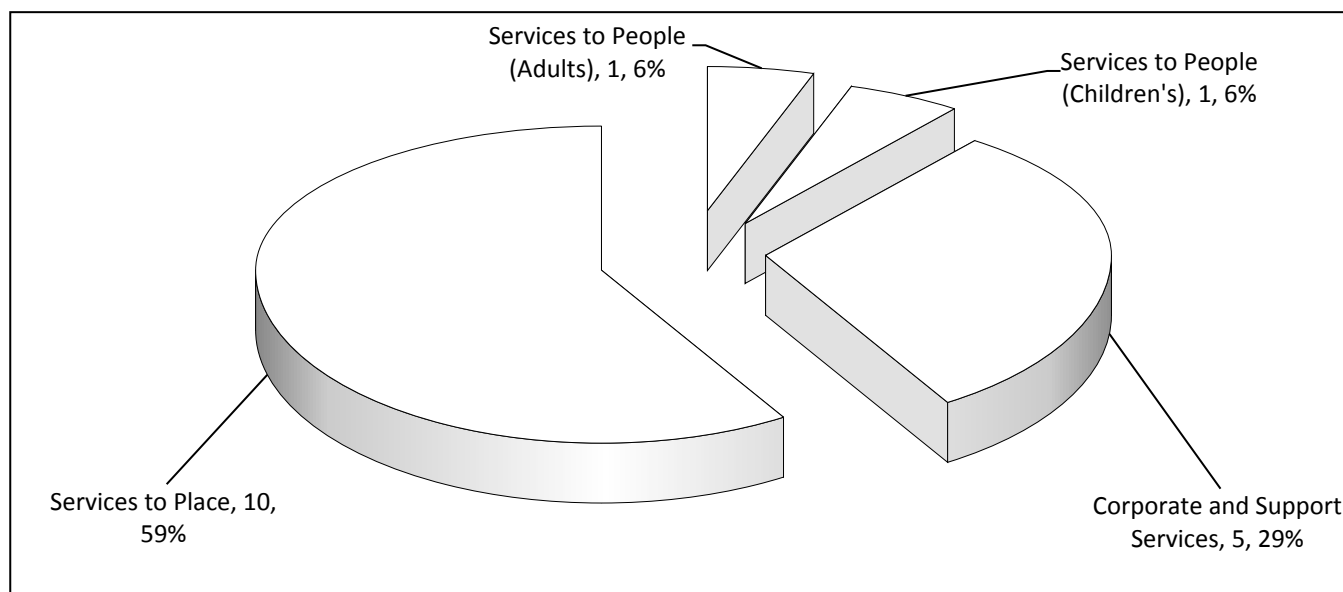
5.1 A total of 17 complaints were received during the 2nd quarter⁷, compared with 21 complaints in the previous quarter. As complaints are fairly evenly spread across services there are no discernible patterns to report. However, almost two thirds of the complaints received relate to Services to Place. Complainants were questioning Council policy, or where they consider the Council has erred dominate the nature of the complaints received. The following are some of the issues complained about in the 2nd quarter:

- A complainant questioned the Registrar's office's decision to report a death to the Coroner's office
- Embargo placed on a nursing home
- Tender process for 'The Produce Hall'
- A Stockport Homes resident was unhappy the Council did not investigate his complaint about their services

5.2 During the 2nd quarter:

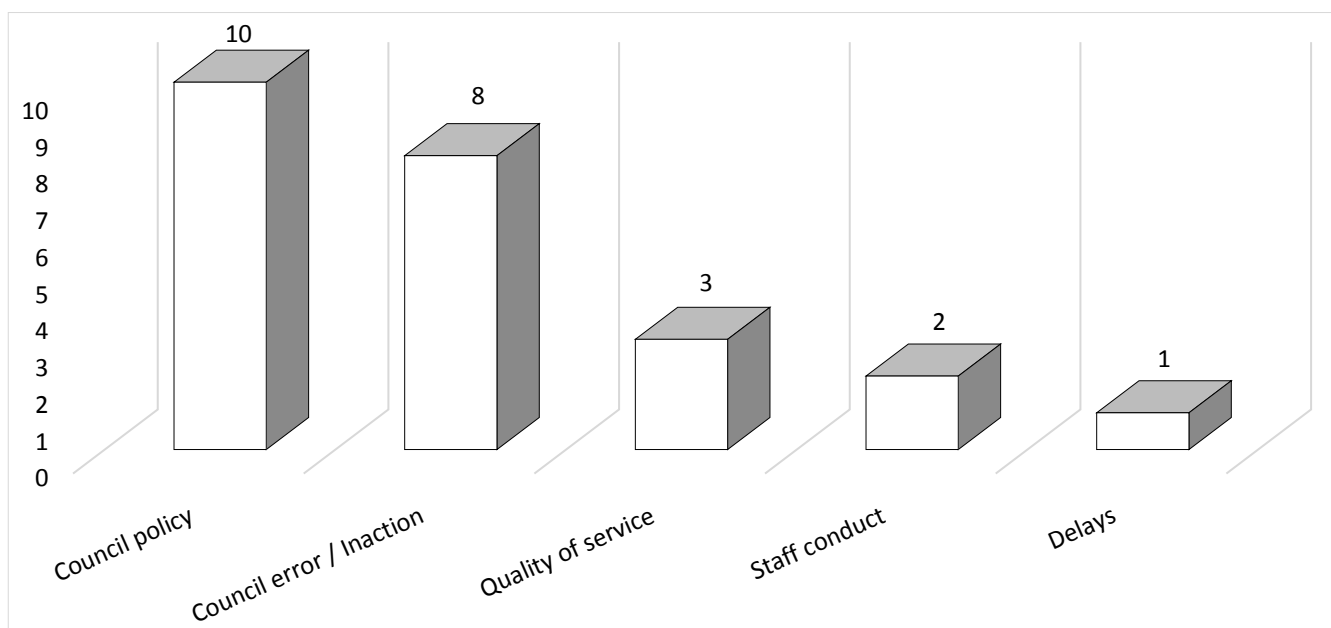
- 5 out of 23 (22%) complaints investigated were either upheld or partially upheld.
- 16 out of 23 (70%) complaints were responded to within the agreed timescale.

Graph 9 - Breakdown of complaints received by Directorate in the 2nd quarter:



⁷ 17 complaints were received in the 2nd quarter of 2017/18.

Graph 10 - Issues giving rise to complaints in 2nd quarter:



6.0 OVERVIEW OF STOCKPORT HOMES COMPLAINTS

- 6.1 Stockport Homes records any issue raised by customers in a wide variety of formats. This is reflected in the number of complaints and complaints closed.
- 6.2 143 complaints⁸ were closed in the second quarter of 2018/19, which is an increase of 33 cases on the same quarter of 2017/18. Repairs are responsible for more than half of the total number of complaints, which reflects the high volume nature of the service.
- 6.3 The repairs team saw an increase in complaints compared to the same quarter in the previous year⁹. Although it has not been possible to identify one single cause, the service has implemented a process to intensify the monitoring and evaluation of complaints that includes regular meetings and associated improvement actions for managers. The service has also undertaken a number of actions to improve the repairs experience for customers. The actions have resulted in a decrease in repairs complaint numbers up to the end of September¹⁰, which demonstrates that improvement actions are having an impact on the customer experience. These include;
- A restructure in Repairs 1st to create Trade Manager roles and new lines of reporting, which will improve the co-ordination of trades and provide a more coherent service for customers. This was completed on 1 August 2018.

⁸ 47 complaints were handled as a 'Fix-in-Five', 95 were handled as a 'Fix-in-Ten' and one was initially handled as a 'Fix-in-Five' but then were escalated to a 'Fix-in-Ten'. One complaint received a response at stage two (an appeal panel).

⁹ 53 cases were recorded for repairs in the 2nd quarter of 2017/18, compared to 78 cases in the corresponding quarter in 2018/19

¹⁰ 115 repairs complaints were closed in the 4th quarter of 2017/18, 110 were closed in the 1st quarter of 2018/19 and 78 were closed in the 2nd quarter of 2018/19.

- The creation of a Scheduling Manager role which will be responsible for the repairs planning function, providing better oversight of the scheduling of jobs. This was also completed on 1 August 2018.
- A number of improvements to the contact centre, most of which are now in place including: multi-skilling of contact centre operatives; recruitment to additional posts; and additional training. This will provide an improved service to customers as well as better management of contact centre capacity. These took place between June and September 2018.

- 6.4 The investment team saw an increase in complaints compared to the same quarter in the previous year¹¹. The increase coincided with an 89% increase in investment work completions compared to the previous year¹² meaning complaints are proportionately similar.
- 6.5 Complaints are analysed for all services, regardless of whether numbers have increased. Analysis shows that the vast majority of complaints for other service areas tend to relate to one-off issues rather than wide-ranging systemic issues.
- 6.6 The average time taken to resolve a complaint in the 2nd quarter was eight working days, which is well within the target of ten working days.

TABLE 7: An overview of local complaints closed and LG&SCO / Housing Ombudsman enquiries received by Stockport Homes.

Stockport Homes	Q1 2018/19	Q2 2018/19	Q3 2018/19	Q4 2018/19	Total YTD
'Fix-in-Five'	79	47			126
'Fix-in-Ten'	101	95			196
Appeal	2	1			3
Total	182	143			325

LG&SCO	-	-			-
Housing Ombudsman	-	3			3
Total	-	3			3

7.0 OVERVIEW OF LGSCO / HO COMPLAINTS

A total of 8 complaints were reviewed by the LGSCO during the 2nd quarter¹³, of which 1 complaint was upheld. This compares with 12 LGSCO complaints investigated in the previous quarter, of which 2 were upheld. The 1 upheld LGSCO decision for this quarter is summarised as follows:

¹¹ Three cases were recorded in quarter two 2017/18 compared to 10 cases in quarter two 2018/19

¹² April to September completions: For 2017/18 there were 860 handovers, for 2018/19 there were 1622 handovers

¹³ 8 LG&SCO complaints were reviewed, of which 1 was upheld in the 1st quarter of 2017/18.

7.1 Services to People (Children's)

- 7.1.1 A joint investigation was carried out by the LGSCO and the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman into Mrs X's complaint about the actions of the Council (in particular its Special Educational Needs and Children's Services departments) in relation to her son, B's special educational needs, school attendance and difficulties in accessing education whilst he was on roll at Y Primary School.
- 7.1.2 Mrs X complained about a lack of appropriate support for B from Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust's CAMHS team.
- 7.1.3 Mrs X complained the Occupational Therapy service, delivered by Stockport NHS Foundation Trust, inappropriately discharged B from its service.
- 7.1.4 Mrs X says the alleged failings by the Council have had a significant impact on B and on his family, causing unnecessary stress and anxiety and additional financial costs in seeking professional reports.
- 7.1.5 The Ombudsmen did not find fault in the Council's actions beyond a failure to provide suitable education to a child with Autism for four weeks, but this caused limited injustice. The Ombudsmen did not find fault in the actions of both the Trusts involved in this case.
- 7.1.6 The Council accepted the findings and recommendations, apologising to Mrs X for the loss of four weeks of education for B in May 2016; and agreed to pay Mrs X £370 for that loss, to be used specifically for B's education in a way to be agreed between Mrs X and the Council.

8.0 LESSONS LEARNT

The Council and Stockport Homes are keen to learn from complaints in order that they can improve their services. The following are examples of lessons learnt in the 2nd quarter:

8.1 Services to People (Adult Social Care)

- A complaint about social care charging highlighted the importance of providing information to clients at the outset, including leaflets on charges and financial assessments
- A service user complained that clear information was not provided at the start of the service they were receiving, and they felt they were unable to ask questions or challenge the process. The complaint was partially upheld, with a recommendation that information is provided when requested and that where communication with a client is proving difficult, the service should consider using an advocate.

8.2 Services to People (Children's)

- Adoptive parents' complained they were unhappy with the lack of support for their son who has autism. They were also unhappy about poor communication and failure of staff to attend a meeting. The service manager accepted that communication had been poor (partly due to the merging of five Local Authorities that now provide a wider adoption service), and an apology was given. As a result, the service intends to recruit additional social workers and develop a more responsive duty system to avoid families being put in this situation again
- A parent was unhappy about advice provided from the social worker, which resulted in several unnecessary visits to the hospital. When the social worker tried to book a medical appointment for the baby, the doctor at Stepping Hill Hospital stated that a slot was not possible as it was late in the day. The social worker was advised to book a medical the next morning but unfortunately did not contact the complainant, as she did not want to unduly alarm them. However, later in the day a senior doctor made a decision to progress with a child protection medical, which is necessary in all cases where an unexplained injury occurs. In future, the service manager expects staff to adhere to the protocol. An internal meeting was arranged involving professionals to review Council protocols given the practice in this case fell below expected standards. The importance of regular communication with the family was also emphasised

8.3 Corporate and Support Services

- An invoice for an overpayment of Housing Benefit was sent to the complainant's previous home address. The Council apologised for the error and reported the incident to the Information Governance team as a potential Data Protection breach. It also undertook the following actions to prevent this error occurring again:
 - The officer involved has been made aware of the error and the distress and consequence of their action
 - A reminder has been issued to all Housing Benefit staff of the importance of ensuring the correct address is used when raising an invoice
 - The Council's Training and Procedural notes, which are used by Housing Benefit officers, have been amended to enforce the importance of this point
- An investigation found that an officer had incorrectly advised the complainant over the phone that it was premature for him to claim for Employment and Support Allowance and Income Support and Carers Allowance after he returned to the UK having worked abroad for a period of time. A recommendation was made that the service reviews its training to ensure staff are brought up to speed in this area of welfare benefits, as well as to consider offering face to face meetings when they receive unusual or complex claims that require closer scrutiny

8.4 Place Directorate

- An unsuccessful bidder for The Produce Hall contract complained about how the informal tender process was conducted. Although the complaint investigation found that the competitive process was conducted appropriately, it did recommend that offers of visits to the business premises of all bidders should be made to ensure fairness (in this case, the Council had declined to visit the unsuccessful bidder's business premises citing that it was already aware of how the business was operating)
- A complaint was made that a highway officer who was not wearing a uniform was taking photographs in a residential area when he was confronted by the complainant. The investigation found that the officer was assessing the area and taking site photographs in preparation of works. However, this matter was discussed with the highway officer involved and refresher training was carried out for the team on safe working practices and the use of personal protective equipment during site visits
- Concerns were raised about traffic congestion and safety fears at Queensgate Primary School. The Traffic Services team advised that the casualty data had been checked for the 3-year period from 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2018 and it showed that there were no collisions within the vicinity of the school. It was also found that the Road Safety Team visited Queensgate Primary in January 2017 and again in February 2018. On each occasion 'Eagle Eye' workshops covering road safety measures were delivered to pupils in years 2, 4, 5 and 6. Although traffic was steady along Albany Road when the Team conducted the Eagle Eye observation sessions, the area outside the school did not appear as congested as many other schools in Stockport. However, in light of concerns about inconsiderate parking, the Parking team agreed to increase enforcement patrols in the area

8.5 Stockport Homes

- A complaint about the manner with which a customer was dealt with by the carecall & concierge team when they got in touch via the intercom, highlighted the importance of continued customer service training
- A complaint from a customer who had experienced a collapsed ceiling highlighted the need to have better management of follow-on process to minimise duplication and delays
- A complaint about the repairs team highlighted the need to check stock status prior to the date of an appointment in order to provide sufficient notice to customers should the appointment need to be rescheduled
- A complaint about a property being incorrectly advertised as having a stair lift (it had been removed previously) highlighted the importance of ensuring the housing management system, Northgate is updated when changes are made to a property

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The Cabinet is asked to:

- a) Review performance information contained in this report, and
- b) Comment on the performance measures reported and suggest any additional information that might be collected in future.

Background Papers

There are none

Anyone wishing to discuss the report should contact Anwar Majothi on 0161 474 3182, or by email on anwar.majothi@stockport.gov.uk