

Customer Insight Report

2020/21

Getting things right first time, every time

Our Vision

Getting things right first time, every time

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Version 1.0
7th June 2021

Context

The purpose of this Customer Insight report is to bring together the information collected about the customer experience of using Brighton & Hove City Council services in 2020/21.

This performance has been in the context of the Covid 19 pandemic.

By customer we mean any user of council services, whether voluntary or involuntary. This includes residents and visitors to the city, businesses, students, service users and their representatives.

This report presents what we currently know about our customer services. Our aim is to ensure we better understand the needs of all our customers, and to learn and grow consistently from the feedback we receive, in order to improve the customer experience.



Customer Insight is one element of our Performance Management Framework that sets out how the council manages performance, to achieve our purpose as set out in the Corporate Plan.

Our Customer Promise

Our promise to you (expected service standards)

Our vision of *Getting things right first time, every time* is the driving force behind our customer promise.

Initially developed in 2015, our promise sets out the standards and principles of how we deliver services to our customers, providing the council with a framework to monitor and measure our performance.

Our Customer Promise was refreshed in September 2019, to ensure that the services we deliver continue to be aligned to the needs of our customers, following engagement with customers through online and paper surveys and face to face interviews conducted in Customer Service Centres and Libraries across the city.

Customers were asked to identify what they valued most when interacting with council services from the below options:

1. That you receive quick responses but may not get all the information straight away
2. That you receive the right information first time, even if it takes longer to respond
3. That information is clear and easy to understand
4. That the council is open about what it can and can't deliver
5. That council services are easy to understand and clear to reach for everyone
6. That you are given all options and are involved in decisions that affect you
7. That the council is friendly, respectful and understanding

Of those engaged:

- 35% indicated they would rather receive the correct information first time, even if it takes longer
- 21% identified responsive communication as their priority
- 12% stated that information being clear and easy to understand was most important to them

Of those surveyed:

- 65% indicated they would prefer to communicate through digital channels (email 44%, website 18%, and social media 3%)
- 30% indicated they would prefer to communicate through more traditional channels - over the phone, 20%, or in person, 10%.
- 4% indicated they would prefer to communicate via post

In addition to the above information, we have reviewed feedback on our customer promise, provided by customers as part of the recent engagement, online customer satisfaction survey responses, customer complaints and compliments.

Our Customer Promise has been jointly developed, from these priorities, in collaboration with representatives from front line services.

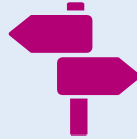
The standards and principles within the promise do not only apply to staff who work directly with customers, but all staff who work for the council, including those in support services such as Human resources, IT & Digital, Finance, Business Operations, Health & Safety. This ensures a consistency of approach and provides staff who do deal directly with customers the appropriate infrastructure, tools and support to deliver the best customer experience.

Our Customer Experience Vision describes how we intend to deliver on the Customer Promise and has been similarly refreshed following customer feedback. These two documents are at the heart of our [Customer Experience Strategy](#) that was approved at the Policy & Resources Committee in December 2019.

Our customer promise to you



We will make it clear how you can contact or access our services



- Communicate with you online (email/ website/social media) where possible and appropriate. This is often quicker and more convenient for you
- If you have specific access needs, work with you to find the best way to get the help you need
- Ensure our services are inclusive and responsive to your needs

We will be clear and treat you with respect



- Be honest and easy to understand in all our communication with you
- Keep your personal data secure
- Work together with other services across the council and city to meet your needs and make it easier for you to get the help you need

We will understand and get things done



- Aim to answer your query at first point of contact. When we can't do this, tell you clearly what will happen next so you know what to expect
- Make sure our staff have the skills, behaviours and tools to deliver the service you need
- Keep you informed with up to date information about the services you use

You can help us to keep our promise by



- Treating us, and other customers, with respect
- Letting us know if you have any specific needs
- Giving us all the information we require to help us meet your needs
- Giving us feedback on our service so we can learn and improve

Please tell us how we are doing



- We welcome all feedback, including when things don't go right. We are committed to using this information to improve our services
- Please tell us how satisfied you are with our service, this short survey should take you about two minutes
- If you would like to provide a detailed compliment or complaint please contact the Customer Feedback team

Checking our performance against this promise



- We check our performance through monitoring:
 - customer satisfaction and ease of access
 - compliments and complaints
 - information about how our customers contact us
 - survey of Brighton & Hove residents and service users
- The results will be published through our Customer Insight Report annually

Different ways to contact us

Website

We will:

- aim to have the council website available for 24 hours a day all yearround
- continually improve our online services to meet your needs
- ensure our online services are accessible and simple to use
- let you know about other ways of contacting us

Face to face

We will:

- make sure our customer service buildings are welcoming, safe, fully accessible and designed to make it easy to get the help you need
- aim to greet you within five minutes of arrival and see you on average within 20 minutes. At busier times, we will aim to let you know how long you may have to wait
- let you know about other ways of contacting us

Written communication

We will:

- ensure all service email addresses have an 'automatic reply' which clearly explains what will happen next
- aim to keep average response times within 10 working days. At busier times, we will aim to let you know how long you may have to wait
- let you know about other ways of contacting us

Social media

We will:

- be clear how we will respond to any queries received
- share relevant information and keep this up to date
- let you know about other ways of contacting us

Telephones

We will:

- aim to keep average waiting times under 10 minutes. At busier times, we will aim to let you know how long you may have to wait
- update voicemails and telephone messages regularly to hold accurate information
- aim to respond to voicemails within one working day
- let you know about other ways of contacting us

We have listened to our customers and updated this promise using their suggestions and priorities.

September 2019

Our Customer Experience Vision:

Getting things right first time, every time

Efficiency



Services are available online, where possible and are easy to find



Council Information systems are joined up appropriately to make it easier for customers



It is clear to customers what the best way of contacting the council is, based on what they need



Staff are skilled and confident in delivering customer service, including being able to resolve customer dissatisfaction quickly and fairly



The Customer Promise is checked regularly to make sure it includes what is important for customers



All services are delivered to the standards set in the Customer Promise



Customers are confident that all services keep the Customer Promise

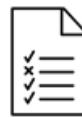


All services engage with everyone who may be affected before making changes

Improvements



Improving the customer experience is the top priority in everyone's day to day role



Customers are asked what they think about the services they receive and their feedback is acted upon



The council uses data and information to plan service improvements



Services work together for the benefit of the customer



Council Resources are used to meet customer needs through all contact methods



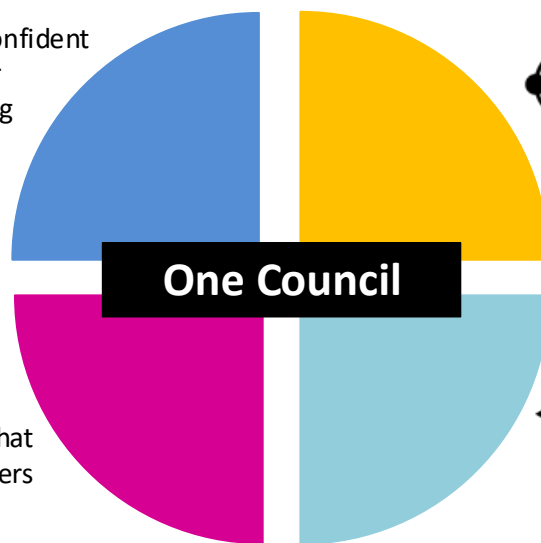
All services support each other positively to fulfil the Customer Promise



All staff are able to offer basic advice, support or signposting to other council services and external support



The council works with other public or private services, charities and community groups to resolve issues together

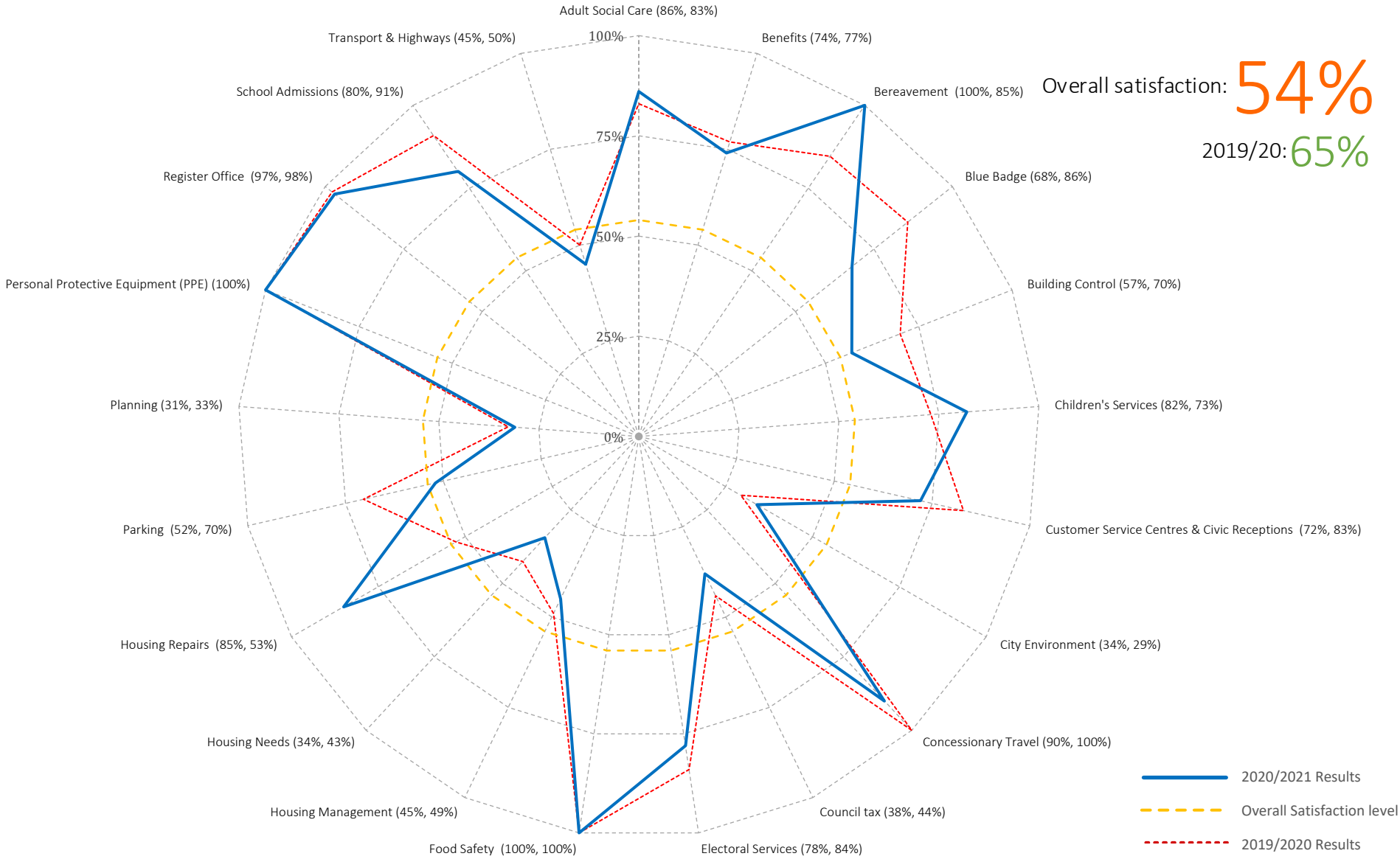


Consistency

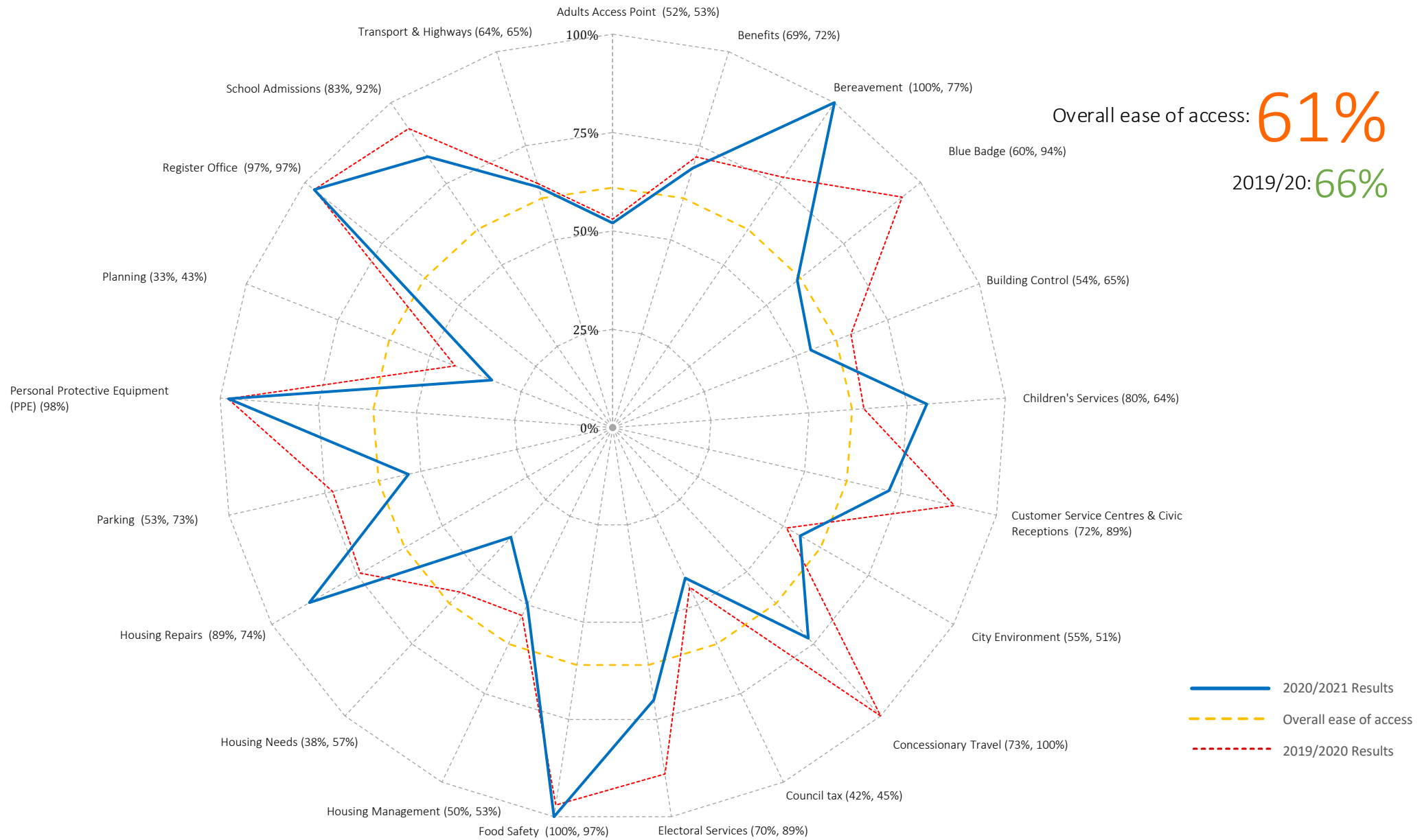
Resilience

Customer Satisfaction: Results Summary

Customer Satisfaction: How was the standard of customer service you received from the council team or service?

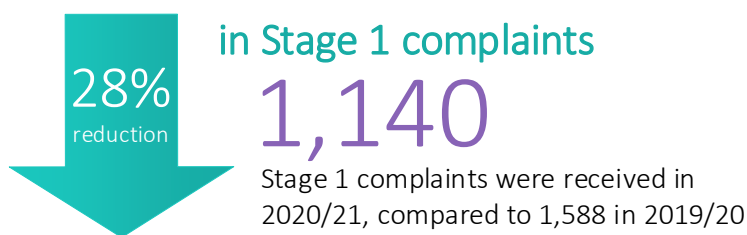


Service Accessibility: How easy or difficult was it for you to access or use the council service or team?



Results have been taken from the corporate Customer Experience Survey (from 2,661 respondents) carried out in March and April 2021 and combined, where possible, with surveys carried out by services or associated partners. Results are only included where a significant number of responses were returned to provide a confident score. Data from 2019/20 has been adjusted to only include comparable results. Due to the varying methodologies used in collecting and compiling data, results shown can only be considered indicative of customer experience.

Customer Feedback: Data Summary



Services who received the most complaints:

City Environment account for **26%** of all complaints (293)

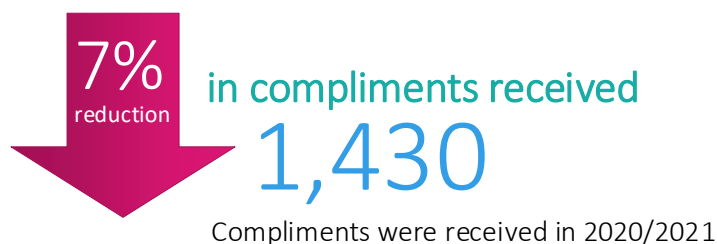
Parking Services received **15%** of all complaints (169)

Temporary Accommodation, Allocations & Housing Needs account for **9%** of all complaints (101)

Repairs & Maintenance account for **10%** of all complaints (119)

Council Tax account for **6%** of all complaints (70)

Compliments



Services with the largest increase in compliments:

Parking Customer Services received **400%** (72) more compliments

Housing Customer Services received **269%** (27) more compliments

Housing Strategy & Development - Private Sector Services received **520%** (42) more compliments

Transport Projects received **533%** (26) more compliments

Blue Badge & Concessionary Travel received **231%** (25) more compliments

Complaint Handling



0.3%
increase

Escalation of complaints from Stage 1 to Stage 2 increased from 10.5% in 2019/20 to **10.8%** in 2020/21

123 complaints were escalated to Stage 2

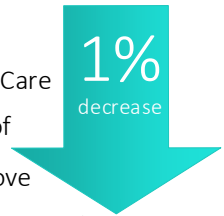
19.5% of Stage 2 complaints were upheld
An improvement of 5.8% when compared to 2019/20



5%
reduction

The number of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days has decreased, going from 69% in 2019/20 to **64%** in 2020/21
A drop of 5% (726/1140)

Stage 1 complaints are responded to within **12 working days** on average



1%
decrease

The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman upheld **53%** of complaints about Brighton & Hove City Council escalated to them in 2019/20, compared to 54% in 2018/19. An improvement of 1%

Similar authorities averaged 56% of complaints upheld by the ombudsman.

The council provided satisfactory remedies **33%** before going to ombudsman which compares to an average of 11% for similar authorities

The number of Stage 2 complaints responded to within 20 working days has reduced, going from 74% in 2019/20 to in 2020/21 **70%**
A decline of 4% (86/123)



4%
reduction

Stage 1 Complaints by Service



Contact by channel: Data Summary

Online Forms

365,744 Online forms received in 2020/21

Council Tax account for 38% of forms received with 127,296



An average of 30,478 online forms per month

Phone contact

151,322 Phone calls received in 2020/21



Housing Repairs 28% (42,631 calls) and Parking 29% (43,139 calls) received the highest number of calls

The council received 12,610 phone calls on average per month

154,823 Calls were made to council services not operating a live phone offer

All high volume transactional services taking live phone calls answered within an average of 5 minutes 9 seconds

Email contact

Approximately 455,833 emails were received in 2019/20



Housing Management 109% (1,385 emails) and City Environment 66% (1,023 emails) saw the highest proportional increase in emails received

Council Tax received the highest volume of emails with approximately 8,100 per month

With the exception of Council Tax and Housing Needs: Homemove, high volume transactional services responded to the majority of emails within 10 working days meeting the Customer Promise

Accessed by **3.5 million** people

Website

Top pages:

Confirmed cases of Covid **365,036** views

MyAccount **344,856** views

Coronavirus (COVID-19) **298,067** views



Over **13.5 million** unique page views

Approximately **31,600** pieces of post received over the past year

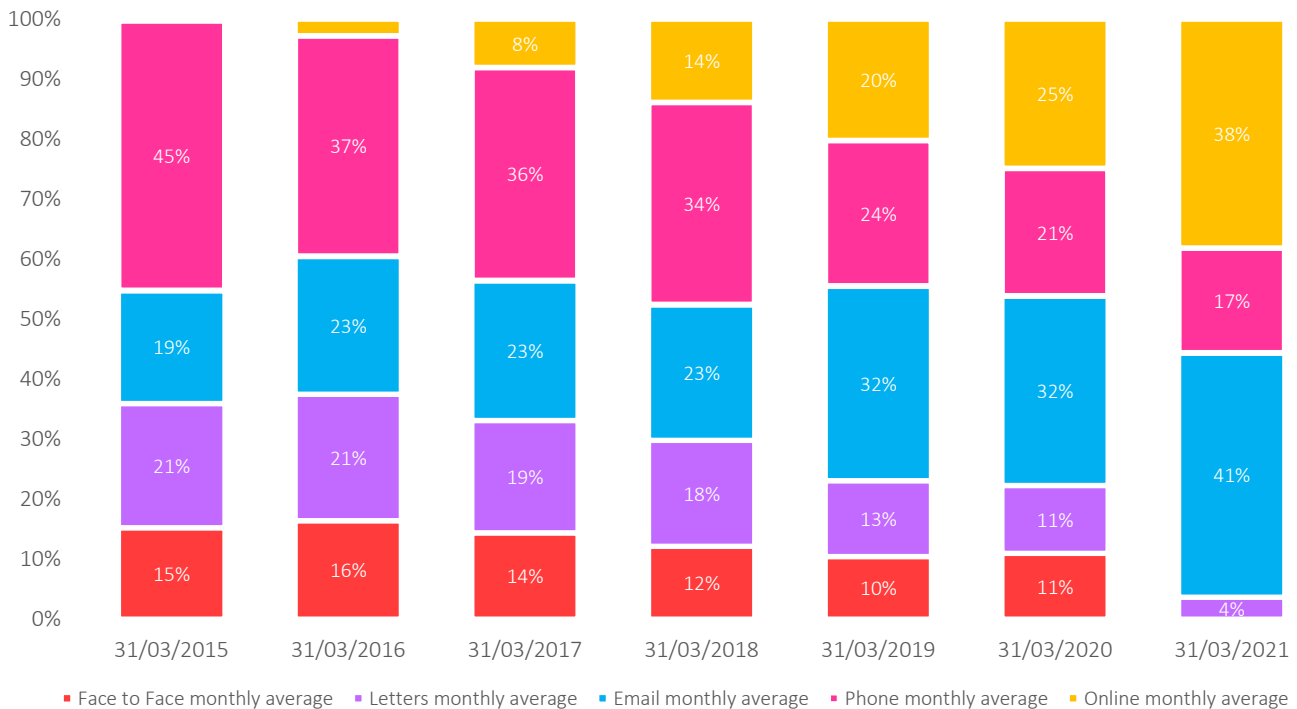
Post



An average of **2,650** pieces of post received per month

Percentage of contact by channel

(Based on the average contact per month for high volume services)



The above chart illustrates the trend in customer contact across all channels with each channel shown as a percentage of the total volume for the respective year. However, due to the impact of Covid-19 pandemic we are not able to confidently use data from 2020/21 to indicate trends in customer contact with many services stopping and/or reducing their service offer for large portions of the year.

Equalities Data Summary

These results are taken from responses to the satisfaction survey provided through the corporate consultation portal and do not include results from independent surveys carried out within services. As such, the results presented as 'average of all respondents' will differ to the data presented in overall satisfaction data.

74% (1,878) of respondents to the satisfaction survey agreed to provide equalities data out of a total 2,543 responses.

All respondents (1,878) who provided equalities data were on average more satisfied; 54%, than the average of all respondents; 46% (2,543).

The 26% (665) of respondents who did not choose to provide equalities data scored significantly lower in satisfaction, 28%, than the average of all respondents and those who provided equalities data.

Ethnicity

- From the 1,878 respondents who provided equalities data; 1,832 (72% of all respondents) provided their ethnicity (22 preferred not to say and 24 did not answer the question).
- Of the 1,832 respondents, 146 (8 %) are from a Black & Minority Ethnic background¹ (city demographic 19.5%).
- Respondents who identified as BME were on average more satisfied (59%) with the level of customer service than those who identified as white (52%)
- Those respondents who identified as 'Black' or 'Black British' were the most satisfied; with 67% stating that the level of service received was either fairly good or very good, and those who identified as being of mixed heritage being the least satisfied with 50%

Sexual Orientation

- From the 1,878 respondents who provided equalities data; 1,745 (69% of all respondents) provided their sexual orientation (100 preferred not to say and 33 did not answer the question).
- Of the 1,745 respondents, 291 respondents (17%) identified as LGBTQ (city demographic 11-15%²)
- Respondents who identified as LGBTQ were on average less satisfied with the level of customer service (49%) than those who identified as heterosexual (55%)
- 45% of respondents who identified as 'Gay man' were satisfied with the level of customer service, 2% higher than those who identified as 'Lesbian / Gay woman' and 9% lower than those who identified as 'Heterosexual'

¹ In line with the Census 2011 data Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) is defined as all ethnic groups other than White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British

² Sexual orientation data was not provided in the census 2011. This figure is taken from a survey conducted by the University of Brighton.

- 51% of people who identified as 'Bisexual' were satisfied with the level of customer service; 2% above the average of all respondents

Day to day activity limited due to health or a disability

- From the 1,878 respondents who provided equalities data; 1,821 (72% of all respondents) provided data on whether their day to day activities were limited due to health or disability (46 preferred not to say and 11 did not answer the question)
- Of the 1,821 respondents, 486 (27%) are limited in day to day activities due to a long-term health problem or disability (city demographic 16.3%) with 221 respondents (12%) indicating they are limited a lot in day to day activities due to a long-term health problem or disability (city demographic 7.5%)
- Respondents who identified as having their day to day activity limited due to health or a disability were on average more satisfied with the level of customer service (56%) than those who did not identify as having their day to day activities limited by health or a disability (52%)
- Respondents whose day to day activity is limited due to a Learning Disability / Difficulty were, on average, 10% less satisfied (39%) than the average of all respondents
- Respondents who have a Developmental Condition or Sensory Impairment were, on average, more satisfied with the level of service (60% and 58% respectively) than the average of all respondents

Satisfaction by age

- From the 1,878 respondents who provided equalities data; 1,822 (72% of all respondents) provided data on their age (56 did not answer the question)
- Of the 1,822 respondents, 1,409 (61%) are age 16 to 64 (city demographic 71%³), 400 (22%) are age 65 to 84 (city demographic 71% and 13 (1%) are aged 85 years or older (city demographic 2%)
- Respondents who are age 16 to 49 were, on average, 5% less satisfied (44%) than the average of all respondents and 15% less satisfied than respondents who are aged 50 years or older (59%)

Satisfaction by gender

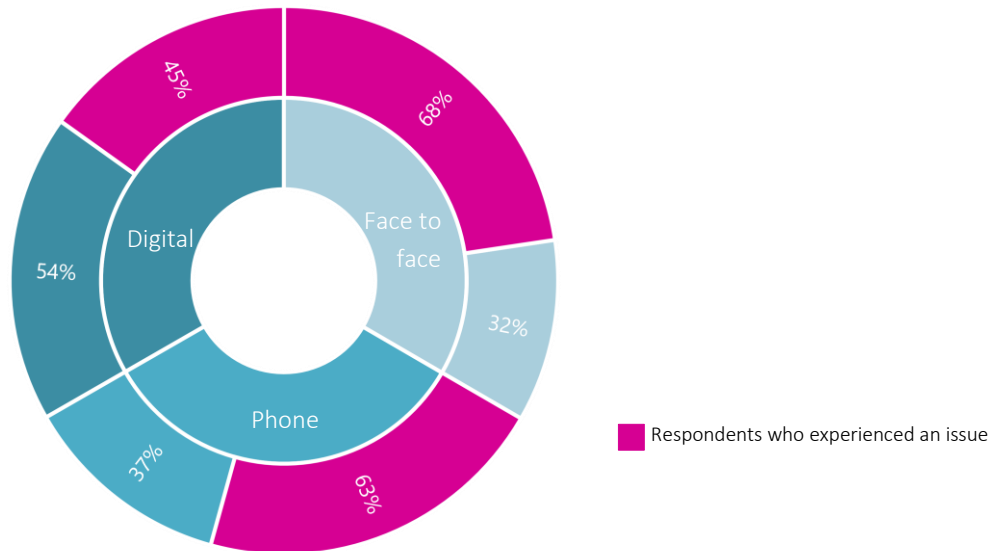
- From the 1,878 respondents who provided equalities data; 1,849 (73% of all respondents) provided data on their gender (17 preferred not to say and 12 did not answer the question)
- Of the 1,849 respondents, 1,020 (55%) identified as female (city demographic 50%), 815 (44%) identified as male (city demographic 50%) and 14 (1%) identified as other
- Respondents who identified as female were, on average, more satisfied (55%) than the average of all respondents and 4% more satisfied than respondents who identified as male or other (51%)

³ City demographic data on age and gender was taken from the [Brighton & Hove JSNA summary](#) 2017, published in September 2018.

Accessing services during Covid-19

As part of this year's customer satisfaction survey, customers were asked if they would like to feedback on their experience of using council services during the Covid-19 pandemic. 60% (1,518) of respondents to the satisfaction survey agreed to provide feedback.

Accessing services during Covid



97% (1,478) of the 1,518 respondents who provide feedback on services during the Covid-19 pandemic indicated they have contacted or used council services in the past 12 months.

Of the 1,478 respondents:

273 identified the need to access services face to face with 68% stating they experienced an issue in accessing services face to face.

901 identified the need to access services by telephone, with 63% experiencing an issue in accessing services by telephone.

1,252 identified the need to access services digitally, with 45% experiencing an issue in accessing services through the website, an online form or by email.

Themes of the issues experienced by customers during the Covid-19 pandemic

Unclear information on website

Unsure who to contact

Lack of clarity over next steps after online form submitted

Website has too much writing

No one to contact when having issues with digital channels

Slow, or no, response to emails

Issues accessing account on council systems

Long waiting times

No phone line

Our Customers

By customer we mean, any user of council services, voluntary or involuntary. This includes residents, visitors to the city, businesses, students, service users and their representatives.



Brighton & Hove's population is estimated at 286,000



The population registered to vote is 208,700



130,000 Council Taxpayers



31,800 children attending school



16,400 receiving housing benefit



11,550 total council owned dwellings



11,300 Business rate payers



624km of carriageway



1,020km of footpaths



12km of coastline



98 parks and open spaces



1,461,200 visits to libraries

Our Services



City Environment

5.5 million refuse collections
2 million recycling collections
700 miles of pavement cleaned



Parking and Transport

360,000 visitor permits issued
51,000 resident permits issued
6,300 Concessionary Bus pass holders
3,700 Blue Badge issued
1,200 Business permits issued
14,387 permits for roadworks granted



Development Management (Planning)

3,700 applications received

2,650 applications approved



Housing Management

11,250 Council tenancies supported

2,858 Leasehold properties managed



Housing Needs

2,800 Applications for social housing

1,800 Units of temporary Accommodation

1,700 open cases for prevention, intervention, advice

1,150 Emergency placements and transfers



Health & Adult Social Care

4,700 care assessments or reviews conducted

4,350 people receiving long term adult social care service

1,300 people receive short term intensive support

30,200 terms of daily living equipment issued



Families, Children & Learning

5,450 children with special education need receive support in schools

2,150 children attend our children's centres and nurseries

1,950 children supported by social work to be safe (including 400 children in care)

500 receive family support



Registrars

3,400 births registered per year

2,500 deaths registered per year

1,300 marriages registered and officiated

580 new British naturalisation certificates issued



Libraries

14 libraries across the city

978,000 items issued

19,100 unique users of public computers in libraries



Bereavement

2,000 cremations

350 burials

1,250 deaths reported to the Coroner's Office



Benefits

19,100 receiving help with council tax

3,250 new claims assessed

2,500 applications assessed for emergency help

Customer Accessibility Review

Over the past year, due to the restrictions in place to manage the pandemic, council teams have had to make significant changes to the way in which they deliver services.

New services have been started, such as the Community Hub, offering support to vulnerable residents during the pandemic, the PPE hub providing essential PPE to staff at work and individuals in need, enforcement of Covid security measures for businesses, grants to businesses affected by Covid and many more.

Other services have had to change how they work and how they can be contacted.

All of these changes have happened very rapidly and were initially planned to be temporary, so as a result of this, we are conducting a review of the current provision, with a priority focus on accessibility of services, to ensure that no one is disadvantaged in accessing the council services that they need, be that through digital exclusion, finance, health, ethnicity or other protected characteristics.

The impacts of the pandemic have presented opportunities and also highlighted areas for improvement – it has helped demonstrate that many of our customers can access the services they need through digital channels, but also that there is a need for more robust and consistent support for those who can't.

The Accessibility review has three phases, the first – to address any urgent gaps in accessibility will be completed by autumn 2021, with consideration given to those who aren't able to access services online, and to make our telephone services easier to use.

In phase one, our priorities are

- **Fair & inclusive service** - currently we are not accessible to all our customers (potentially our vulnerable customers are falling through the net e.g. those digitally excluded, those who don't have money to pay for phone/internet, unable to access because of disability).
- **Improve customer experience** – Redesigned face to face and telephone presence will increase staffing capacity to deal with telephone/digital contacts and create capacity for supported self-help. Around 1/3rd of customer dissatisfaction is related to us being slow or inadequate or not responding at all to our emails/digital forms.
- **Aligning our customer offer with our digital ambitions** - More customers are now used to contacting us digitally. Digital contacts are more cost effective and therefore we have made significant investment in our digital offer. The recommendations will help customers make the most of our digital offer e.g. pre-Covid, 54% of customers renewed their parking permit online which has now increased to 97%. We also know that proportionately, fewer residents are digitally excluded in Brighton & Hove than in other areas of the country.

Further phases will seek to address inconsistencies in the way that services are delivered, as well as considering more significant transformation of the structural organisation of service delivery.

Planned Service Improvements

Access Point

- Development of the HASC Hub to support people to understand the range of support available and find the help they need, including improvement of our online forms if customers do need to contact us
- Using contact management system to help manage contact and referrals from residents and ensure these are quickly passed to the most appropriate team to respond to
- Focus on learning from complaints and customer feedback in new HASC monthly performance meetings to identify actions needed and monitoring of progress around these

Benefits

- Digital improvements to online claim forms (staff to analyse and request changes from IT&D)
- Continue to prioritise correspondence received every day with digital correspondence from customer prioritised over other work. Team is looking at possible new work streams, including backlog busting and increased automation of electronic data received from DWP to free staff up to focus on correspondence received from customer.
- Actions to improve or develop the 'human' side of our interactions with customers; share and emphasise the compliments we get from customers, what is important to them, what makes a difference to them.

Bereavement Services

- An online application process for application to purchase a grave space at Woodvale Natural Burial ground (in progress)
- Working with the Digital communications team to improve our website and the customer journey.
- Developing online applications for various memorials and other transactions.

Blue Badge & Concessionary Travel

- Improvement of customer contact channels, with a focus on accessibility.
- Continuing to improve automatic renewals for Blue Badge and Bus Passes, to improve the customer journey
- Regular checking and maintenance of webpages and links to other information so that they are always up to date.

Childrens Services (including School Admissions)

- Further consideration and action on how best to reinstate, amend, or further improve customer access following Covid e.g. consideration of how to manage live telephone lines

- Increase the number and ways in which services seek and act upon customer feedback, including a focus on targeting service users who have been 'hard to reach' in the past
- Reviewing the quality, availability, and accessibility of all content published online, including for internal and partner customers

City Environmental Management

- Improve refuse and recycling services through investigating root cause of repeated missed collections.
- Work with colleagues on the development and implementation of digital solutions to improve service delivery and communication with the residents.
- Over the next 12 months, redesign rounds to improve the refuse and recycling services and reduce missed collections.

Council Tax

- Specific team collaborating with MyAccount team to improve the usability of website service.
- Increased flexibility in resourcing phone opening times to match periods of low and high demand.
- Increased resources (including backlog team) to respond to customer contacts and reduce delays to response.

Electoral Services

- Printing procurement project that will seek to reduce the time between the service uploading a letter for postage and dispatch.
- Full review of Electoral Services' webpages to reduce the number of pages and make access to online forms simpler.
- Liaising with Cabinet Office, who run the Individual Electoral Registration Digital Services, about improving the website's wording regarding re-registering due to credit score.

Housing Needs

- Housing Needs to introduce times for live phone calls to respond more quickly and in real time to customers who choose to contact us by telephone. It is anticipated that this will reduce failure demand via the phone service, resulting in fewer voicemails and emails.
- Improve response rate and time to respond to emails (through implementation of customer contact channels and reduction in emails)
- Ensure corporate customer complaint and customer service response times are adhered to by all services within Housing Needs.

Housing Management (HCS)

- HCS to increase opening times for live phone calls in order to respond more quickly and in real time to customers who choose to contact us by telephone. It is anticipated that this will reduce failure demand via the phone service, resulting in fewer voicemails and emails, thus speeding up response time to queries on these channels.

- HCS to lead on reviewing and updating the content of Housing pages on BHCC website. This to include developing accessible forms for customers to access the service, reducing reliance on free form emails in collaboration with colleagues in Housing Needs and Private Sector Housing.
- HCS to lead on developing process / roadmaps for customers, to include which area will be responsible for their issues, time frames and contact points.

Housing Repairs

- Recruitment to vacant posts
- Implementing improvements to communication channels to ensure customer expectation aligns with service delivery capabilities

Libraries

- Comprehensive consultation with library users and non-users, to improve services
- Implementing a regular newsletter and service update emails to councillors
- Implementing a more systematic monitoring system for telephone enquiries

Parking

- Improve website experience, to improve the customer journey and make it easier to find the information needed.
- Improve telephone answering times through phone option remodelling and analysis of calls received.
- Improve response time to email contact, through implementation of customer contact forms and balancing of resources across all channels of contact.

Planning and Development Control

- Introduce bespoke customer satisfaction surveys at the end of each transaction, focusing on whether standards for customer service delivery were maintained
- To improve communication skills of officers, training to include the importance of customer care and skills for effective communication.
- Client Management – introduction of named points of contact for selected agents to improve our relationships with regular customers.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Hub

- When the PPE Hub contacts requestors to advise their PPE is ready for collection, they are to ensure the following is clearly communicated-
 - Parking arrangements
 - The size of the request being collected (no. of boxes, bags etc.)
 - Requestors are given the option of being sent an email which contains the collection instructions for the PPE Hub (including a detailed map)
- Ensure the parking space for customer use is clearly delineated with paint so that all customers are aware of where they can park when they arrive at the PPE Hub.
- Introduce a process to seek more regular customer feedback

Transport

- Improve the quality and accessibility of information about Transport services on the BHCC website.
- Develop our approach to customer contact so that reports and queries are responded to in a timely manner and customers are kept informed.
- Ensure corporate customer complaint and customer service response times are adhered to by every part of the service.

Contact Us

We welcome any suggestions, questions or other feedback about this report, please contact:

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