

Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

10am, Tuesday 23 March 2021

Whistleblowing Annual Report 2020

Item number
Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

1.1 To note the report.

Andrew Kerr

Chief Executive

Contact: Nick Smith, Council Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Risk

E-mail: nick.smith@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 529 4377

Report

Whistleblowing Annual Report

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report covers the sixth full year of operation of the Council's whistleblowing service for the period 1 January – 31 December 2020.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council's whistleblowing service, including telephone, email and online reporting; disclosure management; investigations and training, continues to be provided by an independent company, Safecall Limited.
- 3.2 The Council's Whistleblowing policy (section 4.3.2) requires that an annual report on whistleblowing activity is presented to the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee for information and scrutiny.

4. Main report

Disclosures

- 4.1 During the reporting period Safecall received 43 disclosures in total, a significant increase on the 20 reported in the previous year. The total number of disclosures received is slightly higher than the average for Safecall's client base of approximately 1 per 500 employees per annum, which equates to 37-38 for the Council's staff group.
- 4.2 The total for the year includes nine disclosures on the same issue, an unusual occurrence that has an impact on comparisons with previous years and Safecall's average.

Category of disclosure	Number of disclosures		
	2018	2019	2020

Major/significant	0	2 (1)	6 (2)
Minor/operational	21 (1)	17 (6)	32 (4)
Still to be determined	-	-	2 (1)
Non-qualifying	5 (0)	1 (0)	3 (0)
Total	26	20	43

Number of management referrals in brackets

Investigations

- 4.3 Fifteen investigations (relating to sixteen disclosures) were completed during the reporting period with outcomes and management action reported quarterly to the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee.
- 4.4 Thirty-two investigations, relating to forty-four disclosures, are ongoing and will be reported to the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee on completion.
- 4.5 There were three reports that did not qualify as disclosures under the Whistleblowing Policy but, where necessary, checks were carried out to establish that the issue raised was not one of concern and redirection to an alternative reporting route was undertaken in relation to one of the reports.
- 4.6 Recommendations resulting from investigations have continued to result in amendments to policy, improvements to procedures and processes, the development of best practice and improved service delivery, as set out in the individual reports.
- 4.7 Where the service provider has an open line of communication with the whistleblower, feedback on the outcome of an investigation has been provided. Where this has not been possible, information has been recorded for dissemination to the whistleblower should they make further contact.

Whistleblowing Services Contract

- 4.8 The independent service provider contract was re-tendered and contract award made during the reporting period. Safecall Limited were the successful tenderer and the new contract commenced on 12 May 2020.
- 4.9 A full review of operational arrangements had been planned for the summer of 2020. This work had started but has had to be paused while staff deal with the pressures resulting from the significant increase in caseload and investigation support requirements, as well as the impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic. This work will recommence as soon as is practically possible. Additional resource has

temporarily been allocated to the Governance team to assist with the current workload pressures.

Policy Review

- 4.10 The scheduled 2020 review of the Whistleblowing Policy was impacted initially by Coronavirus restrictions and subsequently by the capacity issues described in 4.9. This includes the resource impact on the team as a result of responding to information requests in relation to the ongoing Pinsent Masons review.
- 4.11 Proposed amendments to the policy include the formalising of improvements identified at the workshop held with Governance, Risk and Best Value committee members in October 2019, many of which have already been implemented, and others proposed through initial Trade Union consultation.
- 4.12 It is hoped that formal Trade Union consultation on the proposed amendments can be progressed in the coming weeks, with Policy and Strategy Committee approval in the Spring.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Formal Trade Union consultation on proposed amendments to the Whistleblowing policy to secure a collective agreement prior to approval at Policy and Strategy Committee.
- 5.2 Recommence review of operational arrangements as soon as capacity pressures allow.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The cost of the whistleblowing service, including investigation costs, for the year 1 January to 31 December 2020 was £29,895.70 (exclusive of VAT).

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The whistleblowing policy was developed and agreed in order to complement management reporting arrangements and to ensure all matters at the Council are fully transparent and officers are accountable.
- 7.2 The aim of the policy and the appointment of an independent service provider is to empower employees to report suspected wrongdoing as early as possible in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated appropriately; that they will be protected from victimisation and other forms of detriment; and that their confidentiality will be maintained.

- 7.3 The whistleblowing policy, and subsequent reviews, have been consulted on with the trades unions to secure a local agreement.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Finance and Resources Committee 23 May 2019: item 7.20 Whistleblowing Policy](#)

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Safecall Annual Management Information Report 2020

Safecall Annual Report
The City of Edinburgh Council
2020



Annual report for The City of Edinburgh Council

Period

1st January 2020 to 31st December 2020



Tim Smith

Contents

Management information
Appendix A

Key Performance Indicators
Appendix B



An aerial photograph of a city, likely Edinburgh, Scotland, with a prominent purple overlay. The city features a mix of historic stone buildings and modern structures, with a large castle on a hill in the background. The text is centered over the image.

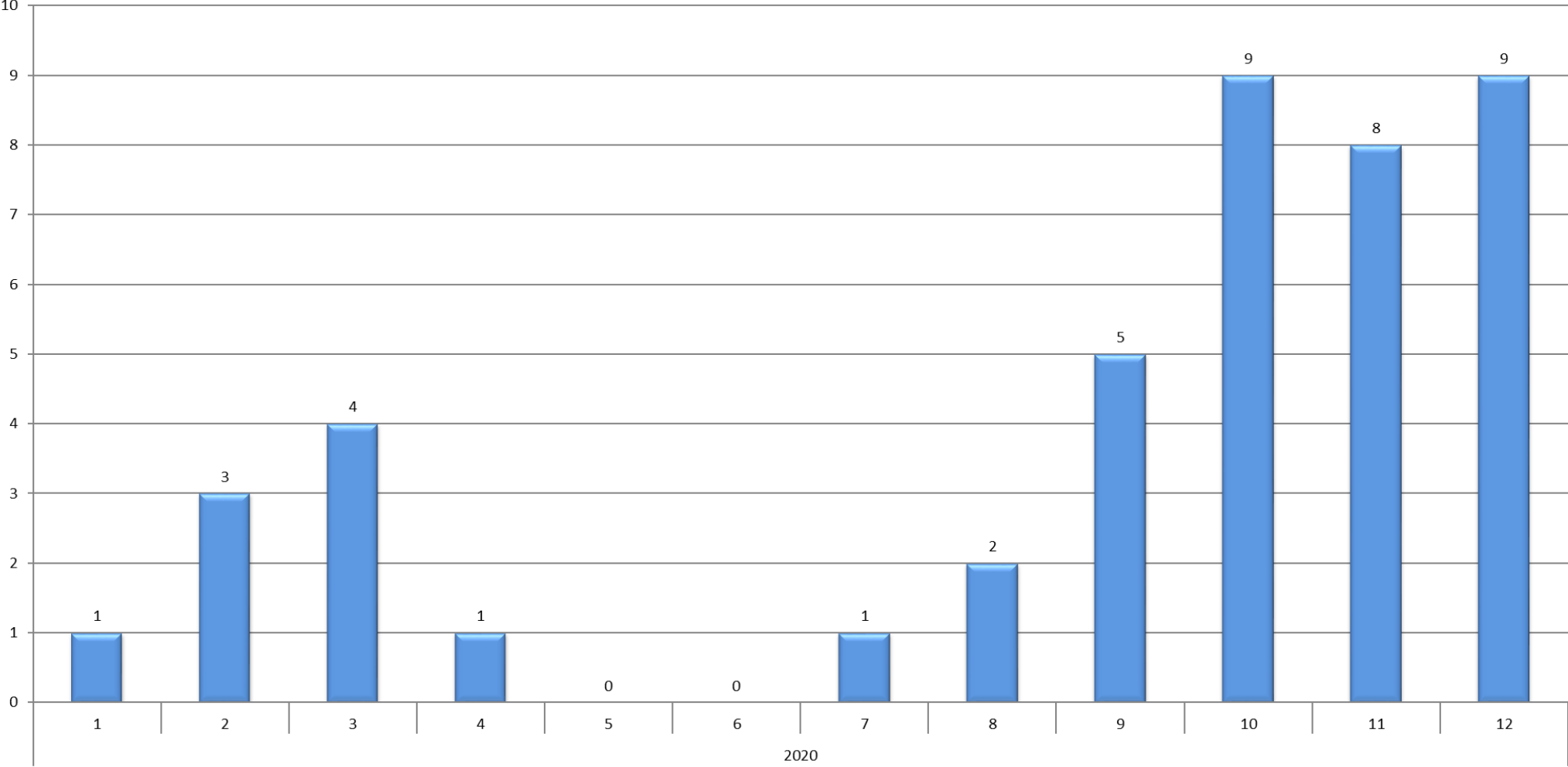
Appendix A

Management Information

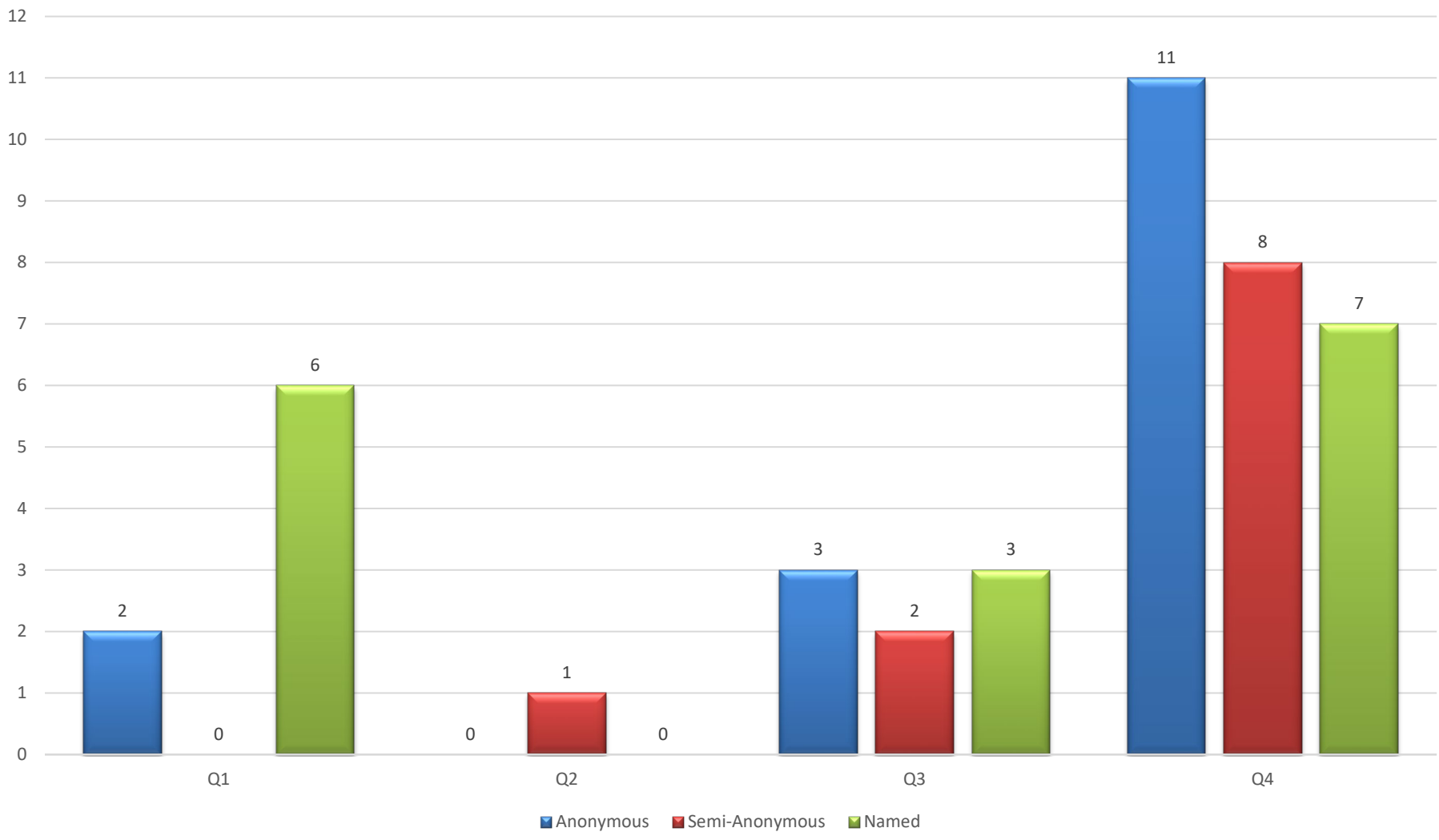


Tim Smith

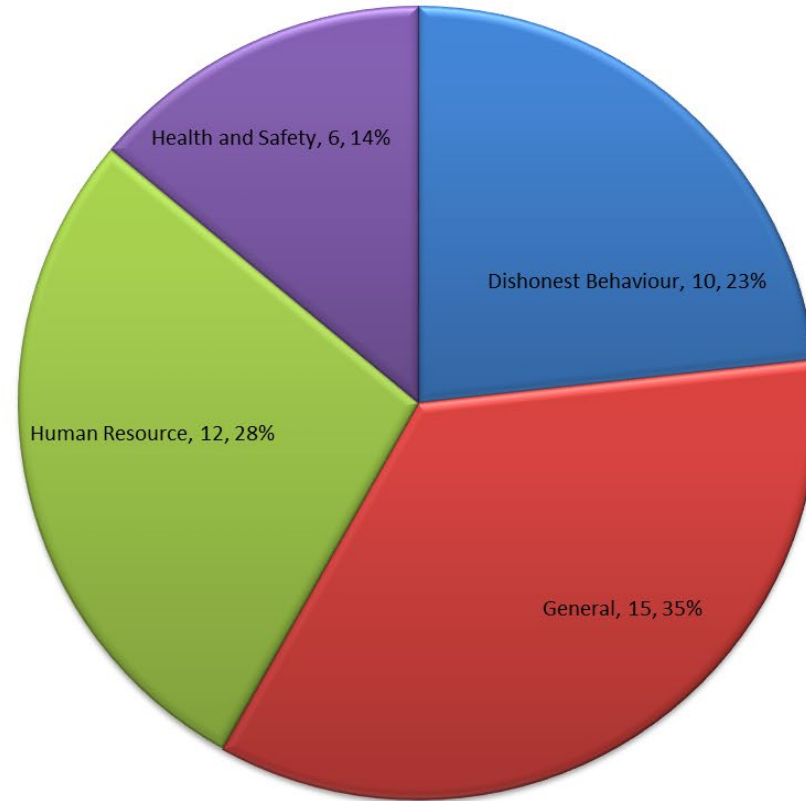
Edinburgh Council - Reports per Month from Jan 2020 to Dec 2020



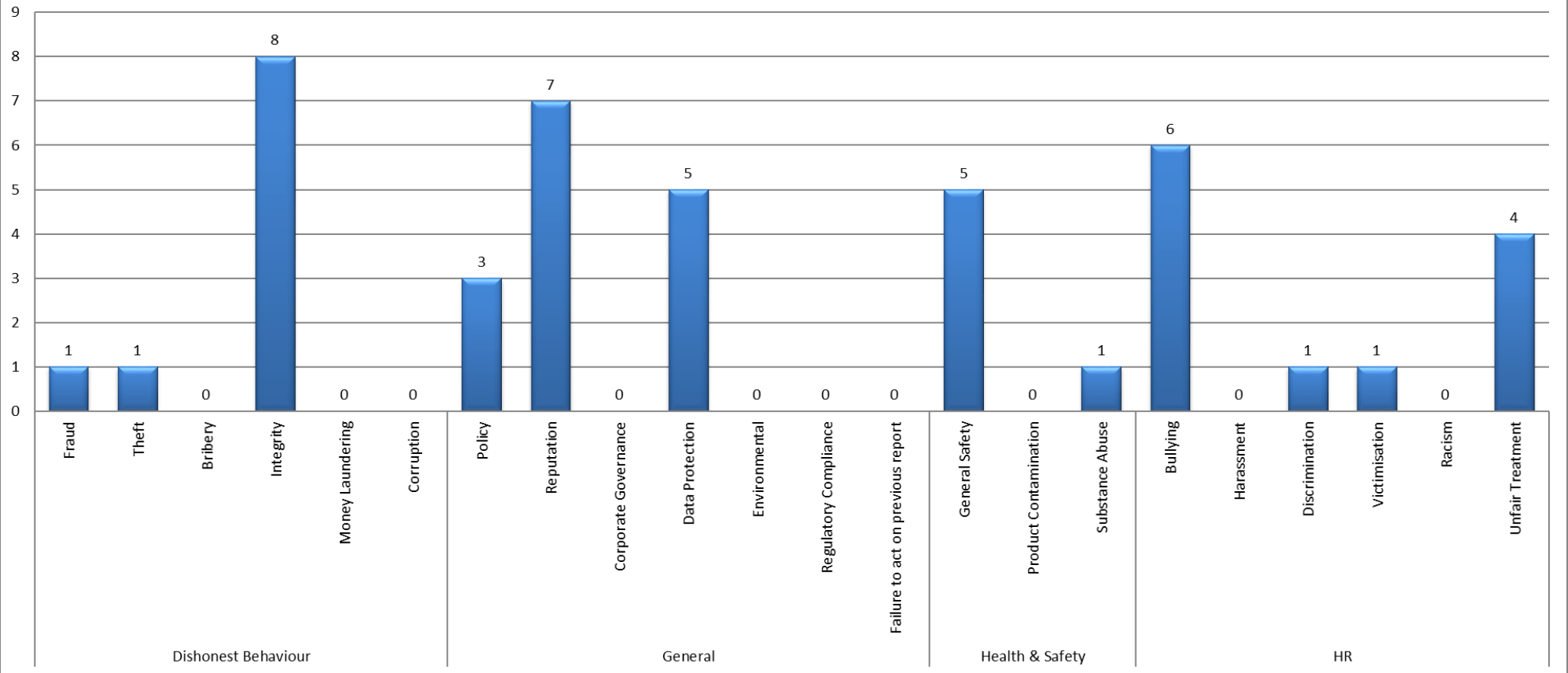
Edinburgh Council - Anonymous Reports per Quarter from Jan 2020 to Dec 2020



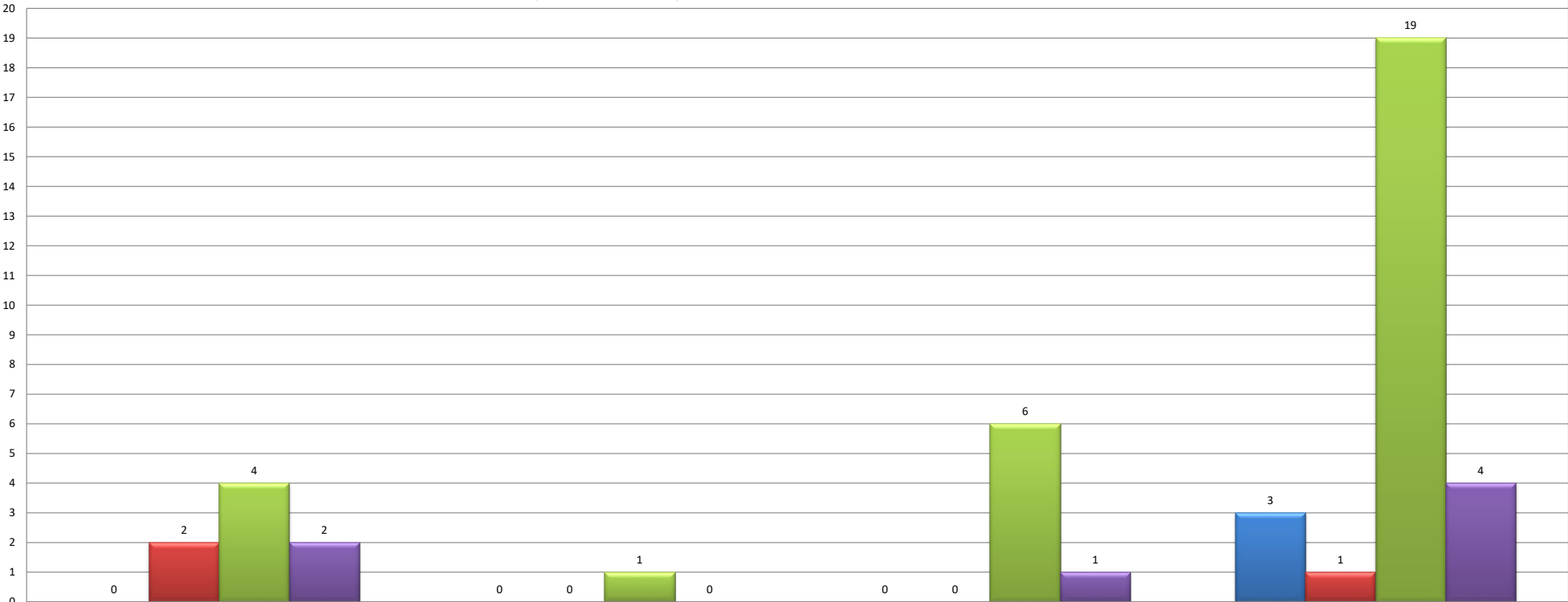
Edinburgh Council - Reports by Classification from Jan 2020 to Dec 2020



Edinburgh Council - Reports by Subclassification from Jan 2020 to Dec 2020

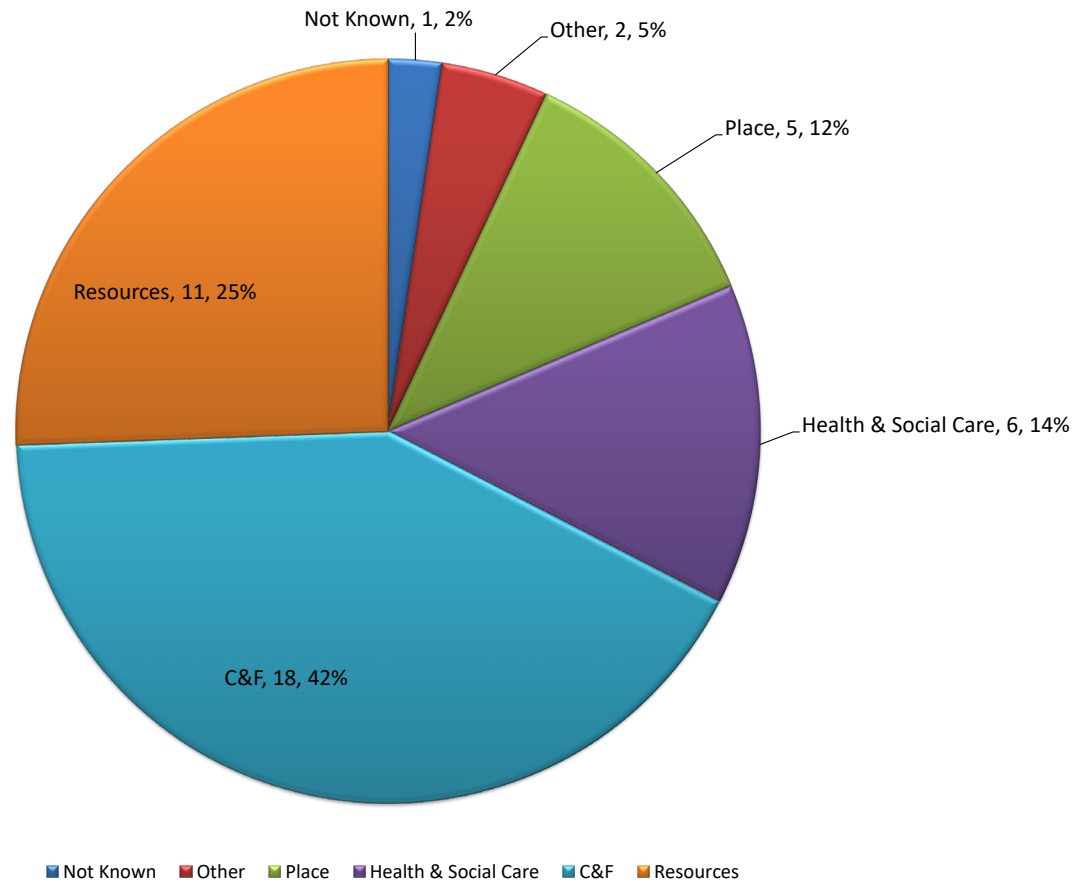


Major or Minor Reports from Jan 2020 to Dec 2020



■ To be determined	0	0	0	3
■ NQD	2	0	0	1
■ Minor	4	1	6	19
■ Major	2	0	1	4

Reports by Directorate from July 2020 to Dec 2020



Date	Month	Year	Quarter	Classification	Sub classification	Ref	Major / Minor	Directorate
16/01/2020	1	2020	Q1	Dishonest Behaviour	Integrity	CEC 0120	Minor	C&F
06/02/2020	2	2020	Q1	General	Reputation	MCEC 0220	To be determined	C&F
21/02/2020	2	2020	Q1	Human Resource	Bullying	CEC 0420	Major	Place
22/02/2020	2	2020	Q1	Human Resource	Bullying	CEC 0320	Major	Place
03/03/2020	3	2020	Q1	Dishonest Behaviour	Fraud	CEC 0520	NQD	H&SC
16/03/2020	3	2020	Q1	Human Resource	Discrimination	CEC 0620	Minor	C&F
18/03/2020	3	2020	Q1	Health and Safety	General Safety	MCEC 0720	Minor	C&F
22/03/2020	3	2020	Q1	Health and Safety	General Safety	CEC 0820	Minor	H&SC
27/04/2020	4	2020	Q2	Dishonest Behaviour	Integrity	CEC 0920	Minor	H&SC
23/07/2020	7	2020	Q2	Health and Safety	General Safety	CEC 1020	Minor	C&F
17/08/2020	8	2020	Q3	Human Resource	Unfair Treatment	CEC 1120	Minor	C&F
27/08/2020	8	2020	Q3	General	Policy	CEC 1220	Minor	H&SC
15/09/2020	9	2020	Q3	General	Reputation	MCEC 1320	Major	C&F
21/09/2020	9	2020	Q3	General	Reputation	MCEC 1420	Minor	C&F
29/09/2020	9	2020	Q3	General	Data Protection	CEC 1520	Minor	Resources
30/09/2020	9	2020	Q3	General	Data Protection	CEC 1620	Minor	Resources
30/09/2020	9	2020	Q3	General	Data Protection	CEC 1720	Minor	Resources
01/10/2020	10	2020	Q4	General	Data Protection	CEC 1820	Minor	Resources
01/10/2020	10	2020	Q4	General	Reputation	CEC 1920	NQD	Chief Exec
01/10/2020	10	2020	Q4	Dishonest Behaviour	Theft	CEC 2020	Minor	C&F
14/10/2020	10	2020	Q4	Dishonest Behaviour	Integrity	CEC 2120	Minor	Resources
16/10/2020	10	2020	Q4	Human Resource	Bullying	CEC 2220	Minor	C&F
16/10/2020	10	2020	Q4	Dishonest Behaviour	Integrity	CEC 50120	Major	Cross – dept
20/10/2020	10	2020	Q4	Dishonest Behaviour	Integrity	CEC 2320	Minor	Resources
27/10/2020	10	2020	Q4	Health and Safety	General Safety	CEC 2420	Minor	C&F
28/10/2020	10	2020	Q4	Human Resource	Unfair Treatment	CEC 2520	Minor	Resources
03/11/2020	11	2020	Q4	Dishonest Behaviour	Integrity	CEC 2620	Minor	Resources
13/11/2020	11	2020	Q4	General	Policy	MCEC 2720	Major	C&F
13/11/2020	11	2020	Q4	General	Policy	CEC 2820	Minor	H&SC
16/11/2020	11	2020	Q4	Dishonest Behaviour	Integrity	CEC 2920	Minor	Resources
20/11/2020	11	2020	Q4	General	Data Protection	CEC 3020	Minor	Resources
24/11/2020	11	2020	Q4	Human Resource	Victimisation	CEC 3120	Major	C&F
26/11/2020	11	2020	Q4	Dishonest Behaviour	Integrity	CEC 3220	Minor	Place
30/11/2020	11	2020	Q4	Human Resource	Unfair Treatment	CEC 3320	Minor	C&F
03/12/2020	12	2020	Q4	General	Reputation	MCEC 3420	To be determined	Resources
14/12/2020	12	2020	Q4	Health and Safety	General Safety	CEC 3520	Minor	H&SC
15/12/2020	12	2020	Q4	Human Resource	Bullying	CEC 3620	Minor	Place
15/12/2020	12	2020	Q4	Health and Safety	Substance Abuse	CEC 3720	Minor	Not Known
15/12/2020	12	2020	Q4	Human Resource	Bullying	CEC 3820	Minor	C&F
17/12/2020	12	2020	Q4	General	Reputation	CEC 3920	Minor	C&F
18/12/2020	12	2020	Q4	Human Resource	Bullying	CEC 4020	To be determined	C&F
19/12/2020	12	2020	Q4	General	Reputation	CEC 4120	Minor	C&F
27/12/2020	12	2020	Q4	Human Resource	Unfair Treatment	CEC 4220	To be determined	Place

An aerial photograph of Edinburgh, Scotland, showing the city's dense architecture and the prominent Edinburgh Castle on a hill. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The text 'Appendix B' and 'Key Performance Indicators' is centered in white.

Appendix B

Key Performance Indicators



KPI

- KPI 1** Full compliance, all calls answered within 4 rings
- KPI 2** N/A this quarter, no complaints made re provision of service
- KPI 3** One report made without disclosure assessment however this was followed up within 48 hours
- KPI 4** N/A this quarter, no referrals required
- KPI 5** Full compliance, all minor/operational disclosures completed within 5 working days.

