

**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

31 March 2022

**Customer Feedback Report,
Quarter Three, 2021/22**



Report of Corporate Management Team

Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

**Councillor Susan McDonnell, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Digital and
Customer Services**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report brings together a wide range of information collected from our customers and describes their experiences of using our services. The information relates to the latest 12 months (1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021), compared to the same period in the previous year.

Executive summary

- 2 Information, such as our customers' satisfaction / dissatisfaction with, and general experiences of the services and support we provide, is an important resource for improving customer service and aligning our actions with customer need.
- 3 This report covers the following range of feedback:
 - an overview of contact through our Customer Services team,
 - a summary of customer satisfaction outcomes through completed surveys and compliments received,
 - a selection of customer suggestions and their outcomes,
 - an overview of comments relating to our policies, procedures, and decision-making,
 - our performance in dealing with complaints (both statutory and non-statutory corporate complaints), and
 - recent developments that enhance the customer experience.

- 4 Throughout the 12 months ending 31 December 2021 we received almost 1.7 million contacts through our reported channels. Although the telephone remained the most frequently used channel for contacting us, we continued to see an increasing volume of customers who chose to interact with us via our digital channels.
- 5 Between 1 October and 31 December, an additional 2,000 residents signed up for an online account - taking the number of households able to engage with us through this method to almost 159,000 unique properties.
- 6 Generally, just over a quarter of all contact leads to the creation of a service request in our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The remaining three quarters are from customers seeking advice, information, wanting to be transferred to another team, book an appointment, or request a progress update.
- 7 Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a steady increase in the number of service requests received. (+11% / +45,761 over the 12 months ending 31 December).
- 8 To help monitor delivery timescales of service requests logged within our CRM system, we have applied performance standards within the system where possible.
- 9 Following a recent review of these performance standards, a range of service improvement activity linked to systems, data and reporting, training, and member experience has taken place.
- 10 At the end of quarter three, the number of service requests with a reportable and accurate performance standard had increased from seven to 58. Improvement work will continue during quarter four.
- 11 Almost half of all CRM processes are 'single-stage' online forms only (45%) which means that a measurable performance standard cannot be established, unless a full back-office process using the CRM is designed and implemented, requiring significant development resources.
- 12 44% of service requests processed during the 12 months ending 31 December 2021 were assessed against a performance standard with the standard met in 68% of cases. Whilst this is an eight percentage point decrease on the previous quarter, the decrease is likely to be affected by system improvement activity which has been implemented to enhance the accuracy and reliability of the data sets used.
- 13 A comparison with the same period of the previous year shows no change with 68% compliance (2020/21). However, service requests increased by 11% as a result of increased demand.

- 14 Our CRM system enables customer satisfaction surveys (CSS) to be automatically sent to the customer when their service request (SR) is closed.
- 15 Over the 12 months ending 31 December 2021 we sent 132,963 surveys to our customers and received 18,439 responses (13.9%) which was an increase on the previous period where 11,033 responses (8.9%) were received.
- 16 Increased levels of dissatisfaction are mainly linked to not keeping customers informed of progress, not explaining our decision making and taking too long to complete tasks and respond. It is important to note that the ongoing response to the pandemic and increased demand have led to extended service delivery times over the reporting period. These areas are the focus of a detailed review which will continue over coming months.
- 17 During the 12 months ending 31 December 2021, we received 2,715 corporate complaints – 382 more (+16%) than the previous year. Of those investigated, 49% were upheld.
- 18 During the 12 months ending 31 December 2021, 191 complainants were dissatisfied with the response to their complaint (47 of these relate to the period 1 September to 31 December 2021) and asked for it to be escalated to independent investigation by the Customer Feedback Team.
- 19 Analysis of a sample of these investigations highlights that 24% could have been avoided through either timelier or more comprehensive updates from services, and/or completion of the agreed action in the first instance.
- 20 We continue to monitor our performance for statutory complaints that arise from our duties as a local social services authority.
- 21 As of 31 December 2021, around 19,000 adults and 3,800 children and young people were being supported by Adult and Health Services (AHS) and Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) respectively.
- 22 AHS received a total of 81 complaints over the reporting period, a 12% increase on the previous year with 24% of these upheld and 33% partially upheld. This correlates with an increase in adults open to services (18,730 compared to 17,895 last year).
- 23 The most frequent reasons for making a complaint were dissatisfaction with charges (22 complaints), speed of service (18 complaints) and lack of communication - no information received (15 complaints).
- 24 CYPS received a total of 34 complaints over the reporting period, a 9% decrease on the previous year with 6% upheld and 38% partially upheld.

- 25 Due to the complexity of these complaints, up to three reasons can be recorded for each. During the 12 months ending 31 December, the most frequently recorded reason for making a complaint (14 complaints) was communication. Eleven complaints featured disagreement (with action/ assessment/ decision/ recorded information) and staff behaviour in 10 complaints.
- 26 During the 12 months to 31 December 2021, the Ombudsman delivered decisions relating to 67 complaints, of which 14 were upheld. Of the 12 decisions delivered during the latest quarter, three were upheld (25%).
- 27 Despite the pandemic, we have continued to act on feedback from our customers and conduct focused service improvement activity which has led to the implementation of a range of developments to enhance their experience. We continue to measure the impact of this activity and analyse and utilise feedback to support ongoing improvements.

Recommendation(s)

- 28 Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is recommended to note the content of the report.

Background

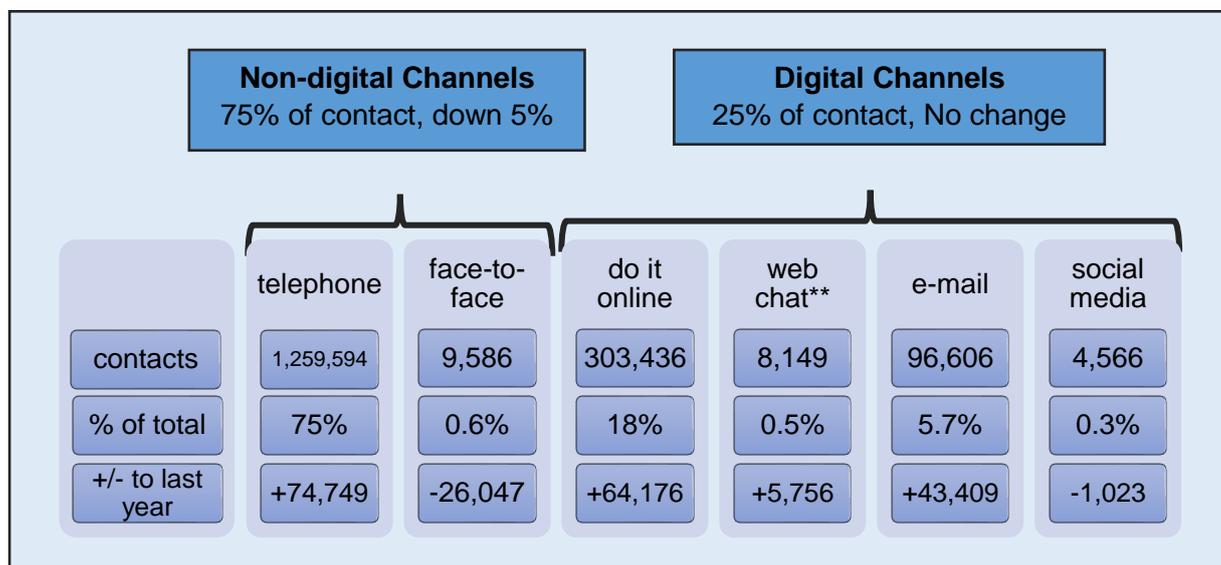
- 29 Successful organisations understand their customers and one way to gain this valuable insight is by gathering and utilising customer feedback.
- 30 The customer feedback report brings together a wide range of information collected from our customers which describes their experiences of using our services.

Contact through our customer services team

- 31 The ongoing response to COVID-19 continues to shape our customer service offer in terms of new and existing services delivered and the ways in which our customers and residents can contact us.
- 32 During the 12 months ending 31 December 2021, we received almost 1.7 million contacts through our reported channels as summarised in the following infographic. Almost one million contacts were handled by our corporate customer services teams.

Non-Digital Channels

- 33 In line with previous reports, the telephone remains the most frequently used channel for contacting us.



- 34 Broadly speaking, we receive telephone calls either through our automatic call distribution (ACD) system, which routes calls to groups of agents based on a first-in-first-answered criteria, or directly to a telephone extension (non-ACD).
- 35 Only calls received via our ACD system are included in our telephone statistics so in line with our initiative to develop a customer-focused, one-council approach to service delivery, we are transferring non-ACD lines into the ACD system. This will allow us to see a more holistic view of telephony demand and performance across the council, and to monitor and identify opportunities to improve and enhance the customer experience.
- 36 The decrease in non-digital channels reflects the closure of our Customer Access Points (CAPs), alongside all other council buildings, at the start of the pandemic. Whilst CAPs were re-opened to the public on 30 September 2021, demand for face-to-face contact following reinstatement was low across all access points with footfall at less than 15% of pre-COVID level.
- 37 Over the same period, workloads across welfare assistance, household support, and test and trace payments increased significantly. Therefore, we temporarily re-closed the CAPs on 13 December 2021, enabling resource to be deployed to help relieve these pressure points.

Digital Channels

- 38 Although the telephone remains the most popular method overall, more customers are choosing to interact with us via our digital channels.
- 39 During quarter three, an additional 2,000 households signed up for an online account - taking the number of households able to engage with us through this method to almost 159,000 unique properties.
- 40 The movement from non-digital to digital channels is particularly noticeable across customers logging service requests within our CRM system. The shift from telephone to online can be seen, as per the table below:

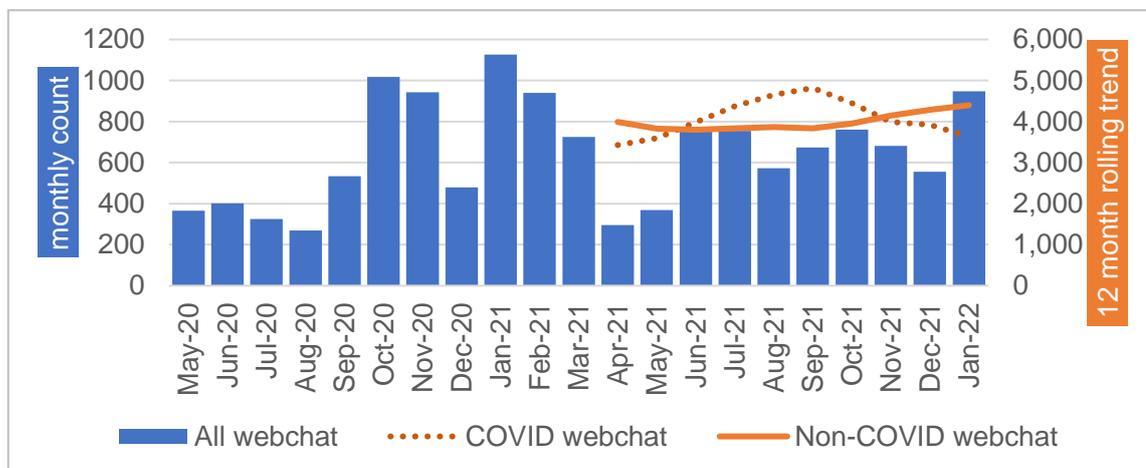
		proportion of service requests logged by channel – 12 months ending 31 December	
		2020	2021
Non digital	Telephone	32%	26%
	Face-to-face	2%	0%
	Total	34%	26%
Digital	Do it online portal	60%	68%
	Other digital*	6%	6%
	Total	66%	74%

*social media (Facebook and Twitter), webchat, e-mail, virtual appointments

- 41 Although COVID-related webchat has dropped since quarter two, non-COVID related webchat has increased by an equivalent volume.

	Webchat interactions			
	Q2, 2021/22	Q3, 2021/22	Change	
Webchat interactions contacts available over 30 pages	1,997	1,998	+1	0%
COVID related	1,039	661	-376	-36%
Non-COVID related	958	1337	+379	+39%

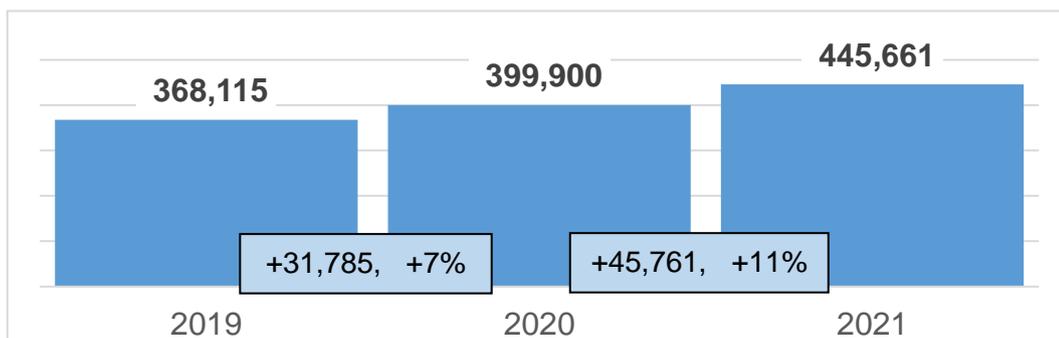
42 The increase in non-COVID related contact is driven by increases across the following service areas: general enquiries (+250, +32%), council tax (+66, +15%), garden waste (+34, +81%), and housing solutions (29 +42%).



Service Requests

43 Around 25% of customer contact leads to the creation of a service request in our CRM system. The remaining 75% relates to customers seeking advice or more information, wanting to be transferred to another team, booking an appointment, or requesting a progress update.

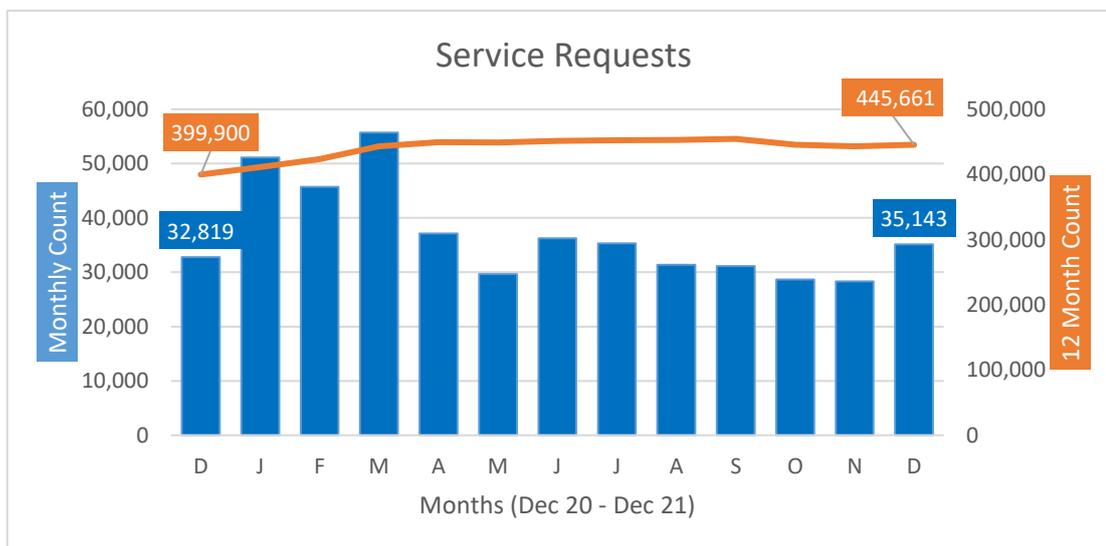
44 Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a steady increase in the number of service requests received.



45 The increase at the start of the pandemic (2020) was driven by residents contacting us to seek financial help (both personal and business related) or report issues arising from spending more time at home (especially environmental issues such as litter and fly-tipping, and anti-social behaviour issues such as noise complaints), and the need to enforce various COVID-19 restrictions. However, the scale of this initial increase is masked by corresponding decreases across service requests linked to services which were required to temporarily close due to COVID restrictions, most notably waste permits and bulky waste collections.

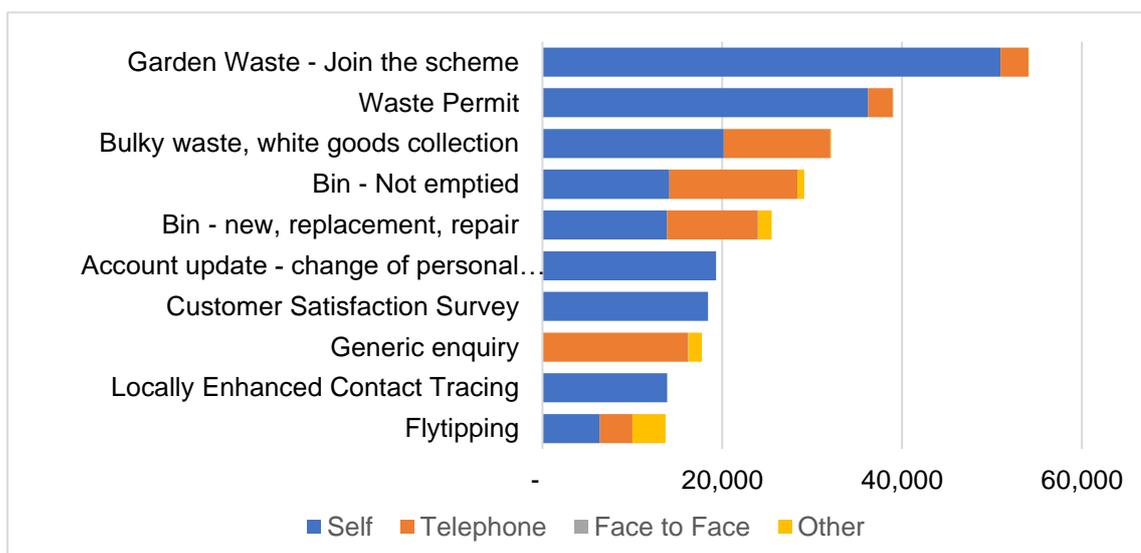
46 By the end of 2021, we were dealing with fewer COVID-related service requests, but the overall total continued to increase. This mainly followed the restatement, and increased demand for, those waste services which were temporarily closed.

47 Almost 46,000 additional service requests were received in the 12 months ending 31 December 2021, an increase of 11% on the previous year.



48 Notable increases included: 30% more requests to join the garden waste scheme (+12,692), 20% more requests for a waste permit (+6,432) and 23% more bookings for bulky waste collections (+6,013). These had a knock-on effect to our customer satisfaction survey, with more surveys distributed and more people responding (up 67%, +7,401).

49 Over the 12 months ending 31 December 2021, the ten most frequently requested services were:



Performance Standards

- 50 To enable us to monitor delivery timescales of service requests logged within our CRM system, we have applied performance standards within the system where possible.
- 51 We do not apply performance standards if the process is not fully managed within the CRM. We also did not apply performance standards to many of the COVID-related service requests, partly due to the speed of the set-up, but also due to the complexity and unknown elements of the request which often resulted in required modifications as the pandemic progressed.
- 52 We recently completed a detailed review of performance standards applied to all service requests within our CRM. This led to a range of service improvements linked to systems, data and reporting, training, and member experience.
- 53 At the end of quarter three, a reportable and accurate performance standard had been applied to 58 service requests. This compares to seven, as at October 2021.
- 54 We have identified a further eight processes where we could apply a performance standard and are working with service areas to resolve these.
- 55 However, 45% of all CRM processes are 'single-stage' online forms which means a measurable performance standard cannot be established without designing and implementing a full back-office process using the CRM which would require significant development resource.
- 56 44% of all service requests processed during 2021 were assessed against a performance standard, and of these, the performance standard was met in 68% of cases. This is in line with performance in 2020 – although it should be noted that more service requests were received in 2021.
- 57 80% of service requests with a measurable performance standard received during quarter three related the one of the following areas:

	Performance standard (days)	Service requests received	Completed within timeframe
Join the garden waste scheme	1	9,011	87%
Waste permit	1	8,249	95%
Bin – not emptied	3	4,556	54%
Street lighting	10	2,406	76%
Fly-tipping	3	2,310	68%
Road or footpath	10	1,182	68%
Tree or hedge pruning or removal	7	1,142	50%
Complaints	10	845	80%
Rubbish in gardens and yards	10	810	46%
Litter	10	798	89%

Customer satisfaction - surveys and compliments

- 58 Our CRM system enables customer satisfaction surveys (CSS) to be automatically sent to the customer when their service request (SR) is closed.
- 59 Although our overall survey response rate as a proportion of service requests is low – as seen below – it has improved over the last two years.



- 60 The improved response rate is due to a combination of essential maintenance work which has resolved previous system closure issues,

linking the survey to more service requests, and capturing more customer email addresses.

	12 months ending December...		
	2020	2021	Change
Service Request types	105	121	16
Service Requests received	300,095	329,544	29,449 (10%)
Surveys emailed to customer	124,359 (41%)	132,863 (40%)	8,504 (7%)
Responses to survey	11,033 (9%)	18,439 (15%)	7,406 (67%)
Responses as a % of service requests	3.7%	5.6%	1.9pp

- 61 Although the satisfaction survey is linked to 121 service request types, 90% of the survey responses received throughout 2021 related to only 21 service request types (see appendix five). Eight service request types, summarised in the table below, made up 80% of total responses.

	Response Rate	
	Surveys returned / total SRs	
	12 months ending December...	
	2020	2021
Bin: missed collection	10.0% 2,521 / 25,215	18.8% 5,471 / 29,100
Bulky Waste	0.1% 17 / 26,093	8.0% 2,578 / 32,106
Complaint	8.5% 373 / 4,379	18.5% 858 / 4,646
Council tax – change of payment method	11.6% 598 / 5,177	10.1% 563 / 5,582
Fly-tipping	5.1% 789 / 15,506	6.7% 920 / 13,684
Join the garden waste scheme	1.0% 432 / 41,408	0.8% 458 / 54,100
Road or footpath	8.2% 403 / 4,916	7.1% 665 / 9,344
Street lighting	11.0% 695 / 6,297	10.3% 715 / 6,934

- 62 Although response rates have increased for five of the eight service request types, there was significant variance ranging from 0.8% to 19%.

This variation is linked to both the volume of requests and the nature of the requests themselves. We are continuing to identify options to reduce this variance and additional ways to capture feedback.

- 63 We have analysed all survey responses received during the 12 months ending 31 December 2021 against our nine key measures as per the following infographic.



- 64 Satisfaction rates vary significantly across different service request types. Analysis of satisfaction with service delivery shows seven areas attained satisfaction ratings of at least 90%: early help (95%), bulky waste collections (96%), waste permit requests (97%), birth death and marriage certificate requests (96%), joining the garden waste scheme (95%), applying for free school travel (97%), and changing the payment method for council tax (92%).
- 65 Six areas recorded the lowest levels of satisfaction of less than 70%: requesting a new, replacement, or repair to bin (40%), service complaints (51%), dog and litter bins (63%), clearing litter (67%), tree or hedge pruning / removal (66%), and warm homes (70%).
- 66 We have investigated the reasons for these low satisfaction levels:
- New, replacement or repair to bins: supply issues mean we have been unable to fulfil requests for new or replacement bins. We expect new stock to arrive in January 2022.
 - Dog and litter bins: impacted by the bin supply issue.

- Service level complaints: timeliness of both acknowledgement and responses is the biggest driver for dissatisfaction.
- Clearing litter: staffing levels have been impacted by COVID. However, our teams are consistently cleaning the same areas within the same timescales as standard. We have installed litter signage in hotspot locations and moved frequently to maintain impact.
- Tree or hedge pruning/removal: there has been no change to the programme but there has been a notable increase in requests where the responsibility for maintenance does not lie with the council.
- Warm homes: customers were receiving automated closure responses before contact had been made and were unable to submit enquiries relating to a new energy grant for air source heat pumps as a dedicated portal was not in place. In response we have delayed the auto response time within our system and are using, as a short-term temporary solution whilst a new portal is developed, using the existing Warm Homes online portal.

Customer Compliments and Star Rating Feedback

- 67 Throughout the 12 months ending 31 December, we received 917 compliments, 10 more (+1%) than the same period the previous year.
- 68 In line with previous reports, most of the compliments related to satisfaction with service provision – although we did also receive praise due to the actions of specific individuals.
- 69 A small sample of the 198 compliments received during quarter three, 2021/22 is attached at Appendix two.
- 70 In addition to compliments, we collect star ratings from customers who request a service via an online form. The rating helps us understand the customer’s experience when logging their request and identifies opportunities for improvement.
- 71 During the 12 months ending 31 December, we received 87,897 ratings, 60% more (+32,876) than the same period last year. Almost two thirds rated service request handling as five star.

All Service Request Types 12 months ending 31 December...	Star ratings received	Proportion of star ratings received				
		5-star	4-star	3-star	2-star	1-star
2020	55,021	60%	17%	14%	3%	6%
2021	87,897	65%	18%	8.6%	2.7%	5.8%

- 72 57% of ratings received during the 12 months ending 31 December related to the following five service areas.

Service Request Type	Star ratings received	Proportion of star ratings received				
		5-star	4-star	3-star	2-star	1-star
Joining the garden waste scheme	20,582	64%	21%	9%	3%	3%
Customer satisfaction survey	15,350	62%	18%	8%	3%	9%
Waste permit	6,901	85%	9%	3%	1%	2%
Bin: not emptied	3,544	53%	15%	10%	3%	19%
Bulky waste collection	3,411	70%	19%	7%	2%	2%

Customer suggestions

- 73 During the 12 months ending 31 December 2021 we received 558 customer suggestions, 65 fewer than the same period last year.
- 74 Whilst we receive and review a considerable number of suggestions, the majority have been addressed previously and/or considered as part of service development.

Comments relating to policies, procedures, decision-making and feed and charges.

- 75 To understand the impact of our policies, procedures and decision making and to support development in these areas we capture and analyse the comments we receive. We then provide feedback to the relevant service areas / teams to support opportunities for improvement and development of policies and procedures.
- 76 The following table summarises the feedback received over the 12 months ending 31 December 2021.

23 objections to our decisions (-36)	Three objections related to operating hours / building closures and three for planning decisions. The remainder were mainly operational decisions, e.g., road closures.
96 dissatisfied with fees and charges (+9)	27 related to leisure centres, 14 to waste (mostly replacement bins (11), garden waste (2) and bulky waste (1)), and 11 to council tax.
150 comments about policies / procedures (+11)	72% of comments related to policies and procedures linked to waste collection and disposal. - 37% to our Household Waste Recycling Centres (56) - 35% to our Refuse and Recycling Service (53)

Priority Correspondence

- 77 During the 12 months ending 31 December, we received 1,882 items of priority correspondence¹.
- 78 All teams are working to a response deadline of 10 working days from receipt of enquiry, except the Resources service grouping which is working to a response deadline of four working days.

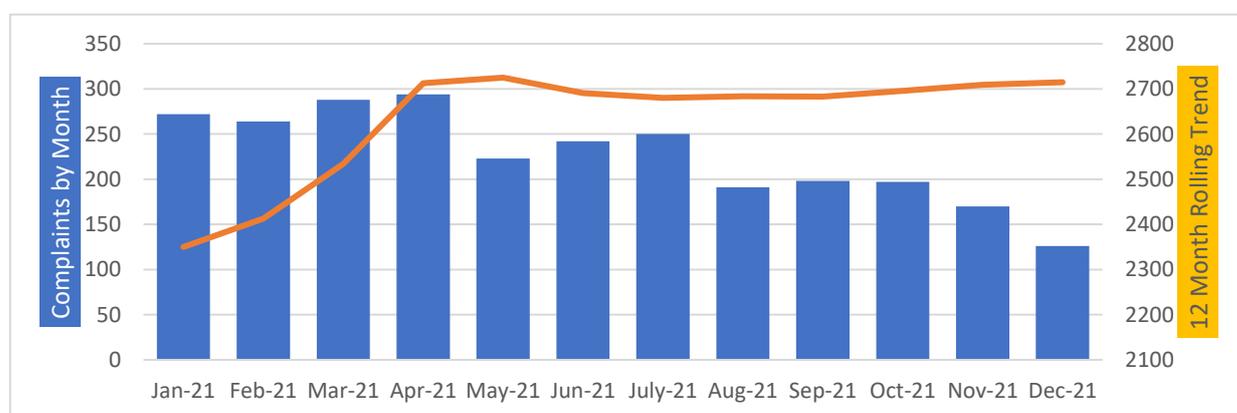
	Enquiries received	Responses on time		Responses late	
1 Jul to 30 Sep 2021	532	317	61%	215	39%
1 Oct to 31 Dec 2021	385	293	76%	92	24%

Our performance in dealing with complaints (both statutory and corporate)

- 79 Each of the complaint types (statutory complaints that arise from our duties as a local social services authority and corporate complaints that cover all other complaints) is subject to its own processes and policy, so is reported separately.

Corporate Complaints

- 80 During the 12 months ending 31 December 2021, we received 2,715 corporate complaints, 382 more (+16%) than the previous year. Of those investigated, 49% were upheld.
- 81 As shown in the graph below, most of the increase occurred in the final quarter of 2020/21 (January to March) and coincided with a significant increase in service requests over the same period. Even so, as of 31 December 2021, the ratio of complaints to service requests was 0.6% or



¹ Priority correspondence relates to correspondence sent directly to the Chief executive, Member of Parliament or Corporate Directors

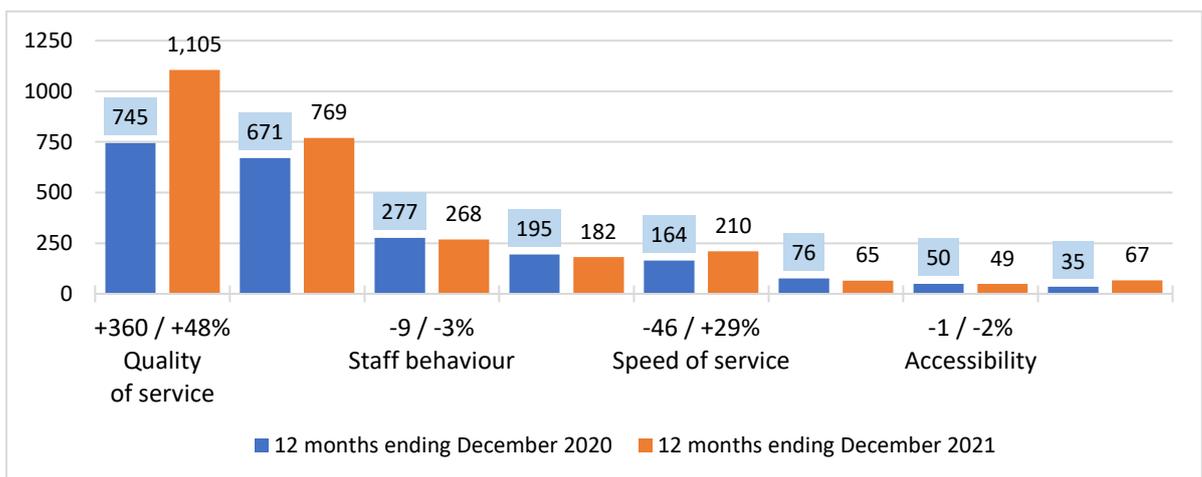
six complaints for every 1,000 service requests. This is the same as the previous year.

82 52% of service level complaints were completed and responded to within timescale, 48% were responded to outside of timescale. Compared with 48% and 52% the previous year.

83 The areas with the largest proportion of responses over performance standard for quarter three are Refuse and Recycling (67), Clean and Green (33) and Highways (14).

84 Broadly speaking, corporate complaints can be categorised across eight specific areas.

Complaint Area	Complaint Area Description
1. Accessibility	We were inaccessible to the customer
2. Administration	Our administrative processes were poor causing inconvenience to the customer
3. Communication	We did not communicate effectively
4. Staff Behaviour	Our staff behaved badly
5. Service Failure	We did not do what we said we would
6. Speed of Service	We did not provide the service when we said we would
7. Quality of Service	We did not provide the service to the expected standard
8. Damage	We caused damage whilst carrying out our duties



85 'Quality of Service' (not providing the service to the expected standard) and 'Service Failure' (not doing what we said we would) remain the most frequent causes for complaint.

86 The main driver behind the increase in service failure complaints was 'not actioning a service request' which increased from 82 to 212. Given that

we received almost 46,000 additional service requests during the same period it is not considered unusual that some progressed to complaints.

In line with previous reports, the most frequent cause for complaint, representing 20% of all complaints, was missed bin collections. Of those investigated in the 12 months ending 31 December 2021, 95% were upheld. However, it is important to note that whilst we received 581 missed bin complaints over this period, we collected 13 million bins, a complaint to delivery ratio of just 0.004%.

Corporate complaints subjected to independent investigation

87 During the 12 months ending 31 December 2021, 191 complainants were dissatisfied with the response to their complaint and asked for it to be escalated to independent investigation by the Customer Feedback Team.

88 Although 79% of these complaints were responded to within the performance standard, it is slightly lower than the 84% achieved in the previous year. There are two main reasons for not achieving the performance standard: the increased complexity of complaints and the time taken for information to be received from service areas. When we are unable to meet the performance standard, we issue a holding response with an explanation of the delay and an expected response date.

89 Analysis of a sample of complaints suggests that 24% could have been avoided if there had been a timelier or more comprehensive update from the service, and/or the agreed action had been completed in the first instance. This is in line with quarter two.

90 47 complaints were escalated to the independent investigation during quarter three:



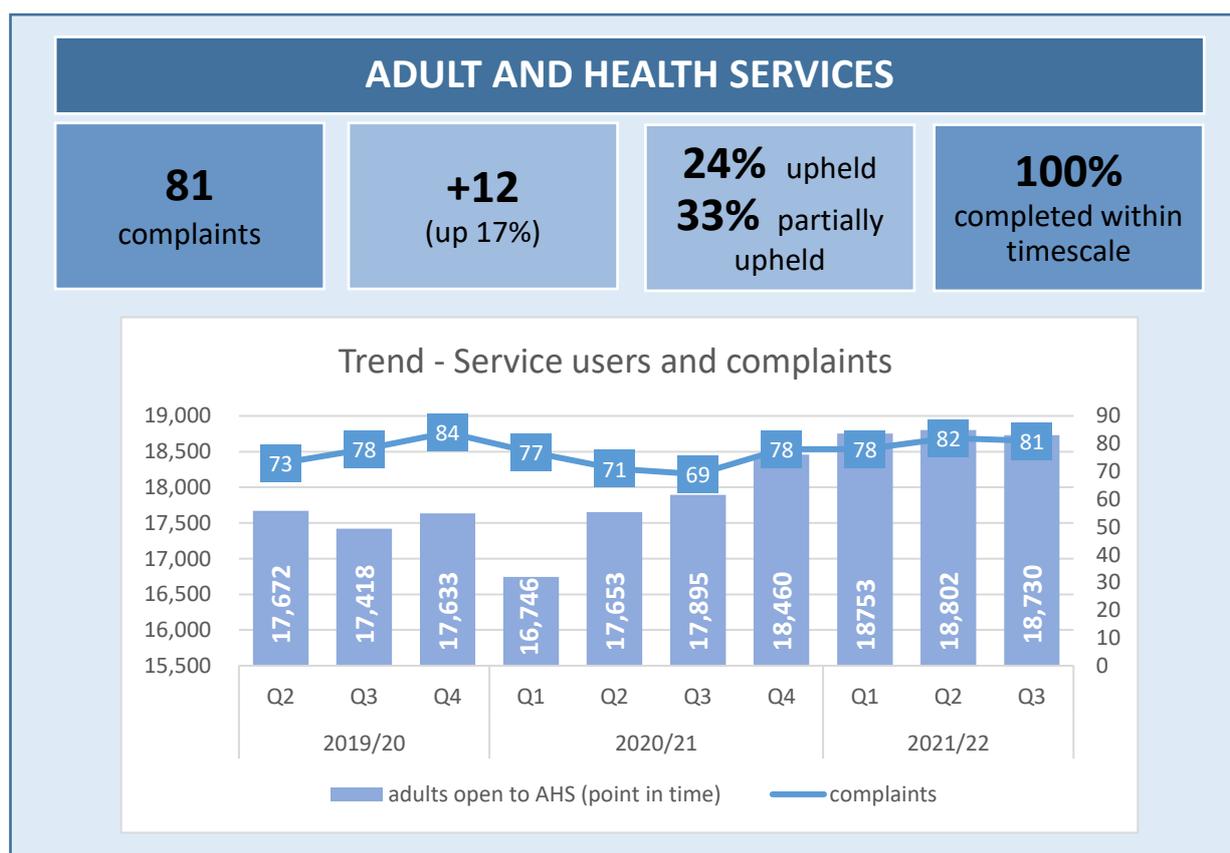
91 Details of complaints upheld by independent investigators during quarter three are included in Appendix three.

Statutory Complaints

92 As of 31 December 2021, around 19,000 adults and 3,800 children and young people were being supported by Adult and Health Services (AHS) and Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) respectively.

- 93 Each service has its own distinct statutory complaints procedures, so the complaints made under each of these procedures are not directly comparable. Broadly speaking, users of AHS have voluntarily requested access to the service whereas the involvement of CYPS is primarily due to a child or young person being in need or at risk of significant harm.
- 94 Statutory complaints have traditionally been logged and tracked through a clerical system, overseen by a complaints officer who monitors progress, adherence to timescales, quality of response and completion of recommended actions.
- 95 A new case management system has now been introduced across social care within AHS (Azeus). The system has a complaints module that allows complaints to be logged upon receipt and updated in real-time. CYPS also intends to introduce a new complaints module using their case management system (Liquid Logic). Quality assurance will remain the responsibility of the complaint officers.

Adult Health Services



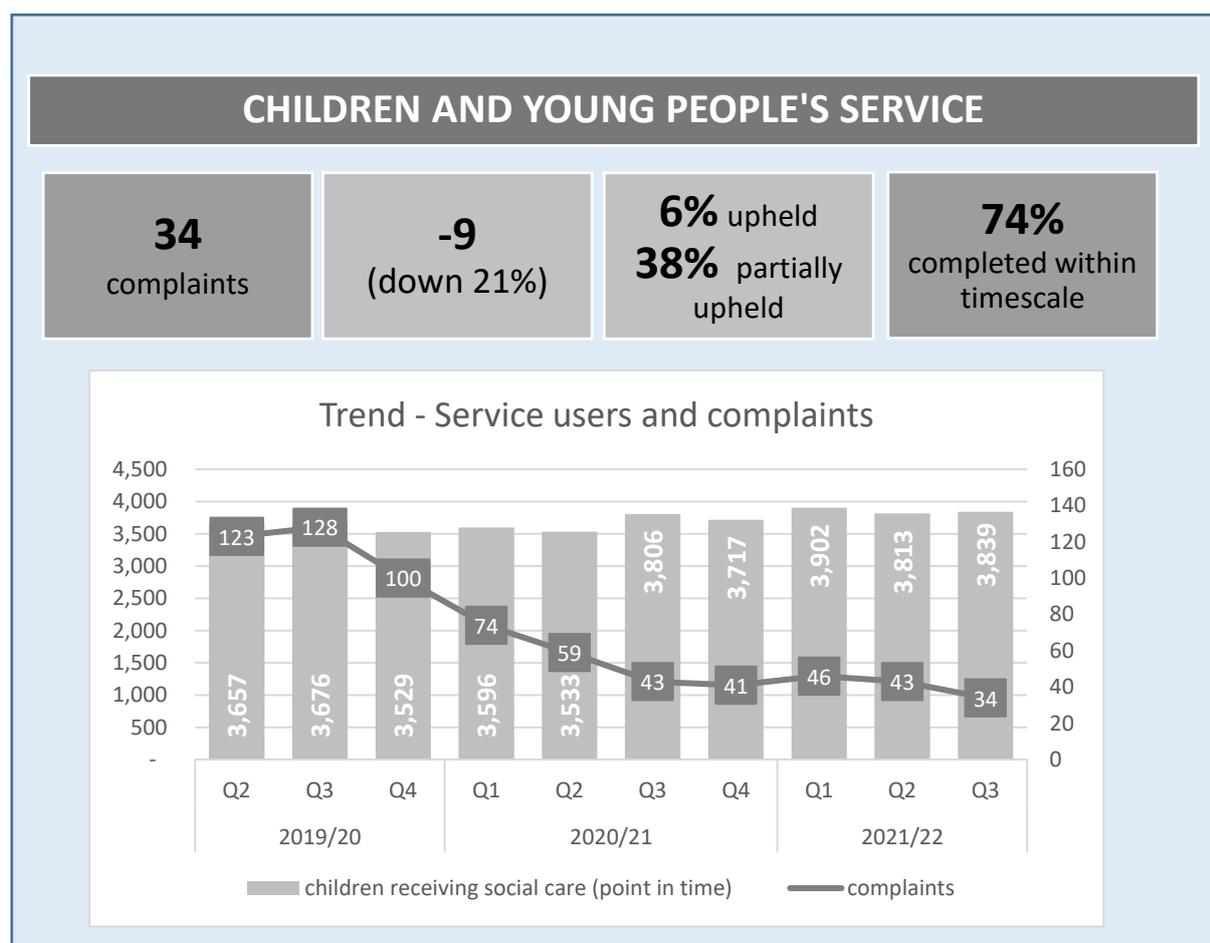
- 96 Of the 81 statutory AHS complaints received during the 12 months ending 31 December 2021: 31% related to older people/physical disabilities/sensory impairment (25 complaints), 27% to Transactional Services (22 complaints) who deal with financial assessments/charging and 22% to learning disabilities/mental health/substance misuse (18 complaints).

97 The most frequent reasons for making a complaint were dissatisfaction with charges (22 complaints), speed of service (18 complaints) and lack of communication - no information received (15 complaints).

98 During quarter three, actions taken in response to complaints included:

- Liaising with a care provider so they could take steps to improve their services, particularly around the accurate completion of daily visit logs.
- Updating direct debit procedures and increasing communication regarding the correct approach for avoiding delays in processing notifications from the Tell Us Once service, following the death of a service user.
- Reviewing current practice in relation to case management to ensure records relating to carers are updated when a service user dies.

Children and Young People’s Services



99 Of the 34 statutory CYPS complaints received during the 12 months ending 31 December 2021: 70% (24 complaints) related to the Families First teams (responsible for children in need, child protection plans, child,

and family assessments (in cases of parental dispute)), 21% (seven complaints) related to teams involved with Children Looked After, and 9% (three complaints) related to the Children with Disabilities team.

- 100 Due to the complexity of these complaints, up to three reasons can be recorded for each. During the 12 months ending 31 December, the most frequently recorded reason for making a complaint (14 complaints) was communication. Eleven complaints featured disagreement (with action/ assessment/ decision/ recorded information) and staff behaviour in 10 complaints.
- 101 During quarter three, actions taken in response to complaints included:
- Communicating changes to fostering social workers to our foster carers
 - Amending practice in cases which are subject to Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) action and fostering review.

Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman)

- 102 During the 12 months ending 31 December 2021, the Ombudsman delivered decisions relating to 67 complaints. Conclusions were reached based on details supplied by complainants, and in some instances, supplemented with contextual information from council officers.
- 103 Of the 12 decisions delivered during the latest quarter, three (25%) were upheld. Details are included in Appendix four. Additional information regarding complaints escalated to the Ombudsman is available [here](#).

Recent developments that enhance the customer experience

- 104 We are continuing to drive improvements across customer services and enhance the customer experience through our Integrated Customer Service initiative and Unified Communications Strategy.
- 105 During quarter three we completed the roll-out of the MiContact Centre Ignite project. This project involved deploying software which allows the council's contact centre agents to work from anywhere with an adequate internet connection, thus increasing flexibility of our workforce.
- 106 32 contact centres and 417 staff have migrated to the software-based technology, reducing the technology solution variability across the group by 94% and the associated limitations and hardware replacement/ licencing costs.

- 107 Additional benefits to this project are the increased accessibility of demand data supporting services to manage their demand more effectively and to identify opportunities to improve and enhance the customer experience.
- 108 53% of services across the council have been fully migrated to ACD system technology. Migrating these lines enables us to see an enhanced view of demand and performance statistics for all telephony contact, and thereby allows us to identify opportunities to improve the customer experience. Migration plans will continue into quarter four of 2021/22 and into quarter one of 2022/23.
- 109 During quarter three, the following CRM improvements were delivered in response to customer feedback or as part of service improvement activity:
- continued improvements to performance standards across multiple processes/forms to better inform customers of service delivery timeframes, and to ensure that the performance standards can be monitored and reviewed
 - Updated the 'bin not emptied' process to improve service information by preventing customers from submitting the form before 2pm on collection day. This change will improve the information provided to the customer at the first point of contact and reduce avoidable contact
 - Additional questions were added to the homelessness form to collect the correct information at first point of contact and reduce repeat contact with customers
 - Improved document uploads and information collected on the post-16 travel assistance application to ensure applications could be dealt with at first point of contact
 - Continued to ensure all forms/processes are accessible and meet the web content accessibility guidelines.
- 110 During the same period, the following new online forms and processes were launched: Lumiere gold passes, school appeals, apply to register an asset of community value, record office booking, food – report a problem.
- 111 Cyclical updates and improvements were also completed to the following processes: garden waste, real Christmas tree collections, Seaham food festival and Fun and food programme.

Conclusion

- 112 Information as to whether customers are satisfied or dissatisfied with our services, as well as their general experience when accessing services and support, is an important resource for improving customer service and determining our actions in line with customer needs.

- 113 The ongoing response to COVID-19 continues to shape our customer service offer in terms of new and existing services delivered and the ways in which our customers and residents can contact us.
- 114 Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a steady increase in the number of service requests received and this has impacted the volume of complaints received as well as overall customer satisfaction.
- 115 However, despite the pandemic, we have continued with a range of new customer focused developments aimed at enhancing user experience and continue to analyse and utilise feedback to support opportunities for improvement.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- Previous Customer Feedback reports presented to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable.

Finance

Information on financial remedies in relation to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is included within the report.

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Complaints regarding any equality and diversity aspect are handled in consultation with the Council's Equality Team.

Climate Change

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

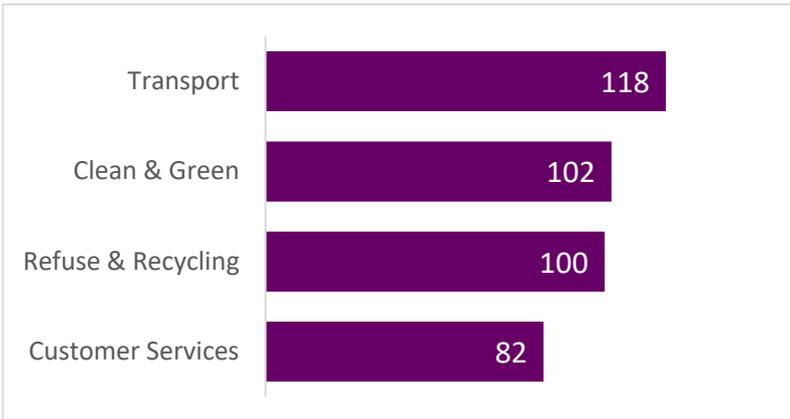
Risk

None.

Procurement

None.

Appendix 2: Sample of compliments received during quarter three, 2021/22



Customer would like to commend the crew for sorting the trees that came down. They have done a great job and were very professional.

Customer wanted to thank all staff involved with the asset valuation process task which has recently been completed. She thanked everyone for all their hard work.

Customer says the Macmillan welfare rights officer had been really kind and helpful

Would like to pass on her Thanks to the refuse crew who have collected her bin this morning she has been unwell & forgot to pull the bin out they have very kindly emptied it & she greatly appreciates this.

Customer wanted to thank transport team for incident on behalf of his parents

Customer very impressed with response to report of flooding and request for sandbags, saying it went from a high-tension situation to feeling of relief. He would like to thank those who cleaned out not just the gully near his house but others on the street and to those who delivered sandbags.

Customer would like to commend the Pest controllers that have visited the property recently. He was very impressed with the advised given and the professionalism of the staff.

Kind thanks: Thank you so much. a remarkable service from DCRO!

Customer has called to say thank you very much for the help when her husband had fallen, she said the two responders were fantastic

Lady and her husband wanted to thank the bin crew for being so lovely over the last couple of years. Couldn't speak highly enough of the crew :-)

Just a note to thank you all for the work yourself and the Team have done in Spennymoor to clear away the debris caused by the storm and for also getting around the area to sweep up the leaves on the paths.

Customer calling to say thank you to Member of BB

Could you please record my appreciation to Highways Department for the work done to alleviate parking issues at the above location that was causing highways safety issues for local residents.

Many thanks for swift response to clear "leaves" from pavement in front of the street and the back lane! Excellent job as usual. Nice friendly and professional worker!!

Customer wanted to let us know what a lovely team of people we have doing bin collections. Their daughter shouts when she hears the bin lorry and loves to stand at our window and watch. Without fail everyone always makes an effort to wave and smile at us. Such a friendly bunch and lovely to see them every Thursday morning. Please pass on our thanks.

Customer would like to thank the highway operatives for the fantastic job they made on the repair of their dropped kerb. Good job, cleaned up after themselves and collected the cones promptly the next morning. Much appreciated.

We have recently moved into the area and have been very impressed with the service of the staff at Annfield Plain waste disposal site. We have been three separate times over the course of the past week, and they have been great each time.

The pest controller who attended customers address provided excellent service in the form of professional advice and honesty. The controller was able to provide sensible advice which was open, honest and evidence-based. He was able to communicate concisely which was straightforward and easily understood. Furthermore, he was approachable, funny and easy to converse with. I personally thought he was an excellent representative of your department.

Staff have been very welcoming upon arrival, they offered help regarding which skip we needed to use and checked that we were able to manage. All staff members were very happy and jolly to speak to. Really great experience.

Customer wanted to pass on sincere appreciation toward the speedy and professional responses we have experienced from the Durham County Records Office team.

Customer thanks are the teams involved for his issue at the weekend in the storm damage

Appendix 3: Independent investigations by Customer Feedback Team where corporate complaints were upheld

Complaint upheld	Recommendation
Council made an error in processing an application for a concessionary bus pass resulting in pass being refused.	Apologise to customer for failing to ensure records were completed correctly. Reimburse reasonable travel expenses incurred prior to the concessionary bus pass being issued.
Bin collections were missed despite being on assisted list.	Partial refund issued for the missed collections. Will ensure that collections are not carried out before 7am.
Lack of consistency in trade waste collections.	Apologise for the inconvenience caused. Partial refund issued for the missed collections.
Repeated missed bin collections.	Apologise for the inconvenience caused.
Communication regarding leisure centre memberships, suspensions and direct debits.	Apologise for the way the matter was dealt with. Feedback included in staff refresher training.

Complaint partially upheld	Recommendation
Response regarding omitting a road from the current list of publicly maintained highways.	Acknowledge that further investigations should have been carried out.
Length of time taken to investigate an issue	Apologise for the unnecessary delay in actioning and rectifying the matter.

Appendix 4: Complaints upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman)

Ombudsman's final decision	Agreed action
<p>There were some failures in the care provider's care and treatment of the customer which may have caused weight loss and poor hygiene.</p>	<p>Council to apologise and offer the complainant £500 for the distress caused by the poor standard of care by its commissioned care provider, and £250 for the distress caused by the knowledge of the poor care at the care home.</p> <p>The council to ensure the care provider takes steps to improve its procedures.</p>
<p>Neglect in a council-funded care home.</p>	<p>Council to apologise and pay £1000 to reflect the family's avoidable distress.</p> <p>Council to ensure the care provider reviews and revises relevant procedures.</p>
<p>Council was at fault for refusing to escalate a complaint to stage two of the children's statutory complaints procedure.</p>	<p>Council to begin a stage two investigation and pay the customer £150 in recognition of the distress caused by the delay.</p>

Appendix 5: Customer Satisfaction Survey: response rates and satisfaction with service delivery

Top 24 by number of survey responses – equates to 90% of responses

	Response Rate		Satisfaction with service delivery		Main reason(s) for dissatisfaction
	Surveys returned / total SRs		(change is only significant if it is =>2pp)		
	12 months ending		12 months ending		
	31 December 2020	31 December 2021	31 December 2020	31 December 2021	
Anti-social behaviour	3.9% 106 / 2,691	3.7% 76 / 2,082	80%	79%	The issue was resolved long term.
Bin: new, replacement or repair	0.6% 138 / 24,864	0.6% 141 / 25,507	55%	60%	not keeping customers informed of progress. Taking too long to complete task.
Bin: missed collection	10.0% 2,521 / 25,215	18.8% 5,471 / 29,100	78%	73%	Time taken to return for the bin. Issue has not been resolved long term.
Birth, death, or marriage certificate	9.7% 302 / 3,125	12.0% 484 / 4,022	96%	96%	Time taken to respond.
Bulky Waste Collection	0.1% 17 / 26,093	8.0% 2,578 / 32,106	71%	96%	Time taken to complete the task.
Complaints	8.5% 373 / 4,379	18.5% 858 / 4,646	59%	51%	not keeping customers informed of progress nor providing them with clear information. Taking too long to complete task.
Council tax – change of payment method	11.6% 598 / 5,177	10.1% 563 / 5,582	95%	92%	Communication issues.
Council tax account	7.3% 1,202 / 16,409	4.7% 2 / 43	97%	50%	
Dog bins or litter bins	6.8% 104 / 1,525	7.5% 135 / 1,789	78%	63%	not explaining our decision when unable to install/ relocate/ renew bin.

Appendix 5: Customer Satisfaction Survey: response rates and satisfaction with service delivery

Top 24 by number of survey responses – equates to 90% of responses

	Response Rate Surveys returned / total SRs		Satisfaction with service delivery (change is only significant if it is =>2pp)		Main reason(s) for dissatisfaction
	12 months ending		12 months ending		
	31 December 2020	31 December 2021	31 December 2020	31 December 2021	
					Not completing task when we agreed to action in line with our existing schedule.
Dog fouling	9.4% 192 / 2,047	8.6% 159 / 1841	67%	81%	The issue remains unresolved.
Drainage and flooding	8.0% 145 / 1,816	8.3% 209 / 2,510	75%	73%	The issue remains unresolved.
Early help referral	8.1% 120 / 1,476	8.1% 144 / 1,783	98%	95%	
Fly-tipping	5.1% 789 / 15,506	6.7% 920 / 13,684	87%	84%	The issue remains unresolved. Time taken to complete task.
Free school travel - apply	12.5% 209 / 1,671	13.3% 229 / 1,720	100%	97%	
Garden waste – join the scheme	1.0% 432 / 41,408	0.8% 458 / 54,100	96%	95%	The issue remains unresolved.
Litter	7.2% 227 / 3,174	5.7% 238 / 4,194	64%	67%	The issue remains unresolved.
Road or footpath	8.2% 403 / 4,916	7.1% 665 / 9,344	78%	81%	The issue remains unresolved.

Appendix 5: Customer Satisfaction Survey: response rates and satisfaction with service delivery

Top 24 by number of survey responses – equates to 90% of responses

	Response Rate		Satisfaction with service delivery		Main reason(s) for dissatisfaction
	Surveys returned / total SRs		(change is only significant if it is =>2pp)		
	12 months ending		12 months ending		
	31 December 2020	31 December 2021	31 December 2020	31 December 2021	
Rubbish in gardens and yards	3.7% 174 / 4,366	3.7% 161 / 4,373	81%	78%	Not keeping customers informed of progress. The issue remains unresolved.
Street lighting	11.0% 695 / 6,297	10.3% 715 / 6,934	86%	82%	The issue remains unresolved. Not keeping customers informed of progress.
Tree or hedge pruning, removal	9.6% 443 / 4,624	11.1% 549 / 4,954	66%	66%	The issue remains unresolved.
Warm homes	9.5% 152 / 1,602	18.9% 256 / 1,358	84%	70%	Nobody contacted the customer. The issue remains unresolved.
Waste permit	0.5% 153 / 32,575	0.8% 329 / 39,007	94%	97%	The time taken to receive the permit.