

**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

16 June 2023

**Customer Feedback Report,
Quarter Four, 2022/23**



Report of 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 To present an overview of the wide range of information collected from our customers that describe their experiences of using our services.
- 2 The report covers performance in and to the end of quarter four 2022/23, January to March 2023.

Executive summary

- 3 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.
- 4 This report covers a range of feedback and performance is reported on an exception basis with key messages under three summary sections of going well, areas which require attention and using feedback to inform learning.

Context

- 5 2022/23 has continued to be a challenging period with COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis all impacted on our residents, our businesses, and the council.

- 6 The cost-of-living crisis has steadily worsened over the last 12 months and high inflation, currently at 10.1%¹, has largely been driven by the rise in the cost of fuel and energy bills. This is driving demand for services which support people facing financial hardship or who are in crisis, as well as services provided to vulnerable people such as social care for children and adults.
- 7 We are continuing to receive more contact from households seeking financial assistance, with a continuing high volume of applications for Welfare Assistance. Applications to both elements of our scheme increased during 2022/23, although the increase in claims for Daily Living Expenses² was more significant (10,812 this year, compared to 4,875 last year) than the increase in claims for Settlement Grants³ (1,576 claims this year, compared to 1,310 last year).
- 8 We continue to support residents through the crisis with various initiatives and funds, including our Council Tax Reduction Scheme, food and fun initiatives, food surplus activity and 'cutting the cost of the school day' initiative.

Recommendation(s)

- 9 That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board notes the overall position and direction of travel in relation to quarter four performance, the impact of COVID-19 pandemic recovery and the external international factors driving inflation and cost-of-living on the councils' performance.

¹ UK Consumer Price Index for 12 months to March 2023. Indicative [modelled consumer price inflation estimates](#) suggest that the CPI rate would have last been higher in October 1981, where the estimate for the annual inflation rate was 11.2%.

² helps people whose circumstances change unexpectedly and who do not have access to money. It provides help with daily living expenses (for up to seven days) – includes food, travel and some clothing (restrictions apply).

³ helps people stay in their home, or move back into housing, after living in supported or unsettled accommodation, e.g., when leaving care or having been made homeless. It includes help towards beds and/or bedding, furniture, white goods (for example, cooker, fridge, washing machine), kitchen equipment, floor coverings, curtains, removal costs.

Background

- 10 Successful organisations listen and respond to their customers and one way to gain this valuable insight is by gathering and utilising customer feedback. This can then be used to inform learning and continuous improvement across services.

Analysis of Customer Feedback

Going well

- 11 Customer contacts through our reported channels⁴ continue to reflect the impact of transferring telephone lines to our automated call distribution system. However, we estimate there has been a 'true' increase in customer contact of around 5%, with an additional 55,000 calls, mainly driven by increases across council tax and benefits, the integrated transport unit, the emergency duty team, social care direct and welfare assistance.
- 12 The increase in digital contact from 15% of all contact before the pandemic to 21% has largely been driven by behavioural change because of process changes implemented during the pandemic (the introduction of service requests through do-it-online and the launch of webchat). This is broadly in line with the situation at quarter three.
- 13 In addition, more customers are signing up to digital accounts. Compared to pre-pandemic: an extra 44,000 have do-it-online accounts (up 34%), an additional 55,941 have open portal system accounts (up 165%) and a further 47,724 receive council tax bills via e-mail (up 132%).
- 14 As we have increased lower cost, more accessible contact options for our customers through delivery of our digital programme, face-to-face contact through our Customer Access Points (CAPs) has continued to decline and is now around two-thirds of its pre-pandemic volume. During quarter four, we consulted on face-to-face service provision across our CAPs to assess the impact of reducing the hours of four of our least used CAPs⁵. This is subject to a MTFP (13) saving proposal that was factored into the budget forecasts for 2023/24 and 2024/25. The outcome of the consultation is due to be presented to Cabinet for consideration in July.
- 15 Although service demand has increased in recent years, corporate complaints have remained relatively static. The number received averages around 2,500 each year, the percentage upheld is consistent –

⁴ contacts received through the ACD, face to face through our CAPs, do-it-online, webchat, social media and email.

⁵ Barnard Castle, Chester-le-Street, Consett and Stanley

at around 62%, and the main cause for complaint continues to be missed collections (around 15% of complaints).

- 16 81% of respondents were satisfied with overall service delivery⁶ which is in line with previous reports. The following are examples of services which attained an overall satisfaction rating of more than 94%: birth, death, or marriage certification (98%); waste permits (97%); bulky waste (96%); domestic pest control (94%); join the garden waste scheme (95%).
- 17 95% of visitors to our theatres and cinemas who responded to our survey, rated their 'whole experience' as 'good' or 'very good'. High levels of satisfaction were experienced in all venues, and across all areas except food and drink facilities. This is consistent with previous reports.
- 18 During quarter four, we continued to progress initiatives that will enhance the customer experience. Our Chatbot project (to reduce avoidable contact and provide digital customer service 24/7 via the council's website) and our pilot scheme to improve location accuracy using what3words, were both launched. We also tested customer satisfaction surveys via text message at the end of telephone calls and incorporating real time information within the telephony voice recognition system – a full launch is scheduled for quarter one 23/24.

Areas which require attention

- 19 40% of service request types (78 of 196), equating to around 68% of service requests, can be assessed against a performance standard. Although 80% met the performance standard during quarter four, 21 service areas (equating to 10,816 service requests or 12%) did not in more than half of cases.
- 20 Although, on average, 81% of respondents to our CRM satisfaction survey were satisfied with service delivery, some service areas attained lower rates, e.g., complaints (47%), tree/hedge pruning and removal (58%), generic enquiries (63%).
- 21 The main drivers for dissatisfaction remain timeliness, insufficient progress updates and service requests being closed without being actioned. Dissatisfaction with progress updates related to three specific areas: returning for a missed bin, complaints, and actions following a missed bulky waste collection.
- 22 Although we are responding to a greater proportion of first stage complaints within the performance standard (77% compared to 67% for the same period last year), we have identified that if the responses were

⁶ Services requested through the CRM

timelier or more comprehensive overall, up to 29% fewer complaints would have escalated to independent investigation. We continue to work with service areas to resolve this issue.

- 23 The report in Appendix 2 provides the detailed update on Customer Feedback during quarter four 2022/23 and the actions put into place as a result.

Using feedback to inform learning

- 24 During quarter four, we continued with our data analytics project which will provide interactive dashboards and combine data to give new insights about our residents and service users. Social care (adult and children) has been prioritised and we expect those new reports to go live in the system during quarter one.

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.

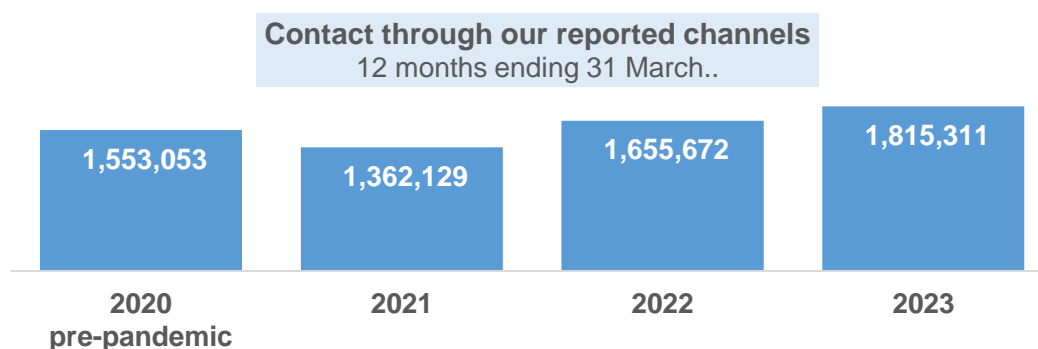


Durham County Council Customer Feedback Report Quarter Four, 2022/23



Contact through our reported channels⁷

- 1 Overall contact through our reported channels has been increasing for several years. During the 12 months ending 31 March 2023, we received more than 1.8 million contacts.



- 2 Although most of the increase is artificial⁸, caused by the transfer of existing telephone lines to our automatic call distribution (ACD) system⁹, we estimate overall contact to be around 5% higher than the pre-pandemic volume (+55,000 contacts). The increase has mainly been driven by more contacts in relation to council tax and benefits, the integrated transport unit, the emergency duty team, social care direct and welfare assistance.
- 3 Most contact (79%) is non-digital, driven by the continuing popularity of the telephone. Face-to-face contact through our Customer Access Points (CAPs) has been declining in recent years and is now around a third of its pre-pandemic volume. During quarter four, we consulted on face-to-face service provision across our CAPs to assess the impact of reducing the hours of four of our least used CAPs¹⁰.
- 4 However, digital contact is increasing in popularity and now accounts for 21% of all contact, compared to 15% pre-pandemic. This increase has largely been driven by behavioural change due to process changes implemented during the pandemic (more service requests made available through do-it-online and the launch of webchat). This change is also reflected by more customers registering to use our digital tools.

⁷ Through our ACD telephone system, Customer Access Points, Do-It-Online, webchat, e-mail to customer services, social media

⁸ As we can't migrate past data, the transferred lines create artificial increases in call volume

⁹ Telephone calls are received either through our ACD system, which routes calls to groups of agents on a first-in-first-answered criteria, or directly to a telephone extension non-ACD. Only calls received via our ACD system are included in our telephone statistics. When we transfer non-ACD lines into the ACD system, there is no past data. Consequently, it appears that call volume has increased.

¹⁰ Barnard Castle, Chester-le-Street, Consett and Stanley

Account		Pre-pandemic volume	12 months ending 31 March		Change since pre-pandemic	
			2022	2023		
Do-it-online (CRM)		129,876	158,763	174,288	+44,412	+34%
Revenues & Benefits	Open Portal	33,876	70,980	89,817	+55,941	+165%
	Council tax e-bills	36,193	64,398	83,917	+47,724	+132%

Comments relating to policies, procedures, decision-making and charges (12 months ending 31 March)

27 objections to our decisions (-10)	43 dissatisfied with fees and charges (-6)	101 comments about policies / procedures (+16)
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- 5 The objections to our decisions covered a variety of topics. The most frequent topic was dissatisfaction with road closures. However, there were also objections to our decisions to turn down the customer's application for welfare assistance, blue badges, or bus passes. Two objections were received that related to the planning decision concerning the police radio mast at Aykley Heads.
- 6 In relation to dissatisfaction with fees and charges, 60% related to one of three services: replacement bins (10), leisure centres (10) or council tax (six).
- 7 More than three quarters of the comments received expressed dissatisfaction with our waste policies and procedures (79 comments). The comments were distributed between our kerbside collection policies (e.g., side waste or contamination) and procedures at our Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) (e.g., the type of vehicle that can use the HWRCs).

Performance Standards

- 8 78 of 196 service request types can be assessed against a performance standard. This equates to 68% of service requests recorded in our CRM system during quarter four – of these, 80% met their performance standard.
- 9 23 service request types (around 30%) met their performance standard for more than 80% of requests. This included: assisted bin collection (99%); public rights of way (92%); road or footpath obstruction (85%) and street lighting (83%).

- 10 However, 21 service request types (27%) met the performance standard for fewer than 50% of requests. This included: rubbish in gardens and yards (49%); road signs (42%) and grass cutting, shrubs and flower beds (40%).

Customer suggestions

- 11 Whilst we receive and review all suggestions, most have been addressed previously and/or considered as part of service development. Many cannot be implemented, for example changes to traffic light sequences or road layouts, as they would have knock-on effects elsewhere.
- 12 A small sample of customer suggestions received during the latest quarter is attached at Appendix three.

Customer Compliments and Star Rating Feedback

- 13 Although most compliments relate to satisfaction with service provision, we continue to receive praise specific to the actions of our staff.
- 14 In relation to our star rating system¹¹, just over 91% of respondents (72,866) rated the service as three star or above. Almost nine percent of respondents rated the service as less than three star (6,889).
- 15 A small sample of the compliments and star rating feedback received during the latest quarter is attached at Appendix four and five.

Customer satisfaction through the CRM¹²

- 16 Although 81% of respondents were satisfied with overall service delivery, which is in line with previous reports, the rate varies across service requests.
- 17 Service requests attaining a satisfaction rating of at least 90% include: birth, death, or marriage certification (98%); waste permits (97%); bulky waste (96%); domestic pest control (94%); join the garden waste scheme (95%).
- 18 Service requests attaining an overall satisfaction rating of less than 70% include: complaints (47%); tree/hedge pruning and removal (58%); generic enquiries (63%).

¹¹ initial contact and the online experience

¹² Customer satisfaction surveys are automatically e-mailed to the customer when their service request is closed within the CRM. The response rate has improved over the last two years and is currently around 5.3% of service requests. As the results are taken from a sample survey, we are carrying out further work to determine if the results are statistically relevant.

19 The main driver for dissatisfaction with overall service delivery remains timeliness (of both acknowledgment and response), insufficient progress updates and service requests being closed without being actioned.

20 We also collect satisfaction data relating to specific elements of our process, and during the 12 months ending the 31 March 2023:

- 92% found it easy to contact the right service
- 87% were provided with clear information
- 78% were informed of how long it would take to complete the task
- 97% felt their request was handled knowledgeably and effectively handled
- 86% were satisfied with our handling of the initial contact
- 72% were kept informed of progress.
- 82% were satisfied with the time to complete the task
- 94% felt they were treated with dignity and respect.

21 The lowest satisfaction rate related to being kept informed of progress. Further analysis shows dissatisfaction relating to three specific service areas.

- Not returning for a missed bin within three working days (our performance standard) and not informing the customer as to the reason or when a re-scheduled collection would take place.
- Not keeping customers with open complaints informed of progress.
- Not giving customers an explanation and a re-scheduled collection date when we miss their bulky collection.

Customer satisfaction theatres and cinemas: Gala, Bishop Auckland Town Hall, and Empire¹³

22 Across the three venues, respondents rated the following as ‘good’ or ‘very good’:

	Overall	Gala	Bishop Auckland	Empire
Ticket booking experience	95%	95%	94%	94%
Staff welcome	94%	94%	97%	94%
Food and drink facilities	69%	66%	87%	79%
Quality of event	95%	95%	94%	96%
Value for money	96%	96%	94%	96%

¹³ January to March 2023

Whole Experience	95%	95%	97%	95%
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23 High levels of satisfaction were experienced in all venues, across all areas except food and drink facilities. This is consistent with previous reports.

Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations

24 301 requests were received during quarter four, a third more (+75) than the same period last year. We responded to 74% of requests within 20 working days, lower than the target of 95%.

Priority Correspondence

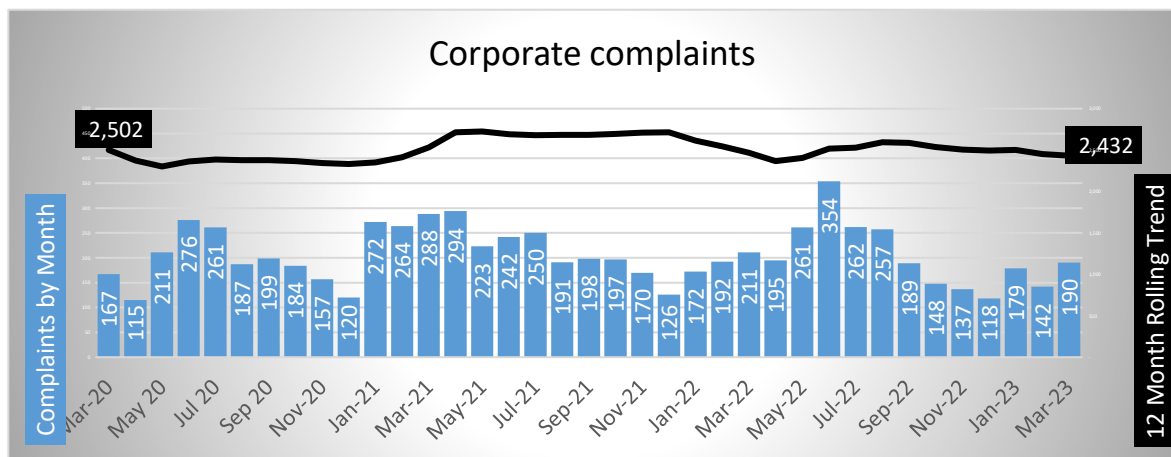
25 During the 12 months ending 31 March 2023, we received 2,282 items of priority correspondence and responded to 65% (1,487) within the performance standard.

26 The main topics during quarter four were enquiries relating to housing and planning – homelessness and strategic planning, council tax - assessment and awards, and litter/fly-tipping.

Complaints¹⁴

Corporate Complaints

27 Corporate complaints have remained relatively static in recent years. The number received averages around 2,500 each year, the percentage upheld is consistent – at around 62%, and the main specific cause for complaint continues to be missed collections (around 18% of complaints).



¹⁴ statutory complaints that arise from our duties as a local social services authority and corporate complaints that cover all other complaints

- 28 During quarter four, around one third of complaints were from customers dissatisfied with the quality of the service we provided. Half of these complaints originated from the frontline services of refuse and recycling (mainly not returning bins to the bin collection point), culture and sport (e.g., cleanliness of the leisure centres, access to swimming lessons), highways maintenance (e.g., general maintenance activities, traffic calming measures) and neighbourhood wardens (most related to the quality of service from the pest control team).
- 29 18% of complaints related to missed bins and of these 80% were upheld. However, this is not considered to be a cause for concern as it equates to fewer than 0.0003% of bins scheduled for collection or one complaint for every 35,000 bins.

Corporate complaints subjected to independent investigation

- 30 During quarter four, 77% of independent investigations were responded to within the performance standard, compared to 67% the same period last year.
- 31 However, analysis suggests that up to 29% of complaints escalated to independent investigation could have been avoided if there had been a timelier or more comprehensive update from the service at the first stage response.
- 32 We are continuing to provide training to service teams to improve the quality of first stage responses and reduce the number of complaints escalated. Our ongoing complaints review will help streamline, improve, and enhance the process.
- 33 Details of complaints upheld by independent investigation during quarter four are included in Appendix six.

Statutory Complaints: Adult Health Services (AHS)

- 34 Of the 96 complaints received during the 12 months ending 31 March 2023: 36.5% related to older people/physical disabilities/sensory impairment (35 complaints), 33% to the team dealing with financial assessments/charging (32 complaints) and 16.5% to learning disabilities/mental health/substance misuse (16 complaints).

- 35 The most frequent reasons for making a complaint were dissatisfaction with charges (31 complaints), lack of communication or information (26 complaints) and lack of service/denied service (21 complaints).
- 36 During quarter four, in response to complaints received, we reiterated the importance of making potential users aware of charges for residential care at the time of a needs assessment, and provided training to ensure the addresses of service users were updated when placed in permanent residential care.

Statutory Complaints: Children & Young People's Services (CYPS)

- 37 46 statutory complaints were received over the reporting period, 26% more than the same period last year. Of these, 24% were upheld and 22% partially upheld.
- 38 23 complaints (50%) related to the Families First teams (responsible for children in need, child protection plans, child, and family assessments in cases of parental dispute), 15 complaints (33%) related to teams involved with Children in our care, and 6 complaints (13%) to the Children and Disabilities team. One complaint (2%) related to the Adolescent Safeguarding and Exploitation team and one complaint (2%) to the Emergency Duty Team.
- 39 Statutory complaints for CYPS are complex and up to three reasons can be recorded for each. Of the 46 complaints, 27 involved communication issues, 14 involved staff behaviour and 12 involved a disagreement.
- 40 During quarter four, in response to complaints received, we reiterated the need to evidence posting dates when sending documents without 'proof of posting'; ensured social workers know how to signpost parents and carers who want to make a complaint; ensured parents are informed in a timely manner if the child's case is closed; and updated the procedure relating to looked after young people who go missing from foster care, requesting carers follow up with a call to the Emergency Duty Team if they do not receive any communication from a social worker after raising the alert.

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

- 41 Four of the 26 decisions delivered during quarter four were upheld (15%). Details are included in Appendix seven. Additional information regarding complaints escalated to the Ombudsman is available [here](#).

Recent developments that enhance the customer experience

- 42 We are continuing with our data analytics project which will provide interactive dashboards and combine data at a person level to give new insights about our residents and service users. Having prioritised interactive data dashboards for social care (adult and children's), we are expecting those new reports to go live in the system during quarter one.
- 43 A pilot scheme exploring the potential of increasing customer location accuracy using what3words went live across the fly-tipping process in March 2023. The pilot will be fully evaluated in the summer and an update provided at quarter three.
- 44 The Chatbot project, aimed at reducing avoidable contact and providing digital customer service 24/7 via the council's website, continued to progress during quarter four. The project will be launched in April 2023 and evaluated six months later.
- 45 Work to unlock additional functionality within the Eckoh telephony voice recognition system also progressed during quarter four. The telephony interaction customer satisfaction survey was tested, and its launch scheduled for quarter one 2023/24. We will use the survey data to improve the customer experience.

Appendix 3: Sample of suggestions received during quarter four, 2022/23

Suggestion: extend the time that customers can book a Christmas tree collection

Our Response: Bookings are open for nearly 4 weeks (from around 12 December to Twelfth Night). We are unable to extend the booking window as it would result in residents waiting more than a month for their tree to be collected. This year, we collected more than 4,500 trees during three weeks in January.

Suggestion: reduce membership fees at our leisure centres

Our Response: We are currently reviewing our memberships and prices. Any changes will be communicated to customers later this year.

Suggestion: allow customers the option of a smaller wheeled bin

Our Response: In the past we have offered smaller bins to residents who could manage to pull this out themselves as an alternative to assisted collection. However, since the introduction of alternate weekly collections there has been little demand for a smaller bin.

Suggestion: start the garden waste collections sooner.

Our Response: We balance the cost of the service (more collections would result in a higher charge) and the amount of garden waste produced (more limited over the winter months).

Suggestion: Remove the temporary heavy metal fencing at Baths Bridge (believed to be a COVID measure)

Our Response: The fencing is not a COVID measure. The concrete footbridge is showing signs of cracking in the main beams and abutments so is no longer able to operate at full capacity. The temporary fencing is to reduce pedestrian footfall/loading and allow the bridge to remain open. We are working on a scheme to resolve the issue.

Suggestion: increase the size of the writing on the signage of the car park in Festival Walk in Spennymoor.

Our Response: The sign is designed to a standard size (replicated across all of the car parks we maintain). We have considered if we could reduce the mounting height or reposition the sign to another location to improve readability. However, this is not possible.

Suggestion: Can the Gala offer more substantial food choices before performances (only snacks are available).

Our Response: Staffing and maintenance issues at Gala café over the last few months has, at times, resulted in a reduced menu. We are currently reviewing our offer.

Suggestion: Programmes should be on sale at interval and end of performance, not just prior to show (Gala theatre)

Our Response: Programmes are on sale during the interval. There is not a huge demand for programmes post show but they are available to purchase from Front of House staff.

Suggestion: develop a mechanism for informing members of leisure centres when the pool is closed due to unforeseen circumstances

Our Response: We currently provide information via our website, Facebook and our leisure hub. However, we are developing our App to provide an automated response notification.

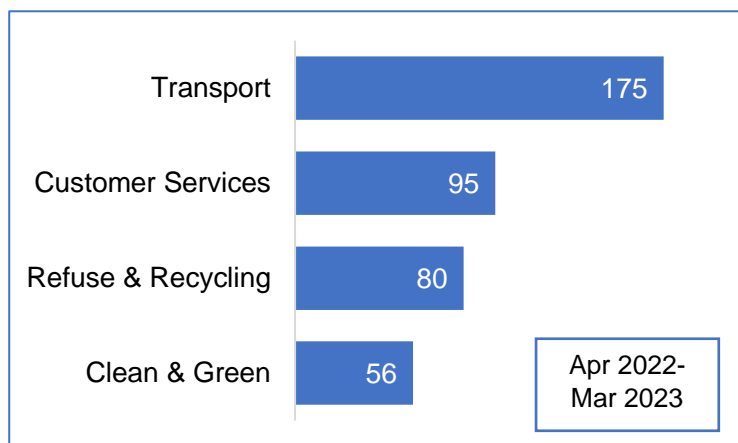
Suggestion: extend the opening hours of the football pitches at Consett leisure centre

Our Response: Our shared agreement with Consett Academy means we are unable to access the pitch until 5.30pm. However, during school holidays and weekends (and when the pitch is available), children it is available for £1.50 per hour per child.

Suggestion: Could the Gala Theatre have a sensory break out room so those with Autism can take breaks from performances when it becomes overwhelming.

Our Response: A break out space is available – the details of this are included in the social story for relaxed performances but we will look into additional signage to make this clearer.

Appendix 4: Sample of compliments received during quarter four, 2022/23



Might I compliment everyone involved in the resurfacing works to the track between Pity Me front street and Newton Hall. It is a much needed improvement to a well used track and the workmen have made a grand job of it.

My mother and I just want to thank you for your help, support and advice during this awful time. Both of us really appreciate all you have done.

A big thank you to all the workers that came and cleaned all the mud off the pavements in Murton. They even cleaned the bus shelter. Fantastic job

I would like to compliment the guys who litter pick/empty bins every week in this village. Without them we would be buried under a mountain of rubbish.

I have recently received some fabulous support from your Welfare Rights team in relation to my elderly dad's finances after an unfortunate change in his circumstances last year

The crew members that emptied my bin this morning were very friendly and had a lovely manner about them. They were smiling and extremely respectful.

I have been in the Consett office 3 times this year and the girls are most helpful and friendly and do a brilliant job nothing is too much trouble thank you

Just wanted to say a big thank you to the winter maintenance/highways team for so promptly gritting and maintaining the local footpaths, as well as the main road, in advance of further icy/snowy weather. Its appreciated by all us local residents.

Clean and Green team cleared some dog fouling behind the back streets of Aged Miners Homes in Willington this morning and cleansed the area. Customer would like to thank them as they did a prompt and amazing job.

Just wanted to say a big thank you to the building control team for prompt action in picking up my request and then going out and resolving the issue with a nearby roof.

I'd like to compliment the park keepers at Wharton Park, Durham. I have regularly walked dogs through the park in recent years and I see the same two park keepers who are doing a tremendous job, year round, keeping the park in superb order.

Wanted to pass on my thanks for the lovely service provided by the Blue Badge Team for helping with my replacement BB. There kindness was very much appreciated.

Caller would like to compliment DCC staff who painted the road markings outside of Lanchester School as it has made a big difference in the safety in the area. Looks a lot tidier and safer for people crossing the road. He said it has made a grand difference - first class

Thank you so much, the council tax team have all gone above and beyond, and have always been so understanding, I really appreciate all your understanding and support.

would like to express her gratitude to all staff that dealt with the equipment collection, as her father has just passed away, staff were lovely and very empathetic and the care that they showed was greatly appreciated.

thanking the team for collecting the fly tipped waste and very quick service for this

wanted to thank back office for their speedy response with her request for the bin assist.

call from customer who wanted to give thanks to the team who went out "super quick" and repaired the pot holes in the road where customer lives.

Appendix 5: Sample of comments received with the star ratings during quarter four, 2022/23

5★ - Road or footpath – “good supportive system”	1★ - Waste permit – “Applied yesterday for a permit but nothing has arrived”	5★ - Garden waste (join the scheme) – “very convenient and easy to navigate service”
3★ - Waste Permit – “apparently I get 12 permits, but can only download 1 at a time. I seem to have to repeat the application for each permit”		
3★ - Customer document submission – “awkward”	4★ - Garden waste (join the scheme) – “Apple Pay would make it a little easier and more secure, rather than manually entering card details”	2★ - Bin (new, replacement, repair) – “Applied for recycling box a few times and never received it. Have to keep applying which can be annoying”
4★ - Garden waste (join the scheme) – “although registered for do-it-online, I had to enter my details multiple times”		1★ - Waste Permit – “always have to reset password”
5★ - Council Tax (change of payment method) – “it was easy to set up”	5★ - Customer document submission – “simple process”	5★ - Replacement bus pass – “easy and efficient”
		1★ - Taxis (apply for an operator licence) – “crashed at the payment section after too long inputting all the information”
2★ - Birth, death or marriage certificates - “Bit slow”	4★ - Garden waste (join the scheme) – “bit long winded, otherwise OK”	2★ - Bin not emptied – “can we report a missed bin collection before 5pm. Only being able to report after 5pm is poor service to customers who find it better to report as soon as the bin is missed”
5★ - Street lighting – “being able to use map to identify faulty light is very good”	5★ - Garden waste (join the scheme) – “effortless process”	
5★ - Garden waste (join the scheme) – “all very clear. But pages seem quite slow to load which makes me nervous something has gone wrong halfway through the transaction”	3★ - Missing or incorrect address – “checking address or changing very difficult”	
3★ - Road or footpath – “enable multiple potholes in different locations to be identified”	1★ - warm homes - “can’t actually write anywhere on the form what you are actually requesting information about”	5★ - Bollards – “everything worked well”
		1★ - road or footpath - “no response from previous online submissions”
3★ - Anti-Social Behaviour – “not allowed on this form to upload CCTV footage”	5★ - Bulky waste, white goods collection – “everything was straightforward”	2★ - Garden waste (join the scheme) – “entered my details on at least 5 separate occasions before they were accepted”
		3★ - Drainage or flooding - “not able to choose an address for location”

Appendix 6: Independent investigations by Customer Feedback Team where corporate complaints were upheld

Complaint Upheld	Our Response
<p>The customer is unhappy that their bins have been missed on multiple occasions.</p>	<p>We have apologised to the customer for the issues experienced.</p> <p>The customer's property was designated a 'priority address' to ensure the bins were collected, and the issue has been resolved.</p>
<p>The customer is unhappy that their refuse and recycling bins were missed over a three-week period and that they were not able to escalate/discuss this matter with a senior manager.</p>	<p>The bin crew is now fully aware of the location of the bins, and the Area Supervisor has monitored the last two collections.</p> <p>Although no fault found in the actions of the Customer Services Assistant (CSA), the issue could have been handled better if it had been referred to a Team coach. Relevant feedback has been provided to the CSA.</p>

Complaint partially upheld	Our Response
<p>The customer was prevented from using their trailer to dispose of waste at a Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) even though they had used it previously.</p>	<p>No fault in how the council decided to restrict vehicle types and size including trailers, this is a policy decision for the council to make.</p> <p>However, it would have been reasonable for the council to have provided additional publicity around this to ensure the public were aware and therefore remove the need for a complaint about what you felt was a policy change rather than a strengthening of the existing wording by adding clarity to them.</p>
<p>The customer was prevented from using their trailer to dispose of their excess garden waste at a Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) even though they had used it previously.</p>	<p>No fault in how the council decided to restrict vehicle types and size including trailers, this is a policy decision for the council to make.</p> <p>However, it would have been reasonable for the council to have provided additional publicity around this to ensure the public were aware and therefore remove the need for a complaint about what you felt was a policy change rather than a strengthening of the existing wording by adding clarity to them.</p>

Complaint partially upheld	Our Response
<p>The complainant feels the council has failed in its duty of care with regards to an offer of interim accommodation.</p>	<p>No fault was found in the actions of the officer who allocated the accommodation (it was deemed to be the most suitable for their priority need at that time). However, there was a delay in the referral process. We have apologised and offered a financial remedy of £100. In addition, all operational staff have been reminded of the importance of following protocol.</p>
<p>The customer is dissatisfied with our earlier response to their complaint in relation to a party wall.</p>	<p>We have apologised to the customer for not providing a more detailed/thorough response. Additional information has now been provided, and we have agreed to update customer regularly about progress.</p>
<p>Customer is dissatisfied to have only received a 50% refund for their pest control appointment. They claim they did not hear the Pest Control Officer (PCO) knock and query why the PCO did not telephone or look around the property.</p>	<p>No fault was found with the actions of the pest control team, and it is clear on the pest control booking form that if no one answers the door, then a 50% refund is applicable. However, the customer's complaint was logged incorrectly, and this caused an unnecessary delay in the complaint being actioned. We have apologised and feedback/additional training will be provided to the officers involved.</p>
<p>The complainant feels we administered their late mother's council tax accounts in an insensitive manner.</p>	<p>No fault was found with the actions taken. However, we have apologised to the customer for the delay in answering the initial inquiries and registering the complaint.</p>
<p>The complainant is dissatisfied with our previous response to their report of land encroachment.</p>	<p>Although no fault was found in the process undertaken, we apologised for the length of time the matter has been ongoing without a full response being provided.</p>

Appendix 7: Complaints upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (the Ombudsman)

Ombudsman's final decision	Agreed action
<p>The Council was at fault for the delay in providing information about care charges and carrying out a financial assessment. This resulted in a large and unexpected care bill and the complainant's mother was unable to make an informed decision about her care.</p>	<p>Apologise for the delay in explaining the associated care charges and write-off the care charges from November 2021 to mid-February 2022.</p> <p>Our hospital based social workers to provide clear information about the potential for future care charges when patients are discharged into residential care from hospital.</p> <p>Provide a factsheet on charging for residential care when carrying out needs assessments, so people are made aware of the potential charges as soon as possible.</p>
<p>There is fault with the Council's actions in respect of the complainant's child's special educational needs. The council failed to provide adequate full-time education when they were unable to attend school, delayed carrying out an adequate social care assessment or provide social support to enable a successful transition to college, and failed to communicate properly with the complainant throughout this period.</p>	<p>Pay the complainant a total of £1,250 (£500 for the delays in the social care assessment, £500 to be used for the benefit of the child's educational and social progress, and £250 for the complainant's time and trouble in pursuing the complaint.</p> <p>Review the monitoring of alternative educational provision to ensure it regularly assesses the provision remains suitable.</p>
<p>The complainant is unhappy that the council said her mother would not have to pay for her stay in a care home. Yet a financial assessment was completed a year later which charged her mother retrospectively.</p>	<p>Apologise to the customer for the distress caused and write off the charges until the date of the financial assessment.</p> <p>Provide information leaflets on charging at the earliest opportunity, even where a financial assessment has been delayed.</p>
<p>The complainants are unhappy about the council's decision to stop Special Guardianship (SG) Allowance payments in respect of a relative. The Council's decision to stop the payment was in line with its policy. However, the appeal panel's report is flawed and does not show how the panel considered relevant evidence the complainants submitted.</p>	<p>To hold a new appeal review with a fresh panel to remedy the uncertainty caused.</p> <p>To pay £509.81 to customer for an underpayment of SG allowance during 2019.</p>

Data Tables

Key to Symbols

Performance against target and previous performance		Performance against comparable groups		Direction of Travel	
✓	meeting or exceeding	✓	Performance is better than national or north east	↑	higher than comparable period
■	within 2%	×	Performance is worse than national or north east	→	static against comparable period
×	more than 2% behind			↓	lower than comparable period

NB: oldest data in left column

Types of indicators

There are two types of performance indicators throughout the report:

1. Key target indicators – targets are set as improvements can be measured regularly and can be actively influenced by the council and its partners; and
2. Key tracker indicators – performance is tracked but no targets are set as they are long-term and / or can only be partially influenced by the council and its partners.

National Benchmarking

We compare our performance to all English authorities. The number of authorities varies according to the performance indicator and functions of councils, e.g., educational attainment is compared to county and unitary councils, however waste disposal is compared to district and unitary councils.

North East Benchmarking

The North East figure is the average performance from the authorities within the North East region - County Durham, Darlington, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees, South Tyneside, Sunderland.

More detail is available from the Strategy Team at performance@durham.gov.uk

Performance Indicator		Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:					Direction of Travel - last four reporting periods				updated
			Period target	12 months earlier	Pre-COVID	N	NE					
No. of contacts through reported channels		1,815,311 (2022/23)	Tracker -	1,655,672	1,553,173	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↑	Yes
% of contact through reported digital channels		21% (2022/23)	Tracker -	25%	15%	-	-	→	↓	↓	↓	Yes
% of contact received through reported non-digital channels		79% (2022/23)	Tracker -	75%	85%	-	-	→	↑	↑	↑	Yes
% of CRM requests meeting performance standard		80% (2022/23)	Tracker -	72% ✓	n/a	-	-	↓	↑	↑	↓	Yes
% of respondents who were satisfied with overall service delivery (CRM)		81% (2022/23)	Tracker -	82% ■	81% ✓	-	-	→	→	↑	↓	Yes
% of customers who request a service via an online form who give a rating of 4 or 5 stars		91% (2022/23)	Tracker -	85% ✓	n/a	-	-	↓	→	↑	↑	Yes
Statutory Complaints: Adult and Health Services	No. received	96 (2022/23)	75 x	78 x	84 x	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes
	% within performance standard	100% (2022/23)	Tracker -	100% ✓	100% ✓	-	-	→	→	→	→	Yes
	% upheld (fully or partially)	54% (2022/23)	Tracker -	62% ✓	44% ✓	-	-	↑	↓	↑	↓	Yes
Statutory Complaints: Children and Young People's Service	No. received	46 (2022/23)	46 ✓	34 ✓	100 ✓	-	-	↓	↑	↑	↑	Yes
	% within performance standard	72% (2022/23)	Tracker -	77% x	76% x	-	-	↑	→	↑	↓	Yes
	% upheld (fully or partially)	47% (2022/23)	Tracker -	59% ✓	33% x	-	-	↓	↓	↑	↓	Yes

Performance Indicator	Latest data (period covered)	Performance compared to:					Direction of Travel - last four reporting periods				updated
		Period target	12 months earlier	Pre-COVID	N	NE					
No. of corporate complaints	2,432 (2022/23)	Tracker -	2,466 ✓	2,502 ✓	-	-	↑	↑	↓	↓	Yes
Ratio of corporate complaints to service requests	0.006 (2022/23)	Tracker -	0.006 ■	0.007 ✓	-	-	→	→	→	→	Yes
No. of independent investigations	189 (2022/23)	Tracker -	206	192	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes
No. of complaints submitted to Ombudsman	73 (2022/23)	Tracker -	69 x	91 ✓	-	-	↓	↑	↑	↑	Yes
% of complaints responded to within performance standard	71% (2022/23)	Tracker -	71% ■	85% x	-	-	→	→	→	→	Yes
% of corporate complaints investigated which were upheld	62% (2022/23)	Tracker -	64% ✓	62% ✓	-	-	↓	↓	→	→	Yes
No. of priority correspondence received	2,282 (2022/23)	Tracker -	1,962	n/a	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes
% of priority correspondence responded to within performance standard	65% (2022/23)	Tracker -	71% x	n/a	-	-	↑	↑	↓	↓	Yes
% of Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations requests responded to within 20 working days	74% (Jan-Mar 23)	95% x	83% x	86% x	-	-	↓	↑	↓	↓	Yes
% of CRM service requests which were self-serve	69% (2022/23)	Tracker -	71% ■	49% ✓	-	-	↑	↑	↑	↓	Yes
No. of compliments	662 (2022/23)	Tracker -	770 -	688 -	-	-	↓	↑	↓	↓	Yes
No. of suggestions	453 (2022/23)	Tracker -	532 -	546 -	-	-	↓	↓	↓	↓	Yes