

Standards Committee

7 September 2012



Performance Report for quarter 1, 2012/13: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions

Report of Terry Collins- Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services

Purpose of the Report

1. To present performance in relation to complaints, compliments and suggestions for quarter 1, 2012/13.
2. To highlight any learning outcomes resulting from the complaints, compliments and suggestions received.
3. To update Standards Committee of developments in the collection, monitoring and management of complaints.

Background

4. There are 2 types of complaint used throughout this report,
 - **Statutory.** A complaint which arises from the duties placed on a local social services authority to provide assessments and care services under the provisions of relevant adult and children's social care legislation. The process for managing such complaints is prescribed in Regulations.
 - **Non-Statutory.** All other complaints
5. This report contains information on all complaints received by the Authority and logged on the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system or Social Services Information Database (SSID). All complaints received and reported relate to Durham County Council internally run services only. The overview section refers to the numbers of non-statutory complaints received across the Council. Details of the statutory complaints for Adults, Wellbeing & Health and Children & Young People's Services are provided in the section appropriate to that service grouping.
6. The Corporate Complaints Unit (CCU), and the Council as a whole, works to specified service standards, previously agreed by Cabinet for non-statutory complaints, and so have a number of targets to achieve, for example, acknowledging all complaints within 2 working days, and responding to stage 1 complaints within 10 working days and stage 2 complaints within 20 working days.
7. Performance updates are reported on a quarterly basis and this is the first routine report for 2012/13.

Change to Service Groupings

8. Members are aware of the integration of Adults, Wellbeing and Health and Children and Young People Services and the disaggregation of some functions to Neighbourhood Services. Information presented in the next quarter update will reflect these new arrangements and will be presented as Children and Adults Services for both statutory and non-statutory complaints, compliments and suggestions.

Review of the complaints process

9. DCC's Customer First Strategy is in the process of being refreshed and will be presented to both the Customer First Board and Corporate Management Team (CMT) during September 2012. This refresh will include a review of the current Corporate Complaints Policy and a revised mechanism for capturing learning outcomes.

Format of this report

10. This report is divided into 2 main sections.

Section 1: Overview of Quarter 1, 2012/13

Section 2: Detailed quarter 1, 2012/13 report from each service grouping

Assistant Chief Executive's Office (ACE)

Adults, Wellbeing and Health (AWH)

Children and Young People's Services (CYPS)

Neighbourhood Services (NS)

Regeneration and Economic Development (RED)

Resources (RES)

Section 1: Overview of Quarter 1, 2012/13

11. Between 1 April 2012 and the 30 June 2012, 1,125 non-statutory complaints, 281 compliments and 106 suggestions were received by Durham County Council.

Complaints

12. Overall, there has been a 92% increase in the number of non-statutory complaints received and recorded on the CRM or SSID systems during quarter 1, 12/13 (compared to quarter 1, 11/12)

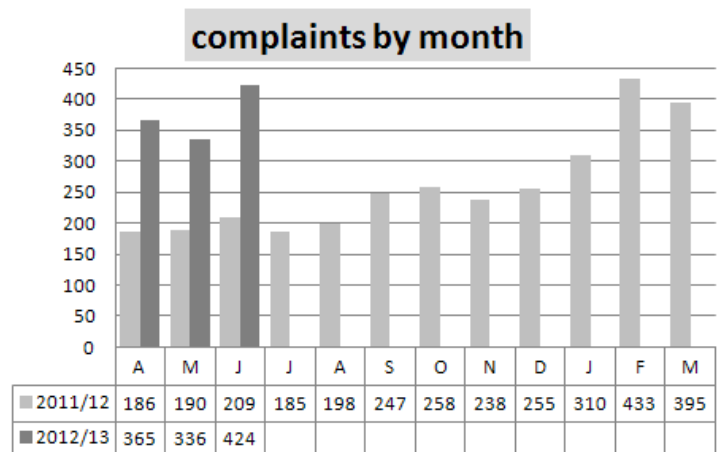
| Service Grouping | Number Received | | | | | | | | | | | | % change* |
|------------------|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----|----|----|-------|--------------|-----------|
| | 10/11 | 11/12 | | | | | 12/13 | | | | | | |
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Total | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Total | | |
| ACE | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 10 | 0 | | | | | 0 | - |
| AWH | 42 | 14 | 28 | 13 | 12 | 67 | 3 | - | - | - | | 3 | -79 |
| CYPS | 11 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 16 | 1 | | | | | 1 | -75 |
| NS | 1,069 | 329 | 301 | 360 | 599 | 1,589 | 737 | - | - | - | | 737 | 124 |
| RED | 309 | 84 | 76 | 79 | 88 | 327 | 85 | | | | | 85 | 1 |
| RES | 350 | 151 | 220 | 296 | 428 | 1,095 | 299 | | | | | 299 | 98 |
| TOTAL | 1,787 | 585 | 630 | 751 | 1,138 | 3,104 | 1,125 | | | | | 1,125 | 92 |

*12/13 to date compared to the same period last year

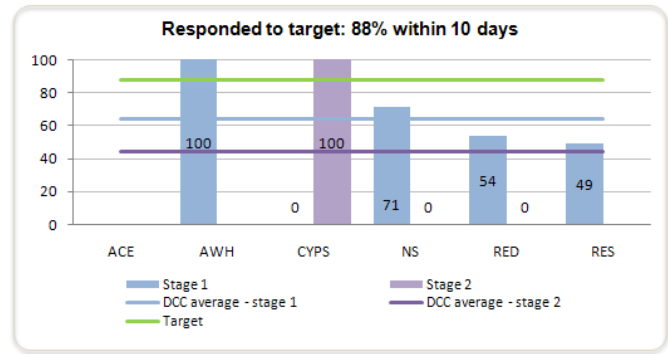
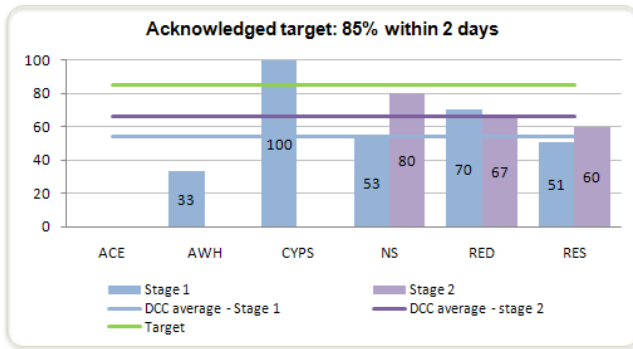
13. As can be seen in the table above and the graph to the right; there is variation in both the number of complaints received by each service grouping and the time of year.

14. There are several reasons for this increase in complaints, including;

- Greater use of and improved recording on the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and Social Services Information Database (SSID)
- The time taken to process benefits
- Changes to the refuse and recycling arrangements (Alternate Weekly Collection) (AWC)
- Increased call volumes leading to longer call waiting times

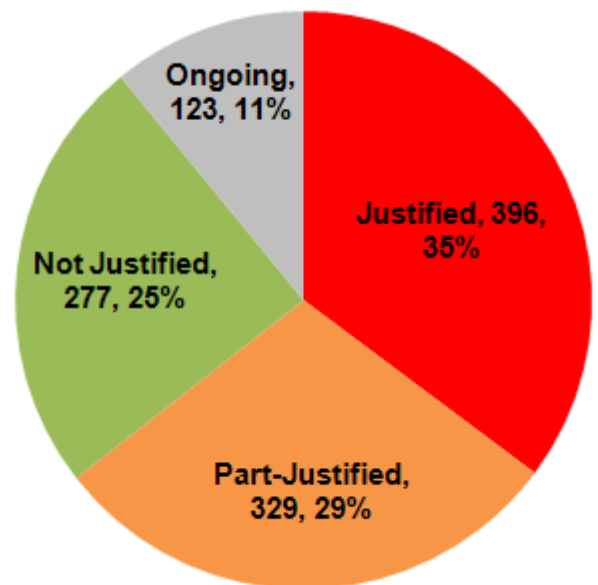


15. For all complaints there is an acknowledgement target of 2 working days. In addition, there is a responded to target time of 10 working days for stage 1 complaints and 20 working days for stage 2 complaints. The following graphs show the average response times throughout quarter 1, 2012/13.



16. The Corporate Complaints Unit (CCU) is responsible for both acknowledging complaints and ensuring complainants receive an appropriate response within set timescales. On occasions when complaints are received and a response is not available within the timescales holding letters are sent out explaining the reasons for the delays.
17. There is variation in response times throughout the year: turnaround times being dependent upon the number received. Changes in response times are most notable during the council tax billing period, periods of inclement weather and bank holidays. At these times, officers are unable to handle complaints within the desired timescales due to a combination of the volume received and the relevant officers endeavouring to keep services running through these busy periods.

18. Further investigation of the complaints received shows that during quarter 1, 2012/13 there were 277 occasions (28% of complaints processed, i.e. excluding those ongoing) where the complaint was not upheld, indicating that although service users were dissatisfied with the service received, the service had in fact acted properly and followed appropriate procedures.



19. If the not justified complaints and those that are ongoing are removed, DCC is left with 725 (64%) justified complaints, 396 fully and 329 partly justified, from which there is possibility of learning.
20. In addition to complaints, we also analyse compliments and suggestions to determine if we can further improve processes, and thereby service delivery. The following table is a summary of the compliments and suggestions received throughout quarter 1, 2012/13.

| Service Grouping | Compliments | Suggestions |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|
| ACE | 3 | 0 |
| AWH | 113 | 11 |
| CYPS | 36 | 4 |
| NS | 75 | 71 |
| RED | 38 | 9 |
| RES | 16 | 11 |
| TOTAL | 281 | 106 |

21. A large proportion of compliments relate to staff in recognition of their support and help in resolving the customer's concerns and issues. On each of these occasions, the individual officer is notified of the compliment and thanked by their line manager. Many of these relate to the professionalism, politeness and general helpfulness of staff.

Section 2: Detailed quarter 1, 2012/13 report from each service grouping

Assistant Chief Executive's Office (ACE)

22. The ACE service grouping consists of 3 service areas and between 1 April 2012 and 30 June 2012 ACE received 0 complaints, 3 compliments and 0 suggestions.

| Abbreviation | Service Area |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| PCE | Partnerships & Community Engagement |
| PP | Planning & Performance |
| PC | Policy & Communications |

Compliments and Suggestions

23. During quarter 1, ACE received 3 compliments.
24. 3 compliments related to the support provided by the Area Action Partnerships.
25. ACE did not record any suggestions during Q1 2012/13.

Adults, Wellbeing and Health (AWH)

Non-statutory complaints, compliments and suggestions

Non-statutory Complaints

26. The AWH service grouping consists of 4 main Service Areas and between 1 April 2012 and 30 June 2012, 3 non-statutory complaints, 113 compliments and 11 suggestions were received.

| Abbreviation | Service Area |
|--------------|--------------------------------|
| AC | Adult Care |
| C | Commissioning |
| PP&P | Policy, Planning & Performance |
| SI | Social Inclusion |

27. During quarter 1, 100% of complaints were responded to within 10 working days.
28. 2 complaints (67%), were received by the Social Inclusion Service Area with 1 received by Commissioning.
29. Of these, 1 was not justified, indicating that although the complainant was dissatisfied with the service received, the service had in fact acted properly and followed appropriate procedures. 1 was partly justified and 1 was justified.
30. In all complaints, information, explanations and apologies were provided to complainants which resolved the enquiries satisfactorily.
31. During the quarter, 113 compliments were received. There was 1 for Commissioning and 4 were for Social Inclusion thanking the staff for their level of service and assistance with research. The remaining 108 also related to Social Inclusion, with 61

complimenting the work of the Adult Learning & Skills Service and 46 complimenting the work of Welfare Rights.

32. There were 11 suggestions received all directed towards Social Inclusion, of these, 8 related to the Adult Learning & Skills Service (ALSS). The other 3 suggestions related to the price of photocopying in library services; a web request for information on a book; and the proposed re-alignment of supported employment. No key trends were identified.

Statutory complaints, compliments and suggestions

33. During the quarter, 19 complaints were received. This is a 9.5% decrease on the previous quarter. Details of the quarterly performance are shown below.

| Comparison of Complaints Received by Quarter | | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---|
| Service Area | Q1 11/12 | Q2 11/12 | Q3 11/12 | Q4 11/12 | Q1 12/13 | Direction of Travel from previous quarter |
| Adult Social Care | 29 | 39 | 35 | 21 | 19 | ↓ |

34. 100% of complaints were acknowledged within 3 working days.
35. Of the 19 complaints, Complaints Resolution Plans were completed in all cases. There were 12 complaints completed within the timescales agreed within the CRP. The remaining 7 cases were not concluded within the quarter but are still within their agreed completion timescales.
36. Social Work (Older Persons/Mental Health Services for Older People/Physical Disability/Sensory Support Services) Teams received the most with 11, followed by Commissioning with 5 complaints.

| Complaints Received by Service Area | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Service Area | Number | |
| | Current Quarter | Previous Quarter |
| Social Work Teams (Learning Disability /Mental Health/Carers) | 1(5%) | 2 (9.5%) |
| Social Work Teams (Older Persons /Mental Health Services Older Persons/ Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment & Sensory Support) | 11(58%) | 5 (24%) |
| Social Work Teams (Safeguarding) | 1(5%) | 0 |
| County Durham Care and Support | 1 (5%) | 2 (9.5%) |
| Commissioning | 5 (27%) | 12 (57%) |
| Policy, Planning & Performance | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 19 (100%) | 21 (100%) |

37. Of the 12 complaints completed in the quarter, 58% (7) were not upheld compared to 53% in the previous quarter. Of the remaining 5 completed complaints, 4 were partially upheld and 1 was upheld.

| Service Area | Number | | | | |
|---|------------|------------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| | Not upheld | Partially Upheld | Upheld | TBC | Total |
| County Durham Care and Support | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Social Work Teams (Learning Disability/ Mental Health/ Carers) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Social Work Teams (Older Persons/ Mental Health Services Older Persons/ Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment & Sensory Support) | 6 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 11 |
| Social Work Teams (Safeguarding) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Commissioning | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| Policy, Planning & Performance | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 7 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 19 |

38. Quality of Service – Personal Financial Issues was the highest category of complaint with 9 recorded.

| Complaints by Classification | |
|--|-------------------|
| Classification | No. of complaints |
| Lack Of Service - Communications/Information | 2 |
| Conduct Or Attitude Of Staff | 2 |
| Lack Of Service – Other | 3 |
| Quality Of Service – Personal Financial Issues | 9 |
| Provision Of Service – Equipment | 1 |
| Quality Of Service – Work Of Other Agencies | 2 |
| Quality Of Service – Another Resident | 1 |
| Finance – Direct Payments | 1 |
| Disputed Payments | 1 |

NB A complaint may have more than one classification recorded against it

Actions as a result of statutory complaints

39. During the period the following outcomes/actions have been identified from the complaints concluded:
- A reminder has been issued by the Operations Manager Older Persons/Physical Disabilities and Sensory Impairment to all staff that they must wear their ID badges at all times; show this to clients/carers to verify their identity; and to establish that their role and reason for their visit was understood.
 - Staff are to be advised that following an assessment of need, where there are exceptional circumstances and known objections by clients and/or carers about the outcomes of discussions, that any discussions/decisions should also be recorded in the form of written meeting notes, or in letter form, to be circulated to the persons present at an assessment.

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO): Current Activity

40. The LGO reported one decision during the Quarter: A complaint about the management of Safeguarding of a client with learning disabilities was referred to the LGO as the parent had remained dissatisfied with the outcome at the local resolution stage. The Ombudsman concluded that the client had not suffered an injustice as a result of any failure on the part of the Council. For this reason, the Ombudsman declined to have further involvement in the complaint as there were no grounds on which to justify the public expense of the continuing of an investigation.

Compliments

41. There were 90 compliments received in quarter one.

| Compliments Received by Service Area | | |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Service Area | Number | |
| | Current Quarter | Previous Quarter |
| County Durham Care and Support | 44 (49.5%) | 83 (70%) |
| Social Work Teams (Learning Disability /Mental Health/Carers) | 1 (0.5%) | 3 (2.5%) |
| Social Work Teams (Older Persons /Mental Health Services Older Persons /Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment & Sensory Support) | 45 (50%) | 29 (25%) |
| Policy, Planning & Performance | 0 (0%) | 3 (2.5%) |
| Commissioning | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |
| TOTAL | 90 (100%) | 118 (100%) |

42. No suggestions relating to statutory functions were received during the quarter.

Children and Young People's Services (CYPS)

Non-statutory complaints, compliments and suggestions

Non-statutory Complaints

43. Between 1 April 2012 and 30 June 2012, 1 Stage 1 non-statutory complaint, 36 compliments and 4 suggestions were received.
44. During quarter 1, 100% of complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days.
45. During quarter 1, the one non-statutory complaint which was received was responded outside the 10 working day timescale due to its complexity.
46. The lowest percentage of complaints was received by County Wide Services.
47. Further investigation of the 1 Stage 1 complaint received during quarter 1 shows that it was partially upheld. It has subsequently been taken to Stage 2 of the Council's corporate complaints procedure and an outcome is awaited.
48. The learning outcome from this complaint was that Social Workers should double-check information and not make assumptions before sharing key information with service users. Managers have been made aware of the issues and these have been discussed with staff to avoid future recurrences.

| Abbreviation | Service Area |
|--------------|---|
| AS | Achievement Services |
| CWS | County Wide Services |
| EI&PS | Early Intervention and Partnership Services |
| SaSS | Safeguarding and Specialist Services |

Non-statutory Compliments and Suggestions

49. During quarter 1, CYPS received 36 compliments which were not about social care services.
50. During the quarter CYPS received a suggestion via a Sure Start Children's Centre about an arts and craft activity session. The suggestion was taken forward and the parent was thanked.

Statutory complaints, compliments and suggestions

Statutory complaints

51. During quarter 1, 3 statutory complaints were received by the CYPS service grouping which were actioned at Stage 1. In addition, a further 50 statutory complaints were resolved locally and informally to the complainants' satisfaction. Details of the quarterly performance of Stage 1 complaints is shown below:

| Comparison of Statutory Stage 1 Complaints Received by Quarter | | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---|
| Service Area | Q1 11/12 | Q2 11/12 | Q3 11/12 | Q4 11/12 | Q1 12/13 | Direction of Travel from previous quarter |
| Safeguarding and Specialist Services | 7 | 10 | 5 | 5 | 3 | ↓ ↓ |

52. All 3 complaints were acknowledged within two working days maintaining performance at 100%.
53. Of the 3 Stage 1 complaints received in the quarter, none of the investigations were completed within the 20 working day timescale for response; all are still being investigated at the time of writing. This is reflective of the complexity of the relatively few complaints which are actioned at the formal stage.
54. The table below shows the where the complaints were received this quarter:

| Complaints Received by Service Area | | |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Service Areas | Complaints Received | |
| | Current Quarter | Previous Quarter |
| Fostering and Adoption | 1 (33%) | 0 |
| Safeguarding Children – Durham | 1 (33%) | 0 |
| Young People’s Service – North | 1 (33%) | 0 |
| TOTAL | 3 (100%) | 0 |

55. None of the 3 Stage 1 complaints made this quarter had been resolved at the time of writing; therefore it is not possible to report on outcomes.
56. The complaints can be classified as shown in the table below. ‘Poor Service’ was the highest category of complaint.

| Complaints by Classification | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Classification | Number |
| Poor Service | 3 |
| Conduct or attitude of staff | 0 |
| Decision regarding service | 0 |
| Total | 3 |

Compliments

57. During quarter 1, CYPS received 56 compliments about social care services. These compliments were all about Safeguarding and Specialist Services (SaSS), which is the only service within CYPS which provides social care services.
58. SaSS received 81 compliments in the previous quarter (see table below). The ratio of compliments to formal complaints is 18.7:1, compared to 16.2:1 in the previous quarter.

| Number of compliments received | | |
|---|-----------------|------------------|
| Service Area | Current Quarter | Previous Quarter |
| Children's Homes | 5 (8.9%) | 1.2% |
| Looked After Children - Durham | 1 (1.8%) | 0 |
| Looked After Children - Aycliffe | 3 (5.4%) | 2.5% |
| Pathfinder service | 20 (37.5%) | 27.2% |
| Safeguarding Children – Bishop Auckland | 2 (3.6%) | 2.5% |
| Safeguarding Children – Chester le Street | 1 (1.8%) | 0 |
| Safeguarding Children - Durham | 1 (1.8%) | 0 |
| Safeguarding Children - Easington | 3 (5.4%) | 0 |
| Safeguarding Children – Seaham | 2 (3.6%) | 1.2% |
| Safeguarding Children – Stanley 2 | 1 (1.8%) | 2.5% |
| Young People's Service | 2 (3.6%) | 1.2% |
| 4Real Team | 15 (26.8%) | 4.9% |
| Total | 56 | 81 |

Suggestions

59. No suggestions were received during the quarter regarding social care services.

Actions as a result of statutory representations

60. No actions have been identified as a direct result of Stage 1 statutory complaints received during this quarter, but as a result of informally resolved complaints about social care matters, it has been brought to managers' attention that assessments of disabled young people should be carried out in accordance with procedures and in a timely manner.

Neighbourhood Services (NS)

61. **Overview**
The NS service grouping consists of 5 main service areas and between 1 April 2012 and 30 June 2012, 737 complaints, 75 compliments and 71 suggestions were received and recorded on the CRM.

| Abbreviation | Service Area |
|--------------|--|
| DS | Direct Services |
| EHCP | Environmental Health & Consumer Protection |
| PBS | Projects and Business Services |
| S&L | Sport and Leisure |
| TS | Technical Services |

62. As can be seen in the table below; there is variation in the number of complaints received throughout the year.

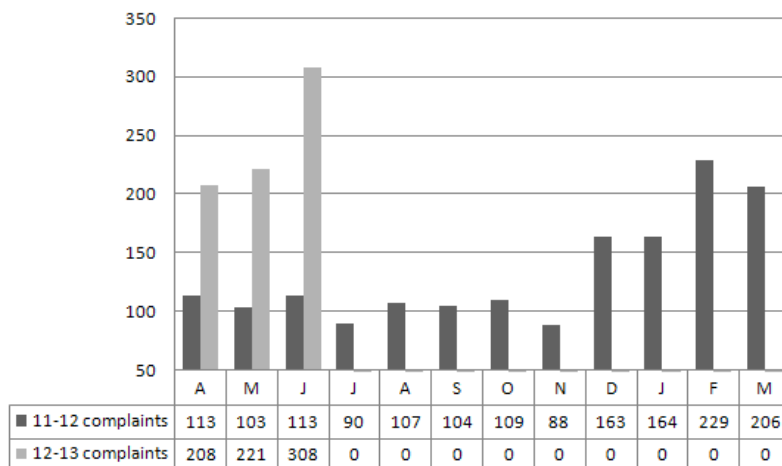
| Service Grouping | Number Received | | | | | | | | | | | | % change* |
|------------------|-----------------|-------|------------------------|-----|-----|-----|------------------------|----|----|----|---------------|-----|-----------|
| | 10/11 | 11/12 | 11/12 split by quarter | | | | 12/13 split by quarter | | | | 12/13 to date | | |
| | | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | | | |
| NS | 1,032 | 1,589 | 329 | 301 | 360 | 599 | 737 | - | - | - | 737 | 124 | |

*12/13 to date compared to the same period last year

63. A monthly breakdown is shown in the graph to the right.

64. More than 50% if the complaints received during quarter 1 can be attributed to

- Missed Bins. 291 complaints were received, compared to 34 in the same period last year, and this category made up 44% of the complaints received during quarter 1, 12/13. This increase could be attributed to changes to the refuse and recycling arrangements (Alternate Weekly Collection (AWC)).



- Call waiting time. 71 complaints were received, compared to 13 in the same period last year, and this category made up 11% of the complaints received during quarter 1, 12/13. This increase can be attributed to an increase in calls in relation to council tax billing, benefits and AWC. The council tax and benefits enquiries tend to be complex so are more time consuming which itself increases the wait time for customers.

65. Further detail in relation to these areas can be found in the section of the report dedicated to that service area.

66. Further investigation of the complaints received shows that during quarter 1, 12/13 there were 143 occasions (28% of complaints processed, i.e. excluding those ongoing) where the complaint was not upheld, indicating that although service users were dissatisfied with the service received, the service had in fact acted properly and followed appropriate procedures.

| | Justified (fully or partly) | Not justified | Ongoing | Total |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|---------|-------|
| Number | 370 | 143 | 224 | 737 |
| % of total received | 50% | 19% | 30% | - |

67. If the not justified complaints and those that are ongoing are removed, NS is left with 370 justified complaints, 232 fully and 138 partly

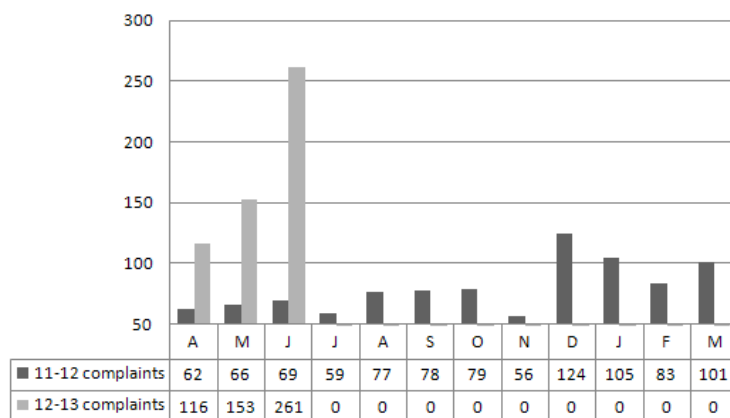
Direct Services (DS)

68. Between 1 April 2012 and 30 June 2012, 530 complaints were received by DS

| | Justified (fully or partly) | Not justified | Ongoing | Total |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|---------|-------|
| Number | 250 | 101 | 179 | 530 |
| % of total received | 47% | 19% | 34% | - |

69. The number of complaints received by DS each month is shown in the graph to the right.

70. There has been a marked increase in the number of complaints received by DS during quarter 1: this is mainly due to an increase in missed bins as changes to our refuse and recycling service have been implemented, as shown in the table below.



| Overarching Complaint Category | Detail | Q1 11/12 | Q1 12/13 | Change | | Direction of Travel |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------|------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|
| | | | | No. | % | |
| Refuse Collection | Missed Collection | 58 | 281 | +223 | +384% | ✗ |
| | Staff not returning bins / containers | 7 | 19 | +12 | +171% | ✗ |
| | Staff making a mess | 4 | 11 | +7 | +175% | ✗ |
| | Special collections | 1 | 3 | +2 | +200% | ✗ |
| | Total | 70 | 314 | +244 | +349% | ✗ |
| | Charges | 19 | 23 | +4 | +21% | ✗ |
| | Lack of Action: Non-delivery of bins and containers | 21 | 30 | +9 | +43% | ✗ |
| | Staff Attitude | 11 | 14 | +3 | +27% | ✗ |
| | TOTAL | 121 | 381 | +260 | +215% | ✗ |

71. Other complaints received by DS during quarter 1 are listed in the following table.

| COMPLAINT CATEGORY | TOTAL | % of total |
|---|------------|-------------|
| Call waiting time | 3 | 1% |
| Charges (excl refuse service) | 3 | 1% |
| Condition of local area | 21 | 4% |
| Damage caused by council | 8 | 2% |
| DCC fleet: driving / parking issues | 7 | 1% |
| Highways: drainage | 1 | 0% |
| Lack of action | 14 | 3% |
| No communication / missed appointments | 12 | 2% |
| Other | 32 | 6% |
| Parking | 2 | 0% |
| response to ASB | 1 | 0% |
| Staff Attitude (excl refuse service) | 2 | 0% |
| Staff making a mess (excl refuse service) | 1 | 0% |
| website / communication | 15 | 3% |
| TOTAL | 503 | 100% |
| comment | 19 | - |
| Not NS | 1 | - |
| service request | 7 | - |

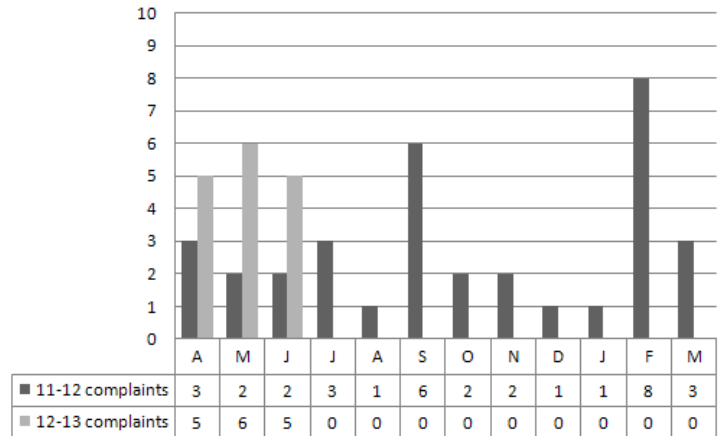
72. A regular meeting has been set up for exchanging data, including complaints and suggestions, in order to improve the customer experience. Learning outcomes from this analysis will result in a number of Improvement actions which will be implemented.

Environment, Health and Consumer Protection (EHCP)

73. Between 1 April 2012 and 30 June 2012, 16 complaints were received in relation to EHCP

| | Justified (fully or partly) | Not justified | Ongoing | Total |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|---------|-------|
| Number | 6 | 6 | 4 | 16 |
| % of total received | 38% | 38% | 25% | - |

74. The number of complaints received by EHCP remains relatively low. The complaints tend to be specific and as such, learning outcomes are difficult to identify. However, the service continues to monitor all complaints in order to identify any emerging trends. The distinction between a genuine complaint and a service request still appears to be an issue but EHCP is endeavouring to resolve at an earlier stage.



Projects and Business Services (PBS)

75. Between 1 April 2012 and 30 June 2012, 133 complaints were received in relation to PBS.

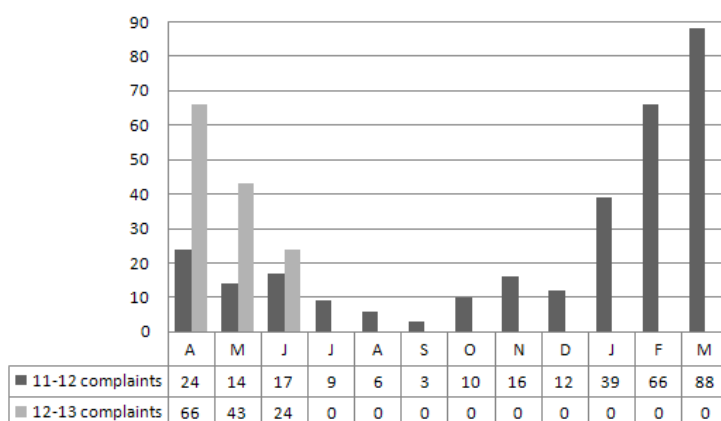
| | Justified (fully or partly) | Not justified | Ongoing | Total |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|---------|-------|
| Number | 94 | 16 | 23 | 133 |
| % of total received | 71% | 12% | 17% | - |

76. The majority of complaints received related to Customer Services and in particular call waiting times.

77. 66 complaints were received by Customer Services in relation to call waiting times, compared to 13 throughout the same period last year.

78. The main reasons for increased call waiting times are:

- An increase in the volume and complexity of calls in relation to council tax billing and benefits enquiries.
- An increase in the number of calls resulting from changes to the refuse collection service.
- An increase in footfall at our access points: mostly in relation to council tax and benefit queries. Resources have been realigned; moving staff from telephone duties to face-to-face duties.

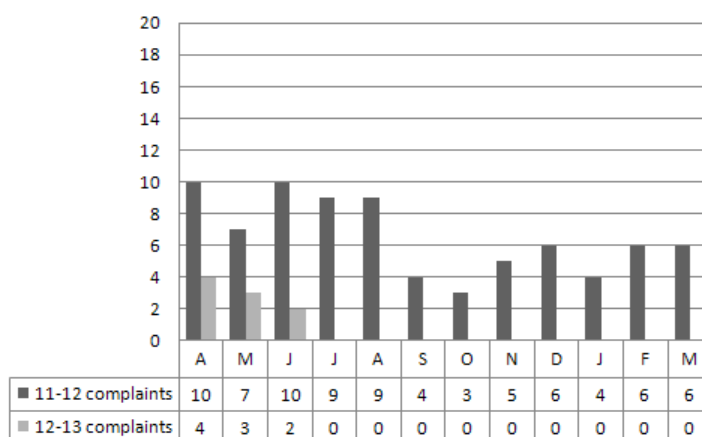


Sport and Leisure Services (S&L)

79. Between 1 April 2012 and 30 June 2012, 9 complaints were received in relation to S&L.

| | Justified (fully or partly) | Not justified | Ongoing | Total |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|---------|-------|
| Number | 1 | 4 | 4 | 9 |
| % of total received | 11% | 44% | 44% | - |

80. The number of complaints received by S&L remains relatively low. The complaints tend to be specific and as such, learning outcomes are difficult to identify. However, the service continues to monitor all complaints in order to identify any emerging trends.

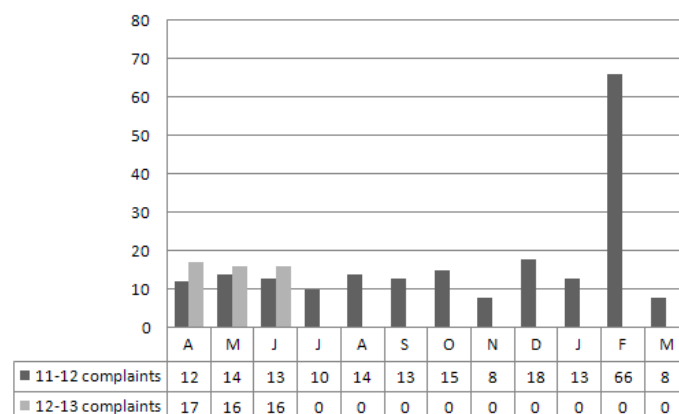


Technical Services (TS)

81. Between 1 April 2012 and 30 June 2012, 49 complaints were received in relation to TS.

| | Justified (fully or partly) | Not justified | Ongoing | Total |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|---------|-------|
| Number | 19 | 16 | 14 | 49 |
| % of total received | 39% | 33% | 29% | - |

82. The number of complaints received by TS remains relatively low. The complaints tend to be specific and as such, learning outcomes are difficult to identify. However, the service continues to monitor all complaints in order to identify any emerging trends.



Compliments

83. Between 1 April 2012 and 30 June 2012, NS received 75 compliments which covered a wide range of subjects and service areas.

84. A large proportion of compliments relate to staff in recognition of their support and help in resolving the customer's concerns and issues. On each of these occasions, the individual officer is notified of the compliment and thanked by their line manager. Many of these relate to the professionalism, politeness and general helpfulness of staff.

85. The remaining compliments relate to our service provision, examples include

- Standard of work, e.g. keeping local areas clean and tidy, carrying out remedial work, road improvements
- Speed of work, e.g. repair to street lights, filling in pot holes.

Suggestions

86. Between 1 April 2012 and 30 June 2012, NS received 71 suggestions which covered a wide range of subjects and service areas.

87. Each suggestion is passed to the appropriate service area and reviewed.

Resources (RES)

88. The Resources service grouping consists of 5 main service areas.
89. During Q1 2012/13 a total of 299 complaints were recorded on the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that related to services delivered by the Resources Service Grouping. While the number is significantly higher than at the same point in Q1 2011/12 when 151 complaints were received, the quarterly trend improved from a worst point of 428 in Q4. Q1 therefore represents a 30% reduction over Q4 2011/12.

| Abbreviation | Service Area |
|--------------|--|
| FS | Financial Services including the Revenues and Benefits Service |
| CF | Corporate Finance |
| HROD | Human Resources and Organisational Development |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| LDS | Legal and Democratic Services |

90. The rise in Resources' complaints during 2011/12 is well documented and is known to have come about due to delays that arose in processing benefit claims during the implementation period of our new single computer system. While it is regrettable that complaints remain higher than the same point last year, it is encouraging that the trend has started to improve; this reflects the improvements that have taken place in benefits processing over recent months. Work continues on the implementation of our improvement plan for the Benefits Service, and in the meantime our staff do their utmost to protect the most vulnerable and respond to complaints.
91. During Q1 2012/13, a total of 16 compliments and 11 suggestions were also logged in the CRM. The majority of compliments related to wedding ceremonies.
92. Of the 299 complaints received in Q1 for Resources, 64% were either justified or part justified (75% in 11/12), 21% were not justified (22% in 11/12) and 15% were unresolved at the point of reporting. (3% in 11/12)
93. Whilst having fewer complaints during Q1 is encouraging, the proportion of complaints responded to within the 10 days standard appears to have worsened from 71% in Q4 to 49% in Q1.

Financial Services

94. During Q1 2012/13, 292 complaints were received in relation to Financial Services (which includes Revenues & Benefits Service)

| | Justified | Partly Justified | Not justified | Ongoing | Total |
|---------------------|-----------|------------------|---------------|---------|-------|
| Number | 89 | 98 | 60 | 45 | 292 |
| % of total received | 64% | | 21% | 15% | 100% |

95. There were 292 complaints received in the first quarter 2012/13; this is a reduction of 31% on the previous quarter. The majority of complaints (41%) were received in April and the remaining evenly split over May and June.

96. The complaints fell in to 8 different categories: Service Failure – 55%, Quality of Service – 17%, Speed of Delivery – 17%, Administration – 8%, Council Policy, Communications, Government Policy & Staff Attitude
97. Of the 292 complaints, 64% were either fully or partly justified, 21% were not justified and the remaining 15% are ongoing. The Benefits service received 219 complaints the majority (65%) of which related to delays in processing claims; approximately half of these complaints were submitted by private landlords.
98. There were two discernible trends common to both Revenues and Benefits: issues related to contacting the council and the calculation of benefits or Council Tax bills. Customers reported long call waiting times, having to wait in offices, and inconsistent advice and information being given. Other customers complained to dispute their benefit calculation or Council Tax bill (36 complaints).
99. In the last quarter the Revenues service reported that a number of complaints were received following changes to Council Tax charges on long term empty properties and exemptions on second homes; in Q1 4 such complaints where received.
100. The Benefits Service has a comprehensive recovery plan which is monitored on a weekly basis. This plan has produced positive results and delays have been significantly reduced and this is reflected in the reduction of complaints received in May and June. Likewise the service continues to meet regularly and work with Customer Services to improve the customers' experience when contacting the Council. Landlords have now been given a dedicated email address which is closely monitored.

Legal & Democratic Services

101. During Q1 2012/13, 7 complaints were received in relation to Legal and Democratic Services.

| | Justified | Partly Justified | Not justified | Ongoing | Total |
|---------------------|-----------|------------------|---------------|---------|-------|
| Number | 3 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 7 |
| % of total received | 43% | | 57% | 0% | 100% |

102. The complaints received related to contact issues for our Registration service, delays with sending out marriage certificates, delays with land charges and right to buy issues. All complaints have been handled within the quarter and 3 were justified. Relevant managers within Legal and Democratic Services have been involved in the necessary investigations and responses and have considered the implications of each.

Compliments & Suggestions

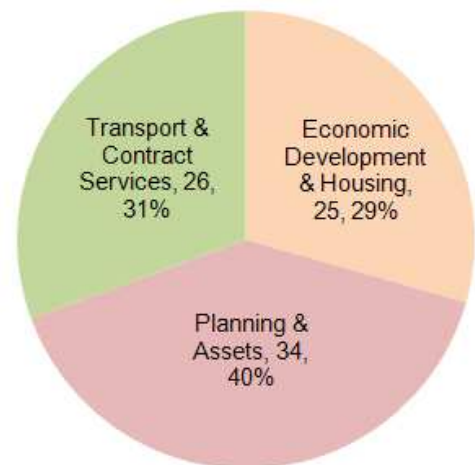
103. During Q1 2012/13 we received a total of 16 compliments and 11 suggestions.
104. The majority of compliments were for carrying out wedding ceremonies, and for staff in the Benefits Service.
105. Suggestions were received in relation to the wording of letters from the Revenues and Benefits Service. A project to review all correspondence and notification letters is planned and will be undertaken during the remainder of 2012/2013.

Regeneration and Economic Development (RED)

106. The level of Stage 1 complaints received by RED has remained consistent in comparison with previous quarters. The 4 quarters of 2011/12 saw 84, 76, 79 and 88 complaints being received respectively. Taken in the context of service changes and budget reductions the maintaining of complaints levels can be seen positively.

Stage 1 Complaints

| Service Area | Number Received | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------|------------------------|----|----|----|---------------|
| | 10/11 | 11/12 | 12/13 split by quarter | | | | 12/13 to date |
| | | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | |
| Economic Development & Housing | 106 | 119 | 25 | | | | 25 |
| Planning & Assets | 145 | 129 | 34 | - | - | - | 34 |
| Transport & Contract Services | 46 | 79 | 26 | | | | 26 |
| TOTAL | 297 | 327 | 85 | | | | 85 |



| Service Area | % Stage 1 complaints acknowledged within 2 day deadline | % Stage 1 complaints replied to within 10 day deadline |
|---|---|--|
| Economic Development & Housing | 100.0% | 77.3% |
| Planning & Assets | 58.8% | 36.7% |
| Transport & Contract Services | 73.1% | 47.8% |
| RED Total | 74.1% | 52.0% |

| | Justified | Part Justified | Not Justified |
|---|------------|----------------|---------------|
| Economic Development & Housing | 22.7% | 45.4% | 31.8% |
| Planning & Assets | 23.3% | 10% | 66.7% |
| Transport & Contract Services | 26.1% | 39.1% | 34.8% |
| RED Total | 24% | 29.3% | 46.7% |

Stage 2 complaints

| Service Area | Number Received | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|------------------------|----|----|----|---------------|
| | 11/12 | 12/13 split by quarter | | | | 12/13 to date |
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | |
| Economic Development & Housing | 7 | 2 | | | | 2 |
| Planning & Assets | 29 | 7 | | | | 7 |
| Transport & Contract Services | 1 | - | | | | - |
| TOTAL | 37 | 9 | | | | 9 |

| Service Area | % Stage 2 complaints acknowledged within 2 day deadline | % Stage 2 complaints replied to within 10 day deadline |
|---|---|--|
| Economic Development & Housing | 100.0% | 0% |
| Planning & Assets | 100.0% | 0% |
| Transport & Contract Services | - | - |
| RED Total | 100% | 0% |

Economic Development and Housing

107. During Quarter 1, 25 stage 1 complaints were received by the Economic Development and Housing service all in connection with Housing.
108. Of the 25 complaints received, 19 were in relation to Durham City Homes mainly repairs and maintenance issues, 5 were in connection to Housing Solutions and 1 was for Housing Regeneration.
109. 2 complaints have escalated to Stage 2 during Quarter 1, both in relation to Durham City Homes.

Planning and Assets

110. During Quarter 1, 36 Stage 1 complaints have been received by the Planning and Assets service.
111. Of the 36 complaints received, 19 were in relation to Development Management mainly in relation to planning decisions, 3 were in relation to Spatial Policy, 7 were in relation to Assets and 5 were in relation to Environment and Design.
112. 7 complaints escalated to Stage 2 during Quarter 1 all of which were received by Development Management and were in relation to building control and planning decisions

Transport and Contract Services

113. During Quarter 1, 26 complaints were received by Transport and Contract Services.
114. Of the 26, 14 were received by Sustainable Travel, 10 were received by Strategic Traffic and 2 by Supported Housing. The complaints covered a wide variety of issues not providing any themes for discussion.
115. During Quarter 1 no complaints escalated to Stage 2.

Compliments and Suggestions

| Service Area | Compliments | Suggestions |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| Economic Development & Housing | 1 | 1 |
| Planning & Assets | 36 | 5 |
| Transport & Contract Services | 1 | 3 |
| RED Total | 38 | 9 |

116. The compliments received by RED are generally thanks to staff for the service they have provided. All compliments have been passed to the relevant staff and teams and have also been raised during team meetings highlighting the importance of a positive customer focus. All suggestions have been considered.

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO): current activity

117. During quarter 1, 2012/13, the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) initiated investigations into 8 matters relating to a range of complaints concerning:
- **Anti-social Behaviour.** Outcome awaited
 - **Planning / Environmental Health.** Outcome awaited
 - **Highways.** Outcome awaited
 - **School Admissions.** Outcome awaited
 - **Noise Nuisance.** Outcome awaited
 - **Refuse / Recycling.** Following preliminary enquiries, LGO decided not to investigate this matter
 - **Benefits and Tax.** Of the 2 cases, LGO decided to discontinue one matter. The other matter is under investigation and the outcome is awaited
118. The Ombudsman delivered decisions on 8 matters which had been subject to investigations that had been initiated prior to the beginning of the quarter. These matters can be summarised as follows:
- **School admissions Appeal.** LGO discontinued the investigation.
 - **School Transport.** LGO discontinued the investigation
 - **Environmental Services, Public Protection and Regulation Issue (flooding).** LGO discontinued the investigation
 - **Benefits and Tax.** This matter was outside LGO jurisdiction
 - **Planning and Development.** Of the 4 cases; 2 were discontinued, following preliminary enquiries LGO decided not to proceed with another. In the fourth case, LGO identified maladministration but the case was ultimately discontinued following

agreement of a local settlement. However, learning outcomes were identified in relation to this fourth case. It was identified that there is a need for

- accuracy when checking the extent of neighbourhood consultation undertaken
- accuracy and attention to detail when drafting reports to determine planning applications.

The Ombudsman's decision was circulated to all relevant Line Managers for information, with a service management request that implications of decisions are discussed within teams and staff are reminded of the required standards of work. Attention was also drawn to the need for all staff to complete all standard control documentation on planning application files, including the fail safes on "Site Record Sheets".

119. During the quarter the Ombudsman also notified the Council of the outcome in relation to a range of matters which were not subject to full investigation. The Ombudsman's investigators reached their decisions on the basis of the details supplied by complainants supplemented in some instances with contextual information from Council officers. These matters can be summarised as follows:
- **Noise Nuisance.** This issue was out of LGO jurisdiction.
 - **Benefits and Tax.** Investigation was not initiated,
 - **Adult Care Services.** Investigation was not initiated,
 - **Planning and Development Issue.** Investigation was not initiated,
 - **Environmental Services, Public Protection and Regulation.** This issue was outside of jurisdiction.
 - **Planning and Control.** Investigation was not initiated.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND REASONS

120. Members of Standards Committee note the report.
121. When the current reporting regime for complaints handling was introduced it was on the understanding that refinements/further development would take place as a continuing process. The views of Members as part of this process are always welcome.

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