

**Report of Terry Collins- Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. To present performance and information in relation to complaints, compliments and suggestions for quarter 2, 2012/13; highlighting any learning outcomes resulting from the complaints, compliments and suggestions received.

**Change to Service Groupings**

2. This report captures the changes presented as a result of the integration of Adults, Wellbeing and Health and Children and Young People Services and the transfer of culture and arts functions from AWBH to Neighbourhood Services.

**Background**

3. This report provides information in relation to the 2 types of complaint the Council deals with:
  - **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
4. 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 Children and Adults Services are provided in the section appropriate to that service grouping.
5. The Corporate Complaints Unit (CCU), and the Council as a whole, works to specified service standards for dealing with non-statutory complaints; which are, acknowledging all complaints within 2 working days; responding to stage 1 complaints within 10 working days and responding to stage 2 complaints within 20 working days.

**Review of the complaints process**

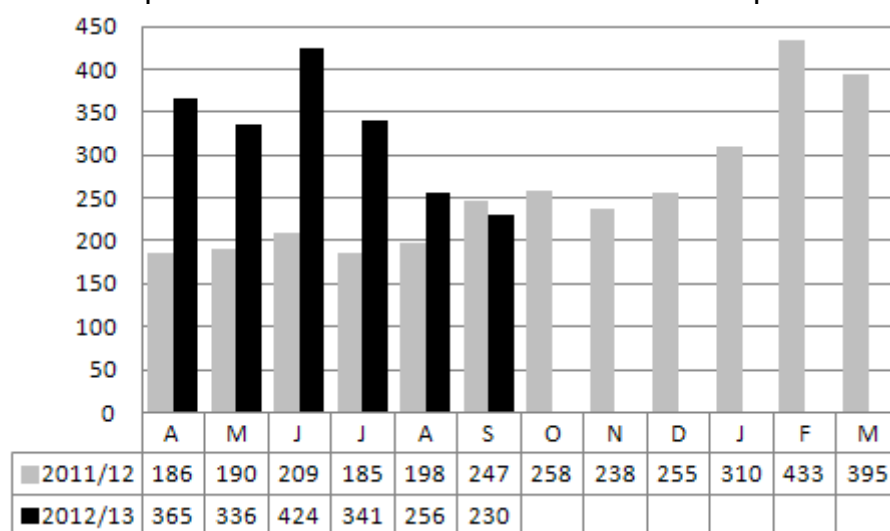
6. The Council's Customer First Strategy is in the process of being refreshed and includes a review of the current Corporate Complaints Policy and a revised mechanism for capturing learning outcomes. This work cuts across all service areas of the council and is aimed at both streamlining the processes currently in place and implementing an approach to working much more closely with service areas to use customer feedback, and in particular customer demand instigated by service failure, to ensure that improvement actions are implemented. Work is also currently underway to review the way in which complaints are captured on the CRM system to enable the system to capture more detailed information and improve the work flow which should result in better reporting.

## Summary of Complaints, compliments and suggestions received across the Council during Quarter 2, 2012/13

7. Between 1 July 2012 and the 30 September 2012, 827 non-statutory complaints, 442 compliments and 74 suggestions were received by Durham County Council.

### Complaints

8. Overall, there has been a 31% increase in the number of non-statutory complaints received and recorded on the CRM or SSID systems during quarter 2, 12/13 compared to those received during quarter 2, 11/12. The table below shows a comparison of the total numbers of complaints received across the Council since April 2011:



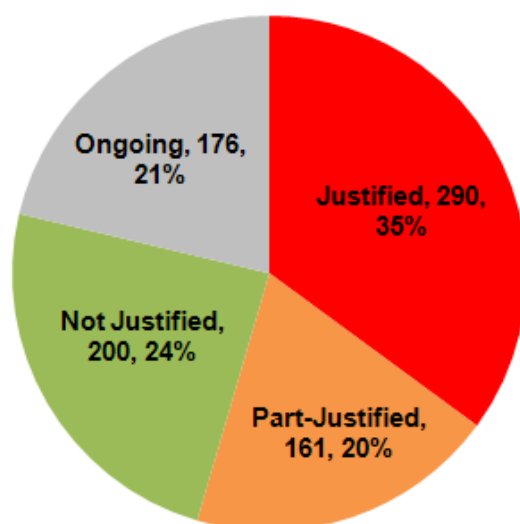
9. The table below shows a breakdown of complaints received across Service Groupings since 2010/11:

Service Grouping	10/11 Total	11/12					12/13				
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
ACE	6	3	1	2	4	10	0	2	-	-	2
CAS	53	18	32	14	19	83	4	15	-	-	19
NS	1,069	329	301	360	599	1,589	737	537	-	-	1,274
RED	297	84	76	79	88	327	85	88	-	-	173
RES	350	151	220	296	428	1,095	299	185	-	-	484
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,775</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>751</b>	<b>1,138</b>	<b>3,104</b>	<b>1,125</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,952</b>

10. Analysis of the data shows that the highest numbers of complaints were due to:
- Missed Bins. 178 complaints were received, compared to 68 in the same period last year. This increase can be attributed to changes to the refuse and recycling arrangements by moving to the Alternate Weekly Collection (AWC) service. However, it can also be seen that the number of complaints of this type are decreasing, with 40% fewer being received during quarter 2 compared to quarter 1.
  - Disputed benefit overpayments. 33 complaints related to benefits and 23 to council tax. Investigation suggests the increase in this nature of complaint is because more changes of circumstances have been processed which has led to an increase in benefit overpayments and revised council tax bills.
11. During this period, 96% of stage 1 complaints and 75% of Stage 2 complaints were responded to within the target of 2 working days. In addition, 63% of stage 1

complaints were responded to within the target of 10 working days, and 57% of stage 2 complaints were responded to within the target of 20 working days.

12. The Corporate Complaints Unit (CCU) is responsible for both acknowledging complaints and for working with services to endeavour to ensure 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.
13. 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 during these busy periods.
14. Further investigation of the complaints received shows that during quarter 2, 2012/13 there were 200 occasions (24% of complaints processed) 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 the correct procedures.



15. If the not justified complaints and those that are ongoing are removed, DCC is left with 451 (55%) justified complaints, 290 fully and 161 part justified, from which there is possibility of learning.
16. 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 2, 2012/13.

Service Grouping	Compliments	Suggestions
ACE	3	1
CAS	312	0
NS	67	55
RED	39	11
RES	21	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>74</b>

17. A large proportion of compliments are for 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.

### **Detailed report for each service grouping for quarter 2, 2012/13**

18. The following sections provide details for each Service Grouping in relation to complaints compliments and suggestions received in quarter 2 and the learning outcomes applied to improve service delivery for those complaints which were justified

#### **Assistant Chief Executive's Office (ACE)**

19. The ACE service grouping consists of 3 service areas and between 1 July 2012 and 30 September 2012 ACE received 2 complaints, 3 compliments and 1 suggestion.

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Service Area</b>
<b>PCE</b>	Partnerships & Community Engagement
<b>PP</b>	Planning & Performance
<b>PC</b>	Policy & Communications

#### **Policy and Communications**

20. During quarter 2, 1 complaint was received by Policy and Communications, relating to non-receipt of notification/consultation material/free newspaper from Durham County Council, in particular AAP information. This complaint is currently under consideration with the relevant service grouping.

#### **Planning and Performance**

21. During quarter 2, 1 complaint was received by Planning and Performance following a £10 charge for the provision of CCTV footage to the customer. A written response was sent to the customer explaining that the £10 fee related to the request for personal information under the Data Protection Act and not for the purchase of the CCTV footage.

#### **Compliments and Suggestions**

22. During quarter 2, ACE received 3 compliments; 2 compliments were received by the County Records Office. 1 compliment expressed thanks for assistance given by the team from a former colleague. The second compliment came from a member of the public who was conducting research into their family history and found the County Records team extremely helpful. A third compliment was made thanking the authority on the provision of a booklet containing service contact numbers which they had found useful.
23. A suggestion was made for a Social Care Direct contact number to be added to the Durham County News. However there is already a generic contact number in the Durham County News which will direct customers to the relevant service grouping depending upon the nature of the call.

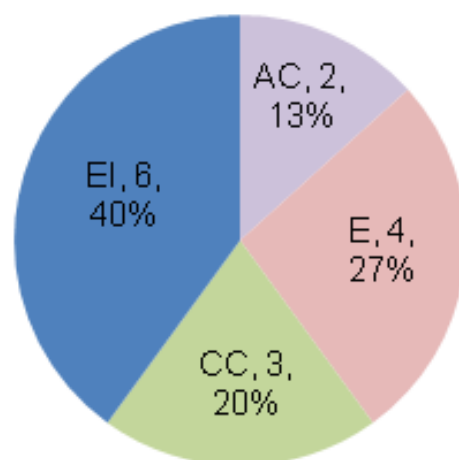
## Children and Adults Services (CAS)

### Corporate Complaints

24. During the quarter, 15 complaints were received (2 were for Adult Care, 5 for Education, 3 for Children's Care and 5 for Early Intervention and Involvement). See the Table below which shows the performance comparison on previous quarters.

Abbreviation	Service Area
AC	Adult Care
E	Education
CC	Children's Care
EI	Early Intervention & Involvement

Comparison of Complaints Received by Quarter						
	Q2 11/12 Total	Q3 11/12 Total	Q4 11/12 Total	Q1 12/13 Total	Q2 12/13 Total (Combined)	Direction of travel from previous Quarter
Adult	28	12	12	3	15	↑
Childrens	0	0	7	1		



25. Of the stage 1 complaints 100% were acknowledged within 2 working days and 94.4% were responded to within 10 working days.
26. Twelve complaints related to Service Failure/Poor Service, 1 to Staff Attitude and 2 were about the Decision Regarding Services.
27. Examples of these complaints include:
- Complaint about the County Council's handling of travellers encampments in two locations within the County.
  - Complaints regarding the Blue Badge application process including one from a complainant who experienced a lack of communication regarding their application. In the second case the applicant for a Blue Badge had been declined despite having had a badge for 6 years. The criteria for Blue Badge applications had changed and this was explained.
  - Complaint about Children's travel costs to and from school.
  - Complaint regarding lack of Communication with a Children's Service Area.
  - Complaint relating to advice received from a school meals application.
28. Of the 15 complaints received, 7 were not justified, 2 were partially justified, 3 were justified and 3 are ongoing.

**Outcome of complaints completed in 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter (previous quarter's figures shown in brackets)**


Service Area	Justified	Partly Justified	Not justified	Resolved at first point of contact	Ongoing	Total
Adult Care	1	0	1	0	0	2
Early Intervention & Involvement	0	1	1	0	3	5
Education	2	1	2	0	0	5
Children's Care	0	0	3	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>

**Compliments and Suggestions**

29. During the quarter, 95 compliments were received; 1 for Adult Care, 87 for Early Intervention and Involvement, 6 for Education, 1 Planning and Service Strategy. Of these, 64 compliments were received by the Welfare Rights service, complimenting the work and assistance given during Welfare applications and appeals and 20 for the One Point Hubs.
30. There has been a 36% decrease in the numbers of compliments received. This is due to a significant drop in the amount received by the Adult Learning & Skills Service. However, this is to be expected as it is more usual for compliments to be received by the Service at the end of academic terms.
31. There were 5 Comments/Suggestions received directed towards Early Intervention and Involvement and Education.

**Adult Statutory complaints, compliments and suggestions**

32. During the quarter, 26 complaints were received. Details of the quarterly performance are shown below.

Comparison of Complaints Received by Quarter						
Service Area	Q2 11/12	Q3 11/12	Q4 11/12	Q1 12/13	Q2 12/13	Direction of Travel from previous quarter
Adult Care	39	35	21	19	26	

33. Of complaints received 96% (25) were acknowledged within 3 working days.
34. Complaints Resolution Plans were completed in all cases. There were 19 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.
35. 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. See Table below.

Complaints Received by Service Area		
Service Area	Number	
	Current Quarter	Previous Quarter
Social Work Teams (Learning Disability /Mental Health/Carers)	4 (15.4%)	1(5%)
Social Work Teams (Older Persons /Mental Health Services Older Persons/ Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment & Sensory Support)	11 (42.4%)	11(58%)
Social Work Teams (Safeguarding)	1 (3.8%)	1(5%)
County Durham Care and Support	2 (7.6%)	1 (5%)
Commissioning	8 (30.8%)	5(27%)
Policy, Planning & Performance	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26 (100%)</b>	<b>19(100%)</b>

### Declined Complaints

37. There were 3 complaints declined in the quarter, all on the grounds that the issues complained about had, in each case, occurred several years ago – in one case 14 years ago. Full explanations were given as to why the complaints could not be accepted.
38. Quality of Service – Communications/Information constituted the highest category of complaint with 6 recorded. See Table below.

Complaints by Classification	
Classification	No. of complaints
Lack Of Service - Communications/Information	6
Finance - Charging Policy	4
Disputed Decision	4
Finance - Assessment	3
Quality Of Service – Personal Care	3
Provision Of Service – Equipment	2
Quality Of Service – Work Of Other Agencies	2
Professional Conduct Of Staff	2
Missed/Late Domiciliary care Calls	1
Quality Of Service – Personal Financial Issues	1
Safeguarding	1
Application of Service Guidance/Procedures	1
Provision of Service - Assessment	1

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

39. Of the 19 complaints completed in the quarter, 68% (13) were not upheld compared to 58% in the previous quarter. Of the remaining 6 completed complaints, 4 were partially upheld and 1 was upheld. See Table below.

Outcome of Complaints Completed in 2nd Quarter					
Service Area	Number				
	Not upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	TBC	Total
County Durham Care and Support	1	0	0	1	2
Social Work Teams (Learning Disability/Mental Health/Carers)	4	0	2	0	6
Social Work Teams (Older Persons/Mental Health Services Older Persons /Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment & Sensory Support)	3	1	0	5	9
Social Work Teams (Safeguarding)	1	0	0	0	1
Commissioning	4	0	3	1	8
Policy, Planning & Performance	0	0	0	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>26</b>

### Actions as a result of statutory complaints

40. During the period the following outcomes/actions have been identified from the complaints concluded:
41. The Operations Manager for Older Persons/Mental Health Services for Older People/Physical Disabilities and Sensory Support has issued instructions that:
- Where a client is self-funding (i.e. they have capital above the allowable limits) but who has been assessed as meeting the criteria for 24 hour residential care and their capital may reduce within the next 4 months; the need to keep open the case on the Social Services Information Database – IT system. This will ensure that a financial assessment will not be overlooked and conducted in a timely way.
  - A financial assessment cannot be carried out if the client has not had an assessment that has concluded that they meet the eligibility criteria to receive services.
  - Where a service user or their family makes arrangements to enter into 24 hour care without reference to adult social care. Staff have been reminded that a financial assessment must not be undertaken until there has been an assessment of need against the eligibility criteria and Locality Panel approval given to the placement.

### Compliments

42. There were 67 compliments received in Quarter 2. See Table below.




Compliments Received by Service Area		
Service Area	Number	
	Current Quarter	Previous Quarter
County Durham Care and Support	45 (67.2%)	44 (49.5%)
Social Work Teams (Learning Disability/Mental Health/Carers)	0 (0%)	1 (0.5%)
Social Work Teams (Older Persons/Mental Health Services Older Persons /Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment & Sensory Support)	20 (20.98%)	45 (50%)
Planning & Service Strategy	2 (3%)	0 (0%)
Commissioning	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>67 (100%)</b>	<b>90 (100%)</b>

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

#### Children Statutory complaints, compliments and suggestions

44. During the quarter, 18 Stage 1 complaints were received. Details of the quarterly performance are show below:

Comparison of Complaints Received by Quarter						
Service Area	Q2 11/12	Q3 11/12	Q4 11/12	Q1 12/13	Q2 12/13	Direction of Travel from previous quarter
Children's Care	12	5	5	4	18	

45. Of these complaints 100% were acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt.
46. Due to their complexity, only 3 (16.7%) of the statutory Stage 1 complaints were resolved within the 20 working day timescale. Of the remaining 15 complaints, 9 (50.0%) were resolved outside 20 days, 5 complaints (27.7%) are still to be resolved and 1 complaint (5.6%) was withdrawn.
47. Safeguarding Children Teams received the most with 13, followed by Disability Social Work with 3 complaints. See Table below.

Complaints Received by Service Area		
Service Area	Current Quarter	Previous Quarter
Disability Social Work	3 (16.7%)	1 (33.3%)
Initial Response Team	1 (5.6%)	0
Looked After Children Aycliffe	1 (5.6%)	0
Safeguarding Children Aycliffe	2 (11.1%)	0
Safeguarding Children Crook	1 (5.6%)	0
Safeguarding Children Durham	3 (16.7%)	1 (33.3%)
Safeguarding Children Easington / Fostering & Adoption	1 (5.6%)	0
Safeguarding Children Peterlee	2 (11.1%)	0
Safeguarding Children Seaham	1 (5.6%)	0
Safeguarding Children Stanley 1	3 (16.7%)	0
Young People's Service (North)	0	1 (33.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 (100%)</b>	<b>3 (100%)</b>

### Declined Complaints

48. No complaints were declined during the quarter. There were 6 issues relating to Children's Care services that were dealt with as enquiries rather than complaints.
49. Poor Service was the highest category of complaint with 8 recorded. See Table below.

Complaints by Classification	
Classification	No. of complaints
Poor Service	8
Staff Conduct or Attitude	7
Decision regarding a Service	6
Withdrawn	1

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

50. Of the 18 complaints completed in the quarter, 58.3% (7) were not upheld. Of the remaining 6 completed complaints, 3 were partially upheld and 2 were upheld. See Table below.

Outcome of Complaints Completed in 2nd Quarter					
Service Area	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	TBC	Total
Disability Social Work	-	2	-	1	3
Initial Response Team	1	-	-	-	1
Looked After Children Aycliffe	-	-	1	-	1
Safeguarding Children Aycliffe	1	-	-	1	2
Safeguarding Children Crook	-	-	-	1	1
Safeguarding Children Durham	-	-	-	2	3
Safeguarding Children Easington / Fostering & Adoption	1	-	-	-	1
Safeguarding Children Peterlee	-	-	1	1 withdrawn	2
Safeguarding Children Seaham	-	1	-	-	1
Safeguarding Children Stanley 1	3	-	-	-	3
Young People's Service	-	-	-	-	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>18</b>

### Actions as a result of statutory complaints

51. During the period there were no general learning themes identified; however the following actions resulted from concluded complaints:
- Parents complained about the contact arrangements with their children who are looked after. The complaint was about the collection arrangements with the Volunteer Driver Service (VDS). It was found that the information provided to the VDS by the Safeguarding Children team (who have responsibility for arranging the contact between the children and the parents) had not been clear enough and this was rectified. The parents were asked to inform the children's Social Worker if there were any further incidences.
  - A young person (aged 11) in foster care complained that his placement was regularly reviewed, and he wanted to be told that he could stay in the same placement until he was 18 years old. Information about the case was reviewed, a care team meeting held (including the young person's Advocate), a report to the appropriate panel was written and the outcome was that approval was granted for long-term funding for the current placement.

## Compliments

52. There were 150 compliments received in Quarter 2. See Table below.

Compliments Received by Service Area		
Service Area within SaSS	Compliments Received	
	Current Quarter	Previous Quarter
Aycliffe Secure Services	2 (1.3%)	0
CATS (Copelaw Activity Service)	95 (63.3%)	0
Children's Homes	8 (5.3%)	5 (8.9%)
Community Support service	14 (9.3%)	0
Fostering & Adoption	1 (0.6%)	0
Full Circle service	2 (1.3%)	0
Looked After Children - Durham	3 (2.0%)	1 (1.8%)
Looked After Children - Aycliffe	2 (1.3%)	3 (5.4%)
Pathfinder service	0	19 (33.9%)
Safeguarding Children – Bishop Auckland	1 (0.6%)	2 (3.6%)
Safeguarding Children – Chester le Street	1 (0.6%)	1 (1.8%)
Safeguarding Children - Durham	0	1 (1.8%)
Safeguarding Children - Easington	0	3 (5.4%)
Safeguarding Children - Peterlee	2 (1.3%)	0
Safeguarding Children – Seaham	2 (1.3%)	2 (3.6%)
Safeguarding Children – Stanley 2	0	1 (1.8%)
Young People's Service	1 (0.6%)	2 (3.6%)
4Real Team	16 (10.7%)	15 (26.8%)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>56</b>

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

## Neighbourhood Services (NS)

### Overview

54. The NS service grouping consists of 5 main service areas and between 1 July 2012 and 30 September 2012, 537 complaints, 67 compliments and 55 suggestions were received and recorded on the CRM.

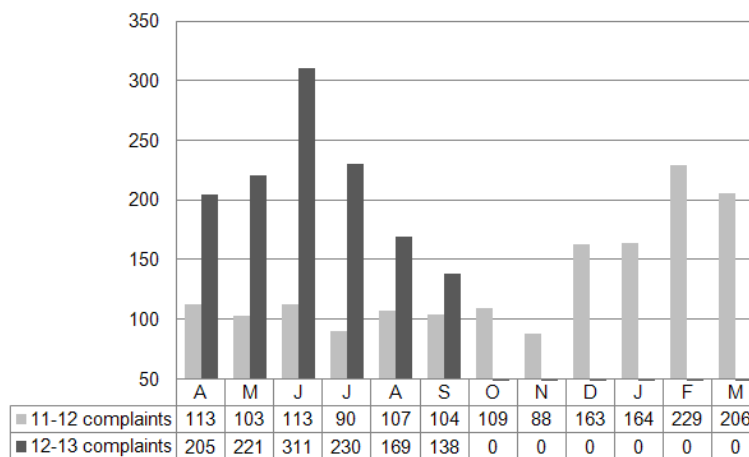
Abbreviation	Service Area
DS	Direct Services
EHCP	Environmental Health & Consumer Protection
PBS	Projects and Business Services
S&L	Sport and Leisure
TS	Technical Services

55. 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		
<b>NS</b>	1,032	1,589	329	301	360	599	737	537	-	-	1,274	102

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

56. A monthly breakdown is shown in the graph below.



57. More than 50% of the complaints received during quarter 2 can be attributed to the following 4 categories

- Missed Bins. 178 complaints were received, compared to 68 in the same period last year, and this category made up 35% of all complaints received during quarter 2, 12/13. This increase could be attributed to changes to the refuse and recycling arrangements (Alternate Weekly Collection (AWC)). However, the number of complaints of this type are decreasing over time, 40% fewer were received during quarter 2 compared to quarter 1.

- Refuse staff not returning bins/containers. 33 complaints were received from residents, 5 of whom are on the assist list, complaining refuse bins/containers are not being returned to the correct location.
- Lack of action. 26 complaints were received from residents who believed NS did not respond appropriately to their original service request. It should be noted that almost 135,000 requests for service were received during quarter 2.
- Charges for replacement wheeled bins: 25 complaints were received from residents objecting to the £20 charge for replacement bins.

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

59. Further investigation of the complaints received shows that during quarter 2, 12/13 there were 111 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	289	111	137	537
% of total received	54%	21%	25%	-

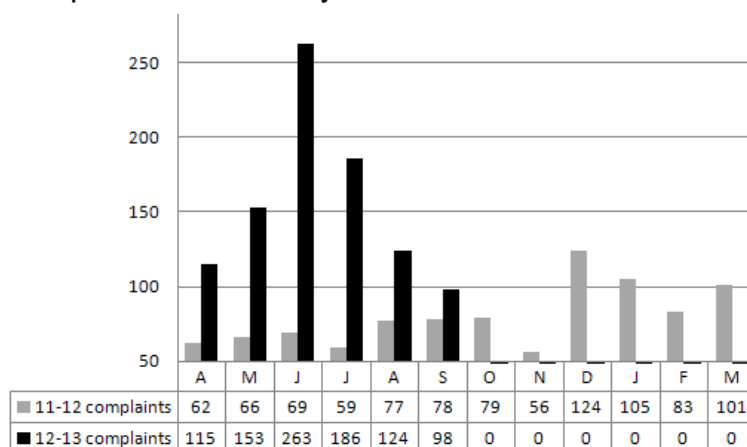
60. If the not justified complaints and those that are ongoing are removed, NS is left with 289 justified complaints, 199 fully and 90 partly

#### Direct Services (DS)

61. Between 1 July 2012 and 30 September 2012, 408 complaints were received by DS

	Justified (fully or partly)	Not justified	Ongoing	Total
Number	228	82	98	408
% of total received	56%	20%	24%	-

62. The number of complaints received by DS each month is shown in the graph below.



63. There was 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. However, after peaking in June, the number of complaints has started to decline.

Overarching Complaint Category	Detail	Q2 11/12	Q2 12/13	Change		Direction of Travel
				No.	%	
Refuse Collection	Missed Collection	68	174	106	156	✗
	Staff not returning bins / containers	8	33	25	312	✗
	Staff making a mess	9	4	-5	-56	✓
	Special collections	5	5	0	-	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>✗</b>
<b>Charges</b>		17	24	7	41	✗
<b>Lack of Action: Non-delivery of bins and containers</b>		14	15	1	7	✗
<b>Staff Attitude</b>		6	16	10	167	✗
<b>TOTAL</b>		127	271	144	114	✗

64. Other complaints received by DS during quarter 2 are listed in the following table.

COMPLAINT CATEGORY	TOTAL	% of total
Condition of local area: detritus	1	0%
Condition of local area: grass cutting	11	3%
Condition of local area: litter	1	0%
Condition of local area: overhanging hedges / trees	5	1%
Condition of local area: parks / open spaces	8	2%
Customer Service: call waiting time	1	0%
DCC fleet: driving issues	2	1%
Highways: condition of footway	2	1%
Highways: drainage	2	1%
Lack of action	15	4%
No communication / missed appointments	10	3%
Other	25	6%
Other: staff attitude	12	3%
Other: damage caused by council	16	4%
Other: staff making a mess	6	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>388</b>	
comment	9	
service request	9	

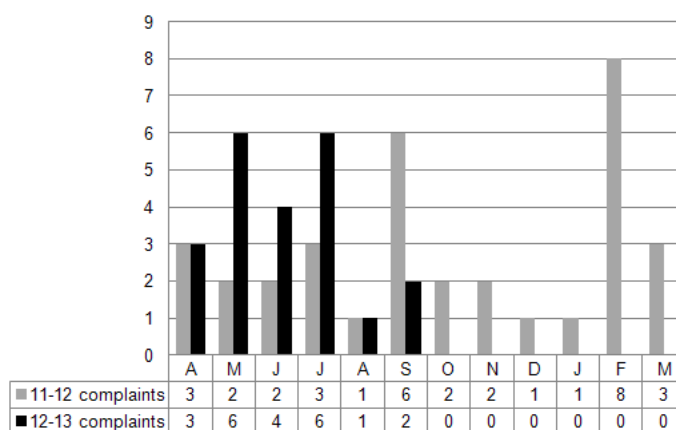
65. A regular meeting, named the "Customer Experience" has been set up for exchanging data, including complaints and suggestions, in order to improve our contact with customers. Learning outcomes from this analysis will result in a number of Improvement actions which are in the process of being implemented.

## Environment, Health and Consumer Protection (EHCP)

66. Between 1 July 2012 and 30 September 2012, 9 complaints were received in relation to EHCP

	Justified (fully or partly)	Not justified	Ongoing	Total
Number	2	6	1	9
% of total received	22%	67%	11%	-

67. 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.

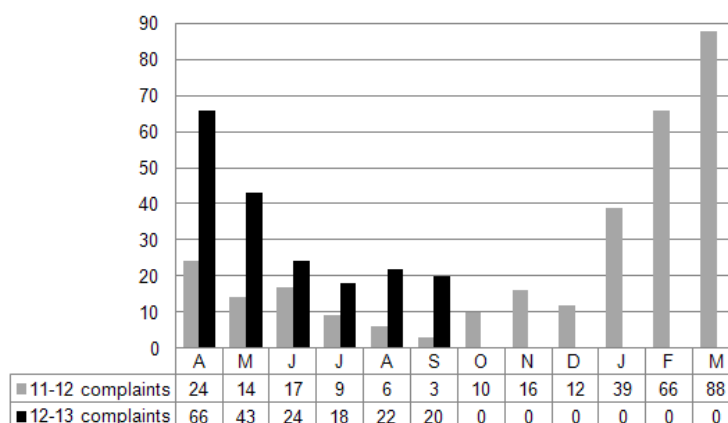


## Projects and Business Services (PBS)

68. Between 1 July 2012 and 30 September 2012, 60 complaints were received in relation to PBS.

	Justified (fully or partly)	Not justified	Ongoing	Total
Number	30	10	20	60
% of total received	50%	17%	33%	-

69. 4 complaints were received in relation to call waiting times in Customer Services; a significant reduction from the complaints received in this respect in quarter 1 which totalled 67. The rest of the complaints relate to phone system issues where individuals were cut off; customers unhappy with the information/advice given; but the majority relate to dissatisfaction in not being informed by the service area after raising a service request; these issues are being addressed through the customer experience meetings to improve customer follow up. A summary of complaint numbers are shown below:



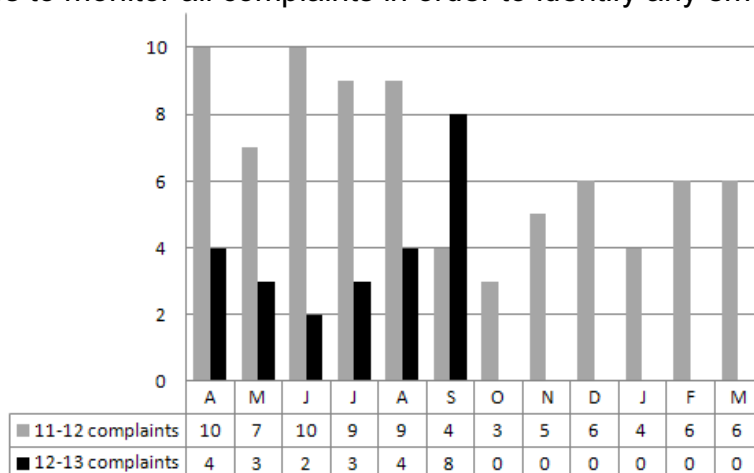


## Sport and Leisure Services (S&L)

70. Between 1 July 2012 and 30 September 2012, 15 complaints were received in relation to S&L.

	Justified (fully or partly)	Not justified	Ongoing	Total
Number	8	4	3	15
% of total received	53%	27%	20%	-

71. 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.

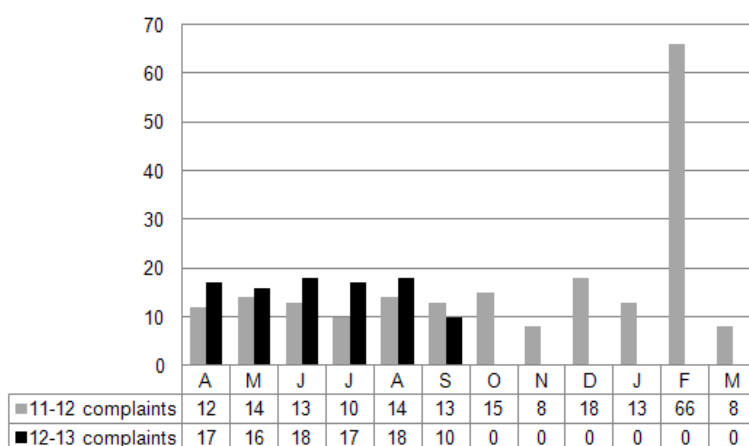


## Technical Services (TS)

72. Between 1 July 2012 and 30 September 2012, 45 complaints were received in relation to TS.

	Justified (fully or partly)	Not justified	Ongoing	Total
Number	21	9	15	45
% of total received	47%	20%	33%	-

73. 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

74. Between 1 July 2012 and 30 September 2012, NS received 67 compliments which covered a wide range of subjects and service areas.
75. 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.
76. 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

77. Between 1 July 2012 and 30 September 2012, NS received 55 suggestions which covered a wide range of subjects and service areas.
78. Each suggestion is passed to the appropriate service area and reviewed.

## Regeneration and Economic Development (RED)

79. The level of Stage 1 complaints received by RED has remained consistent in comparison with previous quarters. Taken in the context of service changes and budget reductions the maintaining of complaints levels can be seen positively.

### Stage 1 Complaints

Service Area	10/11 Total	11/12 Total	12/13 Q1	12/13 Q2	12/13 Q3	13/13 Q4	12/13 Total
<b>Economic Development &amp; Housing</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>119</b>	25	27			52
<b>Planning &amp; Assets</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>129</b>	34	32			66
<b>Transport &amp; Contract Services</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>79</b>	26	29			55
<b>RED Total</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>88</b>			<b>173</b>

Service Area	Justified/ Part Justified	Not Justified
<b>Economic Development &amp; Housing</b>	60%	28%
<b>Planning &amp; Assets</b>	31%	55%
<b>Transport &amp; Contract Services</b>	37.5%	37.5%
<b>RED Total</b>	<b>42.3%</b>	<b>41%</b>

\*Of those due to be determined

## Stage 2 complaints

Service Area	11/12 Total	12/13 Q1	12/13 Q2	12/13 Q3	13/13 Q4	12/13 Total
<b>Economic Development &amp; Housing</b>	7	2	1			3
<b>Planning &amp; Assets</b>	29	7	2			9
<b>Transport &amp; Contract Services</b>	1	-	4			4
<b>RED Total</b>	37	9	7			16

Service Area	% Stage 2 complaints replied to within 20 day deadline
<b>Economic Development &amp; Housing</b>	0%
<b>Planning &amp; Assets</b>	50%
<b>Transport &amp; Contract Services</b>	50%
<b>RED Total</b>	50%

### Economic Development and Housing

80. During Quarter 2, 27 stage 1 complaints were received by the Economic Development and Housing service.
81. Of these, 21 were in relation to Durham City Homes mainly repairs and maintenance issues, 4 were in connection to Housing Solutions, 1 was for Housing Regeneration and 1 in connection with Regeneration and Development
82. 1 complaint in connection to Durham City Homes has escalated to Stage 2 during Quarter 2.

### Planning and Assets

83. During Quarter 2, 32 Stage 1 complaints have been received by the Planning and Assets service.
84. Of the 32 complaints received, 27 were in relation to Development Management mainly in relation to planning decisions, and 5 were in relation to Assets
85. 2 complaints escalated to Stage 2 during Quarter 2 which were received by Development Management and were in relation to planning decisions

### Transport and Contract Services

86. During Quarter 2, 29 complaints were received by Transport and Contract Services.
87. Of the 29, 16 were received by Sustainable Travel, 12 were received by Strategic Traffic and 2 by Supported Housing. The complaints covered a wide variety of issues not providing any themes for discussion.
88. 4 complaints escalated to Stage 2 during Quarter 2, 2 were received by Sustainable Travel and 2 by Strategic Traffic

## Compliments and Suggestions

Service Area	Compliments	Suggestions
<b>Economic Development &amp; Housing</b>	3	2
<b>Planning &amp; Assets</b>	33	5
<b>Transport &amp; Contract Services</b>	3	4
<b>RED Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>11</b>

89. 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.

## Resources (RES)

90. The Resources service grouping consists of 6 main service areas.

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
IA&R	Internal Audit & Risk

91. During Q2 2012/13 a total of 185 complaints were recorded on the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that related to services delivered by the Resources Service Grouping. This represents a 38% improvement over Q1 when 299 complaints were received.
92. The rise in Resources' complaints during 2011/12 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. Significant improvements have been made over recent months on claims processing and this has resulted in fewer complaints arising from delays.
93. During Q2 2012/13, a total of 21 compliments and 7 suggestions were logged in the CRM. The majority of compliments related to wedding ceremonies.
94. Of the 185 complaints received in Q2 for Resources, 64% were either justified or part justified (64% in Q1), 20% were not justified (21% in Q1) and 16% were unresolved at the point of reporting. (15% in Q1).
95. The proportion of complaints responded to within the 10 days standard has improved marginally from 49% in Q1 to 53% in Q2. Colleagues in Financial Services are working to improve responsiveness during the third quarter.

## Financial Services

96. During Q2 of 2012/13, of the 185 complaints in total, 178 complaints were received in relation to Financial Services (which includes Revenues & Benefits Service). This represents a 39% reduction over Q1 when 292 were received – a real positive sign of service improvement.

	Justified	Partly Justified	Not justified	Ongoing	Total
Number	69	44	37	28	178
% of total received	63%		21%	16%	100%

97. The majority of complaints (44%) were received in July and the remaining were evenly spread over August and September.
98. The complaints were attributed to 8 categories: Service Failure –57%, Quality of Service –17%, Speed of Delivery - 17%, Administration – 8%, the remainder allocated to Council Policy, Communications, and Staff Attitude – 1%.
99. The Benefits service received 129 complaints. The proportion of complaints related to claims processing delays improved to 14% of all complaints received. At the same time, the number of complaints submitted by private landlords reduced significantly to 22% of all complaints to the Benefits service compared to over 50% in the previous quarter.
100. The Revenues service received 54 complaints in the second quarter. The complaints were evenly distributed between billing and recovery queries.
101. Analysis of the complaints received in quarter 2 identified a common trend reflected in both the Benefits and Revenues services. 33 Benefits complaints related to disputed overpayments and 23 Revenues complaints related to disputed Council Tax bills or Council tax recovery arrangements. Investigation suggests that the increase in this nature of complaint is because more changes of circumstances have been processed and this has resulted in an increase in benefit overpayments and revised council tax bills.
102. The Benefits Service continues to have a comprehensive improvement 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 sustained reduction of complaints received.
103. The Revenues and Benefits Service is committed to service improvement and is continually reviewing processes and procedures as well as working with software suppliers to ensure that the service functions as efficiently as possible. This will ensure that customer contacts are handled accurately and timely.
104. The service continues to engage with both internal and external stakeholders and meeting with Customer Services, Landlords, Dept of Work and Pensions, Welfare Rights, other welfare agencies and local authority benchmarking groups.

## Legal and Democratic Services

105. During Q2 2012/13, 7 complaints were received in relation to Legal and Democratic Services.

	Justified	Partly Justified	Not justified	Ongoing	Total
Number	3	3	0	1	7
% of total received	86%		-	14%	100%

106. 4 complaints were received in relation to the Registration Service. Each of the complaints cited difficulties they had experienced in making contact with the service. Another complaint arose from a changed County Hall appointments system for highways search information. Other complaints related to information held on the electoral register and compensation claims.
107. Of the six complaints handled within the quarter, all were either justified or part-justified; 1 complaint remained unresolved at the end of September. Relevant managers within Legal and Democratic Services have been involved in the necessary investigations and responses and have considered the implications of each.

## Compliments and Suggestions

108. During Q2 2012/13 we received a total of 21 compliments and 7 suggestions.
109. Compliments related to carrying out wedding ceremonies, individual staff in the Benefits Service and the standard of our archives and records.
110. Last quarter suggestions were received in relation to the wording of letters from the Revenues and Benefits Service; further suggestions to this effect were received in quarter 2. It should be noted that the service continuously reviews forms and literature in an attempt to make them as simple as possible whilst ensuring that they meet legislative requirements.
111. Another suggestion related to checking envelopes before posting. The service has recently automated the dispatch of all bills and benefit notification letters. This has significantly reduced the potential for data protection issues as software tags all correspondence to ensure that it is correctly enveloped.

## Local Government Ombudsman (LGO): current activity

112. During quarter 1, 2012/13, the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) initiated investigations into 8 matters relating to a range of complaints concerning:
- **Adult Social Care.** Outcome awaited
  - **Planning Enforcement.** Preliminary enquiries made, outcome awaited
  - **Planning Enforcement and Noise Nuisance (environmental).** Outcome awaited
  - **Planning and Development.** 3 issues; outcome awaited
  - **Housing.** Following preliminary enquiries, LGO decided not to investigate this matter
  - **Housing / tenancy.** Outcome awaited
  - **School Admissions.** 2 investigations: LGO discontinued both.
  - **School Transport.** Outcome awaited
113. The Ombudsman delivered decisions on 6 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:
- **Highways & Transport.** LGO decided not to initiate a full investigation into this matter

- **Benefits and Tax.** 3 issues, 2 of which were discontinued by LGO and the third was deemed to be outside LGO's jurisdiction.
  - **Environmental Services.** Public Protection and Regulation Issue (refuse collection). LGO decided not to initiate a full investigation into this matter.
  - **School Admissions Appeal.** LGO discontinued the investigation.
114. 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:
- Environmental Services and Public Protection & Regulation Issues: 2 complaints, both of which were outside LGO's jurisdiction
  - Children's Services. Investigation was not initiated.
  - Benefits & Tax. 2 issues, neither investigation were initiated.
  - Adult Care Services. Investigation was not initiated.
  - Planning and Development. Investigation was not initiated.
115. Details of learning outcomes have been sought in relation to all Ombudsman investigations which have been concluded during the quarter. During Quarter 2 no learning outcomes have been reported.

### **Recommendations and Reasons**

116. Members of Standards Committee note the report.
117. 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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