

Customer Feedback Report: Complaints, compliments and suggestions Quarter 2 report 2014/15



Putting our customers first

A strategy for 2014 to 2017

Altogether better

Digital Durham



Altogether better



Overview

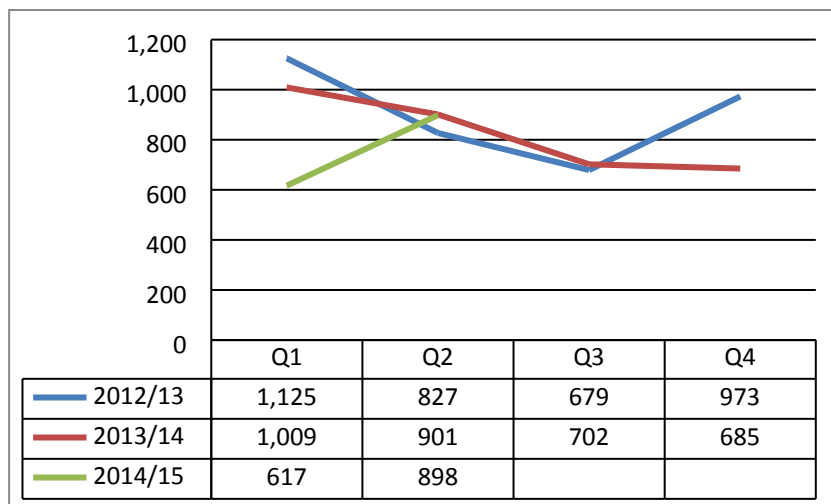
- This report provides the performance information and learning outcomes in relation to Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions received for all Council Services during quarter 2 2014/15. Complaints are categorised as:
 - Statutory** - A complaint arising from the duties placed on a local social services authority to provide assessments and care services under the provisions of relevant adult and children's social care legislation.
 - "Corporate"** - All other complaints

PART ONE: Summary of complaints, compliments and suggestions received across the Council during quarter 2 2014/15

- Between 1 July and 30 September 2014, the Council received 898 corporate complaints, 286 compliments and 61 suggestions. During this quarter, 62 complaints were escalated to stage 2 of the complaints process.
- During the period, the Council also received 41 statutory complaints and 130 compliments in relation to the statutory service.
- Performance against the target in relation to the council's service standards for dealing with corporate complaints was:
 - 86% of stage 1 and 100% of stage 2 complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days;
 - 81% of stage 1 complaints were responded to within 10 working days
 - 55% of stage 2 complaints were responded to within 20 working days.
- Performance against the target in relation to service standards for dealing with Statutory complaints was:
 - 95% of Stage 1 complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt
 - 38% of the 21 statutory complaints about children's social care services were resolved within the prescribed timescale of 20 working days. Of the remaining 13 Stage 1 complaints, 3 were resolved after 20 working days; and 10 were ongoing at the quarter end. Five of these were received near the quarter end and are on target to be resolved within timescales.
- The table below shows numbers of complaints received across Service Groupings since 2012/13:

| Service Grouping | 2012-13 | 2013-2014 | | | | | 2014-2015 | | |
|------------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| | Total | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Total | Q1 | Q2 | Total |
| ACE | 7 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| CAS | 33 | 10 | 15 | 18 | 11 | 54 | 6 | 8 | 14 |
| NS | 2,398 | 724 | 614 | 446 | 446 | 2230 | 447 | 691 | 1138 |
| RED | 357 | 92 | 128 | 97 | 95 | 412 | 67 | 79 | 146 |
| RES | 809 | 180 | 141 | 139 | 132 | 592 | 96 | 118 | 214 |
| TOTAL | 3,604 | 1,009 | 901 | 702 | 685 | 3,297 | 617 | 898 | 1,515 |

7. Despite a previously reducing trend in volumes of complaints since quarter 1 2013/14, quarter 2 of this year has seen an increase in complaints received across the Council as illustrated in the graph below. The increase in complaints is apparent across all Service Groupings.



Key Challenges

Neighbourhood Services

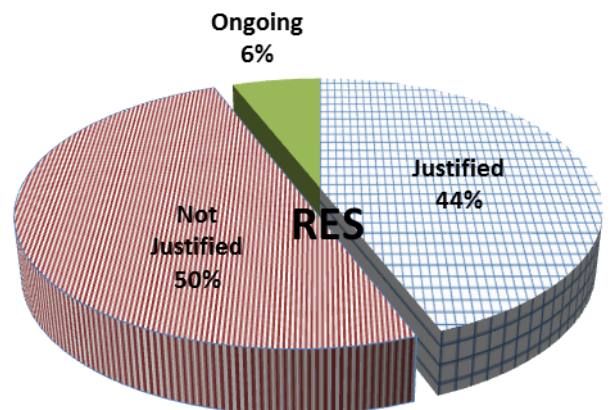
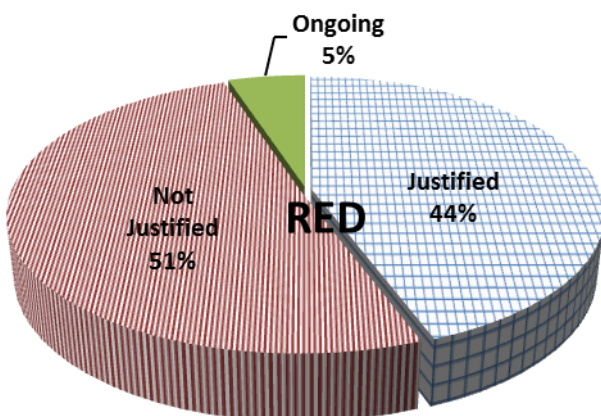
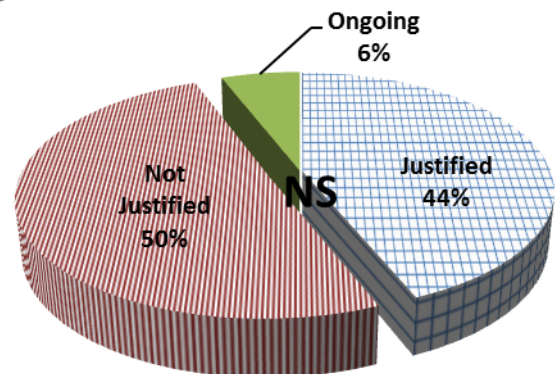
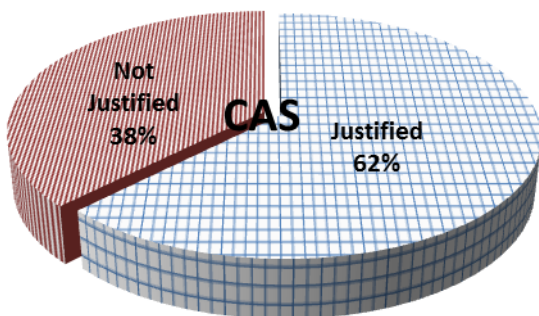
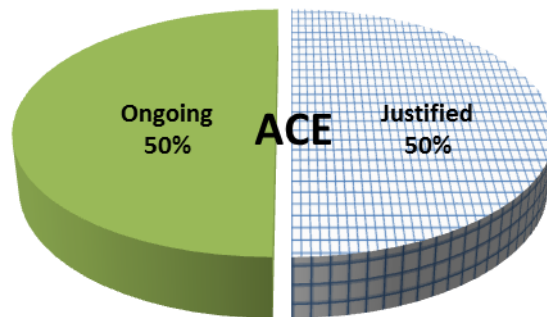
8. **Garden Waste Service:** During the quarter we received 52 complaints in relation to the Garden Waste service. We started to receive complaints of this nature during September as a result of communications in relation to the introduction of a charge for the service under the new scheme.
9. **Missed Bins:** In the main we have seen a significant reduction in the number of complaints in relation to missed bin collections. However, during quarter 2, 241 complaints were received regarding missed bins, which is a 46% increase when compared with the same period in 2013/14. This is due to the industrial action in July 2014, with 56% of complaints relating solely to the impact of this action.

Resources

10. **Revenues and Benefits Service:** Despite ongoing improvements to practices & procedures to ensure the maximum level of service is being achieved, the Revenues and Benefits Service has seen a slight increase in the number of complaints received during quarter 2. The Benefits Service received 43 complaints which is a 35% reduction when compared with the same period in 2013/14. The Revenues Service received 53 complaints which is a 9% reduction when compared with the same period in 2013/14. The increase in complaints covered a broad range of issues and there were no significant trends or issues identified within the complaints received.
11. **Legal & Democratic Services:** The number of complaints for quarter 2, 2014/15, has doubled when compared with the same period last year. This can be attributed to changes in processes and procedures in line with changes in legislation regarding Electoral Registration. The changes have placed more emphasis on moving from household registration to one of individual registration. As a result we have received 16 complaints during the period from residents in relation to the changes.

Investigation of complaints: Outcomes

12. Further investigation of stage 1 complaints received shows that during quarter 2 2014/15 there were 450 occasions (50% of complaints processed) where the complaint was not upheld. This indicates that, although service users were dissatisfied, the service had acted properly and followed the correct procedures.
13. If the not justified complaints and those that are ongoing are removed, the Council is left with 395 (44%) justified complaints, from which there is possibility of learning.
14. The charts below show a breakdown of the categorisation of complaints in terms of justification for each Service Grouping.



Compliments and Suggestions

15. The following table shows the numbers of compliments and suggestions received across service groupings during quarter 2 2014/15:

| Service Grouping | Compliments | Suggestions |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|
| ACE | 5 | 2 |
| CAS | 51 | 4 |
| NS | 161 | 49 |
| RED | 27 | 5 |
| RES | 42 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 286 | 61 |

16. 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, speed of service and general helpfulness of staff.

PART TWO: Detailed report for each service grouping for quarter 2 2014/15

Assistant Chief Executive's Office (ACE)

Overview

17. A summary of feedback since 2012/2013 is shown below:

| Service Grouping ACE | Number Received | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-------|----|----|----|----------------|-------|----|----|----|----------------|
| | 12/13 Total | 13/14 | | | | 13/14 Total | 14/15 | | | | 14/15 Total |
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | |
| Complaints | 7 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 1 | 2 | - | - | 3 |
| Compliments | 25 | 3 | 9 | 25 | 12 | 49 | 8 | 5 | - | - | 13 |
| Suggestions | 9 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 14 | 24 | 1 | 2 | - | - | 3 |

Complaints

18. There were two complaints during quarter 2. One complaint related to a Freedom of Information (FOI) request. This is now being investigated by an FOI internal review. The other was in relation to non-delivery of Durham County News. This has now been resolved.

Compliments and Suggestions

19. 4 of the 5 compliments were thanking staff in the County Records Office for their help in providing comprehensive and swift replies in relation to various family and local history queries, including a compliment on the DLI World War 1 event. One compliment was received in relation to the successful 'Party in the Park' event.

20. There were 2 suggestions received; one regarding the possibility of a company operating in the Durham area being listed on the council's website; the other came from a political association regarding the possibility of raising a flag over the Council on a certain day.

Children and Adults Services (CAS)

Corporate Complaints Overview

21. A summary of feedback since 2012/2013 is shown below:

| Service Grouping CAS | Number Received | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------|----|----|----|-------------|-------|----|----|----|-------------|
| | 12/13 Total | 13/14 | | | | 13/14 Total | 14/15 | | | | 13/14 Total |
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | |
| Complaints | 33 | 10 | 15 | 18 | 11 | 54 | 6 | 8 | | | 14 |
| Compliments | 547 | 88 | 42 | 47 | 7 | 184 | 55 | 51 | | | 106 |
| Suggestions | 26 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 4 | | | 4 |

Complaints

22. Although the number of complaints has increased by 2 from quarter 1 they have decreased by 7 when compared to quarter 2 of 2013/14. The complaints relate to:
- Children's Services received 1 complaint in relation to the One Point Service.
 - Education received 6 complaints (4 relating to Special Educational Needs services, 1 relating to the Music Service, and 1 relating to School Places and Admissions).
 - Commissioning received 1 complaint.

Compliments and Suggestions

23. There were 51 compliments were received which is an increase of 9 when compared to the same period in 2013/14. Children's Services received 29 compliments (14 for the One Point service and 15 for the Youth Offending Service); Education received 20 compliments (17 for School and Governor Support Service and 3 for SEN Placement and Provision) and Planning and Service Strategy received 2 compliments (both in relation to Service Quality and Development complaints function).
24. Four suggestions were received of which three referred to a newspaper story relating to a school bus pass and one concerned the online information in relation to the Blue Badge scheme.

CAS Statutory Complaints, Compliments and Comments Q2 2014/15

25. As shown in the table below, the total number of statutory complaints, compliments and comments has decreased from 206 in quarter 1 to 173 in quarter 2.

| Service | Number Received |
|---------|-----------------|
|---------|-----------------|

| Grouping CAS | 13/14 | | | | 13/14 Total | 14/15 | | | | 14/15 Total |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|----|----|-------------|
| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | |
| Complaints | 64 | 75 | 43 | 47 | 229 | 58 | 41 | | | 99 |
| Compliments | 155 | 100 | 97 | 87 | 439 | 148 | 130 | | | 278 |
| Comments | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | | | 2 |
| Total | 219 | 175 | 140 | 134 | 668 | 206 | 173 | | | 379 |

26. In relation to the 2 comments received, 1 was anonymous and couldn't be responded to and the other is being considered by the Head of Adult Care.

Children's Services Statutory Complaints, Compliments and Comments Q2 2014/15

27. During quarter 2 a total of 21 complaints in relation to the Children's social care services were logged at Stage 1 of the complaints procedure. This represents a decrease of 9 complaints in comparison to the previous quarter.

| Comparison of Children's Services Complaints received by quarter | | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|---|
| Complaint type | Q1 14/15 | Q2 14/15 | Q3 14/15 | Q4 14/15 | Direction of Travel from previous quarter |
| Stage 1 | 29 | 21 | | | ↓ |
| Stage 2 | 1 | 0 | | | ↓ |
| Total | 30 | 21 | | | ↓ |

28. Continued efforts to resolve complaints as soon as possible through senior managers, meeting with complainants and working with Service staff to achieve early resolution, have contributed to there being no complaints taken to Stage 2 during quarter 2.
29. Stage 1 complaints received by the team are broken down as follows:

| Stage 1 Complaints received by Teams in the quarter | | |
|---|------------|-------------|
| Teams | Current Q2 | Previous Q1 |
| Assessment and Intervention – Bishop Auckland | 2 | 1 |
| Assessment and Intervention - Durham | 1 | 1 |
| Assessment and Intervention – Peterlee & Easington | 1 | 1 |
| Assessment and Intervention - Seaham | 2 | 3 |
| Assessment and Intervention - Spennymoor | 0 | 2 |
| Assessment and Intervention – Stanley 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Child Protection – Peterlee | 2 | 5 |
| Child Protection – Spennymoor | 1 | 4 |
| Child Protection – Stanley | 3 | 1 |
| Children's Home* | 1 | 0 |
| Disability social work | 1 | 1 |
| Fostering | 2 | 1 |
| Independent Reviewing Officers | 0 | 1 |
| Initial Response Team | 0 | 4 |
| Looked After and Permanence | 4 | 1 |
| Safeguarding Children - Chester-le-Street | 0 | 1 |
| Safeguarding Children - Peterlee | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 21 | 29 |

*Note: complaint was about another young person resident in the home

Declined Complaints

30. Two complaints were declined during quarter 2, with both cases subject to legal processes requiring resolution through the Courts.

Themes of Complaints

31. *Disputed Decision* constituted the category with the highest number of complaints. *Lack of Service - Communications/Information* was a theme in 3 complaints. It is possible for a complaint to contain more than one theme.

Outcomes

32. Of the 11 complaints completed in the quarter, 3 were not upheld, 4 were partially upheld and 4 complaints were fully upheld as outlined in the table below:

| Outcome of Children's Complaints received in the Quarter | | | |
|--|------------|------------------|----------|
| Team | Not Upheld | Partially Upheld | Upheld |
| Assessment and Intervention – Stanley 1 | | 1 | |
| Assessment and Intervention – Bishop Auckland | | | 1 |
| Child Protection - Peterlee | 1 | | |
| Child Protection - Spennymoor | | | 1 |
| Child Protection - Stanley | | 1 | |
| Children's Home | | | 1 |
| Disability social work | 1 | | |
| Fostering | | 1 | 1 |
| Looked After and Permanence | 1 | 1 | |
| Total | 3 | 4 | 4 |

Actions as a Result of Statutory Complaints

33. As a result of some of the statutory complaints, staff have been reminded to:
- be vigilant when writing and checking reports, particularly where information is carried over or 'copied and pasted' from previous or other documents, to avoid potential data breaches, and incorrect or out of date information being included.
 - be mindful of not leaving behind personal items when visiting service user's homes, particularly mobile phones.
 - ensure good communications between colleagues in different teams, or when handing over cases, to reduce unnecessary delays.
 - ensure that policies and procedures in relation to Foster Carers are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect current working practices.

Compliments

34. There were 84 compliments received in quarter 2 which represents a decrease of 20 in comparison to the previous quarter. A breakdown of compliments received by the team is shown on the table below.

| Teams | Compliments Received | |
|-------|----------------------|-------------|
| | Current Q2 | Previous Q1 |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Aycliffe Secure Services | 0 | 3 |
| Assessment and Intervention Teams | 11 | 6 |
| Children's Homes | 6 | 10 |
| Child Protection Teams | 1 | 0 |
| Community Support Team | 10 | 21 |
| Disabled Children and Families Team | 0 | 3 |
| Emergency Duty Team | 0 | 5 |
| First Contact and Prevention service | 1 | 1 |
| Fostering and Adoption | 0 | 0 |
| Looked After and Permanence Teams | 6 | 2 |
| 4 Real | 3 | 2 |
| Pathfinder teams | 16 | 49 |
| The Full Circle | 1 | 2 |
| Think Family | 29 | 0 |
| Total | 84 | 104 |

Adults Services Statutory Complaints, Compliments and Comments Q2 2014/15

35. 20 complaints were received in relation to adult social care services, as shown below.

| Comparison of Complaints received by quarter | | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--|
| Service Area | Q3 13/14 | Q4 13/14 | Q1 14/15 | Q2 14/15 | Direction of Travel from previous quarter |
| Adult Care | 20 | 23 | 28 | 20 | ↓ |

36. Of the 20 complaints received, 17 were acknowledged within 2 working days and 14 were completed within the quarter and within target timescales. The remaining 6 cases were ongoing at the quarter end but within their agreed completion timescales.

| Complaints received by Service area in the quarter | | |
|--|------------|-------------|
| Service area | Current Q2 | Previous Q1 |
| Adult Social Work Teams: Older Persons /Mental Health Services for Older Persons/Physical Disability/ Sensory Support services | 12 | 14 |
| Adult Social Work Teams: Learning Disabilities, Mental Health, Substance Misuse services | 7 | 5 |
| Commissioning | 1 | 5 |
| County Durham Care and Support | 0 | 3 |
| Emergency Duty Team | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 20 | 28 |

37. The Adult Social Work Teams (Older Persons/Mental Health Services for Older People/Physical Disability/Sensory Support Services) received the greatest number of complaints at 12, followed by 7 in Adult Social Work Teams (Learning Disabilities, Mental Health, Substance Misuse) and 1 in Commissioning.

Declined Complaints

38. One complaint was declined in the quarter on the grounds that the service user had not given his permission for his care worker to make a complaint on his behalf, and the issues raised were more than 1 year old.

Category of Complaint

39. *Lack of Communications/Information* constituted the category with the highest number of complaints. *Professional Conduct of Staff* was a theme in 5 complaints. It is possible for a complaint to contain more than one theme.

Outcome of Complaints

40. Of the 14 completed complaints, 6 were not upheld, 3 were partially upheld and 5 were upheld in full.

| Outcome of Complaints received and completed in the quarter | | | |
|---|------------|------------------|----------|
| | Not upheld | Partially Upheld | Upheld |
| Social Work Teams: Older Persons /Mental Health Services for Older Persons/Physical Disability/ Sensory Support services | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Adult Social Work Teams: Learning Disabilities, Mental Health, Substance Misuse services | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Commissioning | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 6 | 3 | 5 |

Actions as a Result of Statutory complaints

41. As a result of some of the statutory complaints received and concluded during the period, Team Managers/ staff are to be reminded about the following:
- To ensure caseload is managed when Social Workers are absent for extended/unplanned periods.
 - The need to act promptly when there are changes made in the type/provision of care for a service user.

Compliments

42. There were 46 compliments received during the quarter which is an increase of 2 from the previous quarter.

| Service area | Compliments Received | |
|--|----------------------|-------------|
| | Current Q2 | Previous Q1 |
| County Durham Care and Support | 22 | 29 |
| Social Work Teams: (Older Persons /Mental Health Services for Older Persons/Physical Disability/ Sensory Support services) | 21 | 13 |
| Social Work Teams (Learning Disabilities/Mental Health/Substance Misuse Services) | 3 | 1 |
| Commissioning | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 46 | 44 |

43. Work continues to highlight to staff the importance of capturing compliments using the monthly 'Staff Update' and senior managers are also reminded in Service Area management team meetings.

Neighbourhood Services (NS)

Overview

44. During quarter 2 2014/2015, 691 complaints, 161 compliments and 49 suggestions were received. A summary of feedback since 2012/2013 is shown in the following table:

| NS | Number Received | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----|-----|-----|----------------|------------------------|-----|----|----|----------------|
| | 12/13 | 13/14 split by quarter | | | | 12/13 Total | 14/15 split by quarter | | | | 14/15 Total |
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | |
| Complaints | 2,398 | 724 | 614 | 446 | 446 | 2,230 | 447 | 691 | | | 1,138 |
| Compliments | 402 | 126 | 134 | 125 | 121 | 506 | 129 | 161 | | | 290 |
| Suggestions | 215 | 62 | 57 | 41 | 88 | 248 | 52 | 49 | | | 101 |

45. Analysis shows that when compared to the same quarter in 2013/14, the number of complaints received increased by 13%.

Improvement

- **Staff Attitude:** We have seen a 37% reduction in complaints received in relation to staff attitude when compared with the same period last year.
- **Changes to Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs):** We received 18 complaints regarding HWRCs during this quarter which is a 75% decrease when compared with quarter 2 in 2013/14. Complaints related to a number of issues including tighter control of the waste being put through the sites, waste permit issues and staff attitude.
- **Charges for replacement wheeled bins:** 17 complaints were received from residents objecting to the £20 charge for replacement bins which is a 29% reduction from the same period last year.
- **Customer services administration:** 6 complaints were received from customers who were unhappy with their customer service experience which is a 57% reduction from the previous quarter. Complaints included service request details being logged incorrectly by staff, customers being asked to repeatedly provide the same information and the handling of documents.

Challenges

- **Grass cutting:** 20 complaints were received regarding various aspects of the grass cutting service during quarter 2 which is a 20% increase when compared with the same period last year. Complaints include standard of grass cutting, areas being missed off grass cutting schedules and mess left by grass cutters.
- **Missed Bins:** 241 complaints were received regarding missed bins during quarter 2 which is a 46% increase when compared with the same period in 2013/14. However this can be largely attributed to industrial action in July 2014, as 56% of the missed container complaints related solely to the impact of this action.
- **Garden waste service:** During the quarter we received 52 complaints regarding the garden waste service. We started to receive complaints of this nature during September as a result of communications in relation to the introduction of a charge for the service under the new scheme.

Compliments and Suggestions

46. 161 compliments were received during quarter 2 2014/15. The majority of compliments relate to staff in recognition of their support and help in resolving customer enquiries in a professional and timely manner.
47. 49 suggestions were received, a number of these were in relation to the installation of litter and dog bins. As a result of the “Bin It Right” campaign, there were a number of suggestions in relation to improving communications around bin contamination.

Regeneration and Economic Development (RED)

Overview

48. During quarter 2, 79 complaints, 27 compliments and 5 suggestions were received by the Regeneration and Economic Development (RED) Service Grouping.
49. A full summary is shown below:

| Service Grouping RED | Number Received | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----|----|----|-------------|------------------------|----|----|----|-------------|
| | 12/13 Total | 13/14 split by quarter | | | | 13/14 Total | 14/15 split by quarter | | | | 14/15 Total |
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | |
| Complaints | 357 | 92 | 128 | 97 | 95 | 412 | 67 | 79 | | | 146 |
| Compliments | 125 | 34 | 27 | 85 | 39 | 185 | 15 | 27 | | | 42 |
| Suggestions | 33 | 11 | 6 | 13 | 10 | 40 | 8 | 5 | | | 13 |

Complaints

50. RED received 79 complaints which is a decrease of 38% compared to the same period in the previous year. However this is an increase of 18% when compared to the previous quarter. RED responded to 68% of Stage 1 complaints within the 10 working day deadline. 17 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 of the complaints process during quarter 2, 8 of which were in relation to Planning Development.
51. Detailed analysis of the complaints received during quarter 2 shows that 3 areas of the service grouping account for 72% of the complaints received.
- **Durham City Homes:** 23 complaints were received in relation to Durham City Homes, particularly in regard to the handling of repairs and maintenance issues and the associated contractors. Complaints of this nature have decreased by 52% when compared to the same period in the previous year but have increased by 35% from quarter 1.
 - **Planning Development:** 21 complaints received were in relation to Planning Development mainly in connection to planning decisions and building control. This is a significant decrease (35%) on the same period of the previous year when 33 complaints were received. 8 Planning Development complaints were escalated to Stage 2 of the complaints process during quarter 2 which is a significant reduction from quarter 1 when 15 complaints were received.
 - **Strategic Traffic:** 13 complaints were received by Strategic Traffic. The majority are parking and road works related. This is a significant decrease of 41% from the same

period in the previous year but an increase from quarter 1 when 10 complaints were received.

Compliments and Suggestions

52. The service grouping received 27 compliments in quarter 2 of which 13 related to Planning Development. These are generally thanking staff for the service they have provided.
53. RED received 5 suggestions during quarter 2 which covered a variety of subjects and service areas including parking and tourism.

Resources (RES)

Overview

54. In the second quarter of 2014/15, Resources received 118 complaints which is a 23% increase from quarter 1 and a 16% reduction compared to the same period in 2013/14.

| RES | Number Received | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-------------|------------------------|-----|----|----|-------|
| | 12/13 Total | 13/14 split by quarter | | | | 13/14 Total | 14/15 split by quarter | | | | 14/15 |
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | |
| Complaints | 809 | 180 | 141 | 139 | 132 | 592 | 96 | 118 | | | 214 |
| Compliments | 69 | 14 | 10 | 17 | 38 | 79 | 32 | 42 | | | 74 |
| Suggestions | 24 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 8 | 19 | 6 | 1 | | | 7 |

Key Areas and Learning

55. Detailed analysis of customer feedback received during quarter 2 reveals that 98% of the complaints are attributable to the Revenues and Benefits Services and Legal and Democratic Services. This is outlined below.
56. **Benefits Service:** The Benefits Service received 43 complaints during this quarter, 11 (26%) of which were made by landlords or agents regarding issues with payments, such as payments being made directly to tenants instead of themselves, or the frequency of payments. 6 (14%) complaints were made by customers whose benefit claims had been suspended due to the service receiving notification of a change in their circumstances. There were no significant trends or issues within the complaints received.
57. **Revenues Service:** The Revenues Service received 53 complaints this quarter. 8 (15%) related to recovery action being taken. 4 complaints were against the council policy on empty property discounts and the long term empty property premium. 2 complaints were received in respect of a review of mobile homes / caravan sites that was undertaken in the quarter. There were no other significant issues or trends within the other complaints received.
58. During quarter 2 the Revenues and Benefit Service has been piloting a revised complaints process. It is anticipated that this will be rolled out across the organisation in due course. Early indications are that the new process, which involves resolving the complaint by telephone wherever possible, has been well received by both staff and

customers, has improved performance in complaints handling and is more efficient. 34% of the complaints received in quarter 2 have been resolved in this manner.

59. The Revenues and Benefits Service is committed to service improvement and is continually reviewing processes and procedures as well as working with its software suppliers to ensure that the service functions as efficiently as possible. The service is in the process of rolling out an e-communications strategy to implement e-billing and a SMS text messaging service from next year.
60. The service has regular meetings with key stakeholders including landlords to improve information flows, communication and working relationships. Likewise regular liaison meetings are held with Customer Services to ensure that processes and procedures are continually reviewed. As well as an ongoing review of recovery processes, bailiff action is monitored and reviewed at regular meetings with the three appointed bailiff companies to enable them to develop effective processes and procedures.
61. **Legal and Democratic Services:** During quarter 2 of 2014/15, this service received 16 complaints. Nearly half of these related to Electoral Services, several of which are as a direct result of the additional information which electors are being asked to provide in order to remain on the Electoral Register, prompted by Legislation changes. In order to make the electoral registration system more secure, electors are being asked to provide additional information to confirm proof of identity such as date of birth or National Insurance Number. This has therefore generated several complaints from people reluctant to provide additional information about themselves.
62. Other electoral services complaints relate to objections to details appearing on the “open register”, resulting in individuals receiving “cold calls” from companies such as 192.com, who have indicated that they obtained details from the Register. The onus is on the elector to “opt out” of appearing on the Open Register and in all the complaint cases, the elector had not indicated that they wished to opt out, meaning that the Council is not at fault.
63. Four of the complaints received during the quarter related to the Registration Service. One complainant is currently challenging several local authorities on the fees charged for duplicate certificates. Another complaint related to delays in the issuing of a duplicate certificate and in that particular case, the fees charge was waived as a goodwill gesture.

Compliments and Suggestions

64. There were 42 compliments received by the Resources service grouping in quarter 2 2014/15. Of these 23 were for the Revenues and Benefits with 12 referring to the excellent service provided by individual members of staff in the Welfare Rights team and 1 by a member of staff in the Collections team. A further 2 compliments were received for the Welfare Rights team as a whole.
65. Eight compliments related to employees in Human Resources & Organisational Development.
66. Legal & Democratic Services received a number of compliments arising from conducting wedding ceremonies.
67. 1 suggestion was received this quarter relating to security checks for account holders.

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO): current activity

68. During this quarter the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) made initial enquiries / initiated investigations into 31 matters.
69. The Ombudsman discounted their involvement in 8 of these cases as they found no fault by the Council. These related to:
- 4 – School admissions appeals
 - 2 – Council tax
 - 1 – Highways issue
 - 1 – Missing refuse bin
70. The Ombudsman also discontinued investigations into 6 cases as they were found to be outside of their jurisdiction. These cases related to:
- 2 – Childrens services issues
 - 1 – Council tax
 - 1 – Planning
 - 1 – Land ownership issue
 - 1 – Insurance
71. Enquiries made by the Ombudsman in respect of the remaining 17 cases have now had the Council's response. The outcomes are currently awaited and relate to the following areas:
- 5 – Adult social care
 - 4 – Planning
 - 2 – Childrens services
 - 2 – Highways
 - 1 – School admissions
 - 1 – School transport
 - 1 – Housing allocation
 - 1 – Environmental Health
72. The Ombudsman delivered decisions on 4 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:
- Planning issue – no fault by the Council.
 - Council's approved list of contractors – The investigation was concluded, the Ombudsman did identify some errors by the Council (maladministration), however did not identify any evidence that the complainant had been caused an injustice.
 - Home to School Transport complaint – The Ombudsman concluded the investigation and found both maladministration and injustice to the complainant. The investigation was closed on the basis that the Council agreed to various actions to remedy the issues raised in the complaint. This included a financial settlement.
 - Adult Mental Health Services complaint – The Ombudsman concluded the investigation and found both maladministration and injustice to the complainant. The investigation was closed on the basis that the Council agreed to various actions to remedy the issues raised in the complaint.

73. 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:
- 9 refuse collection complaints – the Ombudsman found no fault by the Council in respect of the complaints and as such discontinued their involvement.
 - The following cases were reported to the Ombudsman prematurely and was therefore referred back to the Council to deal with under the complaints procedure:
 - 1 electoral services issue,
 - 1 bonfire/allotments issue
 - 1 land purchase issue
 - 1 code of conduct complaints procedure issue
 - 1 insurance issue
 - 1 drainage issue
 - 1 council tax complaint, 1 childrens services issue and 1 manhole cover issue – all determined to be outside the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman.

Recommendation

74. To note the contents of the report

Contact: Mary Readman 03000 268161
