

Customer Feedback Report: Complaints, compliments and suggestions Quarter 3 report 2014/15



Putting our customers first

A strategy for 2014 to 2017



Altogether better



Overview

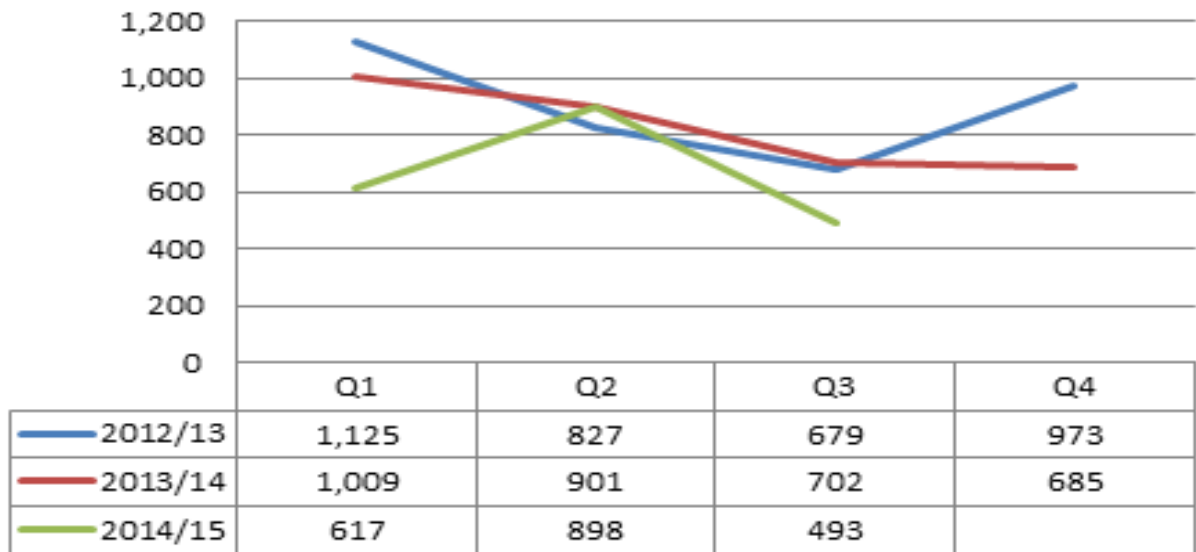
- This report provides the performance information and learning outcomes in relation to Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions received for all Council Services during quarter 3 2014/15. Complaints are categorised as:
 - Statutory.** A complaint arising from the duties placed on a 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 3 2014/15

- Between 1 October and 31 December 2014, Durham County Council received 493 stage 1 and 41 stage 2 corporate complaints, 288 compliments and 62 suggestions.
- During this period, there were 33 complaints and 121 compliments received in relation to the statutory services of adult and children's social care
- Performance against target in relation to the council's service standards for dealing with corporate complaints was:
 - 85% of stage 1 and 97% of stage 2 complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days;
 - 80% of stage 1 complaints were responded to within 10 working days
 - 39% of stage 2 complaints were responded to within 20 working days.
- Performance against target in relation to service standards for dealing with Statutory complaints was:
 - 100% of Stage 1 complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt
 - 75% of the 20 statutory complaints about children's social care services were resolved within the prescribed timescale of 20 working days. Of the remaining 5 Stage 1 complaints, 2 were resolved after 20 working days; and 3 were ongoing at the quarter end.
- The table below shows numbers of complaints received across Service Groupings since 2012/13:

Service Grouping	2012-13 Total	2013-2014					2014-2015			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Total
ACE	7	3	3	2	1	9	1	2	2	5
CAS	33	10	15	18	11	54	6	8	7	21
NS	2,398	724	614	446	446	2230	447	691	339	1,477
RED	357*	92*	128	97*	95*	412*	67	79	67	213
RES	809	180	141	139	132	592	96	118	78	292
TOTAL	3,604	1,009	901	702	685	3,297	617	898	493	2,008

7. Numbers of complaints received are at their lowest level since quarter 4 2010/11. There has been a 30% reduction in complaints received this quarter when compared with the same period in 2013/14 and a 45% reduction from the previous quarter, as shown below



8. This decrease is apparent across all Service Groupings; however it is particularly noticeable in Neighbourhood Services who have seen a 51% reduction in complaints received in relation to their services from the last quarter.

Key Improvements

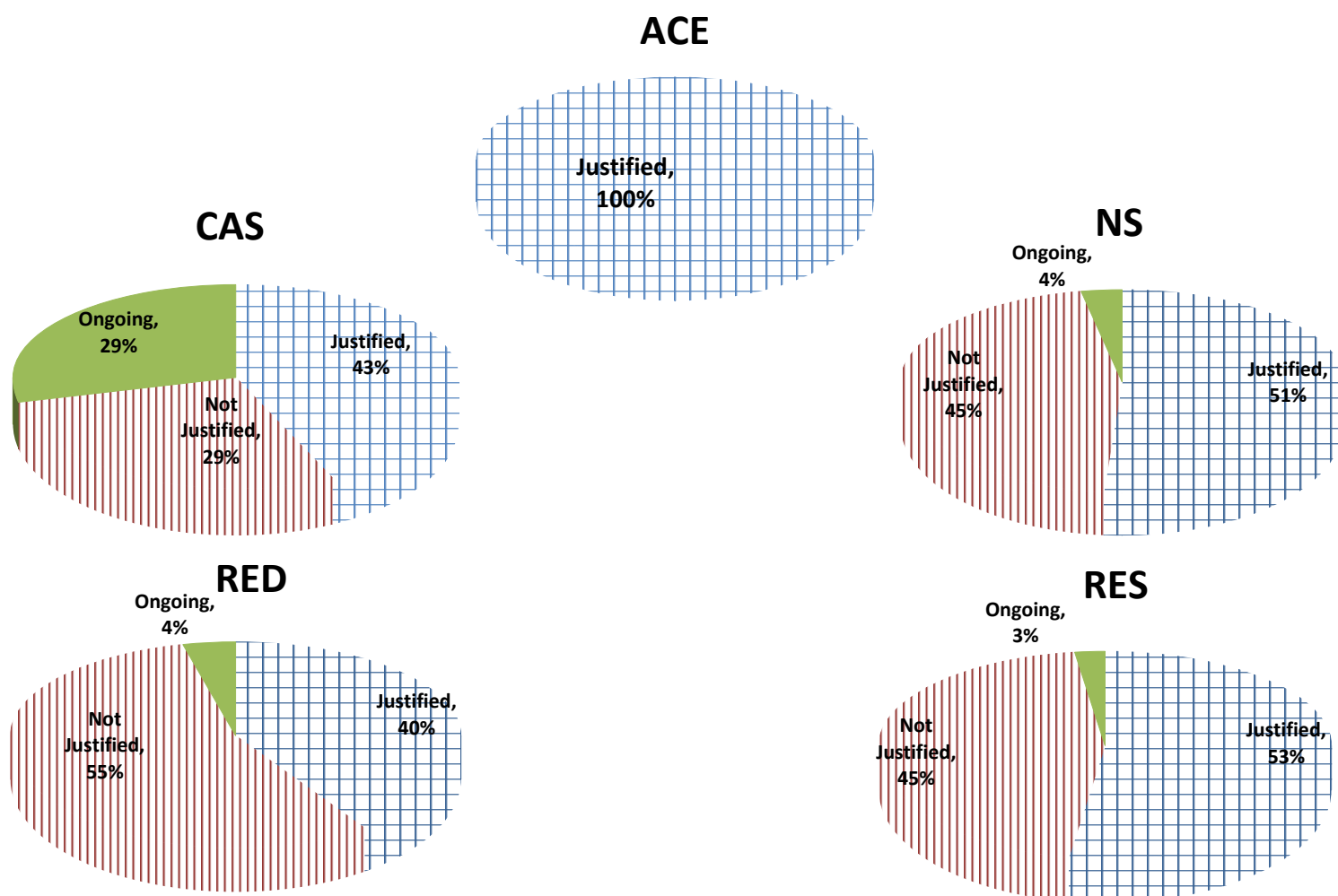
9. **Missed Bins:** The number of complaints received in relation to missed bins has reduced significantly throughout the year. This improvement can be attributed to a number of factors including the ‘bedding in’ of the Alternate Weekly Collection service; the new ‘Repeat Missed Container’ Process; improved communications in relation to bank holiday collection dates and the implementation of the incab ‘Bartec’ system which provides better operational information capture. During quarter 3, 56 complaints were received regarding missed bins, a 34% reduction when compared with the same period in 2013/14.
10. **Garden waste service:** During the quarter we received 25 complaints from customers unhappy with the changes to the garden waste service. We started to receive complaints in relation to the new scheme during September 2014 following communications about the introduction of a charge for this service. Complaints of this type are reducing and we have seen a 52% reduction from the previous quarter. As of 2 February 2015 over 40,000 customers have signed up to the scheme and we have received a total of 80 complaints.
11. **Durham City Homes:** 28 complaints were received in relation to Durham City Homes, mainly relating to the handling of repairs and maintenance issues. Complaints of this nature have reduced by 22% when compared to the same period last year.
12. **Planning Development:** 12 complaints received were in relation to Planning Development mainly in connection to planning decisions and building control. This is a 29% decrease compared to the same period last year.
13. **Revenues and Benefits:** As a result of ongoing improvements to practices & procedures the Revenues and Benefits Service has seen a significant reduction in the number of complaints received. The service received 74 complaints during quarter 3, which is a 39% reduction when compared with quarter 3 2013/14.

Challenges

14. **Contaminated waste:** Customers submitted 22 complaints regarding various aspects of the Council's process to reduce contamination of recycling bins. Complaints from customers related to their bin being incorrectly logged as contaminated and customers who did not consider themselves to be responsible for the incorrect items in their bin. Although previous work has been carried out to educate residents on recyclable materials, this campaign and enforcement activity has been ramped up to fully push the messages out and enforce behaviour change.

Investigation of complaints: Outcomes

15. Further investigation of stage 1 complaints received shows that during quarter 3 2014/15 there were 227 occasions (46% 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.
16. If the not justified complaints and those that are ongoing are removed, DCC is left with 246 (50%) justified complaints, from which there is possibility of learning.
17. The charts below show a breakdown of the categorisation of complaints in terms of justification for each Service Grouping.



Compliments and Suggestions

18. The following table shows the numbers of compliments and suggestions received across service groupings during quarter 3 2014/15.

Service Grouping	Compliments	Suggestions
ACE	31	3
CAS	18	1
NS	152	45
RED	54	8
RES	33	5
TOTAL	288	62

19. 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.

PART TWO: Detailed report for each service grouping for quarter 3 2014/15

Assistant Chief Executive's Office (ACE)

Overview

20. A summary of the feedback since 2012/13 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	2	-	5
Compliments	25	3	9	25	12	49	8	5	31	-	44
Suggestions	9	3	3	4	14	24	1	2	3	-	6

Complaints

21. One complaint was received during quarter 3 relating to poor maintenance of a Community centre which has subsequently caused damp in a neighbouring private property.
22. The other was with reference to the accuracy of information on the DCC Website in relation to Durham car parking. Following investigation it was found that the information on the website was correct.

Compliments and Suggestions

23. 13 of the 31 compliments were in relation to the County Records Office, thanking staff for their help in providing comprehensive and swift replies in relation to various family and local history queries, including a compliment regarding the CRO website and the detail it provides anyone who wishes to visit. The other 18 compliments were received by Partnerships and Community Engagement, 15 of which were in relation to Spennymoor AAP and the work put into planning, organising and delivering a successful 'It's Up 2 U'

event and three were thanking the AAPs for grants to help community projects and for facilitating the Children’s Centre review sessions.

24. There were 3 suggestions for Policy and Communications. One was for a text messaging service for deaf people which has been responded to, providing information on the various communication mechanisms for the deaf such as a minicom service, a web contact form on the website, Facebook and Twitter. The second suggestion related to issues with finding information on the current leisure websites, which has been responded to informing that DCC had recently launched the new website and were undertaking a programme of content reviews, which would factor in the comments received. A further suggestion related to the Christmas lights switch on.

Children and Adults Services (CAS)

Corporate Complaints Overview

25. A summary of the feedback since 2012/13 is shown below:

Service Grouping CAS	Number Received									
	13/14				13/14 Total	14/15				14/15 Total
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Complaints	10	15	18	11	54	6	8	7		21
Compliments	88	42	47	7	184	55	51	18		124
Suggestions	0	0	1	4	5	0	4	1		5

Complaints

26. Complaints during this quarter have decreased by 61% when compared to quarter 3 of 2013/14 and relate to:
- The Young People’s Service (1 complaint)
 - Education (1 relating to Special Educational Needs services, 1 relating to the Music Service, 1 relating to School Places and Admissions and 1 relating to the Educational Psychology service).
 - Planning and Service Strategy (1 relating to the Central Administration and Governance Team, and 1 relating to Locality Administration)

Compliments and Suggestions

27. During the quarter, 18 compliments were received. Children’s Services received 12 compliments (9 for the One Point service, 2 for Think Family and 1 for Pathfinder service); and Education received 6 compliments (all for Educational Health Needs team). The low number of compliments is thought to be as a result of a delay in services reporting compliments received to the Complaints Team. Managers will be reminded to submit any compliment numbers and these will be reported in quarter 4.
28. The suggestion received during the quarter was received from a young person who wants to be a DJ who suggested that a weekly ‘party night’ could be held for young people in the Peterlee area. Arrangements were made for an area Youth Worker to meet with the young person to discuss his idea further.

CAS Statutory Complaints, Compliments and Comments Q3 2014/15

29. As shown in the table below, the total number of statutory complaints, compliments and comments has decreased from 173 in quarter 2 to 152 in quarter 3. However, when comparing with the corresponding period last year there has been an 8.6% increase.

Service Grouping CAS	Number Received									
	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	33		132
Compliments	155	100	97	87	439	148	130	135		413
Comments	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0		2
Total	219	175	140	134	668	206	173	168		547

30. The following is a breakdown of the complaints and compliments received about Children's Services and Adult Care in quarter 3:

	Children's Services	Adult Care	Totals
Complaints	20	13	33
Compliments	113	22	135

Children's Services Statutory Complaints, Compliments and Comments Q3 2014/15

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	20		↓
Stage 2	1	0	2		↑

31. All 20 Stage 1 complaints received were acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt. There were 15 Stage 1 complaints resolved within the prescribed timescale of 20 working days (75%); an improvement on the previous quarter's performance (38.1%). Of the remaining 5 Stage 1 complaints, 2 were resolved after 20 working days; and 3 were ongoing at the quarter end.
32. Two complaints were taken to Stage 2 during the quarter. One complaint relates to a case where the children were made the subjects of Child Protection Plans against their parents' wishes. The other complaint was in relation to Children's Services' involvement in a safeguarding case. Project Plans have been developed for both investigations which are due to be completed by the end of March 2015.
33. Stage 1 complaints received, by team, are broken down as follows:

Stage 1 Complaints received by Teams in the quarter		
Teams	Current Q3	Previous Q2
Assessment and Intervention – Bishop Auckland	4	2
Assessment and Intervention - Crook	2	0
Assessment and Intervention - Durham	1	1
Assessment and Intervention – Peterlee & Easington	0	1
Assessment and Intervention - Seaham	0	2
Assessment and Intervention - Spennymoor	0	0
Assessment and Intervention – Stanley 1	0	1
Child Protection - Peterlee	4	2
Child Protection - Spennymoor	1	1
Child Protection - Stanley	3	3
Children’s Home*	0	1
Disability social work	1	1
First Contact (previously Initial Response Team)	2	0
Fostering and Adoption	2	2
Independent Reviewing Officers	0	0
Looked After and Permanence	0	4
Total	20	21

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

Declined Complaints

34. Two complaints were declined in the quarter. One case was about matters which were over 1 year old and had been through legal processes. The other case was about matters which were over 1 year old, had previously been investigated and the complainant had stated that she would be taking legal action against the Council.

Themes of Complaints

35. “Professional Conduct of Staff” was the subject of the highest number of complaints, with 6 complaints containing this as a theme; and “Lack of Service - Communications/Information” was a theme in 5 complaints, followed by “Disputed Decision” in 4 complaints. It is possible for a complaint to contain more than one theme.

Outcome of Complaints

36. Of the 17 complaints completed in the quarter, 10 were not upheld, 5 were partially upheld and 2 complaints were fully upheld as the table below outlines:

Outcome of Children’s Complaints received in the Quarter			
Team	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld
A & I Bishop Auckland	3	1	0
A & I Crook	1	0	0
A & I Durham	1	0	0
Child Protection - Peterlee	0	3	1
Child Protection - Spennymoor	0	1	0
Child Protection - Stanley	2	0	1
First Contact	2	0	0
Disability social work	1	0	0
Total	10	5	2

Actions as a Result of Statutory Complaints

37. The following recommendations have been made as a result of review of complaints:
- In cases involving Private Law proceedings, parents should be issued with an 'Information Sheet' setting out the statutory role/responsibilities of Children's Services to appropriately manage parent expectations.
 - A review of the procedure for the sharing of Supervised Contact Records
 - The Full Circle service will review and update its published leaflets.
 - Improved communication where decisions have been agreed with a complainant and these are subsequently changed.

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

38. During the quarter the LGO made enquiries and decisions in relation to 2 cases about children's social care services. One case was closed as it was outside the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman. The other case, following changes as a result of a review of Special Guardianship payments, is being considered by the Ombudsman.

Compliments

39. There were 113 compliments received in quarter 3, an increase of 29 in comparison to the previous quarter. A breakdown of compliments received by team is shown below.

Teams	Compliments Received	
	Current Q3	Previous Q2
Aycliffe Secure Services	79	0
Assessment and Intervention Teams	3	11
Children's Homes	5	6
Child Protection Teams	5	1
Community Support Team	3	10
First Contact and Prevention service	0	1
Fostering and Adoption	4	0
Looked After and Permanence Teams	10	6
4 Real	0	3
Pathfinder teams	3	16
The Full Circle	0	1
Think Family	1	29
Total	113	84

Adults Services Statutory Complaints, Compliments Comments Q3 2014/15

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

40. All 13 complaints received were acknowledged within 2 working days; 7 were completed within the quarter, 6 within the target timescales. The remaining 6 cases were ongoing at the quarter end but are still within their agreed completion timescales.
41. A summary of complaints by service is shown below:

Complaints received by service area in the quarter		
Service area	Current Q3	Previous Q2
Adult Social Work Teams: Older Persons /Mental Health Services for Older Persons/Physical Disability/ Sensory Support services	5	12
Adult Social Work Teams: Learning Disabilities, Mental Health, Substance Misuse services	1	7
Commissioning	5	1
County Durham Care and Support	2	0
Emergency Duty Team	0	0
Total	13	20

Declined Complaints

42. One complaint was declined in the quarter on the grounds that the Council cannot become involved in the decisions made by an external agency (a care provider) in relation to personal matters between the agency's employee and the complainant; nor can the Council act to enforce the agency to continue to provide a service where there has been an irretrievable breakdown in the relationship between the service user's family and the care providers employee.

Category of Complaint

43. "Disputed Decision" was a theme in 4 complaints; "Professional Conduct of Staff" was also a theme in 4 complaints, as was "Finance - Direct Payment". Three complaints contained "Staff Attitude" as a theme, and 3 complaints were in respect of "Quality of Service – Work of Other Agencies". It is possible for a complaint to contain more than one theme.

Outcome of Complaints

44. Of the 7 complaints completed in the quarter, 1 was not upheld, 2 were partially upheld and 4 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	0	0	2
Adult Social Work Teams: Learning Disabilities, Mental Health, Substance Misuse services	0	1	0
Commissioning	0	0	2
County Durham Care and Support	1	1	0
Total	1	2	4

Actions as a result of statutory complaints

45. Learning outcomes include reminding staff of the need to:
- be mindful at all times regarding professionalism and communication skills, not least when dealing with service users who may have learning disabilities.
 - ensure that service user information, including address and bank details where necessary, is updated.
 - ensure a service user and families understand the purpose of an assessment and why the decisions have been made.
 - use plain English and clearly explain what social care and health terminology means.

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

46. During the quarter the LGO made enquiries in relation to 4 cases about adult's social care services. 3 of these cases are still under consideration and relate to:
- the way a service users' daughter felt that she had been treated.
 - a disabled service users request to have her property adapted.
 - a care provider.
47. In the fourth case, the Ombudsman made a decision that the Council had acted without fault when they had billed a service user for the costs of nursing care whilst residing in a care home.

Compliments

48. 22 compliments were received in the quarter, a decrease of 24 from the previous quarter.

Service area	Compliments Received	
	Current Q3	Previous Q2
County Durham Care and Support	5	22
Social Work Teams: (Older Persons /Mental Health Services for Older Persons/Physical Disability/ Sensory Support services)	14	21
Social Work Teams (Learning Disabilities/Mental Health/Substance Misuse Services)	1	3
Commissioning	2	0
Total	22	46

49. The low number of compliments is thought to be due to a delay in services reporting compliments received to the Complaints Team and will be rectified for quarter 4.

Neighbourhood Services (NS)

Overview

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

NS	Number Received										
	2012-13	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	2,398	724	614	446	446	2,230	447	691	339		1,477
Compliments	402	126	134	125	121	506	129	161	152		442
Suggestions	215	62	57	41	88	248	52	49	45		146

Improvement

51. Analysis shows that when compared to the same quarter in 2013/14, the number of complaints received reduced by 24%, mainly due to:
- **Missed Bins:** 56 complaints were received regarding missed bins during quarter 3 2014/15, which is a 34% reduction when compared with the same period in 2013/14 and a 77% decrease compared to quarter 2 2014/15.
 - **Attitude of refuse crews:** there has been a 43% reduction in complaints received in relation to the attitude of refuse crews when compared with the same period last year

- **Changes to Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs):** We received 13 complaints regarding HWRCs during this quarter, a 72% decrease when compared with quarter 3 2013/14. Complaints related to a number of issues including tighter control of the waste being put through the sites, waste permit issues, opening hours at sites and staff attitude.
- **Crew not returning bins to collection point:** 17 complaints were received from customers who were unhappy that refuse crews are not returning bins to their original collection point after emptying. This is a 15% reduction when compared with quarter 3 2013/14.
- **Garden waste service:** During the quarter we received 25 complaints from customers unhappy with the changes to the garden waste service. We started to receive complaints in relation to the new scheme during September 2014 following communications about the introduction of a charge for this service. Complaints of this type are reducing and we have seen a 52% reduction from the previous quarter. As of 2 February 2015 over 40,000 customers have signed up to the scheme and we have received a total of 80 complaints.

Challenges

- **Contaminated waste:** Customers submitted 22 complaints regarding various aspects of the contamination process. This is a 59% increase when compared with the same period last year. Complaints from customers related to their bin being incorrectly logged as contaminated and customers who did not consider themselves to be responsible for the incorrect items in their bin.

Compliments and Suggestions

52. 152 compliments were received during quarter 3 2014/15. The majority of compliments relate to helpfulness of staff and recognition of their support by resolving customer enquiries in a professional and timely manner.
53. 45 suggestions were received; a number of these were regarding extending garden waste collections into November. There were suggestions received regarding a number of issues such as bottle banks and commercial-sized waste bins being available in residential areas.
54. Previous suggestions which have been actioned include all refuse and recycling crews carrying a brush and shovel on the vehicle, to clear up items dropped during collection and the installation of additional dog poo bins in the Chester-Le-Street area

Regeneration and Economic Development (RED)

Overview

55. A summary of feedback since 2012/2013 is shown below; when compared to the same quarter in 2013/14, the number of complaints received has reduced by 31%.

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	67		213
Compliments	125	34	27	85	39	185	15	27	54		96
Suggestions	33	11	6	13	10	40	8	5	8		21

Complaints

56. Detailed analysis of the complaints received during Quarter 3 shows that 3 areas of the service grouping account for 75% of the complaints received.
- **Durham City Homes:** 28 complaints were received in relation to Durham City Homes, particularly in regard to the handling of repairs and maintenance issues. This is a decrease of 22% from the same period in the previous year but an increase from Quarter 2 when 23 complaints were received. 1 Durham City Homes complaint was escalated to Stage 2 of the complaints process during Quarter 3.
 - **Planning Development:** 12 complaints received were in relation to Planning Development mainly in connection to planning decisions and building control. This is a significant decrease (45%) on the previous quarter when 22 complaints were received. 7 Planning Development complaints were escalated to Stage 2 of the complaints process during Quarter 3, a small reduction from 8 at Quarter 2.
 - **Strategic Traffic:** 10 complaints were received by Strategic Traffic in the quarter, the majority are parking and road layout related. This is a significant decrease of 33% from the same period in the previous year and a decrease from Quarter 2 when 12 complaints were received.

Compliments and Suggestions

57. The service grouping received 54 compliments in Quarter 3, 27 of which were for Care Connect. These are generally thanks to staff for the service they have provided.
58. RED received 8 suggestions during Quarter 3, covering a variety of subjects and service areas, including parking and planned student accommodation.

Resources (RES)

Overview

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

RES	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	809	180	141	139	132	592	96	118	78		292
Compliments	69	14	10	17	38	79	32	40	33		105
Suggestions	24	3	5	3	8	19	6	1	5		12

60. Analysis shows that when compared to the same quarter in 2013/14, the number of complaints received reduced by 44%. 97% of these complaints are attributable to:

Revenues and Benefits Service:

61. The Assessment Team, responsible for the administration of Housing Benefit and the Council's Council Tax Reduction scheme received 26 complaints of which 2 were from landlords. During the same period the team processed 3174 new claims and 24881 change in circumstances. The complaints generally related to processes and procedures, but not to any one specific process or procedure. One complainant referred to the 'suspension' of claims, but upon review it was found that the decision to suspend benefit to minimise overpayment had been correctly applied. Two complaints arose from the decision making process for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) but the process had been appropriately applied.
62. The Awards and Collection teams received a total of 48 complaints. The Awards Team received 37 of these complaints, 22% of which were made by landlords about Council Tax liability on eight individual properties. The majority of complaints disputed Council Tax liability but review revealed that liability had been correctly applied. The Collection Team received 11 complaints about recovery action. The majority of complainants claimed to have no knowledge of outstanding debts until receiving a summons, despite reminders and final notices having been issued.
63. Analysis of complaints and quality assurance is used to develop individual and team training plans and where error is found, remedial action is taken to ensure that policy and procedure is properly followed.

Legal & Democratic Services:

64. Two complaints were received for Legal & Democratic Services during Q3 2014/15, the lowest recorded for the last year.
65. One of the complaints related to the Electoral Canvass, undertaken across the County in early Autumn. In this instance, both canvasser and customer reported inappropriate attitude to each other. We apologised to the complainant for the canvasser's visit to her home not proceeding well and the situation was resolved.
66. The second complaint related to advice from Legal & Democratic Services on a former Council house with asbestos issues. The Conveyancing Team advised that as the complainant bought the house from a previous owner (not the Council); the Council would not become involved as it was a private matter.

Compliments and Suggestions

67. There were 33 compliments received by Resources in quarter 3 2014/15.

68. The Revenues and Benefits Service received 16 compliments during quarter 3 highlighting the excellent service provided by individual employees. Individual employees within the following teams were praised by customers: Welfare Rights, Collections team, Assessment team and the Awards team.
69. Thirteen compliments related to staff in Human Resources & Organisational Development. Legal & Democratic Services continue to receive compliments (four) arising from conducting wedding ceremonies.
70. 5 suggestions were received this quarter in relation to:
- Councillors attending local libraries to assist members of the public
 - H&S officer to inspect a gymnastics centre in County Durham
 - DCC Health and Safety policies for Schools
 - Enabling customers to view their Council Tax balance on-line
 - Ceasing the e-billing prize draw incentive as it discriminates against non- internet users
71. Suggestions from customers are acknowledged and used as appropriate to inform service developments and improvements. However, the Revenues and Benefit Service, for example, is governed by prescriptive legislation and it is therefore not always possible to adopt customers' suggestions.

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO): current activity

72. During the quarter the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) made initial enquiries / initiated investigations into 19 matters.
73. The Ombudsman discounted their involvement in 2 of these cases as they found no fault by the Council. These related to:
- 1 - Leisure Services
 - 1 - Adult Social Care
74. The Ombudsman also discontinued investigations into 3 cases as they were reported prematurely and therefore referred back to the Council to deal with under the complaints procedure. These related to:
- 2 - Benefits
 - 1 - Land Bid Issue
75. We are still waiting for a decision on the following 13 cases which have been subject to LGO enquiries and relate to:
- 3 - Adult Social Care
 - 2 - Planning issues
 - 1 - Garden Waste Collection
 - 1 - Overhanging Trees issue
 - 1 - Refuse and Pest Control issue
 - 1 - Environmental Health and Housing issue
 - 1 - Issue regarding the lease of a Business Premises
 - 1 - Drainage, Highways and Insurance issue
 - 1 - Drainage and Planning issue
 - 1 - Children's Services

76. One case relating to Children's Services was closed by the Ombudsman after the Council responded to preliminary enquiries.
77. The Ombudsman delivered decisions on 14 matters which had been subject to investigations initiated prior to the beginning of the quarter:
- Three Adult Services issues – In 2 of the cases the investigations were concluded and the Ombudsman found there to be no evidence of fault by the Council. In 1 of the cases 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.
 - Three Planning issues – no fault by the Council.
 - Benefits issue – no fault by the Council.
 - Procurement issue – no fault by the Council.
 - Highways issue – no fault by the Council.
 - Children's Services issue – no fault by the Council.
 - One complaint regarding damage to a wall – The Ombudsman determined that the complaint had been reported to them prematurely, the complaint was therefore referred back to the Council to consider through the complaints procedure.
 - Electoral Services issue – The Ombudsman determined that the complaint had been reported to them prematurely, the complaint was therefore referred back to the Council to consider through the complaints procedure.
 - Housing issue – the complainant withdrew the complaint.
 - Procurement of driving instructors – The Ombudsman found both maladministration and injustice. 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.
78. 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:
- 2 Garden Waste complaints – no fault by the Council
 - 1 Recycling Centre issue – no fault by the Council
 - 1 Refuse collection issue – no fault by the Council
 - 1 Planning issue – no fault by the Council
 - 1 Land & property sale issue – no fault by the Council
 - 1 Insurance issue – Outside the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman
 - 1 Overhanging Trees complaint – Outside the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman

Recommendation

79. To note the contents of the report

Contact: Mary Readman 03000 268161
