

**Putting our
Customers first**

Customer Feedback Report

**Complaints,
compliments and
suggestions**

**2015/16
Year end**

Altogether better



Background information

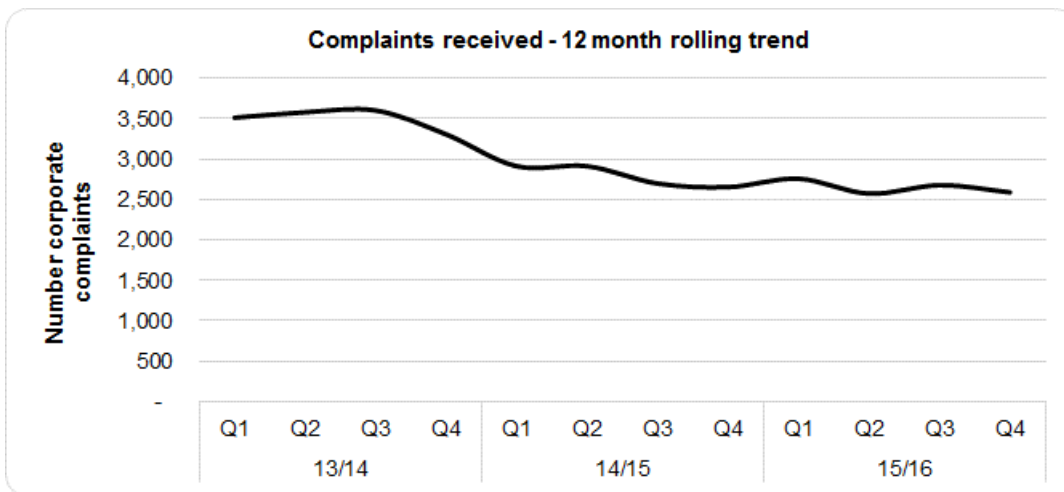
1. Customer feedback is a valuable tool. It not only helps us understand what is important to service users and what we are doing well, it can also indicate widespread issues and offer us the opportunity to put things right and improve our services.
2. There are two types of complaint. Statutory complaints which arise from our duties as a local social services authority and corporate complaints which cover all other complaints. Each complaint type is subject to its own processes and policy.
3. We are required by law to publish an annual report in relation to statutory complaints. As the Annual Representations Report for 2015/16 will be presented to members at Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10 October 2016, and will include detailed information in relation to social care representations received during 2015/16, statutory complaints are excluded from this year-end report.
4. This report provides a breakdown of all corporate complaints received by the Council during the 2015/16 financial year (1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016). It summarises the Council's performance in dealing with corporate complaints, explores the themes across customer feedback and identifies the action we will take to not only put things right for an individual but to improve wider service provision. The report also includes an overview of complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), as well as all compliments and suggestions.
5. The new process for handling corporate complaints was fully implemented in September 2015 following a programme of training and system development to enable better capture of information and a more streamlined approach. Services are now wholly dealing with complaints in the first instance, completing the initial service review and, as far as possible, contacting customers by telephone to ensure a more personal approach.
6. Should the customer remain dissatisfied with the service response to a corporate complaint, the complaint can be forwarded to the new Customer Feedback Team, set up within Customer Services to undertake independent review. The Customer Feedback Team is also working more closely with services to identify trends and opportunities for service improvement; capturing learning outcomes more effectively. Independent review of statutory complaints is arranged by the Complaints Team within Children and Adults Services, who commission independent investigations in line with the statutory regulations.

Summary

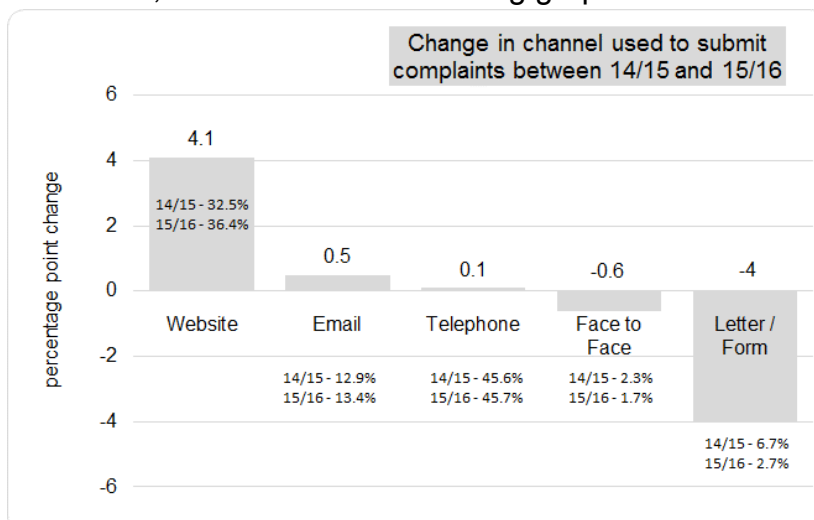
7. During 2015/16, we received 2,588 corporate complaints, a 2% decrease compared to 2014/15.

	14/15	15/16	Change
number received	2,649	2,588	↓ -61


8. For the last 2 years, the number of corporate complaints received has experienced a downward trend, albeit with a slight increase during quarter 1 and quarter 3, as shown in the graph below.



9. The slight increase in corporate complaints during quarter 1 followed the introduction of the new garden waste scheme and the impact of one-off issues associated with the implementation of a new service. The increase in quarter 3 is mainly attributable to 2 events; the period of heavy snowfall toward the end of December which led to a surge of complaints in relation to snow clearance and gritting, and the traffic census during November which led to complaints focussing on lack of notification and delays.
10. Analysis has been carried out to identify the channels used to report complaints during 2015/16. Although the telephone remains the preferred method with almost half of all complaints reported this way, there has been a shift from face to face and letter / form to website and e-mails, as shown in the following graph:



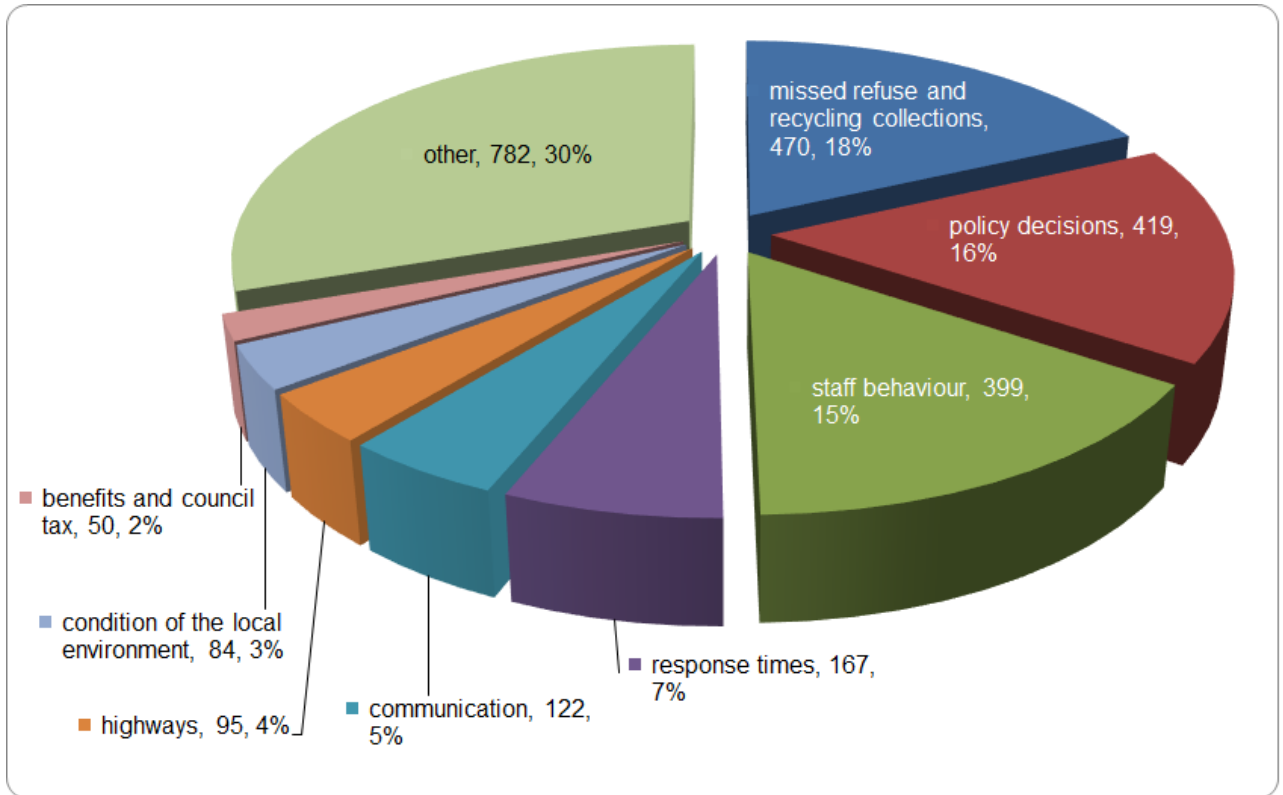
11. The increased use of the website reflects a recent customer satisfaction survey which showed that 92% of respondents found it easy to complete the web-form.
12. Process improvements throughout 2015/16 continue to positively impact the way our corporate complaints are handled. The average time for services to close a complaint has reduced by two days and the time to conclude an independent investigation has reduced by seven days. The customer satisfaction survey has shown that 79% of customers are happy with the time to respond to their complaint.
13. Of the complaints handled during 2015/16, approximately half were upheld (partly or fully), as shown in the following table:

	Service Review		
	14/15	15/16	Change
% upheld (fully or partly)	57%	51%	 -6pp

14. Following investigation by service areas, some complainants remained dissatisfied and requested their complaint progress to independent review. Investigations have been completed into 193 corporate complaints, 27% (53) of which were upheld (partly or fully).
15. During 2015/16, the Local Government Ombudsman delivered decisions into 112 matters. Of the 44 subject to full investigation, 18 were upheld.
16. In addition to complaints, we also received 1,475 compliments and 505 suggestions during 2015/16.

Corporate Complaints

17. Analysis of the 2,588 corporate complaints received during 2015/16 has highlighted three key topics which collectively make up half of all complaints received and an additional five topics which account for a further 20%, as shown in the chart below:



Missed Refuse and Recycling Collections

18. 470 complaints, 18% of the total received, related to missed collections; 226 garden waste, 194 kerbside refuse and recycling, 43 bulky collections and 7 trade waste. When considering the number of complaints relating to missed collections it is important to note that, during 2015/16, our crews completed almost 13 million refuse and recycling collections, over one million garden waste collections and 32,000 bulky collections.
19. The vast majority of complaints relating to missed garden waste collections followed the introduction of the new scheme. Just over half of the 226 complaints were received in April and June, but as the year progressed and crews became accustomed to the new collection rounds, the number received subsided.
20. A cross-service working group, comprising representatives from refuse and recycling, business support and customer services, has been established with the objective of reducing missed collections. The team will review operational practices, contact handling, software systems in place, policy and service standards as well as benchmarking.

Actions linked to our policies and procedures

21. Our service provision is reflected in our policies and procedures, and during 2015/16 we received 419 complaints as a direct consequence of carrying out actions in line with those policies and procedures. This equates to 16% of the total complaints received.
22. 42% of the 419 complaints related to our household waste policies and procedures: 125 to kerbside refuse and recycling collection service, 37 to the new garden waste collection scheme and 14 to the operational procedures of our Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs)
23. In relation to our kerbside refuse and recycling collection service, residents used the complaints system to object that; their household recycling bin was not emptied / permanently removed due to contamination (82 complaints), residual side waste was not collected (17), they were refused an additional / larger bin or a place on the assist list (15). Complaints were also received from residents unhappy that there are no specific bin collection times, they could not elect a collection point for bulky waste but instead had to leave it at the designated bin collection point, they could not have a smaller refuse bin and recycling collections are not scheduled weekly.
24. Of the 37 residents who complained about the workings of the new garden waste scheme, the majority (29) argued October was too early for the scheme to end. The remainder were from people unhappy that they were unable to transfer their subscription to a new property, objections to being ineligible to join the scheme and disagreeing with the decision that we will only take back empty garden waste bins.
25. Of the 14 complaints concerning our HWRCs, of which there are 12 permanent sites and one mobile site, half were from residents believing HWRCs should open later in the evening to benefit residents who work office hours. The remainder were as a consequence of site controls such as the ban on landlords disposing of waste left behind by their tenants, entering a HWRC on foot and the use of certain vehicles without a waste permit.
26. 17% of the 419 complaints related to our fees and charges, which are reviewed annually and allow us to provide local services which might not otherwise be possible. 44 of the 72 complaints related to the £20 administration and delivery charge to replace a bin lost, stolen or damaged beyond repair, seven to the standard £40 charge by our pest control service which covers visits and materials and five to the £20 subscription for the garden waste collection scheme. Six residents submitted general complaints in response to price increases at our leisure centres and the remaining complaints related to bulky waste charges, the charge for clearing an empty property and burial fees.

27. 27 complainants were dissatisfied with planning application policies and procedures, mainly due to disagreements with how a planning application had been dealt with or not receiving enough support through the procedure.
28. Our Street Lighting Energy Reduction Programme, which has upgraded more than 33,000 street lights with LED light fittings which concentrate light on the road and footpath areas, reducing light pollution to the surrounding areas, is continuing. During 2015/16, we received 24 complaints from residents believing that this change will lead to more crime as the light is not covering as wide an area as previously. However, a recent study concluded there is no evidence of any link between reduced street lighting and increased crime or road traffic collisions at night, which is in line with previous work commissioned by the Department of Transport.
29. 24 complaints were in response to our Revenues and Benefits Team following appropriate procedures. The majority (15 complaints) related to our policy that all unoccupied properties are subject to 100% council tax for the first two years, and then 150% if they remain unfurnished. The remaining complaints were in relation to housing benefit regulations and enforcement regulations.
30. 5% of the 419 complaints were from residents unhappy that they had received an enforcement notice from our Neighbourhood Warden Team which utilises various powers to help tackle environmental issues and keep County Durham clean. Although the majority related to being issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice for dropping litter or not cleaning up after their dog, there were also objections to being the recipient of a litter clearance notice or a formal warning issued under section 46 of Environmental Protection Act.
31. We also received complaints about actions undertaken in line with our tree policy, the decision not to open on bank holidays, the new approach to storing and displaying the DLI collection, the implementation of 20mph speed limit zones around schools, our decision to host Lumiere, our street naming and numbering policy and our procedures for lowering kerbs.
32. All complaints received in relation to taking a decision in line with our policies and procedures are considered when the associated policy or procedure is reviewed.

Staff Behaviour

33. Staff behaviour accounted for 399 complaints, 15% of the total received.
34. 40% (161 instances) related to the attitude of our staff, most of which was general unhelpfulness but a small number related to staff being rude, abusive or swearing. A further 11% (46 instances) concerned staff using council vehicles; speeding, using a mobile phone whilst driving or parking inconsiderately. The Council expects the highest standards from all employees and deals with any alleged shortcomings through our HR

policies and procedures. All complaints relating to non-DCC employees are passed to the appropriate contractor to be dealt with under their procedures. The contractor feeds back the results of their investigations to DCC.

35. Just over a third of the 399 complaints (141 instances) cited the actions of our refuse and recycling crews. Of these, the majority (78 residents) objected that their bins were not being returned to their collection point. In addition, 55 residents complained crews did not clear up dropped refuse / recycling from roads and pavements as they completed their collection rounds. The remaining complaints related to crews not closing gates or leaving bins open so they become full of water when it rains.
36. A further 11% identified staff's actions as causing damage to their property. Half of these 46 complaints involved grass cutters or refuse and recycling vehicles, a quarter involved weed killer and the remaining quarter related to highways operations.
37. The remaining complaints covered a variety of reasons in smaller volumes, such as school crossing patrols being too hesitant, stopping cars too frequently or stepping out in front of cars; and conflict of interest.

Response times

38. 167 complaints, 6% of the total received, were from customers who felt that our response times were inadequate. Two thirds complained there had been no action in response to their request / concern and one third complained we had taken too long to action their request / resolve their issue.
39. Almost two thirds of complaints related to the repair of street lights or the delivery of new or replacement bins. The introduction of the new garden waste scheme resulted in 47 complaints, mainly from people who did not receive a bin (28 complaints) or the appropriate bin sticker (16) in time for the start of the 2015/16 scheme.
40. Other complaints related to the removal of fly-tips, perceived lack of action by Neighbourhood Wardens and time taken to cut hedges / trees / grass.

Communication

41. Communication was the basis of 122 complaints, 5% of all complaints received during 2015/16.
42. 'Insufficient, inaccurate or unclear information' accounted for around two thirds of communication complaints. There were 2 main themes; information given at the initial point of contact and the wording of letters.
43. All cases involving the customers being given incorrect information or advice are investigated, fed back to the relevant team manager and discussed with the team. To ensure all staff have access to the latest training materials and are kept up to date with

legislative and process changes, regular liaison meetings are held between Revenues and Benefits and Customer Services. During 2015/16 our customer services team dealt with more than 1.3 million enquiries.

44. Some residents find the wording of letters, for example, benefit notification letters difficult to understand. We appreciate that these letters can be complex and although the information is prescribed by legislation, we are reviewing the notification letters to make them easier to understand whilst ensuring we meet legislative requirements. During quarter 3, we concluded our e-bill take up campaign encouraging Direct Debit payers to move to paperless bills, and received several complaints that the wording in the take up letter suggested this was mandatory. These comments have been acknowledged and will be considered when determining the wording of future canvass letters.
45. The remaining third of communication complaints related to traffic management measures, e.g. road closures, lane restrictions and traffic lights, which the complainant felt had not been adequately communicated. The Traffic Census, carried out in November to gather data for the County Durham Plan, resulted in 13 complaints from residents who did not know this was to take place and were delayed by it. Unfortunately, we could not forewarn residents in case they changed their routes to avoid the census points thereby reducing the validity of the data.
46. At any point in time, there are between 150 and 200 traffic management systems in place across the county, and of these the Council will be responsible for about a quarter, the remainder being the responsibility of utility companies, house builders or other private companies. As a minimum and as far as we are able, we ensure the information is included on our website. Depending on the size and duration of a scheme / road closure, we also communicate any disruption or diversion through a mix of channels, including social media, press releases, leaflets, posters, electronic Variable Message Signage (static and mobile), traffic management / on street signage. Furthermore, letters are being handed out to taxi companies to keep parents, carers and schools advised of any significant delays.
47. There were also a small number of specific complaints. One complaint highlighted that the public transport map was showing incorrect information; this has now been corrected. There was an instance when a resident was unable to submit information on the planning website and could not find the right person to contact; the webpage has been updated to make it clearer who to contact if there are technical issues. One complainant highlighted that no announcements of stops were made on the Park and Ride buses; we have arranged for leaflets containing the route and bus stop information for Park and Ride and Cathedral bus services to be available on each bus, and we are investigating the possibility of installing bus route maps inside the buses. Following an Instagram competition and the non-delivery of the customer's winning tickets, the Social Media team has amended their third party involvement procedures.

Highways Infrastructure

48. 95 complaints, 4% of the total received, were in relation to our highway. The majority of complaints (28 instances) related to the condition of the highway; although the latest road condition survey shows an improvement within our road network and we were recently named, alongside Lincolnshire, as one of the two top performing highway authorities in the country.
49. The second most frequent cause for complaint was obstructive parking. DCC is responsible for enforcing parking restrictions such as yellow lines and restricted bays which are generally in town centres and other commercial areas. Where vehicles are parked in contravention of such restrictions DCC is able to issue a Penalty Charge Notice to the registered keeper. In the instance of a residential area which is not restricted in this way, no contravention is being committed. However, all obstructive parking complaints are passed to Durham Police for further action. The remaining complaints covered various topics such as roadworks, road layout including objections to traffic calming measures, highway obstruction, road safety and drainage work.

Condition of the Local Environment

50. We received 84 complaints in relation to the condition of the local environment, 3% of all complaints received during 2015/16. The majority of complaints highlighted an issue rather than complaining about our processes, for example, levels of fly-tipping, littering or dog fouling within their local area, anti-social behaviour, overgrown trees and hedges, overflowing litter bins. Once we are aware of the issue, action is taken to rectify the problem.

Revenues and Benefits

51. 50 complaints, 2% of the total received, related to incorrect decisions made on benefit claims or inconsistencies in data recorded within our benefits and council tax systems. More than 115,000 new claims, change of circumstances and work items are processed each year and we have steps in place to mitigate the risk of error and ensure information is as accurate as possible. A dedicated training team, a regular staff update and a robust quality assurance process targeting high risk claims and procedures, are in place. Identified trends are shared with managers and used to further develop training plans and process reviews. We also work closely with software suppliers, seeking opportunities to automate processes to further minimise the risk of error.

Other complaints

52. The remaining 30% of the 2,588 corporate complaints received related to a wide variety of issues received in smaller volumes.

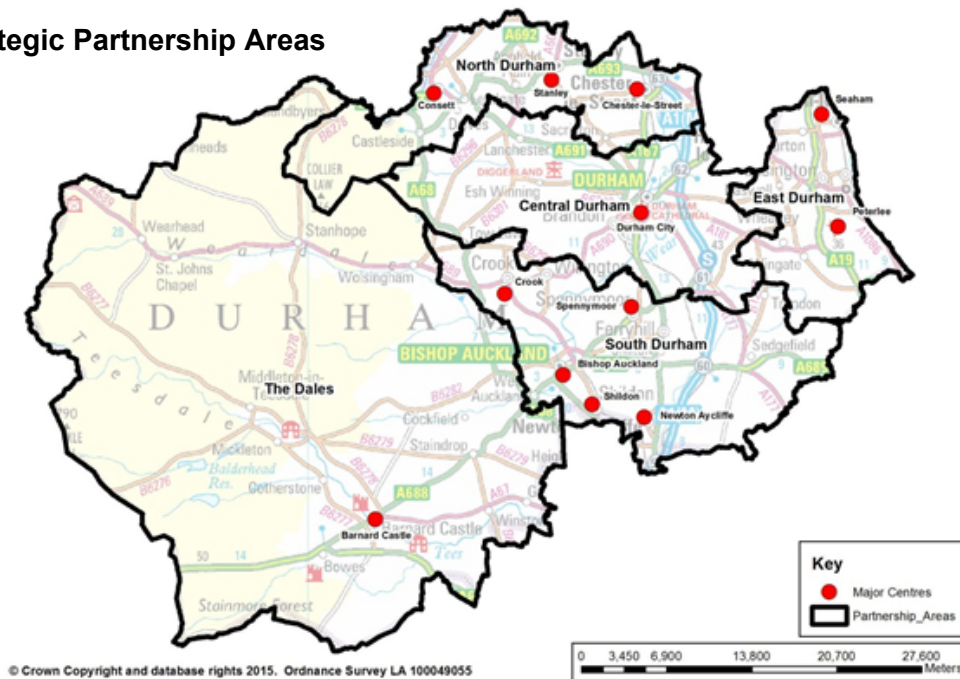
Corporate complaints subjected to independent review

53. During 2015/16, 172 complainants requested their complaint be escalated to independent review. We declined to investigate 20 of these complaints as the Customer Feedback Team believed there was no value in an independent investigation, advising the customer to contact the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) should they wish to pursue their complaint.
54. During the same period, we completed investigations into 193 complaints, of which 53 (27%) were upheld (fully or partly). The majority of upheld complaints related to one of three areas.
55. The most frequent topic (14 complaints) related to our Garden Waste Scheme. 13 complaints were in relation to missed collections, and the final complaint was in relation to non-delivery of a new garden waste bin. These complaints followed the introduction of the new garden waste collection scheme and although there was a spike in missed garden waste complaints in April and June, as the year progressed and crews became accustomed to the new collection rounds, the number received subsided.
56. 10 complaints related to our Revenues and Benefits Service. Topic included housing benefit calculations, incorrect addressing of bills, Council Tax for empty properties, paying Housing Benefit directly to landlords.
57. 8 complaints related to refuse and recycling bins. The most frequent causes for complaint were missed bins, not returning bins to their collection points and not closing gates.
58. The remaining complaints covered a variety of areas including lack of contact in relation to an issue / request, procedures at a HWRC, planning terms of reference, recruitment and staff issues.

Analysis of data across County geographies

59. In order to provide a geographic overview of the corporate complaints submitted to the Council; complaints data for the last 4 years (almost 11,000 corporate complaints) was analysed and mapped by the five Strategic Partnership Areas as shown on the map overleaf.

Strategic Partnership Areas



60. Not all complaints could be included within the geographical analysis: those submitted without an accompanying address or by a complainant residing outside the County were excluded.
61. As it is possible for a small number of people to skew the results if they have submitted multiple complaints, the analysis was completed by based on the number of complainants rather than the number of complaints. Reporting 'per 1,000 households' enables comparisons to be made between areas of varying population size.
62. Overall, at a county level, there has been a slight rise in the complainant rate, as shown in the table below. It should be noted that there have been improvements in the data quality of information relating to complainants which could account for this increase in the light of reduced overall complaints :

Area	Number of Complainants					Rate per 1,000 Households			
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	Total	Rate 2012-13	Rate 2013-14	Rate 2014-15	Rate 2015-16
Central Durham	579	569	447	492	2087	13.3	13.3	10.4	11.3
East Durham	466	413	378	354	1611	11.4	10.3	9.2	8.5
North Durham	743	606	547	603	2499	12.8	10.4	9.4	10.2
South Durham	586	530	557	535	2208	9.2	8.3	8.7	8.3
The Dales	124	110	104	106	444	8.5	7.5	7.1	7.2
Grand Total	2498	2228	2033	2090	8849	11.3	10.1	9.2	9.3

63. Rates have remained relatively high in Central Durham and relatively low in The Dales.

Complaints by service

64. A service analysis of complaints received during 2015-16 reveals that there is little difference between areas. 85% of all complaints were for services provided by Neighbourhood Services and of these, 76% related to waste. 7% of complaints related to Resources, 5% to Regeneration and Economic Development and the remaining complaints to Children and Adult's Services, and Assistant Chief Executives.

Complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

65. During 2015/16, the LGO delivered decisions in relation to 112 complaints, 44 of which had been subject to full investigation.
66. Of those 68 matters not subject to full investigation, conclusions were reached based on details supplied by complainants and supplemented in some instances with contextual information from Council officers. The 68 investigations related to a number of service areas including planning, adult care, and children's services. 24 were found to be outside the LGO's jurisdiction and in 44 cases no further action was proposed.
67. The LGO also delivered decisions on 44 matters which had been subject to full investigation. Of these, 26 found no fault on the part of the Council, 6 ruled maladministration with no injustice and 12 found maladministration and injustice. Those cases involving maladministration and injustice are listed in the following table.

Category	Complaint	Action to be taken
Maladministration and Injustice	Failure to deal with late father's move from one care home to another	Council had already taken action to remedy the issues before the LGO's decision and to the LGO's satisfaction
	Failure to pass an employee planning application to a planning committee for consideration	
	Fault by the Council in the way it dealt with a complaint about street lighting	Financial remedy of £150 and a formal written apology
	Failure by the Council to correctly transfer a council tax payment the complainant made on a previous property to current address	Financial remedy of £75 in recognition of time and trouble
	Council's failure to rent an area of land, billing in error for rent and failure to properly investigate	Financial settlement of £100 and an apology

Category	Complaint	Action to be taken
	Failure to follow proper procedures before arranging a Child Protection Conference, then failure to deal appropriately with their complaints and provide adequate remedy	Council made a time and trouble payment of £350 and agreed to place a statement on file outlining the key failings in the child protection inquiry
	Failure to apply its policy to consider whether there were exceptional circumstances to pay a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) for more than 53 weeks.	Council to review the decision to refuse this DHP, and within three months review the operation of the DHP policy to ensure proper consideration has been given to the circumstances of other claimants.
	Faults in handling concerns about hens on allotments.	Financial settlement of £100 and an apology.
	Home care services commissioned by the Council were poor.	Financial settlement of £250. Council reminded the care provider of the importance of recording medication properly and made this part of any contract compliance visits.
	The Council's actions prevented the sale of a business as a going concern	Financial settlement of £1,000
	Failure to deal properly with the need for home adaptations	Council to commission an independent assessment of needs.
	Retrospective planning applications.	Financial settlement of £200 and an apology.

Review of the Complaints Policy and Process

68. The new Complaints Policy was adopted in July 2015 to align it to the new process for handling complaints with a recommendation that it be reviewed in April 2016 to take into account any anomalies that became apparent during its first nine months of operation. The revised policy will be considered in July 2016.
69. A new mechanism for monitoring the quality and performance of complaint handling is now in place, and a cross-service working group has been established as a conduit for sharing this information, ensuring consistent ways of working and sharing best practice.

Suggestions

70. We believe suggestions are essential to the ongoing development and improvement of our services, and carefully consider all received.
71. During 2015/16, we received 505 suggestions, compared to 305 during 2014/15. Almost 35% of all suggestions received during 2015/16, and the main cause of the increase, suggested that the garden waste scheme be extended into November. This was considered by the service area and the scheme extended to 17 collections from 2016. The remaining 333 suggestions covered a wide range of topics.
72. There were a number of suggestions relating to communicating via our website, for example, adding the option of a 'nothing has changed' button when renewing blue badges, allowing the congestion charge to be paid via our website, reporting envirocrime using interactive maps. The possibility of implementing all of these suggestions is being investigated as part of a wider programme linked to the development of the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. In response to a suggestion, we have looked into increasing the volume of our automated messages but it is currently not possible at the moment.
73. One resident suggested that improvements should be made to Millennium Place which coincides with the commissioning of an urban design study which could bring changes to this area following the Council's accommodation review and the marketing of the buildings around the area. We have noted the suggestion in relation to the location of 'The Journey' statue.
74. Suggestions are frequently received suggesting changes to our road system. However, if implemented, many would have knock on effects to the traffic flows elsewhere. For example, during quarter 3, one suggestion was to introduce a right only turn at traffic lights in Chester-le-Street. Although there is logic to this suggestion, making such a change would slow down rush hour traffic.
75. A couple of suggestions were received in relation to parking charges. One suggestion was to remove parking charges at Chester-le-Street Leisure Centre and although this was also considered, we were unable to implement as the charges not only discourage long stay parking by commuters but also cover the cost of the car park which otherwise would need to be paid by the taxpayer. Another was to allow free parking in our Park and Ride car parks. The Park and Ride service is operated and maintained using income from passenger fares. If the sites were used as a free Park and Pedal or Park and Walk base many of the spaces could potentially be taken by non-paying customers, reducing available space for paying customers which in turn would impact upon income and ability to operate the buses and maintain the sites.

76. There were a number of suggestions relating to our Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs), including a suggestion to e-mail waste permits so they are received quickly and postage costs are saved. The foil hologram on the current waste permit prevents photocopies being used fraudulently but we are considering electronic permits with unique barcodes that could be scanned at HWRCs. There was also a suggestion specific to Potterhouse Lane HWRC, proposing that during periods of temporary closure a container is placed at the gates as a legitimate means of waste disposal. However, this was not possible as there is insufficient space for a container and for cars to pull over and residents to get out safely.
77. A suggestion was received to merge letters addressed to the same property to save costs. We have now introduced merging of Council Tax Bills and Benefit Notification letters where the name on the account and address is consistent.

Compliments

78. We receive many positive comments about our staff and the services we provide, and we believe that understanding what is working well and appreciated is as important as knowing what is not working as well.
79. During 2015/16, we received 1,475 compliments, 352 in relation to social services and 1,123 in relation to other services. These compliments recognise not only the motivation, dedication and hard-work of our staff but also the high standard and value of the services we provide. The majority of the compliments related to satisfaction with service provision but a proportion of compliments conveyed thanks to specific individuals. As far as we are able, we have passed these thanks onto the individual concerned.
80. Staff in the Durham County Record Office were thanked for their helpfulness, hard work, time out of their schedule, excellent customer service and for providing comprehensive and swift replies in relation to various family and local history queries. In addition, they were praised for their high quality family history courses, Map Curators' workshop and website.
81. Our highly professional and enthusiastic Registration Services Team was regularly complimented for their care, support and manner in which they conducted wedding ceremonies, helping to make them happy and memorable occasions.
82. Throughout 2015/16, residents commended our Care Connect Team for their professionalism, help and support in caring for their relatives. The compliments included instances when staff had gone the extra mile, including a staff member who went out of her way to check on a client and a paramedic crew who thanked care connect staff after recognising they would not have been able to manage without them.

83. Our refuse and recycling crews received many compliments, the main themes being their helpfulness in coming to the aid of vulnerable people struggling to put their bins out for collection, promptly repairing damaged bins, returning to collect missed collections and general gratitude for continuing to collect bins in appalling weather. The HWRCs also attracted compliments, mainly in relation to the staff being polite, helpful and aiding people to unload the waste from their cars.
84. Residents submitted compliments to the Clean and Green and Grounds Maintenance teams for the speedy removal of fly-tips, resolving localised issues of littering or dog fouling and for maintaining the quality of our environment. During 2015/16, we also received many positive comments about our wildflower planting scheme. The wildflower meadows also drew attention on our social media sites: more than 170,000 people viewed our post highlighting the roadside wild floral displays with 4,038 likes and 1,027 comments.
85. The condition of the highway received many compliments, including thanks for the speedy repair of street lights, effective gully cleansing and filling in pot holes. Compliments were also received following the major improvement works undertaken at Sunderland Bridge and Milburngate Bridge during quarter 2. The severe delays expected by the works did not materialise due to a combination of our proactive approach, a hardworking and dedicated workforce and public support. In addition to compliments recorded on our database, social media reached nearly 53,000 people, attracting 640 likes and more than 80 comments, the majority of which congratulated us for finishing the job early. A number of properties were affected by flooding during 2015/16, and residents thanked us for the effective procedures we have in place to respond to these instances, e.g. speedy delivery of sandbags.
86. The new Customer Feedback Team is currently working with services to determine how compliments and suggestions can be better used to influence our learning, service improvement and organisational development plans. Information on the outcome of this work will be provided in a future report.

Recommendation

87. That the contents of the report are noted