Appendix 2

Putting our Customers first

Customer Feedback Report

Complaints, compliments and suggestions

Year end 2016/17

Altogether better

Durham County Council

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. Covering a range of customer feedback, this report highlights the main themes throughout 2016/17 (1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017), summarises our performance in dealing with complaints, identifies any lessons learned and states what remedial action we have taken, or plan to take, to put things right and ensure similar mistakes are avoided in the future. As feedback can also highlight opportunities for operational improvement even when the service is delivered properly, the report also includes a selection of customer suggestions and their outcomes, and an overview of comments relating to our decision making.

Complaints

3. Within this document, 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. As each complaint type is subject to its own processes and policy, they are reported separately.

4. The first stage in the corporate complaints process enables service areas to resolve the issue in the first instance, providing a service response. Should the customer remain dissatisfied with the service response they can escalate to the Customer Feedback Team, who will either progress with an independent investigation, or advise the service user to contact the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). Independent investigation of statutory complaints is arranged by the statutory Complaints Teams.

5. A piece of work on providing a more robust approach to dealing with customer remedies to resolve complaints has recently been concluded; this has resulted in a new policy which will be available to both staff and the public.

Summary:

6. During 2016/17, we received 2,120 complaints; 194 statutory complaints and 1,926 corporate complaints.

	2015/16	2016/17	change	
number received	**2,793**	**2,120**	**-673**	**-24%**
- Statutory complaints	205	194	-11	-5%
- corporate complaints	2,588	1,926	-662	-26%

7. The decrease in the number of complaints is a continuation of the downward trend experienced over the last few years.

8. Analysis has been carried out to identify the channels used to report complaints during 2016/17, and there appears to have been a shift towards reporting via our website. The following table shows the channel split in relation to complaint submission between 2014/15 and 2016/17.

Channel	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Change over last 2 years
Website	32.5%	36.4%	42.7%	10.2pp
Face to Face	2.3%	1.7%	2.3%	-
Telephone	45.6%	45.7%	44.5%	-1.1pp
Letter / Form / Fax	6.7%	2.7%	2.9%	-3.8pp
E-mail	12.9%	13.4%	7.2%	-5.7pp

9. Of the complaints handled during 2016/17, just over half were upheld (partially or fully)

	2015/16	2016/17	change
% upheld (fully or partially)	**51%**	**57%**	↑ **6pp**
- Statutory complaints	50%	47%	↓ -3pp
- corporate complaints	51%	59%	↑ 8pp

10. Following investigation by service areas, 140 complainants remained dissatisfied and requested their complaint progress to independent review. Investigations have been completed into 114 complaints; 88 corporate complaints, of which 23% (20) were upheld (partly or fully) and 26 statutory of which 46% (12) were upheld.

11. During 2016/17, the Local Government Ombudsman delivered decisions into 72 matters. 20 complaints were upheld.

12. In addition to complaints, we also received 1,095 compliments, 382 suggestions and 335 comments in relation to our policies and procedures.

Statutory Complaints: Children's Social Care Services

13. During 2016/17, Children's Social Care Services received 107 statutory complaints, 18% fewer (-23) than 2015/16. Three complaints progressed to independent investigation, 62% fewer (-5) than 2015/16.

14. Two thirds of these complaints related to our Families First Teams (37%) or Child Protection Teams (30%). 64% of complaints were made by parents and 7% by young people or their advocates.

15. 82 complaints (77%) were resolved within their prescribed timescale and 25 complaints (23%) were resolved outside their prescribed timescale. Of these complaints: 57 were not upheld (53%), 13 were upheld (12%) and 37 partially upheld (35%). The most common theme of complaints upheld (fully or partially) was 'lack of communication – not informed about the case'.

16. 11 complaints were declined for various reasons including being about private law matters or from persons who were not eligible to act on the child's behalf.

17. During 2016/17, a number of actions were taken in response to complaints, including:
    - Reminding Child Protection staff to share birth response plans with appropriate staff, including staff in hospitals.
    - Reminding staff that when families are signposted to the relevant agencies for benefits advice, a case note should be recorded as evidence that guidance has been given
    - Reminding managers that when court orders are issued, they have responsibility for ensuring the allocated case worker follows up actions as appropriate.

Statutory Complaints: Adult Social Care Services

18. During 2016/17, Adult Social Care Services received 87 statutory complaints, 19% more (+14) than 2015/16. Five complaints were declined.

19. Almost half of these complaints related to Older People / Physical Disabilities / Sensory Impairment. The most common reason for complaint was a disputed decision where a service user disagrees with an explanation or decision.

20. 85 complaints were resolved during 2016/17, 77 within their agreed timescale (91%). Of the 85 resolved complaints: 44 were not upheld (51%), 13 were upheld (15%) and 28 partially upheld (32%).

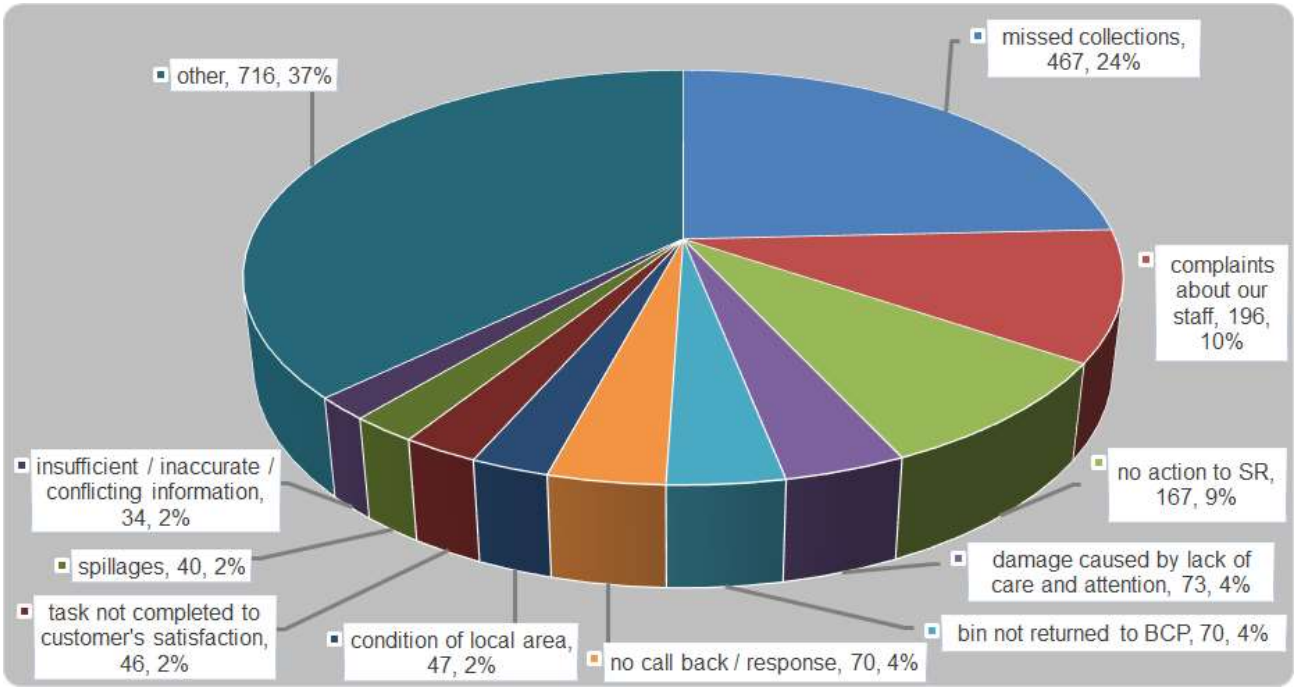
21. During 2016/17, a number of actions were taken in response to complaints, including:
    - Revising and recirculating to staff, best interest procedures and processes for involving an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate.
    - Correcting a flaw in the invoicing process linked to circumstances where care charges have been waived
    - Reminding staff to clearly communicate the criteria for receiving an Intermediate Care Plus service.

22. Further detail of statutory complaints received during 2016/17 are within the Annual Representations Reports which are presented as separate reports.

Corporate Complaints

23. During 2016/17, we received 1,926 corporate complaints, 662 fewer than 2015/16. Of those complaints investigated during 2016/17, 59% were upheld (fully or partially) compared to 51% during 2015/16.

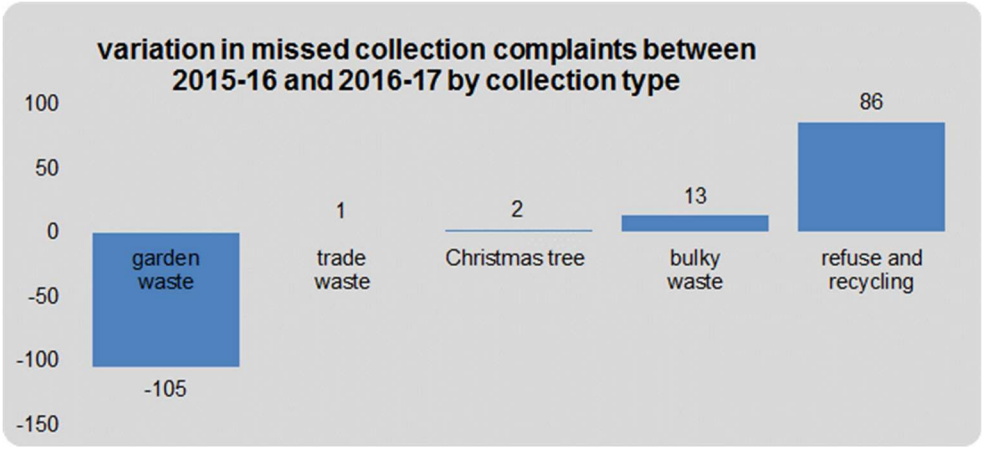
24. Further analysis has identified ten topics that collectively account for 63% of complaints:



Missed Collections

25. In line with previous reports, missed collections continue to be the most frequent cause of complaint across the council. However, when considering these complaints, it is important to note that every year our crews complete 13 million refuse and recycling collections, 1.2 million garden waste collections and 32,000 bulky collections.

26. Of the 467 complaints received during 2016/17, a 1% decrease (3 fewer) when compared to 2015/16, 280 related to kerbside refuse and recycling, 121 to garden waste, 56 to bulky collections, 8 to trade waste and 2 to Christmas tree collections. Although the overall number received is consistent between 2015/16 and 2016/17,this is not reflected across all collection types as shown in the graph below,



27. 105 fewer complaints relating to missed garden waste collections can be attributed to crews now being accustomed to collection rounds. During 2015/16, the vast majority of complaints of this type followed the introduction of the new scheme with just over half of the 226 complaints received in April 2015 and June 2015. However, as time progressed, the number received subsided.

28. During 2016/17, the increase in the complaints relating to missed refuse and recycling collections followed changes to household refuse and recycling collection routes. Missed collections peaked in October but reduced as crews and customers became accustomed with new collection rounds.

29. A cross-service working group has been established to reduce missed collections by reviewing operational practices, contact handling, software systems, policy and service standards as well as benchmarking.

Complaints about our staff

30. 196 complaints, 10% of all those received during 2016/17, concerned our staff. Of these, 85% can be categorised within one of three main themes.

31. 42% were objecting to the attitude of our staff (82 instances) claiming they were deliberately unhelpful, obstructive or unreasonable. 26% felt our staff behaved toward them in an aggressive or intimidating way, often using foul, obscene or insulting language (51 instances). 17% believed our staff drove in a dangerous manner, some of which involved near misses (33 instances).

32. The remaining complaints included staff parking inappropriately, driving too slow, throwing items (e.g. recycling boxes, cones), dropping litter, contacting residents too early, or not fulfilling their duties appropriately (e.g. investigating enviro-crime, school crossing patrol).

33. 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.

No action to Service Request

34. 167 complaints, 9% of all those received during 2016/17, were from customers unhappy that there had been no action in response to their request, concern or query. However, it is important to consider this within the context of receiving more than 1.3 million contacts each year, the majority of which require us to action a request or resolve an issue.

35. Almost three quarters of these complaints related to: a bin repair or delivery of a replacement bin (42, 25%), a street lighting repair (42 instances, 25%), a reported enviro-crime incident (24, 14%), or the delivery of a Garden waste bin or sticker (13, 8%).

36. During 2016/17, we responded to 20,000 bin repairs or replacements, 11,500 street lighting and 6,000 reports of enviro-crime. We also delivered stickers to the 70,000 households participating in the Garden Waste Collection Scheme.

Damage caused by lack of care or attention

37. The basis of 73 complaints, 4% of all those received during 2016/17, was that staff had damaged property, either theirs or the Council's, due to a lack of care and attention whilst undertaking their duties.

38. The most frequent cause of these complaints (29 instances) was damage allegedly caused by our refuse and recycling crews. These included damage to: refuse and recycling receptacles (9), cars (5), grassed areas / plants (5), walls and paving (6).

39. Grounds maintenance accounted for 20 complaints: 11 related to our use of weed killer and nine to damage caused by grass cutters, which included damage to cars by stones (3), driveways and paving by driving over or dislodging edging (3) or hitting pipes or ornaments (3).

40. A further 14 complainants alleged damage by our highway maintenance teams, mainly car damage due to stone chips following road resurfacing or when gritting.

41. We also received complaints in small numbers regarding damage to; cables by street lighting teams, the highway through diesel spillage and to walls by dirty water when drain clearing.

Bins not returned to Bin Collection Point

42. 70 complaints, 4% of all those received during 2016/17, objected to our refuse and recycling crews not returning bins to their collection point.

No call back or update to a service request

43. 70 complaints, 4% of all those received during 2016/17, were unhappy not to have received an expected call back or update following their initial contact.

44. Although most of the initial contact related to a submitted service request, a proportion was from residents seeking clarification or requesting information. A small number of complainants were disappointed not to have received feedback as to the outcome of their service request, e.g. report of fly tipping. System and process changes have been made to address issues raised in this category

Condition of the local area

45. 47 complainants (2%) were unhappy with the condition of their local area and felt we were not doing enough to maintain it to an appropriate standard. In instances such as these, if we feel it would be of benefit, we do consider amending our maintenance schedule.

Tasks not completed to the customer's satisfaction

46. 46 complainants (2%) felt the standard of our work was inadequate. Almost half of these complaints related to two frontline service areas: highway maintenance (15 complaints, 33%) and grass cutting (11 complaints, 24%), of which three quarters cited the standard of work and one quarter related to leaving the local environment in an unacceptable condition after the work had been completed.

47. A further 10 complainants (22%) were dissatisfied with our response to their report of enviro-crime or anti-social behaviour.

48. The remaining complaints related to the following service areas in small numbers: street lighting, street cleansing, gritting, drainage or environmental health.

Spillages

49. 40 complaints (2%) were in relation to spillages. The vast majority related to spillages occurring during household waste collection; mainly broken glass. We have reminded refuse and recycling crews to clean up any spillages that occur.

Insufficient, inaccurate or conflicting information

50. 34 complaints (2%) were from residents who believed the information they were given was insufficient, inaccurate or conflicting.

51. Almost half of these complaints related to the Assessments and Awards Team within our Revenues and Benefits service, which processes approximately 115,000 work items

each year, and were due to staff failing to follow processes and procedures or due to human error with manual input required.

52. The administration of council tax, housing benefit and council tax reduction is complex, subject to frequent change and highly legislated, and the service is continuously seeking opportunities to minimise the risk of error and complaint such as working closely with software suppliers to automate processes and minimise manual interventions, improving quality assurance to help minimise and mitigate errors, and providing ongoing training to both individuals and teams.

53. The remaining complaints included information on pest control charges and associated discounts (6), garden waste collections (3), what can be included and the cost of bulky waste collections (2), items that can be recycled (1), start times of fitness classes (1).

Other

54. The remaining 37% of corporate complaints related to a wide variety of issues.

Locality analysis 2016/17

55. As in previous years, as part of the annual reporting, a locality analysis of complaints data has been undertaken by the Research Team in Transformation and Partnerships.

56. During 2016/17, we received 1,926 corporate complaints. 172 of these complaints could not be geocoded (i.e. pinpointed to a specific location within the county) because either the address was not given (87 instances, 51% of ungeocoded complaints) or were outside of the county (85 instances, 49%).

57. The following table details the number of complainants per financial year**.** Complainants are used in preference to complaints because it is possible that a small number of people could make multiple complaints thereby skewing results for a specific area. By removing duplicate addresses, the total number of complainants was 1,890. Presenting the results as rates per 1,000 households enables like for like comparison between areas of varying population size.

Complainant[1] rate per 1,000 households

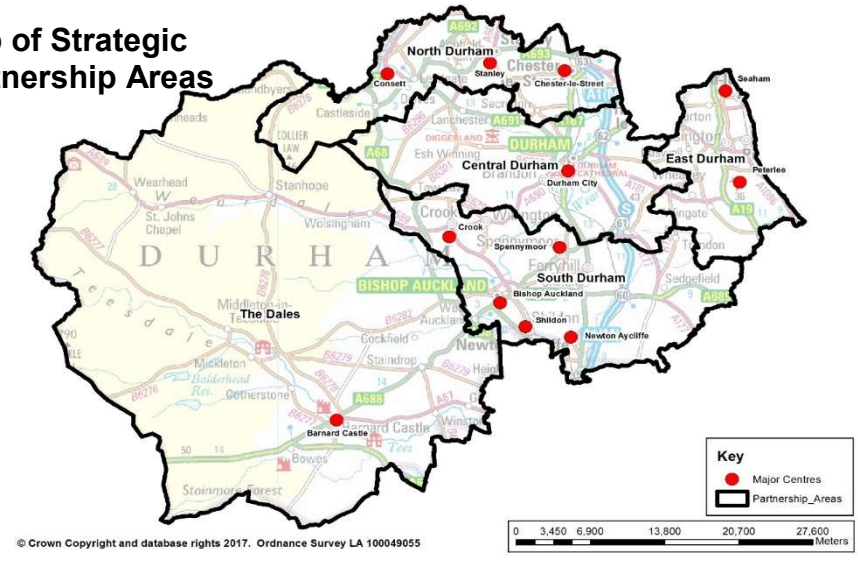
		Number of Complainants				Rate per 1,000 Households			
	no of households	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	Rate 2013-14	Rate 2014-15	Rate 2015-16	Rate 2016-17
Central Durham	**43,690**	569	447	492	321	13.3	10.4	11.3	7.3
East Durham	**41,416**	413	378	354	242	10.3	9.2	8.5	5.8
North Durham	**59,366**	606	547	603	380	10.4	9.4	10.2	6.4
South Durham	**64,520**	530	557	535	413	8.3	8.7	8.3	6.4
The Dales	**14,811**	110	104	106	81	7.5	7.1	7.2	5.5
Grand Total	**223,803**	**2,228**	**2,033**	**2,090**	**1,437**	**10.1**	**9.2**	**9.3**	**6.4**

[1] Using a complainant rate also enables some indicative statistical significance testing to be undertaken. This was determined by the observation of non-overlapping confidence intervals, which were themselves derived using Byar's method.

Summary of results

58. Overall, at a county level the trend in complainant rates saw a considerable fall from 9.3 to 6.4 complainants per 1,000 households. Although rates remain highest overall in Central Durham, this area saw a fall of 4.0 to 7.3 complaints per 1,000 households during the period. The Dales remains lowest with a rate of 5.5 with East Durham seeing a similar figure having had a fall from 8.5 to 5.8 complainants per 1,000 households. Both North Durham and South Durham saw falls in rates of 3.8 and 1.9 respectively and are now in line with the county average.

Map of Strategic Partnership Areas



Corporate complaints subjected to independent investigation

59. During 2016/17, 114 complainants requested their complaint be escalated to the next stage; we declined to investigate 26 of these complaints.

60. During the same period, we completed investigations into 88 complaints, of which 20 (23%) were upheld (fully or partially). A complete list of complaints upheld during 2016/17 is attached at Appendix 1. The following table provides detail of complaints upheld during quarter 4:

Outcome	Complaint	Action to be taken
Partially upheld	Lack of action in relation to street lighting repair	The failure of these streetlights was due to an extensive intermittent fault on Northern Power Grid underground cable network. The council has apologised for not keeping the customer updated.
	Planning consent for a bin storage area	The initial complaint was incorrectly assessed which caused long delays for which the council has apologised.
	Position of a street light	Although procedures were correctly followed, the council has apologised for not keeping the customer updated.

Complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

61. During 2016/17, the LGO delivered decisions in relation to 72 complaints. Conclusions were reached based on details supplied by complainants and supplemented in some instances with contextual information from Council officers.

62. The 72 complaints related to a number of service areas including planning, refuse and recycling, revenues and benefits, and planning. Of these complaints, the LGO declined to investigate 13, five were found to be outside the LGO's jurisdiction, nine were referred back to the council to deal with under our complaints procedure, and in 25 cases no further action was proposed. The LGO upheld 20 complaints as detailed in Appendix 2.

63. The following table provides detail of complaints involving maladministration and injustice during quarter 4:

Complaint involving maladministration and injustice	Action to be taken
Failure to consider land levels in a planning application that resulted in a loss of privacy for the complainant.	Council to apologise and pay a financial remedy of £500 comprising £250 to allow the complainant to buy screening plants for the garden boundary if they choose and £250 time and trouble payment for having to approach the LGO.

Complaint involving maladministration and injustice	Action to be taken
Charging for services that should have been free	Council accepts the complainant may have been eligible for free intermediate care services and will amend the complainant's bill so they do not pay for the first six weeks of nursing home care.
Failure to explain care charges clearly	Council to apologise for not communicating the NHS Continuing Health Care (CHC) funding process clearly.
Incorrect assessment for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)	Council has reinstated DHP and backdated payments. Council to improve the DHP application form and staff guidance to prevent this fault occurring in the future.
Failure to remove single person discount from the complainant's council tax account that led to an unexpected bill to repay the arrears.	Council to apologise and refund the £175 it should not have sought from the complainant by reducing their current council tax bill by this amount.

Compliments

64. We also receive many positive comments about our staff and the services we provide, and we believe that understanding what is working well and valued is as important as knowing what is not working as well.

65. During 2016/17, we received 1,095 compliments, 302 in relation to social care services and 793 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 number of compliments conveyed thanks to specific individuals. As far as we are able, we have passed these thanks onto the individuals concerned.

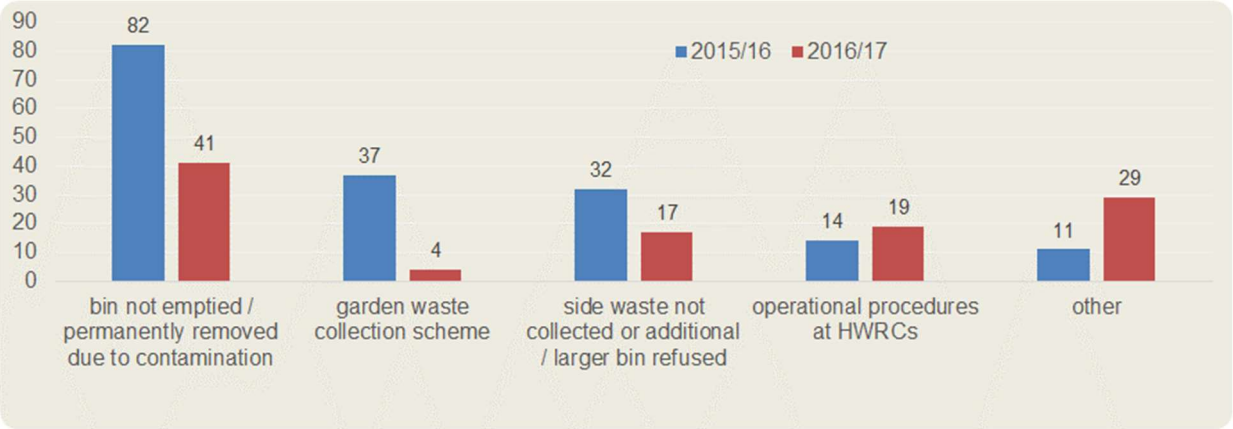
66. However, we are aware that many compliments remain unrecorded and so the overall count is not a true reflection of customer appreciation of our staff and services. Many customers now choose to provide feedback through our social media accounts. Although we currently only record complaints in relation to social media, we are investigating how we can extend this to include other feedback including compliments.

Feedback relating to our policies and procedures

67. Our service provision is reflected in our policies and procedures, and during 2016/17, we received 335 complaints as a direct consequence of carrying out actions in line with those policies and procedures. This is a 20% reduction (-84) compared to 2015/16.

68. Almost two thirds of this feedback can be attributed to three key areas, our household waste policies and procedures (110 instances, 33%), our fees and charges (66 instances, 20%) and our revenues and benefits procedures (41 instances, 12%).

69. Complaints relating to our household waste policies and procedures reduced by 32% from 2015/16 as shown in the graph below.



70. Fewer complaints relating to bins not emptied or permanently removed due to contamination were received during 2016/17. This is partly due to the decision to amend the procedure used by the service to remove bins after a third contamination, and partly due to the continuation of our educational programme which includes waste awareness campaigns such as Bin it Right, door knocking, roadshows and school educational sessions.

71. Launched in 2015/16, our Garden Waste Collection Scheme initially received 37 complaints, mostly (29) arguing that October was too early for the scheme to end. Because of these complaints and other feedback, we extended the scheme to 17 collections so it now ends in November, thereby eliminating this type of complaint during 2016/17. Nearly all of the remaining complaints were from residents unhappy they could not transfer their garden waste subscription to a new property.

72. We believe the Bin it Right campaign, to get people to put the right items in the right bin to stop recyclable material being contaminated and made unusable, has impacted on complaints relating to side waste and requests for additional / larger bins. As residents recycle more they produce less residual waste thereby reducing the need for an additional bin or the production of side waste.

73. The slight increase in complaints relating to our Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC), of which there are 12 permanent sites and one mobile site, can be attributed to

greater use of site controls to ensure only household waste is disposed of. For example, ensuring landlords are not disposing of waste left behind by their tenants, prohibiting customers in specific vehicles if they do not have a valid waste permit or requesting customers complete a trade declaration form. Other complaints include delays caused by crushing waste within skips and the requirement for customers to sort waste by type.

74. Although the 'other' category has shown a noticeable increase, we cannot identify any trends as the complaints cover a wide range of issues in small numbers. These complaints include; not allowing residents to place waste directly into refuse vehicles, having to present bins by 7am, excluding hard plastics from the kerbside recycling scheme, needing to place bulky waste collections at the designated Bin Collection Point (BCP) and the inability to add to a bulky waste collection once arranged.

75. Complaints relating to our fees and charges, which are reviewed annually and allow us to provide local services which might not otherwise be possible, reduced from 72 in 2015/16 to 66 in 2016/17 (six fewer, -8%). The main reason for dissatisfaction in 2015/16 (61%) and 2016/17 (64%) was the £20 administration and delivery charge to replace a bin lost, stolen or damaged beyond repair. Other complaint types consistent to both years are; the standard £40 charge by our pest control service that covers visits and materials, the £20 subscription for the garden waste collection scheme and prices at our leisure centres. Slight increases in the following complaint types were noted in 2016/17; bulky waste charges (+6) and Council Tax increases (+7).

76. Complaints relating to our revenues and benefits policies and procedures increased from 24 in 2015/16 to 41 in 2016/17 (+17, +71%). The most frequent cause for complaint related to our recovery procedures (16). The other 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 (9); annual billing (8); council tax liability regulations (3); housing benefit regulations (3); council tax regulations (1); and direct debit regulations (1).

77. In addition to the three key areas above, the following policies and procedures received complaints in 2016/17: home to school transport, Street Lighting Energy Reduction Programme (SLERP) and planning. Almost half of planning related complaints concerned planning application decisions and their administration.

Suggestions

78. We believe suggestions are essential to the ongoing development and improvement of our services, and carefully consider all received. During 2016/17, we received 382 suggestions.

79. We have made changes to our working practices because of suggestions received during 2016/17. Examples include;

- Extending the Garden Waste Collection Scheme to 17 collections and now ending in November.

- Improving the links both in the ‘contact us’ section and across the website to make it easier for residents to contact their local councillor.

- Issuing coloured tickets that correspond to a coloured sign at the front of the Park and Ride buses, thereby allowing customers to easily identify which bus goes to each of our sites.

- Modifying the shelving system at the new library in Stanley’s Louisa Centre. It was originally set up so that the top shelf was a display shelf and the remaining shelves held the books. Following feedback from library users that the bottom shelf was difficult to access, we reversed the shelving configuration so books now occupy the top shelves and the bottom shelf is the display shelf.

- Removing parking restrictions associated with Seaham School once the school closed (we already had plans in place to remove the lines within the vicinity of the school).

- Installing signage across car parks in Consett to highlight terms and conditions relating to motorhomes

80. We are investigating the possibility of implementing other suggestions, including;

- The online capability to add additional items to bulky waste collections that have not yet met the maximum number of items

- Incorporating information to housing benefit suspension letters to explain the reason for the suspension and that regulations state it is necessary where there is any doubt to entitlement to avoid potential overpayments. The wording of letters is largely dictated by our software supplier but the service is working will the supplier to determine if these changes can be made.

81. However, we are not always able to implement suggestions, for example; due to cost, the suggestion to expand the current Park and Ride scheme could not progress. However, we expanded Howland’s Park and Ride site to increase capacity and extended the service on a Thursday evening to support longer opening hours of shops within the city centre. Amending our procedure for suspending housing benefit to protect people from malicious tip-offs was not possible. Regulations state we must suspend benefit if there is any doubt to entitlement to avoid potential overpayments.

82. We are unable to implement the suggestion to visit elderly claimants in receipt of a benefit overpayment rather than issue a letter. This is due to a combination of regulations that set out the procedure we must follow and the high number of elderly claimants.

83. We cannot amend the layout of our council tax bills (following feedback from a customer that the social care levy was unclear). Information contained in council tax bills is prescribed by the council tax demand regulations and central government specifies how the levy should be shown on the bill.

84. It is not possible to add a map to our website to show the location of containers at our Household Waste Recycling Centres by waste type, thereby helping residents navigate the site and dispose of their waste quickly. This is because we do not operate the sites directly and our waste contractor can change the location of containers, without prior notice to ourselves, in line with operational need. In addition, some waste streams are inaccessible to the public with items taken to these containers by staff on site.

85. We frequently receive suggestions that propose changes to our road system. However, when looked at in the context of countywide traffic flows, many would have knock-on effects to the traffic flows elsewhere if implemented.

86. We also regularly receive suggestions in relation to parking. For example, the provision of additional car parking space for residential streets with limited capacity, thereby enabling residents to park close to their homes, or greater use of parking restrictions. The council is responsible for enforcing parking restrictions such as yellow lines and restricted bays, which are generally in town centres and other commercial areas, and can issue a Penalty Charge Notice where vehicles contravene such restrictions. However, in residential areas that are not restricted in this way, no contravention is being committed. We pass all obstructive parking complaints to Durham Police for further action.

Appendix 1:

Corporate complaints subjected to independent investigation during 2016/17 that were upheld

Outcome	Complaint	Action to be taken
Upheld	Council's failure to obtain permission before entering a private property to remove a recycling bin following a third contamination.	The service is reviewing the wording of letters to avoid any confusion in the future. The current procedure used by the service to collect bins after a third contamination was suspended and a revised policy is being considered.
	Missed collection	The complainant's experience has been highlighted to refuse and recycling management to prevent a similar situation occurring; issues with the Bin Collection Point should have been explained sooner.
	Garden Waste Collection Service: missed collection and the difficulties experienced in obtaining a repeat collection.	For several years the customer's refuse and recycling bins have been emptied from a specific location and the customer naturally used this location for their garden waste bin. However, this location is not their identified bin collection point. A different crew collects garden waste and being unaware of this arrangement assumed the bin was 'not presented'. The Council has apologised for the time and trouble caused to the customer and confirmed with the crew. There have been no further missed collections
	Pollution from bitumen emulsion leaking onto the road and around a gully cover.	Council removed the pollution which did not enter the watercourse. Poor practices from the contractor have been noted and will now be monitored more closely. In the future, the contractor will remove all such material from site or store it in secure containers.
	Garden waste bin was not emptied on the scheduled dates on many occasions.	The customer's address has now been flagged as 'priority' thereby ensuring it is collected

Outcome	Complaint	Action to be taken
	Lack of clarity in relation to the process for transferring rights of a grave. When the customer received the form, it contained a third party's name.	Council has apologised for any distress caused, refunded the £70.00 charge and put a more robust process in place to prevent administrative errors such as this.
	Service received from Care Connect	Council to amend its policies to clearly define 'an emergency' set out the steps in the call process and clarify when emergency services should be called. Council to amend its procedures in relation to accessing master keys and ensuring personal contact details are kept up to date.
Partially upheld	Council's failure to adequately maintain a pathway and its surrounding area	We have undertaken a number of remedial actions to improve the appearance of this area, including removal of graffiti and replacement of trees. A more regular litter pick has been scheduled and the Clean and Green Team are monitoring the area for further action, e.g. dog fouling, grounds maintenance, footpath maintenance
	Complainant unhappy with service received from our Building Control Team	Although no fault was found with the detail provided to the complainant, the need for a more robust process to manage complaints about builders was acknowledged. In relation to staff attitude, relevant training and development is to be administered.
	Council informed complainant, incorrectly, that temporary closure orders were in place for two unregistered footpaths	Even if temporary closure orders had been in place, the outcome would have remained the same. Council has apologised for the distress and inconvenience caused.
	Lack of intervention by the Building Control Team in relation to required remedial works at a property by the housing developer	Although no fault was found in service provision, a more robust process is to be put in place in to manage complaints about builders.
	Service received from our Planning Team	The planning team will consider a more holistic approach involving other service teams across the council to ensure all customer queries, not only planning issues, are addressed.

Outcome	Complaint	Action to be taken
	Level of service received in relation to missed refuse and recycling collections.	The Refuse and Recycling Team Leader has met with the customer and reaffirmed the Bin Collection Point and the assist list procedures to be followed. A reminder has been issued to staff dealing with garden waste enquiries to ensure that customers have read and understood the terms and conditions of the scheme.
	Inadequate response to customer complaint about staff attitude	Council accepts that our response to the initial complaint contained an inadequate level of detail. An additional check to ensure the quality of responses has been added to the existing process.
	Not updating our Council Tax system when informed of a change in circumstances thereby incorrectly applying the single person discount.	Council has corrected the bill and apologised that the initial response did not adequately explain why the complainant received credits to their account.
	Our processes for dealing with fly-tipping on private land	Working practices have been amended to include a courtesy email acknowledgement in situations such as this, which will set out our responsibilities in relation to fly-tips on private land.
	Delay in Disabled Facilities Grant assessment.	Council has apologised for the delay experienced by the complainant and has amended its policies and procedures for dealing with unexpected absences and the reallocation of cases.
	Lack of action in relation to street lighting repair	The failure of these streetlights was due to an extensive intermittent fault on Northern Power Grid underground cable network. The council has apologised for not keeping the customer updated.
	Planning consent for a bin storage area	The initial complaint was incorrectly assessed which caused long delays for which the council has apologised.
	Position of a street light	Although procedures were correctly followed, the council has apologised for not keeping the customer updated.

Appendix 2:

LGO cases during 2016/17 involving maladministration and injustice

Complaint involving maladministration and injustice	Action to be taken
Council failed to undertake an audit of a Direct Payment Account regarding personal contribution towards the cost of care.	Council to apologise and pay £100 in recognition that its failure caused additional unnecessary distress.
Council's failure to consider the hardship caused by deductions from housing benefit.	Council had already taken action to remedy the issues before the LGO's decision and to the LGO's satisfaction
Council's failure to inform a community of its intention to remove headstones for health and safety reasons, thereby denying the community the opportunity to take action beforehand	Financial settlement of £100 and various other actions to be taken within three months of the decision
Council failed to properly explain the nature of a safeguarding investigation, seek the views of the family during the investigation and communicate the outcome of the investigation in a timely way.	Although the Council properly looked into safeguarding concerns about an elderly person's care in a care home, it did not keep the family informed of its enquiries. The Council has already apologised for this, which LGO feels is a suitable remedy for that fault.
Council failed to pay housing benefit directly to a landlord	Financial remedy of £267.04
The Council was at fault in the way it gave building control approval for works done, partly under a Disabled Facilities Grant, and that the Council did not offer to cover the full cost of putting the work right	The Council accepts it was partly at fault in the way it issued a completion certificate for works at this property. It offered to refund its fees and pay for some works towards putting matters right. Financial remedy of £612 and a further payment to cover a proposed schedule of works.
Council's involvement in the care received by the complainant's mother by a care provider.	The Council was at fault for not considering the complainant's version of events when it acted in response to a safeguarding alert. This led the Council to serve a letter based on an incomplete understanding of the facts, leading to avoidable distress. The Council agreed to apologise and place a statement on its records to reflect the flaws in its investigation. Other complaints about the Council's assessment of the needs of the complainant's mother and its response to the complainant's concerns about a care provider were not upheld

Complaint involving maladministration and injustice	Action to be taken
Safeguarding action taken by the Council following accusations against the complainant	Financial remedy of £1,000 to the complainant for the loss of opportunity to challenge the Council's decision to remove her children and the distress caused by other faults identified An additional financial remedy of £350 for time and trouble, in light of significant delays at independent investigation stage. The Council to place a copy of its independent investigation and LGO's final decision on the children's files and any file held about the complainant The Council has now revised the way it handles safeguarding enquiries and the quality of recording decisions at Strategy meetings. Improvements also made to information sharing between the Council and Police.
The way the Council administered Direct Payments and assessed the complainant's care needs.	Financial remedy of £100 in recognition of the uncertainty caused by the delay in reviewing the complainant's care needs. An apology for failing to record the complainant's contacts with the Council. The Council to review the way officers record contacts within three months.
A culvert over a watercourse behind the complainant's home is causing water to pool in the complainant's garden.	Council to apologise and convene a meeting with the complainant and the landowners to consider action to minimise the impact of water pooling. Council to pay one third of the cost of any agreed solution. If any agreed action does not improve the situation within three months of implementation, the complainant will commission a land drainage survey. If a connection between water pooling and the culvert is found, the Council will refund 50% of the survey cost and contribute one third of the cost of any recommended further work.
Loss of earnings due to the Council suspending a hackney carriage licence and delaying an investigation into allegations which were later proved to be unfounded.	Financial remedy of £500
Council delayed investigating concerns about breaches of confidentiality by a social worker and failed to involve the complainant and his nephew in a visit to the complainant's mother's care home, as agreed.	Council to apologise and draw up a formal procedure for dealing with complaints of breaches of confidentiality.

Complaint involving maladministration and injustice	Action to be taken
Failure to consider land levels in a planning application that resulted in a loss of privacy for the complainant.	Council to apologise and pay a financial remedy of £500 comprising £250 to allow the complainant to buy screening plants for the garden boundary if they choose and £250 time and trouble payment.
Charging for services that should have been free	Council accepts the complainant may have been eligible for free intermediate care services and will amend the complainant's bill so they do not pay for the first six weeks of nursing home care.
Failure to explain care charges clearly	Council to apologise for not communicating the NHS Continuing Health Care (CHC) funding process clearly.
Incorrect assessment for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)	Council has reinstated DHP and backdated payments. Council to improve the DHP application form and staff guidance to prevent this fault occurring in the future.
Failure to remove single person discount from the complainant's council tax account that led to an unexpected bill to repay the arrears.	Council to apologise and refund the £175 it should not have sought from the complainant by reducing their current council tax bill by this amount.