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**COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMMENTS**  
**ANNUAL REPORTS 2013/14**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Stephen Harker**  
**Efficiency and Resources Portfolio**

**Responsible Director - Paul Wildsmith, Neighbourhood Services and Resources**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Cabinet with the 2013/14 Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports for:
  - Adult Social Care (**Appendix 2**);
  - Children's Social Care (**Appendix 3**);
  - Corporate (**Appendix 4**);
  - Housing (**Appendix 5**); and
  - Public Health.
2. To make Cabinet aware of amendments made to the Council's complaints procedures.

**Summary**

3. The production of an annual report in respect of representations received under the Adult Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure is a requirement of the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.
4. The production of an annual report in respect of representations received under the Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure is a requirement of the Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.
5. The production of an annual report in respect of representations received under the Public Health Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure is a requirement of the NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012.
6. The Council saw a significant increase in the overall number of representations made under its complaints, compliments and comments procedures during 2013/14. This can be attributed to the high volume of complaints received following the introduction of wheeled bins.

7. The Council received a total of 845 complaints during 2013/14, compared to 466 in 2012/13; saw an increase in the overall number of compliments received, 278 compared to 254 in 2012/13; and saw a decrease in the number of comments received, 209 compared to 255 in 2012/13.

### **Recommendation**

8. That Cabinet notes the content of the attached reports.
9. That Cabinet notes the progress made in relation to the further recommendations set out in the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report 2013/14, detailed in paragraph 23.
10. That Cabinet notes the amendments made to the Council's complaints procedures, detailed in paragraphs 26 - 28.

### **Reasons**

11. To make Cabinet aware of the number and nature of the complaints received by the Council and the organisational learning that has taken place as a result.
12. To ensure Cabinet is aware of the progress made in respect of how the Council handles complaints since the introduction of the Complaints and Information Governance Team.

### **Background Papers**

Note: No background papers were used in the production of this report.

**Paul Wildsmith**  
**Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources**

Lee Downey, Extension 2401

S17 Crime and Disorder	There is no specific impact on Crime and Disorder.
Health and Well Being	The purpose of the Adult Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report is to improve the service we provide to service users and their carers.
Carbon Impact	There are no specific recommendations contained within the attached reports concerning Carbon Reduction.
Diversity	Complaint investigations have led to service improvements for people with protected characteristics.
Wards Affected	All.
Groups Affected	All.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not have a direct impact on the Budget and Policy Framework.
Key Decision	This report does not constitute a Key Decision.
Urgent Decision	This report does not require an Urgent Decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Learning as a result of complaints contributes towards achieving across all of the delivery themes.
Efficiency	The revised procedures, organisational learning and improved training/support for officers has reduced the amount of time and the cost associated with handling complaints. The recommendations contained within the appended reports aim to reduce risk and improving efficiency in the way we interact with our customers.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

13. **Adult Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure** There was an increase in the number of representations made during 2013/14, an increase in the number of complaints received; a decrease in the number of compliments received and the number of comments received remained the same as in 2012/13. Full details and comparisons with previous years are attached at **Appendix 1**.
14. **Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure** There was a decrease in the number of representations made during 2013/14, a decrease in the number of complaints received however there was an increase in the number escalated to Stage 2. There was a decrease in the number of compliments received and a decrease in the number of comments received. Full details and comparisons with previous years are attached at **Appendix 1**.
15. **Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure.** There was an increase in the number of representations made during 2013/14, a significant increase in the number of complaints received and an increase in the number escalated to Stage 2. There was also an increase in the number of compliments received and a decrease in the number of comments received. Full details and comparisons with previous years are attached at **Appendix 1**.
16. **Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure.** While there is no directly comparable data, having only been introduced in April 2013, the Council did receive a similar number of complaints during 2013/14 as it received for Housing and Building Services under the corporate procedure in 2012/13. All of the compliments and comments received for Housing and Building Services during 2013/14 were recorded under the corporate procedure. Full details are attached at **Appendix 1**.
17. **Public Health Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure.** This procedure was introduced in April 2013 and a copy of the procedure was sent to all of the Council's public health providers. The Council did not receive any complaints, compliments or comments during the year. The procedure is also available on the Council's website. Complaints Managers attending the Northern Regional Complaints Managers Group reported a similar picture across the region.
18. Some examples of organisational learning resulting from complaints have been extracted from the appended reports and are provided below.
19. *Adult Social Care Complaints:*
  - a) Following a complaint for Occupational Therapy all staff, including duty workers, were advised that when people are admitted to hospital steps must be taken establish if their next of kin has been informed.
  - b) Following a complaint for the RIACT Service staff were given training on Autism/Asperger Syndrome.

## 20. *Children's Social Care Complaints:*

- a) Following a complaint for the Family Placement Service training was provided for staff in relation to the adoption process. A review of the adoption process was also undertaken.
- b) Following a complaint for the Looked After Through Care team it was agreed that the Council would critically examine its system for ensuring that Looked After Reviews address issues raised by participants and that after the review all parties receive the relevant review documentation within the timescales indicated by guidance. It was also agreed that the Council would consider an extension of the current monitoring system that alerts a senior manager, independent of the case, when timescales have been exceeded by a predetermined amount.

## 21. *Corporate Complaints:*

- a) Following the complaint that was upheld for School and Pupil Support Services, Admissions and Transport, Transport it was agreed that the Council would look to employ staff with the appropriate skills to supervise children with behavioural difficulties using school transport.
- b) Following a complaint for Community Enabling – In People the Council developed a leaflet that sets out the timescales and process for Disabled Facilities Grant applications. The Council made this information available on its website.
- c) Following a complaint for the Dolphin Centre it was highlighted at leisure staff training sessions and via a memo, that the Dolphin Centre is a breastfeeding friendly premises and as such customers are welcome to breastfeed anywhere in the Dolphin Centre.
- d) Following numerous complaints for Refuse Collection and Refuse and Recycling assurances were given to residents and crews were reminded to ensure wheeled bins are returned to the point they are collected from.
- e) Following a complaint for Refuse Collection the Council provided training for its staff on reporting and recording fly-tipping.
- f) Following a complaint for Revenues and Benefits the Council Tax class F exemption form was reviewed to make it clearer to the applicant that they need to notify the Council when probate has been granted.

## 22. *Housing Complaints:*

- a) Following a complaint for Housing Management refresher training was provided to housing officers regarding the void management process.
- b) Following a complaint for Building Services, Gas Technician a system was put in place to ensure Housing Management Officers contact tenants in relation to

repairs reported via the out of hours service rather than placing the onus on the tenant.

23. The further recommendation set out in the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports 2013/14 is:

- a) Action should be taken to address the ongoing issues in relation to Refuse Collection, in particular ensuring wheeled bins are returned to the point of collection and not left in a manner that causes an obstruction.

*N.B. Following discussions with the service, prior to the publication of this report, action has been taken and as a result the Council has seen a reduction in the number of complaints received (17 in the first quarter of 2014/15).*

24. The Local Government Ombudsman reached a decision on 12 complaints during 2013/14, previously considered under the Council's complaints procedures. The Council received one maladministration decision; in relation to wheeled bin collections and the removal of fly-tipping. This was reported to Cabinet on 1 July 2014.

25. This year the Annual Letter of the Local Government Ombudsman provides the first full year of recording complaints under their new business model. The figures include decisions on complaints not previously considered by the Council, for example, those referred back to the Council for local resolution. This accounts for the discrepancy between the 2013/14 figures reported to Cabinet in the 'Review of Outcome of Complaints made to Ombudsman' report and those contained in the Annual Letter of the Ombudsman.

### **Amendments to procedures**

26. Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure – as a result of Council reorganisation the procedure has been amended to reflect the fact that the Assistant Director of Adult Social Care will act as adjudicating officer in certain cases i.e. where a child is open to Life Stage Service 0 – 25.

27. Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure – the procedure has been amended to ensure complaints alleging discrimination on the grounds of race are handled effectively and in manner consistent with complaints alleging discrimination on the grounds of other protected characteristics. An equality impact assessment in relation to this amendment is attached at **Appendix 6**.

28. Minor amendments were made to the wording of the Corporate and Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedures at paragraph i) under the heading 'Stage 2' following the introduction of the Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

29. No consultation was required in preparing this report.

## TOTAL REPRESENTATIONS BY YEAR

Type of representation	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
<b>Complaints</b>			
Corporate			
<i>Stage 1</i>	672	383	429
<i>Stage 2</i>	72	58	60
Adult Social Care	26	20	39
Children's Social Care			
<i>Stage 1</i>	46	63	49
<i>Stage 2</i>	9	5	3
<i>Stage 3</i>	0	0	0
Housing			
<i>Stage 1</i>	101	N/A	N/A
<i>Stage 2</i>	12	N/A	N/A
Public Health	0	N/A	N/A
<b>Compliments</b>			
Corporate	233	199	267
Adult Social Care	39	42	39
Children's Social Care	6	13	14
Housing	0	N/A	N/A
Public Health	0	N/A	N/A
<b>Comments</b>			
Corporate	209	254	199
Adult Social Care	0	0	6
Children's Social Care	0	1	0
Housing	0	N/A	N/A
Public Health	0	N/A	N/A