



Corporate Comments, Compliments and Complaints Annual Report

1 April 2010 – 31 March 2011

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Introduction

This report provides an overview of the complaints, compliments and comments received by the Council during 2010/11 under the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure (the procedure). The report identifies topics and trends in relation to complaints information, makes suggestions for service improvements and identifies areas of organisational learning that have taken place in relation to people, policy and process.

In addition to the statistical information presented in this report it is important to recognise the work of the Complaints and Information Governance (CIG) Team that underpins this in terms of promoting an organisational culture in which complaints are recognised, accepted, owned and resolved as efficiently and as close to the point of service delivery as possible. The development of an organisational culture in which complaints are viewed as a positive means of engagement will ensure that the Council can deliver high levels of customer satisfaction with complaints handling. It will also enable the Council to continue to collect accurate information on complaints in order to identify topics and trends and improve services accordingly.

Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure

The procedure sets out how the Council will deal with all complaints, compliments and comments received with the exception of those received in relation to adult and children's social care services and Members which will be dealt with under separate procedures.

The procedure has two stages. Stage 1 is a local resolution stage where we try to resolve those complaints that cannot be resolved immediately as part of our day to day business. Stage 1 complaints are dealt with locally, that is within the service being complained about. We aim to resolve the majority of complaints at Stage 1 of the procedure.

Stage 2 is a formal investigation stage where complaints will usually be investigated by the Complaints and Information Governance Manager or another officer independent of the service being complained about.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following a Stage 2 investigation they may refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Public Information and Accessibility

We are committed to making sure that everyone has equal access to all our services, including the complaints procedure. To help make sure the Council's complaints procedures are easily accessible we have produced two leaflets (one for children and young people and one for adults) covering all Council services to reflect the single point of access for complainants within the Council. The leaflets are available in all Council buildings. They have been written in line with the Plain English Campaign standards. The title is written in the most commonly used community languages and it contains details on how to access the information in other formats, for example, large print, audio and Braille.

Information is available on the Council's website which contains an electronic form which people can use to make a complaint, pay someone a compliment or pass comment on Council services. People may make a complaint in any format they wish. This can be in writing, email, via the web, over the phone, in person or by any other reasonable means.

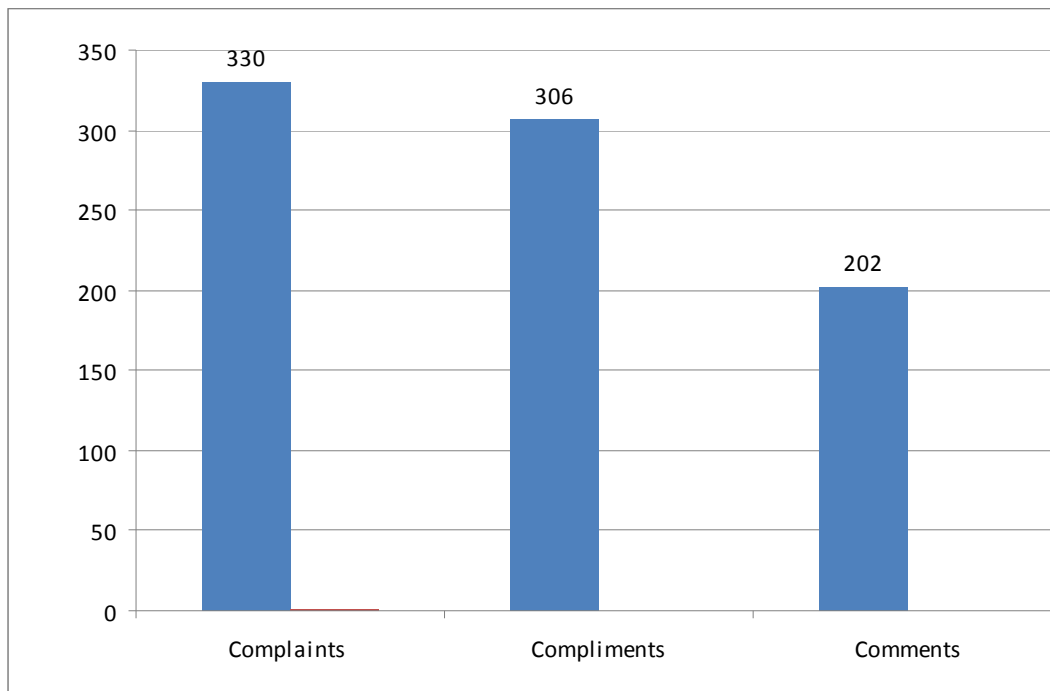
The Complaints and Information Governance Manager can arrange advocates and interpreters (including British Sign Language interpreters) where appropriate.

Complaints Information and Organisational Learning

Overview of Complaints, Compliments and Comments

Between the 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011 Darlington Borough Council received 330 complaints a reduction from 532 complaints in 2009/10. 329 complaints were initially dealt with at Stage 1 of the procedure while one was initially dealt with at Stage 2. 42 Stage 1 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 following a Stage 1 investigation. The Council also received 306 compliments a reduction from 484 in 2009/10 and 202 comments and increase from 148 in 2009/10. A large proportion of the additional comments received related to the Council's budget proposals.

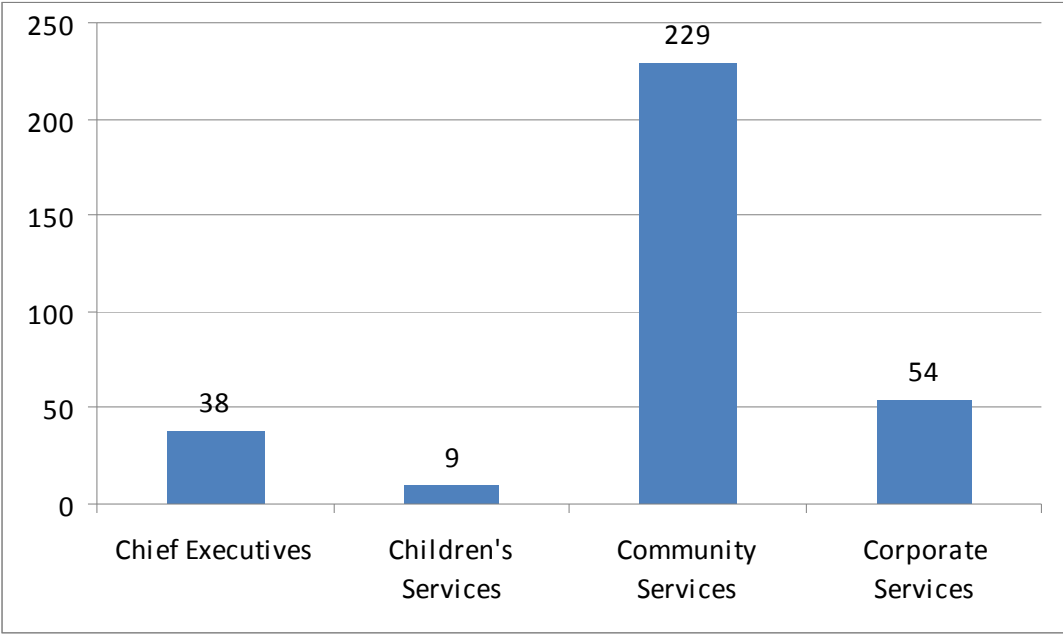
Total Complaints, Compliments and Comments



The reduction in the number of representations received under the procedure can, in part, be attributed to the organisational learning resulting from complaints being handled effectively and in line with the procedure. The various measures implemented as a result of complaints being handled in this way has led to a reduction in individuals having to contact the Council regarding the same issue(s). It is important that all complaints, compliments and comments continue to be forwarded to the CIG Team on the day of receipt to ensure we can continue to learn from the feedback we receive and improve our services as a result.

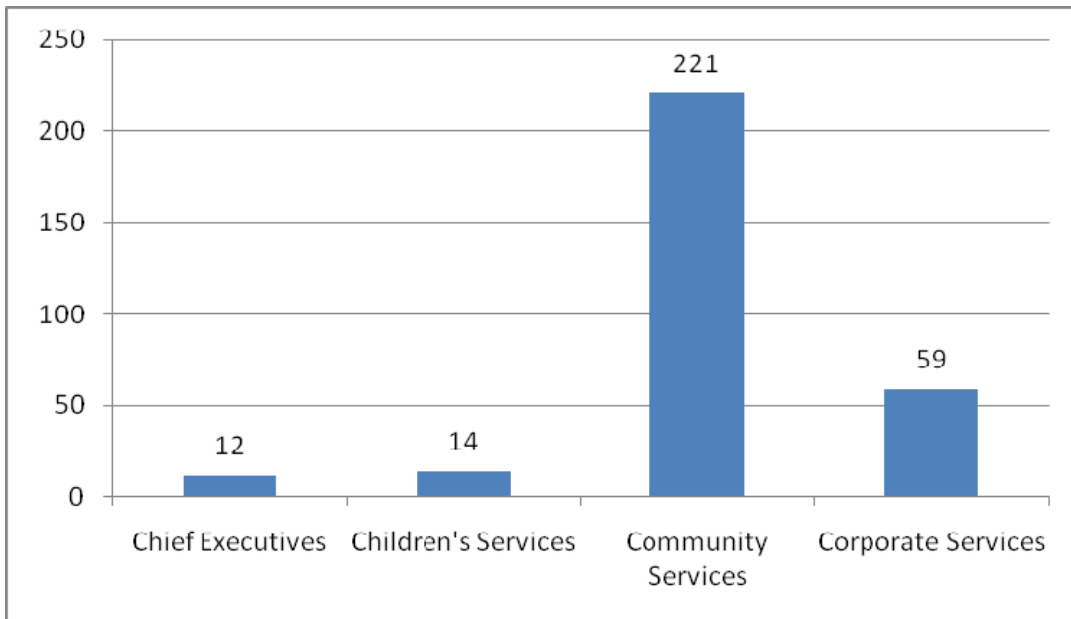
A breakdown of the total number of complaints, compliments and comments received by each department is provided below.

Complaints by Department

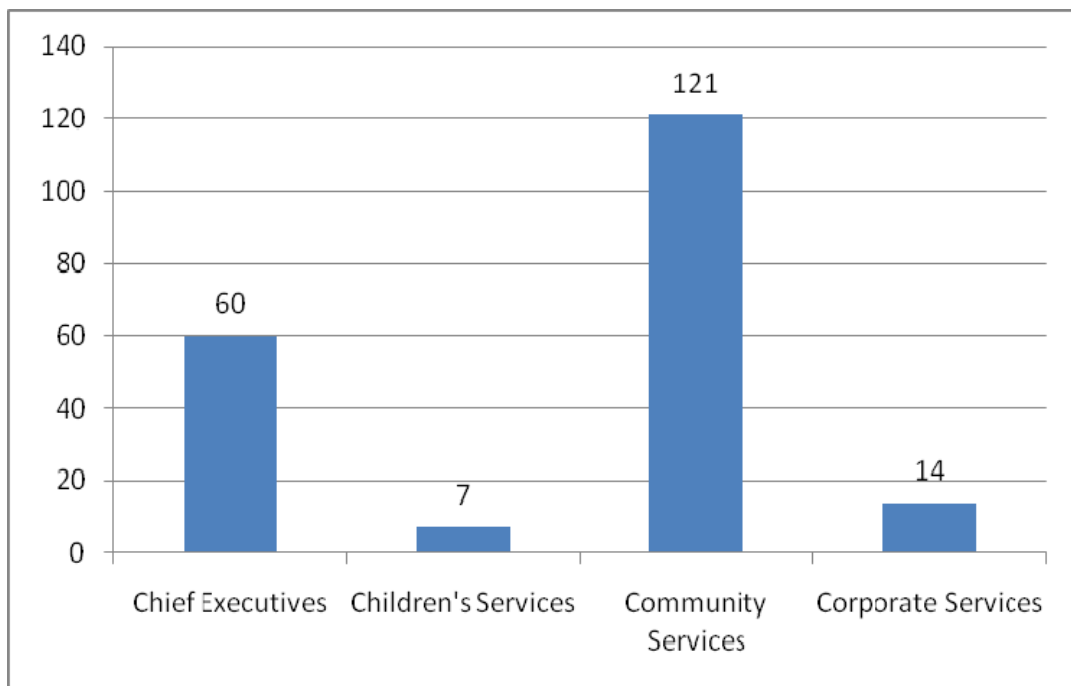


In 2010/11 Community Services saw a significant reduction in the number of complaints received from 368 in 2009/10. While there also appears to be a significant reduction in the number of complaints received by the Chief Executives Department from 89 in 2009/10 this can be accounted for by a single incident in which the same complaint was submitted 58 times by different people in the previous year. Taking this into account the Chief Executives Department actually saw a slight increase in the overall number of individual complaints received, from 32 in 2009/10 to 38 in 2010/11. Children's Services saw a reduction from 19 complaints in 2009/10 to 14 in 2010/11. There was no notable difference in the number of complaints received by Corporate Services who received 56 complaints in 2009/10 compared to 54 in 2010/11.

Compliments by Department



Comments by Department



It is worth noting that once again Children's Services received a relatively small amount of feedback via the procedure. While the reasons for this are not clear the Complaints and Information Governance Manager is continuing to work with the service to raise awareness of the the procedure.

Complaints, Compliments and Comments by Department

Chief Executives Department *Assistant Chief Executive – Policy Division*

Assistant Chief Executive – Policy Division did not receive any complaints during 2010/11.

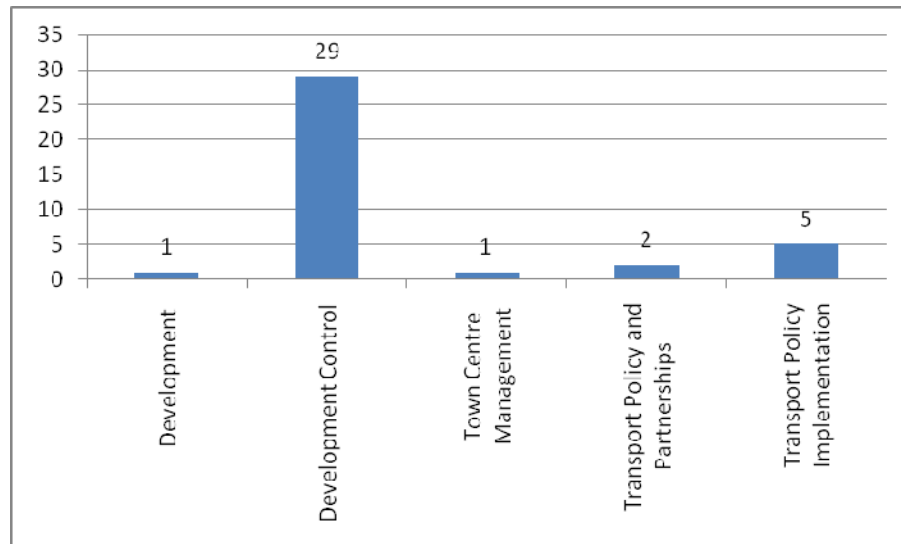
Assistant Chief Executive – Policy Division did not receive any compliments during 2010/11.

Assistant Chief Executive – Policy Division received three comments during 2010/11. One for the Gold Team, one for Interaction with the Third Sector and one for Darlington Partnership.

Chief Executives Department *Assistant Chief Executive – Regeneration Division*

The complaints received by each service area/team within this division are illustrated below.

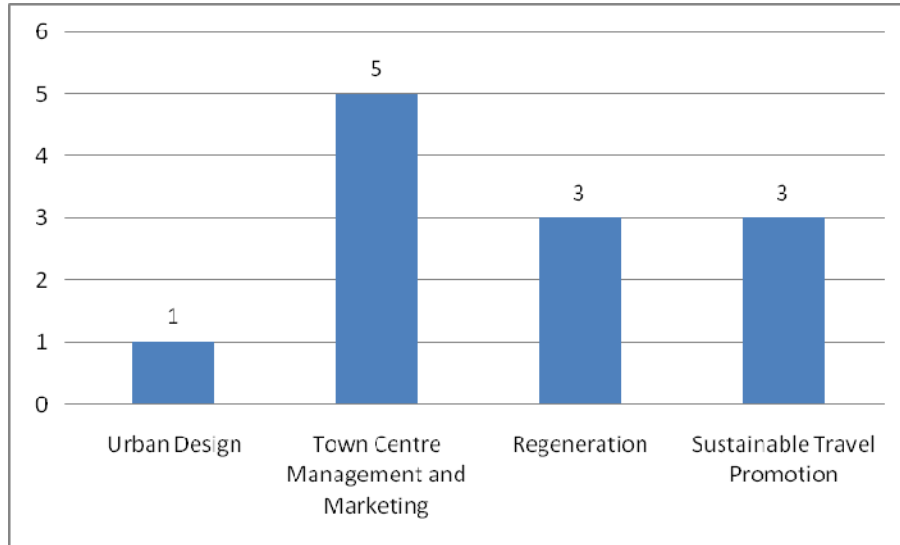
Complaints by Service Area/Team



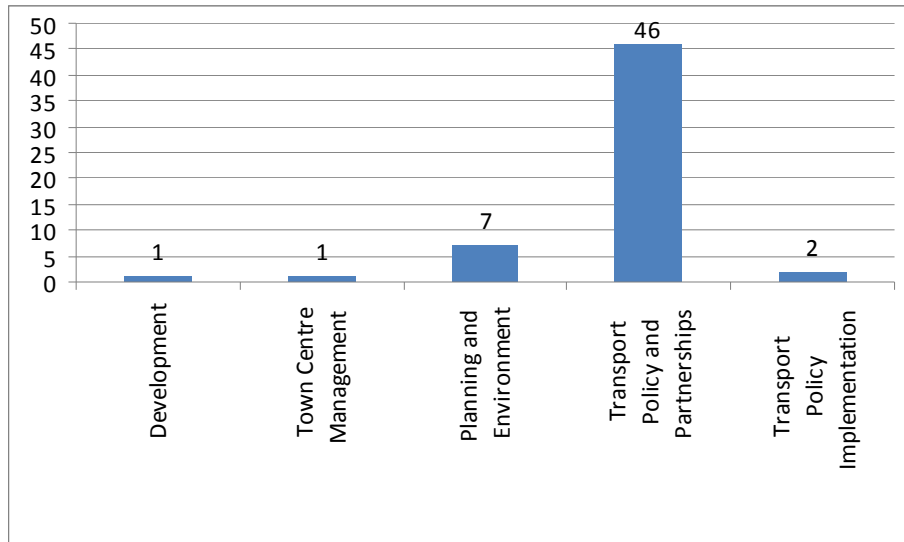
Although Development/Development Control received 71 complaints in 2009/10 58 of these related to the same issue. Once this has been taken into account it is evident that there was a significant increase in the number of individual complaints received from 14 in 2009/10 to 30 in 2010/11. The most common topics complained about during 2010/11 were a lack of enforcement action and dissatisfaction with the way in which planning applications were processed. Lack of enforcement action was the most commonly complained about topic in 2009/10. Common themes running throughout a number of complaints received during 2010/11 were poor communication and customer service.

Transport Policy saw a reduction from 15 complaints in 2009/10 to 7 in 2010/11.

Compliments by Service Area/Team

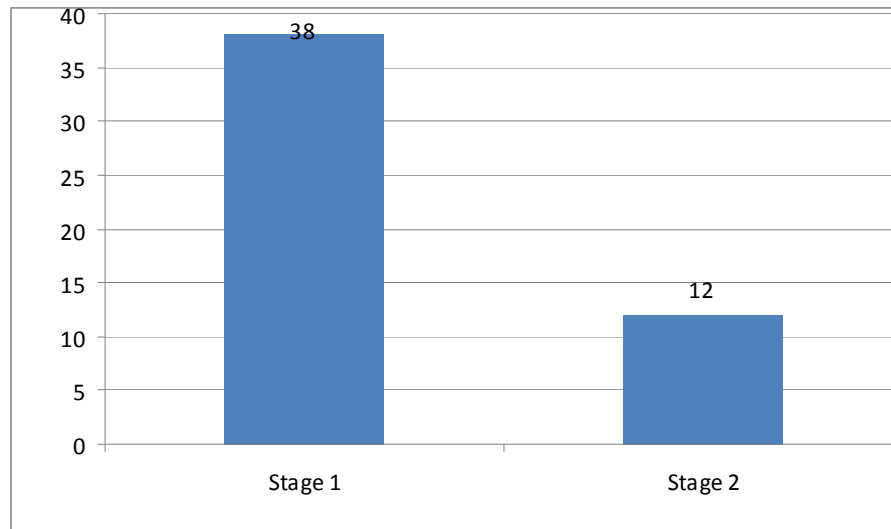


Comments by Service Area/Team



The high volume of comments received by Transport Policy and Partnerships related to the Council's budget proposals. The comments received regarding the Council's budget proposals were used to inform the decision making process.

Complaints by Stage



All of the complaints received by Assistant Chief Executive - Regeneration Division within this period were initially dealt with at Stage 1 of the procedure. 12 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 in this period. There was no significant difference in the number of complaints escalated to Stage 2 in 2010/11 compared to 2009/10.

Complaints by Outcome

Stage 1

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Development						
Development	0	1	0	0	0	1
Development Control	0	20	5	2	1	28
Total	0	21	5	2	1	29
Economic Regen.						
Town Centre Man/Marketing	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	0	0	1	0	0	1
Transport Policy						
Transport Policy/Partnerships	0	1	0	1	0	2
Transport Policy Imp	0	5	0	0	0	5
Total	0	6	0	1	0	7
Total for ACE (Regeneration)	0	27	6	3	1	37

One complaint for Development Control remained open at the time of writing.

Stage 2

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
<i>Development</i>	0	0	1	0	0	1
Development Control	0	8	1	1	0	10
<i>Total</i>	0	8	2	1	0	11
<i>Transport Policy</i>						
Transport Policy Imp.	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for ACE (Regeneration)	0	9	2	1	0	12

Organisational Learning

Following a complaint about the manner in which a planning application was publicised, planning officers were asked to ensure planning applications for major developments are publicised in line with both the regulations and the requirements set out in Darlington Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

As a result of another complaint a specific condition was developed around the building of roads to adoptable standards.

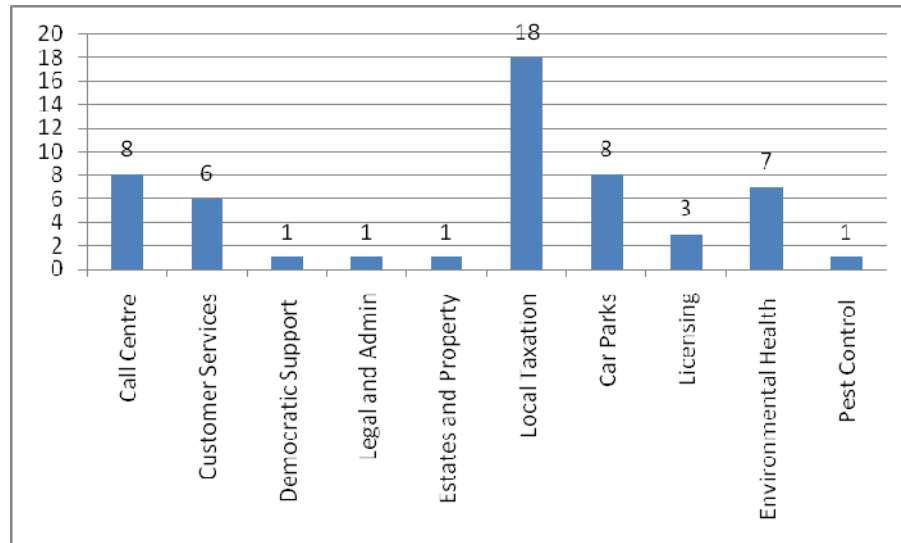
Planning officers agreed upon a shared interpretation of a particular planning policy statement following a complaint investigation to ensure a consistent approach to future planning applications affecting shops, leisure uses including public houses or services in local centres and villages. As a result of this complaint it was also agreed that where an omission is brought to the attention of a planning officer prior to the publication of an agenda/report it would either be included in the report or the reasons for not including it would be discussed in full with the objector.

Further Recommendations

A number of the complaints received by Development Control contained an element of dissatisfaction with the level of customer service and communication provided, although the majority of these complaints were not upheld. In order to improve the service to the public and attempt to reduce the number of complaints people find it necessary to make greater emphasis should be placed on the importance of good communication and customer service.

Corporate Services

Complaints by Service Area/Team



A common theme cutting across complaints about both the Call Centre and Customer Services was the amount of time people had to wait before having their query dealt with.

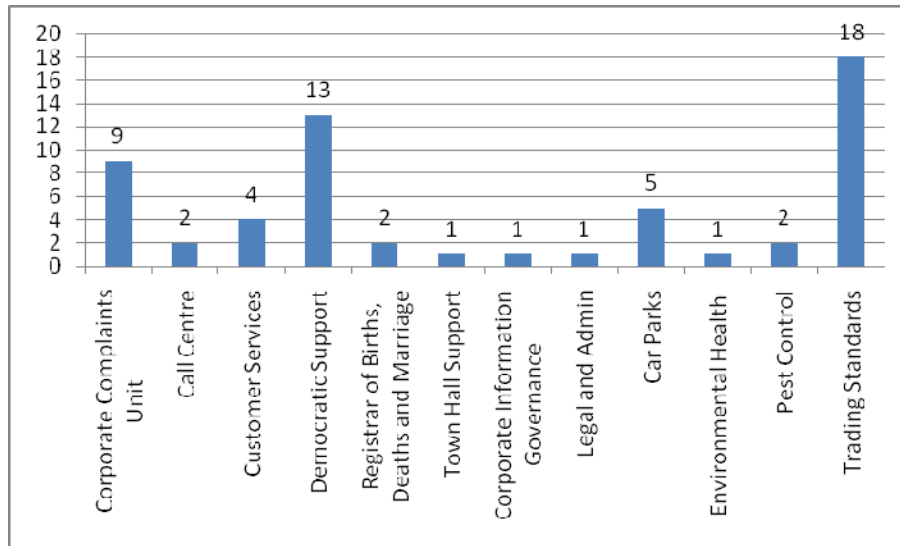
The most common themes complained about in relation to Local Taxation included the manner in which peoples Council Tax bills were processed and their dissatisfaction with being taken to court for non-payment of Council Tax.

While there were no identifiable trends in relation to Car Parks the issues complained about included the handling of parking appeals, the lack of discretion parking wardens have in issuing Penalty Charge Notices, signage and residents parking permits.

All of the complaints relating to Licensing concerned taxi and private hire vehicle licensing.

The most common issues complained about in relation to Environmental Health included the manner in which the case was handled and a lack of enforcement action.

Compliments by Service Area/Team

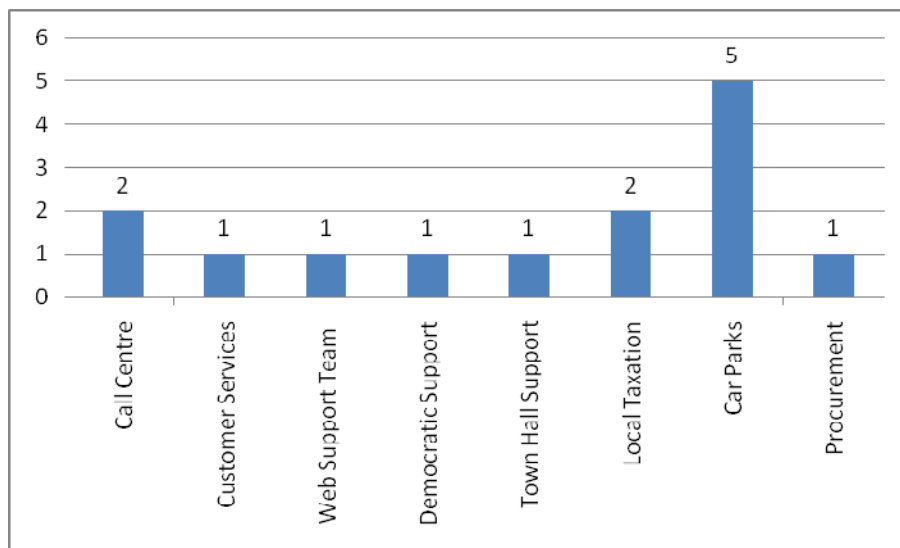


All of the compliments for Trading Standards were in relation to the excellent service received and the assistance provided in resolving disputes.

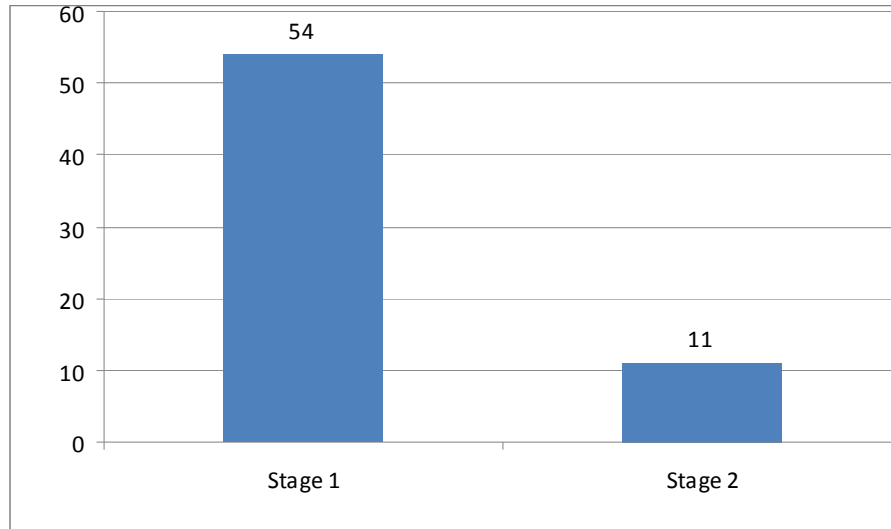
Almost half of the compliments received for Democratic Services related to assistance with Education Appeals while the other half related to the Freedom of the Borough Parade.

The majority of the compliments for the Corporate Complaints Unit (*CIG Team*) related to the accepting, efficient and resolution focused manner in which they dealt with people's complaints.

Comments by Service Area/Team



Complaints by Stage



All of the 54 complaints received by Corporate Services in this period were initially dealt with at Stage 1 of the procedure. 11 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 in this period.

Complaints by Outcome

Stage 1

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Customer Services						
Call Centre	0	0	0	8	0	8
Customer Services	1	1	2	2	0	6
Total	1	1	2	10	0	14
Democratic Services						
Democratic Support	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	0	1	0	0	0	1
Legal						
Legal and Admin	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	0	1	0	0	0	1
Corporate						
Estates and Property	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	0	0	0	1	0	1
Finance						
Local Taxation	0	12	2	4	0	18
Total	0	12	2	4	0	18
Licensing and Parking						
Car Parks	0	4	1	3	0	8
Licensing	0	3	0	0	0	3
Total	0	7	1	3	0	11
Pollution and Regulation						
Environmental Health	0	5	1	0	0	6
Pest Control	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	0	6	1	0	0	7
Total for Corporate Services	1	28	6	18	0	53

One complaint for Environmental Health remained open at the time of writing.

Stage 2

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
<i>Borough Solicitor</i>						
Customer Services	0	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Legal</i>						
Legal and Admin	0	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Finance</i>						
Local Taxation	0	2	0	0	0	2
<i>Licensing and Parking</i>						
Licensing	0	4	0	0	0	4
<i>Pollution and Regulation</i>						
Environmental Health	0	2	0	0	0	2
<i>Trading Standards</i>						
Trading Standards	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total for Corporate Services	0	10	0	1	0	11

Organisational Learning

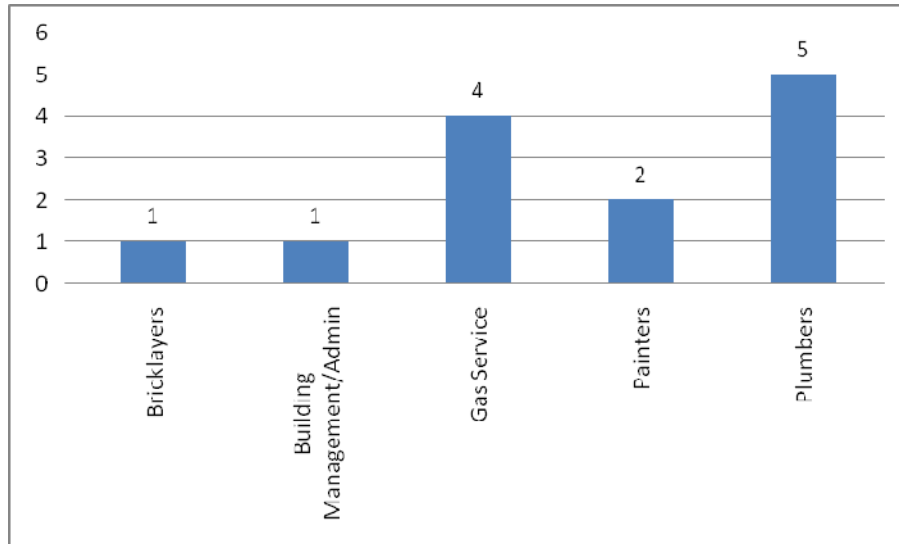
Following a number of complaints about the Call Centre and Customer Services the Customer Services Manager advised complainants the Council intends to re-organise staffing levels to ensure we are able to better respond to fluctuations in customer demand; train even more staff to deal with a wider range of transactions; introduce more part time staff to cover our busier periods; review all services we provide to streamline processes; improve the communication of key issues and make them easier for all customers to understand; investigate new technology to help manage the 8, 400 switchboard contacts we receive each month and put experts at the front of many processes in order to process applications from start to finish with the customer present, something we have successfully trialled with benefits and intend to role out in other areas. While these actions did not result directly from complaints received the complaints received re-enforce the need to undertake such action.

As a result of a complaint to Licensing the Hackney Carriage license application form and public information were updated.

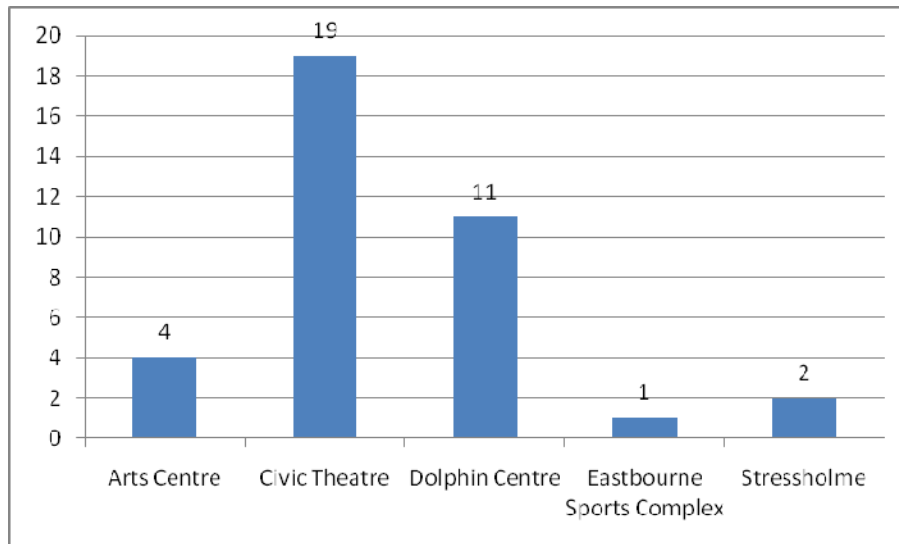
Community Services

Complaints by Service Area/Team

Building Services (Total 13)



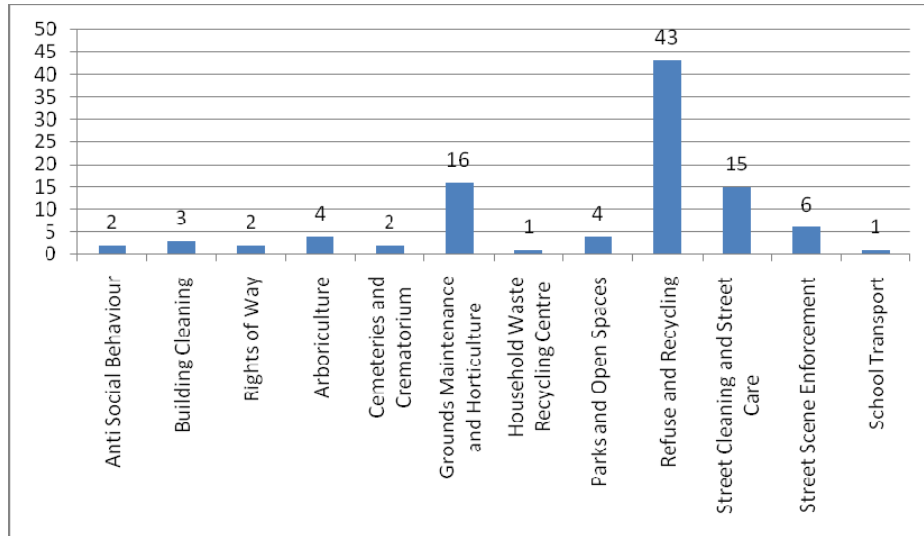
Cultural Services (Total 37)



The complaints received about the Civic Theatre ranged from the quality of the performance, the inaccuracy of the advice given regarding show content and problems making booking over the telephone and via the website. There were no identifiable topics or trends.

The complaints received about the Dolphin Centre included dissatisfaction with the facilities and changes to gym and pool rules, however, there were no identifiable topics or trends.

Environmental Services (Total 99)

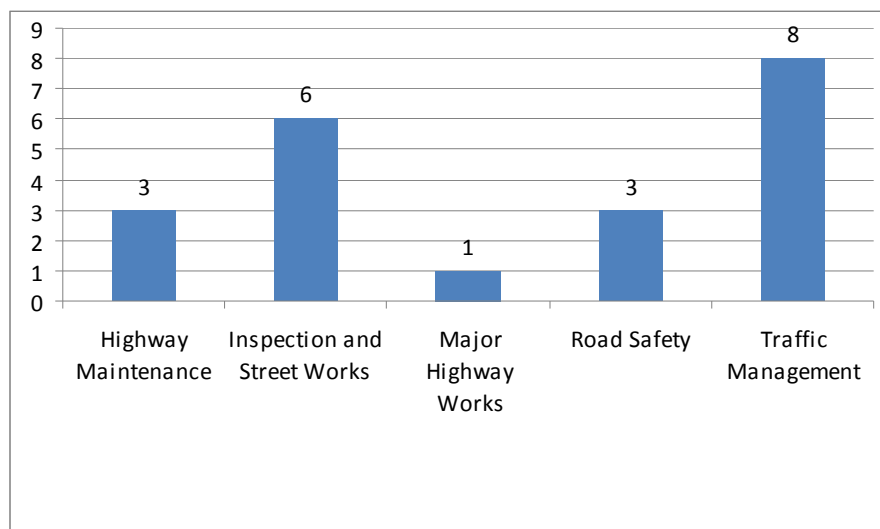


The majority of complaints for Grounds Maintenance and Horticulture related to delays in or failure to cut grassed areas.

While the most common complaints in relation to Street Scene services remain missed refuse and recycling collections, including assisted collections, the Council did see a significant reduction in the number of complaints received about these issues, 20 in 2010/11 compared to 97 in 2009/10.

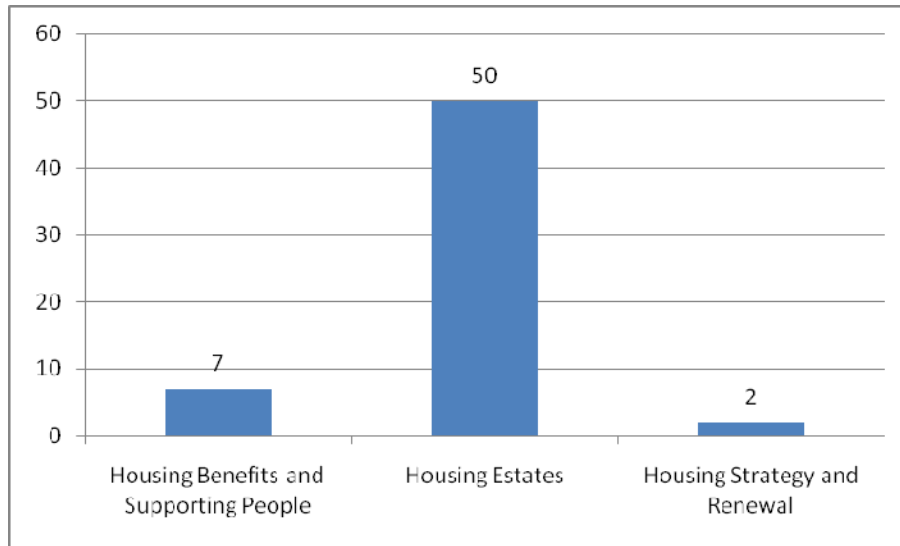
Other Street Scene services including Street Cleaning and Street Care saw significant reductions in the number of complaints received from 45 in 2009/10 to 15 in 2010/11. The majority of complaints received in 2009/10 related to the lack of gritting and levels of cleanliness in Darlington.

Highways and Engineering Operations (Total 21)



There were no identifiable topics or trends in relation to Highways and Engineering Operations.

Housing (Total 59)



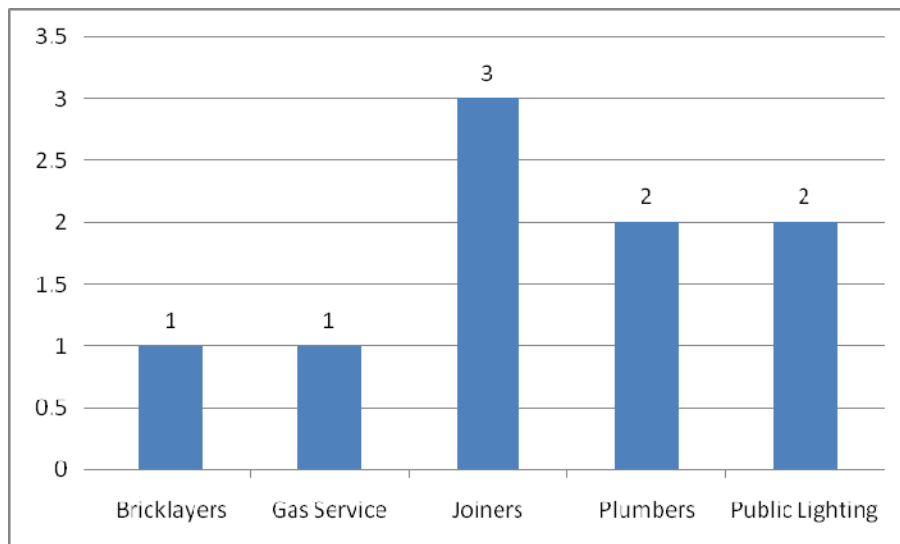
The most common things complained about in relation to Housing Estates were delays in undertaking and the quality of repair works (including the Internal Planned Maintenance (IPM) Works). Other complaints concerned dissatisfaction with the level of service provided and the manner in which Compass Housing applications were processed.

Compliments by Service Area/Team

Adult Services

The Lifeline Service received two compliments.

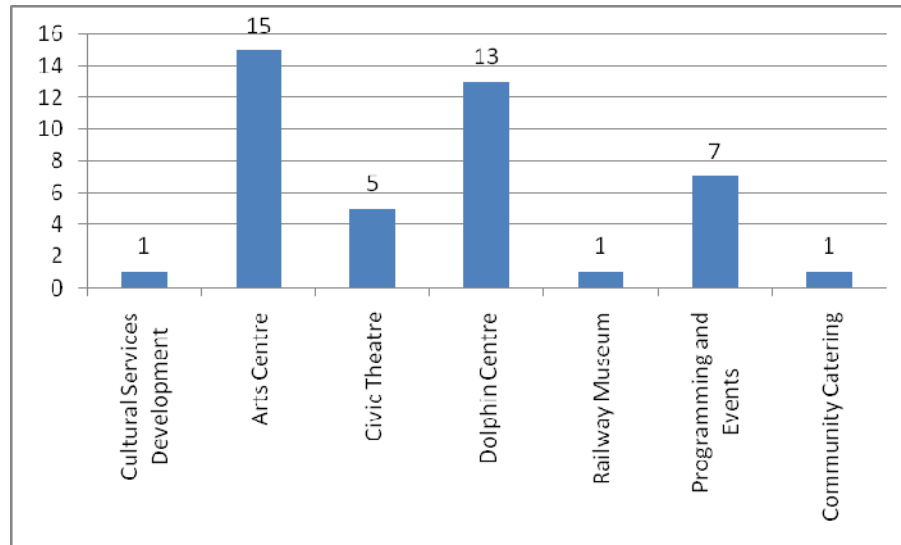
Building Services (Total 9)



Business Development

Both the Markets and the Tourist Information Centre received one compliment.

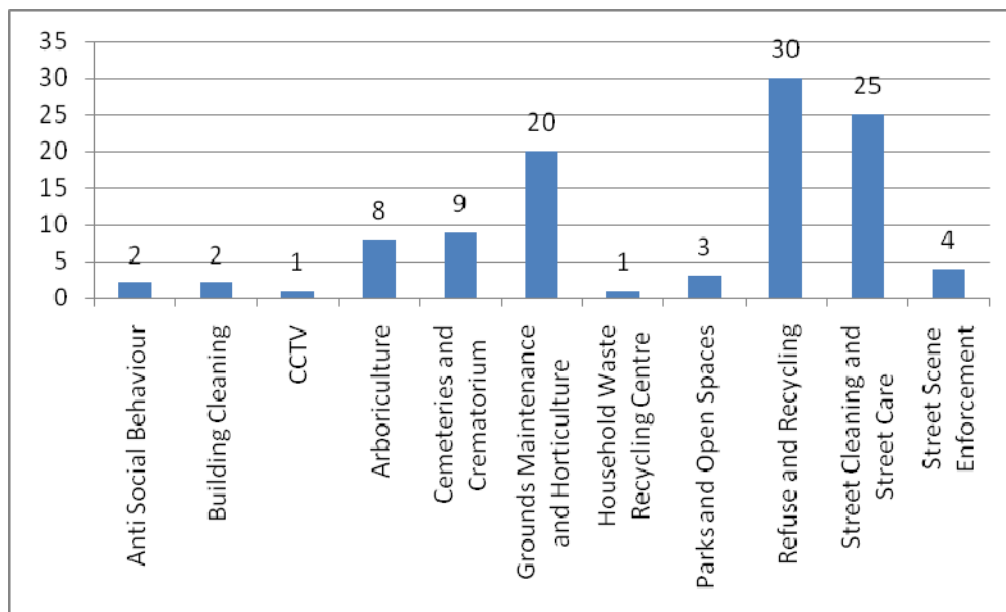
Cultural Services (Total 43)



Compliments for the Arts Centre ranged from the helpfulness of staff to the catering and the quality of the events.

The most common compliments received for the Dolphin Centre concerned the excellent service provided in relation to parties.

Environmental Services (Total 105)

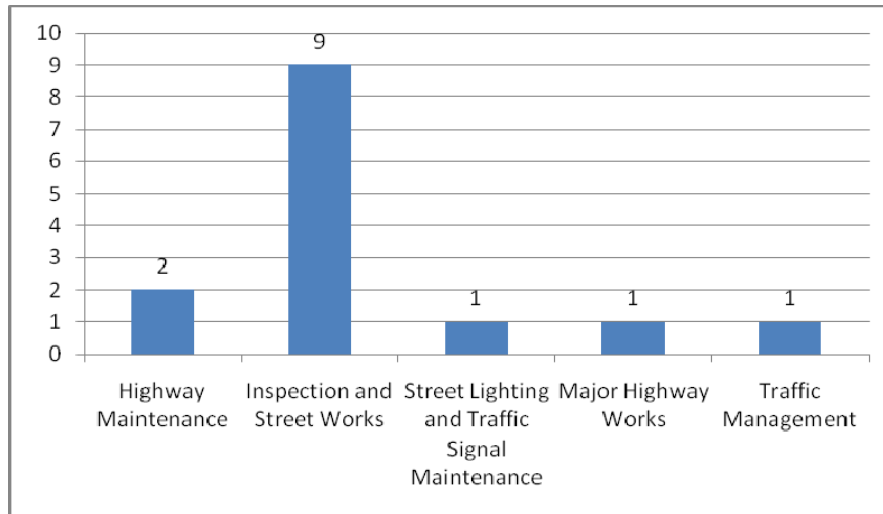


The majority of compliments for Grounds Maintenance and Horticulture concerned the floral displays around the Town.

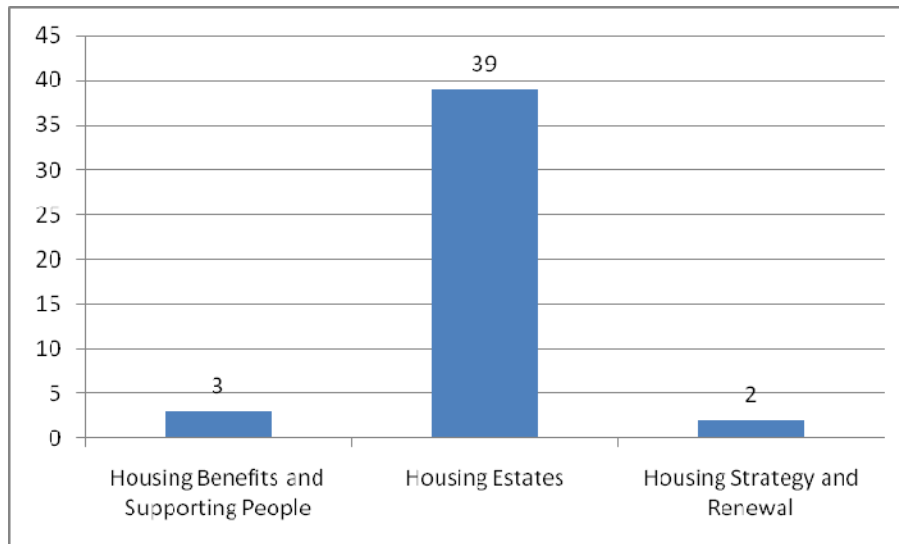
The majority of compliments for Refuse and Recycling were for the Council officers who provided an excellent service particularly during the snow.

The majority of compliments for Street Cleaning and Street Care were in relation to the excellent work of Council officers in gritting and clearing the snow and ice over the winter. Although the Council did receive a number of comments in relation to this issue from people who were dissatisfied the overall picture clearly points to an improvement in the service provided.

Highways and Engineering Operations (Total 14)



Housing (Total 44)



The most common compliments received in relation to Housing Estates related to the quality of repair work (including the IPM Works) and the level of service provided.

Technical

Both the Nursery and Surveying received one compliment.

Comments by Service Area/Team

Adult Services

Client Based Finance received one comment.

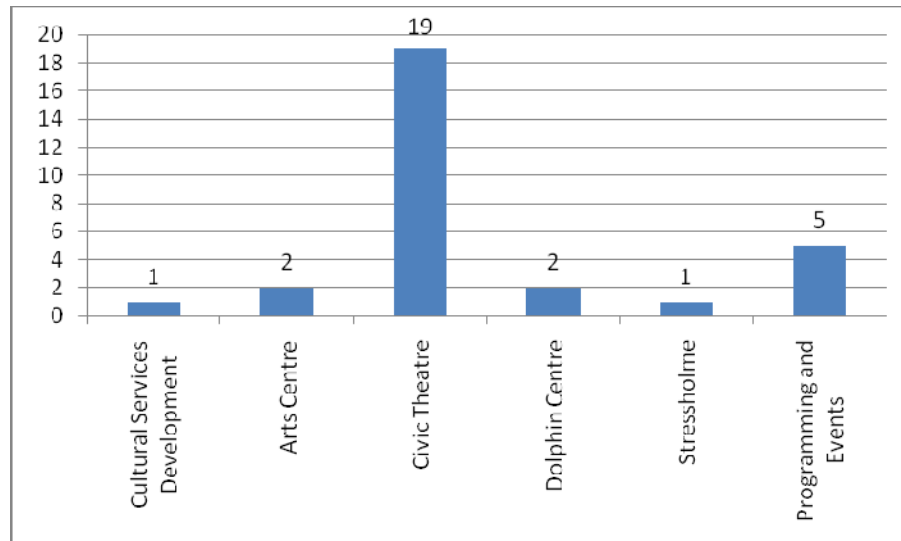
Building Services

Electricians received one comment and Driver/Labourer received two.

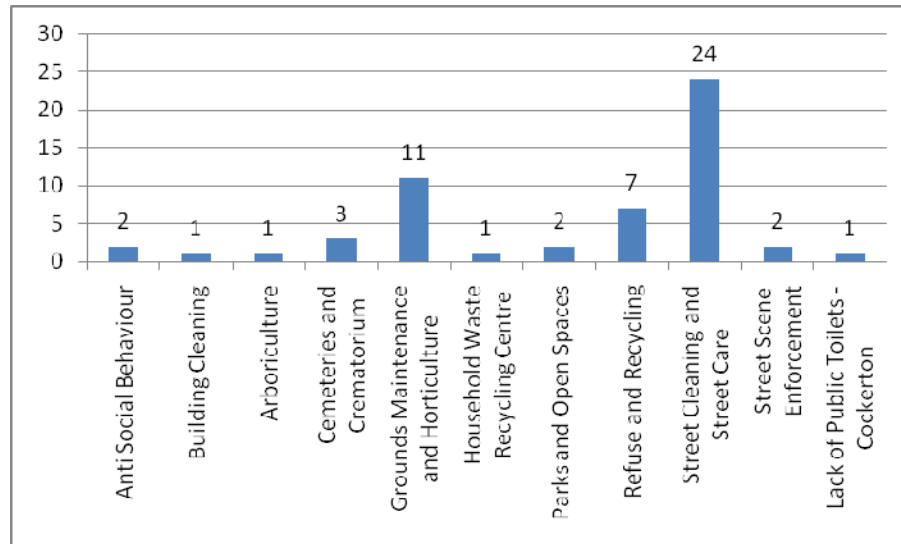
Business Development

Markets and Tourist Information received one comment each.

Cultural Services (Total 30)

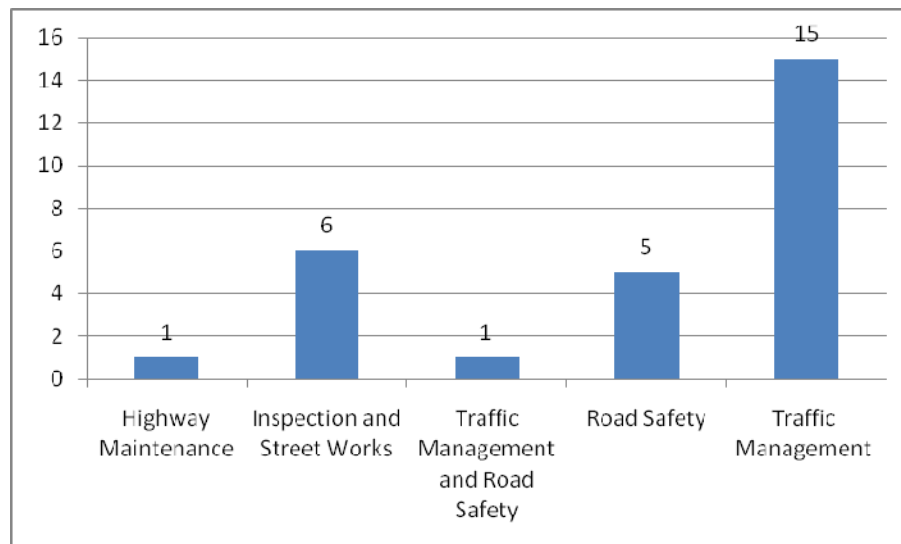


Environmental Services (Total 55)



In relation to Street Cleaning and Street Care the most frequent comments related to gritting and levels of cleanliness in Darlington.

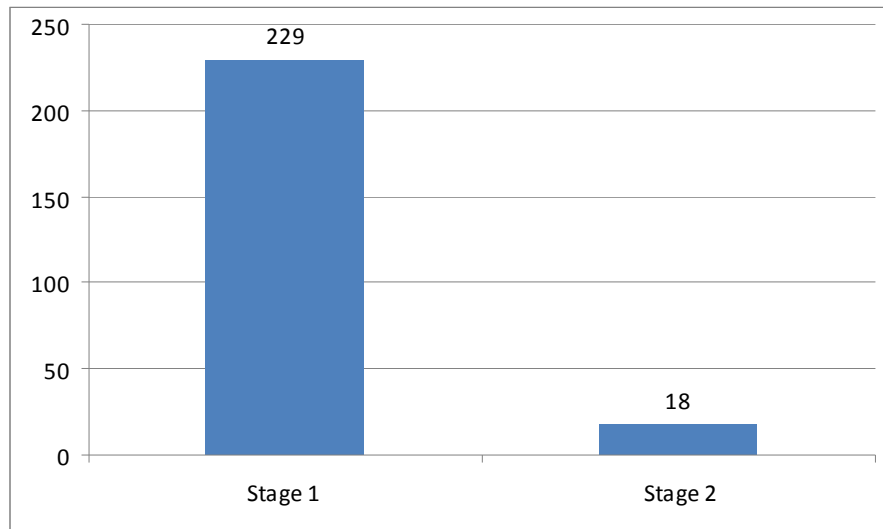
Highways and Engineering Operations (Total 28)



Housing

Housing Benefits and Supporting People and Housing Strategy and Renewal received one comment each.

Complaints by Stage



228 of the complaints received by Community Services in this period were initially dealt with at Stage 1 of the procedure, 17 of which were escalated to Stage 2. One complaint received in this period was initially dealt with at Stage 2.

Complaints by Outcome

Stage 1

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
<i>Building Services</i>						
Bricklayers	0	0	1	0	0	1
Building Management	0	0	0	1	0	1
Gas Service	0	1	0	3	0	4
Painters	0	0	1	1	0	2
Plumbers	0	0	0	4	1	5
Total - Building Services	0	1	2	9	1	13
<i>Cultural Services</i>						
Arts Centre	0	1	1	2	0	4
Civic Theatre	1	9	1	7	0	18
Dolphin Centre	0	4	2	3	1	10
Eastbourne Sport Complex	0	0	1	0	0	1
Stressholme	0	0	1	1	0	2
Total – Cultural Service	1	14	6	13	1	35
<i>Environmental Services</i>						
Anti Social Behaviour	0	2	0	0	0	2
Building Cleaning	0	1	0	2	0	3
<i>Parks & Countryside</i>						
Rights of Way	0	1	0	1	0	2
<i>Street Scene</i>						
Arboriculture	0	1	2	1	0	4
Cemeteries & Crematorium	0	0	0	1	1	2
Grounds Maintenance and Horticulture	0	6	0	10	0	16
Household Waste Recycling Centre	0	1	0	0	0	1
Parks & Open Spaces	0	2	0	2	0	4
Refuse & Recycling	2	13	0	28	0	43
Street Clean. & Care	0	3	1	11	0	15
Street Scene Enforce.	0	3	0	3	0	6
Total – Street Scene	2	29	3	56	1	91

Cont...

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
<i>Transport</i>						
School Transport	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total – Environmental Services	2	33	4	59	1	99
Highways & Engineering Op.						
<i>Highway Maintenance</i>						
Highway Maintenance	0	2	1	0	0	3
Inspections & Street Works	0	3	1	1	1	6
Total - Highway Maintenance	0	5	2	1	1	9
<i>Highways & Bridge Design</i>						
Major Highway Works	0	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Traffic Management & Road Safety</i>						
Road Safety	0	1	1	0	0	2
Traffic Management	1	2	3	2	0	8
Total – Traffic Management & Road Safety	1	3	4	2	0	10
Total - Highways & Engineering Op.	1	9	6	3	1	20
Housing						
Housing Benefits & Supporting People	0	3	2	2	0	7
Housing Estates	1	12	10	18	6	47
Housing Strategy & Renewal	0	0	0	1	1	2
Total - Housing	1	15	12	21	7	56
Total for Community Services	5	72	30	105	11	223

One complaint for the Civic Theatre and one complaint for the Dolphin Centre remained open at the time of writing.

One complaint for Road Safety remained open at the time of writing.

Three complaints for Housing Estates remained open at the time of writing.

Stage 2

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
Environmental Services						
<i>Parks & Countryside</i>						
Rights of Way	0	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Street Scene</i>						
Arboriculture	0	0	0	0	1	1
Grounds Maintenance & Horticulture	0	0	0	1	0	1
Refuse & Recycling	0	1	0	0	1	2
Street Scene Enforcement	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total – Street Scene	0	2	0	1	2	5
Total – Env. Services	0	2	1	1	2	6
Highway & Engineering Op.						
<i>Highway Maintenance</i>						
Inspection & Street Works	0	1	0	1	0	2
<i>Traffic Management & Road Safety</i>						
Traffic Management	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total - Highway & Engineering Op.	0	2	0	1	0	3
Housing						
Housing Estates	1	4	2	2	0	9
Total for Community Services	1	8	3	4	2	18

Organisational Learning

Following a complaint about Housing Benefits it was agreed the Council would review the procedures for notifying Local Taxation when a customer dies.

As a result of a complaint about a Compass Housing Application it was recommended that the declaration on the application form be reviewed to ensure that it is clear to applicants what information may be requested or shared with other agencies in support of their application.

As a result of a gentleman having to repeatedly raise the issue of being sent an arrears letter despite paying his rent he eventually made a complaint. Through the complaints

investigation the root cause of the problem was identified the Council's housing management system was amended to ensure an effective solution to the problem.

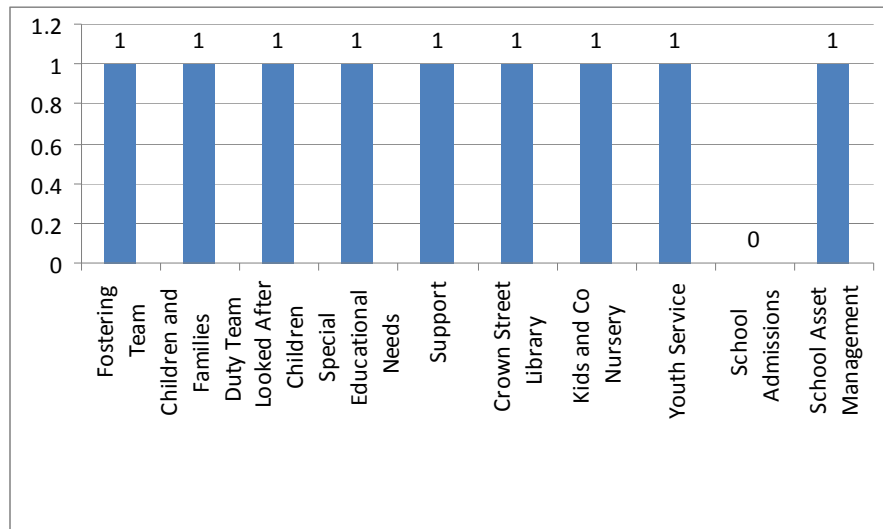
Following a complaint about the Council entering an individual's Council property officers were reminded of the importance of establishing the facts of the case i.e. ensuring that reasonable arrangements for access have been made or that the matter is an 'emergency' prior to authorising forced entry. In addition Housing Estates developed a protocol around notifying tenants of how to collect their new keys should the Council need to change the locks.

Further Recommendations

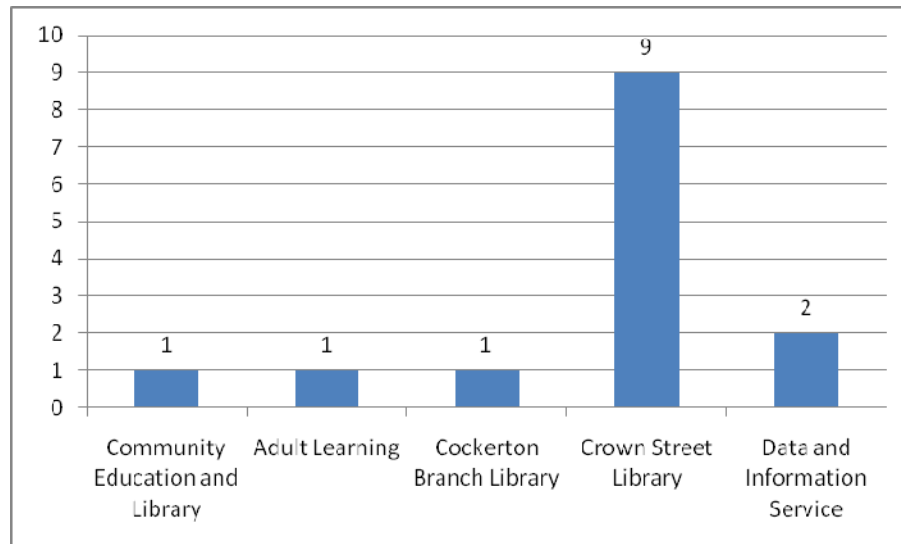
Environmental Services – undertake a Disability Equality Impact Assessment (DEIA) in relation to the Council's Tree Strategy. Furthermore all staff responsible for policies and procedures should ensure that appropriate DEIA are in place.

Children's Services

Complaints by Service Area/Team



Compliments by Service Area/Team

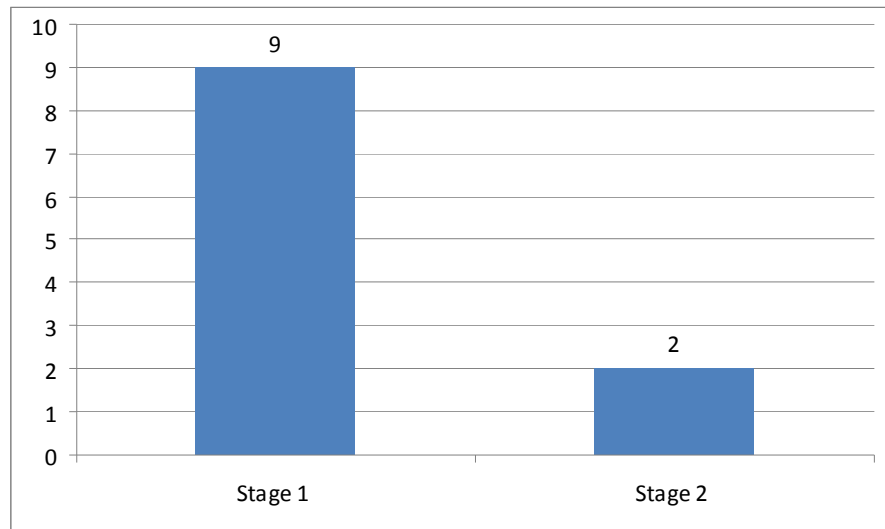


The majority of compliments the Crown Street Library received were in relation to the excellent service the officers provide.

Comments by Service Area/Team

Crown Street Library received seven comments.

Complaints by Stage



All of the complaints received by Children’s Services in this period were initially dealt with at Stage 1 of the complaints procedure. Two complaints were escalated to Stage 2 in this period.

Complaints by Outcome

Stage 1

Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
<i>Children's Accommodation</i>						
Fostering Team	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	1	0	0	0	0	1
<i>Children's Commissioning</i>						
Children & Families Duty Team	0	0	0	0	1	1
Looked After Children	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	0	1	0	0	1	2
<i>Special Educational Needs</i>						
Support	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	0	0	2	0	0	2
<i>Community Education & Library</i>						
Crown Street Library	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	0	1	0	0	0	1
<i>Early Years Partnership</i>						
Kids & Co Nurseries	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	0	0	0	1	0	1
<i>Partnerships</i>						
Youth Service	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	0	0	0	1	0	1
<i>School Place Planning & Assets</i>						
School Asset Management	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total for Children's Services	1	2	3	2	1	9

Stage 2

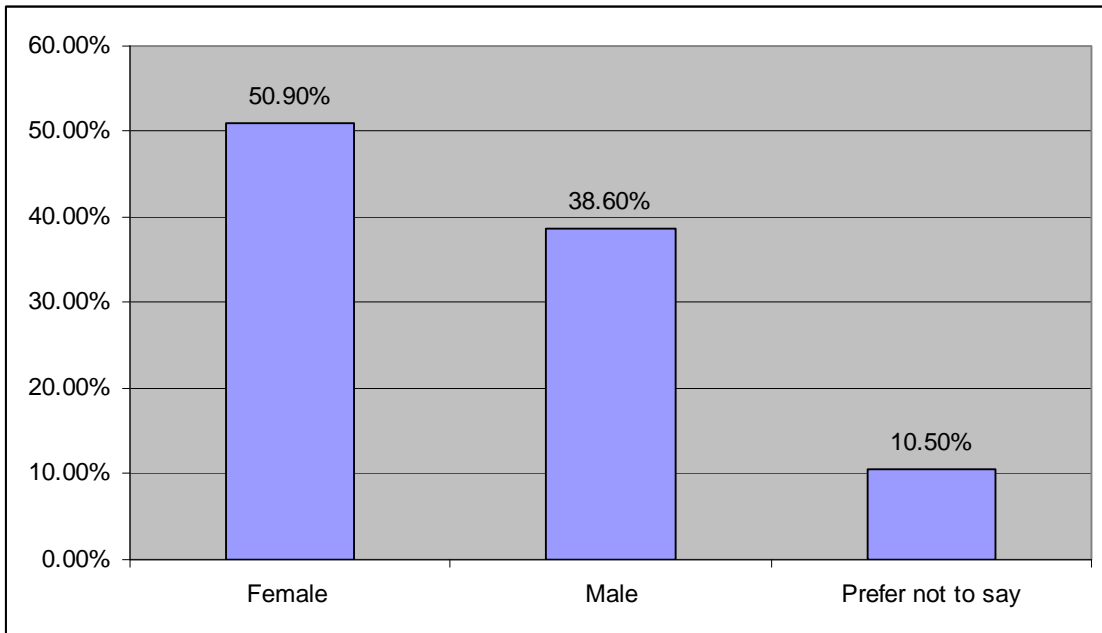
Service Area/Team	Inconclusive	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Withdrawn	Total
<i>Children's Commissioning</i>						
Looked After Children	0	1	0	0	0	1
Special Educational Needs	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total for Children's Services	0	2	0	0	0	2

Organisational Learning

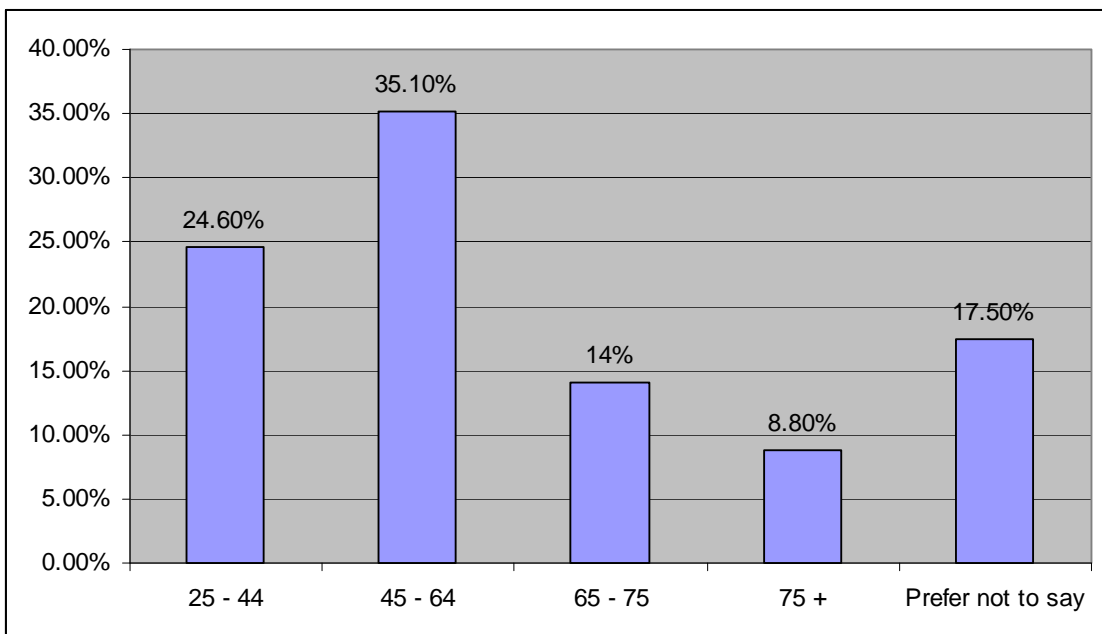
Following a complaint about Kids and Co. Nurseries, staff awareness training was undertaken to ensure all staff understand what constitutes as an "incident or accident" and that all incident/accident recording forms are completed on the day of the incident/accident.

Equal Opportunities Monitoring

Complainants by Gender



Complainants by Age

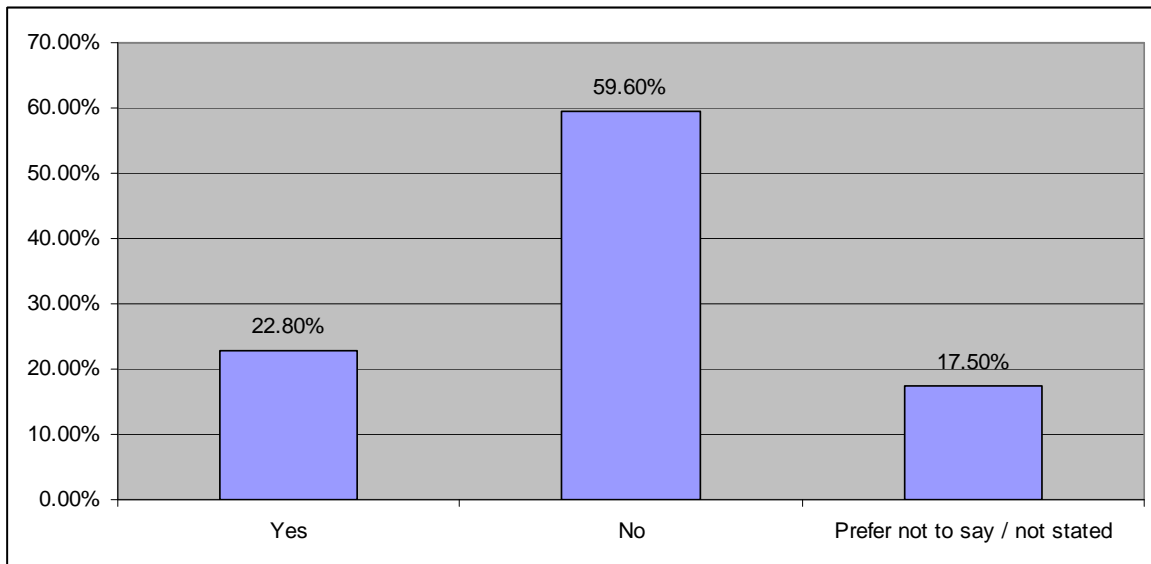


The number of complaints received from young people remains particularly low. The CIG Team have now developed a leaflet in conjunction with Connexions and young people to try and engage more young people in the process. The leaflet will be distributed during 2011/12. In addition to this the Complaints and Information

Governance Manager has visited services provided for young people to raise awareness of the Council's complaints, compliments and comments procedures.

Furthermore the Council is now using social networking sites to provide alternative forums via which young people can engage with the Council. The use of social networking sites has been successful in engaging with young people between the age of 13 and 24.

Complainants by Disability

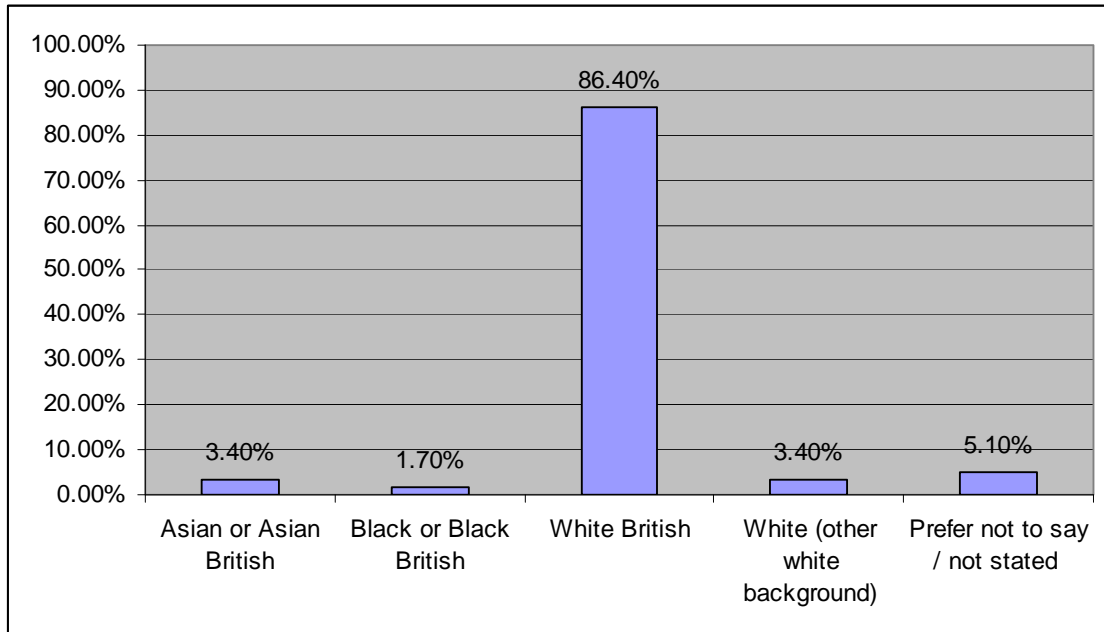


According to census data, there is, in Darlington, a slightly higher than average percentage of people who stated they had a long term illness, health problem or disability (this includes mental, physical and sensory impairment) which limited their daily activities or work (20.4%, compared to a national average of 18.2%).

On the basis of the information gathered in 2010/11 there appears to have been an 11% reduction in the number of complaints received from disabled people from 33.65% in 2009/10. While this was the case there appears to have been around an 11% increase in the number of complaints from people who preferred not to say or did not state whether they were disabled. From the statistical information gathered it is not clear whether or not there has actually been a reduction in the number of complaints received from disabled people.

It is important that officers continue to ensure that where a complaint contains an element of disability it triggers a screening exercise for a Disability Equality Impact Assessment in line with the Council's Disability Equality Scheme.

Complainants by Ethnicity



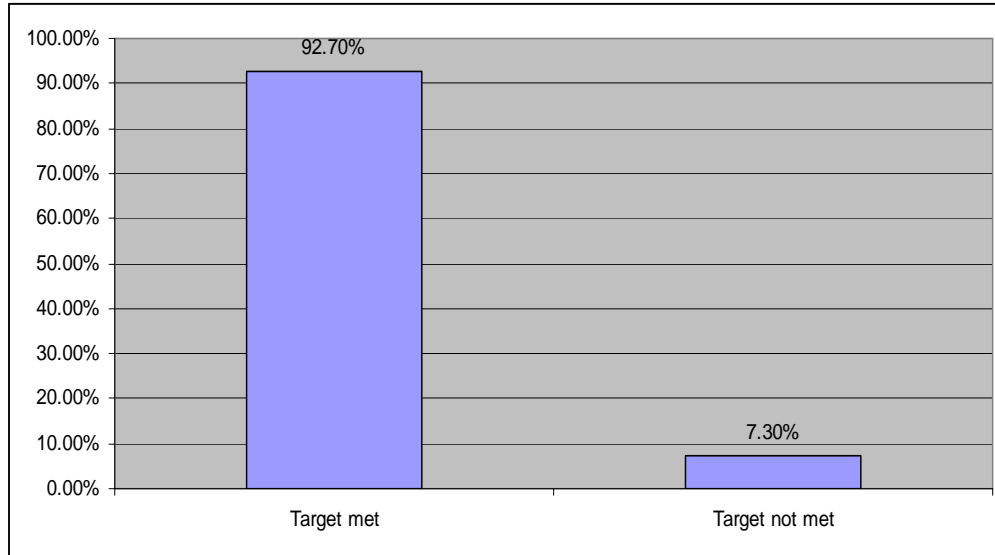
Darlington's Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population was 2.1% at the time of the 2001 census. In 2011 the Office for National Statistics published some experimental population estimates by ethnic group for local authority districts and higher administrative areas in England and Wales for 2009. This information indicated that the BME population in Darlington had increased to 6.4%. Based on the information gathered, 8.5% of the complaints received were from members of the BME community. This is a positive improvement since 2009/10 when members of the BME were under represented in the complaints procedure.

Work to try and improve the accessibility of the complaints procedure over the past year has included the printing of the title of the complaints leaflet in the most commonly used community languages.

Performance against the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure

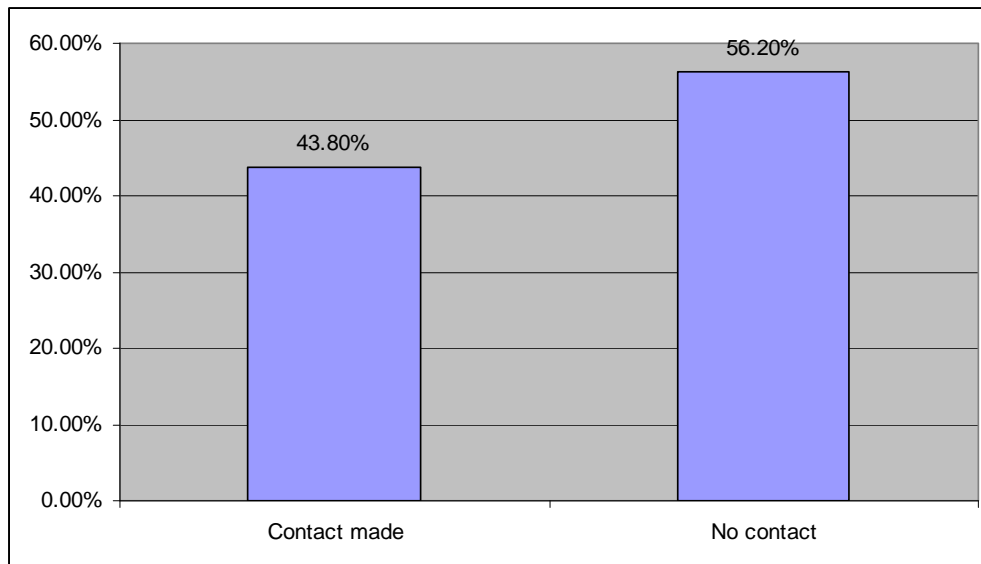
Stage 1

Performance against Stage 1 acknowledgement target (2 working days)



The most common reason that the Stage 1 acknowledgement target was not met was because the complaint was not forwarded to the CIG Team on the day of receipt. Information is provided in the procedure practice guidance on how officers can ensure complaints reach the CIG Team in time to be acknowledged within the timescale.

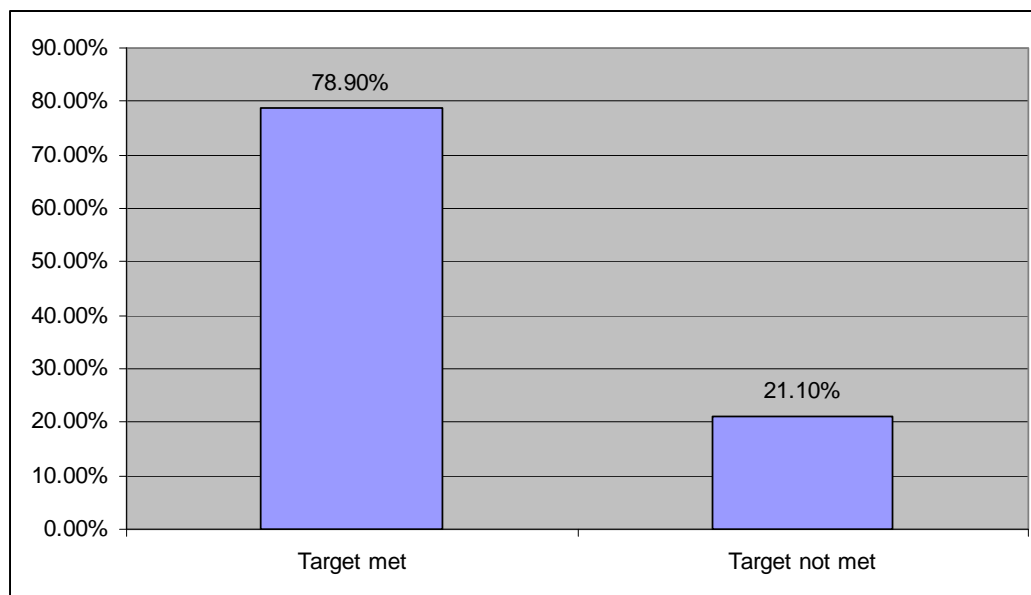
Performance against Stage 1 contact complainant target (5 working days)



In 2009/10 only 15.3% of complainants were contacted by an officer to discuss their complaint and desired outcomes. Following an instruction from senior management and the continued work of the Complaints and Information Governance Manager in reiterating the importance of this dialogue there has been a significant increase of

28.5% in the number of complainants who were contacted. This dialogue is vital in ensuring officers fully understand complainants issues and are able to resolve their complaints as close to the point of service delivery as possible. This dialogue will also help ensure a high level of customer satisfaction with complaints handling. While it may not be necessary to contact all complainants and in some cases they may not wish to be contacted it is recommended that the Council continue to emphasise the importance of this dialogue.

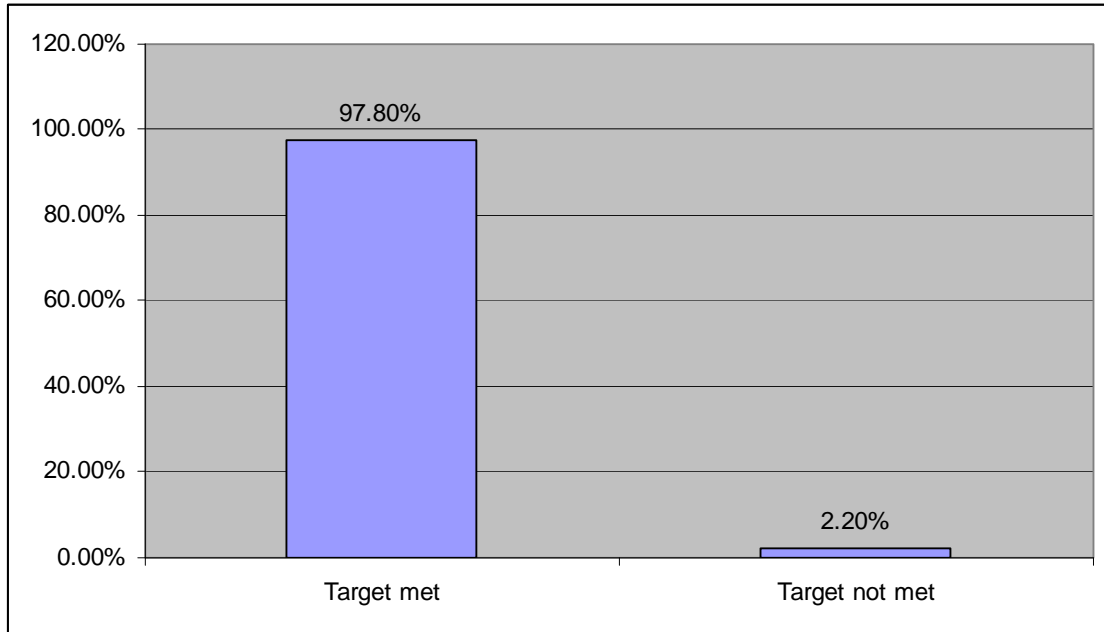
Performance against Stage 1 response target (20 working days)



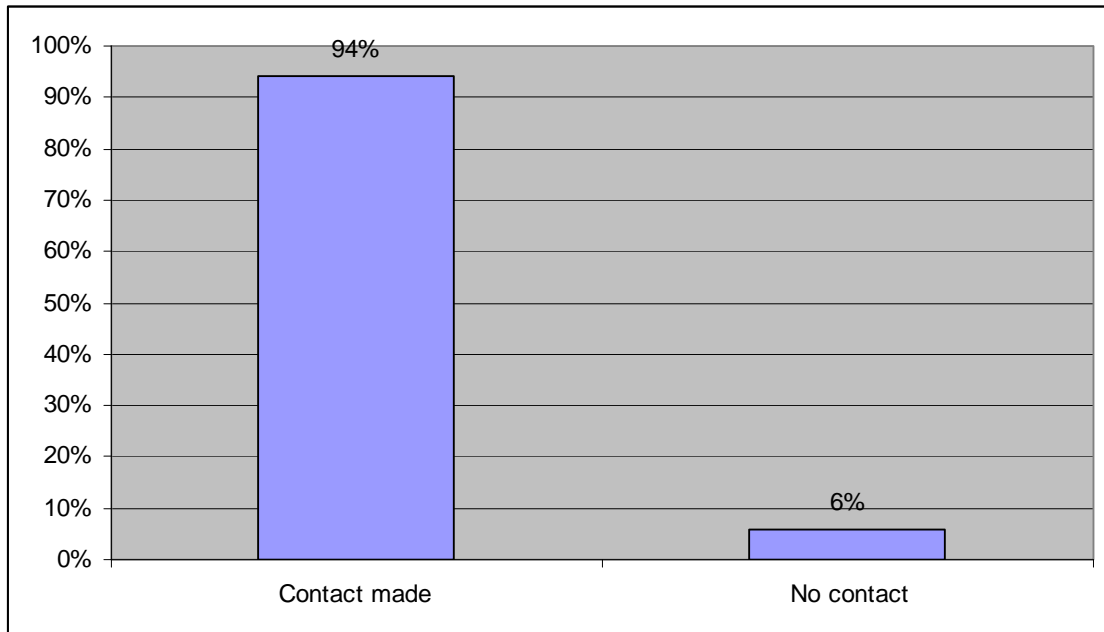
There was a reduction in performance against this target from 85.07% in 2009/10. While it is important that officers work to the timescales it is recognised that this is not possible in all cases and that process should not necessarily come before successfully resolving the matter to the complainant's satisfaction. Where it is not going to be possible to meet the timescale the responding officer should speak to the complainant and agree an extension with them.

Stage 2

Performance against Stage 2 acknowledgement target (2 working days)



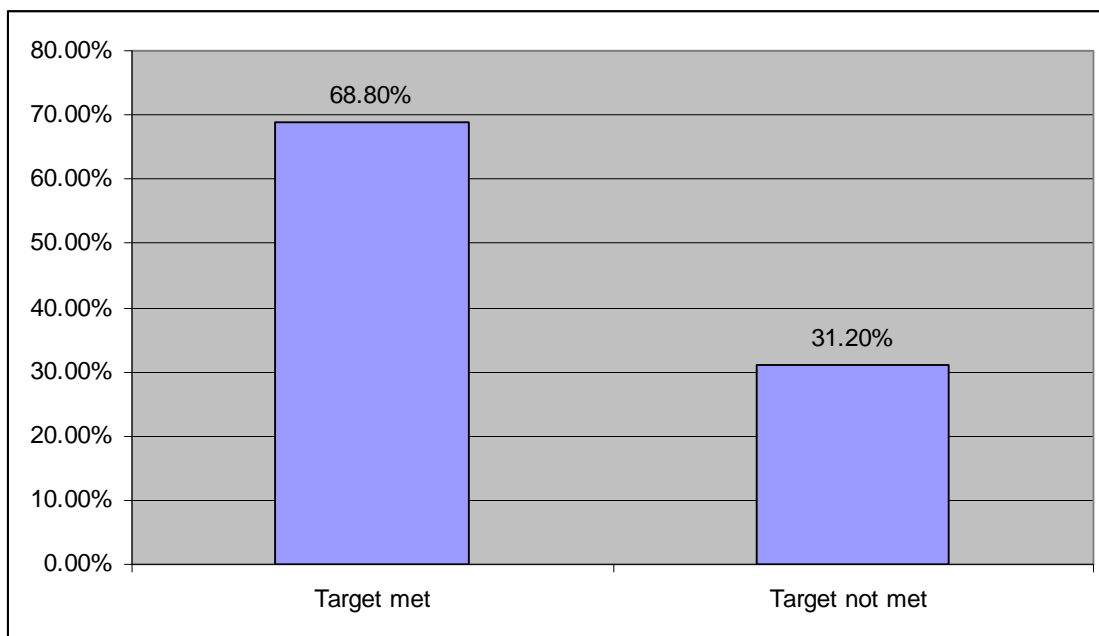
Performance against Stage 2 contact complainant target (5 working days)



There were only two cases in which no contact was made with the complainant. One was due to the fact that the complaint was escalated as a result of the Council's failure to follow through one of the agreed stage 1 resolution actions. The matter was straight forward, the action was undertaken and communicated, in writing, to the complainant

who was satisfied. The other complaint was referred to the Ombudsman without a Stage 2 investigation being undertaken as the matter was upheld at stage 1, the complainant remained dissatisfied and the Council did not feel it would be possible to resolve the matter to the complainant's satisfaction. This was communicated to the complainant who decided not to pursue the matter with the Ombudsman.

Performance against Stage 2 response target (25 working days)



Those investigations not completed within the 25 working day target were not done so due to the complexity of the case or officers/complainants being on annual leave/holiday. In all cases an extension was agreed with the complainant in advance. 95.9% of Stage 2 complaints were responded to within 30 working days.

Performance against Local Performance Indicators

LI 0410 - Percentage of those making a complaint satisfied with the handling of these complaints.

The **TARGET** for 2010/11 is **67.5%**

The **ACTUAL FIGURE** for 2009/10 is **58.6%**

In order to improve satisfaction with complaint handling it is vital that officers continue to contact complaints within 5 working days to discuss their complaint and desired outcomes and ensure they address all of the points raised in an objective manner.

LI 0426 - Percentage of Stage 1 complaints escalated to Stage 2.

The **TARGET** for 2010/11 is **8.75%**

The **ACTUAL FIGURE** for 2009/10 is **13.1%**

While the Council saw a significant reduction in the overall number of complaints received there was only a small reduction in the number of complaints escalated to Stage 2 of the Council's complaints procedure following a Stage 1 investigation (41 in 2010/11 as opposed to 47 in 2009/10).

The main reasons that complainants remained dissatisfied and requested their complaint be escalated to Stage 2 was due to the quality of the initial investigation. In particular, problems occurred where officers failed to address all the issues raised within the complaint. It is recommended that this issue be addressed by officers ensuring they contact complainants within 5 working days to discuss their complaint and desired outcomes and ensure they address all of the points raised in an objective manner.

LI 0427 - Percentage of all complaints received referred to the Ombudsman following investigation through the Council's complaints procedure.

The **TARGET** for 2010/11 is **2.5%**

The **ACTUAL FIGURE** for 2009/10 is **7.6%**

During 2010/11 25 complaints were referred to the Ombudsman following investigation through the Council's complaints procedure compared to 15 in 2009/10. While more individuals chose to exercise their right to refer their complaint to the Ombudsman in this period, once again, the Council did not receive a single maladministration report from the Ombudsman.

LI 0428 - Number of complaints submitted to the Ombudsman without consideration through the Council's complaints procedure.

The **TARGET** for 2010/11 is **11**.

The **ACTUAL FIGURE** for 2009/10 is **4**.

There are a number of factors which are likely to have contributed to this including greater staff awareness around how to deal with complaints and the willingness of staff to accept complaints in order to resolve them at the earliest opportunity.