

---

**COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMMENTS**  
**ANNUAL REPORTS 2016/17**

---

**Responsible Cabinet Members**

**Councillor Stephen Harker – Deputy Leader, Efficiency and Resources Portfolio**  
**Councillor Sue Richmond – Adult Social Care Portfolio**  
**Councillor Cyndi Hughes - Children and Young People Portfolio**  
**Councilor Andy Scott, Housing, Health and Partnerships Portfolio**

**Responsible Directors**

**Paul Wildsmith, Director Neighbourhood Services and Resources**  
**Suzanne Joyner, Director of Children and Adults Services**

---

**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Cabinet with the 2016/17 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 (**Appendix 6**).
2. To seek Cabinet’s approval to amend the Council’s Unreasonable and Unreasonably Persistent Complainants Procedure.

**Summary**

3. The Council received a total of 603 complaints during 2016/17, a decrease from 611 complaints during 2015/16.
4. The Council received a total of 157 compliments during 2016/17, a decrease from 243 in 2015/16.
5. The Council received a total of 199 comments during 2016/17, an increase from 149 in 2015/16.
6. A summary table is provided at **Appendix 1**.

7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. The Council's Unreasonable and Unreasonably Persistent Complainants Procedure requires updating in light of the corporate arrangements introduced by the Employee Protection Register (EPR).

### **Recommendation**

11. That Cabinet notes the content of the attached reports.
12. That Cabinet endorses the further recommendations made in the Children Social Care and Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports.
13. That Cabinet approves the proposed amendments to the Council's Unreasonable and Unreasonably Persistent Complainants Procedure (**Appendix 7**).

### **Reasons**

14. 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.
15. To enable the Council to further improve its services as a result of the complaints received and continue to improve satisfaction with complaints handling.

### **Background Papers**

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

Lee Downey,  
Complaints and Information Governance Manager  
Extension 5451

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 all of the delivery themes.
Efficiency	The revised procedures aim to improve the efficiency with which complaints are handled. The recommendations contained within the appended reports aim to reduce risk and improve efficiency in the way we interact with our customers.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

16. There was a decrease in the number of representations made under the Adult Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2016/17. There was a decrease in the number of complaints received, a decrease in the number of compliments received, while the number of comments received remained the same as in 2015/16. Full details and comparisons with previous years are attached at **Appendix 2**.
17. There was a decrease in the number of representations made under the Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2016/17. There was an increase in the number of complaints received at Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the procedure. 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 3**.
18. There was a decrease in the number of representations made under the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2016/17. There was a decrease in the number of complaints received at Stages 1, although there was an

increase in the number received at Stage 2. There was a decrease in the number of compliments received and an increase in the number of comments received. Full details and comparisons with previous years are attached at **Appendix 4**.

19. There was a decrease in the number of representations made under the Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2016/17. There was a decrease in the number of complaints received at Stage 1 of the procedure and a decrease in the number received at Stage 2. The number of complaints received at Stage 3 remained the same as in 2015/16. 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 5**.
20. There was an increase in the number of representations made under the Public Health Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2016/17. There was an increase in the number of complaints received. There was also an increase in the number of comments received. The number of compliments received remained the same as in 2015/16. The number of representations made under the Public Health Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure remain unusually low a trend reported by Complaints Managers attending the Northern Regional Complaints Managers Group. Full details and comparisons with previous years are attached at **Appendix 6**.
21. Some examples of organisational learning resulting from complaints have been extracted from the appended reports and are provided below.
22. *Adult Social Care Complaints:*
  - a) Financial Assessments – the Council agreed to review the information leaflet in relation to Financial Assessments and payment of contributions.
  - b) RIACT – the Council agreed to brief staff on the importance of informing individuals that they may be charged for services and this would be determined by a financial assessment; that this should be recorded and if a charge is deemed appropriate, confirmed in writing to the client.
  - c) Contracted Services - in conjunction with a home care provider it was agreed that all carers delivering care and support to people with Dementia would be specifically trained in this area and all reasonable endeavours would be made to introduce carers to service users in advance of care calls.
  - d) Ongoing Care – the Council also agreed that Extra Care eligibility should be raised in all social work business meetings and for Team Managers to ensure all new staff are aware of the extra care process.
  - e) Life Stages 0 – 25 Team – the Council agreed to reiterate with practitioners the importance of giving as much notice as possible to individuals and their families when changes are required to planned meetings.
23. *Children’s Social Care Complaints:*
  - a) Compliance with Complaints Process - it was agreed that with regard to social workers being reluctant to engage in complaints investigations once they have

left the authority, the Local Authority would consider whether they can improve engagement via the Northern Regional Complaints Manager's Group (NRCMG) and the Children's Services' Directors' Group.

- b) Social Care & Youth Offending, Area 1 - it was agreed the Local Authority would ensure more robust quality assurance of assessments and reports.
- c) Social Care & Youth Offending, Area 1 - it was also agreed that in planning their intervention with a family the Local Authority would consider a communication plan for each person with parental responsibility, which would be proportionate to the needs and circumstances of each individual family. This was incorporated into the revised assessment forms.
- d) MASH - it was agreed that a review of the current arrangements for the assessment of risk associated to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) would be undertaken.

#### 24. *Corporate Complaints:*

- a) Admissions and Transport - the Council agreed to consider providing details of the existing route(s) to parents so they can make an informed decision about whether or not to apply for a place on non-statutory school transport and to review its procedures to ensure our records are correctly and promptly updated when school routes are changed.
- b) Highways Network Management - following a number of complaints regarding the Council's decision not to renew concessionary bus passes, the Council amended the Occupational Therapy Assessment form to ensure the decision was made in accordance with the Department for Transport guidance to local authorities on assessing eligibility of disabled people in England for concessionary bus travel.
- c) Development Management – following two complaints it was agreed that any planning applications and any information material to the consideration of an application would be uploaded to the planning portal in a timely manner.
- d) Choice Based Lettings - it was agreed the Council would update the Darlington Local Lettings Policy to include details of who is/is not eligible to bid on two bedroom houses.
- e) Customer Services - it was agreed that upon request the Customer Service Advisors should give their full name.

#### 25. *Housing Complaints:*

- a) Lifeline Services - it was agreed Lifeline Services would create a robust recording system to ensure that all lock change requests are recorded and 'signed off' on completion and that random quality audits will be carried out to ensure compliance. It was also agreed that Tenancy Management would review their void management processes to ensure that a mastered lock is fitted to all

void properties benefitting from either a full warden service or mobile warden service and ensure keys for the mastered locks are issued to the ingoing tenant.

- b) Housing also agreed to ensure they make it clear whether an applicant had a disability, when requesting an estimate for a pavement crossing and hardstand.

20. The further recommendation set out in the Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports 2016/17 is:

- a) Children's social Care staff should work to improve performance against the Stage 1, 2 and 3 timescales set out in the Council's Children's Social Care Complaints Procedure.

26. The further recommendation set out in the Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports 2016/17 is:

- a) As recommended in the 2015/16 annual report, the timeliness of responding to complaints or agreeing an extension when it is not going to be possible to respond within timescale should be addressed by Housing and Building Services staff.

27. The Council's Unreasonable and Unreasonably Persistent Complainants Procedure was introduced in 2009. However, since the introduction of the Employee Protection Register (EPR), if the Council did find an individual's behaviour to be unreasonable at any time, including during the course of a complaint investigation, it would be most appropriate to create a record on the EPR. As such, it is proposed that the procedure be amended to remove any reference to unreasonable complainants.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

28. The Complaints and Information Governance Manager attended the Housing Tenants' Board who were in agreement with the proposal to extend the timescales for the reasons stated in this report.

## Total Representations by Year

Type of representation	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
<b>Complaints</b>					
<b>Corporate</b>					
Stage 1 complaints	402	403	744	668	376
Direct to Stage 2 complaints	10	11	13	4	7
<i>Total complaints</i>	<i>412</i>	<i>414</i>	<i>757</i>	<i>672</i>	<i>383</i>
Stage 1 escalated to Stage 2	51	47	86	68	51
<i>Total Stage 2 complaints</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>58</i>
<b>Adult Social Care</b>	44	49	24	26	20
<b>Children's Social Care</b>					
Stage 1 complaints	58	54	60	46	63
Stage 2 complaints	16	14	15	9	5
Stage 3 complaints	5	3	1	0	0
<b>Housing</b>					
Stage 1 complaints	86	94	105	101	N/A
Direct to Stage 2 complaints	0	0	1	0	N/A
<i>Total complaints</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>101</i>	<i>N/A</i>
Stage 1 escalated to Stage 2	14	15	12	12	N/A
<i>Total Stage 2 complaints</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>N/A</i>
Stage 3 complaints	0	0	2	1	N/A
<b>Public Health</b>	3	0	0	0	N/A
<b>Compliments</b>					
Corporate	106	173	185	233	199
Adult Social Care	13	33	40	39	42
Children's Social Care	4	6	12	6	13
Housing	34	31	47	0	N/A
Public Health	0	0	0	0	N/A
<b>Comments</b>					
Corporate	195	143	263	209	254
Adult Social Care	0	0	0	0	0
Children's Social Care	0	1	1	0	1
Housing	3	5	9	0	N/A
Public Health	1	0	0	0	N/A