
**COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMMENTS
ANNUAL REPORTS 2017/18**

Responsible Cabinet Members

**Councillor Stephen Harker – Leader, Efficiency and Resources Portfolio
Councillor Chris McEwan – Deputy Leader, Economy and Regeneration Portfolio
Councillor Sue Richmond – Adult Social Care Portfolio
Councillor Cyndi Hughes - Children and Young People Portfolio
Councilor Andy Scott - Housing, Health and Partnerships Portfolio
Councillor Nick Wallis - Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio**

Responsible Directors

**Paul Wildsmith, Managing Director
Suzanne Joyner, Director of Children and Adults Services
Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Cabinet with the 2017/18 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**).

Summary

2. The Council received a total of 871 complaints during 2017/18, an increase from 603 complaints during 2016/17. One of the major factors in the increase was the introduction of the Council’s policy to no longer provide a recall service for missed refuse collections. There was also a significant increase in complaints about Customer Services following a restructure, the most common theme was dissatisfaction with telephone waiting times. Additional staffing resource was brought in, as a response to the complaints about telephone waiting times. Adult social care also saw a significant increase in complaints following the implementation of the Adult Social Care Transformation Program and dissatisfaction with individual financial assessments. As a result the Council has just completed a further consultation on changes to its charging policy for non-

residential adult social care services. A further report about this will be coming to Cabinet.

3. The Council received a total of 116 compliments during 2017/18, a decrease from 157 in 2016/17.
4. The Council received a total of 224 comments during 2017/18, an increase from 199 in 2016/17.
5. A summary table is provided at **Appendix 1**.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.

Recommendation

9. That Cabinet notes the content of the attached reports.
10. That Cabinet endorses the further recommendation made in the Children Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report (i.e. that children's social care staff should work to improve performance against the Stage 1, 2 and 3 timescales).

Reasons

11. To make Cabinet aware of the number and nature of the complaints, compliments and comments received by the Council and the organisational learning that has taken place as a result.
12. To enable the Council to further improve its services as a result of the complaints, compliments and comments received and 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

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| 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 understanding and analysis of complaints can help the Council improve services. |
| Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers | There is no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers as a result of this report. |

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

13. There was a significant increase in the number of representations (complaints, compliments and comments) made under the Adult Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2017/18. There was a significant increase in the number of complaints received primarily as a result of people's dissatisfaction with the outcome of their assessment following the implementation of the Adult Social Care Transformation Program and people's dissatisfaction with the outcome of their financial assessment. A central theme of the Transformation Program is the adoption of strength based approaches that prevent, reduce and delay the need for formal support. This approach promotes the independence and quality of life of adults living in our communities, while ensuring that resources are deployed in a way that supports the delivery of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). As a result the Council has just completed a further consultation on changes to its charging policy for non-residential adult social care services. A further report about this will be coming to Cabinet. Full details and comparisons with previous years are attached at **Appendix 2**.
17. The Council received the same number of representations under the Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure as it did in 2016/17. Complaint numbers fell slightly compared to 2016/17. The most commonly complained about issues was service provision. Complaints about communication were down, having been the most commonly complained about issue in 2016/17. Full details and comparisons with previous years are attached at **Appendix 3**.
18. There was a significant increase in the number of representations made under the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2017/18. There was a significant increase in the number of complaints received about missed refuse collections following the introduction of the Council's policy to no longer provide a recall service. There was also a significant increase in complaints about Customer Services following a restructure, the most common theme was dissatisfaction with telephone waiting times. Additional staffing resource was brought in, as a response to the complaints about telephone waiting times. 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 2017/18. Complaint numbers remained the same as in 2016/17. Service provision remained the most commonly complained about issues, while there was a significant decrease in complaints about communication. Full details and comparisons with previous years are attached at **Appendix 5**.
20. There was a decrease in the number of representations made under the Public Health Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2017/18. The Council received the same number of complaints as in 2016/17. These related to both the Council as a commissioner and the services provided. Full details and comparisons with previous years are attached at **Appendix 6**.

21. Some other examples of organisational learning resulting from complaints have been extracted from the appended reports and are provided below.

22. *Adult Social Care Complaints:*

- a) Following a complaint for the Responsive Integrated Assessment Care Team (RIACT), it was agreed the team should improve case recording to ensure it provides a factual account of conversations or events that have taken place. It was also agreed that a Care and Support Needs assessment should be offered regardless of an individual's financial circumstances and that a review of the written information available for individuals and family members who access the RIACT service should be undertaken.
- b) Following a complaint for Ongoing Assessment & Intervention Team, it was agreed the team manager would ensure that when a worker is on long term sick leave and reviews are due to be completed, these are allocated to other workers to complete, or prioritised by the original worker if their return to work would not affect timescales of reviews.
- c) As a result of another complaint for Ongoing Assessment & Intervention Team, it was recommended the Council should consider reviewing its procedures pertaining to the recording of disagreements in relation to a proposed plan and the steps which must be taken to ensure the plan is signed off in the event of a disagreement, in light of the Care Act guidance.
- d) Following a complaint for Ongoing Care, it was agreed the Council would devise a robust process to monitor short break stays, to avoid extended periods of stay. It was also agreed the Contracts & Commissioning would review provision of care in rural areas as part of re-tendering of homecare services.
- e) Following a complaint for Life Stages 0 – 25, it was recommended the Council would revisit the advice it gives officers who manage finances on behalf of care users, ensure it accurately explains the role of a corporate appointee and considers potential implications for Direct Payments if taking on that role (or that of a Court appointed Deputy).
- f) Following a complaint for Occupational Therapy, it was recommended the Council reviews its policy for reclaiming unused Direct Payments.

23. *Children's Social Care Complaints:*

- a) It was agreed following two separate complaints that training would be provided to improve in-house complaints investigations, with a view to resolving more complaints at Stage 1.
- b) Following a complaint for Looked After Through Care, it was agreed the Council would continue to improve access to therapeutic support for looked after children and continue to improve the quality and choice of placements available for looked after children.

- c) Following a complaint for Assessment & Safeguarding Team D, it was agreed there needs to be a strengthening of practice around practitioners, managers and legal representatives listening and acting upon the wishes and feelings of young people they work with and a clear policy and procedure that highlights some of the complexities of this area of work developed in its own right rather than being incorporated into the procedures of other areas of work.

It was agreed there would be a development day for practitioners, managers, legal advisors and representatives of children and young people who are looked after and/or care leavers to develop practice around listening to children and young people and the care planning processes and a strategy be developed and implemented.

It was also agreed there would be supervision training for social work managers that addresses the issue of managing professional bias in practice and the development of hypothesis trees and the blocked cycle framework.

It was also agreed that following assessment of birth parents in line with duties under the Adoption and Children Act 2002, processes would be established that monitors the take up and outcomes of those services commissioned to support birth parents, in particular where the support is provided by an agency independent to the Local Authority.

24. *Corporate Complaints:*

- a) Following a complaint for Communications, it was agreed the Council would ensure it included all responses in future consultation evaluations.
- b) Following a complaint for Admissions and Transport, the Council considered providing details of the existing routes 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 ensure that where a stop is no longer used along an existing route, that stop is removed from the route.
- c) Following a complaint for Special Educational Needs (SEN), it was agreed that the Council would ensure that where an early years setting, further education college or other post-16 institution does not reply to a request to convene and hold a meeting on the Council's behalf or refuses to do so, the Council would put timely arrangements in place to ensure the Education Health Care (EHC) Plan is reviewed in accordance with the Children and Families Act 2014.
- d) Following another complaint for SEN, the Council agreed to ensure the required notice period is given in relation to future reviews and a reasonable period of time is allowed for individuals to complete their section of the EHC Plan, within the maximum time permitted.
- f) Following a complaint for Development Management, it was agreed the Development Manager would review the use of conditions, provide training for officers in the use of conditions and there construction and improve scrutiny of reports in this respect.

- g) Following another complaint for Development Management, it was agreed the Council would refer explicitly within application reports to the duty to determine applications in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise i.e. the duty under section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

25. *Housing Complaints:*

- a) Following a complaint for General Trades, it was agreed that training would be provided for staff to ensure repairs were highlighted to tenants and appointments booked prior to them moving into a property.
- b) As the result of a complaint for Housing Management Services, it was agreed the Housing Management Officer would be reminded of the practice and procedure in relation to termination of tenancies.
- c) Following a complaint for Housing Income Management, a member of staff was reminded of the need to maintain a professional telephone manner.

26. The further recommendation set out in the Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports 2017/18 is:

- a) Children's social care staff should work to improve performance against the Stage 1, 2 and 3 timescales.

Conclusion

27. The Council received 871 complaints, the second highest number of complaints it has received since 2009/10; when the Council started keeping comprehensive records. These have primarily resulted from new ways of working aimed at supporting the delivery of the Council's MTFP.

Outcome of Consultation

28. No consultation was required in preparing this report.

Total Representations by Year

| Type of representation | 2017/18 | 2016/17 | 2015/16 | 2014/15 | 2013/14 |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Complaints | | | | | |
| Corporate | | | | | |
| Stage 1 complaints | 628 | 402 | 403 | 744 | 668 |
| Direct to Stage 2 complaints | 8 | 10 | 11 | 13 | 4 |
| <i>Total complaints</i> | <i>636</i> | <i>412</i> | <i>414</i> | <i>757</i> | <i>672</i> |
| Stage 1 escalated to Stage 2 | 80 | 51 | 47 | 86 | 68 |
| <i>Total Stage 2 complaints</i> | <i>88</i> | <i>61</i> | <i>58</i> | <i>99</i> | <i>72</i> |
| Adult Social Care | 92 | 44 | 49 | 24 | 26 |
| Children's Social Care | | | | | |
| Stage 1 complaints | 54 | 58 | 54 | 60 | 46 |
| Stage 2 complaints | 16 | 16 | 14 | 15 | 9 |
| Stage 3 complaints | 2 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Housing | | | | | |
| Stage 1 complaints | 86 | 86 | 94 | 105 | 101 |
| Direct to Stage 2 complaints | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| <i>Total complaints</i> | <i>86</i> | <i>86</i> | <i>94</i> | <i>106</i> | <i>101</i> |
| Stage 1 escalated to Stage 2 | 18 | 14 | 15 | 12 | 12 |
| <i>Total Stage 2 complaints</i> | <i>18</i> | <i>14</i> | <i>15</i> | <i>13</i> | <i>12</i> |
| Stage 3 complaints | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Public Health | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Compliments | | | | | |
| Corporate | 79 | 106 | 173 | 185 | 233 |
| Adult Social Care | 6 | 13 | 33 | 40 | 39 |
| Children's Social Care | 12 | 4 | 6 | 12 | 6 |
| Housing | 19 | 34 | 31 | 47 | 0 |
| Public Health | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Comments | | | | | |
| Corporate | 224 | 195 | 143 | 263 | 209 |
| Adult Social Care | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Children's Social Care | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Housing | 0 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 0 |
| Public Health | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |