

**CABINET
7 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMMENTS
ANNUAL REPORTS 2020/21**

Responsible Cabinet Members

**Councillor Scott Durham - Resources Portfolio
Councillor Heather Scott, Leader
Councillor Jon Clarke - Children and Young People Portfolio
Councilor Kevin Nicholson - Health and Housing Portfolio**

Responsible Directors

**Ian Williams, Chief Executive
Elizabeth Davison, Group Director of Operations
James Stroyan, Group Director of People
Dave Winstanley, Group Director of Services**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Cabinet with the 2020/21 Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports for:
 - (a) Adult Social Care (**Appendix 2**);
 - (b) Children's Social Care (**Appendix 3**);
 - (c) Corporate (**Appendix 4**);
 - (d) Housing (**Appendix 5**); and
 - (e) Public Health (**Appendix 6**).

Summary

2. It is important that the Council's complaints, compliments and comments procedures are accessible so people can tell us what they think about the services we provide. The Council constantly strives to ensure an organisational culture in which complaints are accepted, owned and resolved as quickly as possible and one in which learning from complaints is used to improve services.
3. The Council received a total of 628 complaints during 2020/21, a decrease from 838 complaints during 2019/20.

4. The Council received a total of 309 compliments during 2020/21, an increase from 292 in 2019/20.
5. The Council received a total of 178 comments during 2020/21, an increase from 168 in 2019/20.
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.

Recommendations

10. It is recommended that:
 - (a) That Cabinet notes the content of the attached reports.
 - (b) That Cabinet endorses the further recommendations made in the Adult Social Care, Children Social Care and Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports.

Reasons

11. The recommendation is supported by the following reasons:
 - (a) 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.
 - (b) 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.

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 and Climate Change	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
Council Plan	Learning from complaints contributes towards the delivery of the priorities in the Plan
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
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	The purpose of the Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report is, in part, to improve the service we provide to Looked After Children and Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Background

12. Our aim is to put people first and provide them with the best possible service. To make this aim a reality it is important people have the opportunity to tell us what they think about the services we provide. The Council's Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedures are one way they can do this. They can tell us when we get things wrong so we can put them right. They can also tell us when we get things right, make comments about the things we do and suggest new ways of doing things.
13. We understand that sometimes it is difficult to complain and work hard to ensure an organisational culture in which complaints are seen as a positive means of engagement and an opportunity for the Council to learn and improve services. If people do need to complain we always take their concerns seriously, treat them fairly and with respect and assure them they will not receive a poorer service as a result.

Information and Analysis

14. There was a decrease in the overall number of representations made under the Adult Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2020/21. There was a significant decrease in the number of complaints received, a significant decrease in the number of compliments received and a small increase in the number of comments received. Full details are attached at Appendix 2.
15. There was a decrease in the overall number of representations made under the Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2020/21. There was a significant decrease in the number of complaints received at Stage 1 of the procedure, a decrease in the number of complaints received at Stage 2 and a decrease in the number of complaints received at Stage 3. There was an increase in the number of compliments received, while the number of comments received remained the same as in 2019/20. Full details are attached at Appendix 3.
16. There was a decrease in the overall number of representations made under the Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2020/21. There was a significant decrease in the number of complaints received at Stage 1 and a decrease in the number of complaints received at Stage 2 of the procedure. There was an increase in the number of compliments and comments received. Full details are attached at Appendix 4.
17. There was a decrease in the number of representations made under the Housing Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2020/21. While there was a decrease in the number of complaints received at Stage 1, there was an increase in the number of complaints received at Stage 2 of the procedure. The number of complaints received at Stage 3 remained the same as in 2019/20. There was a slight decrease in the number of compliments received, while there was a slight increase in the number of comments received. Full details are attached at Appendix 5.
18. There was a decrease in the number of representations made under the Public Health Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure during 2020/21. There was a slight

increase in the number of complaints received, a decrease in the number of compliments received and a slight increase in the number of comments received. Full details are attached at Appendix 6.

19. Some examples of organisational learning resulting from complaints have been extracted from the appended reports and are provided below.
20. *Adult Social Care Complaints:*
 - (a) Following a complaint for Life Stages 26+ an internal investigation and a review of practice was completed by the Registered Manager into the handling of controlled medication.
 - (b) Following a further complaint for Life Stages 26+ all Safeguarding Adult Managers were reminded that unless it would put the adult at further risk, the person alleged to have caused harm should have the opportunity to respond to the allegations against them and that the response should be shared in the Safeguarding Strategy meeting.
 - (c) Following a complaint for Provider Services it was agreed the Reablement Team would re-visit relevant Council training regarding dignity and respect.
 - (d) Following a complaint for Ongoing Assessment & Intervention team (OAIT) staff were reminded of their conduct when dealing with members of the public and to treat people with dignity and respect, whilst being clear about the remit of services.
21. *Children's Social Care Complaints:*
 - (a) Following a complaint for Team A the Team Manager addressed communication issue with social worker and reminded them to ensure that parents are informed in a timely manner of any key decisions or changes for their children, especially when they are placed outside of their care.
 - (b) Following a complaint for Team B the Team Manager raised the importance of checking who has parental responsibility with a social worker, prior to seeking consent to work with a child.
 - (c) Following a complaint for Team D the Team Manager reminded social workers to check personal details for families are correct to reduce the likelihood of data breaches and shared the Data Protection Officer's advice for avoiding a data breaches.
 - (d) Following a complaint for Keeping Families Together it was agreed the strategies in place to reduce the number of changes of social worker for families should continue to be implemented and social workers bringing cases for discussion at Keeping Families Together panel would be required to provide evidence that parents had given informed consent for Keeping Families Together to work with their family.

22. *Corporate Complaints:*

- (a) Following a complaint for School Admissions & Transport a process was agreed in relation to handing over information when an officer leaves the service.
- (b) Following a complaint for Highway Asset Management about road works commencing too early the Council addressed the issue with the sub-contractor to prevent a re-occurrence.
- (c) Following a complaint for Xentrall it was agreed the Council would make a change to the Darlington Borough Council jobs page to include a sentence at the top of the page to make it clear that CVs are not accepted and that the application form can be found on the link to the job.
- (d) Following a complaint for the Superintendent Registrar the staff at the Registry Office reviewed their practice and bring it into line with the advice provided on .Gov.uk.

23. *Housing Complaints:*

- (a) Following a complaint for Management Services it was recommended that Housing Services ensures it adheres to the timescales set out in its Housing Services Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.
- (b) Following a further complaint for Management Services it was agreed that Housing Services would review their sign up process and going forward ensure sign up appointments are made when all works are completed, post inspected and not beforehand.
- (c) Following a complaint for Service & Repairs, Building Services decided to keep a small stock of radiators to prevent other people experience delays in having them repaired/replaced.
- (d) Following a complaint for Contact & Repairs Co-ordination, Building Services reviewed their stock level resulting in them requiring their supplier to hold a small number of a particular boiler part.

24. The further recommendations set out in the Adult Social Care, Children Social Care and Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Reports are:

- (a) Adult Services should now work to clear the backlog of complaints that has arisen during the pandemic and on doing so ensure any new complaints are responded to in a timely manner and that where an extension is required this is communicated to the complainant and properly recorded.
- (b) Children's Services should now continue to work to improve performance against the Stage 1 and Stage 2 timescales for Children's Social Care complaints.

- (c) The Council should work to improve performance against the Corporate Stage 2 response target.

Outcome of Consultation

- 25. No consultation was required in preparing this report.

Total Representations by Year

Type of representation	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Complaints					
<i>Corporate</i>					
Stage 1 complaints	457	632	623	628	402
Direct to Stage 2 complaints	24	15	1	8	10
Direct to Ombudsman	1	0	0	0	0
<i>Total complaints</i>	<i>483</i>	<i>647</i>	<i>624</i>	<i>636</i>	<i>412</i>
Stage 1 escalated to Stage 2	26	44	70	80	51
<i>Total Stage 2 complaints</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>Adult Social Care</i>	46	67	64	92	44
<i>Children's Social Care</i>					
Stage 1 complaints	37	57	67	54	58
Stage 2 complaints	7	10	16	16	16
Stage 3 complaints	2	3	4	2	5
<i>Housing</i>					
Stage 1 complaints	60	65	69	86	86
Direct to Stage 2 complaints	1	1	1	0	0
<i>Total complaints</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>86</i>
Stage 1 escalated to Stage 2	12	6	9	18	14
<i>Total Stage 2 complaints</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>14</i>
Stage 3 complaints	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Public Health</i>	2	1	0	3	3
<i>Compliments</i>					
Corporate	209	170	199	79	106
Adult Social Care	38	62	33	6	13
Children's Social Care	15	7	19	12	4
Housing	47	49	28	19	34
Public Health	0	4	1	0	0
<i>Comments</i>					
Corporate	171	166	236	224	195
Adult Social Care	1	0	2	0	0
Children's Social Care	0	0	0	0	0
Housing	4	2	2	0	3
Public Health	2	0	0	0	1