

Appendix 1 Directorate updates

1 Adult Social Care

Top complaint issues:

Blue badge applications - where people are have been turned down for a disabled parking permit following an assessment by our Independent Mobility Assessment team. Complainants often cite that their disability had been overlooked, that on the day of the assessment they had taken strong medication which enabled them to get through the assessment. They often cite that their blue badge had been turned down because the assessment did not take into account their medical condition, further that removing the blue badge would take away their independence.

Social work practice - relating to: a) assessments and care plans, i.e. delays in assessments being undertaken, and assessments and support plans being inadequate and not meeting needs; b) social workers not giving service users and their representatives sufficient information, e.g. about support services available to them and the cost of services; c) Social workers not communicating with families and following things through, including not keeping them informed, and not providing support at times of crisis.

Poor customer service - staff not responding to important telephone calls or correspondence; a lack of empathy and sympathy particularly during assessments or when service users or their representatives raise concerns about their support.

Trends

We have seen an increase in complaints about older people's social work, learning disability social work, equipment & adaptations.

Complaints have fallen in blue badge applications and support services

We have seen increases in compliments for in-house mental health residential and day services and in-house physical disability day services

Learning points

Overall, 53% of Adult Social Care complaints are upheld in full or in part. There are some services where we uphold more than the average - community equipment and telecare, private sector residential care, strategic commissioning, and LCC contracting services (catering and transport).

Where a complaint has been upheld, it is often the case that the manager undertaking the resolution of the complaint will make recommendations on how the service should be improved to avoid a similar situation arising for another service user. These actions will be brought to the attention of the complainant and there is a system in place for recording the action and the person with responsibility for implementing the action. Our annual report (attached as an appendix) contains seven pages of detailed analysis of lessons learned and improvements made as a result.

We contact every complainant after they have received a response, to check if they are satisfied, and whether there is anything more we can do to resolve their complaint.

2 Children's Services

Top complaint issues:

Social work support - this is either the manner of social work support or lack of it and often reflects a general unhappiness about social care's involvement in a complainant's life.

Placement moves for looked after children - this is either wanting to move and being informed they are unable to or not wanting to move placement (usually residential care).

Quality of information held - this is either disputing the accuracy of the information held or alleging a breach of confidentiality including sharing information in assessment documents and in court.

Trends, learning points

We recognise that challenging conversations need skill and have trained all Children's Services staff in restorative practice (a personal approach to building, maintaining and repairing relationships) which has helped our officers in working with families in difficult situations.

We also know that complaints are more likely to be resolved through face to face discussion and ask complaint investigators to meet with complainants where possible. This now happens in over 80% of cases.

Moving placement is stressful for looked after children and communication is key to getting the move to go smoothly. Young people want to feel they have been listened to and have some say in what happens to them. These cases are overseen by the chief officer for children's social care and the head of service for looked after children so that the young person is seen quickly and their views listened to.

Links have been formed between customer relations and the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) team to resolve placement issues at an early stage

Information governance training is mandatory and is available online and face to face so it is clear to everyone how and when information can be shared; an action plan is implemented after every security breach.

Assessment of resolution

Although every complaint is assessed as being upheld or not, the focus of our response is to find a resolution for the complainant. This is the reason for meeting with the complainant so that the resolution can be restorative.

The percentage of complaints that escalate to stage two has reduced over the last few years, now standing at 4% of stage one complaints, last year was 6.8% and the year before 8%. This gives some indication that more restorative ways of dealing with complaints at the initial stage may be having an impact in resolving cases without escalation to further stages. It also reflects the concerted efforts being made to facilitate an early resolution as this brings benefits not only to ourselves in terms of cost but also the complainant.

Independent investigators are commissioned at stage two for children's complaints. However, for appropriate cases these people are also commissioned to do mediation work with some complainants.

Restorative meetings are offered to complainants at every stage of the process and after the complaint has closed - these are facilitated by trained facilitators

3 Citizens & Communities, including Public Health

Top complaint issues:

Contact Centre advice and service – 366 complaints were submitted against the contact centre in 2015. In the main, these were about advice provided by staff, wait times and complaints over staff conduct.

Welfare and Benefits – 85 complaints were submitted in relation to benefit claims. Whilst there is a separate benefits appeal process, we still received a large amount of complaints relating to the assessment of benefit claims.

Council Tax billing – 75 complaints were submitted about council tax administration (not recovery). These typically focused on disputes over liability or a change made that a customer disagrees with.

Public Health received three complaints during 2015, and while this is too few to draw conclusions from, these are included in this report for information.

What are the top complaints about?

Contact centre advice and service - Whilst the largest number of complaints received by Citizens & Communities have been about the contact centre, to date in 2015 the contact centre have answered over 600,000 calls, meaning a complaint is received for every 1736 calls answered.

One of the largest areas where complaints have been received is in relation to perceived incorrect advice being provided by staff, particularly on housing, council tax and waste enquiries. Of the 128 complaints received over this issue, only 23 were not upheld, with 105 partially or fully upheld.

There have been a significant number of complaints in relation to staff conduct or knowledge. The areas where the largest amount of these have been received have been within council tax, benefits and housing. Of the 148 received, 106 were upheld or partially upheld, with the remaining 42 not being upheld.

Wait times, in particular on the waste, council tax and benefits lines, have generated a total of 54 complaints where this has been the main issue, however there have also been a significant number of complaints where wait times have been mentioned alongside other issues.

Welfare and benefits – The complaints received have often been received from customers whose claims have not been processed as they would wish.

Council tax billing – The complaints made against council tax billing have been varied throughout the year as can be expected for a department that deals with many different types of enquiry and additionally is tasked with collecting revenue. Overall, around 20% of complaints have been dealt with as service requests, and of those that have been processed as complaints, 39 of the 75 received have not been upheld, 23 partially upheld and only 13 fully upheld.

Key trends and issues

Contact centre advice & service – All three key areas where complaints have been generated within the contact centre have been influenced in some part by high staff turnover. Staff knowledge and coaching has been a challenge as a significant number of experienced staff have left the contact centre for other areas within the council. With staff leaving, the contact centre has to recruit and train additional staff, which takes time, and with a larger number of inexperienced staff this has led on occasion to incorrect advice being provided. Wait times have typically been longer in 2015 also in part due to low staff numbers at times.

The contact centre has received 4 more complaints in 2015 than had been received in 2014 which overall is negligible; however this does show that the issues faced in 2014 have continued through 2015. The three main areas where complaints had been received have been consistent from 2014 to 2015. There had been a small increase in complaints concerning wait times and an increase of around 40 complaints relating to staff attitude but no significant change in staff knowledge complaints.

Welfare and benefits – The main areas where complaints have been received are where a customer feels that a claim has been processed incorrectly or a customer is aggrieved at the time it has taken for a claim to be processed. Interestingly, particularly since April, as many complaints have been dealt with as service requests as have been dealt with as a formal complaint. This indicates that on many occasions where complaints have been received, action can be taken to placate the customer and speed up the processing of their claim.

Of the complaints logged, 15 have been due to delays in processing and 25 due to failure to provide claim entitlement, annual reviews and claims for discretionary housing payment. Half of the delay complaints were not upheld, and six of the failure to provide claims were not upheld, meaning fault (or partial fault) had been found with the majority of these.

Compared to 2014, there has been a significant decrease in complaints received in relation to Welfare and Benefits in 2015, dropping by just over 25%. The issues which customers have complained about have been consistent from 2014 to 2015, however the complaints received in relation to delays in processing and failure to provide have both fallen by a third from 2014.

Council tax billing - In particular a number of complaints have been generated due to the single persons discount review. This review is led by Capita, who will check credit records and the electoral register to identify properties where a sole occupiers discount is claimed, but it appears that more than one occupant is resident. The complaints received are from customers who typically will live alone, however there is information that incorrectly suggests there is another occupier.

There has been an increase of nearly 50% in complaints received from 2014 to 2015 in relation to Council Tax billing. However, in 2015 the number of complaints that have been upheld has been double the amount that there had been in 2014. The issues which have generated complaints have been similar.

Public Health - Complaint related to a patient who was unable to access an NHS healthcheck at two Leeds Asda stores. Complaint regarding care received from a provider of social care services. Complaint regarding health and safety concerns in an alcohol and drug service in Leeds. In addition, a number of complaints were about Adult Social Care (where Public Health supported Adult Social Care on the response).

Learning points

Contact centre advice & service - Whilst the main issues have been consistent over 2015, the factors that have in part led to these complaints being generated are continually addressed and worked towards being improved. Team leaders focus on soft skill training to improve the customer experience and staff are provided with coaching and support around their roles to ensure that staff are competent and confident in their roles. Measures have been taken throughout the year to develop our online capability and encourage good channel shift from phone to online.

Welfare and benefits – As with council tax billing, there are arrangements in place to learn from feedback and provide additional training. Benefits can be an emotive subject for many, and often these are amongst our most vulnerable customers who can be in significant financial need. As can be seen by the number of complaints converted to service requests, often a complaint is submitted which can be handled as a service request.

Council tax billing - Of the 13 upheld complaints, these were often where staff error had led to customer dissatisfaction. Lessons were learnt from these errors and feedback is provided where mistakes have been made to prevent any future recurrences. Of the remainder of the complaints that were partially or not upheld, effort is taken to ensure that information is made available to customers over charging and liability issues, however as council tax billing is underpinned by legislation, often complaints will not be upheld if the legislation has been applied and followed correctly.

Public Health – Public Health receives too few complaints to draw lessons. However, it is notable that in 2015, Public Health received eight compliments, five of which related to the services provided by the Public Health Resource Centre.

4 City Development

Top complaint issues:

Sport received 108 complaints in the year of which 41 were upheld. The complaints were varied and cover all aspects of the sport centre. Of those complaints upheld, the highest number (12) related to staff conduct.

Planning received 91 complaints of which 14 were upheld. The majority of complaints were, as would be expected, disagreeing with properly taken planning decisions. Of the 14 upheld, 9 were unhappy with delays in determining planning applications.

Key trends, learning points

Overall there has been a small rise in complaints during 2015, compared with 2014, but the increase cannot be attributed to any one issue.

As many of the complaints received within City Development are expressions of dissatisfaction with decisions properly arrived at under processes governed by various statutes, it is unlikely this type of complaint can be significantly reduced.

There has been an increase in complaints regarding staff conduct a number of which relate to contracted in services such as external security for events and we continue to address this with the companies involved. This issue has been discussed at our Chief Officer meeting and we are in the process of developing an action plan aimed at improving the customer experience.

We continue to raise awareness of the importance of excellent customer service and positive customer experience within all City Development. A number of customer facing staff will be attending 'excellence in customer services' training in the coming months.

We are also in the process of developing workshops for staff focusing on customer expectations and understanding the customer experience.

5 Environment & Housing

Top complaint issues

The largest services in terms of customer contact and complaints in Environment and Housing are housing and waste, followed by environmental action services.

Housing Leeds

Quality of repairs – where customers remain dissatisfied with the work carried out. Property and Contracts staff will engage with customers and ensure that feedback is discussed at ‘toolbox talks’ to contractors’ staff. The focus is on ensuring we communicate key messages and manage, where appropriate, the expectations of our customers. Positive and negative comments received from our customers are provided to contractors so they can identify service improvement areas. This has contributed to a current satisfaction rate in excess of 90%.

Process failings –staff not adhering to processes; or processes not supporting customer’s needs. Training needs identified for individuals and teams and implemented.

Staff attitude/conduct – concerning lack of communication or clear advice/signposting. Face to face meetings take place with complainants where possible to ensure a way forward is agreed. Restorative practice training being introduced for all staff across housing. We are also engaging with involved customer groups to explore ways of improving services.

Leeds building services - are responsible for repairs across one third (the east side) of the city, are undergoing a period of significant change. During this change, which is being managed as a formal project, all processes are being reviewed. Best practice identified during the review will be shared with contractors city-wide to improve the consistency and mechanics of the services delivered.

Anti-social behaviour - most complaints are linked to customer’s dissatisfaction with the response of the service, specifically the action taken or the time taken to act. Very few complaints have been upheld, and only four have progressed to stage 2.

Waste management - Top complaint issues are: missed bins, followed by crew issues, then bin orders and deliveries. Taking the missed bin figures, that black bins have the most complaints about them, followed by green then brown. This reflects the importance to residents of a regular efficient black bin collection, the availability of the brown bin (garden waste) service for approx. 220,000 residents from March to November and participation with the green bin recycling service..

Environmental action and localities

Parking services - Issues raised are about parking tickets and fines and complaints involving staff attitude. The complaints are about a range of issues including broken/faulty ticket machines taking money and not giving (appropriate) tickets, receipt of parking fines where the customer does not believe they are justified (these generally should be processed as appeals), complaints about receiving fines for driving in bus lanes and the attitude of the parking attendants.

Street cleansing issues - Complaints relate to blocked gullies causing flooding and issues around leaf sweeping and other street cleansing issues, which can be quite seasonal in nature. Complaints involve concerns about the lack of leaf sweeping or the machines attending at the wrong time of day. There are also one or two customers who make multiple simultaneous complaints about blocked gullies.

Bulky collections- In early 2015, the missed collection of pre-booked bulky items of household waste received an increased number of complaints as a wider group of staff became involved in delivering this service as part of a restructure. This has now settled down and complaints of missed collections are now lower than prior to the restructure.

Key trends:

Housing - Increase in number of property and contract complaints in recent months – (Oct-Dec), and an increase in number of complaints relating to missed timescales or incomplete works for repairs. 60% of complaints between January 2015 and October 2015 were partially or fully upheld. These complaints related mainly to our failure to provide a service, or to complete works on time, quality matters or related to about staff and/or operative attitude/conduct.

Waste management - Figures tend to remain consistent throughout the year, with peaks occurring at various points. For example, overall complaints about missed bins increase during the summer months as more people use their garden bins. Complaints about alternative weekly collection peaked in the two months following the implementation of phase 4 in May 2015 (as residents adjust to the changes to their collection service, and crews become familiar with new routes). The introduction of permits for use at household waste sites also increased complaints from April 2015. Complaints in general are falling, which can be attributed to the drop in missed bins, improvements to the bin delivery process /timescales and indicates an overall improvement in service.

Environmental action and localities - The number of complaints we now receive about bulky collections has decreased noticeably. There was a slight increase during the summer of 2015 when the work first transferred from the bulky item team to our locality teams, however the work has now been absorbed into their workloads and the processes have bedded in. We have recently had a number of compliments regarding staff attitudes amongst the streets crews who are undertaking the bulky collections.

The main areas of complaint continue to involve situations where customers have received some form of financial penalty (parking ticket, fixed penalty notice or fine). These situations are always going to be difficult and are likely to involve unhappy customers.

Other services include community safety, housing options (homelessness and vulnerable housing) and parks and countryside. The numbers of complaints for each service range from an average of five (community safety) to 18 (parks and countryside) per month. Trends can also vary widely, for example, some are seasonal, such as grass cutting and other similar environmental activities. Some relate to the issues around case management such as anti-social behaviour and homelessness. These complaints tend to be more complex and complaints can be affected in line with levels of demand for these services (housing options has a statutory review process where customers can challenge decisions).

Learning points:

Housing - Both housing management and property and contracts have developed both new processes and are implementing a continuous service development culture. Central to this is identifying training needs and implementing induction programmes which are being run regularly throughout the year. This ensures that all staff are aware of who the key contacts are for each area and the processes to be followed. The service is actively engaging with community hub developments and working with tenants to develop service standards and improve services. The lessons learned from the service improvement programme implemented with our contractor Mears over the past three years are being applied to the Leeds building services integration and development programme.

Lessons learnt from complaints about anti social behaviour point towards a need to better address their expectations of the service in light of the evidence needed to support appropriate action under our procedures and the legislative tools available. The appointment of a new service development officer in Leeds anti social behaviour team will also assist the service to provide training to staff where needed.

Waste mgt - given the nature of the complaints we receive it is often difficult to place the root cause with the crews or the customer. For example, a resident may report a missed bin, however it is possible that the bin was not placed out for collection until after the crew had been. However

there is no way of disproving what the resident has said, so this would be upheld even though it is possible that the bin was not actually missed. Given that the in-cab technology has not yet been fully implemented to log when a bin hasn't been presented for collection, then these will generally be upheld. On crew issues, these are often a case of one word against another, with no physical evidence either way, and these tend to be upheld.

Environmental action and localities - The complaints are dealt with by managers across the service. The factors that have led to some of the complaints have been removed, i.e. the restructure has been completed and the new service is proving to be successful, if judged by the increase in compliments.

6 Strategy & Resources, including Civic Enterprise

Top complaint issues:

Council tax recovery – 58 complaints were received about council tax recovery. The main issues have included bailiff action (including conduct), staff conduct and recovery action.

Passenger services – 15 complaints were received about passenger services. Ten of these concerned staff conduct.

What are the top complaints about?

Council tax recovery – Overall, breaking down the ten staff attitude complaints, one was upheld, another partially upheld and eight not upheld. Eight complaints were made against the bailiffs with three partially upheld and five not upheld. Other common complaints have been over the amount customers are charged and are expected to pay, whether this is to the council directly or through the bailiffs.

Passenger services – Most complaints have been about staff conduct, particularly the driving and parking of council vehicles.

Key trends and issues

Council tax recovery – As can be seen by the number of staff attitude complaints received, and the number not upheld, debt recovery is an emotive area and often customers are struggling financially. Customers contact with the recovery office where they have failed to pay their council tax as billed. If the customer does not pay the recovery office, they will have to deal with the bailiffs, who are used as a last resort. Both recovery and bailiff staff will deal with the customer in a more robust way than they would if they had called the council's contact centre following receipt of their initial bill. This difference generates staff conduct complaints, however recovery staff where possible will try and reach an amicable agreement.

Complaints have also been received where customers feel they have been incorrectly charged or there has been bailiff action (including charges added to balances). Overall, of the 58 complaints received, eight have been upheld, 14 partially upheld and 36 not upheld. This suggests that whilst council tax recovery has received the largest amount of complaints within the directorate, on balance complaints are made because of dissatisfaction with the amount or method by which a customer has to pay, rather than a pattern of errors made by the council.

Compared to 2014, there has been a minor decrease in complaints received in 2015, reducing from 61 to 58. Whilst the overall total has not changed a great deal, the number of complaints concerning bailiff action has increased from 7 in 2014 to 19 in 2015, with mean these complaints now make up a third of the complaints received. It's worth noting however that only 1 of the bailiff complaints was fully upheld.

Passenger services – Of the 15 complaints received, 12 have focused on staff conduct and of these, five were upheld, six were partially upheld and one not upheld. The majority concern the actions of council staff driving council vehicles. Issues raised cover what the customer views as erratic driving and inconsiderate parking.

Compared to 2014, complaints received by passenger services have increased slightly from 13 in 2014 to 15 in 2015. The complaints received in both 2014 and 2015 concern the same issues relating to the driving of others and are on the whole, upheld.

Learning points

Council tax recovery – There have been no patterns identified that would indicate any process or policy issues within council tax recovery. However, the welfare reforms continue to impact on the most vulnerable in society, and over 2016 attention will be paid to ensure that we continue to do our best by the customer, and refer them for assistance if required from external sources, such as the Stepchange debt advice charity.

Passenger services – the driving habits of others can be quite an emotive subject, and the council needs its drivers to set a good example. If a customer is able to identify that a driver is working for Leeds City Council, then there is a route for feedback to be provided to passenger service teams and individual drivers on driving habits.