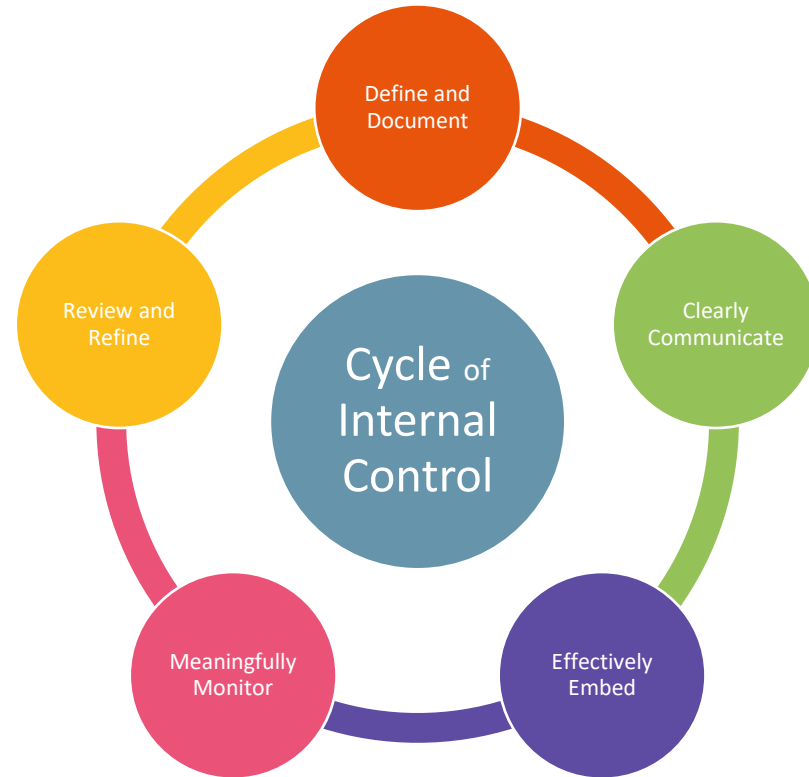


Introduction

1. This statement of internal control provides assurance that the appropriate systems and procedures are in place in respect of the Council's control environment for customer contact and satisfaction and there are robust plans in place for improving the customer experience.
2. The customer contact and satisfaction framework is comprised of the standards, policies, systems and processes which ensure that the Council's services are accessible through face to face, telephone and digital channels.
3. The framework seeks to ensure that the Council's values are routinely demonstrated in our interactions with customers; that customers receive a high quality, efficient and effective service when they contact us; and that there are robust processes in place to receive and act upon customer feedback.
4. The statement sets out the standing arrangements for the internal control of customer contact and satisfaction and provides evidence of monitoring and compliance over the reporting period from January 2021 to December 2021. Information is also provided for the period from January 2020 to December 2020 for the purposes of comparison.
5. The statement includes opportunities that have been identified to improve these arrangements.



Define and Document

The Best Council Plan (BCP)

7. The BCP is the Council’s strategic plan which sets out its ambitions, outcomes, and priorities for the City of Leeds and for the Local Authority. Maintaining a clear focus on delivering high quality public services is at the heart of the BCP.
8. Underpinning everything we do and how we work to achieve our ambitions are our #TeamLeeds Values:
 - Being open, honest and trusted
 - Treating people fairly
 - Spending money wisely
 - Working as a team for Leeds
 - Working with all communities
9. Leeds City Council is committed to providing the highest standards of services to its customers. The following provides an overview of the primary policies, principles, standards and procedures that direct the customer contact functions.

Table 1: Overview of Primary Policies, Principles, Standards and Procedures

| Policy, Standard or Procedure | Overview |
|---|---|
| Officer delegation and sub delegation schemes | Each Director has separate and joint responsibilities for areas of customer contact and satisfaction within their remit. |
| Compliments and Complaints Policy and associated guidance | The Council welcomes and encourages feedback from members of the public and uses it to maintain and improve standards and the quality of service provided. The policy details the way in which complaints will be managed, investigated and acted upon. |
| Customer Care Standards | Customer Care Standards set out what customers can expect when they contact the Council. Customers may contact the council digitally, by phone or by coming into our buildings. |

| | |
|--|--|
| Web Content Principles and Standards | Web content is created in line with the standards set in the local digital declaration which as a council we have signed up to. They are based on the guidance/best practice set out by the Government Digital Service . |
| Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 | The accessibility regulations state that websites should be ‘perceivable, operable, understandable and robust’. It is a requirement of the regulations that an accessibility statement is included on the website of Public Sector Bodies. |
| Equality Improvement Priorities | A key area of focus is to increase digital inclusion for those in poverty to provide greater access to jobs, skills and learning to reduce poverty. An update has been included in the Equality Annual Report |
| Training Guides | <p>Training guides are in place for each service delivered through the Contact Centre and articulate the approach and methodology for dealing with calls.</p> <p>Customer Service Excellence is included in induction, service specific and ongoing training for Contact Centre and Face to Face colleagues. A new training package was launched in August 2021 - Customer Care Basics – this provides an overview of basic customer service skills and techniques to deliver a quality service to our customers and understand its impact. The training explores topics such as handling customer expectations, effective communication and methods for creating a positive first impression.</p> |

Roles and Responsibilities

10. Each Director has separate and joint responsibilities for areas of customer contact and satisfaction within their remit. Customers may access the services provided by each directorate through the Council’s website, the corporate Contact Centre or through Face to Face services. Feedback on the services provided by the Council is managed through the corporate Compliments and Complaints function. The Director of Resources has responsibility for the website, the Contact Centre and the central Compliments and Complaints function (Customer Relations Team), and the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment has responsibility for the community hubs covering provision of the Council’s One Stop Centre services; community-based housing management and advice services; front line community library services and mobile services; and local job-shop provision. The Directors of Adults and Health and Children and Families have responsibility for their own Complaints functions given the statutory nature of the functions. The Council is committed to delivering a seamless service for customers that contact us and aims to take a whole-Council approach to service provision with mechanisms in place to address the root cause of the contact and facilitate continuous improvement in the services provided across the Council.

11. The following table shows the service areas that are supported by the Contact Centre.

Table 2: Contact Centre Services

| Directorate | Services |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Adults and Health | Adult Social Care, Blue Badge |
| Children and Families | Children’s Social Care, School Admissions |
| Communities, Housing and Environment | Choice Based Lettings, Housing, Registrars, Elections, Refuse, Pest Control, Large Collections, Environmental Action Services, Benefits, Welfare Support, Anti-Social Behaviour Unit. |
| City Development | Highways, Planning |
| Resources | Gold Number, Council Tax |

12. The Contact Centre also handles customer enquiries via social media (Twitter and Facebook) and email. Feedback from this team is used to put in place improvements to the Council’s website. The Resources directorate manages the Council's website and is responsible for developing effective ways for customers to find the information they require.

13. Face to Face Services are managed by the Communities, Housing and Environment directorate. A resident may walk into a public office about any Council service but primarily there are:

- Libraries: to borrow books, use the computers, job search
- Job shops: provide access to job opportunities and support to gain employment
- Customer Service enquiries, for example council tax, housing or benefits. Other areas of support that can be accessed include: Welfare Rights, Debt Support, Registrars, social prescribing, Leeds Credit Union and more.

14. The Customer Relations Team manages the relationship with the Local Government Ombudsman, Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman, and the complaints for the Communities, Housing and Environment, City Development and Resources directorates. Complaints relating to Adults and Health and Children’s and Families are managed separately due to different statutory responsibilities and timescales.

15. The table below sets out a summary of officer groups providing oversight and accountability in the customer contact and satisfaction framework.

Table 3: Officer groups for oversight and accountability

| Group | Composition | Function |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Best Council Team: People and Culture | Director of Resources, Chief Officer Strategy and Improvement, Chief Officer HR, Chief Officer Community Hubs, Welfare and Business Support, Chief Officers Resources and Strategy for both Adults and Health and Children and Families, Chief Officer Operations and Active Leeds, Chief Digital and Information Officer, Acting Head of Communications and Marketing | Meets monthly to identify options to ensure LCC is an efficient, enterprising and healthy organisation. With a focus on setting and directing policy in relation to any organisational issues that apply across all departments and services including the People Strategy; governance; risk; communications; and complaints. |
| Contact Centre Board | Director of Resources, Chief Officer Sustainable Energy and Air Quality, Chief Digital Information Officer, Deputy Chief HR Officer, Head of Shared Services. | Monthly reports on Contact Centre performance and transformation activity. |
| Customer Access Leadership Team | Chief Officer Community Hubs, Welfare and Business Support, Head of Customer Contact, Deputy Head of Customer Contact, Head of Shared Services, Training and Development Manager, Financial Inclusion Manager. | A joint meeting between Face to Face and Contact Centre colleagues to ensure alignment of priorities and objectives. |
| Contact Centre Service Groups | Heads of Service and / or their delegates for each service area detailed in Table 2 and Contact Centre management. | To review Contact Centre performance, discuss and address root cause of contact and improve end-to-end customer experience. |

16. In relation to complaints, reports to directorate leadership teams were paused during the pandemic however quarterly reporting in high volume areas have continued to be reported into service leadership teams. Complaint handling reporting has continued to be covered in the annual and quarterly Best Council plan performance reports which are considered by the Corporate Leadership Team.

17. The table below sets out a summary of democratic oversight and accountability in the customer contact and satisfaction framework.

Table 4: Democratic oversight and accountability

| Councillor / Committee | Oversight |
|---|--|
| Executive Member for Resources | Regular updates by the Chief Officers and Director with the Executive Member for Resources on all matters relating to customer services. |
| Executive Member for Communities | Regular updates by the Chief Officer Community Hubs, Welfare and Business Support and Communities, Housing and Environment Director with the Executive Member for Communities on all matters relating to Face-to-Face customer services. |
| Scrutiny Board for Resources | Reports describing the work and performance information in relation to the Contact Centre |
| Scrutiny Board for Communities, Housing and Environment | Reports describing the work and performance information in relation to the Face-to-Face Customer Services |
| Corporate Governance and Audit Committee | Annual report on customer contact and satisfaction |

Clearly Communicate

18. The Corporate Leadership Team is responsible for delivering a customer centric culture and this expectation is cascaded to directorates. Our values and behaviours underpin the way we deliver services and guide the way we all work. Providing excellent customer service is linked to ‘living our values’ and shows our customers that we are always striving to put them at the heart of everything we do. Our values and behaviours are routinely communicated across the Council and discussed with each individual member of staff through the appraisal process. The customer care standards are underpinned by the council values and are designed to embed a customer centred approach in how we interact with customers.

19. The policies, principles, standards and procedures that direct how the Council should interact with its customers are communicated to officers throughout the Council through a combination of training, guidance and toolkits available on the Council’s internal intranet and

training platform. Within the Contact Centre, individual coaching takes place based on performance information and relevant changes are communicated through regular service meetings and an established SharePoint site.

20. A well trained, customer focussed workforce is essential in delivering the excellent service that we strive to provide for our customers. There is a dedicated training team within the Contact Centre that provides comprehensive customer services training to Contact Centre staff and Face-to-Face staff. During 2021, this team delivered 163 training courses and briefings to Contact Centre and Face-to-Face staff, including Customer Service Excellence and service specific courses to enable staff to handle customer queries and service requests in relation to the services detailed in table 2.
21. The Compliments and Complaints procedure and Customer Care Standards are available for customers to access through the Council's website. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual report including performance information is publicly available and received by the Chief Executive. For any Ombudsman cases where a remedy is required, along with details to the service, details are also provided to the relevant Director for awareness and appropriate action to be taken.
22. The accessibility statement is kept up to date and published on the Council's website. The statement includes information on how accessible the website is and the actions being taken to improve accessibility.

Effectively Embed

23. When effectively embedded, the internal control framework supports the delivery of high quality services and high levels of customer satisfaction. Assurance that the processes are effectively embedded is demonstrated through the performance information, including measurements of customer satisfaction and complaints.
24. The standards are underpinned by the Council values and help focus on services being accessible, provision of clear timescales, and clear communications, and the customer being kept informed by approachable and knowledgeable staff. The commitment is to measure timescales and use customer surveys and feedback to share and learn from customers' experiences. The main measurements are therefore around timescales, complaints and satisfaction surveys.
25. Levels of contact, key performance measures and customer satisfaction levels are provided below for Face-to-Face Services, Contact Centre, Digital Services and the corporate Compliments and Complaints function.

Face-to-Face Services

Table 5: Level of Contact (Face-to-Face services)

| Channel | Jan 2020 to Dec 2020 | Jan 2021 to Dec 2021 |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Community Hubs | 513,384 | 416,140 |
| Community Libraries - Visits | 265,982 | 8,063 |
| Books Issued | 616,801 | 687,887 |
| PC Usage | 101,534 | 99,536 |
| Central Library - Visits | 122,483 | 95,712 |
| Books Issued | 50,887 | 47,583 |
| PC Usage | 20,858 | 18,008 |

26. In the Face-to-Face service new methods of delivery have been established from learning during the pandemic, these include phone and video appointments – and a ‘one team’ approach.

27. A review of the community hub and Library opening hours was undertaken resulting in significant savings (circa £450k) and rota efficiencies. In addition, this service has provided support to the vaccination effort, handing over mobile community hubs and select venues.

28. There were 1,112 instances of a member of the job shop team securing a customer employment between Jan - Dec 2021.

Face-to-Face Services - Customer Satisfaction

29. Continues to be at 99% satisfaction levels (based on 2020 figs as not captured during 2021 due to covid).

Contact Centre and Digital Services

Table 6: Level of Contact (Contact Centre and Digital Services)

| Channel | Jan 2020 to Dec 2020 | Jan 2021 to Dec 2021 |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|
| Gross calls received | 1,398,906 | 1,428,472 |
| Emails and admin (Contact Centre) | 218,908 | 254,034 |
| Social Media – Facebook followers (at December) | 40,751 | 44,782 |
| Social Media – Twitter followers (at December) | 26,164 | 26,850 |
| Social Media – Direct messages received | 18,217 | 19,100 |
| Unique website page visits | 14,586,475 | 13,608,932 |
| Self Service online transactions | 3,702,657 | 3,917,159 |
| Percentage of customers accessing digital services | 79% | 80% |

30. During 2021 the outbound posts made via the LCC Facebook page reached 9,125,136 people, with 91,357 engagements to the posts. This is made up of 55,915 clicks and 35,442 comments.

31. During the period from 1st January 2019 to 31st December 2019, there were 11,469,675 website page visits. The number of website page visits increased by over 3 million during 2020 as citizens were keeping up to date on the changes to services and information that were brought about during the pandemic. Website visits decreased in 2021 by nearly 1 million compared to 2020. There are two main areas that account for this reduction:

- There were 1.3 million views to coronavirus content in 2020, compared to 600k views in 2021
- There were around 1.3 million views to recycling site information and bookings in 2020, compared to 1.1 million in 2021

Table 7: Performance Data (Contact Centre and Digital Services)

| Performance Measure | Jan 2020 to Dec 2020 | Jan 2021 to Dec 2021 |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|
| Contact Centre Answer Rate | 92% | 82% |
| Contact Centre Average Speed to Answer (seconds) | 235 | 614* |
| Contact Centre Average Handling Time (seconds) | 516 | 543 |
| Contact Centre Average Email Response (days) | 6 | 4 |
| Direct messages dealt with or signposted online | 86% | 85% |
| Percentage of Customers Accessing Digital Services | 79% | 80% |

* The Contact Centre is taking a risk-based approach to resource allocation, prioritising lines that may have safeguarding implications or are of a very sensitive nature, for example, people calling the Council to register a death. The average speed to answer Child Social Care and Registrars Priority calls was between one and two minutes, and the answer rate for these lines was 89% and 96% respectively.

32. Significant operational changes were made in March 2020 to enable the council to respond to the Covid pandemic. Workplaces were closed and some services were suspended. Staff were retrained and deployed from other areas of the Council to support the work of the Contact Centre and handle phone calls from customers. From April 2021, as Face-to-Face services re-opened, the staff that were supporting the Contact Centre moved back to their roles.
33. During 2021 there were a number of factors which adversely impacted upon the waiting times experienced by customers calling the Contact Centre. Having experienced a low level of staff turnover in 2020, there was a very high level of turnover as the economy recovered from the Spring of 2021. This resulted in not only lower levels of staffing but a loss of expertise in key areas whilst new staff were trained. The filling of vacancies was done in line with the budget allocation for the Contact Centre which had been predicated on reducing call volumes. Whilst some new process improvements have been introduced which have mitigated the issue, overall call volumes increased during 2021 against the budget prediction. Backlogs of service requests resulting from lockdown measures significantly contributed to this. In addition, the complexity of enquiries also increased, leading to longer call times. The Contact Centre has recognised the impacts and has therefore brought additional staffing into play which is designed to improve performance based on current volumes. Further recruitment is underway to boost the numbers of staff whilst technological solutions are implemented. Looking forward

staff reductions will only be made when there are secure reductions in call volumes brought about through channel shift or service changes.

Contact Centre - Customer Satisfaction

34. Within the Contact Centre, customer satisfaction was measured through externally provided software until May 2021 when the contract with the provider of the software expired. In order to deliver a saving in the region of £60k per annum a decision was taken to develop an in-house customer satisfaction survey. The new customer satisfaction survey was launched on 5th January 2022 and selects customers to ask for their view on the level of service they received from the Contact Centre. As at the 31st January, 14,133 surveys had been issued and 1,752 had been returned from customers, a response rate of 12.4%. The scores from these surveys are included in table 8.

Table 8: Contact Centre Customer Satisfaction (5th January to 31st January 2022)

| Question | Score |
|--|-------|
| Overall, how satisfied are you with the service you received | 78% |
| How satisfied were you with the adviser's ability to communicate in a positive and caring way | 86% |
| How satisfied were you with the adviser's knowledge when answering your questions and providing guidance | 84% |
| Did we resolve your query on the call (Y/N) | 75% |
| Is it the first time you have contacted us about this query (Y/N) | 68% |
| How satisfied were you with the time taken to answer your call | 50% |
| Did you try to find the information you needed on our website before calling | 47% |

35. The scores from the 1,392 survey respondents in respect of CSO empathy and knowledge are 86% and 84%, which indicates that generally, customers are satisfied with the service they receive from individuals. Our quality assurance processes include undertaking a review of all calls where the customer has indicated that they were not satisfied with the service they have received so that appropriate remedial action is taken and service levels are continually improved.

36. The new customer satisfaction survey referred to above asks customers if they had tried to find the information they needed on our website before calling, and 47% of customers indicated that they had attempted to find the information they needed from the website

before calling the Contact Centre. This suggests there is scope to improve the information available to customers on the website which will, in turn, improve the customer experience and reduce demand in the Contact Centre. A programme of work is being developed to review the content of the website and provide better digital options for our customers so that optimal numbers of customers find it easy and efficient to use. There is also an ongoing piece of work that aims to improve the communications being issued by the Council to customers, making the communications clearer and more accessible for people.

37. Previous Annual Assurance Reports to the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee have included customer satisfaction results in respect of web self-service forms. The previous system that provided online customer forms was replaced by an in-house developed solution in early 2021, and the new solution does not currently have the functionality to issue customer satisfaction questionnaires. A review will be undertaken to determine the most appropriate method to capture customer satisfaction information from customers that use the self-service forms.

Compliments and Complaints

Table 10: Number of Compliments and Complaints

| | Stage 1 | | Stage 2 | | Ombudsman Cases | | Ombudsman Cases Upheld | | Compliments* | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | Jan to Dec 2020 | Jan to Dec 2021 | Jan to Dec 2020 | Jan to Dec 2021 | Jan to Dec 2020 | Jan to Dec 2021 | Jan to Dec 2020 | Jan to Dec 2021 | Jan to Dec 2020 | Jan to Dec 2021 |
| Communities, Housing and Environment | 3605 | 4671 | 458 | 614 | 53 | 89 | 21 | 19 | 269 | 225 |
| Resources | 302 | 378 | 26 | 26 | 7 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 97 | 126 |
| City Development | 300 | 262 | 75 | 72 | 23 | 21 | 8 | 1 | 54 | 38 |
| Adults and Health | 383 | 369 | 73 | 77 | 17 | 25 | 8 | 9 | 724 | 662 |
| Childrens and Families | 255 | 303 | 23 | 37 | 22 | 19 | 4 | 6 | 67 | 105 |
| Total | 4845 | 5983 | 655 | 826 | 122 | 160 | 41 | 35 | 1211 | 1156 |

*Compliments included in the table above include only those received and logged by Customer Relations. Not all compliments received in some areas of the Council are captured formally by Customer Relations, with many sent to services directly which are not reflected in these figures.

38. To allow for year-on-year comparison the figures in tables 10 and 11 reflect the Council’s structure from the 1st April 2021. For example, throughout 2020 Housing was part of the Resources and Housing directorate and the Contact Centre was part of the Communities and Environment directorate. All Housing compliments and complaints for 2020 and 2021 are classified under the Communities, Housing and Environment directorate, and the Contact Centre within the Resources directorate, where the services now sit. Other changes to the Council’s organisational structure in April 2021 are reflected in the same way.

39. In his 2021 annual letter which provided a view on cases investigated between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has confirmed that of 33 cases formally investigated, 76% of cases were upheld* (* complaints upheld – the LGO upholds complaints where they find some form of fault in an authority’s actions, including where the authority accepted fault before they were investigated). Five of these cases related to one planning issue raised by 5 individual customers. This compares to an average of 72% amongst similar authorities. 100% of remedies were complied with** (** compliance with recommendations – the LGO recommends ways for authorities to put things right when faults have caused injustice and monitor compliance with their recommendations. Failure to comply is rare and a compliance rate of below 100% is a cause for concern). The ‘Ombudsman cases’ columns in the table above include all cases received, not just those which were investigated formally. Where cases are not investigated formally this can mean the Ombudsman are satisfied with the Council’s actions or consider that they are unlikely to find fault.

Table 11: Complaints responded to within target

| | Jan to Dec 2020 | Jan to Dec 2021 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Communities, Housing and Environment | 86.3% | 64.6% |
| Resources | 89.9% | 78.2% |
| City Development | 74.1% | 70.1% |
| Adults and Health | 96.4% | 97.4% |
| Children and Families | 82.0% | 78.9% |
| Total | 86.30% | 68.50% |

40. Children and Families and Adults and Health Directorates work to statutory timescales as follows:

- Children and Families: 20 working days at stage 1 and 65 working days at stage 2.
- Adults and Health: 20 working days for complaints risk assessed as low risk, 20 working days for complaints risk assessed as medium risk and up to a maximum of 6 months for high risk complaints.

41. All other services work to 15 working days for both stage 1 and stage 2.

42. Responses within target have been lower than would be expected over 2021 as many services have been impacted by the pandemic. Work is ongoing to support services in the recovery from this and to provide a greater understanding of the types and volumes of complaints received, to develop learning and systems to ensure improved compliance within our complaints policy. Actions taken to support improvement include developing early intervention processes within Housing for housing repairs complaints and expanding the support provided to investigating officers.

43. The 2021 figures may change as there are cases where responses may have been issued but not yet recorded centrally.

Meaningfully Monitor

44. The mechanisms in place for monitoring performance and compliance with the internal control framework are set out below for Face-to-Face Services, Contact Centre and the corporate Compliments and Complaints function.

Face-to-Face Services

Table 12: Face-to-Face Services – Monitoring Information

| Performance narrative | Changes made | Further work to take place |
|--|--|---|
| The Community Hub and Library development programme aims to enhance customer experience and to increase the range of Council enquiries at these sites. | Completed refurbishment of: Armley – fully complete during 2021 including all works to clock and book display | Halton – initial concept agreed and work started to develop a detailed design |

CUSTOMER CONTACT AND SATISFACTION – STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | <p>Holt Park – fully complete by early 2021 including all payments to the PFI contractor being made</p> <p>Farsley – opened in 2021</p> <p>Beeston – opened in 2021</p> <p>Crossgates – detailed design agreed and work underway to secure a temporary location for the Library for the duration of the works</p> | |
| <p>Covid restrictions easing has resulted in Hubs and Libraries fully reopening.</p> | <p>Following the easing of restrictions, the Hubs and libraries are now back fully open to the public including late nights.</p> <p>Partners are now welcome back into buildings to deliver additional services, although maximum occupancy and adequate ventilation may limit the number in some venues.</p> | <p>Some mitigations remain in place including screens on the front desk and in appointment booths, and dividers between customer PC's. As restrictions continue to ease we will review whether to keep these installed or not (in line with government guidance)</p> |
| <p>A review of the Community Hub and Library opening hours was undertaken</p> | <p>A wholesale review of opening hours took place during 2021. Standardising in this way enable the service to make significant savings, and brought about efficiencies in rota management.</p> | <p>The review has been successful, however as a result the rota now has very little slack. This needs to be kept under review to ensure sites remain up and running as advertised. A 'one team' approach has been adapted to support this – with all sites now able to book online/telephone appointments for customers at any venue in the city – this maximises the resource we have available to us.</p> |
| <p>Contact Centre needed additional resources to staff the Covid line which was open 7 days a week during the peak. Some staff from sites which were closed were deployed to this</p> | <p>The Covid line supported residents with requests for Local Welfare Support/food parcels/help with prescription delivery etc. The calls were varied, sometimes complex and very often dealing with distressed customers. This support</p> | <p>In the early part of the year Face-to-Face staff continued to provide support for the covid line, Vaccinations calls, this has now ceased (Vaccination support is offered on an ad hoc/as requested basis). Face-to-Face continues to</p> |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| | continued in the early stages of the year but has now ceased as community hubs have reverted to full opening hours. | support SIP payments both raising and authorising on a daily basis. |
| Mobile Community Hubs | 2 vans from the mobile fleet have been given over to health colleagues in order to support the vaccination effort. These vans have been to different areas of the city to, often to low uptake communities. This arrangement continues | Gradually the vans will be brought back into use by the service. In line with this, one Mobile Community Hub is now operational within the city. The Mobile Hub visits the following wards each week; Farnley & Wortley, Beeston & Holbeck, Swarcliffe and Burmatofts & Richmond Hills |
| Community Hubs as vaccination venues | During the year we have offered certain venues as community based vaccination points e.g. Dewsbury Road, Compton Centre. This arrangement will continue for as long as we can provide it and is required. | We will review sites offered and continue to support the effort wherever possible. |
| Employment support could not continue in its usual form in the early stages of the year with appointment only remaining necessary – however the service has since fully re opened and customer starts, customer throughput and job outcomes have begun to increase. | Job support has reverted back to face to face within sites. During 2021 we have also begin the delivery of the ESIF employment support contract which has brought a more intensive support element to what we can offer – this contract runs for a 3 year period. The total number of job outcomes during this period is 1112 | This service will continue to deliver employment support and this will be kept under review to deliver the best possible service in the changing circumstances. |

Contact Centre and Digital Services

45. Our vision is to achieve the highest standards of customer satisfaction and minimise call wait times across all services. The formal monitoring mechanisms in place have informed the significant amount of transformation work that is in progress. The transformation work

will improve the performance of the Contact Centre, improve the end-to-end customer experience and address the issues that create avoidable contact.

46. Key to delivering the excellent service that we want to give our customers is to understand and address the root cause for the contact. The Contact Centre is in part a barometer for the problems the public is experiencing with services and by improving the links between the Contact Centre and services, we can better place the Council to react and recover.
47. The Contact Centre holds regular liaison meetings with service areas to discuss performance and agree actions that will improve the customer experience overall. We have recently enhanced this process and formalised a robust performance management and reporting framework to ensure that appropriate feedback and escalation mechanisms are in place to address the root cause of issues and improve the service that the customer receives from start to finish. This includes reviewing end-to-end processes to ensure that customers have a seamless experience when they interact with the council and feeding back to services where transparent and proactive messaging to customers would prevent the need for customers to contact the council. This reporting mechanism will also formally capture where there have been issues with the service provided. Escalation measures will be reviewed and strengthened where necessary to ensure that relevant remedial action is taken to address the root cause of the issues.
48. Individual performance is closely managed within the Contact Centre and there are mechanisms in place to review and assess the quality of the interactions with customers. Call listening, feedback, supervision and coaching are embedded in the quality assurance processes to promote a culture of continuous improvement within the Contact Centre.
49. The performance of the Contact Centre and the effectiveness of digital options available to customers are closely monitored within the service and reported through the Contact Centre Board.

Compliments and Complaints

50. Table 13 provides monitoring information on service areas which have received the most complaints by directorate.

Table 13: Compliments and Complaints – Monitoring Information

| Performance narrative | Changes made | Further work to take place |
|---|--|--|
| Communities, Housing and Environment Housing | Wider reporting on complaints trends across Housing is provided quarterly to the service management team, with access to | Quality Assurance and quarterly reporting will continue and be adapted to provide greater insight into areas requiring focus, the outcomes |

Housing complaint volumes varied in 2020 and 2021. In early 2020, complaint volumes reduced greatly due to the impact of the pandemic as non-essential repairs were suspended.

Complaint volumes returned to normal levels sooner in non-repair services, with the increase in repairs complaints seen more in 2021.

This has impacted on current performance, as work continues to recover from the backlog of repairs, which has been impacted by both staffing challenges and availability of materials. The impact of the pandemic on Housing performance including repairs and complaints was considered by Housing, Communities and Environment Scrutiny Board at their October 2021 meeting.

Housing complaints peaked in August 21 but have reduced over recent months. In the second half of 2021, 70% of Housing complaints have related to repairs services.

top level complaint performance data provided widely across all Housing Services.

Following internal audit recommendations, a new Quality Assurance process, sampling 10% of Housing complaint responses, has been undertaken and the results shared with the service from mid-2021. This has given insight into the areas where responses can be strengthened in terms of their quality with key messages and reminders with staff shared.

We commenced undertaking satisfaction surveys from mid-2021 with complainants. The results from these have shaped Quality Assurance work with reports on the outcomes shared with management. Training sessions have been provided to over 40 investigating officers from teams across Housing, in addition to rolling out the online Customer Care Training for all staff.

Through the formation of the Early Intervention Team in the repairs service, avenues are being explored in how best to facilitate speedier resolution of straightforward complaints, to reduce workloads in providing formal responses and provide better outcomes for customers.

Learning from complaints is now a regular monthly feature in the staff e-bulletin and teams encouraged to discuss as part of staff training sessions

from Customer Satisfaction Surveys will be analysed to provide additional context to this work.

Customer Relations will continue to support managing complaint volumes and outstanding cases as part of the recovery plan.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | <p>Housing have met the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, self-assessing against the standards in the code and making this publicly available online.</p> | |
| <p>Communities, Housing and Environment Waste Management</p> <p>Overall complaint volumes received by Waste Management in 2020 and 2021 are similar in number.</p> <p>Complaint volumes in 2020 were low at the beginning of the pandemic but increased, through 2021 volumes have fluctuated.</p> <p>In 2021 missed collections have accounted for half of all complaints, with black bins being most common.</p> <p>Collections have been impacted by staffing capacity because of the pandemic, with positive cases and self-isolation impacting on the service that can be provided, often at short notice.</p> <p>Towards the end of 2021 complaint volumes have reduced, from October fewer than 100 complaints have been received each month, with around 1.5 million collections taking place each month.</p> <p>During 2021 waste presented for collection by residents has been 13% higher on average than normal levels. However at peak periods during 2021 this figure has been up to 25% higher.</p> | <p>The primary focus for the service during 2021 has been to maintain frontline waste and recycling collections. This has forced other service improvement work – mainly the Service Review launched in 2019, to continue to be paused.</p> <p>Despite the considerable pressure caused by the pandemic, Waste Management have been able to make a number of smaller scale changes to maintain/improve the reliability of collections during this period:</p> <p>3 new temporary collection routes have been added to Waste Management’s resources. These have helped the service to keep up with the constant pressure caused by out of dates routes and new development.</p> <p>8 additional Chargehands posts (drivers) have been created and recruited to. This exercise took place during the National HGV shortage. The additional posts will help Waste Management to continue to navigate the pandemic, minimising collection failures due to staffing impacts.</p> | <p>The Waste Management service have now restarted the Service Review. This principally will look at route re-design – establishing new, consistent, collection schedules city-wide, and bringing new developments into local collection routes. It will also improve recycling provision in a number of parts of the City.</p> <p>In 2022 Waste Management, alongside colleagues in Clearer Neighbourhoods, will move into the new purpose built Newmarket Headquarters. This move will bring together teams from a number of separate depots across the City.</p> |

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| <p>City Development</p> <p>Across 2020 and 2021, complaint volumes in City Development have been reasonably consistent.</p> <p>The areas of the directorate receiving larger complaints volumes have remained Planning, Sport and Highways.</p> <p>Areas raised in planning complaints often concern applications or permitted developments.</p> <p>Within Active Leeds, Bodyline complaints account for over half of complaints received in 2021 because of centre closures.</p> <p>Within Highways, there has been little of common issue raised in complaints.</p> | <p>Changes have been made in the way Highways complaints are managed which has placed greater focus on separating requests for service from formal complaints, with the aim of providing speedier resolution for requests for service.</p> | <p>Work will be undertaken as an expanded offer from Customer Relations to provide greater insight into complaints across Active Leeds.</p> |
| <p>Complaints - Children and families</p> <p>Children and Families complaint numbers are higher than in 2018-2020. We have seen stage one and stage two complaints about Education almost double between 2020 and 2021. The increase mostly relates to Learning Inclusion and specifically SENSAP services. The increase reflects rising demands on the service coupled with ongoing staffing concerns.</p> <p>Children's Social Work Service complaints have not risen significantly at stage one but we have seen an increase in stage two submissions with themes of limited improvement in service following stage one response, general lack of customer service and challenge of assessment content/bias</p> | <p>Customer Relations and Learning Inclusion are working together to improve the service's response to complaints, and they are undergoing a significant recruitment drive which, when staff are in place, should provide better service and a reduction in complaint numbers.</p> <p>Customer Relations feed complaint learning into quality assurance and practice improvement work plus there is an increased focus on areas such as bias in assessments within new workforce development training programmes.</p> | <p>One significant area of learning has been around the support for carers who apply for special guardianship orders. As an authority we want to ensure packages of support are fair to all carers and that the family's needs are met to guarantee the stability of the placement. A full review of the process has been carried out and a revised offer will be published in the first quarter of 2022.</p> |
| <p>Complaints – Adults and Health</p> | <p>Several actions were taken in response to complaints to improve services.</p> | <p>Work is being done to develop a system which ensures that lessons learned are shared widely</p> |

The direct impact of covid-19 on services saw Adults and Health receive fewer complaints than in a typical year. The focus for the Complaints Team has been to ensure that complainants were kept informed and that their complaints were resolved within timescales agreed with them achieving a target of 97.4%.

The impact of Covid-19 runs through most complaints. Covid-19 complaints raised concerns about care homes not allowing visits; not receiving updates from staff about their family in care homes and/or supported living homes; poor infection control by staff not properly wearing PPE and/or disposing of the same properly; spending time indoors with no interaction with friends, no family visits and care home lack of effort to facilitate digital contact, little wellbeing input no walks in fresh air

The top 3 issues complained about were Inconsistent homecare delivery, quality of service and people challenging assessment outcomes.

In response to a family's complaints that they had stopped receiving regular updates from a Supported Living setting, a system was put in place to ensure continuity in communication and for weekly updates to be provided.

In response to complaints about staff not adhering to PPE guidelines, it was reiterated to all care workers the importance of wearing full PPE with clear guidance provided about the expectations for wearing PPE. Staff were retrained in infection control and prevention.

In response to people challenging assessment outcomes, most complainants felt that evidence relating to medical conditions had not been taken into consideration. In these cases any expert opinion the complainants provided was taken into consideration and in many cases, this resulted in the appeal being successful. In relation to people with hidden disabilities assessors sought expert evidence to establish if the applicants met the criteria.

In response to some complaints challenging outcome of financial assessment, training has been delivered to all financial assessment officers / managers involved in Care Act financial assessments covering the appropriate legal test for deprivation of assets and how to apply the test correctly.

across A&H, NHS partners and commissioned service providers.

In response to lessons learned from complaints reviewed by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in relation to commissioned services, the current Complaints Joint Protocol with commissioned service providers will be updated to include a request that all draft complaint responses in relation to Leeds commissioned services must be sent to the Complaints team for quality assurance and approval before they are sent to the complainant.

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| <p>Customer Care Training</p> <p>Customer Care Basics on-line training launched in August 2021 provides an overview of basic customer service skills and techniques to deliver a quality service to our customers and understand its impact. The training explores such as handling customer expectations, effective communication and methods for creating a positive first impression.</p> | <p>The training includes as a background document the Investigating Officer Guide - Corporate Complaints Guide to Conducting Complaint Investigations</p> | <p>Evaluate training against the customer care standards. Target March 2022</p> |
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Review and Refine

51. The documents, systems and processes which together form the framework surrounding customer contact and satisfaction have been under continuous review during this reporting period. The framework seeks to ensure that the Council's values are routinely demonstrated in our interactions with customers; that customers receive a high quality, efficient and effective service when they contact us; and that there are robust processes in place to receive and act upon customer feedback.

Face-to-Face Services

52. The changes in Face-to-Face that have been retained based on learning from the pandemic, include:

- the use of phone and video appointments, and to continue with embedding the 'one team' approach;
- working from home/hybrid working as appropriate and in line with corporate direction;
- continue to increase the digital options available to customers including guiding and educating them on independent use.

53. With regard to digital inclusion, the Council continues to develop and implement our best practice work on addressing Digital Inclusion in the city. The impact of Covid in this area has been profound and has touched all aspects of individuals and families lives. The 100% digital Leeds ambition remains, and through the close working within IDS and the Library Service, support in the city can now include;

- the provision of equipment, grant funding, technical support, Digital Champions training, signposting to existing statistics, reports and toolkits.
- advice on how to tackle digital inclusion issues in a way that works for different organisations
- a growing network of digital Champions who help us to reach the digitally excluded in their communities by advocating the benefits of digital, and signposting people to free training and support available across the city.
- a growing Tablet lending scheme with support on how to use tablets available free of charge in many of the Libraries and Community Hub sites across the city

Table 14: Face-to-Face Policy Reviews

| Document | Purpose | Monitored | Review date | Review | Accountability and oversight |
|---|---|--|-------------------------|--|--|
| Matrix accreditation | An improvement tool to help Jobshops put customers at the heart of what they do | Annual continuous improvement check, with full accreditation every 3 years | Full accreditation 2024 | Action plan developed and regularly reviewed | Chief Officer Community Hubs, Welfare and Business Support |
| Equality Improvement Priority – increase digital inclusion particularly for those in poverty to provide greater access to jobs, skills and learning to reduce poverty | Support focus on key area of equality priority for the service | Customer Access Leadership Team | July 2022 | Review and update included in Equality Annual Report | Chief Officer Community Hubs, Welfare and Business Support |

Contact Centre and Digital Services

54. The shape and performance of the Contact Centre are bound up in how the Council envisages customer contact going forward. There are a number of key principles which govern this:

- To eradicate as many service failures as possible to minimise the need for contact
- To provide clear public communications to minimise the need for clarification

- To ensure effective feedback and completion of tasks once actions by the public are raised to minimise repeat contact;
- To enable those who have access to digital technology to self-serve as a first preference;
- To widen participation in the use of digital technology;
- To provide excellent face to face and telephony contact for key services which require complex handling or for customers who are unable to realistically self serve.

55. Within this context, the Contact Centre will act as a source of intelligence and learning for the organisation so that it can be used to deliver improvements to services council-wide. The Contact Centre will provide the necessary data to service areas to enable them to get things right first time, help drive forward customer-focussed digital solutions and support service areas to ensure the information that customers need is readily and easily available for them. For customers that need to contact us, call wait times will be minimised and we will endeavour to provide the highest levels of customer service.

56. Transformation and improvement activities are key to delivering an efficient, accessible and customer focussed Contact Centre operation. Several opportunities have been identified to achieve savings through transformation work linked to customer contact. These projects focus on tactical digital improvements that will automate processes and enable customers to self-serve at their own convenience.

57. It is anticipated that by offering better online options for customers, there will be more capacity for the contact centre to handle complex cases which will enhance the user experience for non-digital customers. Whilst the transition to online will be delivered in such a way as to make the process the route of choice for most of our customers, we are committed to ensuring that those who are unable to use that option are provided with relevant support. Digital inclusion is being considered within each piece of transformational work to ensure that all customers have a way of contacting the council.

58. There is scope to improve the information available to customers on the website which will, in turn, improve the customer experience and reduce demand in the Contact Centre. A programme of work is being developed to review the content of the website and provide better digital options for our customers so that optimal numbers of customers find it easy and efficient to use. There is also an ongoing piece of work that aims to improve the communications being issued by the council to customers, making the communications clearer and more accessible for people.

59. In order to identify best practice and further opportunities for improvement, a benchmarking group has been established with other local authorities and the learning from this group will feed into service improvement activities. A review of the Contact Centre's resource planning and forecasting practices is currently being undertaken and is due to be complete by the end of the financial year. The results of the review will be incorporated into the operational improvement plan for 2022.

Compliments and Complaints

60. A review of the Council’s Compliments and Complaints Policy was due in November 2021, however this has been delayed due to the pressures of the ongoing pandemic. Work is currently ongoing to improve the Quality Assurances processes in relation to complaints and processes are being refined to provide greater intelligence to service areas that have high complaint volumes to inform service improvements. A performance reporting tool has been developed that allows managers to track and understand their service performance. This will be piloted in April 2022 and rolled out more widely as appropriate during the coming year.

Statement of Assurance

61. Having undertaken the review of the system of internal control for customer contact and satisfaction outlined in this statement the Director of Resources and the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment are satisfied that the Council’s arrangements for customer contact and satisfaction are fit for purpose.

62. The Director of Resources and the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment have identified the following opportunities for enhancement of the system of internal control for customer contact and satisfaction and will implement these over the course of the 2022/23 municipal year.

Opportunities for Improvement

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| Define and Document | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of the sub-delegation scheme for the Resources directorate will be undertaken to ensure it remains up to date and fit for purpose in light of changes to the structures. • The Compliments and Complaints Policy will be reviewed. |
| Clearly Communicate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A programme of work is being developed to review communications to the public, the content of the Council’s website and provide better digital options for customers. • The Contact Centre will provide the necessary information to service areas to enable them to get things right first time, help drive forward customer-focussed digital solutions and support service areas to ensure the information that customers need is readily and easily available for them. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new performance reporting tool to facilitate learning from customer feedback and complaints will be piloted and rolled out as appropriate. |
| <p>Effectively Embed</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer engagement with service areas to improve to improve end-to-end processes to facilitate a seamless experience for customers when they interact with the Council. |
| <p>Meaningfully Monitor</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The improvement activities outlined within this statement will be appropriately monitored. |
| <p>Review and Refine</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review is being undertaken within Community Hubs and Libraries to ensure that Council services and partners in the city are making the most of the capabilities and assets available within the Hubs and Libraries. • A review will be undertaken to determine the most appropriate method to capture customer satisfaction information from customers that use the self-service forms. • A review will be undertaken of the 'Percentage of Customers Accessing Digital Services' key performance indicator and of the key performance indicators relevant to the Contact Centre. |