

BARNSELEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is not a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has not been included in the relevant Forward Plan

**Report of the Executive Director -
Communities**

Barnsley Council Annual Customer Feedback Report, Complaints, Compliments and Comments – April 2015 to March 2016

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of the report is to provide Cabinet with an analysis and overview of the complaints handled under the council's complaints procedures in line with our statutory obligations under the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 and the Corporate Complaints Procedure during the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016. It is also to advise on the compliments received by the council and the improvements to service delivery that have arisen as a result of complaints made within this period.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Members' receive and discuss the information contained in this report as required under the complaints legislation.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 This is the first annual customer feedback report for the council.
- 3.2 The data contained in this report was correct at the time of creation of the report. However, this is a risk to some variation in future reported data due to system updates.
- 3.3 The submission of feedback (compliments, complaints, and comments) is an important means by which people can let the Council know about their experiences. The aim is to ensure that each item of feedback is recorded, acknowledged and appropriately responded to.
- 3.4 It is vital to continuous service improvement to know when things have gone right and people are happy with the services they receive. However, on those occasions when things go wrong complaints are equally valuable because they provide a chance to identify errors and to ensure the same mistake is not repeated in the future.
- 3.5 The complaints process aims to investigate a person's concerns thoroughly and fairly in partnership with the complainant, to reach a swift resolution and to ensure, where appropriate, that a proper apology is given and that a form of redress is provided.

- 3.6 Compliments received are acknowledged with the customer and shared with the service area concerned.
- 3.7 Comments received are acknowledged with the customer and shared with the service area concerned and a response provided to the customer within 10 working days.

4. Proposal and justification

- 4.1 A total number of 541 customer compliments have been received by the council, the highest number of these were received in the Customer Services Business Unit. Of the total number of compliments received 302 demonstrated a value of being proud, 228 demonstrated a value of being excellent, 6 demonstrated a value of being honest and 5 supported the value of working together as a team.
- 4.2 Where our customers would like to share their thoughts and suggestions the Customer Feedback and Improvement Team logs these as comments. 2015-16 saw 171 comments from our customers being recorded.
- 4.3 384 customer complaints were logged in 2015-16. It is important to note that not all customer concerns need to be processed as a complaint. Where a customer has contacted the service direct and their concerns are sorted out by the service there is often no need to escalate these through the council's complaints procedures. It is important that we make sure the customer is always informed of their right to make a complaint if their concern is not resolved or they remain unhappy. During 2016-17 we're going to capture how the complaints we receive relate to our organisational values – just like we've done with our compliments this year.
- 4.4 It is positive to report that our customers who are the ones in receipt of the service are making complaints themselves, and the majority of our complaints are being made online and directly to the Customer Feedback and Improvement Team.
- 4.5 The majority of the complaints received are being resolved quickly through early resolution. 288 of the total number of complaints received were resolved this way. 96 required a formal investigation. However, there is still some improvement to be made to resolving complaints within timescale and work is on-going to address this.
- 4.6 Investigations into our customers complaints resulted in us upholding 235 cases, we partially upheld 68 and 77 of them were not upheld. Unfortunately, 2 of our customer withdrawn their complaints during 2015-16. We are working with services to strengthen how we are learn from customer complaints and in turn in identifying a robust process to ensure that what we are identifying as learning is then acted upon.
- 4.7 4 of the complaints received progressed onto the review stage. None of these were for children social care.

4.8 Our records indicate that we have received 44 contacts from the Local Government Ombudsman in 2015-16. 28 of these required the Ombudsman to undertake a formal investigation. Fault on the council's part was found in 8 of these cases. 1 investigation was into an adult social care complaint and a recommendation was made for an independent assessment to be offered to the customer; 3 investigations were into Berneslai Home complaints and a recommendation of financial redress was accepted for all 3 complaints; 1 investigation was into an Environment and Transport complaint and a recommendation of financial redress was accepted; 1 investigation was into a Customer Services complaint and a recommendation of financial redress was accepted; 1 investigation was into an Economic Regeneration complaint and a recommendation of financial redress was accepted; 1 investigation was into an Education, Early Start and Prevention complaint and whilst fault was found there was no injustice caused therefore no recommendations were made.

We expect to receive the Local Government Ombudsman annual review letter over the summer period. This review provides a summary of the statistics on the complaints made to them for the council.

4.9 Work is continuing to embed the role of the Customer Feedback and Improvement Team and during 2016-17 the following work is planned:

- Take a look at how we can identify with our customer their individual preferences in how we contact and work with them.
- Provide a mechanism for our customers to let us know how satisfied they are after providing feedback and what their experience was.
- Relate the compliments and complaints we get against our values – this will enable us measure how customers rate our performance.
- Establish a tool for the capturing and reporting of compliments and complaints made directly to other organisations that provide services on our behalf.
- Look at how we are recognising and learning from customer complaints and compliments and making our system for managing this better.

5. Consideration of alternative approaches

Not applicable.

6. Implications for local people / service users

The attached report demonstrates which areas of service provision that service users are currently providing feedback on, in the form of complaints and compliments.

7. Financial implications

As part of the complaints procedures process a number of formal resolution methods may have financial charges associated with them in undertaking this function such as external investigations and appointment of mediators. However, effective resolution of complaints can lead to service improvements and complainant satisfaction.

8. Employee implications

8.1 All staff should be aware of the complaints procedures covering their area of work so that they can advise service users of the options available to them.

8.2 There will be staff resource issues associated with managers carrying out investigations or where staff need to be interviewed as part of a complaint. On rare occasions other procedures such as management investigations may be required following a complaint investigation.

9. Communication implications

Report will be published.

10. Consultations

a) Communities directorate management meeting on 11th May 2016.

b) SMT on 17th May 2016.

11. The Corporate Plan and the Council's Performance Management Framework

The Customer Feedback and Improvement Team had four performance measurements during 2015-16 on the management of customer complaints, compliments and comments. The progress on these will be outlined in the council corporate performance report.

12. Promoting equality, diversity, and social inclusion

The capturing of equality information is to be reviewed for this service. The review will focus on how customer information can be effectively captured and used to ensure accessibility of the council's complaints procedure. The equality impact assessment for this area of service will be reviewed during 2016-17 to determine this.

13. Tackling the Impact of Poverty

Not applicable.

14. Tackling health inequalities

Not applicable.

15. Reduction of crime and disorder

Not applicable.

16. Risk management issues

16.1 Services fail to recognise or escalate complaints and compliments that need to be considered through the Council's management of complaints process which is managed by the Customer Feedback and Improvement Team.

16.2 Escalation of complaints to the Ombudsman without the Customer Feedback and Improvement Team having had sight of the complaint and it by passing the complaints management process.

16.3 These risks are mitigated by the use of regular visits to DMT and team meetings to raise awareness of the feedback processes.

17. Health, safety, and emergency resilience issues

Not applicable.

18. Compatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights

Not applicable.

19. Conservation of biodiversity

Not applicable.

20. Glossary

Not applicable.

21. List of appendices

a) Barnsley Council Annual Customer Feedback Report – Complaints, Compliments and Comments, 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016

22. Background papers

a) Management of Customer Feedback Procedure - background papers can be obtained by contacting Claire Dobby, Complaints Manager, Feedback and Improvement Team, Gateway Plaza, Level 8.

b) Complaints and Representations Procedure for Children and Young Peoples Services

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Date May 2016

Financial Implications /
Consultation
(To be signed by senior Financial Services officer
where no financial implications)