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# ANNUAL CUSTOMER FEEDBACK REPORT

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**Complaints,  
Compliments  
and Comments**

April 2015 to March 2016

◀ **OUR VISION** ▶

**WORKING TOGETHER FOR**

**A BRIGHTER FUTURE**

**A BETTER BARNESLEY**

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first annual customer feedback report, which provides the council, partners and members of the public with important information on what our customers have told us about their expectations and experiences of the services they have received during 2015–16.

This report looks at all of the complaints, compliments and comments that have been recorded by the council during the period 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016, including those complaints received about adult and children social care services.

It is one of our challenges to ensure that we respond to and manage rising customer expectations and demands, but also recognise the opportunities this presents. To achieve this we need to listen to what our customers are telling us, manage their expectations and continuously improve our services. This is why customer feedback (compliments, complaints, and comments) is important, and why it is our aim is to ensure that our customers feel able to provide us with feedback, know how to do this, and that we respond fairly, in partnership with the customer and reach a swift resolution where putting it right is at the heart of what we always consider.

It is also vital to continuous service improvement to know when things have gone right and when 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.

Not all customer concerns need to be processed as a complaint and where a customer has contacted the service direct and their concerns are sorted out by the service there is no need to escalate these to the council's complaints procedures. Therefore the information reported on below does not include these concerns unless the customer remained unhappy and wished to make a complaint. It is important though 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.

The customer feedback and improvement team, who are a part of the customer services business unit are responsible for the management and collation of all customer feedback received for the council.

## KEY POINTS AND HOW ARE WE MEETING OUR VALUES

The information contained in this report refers to all customer contacts received by the customer feedback and improvement team between 1 April 2015 and 3 March 2016.



A total number of **541** customer compliments have been received



**171** comments have been recorded.

A total number of **384** customer complaints have been received



The Local Government Ombudsman made **44** contacts in 2015–16. Of these, **27** required the Ombudsman to undertake a formal investigation in which **7** case fault was found. **5** cases resulted in a recommendation of providing the customer with financial redress.



Learning from our customer feedback to ensure that services are making improvements to service delivery as a result of the feedback we receive.

## CUSTOMER FEEDBACK – AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN

Complaints are welcomed as a valuable source of information from which the service can learn and improve. 541 customer compliments and 384 customer complaints were registered by the council during 2015–16. This is great news – it’s important to us that customers let us know what they think about the service they receive. The table opposite shows us which services complaints and compliments are being made about.

Most of the complaints we received were about our finance services and were received in the first quarter of the year. We’ve had a look at what our customers were telling us and can see that these complaints were about one of the changes we had made and customers were having problems getting in contact with us to talk about their benefits, taxation and income. The service responded to these complaints quickly and from listening to what the customers were telling us the service agreed to:

Open the contact centre on a Saturday and would look to explore other technical solutions that would provide the customer with better information and access choices.

We also received a high number of complaints from our customers about our waste management services. Our customers provided us with lots of valuable information about the problems they were experiencing with bin collections, customer services, the information we had provided and how well the service were performing against what our customer expected. Again, the service responded to most of these complaints quickly without the customer needing to take their complaint any further through the procedure. This is really positive as resolving complaints quickly and to the customer’s satisfaction is one of our aims. The waste management service also received a good number of compliments from customers, one customer told us:

“Really impressed with the way our bin men have left the bins after emptying them this morning – all neatly lined up.... I went out this morning expecting to have to rearrange the bins and there were none to move. Thanks guys, it’s really appreciated!”

Directorate	Business Unit	Complaints Total	Directorate Complaints Total	Compliments Total	Directorate Compliments Total
Core	Finance, Assets and Information Services	137	143	11	12
	Legal and Governance	6		1	
	Human Resources and Business Support	0		0	
Place	Culture, Housing and Regulations	8	127	29	130
	Environment and Transport	109		87	
	Economic Regeneration	10		14	
Communities	Customer Services	26	41	357	385
	Stronger, Safer and Healthier Communities	15		28	
People	Education, Early Start and Prevention	4	73	0	14
	Adult Assessment and Care Management	31		11	
	Children’s Social Care and Safeguarding	38		3	
Total		384		541	

As you can see we've received lots of feedback from our customers – here are a few more examples of where customer's complaints have resulted in services agreeing to make changes and of the compliments we have received.

Customers told us...

That they didn't like to see staff eating and taking their lunch breaks at council public access points (such as reception desks).

Services agreed to...

Remind staff that there are facilities available for them to use for lunch and rest breaks.

...he and his team were brilliant and it is gratifying to know there are still honest people around.

The staff at Mapplewell Library are the most helpful I have known in my many years at numerous libraries around Britain.

Customers told us...

The length of time it was taking for us to support you in monitoring noise nuisance was too long.

Services agreed to...

Create a new procedure to support staff who are responsible for monitoring noise nuisance. This should hopefully mean that we can be more supportive and meet customer expectations.

...one of the most professional I have dealt with in 13 years of trading nationally. They have been exceptional with their application.

## Of the 384 complaints we received, 69 were handled in line with our legal responsibilities for adult and children social care services.

The way we handle these complaints is a little bit different to those for other council services, this is because the law tells us how we should treat these complaints. However, we do try to make sure that all of the good practice we get from these legal responsibilities is used in how we handle all of our customer complaints.

It's really important to us that we receive as much feedback as possible from all of our customers, but especially from our most vulnerable young and older people. Therefore in 2016–17 we are going to work on this and make sure both our young and older people have easy access to our customer feedback procedures.

Here are a few examples of feedback we've received from our social care customers and what the services have agreed to do:

**Services agreed to...**  
Provide guidance to our staff members of the standards expected in working with potential adopters. We also looked at our training courses and made changes where necessary to ensure potential adopters were clear on the adoption process.

**Customers told us...**  
That they felt we could provide better information to potential adopters through meetings, training and guidance.

**Customers told us...**  
Where there has been difference in opinions held by foster carers and professionals in the assessment and needs of looked after children, there needs to be a process that can capture, explore, challenge and ensure agreements are reached.

**The service responded with...**  
This should always be enabled and that there are mechanisms in place to support this such as the looked after child review. We agreed to talk to social work staff about this and ensure both carers and professionals felt that they always had the opportunity to do this.

**Customers told us...**  
Information had come to their attention that led them to question how we had undertaken an adult social care assessment.

**The service agreed to...**  
Reiterate with teams the importance of recording decisions within case notes and care plans to support any later challenges.

**Where a customer remains unhappy with their complaint investigation and the response they have received from the service, they can decide to pursue their complaint further. As the table shows, of the 384 complaints received only four required further consideration.**

It's positive to report that the number of complaints requiring further consideration is low as this supports our aim to resolve customer complaints quickly, proportionately and to the customer's satisfaction.

the employment of external investigators. However, this total is for complaint investigations which were undertaken during previous years but the complaint had not finished or invoices were not received before the end of the relevant financial year.

This year we have spent a total of £5,179.01 in the investigation of customer complaints through

Directorate	Business Unit	Complaints Total	Complaints progressed to next stage
Core	Finance, Assets and Information Services	137	0
	Legal and Governance	6	0
	Human Resources and Business Support	0	0
Place	Culture, Housing and Regulations	8	2
	Environment and Transport	109	0
	Economic Regeneration	10	1
Communities	Customer Services	26	0
	Stronger, Safer and Healthier Communities	15	0
People	Education, Early Start and Prevention	4	0
	Adult Assessment and Care Management	31	1
	Children's Social Care and Safeguarding	38	0
Total		384	4

Where customers feel that their concerns have not been resolved by us or they disagree with what we have found in our investigation, they have a right to contact the Local Government Ombudsman. This year we have received 44 contacts from the Local Government Ombudsman. Of these, to date:

28

contacts were treated as formal investigations

8

of the investigations to date have found fault in the council's actions

6

investigations resulted in a recommendation of financial redress being provided to remedy the injustice

25

contacts did not require any further action

We know that not all of our customers want to make a complaint or compliment about our services but they want to tell us about their experience and maybe ask a question about what we do or why. Therefore as well as complaints and compliments the customer feedback and improvement team also register and record customer comments.

This year we have received 171 customer's comments and we've shared these with the service they were about for them to consider and respond to the customer directly. Here are a few examples of what customers were telling us.

Could we look at the policy for how long customers can use the computer.

It would be really helpful if the reference number on the automated payment line could be slowed down so that customers have the time to write it down.

There needs to be more litter bins in general in the Kendray area. Perhaps they could be put next to bus stops.

## TYPE, TIMESCALES AND OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

The feedback our customers provide us with allows us to see where the delivery of our services is not meeting what our customers expect. By collecting information on the type or nature of complaints received, how quickly we are investigating complaints and how we are resolving them, it enables us to manage our performance and put improvements in place where we need to.

As the table opposite shows, most of the complaints we received were about our service delivery and the types of complaint we received were about how quickly we were delivering service and the quality of the service. **67 per cent** of our investigations into these complaints agreed that our services had fallen short of what our customers should expect.

In fact of the total number of complaints we received **60 per cent** of the investigations showed that we agreed with what our customers were telling us and where this was found we resolved these complaints through an explanation, an apology or a change to service. **14** of the complaints received required a form of redress.

Complaint Type	Total	Outcome
Workforce	51	27 Upheld
		10 Partially upheld
		13 Not upheld
		1 withdrawn
Information	19	8 upheld
		6 Partially upheld
		5 Not upheld
Service Provision	260	175 Upheld
		37 Partially upheld
		47 Not upheld
		1 outstanding
Communication and Consultation	26	13 Upheld
		9 Partially upheld
		4 Not upheld
Process and Procedure	27	12 Upheld
		6 Partially upheld
		7 Not upheld
		1 Withdrawn
		1 Outstanding
Policy	1	1 Not upheld
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	235 Upheld
		68 Partially upheld
		77 Not upheld
		2 Withdrawn
		2 Outstanding

**Upheld:** As part of our investigation we found enough evidence to agree with what the customer was telling us.

**Not Upheld:** Our investigation did not find any evidence to support what the customer was telling us.

**Partially Upheld:** We agreed in part with what the customer was telling us.



## TIMESCALES

It's really important to us that we handle customer complaints quickly and to the customer's satisfaction. So when we receive a complaint we will always try to resolve the complaint early – we call these complaints early resolution and aim to resolve them within two working days.

However, there are times when early resolution is not possible or appropriate because of how complex or serious a complaint is. When this is the case we call these complaints 'formal investigation' and we agree a timescale for us to respond with the customer. Although if your complaint is a children's social care complaint the law tell us that we have to resolve these complaints in no more than 20 working days.

Chart one opposite shows that most of our complaints were handled through early resolution. This is really positive news. However, of those we handled as early resolution, chart two shows that almost 21 per cent went over our two day target.

CHART ONE: HOW WE HAVE HANDLED CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

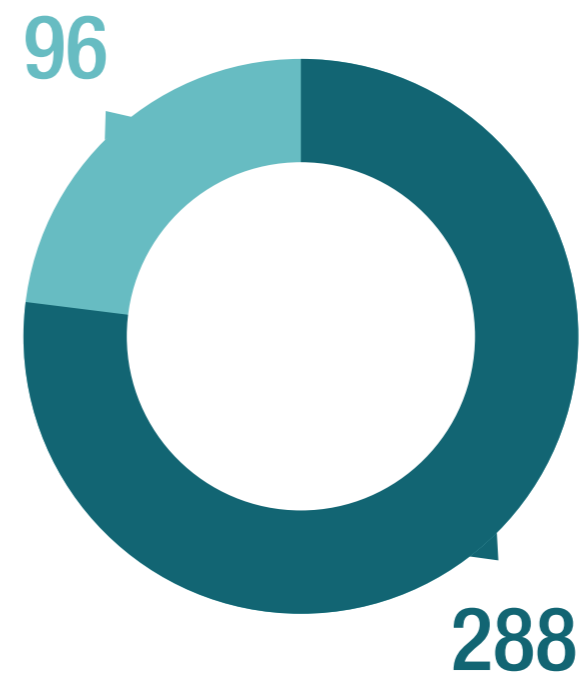
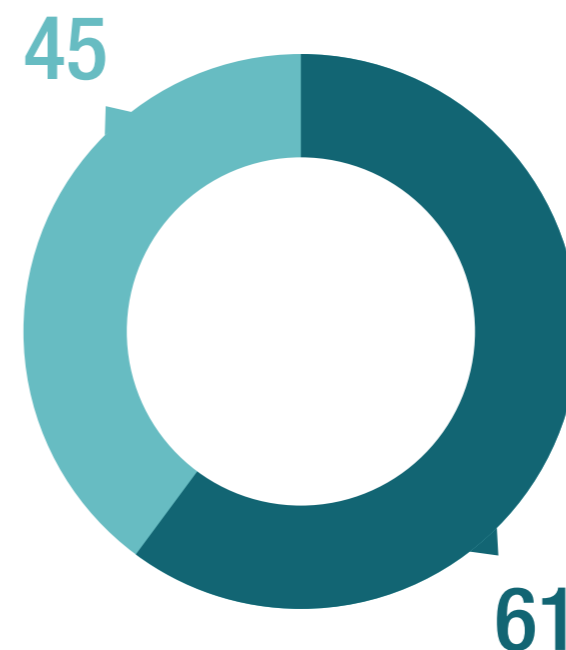


CHART TWO: NUMBER OF COMPLAINT INVESTIGATIONS WHICH HAVE GONE OVER AGREED TIMESCALE



Of the 96 complaints we formally investigated 47 per cent of these went over the timescale we agreed we would complete our investigation within. This is something we are working hard to improve as it's important that we're honest about how quickly we can respond to our customers complaints and the timescale we are telling our customers are met.

## WHO, HOW AND WHERE?

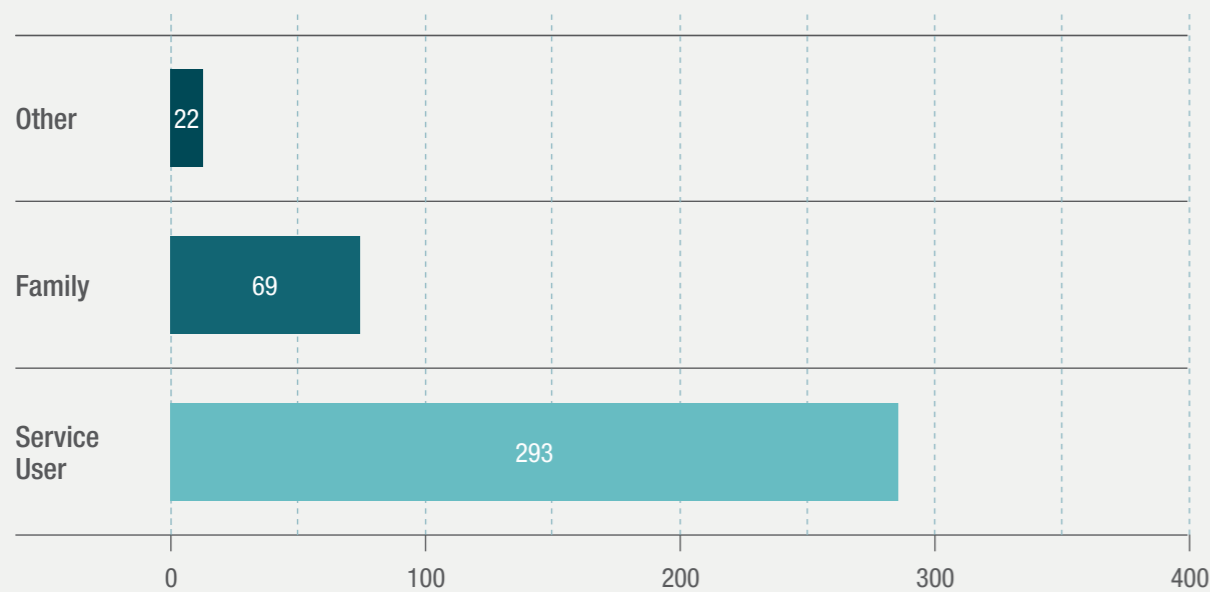
**It's really positive to report that most of our complaints are being made by customers themselves. This demonstrates that customers who are receiving our services are empowered and feel confident to raise their own concerns. Where this is the case we also offer support from an advocate and our customers are informed of this when a complaint progresses to formal investigation. This offer has been accepted by six of our customers.**

Most of the complaints we receive are being made online. This is great news and shows a clear transition being made by our customers to accessing services online. However, regardless of how complaints are being made it is really important that a conversation takes place with the customer to gain a true understanding of the complaint and to enable effective resolution.

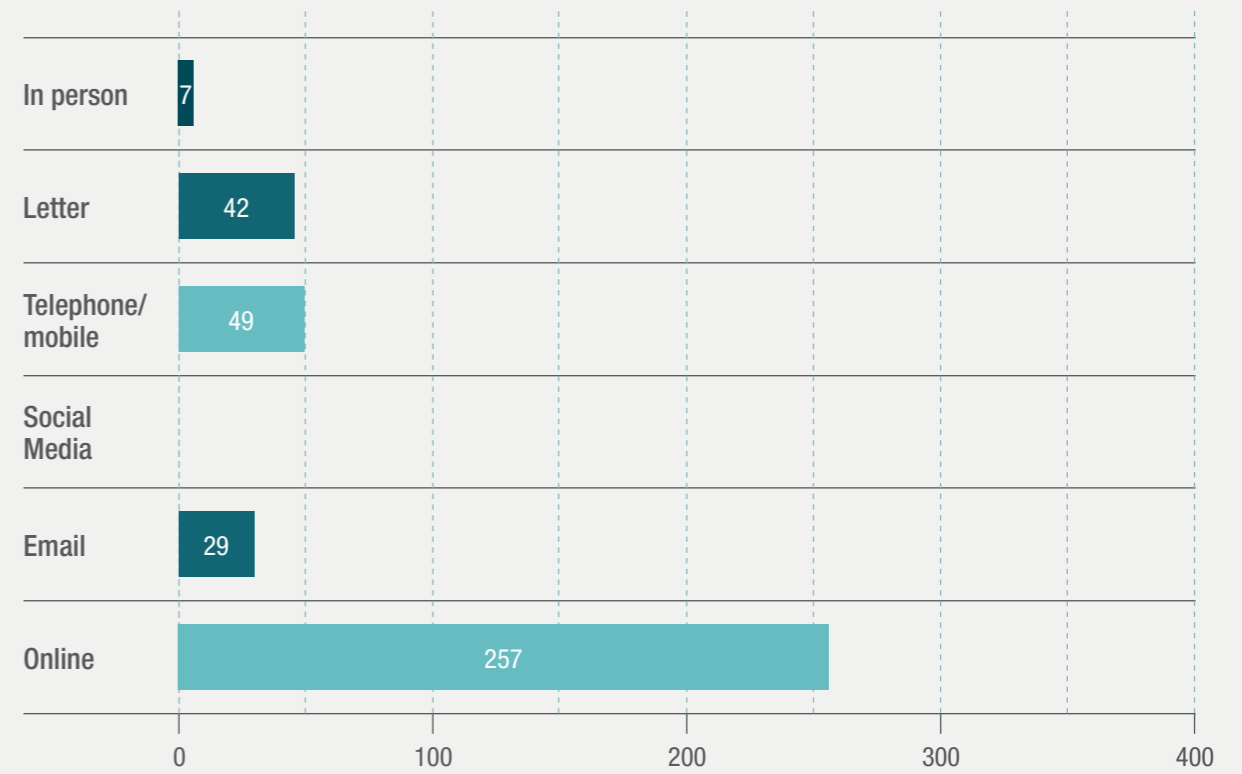
The Customer Feedback and Improvement Team (CFIT) is the service where most of the complaints being made are received. Again this is positive as it shows those customers who want to make a complaint are contacting the right team.

CFIT HAS BEEN CHANGED TO LOWER CASE ELSEWHERE – SHOULD IT BE UPPER?

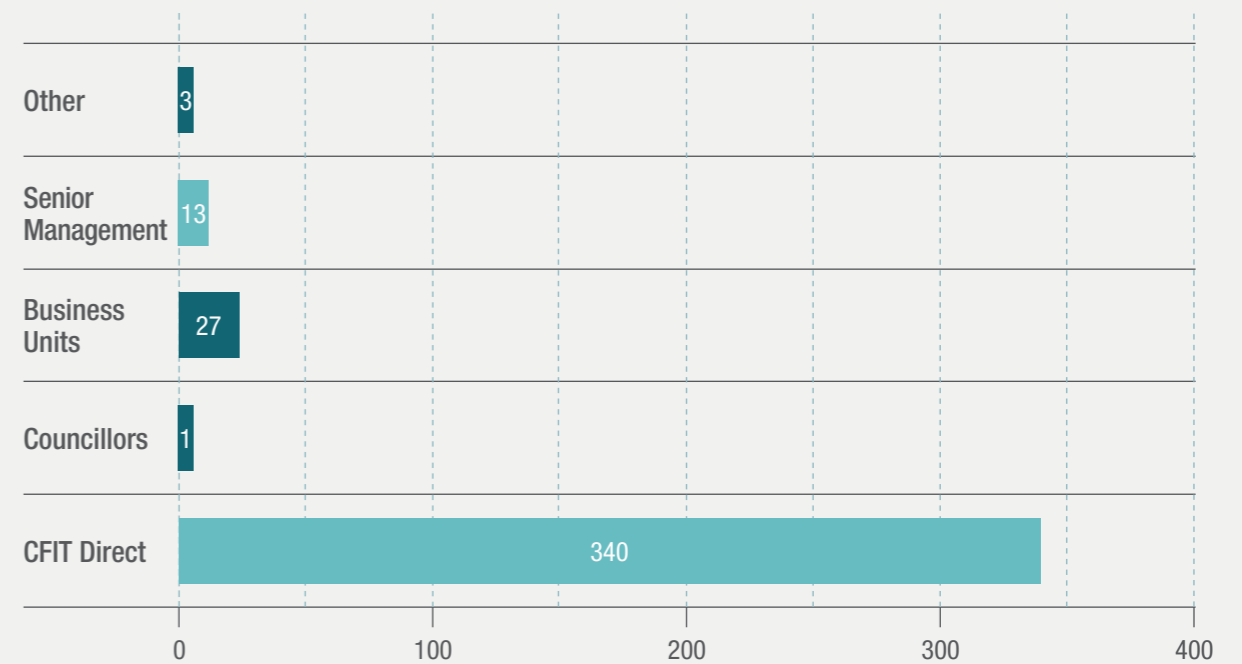
### WHO IS MAKING COMPLAINTS?



### HOW ARE COMPLAINTS BEING MADE?



### WHERE ARE COMPLAINTS BEING RECEIVED?



## SO WHAT'S NEXT?

This year has been our first year where all of our customer compliments, complaints and comments have been handled by one team, the customer feedback and improvement team. The year has very much been about getting services familiar with the new way of working and ensuring our customers know how and where they can make their feedback.

There is still so much to do and therefore here a few things we hope to do in 2016–17:

### Identify with our customer

Take a look at how we can identify with our customer and their individual preferences in how we contact and work with them.

### Encourage customer feedback

Provide a mechanism for our customers to let us know how satisfied they are after providing feedback and what their experience was.

**Here's your first opportunity – at the back of this report is a short questionnaire. Please complete and return it back to us – Your Feedback is Important!!**

NO  
NOTE IN AMENDS  
PDF RELATING TO THIS  
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### Uphold our values

Relate the compliments and complaints we get against our values – this will enable us measure how customers rate our performance.

### Monitor feedback made to other organisations

Establish a tool for the capturing and reporting of compliments and complaints made directly to other organisations that provide services on our behalf.

### Build on information gathered

Look at how we are recognising and learning from customer complaints and compliments and making our system for managing this better.

## QUESTIONNAIRE

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