

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 - CORE TO CABINET ON 2nd July 2018

Barnsley Council Annual Customer Feedback Report - Complaints, Compliments and Comments – April 2017 to March 2018

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 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 Management of Customer Feedback Procedure during the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018. It is also to advise on the compliments and comments received by the Council and the improvements to service delivery that have arisen as a result of complaints made within this period.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 The data contained in this report was correct at the time of creation. However, there is a risk to some variation in future reported data due to updates.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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 satisfactory apology is given and that a form of redress is provided.

- 3.5 Compliments received are acknowledged with the customer and shared with the service area concerned.
- 3.6 Comments received are acknowledged with the customer and shared with the service area concerned. In some cases a response is provided to the customer within 10 working days.
- 3.7 Customer feedback is recorded, received, managed and facilitated by the Customer Feedback and Improvement Team which is a part of the Business Improvement and Communications Business Unit.

4. PROPOSAL AND JUSTIFICATION

- 4.1 A total number of 490 customer compliments have been received by the council, the highest number of these being received in the Environment and Transport Business Unit. This is an increase in number from the total reported last year (458) but remains lower than 2015-16 (541). Work will continue to ensure that customers and all staff know how they can share their positive experiences with us.
- 4.2 Where our customers would like to share their thoughts and suggestions the Customer Feedback and Improvement Team register these as comments. The period 2017-18 resulted in 258 comments being received from our customers. This is a decrease on the total number received last year (310).
- 4.3 During the period 2017-18, 317 customer complaints were registered. This is a decrease on last year's total of 504. 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 resolved 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. Work has been ongoing within the Council to encourage this approach thus ensuring that the complaints received by the Customer Feedback and Improvement Team are those where there is a focus on investigating where a customer's experience has fallen below their expectation.
- 4.4 It is positive to report that it is the customer who is in receipt of the service who are making their own complaints. Most complaints are also being made directly to the Customer Feedback and Improvement Team and by telephone. 2017-18 has seen a change in how customers are making their complaints moving from online to telephone. Consideration into the reasons for this shift will be further explored by the team through liaising with other services and monitored throughout 2018-19.
- 4.5 The majority of complaints received have been resolved quickly through early resolution with 172 of the total number of complaints received resolved this way, and 145 required a formal investigation. Further work is to be undertaken to improve the timely resolution of complaints.

- 4.6 Investigations into customer complaints resulted in 123 cases being upheld, 70 were partially upheld and 82 were not upheld. Unfortunately, 1 of our customer withdrew their complaints during 2017-18 and this was followed up directly with the customer.
- 4.7 3 complaints received progressed onto the review stage. Upon reviewing our actions and response to the customer, this highlighted our initial response provided to the customer was not sufficient and we agreed to take further action to address the complaint. Whilst it is positive to note that the number of complaints progressing on to the review stage is low it is not to say that all customers were happy with the outcome of their complaint after investigation. Those customers who did remain unhappy were supported by the Customer Feedback and Improvement Team without the need to progress their complaint onto the next stage of the process.
- 4.8 Our records indicate that we have received 41 contacts from the Local Government Ombudsman in 2017-18, this is a slight increase from last years reported position (36). 11 of these required the Ombudsman to undertake a formal investigation, of which fault on was found in 2 of these cases both resulting in injustice being caused to the customer. The Council agreed with the Investigator's recommendation to address these complaints.
- 4.9 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.
- 4.10 Work is continuing to embed the role of the Customer Feedback and Improvement Team and during 2017-18 the following work was undertaken:
- Embedding and development of the management system for customer feedback and information request. Additional changes to the reporting of information are hoped to be in place by the autumn of 2018.
 - Promoting the benefits of ensuring services report to the Customer Feedback and Improvement Team compliments received from customers directly and celebrating these through 'compliment of the week' in the Council's staff newsletter.
 - We continue to promote, encourage and support our customers to contact us and access our services online, whilst offering a telephony service too. We have worked to ensure the information we provide to customers both online and via telephone is clear to ensure their concerns are handled appropriately and proportionately.
 - We have trialled an approach in how we capture learning from customer complaints and work remains ongoing to strengthen how we do this in 2018-19.
 - Ensuring our procedures are reviewed and remain up to date whilst reflecting best practice guidance.
- 4.11 During 2018-19 we plan to undertake the following:

- Strengthen our learning from complaints arrangements.
- Explore how we ensure our most vulnerable customers know how to make a complaint if they are unhappy with a service provided. This includes customers who are receiving a service paid for by the Council whilst delivered by a third party.
- Explore how we can capture and report on all compliments and complaints made directly to other organisations that provide services on the Council's behalf.

5. CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

5.1 Not applicable

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE/SERVICE USERS

6.1 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

7.1 As part of the complaints process a number of formal resolution methods may have financial charges associated with them 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 Staff resources are needed in order to carry out investigations following a complaint. On rare occasions other procedures such as management investigations may be required following a complaint investigation.

9. COMMUNICATIONS IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The report will be published online.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 Discussed at Senior Management Team on 12th June 2018

10.2 Circulated to the Barnsley Leadership Team on 13th June 2018

11. THE CORPORATE PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

11.1 The Customer Feedback and Improvement Team had four performance measurements during 2017-18 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

- 12.1 A new equality impact assessment will be undertaken during 2018-19 to consider and incorporate the changes made to the management of customer feedback procedure during 2017-18.

13. TACKLING THE IMPACT OF POVERTY

- 13.1 Not applicable.

14. TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES

- 14.1 Not applicable.

15. REDUCTION OF CRIME AND DISORDER

- 15.1 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 Robust arrangements are required when working in partnership with organisations and contracted providers in the management of customer complaints.
- 16.3 These risks are mitigated through the use of regular visits to DMT and team meetings to raise awareness of the feedback processes and in work identified to be completed.

17. HEALTH, SAFETY AND EMERGENCY RESILIENCE ISSUES

- 17.1 Not applicable.

18. COMPATIBILITY WITH THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

- 18.1 Not applicable.

19. CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY

- 19.1 Not applicable.

20. GLOSSARY

Not applicable

21. LIST OF APPENDICES

22. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- a) Management of Customer Feedback Procedure
- b) Complaints and Representations Procedure for Children and Young Peoples Services

If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email governance@barnsley.gov.uk so that appropriate arrangements can be made

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Financial Implications/Consultation

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*(To be signed by senior Financial Services officer
where no financial implications)*