



Customer Feedback and Complaints

SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the arrangements in place for recording and monitoring customer feedback, current levels of performance regarding complaints and actions being taken to improve. An interim report was presented at the last meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny and Climate Change Board on 16 September 2013.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the current levels of performance on numbers of complaints / response rates and some of the key issues impacting on performance in this area.
- 2.2 To note the improvement plan in Appendix 3 (approved by Council Cabinet on 16 October 2013).

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Performance levels for responding to and learning from customer feedback is an area for improvement. Poor management of complaints can lead to lower satisfaction levels and reputational damage to the organisation.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 4.1 Customer feedback encompasses comments, compliments and complaints from service users. For any organisation, customer feedback provides invaluable information regarding actual service delivery and perceptions of service. Feedback can be received via many channels, both informal and formal. The importance of capturing this feedback and using it proactively to drive service improvement cannot be underestimated.
- 4.2 In Derby, the Customer Management Strategy 2011 sets out our vision for improving the way customers interact with the Council:

“To provide an enhanced customer experience through better access to

services, greater choice and greater flexibility for all Derby’s customers.”

Customer contacts were centralised in 2011 and the contact process for recording and responding to complaints and wider customer feedback has been standardised and automated through the Lagan CRM system. Following channel shift work, there are now more ways customers can access Council services, for example, obtain information, request services, buy services and give feedback, including web, email, phone, letter and in person.

4.3 A complaint is defined in the Council’s Corporate Complaints Procedure 2006:

‘Any expression of dissatisfaction with a specific service or services provided by the Council, which has been previously raised with the Council and not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.

This excludes disagreement with specific policies, decisions or assessments, such as level of council tax, benefit decision, parking ticket or planning appeal.

4.4 The Procedure sets out the stages for complaints investigation and resolution:

Stage	Description
Stage 1	Complaint is received via email, web form, letter or phone and acknowledged. The service investigates and responds to the complaint within service standard: Neighbourhoods & Corporate – 10 working days Children’s – 20 working days Adult’s – up to 42 days as agreed with customer
Stage 2	Complaint appeal is conducted by Chief Executive or nominated representative.
Stage 3	Review by Standards Committee.
Stage 4	Complaint referred to Local Government Ombudsman (this can happen at any stage of the process after Stage 1).

4.5 It is worth noting that separate procedures are in place for complaints governed by statutory requirements such as Children’s and Adult’s Social Care. Complaints regarding the conduct of elected members also follow a separate procedure through the Council’s Standards Board.

Complaints activity and performance

4.6 Trends in numbers of complaints are shown below, based on data currently held.

Number of Stage 1 complaints received 2008-13

Directorate	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Adult Social Care	63	74	52	46	47
Children and Young People	35	33	45	47	50
Corporate / Other	155	198	9	0	0
Neighbourhoods	0	0	80	169	305
Resources	0	0	39	72	102
TOTAL	253	305	225	334	504

4.7 Whilst superficially it appears the number of complaints has increased over the last few years, this is due in part to more accessibility (for example, e-forms) and better capture and recording across all services. Neighbourhoods currently account for around 60% of complaints, the vast majority of which relate to Waste Management.

4.8 A summary of 2012/13 complaints is shown in **Appendix 2**, including response rates and judgements. Headlines include...

- The number of complaints in Adult Social Care has remained consistent although the response rate has deteriorated from 88% to 68%. Some of the cases are complex and the statutory guidance requires local authorities to agree timescales with individual complainants (which may exceed 20 days).
- There has been an improvement in Children's performance from 68% to 83% on the same volume of complaints (based on the statutory timescale of 20 days).
- The response rate in Neighbourhoods has also improved from 57% to 60% despite a significant increase in complaints.
- Complaints to Customer Management (Resources) have increased partly due to more accurate reporting and specific service drivers (for example, benefits). Response rates have fallen from 90% in 2011/12 to 72% in 2012/13.

4.9 Response rates during 2013/14 have improved significantly based on analysis of data up to the end of September, particularly in Neighbourhoods and Adult Social Care.

4.10 Numbers of Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) complaints are shown overleaf. They have fallen in recent years following a spike in 2008/09 and 2009/10.

Derby City Council Ombudsman Complaints

Year	Number of complaints received by Ombudsman
2008/09	80
2009/10	82
2010/11	34
2011/12	42
2012/13	38

Review of Complaints

- 4.11 A recent review of complaints and customer feedback has been carried out to evaluate progress since the Performance Surgery held in 2011. This included a process review, mystery shopping, audit of complaints data on Lagan (back to source documentation) and interviews with key staff.
- 4.12 Overall, it can be concluded that there are good quality responses to customers who have complained and response rates have improved across some services. The Quarter 2 results are expected to show further improvement. Further findings from the review are shown below:

4.13 Policy

- The corporate complaints procedure (2006) is widely understood but needs updating to reflect new roles and responsibilities and highlight the Council's wider aims around customer experience. A consolidated Customer Feedback Policy across all services (including AHH and CYP) would create a consistent approach for customers and staff alike.
- Tracking of complaints at Stages 2 – 4 of complaints, which includes LGO complaints, could be improved. It is suggested these could be monitored via Lagan in the same way as Stage 1 (some are already but it is not used consistently).
- There is scope for simplifying the procedure, for example removing Stage 3 – referral to Standards Committee (which has never occurred in recent times). Instead, improved reporting on learning from complaints to Scrutiny Boards could be more effective.

4.14 Processes and systems

- The complaints process has been improved and automated using Lagan over the last few years. The audit of complaints data on Lagan found data quality could be improved therefore it is proposed to undertake regular dip sampling and set targets for accuracy rates. There is a risk that complaints are not being recorded and/or updated in some areas, however work is on going with all services to identify gaps and ensure staff are trained. More regular training for all staff would also help improve data quality, for example, better recording of complaint judgements, outcomes and learning by investigating officers.

- Reporting has improved considerably with a new portal for reports by service and complaint type. Reporting could be enhanced by improved classifications for complaint categories in Lagan e.g. poor service, service failure. Analysis by ward, equality group and correlation with comments would also help.
- Some services are continuing to record complaints on legacy systems and shared drives (as documents cannot be attached), in addition to Lagan. This means potential duplication and risk of inconsistency between systems. Some integration work between Lagan and other systems has already started, this needs to continue in order to fully realise efficiencies in the process.
- Mystery shopping found that further improvements could be made to the complaints process from a user perspective (for example, DCC website).
- There is no doubt there have been improvements to enable customers to submit feedback in different ways in line with our Channel Shift Strategy. It is likely this has contributed to the increase in complaints received.

4.15 Learning

- Customer feedback is gathered in a variety of different ways. Following the success of the external LCP form, an internal e-form could be established on i-derby to support the proactive process of collating and evaluating comments and compliments.
- The Council would benefit from more analysis of comments, complaints and compliments to inform service redesign and learning. It is important that going forward, all staff, councillors and partners are encouraged to record customer feedback in a systematic way to ensure we can use feedback intelligently to drive our business.

4.16 There are a number of actions already being taken to improve the response and learning from complaints including review of the complaints procedure, improved reporting, use of alerts and training for investigating officers.

4.17 Further recommendations include...

- Clear message is issued to all staff of the importance of capturing customer feedback using one system, Lagan.
- Identification of Lagan coordinators in each service with training offered to all key staff.
- Improved controls in Lagan e.g. work queue, mandatory fields, better classification of complaints.
- Regular sample checking to improve data quality.
- Monitoring by Directorate Management Teams of responses and learning outcomes (already in place).
- Development of new Customer Feedback Policy and simplified complaints procedure (including removal of Stage 3 – Standards Committee).

4.18 A draft improvement plan is shown in **Appendix 3**.

4.19 Going forward, customer experience features as part of the Council's Innovation programme and a board will lead development and manage the improvement plan. The remit of the Customer Experience Board is to:

- Transform the customer journey through the use of insight and engagement – across all services and in partnership with agencies.
- Get it right for our customers first time every time.
- Create a culture where brilliant customer service is everyone's responsibility.
- Achieve improved customer satisfaction and outcomes.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 None.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Director of Customer Management Director of ICT Head of Customer Management Head of Business Systems
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For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Heather Greenan 01332 643462 e-mail heather.greenan@derby.gov.uk None Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Summary of complaints 2012/13 Appendix 3 – Improvement Plan
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IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 The management of complaints by organisations can impact on perceptions of value for money by service users.

Legal

- 2.1 A number of the Council's functions are governed by their own statutory requirements which include statutory complaints mechanisms, which fall outside of the corporate scheme.

Personnel

- 3.1 None noted.

Equalities Impact

- 4.1 The audit found that the equality implications from complaints could be themed and reported more effectively to aid identification of issues and wider interpretation.

Health and Safety

- 5.1 None noted.

Environmental Sustainability

- 6.1 None noted.

Asset Management

- 7.1 None noted.

Risk Management

- 8.1 The risk of reputational damage to the organisation from failure to deal with complaints and customer feedback effectively is high.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 9.1 The Council 2011-14 contains objectives to provide good quality services that meet user needs, including greater focus on using complaints to drive service improvement.

Summary of Complaints 2012/13

Number of complaints received

Directorate	Complaints received
AHH (Social Care)	47
CYP (Social Care)	50
Neighbourhoods	305
Resources	102
Total	504

Response Times

Directorate	Response made within timescales set	Timescale
AHH (Social Care)*	68%	Target: 20 days
CYP (Social Care)*	78%	Target: 20 days
Neighbourhoods	60%	Target: 10 days
Resources	72%	Target: 10 days
Total	64%	-

*Note: For AHH and CYP complaints there is the option within Lagan to extend the deadline if agreed with the customer. No time extensions were recorded for 2012/13.

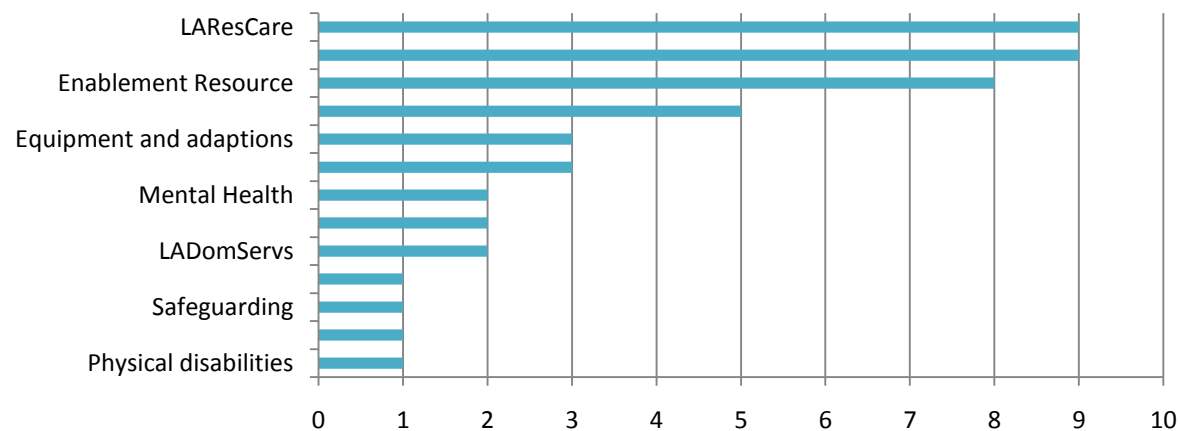
Reasons for complaints

Directorate	Most Common Reason	Percentage
AHH (Social Care)	Quality of Service	19%
CYP (Social Care)	Conduct/Attitude of staff	30%
Neighbourhoods	Service dissatisfaction	80%
Resources	Service dissatisfaction	55%

Adults Social Care

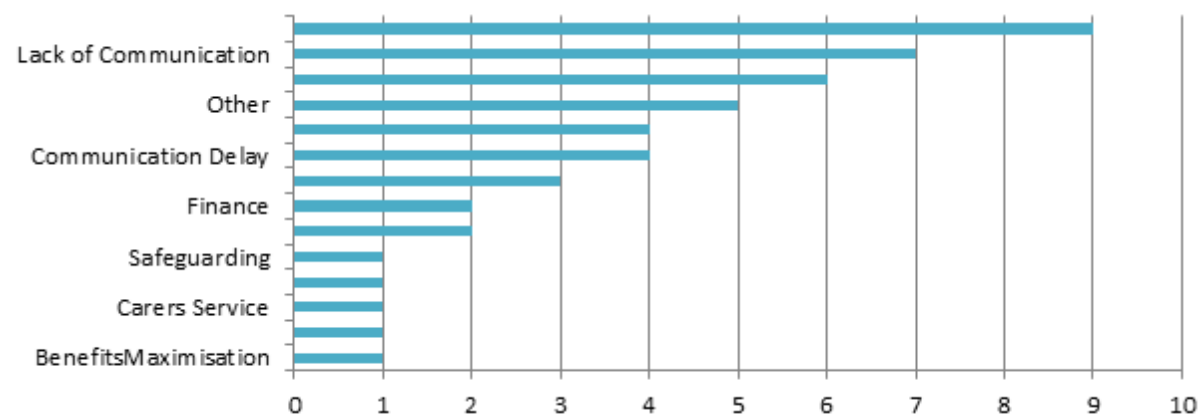
Number of Complaints by Service Area

LA Residential Care	9	19%
Carers	9	19%
Enablement Resource	8	17%
Initial Contact & First Response	5	11%
Equipment and adaptations	3	6%
Assessments	3	6%
Mental Health	2	4%
Learning Disability	2	4%
LA Dom. Services	2	4%
Voluntary Sector	1	2%
Safeguarding	1	2%
Private Residential Day Care	1	2%
Physical disabilities	1	2%
Grand Total	47	100%



Complaint Reason Type

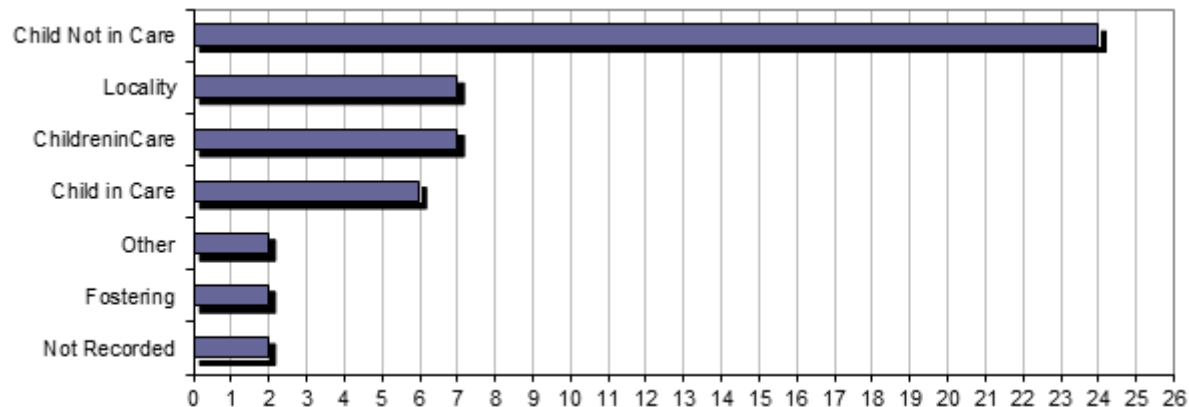
Quality of service	9	19%
Lack of Communication	7	15%
Assessments	6	13%
Other	5	11%
Withdrawal of service	4	9%
Communication delay	4	9%
Conduct of staff	3	6%
Finance	2	4%
Decision	2	4%
Safeguarding	1	2%
Reduction in service	1	2%
Carers Service	1	2%
Blue Badges	1	2%
Benefits Maximisation	1	2%
Grand Total	47	100%



Children and Young People

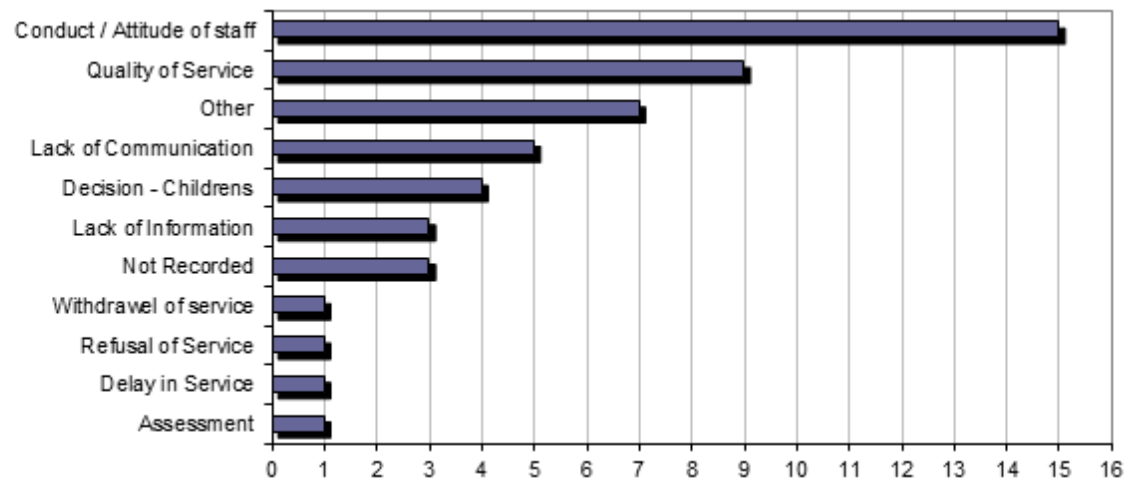
Number of Complaints by Service Area

Child not in care	24	48%
Locality	7	14%
Children in care	7	14%
Child in care	6	12%
Other	2	4%
Fostering	2	4%
Not recorded	2	4%
Grand Total	50	100%



Complaint Reason Type

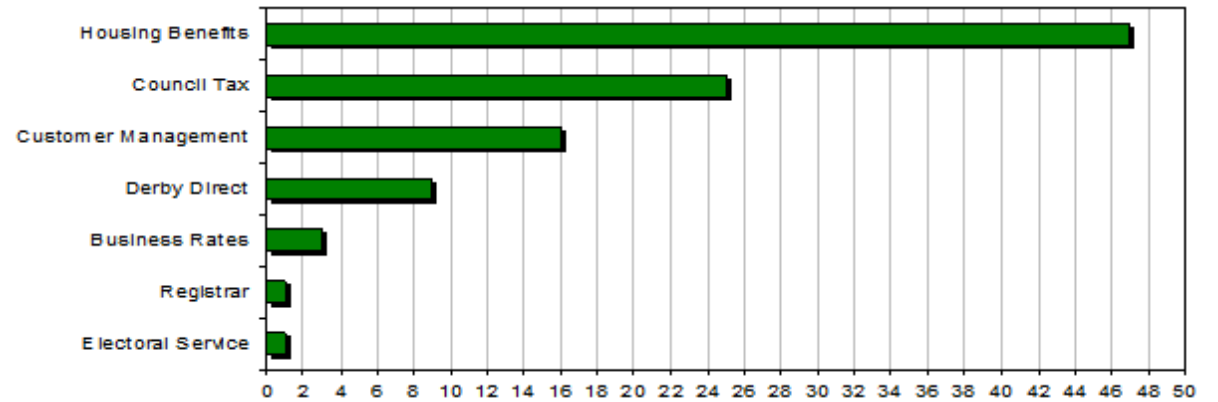
Conduct / attitude of staff	15	30%
Quality of Service	9	18%
Other	7	14%
Lack of Communication	5	10%
Decision – Children's	4	8%
Lack of information	3	6%
Not recorded	3	6%
Withdrawal of Service	1	2%
Refusal of Service	1	2%
Delay in Service	1	2%
Assessment	1	2%
Grand Total	50	100%



Resources

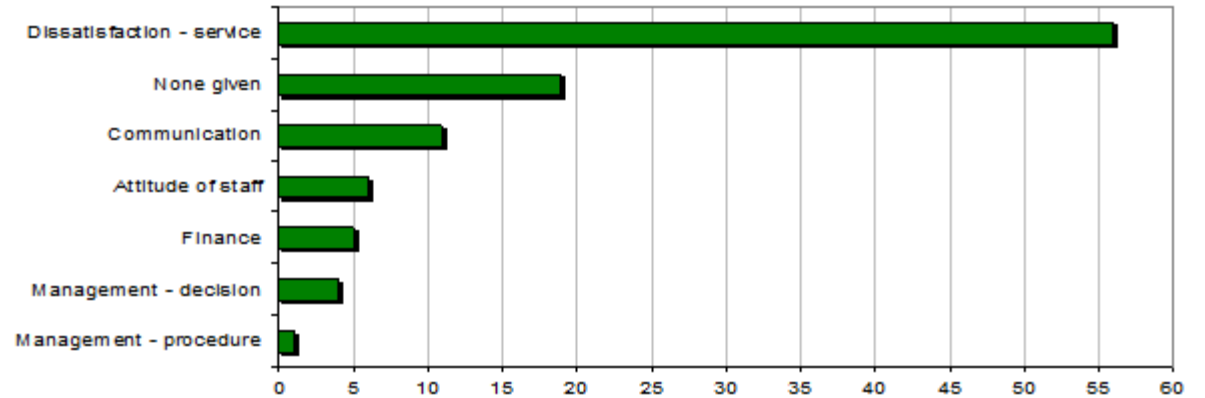
Number of Complaints by Service Area

Housing Benefits	47	46%
Council Tax	25	25%
Customer Management	16	16%
Derby Direct	9	9%
Business Rates	3	3%
Registrar	1	1%
Electoral Service	1	1%
Grand Total	102	100%



Complaint Reason Type

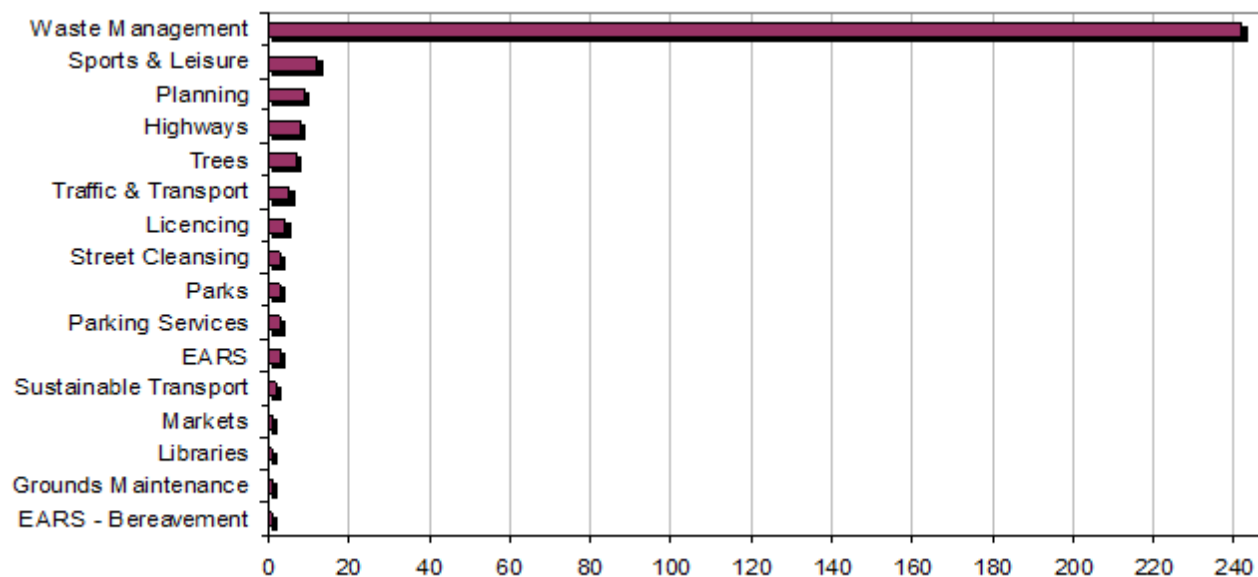
Dissatisfaction - service	56	55%
None given	19	19%
Communication	11	11%
Attitude of staff	6	6%
Finance	5	5%
Management – decision	4	4%
Management - procedure	1	1%
Grand Total	102	100%



Neighbourhoods

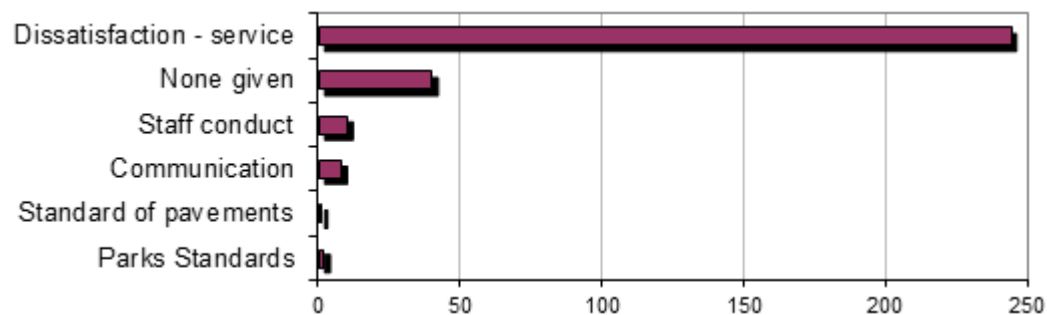
Number of Complaints by Service Area

Waste Management	242	79%
Sports & Leisure	12	4%
Planning	9	3%
Highways	8	3%
Trees	7	2%
Traffic & Transport	5	2%
Licencing	4	1%
Street Cleansing	3	1%
Parks	3	1%
Parking Services	3	1%
EARS	3	1%
Sustainable Transport	2	1%
Markets	1	0%
Libraries	1	0%
Grounds Maintenance	1	0%
EARS - Bereavement	1	0%
Grand Total	305	100%



Complaint Reason Type

Dissatisfaction - service	244	80%
None given	40	13%
Staff conduct	10	3%
Communication	8	3%
Parks Standards	2	1%
Standard of pavements	1	0%
Grand Total	305	100%



Customer Feedback Improvement Plan – September 2013

Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Comments / Cost implications (No cost, low cost, high cost)
POLICY			
1. Produce new customer feedback policy including simplified complaints procedure and documented roles and responsibilities.	Head of Customer Management/ Head of Performance / Director of Legal	November 2013	No cost
2. Communicate new policy and definitions to investigating officers and all staff via Employee Briefings and Intouch. This should include a clear message from directors that customer feedback should be recorded on Lagan.	Head of Customer Management / Head of Communications	December 2013	No cost
ACCESSIBILITY			
3. Improved sign-posting via website and e-form for complainants.	Head of Customer Management	November 2013	No cost
PROCESSES AND SYSTEMS			
4. Identification of Lagan coordinators for each service area with mandatory training.	Head of Customer Management / Head of Performance	October 2013	No cost
5. The queue notification list should be updated and reviewed regularly. Contacts should be minimised to promote accountability (including consideration of service inboxes).	Head of Customer Management	October 2013	No cost
6. Identify key bulletins / briefing sheets for Lagan users to support understanding on decision-making processes.	Head of Customer Management / Head of Performance	November 2013	No cost
7. Deliver regular training sessions each quarter to support managers in responding to stage one complaints.	Head of Customer Management / Head of Performance	October 2013	No cost
8. Establish clear development path for Lagan and review feasibility / benefits of integrating with other systems.	Head of Customer Management / Head of Business Systems	January 2014	High cost
9. Create more mandatory fields in Lagan for complaint details, judgement and outcome (so cases cannot be closed without all details recorded).	Head of Customer Management / Head of Business Systems	March 2014	Low cost

Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Comments / Cost implications (No cost, low cost, high cost)
10. Review of complaint type menu of options in Lagan to improve the quality of analysis (e.g. to drill down on service dissatisfaction).	Head of Customer Management / Head of Performance	November 2013	Low cost
RECORDING AND REPORTING			
11. Regular reporting to DMTs and COG on all stages of complaints, including LGO.	Head of Performance/ DMTs / COG	November 2013	No cost
12. Improved analysis of complaints to identify lead officer, type of complaint – supporting in management of staff conduct.	Head of Performance	January 2014	No cost
13. Quality assure complaints through dip sampling to where possible identify any areas for improvement and reduce the number escalated to stage two.	Head of Performance /DMTs	October 2013	Low cost
14. Improved QA issues that arise through routine reviewing of complaints and report to DMTs on complaints.	Head of Performance / DMTs	October 2013	Low cost
15. Review of Lagan processes to enable better reporting of equality related complaints for review by Equality Group.	Head of Customer Management	January 2014	No cost
OWNERSHIP AND LEARNING			
16. Wider capture and analysis of complaints / feedback to inform a complete picture of user feedback and where appropriate support in service development / improvements.	All Heads of Service	March 2014	Low cost
17. Improved CF measures around ratio of comments/compliments to complaints with data published regularly in In Touch.	Head of Performance	March 2014	No cost
18. Improved complaints handling should be part of HOS / TL MIP objectives.	Directors	March 2014	No cost
19. More mystery shopping of complaints process to evaluate effectiveness	Head of Customer Management	March 2014	Low cost
20. Review by DMTs and Scrutiny Boards of Learning Outcomes and actions taken.	Scrutiny Chairs / Directors	March 2014	No cost

