

If you would like this report in a different format, please contact:
the Customer & Member Liaison Office on 0191 643 2280

COMPLAINTS SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT

2012/13



Contents

Introduction	.....	3
Executive Summary	.....	3
Procedures	Overview	4
	How to make a complaint	5
	Help and Support	6
	Who can make a complaint?	6
External Review	Local Government Ombudsman	7
	Care Quality Commission.....	8
	O.F.S.T.E.D.....	8
Management & Operation	.....	8
Performance Indicators	.....	9
Numbers & analysis of complaints	.....	10
Future Developments	.....	11
Conclusions	.....	12
Statistics	Overall number of complaints	12
	Social Services	14
	Corporate Complaints	17
	Local Government Ombudsman	19
	Informal complaints and enquiries	20
Appendices	1. Corporate Complaints Procedure	22
	2. Children Complaints Procedure	23
	3. Customer Liaison Complaints Survey .	24



North Tyneside Council

COMPLAINTS SERVICE REPORT

APRIL 2012– MARCH 2013

Introduction

This report provides an overview of the Authority's complaints services between April 2012 and March 2013. It covers complaints under the Children Act 1989 and the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, which are often referred to together as the 'social services' procedures. It also includes other 'corporate complaints' about other services provided by the Authority, and Complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).

The Authority aims to provide high quality services and customer care at all times. However, it recognises there are occasions when people may wish to register dissatisfaction with those services. When this happens, the Authority wants to hear about people's experiences and, where something has gone wrong, to put it right so far as is possible and this process in turn drives improvements generated from complaints. Therefore we have a comprehensive complaints service that covers not only the statutory Social Services arena, but also all other services of the Authority under a Corporate Complaints Procedure. The procedures for dealing with Corporate and Children Services complaints are attached to this report as Appendix 1 and 2.

We also welcome comments, compliments and suggestions to provide a broad, balanced and reflective picture of people's experiences of our services.

Executive Summary

The number of complaints continues to be very low compared to the millions of transactions the Authority has with its 201,400 residents and a substantial number of visitors every year. The overall number of formal complaints to the Authority reduced by 9% from 654 in 2011-12 to 602 in 2012-13. This is the first year in many years that the Council have seen a reduction in the number of complaints, which is reflection on the dedication of staff especially in the context of a very difficult financial climate.

Complaints leaflets tailored to Corporate, Social Care Services and young people are widely available in the Authority's buildings and to download from the Authority website. It is also now very easy for our customers to contact us online. Satisfaction surveys are now issued to all complainants following the closure of their complaint, regardless of the complaint outcome. During 2012-13 a survey of complainants showed 57% of complainants were happy with the complaints process and 52% were happy with the outcome of their complaint; these results show no material change from the previous year. Appendix 3 shows a full breakdown of the survey results.

As a result of complaints received during the year a number of changes to practice and procedure were introduced; examples are summarised under 'Number and Analysis of Complaints' below.

In keeping with the principle of resolving problems as quickly as possible, the proportion of Corporate complaints resolved at Stage 1 remains high at 87% and 92% for children Social care complaints. Adult Social Care complaints have a one stage process and if the complainant remains dissatisfied they can then complain to the LGO, resulting in all such complaints being resolved at Stage 1 of the Statutory complaints procedure.

The Local Government Ombudsman found no cases of maladministration with injustice against the Council had an excellent average response time which was well within the required 28 days.

Procedures

Overview

The Council aims to respond positively to all complaints and other representations so that it can help resolve individual issues and learn from experience how to improve services. We aim to provide comprehensive complaint services, which are widely understood and easily accessible to all. The whole Authority, staff and Members, are committed to effective complaint handling and problem solving as an integral part of customer focussed services and responsive performance management.

There are three separate procedures for Corporate, Adult and Children Social Care complaints. Where ever possible, before the 'formal' complaint procedures are used, efforts are made at an operational level to resolve any difficulties.

Corporate Complaints (see Appendix 1)

Once the formal procedures are entered into for Corporate Complaints, there are, in essence, three stages:

1. Complaint referred to team leader or operational manager to try to resolve within 10 working days;
2. If not resolved to the customer's satisfaction, they can ask for it to be reviewed by a more senior manager within 10 working days; and
3. Ultimately, the Appeals and Complaints Committee makes the final decision.

Children Social Care Complaints (see Appendix 2)

In Children Social Care cases, the statutory complaints process is governed by the Local Authority Social Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2006. Stage 1 should be responded to within 10 working days and can be extended to 20 working days; at Stage 2 the response is due within 25 working days and may be extended to 65 working days for complex complaints with the complainant's approval; and Stage 3 the complaint is referred to an Independent Review Panel.

The Authority engage Independent Investigators and Independent Persons for Children Act Complaints at Stage 2 as set out in the Regulations. Other independent roles, e.g. members of Independent Complaint Review Panels, are also engaged by the Authority's Complaints Service as and when required.

Children Social Care staff ensure that all children, of an understanding age, who are new to the care system are in receipt of a complaints leaflet which is specific to young people.

Adult Social Care Complaints

The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 were introduced in April 2009. Under these provisions, the characteristics of individual complaints are assessed and specific plans of how to address the complaint are agreed with the complainant. The approach focuses on the complainant and enables organisations to tailor a flexible response that seeks to resolve the complainant's specific concerns. It is based on the principles of good complaints handling:

1. Getting it right
2. Being customer focussed
3. Being open and accountable
4. Acting fairly and proportionately
5. Putting things right
6. Seeking continuous improvement.

This statutory procedure has no fixed timescales, other than a maximum period of 6 months for handling the complaint and is a one stage process.

How to make a complaint

Complaints can be made in a number of ways, e.g.

- By talking to the staff involved, to let them try to sort the problem out;
- by writing to or telephoning the relevant service department, or the Customer & Member Liaison Office in Quadrant either in writing or by email.
Write to: Customer & Member Liaison Office
Quadrant
The Silverlink North
Cobalt Business Park
North Tyneside
NE27 0BY
tel. 0191 643 2280
Email: customerliaisonoffice@northtyneside.gov.uk
- A complaint form is available on line at:
www.northtyneside.gov.uk/custserv/complaints
- by personal visit to any of the Council's Customer First Centres,
- by telephoning the Council's Contact Centre on 0345 2000 101.

Help and support

The Customer & Member Liaison Office (CMLO) is independent of service departments and offers information, advice and help to complainants and staff responding to complaints. Its primary role is to ensure all complaints are looked into properly and any lessons learnt are adopted. The team also provides a comprehensive support service to the Authority's Councillors and this includes processing in the region of 8,000 enquiries per annum on behalf of the Members and residents.

Independent advocacy is available for people wishing to make Social Services complaints, especially children and vulnerable adults. Other assistance can be arranged to suit individual requirements.

Copies of this report and other material can be made available in other formats or languages on request to the Customer & Member Liaison Office.

Who can make a complaint?

Under the Corporate Complaints Procedures, any user of the Authority's Services can complain. This includes residents and visitors. It also includes relatives and carers acting on someone's behalf, e.g. a person living outside the area representing a relative living in North Tyneside.

In the Social Services arena, people can make a complaint if they are someone for whom the Authority has a power or duty to provide, directly or indirectly, a social service and his/her needs for that service have come to the attention of the Authority. This is extended to cover someone acting on his or her behalf, e.g. a relative or carer.

Limited exclusions do apply:-

- when other more appropriate processes already exist, e.g. formal appeal procedures, legal proceedings;
- when the matter occurred more than 12 months before the complaint was made (unless there is good reason for the delay in bringing the matter to the Authority's attention); and
- when the matter has already been properly examined.

It should be noted that where a complaint is made on someone else's behalf, reasonable checks will be made with that person to ensure they are aware of and are happy for the complaint to be considered.

Outlines of the processes are shown in Appendices 1 and 2 and further information is available from the Customer & Member Liaison Office.

External review

Local Government Ombudsman

The LGO looks at complaints about councils in a fair and independent way and their service is provided free. The LGO is independent of all Government departments and has the same powers as the High Court to obtain information and documents. If the LGO finds the Council has done something wrong they will make recommendations to put things right.

The LGO plays a vital role as either an initial point of contact for people wishing to make a complaint, or if a person remains dissatisfied after the Authority has examined a matter. It is usual for the LGO to refer a matter to the Authority to look into, if it has not done so previously.

The LGO Advice Team can be contacted on:

Tel: 0845 602 1983
Fax: 024 7682 0001
Text 'call back' to 0762 480 4323
at: www.lgo.org.uk
email: advice@lgo.org.uk
or write to :
Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771, Coventry
CV4 0EH

Leaflets and information about the LGO are available at all main offices of the Authority and in a variety of formats. Operational liaison with the LGO is provided by the Customer & Member Liaison Office.

In their Annual Letter for 2012-13 the LGO indicates that in total 31 complaints about North Tyneside Council were received during the year. Although the Authority has recorded that 39 complaints were received from the LGO during the period, 4 of which were classified as premature and dealt with through the appropriate complaints procedure by the Authority.

Of the 39 complaints received from the LGO during the year: 6 were outside of their jurisdiction, and on a further 23 occasions the LGO exercised their general discretion not to pursue. Of the remaining number (10), the LGO found no evidence of maladministration and the Authority was not required to agree to a local settlement in any cases.

The LGO did not issue any reports of maladministration with injustice.

The LGO asks Local Authorities to respond to their enquiries within 28 calendar days. During 2012-13 the Council averaged a response time well within the target timescale.

The LGO's Annual Letter is available on their website, or via the Council's Customer & Member Liaison Office.

Complaints referred to the LGO in Tyne and Wear, 2012/13	
Gateshead	38
Newcastle upon Tyne	36
North Tyneside	31
South Tyneside	34
Sunderland	39
Total	178

Care Quality Commission

In the Adult Social Care arena, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) also plays a similar role within its wider remit of regulation of social care. The Commission can be contacted at:

Care Quality Commission
National Customer Service Centre
City Gate
Gallowgate
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 4PA
 Tel. 03000 616161
 On line form on website www.cqc.org.uk

OFSTED

For Children Social Care, and across Children Young People and Learning, OFSTED plays a similar role to CQC. They can be contacted at:

OFSTED
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
 Tel. 0300 123 1231
 Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Management and Operation

Management and operation of both the corporate and social services processes are provided by the Customer & Member Liaison Office (CMLLO), which is based in Law and Governance under the Chief Executive's Office. The Customer & Member Liaison Office is also the main point of contact for the LGO.

The Office not only manages many individual complaints but also oversees the correct use of the procedures in the various service departments. It does not investigate complaints, as service areas are responsible for examining complaints about their own services.

Individual complaints are referred to relevant service managers to examine and respond to the complainant.

The Complaint service is supported by a bespoke Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

Performance Indicators

A regular report on the overall performance of the complaints services are submitted to the Authority's Appeals and Complaints Committee on an annual basis.

There are currently no national Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) for complaints against Local Authorities. However regionally and nationally work has commenced, led by the National Complaints Managers Group, to carry out a benchmarking exercise of complaints functions within Authorities. This has proven difficult in the past to achieve as local authorities carry out their functions and provide their services in different ways.

The Complaints Service carry out an in-house survey of people who have used the complaints process. Returns are summarised in Appendix 3. These show that 44% of respondents said they found it easy to find information about the complaints process; 58% were happy with the time taken to respond to complaints; 57% thought the process was good and 52% were satisfied with the outcome.

There are currently 201,400 residents in North Tyneside. Voluntary diversity monitoring of complainants was introduced 7 years ago. The following table compares the results of the survey against the Office of National Statistics (ONS) Mid Year Population Census estimate for 2012. There is no up to date information relating to disability.

%	O.N.S.	NTC	%	O.N.S.	NTC
Gender			Ethnic Origin		
Female	51.7	61	Asian	1.9	-
Male	48.3	35	Black	0.5	-
Declined		4	Other Ethnic	0.5	-
Age			Mixed	0.8	1
Under 18	22.31	-	White British	94.4	92
18-25	5.89	4	Other White	1.9	3
26-35	12.89	14	Declined	-	4
36-45	14.00	10	Religion		
46-55	14.55	28	Christian	63.8	42
56-65	12.84	28	Hindu	0.3	-
66-75	8.81	9	Buddhist	0.2	-
Over 75	8.71	5	Muslim	0.7	-
Declined	-	2	Sikh	0.2	-
With a disability			Other	0.3	5
Yes	-	38	None	28.1	39
No	-	59	Declined	6.4	14
Not given	-	3			

Numbers and analysis of complaints

The number of complaints for 2012-13, together with previous years for comparison, is shown in the Tables at the end of this report.

This information is made available for consideration by individual service areas, as part of performance management throughout the year. This helps identify any themes or trends and so informs service improvement initiatives. The Customer & Member Liaison Manager meets with various departmental management teams to discuss any implications arising from themes or trends in complaints.

Complaints related activity as set out in Table 7 including low level complaints was down by 17% during 2012-13 on the previous year. Formal Corporate complaints decreased by 10% from 590 to 535, Social Care complaints increased by 4%.

Corporate complaints resolved at Stage 1 remained high at 87%, 92% of Children Social Care complaints were resolved at Stage 1. This reflects the value of the training provided over the last few years by Customer & Member Liaison Staff and the LGO in Effective Complaint Handling and the commitment of Managers and Supervisors to resolve complaints at an early stage.

All complaints concluded and closed off on the Complaints Database create a prompt to enter any lessons learnt as a result of the complaint. A number of improvements generated by complaints were made to procedures and services during the year. A number of examples of such improvements are set out below:-

Brief Summary	Lessons Learned
Repairs, bathroom floor, rent arrears, garden tidy	Wording in tenancy review letter could be more clear and a review has been suggested as part of service improvement plan.
Threatening letter regarding Gas Service	Communication improvements to ensure every effort is made to contact the customer prior to any changes to an appointment.
Roof repairs not undertaken	Change in process for work at height team with its own administration to ensure work is followed through from an initial inspection to scaffold request to job completion
Family not informed of charges for Care Home	Raised awareness for Social workers in relation to what charges need to be applied, which beds are charged for, and inform the family accordingly.
Registration procedures for birth of child	Registrars have reviewed procedures.
Swimming classes	Refunds will be given via reception, the complaint has prompted a change in procedures.
Failure to clarify home to school transport arrangements	Review of transport contract / award arrangements working in partnership with Parents Carers Forum.

Condition of grave foundations	Contractors sourced a board to fit at the base of the grave for any future burials where the brick pathway is visible upon excavation. This will both prevent bricks falling into the excavated grave and neaten the appearance of the grave.
Poor Customer Service at Swimming Pool	Swimming registration form updated to include expected wait before being allocated swimming lessons. Form will also include a specific swimming lesson e mail address.
Delays with Adoption process and information sharing issues	1. Policy written to ensure clarity and consistency of information regarding adoption allowances. 2. Complaint and outcome shared with staff for team learning.
Attitude of Education Welfare Officer	Review of the standard letters used to inform parents of school attendance concerns.
Poor communication re care of son	Pathway related to transition to be revisited, particularly support for parents. Operational protocol to be reviewed and escalation of issues to Health & Wellbeing Board.
Family not informed of charges for care home / respite	Social workers need to be aware of what charges need to be applied, which beds are charged for, and inform the family accordingly.
Difficulty with booking exercise classes	New telephony system to be implemented to screen calls to make it easier to book classes

Future Developments

North Tyneside Council is a rapidly changing organisation. This process is likely to continue and remain a challenge for effective complaints handling as service users experience changes in their services and the organisation evolves internally as a result of changing priorities from central Government.

There are significant examples of change within the Council. From 1st November 2012 the Council commenced delivering partnership arrangements for provision of a range of services with Cofley and Capita Symonds. The Authority's Customer & Member Liaison Office will continue to manage complaints for all of the Authority's partners on behalf of its customers.

The overall focus of attention is now very much on 'learning' from complaints and this will be a core driver in all future developments by the Authority.

From April 2013 the Authority's Complaints Service commenced a new relationship with Local Healthwatch. Healthwatch North Tyneside will be the new coordinated local consumer voice for both commissioners and providers of social care services. They provide a valuable source of information about services to local people and make sure those who need help to access information in order to make appropriate choices are supported to do so. Healthwatch North Tyneside have a core function to making people's

views and experiences of services known. In order to do this effectively the Local Healthwatch:

- identify and use existing arrangements to avoid duplication
- develop systematic methods of gathering views from local and national sources, where there are currently gaps
- be responsive to what it finds out and report back on developments
- publish findings and make them fully accessible
- identify causes for concern and celebration amongst the local community and feedback on these findings

Conclusions

The Authority is going through a period of significant change and is implementing efficiency savings over £47.5m over a period of 4 years through to 2015 as part of the Change Efficiency and Improvement Programme. The extent of the changes required will inevitably generate concerns from customers as the changes to service delivery and charging arrangements are implemented.

The rapidly changing culture and demands of increased customer satisfaction coupled with organisational changes across public and partner sectors means that complaints services must be continually kept up to date. The Authority's successful history and current good practice in effective complaint handling cannot be taken for granted.

By the very nature of this area of work, the complaints services will never satisfy all of the people all of the time. However, the survey of complainants indicates a high level of satisfaction with the service overall.

The Authority is committed to providing effective complaints services for the benefits of individual customers, the Authority and the community alike. Complaints are now widely recognised as integral to the provision of quality services at both individual and strategic levels.

Statistics

This part of the report is broken down into the following sections:-

- 1) Overall number of complaints across the Authority
- 2) Social Services Complaints
- 3) Corporate Complaints
- 4) Local Government Ombudsman
- 5) Informal Complaints and Enquiries.

1. Overall number of complaints across the Authority

The volume of formal complaint related activity for the period April 2008 to March 2012 is summarised in Table 1.

Table 7 Summary	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Social Services Complaints	68	52	64	67
Corporate Complaints	348	485	590	535
Local Government Ombudsman investigations	49	33	30	39
Formal total	465	570	684	641
Pre-Complaint and general enquiries dealt with by the Customer Liaison Office.	1,037	844	1,165	944
Total complaint related activity	1,502	1,414	1,849	1,585

Table 1a

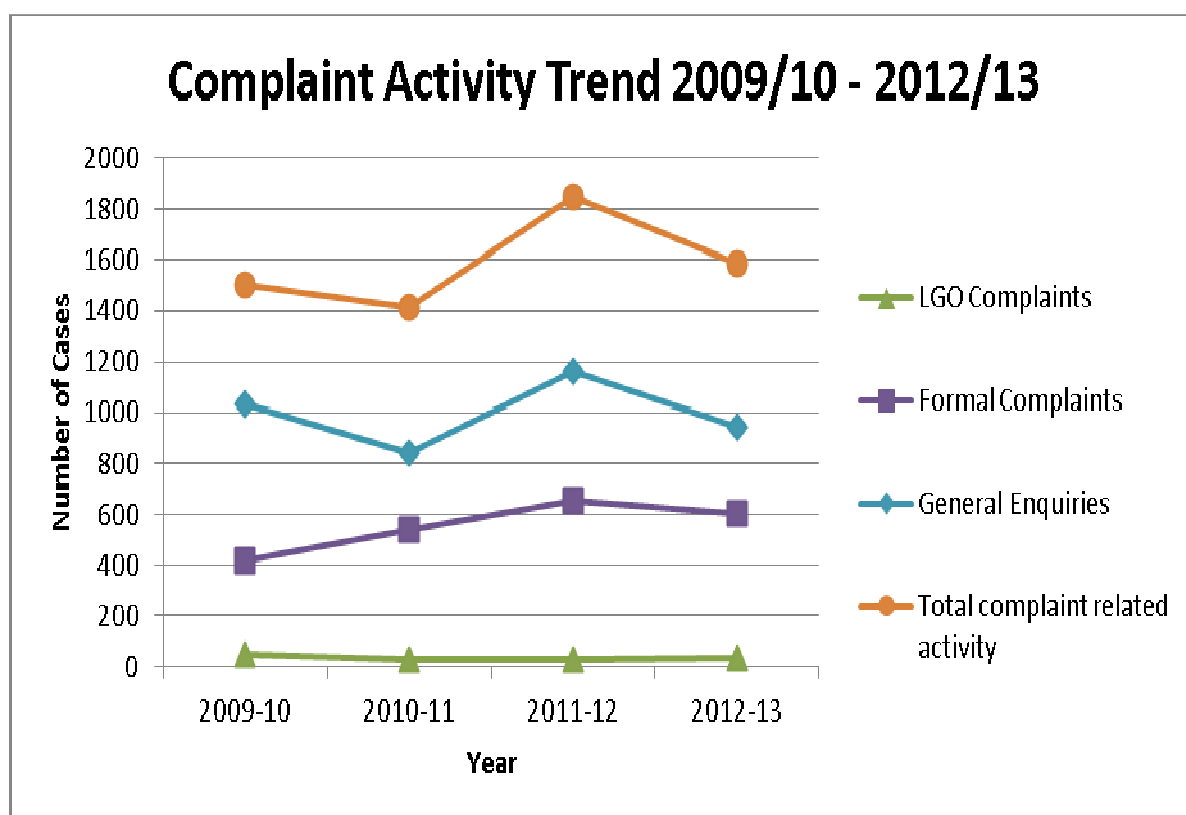
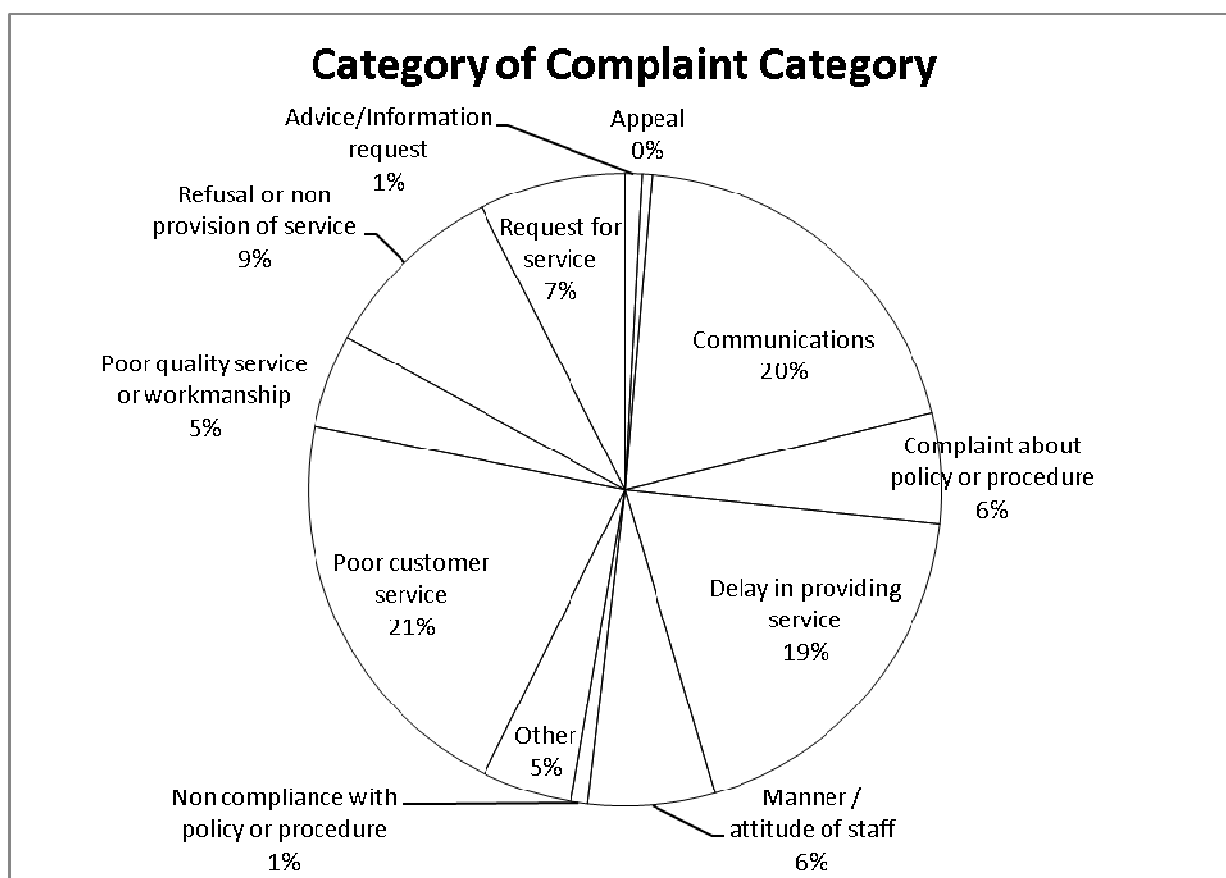


Table 1b – Percentage split by category of all formal complaints to the Council both Corporate and Social Care for 2012-13



There has been a 23% decrease during the year in the number of pre-complaint and general enquiries dealt with by the Customer & Member Liaison Office (CMLO). The CMLO continue to make sure that as many enquiries as possible are directed to the most appropriate department at the first point of contact. This will ensure customers are given more responsive replies and reduce the inefficiencies inherent in redirection of enquiries within the Authority. All enquiries received by email into the CMLO are acknowledged by email, the majority on the same working day. The customer is also notified of who their enquiry has been sent to and that they should expect a response direct. Enquirers by telephone or letter are posted a receipt setting out the same information.

2. Social Services Complaints

Social Service complaints dealt with under the relevant statutory processes are split into Children's and Adult Services, as shown in Table 2. In addition there are complaints regarding Children's and Adult Services which were dealt with under the Corporate Procedure (see Table 8).

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Children & Families Services	33	28	32	37
Adult Services	35	24	32	30
TOTAL	68	52	64	67

There has been an increase of complaints about Social Care Services overall by 4% on the previous year, however numbers remain very low.

Within Children Social Care, complaints have been categorised as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Children & Families Services Categories	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Creche Service / Sure Start	2	2	1	0
Adoption / Fostering / LAC	29	21	8	13
Safeguarding			11	9
Child Protection			2	5
First Call			9	10
Children with Disabilities Service		2	0	0
Other	2	3	1	0
TOTAL	33	28	32	37

Users of services in Children, Young People & Learning (CYPL) are provided with details of the complaints system. Children who are looked after receive a 'complaints form' to use if they wish to raise any point about their care or circumstances generally. Acknowledging that making a complaint can be difficult young people are encouraged to have the assistance of a mentor or advocate if they want to make a complaint. The units for children with a disability have specially trained advocates to help those who have communication difficulties. In the child protection system users may feel they have little power to make a complaint and this is acknowledged. To capture issues of user concern the review process and other meetings are forums in which matters which are of worry to the user can be tackled. In this way the user's view can be heard and services influenced. In addition to the numbers reported above there were 20 complaints about CYPL dealt with under the Corporate Complaints procedure.

The Head of Preventative and Safeguarding Services commented, "The Service has seen a small increase in complaints: 37 in 2012/13, up by 5 from the previous year. The complex area of Looked After Children Services, Safeguarding and Child Protection work and Duty and Assessment activities accounts for the complaints received. Although more than half of the complaints are not upheld and none upheld in full, it is important that the user voice is heard and actions are taken to address matters that need improving.

The review and care team processes are able to deal with many matters. This means minor disputes and or differences of opinion can be dealt with without recourse to formal complaint procedures: this is a positive thing. Complaints are thereby dealt with quickly and close to the operational sector

The 'power in-balance' between the user and service provider is acknowledged and as a service provider social care has to make the complaint procedures accessible and meaningful to the user. Complaints have assisted in

- Focusing training and work-force development on customer care
- Increasing training for social care staff on communicating effectively with children
- Ensuring that procedures and practice include feedback to users in a consistent and timely way.

As we go forward into 2013/14 and in particular develop a new duty and assessment arrangement with the Multi Agency and Joint 'Front Door' with our colleagues from Adult Social Care we are sensitive to the need to build user opinion into the review of the service and will do so as part of the formal review of the provision."

Within Adult Social Care, categories are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Adult Services Categories	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Finance and Administration	3	3	2	1
Service Provision	0	0	4	0
Home Care / Residential	4	3	0	5
Community Assessment & Support	10	10	12	7
Social Work	17	7	14	10
Learning Disability & Mental Health	0	0	0	5
Other	1	1	0	2
TOTAL	35	24	32	30

Referring to the above table, it is a recognised factor in complaints management that the transition phase of a change in service is likely to generate increased dissatisfaction before the new arrangements settle in. There was an increase in complaints for this very reason during 2008-09 and complaint levels have returned to much lower levels during the subsequent years. In addition to the numbers reported above there were 9 complaints about Adult Services dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

Tables 5 and 6 show the proportions of upheld complaints for Children's and Adults Services over the year. Approximately 53% of complaints overall were not upheld, 30% were upheld in part and 17% were upheld in full.

Table 5 - Children Social Care complaint outcomes	2009-10 %	2010-11 %	2011-12 %	2012-13 %
Not Upheld	52	41	69	57
Upheld in Full	9	4	6	0
Upheld in Part	30	55	25	38
Ongoing	9	0	0	5

Table 6 - Adult Social Care complaint outcomes	2009-10 %	2010-11 %	2011-12 %	2012-13 %
Not Upheld	43	46	53	53
Upheld in Full	20	8	10	17
Upheld in Part	37	46	34	30
Ongoing	0	0	3	0

Problem solving at the earliest opportunity is a key aim of effective complaint handling. This is not only of value to the complainant but also to the Council in optimising use of resources and enhancing customer care.

Table 7 shows early resolution at Stage 1 of children complaints only. From April 2009 a one stage process was introduced for Adult Social Care complaints.

Table 7 – Childrens Social Services complaints resolved at stage:	2009-10 %	2010-11 %	2011-12 %	2012-13 %
One	85	89	94	92
Two	9	11	0	3
Three	0	0	0	0
Ongoing	6	0	6	5

3. Corporate Complaints

Table 8, below, shows a breakdown of corporate complaints received for 2012-13 compared to the previous 3 years, reflecting current services.

Table 8 – Corporate Complaints					
Department	Service Area	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Chief Exec & Financial Services	Claims & Insurance	1	3	1	-
	Legal Services / CMLO	-	4	2	4
	Electoral Registration	2	4	-	1
	Other (inc Street Lighting)	1	5	5	4
	Total	4	16	8	9
Revs & Bens	Benefits	19	19	31	13
	Council Tax	22	16	8	7
	Total	41	35	39	20
Cultural & Customer Services	Indoor Sports & Leisure	12	10	9	3
	Cultural Services Other	1	3	3	8
	Customer Services	13	11	18	10
	Other	4	5	1	3
	Total	30	29	31	24
Business & Economic Development	Parking	19	19	15	17
	Planning	10	19	6	12
	Highways	13	10	13	15
	Environmental Health	2	3	5	6
	Other	7	18	7	20
	Taxi Licensing	-	3	0	2
	Regeneration			2	1
	Strategic Property	-	-	1	3
Total	51	72	49	76	
Environmental Services	Cleansing Management	1	2	37	3
	Biodiversity	2	3	3	-
	Vermin/Pest Control	2	2	1	3
	Litter/Enforcement/Fly-tipping	2	4	1	3
	Waste Management	1	15	15	15
	Grounds Maintenance	1	6	6	1

	Sea Front Management		4		-
	Recycling/Wheeled Bins/Special Collections	15	19	12	20
	Trees/Shrubs	4	4	3	6
	Winter Maintenance	1	2	1	2
	Cemeteries	6		0	3
	Total	35	61	80	56
Adult Social Care	Transport/Other	2	2	2	6
	Financial Services	2	4	5	3
	Total	4	6	7	9
Children, Young People & Learning	Children Services	1	3	5	13
	Education	4	4	5	7
	Total	5	7	10	20
North Tyneside Homes	Debt Recovery	5	6	11	7
	Day-to-day Repairs	9	13	27	20
	Allocations/Letting	15	11	19	13
	Housing Estates	23	34	26	45
	Empty Homes /Voids	3	5	8	8
	Gas Services	4	2	5	1
	Homelessness	9	10	6	4
	Housing Investment	12	8	9	6
	Safer Estates	2	1	4	4
	Other	1	4	6	4
	Total	83	94	121	112
Kier North Tyneside (from Sept 2009 only)	Aids & Adaptations	-	3	2	-
	Day-to-day Repairs	65	124	188	159
	Gas Services	8	14	46	26
	Housing Investment	19	20	8	17
	Empty Homes / Voids	3	4	1	7
	Total	95	165	245	209
	Grand Total	348	485	590	535

The number of Corporate Complaints dropped by 10% from 590 in 2011-12 to 535 in 2012-13. The majority of departments saw a reduction in complaint numbers. There was a significant reduction in Revs and Bens (Council Tax and Benefit Payments) which were almost half of the previous years total and a reduction of 17% of complaints against Kier NT.

Table 9 shows the proportion of corporate complaints upheld or not.

Table 9: Corporate complaints outcomes	2009-10 %	2010-11 %	2011-12 %	2012-13 %
Not Upheld	30	29	23	34
Upheld in Full	32	37	38	33
Upheld in Part	38	34	39	33

Table 10 shows the stage at which corporate complaints were resolved, again indicating a high level of early problem solving overall and again is consistent with previous years.

Table 10: Corporate complaints resolved at Stage:	2009-10 %	2010-11 %	2011-12 %	2012-13 %
One	86	87	87	87
Two	13	12	13	13
Three	1	1	0	0

Policy complaints

There were 7 complaints regarding Council 'policy' during the year. Complaints about policy of the Authority are recorded and responded to at Stage 1, but not considered further within the complaints process.

4. Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

The next stage after the Authority's complaints procedures is the Local Government Ombudsman. The number of complaints dealt with by the LGO over the last 4 years and their designation of the outcomes compared to the national average is shown in Table 11 which excludes premature complaints and advice given. No information in relation to national averages is available for 2012-13 but will be available from next year.

Table 11 Complaints determined by the LGO	2009-10		2010-11		2011-12		2012-13	
	NTC %	National Ave' %	NTC %	National Ave' %	NTC %	National Ave' %	NTC %	National Ave' %
Maladministration and injustice	0	1%	2%*	0	0	0	0	-
Local Settlements	16%	27%	7%	26%	7%	21%	0	-
Reports finding maladministration	0				0	1%	0	-
No maladministration	43%	46%	57%	48%	52%	46%	14%	-
LGO's discretion not to investigate	18%	26%	17%	26%	26%	18%	68%	-
Outside jurisdiction	23%		17%		15%	14%	18%	-

* Relates to 1 case

Table 12 shows the number of complaints received by the LGO from the public, which were investigated in previous years, the LGO have not produced this information in 2012-13 due to changes in the way they report in year. However the Authority has based 2012-13 figures on their own records. More detailed reports will be produced from 2013-14.

Table 12: Complaints to the LGO	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Environmental Services		3	4	0
Highways, Transport & Planning	17	6	9	11
Revenues & Benefits	2	1	2	3
North Tyneside Homes	7	9	4	11
Education & Children Social Care	6	7	3	11
Adult Social Care	7	5	5	3
Other	10	2	3	0
Total	49	33	30	39

Table 13 gives the decisions made by the LGO in the given years (including decisions made in respect of complaints received in previous years; the outcome of ongoing complaints at the start of a new financial year will be reported the following year).

Table 13 LGO Decisions		2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Total	Complaints Received	75	68	66	39
	Outside Jurisdiction	10	7	1	6
	Discretion not to investigate	8	7	10	23
	Premature referrals	14	22	27	4
	Advice Given	12	13	9	0
Investigated		49	33	30	33
Outcome	Findings of no maladministration	19	24	14	5
	Local Settlement	7	3	2	0
	Findings of maladministration & injustice	0	1	0	0
	Ongoing	0	0	0	1

5. Informal complaints and enquiries

As has been indicated previously, the 'headline' figure of the number of formal complaints does not reflect the number of concerns or problems reported to the Authority, and satisfactorily dealt with by staff and via the Members Enquiries system.

Consideration is currently being given in a number of service areas to better ways of 'capturing' the valuable information provided by 'informal' complaints as an aid to performance monitoring. This is being extended to include comments and compliments and provide a more comprehensive picture of feedback from our customers.

In the meantime, the Customer & Member Liaison Office has been monitoring the number of enquiries and informal complaints, or 'pre-complaint enquiries' dealt with by its staff, and these figures are shown in Table 14. This information has already proved valuable on a number of occasions as early indicators of developing issues in some service areas.

Table 14 - Pre complaint & general enquiries processed by CMLO	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Mayor's Office	9	2	0	0
Education,	13	5	0	0
Children & Young People	16	14	19	23
Business & Economic Development	226	152	202	171
Adult Social Care	35	21	16	9
Cultural Services	47	39	59	75
North Tyneside Homes	101	136	127	103
Kier North Tyneside	112	39	133	115
Environmental Services	340	343	517*	307
Customer Services (Revs & Bens)	80	43	30	42
Legal Governance & Commercial Services	14	11	37	25
Finance & Resources	2	2	19	46
Policy & Performance	9	4	0	0
Other	32	33	6	28
TOTAL	1,038	844	1,165	944

*A high number of contacts were received from residents during April and May 2011 following a change in refuse collection rounds from a 5 day to 4 day service, this dropped to normal levels once initial issues were resolved.

NORTH TYNESIDE COUNCIL

CORPORATE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

(Amended 1 September 2006)

STAGE 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complaints can be received by any employee/office but usually in a Customer Services Centre, the Telephone Call Centre or Customer Liaison Office.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complaints are registered on computer and referred to Service Area
10 working days to respond in writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service Manager informed, makes enquiries and responds to the complainant in writing.
STAGE 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If not satisfied with the Stage 1 reply, the complainant has 10 working days to ask, giving reasons, for a more senior manager to review matters.
10 working days to respond in writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Case referred to Head of Service or other Senior Manager to review whole complaint and first response.
STAGE 3 COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If not satisfied with Stage 2 reply the complainant has 10 working days to ask, giving reasons, for the complaint to be considered by a Committee of up to 5 Councillors.
Held within 28 calendar days of request.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The complainant and officers are invited to attend and present their cases, supported by all previous correspondence etc.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The decision of the Committee is the final stage of the Council's internal procedure, the decision is communicated to the complainant within 24 hours and confirmed in writing within 5 working days.
FURTHER OPTIONS	Complainants advised to consider consulting Citizen's Advice, a solicitor or Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied. The Ombudsman will only look into a complaint if the Council has not first examined it in exceptional circumstances.

NORTH TYNESIDE COUNCIL

CHILDREN ACT 1989 (*Amended 1 September 2006)

STAGE 1	Sometimes known as the 'informal' stage. 10 working days to respond, can extend to 20 if need be.	Receipt and referral of complaint to Complaints staff <hr/> Service Manager informed of the problem, makes enquiries and responds to the complainant.
STAGE 2	Sometimes known as the 'formal' stage. 25 working days to respond can extend to maximum of 65.	Progress to this stage if:- Complainant feels problem not resolved at stage 1, it is a particularly serious complaint, the complainant requests to by-pass stage 1. <hr/> All stage 2 investigations are co-ordinated by Complaints Manager in Customer Liaison Office. <hr/> For Children Act complaints an 'Independent Investigator' and 'Independent Person' are appointed. <hr/> The Head of Service responds to the complainant after consideration of the investigator's report.
STAGE 3 REVIEW PANEL	Held within 28 days of request for Review Panel.	Progress to this stage if complainant is not satisfied at stage 2. A Review Panel considers the complaint, the investigator's report and the response of the Head of Service. *It comprises 3 independent people recruited from outside of the Council. Relevant Director communicates Review Panel outcome to complainant within 15 working days with any actions to be taken.
FURTHER OPTIONS	Complainants will be advised to consider consulting Citizen's Advice, a solicitor or Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied. The Ombudsman will not usually look into a complaint if it has not first been examined by the Council.	

Summary of Customer Liaison Complaints Survey (1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013)

17% of survey forms issued were returned

How easy was it to find information about the complaints service?	Easy	Neither	Difficult	Other
	44%	26%	16%	14%

If help was sought from staff, how helpful was it?	Helpful	Neither	Unhelpful	Other
	39%	2%	6%	53%

If a leaflet was received, how helpful was the information?	Helpful	Neither	Unhelpful	Other
	55%	18%	7%	20%

How satisfied were you with the response time?	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied	Other
	58%	19%	19%	4%

Was response easy to understand?	Easy	Neither	Difficult	Other
	75%	13%	3%	9%

Did response letter tell you what to do if unhappy?	Yes	No	Other
	73%	5%	22%

How good was the process?	Very good	Fairly good	Neither	Fairly poor	Very poor	Other
	31%	26%	15%	9%	14%	5%

Were you satisfied with the outcome?	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
	27%	25%	15%	7%	26%