

Appendix 1

DIRECTORATE ANNUAL COMPLAINTS SUMMARY: 2016/2017

DIRECTORATE: ADULTS, HOUSING & HEALTH

Summary:

Top expressions of dissatisfaction relate to Housing remedial repairs, Transforming Homes programme, delays by contractors and service provision for homeless applications. These include:

- Transforming Homes - Quality of works, conduct of contractors and no updates being provided.
- Repairs - Lack of updates regarding repairs appointments, damp and mould, delays by the contractor and quality of work.
- Housing solutions - Lack of updates, conduct of staff, delays with decision being made on application.
- Estate Management – ASB issues and lack of communication.

	Concerns rec'd	Concerns escalated	S1 rec'd	% upheld	S1 escalated	S2 rec'd	% upheld	S2 escalated	S3 rec'd	% upheld
Transforming Homes	33 (38)	2 (7)	65 (48)	60% (79%)	11 (13)	15 (15)	67% (67%)	3 (3)	3 (6)	0% (33%)
Repairs	158 (660)	23 (79)	429 (447)	41% (77%)	71 (106)	97 (149)	48% (69%)	15 (40)	15 (46)	7% (13%)
Housing Solutions	30 (108)	1 (9)	100 (77)	24% (18%)	20 (19)	60 (31)	32% (29%)	12 (7)	15 (8)	7% (25%)
Estate Management	54 (157)	7 (13)	107 (79)	20% (49%)	22 (19)	57 (53)	26% (32%)	10 (14)	15 (18)	26% (22%)

*Last year's full figures are shown in brackets

Please note: The Complaints Team will investigate a complaint direct at stage 3 when an assessment of the case is deemed appropriate

Points to Note:

- Transforming Homes – 60% of stage 1 complaints were upheld. This has improved compared to last year (79%) however this still remains high.
- Transforming Homes – 67% of stage 2 complaints were upheld (the same figure for 2015/16).
 - **Reasons why the % upheld is high:**
 - Overall the number of concerns/complaints received for Transforming Homes for the year represents 0.7% of the overall number of contacts required (16,725) to complete these works.
 - A theme this year has been regarding contractor communication.
 - A second theme of those upheld was regarding the timely resolution of any defects which come to light after a property has been completed.
 - **Plans to reduce this %:**
 - Where complaints are upheld actions are put in place with our contractors to address any themes arising and are monitored through ongoing improvement plans.
 - English classes have recently been put in place by a contractor for their workforce to help improve their ability to respond to residents when working in Thurrock homes. In addition to this, the content of all standard letters has been reviewed.
 - The way defects are handled has now been reviewed and the time taken to resolve any defects is now monitored monthly as a performance item with our contractors.
- Repairs - The reporting period has seen a significant reduction in concerns/complaints received compared with 2015/16.

- **What actions have been taken by the service to help contribute to this reduction in volumes:**

Below is a summary of key improvements identified and implemented within the service and in partnership with Mears.

- Follow on works / Exclusions:
 - A dedicated resource is now assigned to the Exclusions work stream.
 - In December a second resource was assigned to this work stream.
- Follow on works/missed appointments:
 - Due to repeated issues of this nature a common trend was identified with regards to one particular sub-contractor. As a result, no further works were issued to the subcontractor from September 2016, allowing them time to focus on existing work orders only.

- A second subcontractor was then identified as having a high number of missed appointments recorded. It was then determined that the demand of works was too high and this was resulting in missed appointments. Volume of work assigned to this subcontractor was reduced.
- Repairs call handling:
 - With effect from November 2016, all calls to the repairs team are now recorded.
 - Regular spot checks are carried out on calls received by the repairs call centre, including both recorded and live calls, to ensure the correct information is being provided to residents and to identify any training needs.
 - Call scripts have been developed and implemented, to assist in the handling of calls relating to repairs.
- Technical Services
 - A dedicated resource has been assigned to work with Technical Services in order to assist in managing visits undertaken by Thurrock Surveyors. This includes arranging appointments with residents and booking these into the Surveyor's diaries, keeping residents informed with regards to appointments and assisting the Surveying and Engineering Team Lead with ensuring that Surveyors are promptly providing their reports and any recommendations following inspections.
- Damp and Mould
 - The service have appointed a Damp and Mould Specialist Surveyor and Damp and Mould Resident Liaison Officer.
 - A full review of the process along with the development of procedures for managing cases relating to reports of Damp and Mould has been completed and implemented in the 3rd quarter (Oct – Dec 2016).
 - Work is currently ongoing with regards to the development and implementation of Damp and Mould training across various housing teams, to assist in the management of cases.
- Repairs - 41% of stage 1 complaints were upheld. This has improved significantly compared to last year (77%) however this still remains high.
- Repairs - 48% of stage 2 complaints were upheld. This has improved significantly compared to last year (69%) however this still remains high.
 - **Reasons why the % upheld is high:**

- The upheld complaints for the Repair Service relate to delays in follow on works being completed, communication issues, staff attitude and quality of workmanship.
- **Plans to reduce this %:**
 - Please see above section (*what actions have been taken by the service to help contribute to this reduction in volumes*)
 - Delays in follow on works - This will be monitored via customer feedback, by introducing logs to ensure follow on work are progressed. Additionally, Mears have outlined that the Customer Care Team will monitor 'call back sheets' to ensure these have been signed off and works completed.
 - Communication issues - The service are addressing communication issues through 'Mears Governance Meetings'
 - Attitude of staff – This has been addressed by taking action in line with HR procedure.
 - Quality of work – This has been addressed by delivering toolbox talks with staff.
 - In addition to the above, it should be noted that:
 - Overall the number of concerns/complaints received for repairs represents 2% of the total number of responsive repairs undertaken (34,056).
 - Resident customer satisfaction, has increased from 86% (2015/16) to 91% for 2016/17.
- Housing Solutions – There has been a significant increase in stage 2 complaints received (60 for this year compared with 31 the previous year).
 - **Reasons for the increase in stage 2 volumes:**
 - The policy, increased demand pressures and limited stock often mean the council are unable to meet all the needs in providing a property for all customers.
 - Delays in processing applications.
 - Lack of contact from staff.
 - Concerns over the conduct of staff.
 - **Detail of the plans to reduce the volume of stage 2 complaints received going forward:**
 - The service review within the homelessness service will drive forward a significant change in the way in which the council delivers the homeless service. This will result in the quicker processing of applications as the team will be working on specialist areas.

- To manage customer expectations, a review of all customer literature and communication will be undertaken to improve the information in letters and on the website. This will clarify the service standards and expectations.
 - Staff will be offered a refresher customer care training.
 - Increased joint working with the corporate complaints team, conducting monthly review of trends and lessons learnt to minimise future complaints.
- Estate Management - The reporting period has seen a significant reduction in concerns/complaints received compared with 2015/16.
 - **What actions have been taken by the service to help contribute to this reduction in volumes:**
 - The team have adopted a more pragmatic approach to introductory tenancy cases and focused more on Tenancy Sustainment. An example of this is whereby there is a small amount of rent arrears.
 - The team now offer early support and referrals to other agencies when concerns are identified and the team are working more closely with our partners to achieve this and reduce the number of evictions.
 - The team have also focused on resolving complaints swiftly to ensure the matter is not escalated. To help with this the team now break down and highlight each separate concern raised by the customer, to ensure they are responding fully to each item raised.
 - The team now provide feedback around lessons learned from previous complaints to ensure the same mistakes aren't repeated. An example of this is a case study that was used in a team brief around a stage 1 which escalated where it shouldn't have if the Officer had checked through previous customer slips to ascertain the customer had raised the same concern before with a different Officer.

DIRECTORATE ANNUAL COMPLAINTS SUMMARY: 2016/2017

DIRECTORATE: Children's Services

Summary:

Top expressions of dissatisfaction relate to Special Educational Needs (SEN) and School Admissions and include:

- Delays with Educational Health and Care (EHC) plan.
- Unhappy with how school admission has been processed.
- Conduct of staff members.

	Concerns rec'd	Concerns escalated	S1 rec'd	% upheld	S1 escalated	S2 rec'd	% upheld	S2 escalated	S3 rec'd	% upheld
SEN	1 (4)	0 (0)	17 (7)	41% (71%)	3 (1)	8 (1)	50% (0%)	4 (0)	4 (0)	25% (0%)
Admissions	1 (3)	0 (1)	7 (6)	14% (0%)	0 (1)	5 (1)	60% (0%)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0%)

*Last year's full year's figures are shown in brackets

Please note: The Complaints Team will investigate a complaint direct at stage 3 when an assessment of the case is deemed appropriate

Points to Note:

- SEN - 50% of stage 2 complaints were upheld (based on 8 complaints).
 - **Reasons why the % upheld is high:**
 - The 4 upheld stage 2 complaints identified in this report relate to the timeliness of the delivery of the of the new Education Health and Care (EHC) plans and communication issues by the SEND team in relation to this. These 4 complaints were upheld, due to:
 - Capacity issues within the SEND team.
 - Delays in the production of the EHC plans.
 - Communication with parents regarding these cases was not at a sufficient level.

- **Plans to reduce this %:**
 - The process of monitoring the performance of delivery of EHC plans has been improved with clearer data reporting and a weekly tracking check on progress.
 - There is now an ongoing log of priority cases where there have been identified issues regarding the EHC plans including timescales, resources and placement issues.
 - All cases are now monitored and reviewed by the SEN Manager with clear expectations placed on SEN caseworkers to keep parents informed of progress on a regular basis and to escalate any issues at an early stage.

- Admissions – 60% of stage 2 complaints were upheld (based on 5 complaints).
 - **Reasons why the % upheld is high:**
 - The upheld complaints were all linked to the same theme and relate to the approach taken by staff and the way the council handled the appeal's process.

 - **Plans to reduce this %:**
 - As a result of the upheld stage 2 complaints, a review of the school admissions service was undertaken.
 - Staff concerns were fully considered and dealt with in-line with council procedures.

DIRECTORATE ANNUAL COMPLAINTS SUMMARY: 2016/2017

DIRECTORATE: Environment & Place

Summary:

Top expressions of dissatisfaction include:

- Bins not being collected on dedicated collection day.
- Bins not being put back in the correct place.
- Issues with fly tipping and general upkeep of area.
- Potholes - Conditions of paths and delays with updates/work being completed.
- Delays in streetlights being fixed.
- Lack of maintenance of recreation grounds.

	Concerns rec'd	Concerns escalated	S1 rec'd	% upheld	S1 escalated	S2 rec'd	% upheld	S2 escalated	S3 rec'd	% upheld
Missed bin collection	94 (388)	12 (37)	190 (89)	66% (76%)	13 (22)	27 (28)	52% (68%)	4 (3)	4 (3)	50% (66%)
Non return of bins	17 (90)	1 (10)	22 (19)	73% (79%)	7 (4)	7 (5)	43% (60%)	1 (3)	3 (3)	67% (66%)
Street Services	23 (65)	5 (5)	23 (20)	17% (40%)	6 (5)	20 (6)	40% (50%)	4 (0)	4 (0)	0% (0)
Potholes	21 (40)	1 (2)	13 (16)	23% (44%)	3 (5)	4 (6)	25% (33%)	1 (2)	1 (2)	0% (50%)
Streetlights	2 (10)	0 (1)	14 (5)	64% (80%)	5 (2)	5 (2)	80% (50%)	1 (0)	1 (0)	100% (0)
Parks & Open spaces	45 (61)	3 (3)	31 (14)	19% (36%)	4 (2)	5 (3)	60% (33%)	1 (0)	0 (0)	100% (0)

*Last year's full year's figures are shown in brackets

Please note: The Complaints Team will investigate a complaint direct at stage 3 when an assessment of the case is deemed appropriate

Points to Note:

- Missed Bins - The reporting period has seen a significant reduction in concerns/complaints received compared with 2015/16.
 - **What actions have been taken by the service to help contribute to this reduction in volumes:**
 - The recruitment of an Environment Frontline Services Manager dedicated to managing the Waste Services Team.
 - Improved monitoring procedures and investigation of complaints. This includes regular meetings with the Complaints Department and the Contact Centre to identify areas of concern and trends, allowing action planning to address matters of concern.
 - The Waste Management team have received in-house training and additional support to improve the quality of complaint investigations and written responses.
 - Positive engagement initiatives have been implemented in order to engage staff and improve performance. This includes, training and better cascade of information, more robust monitoring documentation, informal meetings and challenging poor performance.
 - The additional support from Environment Services Customer Liaison team means that all complaint responses are tailored to each complaint and generalised responses are no longer used.
 - Minor adjustments to the rounds in order to make better use of staff resources and even out workload.
 - The introduction of an additional garden waste round from October 2016.
 - Seven replacement hire vehicles were commissioned to replace four existing old and unreliable vehicles (which when out of action resulted in missed bins complaints).
- Missed Bins - 66% of stage 1 complaints were upheld. This has improved compared to last year (76%) however this still remains high.
 - **Reasons why the % upheld is high:**
 - The department provides over 200,000 waste collections on a weekly basis to over 66,000 households across Thurrock. Due to the high volume of services provided there were operational issues including staff resources, unbalanced rounds and vehicle problems. These factors have all contributed to a high % of upheld complaints.
 - **Plans to reduce this %:**
 - Review of the existing collection system and routes, planned improvement from a 'pepper pot' system to a 'sweep system'.
 - Continue to actively engage frontline crews to ensure they understand the impact of complaints and their role in performance (see measures above).

- Continue to actively develop the Waste Management team to improve management skills and knowledge. A bespoke training programme will be created with the Training team which will include complaint management.
 - Continue to actively engage with the Customer Liaison team, Complaints Department and Contact Centre to ensure high quality responses, swift resolution of enquiries and positive engagement with residents.
- Missed Bins - 52% of stage 2 complaints were upheld. This has improved compared to last year (68%) however this still remains high.
 - **Reasons why the % upheld is high:**
 - Improving the standard of complaint investigations and quality of responses has been a journey for the service.
 - **Plans to reduce this %:**
 - Performance monitoring with crews regarding Stage 2 complaints. This will include individual meetings with crews, addressing and monitoring matters of concern as part of the PDR process.
 - See above stage 1 plans in order to reduce upheld complaints at stage 2.
- Non return of Bins - The reporting period has seen a significant reduction in concerns/complaints received compared with 2015/16.
 - **What actions have been taken by the service to help contribute to this reduction in volumes:**
 - The Waste Management team have been more consistent with addressing crew performance regarding non return of bins and this is ongoing.
 - In house training provided to crews to address correct return of bins.
 - Regular communications with crews to draw their attention to this performance issue and service expectations.
- Non return of Bins – 73% of stage 1 complaints were upheld.
 - **Reasons why the % upheld is high:**
 - This is a highly emotive issue for some residents, and there is some ambiguity around this issue. Crews are required to return bins to the collection point/ curtilage of the property, however, a number of residents expectations are significantly different as they expect the return to an exact placement.
 - **Plans to reduce this %:**

- Further in house training, written notifications provided to crews to address correct return of bins as required.
 - Review of return of bins procedure and improved publicity to residents.
 - Better management of residents expectations.
- Streetlights – 64% of stage 1 complaints were upheld (based on 14 complaints) and 80% of stage 2 complaints were upheld (based on 5 complaints).
 - **Reasons why the % upheld is high:**
 - The council have experienced performance problems with its street lighting contractor over the last 12 months, resulting in works orders for defective street lights not being repaired within the contracted timeframe.
 - The poor customer experience has been intensified by the responses residents have received via the “Report It” feature on the web site. The responses sent regarding street lights gave a timescale for repair, which the contractor was not adhering to.
 - In addition, the Report status on the “Report It” tool was closed down, on the advice that the lights would be repaired within 10 days. The feedback received from residents was negative, as they raised concerns that their request should not be closed down before the actual job was completed.
 - **Plans to reduce this %:**
 - The issues above are being addressed. A new Term Contract has been awarded and street lighting faults will, as of, August be dealt with by the new contractor.
 - The new contractor’s performance will be monitored to ensure works are carried out within agreed timeframes.
 - With regards to the responses that are sent out via “Report It”, these are being changed to provide better information and the reports will not be closed down until the jobs are complete. This should commence mid July.

DIRECTORATE ANNUAL COMPLAINTS SUMMARY: 2016/2017

DIRECTORATE: Finance & IT

Summary:

Top expressions of dissatisfaction relate to Council Tax, Housing Benefit, Sundry Debtors and include:

- Complaints regarding Council Tax demand letters.
- Delays with refunds being processed.
- Delays with amendments being made to accounts.
- Delays and errors in the processing of benefit claims.
- Overpayment letters are not clear.
- Payments stopped with no notification.
- Attitude of staff within the Sundry Debtors service.
- Recovery action taken is unjustified.

	Concerns rec'd	Concerns escalated	S1 rec'd	% upheld	S1 escalated	S2 rec'd	% upheld	S2 escalated	S3 rec'd	% upheld
Council Tax	43 (137)	1 (8)	111 (77)	17% (17%)	18 (17)	23 (37)	13% (13%)	2 (6)	2 (6)	0% (17%)
Housing Benefit	23 (119)	2 (11)	71 (50)	30% (46%)	11 (9)	20 (16)	35% (21%)	4 (5)	5 (5)	0% (20%)
Sundry Debtors	13 (25)	0 (4)	27 (28)	11% (12%)	1 (6)	69 (61)	12% (23%)	3 (7)	3 (7)	0% (14%)

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Please note: The Complaints Team will investigate a complaint direct at stage 3 when an assessment of the case is deemed appropriate

Points to Note:

- Council Tax - The reporting period has seen a significant reduction in concerns/complaints received compared with 2015/16.
 - **What actions have been taken by the service to help contribute to this reduction in volumes:**
 - Complaints in this section range from billing through to debt recovery.
 - For billing, initiatives such as Thurrock On-line have assisted in increasing the accuracy of billing. In addition a strong focus on root cause analysis for complaints continues to be embedded.
 - With regards to debt recovery, whilst this can often be a contentious subject the % upheld rate is low. The focus of the service review has been to consider how the service can improve this trend whilst continuing to maintain the excellent recovery rates, through delivering debt recovery:
 - at the right time,
 - in the right way and
 - with the right message
- Housing Benefit - The reporting period has seen a significant reduction in concerns/complaints received compared with 2015/16.
 - **What actions have been taken by the service to help contribute to this reduction in volumes:**
 - The service is focusing on maintaining timeliness and accuracy in dealing with benefit enquiries. This may be a factor that has contributed to a reduction in volume.
- Housing Benefit – 35% of stage 2 complaints were upheld.
 - **Reasons why the % upheld is high**
 - This relates to 7 complaints for the year. The team process in excess of 3000 new claims a year and 40,000 changes in circumstance. Therefore the numbers are low in relation to the volume of contact that is made.
 - The numbers are low to establish a direct theme, although 2 cases related to timeliness and accuracy.
 - **Plans to reduce this %:**
 - The team will continue to work on areas to improve both timeliness and accuracy.

DIRECTORATE ANNUAL COMPLAINTS SUMMARY: 2016/2017

DIRECTORATE: HR, OD & Transformation

Summary:

Top expressions of dissatisfaction relate to Corporate Complaints & FOI, Organisational Development and the Web Team and include:

- Unhappy with the recruitment process.
- A delay regarding the handling of a complaint.
- Delay in processing a subject access request.
- Removal of name from website.

	Concerns rec'd	Concerns escalated	S1 rec'd	% upheld	S1 escalated	S2 rec'd	% upheld	S2 escalated	S3 rec'd	% upheld
Complaints/FOI/DP	0 (2)	0 (0)	2 (1)	50% (100%)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0%)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0%)
Organisational Development	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)	0% (0%)	0 (0)	0 (1)	0 (0%)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0%)

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Please note: The Complaints Team will investigate a complaint direct at stage 3 when an assessment of the case is deemed appropriate

Points to note:

The upheld complaint for the complaints team, was due to not keeping an individual updated of progress regarding their subject access request. The member of staff was spoken to and reminded that communication is important on any overdue requests.

DIRECTORATE ANNUAL COMPLAINTS SUMMARY: 2016/2017

DIRECTORATE: Legal

Summary:

Top expressions of dissatisfaction relate to Democratic & Electoral Services and Legal Services and include:

- Issues with arrangements made to be able to view the Electoral Role.
- A potential data protection breach within Electoral Services.
- Lack of update received from Legal Services.

	Concerns rec'd	Concerns escalated	S1 rec'd	% upheld	S1 escalated	S2 rec'd	% upheld	S2 escalated	S3 rec'd	% upheld
Democratic & Electoral Services	1 (4)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0% (0%)	1 (1)	4 (2)	50% (50%)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Legal Services	1 (0)	0 (0)	4 (1)	50% (0%)	1 (1)	4 (4)	25% (25%)	1 (2)	1 (2)	100% (50%)

*Last year's full year's figures are shown in brackets

Please note: The Complaints Team will investigate a complaint direct at stage 3 when an assessment of the case is deemed appropriate

DIRECTORATE ANNUAL COMPLAINTS SUMMARY: 2016/2017

DIRECTORATE: Strategy, Communications & Customer Service

Summary:

Top expressions of dissatisfaction relate to the Contact Centre and Face to Face (F2F) and include:

- Mishandling of documents when providing them to F2F.
- Staff conduct.
- Unhappy with advice given by Contact Centre advisors.

	Concerns rec'd	Concerns escalated	S1 rec'd	% upheld	S1 escalated	S2 rec'd	% upheld	S2 escalated	S3 rec'd	% upheld
Contact Centre	3 (17)	0 (1)	10 (9)	90% (44%)	0 (3)	12 (14)	50% (43%)	0 (2)	0 (2)	0% (0%)
Face to Face	0 (4)	0 (0)	4 (1)	100% (100%)	0 (0)	3 (6)	33% (67%)	1 (0)	1 (0)	100% (0)

*Last year's full year's figures are shown in brackets

Please note: The Complaints Team will investigate a complaint direct at stage 3 when an assessment of the case is deemed appropriate

Points to Note:

- Contact Centre - 90% of stage 1 complaints were upheld (based on 10 complaints).
 - **Reasons why the % upheld is high:**
 - During 2016/17 the Contact Centre dealt with 384,700 calls. The number of complaints that were received at stages 1 and 2 (based on calls handled) equates to 0.006%.

- 9 complaints were upheld due to human error.
- **Plans to reduce this %:**
 - Following all of the 9 upheld complaints, the individual advisors were spoken to directly, to make them aware of their error and to ensure that they fully understand the process to try and prevent this from happening again.
- Contact Centre - 50% of stage 2 complaints were upheld (based on 12 complaints).
 - **Reasons why the % upheld is high:**
 - In comparison to the number of calls that were handled over the reporting period (384,700), the % of complaints received is low as stated above.
 - Of the 6 upheld complaints, 3 relate to the standard of customer services provided, 2 related to process and 1 related to the actions of a separate council service.
 - **Plans to reduce this %:**
 - The Contact Centre will continue to undertake quality/monitoring checks, to ensure call advisors handle calls effectively.
 - All advisors have and will continue to attend customer care training.
 - For the 3 upheld complaints in relation to service standards, the advisors were spoken to regarding these complaints (as they could have been handled better) and suggestions were made as to how they could be handled differently in the future.
- Face to Face – 100% of stage 1 complaints were upheld (based on 4 complaints).
 - **Reasons why the % upheld is high:**
 - During 2016/2017 the face to face team dealt with 101,903 customers. Of these 4 upheld complaints were received which equates to 0.003%.
 - The four complaints were for various reasons with no direct theme.