



Knowsley Council

“Have Your Say”

Annual Report

2014/2015

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Background

This is the second annual report under Knowlsey Metropolitan Borough Council's integrated "Have your say" Policy and Procedure. This report incorporates complaints, comments and compliments recorded and responded to relating to Corporate complaints, Adults and Children's statutory social care complaints. It provides the public, elected members, Council staff and other stakeholders with a summary of information relating to complaints received for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

Our aim is to resolve complaints as quickly as possible, whilst ensuring a thorough and fair investigation.

A complaint is defined by the Council as an expression of dissatisfaction made about the Council, its services, staff or an action of an organisation providing a service to the Council.

All complaints are recorded and dealt with under the appropriate complaints procedures and documented in this report. Accordingly a request for service would not be registered and dealt with as a complaint but as a request for action. A copy of the Council's policy and procedure can be found here: <https://secured.knowsley.gov.uk/Documents/HaveYourSay/Final%20have-your-say-complaints-policy-and-procedure-2015.pdf>

Feedback from residents and service users in making complaints is important to the Council. It is an opportunity to learn why people find services unsatisfactory, and what we can do to improve provision to our service users.

Volume of Complaints Received

A total of 929 complaints were received for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 of which 745 were corporate complaints, 104 adult social care and 80 children's social care. This is the second year that information has been collated in this way.

A total of 947 complaints were received in the previous year of which 838 were corporate complaints, 45 adult social care and 64 children social care. This was the first year that information has been collated in this way.

There is a decrease of 18 to the total number of complaints received in comparison to the previous year. On further reflection the statistics evidence a reduction of 93 in the volume of "Have your say" complaints received for the same period of the previous year, but an increase in the volume of Adult statutory complaint by 59 and Children statutory complaints by 16.

The increase in social care complaints can be mainly attributed to the improved recording of such complaints using the improved scheme.

The customer liaison team remains the central point for recording, monitoring and reporting complaints, comments and compliments.

The overall figures for complaints received for each quarter of this year are shown below:

| | Quarter One | Quarter Two | Quarter Three | Quarter Four | Annual Total |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Corporate | 212 | 218 | 173 | 142 | 745 |
| Adults | 20 | 30 | 33 | 21 | 104 |
| Children | 18 | 25 | 16 | 21 | 80 |
| Total | 250 | 273 | 222 | 184 | 929 |

Response Time

For 2014/15 performance full year results, please see the table below.

| | Target | Outcome |
|--|-----------------|----------------|
| Acknowledgements within 3 working days | 100% | 100% |
| Response time | 10 working days | 90% |
| Escalation to stage two | 3.6% | 4.1 |

The table below shows a comparison of response times (complaints responded to within 10 working days) over the last four years:

| | 2011/12 (%) | 2012/13 (%) | 2013/14 (%) | 2014/15 |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Corporate | 97 | 96 | 93 | 92 |
| Adults | - | - | 78 | 88 |
| Children | 54 | 80 | 87 | 78 |

The average response time for corporate complaints has marginally declined over the last three years primarily due to the increase in the volume of complaints received, and a reduction in staffing resources. This will remain an area for development and the Customer Liaison team will continue to work with services to support improvements. In addition, to acknowledge and support the reduction in resource across the council, from 1 September 2015, targets for responses to corporate complaints increased from 10 days to 15 days.

The average response times for Adults services is 88% for the year 2014/15, this is an increase of 10% on the response time achieved for the complaint year 2013/14. This will remain an area for development and the Customer Liaison team will continue to work with services to support improvements.

The average response time for Childrens social care complaints has been improving annually, however this year there has been a decrease in response time of 9%. This continues to remain an area for development. The Customer Liaison team is continuing to work with services to support improvements and work towards achieving the required statutory timescale.

Complaint Outcomes - Upheld/Justified

Stage One

The table below shows the number of complaints upheld/justified during 2014/15. Overall 11.3% of the complaints made to the Council were upheld/justified on review.

| | Quarter One | Quarter Two | Quarter Three | Quarter Four | Total |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Corporate | 17 (9%) | 20 (10%) | 14 (8%) | 16 (11%) | 9 % |
| Adults | 3 (15%) | 9 (31%) | 4 (12%) | 8 (38%) | 23% |
| Children | 3 (16%) | 4 (16%) | 1 (6%) | 6 (28%) | 17.5% |
| | 23 | 33 | 19 | 30 | 105/929 11.3% |

If a complainant is unhappy with the Council's response to their complaint, it can be escalated to stage two. Stage two provides a further opportunity to investigate any issues raised by the complainant. During 2014/15, 37 complaints were escalated to stage two of the "Have your say" process and one complaint to stage two of the Childrens Statutory complaint process. Four of the 37 complaints were upheld or justified on further investigation. The outcome for the one statutory complaint was that some elements of the complaint were upheld and some not upheld.

Stage Two

The Council received a total of 38 stage two complaints:

- 37 Corporate complaints
- 1 Children Statutory complaint

The response time was achieved for 28 of the 37 stage two corporate complaints with the remaining nine failing to achieve the target response date. Complainants were communicated with regularly, including explaining the reasons for the delay.

The one Children's statutory complaint was completed within the extended 65 day timescale.

Progress against the actions resulting from complaints is monitored on a quarterly basis.

Themes

Below shows a summary of the top 6 services that received the highest number of corporate complaints:

1. Waste and Recycling – 179 complaints (24%)
2. Environmental Health – 118 Complaints (16%)
3. Revenue and Benefits – 92 complaints (12%)
4. Street Scene – 68 complaints (9%)
5. Highways – 43 complaints (6%)
6. Leisure – 36 complaints (5%)

The highest number of corporate "Have you say" complaints received for this year related to Waste and Recycling. This area also received the highest volume of complaints in 2013/14. However, there

was a two percent decrease in the volume of complaints received. The themes for this service area include amendments to collection dates, collection issues and charges for replacement bins.

Environmental Health received the next highest volume of complaints for the Council; the main theme for these complaints is fixed penalty notices and the validity of such fines. The volume of these complaints has reduced from 17% received in 2013/14 to 16%.

Revenue and Benefits received financial complaints regarding benefit payments, Council tax charges and the collection of payments.

Communication continues to be a significant theme across all complaint categories. Where communication issues have been highlighted, actions are undertaken to improve these issues. Heads of Service and Directors receive regular updates regarding service improvements implemented as a result of complaints.

All service areas have received a number of complaints referred to as internal reviews when relating to Freedom of Information request (FOI). These requests predominantly relate to the use of exemptions and in some cases the failure to meet timescales. The Council deals with internal reviews under the "Have your say" complaints process as agreed by the Information Commissioners Office (ICO).

Complaints received for Adults Social Care related to:

1. Communication – 29 (28%)
2. Finance – 25 (24%)
3. Care support -24 (23%)
4. Commissioned Providers -11 (11%)
5. Other – 15 (14%)

The highest number of complaints received related to Communication, (28%). This includes complaints regarding delays to the progress of applications regarding care and the results of panel applications. However, a large number of complaints are received for telephone calls not returned or failure to make contact with a social worker when their office base is called. Other complaints received include financial complaints regarding the Direct Payment rate changes when a child completes a transition into Adult Services, the introduction of charging policies for contributions towards transport and reductions in care packages following assessments such as reductions of respite provision or reductions in Day Centre allocations.

Complaints received for Children's Social care:

1. Communication – 22 (28%)
2. Contact, supervision, placements – 19 (24%)
3. Care Orders 19 – (24%)
4. Finance - 6 (7%)
5. Other – 14 (17%)

The highest number of issues received for Children's social care related to communication (28%). This relates to complaints that are received for telephone calls not returned or failure to make contact with social worker or failure to respond to letters received. The Council has also received complaints regarding process and decision making relating to placements, contact order, supervisions and the initiation of safeguarding procedures (24%), care orders (24%) and financial payments e.g. foster care and special guardianship order payments (6%).

Of the total number of complaints received for Children's Social Care 27 % related to Children Looked After or those whom have recently left the care of the Authority. Of the 22 complaints received, seven complaints were received directly from the young people themselves. To support and encourage contact regarding complaints, the Designated Complaints Officer (DCO) regularly attends the Children's Make a Difference Everywhere (MADE) Senior and Junior groups and a letter of introduction has been sent to all Children Looked After to encourage direct contact relating to complaints.

Local Government Ombudsman Referrals

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) has amended the way it presents the annual review incorporating feedback from Councils. The Ombudsman also provides this information to individual councils each year in an annual letter. The Ombudsman published a press release on 25 June 2015. The release included information regarding LGO's annual review of Local Government complaints. It suggests that many councils are dealing with increasing numbers of complaints with less resources to manage them. It details that 43% of complainants were not advised that they could approach the Ombudsman for an independent review. On the final stage of all complaints Knowsley Council documents the details for the LGO.

The LGO reported that it upheld a national average of 46% of the complaints referred to them for an independent review. The Council has received a total of 42 Ombudsman referrals for the complaint year 2014/2015. Knowsley Council had eleven complaints fully investigated, seven of these complaints were upheld which equates to 63.6% in comparison to the national average. However as the LGO records complaints from the date they are completed, Knowsley Council have already reported a complaint in the previous annual report, which reduces the percentage upheld by the LGO to 54%, 8% above the national average.

The LGO recorded that there had been an increase nationally of 10% for social care complaints referred to them. However in Knowsley Council there was a 2.3% reduction of social care complaints referred to the LGO.

Ombudsman referrals were received for the following services areas:

- Benefits and Council Tax – 13
- Highways - 2
- Housing – 5
- Children - 7
- Adult Social Care - 9
- Environmental Services -1
- Planning and development – 2
- Corporate – 1
- Customer Services – 1
- Leisure Service – 1

Of the enquiries and complaints received by the Ombudsman regarding Knowsley Council, seventeen were referred back to the Council's process and considered to be premature, as the complainant had not tried to resolve the matter with the Council first. Ten complaints were closed by the Ombudsman and not investigated and three complaints were closed as invalid. Of the eleven complaints fully investigated, seven were upheld and four were not upheld.

Outcomes

| Service Area | UpHeld | Not upheld |
|---------------|----------|------------|
| Adult | 3 | 1 |
| Housing | 1 | 0 |
| Benefits | 2 | 0 |
| Childrens | 1 | 1 |
| Planning | 0 | 1 |
| Highways | 0 | 1 |
| Totals | 7 | 4 |

Compliments

The integrated “Have your say” process includes the recording of compliments. Compliments received are forwarded on to the relevant managers, services and individual employees.

The table below shows a breakdown of compliments received by the Council through the “Have your say” Process:

| | Quarter One | Quarter Two | Quarter Three | Quarter Four | Total |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Corporate | 18 | 26 | 18 | 18 | 80 |
| Adults | 0 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 8 |
| Children | 1 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 22 |
| Total | 19 | 39 | 28 | 24 | 110 |

A total of 110 compliments were received for this year. The compliments related to the following services:

- Customer Services (One Stop Shops, Contact Centre and Customer Liaison Team)
- Waste and Recycling
- Pest Control
- Housing benefits
- Street Cleaning
- Knowsley Spa
- Stronger Families
- Street Lighting
- Grass vergers, flower beds
- Council tax
- Libraries
- Highways
- The Venue
- Environmental health team
- Adult social care
- Children’s social care.

Conclusion

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council continues to be committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality service to those who make complaints. The outcome of the Local Government Ombudsman's review of complaints provides evidence that the Council is managing and dealing with customer complaints positively. Progress against the actions resulting from complaints is monitored by the Service Area and Designated Complaint's Officer. An annual complaints report is produced for Senior Managers and the relevant Councillor Portfolio holders.