



*Knowsley Council*

**“Have Your Say”**

**Annual Report**

**2016/2017**

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## Background

This annual report under the Council's integrated "Have your say" policy 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 2016 to 31 March 2017.

The Council's 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 within this report. A copy of the Council's policy and procedure can be found [here](#).

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 1066 complaints were received for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 of which 878 (82.5%) were Corporate complaints, 112 (10.5%) Adult Social Care and 76 (7%) Children's Social Care.

By comparison a total of 689 complaints were received for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 of which 528 (77%) were Corporate complaints, 107 (15%) Adult Social Care and 54 (8%) Children's Social Care.

There has been an increase of 377 (66%) to the total number of complaints received in comparison to the previous year. On further reflection the statistics evidence an increase of 350 (65%) in the volume of "Have your say" complaints received for the same period of the previous year. There is a small increase of 5 (4.5%) in the volume of Adult Statutory Complaints received and an increase of 22 (29 %) regarding Children Statutory complaints received.

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

The increase in the volume of complaints can be attributed to several factors;

- The Council has worked to make the "Have Your Say" process an accessible and customer friendly process which has led to an increase in volumes.
- The Councils funding from central government has been drastically cut. These cuts are continuing to be made year on year, meaning that the Council faces the challenge of making a further £16.8 million of permanent savings by 2020. This is in addition to the £86 million already saved since 2010.
- The Council has had to look at all of the services and support it provides to residents. It has also had to reduce its own workforce costs, generate more income from other

sources and work more closely with partners to find additional savings. The review and implementation of changes to services has generated an increase in complaints received by the Council.

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

	<b>Quarter One</b>	<b>Quarter Two</b>	<b>Quarter Three</b>	<b>Quarter Four</b>	<b>Annual Total</b>
<b>Corporate</b>	171	264	181	262	<b>878</b>
<b>Adults</b>	27	22	39	24	<b>112</b>
<b>Children</b>	24	17	19	16	<b>76</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>1066</b>

## Response Time

For 2016/17 performance full year results, please see the table below.

	<b>Target (%)</b>	<b>Outcome (%)</b>
Acknowledgements within 3 working days	100	100
Response within timescale	95	90
Escalation to stage two	3.6	5

The table below shows a comparison of response times (complaints responded to within 10/15 working days) over the last three years:

	<b>2014/15 (%)</b>	<b>2015/16 (%)</b>	<b>2016/7 (%)</b>
<b>Corporate</b>	92	96	90
<b>Adults</b>	88	73	70
<b>Children</b>	78	80	72

Responses within timescale for corporate complaints have reduced to 90%. Knowsley Council's funding from Central Government has been drastically cut. Unfortunately, the scale of the funding cuts and the reduction in staffing has impacted on the response time. The Customer Liaison team is continuing to work with services to support improvements and work towards achieving the required target.

Responses within timescale for Adults Social Care is 70% for the year 2016/17, this is a decrease of 3% compared to 2015/16. This will remain an area for development and the Customer Liaison team will continue to work with services to support improvements.

Responses within timescale for Children's Social Care complaints decreased by 8%. 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 of 100% within 10 working days.

## Complaint Outcomes - Upheld/Justified

### Stage One

The table below shows the number of complaints upheld during 2016/17. Overall 28% of the complaints made to the Council were upheld on review.

	Quarter One	Quarter Two	Quarter Three	Quarter Four	Total
<b>Corporate</b>	29	79	47	69	<b>224 / 878</b>
<b>Adults</b>	15	10	14	13	<b>52 / 112</b>
<b>Children</b>	3	7	5	8	<b>23 / 76</b>
					<b>299 / 1066 = 28%</b>

### Stage Two

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 2016/17, a total of 50 complaints were escalated to stage two of the "Have your say" process. Five complaints related to stage two of the Children's Statutory complaint process and 45 to the Corporate process. Four of the 45 complaints were upheld or justified on further investigation.

The outcome for the five statutory Children's complaints showed that three complaints were partially upheld and two complaints were not upheld.

The response time was achieved for 32 of the 45 stage two corporate complaints with the remaining 13 complaints failing to achieve the target response date. Complainants were communicated with regularly explaining the reasons for the delay.

The five Children's statutory complaints were completed within the extended 65 day timescale.

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

### Themes

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

1. Waste and Recycling - 24 %
2. Highways – 14%
3. Environmental Health – 12%
4. Revenues and Benefits – 11%

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 2015/16. The themes for this service area included missed collections, collections issues, changes to collection routes and charges for replacement bins.

Highways received the next highest volume of complaints for the Council. There are a number of services included in this category of complaint such as parking fines, potholes, drainage issues, parking issues and disruption caused to roadworks.

Environmental Health; the main theme for these complaints is fixed penalty notices and the validity of such fines.

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

Complaints received for Adult's Social Care related to:

1. Finance – 29%
2. Assessment and Care planning – 29%
3. Communication – 26%
4. Commissioned Providers -13%
5. Other 3%

The highest number of complaints received relate to both financial concerns (29%) and assessment and care planning (29%). There was a 1% increase in the volume of complaints received regarding financial issues up from 28 % in 2015/16. Financial complaints include issues raised concerning the Direct Payment rate, client contributions for domiciliary care costs, Client contribution for care home costs.

There was an increase of 3% from complaints received in 2015/16 regarding Assessment and Care Planning. These complaints include delays in assessments taking place, the decision making process and not involving the family.

Complaints received from commissioned providers decreased by 3% compared to 2015/16. The Council aims to provide a seamless process for the service user, providing them with the opportunity to complain directly to the provider or the Council. All provider complaints are brought to the attention of the Council's commissioning service. The commissioning team ensure that quality control and monitoring is undertaken.

The volume of complaints regarding communication has increased by 11% compared to the previous year. Communication complaints include failures to keep the service users updated when assessments are taking place and failure to keep families updated when changes in care provision are taking place. However, a number of complaints were received for telephone calls not returned or failure to make contact with a social worker when their office base is called.

Complaints received for Children's Social Care related to:

1. Child Protection – 39%
2. Communication – 24%
3. Contact Orders / access 14 %
4. Finance – 11%
5. Other 12%

The highest number of issues received for Children's Social Care related to Child Protection, 39%. This category includes allegations, placements, assessments support to children and families during these procedures. Often complaints are made by parents or family members on behalf of the child or young person.

Other complaints received by the Council related to communication, 24% of complaints received related to this issue. This category of complaints includes issues regarding families requiring updates on ongoing procedures, disagreement with meeting minutes, notice of meetings cancelled or rearranged. It also contains complaints regarding contact with social workers, not being able to speak to a social worker when they telephone or messages not being returned or letters unanswered. Every attempt is made for a social worker to speak to service users, however social workers are not predominantly office based and it is not always possible to speak to a social worker as they may be out of the office on a visit. The Council has also received complaints regarding process and decision making relating to contact orders, supervisions, care orders (14%) and financial payments e.g. foster care and special guardianship order payments (11%).

Of the total number of complaints received for Children's Social Care, 50% related to Children Looked After or those whom have recently left the care of the Authority. Of the 38 complaints received, two complaints were received directly from the young people themselves.

### **Local Government Ombudsman Referrals**

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) provides information to individual Councils each year in an annual letter. Knowsley Council received their annual letter dated 20 July 2017. The LGO is not publishing a formal annual report on LGO complaints; however the LGO annual letters and corresponding data tables were published on the LGO website on 27 July 2017.

The LGO reported that it upheld a national average of 54% of the complaints referred to them for an independent review. The Council has received a total of 52 LGO referrals for the complaint year 2016/2017. Knowsley Council had 12 complaints fully investigated, six of these complaints were upheld. The LGO calculates the volume of complaints upheld against the volume of complaints fully investigated. Due to the low volume of complaints fully investigated for Knowsley Council the LGO has reported that they upheld 50%. If the calculation was on all referred complaints received it would be 11.5%.

The information can be viewed on the LGO website by clicking [here](#).

The LGO documented in the "Annual Report & Accounts 2016-17" that nationally in 2016-17 complaints and enquiries about adult social care continued to rise, as they have for a number of years with a reduction in complaints regarding Council Tax and Benefits. Adult Social Care Service complaints referred to the LGO increased by 4%. There was an increase of 0.5% in the volume of Education and Children's Services complaints referred to the LGO.

Nationally the LGO received the highest volume of complaints for Education and Children's services 18%, the second most complained about area was Adult Social Care Services 17%, the third most complained about area was Planning and Development 13%.

Local Government Ombudsman referrals were received for the following services areas:

Adult Care Services – 11  
Benefits and Taxes – 1  
Education and Childrens Services - 7  
Enviromental Servies – 10  
Highways and Transport – 2  
Housing – 6  
Planning and Development – 8  
Other - 7

Of the enquiries and complaints received by the Ombudsman regarding Knowsley Council, 24 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. 12 complaints were closed by the Ombudsman and not investigated. Two complaints were resolved by advice being provided by the LGO. Of the 12 complaints fully investigated, six were upheld and six were not upheld.

### Outcomes

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Upheld</b>	<b>Not Upheld</b>
Adult	5	1
Education and Childrens Services	1	1
Environmental	0	2
Planning and Deveopment	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>

### **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. A total of 184 compliments were received for this year. The Council received 120 compliments for the complaint year 2015-16 this is an increase of 65%.

The compliments related to the following services:

	<b>Quarter One</b>	<b>Quarter Two</b>	<b>Quarter Three</b>	<b>Quarter Four</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Corporate</b>	19	42	17	21	<b>99</b>
<b>Adults</b>	27	2	10	8	<b>47</b>
<b>Children</b>	3	6	14	15	<b>38</b>
<b>Total</b>	49	50	41	44	<b>184</b>

The compliments related to the following services;

- Customer Services (One Stop Shops, Contact Centre, Registrars and Customer Liaison)
- Waste and Recycling
- Street Scene including Street Cleaning
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Council tax
- Commercial Services Management
- Communities and Social Growth
- Employment Initiatives
- Growth Hub
- Site Management
- Highways
- Communications
- Customer Liaison
- Human Resources
- Legal Services
- Registrars
- Environmental Health Team including Licencing and Dog Wardens
- Adult Social Care
- Children's Social Care

## **Conclusion**

Knowsley Council continues to be committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to provide a high quality service to those who make complaints. Progress against the actions resulting from complaints is monitored by the Service Area and Designated Complaint's Officer. Senior Officers are provided with a weekly update on all new complaints to ensure that the issues raised during the complaint process are communicated appropriately and effectively within the Council. Monthly updates are produced to ensure themes are identified and wherever possible a proactive approach is taken to resolve concerns prior to the issue becoming a formal complaint. An Annual Complaints Report is produced for Senior Managers and the relevant elected Members.