



Knowsley Council

“Have Your Say”

Annual Report

2015/2016

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Background

This is the third annual report under Knowsley 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 2015 to 31 March 2016.

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-2016.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 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.

By comparison, a total of 929 complaints were received in the previous year of which 745 (80%) were corporate complaints, 104 (11%) adult social care and 80 (9%) children social care.

There is a decrease of 240 (26%) to the total number of complaints received in comparison to the previous year. On further reflection the statistics evidence a reduction of 217 (29%) in the volume of "Have your say" complaints received for the same period of the previous year. There is a small increase of 3 (2.8%) in the volume of Adult statutory complaint received and a decrease of 26 (32%) regarding Children statutory complaints received.

The small increase of 2.8% in the volume of adult social care complaints can be attributed to the challenging year that adults social care has experienced. The Local Government Ombudsman received an increase of 4% in complaints received relating to Adult Social Care.

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	110	109	154	155	528
Adults	22	26	31	28	107
Children	10	8	14	22	54
Total	142	143	199	205	689

Response Time

For 2015/16 performance full year results, please see the table below.

	Target	Outcome
Acknowledgements within 3 working days	100%	100%
Response time average all complaints	10/15 working days (as applicable)	91.15%
Escalation to stage two	3.6%	3.9%

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

	2013/14 (%)	2015/14 (%)	2015/16 (%)
Corporate	93	92	96
Adults	78	88	73
Children	87	78	80

The average response time for corporate complaints has increased to 96%.

The average response times for Adults services is 73% for the year 2015/16, this is a decrease of 15% on the response time achieved for the complaint year 2014/15. 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 Children's social care complaints increased by 2%. 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/justified during 2015/16. Overall 25 % of the complaints made to the Council were upheld/justified on review.

	Quarter One	Quarter Two	Quarter Three	Quarter Four	Total
Corporate	29	19	35	23	106
Adults	11	12	14	12	49
Children	2	2	4	9	17
	42	33	53	44	172
					172 / 689 = 25 %

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 2015/16, 28 complaints were escalated to stage two of the "Have your say" process and two complaints to stage two of the Children's Statutory complaint process. Four of the 28 complaints were upheld or justified on further investigation. The outcome for the two statutory complaints was that one complaint was upheld and one complaint was not upheld.

Stage Two

The Council received a total of 28 stage two complaints:

- 26 Corporate complaints
- 2 Children Statutory complaint

The response time was achieved for 16 of the 26 stage two corporate complaints with the remaining ten failing to achieve the target response date. Complainants were communicated with regularly explaining the reasons for the delay.

The two Children's statutory complaint were 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 four services that received the highest number of corporate complaints:

1. Waste and Recycling – 21%
2. Highways – 18%
3. Revenues and Benefits – 15%
4. Environmental Health – 10%

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 2014/15. However, there was a 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

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 and disruption caused to roadworks.

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

Environmental Health; the main theme for these complaints is fixed penalty notices and the validity of such fines. The volume of these complaints has reduced from 16% received in 2014/15 to 10%.

Complaints received for Adult’s Social Care related to:

1. Finance – 28%
2. Assessment and Care planning – 26%
3. Commissioned Providers -17%
4. Communication – 15%
5. Other 14%

The highest number of complaints received relate to financial concerns (28%). There was a 4% increase in the volume of complaints received regarding financial issues up from 24 % in 2014/15. Financial complaints include issues raised concerning the Direct Payment rate, client contributions for domiciliary care costs, Client contribution for care home costs.

The next highest volume of complains received related to Assessments and Care planning (26%). There is an increase in 2% from complaints received in 2014/15. These complaints include delays in assessments taking place, the decision making process and not involving the family.

Complaints received from commissioned providers increased by 6% compared to 2014/15. 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 decreased by 9% compared to the previous year. Communication complaints include late responses regarding panel decisions, failures to keep the servicer users updated when assessments are taking place. Failure to keep families updates when changes in care provision are taking place. However, a 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.

Complaints received for Children's Social Care related to:

1. Child Protection – 37%
2. Communication – 29%
3. Contact Orders / access – 24%
4. Finance – 11%
5. Other 12%

The highest number of issues received for Children's social care related to Child protection, 37%. 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, (29%) 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 (24%) 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 37% related to Children Looked After or those whom have recently left the care of the Authority. Of the 20 complaints received, six 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 21 July 2016. The LGO published their annual report 28 July 2016. The report details trends and statistics for all Local Authorities in England. The report can be viewed in full on the LGO website, link below.

<http://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/annual-review-reports/local-government-complaint-reviews>

The LGO reported that it upheld a national average of 51% of the complaints referred to them for an independent review. The Council has received a total of 28 LGO referrals for the complaint year 2015/2016. Knowsley Council had five complaints fully investigated, four 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 80%. If the calculation was on complaints received it would be 14%.

Nationally, the LGO received 2584 adult social care complaints, an increase of 4% where 58% were upheld. The majority of adult social care complaints related to assessments and care planning where the LGO upheld 70%

The LGO upheld 66% of the complaints received regarding Adult social care in Knowsley. However the LGO has measured the outcome of complaints in relation to complaints fully investigated rather than complaints received, therefore three complaints were investigated with two upheld.

The LGO upheld 41% of complaints received for Environmental services, however the LGO includes refuse and recycling in this category and documents that the highest number of complaints relate to failure to collect refuse for example missed collections. The LGO found that the Council has usually taken appropriate steps to remedy the complaint. The fault often lies with how the council has handled the initial complaint. The LGO upheld 59% of detailed investigations for this area.

The LGO upheld 40% of complaints regarding Highways and transport. Most issues related to fines and challenging parking fines. Other themes were traffic management, repairs and maintenance, potholes and parking permits. These themes echo the themes of complaints received by Knowsley Council.

The LGO upheld 38% of complaints regarding Education and Children’s services. The LGO did not fully investigate any of the eight complaints received regarding this service area. The majority of complaints received related to child protection complaints. When the LGO finds fault in these complaints, recommendations are usually to review the safeguarding procedures to avoid other children being similarly affected.

Ombudsman referrals were received for the following services areas:

- Benefits and Council Tax – 2
- Highways - 3
- Housing – 5
- Children - 8
- Adult Social Care - 7
- Environmental Services - 1
- Planning and development – 1
- Corporate – 1

Of the enquiries and complaints received by the Ombudsman regarding Knowsley Council, 15 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. Eight complaints were closed by the Ombudsman and not investigated. Of the five complaints fully investigated, four were upheld and one was not upheld.

Outcomes

Service Area	UpHeld	Not upheld
Adult	2	1
Environmental Health	1	
Highways	1	
Totals	4	1

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 120 compliments were received for this year. The compliments related to the following services:

	Quarter One	Quarter Two	Quarter Three	Quarter Four	Total
Corporate	13	15	17	18	63
Adults	1	6	7	11	25
Children	4	15	7	6	32
Total	18	36	31	35	120

The compliments related to the following services:

- Customer Services (One Stop Shops, Contact Centre, Registrars and Customer Liaison)
- Waste and Recycling
- Pest Control
- Street Scene including Street Cleaning
- Planning Including Tree services
- Stronger Families
- Neighbourhood Management
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Council tax
- Highways
- Environmental health team including Licencing and Dog Wardens
- 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. Progress against the actions resulting from complaints is monitored by the Service Area and Designated Complaint’s Officer. Senior Officers and Directors are provided with a weekly update on all new complaints to ensure that the issues raised during the complaint process are communicated to Senior Officers within the Council. Monthly updates are produced to ensure any theme is 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.