



Knowsley Council

“Have Your Say”

Annual Report

2017/2018

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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 2017 to 31 March 2018.

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 961 complaints were received for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 Of which 805 (84%) were Corporate complaints, 100 (10.3%) Adult Social Care and 56 (5.7%) Children's Social Care.

By comparison 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.

There has been a decrease of 105 (10%) to the total number of complaints received in comparison to the previous year. There is a small decrease of 12 (10.8%) in the volume of Adult Statutory Complaints received and a decrease of 20 (26.4 %) in the volume of Children Statutory complaints received.

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

The Council has worked to make the "Have Your Say" process an accessible and customer friendly process.

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	254	210	157	184	805
Adults	26	28	26	20	100
Children	14	13	13	16	56
Total	294	251	196	220	961

Response Time

For 2017/18 performance full year results, please see the table below.

	Target (%)	Outcome (%)
Acknowledgements within 3 working days	100	100
Response within timescale	872	91%
Escalation to stage two	59	6%

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

	2015/16 (%)	2016/7 (%)	2017/8 (%)
Corporate	96	90	92%
Adults	73	70	89%
Children	80	72	77%

Responses within timescale for corporate complaints have increased to 92%. 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 89% for the year 2017/18, this is an increase of 19% compared to 2016/17. 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 increased by 5%. 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 2017/18. Overall 30% of the complaints made to the Council were upheld on review.

	Quarter One	Quarter Two	Quarter Three	Quarter Four	Total
Corporate	65	70	58	50	243
Adults	6	10	7	7	30
Children	2	4	2	9	17
	74	83	64	66	290/961 =30.1 %

Stage Two

If a complainant is unhappy with the Council's response to their complaint, it can be escalated to stage two. The stage two provides a further opportunity to review the issues raised by the complainant to ensure that the response at stage one has responded to all the concerns raised within the complaint and that the response is both proportionate and reasonable.

During 2017/18, a total of 60 complaints were escalated to stage two of the "Have your say" process. Seven complaints related to stage two of the Children's statutory complaint process and 53 to the corporate process. Ten of the 53 complaints were upheld, partially upheld or justified on further investigation.

The outcome for the seven statutory Children's complaints showed that six complaints were partially upheld and one complaint was not upheld.

The response time was achieved for 41 of the 53 stage two corporate complaints with the remaining 12 complaints failing to achieve the target response date. Complainants were communicated with regularly explaining the reasons for the delay.

Two of seven Children's statutory complaints were not 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:

- Waste 188 complaints 23 %
- Highways 138 complaints 17%
- Environmental Health including Corporate enforcement – 120 complaints 15%
- Revenue and benefits 100 complaints 12%

The highest number of corporate "Have Your Say" complaints received for this year related to Waste and Recycling. This area also received the highest volume of complaints in 2016/17. 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:

- Assessments and Care Plans 30 complaints 30%
- Commissioned Services 23 Complaints 23%
- Finance 20 complaints 20%
- Communication 15 complains 15%
- Safeguarding 4 complaints 4%
- Other 8 complaints 8%

The highest number of complaints received related to assessment and care planning (30%). This is a 4% increase in the volume of complaints received regarding assessment and care planning 26 % in 2016/17. 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 17% 2016/17. 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

Financial complaints decreased by 8% these include issues raised concerning the Direct Payment rate, client contributions for domiciliary care costs, Client contribution for care home costs. The volume of complaints regarding communication has remained the same as the previous year. Communication complaints include failures to keep the servicer 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 correspondence not being returned additional training regarding communication, complaints and customer service has been completed by the Adult Social Workers.

Complaints received for Children's Social Care related to:

1. Child Protection 16 complaints 29%
2. Communication 20 complaints 36%
3. Contact Orders / access 8 complaints 14 %
4. Finance 8 complaints 14%
5. Other 4 complaints 7%

The highest number of issues received for Children's Social Care related to Child Protection, 39%, an increase of 2% from the previous year. 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 is a decrease of 5%. 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, 39% related to Children Looked After or those whom have recently left the care of the Authority. Of the 22 complaints received at stage one three complaints were received directly from the young people themselves. One Young person with the support of NYAS escalated their complaint to stage two of the Children’s statutory complaint process.

Local Government and Social Care 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 28 July 2018. 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 26 July 2018.

The LGO reported that it upheld a national average of 57% of the complaints referred to them for an independent review. The Council has received a total of 38 LGO referrals for the complaint year 2017/2018. Knowsley Council had 13 complaints fully investigated, seven 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 54%. If the calculation was on all referred complaints received it would be 18%. The Ombudsman advised that in the same period upheld complaints about Children and Education services have increased from 38% to 65%.

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

The LGO documented in the Annual Report & Accounts 2017-18:

The report shows the Ombudsman received 17,452 complaints and enquiries about local government in 2017-18, compared with 16,863 in the previous year.

Significantly, the proportion of complaints it has upheld has increased to 57% - up from 54% the previous year. The Ombudsman has also issued 40% more public interest reports about local authorities in the same period.

With it increasingly challenging authorities on how complaints can improve services more widely, as well as remedying individual injustices, the Ombudsman has made 21% more recommendations for service improvements this year. Recommendations to remedy personal injustice were also up 3% (from 2,428 to 2,566).

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

2017/2018	2016/2017
Adults - 7	Adult Care Services - 11
Benefits and Taxes – 5	Benefits and Taxes – 1
Education and Childrens Services 3	Education and Childrens Services 7
Enviromental Servies – 3	Enviromental Servies – 10
Highways and Transport – 5	Highways and Transport – 2
Housing – 4	Housing – 6
Planning and Development – 3	Planning and Development – 8
Others - 8	Other - 7

Of the enquiries and complaints received by the Ombudsman regarding Knowsley Council, 13 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. One complaint was resolved by advice being provided by the LGO and one complaint was closed as being incomplete/invalid. Of the 13 complaints fully investigated, seven were upheld and six were not upheld.

Outcomes

Service Area	Upheld	Not Upheld
Adult Social Care	1	4
Commissioning Whols Life Service	1	0
Corporate Services	3	2
Environmental	1	0
Housing	1	0
Totals	7	6

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 212 compliments were received for this year. The Council received 184 compliments for the complaint year 2016-17 this is an increase of 13.3 %.

The compliments related to the following services:

	Quarter One	Quarter Two	Quarter Three	Quarter Four	Total
Corporate	34	33	24	29	120
Adults	13	6	13	5	37
Children	19	9	17	10	55
Total	66	48	54	44	212

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.