

**Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2023/24**

**1. Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to summarise complaints and compliment information for 2023/24 for the City of Doncaster Council (CDC) and partners. This includes the Council, St Leger Homes of Doncaster (SLHD) and Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust (DCLT).

The aim of complaint procedures is to resolve any dissatisfaction promptly, effectively and transparently and to inform service improvements to prevent service users experiencing the same issues in the future. The Council, SLHD and DCLT all have complaint policies and procedures. They also have officers who are responsible for ensuring the complaint and compliment processes are followed and are available to support customers and staff to ensure that making a complaint is as easy as possible for all concerned. These officers also ensure we respond to enquiries and investigations from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

The Council’s definition of a complaint is:

*“An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action taken by the Council or their staff, which affects a customer or a group of customers*”.

All Councils have a duty to provide available access to residents to report concerns and must investigate and respond within a reasonable and defined timescale.

**2. Complaints Procedure**

The following Complaint Procedure relates to all the organisations; however, complaints relating to Children’s Social Care have a different statutory procedure, which is detailed later in this section.

**Early Resolution**

Complaints that can be fully resolved to the complainant’s satisfaction within 3 working days is the Council’s preferred method of dealing with complaints. We aim to deal with the majority of complaints by early resolution. However, the Council will need to deal with some complaints through a formal investigation approach due to their complexity.

**Stage 1 – Local Resolution**

At this stage, a senior officer within the service area will investigate the complaint and send a full response to the complainant within 10 working days. In the event a complaint cannot be responded to in full by this time, the customer must be updated and an extension recorded with a new due date. Any extensions agreed should be shared with the Customer Experience Team who will be monitoring the progress of each complaint.

**Stage 2 - Escalated Complaint Investigation**

A complainant can request an escalated complaint investigation if they are unhappy with the outcome of the Stage 1 investigation. The Customer Experience Team will liaise with the Head of Service to discuss whether there has been any additional information provided by the complainant that would require a further review. An independent senior officer would conduct the escalated complaint investigation. Their role is to ensure that a thorough investigation is carried into the adequacy of the Stage 1 investigation and to provide a full response provided to the complainant within 20 working days (or a pre agreed timescale) of their latest communication. The escalated investigation is the end of the Council’s internal complaints procedure. There is no further right to appeal to the Council following the issue of a Stage 2 response.

**Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)**

Following a full investigation, a complainant can approach the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The LGSCO will not usually investigate a complaint unless it has been dealt with through the Council’s complaint procedure first and exhausted the internal complaints procedure. The option to approach the LGSCO is the third and final stage of the complaints procedure and is the final point of contact to attempt resolution of a complaint.

St Leger Homes of Doncaster may also receive applications from The Housing Ombudsman specific to their functions. DCLT do not have an Ombudsman, therefore any Stage 3 complaints are investigated and responded to by their Chief Executive.

The LGSCO can ask a Council to:

* Apologise to a customer.
* Provide a service a customer should have had.
* Make a decision the Council should have done before.
* Reconsider a decision the Council did not take properly in the first place.
* Improve the Councils procedures so similar problems do not happen again; or
* Make a payment to the customer.

The LGSCO do not have legal powers to enforce the organisations they investigate to follow their recommendations however it would be unlikely that an organisation would fail to do so.

**Outcome and Resolution**

There are three main categories for classifying the outcome of a complaint, which are as follows:

* *Upheld*: This is where we agree with the concerns raised and as a result, have put measures in place to improve service delivery going forward.
* *Partially Upheld*: We agree with some of the issues identified but not all.
* *Not Upheld*: There has been no evidence found to support the allegations of concern.

In cases where a complaint is upheld or partially upheld, an apology is always given for any distress or inconvenience caused to the resident. In some instances, the investigator of the complaint may recommend that training be carried out for relevant staff members to ensure any knowledge gaps are addressed.

There may also be instances whereby complainants are offered a remedy payment for time and trouble in making their complaint. This can be monetary or an appropriate gift. In most cases where a fault has been identified and a recommendation made, the Customer Experience Team will monitor this to ensure any agreed action is carried out.

**Children’s Social Services Statutory Complaint Procedure**

The majority of representations that the council receives regarding the functions of children’s social care fall under the statutory complaints procedure. The procedure is defined in The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006. The statutory procedure allows for children and young people “to make representations, including complaints about the actions, decisions or apparent failings of a local authority’s children’s social services provision. Complaints that do not fall under the statutory complaints procedure are generally those matters that do not relate to children’s social care involvement or services that are not provided directly by children’s social workers.

**Statutory Stage 1 - Local Resolution**

The aim is to resolve as many complaints as possible by the local team at this early stage. The Customer Experience Team should discuss the complaint with the complainant and attempt to address the issues as quickly as possible. They should exchange information and thinking behind decisions and try to agree a way forward. This should take up to 10 working days, with a maximum extension of up to 20 working days for complex complaints.

**Statutory Stage 2 – Investigation**

Where a complaint is accepted at Stage 1, the complainant is entitled to pursue their complaint further through this procedure except in the case of cross boundary issues. In all other instances, once a complaint has entered Stage 1, the local authority is obliged to ensure that the complaint proceeds to Stages 2 and 3 of this procedure, if that is the complainant’s wish.

The investigation is conducted by an external Investigating Officer who is accompanied by an external Independent Person (whose role is to ensure that the investigation is open, transparent and fair). Both officers complete a report with their recommendations following the investigation, which is passed onto a senior manager within the Council (Adjudicating Officer) for the adjudication process. The Adjudicating Officer is a senior manager who does not have management responsibility for the service area that has been complained about.

The Adjudicating Officer then considers the reports and responds to the complainant on behalf of the Trust. A copy of the Investigating Officer and Independent Person’s reports are also shared with the complainant at this stage. The Stage 2 process should be completed within 25 working days, although this timescale can be extended to 65 working days for complex complaints.

**Statutory Stage 3 – Review panel**

Where Stage 2 of the complaint’s procedure has been concluded and the complainant is still dissatisfied, they will be eligible to request further consideration of the complaint by a Review Panel (regulation 18). As it is not possible to review a complaint that has not yet been fully considered at Stage 2 (including providing the report(s) and adjudication to the complainant), it is essential that the local authority does not unnecessarily delay the conclusion of Stage 2.

Further consideration of the complaint can include, in a limited number of cases, early referral to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Otherwise, the complainant retains the right to proceed to a Review Panel (Stage 3).

The Customer Experience Team should assess requests for the Review Panel as they are presented on a case-by-case basis. They should also confer with the Chair, following the Chair’s appointment, regarding arrangements for the Panel.

The review panel should be held within 30 working days of the request. Within 5 working days of the review panel meeting the Independent Chair will send a letter to the Chief Executive outlining the panel’s findings and recommendations. The Chief Executive will then provide the Council’s final response within a further 15 working days. The whole process should take a maximum of 50 working days.

**3. High Level Analysis**

Across all the organisations in 2023/24, we saw a slight increase in the number of complaints received by a cumulative 23, resulting in 2,421 complaints being received this year compared to 2,398 in the previous year.

Below are accompanying graphs and comments from each organisation showing these figures in more detail and providing further information relating to the difference in complaints received for the period.

**City of Doncaster Council (CDC)**

As shown in the graph above, CDC did not note any particular month or quarter in which we received a peak in complaints, the number stayed quite consistent throughout the year.

Doncaster Council saw an increase of complaints of 21% compared to last year’s figures. CDC received a total of 888 Stage 1 complaints in 2023/2024 as the figure for CDC now includes Childrens Social care, whereas in 2022/2023’s Annual Report Childrens Social care complaints were still reported separately to the Council as a whole. This is because between April 2022 and September 2022 these still formed part of the Doncaster Children’s Service’s Trust.

If we were to compare this year’s CDC total (888) against last year’s CDC (736) and Childrens Social Care (116) combined, the actual increase is only 4%.

It would not be beneficial to compare the increase / decrease per Directorate as since the previous annual report there have been changes to the structure of the Council as a whole which has seen the emergence of a new Directorate and other service teams move into different Directorates. For example the Customer Services Team no longer report into Corporate Resources but rather the newly formed Chief Executive Directorate and the Children’s Social Care function has moved into the Council.

The average time to resolve complaints across all Directorates was 9 working days. The Directorate specific information follows within this report.

**St Leger Homes of Doncaster (SLHD)**

SLHD received a total of 1215 complaints this year compared to 1302 in 2022/2023. This is a reduction of 87 complaints (6.7%).

* 71.6% (870) of the complaints were for Property Services.
* 28.07% (341) of the complaints were for Housing and Customer Services.
* 0.32% (4) of the complaints were for Corporate Services.

The number of complaints SLHD received throughout the year remained fairly constant, with occasional peaks in numbers. SLHD experienced an increase in complaints in August 2023 and March 2024, linked in part to national news about damp, mould and condensation and additional publicity, locally and nationally about how to complain. SLHD regularly publicise their complaints procedures using a variety of media to make it easy for customer to complain.

Complaints fell in December 2023 due to the seasonal closure of offices and as a result increased in January 2024. SLHD did not refuse to accept any complaints in 23/24.

The Housing Ombudsman’s Office introduced a revised Complaints Code in April 2024. The Code sets out the standards against which all member organisations should deal with complaints. Compliance with the Code is a statutory requirement. Part of the statutory nature of the Code means that landlords are required to submit an annual submission of their performance against the Code to ensure they are compliant. This also includes a requirement that member organisations produce an Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report, SLHD have produced their Complaint and Service Improvement Annual Report for 2023/2024

**Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust (DCLT)**

During the year DCLT received a total of 318 complaints, a 30% increase on the previous year.

Service Delivery was the area which received the majority of complaints, common themes related to Service Delivery are bullet pointed below: The majority of complaints related to

* High volume of young people congregating around the gyms and gym equipment.
* Restriction on young people’s access times in the gyms .
* Temperatures of the pools at different venues
* Gym equipment at Choose Fitness, Balby
* Cancellation of swimming lessons

**4. Complaints by Organisation and Service Area**

**5. Escalated Complaints**

**Stage 2**

Although the majority of all complaints will be investigated and resolved at the first stage of the complaint’s procedure, if a customer still feels aggrieved or they have additional evidence they wish to provide they can request that their complaint is escalated to Stage 2 of the complaint procedure. The Stage 2 investigations are carried out internally. If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the response from their Stage 2 investigation, they may proceed to an independent investigation by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or the Housing Ombudsman (SLHD only). The figures relating to Stage 2 investigations are as follows.

**Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)**

As a final stage to the Council’s corporate complaint’s procedure, complainants have the right to approach the LGSCO following an unsatisfactory Stage 2 response. The LGSCO will direct the customer back to the Local Authority if the complainant has not yet given the Council the opportunity to resolve the complaint through our complaint’s procedures. The LGSCO may also pass the complaint back to the council if they consider that there is more that could be done to resolve the complaint.

The LGSCO will request necessary information from us for review and then will contact the Council should they decide that the matter falls within their jurisdiction and wish to investigate further. The LGSCO investigate malpractice or poor service and are instructed to comment on or request changes to council policies.

Throughout the year we have been ensuring that any Stage 1 or Stage 2 investigations that were carried out within the internal complaint procedure had addressed all the customers concerns before the response was sent to the customer. This ensures that if a customer chooses to seek independent advice, we have done all we can to improve.

During 2023/24 the LGSCO received 36 applications across all organisations (35 CDC and 1 SLHD), of these the LGSCO carried out 11 investigations.

The LGSCO publish an annual review letter every year, which details the complaints that they have received for each authority.

**Appendix 2** includes a copy of the LGSCO Annual Letter to Doncaster Council published in July relating to performance in 23/24. The LGSCO comments on our organisations performance in 23/24 were;

“*In last years letter, concerns were raised about your Council’s responses to our investigation enquiries. I am pleased to report there has been an improvement in the Council’s timeliness when responding to our requests for information. This is a welcome improvement in practise, thank you.”*

**The Housing Ombudsman or the Energy Ombudsman (SLHD Only)**

As an alternative to the LGSCO, residents can approach the Housing Ombudsman or the Energy Ombudsman following an unsatisfactory Stage 2 response. In 2023/2024 The Housing Ombudsman received 15 applications in total, 11 of which were premature and 4 were investigated. The Energy Ombudsman received and investigated 1 complaint.

**6. Lessons Learned and Service Improvements**

**City of Doncaster Council**

As a result of both customer and LGSCO feedback and recommendations, the following teams have introduced the following service improvements to positively impact the services provided by Doncaster Council.

**Place: Licensing**

Over the past year Licensing have been working closely with the Customer Experience Strategy programme to improve the experience of their customers. Extensive improvements have been carried out, such as a full re-design of all Taxi Licensing processes and online solution, full re-design of the website and complete re-design of all Licensing’s application forms. From the complaint data collated for this service area we have seen a reduction in the number of complaints logged throughout the year. This has been a steady decline over the last 12 months which has seen an overall reduction in complaints by 45%.

Licensing Complaints 2022/2023 – 55

Licensing Complaints 2023/2024 – 29

Out of the 29 logged for this year, 16 were received in Quarter 1 and only 2 were received in Quarter 4, showing a significant decrease in the number of complaints currently being received and this trend is continuing.

**Place: Planning**

Planning have seen a decrease in complaints this year of 37%, a total of 27 when compared to 43 the previous year. A number of service improvements have been put into place over the course of the last 12 months which has had a positive impact and likely the cause of the reduction in complaints for this area.

The Planning team have carried out a piece of work with Planning Officers to refresh on report writing, ensuring all key aspects are clearly articulated to cover off concerns raised as part of the application consideration process. The Planning team have continued to utilise their customer feedback to shape services and improvements which include the development of comprehensive case management workload reports, providing officers and managers with a real-time dynamic visualisation of priorities and ensuring targets are managed effectively.

The Planning Team have also launched a new service, [“Find out if you need planning permission”](https://planningservices.doncaster.gov.uk/find-out-if-you-need-planning-permission) (FOIYNPP) which is funded through Planning’s involvement in the Government funded Open Digital Planning project. FOIYNPP allows members of the public to easily determine if their development proposals would require planning permission. The launch of this service has been welcomed by members of the public and has consequently created capacity within the team due to not having to respond to such enquiries, thus enabling the team to be more responsive on planning application proposals.

The department were also successful in securing Government funding under the “Planning Skills Delivery Fund”, this funding provided Local Planning Authorities with an opportunity to secure additional resource to tackle their backlog of stalled applications. This has then allowed officers to focus on driving forward current applications.

**Place: Waste and Recycling**

Since February 2024 Waste and Recycling have received 32 complaints relating to Blue Bin collections. Since the COVID pandemic there has been a relaxation of the contractual bin tagging process, resulting in unacceptable contamination levels up to 30%.

If a blue bin has had contaminated waste put in it, a tag is placed on the bin advising the customer which contaminated item needs removing before the bin can be emptied. This has resulted in initially 17% of blue bins being contaminated & tagged, resulting in increased costs of over £300k in 23/24.

Residents have received information relating to the required criteria and what can and cannot be recycled in their blue bin. Inevitably, this has resulted in an increase in complaints as residents may not have realised they were contaminating their waste containers as they were collected without issues until January 2024. Since this initiative started contamination levels are reducing as are the percentages of tags being placed on the bins.

**Adults Wellbeing and Culture (AWC): Community Care & Support**

The concerns raised were associated to misunderstanding in relation to paying for care and support and quality of care provided by commissioned providers.

In response to these the directorate have introduced a number of changes including; circulation of the financial assessment fact sheet to the Transfer of Care Hub at DRI, reviews and changes made to staff practice guidance to ensure that workers are aware of the information to share with people and who to connect the person with to gain further information and advice and an information and advice working group, which includes people with lived experience, has also been introduced.

**Adults Wellbeing and Culture (AWC): Quality and Safeguarding**

Within Quality and Safeguarding concerns raised were associated to client contributions for the delivery of commissioned care and support, call lengths and call times within domiciliary care and the admissions process when moving into residential care setting.

In recognition of these themes call monitoring logs were checked to verify call times and length, measures have been taken to recoup under delivery of hours and adjusted payments to the providers for this period of time. The team has also re-designed the Care and Support at Home contract specification.

Additional support has also been delivered to the provider management teams to ensure that their own policies and procures are adequately adhered to in relation to initial assessments.

**Children, Young People and Families (CYPF): Special Education Needs Department (SEND)**

In 2023/2024 SEND received 52 complaints compared to 7 in 2022/2023, the majority of which were delays in issuing or reviewing Education Health Care Plan’s (EHCP) impacting on the child’s education. 35 of the complaints were received in Quarter 2 and Quarter 3, with only 8 being received in Quarter 4. An officer has been appointed who is responsible for completing annual reviews and team lead officers have been allocated areas of responsibility with oversight of both EHCP completion and reviews, with weekly monitoring at Service Director level, resulting in a continual reduction in the number of complaints being received.

**CYPF: Social Care**

With a complex complaint that involved another Local Authority area and partners, the following actions took place which were also informed by lessons learned from this complaint:

* Doncaster and a neighbouring authority commissioned a learning review which focusses on how best to help families and safeguard children when working across local authority boundaries.
* Staff were reminded of the importance and responsibility to keep timely detailed and accurate records of a child’s journey and management decisions.
* The findings in this investigation to be used for staff learning and reflection of practise where appropriate.

A complaint was taken over the telephone by the Customer Experience Team, detailing over 40 individual complaints, the complainant did not feel that the original complaint was documented correctly. Taking learnings from this complaint, the Customer Experience Team have changed their process, now when a complaint is taken over the telephone a draft of the complaint is sent to the complainant and they are requested to send confirmation that the complaint is correct or make any amendments to their complaint.

CYPF Managers that are responsible for investigating and responding to complaints have attended a Complaint Investigation training course, which was carried out by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

**St Leger Homes of Doncaster (SLHD)**

SLHD have changed the way they deliver scheduled repairs to improve communication with tenants and to make increased use of trade staff resources. Previously these repairs were done as part of a batched approach to delivery with tenants being on a monthly delivery date. SLHD now inform their customers of their appointment date at the first point of contact.

SLHD used feedback from complaints to review and inform policies. Examples include the review of their Repairs and Maintenance Policy and the implementation of a new Damp, Mould, and Condensation Policy.

SLHD have undertaken a significant transformation in their Housing and Customer Services Directorate, moving towards a more seamless and joined up service. SLHD restructured their Housing Services to create a dedicated team of officers to deal with reports of high level anti-social behaviour and their housing officer services to increase support for customers in the localities. This has resulted in improved response times and customer satisfaction when dealing with high and medium risk reports of anti-social behaviour.

SLHD have increased the number of resources they have in the Customer Relations Team to support the timely processing of complaints.

**Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust (DCLT)**

DCLT received a number of complaints throughout the month of January regarding the amount of youths in the gym and their behaviour. The Youth Membership Package was amended to only allow access up to 4.30pm each day, after implementation further complaints were received about the changes. Therefore a guardian pass has been introduced which enables youths to access the gym after 4.30pm if accompanied by a parent/guardian, these changes have been well received by members.

DCLT continue to receive complaints regarding swimming lesson cancellations however they have seen a decline in complaints since last year. Since May 24 DCLT have become a training centre with the Swim Teacher Association which allows them to offer training and employment for new recruits to become swim teachers. This is having a positive impact and is reducing the number of cancelled lessons.

All equipment at Choose Fitness Balby has been replaced and customers are satisfied with the new centre.

**7. Doncaster Council by Directorate**

**Corporate Resources**

The Corporate Resources Directorate received 116 corporate complaints in 2023/24.

Revenues and Benefits received a total of 112 complaints, of which 73 were for Council Tax and 39 were for Financial Assessments or other services such as Housing Benefits, Business Grants and Business Rates. Although there were a considerable number of complaints received for this area compared to other Corporate Resource’s teams, it is worth noting that this is because this service affects the majority of residents in Doncaster with almost all households using at least one service provided by this team on a monthly basis.

Across the Directorate, 84% of all customer complaints were responded to within the timescale of 10 working days.

**Escalated Complaints**

Corporate Resources investigated 3 Stage 2 complaints during 2023/24.

Of all Corporate Resources complaints that were received last year, 5 customers sought advice from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). Of these, 4 investigations were discontinued by the LGSCO and 1 case was upheld where fault and injustice was identified. These cases related to the following service areas:

* Revenues and Benefits: 4
* Litigation and Regulatory: 1

**Compliments**

Doncaster Council have received in total 464 compliments, of which 21 were for teams across Corporate Resources. The breakdown of the directorate is below.

**Place**

The Place Directorate received 456 complaints in 2023/24. The services that received the most complaints were those which have the largest impact on the majority of the residents in the borough, Waste and Recycling, Highways and Street Scene. These three services equated to 68% of all complaints received for this directorate.

Waste and Recycling received 128 complaints last year compared to 146 for this year, an increase of 15%. We can attribute this to the enforcement of contamination in the recycling blue bin collections, which saw a spike in waste complaints from February 2024. The main complaint theme for Highways were around road works and road closures across the borough.

Both the Licensing team and Planning team saw a significant decrease in overall complaints, complaints fell by 45% and 35% respectively. This was due to service improvements being implemented by the teams.

Across the Directorate, 80% of all customer complaints were responded to within the timescale of 10 working days.

**Escalated Complaints**

Place investigated 22 Stage 2 complaints during 2023/24.

Of all Place complaints that were received last year, 12 customers sought advice from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). Of these, 11 investigations were discontinued by the LGSCO and 1 case was upheld with the LGSCO finding fault and injustice. These cases related to the following service areas:

* Planning: 7
* Regulation and Enforcement: 4
* Waste and Recycling:1

**Compliments**

Doncaster Council have received in total 464 compliments, of which 192 were for teams across Place. The breakdown of the directorate is below.

**Chief Executive**

The Chief Executive Directorate received 14 complaints in 2023/24. The service that received the most complaints was Customer Services who received 10 of the 14 complaints.

Across the Directorate, 93% of all customer complaints were responded to within the timescale of 10 working days.

The complaint that took over 20 working days to resolve was as a result of a meeting required between the Council and the Complainant, which was arranged at the complainant’s earliest convenience, following the meeting to discuss the complaint a full written response was issued within 4 working days

**Escalated Complaints**

The Chief Executive directorate did not receive any Stage 2 complaints during 2023/24.

Of all Chief Executive complaints that were received last year, 1 customer sought advice from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

This complaint was related to a Blue Badge appeal and was upheld by the LGSCO who found fault and injustice.

**Compliments**

Doncaster Council have received in total 464 compliments, of which 94 were for Customer Service teams that fall within the Chief Executive Directorate. The breakdown is below.

**Adults Wellbeing and Culture (AWC)**

AWC received 78 complaints in 2023/24, the departments which generated the majority of complaints throughout the year were;

* Integrated Discharge Team (within Home First) 18
* Localities Teams (Communities Care and Support) 16

Below is a full breakdown of all Adults complaints received throughout 2023/24.

Across the Directorate, 37% of all customer complaints were responded to within the corporate timescale of 10 working days. Most complaints in this area are of a complex and sensitive nature and can be difficult to carry out a full investigation and respond within the 10 working days. If a complaint response is going to take longer, customers are regularly contacted throughout and often invited to attend a face-to-face meeting to discuss their concerns on more of a personal level. This can again have an effect on the timescales as we allow the customer to choose a time that suits their requirements.

**Escalated Complaints**

AWC received 13 escalated complaints (Stage 2) during 2023/24.

Of all AWC complaints that were received last year, 3 customers sought advice from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

Of these 3 cases submitted, 2 investigations were discontinued by the LGSCO and 1 case was not upheld, no fault found.

These cases related to the following service areas:

* Communities Care and Support: 2
* Quality and Safeguarding: 1

**Compliments**

Doncaster Council have received in total 464 compliments, of which 77 were for teams across AWC.

Due to the content provided by residents when they are complimenting AWC we are unable to provide an accurate breakdown per service area. At the end of this document you will see examples of compliments received into the Council.

With affect from 01/04/2024, a new system has been put in place to ensure all compliments received can be allocated to a specific service going forward.

**Children, Young People and Families (CYPF)**

This section covers the complaints and compliments that were received by the areas that fall within CYPF. This directorate has two complaint procedures, a Corporate procedure and a Statutory procedure. Under statutory guidance Local Authorities must publish each year specific information in relation to Children’s Social Care complaints that is not required for any other services in the council.

**Corporate Complaints**

CYPF received 210 Corporate complaints in 2023/24. Of the 210 complaints received, 52 of these (25%) were related to Education, Health and Care Plan issues (EHCP). The majority of these were relating to delays in issuing a final EHCP which was having an effect on the child’s education, further details are included in the ‘Lessons Learned’ section of this report.

Across the Directorate, 50% of all Corporate complaints were responded to within the timescale of 10 working days. 29% were responded to between 11 and 20 working days and 21% were responded to in over 20 working days. Complaints for this Directorate can be of a complex and sensitive nature and can be difficult to carry out a full investigation and response within the 10 working days. In all cases whereby an investigation is taking longer than anticipated the resident is kept up to date with the progress.

**Corporate Escalated Complaints**

CYPF received 18 Stage 2 Corporate complaints throughout 2023/24. Of all CYPF Corporate complaints that were received last year, 13 customers sought advice from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). Of these 13 cases submitted, 7 investigations were discontinued by the LGSCO, 1 was not upheld with no fault found, 1 was upheld where fault and injustice were identified and 4 cases remain open and under investigation by the LGSCO.

These cases related to the following service areas:

* Equity and Inclusion (EHCP Issues): 6
* Social Care: 6
* Education and Skills: 1

**Statutory Complaints**

CYPF received 14 Statutory complaints in 2023/24. Of the 14 complaints received, the 2 main areas of concern were decision making which accounted for 4 (29%) and poor communication, which also account for 4 (29%).

This is a slight rise from 2022/23 whereby again the main categories were decision making which accounted for 21% and poor communication which accounted for 26%.

Across the Directorate, 29% of all Statutory complaints were responded to within 10 working days, 14% were responded to between 11 and 20 working days and 57% were responded to over 21 working days. Complaints for this Directorate can be of a complex and sensitive nature and can be difficult to carry out a full investigation and response within the 10 working days. In all cases whereby an investigation is taking longer than anticipated the resident is kept up to date with the progress.

**Statutory Escalated Complaints**

CYPF received 2 Stage 2 Statutory complaints, and 0 Stage 3 Statutory complaints during 2023/24.

There were no Statutory complaints that were investigated by the LGSCO.

**Total number of individual contacts received**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|   | **2023/24** |
| Stage 1 – Social Care  | 14 |
| Representations (Informal) | 18 |
| Withdrawn | 17 |
| **Total Contacts** | **49** |

A large majority of the contacts received continue to be made by adults who were expressing their dissatisfaction with the service provided. There were 9 contacts received from young people during 2023/24.

The age of young people who contacted the Customer Experience Team ranged between 14 and 21. There were less than 3 contacts from children and young people who were of a black and minority ethnic (BME) background.

**Child/Young Person’s Contact Route**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Route** | **Child In Care** | **Care Leaver** | **Child in Need** |
| Telephone Call with Customer Experience Team | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Service Area | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Advocate | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Feedback Form | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Email | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **6** | **2** | **1** |

**Route of how Statutory Stage 1 Complaints have been received**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Route** | **Number Received** |
| Advocate | 3 |
| CDC Contact Centre | 1 |
| Web Form | 1 |
| Email | 3 |
| Letter | 1 |
| Meeting | 1 |
| Telephone Call | 4 |
| **TOTAL** | **14** |

**Source of Statutory Stage 1 Complaints**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Relationship to Young Person / Child** |  |
| Children, Young People and Care Leaver | 4 |
| Foster Carers | 1 |
| Grandparents | 0 |
| Legal Guardian | 0 |
| Parent | 9 |
| Other third Party | 0 |
| **TOTAL** | **14** |

**Breakdown of overall main presenting complaint themes for Statutory Complaints**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2022/2023** | **2023/2024** |
| **Main presenting theme - Statutory Complaints** | **Total Number Received**  | **Upheld / Partially Upheld** | **Not Upheld** | **Total Number Received**  | **Upheld / Partially Upheld** | **Not Upheld** |
| Accuracy of Assessment/Reports | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Actions of Social Worker | 7 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Changes in Social Worker | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Decision making | 9 | 0 | 9 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Delays in receiving services | 8 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Delays in sharing Minutes/Reports | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Family time arrangements | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Financial assistance | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Poor communication | 10 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Unhappy with placement | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Totals** | **40** | **16** | **24** | **14** | **6** | **8** |

**Compliments**

Doncaster Council have received in total 464 compliments, of which 80 were for teams across CYPF. The breakdown of the directorate is below.

**8. Compliments Across all Organisations**

**City of Doncaster Council**

*“I am emailing to let you know how impressed we are with XX. From assigning to Mum she has been approachable, professional and thorough, her commitment to clients and her approach with family members is second to know. XX has been amazing from the moment we met her and has gone above and beyond to ensure the right care and situation is reached for all of us. Again this is to commend XX and all she has done and is doing for our family”.*

*“Mrs XX would like to thank the gentleman and his colleague who came to clear the oil spillage this was logged this morning and I am really happy that this was dealt with swiftly and the gentleman was very helpful so would like to pass on my thanks for a great job.”*

*“I would like to thank you for all you have done for me, without your help and dedication I would not have coped with my problems it was very bad until you got involved you are a star in my opinion once again thank you XX”’.*

*“Customer came in to reception with a licensing enquiry in respect of a premise license that he had been given incorrect information about what to do when he no longer required the licence. XX in licensing was very helpful and sorted the gentleman's enquiry out straight away he was extremely grateful because this had been escalated to Rundle's and he could not understand the reason by it. XX was in his words Brilliant and he could not thank her enough.”*

*“I need to pass on our massive thank you’s to XX playing a huge part in keeping Mum at home for so long after losing our Dad. We didn’t know how this would work and I know there has been some ‘challenges’ but on the whole Mum was extremely happy there with the staff keeping her safe and her being able to meet new friends. If we didn’t have this support in place we couldn’t have managed for as long as we have.”*

*“Caller wanted to compliment waste and recycling for sorting out getting her bin getting collected from her gate as cannot get it over the step - caller is very pleased as bin crew now put the bin back just inside her garden and wanted to send on compliments.”*

*“Yesterday, 6th July, I visited the Waterdale office with a planning/licensing query. Two ladies assisted with this and I would like to offer my thanks for their time and patience. They were polite, thorough, knowledgeable, and friendly”*

*“I reported some household furniture which had be dumped by the tenant when they moved out. Only reported at midday on 22nd June and when i got home at 4pm it had gone Job well done. Hope you get to charge the people that had dumped it”*

*“We have our black bin emptied today 18th May 2023 in Conisbrough. How refreshing to have a bin lady emptying the bins. Her team was efficient, polite and bins put back exactly in front of the appropriate house and no mess. Fabulous and can we have this team every time please.”*

*“I visited Armthorpe waste recycling centre this lunchtime. I would like to thank all the staff on duty for their advice and friendly manner. Also thanks to the 2 staff who took a couple of chairs to the skip for me. I didn’t ask for help and although they were busy they still took the chairs away. Thank you.”*

*“As a regular disabled user of all of your recycling centres, I feel that I would like to inform you of a very thoughtful and extremely helpful member of staff at Carcroft recycling centre. Every time I visit Carcroft he always comes over and asks if I would like any help . ....... As I wear a false leg I quite often wear shorts which displays my disability and XX is the only one to offer any assistance”*

 *“Thank you Stronger Communities for your visit yesterday. My husband and I were blown away by the support and help you gave to us, and it is so nice to know that someone is trying to sort out the problems on this street and that someone is listening to us.”*

*“Lady called to speak to council tax about a bill query, she said the lady she spoke to was really helpful and eased her and explained about her paying her bill and she would leave a note. she found the advisor most helpful and wanted to pass on her gratitude”.*

*“Yesterday I spoke with a lady named XX. I wish to compliment XX. She went above and beyond to resolve a council tax solution. XX very kindly contacted other departments to help to resolve the situation, being very considerate, and thorough in her work.”*

*“A big thank you to XX and the blue badge team for the delivery of the new blue badge which came today as the current blue badge runs out while we are in Spain XX and the team was able to fast track it through to me and I really appreciate it Thank you very much”*

*“Resident was so grateful to XX for helping him regarding his dropped kerb application - you have gone the extra mile to help me today and I’m very thankful. Can I just say I’ve had lots of contact with Doncaster council and I’ve received nothing but courteous behaviour and help when coming into the civic office and whenever I speak with the contact centre.”*

*“Mrs XX wanted to say a great big thank you to XX for his patience today. Resident was nervous and XX put her at ease and stopped her heart pounding and she wanted to say it means the world”.*

*“Just wanted to give a shout out to XX in your School Admissions Dept who has been a credit to Council in how she dealt with an issue that we had. Friendly, professional, helpful and quick to respond - couldn’t have asked for more.”*

*“The three men who came out to clear the road were particularly lovely to my 4-year-old who insisted on going out to watch them do the job. (I mean machinery is exciting when you are that age). They were all very friendly, waved to him and took time to speak to him. They made a small boy very happy. They did a top job too!”*

*“Armthorpe community library have a lady called XX who works there. XX makes it a very enjoyable experience when visiting the library. I use the computers in there and XX is always very polite and helpful. XX makes me feel very welcome indeed, and very much brightens up my day. A big thank you for XX and also a thank you to Doncaster council too.”*

*“I just wanted to send our thanks once again for a marvellous trip around the Mansion house and Museum building.
I know how busy you must be, but you taking the time to give us some insider knowledge really helped to make the day what it was. The students will undoubtedly benefit from your knowledge of the facilities side of things also, which is great. Hopefully going forward we can keep in touch and maybe repeat the day at some point soon.”*

*“Mrs XX would like to thank the gentleman and his colleague who came to clear the oil spillage this was logged this morning and I am really happy that this was dealt with swiftly and the gentleman was very helpful so would like to pass on my thanks for a great job.”*

*“Mr XX wanted to extend his thanks for an excellent job that was done by the spider team who were maintaining the vegetation at the Sycamores, they are did a fantastic job!”*

*“For a number of weeks now the 2 lads that litter pick in front of ward brothers and in front of the council building are doing a great job. Could you pass on my thanks and I appreciate them.”*

*“Thanks for approaching this case with such commitment to safeguarding children, but also compassion.”*

*“Since L has worked with the family this child’s behaviour has transformed. He still needs some support, but it is clear to see his feels safer and happier. He is in class more and making better progress. His mum seems happier too, which is great to see.”*

*“I would like to commend Ms XX, her Team Manager and the Local Authority on a creative and persistent approach to working with XX, and their family since May 2023. I have been impressed with the quality of the social work and therapeutic work. They have provided significant support and resources, which have been pivotal to achieving this happy outcome for the children.”*

**St Leger Homes Doncaster**

*“Customer called to compliment painter she says he has done a great job and he is a lovely person. She also wanted to compliment the roofers who she says have completed the roof to a good standard and again are great workers.”*

*“Customer called to give compliments to the electrician who has attended today. Customer said he was done quickly and gave an excellent service and wanted the compliment to be passed on.”*

*“Customer called today to give compliments to the gas fitter who attended today 21/2/24, she said “He was such a lovely young man, so polite and helpful. I jut want to say thank you so much for your help and understanding. My husband is in a wheelchair and so can’t move things about and he helped move things, then moved them back after he was done. He was lovely. Thank you so much.”*

*I have just spoken with the customer who you recently closed for support. She was absolutely over the moon with the support you gave her. She asked me to pass on to you how grateful she is for your help. She said it’s made a massive difference to her life and although it might seem like small steps to some, she has made massive changes thanks to you, and she feels like her self-esteem and confidence has improved massively. She only wishes she could have had your support for longer.*

*The customer called today to give compliments. He said he loves his house, it’s the best house in the world and he thinks the landlord (SLHD) are wonderful. He said, “I wouldn’t swap my house for Buckingham Palace.”*

**Doncaster Council Leisure Trust**

*"Just want to say visited today with my 2 sons and partners and it was amazing so clean lifeguards always checking everyone is safe it’s the best swimming pool I been to this year 100% returning "*

*"The lifeguard was very polite and made my experience 10x better. Not only did she do this for me but i saw her do it for others as well which was something no other lifeguard did. GIVE HER A RAISE !!!"*

*"Please congratulate the lifeguard at top of “The Falls” slide on 11am session - I was with my grandson who loves that slide and he was super excited to have him interact in fun and banter with him - well over and above - well done and thank you, you made that little boy’s day"*

*"Both members of staff were extremely helpful. The member of staff who supervised our session was excellent. She offered help and advice as we explained it was our first attempt at paddle boarding. With her knowledge and instruction we were both paddle boarding by the end of the session. She made it an extremely satisfying and superb experience. Please pass on our comments to the staff members concerned."*

**9. Unreasonable Behaviour Policy**

In a small number of cases, we experience service users acting in an unreasonable way when accessing Council services. This could be when they have a complaint, pursuing their complaints in a way that can impede the investigation of their complaint, or residents who have not made complaints but take up a disproportionate amount of Council time and resources sending in emails or making phone calls.

There are currently 23 individuals on the Unreasonable Behaviour register and the way in which their behaviour is being managed differs vastly, ranging from complete barring of attending the Civic Buildings One Stop Shop, due to acts of violence and aggression, to appointing a Single Point of Contact to try to streamline communication from an individual in an effort to help them.

The Customer Experience Team have a tracking system to record all residents whose behaviour is deemed unreasonable and they are responsible for reviewing this decision within a reasonable timeframe, which is always set out to the resident from the onset. They are also responsible for keeping a central record of all letters/emails and other communication sent out or received from those residents relating to the policy.