

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

2 February 2009

Corporate Complaints and Compliments

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present to Members, for their information, a schedule of the corporate compliments and complaints received during Quarter 2 (July to September 2008).

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Committee periodically considers statistical information relating to complaints and compliments received by the Council. Once each year, this information is also accompanied by information in relation to agreed ethical indicators which help give an indication of the health of the authority in relation to standards and ethics.

3.0 STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 3.1 Attached at Appendix 1 is a Schedule of the corporate compliments and complaints received by the Council during Quarter 2 (July to September 2008).
- 3.2 In order to assist Officers in compiling the ethical indicators statistical information and to supply the Committee with details of a full year's statistics, the wider ethical indicators information will be brought to the Committee's meeting in May 2009.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That Members note this report.

CAROLE DUNN

Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) and Monitoring Officer

Background Documents:

None

County Hall
NORTHALLERTON

23 January 2009

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE
2 FEBRUARY 2009
COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS QUARTERLY REPORT
QUARTER 2 – JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2008

Introduction

1. This is the second quarterly report on compliments and complaints this year and covers the period July to September 2008.
2. Figures for the previous quarter and for the same quarter last year have been included for comparison, although it should be noted that improvements to recording only started to be made last year and continue to be made, so comparisons will become more meaningful as time goes on.
3. It is important to capture as much data as possible so that we can use it effectively to improve services where necessary. Again, I would like to reiterate the point that it is not the number of complaints received that is important. The percentage of upheld or partly upheld complaints and complaints dealt with over timescale shows us where problem areas may lie (Appendix 1 shows learning that has been identified to address issues arising). However, those complaints that are not upheld can still help us to improve services and should still be monitored.

Compliments Received

Compliments Received	Adult & Community	Business & Environment	Chief Executive	Children & Young People	Finance & Central	Total for year/quarter
Total 2007/08	966	624	53	88	45	1776
Quarter2 2007/08	277	224	15	14	2	532
Quarter1 2008/09	185	305	12	17	51	570
Quarter 2 2008/09	200	233	4	12	22	471

4. The number of compliments received in FCS has decreased due to artificially inflated figures in quarter 1 due to late reporting.
5. Following a system failure in the Customer Service Centre figures may be slightly down for CEG as no figures were available for this service for this quarter.

Complaints Received Stages 1 - 3

Complaints Received	Adult & Community	Business & Environment	Chief Executive	Children & Young People	Finance & Central	Total for year/quarter
Total 2007/08	642	51	21	122	11	847
Quarter2 2007/08	159	21	6	29	1	222
Quarter 1 2008/09	236	15	7	26	6	290
Quarter 2 2008/09	128	61	3	20	1	213

6. Much work has been carried out in making services aware of what should and should not be reported. This has had differing effects on each service.
7. The number of complaints received in ACS has dropped following a review of how the complaints procedure is implemented in the Libraries and Registration Services. There has been a rise in the number of complaints received in BES this quarter (46) following previous underreporting in Waste Management.
8. Again, due to a system failure in the Customer Service Centre, figures may be slightly lower than they should be for CEG.

Timescales

9. A total of 177 (91%) complaints were completed within target timescale and 18 (9%) complaints took longer than 20 working days to resolve. Of these 10 were handled through the statutory procedure for Social Care complaints, which is noted for being generally of a more complex nature requiring specialist input and the involvement of other agencies and occasionally legal advice. The figure for completion within timescale is a 3% drop on the last quarter.
10. Other reasons for delay include complainant availability, joint complaints led by another agency, awaiting information from the complainant or a third party and staff capacity/availability, particularly over the summer months.
11. When complaints do go over timescale complainants are kept fully informed in accordance with procedures.

Outcomes of Complaints by Directorate

Outcomes	Adult & Community		Business & Environment		Chief Executive		Children & Young People		Finance & Central		Total for year/quarter	
	U	NU	U	NU	U	NU	U	NU	U	NU	U	NU
Total 2007/08	147	472	21	27	14	9	63	50	9	2	254	560
Quarter2 2007/08	27	127	11	8	7	1	25	15	2	0	72	151
Quarter 1 2008/09	84	155	7	7	3	0	11	14	3	1	108	177
Quarter 2 2008/09	37	96	32	27	2	2	5	8	1	1	77	134

U = Upheld/Partly Upheld NU – Not Upheld

12. Over the last quarter there has been a decrease from 38% to 36% of complaints that have been upheld or partly upheld.
13. Complaints regarding the new charging policy for internet access in Library and Information Centres (charging now starts after ½ hour instead of after one hour) continue to come in with 31 received this quarter.
14. Some complaints will be upheld, but we seek to learn from these and improve our services as a result. Changes that have been made as a result of upheld complaints during quarter 1 are detailed in Appendix 1 'Overview of Learning Outcomes for Upheld Complaints'.

Reason for Complaint

Category	Poor Service		No Service		Delay in Service		Disagree decision/policy		Staff Attitude		Poor Communication		Personnel		Other	
	U	NU	U	NU	U	NU	U	NU	U	NU	U	NU	U	NU	U	NU
Total 2007/08	104	243	47	28	13	17	34	115	14	16	42	24	0	1	0	116
Quarter2 2007/08	31	81	5	8	6	3	14	30	6	3	10	7	0	0	0	19
Quarter 1 2008/09	77	29	1	3	3	7	15	106	6	3	6	8	0	0	1	20
Quarter 2 2008/09	30	39	4	11	5	1	5	50	24	8	6	5	0	0	3	20

U = Upheld/Partly Upheld NU – Not Upheld

15. This quarter 211 stage 1 – 3 complaints were completed. 69 (33%) of these fell in Poor Service and 55 (26%) in Disagree with Decision/Policy.
16. 57% of the Poor Service category complaints were not upheld. Of the 30 upheld complaints 18 related to internet access in Library and Information Centres. If these were removed, then the percentage upheld would drop from 43% to 24%.
17. 91% of those in the Disagree with Decision/Policy category were not upheld.

Complaints Process

18. During the quarter 205 complaints were received at stage one, seven at stage two and one at stage three.
19. It can be seen that only a small percentage of complaints move on to stages 2 (formal Investigation) and 3 (review of investigation by Chief Executive). This is a reflection of the aims of the procedure.

Ombudsman's Complaints

20. At 1st July 2008 11 Ombudsman complaints were already in progress and a further 14 were received during the quarter. 14 complaints were still in train at the end of the quarter.

21. Ten decisions were made, all of which found no maladministration. Three complaints resulted in Local Settlement (brief details can be found at Appendix 1).
22. All responses were made within the deadline set by the Ombudsman's Office.

Learning from Complaints

23. Appendix 1 shows learning outcomes from complaints that were upheld or partly upheld and where the Ombudsman decision was of Local Settlement.

Conclusion

24. Much good work has been done in directorates to inform staff of the complaints procedure and what should be recorded. It is hoped that much more meaningful information will become available as a result.
25. Complaints dealt with within our target of 20 working days have decreased to 91% from 94% last quarter.
26. Upheld and partly upheld complaints have decreased to 36% from 38% last quarter.
27. The team of Directorate Complaints Coordinators continue to meet regularly to share best practice.
28. Demonstrations of compliments/comments/complaints recording systems have taken place and several are planned for early February.
29. Training sessions for investigating officers and handling of persistent complainants, as well as a further session by the Local Government Ombudsman were carried out this quarter. It is hoped that a fuller, more flexible programme of training relating to complaints will be provided by the corporate complaints team from next year.

Amanda Fry
Staff Officer to the Chief Executive
County Hall
NORTHALLERTON

22 January 2009

Overview of Learning Outcomes for Upheld Complaints
Quarter 2: July – September 2008

STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS		
Directorate	Description	Learning Outcome
ACS Community	18 complaints related to the people's network computers which were slow or crashed whilst being used by members of the public	This number is a reduction on the last quarter and was anticipated due to schools not using the network in the summer. This trend will be monitored in the coming quarter.
ACS Social Care	Change of carer and late visits	Apology and agreement over future arrangements
	Delay in payment for travel and vehicle	Payment made including small compensation
	Respite arrangements	Review of arrangements and a plan for next year
	Breach of confidentiality	Apology for breach
	Delay in provision of equipment and financial assessment	Apology, further assessment offered. Moved to Stage 2.
	Administration of exercise arrangements	Referral to outreach service
	Staff attitude and cancellation of respite	Apology
	Request for respite	Local review of procedures
	Funding and access to service user	Explanation. Payment for changing locks
	Transport arrangements	Apology and discussion with manager
	Contract issue	Pilot of new system for payments. Explanation of other issues
	Attitude of staff and language used	Apology. Reminder to staff re careful use of terminology / jargon.
	Poor communication	Explanation of actions. Apology for distress.
	Delay arranging Direct Payment and poor communication	Apology. Direct Payment arranged.
	Direct Payment stopped, poor communication	Apology
	Communication difficulties	Explanation of action. PCT led response
	Transfer from hospital to EPH	Apology
Missed homecare	Apology. Rota system changed	
Poor service and communication from contracted provider	Apology and explanation of new systems	
BES	20 complaints regarding staff attitude at HWRC	Need for Partners / Contractors to spend more time working with NYCC on Customer Care (presently this issue is being addressed corporately)
	Delay in providing a service (CSI)	Need to keep customers informed if a delay will be encountered.
	Staff attitude TS/RS	Need for regular enforcement as to the standard of customer care expected of staff
	Poor service in not fulfilling promise made to customer	Emphasise to staff the need to follow through actions promised.
	Staff attitude in H&T	Be clear on facts before putting actions in place
	Staff attitude in BBISL Partner Unit	Re-enforce with Partners the standard of customer care that NYCC expect the public to get
	Delay in providing a service - H&T	If there is a problem in delivering the service the customer should be keep informed of this
	Poor service in relation to dealing with request for home to school transport – IPT	Staff on holiday not a reason for poor service
	Poor service to request to clean gullies at Newbiggin Richmond	Need to keep customers up to date, as to were we are in resolving their request, particularly after inspection, the job is not as simple as jetting the gullies
	Lack of response to his complaints about 2 footpaths in the Spofforth Area	Need to keep customers up to date, as to where we are in resolving their request.
Lack of response to his request for information on a common land issue.	Need to keep customers up to date, particularly if a change in procedure has delayed the service.	

STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS			
Directorate	Description	Learning Outcome	
CEG	Delays around recruitment process	Recruitment bureau processes have been reviewed and implemented	
CYPS Social Care	Lack of information and contact	Apology for communication difficulties. Explanation of information held	
	Lack of support from staff	Explanation of policy/procedures. Apology for lack of support previously	
	Contact arrangements	Apology and new arrangements made	
CYPS Other	Details regarding the specific transport needs of an SEN child not passed on to new contractor	Procedures now in place to ensure all necessary information regarding the needs of SEN children is passed on when transport contracts change	
STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS			
Directorate	Description	Learning Outcome	
ACS Social Care	Care plan and provision of care package	Apology. Joint review of arrangements with health	
	Missed/late care visits	Apology. Review of arrangements	
CEG	Blue badge: Had to request form twice – upheld Delay in application – not upheld	Misunderstanding over whether request had been dealt with – human error. Apology.	
CYPS Other	Health and safety concerns about buses manoeuvring on school site while children were entering and exiting school.	As a result of the complaint bus timings have been changed to ensure buses do not manoeuvre on the school site when children are entering and exiting the school.	
FCS	No reply to letter and voicemail message incorrect.	Forms not returned which delayed response. Voicemail of staff member was corrected and reminder given to keep up to date.	
STAGE 3 COMPLAINTS			
Directorate	Description	Learning Outcome	
	No stage 3 complaints upheld		
OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS			
Directorate	Description	Decision	Learning Outcome
BES	Four complaints regarding: the Council gave inadequate consideration to its decision to approve a skateboard park.	Local Settlement	Practice and procedure has been improved resulting in more comprehensive delegated item letters being produced by development control case officers. More robust monitoring of compliance with neighbour notification.