

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Housing and Health Committee – 4 November 2015
Scrutiny Committee – 2 December 2015

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY CARE COMPLAINTS AND CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

Report by Director (Housing and Community Care)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report summarises the housing and community care complaints received between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2015 and details which of these were dealt with at Stage 1 and Stage 2. The report also gives some examples of feedback from customer satisfaction surveys and actions taken to improve services as a result of customer feedback.

1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory responsibility to establish and maintain a formal procedure to receive and consider complaints by, or on behalf of, social work service users and this is set out in Section 5B of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. The duty is expanded upon in the guidance issued by the then Scottish Office (circular No SWSG 5/1996) which asks local authorities to report annually on the complaints investigated and their outcomes. Within Housing and Community Care we also report on non-social work areas of service, including those relating to housing services and finance and business support services.
- 1.2 Handling complaints effectively is an important part of good customer care. It demonstrates that services listen to their service users' and stakeholders' views and, importantly, helps improve services.
- 1.3 As part of the Housing and Community Care performance management and planning processes, the findings of complaints are shared with the relevant managers and the Service as a whole to address any recommendations and improvement actions, as appropriate.
- 1.4 This report is the first report since the introduction of the Council's new model complaints handling procedure, and includes data for the last two years. The new procedure introduced the concept of dealing and resolving complaints at an early stage by 'Front Line Resolution' (Stage 1), and only investigating more complex complaints at a further stage (Stage 2). The model complaints handling procedure is concerned with non-social work complaints. We have, though, taken the opportunity to align our Social Work Procedure as closely as possible to the model complaints handling procedures, with the only major differences being those that we are unable to change until the relevant legislation is enacted.

2 ANALYSIS OF THE COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

- 2.1 This section summarises the types of complaints reported in the past two years and the improvements introduced as a result.

Complaints dealt with under Social Work (Community Care) Complaints Procedure

- 2.2 Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014, 36 complaints were dealt with at stage 1 and twelve complaints were dealt with as stage 2 (Investigations).

Of the 12 investigations

- Service provision and employee issues represented the largest reason for complaints.
- The main service areas were care at home and assessment and care management
- All 12 complainants received an acknowledgement within the target time set of 5 working days.
- 10 (83%) of complainants received their detailed response within the target time set of 28 days or where an extension had been agreed.
- Three Complaints Review Committees were held in the reporting period.

- 2.3 Between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015, 69 complaints were dealt with at Stage 1 and 19 at Stage 2. The increase at stage 1 is as a result of improved recording rather than a decline in services.

Of the 19 investigations:

- Service provision and employee issues represented the main reason for complaints
- The main service areas were care at home and assessment and care management
- 18 of the 19 complaints were acknowledged within the 5 working days timescale.
- 16 (84%) customers received their written response within 28 days or an agreed extension.
- Three Complaints Review Committees were held in the reporting period although a further two escalated complaints from 2014-15 are pending, with one of these being heard in May 2015.

- 2.4 **Complaints dealt with under the Model Complaints Handling Procedure CHP (Non-Social Work)**

Information is also gathered on other, non-social work complaints. Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014 there were 291 complaints dealt with at stage 1 and 17 investigated as stage 2.

Of the 17 investigations:

- Service provision and employee issues represented the largest reason for complaints
- Housing Repairs had the largest number of complaints, followed by Local Taxes.
- 16 of the 17 complainants received their acknowledgements within the target time of 3 working days.
- 7 (41%) of the complainants received their response within the target time of 20 working days. Where responses were delayed, complainants were given information about a new target date.

2.5 Between April 1 2014 and 31 March 2015 there were 339 complaints dealt with at stage 1 and 26 at stage 2 (Investigations).

Of the 26 investigations:

- Housing Repairs had the largest number of complaints, followed by Local Taxes
- Service provision and employee issues represented the largest reason for complaints
- 24 of the 26 (96%) complainants received their acknowledgement within the target of 3 working days.
- 14 of the 26 (54%) received their response within the target time of 20 working days. Where responses were delayed, complainants were given information about a new target date.

A considerable amount of training has been carried out across the service to emphasise the importance of recording accurately our complaints activity. This may well be the reason for an increase in the complaints figures year on year.

2.6 As a result of the feedback from the complaints process we have:

- Carried out Customer Service training where a need for training was identified
- Improved call-handling and face-to-face support in various offices.
- Identified a requirement for training on Codes Of Conduct and also communication with service users
- Reminded staff of their responsibilities with regard to the customer care standards in returning calls, and answering correspondence.
- Carried out a number of refresher sessions in a variety of tasks for staff where a training need was identified.

2.7 What have we learned from the complaints submitted?

- Poor customer care and communication are a key element of many of the complaints we deal with.

- Issues around charging for services in Community Care, especially the delay in sending out invoices, caused a spike in complaints activity within finance and support services.

3 OTHER CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

- 3.1 The section below gives a summary of some other feedback from customers on housing and community care services. The table below includes information from the tenant satisfaction survey and feedback from people who use community care services.

Specific Area of Service	2013-14	2014-15
% of tenants satisfied with Perth and Kinross Council as a landlord	84.55%	3 year survey. New data available 2016
% of tenants who have had a repair completed in the last year satisfied with the service they received	87.54%	90.43%
% of service users satisfied with the management of our Gypsy/ Travellers site	71.43%	3 year survey. New data available 2016
% of service users satisfied with their Community Care service (South)	N/A	87.65%*
% of service users satisfied with their Community Care service (North)	N/A	74.51%*
% of service users satisfied with their Community Care service (Perth City)	N/A	84.91%*

*Unpublished figures taken from recent survey

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Feedback from service users and other customers is an important source of information on how well services are performing and identifying areas that need to be developed or improved.
- 4.2 The introduction of the new complaints handling system for non-social work complaints is working well and the service has adopted these principles for social work complaints.
- 4.3 The number of complaints received continues to be very low as detailed in Appendix 1. However, it is an important way of learning what our customers think about our services and identifying improvement actions where required.
- 4.4 The Housing and Health Committee is asked to note the content of the report.

- 4.5 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to scrutinise the performance and outcomes in the report.

Author

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Approved

Name	Designation	Date
John Gilruth	Director (Housing and Community Care)	13 October 2015

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You can also send us a text message on 07824 498145.

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	None
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	None
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	None
Risk	None
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	None

Strategic Implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

1.1 The Community Plan and Single Outcome objectives are all relevant to this report:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, health and active lives
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

Corporate Plan

1.2 As above.

2. Resource Implications

Financial

2.1 None arising from this report.

Workforce

2.2 None arising from this report.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

2.3 N/A

3. Assessments

3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties. The Equality Impact Assessment undertaken in relation to this report can be viewed clicking [here](#).

3.2 Strategic Environmental Assessment

N/A

3.3 Sustainability

N/A

Legal and Governance

3.4 The Head of Legal Services has been consulted on this report.

Risk

3.5 None.

4. Consultation

Internal

4.1 The Chief Social Work Officer has been consulted on this report.

External

4.2 The Tenant Report Panel have been consulted on the housing complaints in this report. They commented that they were pleased to see that the programme of training seems to have had the desired effect of having the majority of complaints dealt with at stage 1 and not requiring progression to stage 2.

5. Communication

5.1 None

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

3. APPENDICES

Appendices 1-3

Appendix 1:

Table 1 Data to evidence number of complaints compared to service users in some areas of the service

Service or Team	Number of people using services		Number of Complaints & %	Number of Complaints & %
	2013/14	2014/15	2013/14	2014/15
Community Care	8,945	9,354	36 (0.4%) FLR *	69 (0.7%) FLR
			12 (0.1%) Invest **	19 (0.2%) Invest
Housing Repairs	29,305	24,528	83 (0.29%) FLR	149 (0.6%) FLR
			1 (0.003%) Invest	10 (0.04%) Invest
Area Housing Teams	7,374 tenancies	7,412 tenancies	42 (0.006%) FLR	55 (0.7%) FLR
			8 (0.002%) Invest	4 (0.05%) Invest

***Front line Resolution (Stage 1)**

****Investigation (Stage 2)**

Appendix 2:

Community Care (Social Work) Stage 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2015

Table 1 Complaints Activity and Performance

Number of Stage 2 complaints	No. & % acknowledged by target date	No. & % responded to by target date	No. & % upheld	No. & % satisfied with response	Number progressing to Complaints Review Committee
12 (2013/14)	12 (100%)	10 (83%)	8 (66%)	8 (66%)	4 (only two heard)
19 (2014/15)	18 (95%)	16 (84%)	14 (74%)	14 (74%)	5 (only 3 heard)

Table 2 Teams involved

Team Concerned	Number of Stage 2 Complaints (2013/14)	Number of Stage 2 Complaints (2014/15)
Assessment Care Management	3	5
Social Work North	1	3
Community Mental Health Team	1	2
Learning Disabilities	1	1
Hospital Discharge Team	0	2
Social Work Perth City	1	1
Care at Home	0	2
Social Work South	1	1
Criminal Justice Service	1	0
Occupational Therapy	1	0
Safer Communities	1	0
Out of Hours Service	0	1
Reablement	1	0
Comm Alarm- Telecare	0	1
Total	12	19

Table 3 What was the focus of the complaints?

	Employee	Service provision	Communication	Policy and procedure	Other	Equal
2013/14	5	5	0	3	0	0
2014/15	7	9	0	3	0	0

(Some complaints cover more than 1 area)

Community Care Complaints dealt with at Stage 1

In addition to the complaints dealt with at stage 2, between April 2013 and March 2014 there were 36 complaints dealt with at stage 1 primarily by the teams themselves and sometimes by the Customer Liaison Team. Between April 2014 and March 2015 there were 69 complaints dealt with at Stage 1. There is always a degree of under-reporting in some areas and so work is continuing to make sure as many contacts as possible are recorded, which may account for the increase in number in 2014-15.

The main area dealing with complaints informally was the assessment and Care Management Teams and Care at Home service, which is understandable due to the immediate and personal nature of these services and the large number of service users and carers involved. The other area identified, which was reflected in the formal complaints data, concerned staff conduct / attitude and service users feeling that they received a poor quality or reduced service. Many of these issues were dealt with to the complainants' satisfaction when a member of staff made prompt contact and clarified the situation and also made an apology, where this was required.

Appendix 3:

Complaints dealt with under Corporate Complaints Procedure (Housing and Finance and Support Services)

Table 1 Complaints Activity and Performance

Number of Stage 2 complaints	No. & % acknowledged by target date	No. & % responded to by target date	No. & % of complaints upheld	Number escalating to SPSO
17 (2013-14)	16 (94%)	7 (41%)	5 (29%)	3
26 (2014-15)	24 (92%)	13 (50%)	14 (54%)	4

Table 2 Teams involved

Team Concerned	Number of Stage 2 Complaints (2013/14)	Number of Stage 2 Complaints (2014/15)
Housing Repairs and Imp	1	9
Housing Access	4	2
Area Team Letham	4	1
Area Team South	3	1
Local Taxes	2	2
Finance Charging	0	3
Benefits	1	2
Homeless	1	1
Area Team City	1	1
Welfare Rights	0	1
Scottish Welfare Fund	0	1
Area Team North	0	1
Housing	0	1
Total	17	26

Table 3 What was the focus of the complaints?

	Employee	Service provision	Communication	Policy and procedure	Other	Equal
2013/14	7	6	1	8	0	0
2014/15	9	17	0	1	0	1

Complaints dealt with at Stage 1

In addition to the complaints dealt with by way of Investigation Stage 2, the new model complaints process expects staff to deal with complaints raised with them by way of Front Line Resolution (Stage1). In 2013-14 staff in Housing and Finance and Support Services dealt with 291 stage 1 complaints and in 2014-15 staff in these sections dealt with 339 stage 1 complaints. Of these complaints raised, the numbers escalating to Investigation was very small, indicating that staff are dealing with these complaints well and more importantly to the customer's satisfaction.

