

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Housing and Health Committee 25 January 2017
Scrutiny Committee 8 February 2017

Housing and Community Care Complaints and Customer Feedback**Report by Director (Housing and Social Work)****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report summarises the complaints received between 1 April 2015 and 30 September 2016 (18 months) relating to housing services and community care services. It includes examples of actions taken to improve services as a result of complaints and information on other feedback received through customer satisfaction surveys.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Perth and Kinross Council values feedback from people about the services and support they receive as an important way for services to be responsive to customers and to continuously improve. Services are committed to providing high quality, flexible and responsive services, and when this doesn't happen, it is very important that issues are resolved promptly and lessons learned to prevent them recurring.
- 1.2 The Council has a statutory responsibility to establish and maintain a formal procedure for receiving and considering complaints by, or on behalf of, people who use services. This is enshrined in social work legislation as well as government guidance which asks local authorities to report annually on the complaints investigated and the outcomes of these. Across housing, community care and community safety, the service also reports on non-social work areas, including those relating to finance, local taxes and business support.
- 1.3 The findings of complaints are shared with the relevant managers and across management teams to address any specific or cross- service issues, recommendations or improvement actions.
- 1.4 Handling complaints effectively is an important part of good customer care. It demonstrates that services listen to their service users' and stakeholders' views, which in turn helps improve services.
- 1.5 A new way of handing complaints was introduced by the Council in April 2013 for all complaints other than those relating to social work services. As a result, they are now dealt with in two stages, with the aim of resolving as many complaints at the front line (stage 1 front line resolution) to try and reduce the need for more formal investigations. Only more complex cases are dealt with as a stage 2 investigations.

1.6 There will be further changes introduced from April 2017 when a new way of handling complaints about social work services will be introduced across Scotland, which will bring the social work procedure more in line with the procedure already used across the rest of the Council. This will mean that all complaints will be included in the Council's Annual Complaints Performance Report in accordance with the requirements of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. In addition, changes are being made to align NHS complaints and social work complaints to support services and improvements within the Perth and Kinross Health and Social Care Partnership.

2. ANALYSIS OF COMPLAINTS

2.1 Services have been undergoing significant transformational change to improve and alter the way they are delivered to meet rising demand, public expectation and challenging financial times for public services. This all has a bearing on the number and type of complaints the service receives.

2.2 Social work services had a reduction in the number of complaints received during 2015/16 compared to the year before, although this had increased slightly in the first six months of 2016/17. There has been a increase in non social work complaints over the period. The level of complaints received and dealt with by frontline services and during investigations is a very small proportion of the total services provided, as summarised in Appendix 1. The areas that receive the highest number of complaints include housing repairs, council tax and Finance /Charging which reflect the large number of people who use these services.

2.3 Across Scottish local authorities around 50% of complaints are upheld and this is the situation locally. Some complaints have various elements to them but if one of these is upheld and other areas partially or not upheld, the complaint is classed overall as being upheld.

2.4 The vast majority of complainants (73-100%) involved in stage two social work complaints (investigations) were are satisfied with outcome of their complaint

Table 1: Complaints received

	14/15 (12 mnths)	15/16 (12 mnths)	16/17 (6 mnths April-Sep)
Social work services			
Stage 1	69	46	32
Stage 2	19	13	13
Non social work services			
Stage 1	339	406	264
Stage 2	26	26	30

Note: not all stage 2 complaints follow on from stage 1. Some are reported directly into stage 2 and then investigated.

Social work complaints (community care)

- 2.5 The table above shows that the majority of complaints about community care services were resolved at the first point of contact by frontline services. Between April 2015 and 31 March 2016, 13 complaints were investigated (stage 2). The main reason for the complaint related to provision of services. The issues ranged across teams, with no specific team having more of a focus. Three Complaints Review Committees were held during this period carried over from the previous year.
- 2.6 In the six months between April and September 2016, 32 complaints were dealt with by frontline staff, with a smaller number being investigated (13) at stage 2. The main area of complaint related to learning disabilities (3), Perth City team (3) and care at home services (2). The reasons were primarily due to provision of services. Three Complaints Review Committees were held in the 6 months period.

Other service complaints (non-social work) received

- 2.7 The majority of complaints about housing, finance and business support services were also resolved at the first point of contact by frontline services. Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 there were 406 complaints which were dealt with and resolved by frontline services and 26 complaints which were investigated under stage 2. Of those investigated:-
- Housing Repairs Service had the largest number (8) of the 26 stage 2 complaints, followed by Local Taxes (4), which reflects the volume of services provided in these two areas
 - The main reason for the complaints was to do with provision of services or issues with employees
 - 95% (25) were acknowledged within the target time of 3 working days
 - 50% (13) received their response within the 20 working days target and where responses were delayed, complainants were given information about a new target date
- 2.8 Between April 1 2016 and 30 September 2016 there were 264 complaints dealt with by frontline staff as stage 1 and 30 complaints investigated at stage 2 of which:-
- Housing Repairs Service (6) and the housing north locality team (6) had the highest number of the 30 complaints, followed by housing Letham (5) and Perth City (5) areas
 - The main reason for the complaints was to do with provision of services or issues with employees
 - 97% (29) were acknowledged within the target of 3 working days
 - 82% (23) received their response within the 20 working days target, which was improved on the 2015/16 performance. Where responses were delayed, complainants were given information about a new target date

2.9 The increase in stage 1 complaints may be a reflection of the considerable training carried out across the service to emphasise the importance of accurately recording complaints activity.

3. KEY ISSUES AND LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

3.1 A number of issues have been raised by customers and people who use housing, finance, business support and community care (social work) services which have been used by the services to improve their customer care, processes and communication. Some of these are summarised below.

3.2 Issues of poor customer care and communication have been raised by some complainants as the reasons for their complaint. For example, issues around charging for community care services and the delay in sending out invoices to individuals was raised, which have now been improved and complaints in this area reduced.

3.3 To address issues of communication and customer care and focus, refresher training was organised for groups of staff to promote customer care and more effective communication with customers and service users, particularly to resolve issues at an earlier stage and prevent them escalating to more formal investigation.

3.4 Demand for services and high customer expectation have, however, been a challenge for services as they manage new ways of working and transformation of services in times of challenging financial budgets.

3.5 Further work will continue across services to make sure all staff and teams manage and handle complaints effectively and efficiently.

3.6 Some actions have already been carried out and improvements made, for example:-

- Processes have been improved to calculate charges for services, as has information available for service users and their families about the process
- Customer service training continues to be organised when a need for training is identified and staff have been reminded of their responsibilities in relation to customer care standards in returning calls, and answering correspondence
- There is improved wording on paperwork explaining Council Tax reductions when a property is under reconstruction
- Housing staff have been reminded about the need to keep tenants up to date with the status of their repairs and the system changed to support this
- Staff and contractors have been reminded about the requirement to carry their ID badges with them at all times
- The importance of parking appropriately and safely, especially when travelling in Council vehicles, has been stressed to staff
- Options are being investigated to avoid tenants awaiting emergency repairs potentially having to wait in all day for staff to attend

- A new procedure has been introduced at the Joint Equipment Loan Store (JELS) so that if they are unable to uplift equipment within the target of 10 days, they will contact customer and arrange a new date
- Signage and the process for dealing with customers have been improved in one rural office

What else do our customers tell us about the services they receive?

3.7 Feedback from complaints is one important source of information from services users, tenants and other customers about their experience of services. There are others too, which give an indication of satisfaction levels with services, and some of these are included below.

Service area	2015-16
% overall satisfaction levels with community care services	90%
% of community care service users that felt they were supported to live as independently as possible	85%
% respondents who felt they had been involved in making decisions about the help, care and support they received.	85%
% who felt that they were supported to live as independently as possible	85%
% of respondents agreed that their services improved or maintained the quality of life they enjoy	90%
% of tenants satisfied with Perth and Kinross Council as a landlord	84.5%
% of tenants who have had a repair completed in the last year satisfied with the service they received	90%
% of service users satisfied with the management of our Gypsy/ Travellers site	69%
% of tenants who think the rent for their property represents good value for money?	84%
% of tenants satisfied with the quality of their home	85%

Sources: Community care service users' survey 2016; Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2016

4. ACTIONS TO IMPROVE SERVICES

4.1 As mentioned above, the service has introduced a number of actions as a result of receiving complaints and feedback from users and customers and will continue to:

- Monitor improvement actions across the service and where appropriate share the learning
- Work to introduce the new social work procedure
- Work with health colleagues to look at ways of working together on "joint" complaints

- Monitor decisions made by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) concerning other public bodies and share the learning where appropriate

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Complaints and feedback from people who use services is an important way of learning, improving and providing quality services. This report summarises the complaints received about housing and community care services over the past 18 months, as well as other sources of feedback about the nature and quality of services provided. It highlights areas for improvement and action taken as a result of feedback on services.
- 5.2 The Housing and Health Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.
- 5.3 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to scrutinise the performance and outcomes in the report.

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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	Yes
Risk	Yes
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	None

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 The Perth and Kinross Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2023 and Perth and Kinross Council Corporate plan 2013-18 have five outcomes which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. All are relevant to this report.

Corporate Plan

As above

2. Resource Implications

Financial

- 2.1 None

Workforce

- 2.2 None

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

2.3 None

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

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.

3.2 The proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

(i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

Strategic Environmental Assessment

3.3 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals. However, no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matter presented in this report. The matters presented in this report were considered under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

Sustainability

3.4 None

Legal and Governance

3.5 The Head of Legal Services has been consulted and there are no direct legal implications of this report.

Risk

3.6 The Housing and Community Care Senior Management Team regularly reviews complaints and identifies areas for action.

4. Consultation

Internal

4.1 The Heads of Finance and Legal Services have been consulted on this report.

External

- 4.2 The Tenant Committee Reporting Panel was consulted on the report. They commented that the “report emphasises the need for complaints to be dealt with and recorded in a clear and precise way.”

5. Communication

- 5.1 None

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

3. APPENDICES

Detailed complaints monitoring

Appendix 1

Number and types of complaints by total services users and tenants.

Service or team	No. service users at 31 Mar 15	No. service users at 31 Mar 16	No. service users at 30 Sept 16	No. & % complaints 2014-15	No. & % complaints 2015-16	No & % complaints 2016 (Apr-Sept)
Comm Care	9,354	*10,681	*10,619	69 frontline resolution (0.7% of service users)	46 frontline resolution (0.4% service users)	32 frontline resolution (0.3% service users)
				19 investigations (0.2% of service users)	13 investigations (0.1% service users)	13 investigations (0.1% service users)
Housing Repairs	24,528	24,401	16,120	149 frontline resolution (0.6% tenants)	169 frontline resolution (0.7% tenants)	123 frontline resolution (0.8% service users)
				10 investigations (0.04% service users)	9 investigations (0.04% tenants)	9 investigations (0.05% service users)
Area Housing Teams	7,412 Council houses	7,457 Council houses	7,494	55 frontline resolution (0.7% tenants)	118 frontline resolution (1.6% tenants)	83 frontline resolution (1.1% service users)
				4 investigations (0.05% tenants)	4 investigations (0.1% tenants)	17 investigations (0.2% service users)

*The way this figure is compiled has now changed and now includes all people on our system who are open to a service or are involved.

Appendix 2

Community Care formal complaints (Stage 2)

1 April 2015 – 30 September 2016

Community care complaints

Stage 1: dealt with by frontline services

Between April 2015 and Mar 2016 there were 46 complaints dealt with at stage 1 primarily by the teams and sometimes by the Customer Liaison Team. Of these 29 were upheld (63%).

Between April 2016 and Sep 2016 there were 32 complaints dealt with at Stage 1 of which a smaller percentage (56%, 18) were upheld.

The main area dealing with complaints informally was the Care at Home Service and the Learning Disability Team, which reflects 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 gave an apology, where this was required.

Stage 2: investigations

Table 1 Stage 2 complaints activity and performance

No. investigations (stage 2 complaints)	No. & % acknowl by target date	No. & % responded to by target date	No. & % upheld	No. & % satisfied with response	No. progressing to Complaints Review Committee
19 (2014/15)	18 (95%)	16 (84%)	14 (74%)	14 (74%)	5 (only 2 heard)
13 (2015/16)	10 (77%)	7 (64%)	4 (36%)	11 (100%)	0
13 (2016/17 Apr-Sep)	13 (100%)	8 (73%)	2 (18%)	8 (73%)	3

Table 2 Teams involved

Team	No. investigations (stage 2) (2014/15)	No. investigations (stage 2) (2015/16)	No. investigations (stage 2) (2016/17 Apr - Sep)
Assessment Care Management	5	0	0
Social Work North	3	1	0
Social Work Perth City	1	2	3
Social Work South	1	0	1

Team	No. investigations (stage 2) (2014/15)	No. investigations (stage 2) (2015/16)	No. investigations (stage 2) (2016/17 Apr - Sep)
Social Work Access Team	0	1	0
Social Work North/Care at Home	0	1	0
Community Mental Health Team	2	1	0
Learning Disabilities	1	0	3
Hospital Discharge Team	2	1	0
Re-ablement	0	0	0
Care at Home	2	0	2
Occupational Therapy	0	1	0
Out-of- Hours	1	0	0
Comm Alarm- Telecare	1	0	0
Social Work South/Finance Charging	0	1	1
Social Work Perth City/ Finance Charging	0	0	1
Finance Charging	0	1	1
Criminal Justice Service	0	0	0
Safer Communities	0	0	1
Area North/ Safer Communities	0	2	0
Area South/ Safer Communities	0	1	0
Total	19	13	13

Table 3 Nature of the complaints

	Issue with employee	Issue with service provision	Communication issue	Policy and procedure	Other	Equalities
2014/15	7	9	0	3	0	0
2015/16	2	8	0	3	0	0
2016/17 (Apr - Sep)	0	11	0	2	0	0

(Some complaints cover more than 1 area)

Appendix 3

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

Housing and Finance and Support Services)

Complaints dealt with by frontline services (Stage 1)

In 2015-16 staff in Housing and Finance and Support Services dealt with 406 frontline complaints (Stage 1) and of these 249 were upheld (61%). In the six months April to September 2016 staff dealt with 264 frontline complaints, of which 152 were upheld (57%). Of these complaints, the numbers escalating to investigation was very small indicating that staff are dealing with these complaints well, and to the customer's satisfaction.

Stage 2: investigations

Table 1 stage 2 complaints activity and performance

Number of Stage 2 complaints	No. & % ack by target date	No. & % responded to by target date	No. & % of complaints upheld
26 (2014-15)	24 (92%)	13 (50%)	14 (54%)
26 (2015-16)	25 (95%)	13 (50%)	19 (73%)
30 (Apr – Sep 2016)	29 (97%)	23 (82%)	14(50%)

Table 2 Teams involved

Team	No. investigations (Stage 2) (2014/15)	No. investigations (Stage 2) (2015/16)	No. investigations (Stage 2) (2016/17 Apr - Sep)
Housing Repairs and Improvements	9	8	6
Housing access/allocations	2	2	3
Area Team North	1	2	6
Area Team South	1	1	1
Area Team City	1	0	5
Area Team Letham	1	0	5
Area Housing Team City	0	1	0
Housing	1	0	1
Homeless services	1	1	0
Local Taxes	2	4	0
Finance Charging	3	0	0
Benefits	2	0	0
Welfare Rights	1	0	0
Scottish Welfare Fund	1	0	1
CSC/HRIS	0	0	2
Area Housing Team North/Benefits	0	1	0

Team	No. investigations (Stage 2) (2014/15)	No. investigations (Stage 2) (2015/16)	No. investigations (Stage 2) (2016/17 Apr - Sep)
Area Housing Team North/HRIS	0	1	0
Customer Service Centre	0	2	0
Finance Charging	0	3	0
Total	26	26	30

Table 3 Nature of the complaints

	Employee issue	Service provision	Communication	Policy and procedure	Other	Equal
2014/15	9	17	0	1	0	1
2015/16	3*	21	0	3*	0	0
2016/17 (Apr - Sep)	2	28	0	0	0	0

* - Covers more than one category