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# COMPLAINTS SERVICE

## ANNUAL REPORT

### 2013/14



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North Tyneside Council

## COMPLAINTS SERVICE REPORT

APRIL 2013– MARCH 2014

### Introduction

This report provides an overview of the Authority's complaints services between April 2013 and March 2014. It covers complaints under the Children Act 1989 and the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, which are often referred to together as the 'social services' procedures. It also includes other 'corporate complaints' about other services provided by the Authority, and Complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) and Housing Ombudsman (HO).

The Authority aims to provide high quality services and customer care at all times. However, it recognises there are occasions when people may wish to register dissatisfaction with those services. When this happens, the Authority wants to hear about people's experiences and, where something has gone wrong, to put it right so far as is possible and this process in turn drives improvements generated from complaints. Therefore we have a comprehensive complaints service that covers not only the statutory Social Services arena, but also all other services of the Authority under a Corporate Complaints Procedure. The procedures for dealing with Corporate and Children Services complaints are attached to this report as Appendix 1 and 2.

We also welcome comments, compliments and suggestions to provide a broad, balanced and reflective picture of people's experiences of our services.

### Executive Summary

The number of complaints continues to be very low compared to the millions of transactions the Authority has with its 202,200 residents and a substantial number of visitors every year. The overall number of formal complaints to the Authority increased by 23% from 602 in 2012-13 to 740 in 2013-14. This is a significant increase, however this was due to greater numbers of complaints in several service areas, such as Benefits and Council Tax 260% increase – from 20 to 52 complaints; Cultural and Customer Services 54% increase – largely due to increases in Indoor Sport and Customer Services, from 24 to 37 complaints; Housing 36% increase – from 112 to 152 complaints; Kier NT 17% increase – from 209 to 244 complaints.

Complaints leaflets tailored to Corporate, Social Care Services and young people are widely available in the Authority's buildings and to download from the Authority website. It is also now very easy for our customers to contact us online. Satisfaction surveys are now issued to all complainants following the closure of their complaint, regardless of the complaint outcome. During 2013-14 a survey of complainants showed 73% of complainants were overall happy with the complaints process. Appendix 3 shows a full breakdown of the survey results.

As a result of complaints received during the year a number of changes to practice and procedure were introduced; examples are summarised under 'Number and Analysis of Complaints' below.

In keeping with the principle of resolving problems as quickly as possible, the proportion of Corporate complaints resolved at Stage 1 remains high at 85% and 97% for children Social care complaints. Adult Social Care complaints have a one stage process and if the complainant remains dissatisfied they can then complain to the LGO, resulting in all such complaints being resolved at Stage 1 of the Statutory complaints procedure.

The Local Government and Housing Ombudsman found no cases of maladministration with injustice against the Council.

## **Procedures**

### **Overview**

The Council aims to respond positively to all complaints and other representations so that it can help resolve individual issues and learn from experience how to improve services. We aim to provide comprehensive complaint services, which are widely understood and easily accessible to all. The whole Authority, staff and Members, are committed to effective complaint handling and problem solving as an integral part of customer focussed services and responsive performance management.

There are four separate procedures for Corporate, Children and Adult Social Care and Public Health complaints. Where ever possible, before the 'formal' complaint procedures are used, efforts are made at an operational level to resolve any difficulties.

### **Corporate Complaints (see Appendix 1)**

Once the formal procedures are entered into for Corporate Complaints, there are, in essence, three stages:

1. Complaint referred to team leader or operational manager to try to resolve within 10 working days;
2. If not resolved to the customer's satisfaction, they can ask for it to be reviewed by a more senior manager within 10 working days; and
3. Ultimately, the Appeals and Complaints Committee, consisting of up to 5 Ward Councillors, makes the final decision.

### **Children Social Care Complaints (see Appendix 2)**

In Children Social Care cases, the statutory complaints process is governed by the Local Authority Social Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2006. Stage 1 should be responded to within 10 working days and can be extended to 20 working days; at Stage 2 the response is due within 25 working days and may be extended to 65 working days for complex complaints with the complainant's approval; and Stage 3 the complaint is referred to an Independent Review Panel.

The Authority engage Independent Investigators and Independent Persons for Children Act Complaints at Stage 2 as set out in the Regulations. Other independent roles, e.g. members of Independent Complaint Review Panels, are also engaged by the Authority's Complaints Service as and when required.

Children Social Care staff ensure that all children, of an understanding age, who are new to the care system are in receipt of a complaints leaflet which is specific to young people.

## **Adult Social Care Complaints**

The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 were introduced in April 2009. Under these provisions, the characteristics of individual complaints are assessed and specific plans of how to address the complaint are agreed with the complainant. The approach focuses on the complainant and enables organisations to tailor a flexible response that seeks to resolve the complainant's specific concerns. It is based on the principles of good complaints handling:

1. Getting it right
2. Being customer focussed
3. Being open and accountable
4. Acting fairly and proportionately
5. Putting things right
6. Seeking continuous improvement.

This statutory procedure has no fixed timescales, other than a maximum period of 6 months for handling the complaint and is a one stage process. Complaints about the Public Health Service are dealt with under a similar procedure as Adult Social Care complaints, however the Local Authority has not received any complaints about the service to date.

## **How to make a complaint**

Complaints can be made in a number of ways, e.g.

- By talking to the staff involved, to let them try to sort the problem out;
- by writing to or telephoning the relevant service department, or the Customer & Member Liaison Office in Quadrant either in writing or by email.  
Write to: Customer & Member Liaison Office  
Quadrant  
The Silverlink North  
Cobalt Business Park  
North Tyneside  
NE27 0BY  
tel. 0191 643 2280  
Email: [customerliaisonoffice@northtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:customerliaisonoffice@northtyneside.gov.uk)
- A complaint form is available on line at:
- be [www.northtyneside.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/complaints)
- by personal visit to any of the Council's Customer First Centres,
- by telephoning the Council's Contact Centre on 0345 2000 101.

## **Help and support**

The Customer & Member Liaison Office (CMLO) is independent of service departments and offers information, advice and help to complainants and staff responding to complaints. Its primary role is to ensure all complaints are looked into properly and any lessons learnt are adopted. The team also provides a comprehensive support service to the Authority's Councillors and this includes processing in the region of 8,000 enquiries per annum on behalf of the Members and residents.

Independent advocacy is available for people wishing to make Social Services complaints, especially children and vulnerable adults. Other assistance can be arranged to suit individual requirements.

Copies of this report and other material can be made available in other formats or languages on request to the Customer & Member Liaison Office.

## **Who can make a complaint?**

Under the Corporate Complaints Procedures, any user of the Authority's Services can complain. This includes residents and visitors. It also includes relatives and carers acting on someone's behalf, e.g. a person living outside the area representing a relative living in North Tyneside.

In the Social Services arena, people can make a complaint if they are someone for whom the Authority has a power or duty to provide, directly or indirectly, a social service and his/her needs for that service have come to the attention of the Authority. This is extended to cover someone acting on his or her behalf, e.g. a relative or carer.

Limited exclusions do apply:-

- when other more appropriate processes already exist, e.g. formal appeal procedures, legal proceedings;
- when the matter occurred more than 12 months before the complaint was made (unless there is good reason for the delay in bringing the matter to the Authority's attention); and
- when the matter has already been properly examined.

It should be noted that where a complaint is made on someone else's behalf, reasonable checks will be made with that person to ensure they are aware of and are happy for the complaint to be considered.

Outlines of the processes are shown in Appendices 1 and 2 and further information is available from the Customer & Member Liaison Office.

## External review

### Local Government & Housing Ombudsman (LGO & HO)

The LGO & HO look at complaints about councils in a fair and independent way and their service is provided free. They are independent of all Government departments and have the same powers as the High Court to obtain information and documents. If they find the Council has done something wrong they will make recommendations to put things right.

The LGO & HO play a vital role as either an initial point of contact for people wishing to make a complaint, or if a person remains dissatisfied after the Authority has examined a matter. It is usual for them to refer a matter to the Authority to look into, if it has not done so previously.

The LGO Advice Team can be contacted on:

Tel: 0300 061 0614 Fax: 024 7682 0001 Text 'call back' to **0762 481 1595**  
at: [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

or write to : **The Local Government Ombudsman**, PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH

The HO Advice Team can be contacted on:

Tel : 0300 111 3000 Fax : 020 7831 1942 Email : [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)  
**Housing Ombudsman Service**, 81 Aldwych, London, WC2B 4HN

Leaflets and information about the LGO are available at all main offices of the Authority and in a variety of formats. Operational liaison with the LGO & HO is provided by the Customer & Member Liaison Office.

In their Annual Letter for 2013-14 the LGO indicates that in total 56 complaints about North Tyneside Council were received during the year. The HO do not provide an annual report currently, although regionally Complaints Managers have advised that they would find this useful. Although the Authority has recorded that 42 complaints were received from the LGO & HO combined during the period, 10 of which were classified as premature and dealt with through the appropriate complaints procedure by the Authority.

Of the 42 complaints received from the LGO & HO during the year: 9 were outside of their jurisdiction, and on a further 11 occasions they exercised their general discretion not to pursue. Of the remaining number (22), they found no evidence of maladministration and the Authority was not required to agree to a local settlement in any cases.

The LGO & HO did not issue any reports of maladministration with injustice.

The LGO's Annual Letter is available on their website, or via the Council's Customer & Member Liaison Office.

<b>Complaints referred to the LGO in Tyne and Wear</b>		
	2012/13	2013/14
Gateshead	38	64
Newcastle upon Tyne	36	58
<b>North Tyneside</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>56</b>

South Tyneside	34	49
Sunderland	39	59
Total	178	286

## Care Quality Commission

In the Adult Social Care arena, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) also plays a similar role within its wider remit of regulation of social care. The Commission can be contacted at:

CQC National Customer Service Centre  
Citygate  
Gallowgate  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 4PA  
Telephone: 03000 616161  
Fax: 03000 616171  
On line form on website [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)

## OFSTED

For Children Social Care, and across Children Young People and Learning, OFSTED plays a similar role to CQC. They can be contacted at:

OFSTED  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD  
Tel. 0300 123 1231  
Email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

## Management and Operation

Management and operation of both the corporate and social services processes are provided by the Customer & Member Liaison Office (CMLO), which is based in Law and Governance under the Chief Executive's Office. The Customer & Member Liaison Office is also the main point of contact for the LGO & HO.

The Office not only manages many individual complaints, but also oversees the correct use of the procedures in the various service departments. It does not investigate complaints, as service areas are responsible for examining complaints about their own services.

Individual complaints are referred to relevant service managers to examine and respond to the complainant.

The Complaint service is supported by a bespoke Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

## Performance Indicators



A report on the overall performance of the complaints service is submitted to the Authority's Appeals and Complaints Committee on an annual basis.

There are currently no national Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPs) for complaints against Local Authorities.

The Complaints Service carry out an in-house survey of people who have used the complaints process. Returns are summarised in Appendix 3. These show that 52% of respondents said they found it easy to find information about the complaints process; 63% were happy with the time taken to respond to complaints; 73% thought the process was good and 54% were satisfied with the outcome.

There are currently 202,200 residents in North Tyneside. Voluntary diversity monitoring of complainants was introduced 7 years ago. The following table compares the results of the survey against the Office of National Statistics (ONS) Mid Year Population Census estimate for 2012. There is no up to date information relating to disability.

%	O.N.S.	NTC	%	O.N.S.	NTC
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Ethnic Origin</b>		
Female	51.7	55	Asian	1.9	2
Male	48.3	44	Black	0.5	2
Declined		1	Other Ethnic	0.5	-
<b>Age</b>			Mixed	0.8	2
Under 18	22.31	-	White British	94.4	92
18-25	5.89	6	Other White	1.9	-
26-35	12.89	11	Declined	-	2
36-45	14.00	12	<b>Religion</b>		
46-55	14.55	19	Christian	63.8	52
56-65	12.84	21	Hindu	0.3	-
66-75	8.81	21	Buddhist	0.2	-
Over 75	8.71	5	Muslim	0.7	-
Declined	-	5	Sikh	0.2	-
<b>With a disability</b>			Other	0.3	2
Yes	-	29	None	28.1	28
No	-	69	Declined	6.4	18
Not given	-	2			

## Numbers and analysis of complaints

The number of complaints for 2013-14, together with previous years for comparison, is shown in the Tables at the end of this report.

This information is made available for consideration by individual service areas, as part of performance management throughout the year. This helps identify any themes or trends and so informs service improvement initiatives. The Customer & Member Liaison Manager meets

with various departmental management teams to discuss any implications arising from themes or trends in complaints.

Complaints related activity as set out in Table 7 including low level complaints was up by 5% during 2013-14 on the previous year. However formal Corporate complaints increased by 23% from 535 to 659, Social Care complaints increased by 21%.

Corporate complaints resolved at Stage 1 remained high at 85%, 97% of Children Social Care complaints were resolved at Stage 1. This reflects the value of the training provided over the last few years by Customer & Member Liaison Staff and the LGO in Effective Complaint Handling and the commitment of Managers and Supervisors to resolve complaints at an early stage.

All complaints concluded and closed off on the Complaints Database create a prompt to enter any lessons learnt as a result of the complaint. A number of improvements generated by complaints were made to procedures and services during the year. A number of examples of such improvements are set out below:-

<b>Brief Summary</b>	<b>Lessons Learned</b>
Social Care decision making process.	Discussion with team re planning for meetings when family members are travelling from outside the area.

## Future Developments

North Tyneside Council is a rapidly changing organisation. This process is likely to continue and remain a challenge for effective complaints handling as service users experience changes in their services and the organisation evolves internally as a result of changing priorities from central Government.

There are significant examples of change within the Council. The Council has partnership arrangements with Kier North Tyneside, Cofley and Capita to provide a range of services. The Authority's Customer & Member Liaison Office will continue to manage complaints for all of the Authority's partners on behalf of its customers.

The overall focus of attention is now very much on 'learning' from complaints and this will be a core driver in all future developments by the Authority.

## **Conclusions**

The Authority is going through a period of significant change and is implementing efficiency savings over £47.5m over a period of 4 years through to 2015 as part of the Change Efficiency and Improvement Programme. The extent of the changes required will inevitably generate concerns from customers as the changes to service delivery and charging arrangements are implemented.

The rapidly changing culture and demands of increased customer satisfaction coupled with organisational changes across public and partner sectors means that complaints services must be continually kept up to date. The Authority's successful history and current good practice in effective complaint handling cannot be taken for granted.

By the very nature of this area of work, the complaints services will never satisfy all of the people all of the time. However, the survey of complainants indicates a high level of satisfaction with the service overall.

The Authority is committed to providing effective complaints services for the benefits of individual customers, the Authority and the community alike. Complaints are now widely recognised as integral to the provision of quality services at both individual and strategic levels.

## **Statistics**

This part of the report is broken down into the following sections:-

- 1) Overall number of complaints across the Authority
- 2) Social Services Complaints
- 3) Corporate Complaints
- 4) Local Government Ombudsman
- 5) Informal Complaints and Enquiries.

### **1. Overall number of complaints across the Authority**

The volume of formal complaint related activity for the period April 2009 to March 2013 is summarised in Table 1.

<b>Table 7 Summary</b>	<b>2010-11</b>	<b>2011-12</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>
Social Services Complaints	52	64	67	81
Corporate Complaints	485	590	535	659
Local Government Ombudsman investigations	33	30	39	42
<b>Formal total</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>782</b>
Pre-Complaint and general enquiries dealt with by the Customer Liaison Office.	844	1,165	944	889
<b>Total complaint related activity</b>	<b>1,414</b>	<b>1,849</b>	<b>1,585</b>	<b>1,671</b>

Table 1a

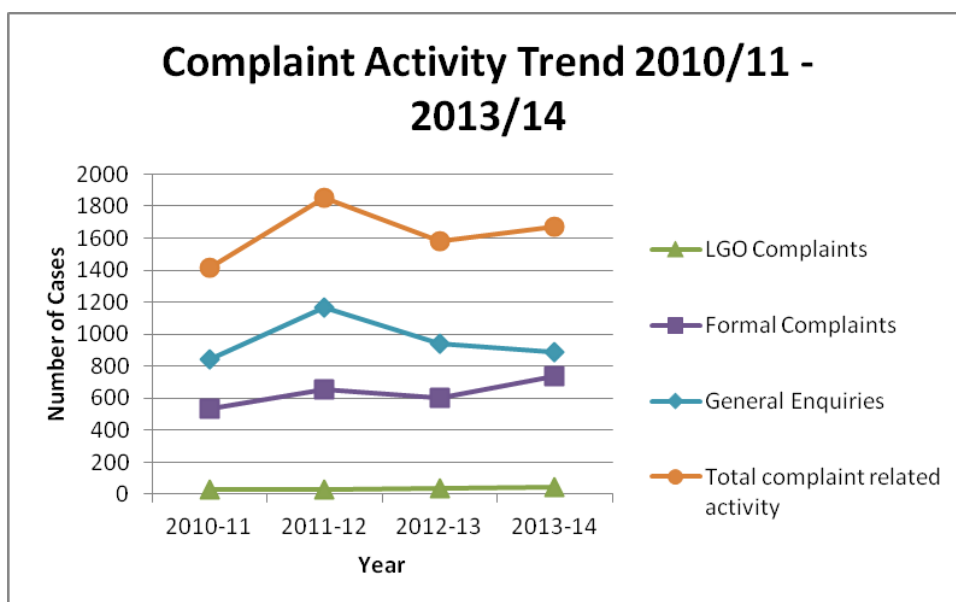
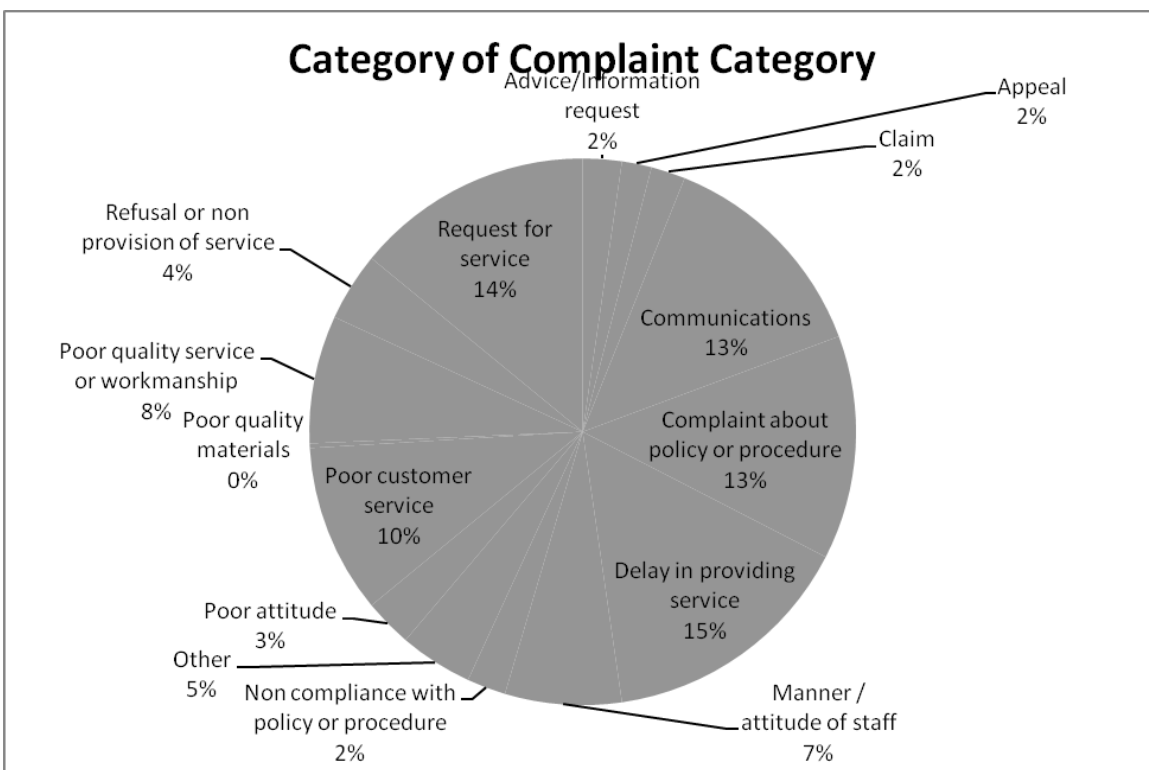


Table 1b – Percentage split by category of all formal complaints to the Council both Corporate and Social Care for 2013-14



There has been a 5% decrease during the year in the number of pre-complaint and general enquiries dealt with by the Customer & Member Liaison Office (CMLO). The CMLO continue to make sure that as many enquiries as possible are directed to the most appropriate department at the first point of contact. This will ensure customers are given more responsive replies and reduce the inefficiencies inherent in redirection of enquiries within the Authority. All enquiries received by email into the CMLO are acknowledged by email, the majority on the same working day. The customer is also notified of who their enquiry has been sent to and that they should expect a response direct. Enquirers by telephone or letter are posted a receipt setting out the same information.

## 2. Social Services Complaints

Social Service complaints dealt with under the relevant statutory processes are split into Children's and Adult Services, as shown in Table 2. In addition there are complaints regarding Children's and Adult Services which were dealt with under the Corporate Procedure (see Table 8).

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Children & Families Services	28	32	37	38
Adult Services	24	32	30	43
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>81</b>

There has been an increase of complaints about Social Care Services overall by 21% on the previous year, however numbers remain very low.

Within Children Social Care, complaints have been categorised as shown in Table 3.

<b>Table 3 Children &amp; Families Services Categories</b>	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Creche Service / Sure Start	2	1	0	0
Adoption / Fostering / LAC	21	8	13	8
Safeguarding		11	9	12
Child Protection		2	5	2
Front Door		9	10	14
Children with Disabilities Service	2	0	0	2
Other	3	1	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>39</b>

Users of services in Children, Young People & Learning (CYPL) are provided with details of the complaints system. Children who are looked after receive a 'complaints form' to use if they wish to raise any point about their care or circumstances generally. Acknowledging that making a complaint can be difficult young people are encouraged to have the assistance of a mentor or advocate if they want to make a complaint. The units for children with a disability have specially trained advocates to help those who have communication difficulties. In the child protection system users may feel they have little power to make a complaint and this is acknowledged. To capture issues of user concern the review process and other meetings are forums in which matters which are of worry to the user can be tackled. In this way the user's view can be heard and services influenced. In addition to the numbers reported above there were 10 complaints about CYPL dealt with under the Corporate Complaints procedure.

The Head of **Preventative and Safeguarding Services** commented, "??"

Within Adult Social Care, categories are shown in Table 4.

<b>Table 4 Adult Services Categories</b>	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Finance and Administration	3	2	1	6
Service Provision	0	4	0	0
Home Care / Residential	3	0	5	11
Community Assessment & Support	10	12	7	0
Social Work	7	14	10	23
Learning Disability & Mental Health	0	0	5	3
Other	1	0	2	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>43</b>

Referring to the above table, it is a recognised factor in complaints management that the transition phase of a change in service is likely to generate increased dissatisfaction before the new arrangements settle in. There was an increase in complaints for this very reason

during 2008-09 and complaint levels have returned to much lower levels during the subsequent years. In addition to the numbers reported above there were 9 complaints about Adult Services dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

Tables 5 and 6 show the proportions of upheld complaints for Children's and Adults Services over the year. Approximately 55% of complaints overall were not upheld, 39% were upheld in part and only 3% were upheld in full.

<b>Table 5 - Children Social Care complaint outcomes</b>	2010-11 %	2011-12 %	2012-13 %	2013-14 %
Not Upheld	41	69	57	55
Upheld in Full	4	6	0	3
Upheld in Part	55	25	38	39
Ongoing	0	0	5	3

<b>Table 6 - Adult Social Care complaint outcomes</b>	2010-11 %	2011-12 %	2012-13 %	2013-14 %
Not Upheld	46	53	53	30
Upheld in Full	8	10	17	7
Upheld in Part	46	34	30	60
Ongoing	0	3	0	3

Problem solving at the earliest opportunity is a key aim of effective complaint handling. This is not only of value to the complainant but also to the Council in optimising use of resources and enhancing customer care.

Table 7 shows early resolution at Stage 1 of children complaints only. From April 2009 a one stage process was introduced for Adult Social Care complaints.

<b>Table 7 – Childrens Social Services complaints resolved at stage:</b>	2010-11 %	2011-12 %	2012-13 %	2013-14 %
One	89	94	92	97
Two	11	0	3	0
Three	0	0	0	0
Ongoing	0	6	5	3

### 3. Corporate Complaints

Table 8, below, shows a breakdown of corporate complaints received for 2013-14 compared to the previous 3 years, reflecting current services.

<b>Table 8 – Corporate Complaints</b>					
<b>Department</b>	<b>Service Area</b>	<b>2010-11</b>	<b>2011-12</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>
Chief Exec & Financial Services	Claims & Insurance	3	1	-	2
	Legal Services / CMLO	4	2	4	3
	Electoral Registration	4	-	1	3
	Other (inc Street Lighting)	5	5	4	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>

Revs & Bens	Benefits	19	31	13	32
	Council Tax	16	8	7	20
	<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>52</b>
Cultural & Customer Services	Indoor Sports & Leisure	10	9	3	16
	Cultural Services Other	3	3	8	2
	Customer Services	11	18	10	19
	Other	5	1	3	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>37</b>
Business & Economic Development	Parking	19	15	17	19
	Planning	19	6	12	19
	Highways	10	13	15	28
	Environmental Health	3	5	6	7
	Other	18	7	20	4
	Taxi Licensing	3	0	2	-
	Regeneration		2	1	1
	Strategic Property	-	1	3	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>85</b>
Environmental Services	Cleansing Management	2	37	3	-
	Biodiversity	3	3	-	-
	Vermin/Pest Control	2	1	3	5
	Litter/Enforcement/Fly-tipping	4	1	3	9
	Waste Management	15	15	15	11
	Grounds Maintenance	6	6	1	4
	Sea Front Management	4		-	-
	Recycling/Wheeled Bins/Special Collections	19	12	20	21
	Trees/Shrubs	4	3	6	7
	Winter Maintenance	2	1	2	-
	Cemeteries		0	3	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>58</b>
Adult Social Care	Transport/Other	2	2	6	7
	Financial Services	4	5	3	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>
Children, Young People & Learning	Children Services	3	5	13	4
	Education	4	5	7	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
North Tyneside Homes	Debt Recovery	6	11	7	17
	Day-to-day Repairs	13	27	20	18
	Allocations/Letting	11	19	13	20
	Housing Estates	34	26	45	60
	Empty Homes /Voids	5	8	8	9
	Gas Services	2	5	1	1
	Homelessness	10	6	4	7



	Housing Investment	8	9	6	4
	Safer Estates	1	4	4	6
	Other	4	6	4	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>152</b>
Kier North Tyneside (from Sept 2009 only)	Aids & Adaptations	3	2	-	-
	Day-to-day Repairs	124	188	159	162
	Gas Services	14	46	26	38
	Housing Investment	20	8	17	21
	Empty Homes / Voids	4	1	7	23
	<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>244</b>
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>659</b>

The number of Corporate Complaints increased by 23% from 535 in 2012-13 to 659 in 2013-14. **Comments .....**

Table 9 shows the proportion of corporate complaints upheld or not.

<b>Table 9: Corporate complaints outcomes</b>	2010-11 %	2011-12 %	2012-13 %	2013-14 %
Not Upheld	29	23	34	34
Upheld in Full	37	38	33	40
Upheld in Part	34	39	33	26

Table 10 shows the stage at which corporate complaints were resolved, again indicating a high level of early problem solving overall and again is consistent with previous years.

<b>Table 10: Corporate complaints resolved at Stage:</b>	2010-11 %	2011-12 %	2012-13 %	2013-14 %
One	87	87	87	85
Two	12	13	13	14
Three	1	0	0	1

### Policy complaints

There were ?? complaints regarding Council 'policy' during the year. Complaints about policy of the Authority are recorded and responded to at Stage 1, but not considered further within the complaints process.

## 4. Local Government and Housing Ombudsman (LGO & HO)

The next stage after the Authority's complaints procedures is the Local Government Ombudsman. The number of complaints dealt with by the LGO over the last 4 years and their designation of the outcomes compared to the national average is shown in Table 11 which excludes premature complaints and advice given. No information in relation to national averages is available for 2012-13 but will be available from next year.

<b>Table 11 Complaints determined by the LGO</b>	2010-11		2011-12		2012-13		2013-14	
	NTC %	National Ave' %	NTC %	National Ave' %	NTC %	National Ave' %	NTC %	National Ave' %
Maladministration and injustice	2%*	0	0	0	0	-		
Local Settlements	7%	26%	7%	21%	0	-		
Reports finding maladministration			0	1%	0	-		
No maladministration	57%	48%	52%	46%	14%	-		
LGO's discretion not to investigate	17%	26%	26%	18%	68%	-		
Outside jurisdiction	17%		15%	14%	18%	-		

\* Relates to 1 case

Table 12 shows the number of complaints received by the LGO from the public, which were investigated in previous years, the LGO have not produced this information in 2012-13 due to changes in the way they report in year. However the Authority has based 2012-13 figures on their own records. More detailed reports will be produced from 2013-14.

<b>Table 12: Complaints to the LGO</b>	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Environmental Services	3	4	0	1
Highways, Transport & Planning	6	9	11	14
Revenues & Benefits	1	2	3	8
North Tyneside Homes	9	4	11	12
Education & Children Social Care	7	3	11	3
Adult Social Care	5	5	3	2
Other	2	3	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>42</b>

Table 13 gives the decisions made by the LGO in the given years (including decisions made in respect of complaints received in previous years; the outcome of ongoing complaints at the start of a new financial year will be reported the following year).

<b>Table 13 LGO Decisions</b>		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
<b>Total</b>	Complaints Received	<b>68</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>42</b>
	Outside Jurisdiction	7	1	6	9
	Discretion not to investigate	7	10	23	11
	Premature referrals	22	27	4	10
	Advice Given	13	9	0	0
<b>Investigated</b>		<b>33</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>12</b>
Outcome	Findings of no maladministration	24	14	5	5
	Satisfied with LA's actions	3	2	0	7
	Findings of maladministration & injustice	1	0	0	0
	Ongoing	0	0	1	0

## 5. Informal complaints and enquiries

As has been indicated previously, the 'headline' figure of the number of formal complaints does not reflect the number of concerns or problems reported to the Authority, and satisfactorily dealt with by staff and via the Members Enquiries system.

Consideration is currently being given in a number of service areas to better ways of 'capturing' the valuable information provided by 'informal' complaints as an aid to performance monitoring. This is being extended to include comments and compliments and provide a more comprehensive picture of feedback from our customers.

In the meantime, the Customer & Member Liaison Office has been monitoring the number of enquiries and informal complaints, or 'pre-complaint enquiries' dealt with by its staff, and these figures are shown in Table 14. This information has already proved valuable on a number of occasions as early indicators of developing issues in some service areas.

<b>Table 14 - Pre complaint &amp; general enquiries processed by CMLO</b>	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Mayor's Office	2	0	0	4
Children, Young People & Learning	19	19	23	21
Business & Economic Development	152	202	171	195
Adult Social Care	21	16	9	31
Cultural Services	39	59	75	55
North Tyneside Homes	136	127	103	132
Kier North Tyneside	39	133	115	90
Environmental Services	343	517*	307	215
Customer Services (Revs & Bens)	43	30	42	52
Legal Governance & Commercial Services	11	37	25	51
Finance & Resources	2	19	46	43
Policy & Performance	4	0	0	0
Other	33	6	28	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>1,165</b>	<b>944</b>	<b>889</b>

\*A high number of contacts were received from residents during April and May 2011 following a change in refuse collection rounds from a 5 day to 4 day service, this dropped to normal levels once initial issues were resolved.

# NORTH TYNESIDE COUNCIL

## CORPORATE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

(Amended 1 September 2006)

<p><b>STAGE 1</b></p>    <p>10 working days to respond in writing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints can be received by any employee/office but usually in a Customer Services Centre, the Telephone Call Centre or Customer Liaison Office.</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints are registered on computer and referred to Service Area</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Manager informed, makes enquiries and responds to the complainant in writing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>STAGE 2</b></p>   <p>10 working days to respond in writing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If not satisfied with the Stage 1 reply, the complainant has 10 working days to ask, giving reasons, for a more senior manager to review matters.</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case referred to Head of Service or other Senior Manager to review whole complaint and first response.</li> </ul>
<p><b>STAGE 3 COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE</b></p>   <p>Held within 28 calendar days of request.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If not satisfied with Stage 2 reply the complainant has 10 working days to ask, giving reasons, for the complaint to be considered by a Committee of up to 5 Councillors.</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The complainant and officers are invited to attend and present their cases, supported by all previous correspondence etc.</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The decision of the Committee is the final stage of the Council's internal procedure, the decision is communicated to the complainant within 24 hours and confirmed in writing within 5 working days.</li> </ul>
<p><b>FURTHER OPTIONS</b></p>	<p>Complainants advised to consider consulting Citizen's Advice, a solicitor or Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied. The Ombudsman will only look into a complaint if the Council has not first examined it in exceptional circumstances.</p>

# NORTH TYNESIDE COUNCIL

## CHILDREN ACT 1989

(\*Amended 1 September 2006)

STAGE 1	Sometimes known as the 'informal' stage. 10 working days to respond, can extend to 20 if need be.	Receipt and referral of complaint to Complaints staff <hr/> Service Manager informed of the problem, makes enquiries and responds to the complainant.
STAGE 2	Sometimes known as the 'formal' stage. 25 working days to respond can extend to maximum of 65.	Progress to this stage if:- Complainant feels problem not resolved at stage 1, it is a particularly serious complaint, the complainant requests to by-pass stage 1. <hr/> All stage 2 investigations are co-ordinated by Complaints Manager in Customer Liaison Office. <hr/> For Children Act complaints an 'Independent Investigator' and 'Independent Person' are appointed. <hr/> The Head of Service responds to the complainant after consideration of the investigator's report.
STAGE 3  REVIEW PANEL	Held within 28 days of request for Review Panel.	Progress to this stage if complainant is not satisfied at stage 2. A Review Panel considers the complaint, the investigator's report and the response of the Head of Service. *It comprises 3 independent people recruited from outside of the Council. Relevant Director communicates Review Panel outcome to complainant within 15 working days with any actions to be taken.
FURTHER OPTIONS	Complainants will be advised to consider consulting Citizen's Advice, a solicitor or Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied. The Ombudsman will not usually look into a complaint if it has not first been examined by the Council.	

## Summary of Customer Liaison Complaints Survey (1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014)

18% of survey forms issued were returned

How easy was it to find information about the complaints service?	Easy	Neither	Difficult
	52 %	33 %	15 %

If help was sought from staff, how helpful was it?	Helpful	Neither	Unhelpful
	75 %	13 %	12 %

If a leaflet was received, how helpful was the information?	Helpful	Neither	Unhelpful
	67 %	25 %	8 %

How satisfied were you with the response time?	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied
	63 %	13 %	24 %

Was response easy to understand?	Easy	Neither	Difficult
	82 %	11 %	6 %

Did response letter tell you what to do if unhappy?	Yes	No	Other
	76 %	12 %	12 %

How good was the process?	Very good	Fairly good	Neither	Fairly poor	Very poor
	40 %	33 %	4 %	7 %	16 %

Were you satisfied with the outcome?	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
	29 %	25 %	8 %	7 %	31 %