

COMPLAINTS SERVICE REPORT 2017-18

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North Tyneside Council

COMPLAINTS SERVICE REPORT

1 APRIL 2017 – 31 MARCH 2018

Introduction

This report provides an overview of the Authority's closed complaints, for the year between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018. 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 and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) and Housing Ombudsman (HO). This report has been produced using data from complaints that were closed during 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

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.

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 approximately 206,000 residents and approximately, 5 million visitors every year, but the overall number of formal complaints to the Authority has remained similar to last year when 1,139 complaints were registered in comparison to 1,196 during 2017-18.

Complaint leaflets are widely available in the Authority's buildings and to download from the Authority's 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. 15% of complainants returned their satisfaction survey during 2017-18 and of them, 65% were happy with the complaints process.

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 86% in 2017-18 and 94% for Children Social care complaints. Adult Social Care complaints have a one stage process and if the complainant remains dissatisfied they may complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, resulting in all such complaints being resolved at Stage 1 of the statutory complaints procedure.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman found three cases of maladministration with injustice against the Council. All recommendations made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman were actioned in a timely way by the Authority.

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. Wherever possible, before the 'formal' complaint procedures are used, efforts are made at an operational level to resolve any difficulties.

Corporate Complaints

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 Regulation and Review Committee, consisting of up to 5 Ward Councillors, makes the final decision.

Children Social Care Complaints

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 15 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.

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 six 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.

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.
- A complaint form is available on line at:
<https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/478/complain-about-council-services>
- 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 Complaints Team is independent of service departments and offers information, advice and help to complainants and staff responding to complaints. The Complaints Team primary role is to ensure all complaints are looked into properly and any lessons learnt are adopted.

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 Senior Complaints Officer.

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.

External review

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO) look at complaints about Local Authorities in a fair and independent way and their service is provided free of charge. 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 Authority has done something wrong they will make recommendations to put things right.

The LGSCO and the HO play a vital role for people wishing to make a complaint. It is usual for them to refer a matter to the Authority to look into, if it has not done so previously; they class this type of complaint as "premature".

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Advice Team can be contacted on:

Tel: **0300 061 0614** Text 'call back' to **0762 481 1595** at: www.lgo.org.uk
or write to: **The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman**, PO Box 4771,
Coventry CV4 0EH

The Housing Ombudsman Advice Team can be contacted on:

Tel: 0300 111 3000 Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
or write to: **Housing Ombudsman Service**, Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange
Square, London, E14 9GE

Operational liaison with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman is undertaken by the Corporate Complaints Officer.

In the Annual Letter for 2017-18 from the LGSCO they indicated that in total, 46 complaints about North Tyneside Council had been received during the year. The HO does not provide an annual report for each Authority and so similar information is not available from the HO in relation to complaints they have received regarding provision of housing and housing services by the Authority.

The Authority also records complaints received from the LGSCO and HO and has recorded that 38 complaints were received from the LGCO and the HO combined during the period. Of the 38 complaints received, seven were outside of their jurisdiction, on eight occasions they exercised their general discretion not to investigate, three were classified as premature and referred to the Authority to investigate, in 10 cases they found no maladministration and they found maladministration and injustice in relation to three complaints. The LGSCO has emphasised that their statistics reflect the data they hold and may not necessarily align with the data we hold. For example, their numbers include enquiries from people they signpost back to the authority, some of whom may never contact us.

The LGSCO Annual Letter will be available on their website in mid July and once published a copy will be available from the Corporate Complaints Officer.

Set out below are details of the complaints received by the LGSCO in relation to neighbouring authorities. In comparison with previous years, it is apparent that levels of contact with the LGSCO remain constant highlighting that the majority of complainants are satisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the Authority.

Complaints referred to the LGO in Tyne & Wear	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Gateshead	64	58	44	51
Newcastle upon Tyne	58	68	66	66
North Tyneside	56	56	36	46
South Tyneside	49	51	45	49
Sunderland	59	56	71	67
Total	286	289	262	377

Care Quality Commission

In the Adult Social Care arena, the Care Quality Commission 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 or via an online form on their website www.cqc.org.uk.

OFSTED

For Children Social Care and across Children Young People and Learning, OFSTED plays a similar role to Care Quality Commission. They can be contacted at: OFSTED, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD, telephone: 0300 123 1231 or via email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Management and Operation

During the period of this report: 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, the management and operation of both the corporate and social services processes was provided by the Customer and Member Liaison Office, which is based within the Law and Governance Department of the Authority. The Customer and Member Liaison Office was also the main point of contact for the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman.

The Office not only managed many individual complaints but also monitored the correct use of the procedures in the various service departments. It did not investigate complaints as service areas were responsible for examining complaints about their own services.

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

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

Performance Indicators

A report on the overall performance of the complaints service is submitted to the Authority's Senior Leadership Team on a monthly basis and to the Authority's Member Support Group every six months. An Annual report is also presented to the Authority's Regulation and Review Committee to update Members with the number of complaints that have been received the previous year.

The local authority carries out an in-house survey of people who have used the complaints process. These show that 55% 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; 66% thought the process was good and 52% were satisfied with the outcome.

There are currently approximately 206,000 residents in North Tyneside. Voluntary diversity monitoring of complainants was introduced several years ago. The following table compares the results of the survey against the Office of National Statistics (ONS) Mid Year Population estimate for 2017 in relation to gender and age, and the latest data in relation to disability, ethnic origin and religion, which is taken from the 2011 Census.

%	O.N.S.	NTC	%	O.N.S.	NTC

Gender		
Female	51.7	55
Male	48.3	44
Declined		1
Age		
16-24	11.1	1.5
25-34	14.9	10
35-44	16.1	12
45-54	18.1	19
55-64	15.9	23
65-74	13.1	24
Over 75	10.8	10
Declined	-	0.5
With a disability		
Yes	20.6	38
No	-	58
Not given	-	5

Ethnic Origin		
Asian	1.9	0.5
Black	0.4	0
Other Ethnic	0.6	1
Mixed	0.9	0.5
White British	95.4	95
Other White	1.2	2
Chinese	0.5	0
Declined	-	1
Religion		
Christian	63.8	57
Hindu	0.3	0
Buddhist	0.2	0.5
Muslim	0.7	1
Sikh	0.2	0
Jewish	0	0
Other	0.2	3.5
None	28.1	30
Declined	6.4	8

Numbers and analysis of complaints

The number of complaints for 2017-18, 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 Complaints Team met with various service management teams to discuss any implications arising from themes or trends in complaints.

The total complaints related activity is set out in Table 1. Formal complaints continue to slightly increase in numbers year on year.

Corporate complaints resolved at Stage 1 remained high at 86% and 94% of Children Social Care complaints closed during the period were resolved at Stage 1. This reflects 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

Adult Social Care complaints

Brief Summary	Lessons Learned
Invoices paid for care fees, etc. work not being done when sickness in staff team.	Backup for staff when on sick leave needs to be put in place. Alternative and more appropriate financial processing systems need to be explored and put in place. Process needs to be explained to families and evidenced by signed copies of forms given to both parties.
Deceased father's Council Tax Bill not being dealt with as system not working properly.	Tell Us Once system does not appear to be working within the Council. Access by the Manager of Information Systems Helpdesk has been made aware that someone should pick up the TUO in relation to Adult Social Care services so that records can be updated accordingly.
Court protection finances.	A decision will be made about purchase of a new Liquid Logic module to prevent tracking having to be done manually as this is fraught with human error.

Children's Services Complaints

Delays in EHC plan outcome.	<p>The new 0-25 process requires assessments from Colleagues in Health 19-25 Colleagues in Social care 19-25 as well as colleagues in Education.</p> <p>If we do not believe that Education continues to meet the outcomes for the young person we need to have a co-ordinated care package from Health and Care which can evidence that the young person can access outcomes but in a different way other than Education.</p>
Concerns over care plans for young children from families.	<p>Find a way to quickly get the information to parents and overcome the fact that these reports are confidential due to the staffing comments it holds. You can either redact the report or talk through the relevant parts.</p> <p>Suggest to the operational teams to use family group conferences facilitated by Barnardos as a way of trying to resolve issue between us and families/guardians.</p> <p>In this case it was particularly helpful to also work with legal support to help us</p>

	and the family better understand the issues and proposals.
Lack of consistent member of staff working with families.	This complaint highlighted the importance of ensuring service users are informed of a change of worker, particularly when the worker is agency and is leaving at short notice. Senior Social Worker/Team Leader to ensure this is included with the preparation for the worker leaving. Ensure family members are kept informed wherever possible.

Corporate Complaints

Repairs to properties within North Tyneside.	Communications need to be clear to residents regarding repairs and response times. Repairs staff need to also ensure jobs are done in a sensible priority order. Any materials needed for jobs should be identified at an early stage to avoid delays. We need to manage tenant's expectations.
Wrong information being given out from Call Centre staff.	Sessions to be held in the summer about training call centre staff on what departments deal with. This will avoid crossed communications in future.
All Service Areas.	Staff sickness/holidays need to be covered so that services are not impacted on. Continual complaints regarding residents not being able to contact "a person".
Gas servicing for residents.	<p>The gas servicing procedure is so robust that automated letters can upset customers due to the process not being flexible. The Gas Team need to make a note of the conversation and stop engineers calling if, as an example, advance notice of the customer being in hospital was given. Also emphasising to customers that they should ignore any letter that is delivered subsequently if new servicing appointments have been made.</p> <p>Although the gas servicing procedure produces good KPI's and has been agreed with NTC/Customers it is another example of being a complaint generator and will continue to do so if changes are</p>

	not made.
Special Guardianship Orders.	The financial process for calculating Special Guardianship Order allowances was found to be inaccurate and amended process was developed with Barrister advice and subsequently agreed as the new process. However given the financial implications and significance of change to an established process this requires cabinet approval and the necessary paperwork was prepared for presentation to Cabinet. Following cabinet approval, the new process will be put in place.
Adult Learning Alliance courses.	Learners need to have better guidance around the next steps in their learning and for this to be provided earlier in the academic year so that there is a clear pathway identified including planned 'next steps'.
Free school meals process – flaws in process leading to child not getting entitlement.	We have put in place a checking mechanism to prevent errors in Free School Meal application confirmations happening again.

Future Developments

North Tyneside Council continues to change rapidly. This change process will continue and remain a challenge for effective complaints handling as service users experience changes and the organisation evolves internally as a result of changing priorities from central Government and more limited resources being available to the Authority.

There are significant examples of change within the Authority. The Authority has partnership arrangements with Kier North Tyneside, Engie and Capita to provide a range of services.

From 1 April 2018, a substantial change to the management of complaints will take place with the creation of Link Officers within the service areas. The Link Officers within the service areas will be responsible for recording complaints on the customer relationship management system with the Complaints Team taking a supervisory role providing advice and support when required. The Senior Complaints Officer will be responsible for considering Stage Three requests to Committee and the liaison with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman.

The overall focus of attention however, will continue to be very much centred on 'learning' from complaints and this will be a core driver in all future developments by the Authority.

Conclusions

The Authority has made a commitment to deliver a successful future for its residents and the borough in the Our North Tyneside plan, but to achieve the outcomes we need to deliver within the resources available and must therefore do things differently. There is not only significantly less money available, but also increasing pressures and challenges from a growing and ageing population and changing needs and expectations, however, the underlying principles when dealing with complaints still remain:

- To aim to respond to complainants in a proportionate manner, understanding the perspective of the person making the complaint and wherever possible resolve matters at an early stage.
- To continue to work alongside and support managers and other partner organisations to ensure that complaints are responded to concisely and in a timely manner.
- To continue to work within our policies, procedures and legislative guidelines throughout the complaints processes.
- To provide training to staff to ensure complaints are handled effectively and efficiently.
- To continue to focus on handling enquiries promptly to try to prevent unnecessary escalation and dissatisfaction.
- To continue to learn from our outcomes and make changes to improve our services.

The 'Creating a Brighter Future' programme is not just a plan for delivery but it will deliver a major culture change and new way of working that will:

- Encourage our customers to be more independent
- Better manage demand for services so people access the right services at the right time
- Focus everything it does to delivering its priorities.

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 and will continue to be so in the coming years.

Background

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 2014 to March 2018 is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Social Service Complaints	92	97	115	126
Corporate Complaints	772	836	992	1070
Total	864	933	1107	1196
Local Government & Housing Ombudsman complaints received by NTC	35	43	32	38
Formal total	899	976	1139	1234
Pre-Complaint and general enquiries dealt with by the Customer & Member Liaison Office	814	550	599	685
Total complaint related activity	1713	1526	1738	1919

There was a slight increase in the number of pre-complaint and general enquiries dealt with by the Customer and Member Liaison Office during 2017-18 in comparison with 2016-17. The Customer and Member Liaison Office continued to make sure that as many enquiries as possible are directed to the most appropriate service 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 Customer and Member Liaison Office 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 also provided with 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).

Table 2 Social Services by Division	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
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Children & Families Services	46	50	54	64
Adult Services	46	47	61	62
TOTAL	92	97	115	126

There has been small increase of complaints about Social Care Services overall during the last year, however numbers remain very low.

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

Table 3 Children & Families Services Categories	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Adoption/Fostering/LAC	20	10	7	14
Safeguarding	11	20	22	31
Child Protection	0	0	2	2
Front Door	9	12	12	9
Commissioning and Investment	4	3	0	3
Children with Disability Team	0	0	0	5
Other	2	5	11	0
TOTAL	46	50	54	64

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 a 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 14 complaints about Children Services dealt with under the Corporate Complaints procedure.

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

Table 4 Adult Services Categories	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Safeguarding	2	2	1	3
Commissioning	3	3	3	2
Personalisation / Social Work	32	36	44	40
Integrated Services	8	4	5	9
Other	1	2	8	8
TOTAL	46	47	61	62

In addition to the numbers reported above there were 14 complaints about Adult Services dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Procedure during 2017-18.

Tables 5 and 6 show the proportions of upheld complaints for Children’s and Adults Services over the year.

Table 5 - Children Social Care complaint outcomes	2014-15 %	2015-16 %	2016-17 %	2017-18 %
Not Upheld	61	70	46	55
Upheld in Full	7	2	4	8
Upheld in Part	30	26	44	37

Table 6 - Adult Social Care complaint outcomes	2014-15 %	2015-16 %	2016-17 %	2017-18 %
Not Upheld	46	49	43	43.5
Upheld in Full	2	0	3	0
Upheld in Part	52	49	51	56.5

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 Authority in optimising use of resources and enhancing customer care.

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

Table 7 – Children’s Social Services complaints resolved at stage:	2014-15 %	2015-16 %	2016-17 %	2017-18 %
One	91	96	93	94
Two	7	2	2	1.5
Three	2	0	0	4.5

3. Corporate Complaints

Table 8, below, shows a breakdown of corporate complaints received from 2014-15 for comparison purposes.

Table 8 – Corporate Complaints					
Department	Service Area	2014-15	2014-15	2016-17	2017-18
Chief Exec & Financial Services	Finance & Resources	1	7	7	11
	Law & Governance	15	13	22	7
	Other (inc Street Lighting)	9	0	2	1
	Total	25	20	31	19
Revs, Bens & Customer Services	Benefits	55	80	71	51
	Council Tax	41	50	43	69
	Customer Services	31	34	37	38
	Total	127	164	151	158
Adult Social					

Care					
	Total	15	11	15	14
Children, Young People & Learning					
	Total	17	13	19	16
ENVIRONMENT, LEISURE AND HOUSING:					
Department	Service Area	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017/18
Leisure	Indoor Sports & Leisure	13	15	15	21
	Cultural Services Other	8	11	11	8
	Total	21	26	26	29
Environment	Parking	20	20	33	52
	Planning	19	20	27	21
	Highways	41	51	64	87
	Environmental Health	5	12	15	19
	Other	2	1	3	20
	Street Environment	36	39	49	80
	Property	4	6	7	7
	Waste Management	20	16	15	30
	Recycling/Wheeled Bins/Special Collections	20	71	89	116
	Trees/Shrubs	8	15	21	15
	Winter Maintenance	0	2	0	0
	Bereavement Services	2	2	3	0
	Total	182	255	326	447
Housing	Debt Recovery/Income	15	12	20	20
	Day-to-day Repairs	13	12	16	10
	Allocations/Letting	27	24	40	26
	Housing Estates	73	45	79	76
	Empty Homes / Voids	7	12	5	10
	Quality Homes for Older People	2	10	7	4
	Homelessness / Advice	15	7	6	9
	Housing Investment	8	25	11	10
	Safer Estates	3	3	10	4
	Leasehold	2	2	2	3
	Other	8	3	10	10
	Total	173	155	206	182
Kier North Tyneside	Day-to-day Repairs	156	126	156	148
	Gas Services	24	23	26	20
	Housing Investment	16	27	19	20
	Empty Homes / Voids	14	14	16	12
	Total	210	190	217	200

Business & Economic Development	Business & Economic Development	2	2	1	4
Public Health	Public Health	0	0	0	1
	Grand Total	772	836	992	1070

The number of Corporate Complaints increased by 8% to 1070 in 2017-18.

Environmental complaint numbers were 326 in 2016-17 and increased to 427 in 2016-17 (+24%). There had been a noticeable increase in complaints in two areas, these were parking and highways. With regard to parking, the local authority had recently advised residents who lived in a parking controlled area that charges for their residential parking permit were to be introduced, this resulted in more complaints being attributed to this category. In relation to Highways, there are a number of ongoing major road infrastructure developments across the Borough, this has resulted in an increase in the number of complaints received. The developments include the replacement of Norham Road bridge and improvements to the A19 corridor at the Silverlink.

An increase had also occurred in the category of recycling but in the context of the 90,000 households in the borough the number remains small and every effort is made to ensure all complaints are kept to a minimum and that residents satisfaction is maintained.

The number of Housing complaints during 2017-18 had shown a marked improvement with a small reduction in the number of formal complaints recorded. It should be acknowledged that the Housing Department have worked hard to improve their standards as they deal with hundreds of thousands of transactions with Council tenants over the year.

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

Table 9: Corporate complaints outcomes	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
	%	%	%	%
Not Upheld	39	40	47	46.5
Upheld in Full	33	32	24	27
Upheld in Part	28	28	29	26.5

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.

Table 10: Corporate complaints resolved at Stage:	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
	%	%	%	%
One	86	87	88	87
Two	13	12	12	13
Three	1	1	0	<1

Policy complaints

Complaints about the policies of the Authority are recorded and responded to at Stage 1 but not considered further within the complaints process.

4. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman

The next stage after the Authority's complaints procedures is consideration by the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman or Housing Ombudsman.

Table 11 groups the breakdown by the Authority's Service Areas as recorded by the Authority:

Table 11: Complaints to the LGO & HO	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Environmental & Cultural Services	4	5	5	4
Highways, Transport & Planning	6	9	4	7
Revenues & Benefits	4	5	4	4
Housing	11	7	9	8
Education & Children Social Care	3	8	4	5
Adult Social Care	3	7	4	8
Other	4	2	2	2
Total	35	43	32	38

Table 12 gives the decisions made by the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman in the given years as recorded by the Authority.

Table 12: LGO & HO Decisions		2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Total	Complaints Received	35	43	32	38
Not Investigated	Outside Jurisdiction	9	10	3	7
	Discretion not to investigate	5	5	7	8
	Premature referrals	4	4	6	3
	Discontinued Investigation	6	3	2	5
Total Not Investigated		24	22	18	23
Investigated	Findings of no maladministration	6	15	8	10
	Satisfied with LA's actions	3	0	0	0
	Findings of maladministration and injustice	2	4	3	3
	Maladministration, no injustice				1
	Ongoing	0	2	3	1
Total Investigated		11	21	14	38

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.

The Customer & Member Liaison Office also monitored the number of enquiries and informal complaints, or 'pre-complaint enquiries' dealt with by its staff during 2017-18, and these figures are shown in Table 13. This information has already been helpful on a number of occasions as early indicators of developing issues in some service areas.

Table 13 - Pre complaint & general enquiries processed by CMLO	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Children, Young People & Learning	29	11	18	20
Adult Social Care	25	18	18	15
Cultural Services	39	19	17	23
North Tyneside Homes	114	79	84	91
Kier North Tyneside	46	30	29	23
Environmental Services	417	306	353	404
Customer Services, Revs & Bens	58	36	32	41
Law & Governance	43	23	20	20
Finance & Resources	39	25	21	35
Other	4	3	7	13
TOTAL	814	550	599	685