

COMPLAINTS SERVICE REPORT 2018-19

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Contents

Introduction	3
Executive Summary	3
Procedures	
Overview	4
How to make a complaint	5
Help and Support	5
Who can make a complaint?	6
External Review	
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman	6
Care Quality Commission.....	7
O.F.S.T.E.D.....	8
Management and Operation	8
Performance Indicators	8
Numbers and analysis of complaints	9
Future Developments	11
Conclusions	11
Statistics	
Overall number of complaints	13
Social Services	13
Corporate Complaints	15
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman	17
Informal complaints and enquiries	18



North Tyneside Council

COMPLAINTS SERVICE REPORT

1 APRIL 2018 – 31 MARCH 2019

Introduction

This report provides an overview of the Authority's closed complaints, for the year between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019. 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 (LGSCO) and Housing Ombudsman (HO). This report has been produced using data from complaints that were closed during 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

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 to the area every year, but the overall number of formal complaints to the Authority has decreased since last year when 1,196 complaints were registered in comparison to 973 during 2018-19.

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. 11% of complainants returned their satisfaction survey during 2018-19 and of them, 59% were happy with the complaints process.

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% in 2018-19 and 93% 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 three separate procedures for Corporate, Children's and Adult Social Care. 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 Manager to try to resolve within 15 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 15 working days; and
3. Ultimately, the Regulation and Review Committee, consisting of up to five Ward Councillors, make 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 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.

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 focused
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.

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 and Member Liaison Office in Quadrant.
Write to: Customer and Member Liaison Office
Quadrant
The Silverlink North
Cobalt Business Park
North Tyneside
NE27 0BY
Tel. 0191 643 2280
Email: cmlo@northtyneside.gov.uk
- 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 Customer and Member Liaison Office is independent of service departments and offers information, advice and help to complainants and staff responding to complaints. The primary role of the Customer and Member Liaison Office is to ensure all complaints are looked into properly and any lessons learned 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 Customer and 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, authorisation to act will be obtained from the person the complaint is about.

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 Ombudsmen 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 Senior Complaints Officer.

In the Annual Letter for 2018-19 from the LGSCO they indicated that in total, 56 complaints about North Tyneside Council had been received during the year. The HO does not provide an annual report for each Authority 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.

Of the 56 complaints received, advice was given by the Ombudsmen on six occasions, 18 were referred back to the Authority for local resolution, 20 were closed after initial enquiries, six were not upheld and six were upheld causing injustice to the complainant. The Ombudsmen 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 is available on their website and a copy is available from the Senior 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 LGSCO in Tyne & Wear	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Gateshead	58	44	51	51
Newcastle upon Tyne	68	66	66	67
North Tyneside	56	36	46	56
South Tyneside	51	45	49	49
Sunderland	56	71	67	67
Total	289	262	377	290

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

The management and operation of both the corporate and social services processes is 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 is 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

The Complaints Annual Report is presented to the Authority's full Cabinet meeting. The 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 and to advise Members if the recommendations from any Stage Three hearing have been undertaken.

The Authority carries out an in-house survey of people who have used the complaints process. These show that 52% of respondents said they found it easy to find information about the complaints process; 34% were happy with the time taken to respond to complaints; 39% thought the process was good and 35% 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			Ethnic Origin		
Female	51.7	50	Asian	1.9	0
Male	48.3	47	Black	0.4	0
Declined		3	Other Ethnic	0.6	0
Age			Mixed	0.9	0
16-24	11.1	0	White British	95.4	95
			Other White	1.2	0
25-34	14.9	10	Chinese	0.5	0
35-44	16.1	26	Declined	-	5
45-54	18.1	19	Religion		
55-64	15.9	16	Christian	63.8	43
65-74	13.1	21	Hindu	0.3	0
Over 75	10.8	5	Buddhist	0.2	0
Declined	-	3	Muslim	0.7	0
With a disability			Sikh	0.2	0
Yes	20.6	17	Jewish	0	0
No	-	72	Other	0.2	0
Not given	-	11	None	28.1	38
			Declined	6.4	19

Numbers and analysis of complaints

The number of complaints for 2018-19, 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 Senior Complaints Officer 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. Whilst formal complaints have continued to slightly increase in numbers year on year, this year, there has been a small reduction in the number of registered formal complaints.

Corporate complaints resolved at Stage 1 remained high at 85% and 93% 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 learned 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.

Department	Lessons Learned
Building Control	Arrangements will be made for long term appointments to be confirmed nearer the appointment date.
Delay in producing an Education, Health and Care Plan	Further recruitment to Department, investment in training and induction undertaken.
Issues surrounding Universal Credit and the knowledge of staff in the Contact Centre	Staff have been reminded to advise eligible customers to claim Universal Credit. Refresher training conducted by Training Advisor to all Customer Service staff.
Special Guardianship Order	It was found that the original calculation was incorrect. This has now been amended to reflect the correct payment. The complainant was offered £500 in recognition of the impact pursuing this complaint has had upon her and her family, both emotionally and financially and a payment of £250 to the Advocate for her expenses in supporting the complainant with this complaint.
Delay to entry into the Mouth of the Tyne Festival	There was a delay in the Act arriving which delayed to opening time of the gates to the public. Following a review of procedures, changes have been made to what attendees can take into the event.
No facility to record the title of transgender complainant	System changes to include 'Mx' prefix and training to staff around LGBT issues.
Delays to repair leak in kitchen	Better coordination between trades will be implemented.
Difficulty discussing repairs with tenant	Communication with family difficult without an interpreter was difficult. Arrangements made for an Interpreter to be engaged during further meetings, if required.
Lack of response from the Parking Department	Parking Control will ensure that adequate staffing resources are in place to deal with high spikes in workload to avoid a re-occurrence of this issue.
Dispute over conversation during the issue of a Penalty Charge Notice.	Civil Enforcement Officers have been instructed to activate their body worn

	CCTV whenever they are in conversation with a member of the public.
Advice given to residents applying for a dropped kerb.	To ensure consistency and to remove any doubt, staff have started to advise residents about permission in writing and not verbally.
Renewal of Ease Card for Armed Forces	We have changed a policy based on feedback and equity and will implement the change in January 2019.

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 Engie and Capita to provide a range of services.

On 1 April 2018, a substantial change to the management of complaints took place whereby, Link Officers within the main services areas became responsible for recording complaints on the customer relationship management system. This process has now reverted back to a centralised Complaints Team responsible for registering and monitoring all complaints made to the Authority. The Senior Complaints Officer remains responsible for considering corporate complaint requests to progress to Stage Three which is a hearing of the Regulation and Review Committee, liaison with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman and the supervision of complaints at Stage Two and Three of the Children’s complaints process.

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

Conclusions

In the Our North Tyneside Plan, the Authority has made a commitment to listen and to work better for residents. As part of this commitment, Cabinet agreed in May 2019, a programme to improve customer service across all of its services. This programme has four key elements and one of these, “Better Never Stops”, will introduce a clearer focus on a continuous improvement culture across the organisation.

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.

Therefore, part of the customer service improvement programme will include a review of how we handle complaints to ensure that the Authority has the best structure and systems in place to enable complaints to be dealt with effectively, sensitively and in a timely manner. The Authority already delivers a good level of service as set out in this annual report, but this review as part of the customer service improvement programme will identify where there might be any other improvements that could be made.

The underlying principles when dealing with complaints will tie into a new set of customer service standards, a “Customer Promise “,that will be developed as part of the Customer Improvement Programme and will continue to include the following.

- 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.

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 good 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 and Social Care 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 2015 to March 2019 is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Social Service Complaints	97	115	126	97
Corporate Complaints	836	992	1070	973
Total	933	1107	1196	1070
Local Government & Housing Ombudsman complaints received by NTC	43	32	38	56
Formal total	976	1139	1234	1126
Pre-Complaint and general enquiries dealt with by the Customer & Member Liaison Office	550	599	685	1105
Total complaint related activity	1526	1738	1919	2231

There has been an increase in the number of pre-complaint and general enquiries dealt with by the Customer and Member Liaison Team during 2018-19 in comparison to previous years. 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	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Children & Families Services	50	54	64	42
Adult Services	47	61	62	55
TOTAL	97	115	126	97

There has been small decrease of complaints about Social Care Services overall during the last year.

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

Table 3 Children & Families Services Categories	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Adoption/Fostering/LAC	10	7	14	5
Safeguarding	20	22	31	19
Child Protection	0	2	2	0
Front Door	12	12	9	2
Commissioning and Investment	3	0	3	0
Children with Disability Team	0	0	5	3
Other	5	11	0	13
TOTAL	50	54	64	42

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 that 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 24 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	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Safeguarding	2	1	3	5
Commissioning	3	3	2	4
Personalisation / Social Work	36	44	40	34
Integrated Services	4	5	9	5
Other	2	8	8	7
TOTAL	47	61	62	55

In addition to the numbers reported above there were 20 complaints about Adult Services dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Procedure during 2018-19.

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	2015-16 %	2016-17 %	2017-18 %	2018-19 %
Not Upheld	70	46	55	40
Upheld in Full	2	4	8	31
Upheld in Part	26	44	37	29

Table 6 - Adult Social Care complaint outcomes	2015-16 %	2016-17 %	2017-18 %	2018-19 %
Not Upheld	49	43	43.5	47.2
Upheld in Full	0	3	0	9.0
Upheld in Part	49	51	56.5	43.6

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:	2015-16 %	2016-17 %	2017-18 %	2018-19 %
One	96	93	94	93
Two	2	2	1.5	7
Three	0	0	4.5	0

3. Corporate Complaints

Table 8, below, shows a breakdown of corporate complaints received from 2015-16 for comparison purposes.

Table 8 – Corporate Complaints					
Department	Service Area	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Chief Exec & Financial Services	Finance & Resources	7	7	11	14
	Law & Governance	13	22	7	5
	Other (inc Street Lighting)	0	2	1	7
	Total	20	31	19	26
Revs, Bens & Customer Services	Benefits	80	71	51	30
	Council Tax	50	43	69	99
	Customer Services	34	37	37	42
	Total	164	151	158	171
Adult Social Care					
	Total	11	15	14	20
Children, Young People & Learning					
	Total	13	19	16	24
ENVIRONMENT, LEISURE AND HOUSING:					
Department	Service Area	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Leisure	Indoor Sports & Leisure	15	15	21	21

	Cultural Services Other	11	11	8	12
	Total	26	26	29	33
Environment	Parking	20	33	52	46
	Planning/Building Control	20	27	21	19
	Highways	51	64	87	59
	Environmental Health	12	15	19	7
	Other	1	3	20	3
	Street Environment	39	49	80	61
	Property	6	7	7	8
	Waste Management	16	15	30	15
	Recycling/Wheeled Bins/Special Collections	71	89	116	153
	Trees/Shrubs	15	21	15	9
	Winter Maintenance	2	0	0	0
	Bereavement Services	2	3	0	0
	Total	255	326	447	380
Housing	Debt Recovery/Income	12	20	20	18
	Day-to-day Repairs	12	16	10	22
	Allocations/Letting	24	40	26	31
	Housing Estates	45	79	76	47
	Empty Homes / Voids	12	5	10	12
	Quality Homes for Older People	10	7	4	1
	Homelessness / Advice	7	6	9	12
	Housing Investment	25	11	10	17
	Safer Estates	3	10	4	22
	Leasehold	2	2	3	0
	Other	3	10	10	6
	Total	155	206	182	188
Kier North Tyneside	Day-to-day Repairs	126	156	148	99
	Gas Services	23	26	20	10
	Housing Investment	27	19	20	11
	Empty Homes / Voids	14	16	12	7
	Other				2
Total	190	217	200	129	
Business & Economic Development	Business & Economic Development	2	1	4	1
Public Health	Public Health	0	0	1	1
	Grand Total	836	992	1070	973

The number of formal Corporate Complaint registered during 2018-19 had decreased by 10% to 973.

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

Table 9: Corporate complaints outcomes	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
	%	%	%	%
Not Upheld	40	47	46.5	49
Upheld in Full	32	24	27	30
Upheld in Part	28	29	26.5	21

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:	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
	%	%	%	%
One	87	88	87	85
Two	12	12	13	14
Three	1	0	<1	<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	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Environmental & Cultural Services	5	5	4	4
Highways, Transport & Planning	9	4	7	9
Revenues & Benefits	5	4	4	3
Housing	7	9	8	11
Education & Children Social Care	8	4	5	15
Adult Social Care	7	4	8	10
Other	2	2	2	4
Total	43	32	38	56

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		2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Total	Complaints Received	43	32	38	56
Not Investigated	Outside Jurisdiction	10	3	7	10
	Discretion not to	5	7	8	10

	investigate/No further action				
	Premature referrals	4	6	3	19
	Discontinued Investigation	3	2	5	0
	Signposted to HO				5
Total Not Investigated		22	18	23	44
Investigated	Findings of no maladministration	15	8	10	5
	Satisfied with LA's actions	0	0	0	0
	Findings of maladministration and injustice	4	3	3	6
	Maladministration, no injustice			1	0
	Ongoing	2	3	1	1
Total Investigated		21	14	38	56

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 via social media, telephone and email contact and via the Members Enquiries System.

The Customer and Member Liaison Office also monitored the number of enquiries and informal complaints, or 'pre-complaint enquiries' dealt with by its staff during 2018-19, 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	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Children, Young People & Learning	11	18	20	8
Adult Social Care	18	18	15	22
Cultural Services	19	17	23	27
North Tyneside Homes	79	84	91	110
Kier North Tyneside	30	29	23	57
Environmental Services	306	353	404	805
Customer Services, Revs & Bens	36	32	41	36
Law & Governance	23	20	20	19
Finance & Resources	25	21	35	6
Other	3	7	13	15
TOTAL	550	599	685	1105

It is noted that complaint numbers had reduced overall however, the number of pre-complaints had greatly increased. During 2018, the Authority introduced alternative weekly bin collections. This resulted in a significant increase in contact from members of the public who were unhappy at the change to the service, dissatisfied with the length of time taken to receive an extra bin and upset that their bin had not been collected, however, it is understandable that such a significant change in delivery has impacted on

residents. Whilst, this increase had occurred, it has to be taken in the context that there are over 90,000 households in the Borough who benefit from this service, therefore, complaint numbers are relatively small and every effort is made to ensure that residents' satisfaction is maintained.