

Annual Report

April 2013 to March 2014

Complaints

Rotherham
Metropolitan
Borough Council 
Where Everyone Matters

Executive Summary

This report provides information about complaints made between **1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014** to the Local Authority, under the Corporate Complaint's Procedure, the Adult Social Services and Children's Social Services Complaint Regulations.

The figures in the report include details of the number of customers and the number of complaints they have made, each Directorate area has provided information and a breakdown summary.

In total over the last 12 months the number of complaints received by the Council is 672 (0.5% increase - 668 received 2012-13).

The continuous improvement in complaint handling (less complaints escalating through the complaints procedure, complaints upheld, less Ombudsman complaints upheld) is as a result of the creation of a centralised complaint function in 2012. The Complaints Team has allowed for a standardised approach to complaint handling and has allowed for the improvements seen in recent years to be maintained. All complaints are quality assured and all are reviewed for learning and service improvement. The team continues to work for the customer to make sure they are provided the best and most appropriate response to their concerns.

We are pleased to report that, working with front line services and customers, we have maintained a high level of performance and at the same time maintaining a qualitative approach to complaint handling. As well as complaint quality assurance and learning and improvement from complaints we have also continued to improve the access to our complaint service and improved the experience of customers using the complaint procedures.

The efficiencies in the service and the best ever performance and experience of customers can be considered as a significant and successful improvement to the complaint service.

Overall **98%** of all complaints were responded to within the timescales promised, compared to **98%** (2012-13) and **94%** (2011-12). This continues the Council's progressive approach to performance management, leading to year on year improvement. All Directorate leads are targeted to achieve 100% performance.

Complaints Results April 2013 to March 2014

↑	More formal complaints (at all levels) received, 672 . (668 received 2012-13)
↑	More complaints for Neighbourhoods and Adult Services received, 417 . (413 received 2012-13)
↔	Same number of complaints for the former Resources Directorate received, 48 . (69 received 2012-13)
↓	Less complaints for Children and Young Peoples Services received, 73 . (76 received 2012-13)
↑	More complaints for Environment and Development Services received, 113 . (110 received 2012-13)
↑	More Councillor Surgeries were received, 714 . (572 received in 2012-13)
↔	The same number of complaints were responded to within timescales, 98% . (98% in

	2012-13)
↓	Less complaints (at all stages) upheld, 193, 28% . (256, 38% upheld 2012-13)
↔	The same number of Stage 1 complaints escalated to Stage 2, 7%, 50 . (7%, 48 escalated in 2012-13)
↑	More complaints about quality of service were received, 325 . (291 received 2012-13)
↓	Less complaints about actions of staff were received, 119 . (138 received 2012-13)
↓	The Ombudsman investigated more complaints, 38 complaints but upheld less, 5, 13% (30 investigated and 8 upheld 27% in 2012-13)
↓	Less compensation awards made, £1037 . (£1433 in 2012-13)
↓	Reduction in external complaint investigation costs in CYPs, £19,494 . (£24,384 in 2012-13)
↑	More compliments recorded by the Complaints Team, 753 . (714 recorded in 2012-13)
↑	More informal complaints* received, 811 . (1206 received 2012-13)

* Please note, informal complaints are defined as contacts by customers who are expressing dissatisfaction but the Council has been previously unaware of the concern and has not had an opportunity to put things right. These complaints have been dealt with and resolved to the customer's satisfaction at this first point of contact and as a result the customer has not wanted to enter formal complaint proceedings. This is done with the agreement of the customer and it means that a large number of enquiries are dealt with much quicker and at less cost to the Council.

An example would be a report of an outstanding repair to a Council property. The customer is unhappy but it can be very quickly resolved without need of a detailed investigation.

The Directorate Complaints Team has continued to maintain recent significant improvements in the following areas:

- Learning from all Complaints to identify service improvements
- Less Ombudsman complaints upheld
- Improved performance on enquiries responded to in time
- Reduced the number of informal complaints received
- Maintained the number of complaints escalating through the complaint procedure
- Less complaints upheld
- All responses are quality assured
- Has assisted with more Councillor Surgery enquiries
- Has reduced compensation costs
- Has reduced CYPs investigation costs
- Increased the number of compliments recorded

Complaint Trends

We have continued to improve the way that complaints are dealt with across the Council. Complaints have reduced slightly and we have maintained high performance. We continue to quality assure all complaints and consider all complaints for learning and improvement. This has contributed to the reduction in complaints escalating through the complaint procedure. There is a continued commitment to putting things right, we consider the best and most

efficient way to provide a response to the customer. Services are also encouraged to deal with any concerns at the earliest opportunity before concerns become complaints.

- We are beginning to see complaints as a result of the Council's budget reductions and other national external factors. Complaints have been received relating to reductions in service, such as the Council's grass cutting service and from customers who are affected when services have been removed. Complaints increased for the Housing Income Service reflecting the difficult financial times customers are facing. We also saw increases in complaints about damp in Council properties which is partially attributable to fuel poverty. Fuel poverty itself has been exacerbated by welfare benefit reforms such as the spare bedroom subsidy.
- Due to changes introduced by the Localism Act 2011, the Housing Ombudsman can also investigate complaints made against the Council. In addition the Local Government Ombudsman changed the way it categorised its decisions following investigation, they now clearly state if a complaint is upheld or not upheld or whether there is any evidence of maladministration or injustice. The potential of these judgements negatively impacting on the reputation of the Council means that now any complaints where resolution has not been found and could escalate to the Ombudsman are reviewed and considered, managers and the Complaints Team have to be fully satisfied that all possible action has been taken to resolve the complaint.
- We have reduced the amount paid in compensation to customers. Compensation awards can be defined as small payments for low level quantifiable costs identified by customers. In some cases we have also awarded for inconvenience caused. A reason for the reduction is that managers investigating complaints are encouraged to consider other solutions before a financial settlement is offered.
- Complaint investigation costs in Children's Social Services have also decreased, although some costs were carried over into this financial year, this reduction is due to the work to reduce the number of complaints escalating through to Stage 2 of the Complaint Procedure. Improvements to the quality of responses at Stage 1 has led to investigation costs being reduced. It is expected that a further reduction will be evident in 2013-14.

Improvements from Complaints

Complaints are an opportunity for the Council not only to put things right but to improve the service it offers, some of the changes that have been made from complaints are as follows; (full details are in the learning from complaints sections throughout the report)

- The "It's Your move" and bidding process in Housing has been re-engineered
- Replaced all communal facility cupboards with key pads to avoid future delays.
- The allocation process was amended and training given to allocation officers to advise prospective tenants of the presence of asbestos.
- Updated the internet with a list of garage sites, plans, Frequently Asked Question information and application forms to allow greater self-help and reduce avoidable contact.

- Changed the eligibility criteria to access the Memory Café service, we now have flexibility based on capacity, it is open to all on request subject to review every 6 months.
- Briefed all staff, including those working out of hours and reminded them to provide information and advice about the financial assessment process for Adult Social care. We have also looked at what written information is available to customers, including online information.
- Reviewed and made clearer its eligibility criteria for children with disabilities accessing and being assessed for services.
- Amended advice offered to customers, regarding Council Tax, over the phone to set up arrangement to pay where an acceptable level of re-payment has been offered.
- Amended procedure where customers are asked to provide employer details as part of arrangement to pay (Council Tax) and they refuse the call / interaction is take by a Senior Officer and judgement made on the best way forward.

Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

In **Adult Social Services**, **76** complaints were received; this is a reduction from **88** last year and underlines the progress made in responding to customers concerns before they become formal complaints. Satisfaction with adult social care services has also increased, Rotherham has the best satisfaction rates in Yorkshire & Humberside.

Trends in complaints were regarding delays to services and information provided, waiting times for COT assessments and delays processing some social care assessments led to a number of complaints. Customers also made complaints about an absence of information or advice, particularly around the financial assessment process. Learning actions have been taken to address all issues and procedures updated and staff informed.

The front line social work teams completing assessments for customers received the most complaints. Complaints were received if the complainant wanted to challenge the outcome of the assessment, usually relating to the level of care to be provided. Complaints were received in other service areas including, Learning Disabilities – complaints were received about the transportation review, Direct Payments – regarding audits completed and Rothercare – regarding the provision of assistive technology equipment.

In **Housing and Neighbourhood Services** **341** complaints were received. Just over half of all new Stage 1 complaints in the period (**165, 51.72%**) were linked to repair services delivered by the Contract and Service Development Teams, the repairs contractors and the Strategic Housing Investment Team. The most common issues being the delay in repairs, damp and roof leaks, which in part was due to the gales in the third and fourth quarter of the year. Actions, detailed in the report have been put in place to address these issues in 2014-15.

The trends suggest lessons learned and reported in 2012-13 have been applied. Complaints about the repairs contractors have reduced by **12%**. One reason for this is the dramatic reduction of complaints about missed appointments. The next highest number of complaints (**70, 21.94%**) were made about services provided by Housing and Communities, this

represents a drop of almost one fifth on last year. This reduction has been driven by a significant reduction in complaints about the action of staff enforcing tenancy breaches, the figures support the view that officers have improved how they communicate when taking enforcement action.

See appendix 1 for further details

Children and Young Peoples Services

In total **73** formal complaints were received. Complaints were received in relation to communication, customer care, information about action taken and delays in information being provided. The number and type of these complaints are consistent with those received in previous 6 months.

In addition complaints were received relating to decisions made in response to allegations made in respect of children, the sharing of sensitive information with families and concerns raised by young people about other young people which they live with in residential care.

See appendix 2 for further details

Environment and Development Services

The highest number of complaints received related to Streetpride Services and were specifically around services delivered by Network Management where customers complained about the content of standard letters, lack of maintenance of road surfaces and number of pot holes evident across the borough along with lack of feedback received from Streetpride Connect contacts. Complaints were also received relating to Waste Management and problems being experienced with Waste Collections crew re-siting bins in the wrong location and assisted collections being missed. In Leisure and Community Services there are some indications that customers are complaining about Council budget reductions. They received a number of complaints relating to removal of litter bins, lack of litter picking, reduced grass cutting service and removal of toilet facilities at Rosehill Park.

See appendix 3 for further details

Former Resources Directorate

The total number of complaints received for the Former Resources Directorate was **48**, representing a decrease over the last year from **69**. The decrease can be attributed to an improvement in the way that complaints are reported rather than a decline in the standard of service. Improvements in the way that the Council deals with complaints overall has led to a better engagement with services who are able to better identify when a complaint should be responded on a formal basis.

The Revenues and Benefits Service (Benefits Assessment) and Local Taxation received the highest number of complaints. These were mainly regarding advice and information provided by staff.

See appendix 4 for further details

New Developments in 2013-14

The Complaints Team continued to make improvements in complaint handling, continued to make sure that customers receive the best response possible. We continue to look for ways to improve the service to customers, through consultation with managers, staff training, learning from complaints and customer feedback.

We have continued to deliver on previous year on year improvements, including;

- Maintained the highest performance for dealing with complaints ever – 98% in timescale.
- Through learning from complaints reduced the number of complaints for a 5th consecutive year across the Council.
- Reduced number of complaints escalating through the complaint procedure (Stage 2 and Stage 3).
- A better experience for customers making a complaint.
- Improved the learning and service improvement from complaints.
- Improved customer satisfaction, as evidenced in best practice models that exist across the council.
- Procedures strengthened for all complaints to be dealt with and resolved at the earliest opportunity.
- Improved process for filtering out service requests (received by the Complaints Team) at point of contact so that they are dealt with promptly for the customer.
- All complaints continue to be subject to learning from complaint procedures. Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints are subject to special consideration by the services responsible in collaboration with the Complaints Team.
- Service redesign based on complaints and enquiries received, supported by the Complaints Team.
- New reporting framework to Children and Young People's Services Leadership Team and Safeguarding Children and Families Management Team.
- Improved access to the complaints procedure for children in care and children with disabilities.

In addition, the following actions have been completed and embedded in 2013-14;

- Reviewed statutory responsibilities for Children's and Adult Social Care and revised structures accordingly in line with legislative guidance and best practice.
- Strengthened guidance and training around apologising and early resolution to reduce complaints time and costs and ensure that this is embedded into general customer service at front end.
- Reviewed the commissioning of independent investigator and independent person at Stage 2 to reduce costs.
- Reviewed the handling of school complaints
- Introduced new complaint procedure for Housing to accommodate requirements in complaint handling due to the Localism Act 2011.
- New Designated Tenant complaint panel and Designated Person procedures.
- Accommodated complaints received from Public Health Services.
- New webpage for complaints, all new advice and information available.

- New complaint advice literature.
- New Quality Assurance procedure for all MP enquiry responses.
- Outcome of investigations by the Ombudsman Services are subject to a Director led management review.

Finally working with Self Regulation Select Commission we have;

- Reviewed advice to Managers to allow them to better consider requests for compensation.
- Any complaint trends, e.g. any increases in the number or type received, are discussed with managers.
- All complaint processes aligned.
- Complaint webpage refreshed – contact information fully available.
- Review of how commissioned services deal with complaints.
- Continued to work with managers to make sure complaints are resolved as early as possible and we always apologise when appropriate.

2014-15 Improvement Actions

The following improvement actions are ongoing into year 2014-15;

- We will continue to improve learning and service improvement from customer feedback.
- We will review the quality of complaint responses in light of new requirements from dealing with MP Enquiries and Local Government Ombudsman enquiries.
- All customer responses (all Directorates) will be quality assured to reduce the number of complaints escalating through the complaint procedure.
- Specific training and feedback will be provided to staff to further improve the quality of investigation and response.
- All Ombudsman decisions will be considered for learning and improvement.
- We will continue to strengthen guidance and training around apologising and early resolution to reduce complaints time and costs and ensure that this is embedded into general customer service at front end.
- Publish performance with regards to complaints to customers including learning and improved outcomes.
- Put in place a consistent training programme for all investigating officers and Members.
- Develop an online mandatory complaints handling training package for all staff and managers.
- The Complaints Team will review how it performance manages the e-case surgery system to ensure best value and it can manage an anticipated increase in usage of the system.

Appendix 1 Directorate Performance in 2013-14

Neighbourhood and Adult Services

Neighbourhood and Adult Services Directorate complaints are split into statutory (Adult Services) and non statutory complaints (Housing and Neighbourhood Services). As of this year complaints for Public Health have also been reported under this Directorate.

The combined results for the whole Directorate are as follows;

The total number of complaints received for Neighbourhood and Adult Services was 417 (Total received in 2012-13 – 413)

Overall 100% of all complaints were responded to within the timescales, compared to 100% in 2012-13.

↓	Total number of complaints upheld was 128 . (177 in 2012-13)
↑	Number of complaints escalating: - 29 Stage 1 complaints escalated to Stage 2. (25 in 2012-13)
↓	£915 compensation payments. (£1240 in 2012-13)
↑	Number of Councillor Surgeries received was 340 . (261 in 2012-13)
↓	Number of Compliments received was 373 . (450 in 2012-13)
↓	Number of informal complaints 245 . (377 in 2011-12)

Adult Services

Adult Services Complaints are dealt with under a separate complaint procedure, the complaints and representations procedures established through the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 (Making Experiences Count).

Over the last 12 months the total number of complaints received for Adult Social Services was 76 (Total received in 2012-13 - 88)

Overall 100% of all complaints were responded to within the statutory timescales. This performance again benchmarks the best against the regional Yorkshire and Humberside Local Authority complaints group based on numbers received (15 Local Authority areas).

Headline Results 2013-14

↓	Number of complaints, 76 , decrease from 88 received 2012-13.
↑	The proportion of complaints (at all stages) upheld, 24 , increase from 16 upheld in 2012-13.
↓	The number of complaints escalating, 11% , 8 Stage 1 complaints escalating to Stage 2, from 67 Stage 1 complaints. Decrease from 12% in 2011-12. (9 Stage 2 complaints and 75 Stage 1 complaints)
↓	Complaints about quality of service, 30 , decrease from 52 received in 2012-13.
↓	Complaints about actions of staff 20 , decrease from 23 in 2012-13.

↔	1 Upheld Ombudsman complaint from 6 decisions
↔	Total compensation awards made £0, £0 in 2012-13.
↓	External complaint investigation costs, £0
↑	Number of Councillor Surgery's received was 16, increase from 15 in 2012-13.
↓	Number of Compliments received was 118, decrease from 147 in 2012-13.
↓	Number of informal complaints received, 38, decrease from 40 received in 2012-13.

Adult Social Services has maintained the recent significant improvements in the following areas:

- Reduced the number of complaints received.
- Reduced the number of complaints escalating through the complaint procedure.
- Maintained performance at 100%.
- Promoting and increasing accessibility of the complaints procedure through the development of new internet pages, SMS, and new advice leaflets.
- Learning from complaints – all complaints interrogated for learning.
- No compensation paid.

Top complaint issues

Complaints in Adult Social Services reflect the range of services offered by the Directorate. Common themes in terms of the types of complaints received were regarding information and delay.

Customers complained over delays in assessment, both in terms of social care and Occupational Therapy assessments. The **Occupational Therapy Service** received complaints around waiting times for assessments but in Social Care complaints were regarding issues specific to individual teams and Social Workers, about how successfully cases are managed by individuals and teams. In response work was completed to address any individual problems and the service as a whole has looked at ways to improve its case management procedures.

Absence of information provided to customers also generated complaints, customers complained if they were not given enough information about their care arrangements or about the financial assessment process. Again learning from complaints has considered the type and level of information that it provided.

In terms of the service areas in Adult Social Care, the services dealing with the largest number of customers, **Assessment and Care Management** has dealt with the majority of complaints. These were mostly regarding the outcome of care assessments. Customers complained if they felt that the level of care was not adequate to meet their needs or that they felt that the type of care offered was not appropriate, for example complaints were received if a family felt that their family member required residential care rather than community care.

Complaints were received by the **Safeguarding Service**; both perpetrators and victims family's raised concerns about the outcome of the process. Complaints will always centre on the outcome of the procedures. Although the complaint procedure will not consider complaints about the outcome, it will consider complaints about how the outcome is reached and if safeguarding procedures have been followed. Out of the 7 complaints received only one was from a perpetrator, a care provider with concerns about a contract default notice that had been

served. The other complaints were raised by family members of victims, two complaints about how they felt they had been dealt with throughout the process and three complaints about how the safeguarding investigation had been conducted and what information had been considered.

The **Learning Disabilities Service** received complaints regarding the transportation review; family members raised concerns about the outcome of the assessments under the review. This is further evidence that changes to services due to financial pressures are generating complaints.

Finally, complaints were received regarding **Assistive Technology**, this is a relatively new service offered by the Council and as such had not received complaints previously. Complaints were received as more equipment is made available to customers and more services are provided reflecting the demand for its services. The complaints were regarding delays in assessment for equipment, which have now been addressed.

Councillor Surgeries

16 Councillor Surgery enquiries were received regarding Adult Social Care Services (**15** in 2012/13). They were in the main requests for Occupational Therapy assessments, usually relating to access to properties. Other requests were received asking for social care assessments to be completed. These were all directed to appropriate channels and the request completed.

Compliments

118 compliments were received regarding Adult Social Care Services, some examples are as follows;

Compliment for the **Community Occupational Therapy Service** "Nothing needs to be changed as far as I am concerned. She was a lovely person, very efficient and I can't believe how quickly work was carried out".

Compliment for the **Assessment Team** "Passion and professionalism that restores faith in this much needed service. She is such a friendly, but professional and sensitive person".

Compliments for **Enabling Service** "Very satisfied – helped me to get on my feet again. Thank you very much." "The service you all gave was amazing - we were so very grateful. Please pass on my thanks". "Very pleased with the care I received".

Compliment for **Unplanned Review Team** "for responding promptly and efficiently in arranging respite care".

Compliment for **Davis Court** "Just wanted to say a massive thank you for the care and support received".

Compliment for the **Planned Review Team**. "Thanks for all your help in facilitating the smooth transition of care and respite to new providers".

Housing and Neighbourhood Services

Housing and Neighbourhood Services' complaints are dealt with under the Council's Corporate Complaint Procedure.

Over the last 12 months the total number of complaints received for Housing and Neighbourhood Services was 341 (Total received in 2012-13 - 325)

Overall 100% of all complaints were responded to within the statutory timescales

There was a **5%** increase in the number of complaints, although **35%** fewer of these were fully upheld than last year. The quality of complaint investigation and resolution continues to improve with only one case progressing to stage three of the complaints procedure and no full investigations being conducted by either the Local Government Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman Service.

Headline Results 2013-14

↑	Number of complaints (at all levels) was 341 representing a comparative 5% increase on the 325 received in 2012-13.
↑	319 New (stage 1) complaints were received representing a comparative 5% increase on the 305 received in 2012-13.
↓	The total number of complaints fully upheld was 104 representing a comparative 35% reduction on the 161 upheld in 2012-13.
↑	21 complaints escalated from stage 1 to stage 2 compared to 16 received in 2012-13.
↓	1 was escalated from stage 2 to stage 3 compared to 3 received in 2012-13.
↓	Complaints about lack of service decreased from 85 in 2012-13 to 45 a 47 % reduction.
↓	Complaints about delays in service decreased from 48 in 2012-13 to 43 a 6% reduction.
↓	Complaints about actions of staff decreased from 72 in 2012-13 to 59 an 18% reduction.
↑	There were 160 new complaints about the quality of service representing a 74 % increase on the 92 received in 2012-13.
↓	There were 2 complaints about the lack of information compared to 3 in 2012-13.
↑	There were 10 complaints about the cost of the service compared to 2 in 2012-13.
↓	£915 in compensation awards made, compared to £1,240 in 2012-13.
↓	207 informal complaints were received in the period, representing a significant reduction on the 337 received in 2012-13.
↔	No Ombudsman investigations were received. None received in 2012-13.
↑	Number of Service Requests received was 434 , increase from 300 in 2012-13.
↑	Number of Councillor Surgeries received through the e-casework system was 324 , increase from 246 received in 2012-13.
↓	Number of Compliments received was 250 , decrease from 303 in 2012-13.

The number of complaints has risen by **5%** and responded to in an average of **7.28** days. Although the number of complaints have slightly increased fewer have been fully upheld at stage 1 and although there was an increase in complaints reaching stage 2, only **5** were upheld. Only one customer wished to progress to stage three and this was a case held over from 2012-13, the case was not upheld by the Complaints Panel. The figures suggest an improvement in case handling, this view is supported by the fact the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) or Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) did not fully investigate a single complaint about the service for a second successive year.

Although the number of complaints have slightly increased fewer have been fully upheld.

Top complaint issues

Table 1 Complaints by Service Area

Service Area	Stage 1 *Complaints	% of total complaints
Contract & Service Development Team	85 – (81)	26.65%
Contractors	57 – (66)	17.86%
Housing & Communities	70 – (86)	21.94%
Housing Options	40 – (36)	12.54%
Safer Neighbourhoods	16 -- (14)	5.02%
Strategic Housing Investment	23 – (14)	7.21%
Business Regulation	3 -- (3)	0.94%
Housing Finance	16 -- (3)	5.02%
CSC/Connect	9 -- (2)	2.82%
Total	319 – (305)	100%

***2012/3 complaint numbers are in the brackets**

An improving trend has been shown by the 12% reduction in complaints received about Willmott Dixon Partnership and Mears the Council's two repairs and maintenance contractors. This continues the year on year reduction in the number of complaints about the contractors and the use of "tool box talks" to promote service improvements to the workforce. It is noticeable that the number of complaints about missed appointments has dramatically reduced.

Similarly complaints about the Housing and Communities department are down 19% with a noticeable reduction regarding complaints about the actions of staff. The department deals with issues such as breaches of the Council's tenancy agreement and anti-social behaviour, the reduction may reflect lessons learned about conflict management.

Complaints about Housing Income are up from a small number in 2012-13. The complaints do not appear to reflect a deterioration of service; issues raised include rent arrears and service charges and in all probability reflect the difficult financial times customers are facing. The service will monitor complaints to identify any trend and service improvements.

Complaints about the Strategic Housing Investment Team have increased, again from a small number. There is no immediate identifiable trend, although the most common complaint was a result of contractor's actions/damage.

The service has treated every complaint as a learning opportunity and has sought to improve the service and customer experience by again targeting improvements in those areas of highest volume of complaints.

Analysis of complaints by service and type has continued to inform service improvements helping the directorate make decisions to realign resources. The following are examples of how the service has been realigned.

Complaints about condensation related damp

The year saw a trend of complaints and service requests about damp, in the vast majority of cases the damp proved to be condensation rather than rising or penetrating damp caused by disrepair. The increase in this type of complaint has locally and nationally been attributed to fuel poverty which has been exacerbated by welfare benefit reforms such as the spare bedroom subsidy or "Bedroom Tax".

Traditionally condensation has been treated as a "lifestyle" issue and tackled through education. However learning from complaints and assessing the growing impact of fuel poverty has informed a new approach for 2014-15. This has culminated in the use of specialist Condensation Company to recommend and advise the Council on ventilation solutions it could implement rather than advise customers who may not have the capacity to adequately heat their homes. The outcome will help minimise condensation and its impact on tenant's health and help sustain the Councils stock.

Empty Homes

There were a number of complaints about the standard of empty homes let resulting in a reorganisation and the team being brought within the Contract and Service Development Team in the last quarter of 2013-14. This has resulted in increased monitoring of the contractors by Contract and Service Development officers and a holistic approach to empty homes, which looks beyond the letting of the property. It is anticipated this approach will see a reduction in complaints about empty homes in 2014-15.

As an example the Contract and Service Delivery Team have addressed the issue of gas and electricity services not being connected when the property is let by forming a partnership with British Gas, which commenced on the 1 April 2014. This means the contractors have gas and electricity available to complete necessary tests before the customer moves in and avoids lengthy delays the customer may experience when arranging for the utilities to connect the service.

Gale damage and roof leaks

A succession of gales at the end of the third quarter and beginning of the fourth quarter of 2013-14 and persistent rain caused a significant number of complaints about delays completing repairs as the contractors and their sub-contractors were faced with batches of hundreds of additional roof repairs generated over a short period of time. The volume of additional repairs resulted in lengthy delays before some repairs were completed.

Learning from the gales the Contract and Service Development Team, has changed its practice and if faced with severe gales in the future, will inspect and prioritise all gale damage and refer through to the contractors in a prioritised order. This will not impact on the overall time to complete all jobs but will ensure that gale damage affecting the Council's property

causing most disturbance to customers will be prioritised and dealt with as soon as reasonably possible.

Access to Key Choices

Customers were experiencing significant telephone delays after they have been transferred to the Property Shop. To address this the following action was taken resulting in improved access and no further complaints about delays have been received.

- The available resources to respond to calls was improved by
 - Reviewing officers skill sets and ensuring greater generic working.
 - Call patterns monitored and resources more effectively targeted.
 - Officers will receive refresher training on the use of the CC6 system.
 - Call handling and wrap up times will be emphasised in 1-2-1's to ensure quality and efficiency.
- The dedicated bidding line was changed so that callers only have to make one call and more calls go direct to the call handlers.
- A green, amber and red system was introduced, to warn of impending service failure on response time and allow managers to intervene. Arrangements were put in place to ensure if the average response nears the service standard then the Call Centre Manager will ensure that calls will be taken by the Contact Centre and arrange for the Allocation Team to phone back when the number of calls reaches a more manageable level.

Councillor Surgeries

Service Area	Number of Surgeries
Contract & Service Development	122
Housing & Communities	100
Housing Options	58
Safer Neighbourhoods	28
Strategic Housing Services	10
Housing Finance	3
Business regulation	2
Repairs connect	1
Total	324

324 Councillor enquiries were received via the Council's e-case surgery system in 2013-14 a rise of a quarter from the 246 reported in 2012-13. Approximately 90% of these related to services received by existing or perspective council tenants. Repair issues comprised almost half (**152**) of all enquiries, the issues being most commonly repair request, damp, leaks, perceived repair delays and gates and fencing. The next highest number of enquiries received were those received regarding neighbourhood management issues (**85**) the dominant issues being raised were tenancy management (**38**) ASB/nuisance (**26**) and grounds maintenance/estate services related issues such as trees and hedges (**21**).

The Housing Options service received the third highest number of enquires (**51**) with almost all relating to customers request for re-housing.

It should be noted the figures are based on enquiries received through the e-case surgery system and do not include any enquiries sent direct to officers.

Compliments

250 compliments were received regarding Housing and Neighbourhood Services, some examples are as follows;

Compliment for Nicola Bratley, **Furniture Solutions Team** "big thank you to you and your team, many thanks and I will spread the word about your amazing service, the men were brilliant polite and helpful nothing was too much trouble for them."

Compliment for **Housing Options**, Barry Senior, "he was very caring and understanding of my application. Barry was really helpful he deserves an email of praise and is a credit to your team".

Compliment for Steph Lowrie, **Rotherham South** "both the new tenant and her mum praised how thorough you had been during the IYM meeting and how knowledgeable you were when answering their questions. They were very pleased with the meeting and spoke very highly of you".

Compliment for **Morrison FS** "Stewart and Dan and all the work lads who have helped. Thank you so much you have given me freedom in my house."

Compliment for **Willmott Dixon** "very friendly efficient and very clean workers... from my experience all your workmen have been absolutely brilliant... and are welcome in for a cuppa anytime".

Compliment for Linda Hopkins, **Community Protection Unit**, "I would like to thank you for your prompt attention you have given to the problem we had with dog fouling in our street. As promised the signs were put up and they seem to have done the trick. Please pass on my thanks to the team responsible FULL MARKS".

Compliment for **Aid and Adaptations Team** "Thank you very much". "Everybody I spoke to on the phone or personally was pleasant and obliging and thanks a lot." "Very happy with all of the Adaptations Team and workmen, thank you." "Would not change a thing, everything excellent. "Very good." "I would leave you as you are perfect. Thank you very, very much."

Public Health

No formal complaints were received

1 enquiry from a MP was received – regarding the changes to the Ministry of Food.

5 Compliments were received;

- "Big thank you to you all for making my filming session into a wonderful experience (I had really been dreading it) by putting me at ease and reassuring me throughout that it was going well."

- “Thanks to everyone who gave up their time to host us last week.”
- Compliment in support of Local Chronicle Award Application (Heart Town Project)
- “Thanks for all your help and support in trying to reduce crime in the Rotherham area.”
- “Massive thank you from all of us. The films are fantastic – the quality and content is superb and they really do the nominees justice. It has been a real pleasure to work with you.”

Learning from complaints

1. A customer complained they had come top in the bidding for a property which was then let to another applicant after they failed to attend an "It's Your Move" interview. The interviewing officer was adamant messages were left on the customer's phone and the customer claims not to have received them.

In response to their concerns we have;

- The "Its Your move" and bidding process has been re-engineered to provide a written auditable trail to ensure there is adequate written, auditable notice of the "Its Your Move" process and consequence of failure to attend. This will mean customers do not miss out on the home of their choice and the Council is protected from any liability and reputational damage.

2. Several customers complained about distress caused by the annual rent increase letter for garages, which includes a Notice to Quit on the rear. The wording of the annual garage rent increase letter has not changed for many years, the letter in effect says in a very formal way if the customer does not wish to pay the new rent the garage licence can be brought to an end.

In response to their concerns we are;

- Removing the Notice to Quit from the 2015-16 letter because there is no reasonable reason to include the Notice to Quit because there is effective monitoring in place and garage licences can be brought to an end swiftly if there are breaches of the licence.
- Replacing all communal facility cupboards with key pads to avoid future delays.

3. A new tenant complained about an asbestos garage, the garage should have been removed prior to letting. The complaint raised the issue of new lettings and the notification of asbestos.

In response to this problem;

- A report was designed to extract information from APEX and put it into a standard easy to read letter for new tenants identifying the type and location and level of risk of asbestos in each room.
- An easy to read advice leaflet was designed to reassure customers.
- The allocation process was amended and training given to allocation officers to advise prospective tenants of the presence of asbestos.

4. A number of complaints were made about missed appointments at the start of the year for jobs which a contractor was adamant none had been made. The issue affected those jobs where no appointment dates has been made such as variation orders where the contractor was reasonably awaiting materials and cannot make an appointment until they arrive.

In response;

- The Complaints Team investigated and identified the last date of the Contractors planning period was translating as the appointment date on ROCC, resulting in the tenants being given false appointment dates by Rotherham Connect call handlers when they have looked on ROCC. The cause was identified by examining how the two IT systems used by RMBC and the contractor interface. The Contract and Service Development Team have altered ROCC's tolerances to ensure the end of the planning period cannot now appear on ROCC as an appointment.

5. A complaint was received regarding the poor standard of advice and information on the location, availability and applications for Council garages.

In response to the complaints concerns we have;

- Placed plans and support information on the intranet to help call centre staff more adequately respond to service requests.
- Updated the internet with a list of sites, plans, Frequently Asked Questions information and application forms to allow greater self-help and reduce avoidable contact.

Learning from complaints – continued

6. Customer complained that their family member could not use the Memory Café service, as she was in residential care.

In response to their concerns we;

- Changed the eligibility criteria to access the service, we now have flexibility based on capacity, it is open to all on request subject to review every 6 months.

7. Customer not given any information regarding the financial assessment process and possible charges for care following the end of the 6 week enablement period.

In response to their concerns we have;

- Briefed all staff, including those working out of hours and reminded them to provide information and advice about the financial assessment process. We have also looked at what written information is available to customers, including online information.

New Developments during 2013-14

- Complaints have reduced as work around putting things right at the earliest opportunity continues to impact on the way we respond to customers concerns.
- All complaints continue to be subject to learning from complaint procedures. Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints are subject to special consideration by the services responsible in collaboration with the Complaints Team.
- Outcome of investigations by the Ombudsman Services are subject to a Director led management review.
- New Housing complaint procedure has been agreed and implemented, all Housing complaints are subject to a two stage process. New information and advice is available to customers, in writing and on line.
- Information and advice relating to Adult Services complaints was reviewed and has been refreshed, new information is available on line in writing.
- The Complaints Team met with the Housing Ombudsman in November 2013 to understand its approach to complaints and trends of complaints received by other social landlords.
- The Empty Homes Team were brought within the Contract and Service Development division; this has improved the service by giving access to quality assurance officers in the Contract and Service Development Team. It has also overcome silo working and promoted a more holistic approach, not least because repair issues arising from the letting of properties will have to be addressed within the division, meaning there is a greater incentive to get it right first time.
- Analysis of service requests received by the Complaints Team was used to help redesign the Council's website to improve access to services. This has improved access by creating clear direct access to individual services on the website. It has also improved the Complaints Team's efficiency because it no longer has to process and forward on large numbers of service requests such as reports of neighbour nuisance.
- The layout of the Property Shop was redesigned to improve the confidentiality of interviews following a complaint.

2014-15 Improvement Actions

- Analysis of complaints by service and type will continue to inform service improvements and the Complaints Team's focus. The Service will monitor the implementation of improvement plans generated by individual complaints.
- Continue to reduce the numbers of complaints received and to reduce the number of complaints escalating through the complaint procedure.
- Continue to analyse complaints by service and type will continue to inform service improvements.
- Work with Rotherfed to assist with the creation of a Tenant Complaint Panel in Rotherham.
- Work with Members and MP's to allow them to maintain their role as Designated Persons in Housing complaints.
- E-learning package for complaints handling and investigation will be developed for all staff and managers.
- Focus on improving the quality of Stage 1 complaint investigation and responses to drive service improvements and customer satisfaction.
- The Complaints Team will work closely with the CIVICA implementation manager to ensure the complaints investigation maximises the opportunities offered by the implementation of CIVICA.
- The Complaints Team will continue to identify service sector best practice by attending the Housemark Complaints benchmarking group to aid service improvements
- The Complaints Team will review how it performance manages the e-case surgery system to ensure best value and it can manage an anticipated increase in usage of the system within existing reducing resources.

Appendix 2 Directorate Performance in 2013-14

Children and Young People Services

Children and Young People's Services complaints are responded to in accordance to The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

The Service records customers and complaint points as is required under their regulations.

The total number of complaints received was 73. (76 received in 2012-13)

Overall 77% of all complaints were responded to within the statutory timescales, compared to 84% (2012-13).

A total of 16 complaints were responded to out of timescale. The reason for complaints been dealt with over time were in the main due to the complexity of complaint investigations and the availability of key persons relevant to the investigation. Unfortunately, some complaints were also responded to out of time due to a failure in business continuity and business planning.

At all times customers were kept informed of the delay and were offered an unreserved apology. The complaint team will work with all managers to increase the number of complaints responded to in timescale and improvement actions have been implemented.

Headline Results 2013-14

↑	Number of school complaint enquiries, 107 . Increased from 81 in 2012-13.
↓	Number of enquiries from MPs, 18 . Decreased from 23 in 2012-13.
↓	Number of enquiries from Local Government Ombudsman, 8, 1 Upheld . Decreased from 14, 8 Upheld in 2012-13.
↓	Number of complaints at all levels, 73 . Decreased from 76 in 2012-13.
↑	Number of Stage 1 complaints, 70 . Increased from 68 in 2012-13.
↓	Number of Stage 2 complaints, 3 . Decreased from 6 in 2012-13.
↓	Number of Stage 3 complaints, 0 . Decreased from 2 in 2012-13.
↑	Number of complaints escalating from Stage 1 to Stage 2, 3, 4% . Increased from 6, 9% in 2012-13.
↓	Number of complaints upheld at all levels, 24, 34% . Decreased from 38% in 2012-13.
↓	Percentage of complaints at all levels responded to in timescales, 77% . Decreased from 83% in 2012-13.
↓	External complaint investigation costs, £19,494 . Decreased from £22,039 in 2012-13.
↑	Number of Councillor Surgery enquiries 5 . Increased from 2 in 2012-13.
↓	Number of informal complaints received, 108 . Decreased from 119 in 2012-13.
↑	Number of compliments received 133 . 31 received in 2012-13.
↑	Total compensation paid £250 . Increased from no compensation paid in 2012-13.
↑	Complaints about quality of service, 42 , increase from 35 received in 2012-13.
↑	Complaints about actions of staff, 22 , increase from 20 received in 2012-13.

Top complaint issues

Content and timeliness of assessments and reports

Customers raised complaints about Initial and Core Assessments, Case Conference Reports and Court Welfare Reports.

Customers are entitled and encouraged to share their views with the relevant social worker as part of the assessment and child in need or child protection process and their views can be recorded in the appropriate section of the assessment. However, complaints about court reports are not considered via the complaints procedure and customers are advised to discuss their concerns with their legal representative.

Communication and Customer Service

Complaints about phone calls not being returned or customers being unable to contact members of staff account for a significant proportion of all complaints received, particularly in relation to Children's Social care. These types of complaints rarely form the basis of a complaint and tend to be raised supplementary to the customer's main issues which they have complained about.

Actions, Conduct and Professionalism of Staff

Complaints are usually made in addition to the customers main complaint issues. In most cases there is little evidence to support or disprove the complaint being made as the customer has raised concerns about the way verbal information has provided to them or the attitude of the member of staff.

Sharing of sensitive information

A small number of complaints were regarding the information shared about the complainant, with other persons.

There are specific exceptions in law for information to be shared when it relates to the protection of a child.

Response to referrals

A small number of complaints were regarding the decisions made in response to allegations received concerning the welfare of children. These complaints are usually made if the complainants believes either that the allegations are malicious and the Council should not have taken any action; or that the Council has not acted on information given and therefore has not taken concerns seriously from the point of view of the complainant.

Actions of other young people in Children's Homes

A number of complaints were received by young people about the disruption and emotional impact resulting from the behaviour of other young people who they live with in residential units.

School Complaints

School complaints cover a diverse range of issues which include:

- Bullying by pupils

- Actions, conduct and professionalism of the head teacher and other school staff
- Complaints from parents of pupils who have been excluded from school
- Pupil attendance issues
- School uniform issues
- Examination issues

Councillor Surgeries

6 Councillor Surgery enquiries were received, they were regarding various issues relating to both children's social care and schools and education services.

Compliments

133 compliments were received regarding Children's Social Care Services, some examples are as follows;

"[Social Worker] made her feel very comfortable and didn't judge the situation. She was helpful and friendly and was very good with my son." – Compliment from parent about the support received from a social worker.

"The Portage Service was only actively involved with us for about 6 months, but their devotion and achievements were beyond beliefs or our anticipations and could only wish that their services were accessible well beyond their remit." – Compliment from parent whose child received support from the Portage Service.

".... has been a light within for us during this long process, especially when we were in the darkness....She has been incredibly dedicated and has seen us through the complicated adoption process of the....boys." – Compliment from Parents regarding the level of support received during the adoption process.

"...would like to say a big thank you to all the Social Workers, the Management and all the Fostering Team for all the help and support she had received during her years as a Foster Carer." – Compliment from Foster Carer.

Learning from complaints

1. Customers complained that they had not received Residence Order Allowance for a child in their care despite them having submitted all the information required for the final assessment. Customers were unhappy about how long it had taken to process their application for Residence Order Allowance.

Immediate steps were taken to ensure that the application for Residence Order Allowance was completed without further delay.

In response to a number of customers' concerns we have;

- Reviewed all previous complaints made about applications for Residence Order Allowance and Special Guardianship Allowance.
- The Local Authority is currently undertaking a review of the process in consultation with staff to address the issues that cause delay in the process.

2. A customer complained to the Local Government Ombudsman that the Council had taken too long to arrange an assessment of their child's needs and too long to deal with their complaint.

The Local Government Ombudsman acknowledged that the Council had now completed an assessment of the child's needs and had completed consideration of their complaint. The Council apologised for the delays and recognised the injustice this caused by making a payment to the complainant.

In response to this complaint the Council has:

- Reviewed and made clearer its eligibility criteria for children with disabilities accessing and being assessed for services.
- Reviewed and revised the procedure for dealing with complaints at Stage 2 of the complaints procedure.

New Developments 2013-14

- Introduction of a new reporting framework including monthly reporting to Children and Young People's Services Leadership Team and Safeguarding Children and Families Management Team.
- Re-focus on performance management of complaints at all stages.
- Introduction of new performance management process for Stage 2 Complaints to ensure that complaints are handled within timescales.
- Introduction of quality checks on response letters.
- Review of process for capturing learning from customers.
- Introduction of process to capture feedback from people who receive a service from children's social care; including capturing compliments and complaints.

2014-15 Improvement Actions

- Continue to reduce the number of complaints dealt with through the formal complaints process by working with teams to take immediate actions to put things right at the earliest opportunity and achieving resolution for our customers.
- Implement new process for capturing and reporting learning from complaints.
- Training scheduled to be delivered to managers in October/November 2014 focussing on response and resolution at Stage 1; to improve the quality and effectiveness of Stage 1 complaints process.
- Re-introduce processes to capture the satisfaction of customers with the complaints handling process.
- Improve access to the complaints procedure for children in care and children with disabilities by improving the quality of information provided to them and opportunities to tell us their views.
- All complaints responded to out of time are reported to DLT on a monthly basis. Managers are asked to provide reasons for the delay in response.

Appendix 3 Directorate Performance in 2013-14

Environment and Development Services

Environment and Development Services' complaints are dealt with under the Council's Corporate Complaint's Procedure, Tell Us Your Views.

Over the last 12 months the total number of complaints received was **113**. This represents a slight increase over the last year from **110** to **113**. However **391** informal complaints have also been received.

Overall **99%** of all complaints were responded to within timescales. Only one complaint was dealt with out of time which was due to an administration problem when the complaint was received. The customer was offered a full apology.

Headline Results 2013-14

↑	Number of complaints (at all levels) increased from 110 in 2012-13 to 113
↓	Complaints regarding Streetpride 59, 52% (2012-13, 64, 58%)
↑	Complaints regarding Planning, Regeneration & Cultural Services 49, 43% (2012-13, 46, 42%)
↓	Total number of complaints upheld was 29, 26% (2012-13, 42, 38%)
↓	A slight decrease in the number of complaints escalating has been seen:- From 14 in 2012-13 to 13 for Stage 1 complaints escalating to Stage 2 in 2013-14
↓	Complaints about quality of service decreased to 53, 47% (2012-2013, 67, 61%)
↓	Complaints about actions of staff reduced to 14, 13% (2011-2012, 32, 28%)
↑	Three compensation awards were made, in total £548.50 . Increased from £93.40 in 2012-13.
↑	1 Ombudsman investigation upheld from 16 enquiries. 12 received in 2012-13 None Upheld.
↑	Number of Councillor Surgeries received was 361 , increase from 303 in 2012-13.
↑	Number of Compliments received was 249 . <i>The majority of compliments (123) received related to Leisure & Community Services and the wild flower displays along the central reservations into the town centre.</i> Increase from 224 received in 2012-13.
↓	Number of informal complaints decreased to 391 . In 2012-13 578 were received.

Environment and Development Services has maintained the recent significant improvements in the following areas:

- Improving the timeliness of responses to customers
- Improving the quality of responses to customers
- Improving satisfaction of the complaint management process
- Learning from all Complaints to identify service improvements

Top complaint issues

Streetpride

The highest number of complaints received related to Streetpride Services and were specifically around services delivered by Network Management in relation to the conduct and service provided by Civil Enforcement Officers within the Council's Parking Services Team. Other complaints received related to the condition of the roads and footpaths around the borough and increased problems with parking on grass verges.

Leisure and Community Services received a number of complaints relating to removal of litter bins, lack of litter picking, reduced grass cutting service, advice offered relating to tree survey's and removal of toilet facilities at Rosehill Park.

Waste Management received complaints relating to lack of response to reports of missed bin/box collections and attitude of staff at a Household Waste Recycling Site.

Planning, Regeneration Cultural & Customer Services

Complaints were received around the service offered by Cultural and Customer Services specifically relating to advice offered to customers and waiting times across some of our Customer Service Centres.

Example complaints;

Complaint - Customer complained about the lack of payment facility at Aston CSC over lunchtime period

Resolution – Introduce a back-up procedure for taking payments. This has been fully communicated to the staff at Aston to eliminate the lunchtime pressure point. Cash payment machine installed which will be available for customers to use mid-October 2013

Complaint - Customer complained about the delay in seeing an adviser whilst visiting Riverside House

Resolution – Apology offered for the fact that a delay occurred and the customer wasn't advised that they could make an appointment without having to join a queue and wait. Staff reminded of need to offer appointments to customers. Customer also advised that to try and reduce the waiting times we are making every effort to make customers aware of all the channels that can be accessed to make contact with the council: online, phone and using locality sites. We are hopeful that this will alleviate some of the pressures faced at Riverside House.

Complaints were also received relating to services offered by the Planning Service specifically around advice offered to customers and perceived procedural failures.

Councillors Surgeries

361 enquiries were received in the last year. The highest number out of all Council Directorates, (**324** received in Housing and Neighbourhood Services). The vast majority being related to services delivered by Streetpride primarily Network Management (**87**) and Leisure and Community Services (**95**).

Issues related to Leisure and Community Services were concerning, nuisance motorcycles, overgrown footpaths, overhanging trees, tree pruning, grass cutting, additional dog bins, accumulation of leaves, accumulation of weeds and litter. Issues relating to Network Management Service were trees overhanging the highway, potholes, on street parking problems, street lighting, parking on grass verges, drainage problems and footpath repairs.

Enquiries were also received relating to the Highway Design and Transportation Service (**32**) regarding road markings, parking regulations/enforcement and parking problems around schools. Waste Management Service (**6**) received enquiries relating to missed collections and bulky item collections.

Compliments

249 compliments were received regarding EDS, some examples are as follows;

Leisure and Community Services

Over **120** individual compliments were received relating to the wild flower display planted in the central reservations across the borough.

- Following successful litter pick Golden Smithies Lane is considerably improved.
- Clean-up on Eldon Road Playing Fields, Eastwood – Thank you.
- Customer called to thank the Council for cutting the hedges near to her property. She now doesn't have to take her life in her hands to cross the road.
- Good job done when carrying out grass cutting work.

Network Management

- Restored faith in the Council as a verge repair was carried out quickly.
- Compliment received regarding the speed/efficiency of carrying out a street lighting repair.
- Thank you to the Drainage Team who quickly attended to a blocked gully in Wentworth.
- Thank you to the Parking Services Team for cancelling a Penalty Charge Notice.

- Compliment received relating to the road improvements taking place near the bus station – Drummond Street/Centenary Way – Should have been done a long time ago.
- Thanks to the workforce on Doncaster Road – “They were courteous, helpful and really good.”
- They helped in car parking, crossing the road and aiding the elderly who walked through the works”.

Waste Management

- Mrs Ellis says the staff at Warren Vale recycling site are always very helpful and cheerful and always smiling.
- Mrs Pearson called to say “Thank you to Mandy” for arranging for the fly tipping to be removed so promptly.
- Compliment to the Waste Management Crew – “They do a wonderful job” - They are always polite and happy and go out of their way to help.
- Child Minder called to thank the Waste Management Crew – “Overwhelmed with the crew. The crew waved through the window to the boys she looks after and then showed them the empty bin”.
- Compliment to the staff at Magilla Recycling Site – “They are always helpful and polite. Today they have excelled themselves. Two members of staff were a great help in taking items off me to recycle in the correct skips without me asking. I am sure they have the same attitude to all the users of the centre and they should be congratulated on their friendliness, helpfulness and making a trip to the recycling site much less of a chore”.
- “Thank you to Rotherham and your department for another impeccable year of local services.”

Customer and Cultural Services

- “Rotherham Registrars has been fantastic and offers an excellent service in comparison to other Councils.”
- “Thank you for Sue Hartley - very knowledgeable and with great customer care skills.”
- “Thank you for the professional and empathetic way you treated me after my father’s death.”
- “Congratulations to Lisa and team - brilliant evening event with crime novelist.”
- “Tom Gray is such a polite, friendly, knowledgeable, funny young man and a credit to your service. He is also very willing and hardworking. Tell him thank you for all he does.”

- “Excellent customer service shown at Rawmarsh CSC by Julie (officer23).”
- “Registrars staff were so kind when she telephoned – Wanted to say a big thank you to all concerned.”

Planning Service

- Compliment regarding Planning Process – AMP/Waverley

Building Control

- “Thank you for help and advice shown by Phil Muffett.”

Regeneration Service

- “Tim O’Connell - Thank you for dealing with my complaint so swiftly - it is appreciated
Congratulations on the Town Centre.”

Learning from complaints

1. A customer complained that they were wrongly advised by a switchboard operator how many people were in the queue to speak to a Streetpride operator.

In response to their concerns we have;

- Apologised to the customer for the operator not transferring the call correctly, review internal procedures for dealing with this situation in the future and re-trained staff.

2. A customer complained that he had made 4 separate reports to Streetpride Connect about vehicles driving over grass verges but had received no response and increasing damage was being caused to the verges.

In response to their concerns we have;

- Apologised to the customer, reminded the Highway Inspectors of need to provide feedback to customers in a timely manner.
- Communicated with all households on the road reminding them that it is an offence to drive over verges to access driveways and advised that enforcement action could be taken.

New Developments 2013-14

- EDS Directorate Management Team receives a monthly performance report which identifies all new customer complaints received along with service improvement opportunities to reduce the likelihood of similar complaints being received in the future.

2014-15 Improvement Actions

- Environment and Development Services will continue to assist the service to make service improvements based on the outcomes of the complaints received and on what our customers have told us are their main concerns.
- The Directorate lead will work with management and staff to improve customer care around; information and advice, seek to continue to reduce complaints regarding actions of staff and lack of service. The team will continue to highlight the need for improvements where customers express a concern regarding quality of service.
- Training will be provided in complaint handling to all managers and senior staff in EDS on an on-going basis.

Appendix 4 Directorate Performance in 2013-14

Former Resources Directorate

The Former Resources Directorate's complaints are dealt with under the Council's Corporate Complaint's Procedure, Tell Us Your Views.

Over the last 12 months the total number of complaints received for Resources was **48**. This represents a decrease over the last year from **69** to **48**. In addition **67** customer informal complaints have also been received.

Overall **100%** of all complaints were responded to within the statutory timescales.

Headline Results 2013-14

↓	Number of complaints (at all levels) was 48 , 30% decrease from 12 month total in 2012-13 – 69
↓	Total number of complaints upheld was 12 , 25% compared to 20 , 29% (12 month total) in 2012-13
↑	Increase in the number of complaints escalating:- From 3 in 2012-13 to 5 for Stage 1 complaints escalating to Stage 2 in 2013-14
↑	Complaints about quality of service 40 , 83% (2012-13, 42 , 61%)
↓	Complaints about actions of staff 4 , 8% (2012-13, 8 , 11%)
↑	2 compensation awards made of £122.50 , (2012-13, 1 , £100)
↑	1 Ombudsman investigation upheld from 8 enquiries. 1 received in 2012-13 None Upheld.
↓	Number of Councillor Surgeries received was 8 , decrease from 16 in 2012-13.
↓	Number of Compliments received was 3 , decrease from 9 in 2012-13.
↓	Number of informal complaints was 67 , decrease from 12 month total in 2012-13 – 132

Former Resources Directorate maintained the recent significant improvements in the following areas:

- All complaint and informal complaints quality assured
- More timely responses to customer enquires
- More learning from all complaints issues identified

Top complaint issues

Revenue and Benefits

The majority of complaints for the Directorate were received in Revenue and Benefits. These complaints were mostly regarding how people had been dealt with by staff and the advice that they had been provided. Complaints were received around delays in processing benefit applications.

Local Taxation

Complaints were received relating to information and advice provided. Customers raised issues relating to inaccuracy of information held and time taken to resolve issues of concern.

Councillor Surgeries

Only **8** Councillor Surgery enquiries were received in the year, the majority being related to services delivered by Revenues and Benefits. Issues relating to Revenues and Benefits - Benefits Assessment (**3**) Revenues and Benefits – Account Management (**2**), Local Taxation (**2**) and Legal Services (**1**) - The types of enquiries received related to the way customers were affected by changes in legislation relating to housing benefit (bedroom tax) and advice around fines and recovery. Enquiries were also received around advice regarding arrears and payments concerning local taxation. Legal Services received enquiries relating to land ownership.

Compliments

2 compliments were recorded regarding services delivered by the Former Resources Directorate as follows;

- Compliment for Legal Services; “Thank you for your help and support with this today and over the last couple of days – it’s been very much appreciated.”
- Compliment for Local Taxation service. “Yvonne was such a delight to talk to, she offered me so much advice in such a friendly professional manner and nothing was too much trouble for her.”

Learning from complaints

1. A customer complained about the manner in which the Council has acted in recovering an outstanding Council tax debt.

In response to their concerns we have;

- Provided the customer with an apology
- Internal systems revised to ensure that additional checks are carried out on accounts prior to handover to bailiffs
- Paid £50 as a goodwill gesture

2. A customer complained that as part of a benefits assessment they had supplied a copy of their passport to the Council. On return of the personal documents via Royal Mail the passport was missing.

In response to their concerns we;

- Apologised to the customer but confirmed the passport was in the envelope sent 1st class post via Royal Mail
- Revised procedure so that all personal details are dispatched registered post and double checked/signed by 2 Council officers before leaving the building
- Paid £72.50 as a goodwill gesture via cheque payable to Passport Office

3. A customer complained that Council Tax arrears had wrongly been passed to Recovery/Bailiffs when an acceptable level of re-payment had been made by the customer. The Council refused to set up an arrangement to pay as the customer was unwilling to provide employer details to allow an attachment to earnings application to be made if the arrangement wasn't adhered to.

In response to their concerns we;

- Amended advice offered to customers over the phone to set up arrangement to pay where an acceptable level of re-payment has been offered.
- Amended procedure where customers are asked to provide employer details as part of arrangement to pay and they refuse the call/interaction is taken by a Senior Officer and judgement made on the best way forward.

New Developments 2013-14

- Improved the quality assurance process for all responses. Complaints Team supporting managers to check 100% of response letters.
- Improved complaint investigations and responses, all investigating managers will make direct contact with the customer before responding to the complaint.
- Improved learning and service improvements from complaints, 100% of complaints considered for potential learning.

2014-15 Improvement Actions

- Revised training programme for investigating manager's to be introduced, bespoke training to be developed incorporating discussions around learning from complaints.