

Non statutory corporate complaints and customer feedback

For the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

INTRODUCTION

This report covers the period 1 April 2018 to the 31 March 2019, covers all corporate (non-statutory) complaints and compliments for all council direct provision and commissioned services that do not relate to adult social care or children's complaints. The report also contains complaints and compliments for Public Health Commissioned Services.

If you require any additional information please contact the Complaints Team on 01772 539414 or email your [request to complaintsandfeedback@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:request.to.complaintsandfeedback@lancashire.gov.uk)

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All council non-statutory corporate feedback

1.1 Summary of Corporate Complaints in 2018/19

Graph 1 - Corporate 'expressions of dissatisfaction'



Complaints are used by the council as an opportunity to learn and improve. As a direct result of corporate complaints in 2018/19 the council has made improvements to the Blue Badge service, public information, our communication with complainants and internal processes and procedures. Public Health is the most complimented corporate council service.

The council has a single central team for all complaints. Not all issues which are reported to the complaints team in the first instance are considered 'complaints'. The matter will usually be considered as a 'routine service issue' if it is a first notification and the council has not had a chance to put the situation right. Hopefully the issue can be dealt with early but, if not, an informal complaint is logged and, if the customer still remains dissatisfied after 20 working days, a formal complaint is logged.

This report uses the terminology 'expression of dissatisfaction' (regardless if it is a formal complaint or not) for all issues which have been reported by customers to the complaints team. Graph 1 shows that in 2018/19, 1188 matters were reported initially as a 'corporate complaint'. This figure is a slight reduction (of 3%), on the previous year. The vast majority of expressions of dissatisfaction (96%) were resolved and nipped in the bud as routine service issues, early in the complaint process.

The majority of expressions of dissatisfaction (35%) were about highways (414 individual matters). This however is a significant reduction on the figures for 2017/18, when the proportion was 50%. This is due to the considerable size of this service and the fact that roads impact on every Lancashire citizen. Highways therefore also attract a large volume of enquires and the service received 62 individual compliments in 2018/19.

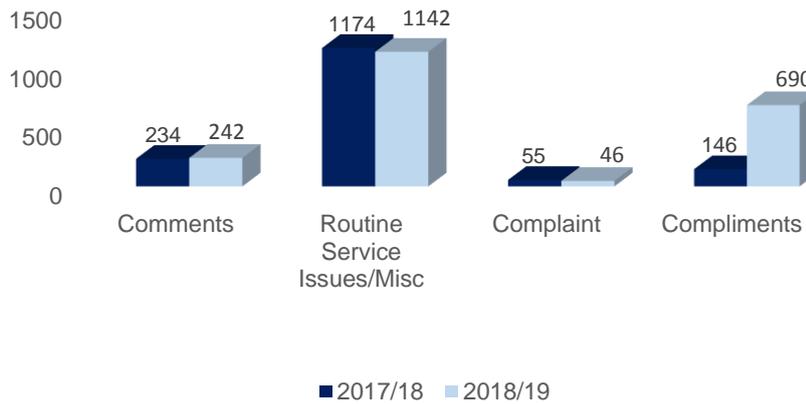
There was a slight decrease in views of the complaints pages on the LCC website from 9172 views in 2017/18 to 9139 in 2018/19 which also reflects the slight decrease in corporate expressions of dissatisfaction.

A total of 34 final decisions were made by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) in 2018/19; 26 (76%) were not investigated; 5 (15%) were upheld or partly upheld; 3 (9%) were not upheld. Section 1.7 covers the learning from upheld complaints.

1.2 Breakdown of feedback type

Graph 2 shows of the 1188 corporate related expressions of dissatisfaction (including 3rd party claims, 96% (1142) were resolved early in the complaint pathway. They were 'nipped in the bud' as part of ongoing business matters and by proactive management action. It also should be noted that about 33% of all feedback received was positive, in the form of a compliment. There has been a welcome significant rise in the capture of corporate compliments, with over four times as many recorded for the previous year. An additional 242 comments were received by the complaints team which are always signposted for action to the service concerned.

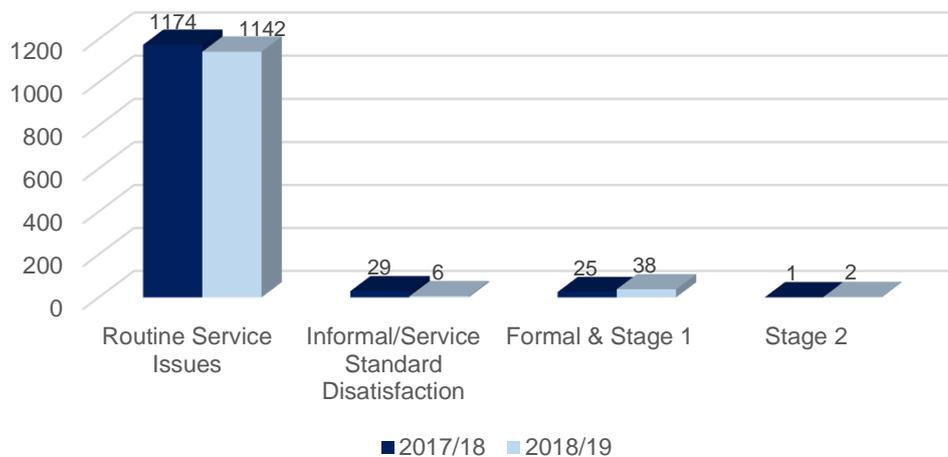
Graph 2 - Corporate Feedback Type



1.3 Complaints by Stage

Not many corporate complaints enter the formal stages. Graph 3 shows that just over 96% of negative feedback was resolved as part of routine business matters (including 3rd party claims). Six complaints were resolved early on in the informal complaints process, down from 29 in 2017/18. The most significant difference from 2017/18 is the number of complaints entering the formal stage. This has risen from 25 during 2017/18 to 38 during 2018/19 (56%) and this is mainly due to a change in how Highways and Transport complaints are managed.

Graph 3 - Complaint by Stage



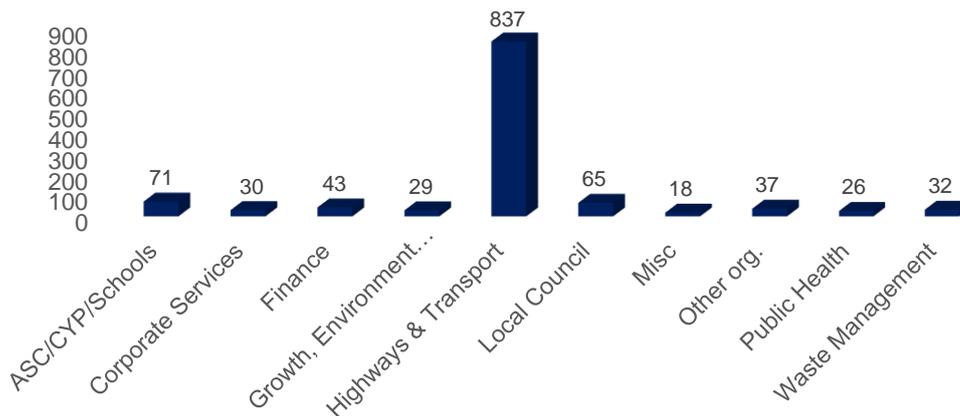
For the majority of 2018/19, Stage 2 of the corporate complaints process involved a panel of County Councillors, (it changed to a review by Head of Service or Director late in May 2019). No Stage 2 review panels were held in 2018/19. Both complaints resolved at Stage 2, were made during the

2018/19 financial year and resolved under the new process at Head of Service or Director Level in 2019/20.

1.4 What do people make corporate 'complaints' about?

Graph 4 shows that Highways & Transport continues to be the single most common reason for expressions of dissatisfaction in about 71% of all cases. This is because of the considerable size of Highways & Transport and the fact that these services potentially impact upon the entire population of Lancashire and not just those in direct receipt of services from LCC.

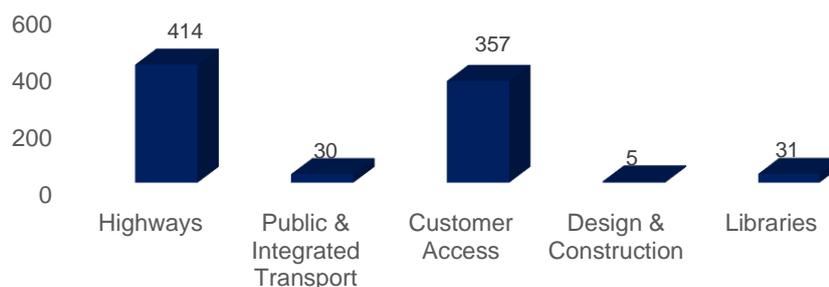
Graph 4 - Expressions of dissatisfaction 2018/19



1.5 What are complaints made for the Highways and Transport Service about?

A further breakdown of the 837 Highways & Transport expressions of dissatisfaction (which also includes customer access and libraries) can be seen in Graph 5 below.

Graph 5 - Expressions of dissatisfaction for Highways & Transport 2018/19



The majority of expressions of dissatisfaction were for Highways (414) which represents 35% of the total number (1188). However this figure is significantly down from 617, received the previous year, which at that time, represented half of all expressions of dissatisfaction. Customer Access figures are up by 85% from 193 in 2017/18 to 357 in 2018/19. The most common reason for dissatisfaction with customer access relates to poor communication about highways reports that have not been fixed. The Complaints Team have worked with the Customer Access Team to re-introduce the

Highways Mailbox to assist in communicating with customers in these situations, so it is expected that this figure will reduce for 2019/20.

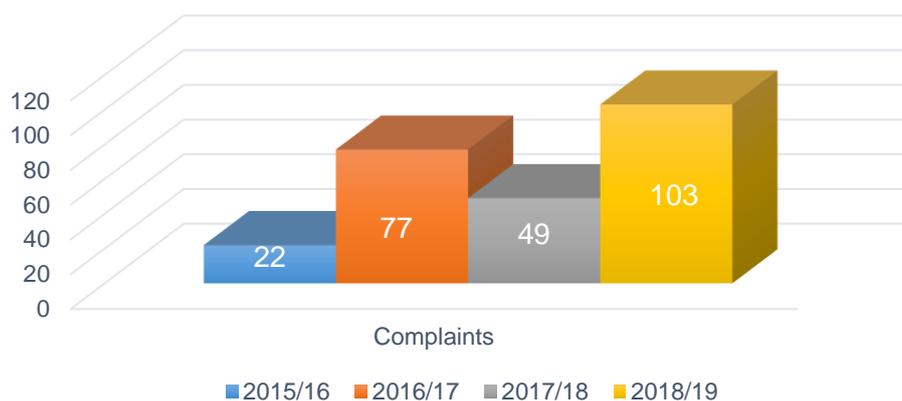
The top three most complained about themes within Highways for 2018/19 were timeliness of response/action (156); flooding/blocked gullies (28); and professionalism of worker/staff conduct (20). After an analysis of some of the complaint themes, a note about expected behaviour is being issued to all drivers by the Director of Highways and Transport. After some complaints about charges for a phone number being used for Penalty Charge Notices, this was changed to a local rate number.

1.6 Complaints about Public Health Commissioned Services

Public Health services are provided to the public through commissioned providers. However as the council is responsible for the quality of these services, the performance of these contracts are monitored and providers report back quarterly on their performance.

There has been a fourfold increase in the capture of all feedback in Public Health as a result of continued promotion of the use of an electronic form for submitting data and the increased reporting from providers. From the council perspective, it is important to know about the performance of our contracts and that complaints procedures are accessible to the public.

Graph 6 - Public Health Complaints

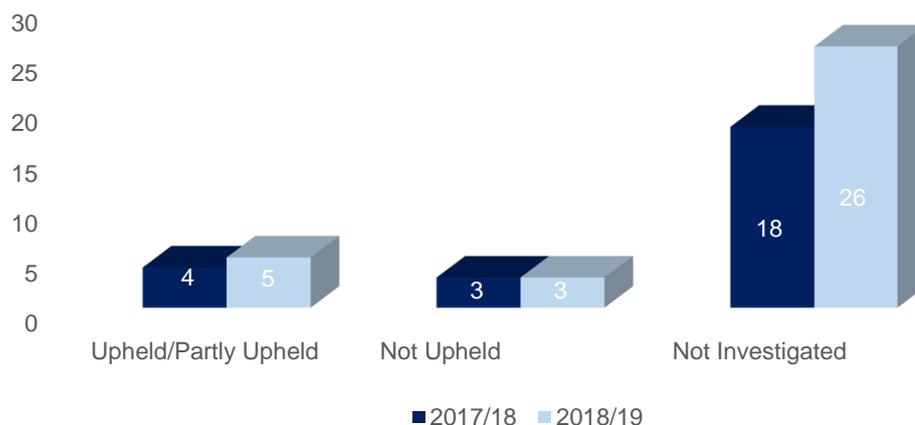


1.7 LGSCO Complaints

Council officers try their best to respond to complaints proportionately, but sometimes complaints are not upheld and people remain dissatisfied. In total 42 separate corporate complaints were made by the public to the LGSCO in 2018/19. Of these, the ombudsman made 32 final corporate decisions. In 2017/18 it was just 24, so these figures have gone up.

The 32 corporate enquiries received from the LGSCO in 2018/19 resulted in 25 final decisions within the same year and an additional 9 final decisions were received from the previous year, making a total of 34. Graph 7 shows the final outcome of these complaints. Only 5 complaints were upheld and 29 were not investigated or not upheld. This makes an uphold rate of only 15%. In 85% of corporate complaints, the final council decision on the complaint is therefore not further investigated or the council position is agreed by the ombudsman.

Graph 7 - Final Outcome of LGSCO complaints



1.8 Learning from LGSCO corporate complaints

In three upheld complaints about blue badges, we reviewed the matrix we currently use for the Blue Badge service and took the following actions:

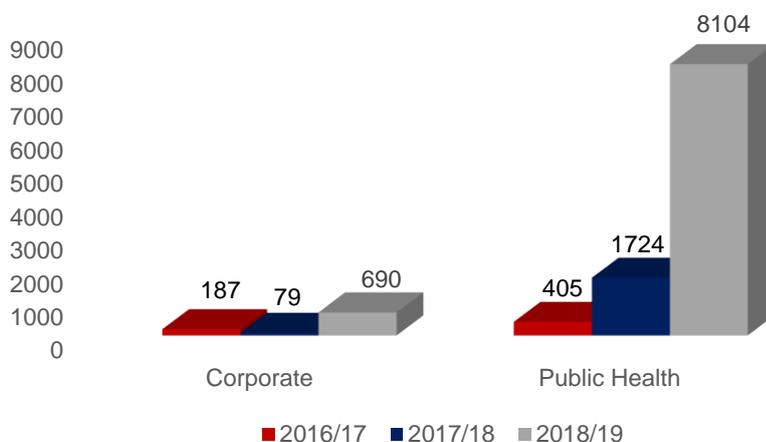
- We agreed to review our blue badge policy and procedures to ensure they comply with the law.
- We ensure all applications are referred for an independent mobility assessment where it is not obvious that the applicant is eligible or ineligible.
- We ensure we do not discount people with variable conditions and take account of people with hidden or non-physical conditions which affect walking ability.
- We have arranged training for our officers to ensure they are properly following the law and government guidance when considering blue badge applications.
- We made changes to our process, so that in the event an applicant reaches a borderline score and a positive decision cannot be reached, the applicant will be offered an independent assessment immediately.
- A further review was conducted after the results of a recent Government consultation into blue badge provision.

In a complaint about a delay to a school transport appeal, we have improved the process and if delays become unavoidable we communicate the reasons for delays to appellants.

Changes to supply and ordering processes have been made in children's centre which had wrongly told a parent that it had vitamins in stock, when it did not.

1.9 All Corporate Compliments

Graph 8 - Compliments



The capture of corporate compliments has shown a welcome increase for 2018/19. The amount of compliments generated is generally in relation to the nature of the business and is directly proportional to the amount of business that the council undertakes in particular service areas. As can be seen in Graph 8, a total of 8794 compliments were made in 2018/19. The majority are made in relation to public health commissioned services with just over 92% of all the compliments received. The number of public health compliments have risen by four times the previous year, (similar to the rise in complaints), pointing to improved capture and recording of all feedback by providers. Compliments are always shared with the line managers concerned and staff are also sometimes nominated for Pride Awards from this customer feedback.

1.10 Exceptional compliments by service

A. Public Health

Public Health commissioned services stand out by far, as the most appreciated council service. Some examples of exceptional feedback received in 2018/19 are quoted below.

We cannot thank you ALL enough for all your help, patience, support and understanding. I can report that my son is getting meetings in and enjoying sobriety. He could not have done it without you. You all do a wonderful job and provide an excellent service!

A great service, thank you for changing my ferrule. Very good home assessment, I didn't realise the support I needed. How lovely that you came to our heritage group to talk to us about how we can help ourselves and be safe. I wouldn't have known where to get the support you have been able to help me find, thank you. How great! A new ferrule for Christmas! Such a great, caring service. The ladies are always smiling, so kind and helpful.

Best place I've ever been to. Get the support I need and no matter what the staff are always there to help.

B. Highways

Highways received 62 formally recorded compliments in 2018/19. Some examples of exceptional feedback received in 2018/19 are quoted below.

Just to say what a wonderful job you have done with the road surface of Smithy Lane, Stalmine. Our Wyre Pensioners Forum group members wanted me to contact you to say what an excellent job you had done and made the cut through now a safer road to travel to and from upon. Well done to all involved.

Many thanks for the very prompt action in clearing the blocked gulley by Waddington Coronation Gardens. Not only do we have lovely smooth roads through the village now but we have clear gullies as well.

I want to thank you for sorting out the street lighting on main avenue, Middleton, Morecambe. I told you about it on 9th October and you sorted out the whole road on 10th October. Wonderful service, keep up the good work.

C. Welfare Rights

Welfare Rights received 224 formally recorded compliments in 2018/19. Some examples of exceptional feedback are quoted below.

I wish to compliment the staff at your office (the Welfare Rights Service) for all the help and support shown to me in my claim for attendance allowance- thank you once again.

I didn't think that we (my husband and I) would be eligible for pension credit. However; after being contacted by this department, your representative made a claim on our behalf. We then had a visitor from the Department who was very helpful, business like and courteous. Each time we had cause to contact the Department we had the same experience from all the staff. I cannot speak too highly of them and thank them all for their help.

Thank you with all your assistance with my case. Although it took considerable time to come to court, your advice and helpfulness are greatly appreciated. Without your help I would have lost the case. Thank you again for your time and effort. You are a valuable member of staff!