



## Report to Customers and Communities Committee

8 May 2014

**Title:** Complaints and Compliments Performance Update 2013/14

**Report of:** Managing Director

### Purpose of Report

1. To provide the committee with complaints and compliments performance for the year ended 31 March 2014

### Background

2. One of the company values is to be a 'listening and learning organisation'. The experience of customers and learning from complaints and compliments are key to informing continuous improvement
3. The company has a three stage process for dealing with complaints:
  - *Step 1: Problem solving* – where we are able to resolve the complaint at the point that it is brought to our attention
  - *Step 2: Investigation* – a complaint that cannot be immediately resolved and an investigation is required. Acknowledgement within three working days, the target for resolution is 10 working days (this can include a holding letter).
  - *Step 3: Review* – where a complainant is unhappy with the response following an investigation they can request a review of their complaint by the Managing Director. This will be completed within 20 working days.
4. From 1 April 2013, the Localism Act introduced the role of "designated person" to support the local resolution of complaints for tenants of housing associations, local authorities and ALMOs. The designated person can be an MP, local councillor or a recognised tenant panel.
5. A review of our overall approach to dealing with complaints and compliments is currently underway and will be reported to a future Board meeting with recommendations for improvement.

### Complaints and Compliments Performance

6. The number of complaints recorded in 2013/14 has reduced compared to 2012/13. It is difficult to know if it is a reflection of improved customer service

resulting in fewer expressions of dissatisfaction, or whether complaints are not being recorded. However it is acknowledged that in 2012/13 a high proportion of complaints recorded in the mobilisation period of the new repairs contract.

	2012/13	2013/14		
<b>Step 1 – Problem-solving</b>	1722	1068	<b>Escalated from step 2</b>	
<b>Step 2 - Investigation</b>	761	492	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>
<b>Step 3 – Review</b>	21	12	2.76%	2.44%
<b>Compliments</b>	410	331		

7. Looked at as a percentage of step 2 complaints logged however, it appears that the numbers of complaints escalated to review stage has remained reasonably stable, with a slight decrease shown to date. This suggests that complaints handling has improved with more customers being satisfied with the response they receive as step 2.
8. This is also reflected in the results of satisfaction surveys carried out in the same period. In 2012/13 60.67% of customers surveyed were satisfied with the handling of their complaint, compared with 73.37% at the end of 2013/14.
9. Performance against the 10 day response target for step 2 investigations has also improved (73.2% up from 71.16%). A target has been set to increase this performance again in 2014/15 and the work of the review will support this.
10. Performance against the 20 day target for step 3 shows that there has been in improvement in the response times compared to 2012/13.

<b>Step 3 Review status</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>
<b>In target</b>	12 (57.14%)	9 (75.00%)
<b>Outside target</b>	9 (42.86)	2 (16.67%)
<b>Open</b>	-	1 (8.33%)

The recent audit identified the ability to report on complaint trends by service area as an opportunity for improvement for best practice. At present this information can only be provided from the system through a manual checking process. From this process we know that the repairs service records the highest number of complaints overall, accounting for 63.62% of step 2 complaints recorded in 2013/14. A breakdown of all recorded step 2 complaints by service is included in Appendix A to this report.

11. Complaints are categorised under six headings, which enables the company to monitor broad trends in complaint cause. Understanding the root cause of complaints allows the company to identify remedial actions, and identify service improvements. A full breakdown by category is also included in appendix A
12. Throughout 2013/14 by far the greatest cause of complaint has consistently been quality of service. At year end 78.46% of all complaints were wholly or in part attributed to this category. Injury or damage to person or possessions was the second most significant cause at 25.2%, with employee coming third at 13.82%.
13. Examples of compliments received during the year are provided at Appendix B to this report.

14. Guidance and training will be delivered over the next 12 months to ensure a consistent approach to complaint logging and case management.

### **Complaint Review**

15. In order to improve our approach to complaints and compliments we are undertaking a review, including how we deal with individual complaints and how we learn from these to improve services. Documents are currently out for consultation with managers across the company and with relevant sections of the council to ensure that our approach to complaints compliments that of the council. Following on from this, the final report and findings will be presented to Board for approval.

### **Complaint Scrutiny Panel**

16. The complaints panel have been involved in setting performance targets for 2014/15, and have also had the opportunity to attend a Best Practice in Complaint Management course run by TPAS. The panel members who attended gained an insight into the changes introduced by the Localism Act, and an understanding of the role of a tenant panel as a designated person. Following on from this session the panel have indicated that they do not wish to seek recognition as a designated person at this stage, preferring to continue the focus of their work on scrutiny and service improvement.
17. In addition, group membership levels dropped due to other commitments and members moving away.
18. These factors have prompted a rethink around the activity of the group going forward. Whilst there is still an appetite to undertake scrutiny work, they recognise that they need to be able to demonstrate how they have influenced change in order to justify the administrative support currently required. With this in mind the group are looking to expand their role to include projects which are likely to result in visible change, such as working with the team to produce training and guidance for employees on logging, investigating and responding to complaints and undertaking quality checks of responses being issued.
19. The group are also keen to support the company undertake a self-assessment against the CIH complaints charter. Short-term projects and action days (complaint drop-ins, satisfaction surveys etc) would also allow members to be involved with less time commitment. By offering more flexibility we hope to attract new members over the next twelve months.

### **Service Improvements**

20. The Repairs Managers have regular meetings with Mears, our contractor, to allow them to identify any issues in service delivery due to temporary factors such as weather or staffing. The HomeRepairs team also constantly monitor trends in complaints and work with Mears customer care team to ensure that issues with contractors are raised and resolved in their toolbox talks.
21. The corporate complaints system also allows officers to log potential opportunities for service improvement at the end of their investigation.

22. In 2013/14 15 suggestions were recorded, as well as 8 specific actions or changes which were introduced either to resolve or prevent the reoccurrence of a problem (see appendix C)
23. This demonstrates that service improvements are being made in response to customer feedback. Over the next 12 months the company intends to improve recording and reporting of these actions and learning to promote the improvements being made throughout the company and to our customers.

### **Link to values**

24. This report is aligned to the following company values: -

- Being a listening and learning organisation
- Being honest, accountable and transparent
- Being customer focused, innovative and professional
- Caring and respecting

### **Impact on tenants**

25. Using learning from customer complaints will allow us to improve services for our tenants and leaseholders.

### **Risk Management Implications**

26. Failure to record and monitor customer feedback may result in missed opportunities to improve services for customers, resulting in decreased customer satisfaction.
27. Inappropriate responses to Council leading to negative findings against the company from Local Government Ombudsman/Housing Ombudsman have been highlighted as an operational risk for the company. Through having clear and comprehensive records of our complaints handling process we are able to minimise this risk.

### **Financial Implications**

28. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

29. We aim to improve customer service and ensure extended, inclusive access to services, advice and information for all customers.

### **Value for Money Implications**

30. Improvements identified and implemented as a result of complaints will have a positive value for money implication by providing a more effective service to our customers.

### **Health Implications**

31. There are no direct health implications arising from this report.

### **Environmental Implications**

32. There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

### **Consultation carried out**

33. The Complaint Scrutiny Panel will meet on the 1 May 2014 to discuss the company's year-end performance and to plan future activity.

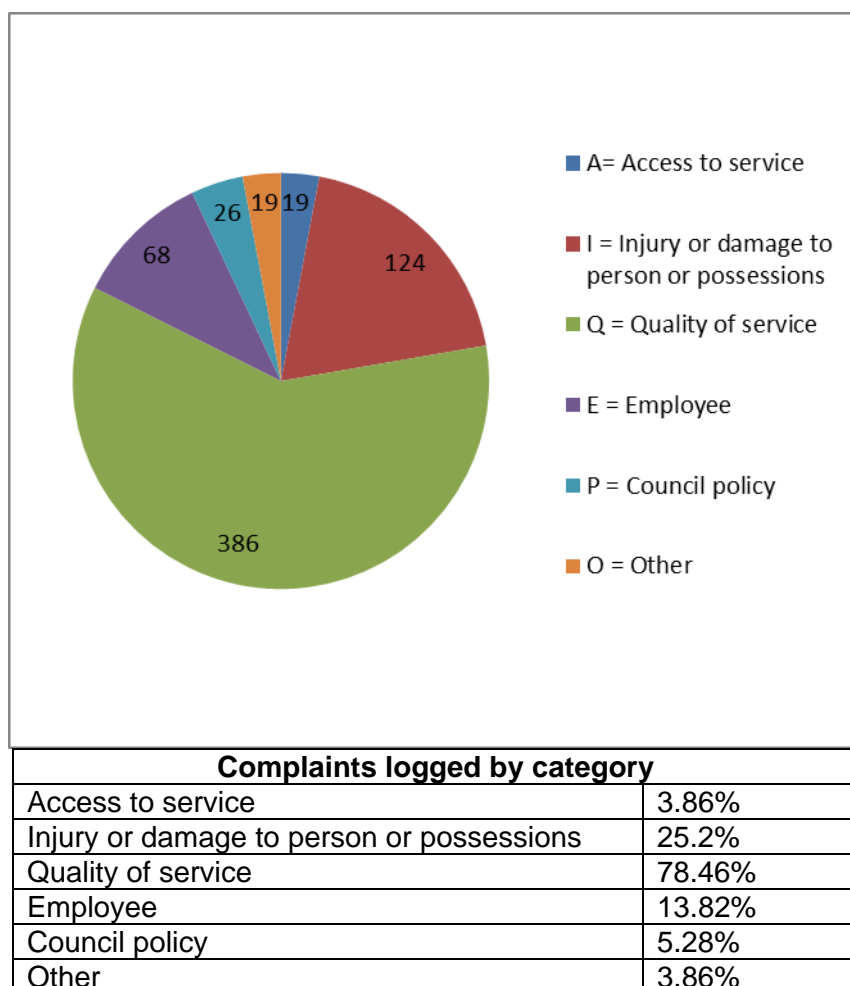
### **Recommendation**

34. The views of the committee are sought on whether it is satisfied with performance on complaints and compliments for 2013/14.

## Complaints performance – whole year 2013/14

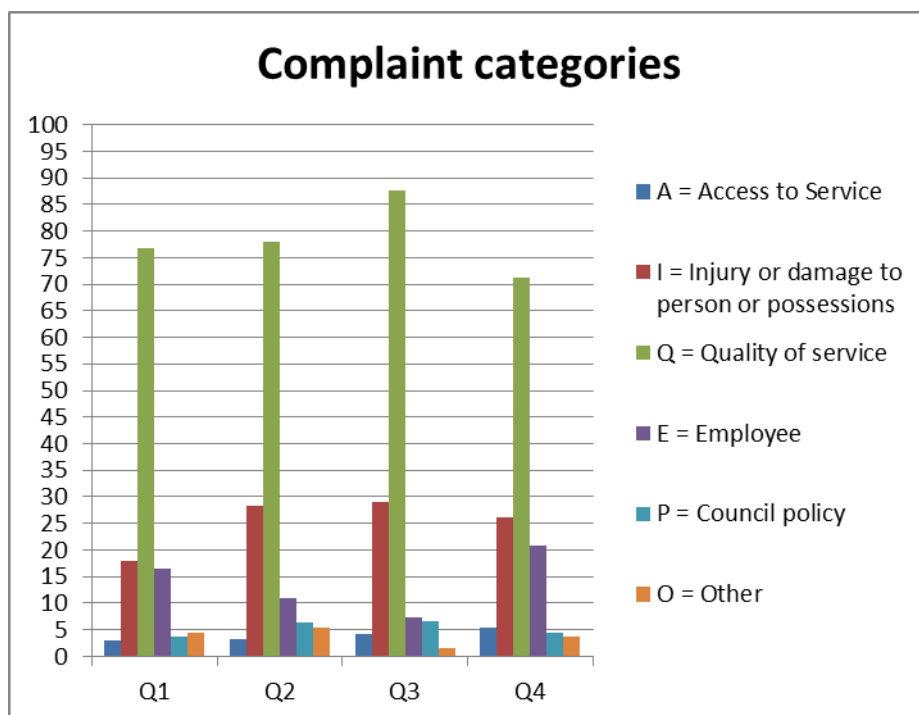
Corporate Complaints and Compliments System										
Selection: From : 01/04/13 00:00:00 To: 31/03/14 23:59:59 - Complaints Only										
Group		Category						Justified		
No.	%	A	I	Q	E	P	O	Yes	Part	No
The Gateshead Housing Company>										
373		> Resolved								
112		> Closed								
7		> Open								
Total>>	492	19	124	386	68	26	19	137	38	87

Of the 373 complaints resolved over the year, 46.92% were found to be either wholly or partly justified.



The total numbers of complaints logged by category (642) is greater than the total number of complaints logged (492) because complaints can be logged in more than one category. For example, a complaint might relate jointly to access to service and the behaviour of an employee.

By far the main cause for complaint throughout the year was “quality of service”, followed by “injury or damage to person or possessions”, “employee”, “council policy”, “access to service”, and finally “other”.



“Quality of service”, “injury or damage to person or possessions” and “employee” were first, second and third most common causes respectively each quarter.

These categories allow the company to monitor broad themes in complaint causes, however in future it would be beneficial to also be able to easily monitor complaints within service area. At present this is only possible for step 2 complaints, through a manual checking process.

This is one of the considerations of the current review.

### Step 2 complaints logged by service area 2013/14

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Whole year
<b>Repairs</b>	89	71	77	76	<b>313</b>
<b>Gas Servicing</b>	3	15	17	5	<b>40</b>
<b>Tenancy &amp; Estate Management</b>	8	14	9	3	<b>34</b>
<b>Investment</b>	9	7	3	9	<b>28</b>
<b>Voids</b>	10	5	4	7	<b>26</b>
<b>Lettings</b>	2	5	3	4	<b>14</b>
<b>NRT</b>	1	3	2	6	<b>12</b>
<b>RAIT</b>	5	3	0	0	<b>8</b>
<b>Caretaker</b>	1	1	3	0	<b>5</b>
<b>Asset Management</b>	1	1	3	0	<b>5</b>
<b>Leasehold</b>	1	1	0	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Older Persons</b>	0	1	0	1	<b>2</b>
<b>New Build</b>	2	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Concierge</b>	1	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
	133	127	121	111	<b>492</b>

Repairs receive the most complaints each quarter, and account for nearly two thirds (63.62%) of the total step 2 complaints logged in 2013/14. This is to be expected due to the volume of repairs undertaken although.

Gas Servicing, Investment and Voids also receive relatively high numbers of complaints – these services, like Repairs are delivered by contractors. This emphasises the importance of the ongoing work being done by managers within the company and the customer care teams in-the company, Mears and Local Environmental Services to monitor complaints and use this information jointly to drive improvements.



## Compliments Performance – Whole Year 2013/14

The company recorded 331 compliments in 2013/14, with Mears and Estate Management accounting for over half of all compliments received:

	Total	%
Mears	96	29.00
Estate Mgmt	87	26.28
Caretaker	40	12.08
HomeRepairs	38	11.48
Garden Service	14	4.23
NRT	9	2.72
Older Persons	9	2.72
RAIT	7	2.11
Investment	6	1.81
Leasehold	6	1.81
Lettings	6	1.81
Improvement	5	1.51
Handyperson	4	1.21
Gas Servicing	2	0.60
Surveyor	2	0.60
	<b>331</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Of the 15 service areas that received compliments, only six received at least one compliment in every quarter:

Caretakers  
 Estate Management  
 HomeRepairs  
 Mears  
 Improvement team  
 NRT

This suggests that these are either the services engaged in the most frequent customer transactions, or the services where the customer perceives the greatest impact from the transaction.

The garden service receives a relatively high number of compliments but only during quarters 2 and 3 – this may be a reflection of the seasonal nature of the service. Between April and October customers receive a monthly visit, whereas in winter the garden service only visits twice as this is not the growing season and gardens require less maintenance. During the summer the customer can see a greater improvement as a result of the visit, perhaps explaining why all compliments relate to these periods, rather than a decline in service during winter.

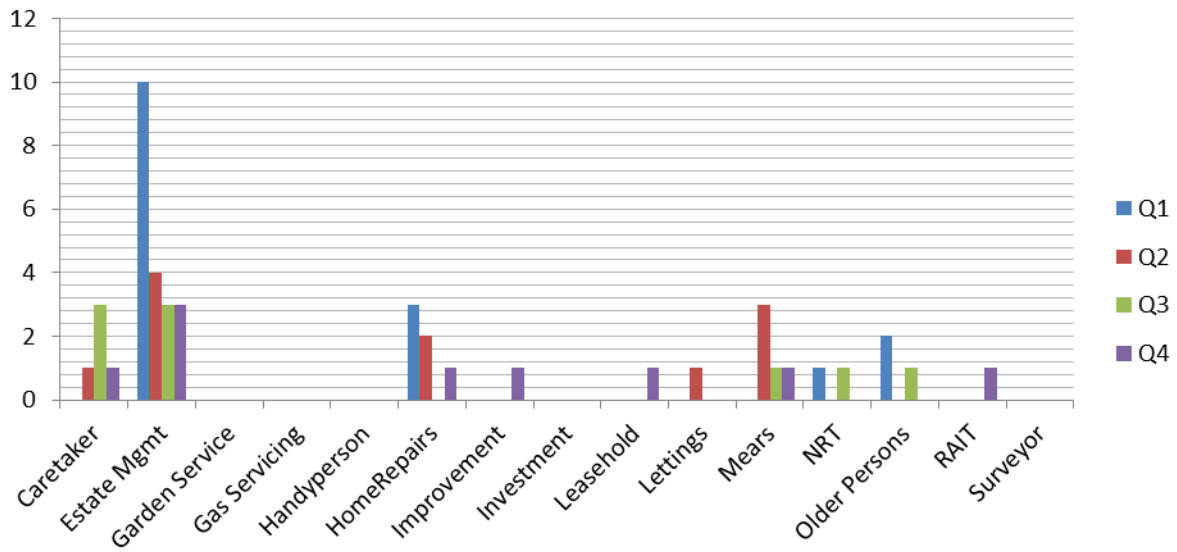
Compliments fall into two categories:

**Employee** - Compliment identifies an individual officer for attitude/behaviour but no specific action

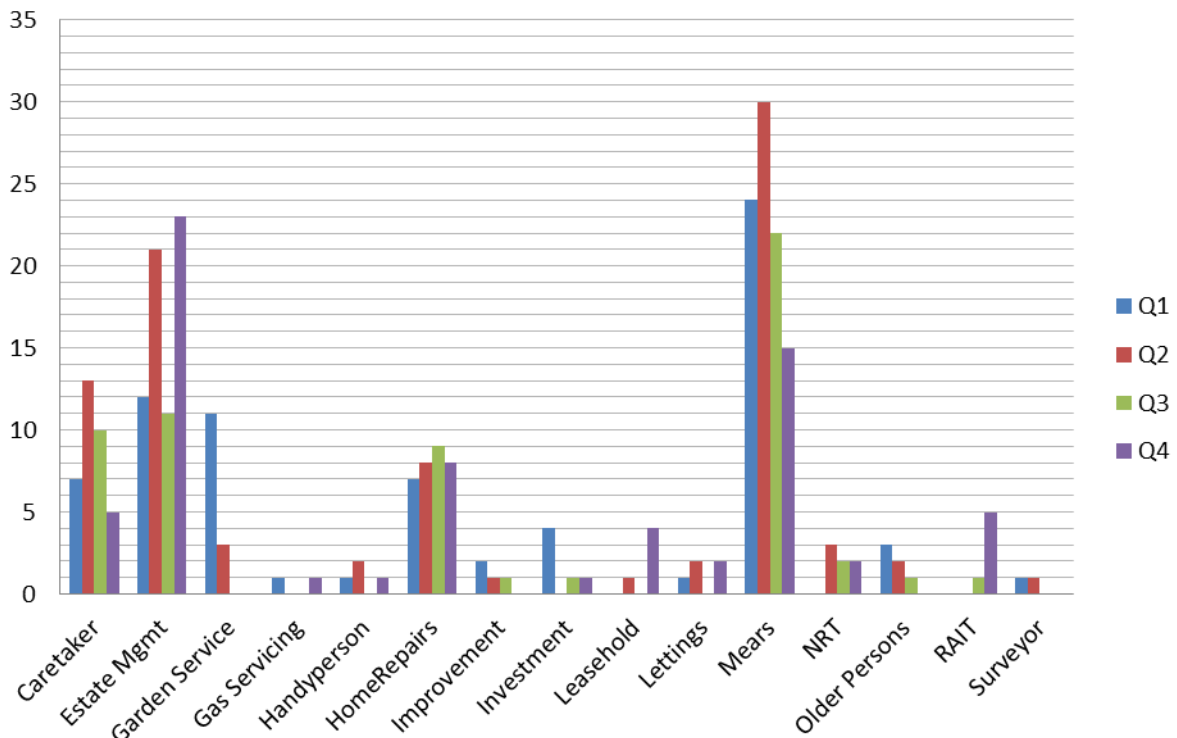
**Quality of service** - Compliment relates to a specific action or job fulfilled by an employee or team

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total by service
<b>Employee</b>					<b>45</b>
Caretaker	0	1	3	1	5
Estate Mgmt	10	4	3	3	20
Garden Service	0	0	0	0	0
Gas Servicing	0	0	0	0	0
Handyperson	0	0	0	0	0
HomeRepairs	3	2	0	1	6
Improvement	0	0	0	1	1
Investment	0	0	0	0	0
Leasehold	0	0	0	1	1
Lettings	0	1	0	0	1
Mears	0	3	1	1	5
NRT	1	0	1	0	2
Older Persons	2	0	1	0	3
RAIT	0	0	0	1	1
Surveyor	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Quality of Service</b>					<b>286</b>
Caretaker	7	13	10	5	35
Estate Mgmt	12	21	11	23	67
Garden Service	11	3	0	0	14
Gas Servicing	1	0	0	1	2
Handyperson	1	2	0	1	4
HomeRepairs	7	8	9	8	32
Improvement	2	1	1	0	4
Investment	4	0	1	1	6
Leasehold	0	1	0	4	5
Lettings	1	2	0	2	5
Mears	24	30	22	15	91
NRT	0	3	2	2	7
Older Persons	3	2	1	0	6
RAIT	0	0	1	5	6
Surveyor	1	1	0	0	2
<b>Total by date</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>331</b>

## Compliments about employee behaviour or attitude 2013/14



## Compliments about quality of service 2013/14



**Examples of compliments received 2013/14**

**Tenant, West** – Customer who is an amputee and relies on his mobility scooter reported his garage doors broken preventing him from accessing his scooter. He wanted to thank the CSA from repairs for arranging someone to attend so quickly and to the operative specifically who worked in the rain to mend the door.

**Tenant, Inner West** – Customer expressed his thanks during his Home Welcome Visit to all of the housing office staff he has dealt with from the initial viewing to the sign up - he said the service he received was 'outstanding'

**Tenant, South** – Wanted to pass on compliments to the Mears plumber and plasterers who attended her property. She was very happy with their work and that the job was completed.

**Tenant Multi-storey, Central** - Complimented housing staff bringing in a caretaker to care for the building and the adjustment made to concierge service. She also complimented the cleanliness through the whole building and good work of caretaker.

**Tenant, East** - Customer completed an ASB survey with the Neighbourhood relations team and wanted to compliment the Neighbourhood relations officer for her ongoing work in dealing with her complaint. She wanted to highlight her attitude and thought she is 'Brilliant'

**Tenant, Inner West** - She would like to thank the repairs CSA on helping her get all of her heating issues resolved. Mrs Bullock feels that without her help this would not have been done

**Tenant, Blaydon** – Wanted to express thanks to the investment team and the two employees who carried out the electrical work to his 92 year old mum's property for taking such a sympathetic approach and dealing with the work in a discreet, tidy fashion where it could have been quite an ordeal for her.

**Tenant, Inner West** - Wanted to say thank you and give a compliment to the CSA's in Home Repairs, stating all the CSA's she spoke to were very nice and helpful. She also said the operatives who went out to her numerous jobs were very prompt and of a good standard.

**Tenant, South** - Wanted to pass on a compliment to the CSA for the speedy service she received. She was very helpful and efficient.

**Leaseholder, East** - Rang to thank the Leasehold Services Manager for her assistance with an insurance claim for repairs carried out to the roof of his block.

**Tenant, West** - Would to compliment the Mears Plumber for doing a very good job and repairing the leak under the sink promptly.

**Tenant, Multi-storey, Central** - Wanted to compliment the Caretaker on the fresh clean smelling lifts in Tennyson Court.

**Tenant, Inner West** – Wanted to thank the gas engineer, who carried out her gas service, for being very polite, friendly and professional. She is very pleased with the service she has received from him.

**Leaseholder, South** – Rang to compliment the Leasehold Officer stating that he had been very pleasant, had looked into the issues that she had raised and had got back to her with the results. The customer said "He deserves a pat on the back".

### Changes or actions taken to prevent reoccurrence of complaint

**Complaint:** Customer complained that had been refused service at the rent counter despite having arrived before the service cut-off time and staff being present on the counter.

**Action:** The CSO delivered training on best practice at the end of the financial day front line staff during the next Wednesday briefing session

**Complaint:** Applicant complained about having to repeat information to advisors when ringing back to chase up a void date.

**Action:** Advice line reminded to put notes of calls on system

**Complaint:** Tenant complained that allegations of ASB had not been investigated properly and that housing officers had failed to empathise with their situation.

**Action:** Training for housing officers when dealing with victims of ASB

**Complaint:** Tenant complained that had not been given adequate information when requesting a repair to intermediate fencing. The fence was removed as a make safe when the tenant had believed it would be repaired.

**Action:** Information to tenants booklet and tenancy agreement lists those repairs that are tenants responsibility, but does not include intermediate fencing or state that we will raise orders for "make safe" on this type of fence, but that usually means taking the fence away. Email sent to communications to request this to be added to the list of tenants responsibilities at next reprint.

**Complaint:** Tenant complaint about attitude and patronising manner of advisor who "spoke to him like a schoolboy"

**Action:** Employee retraining to improve customer service skills following complaints about employee's manner on telephone

**Complaint:** private resident unhappy that contractor had gone onto their roof to affect a repair on the adjoining council property.

**Action:** Mears included this example in toolbox talks to remind contractors to inform private residents if access is required

**Complaint:** Emergency ambulance had to be granted access to a gated car park as the concierge was not on duty and the crew did not have the access code due to an internal IT failure.

**Action:** NEAC have re-entered information onto their computer system and will monitor, in addition they have also made their IT department aware to ensure the data is not lost going forward

**Complaint:** Tenant complained poor communication and about the length of time and number of visits needed to determine that a non-standard bathroom fitting could not be repaired and would need replacing.

**Action:** Senior Customer Care Officer role has been introduced to deal with complex and non-standard repairs, and to ensure tenants are kept informed throughout repair process.