



Report to Customers and Communities Committee

6 November 2014

Title: Complaints and Compliments Performance Update 2014/15

Report of: Involvement and Diversity Manager

Purpose of Report

1. To provide the committee with an update on complaints & compliments performance over the first two quarters of 2014/15

Background

2. Following the adoption of the new complaints policy in July 2014, the Committee agreed to receive a 6 monthly update on complaints and compliments performance, the activity of the Complaints Scrutiny Panel, and the ongoing work associated with the review of the complaints process.

Complaints and Compliments Performance

Number of complaints recorded

3. The number of recorded complaints overall are significantly lower in 2014/15 compared with the same period in 2013/14. The number of Problem-solving complaints has seen a reduction of 43%, and Investigations have seen a reduction of 32%.
4. In the same time period, the proportion of complaints escalated to reviews has increased 2.7% to 5.3%.

	2013/14	2014/15
Step 1 – Problem-solving	563	320
Step 2 - Investigation	223	151
Step 3 – Review	6	8
Compliments	153	136

5. A breakdown of the number of complaints by service area and category is provided in Appendix 1.
6. It has been noted that the number of complaints recorded by HomeRepairs has reduced, particularly at the problem-solving level. This is largely attributable to staff vacancies within the team, particularly the Advice Assistant roles. All posts have now been filled and it is anticipated that the number of complaints captured by the team will increase going forward. An exercise is also planned

with the Complaints Scrutiny Panel and the HomeRepairs Manager to investigate this further, and to identify ways of increasing the consistency of complaints recording across the company.

Responding within 10 days

7. The company-wide target is to respond to 76% of Investigations within 10 days, and performance is continuing to improve against this target for Investigations. Overall 89.86% of complaints have been responded to within 10 working days.
8. To date, over two thirds of complaints (69.7%) have been resolved within target and without the use of a holding letter. On average, these took 6.6 days to resolve demonstrating that the 10 day target continues to be achievable. 27 hold letters were issued (20.45%) and for these complaints the average time to resolve is 21.3 days, with an average 13.2 days from the hold letter being issued to the complaint being resolved. Appendix 1 provides information on the proportion of complaints responded to within target by service area.
9. Mears and Repairs represent the highest number of complaints recorded, due to the volume of contact with our tenants and leaseholders. 78 of the total 141 (55.32%) complaints related to this service area, however, they continue to achieve a high degree of compliance reflecting the approach within the service, with dedicated customer care officers responsible for coordinating and resolving complaints and closer working between the company and Mears.
10. Compared with the same period last year there has been an improvement in the number of Reviews completed within target.

Step 3 Review status at end of quarter 2	2013/14	2014/15
In target	4 (66.67%)	6 (100%)
Outside target	2 (33.33%)	-
Open	-	2

11. Of the six Reviews responded to in the period, the original decision of the investigating officer has been upheld in five of these. For the same period last year, only one of the six complaints was upheld. This suggests that the quality of Investigations and responses have improved.
12. Finally, in this period there has been one approach to the Ombudsman which was dealt with through a local resolution and therefore did not result in a formal Ombudsman investigation.

Customer satisfaction with complaints management

13. Satisfaction has improved since the first quarter; however this remains lower than expected. We are currently working to analyse the reasons for this dissatisfaction which primarily relates to communication. We are inviting those who have stated they were dissatisfied to attend a focus group or provide further information via telephone about their experiences to help us understand and manage tenant expectations in complaints handling.
14. We are also developing and providing employees with a range of guidance and training over the coming months to assist them to respond to complaints effectively.

		Y	N
Did we communicate well throughout your complaint	Quarter 1	63.33%	36.67%
	Quarter 2	64.00%	36.00%
	Year to Date	63.75%	36.25%
Are you satisfied with the outcome of your complaint	Quarter 1	50.00%	50.00%
	Quarter 2	62.00%	38.00%
	Year to Date	57.50%	42.50%
Satisfied how we handled your complaint overall	Quarter 1	53.33%	46.67%
	Quarter 2	60.00%	40.00%
	Year to Date	57.50%	42.50%

Compliments

15. There have been 136 compliments recorded this year, including 41 received for services provided by Mears. Compliments recorded by service area are provided at appendix 2.
16. Analysis of the compliments shows that there are a number of employees being recognised by several customers. In both quarter one and quarter two there have been three employees who have been complimented on three or more occasions and 7 employees have received a compliment at least once in each quarter.
17. This demonstrates that employees continue to deliver excellent services to our customers and live up to the company value of being customer focused, innovative and professional.
18. A sample of compliments received has been included at Appendix 3.

Service Improvements

19. In total, 7 complaints resulted in additional or refresher training for employees, and a further 11 suggestions have been passed to service managers for consideration. These included:
 - Taking before and after photographs on site to provide evidence where customers are claiming that damage has been caused by contractors, or that the site has not been properly cleared afterwards.
 - Using photographs to support the void checklist, providing evidence of property & fixture condition at handover.
 - Working with Gateshead Council's Customer Service Unit to enable the Estate Officer to check whether a large item collection has been arranged as part of the garden condition checks.

Complaints Scrutiny Panel

20. The Complaints Scrutiny Panel have met monthly since May 2014, and during this time have been actively involved in challenging complaints performance and identifying opportunities and tools for improvement.

21. The panel have worked with the Complaints Project Officer and Organisational Development Officer to develop letter writing guidance and a checklist that will enable officers to quality check their own and others' complaint response letters. The work with the panel will also form the basis of a new half-day letter writing course which will be rolled out to all officers in roles identified as potential Investigating Officers.
22. In the next quarter members of the panel will undertake customer satisfaction surveys for complaints, with a view to increasing the number of surveys returned. The response rate for quarter two increased to 50 surveys from just 30 in quarter one and we continue to aim to increase the sample to be able to carry out more meaningful analysis. Volunteers from the panel have agreed to carry out surveys on a quarterly basis.
23. As mentioned previously in this report, an exercise with HomeRepairs has also been agreed and will take place in November. Panel members requested the opportunity to shadow the Advice Assistants on calls, to observe the number of complaints recorded and the steps taken to resolve these at the first point of contact. By measuring the ratio of complaints to contacts received, it is hoped that a baseline can be found that will allow managers in other offices or services to monitor whether all problem-solving complaints are currently being captured.

Progress against review recommendations

ICT

24. Having established that the current complaints and compliments recording system does not allow effective monitoring and reporting, work has been undertaken to develop a specification for a new system in Northgate.
25. Initial surveys of the views of all employees were followed by in-depth interviews with managers from across service areas to establish business needs.
26. The next step is to finish process-mapping the whole complaints and compliments procedure and finalise the system specification to ensure that the future system will capture the required information efficiently, and will allow timely data interrogation with the manual work this currently entails. This will also allow us to consider complaints information alongside the other detailed customer information contained within Northgate and to assign workflow to ensure that the complaints process is followed effectively.

Vexatious Contacts

27. The vexatious contacts guide has been tested against an existing case involving housing management and Neighbourhood Relations Team, which has resulted in a number of suggestions for improvements. These include the use of standard letters to notify customers of any application of the vexatious contacts approach; development of a company-wide contact logging facility that would allow employees to gather evidence where a customer potentially presents as vexatious; and a more detailed step-by-step guide for officers navigating the process. These developments will be reported back to a future committee.

Link to values

28. This report relates 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

29. Using learning from customer complaints will allow us to improve services for our tenants.

Risk Management Implications

30. Failure to record and monitor customer feedback may result in missed opportunities to improve services for customers, resulting in decreased customer satisfaction.

Financial Implications

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

Health Implications

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

Environmental Implications

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

Equality and Diversity Implications

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

Value for Money implications

35. 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.

Customer Consultation

36. Ongoing consultation with the Complaints Scrutiny Panel takes place monthly.

Recommendation

37. The views of the committee are sought on whether it is satisfied with performance on complaints and compliments.

Appendix 1 – Summary of complaints Quarter 1 & 2

Service area	Total complaints (not including closed)			Category							Justified			
	Recorded	Resolved	% in target	Quality of service	Access to service	Employee	Injury	Damage	Policy	Other	Yes	No	Partially	Not specified
Capital Works	2	2	100.00	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
Caretaker	3	3	100.00	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
Cyclical Maintenance	1	1	100.00	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Estate Management	14	14	78.57	9	1	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0
Gas Servicing	6	5	66.67	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
Repairs Reporting	2	2	100.00	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Investment	5	5	100.00	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0
Lettings	11	9	100.00	6	1	0	0	0	6	0	2	5	0	2
Mears	31	30	96.67	24	3	18	2	6	0	0	10	2	0	18
New Build	3	3	100.00	3	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	2
NRT	5	5	100.00	5	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	1
Older Persons	1	1	100.00	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
RAIT	1	1	100.00	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Repairs	47	45	86.67	39	4	8	0	11	2	2	7	4	0	35
Scaffolding /subcontractor	5	4	100.00	3	0	1	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	3
Surveyors	4	2	50.00	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1
	141	132		110	11	36	2	24	12	3	27	22	3	70

Appendix 2 – Compliments received in Quarter 1 and 2

	Quality of Service	Employee
Admin	0	1
Caretaker	14	2
Concierge	1	0
Estate Management	25	4
Gardening Service	3	0
Leasehold	3	0
Lettings	5	1
Mears	37	4
NRT	1	2
Older Persons	7	2
RAIT	4	0
Repairs	8	1
Repairs reporting	9	1
Scaffolding	1	0
	118	18

Appendix 2

Tenant, East Area

Compliment received for the very prompt response on a Sunday by Mears plumber who responded to an elderly tenant with no hot water.

Leaseholder, West Area

Service received from Leasehold Officer described as “second to none” by customer purchasing their home.

Tenant, East Area

Tenant thanked Estate Officer and HMA for their kindness in attending to assist with a flood from washer, and in helping to clean the water after, when she was unable to turn off water at the mains herself.

Tenant, South Area

Thank you to the Caretaker who comforted the tenant and kept her company for an hour whilst she was stuck in the lift.

Tenant, Inner West

NRT officers complimented for their excellent work in tackling ASB case, and for their approachable and sympathetic manner when dealing with the victim.

Leaseholder, South Area

After receiving an unexpected invoice, the customer contacted TGHC to thank Leasehold Officer for the “high level of customer care” received and for the courtesy and professionalism shown whilst assisting her.

Tenants, Central Area

Sheltered scheme officer and tenants of scheme thanked their Sheltered Estate Officer for her support and assistance arranging a joint event with a local school.

Tenant, West Area

Thank you card and chocolates given by customer to thank all the team at Blaydon for their help throughout the decant and relocation process.

Tenant, East Area

During a satisfaction survey, the tenant commented that all the TGHC employees who had assisted her with her complaint had been brilliant, particularly the CSA who was “so professional and lovely, a credit to you all”, and the Customer Care Officer.