

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2014-2015

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR – COMMUNITIES, HOUSING &
CUSTOMER SERVICES**

AGENDA ITEM: 6

**PORTFOLIO: CORPORATE SERVICES & PERFORMANCE (COUNCILLOR
GRAHAM HINCHEY)**

Reason for this Report

1. To report to the Cabinet on the operation of the corporate complaints procedure between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015.

Background

2. Complaints provide valuable information about how we are performing and what our customers think about our services. Most people who complain tell us what we have done wrong and how we can do better; we use this information to improve our services, strengthen our relationships with customers and make better use of our resources. Publishing this annual report demonstrates the Council's commitment to transparency and a positive approach to dealing with and learning from complaints.
3. The Council's complaints procedure reflects guidance given in the Welsh Government Model Policy and Guidance Paper for Handling Complaints. This was further supported by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. Every Council Service Area has a lead officer for complaints. The Complaints Managers aim to acknowledge complaints within 5 working days and provide a full response within 20 working days. Many service areas surpass these expectations and send a full response within 5 working days. Once a complaint is answered in full by the Council, the customer has the option to contact the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales if they are dissatisfied with our response. The Ombudsman states that the aim of every formal investigation should be to "investigate once, investigate well".

Annual Complaints

4. The Annual Complaints Report 2014-15 is attached as appendix 1. A total of 2,418 complaints were recorded during 2014/15. This is a 5.7% decrease from the previous year, when 2,555 complaints were recorded.

There has been a fall in the number of complaints recorded by City of Cardiff Council for the third successive year.

Compliments

5. The Council receives many positive comments about our staff and the services we provide. Knowing where things are working well and are appreciated is as important to analyse as knowing where things are not working. This analysis is used to identify good practice and learning can then be circulated across the Council. Across the year 2014-15, City of Cardiff Council received a total of 1,560 recorded compliments, which is a 0.5% increase from the previous year.

Ombudsman

6. The Ombudsman received 103 cases and closed 98 cases involving City of Cardiff Council in 2014-15 compared to 106 cases received in 2013-14. 3 of the cases were accepted for further investigation of which only 1 led to a report. The reasons for closing cases included premature complaints (defined as when the Council has not had a reasonable opportunity to deal with the complaint itself), the Ombudsman being satisfied with action proposed or taken by the Council and cases being closed after initial consideration.
7. Each year the Ombudsman sends a letter to each local authority detailing the relevant information from his Annual Report. This letter is attached in appendix 2.

Learning from Complaints

8. It is important to use this crucial information to influence future interactions with our customers and to provide the basis for continual improvements in the service. This work is led by the lead officer for complaints and Corporate Complaints Workshops have been set up to look at common issues relating to complaints handling, including standardising responses to customers, collecting customer views and developing templates.

Reason for Recommendations

9. To enable Cabinet to have corporate overview of the complaints and compliments process during 2014/15 and to note the information contained within the report.

Financial Implications

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

Legal Implications

11. There are no direct Legal implications arising from this report.

HR Implications

12. There are no direct HR implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to note the contents of the report

SARAH MCGILL

Director

11 September 2015

The following appendices are attached:

Appendix 1 – City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

Appendix 2 – Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter 2014-15

City of Cardiff Council

Annual Complaints Report 2014-15



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City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

Reason for this report

To report to the Cabinet on the operation of the corporate complaints procedure between 1st April 2014 and 31st March 2015. The statistics for corporate complaints are set out by service area.

Background

Complaints provide valuable information about how we are performing and what our customers think about our services. Most people who complain tell us what we have done wrong and how we can do better; we use this information to improve our services, strengthen our relationships with customers and make better use of our resources. Publishing this annual report demonstrates the Council's commitment to transparency and a positive approach to dealing with and learning from complaints.

Our Complaints Procedure

The Council's complaints procedure reflects guidance given in the Welsh Government Model Policy and Guidance Paper for Handling Complaints. This was further supported by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Complaint received. A complaint can be registered via any council venue and once received, should be forwarded to the Service Area Complaints Manager. Every Council Service Area has a lead officer for complaints. The Complaints Manager will ensure complaints are acknowledged and recorded and facilitate the investigation of the complaint in accordance with the corporate complaints procedure.



Acknowledgment. The Complaints Managers will aim to acknowledge complaints within 5 working days. At this stage, we can let the customer know who is dealing with their complaint and our understanding of what the customer's complaint entails – this is important so that the complainant's expectations are realistic and they have an indication of precisely the issues that will be looked at. We can also let them know that a full response will follow within 20 working days of our receipt of the complaint.



Full response. At the end of an investigation, a response should be produced depending how a customer has indicated they prefer to be contacted. The response should include the outcome of the investigation as well as any necessary action taken for service improvement. The Ombudsman states that the aim of every formal investigation should be to **"investigate once, investigate well"**. Advice is also included on what the complainant should do if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome – to contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.



Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. Complaints that progress to the Ombudsman will have been thoroughly investigated by the service area. If a complainant remains dissatisfied, it is for the Ombudsman to assess whether there is any evidence of service failure or maladministration not identified by the Council.

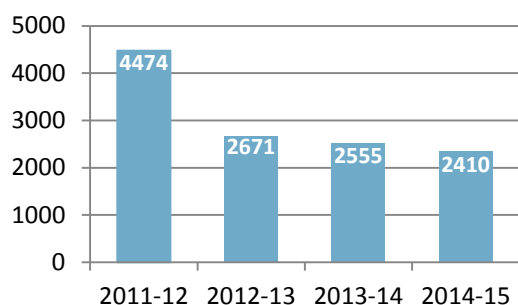
Recording performance

Complaints Managers record information about the number of complaints they have received and how quickly they acknowledged and responded to the complaints. This information is submitted to the Corporate Complaints Team at the end of each quarter. The Corporate Complaints Team use this information to ensure that the complaints policy is being adhered to. Meanwhile, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales captures detailed information regarding complaints against the Council which is included in his annual report.

City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

Complaints to City of Cardiff Council in 2014-15

A total of 2,418 complaints were recorded during 2014/15. This is a 5.7% decrease from the previous year, when 2,555 complaints were recorded. There has been a fall in the number of complaints recorded by City of Cardiff Council for the third successive year.



COMPLAINTS HAVE
DECREASED BY
5.7%
WHEN COMPARED TO
2013/14

Year	Number of complaints
2014-15	2,418
2013-14	2,555
2012-13	2,671
2011-12	4,474

COMPLAINTS HAVE
DECREASED FOR THE
**THIRD
SUCCESSIVE
YEAR**

Complaints breakdown

Service Area	Number of complaints 2014/15	Number of complaints 2013/14
Waste Strategy & Enforcement	759	703
Community Maintenance Services	333	430
Culture, Tourism & Events	294	230
Traffic & Transportation	243	318
Housing	170	225
Finance	164	157
Highways Maintenance	108	114
Parks & Sports	73	80
Customer Services	58	78
Leisure & Play	52	66
Bereavement Services	51	42
Regulatory & Supporting Services	25	28
Education & Lifelong Learning	23	28
Democratic Services	20	2
Planning	19	15
Economic Development	11	12
Central Transport Services / Facilities Management	9	6
Harbour Authority	6	12
HR People Services	0	5
Communications & Media	0	3
Legal Services	0	1
ICT	0	0
Improvement & Information	0	0
Total	2418	2555

NB Complaints for Children's Services and Health & Social Care are recorded under their statutory complaints procedure (please see page 18)

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Compliments for City of Cardiff Council

As an organisation we get many positive comments about our staff and the services we provide. Knowing where things are working well and are appreciated is as important to capture as knowing where things are perhaps not working. We therefore keep a record of the compliments we receive as well as the complaints. Good practice and learning can then be circulated across the Council.

Across the year 2014-15, City of Cardiff Council received a total of 1,560 recorded compliments, which is a 0.5% increase from the previous year.

A few examples are provided below of the types of compliments we have received:

Bereavement Services: The whole process from registration to cremation was carried out in a friendly, helpful and professional manner. The family is very grateful for everything at this difficult time.

Community Maintenance Services: Tenant wanted to compliment CMS for the marvellous work they do, and praised the workmen for being gentlemanly, friendly and helpful.

Culture, Tourism & Events: I wanted to write to you to express my sincere gratitude. I accidentally purchased tickets for the wrong performance of a show. I rang your box office today and the service I received was second to none. As it was my mistake I would have been devastated but understanding if nothing could have been done. However, your staff were extremely helpful, courteous and kind. They have reserved tickets for an afternoon performance which I am truly grateful for. I've been a patron of your theatre since I was a child and have never had any reason to complain about the service I have received. I would like to thank you and your staff for your excellent customer service and look forward to enjoying more experiences in your wonderful establishment.

Customer Services: Excellent, quick, professional response by email and on the telephone. The service from C2C is set up really well and your response is almost immediate.

Service Area	Number of compliments 2014/15	Number of compliments 2013/14
Culture, Tourism & Events	367	356
Environment (Waste Strategy & Enforcement and Regulatory & Supporting Services)	275	294
Strategic Planning, Highways, Traffic & Transportation	242	188
Customer Services	165	202
Housing	156	170
Parks & Sports	136	99
Bereavement Services	71	64
Community Maintenance Services	59	41
Harbour Authority	27	61
Economic Development	26	15
Leisure & Play	13	32
Finance	12	11
Legal Services	4	7
Democratic Services	3	0
Central Transport Services / Facilities Management	2	1
Health & Social Care	1	6
Education & Lifelong Learning	1	3
Communications & Media	0	1
HR People Services	0	1
Total	1560	1552

NB Internal compliments are excluded from this process and it is worth noting that many of the above service areas will receive a sizeable amount of compliments from internal employees.

Economic Development: An email was received from visitors from Australia who wished to praise the Tourist Information Centre who went out of their way to find and book accommodation, provide maps and information of places to visit. The customer remarked that by the time they left the centre they felt calm and also had made some new friends.

Facilities Management: After having a major incident onsite with loss of heating I felt that I wanted to email to thank the staff for their dedication and huge efforts to get the school open and back to normal. Incidents such as these are never easy to manage but I can honestly say that the staff have been fantastic and I cannot thank them enough for their work and support which has been invaluable. The staff have been a huge help and should be congratulated for their hard work as without them we would now be in a very different position, thank you.

City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

Finance: Customer wanted to pass on his father's thanks for the quick responses and the way the account was handled when his mum passed away. Customer advised that the council tax department have made things easier for them during this difficult time.

Harbour Authority: Customer wanted to say that all the team that helped with the rafting and surfing activities could not have been more helpful, everyone had a great time and were very happy by the end. She wished to pass on her thanks to all the instructors and that it was a pleasure visiting the venue.

Highways Maintenance: I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to Cardiff Council in taking action with such speed to a report I made in respect to a faulty manhole. It is absolutely bliss that I no longer hear the rattling sounds that echoed through the evening and early morning keeping myself and probably other residents in the area awake

Housing: I'd like to thank the into-work team, and the job club for helping me obtain a new career, your staff were able to help me complete an application form for the NHS which I would not have been able to complete on my own. I'm waiting to start my new job and none of this would be happening if it was not for the help of all the staff in the into-work team and job club.

Legal Services: As students, we felt extremely privileged to have talked to staff at the Mansion House about the cultural significance of sport in Wales. During our visit to Cardiff we experienced at first hand the passion the City of Cardiff has for sport. We once again thank you and the Mansion House staff for their warm Welsh welcome.

Leisure: Customer wanted to pass on his thanks to the staff at Pentwyn Leisure Centre as his client doesn't cope well with certain social situations and tried for the first time, boxercise and squash. Customer would like to state that the reception staff were excellent and the instructor was fantastic as he helped his client understand the exercises and didn't make him feel like he was being watched by everyone else, which benefited his client very much.

Parks and Sport: Just wanted to say a big thank you to you for all you have done for my family with regards to the placing of the plaque on the bench in Thompson's Park, and allowing us to scatter my dad's ashes in the flower bed opposite the bench. Your kindness and consideration throughout has been amazing, and has given us all peace of mind that my dad is now completely at rest. We were at the park on Thursday when your guys came to look at the paint job required and then returned Saturday with my brother and his daughter and the benches are looking fantastic! You certainly get things done! Once again thank you so much.

Planning / Building Control: Thank you for returning my call. To me you were a life saver. I'm truly grateful to you for the high level of service that your department has offered. In my opinion Cardiff building control is an outstanding department with highly experienced professional people that are willing to give sound advice to the general public. As long as people are willing to ask them, they are willing to help. As an accountant I wouldn't have a clue about rules and regulation of construction world, so I am really glad that Cardiff building control is still in the public sector. Once again thank you for your time - I will continue to call upon your departments service as you have been outstanding in my books.

Traffic & Transportation: I'd like to pass on my personal thanks to the construction crew who worked on the re-modelling of the junction between Caerphilly Road and Ty-Wern Road. I left my bike locked to the railings, as I usually do while at work. When I got back, I was at first horrified to find all the railings had been removed. I then found that the guys had carefully dismantled the railing my bike was locked to, and swapped it (with the bike still attached) for another one round the corner. I'm incredibly pleased that they went the extra mile to save my bike - ideally I'd like to contact them personally, or at least be able to pass on a gift to the guys involved.

Waste Management: I would like to convey my thanks to the general refuse collection team that services my school. They have been coming here for some time and I'd like them to know how much we appreciate their work. The whole team are very friendly and professional. In these days of doom and gloom, it's nice to have a bit of appreciation – and we do!

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Ombudsman Complaints 2014-15

Recommendations in Ombudsman reports and observations about our strengths and weaknesses help us improve our processes.

The Ombudsman closed 98 cases involving City of Cardiff Council in 2014-15 compared to 100 cases in 2013-14. 3 cases were accepted for further investigation of which only 1 led to an Ombudsman report. The Ombudsman received 41 premature complaints (defined as when the council has not had a reasonable opportunity to deal with the complaint itself). It is felt this is due to public perception that the Ombudsman can intervene and make decisions without the Council initially considering the complaint. A further 17 cases were declined because the Ombudsman was satisfied with action proposed or taken by the Council. The Ombudsman closed the cases for the following reasons:

Reason for closing the case	
Complainants had not exhausted the Council's complaints process - they were referred back to the Council	41
Cases closed after initial consideration	27
Cases declined because Ombudsman was satisfied with action proposed or taken by Council	17
Cases out of Ombudsman's jurisdiction	11
Cases withdrawn by complainant	1
Complaint led to an Ombudsman's report	1
Total	98

Ombudsman Complaints - a yearly comparison

The table below shows the total number of complaints made to the Ombudsman regarding City of Cardiff Council. Although the Council removed the independent review from its complaints procedure in 2013, this has only resulted in a small increase in the number of service users approaching the Ombudsman.

Year	
2014-15	103
2013-14	106
2012-13	93
2011-12	90

Investigations leading to Reports

The Ombudsman issues reports if he finds that a complainant has suffered hardship or injustice through the Council's maladministration or service failure.

Under the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005, the Ombudsman can issue one of two types of reports following an investigation into a complaint by a member of the public: Section 16 and Section 21.

Section 16 Report

The first type of report is known as a Section 16 report. This is issued when the Ombudsman believes that the investigation report contains matters of public interest. The Council is then obliged to publicise the report at its own expense. **For the third consecutive year, the Ombudsman issued 0 Section 16 reports against City of Cardiff Council.**

Section 21 Report

The Ombudsman can issue a Section 21 report if the Council agrees to implement any recommendations he has made and if he is satisfied that the case does not raise matters of public interest. The Ombudsman issued 1 Section 21 report during this period for Planning..

Any recommendations as a result of Ombudsman reports have been fulfilled.

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Learning from complaints

Complaints provide valuable feedback and are viewed by our staff as a positive opportunity to learn from experiences in order to drive continual organisational improvement and prevent similar things happening again.

Our complaints handling procedure helps us to address a customer's dissatisfaction and may also prevent the same problems that led to the complaint from arising again. For our staff, complaints provide a first-hand account of the customer's views and experience, and resolving complaints early saves resources and creates better customer relations.

Every Council Service Area has a lead officer for complaints and Corporate Complaints Workshops have been set up to look at common issues relating to complaints handling, including standardising responses to customers, collecting customer views and developing templates.

Some of the actions we take in response to complaints might appear to be small but they can make a big difference. The following are examples - big and small - of what we have done as a result of learning from complaints.

Complaint area	Complaints analysis	Service improvement
Community Maintenance Services	Themes have developed in relation to Housing Repairs particularly in regard to appointment times.	A new system has been implemented which gives our service users a specific appointment time rather than morning / afternoon. (p.10)
Corporate Customer Services	A complaint was received from a Welsh speaker who requested a copy of our complaints form in Welsh but received an English-only copy, thereby contravening Cardiff Council's Welsh Language Policy.	The Corporate Complaints Team have worked with the Welsh Language Unit to produce a bilingual complaint form. This will ensure that such an error will not occur again. It also represents best practice as outlined for by the Welsh Language Commissioner.
Customer Services	Customers unhappy with the waiting time to speak to an agent at Connect to Cardiff.	Shifts have been reviewed to enable maximum efficiency at peak times.
Culture, Tourism & Events	Complaints regarding the suitability of seating and sound quality at a council venue.	In the case of seat repairs, this is done immediately or the seats are taken out of service for repair. For complaints about sound quality, a complaint map is drawn up to establish any consistent problems and inform the promoters and artistes of individual shows. (p.15)
Culture, Tourism & Events	Complaints regarding noise levels at a Cardiff Council organized event.	A meeting was arranged with residents to understand their concerns. Further consultation resulted in improvements made. (p.16)
Environment – Waste Management	Complaints received regarding excess littering in local communities.	Regular ward analysis of complaints is carried out to identify any particular littering hotspots.
Harbour Authority	Complaint regarding dog fouling on the Cardiff Bay Barrage	The Harbour Authority now has two trained enforcement officers that are able to undertake patrols and serve Fixed Penalty Notices on offending dog owners. This will serve to improve the environment for the visitors to the Bay through prevention rather than reactive service. (p.16)

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Harbour Authority	Residents complained about noise at Harbour Authority events	Residents who have complained have subsequently been added to the 'Notice to Mariners' database so that they are kept informed of any events that may affect them. (p.16)
Harbour Authority	Complaints about litter within the Harbour Authority's jurisdiction	A benchmarking exercise was undertaken to establish the cleansing operations that similar organisations on comparable water bodies undertake in the UK (in particular Salford Quays, The Canal & Rivers Trust, Bristol Docks and Swansea Marina), to ascertain what the standard approach is. The result being that the Harbour Authority will clean to the highest possible standard within its resource capability and throughout its jurisdiction.
Health & Social Care	Complaints about the reliability of domiciliary care provided by agencies	The department facilitated meetings involving the agencies, service user and families in order to further understand these concerns. (p.21)
Health & Social Care	A family challenged a Council decision to refuse 24 hour care to a service user. A Stage 3 Panel agreed that the decision was properly made but had not been thoroughly explained to the family.	Managers have considered how to improve the explanation given to service users and families (p.21)
Housing	Complaints received about the lack of clarity within Housing Benefit letters.	The section have taken steps to improve responses as a whole, including complaints responses and Housing Benefit award notices

Other examples of learning from complaints are situated throughout the report.

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Complaints by service area 2014-15

Housing & Communities

Housing & Communities received a total of **503** complaints in 2014/15, which is a significant decrease (23.2%) on the 655 complaints received in 2013/14.

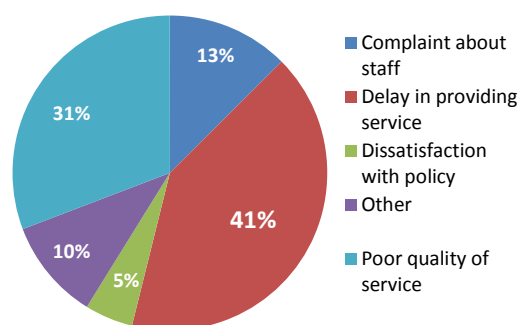
Service Area	Total complaints in 2014/15	Total complaints in 2013/14
Housing	503	655
Community Maintenance Services	333	430
Landlord Services	75	70
Benefits	59	86
Assessment & Support	16	23
Hubs	10	9
Housing Development	5	7
Neighbourhood Regeneration	5	6
Number / Percentage of complaints not responded to on time	11 (2.2%)	9 (1.4%)
Complaints about staff	63 (12.5%)	79 (12.1%)
Delay in providing service	208 (41.4%)	184 (28.1%)
Dissatisfaction with policy	25 (5.0%)	47 (7.2%)
Other	52 (10.3%)	61 (9.3%)
Poor quality of service	155 (30.8%)	284 (43.4%)

Housing & Communities continue to treat complaints in a positive way, looking at each one thoroughly to establish exactly what (if anything) has gone wrong. In addition to doing everything possible to resolve individual complaints, officers will always look at any changes that can be made following a complaint, for example to our literature or procedures. Any lessons that can be learned from a complaint are used to deliver service improvements.

Complaints about the Benefits section and Landlord Services, which are upheld either in full or in part, are reported directly to the relevant senior manager(s). In addition, complaints are reported at monthly meetings to the Assistant Director for Housing and Communities and other relevant staff. Any patterns, such as the types of errors being made, can then be addressed and the appropriate action taken to ensure best practice; for example, reminders issued to staff.

A major development during 2014/15 is that two specialised Housing Complaint Officer posts have been created. These officers started in early 2015 to coincide with the launch of the new allocations policy. These officers currently deal with complaints directed to the Social Letting Unit and it is hoped that their role will expand in future, ensuring that complainants receive the best possible service and simultaneously freeing up staff to do other work.

Categories of Complaints for Housing



The increase in the complaints about **Landlord Services** is primarily due to an increase in complaints about the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Team. The aforementioned Housing Complaints Officers have recently taken over dealing with complaints for the ASB team and, as such, it is hoped that any patterns and trends can be identified and appropriate improvements to the service made.

10 complaints were received in respect of the **Hubs**, which is an increase of 1 when compared to the previous year. The number of complaints remains very low when compared to the number of customers that were helped in the hubs during 2014/15, which was in excess of 122,000.

The largest proportion of complaints was about **Community Maintenance Services (CMS)**, who are responsible for responsive and planned maintenance to 13,500 Council properties. 333 complaints were received and, while this remains of concern, it should be noted that the number of complaints about CMS has fallen by around 23% compared to last year. Furthermore, the amount of complaints is less than 1% of the approximately 70,000 repairs carried out in 2014/15 in total.

Learning from complaints

CMS have carried out a large number of changes to their way of working to improve customer service:

- All CMS operatives were issued with smart phones to enable mobile working. This change has allowed CMS to start offering morning or afternoon appointments to customers, or a slot to avoid the school run. All of these changes to the service have had a positive impact on the number of complaints.
- More repairs are being undertaken by in-house operatives as opposed to external contractors.
- All telephone calls to report repairs are now handled by Connect to Cardiff (C2C)
- Customers receive a text message (if possible) notifying them of their appointment and a reminder text 24 hours before the appointment.

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Customer Services

During 2014-15, the Customer Services directorate expanded to include Connect to Cardiff, Adult Community Learning, Libraries and 24/7 Services. Despite this expansion, the total complaints recorded decreased from 77 in 2013-14 to **58** in 2014-15.

Service Area	Total complaints in 2014/15	Total complaints in 2013/14
Customer Services	58	77
Connect to Cardiff	24	24
Libraries	16	24
Adult Community Learning	13	25
24/7 Services	5	4
Number / Percentage of complaints not responded to on time	7 (12.0%)	0 (0%)
Complaints about staff	17 (29.3%)	24 (31.2%)
Delay in service	5 (8.6%)	5 (6.5%)
Dissatisfaction with policy	9 (15.6%)	29 (37.7%)
Other	13 (22.4%)	3 (3.9%)
Poor quality of service	14 (24.1%)	16 (20.8%)

The number of complaints received at **Connect to Cardiff (C2C)** remains on par with the 24 received in 2013/14. This is a good indication that C2C's low volume of complaints is fairly static, fluctuating by just 2 in the last 3 years. This is despite a rise year on year in the number of calls presented to C2C, which has seen a 7.85% increase in the total number of contacts offered to C2C, with a total of 583,473 in 2014/15.

In April 2014, in line with the Council's programme of savings, C2C reduced its opening hours. In conjunction with the introduction of the Workforce Package Agreement, this translated to less staff availability to deal with increased customer demand. When analysing the complaints over this period, it can be seen that 7 of the 24 relate specifically to the resulting increase in hold times for customers waiting to get through to a Customer Service Representative (CSR). In response to this feedback, new CSR shift patterns were introduced and an extensive re-working of staff rotas was undertaken until a sustained improvement in the customer queue time was achieved.

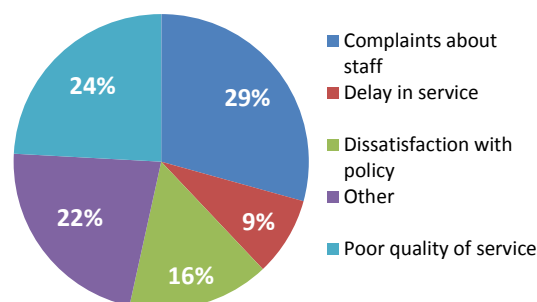
Utilisation of call recording software provides C2C with the opportunity to thoroughly investigate customer issues; subsequently, 9 complaints were not upheld based on the evidence obtained via these recordings. Advancements with the technology means that we are also able to capture

the conversations taking place between C2C operatives and back-office staff, allowing us to offer greater assistance to service area partners in their own complaints investigations.

In the case of staff error, in-house training has been put in place. C2C Team Leaders also continue to monitor call quality on a regular and ongoing basis in order to intervene and actively rectify situations for customers before they reach the complaint stage.

A high level of Customer Service remains the priority in C2C. Notably, we received a total of 165 compliments from customers wishing to record their appreciation for the quality of service received or pass on their thanks to members of staff who assisted them.

Categories of Complaints for Customer Services



The number of complaints received by **Libraries** in 2014/15 has decreased when compared to 2013/14. This is a positive indication that improvements are being made in the quality of library services offered to Cardiff's citizens. This is particularly pleasing when it is considered that visitor figures have increased significantly, with 39,000 extra visitors to Cardiff libraries during 2014/15. Overall, Libraries were visited by 2,078,992 individuals during 2014/15 which means that just 1 in every 129,937 visitors made a complaint.

12.5% of the complaints received related to accessibility of Yahoo emails on library computers – an issue that lies outside of the Authorities' control. Yahoo has introduced the use of pop-up advertisements that are not, in some cases, appropriate for public-use computers and are therefore blocked by the filtering systems in place.

The service has taken action to progress the renewal of outdated equipment that has attracted complaints - namely the self-service RFID technology utilised by Libraries which has invoked

City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

a further 12.5% of the complaints received. This equipment will be replaced within Quarter 2 of this financial year.

43.7% of the complaints related to staff and levels of customer service received. The Library Service has responded by developing customer service training to develop the skillsets of staff and ensure that quality provision is provided. This training will be mandatory and has been incorporated into team Performance and Development Reviews. The PPDR vehicle has also been employed to specify the importance of the "Customer radar" and proactive customer service, as well as the requirements of managers to address poor performance when the quality customer relations benchmark (the Library Service Quality Innovation standard) is not reached.

The Library Service is well thought of and valued by customers as evidenced during the budget consultation for 2014/15 in which the largest proportion of positive citizen feedback related to Library Services.

The **Adult Community Learning** Service received **13** complaints for 2014/15; a clear reduction from 25 in 2013/14. While Learner Fee increases resulted in 18 complaints last year, avoiding changes to fees in 2014/15 has contributed to learner satisfaction.

There were further challenges in the year ahead, however, with a reduction in Welsh Government (WG) grant funding for ACL provision. This led to the ACL programme being divided into Learning for Work, which is grant funded, and Learning for Life, a cost-neutral recreational programme. Significant changes were subsequently made to each programme, resulting in further feedback from the public.

The 7 upheld complaints related to the following:

- 3 complaints concerning a British Sign Language exam that was undertimed, with 3 learners having to re-sit. Measures were taken to ensure there was no room for this error to re-occur, with all relevant staff being re-trained on the process.
- 1 learner raised an issue around not being asked if they had any disability requirements when enrolling via telephone. The customer facing team were reminded of questions that must be asked when undertaking the enrolment process.

- 1 complaint referred to difficulties a learner encountered whilst enrolling and trying to pay for the course online, and further issues in obtaining a refund when the course was cancelled. The ACL service offered online enrolment for the first time last year and there were some initial teething problems. The online enrolment process will be improved for academic year 2015/16, with learners being able to enrol from July 1st.
- 1 complaint was made regarding pottery not being fired at a venue due to resource shortages, which was resolved by a Community Education Officer stepping in to cover a deleted caretaker post.
- 1 complaint concerned a learner's work not being 'signed off' by the class tutor. The delay was acknowledged and the required feedback provided.

The 6 complaints that were not upheld related to the following:

- 2 complaints were made about the lack of level 3 French classes. As part of the cost-neutral programme, this course required a minimum number of learners to enrol. A level 3 French class was later added at Howardian as there was enough demand.
- 3 complaints referred to the cancellation of courses that were run previously. ACL programmes are reviewed annually and funding for grant related courses has to meet specific Welsh Government criteria. Any changes can result in some classes no longer being eligible. The cost neutral programme can only run courses where learner fees will cover tutor, venue, and any additional overhead costs in full. If not enough learners enrol, a course will be cancelled.
- 1 complaint concerned an ACL brochure containing a picture of an individual who had apparently passed away. However, this information proved to be incorrect.

The low number of complaints received by **24/7 Services (Community Alarm)** received is good to see considering the significant raise in calls to the service in the last financial year. Every complaint received helps to further develop the team and the service provided.

As in previous years, the team has received many compliments about the fantastic service delivered by the contact centre and the Mobile Response team.

City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

Education

The Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate received **23** formal complaints in 2014/15.

Service Area	Total complaints in 2014/15	Total complaints in 2013/14
Education	23	28
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	21 (91%)	28 (100%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	11 (48%)	28 (100%)

The Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate received 28 complaints in 2013/14 and therefore there has been decrease in the number of complaints for the Directorate in 2014/15. From the 23 complaints received, 91% of the complaints were acknowledged within five working days. The Directorate responded to 48% of the complaints received within 20 days of receipt.

The number of complaints responded to within 20 working days has decreased from the previous year. Some complaints have involved the Directorate having to commission an Independent Investigator to undertake and oversee the complaint process. This process has had an impact on the Council meeting its complaint timescales. Where this occurs, the Directorate will send an interim reply which explains the delay and when the complainant can expect a comprehensive response. The Directorate is looking at ways to improve this process during 2015/16.

Typically the Directorate receives complaints relating to concerns regarding the statutory functions; School Reorganisation, School Admissions and Statements of Special Educational Needs.

It is important to note that under Section 29(1) of the Education Act 2002, governing bodies of all maintained schools are required to establish procedures for dealing with complaints relating to the school or to the provision of facilities or services. The Local Authority does not have a role in investigating or resolving complaints about schools. The Welsh Government has issued guidance to support schools in dealing with complaints entitled Complaints Procedures for School Governing Bodies in Wales (Welsh Government circular no 011/2012). Within the

guidance, it is the responsibility of the Local Authority to satisfy itself that all schools it maintains have adequate complaints procedures in place and that these are published. A governing body complaints procedure may, with the agreement of the local authority, include a stage for the local authority to consider the complaint. However the statutory responsibility for dealing with a complaint remains with the governing body.

City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

Environment

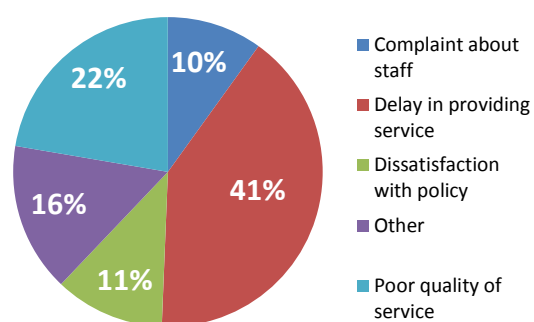
The number of complaints received by Environment has risen slightly from 731 in 2013/2014 to 784 in 2014/2015. The increase of **Waste Strategy and Enforcement** complaints was partly due to operational difficulties, which included vehicle breakdowns and the implementation of a 36 hour working week. Since returning to a 37 hour working week, and with the introduction of a new fleet, complaints have started to return to previous levels.

Service Area	Total complaints in 2014/15	Total complaints in 2013/14
Environment	784	731
Waste Strategy & Enforcement	759	703
Regulatory & Supporting Services	25	28
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	783 (99.9%)	729 (99.7%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	752 (95.9%)	698 (95.5%)
Complaints about staff	78 (9.9%)	104 (14.2%)
Delay in service	319 (40.7%)	193 (26.4%)
Dissatisfaction with policy	90 (11.5%)	126 (17.2%)
Other	122 (15.6%)	146 (19.9%)
Poor quality of service	175 (22.3%)	162 (22.2%)

The number of complaints is considered to be very low when the volume of waste service delivery is taken into account. With approximately 150,000 address points across the city, up to 450,000 waste collections are now done weekly which is equivalent to over 23 million a year. Additionally, Waste Management also provides street cleansing, education and enforcement and bulky waste collection services in addition to providing three Household Waste Recycling Centres during the 2014/15 period. It is pleasing to note that a significant number of compliments continue to be received (275 in 2014/15)

Complaints and trends are robustly monitored by officers through close liaison with Connect to Cardiff and regular updates from the Service Complaints Manager. Officers will continue to work with Supervisors and front line teams to monitor complaints and address any identified trends going forward.

Categories of Complaints for Environment



Every month, a breakdown of the monthly corporate complaints is sent to all Operational Managers with trends highlighted, and appropriate action is taken to address the trend and to reduce complaints. Complaints are regularly monitored by the Business Support team in an effort to ensure that they are responded to within the appropriate response timescales.

The **Regulatory & Supporting Services** section received 25 complaints in 2014/15, compared to 28 in 2013/14. There was no identifiable trend with regards to the complaints which covered a range of issues including noise pollution, private sector housing and trading standards. The number of complaints received is extremely small, given the range of customer facing services provided by the directorate.

City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

Sport, Leisure & Culture

There were 293 complaints for **Culture, Venues & Events** in 2014/2015, compared to 230 complaints in 2013/2014.

Service Area	Total complaints in 2014/15	Total complaints in 2013/14
Culture, Venues & Events	293	230
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	288 (98.3%)	228 (99.1%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	284 (96.9%)	221 (96.1%)
Complaints about staff	3 (1.02%)	22 (7.9%)
Delay in service	0 (0%)	2 (0.7%)
Dissatisfaction with policy	16 (5.5%)	39 (14.0%)
Other	255 (87%)	98 (35.3%)
Poor quality of service	19 (6.48%)	117 (42.1%)

98.3% of complaints received an acknowledgment within 5 working days, and 97% of complainants received a full response within 20 working days. The Council's online services ensure that customers have a quick, convenient and cost free way to complain or comment on our services. This can also result in compliments, and an impressive 367 compliments were recorded for this area. It is important to note that the majority of complaints for this service area can be classified as 'customer preference' rather than service failure. For example, the department receives complaints about shows not being to the customer's personal taste, the quality of plays and the audience etc.

A significant proportion of the increase of non-customer preference complaints can be attributed to:

- a 5.5% increase in tickets sold.
- increased public willingness to voice their complaints
- the need to refurbish the seating
- the introduction of a Ticket Service Charge
- missing out on Dr Who tickets - this was a BBC-run production and ticket allocation.
- what the complainants felt to be poor shows
- patron to patron interaction

Learning from Complaints

The complaints process has allowed St Davids Hall to carry out remedial works where possible such as seat repairs – this is done immediately or the seats are taken out of service for repair and sound - predominately about visiting touring sound. Following this, a complaint map will be drawn up to establish any consistent problems and inform the promoters and artistes of individual shows.

Complaints for **Parks and Sports** have reduced from 80 in 2013/14 to 71 2014/15

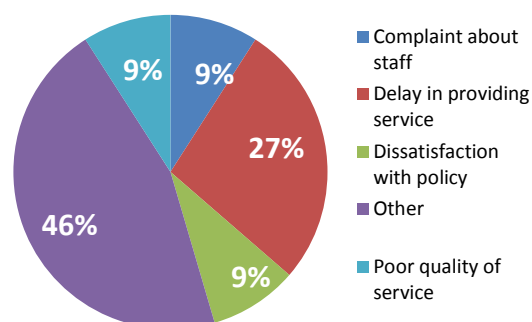
Service Area	Total complaints in 2014/15	Total complaints in 2013/14
Parks and Sports	71	80
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	68 (95.7%)	71 (88.8%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	54 (76.0%)	64 (80.0%)
Complaints about staff	1 (1.41%)	7 (8.8%)
Delay in service	5 (7.04%)	7 (8.8%)
Dissatisfaction with policy	2 (2.82%)	21 (26.3%)
Other	55 (77.46%)	19 (23.8%)
Poor quality of service	8 (11.27%)	26 (32.5%)

An impressive 96% of these complaints received an acknowledgement within 5 working days. This has shown an improvement from 2013/14 during which 88.8% received an acknowledgement within 5 working days. 141 compliments have been received for this area, an increase from 2013/14 when 99 compliments were recorded.

Monthly complaint statistics for Parks and Sports continue to be monitored at Business and Operational Improvement Meetings. This allows managers to identify trends and, if necessary, take corrective action.

Compliments are also reported at bi-monthly Business and Operational Improvement Meetings.

Categories of Complaints for Sports, Leisure & Culture



City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

Complaints for **Leisure and Play** have reduced from 66 in 2013/14 to **57** in 2014/15. 72% of these complaints received an acknowledgement within 5 working days. An impressive 94.7% received a response within 20 working days.

Service Area	Total complaints in 2014/15	Total complaints in 2013/14
Leisure and Play	57	66
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	41 (71.9%)	66 (100%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	54 (94.7%)	64 (96.9%)
Complaints about staff	5 (8.78%)	11 (16.7%)
Delay in service	1 (1.75%)	1 (1.5%)
Dissatisfaction with policy	3 (5.26%)	12 (18.2%)
Other	46 (80.70%)	18 (27.3%)
Poor quality of service	2 (3.51%)	24 (36.4%)

Monthly complaint statistics for Leisure and Play are monitored at Business and Operational Improvement Meetings, which allows managers to identify trends and take corrective action where necessary. 19 compliments were received during the year.

Learning from Complaints:

Several complaints were received regarding Cardiff Bay Beach. Residents who had apartments in close proximity to the Cardiff Bay Beach collectively complained about the noise levels.

A debrief meeting was arranged with residents to discuss the complaints received, and included Cardiff Council Representatives and operators.

After this debrief meeting, the residents were contacted again to explain the outcome. Following the consultation process, a compliment was received reflecting the improvements made.

“On behalf of the residents of QUAYSIDE many thanks to all concerned with the new layout of the Beach / fair. The noise is now very acceptable and the area looks great with the introduction of ‘the horses’. Many thanks and best wishes for a successful sandy summer.

The **Harbour Authority** received **6** complaints in 2014/15, which is an improvement on the previous year when the directorate received 12 complaints. It is pleasing to note that all complaints were acknowledged and responded to within the corporate time limits.

Service Area	Total complaints in 2014/15	Total complaints in 2013/14
Harbour Authority	6	12
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	6 (100%)	12 (100%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	6 (100%)	11 (91.7%)
Complaints about staff	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Delay in service	0 (0%)	2 (16.7%)
Dissatisfaction with policy	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other	3 (50%)	8 (66.6%)
Poor quality of service	3 (50%)	2 (16.7%)

Complaints covered issues including rubbish, dog fouling and noise.

Learning from Complaints:

Residents who have complained about noise have subsequently been added to the ‘Notice to Mariners’ database so that they are kept informed of any events and other closures that may affect them. Following a complaint about dog fouling on the barrage, two Harbour officers received enforcement training so they would be able to patrol the area and improve the environment.

The Harbour Authority was pleased to receive 28 compliments from customers for all sections of the organization. These compliments were received from statutory bodies to local business and water users. Compliments were received across all areas of the Harbour Authority, with 50% of compliments received for the Leisure section which includes Cardiff International White Water and Cardiff Bay Water Activity Centre / Cardiff Sailing Centre. The remaining 50% was made up of 7% for the Barrage/Environmental Teams ranging from works in the wetlands to Barrage Tours; 11% for the Harbourmaster Team for work on the Extreme Sailing Series event and assistance in the run up to NATO; 4% for Harbourmaster/Environment and 11% for the Environment Team.

City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

Bereavement Services

There were 51 recorded complaints for this area in 2014/15 compared to 42 in 2013/14.

Service Area	Total complaints in 2014/15	Total complaints in 2013/14
Bereavement Services	51	42
Number / Percentage of complaints not responded to on time	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Bereavement Services actively encourages the bereaved to contact them should they experience any issues with their grave or at a service in the crematorium. 132 complaints were received via service monitor forms, a decrease of 81 complaints from 2013-14.

Complaints are received by email, C2C, in writing and also via Bereavement Services' reception area where service monitor forms are completed. All complaints are recorded on a database and dealt with as soon as possible. Service Provision Questionnaires are also sent to all those who use Bereavement and Registration Services which provides an additional avenue for people to advise us of any issues with the services they have received.

It is important to note that relative to the high number of visitors to the service, complaints are minimal. Bereavement Services accounts for over 4000 funeral services per annum, approximately 500,000 visitors to our sites and 9000 registrations for births and deaths and 1500 marriages the complaints are very minimal.

Bereavement and Registration Services is a 'right first time' service in which our customers, the bereaved, or those carrying out life changing events are our ultimate priority. Customer requests and comments via service monitor forms and questionnaires are scrutinized and service standards have been developed to inform the public. From these standards monthly performance data is monitored to ensure that we are meeting our commitments to Cardiff's citizens. Annually our level of customer satisfaction averages 99%.

The complaints reported would equate to under 0.03% of all visitors at our sites. Visitors come to us, in the main, in quite a vulnerable state and at differing points in their grieving process. This can

mean that small issues may become of increased importance to them and we actively encourage families to communicate with Bereavement Services their needs via service monitor forms. These are then monitored via our monthly statistics and at operational meetings. Trends in service requirements are considered at this point as well. Where an error has occurred we will proactively apologise in writing to the family concerned to prevent an issue escalating.

Due to the sensitive nature of the service 100% of complaints received a full response within 5 working days.

An impressive 71 instances of thanks were recorded and 247 instances of requests for services such as families being taken to grave locations were recorded.

City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

Statutory Complaints - Social Services (Children's Services and Health & Social Care)

It is a statutory requirement under the following items of legislation for Local Authorities to have in place a Representations and Complaints Procedure for Social Services.

- Representation Procedure (Children) (Wales) Regulations 2014
- Social Services Complaint's Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014

This is in line with the Model Concerns and Complaints Policy and Guidance and the NHS Complaints procedure Putting Things Right

The following provides information about the operation of the Social Services Representation and Complaints Procedure between 1st April 2014 and 31st March 2015. The report contains information about the number and type of complaints received and also provides details of the activities undertaken by the Complaints Unit during that period.

Background

Complaints are treated as a vitally important part of the business of Social Services in the City of Cardiff Council and integrated into organisational learning in both Children's and Health, Social Care & Wellbeing functions.

In particular, complaints provide an opportunity to learn lessons where a service has fallen short of an expected standard in such cases an action plan is developed in partnership with the service area which is reviewed regularly to ensure improvements to services are made.

The Representation and Complaints Procedure is widely publicised and specifically to people who use our services. This provides people with an opportunity to:

- Voice their concerns when they are dissatisfied in order that the issue can be rectified to their satisfaction wherever possible.
- Make a complaint.
- Suggest improvement.
- Challenge decisions

Cardiff's Advocacy Service support all looked after children who make a complaint to ensure they are listened to and play an active role in their planning.

The aim of the City of Cardiff Council Social Services Complaints Procedure aims overall to secure better outcomes for adults, children, young people and families using social care services and is underpinned by the following key principles.

- Commitment to providing quality services
- Accessible and supportive to those with particular needs
- Prompt and responsive with resolution at the earliest opportunity
- Enabling individuals to be independent
- Operated without prejudice or discrimination
- Adheres to the principles of equal opportunity
- Empowering the voice of individuals and augmenting that voice with advocacy wherever individuals want or need it
- Good corporate parenting for looked after children.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution 10 Day Timescale

Complainants should be offered a discussion to resolve their complaints within 10 days of receipt of the complaint. The majority of complaints are dealt with at this informal resolution stage and most are concluded without the need for a formal investigation.

Children and young people who make a complaint are all seen on an individual basis, normally with their advocate, within 48 hours of making their complaint. Where the child's personal circumstances allow, the Children's Services Complaints Officer meets them in person to support them through the process.

Stage 2 – Formal Considerations 25 Day Timescale

Where an initial investigation has not achieved a resolution, complainants have the right to make a formal complaint. In these circumstances, the Complaints Unit commissions an Independent Investigator and an Independent Person to undertake and oversee the complaint process. These investigations are subject to statutory response from the Council, detailing findings, conclusions, recommendations and actions to resolve the complaint.

City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW)

Complainants must be reminded they have the right to complain to the PSOW who provides an external independent service to consider complaints about all Local Authority Services. The Ombudsman is concerned with maladministration and normally requires the complainants to have used their Local Authority Complaints Procedures before accepting a complaint for investigation.

Making a complaint

Making a complaint is not difficult and general advice about the procedure can be found in complaints leaflets and on the Council's website. Alternatively, service users can contact the Complaints Unit (or the Council's Connect to Cardiff service) for help and advice. There is a separate leaflet for children's complaints.

Translations of the Representations and Complaints Procedure can be provided on request and the Complaints Unit can also arrange interpretation services when required. Welsh Language complaints can be dealt with immediately.

Children who are looked after by the local authority are informed of the services of Tros Gynnal Advocacy Service. These children are therefore able to access this service if they need independent support and wish to make a complaint.

Children's Stage 1 Complaints

Of the 195 complaints received in 2014/15, 174 were resolved at Stage 1 the local resolution stage. Of the 195 complaints, 26 were made by children and young people. All of these were resolved at Stage 1, the local resolution stage.

The most common aspects of the services complained about were:

- Quality of service
- Staff (e.g. social worker, team manager, personal adviser)
- Communication
- Contact and placement issues
- Financial Support
- Assessment & decision making, including information sharing / consultation with fathers
- Foster carers
- Confidentiality

Children's Stage 2 Complaints

12 complaints proceeded to Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure compared with 6 in 2013/14.

4 of the complaints investigated at Stage 2 were resolved, and 8 were carried over into 2014/15.

Children's Stage 3 Complaints

1 complaint went to a Stage 3 Review Panel compared with 0 in 2013/14.

Complaints to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

There was 1 complaint to the Ombudsman during this period – the first since 2009.

Complaints

Year	Total complaints
2010/11	134
2011/12	139
2012/13	142
2013/14	150
2014/15	195

Learning from complaints

Information from complaints represents an invaluable source of user feedback as it can highlight aspects of service delivery and performance.

The following is an example of appropriate action taken on issues raised as a result of a complaint.

- A theme had developed with fathers who did not feel they had been included / consulted as part of the assessment process, or that information had not been shared with them.

The case audit tool has been reviewed and amended to capture information on whether assessments demonstrate that fathers were included / consulted as part of the assessment process, and that information has been shared with them appropriately. This will enable the Directorate to evidence involvement of fathers and address the need for this with social workers as required.

City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

Health, Social Care & Wellbeing Complaints

In the year 2014/15, Health, Social Care & Wellbeing had 58 Stage 1 complaints.

Of the 58 complaints which were considered at Stage 1, 11 went on to a Stage 2 Investigation.

The outcomes in Health, Social Care & Wellbeing were as follows:

- Upheld – 16
- Partly upheld – 9
- Not upheld – 25
- Other (including withdrawn) – 12

Service Area	Total complaints in 2014/15	Total complaints in 2013/14
Health, Social Care & Wellbeing	58	70
Stage 1 complaints	58	70
Stage 2 complaints	11	3
Stage 3 complaints	N/A	0
Ombudsman	0	0
Complaints upheld	16	16
Complaints part upheld	9	10
Complaints not upheld	25	27
Other (including withdrawn)	12	17

Learning from complaints

- Health, Social Care & Wellbeing had a number of complaints about the reliability of domiciliary care provided by agencies. These have been resolved by facilitating meetings involving the agency, the service user and family and ourselves.
- The family of a young man with a learning disability complained that the respite care offered was unsuitable. The social worker engaged in a discussion about the nature of the care offered and the goals that were in place for the service user in order to find a resolution.
- Mrs. A needed a high level of care and had multiple health problems. At this stage she did not meet Continuing Health Care (CHC) criteria. Her family requested 24 hour care at home which was refused. This was challenged. A Stage 3 Panel agreed that the decision was properly made but had not been thoroughly and clearly explained to the family. Health, Social Care & Wellbeing managers considered how to improve the explanations given to service users and families.

City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

Strategic Planning, Highways, Traffic & Transportation

Service Area	Total complaints in 2014/15	Total complaints in 2013/14
Strategic Planning, Highways, Traffic & Transportation	370	447
Highways Infrastructure & Maintenance	108	114
Planning (including Building Control)	19	15
Traffic & Transportation	243	318
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	341 (92.2%)	438 (97.9%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	277 (74.9%)	389 (87.0%)
Complaints about staff	25 (6.8%)	24 (5.4%)
Delay in providing service	34 (9.2%)	49 (10.9%)
Dissatisfaction with policy	103 (27.8%)	102 (22.8%)
Other	47 (12.7%)	125 (27.9%)
Poor quality of service	161 (43.5%)	147 (32.9%)

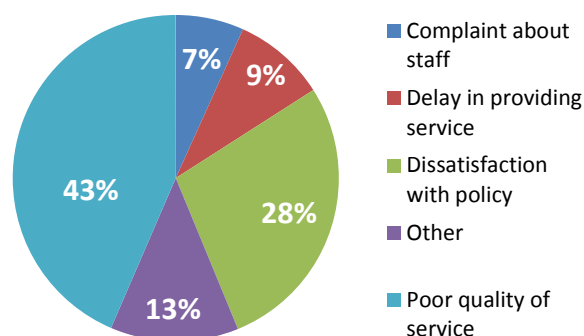
Highway Infrastructure & Maintenance

Highway Maintenance received **108** complaints for 2014/15. This is a decrease of 6 on the previous year where 114 complaints were recorded. The highest number of complaints received was again related to Potholes/Trips/Paving. However, this number had continued to fall from the previous year to 18 from 23, which can be partly attributed to the way potholes are processed and passed to Highway Inspectors for action via the AMX database.

The second highest category related to highway drainage complaints. 15 complaints were recorded which remained consistent with the previous year where 15 complaints had also been received.

The third highest category was in relation to Carriageway Reconstruction. The increased resurfacing programme for 2014/15 has resulted in 158 roads being resurfaced compared with 81 the previous year, although the number of complaints remained relatively similar (12 compared to 13 the previous year).

Categories of Complaints for Strategic Planning, Highways, Traffic & Transportation



Traffic & Transportation

Traffic & Transportation (including what was Network Management) received **243** complaints for 2014/15, which is a decrease of 75 from the total for 2013/14.

The highest number of complaints related to the Resident Parking Scheme. The majority of the complaints followed on from the previous year where people were unhappy with the cost of permits and also the policy relating to lost visitor permits. A number of complaints were also received regarding the application process. In spite of this, complaints dropped from 76 to 59 from the previous year.

Civil Parking Enforcement also figured highly for the number of complaints received, but had also seen figures decrease from the previous year. Complaints against Civil Enforcement Officers remained the same compared with the previous year with 11 complaints received.

Road Safety Schemes received 24 complaints for the past year. This related mainly to motorists complaining about the diversions that have been put in place and the delays that are endured usually for a short amount of time.

City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

Planning (including Building Control)

The Planning Service received **19** complaints in total for 2014/15. This is an increase of 4 on the previous year where 15 complaints were recorded. These complaints covered a range of issues relating to Planning applications, the planning consultation process, planning decisions and compliance with Building Regulations. This figure is considerably small given that Development Management receives an approximate of 2,500 planning applications per year. Many of these applications will require negotiating with multiple parties to discuss contentious issues and securing decisions using either delegated powers or by reporting through the Planning Committee. Planners also investigate developments where planning permission has not been granted and unauthorised developments have been undertaken.

For 2014/15, 242 compliments have been received for the service area as a whole which should be considered a great achievement considering the varied and complex duties that are undertaken within the directive.

Monthly complaints statistics for Strategic Planning, Highways and Traffic & Transportation are monitored at Business & Operational Improvement Meetings (BIMs) and this allows managers to identify any trends and take any necessary corrective action.

City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

Resources

There has been a slight increase in the total number of complaints received by **Finance** from 157 in 2013/14 to 164 in 2014/15.

Service Area	Total complaints in 2014/15	Total complaints in 2013/14
Finance	164	157
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	129 (78.7%)	126 (80.3%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	114 (69.5%)	139 (88.5%)
Complaints upheld	28 (17.0%)	26 (16.5%)
Complaints not upheld	136 (83.0%)	131 (83.5%)
Complaints about staff	7 (4.3%)	16 (10.1%)
Delay in providing service	5 (3.0%)	9 (5.7%)
Dissatisfaction with policy	8 (4.9%)	30 (19.0%)
Other	0 (0%)	11 (7.0%)
Poor quality of service	144 (87.9%)	92 (58.2%)

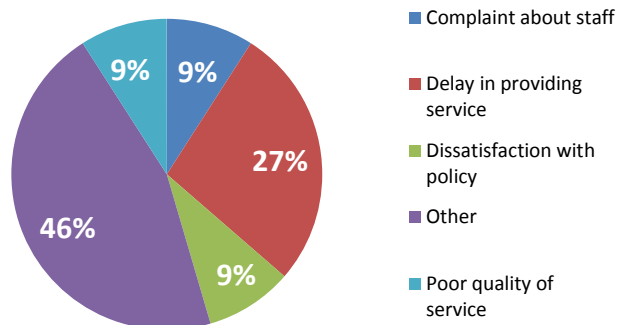
The percentage of complaints considered justified is slightly higher at 17% compared to 16.5% in the previous year. Upheld complaints are further considered by the relevant manager to determine any action that can be taken to minimise similar complaints in future.

As in previous years, the majority of complaints received related to the collection of unpaid Council Tax charges and queries over liability and exemptions.

The Directorate is continuing to take a robust stance in pursuing Council Tax debtors and takes appropriate legal action to obtain Liability Orders and seek prompt payment. As part of this process, the Council continues to use external bailiffs to complement the work of the in-house team. This does lead to some complaints about the recovery action taken. However, in most instances these complaints were considered unjustified when they were investigated as the complainants were in arrears and were objecting to being pursued over the unpaid bills.

The collection of as much Council Tax income as possible is particularly important in the current economic climate and it should be noted that the approach outlined has resulted in an increase in the percentage of Council Tax collected to 97.03% in 2014/15. This is the highest percentage collected since Council Tax was introduced.

Categories of Complaints for Finance



HR People Services

There were **0** complaints about HR People Services in 2014/15 which is a positive result considering the challenges facing HR and the Council.

HR People Services continues to review its processes on a regular basis, which is based on comments from complaints, customer feedback and our own staff. With reduced resources, HR will develop ways for managers to access HR information via updated Intranet pages and FAQs, together with streamlining processes to enable quicker processing and better accuracy. With the challenges facing HR and the Council we will continually monitor any complaints, feedback and compliments to improve service delivery.

There were **0** complaints for **Legal Services** and **20** complaints for **Democratic Services** in 2014/15. The complaints manager reviewed all of the complaints and concluded that the increase was the result of improvements in reporting and recording of complaints within the service area. There were otherwise no identifiable trends from the complaints

Communications & Media are responsible for Corporate Communication, including the production and distribution of the Capital Times newspaper. There were **0** complaints during 2014/15. Considering the level of coverage, this is a positive result.

City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

During 2014/15 **Economic Development** received 11 complaints, comprised of 3 for Economic Development, 2 for Major Projects, 1 for City Centre Management and 5 for Strategic Estates.

When considering the number of high profile projects and the amount of regeneration activity across the city, this is a very encouraging result.

Service Area	Total complaints in 2014/15	Total complaints in 2013/14
Economic Development	11	12
Number / Percentage of acknowledgments sent within 5 working days	11 (100%)	10 (83.3%)
Number / Percentage of responses sent within 20 working days	11 (100%)	11 (91.7%)
Complaints upheld	11 (100%)	12 (100%)
Complaints not upheld	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Complaints about staff	1 (9.1%)	1 (8.3%)
Delay in service	3 (27.3%)	2 (16.7%)
Dissatisfaction with policy	1 (9.1%)	2 (16.7%)
Other	5 (45.5%)	5 (41.7%)
Poor quality of service	1 (9.1%)	2 (16.7%)

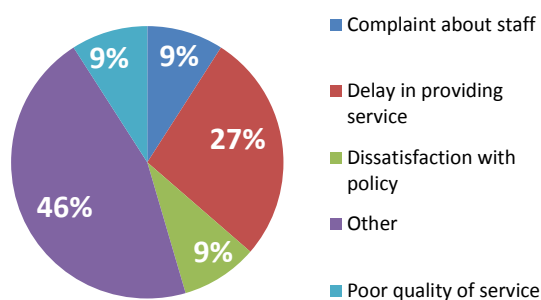
Welsh Language Complaints

In accordance with Corporate Standards, we monitor the number of complaints in relation to the operation of the Welsh Language Scheme. All public services have a legal obligation to provide their services through the medium of Welsh. In 2014/15, the Council received 24 complaints about Welsh Language issues compared to 11 in 2013/14 and 13 in 2012/13.

Whether the complaints were received in the medium of English or Welsh, they were dealt with in accordance with the corporate complaints procedure. These instances are monitored and communicated with senior management.

The Corporate Complaints policy has been well publicised and all directorates are required to complete a Welsh Language Scheme Monitor Form each quarter in order to report complaints relating to the Scheme to the Legal Service Area.

Categories of Complaints for Economic Development



Economic Development received a total of 26 compliments during 2014/15.

There were 0 complaints for **Improvement & Information** in 2014/15. Complaints about the Freedom of Information process and Data Protection issues are not subject to our Complaints procedure or the Ombudsman.

City of Cardiff Council Annual Complaints Report 2014-15

Priorities for the coming year

We will continue to review the complaints service through 2015/16 and make any necessary changes to ensure that our complaints process remains customer-focused and that the Council is providing the best service possible. Below are some of our priorities this coming year so that we can achieve these goals.

Improved complaints reporting - The complaints team will implement a quarterly report which will help to identify any trends promptly but also place increased emphasis on what the Council is learning from complaints. Quarterly meetings will also be arranged with Service Area Complaints Managers so that issues can be raised, discussed and resolved.

Improved complaints resolution - There are occasions where a problem can be resolved without the need to enter the complaints process. The complaints team will look at ways of empowering public-facing staff to try and resolve these problems at the first point of contact before they escalate into complaints. This may involve training with service areas to help them apply the complaints policy and procedure.

Improved complaint responses - Although the Council removed its independent review stage from the complaints procedure, this has only had a limited impact on the number of complainants approaching the Ombudsman. This provides evidence that our complaint responses are improving and that we are following the Ombudsman's aim for local authorities of 'Investigate once, investigate well'. We hope to see continued progress on this front and the complaints team will be working with service areas to improve the overall quality of our complaint responses.

Improved customer satisfaction - Though compliments have increased this year, there is a concern that the good service provided every day by some Council departments is not being represented. The complaints team will look at ways of updating our recording procedure to ensure our compliments are captured and that we are continuing to take on board what our customers want.

Our ref: NB/jm

Ask for: James Merrifield

Your ref:

 01656 644 200

Date: 3 August 2015

 James.Merrifield@ombudsman-wales.org.uk

Mr Paul Orders
Chief Executive
Cardiff County Council
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Dear Mr Orders

Annual Letter 2014/15

Following the recent publication of my Annual Report, I am pleased to provide you with the Annual Letter (2014/15) for Cardiff County Council.

I have referred to the stark reality of the volume of increases in enquires and complaints in the Annual Report. Comparing the position against 2013/14, there has been a 7% increase in the number of public body complaints received by my office. The Health and Local Authority sectors account for 83% of the complaints received by my office; over the past five years, there has been a 126% and 10% increase in complaints respectively.

Traditionally, county councils have generated the largest number of complaints to this office and the last year has seen a 5% increase. Whilst Housing and Planning are consistently the largest areas of complaint for Local Authorities, the data for 2014/15 shows notable increases in complaints about Complaint-handling, Environment and Environmental Health, and Finance and Taxation, compared with 2013/14.

In reference to the outcomes of complaints, I am pleased that my office has issued fewer upheld reports against Local Authorities, compared with 2013/14. I have issued one Public Interest report against a body in the Local Authority sector. The report identified numerous failings concerning the way in which the Local Authority investigated concerns about the welfare of the complainant's daughter. The report also identified poor complaint-handling, a common feature amongst complaints across all sectors.

The complaint data shows a small decrease in the number of Quick Fixes and Voluntary Settlements achieved with Local Authorities, compared with 2013/14. I am keen to ensure that, wherever possible and appropriate, my office works with bodies from all sectors to resolve complaints as quickly and effectively as possible. In this regard, I am concerned that the time taken in responding to requests for information from this office has significantly worsened; 45% of responses across Local Authorities took more than six weeks in 2014/15.

This figure is noticeable worse than the equivalent figure for the Health sector, despite my office making appreciably more requests for information to Health Boards. Against this background, I take this opportunity to reinforce the content of the letter I sent to you in April 2015 setting out a number of changes in the way that my office will work with your organisation in handling complaints. The changes included amending the time given to bodies to provide complaint files to two weeks, as well as new arrangements in granting additional time to bodies to provide information meaning that requests for extensions which are made with very limited justification will no longer be agreed.

In reference to your Local Authority, the number of complaints received has decreased compared to 2013/14, and is now below the average. The largest single area of complaint was Housing, followed by complaints about Environment and Environmental Health. My office investigated three complaints during 2014/15 and issued one 'upheld' report. I am pleased to note the level of Quick Fixes and Voluntary Settlements achieved with your Local Authority. I am also pleased to note that 67% of responses to requests for information from my office were received within four weeks, although a third took more than six weeks.

My office is working in a number of ways to address the upward trend in complaints. We will be looking to engage more directly with county councils to promote improvement. We will also be placing greater emphasis on the data which we gather, initially in relation to complaints about the Health sector, to further identify trends and patterns. My office will also be taking a more proactive role in measuring compliance with recommendations and settlements, which may result in requests to visit your offices to discuss and examine changes that you have implemented. In addition to this work, you will be aware that following its inquiry, the Assembly's Finance Committee issued a report in May 2015, making a number of recommendations for revised or additional powers for the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. I very much hope that those recommendations will come to fruition in the form of a new Act within the next year or so.

This correspondence has been copied to the Leader of the Council. I will also be sending a copy of this correspondence to your contact officer within your organisation and would again reiterate the importance of this role. Finally, a copy of all annual letters will be published on the PSOW's website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Bennett', written in a cursive style.

Nick Bennett
Ombudsman

Copy: Leader, Cardiff County Council