



# Doncaster Council

## Report

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Date: 9<sup>th</sup> September  
2021

To the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee

Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2020/21

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Councillor Jane Nightingale		No

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this report is to summarise complaints and compliment information relating to 2020/21 for Doncaster Council and partners. This includes the Council, Doncaster Council Services Trust (DCST), St Leger Homes of Doncaster (SLHD) and Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust (DCLT). It also seeks to identify the key areas that are the subject of complaints and what measures have been taken to improve as a result of that feedback where required. It also provides a view of improvement from the Council's Customer Service Team who listen to thousands of customers directly every week and reports the current position with regard to the Unreasonable Behaviour Policy introduced last year. **Appendix 1** includes the full Complaint and Compliment report and there will be an **Appendix 2** includes a copy of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Annual Letter to Doncaster Council published in July relating to performance in 20/21.
2. Analysis evidences that the overall number of complaints have reduced, the number of investigations by the LGSCO have reduced and we have learned significantly throughout the year as detailed in the annual report. That said it is hard to compare 20/21 with any other year for obvious reasons. The key improvements resulting from the feedback in 20/21 are:

### **Doncaster Council**

- The Waste & Recycling Team have been working closely with the Customer Experience Team to ensure that a considerable proportion of their complaints are investigated the same day with a view to immediately resolving the matter for the customer.
- The Adults Health and Wellbeing Directorate have introduced a new process for how complaints are distributed within the directorate; this ensures that the relevant Head of Service has visibility of complaints on the first day of it being received.
- School Admissions – The new Synergy technology system (part of the Integrated People Solution) is now fully embedded within the team, which has resulted in much improved processing times for applications and response times to customers.

### **Doncaster Children's Services Trust**

- Introduction of changes to working practises and decision making around social workers are changing to ensure a smooth transition for children.
- Pro-actively worked with families to support contact with their children through other sources when face-to-face contact was not an option due to COVID restrictions, such as face time and telephone calls.
- Adapted work practises to pro-actively supply people with weekly updates when they are waiting for a decision to be made. Also if a decision has been made ahead of the next scheduled update the person will be advised at that point.

### **St Leger Homes of Doncaster**

- Review of telephony system and revised protocols across the organisation to ensure customers always receive a response when telephoning.
- Improved the content of letters to customers by improving existing processes, creating more ownership for individual case management and ensuring that all staff involved in these areas received full end-to-end training on the new processes.
- Improved process for asbestos surveys to improve communication to customers around timescales and to manage customers' expectations.

### **Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust**

- Improved booking system, customers can now register for their own account online removing the need for customers to telephone the contact centre to register.
- An 86% reduction in complaints relating to cleanliness of facilities.
- Suspension of membership payments whilst facilities were closed.

## **EXEMPT REPORT**

3. N/A

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

4. This report recommends consideration and comment on the complaint and compliment report for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

5. Insight from complaints plays a key role in how we deliver the right outcome to our citizens and in continually improving our service delivery. As well as putting things right for the individual service user, we learn from complaints in order to improve services for the future.

## BACKGROUND

6. The aim of complaint procedures is to resolve any dissatisfaction promptly, effectively and transparently and to inform service improvements to prevent service users experiencing the same issues in the future. The Council, DCST, SLHD and DCLT all have complaint policies and procedures. They also have officers who are responsible for ensuring the complaint and compliment processes are followed and are available to support customers and staff to ensure that making a complaint is as easy as possible for all concerned.
7. The LGSCO carried out detailed investigations on six applications, three were upheld in the customers favour and three were not upheld. When comparing the number of decisions following investigations by the LGSCO to last year's statistics, the number of investigations have reduced by over 50%. Throughout the year we have been ensuring that, any Stage 1 or Stage 2 investigations that were carried out within the internal complaint procedure had addressed all the customers concerns before the response was sent to the customer. This ensures that if a customer chooses to seek independent advice, we have done all we can to improve. In 100% of cases the LGSCO were satisfied that DMBC, DCST and SLHD had successfully implemented their recommendations when a complaint was upheld.
8. Along with the figure above the LGSCO have also assisted residents who had applied to the council for a business grant and had been unsuccessful. In total, the LGSCO conducted seven investigations solely relating to business grants. This resulted in one investigation being upheld.

## 9. Summary of Complaints and Compliment Information

Area	Volume of Complaints Received in 2019/2020	Volume of Complaints Received in 2020/21
Doncaster Council	620	460
Doncaster Children's Services Trust	134	151
St Leger Homes of Doncaster	832	845
Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust	966	321
<b>Total</b>	<b>2552</b>	<b>1777</b>

## Number of complaints received and outcomes of complaint investigations.

Areas	No. of Stage 1 Complaints received	Upheld/Partly Upheld	Not Upheld
DMBC	460	60%	40%
DCST	151	34%	66%
SLHD	845	28%	72%

\*DCLT does not capture this information.

## Compliments

Areas	No of Compliments Received	Top Area
DMBC	423	Waste & Recycling
DCST	265	Placements
SLHD	107	Property Services
DCLT	28	The Dome

10. The key priorities for the staff who co-ordinate this feedback will be to continue to provide an expert service in complaint handling, promoting the sharing of good practice as well as poor practice so that lessons can be learned. There will also be a focus on reducing complaints through service improvements, which in turn should reduce the number of complaints being upheld or partially upheld.

## OPTIONS CONSIDERED

11. There are no options to consider in this particular report. The main objective is to communicate the 2020/2021 complaint and compliment information for Doncaster Council and its partners.

## REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

12. N/A

## IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

13.

Outcomes	Implications
<p><b>Doncaster Working:</b> Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better access to good fulfilling work</li> <li>• Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints and Compliments both provide valuable customer feedback to put any failure right, implement the resulting improvement and to celebrate an outstanding quality of service. This applies to everything we do and all</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inward Investment</li> </ul>	services involved in delivering all our priorities.
	<p><b>Doncaster Living:</b> Our vision is for Doncaster's people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster</li> <li>• More people can live in a good quality, affordable home</li> <li>• Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport</li> <li>• Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean</li> <li>• Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Doncaster Learning:</b> Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school</li> <li>• Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better</li> <li>• Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Doncaster Caring:</b> Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children have the best start in life</li> <li>• Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust</li> <li>• Older people can live well and independently in their own homes.</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Connected Council:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A modern, efficient and flexible workforce</li> <li>• Modern, accessible customer interactions</li> <li>• Operating within our resources and delivering value for money</li> <li>• A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and</li> </ul>	

	aspirations of residents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths</li> <li>• Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance</li> </ul>	
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## **RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

14. If we fail to learn lessons and effectively analyse the information we receive through our complaints to inform improved service delivery, the following could occur:
- Doncaster residents may not receive the standard of service delivery they expect and deserve; and
  - An increased risk of maladministration.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [SRF 21/06/2021]**

15. The Council has a number of legal duties in relation to complaints, particularly in relation to Local Government Ombudsman findings. The Monitoring Officer has detailed duties in relation to findings of maladministration. The Council also has a specific duty set out in law to publish an annual report of complaints made in relation to Children's Services. Complaints are increasingly seen as a valuable tool to be used by organisations to better understand their services and to ensure that lessons can be learnt from customer complaints, feedback, and services improved.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials PH Date 24/06/21]**

16. There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report. If service improvements are required, these should be addressed by each service within existing budget levels.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials RH Date 21/06/2021]**

17. There are no specific HR issues raised in this report.

## **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials PW Date 21/06/2021]**

18. There are no technology implications in relation to this report.

## **HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials SH 21/06/2021]**

19. Good governance is important for healthy organisations and for healthy populations. Effective systems to respond to complaints and compliments demonstrate not only a responsive learning culture but also allows specific health issues to be addressed.

## **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials DA Date 21/06/21]**

20. Decision makers must consider the Council's duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty at s149 of the Equality Act 2010. The duty requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the act, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a 'protected characteristic' and those that do not share that protected characteristic. There are no specific equality implications arising from this report. However, any activities arising from the management of complaints and compliments will need to be the subject of separate 'due regard' assessments.

## **CONSULTATION**

21. This report will be considered by the Chief Executive, Directors, the Executive Board and the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

22. **Appendix 1** – Annual Complaints & Compliments Report  
**Appendix 2** – Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Annual Letter.

## **REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS**

Steven Jones, DMBC Customer Experience Officer  
Dawn Jones, DCST Customer Experience Manager  
Louise Robson, SLHD Customer & Communications Service Manager  
Carl Lewis, DCLT Head of Communications

Dulcie Aulton, Head of Customer Service  
Tel: 01302 552860 Email: [dulcie.aulton@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:dulcie.aulton@doncaster.gov.uk)

**Debbie Hogg**  
**Director of Corporate Resources**