



# Doncaster Council

## Report

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Date: 8<sup>th</sup> September  
2022

To the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee

Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2021/22

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

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this report is to summarise complaints and compliment information relating to 2021/22 for Doncaster Council and partners. This includes the Council, Doncaster Children's 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 the current position with regard to the Unreasonable Behaviour Policy. **Appendix 1** includes the full Complaint and Compliment report and **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 21/22.
2. Analysis evidences that across all the organisations in 2021/22, we saw an increase in the number of complaints received by a cumulative 1,080, resulting in 2,857 complaints being received compared to 1,777 in the previous year. The report includes a comparison to the 2019/20 year, in which the number of complaints received are similar to this year. Last year, the impact COVID had on both Council Services and residents as a whole saw the number of complaints and communication with the Council decrease significantly and for that reason is not a useful comparison when assessing the final figures. The key improvements resulting from the feedback in 21/22 are:

### **Doncaster Council**

- The Adults Health and Wellbeing Directorate (AHWB) has introduced the involvement of Senior Practitioners in responses to complaints to help recognise where improvements in service areas can be maximised, for example contacting family members and striking up dialogues in a more timely manner. Previously the communication was delayed due to prioritisation of workloads by social workers.
- The Waste & Recycling Team have been working closely with the Customer Experience Team to ensure that a considerable proportion of their complaints are investigated with the resident contacted the same day with a view to preventing unnecessary formal action.
- In AHWB, complaint training has been made mandatory to all senior managers and officers that may deal with complaints to improve letter writing and communication style with residents and families, which will reduce escalation.

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

- A review of fostering processes including training, assessments and ongoing supervision so that existing and potential foster carers understand what the Trust expects of them. The outcome was that it was agreed with the Recruitment and Assessment Team that standards of conduct of foster carers, including consumption of alcohol, would be explored during the preparation course for people who are interested in fostering and also in the home study for those who wished to pursue fostering for the Trust. Standards of conduct would be addressed in supervision with existing foster carers as well as through the Annual Review Process, which provides independent oversight by the Agency Decision Maker.
- A sample letter template has been created by the Letterbox Coordinator for a sibling/young person to use as part of the Letterbox process. The Letterbox is used for communication between birth families and children who have been adopted.
- The Trust's Psychological Services has changed its procedures to either share the outcome of any assessment they undertook directly with the young person and their families or be present when the social worker did this. This action was taken because they are best placed to answer any queries and receive direct feedback

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

- SLHD have launched The Repairs Excellence pilot, with a new approach to communicating with customers, which includes text reminders to confirm appointments.
- SLHD have reviewed their ASB processes and procedures using the Tenant and Resident Improvement Panel and will shortly be implementing a number of service improvements resulting from the review.
- SLHD are reviewing the front-end access into the Home Options service to provide a quicker response at the first point of contact and immediate allocation to an officer to case manage if required. SLH are also ensuring all homeless cases have a dedicated case manager so

that customers have just the one officer they deal with and can contact if they have a problem.

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

- With regard to DCLT capital works and site closures, they have improved communication with customers and feedback on progress of the works. They have now published statements of progress to reduce complaints from customers and they meet regularly with stakeholders.
- DCLT have experienced several communication and process errors with their external provider who managed their memberships and direct debit payments. This caused upset and distress for their customers. DCLT have taken the decision to move the process in house and to maximise their IT systems to provide a better customer experience.
- Due to capital works, DCLT pool space is limited. After returning from Covid19 closures, programming reviews became central to ensure that the offer was fair, consistent, and equitable to all customers. This did cause issues for some customers who felt that their session should be prioritised. DCLT decisions were made to ensure they could maintain an offer for all customers, including public, learn to swim, education lessons and local swimming clubs.

### **EXEMPT REPORT**

3. N/A

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

4. This report recommends consideration and comment on the complaints and compliment report for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

### **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 16 applications, six were upheld in the customers favour, two were partially upheld, four were not upheld

and four are still being investigated. Of the 6 cases that have been upheld across the Authority, the majority were upheld as the LGSCO did not feel that the distress and inconvenience caused to the resident had been adequately considered, even if the overall actions by the authority were supported.

8. 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.

## 9. Summary of Complaints and Compliment Information

### Number of Complaints received

Organisation	Stage 1 2019/20	Stage 1 2020/21	Stage 1 2021/22
DMBC	620	460	815
SLHD	832	845	1183
DCST	134	151	169
DCLT	966	321	690
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2552</b>	<b>1777</b>	<b>2857</b>

### Number of Compliments received

Organisation	Compliments 2019/20	Compliments 2020/21	Compliments 2021/22
DMBC	346	423	418
SLHD	203	107	124
DCST	243	265	211
DCLT	57	28	43
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>849</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>796</b>

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 2021/2022 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.

	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Implications</b>
	<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> <li>• Inward Investment</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 services involved in delivering all our priorities.</p>
	<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 aspirations of residents</li> <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>	

## 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 [HP 14/06/2022]

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 under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government Act 1974. 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 10/06/22]**

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 14/06/2022]**

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

### **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials PW Date 10/06/2022]**

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

### **HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials SH 14/06/2022]**

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 10/06/22]**

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 has been considered by the Chief Executive, Directors and the Executive Board followed by the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

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