

COMPLAINTS SERVICE REPORT 2020-21

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Author: Eilidh Cook

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North Tyneside Council

COMPLAINTS SERVICE REPORT

1 APRIL 2020 – 31 MARCH 2021

Introduction

This report provides an overview of the Authority's closed complaints, for the year between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. It covers complaints under the Children Act 1989 and the Local Authority Social Services NHS Complaint Regulations (England) 2009, which are often referred to together as the 'social services' procedures. It also includes other 'corporate complaints' about other services provided by the Authority and Complaints made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and Housing Ombudsman (HO). This report has been produced using data from complaints that were closed during 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The Authority always aims to provide high quality services and customer care at all times. However, it recognises there are occasions when people may wish to register dissatisfaction with those services. When this happens, the Authority wants to hear about people's experiences and, where something has gone wrong, to put it right, so far as is possible and this process in turn drives improvements generated from complaints. Therefore, we have a comprehensive complaints service that covers not only the statutory Social Services arena, but also all other services of the Authority under a Corporate Complaints Procedure.

We also welcome comments, compliments and suggestions to provide a broad, balanced and reflective picture of people's experiences of our services.

Executive Summary

The number of complaints continues to be very low compared to the millions of transactions the Authority has with approximately 204,000 residents and approximately, 6 million visitors to the area every year, the overall number of formal complaints to the Authority is lower compared to last year when 1069 complaints were registered in comparison to 979 during 2020-21, this was due to complaints registering been placed on hold at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic between April and June 2021. This action was following guidance from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Complaint leaflets are widely available in the Authority's buildings and to download from the Authority's website. It is also now very easy for our customers to contact us online and this is very quickly becoming, the preferred method of communication.

In keeping with the principle of resolving problems as quickly as possible, the proportion of Corporate Complaints resolved at Stage 1 remains high at 83% in 2020-21 and 83% for Children Social Care Complaints. Adult Social Care complaints have a one stage process and if the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may complain to the Local Government

and Social Care Ombudsman, resulting in all such complaints being resolved at Stage 1 of the statutory complaints procedure.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman undertook 8 detailed investigations during this period and upheld six. The Authority fully complied with all recommendations made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Procedures

Overview

The Authority aims to respond positively to all complaints and other representations so that it can help resolve individual issues and learn from experience how to improve services. We aim to provide comprehensive complaint services, which are widely understood and easily accessible to all. The whole Authority, staff and Members, are committed to effective complaint handling and problem solving as an integral part of customer focussed services and responsive performance management.

There are three separate procedures for Corporate, Children's and Adult Social Care. Wherever possible, before the 'formal' complaint procedures are used, efforts are made at an operational level to resolve any difficulties.

Corporate Complaints

Once the formal procedures are entered into for Corporate Complaints, there are, in essence, three stages:

1. The complaint is referred to a Team Leader or Manager, of the relevant services area, to try to resolve within 15 working days.
2. If not resolved to the customer's satisfaction, they can ask for it to be reviewed by a more senior Manager and this will be done within a further 15 working days; and
3. Ultimately, the Regulation and Review Committee, consisting of up to five Ward Councillors, make the final decision but prior to progression to this stage, the matter is fully considered by the Senior Complaints Officer.

Children Social Care Complaints

In Children Social Care cases, the statutory complaints process is governed by the Local Authority Social Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2006. Stage 1 should be responded to within 10 working days and can be extended to 20 working days; at Stage 2 the response is due within 25 working days and may be extended to 65 working days for complex complaints with the complainant's approval; and Stage 3, the complaint is referred to an Independent Review Panel.

The Authority engage Independent Investigators and Independent Persons for Children Social Care Complaints at Stage 2 as set out in the Regulations. Other independent roles, e.g. members of Independent Complaint Review Panels, are also engaged by the Authority's Complaints Service when required.

Children Social Care staff ensure that all children, of an understanding age, who are new to the care system are in receipt of a complaints leaflet.

Adult Social Care Complaints

The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 were introduced in April 2009. Under these provisions, the characteristics of individual complaints are assessed and specific plans of how to address the complaint are agreed with the complainant. The approach focuses on the complainant and enables organisations to tailor a flexible response that seeks to resolve the complainant's specific concerns. It is based on the principles of good complaints handling:

1. Getting it right
2. Being customer focused
3. Being open and accountable
4. Acting fairly and proportionately
5. Putting things right
6. Seeking continuous improvement

This statutory procedure has no fixed timescales, other than a maximum period of six months for handling the complaint and is a one stage process, however, locally, the Authority aims to respond within 20 working days.

How to make a complaint

Complaints can be made in a number of ways, e.g.

- By talking to the staff involved, to let them try to sort the problem out
- By writing to or telephoning the Customer and Member Liaison Office:
Customer and Member Liaison Office
Quadrant
The Silverlink North
Cobalt Business Park
North Tyneside
NE27 0BY
Tel. 0191 643 2280
Email: cmlo@northtyneside.gov.uk
- A complaint form is available on line
at: <https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/478/complain-about-council-services>
- By personal visit to any of the Authority's Customer First Centres
- By telephoning the Authority's Contact Centre on 0345 2000 101

Help and support

The Customer and Member Liaison Office is independent of service departments and offers information, advice and help to complainants and staff responding to complaints. The primary role of the Customer and Member Liaison Office is to ensure all complaints are investigated properly and any lessons learned are adopted.

Independent advocacy is available for people wishing to make Social Services complaints, especially children and vulnerable adults. Other assistance can be arranged to suit individual requirements.

Copies of this report and other material can be made available in other formats or languages on request to the Customer and Member Liaison Office.

Who can make a complaint?

Under the Corporate Complaints Procedures, any user of the Authority's Services can complain. This includes residents and visitors. It also includes relatives and carers acting on someone's behalf, e.g., a person living outside the area representing a relative living in North Tyneside.

In the Social Services arena, people can make a complaint if they are someone for whom the Authority has a power or duty to provide, directly or indirectly, a social service and his/her needs for that service have come to the attention of the Authority. This is extended to cover someone acting on his or her behalf, e.g., a relative or carer.

Limited exclusions do apply:

- when other more appropriate processes already exist, e.g. formal appeal procedures, legal proceedings;
- when the matter occurred more than 12 months before the complaint was made (unless there is good reason for the delay in bringing the matter to the Authority's attention); and
- when the matter has already been properly examined.

It should be noted that where a complaint is made on someone else's behalf, authorisation to act will be obtained from the person the complaint is about.

External review

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO) look at complaints about Local Authorities in a fair and independent way and their service is provided free of charge. They are independent of all Government Departments and have the same powers as the High Court to obtain information and documents. If they find the Authority has done something wrong, they will make recommendations to put things right.

The Ombudsmen play a vital role for people wishing to make a complaint. It is usual for them to refer a matter to the Authority to examine, if it has not done so previously; they class this type of complaint as "premature".

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Advice Team can be contacted on:

Tel: **0300 061 0614** Text 'call back' to **0762 481 1595** at: www.lgo.org.uk
or write to: **The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman**, PO Box 4771,
Coventry CV4 0EH

The Housing Ombudsman Advice Team can be contacted on:

Tel: 0300 111 3000 Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

or write to: **Housing Ombudsman Service**, Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange Square, London, E14 9GE

Operational liaison with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman is undertaken by the Senior Complaints Officer.

In the Annual Letter for 2020-21 from the LGSCO they indicated that in total, 29 complaints about North Tyneside Council had been received during the year. The HO does not provide an annual report for each Authority so similar information is not available from the HO in relation to complaints they have received regarding provision of housing and housing services by the Authority.

Of the 29 complaints received, advice was given by the Ombudsmen on two occasions, 5 were referred back to the Authority for local resolution, 9 were closed after initial enquiries, two were not upheld, six were upheld and two were invalid. The Ombudsmen has emphasised that their statistics reflect the data they hold and may not necessarily align with the data we hold. For example, their numbers include enquiries from people they signpost back to the authority, some of whom may never contact us.

The LGSCO Annual Letter is available on their website and a copy is available from the Senior Complaints Officer.

Set out below are details of the complaints received by the LGSCO in relation to neighbouring authorities. In comparison with previous years, it is apparent that levels of contact with the LGSCO remain constant highlighting that the majority of complainants are satisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the Authority.

Complaints referred to the LGSCO in Tyne & Wear	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Gateshead	51	51	51	36
Newcastle upon Tyne	66	67	65	39
North Tyneside	46	56	50	29
South Tyneside	49	49	40	40
Sunderland	67	67	74	34

Care Quality Commission

In the Adult Social Care arena, the Care Quality Commission also plays a similar role within its wider remit of regulation of social care. The Commission can be contacted at CQC, Citygate, Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4PA, telephone: 03000 616161 or via an online form on their website www.cqc.org.uk.

OFSTED

For Children Social Care and across Children Young People and Learning, OFSTED plays a similar role to Care Quality Commission. They can be contacted at: OFSTED, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD, telephone: 0300 123 1231 or via email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Management and Operation

The management and operation of both the corporate and social services processes is provided by the Customer and Member Liaison Office, which is based within the Law and Governance Department of the Authority. The Customer and Member Liaison Office is also the main point of contact for the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman.

The Office not only managed many individual complaints but also monitored the correct use of the procedures in the various service departments. It did not investigate complaints as service areas were responsible for examining complaints about their own services.

Individual complaints were referred to relevant service managers to examine and respond to the complainant.

The Complaint service is supported by a bespoke Customer Relationship Management system.

Performance Indicators

The Complaints Annual Report is presented to the Authority's full Cabinet meeting. The Report is also presented to the Authority's Regulation and Review Committee to update Members with the number of complaints that have been received the previous year and to advise Members if the recommendations from any Stage Three Corporate complaint hearing have been undertaken.

The Authority carries out an in-house survey of people who have used the complaints process. These show that 78% of respondents said they found it easy to find information about the complaints process; 45% were happy with the time taken to respond to complaints; 45% thought the process was good and 56% were satisfied with the outcome.

There are currently approximately 204,000 residents in North Tyneside. Voluntary diversity monitoring of complainants was introduced several years ago. The following table compares the results of the survey against the Office of National Statistics (ONS) Mid Year Population estimate for 2017 in relation to gender and age, and the latest data in relation to disability, ethnic origin and religion, which is taken from the 2011 Census.

%	O.N.S.	NTC	%	O.N.S.	NTC
Gender			Ethnic Origin		
Female	51.7	66.6	Asian	1.9	0
Male	48.3	34	Black	0.4	0
Declined			Other Ethnic	0.6	0
Age			Mixed	0.9	0
16-24	11.1	0	White British	95.4	100
			Other White	1.2	0
25-34	14.9	11	Chinese	0.5	0
35-44	16.1	11	Declined	-	0
45-54	18.1	22	Religion		
55-64	15.9	11	Christian	63.8	33
65-74	13.1	44	Hindu	0.3	0
Over 75	10.8	1	Buddhist	0.2	0
Declined	-	0	Muslim	0.7	0
			Sikh	0.2	0
With a disability			Jewish	0	0
Yes	20.6	44	Other	0.2	0
No	-	33	None	28.1	34
Not given	-	23	Declined	6.4	33

Numbers and analysis of complaints

The number of complaints for 2020 -21, together with previous years for comparison, is shown in the tables at the end of this report.

This information is made available for consideration by individual service areas, as part of performance management throughout the year. This helps identify any themes or trends and so informs service improvement initiatives. The Senior Complaints Officer met with various service management teams to discuss any implications arising from themes or trends in complaints.

The total complaints related activity is set out in Table 1.

Corporate complaints resolved at Stage 1 remained high at 83% and 83% of Children Social Care complaints closed during the period were resolved at Stage 1. This reflects the commitment of Managers and Supervisors to resolve complaints at an early stage.

All complaints concluded and closed off on the Complaints Database create a prompt to enter any lessons learned as a result of the complaint. Several changes, generated by complaints, were made to procedures and services during the year. A few examples of such improvements are set out below.

Department	Lessons Learned
Children's Services	<p>Through the complaints process, it was recognised that the importance of consistency of workers for young people within residential mental health settings and the need to consider this during allocation. Also, the need to ensure family members are kept informed wherever possible in accordance with a young person's views.</p> <p>It has also raised our awareness in respect of discharge planning regarding the complexities around this and the importance of liaison with adult and mental health services as a young person transitions from Children's Services to Adult Services.</p>
Adult Social Care	<p>Following a complaint in respect of the payment of care home fees, the Authority are looking at a process for dealing with those clients placed by NTC prior to Financial Assessment and if we should pay the home and charge the client if NTC are involved.</p>
Planning	<p>Following a complaint, a change has been made to ensure a process is put in place by the communications operator to ensure the Local Planning Authority is notified of proposals correctly.</p>
Housing	<p>Through the complaints process, the Authority established there had been a failure when a fencing contractor wrongly removed and disposed of a private fence. Consequently, it was agreed that better communication was needed between the Authority and contractors.</p>
Commissioning and Investment	<p>Through the complaints process the Authority determined that greater clarity was required in letters relating to the school meal payment system in respect of refunds.</p> <p>Ensure the process for refunds is addressed as part of the new system to allow parents to withdraw their own funds rather than rely on refunds being managed by the LA</p> <p>Ensure communication with parents is clearer.</p>
Parking	<p>In response to a complaint, it is recognised that unique circumstances have contributed to the delays in processing</p>

	<p>parking applications. It is also acknowledged that the temporary process has led to difficulties in contacting staff due to the volume of telephone calls that it is generating. A new permit management software solution was introduced in June 2021 which will address the issues.</p>
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Developments

North Tyneside Council continues to change rapidly. This change process will continue and remain a challenge for effective complaints handling as service users experience changes and the organisation evolves internally as a result of changing priorities from central Government and more limited resources being available to the Authority.

There are significant examples of change within the Authority. The Authority currently has partnership arrangements with Engie and Capita to provide a range of services and for the past ten years, housing repairs and maintenance were undertaken by a partnership organisation, Kier North Tyneside. However, in April 2019, this changed, and the housing repairs and maintenance is now undertaken internally by the Housing Property and Construction Group.

The overall focus of attention continues to be very much centred on ‘learning’ from complaints and this will be a core driver in all future developments by the Authority.

Conclusions

In the Our North Tyneside Plan, the Authority has made a commitment to listen and to work better for residents. As part of this commitment, Cabinet agreed in May 2019, a programme to improve customer service across all its services. This programme has four key elements and one of these, “Better Never Stops”, will introduce a clearer focus on a continuous improvement culture across the organisation.

The rapidly changing culture and demands of increased customer satisfaction coupled with organisational changes across public and partner sectors means that complaints services must be continually kept up to date. The Authority’s successful history and current good practice in effective complaint handling cannot be taken for granted.

Therefore, part of the customer service improvement programme will include a review of how we handle complaints to ensure that the Authority has the best structure and systems in place to enable complaints to be dealt with effectively, sensitively and in a timely manner. The Authority already delivers a good level of service as set out in this annual report, but this review as part of the customer service improvement programme will identify where there might be any other improvements that could be made.

The underlying principles when dealing with complaints will tie into a new set of customer service standards, a “Customer Promise” that will be developed as part of the Customer Improvement Programme and will continue to include the following.

- To aim to respond to complainants in a proportionate manner, understanding the perspective of the person making the complaint and wherever possible resolve matters at an early stage.
- To continue to work alongside and support managers and other partner organisations to ensure that complaints are responded to concisely and in a timely manner.
- To continue to work within our policies, procedures and legislative guidelines throughout the complaints processes.
- To provide training to staff to ensure complaints are handled effectively and efficiently.
- To continue to focus on handling enquiries promptly to try to prevent unnecessary escalation and dissatisfaction.
- To continue to learn from our outcomes and make changes to improve our services.

By the very nature of this area of work, the complaints services will never satisfy all of the people all of the time. However, the survey of complainants indicates a good level of satisfaction with the service overall.

The Authority is committed to providing effective complaints services for the benefits of individual customers, the Authority and the community alike. Complaints are now widely recognised as integral to the provision of quality services at both individual and strategic levels and will continue to be so in the coming years.

Background

Statistics

This part of the report is broken down into the following sections: -

- 1) Overall number of complaints across the Authority
- 2) Social Services Complaints
- 3) Corporate Complaints
- 4) Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
- 5) Informal Complaints and Enquiries

1. Overall number of complaints across the Authority

The volume of formal complaint related activity for the period April 2015 to March 2019 is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Social Service Complaints	126	97	102	68
Corporate Complaints	1070	973	967	451
Total	1196	1070	1069	519
Local Government & Housing Ombudsman complaints received by NTC	38	56	50	29
Formal total	1234	1126	1119	548

Pre-Complaint and general enquiries dealt with by the Customer & Member Liaison Office	685	1105	1107	914
Total complaint related activity	1919	2231	2226	1462

There has been a lower number of complaints and general enquiries dealt with by the Customer and Member Liaison Office during 2020 - 2021. This is due to the break in accepting complaints between April and June, during the initial stages of the Covid 19 Pandemic, this was following guidance from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The Customer and Member Liaison Office continued to make sure that as many enquiries as possible are directed to the most appropriate service at the first point of contact. This ensured customers were given more responsive replies and reduced the inefficiencies inherent in redirection of enquiries within the Authority. All enquiries received by email into the Customer and Member Liaison Office were acknowledged by email, the majority on the same working day. The customer was also notified of who their enquiry had been sent to and that they should expect a response direct. Enquirers by telephone or letter were also provided with a receipt setting out the same information.

2. Social Services Complaints

Social Service complaints dealt with under the relevant statutory processes are split into Children's and Adult Services, as shown in Table 2. In addition, there are complaints regarding Children's and Adult Services which were dealt with under the Corporate procedure (see Table 8).

Table 2 Social Services by Division	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020 -21
Children's Social Care	64	42	49	30
Adult Social Care	62	55	53	38
TOTAL	126	97	102	68

Overall, there has been minimal increase of complaints about Social Care Services during the last year.

Within Children Social Care, complaints have been categorised as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Children & Families Services Categories	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020 -21
Adoption/Fostering/LAC	14	5	4	2
Safeguarding	31	19	33	17
Child Protection	2	0	0	0
Front Door	9	2	7	3
Commissioning and Investment	3	0	0	0
Children with Disability Team	5	3	4	0
Other	0	13	1	8
TOTAL	54	64	42	30

Children who are looked after, receive a complaints leaflet to use if they wish to raise any point about their care or circumstances generally. Acknowledging that making a complaint can be difficult, young people are encouraged to have the assistance of a mentor or advocate if they want to make a complaint. The units for children with a disability have specially trained advocates to help those who have communication difficulties.

In the child protection system users may feel they have little power to make a complaint and this is acknowledged. To capture issues of user concern, the review process and other meetings are forums in which matters that are a worry to the user can be tackled. In this way the user's view can be heard and services influenced. In addition to the numbers reported above there were 25 complaints about Children Services dealt with under the Corporate Complaints procedure.

Within Adult Social Care, categories are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Adult Services Categories	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020 -21
Safeguarding	3	5	4	2
Commissioning	2	4	6	5
Personalisation / Social Work	40	34	33	23
Integrated Services	9	5	7	6
Other	8	7	3	2
TOTAL	62	55	53	38

In addition to the numbers reported above there were 8 complaints about Adult Services dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Procedure during 2020 – 21.

Tables 5 and 6 show the proportions of upheld complaints for Children's and Adults Services over the year.

Table 5 - Children Social Care complaint outcomes	2017-18 %	2018-19 %	2019-20 %	2020 -21 %
Not Upheld	55	40	46	30
Upheld in Full	8	31	20	10
Upheld in Part	37	29	34	60

Table 6 - Adult Social Care complaint outcomes	2017-18 %	2018 - 19 %	2019-20 %	2020 -21 %
Not Upheld	44	48	55	42
Upheld in Full	0	9	7	11
Upheld in Part	56	43	38	47

Problem solving at the earliest opportunity is a key aim of effective complaint handling. This is not only of value to the complainant but also to the Authority in optimising use of resources and enhancing customer care.

Table 7 shows early resolution at Stage 1 of Children's complaints only. From April 2009 a one stage process was introduced for Adult Social Care complaints.

Table 7 – Children’s Social Services complaints resolved at stage:	2018-19 %	2018-19 %	2019-20 %	2020-21 %
One	94	93	88	83
Two	1.5	7	10	10
Three	4.5	0	2	7

3. Corporate Complaints

Table 8, below, shows a breakdown of corporate complaints received from 2017-18 for comparison purposes.

Table 8 – Corporate Complaints					
Department	Service Area	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Chief Exec & Financial Services	Finance & Resources	11	14	5	0
	Law & Governance	7	5	14	11
	Other (inc Street Lighting)	1	7	13	0
	Total	19	26	32	11
Revs, Bens & Customer Services	Benefits	51	30	28	16
	Council Tax	69	99	101	25
	Customer Services	37	42	22	6
	Total	158	171	151	47
Adult Social Care					
	Total	14	20	23	8
Children, Young People & Learning					
	Total	16	24	20	27
ENVIRONMENT, LEISURE AND HOUSING:					
Department	Service Area	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Leisure	Indoor Sports & Leisure	21	9	9	1
	Cultural Services Other	8	1	1	0
	Total	29	10	10	1
Environment	Parking	52	46	52	25
	Planning/Building Control	21	19	18	14
	Highways	87	59	42	11
	Environmental Health	19	7	13	8
	Other	20	3	0	5
	Street Environment	80	61	61	31
	Property	7	8	5	2
	Waste Management	30	15	3	4
	Recycling/Wheeled Bins/Special Collections	116	156	152	50
	Trees/Shrubs	15	9	6	7
	Winter Maintenance	0	0	2	0
	Bereavement Services	3	0	1	1
	Total	447	380	355	158

Housing	Debt Recovery/Income	20	18	13	5
	Day-to-day Repairs	10	22	11	3
	Allocations/Letting	26	31	23	17
	Housing Estates	76	47	53	6
	Empty Homes /Voids	10	12	8	6
	Quality Homes for Older People	4	1	0	0
	Homelessness / Advice	9	12	16	3
	Housing Investment	10	17	4	11
	Safer Estates	4	22	23	23
	Leasehold	3	0	3	1
	Other	10	6	2	5
	Total	182	188	156	80
Housing, Property and Construction	Day-to-day Repairs	148	99	158	98
	Gas Services	20	10	27	6
	Housing Investment	20	11	31	11
	Empty Homes / Voids	12	7	3	0
	Other	0	2	0	0
	Total	200	129	219	115
Business & Economic Development	Business & Economic Development	4	1	0	3
Public Health	Public Health	1	1	1	1
	Grand Total	1070	973	967	451

The number of formal Corporate Complaints registered during 2019-20 has remained similar to last year.

Table 9 shows the proportion of corporate complaints upheld or not.

Table 9: Corporate complaints outcomes	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
	%	%	%	%
Not Upheld	46.5	49	54	52
Upheld in Full	27	30	24	25
Upheld in Part	26.5	21	22	23

Table 10 shows the stage at which corporate complaints were resolved, again indicating a high level of early problem solving overall and again is consistent with previous years.

Table 10: Corporate complaints resolved at Stage:	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
	%	%	%	%
One	87	85	88	83
Two	13	14	12	17
Three	<1	<1	0	0

Policy complaints

Complaints about the policies of the Authority are recorded and responded to at Stage 1 but not considered further within the complaints process.

4. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman

The next stage after the Authority's complaints procedures is consideration by the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman or Housing Ombudsman.

Table 11 groups the breakdown by the Authority's Service Areas as recorded by the Authority:

Table 11: Complaints to the LGSCO & HO	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Environmental & Cultural Services	4	9	4	2
Highways, Transport & Planning	7	3	10	6
Revenues & Benefits	4	11	5	2
Housing	8	15	3	6
Education & Children Social Care	5	10	17	10
Adult Social Care	8	4	6	3
Other	2	9	5	0
Total	38	61	50	29

Table 12 gives the decisions made by the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman in the given years as recorded by the Authority.

Table 12: LGSCO		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Total	Complaints Received	38	56	50	29
Not Investigated	Outside Jurisdiction	7	10	8	2
	Closed after initial enquiries	8	10	13	9
	Premature referrals	3	19	16	8
	Discontinued Investigation	5	0	0	2
	Signposted to HO		5	1	0
Total Not Investigated		18	44	38	21
Investigated	Not upheld	10	5	4	2
	Satisfied with LA's actions	0	0	0	0
	Maladministration and injustice	3	6	7	4
	Maladministration, no injustice	1	0	1	2
	Ongoing	1	1	0	0
Total Investigated		15	12	12	8

5. Informal complaints and enquiries

As has been indicated previously, the 'headline' figure of the number of formal complaints does not reflect the number of concerns or problems reported to the Authority, and satisfactorily dealt with by staff via social media, telephone and email contact and via the Members Enquiries System.

The Customer and Member Liaison Office also monitored the number of enquiries and informal complaints, or 'pre-complaint enquiries' dealt with by its staff during 2019-20, and these figures are shown in Table 13. This information has already been helpful on a number of occasions as early indicators of developing issues in some service areas.

Table 13 - Pre complaint & general enquiries processed by CMLO	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Children, Young People & Learning	20	8	29	29
Adult Social Care	15	22	14	21
Cultural Services	23	27	26	14
North Tyneside Homes	91	110	264	233
Kier North Tyneside	23	57	0	0
Environmental Services	404	805	615	514
Customer Services, Revs & Bens	41	36	89	61
Law & Governance	20	19	23	12
Finance & Resources	35	6	3	5
Other	13	15	44	25
TOTAL	685	1105	1107	914

It is noted that the pre-complaint/general enquiry numbers have remained very similar to that of last year.