

Appendix A - COMPLAINTS MONITORING REPORT 2022/23

Purpose of Report

To provide the committee with an overview of complaints received and responded to during 2022-23. Following committee's request last year this report will now include details of complaints following all three complaints procedures, Corporate, Childrens Social Care and Adult Social Care. There is also detail provided of complaints following the Peterborough Ltd complaints process, the council's contractor for waste services and grounds maintenance as well as sports and leisure.

Both Adults and Children's Social Care complaints are also reportable to separate scrutiny committees and from next year both these committees will have reviewed their separate reports prior to this report being prepared for Audit and both these reports will be included as Appendices in this report. This was not possible for ASC annual complaints report this year as this is not scheduled to be presented to that committee until March 2024, but the Childrens Social Care annual complaint report is attached as Appendix D.

Summary of Complaint Volumes 2022-23

Adult Social Care Complaints

Complaints registered under the Adult Social Care statutory process for 2022-23 will be detailed to the Adults and Health Scrutiny committee later this year but the summary data is provided here.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE	Complaint Volumes	Withdrawn	Percentage where fault found	Escalation Rate
2022-23	48	2	50%	13%
2021-22	42	3	70%	16%

Childrens Social Care Complaints

Complaints registered under the Childrens Social Care statutory process are detailed in **Appendix D** - but a summary of this data is shown here.

CHILDRENS SOCIAL CARE	Complaint Volumes	Withdrawn	Percentage where fault found	Escalation Rate
2022-23	48	3	75%	8%
2021-22	73	3	67%	7%

Corporate Complaints

Complaints logged under the corporate complaints process incorporates all complaints that are non-statutory, but excluding Peterborough Ltd complaints who currently have their own separate complaints process (**Peterborough Limited complaints detailed in Appendix B**)

CORPORATE COMPLAINTS	Complaint Volumes	Withdrawn	Percentage where fault found	Escalation Rate
2022-23	330	13	47%	7.5%
2021-22	329	9	48%	5%

Corporate complaint volumes reduced in 2020-21 due to the pandemic but over the past two years numbers have returned to normal levels.

Compensation Paid from Complaints 2022-23

The committee have asked for the report to include the amount of compensation paid as a result of complaints each year to be included in the report – this is displayed in the table at Figure 1

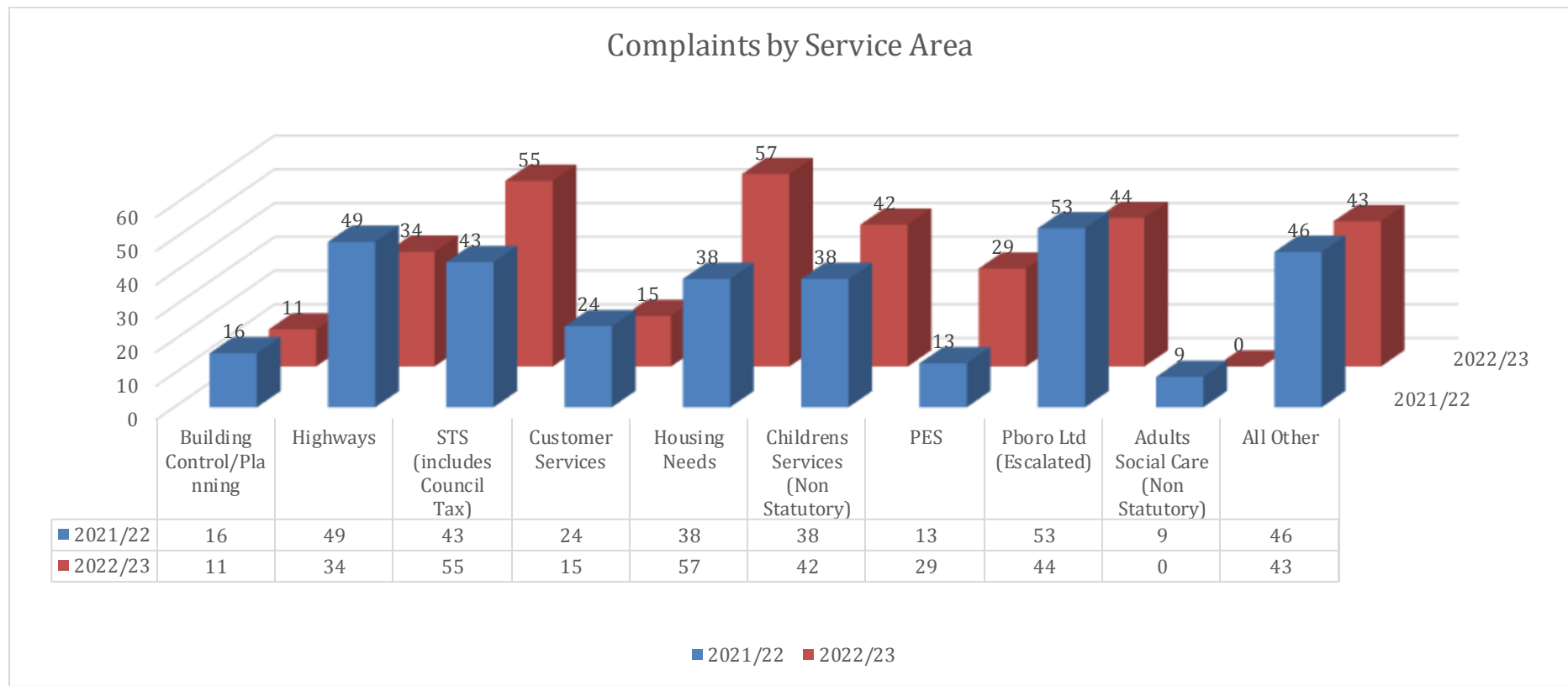
Figure 1: Compensation from Complaints

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Corporate Complaints	£6850 (4)	£1500 (2)	£2400 (4)
CSC Complaints process	£Nil	£650 (2)	£28,939 (4)
ASC Complaints Process	£Nil	£200 (1)	£120 (1)
Totals	£6850	£2350	£31,459

(Number of cases included in each total is shown in brackets after the amount)

Figure 2: Complaint Volumes by Key Service Areas – 2022-23

In previous years complaints were compared by Directorates. Over the past few years there have been ongoing restructures which have meant that services moved Directorates which made comparisons against previous years challenging. Therefore, complaint comparisons are now given of the main service areas who receive higher levels of complaints whilst those services with very few complaints annually (less than 10) are grouped together into an 'All Other' category. This includes Register office, Electoral Services, Regulatory services, Legal and Property Services.



Corporate Complaint Stages & Outcomes

The councils' corporate complaints procedure includes two stages. Most complaints will be resolved at the first stage. If escalated a complaint will have a review at Stage 2 and if the customer remains dissatisfied, they will have the right to approach the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman to review their complaint.

Figure 3: Stage where Complaints Resolution Achieved

When was the complaint resolved?	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Informal	31	82	110
Stage 1	153	215	183
Stage 2 review*	10	13	11
LGO	18	10	14
Withdrawn	7	9	12
Totals	219	329	330

Over the past two years we have promoted the importance of engaging with customers verbally on receipt of a complaint so customers feel heard and can talk through their concerns. This has led to an increasing number of complaints resolved informally by telephone where the customer confirms they are satisfied, and the matter is resolved.

Due to the success seen with the informal approach from April 2023 the process was changed to require all managers to attempt a call with customers before they investigate a complaint unless the customer indicates they do not wish to be contacted.

Recognising fault at the earliest opportunity will also ensure that complaints are resolved promptly leading to increased customer satisfaction and less escalation of complaints to the review stage and ultimately to the Ombudsman.

Complaint Outcomes 2022/23

Complaint Outcomes at Stage 1

The percentage of complaints which where some fault was identified in 2022/23 is in a similar range to the previous year where fault was found in 55% of informal complaints and 46% of formal complaints at Stage 1.

Figure 4 - Complaint Outcomes at Stage 1 2022-23

Stage 1	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Withdrawn	TOTALS	% where some fault identified
Informal	31	21	56	2	110	47%
Formal	52	52	105	11	220	47%

Complaint Outcomes at Stage 2 Review

Although there were 39 complaints where customers were not happy with their response at Stage 1 some were resolved with intervention by senior managers. Only 22 complaints then progressed to Stage 2 review in 2022-23. The level of Stage 2 reviews represents an escalation rate of 7.5% of the complaints that were received – this is within an expected range of between 5% and 10% per annum.

Up until February 2023 Stage 2 reviews were the responsibility of the Chief Internal Auditor and investigators in the compliance team. Due to resourcing issues for that team Stage 2 reviews were put on hold and several of the Stage 2 reviews were carried forward to 2023-24 to be completed by independent Heads of Service under the revised complaints process.

Of the thirteen complaints that had a Stage 2 review the percentage that found fault with the service was 38%.

Figure 5: Stage 2 Review Outcomes 2022/23

Service	Outcome	Complaint	Actions
Planning	Partially Upheld	Planning Consultation Advice	Apology for not sending copy of decision
Highways	Partially Upheld	Failure to notify about planned roadworks	Service to improve communications
Highways	Partially Upheld	Poor management of reinstatement of pavements	Apology and compensation offered
SEN	Not Upheld	Inadequate education provided to child out of school	Escalated to Ombudsman
PES	Not Upheld	Wants CCTV sited in area	Referred to Ombudsman
SEN	Partially Upheld	Additional Education provisions not delivered	Apology
Early Help	Not Upheld	Dissatisfied that parental assessment required before Autism assessment could be accessed.	Escalated to Ombudsman
Customer Services	Partially Upheld	No support provided when customer fell at Town Hall	Officers must log all incidents
Aragon	Not Upheld	Alleged damage caused by grass cutters	Referred to Ombudsman
Council Tax	Not Upheld	Delay in issuing bill	Referred to Ombudsman
Highways	Not Upheld	Wants parking restricted on their street	Referred to Ombudsman
Council Tax	Not Upheld	Alleged Billing error	Referred to Ombudsman
Vivacity	Not Upheld	Increase in membership fee	Referred to Ombudsman

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Decisions 2022-23

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) reviews complaints they receive from residents about council services.

Every year the Ombudsman sends an Annual Letter to each council to detail the enquiries they have received for that council and the investigations that have taken place. A link to the letter is provided under background documents.

The number of enquiries that the LGSCO has received about Peterborough City Council this year has seen a significant fall to 25 complaints (36 in 2021-22, 39 in 2020-21).

The Ombudsman has changed their working processes over the past 2 years so that they only investigate complaints where they identify that it may be in the public interest to do so or where there is a potential for significant injustice.

They recognise that this has led to an increase in the number of complaints that they are likely to uphold

Complaints Upheld

In 2022-23 the LGSCO investigated nine complaints about our council and upheld six of these. This is an uphold rate of 67%

The LGSCO provide a benchmark for Unitary Authorities so we can compare our performance with other Authorities of the same type. For Unitary Authorities the average is an uphold rate of 72% so we are in line with this figure.

The six cases are detailed in the table at **Figure 6**.

It should be noted that four out of the six cases are for Childrens Services. In the LGSCO Annual report on Local Government 2022-23 they recognise “We received and upheld more complaints about Education and Children’s services than any other service area”. Our council does not receive high volumes of complaints about these two services but they are often complex and more likely to escalate.

Generally, complaints investigated by the LGSCO will have been investigated by the council in the previous year particularly for Childrens Social Care as the complaints process for these complaints can take up to six months. This year two of the complaints that were Upheld were from the current year.

Figure 6. Complaints Upheld by the LGSCO 2022-23

Service Area	LGSCO Ref	Type of complaint	Recommended Actions
Adult Social Care	21003925	The council and Health services failed to arrange regular S117 aftercare reviews following discharge from hospital	Apology for not ensuring the provision of the review within a reasonable period
Education	21008178	Delays in reviewing an Education, Health and Care plan leading to missed provision	Apology for the delay, Compensation for missing education and distress caused, Council required to develop an improvement plan for the delivery of annual reviews
Childrens Social Care	21014757	The council did not provide agreed support to a family with three disabled children for a protracted period	Compensation for the impact on the whole family who had to take on additional responsibilities due to the lack of care being provided. There were also delays in complaint handling, so a review of the complaints process was also required.
Building Control	21018326	Resident unhappy the council failed to act to stop unauthorised building works in a residential property near their home	Fault in how the Council failed to properly consider the legal powers available to it and complaint handling delays. Apology, financial remedy for delay in complaint handling review of procedures/retraining of staff around enforcement powers.
Childrens Social Care	22000753	Parent unhappy that service would not fund therapeutic support for their child.	Substantive complaint was not upheld but there were delays in complaint handling and for this a symbolic payment was made. The council were also required to develop a tracking system to ensure service improvements could be delivered.
Early Help/Education	22008825	Failure to consider a request for an EHCP assessment	Apology, payment for distress, undertake the assessment, issue guidance to staff to ensure they recognise when an EHCP assessment is being requested

Compliance with Recommendations

The Ombudsman requires that Local Authorities must update them within 3 months confirming delivery of the agreed actions on each upheld case.

Where departments fail to evidence the delivery of actions required by the Ombudsman within the requested timescale the LGSCO will record this as late compliance.

The central complaints office set targets for completion of any LGSCO recommendations and vigorously chase services to ensure compliance.

Compliance with this requirement is expected to be 100% by the LGSCO and this year the council met this requirement.

Satisfactory Remedy provided by the Authority

In their annual letter the LGSCO also provides performance data on where an organisation had upheld the complaint previously and the LGSCO agreed with how it offered to put things right.

In 2022-23 the average for Unitary Authorities against this indicator is 12%. However, the score for PCC was recorded as 0%. This is an area for improvement.

To meet expectations under this category the council needs to ensure that it considers the right remedy for the errors that have been caused. In one of these complaints, the complaint was upheld and a financial remedy offered but this was not at the right level. On several others the LGSCO recommended a service improvement that the service area had failed to identify.

To improve the council's performance in this area changes to the corporate complaints process introduced in April 2023 require that at the final stage the reviewing manager is considering appropriate financial remedies and service improvements and obtaining advice from the complaint manager. This should improve resolution of complaints at the final stage but if the customer does approach the Ombudsman, it is hoped the LGSCO will be satisfied with the level of remedy the council has offered.

Complaint Timescales

One of the key areas of focus with complaints should be on reaching an effective resolution as quickly as possible.

First Stage

In 2022/23 the average response time at the first stage was 19 days. This is within the set timescale of 20 working days.

With the changes to the corporate process from April 2023 it will be a requirement for most complainants to be contacted by phone and this should lead to earlier resolution of complaints.

Review Stage

In 2022/23 the average response time at the review stage was 27 days. This is within the set timescale of 28 working days. However, 25% of cases took more than 40 working days at the final stage and we received criticism from the LGSCO on several complaints which took longer than the LGSCO recommended guidance of 60 working days for complaints to complete both stages.

The lack of resource for investigations at the review stage in Q4 2022-23 has meant that some reviews were held back for several weeks and therefore the council may receive further criticism of these delays as some of these cases are currently being investigated at the LGSCO.

The recently implemented changes to the corporate complaints process provides for reviews on escalated complaints to be carried out by any Head of Service who has not been previously involved in the complaint. This increased resource should ensure less delay in the future.

Service Improvements

When a complaint is upheld, the focus should be on providing the solution that rectifies the problem for the customer. This may often be an apology or an explanation but can sometimes be delivering a service that has been delayed or could even be compensation.

Sometimes an upheld complaint can highlight that service improvements are needed to ensure customers don't have similar problems in the future. Service improvements have been identified in several key areas during the year and these are illustrated below in the table at Figure 7

Figure 7. Service Improvements

Service Area	Complaint Issues	Service Improvement Identified
Aragon	Bins missed	Customers offered the pull-out service to ensure a better service going forward
Licensing	Delay in Taxi Licensing Applications being processed	Service received agreement to recruit additional staff to meet an increased demand for this service
Planning	Unhappy with the siting of a telephone mast near resident's property	Introduced a supplementary report for any amendments to telecoms prior-approval decisions
Highways	Unhappy with conduct of operatives completing highways maintenance	Highlighted a learning point to contractors that they should use screening fences with facilities cabins
Communities	Denial of application for Household Support Fund	Changed criteria to remove the stipulation that people can't access the fund if they have a child receiving free school meals.
Prevention and Enforcement	Resident highlighted issues with ASB and littering in residential rear access road	Multi team review led to discovery area was not on cleaning schedule and was subsequently added to ensure regular cleaning and area will now be monitored through Neighbourhood policing patrols
Early Help	Delays in Early Help Assessment	Process review undertaken to ensure communication with parents improves
Family Safeguarding	Incorrect information about benefit entitlement	Training will be arranged so that workers understand Benefit regulations
Council Tax	Delays and error in determination	Further staff trained to improve processing timescales and specialist training to ensure officers understand the legislation around different types of tenancy

Complaint Categories

On receipt a complaint is registered and given a category so that trends can be identified.

The most common cause for complaint is about delays. The categories of complaints received in 2022-23 are shown in Figure 8

Figure 8 – Complaints received by Category 2022-23

Complaint Category	2021-22		2022-23	
	Volume	Uphold Rate	Volume	Uphold Rate
Not to Standard	11	63%	9	89%
Poor Facility or Building	0	N/A	1	0%
Staff Attitude/Conduct	26	54%	36	55%
Breach of Confidentiality	4	25%	1	0%
Denial/Withdrawal of Service	9	22%	6	67%
Delay/Failed Service	208	58%	244	50.5%
Lack of Information	0	N/A	2	0%
About Legislation	2	0%	0	N/A
About Policy	47	23%	28	14%
Other	5	60%	3	33%

Accessibility

Most complaints are received digitally – the numbers received in 2022/23 were -

- **Email/Online Form 85%**
- **By Telephone – 13.5%**
- **By Letter – 1.5%**

As a service it is more efficient to receive complaints and correspond by email. The council website offers a complaint form which customers can use to make their complaint directly with the complaints team. Most complaints received by the council are received by this web form. However, a direct telephone line is also provided so customers that prefer to make their complaint verbally can contact the team direct without going through the council's call centre.

The complaints received by letter has fallen further from 4% to 1.5% as more customers chose the quicker and more convenient methods of telephone and email.

The complaints team will always ensure they obtain both phone and email details from customers so that they can offer services both options in contacting the customer to discuss their complaint. However, if the customer does not wish to be contacted by telephone this will be respected.

The team are also able to respond to requests for 'reasonable adjustments' from customers – for example reading the complaint response to a complainant by telephone where there are language or literacy issues.

Compliments

243 compliments have been recorded in 2022-23 as shown in Figure 9 below. The previous year it was 191.

Compliments for Peterborough Ltd are not included in these figures but are included in **Appendix B)**

Figure 9. Compliments 2022-23

Service Area	Number of Compliments 2022/23
Household Waste Service	52
Customer Services	67
Register Office	24
SEN*	26
Highways	12
STS (Council Tax, Revs & Bens)	8
Communities	1
Prevention & Enforcement Service	4
Housing Needs	44
Total	238

**SEN compliments are illustrated in Appendix C*

Compliments can be received both from members of the public or external professionals but also from one service to another.

There is a compliment form on the council website which enables customers to send in feedback which is managed by the complaints team who will then share the feedback with the appropriate service.

However, most compliments received have traditionally been received direct to service areas. Not all services have a centralised way to record these which we are trying to improve upon.

Some examples of the compliments received in 2022/23 are shown in Figure 10

Figure 10: Examples of Compliments 2022-23

Examples of Compliments 2022-23
<p>Housing Needs</p> <p>I contacted XX over an urgent safeguarding case which required immediate housing actions. They responded immediately and has worked with me with a very tricky case to assist probation in exploring housing options. The person is a MAPPA case and assessed as high risk to public and children. Regardless of the outcome I would like to highlight the excellent communication and efforts that xx has made. I just wanted to express my thanks and gratitude for the support that xx has given.</p> <p><i>"Just reaching out to say thank you so much for all your help; we just received our first rent payment for our property!"</i></p> <p><i>- Landlord of a leased property who had been set up with the Syrian refugee resettlement.</i></p> <p>I just wanted to raise with you how brilliant xx was today. Although I was constantly calling, xx always picked up the phone immediately and dealt with every situation fully. Including have to arrange a large number of translators for various cases. Please can you pass on my thanks to xx as their assistance meant we could properly support a sizeable number of people.</p> <p><i>To the Resettlement team and Housing Needs team, I would like to say thank you to all of you involved in helping me being housed. I know you are extremely busy, but you managed to get me and my children out of a difficult situation and I will always be grateful for all your help. Often people forget to talk about their good experiences and always talk about the negatives. So, here's a great big thank you for all your hard work, a special thank you to xx for helping me with any questions and always getting back to me. You have really made a difference to our lives. Have an amazing weekend, Kind Regards, xx</i></p>
<p>Highways</p> <p>Just wanted to thank you for resolving my issue with the line outside my drop curb. A member of your team came out today and reinstated it, I am most pleased.</p> <p><i>Having recently walked some of the foot paths under your jurisdiction/area, I have been impressed with how well the marker posts/way markers are, making walking this glorious an area easier, thank you to the team responsible.</i></p> <p>I reported this today at school drop off - And at pick up it was fixed!! Amazing. Thank you to whoever did it so quickly.</p> <p><i>Just wanted to thank you for resolving my issue with the line outside my drop curb. A member of your team came out today and reinstated it, I am most pleased.</i></p>

Household Waste Service

Friendly staff all very helpful. Well organised. Massive improvement over the old council site. Excellent.

Have always found staff very helpful and quick to jump to assist an older lady who cannot always reach the sides of skips to get rubbish in. Cheerful and courteous staff make the whole process enjoyable instead of a chore.

I visited the recycling centre today and the member of staff was really friendly and helpful. I have found every visit to the centre is less stressful because the staff are so helpful and polite. They advise which area is the right one for the recycling. They are a good team. It's never a job I look forward to but in the end it always feels good.

I wanted to compliment another member of your staff in the recycling centre. They were so helpful with regards to emptying my car. As I have mentioned before, I am a pensioner, and am finding so much in my life difficult. However, coming to the recycling centre (I like to do my bit for the environment) is a pleasure when I meet such good staff. You have a core of really good staff, hang on to them.

Customer Services

Customer called to thank officer for listening - Customer stated 'I wish all Council services listened to me the way you did. Thank you for being proactive and moving things forward'

From an officer visiting Reception: Just wanting to pass on my thoughts to what I saw from one of your officers yesterday at town hall.

Just after 9am a PCC customer arrived in reception foyer. She was in a distressed state having been left on the street alone all night and just took a seat at the bottom of the stairs.

I was surprised at how the officer went to the lady, even to the point of sitting on the floor at her level, openly and calmly taking the time to talk to the lady. His body and vocal language were so open and genuinely supportive. The lady calmed to him, and you could see the officer in a professional supportive role. I was very impressed by the officers approach. "

Customer took the time at the end of his enquiry to say that he has dealt with many Councils in the past, and they have not all been good experiences. He wanted to say that at PCC we are all switched on and it has been a pleasure dealing with us on behalf of his family member.

During a Council tax call, the customer told the member of staff that he wanted to tell them that they had been very helpful, they explained things very clearly, and they helped him out and put his mind at peace as he was very worried about the correspondence he had received.