

Appendix A - COMPLAINTS MONITORING REPORT 2023-24

Purpose of Report

To provide the committee with an overview of complaints received and responded to during 2023-24. Following committee's request last year this report will now include details of complaints following all three complaints procedures, Corporate, Children 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, so these will be presented independently to these committees at a later date.

Summary of Complaint Volumes 2023-24

Adult Social Care Complaints

Complaints registered under the Adult Social Care statutory process for 2023-24 are detailed in **Appendix B** - but a summary of this data is shown here.

Figure 1 – Adult Social Care complaints 2023-24

ADULT SOCIAL CARE	Complaint Volumes	Withdrawn	Percentage where fault found	Escalation Rate
2021-22	42	3	70%	16%
2022-23	48	2	50%	14%
2023-24	49	1	59%	12%

Children Social Care Complaints

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

Figure 2 – Children Social Care complaints 2023-24

CHILDRENS SOCIAL CARE	Complaint Volumes	Withdrawn	Percentage where fault found	Escalation Rate
2021-22	73	3	67%	7%
2022-23	48	3	75%	8%
2023-24	49	1	73%	4%

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 D**)

Figure 3 – Corporate complaints 2023-24

CORPORATE COMPLAINTS	Complaint Volumes	Withdrawn	Percentage where fault found	Escalation Rate
2021-22	329	9	47%	5%
2022-23	330	13	47%	7.5%
2023-24	302	20	64%	8.6%

Compensation Paid from Complaints 2023-24

The committee have asked for information about the amount of compensation paid as a result of complaints each year to be included in the report – this is displayed in the table below: -

Figure 4 – Compensation from Complaints 2023-24

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Corporate Complaints	£1500 (2)	£2400 (4)	£5600(5)
CSC Complaints	£650 (2)	£28,939 (4)	£41055 (5)
ASC Complaints	£200 (1)	£120 (1)	£200(1)
Totals	£2350	£31,459	£46,855

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

Figure 5: Complaint Volumes by Key Service Areas – 2023-24

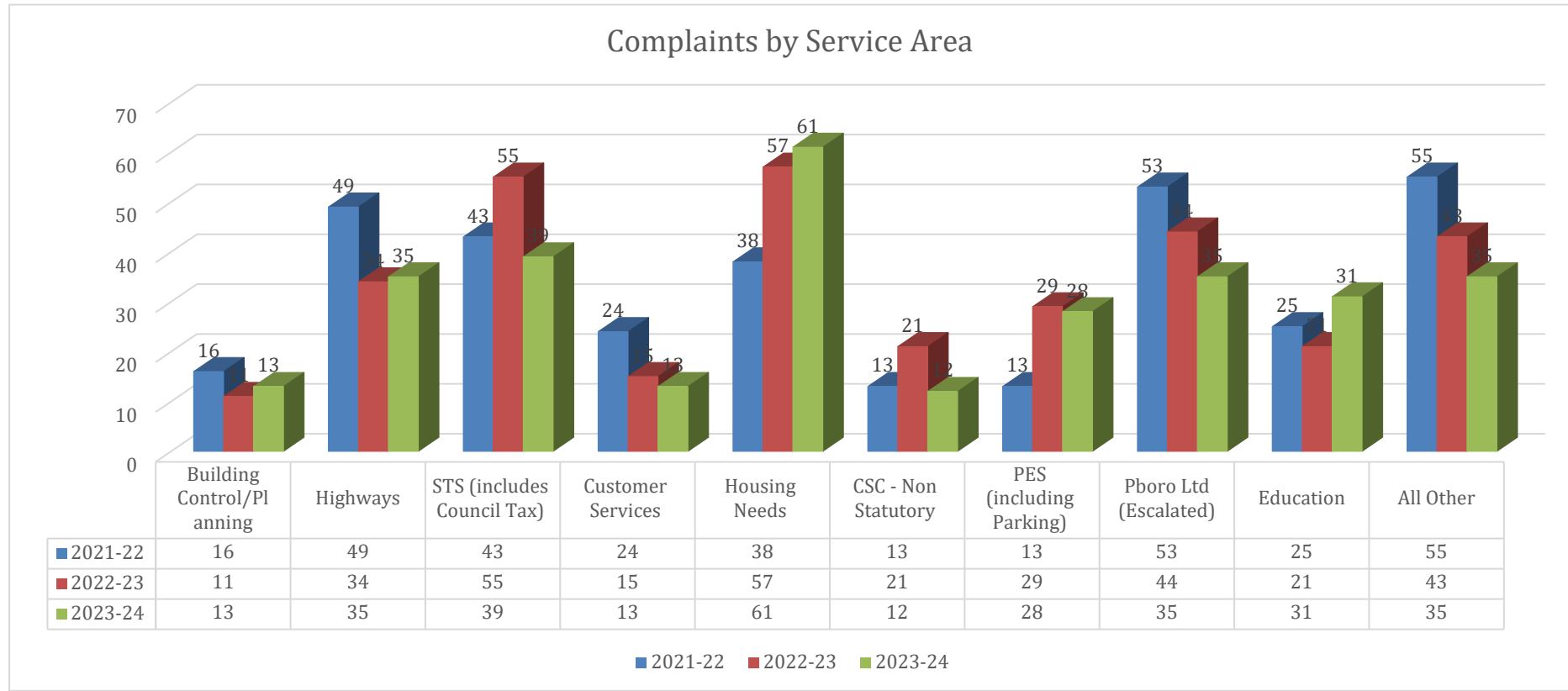


Figure 5 shows the complaints received in the main service areas over the past three years. For the past two years the highest complaint numbers have been for Housing Needs and then Council tax. The other category includes services that have fewer than 10 complaints per year and includes Licensing, Property, Pollution, Electoral Services, Register Office, Bereavement services etc

Complaint Handling Performance 2023-24

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

First Stage

In 2023-24 the average response time at the first stage was 15 working days. The timescale was 20 working days. This is a significant improvement on the previous year where the average was 19 working days.

As a high percentage of complaints are informally resolved by telephone this has helped to improve performance at stage one.

Review Stage

In 2023-24 the average response time at the review stage was 26 days. This is within the set timescale of 40 working days. This year the percentage of Stage 2 reviews which exceeded 40 working days was reduced to 11% (previous year was 25%). Changes made to the personnel conducting reviews has led to this improvement and a further change made in August 2024 should help to reduce those exceeding 40 working days to zero.

Corporate Complaint Stages & Outcomes 2023-24

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 6: Complaints Logged in 2023- 24.

How the complaint was recorded	2023-24
Informally Resolved	142
Stage 1 Response sent	124
Straight to Stage 2	12
Direct from LGSCO	4
Withdrawn	20
Totals	302

In previous years some customers who had had a Stage 1 response but then wanted to escalate, met with a manager where the matter was subsequently resolved. Following feedback from the Ombudsman that this was an unofficial extra stage we have removed this option and now encourage contact with the complainant at the beginning of the process. This has had the effect that more complaints are being resolved informally but also that where this has not resolved the complaint the escalation to Stage 2 is processed with more expediency.

Complaint Outcomes at Stage 1

The percentage of complaints where some fault was identified in 2023-24 has increased from the previous year. Complaints are categorised as Partially Upheld or Upheld when the service decides they have been at fault on some or all the points raised by the customer. With informally resolved complaints the level of fault identified was 70% (55% the previous year) and with Stage 1 formal responses the level of fault identified increased to 56% (46% the previous year). Where a service accepts that errors have occurred the customer is more likely to be satisfied and agree to resolve the complaint at the earlier stages which is why informally resolved complaints have a high uphold rate. In some cases, a service improvement is identified to improve the service going forward – these are illustrated in Figure 7

Figure 7. Stage 1 Service Improvements

Service Area	Complaint Issues	Service Improvement Identified
PES (parking)	Car Park out of action longer than advertised	In future will anticipate/advertise extra days closure so customers not inconvenienced
Council Tax	Long wait time in calls being answered	Increased resourcing and capacity on lines for future busy times
Education	Parent unhappy agreed plan not followed up in writing	Education officers reminded of good practice to follow up agreements in writing.
Bereavement Services	Concerns regarding condition of cemetery	Contract will be contacted to discuss prevention of damage caused by grass cutting.
Customer Services	Customer critical of long delay estimated for delivery of food waste bags	Agreed to determine more accurate timescale and update message
Housing Needs	Delay in payment to landlord due to absence of authorising manager	Process revised to ensure delegated authority/other managers able to process payments
Education	Delays in Education provision	Policy review undertaken to ensure alternative provision is sourced more promptly when a child transfers into LA

Family Safeguarding	Sensitive information sent to wrong address	Data checking processes to be improved to reduce error.
Call Centre	Unhappy with Bin replacement charge applied before policy changed	Ensure staff check call history to ensure correct information given
Benefits	Unhappy with how overpayment recovery was handled	Reminder given to all officers to ensure they are exhausting all contact methods before recovery action commences
Household Recycling Centre	Unhappy with lack of assistance to move heavy items	HRC site staff to have extra customer service training
Housing Needs	Delays and poor communication in receiving rent deposit.	Need to streamline buying support process for letting agents and need better handovers.
PES (Parking)	Lack of Parking Enforcement	Some evening patrols will be introduced when resources are recruited
Waste Services	Unhappy with charge introduced for replacement food bin	Policy reviewed so first bin is free and charge applied on subsequent cases
Council Tax	Unhappy that Council Tax letter is unclear	Billing templates will be reviewed
Highways	Unhappy that road closures occurred but road works did not go ahead	PCC staff to ensure that they monitor the delivery of letters by the road contractor to householders effected by road closures

Complaint Outcomes at Stage 2 Review

Even with the removal of the post stage 1 meeting the escalation rate only increased marginally from 7.5% to 8.6% with 23 Stage 2 reviews (compared to 22 the previous year).

Since April 2023 Stage 2 reviews are conducted by a Head of Service Independent of the service area which is the subject of the complaint, and this is working well and has improved the performance on Stage 2 complaint reviews.

The Stage 2 reviews resulted in an uphold rate of 56.5%. The 13 cases where the complaint was upheld by the reviewer are detailed below in Figure 8

Figure 8 Stage 2 Review Outcomes 2023-24

Service	Outcome	Complaint	Actions
Licensing	Upheld	Failure to consult street traders regarding speed bumps	Refund of fees given for lack of consultation on speed bumps effecting trading
Regulatory Services	Upheld	Poor communication and unclear information in interview process	Review of Recruitment Advertising and Recruitment Policy to improve flexible/remote working options. Guidance to Recruiting managers to refer all T&C queries to HR
Democratic Services	Partially Upheld	Concerns about information shared with councillors for a committee meeting, re-scheduling of the committee meeting and the time given to present their case.	Democratic Services to improve response times to contacts.
Planning	Partially Upheld	Complaint regarding refund of planning fee & misleading statement by tree officer at planning committee.	Democratic services to improve response times
Property Services	Partially Upheld	Lack of response to enquiry regarding land ownership with no response for over a month	Team to be trained on complaints process and written procedures to be produced for dealing with land purchase requests.
Property Services	Partially Upheld	Alleged poor conduct of worker regarding the management of the land owned by PCC.	Recommendations to be taken forward by Property Services which are specific to this location
Housing Needs	Upheld	Customer challenged review decision for Housing Registration.	Payment offered to recognise the distress caused by the error of placing applicant on housing register then removing them.
Housing Needs	Partially Upheld	Housing failed to consider all of customer's needs. Unhappy with time taken to acknowledge their concerns.	Commitment to reply within 7 working days to direct allocation request. Backdated application to Feb as requested. Will review allocations policy to assess compliance with Equality Act within 3 months.
Blue Badges	Partially upheld	Unhappy with the communication from the Blue Badges team	Apology for typo and out of office mistake but did not affect decision about eligibility for a blue badge
Attendance Service	Partially Upheld	Unhappy that educational provision was not provided on multiple days when child could not attend school	Apology for delays in sourcing alternative provision compensation offered for missed education

SEN	Partially Upheld	Unhappy with implementation of package for EHCP.	No merit in investigating further, but payment offer made at stage 1 has been re-offered.
SEN	Partially Upheld	Complaint alleging failure to ensure alternative provision and continuity of tutor	Officer should have been clearer regarding term time provision. Apologised for this misunderstanding. Gesture of good will made in allowing complainant to retain laptop
Council Tax	Partially Upheld	Delays in payments, and delays in resolving overpayment issue.	Feedback that responses should demonstrate empathy where appropriate.

Reviews due to other processes

There is another type of Stage 2 Review which is completed under the complaints process which is where the original complaint has been handled by a contractor or where the review follows an appeal or review process, and a Stage 1 complaint response is not necessary.

In 2023-24 there were 12 Stage 2 reviews of this type which are shown below in Figure 9

Figure 9 - Other Review Outcomes 2023-24

Service	Outcome	Complaint	Actions
Peterborough Limited	Not Upheld	Unhappy that they were asked to move lanes and how they were spoken to by lifeguards and a manager at Premier Fitness	None required
Peterborough Limited	Upheld	Escalated Aragon complaint Housing scheme requesting further bins for housing for residents.	Issued with more bins
Peterborough Limited	Upheld	Ongoing failure to empty brown bin. Evidence provided showing bin was left out for collection. Requesting a refund.	Apology for missed bins and poor complaint handling. Time and trouble payment offered.

Peterborough Limited	Not Upheld	Unhappy with the policy regarding contaminated bins	Apology that further questions were not answered by Aragon
Peterborough Limited	Not Upheld	Unhappy with the lack of action taken by Aragon to maintain overgrown vegetation which is affecting their property	Gesture of goodwill to arrange cutback earlier.
Peterborough Limited	Upheld	Unhappy with policy around collecting bins when road is blocked for the pick-up truck	Request colleagues in highways add this street to the list for consideration of parking restrictions subject to public consultation. Letter to be sent to all residents of street asking them to park considerably on waste collection days.
Peterborough Limited	Not Upheld	Unhappy with process for membership cancellation and unhappy with Aragon response	None Required
Peterborough Limited	Partially Upheld	Unhappy that Aragon will not cut down hedges at back of property. Aragon have said once a year. Unhappy with stage 1 and 2 Peterborough Ltd responses.	Apology given. Review of Policy. Feedback to contractor/goodwill of extra cutback of bushes
Peterborough Limited	Not Upheld	Disagreeing with services response/decision in relation to replacing their fence.	None Required
Peterborough Limited	Not Upheld	Unhappy with the time taken to respond/deal with complaint	None Required
Housing Needs	Not Upheld	Registration review complaint as family has multiple needs.	None offered
Housing Needs	Not Upheld	Registration review complaint as applicant has medical needs.	None offered

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Decisions 2023-24

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 have risen to 48 following a significant fall the previous year (36 in 2021-22, 25 in 2022-23).

In the Ombudsman report on Local Government 2023-24 they show that there are increasing pressures in some areas. They have seen an increase of 16% in the complaints they received last year, and the highest areas are Children's Services and Education, Housing and Adult Social Care. More than half the enquiries they received about Peterborough City Council last year were about these three services.

Whilst the numbers of enquiries that were received by the LGSCO increased they did not investigate a high proportion of the complaints.

Complaints Upheld

In 2023-24 the LGSCO investigated only 11 of the 48 complaints received and upheld 8 of these. This is an uphold rate of 73%.

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 was an uphold rate of 79% so we are in line with this figure. Sometimes the complaints investigated by the LGSCO will have been investigated by the council in the previous year. This is particularly true of complaints about Children Social Care as the complaints process for these complaints can take up to six months.

The eight cases are detailed in the table at **Figure 10**.

Figure 10. Complaints Upheld by the LGSCO 2023-24

Service Area	LGSCO Ref	Type of complaint	Recommended Actions
SEN	22012675	The Council failed to offer suitable alternative provision, failed to secure provision in her son's Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan, failed to consult with provisions suitable for her son. Because of this, her son has been out of education and said she has been caused significant stress.	The Council has agreed to apologise to Miss X for the faults identified in this statement and pay compensation for the failure in education and distress caused. The Council to remind staff of their duties under the Education Act 1996 to provide provision or suitable education for children of compulsory age who cannot attend school because of exclusion, medical reasons or otherwise.
Council Contractor - Aragon	23008000	Complaint made about the Council's zero tolerance policy, which resulted in communal recycling bin not being emptied because it was contaminated	The council had previously accepted that Aragon did not address the issues raised in the complaint and will produce standard wording to explain its contaminated bin policy. Council also offered to liaise with the complainant's landlord. The ombudsman stated that the council has addressed the issue satisfactorily.
Children Social Care	22018116	Complaint in respect of special guardianship allowance paid and no backdating, plus lack of breakdown on how calculated. This caused anxiety and financial hardship.	Council to apologise and pay compensation. Recalculate the guardianship award and council to review its special guardianship policy and ensure guidance taken into account when doing so.
Council Contractor - Aragon	22015223	Complaint that the Council failed to deal with concerns about large trees that overhang a garden. The trees are council owned, but the Council took a long time to accept responsibility. It did not respond to her contact properly and has wrongly decided not to take any action. Complainant not able to use their garden.	The Council is to apologise to the complainant that it failed to address all parts of the complaint and failed to give clear information about the ownership of, and responsibility for the trees. There should be a written apology from an officer with appropriate seniority, and in accordance with the Ombudsman's guidance.
Adult Social Care	23002112	Complaint about the care provided to his son, Mr Y, by the Council, NHS and ICB. Complaint that the Council, Trust and ICB failed to arrange a Section 117 review for Mr Y as recommended by the Ombudsman in May 2022. Mr Y has not had a Section 117 review since 2019 and that this means his ongoing care needs have not been properly and holistically considered.	All 3 organisation to write to Complainant and Mr Y with a joint letter of apology for the inconvenience and frustration caused to them by their failure to arrange a Section 117 review meeting, as well as pay compensation inconvenience and frustration caused. Also, to appoint a care coordinator for Mr Y; and arrange a Section 117 review meeting for Mr Y.

Housing Needs	23005892	Complainant stated the Council failed to give him the correct housing priority and so missed a property offer. The Council did offer a suitable property which was accepted and offered a financial remedy for the injustice caused. However, complainant says the remedy does not take account of the significant impact on his life and personal relationships.	As a remedy for the injustice caused by the faults identified, the council is recommended to pay compensation for missing the property offer and the delay in the complaint process.
Children Social Care	23003640	Complaint about how the Council considered a complaint about its change in policy for adoption allowance and special guardianship allowance. The Council did not have all the historic paperwork and so it could not properly consider the complaint. The Council's decision has caused financial difficulties, distress, and uncertainty.	Letter of apology to be sent and compensation paid for delay in the complaints process being completed. Staff to receive extra training and show stage 3 panel's recommendations were undertaken.
School Admissions	23008638	Complaint about the Council's decision to refuse a request for delayed entry to reception for her summer born child. Says the Council's policy does not comply with recent government guidance. Says the Council has ignored concerns raised about this and not explained why it would be in child's best interests to bypass reception and go straight to year one.	Council to send a written apology. Reconsider request for the child to be admitted out of their normal age group. If council does not agree to start in reception it must explain fully why. Council to review and publish its policy for delayed admissions.

Compliance with Recommendations

The Ombudsman sets a deadline for the delivery of recommendations in each case it investigates and upholds. 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 2023-24 the average for Unitary Authorities against this indicator is 13% and at PCC we have also scored 13%. This is an improvement on the previous year's performance against this indicator.

To improve our performance in this area further the complaint manager provides advice to Directors at Stage 2 when compensation should be considered and at what level. On some cases the LGSCO recommended a service improvement that the service area had failed to identify. Now that Stage 2 reviews are conducted by an independent manager outside of the service area it is hoped that this will lead to improvement in this area.

Accessibility

In 2023-24 we have started classifying the complaints received by email and online form separately. This is because we prefer customers to use our online form which is more efficient as it captures all the information needed without the team having to make further enquiries with the customer which slows the process down. The results are unexpected because more customers are accessing the service via email than online form and will lead to us working more closely with the Website team to ensure the online form is made more accessible for customers.

- **Email – 47%**
- **Online Form - 43.7%**
- **Telephone – 7.3%**
- **Letter – 2%**

Compared to the previous year telephone complaints have reduced further and complaints received by post are rare.

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

The number of compliments received about corporate teams this year is 249. This compares with 243 compliments that were recorded in 2022-23.

Compliments for, Adult Social Care, Children Social Care and Peterborough Ltd are not included in these figures but are included in the Appendices for those services Appendices B, C & D)

Service Area	Number of Compliments 2023-24
Household Waste Service	21
Customer Services	84
Register Office	47
Education *	29
Highways	17
STS (Council Tax, Revs & Bens)	4
Housing Needs	47
Total	249

**Education compliments are illustrated in Appendix B*

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 the complaints team manage and share with the appropriate service.

Some examples of the compliments received in 2023-24 are shown in Figure 10

Figure 10: Examples of Compliments 2023-24

Examples of Compliments 2023-24
<p>Customer Services</p> <p>Customer has just called today regarding her council tax. She passed on that she loves speaking to us all and we are all so nice and helpful whenever she calls.</p> <p>Customer left thank you card at reception for a member of the call centre team. In the note the customer said that she had contacted PCC to explain what issue she was having with her bank and her council tax payments and the member of staff at the end of the phone took time of her very busy day to help the customer and explain. The customer wanted to thank the staff for their time and kindness.</p> <p>A customer called to speak to a manager. He was extremely pleased with the service he received from a member of staff today over an Aragon issue. He regularly finds it difficult to get across what he wants to say but the team member understood the issue he was raising and was able to advise him in a manner he understood and knew that he had been listened to and understood also.</p> <p>Customer called back twice about a council tax matter. He said how impressed he was with the service he had received from both the people he spoke to. Their service was excellent. They were informative and aligned with what they said and did. The customer was extremely pleased.</p>
<p>Housing Needs</p> <p>Just wanted to update you on things. Got my furniture from Care zone, thank you so much. Life is getting better thanks to you and the team. Thank you all. Lots of love and respect.</p> <p>I know it's your job & I'm just a number in your never ending workload but hand on heart thank you for everything really , no way on this planet could I of done this journey on my own , I would of thrown the towel in long ago ,appreciate everything down to the repeated emails I send you when I can't even get my head around all the how to do this or answer that , I am absolutely shocking at all the on line game , never been the cleverest with computers, truth is I'm not very well with mental health issues as you probably know with your in depth checks but I'm holding it together & it's been a pleasure having you as my council housing officer</p> <p>Thank you, really so much, for helping me at a very difficult time, I really appreciate everything you have done for us. Thank you!</p> <p>Thank you for all the help and I appreciate everything. I will be giving a letter of thanks to everyone that has helped me get through the last year at the council thank you.</p> <p>Thanks for the kind and motivating words during our initial housing assessment, you having that positive outlook and confidence in me finding accommodation really helped to push me to look harder. Thanks</p>

Hi! I am doing well, in a much better place after today's news, thank you for all the help and support with my homeless situation I really do appreciate it.

Household Waste Service

Proactively Helpful and approachable staff. Completely covered indoor facility making visit on a rainy day possible without getting drenched while unloading. Clean and tidy - always seen one of the staff cleaning up the parking bays. They always have an alternate bay if they are closing a section for clearance, so you are not kept waiting for long. Keep it up!

On parking my car to unload my recycling I met xxx . He kindly helped me, and he took all my recycling to the appropriate bins for me. He was very kind and considerate and went out of his way to help me. This service was greatly appreciated as I am a woman and a pensioner. If only we could get this service elsewhere. I do so hope that on my next visit he will be there to help me again.

They are always helpful down there even though it is a very hard job the team always help and advise which area the waste go. Thank you all to everyone down there for making getting rid of our house waste as easy as you all currently do. Keep up the good work!

Council Tax

The officer was very helpful. Listened to me waffle on, explained everything to me in full and gave me many options to pay back without impacting me financially.

"

A fantastic compliment for xxx's all- round service and how she dealt with the customer's query. The customer said "She showed such professionalism and was so kind in calling me every day until I had received the refund. Simply, a World Class Service. Please pass on my appreciation to xxx for an outstanding customer interaction. She sets the benchmark that all should aim to achieve in any company"

Highways

Thanks for all the hard work that went into this project. Local residents are most impressed by their new ""rolls royce"" standard bus shelter. They even had a brief opening ceremony that was attended by around 50 residents!

"The repair team were here today and have made a good job of repairing the footway. Thanks to everyone at your end for organising this.

A serious 'Thank You' to those involved with dealing with the problem, it is very noticeable that it is working more efficiently now, as the roadway has remained clear of surface water since actioned. I have not seen it like that ever, when it has been raining! Thanks.

Register Office

My dear husband died recently which obviously meant I had to register his death. I wanted to say how much I appreciated the ease with which I had to complete the procedure. Booking the appointment on line was straightforward and the kindness and sensitivity shown by the Deputy Registrar to me and my son was excellent.

Everything was perfect from the friendliness of the wedding service staff to the service itself. We really enjoyed the whole experience!