



Somerset County Council

Annual Customer Feedback Report

April 2014 – March 2015

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1. Introduction

This annual report summarises Customer feedback. Somerset County Council [SCC] has a statutory obligation to report on the operation of its complaints procedure in relation to adults and children’s social care. The report summarises customer feedback across all services in the period from April 2014 – March 2015.

This report is for staff, Members, the relevant local authority committee and will be made available to the Regulator and general public. It provides information about numbers of feedback received, learning and service improvements that have been made, details of any that have not been implemented and why and any matters of general importance arising from complaints or the way in which they were handled.

For the purposes of this report, the term feedback should be taken to mean complaints, compliments and comments.

SCC classifies a complaint as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction with the actions or inactions of the Council or its agents either by a member of the public directly affected or by someone acting on their behalf, which isn’t resolved immediately”.

The SCC complaint process begins when a complaint is received by the local authority.

Stage 1 is to seek local resolution within 10 working days

Where a complainant is not satisfied with the Stage 1 response, the customer can request a;

Stage 2 where the complaint is investigated by an independent officer from a different service area or external to the authority.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can request a;

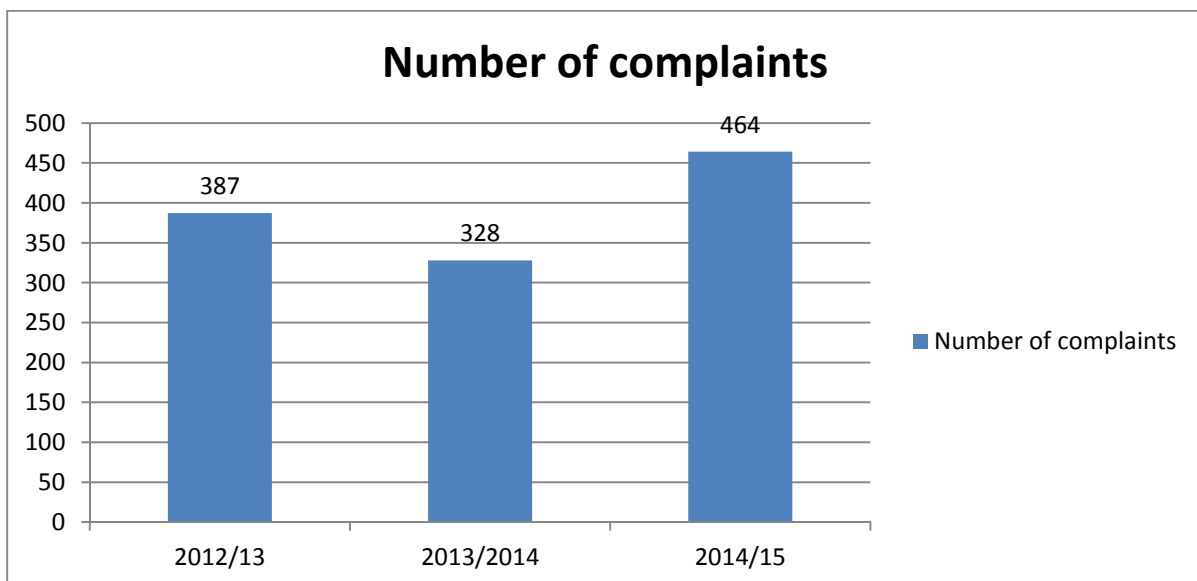
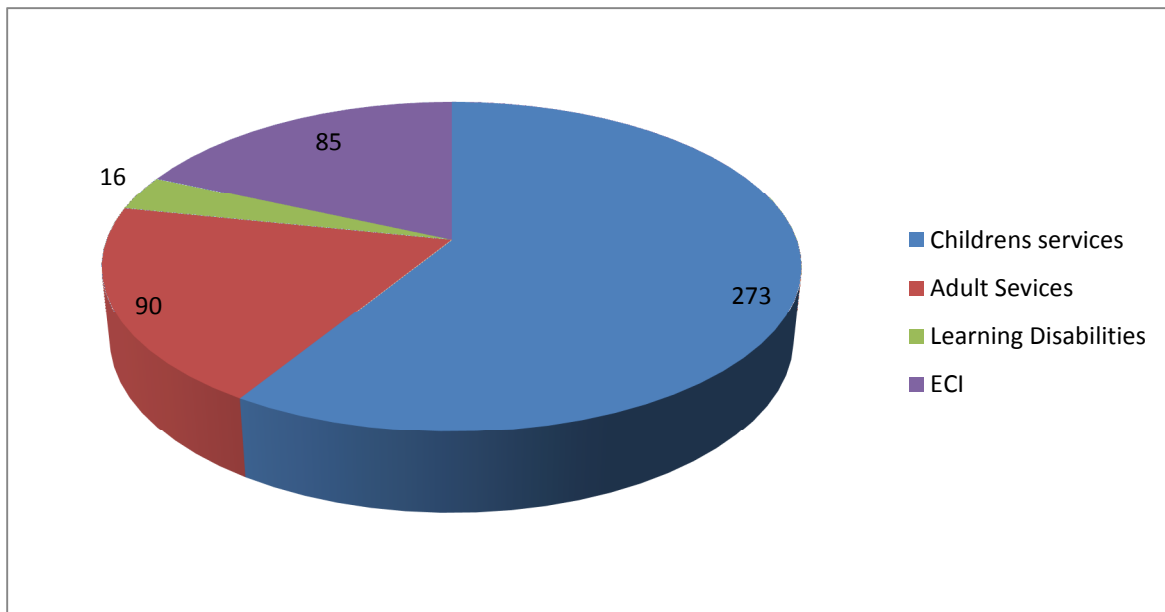
Stage 3 A panel hearing, to include the Chief Executive is convened to review the process and outcome reached. (only two stages are available in Adult social care)

If the customer remains unhappy with the outcome of their complaint they may escalate their complaint to, the Local Government Ombudsman (who is independent of the County Council) who will consider their complaint and decide whether to investigate.

2. 2014/15 Annual Feedback Data Overview

Complaints

SCC recorded 464 stage one complaints during the period 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015. The chart below shows the distribution across service areas.



Total complaints recorded in 2014/15 shows an increase on the previous year of approximately 41%.

2013/14 complaints recorded were 328, 2014/15 complaints recorded 464. This shows an overall increase of 136 complaints across SCC.

Stage two complaints

Of the 464 stage one complaints only escalated to stage two of the process. Stage two complaints have shown a 0.1% rise in 2014/15 showing that 2.6 % of all complaints escalated to stage 2, (12 cases compared with 8 cases in 2013/14. which showed an escalation of 2.5%.

Stage three complaints

No complaints were escalated to stage 3 of the process during the reporting period 2014/15..

Local Government Ombudsman

From an initial 82 customer enquiries , 25 cases went through to investigation stage. Of these 8 were not upheld 17 were upheld. (Please refer to Section 7 Local Government Ombudsman for further details)

MP enquiries

The authority also receives correspondence from MPs regarding a wide range of constituents’ issues. This correspondence is logged and recorded as an MP enquiry. We respond directly to the MP regarding the concern unless requested otherwise. The MP may, in some instances, direct their constituent to our complaints procedure which they can follow if they wish.

Somerset County Council recorded 444 MP enquiries during the 2014/15 reporting period.

3. Detailed Annual Data Breakdown

The following table shows the annual comparisons for total complaints across service areas. You will note an increase in Children’s Social Care complaints of approximately 82% and reductions in all other areas, This increase in CSC is due to an upward trend in accurate recording.

Stage one complaints breakdown			
Service Area	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Children’s Social Care	136	150	273
Adult Social Care	79	77	90
Learning Disabilities	69	34	16
Economic & Community Infrastructure	103	67	85
Total	387	328	464

The following table shows the annual comparisons for sStage 2 complaints across service areas.

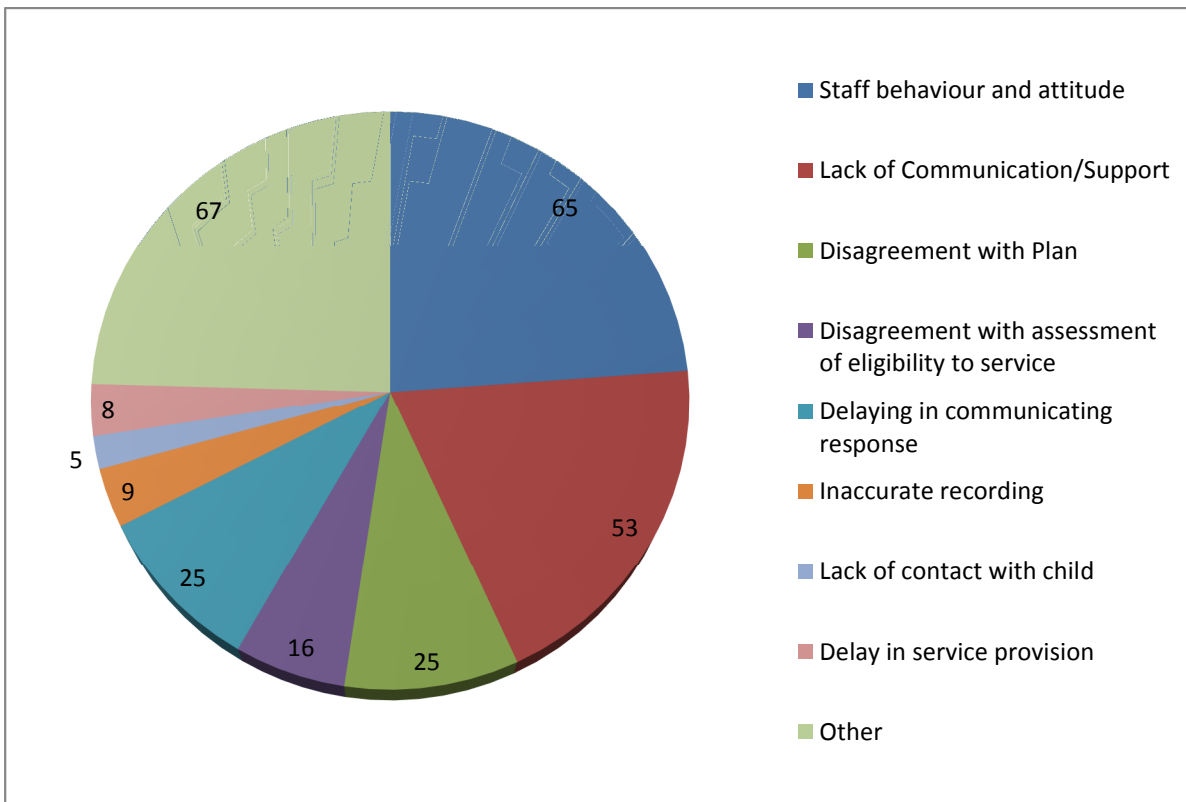
Stage two complaints breakdown			
Service Area	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Children's Social Care	2	2	8
Adult Social Care	5	4	3
Learning Disabilities	3	1	0
Economic & Community Infrastructure	4	1	1
Total	14	8	12

Stage 2 complaints are starting to show a downward trend in all areas of the authority other than CSC. Reasons for the decline are a direct result of centralising the role of the Customer Experience Team and the increased amount of mediation and conflict resolution work the team are conducting with all service areas.

Children's Services agreed that the Customer Experience Team could provide increased levels of support to facilitate mediation meetings with complainants at an earlier stage in the process so as to reduce the number of complaint escalations. This engagement with the service came at a later stage and therefore is not reflected in this year's data.

Detailed data analysis by service areas

4. Feedback from Children Services



273 stage one complaints were received across the service. An upward trend in more accurate recording is believed to be the main factor for the increase.

The key learning from the data is staff behaviour and lack of communication are the main areas of a customer complaint.

CSC is sharing the learning from the above data to make changes and improvements to customer interactions.

5. Feedback from Children & Young People

This data below is recorded complaints from looked after children and young people. CSC encourages children to have a voice and feedback how they are feeling. From the Learning of 2013/14 report CSC is encouraging feedback from looked after children and aims to respond in timely and appropriate communication.

There was a total of 31 complaints for the year 2014/15. The ages of children making complaints are:

Age	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Total
Number	1	4	2	2	8	4	2	6	2	31

The table below shows the length of time it has taken to resolve this complaints.

Working days	Number
Completed under 10 days	7
Completed under 20 days	7
Completed over 20 days	17
Total	31
Resolved	26
Not Resolved moved to a stage 2	3
Still open	2
Advocate service provided	15

The table below shows the root causes for complaints by children and young people.

Reason	Number
Social worker	4
Foster carer	2
Placement move opposed	4
Siblings wanting to live together; communication; contact; challenge assessment	3
Other young person in children's home	2
Child seeking permanent placement with current carers	2
Complaint about carers	3
Care Home staff	3
Clothes missing from previous placement	1
-Opposed to going home	1
Bullying by another young person in a children's home	1
Contact	3
Young person in prison – complaints re workers and lack of response to his complaints	1
Medication error; LADO and agency investigation	1
Total	31

Promise Advocacy

PROMISE continues to support volunteer mentors for 150 of the most vulnerable and at risk children and young people in Somerset. 50 of these also act as Independent Visitors for Children looked After. It is expected that in line with the increasing emphasis on the need for the child's voice to be heard, this figure will increase substantially in the future. Most other mentoring is focused on children with Child Protection Plans and those at risk of entering the care system. There is a constant and significant demand for mentors from all children's services.

Requests for advocates also continue to increase. There were nearly 600 requests for advocates between March 2014 and April 2015. All were met. The majority, nearly 500, were for Child Protection meetings followed by Children Looked after Reviews, family meetings, Complaints, Advice and Assistance meetings. We also received 249 notifications on young people missing from home. All were contacted and offered an advocacy service. There is a growing increase in the uptake for this service.

A sample of comments and compliments

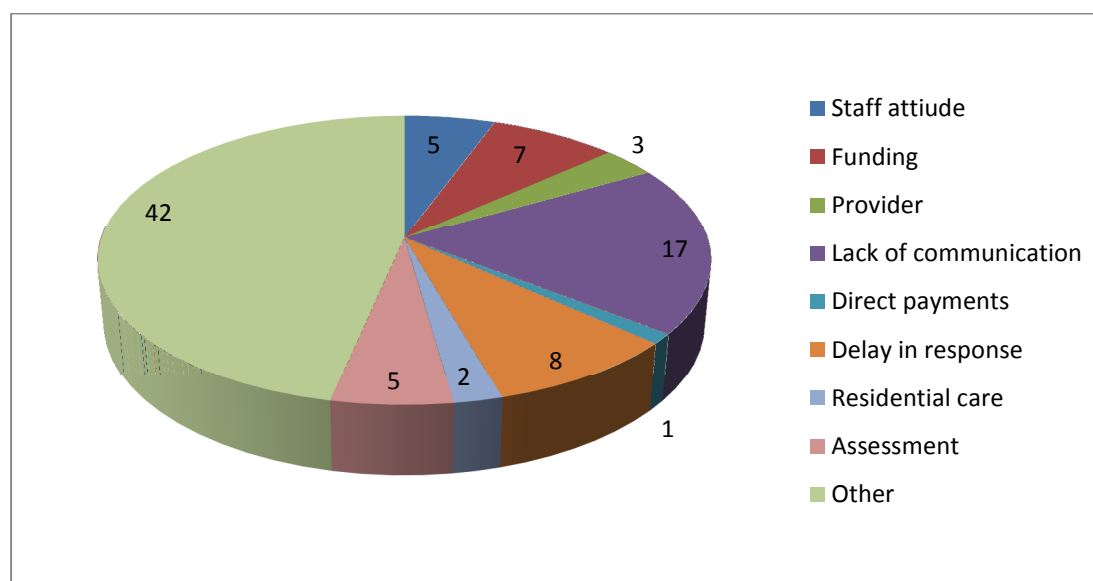
- Child wanted to talk about things that worry him in society and his family. Not a complaint – resolved by phone and confirmed by letter
- Comment – no complaints but thanks for asking

Completed actions from 2013/14 Annual Report

- Raise staff awareness on the benefit of customer feedback, using the new data recording system (iCasework) we can produce service specific reports i.e their top ten issues.
- Staff training in CSC complaints process – All staff involved in handling customer feedback will undertake ongoing training from their service feedback coordinator or the Customer Experience Team
- Engaging with CSC customers, create better leaflets and feedback cards for children and parents. Learning from that feedback.
- Utilise improved functionality resulting from iCasework implementation to ensure that learning from feedback is collated more comprehensively, used to effectively inform service improvement activity and evidenced in feedback reports.

6. Feedback and Learning from Adult's Social Care and Learning Disability

Complaint breakdown for Adult Social Care



Lessons Learned by category	Total
Staff attitude	5
Provider	3
Lack of communication	17
Delay in response	8
Residential care	2
Assessment	5
Other	42
Total	90
Complaint upheld	9
Complaint not upheld	19
Total recorded	28

Analysis of the 2014/15 ASC complaints raises four main areas for improvement:

- (a) Recording- it is noticeable that fewer complaints are being recorded on the current complaint management system and where they are recorded the data is often incomplete. It has therefore necessitated a degree of manual effort to collate data for this report. and this adversely affects our ability to effectively manage and learn from the complaints.
- (b) Communication - Lack of communication and support were the most common reasons for a complaint being made. Complainants often felt that the information provided about the Council's care and support services was not clear.

- (c) Care providers and safeguarding issues:
 - Specific issues arising from complaint investigation around complaints process from customers accessing care providers.
 - Review safeguarding guidance concerning input of carers and a person's best interests.
- (d) Customer Finance; communication and process of customer entitlements and payments.

Actioned from learning during the 2014/15 period

From 1st September 2015 a new centralised safeguarding adults service was established to:

- Receive all the safeguarding concerns for adults who may be at risk across Somerset
- Decide whether the concerns meet the criteria for a statutory or section 42 enquiry
- Work with the adult at risk or their advocate to agree what outcome they want
- Determine the proportionate response and timescales for achieving those outcomes
- Make sure the response is personal to the individual concerned
- Carry out the investigation or delegate as appropriate
- Manage all safeguarding situations where there are whole service or whole provider concerns.

This new service will ensure that there is a quality assured, consistent response to any concerns being raised. The service will be delivered by an expert, skilled workforce, whose primary focus will be to implement a person centred safeguarding approach.

Additional improvements have been undertaken including:

- Changes to the discharge process for respite care;
- Changes to information on our internet site;
- Changes to our guidance on Direct Payments.

Complaint breakdown for Learning Disability

Complaint Type	Total
Local Response Care Management	8
Unknown	8
Total	16

Channel by which complaints received:

Contact Method	Total
Paper	1
Telephone	11
Visit/face to face	0
Email	4
Total	16

Complaint Outcomes	Total
Complaint Response-Upheld	1
Complaint Response- Not upheld	3
Complaint outcome unknown/ not recorded	12
Total	16

Gender	Total
Female	10
Male	6
Total	16

Actions from complaints during 2014/15 period

Complaint raised by member of the public that a person on night duty was using Facebook. The employee admitted this at the first opportunity.

Action

A formal meeting was held with the employee to set Performance Expectations.

Complaint letter from parents of a customer, after a short break where his parents claim he ingested a rubber glove. It was found by his parents after he used the toilet on his return home. The safeguarding investigation was inconclusive as to how this happened. The customer came to no harm. His parents have subsequently booked short breaks for him and did so even while the investigation was ongoing. There was no prior history of the customer ingesting rubber gloves.

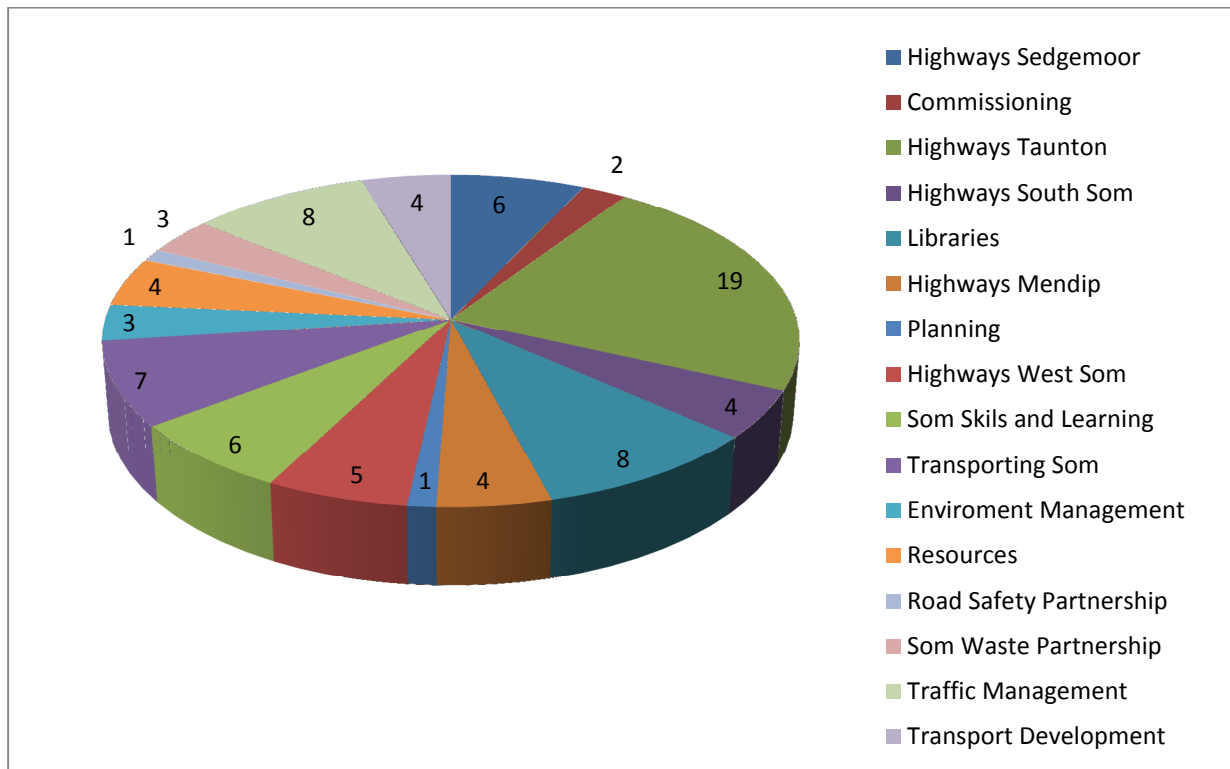
Action

The risk of a re-occurrence of this incident has been greatly reduced by the agreed understanding between staff and the parents that all gloves will be locked away in a COSHH cupboard during any future stays he has. The key for this cupboard will be held in the house safe. This has been detailed in a new Risk Assessment held on his file. This measure was documented in a meeting they had with Team Manager. The health and safety team were also asked to review this investigation and the action taken to minimise risks and advise of any further action they wish to be taken.

7. Economic & Community Infrastructure Learning and Areas for Improvement

ECl receives a large proportion of SCC customer feedback they include feedback from: Highways planning, potholes and flooding. On the whole the service works hard on stage one resolution. Only one complaint escalated to stage two in 2014/15.

There is still learning and improvement to be made for example recommendations were made by the LGO regarding timing and better communication in relation to a Highways Planning case on which they adjudicated. As a result, Highways staff were retrained by the Customer Experience Team on the complaints process. The team now communicate with complainants to reach an understanding of the desired outcomes of the complaint. Complaint responses are collated and answered by one staff member (instead of multiple replies) in the correct timescale



7. Ombudsman Overview

82 customer enquiries were received by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), 25 of the 82 were escalated to the investigation stage. Of those 25, 8 were not upheld and 17 complaints were upheld. A sample of those 17 include:

Issue	LGO Recommendation
Council at fault for providing inadequate information and delayed replies and in the way it handled the complaint.	£400 plus reimbursement of interest
Safeguarding - access of daughter to mother	£500 plus apology
I found some fault in the way the Council dealt with Ms C's safeguarding alert.	Apology and changes to process
Fault re financial assessment, but no injustice	
Complaint re administration of financial assessment	£350 plus review of processes
Complaint re care provision and charging and Council's failure to deal with the complaint through processes.	Apology

The Somerset County Council LGO report is attached at Appendix 1.

As a listening and learning authority SCC has now introduced a learning panel. This panel is chaired by the Director of Customer and Communities. The aim of the panel is to ensure learning and consistency from complaints is actioned across the authority.

8. Learning & Improvements

When taking complaints as a whole, analysis of 2014/15 data shows that the main reasons why people complain are:

- Poor communication
- Delay in communicating a response
- Disagreement with assessment of eligibility to service
- Behaviour of social worker
- Contact arrangements
- Delay in service provision
- Quality of care/support – residential

The Customer Experience Team is now working closely with services to address the following areas:

- Encouraging more feedback from service users
- Implementing a new system for recording, monitoring and managing feedback
- Improving timeliness of responses to complaints
- Improving standard of communication
- Supporting front line managers to deal effectively with first stage complaints

- Using mediation to support early stage conflict resolution
- Building an infrastructure to ensure learning from complaints is captured and acted upon

9. Changes in Feedback Management

A new management system iCasework which has been specifically designed to manage customer feedback, went live in September 2015 across SCC.

The new system enables us to:

- Embed a consistent approach to the recording of customer feedback.
- Monitor performance against service standards.
- Identify learning outcomes from customer feedback
- Produce consistent and reliable management information
- Enable channel shift by improving the experience of registering feedback through the web.
- Streamline business processes and manage change easily

10. Appendices and Links



LGO Table.docx

Local Government Ombudsman report

Somerset County Council customer feedback web link:

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/have-your-say/complaints-comments-and-compliments/complaints-comments-compliments/>