

Somerset County Council

Annual Customer Feedback Summary Report

1st April 2016 – 31 March 2017



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Contents:

Section	Title	Page
	Introduction	2
1	Feedback Data	3
1.1	Volumes and Comparisons	3
1.2	Performance	4
1.3	Complaint Outcomes	4
1.4	Reasons for Complaints	4
2	Learning and Recommendations	5

Introduction

This is an annual summary report of all customer feedback received across all Somerset County Council services during the year 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017. Data used in this report is taken from the corporate iCasework system.

Full detailed annual reports for Adult and Children's Social Care are available on the Somerset County Council website.

The Local Government Ombudsman (now the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman) produces an annual review for each council and the Somerset County Council 2017 review can be found at <http://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/councils-performance/council/Somerset%20County%20Council>

1. Feedback Data

1.1 Volumes and Comparisons

Total feedback received across all council services for last 3 years:

Feedback Type	1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015	1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016	1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017
Children's Social Care Complaints	273	303	267
Adults Social Care Complaints	106	240	305
ECI Complaints	85	231	196
Other Children's Complaints	Not known	86	131
Corporate Complaints	Not known	53	34
Total Complaints	464	913	933
Children's Social Care Compliments	Not known	135	124
Adults Social Care Compliments	Not known	133	128
ECI Compliments	Not known	333	261
Other Children's Compliments	Not known	46	144
Corporate Compliments	Not known	9	6
Total Compliments	Not known	656	663
Children's Social Care Comments	Not known	9	16
Adults Social Comments	Not known	29	15
ECI Comments	Not known	80	51
Other Children's Comments	Not known	1	9
Corporate Comments	Not known	15	7
Total Comments	Not known	134	98
Children's Social Care Member Enquiries	Not Known	Not Known	19
Adults Social Member Enquiries	Not Known	Not Known	35
ECI Member Enquiries	Not Known	Not Known	2
Other Children's Member Enquiries	Not Known	Not Known	35
Corporate Member Enquiries	Not Known	Not Known	36
Total Member Enquiries	Not Known	Not Known	127
Total Feedback	464	1703	1821

Figures for 2016/17 show an overall increase in total feedback received when compared with figures recorded in the 12 months prior. The table below shows percentage increase/decrease per service for feedback types.

Service Area	Feedback Type	↑↓
Children's Social Care	Complaint	11% ↓
	Compliment	8% ↓
Adult's Social Care	Complaint	27% ↑
	Compliment	48% ↓
Economic & Community Infrastructure	Complaint	15% ↓
	Compliment	22% ↓
Other Children's Services	Complaint	52% ↑
	Compliment	213% ↑
Corporate Feedback	Complaint	36% ↓
	Compliment	33% ↓

1.2 Performance

The vast majority of complaints (97%) continue to be resolved at 'Stage 1' of the complaints process. 11 cases (1.3%) escalated to 'Stage 2' in the year 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017 and 15 cases (1.7 %) were referred to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).

Somerset County Council's complaint procedure sets a target resolution timescale of 10 days. The table below show the average resolution times at stage one, by service area:

Service Area	1st April 2015 – 31st March 2016	1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017
Children's Social Care	25 working days	26 working days
Adult's Social Care	36 working days	30 working days
Economic & Community Infrastructure	20 working days	15 working days
Other Children's Services	47 working days	26 working days
Corporate Feedback	46 working days	34 working days

Whilst we continue to exceed the 10 day target, we have shown improvement on the previous year in most operational areas.

1.3 Complaint Outcomes

The table below shows the percentage of complaints across all services that were resolved with the listed outcomes and a comparison with the previous year.

Outcomes	1st April 2015 – 31st March 2016	1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017
Upheld	17%	17%
Not Upheld	39%	33%
Partially Upheld	22%	26%
Resolved Upon Receipt	22%	19%
Case Withdrawn/Rejected	0%	5%
	100%	100%

1.4 Reasons for Complaints

The table below shows the primary causes recorded for resolved complaints as a percentage of the total:

Cause Theme	% of total
Service Provision	20.09%
Communication	17.90%
Attitude & Behaviour of Staff	15.94%
Service Quality	13.54%
Policy & Procedures	13.21%
Not recorded	8.08%
Information	5.35%
Financial	3.38%

Unfair Treatment	1.20%
Confidentiality	1.09%
Health & Safety	0.22%
	100%

2. Learning and Improvement

Service provision and communication remain the two biggest ‘themes’ from the primary cause data recorded. Even in cases where communication is not the primary cause for a complaint, it can frequently be an additional cause for dissatisfaction and frustration from customers.

The experience of the Customer Experience Team is that complaints often escalate when communication with the customer is absent, infrequent, incomplete or unclear. This can lead to persistent contact, increased customer dissatisfaction (compounding the original ‘mistakes’), unacceptable customer behaviour, the need for costly investigation, scrutiny from the Local Government Ombudsman and potential for compensation payment. This is an area for improvement across all Somerset County Council services and is addressed in the recommendations below.

Recommendation 1
Work with services to establish blocks and barriers to working effectively within the complaints process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With services, analyse the block and barriers within current processes. • Undertake corporate review and options appraisal of complaints process.
Recommendation 2
Consider how the complaints process, the Customer Experience Team and the iCasework system can better support communication with the customers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring customer communication is a key consideration in the complaints process options appraisal. • Make better use of iCasework to minimise delays & identify ‘inaction’ on cases. • Consider the addition of a ‘QA’ role to the process to ensure clear and comprehensive responses at Stage 1 (reduce escalation and avoidable contact).
Recommendation 3
Improve management of customers who display unacceptable behaviour and/or are unreasonably persistent.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision of current policy to include impact assessment for restriction of access. • Consistent use of policy in all cases.
Recommendation 4
Further develop mechanisms for informing and influencing service improvement based on customer complaints.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of reporting framework to enable better insight on customer dissatisfaction. • Implement case study reviews to feed in to service improvement planning.