



# Borough of Telford and Wrekin

## Audit Committee

17 July 2024

### Customer Feedback Reports for 2023-24

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<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Richard Overton – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member: Homes, Enforcement & Customer Services
<b>Lead Director:</b>	Felicity Mercer – Director Communities, Customer and Commercial Services
<b>Service Area:</b>	Customer Relationships and Welfare Services
<b>Report Author:</b>	Lee Higgins - Service Delivery Manager: Customer Relationships and Welfare Services
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<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All Wards
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Not Key Decision
<b>Forward Plan:</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Report considered by:</b>	SMT - 18 June 2024 Business Briefing - 27 June 2024 Cabinet - 10 July 2024 Audit Committee- 17 July 2024

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#### 1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Audit Committee:

- 1.1 Review the Customer Feedback Reports for 2023-24 in respect of Adult Statutory Complaints, Children’s Statutory Complaints and Corporate Customer Feedback.
- 1.2 Note the improvement in complaint handing performance and the increase in positive feedback.

## **2.0 Purpose of Report**

2.1 The purpose of this report is to update Audit Committee on the Council's customer feedback received between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, to provide assurance that the Council's response to complaints is effective, and that services are learning from complaints and wider customer feedback to continuously improve.

## **3.0 Background**

3.1 The Council has a well-established mechanism for customers to tell us when things have gone well, they have received an excellent service, or we have exceeded their expectations. Compliments and positive feedback are shared across the Council and within teams, to inspire, motivate and build confidence and ensure that examples of best practice are used to help develop services.

3.2 Our Customer Strategy outlines our ambitions to collaborate with our customers to develop quality services that are accessible to all, while all staff are encouraged to adopt an 'Everything Speaks' approach, paying attention to detail and reporting any issues they see with our services. As part of our established Customer Insight Programme, we have recruited Mystery Customers who help us to review our services from the customers' perspective, providing valuable feedback that allows our services to continually improve.

3.3 Our customers can also raise issues directly with the Council's Leader, Cabinet and Members via our Cabinet and Member Enquiry processes, which also allows any trends to be identified and highlights any service development opportunities.

3.4 To demonstrate an effective approach to responding to customer feedback and complaint handling, the Council produces an annual report on complaint handling for Children's Statutory Complaints, Adult's Statutory Complaints and Corporate Feedback. These reports can be found at Appendices A, B and C.

3.5 This year has seen continued challenges both for the Council and for our residents and customers, against the backdrop of the ongoing cost of living crisis which continues to put significant pressure on our residents and customers as they seek support. As a result, the Council continues to see a significant demand and increased pressure on its services, particularly during times where swift mobilisation of financial support was required.

3.6 In January 2022, the Council continued its commitment to improve our customers experience by becoming members of the Institute of Customer Services (ICS). We aim to work with the ICS to reinforce our Customer Strategy actions and continue to analyse our customers' journeys to improve our services. Membership also allows us to benchmark the Council against similar organisations and share ideas.

## **4.0 Summary of main proposals**

### **4.1 Corporate Feedback Report (Appendix A)**

- 4.1.1 The Corporate Feedback Report shows that there has been a sustained increase in compliments which has continued to increase year on year. The number of residents and customers who have taken the opportunity to give a compliment in this reporting period has increased by 13% compared to the previous year. Telford and Wrekin Council has seen a 120% increase in compliments in the last 5 years.
- 4.1.2 The Customer Insight Programme now has 214 volunteers who have registered with us as Mystery Customers and are undertaking assignments to help us shape and improve our services. We have seen a 15% increase in volunteers during 2023/24.
- 4.1.3 Feedback from customers in relation to our Corporate Contact Centre indicates that performance is excellent. Customer satisfaction on our contact centre telephone calls was 93%. In addition, 99% of customers were also satisfied with the experience using our Automated Assistant, Ask Tom.
- 4.1.4 During 2023/24 the Customer Insight Programme completed a number of reviews of different elements of the customer experience, including physical locations, such as our key parks, and telephone services. The report outlines some of the results including details of the recommendations and the improvements and quick wins completed.
- 4.1.5 Alongside the physical and telephone reviews, Mystery Customers have also completed digital reviews. This has included testing the Cost of Living and Revenues pages on the website. These online reviews and user testing helps us to design an app or a website that the community can easily use. During the year 72 Customer Insight assignments were completed with 87% satisfaction with the experience when using the Council's services.
- 4.1.6 There continues to be a range of ways that our customers can provide feedback e.g. QR Code Surveys, automated telephone surveys at the end of calls, Mystery Customer programme and other mechanisms such as the Making It Real Board. Any improvements made are included on our 'You said, We did' which can be found here [You said, We did](#).
- 4.1.7 A total of 721 complaints were received across the Council, including statutory complaints in 2023/24, from 678 complainants. In the context of the many thousands of transactions and interactions that take place across the organisation in a week this remains an incredibly small proportion which equates to less than 1% of all transactions.
- 4.1.8 In 2023/24 659 of these were corporate complaints, an increase on the 601 that were received in 2022/23, although lower than in 2021/22. The remaining complaints were children's and adult's statutory complaints (see Section 4.2 and

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4.3). Of the 659 corporate complaints that were responded to in the year 42% (271) were upheld, this is where services have acknowledged that we could have done better.

- 4.1.9 During 2023/24 the Council has responded to corporate complaints in an average of 10 days (improving on the average response timescale of 11 working days achieved in 2022/23). This is well within the 15 working day target timescale that applied in 2023/24 and also is in line with the new timescale of 10 working days introduced from May 2024, in accordance with the Local Government Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. 87% of corporate complaints were responded to within the 15 working day target time scale, a significant improvement on the 80% achieved in 2022/23. The Council continues to perform well in terms of response timescales.
- 4.1.10 With effect from May 2024 our complaint procedure was amended, which included stage 1 initial timescales reducing from 15 working days to 10 working days, in line with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's complaint handling code.
- 4.1.11 10% of the corporate complaints received escalated to stage 2 of the procedure. In terms of numbers, this resulted in 70 stage 2 complaints, with 21 complaints upheld.
- 4.1.12 All complaints upheld have been reviewed to ensure wider learning to avoid such issues occurring in the future. There are no major trends, however common themes across all directorates included issues with communication and action, complaints involving staff, delays and processing or administration errors.
- 4.1.13 Examples of positive improvements resulting from learning following complaints can be seen at page 27 of the Corporate Feedback Report (Appendix A).
- 4.1.14 As well as compliments and complaints, the Customer Relationship Team manages the Leader and Cabinet enquiry process, Member enquiry process and MP enquiries. During 2023/24 a total of 1071 Leader and Cabinet enquiries were received, a 35% increase on the year before (792). Whilst there was an increase, 87% of responses were responded to within the target timescales.
- 4.1.15 Under Telford and Wrekin Council's Registered Provider status there are 23 properties. 0 complaints were received from tenants in these properties during 2023/24.
- 4.1.16 During 2023/24 no complaints were received and handled under the policy for Complaints involving Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). From May 2024 the Policy and procedure for these cases has been combined into one corporate complaint procedure. However we have produced a reference document on 'How we respond to complaints involving Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)' which can be found here [Complaints procedures - Telford & Wrekin Council](#).

## **4.2 Adult Statutory Complaint Report (Appendix B)**

- 4.2.1 We received 39 Adult Statutory complaints in 2023/24, an increase on the 35 received in 2022/23. A further 55 complaints were resolved under the 24 hours resolution process and were therefore not registered under the statutory procedure in accordance with legislation. Of the complaints responded to in the year, 70% (28) were upheld.
- 4.2.2 In 2023/24 the average number of days to respond to an Adult Statutory complaint across all portfolios was 29 days, this is an increase on the average response time of 25 working days achieved in 2022/23 but remains lower than in the two previous years. A 45% reduction in timescales has been maintained since 2020/21. The 2009 regulations set a benchmark for all Adult Statutory Complaints to be investigated within six months. When an Adult statutory complaint is received we negotiate a timescale with the complainants, depending on the complexity of the case, this is typically 35 working days. We aim to respond to all Adult Statutory Complaints within a maximum of 65 working days.
- 4.2.3 Examples of positive improvements resulting from learning following complaints can be seen from page 9 of the Adult Statutory Complaint Report (Appendix B).
- 4.2.4 Our Adult Social Care service is committed to achieving improved outcomes through continuous learning and improvement. A key area of quality assurance is using feedback from people who use our services, their carers and families to understand experiences and shape improvements, demonstrating a commitment to learning from all feedback, regardless of source, format or process. Adult Social Care follows an intelligence-led approach of review, reflect, change and share, ensuring we connect with the right people, learning as we go, and evaluating the difference/impact we have made. We are committed to learning from all feedback, regardless of source, format or process.

The following are Adult Social Care's main sources of feedback:

- Individual feedback through frontline workers
- Feedback from Experts by Experience, Making it Real Board, co-production groups and place-based partnership boards
- Complaints
- Compliments
- Adult Social Care feedback forms
- Adult Social Care Case File Audits – feedback from individuals/carers
- Annual NHS Digital Adult Social Care Survey
- Bi-annual NHS Digital Survey of Adult Carers in England
- Mystery shopper exercises
- Feedback from voluntary organisations, e.g. Healthwatch
- Consultations – Charging, Ageing Well, Autism
- Feedback through Commissioners
- MP and Elected member enquiries
- Other online feedback opportunities – such as through Live Well Telford contact us button

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4.2.5 Feedback from people about their experiences of assessment care provision is monitored in accordance with our Quality Assurance Framework. A monthly 'Learning from People's Experiences' summary report is shared and discussed at the monthly Finance, Performance and Quality meeting. This includes issues identified, areas for reflection and improvement and learning outcomes from feedback.

### **4.3 Children's Statutory Complaint Report (Appendix C)**

4.3.1 We received 23 Children's statutory complaints in 2023/24, a marginal increase on the 20 received in 2022/23. 5 cases progressed to an independent Stage 2 investigation during the year. One Stage 3 panel was completed in 2023/24.

4.3.2 Of the complaints completed in the year, 37% (7) of the complaints were upheld.

4.3.3 The average number of days to respond to Children's Statutory Complaints during the year was 14 working days, which is an improvement on the 16 working days achieved in 2022/23. New procedures introduced have directly impacted the performance over the last 3 years.

4.3.4 Examples of positive improvements resulting from learning following complaints can be seen from page 10 of the Children's Statutory Complaint Report (Appendix C).

4.3.5 Our Children's Safeguarding and Family Support Service is committed continuous learning and improvement using feedback from customers who use our services, such as parents, carers, professionals, colleagues, children and young people and their families to understand experiences and inform improvements, demonstrating a commitment to learning from all feedback, regardless of source, format or process. All staff and practitioners are encouraged to share any feedback, ensuring we connect with the right people, learning as we go, and evaluating the difference/impact we have made.

The following are Children's Safeguarding and Family Support main sources of feedback include:

- Individual feedback through practitioners
- Children's Safeguarding and Family Support Case File Audit-Practice Evaluations
- Feedback from The Dandelion Group and other working groups and participation
- Telford and Wrekin's Children in Care Council (VOICE)
- Annual 'Your Life, Your Care' survey- for children in care
- Annual 'Your Life, Beyond Care' survey- for care leavers
- Top 10 priorities for Children in Care Coram outcomes
- 'Have your say- Children in Care Review' feedback forms
- Feedback through Commissioners
- Complaints
- Compliments
- MP and Elected member enquiries

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- Consultations- Foster carers, Short breaks statement

Feedback from customers about their experiences of children's social care provisions is monitored in accordance with our Quality Assurance Framework. A monthly Quality Assurance meeting is held to discuss issues identified, areas for reflection and improvement and learning outcomes from feedback. All of this ensures that we continue to 'close the loop' to ensure that learning from Quality Assurance is used in a meaningful way.

### **4.4 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Enquiries**

- 4.4.1 During 2023/24 a total of 17 complaints were escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, 1 detailed investigation remained open on 31 March 2023. 5 of the complaints related to statutory complaints procedures.
- 4.4.2 During the year, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman made the decision that 12 complaints were premature, or the Ombudsman decided not to further investigate. There were 3 detailed investigations completed in 2023/24, one of which was still outstanding on 31 March 2023. This is a decrease on the 8 investigated in 2022/23. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has confirmed that two detailed investigations were not upheld, and one Adult Statutory complaint was upheld.
- 4.4.3 In all cases where complaints were upheld, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman was satisfied that the Council successfully implemented their recommendations.
- 4.4.4 In the upheld case the Council has taken learning forward to improve practices in relation to the faults identified, apologies have also been given to customers in these cases.
- 4.4.5 The Office for Local Government has introduced a set of metrics to provide insight on performance for local authorities within England. One of the metrics is the number of upheld Ombudsman complaints per 10,000 population. This metric uses complaints data published by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and population data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).
- 4.4.6 As outlined above there were 3 detailed investigations completed by the LGSCO during 2023/24. 2 cases were not upheld and 1 case was upheld. Therefore, the percentage of Ombudsman complaints upheld for 2023/24 is 33%. Based on a population of 188,871 (as confirmed by the ONS) the number of complaints per 10,000 population is 1.74, an improvement on the 2.33 achieved in 2022/23.

### **5.0 Alternative Options**

- 5.1 Not applicable

### **6.0 Key Risks**

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- 6.1 Ineffective handling of complaints and management of the complaints procedures may result in reputational damage and financial costs to the Council.

### **7.0 Council Priorities**

- 7.1 A community- focussed, innovative Council providing efficient, effective and quality services.

Key outcome: Our customer experience is the best possible and facilities are accessible to all.

### **8.0 Financial Implications**

- 8.1 The cost of dealing with complaints is mainly in the form of officer time and is therefore met from existing Council budgets. The cost of membership to the Institute of Customer Services (ICS) and the mystery customer exercise has been funded from reserves.

### **9.0 Legal and HR Implications**

- 9.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. It should be noted, however, that under the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, there are some complaints involving Children's Services and Family Safeguarding which must follow the procedure contained within the Regulations. Where a complaint is made which is of a type that should be dealt with under the Regulations, the Council is required to ensure that this occurs.
- 9.2 Complaints about Adult Social Care Services are governed by The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 and guidance: Listening, responding, improving: a guide to better customer care.
- 9.3 The policies to which the Council works in respect of customer feedback and complaints is in line with the latest guidance issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

### **10.0 Ward Implications**

- 10.1 Not applicable

### **11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications**

- 11.1 Some complaints relate to Social Care, there are strong links into the local health and care system.

### **12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 12.1 All our complaints policies provide an opportunity for residents to raise any concerns around inequality. Our policies take account of our customers communication accessibility needs.

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12.2 The policies specifically meet the aims of the public sector equality duty; eliminate unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations, for people who share protected characteristics. To ensure that we continue to meet this enduring duty we collect data on a regular basis on complainants and report on the protected characteristics of complainants and nature of any discrimination or inequality.

### 13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 Not applicable

### 14.0 Background Papers

14.1 You said, We did [webpage](#).  
'How we respond to complaints involving Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)'-  
[Complaints procedures - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)

### 15.0 Appendices

A	Corporate Feedback Report 2023-24
B	Adult's Statutory Complaint Report 2023-24
C	Children's Statutory Complaint Report 2023-24

### 16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	09.07.2024	09.07.2024	SH
Finance	09.07.2024	09.07.2024	CM