



**Public Health
Complaints, Compliments
and Comments
Annual Report
2017/18**

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Introduction

The purpose of this annual report is to inform service users, carers, the public, Council Members and staff of the effectiveness of the Public Health Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure (the Procedure).

On the 1 April 2013 the NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012 (the Regulations) came into force. Part five of the Regulations deals with Complaints about Public Health Functions of Local Authorities.

The Council implemented a new procedure providing a local framework to ensure complaints are handled effectively and in line with the regulations.

The procedure aims to:

- (a) Make it as easy and accessible as possible for service users and their carers to raise complaints;
- (b) Foster an organisational culture in which complaints are accepted, owned and resolved as efficiently as possible;
- (c) Ensure high levels of customer satisfaction with complaints handling;
- (d) Resolve individual issues when they arise and reduce the number of complaints referred to the Ombudsman; and
- (e) Enable the Council to identify topics and trends in relation to Public Health complaints and improve services as a result.

The Chief Executive is the designated as the ‘Responsible Person’ for ensuring compliance with the arrangements made under the Regulations, and in particular ensuring that action is taken if necessary in the light of the outcome of a complaint. The functions of the responsible person will usually be performed by the Director of Public Health.

The Complaints and Information Governance Manager is designated the ‘Complaints Manager’ in accordance with the regulations and is responsible for managing the procedures for handling and considering complaints in accordance with the arrangements made under the Regulations.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Although complainants can refer their complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) from the outset, the LGSCO will not normally investigate until the Council or service provider has conducted its own investigation and provided a response. Where it has not been possible for the complaint to be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant they may refer the matter to the LGSCO.

Information and Accessibility

We are committed to making sure that everyone has equal access to all our services, including the complaints procedure. To help make sure the Council's complaints procedures are easily accessible we have produced two leaflets (one for children and young people and one for adults) covering all Council services to reflect the single point of access for complainants within the Council. The leaflets are available in all Council buildings. They have been written in line with the Plain English Campaign standards. The title is written in the most commonly used community languages and it contains details on how to access the information in other formats, for example, large print, audio and Braille.

Information is available on the Council's website. There is also an electronic form which people can use to make a complaint, pay someone a compliment or pass comment on Council services. People may make a complaint in any format they wish. This can be in writing, by email, via the web, over the phone, in person or by any other reasonable means.

The Complaints Manager can arrange advocates and interpreters (including British Sign Language interpreters) where appropriate.

Summary

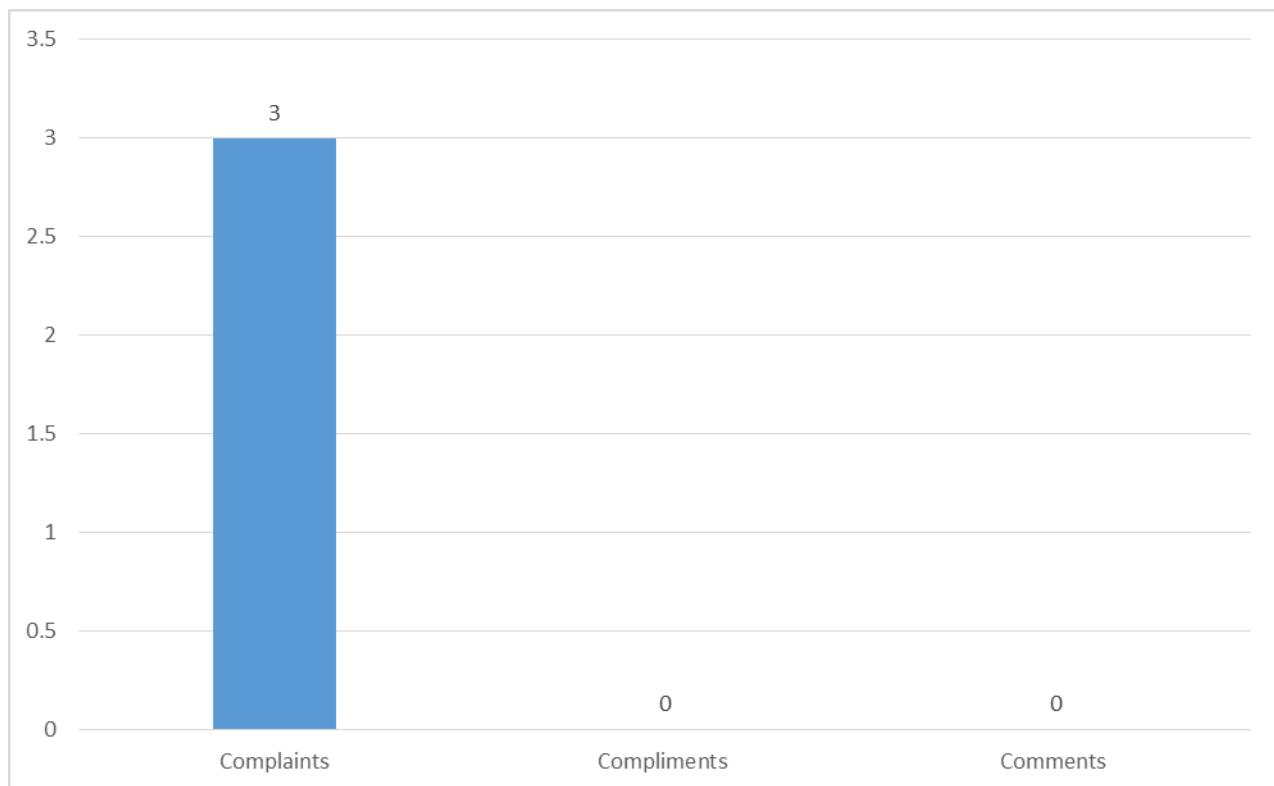
- The Council received three complaints about Public Health services during 2017/18, the same number as in 2016/17.
- The Council did not receive any comments, compared to one in 2016/17.
- The Council did not receive any compliments, as was the case in 2016/17.

Review of the Year

Breakdown of all Representations

A total of three representations were handled under the procedure during 2017/18.

Total Complaints, Compliments and Comments Received



One of the complaints received concerned a lack of consultation regarding changes to the Health Visiting services and the service provided.

One concerned the professionalism of a staff member at the Community Contraception and Sexual Health Service (CASH).

The other concerned the service provided by the Stop Smoking Hub.

Complaint Outcomes

Four complaint investigations were concluded during 2017/18. The outcomes of these complaints are detailed in the chart below.

Service Area/Team	Upheld	Partly Upheld	Not Upheld	Total
Darlington Borough Council/Health Visitors	0	1	0	1
Health Visitors	1	0	0	1
CASH	1	0	0	1
Stop Smoking Hub	1	0	0	1
TOTAL	3	1	0	4

Local Government Ombudsman Complaints Received 2017/18

No Public Health complaints were progressed to the LGSCO during 2017/18, the same as in 2016/17.

Local Government Ombudsman Complaint Outcomes 2017/18

No Public Health complaints were determined by the LGSCO during 2017/18, the same as in 2016/17.

Organisational Learning

All resolution and organisational learning actions identified as a result of complaints are assigned to a responsible manager and progress against those actions is monitored by the Complaints Manager. In addition to those actions taken to resolve individual complaints several service improvements were made following complaint investigations during 2017/18.

Darlington Borough Council/Health Visitors

Following the complaint about Darlington Borough Council and the Health Visitors it was agreed the Council would contact the provider to ask for assurance from them that they will review their existing policies and procedures to ensure that written information is provided to those being transferred in or out of the care of the local teams and that there are sufficient checks to avoid individuals or families being left without contact with, or direct access to, a Health Visitor, particularly those with enhanced needs.

CASH

Following the complaint about CASH it was agreed any conversations with patients would take place in a separate room, that a room would be assigned for this purpose and that the issue of confidentiality would be discussed in a full meeting. It was also agreed a staff bulletin would be issued reminding staff of the requirement to keep information confidential and to treat sensitive matters with great care.

Stop Smoking Hub

Following the complaint for the Stop Smoking hub it was agreed the contract would be reviewed and clarification given to the provider to ensure that the most up to date and current clinical and prescribing guidelines are being applied.

Further recommendations

There are no further recommendations.

Performance against the Procedure

While the regulations allow a maximum of six months to respond to a complaint we aim to respond to complaints within 30 working days.

One complaint was responded to within 30 working days. The other three were responded to in 45, 54 and 118 working days.

Performance Indicator for 2017/18

In relation to Public Health complaints the Council's key performance indicator is the number of maladministration decisions received from the Local Government Ombudsman. The Council received zero maladministration decisions during 2017/18.

Full details of those complaints determined by the LGSCO are included in the Cabinet reports of 5 December 2017 and 9 October 2018 entitled [Review of Outcome of Complaints Made to Ombudsman](#).