



**EVERY CUSTOMER, EVERY TIME -
“Everybody Matters”**

Making Experiences Count

Quarterly Customer Service Report

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

1st June 2012 – 30th September 2012



www.redditchbc.gov.uk

1. Introduction

This report provides some of the key customer service information for the organisation, including:-

- Analysis of the complaints and compliments received during this quarter and any other relevant feedback.
- Customer Service Centre management information, including transactional statistics for information; and
- Customer satisfaction information.

2. Customer Feedback Analysis

73 complaints were received during this quarter because we did not meet the customer expectations, or failed to meet our own standards, or the customer was unhappy with an outcome. **60 complaints** (82%) were answered in 15 working days or less. **9 complaints** took longer than 15 working days to respond to and details of these complaints are detailed below. This shows an increase in the percentage dealt with within our agreed timescales.

We also received **91 compliments**.

These figures compare with last quarter and last years totals as follows:-

Quarter 2 11/12		Total 11/12		Quarter 1 12/13		Quarter 2 12/13	
Complaints	Compliments	Complaints	Compliments	Complaints	Compliments	Complaints	Compliments
45	57	204	177	56	81	73	91

The main reason for the rise in numbers is that teams in transformation are now much more aware of the need to capture demand data and therefore more contact from customers is being recorded. This in turn is helping to improve understanding of when a matter should be logged as a complaint rather than just dealt with as a request for service. In due course through transformation we should see the nature of complaints change as we better meet customers needs.

The majority of complaints received this quarter had several factors in common which were:

- Not doing what we have said we will do
- Giving customers incorrect or confusing information
- Not responding to customers calls and queries
- Delays in taking action
- Wasting tax payers money.
- Failure to provide service (card payments)

These are issues that we are addressing by:

- Redesigning services through systems thinking transformation.
- Delivering a series of courses for managers designed to develop their coaching and communications skills in customer care
- Arranging small workshops with teams to discuss customer service issues and then delivering training tailored to their needs.

The issue with card payments is still under review. We continue to have an intermittent problem which is being addressed, and which impacts on customers wishing to pay online or via the automated telephone service.

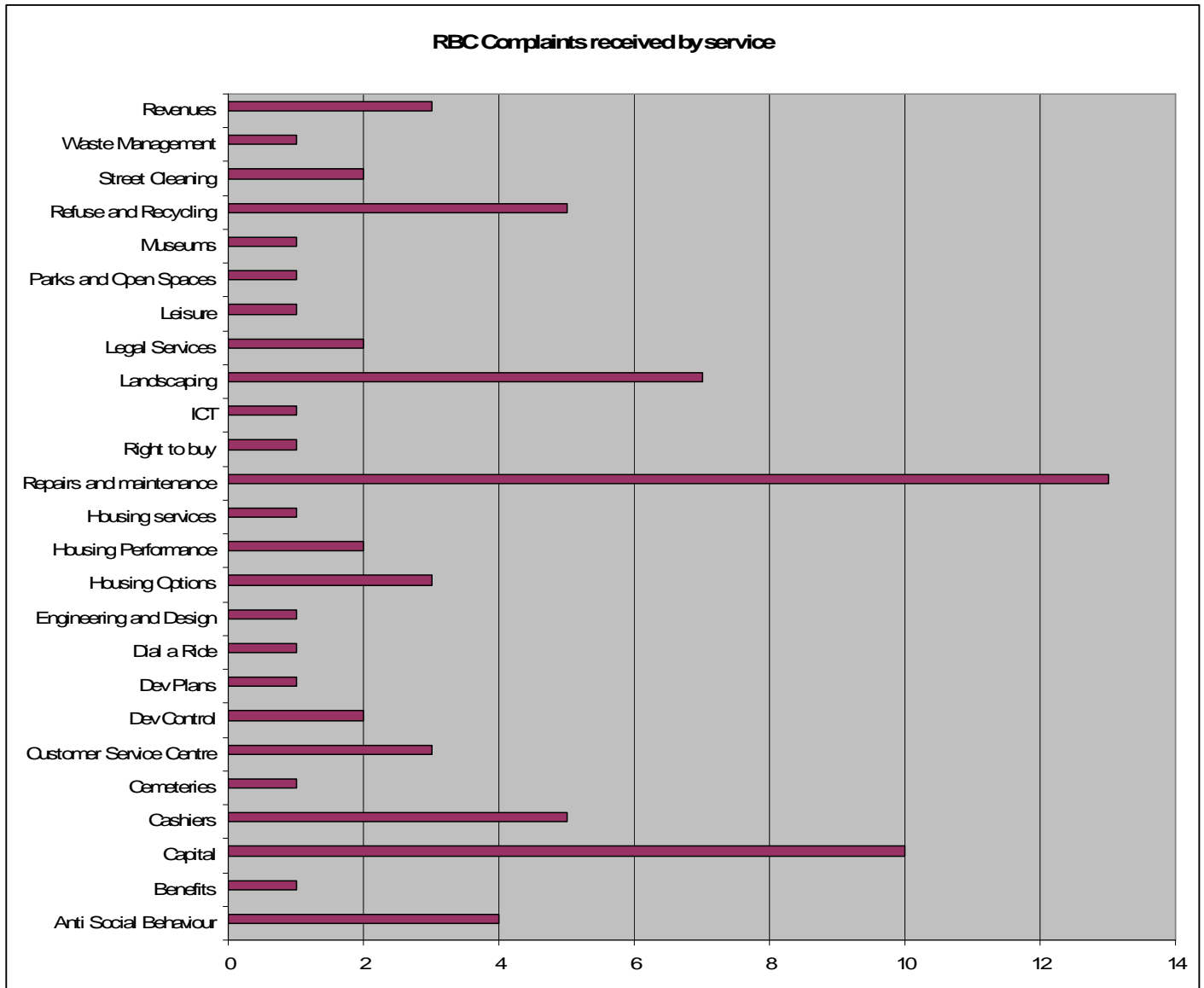
The following table shows the total of the complaints and compliments received by department. Those departments with the highest demand inevitably have higher number of complaints but compared with the total demand the numbers are low.

Complaints and compliments by department

Dept	Compliments	Complaints	Responded to within 15 working days	Still open
Business Transformation	0	1	1	0
Community Services	20	5	3	2
Customer Services	22	8	8	0
Environmental Services	11	17	14	0
Legal and Democratic Services	1	2	2	0
Leisure and Culture	15	3	3	0
Housing	17	30	23	2
Planning and Regeneration	2	3	3	0
Resources	3	4	3	0
Totals	91	73	60	4

The following table provides a more detailed breakdown of complaints by service.

Number of complaints by service (detailed)



Time taken to respond to complaints

We aim to respond to customer complaints within 15 working days and 82% of complaints received during this quarter were dealt with within that timeframe. Where it has taken us longer to respond than expected, (9 cases) customers were informed that there would be a delay, except where the delay was only 1 day (3 cases), or where the customer could not be contacted (1 case).

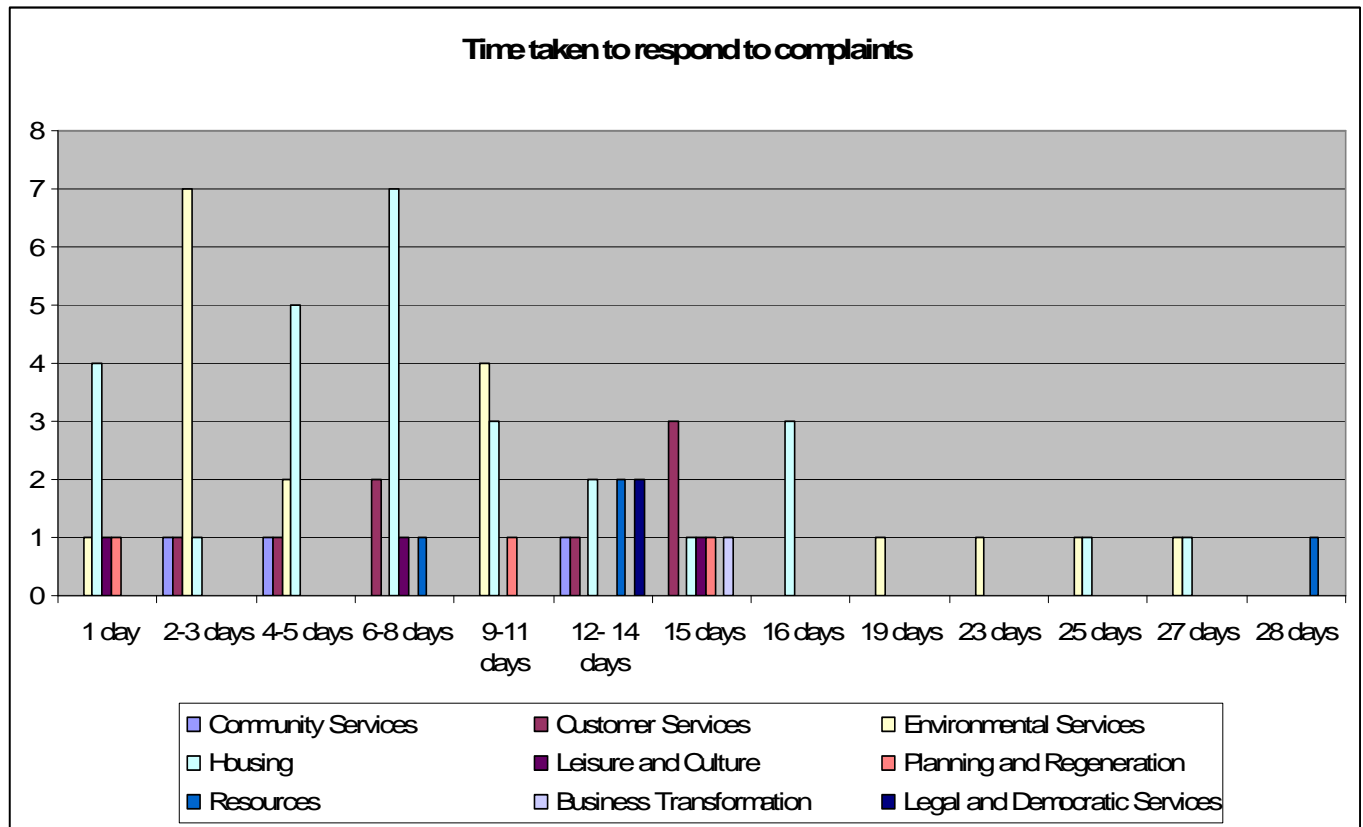
The reasons for delay are detailed below, along with details of the complaint and the outcome.

Complaint details	Outcome of investigation	Action taken	Days taken to respond and reason for delay
Environmental Services			
<p>Customer unhappy about the hole left in the cemetery fence after works on the Abbey Stadium . She was promised that the fence would be replaced when the work was completed. The work was completed in December last year but a large hole is still there.</p>	<p>Customer was advised that the fencing/hedge would be repaired after the work was completed and this hasn't happened. Temporary barriers will be put in place until fencing work is completed in September.</p>	<p>Apology given and customer will be informed when the repair has been completed.</p>	<p>27 Complex investigation</p>
<p>Customer unhappy about the grass area near his home and feels that it is neglected and not maintained on a regular basis.</p>	<p>The difficult growing conditions have affected the grass mowing operations.</p>	<p>Apology given to customer and explanation about how we are going to address this.</p>	<p>19 Difficulty contacting customer</p>
<p>Customer complained that her report from Dec 2011 had not been acted on. She reported a large amount of rubbish dumped on council land by a neighbour. Customer had been informed that it was being dealt with, to be patient and that it was not a fly-tipping issue. After chasing the report again she has been told that the Community Safety Enforcement Team are dealing with as a fly tipping issue and have started the enforcement process by requesting witness statements. Customer is very angry and feels that nothing has been done since Dec last year.</p>	<p>Whilst there was lots of work happening internally, there appears to have been only limited feedback to the customer, some of which was conflicting information. As nothing has actually been removed as yet, from the customers point of view it does look as if the Council has not taken any decisive action.</p>	<p>Apology and explanation given to customer.</p>	<p>23 Officer on leave</p>
Housing			

Customer unhappy that he made a request for new thermostat valves but after 4 months has had no response from Council.	After investigation it was found that the customer's details had been lost so the team were unaware of the request.	Apology given to Customer and job actioned.	25 Complex investigation
Customer had letter from Contractor regarding a final visit for the annual gas inspection and was unhappy that she had not received any previous communication.	After investigations it was found that the customer had been sent several letters but had not responded.	No further action.	16
Customer is unhappy about the delay to the marking out of car park spaces for residents	Car park marking job had been scheduled.	Customer informed when this job will be done	16
Customer has a wet room installed by Council contractors. After one month a leak into the kitchen appeared and was reported. She has repeatedly reported this problem but nothing has happened	Delay by a contractor which has now been remedied.	Process put in place to ensure tenants are informed of the work to be carried out and all relevant information	23 Reason for delay not known
Customer unhappy about the about the standard of work carried out on repair to communal fence which she feels that the charge is excessive as all that was done was a few nails were knocked in which the residents could have done themselves	It was found that the charge was justified.	Customer informed	16
Resources			
Customer wrote to complain about a council tax bill received when she thought she was exempt due to the renovations taking place at her property.	It was found that the exemption should have ceased automatically and a revised demand should have been issued.	Apology given to customer and new payment arrangements made. Systems are to be checked for errors.	28 Complex investigation

Time taken to respond to complaints by service.

This chart shows the break down of all complaints by response time. This suggests that the end to end time for responding to complaints is generally based on the nature of the service and/or complaint rather than any one service dealing with complaints in an unsatisfactory way.



The nature of Leisure and Culture complaints is such that they can usually be dealt with either on the spot or within a few days. Complaints for Housing and Resources (Council Tax and Benefits included) Services are more variable because investigations can be quite complex and time consuming. A high proportion of Environmental Services complaints are dealt with within 2 to 3 days.

“You said – we listened” – what did we change as a result of complaints?

Some of the changes made as a result of complaints include:-

- A new procedure is being developed to keep tenants informed of scheduled repair works.
- We are developing a new process for attachment of earnings, in respect of Council Tax arrears.
- Staff reminded to thoroughly check information handed over at reception.

Number of complaints escalated to Head of Customer Services

There were two complaints escalated to the Head of Customer Services, for further investigation or action.

CCTV and Lifeline. The customer was unhappy that following a request for CCTV footage to be examined by police after his car was damaged in a car park it was subsequently wiped so couldn't be used. After investigation it was found that proper procedure was followed by the Council, however communication with the customer could have been clearer to avoid misunderstandings. CCTV Officers have taken this on board and will ensure that customers are provided with clear information in such cases.

Repairs and Maintenance. A tenant was very unhappy about the delays to various repairs and the quality of the work already carried out. After investigation it was found that there had been delays in taking agreed actions by the Council, and this was further complicated by the tenant themselves cancelling jobs. Furthermore the Council had not kept to an agreement to inform the customer in advance of any visits to the property. An apology has been given to the customer and arrangements put in place to continue the works by an agreed date, however the customer remains unhappy and has taken this matter to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Happy Customers!

From the **91** compliments received we can see that customers appreciate the range of services the Council provides, especially when we deal with their requests in a timely and professional manner. Here are some of the compliments we have received for information.

Team	Compliment Detail
Children's Centre	Customer very happy with result of recent OFSTED inspection.
Customer Service Centre	Customer contacted to report that Beverley Hopcroft was very helpful and understanding. Customer reported that Beverley was caring and listened. Customer suggested we should employ more helpful staff like her. Customer stated that Beverley had helped them with a homelessness enquiry.
Customer Service Centre	Customer reported that Hilary Dewhurst was very helpful to and showed utmost respect when assisting with a homeless application. The customer reported that it was the first time they had walked away with a smile and that Hilary had potentially helped them to get a job.
Engineering and Design	Customer phoned to report manhole blocked and raw sewerage coming up in the front garden. Matthew Mead arranged for contractors to attend and customer phoned to thank the Council in arranging the quick response from contractors, who did a very good job.
Landscaping	Customer rang to say "I am delighted to see the hedge at the front of my flat has been beautifully cut. The lads deserve a big thank you."
Refuse and Recycling	Customer rang to say that waste collection operative by the name of Joy, is always very pleasant, always smiling and works exceptionally hard, she always has a pleasant word for every one.

Housing Services	Customer rang to compliment Jenny Saunders, Home Support Officer. She wanted to pass her thanks to Jenny for all the work she had done with her since her move. She said Jenny had been her back bone and doesn't know how she would have coped without Jenny, so well done.
Repairs and Maintenance	Customer phoned to say a very big thank you to all concerned - especially contractors for the works carried out to the installation of his new boiler. He is very happy with the works carried out.
Repairs and Maintenance	Customer phoned to pay a compliment to the Aids and Adaptations team. He wanted to say an operative named Darren came to install some grab rails for him due to his mobility problem, and he was quick, efficient, there were no problems or grief, he was lovely and chatty, he answered his questions happily, he was fantastic! His name was Darren and he deserves a pat on the back. He also added that he is so thankful for the service, his condition is progressive and the rails will be immense help.
Repairs and Maintenance	Customer would like to express his thanks for the swift response and workmanship carried out at his property last week. He would like the original Inspector Steve Ballard and also the tradesman Gary Harris to be thanked for all their hard work.
Development Control	Customer emailed about the service received from Iain Mackay to say that such great service is very much appreciated and it's a long time since somebody has dealt with something so quickly and professionally for him.
Theatre	Thank you and all the staff for all their hard work last night. We had a fantastic experience at the theatre and everyone enjoyed the show.
Arts Development	Customer emailed to say: We would like to say a very big thank you for the entertainment provided on Church Green on the 31st July 2012. It was a great day out, with Robot being the highlight. Face paints and playing drums was just great. Children and adults alike just loved it. Thank you.
Income and Debt Management	Thanks very much to Joyce for dealing with my query and for coming back to me so quickly! Great service!
Benefits	I wish to thank Clare Colley very much for her polite, efficient service, she worked alongside Kim Brazier in Benefits in getting everything sorted for me ready for my next rent payment due next week.

3. Local Government Ombudsman Complaints

During this quarter there were two complaints referred from the Local Government Ombudsman. Both are still in the process of being investigated.

Complaint 1 – is in relation to the delay and poor quality of repairs to a tenant’s property and information is currently being gathered in response.

Complaint 2- is in relation to tree roots causing damage to a water pipe, affecting the water supply to a private home and information is currently being gathered in response.

4. Customer Service Centre Information

This section provides some statistical information in respect of the service provided at the Customer Service Centres (CSC) and One Stop Shops (OSS). The purpose of the Customer Services team is **to help resolve customer’s problems or requests.**

Customer numbers

The following table shows the numbers of customer enquiries dealt with by the Customer Service Team:

	Totals for 2011/12	2nd Quarter 2011/12	1st quarter 2012/13	2nd quarter 2012/13
Face to face	72,785	17,724	14,130	15,080
Telephone	76,813	19,261	27,180	31,851
Email	3,270	469	825	770
Payments	118,576	31,958	28,031	28,867
Total customer contacts	271,444	69,412	69,341	76,568

Due to technical problems we were unable to take credit or debit card payments for some weeks during this period. This had an impact on those wishing to pay by telephone or online and saw a reduction of payments by these channels of over 6,000 payments.

However, the total number of payments processed during the second quarter (including all automated channels) was 37,487, compared with 39,373 in the 1st quarter. We always see a drop in payments in the second quarter as new year billing for Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates has an impact during the 1st quarter. Therefore, it would appear that the net result is that payments are not significantly lower than anticipated although there has been considerable disruption to customers, and a higher number of customers using the face to face service.

The technical problems that we were experiencing at that time are now resolved although we do have an intermittent problem which is affecting the payment of Council Tax or Sundry Debtors online or via telephone, which is still being addressed by the ICT and Revenues Teams.

5. Customer Satisfaction

The majority of problems or requests received by Customer Service Staff are handed over to someone else within the organisation to resolve.

We have established a scheme to gain feedback from customers who have recently made contact with us on how well the organisation (or a part of it) responded to customer's problems and during this quarter we made contact with 30 customers, who had made contact with us with issues relating to Benefits. We received the following responses to our questions:

How was your enquiry handled by the customer services adviser?

Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
0	0	0	6	24

Was your enquiry resolved to your satisfaction by the council?

Yes	No
28	2

Those customers who did not feel their issue had been resolved had commented as follows:-

1. Benefits were not paid on the expected day. Called and told the matter would be processed and that given a date when the money would in account. Benefits were still not in account and was told that it would be a further week. Staff were reportedly unhelpful.
2. My claim took too long and was too much messing around having to bring documents back all the time.

The feedback from this exercise has been fed back to the relevant officers to take into account when reviewing service delivery.

Amanda de Warr
Head of Customer Services
October 2012