



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

**Making Experiences Count**

**Quarterly Customer Service Report**

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**1st October 2012 - 31st December 2012**



## 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

**46** complaints were received during this quarter because we either did not meet the customer expectations; or failed to meet our own standards; or the customer was unhappy with an outcome.

**30** complaints (65%) were answered in 15 working days or less. **16** complaints took longer than 15 working days to respond to and details of these complaints are provided below.

We also received **74 compliments**.

These figures compare with previous quarters and last year's totals as follows:-

Quarter 3 11/12		Total 11/12		Quarter 1 12/13		Quarter 2 12/13		Quarter 3 12/13	
									
47	35	204	177	56	81	73	91	46	74

There has been an overall reduction in complaints this quarter. Housing has seen a significant drop in complaints, due mainly to the improved service delivery in repairs and maintenance.

There has been a decrease in the percentage of complaints dealt with within 15 working days from 82% but this appears to be due to the reduced number of complaints in Housing which were generally quickly and easily dealt with and therefore brought the average down. The number of complaint taking longer remains reasonably consistent and appears to be due to the complexity of the matter.

We are reviewing our process in relation to dealing with complaints using systems thinking principles. A trial has started which sees far greater verbal contact with the customer at the earliest opportunity to improve understanding of the issues and reduce the need for responses by letter which may not address the real problem. We are also looking to remove the target time for handling complaints as this appears to be driving behavior which see some complaints taking longer to respond to than might be necessary. Instead we are aiming to work on the basis that the complaints should always be dealt with as quickly as possible and that communication with the customer should provide meaningful updates as to progress. We will continue to monitor response times and address concerns if they arise. The outcome of the trial will inform the process in future.

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

- not doing what we have said we will do;
- not listening to the customer;
- giving customers incorrect or confusing information;
- staff being rude to customers;
- not responding to customers calls and queries; and
- delays in taking action.

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;
- Further customer care awareness for all staff.

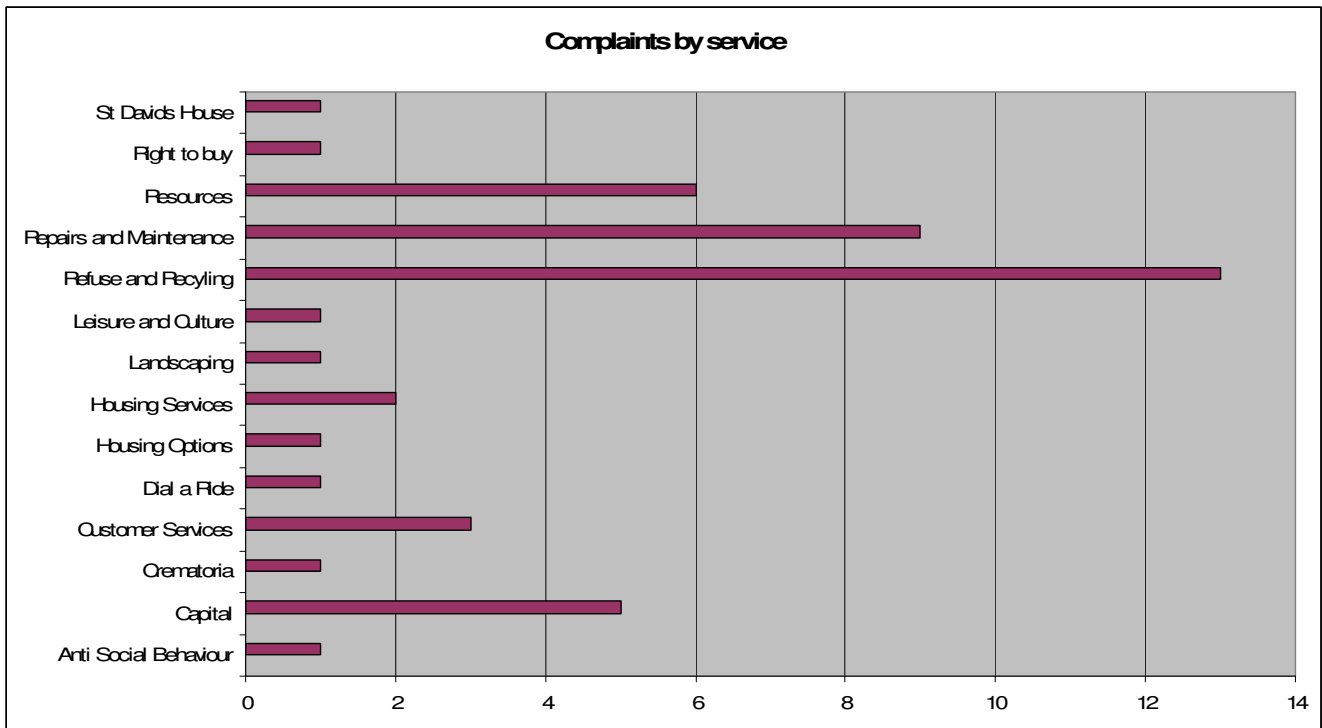
The following table shows the total of the complaints and compliments received by department. Those departments with the highest demand inevitably have higher number of complaints but compared with the total demand the numbers are low.

### Complaints and compliments by department

Dept	Compliments	Complaints	Responded to within 15 working days	Still open
<b>Community Services</b>	17	2	2	0
<b>Customer Services</b>	8	3	3	0
<b>Environmental Services</b>	10	15	9	0
<b>Housing</b>	13	19	13	1
<b>Leisure and Culture</b>	23	1	1	0
<b>Planning and Regeneration</b>	1	0	0	0
<b>Resources</b>	2	6	2	1
<b>Total</b>	74	46	30	2

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 currently aim to respond to customer complaints within 15 working days and **65%** of complaints received during this quarter were dealt with within that timeframe. Where it has taken us longer to respond than expected (15 cases) customers were informed that there would be a delay, except where the delay was only 1 day (1 case), 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.

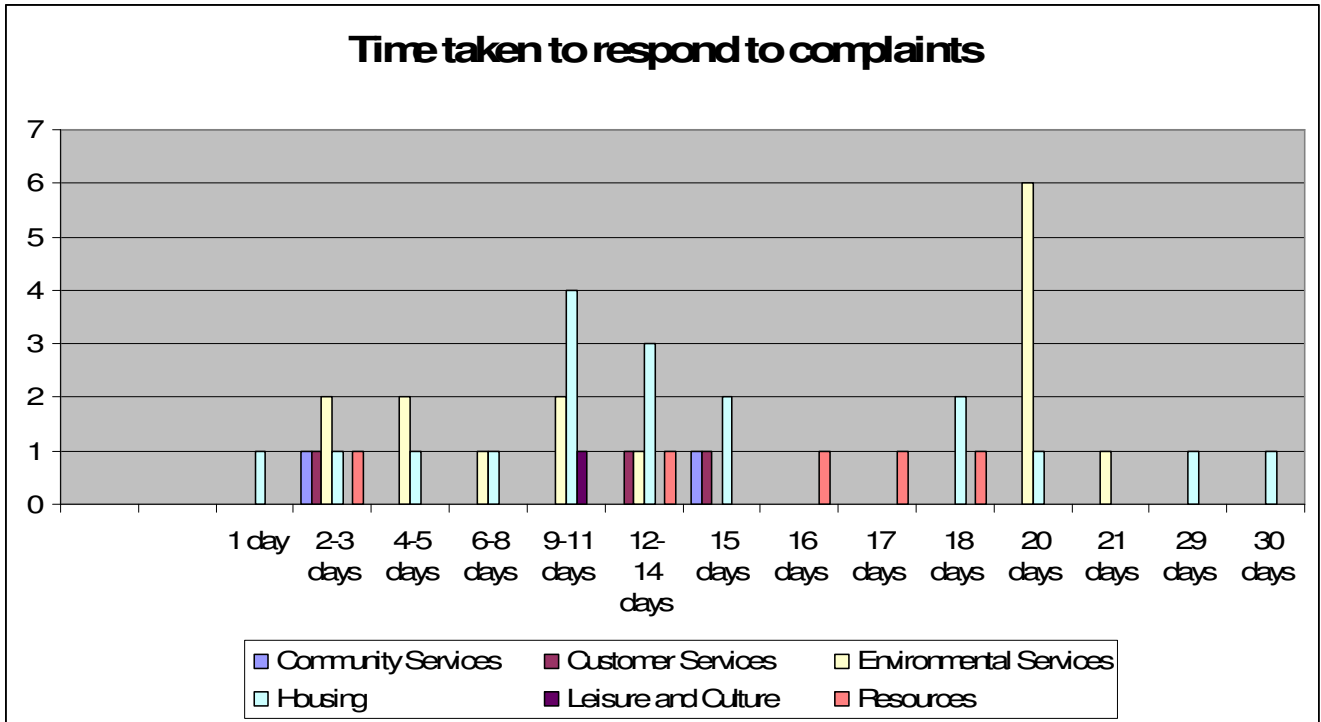
Complaint details	Outcome of investigation	Action taken	Days taken to respond and reason for delay
<b>Environmental Services</b>			
Customer unhappy that staff are not resolving her problems in relation to a gravestone which had been going on for 12 months.	Owners of an adjoining grave had erected a headstone which was larger than the regulation size and encroached on the space of the plots next to it.	Apology given to customer and other customers reminded of rules and regulations. Arrangements made for the headstone in question to be replaced.	<b>21</b> Delay caused by not being able to contact family with the problem headstone.

<p>Six separate complaints received from residents of the same close regarding re-positioning of waste collection bins over the road.</p> <p>They feel that issue of moving the new collection point to over the road is avoiding the ongoing issue which is a car constantly parking on the road and path where the bins have always been collected since 2006. They feel that the car is parking illegally and ask why is the owner not noticed to move on rather than be accommodated?</p>	<p>Collection point changed at request of ASB Team due to ongoing Anti Social Behaviour issues.</p>	<p>Customers informed of reason for change.</p>	<p><b>20</b> ( for six complaints)  Investigation involving third parties.</p>
<p><b>Housing</b></p>			
<p>Customer unhappy that he has bid unsuccessfully a number of times. He believed it was based on family size and that there would be extra points when the new child arrived.</p>	<p>Customer did not qualify for the (larger) properties he was bidding on.</p>	<p>The criteria for qualification was explained to him.</p>	<p><b>18</b> Complex investigation.</p>
<p>Customer unhappy about delays to repair boiler and that Contractor was rude and would not undertake repair.</p>	<p>Poor communication between Repairs Team and Contractor identified.</p>	<p>Instructions reinforced with workforce and private contractors to carry out all repairs required on first visit, or if not possible report back immediately so the repair can be completed to cut down on waiting time. Apology given to customer and action taken to remedy.</p>	<p><b>18</b> Complex investigation.</p>

Customer lodged a formal complaint into the heating problems. He has been refusing to pay the heating element of his rent charge.	Residents having problems understanding the new thermostat.	Heating engineer will call in weekly for a short period to make sure there are no further problems.	<b>29</b> Investigation took longer than expected as a lot of residents were also involved.
Customer unhappy about conflicting information about her tenancy received from Housing Officers.	Customer was confused about the tenancy agreement and provided conflicting information.	Council to support move provided customer informs us in writing of her wish to end the tenancy.	<b>30</b> Investigation was complex as it involved various members of staff and members of customers family.
Customer is unhappy that she has had to chase repairs to dangerous crumbling slabs in her garden four times. She says she has never had a problem with repairs before they have always been excellent.	Delays due to errors in booking process.	Changes made to the process and work has now been carried out to customer's satisfaction.	<b>20</b> Delay as Officers on leave.
<b>Resources</b>			
Customer unhappy about his Housing Benefit affecting his housing application.	Customer's personal circumstances are affecting entitlement.	Situation explained and the circumstances are being taken into account whilst a search for suitable property is being carried out.	<b>17</b> Investigation involved several teams.
Customer unhappy with the attitude of benefits officer when he came in to get his student application signed.	Officer was not rude as suggested but was trying to get information to verify customers address and was not clear enough in their intentions.	A clearer explanation of the changes to benefits has been given to the customer.	<b>18</b> Complex investigation.
Customer unhappy with the attitude of the bailiffs.	Bailiff acted correctly however customer has informed us of ill health of her husband.	Recovery actions put on hold and a payment has been negotiated.	<b>16</b>

### Time taken to respond to complaints by service.

The following 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, Council Tax and Benefits Services are more variable because investigations can be quite complex and time consuming.

### You said - we listened - what did we change as a result of complaints?

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

- Dial a Ride Staff will now contact the office if there could be a change to the running schedule so team can change routes accordingly;
- All customers will receive a copy of the rules and regulations for headstones and memorials;
- A robust list of assisted collections and where the bins are located has been established so crews know exactly where they need to be returned to;
- Process has been adapted so that contractors record the correct times for engineers to visit and carry out repairs.

### Number of complaints escalated to Head of Customer Services

There were no complaints escalated to the Head of Customer Services for further investigation or action during this period.

## Happy Customers!

From the 74 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
Lifeline.	Customer was very happy with the help and reassurance received from Lifeline when he rang with a problem.
Children's Centres.	Customer emailed to thank Diane Buggins for all her support over the last 12 months. She says "I can only hope the children's centres in Crawley are half as good as the ones here. Thanks again for the friendly ear."
Community Safety.	Compliment received regarding James Cooper, Senior Community Safety Project Officer. We have had positive feedback about James, including excellent communication a quick turn around from assessment to actions; James is very professional with families but also supportive and sensitive to their needs. Families have clearly been supported and empowered to remain in their homes due to the service that your team provides.
Customer Service.	Customer phoned to thank Neil Chapman, Reception, Town Hall, RBC, for all his help with the car parking, signposting, and the warm welcome both to the organisers and the attendees of an event.
Customer Service.	Customer phoned to thank Jo Frost in Customer Services for the efficient way she dealt with her enquiry and arranging for her guttering to be repaired.
Landscaping.	Customer phoned to say what a fantastic job the team did around his property. They phoned to organise the work, arrived on time, showed their ID, worked with minimal fuss in a courteous and professional manner.
Landscaping.	Customer rang to say "Thanks for cutting the hedges and brambles back - fab job, well done team!"
Housing Services.	Thank you letter from customer - "for the fence you arranged to have erected for our garden. We are very grateful for the quick service."
Housing Services.	Customer phoned to say a very big thank you to Laura for taking the request and then to Mick for attending on site to assess the situation, arranging for the work to be carried out so efficiently.
Repairs and Maintenance.	Customer phoned to say thanks to the tradesperson that attended to fit a new extractor fan in her downstairs toilet - he was the best repairs person she has ever had visit her property and would recommend him to anyone. She feels his hard work should be recognised as he was excellent!
Repairs and Maintenance.	Customer phoned to say she is very happy with the tradesperson who carried out the plastering repair to her bedroom wall. He was a very nice gentleman who did a lovely job and she wanted this to be noted.



Arts Development.	Letter received from Transport Coordination Centre and Department of Transport thanking the Council and its staff on behalf of the Olympic Delivery Authority and DoT for the support and assistance provided to the Transport Liaison Officers in making the Olympic Torch Relay 2012 a successful event.
Leisure.	Customer wrote to say she joined Abbey Stadium as a member a couple of months ago and all of the staff have always been very helpful and informative, they take the time to advise and support every member. She feels that they all go the extra mile in providing a customer service.
Caretakers.	Customer phoned to thank Bob for all his help with arranging the Civic Suite for the Carers' Rights Day. Bob made sure everything they needed was available and the day went very well.
Museum.	Customer emailed to thank Jo-Ann for meeting them and giving them a special tour of the Forge Mill Needle Museum. "Your knowledge of this history is truly exceptional and visiting the city where William Avery lived and worked, learning about the history of the area and especially visiting the museum gave even more meaning to our trip."
Sports Development.	Customer emailed to thank Hayley Gwilliam. She says" Hayley, I am very impressed by your initiative and by all your hard work that you are putting into the various health and fitness schemes. You are an inspiration".
Theatre.	Excellent performance and venue for Sleeping Beauty pantomime.
Development Control.	Customer very happy with help received from Iain Mckay.

### 3. Local Government Ombudsman Complaints

During this quarter there was one complaint referred from the Local Government Ombudsman which related to trees on Council land at the back of the customers property. The customer felt that the Council had failed to properly maintain the trees causing an adverse impact on his property and amenity.

The LGO has since decided not to investigate as they could not find any evidence of maladministration by the Council.

## 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 transactions recorded by the Customer Service Team:

	<b>Totals for 2011/12</b>	<b>3rd quarter 2011/12</b>	<b>1st quarter 2012/13</b>	<b>2nd quarter 2012/13</b>	<b>3rd quarter 2012/13</b>
Face to face (enquiries)	72,785	15,840	14,130	15,080	<b>16,285</b>
Telephone (enquiries)	76,813	16,946	12,579	13,007	<b>15,439</b>
Switchboard calls (handled by operator)	77,017	23,845	26,299	27,817	<b>30,416</b>
Switchboard calls (handled by automated system)*	118,586 (figures only available from 17/07/11)	38,478	39,125	41,170	<b>39,283</b>
Email (enquiries handled by CS team)	3,270	882	825	770	<b>1,159</b>
Payments (through cash offices)	118,576	30,383	28,031	28,867	<b>28,094</b>
Payments (online)	16,786	4,614	5,202	4,173	<b>5,534</b>
Payments (automated telephone service)	9,921	2,900	2,447	1,828	<b>2,134</b>
Payments (assisted telephone service)	4,676 **	1,675	3,693	2,619	<b>3,321</b>
<b>Total customer contacts</b>	<b>498,310</b>	<b>135,563</b>	<b>132,331</b>	<b>135,331</b>	<b>141,665</b>

\* It is not known how many of these calls were unsuccessful and resulted in a repeat call which the operator then had to handle but the proportion is expected to be quite high.

\*\* Service not available until Q2 2011

We have recorded a steady increase in contact and it is difficult to pinpoint the reason for this.

The increase in face to face contact could be partly attributable to the fact that we are encouraging greater face to face contact through the changes we have made to service delivery but I would expect telephone contact to decrease.

Some of the increase in recorded telephone calls will be due to the business continuity arrangements put in place in October to support Bromsgrove District Council. However, this is only a small part of the picture and we are seeing an increase of around 1,000 calls per month coming through.

Ongoing flooding and weather related calls have also had an impact on call numbers.

Despite this increase in business performance in relation to call handling remains very good.

We consistently answer around 90% of calls to the switchboard within 30 seconds, with approximately 80% answered in less than 8 seconds. This is discounting the automated calls, where the caller self selects the extension they want.

Due to the nature of the service, calls to the Contact Centre take longer to deal with and therefore wait times are always longer. Whilst the vast majority of calls (over 70%) are answered within 30 seconds, some callers do experience longer wait times depending on the time of day, the resources available and types of calls coming through at any one time. It is rare for calls to be on hold for longer than 3 minutes and less than 1% of calls waited longer than 5 minutes to be answered during this quarter.

During the 4th quarter of 2012/13 we will be implementing a new call handling system. This will be directly linked to the telephony systems already installed throughout the Borough Council's offices and will provide us with greater flexibility. It will result in more calls being handled directly by service specific teams and the Customer Services team will provide a greater role in handling the incoming call and transferring it to the correct team, but actually deal with less of the enquiries. This will bring about a shift in both role and resources, and savings (through vacancy management) have been identified as a result.

We are seeing a slow but steady rise in payments being made via electronic methods. This has been hampered by the various problems we have encountered with the provision of this service (technology and phone line issues) but once we have a totally stable platform we will carry out a campaign to raise awareness of this facility as it reduces the need for customers to wait in queues to pay and reduces our cost of collection.

## 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.

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 the Customer Services team call back a sample of customers. During this quarter we made contact with 31 customers, who had made contact with us with issues relating to Environmental Services. 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	4	13	14

Was your enquiry resolved to your satisfaction by the Council?

Yes	No
27	4

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

1. I was happy with the service regarding this issue but last week my green bin wasn't collected so I had to take it to the tip myself.
2. The flytipping I reported is still there in the same place and hasn't been removed.
3. The dog fouling I reported wasn't removed so I had to remove it myself.
4. My bin has been missed the last two weeks, this is an ongoing problem. I had to register a formal complaint.

The feedback from this exercise has been fed back to the relevant Officers to take into account when reviewing service delivery. One issue was referred back to Environmental Services for action and one new job was raised.

Amanda de Warr  
Head of Customer Services  
January 2013