

dorsetcomplaints

2020/21

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
	Number of FORMAL complaints	23	120			Q2 saw a massive increase over Q1 in complaints in general, with many more going through the formal process.
	Number of INFORMAL complaints	79	120			Again, Q2 saw a significant increase over Q1 in complaints which were resolved informally.
	Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	0/0	0/1			There was one approach to the LGSCO on Q2. This was not upheld.
	Timescales (overdue)	10%	4%			In Q2 only 4% of complaint responses were overdue, which is encouraging given the volumes.
	% fully justified complaints	5%	4%			Only 4% of the complaints received in Q1 were reported as being fully justified.
	% part justified complaints	5%	5%			Only 5% of the complaints received in Q2 were reported as being partially justified.
	Compliments	117	92			In Q2 we received a respectable 92 compliments.
	Learnings	6	17			In Q2 only 17 of the 240 complaints received brought forth learning points. Covid-19 is undoubtedly a factor in this disappointing figure.

Place - Q2 total complaints = 240

2020/21

performance

Summary of Q2 Complaints

Quarter 2 Total 240 Complaints

Complaints handling staff have received 240 communications for Quarter 1, compared to 102 in Q1 2020-21. 120 were dealt with informally, and 120 formally through Dorset Council's Whole Authority complaints process. The Ombudsman reopened in Q2 and 1 was considered regarding a parking matter

	2020/21
Total Communications to Complaints	240
Total Formal Complaints	120
Total Informal Representations	120
LGSCO	1/0

The sharp increase (135% up on Q1) rather reflects the impacts of the Covid19 emergency on Dorset residents, and the pressure on the Complaints Team, and those staff asked to help resolve the concerns. As well as volume, behaviours of the general public have contributed to a very challenging quarter.

Place is a directorate where work is clearly visible by Dorset Council and people have had a lot more time to fashion complaints, some of which have become vexatious or unreasonable. Highways, Waste and Planning are the main areas of complaint which underlines my comment above. Some residents in Dorset are spending a lot more time in their homes and are more aware and sensitised to neighbours, bins and services surrounding their properties – this includes an increase in 'noisy neighbour' complaints

Main Theme -Service Provision

Some complaints have more than 1 theme depending on complexity. However, the majority of cases fall under 'Service Provision' with a perceived lack of, delay to, of dissatisfaction with, service levels. There is a slight rise also in communication as it has not always been possible to meet people's expectations all the time due to more pressing commitments. That said, many of the complaints in Q2 are essentially frustrated service requests with little learning opportunity for the council.

Timescales

Place complaints & concerns should be investigated and responded to within 20 working days. Since the Ombudsman reopened for business as usual, DC have tried to do the same – although something of a challenge. Only 9 cases have been reported as overdue – which again is a tremendous effort

Timescales	2020/21
Responses within 20 days	96%
Responses Overdue	4%

Complaints by Team

Former DCP and DCC software will not be fully aligned until later in the new financial year and the priorities of Covid19 took precedence in Q1 & 2. Here is a snapshot of volumes by team. You will note the majority are Highways, Planning and Waste concerns.

Team	No. of Complaints	Nature of Complaint Example
PLACE - Customer Services & Libraries	5	Alleged attitude/behaviour of staff
PLACE - Highways (General)	57	Service Provision - Quality of Service
PLACE - Highways Parking	20	Policy/Procedure - Parking attendant activity (during Covid) and tickets
PLACE - Environment & Wellbeing	37	Disagreement with Decision – (initial Ironman) Neighbour Impacts
PLACE - Planning	56	Disagreement with Decision
PLACE - Estate & Assets	10	Disagreement with Decision
PLACE - Waste	17	Service Provision - Quality of Service
PLACE – Community Public Protection	15	Noise from neighbours
Unspecified or various	23	
TOTAL	240	

Justifications

It has been difficult to accurately gauge the percentage of fully and partially justified complaints by team this quarter due to the volume of complaints across Dorset Council, and resources available to process and challenge managers. 9 have been reported as fully or partially justified (4%) but 9 out of 240 is more indicative of the challenges across the council rather than an accurate reflection of complaints that we should be upholding.

Learning from Complaints

The Complaints Team are very pleased to report 17 learning points and actions arising from complaints up from just 6 on Q1. These are usually reminders to staff or updates to records to prevent errors happening again. Some examples below:

Officers to be clear about the status of pre-application service charges to minimise the risk of confusion with national planning fees for planning applications.

1. Letter review prior to being sent out as unrelated and inappropriate contents. 2. Discussion on the handling of incoming service requests. 3. Discussion on the complaint process as Officer attempted intervention which made the situation harder to manage.

Agreed with customer that information about local plan evidence studies should be included on website in future. But the suggestion that the team had been failing to communicate was not borne out by the evidence that they had generally been responding to the complainant's emails within 2 days.

Lesson Learnt: We have updated our records to reflect that the complainant has no relationship with the site owner and I have instigated a learning session with my whole team to highlight the issue to ensure that we learn from this mistake.

Need to keep complainants updated of enforcement and/or planning application process as this issue fell between 2 stools - started with an enforcement case and ended up with a planning application that remains in a backlog with differing case officers

It is acknowledged that the determination of this application took longer than the Council would have liked. The delays were mainly the result of high workloads due in part with the creation of the new Council. We are currently undergoing a recruitment campaign to fill posts that have been identified as part of the restructure. The Council is also moving to a single computer system as opposed to 6 from the legacy sovereign councils. This will streamline services and result in a more efficient service to our customers.

Compliments

We have collected 92 compliments across the directorate in Q2.

What people are saying:

Thank you for this and for the sympathetic way you handled the registration. It was much appreciated and good to know that one can still be treated with humanity by the public services!

We cannot thank you enough for making our Wedding Ceremony so special, it was beautiful. Our day was perfect.

This is a general compliment for all the hard work that the bin crews have been doing during Coronavirus - and all the time really.

They are really hard workers, always smiling and polite.

WELL DONE CREWS!!!!!!!!!!!!

On Saturday evening I was in the Lulworth area and I thought the staff manning the roadblocks were very good, patient and tolerant with very difficult people. They must have to deal with such aggressive and angry people, and it must be a thankless task, so wanted to say a big thanks to them, as it is clearly a necessary job.

Thank you for all of your help with sorting out Thomas's bus route. You've been amazing and it will make such a difference for him. We really appreciate everything you've done for us and thank you for being so patient!

Thank you for checking in on us that's great and finding this place for us was like a gift from the gods I cannot begin tell you how much this has changed are lives and made them so much happier I thank you from the bottom of my heart for what this has done for my son and me I will keep in touch as what we are thinking about hope you and the team you work with are good .

**Compliments are being promoted and we hope locality teams will make use of the new address in an effort towards producing a more balanced report:
Compliments@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk**

Local Government Social Care Ombudsman -(LGSCO)

The Ombudsman reopened its doors in Q2 and found no maladministration on the 1 case investigated

Ombudsman Link:

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKLGO/bulletins/2204c0b>

A look forward....

As predicted in my Q1 report – we felt the tide of public sentiment was turning and the Q2 report is a reflection of what many DC staff already know – its been challenging and very busy.

Our immediate focus is on staff wellbeing as working from home in the complaints business can be a little isolating at times, without the comradery we all usually enjoy across the directorates. We are aware that many DC staff are feeling a little isolated and dealing with negative public feedback. We are hoping to make more phone/skype and teams contacts to ensure there is some positive contact across the council, rather than just email complaints at people

This has been mutually beneficial to date

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Complaints Page – Find out more

<https://dorsetcc.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/find-out-about/information-management/complaints#cat-termName>

Complaints Team Home Page

<https://dorsetcc.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/howwework/teams/Pages/Compliments-and-Complaints.aspx>