

Customer feedback annual review 2023/2024



We receive a variety of customer feedback – from stage one and two complaints, through to MP enquiries, ombudsman enquiries, and compliments. We see all feedback, and in particular complaints and MP enquiries, as a way of driving change and improvements in the way we deliver services, and the way we communicate with our customers.



This report gives an overview of the feedback we received last year (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024). Thank you to all our customers who have taken time to give us feedback this year. If you have any questions, please email our customer services team at enquiries@lichfielddc.gov.uk

Key facts about compliments

**109
thank
you's**

We received a 142% increase in compliments from customers compared to last year (109, compared to 45). We define a compliment as feedback from a customer over and above common courtesy. This year the most complimented service was planning with 49 compliments. The next were joint waste, environmental health, and street scene. Thank you to all the staff involved and thank you to all our customers for taking time to let us know when we've done a good job. We appreciate it!

Why we said sorry and what we've done

The number of apologies we issued increased slightly. Below and overleaf is a summary of the key reasons we said sorry and the actions we have taken as a result to help improve our services.

Why we said sorry	What action we've taken
Missed response to enquiry by parks team.	We reminded staff to respond to emails in a timely manner.
Poor communication from housing enforcement officer.	Manager addressed issue with team member to encourage an improvement in communication style and timeliness.
Error made during a housing enforcement inspection.	Additional team training was provided so that the error will not be repeated.
A housing customer was made to feel uncomfortable during an interview.	We've worked with the team to ensure they show more empathy when supporting vulnerable customers.
Discretionary housing payment application not dealt with in accordance with procedure.	All teams involved were reminded of the correct procedure to follow for both existing and future claims.
Lack of communication from planning about an application.	The original case officer left the council, and the application was not reassigned in a timely manner. This has now been addressed.

Why we said sorry	What action we've taken
Slow delivery of brown bin and unacceptable waiting times to get through to customer service.	The brown bin delivery was resolved, and we explained we were recruiting new members to the team in customer services to speed up service levels. We also introduced live chat and WhatsApp to speed up response times.
Missed assisted blue bin collections.	The crew returned the same day to empty the bin and a reminder was added to the crews round folder.
Failure to replace black bin and broken one not emptied.	A new bin was delivered and the broken one removed.
Repeated missed garden bin collection on a new estate.	Crews were issued with updated maps.
Not returning bins and blue bags to the correct place.	Team were reminded of the importance of doing this correctly.
Court summons issued whilst customer was awaiting a decision about discretionary council tax relief.	We reminded the team to process emails in a timely manner and to check all incoming communications before issuing summons.
Incorrect advice given to cancel council tax direct debit.	Team member reminded to thoroughly check council tax accounts before advising customers.
Reminder letter for council tax payment although payment had been made.	Addressed with finance to ensure payments are still processed/posted when an officer is on leave.
Sundry debtor invoice format.	We've changed the format of the invoices to make it clearer who they are from, so they are not perceived as junk mail.
Building control officers did not follow policy when delivering services.	Reminded officers that approved policies must be adhered to.

Key facts about complaints

'The best authorities use complaints as a barometer of external opinion and as an early warning of problems might otherwise stay unseen. They take that a step further and use critical feedback to drive a sophisticated culture of learning, reflection and improvement.' Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

We received 91 stage one complaints, of which 15 were not investigated because they were either withdrawn by the customer or were not about services provided by the council. **This is a 33% increase on last year, when 57 complaints were investigated.**

76 complaints investigated

33 upheld or partially upheld

Following investigation, **33 stage one complaints were either upheld or partially upheld. 43 complaints were not upheld.** This is because, while the customer was not happy with the service they received, or the decision the council made, teams had delivered the services or decisions in line with policy, and poor practice or injustice was not found. **Last year 22 stage one complaints were upheld or partially upheld, so this is a significant increase (50%).** We issued 19 apologies this year, compared to 16 apologies last year.

Sixteen stage-two complaints were handled. **Five were upheld, three were partially upheld and eight were not upheld.** In the previous year only four complaints progressed to stage two, and two of these were upheld or partially upheld, so this is a **significant increase on the previous year.**

16 stage two complaints

Most frequent complaint areas

Waste (36%, 27), revenues and benefits and corporate debt (12%, 9), housing (11%, 8) planning (9%, 7) and planning enforcement (7%, 5) received the most complaints*. **Whilst complaints about our joint waste service increased this year (27 in total with 19 upheld, relating mainly to missed bins, assisted collections and blue bag returns), when you consider the service carries out over 4,300,000 bin collections from 82,910 households a year, the number of complaints is still very low. Planning related complaints dropped slightly compared to last year, when 14% (8) of all complaints were planning related.**

89% (68) of stage one complaints were responded to within the target timescales, which is a significant improvement on last year when 76% (43) of complaints met our target timescales. Where responses were not issued within 20 working days, customers were kept informed of progress. Stage two complaints were either responded to within the target timescale, or customers were kept updated if the investigation was going to take longer.

89% in time

Ombudsman complaints

4 LGSCO complaints

The local government and social care ombudsman (LGSCO) received four complaints during 2023/2024. **All were closed after initial enquiries and not investigated.** They related to planning enforcement, homelessness, air pollution and the pedestrianisation of Lichfield City Centre.

Key facts about MP enquiries

We received 97 MP enquiries. MP enquiries are often like a complaint, but the customer has asked the MP to act on their behalf instead of coming to the council directly. **81% (79) were responded to within target timescales, which is a decrease on the previous year when 94% (109) were processed in a timely manner.**

97 enquiries investigated

** In line with our complaint policy, where there has been a service failure which is easily rectified, e.g., a report of litter in a park, or a missed bin collection, these are not logged as complaints unless they become repeat issues, and the customer asks to log a complaint.*

Key areas of enquiry

MP enquiries covered a wide range of services with the most in housing (20%, 19), operational services (18%, 17), planning (15%, 15) and environmental health (11%, 11). **Enquiries about pedestrianisation, disabled parking and council tax were also responded to.**

The customer services and digital teams continue to work to improve the ways in which customers can give their feedback easily and quickly, introducing telephone and web surveys, so that customers have a convenient way to share their views and help improve our services.



The number of stage one and stage two complaints we received this year increased.

The number of complaints upheld or partially upheld at both stages also increased, in line with the overall increase in complaints.

Whilst it's not possible to evidence this, we believe the more robust processes we put in place to record and oversee complaints through customer services contributed to the increased level of complaints we've handled.

Whilst we upheld, or partially upheld 33 stage one complaints, we only issued 19 apologies. Our view is that if any complaint is upheld or partially upheld, we should always issue an apology. We are now working with teams involved to ensure this takes place moving forwards.

We are delighted the number of compliments we received more than doubled this year – well done to all teams involved. To build on this, we will be reviewing service areas where compliments have increased (such as planning), so we can identify best practice and learning opportunities. We will also be looking into areas where complaints have increased to identify issues or trends we can address.

Feed back analysis

If you have any questions, please email our customer services team at feedback@lichfielddc.gov.uk