

RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

1. BACKGROUND

As part of the Business Support Review and the New Ways of Working that arose from the Review, it was proposed that Stage 3 of the complaints procedure would be removed from the Corporate Complaints Policy and a new Corporate Service Improvement Group is established.

In order to continue to meet new challenges and rising customer demand, the following five key initiatives have been undertaken:

- Channel migration
- Using risk to determine h&f InTouch involvement
- Managing internal customer demand
- Promoting service improvement
- Localism and swifter resolutions

2 Channel migration

2.1 Aims:

- Increase the use of the H&F My Account portal for the submission of complaints and requests for information
- Improve the request for information disclosure log so that it is searchable
- Reducing telephone transactions

2.2 Evidence:

| Contact method | Complaints | | Requests for information: | |
|----------------|------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| | 2011-12 | Since 2 July 2012 | 2011-12 | Since 2 July 2012 |
| Email | 25% | 19% | 93% | 88% |
| Form | 19% | 3% | 0% | 0% |
| Letter | 22% | 14% | 7% | 6% |
| Phone | 34% | 22% | 0% | 0% |
| Self service | 0% | 42% | 0% | 6% |

The above table shows that there has been a 42% take up on self-service via My Account and that the proportion of telephone complaints has reduced by 12%.

2.3 Recommendations/Next Steps:

- Continue to push the use of self-service for complaints and to find methods to 'focus' these. Although the take-up of self-service is positive, roughly half of all transactions should not be brought to the attention of the h&f InTouch team – these include Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) appeals and general enquiries.
- Increase the use of self-service for requests for information. The small take-up on self-service is a positive first-step, but email remains the most used method of contact for this workstream and this creates an unnecessary administrative

task for the InTouch team and does not open up all of the benefits of self-service to our customers (e.g. tracking, etc).

3 Managing internal customer demand

3.1 Aims:

- *Reviewing the ITT and IMT intranet pages*
- *eLearning and training*

3.2 Evidence:

The h&f Intouch intranet pages were reviewed and completely restructured in advance of the launch of the New Ways of Working. The new pages set out clearly to officers the changes brought about by the New Ways of Working, provided guidance documents and frequently asked questions, etc.

An eLearning package is currently being developed, but training programmes have already begun. Training has been delivered to officers in Environment, Finance & Corporate Services (H&F Direct), Residents and Leisure Services (ELRS) and Transportation and Technical Services (TTS), which has been described by attendees as 'very useful' and full of 'expert knowledge'. Executive Services dedicated resources in Housing & Regeneration to help support the changes and provide training, advice and guidance directly.

Further training can be provided on request via the h&f InTouch intranet pages and it is anticipated that the eLearning package will replace the need for some of the 'classroom' based training.

3.3 Recommendations/Next Steps:

- 3.1 To continue to provide training as requested and to develop the eLearning modules in collaboration with the Organisation Development Team.

4 Promoting service improvement

4.1 Aims:

Using trend analysis to drive down complaints demand

4.2 Evidence:

In order to reduce the volume of complaints made to the h&f InTouch team, and therefore demand, it is planned that the h&f InTouch team will identify areas of concern using the volumes of complaints made and trend analysis of the problems reported; referring these to the relevant services, who will be expected to report back what steps will be taken to address any problems identified throughout the analysis. This is yet to occur, as a suitable point in the reporting year is yet to be reached - i.e. the next Annual Complaints Review.

Nevertheless, the h&f InTouch team has already reported a 13.4% reduction in the number of complaints made during the reporting year 2011-12 over the previous reporting year. Further information on this reduction is available in the Annual Complaints Review for 2011-12.

4.3 Recommendations/Next Steps:

- Place a strong emphasis on learning from complaints, using business intelligence from iCasework, in the next Annual Complaints Review.
- h&f InTouch team will be allocated a service 'portfolio' of responsibilities, as part of the Corporate Service Improvement Group.

5 Localism and swifter resolutions

5.1 Aims:

- *Reducing the number of stages in the complaints procedure:*

5.2 Evidence:

Due to the improved framework in place for managing complaints and the efforts of the h&f InTouch team, the overall number of complaints – since the introduction of the h&f InTouch team – has been reducing each year at an average of circa 10%.

Importantly, the number of complaints escalating has also decreased, and this has occurred at higher proportion than the overall decrease in complaints received by the Council.

The below illustrates the volumes of complaints received over the same period (1 April to 30 September) for the last three years and the percentage change in volume:

| | Q2-Q3 2010/11 | Q2-Q3 2011/12 | Q2-Q3 2012/13 |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Stage 1 | 964 | 850 (-12%) | 869 (+2%)* |
| Stage 2 | 93 | 71 (-24%) | 40 (-44%) |
| Stage 3 | 39 | 24 (-38%) | 7 (-71%) |

* the recent increase in complaints received can be attributed to the introduction of self-service for our customers

Given the significant decrease in both Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints, it is now considered that Stage 3 can be removed from the complaints procedure.

Although the number of Stage 3 complaints now received is negligible, removing Stage 3 from the complaints procedure will be a significant shift in how the Council manages complaints. Stage 3 is the first opportunity for an independent view on a complaint which, although not often exercised, many customer find reassuring; it has made also a difference in a number of cases, avoiding Ombudsman decisions against the Council.

Increasingly, due to the Localism Act and the introduction of a new Housing Ombudsman scheme on 1 April 2013, pressure will be put on the Council to resolve matters locally – the h&f InTouch team will add value here to all parties.

In order to continue to offer our customers a view on their complaint that is separate from the Service concerned, it is considered that taking the best practice from Stages 2 and 3 (a review by a Senior officer from the Service and the h&f InTouch team) is an appropriate way forward.

5.3 Recommendations/Next Steps

- To reduce the number of Stages in the Council’s complaints procedure to 2 and to introduce an option for mediation between the Council and the customer lead by h&f InTouch.

6 Impact of the New Ways of Working

6.1 Customer satisfaction

As a result of the introduction of self-service, it is now possible for customers (specifically complainants) to record their satisfaction/dissatisfaction with how their complaint was handled. This was a significant piece of work.

Such feedback is in its infancy, as this functionality was only introduced on 2 July 2012; however, the number of satisfaction surveys being submitted is increasing on a weekly basis. Below is a snapshot of the returns so far:

| | Overall satisfaction | Outcome | Easy to complain | Staff helpfulness | Understanding of complaint |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|---------|------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Very satisfied | 25% | 13% | 38% | 29% | 46% |
| Fairly satisfied | 17% | 17% | 17% | 21% | 13% |
| Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 13% | 4% | 29% | 17% | n/a |
| Fairly dissatisfied | 17% | 26% | 13% | 8% | 29% |
| Very dissatisfied | 29% | 39% | 4% | 25% | 13% |

The results are seen as positive. Overall satisfaction is recorded at 42%, which is higher than any previous reporting method has recorded, including the Council’s Annual Residents’ Survey (37% - 2011 Results).

6.3 Escalation

As set out above, the h&f InTouch has worked hard to reduce the number of complaints made to the Council. During Quarter 3 (01/07/2011-30/09/2011) of the reporting year 2011/12, there were 33 Stage 2 complaints recorded. Over the same period in 2012/13, only 14 Stage 2 complaints were recorded. The evidence strongly suggests that the amount of unnecessary escalation is reducing and that this is having a positive impact on customer satisfaction - as can be seen in the above table.