



Customer Services



Sheffield City Council

Customer Feedback and Complaints Annual Report: 2018 – 2019

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INTRODUCTION

Our approach to complaints

Sheffield City Council welcomes our customers' views on the way we deliver our services, and we are committed to using their views to improve our services.

When a customer makes a complaint, we will deal with it in the way described in our Complaints Policy. We will do this regardless of where and how the customer makes their complaint.

Our definition of a complaint is "any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not". The way we deal with complaints is based on the following principles:

- It should be easy for customers to make a complaint.
- When a complaint is made, we will focus on early resolution and, wherever possible, we will try to solve the complaint at point of contact or within three working days.
- We want to know why a customer is dissatisfied, and what they feel we could do to resolve their complaint.
- When investigating a complaint, the person dealing with it will make personal contact with the customer, wherever possible.
- We will aim to ensure that individual needs are taken into account when dealing with complaints.
- When responding, we will, where appropriate, thank the customer, clearly explain what happened and what we will do, and will apologise and put in place remedies.
- Our tone will be open, responsive and avoid unnecessary formality. Written correspondence will use Plain English.
- Customers who make a complaint will be treated fairly, and will not be victimised or discriminated against, either in the investigation or conclusion of their complaint, or in any service they receive or request.
- Dealing with complaints is the responsibility of all Sheffield City Council employees.
- We will keep a record of complaints raised by customers.
- We will learn from complaints, so that we can improve our services.

Note on the Annual Report

This report covers the period from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019. Additional annual reports are prepared for children and adult social care services complaints. Where possible, the report includes figures for our major service delivery partners (Amey, Capita and Veolia). However, because some partners use other systems to record complaints, figures are not available on some measures, or are not directly comparable with the Council's data.

NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS

The table below shows the number of complaints received by Council services and our major service delivery partners (Amey, Capita and Veolia) between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019.

We have only shown those complaints recorded for consideration at the **Investigation** stage of the complaints process: complaints dealt with through informal ‘problem solving’¹ are not included.

Table 1: Number of complaints recorded for consideration at investigation stage over last 3 years

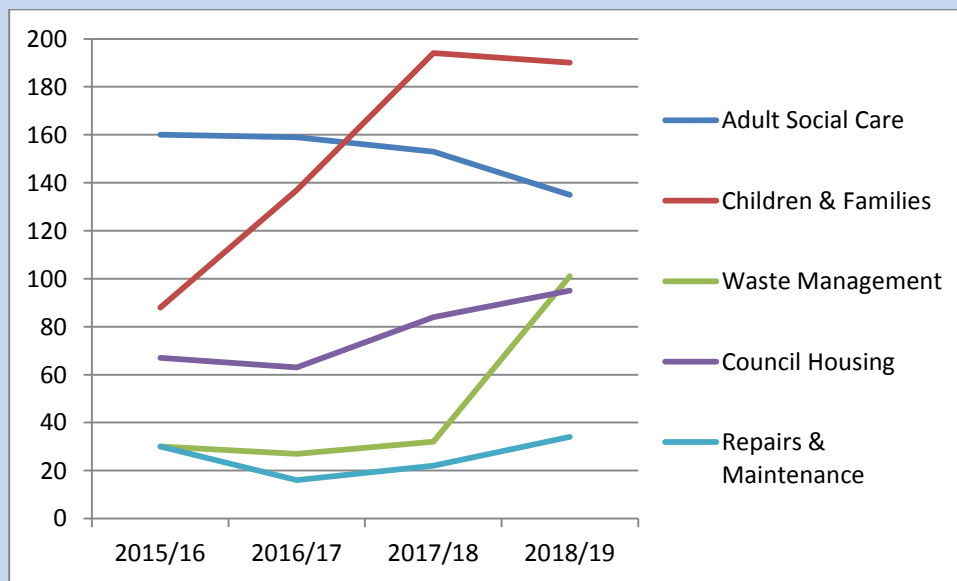
Council Portfolio/ Partner	Service area	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
People	Social Care – Adults	159	152	135
	Social Care – Children	137	194	190
	People – Other	11	29	36
	People Total	307	375	361
Place	Council Housing	64	84	95
	Council Housing Repairs	16	22	34
	Environmental Services	5	5	7
	Housing & Neighbourhood Services	36	22	7
	Waste Management Client Team	27	32	101
	Culture & Environment	7	5	8
	City Growth	32	39	29
	Traffic & Parking	22	23	14
	Transport & Facilities Management	9	5	6
	Place – Other	4	1	2
	Place Total	222	238	303
Resources, and Policy Performance and Communication (PPC)	Customer Services	17	46	32
	Legal	1	0	2
	Finance & Commercial	8	19	8
	Other	5	5	4
	Resources & PPC Total	31	70	46
Amey	Streets Ahead	2398	2164	1744
Capita	Benefits	3	16	177
	Revenues	21	60	51
	Capita Total	24	76	228
Veolia	Waste Management	287	187	360
Overall Total		3269	3110	3042

¹ Problem solving is dealing with complaints that can be resolved (or there is an agreed way forward) within **three working days**.

The overall number of complaints received in 2018/19 was 2% fewer compared with the previous year. However, behind this headline figure there was a wide variation of increases and decreases across services. Notably, there was:

- A tripling of complaints dealt with by the Waste Management Client Team coupled with 96% increase in complaints about Veolia. Both increases attributable to the high level of complaints about the roll out of the new recycling service.
- More than 10 times as many complaints recorded about Benefits. . The numbers reported in previous years were not a true representation due to Capita practice of only recording complaints on the complaints system iCasework when they escalated to the review stage of the complaints process.
- 19% reduction in complaints about Streets Ahead.

The chart below shows the Council services that received the most complaints in 2018/19, and compares this with the previous three years.



Customers can make a complaint on-line, over the telephone, in writing or in person. Many customers now choose to make their complaint online.

The table on the following page shows a breakdown of complaints made via the on-line form by subject area. Many of these complaints will have been dealt with through the problem solving part of the complaints process.

Table 2: Breakdown of on-line complaints received over last 3 years by subject area

Subject area	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Benefits	114	237	178
Bins, pollution and animals			
Bins and recycling	23	163	298
Environmental health and safety	39	110	109
Pest control	7	28	31
Pollution	14	35	30
Other	151	96	112
Births, deaths and marriages	47	37	38
Business information	21	52	53
Council Tax	306	535	676
Education and learning			
School admissions	2	21	11
Other	22	37	45
Health and social care			
Adult social care	71	55	34
Blue Badge	10	7	22
Children's social care	40	46	48
Other	51	68	79
Housing			
Council housing	292	530	186
Council Housing repairs			450
Private sector housing	12	23	26
Other	129	195	208
Leisure and culture			
Libraries	7	8	7
Parks and open spaces	28	51	73
Other	29	54	46
Parking, road works and highways			
Parking and bus lane fines	117	207	190
Parking permits	68	92	111
Public transport	28	7	11
Other	371	415	400
Planning and building control			
Planning applications/permission	16	51	24
Other	35	41	61
Voting and Elections	24	25	23
Other service areas	3	101	102
Total	2077	3327	3683

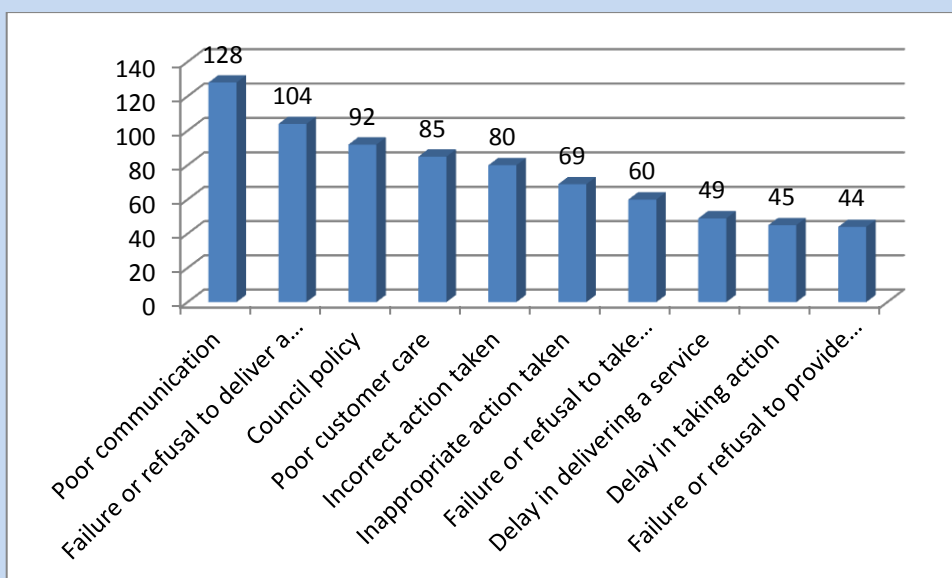
TYPES OF COMPLAINTS WE RECEIVE

To help us understand what customers complain about, we have a number of categories against which we record complaints. A single complaint can be recorded against more than one category, so the numbers shown in the table below do not match the number of complaints received.

Table 3: Complaint categories 2018/19

	Access	Delay	Failure or refusal	Policy or legislation	Quality of service	Staff conduct
People (Social Care – Adult)	4	38	95	5	147	41
People (Social Care – Children)	0	32	80	1	226	107
People – Other services	4	27	30	1	12	7
Place	5	17	23	98	19	24
Place (Council Housing and Housing Repairs)	4	26	24	26	37	36
Resources and PPC	6	17	21	6	19	21
Amey	217	138	443	357	526	63
Capita	13	132	23	13	101	12
Veolia	5	0	96	124	59	76
Total	258	427	835	631	1146	387

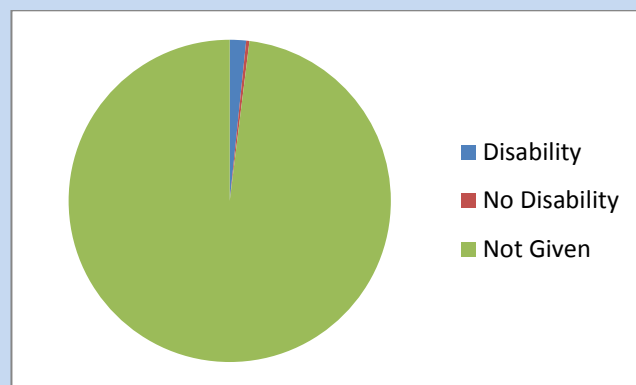
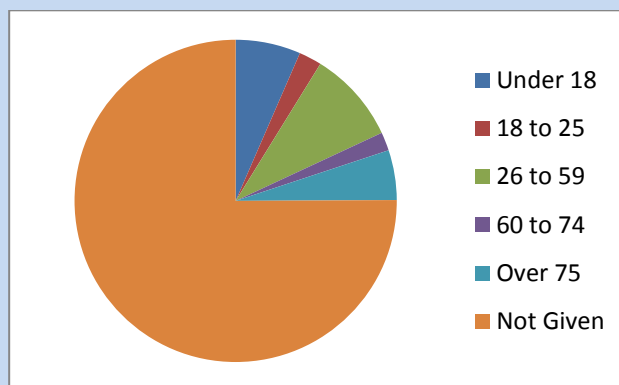
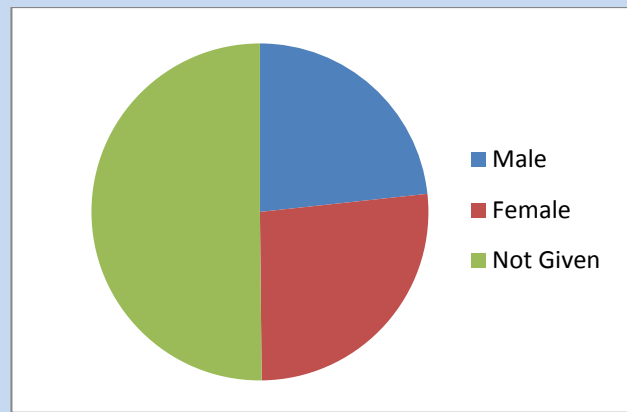
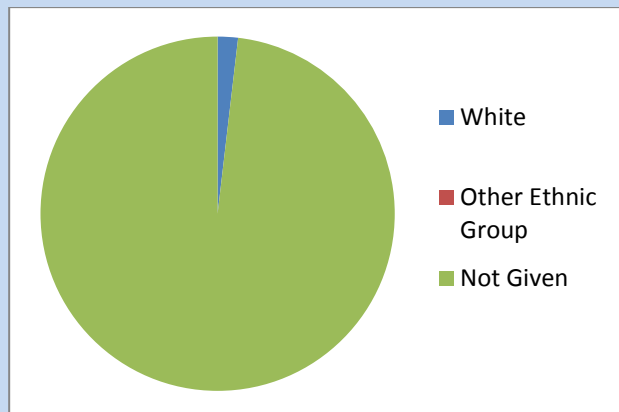
Looking in more detail, the top ten reasons for complaints about Council managed services (excluding Council Housing and Repairs, Amey, Capita and Veolia) in 2018/19 were as follows:



The most common cause of complaint was poor communication (17%) and failure or refusal to deliver a service (14%).

WHO MADE A COMPLAINT AND HOW THEY DID IT

When a customer makes a complaint, we ask for some information about their background. This information helps us to understand who is making a complaint, and can help us improve access to the complaints process. Providing the information is optional, and customers can make a complaint without providing this information.



Customers can complain in any way they choose to. The table below shows how the complaints that were dealt with through a formal 'investigation' were made by our customers in 2018/19.

Table 4: Complaint access channels 2018/19

	Email	Face-Face	Form	Letter	Telephone
People (Social Care – Adult)	55	0	25	39	16
People (Social Care – Children)	55	0	44	35	56
People – Other services	26	0	0	8	2
Place	88	2	7	22	55
Place (Council Housing and Housing Repairs)	22	8	11	37	52
Resources and PPC	19	0	8	10	9
Amey	Data not available				
Capita	156	3	16	39	14
Veolia	Data not available				
Total	421	13	111	190	204

RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS

Response times

The Council's target for responding to complaints that are dealt with through an 'investigation' and 'review' is 28 days.

There was wide variation in performance in 2018/19, ranging from 20% to 94% of complaint investigations/reviews responded to within 28 days; while the average number of days to respond ranged between 15 and 91 days.

These figures below do not take account of the large number of complaints resolved in three days through 'problem solving' part of the complaint process. Also, complaints about social care services are dealt with through statutory processes, which work to different timescales.

Table 5: Complaint response times over last 3 years

	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19	
	Average days	% in 28 day target	Average days	% in 28 day target	Average days	% in 28 day target
People (Social Care – Adult)	60	24%	79	19%	79	20%
People (Social Care – Children)	37	40%	46	33%	58	28%
People – Other services	68	22%	47	32%	91	36%
Place	31	65%	38	62%	26	74%
Place (Council Housing)	25	76%	21	81%	32	68%
Place (Housing Repairs)	19	95%	27	78%	36	46%
Resources and PPC	31	67%	19	79%	17	86%
Amey	17	71%	14	95%	15	94%
Capita	16	86%	17	83%	19	94%
Veolia	8	99%	8	100%	15	88%

Outcomes

We measure the outcomes from complaint investigations/reviews against three main areas:

- 1 **Service failure** – we have agreed with the complaint and offered a remedy that may or may not be accepted
- 2 **No action necessary** – we have not agreed with the complaint
- 3 **Agreed way forward, or misunderstanding clarified** – there may be partial agreement, but it is more about the need for clarification or negotiation.

In addition, complaints are sometimes closed if the customer withdraws their complaint.

The table below shows a breakdown of complaints outcomes during 2018/19.

Table 6: Breakdown of complaint outcomes 2018/19

	Service Failure	Agreed way forward	Misunderstanding clarified	No action necessary	Complaint withdrawn
People (Social Care – Adult)	41	44	28	8	0
People (Social Care – Children)	34	77	56	10	3
People – Other services	18	18	5	3	0
Place	20	38	25	95	0
Place (Council Housing)	7	64	5	19	1
Place (Housing Repairs)	1	35	0	11	0
Resources and PPC	16	12	4	23	1
Amey	11	588	35	1109	1
Capita	51	18	138	53	0
Veolia	41	193	16	103	7
Total	240	1087	312	1434	13

The table below shows the remedies and improvements that Sheffield City Council services (excluding Amey, Capita and Veolia) made during 2018/19 in response to the complaints received.

Table 7: Number of remedies & service improvements made over last 3 years

Remedy and service improvements	Total 2016/17	Total 2017/18	Total 2018/19
Number of complaints where remedies/ improvements identified	247	359	290

Apology	204	333	222
Change, review or provide a service	23	45	79
Change service provider	1	0	0
Financial remedy	23	49	4
Improve customer care	20	32	44
Provide or review employee training or guidance	42	58	49
Provide additional information or explanation	22	45	56
Review or change customer literature	8	2	6
Review or change policy or procedure	32	68	56
Take action or enforce a decision	42	67	78
Take action against a contractor or partner	3	4	2
Total number of remedies/ improvements	430	703	596

Over a third of the 596 remedies and improvements identified were an apology to the customer.

There were 79 financial remedies made. The service areas that recorded the greatest number of non-financial remedies and improvements were adult social care (95), children & families (94) and Council Housing (40).

Escalation

An important measure of successful complaint handling is the escalation rate, i.e., the percentage of complaints where the customer receives a first response, and then asks for a review by a more senior manager.

It is accepted that a number of complaints will not be resolved at the first stage.

The table below shows the percentage of complaints that were escalated from 'Investigation' to the next stage of the complaints process in 2018/19, compared with the previous two years.

Table 8: Complaint escalation rates over last 3 years

	% escalated 2016/17	% escalated 2017/18	% escalated 2018/19
People (Social Care – adult)	11%	6%	6%
People (Social Care – children)	13%	13%	12%
People (Other services)	NA	44%	44%
Place	18%	29%	50%
Place (Council Housing)	16%	16%	13%
Place (Housing Repairs)	29%	47%	24%
Resources and PPC	46%	31%	16%
Amey	14%	16%	15%
Capita	50%	26%	13%
Veolia	5%	2%	9%

OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS

The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO), and Housing Ombudsman (HO) investigate complaints about Local Authorities. The LGSCO, PHSO and HO are independent of Councils and the Government.

The Customer Feedback & Complaints Team keeps a record of the enquiries made by the LGSCO, PHSO and HO about services provided by Sheffield City Council, both directly and through partners. The table below shows the Ombudsman enquiries made about Sheffield City Council during 2018/19, and compares this with 2017/18.

Table 9: Breakdown of Ombudsman enquiries over last 2 years

Portfolio/ Partner	Subject	Formal premature referrals	Considered without Investigation	Formal /detailed investigations made	Totals 2018/19	Totals 2017/18
People	Social Care - Adults	5	9	5	19	18
	Social Care - Children's	9	2	1	12	14
	Education	2	5	8	15	16
	Libraries	0	1	0	1	0
Place	Bereavement Services	0	2	0	2	1
	Council Housing & Repairs	2	3	10	15	15
	Housing - other	2	4	2	8	11
	Environmental Services	1	0	1	2	0
	Parking Services	3	2	0	5	7
	Planning	1	5	3	9	6
	Highways	0	0	0	0	1
	Land/property	0	0	0	0	1
	Licensing	0	1	0	1	0
Resources	Customer Services	0	3	0	3	2
	Legal	0	3	0	3	3
	Business Change & Information Services	0	1	0	1	1
	Miscellaneous	0	0	0	0	1
Amey/Client	Streets Ahead	1	16	8	25	29
Capita	Benefits	2	7	3	12	8
	Revenues	0	0	0	0	2
Veolia/Client	Waste Management	0	1	3	4	0
Totals		28	65	44	137	136

The Council's average time for responding to Ombudsman initial formal enquiries was **24 working days**, which exceeds the target 20 working days set by the Ombudsman. 35 % of formal enquiries were dealt with in the 20 working day target.

In the Annual Review Letter, the LGSCO has reported that 165 enquiries were received about Sheffield City Council during 2018/19. This figure is higher than the 137 reported in the table above because it includes, for example, people who have made an 'incomplete or invalid' complaint or cases where advice was given but details not shared with the Council. The table below shows what the 165 enquiries were about, compared with the previous two years.

Table 10: Breakdown of Ombudsman enquiries by subject area over last 3 years

LGO subject category	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Adult Social Care	33	32	28
Benefits and Tax	20	17	17
Corporate and other	6	14	12
Education and Children's Services	36	46	34
Environmental Services and Public Protection & Regulation	4	17	25
Highways & Transport	50	33	21
Housing	16	16	18
Planning & Development	10	11	10
Total	175	186	165

After making enquiries or completing an investigation, the LGSCO and HO provide details of the decision. The tables below provide details of the decisions reached by the LGSCO over the last three years and the HO in 2018/19.

Table 11: Breakdown of LGSCO decisions over last 3 years

LGSCO Decisions	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Incomplete or invalid	4	9	13
Advice Given	5	3	7
Referred back for local resolution	67	62	51
Closed after initial enquiries	60	65	62
Investigated – not upheld	21	11	13
Investigated - upheld	20	22	22
Total	177	172	168

Table 12: Breakdown of HO decisions 2018/19

HO Decisions	2018/19
Closed after initial enquiries	3
Investigated – not upheld	4
Investigated - upheld	3
Total	10

How we compare

The tables below compare the number of enquiries received by the LGSCO and complaint outcomes across the Core Cities based on information provided by the LGSCO in the Annual Review Letters.

Table 13: Number of enquiries received by LGSCO across core cities over the last 2 years

	Number of enquiries received 2017/18	Number of enquiries received 2018/19	% increase/decrease (+ / -)	Number of enquiries per 1000 population
Birmingham	455	484	+6%	0.42
Bristol	129	136	+5%	0.29
Leeds	189	187	-1%	0.24
Liverpool	147	136	-8%	0.27
Manchester	167	176	+5%	0.32
Newcastle	67	73	+8%	0.24
Nottingham	103	106	+1%	0.31
Sheffield	186	165	-13%	0.28

Table 14: LGSCO complaint outcomes across the core cities 2018/19

	Number of detailed investigations 2018/19	Number of complaints upheld 2018/19	Upheld rate 2018/19	Number of complaints where Satisfactory Remedy provided before complaint reached Ombudsman 2018/19 (% of upheld cases)		Compliance with Ombudsman Recommendations 2018/19 (% late compliance)	
Birmingham	100	77	77%	10	(13%)	100%	(4%)
Bristol	18	12	67%	3	(25%)	100%	(0%)
Leeds	47	21	45%	1	(5%)	100%	(9%)
Liverpool	30	22	73%	3	(14%)	100%	(5%)
Manchester	38	21	55%	6	(29%)	100%	(6%)
Newcastle	14	9	64%	4	(44%)	100%	(0%)
Nottingham	26	18	69%	1	(6%)	100%	(0%)
Sheffield	35	22	63%	3	(14%)	100%	(13%)

HOW WELL WE RESPOND TO COMPLAINTS

The quality of responses

Four times a year, a sample of complaint response letters is scored against a quality assurance framework by the Council's Complaints Managers. The aim of quality assurance is to:

- Evaluate the quality of responses
- Identify areas for improvement and good practice
- Use the outcome to advise and provide guidance on complaints handling to other managers.

The quality assurance framework places an emphasis on personal contact and empathy with the customer.

We have a corporate target of 80% for the Quality Assurance score. The table below shows the scores for the full year.

Table 15: Complaint response quality assurance scores over last 3 years

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
People (Social Care - adult)	76%	77%	82%
People (Social Care – children)	75%	77%	84%
People (Other services)	NA	76%	80%
Place	82%	82%	79%
Place (Council Housing)	79%	89%	86%
Place (Housing Repairs)	72%	83%	82%
Resources and PPC	78%	79%	79%
Amey	Data not available		
Capita	73%	80%	78%
Veolia	Data not available		

Future Developments

The following have been identified as actions and areas for improvement during 2019/20:

- Review and develop public facing complaints information on SCC website;
- Review and develop online complaint form to ensure it is easy to use and to ensure effective routing of complaints.
- Development of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to improve recording and reporting of complaints, compliments and suggestions.
- Review and develop the information/guidance available to all employees and managers around resolving, investigating, reviewing and responding to complaints.
- Launch of new half day classroom course “Customer Complaints – Effective Handling” aimed at managers who resolve, investigate and respond to complaints.

How To CONTACT Us

If you would like to make a complaint, you can do this by completing an on-line form on Sheffield City Council's website: www.sheffield.gov.uk/tellus

You can also telephone us on 0114 273 4567, or write to:

Customer Services
Sheffield City Council
Town Hall
Pinstone Street
Sheffield
S1 2HH

If you would like to comment on this report, or have any questions about the complaints procedure, please contact the Complaints Team at:

Email complaintsmanagers@sheffield.gov.uk

Telephone 0114 273 4567, or write to:

Customer Services
Sheffield City Council
Town Hall
Pinstone Street
Sheffield
S1 2HH