

## 1.5 MORI DATA (2006)

### Contact with the Council

#### Contact Channels

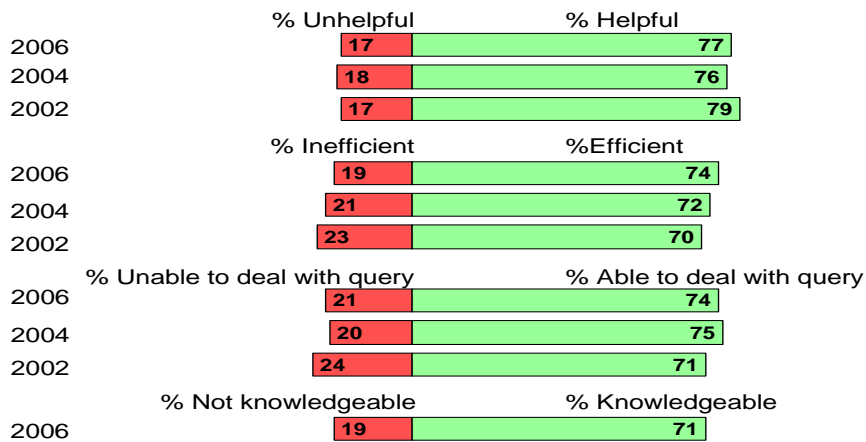
Almost half of Stockton residents (46%) have contacted the Council in the last year (2006) or so, which is in line with 2004 levels. Consistent with 2004, seven in ten (70%) of these contacted the Council by 'phone, whilst around one in seven made contact in person (15%). Relatively small proportions used letters (6%) or emails (5%).

#### Ratings of Staff

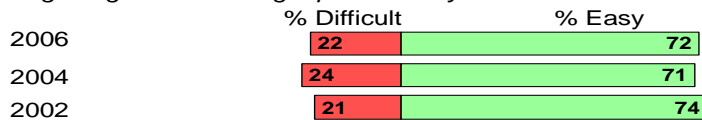
Ratings of staff amongst those who have made contact with the Council remain very similar from 2006 to 2004, with no statistically significant variations.

### Ratings of Council Contact

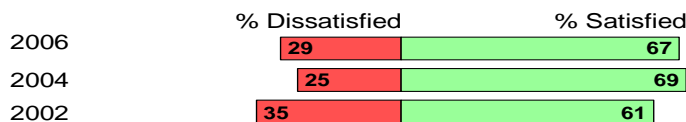
Q *And when you contacted the Council did you find the staff there . . . ?*



Q *Was getting hold of the right person easy?*



Q *And were you satisfied or dissatisfied with final outcome?*



Base: All those who have contacted Stockton Council in the last year.  
2006 (468), 2004 (440); 2002 (530)

Source: Ipsos MORI

## 1.6 MORI DATA Comparisons with other Local Authorities

### Helpfulness

Q	<i>When you last contacted the Council (..... Service) did you find (the staff there) helpful/unhelpful?</i>	
	Year	Helpful %
<i>Base: All contacting the Council</i>		
Southampton	2004	78
<b>Stockton-on-Tees</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Stockton-on-Tees</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>76</b>
Sunderland	2005	75
Westminster	2005	73
South Tyneside	2004	73
Leicester	2005	70
Southwark	2005	70
Birmingham	2004	69

### Efficiency

Q	<i>When you last contacted the Council (..... Service) did you find (the staff there) efficient/inefficient?</i>	
	Year	Efficient %
<i>Base: All contacting the Council</i>		
<b>Stockton-on-Tees</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Stockton-on-Tees</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>72</b>
Southampton	2004	71
South Tyneside	2004	68
Westminster	2005	65
Leicester	2005	62

### Ability to deal with your problem

Q	<i>When you last contacted the Council (..... Service) did you find (the staff there) able to deal with your problem?</i>		
	Year	Able to deal with problem %	
<i>Base: All</i>			
<b>Stockton-on-Tees</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>75</b>	
<b>Stockton-on-Tees</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>74</b>	
Southampton	2004	67	
South Tyneside	2004	62	
Sunderland	2005	60	

### 1.7 MORI DATA – Comparative Data over Time

Q66	<b>Have you contacted Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council in the last year or so?</b>				
			<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>	
			%	%	
		Yes	43	46	+3
		No	57	54	
		Don't know/can't remember	*	*	

Q67	<b>Thinking about the <u>last</u> contact you made, how did you contact the Council? Please just read out the letter which applies.</b>		
		<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>
		%	%
	By 'phone	70	70
	In person	17	15
	Letter	9	6
	Email	3	5
	Through a website	1	2
	Through someone else	1	*
	Fax	*	0
	Through a Local Councillor	*	1
	Through digital TV	0	0
	Other	1	*
	Don't know/can't remember	0	*

*Base: All who have contacted Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council in the last year (440, 2004; 468, 2006)*

Q68-71	And when you contacted the Council, did you find staff there . . . .?						
			<b>1998</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>
			(505)	(480)	(530)	(440)	(468)
			%	%	%	%	%
Q68		Helpful	74	74	79	76	77
	<b>OR</b>	Unhelpful	21	20	17	18	17
		Neither/don't know/not relevant/not stated	4	5	4	6	6
		NET	53	54	62	58	60
Q69		Efficient	67	70	70	72	74
	<b>OR</b>	Inefficient	25	24	23	21	19
		Neither/don't know/not relevant/not stated	7	6	6	7	7
		NET	42	46	47	51	55
Q70		Able to deal with your query/enquiry	76	72	71	75	74
	<b>OR</b>	Unable to deal with only query/enquiry	18	23	24	20	21
		Neither/don't know/not relevant/not stated	5	5	4	5	5
		NET	58	49	47	55	53
Q71		Knowledgeable	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	71
	<b>OR</b>	Not knowledgeable	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	19
		Neither/don't know/not relevant/not stated	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	10
		NET					52

Base: All who have contacted Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council in the last year

Q72	Was getting hold of the right person . . . .?						
			<b>1998</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>
			(505)	(480)	(530)	(440)	(468)
			%	%	%	%	%
		<b>Easy</b>	67	73	74	71	72
	<b>OR</b>	<b>Difficult</b>	26	20	21	24	22
		Neither/don't know/not relevant	6	7	5	6	6
		<b>NET</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>50</b>

Base: All who have contacted Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council in the last year

Q73	And were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the final outcome?						
			1998	2000	2002	2004	2006
			(505)	(480)	(530)	(440)	(468)
			%	%	%	%	%
		Satisfied	61	58	61	69	67
		Dissatisfied	31	35	35	25	29
		Don't know/not stated	7	7	4	6	5
		<b>NET</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>38</b>

*Base: All who have contacted Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council in the last year*

**1.8 BVPI General Survey 2006 – Top Line Data – Comparison with 2000 and 2003 Data Sets**

**Technical notes**

**CI = Confidence Interval**

**SS = Sample Size**

**All figures calculated by removing any don't know and not responded answers**

**Response rates**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Response rate</b>
2006	2,215	46%
2003	2,167	43%
2000	1,248	15.6%

**Contacting your Council for other reasons**

***QUESTIONS 31 TO 35 ARE ABOUT YOUR MOST RECENT CONTACT WITH THE COUNCIL FOR OTHER REASONS THAN TO MAKE A COMPLAINT.***

Q31. How many times have you contacted the Council in the past twelve months for any other reason than to make a complaint?

**Please tick ✓ one box only**

Have not contacted them in past 12 months	39.7%	Four times	1.9%
Once	15.6%	Five or more times	4.9%
Twice	11.5%	Don't know/can't remember	14.4%
Three times	6.8%		

***IF YOU HAVE CONTACTED THE COUNCIL FOR ANY REASON OTHER THAN TO MAKE A COMPLAINT IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS, PLEASE CONTINUE TO Q32. OTHERWISE, PLEASE GO TO Q36***

Q32. Which of these describes the reasons why you made YOUR MOST RECENT contact with the council?

**Please tick ✓ all boxes that apply**

Reported an issue or problem	21.8%	Don't know/can't remember	1.5%
Asked for advice/information	44.1%	Any other reason (✓ and write in below)	10.5%
Applied to use a service	28.1%		

Q33. How were you in contact with the Council?  
**Please tick ✓ all boxes that apply**

In person	20.1%	Via a website/ Internet	3.7%
By telephone	75.4%	By letter	12.4%
By e-mail	8.2%	Other method (✓ and write in below)	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Councillor</li> <li>• Planning hearing</li> </ul>	

Q34. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the service you received the last time you made contact with the Council?  
**Please tick ✓ one box only**

Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Satisfied	Net satisfaction
29%	43.7%	10.6%	10.3%	6.3%	72.7%	55.8%

Q35. Still thinking about your most recent contact with the Council, please indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied you were with each aspect of the service you received. If any aspect does not apply to your particular experience, please tick not applicable.  
**Please tick ✓ one box per row**

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Satisfied	Net satisfaction
How easy it was to find the right person to deal with	27.8%	47%	10.7%	8.7%	5.8%	75%	60.3%
The length of time it took to deal with the person you contacted	27.3%	47.2%	11.3%	8.1%	6%	75%	60.4%
Any information you were given	26.5%	46.1%	10.2%	10.1%	7.1%	73%	55.4%
How competent the staff were	31.1%	43.8%	13.6%	6.4%	5.1%	75%	63.4%
How helpful the staff were	35.4%	42.3%	10%	7.3%	4.9%	78%	65.5%
The final outcome	32.1%	35.4%	12.3%	8.1%	12.1%	68%	47.2%

## **1.9 Complaints and Commendations Quarter 3 2007/08 – October to December 2007 – from Report to Cabinet on Performance Management**

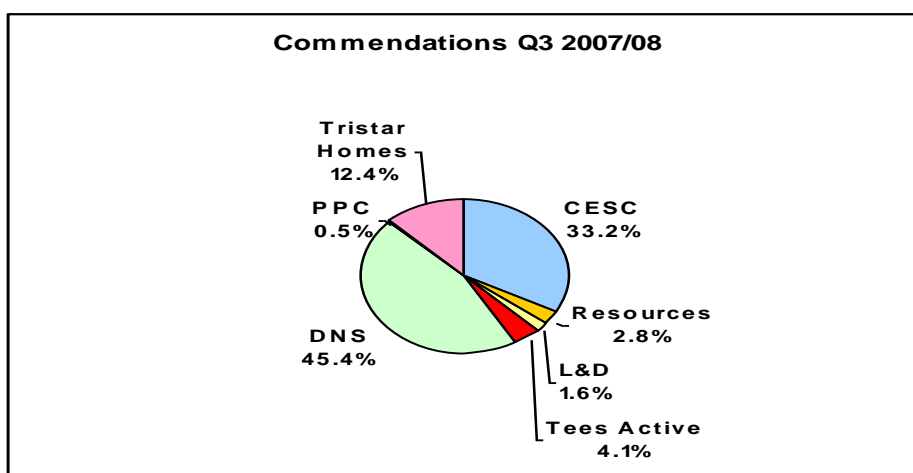
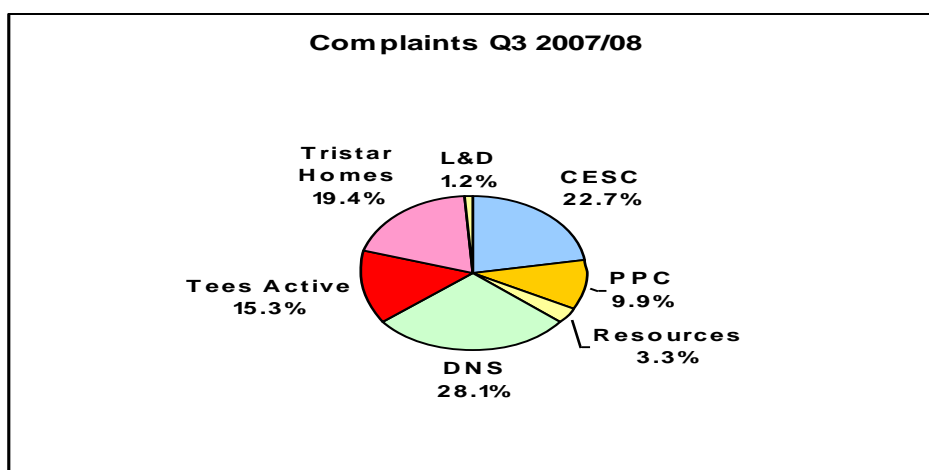
### **Complaints**

In total the Council received 242 complaints in Quarter 3 of 2007/08, this compares to 205 complaints received in the same quarter last year. The number of complaints received for the first nine months of 2007/8 is 643. This compares to 599 for the same period last year. Of the 242 complaints, 6 are at Stage 3 and of the Stage 1 and 2 complaints 86% (203) were responded to within timescales, an improvement over quarter 2, where 80% of the Stage 1 and 2 complaints were responded to within timescales.

### **Commendations**

A total of 434 commendations were received in Quarter 3, this compares to 452 commendations in the same quarter last year.

The pie charts below show a breakdown of complaints and commendations by service group.





New procedures have been introduced recently through Customer Services to collect information about the age, gender, disability, ethnicity and faith of those who make complaints. Further analysis of this data is required to provide services with quality information to inform any future service improvements. As part of ongoing development in this area, further training and awareness sessions are being provided to complaints officers.

This report highlights some of the main messages from the analysis of complaints and commendations.

- The main trend from Quarters 1 to 3 identifies that on average almost 75% of the complaints are in relation to the 3 service areas Children, Education, and Social Care (CESC), Development and Neighbourhood Services (DANS) and Tristar (Housing). Each receiving approximately a quarter of the total complaints
- Of the total commendations almost 79% are received for 2 service areas CESC and DANS, approximately 45% of these are compliments for DANS.
- Of the 14% of complaints which are not responded to on time the main areas are DANS and CESC with an approximate failure to respond rate of 20% and 26% respectively. Most of those within CESC are in Health and Social Care.
- Within CESC the majority of the complaints are within the children and young people service and the majority of the compliments are within adults services
- Within DANS the complaints are evenly spread across Direct Services, Community Protection and Housing and the commendations are within the Direct Services area (e.g. street cleansing, refuse, highways).
- For Tristar the main areas of complaints are repairs procedure, modernisation works not delivered on time and some in relation to staff approach. Commendations are thanks to teams and to individuals.

### **Main Areas of Complaint in Quarter 2 2007/08**

#### **Complaints**

<b>Service Grouping/ Division</b>	<b>Q2 total</b>	<b>Main area(s)</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>CESC</b>	<b>54</b>		
Education & Culture	20	libraries & information services	6
		transport	5
Children & Adults' Social Care	34	children & young people's services	13
		service development team	7
<b>DNS</b>	<b>54</b>		
Performance & Business Services	9	unauthorised memorials	4
		env health/ anti-social	
Community Protection	5	behaviour	2
Direct Services	13	street cleansing/ refuse/ recycling	7
		horticultural services/ highways	
Technical Services	5	street lighting	2
Housing	15	service received	7
Planning	6	planning applications	4

Regeneration	1	lack of information	1
<b>Law &amp; Democracy</b>	<b>27</b>	Corporate complaints re:Planning	22
<b>Policy, Perf. &amp; Comms.</b>	<b>0</b>		
<b>Resources</b>	<b>6</b>	Taxation - procedural problems	5
<b>Tees Active</b>	<b>34</b>	Splash - no music in aqua-fit session	9
		Forum - swimming lanes	3
<b>Tristar</b>	<b>53</b>	neighbour disputes	7
		staff attitude	8
		housing applications	4
		modernisation	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>228</b>		

### Main Areas of Complaint in Quarter 3 2007/08

#### Complaints

Service Grouping/ Division	Q3 total	Main area(s)	Number
<b>CESC</b>	<b>55</b>		
Education and Culture	16	Library & Information Services	7
		Community Education	4
Children's & Adults' Social Care	39	Children & Young People's Services	20
		Adults' Services	9
<b>DNS</b>	<b>68</b>		
Performance & Business Services	7	Unauthorised memorials	3
Community Protection	14	Anti-social behaviour/ parking	5
Direct Services	14	Refuse collection, street cleansing, horticultural services and recycling	7
Technical Services	5	Roadworks & street lighting	3
Housing	19	Letters, correspondence, service	14
Planning	8	Planning application	5

Regeneration	1	Staffing	1
<b>Law &amp; Democracy</b>	<b>3</b>	Electoral registration process	2
<b>Policy, Perf. &amp; Comms.</b>	<b>24</b>	Non-delivery of Building Schools for the Future Booklet/ Stockton News	23
<b>Resources</b>	<b>8</b>	Taxation - procedural problems	4
<b>Tees Active</b>	<b>37</b>	Swimming/ instructor removal of saunas from membership	24 7
<b>Tristar</b>	<b>47</b>	Repairs procedure	10
		Staff attitude	8
		Poor communication	6
		Modernisation	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>242</b>		

**1.10 Viewpoint 21 – Access to Services Survey**



**Viewpoint 21  
Survey Results Report**

**Jenny Elstob**

**October 2007**

## Access to Services

### Key findings

- Sixty eight per cent of respondents preferred using the telephone if they wanted information about the Council. Respondents also preferred using the telephone (79%) if they wanted to request a service from the Council.
- 178 respondents thought it was reasonable to wait 1 day before they got a reply from an e-mail or website, this was followed by 174 respondents thinking it was reasonable to wait 2 days. When they were asked how long they thought it was reasonable to wait for a reply to a letter, 215 agreed that 7 days was a reasonable time. This was followed by 166 respondents stating 5 days.

### FACE TO FACE CONTACT

- When respondents were asked if the current face to face enquiry hours of 8.30am – 4.30pm suit their needs, seventy three per cent agreed that they were.
- Forty eight per cent would like to see the new multi-service centres to stay open after 5pm on an evening.
- Thirty three per cent of respondents would like to the multi-service centres stay open until 7pm, Monday to Friday.
- 159 respondents would like to see the centres open two evenings a week, three evenings per week (79 respondents) was the second most popular choice.
- Sixty four per cent of respondents would like the centres open at the weekend. When asked what time of the day they preferred to visit, Saturday morning (84%) was the most popular followed by Sunday morning (69%).

### TELEPHONE CONTACT

- When asked if the current telephone contact suited their needs, eighty two per cent of respondents agreed that they were suitable.
- Forty six per cent of respondents would like to be able to telephone the Council earlier in the morning.
- Fifty two per cent of respondents would like to be able to telephone the Council after 5pm in the evening. Twenty six per cent of respondents would like to be able to telephone the Council until 7pm.
- 124 respondents would like to be able to telephone the Council two evenings per week, five evenings per week (98 respondents) was the second most popular choice.
- Sixty three per cent of respondents would like to be able to telephone the Council at the weekend. When asked what time of the day they preferred to telephone, Saturday morning (89%) was the most popular followed by Sunday morning (81%).
- When respondents were asked which services listed should have extended opening hours for telephone contact, anti social behaviour (80%), environmental health (45%) and fly tip removal (39%) were the top priorities given.
- Only twenty two per cent of respondents were aware that the Council had a range of Golden Numbers. Eighty seven per cent thought that the idea of Golden Numbers was a good one.
- Fifty eight per cent of respondents would be happy to use a menu system, if they could speak to an operator. Twenty nine respondents said they would not be happy using a menu system as they thought it was too long.
- When respondents were asked how long they thought it was reasonable to wait before their call is accepted, 30 seconds (40%) and 1 minute (35%) were the top answers.

- 206 respondents were prepared to wait five minutes for their call to be answered fully, compared to 151 respondents who thought it was reasonable to wait five minutes.
- When respondents were asked if they were waiting in a queue to have their call answered, what would they prefer to hear, seventy six per cent would like to be given an estimated time for their call to be answered. Sixty six per cent would like to be told their position in the queue and sixty one per cent of respondents would like to be given the option of leaving a voice mail message for someone to ring them back.
- When respondents were asked if they left a voice mail message, how long would they be prepared to wait for their call to be returned, forty per cent of respondents agreed within the hour. Thirty four per cent of respondents agreed the same day. Only seven per cent of respondents expected a call back within 2 – 3 hours.

**12. If you have a query and you want to find out information about Council services, how would you prefer to do this?**

When asked how they would prefer to find out information about Council Services, sixty eight percent of respondents preferred to use the telephone, only three per cent preferred to write. There was no variation by gender, disability or ethnicity but there was by age. None of the 85+ age group preferred to use the telephone to contact the Council and none of the 18 – 24 age group preferred to write.

**13. If you want to ‘Request a Service’ from the Council, for example, to request the repair of a faulty street light or to enquire about council tax, how would you prefer to do this?**

Seventy nine per cent of respondents preferred to use the telephone if they wanted to Request a Service from the Council, only two per cent preferred to write. Once again there was no variation by gender, disability or ethnicity but there was by age. Eighty seven per cent of respondents from the 65 – 84 age group preferred to use the telephone compared to the 85+ age group (50%). None of the 18 – 34 age group preferred to write compared fifty per cent of the 85+ age group.

**14. How many days do you think it is reasonable to wait before you get a reply from the Council if you made contact by the following? (Please write below)**

Email/Website	Frequency	% of respondents
1 day	178	24%
2 days	174	24%
3 days	73	10%
4 days	9	1%
5 days	31	4%
7 days	23	3%
10 days	1	*
14 days	1	*

Letter	Frequency	% of respondents
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1 day	4	*
2 days	28	4%
3 days	95	13%
4 days	85	12%
5 days	166	23%
6 days	8	*
7 days	215	29%
8 days	8	*
9 days	1	*
10 days	39	5%
12 days	11	*
14 days	20	3%
17 days	1	*
24 days	1	*

**37. If you would like to be able to leave a voice-mail message, how long would you be prepared to wait for your call to be returned? (Please tick one option)**

When respondents were asked if they left a voice mail message how long they would be prepared to wait for their call to be returned, forty per cent of respondents said within the hour. Thirty four per cent were happy to have their call returned the same day.

There was no variation by gender and disability but there was by ethnicity and age. Sixty three per cent of BME respondents would like their call returned within the hour compared to thirty nine per cent of white respondents. Fifty seven per cent of the 18 – 24 age group were happy to wait the same day compared to the 65 – 74 age group (27%).

**38. If you have any further comments about how we might improve telephone access to Council Services, please write below?**

<b>Further comments</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Staff and service has always been good/excellent	15	2%
Improve customer service	10	1%
Ensure quick responses and returned calls	8	1%
Employ more staff	4	*
Don't have call centres/queuing system/music	4	*
Don't leave people on the phone	4	*
Make staff state their name	3	*

## Access to Services – Open answers

### Q12 Other

All of the above - depending on what my query was. Question about bin collections - go to website. More complex questions about social services for an elderly relative, costs, care packages etc - telephone and maybe also in person.
Anyway, as long as a response is forthcoming
As stated I would prefer E-mail, however this is provided that the Email is acknowledged, if not, an Email appointment to see someone in person or if urgent a telephone call from the relevant office would be appropriate.
Please look at your information. It is not a very good advert for customer access to services when contact details are unreadable.

### Q13 Other

Contact local councillor
Once again E-mail should be acknowledged so that I would be aware that the item in question is being dealt with.
Usually contact local Councillor

### Q37 Longer

24-48hours
2days
48hours
It all depends on the nature of the enquiry - most important is that the call IS returned - preferably within the day
Next day
This depends on the nature of the question - one query may not be urgent and could well be left a day or two, but others may be more urgent and require a quick response.
Up to next day but you would be influenced by the gravity of the call.

### Q38

A night line for complaints of noise to be dealt with. At the moment some council staff in correctly direct members of the public to call police regarding this issue which is not correct
Advise people of your golden numbers. Don't enrage people of my age or younger by using menu system. Never spoken to anyone who likes the system?
After 1st contact, be given name and direct line number of the person dealing with you
All the waiting in queues is only helpful if the call is free. System is not of much use
Better systems and training
Council employees answering telephone should be polite responsive and attentive.
Don't get a menu system
Don't put music on it is so annoying. Id rather be told where I was in the queue and approx how long to wait before call would be answered
Employ more telephonists. Voice mail is frustrating especially if one has to go out to work and will not be in to receive a call
Employ receptionist for switchboard who can direct you to right person/department, able to leave a message and receive a call back service
Everyone answering a call should give their name in full and the department. A promise to return a call should be carried out
Excellent service when I ring
Free phone number



Have a voice make queue system that is quick response either saying the person to deal with this matter is not available for whatever reason or deal with immediately. Nobody like waiting all day for a phone call which may or may not come
How come always have to queue whatever time/day. Too often to be authentic
I am disabled and its affects my speech and I would more time and patience to given
I appreciate a prompt response by an actual person who is able to help me with my concern
I believe that the best possible way for an enquiry to be dealt with is to speak to the same person throughout the process and not be passed from pillar to post.
I disagree with council setting up a call centre!! I want to be able to telephone directly the person or service I need
I feel that the existing telephone service if used correctly is very good
I find it most annoying being passed from one to another only to be told you are in a queue and followed by funeral music More direct lines or please call back later. NOT answer phones
I had experience of the "ring back" idea recently. When the phone rang I was unable to get across the room in time to answer it, and so lost the call. I gave up. The impression this sort of thing creates is that the persons called wish to avoid speaking
I have found the service currently offered quite good and have had satisfaction and better service
I have never experienced any difficulty
I think access is very good at present if the people at the switchboard are local and know the Stockton Area quite well. Then I don't have any problem
I think it's excellent already. I always access required query/service very quickly on 393939, 391959.
I think the main switchboard is an excellent service the council provides. Staff need to be consistent in providing a pleasant and courteous service-if necessary provide training in customer service to continue to improve attitude and staff moral
I would like telephone numbers to be available at libraries and post office
I would like the person who answers or takes the message to give their name preferably their surname, then when you get no response you can have their name recorded
I would much prefer a direct number. Ask for callers phone number to call back when it was more convenient
If my call is transferred by operators or by council employee to another time, I would like to be assured that at that time is manned
If waiting in a queue it is important to know how long position in queue
If you set up a menu option test it regularly
Improved customer service. The staff at Billingham forum in particular are rude on occasion, particularly if you are unsure if you have called the correct department
In my experience people do not ring you back or keep you hanging on for 20-30minutes.Keep promises, No menu system, speak to people
Include a list of your golden numbers in the leaflets that you send out to all residents re-all the services you provide each year
It is very difficult to please everyone. I hate waiting in a queue. I would rather a call back if the busy tone activated. I would be unhappy to wait because of the volume of calls
It would be great if phone calls were answered immediately instead at the moment one can ring and ring no one answers
Just go back to switchboard, easier and more efficient and keeps people jobs
Make numbers easier to find in directories.
Make sure people return your call. In my experience calls aren't returned.
Make sure you have competent staff answering the telephone

Many of my responses could depend on the reason for the call
More people to man the phones
Most of the staff are helpful but some are in need of training to improve their negative attitude and to be better informed of council services e.g. which dept do I require for such and such a problem?
Mostly people are cheery and polite which is nice
My experience of telephone access to 'Care for your Area' has been unsatisfactory. Contact made quickly but person on call wasn't sure of answers.
No comments as it is doing ok as it is
Nobody wants to know
Not at the Moment
Nothing makes me more angry than been left on the phone listening to music or to be given options. I just hang up
On the few occasions that I have phoned I have found the service provided to be very good
option of text messaging
Out of hours voicemail messages to be acknowledged the next day
Patience. An operator is usually better to transfer t the ext. required rather than menu option. Some menu options give further menu options. Can be very confusing and time consuming
Please don't use the 0845 number. Please keep an operator if possible if not, access to a personal operator and not a loop of numbers
Please keep on using local code numbers. This way we can call cheaply any time of the day from mobile phones. Do not switch to 0800, 0845, 0870 etc phone numbers because those are expensive to use from mobile homes.
Q30-37 will not improve access.
Re q37-alot would depend on the reason for making the call as does replies to other questions
Re: q37 - I would like my call to be returned that day even if it is to tell me that my call is being acknowledged and that it may take several days to get me a full answer. I would appreciate a realistic timescale instead of being told a lie.
Ring back appointment
Staff should treat people how they wish to be treated. Pleasant courteous sympathetic and understanding
Streamlining and automation of telephone services is fine but so long as somewhere in the process-there in the ability to speak to an informed person
Sub headings giving a clearer description of what each council department is responsible for
Tell your staff to have a better tone of voice instead of being horrible
Text service would be good as most deaf people own a mobile phone
That receptionist knows which department to put you through to and that there is no continuous transferring of calls to other departments
The switchboard staff are always helpful and polite
This can be a well managed professional service giving the right image, or it can be a nightmare-don't outsource it
Use more resources
Whenever and whichever I have my council offices I have been treated with courtesy and pleasantness. They have also been very helpful on occasions
Why are Yarm, Ingleby Barwick, and Eaglescliffe completely ignored in your service centre proposals??

## **1.11 Access to Services Discussion Groups – Summary – 11<sup>th</sup> May 2006**

### **Background**

To gain the general public views on the proposed Access to Services Strategy, consultation took place with members of Adult Viewpoint, the residents' panel for Stockton-on-Tees, in the form of focus groups.

A total of six focus groups took place, both on an afternoon and evening between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> May 2006. They were held in five locations, Billingham, Thornaby, Yarm, Ingleby Barwick and central Stockton. A total of sixty-five Viewpoint members, attended the sessions from all areas across the Borough.

The sessions were facilitated by Jenny Elstob, Kath Hornsey and Lianne Hope and were also attended by Debbie Hurwood, Sue Daniels, Craig Willows and Lesley King.

A summary of the comments made at all six sessions follows.

### **GENERAL CUSTOMER CARE QUESTIONS**

#### **Good experiences of Customer Care?**

This question was a general one not necessarily related to Stockton-on-Tees Council services. The comments received were from across all six sessions and includes their views on what they thought good customer care is:

- Friendly and helpful staff.
- Listening skills.
- Telephones being answered promptly and being put through to the right extension.
- Getting feedback.
- Taking concerns seriously.
- Somebody who makes the customer feel important.
- Staff providing their name when they speak to you.
- Being able to make appointments within a specific timescale.
- Well-trained, well-informed staff.
- When somebody says they will do something, they do it.
- English speaking so you can understand what is being said to you.
- The main switchboard of SBC
- CFYA (The Council's Care for Your Area service)
- Council (Tristar) repair service

#### **Bad experiences of Customer Care?**

Again, this question was a general one not necessarily related to Stockton-on-Tees Council services.

- People not ringing you back when they say they will.
- No response when you ring someone.
- Staff not providing their name when you talk to them.
- Being put through to an answering machine.
- Staff answering the telephone when you are stood at a reception desk.
- Staff talking to each other and ignoring you when you are stood there.
- Being transferred around.
- Language barriers

- “We value your call” or “your call is important to us” message when you have been waiting ages.
- Turning up to see someone at an office then finding they are out.

## **BOROUGH WIDE ACCESS TO SERVICES**

### **How can we make it easier for people with special needs or who live in out-lying areas to access services?**

When asked this question, lots of ideas were given where access points for contacting the Council could be located in the Borough. A free phone number was suggested for people who found it difficult to get out of their homes to contact an officer from the Council. Another suggestion was to provide home visits for people with disabilities. It was felt staff should be trained to deal with people with special needs e.g. deaf awareness.

One group suggested that SBC should consult other authorities that have already been down this route and learn from their experiences. They also felt that a steering group should be formed and include people with special needs.

It was suggested that a mobile bus/contact centre could tour the area. The times and dates of its location could be published in local papers such as the Herald & Post and Stockton News.

### **It was suggested that electronic access channels such as Stockton on Line and interactive kiosks might help and that these could be located in existing Council buildings.**

Reducing the number of phone numbers that people have to choose from would reduce confusion.

### **If they live in out-lying areas, could they access facilities in local libraries or community centres?**

Using community centres was generally thought to be a good idea and people were happy to use libraries, Yarm library already has disabled access (as do all SBC libraries) and people can already access the Internet.

The mobile library was a popular suggestion as long as dates and times were published in advance. One person raised a note of caution stating that a mobile contact centre may not be well utilised. Examples given were the Durham Tees Valley Rail/Bus connection and the BBC bus, which tends to be empty.

### **Other Suitable venues for community access points?**

- Supermarkets, for example, Tesco, Ingleby Barwick.
- Hospitals
- Post Offices
- Parish halls
- Schools
- Through local councillors

### **What should they look like/how should they be set out?**

Most groups felt it was important that an area should be made to allow privacy for customers and there was access for the disabled. It was also felt that experienced informed staff with the same skills as the main centre should be employed.

Extension of opening times until 7pm on an evening and Saturday morning opening was suggested.

**If a face-to-face service could be provided on part time basis, how often would be suitable and what days would be best?**

It was generally felt that this was a difficult question to answer. Comments made were “we would rather just ring the Council.” One group suggested a couple of half days per week in Yarm in a suitable venue but that telephone access to the contact centre would suffice at other times and in emergencies.

**NEW TECHNOLOGY**

**What benefits kiosks and video conferencing would be for them?**

Young people may be happy to use it but it may be a barrier for older residents as training to use new technology might be required. Concerns were also raised over security, possible misuse and vandalism and that the technology would need to be located in a secure environment. Also, what would happen if systems went down. One comment was “why not use the telephone”. And “video conferencing little benefit over telephone but worth giving it a try.” It was generally felt that new technology should supplement, rather than replace, existing access channels.

**Barriers?**

- Comments as above
- Long queues might form if busy
- Confusing

**Suggestions for location of kiosks?**

- Mobile bus
- Library (could also be used as a venue for video conferencing)
- Places where they can be accessed on an evening
- Community centres
- Pubs
- Supermarkets
- Bus stops
- Post Offices
- Doctors surgeries
- Schools
- There were differences of opinion as to whether kiosks should be placed in outside locations so that they could be available on a 24/7 basis (risk of vandalism)

**Why is the Internet good?**

Feedback was positive from all groups with regard to using the Internet. Good comments were made about Stockton Council’s web site. Other comments made were

- You get a quick response to queries
- You can do almost anything on-line for example book tickets etc
- Research purposes
- Good for students
- Access to information from the armchair
- Can think about what you want to say in your own time
- Great (when you know how to use it)

### **Why don't they use it?**

The main comments made were

- Fear
- Can't find access to sites
- Links need to be kept up to date
- Cost
- Don't have easy access to a computer
- Prefer to use other methods such as the telephone
- Slow response
- No interest
- Not being computer literate
- Unable to due to disability or illness (for example arthritis)
- 24/7 internet access doesn't necessarily mean that services are provided 24/7
- Loss of social interaction

## **GOOD AND BAD EXPERIENCES OF CUSTOMER CARE**

### **Good experiences about telephone enquiries?**

Very positive comments were made about the main switchboard with regard to answering telephones promptly and politely. Compliments were also made about the efficiency CFYA and the repairs service.

### **Bad experiences about telephone enquiries?**

- People prefer face to face contact
- Insincere messages such as " your call is important to us" whilst waiting on the phone
- Problems with automated call distribution service when the facility has too many options
- When they can't get in touch with staff because they are in a meeting and then they don't call you back when promised.
- Waiting in a queue for ages, then when the person answering your call is unable to deal with your query/problem.
- Being charged when waiting on the phone for a long time.

### **What they would like to hear whilst waiting on the phone?**

"Definitely not music" was the message from the majority of the groups. Other comments made were:

- Position in the queue was the preferred choice
- Would rather not wait in the first place
- An option to leave a message for someone to ring them back
- Not "Greensleeves"
- SBC information rather than music

### **Preferences for Voicemail?**

There was support for an option to leave a Voicemail message, provided that people's telephone calls were returned. One suggestion made was targets should to be set and the system monitored to ensure that responses were prompt. It would be good to be given a choice whether to wait in the queue or leave a message for someone to ring back.

### **How can we improve? Face to face enquiries**

Generally people were happy with the face-to-face experiences they have experienced. Suggestions for improvement were as follows:

- Separate switchboard duties for reception staff to avoid waiting
- More training for front line staff in customer care. Also train people to sign and provide training in sensory awareness. If this was expensive to provide, then ensure that some of these enhanced services are available part time.
- Honesty, if we can't help people, promises shouldn't be made.
- Dropped counters for wheelchair users.
- Smaller queues

### **More privacy?**

All six groups felt it was important that private rooms were available to discuss personal matters. They were aware that SBC had private rooms if required but perhaps they could be slightly larger for wheelchair access.

### **Glass counters as opposed to open counters?**

Although open counters were preferred everybody recognised the need for security in certain areas. They were happy as long as the staff behind them could clearly hear what they were saying without having to shout.

### **Queuing systems. What do they feel?**

All six groups thought this was a good idea. The idea of a ticketing system was popular because it was felt that nobody could jump a queue and you could sit down whilst waiting. Another suggestion made was that you should be able to purchase refreshments whilst waiting.

## **MEASURING SUCCESS**

### **How do we know we have been successful?**

- No complaints
- Different methods of measuring customer satisfaction were suggested – these could be used to monitor trends.
- Monitor the time taken between the initial complaint/request and the conclusion.
- Feedback to customers
- Produce performance Indicators
- Mystery shopping
- Random sampling
- Effective consultation
- More queries/calls resolved at the first point of contact

**Following up some questions by telephone, how do they feel about that?**

Comments were mixed; concerns were raised about the costs involved if everyone was given a follow up call, others thought it was a good idea to follow up with telephone calls. One group felt that Stockton was already doing this in many cases; Viewpoint was given as an example.

**What standards do they expect?**

Customers expect a prompt and efficient service from SBC and an acknowledgement letter for enquiries to be sent to them within one week of receipt. Targets and response times should be published for all to see, for example how quickly street lights are repaired. There should be feedback and an explanation if the target time is not going to be achieved.