

Agenda Item 13

Housing Review Board

4 March 2010

RT



Estate Management Service

Summary

This report is intended to inform Board members as to the important role and work of the Estate Management Section, and the improvements which have been made to deliver an improved customer focussed service. Estate Management is a core landlord activity and an area in which the Council's performance has a direct impact on tenants' quality of life and enjoyment of their homes.

Recommendation

To note the work of the Estate Management Section and the details of recent improvements outlined in this report.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

To keep Members informed of our estate management role and activities.

b) Alternative Options

Not to report on this housing management activity.

c) Risk Considerations

Poor performance in this area can have a direct impact on tenant satisfaction and well being.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

This report does not give rise to any significant policy or budget changes.

e) Date for Review of Decision

Annual review of estate management activities.

1 Background

1.1 The role of the Estate Management Section is to deal with tenants who breach the conditions of their tenancy agreement, reduce or resolve anti-social behaviour, and maintain the condition of our housing estates. This role is critical as the prime housing management function, yet one which unfortunately can go unnoticed.

Breaches of the tenancy agreement typically fall into several broad categories:

- Anti-social behaviour e.g. noise, verbal abuse, harassment, drug/alcohol abuse, litter.
- Property related e.g. abandoned property, sub-letting, and trespass.

- Conditions e.g. untidy gardens, poor internal conditions, refuse nuisance, communal open space.
 - Miscellaneous e.g. behaviour of children, parking disputes, untaxed vehicles.
- 1.2 The Audit Commission assessed the housing management service during the inspection of the Housing Service in 2007, and their report noted that in terms of general housing management strengths outweighed weaknesses.
- i. They felt that there was a robust approach to tackling anti-social behaviour, good partnership working with other agencies, and that officers' response to complainants was considerate.
 - ii. In terms of Estate Management, the inspectors felt that "most of the Council's estates are attractive places to live and tenants are generally satisfied with their neighbourhoods.
- 1.3 The report however did identify failings with regard to litter on one estate, and a patchy standard of grounds maintenance/communal cleaning across the district. (This aspect is not currently under the control of the Estate Management Section and is part of a review being undertaken by the Business Unit). The report also noted that there had been little work to date on tenant satisfaction within the Estate Management Service, and it was difficult for residents to know who their Housing Officer is due to the fragmentation of services that might be part of a generic housing officers' role - for example the 'sign up' process, grounds maintenance or minor improvements.

2 Service Improvement

- 2.1 The majority of our workload comes from tenants and residents making "complaints" or "requests for service" to one of the four officers who cover the district on an area basis. Understandably the team are required to have high levels of interpersonal skills – to empathise with customers by listening and supporting them whilst in other situations carrying out an enforcement role.
- 2.2 The Section deals with an average of 1300 service requests or reports annually, of which approximately 1000 are estate management and 300 anti-social behaviour. One measure of the teams' success is that there was only one official complaint received in 2009 for all four officers, which is quite outstanding bearing in mind that the team deal with some difficult and stressful situations.
- 2.3 **Customer Satisfaction** – to obtain a more quantitative and qualitative measure and to implement an Audit Commission recommendation, we started sending out satisfaction surveys from May 2008, when we closed a report/service request (or a case/job). The analysis of the questionnaires which were returned from May 2008 to April 2009 is shown in **annex 1** – the percentages are the positive responses. When considering these figures it should be borne in mind that the responses cover anti-social behaviour and estate management, so some questions will not be relevant – for example "explain the reason for the outcome of your report" and "explain what to do if the problem returns" are only relevant to a noise complaint and not to removal of rubbish.
- 2.4 As a step towards signing up to the Respect Agenda and to benchmark with other authorities on anti-social behaviour, we have changed the questionnaire to the nationally prescribed format from May 2009. Most of the information requested was the same albeit worded slightly differently, so the results are comparable.
- 2.5 The results of the first two quarters actually from May 2009 – October 2009 are shown in **annex 2**. There is some variation, but in general satisfaction has improved. The Section is accessible to the public with a high percentage of ease of reporting, there is a good perception of our service and the subjective judgement of each officer is also good.
- 2.6 The Section also scores highly for communications being easy to understand, which mirrors a mystery shopping exercise carried out in 2008. Question 4, 5, and 7 are all

related to anti-social behaviour cases where we would be working closely with complainants, reporting back, supporting and advising them. Overall satisfaction with the way the complaint was dealt with and the satisfaction with the outcome are similar questions, but to a certain extent the more important question is the former in so much as it affects the standard of our work. When resolving noise issues for example a resident may not be satisfied to be told after our investigation that it is 'everyday living' noise.

The response rate was 34.6% for the period May-July but 56.4% for the period August – October, perhaps due to a Housing Standard article.

- 2.7 The latest analysis of May – December feedback is given in **annex 3** and shown graphically in **annex 4**.
- 2.8 **Information Management** – the Section uses the Host Access computer system to record service requests and log officers actions, which produces various reports mainly a) the number and type of service requests and b) response and completion times against target times.
- 2.9 The system has been re-organised to use Housemark categories for anti-social behaviour, separating it from estate management functions. This allows us to submit to Housemark some comprehensive information including:
 - the number of new cases by category of ASB.
 - type of action taken to tackle ASB.
 - the number of resolved cases for each main action – this will over time show the effectiveness of each action taken.

We can then benchmark not only our performance, but also the level and type of anti-social behaviour with other similar housing providers. We are in the process of reporting our first quarter figures to Housemark and will report to HRB on future data.

- 2.10 **Estate Walkabouts** – In May 2007 we started a programme of estate walkabouts, with 8 areas covered per year increasing to 12 estates in 2009. Local Councillors, the Police and residents are invited to attend and the results are published in the Housing Standard. The purpose of the walkabout is to visit areas with our stakeholders, to pick up things that may be of concern to them and to identify any problems which we may have missed in the normal course of estate visits. It also provides an opportunity for residents to express their views and for us to have a more visible presence. Although the walkabouts are publicised, we do not get many tenants participating in these visits, which possibly supports the Audit Commissions' comment that tenants are generally satisfied with their neighbourhoods.
 - 2.11 The next set of walkabouts in May will be the first opportunity to revisit estates. We will then be in a position to compare our findings and determine whether the condition of the estate has improved.
 - 2.12 We conduct occasional walkabouts on estates at the request of the Police, and participate in Community Action days which bring together all the services, Police, Fire and Street Scene. On these events we would knock on residents' doors giving advice and information. We also assist Environmental Health in their Neighbour Assessments.
 - 2.13 **Tenant Involvement** – apart from a tenant representative on estate walkabouts, we have also set up an Estate Management Service Review Group. This group of tenants meet quarterly to monitor the work of the Estate Management Section, to examine and improve the performance data and to be pro-active in identifying improvements.
-

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications requiring comment.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

None.

Background Papers

- Inspection of housing management services, Audit Commission, December 2007.

Rose Tyrrell
Senior Housing Officer

Housing Review Board
4 March 2010

Annex 1

Estate Management Satisfaction Survey 2008/9

The survey covers 145 questionnaires sent out between May 2008 and April 2009.

Question	May to 08 July 08	Aug 08 to Oct 08	Nov 08 to Jan 09	Feb 09 to Apr 09	Full year May 08 to April 09
Did council explain what action they could take	69.2%	85.7%	83.7%	98.5%	81.1%
Given name of housing officer	69.2%	76.2%	72.1%	75%	72.9%
Given general information and advice	57.9%	72.5%	61.9%	65%	64.3%
Was housing officer helpful or sympathetic	81.1%	87.8%	92.8%	90%	85%
Were you kept informed of progress	50%	70%	63.4%	50%	59.9%
Information provided easy to understand	78.1%	79.5%	81%	88.2%	80.8%
Given support needed	67.7%	63.2%	65.1%	68.4%	65.6%
Satisfaction with way team handled report	65.7%	65.8%	67.4%	68.5%	66.7%
Explained reason for the outcome	48.4%	57.1%	62.5%	52.9%	56.1%
Explained what to do if problem continued	57.6%	60.5%	65%	29.4%	57%
Overall satisfaction with outcome of report	56.3%	57.9%	62.5%	70%	60.7%

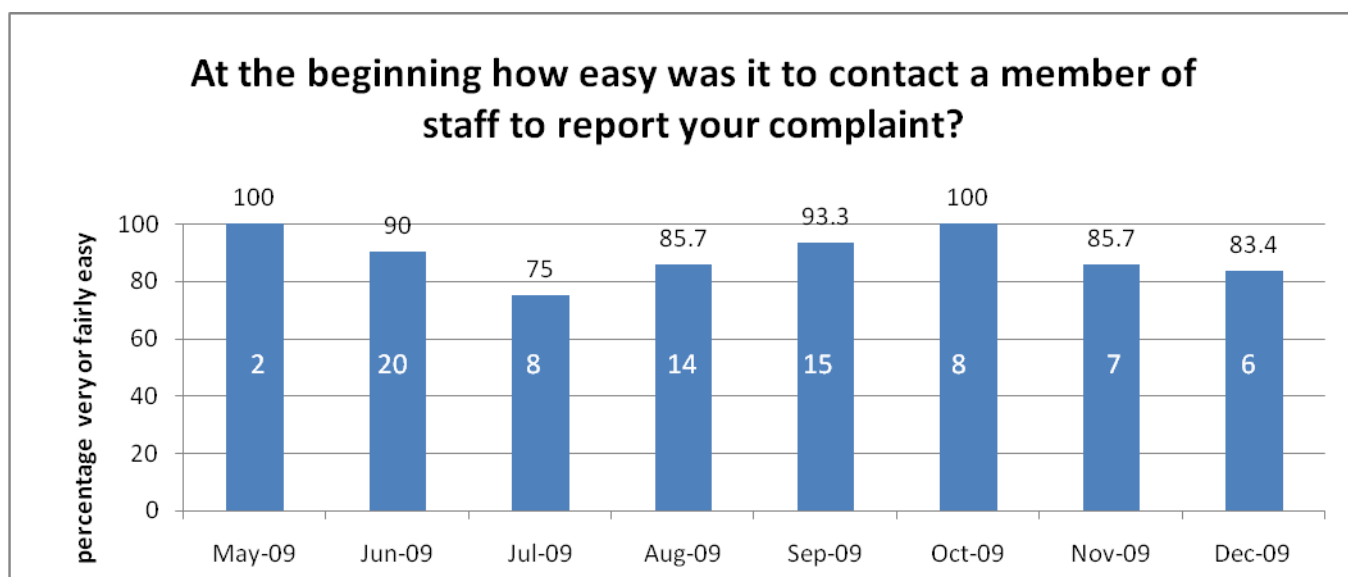
Estate Management Satisfaction surveys 2009/10

	Question	May – July 2009 30 surveys	Aug- Oct 2009 44 surveys	Annual rolling May to October 74 surveys
Q1	How easy to report complaint	86.7% positive rating	90.9% positive rating	89.2% positive rating
Q2	How quickly were you interviewed	100% positive rating	85.7% positive rating	91.5% positive rating
Q3a	Was staff member helpful	89.6% positive rating	88.1% positive rating	88.7% positive rating
Q3b	Was staff member courteous	95.2% positive rating	93.8% positive rating	94.3% positive rating
Q3c	Was staff member sensitive	70.6% positive rating	86.7% positive rating	80.9% positive rating
Q3d	Was staff member responsive	85% positive rating	90.7% positive rating	88.5% positive rating
Q3e	Was staff member knowledgeable	94.7% positive rating	90.0% positive rating	90.6% positive rating
Q4	Kept up to date	82.8% positive rating	72.8% positive rating	76.7% positive rating
Q5	Support given	85.2% positive rating	72.9% positive rating	78.1% positive rating
Q6	Information easy to understand	100% - yes	94.4% - yes	96.7% - yes
Q7	Explain what to do if problem continues	82.6% - yes	72.2% - yes	79.2% - yes
Q8	Overall satisfaction with way complaint was dealt with	81.5% positive rating	76.3% positive rating	78.5% positive rating
Q9	Overall satisfaction with outcome of complaint	76.0% positive rating	68.5% positive rating	71.5% positive rating
Q10	How willing to report ASB to us in future	92.6% positive rating	79.0% positive rating	84.6% positive rating

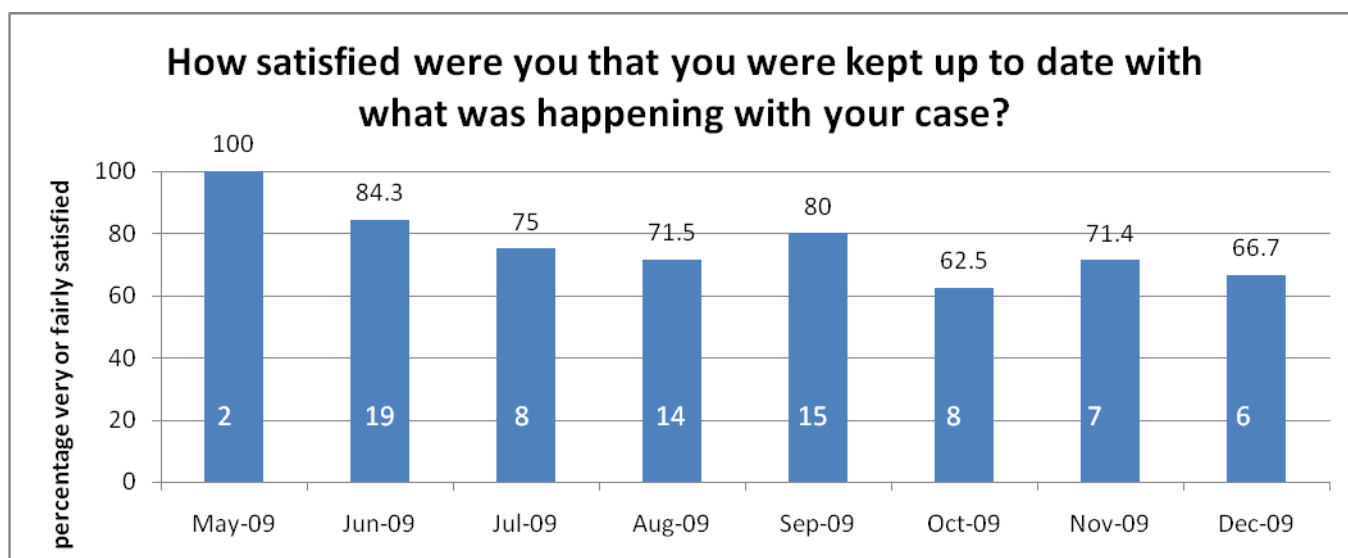
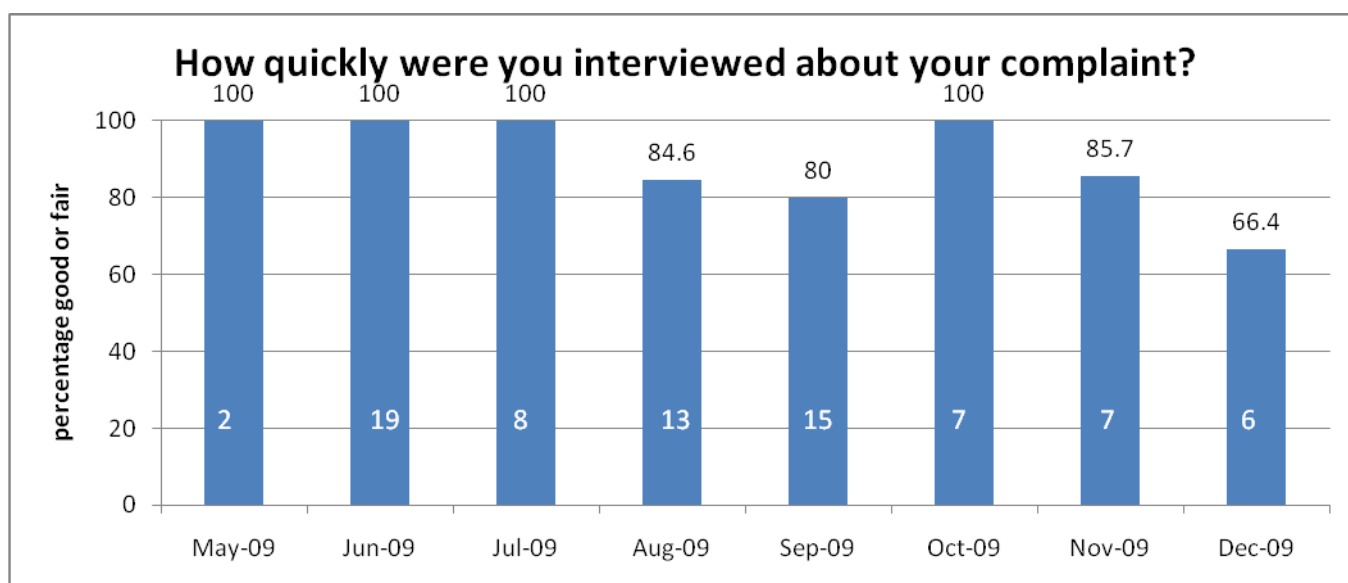
Estate Management Satisfaction surveys 2009/10

Question		May to December 2009 (80 surveys)
Q1	How easy to report complaint	88.8% positive rating
Q2	How quickly were you interviewed	89.6% positive rating
Q3a	Was staff member helpful	89.5% positive rating
Q3b	Was staff member courteous	94.9% positive rating
Q3c	Was staff member sensitive	82.7% positive rating
Q3d	Was staff member responsive	89.5% positive rating
Q3e	Was staff member knowledgeable	92.6% positive rating
Q4	Kept up to date	75.9% positive rating
Q5	Support given	77.1% positive rating
Q6	Information easy to understand	95.4% - yes
Q7	Explain what to do if problem continues	75.4% - yes
Q8	Overall satisfaction with way complaint was dealt with	78.9% positive rating
Q9	Overall satisfaction with outcome of complaint	71.0% positive rating
Q10	How willing to report ASB to us in future	84.5% positive rating

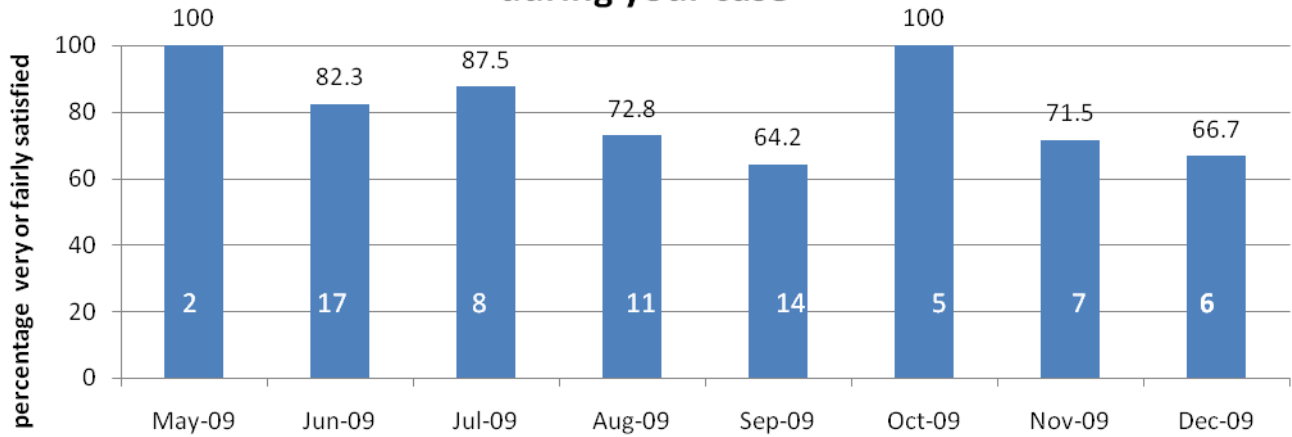
Estate Management Satisfaction Surveys month by month comparisons 2009



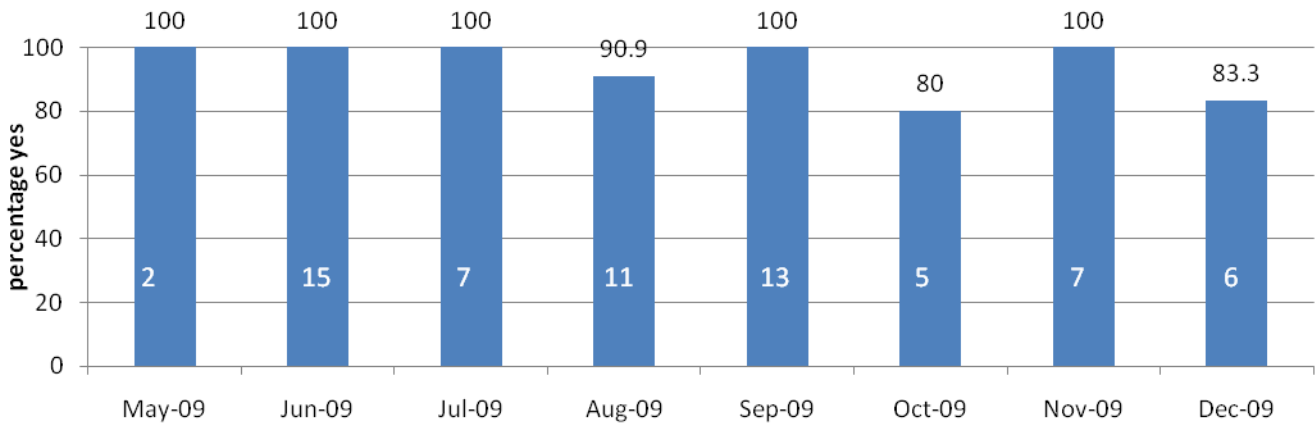
The figures inside the bars show the number of surveys returned for this question each month



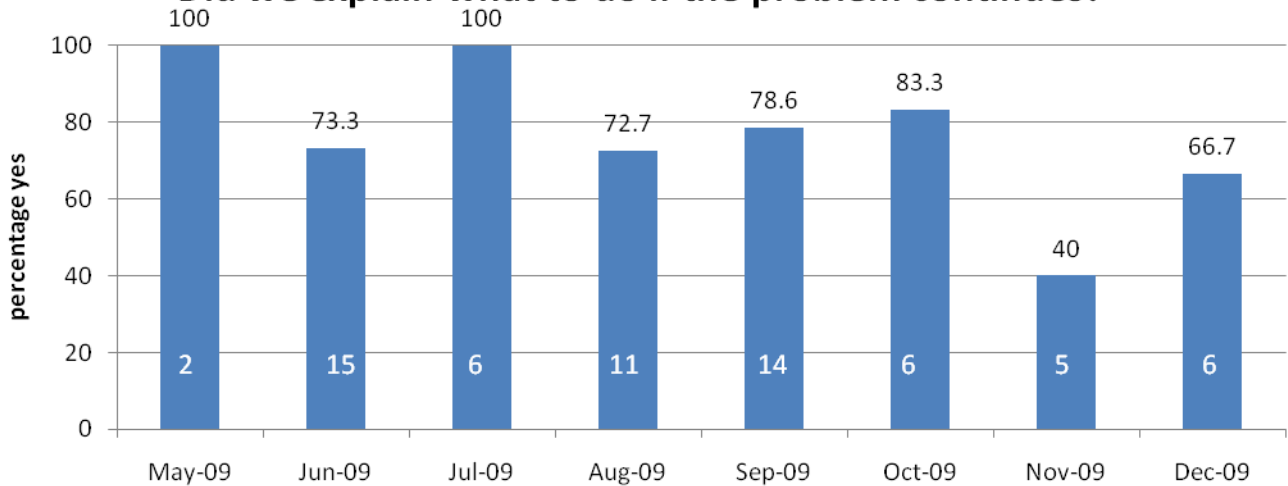
How satisfied were you with the support given to you during your case



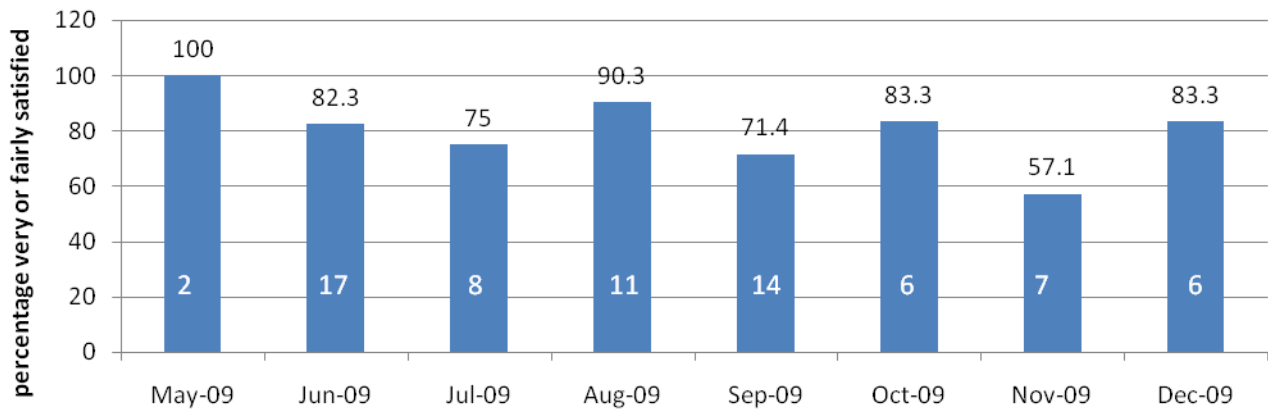
When we contacted you was the information easy to understand?



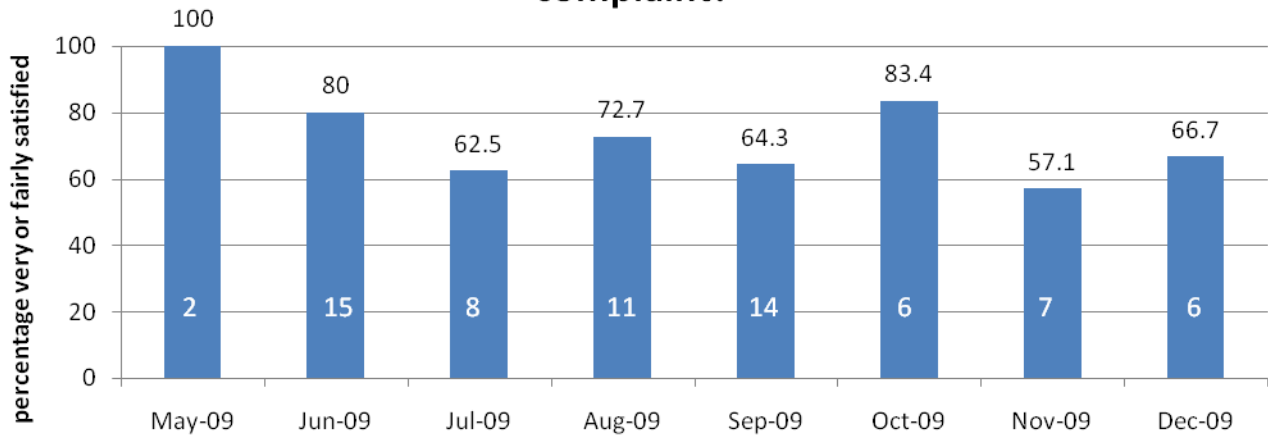
Did we explain what to do if the problem continues?



How satisfied are you with the way your complaint was dealt with?



How satisfied are you with the outcome of your complaint?



How willing would you be to report incidents to us in the future?

