

Appendix C – Planning Enforcement service improvements

1. Weekly case reviews available for Officers to discuss investigations and receive guidance from colleagues and line managers to improve officer experience and confidence to make robust evidence-based decisions
2. Investigation reports developed and includes clear guidance to assist and steer new officers with the matters required to inform details required from site visits and how to assess and draw conclusions from the information they have obtained
3. Regular 1-2-1 meetings between Case Officers and Line Managers
4. Development and Training Plans, which are bespoke tools that track officer progress, development, and training required and delivered to support individual progress pathways
5. Internal consultations established as a forum for Officers to discuss and benefit from the specialist knowledge and experience of colleagues in other areas of the Planning Service and Legal Team
6. Data of planning enforcement cases and actions published on Council website, including number of cases investigated, actions taken and pending. In publicising this information Officers aim to strengthen community support and confidence in the work of the Planning Enforcement Service
7. Planning Enforcement webpage now includes Frequently Asked Questions following work collating information on complaints and queries received most often
8. Triage of emails received, and updates given to customers, responding to specific information where possible to provide swifter information
9. Planning enforcement auto-reply email used as a valuable tool to advise customers on the process and timescales, also signposts to relevant areas for specific complaints not dealt with by planning enforcement
10. Pre-application advise for landowners/developers to discuss options to resolve planning breaches
11. Performance monitoring undertaken on a quarterly basis
12. Customer Experience engagement and improvement reported to PCC on 21st November 2024

Appendix C – Enforcement Agency service improvements

“Following the Complaint and the Ombudsman’s findings, we immediately gave additional training in vulnerability for Office Staff and Agents, both in a classroom situation and by on-line training courses. We stressed the importance of investigating thoroughly and observing tone of voice, actions, comments made and asking more questions and asking for medical evidence to assist us in helping the charge payer and assessing the situation thoroughly.

If the Staff believe that there is a vulnerable situation, we will discuss with the Council and take further instructions.

We also gave additional training when telephone calls become heated or difficult and the importance of being accurate with applying the arrangements, when they are agreed, and emailing the detailed arrangement to the charge payer. Both sides will then have a record of what has been agreed, when to pay and the amount payable. This then avoids any unnecessary attendances, which may escalate a situation.

The training is repeated every three months, and we encourage referral to a manager or senior member of the team if a telephone call or Agent’s visit becomes contentious.

We have also included in the training the importance of signposting charge payers to any relevant non-paying organisations such as Citizens Advice. We have added to our Website and Letters details of the National Support Network, Support Hub, which provides a wide range of resources, helplines, self-help apps, local support services and peer support groups.

Our system now highlights potentially vulnerable cases, vulnerable cases, possible complaints and complaints in different colours to assist the staff and our arrangement and arrangement email system has also been made easier to use for the operators.”