



Consumer Complaints, Enquiries and Outreach Data 2018/19:

A Summary

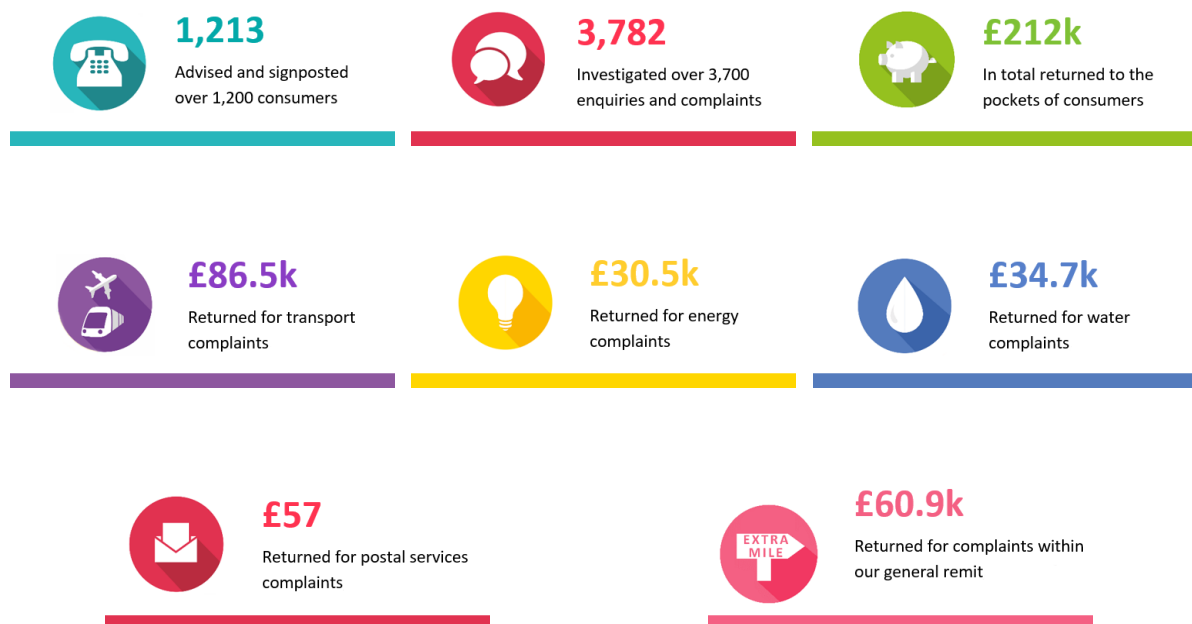
Consumer Enquiries and Complaints

In 2018/19, The Consumer Council helped almost 5,000 consumers across Northern Ireland by investigating 3,782 enquiries and complaints, and assisting 1,213 consumers through the provision of general advice and signposting them to relevant organisations.

Overall, The Consumer Council had a successful year in 2018/19, dealing with a 40% increase in enquiries and complaints, returning £212k to consumers (an increase of 51% compared to 2017/18), achieving a 99.2% customer satisfaction rate and a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 95, which has also improved from last year (92).

Over two thirds of all consumer enquiries and complaints (71%) were in relation to private parking charges and electricity related issues respectively.

Overall contacts from the 11 council areas is proportionate to the population size (+/-3%). However, the evidence highlights that Fermanagh and Omagh have the lowest contacts (4%) and Belfast has the highest (21%).



In 2018/19, the telephone was the preferred communication choice when contacting The Consumer Council, accounting for 71% (n=2,690) of the total contacts received. Additionally, just over a quarter of consumers (27%) who contacted us found out about us using search engines, such as Google.

The impact we make is in relation to supporting well-being of consumers when going through a complaint or enquiry process. At least 95% of consumers who contact The Consumer Council feel that our help relieved them of stress and anxiety, they felt supported and listened to, and that our help made them feel more empowered.



94.8%

Agreed that our help **relieved**
them of **stress and anxiety**



98.3%

Agreed that we made
them **feel listened to**



95.7%

Agreed that our help made
them feel **more empowered**



98.5%

Agreed that our help made
them feel **supported**

In 2018/19, The Consumer Council met service targets by no less than 90% across all Service Standards.

In 2018/19, we successfully completed our second rolling Customer Service Excellence (CSE) programme which tested 19 of 57 criterion. Out of the 57 criterion we have been awarded, 17 Compliance Plus, which signifies best practice within this area, and 40 Compliant.

In January 2019, The Consumer Council was shortlisted in the UK Complaints Handling Awards, and was awarded a silver award in Pro-active Complaint Handling and a bronze award in Best Complaints Process B2C.

Across Northern Ireland in 2018/19, there were 11,248 consumer complaints made to the Trading Standards Service Northern Ireland, Consumer Advice Service Belfast (Belfast City Council) and The Consumer Council combined. This is an increase of 15% (n=1,467) total complaints from 2017/18.

The most common complaints made across all three organisations included: Vehicles and Public Transport; Furniture and Household; Clothing, goods and services; Electricity and energy; Air travel and holidays; and, 'other' matters, such as private car parking charges.

The month in which most contacts were made to Trading Standards and The Consumer Council combined was October 2018 (n=1,015 contacts). The quietest months for consumer complaints were December 2018 (for Trading Standards) and February 2019 (for The Consumer Council).

Consumer Outreach





In 2018/19, The Consumer Council attended 204 events (an increase of 52% compared to 134 events in the previous year). On average, for a team of two staff members, this equates to 102 events each in 2018/19. The majority of outreach activities consist of delivering presentations and hosting stands at events, accounting for 84% of all outreach activity in 2018/19.

These events were attended by a total of 7,857 people, which is an increase of 59% attendees compared to 2017-18.

Almost two-fifths (38%) of these events were attended by 30 or more people. A wide range of consumer groups were covered at the 204 events in 2018/19, such as

- Businesses (4%)
- Consumers with Long Term Illness/Disability (11%)
- Older People (20%)
- Rural Consumers (5%)
- Stakeholders and workplace staff (20%)
- Migrants (1%)
- Students (18%)
- Rural Youth Groups (1%)
- General Consumers (including low income consumers) (21%)

When possible, The Consumer Council staff will distribute evaluations (i.e. surveys) to consumers following presentations or workshops to understand impacts. The table below shows the improvements in scores across each evaluated area from 2017-18 compared to 2018-19.

Evaluation	2017-18 (n=375)	2018-19 (n=409)	
Consumers satisfied with information provided	95%	99%	
Consumers indicated that knowledge had improved	97%	99%	
Consumers intend to make changes in behaviour	60%	61%	
Net Promoter Score	61	78	

Most events (n=29) were in February 2019, though the busiest month for attendees at events was September 2018 (with over n=1,400 consumers at events). The quietest month for events was August 2018, with five events attended by 90 consumers, which is typical of summer/holiday season.

Belfast City Council was the most common area where events took place (44%). Over half (56%) of events took place outside of the Belfast City Council area.

For further information about our work, or to get in touch and have us visit your local area or workplace, please visit www.consumerCouncil.org.uk



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