



Annual Complaints Report

2014 - 2015



An Agency within the Department of the
Environment
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**INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE**



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1. Introduction

Complaints are a very important source of information about our customers' views regarding the quality of services provided by DVA. All formal complaints received have been fully investigated through the Agency's complaints procedure. All staff are encouraged to respond to concerns raised by customers as soon as they become aware of them, rather than waiting to receive a formal written complaint.

Complaints represent the feelings of real people, who have real experiences of receiving services from us, and telling us what that service was like.

We received 337¹ formal complaints in 2014-15, 224 informal complaints and, notably, 154 compliments from our customers.

For an Agency that delivered over 1 million vehicle tests, issued 227,000 driving licences, 440,000 vehicle licences (up to 17 July 2014), conducted 53,000 driving tests, and handled over 300,000 enquiries, the number of complaints we received in 2014-15 is not significant, in terms of its ratio to the transactions conducted.

This report provides statistical information on the number of complaints we received, our performance in handling those – in terms of timeliness and also our effectiveness in persuading complainants that they did not need to escalate the complaint to the next stage – and an insight into how our many customers perceive our level of service.

The complaints also provide real opportunities for us to improve our internal processes and how we serve those customers.

Reports about complaints are discussed at Senior management level within the Agency on a regular basis.

The purpose of this report is to:

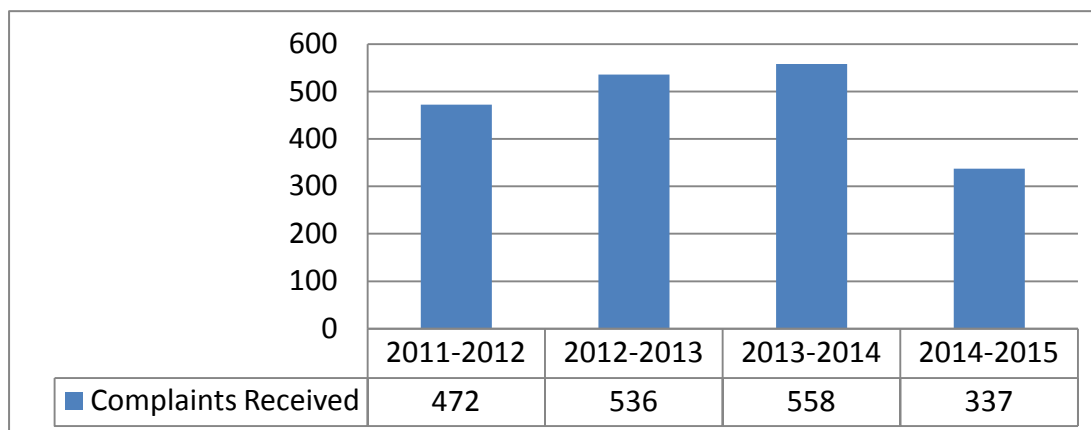
- Provide assurance that the Agency operates a robust and accessible complaints procedure when investigating and responding to formal complaints;
- Show evidence that complaints and lessons learned from complaint investigations have been used to improve the quality of service to citizens during the year; and
- Provide statistics about the nature of complaints received.

¹ This figure includes 22 complaints relating to the registration and licensing of vehicles. Responsibility for these functions transferred to the DVLA in Swansea on 17 July 2014.

2. Complaints Summary

During this reporting year (April 2014 to March 2015) DVA received and dealt with a total of 337 formal complaints. This figure represents a decrease of 39.61% on the previous year (558 complaints received 2013-14).

As can be seen from the graph, below, this is a significant drop in the amount of complaints received.



This decrease is largely due to the transfer of the vehicle registration and licensing functions to the DVLA in Swansea on the 17/7/2014.

Complaints Outcomes

Year	Total	Complaints			
		Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Withdrawn
2014-15	337	113 (33.5%)	39 (11.6%)	176 (52.2%)	9 (2.7%)
2013-14	558	184 (33%)	53 (9.5%)	321(57.5%)	0 (0.0%)
2012-13	536	121 (22.6%)	51 (9.5%)	357 (66.6%)	7 (1.3%)
2011-12	472	115 (24.2)	30 (6.4%)	323 (68.4%)	4 (0.8%)

3. Performance against Target

Target	Outcome	Actual 2012-2013	Actual 2013-2014	Actual 2014-2015
To respond to 95% of complaints within 10 working days	ACHIEVED	99.3%	99.3%	99.7%

This high level of performance has been achieved by:

- a robust complaints procedure;
- an effective Customer Services monitoring role; and
- the provision of complaints handling awareness for managers.

4. Complaints Missing Target

Centre/Office Involved	Total No. Which Missed Target	Reason
Postal Licensing (Licensing Centres, Vehicles)	1	Complaint response missed target at Stage 3
Total	1	

5. Complaints Breakdown

Section	Total
Test Centres	167
Vehicle Licensing Central Office (VLCO)	20
Driver Licensing	82
Enquiries	19
BSP Booking Services	16
Local Vehicle Licensing Offices (LVLO's)	2
Compliance & Enforcement	6
Theory Test	17
AMI / ADI	1
Operators – Passenger Service	7
Other	0
TOTAL	337

Complaints as a percentage of transactions

Enquiries - During this reporting cycle the total number of calls answered by the Agency Enquiries team was 269,917, and the total number of emails responded to by Enquiries was 19,988. This gives a total of 289,905 Enquiries transactions. The 19 complaints received regarding Enquiries equates to 0.007% of customer interactions (i.e. 1 per 15,000).

Driver Licensing - The total number of driver licences issued during this reporting cycle was 227,250. The 82 driving licence complaints received equates to 0.036% of transactions processed. (i.e. 1 per 2,800)

Vehicle Licensing - The total number of vehicle licences issued up to 17/07/14 was 440,403. The 22 vehicle licence complaints received equates to 0.005% of transactions processed (i.e. 1 per 20,000.)

Vehicle Testing - The total number of vehicle tests conducted during this reporting cycle was 1,009,194. The 134 complaints attributable to vehicle tests equates to 0.013 % of tests conducted (i.e. 1 per 7,500.)

Driver Testing - The total number of driving tests conducted during this reporting cycle was 53,227. The 71 complaints relating to driving tests equates to 0.133% of tests conducted (i.e. 1 per 750.)

Compliance and Enforcement - Given the nature of the work conducted by Compliance and Enforcement, it is not a simple process to calculate the number of transactions it undertook. However, the total number of complaints received in respect of our Compliance and Enforcement work was 6.

As a means of comparison, we sought statistics from other organisations in relation to their 'complaints per transaction' figures. One of the London Foundation Trusts, (University College of London Hospitals) produced figures in their annual complaints report for 2012-13, which showed that it received 1 complaint for every 1773 patient visits. A comparable figure for DVA might be complaints per vehicle / driver test. This works out at 1 complaint per 5,182 transactions.

A detailed analysis of complaints, broken down by business area, can be found in appendices 1 - 10.

6. Complaints Procedure

We operate a three stage complaints procedure.

The objective is to deal as thoroughly as possible with the complaint at Stage One, and thereby minimise the customer's perceived need to take it any further. This, of course, is not always possible.

If a complainant has made a formal complaint and is not satisfied with the response at Stage One, he may request that it be escalated to Stage Two.

If the complainant is still not satisfied with the response at Stage Two, he may again request that it be escalated to stage 3². At this stage, the response must be signed off by the Chief Executive.

Should, the complainant remain unhappy, after the three stages of the Complaints Procedure have been used, he may take the matter to the Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

In 2014-15, of the 337 complaints received, 307 (91.09%) complaints were resolved at Stage One. Of the remaining 30 complaints, 20 (5.93%) complaints were resolved at Stage Two, with the remaining 9 (2.67%) being resolved at Stage Three. 1 case (0.33%) was referred to the Ombudsman.

Breakdown of Complaints Escalated to Stage Two

Nature of Complaint	Total
Test Outcome	4
Enforcement	1
Damage to Vehicle During Test	2
Loss of Documents	4
Length of Time to Produce a Licence	3
Driving Licence Procedures	2
Theory Test Procedures	1
Website Anomalies	3
Total	20

² We took advice from the Assembly Ombudsman's Office about the escalation process. Their advice was that the complaints procedure is an appeals process in its own right. This means that the complainant need only express dissatisfaction with the response, and does not have to produce new evidence for the complaint to move to the next stage.

Breakdown of Complaints Escalated to Stage Three

Nature of Complaint	Total
Test Outcome	4
Enforcement	1
Damage to Vehicle During Test	1
Lost Documents	1
Length of Time to Process Licence and Return of ID Documents	2
Website Anomalies	1
Total	10

7. Complaints to the Assembly Ombudsman

During this reporting cycle, one complaint was escalated to the Ombudsman.

This case related to a driver who was issued with Fixed Penalty Notices for driving without the appropriate PSV licences. The driver accepted the notice and paid the fine, as he understood that the case would definitely go to Court otherwise – and he wished to avoid a court hearing. Subsequently he took his case to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman concluded that DVA had failed to apply the principles of good administration by not providing the driver with sufficient information on which to base his decision to accept or reject the FPN, and upheld the complaint.

8. Customer Feedback

We conducted a small survey to evaluate the effectiveness of our complaints process, from the perspective of those who had used it.

Of the 337 complaints received, 50 surveys were issued, representing a 14.8% sample.

Of these 50 surveys, 5 (10%) were returned.

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied Nor dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Total
The way the complaint was handled.	3	1			1	5
Someone taking responsibility for sorting out your complaint.	3	1			1	5

The time taken to sort out your complaint.	3		1		1	5
The follow up contact you received.	3				2	5
The clarity of the response	3	1			1	5
The eventual outcome of your complaint.	3	1			1	5
Overall Result	60%	13.4%	3.3%	0%	23.3%	

We have looked at the nature of the initial complaints raised by these 5 respondents and there is no correlation between the outcome of the complaint and the level of satisfaction. i.e. the 1 person who was very dissatisfied across all the measures above, had his complaint upheld.

9. Improvements

Our complaints process challenges us to learn from the complaints received, identify areas where repeated problems are occurring and take steps to improve our service.

In 2014-15 the following improvements were identified and implemented:

Issue	Suggestion for Improvement	Progress
Complaints Procedure leaflet was printed on 'glossy' paper which caused customer's writing to smear and become illegible to Customer Service's staff.	Change paper that this leaflet is printed on.	This leaflet has been reprinted on more appropriate paper.
There was a need to develop a policy to deal with customers who complained or contacted us persistently, and often unreasonably.	Review good practice in respect of repetitive / vexatious complainants and develop a DVA policy.	The policy has been developed and was recently approved by our Strategic Management Board. Guidance notes now

Lack of clarity on options available to drivers who receive Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN's)	Ensure that guidance notes for FPN's and oral advice from staff include clear reference to options available to those receiving FPN's.	provide clear options. Staff have also been advised to offer clear advice when issuing FPN's.
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10. Informal Complaints

An informal complaint can be described as an expression of dissatisfaction from a customer, which he chooses to raise at the point of service, but not formally in writing. These are generally handled on the spot by a manager.

In 2014-15, 224 informal complaints were received. This is a 33.13% decrease from the previous year.

The table below lists the locations where informal complaints were received and a breakdown of the 2014-15 Informal Complaints can be found at Appendix 10.

Centre	Total
Armagh Test Centre	6
Ballymena Test Centre	11
Belfast Test Centre	10
Belfast LVLO	4
Coleraine Test Centre	11
Cookstown Test Centre	23
Craigavon Test Centre	11
Downpatrick Test Centre	4
Enniskillen Test Centre	15
Larne Test Centre	16
Lisburn Test Centre	15
Londonderry Test Centre	21
Newry Test Centre	10
Newtownards Test Centre	21
Omagh Test Centre	18
Omagh LVLO	26
Others	2
Total	224

11. Compensation Payments

There are a number of instances where it is necessary for the Agency to pay compensation to customers.

Ex-gratia Payments

In this reporting period there were 16 ex-gratia (Driver Licensing) complaints/payments, with a total associated cost of £283.77

Reason	Total
Replacement of lost documents or photographs	10
Costs associated with completion of forms which were not required	1
Postage Costs	4
Cost to cover theory test	1
Total	16

Tests Cancelled by Agency

If a vehicle or driving test is cancelled by the Agency for any reason within the Agency's control and the period of notification is less than the accepted period of 1 clear working day for vehicle tests and 3 clear working days for driving tests, the customer is refunded 50% of their test fee and receives a rescheduled appointment.

During the 2014-15 year, 158 Driving Tests and 245 Vehicle Tests were cancelled. This is an increase of 103.54% on the 2013-14 cancelled tests total.

These cancelled tests resulted in compensation payments totaling **£9,329.00**

The 245 cancelled Vehicle Tests equates to 0.024% of tests conducted (i.e. 1 in 4,119 tests.)

The 158 cancelled Driving Tests, equates to 0.297% of tests conducted (i.e. 1 in 337 tests.)

A full breakdown of the 2014-15 Cancelled tests can be found in Appendices 11-14.

Damage to Vehicles

If damage is caused to a customer's vehicle and the Agency is found to be negligent, compensation may be applicable.

For 2014-15, **24** incidents of damage to vehicles were recorded. This is a reduction of 7.7% on the 2013-14 year. The table below lists the nature of the damage caused to vehicles in

2014-15.

This resulted in a total cost to the Agency of £7,129.06

The 24 incidents of damage to vehicles equates to 0.002% of vehicles tests conducted (i.e. 1 in 42,000 vehicles tests.)

Reason	2013-14 Reporting Year
Tyre damage during test	1
Damage to door handle during test	1
Damage to paintwork/filler during test	1
Vehicle damaged when being jacked / lifted	2
Headlight washer jet	1
Broken Car key	1
Damage to vehicle due to collision with testing equipment	1
Vehicle seat lever damaged during test	1
Vehicle bonnet catch damaged during test	2
Bumper damaged during test	2
Fuel cap cover broke during test	1
Damage to two outer sills	2
Damage to mirror	2
Damage to Indicator light switch	1
Damage to Hand break surround	1
Damage to passenger door	1
Power steering reservoir burst	1
Damage to tachograph head	1
Damage to kick start on motorbike	1
Total	24

12. Compliments received from customers

Section	Total
Test Centres	106
Vehicle Licensing Central Office (VLCO)	10
Driver Licensing	11
Enquiries	17
Local Vehicle Licensing Offices (LVLO's)	5
PLTD	5
TOTAL	154

13. At a Glance Guide for Test Centres

Test Centre	Formal Complaint	Informal Complaint	Compensation Payments	VT Cancelled	DT Cancelled
Armagh	4	6	0	6	0
Ballymena	11	11	£659.30	107	29
Belfast	24	10	£344.39	0	12
Coleraine	12	11	£2741.83	35	11
Cookstown	17	23	£355.80	0	8
Craigavon	6	11	0	0	1
Downpatrick	5	4	£174.00	70	0
Enniskillen	3	15	0	4	0
Larne	13	16	£37.10	10	13
Lisburn	8	15	0	0	7
Londonderry	19	21	£776.46	0	39
Mallusk	12	0	£351.86	0	0
Newry	4	10	0	12	28
Newtownards	20	21	£1341.56	0	1
Omagh	9	18	£346.76	1	9

14. Lessons Learned

In recent times our complaints procedure has been comprehensively reviewed and indeed commended as good practice, following an independent assessment. We have also liaised with the Assembly Ombudsman to ensure that we follow good practice guidance in handling complaints.

We have made a few improvements to our customer service delivery as a result of lessons learned from customer and staff experiences. However, from the analysis of the statistics provided, we have learned that the volume of complaints received, whilst never acceptable, is not unreasonable, nor is it a major cause of concern, given the nature of our work, and the volume of transactions we have with citizens.

Nonetheless, we are not complacent and continue to review our procedures and take account of the views expressed by citizens in relation to the services they receive.

15. APPENDICES - Detailed breakdown of complaints by Business Area

Appendix 1 – Driver Licensing

Section	2014 - 2015 Reporting Year
Correspondence Team	39
Medicals / Vocational	14
Post Team	7
Data Input / Cash	12
Court Section	3
Scanning Card Production	3
Foreign Licence	4
TOTAL	82

Drivers - Correspondence Team

Administration Procedures / Policy	8
Lost Documentation / ID documents	10
Insufficient / Quality of Service	16
Attitude/ Conduct of Staff	3
Length of Time Taken to Issue Licence	2
TOTAL	39

Drivers - Medicals Vocational

Administration Procedures / Policy	3
Length of Time to Produce a Licence	9
Insufficient / Quality of Advice Provided	1
Incorrect Information on DLM1	1
TOTAL	14

Post Team

Lost Documents	5
Insufficient / Quality of Service	1
Documents Received Damaged	1
TOTAL	7

Drivers - Data Input / Cash

Errors on Licence	9
Licence Issued to Incorrect Address	3
TOTAL	12

Drivers - Court Section

Administration Procedures / Policy	2
Lost Documentation/ ID documents	1
TOTAL	3

Drivers - Scanning Card production

Administration Procedures / Policy	1
Length of Time to Produce a Licence	2
TOTAL	3

Drivers - Foreign Licence

Administration Procedures / Policy	1
Length of Time to Produce a Licence	2
Errors on Licence	1
TOTAL	4

Appendix 2 – Test Centres (including main reasons for complaints)

Centre	2014 - 2015 Reporting Year	Test outcome	Damage to vehicle	Attitude of staff
Armagh	4	2	1	1
Ballymena	11	3	2	2
Belfast	24	10	2	5
Coleraine	12	6	2	1
Cookstown	17	5	5	2
Craigavon	6	3	1	-
Downpatrick	5	1	1	2
Enniskillen	3	1	1	1
Larne	13	4	4	1
Lisburn	8	1	1	5
Londonderry	19	5	3	5
Mallusk	12	2	6	2
Newry	4	2	-	1
Newtownards	20	7	8	2
Omagh	9	3	3	1
TOTAL	167	55	40	31

Appendix 3 – Booking Services

Breakdown	
Maladministration	1
Booking Procedure	6
Did Not Receive Correspondence	2
Difficulty using Online Booking System	3
Issue Related to Card Payment	1
Attitude/ Conduct of Staff	2
Waiting Time for an Appointment	1
TOTAL	16

Appendix 4 – Telephone Enquiries

Breakdown	
Quality of advice / service provided	13
Attitude/ Conduct of Staff	4
Deaf Awareness	1
Admin Procedures and Policy	1
TOTAL	19

Appendix 5 – Compliance & Enforcement

Breakdown	
Attitude/ Conduct of Staff	4
Admin Procedures and Policy	2
TOTAL	6

Appendix 6 – Theory Testing

Breakdown	
Not permitted to take test due to licence issues	3
Booking difficulties	2
Attitude/ Conduct of Staff	5
Test Outcome	4
Arrangement of Special Circumstances	1
Relevance of Questions	1
Conflicting Information	1
TOTAL	17

Appendix 7 – ADI / AMI

Breakdown	
Complaint from Customer re. harassment & bullying from DVA Management	1
TOTAL	1

Appendix 8 – Operators – Passenger Service

Breakdown	
Length of time to process application	5
Admin Procedures and Policy	2
TOTAL	7

Appendix 9 – Breakdown of Formal Complaints across DVA

Reason	Complaints
Maladministration	8
Administration Procedures and Policy	43
Decision of Test	61
Attitude/Conduct of staff	50
Loss of Documents	17
Conduct of test	16
Quality of Advice/ Service Provided	34
Booking Systems/ Process	13
System Limitations	6
Damage Caused During Test	41
Length of Time to Produce a Licence	20
Test Procedures	5
Error on Licence	13
Waiting Times for an Appointment	4
Incorrect Information on DLM1 Form	1
Documents Received Damaged	1
Deaf Awareness	1
Website	1
Display of Union Flag	1
ADI/AMI	1
Total	337

Appendix 10 – Breakdown of Informal Complaints

Reason	Complaints
Test Outcome	137
Waiting Times/More Staff	3
Attitude of Examiner	46
Damage to vehicle during test	11
Procedures	8
Attitude of Staff	3
Refusal of Test	4
21 Day Retest Regulations	2
Unable to Contact Test Centre by Phone	1
V5C Form Not Returned After Test	1
Incorrect information on System	1
Incorrect Information Provided	1
Cancellation of Test by Agency	1
Facilities at LVLO	1
Non Receipt of Taxi Plates	1
Delay in Taxi Licence	1
Administration Error	2
Total	224

Appendix 11 – Vehicle Test Cancellations

Reason	2014-2015 Reporting Year
Server / BSP failure	105
Brake Testing Equipment / Brake rollers failure	27
Failure of Equipment	113
Total	245

Appendix 12 – Driving Test Cancellations

Reason	2014-2015 Reporting Year
Examiner Not Available / Examiner Illness	152
Booking Error (BSP)	5
Non Receipt of LOE	1
Total	158

Appendix 13 – Vehicle Test Cancellations by Centre

Test Centre	Number of Cancellations
Armagh	6
Ballymena	107
Coleraine	35
Downpatrick	70
Enniskillen	4
Larne	10
Newry	12
Omagh	1
Total	245

Appendix 14 – Driving Test Cancellations by Centre

Test Centre	Number of Cancellations
Ballymena	29
Belfast	12
Coleraine	11
Cookstown	8
Craigavon	1
Larne	13
Lisburn	7
Londonderry	39
Newtownards	1
Newry	28
Omagh	9
Total	158

Appendix 15 – Damage to Vehicles by Centre

Centre	Number of Incidents	Total Cost
Ballymena	2	£659.30
Belfast	1	£344.39
Coleraine	4	£2,741.83
Cookstown	2	£355.80
Downpatrick	1	£174
Larne	1	£37.10
Londonderry	2	£776.46
Mallusk	4	£351.86
Newtownards	5	£1,341.56
Omagh	2	£346.76
Total	24	£7,129.06