

DVA Annual Complaints Report

2023-24



An Agency within the Department for
Infrastructure

Gníomhaireacht Iaisigh den Roinn
Bonneagair

An Agency wⁱin the Department for
Infrastructure

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Abbreviations

DVA = Driver and Vehicle Agency

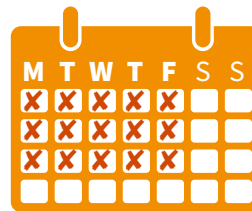
PTLD = Passenger and Transport Licensing Division

1.0 Introduction

This report details complaints received by the Driver and Vehicle Agency from customers during the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. It provides an analysis of our performance against our targets, the reasons for the complaints and areas for improvement in the delivery of our services.

Complaints offer a unique insight into how customers feel about our services. They give us a different perspective on how the services we provide, and the decisions we make, can impact our customers. They provide valuable lessons learnt which we use to continually improve the delivery of our services.

The complaints process is a two-stage process. Our targets for 2023-24 were:



to reply to 97% of stage 1 complaints within **15 working days**; and



to reply to 97% of stage 2 complaints within **10 working days**.

2.0 Summary Complaints Dashboard



Business Plan Target
97%

Percentages of complaints responded to within the target timeframes:

Stage 1: 99.4%

Stage 2: 98.9%

3.0 Executive Summary

In 2023-24, the Agency conducted approximately 1.8m customer transactions through delivery of the services including vehicle and driver testing, driving theory test and driver licensing.

The Agency received 73,357 pieces of correspondence, a decrease of 11% from the previous year (82,436). 34% of this correspondence was answered at the first point of contact, with the rest being re-directed to the relevant business area for a more detailed explanation.

The Agency received 61 compliments from customers, an increase of 52.5% when compared with 40 compliments received in 2022-23. These complimented staff on things such as their conduct during vehicle and driving tests, their professionalism and assistance in helping customers with appointments and the prompt delivery of licences. Appendix 1 details a breakdown of the compliments received by Business Area.

The Agency received a total of 872 complaints. Appendix 2 provides the top 5 reasons for complaints by Business Area and Appendix 3 shows the number of Compliments and Complaints by Test Centre.

- 99.4% of Stage 1 complaints and 98.9% of Stage 2 complaints were responded to on time against targets of 97% for each stage.
- 428 (49%) of the complaints received were withdrawn, rejected or not upheld.
- 338 (39%) were partially upheld.
- 106 (12%) were fully upheld.

The complaints that were partially or fully upheld related mainly to the following issues:

- licence delay;
- availability of appointments;
- test outcomes; and
- staff behaviour.

Each of the partially or fully upheld complaints have been assessed to determine lessons learned and, where appropriate, implement improvements to services.

4.0 Complaints Infographics

4.1 Total Complaints Year on Year

Figure 1: Total Complaints Year on Year

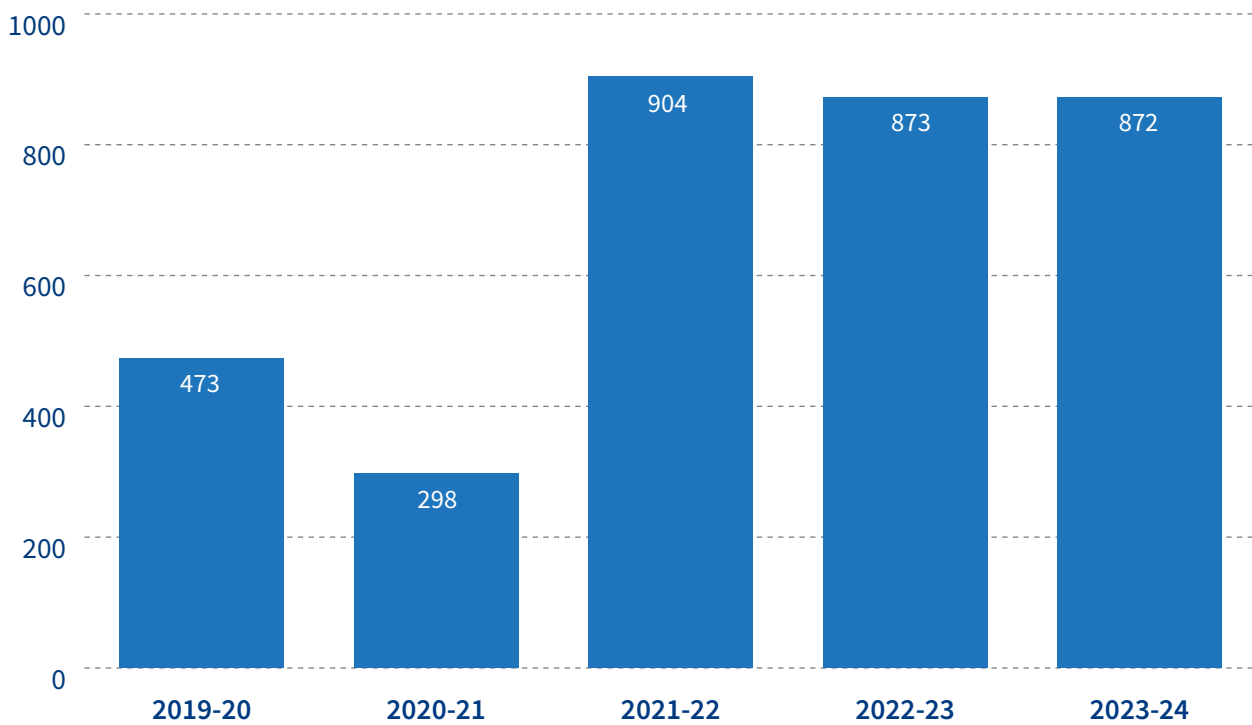
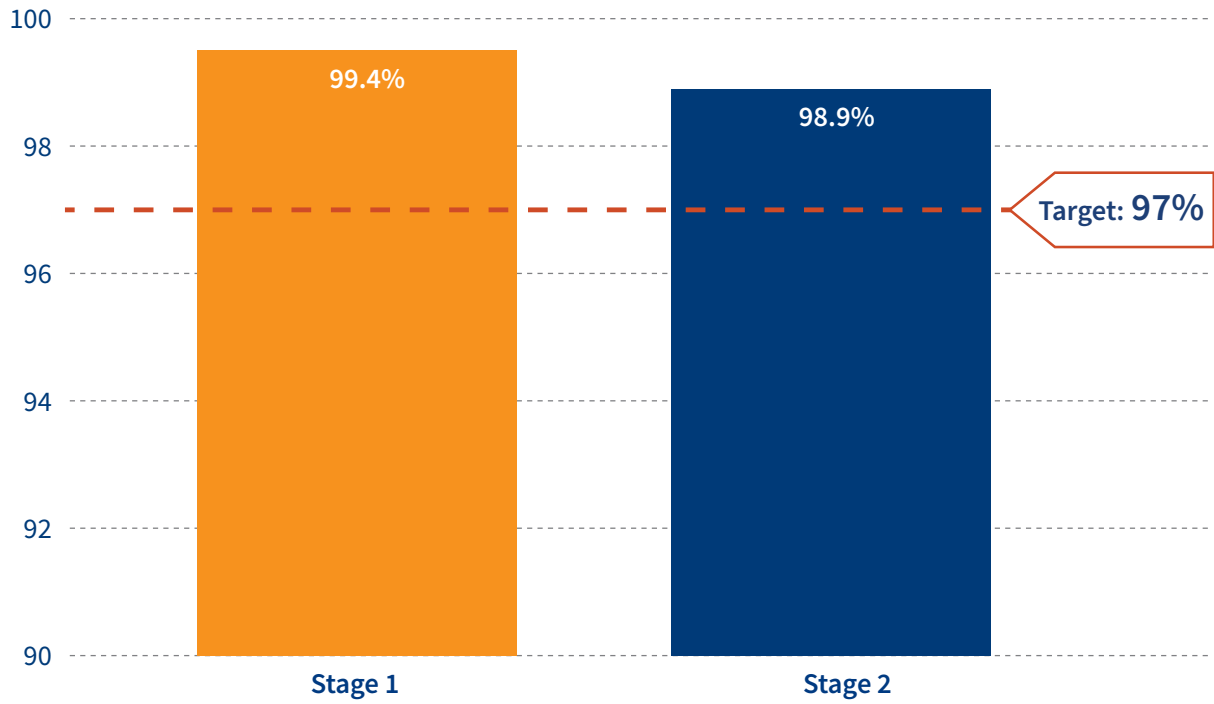


Figure 1: Total Complaints Year on Year

Year	Number of Complaints
2019-20	473
2020-21	298
2021-22	904
2022-23	873
2023-24	872

4.2 Performance against Target

Figure 2: Complaint Handling Results Against Target



4.3 Complaints that Missed Target

Figure 3: Complaint Target Missed by Business Area

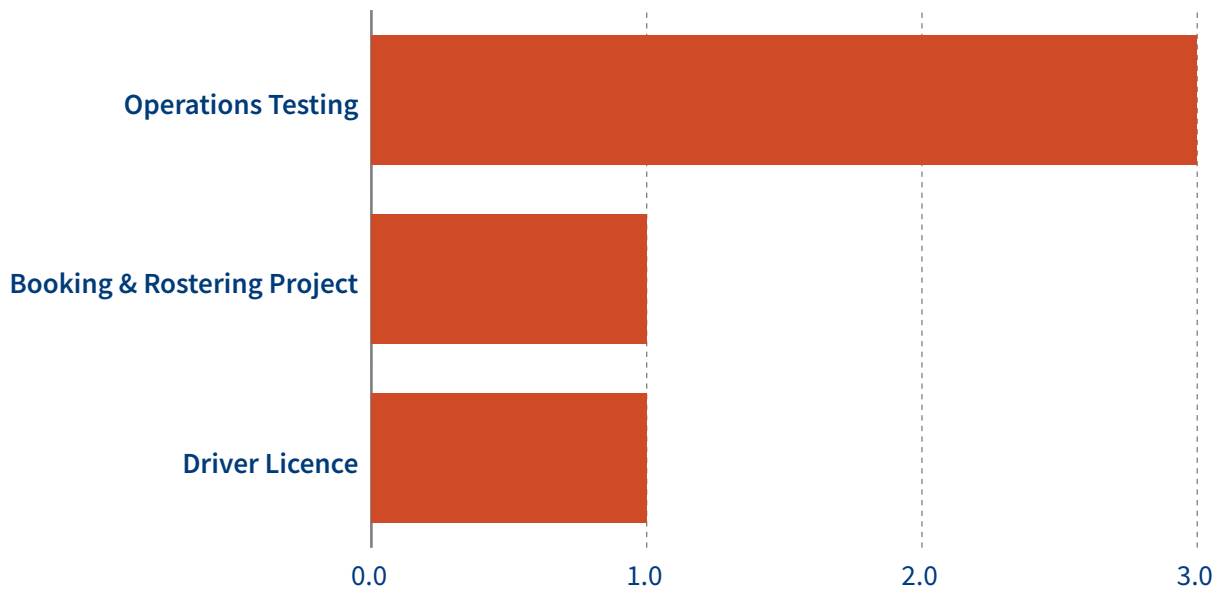


Figure 3: Complaints Target Missed by Business Area

Business Area	Overall
Operations Testing	3
Booking & Rostering Project	1
Driver Licence	1
TOTAL	5

4.4 Complaints by Business Area

Figure 4: Complaints by Business Area

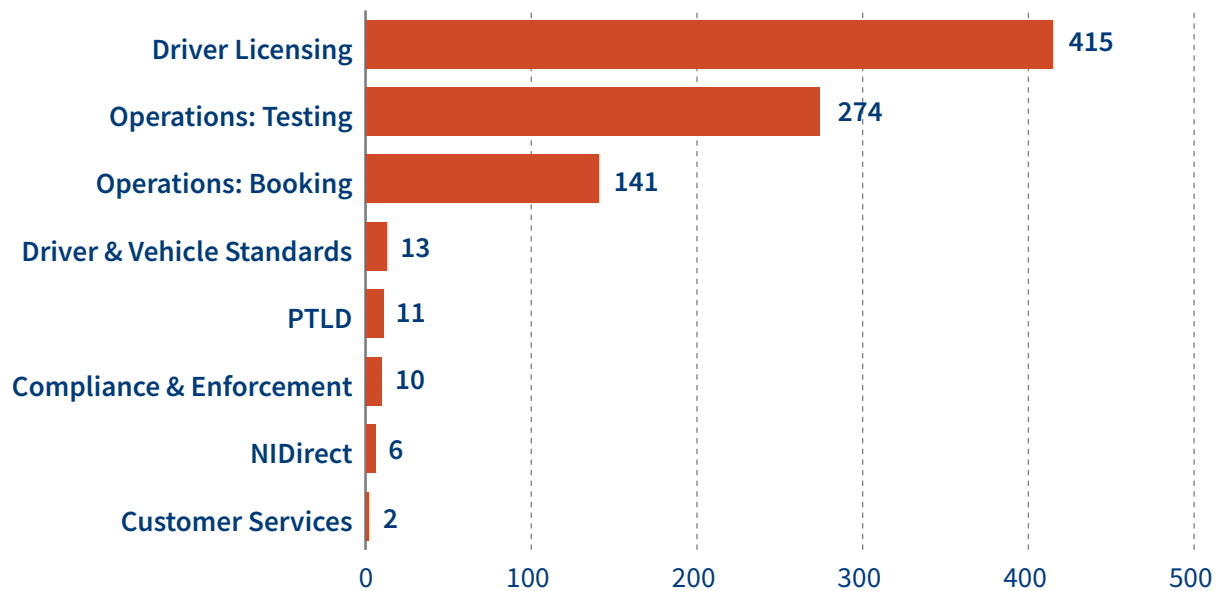


Figure 4: Complaints by Business Area

Business Area	Overall
Driver Licensing	415
Operations: Testing	274
Operations: Booking	141
Driver & Vehicle Standards	13
Passenger and Transport Licensing Division	11
Compliance & Enforcement	10
NIDirect	6
Customer Services	2
TOTALS	872

4.5 Complaints by Reason

Figure 5: Complaints by Reason

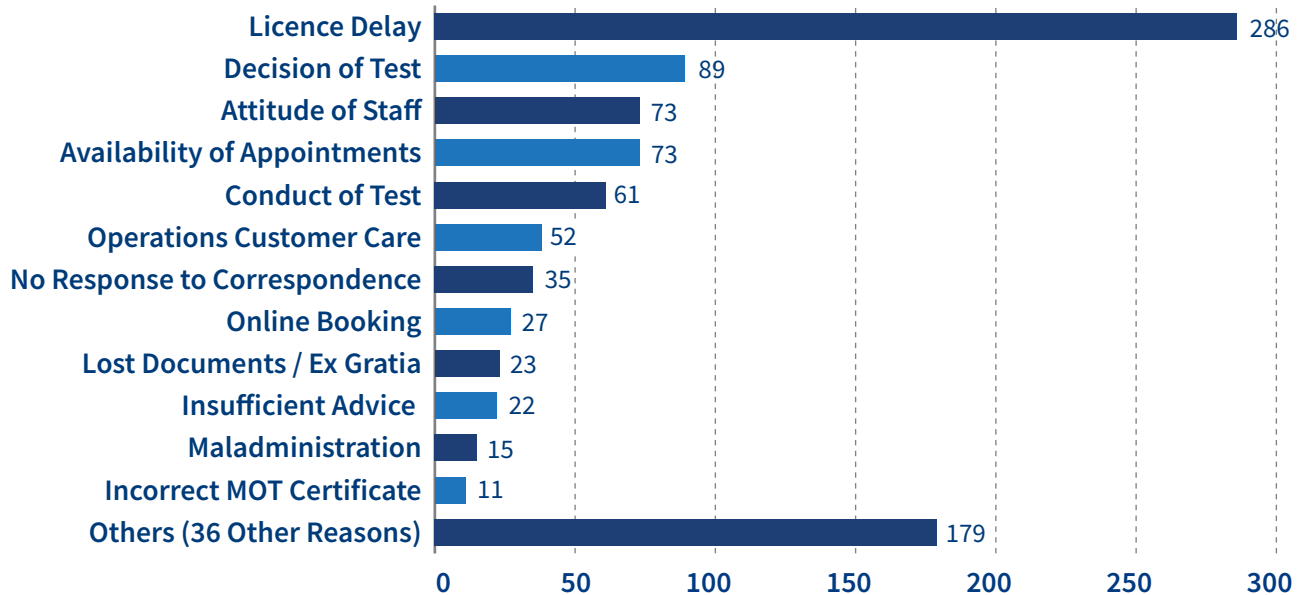


Figure 5: Complaints by Reason

Rank	Reasons	Total number of Complaints*
1	Licence Delay	286
2	Decision of Test	89
3	Attitude of Staff	73
4	Availability of Appointments	73
5	Conduct of Test	61
6	Operations Customer Care	52
7	No Response to Correspondence	35
8	Online Booking	27
9	Lost Documents / Ex Gratia	23
10	Insufficient Advice	22
11	Maladministration	15
12	Incorrect MOT Certificate	11
13	Others (36 Other Reasons)	179

*In any one individual complaint a customer can give more than one reason for their complaint. Therefore, the total number of complaints by reason may not match the total number of complaints.

4.6 Section 75 Complaints

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act places a statutory obligation on Public Authorities to carry out their functions with due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations in respect of religious beliefs, political opinion, gender, race, disability, age, marital status, dependants, and sexual orientation.

16 of the 872 complaints claimed the Agency did not comply with the Section 75 characteristics, a significant increase when compared to the 5 received in 2022-23. Following consideration of each complaint, 2 were upheld, 3 partially upheld and 12 not upheld*. The tables below detail the number/type of complaints received by business area and the outcome following review.

Figure 6: Complaints by Type

Complaint Type	Business Area(s)	Total number of Complaints
Disability	Driver Licensing, Operations Testing	8
Race	Driver Licensing, Operations Testing, NIDirect/ Communications	6
Religion	Operations Testing, Compliance & Enforcement	2
Political Views	Compliance & Enforcement	1
		Total: 17*

Figure 7: Complaints Outcome

Outcome recorded	Business Area/Issue	No of complaints/ issues	Complaint Type
Upheld	Driver Licensing (Delay in issuing licence); Operations Testing (Conduct of an MOT)	2	Disability
Partially Upheld	Driver Licensing (Delay in issuing licence)	3	Disability
Not Upheld		12	

* One of the complaints related to two issues under Section 75 which is why there are 17 issues and outcomes recorded

4.7 Complaints Outcomes

Figure 8: Outcome of Complaints Received

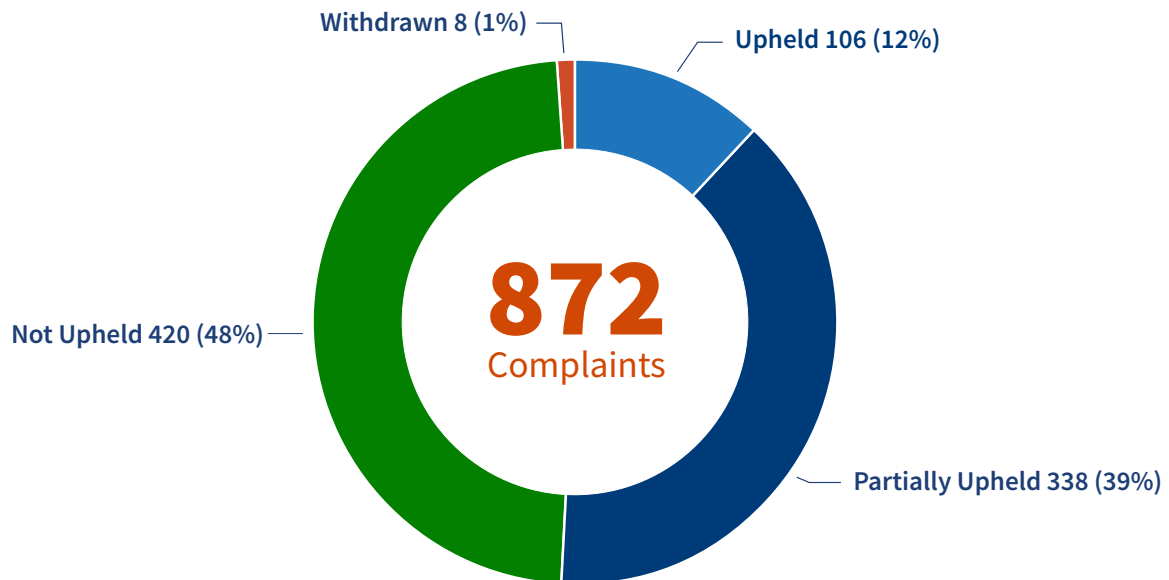


Figure 8: Outcome of Complaints Received

Outcome	Overall
Upheld	106 (12%)
Partially Upheld	338 (39%)
Not Upheld	420 (48%)
Withdrawn	8 (1%)
Totals	872

5.0 Issues and Lessons Learned

Following staff training and the introduction of more robust and targeted internal reminder and management processes, the number of complaints that missed target decreased from 75 in 2022-23 to 5 in 2023-24.

In addition, the Agency received 61 compliments from customers, an increase of 52.4% when compared with 40 compliments received in 2022-23. These complimented staff on things such as their conduct during vehicle and driving tests, their professionalism and assistance in helping customers with appointments and the prompt delivery of licences.

99.4% of Stage 1 complaints were responded to within the target timescale of 15 working days. This is compared to 91.4% of last year's complaints being answered within target.

98.9% of Stage 2 complaints were responded to within the target timescale of 10 working days. This is compared to 98.6% of last year's complaints being answered within target.

428 (49%) of complaints received were withdrawn (8) or not upheld (420). Some of these related to fines received by customers due to not having their vehicle taxed. These were not upheld mainly because Vehicle Excise Duty (Motor Tax) is an excepted matter that is administered by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) in Swansea on behalf of HM Treasury. The Agency has no authority or influence with the DVLA on matters where a customer has received a fine for non-payment of tax.

444 (51%) of complaints received were either "upheld" or "partially upheld". In the main these related to matters such as:

- delays in issuing ordinary or vocational medical licences;
- the outcome of MOT and driving tests;
- the attitude of an examiner during a driving test; and
- availability / waiting times for MOTs and driving tests.

It is important to note that in some processes the Agency is dependent on third parties and is therefore limited in the influence it can bring to the service delivery (e.g. the granting of driver licences where external medical advice is required). However, the Agency is ultimately responsible, therefore where appropriate these types of complaints were fully/partially upheld.

33% of the complaints received this year related to the delays in obtaining a licence (Table 2a at Appendix 2 provides a breakdown of the reasons for Driver Licensing complaints). Many of these complaints related to licences where medical information was required. This is an area where there had been a significant backlog in the medical assessment process. During 2023, the Agency appointed a new external provider to conduct the medical assessments. This has resulted in a significant improvement in turnaround times, and it is anticipated that complaint volumes will reduce in 2024-25 to reflect this improved position.

The next biggest reason for complaints received was the outcome of tests (both MOTs and driving tests). It is likely that the Agency will always receive complaints of this nature especially in relation to driving tests.

In respect of those complaints relating to the attitude of examiners/staff, the Agency expects all its staff to adhere to the NICS Code of Ethics and display, at all times, the highest standards of behaviour. However, like many other public services our staff are also experiencing a significant increase in the number of incidents of unacceptable customer behaviour, which causes distress to them. Our staff are constantly reminded that when working with the public they need to treat people with courtesy and respect and, through appropriate training, have the tools to deal with difficult and abusive customers.

The Agency is committed to reducing waiting times and increasing the availability of test appointments, but it recognises that this has been a frustrating time for some customers. By employing additional driving and vehicle examiners, making tests available of Sundays and Bank Holidays when they aren't normally available, and the introduction of Temporary Exemption Certificates, waiting times are reducing, which should have a positive impact on the customer experience and reduce the number of complaints during the current year.

6.0 The Way Forward

The Agency will continue in its efforts to improve services to customers and ensure that all staff are aware of the importance of good customer care. The following actions are proposed:

- business areas will review upheld complaints and seek to improve services;
- robust and targeted internal reminder and management processes will continue to be used and monitored across all business areas;
- Temporary Exemption Certificates (TECs) will continue to be used and monitored to help lessen demand for appointments.
- continue to recruit examiners and build new test centres to provide additional capacity to deliver vehicle and driving tests;
- automatic appointment reminders will continue to be used to remind customers of their appointments in an effort to reduce the number of lost appointments due to customers failing to appear for tests;
- staff will be reminded of their Section 75 obligations and the high standards expected from them when dealing with customers through training, guidance and direct engagement at team meetings;
- guidance detailing correct processes for handling queries and complaints will continue to be provided to staff;
- customer feedback will continue to be considered when prioritising changes to the Agency's IT applications and customer journeys.

Staff at all levels within the Agency are committed to seeking improvement for the customer, and senior management support the importance of complaint handling. As stated in Principles of Good Complaint Handling – “good complaint handling requires strong and effective leadership; those in management positions will take the lead in ensuring good complaint handling, with regard to both the practice and the culture”. The Agency continues to be proactive in using complaints information to constantly improve its services.

7.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Breakdown of Compliments by Business Area

Business Area	Number of Compliments
Operations Testing	31
Driver Licensing	22
DVA Customer Services	4
Passenger and Transport Licensing Division	2
Operations Booking	1
Driver & Vehicle Standards	1
Total	61

Appendix 2: Top 5 Complaints by Business Area

2a. Driver Licensing	
Complaint Reason	Number of Complaints
Licence Delay	289
Loss of Documents	23
Errors on Licence	13
Online Limitations	9
Medical Revocation Decision	5

2b. Operations Testing	
Complaint Reason	Number of Complaints
Decision of Test	89
Attitude of Staff/Examiner	73
Conduct of Test	60
Damage to Vehicle	16
Customer Care	11

2b2. Driver Testing

Complaint Reason	Number of Complaints
Decision of Test	35
Attitude of Examiner	33
Conduct of Test	25
Cancellation Timeframe	5
Race	3

2c. Booking and Rostering

Complaint Reason	Number of Complaints
Availability of Appointments	73
Online Booking Issues	27
Customer Services	6
Insufficient Advice / Telephone Booking / Cancellation Timeframes	5

2d. Driver and Vehicle Standards

Complaint Reason	Number of Complaints
Test Result / Non Response / Customer Service	3
Legislation / Attitude / Conduct / Delay / Maladministration	1

2e. NI Direct and Communications

Complaint Reason	Number of Complaints
Telephone Booking	3
Attitude of Staff	2
Customer Service / GDPR / Non-Response to Correspondence / Online Booking / Race	1

Appendix 3: Compliments and Complaints by Test Centre

Test Centre	Compliments	Complaints
Armagh	2	8
Ballymena	1	19
Belfast	1	21
Coleraine	3	25
Cookstown	-	16
Craigavon	5	22
Downpatrick	-	10
Enniskillen	-	2
Larne	4	20
Lisburn	10	18
Londonderry	-	6
Mallusk	2	10
Newry	-	17
Newtownards	3	35
Omagh	-	4
TOTAL	31	233



Driver & Vehicle Agency

Hydebank House

4a Hospital Road

Ballydollahgan

Belfast

BT8 8JL