



HILLINGDON  
LONDON



# Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy Overview Committee

## Councillors on the Committee

Richard Lewis (Chairman)  
Richard Mills (Vice-Chairman)  
Robin Sansarpuri (Labour Lead)  
Wayne Bridges  
Tony Burles  
Nick Denys  
Narinder Garg  
Raymond Graham  
Carol Melvin

**Date:** TUESDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER  
2014

**Time:** 7.30 PM

**Venue:** COMMITTEE ROOM 4 -  
CIVIC CENTRE, HIGH  
STREET, UXBRIDGE UB8  
1UW

**Meeting  
Details:** Members of the Public and  
Press are welcome to attend  
this meeting

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further information.**

**Published: 8 September 2014**

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This Agenda is available online at:

<http://modgov.hillingdon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=243&MId=2115&Ver=4>

***Putting our residents first***

Lloyd White  
Head of Democratic Services  
London Borough of Hillingdon,  
3E/05, Civic Centre, High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW  
[www.hillingdon.gov.uk](http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk)

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## About this Committee

This Policy Overview Committee (POC) will undertake reviews in the areas covered by the Administration and Finance Directorates and can establish a working party (with another POC if desired) to undertake reviews if, for example, a topic is cross-cutting.

This Policy Overview Committee will consider and comment on budget and service plan proposals for the Administration and Finance Directorates.

The Cabinet Forward Plan is a standing item on the Committee's agenda.

The Committee will not consider call-ins of Executive decisions or investigate individual complaints about the Council's services.

To perform the policy overview role outlined above in relation to the following matters:

1. Democratic Services
2. Localism
3. Central Services, incl. Human Resources, ICT, Communications & Legal Services
4. Capital programme, property, construction & facilities management
5. Financial Planning & Financial Services
6. Enforcement and anti-fraud activities
7. Procurement
8. Performance Improvement
9. Economic development & town centres and regeneration
10. Local commerce, employment, skills and job creation
11. Local Strategic Partnership and Sustainable Community Strategy;
12. Community engagement, partnerships and the voluntary sector
13. Equalities and Community Cohesion
14. Community Safety
15. Public Safety & Civil Protection
16. Energy use and carbon reduction
17. Health & Safety
18. Any functions not included within the remit of the other Policy Overview Committees
19. Cross-cutting reviews that cover the remit of other Committees

# Agenda

## **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

1 Apologies

2 Declarations of Interest

3 Minutes of Meeting held on 16 July 2014 (**Pages 1-6**)

4 Exclusion of Press and Public

To confirm the items of business marked Part I will be considered in public and that items marked Part II will be considered in private.

5 Major Review - Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure (**Pages 7-68**)

6 Work Programme 2014/15 (**Pages 69-72**)

7 Forward Plan (**Pages 73-78**)

## Minutes

Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy

Overview Committee

Wednesday 16 July 2014

Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre,  
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



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	<p><b>Members Present:</b> Councillors Richard Lewis (Chairman), Richard Mills (Vice-Chairman), Wayne Bridges, Tony Burles, Narinder Garg, Becky Haggar, Raymond Graham, Carol Melvin, and Robin Sansarpuri.</p> <p><b>Officers:</b> Bharat Jashapara (Principal Accountant - Finance and Administration), Dan Kennedy (Head of Performance and Improvement) and Khalid Ahmed (Democratic Services Manager).</p>		
9.	<p><b>MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 26 JUNE 2014</b></p> <p>Agreed as an accurate record.</p>		
10.	<p><b>EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</b></p> <p>It was agreed that all items of business would be considered in public.</p>		
11	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>BUDGET PLANNING REPORT FOR ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE DIRECTORATES</b></p> <p>The Principal Accountant for Finance and Administration attended the meeting and informed Members that the report set out the main financial issues which faced the Group's services and the work being undertaken to respond to them.</p> <p>Members were informed that the budget report to Council in February 2014 had identified the savings requirements for 2015/16 of £20.3m and the Committee was informed that work was underway to refresh this figure. The finance settlement for the Council would be announced towards the end of the year.</p> <p>The Committee was informed that the Group was given a savings target for 2014/15 of £1.5m and had already delivered £1.4m of these.</p> <p>Members asked what was the percentage of savings made in relation to the overall Council savings and to overall costs.</p> <p>Subsequent to the meeting, Members were informed that Administration &amp; Finance savings equated to 12% of the Council's overall savings and that the savings for the Group equated to 6.74% of the net budget for the Group.</p> </td> <td style="width: 20%; padding: 5px; vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>Action By:</b></p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p><b>BUDGET PLANNING REPORT FOR ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE DIRECTORATES</b></p> <p>The Principal Accountant for Finance and Administration attended the meeting and informed Members that the report set out the main financial issues which faced the Group's services and the work being undertaken to respond to them.</p> <p>Members were informed that the budget report to Council in February 2014 had identified the savings requirements for 2015/16 of £20.3m and the Committee was informed that work was underway to refresh this figure. The finance settlement for the Council would be announced towards the end of the year.</p> <p>The Committee was informed that the Group was given a savings target for 2014/15 of £1.5m and had already delivered £1.4m of these.</p> <p>Members asked what was the percentage of savings made in relation to the overall Council savings and to overall costs.</p> <p>Subsequent to the meeting, Members were informed that Administration &amp; Finance savings equated to 12% of the Council's overall savings and that the savings for the Group equated to 6.74% of the net budget for the Group.</p>	<p><b>Action By:</b></p>
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	<p>In relation to the impact of the Better Care Fund (BCF), Members asked how the Council's funding of £17,991k was calculated. Subsequent to the meeting, Members were provided with background to the BCF.</p> <p>The Disabled Facilities Capital and Social Care Capital figures were currently received directly by LBH. Section 256 of the National Health Act allowed Primary Care Trusts and their successor Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) to enter into arrangements with local authorities, for local authorities to carry out social care activities with health benefits. This is what the Section 256 funding listed above related to.</p> <p>The further NHS funding transfer included funding for carers and intermediate care/ Rapid Response, currently received by the CCG.</p> <p>The total BCF funding was not new money into the local economy; it was either committed to existing ongoing spend within LBH or the CCG; or, alternatively it was expected to be released from commissioning for hospital services.</p> <p>The BCF was also linked to new duties that come into being from April 2015 as a result of the Care Act, resulting from new entitlements for carers and the introduction of a national minimum eligibility threshold as well as better information and advice, advocacy, safeguarding and other measures in the Care Act.</p> <p>Members asked about emerging pressures within the Group and were informed that there were two key areas which required closely monitoring. There was the management of the vacancy factor given the significant staffing budgets and the number of restructures that were at various stages across the Group. The second key area related to the ongoing achievement of income targets, particularly those that had been increased for 2014/15 through the MTFF process.</p> <p>A general point was made regarding whether the savings targets had been challenging and subsequent to the meeting, it was reported that the Group was continuously seeking to identify efficiencies and savings and these were put in place as quickly as possible. This strategy had assisted in an early delivery of savings for 2014/15, some of which had been based on efficiencies put in to place during 2013/14. The majority of the budget of the Group related to staffing and most of the savings had been the result of restructures.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED –</b></p> <p><b>1. That the development of the financial planning process undertaken to date be noted, together with</b></p>	<p><b>Action By:</b></p>
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	the subsequent responses given to the issues raised.	
12.	<p><b>MAJOR REVIEW - THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE</b></p> <p>The Council's Head of Performance and Improvement attended the meeting and provided the Committee with a presentation on the Corporate Complaints Procedure.</p> <p>Members were also provided with a scoping report for the review which provided details of the objectives of the review and background analysis.</p> <p>Members were informed that there were four complaints procedures which operated within this Council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints made by children or on their behalf were governed by the Children Act 1989, Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 (Statutory Instrument 2006 No. 1738).</li> <li>• Adults' services complaints were managed in line with the 'The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009'.</li> <li>• All other complaints were dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Procedure.</li> <li>• All complaints received by the Council regarding its public health functions were handled in accordance with The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangement Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012.</li> </ul> <p>The Committee was informed that the first three complaint procedures were set by statute and the Council was required to follow legislation with little scope for doing otherwise.</p> <p>The Corporate Complaints procedure which was the subject of the review was different because it was agreed locally. Members were informed that this procedure currently operated under the following stages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Informal Complaints (Service requests)</b></li> </ul> <p>At this stage, officers tried to resolve enquiries and concerns as quickly as possible by discussing the problem with the complainant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stage 1 – Response from the Head of Service or Deputy Director</b></li> </ul> <p>Officers acknowledged Stage 1 complaints within 3 working</p>	Action By:

<p>days of receipt of the complaint and the deadline was for complainants to receive a full response within 10 working days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stage 2 – Response from the relevant Director</b></li> </ul> <p>If a complainant was dissatisfied with the response, he/she could ask for their complaint to be reviewed at Stage 2 stating the reason for their dissatisfaction with the response.</p> <p>Officers acknowledged Stage 2 complaints within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint and the deadline was for complainants to receive a full response within 10 working days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stage 3 – response from the Chief Executive of the Council</b></li> </ul> <p>If a complainant was dissatisfied with the response, he/she could ask for their complaint to be reviewed at Stage 3 by the Chief Executive. The complainant had to state the reason why they were dissatisfied with the response given at Stage 2.</p> <p>The Chief Executive acknowledged Stage 3 complaints within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint and the deadline was for complainants to receive a full response within 15 working days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stage 4 - Designated Person for the Council (for housing complaints only)</b></li> </ul> <p>If the complaint was about a tenancy, leasehold or other housing management issue, this could be referred to a 'Designated Person'. If a complaint was still not resolved, the complainant was advised to take their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman for Housing complaints with all other complaints being directed to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).</p> <p>Members were informed that the Council service areas which were covered by the Corporate Complaints Procedure were:- Housing, Housing Benefit, Council Tax, Education Services, Resident Services (Planning, Environment, Anti social behaviour, etc), Administration and Finance and Legal services.</p> <p>The Head of Performance and Improvement provided Members with a number of relevant statistics and the stand out ones were that there had been a 42% increase in housing stage 1 complaints and a large increase in Finance complaints. Members were informed that these complaints had increased because of the recent changes in the Council's Housing Allocation Policy and the recent Welfare changes.</p> <p>The Committee was also informed that the LGO received 93</p>	<p><b>Action By:</b></p>
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	<p>It was agreed that the issues outlined above be examined at future witness sessions.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED –</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. That the presentation and the information provided be noted and officers be asked to explore the areas outlined above.</b></li> <li><b>2. That the scoping report be noted and be amended to reflect discussion during the meeting.</b></li> </ol>	<p><b>Action By:</b></p> <p><b>Dan Kennedy / Khalid Ahmed</b></p>
<b>13.</b>	<p><b>WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15</b></p> <p>Noted. It was agreed that a single meeting review take place at the October meeting on Members Enquiries.</p>	<p><b>Khalid Ahmed</b></p>
<b>14.</b>	<p><b>CABINET FORWARD PLAN</b></p> <p>Noted.</p>	
	<p><b>Meeting commenced at 7.30pm and closed at 8.55pm</b>  <b>Next meeting: 16 September 2014 at 7.30pm</b></p>	

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Khalid Ahmed on 01895 250833. These minutes are circulated to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.

# Agenda Item 5

## **COPROPRATE SERVICES & PARTNERSHIPS POC - MAJOR REVIEW - COUNCIL'S CORPORATE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

**Contact Officers:** Khalid Ahmed  
**Telephone:** 01895 250833

### **REASON FOR ITEM**

To hear from witnesses who will provide evidence for this Committee's review on examining the effectiveness of the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure and to be provided with information and statistics on the Council's performance in relation to complaints.

### **OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE**

- 1. To question the witnesses who are providing the Committee with evidence for the Committee's review.**
- 2. To receive further information on areas of the review which were requested at the last meeting.**
- 3. To make amendments to the scoping report for the review if necessary (Appendix 1).**

### **BACKGROUND**

1. At the last meeting of the Committee, Members were provided with a presentation which provided an overview of the Council's Corporate Complaints procedure. The Council's Head of Performance and Improvement provided Members with a brief run-down of the statistics as they related to complaints which are received from residents.
2. For this meeting, the Committee will be provided with further information relating to:
  - Trends and patterns of complaints which may indicate there may be a problem in a particular service area;
  - How does the Council learn from complaints and what examples are there of where the Council have improved services as a result of complaints?
  - What evidence is there of officers solving complaints with the use of "intelligent intervention", rather than letting a complaint pass through the three stage complaints process?
  - What training is given to Council managers to deal with complaints?
  - What literature and information is available for residents to understand their access to the complaints procedure?
  - The Council's compensation policy for complaints; is it appropriate and relevant or does it need revising;
3. As stated at the last meeting, Annual Complaints Reports are submitted to both the Children, Young People & Learning Policy Overview Committee and the Social Services, Housing & Public Health Policy Overview Committee. Copies of both these

reports are attached to this report to enable Members to gauge the picture on complaints the Council receives (**Appendix 2**).

## **WITNESSES**

4. For this meeting, the following will provide evidence for the review:

- Dan Kennedy - Head of Performance and Improvement
- Ian Anderson - Complaints and Service Improvement Manager (Administration)
- Nigel Dicker - Deputy Director - Public Safety & Environment - (Residents Services)

## **PAPERS WITH REPORT**

**APPENDIX 1 - Scoping Report**

**APPENDIX 2 - Annual Complaints Report to Children, Young People & Learning  
Policy Overview Committee**

**APPENDIX 3 - Annual Complaints Report to the Social Services, Housing & Public  
Health Policy Overview Committee**

## APPENDIX 1



# Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee Review Scoping Report 2014/15

## ***The Effectiveness of the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure***

### **1. REVIEW OBJECTIVES**

#### **Aim and background to review**

To examine the effectiveness of the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure and to propose improvements and enhancements which could be made to the procedure to improve this important aspect of customer service to the Borough's residents.

#### **Terms of Reference**

1. To review the current definition of what constitutes a complaint?
2. To consider what makes an effective complaints system.
3. To review the effectiveness of the current three stage complaints structure.

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4. To assess the Council's current performance in dealing with complaints.
5. To examine the handling of complaints across the Council to ensure that there is a consistent and standard approach.
6. To review the current timelines and service standards for responses to complaints within each stage of the complaints process.
7. To identify what staff do to try and resolve complaints and consider whether this is effective in stopping complaints from escalating.
8. To review and update the existing compensation policy.
9. How has the organisation learnt from complaints received and what evidence is there of service improvement.
10. To report to Cabinet on any recommendations which arise out of the review.

## 2. INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

### Key Information

Dealing with complaints is a key part of effective customer service delivery. A good complaints system is an opportunity for a Council to show that it wants to open and honest, that it cares about providing a good service to residents and that it genuinely values feedback on whether there are any problems which need attention. Therefore, improving the way the Council deals with complaints should improve service delivery.

There are four complaint procedures that operate within this Council.

- Complaints made by children or on their behalf are governed by the Children Act 1989, Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 (Statutory Instrument 2006 No. 1738).
- Adults' services complaints are managed in line with the 'The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009'.
- All other complaints are dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Procedure.
- All complaints received by the Council regarding its public health functions are handled in accordance with The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership

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Arrangement Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012.

The first three complaint procedures are set by statute and the Council is required to follow legislation with little scope for doing otherwise. However, the Corporate Complaints procedure is different because it is agreed locally and it is this procedure which Members will be considering as part of their review. The Corporate Complaints Procedure currently operates as follows;

- Informal Complaints (Service requests)

Officers try and resolve enquiries and concerns as quickly as possible by discussing the problem with the complainant.

- Stage 1 – Response from the Head of Service or Deputy Director

Officers acknowledge Stage 1 complaints within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint and the deadline is for complainants to receive a full response within 10 working days.

- Stage 2 – Response from the relevant Director

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the response, he/she can ask for their complaint to be reviewed at Stage 2 stating the reason for their dissatisfaction with the response.

Officers acknowledge Stage 2 complaints within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint and the deadline is for complainants to receive a full response within 10 working days.

- Stage 3 – response from the Chief Executive of the Council

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the response, he/she can ask for their complaint to be reviewed at Stage 3 by the Chief Executive. The complainant has to state the reason why they are dissatisfied with the response given at Stage 2.

The Chief Executive acknowledges Stage 3 complaints within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint and the deadline is for complainants to receive a full response within 15 working days.

- Stage 4 - Designated Person for the Council (**for housing complaints only**)

If the complaint is about a tenancy, leasehold or other housing management issue, this can be referred to a 'Designated Person'. If complaint is still not resolved, the

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complainant is advised to take their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman for Housing complaints with all other complaints being directed to the Local Government Ombudsman.

If after the Stage 3 response, the complainant remains dissatisfied, he/she is advised to take the complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

### **Responsibilities**

Service areas covered by the Corporate Complaints Procedure:

- Housing
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax
- Education Services
- Resident Services (Planning, Environment, Anti social behaviour, etc)
- Administration and Finance
- Legal

### **Connected activity**

Members Enquiries.

### **Current intelligence, best practice and research**

Information from feedback from complainants will be reported to the Committee, together with details on statistics on the number of complaints each Council service received at the three stages of the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

Details of the Annual Complaints Reports which are submitted to relevant Policy Overview Committee's in September will be supplied for the review.

Consideration could also be given to best practice used in other organisation's complaints procedure and systems which could be introduced at Hillingdon to improve the process for residents

### **Further information**

Corporate Complaints Procedure

Local Government Ombudsman <http://www.lgo.org.uk/>

Annual Complaints Reports to relevant Policy Overview Committees

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### 3. WITNESS EVIDENCE & ENQUIRY

#### Witness testimony

Officer from Local Government Ombudsman Office  
Dan Kennedy - LBH Performance & Intelligence Team Manager - Administration and Finance  
Ian Anderson - Complaints and Service Improvement Manager - Administration and Finance  
Heads of service / Managers from service departments  
Customer Liaison Officers from Complaints Teams  
Lloyd White - Head of Democratic Services

#### Key information required

Statistics and data on complaints at all three stages  
Annual Complaints Reports  
Comparisons with other local authorities  
Feedback from complainants

#### Potential Consultation & Communications

N/A

#### Lines of enquiry

#### Emerging conclusions or themes for development

### 4. REVIEW PLANNING & ASSESSMENT

*Proposed timeframe & milestones for the review up to Cabinet and beyond in terms of monitoring:*

Meeting Date	Action	Purpose / Outcome
16 July 2014	Agree Scoping Report and presentation from	Information and analysis

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	Performance and Intelligence Team Manager	
16 September 2014	Witness Session 1 - Good practice and service standards	Evidence & enquiry Complaints and Service Improvement Manager Head of Service Council's Customer Liaison Officers
14 October 2014	Witness Session 2 - Stage 3 Complaints and Suggested Recommendations	Evidence & enquiry Guidelines on good practice in dealing with complaints - Officer from LGO Head of Democratic Services
11 November 2014	Draft Final Report	Proposals – agree recommendations and final draft report
18 December 2014	Cabinet - Consider Final Report	Agree recommendations and final report
December 2015	Monitoring of implementation of recommendations	

*\* Specific meetings can be shortened or extended to suit the review topic and needs of the Committee*

### Resource requirements

Normal officer support.

### Equalities impact

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None.

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## APPENDIX 2

# COMPLAINT REPORT FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE - 1 APRIL 2013 TO 31 MARCH 2014

**Contact Officer:** Dan Kennedy / Ian Anderson  
**Telephone:** x0495 / 7335

## PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Using feedback from residents to improve services is a key element of putting our residents first in Hillingdon. This includes feedback in the form of complaints.

This Council aims to make it as easy as possible for people to provide feedback and aim to resolve all complaints at the earliest opportunity. Our complaint procedure is designed to ensure that complaints are dealt with openly, flexibly and in a timely way. Learning from complaints is used to drive up customer satisfaction and make service improvements.

This report provides information and analysis of complaints and Members Enquiries received between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014 for Children & Young People's Service (including Education Services) and satisfies the requirements to publish annual information about complaints.

## OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE

1. Discuss and comment on the annual report and use the report to inform their overview activities
2. Note the contents of the annual report
3. Highlight any concerns with the relevant Cabinet Member

## SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

### Children and Young People's Service (See annex 1)

- The number of Stage 1 complaints registered for the past three years remains broadly similar when comparing 2011/12 of 56 with 2012/13 of 59 and 2013/14 of 58.
- Of the 58 Stage 1 complaints registered in 2013/14, 6 (10%) were upheld, 13 (23%) were partially upheld and 39 (67%) were not upheld.
- The average time taken to conclude a Stage 1 has been reduced from 15.9 working days in 2011/12 to 10.1 working days in 2013/14. This is a significant improvement when compared with previous years and almost meets the 10 working day target.

## APPENDIX 2

- 3 complainants complained direct to the Local Government Ombudsman – all three complaints were not upheld.
- The number of compliments recorded for 2013/14 of 33 represents a significant increase when compared with 2011/12 of 7 (more than 4 times higher).

### Education Services (See annex 2)

- The number of Stage 1 complaints registered for 2013/14 of 7 represents a 46% decrease when compared with 2011/12 of 13. None of the 7 complaints were upheld.
- The average time taken to conclude a Stage 1 complaint has been reduced from 9.15 working days in 2011/12 to 8 working days in 2013/14. A consistently high performing area.
- There were two Stage 2 complaints both of which escalated to Stage 3. At Stage 3, one complaint was withdrawn as the child was offered a place at their preferred school and the other complaint was partially upheld.
- One complainant complained direct to the LGO but their complaint was not upheld.
- 1,618; 1,401 and 1,501 telephone enquiries about Education Services were received in 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14, respectively. These enquiries were, in the main, about school waiting lists, In-Year admissions to a school and accepting an offer of a school place.

### Members Enquiries (ME's) (See annex 3 – page 21)

- Children & Young People's Services received 39 enquiries from Members for 2013/14 which is broadly similar with previous years - 2011/12 of 41 and 2012/13 of 44.
- Education Services received 55 enquiries from Members for 2013/14 which is a significant decrease when compared with 2011/12 of 118 and 2012/13 of 113.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 1. The Council's Vision

The Council's vision is about 'putting our residents first'. We do this by working closely with customers/residents and listening to their views including through complaints, resolving these as soon as possible and using their feedback to prevent similar complaints for the future.

### 2. What is a Complaint?

In general terms a complaint can be considered as:

## **APPENDIX 2**

*“an expression of dissatisfaction by telephone, personal visit or in writing, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council or its staff affecting an individual or group of customers.”*

### **3. How Can People Complain?**

Complaints can be made in person, by telephone, in writing, by fax, via our website or email, either directly to the service area, Contact Centre or to the Complaints and Service Improvement Team.

### **4. The Complaints Procedures**

Complaints made by children or on their behalf are governed by the Children Act 1989, Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 (Statutory Instrument 2006 No. 1738).

Complaints about education services or schools are governed by the Education Act 2002.

### **5. The Informal Complaint**

The process of complaints resolution involves talking to the customer/resident and talking through the issues they have raised, clarifying any points and understanding what outcome they are seeking to achieve. As a result, in addition to the formal complaints procedure, the Complaints and Service Improvement Team take customer enquiries or ‘concerns’ and deal with them promptly and informally. This is because feedback we have received from residents indicate that most want action to resolve the issue quickly and are happy that this is undertaken informally.

### **6. Compensation Payments**

If after an investigation by Council staff or the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), it is concluded that as a result of maladministration by Council staff it has resulted in a complainant suffering a financial loss, compensation may be offered to the complainant.

### **7. What Has the Council Done to Improve Complaint Handling?**

The Council sees every complaint as an opportunity to learn from customers about what works and what does not. As a result of complaints received during 2013/14 the Council has and continues to take the following action:

- workshops for managers and relevant staff are run in investigating and responding to complaints.
- focussed on ensuring we take action on conclusion of a complaint to reduce the likelihood of the same complaint recurring.
- ensured that monthly and quarterly reports are provided for managers regarding their team/service areas complaint handling performance.

## APPENDIX 2

### 8. What is the Council going to do to improve complaint handling?

The Council will continue to seek feedback from those residents who have had cause to complain. During 2014/15 we are using feedback to improve our complaint handling processes and make service improvements by focusing on:

- the Complaint and Service Improvement Team send prompts, on day 7, reminding staff when the deadline for response is due. This should help to ensure that complaints continue to be responded to within target.
- running monthly workshops for managers and relevant staff (via the Learning and Development portal) as part of the suite of customer service courses we offer.
- introduce a web page that pulls together all complaint information in one easy place for staff to view. This will include advice and guidance on handling customer dissatisfaction, complaint procedures, published complaint reports, etc.
- publish regular articles in "AllStaffEmail" on current performance, trends, learning identified, etc.

### 9. Mediation

For some complaints it will not be appropriate, or possible, to resolve them through the complaint process - particularly where there has been a breakdown in the relationship between the service provider and the service user or where emotions are running high. In such situations the Complaints and Service Improvement Team Manager will consider whether mediation is an option that should be considered.

The Complaints and Service Improvement Team Manager will contact both parties to see if they will agree to mediation. (Mediation is not possible without the agreement of those concerned). If both parties are agreeable, mediation by an independent mediator will allow both sides to:

- express their own views;
- think about how to put things right; and
- come together to reach a solution.



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### Annex 1 – Complaints about Children and Young People’s Services

#### The Complaint Procedure

Complaints made by children or on their behalf are governed by the Children Act 1989, Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 (Statutory Instrument 2006 No. 1738). This sets out the three stage complaint procedure that Local Authorities are required to follow when dealing with complaints made by for example any child or young person, any local authority foster carer, children leaving care, Special Guardians, persons wishing to adopt a child, etc. Hillingdon’s procedure operates as follows:

- Stage 1 – Local Resolution.
- Stage 2 – Independent Investigation by two people (Investigating Officer (IO) and Independent Person).
- Stage 3 – Review Panel.
- Local Government Ombudsman.

A more detailed explanation of how the complaint procedure operates, the main complaint themes and statistical data for each stage of the process is provided below.

#### **a. THE INFORMAL COMPLAINT**

We will try to resolve enquiries/concerns on the spot by discussing the problem with a complainant and trying to resolve it. If we can solve the problem we will do so, immediately. It has helped to keep formal complaints at a low level.

#### **Informal Complaints received – (Service requests)**

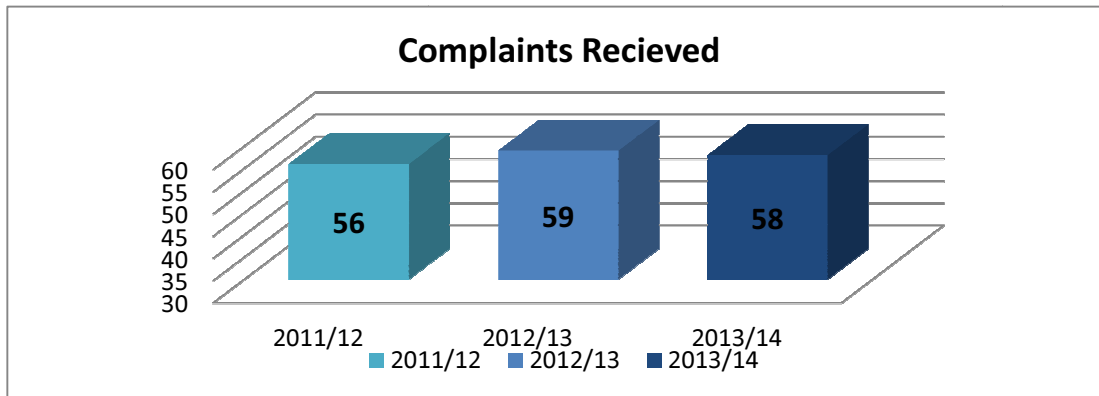
Year	1 April to 30 June (Q1)	1 July to 30 Sept (Q2)	1 Oct to 31 Dec (Q3)	1 Jan to 31 March (Q4)	Total
2013/14	6	5	8	7	26

Nb Figures are not available for previous years.

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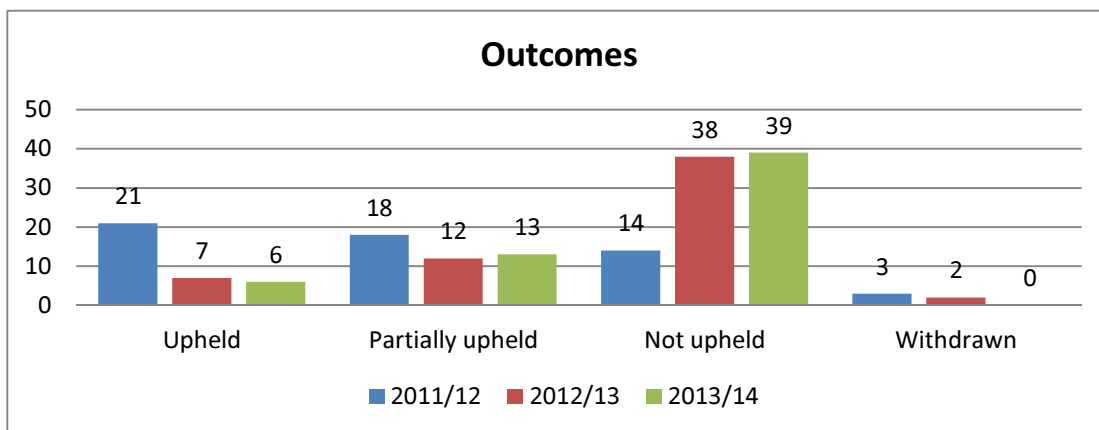
### b. STAGE 1 – LOCAL RESOLUTION

#### Total number of complaints recorded



The number of complaints registered remains broadly similar when comparing 2013/14 of 58 with 2011/12 and 2012/13 of 56 and 59, respectively.

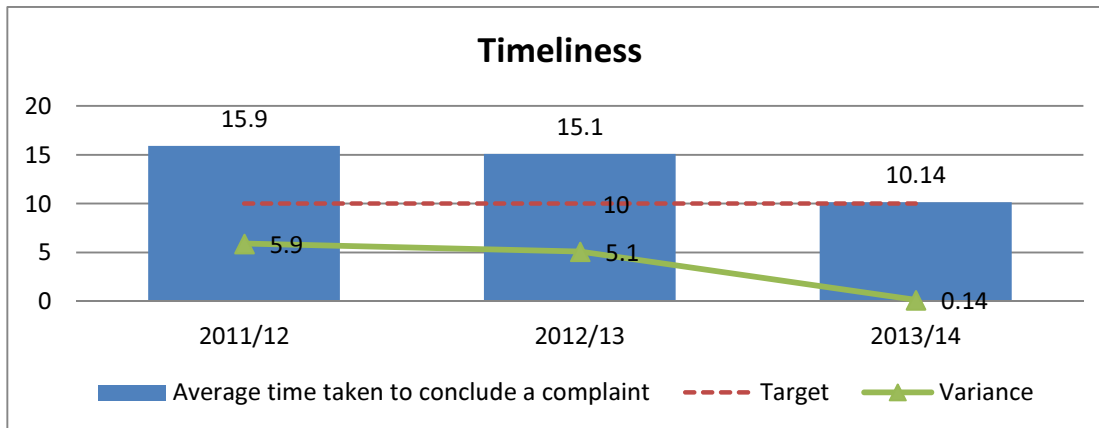
#### Outcome of complaints



- The number of upheld and partially upheld complaints has reduced from 39 in 2011/12 to 19 in 2013/14 – this represents a 51% (20) decrease.
- The number of not upheld complaints has risen from 14 in 2011/12 to 39 in 2013/14.

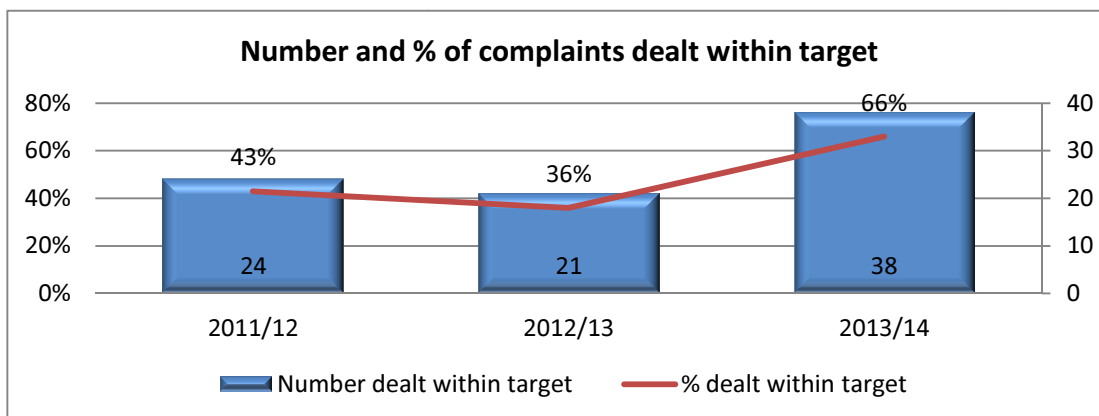
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### Time taken to conclude a complaint (working days)



The average time taken to conclude a Stage 1 complaint has reduced from 15.9 working days in 2011/12 to 10.1 working days in 2013/14. This is a significant improvement when compared against previous years and when compared against the 10 working day target set by statute.

### % of complaints dealt with within 10 working days



In 2013/14, 66% of Stage 1 complaints were responded to within 10 working days. This is a significant improvement when compared against 2011/12 and 2012/13 of 43% and 36%, respectively.

A lot of effort is employed at Stage 1 to resolve complaints and stop complaints escalating to Stage 2. This approach is preferred by complainants and it does work as it has stopped complaints escalating to Stage 2 and 3. However, it does require considerable effort by staff and can take time to achieve as it may require a meeting with the complainant to agree the way forward.

All Stage 1 complaints which were assessed as upheld or partially upheld were interrogated to identify the cause of the complaint and what we learnt from each complaint. This is set out in the table below.

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### Learning from complaints and action taken (upheld and partially upheld complaints)

Complaint ref	Cause of complaint and learning
3187847	Miscommunication with new service provider who forgot to collect child and deliver to contact address.
3193371	Breakdown of communication in relation to contact arrangement - clarity in communication will help the understanding of the processes and plans.
3063419	A Court report was not filed in accordance with court order. Improve systems to ensure that Court Reports are filed on time in future.
3094378	Delay in providing a wheelchair due to high demand for this service. We advised that we are currently reviewing staffing arrangements, structures and the timescales in relation to Occupational Therapy assessment.
3096152	Mrs X says that the Officer told her that if social services had to call her about everything her daughter did they would be on the phone to her every day. The Officer cannot remember the words he used in discussion but apologises if it caused Mrs X any upset.
3047403	Solicitor complained that an officer made derogatory comments about a solicitor from her firm. The staff member could not recall this conversation – she was reminded of the need to comply with standards of customer care
3385864	Mrs X complained that a change in contact arrangement was not communicated to her and it meant she missed her contact. We apologised and explained that this occurred as a result of an oversight. Contact was re scheduled and she was provided with contact details of the Deputy Team Manager and Team Manager.
3374758	Mr X complained that delays in repairs to his wheelchair were impacting on his ability to complete his homework and eat independently. We apologised and explained that a request had been put into our service provider for the parts required and that they be fitted direct to his chair. Unfortunately, there were delays in doing this but we got a firm date when the manufacturer would do this. The repair was completed on that date.
3366333	Mrs X complained to the locum chairperson but her letter was not acknowledged or responded to. We explained that her letter had been received and forwarded to the relevant manager to respond, however, this coincided with that manager going on annual leave and was left to the manager to respond on her return. We apologised and addressed her concerns in the letter.

The main **theme** that emerged from the analysis of complaints upheld and partially upheld related to **communication issues**. Some service users and their families have complained because they feel that they are given insufficient or inconsistent or incorrect or no information at all. They feel that this places them at a disadvantage or unnecessary risk.

### **c. STAGE 2 – INVESTIGATION BY TWO INDEPENDENT PEOPLE**

If a complainant is not happy with the response at Stage 1, and they wish to escalate their complaint to Stage 2. The Complaints and Service Improvement Team Manager will arrange for an independent investigation by two people - Investigating Officer (IO) and

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Independent Person (IP). The IO may be brought from outside the local authority or employed by the local authority but not in direct line management of the service area or person about whom the complaint is being made.

The IO and IP will look into everything, talk to everyone involved and then write a report on what they have found. This process can take up to 65 working days from the date the written statement of complaint is agreed. Upon receipt of the report, the Director, Children and Young People's Service, will write to the complainant and tell them what will happen next.

There were no Stage 2 investigations for 2013/14.

### **d. STAGE 3 – REVIEW PANEL**

If the complainant remains unhappy with the findings of a Stage 2 complaint investigation, the Complaints and Service Improvement Team Manager will arrange for a panel to meet and look at all the issues raised in the complaint and read the report that was written for Stage 2.

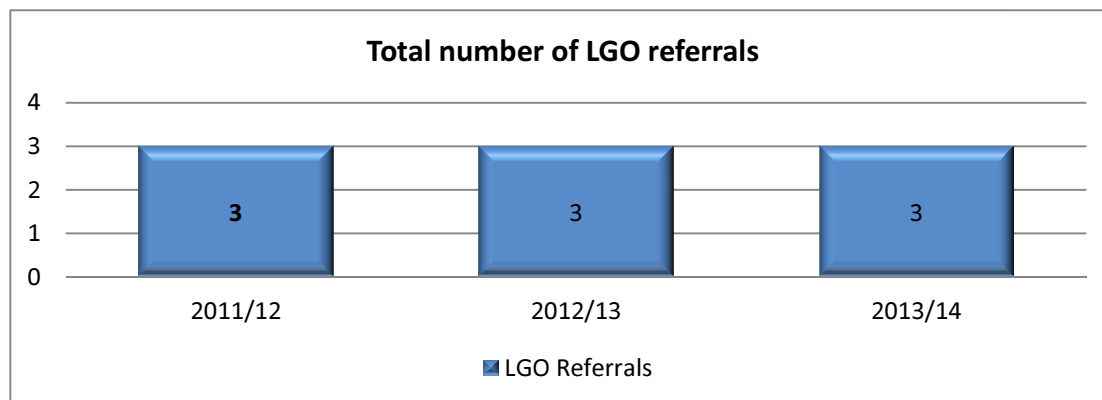
The panel will be made up of three new people who do not work for the local authority and their role is to speak to all the people involved and ask them questions about what has gone wrong and why the complainant is not happy. The three people on the panel will talk about the whole situation and together they will make recommendations of how things can be improved. From beginning to end this stage takes no longer than 50 working days to complete.

There were no Stage 3 investigations for 2013/14.

### **e. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN (LGO) INVESTIGATIONS**

Where it appears that a Council's own investigations have not resolved the complaint, the complainant is entitled to refer their complaint to the LGO and at any stage of the complaint process. However, the Ombudsman normally refers the complaint back to the Council if it has not been considered under the local procedure first.

#### **Total number of LGO referrals**



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Three complainants complained direct to the LGO during this period. The table below provides the outcome of their investigations.

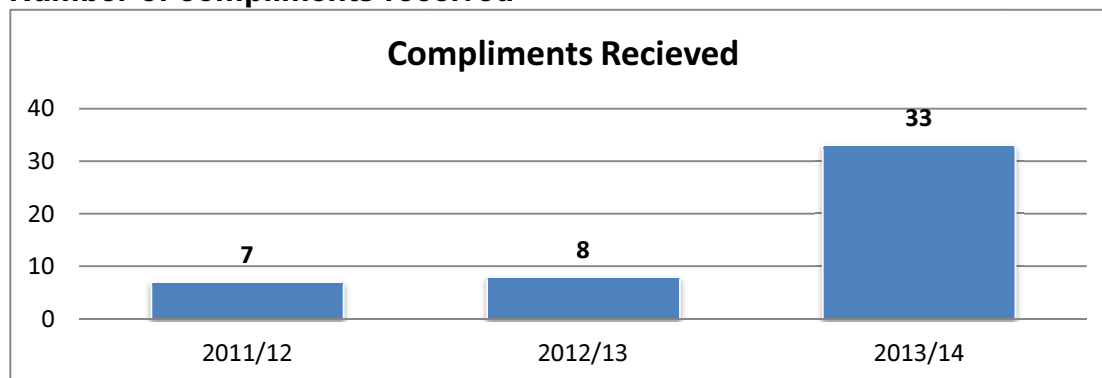
### Outcome of LGO referrals

Complaint details	LGO decision	Rec's
<p><b>3265938</b> Mr X complained that the Council obtained confidential information from the Metropolitan Police and disclosed this information to a third party without first contacting him to determine the accuracy or completeness of the information. He believes it breached Article 8 of the Human Rights Act.</p>	<p><b>Outside of their Jurisdiction</b> The Ombudsman said that they could not investigate this complaint as it is outside their jurisdiction i.e. legal action had commenced. <b>NB</b> The complaint was settled with an apology to Mr X.</p>	<p><b>None</b></p>
<p><b>3044195</b> Ms X. complained to the LGO that the Council had refused to escalate her complaint to Stage 2 of the complaint process.</p>	<p><b>The LGO decided not to investigate the complaint</b> on the basis that they were not satisfied that Ms X had consented for her mother to act her behalf and whether her mother was a suitable representative to act for her.</p>	<p><b>None</b></p>
<p><b>3444285</b> Mr X complained about the decision of a Child Protection Conference to continue his grandchild's Child Protection Plan. He felt that the decision had not been properly taken.</p>	<p><b>The LGO advised Mr X that they would not investigate the complaint</b> as they saw "no evidence of fault in the actions of the Council, and no injustice has been caused to Mr X"</p>	<p><b>None</b></p>

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### f. COMPLIMENTS

#### Number of compliments received



#### **Here's what five people have said about the service provided by Children Services and the difference they have made to their lives.**

*"A big thank you to all of you involved in helping me acquire social housing. It's made an enormous difference to my life as well as X's sisters. I can sleep, have a bath or use the toilet in the knowledge that X is safe. I don't have to watch him 24/7 so I can sit and watch TV, cook, eat at the table, have people over etc. In essence, lead a normal home life. I can't thank you all enough and feel gratitude every day for the help we received".*

*"Thank you, thank you & thank you. X told us yesterday evening that the decision made about contact it has lifted a lot off her shoulders!!!! Last night, was the 1st night she slept all the way through without waking :) she was singing & playing the piano this morning".*

*"There are many times that we know Social Workers get a lot of criticism for lots of different reasons, however I would like to email you and express my feelings towards X and Y. When we became foster carers in 2008 we were assigned X as our Social Worker. Over the years we have learnt so much from X and Y, all of which we have put into our practice and really enjoyed doing so. X always praises us and encourages the best in us. X and Y have always been on the other end of the phone and always make us aware they are available when needed. We feel that these two ladies are a great asset to your team and wanted you to know how grateful we are to have their support"*

*"My son was, until recently, a young offender being supervised by YOS. Y first came into contact with YOS in December 2011, and as well as his offending he was also a cannabis user. As well as these problems, we had quite a complex home life, including a difficult non-relationship with his father. X has worked with Y for the past one and a half years and has always been a great support to him. Y can be very difficult to reach but he and X seem to communicate very well and she was the one person he would actually listen to. Although Y is currently under an order, he hasn't re-offended in the last ten months, and now has a part time job at Tesco's".*

*"I've learnt that a split second thought can get me into so much trouble. If I took a step back, breathed, counted to 10 and thought about it everything could have been different. I've learnt from Y on how to control my anger, to think about the outcomes of my actions and look forward to the future. I am no longer that angry child that got mad over nothing*

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*and smoking lots of weed. I am a better person now, everyone can see it including my family”.*

### **Annex 2 – Complaints about Education and Schools**

Complaints about education and schools are governed by the Education Act 2002.

#### **Background information**

Complaints about the internal management of a school must initially be made in writing to the Head Teacher of the school. If this fails to resolve the issue, concerns should then be raised with the chair of governors. If a complainant remains dissatisfied they can then escalate their complaint to the Department for Education and beyond that to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman via a Member of Parliament.

The Local Authority will only deal with complaints which are education related but not about a specific school such as:

- The provision of the national curriculum;
- The provision of religious education and collective worship (with the exception of church aided schools);
- School admission appeals;
- Exclusions;
- Special educational needs assessments; and
- Child protection issues and allegations of child abuse.

#### **The Complaint Procedure**

For those complaints that the local authority has a statutory duty to investigate we will deal with the complaint in the following way:

- Stage 1 – response from the Chief Education Officer, Head of Performance and Improvement
- Stage 2 – response from the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director, Residents Services
- Stage 3 – response from the Chief Executive of the Council
- Local Government Ombudsman

A more detailed explanation of how the complaint procedure operates, the main complaint themes and statistical data for each stage of the process is provided below.

#### **a. THE INFORMAL COMPLAINT**

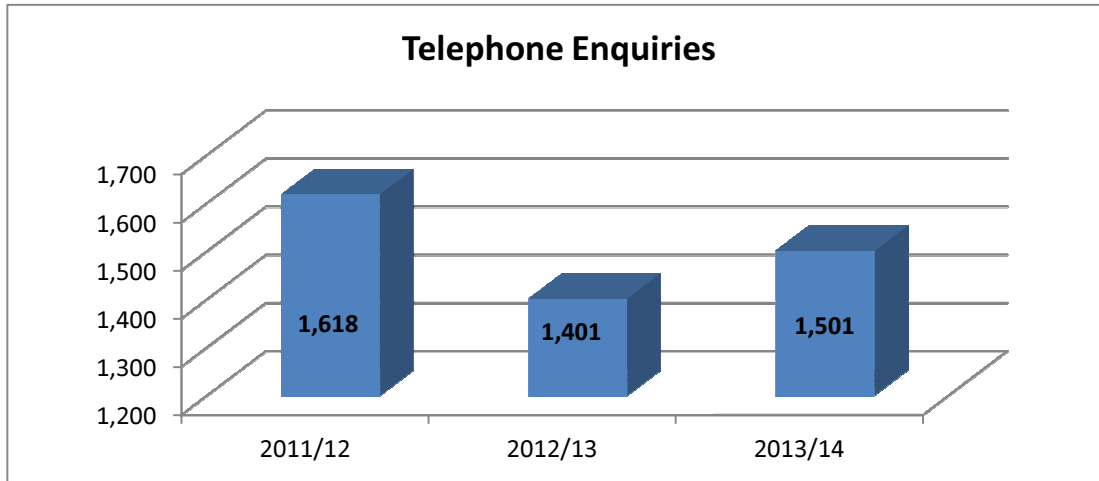
The local authority will attempt to consider all complaints/concerns as close to the point of contact as possible, and in cases where minor or day-to-day concerns are raised these are



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dealt with as service requests. The table below shows the total number of service requests received.

### Total number of telephone enquiries received

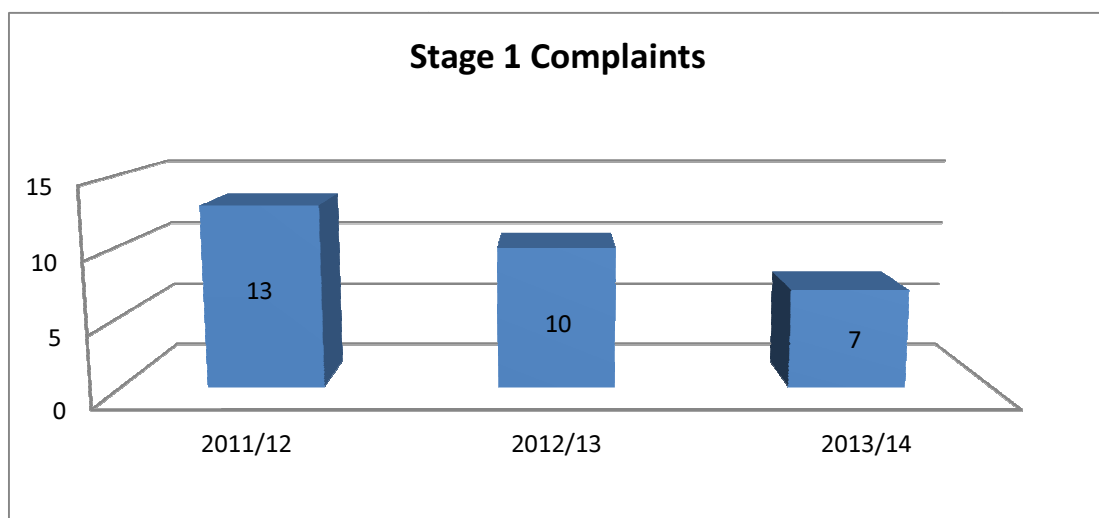


These enquiries are, in the main, dealt with by Contact Centre staff and tend to be about school waiting lists, admissions to a school place and accepting an offer of a school place.

### **b. STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS**

The Chief Education Officer or Head of Performance and Improvement will aim to respond to Stage 1 complaints within 10 working days.

### Total number of Stage 1 complaints



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When comparing the number of Stage 1 complaints for 2011/12 of 13 with 2013/14 of 7, this represents a 46% decrease but with the small numbers involved this is not significant. None of the seven complaints were upheld. Table 13 below provides details of the complaint and the outcome.

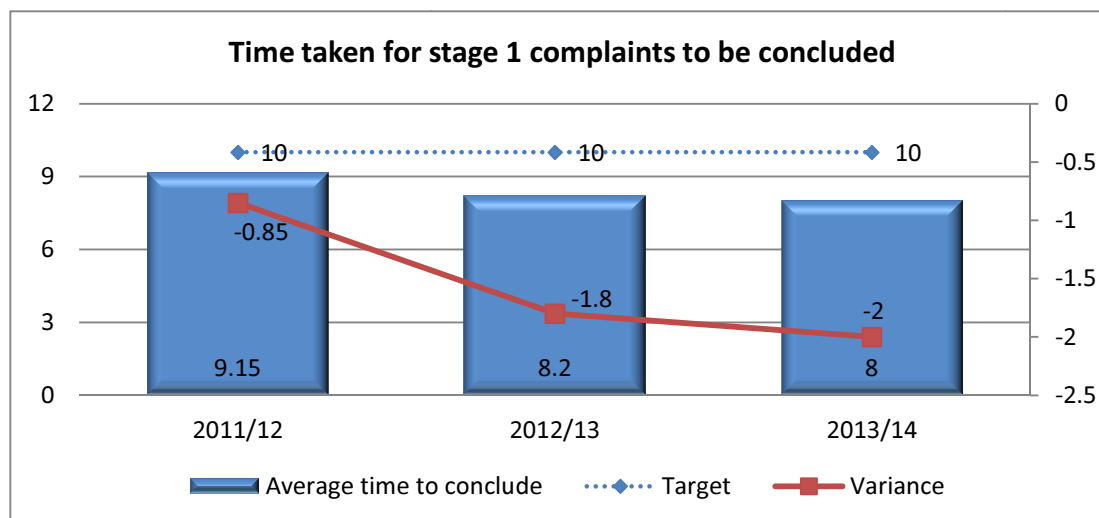
### Outcome of Stage 1 complaints for 2013/14

Reason for complaining	Outcome
<p><b>3017178</b> Ms X complained that her son was not receiving provision relating to his speech and language therapy and social skills group in accordance with the Tribunal Order.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Ms X was advised that the Tribunal Order states that because her son will continue to be educated in a special school as the need for provision to be completely specific is less important than in a mainstream environment. The school using their own specialist expertise should have some flexibility to achieve the objective. We are satisfied that the School is making appropriate provision for her son.</p>
<p><b>3251093</b> Mr X complained about the length of time his daughter had been on the waiting list for an Early Years Centre and that she had been removed from the waiting list without good reason.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Mr X was advised that there is no evidence to suggest that the Early Years Centre had entered into a private agreement to provide flexible childcare. Mr X was also informed that an e-mail was sent advising him of a placement but when it was not responded to, this was taken to mean that he no longer required this placement and her name was removed from the waiting list.</p>
<p><b>3346159</b> X Solicitors complained about a number of different issues including home to school transport, lack of adequate advice about a suitable school for their client's child, etc.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The solicitor was advised that the issues they had raised had already been responded to by the Council's Lawyers and they were referred to the letters.</p>
<p><b>3333204</b> X Solicitors initially complained that correspondence they had sent had not been responded to within the standard times. They asked for responses to various questions raised in previous communications.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The solicitors were advised that communications from them should be directed to department lawyers. Responses were also provided to various questions i.e. where within the Education Act does it stipulate that parents have a responsibility to ensure children attend school punctually.</p>
<p><b>3407146</b> Mrs X complained that her son had not</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Mrs X was advised that the options going</p>

## APPENDIX 2

<p>been schooled for just over 7 months, that no schools in the Borough and outside the Borough had accepted him and that he does not have a tutor from the Borough.</p>	<p>forward are now very limited. The Special Needs officer is willing to explore a package of education to meet her son's needs and that this could include individual tuition, group learning, college placement etc. Mrs X was asked how she wished to proceed.</p>
<p><b>3580154</b> Mrs X complained that her son had not been offered the school of their choice as we had failed to use her new address</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Mrs X was informed that we are required to follow the rules that are set to ensure that we treat all applications for a primary school place fairly and consistently. In her case, we are unable to accept her application from her new address as an on time application. This is because she exchanged contracts to purchase her new home after the deadline date.</p>
<p><b>3283844</b> Mr X complained about the way he was dealt with by Council staff in relation to letters sent to him by his daughter's school regarding her attendance. He felt that the school is too far from where they live and this has meant they are getting her to school late.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Head Teacher spoke to Mr X's wife regarding his daughter's attendance (66%). When he called, Council staff were unaware of this conversation or that he had a speech related disability. As a consequence telephone calls were terminated when he was perceived to be shouting at staff. We placed a note on records to make staff aware of Mr X's disability. Mr X has since been placed on the Restricted Persons Register.</p>

### Time taken for Stage 1 complaints to be concluded (working days)



Response times are consistently within the 10 working day target, year in year out.

### c. STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS

The Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director, Residents Services will aim to respond to Stage 2 complaints within 10 working days.

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### Total number of Stage 2 investigations

Year	Total
2011/12	0
2012/13	0
2013/14	2

The table below provides details of the complaint and the outcome.

### Outcome of complaints progressing to Stage 2

Complaint details	Decision at Stage 2
<b>3580154</b> Mrs X requested that her complaint be escalated as she did not agree with the findings at Stage 1 - she felt that the blame for her son not being given a place at his preferred school lay with the Admissions Team	<b>Not Upheld</b> Mrs X was informed that on review, we did not agree that there was a service failure within the School Placement and Admissions team which resulted in her son not being offered a school place at her preferred school. This is because we did not receive confirmation that she would definitely be moving to her new address until after 14 February 2014.
<b>3346159</b> X Solicitors complained that the Stage 1 response did not address their concerns namely why the Transport Manager kept changing drivers, why adequate advice was not provided in relation to suitable schools for their clients child, etc.	<b>Not Upheld</b> A detailed explanation was provided by the Director in relation to each issue raised as a complaint. The Director found that the Local Authority had made every effort to work with their client's parents to provide their son with suitable education.

### d. STAGE 3 COMPLAINTS

The Chief Executive commissions an investigation by an officer in Democratic Services and we aim to respond to Stage 3 complaints within 15 working days.

### Total number of Stage 3 investigations

Period	Total
2011/12	0
2012/13	0
2013/14	2

The table below provides details of the Stage 3 investigation and the outcome of the complaint.

### Outcome of complaints progressing to Stage 3

Complaint details	Decision at Stage 3
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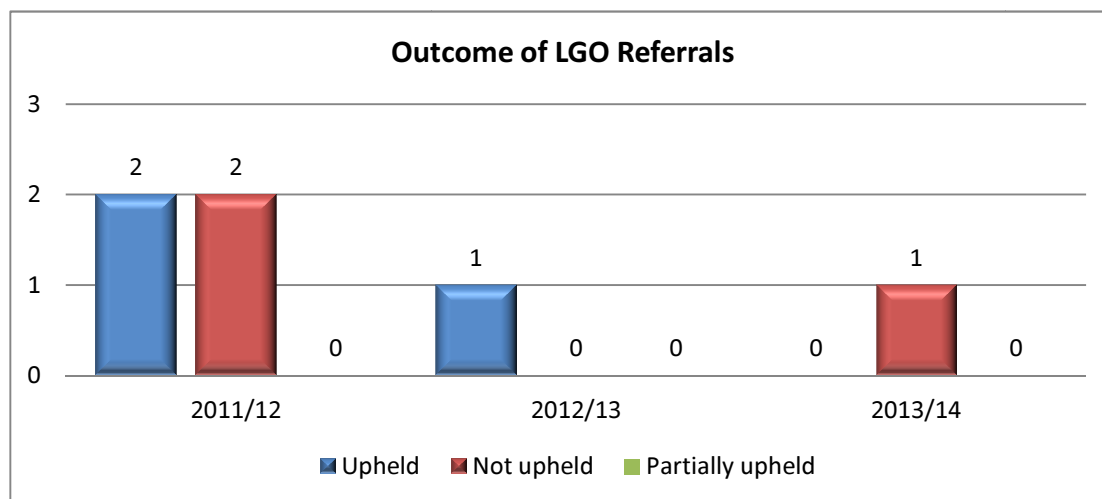
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<p><b>3580154</b> Mrs X complained that the response at Stage 2 was one sided and that it ignored significant events that prove there was a service failure by the Schools placement and admissions team.</p>	<p><b>Withdrawn</b> A vacancy had arisen at Mrs X's son's preferred school and he had been offered a place which Mrs X had accepted. Democratic Services closed the complaint as Mrs X had previously advised that the offer of a school place at her preferred school would bring a satisfactory resolution to her complaint.</p>
<p><b>3346159</b> X Solicitors complain that staff had refused to answer straightforward questions or acknowledge the part the Local Authority had played in their client's son being inadequately supported.</p>	<p><b>Partially Upheld</b> The CE agreed that the alleged assault on their client's son should have been looked in more detail and apologised that it was not. All other aspects of the complaint such as lack of adequate advice about suitable schools, problems associated with the home to school transport and the decision to provide home tuition in a public library were not upheld.</p>

### e. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN (LGO) INVESTIGATIONS

Where it appears that a Council's own investigation has not resolved the complaint, the complainant is entitled to refer their complaint to the LGO and at any stage of the complaint process. However, the LGO will in most instances expect a complainant to have gone through all three stages of the Council's complaints procedure before they can ask the LGO to investigate.

#### Outcome of LGO referrals



There were substantially fewer investigations by the LGO when comparing 2011/12 of 4 with 2013/14 of 1. The table below detail of the complaint submitted to the LGO and the outcome of the investigation.

#### Outcome of LGO referral 2013/14

Complaint details	LGO decision
	<b>Not Upheld</b>

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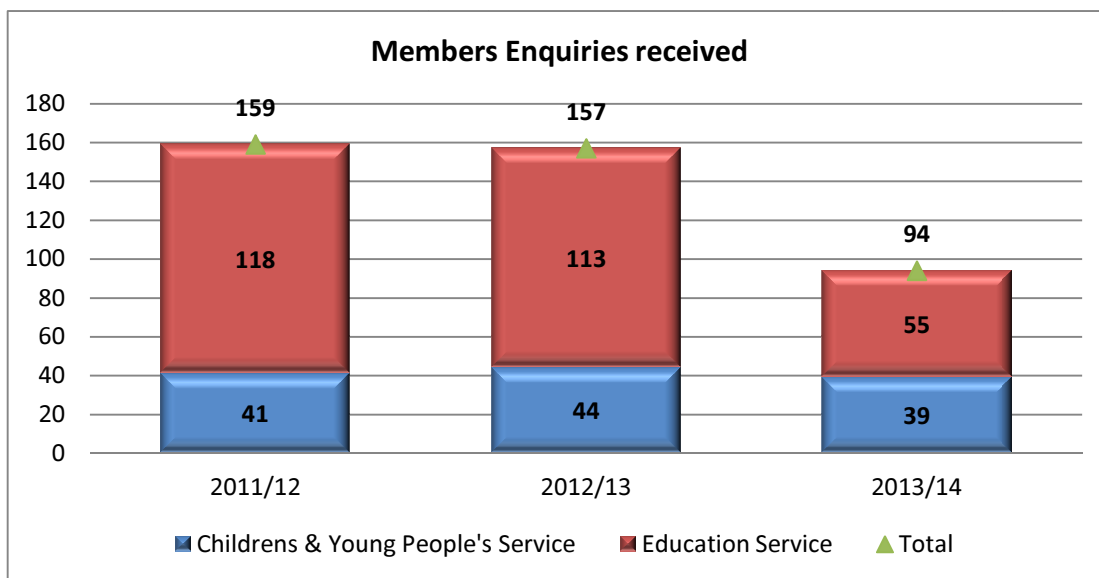
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<p>Ms X complained direct to the Ombudsman that the Council had not found a suitable place for her daughter who is now without full time education.</p>	<p>The LGO informed Ms X that the Council is under a legal duty to provide a school place for a child of statutory school age. The evidence shows the Council fulfilled this duty when it offered a school place to Ms X's daughter. Once the Council had made an offer, the onus fell on Ms X to either accept the offer, or make alternative arrangements. The Council is not under a duty to meet parental preference. It was Ms X's decision to reject the original offer of a place, and the Council cannot be held responsible for any loss of education which occurred after that date.</p>
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### Annex 3 - Members Enquiries

Enquiries can be submitted to officers on behalf of residents to Elected Members for further information. This can include questions about an assessment, decisions or quality of service experienced by our resident.

**Table 21 – Members Enquiries received**



- Children & Young People's Service received 39 enquiries from Members for 2013/14 which is broadly similar with previous years - 2011/12 of 41 and 2012/13 of 44.
- Education Service received 55 enquiries from Members for 2013/14 which is a significant decrease when compared with 2011/12 of 118 and 2012/13 of 113.
- Children and Young People's Service Members Enquiries tend to be about Looked After Children and Disabilities Services.
- Education Members Enquiries tend to be about school admissions, universal services, early years and special education services.



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## APPENDIX 3

### **ANNUAL COMPLAINT REPORT FOR HOUSING SERVICES AND ADULTS' SERVICES FOR 1 APRIL 2013 TO 31 MARCH 2014**

**Contact Officer:** Dan Kennedy / Ian Anderson  
**Telephone:** x0495 / 7335

#### **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

Using feedback from residents to improve services is a key element of putting our residents first in Hillingdon. This includes feedback in the form of complaints.

This Council aims to make it as easy as possible for people to provide feedback and aim to resolve all complaints at the earliest opportunity. Our complaint procedure is designed to ensure that complaints are dealt with openly, flexibly and in a timely way. Learning from complaints is used to drive up customer satisfaction and make service improvements.

This report provides information and analysis of complaints and Members Enquiries received between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014 for Housing and Adults' Services and satisfies the requirements to publish annual information about complaints.

#### **OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE**

1. Discuss and comment on the annual report and use the report to inform their overview activities
2. Note the contents of the annual report
3. Highlight any concerns with the relevant Cabinet Member

#### **SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS**

- a. **Housing Services** (See annex 1 – pages 6 to 19)
  - The number of Stage 1 complaints for 2013/14 of 175 represents a 42% increase when compared with 2011/12 of 123. This % increase is

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also reflected at Stages 2 and 3, where the numbers of complaints registered has increased by 179% and 475%, respectively.

- The average time taken to conclude complaints at Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the complaint process is within the time target set.
- One complainant asked the Council's 'Designated Person' to intervene, which the Designated Person did. The decision of the Council was upheld.
- Four people escalated their complaint to the Ombudsman. None of these complaints were upheld or partially upheld.

### **b. Adults' Services (See annex 2 – pages 20 to 25)**

- The number of Stage 1 complaints for 2013/14 of 42 represents a 39% decrease when compared with 2011/12 of 69.
- The average time taken to conclude a Stage 1 complaint has been reduced from 27.8 working days in 2011/12 to 11.97 working days for 2013/14. This is a significant improvement when compared against the two previous years and against the 20 working day target.
- The number of referrals dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) for 2013/14 was 3, which represents a 73% decrease when compared against 2011/12 of 11.
- The number of compliments recorded for 2013/14 of 31 represents a 417% increase when compared with 2011/12 of 6.

### **c. Members Enquiries (ME's) (See Annex 3 – page 26)**

- Housing Services received 1,134 enquiries from Elected Members for 2013/14 which represents a 40% increase when compared with 2011/12 of 822.
- Adults' Services received 143 enquiries from Elected Members for 2013/14 which is broadly similar with previous years of 141 for 2011/12 and 147 for 2012/13.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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### **1. The Council's Vision**

The Council's vision is about 'putting our residents first'. We do this by working closely with customers/residents and listening to their views including through complaints, resolving these as soon as possible and using their feedback to prevent similar complaints for the future.

### **2. What is a Complaint?**

In general terms a complaint can be considered as:

*"an expression of dissatisfaction by telephone, personal visit or in writing, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the council or its staff affecting an individual or group of customers."*

### **3. How Can People Complain?**

Complaints can be made in person, by telephone, in writing, by fax, via our website or email, either directly to the service area, Contact Centre or to the Complaints and Service Improvement Team.

### **4. The Complaints Procedure**

Housing complaints are managed in line with the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

Adults' services complaints are managed in line with the 'The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009'

### **5. The Informal Complaint**

The process of complaints resolution involves talking to the customer/resident and talking through the issues they have raised, clarifying any points and understanding what outcome they are seeking to achieve. As a result, in addition to the formal complaints procedure, the Complaints and Service Improvement Team take customer enquiries or 'concerns' and deal with them promptly and informally. This is because feedback we have received from residents indicates that most want action to resolve the issue quickly and are happy that this is undertaken informally.

### **6. Compensation Payments**

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If after an investigation by council staff or the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), it is concluded that as a result of maladministration by council staff it has resulted in a complainant suffering a financial loss, compensation may be offered to the complainant.

### **7. What Has the Council Done to Improve Complaint Handling?**

The Council sees every complaint as an opportunity to learn from customers about what works and what does not. As a result of complaints received during 2013/14 the Council has and continues to take the following action:

- workshops for managers and relevant staff are run in investigating and responding to complaints.
- focussed on ensuring we take action on conclusion of a complaint to reduce the likelihood of the same complaint recurring.
- ensured that monthly and quarterly reports are provided for managers regarding their team/service areas complaint handling performance.

### **8. What is the Council Going to do to Improve Complaint Handling?**

The Council will continue to seek feedback from those residents who have had cause to complain. During 2014/15 we are using feedback to improve our complaint handling processes and make service improvements by focusing on:

- the Complaint and Service Improvement Team send prompts, on day 7, reminding staff when the deadline for response is due. This should help to ensure that complaints continue to be responded within target.
- running monthly workshops for managers and relevant staff (via the Learning and Development portal) as part of the suite of customer service courses we offer.
- introduce a web page that pulls together all complaint information in one easy place for staff to view. This will include advice and guidance on handling customer dissatisfaction, complaint procedures, published complaint reports, etc.

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- publish regular articles in “AllStaffEmail” on current performance, trends, learning identified, etc.

### **9. Mediation**

For some complaints it will not be appropriate, or possible, to resolve them through the complaint process - particularly where there has been a breakdown in the relationship between the service provider and the service user or where emotions are running high. In such situations the Complaints and Service Improvement Manager will consider whether mediation is an option that should be considered.

The Complaints and Service Improvement Manager will contact both parties to see if they will agree to mediation. (Mediation is not possible without the agreement of those concerned). If both parties are agreeable, mediation by an independent mediator will allow both sides to:

- express their own views;
- think about how to put things right; and
- come together to reach a solution.

### **Background Documents**

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### **Annex 1 – Complaints about Housing Services**

Housing complaints are managed in line with the Corporate Complaints Procedure. This procedure operates as follows:

#### **The Corporate Complaints Procedure**

This procedure operates as follows:

- Stage 1 – response from the Head of Housing or Deputy Director Residents Services
- Stage 2 – response from the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Residents Services
- Stage 3 – response from the Chief Executive of the Council
- Stage 4 - Designated Person for the Council (for tenants of housing association, local authorities and ALMOS when local complaint procedures have been exhausted. Effective from 1 April 2013.)
- Local Government Ombudsman

A more detailed explanation of how the complaint procedure operates, the main complaint themes and statistical data for each stage of the process is provided below.

#### **a. INFORMAL COMPLAINTS**

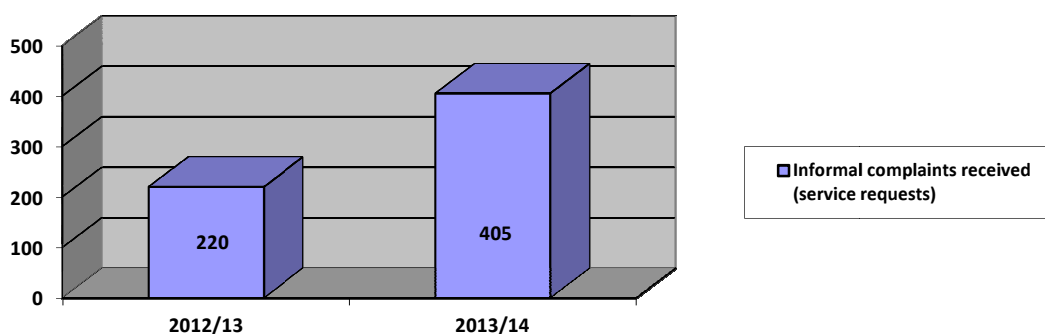
Housing staff focus on resolving complaints informally. This emphasis to resolve issues and concerns quickly and avert the need to escalate these to a

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formal complaint means that a significant number of concerns are dealt with by way of service requests. The table below shows the number of informal complaints that were dealt with by way of service requests. The increase in service requests during 2013/14 indicates that more customers are prepared to work with the Council at an early stage to resolve issues.

### Informal complaints received (service requests)



When comparing the number of service requests recorded in 2012/13 of 220 with 405 in 2013/14, this represents an 84% (185) increase. The increase in volume of service requests were as a result of:

**Repairs** accounted for 45% of all service requests, with residents complaining about delays in carrying out mainly smaller repairs.

**Housing Need** accounted for 32% of all service requests. A number of these service requests were seeking further information about the changes to the revised Social Housing Allocations policy introduced in July 2013.

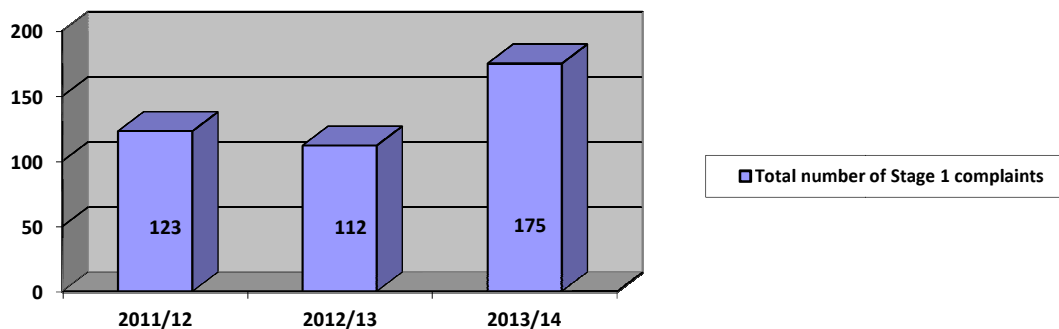
### **b. STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS**

Housing complaints are managed in line with the Corporate Complaints Procedure, with the Head of Housing or Deputy Director Residents Services aiming to respond within 10 working days.

### **Total Number of Stage 1 complaints**

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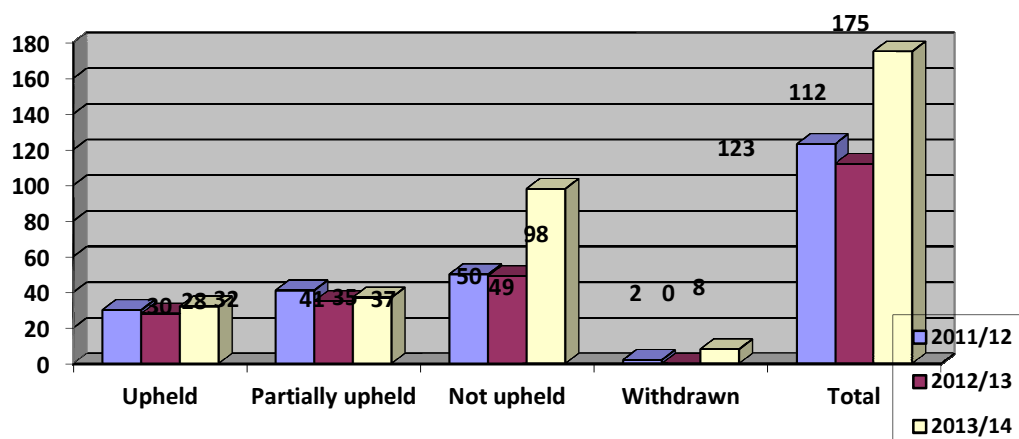
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When comparing the total number of complaints recorded for 2011/12 of 123, with the same period in 2013/14 of 175, this represents a 42% (52) increase.

Overall, 175 Stage 1 complaints is still small when taking into consideration the number of residents who use this service (housing services provide service to approximately 13,000 residents and 3,700 people on the housing register).

### Outcome of complaints



Of the 175 Stage 1 complaints, 39% were either upheld or partially upheld. For 2011/12 and 2012/13, 57% and 56%, respectively were either upheld or partially upheld. Of the additional complaints received about housing services in 2013/14 most were not upheld.

### Time taken to conclude a complaint at Stage 1 (working days)

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Average time taken to conclude a complaint	8.8	9.6	8.7
Target	10	10	10
Variance	- 1.2	- 0.4	- 1.3

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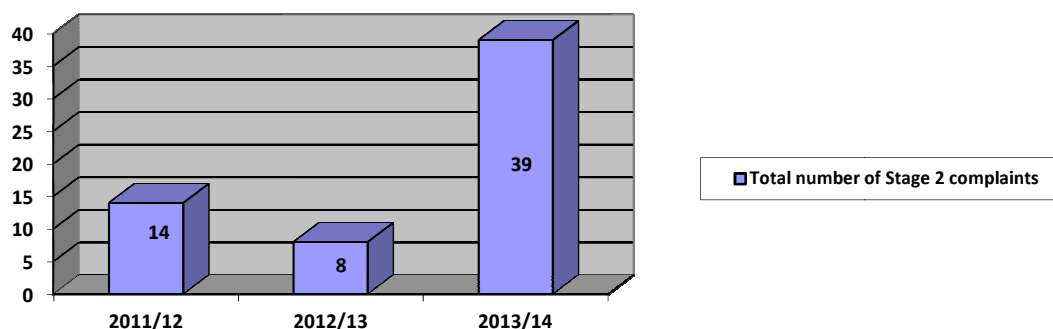
The average time taken to conclude a Stage 1 complaint is 8.7 working days which is under the 10 working day target. This is commendable given the increase in complaints.

However, 47 of the 175 Stage 1 complaints were concluded outside the 10 working day target. This is a concern as 1 in 4 complaints are not being responded to within target. The Complaints and Service Improvement Team are sending reminders at an early stage to ensure responses are prioritised.

### **c. STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS**

The Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director, Residents Services aims to respond to Stage 2 complaints within 10 working days.

#### **Total number of Stage 2 complaints**

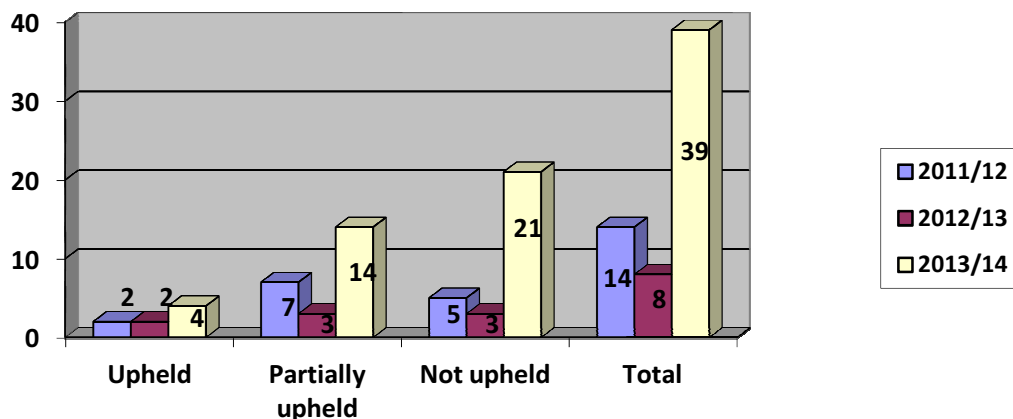


When comparing the total number of complaints recorded at Stage 2 for 2011/12 of 14 with 2013/14 of 39, this represents a 179% (25) increase.

Proportionately, more complaints have escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2 in 2013/14 (22%) than in 2011/12 of 11% and 2012/13 of 7%. This increase is connected with changes to the Social Housing Allocations policy and housing repairs service.

#### **Outcome of complaints**

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Proportionately, the number of upheld and partially upheld complaints has gone down when comparing 2013/14 (46%) against 2011/12 (64%) and 2012/13 (63%). Most of the additional complaints received about housing services in 2013/14 were not upheld or partially upheld.

### Outcome of complaints progressing to Stage 2

Complaint details	Decision
<p><b>3172189</b> Mrs X complained that the Housing Officer had ignored her issues – access to her property being blocked by her neighbour’s car, lighting to be replaced and locks to be changed.</p>	<p><b>Upheld</b> Apologised for delay in processing outstanding work. We offered her compensation for inconvenience.</p>
<p><b>3372206</b> Mr X complained on behalf of his mother regarding the heating and ventilation system at her sheltered accommodation, cooking smells circulating around the home, about the door locking mechanism and the lack of communications</p>	<p><b>Upheld</b> We explained that the home has a modern and complex integrated heating and ventilation system. Working with M&amp;E consultant, we have identified works which need to be undertaken and once this work is completed it will address the issues complained of. An</p>

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regarding the planned works.	automated door system was fitted in his mother's flat.
<p><b>3343383</b></p> <p>Mr X complained that his roof had been looked at 5/6 times since he moved in and was told repeatedly that it was due to the gutter being blocked or pointing in the direction of the window. He did not feel that this was the case as rain comes in through the roof and the seal of the window.</p>	<p><b>Upheld</b></p> <p>We explained that previous inspections had not identified any problems with the roof but would be erecting scaffolding to inspect and complete the repair. We agreed to leave the scaffolding up for a further six weeks in order to ensure that we could be satisfied that the problem has been resolved and if it had not, it could be quickly re-addressed.</p>
<p><b>3165230</b></p> <p>Ms X complained on behalf of her sister – she felt that her sister's homeless application had not been properly considered.</p>	<p><b>Partially Upheld</b></p> <p>Ms X was informed that her sister's application was dealt with in accordance with guidelines. She needed to await the outcome of the review. However, we apologised for the delay in processing the housing application.</p>
<p><b>3343106</b></p> <p>Mr X complained that a T Brown engineer had incorrectly installed his radiator system and this resulted in one of the radiators being on permanently. Mr X wanted to be compensated for the extra use of gas.</p>	<p><b>Partially Upheld</b></p> <p>We informed Mr X that when his central heating system was installed and it could not be turned off he should have been told to turn off the power to the boiler until he required the heating. We apologised for this and offered Mr X £45.36 for expenses incurred. We did not uphold Mr X's complaint that the engineer from T Brown failed to attend appointments.</p>
<p><b>3235256</b></p> <p>Mrs X is unhappy that the Council refused to pay her 1 month's rent in advance.</p>	<p><b>Partially Upheld</b></p> <p>We advised Mrs X that whilst the decision was right to refer her to her current Local Authority to claim one month's rent in advance. As a gesture of goodwill we agreed to pay her one month's rent in advance.</p>
<p><b>3296619</b></p> <p>Ms X complained that operatives</p>	<p><b>Partially Upheld</b></p> <p>Ms X was advised that the operative</p>

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<p>did not call her before appointments, the Council did not follow up after an inspection of her ceiling and that the work to her ceiling was delayed because only 1 workman was sent to do the job when 2 was needed.</p>	<p>said that they had called her prior to the appointment. We could not form a view with two conflicting version of events. We explained that work had to be re prioritised because at that time the focus was on repairing Void properties with smaller work being re scheduled. We apologised that only 1 workman was sent.</p>
<p><b>3003617</b> Ms X was unhappy that the Council was refusing to repair work to her property.</p>	<p><b>Not upheld</b> Ms X was informed that the Council had not given consent for the removal of a wall between her flat and garden store. It was her responsibility to pay for work to stop the leaks which had occurred as a result of the works the tenant had undertaken.</p>
<p><b>3306913</b> Mr X complained that a telephone operative was impolite, asked to know whether the GP report had been taken into consideration in his application for sheltered accommodation and is unhappy that he was refused sheltered accommodation.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Mr X was advised that the telephone operative denied being rude to him and without any independent corroborating evidence either way it was difficult to form a view. Mr X was advised that the report from his GP was considered but as he is a homeowner he is not entitled to be put on the waiting list for sheltered accommodation.</p>
<p><b>3261242</b> Mrs X complained that the report her solicitors received contained typographical and factual errors. He also felt that the inspection that was carried out was superficial and that the report could “create a lot of financial, psychological and personal damage”.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> We acknowledged and apologised that a space was incorrectly inserted in the first line of her address but otherwise the report was accurate. In relation to the inspection, Mrs X was informed that unless the officer is able to identify any serious category 1 or 2 hazards then there is no formal legal action we can take within the confines of the law.</p>
<p><b>3223295</b> Mrs X complained that when her central heating boiler was replaced it was not properly done and resulted in a water leak which caused damage to her laminate</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> We explained that an excess fee is not usually requested up front but that any excess that has been paid or needs to be levied, is recovered on settlement of the claim which is usually handled by</p>

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<p>flooring. Whilst her flooring is covered by household contents insurance, she wanted the Council or T Brown to pay her excess.</p>	<p>the two insurance companies. Our understanding is that the insurers have exchanged details and the matter is being dealt with between them.</p>
<p><b>3267186</b> Mr X complained that he was not offered self contained temporary accommodation but instead temporary accommodation with shared facilities.</p>	<p><b>Not upheld</b> Mr X was advised that it is not always possible to meet the preferences expressed by residents either for the location or type of accommodation they would like. At the time residents require assistance with accommodation, we will do all that we can to support them but it is not always possible to offer self contained accommodation as we have a limited stock of suitable accommodation.</p>
<p><b>3599100</b> Mr X was unhappy with the decision not to offer him social housing.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Mr X was advised that the outcome of his homeless application was that he had made himself intentionally homeless by not paying his rent. If he was dissatisfied with this decision, his recourse was to appeal rather than pursuing it through the complaint process.</p>
<p><b>3538051</b> Mr X advised that when his garage door became jammed, as it was late in the day, he got a local mechanic to repair it. Mr X requested that the Council reimburse him the costs he incurred.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Mr X was advised that the Council is not obliged to reimburse him, as we were not given the opportunity to fix the door first. As a gesture of goodwill we agreed to pay his costs.</p>
<p><b>3430334</b> Mr X complained that he believed that the delays in carrying out repairs to his property were deliberate acts by Council officers, allegedly as a result of his past relationship with the Council.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Mr X was advised that we could not see any evidence to support his stance. We would look at this issue again on receipt of hard evidence from him.</p>
<p><b>3553431</b> Mr X complained about the actions of a Senior Housing Surveyor in carrying out an inspection.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Mr X was advised of the powers of an officer when investigating a property which was allegedly being used as a</p>

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	house in multiple occupation. We were satisfied that the officer had carried out his duties in accordance with our policies and procedures.
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Nb – Please see pages 13 to 17 for the remaining Stage 2 complaints that progressed to Stage 3.

### **Time taken to conclude a complaint at Stage 2 (working days)**

	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>
Average time taken to conclude a complaint	12.1	9.85	8.5
Target	10	10	10
Variance	+ 2.1	- 0.15	- 1.5

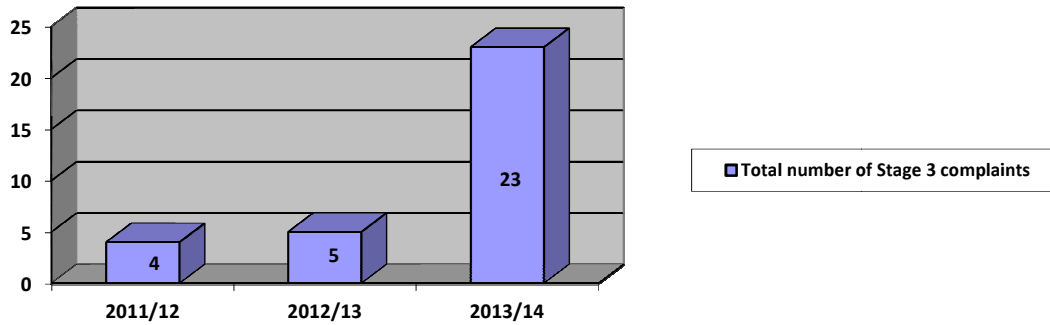
The average time taken to conclude a Stage 2 complaint has reduced from 12.1 working days in 2011/12 to 8.5 working days in 2013/14.

### **d. STAGE 3 COMPLAINTS**

The Chief Executive commissions an investigation by an officer in Democratic Services. The Chief Executive aims to respond within 15 working days.

### **Total number of Stage 3 complaints**

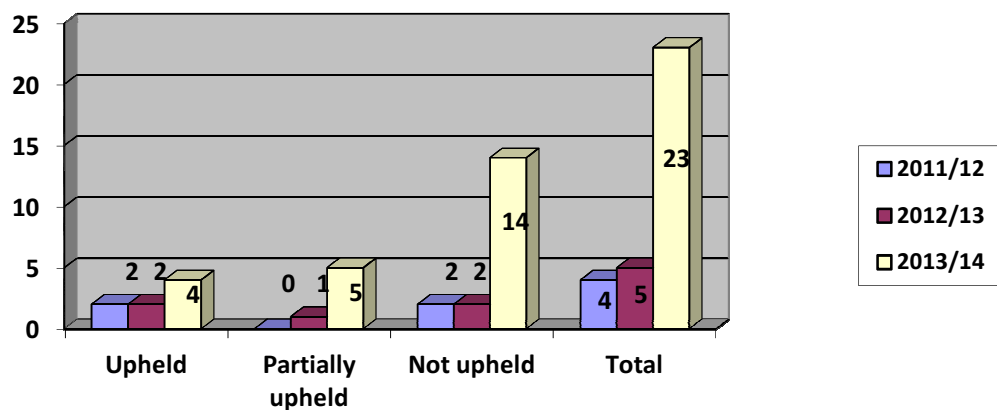
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When comparing the total number of complaints recorded at Stage 3 for 2011/12 of 4 with 2013/14 of 23, this represents an almost five fold (19) increase.

Proportionately, more complaints have escalated from Stage 2 to Stage 3 in 2013/14 (59%), than in 2011/12 (29%).

**Table 10 – Outcome of Stage 3 complaints**



Proportionately, the number of upheld and partially upheld complaints has gone down when comparing 2013/14 of 39% with 2011/12 of 50% and 2012/13 of 60%. Most complaints at Stage 3 were not upheld.

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### Outcome of complaints progressing to Stage 3

<b>Complaint details</b>	<b>Decision</b>
<p><b>3209128</b> Mr X felt that the Council had to take responsibility for being offered inappropriate temporary accommodation.</p>	<p><b>Upheld</b> An apology was given for the error the Council made with his situation. Alternative accommodation has been offered to the tenant.</p>
<p><b>3348522</b> Ms X complained that errors by the Council resulted in her accruing service charge arrears.</p>	<p><b>Upheld</b> The Council admitted and apologised for the service errors identified in this case and offered Ms X compensation.</p>
<p><b>3109112</b> Mrs X complained about the service provided for her sister whilst living in sheltered accommodation.</p>	<p><b>Upheld</b> The Council admitted that it failed to provide the high level of service that it strives to deliver to its vulnerable residents and has taken appropriate action. An apology was offered to Mrs X and her sister.</p>
<p><b>3300278</b> Mr X complained that no viewings were offered to his daughter despite bidding every week.</p>	<p><b>Upheld</b> The Council apologised and made a direct offer of the next available, suitable property by way of redress for the error.</p>
<p><b>3011739</b> Mr X complained that as his son had additional needs and a follow up letter should have been sent.</p>	<p><b>Partially Upheld</b> The Chief Executive concluded that as we were aware of Mr X's son's circumstances, this should have been taken into account when corresponding with him. We apologised to the complainant and his son.</p>
<p><b>3288200</b> Mr X was unhappy with the Stage 2 response and given the evidence of disproportionate delay in repairing the gas fire and that it was requested that the original complaint be reviewed.</p>	<p><b>Partially Upheld</b> Mr X was advised that we would seek to find a replacement part and apologised that some aspects of the complaint handling was not in accordance with procedure. However, this was not deliberate or that it had any material impact on the outcome of the complaint.</p>
<p><b>3311404</b> Ms X disputed that she had been provided with an appropriate and suitable remedy in being offered a direct allocation.</p>	<p><b>Partially Upheld</b> The complainant received an apology for the failure in service which led to her not securing the property of her first preference but that a direct allocation of</p>

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	a similar property was reasonable and proportionate redress.
<p><b>3266088</b> Mr X complained that it was the inadequacy of the work completed by the Repairs Team in securing his front door that he was unable to remain in the property.</p>	<p><b>Partially Upheld</b> We apologised to Mr X for the length of time it took to replace the door.</p>
<p><b>3293402</b> Mr X complained that the Council had been advised that water was dripping onto the electrics and that this was recorded in data entries back to May 2012.</p>	<p><b>Partially Upheld</b> Mr X was advised that owing to client confidentiality, the Repairs Team, would not have been aware of information given to another service area about Mr X's personal circumstances. We apologised for the delay in resolving the leak to the roof and offered Mr X compensation.</p>
<p><b>3081513</b> Mr X complained that he had to perch on a desk during the visit on 28 May because there had been no suitable seating available.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Mr X was informed that it is impossible to know exactly what transpired at the visit but it seems unlikely that, with the variety of seating options available, officers would not have attempted to accommodate Mr X's needs.</p>
<p><b>3006330</b> Mrs X complained that she had made three telephone calls to the Environmental Health Team and sent a letter but no action was taken to address the draught in her bedroom.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Chief Executive informed Mrs X that there is no record of any of the three telephone calls having been received nor is there a copy of the letter she says was sent on our files.</p>
<p><b>2994736</b> Mrs X complained that it was problems with her heating system that had resulted in a much higher electricity bill. She sought compensation from the Council.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Chief Executive informed Mrs X there was no evidence to support Mrs X's claim for compensation in that a faulty boiler led to an excessively high fuel bill.</p>
<p><b>3082914</b> Ms X complained that two Council inspectors told her that she maintained her kitchen to too high a standard and there was no reason for her kitchen to be re</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Ms X was informed that repairs in the kitchen would be undertaken but we would not be renewing the kitchen - officers have taken a reasonable approach of the works required to bring</p>

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fitted.	the kitchen to an acceptable standard.
<p><b>3411636</b> Ms X stated her housing need and her entitlement to a restoration package following her dismissal as a Hillingdon Council employee.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Ms X was advised that the Council had offered information, advice and guidance in a timely and appropriate manner and had no duty to provide her with housing. Her suggestion of a restoration package was refused, she was advised to seek legal advice.</p>
<p><b>3423841</b> Mr X complained about mistakes made by a contractor during the construction of his extension and for the amount of time he had wasted to enable the contractors to access his property.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Mr X was advised that the Chief Executive did not concur that the actions of the Council resulted in an injustice to Mr X or that any loss was incurred by him that would justify a payment of compensation in this case.</p>
<p><b>3470335</b> Ms X complained that it was not acceptable for the Council to provide her with a property that only had a disabled shower and no bath when it was known that she had a two-year-old child.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Chief Executive was satisfied that Ms X had been provided with clear reasons why the Council will not install a bath at her property. If Ms X provides evidence of a medical need why a bath is required, the issue will be revisited.</p>
<p><b>3340298</b> Mr X stated that the revised Housing Allocations Policy had been incorrectly applied as he had only been awarded a temporary place on the Register. The policy should have been applied after his banding had been confirmed.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Mr X was informed that the Chief Executive could find no evidence of maladministration and consider officers to have provided the correct information and also applied the policy correctly.</p>
<p><b>3415358</b> Mr X complained of the problems he had encountered with his current accommodation in the private sector. He had asked the Council for assistance but was unhappy that social housing was not provided by the Council for him.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> No evidence could be found to support his contention that there had been any maladministration or that his housing allocation had been jeopardised by the actions of the Council.</p>

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<p><b>3134810</b> Mr X was unhappy that the Council would not provide him with secure social housing as he was homeless.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Mr X was advised that as he had not lived in the Borough for 10 years he was not eligible for social housing.</p>
<p><b>3462034</b> Mr X complained that under part VII of the Housing Act 1996 the Council was required to either adapt his current home or to provide him with social housing.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Mr X was advised that as he held a share in the property in which he lived, the Council are only able to offer advice on the complainant's options for seeking a property in the private sector.</p>
<p><b>3466638</b> Ms X complained that the Council had a duty to provide her with social housing as her nephew had taken possession of the property she used to live at.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Ms X was informed that the Housing Allocations policy had been explained to her and that any homeless application she makes would be unsuccessful – she was not considered to be in priority need.</p>
<p><b>3477569</b> Ms X said that she met the 10 year residency criteria and that the Council's scheme for private renting was not working as she had been trying for a year to find private accommodation.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Ms X was advised that she was not eligible for social housing as she had lived in another Borough for 1 year – we had checked the electoral register of another Borough and Experian to verify this. We offered her advice and support to find a property in the private sector.</p>
<p><b>3407902</b> Miss X complained that she had been awarded Band C in May 2012 and not at the time she was made homeless. The Council had penalised her by changing her priority date to March 2013.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Miss X was informed that no evidence could be found of maladministration concerning the explanation given to her concerning the introduction of the revised Housing Allocation Policy.</p>

### e. INVESTIGATION BY THE COUNCIL'S DESIGNATED PERSON

From 1 April 2013, if a complaint is about a tenancy, leasehold, or other housing management issue, a complainant will first need to refer their complaint to a 'Designated Person'. This can be a Councillor, MP or a Tenant Panel recognised by the Council who will decide whether to consider the complaint and help resolve it. If the 'Designated Person' cannot resolve a complaint or if 8 weeks have elapsed since the Stage 3 response, a complainant can then complain to the Housing Ombudsman.

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During 2013/14 one complainant asked the Designated Person for the Council (Cllr Corthorne) to see if he could help to resolve the complaint. Table 12 below provides details of the complaint and the outcome of the review.

### Outcome of the investigation by the Designated Person

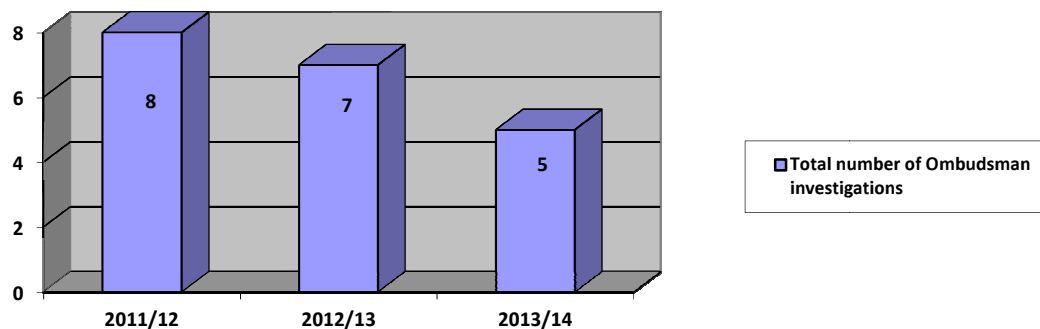
The Complaint	Council's position	Decision of the Designated Person
<b>3462034</b> Mr X believed that that the Council is required to provide him with accommodation on the basis that he met the five tests under part VII of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.	The Council's position is that as Mr X owned a share in a property, there was no legal duty to provide him with social housing. The Council referred Mr X to section 2.2.2 of the Social Housing Allocations Policy which states that 'any household who owns or has an interest in a property' will not qualify to join the housing register.	<b>Not Upheld</b> Cllr Corthorne sought legal advice on this issue. The legal advice he received was that as Mr X owned a share in the property, as an owner of the property he is not eligible for inclusion on the Council's Housing Register". Cllr Corthorne upheld the decision of the Council not to include Mr X's name on the Housing Register.

### f. INVESTIGATION BY THE OMBUDSMAN

Where it appears that a Council's own investigations have not resolved the complaint, the complainant is entitled to refer their complaint to the Ombudsman and at any stage of the complaint process. However, the Ombudsman normally refers the complaint back to the Council if it has not been considered fully using local procedures first.

### Total number of Ombudsman investigations

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The number of complainants escalating their complaint to the Ombudsman has reduced from 8 in 2011/12 to 5 in 2013/14.

### Outcome of investigations by the Housing Ombudsman

Complaint details	Ombudsman decision	Recommendations
<p><b>3265938</b> Mr X complained to the HO that the Council did not provide sufficient information about planned major works to the property he purchased in 2006. He also said that the Council had not responded to his Freedom of Information Act request.</p>	<p><b>Outside of their Jurisdiction</b> The HO informed Mr X they could not consider his complaint. This was because the substantive matter of the complaint (that the landlord did not provide him with sufficient information about the major works to the roof) had already been considered and a finding made by the Local Government Ombudsman in 2008. They could not consider it again. In terms of the FOI request, Mr X was advised to raise this with the Information Commissioner's Office.</p>	<p>None</p>

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<p><b>2994736</b> Mrs X Complained that a defect in the heating and hot water system caused her utility bills to increase and that the Council should compensate her for the increased costs.</p>	<p><b>Not upheld</b> The Ombudsman decision was that the Council were not responsible for Mrs X's electricity bill. The reason her bills were so high was because Mrs X had been paying estimated bills.</p>	<p>None</p>
<p><b>3348522</b> Miss X complained to the Ombudsman regarding the outcome of the Council's investigation regarding service charges she was invoiced for disputed works in 2011.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Ombudsman advised Miss X that she was "satisfied that the landlord has acted fairly in attempting to resolve this dispute. This includes appropriately acknowledging what went wrong and redressing this by way of an offer of proportionate compensation." It was on this basis that the complaint was closed.</p>	<p>None</p> <p>Miss X contacted the Council and accepted the offer of compensation.</p>
<p><b>3466638</b> Ms X complained about the Council's decision that she was not eligible to join the social housing register.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Ombudsman decision was that there was no evidence of fault in the Council's not to include Ms X's name on the Housing register. This is because the decision was made in accordance with the Council's housing allocations policy.</p>	<p>None</p>

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Mr X complained direct to the Ombudsman that the Council had unreasonably decided it had no duty to house his family because he had made himself intentionally homeless.	The Ombudsman decided not to investigate this complaint because Mr X can use his statutory review and appeal rights to challenge the Council's decision in a County Court.	None
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### **Annex 2 – Complaints about Adults’ Services**

The procedure for dealing with Adults’ Services complaints is regulated by the ‘The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009’. This sets out the two stage complaint procedure that Local Authorities are required to follow and it applies to older people,

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people with a physical disability, people with a learning disability and other vulnerable people.

### The Complaint Procedure

This procedure is far less prescriptive and allows for early escalation to the Local Government Ombudsman should the complainant be dissatisfied with the response from the Local Authority. The intention of this procedure is to achieve complete resolution at the first attempt, to remove bureaucracy and has been designed to empower complainants in shaping from the outset the approach to resolving the complaint.

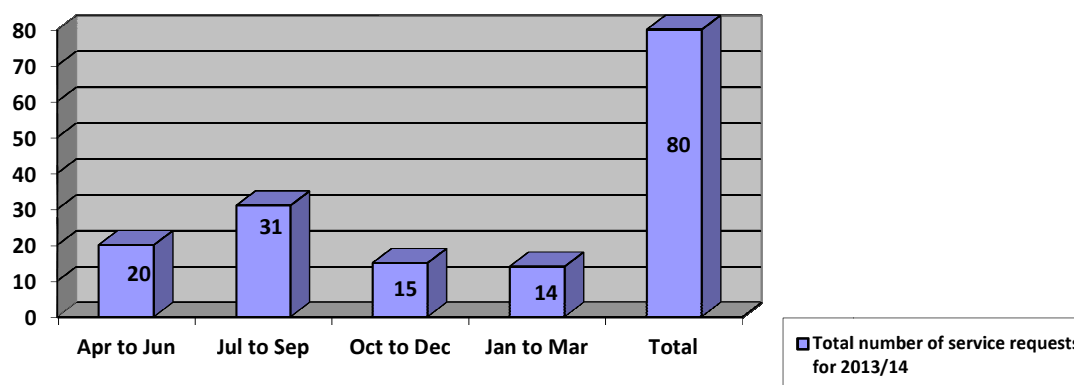
The complaint procedure is as follows:

- Stage 1 – Local Resolution.
- Local Government Ombudsman.

#### a. INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

Our focus remains on resolving complaints informally. This emphasis to resolve issues and concerns quickly and avert the need to escalate these to a formal complaint has helped to reduce the number of formal complaints. Please see below.

#### Informal complaints received (service requests)



Figures are not available for previous years. For 2013/14 it shows that for every one Stage 1 complaint received, two are dealt with informally.

#### b. STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS

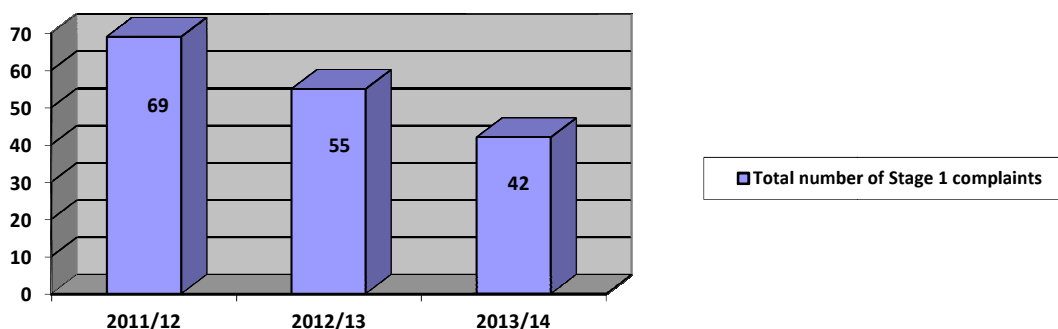
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At Stage 1 of the complaint process a manager will carry out an investigation and aim to respond within 10 working days.

### Total number of Stage 1 complaints



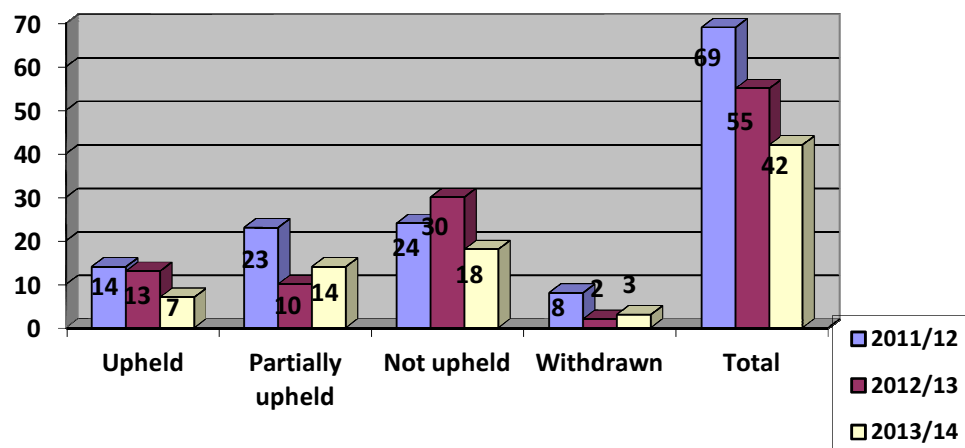
When comparing Stage 1 complaints for 2011/12 of 69 with the same period in 2013/14 of 42, this represents a 39% (27) decrease.

Analysis of the complaints received shows, 12 (29%) of the 42 complaints relate to hospital discharge issues, in particular, the medical fitness of the patient at the time of discharge i.e. that they should not have been discharged at all. Of the 12 complaints, 8 related to Hillingdon Hospital and 4 related to Northwick Park Hospitals. A case summary is now prepared of the complaints. To manage such cross cutting complaints a meeting has taken place between social care, hospital and community health service staff to ensure effective management of these complaints.

### Outcome of Stage 1 complaints

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Proportionately, the number of upheld and partially upheld complaints remains broadly similar for the past three years - 2011/12 (53%), 2012/13 (42%) and 2013/14 (50%).

### Time taken to conclude a Stage 1 complaint (working days)

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Average time taken to conclude a complaint	27.8	21.6	11.97
Target	20	20	20
Variance	+ 7.8	+ 1.6	- 8.03

The average time taken to conclude a complaint has been reduced from 27.8 working days in 2011/12 to 11.97 working days for 2013/14. This is a significant improvement when compared against previous years and against the 20 working day target.

The figures show that 91% (38) of all Stage 1 complaints were concluded within 20 working days or less and that 53% (22), were concluded within 10 days or less.

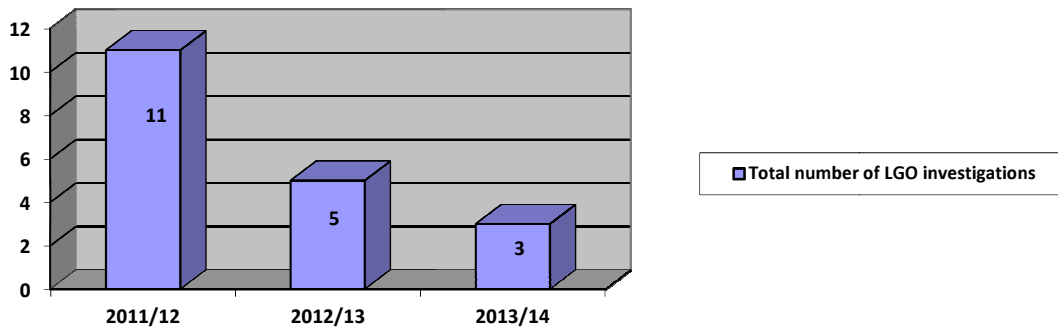
### **c. INVESTIGATION BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN**

Where it appears that a Council's own investigations have not resolved the complaint, the complainant is entitled to refer their complaint to the LGO and at any stage of the Adult Social Services complaint process concluded in 2013/14.

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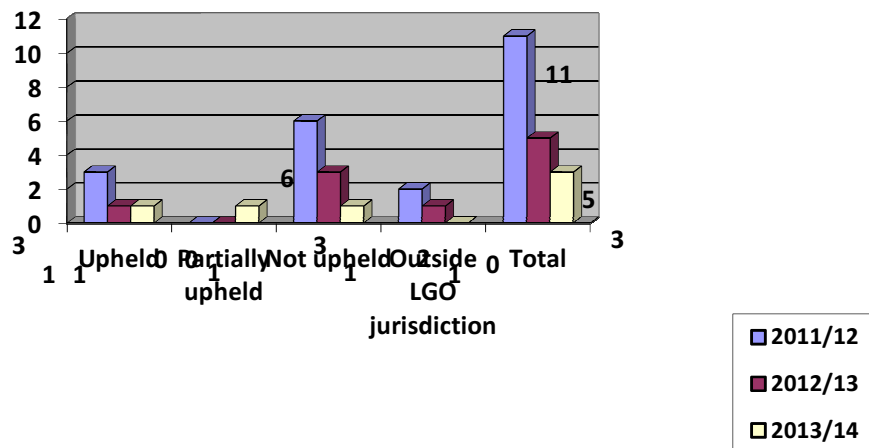
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### Total number of LGO investigations



The number of investigations dealt with by the LGO has reduced by 73% when comparing the 2011/12 figure of 11 with the 2013/14 figure of 3. However, it should be noted that there are 3 complaints which the LGO began to investigate in 2013/14 but have not yet been concluded.

### Outcome of known LGO investigation



See below for details of the complaint and the findings of the LGO.

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### Outcome of investigations by the LGO

Complaint details	LGO decision	Recommendations
<p><b>2988343</b></p> <p>Mr X complained that the Council failed to properly assess Ms Y's needs in March 2011 and that the resolution offered was inadequate. Mr X believed therefore that Ms Y was entitled to a higher personal budget.</p>	<p><b>Upheld</b></p> <p>The LGO found evidence of fault in the way the Council had assessed her needs and applied a deduction to Ms Y's personal budget. However, as the Council had taken steps to remedy any injustice Ms Y had suffered. The LGO decided to discontinue their investigation on the basis of the action taken by the Council to address the injustice to Ms Y.</p>	<p>The Council agreed to re assess Ms Y's personal budget and paid her compensation.</p>
<p><b>3051639</b></p> <p>Mrs X complained that the Council is at fault for suspending her direct payments because of anomalies in her accounts. She also said the Council did not carry out annual reviews of her direct payments and that any discrepancies would have been identified sooner, had it done so.</p>	<p><b>Not upheld</b></p> <p>The LGO decision was that although they found some evidence of fault by the Council, they did not consider that this caused Mrs X significant injustice. Nor did they think that the identified fault altered its decision on this matter.</p>	<p>None</p>
<p><b>3141640</b></p> <p>Mr X complained that when acting as Appointee for his late mother after she was placed in residential care, the Council delayed in applying for a higher rate of attendance allowance and that following his mother's death the Council failed to</p>	<p><b>Partially Upheld</b></p> <p>The LGO determined that the Council failed promptly to apply for a higher rate of attendance allowance when it became Appointee and that this caused financial loss to her estate. However, the</p>	<p>The Council apologised to the complainant, agreed to pay the difference between the lower and higher attendance allowance rate and paid him</p>

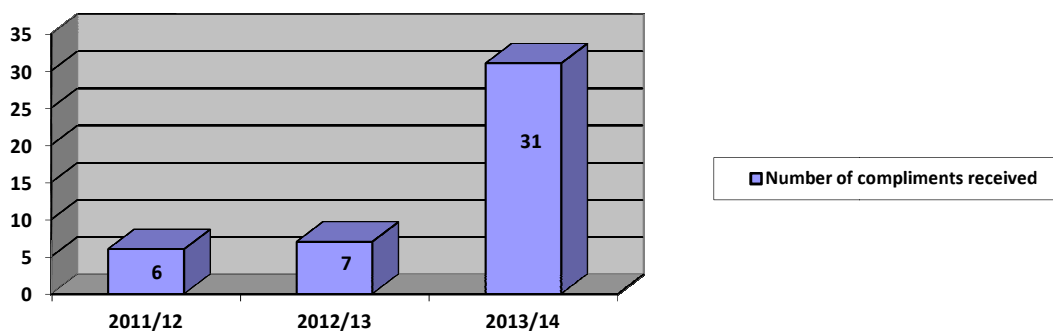
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supply financial information in a standard format.	Council was not at fault when it later supplied Mrs X's son with financial information required for the administration of her estate.	compensation.
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### d. COMPLIMENTS RECEIVED

**Table 22 – number of compliments received**



The number of compliments recorded for 2013/14 of 31 represents a four-fold increase when compared with 2011/12 of 6. This is encouraging and efforts will continue to be made to remind staff to make their manager aware when a compliment is received.

### **Here's what five people have said about the service provided by Adults' Service staff and the difference it has made to their lives.**

*"A massive thank you to X for working so hard on Y's behalf and securing the extra hours. This is fantastic and we are really pleased. Words can't express how happy we are with X and thank you for making it possible. It's given Y a new lease of life and she is amazing all of us".*

*"I cannot thank X enough for all the help, support and professionalism that she has shown me and my family through this very difficult time. I had never had to deal with Social Services before regarding care in the community. I was so lucky to have had X as my mother's Community Care Worker. It was a very steep learning curve but X was so approachable, understanding and kind. I was so grateful when I spoke with her and she helped and guided me through what I needed to do regarding the care of my mother".*

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*"I am writing on behalf of my mother who has had re-ablement carer's since coming out of hospital. Your service is excellent, the carer's are kind and very helpful, especially X who goes out of her way to help you".*

*"I am writing on behalf of my mother to convey her heartfelt thanks and appreciation. As you are aware my father passed away after a short illness. During the re-ablement period X and Y undertook the majority of care. Both X and Y were very professional, provided exceptional care and attention. So much so that my father, would look forward to their visit, and on occasions say, when asked if he was feeling better, that 'if the carers were feeling better so was he'. My mother feels that the last few weeks of my father's life were truly touched by 'angels' in the care and attention X and Y provided".*

*"Thank all your staff for the wonderful care they have shown me. They are always willing to listen to me and help me in things I can't do. They always make sure I am alright before leaving. I look forward to them coming in it makes my day".*

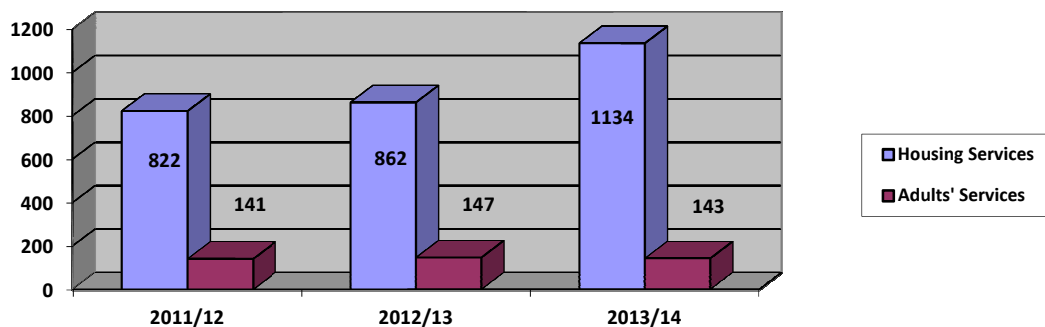
*"I feel I must write to thank you and your team of carers and support staff for the very real care, I have received over the past 6 weeks. My main carer couldn't have been kinder, caring and concerned for my wellbeing. She made me feel I was her only client. Almost immediately, instead of feeling sorry for myself, with nothing to get up for X helped me with her encouraging way so I wanted to show her I could manage and appreciate all she was doing for me".*

### **2. Members Enquiries**

Enquiries can be submitted to officers on behalf of residents to Elected Members for further information. This can include questions about an assessment, decisions or quality of service experienced by our resident.

#### **Total number of Members Enquiries**

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- Housing Services received 822 enquiries from elected members on behalf of our residents in 2011/12. For the same period in 2013/14 the figure was 1,134, which represents a 40% (312) increase.
- Adults' Service received 143 enquiries from elected members for 2013/14 which is broadly similar to previous years of 141 for 2011/12 and 147 for 2012/13.
- Housing and Adults Services both receive far more enquiries from elected members than complaints.
- Housing Service Members Enquiries tend to be about the allocation of housing, repairs and community housing services.
- Adults Services Members Enquiries tend to be about Disability Services, delay or failure to carry out assessments, payment of or calculation of direct payments and the provision of older people's services.

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# Agenda Item 6

## WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

**Contact Officer:** Khalid Ahmed  
**Telephone:** 01895 250833

## REASON FOR ITEM

This report is to enable the Committee to review meeting dates and forward plans. This is a standard item at the end of the agenda.

## OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE

1. To confirm dates for meetings
2. To make suggestions for future working practices and/or reviews.

## INFORMATION

*All meetings to start at 7.30pm*

<b>Meetings</b>	<b>Room</b>
<b>26 June 2014</b>	<b>CR 6</b>
<b>16 July 2014</b>	<b>CR 5</b>
<b>16 September 2014</b>	<b>CR 4</b>
<b>14 October 2014</b>	<b>CR 4</b>
<b>11 November 2014</b>	<b>CR 5</b>
<b>8 January 2015</b>	<b>CR 5</b>
<b>3 February 2015</b>	<b>CR 5</b>
<b>12 March 2015</b>	<b>CR 6</b>
<b>28 April 2015</b>	<b>CR 5</b>

Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee

**2014/15 DRAFT Work Programme**

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Item</b>
<b>26 June 2014</b>	Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee Possible Review Topics 2014/15
	Work programme for 2014/15
	Cabinet Forward Plan

<b>16 July 2014</b>	Budget Planning Report for Administration and Finance Directorates
	Scoping Report for next Major Review and presentation
	Work Programme
	Cabinet Forward Plan

<b>16 September 2014</b>	Major Review - Witness Session
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme

<b>14 October 2014</b>	Major Review - Witness Session and consideration of draft recommendations
	Single Meeting Review
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme

<b>11 November 2014</b>	Major Review - Draft Final Report
	Scoping Report for Second Major Review and presentation
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme

<b>8 January 2015</b>	Budget Proposals Report for 2015/16
	Witness Session
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme

<b>3 February 2015</b>	Witness Session for Second Review
	Single Meeting Review
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme

<b>12 March 2015</b>	Witness Session for Second Review
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme

<b>29 April 2014</b>	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme

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## **Cabinet Forward Plan**

**Contact Officer:** Khalid Ahmed  
**Telephone:** 01895 250833

### **REASON FOR ITEM**

The Committee is required to consider the Forward Plan and provide Cabinet with any comments it wishes to make before the decision is taken.

### **OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE**

1. Decide to comment on any items coming before Cabinet
2. Decide not to comment on any items coming before Cabinet

### **INFORMATION**

1. The Forward Plan is updated on the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. An edited version to include only items relevant to the Committee's remit is attached below. The full version can be found on the front page of the 'Members' Desk' under 'Useful Links'.
2. The Forward Plan attached has not been updated since the last meeting of the Committee held on 26 June. However, an updated version of the Forward Plan published on 15 July will be distributed on the evening of the POC meeting.

### **SUGGESTED COMMITTEE ACTIVITY**

1. Members decide whether to examine any of the reports listed on the Forward Plan at a future meeting.

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Ref **Decision****Further information**

Ward(s)

Final decision  
by Full CouncilCabinet  
Member(s)  
ResponsibleOfficer  
Contact for  
further  
informationConsultation  
on the  
decision

NEW ITEM

Private  
decision?

Council Departments: RS = Residents Services CYPs = Children and Young People's Services ASCS = Adult Social Care Services AD = Administration FD = Finance

**Cabinet meeting - 25 September 2014**

020	<b>Green Deal Communities Scheme and Energy Company Obligation (ECO)</b>	This report appoints a supplier to deliver the Green Deal Communities and Energy Company Obligation (ECO) Programme for residents, enabling them to start benefiting from a variety of energy saving measures.	Various		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	RS - Neil Stubbings / Jo Gill	Internal Consultees	<b>NEW</b>	Private (3)
021	<b>Renewal of Energy Supplies</b>	Members approved an energy contract for Hillingdon's electricity non-half hourly supplies for schools and housing sites in July 2014 with SSE starting from October 2014. As part of Hillingdon's continued energy procurement strategy, Cabinet are asked to approve a further energy contract from April 2015 for electricity and gas supplies for a portfolio consisting of the Civic Centre, street lighting, CCTV and other Council sites.	Various		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	FD - Allison Mayo	Internal Consultees	<b>NEW</b>	Private (3)
010	<b>Appointment of Banking Services and Merchant Services Suppliers to the Council</b>	The Council's main banking contract (which included merchant services) expires on 31.3.2015. As most banks now no longer supply merchant services, the award of two new contracts (Banking Services and Merchant Services) will be required.	N/A		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	FD - Annette Reeves			Private (3)
011	<b>Vehicle Procurement Refuse Collection</b>	As part of the Vehicle Replacement program (VRP) 2014/15, Cabinet approval is sought for the Procurement of Refuse Collection vehicles following a tendering exercise.	N/A		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	RS - D M Fisher			Private (3)
012	<b>Vehicle Procurement various residents services</b>	As part of the Vehicle Replacement program (VRP) 2014/15, Cabinet approval is sought for the procurement of a number of vehicles following a tendering exercise for Housing, Care-taking, Waste Collection and Green Spaces.	N/A		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	RS - D M Fisher			Private (3)

Ref	Decision	Further information	Ward(s)	Final decision by Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Officer Contact for further information	Consultation on the decision	NEW ITEM	Private decision?
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Council Departments: RS = Residents Services CYPs =Children and Young People's Services ASCS= Adult Social Care Services AD = Administration FD= Finance

## Cabinet Member Decisions - September 2014

016	<b>Oracle HR &amp; Payroll 'Phase 2' Planning</b>	In April 2014, Cabinet approved the 'phase 1' implementation of Oracle HR and Payroll, which enabled integration with the Oracle Financials system. In this original report it was noted that a second paper would be presented to outlying the proposed 'phase 2' implementation of a Performance and Learning Management system. This paper will outline recommendations following the project scoping for the 'phase 2' of the HR & Payroll system project.	N/A		Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE & Cllr Scott Seaman-Digby	AD - Mike Talbot			Private (3)
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Ref **Decision****Further information**

Ward(s)

Final decision  
by Full CouncilCabinet  
Member(s)  
ResponsibleOfficer  
Contact for  
further  
informationConsultation  
on the  
decision**NEW ITEM**Private  
decision?

Council Departments: RS = Residents Services CYPs = Children and Young People's Services ASCS = Adult Social Care Services AD = Administration FD = Finance

**Cabinet meeting - 20 November 2014**

028	<b>LEADERS' INITIATIVE: Burglar Alarms for Older People</b>	Continuing this highly successful initiative, this report to Cabinet will present the outcome of a tender exercise for the Phase 8 supplier to provide free burglar alarms to Older People across the Borough.	All		Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE and Cllr Philip Corthorne	AD - Vicky Trott	Internal Consultees	<b>NEW</b>	Private (3)
029	<b>Contract award for ICT Network and Telephony</b>	Cabinet will be asked to award a contract(s) for the support of the Council's ICT Network and Telephony systems, enabling effective, modern communication, information flow and collaboration operationally and externally with residents.	N/A		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	RS - Steve Palmer / Nick McCarthy	Internal Consultees	<b>NEW</b>	Private (3)
030	<b>Delivery of the Revenues and Benefits Services</b>	This report to Cabinet will recommend a 5 year contract for the operational delivery and customer services of the Council's revenues and benefits services, following due procurement process.	N/A		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	FD - Rob Smith	Internal Consultees	<b>NEW</b>	Private (3)

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