

# **ANNUAL COMPLAINT REPORT FOR HOUSING SERVICES AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SERVICES FOR 1 APRIL 2016 TO 31 MARCH 2017**

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and Enquiries  
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## **Purpose of the report**

This report provides information and analysis of complaints and Members Enquiries received between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017 for Housing and Adult Social Care Services and satisfies the requirements to publish annual information about complaints.

## **OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE**

For members of the committee to:

1. note the contents of the annual complaint report; and
2. discuss any concerns with the relevant Cabinet member.

## **SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS**

- a. **Housing Services** (See annex 1 – pages 5 to 15)

### **Informal complaints**

- 201 fewer informal complaints recorded for 2016/17 (455) when compared with 656 for 2015/16.

### **Stage 1 complaints**

- 7 more Stage 1 complaints recorded when comparing 2015/16 of 118 with 125 for 2016/17. Of the 125 Stage 1 complaints, 22 were upheld, 14 partially upheld, 82 not upheld and 7 complaints were either cancelled or withdrawn. The average time taken to conclude a Stage 1 complaint is 8.26 working days against a target of 10 working days.

### **Stage 2 complaints**

- The number of Stage 2 complaints has fallen from 25 in 2015/16 to 12 in 2016/17. Of the 12 Stage 2 complaints, 3 were upheld and 9 were not upheld. The average time to conclude a Stage 2 complaint is 11.16 working days against a target of 10 working days.

### **Stage 3 complaints**

- There were no Stage 3 complaints.

### **Investigation by the Local Government or Housing Ombudsman**

- 22 complaints were concluded by the Ombudsman during this period - 1 complaint was upheld, 2 partially upheld, 12 not upheld and 7 were not investigated.

### **Compliments**

- Compliments are down from 23 in 2015/16 to 19 in 2016/17.

#### **b. Adult Social Care (See annex 2 – pages 16 to 23)**

### **Informal Complaints**

- Informal complaints are down by 19% from 131 in 2015/16 to 105 in 2016/17.

### **Stage 1 complaints**

- Stage 1 complaints are down from 39 for 2015/16 to 35 for 2016/17. Of the 35 Stage 1 complaints, 4 were upheld, 9 partially upheld, 22 not upheld. The average time taken to conclude a Stage 1 complaint is 10.47 working days.

### **Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)**

- 8 complaints were concluded by the Ombudsman during this period - 3 were upheld, 4 not upheld and 1 was discontinued.

### **Compliments**

- Compliments are up 61% (30) when comparing the same period in 2015/16 of 49 with 2016/17 of 79.

### **Complaints dealt with by Home Care Providers (service requests)**

- 96 informal complaints were completed during this period - 40 complaints were upheld, 25 partially upheld and 31 not upheld. The main reason why people complained were: poor time keeping (62 instances), missed calls (49 instances) and poor quality of care (42 instances).

#### **c. Members Enquiries (See annex 3 – pages 24)**

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- 7% (574) increase in enquiries from Elected Members when comparing the figure for 2015/16 of 8,611 with the figure for 2016/17 of 9,185.
- Housing Service accounted for 11% (984) and Adult Social Care accounted for 3% (237) of all Members Enquiries recorded in 2016/17.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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

The Council's vision is about 'putting our residents first'. Feedback in the form of complaints and compliments is seen as a very important source of information from residents about the quality of services and care provided by the Council. In cases where something has gone wrong, we are committed to putting it right and ensure that it does not happen again.

### **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 Enquiries Team.

### **4. Remedies for redress**

The purpose of redress is to remedy the injustice or hardship suffered and where possible to return a complainant to the position they would have been before the situation went wrong. Types of redress include:

- an apology;
- providing the service that should have been received at first;
- taking action or making a decision that the Council should have done before;
- reconsidering an incorrect decision;
- improving procedures so that similar problems do not happen again; and
- if after an investigation by council staff or the Ombudsman, it is concluded that as a result of maladministration there is no practical action that would provide a full and appropriate remedy or if the complainant has sustained loss or suffering, financial compensation may be the most appropriate approach.

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## **5. Mediation**

For some complaints it will not be appropriate, or possible, to resolve a complaint 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 Business Manager, Complaints and Enquiries will consider whether mediation is an option that should be considered. If both parties are agreeable, mediation by an independent mediator allows both parties to come together to see if they can reach a solution through dialogue.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

### Annex 1 – Complaints about Housing Services

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

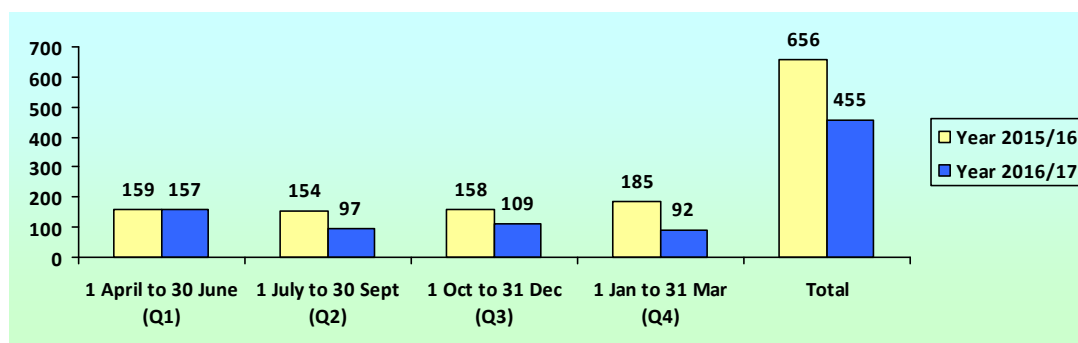
- The Informal Complaint (service request).
- Stage 1 – response from a Deputy Director or Head of Service.
- Stage 2 – response from the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Residents Services
- Stage 3 – response from the Chief Executive of the Council
- Stage 4 - Designated Person for the Council
- Local Government or Housing 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.

#### 1. INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

The feedback we have received from residents indicate that most want action to resolve their concerns on the spot by discussing the problem with an officer/manager rather than going through the more formal complaint route. If we can resolve a residents issue in this way we will do so, immediately. We will continue to take this approach, wherever possible.

#### Informal complaints (Service Requests)

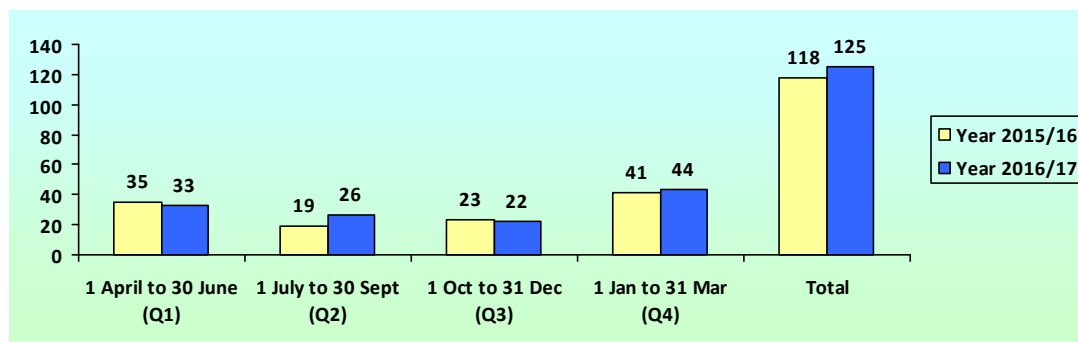


- 30% (201) fall in informal complaints recorded from 656 in 2015/16 to 455 in 2016/17. The main reason for this is the mild winter and less rainfall during spring, resulting in less demand for heating and roof repairs.

## 2. STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS

A Deputy Director or Head of Service will aim to respond to complaints within 10 working days.

### Total number of Stage 1 complaints



- 6% (7) rise in Stage 1 complaints registered from 118 in 2015/16 to 125 in 2016/17.

**Table 1 – Outcome of complaints**

Service Area	Total number	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Withdrawn
Homeless Prevention	46	0	6	37	3
Repairs including Heating	56	17	7	29	3
Programme and Asset Management	13	5	1	6	1
Estates and Tenancy Management	10	0	0	10	0
Total	125	22	14	82	7

- Of the 125 Stage 1 complaints, 22 were upheld, 14 partially upheld and 82 not upheld. This is consistent with previous years.

**Table 2 – Time taken to conclude a complaint at Stage 1 (working days)**

	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>
Average time taken to conclude a complaint	9.48	8.26
Target	10	10
Variance	- 0.52	- 1.74

- The average time taken to conclude a Stage 1 complaint is 8.26 working days against the target of 10 working days.

**Table 3** - Number and % of complaints dealt with within 10 working days

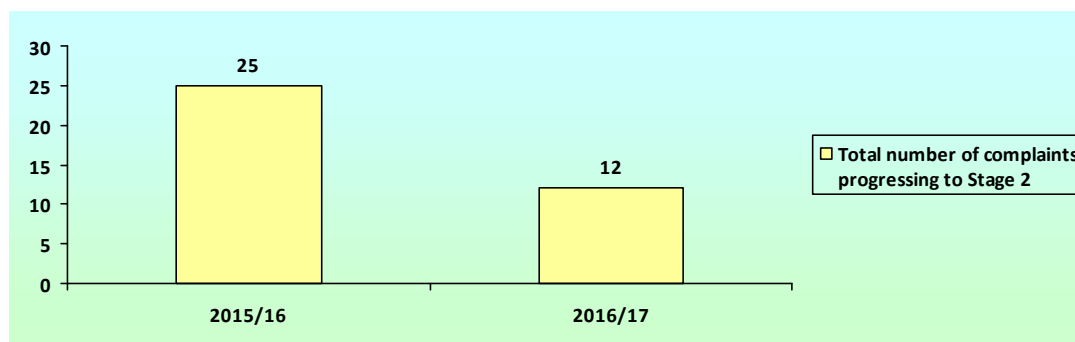
Period	Total number of complaints	Number dealt with within 10 working days	% dealt with within 10 working days
2015/16	118	87	74 %
2016/17	125	99	79 %

- More complaints have been responded to within the 10 working day target. This is progress.

### 3. **STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS**

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

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



- As expected, the number of Stage 2 complaints has fallen from 25 in 2015/16 to 12 in 2016/17 and will continue to fall as officers apply the revised Corporate complaints procedure i.e. to escalate a complaint direct from Stages 1 and/or 2 to the Ombudsman where it is felt that the decision cannot be overturned through the complaint process.

**Table 4** – Outcome of complaints

Period	Upheld	Partially upheld	Not upheld	Total
2015/16	2	1	22	25
2016/17	3	0	9	12

The table below provides a summary of the 12 Stage 2 complaints investigated.

<b>Complaint details</b>	<b>Decision at Stage 2</b>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5069477</b> Mr X complained about the length of time it took the Council to replace his boiler - 12 March to 11 April 2016</p>	<p><b>Upheld</b> The Council apologised for the time it took to replace his boiler and offered Mr X compensation. The offer made was accepted.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5171283</b> Mr X complained that the offer of compensation at Stage 1 did not take into account the work that needs to be done to bring his kitchen back to how it was.</p>	<p><b>Upheld</b> Mr X was told that there is evidence of normal wear and tear in the photographs but it does not show any bowing and the inspectors report makes no reference to bowed work surface. The offer of compensation made at Stage 1 was re offered and it was accepted.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5534967</b> Mrs X complained that an officer deliberately addressed her as 'Mr X...' in his letter and that this had upset her.</p>	<p><b>Upheld</b> We apologised to Mrs X that she had been addressed as 'Mr X...' by the officer. It was not deliberate but a genuine mistake.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5506613</b> Mrs X complained about the way her daughter's application for an Essential Repairs Grant (ERG) and Disabled Facilities Grant was handled.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Mrs X was informed that the maximum grant payable is £5,000 per property under ERG and is not available for either routine work or desirable improvements. Officers could not proceed with her daughter's ERG application not only because the quotes provided exceed the maximum amount payable but also because some of the work quoted for appear to be desirable improvements that do not meet the ERG eligibility criteria.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5256897</b> Ms X complained that her landlord was not carrying out urgent repairs at the property she was living at.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Ms X was informed that officers from the Private Sector Housing Team made a number of visits and identified four Category 2 Hazards for which no enforcement action is possible. However, the landlord agreed to carry out a number of the recommended works on condition that her representative was given access to view the disrepair in the presence of officers. Mrs X refused to allow the representative access. As a consequence the landlord was now taking legal action to recover possession of the property.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5215853</b> Ms X complained that she was not supported by officers when</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> Mr X was informed that she was evicted from her previous accommodation as she had</p>



she was unwell and that she should not have been pursued for rent arrears as this was being paid by Housing Benefit.	breached her licensed agreement by refusing access to inspectors and by allowing unauthorised people to stay at the property. Ms X was advised how to ask for a review.
<b>Complaint ref: 5599232</b> Ms X complained that the plumber had damaged her bathroom floor and was unhappy that compensation had been refused.	<b>Not Upheld</b> Ms X was informed that when the work was undertaken in 2015 she informed the operative that she was happy with the work done. If she wanted the Council to remove the stain, we would have to use a strong chemical cleaner but it could take the colour off the floor.
<b>Complaint ref: 5688047</b> Miss X complained that the offer of compensation at Stage 1 had not taken into consideration that she was without hot water for days and paid full rent during that period.	<b>Not Upheld</b> Miss X was informed that the offer of compensation did take into consideration that she was without hot water and the inconvenienced caused to her and her family
<b>Complaint ref: 5505891</b> Ms X was unhappy with the Stage 1 response which informed her that as the time limit for a contractor to remedy defects of their workmanship had passed, it was her responsibility to pay for the repairs.	<b>Not Upheld</b> Ms X was informed that it was correct to inform her that contractually there are liability periods for a contractor or authority to remedy the defect. This had passed in her case. However, as a gesture of goodwill the Council would agree to pay for a contractor of her choice to undertake the repairs but that any sum paid to her would be capped.
<b>Complaint ref: 5636812</b> Mr X accepted the response at Stage 1 but wanted the offer of compensation to be increased as he said that at the start of his tenancy he was not in receipt of any benefits and was paying full rent.	<b>Not Upheld</b> Mr X was informed that the offer made was reasonable as officers had used the rent paid (excluding housing benefit) as a means to calculate what they believe to be a reasonable offer.
<b>Complaint ref: 5714528</b> Ms X complained that re-plastering work undertaken had not been done properly as there were cracks in the wall.	<b>Not Upheld</b> Ms X was informed that the walls and wallpaper were in sound condition when the void property was handed over. Ms X decided to strip the wallpaper as soon as she moved in and this caused the plaster to come away. Instead of contacting the Maintenance Service straight away, she carried on stripping the wallpaper elsewhere and this caused further plaster damage.
<b>Complaint ref: 5721220</b> Mr X complained that the	<b>Not Upheld</b> Mr X was informed that the redress offered to

Stage response had not taken into consideration the impact of his living conditions on his physical and mental health.	him was significant and included an inconvenience payment for stress and upset caused to him.
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**Table 5 – Time taken to conclude a complaint at Stage 2 (working days)**

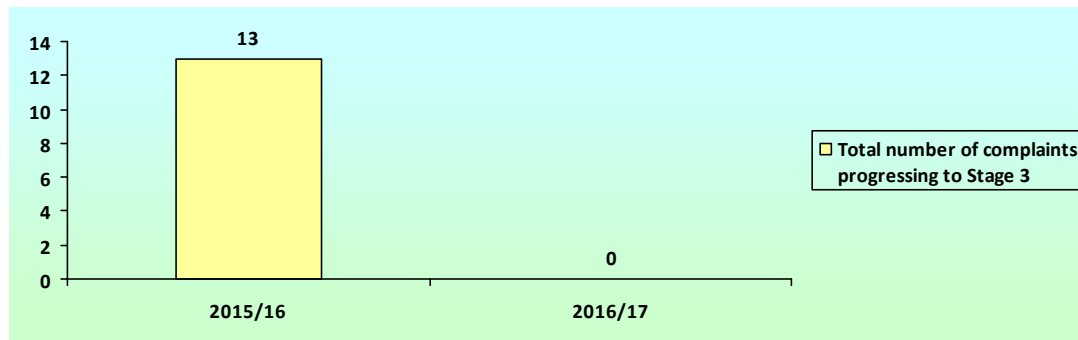
	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>
Average time taken to conclude a complaint	7.86	11.16
Target	10	10
Variance	- 2.14	+ 1.16

- Of the 12 Stage 2 complaints, 10 were responded to within target. Complaint ref: 5256897 took 28 working days to respond as officers had difficulty in agreeing a date and time when the landlord, complainant and officers could meet. Complaint ref: 5505891 took 33 working days to resolve as officers sought to negotiate a settlement with the complainant. Unfortunately, these two complaints resulted in the average time for responses exceeding the target set of 10 working days.

#### **4. STAGE 3 COMPLAINTS**

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

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



- There were no Stage 3 complaints registered for 2016/17, which is a considerable drop from the 2015/16 figure of 13. However, this was expected as officers are applying the revised Corporate complaints procedure.

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

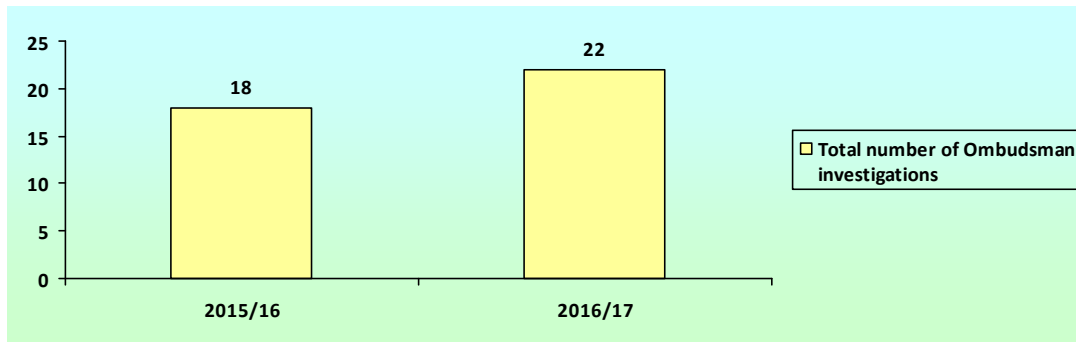
If a complaint is about a tenancy, leasehold, or other housing management issue, a complainant can ask the Councils 'Designated Person' to see if they can intervene to try and help resolve the complaint.

- There were no investigations undertaken by the Council's Designated Person.

## 6. INVESTIGATIONS 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. Depending on the nature of the complaint it could be dealt with either by the Local Government or Housing Ombudsman and at any stage of the complaint process.

### Total number of Ombudsman investigations



The findings and decision of the Ombudsman is set out below.

Complaint details	Ombudsman decision
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5647107</b> Ms X complained that the Council had not considered all of her medical needs when it decided she could not join the Housing Register.</p>	<p><b>Upheld</b> The Ombudsman determined that there was fault by the Council because its decision referred only to Ms X's physical problems and omitted her psychological problems. The Council agreed to remedy the injustice to Ms X by granting her a new review.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5297861</b> Mrs X complained that the Council had wrongly suspended her application from the Housing Register.</p>	<p><b>Partially Upheld</b> The Ombudsman determined that there was no fault in the Council removing Mrs X's application from the Housing Register as she had no housing need. However, the Council had wrongly granted Mrs X priority in 2012 which raised her expectations.</p>

<p><b>Complaint ref: 5058453</b> Mr X complained about the Council's handling of his housing application - he says the Council did not implement changes to the Right to Move legislation when considering his application. Mr X said the Council's actions have resulted in him unfairly being denied a place on its Housing Register.</p>	<p><b>Partially Upheld</b> The Ombudsman determined that some Council officers appeared to be unaware of changes in the Right to Move legislation and as a result Mr X's application was not accepted straightway. The delay put Mr X to unnecessary time and trouble for which an apology adequately addressed the injustice caused to him.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5173370</b> Ms X complained because her name was removed from the Housing Register.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Ombudsman's decision was that Ms X's name was removed from the Housing Register in accordance with the Council's Social Housing and Allocation Policy.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5073528</b> Ms X complained that the Council had failed to take proper account of an Occupational Therapist's report in deciding whether she was adequately housed.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Ombudsman found no evidence of fault in the way the Council applied its Social Housing Allocation Policy.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5084464</b> Miss X complained that the Council had not awarded the correct priority to her housing application and as a result she was living in unsuitable accommodation.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Ombudsman found no evidence of fault by the Council in the way it applied its Social Housing Allocation Policy.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5358964</b> Miss X complained that the Council had not properly considered whether she qualified to join the housing waiting list.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Ombudsman found no evidence which shows the Council was at fault in the way it reached its decision.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5049616</b> Ms X complained that the Council is wrong to say she made herself intentionally homeless. She wants the Council to provide her and her family with permanent accommodation near her children's schools.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Ombudsman found no evidence of fault by the Council in the way it applied its Social Housing Allocation Policy.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5215853</b> Ms X complained that she was not in rent arrears because her rent was covered by housing benefit. She also disagrees with the Council's decision not to accept her as homeless.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Ombudsman determined that as rent arrears stem from a housing benefit issue, Ms X can ask for a review or appeal. In relation to the homelessness decision, there were appeal rights that Ms X could have used.</p>

<p><b>Complaint ref: 5420250</b> Mr X complained that the Council did not deal properly with his homeless application i.e. it wrongly referred him back to another Council for accommodation and failed to provide him with suitable accommodation when he discharged himself from hospital.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Ombudsman determined that the Council was entitled to refer Mr X to his former council if it considered he did not have a local connection to Hillingdon. There are no grounds to consider the accommodation offered in a hotel after Mr X discharged himself from hospital was unsuitable.</p>
<p><b>Complaint report: 5439793</b> Mrs X complained about the Council's decision to remove her from the Housing Register.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Ombudsman determined that the Council had correctly applied the Social Housing Allocation Policy and that Mrs X had no identified housing need.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5077083</b> Miss X complained about how the Council assessed her housing register application. She felt that the Council had not fully considered her application and had not placed her in a higher priority band.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Ombudsman determined that there is no evidence of fault in how the Council assessed Miss X's Housing Register application.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5059582</b> Mr and Mrs X complained about the Council's response to their concerns about their neighbour's garden and that the water pressure into their property was insufficient.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Ombudsman found no maladministration by the Council in relation to Mr and Mrs X's complaint about the water pressure into the property.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5012393</b> Mr X complained about the Council's handling of his request for a review of its decision not to place him on its Housing Register.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Ombudsman determined that there was no fault by the Council in the way it reviewed its decision not to put Mr X on its Housing Register.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5300772</b> Miss X complained that the Council had removed her from the Housing Register because she did not have proof of residency for ten years. She says she has lived in the borough throughout this time apart from nine months.</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Ombudsman did not identify any administrative fault with the Council's decision to remove Miss X's name from the Housing Register.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5521885</b> Mr X complained that the Council had failed to help him move out of his property - he felt the property was unsuitable.</p>	<p><b>Did not investigate</b> The Ombudsman did not investigate Mr X's complaint as he had a right of appeal which was reasonable for him to use.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5339296</b> Mrs X complained about the way the</p>	<p><b>Did not investigate</b> The Ombudsman did not investigate as it is</p>

Council treated her company when a guest was placed in their bed and breakfast accommodation.	reasonable to expect Mrs X to take the matter to court.
<b>Complaint ref: 5383838</b> Ms X complained that the Council failed to maintain the drains near her property and as a result her property was flooded after heavy rainfall. She wanted the Council to pay for the damage to her home and the cost of renting elsewhere.	<b>Did not investigate</b> The Ombudsman will not investigate this complaint because an allegation of negligence is a matter for the courts to decide.
<b>Complaint ref: 5308874</b> Mr X complained that the Council delayed in dealing with his 'right to buy' application.	<b>Did not investigate</b> The Ombudsman did not investigate Mr X's complaints about the Council's decision on his right to buy application as it would be reasonable for him to apply to the County Court.
<b>Complaint ref: 5600211</b> Mrs X complained that the Council advised her that it may find her intentionally homeless if she was evicted for rent arrears and would not provide her with social housing. Mrs X felt this advice was unreasonable as she blamed the Council for causing her rent arrears	<b>Did not investigate</b> The Ombudsman decided not to investigate the complaint as there was no sign of fault by the Council which had caused an injustice to Mrs X.
<b>Complaint ref: 5625010</b> Ms X complained because the Council would not re-house her in a larger home.	<b>Did not investigate</b> The Ombudsman did not investigate this complaint about the Council's decision not to allow Ms X to join the Housing Register because she had not lived in the borough for ten years. This is because there is insufficient evidence of fault by the Council.
<b>Complaint ref: 5647174</b> Ms X complained about the lack of advice and support she had received in finding housing. She says the Council's actions have meant that she missed out on a property.	<b>Did not Investigate</b> The Ombudsman did not investigate because the Council agreed that its initial advice was incorrect but there was no other evidence of fault in how the Council responded to Ms X's request for advice and support.

## **7. LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS**

**Delays** - residents complained about the time it took to replace a boiler, to repair an aerial mast, to process a homeless application, repair the guttering, answering telephone calls and in responding to enquiries. In all cases we

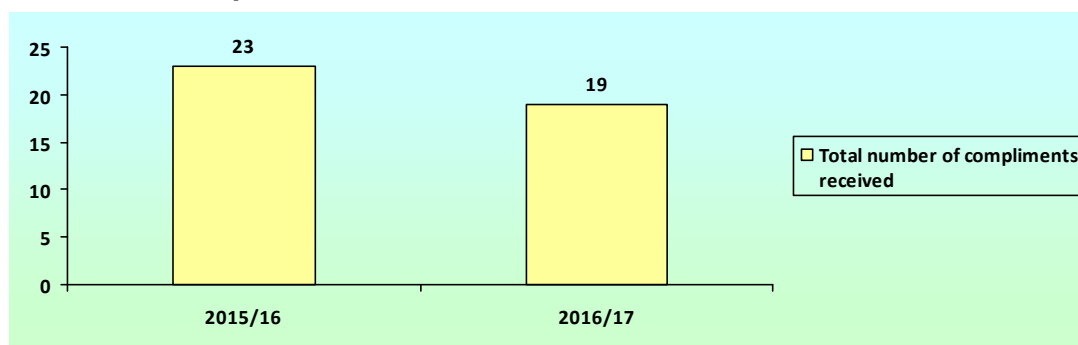
apologised, in the case of the boiler and aerial mast we offered compensation that was accepted.

**Poor workmanship** - one resident complained that the work undertaken by a contractor caused a leak when he repaired a toilet pan - we apologised and agreed to re decorate and replace the lino.

**Communications** - residents complained about conflicting information being given i.e. whether her kitchen was part of the 2016/17 programme of works or not, that we had inspected the guttering in the wrong block of flats and that he was not informed that he could make a claim from the Council's insurer's for the cost of work undertaken. We apologised to the first two complainants and in the latter one we forwarded his claim to the Council's insurers.

## 8. COMPLIMENTS

### Number of compliments received



- 17% (4) fall in compliments received when comparing 2015/16 figure of 23 with the 2016/17 figure of 19.

### Here's what some residents said:

*"We do appreciate your help, guidance and support whole heartedly at what has been a very difficult time due to a number of personal circumstances - a huge thank you as you have shown much empathy, understanding and a great attitude".*

"I am a support worker working in the borough of Hillingdon. Yesterday I attended a follow up appointment after assisting my customer in completing an initial assessment over the phone. The homeless prevention officer we had to see was X. After having to deal with quite a few issues with Homeless prevention over the time I have been working in this borough it was very refreshing to have had such a professional and compassionate approach delivered by X yesterday".

*"This is just a quick email to say thank you to X for her help and advice every time I have spoken to her. Polite, friendly and will go out of her way to advise even if the case is not relevant to her. I personally try not to bother the back*

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*office staff if I can as I appreciate the workloads and our purpose down here. Makes our jobs easier down here knowing how approachable she is".*

"Mrs X called to compliment the plumber that attended her property this morning, a gentleman named Y who attended on the above service request. She advised he was very polite and kind and had amazing service, can you please let him know the resident called to compliment him".

"I am writing to you regarding a repair that I report this morning around 11am. I am absolutely delighted with the service that I have received and would like to commend your plumber, Y on his excellent service. He is a credit to your repairs team. He thoroughly explained what the issue was, he told me how long it would take to resolve and he completed the job perfectly. The job was completed by 2pm. Well done and thank you for providing an excellent service".

## **Annex 2 – Complaints about Adult Social Care Services**

The procedure for dealing with Adult Social Care complaints is regulated by the 'The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009'.

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 operates as follows:

- The Informal Complaint (service request).
- Stage 1 – response from an Assistant Director or Head of Service of the area complained about.
- 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.

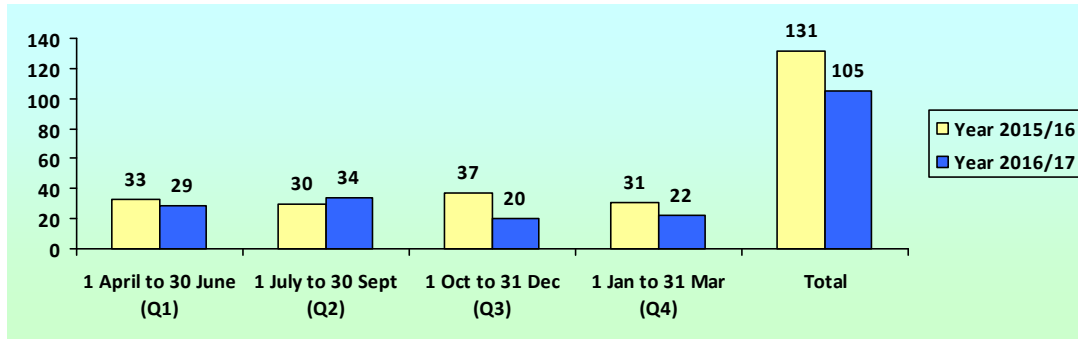
### **1. THE INFORMAL COMPLAINT**

The feedback we have received from residents indicate that most want action to resolve their concerns on the spot by discussing the problem with an officer/manager rather than going through the more formal complaint route. If



we can resolve a residents issue in this way we will do so, immediately. We will continue to take this approach, wherever possible.

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

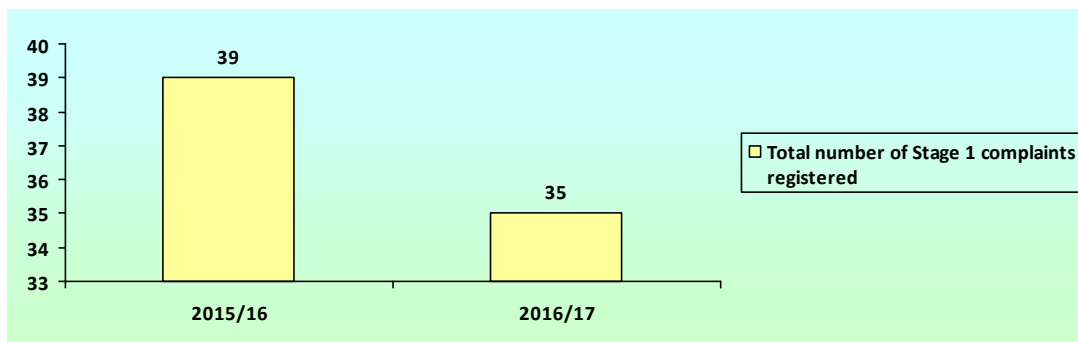


- Informal complaints are down by 19% from 131 in 2015/16 to 105 in 2016/17.

**2. STAGE 1 COMPLAINT - LOCAL RESOLUTION**

An Assistant Director or Head of Service will aim to respond to complaints within 20 working days.

**Total number of Stage 1 complaints registered**



- Stage 1 complaints are down from 39 in 2015/16 to 35 for 2016/17.

**Table 6 - Breakdown of Stage 1 complaints by Service Area**

Service Area	Total number	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld
Older People and Social Services	12	1	3	8

Occupational Therapy				
Disability Social work	6	0	1	5
Home to School transport	4	1	1	2
Early Intervention and Prevention	6	2	2	2
Supported Living	2	0	0	2
Safeguarding	5	0	2	3
Total	35	4	9	22

- 63% (22) of all complaints were not upheld, 26% (9) partially upheld and 11% (4) upheld.
- 34% (12) of all complaints registered were about the service provided by Older People Services and Occupational Therapy.

**Table 7 – Time taken to conclude a complaint (working days)**

	2015/16	2016/17
Average time taken to conclude a complaint	7.97	10.47
Target	20	20
Variance	-12.03	- 9:53

- The average time taken to conclude a Stage 1 complaint is 10.47 working days against the Council's internal target of 10 working days.
- 34 (97%) of complaints were responded to within our published time of 20 working days.

**Table 8 - Number and % of complaints dealt with within 10 working days**

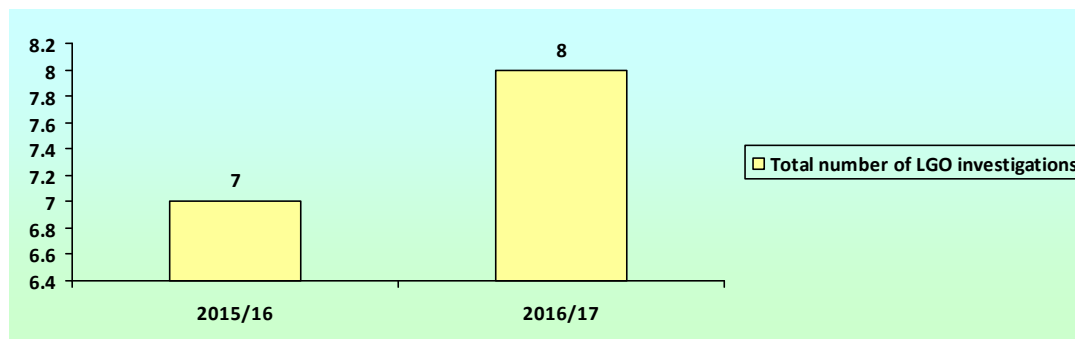
Period	Total number of complaints	Number dealt with within 10 working days	% dealt with within 10 working days
2015/16	39	36	92 %
2016/17	35	27	83%

- 27 (83%) of Stage 1 complaints were dealt with within the Council's internal target of 10 working day target.
- 8 complaints missed the internal target of 10 workings because we had to await feedback from home care providers or just missed the target by one or two days.

### 3. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN INVESTIGATION (LGO)**

Where it appears that the Council's own investigations has not resolved the complaint, a complainant is entitled to refer their complaint to the Ombudsman.

### Total number of LGO investigations



- 4 out of the 8 complaints investigated by the LGO began in 2015 but concluded in this financial year. The findings and the decision of the LGO is set out below.

Complaint details	LGO decision
<p><b>Complaint ref: 4514750</b> Ms X complained that the Council delayed in referring her daughter's case to the Disability Resource Panel and gave no explanation for its reasons to refuse funding.</p>	<p><b>Upheld</b> The Ombudsman concluded that there was fault by the Council in failing to plan properly and in good time when Ms X's daughter left school. The Council agreed to pay a sum in compensation. The Ombudsman was satisfied that the provision is now in place.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 5639822</b> Mr X complained that his home care provider lost a set of keys for his flat (for the main door and his front door) and refused to pay for replacements.</p>	<p><b>Upheld</b> There was fault in how the care agency contracted by the Council responded when a carer reportedly lost Mr X's keys. However, it later agreed to cover the cost of replacing them, which is a suitable remedy.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 4211997</b> Mrs X complained that the Council's safeguarding investigation was inadequate, it failed to offer her advocacy services and the handling of her complaint.</p>	<p><b>Partially Upheld</b> The Ombudsmen found that the Council: a) took too long to complete a safeguarding investigation but found no fault with the process it followed; b) the Council went beyond what it needed to do in terms of arranging advocacy support for Mrs X; and c) found no fault in the way the complaint was handled.</p>
<p><b>Complaint ref: 4256269</b> Mr and Mrs X complained that: (1) the Council's response at stage 2 of the statutory complaints procedure failed to identify the full extent of fault;</p>	<p><b>Not Upheld</b> The Ombudsman determined that the Stage 2 adjudication response correctly identified fault causing injustice and has put in place or plans to put in place suitable remedies.</p>

and (2) failed to implement aspects of the February 2015 action plan.	
<b>Complaint ref: 4852411</b> Mr and Mrs X complained that the Council offered them an unsuitable property without taking note of the Occupational Therapist's recommendations from 2014.	<b>Not Upheld</b> The Ombudsman found no fault in the way the Council offered Mr and Mrs X their current property or in the way it considered its suitability for their needs, including their disabled son.
<b>Complaint ref: 4904063</b> Mr X complained that the Council failed to complete its most recent assessment of his needs for adult social care support and that the assessor also wrongly focussed on his past rather than present needs.	<b>Not Upheld</b> The Ombudsman found no fault in the way the Council assessed Mr X's need for adult social care support.
<b>Complaint ref: 5506305</b> Mrs X made an application for assistance in the school transport for her son. She complained that the Council had not properly considered her son's special needs when it made its decision.	<b>Not Upheld</b> There was no fault in the way the Council considered Mrs X's application for school transport assistance.
<b>Complaint ref: 5438994</b> Ms X complained about the way the Council handled her application for school transport for her daughter.	<b>Discontinued</b> The Ombudsman discontinued her investigation as she was satisfied with the action the Council proposes to take i.e. the Council agreed to provide school transport as soon as Ms X provided proof of her income.

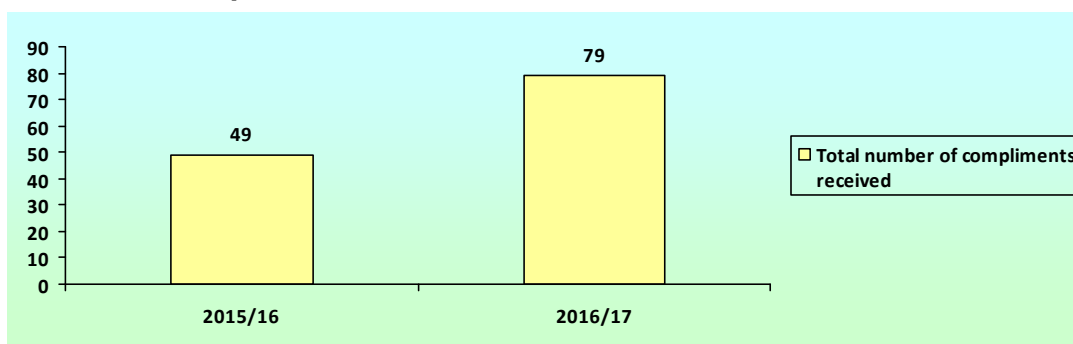
#### **4. LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS**

- Mrs X was discharged from hospital but the Meals on Wheels service was not re started. As a result of this, procedures were reinforced with all brokerage staff regarding the need to fully restart packages of care.
- A care provider decided to renew their emergency telephone system but no backup system was put in place. As a result when a carer's car broke down, it resulted in a client not receiving an evening call (a neighbour helped her to get into bed) nor was she able to contact the care agency over that weekend. The care agency apologised and put a rota system in place where managers provided telephone cover.

- Officers did not cross check information held by the Community Mental Health Team and as a result the information we held was inaccurate i.e. full name, gender and marital status. As a result of this mistake additional support and training was given to staff where it was emphasised the need to cross check.

## 5. COMPLIMENTS

### Number of compliments received



- Compliments are up 61% (30) when comparing the same period in 2015/16 of 49 with 2016/17 of 79.

### Here's what some residents said.

*"To be honest the pleasure has been mine as your help was always on point and much needed. You always tried to understand things from all perspectives to reach a conclusion. I wish more social workers were client oriented then just wanting to meet targets. God bless you for all you did to help and your kind words".*

*"We just want to say that we truly value X...s input and opinions on our child's development and progress. We want to come to meetings at the nursery when we know we get to meet with X - so that we can hear what she has to say and advice she had to offer".*

*"It has been very remiss of me not to thank you for all the time and attention you have given to making my mother's house more accessible for her. The reclining chair, bath chair and commode have been really, really useful. Indeed they have really improved the ability of her carer and myself to manage her needs, day to day. The reclining chair in particular, has given her a degree of independence she has not had for a long time. When it is tipped forwards, she can stand up on her own and grab the walking frame, prior to setting off for the toilet. Previously she needed two people to help her up off her settee. We used the chair on the bath again this morning - it feels so much safer, I can't imagine how she didn't have an accident before! Anyway Thank you for being mum's social worker. I take my hat off to you in dealing with my horrific brothers. I just hope they haven't put you off your career as*

*being a great social worker. Thank you for supporting me and been there to speak to you when I needed a chat or just to have a cry".*

"It has been an absolute pleasure to work with X.... over the past few months. We met on a very challenging case, and my first impressions of X.... were great, she handled herself with professionalism and helped me to manage what could have been a very difficult situation".

*Y... cares for her husband who has Alzheimer's disease and said that X... had "literally saved her life". Prior to X.s involvement she was depressed, social isolated and had experienced suicidal thoughts. X.... had turned her life around and made such a difference. Y was now no longer depressed and she was no longer experiencing any suicidal thoughts. Y said that X had been excellent in communicating with her throughout the process.*

"Just wanted to let you know I've spoken to P's mum who is over the moon that we managed to get his transport arranged so quickly, she's got five other kids so was really worried that she would have to book time off work to try and take them all to school".

## **6. COMPLAINTS DEALT WITH BY HOME CARE PROVIDERS**

If a service user or another person on their behalf raises a concern with the Council about a Home Care provider, a written note of the complaint is made and it is then sent to the Home Care provider to investigate and respond within 10 working days. If the complaint remains unresolved, it will then be registered as a formal complaint for a manager within the Council to investigate and respond.

**Table 9** - Complaints dealt with by Home Care Providers - 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017

<b>Name of Home Care provider</b>	<b>Number of complaints processed</b>	<b>Number dealt with within 10 working days</b>	<b>Upheld</b>	<b>Partially Upheld</b>	<b>Not Upheld</b>
<b>Care Outlook</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>13 (72%)</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Specialist Care Services</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>20 (77%)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Mears</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6 (75%)</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Avant</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13 (76%)</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Oasis</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4 (57%)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Lalis</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3 (60%)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Devine Care</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3 (100%)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Time2Care</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3 (100%)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>CTRC</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3 (75%)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Equicare</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0 (0%)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Comfort</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1 (100%)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>Care</b>					
<b>Bluebird</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2 (100%)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>71 (72%)</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>31</b>

Please note that for each complaint submitted, a complainant will often give more than one cause of their complaint i.e. time keeping, care provided, safeguarding concerns, etc.

The top three reasons why service users complained about Home Care providers:

1. Poor time keeping - 62 instances (64%)
2. Missed Calls - 49 instances (51%)
3. Poor Quality of Care - 42 instances (44%)

## **7. BENCHMARKING AGAINST OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

**Table 10** - provides comparative benchmarking data on how Hillingdon compares against other neighbouring Local Authorities.

Local Authority	Total number of Adult complaints received	Total Number of Ombudsman investigations
Barnet	95	4
Brent	97	9
Ealing	109	5
Buckinghamshire	156	10
Hammersmith and Fulham	112	7
Hillingdon	35	7
Westminster	106	5
Kensington and Chelsea	175	8

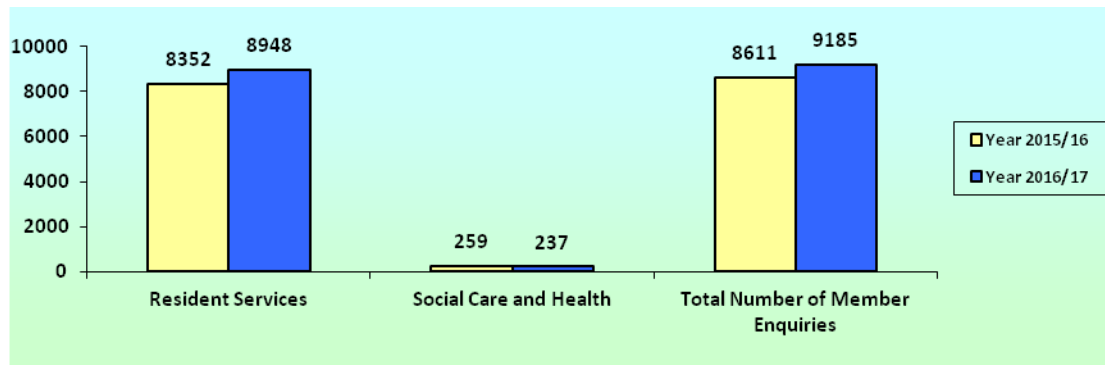
In comparison with the Local Authorities near to us, the volume of formal adult complaints is low. This is mainly due to the effort made by staff to bring about early resolution of a complaint at the informal stage and Stage 1 of the complaint procedure. This approach is effective in ensuring that a complaint is resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant and results in the vast majority of complaints not escalating to the Local Government Ombudsman.

### **Annex 3 MEMBERS ENQUIRIES**

Enquiries can be submitted to officers by Elected Members on behalf of their constituents.

#### **Total number of Enquiries from Elected Members**

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- 7% (574) increase (overall) in enquiries from Elected Members when comparing the figure for 2015/16 of 8,611 with the figure for 2016/17 of 9,185.
- Housing Service accounted for 11% (984) of all ME's recorded in 2016/17. However, this represents a 23% (301) decrease in ME's for Housing Service when comparing the figure for 2015/16 of 1,285 with the same period in 2016/17 of 984.
- Social Care accounted for 3% (237) all ME's recorded in 2016/17. This represents an 8% (22) decrease in ME's recorded for Social Care when comparing the figures for 2015/16 of 259 with the same period in 2016/17 of 237.