

ANNUAL COMPLAINT REPORT FOR HOUSING AND SOCIAL CARE SERVICES FOR 1 APRIL 2017 TO 31 MARCH 2018

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Committee name | Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee |
| Officer reporting | Ian Anderson - Business Manager, Complaints and Enquiries |
| Papers with report | Appendix A |
| Ward | All |

HEADLINES

This report provides information and analysis of complaints and Members Enquiries received between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 for Housing and Social Care Services and satisfies the requirements to publish annual information about complaints.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee notes the contents of the annual complaint report and provides any feedback as appropriate.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

As detailed in appendix A.

Implications on related Council policies

A role of the Policy Overview Committees is to make comments and/or recommendations on service changes and improvements to the Cabinet who are responsible for the Council's policy and direction.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

Provides assurance that complaints and Members' Enquiries are being processed in accordance with our published policies.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

Legal Implications

None

**ANNUAL COMPLAINT REPORT FOR HOUSING AND SOCIAL CARE SERVICES FOR 1
APRIL 2017 TO 31 MARCH 2018**

a. Housing Services (pages 6 to 16)

Informal complaints

- 47 fewer informal complaints received from 455 in 2016/17 to 408 in 2017/18.

Stage 1 complaints

- 45 more Stage 1 complaints were registered when comparing the 2017/18 figure of 170 with the same period in 2016/17 of 125. Of the 170 Stage 1 complaints, 13 were upheld, 32 partially upheld, 121 not upheld and 4 withdrawn. The average time taken to respond to a Stage 1 complaint is 7.80 working days, with 89% (152 of 170) complaints responded to within the 10 working day target.

Stage 2 complaints

- 2 fewer Stage 2 complaints when comparing the 2016/17 figure of 12 with the 2017/18 figure of 10. Of the 10 Stage 2 complaints, 4 were upheld, 2 partially upheld and 4 not upheld. The average time taken to respond to a Stage 2 complaint is 8.63 working days.

Stage 3 complaints

- 1 Stage 3 complaint was recorded during this period, it was responded to within 15 working days and upheld.

Investigation by the Local Government or Housing Ombudsman

- 20 complaints were investigated and considered by the Ombudsman, 1 was upheld, 2 partially upheld, 7 not upheld and in the other 10 the Ombudsman decided not to investigate.

Compliments

- Compliments are up from 19 for 2016/17 to 24 for 2017/18.

b. Children and Young Peoples Services (pages 17 to 24)

Informal Complaints

- 43 fewer informal complaints recorded when comparing the same period for 2016/17 of 103 with 2017/18 of 60.

Stage 1 complaints

- 20 more Stage 1 complaints were recorded when comparing the figure of 2016/17 of 33 with the 2017/18 figure of 53. The average time taken to respond to a Stage 1 complaint is 10.75 working days. 85% (45 out of 53) Stage 1 complaints were responded to within 10 working days.

Stage 2 and 3 Complaints

- Two Stage 2 complaint investigations were undertaken during this period - both were partially upheld.
- There were no Stage 3 investigations.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO)

- Seven complaints were considered by the LGO - 2 were upheld, 1 not upheld and they decided not to investigate in the 4 other enquiries received.

Compliments

- Compliments are up by 14 when comparing the same period in 2016/17 of 46 with 2017/18 of 60.

c. Adult Social Care (pages 25 to 31)

Informal Complaints

- 41 fewer informal complaints recorded when comparing the 2016/17 figure of 105 with the 2017/18 figure of 64.

Stage 1 complaints

- 19 more Stage 1 complaints were recorded when comparing the 2016/17 figure of 35 with the 2017/18 of 54. The average time taken to respond to a Stage 1 complaint is 10.48 working days. 81% (44 out of 54) Stage 1 complaints were responded to within 10 working days and 94% (51 out of 54) were responded to within our published target of 20 working days. 3 Stage 1 complaints were upheld, 11 partially upheld, 36 not upheld and 4 withdrawn or cancelled.

Local Government and Social care Ombudsman (LGO)

- The Ombudsman concluded 11 investigations - 2 were upheld, 3 partially upheld, 2 not upheld and 4 were not investigated.

Compliments

- 23 fewer compliments recorded when comparing the same period in 2016/17 of 79 with 2017/18 of 56.

d. Members' Enquiries (ME) (page 32)

- 8,502 MEs were recorded for 2017/18. This is 683 (7%) fewer than 2016/17 figure of 9,185. The service areas with the highest number of MEs is Waste (3,340), Anti-Social Behaviour (1,273) and Planning (1,227) Services.

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.

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 – HOUSING SERVICES

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

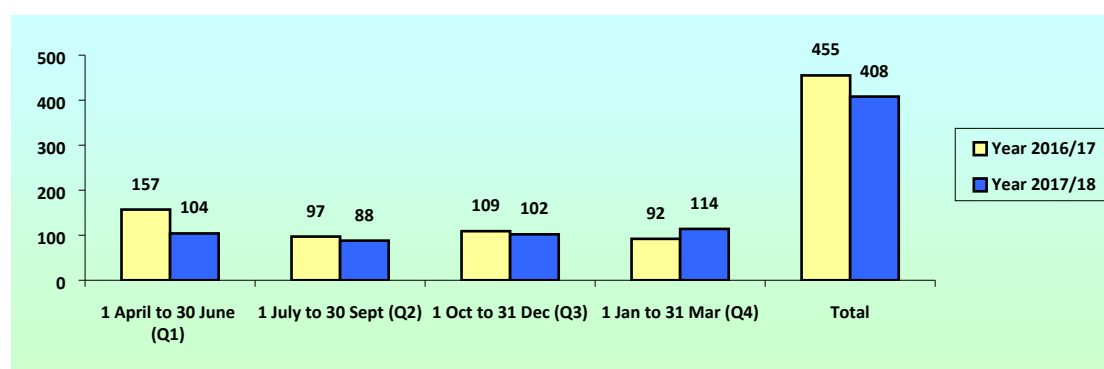
- The Informal Complaint (service request).
- Stage 1 – response from a Deputy Director or Head of Service.
- Stage 2 – response from the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Residents Services
- Stage 3 – response from the Chief Executive of the Council
- Stage 4 - Designated Person for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

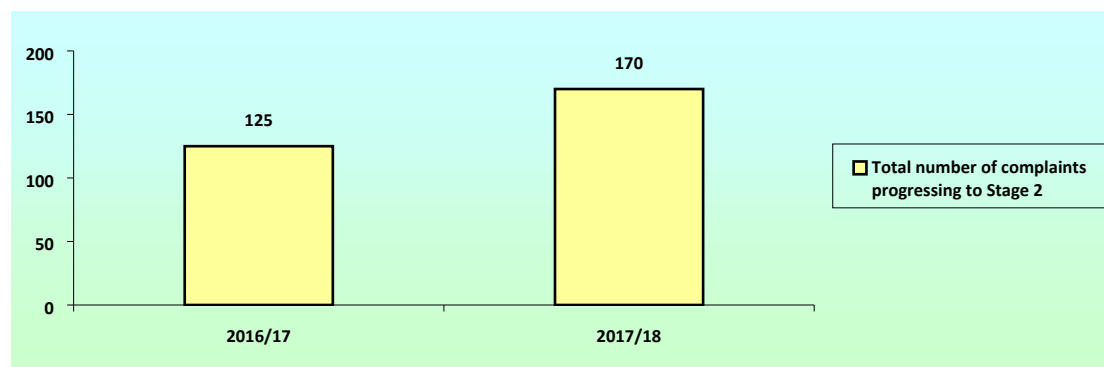
Informal complaints (service requests)



- 10% (47) fewer informal complaints received from 455 in 2016/17 to 408 in 2017/18.

2. STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS

Total number of Stage 1 complaints



- 36% (45) more Stage 1 complaints were registered when comparing the 2017/18 figure of 170 with the same period in 2016/17 of 125.

Table 1 – Outcome of complaints

| Service Area | Total number | % responded within 10 working days | Upheld | Partially upheld | Not upheld | Withdrawn |
|--------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|--------|------------------|------------|-----------|
| Homeless Prevention | 71 | 97% | 0 | 8 | 61 | 2 |
| Repairs including Heating | 65 | 82% | 7 | 19 | 37 | 2 |
| Programme and Asset Management | 9 | 78% | 2 | 2 | 5 | 0 |
| Tenancy Services | 25 | 88% | 4 | 3 | 18 | 0 |
| Total | 170 | 89% | 13 | 32 | 121 | 4 |

- Of the 170 Stage 1 complaints, 8% (13) were upheld, 19% (32) partially upheld and 71% (121) not upheld.
- 97% of the Homeless Prevention Stage 1 complaints were not upheld because the majority of these were challenges of the Council's Social Housing Allocation Policy.

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

| | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| Average time taken to respond to a complaint | 8.26 | 7.80 |
| Target | 10 | 10 |
| Variance | -1.74 | -2.2 |

- The average time taken to respond to a Stage 1 complaint is 7.80 working days against the target of 10 working days.

Table 3 - Number and % of complaints responded to within 10 working days

| Period | Total number of complaints | Number responded to within 10 working days | % responded to within 10 working days |
|---------|----------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 2016/17 | 125 | 99 | 79 % |
| 2017/18 | 170 | 152 | 89 % |

- 89% (152 out of 170) Stage 1 complaints were responded to within 10 working days.

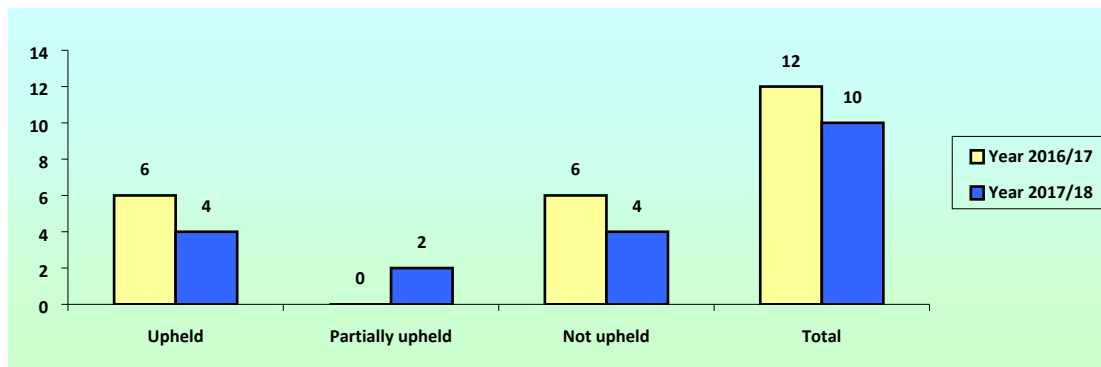
3. STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS

Table 4 - Total number of complaints progressing to Stage 2

| Period | Total number |
|---------------|---------------------|
| 2016/17 | 12 |
| 2017/18 | 10 |

- The number of Stage 2 complaints remains low 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.

Outcome of complaints



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

| Complaint details | Decision at Stage 2 |
|---|--|
| Complaint ref: 5960020 Mr X sought compensation for heating costs and inconvenience for a poorly fitted threshold to his back door sometime between 1999 and 2017. | Upheld The Council accepted that the back to front threshold was the cause and agreed to renew the door set. Mr X was offered a sum of money in compensation by way of redress. |
| Complaint ref: 6111551 Mrs X was unhappy with the response she received at Stage 1, namely that her property was left unsafe, that an offer had not been made to re-decorate her hallway and that the offer of compensation was insufficient. | Upheld We apologised that when an Asbestos board was removed the gap was not filled in by the contractor, we agreed to re decorate part of the hallway where tape we had used had damaged the paintwork. We offered her compensation for the additional electricity Mrs X had used whilst her boiler was being replaced. |
| Complaint ref: 6399081 Mr X sought compensation because his boiler was not working from 13 December 2017 until 4 January 2018. | Upheld We apologised for the time taken to resolve this issue. We explained that as the part was no longer available, a new boiler was installed. No compensation was paid. |
| Complaint ref: 6399731 Miss X complained about the number of visits it took to resolve her boiler problems. | Partially Upheld We explained that we do not pay compensation for engineers having to attend to undertake a repair and the requirement of the tenant or someone on their behalf to give access to the property. We apologised for the time it took to complete the repair. |

| | |
|--|--|
| Complaint ref: 6498977 Ms X complained about the number of visits it took to resolve her boiler problems. | Partially Upheld We apologised for the number of visits it took to complete the repair. |
| Complaint ref: 6367489 Mr X complained that on 19 December 2017 he reported his boiler as not working and that it was not fixed until 26 January 2018. He wanted £3,000 in compensation. | No Upheld Mr X was informed that when he first reported that the boiler was not working, it was repaired and left in working order on 23 December. When on 8 January 2018 he reported that the boiler would not switch on, an appointment was arranged on a date convenient to Mr X when the fault was identified and fixed on 26 January 2018. His claim for compensation was rejected. |
| Complaint ref: 6169222 Mr X complained that when he moved into the property was not redecorated as part of the void works. | Not Upheld Mr X was informed that the redecorating of properties is not part of the Minimum Lettable Standard (MLS). The current MLS has been in place since 2013 and the Voids Team is tasked to ensure that all empty properties meet this standard. |
| Complaint ref: 6210141 Mr X complained that the property was not ready for it to be let to him and that electrical work needed to be done two weeks after he moved in. | Not Upheld Mr X was informed that the property met the Minimal Lettable Standards and that it had passed the electrical test 2 weeks before he moved into the property. We advised that we could not wave his rental liability. |
| Complaint ref: 6399769 Mr X complained that the Council was not properly managing a small repair. | Not Upheld Mr X was advised that it was proving difficult to find a manufacturer to make and fit a new rodding eye for the cast iron soil pipe in the garage. Officers were progressing the work as quickly as they could and had now found a company who were prepared to do this work. |
| Complaint ref: 6168012 Mrs X complained about the handling of her Right to Buy application. | Not Upheld Mrs X was informed that there was no delay in processing her Right to Buy application. We confirmed that her offer had been received and in accordance with our practices, her application was going through the verification process. |

Table 5 – Time taken to respond to a complaint at Stage 2 (working days)

| | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| Average time taken to respond to a complaint | 11.16 | 8.63 |
| Target | 10 | 10 |

| | | |
|----------|--------|--------|
| Variance | + 1.16 | - 1.37 |
|----------|--------|--------|

- The average time taken to respond to a Stage 2 complaint is 8.63 working days against the target of 10 working days.

4. **STAGE 3 COMPLAINTS**

The table below provides a summary of the one Stage 3 complaint dealt with during 2017/18.

| Complaint details | Decision at Stage 3 |
|--|--|
| Complaint ref: 5665543 Ms X complained about damp in her property and that officers were not doing enough to address this issue. | Upheld Ms X was informed that the apology offered for the length of time taken to deal with the mould/damp issue and the offer to allow her to redecorate the property with the funds that would have been used by the Council to redecorate the property, is considered to be reasonable and proportionate redress. |

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

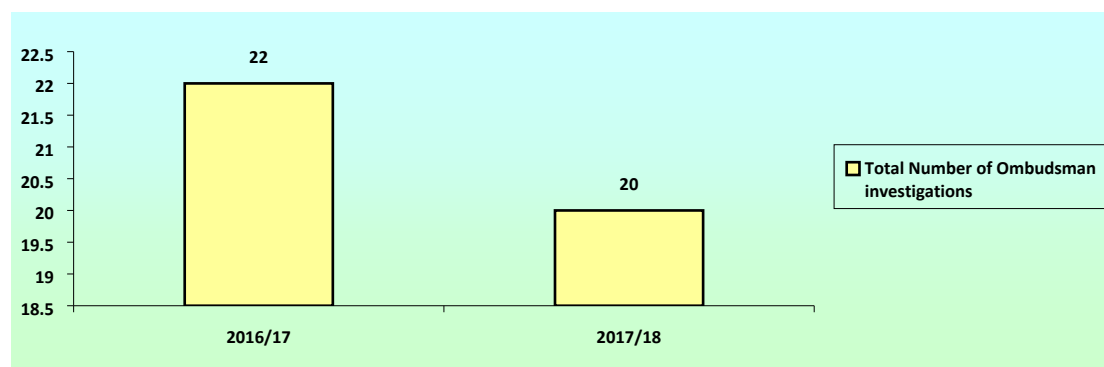
If a complaint is about a tenancy, leasehold, or other housing management issue, a complainant can refer their complaint to a 'Designated Person' to see if they can help resolve the complaint. If the 'Designated Person' cannot resolve a complaint or if 8 weeks have elapsed since the Stage 3 response, a complainant can then complain to the Housing Ombudsman.

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

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 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



The findings and decision of the LGO are set out below.

| Complaint details | Ombudsman decision |
|---|--|
| <p>Complaint ref: 5846362</p> <p>Mr X complained that the Council failed to award a contract for shared ownership properties in accordance with procedure. He stated that the Council failed to achieve value for money and failed to treat all applicants fairly and equally.</p> | <p>Upheld</p> <p>The Ombudsman determined that the Council was at fault when it failed to notify Mr X that it had rejected his application from a tendering process because of a faulty poor credit score. It should have given him the opportunity to correct it. However, even if the Council had done this, he would not have been awarded the contract.</p> |
| <p>Complaint ref: 5084390</p> <p>Mr X complained about the Council's handling of his complaint about the water pressure of his shower, a damaged fence and the absence of a gate to the garden at the rear of his property.</p> | <p>Partially upheld</p> <p>The Ombudsman determined that there was no maladministration by the Council with respect to its handling of the shower complaint. However, it felt that there were instances of service failure in relation to the handling of his fencing complaint.</p> |
| <p>Complaint ref: 6015449</p> <p>Ms X complained that the Council cancelled her housing application despite her having been homeless for four years and her son, Mr Y, having mental health issues.</p> | <p>Partially Upheld</p> <p>The Ombudsman found that the Council was not at fault when it removed Ms X from its housing register. However, the Council was at fault when it provided confusing information to Ms W by suggesting she could not re-apply but this fault did not cause an injustice.</p> |
| <p>Complaint ref: 5966927</p> <p>Ms X complained that the Council refused to accept she has a local connection to the Borough, despite providing evidence to show this. She said she could not provide any further proof because she lost all her documentation in a house fire. Ms X also said that her current temporary housing is unsuitable because her child has Autism.</p> | <p>Not Upheld</p> <p>The Ombudsman determined that the Council had considered all relevant information and is not satisfied Ms X qualifies for its local connection housing priority. This is a decision the Council is entitled to take and the Council is not at fault.</p> |
| <p>Complaint ref: 6254534</p> <p>Mr and Mrs X complained that the Council unreasonably refused to accept their application for re-housing.</p> | <p>Not Upheld</p> <p>The Ombudsman determined that there was no fault in the way the Council applied its Social Housing Allocations policy.</p> |
| <p>Complaint ref: 5652970</p> <p>Ms X complained that the Council</p> | <p>Not Upheld</p> <p>When the Council reviewed the details</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| had wrongly removed her from its housing register because she had not provided sufficient evidence of having lived in the Borough for 10 years and that it wrongly temporarily removed her from the housing register when she mistakenly ticked a box to say she held savings of £30,000 or more. | of Ms X's housing register application it noticed a discrepancy in the accuracy of information relating to requirements for a 10 year local connection. The Council asked Ms S to provide additional information about this. When she did not provide this the Council removed her from its housing register. There is no fault in the Council's actions. |
| Complaint ref: 6205695 Mr X complained about the Council's handling of his report that the over grown trees in his neighbour's garden had caused his fence to fall down. | Not Upheld The tenants' handbook confirms that the Council will only carry out fencing works in very limited circumstances, none of which were met in this case. It was therefore reasonable for the Council to confirm that it would not repair or replace the fence panels. |
| Complaint ref: 6377069 Ms X complained that the Council failed to consider her circumstances when it refused to include her on the Council's housing register. | Not Upheld The Ombudsman found no fault in how the Council considered Ms X's housing application. |
| Complaint ref: 6305605 Mr X complained that the Council refused to provide him with accommodation under Section 17 of the Children Act. | Not Upheld The Ombudsman found that the Council was not at fault when it stopped providing Mr X with accommodation under section 17 of the Children Act as the Council had carried out a full assessment. There is no evidence of fault by the Council. |
| Complaint ref: 6522232 Ms X complained the Council failed to consider the circumstances when refusing to include her on the Council's housing register. | Not Upheld The Ombudsman found no evidence of fault in how the Council considered Ms X's housing application |
| Complaint ref: 6046205 Mrs X complained that the Council removed her from its housing register even though she had been waiting for five years and she now had three children living in a one bedroom property. | Did not investigate The Ombudsman advised that they would not investigate Mrs X's complaint the Council had removed her from its housing register. Further consideration of the complaint is unlikely to find fault by the Council. |
| Complaint ref: 6049896 Mr X disagreed with the Council's decision to remove him from the housing register because he had not lived continuously in the Borough for | Did not investigate The Ombudsman advised that they would not investigate this complaint as there was insufficient evidence of fault by the Council. |

| | |
|---|---|
| 10 years. | |
| Complaint ref: 6339682 Mrs X disagreed with the Council's decision not to allow her son to join the housing register. | Did not investigate The Ombudsman determined that there was insufficient evidence of fault by the Council. |
| Complaint ref: 5654934 Mr X complained that the Council would not let him join the housing register even though he provided all the information asked of him. | Did not investigate The Ombudsman determined that there was insufficient evidence of fault by the Council. |
| Complaint ref: 6247810 Mr X disagreed with the Council's decision to allow him to join the housing register. | Did not investigate The Ombudsman determined that there was insufficient evidence of fault by the Council. |
| Complaint ref: 6050700 Mr X complained about the Council's decision to reject his homeless application in 2015 because he was considered non-priority homeless. He says he was street homeless for a month afterwards as a result. | Did not investigate The Ombudsman stated that it would not exercise his discretion to investigate this complaint. It was received outside the normal 12-month period and it was reasonable for Mr X to seek a review or court remedy at the time. |
| Complaint ref: 6305754 Ms X complained that the Council did not keep a proper record of her repayment of a loan in 2015, causing her distress and inconvenience. | Did not investigate The Ombudsman did not investigate this complaint because they could not achieve a worthwhile outcome for the complainant. |
| Complaint ref: 5850347 Ms X complained about the decision to serve a Notice to Quit. | Did not investigate The Ombudsman did not investigate this complaint as the issue of a Notice to Quit is outside her jurisdiction. |
| Complaint ref: 6178350 Mrs X complained that she had been left in significant arrears on her rent account with the Council because it had decided to reclaim an overpayment of Housing Benefit from her. Mrs X is also unhappy with the advice she had been given by the Council and the attitude of its staff towards her. | Did not investigate The Ombudsman's view was that it was reasonable to expect Mrs X to appeal the Housing Benefit decision at a Tribunal. |
| Complaint ref: 6560244 Ms X complained about the process for extending leases insofar as <i>'two different households ... could receive vastly different costs and then make an offer and experience</i> | Not within jurisdiction The Ombudsman determined that the Council's handling of her application to extend her lease is not within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction to consider any further. She was advised to seek |

vastly different outcomes’.

advice from the Leasehold Advisory Service.

7. LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

Communication

There was one instance where the complainant complained because they had sent in documentation but we did not acknowledge receipt, two instances where people complained about incorrect information given, four instances where people complained about delays in responding to enquiries or the delay in beginning work, and one instance where a caller felt that their call was dealt with insensitively.

Recommendations:

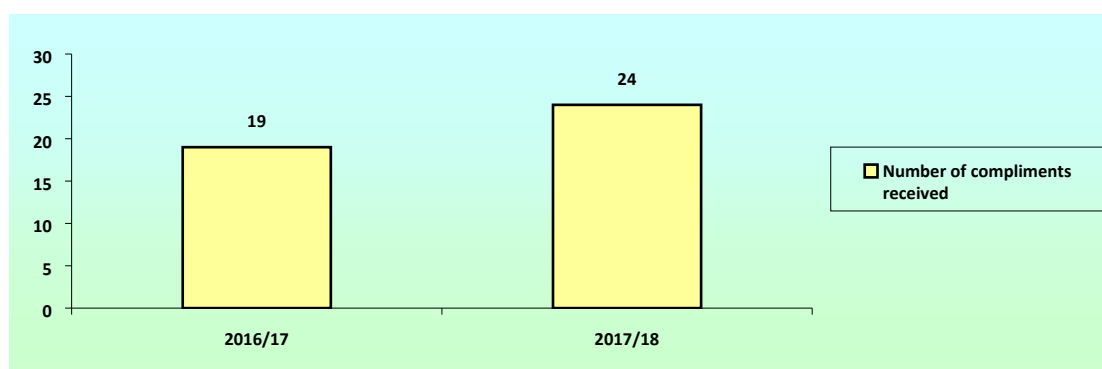
- officers were reminded of the need to keep our promises i.e. if we say we will respond by a particular date we must do so;
- the need for accuracy of information given particularly appointment dates/times and if this is not going to be met we need to be proactive and tell a client if an appointment is going to be changed or if the operative is going to be delayed; and
- the need to convey information sensitively particularly if it is a negative decision i.e. not going to allow a person to join the housing register or offer social housing.

Poor workmanship

In one instance, a complainant complained that the threshold to his back door had been installed the wrong way around between 1999 and 2009. We apologised for our error and offered a sum of money in compensation.

8. COMPLIMENTS

Number of compliments received



Here's what some people have said:

"I thank you and the officers involved, particularly Z and Y, for the help given to Mr F and

ensuring that there will be a smooth transition for him from the family home to a one bedroom property".

"I was just called to HSR by a probation officer who was representing their client. The probation officer heaped nothing but praise for B, particularly emphasising that even though the outcome was a negative one for the client, the way B conducted the interview, his interactions with a very challenging client and the way he explored every possible option to assist was beyond what he would have expected. He also complimented B's problem solving skills and his professionalism throughout the process."

"As well as making a complaint I would like to make it known to the Head of the Housing Department how incredibly kind and helpful a young man called G in your call centre is. I spoke with G on Friday 21 April 2017 and during last week. He is the nicest member I have spoken to on the Housing Line during the last 2 months and I feel he should be complemented."

"I wish to draw your attention to some excellent work carried out by T who, over the recent period - including the Bank Holiday, dealt with a number of difficult and complex matters resulting from plumbing leaks, air-locks and mains water supplies, whereby the residents in a block of three flats in X Close, Uxbridge, were without water; in one case for almost two weeks (or perhaps more)! Suffice to say that T and the team under him were unstinting in their efforts given the problems encountered and bottled water was provided to supply drinking water. I was kept informed throughout. I received a message from T today to inform me that at last all three flats have had their normal water supplies restored."

"Can I just say how happy I am with A, the maintenance man from the Council. He knew what the problem was straight away and fixed it immediately. He was friendly, professional and his workmanship was nothing short of amazing. He could teach xxxx a thing or two. Also the apprentice H was equally as good and will be an asset to your team. They came to my home that was quite manic that day with a friend of my 8 year old and this friend has Down's Syndrome - they were both brilliant around him and tried to keep noise and disruption to a minimum and cleaned up after themselves. Amazing work and amazing staff I can't tell you enough how pleased I am."

Annex 2 – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICES

The Complaint Procedure

Complaints made by children or on their behalf are governed by the Children's 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, etc. Hillingdon's procedure operates as follows:

- The Informal Complaint (service request).
- Stage 1 – Local Resolution.
- Stage 2 – Independent Investigation by two people (Investigating Officer and Independent Person).
- Stage 3 – Review Panel.
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

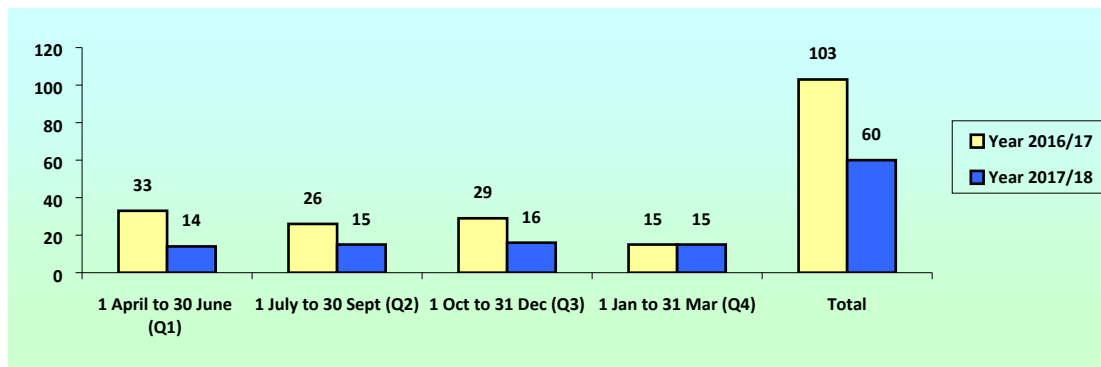
A more detailed explanation of how the complaint procedure operates, the main complaint themes and statistical data for each stage of the complaint process is provided below.

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.

1. THE INFORMAL COMPLAINT

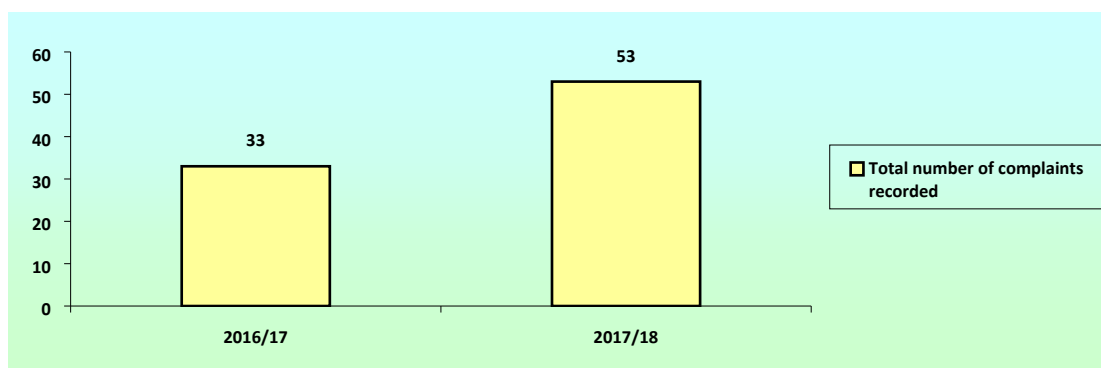
Informal Complaints received – (service requests)



42% (43) fewer complaints dealt with by way of service requests when comparing 2016/17 figure of 103 with the 2017/18 figure of 60. There is no apparent reason for this as informal complaints are still being dealt with in the same way as 2016/17.

2. STAGE 1 – LOCAL RESOLUTION

Total number of complaints recorded



Stage 1 complaints are up 61% (20) when comparing the 2016/17 figure of 33 with the 2017/18 figure of 53. Volumes of complaints remain low.

Table 6 – Complaints by service area

| Service Area | Total number | % responded within 10 working days | Upheld | Partially upheld | Not upheld | With drawn |
|------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|--------|------------------|------------|------------|
| Adoption and Fostering | 3 | 66 % | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Early Intervention | 11 | 73 % | 0 | 1 | 9 | 1 |
| Children in Care | 2 | 100 % | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Children Social Work | 17 | 94 % | 2 | 3 | 11 | 1 |
| Children with | 2 | 50 % | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Disabilities | | | | | | |
| Leaving Care | 8 | 78 % | 1 | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| Safeguarding | 2 | 50 % | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Triage | 8 | 83 % | 0 | 3 | 5 | 0 |
| Total | 53 | 85 % | 4 | 10 | 36 | 3 |

Table 7 – Time taken to respond to a Stage 1 complaint (working days)

| | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|--|---------|---------|
| Average time taken to respond to a complaint | 10.63 | 10.75 |
| Target | 10 | 10 |
| Variance | + 0.63 | + 0.63 |

The average time taken to respond to a Stage 1 complaint is 10.75 working days against our target of 10 working days. This is disappointing and an area that we are working on to improve for 2018/19.

Table 8 - Number and % of complaints responded to within 10 working days

| Period | Total number of complaints | Number responded to within 10 working days | % responded to within 10 working days |
|---------|----------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 2016/17 | 33 | 25 | 76 % |
| 2017/18 | 53 | 45 | 85 % |

45 (85%) of Stage 1 complaints were responded to within the 10 working day target - a slight improvement from 2016/17.

3. STAGE 2 INVESTIGATIONS

A Stage 2 investigation is conducted by an Investigating Officer (IO) and Independent Person (IP) with specialist skills and knowledge of the Children's Act. The Council has to pay the IO and IP an hourly rate for their professional services as well as travel expenses. The timescale to conclude a Stage 2 investigation is set by statute at 25 working days but this may be extended to a maximum of 65 working days.

There were two Stage 2 investigations during this period. The findings and the decisions reached are set out below.

| Complaint details | LGO decision |
|--|--|
| Complaint ref: 6330652 Mr X complained about the | Partially Upheld We apologised for the changes in social |

| | |
|---|---|
| changes of social workers, that he had not received any help with his Asylum application and that his housing situation had not been addressed. | workers and accepted that this was not ideal. We explained to Mr X that his Personal Advisor had been liaising with the Home Office and had requested that they process his application as soon as was possible. Mr X was informed that our records had shown three properties offered to him but these had all been declined by him on the basis that the room was not big enough. |
| Complaint ref: 5562697 and 5770426 Mrs X complained about delays and poor service in providing adaptations to support her son at home, that she was not being supported by social services and that her son should be placed in a residential care. | Partially Upheld We apologised that officers did not employ a more robust approach with Mrs X when she failed to respond to enquiries. All the other concerns raised were not upheld. |

4. **STAGE 3 INVESTIGATIONS**

There were no Stage 3 investigations during this period.

5. **INVESTIGATION BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN (LGO)**

Seven complaints were considered by the Ombudsman during this period. The findings and decision of the LGO is set out below.

| Complaint details | LGO decision |
|--|--|
| Complaint ref: 4806464 Ms X complained of fault in the Council's handling of the care of her daughter under section 20 of the Children Act 1989. | Upheld The Ombudsman determined that there was fault by the Council because of a delay in undertaking a maternity test. The Council agreed to pay Ms X compensation to remedy the injustice she suffered. |
| Complaint ref: 6064222 Mrs X complained about the way the Council had dealt with her concerns for her adoptive daughter and that the Council had not carried out a proper assessment to ensure that her daughter was receiving appropriate care and treatment while she is a looked after child. | Did not investigate The Ombudsman determined that the complaint had been referred to her too early and asked that the Council write to Mrs X to advise her of her right to a Stage 2 complaint investigation, if she wishes. |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Complaint ref: 5770426</p> <p>Ms X complained that the Council had delayed in responding to her complaints and did not respond to her request for a Stage 2 investigation.</p> | <p>Did not investigate</p> <p>The Ombudsman determined that the Council had demonstrated it was considering Ms X's complaints at Stage 2 of the statutory children's complaints procedure. The Ombudsman discontinued her investigation.</p> |
| <p>Complaint ref: 6235966</p> <p>Ms X's complained that the Council failed to provide her family with support, and wrongly removed her children from her care and placed them with their father, so he was able to alienate them from her and the rest of her family.</p> | <p>Did not investigate</p> <p>The Ombudsman did not investigate Ms X's complaint about children's services' involvement with her family, because these are issues she could have raised in court during proceedings to decide where her children should live.</p> |
| <p>Complaint ref: 6152292</p> <p>Ms X complained that the Council did not keep a proper record of her repayment of a loan in 2015, causing her distress and inconvenience.</p> | <p>Did not investigate</p> <p>The Ombudsman did not investigate this complaint because he could not achieve a worthwhile outcome for the complainant.</p> |
| <p>Complaint ref: 5803061</p> <p>Mr X complained that a child protection case conference decided that his son needs a child protection plan. Mr X says the decision is flawed because he was not at the meeting and that the police fabricated evidence.</p> | <p>Did not investigate</p> <p>The Ombudsman did not investigate Mr X's complaint because he could make his disagreement with the conference decision known via the chair or the Council. The Council's social workers have not caused Mr X an injustice.</p> |
| <p>Complaint ref: 6064222</p> <p>Mr X complained that the Council would not provide the information he needs from children services.</p> | <p>Did not investigate</p> <p>The Ombudsman informed Mr X that they would not investigate this complaint because he can raise the issue in court.</p> |

6. LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

Communication

There were some instances where people complained about the way they were spoken to (insensitive), the information given to them was misleading or that they were getting differing information, not informed of meetings and that we did not keep to our promises (calling someone

on a landline when they expressly asked to be called on their mobile phone).

Recommendations:

- officers should keep written notes of contact with people; and
- consider whether it is appropriate to follow up a conversation with a written communication summarising what was said.

Errors

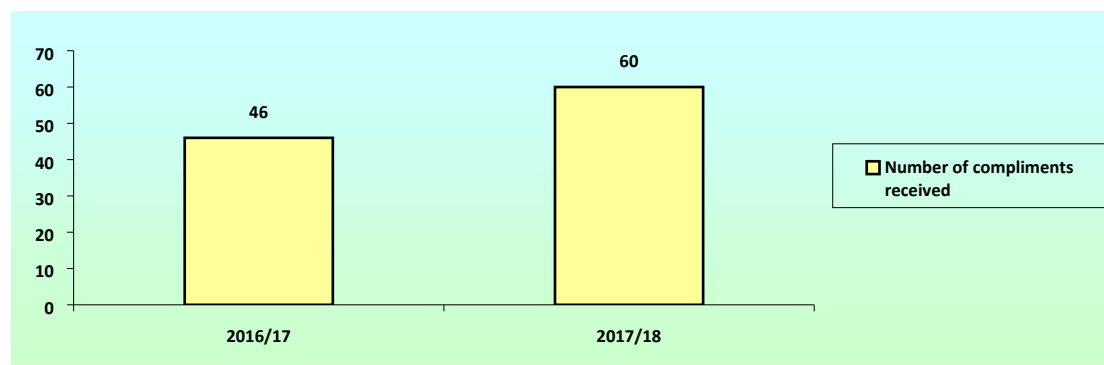
In a few of the complaints, the complaint was about factual inaccuracies contained within a report or an assessment such as omissions, incorrect names/dates, different names, etc.

Recommendations

- avoid cutting and pasting; and
- assessments and reports to be checked by a manager before it is sent.

7. COMPLIMENTS

Number of compliments received



Compliments are up 30% (14) when comparing the same period in 2016/17 of 46 with 2017/18 of 60.

Here's what some people have said.

"Just to let you know that X is doing AMAZINGLY well and is thriving! He is the most precious little being and we love him to bits Y. What a gift!!! having X in our lives is like Christmas every day for us! During the adoption process the Hillingdon adoption team went through a lot of transitions in terms of managers and social workers etc., but as soon as you came on the scene we noticed a HUGE difference in the way things were run. Everything seemed to work so much more efficiently, effectively and professionally, and most importantly, with care. Thank you Y."

"A special thank you to Y - he was our 7th social worker and the most proactive, dedicated,

professional and caring of all the previous social workers before him. He too made a huge impact in terms of getting us matched in very quick time. He never gave up and remained in constant contact with us throughout the time he was our social worker and provided the most amazing support. Y is extremely responsive and very punctual and delivers on what he promises. Such dedication is rare. We will always hold a special place in our hearts for Y, and all of the Hillingdon team, including A, B and C. We will never forget what you have done for us, for our family. You have one of the most important jobs out there - the work you do matters. On the days when you are burnt out, and questioning if it does, take a few moments and think about all the children you have successfully placed in a loving, caring and nurturing home. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. You have enriched our lives in ways you will never know."

"Thank you so much for sharing the photo of X. Mum sent this to you, rightly proud of the fine young man that her son has grown into with your support and involvement. I am aware that you have been integral in X's journey from a socially isolated boy who was psychologically unable to attend school at all, through to his accessing a suitable place at XXXX, now able to socialise and eat in public. Mum has shared his Prom photo, news of his Year 12 positive plans, news of a girlfriend and ambition to become a mechanic. This is truly uplifting."

*"Thank you Z. Your impact and influence with vulnerable young people in general and Y in particular through Mum's testimony never ceases to impress me. I am writing today, following the Case Conference I attended at Hillingdon Civic Centre. I am a Clinical Nurse Specialist with Hillingdon CAMHS, and have been working with a family (JM) with A as the named social worker. I mentioned in the meeting, and wanted to say again in written feedback, that Z has been an **exceptional** support and resource. I have consistently been able to reach her for consultation and feedback both via phone and email. Z has always provided her time, experience and thinking when considering the ongoing work for this family. I have been genuinely impressed each time I have spoken with her, and really do feel that the progress this family has made is such a short time is the result of her thoughtfulness, drive and persistence. I am sure you get many emails with less pleasant feedback, and I really wanted to share just how brilliant she has been."*

"My name is Z and sadly my daughter fell in love with an animal and broke the law . I was with her in court when they said it might be able to be transferred to Hillingdon yot. I rang yot as soon as we got out of court and spoke to a very helpful young man who gave my number to Z. From the moment she rang me to say that she would work with A it felt like a weight had been lifted from my heart. She helped A understand that she was in a very unhealthy relationship. She made her understand the bigger picture of what she had done. Z helped me to understand that myself and my husband were not at fault for what she had done. I never thought this would happen to one of my kids as I work for service and should have picked up the signs. A started the Princes Trust Team Programme and Z was so accommodating with A's time table and juggled her diary so that A to come to yot. Z has totally changed her life around. She has got an apprenticeship at a nursery and has met a young man who is her age and in full time work and comes from a happy close nit family. She has got rid of her so called friends. She has said sorry to my friends and family for the upset she caused. It has been a very long hard year but A is a success story. Z should take credit for this because she has been amazing. I could never thank her for all the hard work she has done. She is a credit to your team. Please feel free to pass my email onto anyone that may be interested in a Hillingdon yot success story."

"We would like to THANK YOU ever so much for all your help and support regarding our son. It

means a lot to us and there is no word's to say how happy and exited we are for B to start his new school. We both strongly believe that B will make a lot of progress during his education at SSS School."

Now that the children have completed the programme I have asked them to complete the Rosenberg Self-Esteem questionnaire which I gave them prior to starting and this is what I used to identify the children. The results show that there has been an improvement from all the children with 10/12 of the children now within 'the normal range' whereas before they were below suggesting low self esteem. The two children who haven't scored 'within the normal range' are now much closer to it and have improved in the areas that were low last time. The programme was very well run and has clearly had a positive impact. The children all appear more confident in themselves and the ones that attended the awards ceremony were really excited and keen to share what had happened with their friends. I'd like to thank you and everyone who led the sessions. The children have really benefited and once again it has made a real impact.

8. BENCHMARKING AGAINST OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Table 9 - Comparative benchmarking data on how Hillingdon compares against other neighbouring Local Authorities.

| Local Authority | Total number of Stage 1 complaints | Total number of Stage 2 complaints | Total number of Stage 3 complaints | Total Number of Ombudsman investigations |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Barnet | 38 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Brent | 79 | 12 | 0 | 1 |
| Ealing | 90 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| Buckinghamshire | 44 | 11 | 3 | 3 |
| Hillingdon | 32 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Islington | 80 | 4 | 0 | 1 |

In comparison with the Local Authorities near to us, the volume of formal children 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. This approach is effective in ensuring that a complaint is resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.

Annex 3 – 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 and Social Care Ombudsman should the complainant be dissatisfied with the response from the Local Authority. The intention of this procedure is to achieve resolution at the first attempt, to remove bureaucracy and is designed to empower complainants in shaping from the outset the approach to resolving the complaint.

The complaint procedure operates as follows:

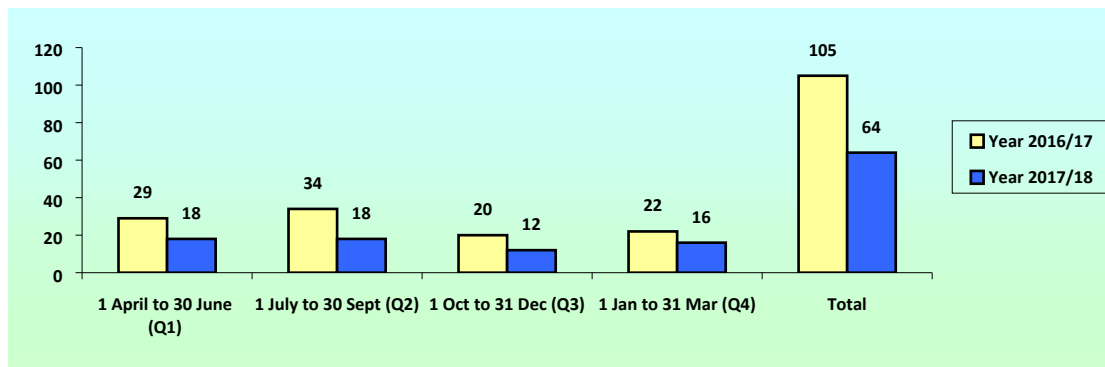
- The Informal Complaint (service request).
- Stage 1 – response from an Assistant Director or Head of Service of the area complained about.
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

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.

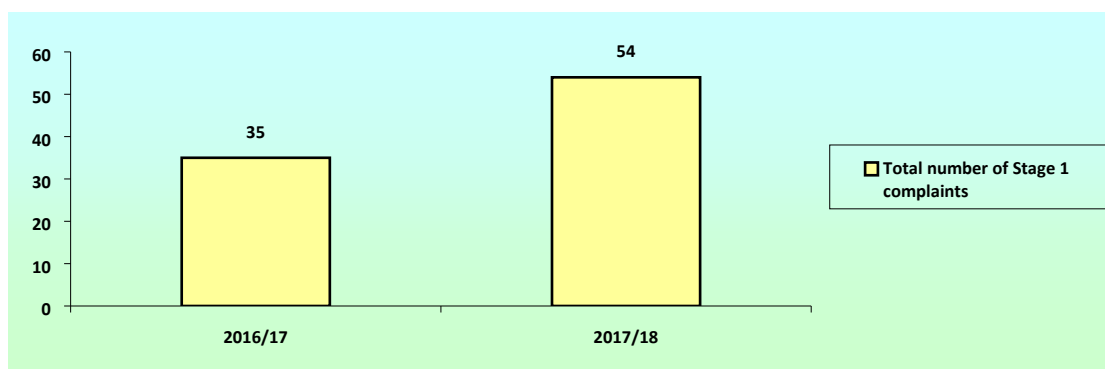
Informal Complaints received – (service requests)



- 39% (41) fewer informal complaints recorded when comparing 2016/17 figure of 105 with the 2017/18 figure of 64.

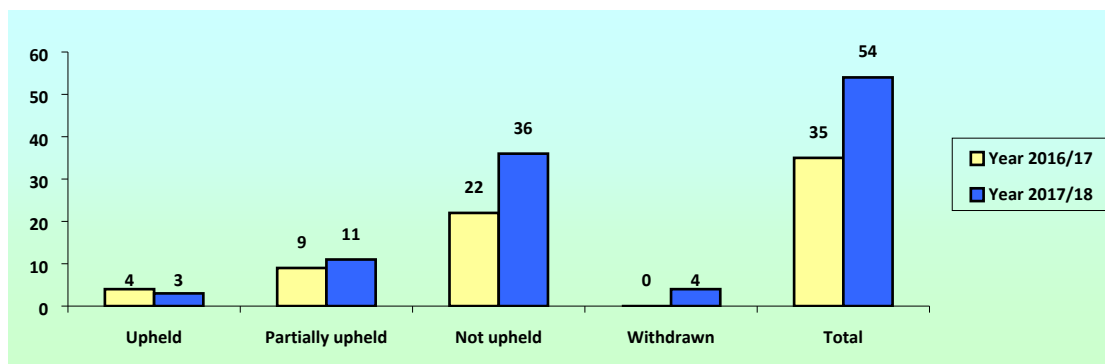
2. STAGE 1 COMPLAINT - LOCAL RESOLUTION

Total number of Stage 1 complaints



- 54% (19) more Stage 1 complaints recorded for 2017/18 then 2016/17.

Outcome of complaints



- 6% (3) of Stage 1 complaints were upheld, 20% (11) partially upheld, 67% (36) not upheld and 7% (4) withdrawn or cancelled.

Table 10 – Time taken to respond to a Stage 1 complaint (working days)

| | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|--|---------|---------|
| Average time taken to respond to a complaint | 10.47 | 10.48 |
| Target | 20 | 20 |
| Variance | - 9:53 | - 9.52 |

- The average time taken to respond to a Stage 1 complaint is 10.48 working days which is just outside our internal target of 10 working days and much better than our published target of 20 working days.

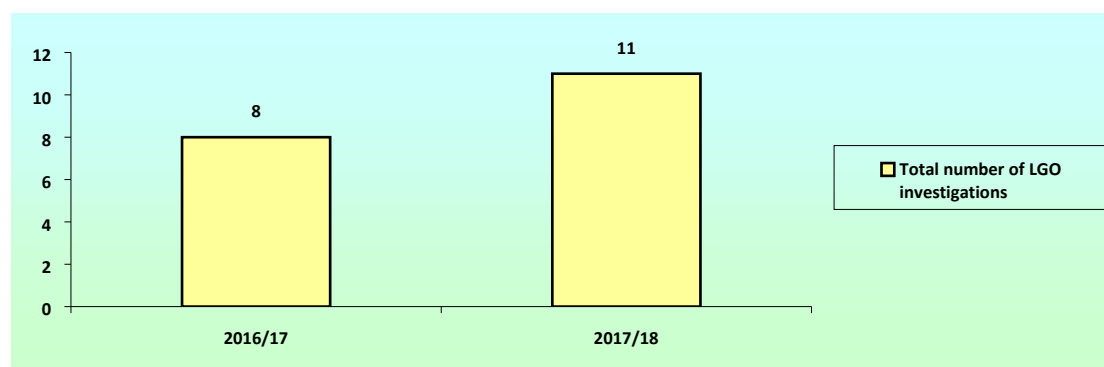
Table 11 - Number and % of responded to within 10 working days

| Period | Total number of complaints | Number responded to within 10 working days | % responded to within 10 working days |
|---------|----------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 2016/17 | 35 | 27 | 83% |
| 2017/18 | 54 | 44 | 81% |

- 44 (81%) of Stage 1 complaints were responded to within the 10 working day target and 51 (94%) were responded to within 20 working days. This is an area where we do need to improve on.

3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN INVESTIGATION (LGO)

Total number of LGO investigations



The table below shows all 11 complaints considered by the LGO and the outcome of their

investigations.

| Complaint details | LGO decision |
|---|---|
| Complaint ref: 6007367 Mr X complained that the Council altered his disabled child's home to school transport so the length of journey each way increased to over two hours. He said that the journey had recently reverted to its original route but the change caused his child distress. | Upheld The Ombudsman determined that the Council was at fault when it failed to properly consider the impact of a revised home to school transport journey on Mr X's disabled child and incorrectly treated his appeal as a complaint. The Council agreed to apologise, compensate Mr X and review its procedures to ensure it considers whether a journey is reasonably stress free as well as the safety of the journey |
| Complaint ref: 5854144 Ms X complained that Council failed to deal properly with the transfer of responsibility for her mother's care from its Reablement team to a care agency, which put her at risk of harm. | Upheld The Ombudsman found fault. The Council agreed to apologise and waive the charges for its care agency. |
| Complaint ref: 5227957 Ms X complained that the safeguarding investigation carried out was delayed and biased and that the community psychiatric nurse and the continuing healthcare nurse assessor were not adequately involved in the safeguarding investigation. | Partially Upheld The Ombudsmen did find some evidence of fault in the Council's record-keeping, in communicating with Ms X and delay in an investigation. As the Council apologised to Ms X this was considered a suitable remedy. |
| Complaint ref: 5231104 Mr X complained that the Council had failed to meet his care needs. | Partially Upheld The Ombudsman found some fault over the way the Council met Mr X's care needs but could not say that it caused Mr X an injustice. If Mr X wants the Council to go on meeting his needs he will have to co-operate with a re-assessment of his needs. |
| Complaint ref: 4996382 Mr X complained that he was not being allowed to use direct payments to pay for leisure activities, that nine hours per week of support had been removed from his personal budget and that he | Partially Upheld The Ombudsman found that there were flaws in the May 2016 reassessment of Mr X's care needs and that he had been incorrectly charged for cleaners. The Council apologised to Mr K and agreed to refund him the costs of the cleaners and a sum of monies by way of redress in recognition of his distress. The Ombudsman |

| | |
|--|---|
| had been charged for cleaning agency visits despite this being part of his section 117 aftercare plan. | found that Mr X was not entitled to use his direct payments to pay for leisure activities or entrance fees. |
| Complaint ref: 6054853 Mr and Mrs X complained that the Council failed to tell them that they would have to contribute towards the cost of a six-week care package. | Not Upheld The Ombudsman found no evidence of fault in the way the Council told Mr and Mrs X about the care package charges they would need to pay. |
| Complaint ref: 6409603 Mr X complained that the Council failed to properly consider his daughter's need for transport to school. He was unhappy with the way his appeal was dealt with. | Not Upheld The Ombudsman found no evidence of fault. |
| Complaint ref: 5642413 Mrs X complained that the Council failed to provide the therapy specified in her son's Education Health and Care Plan and failed to carry out the required annual review. | Did not investigate The Ombudsman did not investigate Mrs X's complaint about two missed sessions of therapy specified in an Education Health and Care Plan. This is because it was unlikely an investigation would produce a significantly different outcome. |
| Complaint ref: 6028337 Mr X complained on behalf of his late wife that there was no Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards authorisation for his late wife while she was in hospital. | Did not investigate The Ombudsman did not investigate this complaint as it is unlikely that a further investigation by the Ombudsman would find fault or lead to a different outcome. The Ombudsman could not provide a worthwhile outcome for Mrs X as sadly she had now died. |
| Complaint ref: 5977892 Mr X complained that the Council had not investigated properly his concerns about the employees of a care provider. He alleged that the employees are claiming for fraudulent timesheets, and defrauding the Council. | Did not investigate The Ombudsman determined that they were unlikely to find fault in the actions of the Council and as no personal injustice had been caused to Mr X. |
| Complaint ref: 5855643 Mrs X complained that the Council changed her son's home to school transport arrangements, but this did not meet his needs and his condition became worse. | Investigation discontinued As the Council had reinstated the home to school transport for the complainant's son, the Ombudsman discontinued the investigation. |

4. LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

Communication

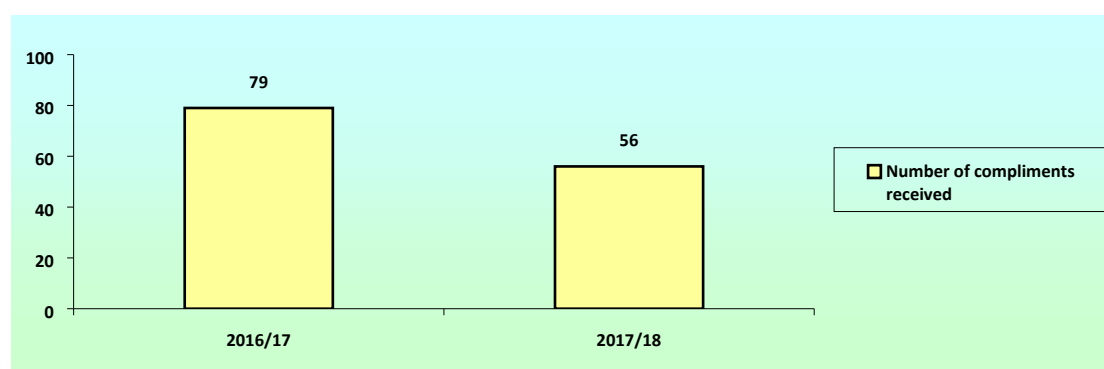
- In four complaints the main cause of the complaint was about the information that had been given, it was either incorrect or misleading or that they were getting differing information. On each occasion, we accepted that the information given should have been clearer and it was addressed with the member of staff directly through their performance review.
- There was one instance when in 2015 the Council decided to take no further action in response to a referral but the information held on file was insufficient. As a result it was difficult to know how the decision had been arrived upon. We apologised for this and advised that our procedure had since been tightened up.

Errors

- After a review, 1:1 night care was withdrawn from a client on the basis that 2 staff were on duty to assist. However, when our client's medication was reduced and his behaviour became challenging, we did not place further support in place. We apologised, agreed that with hindsight further support should have been put in place and advised that in future we would undertake a review when the medication was changed.
- In one instance we wrote to the husband and incorrectly spelt the name of his deceased wife. We apologised.
- A child was signed off to travel independently but his parents had not been told. The Passenger Assistant refused him access to the bus and he was left at the side of the road. We apologised, changed the Passenger Assistant and sought reassurance from the service provider that this would not happen again.

5. COMPLIMENTS

Number of compliments received



- Compliments are down 29% (23) when comparing the same period in 2016/17 of 79 with 2017/18 of 56.

Here's what some people have said:

"I like to take this opportunity to congratulate yourself and your staff in the work that you all have undertaken within the Carers Strategy. When I took on the post 3 years ago there was a real lack of understanding in assessments monies and deliverance. I was inundated with enquires and concerns around packages, fundings and needs. Today however I look back and can see an incredible reduction in the number of enquiries and complaints I have received this year. This is all down to the work that you have participate in, from the BiteSize sessions you attended to the training in the assessments needs and capacity and the open road shows much more. This is a huge step forward and shows the dedication and hard work you and your staff have put in to raise the profile of Social Services for the carers and their cared for person. A Social Service that understand listens and assist residents in their times of need."

"It was good to meet you today and I just wanted to say that the meeting today was very well chaired. In fact probably the best safeguarding chair (SAM) I have ever come across in my many years being in health and social care. You were fair, thorough and followed the process that should be followed. We have attended a few across many boroughs over many years and today's meeting was very well led. Just wanted to pass this compliment on to you."

"We cannot thank you enough for being the person who was so understanding, considerate and who was willing to listen to what we have to say. We are so happy to hear the good news and we are so glad that we have met you. Thank you for all the help and support you have done for our son A. Now, we can move forward with joy in our hearts that our son will have the support he needs and that he will have all the help he requires at school. We greatly appreciate everything."

"In case you have not been told Mum passed away in the early hours of this morning. This was the day she was going to Franklin House. I think the move would have proved to be another frightening experience for her and so I thank God she is now at peace away from pain and so much of the unknown to her. I thank you for all your kindness, compassion and thoughtfulness you are a real blessing to the elderly and their families."

6. BENCHMARKING AGAINST OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Table 13 - provides comparative benchmarking data on how Hillingdon compares against other neighbouring Local Authorities.

| Local Authority | Total number of Adult Social Care complaints received | Total Number of Ombudsman investigations |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Barnet | 95 | 4 |
| Brent | 97 | 9 |
| Ealing | 109 | 5 |
| Buckinghamshire | 156 | 10 |
| Hillingdon | 35 | 7 |

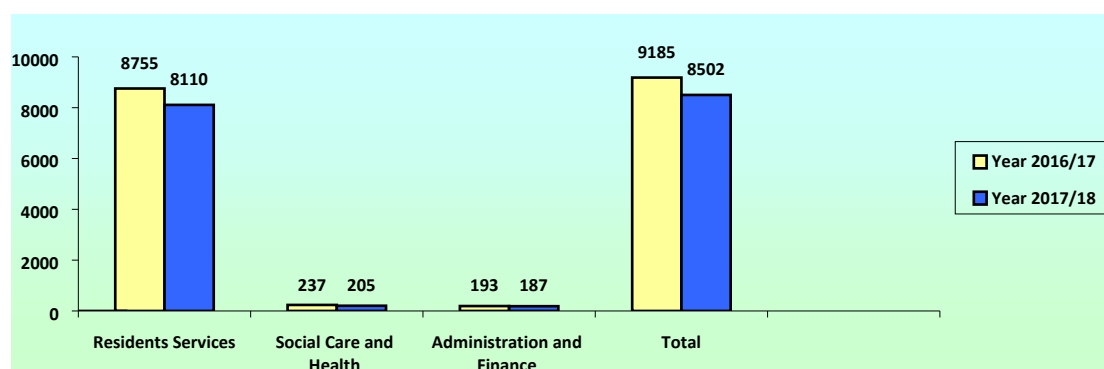
| | | |
|-------------|-----|---|
| Westminster | 106 | 5 |
|-------------|-----|---|

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.

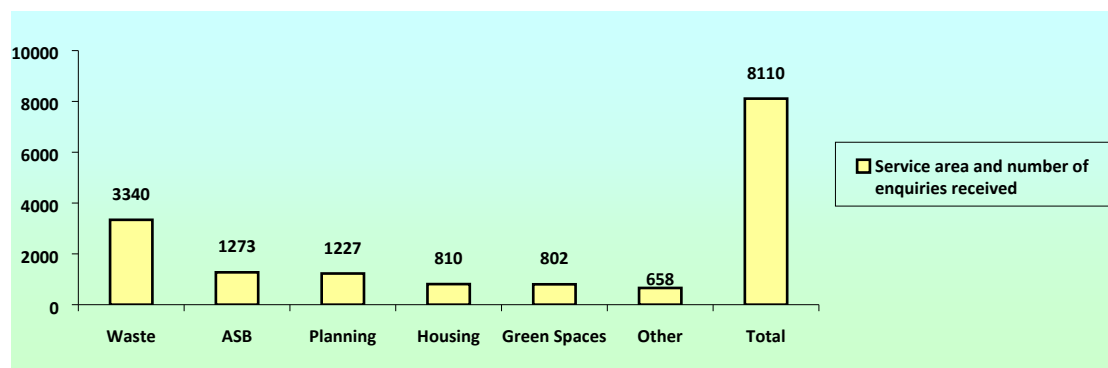
Annex 4 MEMBERS ENQUIRIES

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

Total number of Enquiries from Elected Members



- 7% (683) fewer (overall) enquiries from Elected Members when comparing the figure for 2016/17 of 9,185 with the figure for 2017/18 of 8,502.
- Residents Services accounts for 95% of all enquiries from Elected Members. Please see below for a breakdown of enquiries received for Residents Services.



- Social Care accounted for 3% (205) and Administration and Finance accounted for 2% (187) of all MEs recorded in 2017/18.