

Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee Agenda

Date: Tuesday 18 July 2023

Time: 6.30 pm

Venue: The Auditorium - Harrow Council Hub, Kenmore Avenue, Harrow, HA3 8LU

Membership (Quorum 3)

Chair: Councillor Yogesh Teli

Conservative Councillors: Nitesh Hirani
Samir Sumaria

Labour Councillors: Jerry Miles
Natasha Proctor

Conservative Reserve Members: 1. Salim Chowdhury
2. Govind Bharadia
3. Vipin Mithani

Labour Reserve Members: 1. Dan Anderson
2. Kandy Dolor

Contact: Mwim Chellah, Senior Democratic and Electoral Services Officer
Tel: 07761 405966 E-mail: mwimanji.chellah@harrow.gov.uk

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Useful Information

Joining the Meeting virtually

The meeting is open to the public and can be viewed online at [London Borough of Harrow webcasts](#)

Attending the Meeting in person

Directions by car:

Go along Kenmore Avenue and head towards the Kenton Recreation Ground. When approaching the end of the Kenmore Avenue turn right before reaching the Kadwa Patidar Centre.

The venue is accessible to people with special needs. If you have specific requirements, please contact the officer listed on the front page of this agenda.

You will be admitted on a first-come-first basis and directed to seats.

Please:

- (1) Stay seated.
- (2) Access the meeting agenda online at [Browse meetings - Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee](#)
- (3) Put mobile devices on silent.
- (4) Follow instructions of the Security Officers.
- (5) Advise Security on your arrival if you are a registered speaker.

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Agenda publication date: Monday, 10 July 2023

Agenda - Part I

1. **Appointment of Vice-Chair**
To consider the appointment of a Vice-Chair to the Sub-Committee for the 2023-2024 Municipal Year.
2. **Attendance by Reserve Members**
To note the attendance at this meeting of any duly appointed Reserve Members.
3. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary or non pecuniary interests, arising from business to be transacted at this meeting, from all Members present.
4. **Minutes** (Pages 5 - 8)
That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2023 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.
5. **Public Questions**
To note any public questions received.

Questions will be asked in the order in which they were received. There will be a time limit of 15 minutes for the asking and answering of public questions.

[The deadline for receipt of public questions is 3.00 pm, 13 July 2023. Questions should be sent to publicquestions@harrow.gov.uk
No person may submit more than one question].
6. **Petitions**
To receive petitions (if any) submitted by members of the public/Councillors.
7. **References from Council and Other Committees/Panels**
To receive any references from Council and/or other Committees or Panels.
8. **Annual Complaints Feedback Reports 2022 - 2023 - Children's and Adults'** (Pages 9 - 60)
9. **Any Other Business**
Which cannot otherwise be dealt with.

Agenda - Part II - NIL

Data Protection Act Notice

The Council will record the meeting and will place the recording on the Council's website.

[Note: The questions and answers will not be reproduced in the minutes.]



Performance and Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Minutes

28 March 2023

Present:

Chair: Councillor Yogesh Teli

Councillors: Govind Bharadia Nitesh Hirani
Graham Henson

Apologies received: Samir Sumaria

Absent: Councillor Kandy Dolor

17. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:

Ordinary Member

Reserve Member

Councillor Samir Sumaria

Councillor Govind Bharadia

18. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were none.

19. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2022, be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

20. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received.

21. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions were received.

22. References from Council and Other Committees/Panels

RESOLVED: To note that there were none.

Resolved Items

23. Final Revenue Budget 2023/24 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26

Members received the Final Revenue Budget 2023/24 and Final Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26 Report that were presented to Cabinet on 16 February 2023.

The Director of Finance and Assurance (S151 Officer) informed Members that the report set out the final revenue budget for 2023/24 and final Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2023/24 to 2025/26. In December 2022, Cabinet approved the draft versions of the revenue budget and MTFS for general consultation. Cabinet had been asked to note the adjustments.

After all adjustments, the MTFS showed a balanced budget position for 2023/24 and 2024/25, and an estimated budget gap of £6.321m to £13.143m for 2025/26. This was due largely to the uncertainty of the Social Care Grant. As the budget was approved annually, the latter two years of the MTFS, especially year 3, would be subject to review and adjustment before being finally approved.

The final MTFS was based on the Local Government Indicative Financial Settlement received on 19 December 2022. The final settlement was received on 7 February 2023. Any impact on the budget and MTFS would be managed through the Contingency for Unforeseen Items. The Council held a contingency for unforeseen items (£1.248m) which was intended to support uncertainties. The Council would still be required to review the budget on a yearly basis.

In the discussion that ensued, Members made comments and asked the following questions:

- Given the estimated budget gap, was there a “Plan B” to deliver services if the gap was not bridged?
- What pressure was the Place Directorate under to achieve its target of issuing 50 000 traffic and parking violations, such as penalty charge notices (PCNs) or fixed penalty notice (FPNs), and would current staffing levels of enforcement officers be adequate?
- Was there statistical data on PCNs and FPNs to demonstrate the trend over the years, and to determine whether residents’ mind-sets had changed in relation to following traffic regulations?
- Was there pressure on enforcement officers to issue more fines, and were they required to meet “targets”?
- What effect would the budget gap have on Adult Services, and what would be “Plan B” if funding was inadequate?
- The budget saving on waste collection showed possible changes to day and routes collection, would this affect service delivery?

In response, the Director of Finance and Assurance (S151 Officer) advised as follows:

- Citing page 21 of the Report, which showed the legal requirement of achieving a balanced budget, it was acknowledged that meeting some of the savings would be challenging. However, not all savings would start on 1 April 2023, as some would begin mid-year (June 2023);
- Some savings had a risk element to them. However, with better enforcement and use of technology, it was envisaged that the target of set by the Place Directorate for more PCNs and FPNs would be met;
- Furthermore, PCNs were not just for raising monies but also to help change the mindset of the drivers, as there were many people breaking the law, especially in Harrow;
- There was statistical data to show trends in the issuance of traffic and parking fines over the years. This showed they were having some effect. If there was a risk that the target may not be achieved, and it would be reviewed. Enforcement officers were not required to meet specific targets of issuing fines;
- It was expected that the saving target for Adult Services would be met, and this would begin mid-year;
- During the national lockdown arising from the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19), more waste collection trucks were deployed as residents were at home, which led to more disposal of waste. However, the current situation meant the extra trucks could be withdrawn, as well as the additional routes.

RESOLVED: That the Report be noted.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 6.30 pm, closed at 7.42 pm).

(Signed) Councillor Yogesh Teli
Chair



**Report for: PERFORMANCE AND
FINANCE SUB-
COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting: 18 July 2023

Subject: Children's Services Complaints & Feedback Annual Report 2022/23

Responsible Officer: Senel Arkut, Corporate Director
People Services

Exempt: No

Wards affected: All

Enclosures: Children's Services Complaints & Feedback Annual Report 2022/23

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report provides an overview of the Council's performance on Children's Services complaints and feedback activity between the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Recommendations:

The Sub-Committee is requested to note the report. The report is for information purposes only.

Section 2 – Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of complaints and feedback for Harrow Children's Services from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

1. Background

1.1. This report provides a summary of the complaints and feedback from the Children's Services Annual complaints and feedback report covering the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023, included in Appendix 1.

1.2. Children's social care complaints are handled in line with the Children Act 1989 Regulations 2006 and Getting the Best from Complaints guidance 2006. There is a legal requirement for all local authorities to have a complaint process in place in accordance with these regulations, The Children and Adoption Act 2002 and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and related guidance. The statutory complaints procedure is designed to ensure the needs of the child are the heart of the process.

1.3. The three stages of the Children's statutory complaints procedure are as follows:

Stage 1 - Local Resolution stage (10 - 20 working days)

Stage 2 - Independent investigation stage (25 – 65 working days)

Stage 3 - Independent Review Panel (30 working days)

1.4. Non-social care complaints, concerning Education and Special Educational needs, complaints are investigated in line with the Council's Corporate complaints procedure, which comprises two stages as follows:

Stage 1- Local Resolution (15 working days)

Stage 2 - Review (20 working days)

1.5. The final stage for both corporate and statutory children's complaints, is escalation to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

1.6. Complaints about schools are managed within each school's own complaints procedure. Appeals for school places are considered under the School Appeal Process and disputes such as those relating to the Education, Health and Care plans are considered through appeals to the Statutory Appeals tribunal.

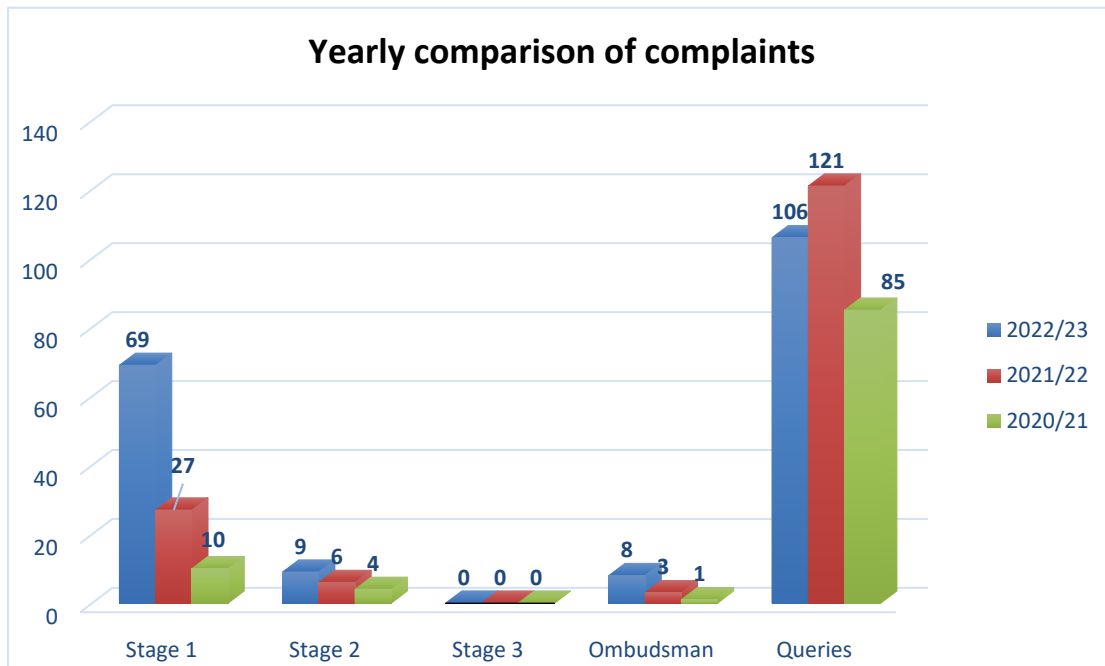
2. Summary of Key Findings

2.1. During 2022/23, Children's Services received a total of 309 representations, as compared to 246 in 2021/22 and 177 during 2020/21.

2.2. Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, a summary of the key activity:

- A total of 69 stage 1 complaints received, 9 complaints escalated to stage 2 complaints and 0 stage 3 panel reviews
- The Ombudsman made investigation decisions on four complaints

- Additionally, there were 45 Member and 51 MP enquiries
- The service recorded 64 compliments
- There were 106 queries addressed outside the formal complaint process



2.3. In total 26 of the 69 stage 1 complaints related to Education and SENAR services, concerning issues related to the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), school transport and school provision. These complaints were investigated in accordance with the Council’s corporate complaints procedure

2.4. There were 43 complaints related to Children’s social care services under the statutory complaint procedure

2.5. A breakdown of the complaints by service team is detailed on page 8 of the Children’s Services annual report and shows that the Special Educational Needs and Reviews (SENARS) and Child in Need (CIN) teams reported the highest number of complaints.

2.6. For SEN and Education, the complaints have concerned delays with the EHCP process with naming a school and related provision, school placements, requests for educational support and actions taken regarding home elected children and school transport.

2.7. The complaints linked to the CIN service challenged the level of support provided or children’s services intervention in their family life. Social work assessments and reports raised complaints where a parent was unhappy with information and not in agreement with the facts or professional opinions recorded about them and related events.

2.8. Complaint response times improved by 14% during 2022/23, with 63% of stage 1 complaints responded on time, as compared to 55% in the previous year.

2.9. In total, 56 stage 1 complaints received a response during 2022/23, which included complaints that were open at the end of previous reporting year 2021/22.

2.10. As detailed on page 12 Chart 6 of the annual report, 68% of the completed complaints were not upheld, 16% were upheld and 16% were partially upheld.

2.11. Complaints that were upheld or partially upheld related to operational issues such as delays in action/decision making and correspondence, inadequate communication and the quality of case recording. The learning section provides details of the actions taken forward for service improvement.

2.12. Complaints regarding Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan delays impacting statutory timescales were mostly upheld. Delays in naming a school place for a child or amending/finalising an EHC plan were largely attributable to the increase in caseloads and staffing capacity pressures

2.13. Six complaints were escalated to stage 2 and three of the complaints had completed investigations. The number of complaints being escalated to stage 2 remains low as detailed in Tables 5 and 6 on page 14 of the annual report. These low numbers reflect the considerable time and effort that is taken to try to resolve issues at stage 1.

2.14. One social care stage 2 complaint was upheld in relation to the quality of contact and communication with the parent. Two complaints were not upheld regarding the level of social care support /intervention and welfare procedure on school transport. Three stage 2 social care complaints were still in progress.

2.15. The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman considered eight Children's Services complaints during this reporting period. Three complaints were not investigated as being premature or not within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction. Below is a summary of the two complaints with completed investigations.

Service	Complaint	Outcome	Remedy
SENARS	Delay in the EHCP process, not securing a school place	Fault (maladministration and injustice)	Apology Financial redress Learning
School Admissions	The appeal process was flawed	No fault identified in the process of handing the appeal.	Not applicable

2.16. Learning identified and implemented as a result of a complaint is summarised:

- The importance of ensuring young care leavers are consulted in formulating and updating their Pathway plan.

- To complete annual reviews and Education, Health and Care plans in a timely manner, in line with the statutory requirements
- To inform a parent within six weeks of the transfer of the Education, Health and Care plan when the Council intends to complete a review and when it intends to conduct a review of the child's needs
- Accurate and timely case recording to document all communications between the worker and families.
- Ensuring families are kept updated and informed to avoid unnecessary delay and distress
- Improving timeliness of actions and responses, to avoid unnecessary delay or outside legal requirements
- Clear communication, to explain processes and decisions and in a timely way
- Social workers to review their direct work practice, to ensure that lessons are learnt going forward.

2.17. The Directorate recorded 51 MP enquiries and 45 Member enquiries during 2022-23. School admission places received the most enquiries from MPs and Members during 2022/23, with parents concerned to ensure their child received their preferred school.

2.18. Three quarters (77%) of MP enquiries were responded in 5 –10 working days and 88% Member enquiries were responded within 5-10 working days by the final quarter period of 2022/23.

2.19. Children's services recorded 21 compliments for the reporting year. Some examples of the positive feedback are detailed below.

2.20. Thank you for your email. I hope your keeping well, I would like to thank you for all the help and indeed support you have given to myself and the boys, going that extra mile to help us was always what made you stand out. The world would be a much better place if there were more people like you, you are a true credit to your profession. It has been a real pleasure to have worked with you. God bless you. **Fostering and Permanence Team**

2.21. Thank you for all the great work you do for deaf children and young people. **Children's Sensory Team**

2.22. There's no word that I can find truly in order to appreciate your great efforts for all of us and the community. From bottom of our heart, we would like to say Thank you so much. **School Admission Team**

2.23. Going forward in 2023/24, the complaints team will continue to ensure the operation of the complaint procedures is robust and in line with the statutory requirements and that it effectively monitors performance. The effectiveness of the complaint procedures depends on the wider organisational culture with a key focus on resolving issues and improving outcomes.

2.24. Improving complaint and Member/MP response times will be an ongoing priority with support from senior staff. The service target has been set to ensure 75% of complaints are responded on time.

2.25. The complaints team will continue to work with all service teams to identify and address areas of learning from complaints for service improvement.

2.26. Training and refresher sessions will be ongoing for Managers and their teams on effective complaints handling and ensuring quality complaint responses and handling complex cases.

Legal Implications

There are no specific budget issues associated with this report

Financial Implications

There are no specific budget issues associated with this report. All compensation payments are agreed by Service Managers and are funded within existing budgets.

Risk Management Implications

Risks included on directorate risk register? **No**

Separate risk register in place? **No**

Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable

Council Priorities

1. **A council that puts residents first**
2. **A borough that is clean and safe**
3. **A place where those in need are supported**

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

The report did not require Financial or Legal clearance.

Chief Officer:

Signed by the Corporate Director

Date:

Mandatory Checks

Ward Councillors notified: NO, as it impacts on all Wards

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Report Author: Harminder Dhillon, Complaints & Information Requests Services Manager, People Services

Background Papers:

Appendix A – Children’s Services Annual Complaints & Feedback Report 2022/23

If appropriate, does the report include the following considerations?

- | | |
|-----------------|----|
| 1. Consultation | NO |
| 2. Priorities | NO |

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**Harrow Council
Children's Services Annual Complaints
and Feedback Report
1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023**

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1. Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the Council's performance for Children's Services complaints for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, which is a requirement of the Children Act 1989 Statutory Regulations. The report also provides information about the non-statutory complaints received for Education Services, as well as other representations for Children's Services.

Complaint numbers increased by 58% from 33 complaints recorded for all stages in 2021/22 to 78 complaints in 2022/23. This was mainly as a result of reviewing the process of handling complaints and feedback, ensuring formal complaints are investigated in line with the Council complaints procedures.

63% of Stage 1 complaints were responded on time, which is an improvement on the previous year (55%).

The Directorate welcomes all feedback about its services including compliments and complaints.

Below is a summary of the provisional figures for Children's Services during 2022/23 which will be finalised at the end of July. These figures provide a context to the number of services provided and the proportion of complaints and representations received.

- Of the 4549 children open to Children's Social Care in the year, 54% were male and 45% were female and 1% were unborn/not known. There is significant diversity in the ethnicity of this cohort of children.
- On the last day of the year (31st March 2023) a total of 1628 children were receiving a service from Social Care with the rest of the 4549 having ceased throughout the year.
- A total of 3018 referrals were received in 2022/23 by Children's Social Care with the most common referral source being Police and Schools, both accounting for 60% of referrals received. The service completed 2999 assessments.
- A total of 1181 child protection investigations were initiated in the period, with 355 leading to an initial child protection conference.
- There were 609 Child Protection Plans (CPP) active at some point during 2022/23, 289 new plans were started and 370 ceased during the year. At 31st March 2023, 239 children were being supported and monitored through a Child Protection Plan
- A total of 293 Children were Looked After (CLA) at some point during 2022/23. During the year, 107 children became newly looked after and 115 stopped being looked after. At 31st March 2023, Harrow had 180 looked after children.
- At 31st March 2023, Harrow had 51 approved fostering households offering 119 placements
- During 2022/23, approximately 5,205 families accessed the Cedars and Hillview Early Support hubs and 299 young people accessed the Wealdstone Early Support hub.

2. Outcomes of Key Actions from 2022/23

The response times for complaints and queries improved during the reporting year, together with the overall quality of responses.

The process for managing and monitoring of complaints and feedback were refreshed to ensure all representations were handled effectively.

Lessons from complaints were regularly shared with Management and disseminated to all teams.

The complaint communication materials were reviewed and updated, to ensure an accessible and responsive service.

3. Background

Children's social care complaints are handled in line with the Children Act 1989 Regulations 2006 and Getting the Best from Complaints guidance 2006. There is a legal requirement for all local authorities to have a complaint process in place in accordance with these regulations, The Children and Adoption Act 2002 and Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and related guidance. The statutory complaints procedure is designed with the needs of the child at the heart of the process.

There is a legal duty to arrange advocacy for children and young people, to be able to make their views and comments about the services and care they receive under Children's Services, in line with the Advocacy Regulations 2004.

The three stages of the Children's statutory complaints procedure are as follows:

Stage 1 - Local Resolution stage (10 - 20 working days)

Stage 2 - Independent investigation stage (25 – 65 working days)

Stage 3 – Independent Review Panel (30 working days)

Non-social care complaints, concerning education and special educational needs, are investigated in line with the Council's Corporate complaints procedure which comprises two stages as follows:

Stage 1- Local Resolution (15 working days)

Stage 2 – Review (20 working days)

The final stage for both corporate and statutory children's complaints, is escalation to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

Complaints about schools are managed within each school's own complaints procedure. Appeals for school places are considered under the School Appeal Process and disputes such as those relating to the Education, Health and Care plans are considered through appeals to the Statutory Appeals tribunal.

4. Summary of Complaints Activity

During 2022/23, the complaints team received a total of 309 representations for Children's Services, as compared to 246 in 2021/22 and 177 during 2020/21.

Parents were the main group to make a complaint or raise an enquiry regarding Children's Services and made up over 90% of the contact. Other contact was by carers and/or family members, a young care leaver or a legal representative.

There are notably few complaints received from children and young people receiving Children's services under the formal complaints process. Children and young people who have received a service or been in care are able to raise their concerns directly with their Social Worker, with their Independent Reviewing Officer, at their Child Looked After Review (LAC) Meetings (twice-yearly) or in their feedback sessions with the Children's Participation Officer (usually once-yearly). They can also use an online feedback form which they can submit at any time.

The most popular method for a person making a complaint was by email, followed by the use of the online form.

Table 1 shows the breakdown of representations by quarterly period in 2022/23.

Table 1 Representations recorded by quarter 2022-23

Representation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Stage 1	7	11	21	30	69
Stage 2	2	2	1	4	9
LGSCO	0	5	1	2	8
Queries	52	37	10	7	106
MP	15	8	15	13	51
Member	10	16	11	8	45
Compliments	4	10	2	5	21
Total	90	89	61	69	309

As illustrated in Chart 1, the number of complaints investigated at stages 1 and 2 increased in 2021/22, when 27 stage 1 and 6 stage 2 complaints were recorded.

In line with the previous year, no stage 3 complaint panels were held in 2022/23. This is due to the low escalation rate from stage 1 to stage 2 for social care complaints and due to implementing effective local resolution.

Chart 1

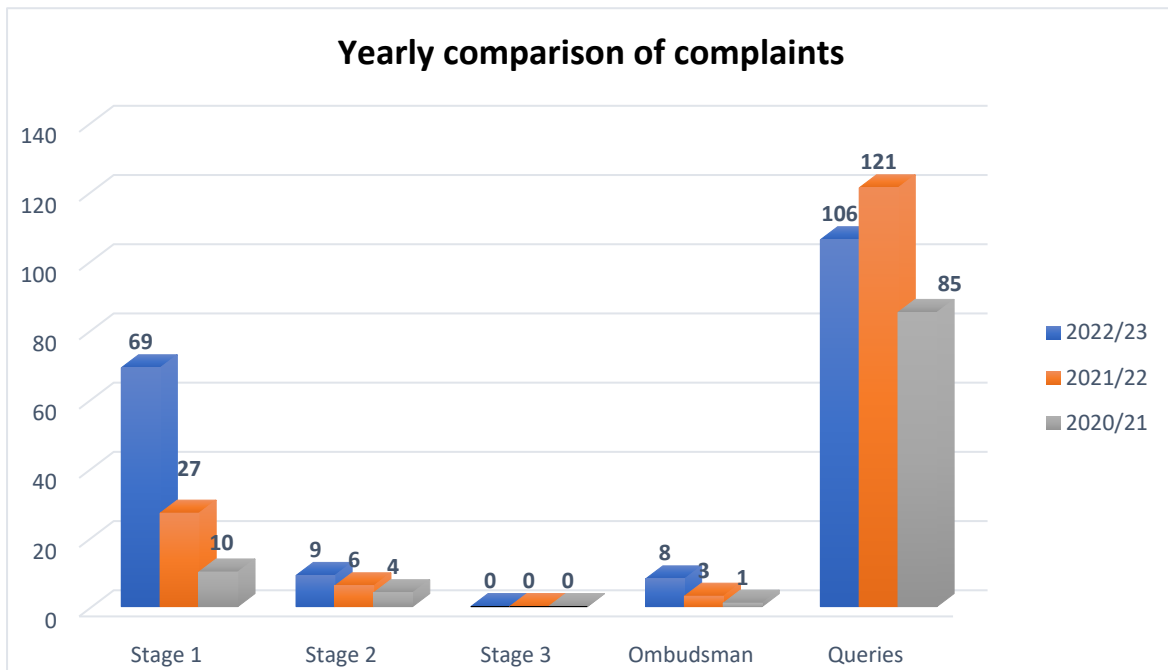


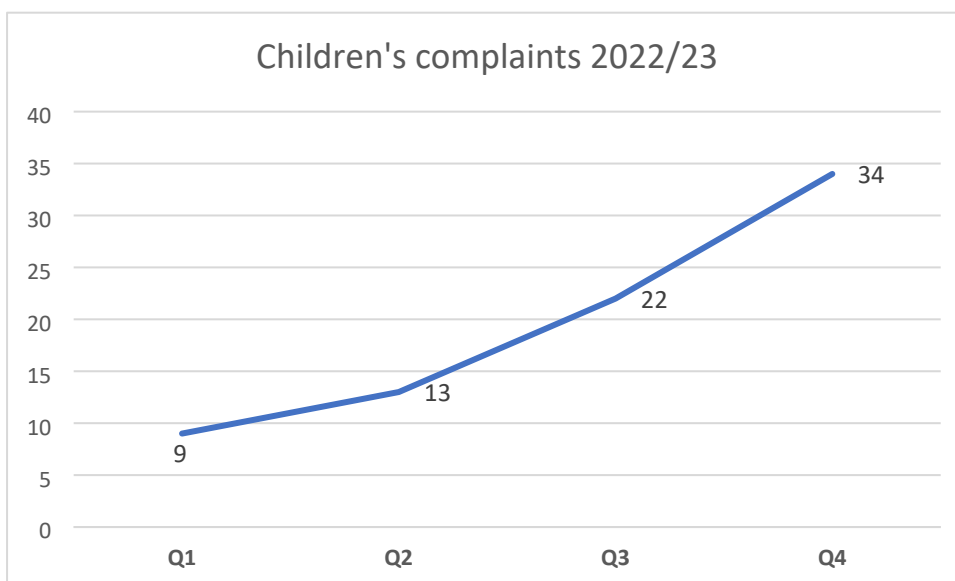
Table 2 Yearly trends for complaints and queries

Year	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Ombudsman	Queries	Total
2022/23	69	9	0	8	106	192
2021/22	27	6	0	3	121	190
2020/21	10	4	0	1	85	100

Overall, the number of complaints and queries has increased year on year, as detailed above, which is largely reflected by the number of general queries recorded.

Chart 2 shows the upward quarterly trend of complaints recorded through 2022/23.

Chart 2 Quarterly Trend Stage 1 and 2 complaints 2022/23



4.1. Stage 1 complaints

During 2022/23, a total of 69 stage 1 complaints were recorded and investigated for Children’s services.

26 of the 69 stage 1 complaints related to Education and Special Educational Needs and Reviews (SENAR) services concerning issues about school places, school transport and the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and process. These complaints were investigated in accordance with the Council’s corporate complaints procedure.

43 complaints related to Children’s social care services under the statutory complaint procedure. In the context of 4549 children being open to the service during 2022/23 with 2999 completed assessments, the number of complaints received is low. Most issues are raised and addressed directly with the social worker.

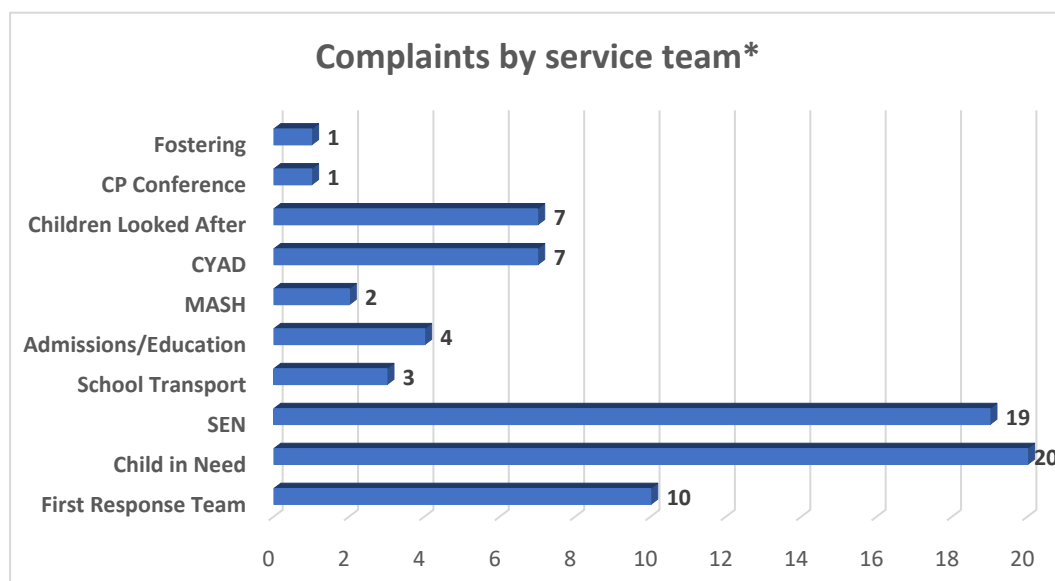
4.1.1 Complaints by service

A breakdown of the complaints by service team is detailed in Chart 3 and Table 4 and shows that the Special Educational Needs and Reviews Service (SENARS) and Child in Need (CIN) teams reported the highest number of complaints, due to the nature of the services they provide.

Parents raised complaints mostly related to their child’s Education, Health and Care plan and the provision they wanted to ensure was in place to meet their child’s needs.

The Child in Need service mostly received complaints from parents dissatisfied with the content of assessments and reports, unhappy with the level of intervention as well as individual social workers.

Chart 3



*Please note complaints can involve more than one service team.

Table 4 Stage 1 Complaints received by teams by quarter

Team	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Children's Safeguarding	0	0	0	1	1
Children Looked After	0	1	2	4	7
CYAD*	1	1	3	2	7
MASH**	0	1	0	1	2
Admissions/Education	0	1	1	2	4
School Transport	0	0	2	1	3
SENARS	5	3	4	7	19
Child in Need	1	3	6	10	20
First Response Team	1	1	3	5	10
Fostering			1		1
Total	8	11	22	33	74

*Children and Young Adults with Disabilities, ** Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

4.1.2. Issues raised as complaints

As shown in Chart 4, the highest complaints concerned issues regarding the Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and against individual staff.

For Education and SENAR services, the complaints were for a range of issues including delays with the Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) process with naming a school and requests for related provision, seeking school places, requests for educational support and actions taken regarding home elected children and school transport.

Children's social care is an emotive area of work, which involves difficult decisions being made by professionals, sometimes in conflict with the views of parents and carers making the complaint. The work is often intrusive and involves direct work with children and families. Parent/ carers frequently raised objections and concerns about the involvement of the service and regarding a child's allocated social worker's involvement.

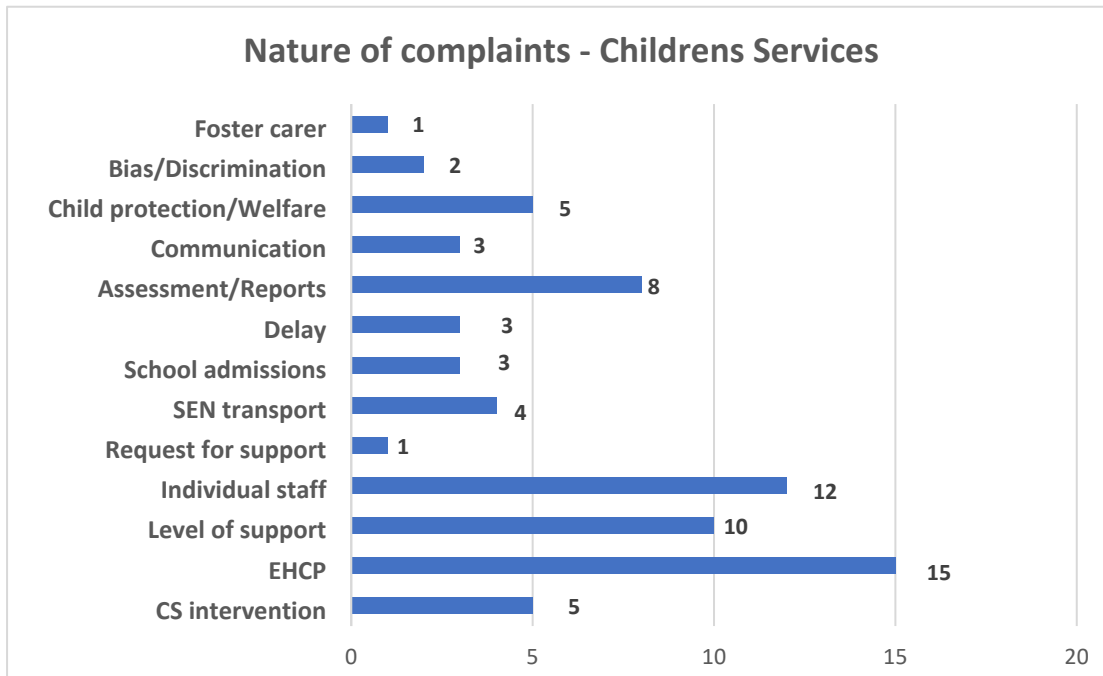
Other social care complaints challenged the level of support provided and intervention in their family life. Social work assessments and reports raised complaints about the information recorded and disagreement with the facts or professional opinions recorded about family members and related events.

Notably, few complaints are received and recorded from children and young people directly under the Statutory Complaints procedure. For this reporting year, the complaints team recorded two complaints by young care leavers, regarding their care provision and level of support.

The Children's Participation Officer works closely with children and young people who are in care and receiving support, to address concerns outside the formal complaint process. Children in care also give their feedback through their looked after reviews.

Children and young people are entitled to make a complaint or other representations with the help of an advocate and the Council has duty to provide advocacy in line with the advocacy regulations.

Chart 4



Some examples of complaints are provided below.

Staff conduct:

It is evident that the worker is unable to manage our family as she is asking more senior professionals to intervene and communicate on her behalf.

Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP):

I feel that it is tremendously unfair that she could potentially be completely uprooted from her friends simply because the Local Authority did not secure the provisions outlined in her plan, refused to hold the school accountable for this provision, and at all levels the impact on her mental health was completely ignored, resulting in the current situation.

Assessment/Reports:

I want to complaint against social service for harassing me and presenting fake facts and documentation in child protection plan

Communication:

I have made numerous complaints directly to social workers via telephone messages and I've requested to speak with managers but all have been ignored.

Support:

I also feel that social services aren't even trying to help me move forward in life, which is frustrating because I have no one to turn to for advice or guidance. Social services are supposed to support me but they have failed, but I haven't seen any progress or support in this area.

School Admissions:

The school that was suggested by the local education authority does not meet his needs in all aspects, the local authority disregarded our choice of school because I know these is best school for my son. I visited several schools, and we came to the decision that will benefit him and also make him independent in the future, to my dismay I was told the public funds cannot be wasted on him. I have therefore come to the conclusion that my son is being discriminated against.

School Transport:

I feel I was massively misled by your team when you changed his bus. He was moved to a bus due to another child's behaviour - which you did not address. I was told the times would be better than his old bus, this was a lie.

4.1.3. Complaint response timescales

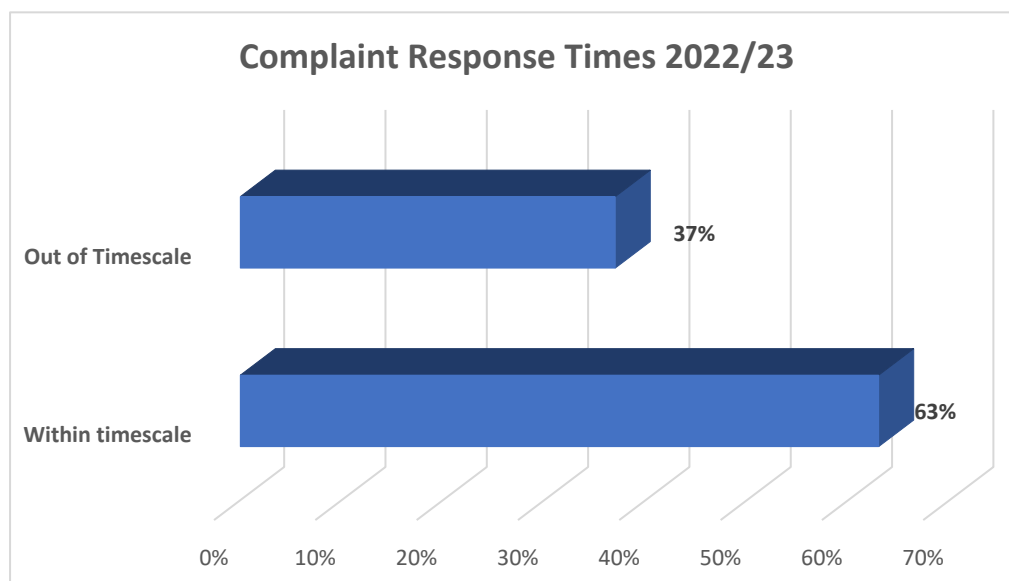
The complaints team works closely with all the service teams to ensure responses to complaints and enquiries are completed in a timely way.

Stage 1 complaint response times improved by 14% during 2022/23, with 63% of stage 1 complaints responded on time, as compared to 55% in the previous year. There is a clear propensity to build on this improvement in 2023/24.

It should be noted that Children's social care complaints can often be complex by their nature or involve more than one service/ agency or have a concurrent investigation underway, which may override or impact and delay a complaint investigation and response.

The complaints team keeps the complainant informed in such instances.

Chart 5



4.1.4 Complaint outcomes

During 2022/23, 56 stage 1 complaints were completed and responded, which included complaints that were in progress at the end of the previous reporting year. Table 4 details the yearly comparative data and trend for the majority of complaints not being upheld.

As illustrated in Chart 6, 68% of the completed complaints were not upheld.

Complaints are often about decisions made by the service and not necessarily about the department making poor decisions. Rather, that they disagree with the rationale or policy on which the decision is based. The rate of upheld and partially upheld complaints is therefore low.

Table 4

Completed response outcomes by year

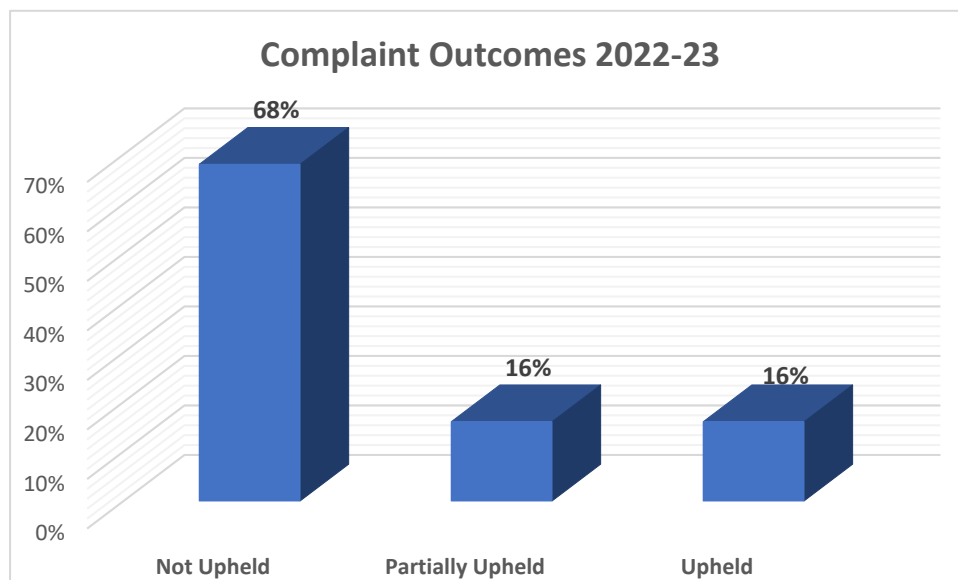
	Not Upheld			Partially Upheld			Upheld			Total outcomes		
	22/23	21/22	20/21	22/23	21/22	20/21	22/23	21/22	20/21	22/23	21/22	20/21
Education /SEN	8	5	0	1	1	1	8	1	0	17	7	1
Children’s Social Care	30	17	7	8	3	2	1	0	0	39	20	9
Total	38	23	7	9	4	3	9	1	0	56	27	10
Total Yearly Stage 1 outcomes, by percentage	68%	85%	70%	16%	12%	30%	16%	3%	0%			

Complaints have also involved issues that are not within the remit of the work that is undertaken by Children’s services and therefore were not upheld, such as concerns linked to private proceedings, court matters or another organisation. In such cases, the response letter provides an explanation and clarity of the service team’s involvement.

Complaints that were upheld or partially upheld related to operational issues, such as delays in action/decision making and correspondence sent, inadequate communication and the quality of case recording. The learning section provides information on the actions taken forward for service improvement.

Complaints regarding the Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) delays impacting statutory timescales were mostly upheld. Delays in naming a school place for a child or amending/finalising an EHC plan were largely attributable to the increase in caseloads and staffing capacity pressures during 2022/23.

Chart 6



4.2. Stage 2 Complaints

Children’s Services received nine stage 2 requests (two related to Education and seven concerned social care) in 2022/23.

Six complaints were investigated or still being investigated at stage 2, at the close of the reporting period. A summary of the complaints is detailed below.

Case 1 – Social care complaint upheld regarding the quality of contact and communication with the parent. A remedy payment was recommended, with learning implemented for social work practice. The complaint findings concluded that further attempts should have been made to ascertain the parent’s contact details to keep him informed regarding any child welfare issues. The learning identified that better communication between the social

worker and parent should have been in place. As a result, workers were reminded to improve the quality of their direct work practice with a child.

Case 2 – Social care complaint was not upheld regarding the level of support received and intervention of Children’s services.

Case 3 – Education complaint was not upheld regarding the safeguarding procedure on school transport, as the team had followed due process.

Case 4 – Social care complaint regarding the social worker involvement in relation to the child’s care and support was still in progress.

Case 5 – Complaint regarding request for appropriate support for child and safeguarding concerns was still in progress.

Case 6 - Complaint regarding Children’s involvement and decision making for care placements and support was still in progress.

The number of complaints being escalated to stage 2 remains low, as detailed in Table 5 and 6. These low numbers reflect the considerable time and effort that is taken to try to resolve issues at stage 1.

Table 5 Stage 2 escalation rates for complaints 2022/23

Service	Stage 1	Stage 2	% escalation
Education/SEN	17	2	12%
Children’s social care	39	7	18%
Total	56	9	16%

Table 6 Stage 2 escalation rates by year

Service	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21
Education/SEN	12%	14%	100%
Children’s social care	18%	25%	33%
Total	16%	22%	44%

4.3. Stage 3 complaints

There were no stage 2 social care complaints escalated to stage 3 review panel during 2022/23, which is consistent with the previous year. This is mainly due to the low number of complaints investigated at stage 2 and in the quality of outcomes.

5. Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is the final stage of the complaint process following the completion of the Council’s own complaint procedure, although a person can make contact at any time during the progress of their complaint.

The Ombudsman considered eight complaints during this reporting period. Three complaints were not investigated as being premature or not within the Ombudsman’s jurisdiction. Below is a summary of the six complaints with investigations.

Table 7

Service	Complaint	Outcome	Remedy
SENARS	Delay in the EHCP process and not securing a school place	Fault (maladministration and injustice) regarding the delay	Apology Financial redress Learning
Social Care	Services failed to act on parent’s concerns regarding daughter’s welfare	Fault (maladministration) as a result of delays in handling complaint	Apology Financial Redress Learning
School Admissions	The appeal process was flawed	No fault identified in the process of handing the appeal.	Not applicable
Contact & Assessment	Level of social care intervention and alleged false statements	Investigation in progress	
Contact & Assessment	Section 47 Enquiry was not completed properly and failure to provide adequate support for the child	Investigation in progress	
SENARS	Not making all the provisions under section F of the EHCP	Investigation in progress	

6. Learning from complaints

Complaints are a valuable source of information, which identify lessons that can be learnt as a means of service improvement. Children’s services are committed to continuous service improvement.

The SENAR service acknowledges the issues experienced with delays with the EHCP process and is working to increase staff capacity and resource support to address this.

The key learning shared with teams in 2022/23 is listed below:

The importance of ensuring **young care leavers are consulted** in formulating and updating their Pathway plan.

To complete annual reviews and Education, Health and Care plans in a **timely manner, in line with the statutory requirements.**

To inform a parent within six weeks of the transfer of the Education, Health and Care plan when the Council intends to complete a review and when it intends to conduct a review of the child’s needs.

Accurate and timely case recording to document all communications between the worker and families.

Ensuring **families are kept updated** and informed to avoid unnecessary delay and distress.

Improving **timeliness of actions and responses**, to avoid unnecessary delay or outside legal requirements.

Clear communication, to explain processes and decisions and in a timely way.

Social workers to **review their direct work practice**, to ensure that lessons are learnt going forward.

Reminder to staff to **adhere to the statutory timescales regarding referrals** to children's social care services and the complaints policy.

Examples of what the service put right as a result of a complaint, are detailed below:

Complaint – A carer raised concerns about the Staying Put arrangements that were in place to support the young person, who was a university student.

What the service did - The concerns were referred to the Harrow Placement Team to review the Staying Put policy, to ensure arrangements are in place for any relevant Looked After young people, at least three months before their 18th birthday. This is monitored closely by the Corporate Parenting Service.

Complaint - Concerns raised regarding the access to Children's Centres when acting in capacity of 'a parent'.

What the service did – Staff for Harrow Early Years were reminded that nannies should have same access as a grandparent, aunty or other family member bringing their children to the centres.

Complaint - Care leaver raised concerns regarding her accommodation and not being supported for her health and wellbeing, and her Pathway plan not being discussed with her.

What the service did – Supported the young person with identifying new accommodation and the worker updated the Pathway plan to reflect the young person's needs. Staff were reminded of the importance of ensuring care leavers were consulted and included with the update of their pathway plans.

7. MP and Member Enquiries

The Children's Services Directorate recorded 51 Member of Parliament (MP) enquiries and 45 Elected Member enquiries during 2022-23.

In total, 96 MP and Member enquiries were recorded by the complaints team in 2022/23, as compared to 77 enquiries in the previous year.

All enquiries are directed to the complaints team to ensure they are logged and tracked for a timely response.

Table 8 Summary of issues raised with MPs and Elected members.

MP issues	Number	Member issues	Number
School admission	20	School Admission	25
Welfare/housing	4	Welfare/Housing	5
Safeguarding	2	Social care support	5
School Transport	1	School concerns	1
School exclusions	1	Unauthorised leave	1
Accommodation support	1	Alleged harassment by social care staff	1
Deportation concern	2	Weekend use of school facilities	1
School issues	4	OT provision	1
Bullying in school	1	EHCP/SEN provision	1
EHCP/SEN provision	7	s.7 court report	1
Change of Social Worker	1	Early Years support	1
Social care support	7	s.17/s47 Assessment	2
Total	51	Total	45

As shown in Table 8, school admissions received the most enquiries from MPs and Members during 2022/23, with parents concerned to ensure their child received their preferred school.

Providing timely responses remained a key priority for MP and Member enquiries during 2022/23. Encouragingly, 77% of MP enquiries were responded in 5 –10 working days and 88% of Member enquiries were responded within 5-10 working days by the final quarter period of 2022/23.

Enquiries that were complex and/or sensitive by their nature required detailed consideration. Where appropriate, if the issues raised by a constituent require formal investigation and meet the eligibility criteria under the relevant complaint process, they will be investigated as a complaint, with a copy of the response shared with the relevant MP or Member.

8. Compliments

Children’s services recorded 21 compliments for the reporting year. Some examples of the positive feedback are detailed below.

What they said...

It was lovely seeing you at the meeting this morning as well. I wanted to thank you for all the help you have been providing to my daughter. I really appreciate all your useful information and support. Thank you once again. **Children’s Sensory Team**

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your support over the past weeks with M’s case and for enabling a smooth transition promptly. I also want to highlight how

you dealt with the case sensitively and for advocating for M to continue his existing care package and services in LB Harrow.

Children & Young Adult 0-25 Disability

I would like to thank you for all the help and indeed support you have given to myself and the boys, going that extra mile to help us was always what made you stand out. The world would be a much better place if there were more people like you, you are a true credit to your profession. It has been a real pleasure to have worked with you. God bless you. **Fostering and Permanence Team**

Thank you for all the great work you do for deaf children and young people.
Children's Sensory Team

There's no words that I can find truly in order to appreciate your great efforts for all of us and the community. From bottom of our heart, we would like to say Thank you so much. **School Admissions Team**

Just to let you know that we have had X's assessment and now getting portage set up as home visits. Got some great coping mechanisms from occupational too. Thanks for all your help. **Cedars Hub**

I wanted to write to you to commend the social work practice of A. We have just finished a difficult case in which A was fair, kind and transparent in her work with the parents. She was always willing to discuss issues with me, kept me updated and sought my views when necessary. A visited the child regularly and continued to deal with all the safeguarding risks in an appropriate and timely way. It has been a pleasure working with A, and I know more importantly that the mother benefited from having her consistent social work skills throughout a lengthy case.

Child in Need team

9. Objectives for 2023/24

The complaints team will continue to ensure the operation of the complaint procedures is robust and in line with the statutory requirements and that it effectively monitors performance. The effectiveness of the complaint procedures depends on the wider organisational culture, with a key focus on resolving issues and improving outcomes.

Improving complaint and Member/MP response times will be an ongoing priority with support from senior staff.

The service target has been set to ensure 75% of complaints are responded on time.

The complaints team will continue to work with all service teams to identify and address areas of learning from complaints for service improvement.

Training and refresher sessions will be ongoing for Managers and their teams on effective complaints handling and ensuring quality complaint responses and handling complex cases.

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**Report for: PERFORMANCE AND
FINANCE SUB-
COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting: 18 July 2023

Subject: Adult Social Care Services
Complaints & Feedback Annual
Report 2022/23

Responsible Officer: Senel Arkut, Corporate Director
People Services

Exempt: No

Wards affected: All

Enclosures: Adult Social Care Services Annual
Complaints & Feedback Report
2022/23

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report provides an overview of the Council's performance on Adult Social Care Services complaints and feedback activity between the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Recommendations:

The Sub-Committee is requested to note the report. The report is for information purposes only.

Section 2 – Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of complaints and feedback for Harrow Adult Social Care Services from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Adults social care complaints are investigated in line with the complaints process set out in the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.

1. Background

1.1. This report provides a summary of the complaints and feedback from the Adult Social Care Services Annual Complaints and Feedback report covering the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023, included in Appendix 1.

1.2. Adult social care complaints are investigated under the Council's Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints procedure, which is a two-stage process for handling social care complaints. There is a statutory duty to produce an annual report on the complaints received, issues raised, and actions taken.

2. Summary of Key Findings

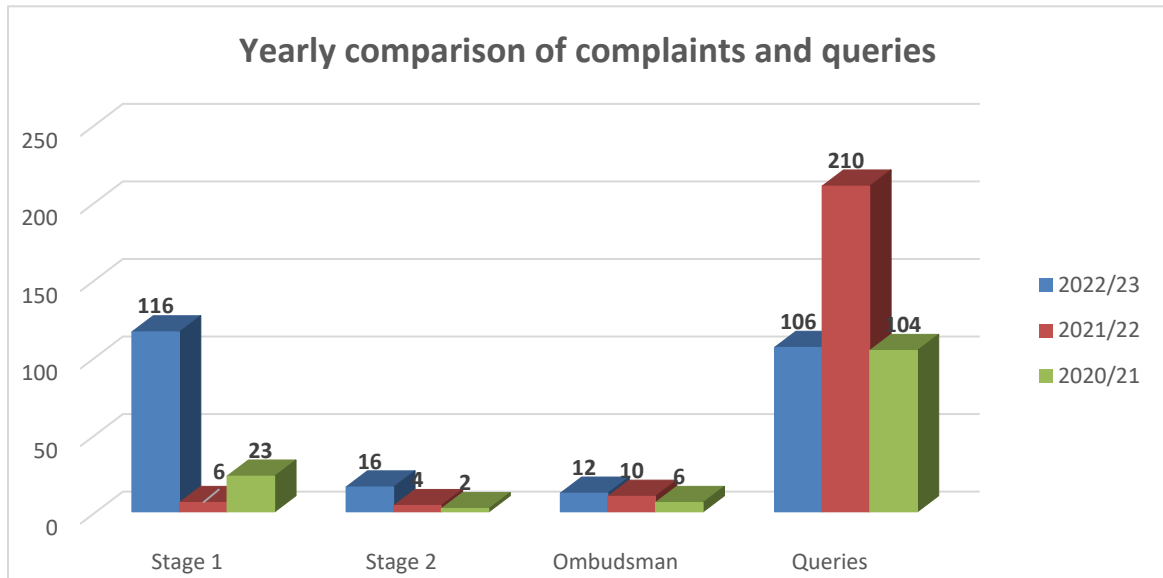
2.1. During 2022/23, the number of adult social care complaints recorded increased significantly, from six stage 1 complaints in 2021/22 to 116 complaints. This was due to an internal refresh of the complaints handling procedures.

2.2. Two thirds (66%) of stage 1 complaints were responded on time in 2022/23, which shows an improvement on the previous year (55%).

2.3. Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

- The complaints service recorded a total of 510 representations
- There were 116 stage 1 complaints and 106 queries
- Sixteen complaints progressed to stage 2 review
- The Ombudsman made investigation decisions on four complaints
- Additionally, there were 196 Member and MP enquiries
- The service recorded 64 compliments
- There were 106 queries addressed outside the formal complaint process

2.4. There was an increase of 23% of total representations in 2022/23, with 510 total representations, compared to 414 total representations received in 2021/22.



2.5. As detailed on page 9 of the annual complaints report, the highest volume of complaints was received by the Financial Assessment and Monitoring team, Localities and Early Intervention teams. These service teams generally receive the most feedback due to the nature of their work, regarding care charges and paying for care, assessments and/or assessment decisions and issues related to the care provision or availability of service.

2.6. Adult social care support is means tested, as required under the Care Act 2014 and a significant number of people receiving care support will be making a client contribution towards their care costs.

2.7. Some of the complaints challenged the outcome of financial assessments, which are calculated in line with Harrow's Charging policy under the Care Act 2014. Other complaints queried the quality of financial advice and information received, delays in receiving the relevant financial paperwork, queries regarding the care costs and related fees, the invoicing and payment reminder letters.

2.8. A total of 82 stage 1 complaint responses were completed during 2022/23. Of those, 54 complaints were responded on time (66%). Complaint response times are closely monitored by the complaints team and there is an ongoing focus to keep improving on response times. Regarding the 28 out of time complaints, the issues are often complex, and the investigation required more time.

2.9. Just over half (52%) of stage 1 complaints were not upheld, 28% were partially upheld and 20% were upheld. Complaints that were either upheld or partially upheld were due to delays in service delivery, staff not returning calls/emails in a timely way, errors in the administrative process or incorrect/unclear information/advice provided.

2.10. Sixteen complaints escalated to stage 2 review during 2022/23. Of those, 12 complaint reviews were completed with four complaints being in progress at the close of the reporting period.

2.11. Three quarters (75%) of the stage 2 reviews were responded on time.

2.12. Almost six in ten (58%) of stage 2 reviews were not upheld, 25% were upheld and 17% were partially upheld.

2.13. The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman completed four investigations during 2022/23. The Ombudsman found no fault in two complaints and upheld two complaints, as summarised:

Summary complaint	Decision	Remedy
1. Council delayed arranging a capacity and needs assessment.	Upheld	Apology Council agreed to arrange the assessment and remind staff of the importance of timely assessments. Learning was implemented as detailed in learning section.
2. Council did not clearly explain the client contributions and top up fees when resident placed in care home, resulting in care charges	Upheld	Apology Resident's care chargers were adjusted, and compensation was paid each to both family members Information on care charges was reviewed, as detailed in learning section

2.14. Learning from complaints is as a key driver for service improvement across the directorate. The key learning themes were:

2.15.

- **Effective Communication** and providing **timely responses**
- **Clearer information** regarding care charges such as cost of a care package and assessment process
- **Avoiding delays** in arranging care package (previously as a result of staff shortages and recruitment issues)
- Ensuring the **case recording system is accurate and updated** such as to avoid incorrect billing and to ensure case details are up to date on where to send billing and whether person is a self-funder.

2.16. Adult Social Care staff reported 64 compliments during 2022/23. Positive feedback is important as it shows what is working well and the good work that staff do. Some examples are:

2.17. I would like to say B is a real treasure for helping my brother. He feels comfortable and so do I knowing that B is helping. B is kind, considerate, professional and compassionate. B is powerful in getting good things done. Beth helped save my brother's life two years ago and I will never forget it. **Locality Team**

2.18. Thank you for guiding us throughout this matter. You have been very helpful and I'm very glad to have this resolved now. Thanks to your help! **Billing Team**

2.19. I just don't know how you do it, you are literally AMAZING!!! You surprise me every time getting the care arranged so quickly and you keep us updated at every point. You're a true star!!!! **Northwick Park Hospital Team**

2.20. Going forward in 2023/24, the complaints team remains committed to improving performance activity across all areas of our complaint processes in responding to complaints and enquiries.

2.21. Adult social care teams will continue to resolve complaints and queries at the earliest stage.

2.22. The complaints team will remain focused on robust monitoring of response times and quality responses.

2.23. Adult social care services will continue using the learning from complaints to inform practice development and have set up a working group to implement the learning from complaints for practice development which meets on a monthly basis.

2.24. Response times have improved, and this will remain a priority in the new reporting period. The service target has been set to ensure 75% of complaints are responded on time.

2.25. Training on effective complaints handling will be provided to Managers throughout 2023/23, to ensure high quality responses to complainants

2.26. The complaints team will continue to work closely with the senior management team to identify and address areas for improvement from the complaints.

Legal Implications

There are no specific budget issues associated with this report

Financial Implications

There are no specific budget issues associated with this report. All compensation payments are agreed by Service Managers and are funded within existing budgets.

Risk Management Implications

Risks included on directorate risk register? **No**

Separate risk register in place? **No**

Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable

Council Priorities

1. **A council that puts residents first**
2. A borough that is clean and safe
3. **A place where those in need are supported**

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

The report did not require Financial or Legal clearance.

Chief Officer:

Signed by the Corporate Director

Date:

Mandatory Checks

Ward Councillors notified: NO, as it impacts on all Wards

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Report Author: Harminder Dhillon, Complaints & Information Requests Services Manager, People Services

Background Papers:

Appendix A – Adult Social Care Annual Complaints & Feedback Report 2022-23

If appropriate, does the report include the following considerations?

- | | |
|-----------------|----|
| 1. Consultation | NO |
| 2. Priorities | NO |



Harrow Council

**Adult Social Care Complaints and
Feedback**

Annual Report

1 April 2022- 31 March 2023

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1. Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the Council's performance on Adult Social Care complaints and feedback activity between the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

The report provides analysis and comment on all complaints managed under the Adult Social Care statutory complaint procedure.

The number of stage 1 complaints increased significantly from 6 complaints recorded in 2021-22 to 116 complaints in 2022-23. The increase in recorded complaints was mainly due to the refreshed complaints handling procedures.

All complaints are logged by the complaints team and investigated in line with the statutory complaint framework, where the issues cannot be resolved quickly and require formal investigation.

66% of stage 1 complaints were responded on time in 2022/23, which shows an improvement on the previous year (55%).

Adult social care workers and Managers received refresher awareness sessions for effective complaints handling and responding to customer feedback.

During 2022-23, regular reports detailing the analysis of complaints and representations have been shared with senior management, with a focus on improving response timescales and implementing learning outcomes from complaints.

2. Outcome of Key Targets from 2021-22

The complaint response rates have improved from 55% in 2021/22 to 66% in 2022-23.

A review of the internal process for managing complaints and representations was completed, to ensure an effective and robust complaints management system is in place to support service users and our service teams.

The complaints team continued to provide refresher sessions to teams for dealing with complaints and feedback, highlighting the importance of identifying and sharing the learning from complaints.

The option to use alternative methods of complaint resolution and problem solving as appropriate, remained open with staff encouraged to resolve issues quickly where possible and not complex by their nature.

3. Background context

The Complaints and Information Team are managed within the remit of the Strategy and Commissioning service in People Services. The team comprises a Complaints Manager, which is a statutory requirement and a Complaints officer and a Data Protection/Freedom of Information officer.

The majority of queries regarding adult social care services will be resolved quickly where possible. The complaints process is a mechanism to consider and investigate problems and resolve issues if things go wrong or are below expectation.

The Council's Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints procedure is a two-stage process for handling social care complaints. The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 provide the legal framework, and the procedure is designed to allow Local Authorities to have flexibility to resolve complaints in the most appropriate manner.

Any adult in need of or receiving a service from Harrow Adult Social Care services is entitled to use the complaints process. Complaints are also accepted from a family member or representative acting on the individual's behalf with their consent. The must be legally able to represent the individual.

Complaints must be acknowledged within 3 working days. A stage one complaint is investigated by the relevant service with a response timeframe of 20 working days. This timeframe may be extended if the issues are complex, require more time or involve other agencies and the complainant will be kept informed of the progress.

If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the response or outcome at stage one, their complaint can be escalated to stage two review stage, which is the final stage of the complaint procedure. The complaint will be reviewed and responded by a senior manager, usually the Head of Service within a timeframe of 20 working days.

Following the completion of the complaint, the complainant can seek further advice from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

The annual adult social care complaints report is a statutory requirement and is a public document.

4. Summary of Activity

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023:

- The complaints service recorded a total of 510 representations
- The service recorded 116 stage 1 complaints
- Sixteen complaints progressed to stage 2 review
- The Ombudsman made decisions on four complaints

- Additionally, 196 Member and MP enquiries were recorded
- The service recorded 64 compliments
- 106 queries were received and addressed outside the complaint process

Table 1 provides the quarterly breakdown of complaints and representations received during 2022-23.

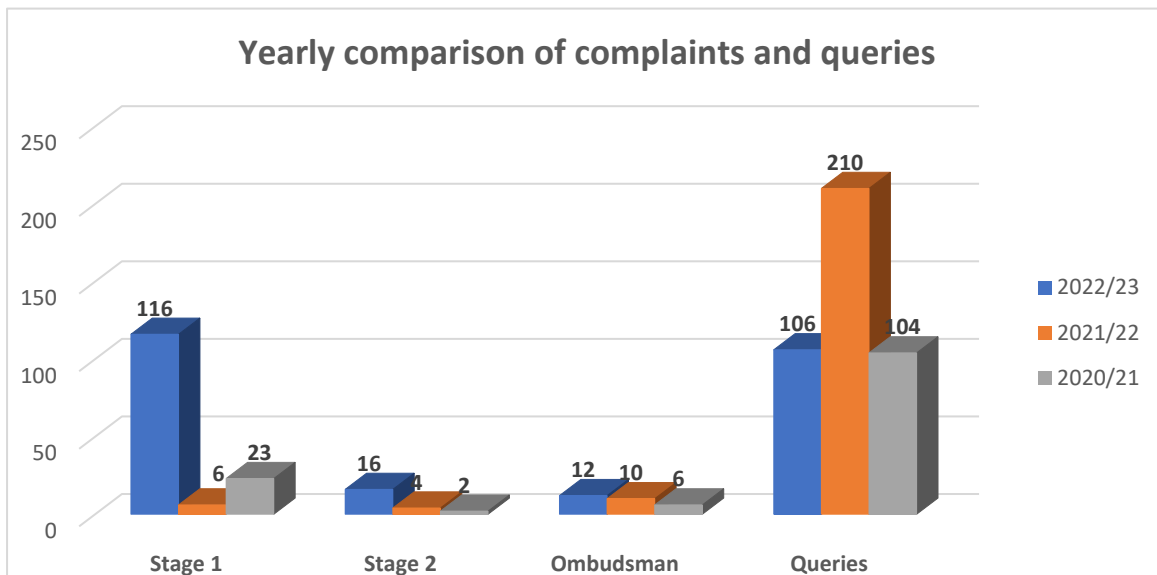
Table 1

Representation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Stage 1	24	26	23	43	116
Stage 2	2	2	0	12	16
Ombudsman	2	4	3	3	12
Queries	39	40	9	18	106
MP	21	20	24	15	80
Member	23	40	22	31	116
Compliments	9	12	15	28	64
Total	120	144	96	150	510

The total representations received for Adult Social Care has increased year on year, as illustrated in Chart 1 below.

There was an increase of 23% of total representations in 2022-23, with 510 total representations received, compared to 414 total representations received in 2021/22.

Chart 1



During 2022-23, Adults Social Care Services:

- Received 9,599 requests for social care support from potential service users.

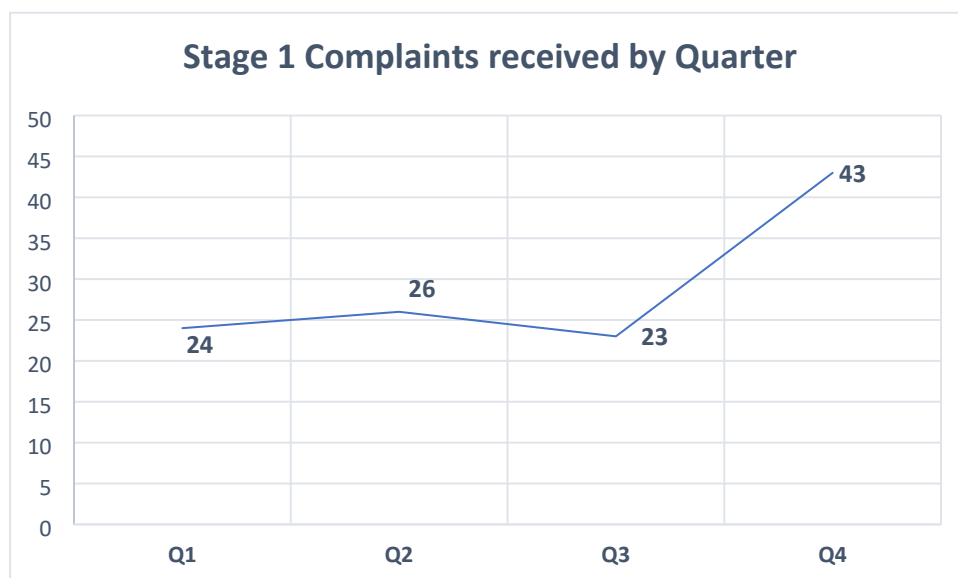
- Provided information and advice (including referrals to other organisations that could assist) to 1,035 clients.
- Ensured a total of 810 clients received home based short term Reablement services.
- An additional 1,698 clients received other forms of short-term support in response to their request, this included support like mental health counselling.
- A total of 4,220 clients received some form of long-term support, which includes personal budgets, direct payments, residential and nursing care during the year. 2,820 of those clients were actively in receipt of such services on 31st March 2023.
- Assisted 451 carers during the year. This included 165 instances of information and advice, 171 direct payments to the carer and 104 temporary support packages delivered to the cared-for person (e.g. to give the carer a break from their caring responsibilities).

During 2022-23, the number of clients that received long term services was 4,220; whilst 810 clients received a short term reablement service and 1,698 clients received other forms of short-term support (such as counselling) with an additional 267 being newly supported through equipment and adaptations. Please note that some people may have been in receipt of two or more services during the year (for example - a person received reablement which ended and then they received long term services).

4.1. Stage 1 complaints

Adult Social Care services recorded 116 stage 1 complaints in 2022-23, which is low given the context of the numbers detailed above for people requesting or receiving adult social care services. As detailed in Chart 2, the January – March 2023 period (Quarter 4) saw a significant spike in complaints by 87%, as a result of the updated process for logging and handling of complaints and representations.

Chart 2



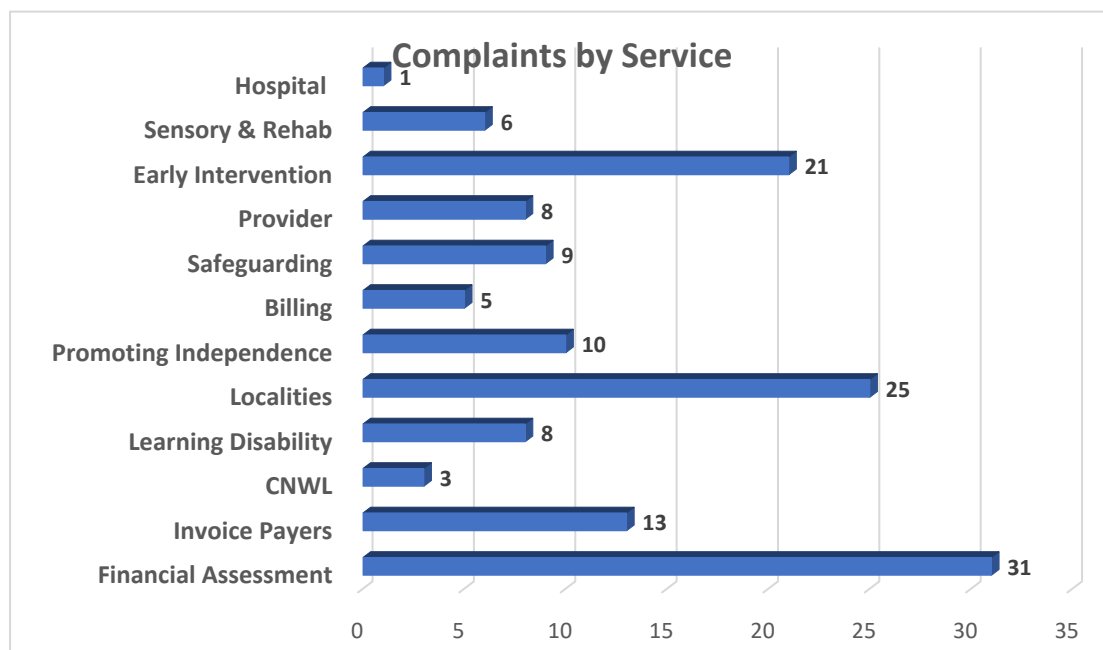
Adult social care staff will usually trouble shoot most issues directly, in order to resolve them outside the complaint process where possible. Staff signpost or refer complaint issues to the complaints team when they cannot be resolved informally or when a person wants their complaint formally investigated.

4.2. Complaints by service

As illustrated in Chart 3, the highest volume of complaints was received by the Financial Assessment and Monitoring team, Localities and Early Intervention teams.

These service teams generally receive the most feedback due to the nature of their work in relation to care charges and paying for care, assessments and/or assessment decisions and concerning care provision or availability of service.

Chart 3



4.3. Complaint Themes

Complaints can involve more than one issue across service teams. As detailed in Table 2, the most common reason for raising a complaint involved care charges (29%).

Complaints that involve care charges include disputes about the client contribution, concerns regarding the financial assessments and related decisions, invoices and the debt recovery process. These complaints are often the most contentious and difficult to resolve to the satisfaction of the complainant.

Adult social care support is means tested, as required under the Care Act 2014, and a significant number of people receiving care support will be making a client contribution towards their care costs.

Some of the complaints received during 2022-23, challenged the outcome of financial assessments, which are calculated in line with Harrow's Charging policy under the Care Act 2014. Other complaints queried the quality of financial advice and information received, delays in receiving the relevant financial paperwork, queries regarding the care costs and related fees, the invoicing and payment reminder letters.

The quality of care by commissioned providers made up 12% of the total complaint issues, which were in relation to care delivery under home based care. Complaints about quality of care arose in relation to care charge disputes.

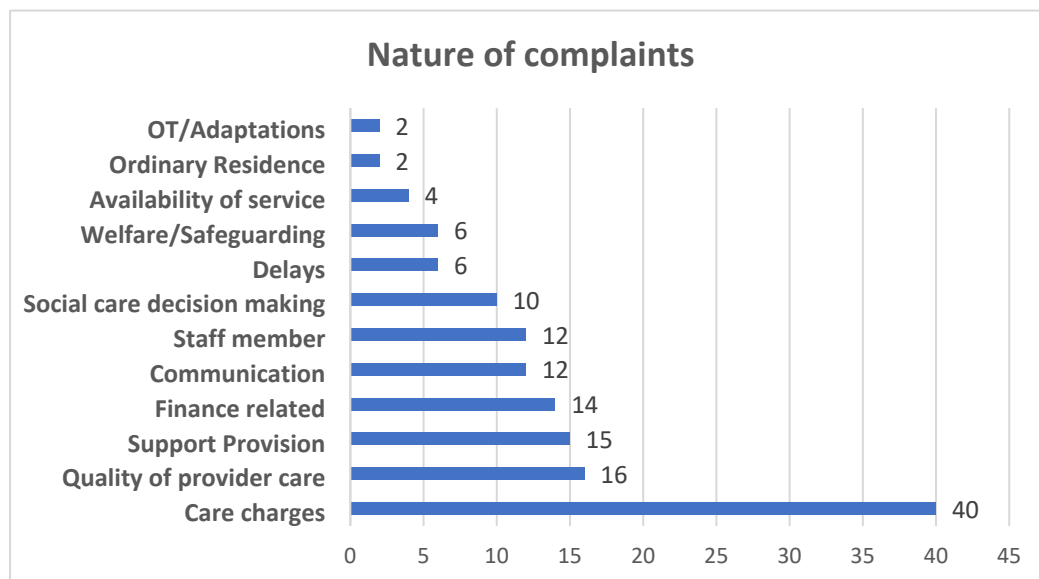
The Council commissioned care providers are firstly given the opportunity to investigate a complaint in line with their own complaint procedure, which can be further reviewed by the Harrow complaints team, as necessary. The provider complaints are also shared with the Brokerage teams as well as the Quality Assurance team for provider monitoring purposes.

Table 2

Complaint Themes	Number	Percentage
Care charges	40	29%
Quality of provider care	16	12%
Communication	12	9%
Delays	6	4%
Support provision	15	11%
Availability of service	4	3%
Staff member	12	9%
Welfare/safeguarding	6	4%
Social care decision making	10	7%
Finance related*	14	10%
Ordinary Residence	2	1%
OT/Adaptations	2	1%
Total	139	100

*complaints regarding alleged fraud, personal budget payments, banking issues, funding additional care, delayed payments

Chart 4



The quantity and themes of complaints are regularly shared with Adult Social Care Managers, to ensure wider awareness of the issues is disseminated to all teams.

Examples of complaints received:

Communication

It is frustrating that you are not able to keep the communication open with me and you leave me very little choice but to escalate each time. I really don't understand what is holding up the decision to simply increase her care hours.

Finance Related

Harrow social services are refusing to release my late mother's money as they got a court protection order in 2018 without my knowledge, they also closed my mother's account now my mother has passed away, they are still refusing to release my mother's money

Decision making

My primary issue is that Harrow council care team has failed in its duty to communicate the case being closed to us on a timely basis and also to explain the reasons for closing the case. We are now being asked to re-start the whole process, which could take weeks or months of time and may not arrive at a satisfactory outcome for my elderly Mother.

Delay

I would like an explanation as to why it took your team over a month to contact me despite the fact that I had initially raised this as urgent, fully explained the extent of my husband's condition and frail state not to mention my inability to assist him, I not only find this really frustrating but extremely concerning.

Lack of support

I am writing to express my deep disappointment in the service provided by with Harrow Adults Social Care and feel extremely let down due to the lack of support and communication when I applied for financial assistance during a difficult time with my father's care needs.

Care charges

At no stage ever was anyone in the family informed that there would be charges, or even quoted what the fees would be. None of us agreed to these charges and never signed any agreements or contracts in this regard. These fees were dumped onto us without any consultation.

Quality of care

I don't think they care - it's just a moneymaking scheme - the hours they must have charged does not reflect the hours they bothered to attend.

4.4. Complaint Response Times

Under the statutory complaint regulations, a complaint should be completed in its entirety within six months. The Council operates a two-stage adult social care complaint process, with 20 working days as the timeframe for response at both stages.

The regulations allow scope for flexibility in handling a complaint and allowing joint working between agencies where response timescales may be agreed as necessary. The complainant is kept updated regarding the progress of their complaint in such instances, and where the investigation requires more time.

Response times are closely monitored by the complaints team and there is an ongoing focus on improving response times. Most complainants prefer their complaint to be carefully considered and investigated, over a rushed response that is primarily focused on meeting a response deadline and if they are kept informed of the progress, the timeframe is not a huge concern. It should be noted that staffing pressures across adult social care services during 2022/23 did impact service delivery, which included complaint responses.

There were 82 complaints completed during 2022-23, and the complaint outcomes are detailed in Table 3.

It is noted that 66% of completed complaints were responded on time and 34% of complaints were completed out of time. Late responses were mainly as a result of investigating complex complaints which required more time, work caseloads and staffing (resource pressures and/or leave)

Table 3 Complaint Response completion

Responses On Time	54	66%
Responses Out of Time	28	34%
Total	82	100%

Chart 5

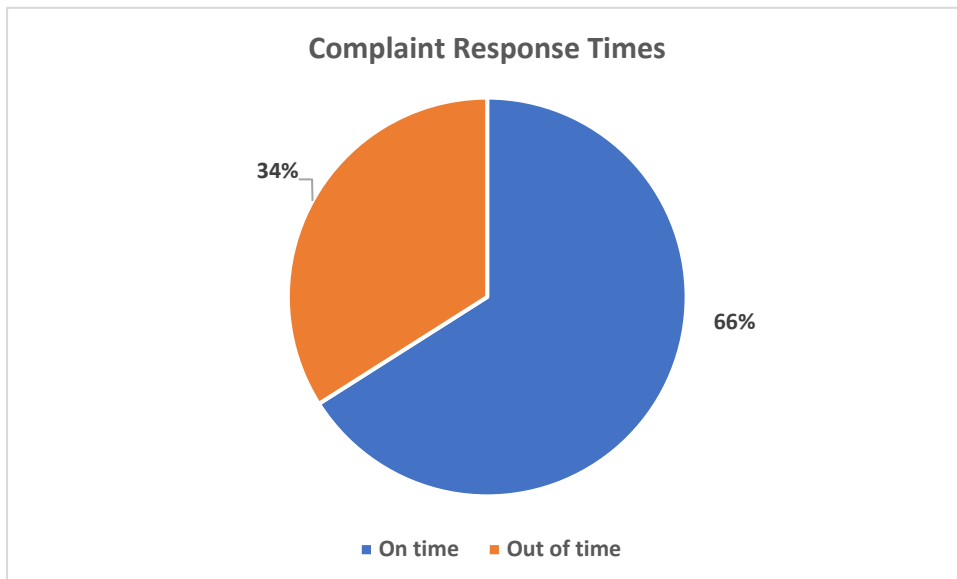
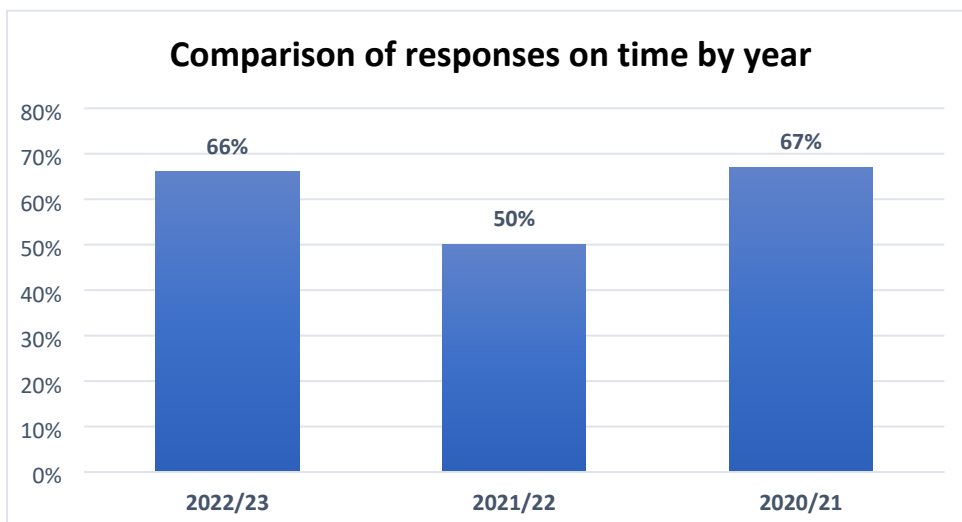


Chart 6 below provides the annual trend for complaint response times and shows an improvement on the previous year, when 50% of complaints were responded on time.

Senior Managers receive a weekly update on the open complaints and enquiries for their services, which are shared within the relevant teams to ensure complaints are tracked and responses are completed in a timely way. There is a strong commitment across the directorate and supported by the senior leads, to continue the good progress in improving timely responses.

Chart 6



4.5 Complaint Outcomes

The majority of the 82 completed complaints were not upheld (52%), as detailed below in Chart 7.

Chart 7

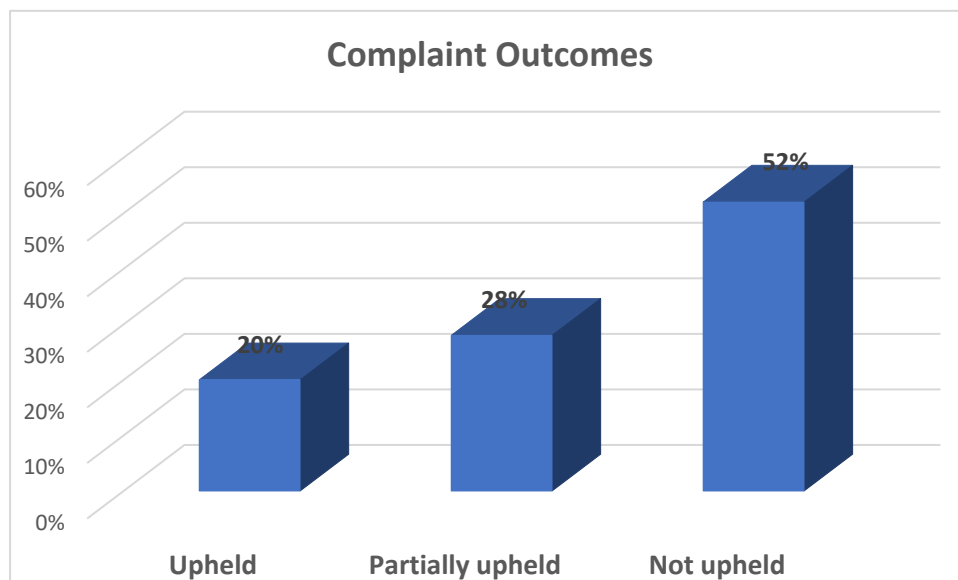


Table 4

Complaint outcomes	Number	Percentage
Upheld	16	20%
Not Upheld	43	52%
Partially Upheld	23	28%
Total	82	100%

Complaints either upheld or partially upheld were for reasons including delays in service delivery and lack of contact, staff not returning calls/emails in a timely way, errors in administrative processes, incorrect information/advice to individuals and their families in relation to care provision and care charging.

For complaints that were not upheld, the response still explained for clarity, what happened and why a decision was taken.

4.6 Stage 2 Complaints

Stage 2 review is the final stage of the adult social care complaints process, which ensures that there is a further opportunity to consider a complaint and provide closure on any outstanding issues.

Sixteen complaints escalated to stage 2 review during 2022-23, with 12 of the sixteen review requests received in quarter 4. These were as a result of reviewing historical complex complaints. The complaints mostly related to disputed care charges but also

concerned social care decisions, issues regarding communication and the quality of support/care provision.

The stage 2 reviews are responded by the lead for the service, usually the Assistant Director. This ensures that there is senior level oversight of escalated complaints.

Following the completion of the stage 2 review response, the complainant is informed of their right to refer their complaint to the Ombudsman.

Twelve stage 2 review complaints were completed and responded during 2022 – 2023, with four reviews in progress at the end of this reporting period.

Table 5 Stage 2 response times

Response times	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21
On time	9	2	1
Out of time	3	3	1
Total	12	5	2

The outcomes of the completed reviews are detailed in Table 6 below.

Table 6 Stage 2 complaint outcomes 2022/23

Stage 2 Complaint outcomes	Number	Percentage
Upheld	3	25%
Not Upheld	7	58%
Partially Upheld	2	17%
Total	12	100%

Table 7 Stage 2 outcomes by year

Stage 2 outcomes	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21
Upheld	3	0	0
Not upheld	7	3	1
Partially upheld	2	2	1
Total	12	5	2

The summary outcomes for complaints that were upheld or upheld in part during 2022-23 with learning identified were as follows:

- In recognition of the delays in arranging the personal budget and an urgent reassessment, the family received an apology and were reimbursed the periods of care which were funded by the family during the relevant period. Staff received a reminder to ensure assessments and social care actions were completed in a timely way.

- An apology was provided for the administrative error in an invoice the family received and for not providing clear advice regarding the 12-week property disregard for care charges. As a gesture of goodwill, a sum was deducted from the outstanding charges due for payment.
- An apology was provided for not providing clear and timely information on care charges to the family regarding the free period of care following the person's discharge from hospital. The disputed care charges were waived for the relevant period and staff were reminded of the need to ensure families had a clear understanding of care charges for the care.
- In recognition of the time and trouble taken in making the complaint and the delays caused in the appointeeship process, an apology was provided with a financial payment to the complainant.
- An apology was provided for the delay in addressing the complainant's concerns.

5. Care Provider complaints

For commissioned care services, which include both home-based and residential/nursing care, providers are given the opportunity to investigate and respond to a complaint in accordance with their own complaint procedure. The Council can also decide to investigate or review a complaint regarding a commissioned service.

By law, a Council remains accountable for the actions of care providers they commission to provide a service. The Ombudsman will name the commissioning authority in their decisions for care provider complaints. The Quality Assurance team monitors complaints feedback regarding commissioned care providers.

There were 16 complaints recorded for commissioned care providers in 2022-23.

The complaints concerned the quality of service for home-based care and were investigated by the care providers. Two complaints were reviewed further by the complaints team to ensure the complaint outcome was fair and reasonable.

The complaints related to carer visits and the timings of the visits, the quality of care delivered, conduct of care staff and discrepancies in the care recording.

For complaints upheld or partially upheld, the outcomes included waiving the disputed care charges, reminders to carer regarding their logging of care calls and staff training.

Self-funders can complain directly to the care provider and Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman. These complaints will be signposted to the relevant care provider.

6. Ombudsman Complaints

The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) is the final stage of the complaint process, following the completion of the Council's own complaint procedure, although a person can make contact at any time during the progress of their complaint.

Twelve complaints were received via the Ombudsman during this period, which is a slight increase on the number received in the previous year (10).

The Ombudsman will refer to ‘maladministration’ should a fault be found on the Council’s part. They will also consider whether the fault has had an adverse impact on the person involved in the complaint.

Of the 12 complaint enquiries received, eight complaints were handled as investigations. Two of the investigated complaints were not upheld. The upheld cases are summarised below.

Table 8

Summary complaint	Decision	Remedy
1. Council delayed arranging a capacity and needs assessment.	Upheld	Apology Council agreed to arrange the assessment and remind staff of the importance of timely assessments. Learning was implemented as detailed in section 8 of this report.
2. Council did not clearly explain the client contributions and top up fees when resident placed in care home, resulting in care charges	Upheld	Apology Resident’s care chargers were adjusted, and compensation was paid each to both family members Information on care charges was reviewed, as detailed in section 8 of this report.

Ombudsman complaints with open investigations at the end of 2022-23:

Case 1 - Complaint with the CNWL Trust regarding the level of care support provided and recovery action for the outstanding charges.

Case 2 - Complaint that the family did not receive appropriate care support for their family member in line with the Care Act duties.

Case 3 – Complaint that the Council is demanding payment of contributions for supported living accommodation.

Case 4 – Complaint regarding care charges and disputing that the family did not receive the care and support plan detailing the weekly contribution.

7. Joint NHS and Social Care complaints

Two complaints were recorded and are included in the stage 1 complaint figures for this reporting year. Both complaints concerned the joint involvement of the Central and North West London Trust (CNWL) and Adult Social Care in the care and support of the person concerned. The services responded jointly to the issues raised.

The complaint regulations are designed for joint working between Health and Adult Social Care to address complaints where a complaint overlaps both services.

8. Learning from Complaints

Complaints are a valuable source of information, which identify lessons that can be learnt as a means of service improvement. When things go wrong, services should use the learning to reduce the likelihood of the same mistake happening again.

The Operational and Service Managers meet regularly to discuss and review internal processes to improve service delivery.

The key learning themes as a result of a complaint in 2022/23 were:

Effective Communication and providing **timely responses**

- Better communication between teams to ensure accuracy in the care billing and information from families is updated on the case system (address for contact etc)

Clearer information regarding care charges, such as cost of a care package and assessment process

- Clearer information regarding financial charging and funding responsibilities to families is being reviewed.
- If a care provider requires a cancellation period, the relevant team reminded that this should be clearly stated in the contract and information provided to the care user/family at the start of the service, to avoid incurring charges.

Avoiding delays in arranging care package (previously as a result of staff shortages and recruitment issues) **and** occurring in processes such as Appointeeship, Deputyship, funding panels outcomes

Ensuring the **case recording system is accurate and updated**, for example: to avoid incorrect billing and accurately recording suspensions of care - for example, when a person is admitted to hospital.

- Staff are regularly reminded in team meetings and supervision.

Following due process - such as ensuring the care and support plan is provided to care user and it is recorded on the case system

- Feedback has been provided to staff to ensure that our duty to obtain consent from the referred for person, is clearly communicated to the referrer so that the next steps are made clearer to them.

The learning implemented from the upheld Ombudsman complaint:

- Staff were reminded within supervision and team meetings, to ensure they completed timely assessments when a person was identified as in need.
- A review was undertaken of the information provided to potential care home residents about how care home funding works, to ensure it adequately explains about client contributions and third party top up fees.
- Staff were reminded of the importance of ensuring residents and family members considering paying a top-up, understand that any top-ups are on of any client contribution and apparent misunderstandings corrected about this at the earliest opportunity.
- A review was completed of the collection and payment of client contributions and top ups for residents where the Council arranges care home placements. Practices are

in line with the statutory guidance so that, the Council pays the full fee to the care provider and collects the client contribution from the resident.

Examples of what we put right as a result of complaints

Complaint - delay in assessing a person's needs and ensuring they had the appropriate care provision.

What we did - The care needs reassessment was completed, and the care resident transferred to a permanent care placement. The care resident and family were happy with the placement and care provided as all care needs were being met in the care placement. Staff were reminded to provide timely assessments when a resident with the appearance of needs requires an assessment.

Complaint - not receiving an outcome regarding request for increase in care and arranging this via the personal budget and payment for increased support

What we did – the care hours were increased, and payments processed accordingly, together with support payment to the family.

Complaint – the resident was being billed incorrectly when they were paying for their care privately and had informed the Council.

What we did – identified that the case system had not been updated to reflect that the resident was paying for their care privately, following a period of reablement. This was updated and the care agency provided a refund, and the Council cancelled the care package and all contributions. The monies were refunded to the resident.

9. MP and Member Enquiries

During the reporting period, a total of 196 enquiries were recorded (80 MP enquiries and 116 Elected Member enquiries).

Table 9 provides the comparative data by year, which shows an upward trajectory of enquiries received each year. There was an increase of 17% received on the previous year 2021/22.

Table 9 Enquiries received by year

Year	MP and Member enquiries
2022/23	196
2021/22	168
2020/21	91

The Council's corporate timeframe to respond to an MP and Member enquiry is 5 working days. It should be noted that social care enquiries are often complex by their nature and will require more time to consider and respond.

In People Services, teams will strive to respond to 'low level' easy to address enquiries within 5 working days. For all other enquiries, the standard response timeframe is usually 10 working days, unless the issues require a formal complaint investigation.

Table 10 Issues raised

MP issues*	Number	Member issues*	Number
Social care support	26	Social care support	23
Welfare/safeguarding concerns	7	Welfare/safeguarding concerns	17
Mental Health/LD provision/support	7	Mental Health/LD provision	7
Care charges	26	Care charges	14
Financial Assessment	10	Financial Assessment	9
Anti-social behaviour	3	Anti-social behaviour	2
OT assessment/adaptations/equipment	6	OT assessment/adaptations/equipment	12
Health related	1	Other finance	4
Housing related	10	Housing related	10
Care provider	4	Care provider	3
Total	100	Total	101

*Enquiries can relate to more than one issue

It is positive to note that 73% of MP enquiries were responded within 5 -10 working days and 68% of Member enquiries were responded within 5 -10 working days in the final quarter period of 2022/23.

Teams understand the importance of addressing enquiries as quickly as possible and this is monitored closely by the complaints team.

10. Compliments

Adult Social Care teams proactively share their compliments, and it is important to recognise the good work that is being delivered by the service teams.

The Directorate reported 64 compliments in 2022- 2023. Some examples of the positive feedback are detailed below.

Thank you to yourself and your colleagues for the SGA conference meeting. I found you all to be extremely professional and I was so grateful that you allowed my voice to be heard as I feel it has not been heard these last two months by those responsible for funding. **Adult Safeguarding Team**

I would like to say B is a real treasure for helping my brother. He feels comfortable and so do I knowing that B is helping. B is kind, considerate, professional and compassionate. B is powerful in getting good things done. Beth helped save my brother's life two years ago and I will never forget it. **Locality Team**

I just wanted to say a very big thank you to you and the others (for such a lovely meal!! It was also really nice to have a chance to meet up with the other Carers and Harrow Council staff to chat too !!Thanks again, look forward to the next Event. What a great idea " munch and mingle " for Carers to meet and help alleviate the loneliness that we can experience at times.

Carers Lead

I am writing this to you to inform you of the excellent service and assistance we had recently received from your colleague, L who dealt with our issues professionally and with care. She was very proactive in dealing with everything and can't thank her enough for her support. L also kept us updated regularly and managed to resolve everything quickly, and we are extremely grateful to her for taking the time to help us when my mother required immediate help. She was extremely polite, knowledgeable and very helpful in trying assist us with our concerns and needs.

Early Intervention and Support Team

I would just like to mention that A's support with the inspection this week has been amazing. She's very understanding, made the whole team feel valued and appreciated, her knowledge of care and support has been greatly appreciated. She has been a great support and she is a credit to the council. Thank you for providing her to us. **Quality Assurance Team**

Thank you so much for your kindness to myself and my husband on our stay in Northwick Park hospital. My husband was admitted with chest problems He has advanced vascular dementia. Several days after his admission, I was also admitted with a heart problem. After a week he was ready to go home but I caught Covid while in the Coronary Care Unit in Ward. You came to see me and visited him too. You could see I was upset at not being able to see him nor being home to care for him, so you took a video on your phone of him saying hello to me. Then gave me your mobile number and sent me the video via WhatsApp. That was so thoughtful, and I felt so much better. By this time, I was moved to an isolation room. You found him a place for 3 weeks respite care. He was safe, warm, and secure there and I was able to be discharged home with heart medications and to recuperate until I tested negative for Covid. I feel very strongly that you went above and beyond your job description. The personal touch of the video made such a difference to my well-being. Thank you! **Northwick Park Hospital Team**

Thank you for guiding us throughout this matter. You have been very helpful and I'm very glad to have this resolved now. Thanks to your help! **Billing Team**

To whom it may concern, very happy with Harrow services never have an issue. Always helpful whenever I need to talk to them regarding my father.
Very happy **Adult Social Care Services**

I would like you to know that I am very pleased with the support J has given my brother. Her assessment and understanding of X is most accurate. I have not been too well for some time. So, it is a great relief to know that J is supporting X to ensure he lives in a safe and secure environment. I thank her for the quality time she is giving to J. **Learning Disability Team**

I just don't know how you do it, you are literally AMAZING!!!
You surprise me every time getting the care arranged so quickly and you keep us updated at every point. You're a true star!!! **Northwick Park Hospital Team**

Ms S has carried out a thorough care needs assessment on our father. She listened to all his concerns and the family's concerns and presented this appropriately together with the evidence to the Panel members. Thank you for allocating an understanding person like Ms S at a time when many doors were shut to my father. She acted very fairly and attentively when assessing his care needs.
Early Intervention Support Team

E is very professional...I have worked with E for years and neither my Mum nor myself have a wrong thing to say about E...She always has the best interests of the carers and the people they support at heart!
Shared Lives Team

11. Key Targets for 2023-24

Adult Social Care services are committed to improving our performance activity across all areas of our complaint process in responding to complaints and enquiries.

Adult social care teams will continue to resolve complaints and queries at the earliest stage.

The complaints team will remain focused on robust monitoring of response times and quality responses.

Adult Social Care services have set up a working group to implement the learning from complaints for practice development which meets on a monthly basis.

Response times have improved, and this will remain a priority in the new reporting period. The Directorate will aim to ensure 75% of complaints are responded on time.

Staff training on effective complaints handling will be provided to Managers throughout 2023-23, to ensure high quality responses to complainants

The complaints team will continue to work closely with the senior management team to identify areas for improvement from the complaints.