

REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting:	13 November 2018
Subject:	Children and Families Services Complaints Annual Report 2017/18
Responsible Officer:	Paul Hewitt, Interim Corporate Director of People
Lead Members:	Councillor Jerry Miles (Lead Member for People) Councillor Janet Mote (Lead Member for People)
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix – Annual Report for Children and Families Services Complaints for period 2017/18

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the statutory Children and Families Services Complaints Annual Report for 2017/18.

Recommendations:

None. For Information purposes only.

Section 2 – 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.

Performance Issues

There are no specific particular performance issues associated with this report.

Environmental Impact

N/A

Risk Management Implications

Risk included on Directorate risk register? No

Separate risk register in place? No

Equalities implications

N/A

Corporate Priorities

The Council's vision:

Working Together to Make a Difference for Harrow

- **Making a difference for the vulnerable**
- **Making a difference for communities**
- Making a difference for local businesses
- **Making a difference for families.**

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

The Corporate Director determined the report did not require Financial or Legal clearance.

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Peter Singh, Head of Service, Adults Market Management and Internally Provided Services

Background Papers: None

Annual Complaints Report for Children and Families Services 2017/18

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1	<p>Executive Summary:</p> <p>There were some 121 “transactions¹” within the statutory complaints process during the year, i.e. representations, formal complaints and referrals to the Local Government Ombudsman. Given the nature of some of the work undertaken, such as child protection and looked after children, it is positive that numbers of complaints are so minimal. During 2017/18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were 3,990 children who were considered to be children in need (CiN) throughout 2017/18 of which just over half were male compared to female. The cohort’s ethnic breakdown is predominantly BME with just over a quarter being white ethnicity. On the last day of the year (31st March) a total of 1,505 children in need were receiving a service with the rest having ceased throughout the year • A total of 2,441 referrals were received in 2017/18 by Children’s Social Care with the most common referral source being Police and Schools both accounting for 59% of referrals received. The service completed
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¹ The total of representations, Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3 & LG Ombudsman referrals within Children and Families Services.

2,563 assessments and just over half required further intervention.

- A total of 959 child protection investigations were initiated in the period with 367 resulting in an initial child protection conference
- There were 642 Child Protection Plans (CPP) active at some point during 2017/18. 323 new plans were started & 319 ceased during the year. At 31st March 2018, 232 children were being supported and monitored through a Child Protection Plan
- A total of 318 Children were Looked After (CLA) at some point during 2017/18. During the year 107 children became newly looked after and 158 stopped being looked after. By 31st March, Harrow had 159 looked after children
- By 31st March Harrow had 61 approved fostering households offering 113 placements
- About 9,200 families accessed the Cedars and Hillview Early Support hubs and 276 young people accessed the Wealdstone Early Support hub.

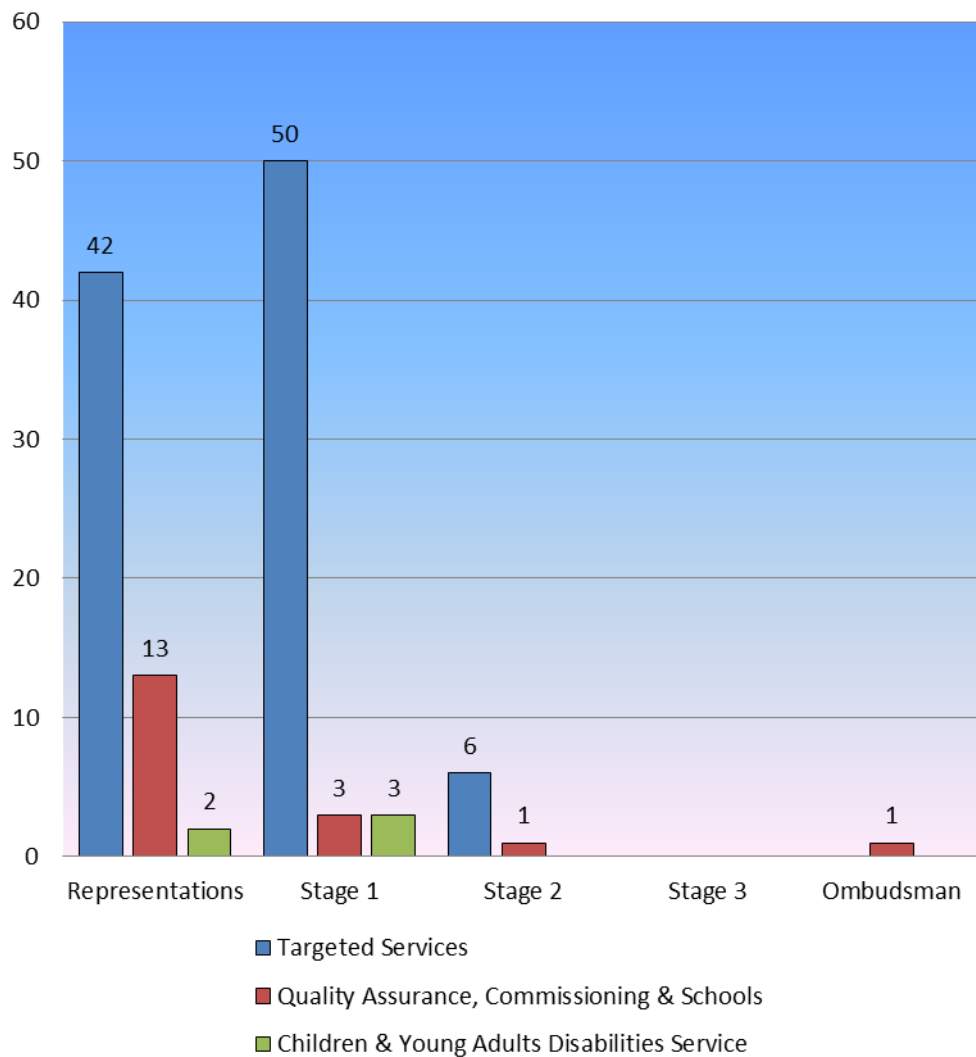
Targeted Services continued to attract the most complaints (81% of all transactions). This reflects the nature of the statutory social work undertaken by that service, where difficult decisions regarding children and their families sometimes leads to necessary actions which are unpopular with service users.

This report contains both positive messages and indications of areas needing more work.

- Of particular note is the high level of representations (57) which are received as potential statutory complaints but were resolved informally to the satisfaction of service users. This is significant in showing that the Council is able to listen to concerns expressed and act promptly to resolve them. Whilst this is positive in terms of the service users' experience, it also endorses that early resolution is more cost effective for the Council by avoiding escalation with associated costs of any investigations
- The proportion of Stage 1 complaint responses sent within timescales has increased to 94% in 2017/18, up from 93% in 2016/17
- The relative escalation rate of complaints between the stages of the complaints process is low and reflects the successful efforts made by officers to understand and address concerns when they arise as complaints and representations. Escalation of Stage 1 complaints to Stage 2 was 12%. This means around 88% of formal complaints are resolved with the first initial response from the Council demonstrating

	<p>the quality of resolution at Stage 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the key actions that were set for 2017/18 in the previous year have been met.
2	Summary of Activity:
2.1	<p>Overall Complaint Activity:</p> <p>Between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 the Council received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 57 representations i.e. potential statutory complaints that did not lead to a formal complaint; • 56 statutory Stage 1 complaints; • Seven Stage 2 complaints; • No (zero) Stage 3 complaint received (no panel hearings); • One formal Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) complaint. <p>Additionally, there were 36 MP and Councillor enquiries managed by the Complaints Team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeliness of complaint responses at an early stage typically prevents/minimises subsequent cost to the Council in time and resources. The Council has slightly improved on Stage 1 timelines in 2017/18. Some 94% of Stage 1 complaint responses were arranged in time (an increase from 93% in 2016/17).

Table 1: Number of Complaints by Service area: April 2017 to March 2018



Number of Complaint Transactions by Service area: April 2017 - March 2018

Service Area	Representations	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Ombudsman	Total
Targeted Services	42	50	6	0	0	98
Education & Commissioning	13	3	1	0	1	18
Special Needs Service	2	3	0	0	0	5
Total	57	56	7	0	1	121

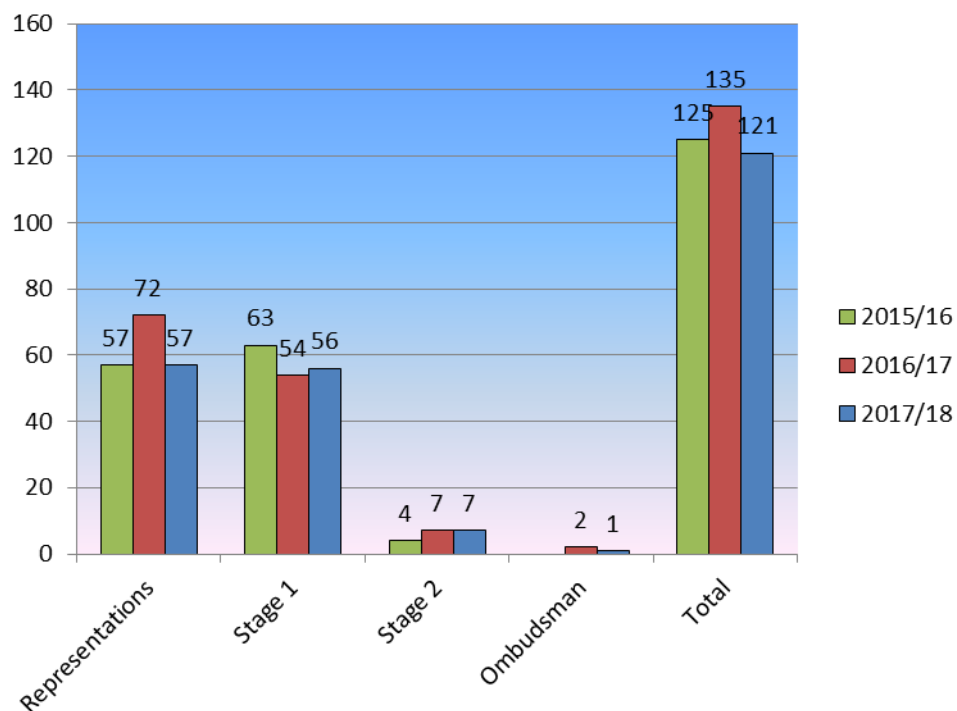
Key message: Overall the picture suggests a continuation of high quality investigative and governance standards.

Analysis: During 2017/18 there was a slight increase in the number of Stage 1 complaints received (up by one on the previous year). As with previous years, the majority of received transactions (both representations and formal complaints) are via Targeted Services (81%).

There were seven Stage 2 complaints received. This represents an escalation rate of 12% of all Stage 1 complaints and as such is a relatively low level. No (zero) complaints progressed to a Stage 3 panel hearing. This is a positive indicator of sound resolution in the earlier stages of the process and compares with the 2016/17 period.

There was one new LGO referral within the year which resulted in an investigation by the LGO. Details of this case is discussed further in the LGO section below.

Table 2: Comparison of Complaints over the last 3 years



	Representations	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Ombudsman	Total
2017/18	57(47%)	56(46%)	7(6%)	0(0%)	1(1%)	121
2016/17	72(53%)	54(40%)	7(5%)	0(0%)	2(2%)	135
2015/16	57(46%)	63(50%)	4(3%)	1(1%)	0(0%)	125

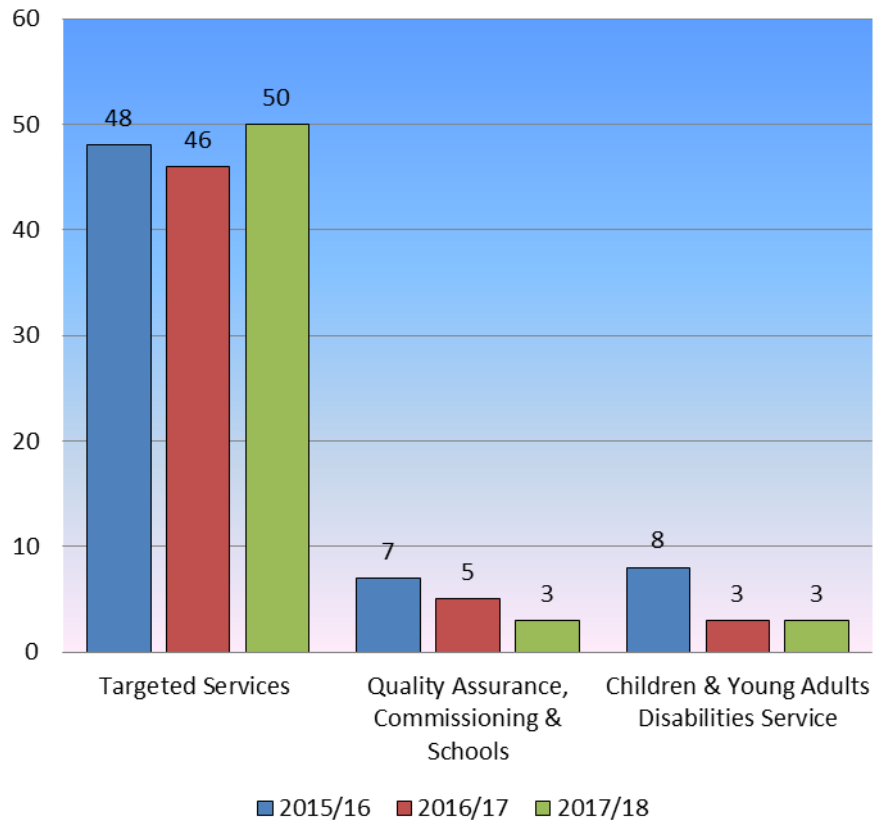
Analysis: There was a slight decrease in the number of total complaints or 'transactions' in 2017/18 (121), compared to 2016/17 (135). This was mainly

	<p>due to a smaller number of informal representations (a decrease of 15 from the previous year). While the number of formal Stage 1 complaints received remained relatively the same with last year (56 as opposed to 54), this may evidence that more informal disputes are being resolved by front line staff and teams without having to involve the complaints service.</p> <p>Escalations beyond Stage 1 have remained low in line with previous years.</p> <p>Key message: Previous research (e.g. Jerry White, Local Government Ombudsman & Steve Carney, Head of Complaints, CQC) has suggested that Councils with high levels of Stage 1 complaints/representations tended to receive good performance ratings and demonstrated a willingness to hear concerns, address them and improve services as a result.</p> <p>Key action: To attempt to maintain the current balance of representations against actual complaints, as this demonstrates good early resolution for service users.</p>
3	<p>Outcomes for key actions in 2016/17</p>
	<p>All of these outcomes have been met or are currently being progressed.</p> <p>The proportion of Stage 1 complaint responses sent within timescales increased to 94% in 2017/18, up from 93% in 2016/17.</p> <p>Improvements have been made by working more closely with Team Managers who have helped to drive improvements in performance. Trends in cases and escalations have been consistently monitored in weekly catch up meetings by the Complaints Team and as part of quarterly improvement board reports.</p> <p>The Complaints team also offered more one to one training sessions for staff members in handling complaints and reflective discussions with managers who were involved in complaints received to manage future situations where complaints may arise. This work has likely fed into the reduced amount of representations received in this area.</p> <p>The complaints literature and communications are currently being reviewed to be updated in early 2018/2019.</p>
4	<p>Priorities for 2017/18:</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that on time Stage 1 complaint response rates continue to exceed the target of 85% • To continue the core offer of training for front line staff and managers on complaint handling • To update and finalise complaints literature and communications. Particularly in terms of the information available on our website.

5 Stage 1 Complaints:

5.1 Stage 1 Complaints Overall Activity

Table 3



Stage 1 Complaints Received

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Education & Commissioning	7	5	3
Targeted Services	48	46	50
Special Needs Services	8	3	3
Total	63	54	56

Key message: Almost inevitably Targeted Services attracts a higher level of complaints. The data below will evidence the majority of complaints are from parents/family members. As the *“nature of complaints”* section will demonstrate below, many complaints arise from parents having a negative view of social care intervention as this will often involve some assessment of their parenting or family relationship. Children’s Social Care is child focused which can be at odds with the initial expectation of Children’s Services involvement from parents.

The formal escalation rate of Targeted Services transactions is low at 6% in 2017/18.

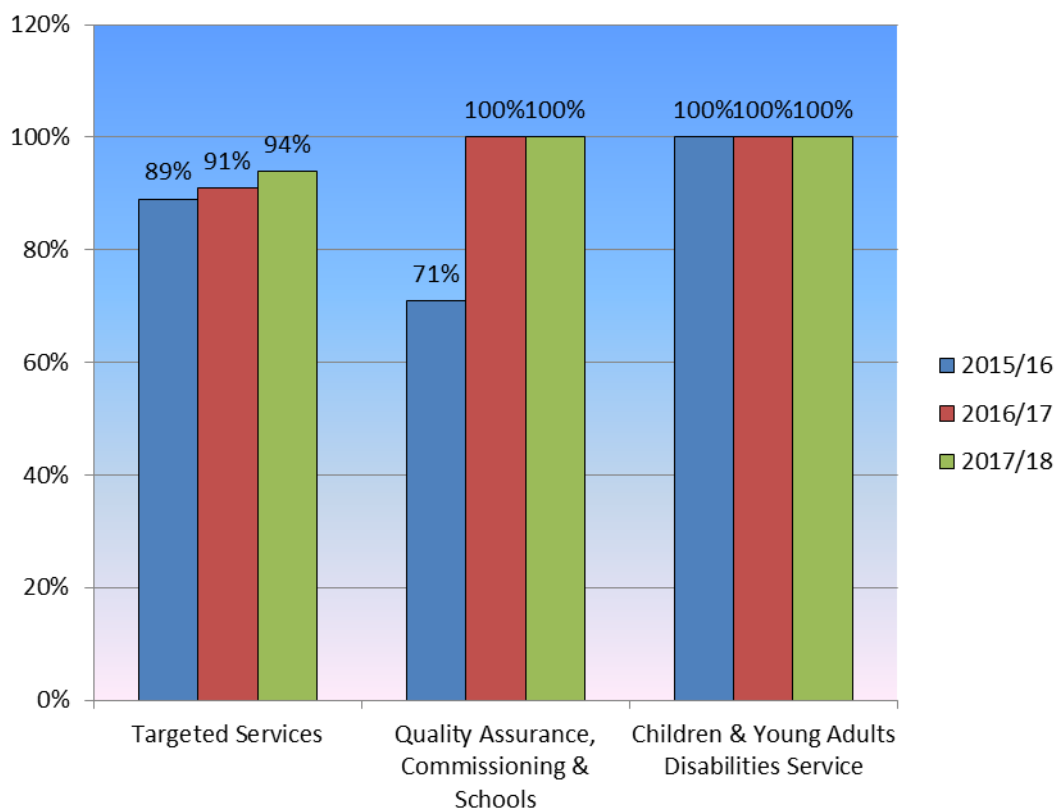
There were 36 MP and Councillor enquiries managed by the Complaints

team, which is a significant decrease from 65 in the previous year. Previous years had significantly higher schools admissions queries. In 2017/18 there were only four queries around this area. This is likely a continuing trend due to schools expansions programmes and a change in parental expectations particularly as media reports have highlighted that a relatively large proportion of children in London and the South East do not secure their first preference school for both primary and secondary schools.

MP and Councillor enquiries varied in nature and it is not possible to determine if they would have actually led to a formal complaint. Nevertheless, the Complaints Team were able to assist in resolving issues and providing specific information to answer queries.

5.2 Stage 1 Response Times

Table 4



Key message: There has been a further increase in the level of Stage 1 complaints completed on time during 2017/18 compared to the previous year.

The overall level of on time complaints during 2017/18 was 94% which compares to 93% during 2016/17 and 88% during 2015/16.

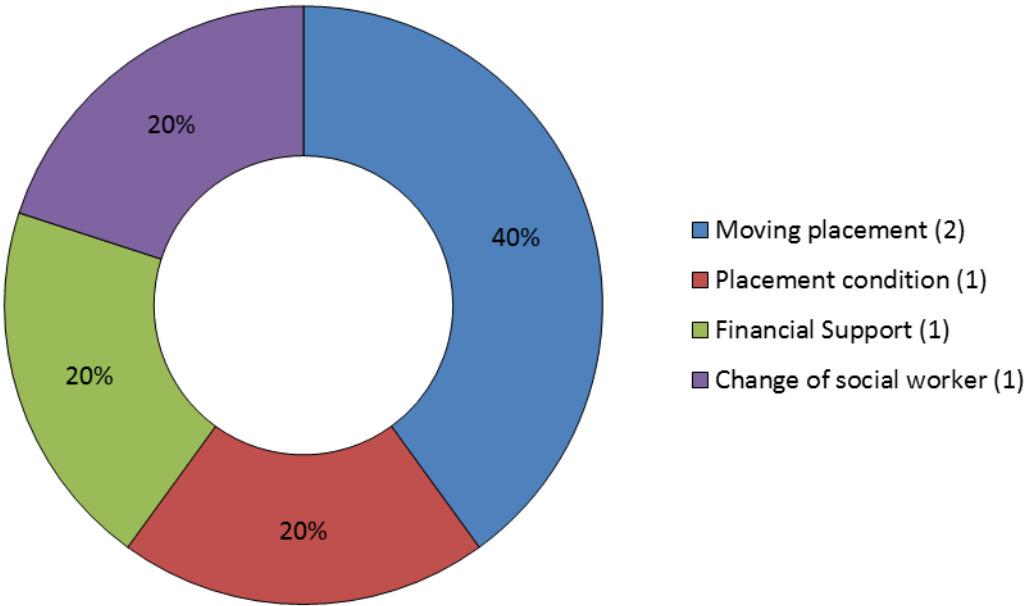
Analysis: On time response rates for Targeted Services rose to 94% whilst complaints in the remaining two areas were all responded to on time.

Key action 1: To continue to exceed the 85% local target timescales for on time Stage 1 complaints throughout 2018/19.

5.3 Stage 1: Nature of Complaints

Table 5

Nature of Stage 1 Complaints from Young People 2017/2018



Complaints Examples from Young People

Moving Placement

Unhappy with decision to move me to an independent placement

Placement Condition

Placement requires repairs and sink is blocked

Financial Support

Not receiving enough financial subsistence support at university

Change of Social Worker

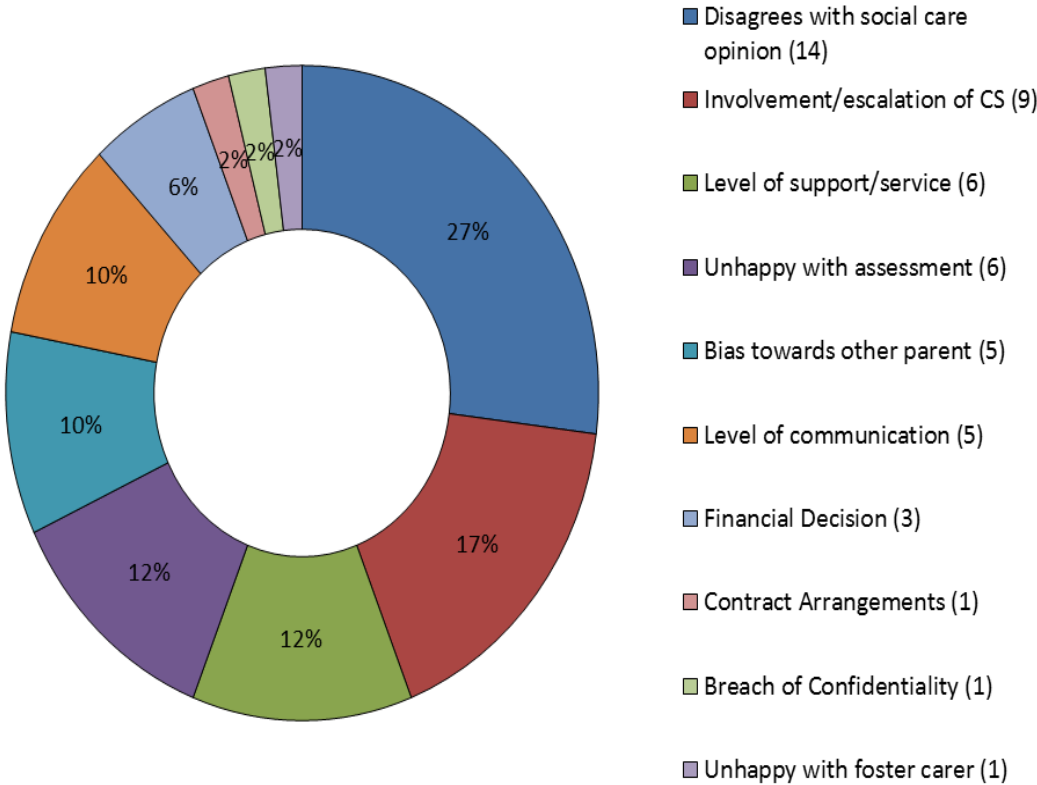
Happy with my previous social worker – unhappy with decision to change

Analysis – Young people tend to raise more practical complaints usually based around managerial decisions with reference to their living or financial circumstances which their social worker usually does not have the authority to resolve individually.

Even the complaint regarding a social worker is not because of unhappiness with a social worker, but due to feeling the loss of a previous worker they had a great relationship with.

Table 6

Nature of Stage 1 Complaints from Parents/Guardians and Relatives 2017/2018



Complaints Examples from Parents/Guardians and Relatives

Disagrees with Social Care Opinion

This category has the greatest number of complaints. The complainant (usually parent) is disagreeing or unhappy with the professional opinion of social workers involved in their family. These opinions will often include their views of the parenting, the home environment, family dynamic and are subjects some people are particularly

sensitive too. Some examples are:

Do not like how social worker discussed the cleanliness of my home

I feel like the social worker wants to take my daughter away

The social worker is not giving my husband a chance (due to safeguarding concerns was recommended by CS that father not be in property with children)

Involvement/escalation of Children's Services

This category contains complaints where the parent or involved family feel the level of involvement of social care is not justified and often want the case to be closed as an outcome.

Social Services have unfairly escalated the case and it should be closed

Unhappy that social care queried family decision to home school following referral of concerns from school

Felt that allegations of domestic violence which contributed to seriousness of the case were false and made by Children's Services

Level of support/service

Do not believe that all pieces of equipment provided to daughter for her needs

Unhappy with assessment

I am unfairly represented in the assessment

Bias towards other parent

Feel that the father has influenced the Children's Services handled the case

Level of communication

Unhappy that I am unable to have direct contact with certain member of staff

Financial Decisions

Child's birthday allowance was not correctly spent

Contract Arrangements

Contact has not been arranged as per agreement

Breach of Confidentiality

My personal information was provided to my ex-partner by way of a mistaken telephone call

Unhappy with foster carer

The foster carer does not provide dietary food to my (grandparents) liking

Analysis – Only a small portion of complaints from parents are about specific resourcing or senior managerial decisions. A large proportion of complaints are how parents perceive whether the social worker is not working in their interests or that the assessment/escalation of the case was unjustified in their view. Children's Services of course have a primary statutory duty to prioritise the best interests of the involved children. This is contrasting to the type of complaints raised by young people who raise issues outside of these practical resourcing decisions directly with their social workers and their team.

The aforementioned low escalation rate tends to suggest that once the complaints service becomes involved, it may allow the child centred focus and priority to become more apparent to parents and family once communication is delivered by non-social care staff. This in turn assists Children's Services with ongoing engagement with parents that may otherwise be difficult.

5.4 Stage 1: Complaints Outcomes

Table 7

		Not Upheld			Partially Upheld			Upheld			Total		
		17/18	16/17	15/16	17/18	16/17	15/16	17/18	16/17	15/16	17/18	15/16	14/15
Education & Commissioning		2	3	5	0	2	1	0	0	1	2	5	7
Targeted Services		41	29	26	7	13	11	2	4	8	50	46	45
Special Needs		2	2	5	1	1	1	0	0	2	3	3	8
Total		45	34	36	8	16	13	2	4	11	55	54	60
Total of overall Stage 1 outcomes, by percentage		82%	63%	60%	14%	30%	22%	4%	7%	18%			

Analysis: Managers and staff within service areas and the Complaints Team have worked towards a more balanced and open approach to complaints, where concerns from service users are recognised and receive appropriate responses. This includes the need to listen to complainants and adopt a less defensive approach when reflecting on practices and making decisions on the outcomes of each complaint.

This approach is evidenced in consideration of the complaints discussed above directly from young persons. Out of the five complaints, three were partially upheld providing a 60% rate of upholding elements of the complaints. This evidences not only a willingness to listen and carefully consider the wishes and feelings of young people by management, but also that young people are able to correctly be signposted to when they should escalate a complaint when they had such important concerns and issues to highlight.

Targeted Services has 41 non-uphold complaints out of a total of 45 complaints. This fits the ongoing trend that as a consequence of statutory duty to investigate safeguarding concerns around children, this can lead to some parents feeling that they have been negatively judged or that their interests are not being prioritised. As a result they raise complaints – not due to the quality of work or specific service issues.

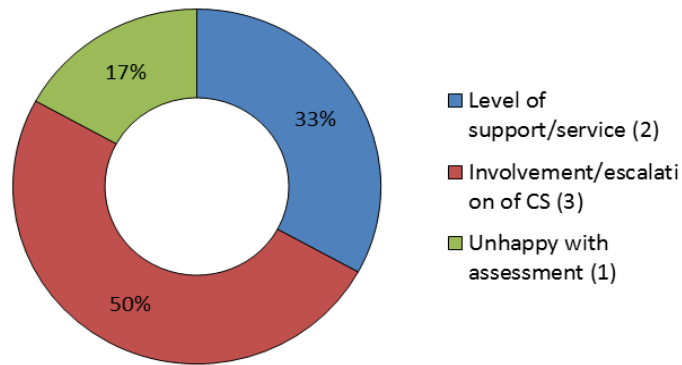
6	Stage 2 Complaints			
6.1	Percentage of Complaints escalating to Stage 2 (2017/18)			
	Table 8			
	Service	Stage 1	Stage 2	% escalation
	Education & Commissioning	3	1	33%
	Targeted Services	50	6	12%
	Special Needs	3	0	0%
	Total	56	7	12%
	<p>In general, escalation rates are at a relatively low level. Only 12% of Stage 1 complaints went on to be considered at Stage 2. The majority (six) of the seven Stage 2 complaints were for Targeted Services, which reflects the difficult statutory social work discussed above undertaken by the service.</p> <p>The Council informs all complainants of their right to escalate their complaints at each stage of the complaints process.</p>			
6.2	Escalations to stage 2 trend over time			
	Table 9			
	Service	Escalations to Stage 2		
		2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
	Education & Commissioning	0%	0%	33%
	Targeted Services	8%	13%	12%
	Special Needs	0%	33%	0%
	Total	6%	12%	12%
	<p>The escalation rate has remained the same as last year and is still low considering how straightforward it is for an individual to request a Stage 2 complaint and the challenging nature of Children's Services work.</p> <p>Also as the total number of Stage 1 complaints has decreased over the past three years, any change in Stage 2 numbers slightly skews the escalation rate when expressed as a percentage.</p>			

6.3	Stage 2 Outcomes 2017/18			
	Table 10			
	Service	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld
	Education & Commissioning	0	1	0
	Targeted Services	3	2	0
	Special Needs	0	0	0
	Total [Grand Total = 6]	3	3	0
	<p>During 2017/18 three Stage 2 complaints were not upheld and the remaining three complaints were only partially upheld. No cases were fully upheld. As 50% of the outcomes had some form of uphold, it evidences that cases with merit do tend to be escalated and that management are able to reconsider perspectives in light of the additional information or context provided by Stage 2 complaints.</p> <p>The summarised reasons for the partial upholds were (1) not correctly closing a case; (2) delay in allocation of a social worker and (3) the difficulty in arranging tuition.</p>			
6.4	Stage 2 Response Times of known outcomes			
	Table 11			
	Service	Within Timescale 2017/8 (2016/17)	Over Timescale 2017/18 (2016/17)	
	Education & Commissioning	1(0)	0(0)	
	Targeted Services	5(5)	0(1)	
	Special Needs	0(1)	0(0)	
	Total	6(6)	0(1)	
	<p>At Stage 2, there is more emphasis on thoroughness than speed. Nevertheless, all Stage 2 complaints were completed within timescale.</p>			

6.5 Stage 2: Nature of Complaints

Table 12

Nature of Stage 2 Complaints from Parents/Guardians and Relatives 2017/2018 (no Stage 2 Complaints from Young People)



Analysis: There were a minority of parents who remained unhappy beyond the Stage 1 response and resolution attempts. Half of the Stage 2 complaints focused on the parent’s dissatisfaction around the initial or continued involvement and escalation of Children’s Services within the family.

7 Stage 3 Complaints:

None (zero) of the six Stage 2 complaint outcomes escalated to Stage 3 during 2017/18 highlighting satisfaction with the outcomes of the Stage 2 response.

8 Ombudsman (LGO) Complaints

**8.1 Complaints made to the LGO
Table 13**

Service	No finding against Council	Partial finding	Total
Education and Commissioning	0	1	1

	The Council received one new complaint from the (LGO) which lead to an investigation during 2017/18. A partial finding was made against the Council for the delay in providing home tuition and not following parts of the EHC plan.				
9	Escalation comparison over time: Table 14				
		Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	LGO
	2017/18	56	7	0	1
	2016/17	54	7	0	2
	2015/16	63	4	1	0
	Analysis: The escalation between the complaints stages and LGO stage over the past three years has remained low despite having a clear method of escalation for complainants. This evidences effective early resolution meaning the vast majority of individuals have their complaints resolved at first official reply.				
10	Compensation/Reimbursement Payments:				
	There were no compensation awards offered by the Council in 2017/18 which was also the case during 2016/17.				
11	Mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution:				
	<p>During 2017/18 two potential Stage 2 complaints were resolved by the Complaints Team facilitating a meeting or mediation between complainants and Children’s Services. These were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with a parent regarding social worker conversations with his children while he was imprisoned to help him understand the level of sensitivity and managing the children’s emotional expectations. Due to the emotional complexity of this case, arranging a meeting was the best way for the parent to feel satisfied with the context of Children’s Services actions. • A parent who had arranged for finances to be passed to his family assisted by social worker for communication. A meeting was arranged to explain the process to the parent and allow him to bring in information to be clarified. <p>In addition, the Complaints Service regularly assists with ad hoc queries which may not come under our normal processes to ensure dispute resolution. Some examples of this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with a Councillor and grandparent to facilitate a correct understanding of the eligibility process of free childcare for young 				

	<p>children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advising Children’s Centre staff on how to deal with complaints with reference to issues with the building facilities and not their service • Arranging a conference call between a school and our Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub to discuss potential concerns around a parent and child raised via the Department for Education
12	Joint NHS and social care complaints
	During 2017/18 there were no complaint investigations carried out jointly between Harrow Council and NHS bodies.
13	Learning Lessons/Practice Improvements
	<p>Examples of lessons learnt/practice improvements include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that even in fast moving safeguarding cases that all appropriate actions are taken to update involved agencies and to close the case accordingly • To verify and check contact details received from other agency referrals against our own records to ensure the correct individual is contacted • When multi agency services are involved such as Health, more clearly explaining to parents the different responsibilities and remits of each service
14	Compliments
	<p>The majority of service users that compliment staff and the Council provide their feedback through verbal communication in care meetings or by phone. There were 10 written compliments sent to Children’s Services that were fed back to the Complaints Team during 2017/18 including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Further to our meeting earlier today, I wanted to put in writing the School’s appreciation for the support provided by Parmjit Chahal and her team over recent months. We worked closely together on an extremely sensitive and complex investigation towards the end of last year. Likewise, Parmjit has provided invaluable assistance on a series of other pastoral cases. [In reference to Children’s Access Services]</i> • <i>Good afternoon Mr. Hewitt,</i> <p><i>I wanted to contact you as my daughters and I have had the pleasure of being assigned D to support our family.</i></p>

Social services and social workers historically through the Media mainly have not been shown in a good light. And honestly some of the cases that have been reported you can see why. Children and families let down at times to the child/children's detriment. And so people build up a negative view. Me included until we met D (Harrow Social Worker).

I myself until recently had not had any personal dealings with Social services. So like many had a negative preconceived view on what they did, how they treated families and what their intentions were.

In February 2016 my girls and I had our first contact with Social services following an incident which resulted in me being rushed to A&E by ambulance during a rather stressful period.

D is warm friendly a wonderful example of what a social worker should be. She made me feel like she cared and wanted to help my family. She listened she saw past my mental health and the domestic abuse. Her approach to my girls was great they felt at ease and comfortable. I just thought someone should know what a great Social worker and person D is. And this should be highlighted as I'm sure she's touched other families lives and she has been a good last experience for my girls and I thanks to her.

She is a wonderful example of how all Social workers should be. And my family and I appreciate the work she has done with us and for us.

- *The Children's Guardian expressed being very pleased with the work of the two Harrow Social Workers who greatly assisted in a complicated and difficult court case.*
- *A Deputy Headteacher expressed she was found Safeguarding Training delivered by one of our LADO's to be extremely informative and delivered in a practical and inspiring way.*
- *We simply have to write to say how marvellous our social worker has been. Our son is 16 and autistic and has presented with very challenging behaviour in adolescence.*

Our social worker made a very prompt appointment with us as soon as we reported the crisis we were going through...she came quickly like the emergency services! She was very sympathetic and professional and spent such a lot of time with us late into the evening which we

really appreciated. Very thorough and seemed to understand the position very quickly and well. She wrote an amazing report - so detailed and had remembered everything - don't know how she did it! She managed to get us some additional support which has turned the situation around and made all the difference in the world. She knew exactly what was going to be appropriate and would work and looked at the needs of the family as a whole not just the child in distress. We now feel we can keep our son at home with us. So nice to have such a positive experience!

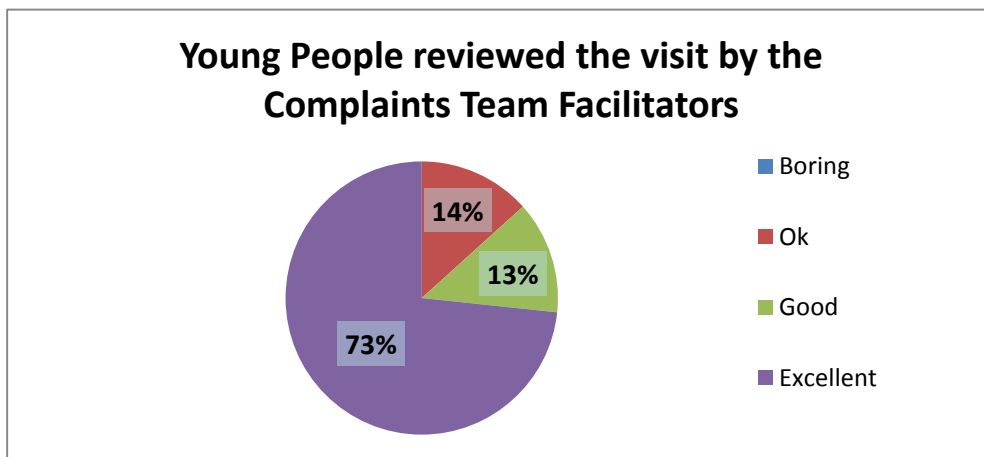
- *A solicitor representing a young person facing serious charges expressed his thanks for the “extra care and commitment” put into the case by the Youth Offending Team.*

15	Equalities Information		
15.1	Equalities Information – Stage 1 Complaints		
	Table 15	2017/18	2016/17
	Gender of Service User:		
	Male:	24 (44%)	31 (55%)
	Female:	30 (46%)	25 (45%)
	Analysis: No concerns noted		
	Table 16	2017/18	2016/17
	Ethnic Origin of Service User:		
	ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITISH		
	Afghani	1	
	Bangladeshi		1
	Indian	3	2
	Pakistani	1	2
	Sri Lankan	2	2
	Sri Lankan Tamil		
	Other Asian	9	2
	BLACK/BLACK BRITISH		
	African	4	4
	Caribbean	5	7
	Somali		
	Other Black	4	1
	OTHER ETHNIC GROUP		
	Arab		
	Chinese		
	Iranian		
	Iraqi		

	Kurdish		
	Lebanese		
	Other Ethnic Group		2
	MIXED		
	White & African	2	2
	White & Caribbean	1	5
	White & Asian	3	1
	Other Mixed	6	8
	WHITE		
	Albanian	1	
	British	7	8
	Irish		4
	Gypsy/Roma Traveller		
	Irish Traveller		
	Polish		
	Romanian		
	Serbian		
	Other White	5	
	PREFER NOT TO SAY/NOT KNOWN	2	3
	Table 17 Origin of Complaints	2017/18	2016/17
	Service User (Young Person)	4	2
	Parent/relative	49	47
	Advocate	3	4
	Solicitor	0	1
	Friend/other	0	0
	15.2 Equalities Information – Stage 2 Complaints		
	Table 18	2017/18	2016/17
	Gender of Service User:		
	Male:	4 (57%)	3 (43%)
	Female:	3 (43%)	4 (57%)
	Table 19	2017/18	2016/17
	Ethnic Origin of Service User:		
	Sri Lankan	1	
	African	1	
	Other Black		1
	Mixed Background - Other	1	2
	Other Asian		1
	Caribbean	1	1
	White British	1	1
	Unknown	2	1

	Total	7	7
	Table 20	2016/17	2016/17
	Origin of Complaints		
	Service User		
	Parent/relative	7	6
	Advocate		1
	Solicitor		

The Complaints Service also attended a Children and Young Persons Event on 22nd December 2017 arranged by our Quality Assurance and Service Improvement Department to further promote engagement with young people. Our service received the below feedback about how the young people felt about our discussions with them on encouraging them to engage with the complaints process when they would like to do so (16 young people were spoken to and surveyed).



16. The Complaints Process explained:

This report provides information about complaints made during the twelve months between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018 under the complaints and representations procedures established through the Representations Procedure (Children) Regulations 2006, and the Council’s corporate complaints procedure.

All timescales contained within this report are in working days. Text in quotation marks indicate direct quotations from the 2006 Regulations or Guidance unless otherwise specified.

16.1 What is a Complaint?

“An expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child or young person, which requires a response.”

However,

“The Children Act 1989 defines the representations procedure as being for ‘representations (including complaints)’.”

Therefore both representations and complaints should be managed under the complaints procedure (unlike for Adult social services, where only complaints need be captured).

16.2 Who can make a Complaint?

The child or young person receiving or eligible to receive services from the Council or their representative e.g. parent, relative, advocate, special guardian, foster carer, etc:

“The local authority has the discretion to decide whether or not the representative is suitable to act in this capacity or has sufficient interest in the child’s welfare.”

16.3 What the complaints team do:

- Letter-vetting
- Liaising with services to try resolve the issue informally
- Mediation
- Training
- Raising awareness / staff surgeries
- Learning facilitation and agreed actions monitoring
- Deliver a unique complaints support SLA to schools
- Advocacy commissioning and support

16.4 Stages of the Complaints Procedure

The complaints procedure has three stages:

Stage 1: This is the most important stage of the complaints procedure. The Service teams and external contractors providing services on our behalf are expected to resolve as many complaints as possible at this initial point.

The Council’s complaints procedure requires complaints at stage 1 to be responded to within ten working days (with an automatic extension to a further ten days where necessary).

Stage 2: This stage is implemented where the complainant is dissatisfied with the findings of stage 1. Stage 2 is an investigation conducted by an independent external Investigating Officer for all statutory complaints and an internal senior manager for corporate complaints. A senior manager adjudicates on the findings.

Under the Regulations, the aim is for stage 2 complaints falling within the social services statutory complaints procedures to be dealt within 25 days, although this can be extended to 65 days if complex.

Stage 3: The third stage of the complaints process is the Review Panel under the statutory procedure. Under the corporate complaints process, there is no Stage 3.

Where complainants wish to proceed with complaints about statutory Children's Services functions, the Council is required to establish a complaints Review Panel. The panel makes recommendations to the Corporate Director who then makes a decision on the complaint and any action to be taken. Complaints Review Panels are made up of three independent panellists. There are various timescales relating to stage 3 complaints. These include:

- setting up the Panel within 30 working days;
- producing the Panel's report within a further 5 working days; and
- producing the local authority's response within 15 working days.

Local Government Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is an independent body empowered to investigate where a Council's own investigations have not resolved the complaint.

The person making the complaint retains the right to approach the Local Government Ombudsman at any time. However, the Ombudsman's policy is to allow the local authority to consider the complaint and will refer the complaint back to the Council unless exceptional criteria are met.