

**REPORT FOR: PERFORMANCE AND
FINANCE SUB-
COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting: 13th December 2021

Subject: Adults Services Complaints Annual Report (social care only) 2020/21

Responsible Officer: Paul Hewitt, Corporate Director
People Services

Lead Member: Councillor Simon Brown

Exempt: No

Enclosures: None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the Adults Services Complaints Annual report (social care only) 2020/21.

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 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

- Build a Better Harrow
- Be More Business-like and Business Friendly
- **Protect the Most Vulnerable and Support 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: Report author: Usman Zia, Complaints Manager, Peoples Services, usman.zia@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

Annual Complaints Report for Adults Social Care Services 2020/21

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This year's report follows the first national lockdown following the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on how public services were provided and how organisations have had to adapt to ensure we are able to look after our most vulnerable and support families.

The priority of the directorate and the local authority at this difficult time was to ensure essential services continued to be delivered and as such resources were prioritised to ensure this. The Complaints Service contributed to this priority as will be explained in the COVID-19 section below in the report.

Despite the above, there were slightly higher contacts (207) actioned by the Complaints Service in 20/21 than in 19/20 (200).

These **207** "transactions¹" were made up of representations, formal complaints, member enquiries and referrals from the LGO. Given the nature of some of the work undertaken in ensuring care for very vulnerable individuals, it is positive that the numbers of complaints are so minimal. Thousands of service episodes are provided each year as is detailed below:

During 2020/21, the number of clients that received Long Term services was 4,238; whilst 407 clients received Short Term Reablement service and 2,337 clients received either Short Term (other) or on-going Low Level services. Please note that some service users may have been in receipt of two or more services during the year (i.e. a service user received Reablement which ended and then received Long Term services).

During 2020/21 Adults Social Care Services:

- *Received 7,985 requests for social care support from potential service users.*
- *Provided information and advice (including referrals to other organisations that could assist) to 755 clients.*
- *Ensured a total of 407 clients received home based short term Reablement services*
- *An additional 2,337 clients received other forms of short term support in response to their request, this included support like mental health counselling.*
- *A total of 4,238 clients received some form of long term support, which includes personal budgets, direct payments, residential and nursing care during the year. 2,991 of those clients were actively in receipt of such services on 31st March 2021.*
- *Assisted 539 carers during the year. This included 135 instances of information and advice, 324 direct payments to the carer and 81 temporary support packages delivered to the cared-for person (e.g. to give the carer a break from their caring responsibilities*

This report contains both positive messages and indications of areas needing more work through a challenging time.

¹ The total of representations, Stage 1, Stage 2, member enquires and LG Ombudsman referrals.

- Of particular note is the high level of representations (101) which are received as potential complaints but are attempted to be resolved informally. This made up most of our contacts and was not all negative in nature (some were service or information requests). This is significant in showing that the Council can listen to concerns expressed and practically work to internally resolve them. Whilst this is positive in terms of the citizen's experience because it focuses on resolving the issue rather than taking a citizen through formal "stages", it also endorses that early resolution is more cost effective for the Council by avoiding escalation with associated costs of any investigations. It provides a problem-solving focus rather than process focus.
- The number of Stage 1 complaints significantly fell but representations/informal requests increased. There was also a notable increase in MP/Councillor contacts that may also reflect the decrease in stage 1 complaints and shows that citizens turned to members through COVID to communicate their concerns.
- The relative escalation rate of complaints between formal Stage 1 and Stage 2 has remained relatively low at 25%. It should be noted that the amount of formal Stage 1 responses is initially very low (6) and only 2 cases went to formal Stage 2. This reflects the successful efforts made by officers to understand and address concerns when they arise as complaints and representations.
- Better quality resolution work has meant that fewer representations moved on to a Stage 1 complaint. There were far more representations (101 at initial contact plus 3 midway through process) than Stage 1 complaints (6) in 2020/21. This meant many cases were informally resolved ensuring an effective resolution for our citizens.

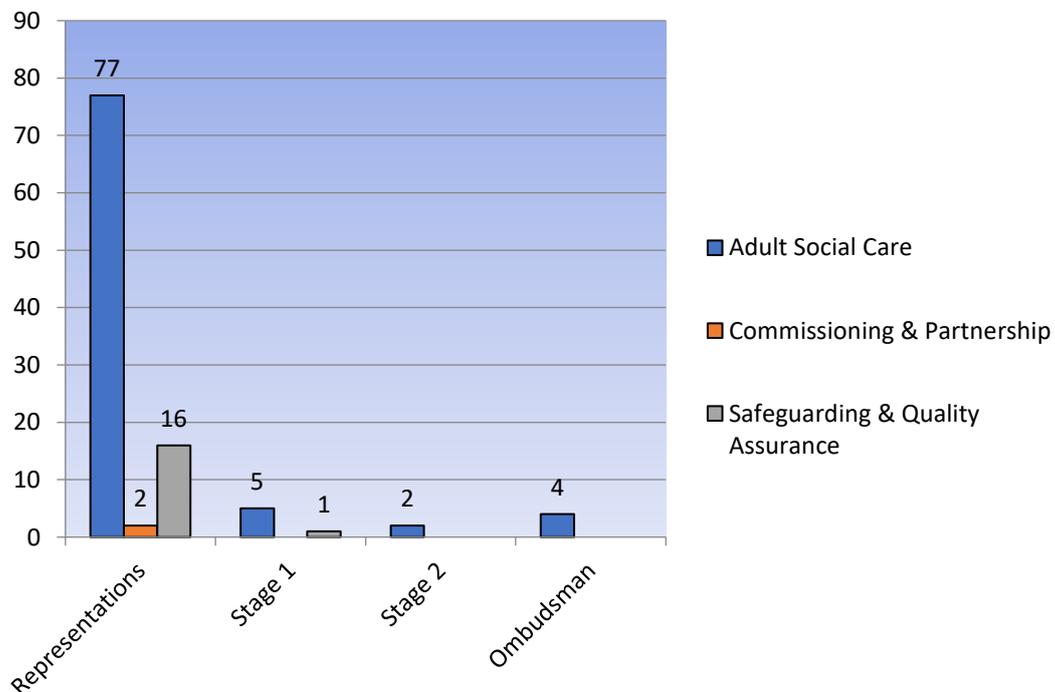
2. Summary of Activity

Between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 there was the following activity: -

- The Complaints Service dealt with 101 representations i.e. potential complaints that did not lead to a formal complaint investigation.
- The Council processed 6 Stage 1 complaints.
- Four complaints progressed to the second stage.
- The Ombudsman made decisions on four formal cases during this period

Additionally, there were 91 MP and Councillor enquiries managed by the Complaints Team (in comparison to 70 from the year before and 52 the year before that).

Chart 1: Number of Complaints by Service area: April 2020 to March 2021



Number of Complaint Transactions by Service area: April 2020 - March 2021

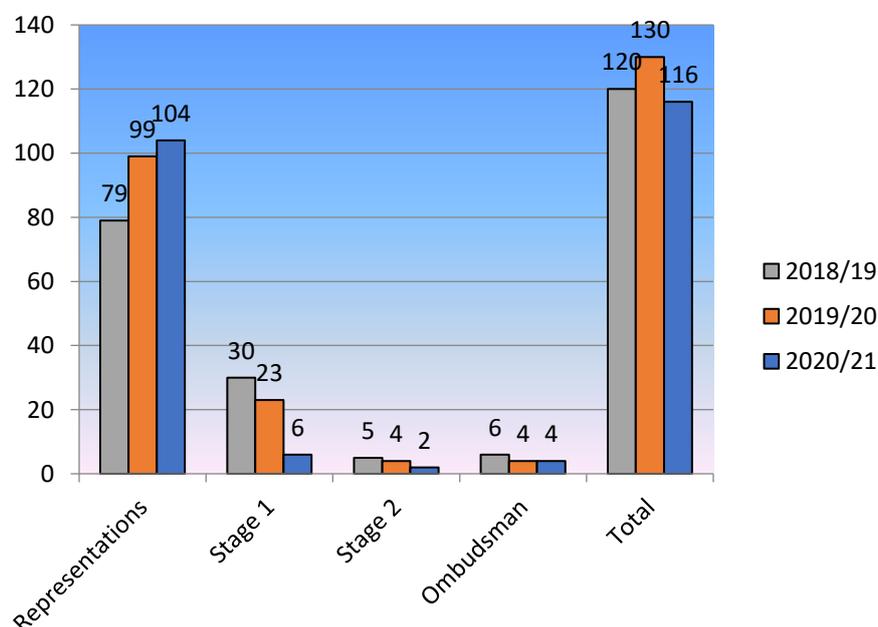
Service Area	Representations	Stage 1	Stage 2	Ombudsman	Total
Adult Social Care	77	5	2	4	88
Commissioning & Partnerships	2	0	0	0	2
Safeguarding & Quality Assurance	16	1	0	0	17
Total	95	6	2	4	107

Key message: Overall the picture suggests a continuation of high quality investigative and governance standards. Please note 9 representations were for other service areas outside of Peoples Directorate. However, the Complaints Service worked on these cases to ensure these were reviewed and actioned to ensure the citizens request was taken forward.

Analysis: This year there has been a significant decrease in the number of Stage 1 complaints, down by seven compared to 2018/19. This partially due to further shifting our focus following COVID-19 on ensuring services receive concerns and are supported internally by the Complaints Service in resolving this. This may be due to further efforts made to resolve issues informally. This is supported by the fact that representations and MP/Councillor enquiries have gone up while formal complaints have gone down.

There were just two formal Stage 2 complaints; this represents an escalation rate of only 3% of all initial contacts (representations and complaints).

2.1 Comparison of complaints over the last 3 years



	Representations	Stage 1	Stage 2	Ombudsman	Total
2020/21	104 (89%)	6 (18%)	2 (3%)	4 (3%)	116
2019/20	99 (76%)	23 (18%)	4 (3%)	4 (3%)	130
2018/19	79 (60%)	30 (33%)	5 (5%)	6 (2%)	120

Key message: Overall the picture suggests a continuation of ensuring issues can be referred and resolved without requiring the stage process.

Analysis: There was a slight decrease in the number of total complaints or 'transactions' in 2020/21 (116), compared to 2019/20 (130). However, this does not consider the increase in member queries which year on year places 2020/21 as the year with slightly higher transactions. Nevertheless, there was a larger number of representations which is a result of continual encouragement from the Complaints Service for managers and front line staff to approach the Complaints Service at the outset of an issue that has potential to become a formal complaint.

We do not believe that once an issue is raised as complaint or potential complaint that it should be passed around departments and reaches the Complaints Service to manage through a set stage-based process. Front line services should be encouraged to try and resolve issues, requests, and concerns at the earliest point as this can help restore trust that may have potentially been lost by involved citizens. The Complaints Service has made it clear we are here to support the services in resolving potential complaints and this approach ensures we have a directorate approach rather than Complaints Service approach as our end goal.

This is also beneficial for both citizens and staff as it allows additional guidance and potential for resolution by involving the Complaints Service at the first possible instance which is often more efficient than the formal process. Front line staff appear also to have greater awareness of the complaints service due to the collaborative work the complaints service encourages with all levels of staff.

3: Complaints Service contribution to the local authority COVID-19 response

The impact of COVID-19 both in the UK and globally meant an unprecedented level of response both at a local and national level to prevent the spread of the disease and to adapt how we work to ensure essential services could be delivered. This meant staff and services across the local authority acting on strategies to act as one council to support the above aim.

As such, the Complaints Service worked to help deliver the following in response to COVID-19 in 20/21:

- Assisting in co-ordinating the distribution of emergency PPE to frontline care services and care providers throughout the borough. This entailed reviewing daily PPE usage figures from care providers on a seven day a week basis approximately between the months of March to July/August 2020 (until PPE supply stabilised in the market). This meant we were pre-emptively ensuring PPE supply did not run low enough that core services could not be delivered. Following this period, we assisted in communicating with providers to ensure awareness of the government PPE portal for health and care services.
- Assisting with the co-ordination of Central Government returns to the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to ensure qualification COVID-19 funding for care services and providers within Harrow.
- Assisting with the co-ordination of data and multi-agency work in contributing to the national winter care plan initiative in 2020 to ensure COVID-19 contingency planning over winter.
- Ensuring care provider concerns were addressed and providing communication updates to care providers within Harrow so that they could more effectively and safely deliver care to our citizens.
- Assisting with the communications with respect to COVID-19 grant funding for care providers across the borough to ensure they received all eligible help from DHSC to ensure they are best placed to provide care to Harrow citizens.

4. Outcomes for key targets in 2020/21

In the previous annual report, the following were identified as key focus areas:

- To ensure that on time Stage 1 complaint response rates continue to exceed the local target of 85%
- To continue the core offer of training for front line staff and managers as well as schools on complaint handling
- To review the impact of COVID-19 with respect to social care complaints
- To continue to review and update complaints literature and communications as necessary.

Unfortunately, we were unable to reach the local target of 85%. The overall timeline score for formal responses this year was 75%. This was due in part to the formal response numbers being low and in running a limited service for a number of months and ensuring some of the key assistance above was provided as this impacted the immediate health and safety of the staff and citizens within the borough. The full Complaints Team were also not equipped with remote IT to enable full capacity for several months of the pandemic as remote IT was rightly prioritised for key workers first.

The offer of core training has been placed on hold throughout COVID-19 to ensure COVID-19 priorities could be addressed where possible. Some training has taken place in 21/22 thus far but we anticipate a full training schedule is provided in 22/23 across the directorate. The aim of this would be to further upskill directorate services to address citizens concerns and requests effectively and to a standard of good communication.

We have ensured we have adapted our services where possible to COVID-19 impact but ensuring a further focus on resolution-based work rather than process-based work which is evidenced by the numbers.

The website has been further updated and been using Microsoft Teams with staff and citizens to ensure we are still able to hold resolution meetings and allow fluid communication.

5. Focus for 2021/22:

- To improve Stage 1 complaint response rates to work towards the local target of 85%
- To continue the core offer of training for front line staff and managers. Where this is not possible ensuring these services are able to consult with the Complaints Service with difficult cases
- To continue to review the impact of COVID-19 with respect to social care complaints and use lessons learned to adapt and improve our service going forward
- To continue to review and update complaints literature and communications as necessary
- To continue the effort to work towards resolution and problem-solving work as opposed to process based work.

6. Stage 1 Complaints

6.1 Overall Activity

	Commissioning & Partnership	Adult Social Care	Safeguarding , & Quality Assurance	Total
2020/21	0	5	1	6
2019/20	0	21	2	23
2018/19	1	28	1	30

Analysis:

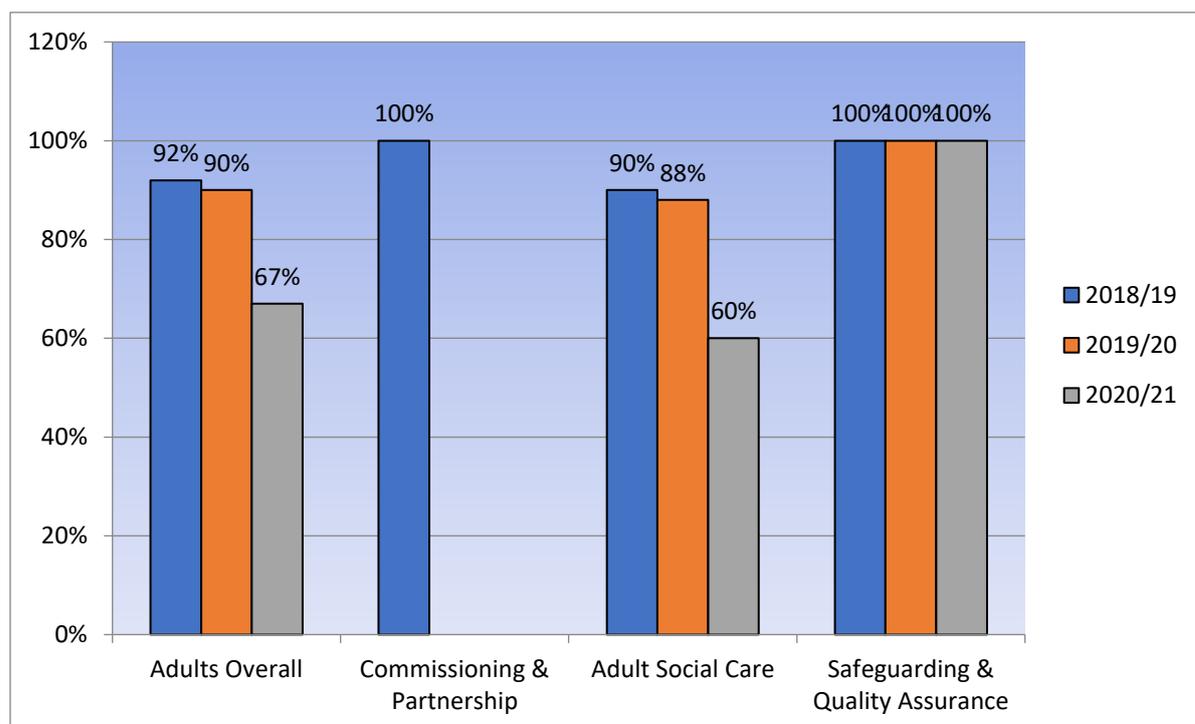
The number of Stage 1 complaints have continued to stay relatively low over the past three years. The reasons for this include:

- Better quality resolution work has meant that fewer representations moved on to Stage 1 complaints. There were significantly more representations (101) than formal Stage 1 complaints (6) in 2020/21.
- Support and consultation availability for front line staff to offer choice and control has resulted in a positive culture change throughout Adult Services, leading to higher levels of satisfaction leading to fewer complaints that escalate through the formal stages.

Adult Social Care, which manages all referrals for statutory services under the Care Act and contains the majority of the social work teams within Adults by the nature of the work will always receive the most complaints. Family members are very conscious and sensitive both to the level of care a loved one receives as well as the financial implications of Adult Social Care which is means tested.

COVID-19 also introduced several additional pressures around the care of our citizens. One example is due to lockdown, shielding and self-isolation initiatives family members may not have been able to see or provide care to their loved ones. This in turn likely raised the number of requests and concerns to ensure Adult Social Care was able to support rather than formal complaints about the service where an individual is concerned about receiving a formal stage based response rather than ensuring the delivery of a service or general support.

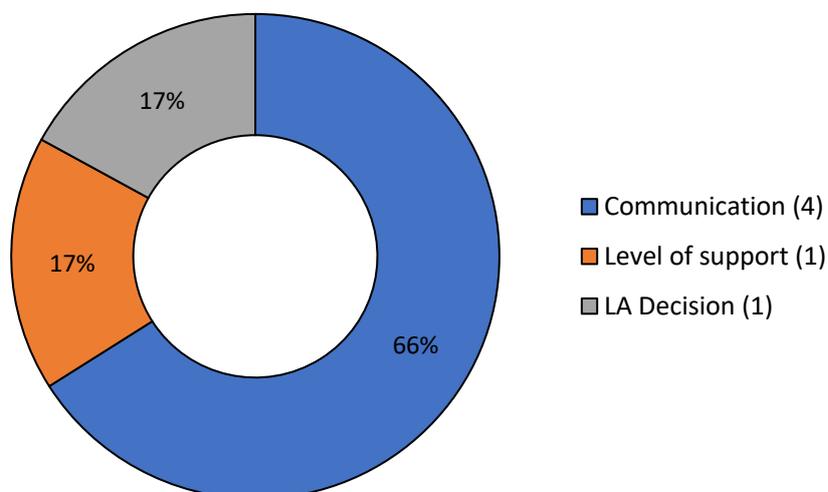
6.2 Stage 1 response times



Analysis: An explanation for the above is primarily covered in section 4 and the primary reason is COVID-19 pressures and priorities in addition to staff availability. This has been a challenge throughout the pandemic where a balance has always had to be struck between conclusion of formal processes and progressing representations. Formal responses require service and manager availability, approval/sign off and overall adherence to the requirements of formal procedures. These elements do take time and the Complaints Service has prioritised internal service awareness, support and actioning/responding to all representations where possible to seek agile and flexible solutions to problems and concerns raised as well as COVID-19 support work.

Nonetheless, the Complaints Service recognises that those who go through the formal process should receive their responses in a timely manner wherever possible. Where responses are provided outside of timelines, we do contact complainants and apologise and explain where possible.

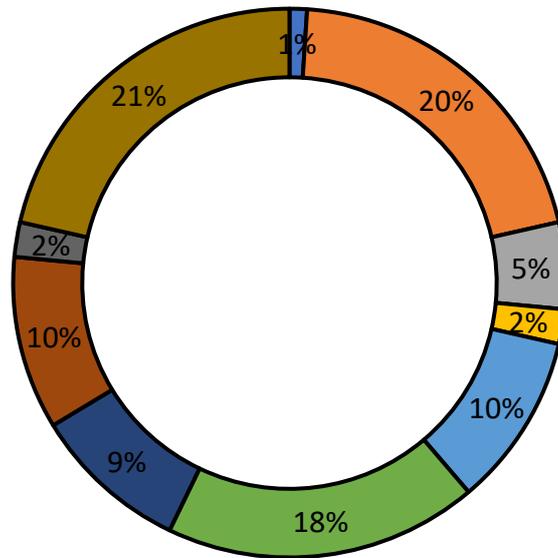
6.3 Nature of complaints – Stage 1



Analysis: Due to the low number of formal complaints, meaningful analysis is not possible. Communications are a key issue that mean despite all best efforts, a complaint may still escalate to a formal process. This is usually because of a breakdown or missing link in communications between the different internal social care teams that serve very different functions (e.g. care management and brokerage) or even with multi agency involvement such as with health.

However, to ensure we are able to meaningfully understand the underpinning reasons for why concerns or requests are raised to the attention of our service, we have analysed the nature of the representations made which provides a much larger pool of contacts.

6.4 Nature of representations



- Bias (1)
- Communication (20)
- Delays (6)
- Disagrees with service view (2)
- Financial Dispute (11)
- Information Request (18)
- LA/legal decision (9)
- Level of support (11)
- Placement/care provider issue (2)
- Service Request (21)

Examples of complaints by category:	2020/21 examples
Bias	In a safeguarding investigation where family members have an internal dispute, feeling that the safeguarding service were biased towards a side of the family
Communication	<p>Didn't like how they were spoken about by social care staff in an email</p> <p>Did not feel financial information was explained clearly enough</p>
Delays	Unhappy with timeline for adaptations process

<p>Disagrees with service view</p>	<p>Delay in payments being made</p> <p>Unhappy that safeguarding service did not substantiate the allegations they had raised</p>
<p>Financial Dispute</p>	<p>Receiving invoices for payment against estate after six-month probate period</p> <p>Disputing care charges as being higher than care received</p>
<p>Information Request</p>	<p>Requesting copies of care invoices</p> <p>Clarifying grant of probate responsibilities</p>
<p>LA/legal decision</p>	<p>Not transferring care to other local authority/Ordinary Residence</p> <p>Account has been frozen/restricted</p>
<p>Level of support</p>	<p>Wants different types of meals delivered</p> <p>Wants an increased packaged of care</p>
<p>Placement/care provider issue</p>	<p>Missing items from placement</p> <p>Unhappy with care provider</p>
<p>Service Request</p>	<p>Help with funeral arrangements and property dispersal</p> <p>Request for OT assessment</p> <p>Proving food parcels and COVID support</p>

Analysis: The complaint categories that held the greatest numbers tended to reflect:

- *the information and procedural complexities of the assessing and charging of social care and how this may require significant management of expectations and journey signposting*
- *facing the financial implications of means tested care*
- *disagreement with the level of support that social care determines meets Care Act needs.*

These are understandable points to raise through the formal complaints' procedure. Every citizen goes through life with at least some exposure to the National Health Service and this experience can catch many families off guard when they first interact with social care when care needs arise in addition to health needs.

Family preferences are important but this a balance every family may come across when the financial implications of preference and top up/contributions etc. are realised.

COVID-19 also introduced additional expectations from families and individuals with respect to delivering care and support to those who were shielding or vulnerable and this appeared to raise anxiety within some families.

In addition, there were high numbers in several categories of representations which are not necessarily negative or potential complaints in nature. These were information requests and service requests where the individual was seeking support, services, or guidance.

The Complaints Service continually feedback trends and lessons learned from complaints to Heads of Service and managers to ensure the impact of the above can be lessened. Given how many families interact with Adult Social Care services it is positive that so few of these interactions result in formal complaints despite the above.

6.5 Complaints outcomes

Service	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Total
Adult Social Care	3	1	1	5
Commissioning & Partnership	0	0	0	0
Safeguarding & Quality Assurance	1	0	0	1
2020/21	4 (66%)	1 (17%)	1 (17%)	6
2019/20	16 (70%)	5 (21%)	2 (9%)	23
2018/19	18 (60%)	7 (23%)	5 (17%)	30

Key message: Managers and staff within service areas and the complaints team have worked towards a more balanced and open approach to complaints, where concerns from citizens 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.

Approximately a third of the Stage 1 complaints had some element upheld showing a willingness to improve services and provide suitable remedies and solutions for people who have rightfully raised a concern and had it suitably addressed. As upheld cases usually would have an action or learning point to follow the complaint, an update or meeting would take place with the relevant Head of Service or Director to ensure these were progressed.

For the complaints where the overall outcome is non-upheld, the Complaints Service ensures these responses are helpful in explaining the rationale and reasoning behind the key issues so that citizens can find these responses of value and help regardless of the outcome.

When outcomes are communicated with respect to informal complaints/representations, we also ensure responsibility is taken with respect to anything that may not have gone as expected or to the expected standard and assurances are provided about what is being done to resolve the issues as well as learning for the future were appropriate.

7. Stage 2 complaints

7.1 Stage 2 complaint numbers and escalation rates

Service	Stage 1	Stage 2	% escalating to formal complaints
2020/21	6	2	33%
2019/20	23	4	17%
2018/19	30	5	17%

Analysis: There were two Stage 2 complaints in 20/21, compared to four for last year. The escalation rate remains very low and while percentage wise it is higher at 33%, the actual number shows a low escalation rate the Stage 2 formal process.

Factors for this low escalation include the efforts made by the Complaints Service, Managers and Social Work Team in working to directly resolve concerns via interventions such as arranging call-backs, communication direct from the service, arranging meetings and discussing strategies to allow an active resolution rather than having these actions occur through the end process of arranging a formal letter. These resolution meetings have been helpful to resolve issues and have continued post COVID-19 via MS Teams or over the telephone to ensure health and safety.

7.2 Stage 2 Complaints and outcomes

Service	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Total
2020/21	1	1	0	2
2019/20	3	1	0	4
2018/19	4	1	0	5

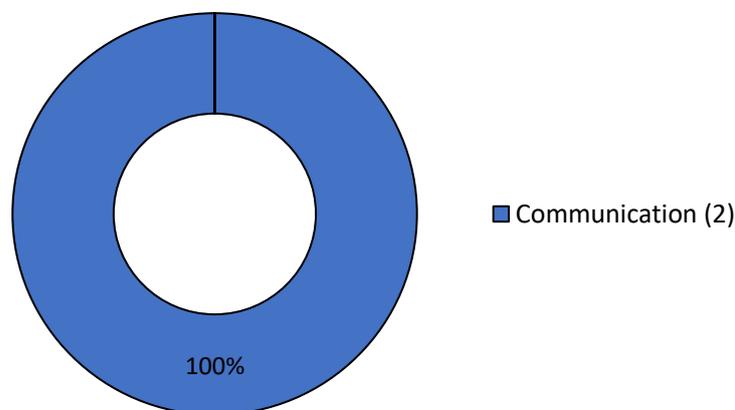
The complaint outcomes are discussed in 7.4 Nature of Complaints

7.3 Stage 2 Response Times

Year	Within time	Over timescale	Total
2020/21	1	1	2
2019/20	3	1	4
2018/19	5	0	5

One Stage 2 complaint response was delayed due the pressures discussed earlier in this report. Apologies were provided.

7.4 Nature of complaints



Analysis: One of the two complaints at Stage 2 was partially upheld. A summary of these complaints are:

- Unhappy that a member of staff spoken to on the phone did not resolve a debt recovery query
- Family was unhappy with the level and responsiveness of involved social worker

The first complaint found that the member of staff had given appropriate advice as this individual did not work in debt recovery.

In such circumstances where care costs can be high and their care can impact every aspect of everyday life (such as in a placement), it is understandable that family members may wish to explore every available avenue to lessen the impact of these – hence why Stage 2 can be requested in cases where there was no fault found in the original Stage 1 determination.

The second was partially upheld as while a significant effort was made to assist the family, the clarity in the communications could have been better.

Please note that there is no Stage 3 complaint stage under Adults.

Context: The removal of review panels makes it more likely complaints will escalate to the Ombudsman, meaning it becomes even more imperative that errors are identified at an early stage and robust remedial action is taken.

9. Ombudsman complaints and enquiries

Service	No finding against Council	Finding against Council	Total
Adult Social Care	1	3	4
Commissioning and Partnership	0	0	0
Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	0	0	0

Analysis: There were four complaints concluded with the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) during 2020/21. Two of these complaints were initially raised in 2019/20. However, they were only able to be concluded beyond March 31st 2020. The primary reason for this was due to COVID-19 the LGO was not operating/accepting complaints approx. between the period of March to June 2020.

Due to this, two of these complaints had an initial decision by the LGO in 19/20 and these were discussed in last year's report but were only able to be concluded in 20/21.

The LGO had partial findings against the Council and/or partner agencies, these were:

- With respect to the local authority, CCG and the involved care home there were findings with respect to delays in providing equipment as well as confusion over funding.
- Journey through social care and relevant pathway not being clear and well explained.
- Unreasonable delays in sending out invoices for care costs as well as how the financial situation was communicated

With the fourth complaint which was in reference to requesting repairs within the bathroom of a property, the LGO found no fault from the Council as the complainant was informed of their rights under a landlord/Housing Association and were signposted accordingly.

10. Escalation Comparisons via LGO findings over time

Service	No finding against Council	Finding against Council	Total
2020-21	1	3	4
2019-20	0	4	4
2018-19	3	2	5

Analysis: The rate of escalation between Stage 1 and Stage 2 has remained in single figures in recent years and the number of LGO complaints concluded within the year has remained low also. For context, 2020-21 figures from the LGO show that they received 11,830 complaints and enquiries and of these, 4 were received by the council as detailed investigations within Adult Social Care.

11. Remedy Payments

A payment would usually be termed as a “remedy payment” when it is made in line with the LGO guidance on Remedy Payments.

In line with this, of the four complaints considered by the Ombudsmen, the local authority was asked to arrange the following remedy payments in line with LGO guidance in 2020/21. These were:

- £200 for the impact of delays in providing equipment
- £100 to acknowledge any trouble and distress experienced
- £200 for time and trouble (has already been proposed by the council at Stage 2 and LGO agreed with this proposal)
- £100 for time and trouble

The Complaints Service often refers to the LGO guidance on Remedy Payments to keep in mind what is fair as a resolution to try and resolve matters. This is why in one of these cases the LGO agreed with our findings. The goal with any complaint or request received within the service is to try and find a fair resolution and this aim is kept in mind from start to end whether or it may refer to something like an apology, an action within a service or in very rare cases, a remedy payment.

12. Mediation

At times, the Complaints Service will facilitate mediation meetings between parties to resolve more complex situations where a direct remedy is best found by the Complaints Service actively mediating and facilitating mediation and resolution.

In previous years, these were held at the Civic in most cases. Due to COVID-19 and ensuring we have robust remote technology; we are now able to use Microsoft Teams to continue the trend of offering and chairing resolution meetings. These allow face to face conversations and nuances on both sides and can be acknowledged to allow a more productive and human interaction to take place. It is positive news that we can now do this and present a more convenient option to citizens whereas previously they would have had to make time to attend a physical appointment.

Some examples of these are:

- *Arranging calls and meetings for a concerned family member with respect to ensuring a streamlined level of communication from involved social care, health and education colleagues. The relevant Assistant Director at the time attended these meetings with the Complaints Service to ensure understanding of the issues raised and assurance that communication would be improved via a named worker at the council co-ordinating communications*
- *Assisting an individual with concerns they had with respect to their property and access to it as well as their benefits applications. The Complaints Service arranged calls with this individual and the relevant services to progress these matters*
- *Working with CNWL to try and implement strategies and communication with the advocate of an individual to resolve their outstanding Care Act queries and support requests*
- *Mediating conversations between a citizen and our billing services to resolve the matter of a historic outstanding debt of several years. The Complaints Service sought the information required from relevant services and fed back to the individual to clarify exact what these charges were for. The debt was paid as a result of these actions and the individual was satisfied with the mediation and intervention from the service.*

13. Joint NHS and Social Care Complaints

There were two joint NHS and Social Care complaints in this year. In both these cases, health led on the responses and as such our service provided a response to ensure the social care perspective could be represented in their communications. A summary of these complaints:

- Unhappy that father did not receive CCG funding
- Unhappy with assessed contributions via financial assessment and care from health

14. Learning Lessons/Practice Improvements

- Staff were reminded that when discussing their professional's views with each other over email, that respectful and sensitive language is always used as otherwise this can break down trust between citizens and care staff.
- Senior staff alerted that staff may need further upskills and assurance on explaining their professional views with confidence even when challenged on difficult issues. This is because if challenging conversations are not addressed fully at the earliest point, the expectations of families may not be correctly managed, and communication may be stifled as a result.
- This may have been furthered by COVID-19 where difficult decisions had to be made to limit/close certain in person services and concerns around these would be directed at front line staff. One of the training modules planned to be offered to Adults Social Care teams is key skills and strategies on how to have difficult conversations and as such we should see improvements in this area.
- The communication of financial contribution and charging of care remains a persistent area of learning. This is one that is a long-term project where continual feedback is provided to senior management on how to change our communication journey and level of detail with respect to managing expectations around social care means testing and charging.
- Following from this, care based work on ensuring an individual's day to day care needs are met often doesn't mesh hand in hand with the colder nature of financial calculations, payments and invoicing and the we are aiming to try and bridge this gap with annual reviews of our finance communications and ensuring expectations are managed throughout the care journey.

15. Compliments

The majority of service users, external agencies, and organisations that compliment staff and the Council provide their feedback through verbal communication in care meetings or by phone.

However, both professionals as well as families who use our services do write in to let us know their positive feedback and experiences. The below is correspondence received in 2020/21 and in total the below evidences how the community felt about the work carried out by Adult Social Care throughout COVID-19

1. *Hello C,*

It has been a while since I last needed to contact you. We have found you to always be supportive and empathetic towards my dads needs.

Pls acknowledge when you receive this email C as I would also like to say a special thank you to you. We came back to you on many occasions and you were patient, sympathetic and quick to sort out any issues. As a family we are grateful to you also.

2. *To whom it may concern,*

I just want to say thank you to A for being so amazing once again. She has been there for me ever since I lost my sight back in 2013 when I was 18, helping me get back on my feet. And now she has helped me secure funding through charitable grants so that I can purchase technology that is able to help me partially see again.

If it wasn't for A, helping me out by applying to the charities and writing up a personal statement and sending off the applications, I would not have managed to raise the necessary funds to buy this life-saving equipment.

Thank you so much again A

I really appreciate it.

3. *On behalf of all service users, families and staff, I would like to say a big thank you for all the support you are providing to all of us at this very difficult time, they are immensely appreciated.*

4. *I spoke with L on the Covid19 Helpline (I was calling from the National Safeguarding Helpline) and I just wanted to say how incredibly efficient and helpful she was. Thank you :-)*

5. *Hello to the kindest, caring, understanding, helpful, stress relieving, calming 'strangers'(LOL), I think I have ever spoken to. The suggestions and information you gave me over the phone when you called yesterday was invaluable. and...WE HAVE FOOD. I think most guys would say that 'food' shopping ' is one of their 'most hated things to do and probably close to house work and washing up.*

So thank you so very much.
No mistakes, nothing missed. To me, it was like a 'high level Military Stealth operation.'
Mission Drive to Address. Collect shopping list. Drive to supermarket to collect items. Pay for them. Drive to item 'drop-off'. Exchange items for money and go go go! 😊 lol..
Thank you both so very much I know that you are not even living nearby to me and what you did made a big difference

6. *Good morning, I know the placement had by then passed over to the palliative care team, but I won't forget your efforts up to that point. I want to thank you sincerely for your support and all of the hard work you put in to help my mother and me as I struggled to find appropriate care solutions for her. as I have often told you: you live up to your name*
7. *Hi J I just wanted to let you know that the recliner was delivered to D and it is absolutely the perfect size and D loves the chair and is so comfortable in it. It has made a huge difference to how her posture is in the chair. Thank you so much for all that you have done to organise this we are so grateful.*
8. *I just wanted you to know that the boiler has now been installed and working well and so we do not need the heaters anymore. We would like to say a big thank you for the fast way in which you reacted to our situation, it is reassuring to know that we can rely upon you when we have to.*
9. *Thank you for calling this afternoon on behalf of C to see how we are doing as a family and G in particular. As I mentioned just now, it has been a stressful period and G's anxiety is much higher because of all the changes. However we have felt supported by his school and by his Behaviour Consultant to manage his anxiety and I have been very impressed by the fact that we have had periodic phone calls from CYADS to see how we are doing and if we need help in some way. I think your department is doing a fabulous job at reaching out to families like ours during what is a stressful time for everyone. It is also really heartening to see how much you work as a team, so that you helped out by calling me today even though it is not your usual role. ;-)* Thank you. *Please would you pass this email on to your Head of Service,, who I have met at parent events; and I could see he took engagement with parents seriously. I think it's important for a service to know when it is getting things right. :-)*
10. *I just would like to say a big thank you to Y and P for their ongoing support throughout this pandemic. They have been exceptional in supporting the home through this pandemic day by day.*

11. *During this lockdown period, I have been contacting service users from Dementia HUB on a regular basis to ensure continuity of service. This entails finding out their preference in music, researching their favourite songs and singing it back to them through the video link. On some occasions, I have composed my own songs relating to their interests and performing it. I have had such positive feedback from the clients and their carers. They are grateful that we still keep in touch with them during this enforced isolation and bringing smile to their faces. With their positive feedback, it gives me further enthusiasm to continually explore ways to provide a service that could be personal to them.*
12. *I am writing to thank you for the delivery of a goodie bag of sweets and crisps to us carers in Harrow. It was a nice surprise and helped to cheer us up. Fortunately we were at home when it was delivered, so the courier explained what it was. My friend was not so lucky. She was out when it came, so the courier left it hanging on her door handle. As there was no note or card to say who it was for or from, she assumed it was meant for the children next door, and so she gave it to her neighbours*
13. *Well organised and just the right amount of activities for service users*
14. *Pleasure to be part of the club, fun to play games, we are very thankful for the support and for still being in touch with us during lockdown*
15. *A is very passionate about her work, she is a good listener to what you ask of her. She is dedicated to her job and does it with a passion.*
16. *We are very thankful for how you have transformed her Tuesday afternoons – thank you ever so much, she really enjoys her time.*
17. *You have called us practically every day even when you were under the weather. Thank you so much.*
18. *We are very happy about the activities at the dementia hub*
19. *A I would describe you as an angel. Totally dedicated to the work, you go many steps beyond your call of duty. You give so much inspiration and motivation to dementia patients. Bless you*
20. *I felt compelled to write to you and share with you our thanks and gratitude for the support, guidance and faultless care we received under*

the management of J. Sadly my Father; was taken ill and due to COVID-19 we had to engage 111. I am a cancer patient and am shielding as well as living some 3.5 hours drive away from my Father. J contacted me by phone and her relentless efficiency, dedication and heart felt care for my Fathers care and liberty has been nothing other than first class. J organised all immediate required care and started the process to seek a ground floor accommodation as he currently lives on a second floor with 30 steep stairs and no lift. Subsequently, last week my Father was re-admitted to hospital and his care now falls under the NHS, however, I wanted you to know the positive difference J provided to myself and Father and enabled us to deal with the situation in a manner which was made much easier by her dedication and quality of understanding. I shall always proudly 'clap' for J and the caring management she provided. Lastly, I would like to thank you and your extended team for all you do for the citizens of your local communities, your service and care is often unseen, however, you are the true foundation of what being human should be all about. Thank you and please, please continue because the world needs you all.

21. We are thankful and grateful to you to provide us with good and healthy food supply

22. We can only thank and congratulate you, you have a superb member of staff in M.

My involvement with M who was dealing with my parents, only started on the 21st July. Despite me being extremely cautious, as her call had come 'out of the blue' she was extremely polite, professional and quickly won my confidence. The subject matter was extremely urgent as it became clear that my parents were no longer able to look after themselves and that imminent action was planned. M had taken time to understand my parents and the closeness of their relationship and it was clear that she wanted to explore all alternatives before action was enforced.

It appears that our, my wife and my, desire for my parents to move in to our house had not been communicated by my parents, or brother. I had been led to believe that this had been documented in the medical records, but it was clear that if so this also had not been communicated to the team involved. M became aware of my existence and acted on this discovering an alternative option was available. Over the next three days we had several telephone calls when it was very clear that M was fighting hard for the alternative plan to be allowed to be put into place.

Without doubt action was required to be taken, but I am certain that the action that was planned would have ended very badly. Both my parents would have been deeply distressed to have been separated from each other and the quality of their lives destroyed, probably resulting in the death of one or both of them within relatively short time scales.

With hindsight it is easy to see just what M's bravery in standing up and fighting until all alternatives had been fully explored has achieved. My parents are different people. They now live with us and with shared care, they are both sleeping well, eating well and already looking far fitter than when we collected them. We believe that as they are no longer under stress they have responded well and my mother is exhibiting far fewer symptoms of dementia than we had previously seen. Whilst her dementia is still there, she has long periods where she is fully aware of and involved with those around her. None of this would have been possible without M's involvement in this case and her determination to explore all options.

In short you have a great member of staff on your team, who in this instance has probably saved two lives. Lives that are now being lived out with a quality that M believed was possible despite the views of others, including others in my family.

I have spoken to M several times since we returned and she has continued to be very supportive of both us and my parents. In a very short space of time it feels that M has become a friend, which is perhaps one of the biggest compliments we can give, particularly as this has been a very challenging time for all and we can't thank her enough.

As I started this note - thank you, you have a superb member of staff working for you.

23. I would like to thank social services in Harrow council. They helped make our life better. Specially thanks to social worker L who handle my case very nicely. She understand my situation without explain every time. For her help we overcome from this situation. Thanks

24. We would like to confirm that we have been working together with S and M and that we have good working relationship, they show professionalism and patience with the current difficulties we are experiencing , I believe they understand the complex and challenging nature of the problems my brother and I are enduring in protecting our fathers placement and well being .

25. Amazing service, very professional , great information provide. very kind and considerate to the needs of an elderly person.

26. I just wanted to say thank you for working with me and ensuring D now has the care and support she needs for her current care needs. I wish you all the best for the future and who knows our paths may cross again.

27. Just a note to say how pleased I have been with the support V has given to us in relation to the care of my mother. She really is excellent and worthy of your service. She always deals with issues promptly and

efficiently and takes the time to ensure things are done properly. A real credit to your service! Please pass on my compliments.

28. A has been extremely helpful and professional in dealing with F's care and wellbeing, I am so impressed with not only her fantastic people skills, she has quickly dealt with some most urgent problems, always keeping me informed as what has been put in place. F has been very isolated this past year, not just the Covid, it seems she had no mental health support in place, it has been quickly dealt with by A, along with her care plan being looked at. I have been so impressed with the background work A is doing to put F's care and mental health in place. I live in M, so I haven't been able to visit since last February, and greatly appreciate all the help A and your department are giving My Sister.

29. Thank you for your time, effort and additional help for my mother. I know you have served outside your assigned responsibilities and I am grateful for that. Be assured I will continue to discuss, assess and continue to monitor my mother's needs with her and family and friends, who are able to visit in person. And it was nice putting a face to a name and her face on phone! 😊. Thanks

30. I have been meaning to write to compliment Harrow on the provision of carers to assist me temporarily in showering/dressing in Nov 2019 following my knee operation (and also two years prior to that on the other knee). In all dealings with every one of your personnel, they were extremely professional and courteous. This also extended to the carers who came in to assist me. A belated thank you.

31. I am pleased to inform you that Mrs K is starting to feel much better. She really appreciates the support provided with AQF agency and how quickly this was set up. I have explained that without your input I would not have known that some agencies could support families who had the virus so it was very much a team effort!

32. I would like to thank Harrow Council social care worker S for all the efforts she put to help me with JS. JS came back home from TS Home Care and currently I'm looking after her. She is my friend. S was in touch on the daily basis asking how J is doing how I'm doing, she gave me instructions if J or I will need help. She is super helpful and I know I can be in touch with her any time. I'm so happy that so is the social worker involved in J's case as I could not ask for a better person to help. I wish more people like S could work as a social worker. She is really friendly, caring and involved in elderly people's life. Thank you again.

33. Dear Sirs, please ignore my email below. It was my mistake and I will be making the payment for my mother. I would like to convey my

appreciation of your staff member Mr H's patience and courtesy when I spoke to him about this matter. Kind regards

34. I just wanted to Thank You for all your help and support regarding my dad.

I also like to let you know dad is going to be discharged from hospital this afternoon. He was due to be home yesterday but from what i understand the hospital were rushing into sending him home. In the process they missed out on arranging District Nurse visit. Now everything (i.e. D/N, cares, equipments) is in place for dad when he comes home. Once again i really appreciate your help, specially in the current situation you went out of your way to suport me.

35. I specifically want to thank you Q, and all in brokerage for making our partnership a positive one. I would also like to inform you, that your exceptional work ethic and support has not gone unnoticed. I have really appreciated the time you took to listen and to give sound advice where needed, which made all the challenges of working with families coupled with the pandemic during 2020 endureable. Although there were times when things got a bit hairy with some difficult service users, mainly family, we stuck it out and continued to offer care and support at the highest standard according to needs and in line with the expectation of Harrow Adult Social Care Services.

36. I would just like to say a big thank you to all the people involved in the vaccination programme on Saturday 16th J at Byron Hall. My 93 year old mother had her jab there, along with one of her carers. The staff were all so nice, we look forward to the second visit in March

37. I had the pleasure of speaking with a Lady called F, I would like her supervisors to be made aware on how professional, kind, considerate she was in dealing with me whilst arranging care for my Mother. We also spoke about getting care arranged for my dad, but this was not possible due to him being in hospital. F asked questions in a very kind manor and was able to get the best care package for my mother whilst trying to give my mother her independence. I am extremely grateful for on her phone calls which kept me up to date and how professional she was. It was actually a pleasure speaking to her in getting this sensitive issue dealt with. Please pass this to her line manager and please make this lady aware on how she made my decision more bearable.

38. Dear F, Following your review of R's needs this morning, I would like you to know that I do appreciate the time you took to go through his file. I learned more from you this morning than I have in my 53 years as a full time carer. Thank you.

16. The Complaints Process explained

All timescales contained within this report are in working days.

16.1 What is a Complaint?

An expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about the actions, decisions or apparent failings of a local authority's adult's social services provision which requires a response.

16.2 Who can make a Complaint?

(a) a person who receives or has received services from the Council; or
(b) a person who is affected, or likely to be affected, by the action, omission or decision of the Council.

16.3 Stages of the Complaints Procedure

From April 2009, regulations removed the traditional 3 Stage complaints procedure for statutory complaints, replacing it with a duty to provide a senior manager sign-off to every complaint response. The Council is expected to negotiate with the complainant how their complaint should be managed, including agreeing a timescale. If a verbal issue can be resolved by the end of the next working day, the regulations state this does not need to be recorded as a complaint.

Many complainants prefer a defined process and prefer to rely on the Council to identify a process to manage their complaint. To assist such complainants the Council produced a model procedure which complainants can use if they prefer. It is also used where complainants cannot be contacted to discuss how they want their complaint managed. Complainants are always advised in writing of their right to agree a different process if they prefer.

The stages of the Model procedure:

1) Stage 1 investigation

Timescale: 15 working days. 20 working days for complex

2) Mediation (optional)

3) Stage 2 investigation

Timescale: 20 working days. 65 working days if complex e.g. requiring independent investigation.

It is important to emphasise that these stages are very fluid, so it is not uncommon to go immediately now to mediation or independent investigation.

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.

15.4 What the complaints team do

- Letter-vetting
- Liaising with services to try resolve the issue informally
- Mediation
- Training
- Surgeries/raising awareness
- Learning identification and agreed actions monitoring
- Advocacy identification
- Chasing complaint responses

Note: Previous years had some limited gender and race data at the end of the report based on complainants. However, as the data set was so small, this data could not reasonably provide any meaningful interpretation and the importance of equality and diversity is such that only meaningful consideration should be applied.

The Complaints Service will consult with our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Service on an ongoing basis when any relevant queries or concerns are raised to ensure this is always considered as a priority.