

## LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

<b>Meeting:</b>	Health & Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee
<b>Date:</b>	18 September 2003
<b>Subject:</b>	Statutory Annual Report on Social Services' Complaints Procedures – 2002-2003
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	Acting Chief Social Services Officer
<b>Relevant Portfolio Holder:</b>	Social Services
<b>Status:</b>	Part 1
<b>Ward:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Enclosures:</b>	Annual Report of the Complaint Procedures 2002-2003

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### **Additional Information:**

**Comparative data on Social Services complaints in 2002-03 in neighbouring authorities is attached, as requested by Members.**

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## COMPARATIVE DATA ON SOCIAL SERVICES COMPLAINTS IN 2002-03 IN NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITIES

### 1. Informal Complaints – Stage 1

The differing recording policy and practices within local authorities mean that comparative data for informal complaints is not available.

### 2. Formal Complaints – Stage 2 and Stage 3

Data for Harrow and three neighbouring authorities for 2002-03 is shown in the table below.

Authority	Formal Complaints –Stage 2		Review Panel –Stage 3	
	Children Act	Community Care Act	Children Act	Community Care Act
<b>Harrow</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Brent	9	18	1	4
Barnet	5	7	2	3
Hillingdon	3	7	0	2

Data for previous years for Harrow is shown in the main report – paragraph 4.3. Unfortunately it has only been possible at short notice, to obtain data from neighbouring authorities for a single year - 2002-03. The authorities advise that the total number of complaints registered each year generally remains fairly constant and that for most years complaints are generally fairly equally divided between Children and Community Care services. There are however, years when figures rise or fall, for a variety of reasons, with corresponding adjustment in following years, and this should be borne in mind.

Care also needs to be taken when comparing numbers of complaints registered across other authorities. Differences in the following, for example, may all have an affect on complaint numbers:

- The extent to which the complaints procedure is publicised and made fully accessible to service users and their families and carers
- The resources of the complaints unit to be proactive in empowering and encouraging all client and community groups to comment on services and make complaints.
- Flexibility in dealing with informal complaints –Stage1 – by use of mediation for example.
- Population and demographic data – and its influence on service needs.
- Levels of service provision – for example under the Fair Access to Services criteria.
- The number of contracted out services – where complaints may be resolved by the agency.

The Department views complaints in a positive light, as a means of monitoring and improving its services and better understanding the needs of people who make contact with it. More complaints, not necessarily being a reflection of poor services.