



**Havering**  
LONDON BOROUGH

## **CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 21 October 2014**

**Subject Heading:**

**Report Author and contact details:**

**Policy context:**

Children Adults & Housing(Children  
and Young People's Services)  
Annual Complaints and Compliments  
Report 2013/14  
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### **SUMMARY**

The Children & Young People's Services Complaints Annual report, attached as Appendix 1 provides information about the numbers and types of complaints handled by the Children and Young People's Service during 2013/14, as well as Members' correspondence and how they were dealt with.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That Members note the contents of the attached report and the continued efforts made by the service to learn from complaints with the increasing demands on the service through various challenges.
2. That Members note the actions identified to improve and feedback to services and to monitor to ensure these are implemented to evidence service improvements.

<b>REPORT DETAIL</b>
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3. Appendix 1 shows that complaints at Stage 1 decreased slightly in 2013/14 from 2012/13 by 2% and Stage 2 remained at the same level as 2012/13, while enquiries increased. Although Stage 2 complaints remained at the same level as in 2012/13, it should be noted that the requests to progress to Stage 2 were double in 2013/14 and of those 30% were resolved through face-to-face meetings and did not progress to an independent investigation.
4. Within the Under 12's and Triage/MASH & Assessment Teams there have been increases in the number of Stage 2 complaints, although there have been decreases in Stage 1 complaints across the board.
5. Many of the complaints received were from parents as opposed from children directly and the main reason for complaint was around 'behaviour of staff'. This is linked mainly to the Triage/MASH & Assessment and Under 12's Team which had the highest complaints in relation to 'behaviour of staff'. However these were mainly around decisions made by social workers within very emotive situations e.g. children going into care/child protection.
6. Outcomes of complaints highlighted the need for improved information and better explanation needed, as the main outcomes were apology given and explanation. It can also be said that where decisions are made within very emotive situations, that there is an added need to ensure that parents are very clear about the implications. The complaints team will be looking at improving recording on outcomes.
7. Response times to Stage 1 complaints were 48% for those responding to within 10 working days with 40% responded to within 20 working days. Within the statutory framework this does meet the required timescale by 88% for Stage 1 complaints which allows for 10 working days with an extension of a further 10 working days.
8. Requests for Stage 2 complaints had doubled in 2013/14 compared to 2012/13. However with the continued efforts of resolving complaints, face-to-face meetings have been successful which led to three out of the five not progressing to independent investigation. Those that progressed to independent investigation were mainly regarding parent dispute about child's welfare.
9. The main outcomes/recommendations at Stage 2 were around improving communication/contact between complainants, family and the local authority and highlighted the need for improved recording.

10. Response times at Stage 2 showed 40% were responded to within the statutory timeframe of up to 65 working days. Delays may be caused by availability of staff for interviews, delays caused by the complainant.
11. There was one Stage 3 Review Panel for 2013/14.
12. Corporate complaints decreased in 2013/14 by 16%. The high volume in 2012/13 was due to the closure of certain groups within Children's Centres. The highest number of corporate complaints for 2013/14 was in relation to Children's Centres. However it should be noted that complaints that do not fall within the statutory framework are recorded as corporate complaints.
13. Expenditure for 2013/14 totalled £9,652.90, which was broken down into costs for independent investigators and publicity/leaflets of £9,203.40 and £449.50 respectively.
14. Email was the most preferred method of contact followed by telephone for those either making a complaint or a compliment.
15. Complaints relating to children between the ages of 0-5 and 6-9 have increased. Monitoring information needs to be looked at in terms of disability and ethnicity as there is a high number of those not declared especially under disability.
16. Members' correspondence has dropped by 56% in 2013/14 compared to 2012/13 with 67% being responded to within the 10 working day timescale.
17. Compliments have slightly decreased by 9% from 2012/13 to 39 in 2013/14. Members of staff were thanked for their support and practical advice, as well as being kind, helpful and understanding with commitment and professionalism.
18. The format of the report has changed to better highlight the information and contextualise it, as requested by Members previously. Unfortunately information in relation to complaints against Wards could not be provided for this report, but aiming for this to be available for the report for 2014/15. Children & Young People's Services complaints recording will be moved to the new CRM system and the Complaints, Information & Communication Team will need to look at how best to capture information in order to provide the detailed areas reported within this report.
19. Recommendations and actions identified as a result of complaints will be monitored to ensure that they are implemented and reviewed to see how these will lead to improvements in the service where required.

<b>IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS</b>
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**Financial implications and risks:**

There is a Complaints, Information and Communication team within the Directorate. This team addresses complaints received and manages associated resource implications, which are funded from within overall service budgets. There are no new financial implications or risks arising from this report, which is for information purposes.

**Legal implications and risks:**

There are no apparent legal implications from noting this Report. The complaints process is governed by the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

**Human Resources implications and risks:**

The Children's Services department have identified actions to be followed through with the qualified workforce to ensure that the learning from the complaints received is firmly embedded into the training and supervision of social work staff and also addressed through the Council's Performance Development Review (PDR) process

**Equalities implications and risks:**

The report demonstrates that there is a transparent and structured (both informal and formal) route for concerns or complaints, including those relating specifically to bullying, harassment, unfair treatment and/or discrimination against young people, guardians, parents or carers, to be registered for review and action where required. The Council monitors the diversity profile of complainants and service users against relevant protected characteristics such as age, disability, ethnicity, etc. This data is captured on the CRM system and forms part of the Complaints Annual Report.

In line with the Council's corporate policy on translation and interpreting services, this service also offers information in other languages and alternative formats on request.

We will continue working towards raising awareness on equality and diversity related issues and improving the access to our Complaints, Comments and Compliments policy and procedure.

<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>
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None