



Haverling

LONDON BOROUGH

PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE AGENDA

7.00 pm

Tuesday
27 August 2024

Appointment Centre
Room 10 & 11, Town
Hall, Romford

Members 9: Quorum 4

COUNCILLORS:

Jason Frost (Chairman)
Frankie Walker (Vice-Chair)
Sarah Edwards

Robby Misir
Christine Smith
Judith Holt

Jacqueline McArdle
Julie Wilkes
EHRG Vacancy

CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

**Statutory Members
representing the Churches**

Jack How (Roman Catholic
Church)

**Statutory Members
representing parent
governors**

Julie Lamb, Special Schools

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

Ian Rusha (NEU)

For information about the meeting please contact:
Luke Phimister
01708 434619 luke.phimister@onesource.co.uk

Under the Committee Procedure Rules within the Council's Constitution the Chairman of the meeting may exercise the powers conferred upon the Mayor in relation to the conduct of full Council meetings. As such, should any member of the public interrupt proceedings, the Chairman will warn the person concerned. If they continue to interrupt, the Chairman will order their removal from the meeting room and may adjourn the meeting while this takes place.

Excessive noise and talking should also be kept to a minimum whilst the meeting is in progress in order that the scheduled business may proceed as planned.

Protocol for members of the public wishing to report on meetings of the London Borough of Havering

Members of the public are entitled to report on meetings of Council, Committees and Cabinet, except in circumstances where the public have been excluded as permitted by law.

Reporting means:-

- filming, photographing or making an audio recording of the proceedings of the meeting;
- using any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it takes place or later; or
- reporting or providing commentary on proceedings at a meeting, orally or in writing, so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later if the person is not present.

Anyone present at a meeting as it takes place is not permitted to carry out an oral commentary or report. This is to prevent the business of the meeting being disrupted.

Anyone attending a meeting is asked to advise Democratic Services staff on 01708 433076 that they wish to report on the meeting and how they wish to do so. This is to enable employees to guide anyone choosing to report on proceedings to an appropriate place from which to be able to report effectively.

Members of the public are asked to remain seated throughout the meeting as standing up and walking around could distract from the business in hand.

What is Overview & Scrutiny?

Each local authority is required by law to establish an overview and scrutiny function to support and scrutinise the Council's executive arrangements. Each overview and scrutiny sub-committee has its own remit as set out in the terms of reference but they each meet to consider issues of local importance.

The sub-committees have a number of key roles:

1. Providing a critical friend challenge to policy and decision makers.
2. Driving improvement in public services.
3. Holding key local partners to account.
4. Enabling the voice and concerns to the public.

The sub-committees consider issues by receiving information from, and questioning, Cabinet Members, officers and external partners to develop an understanding of proposals, policy and practices. They can then develop recommendations that they believe will improve performance, or as a response to public consultations. These are considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and if approved, submitted for a response to Council, Cabinet and other relevant bodies.

Sub-Committees will often establish Topic Groups to examine specific areas in much greater detail. These groups consist of a number of Members and the review period can last for anything from a few weeks to a year or more to allow the Members to comprehensively examine an issue through interviewing expert witnesses, conducting research or undertaking site visits. Once the topic group has finished its work it will send a report to the Sub-Committee that created it and will often suggest recommendations for the Overview and Scrutiny Board to pass to the Council's Executive.

Terms of Reference

The areas scrutinised by the Committee are:

- Drug, Alcohol & sexual Services
- Health & Wellbeing
- Health O & Scrutiny
- Adult Care
- Learning and Physical Disabilities
- Employment & Skills
- Education
- Child Protection
- Youth Services

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- Fostering & Adoption Services
- Education Traded Services
- Early Years Services
- Looked after Children
- Media
- Communications
- Advertising
- Corporate Events
- Bereavement & Registration Services
- Crime & Disorder

DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF



AGENDA ITEMS

1 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman will announce details of the arrangements in case of fire or other events that might require the meeting room or building's evacuation.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

To receive (if any)

3 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members are invited to disclose any interests in any of the items on the agenda at this point of the meeting. Members may still declare an interest in an item at any time prior to the consideration of the matter.

4 MINUTES (Pages 7 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 11th July 2024 and authorise the Chairman to sign them

5 CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS 2023-24 (Pages 9 - 46)

Documents attached

6 ADULT'S SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS 2023-24 (Pages 47 - 76)

Documents attached

Zena Smith
Head of Committee and Election Services

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE
Appointment Centre Room 10 & 11, Town Hall, Romford
11 July 2024 (7.00 - 7.47 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group Jason Frost (Chairman) and Judith Holt

Havering Residents' Group Julie Wilkes, Sarah Edwards, Robby Misir and Christine Smith

1 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillors Frankie Walker.

3 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interests.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 HAVERING EDUCATION SERVICES - TRADED SERVICES FOR SCHOOLS AND EARLY YEARS SETTINGS

The Sub-Committee were presented with a report on the Havering Education Services (HES) Traded Services for Schools and Early Years (EY) settings.

The traded services are for all schools in the borough and EY settings. Members noted all Local Authorities (LAs) have traded services of varying levels but Havering's is one of the most broad and longstanding, being in use for over 12 years. The relationship between HES and schools would be changing as the grant to provide the services would reduce by over £600k. Also, the clientele using the services would be changing as more schools have joint academy trust as opposed to being controlled by the LA with national academy trusts potentially having their own traded services.

A pressure facing HES is schools needing to make efficiencies and work under smaller budgets, meaning they have less available resources to pay for the traded services provided by HES. It was noted that the COVID pandemic added further pressure but the service was now providing at a small deficit but the forecasts for the current year are showing a small surplus.

Members noted HES had refreshed its commercial strategy the previous year with 5 key pillars; Enhancing the current trading activities, Safeguarding & future-proofing their financial situation, Expanding the current brokerage & partnerships model, Enhancing the current traded CPD offering & expanding audience & customer base, Strengthening their commercial culture & capabilities.

It was explained by officers that the HES Traded Services generate £12.5 million as revenue annually but due to laws and regulations cannot make a profit. Some services, such as catering and music schools, can generate a surplus due to how they operate but all monies are ring-fenced. Members noted that if the Traded Services was an external or arms-length company they could make a profit by Havering' Cabinet made the decision to keep it in house.

Members questioned the viability and achievability of the targets set to which offices responded that each target has a delivery plan based on performance from previous years. The Sub-Committee asked if a report could be brought back outlining each delivery plan to which the officers' explained they could contain exempt information so the decision would be made by the Officers and Chairman.

The Sub-Committee made no recommendations and noted the report.

Chairman



CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – TBC

Subject Heading:

Children’s Services Annual Complaints
and Compliments Report 2023-24

SLT Lead:

Tara Geere

Report Author and contact details:

Johannah Philp, 01708 431998
johannah.philp@haverling.gov.uk

Policy context:

As part of the remit of the Children Act
1989 Representations Procedure
(England) Regulations 2006’

Financial summary:

There are no direct financial implications
arising from this report as this report is for
information purposes only. However
adverse performance against some
performance indicators may have financial
implications for the Council.

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering

Places making Havering

Opportunities making Havering

Connections making Havering

SUMMARY

Local authorities have a statutory requirement to set up a complaints process which is set out in section 26 Children Act 1989 and The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 and to publish an Annual Report.

The Children's Services Annual Complaints and Compliments Report for 2023–24, attached as Appendix 1 and The Education Services Complaints and Compliments Report for 2023–24, attached as Appendix 2, sets out Children's Services statutory complaints and compliments received during this period, as well as Members' correspondence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Members note the content of the Children's Services Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2023-24 attached as Appendix 1.
2. That Members note the content of the Education Services Complaints and Compliments Report 2023-24 attached as Appendix 2.
3. That Members note the continued learning from complaints and the recognition of good practice through compliments.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Children's services saw a 33% increase in the number of complaints received in 2023-24 (101) compared to 2022-23 (76). The number of enquiries decreased slightly by 5.2% (76) in 2023-24 compared to 80 in 2022-23. There were 10 requests to progress to stage 2 in 2023-24 however following successful resolution meetings, only two of these actually went on to be investigated at stage 2, both of which are currently on-going. The benefits of successful resolution meetings are complaints being resolved more timely and with less financial implications. One complaint was escalated to Stage 3 in 2023-24. There were 7 complaints referred to the Ombudsman however 6 of those were not fully investigated following initial enquiries.

The number of Corporate complaints increased significantly in 2023-24 period by 116%. The majority of these complaints were about the SEND service (35). Of those 35 complaints, many of them were about delays with Educational Health Care Plans and Home to School Transport Consultation.

Overall response times for both corporate complaints and enquires have dropped slightly with 78% in 2023-24 being responded to within timescale, compared to 81% in 2022-23, again this is likely to be due to the number being received in 2022-23 increasing by 23% overall.

2. The number of complaints for MASH & Targeted Support has remained to same as in 2022-23, it is noted that the most common themes for complaints received were about attitude/behaviour of staff and lack of communication. The Safeguarding Service saw an increase (31%) in the number of complaints from 45 in 2022-23 to 59 in 2023-24. The two main reasons for these complaints continued to be attitude/behaviour of staff (19).
3. With regards to contacts and referrals coming into the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, Children's Services has seen some stability when compared with 2022/23, with volumes remaining fairly consistent. We have, however, seen the number of children coming into care increase by 25% from last year.

Demand modelling made clear that we expected contacts to continue to grow throughout 2023 - 2024, both as a result of the impact of the pandemic on children's mental health and as a result of the cost-of-living impact on families. The most common assessment factor in Havering during 2023-24 was Domestic violence against parent/carer, up from 865 to 905, an increase of 4.7%, replacing mental health of the parent/carer, which also increased slightly from 864 to 869. We have also seen a continued increase in assessments identifying mental health of the child as a factor, up by 10% from 547 to 602, as well as a significant increase in contacts relating to abuse or neglect, up 49% from 1230 to 1833.

4. Stage 1 complaint responses within 10 working days improved in 2023-24 (47) compared to 2022-23 (28) an increase of 10% being responded to within the statutory timeframe. 29.7% of complaints were responded to within 20 days which is another improvement compared to 2022-23. The number of complaints taking over 20 days has however increased compared to 2022-23 from 22 to 24.
5. Monitoring information is based on the child(ren) within the family unit in which a complaint was made. During 2023-24 there have been noticeable increases in complaints across all age groups with the exception of 18+. 0-5 years up 126%, 6-9 years up 166%, 10-14 years up 160%, and 15-17 years up by 105%. In our complaint data, there is a low number of children that had a recorded disability, with the majority having Autism/Aspergers syndrome in 2023-24. It is noted that in 2023-24 we have behaviour, communication, hearing, and learning recorded as disabilities compared to zero being recorded in 2022-23. The higher number of 'White British' complainants continues to reflect the population within Havering. However, it is not representative of the service users across Children's Services. There are

representations across many ethnicities with slight increases shown across any other mixed background and African.

6. There has been a further increase in the number of compliments received from service users from 154 in 2022-23 to 178 in 2023-24, a 15.5% increase which is an amazing achievement and testimony to the excellent work being undertaken by our staff to support children, young people and their families
7. The Complaints and Compliments action plan has been refreshed and will be monitored at quarterly meetings between the Social Care Complaints and Information Team, and the Children's Services Senior Management Team

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, which is for information only. However adverse performance against some performance indicators may have financial implications for the Council.

All service directorates are required to achieve their performance targets within approved budgets.

The timely resolution of complaints helps the Directorate to improve performance and deliver a cost effective service.

Legal implications and risks:

As stated in the Report the Authority has a duty to set up a representations process for complaints in relation to children under s 26 (3) Children Act 1989.

Under the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006

"13 (2) Local authorities must monitor those arrangements by keeping a record of—

- (a) each representation under section 26 received;
 - (b) the outcome of each such representation; and
 - (c) whether there was compliance with the time limits specified in these Regulations.
- (3) For the purposes of such monitoring every local authority must as soon as possible after the end of each financial year compile a report on the operation in that year of the procedure set out in these Regulations."

The Children's Services Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2023-24 complies with these Regulations.

Whilst there is no statutory duty to provide a complaint service, or Report in relation to Education issues this is clearly good practice.

Otherwise there are no legal implications in noting the content of the Annual Report.

Human Resources implications and risks:

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce.

Equalities implications and risks:

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to:

- (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants. The policy contains a breakdown of complaints received.

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Children's Services – Starting Well
Annual Complaints and Compliments
Report 2023–24

Prepared for: Tara Geere, Director of Starting Well

Prepared by: Johannah Philp Complaints, Compliance, and Information Team Lead

Date 26th July 2024

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Executive Summary

Children's Services complaints fall within the remit of 'The Children Act 1989' and 'The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006' which includes the requirement to publish an annual report. This report covers the reporting period April 2023 to March 2024.

During 2023 – 2024 Children's Services saw a 33% increase in the number of complaints received from the previous year. 101 complaints were received compared to 76 in 2022- 2023; of which 17 were upheld, 18 were partially upheld, 44 were not upheld and 22 were withdrawn. Attitude/behaviour of staff was the largest reason for complaints with 28 recorded, followed by standard of service not met with 25 complaints, and lack of communication with 19 complaints. Improvements have been seen in most of the areas highlighted as concerns by complainants from the previous year, except in respect of "lack of communication".

The majority of concerns raised were made on behalf of children, as we continued to see low levels of complaints received directly from children and young people. There were 10 requests to progress to stage 2 complaints. However, following successful resolution meetings, only two of these went on to be investigated at stage 2, both of which are currently on-going. The benefits of successful resolution meetings are complaints are being resolved in a timelier manner with less financial implications.

Despite the rise in the number of complaints received, there was a 13% increase in the number of compliments received in 2023-24 to 178 compared to 158 in 2022-2023. The importance of capturing all compliments received continues to be highlighted across all service areas.

Post the Covid-19 pandemic and with the ongoing cost-of-living issues on top of the unprecedented growth in population, Havering Council has continued to experience increased pressure on many service areas in the Council. Within Children's Services the availability and capacity of staff to meet demand has continued to be the biggest challenge for the service.

A government study in 2019 prior to the pandemic highlighted the struggle local authorities were facing in recruiting experienced permanent Social Workers, this was exacerbated by the pandemic and Havering is no exception to these challenges. Findings by the Department for Education (DfE) Children's Social Work Workforce report for 2023 highlighted nationally the number of children and family Social Workers increased by 4.5%. However, nationally there was an increase of 6.1% in the number of agency workers in post. Whilst the DfE report showed a slight decrease in vacancies not being filled from the previous year by 2.4%, this remains the second highest figure since the reporting started in 2017. Nationally there was a slight reduction in the average caseload to 16 which still remains much higher in Havering who at an average of 20.4 cases per worker have the highest caseloads in London and are ranked 5th highest nationally for average caseloads out of 152 local authorities.

Demand modelling showed increasing demands and we expected contacts to continue to grow throughout 2023 - 2024, both as a result of the impact of the pandemic on children's mental health and as a result of the cost-of-living impact on families. However, with regards to contacts and referrals coming into the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, Children's Services has seen some consistency when compared with 2022/23, with volumes remaining fairly stable. However, the number of children coming into care increase by 25% from last year. The most common assessment factor in Havering during 2023-24 was Domestic violence against parent/carer, up from 865 to 905, an increase of 4.7%, replacing mental health of the parent/carer, which also increased slightly from 864 to 869. We have also seen a continued increase in assessments identifying mental health of the child as a factor, up by 10% from 547 to 602, as well as a significant increase in contacts relating to abuse or neglect, up 49% from 1230 to 1833.

Children's Services have continued to use learning from complaints and compliments to help shape services. Our systemic model of practice is focused on relational, strengths-based practice as well as inviting feedback loops to reflect on our practice. Children's Services will respond to the areas of improvement identified in this report and continue to utilise good practice examples to show case what works well.

Introduction

The 'Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006' govern complaints, representations and compliments received about Children's Services.

There are three stages covered within the regulations as follows:

- Stage 1 – Local Resolution

Response times are 10 working days with a further 10 working days if required. If a young person requires an advocate this should be sought for them. If the complainant is not happy with the response at Stage 1, they can request to progress to Stage 2 within 20 working days of receiving the response.

- Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

Response times are 25 – 65 working days. An Independent Investigator and Independent Person are appointed at this stage. The Independent Person must be external to the organisation. Following the independent investigation, the investigation report will be sent to the complainant, along with the adjudication letter giving the decision of the Head of Service. If the complainant is not happy with the response at Stage 2, they can request their complaint to be heard by a Review Panel within 20 working days of receiving the response.

- Stage 3 – Review Panel

The Review Panel is managed independently of the Complaint & Information Team via Democratic Services. The Panel must consist of three independent people, one of whom is the Chair. The Panel must be held within 30 working days from the request. Following the Panel Hearing, the recommendations will be issued to the complainant, independent people, advocate, and Director of Children's Services within 5 working days. The Director must issue their decision within 15 working days of receiving the recommendations.

Complaints

1.1 Ombudsman Referrals

Havering's overview of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman enquiries for the year 2023-24 shows the total number of enquiries increased to seven, a significant rise from the two received in the previous year (2022-23).

However, it is of note that six out of these seven enquiries were not fully investigated following initial assessments. This reduction in the investigative workload has highlighted improved case recording practices of the dedicated staff across Children's Services.

This positive trend underscores our corporate, whole council commitment to efficiency, accuracy, and continuous improvement in handling enquiries. As we move forward, we remain focused on maintaining high standards, improving our services to ensure the best outcomes for the children and families of Havering.

From the Ombudsman enquiry, one found maladministration with injustice relating to how the Council handled a child protection matter regarding the complainant's son. The complainant raised he felt the Council was biased against him during the processes, it failed to give him enough notice to attend meetings, and it failed to communicate with him properly and engage him in the process. This resulted with an apology being made, alongside a goodwill payment of £350.00. A review of the learning resulted in a written reminder being sent to all staff in the social work team to ensure they were aware of the importance of actively engaging with both parents and communicating with them effectively during our

Children’s Services, Starting Well - Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2023-24 interventions such as child protection processes. This is being followed up with further training that is being rolled out to staff as part of the Children’s Services Improvement plan.

	Apr 23-Mar 24	Apr 22-Mar 23	Apr 21-Mar 22
Maladministration (no injustice)			1
Maladministration & Injustice	1	1	1
No maladministration after investigation			
`Ombudsman discretion			
Investigation with Local settlement			
Outside Jurisdiction			1
Investigation Discontinued			1
Premature/Informal enquiries			
Closed after initial enquiries – no further action	6	1	
Total	7	2	4

1.2 Total number of complaints

During 2023-24 we saw a slight reduction of 5% in the number of enquiries received (76) compared to 2022-23 (80). Enquiries do not fall within the remit of statutory or corporate complaints and are not included in any further data within this report.

A total of 101 complaints went through the formal Stage 1 process in 2023-24, a 32% increase compared to the number received in 2022-23 (76).

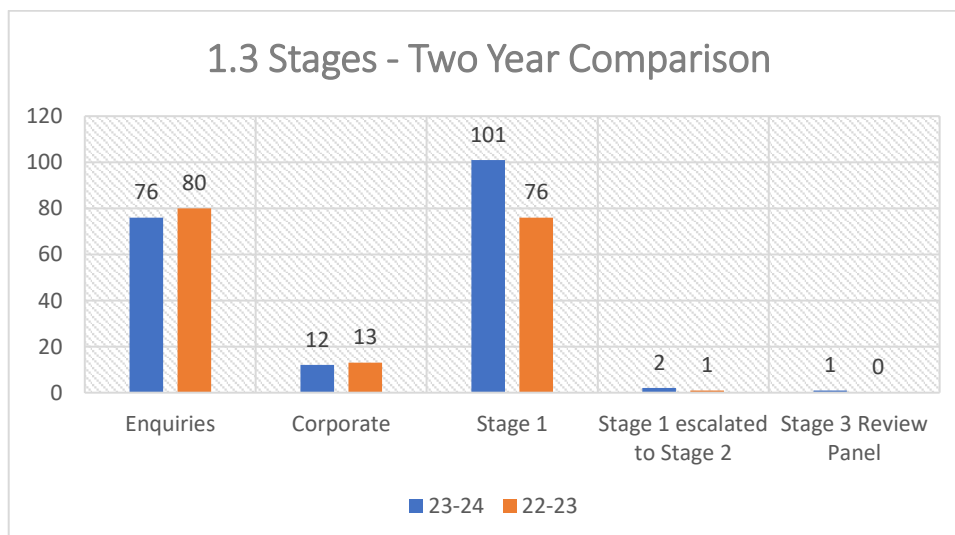
5202 children received a service during 2023-24, this means that 1.9% of the children and young people receiving services within Havering Children’s Services made a formal complaint.

1.3 Stages

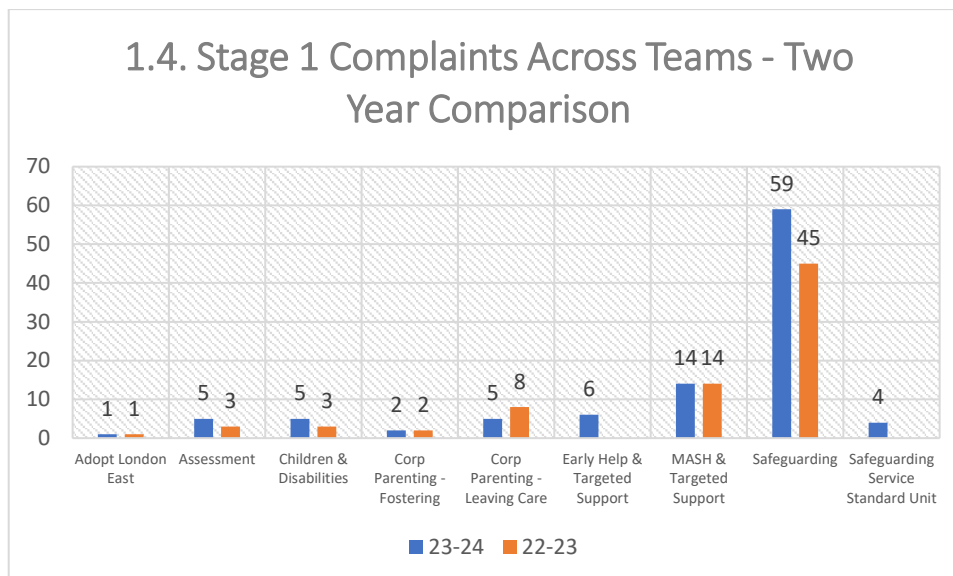
The number of complaints received in 2023-23 rose by 33% from 76 to 101. There was also an increase in the number of requests for complaints to be escalated to a stage 2 investigation in 2023-24 with 10 requests being made.

It is important to note that eight of those requests were withdrawn or resolved informally by utilising resolution meetings. Stage 2 requests can often be resolved by offering a meeting to the complainant and talking through the complaint face to face, these have been very successful this year.

One complaint has been through the Stage 3 review panel process this year.



1.4 Teams



The number of complaints for the MASH & Targeted Support has remained consistent with 2022-23, it is noted that the most common themes for complaints received were about attitude/behaviour of staff and lack of communication.

The Safeguarding Service saw an increase (31%) in the number of complaints from 45 in 2022-23 to 59 in 2023-24. The two main reasons for these complaints continued to be attitude/behaviour of staff (19), of which 8 were upheld to some degree and lack of communication (22) of which 7 were upheld.

As picked up within our Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services report published in February 2024 the capacity of staff has continued to be the biggest challenge for Children's Services. Whilst the year ending 30 September 2023 saw a reduction in staff turnover compared with the previous year, there were a high number of leavers in the second half of the financial year, which will only be reflected in 2024 figures.

Havering is not unique in its workforce challenges. The DfE Children's social work workforce report 2023 in England highlighted the number of staff vacancies in 2023 as the second highest since reporting started in 2017. In Havering, our vacancy rate on 30 September 2023 was higher than all of our comparator groups (England, London and statistical neighbours) at 27.8% and again, this increased further, later in the reporting year.

The use of agency social workers in Children's Services increased to 17.8% nationally. Havering saw a reduction in agency use compared to the previous year but remained above all comparators at 25.6%. This persistently high figure is directly linked to the high vacancy rate detailed above. The impact of the high levels of staff turnover and vacancies is high caseloads for remaining staff, which can result in a reduction in capacity and time for good communication with staff not meeting expected standards of service. There has been a concerted effort to recruit permanent staff including a larger tranche of newly qualified staff, which has been successful to some extent; however, the cumulative impact continues to be felt with continued use of agency staff.

The large increase in the volume of contacts in October 2023 coincided with many complaints from partners and families in relation to a lack of communication. Several strategies were put in place with partners to address the issues around communication and access to senior managers to address any issues. A lack of IT equipment including mobile telephones for SW's was addressed by escalation from the Director of Children's Services.

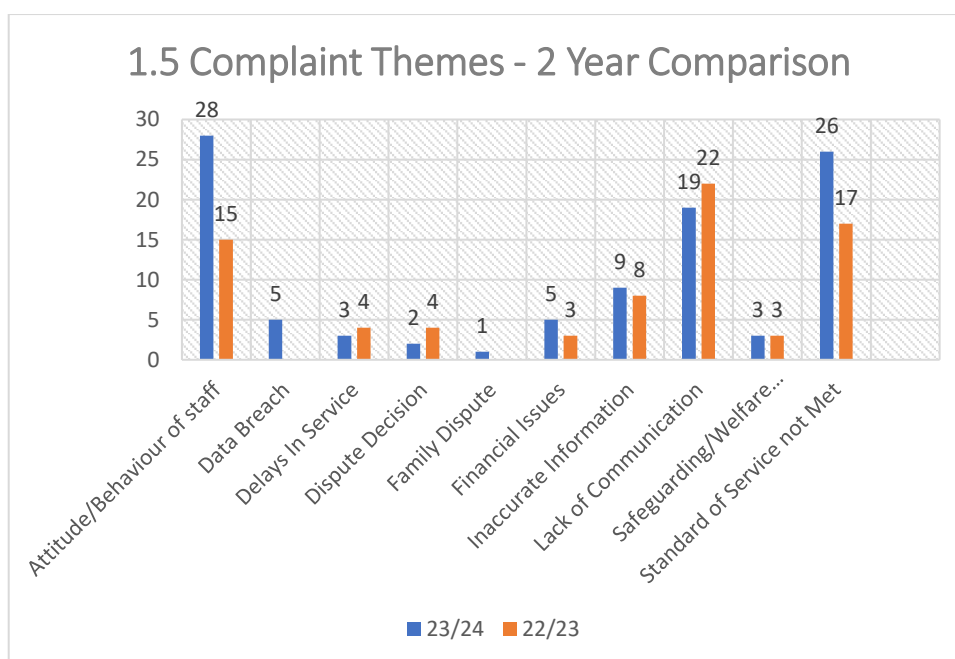
There are now clear communication pathways in place to ensure that partners and families are informed of outcomes of contacts by way of letter and email communication. We have continued to have strategic leads linked to school clusters to keep an open-door communication in place with our Early Help, MASH and safeguarding teams .

Revised structure charts of the service are regularly shared with cluster leads and the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL’s) in schools / health provision to support partners being able to reach the correct person in a timely manner. A newsletter is being developed to share by Early Help and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub to start in September 2024 to offer partners updates to service changes. There are also regular Inward Speaking events scheduled throughout the year that informs and updates on the service offer by Havering.

Within our Children with Disabilities Service we have seen increased demand for services. Despite this, there has been a very small increase in the number of complaints, from 3 in 2022-23 to 5 in 2023-24. We continue to see a significant increase in behaviour support requests linked to the ongoing impact of the pandemic, as well as the ongoing increase in requests for children to be assessed for Education, Health and Care Plans. We continue to work with our safeguarding partners and third-sector colleagues to ensure that children are ‘school ready’ and to ensure the continued identification of Young Carers.

1.5 Complaint Themes

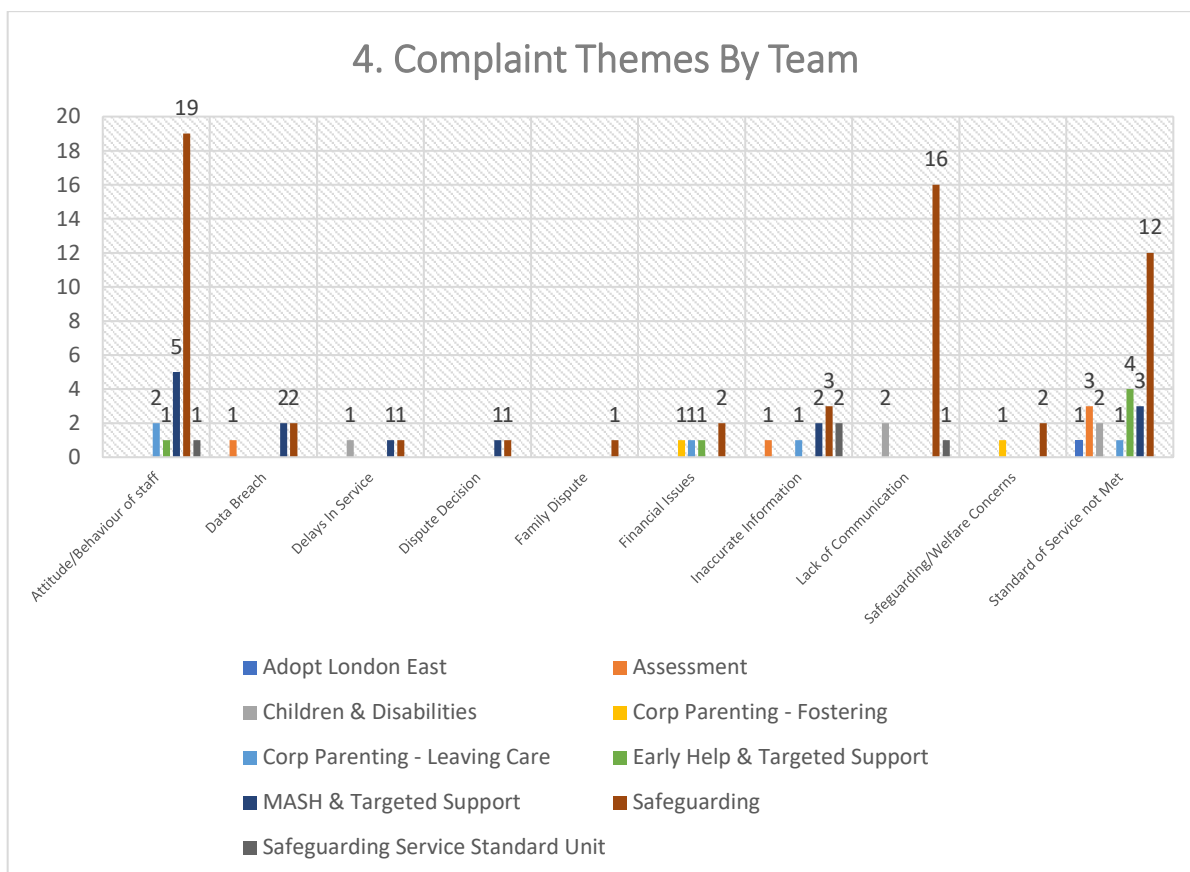
Complaints vary in their content but there are some important themes that we can learn from in the service to improve practice and enable us to develop better relationships with children, young people and their families. Every complaint received is carefully considered and enables us to review our processes and practices.



The chart above highlights the highest number of complaint themes in 2023- 24 were the attitude and behaviour of staff, standard of service, and lack of communication. It is concerning that there were five complaints about data breaches over the course of the year, these complaints are dealt with by the GDPR team. Staff are constantly reminded to adhere to GDPR data protection protocols and are required to refresh their mandatory GDPR training annually. Work to remind staff regarding GDPR requirements is being picked up as part of the training that is being rolled out to staff as part of our improvement plan.

Many complaints highlighting the ‘attitude/behaviour of staff’ were in relation to parents being unhappy about the decisions that had been made.

The service continues to model our systemic model of practice and we are working with staff on reducing the use of professional language or jargon when we are discussing or planning interventions with families so that the families can recognise themselves and the concerns of professionals within assessments, reports, and plans. We are also using one-to-one supervision and group supervision to invite reflections from staff as to their relationships and communication with children and families and how our interventions can empower families. Alongside planned training on a ‘back to basics’ programme for staff.



Complaint themes by team are illustrated in Chart 4 above. This shows the Safeguarding Service which is the service with the greatest volume of children’s cases has the greatest number of complaints. However, of the 59 complaints received in relation to these teams, 39 (66%) were either withdrawn or not upheld. The MASH / Assessment Service saw the next highest number of complaints, 14 with 9 (64.2%) being withdrawn or not upheld.

1.6 Outcomes & Learning

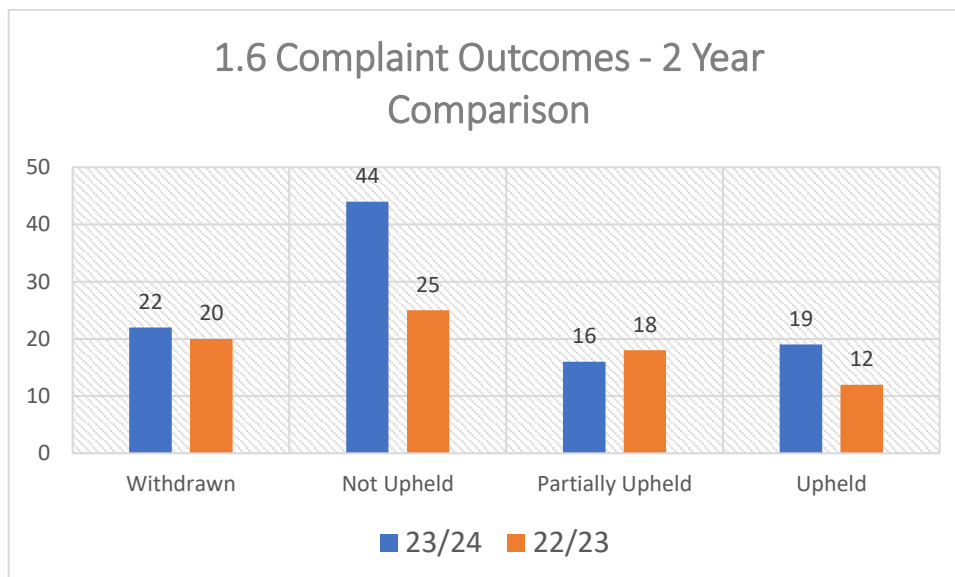
Learning from complaints forms part of Havering’s quality assurance framework and is used to plan training, improvement and quality assurance activities both on a strategic level as well as for individual practitioners, supervisors and managers.

During 2023-24 the Complaints Team Manager worked closely with the Social Work Practice Development Manager to offer complainants the opportunity to discuss their experiences with

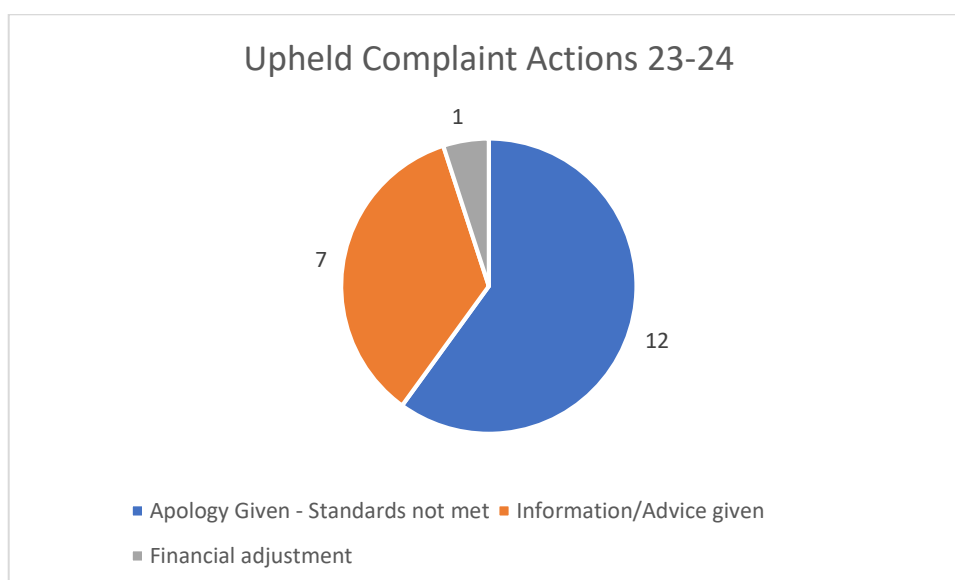
Children's Services, Starting Well - Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2023-24

Children's Services in order to identify and drive service improvements. This work was done outside of the complaints process and was only offered once the complaint has been responded to.

During 2023-24 the number of complaints that were 'upheld' decreased by 15% (19). Those 'partially upheld' stayed consistent with 2023-24 at 18, and complaints 'not upheld' rose by 52% in 2023-24(53) compared to 2022-23(25).



For those complaints upheld or partially upheld, these all resulted in an apology, linked to further information or explanation being provided, as shown in the breakdown of upheld complaints below.



For 2024-25 consideration needs to be given to how information is communicated to ensure this is given clearly and concisely so that it is understood by children, parents, and carers. This is key to ensuring families are always aware of either the reasons for intervention or the actions to be taken by Children's Services to intervene or the limitations to intervention where there may be discord among separated parents or family members concerning children.

The service position is that all visits and statutory meetings are undertaken in person, unless there is a valid reason not to and the rationale is agreed and recorded by a manager. Practice standards are being updated to reiterate this message to all staff.

Training is being planned as part of the Ofsted improvement plan to refresh the Systemic model of practice to allow staff to focus on their interventions with families, ensuring these are purposeful, planned and deliver both improvements on how we work with children and families and to improve outcomes, as well as supporting decreases in the number of complaints. Alongside, there has been a refresh of further learning and support materials for staff via the Havering Social Care Academy SharePoint site online.

Children’s Services have undertaken a significant amount of work to improve the forms and processes of the case management system to improve accuracy and efficiency and this is continuing with a DfE funded audit of the Case Management system as part of the Ofsted improvement action plan.

1.7 Response times

Stage 1 complaint responses within 10 working days improved in 2023-24 (47) compared to 2022-23 (28) an increase of 10% being responded to within the statutory timeframe. A further 29.7% of complaints were responded to within 20 days also an improvement compared to 2022-23. The number of complaints taking over 20 days has however increased to 24 from 22 in 2022-23 but was an improved % overall.

Complaints response timeframes are an area that are being monitored, we are hopeful that with the introduction of the new managers as part of the Starting Well restructure and the new case management system we will see an improvement in this area in 2024-25.

	Within 10 days		11-20 days		Over 20 days	
	Apr 23- Mar 24	Apr 22- Mar 23	Apr 23- Mar 24	Apr 22- Mar 23	Apr 23- Mar 24	Apr 22- Mar 23
Stage 1	47	28	30	25	24	22
%	46.50%	36.80%	29.70%	32.80%	23.70%	28.90%

1.8 Expenditure

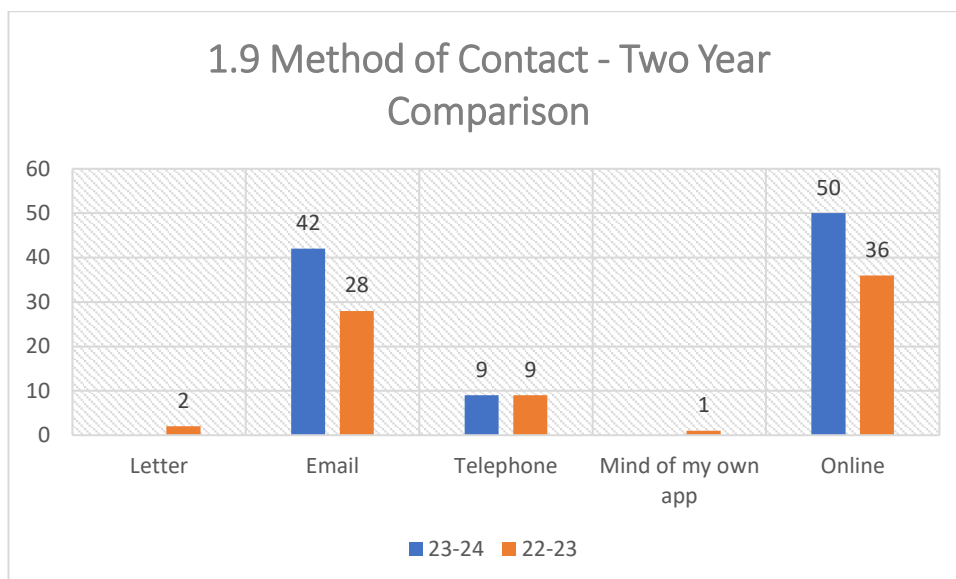
The cost of independent investigations in 2023-24 rose due to the number of stage 2 investigations increasing. Alongside one complaint leading to a financial adjustment of £350 being made.

	Publicity/ leaflets	Independent investigators	Payments	Total
Apr 2023 – Mar 2024		£2700	£350	£3050
Apr 2022 – Mar 2023		£1876	£150	£2026

1.9 Method of Contact

Email has continued to be the preferred method of contact as in previous years. It is also encouraging that we have seen an increase in the number of people opting to use Havering’s online form during 2023-24 which increased by 39% compared to 2022-23. Complaints received by telephone are always followed up with an email outlining the content of the conversation.

Haverling rolled out the new complaints case management system in 2023-24, which allows greater case tracking. We will continue to drive increases in the use of our online form to simplify the process of logging complaints and we expect this to improve response times and enhance user experience alongside improving reporting capabilities.



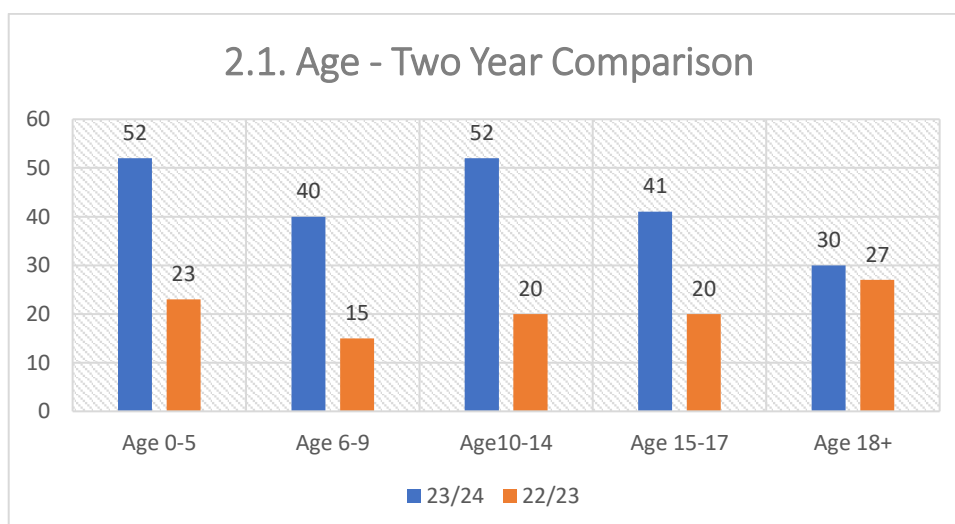
2. Monitoring Information

Whilst the monitoring information within this report is based on the number of children/young people the complaint is in relation to, we are able to break down the information to show that of the 76 Stage 1 complaints received, 66 were submitted by parents or family members, 9 were submitted by the young people receiving social care support and 6 were submitted by advocates on behalf of the young person.

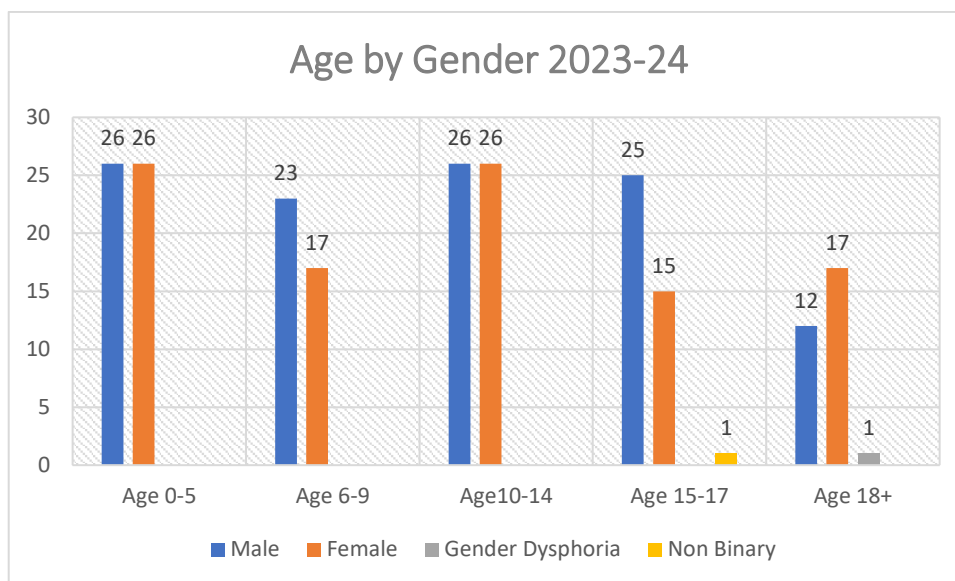
2.1 Age and Gender

It should be noted that data collected for the monitoring information will include all children within a family unit from which a complaint is made.

During 2023-24 there have been noticeable increases in complaints across all age groups with the exception of 18+. With the 0-5 years up age group up by 126%, 6-9 years age group up by 166%, 10-14 years age group up by 160%, and the 15-17 years age group up by 105%.



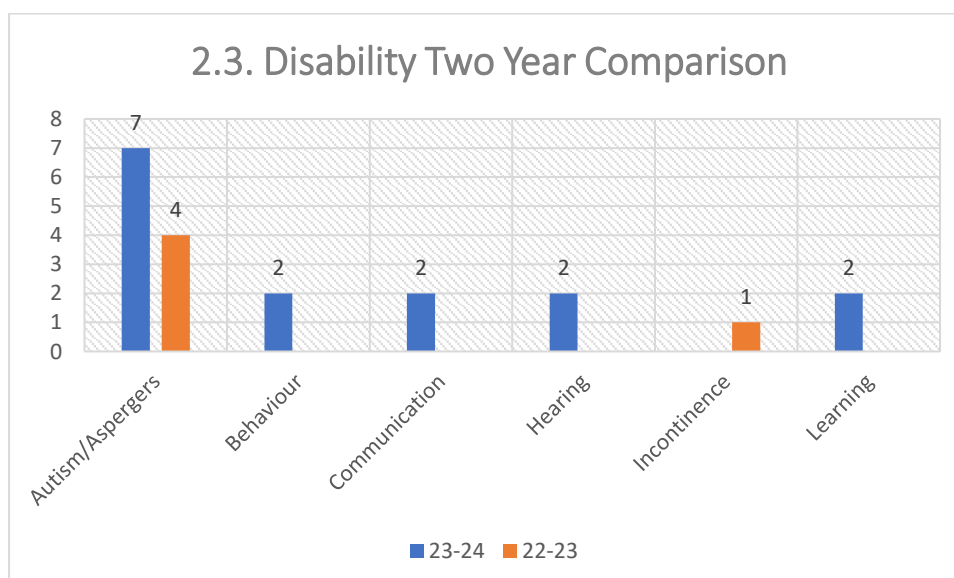
Overall, there have been 10% more complaints received in relation to male children than females in 2023-24.



2.3 Disability

Within the complaints received, we have seen a low number of children that had a recorded disability in 2023-24. Where children do have a disability recorded the majority have Autism/Aspergers syndrome. We have seen improved recording of children with behaviour, communication, hearing, and learning disabilities evidenced.

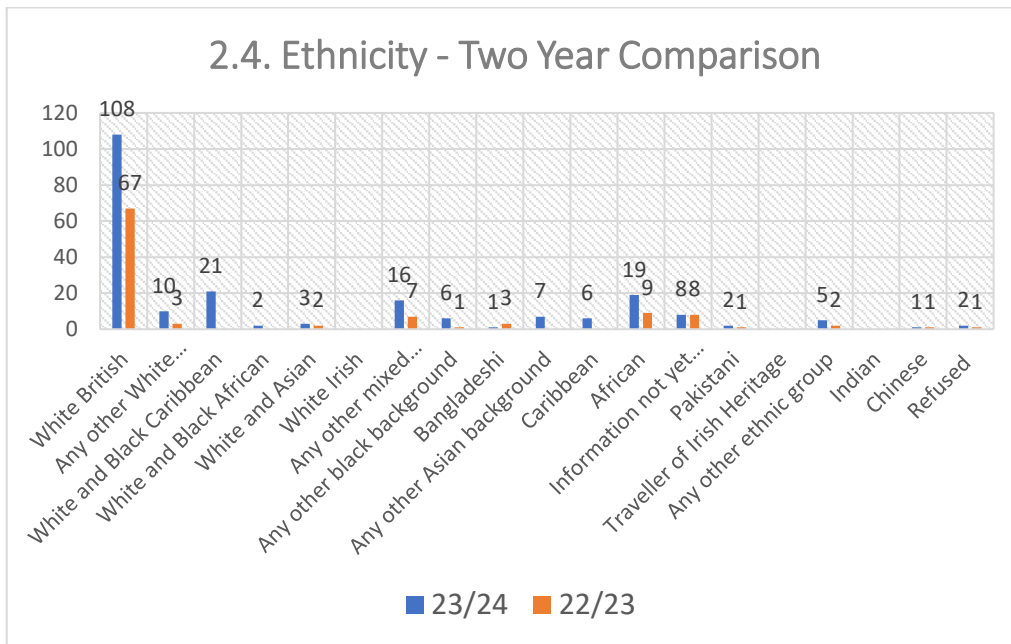
We know that the 15.2% population increase of children aged under 18 living in the Borough has occurred at a time when the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs; or their predecessor, Statements of Special Educational Needs) has seen a 52% rise nationally over the 12 year period between 2010 and 2022. As a result we have seen a significant increase in the number of requests for assessments for Havering children and young people and a corresponding rise in the number of EHCP's issued. However, we have continued to see low numbers of complaints in this cohort.



2.4 Ethnicity

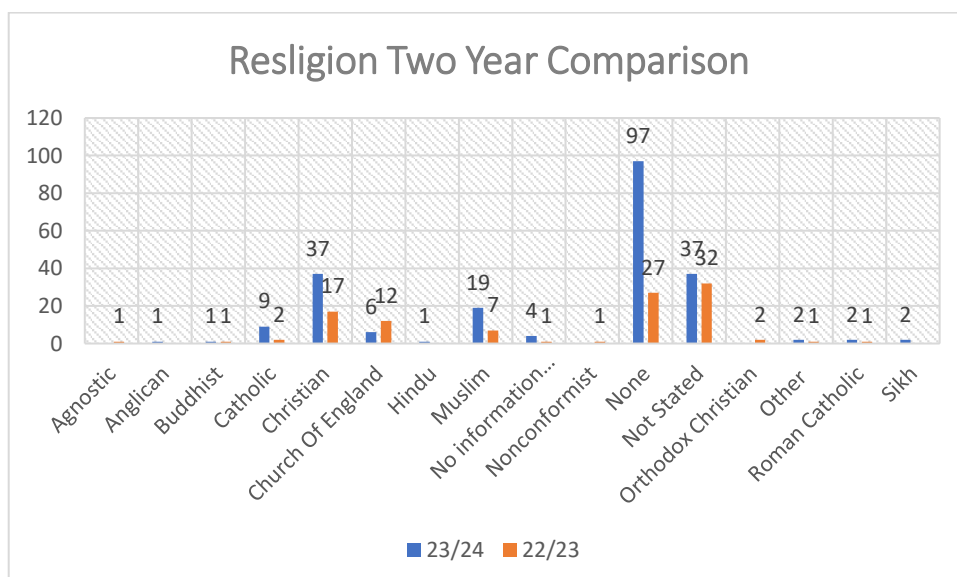
The higher number of ‘White British’ complainants continues to reflect the population within Havering. However, it is not representative of the service users across Children’s Services. There are representations across many ethnicities with slight increases shown across any other mixed background and African.

As part of the work being undertaken by the service to understand the disproportionate representation of some BAME groups in our statutory services, we need to ensure that all families and young people feel able and empowered to complain or to share compliments, feedback or good news updates on their lives.



2.5 Religion

These figures are defined by how people personally report their religion and therefore we do not group together. During 2023-24 there was a significant increase in those recorded as having no religion and a slight increase where religion was not stated.



Members Correspondence

The number of Members correspondence recorded increased by 71% during 2023-24 at 77 compared to 45 in 2022-23. There was a decline in member's enquiries being responded to within the timeframe during 2022-23, with 78% meeting the target of 15 days or less compared to 91% in 2022-23.

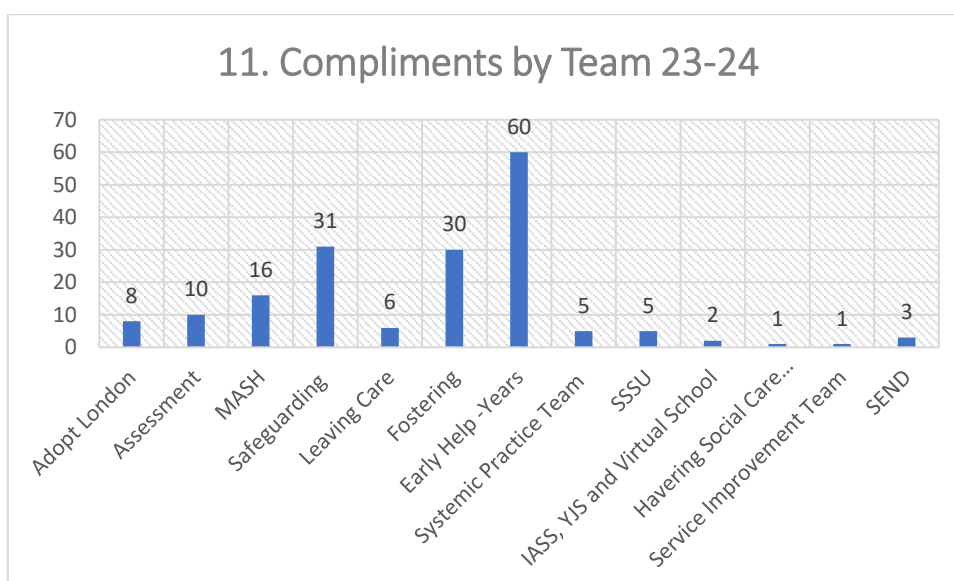
	2023-24	2022-23
Members Correspondence	77	45

The Service is aware that some Councillor/Member enquiries are being sent directly to Officers and therefore may not be captured in the performance data. Staff have been reminded to forward these to the SCCI Complaints Team for inclusion in the figures. During 2024-25 Councillor/Member enquiries will move on to a new case management system (Casetracker), we may therefore see a rise in the number of enquiries being reported next year as we will be able to record them more accurately.

Compliments

There were 178 recorded compliments received for Children’s Social Care from both external and internal stakeholders during 2023-24. This is an increase on the 158 received last year.

It is particularly encouraging to see that the Safeguarding service (formerly the Intervention Support Service) received a significant number of compliments, alongside a high number of complaints. The Early Help Service again received the highest number of compliments.



Social Worker Adopt London

You have been brilliant and really made a difference. Thank you so so much. You have shown us a lot of care and pushed things along for us whilst providing sound advice which we could rely upon and trust.

Leaving Care

I cannot thank you enough for being the professional that is constantly there when i need them

Systemic Family Therapy

S said 'you were very calming and made the situation fee safer'.

Safeguarding

You honestly did help me so much and thanks so much for putting up with me. I am doing really well in life and am now renting my own really nice apartment that I moved into this weekend

Early Help

This is to express our profound gratitude to you for the positive outcome of yesterday's hearing, which was due largely to your diligence and commitment.

SSSU

We have had a meeting with new IRO A a few months ago which, we were really impressed with him, it was a good meeting and he gave us a lot of hope that things will improve for X

Fostering

She was not only professional, non-bias, confident and knowledgeable, but was also extremely supportive and

MASH

I like working with J she knows how to help with my mental health and my anxiety i was wondering if i can have more sessions with her

Assessment

Your dedication, compassion, and tireless efforts have made an immeasurable difference in the lives of the mother and child involved.

Conclusion and recommendations

The data and analysis presented in this report offers valuable insights into the performance and challenges faced by Havering's Children's Services in managing complaints. Despite encountering obstacles such as staff turnover and communication issues, the service has demonstrated resilience and a commitment to improvement.

Noteworthy trends include a reduction in overall complaints received, albeit with an increase in Stage 2 escalations. This underscores the need for proactive resolution strategies and effective communication to address concerns at an early stage.

The dedication to learning from complaints and implementing systemic improvements is evident, as shown in the decrease in upheld complaints and the focus on staff training and development. Efforts to streamline processes, enhance response times, and leverage technology for better complaint management are commendable and poised to yield positive results.

The insights gleaned from monitoring information regarding demographics, disabilities, ethnicity, and religion underscore the importance of inclusive and equitable service delivery. Addressing representation imbalances and empowering all service users to provide feedback will be crucial in fostering trust and accountability within the community.

Moreover, the recognition of compliments received, particularly for Safeguarding and Early Help services, reflects the positive impact of dedicated staff efforts and reinforces Havering's commitment to delivering high-quality services.

As Havering's Children's Services continue their journey of improvement, it is imperative to sustain the momentum of positive change, address persistent challenges, and prioritise the well-being and best interests of children and families. By embracing a culture of transparency, accountability, and continuous learning, the service can further enhance its effectiveness and reputation, ultimately ensuring the best outcomes for the children and communities it serves.

Complaints play an important role in identifying and embedding service improvements. Whilst there have been improvements, response times are not yet being consistently met. This is having a negative impact on taking the learning from complaints to the service in a timely manner and takes up staff time in chasing outstanding complaint responses.

The recording and monitoring of complaints is continually being reviewed and it is recognised that performance in this area needs to be improved, this is something that the Complaints & Information Team Manager and Director of Children's Services will continue to collaborate on in 2024-25.

The extended managers team looks at quality assurance and learning from complaints, while also linking to appropriate training and, going forward, quarterly meetings will be held with the Children's Services Senior Management Team to review performance and monitor progress against the action plans on any complaints received in the preceding quarter.

Although Children's Services are better recording compliments, teams will again be reminded to forward compliments for recording purposes, as we are aware the numbers may not be representative of all compliments actually received recognising the good work being done within teams. Managers and staff will be reminded to record compliments with the Complaints & Information Team.

Complaints and Compliments Action Plan

	Task / Action	Owner	By Date	Intended Outcome / Impact	Target Completion Date	Quarterly Update
Page 32	<p>1 Enhancing Complaint Handling Processes</p> <p>Action Steps Further develop the 'closing the loop' interview with complainants after the complaint is resolved, ensuring that feedback is collected to improve future service delivery. Develop a robust structure within the complaints handling process, outlining specific tasks that should be completed within the ten-day response timescale, such as making a phone call to the complainant.</p>	Tara Geere/ Customer Information & Investigations	By April 2025	<p>Intended Outcomes:</p> <p>Improve customer satisfaction and trust by actively engaging with complainants throughout the process and seeking feedback on their experiences. Enhance efficiency and accountability by clearly defining roles and responsibilities and establishing standardized procedures for handling complaints within the specified timeframe.</p>	The revised process to be in place by October 2024	
	<p>2 Proactive Resolution Strategies</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <p>Continue offering resolution meetings to complainants at Stage 2 Implement a formal process for successful resolution meetings to be documented and shared for learning purposes. Provide training to staff on conflict resolution and effective communication techniques.</p>	Tara Geere/ Customer Information & I Investigations	By April 25	<p>Intended Outcomes:</p> <p>Reduce the need for formal complaints escalation. Increase satisfaction among complainants by resolving issues more quickly. Improve staff skills in conflict resolution and communication.</p>	The revised process to be in place by October 2024	

Children's Services, Starting Well - Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2023-24

3	<p>Strengthening Response Times</p> <p>Action Steps: Monitor complaint response times closely and identify bottlenecks in the process. Implement measures to streamline the complaints handling process, leveraging new technologies where possible. Provide additional resources or staffing support to the Complaints & Information Team if needed.</p> <p>Set clear targets for response times and regularly review performance against these targets.</p>	Johannah Philp	From April 24	<p>Intended Outcomes:</p> <p>Improve overall customer satisfaction by responding to complaints in a timely manner. Increase efficiency and effectiveness of the complaints handling process. Enhance accountability and transparency by meeting established response time targets.</p>	As received and On-going	
4	All managers to ensure that compliments are captured and shared with the Customer Insight & Investigations Team team for collation and reporting.	All Heads of Service, Group Managers and Team Managers/CIIT	From April 24	Compliments are recognised and celebrated with the workforce and any learning from good practice is utilised.	As received and On-going	
5	Children's Services Practice and Case Recording Standards to be relaunched and a regular discussion item at service and team meetings, and case recording to be a standard item within staff PDR's for all case holding practitioners and managers.	All Heads of Service and Group Managers	From April 24	Improved case recording should result in fewer complaints regarding improper or inaccurate recording of information.	To be in all PDRs for 2024/25	
6	Introduction of a more formal process for learning from complaints, local and national serious case reviews / rapid reviews to be shared consistently across the service and partners.	Kate Dempsey / Practice Development Manager	From April 24	Practice development and learning is disseminated across the service to ensure positive changes occur as a result of serious incidents during practice weeks.	TBC	
7	Process to be developed for families to be notified in writing of any significant changes to service delivery, and the reasons why e.g., new social worker or any significant	Gary Jones	From April 24	Improved communication regarding significant changes should result in fewer	September 2024	

Children's Services, Starting Well - Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2023-24

	decisions made (for example, family time arrangements, change of care plan or end of intervention)			complaints regarding poor communication		
8	All managers are to be responsible for quality-assuring documents and ensuring compliance with data protection regulation (GDPR) within key documents such as assessments and care plans before they are shared; to be checked through quality assurance processes	All Heads of Service, Group Managers and Team Managers	From April 24	All information shared is relevant, proportionate and compliant with our duties under data protection regulation, therefore reducing the likelihood of complaints in this area.	On-going	
9	All responding managers to ensure that complaints and responses are shared with relevant staff members and are discussed during supervision meetings	All Heads of Service, Group Managers and Team Managers	From April 24	Learning from complaints and accountability	On-going	
10	Managers to include complaints and compliments as a standing item on team meeting agendas	All Heads of Service, Group Managers and Team Managers	From April 24	Learning from complaints and accountability	On-going	



APPENDIX 2

Starting Well - Education Services

Annual Report 2023–24 Complaints and Compliments

**Prepared for: Trevor Cook,
Assistant Director for Education, Starting Well**

**Prepared by: Johannah Philp,
Complaints, Compliance & Information Team Lead**

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Executive Summary

At the London Borough of Havering our Education Service is focused on improving outcomes for children and young people by supporting education providers to be as effective and efficient as they can be in their day-to-day work.

The Havering Education service works with schools, academies, colleges and early years providers to provide critical statutory and traded education services. With a long-established history, we have developed and maintained strong partnerships and relationships with key stakeholders in these institutions ensuring high-quality day-to-day support.

As well as providing support for education settings, the service also has statutory responsibilities for ensuring high-quality provision for children from early years to reception, and throughout all their schooling to age 18, and up to 25 years for those young people with special educational needs (SEND) as well as the statutory responsibility for the placement of those children and young people, via the statutory admissions process and early education entitlement placement processes.

The service also provides support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities across education and social care. It is responsible for implementing the legislation under the Children and Families Act 2014, working together to bring about coordinated support for children, young people and their families. Collectively they are responsible for the Education Health and Care assessment and planning process, support from advisory teachers and educational psychologists in schools and the children's social care statutory processes around Children in need, Child protection and looked after Children.

The number of Corporate complaints increased significantly in 2023-24 period by 116%. The majority of these complaints were about the SEND service (35). Of those 35 complaints, many of them were about delays with Educational Health Care Plans and Home to School Transport Consultation.

Overall response times for both corporate complaints and enquires have dropped slightly with 78% in 2023-24 being responded to within timescale, compared to 81% in 2022-23, again this is likely to be due to the number being received in 2022-23 increasing by 23% overall.

Our action plan for 2024–25 is focused on continuing to further improve response times, across complaints. We are also focused on improving the member enquiry response times.

The introduction of the case management system, Casetracker will assist with improving recording and response times of complaints and enquiries. This launched in April 2024.

1. Ombudsman referrals

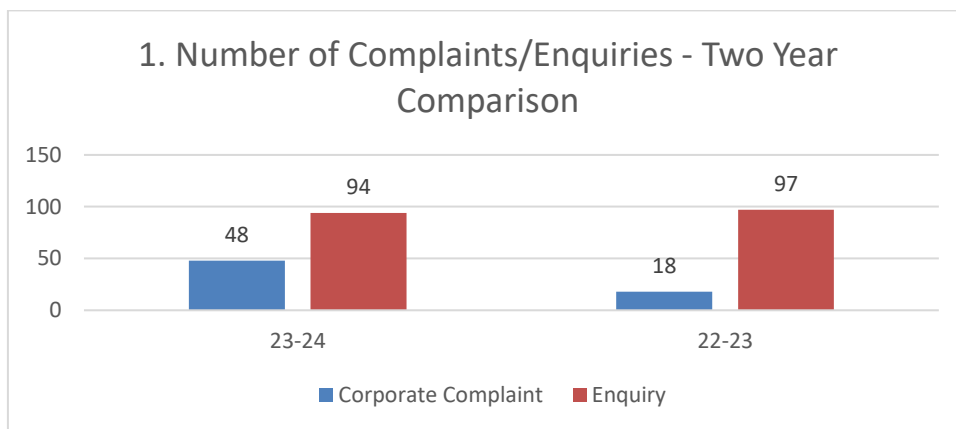
Encouragingly there have been no Ombudsman enquiries for 2023-24.

2. Total number of complaints

The total number of Corporate Complaints has increased by 116% from 18 in 2022-23 to 48 in 2023-24, which are reported within the Corporate Complaints reports.

Enquiries have reduced slightly by 3% to 94 in 2023-24 from 97 in 2022-23.

Enquiries are complaints received by the authority that relate to schools, academies or colleges that may need to be taken through their own complaints procedure.



2.1 Service Areas

Chart 2 shows the breakdown of enquiries received in 2023-24. As expected, the highest number (79) are those for Education & Schools, 61 of those enquiries were received via OFSTED. We have seen a small decrease in the number of SEND enquiries being received.

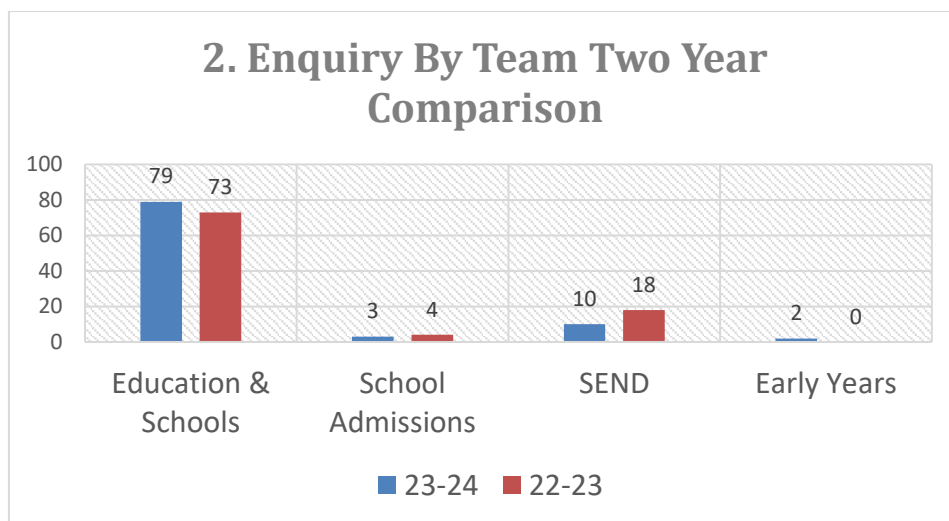
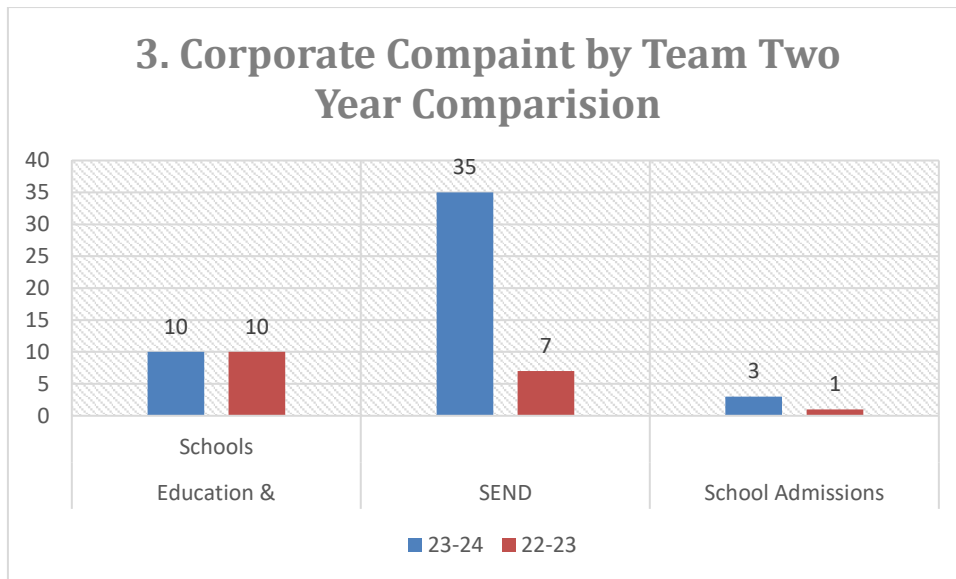


Chart 3 shows the breakdown of Corporate complaints received. Across the teams, 2023-24 saw an increase in the number of corporate complaints received with the highest rise being for SEND, many of these are concerning Educational Health Care Plans.



2.2 Themes

Chart 4 shows a breakdown of themes for enquiries received and relates to those complaints relating to schools, academy or college issues. The main reason by far is safeguarding/welfare concerns which make up 65% of all enquiries received, 92% of which were received from Ofsted. There has also been an increase in the number of enquiries received in relation to lack of communication in 2023-24, these generally relate to delays in communication being made available, inaccurate information, or unclear communication.

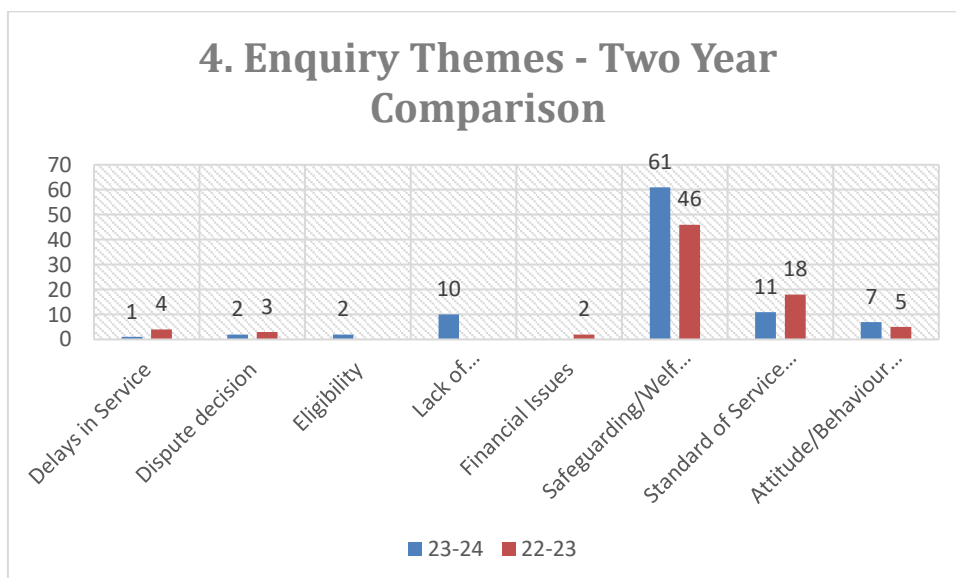
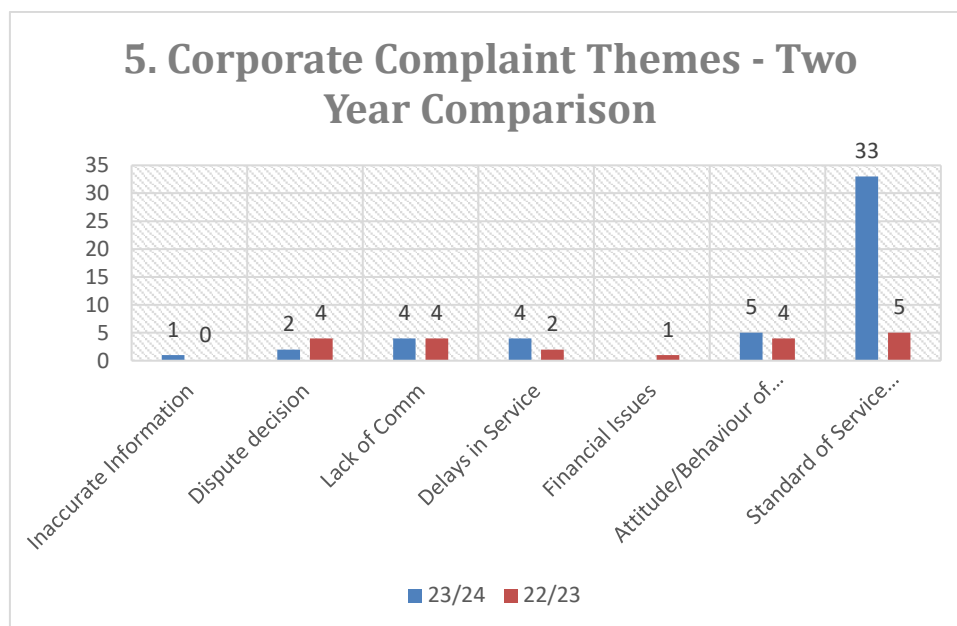


Chart 5 shows the breakdown of Corporate Complaints themes. There has been a significant increase over the past year in the number of complaints relating to standard of service not met. The majority of these have been made against the SEND Service.

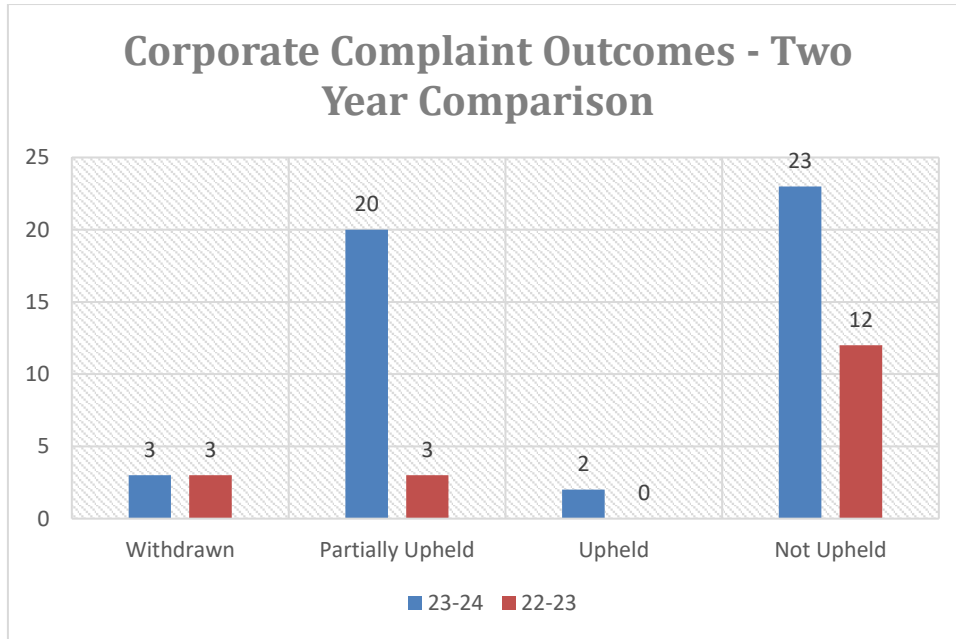
13 of those complaints relate to delays in Educational Health Care planning and 9 were about the recent Home to School Transport consultation where it became apparent that the consultation papers had not been shared with out-of-borough schools. This was initially thought to have been rectified with the consultation period extended, however, a further extension is now taking place.



2.3 Outcomes

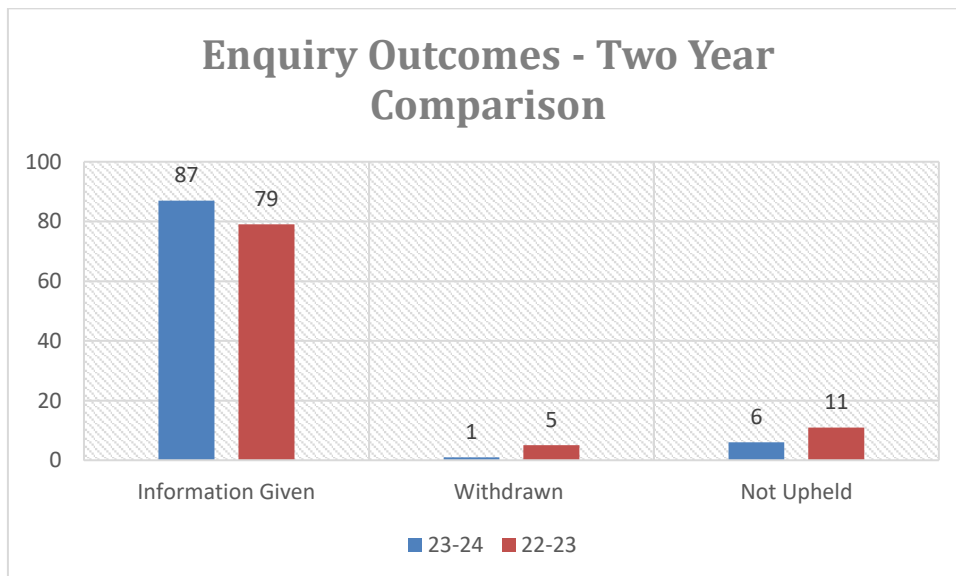
Corporate Complaint Outcomes

Of the Corporate Complaints received in 2023-24, 23 were not upheld and explanations were given, 20 were partially upheld, most of which were in relation to standard of service not met in the SEN team. Two complaints were upheld, these were also complaints made against the SEN Team. For partially upheld and upheld complaints apologies were made, and information given. Three complaints were withdrawn. Upheld complaints are always reviewed in order to feed into learning for the service and to identify areas for improvement.



Enquiry Outcomes

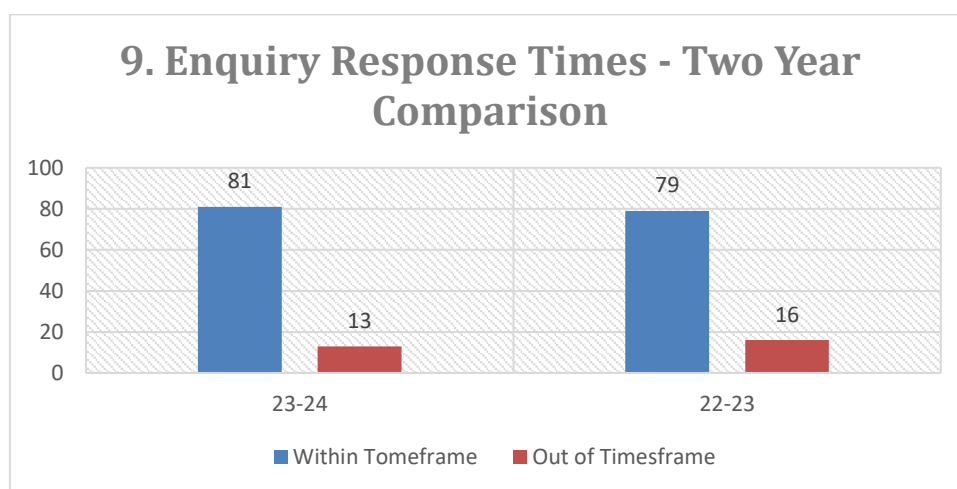
Enquiry outcomes are shown below with 87 being ‘information given’ to advise complainants of the correct process. There was a 58% increase in the number of Ofsted enquiries received in 2023-24. 70% of the enquiries received from Ofsted were mainly concerning safeguarding, these enquiries are routinely sent on for the attention of the Assistant Director for Education Services, and some may result in follow-up enquiries with the school or academy. One enquiry was withdrawn and six were not upheld.



2.4 Response times

There has been a slight reduction in the number of corporate complaints being responded to within timeframe down to 65% during 2023-24, compared to 77% in 2022-23. This is due to the higher volume of enquiries that were received throughout the year and the capacity issues within the SEND service, which we are being monitored with some additional growth posts in 2024-2025.

Of the 94 enquiries received during 2023-24 92 (88%) were responded to within timeframe, an improvement on the 80% in 2022-23 which is very encouraging given the capacity challenges.

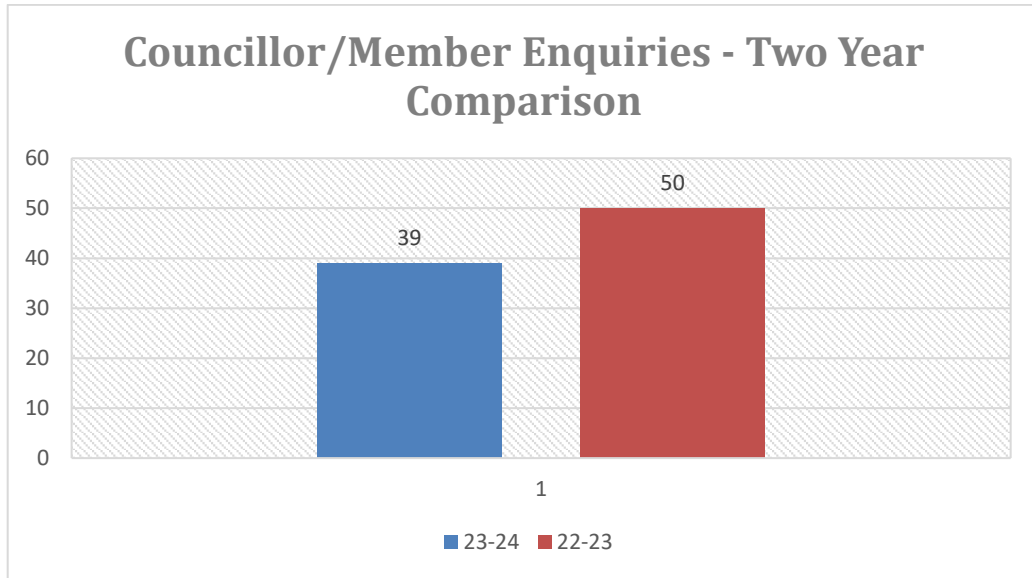


2. Members' Correspondence

Councillor and Member enquiries reduced by 22% to 39 in 2023-24 compared to 50 in 2022-23, with 90% being responded to within the timescale. It should be noted that it is likely that there may have been many more enquiries than the numbers being reported here, due to them being sent directly to officers within the service. Officers and members are reminded to ensure that SCCI is aware of such enquiries so that we can report on them more accurately.

It is evident that some members sometimes become involved in 'Business as Usual' Communication, with good intentions, however this occasionally escalates into complaints. To address this, we are planning a session with members to clarify the correct process for their involvement. We believe that this proactive approach will help streamline our communication and prevent any misunderstandings and reduce complaints.

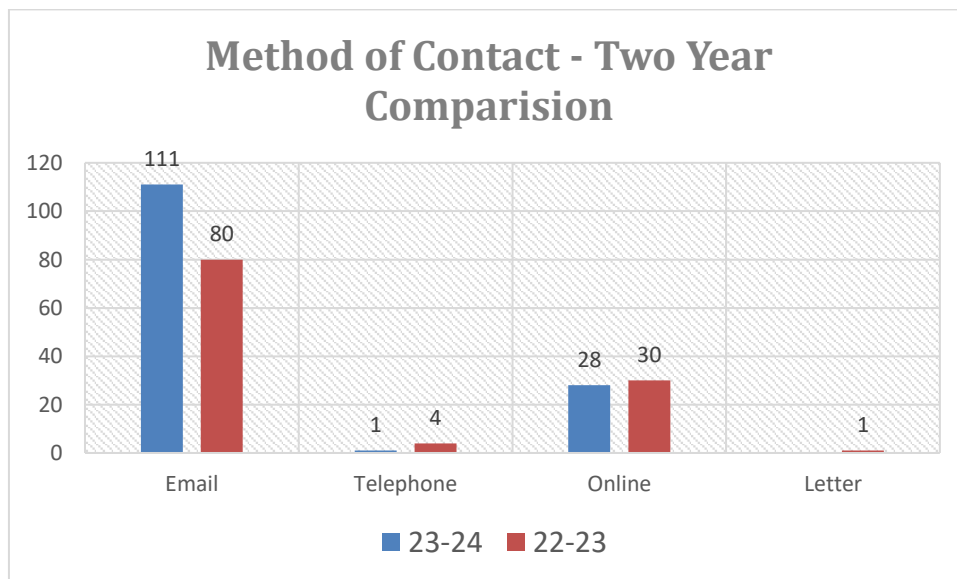
The newly formed Insight, Information and Investigations Team have a new complaints and information case management system in place which allows the tracking, reporting and monitoring of complaints to become much more effective. With this in mind, the decision has been taken to move members enquiries onto this system. The build will begin shortly and over the next few months, it is hoped that all member enquiries will be logged in this way.



3. Method of Contact

Email continues to be the preferred method of contact for Corporate Complaints and Enquiries in 2023-24 at 80%. Despite numbers still being relatively low, we have seen those coming through online consistent with 2022-23.

Havering has procured a new complaints and information case management system from ROL Solutions, Casetracker. We will be aiming to significantly increase the number of enquiries being submitted via the online form in 2024-25.



5. Compliments

The number of compliments received for Education in 2023-24 has stayed consistent with those received in 2022-23 (13), however, the low numbers reported here are likely to be a result of compliments not being shared with SCCI by the officers within the service. Officers are reminded to share all compliments so that we are able to reflect the good work being undertaken accurately.

You deserve an award for everything you do for all SEN children in this borough with little help from government

I would just like to show my appreciation and thank you for everything your team do. Once again thank you so much for all the help and support you offer the children.

We are eager to continue our close working relationship with Havering Council, championing educational excellence

You have really shown your dedication to children and providing them with enriching experiences. Especially you are keen to include children with SEN and ensure they don't feel left out

C and B were both full of praise for the exceptional joint working between themselves and your education department in making the processes run smoothly

I am so pleased with everything and all your hard work .

6. Conclusion

Education Services complaints are being dealt with effectively through the Corporate Complaints process and we are seeing improvements in the processes, including improved recorded with the detail and breakdown of information available.

The information collated for complaints that relate to schools, academies, and colleges are recorded as enquiries within this report. Although this is only a snapshot of complaints, it does provide information on particular themes arising. In 2023-24 these themes were predominantly around safeguarding and welfare concerns.

Further work is required to improve the timescales of responses and to ensure compliments are recorded consistently

As Education also receives some Corporate Complaints, this report has been included as an additional appendix as part of the Children's Services Statutory Complaints Annual Report.

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PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:	Adult Social Care Annual Complaints & Compliments Report
SLT Lead:	Barbara Nicholls
Report Author and contact details:	<i>Johannah Philp Tel: 01708 431998</i> johannah.philp@havering.gov.uk
Policy context:	An annual report is required as part of the remit of 'The Local Authority Social Services & NHS Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 and Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003.
Financial summary:	There are no financial implications as this report is for information purposes and is required as part of the statutory complaints regulations

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Places making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connections making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>

SUMMARY

The Adult Social Care Annual Complaints Report 2023-24 is attached as Appendix 1. The report outlines the complaints, enquiries, compliments and Member correspondence received during the period April 2023 – March 2024.

Adult Social Care Annual Complaints fall within the remit of the 'The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009' with a requirement to publish the annual report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Members note the contents of the report with the particular challenges faced by the service during 2023-24 with the added pressures resulting from the cost of living crisis and the continued efforts in resolving and learning from complaints.
2. That Members note:
 - (a) the continued use of complaints as a learning tool to identify actions to improve services.
 - (b) the continued monitoring by the Service and the Complaints & Information Team to ensure actions are implemented to evidence the service improvements with a view to reduce similar complaints.
3. That Members note the increase in the positive feedback received by staff, during a particularly difficult period, by way of compliments received and highlighting examples of good practice.

REPORT DETAIL

1. In 2023-24, Adult Social Care received 124 statutory complaints, representing a 7.8% increase from 2022-23(115). The small increase in the number of complaints over the last year could be attributed to the decommissioning of CM2000 as we have seen a high volume of complaints relating to invoicing.
2. Ombudsman enquiries in 2023-24 saw a total of 16 complaints being made regarding Adult Social Care decisions, this is a significant increase on the 7 cases referred to them in 2022-23. However, of the 16 cases referred to the LGSCO, 9 were discontinued and not investigated following initial enquiries, this is a testament to the accurate case recording of Havering staff members. There have been 5 decisions for maladministration (injustice with penalty) and 2 cases remain ongoing. All of the decisions returned for maladministration were regarding the level and quality of care provided by home care agencies along with poor record keeping and short visits.
3. Financial Issues' was the highest reason for complaints during 2023-24 followed by 'Standard of Service' (linked predominately to home care provision) which is the same as in 2022-23. As above, where financial issues were given as the primary reason this is around invoicing and charging, these are usually coupled with a secondary complaint point

around the quality of care by home care providers. 'Dispute Decision' was the third highest relating to the discharge pathways (and the associated financial contributions) however the majority of these complaints were not upheld, a testament to the robust processes put in place throughout the year.

4. Of the 124 complaints received in 2023-24, 13% were upheld that is reduction on the 24 upheld in 2022-23. 15.3% were partially upheld another reduction from 18.2% on last year and 51% were not upheld compared to 45.2% in 2022-23. The number of complaints being withdrawn also went up from 12% to 21%. There was a significant increase in the number of complaints 'not upheld'. A number around financial charging were able to be rejected due to evidence that discussions had taken place with the client or family members around the charging processes in advance.
5. Learning from complaints continues to be a focus within Adult Social Care. During 2023-24, with rising financial demands on residents the priority and focus for Adult Social Care was on vulnerable residents within Havering and ensuring appropriate support was provided. It is noted that there was still a need for workers to ensure that service users and family members received appropriate, relevant and accurate information.
6. Response times improved for complaints responded to within 20 working days in 2023-24, 75% compared to 58.2% in 2022-23. Responses over 20 working days showed another improvement in 2023-24 at 26% compared to 41.6% in 2022-23, this is also encouraging given that many of the complaints received in 2023-24 have seen more complexities and often involve care providers and require more thorough investigation.
7. During 2023-24 complaints across all age ranges showed an increase, the most significant increase by far was for those aged 85 years and over with a 107% increase from 40 to 83. It is also noticeable that the number of complaints received that are in respect of those aged between 18 years and 24 years increased from one in 2022-23 to 22 in 2023-24. It is noted that during 2023-24 complaints relating to females were 29% higher than those for males.
8. As reflected in the population of Havering, 'White British' is the highest ethnicity and there was a 78% representation in this category for 2023-24 as against 83% recorded for 2022-23. There were no significant changes in the data collated for the other groups such as Asian/Asian British – Any other Asian background', 'Asian/Asian British – Pakistani' and 'Mixed White & Asian', 'Black/Black British – African' and 'Black/Black British – Caribbean'. Whilst underrepresented groups have not changed significantly over the years, we continue to monitor our resident involvement in view of Havering's changing demographics. 9% of service users that have made a complaint on 2023-24 have no ethnicity recorded.
9. There has been a significant increase in the number of service users who have no religion recorded, this has increased from 88 in 2022-23 to 160 in 2023-24 up 81%, and greater emphasis will be placed on case file auditing

to address this recording. There have been marginal increases in those recorded as Christian and Church of England.

10. Email continues to be the favoured method of contact during 2023-24 at 50%, with telephone being the second highest method of contact at 27%, which remains consistent with 2022-23.
11. Expenditure on complaints totalled £6535.63 in 2023-24 a reduction of £3965.63 compared to 2022-23. This is made up of payment of £4250.00 following Ombudsman investigations and £2585.63 in invoices being waived.
12. The number of compliments received during 2023-24 increased significantly to 90 from 48 in 2022-23. The number of compliments is encouraging and is testimony to the professional and proficient service staff across Adult Social Care provide to the residents of Havering who are in need of support.
13. The number of MP/Councillor enquiries received in 2023-24 was 87, an 81% increase from 2022-23 (48). 78 of those enquiries (90%) were responded to within the timeframe in 2023-24, an improvement on the 86% in 2022-23.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

There are no specific financial implications to this report, which is for information only. Costs incurred through complaints will be contained within Adult Social Care allocated budgets. With the increase in the number of complaints highlighted in the report, there is still a risk of consequential compensation payments, which is being managed in the service by ensuring lessons are learned and procedures reviewed to minimise the risk of compensation arising from future complaints.

Legal implications and risks:

The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 require the Local Authority to have a complaints process for adult social care complaints. These Regulations set out the types of complaint that can be made, by whom and how they are to be processed.

Regulation 18 requires as follows:

- (1) Each responsible body must prepare an annual report for each year which must—
 - (a) specify the number of complaints which the responsible body received;
 - (b) specify the number of complaints which the responsible body decided were well-founded;
 - (c) specify the number of complaints which the responsible body has been informed have been referred to—
 - (i) the Health Service Commissioner to consider under the 1993 Act; or

- (ii) the Local Commissioner to consider under the Local Government Act 1974; and
- (d) summarise—
 - (i) the subject matter of complaints that the responsible body received;
 - (ii) any matters of general importance arising out of those complaints, or the way in which the complaints were handled;
 - (iii) any matters where action has been or is to be taken to improve services as a consequence of those complaints.

The Annual Report appears to comply with these Regulations and therefore there are no apparent legal implications from noting of this report.

Human Resources implications and risks:

There are no HR implications.

Equalities implications and risks:

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

- (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are: age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants. We are regularly monitoring the equalities profile of our customers and it is encouraging that disclosure is improving year on year.

The most recent monitoring information has evidenced that the number of ethnic minorities accessing the complaints process is reflective of the population within Havering and therefore accessing information about our Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy and Procedure or the facilities available to make a complaint/compliment is available to these groups. Monitoring data shows that there has been a significant increase in complaints made by service users with physical disabilities and this has been linked to the increase in disabled freedom pass complaints, however this will need continued monitoring.

We will continue to ensure that our communication is clear, accessible and written in plain English, and that translation and interpreting services or reasonable adjustments are provided upon request or where appropriate. We will need to ensure accurate and comprehensive monitoring data is maintained to cross-tabulate complaints data against protected characteristics. This will provide us with more detailed information on gaps/issues in service provision and barriers facing

people with different protected characteristics, and will enable us to take targeted actions and make informed decisions on service improvement and future service provision.



ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Complaints, Comments and Compliments

Prepared for: Barbara Nicholls, Strategic Director of People

**Prepared by: Johannah Philp
Complaints, Compliance & Information Team Lead**

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1. Executive Summary

Adult Social Care (ASC) complaints fall within the remit of the 'The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009' which includes a requirement to publish an annual report. This report covers the period from April 2023 to March 2024.

In the year 2023-24, Havering's Adult Social Care department experienced notable shifts in complaints received, reflecting both challenges and successes in service delivery and resolution.

Complaints escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) increased significantly from the previous year, with 14 cases referred we have 16 cases referenced on page 6. However, the diligence of Havering staff led to the discontinuation of 9 cases, showcasing robust case recording practices. Of the remaining cases, 5 were determined to have resulted in maladministration, primarily concerning the quality of care provided by home care agencies and inadequate record-keeping.

A slight rise in statutory complaints was observed, totalling 124 in 2023-24, compared to 115 in the preceding year.

Enquiry volumes surged by 15%, with financial concerns comprising 29% of the total, reflecting the prevailing economic challenges. Efforts to improve record-keeping and communication with care providers are ongoing to address recurring issues.

The Havering Assessment and Community Review Team demonstrated a substantial reduction in complaints, attributed to enhanced discharge-to-assess processes. Conversely, complaints related to the Financial Assessment Team surged by 183%, necessitating a closer examination of invoicing procedures.

Financial issues remained the primary cause of complaints, often intertwined with concerns regarding home care service quality. Disputes over discharge pathways were also notable, although many were ultimately dismissed due to established procedural integrity.

While the overall number of upheld complaints decreased, the proportion of complaints withdrawn increased significantly. Efforts to provide timely information and improve communication with clients and families were emphasised, resulting in a higher percentage of complaints being resolved without financial adjustments. For complaints upheld, apologies and financial adjustments were common resolutions, indicating a commitment to accountability and remediation.

In conclusion, Havering's Adult Social Care department navigated an increase in complaints with resilience and adaptability, leveraging lessons learned to enhance service provision and stakeholder satisfaction. Continued efforts in addressing systemic challenges and fostering a culture of transparency and responsiveness will be pivotal in sustaining positive outcomes in the future.

Outcomes from the complaints process have been incorporated into the ASC Action Plan (Appendix 1) in order to aid learning and improve performance.

2. Introduction

Local authorities have a statutory process for complaints, which are set out in the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints Regulations 2009 and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care's recommendation in paragraph 3.55. It is a requirement for the local authority ASC and Children's Services to have a system of receiving representations by, or on behalf of, users of those services. Havering ASC welcomes all feedback, whether this is a comment on improving the service, a complaint on what has gone wrong, or a compliment about how well a service or individual has performed.

Havering has adopted the statutory guidelines for complaints management as outlined by the Department of Health and good practice principles of the Local Government Ombudsman, and has encompassed this within its new procedures as follows:

Local resolution

Enquiries - Anyone can make an enquiry of the service for any reason, they do not need to have been adversely affected or be in receipt of a social care service. If a response is appropriate either the service can respond directly or SCCI can respond on their behalf. Responses can be provided over the phone or face-to-face as long as a record is kept.

Informal - Where a complaint relates solely to a regulated service, this will be referred to the relevant agency.

Formal - Complaints will be responded to within 20 working days from the date on which points of the complaint are agreed upon and/or relevant consent or further information is received. Complaints involving an external agency will be responded to within 25 working days. Complaints requiring an independent investigation will be completed within 25-65 working days. Timescales may vary in agreement with the complainant.

Stage 1 – Stage 1 Complaints is a replacement for Informal/Formal incorporated as these will be recorded in the same way during 2024-25 via our new complaints case management system Casetracker.

Although there is no longer a Stage 3 Review Panel in the regulations, it has been agreed within Havering to have an option for complaints to be reviewed by a Hearings Panel.

Complainants who remain dissatisfied will have the right to progress to the Local Government Ombudsman and are advised of such in responses.

The time limit for complaints to be made has remained at 12 months.

3. Service Context

Adult Social Care is responsible for ensuring the most vulnerable adults in our community, and their carers, are provided with support to meet their assessed needs. Safeguarding is a priority, with a personalised, outcome-focused approach adopted with each case. The Service ensures residents are provided with practical support to help them live their lives and maintain independence, dignity and control, with individual well-being at the heart of every decision.

Adult Social Care supports and works with individuals across our communities: older adults; adults who have physical disabilities; those with sensory impairment; mental health needs; and/or learning disabilities; as well as carers in the community.

The Service has the responsibility for supporting individuals to remain well and self-sufficient for as long as possible in the community, as well as providing services to those who are vulnerable and have social care needs. Adult Social Care provides direct delivery of services namely day opportunities for people with learning disabilities and physical disabilities.

For those that do not meet the eligibility criteria, we also have a duty to provide information and advice to all residents, and to signpost to services. The Service operates a strength-based approach to frontline social care to support clients to make the best use of community resources and to carry out assessments based on client assets and strengths (we call this 'Better Living'). We continue to work with and integrate with partners, such as the Integrated Care Board and wider Health colleagues, to help people remain well and active for as long as they are able.

Adult Social Care is further supported through the commissioning and brokerage of care, as well as quality and contract monitoring of provider services. In addition, the Service supports clients with the management of direct payments; Appointee and Deputyship and managing client finance arrangements; and assessing client financial contributions to their care to generate income for the Council.

4. Complaints Received

4.1 Ombudsman referrals

In 2023-24, there were a total of 14 complaints made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) regarding Adult Social Care decisions, this is a significant increase on the 7 cases referred to them in 2022-23. However, of the 16 cases referred to the LGSCO, 9 were discontinued and not investigated following initial enquiries, this is a testament to the accurate case recording of Havering staff members.

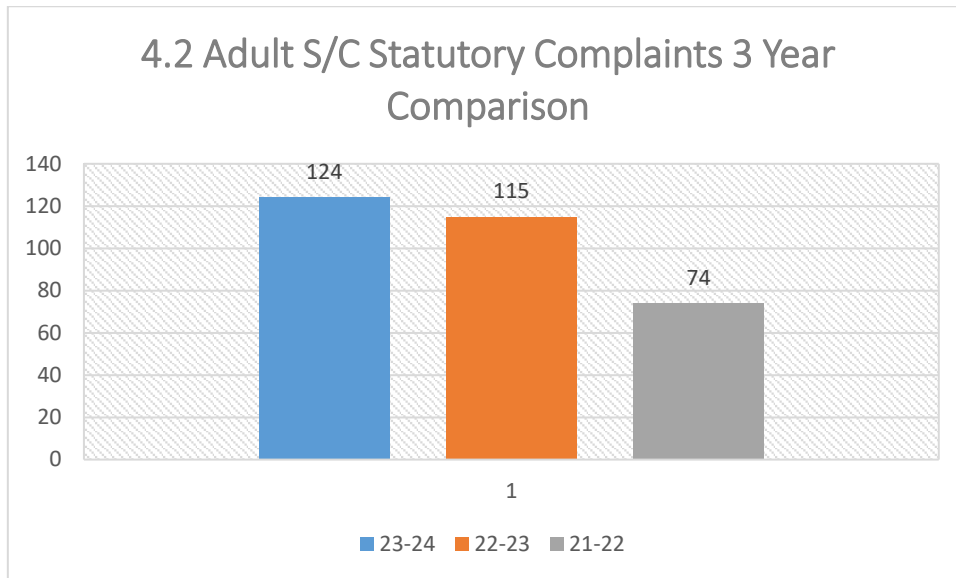
There have been 5 decisions for maladministration (injustice with penalty) and 2 cases remain ongoing.

All of the decisions returned for maladministration were regarding the level and quality of care provided by home care agencies along with poor record keeping and short visits.

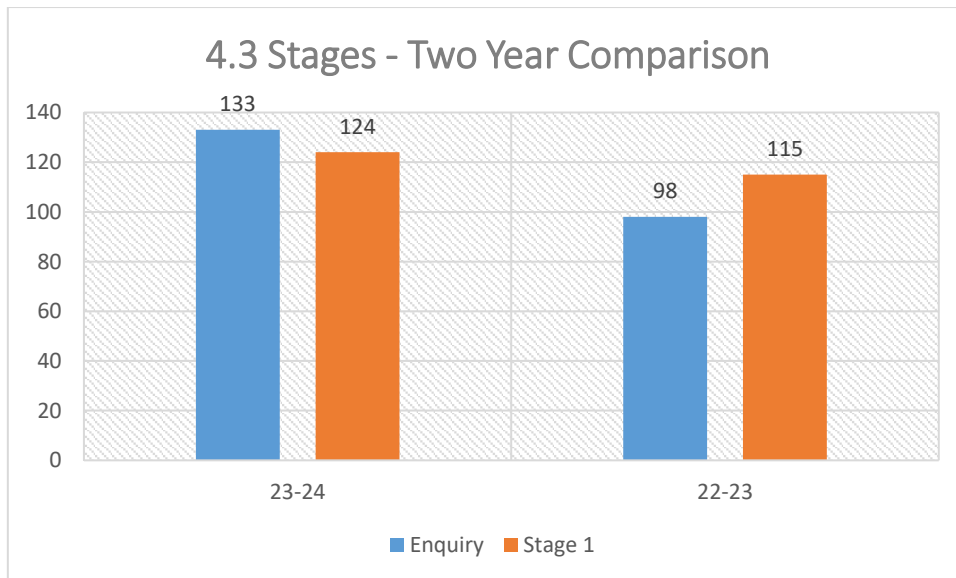
	Apr23 – Mar24	Apr22 – Mar23	Apr21 – Mar22
Maladministration (no injustice)			
Maladministration Injustice with penalty	5	2	2
Maladministration injustice no penalty			
No maladministration after investigation			
Ombudsman discretion			
-Cases under investigation/ongoing			
-Investigation not started/discontinued			
Not upheld no maladministration/service failure			1
Closed after initial enquiries: no further action	9	5	3
Closed after initial enquiries: out of jurisdiction			
Premature/Informal enquiries			
Total	14	7	6

4.2 Total number of complaints

In 2023-24, there have been 124 statutory complaints made, a slight rise on the number received in 2022-23 (115).

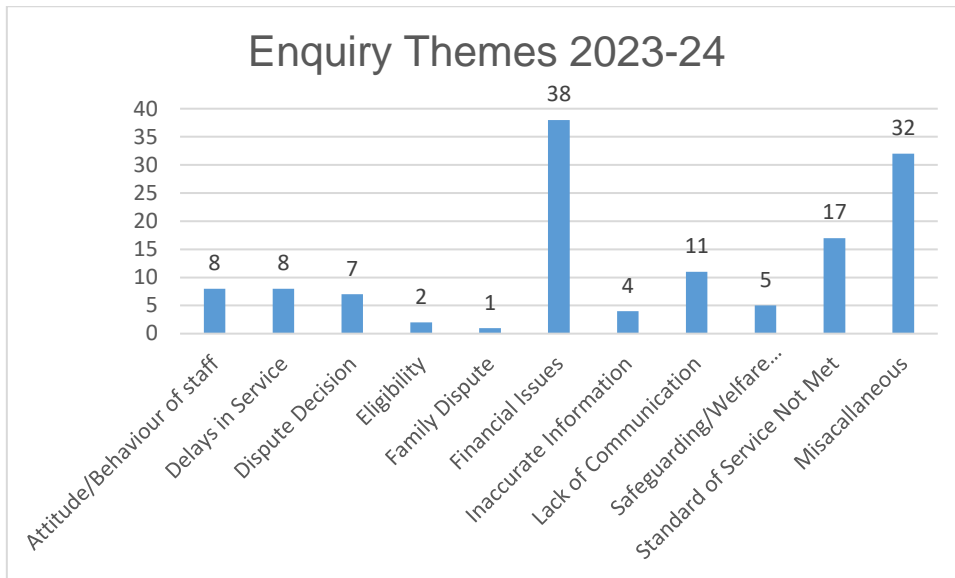


4.3 Stages

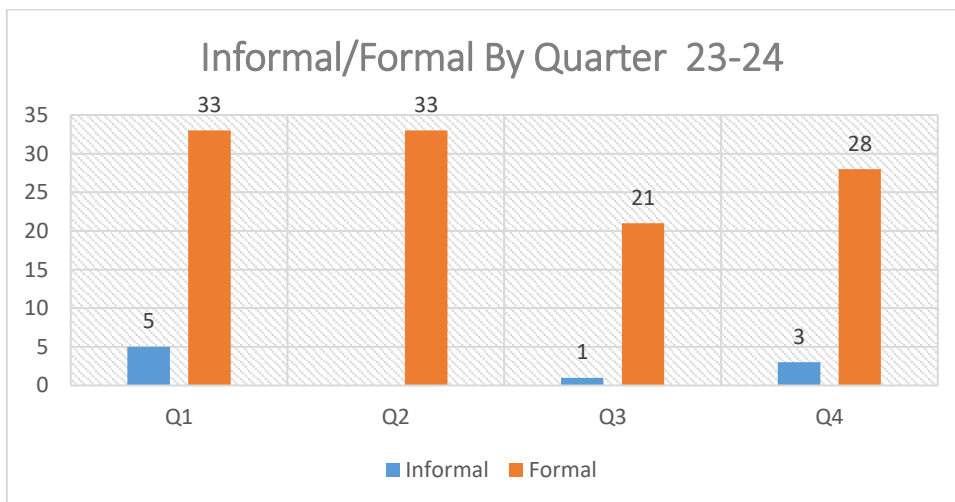


The number of enquiries received has risen from 98 in 2022-23 to 133 in 2023-24, a 15% increase.

The chart below gives an indication of the type of enquiries being received. Given the current financial climate and cost of living crisis, it is unsurprising to see that 29% of the enquiries relate to financial issues which are generally about financial charging, client contributions and cost of care enquiries. There continued to be complaints about the quality of care provided by home care services and the provided hours. Information has been shared with providers regarding the importance of accurate record keeping and the complaints manager continues to work with the quality team to identify where improvements can be made. The enquiries listed as miscellaneous are for a variety of reasons, for example, unwanted correspondence, unable to get through on the telephone, requesting reviews, and information being requested from the service.



There has also been a slight increase in 2023-24 of 8% in Stage 1 complaints. In 2024-25 formal/informal complaints will be reported together as stage 1 complaints.

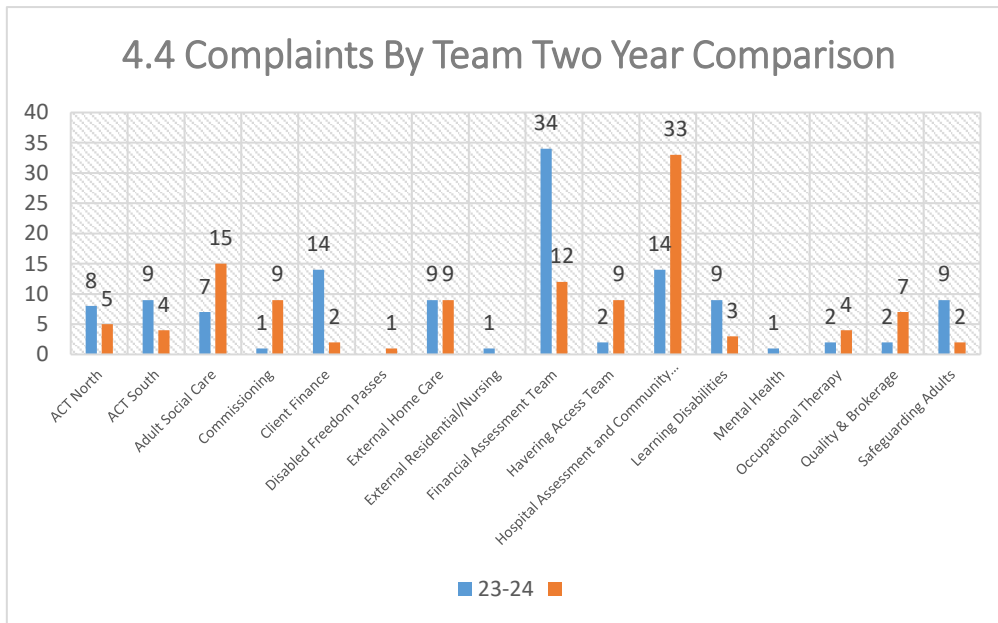


4.4 Service Areas

The Havering Assessment and Community Review Team showed a significant reduction in the number of complaints during 2023-24 with 14 being received compared to 33 in 2022-23. This is really encouraging and evidence that new processes implemented around the discharge to assess process. This reduction has also resulted in us reducing costs incurred when waiving invoice charges.

The number of complaints received around the financial assessment process and the Financial Assessment Team increased by 183% from 12 in 2022-23 to 34 in 2023-24. Many of these complaints were in relation to invoicing queries of lack of explanation about charges.

It is recognised that this should be an area of focus and that there is some work required around how our systems produce invoices and the level and quality of information contained within them.



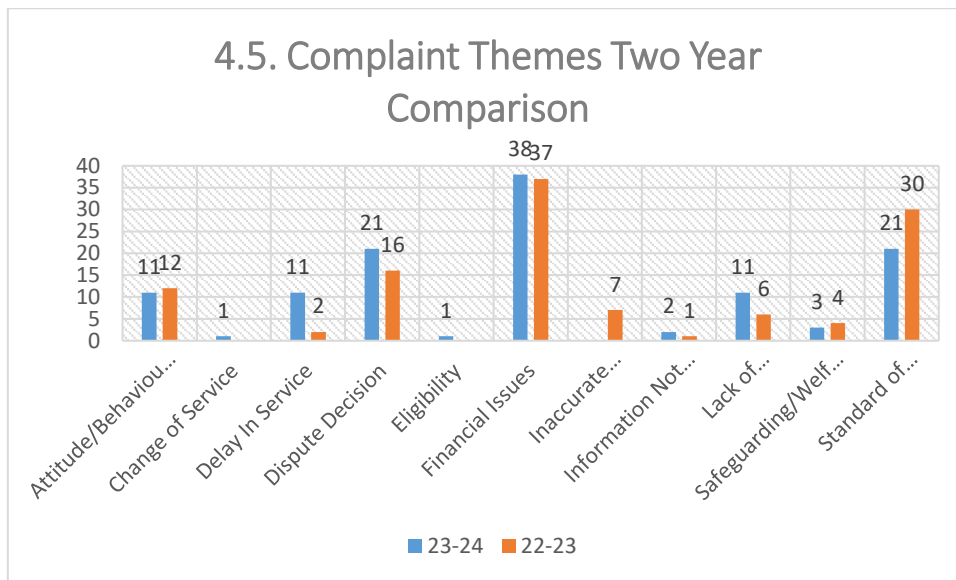
Complaints that relate to multiple areas of the Service (Cross Service - Adults Social Care) have seen a 50% decrease in the number of complaints recorded in 2023-24 and many other frontline teams have also reduced in the number of complaints they receive. This is likely because assessments and reviews of client care are now back to being face-to-face and this means that frontline workers can have more quality conversations with clients to understand the issues faced. ACT North and South, Client Finance, Learning Disabilities and Safeguarding have all seen a small increase in the number of complaints received in 2023-24.

4.5 Themes

As in 2022-23, 'Financial Issues' was the highest reason for complaints during 2023-24 followed by 'Standard of Service' (linked predominately to home care provision) which is the same as in 2022-23.

As above, where financial issues were given as the primary reason this is around invoicing and charging, these are usually coupled with a secondary complaint point around the quality of care by home care providers.

'Dispute Decision' was the third highest relating to the discharge pathways (and the associated financial contributions) however the majority of these complaints were not upheld, a testament to the robust processes put in place throughout the year.

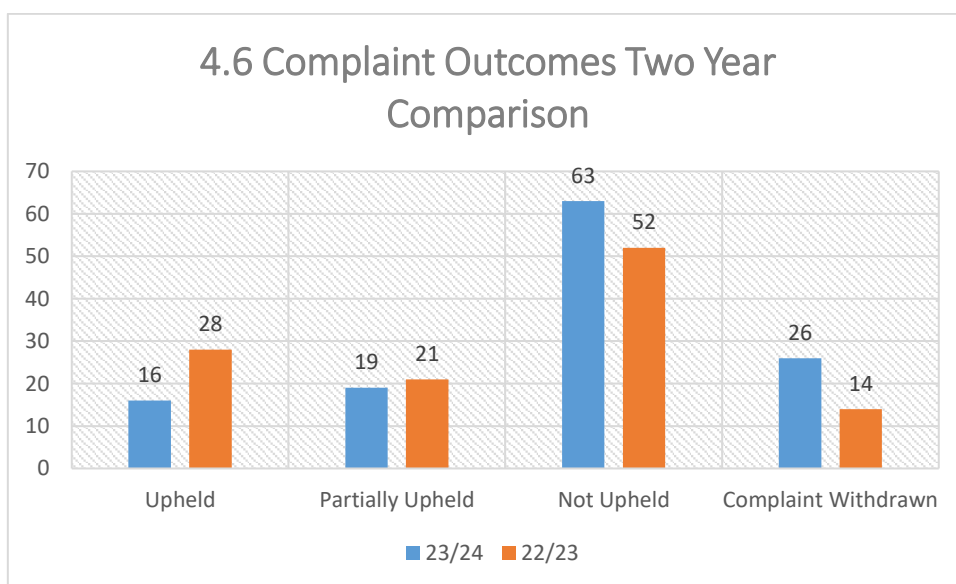


4.6 Outcomes & Learning

Of the 124 complaints received in 2023-24, 13% were upheld that is reduction on the 24.3 upheld in 2022-23. 15.3% were partially upheld another reduction from 18.2% on last year and 51% were not upheld compared to 45.2% in 2022-23.

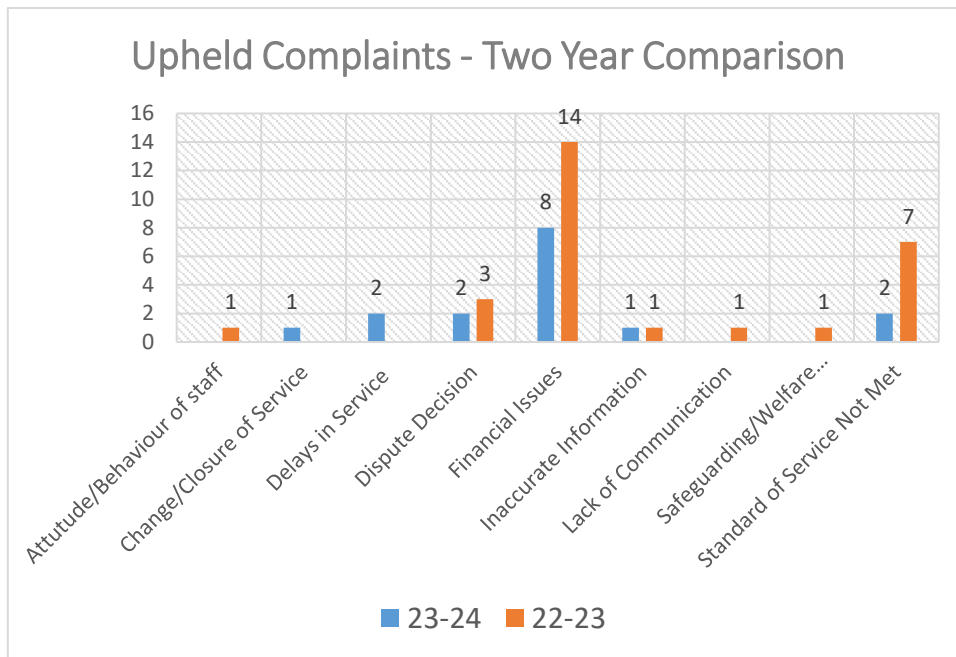
The number of complaints being withdrawn also went up from 12% to 21%.

There was a significant increase in the number of complaints ‘not upheld’. A number around financial charging were able to be rejected due to evidence that discussions had taken place with the client or family members around the charging processes in advance.

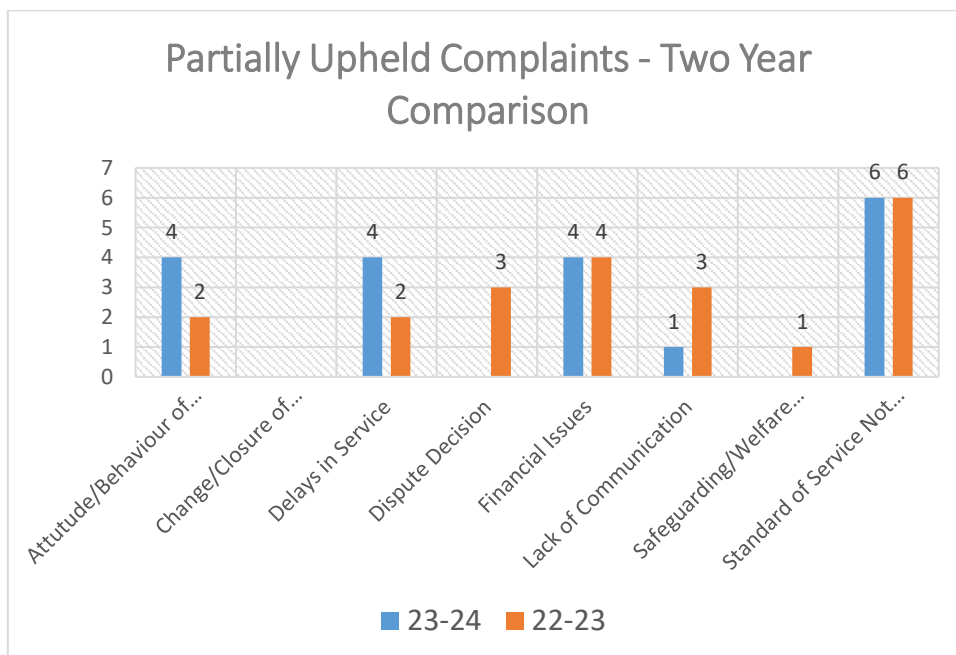


For complaints that were upheld 55% resulted in an apology being given and 45% resulted in a financial adjustment being made.

The financial adjustments were due to the Service not being able to evidence from the client database records that information about client financial charging was given in a timely manner. Processes have already been updated (as explained previously) to mitigate this in future as far as possible. Furthermore, home care charges are reimbursed when clients challenge the care hours received and this is upheld by the Service. These costs are recouped from the payments to the providers where they have erroneously charged.



For complaints that were partially upheld 95% resulted in an apology being given or information/explanation provided and 5% resulted in a financial adjustment being made.



4.6.1 Learning from Complaints

Complaints surrounding financial issues highlight the importance of clear communication regarding invoicing and charges. Improving transparency in financial assessments and charging processes can pre-emptively address misunderstandings and mitigate complaints.

The prevalence of complaints related to the quality of care provided by home care agencies underscores the need for ongoing monitoring and quality assurance measures. Regular audits and feedback mechanisms can help ensure that care standards meet the expectations of clients and their families.

Effective record-keeping is crucial for both accurate case management and addressing complaints. Investing in training and resources to enhance record-keeping practices can facilitate smoother resolution of complaints and strengthen the overall integrity of service delivery.

Complaints serve as valuable feedback for identifying areas where services may not fully meet the needs and expectations of clients. Adopting a client-centered approach that prioritises individual preferences and concerns can foster greater satisfaction and reduce the likelihood of complaints.

Prompt resolution of complaints, coupled with sincere apologies when warranted, can help rebuild trust and mitigate the impact of service shortcomings. Establishing protocols for swift acknowledgement and resolution of complaints demonstrates accountability and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Investing in ongoing training and development for staff members, particularly in areas such as communication skills, conflict resolution, and service standards, can equip them with the tools and knowledge needed to address complaints effectively and prevent recurrence.

Regular reviews of service delivery processes, informed by insights from complaints, are essential for identifying systemic issues and implementing targeted interventions. Engaging stakeholders in process improvement initiatives can foster a culture of collaboration and ownership in addressing service challenges.

4.6.2 Learning from the Ombudsman

It is important to note that where ASC commission a service, the local authority will be deemed responsible for those services and the actions of the organisation.

Commissioning, as part of their monitoring and quality visits, inspect records and complaints of providers and will make recommendations for improvements required. This is also reinforced through the Quality and Safeguarding Board meetings that take place in ASC, which cover safeguarding concerns, quality concerns, and complaints.

The Ombudsman decision of fault with injustice in 2023-24 with the highest financial impact on the service underscores the importance of thorough and considerate communication in care management, particularly when dealing with vulnerable individuals

like those with dementia. It highlights the necessity of assessing not just the care needs but also the financial and legal aspects surrounding the individual's situation. Learning from this, we should prioritise obtaining necessary legal documentation and ensuring clear communication channels with all relevant parties involved. By doing so, we can mitigate misunderstandings, prevent financial burdens on families, and ultimately provide more effective and compassionate care.

4.7 Response times

Response times improved for complaints responded to within 20 working days in 2023-24, 75% compared to 58.2% in 2022-23. The increased performance was a testament to the hard work of staff and the strategies put into place to deal with complaints in time.

Responses over 20 working days showed another improvement in 2023-24 at 26% compared to 41.6% in 2022-23, this is also encouraging given that many of the complaints received in 2023-24 have seen more complexities and often involve care providers and require more thorough investigation.

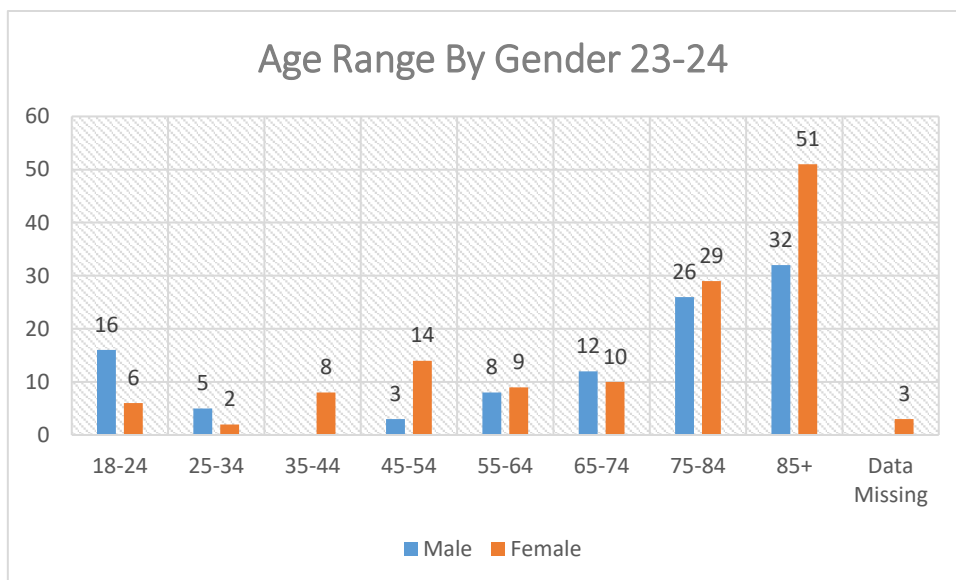
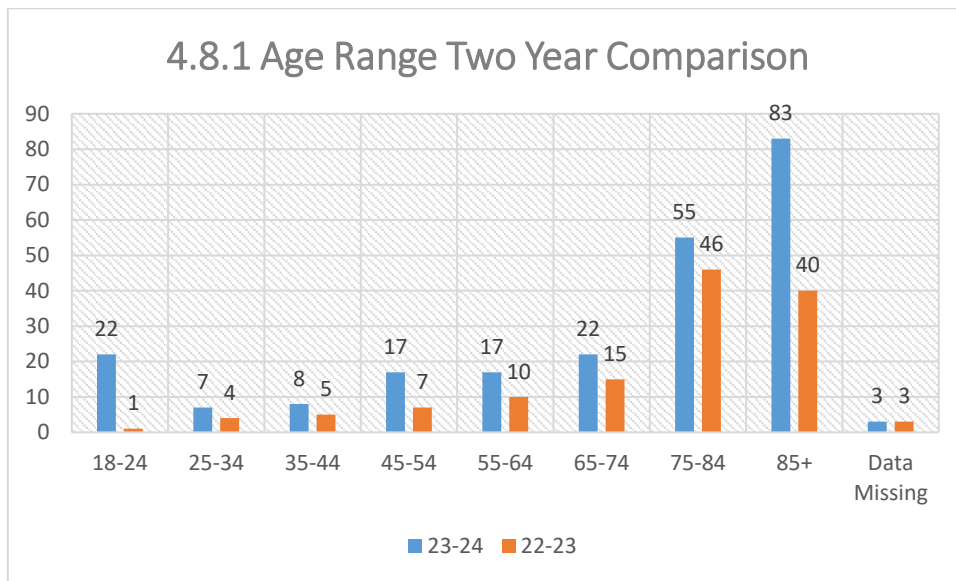
	Within 10 days	%	11-20 days	%	20+ days	%	25+ days	%
23-24	29	24%	63	51%	7	6%	24	20%
22-23	21	18.20%	46	40.00%	11	9.50%	37	32.10%

4.8 Monitoring information

4.8.1 Age

During 2023-24 complaints across all age ranges showed an increase, the most significant increase by far was for those aged 85 years and over with a 107% increase from 40 to 83. It is also noticeable that the number of complaints received that are in respect of those aged between 18 years and 24 years increased from one in 2022-23 to 22 in 2023-24

It is noted that during 2023-24 complaints relating to females were 29% higher than those for males.

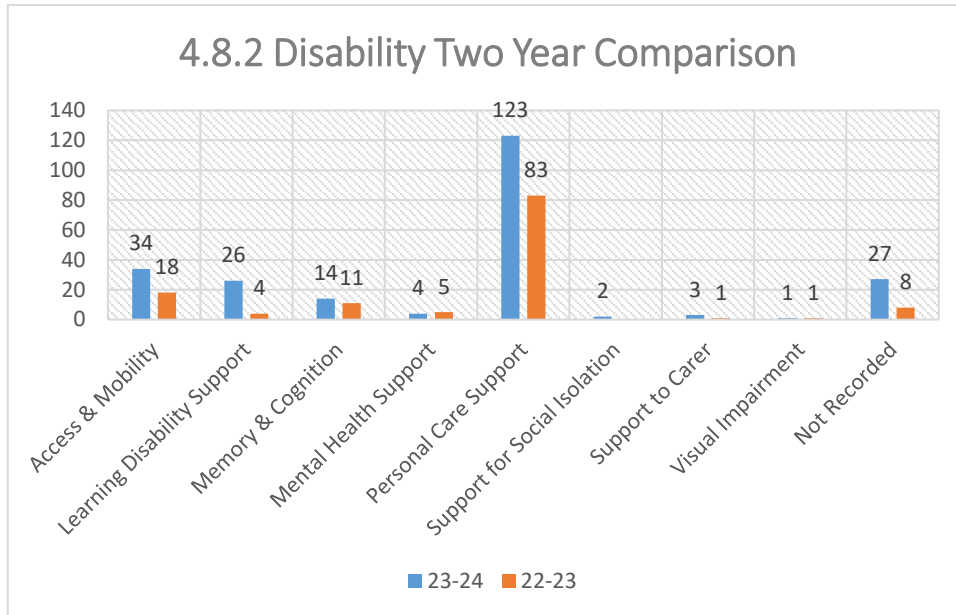


4.8.2 Disability

Complaints received by those requiring 'Personal Care Support' have continued to grow on the 2022-23 figures and have risen by 48% in 2023-24 from 83 to 123. Complaints for

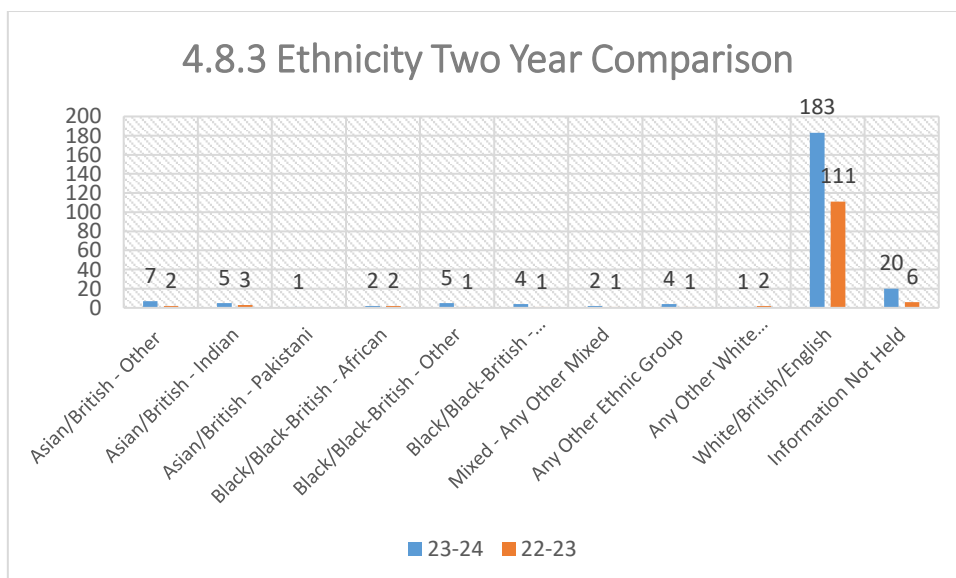
those requiring access and mobility support have increased by 88%, and learning disability support by 500%, demonstrating the rising support needs of Havering residents thus impacting on the Local Authority financially.

There have been 27 complaints from those who have a disability marker on record but it is not recorded which type of disability they have.



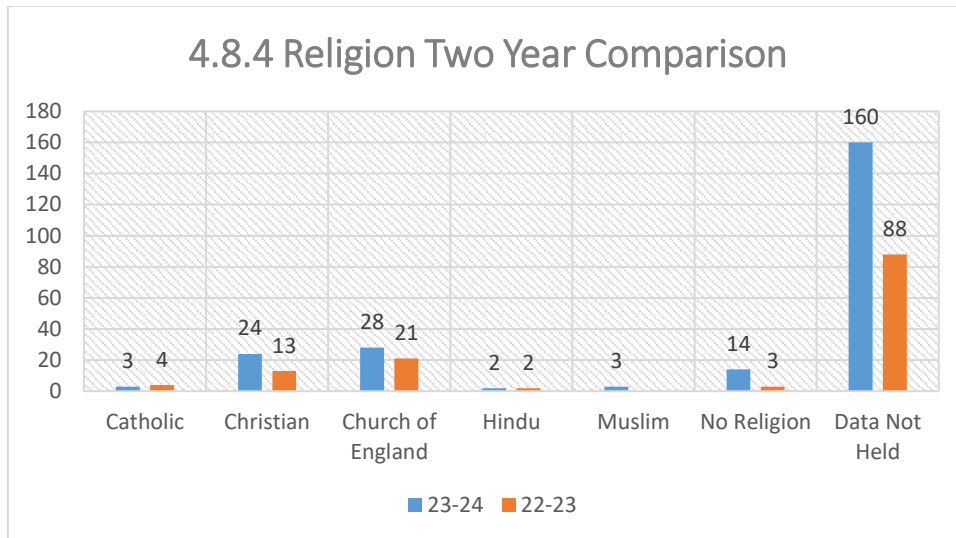
4.8.3 Ethnicity

As reflected in the population of Havering, 'White British' is the highest ethnicity and there was a 78% representation in this category for 2023-24 as against 83% recorded for 2022-23. There were no significant changes in the data collated for the other groups such as Asian/Asian British – Any other Asian background', 'Asian/Asian British – Pakistani' and 'Mixed White & Asian', 'Black/Black British – African' and 'Black/Black British – Caribbean'. Whilst underrepresented groups have not changed significantly over the years, we continue to monitor our resident involvement in view of Havering's changing demographics. 9% of service users that have made a complaint on 2023-24 have no ethnicity recorded.



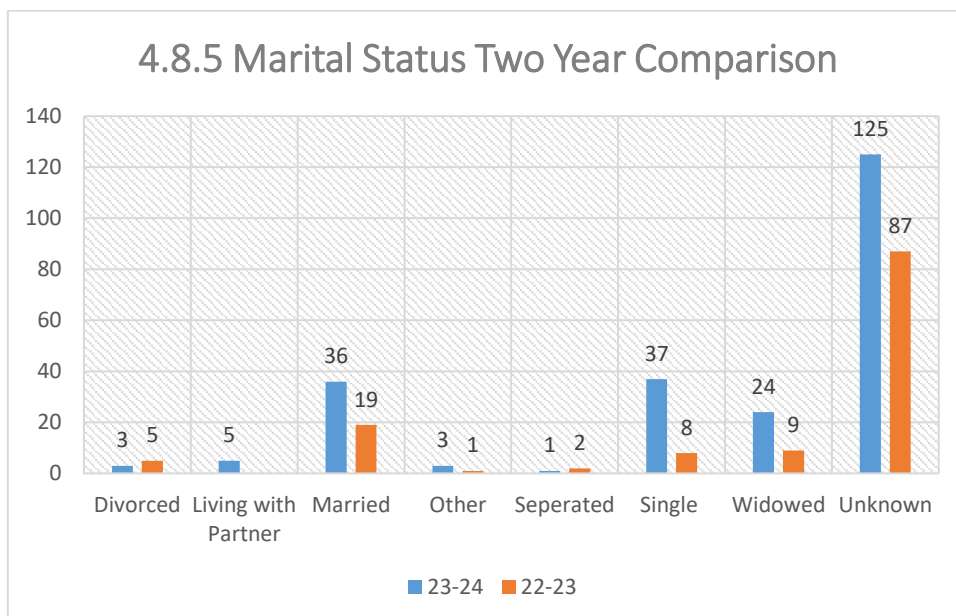
4.8.4 Religion

There has been a significant increase in the number of service users who have no religion recorded, this has increased from 88 in 2022-23 to 160 in 2023-24 up 81%, and greater emphasis will be placed on case file auditing to address this recording. There have been marginal increases in those recorded as Christian and Church of England.



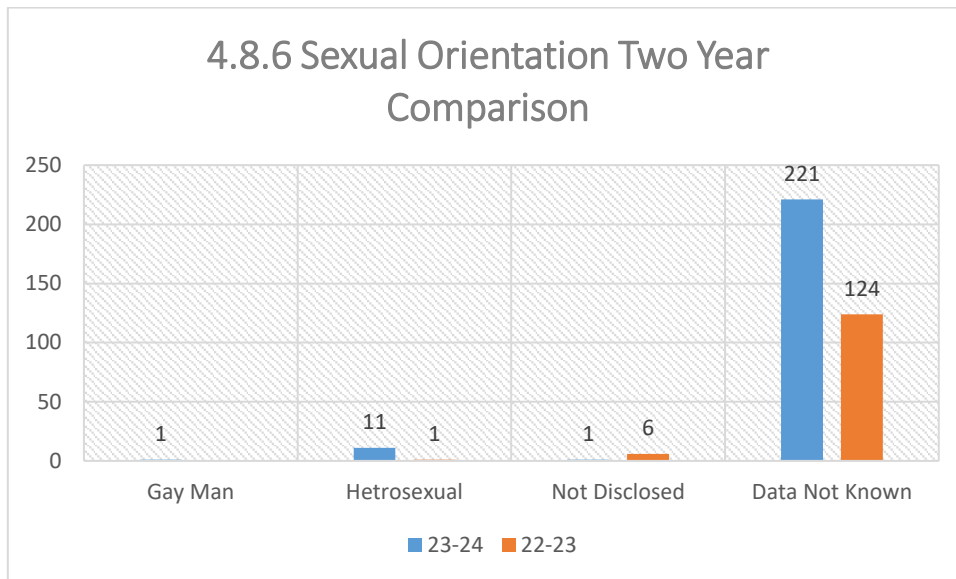
4.8.5 Marital Status

In 2023-24, 36 service users are recorded as being married up from 19 in 2022-23. Those recorded as single also increased from eight to 37. Those who are widowed rose from 9 in 2022-23 to 24 in 2023-24 and there is still a high number of service users that do not have a marital status recorded.



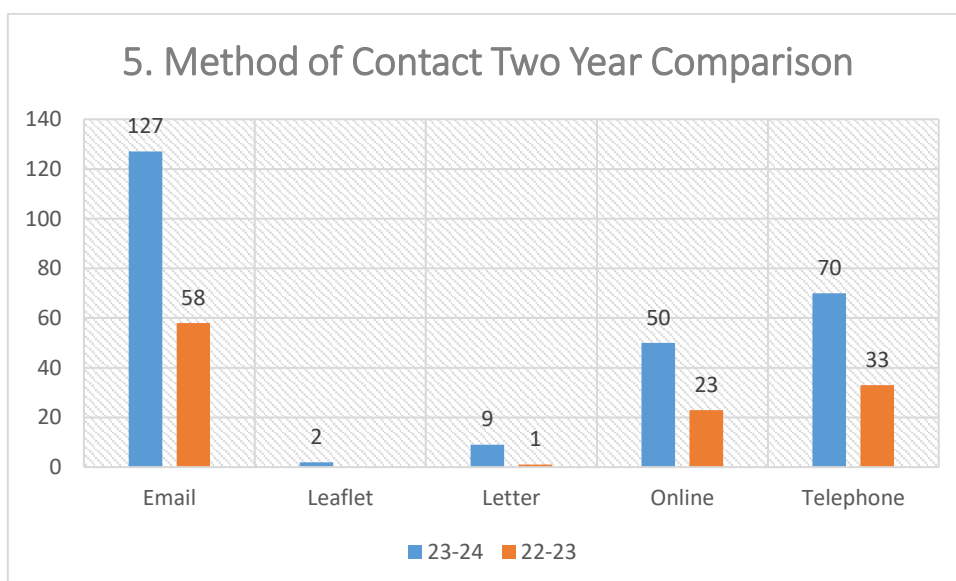
4.8.6 Sexual Orientation

This continues to be a category in which recording of this data could be seen as very sensitive and personal to an individual and is reflected in the high numbers that are 'not known'.



5 Method of Contact

Email continues to be the favoured method of contact during 2023-24 at 50%, with telephone being the second highest method of contact at 27%, which remains consistent with 2022-23. It is encouraging to see that those choosing to complain using the online service increased in 2023-24 and represented 20% of complaints received. Whilst acknowledging the multiple channels through which residents can register their complaints, we recognise the need to promote the online service as a preferred option for residents as the template provides a structured format and better data analysis opportunities that benefits all parties i.e. the complainant and service provider.



6 Expenditure

Whilst expenditure for LGSCO cases has increased in 2023-24, this in the main due to one case following a safeguarding investigation into abuse of an elderly resident by a member of home care staff where a large financial redress was recommended.

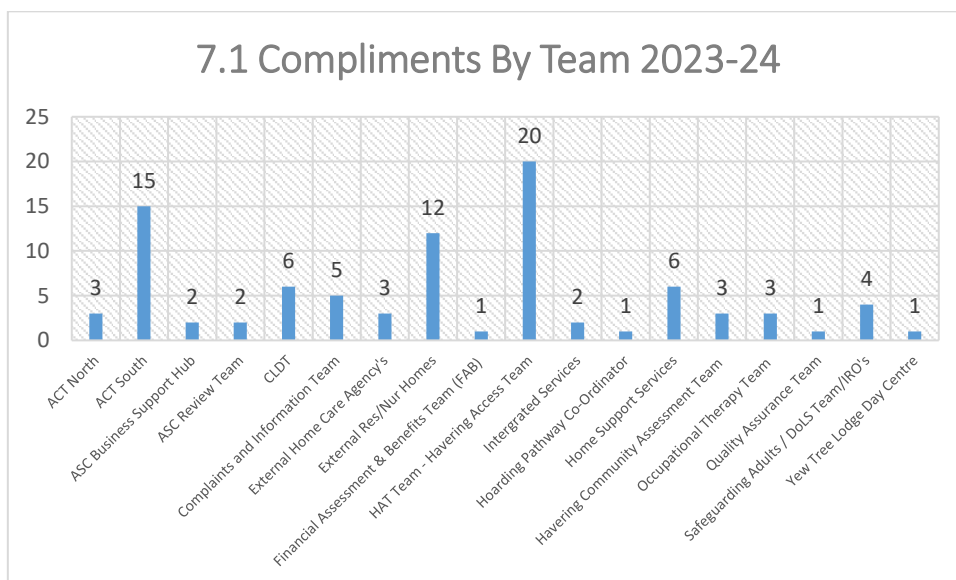
The costs of invoices being waived has decreased significantly from 2022-23, again this is due to the robust processes that have been put in place around the discharge to assess pathway.

	Ombudsman	Invoices Waived	Goodwill Payment	Total
Apr 2023- Mar 2024	£4250.00	£2585.63		£6535.63
Apr 2022-Mar 2023	£2024.42	£8282.14	£195	£10,501.56

7. Compliments and resident satisfaction

7.1 Compliments

The number of compliments received during 2023-24 increased significantly to 90 from 48 in 2022-23. The number of compliments is encouraging and is testimony to the professional and proficient service staff across Adult Social Care provide to the residents of Havering who are in need of support.



Some of the outstanding work of teams/staff are shown by a small selection of examples of compliments given below:

ASC Review Team

Thank you on her behalf to you not only for her coffee and bacon sandwich but also for caring and taking the time to ensure she had a hot drink.

ACT South

I feel that the situation is being dealt with better than it has been so far and that is thanks to you.

CLDT

Margaret was kind, friendly and cheerful putting us all at ease, she made it clear we could email or contact her at any time if we thought of anything else we wanted to add that we may have forgotten, she kept us up to date with the process

Home Care Agency

I must say S is outstanding in his approach and being able to understand vulnerable people's circumstances and full of empathy,

Occupational Therapy

Mr C's partner rang to say how wonderful and lovely M was and hopes we have got more people like her

Community Assessment Team

Just wanted to say thank you for all your hard work getting my mum the care that is needed for her

Havering Access Team

Thank you for your kindness and respect that you personally have shown me, you're very good at your job. Thank you!

Residential/Nursing

Thank you for the wonderful care your staff gave to mum, it was very much appreciated by all our family.

ACT North

He wanted to thank me for the wonderful social worker that came round. Who was kind, honest and made both him and his mother very much at ease.

7.2 Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework – Survey 2023/24

The chart below shows comparative data against 2022-23. In line with the statutory guidance, it should be noted that the ‘Quality of Life’ outturn is not calculated as a percentage (all others are), this is a weighted combination of a number of questions answered in the survey to come up with an outturn.

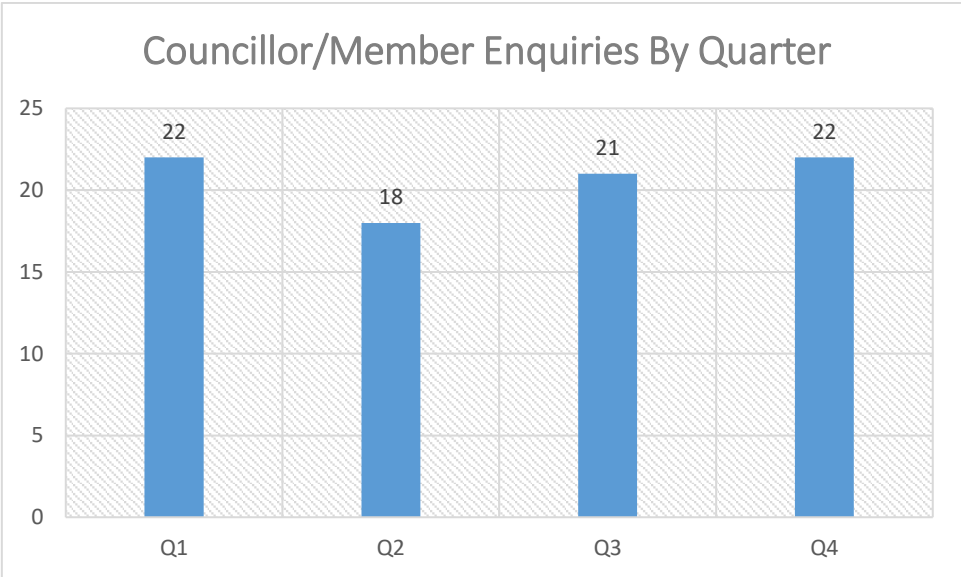
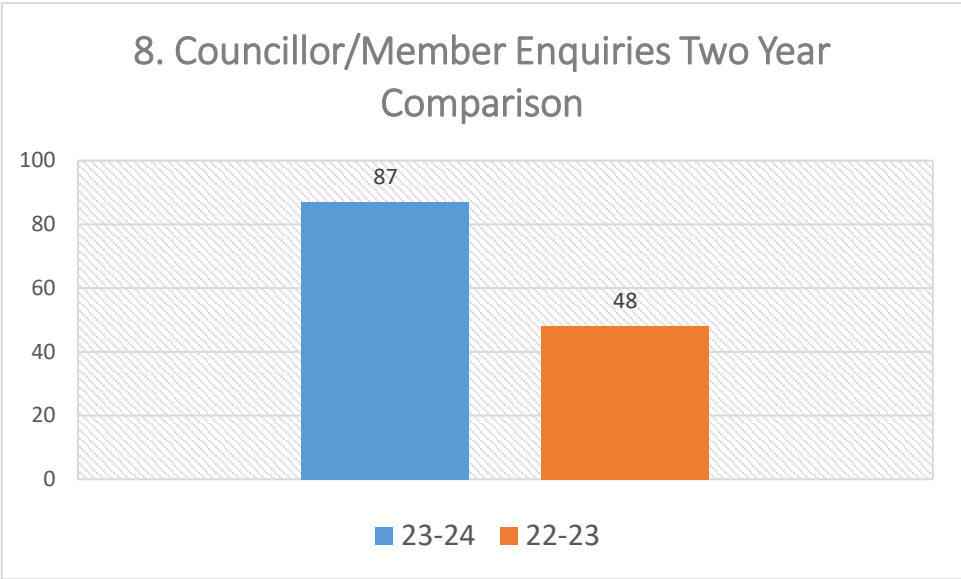
The data shows a decline in almost all of the categories with the exception of the proportion of people who use services who find it easy to find information about services which has remained the same, with a slight increase in those who feel they have as much social contact as they would like.

Service User Survey	23/24	22/23
Social care-related quality of life	18.7	19.0
The proportion of people who use services who have control over their daily life	75.1%	75.8%
The proportion of people who use services who reported that they had as much social contact as they would like	43.3%	43.0%
Overall satisfaction of people who use services with their care and support	60.9%	63.1%
The proportion of people who use services who find it easy to find information about services	65.3%	65.3%
The proportion of people who use services who feel safe	69.7%	73.7%
The proportion of people who use services who say that those services have made them feel safe and secure	86.4%	87.7%

8. Member Enquiries

The number of MP/Councillor enquiries received in 2023-24 was 87, an 81% increase from 2022-23 (48). 78 of those enquiries (90%) were responded to within the timeframe in 2023-24, an improvement on the 86% in 2022-23. Those that were not responded to within the timeframe were related to complex cases that required further investigations to be undertaken in order to provide a robust response.

The Service is aware that some Councillor/Member enquiries are being sent directly to Officers and therefore may not be captured in the performance data. Staff across ASC are reminded to forward these to the SCCI Complaints Team for inclusion in the figures. During 2024-25 Councillor/Member enquiries will move on to a new case management system (Casetracker), we may therefore see a rise in the number of enquiries being reported next year as we will be able to record them more accurately.



9. Conclusion

The assessment of complaints within Havering's Adult Social Care (ASC) department during the period of April 2023 to March 2024 offers valuable insights into both the challenges and achievements encountered in service delivery and resolution. Despite facing a significant increase in complaints referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), the department demonstrated resilience and effectiveness in managing these cases, evidenced by the discontinuation of nine cases following initial enquiries. This outcome underscores the meticulous case recording practices upheld by Havering staff members.

While a slight rise in statutory complaints was observed, efforts to address the underlying issues have been initiated, particularly in response to the surge in enquiries, predominantly concerning financial concerns amidst the prevailing economic challenges. Strategies aimed at enhancing record-keeping and communication with care providers are underway to tackle recurring issues and improve service standards.

Notable reductions in complaints were observed in specific service areas, such as the Havering Assessment and Community Review Team, attributed to enhanced discharge-to-assess processes. However, challenges persist, particularly in the Financial Assessment Team, where a significant increase in complaints underscores the need for closer scrutiny of invoicing procedures and information provision.

Financial issues remained a primary cause of complaints, often intertwined with concerns regarding home care service quality, emphasising the importance of addressing systemic challenges and fostering a culture of transparency and responsiveness. The proportion of upheld complaints decreased overall, indicating progress in addressing service shortcomings and enhancing client satisfaction.

Learning from complaints has been incorporated into the ASC Action Plan to facilitate continuous improvement and performance enhancement. Furthermore, insights gleaned from LGSCO investigations have informed robust processes and monitoring mechanisms, reinforcing the commitment to quality and accountability in service provision.

Despite facing complexities in some cases, the department demonstrated improved response times and a proactive approach in addressing member enquiries, reflecting a dedication to resolving issues expediently and effectively.

In conclusion, the assessment of complaints within Havering's ASC department provides valuable lessons and opportunities for ongoing improvement. By addressing systemic challenges, fostering a client-centered approach, and leveraging insights from complaints to inform policy and practice, Havering is well-positioned to enhance service provision and stakeholder satisfaction in the future.

ASC complaints recording will be transferring to a new Complaints Handling Management System in 2024-25 and it is anticipated, as this matures, that this will lead to better monitoring to provide evidence-based learning, through the action plan incorporated within it.

Appendix 1

9. ASC Complaints Action Plan

Issues Identified	Lessons Learnt	Action to be taken	Department	Timescale	Review/Progress
Ensure meticulous case recording to facilitate efficient management and resolution of complaints.	Accurate case recording is crucial for effective complaint management. Regular training and audits help maintain high standards in case recording. Peer review enhances accuracy and consistency.	Provide refresher training on case recording practices for all ASC staff. Implement regular audits to monitor the quality and accuracy of case recordings. Introduce peer review mechanisms to validate case recordings and provide feedback.	Lurleen Trumpet & Patrick Odling-Smee	From April 2024	
Lack of Information on Invoices	We have seen an increase in the number of complaints being received due to service users/families being unclear about what it is they are being charged for	Look at how we can utilise systems LAS and Controcc more effectively to enhance the level of detail provided on invoices	Lurleen Trumpet, Patrick Odling-Smee & Richard Tyler	By 30 June 2024	
Improve transparency and accuracy in financial assessments and invoicing processes.	Clear communication about financial processes reduces misunderstandings and complaints. Regular reviews of invoicing procedures are necessary to ensure accuracy. Staff training ensures consistency in financial assessments.	Conduct a review of invoicing procedures to identify areas for improvement. Enhance communication with clients and families regarding financial charging processes. Provide additional training to staff involved in financial assessments to ensure clarity and consistency. Enhance engagement between finance and ASC	Financial Assessments & Benefits – Salim Rabah	From April 2024	

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Issues Identified	Lessons Learnt	Action to be taken	Department	Timescale	Review/Progress
Enhance communication with care providers and maintain accurate records to address recurring issues.	Good communication with care providers helps in resolving issues promptly.	Establish regular communication channels with care providers to address concerns and share feedback. Provide training on effective record-keeping practices and the importance of accurate documentation. Implement regular audits to ensure compliance with record-keeping standards	Quality and Outcomes Team	From April 2024	
Use insights from complaints to identify systemic issues and drive continuous improvement.	Complaints analysis provides valuable insights into systemic issues and areas for improvement. Implementing recommendations from complaints analysis leads to better service delivery. Regular reviews of progress against the Action Plan ensure continuous improvement.	Establish a dedicated team to analyse complaints data and identify trends. Implement recommendations from complaints analysis into service improvement initiatives. Regularly review progress against the ASC Action Plan and adjust strategies as needed.	Customer Insight Information Team	From April 2024	
Streamline the process for managing MP/Councillor enquiries, ensuring all requests are promptly captured, recorded, and responded to within agreed timeframes.	Streamlining enquiry management processes and providing staff training on complex enquiries enable prompt and effective resolution, improving service responsiveness and efficiency.	Linked to roll-out of new system for members to log enquiries	Customer Insight, Information, and Investigations Team	By October 2024	

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