



**Havering**  
LONDON BOROUGH

## **CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – TBC**

**Subject Heading:**

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

**SLT Lead:**

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**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

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## **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.

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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.