



HOUSING & COMMUNITY CARE

COMMUNITY CARE COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2007/2008

<u>Section</u>	<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page</u>
1	Context/Overview	1
2	Stages of the Procedure and Summary of Figures	3
3	Stage 1 Complaints	5
4	Stage 2 Complaints	10
5	Stage 3 Complaints	12
6	Ombudsman Complaints & Enquiries	13
7	Learning the Lessons/Practice Improvements	13
8	Compensation Payments	14

1. CONTEXT / OVERVIEW

- 1.1 This report provides information on complaints made about Community Care Services during the period 1.4.07 -31.3.08 under:
- the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003
 - the Council's corporate complaints procedure.

The statute, regulations and government policy guidance that were introduced in September 2006 made a number of changes to the statutory complaints procedure and these included:

- strengthening the role of the Complaints Manager;
- requirement for Complaints Manager to be informed of all complaints received.
- 12 months time limit for people to make a complaint;
- greater clarity of roles within the complaints process. e.g. Complaints Manager, Adjudicator, Advocate, Investigator, Panel Chair;
- Stage 1 now an integral part of the statutory procedure;
- Revised timescales at all stages;
- More power given to complainant - need for their agreement in certain circumstances, e.g. to extend timescales. Right to escalate complaint if no response within timescale;
- Greater clarity regarding who can complain on behalf of someone else;
- Clarity regarding dealing with cross boundary complaints. e.g. those relating to NHS and the local authority;
- Clearer guidance regarding role of the local authority in dealing with complaints about regulated services;
- More powers and responsibilities placed on the Chair of a Stage 3 Complaint Review Panel;

- No officer from the local authority to be a Panel member at Stage 3;
- At least two independent people on a Panel;
- Need for Panel Clerk;
- Facility to suspend the complaints process to use alternative dispute resolution, mediation or conciliation, with agreement of complainant;
- Possibility of early referral to Ombudsman after stage 2.

1.2 We aim to ensure that we provide appropriate, accessible and high quality services. However we are aware that we do not always get things right and it is important that we acknowledge this and learn from complaints, identifying the action we need to take to improve services in the future. We accept a person's right to complain and when complaints are received we encourage staff to be open and honest, calm and polite; to consider what the complainant says; to acknowledge the complainant's point of view and to have an 'open mind'. Complaints from the people who use our services, their carers and others in the local community should be regarded as an indicator of areas where we need to examine how services are delivered. Complaints provide the Council with valuable information that can be used to improve services, enhance service user's experiences, reduce the anxieties of individuals, their families and carers and prevent further problems and complaints. When we fail to correct a service failure or mistake and do not provide an adequate remedy for the complainant we run the risk of the same thing happening again and an escalation of the person's dissatisfaction. Constructive responses to complaints help to provide high quality services and more responsive service to our diverse community.

We aim to resolve issues and concerns before they become complaints and resolve as many complaints as possible at the first stage of the complaints process within the service area concerned. Stage 1 of the complaints procedure is primarily a problem solving and local resolution stage and an opportunity for local managers to remedy any service failures that have occurred, to inform and to maintain and develop goodwill between the Council and the complainant. When responding to complaints, managers are required to provide an explanation of what has happened and why; an explanation of how a justified complaint will be remedied; their view and decision on any outcomes being sought. It is the Council's policy to give an apology if the Council is found to be at fault. Where maladministration and injustice has occurred, a compensation payment can be made.

The Council's aim is to get complaints right at the earliest stage possible. Complaints escalating to the subsequent stages of the complaints procedure can indicate that this is not always the case, and that complaint responses at the early stages may be either inadequate or not sufficiently open and transparent when things have gone wrong. Investigating and reviewing complaints at Stages 2 and 3 is expensive in terms of officer time as well as costs involved in commissioning external investigators and panel members. Also increasing amounts of compensation are likely to be paid at subsequent stages of the procedure when service failures have occurred and injustice has been suffered. Responding in a positive and timely way at the outset saves money in the long run, significantly enhances the Council's reputation with its customers and reduces anxiety for those involved. This is an area that we will continue to focus on as part of future improvement in complaints handling.

The number of complaints detailed in this report should be seen in the context of the range and level of services that are provided; the number of referrals for

services; the number of assessments and the total number of users across the service units. When looking at complaints in this context the number received is relatively small.

Where complaints are seen as being justified, putting things right sometimes relates to an individual case and on some occasions indicates a need for a general improvement or development in respect of the service. It is important that we learn the lessons from complaints, using the information to review practice, put things right if they have gone wrong and to stop mistakes happening again.

External Service Providers regulated under the Care Standards Act by the Commission for Social Care Inspection are required by law to have their own complaints procedure. Therefore complaints about care standards provided by such providers will often be received directly by them and these are not detailed in this report. However, our Service Units maintain care management and contract management responsibilities in respect of the services that they arrange through such external providers and services are monitored through such processes and through meetings with contractors and reviews that are held. Service users and their representatives can pursue their complaint through the Council's procedure if they wish.

The information in this report demonstrates that there is evidence of some good practice and professional complaint handling. However, we cannot afford to be complacent. We need to continue to ensure that our customers know about and have confidence in our complaints procedure; that complaints are not overlooked; that time targets are met; escalation rates reduced; and that good quality responses are provided.

1.3 What is a Complaint?

As a working guide, a complaint is generally defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about the actions, decisions or apparent failings of a local authority's adult's social services provision which requires a response”. The intention is not to be too rigid in the way that complaints are defined and if it is possible to resolve the matter immediately, there is no need to engage the complaints procedure.

Complaints can be made in writing, by telephone, on-line, in person, by e-mail or by fax. We try to make it easy for people to raise their concerns.

1.4 Who can make a Complaint?

Social Services complaints legislation details those persons who can make a complaint under the statutory complaints procedure. This includes the service user, someone acting with the agreement of the service user and someone acting on behalf of a service user who is not able to make the complaint themselves.

2. THE STAGES OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS AND SUMMARY OF FIGURES.

2.1 The complaints process has three stages in line with the requirements of legislation, central government guidance and Council procedure.

2.2 **Stage 1 complaints** – Service units and external contractors providing services on behalf of the Council are expected to resolve as many complaints as possible at this initial point.

The Council's corporate complaints procedure requires complaints at stage 1 to be responded to within 15 working days. The statutory procedure details a maximum period of 20 working days for a response; however the Department of Health expects that local authorities will deal with the majority of complaints within 10 working days.

Section 3 provides details of the 168 stage 1 complaints that were recorded. (171 received in the previous year)

2.3 Stage 2 complaints - These are usually considered by the Assistant Director, often following a full investigation by either a Senior Officer or an external investigator. Some complaints have been resolved without the need for a full investigation, following enquiries and consideration by a relevant senior manager.

Stage 2 complaints falling within the current social services statutory complaints procedure should be dealt with in 25 working days, although in certain cases when a complaint is complex this can be extended to 65 working days. Complaints considered under the corporate procedure should be responded to within 20 working days.

Section 4 provides details of the 15 stage 2 complaints that were received. (This compares with 13 stage 2 complaints last year)

2.4 Stage 3 complaints - The third stage of the complaints process is a review. Section 5 of this report provides details of the three stage 3 complaints that were made. (In the previous year there were five stage 3 complaints).

Complaints about statutory social services functions require a Complaints Review Panel to be established. The panel makes recommendations to the Chief Executive who then makes a decision on the complaint and the action to be taken. Complaint Review Panels are chaired by an independent person, and also involve other independent people. There are various timescales relating to stage 3 complaints. These relate to the setting up of the Panel - within 30 working days; the production of the Panel's report - within 5 working days and the local authority's response - within 15 working days.

There was one Panel hearing held during the year, one statutory complaint was withdrawn and the other complaint was dealt with under the corporate complaints procedure.

2.5 Percentage escalation

Stage 1 to Stage 2	9% (8% in the previous year)
Stage 2 to Stage 3	20% (38% in the previous year)

The escalation rate for complaints going from stage 1 to stage 2 is well below the Council's target of no more than 20%. The escalation rate for complaints going from stage 2 to stage 3 is just within the Council's target of no more than 20%.

2.6 Comparative Community Care Complaint figures – London Family and Neighbouring authorities

Figures have been sought from other London local authorities but many have not responded.

Local authority	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Barnet	Not available		
Brent	168	15	3
Camden	143	18	3
City of Westminster	34	6	4
Croydon	Not available		
Ealing	183	8	0
Enfield	Not available		
Hammersmith & Fulham	46	1	0
Haringey	111	13	1
Harrow	63	11	2
Hounslow	109	2	1
Kensington & Chelsea	85	8	1
Lambeth	Not available		
Lewisham	67	1	0
Waltham Forest	45	9	1

Care should be taken in reaching conclusions about comparison of such figures as numerical data on its own does not take account of differing interpretations and practices across local authorities.

3. STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS

- 3.1 There were 168 recorded complaints during the year, three less than last year. Community Care Service Units have been positively encouraged to record complaints received and to acknowledge and deal with expressions of dissatisfaction as complaints when issues and concerns are not resolved within 24 hours of receipt.

Of the complaints where an outcome was determined (excluding withdrawn and pending complaints and those where consideration was given under an alternative procedure; 54% were upheld to some degree (either fully or partially). This is a higher figure than last year (46%).

Each statutory complaint is assessed as to its complexity; with a target timescale of 10 working days being attached to a non-complex complaint and 20 working days being attached to a complex complaint. A complaint being dealt with under the corporate complaints procedure should be responded to within 15 working days. Of all the complaints that were determined, 62% were responded to within the required timescale. This compares with 68% last year. This figure falls short of the Council's aim of 85% of responses being sent within target time. Work towards achieving better compliance with time targets is a priority for the future. However, it should be noted that of the 131 responses made to complaints falling under the statutory complaints procedure, 53% were sent within 10 working days. This is in line with the Department of Health's policy requirement for local authorities to respond to the majority of statutory complaints within this time period.

Of the 168 complaints that were made about Community Care Services, 40% were made by the service user and 53% were made by relatives.

Complaints that are logged formally can be tracked and monitored, and if things have gone wrong managers can ensure that matters are put right. Service Units have been encouraged to recognise and record complaints and report these to the Complaints Team. The figures show a relatively low percentage of complaints being received and recorded at the local level, at least in some Service Units, with only 21% of recorded complaints being received directly by Service Units which the complaint related to. (this compares with 26% in the previous year) 45% of the complaints were received directly by the Complaints Team. (this compares with 34% in the previous year).

The highest area of complaint related to communication failures (21%) with complaints about the level of service (16%) and conduct/attitude of staff (13%) being the next highest. The first two categories were also the highest two categories last year.

Tables 3.3 and 3.4 below provide detailed figures relating to each service unit.

3.2 Racial Origin of Service User - Stage 1 complaints

WHITE	White British	67	
	White Irish	8	
	White Other	13	
	White Unknown	2	
SUB TOTAL (WHITE)			90
ASIAN	Asian British	20	
	Asian Indian	13	
	Asian Pakistani	1	
	Asian Other	6	
SUB TOTAL (ASIAN)			40
BLACK	Black British	17	
	Black Caribbean	11	
	Black African	5	
SUB TOTAL (BLACK)			33
OTHER	Unknown/not specified	4	
	Organisations	1	
SUB TOTAL (OTHER)			5
TOTAL			168

3.3 COMMUNITY CARE STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS BY SERVICE UNIT, RESPONSE TIMES, OUTCOME AND WHERE RECEIVED

Service Unit	Joint – OPS and Finance		Older Peoples Services		Physical Disability Services		Brent Learning Disability Partnership		Brent Mental Health Services		Contracted Services		Emergency Duty Team		Finance		Central Functions		TOTAL
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS	1	(1)	55	(33)	26	(15)	11	(7)	17	(10)	31	(18)	1	(1)	25	(15)	1	(1)	168

Response Times

Within required timescale	-	-	28	(51)	18	(69)	3	(27)	12	(71)	20	(65)	1	(100)	16	(64)	-	-	98	(58)
Outside required timescale	1	(100)	21	(38)	8	(31)	8	(73)	4	(24)	8	(26)	-	-	9	(36)	1	(100)	60	(36)
Withdrawn	-	-	4	(7)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	(3)	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	(3)
Dealt with under other processes	-	-	1	(2)	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	(6)	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	(2)
Pending	-	-	1	(2)	-	-	-	-	1	(6)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	(1)

Outcomes:

Upheld	-	-	10	(18)	4	(15)	1	(9)	2	(12)	18	(58)	-	-	8	(32)	-	-	43	(26)
Partially Upheld	-	-	16	(29)	10	(38)	6	(55)	2	(12)	3	(10)	-	-	5	(20)	-	-	42	(25)
Not Upheld	1	(100)	23	(42)	12	(46)	4	(36)	12	(71)	7	(23)	1	(100)	12	(48)	1	(100)	73	(43)
Withdrawn	-	-	4	(7)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	(3)	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	(3)
Dealt with under other processes	-	-	1	(2)	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	(6)	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	(2)
Pending	-	-	1	(2)	-	-	-	-	1	(6)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	(1)

Where Complaint received:

The Service Unit	-	-	13	(24)	5	(19)	2	(18)	2	(12)	13	(42)	-	-	-	-	-	-	35	(21)
Dept Complaints Team	1	(100)	21	(38)	15	(58)	5	(46)	8	(47)	8	(26)	1	(100)	17	(68)	-	-	76	(45)
One Stop Shop	-	-	6	(11)	3	(12)	-	-	5	(29)	2	(6)	-	-	2	(8)	-	-	18	(11)
Director or Asst. Dir.	-	-	10	(18)	2	(8)	3	(27)	1	(6)	4	(13)	-	-	3	(12)	1	(100)	24	(14)
Corp. Complaints Team	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	(9)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	(4)	-	-	2	(1)
Chief Executive	-	-	1	(2)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	(1)
Other Department	-	-	-	-	1	(4)	-	-	-	-	1	(3)	-	-	2	(8)	-	-	4	(2)
NHS Trust	-	-	2	(4)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	(1)
Other Council Unit	-	-	2	(4)	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	(10)	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	(3)
Local Govt Ombudsman	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	(6)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	(1)

3.3 COMMUNITY CARE STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS BY SERVICE UNIT AND NATURE OF COMPLAINT

Service Unit	Joint – OPS and Finance		Older Peoples Services		Physical Disability Services		Brent Learning Disability Partnership		Brent Mental Health Services		Contracted Services		Emergency Duty Team		Finance		Central Functions		TOTAL
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS	1	(1)	55	(33)	26	(15)	11	(7)	17	(10)	31	(18)	1	(1)	25	(15)	1	(1)	168

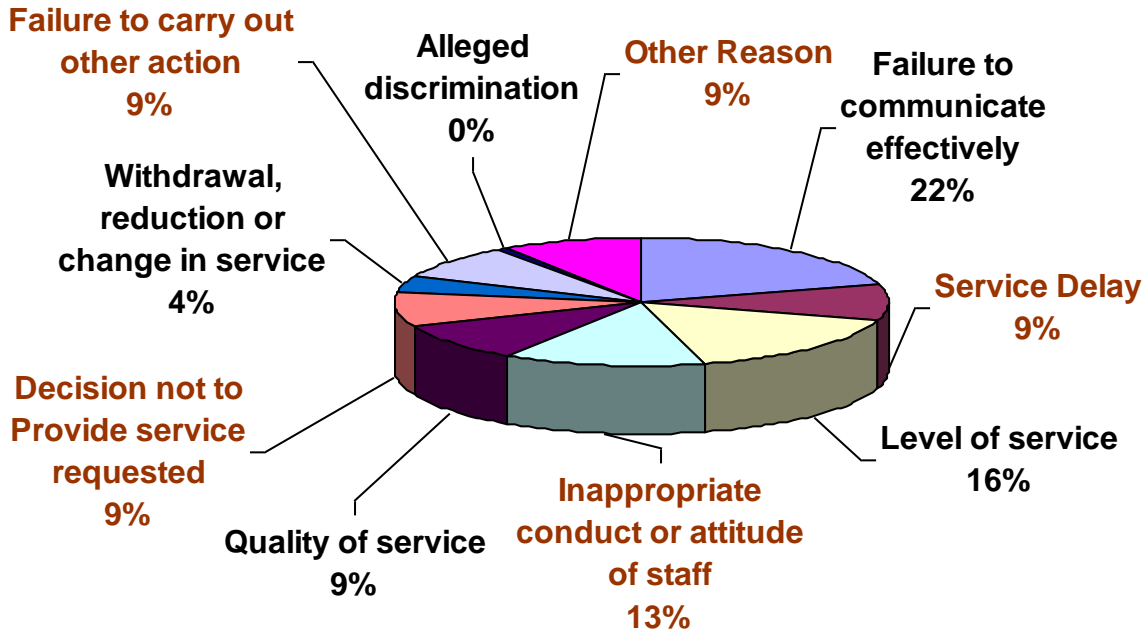
Nature of Complaint (see chart on page 9)

Communication Failure	1	(33)	20	(24)	9	(21)	1	(8)	4	(19)	5	(11)	-	-	11	(30)	-	-	51	(21)
Service Delay	-	-	13	(16)	5	(12)	-	-	1	(5)	4	(9)	-	-	-	-	-	-	23	(9)
Level of service	-	-	9	(11)	6	(14)	1	(8)	8	(38)	15	(33)	1	(50)	-	-	-	-	40	(16)
Inappropriate conduct or attitude of staff	1	(33)	11	(13)	5	(12)	1	(8)	2	(10)	8	(17)	1	(50)	4	(11)	-	-	33	(13)
Quality of service	-	-	6	(7)	2	(5)	4	(31)	1	(5)	9	(20)	-	-	1	(3)	-	-	23	(9)
Decision not to Provide service requested	-	-	15	(18)	3	(7)	3	(23)	1	(5)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	(9)
Withdrawal, reduction or change in service	-	-	1	(1)	2	(5)	2	(15)	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	(14)	-	-	10	(4)
Failure to carry out other action	-	-	6	(7)	7	(17)	-	-	2	(10)	4	(9)	-	-	3	(8)	-	-	22	(9)
Alleged discrimination	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	(5)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	(0)
Other Reason	1	(33)	2	(2)	3	(7)	1	(8)	1	(5)	1	(2)	-	-	13	(35)	1	(100)	23	(9)
Total	3		83		42		13		21		46		2		37		1		248	

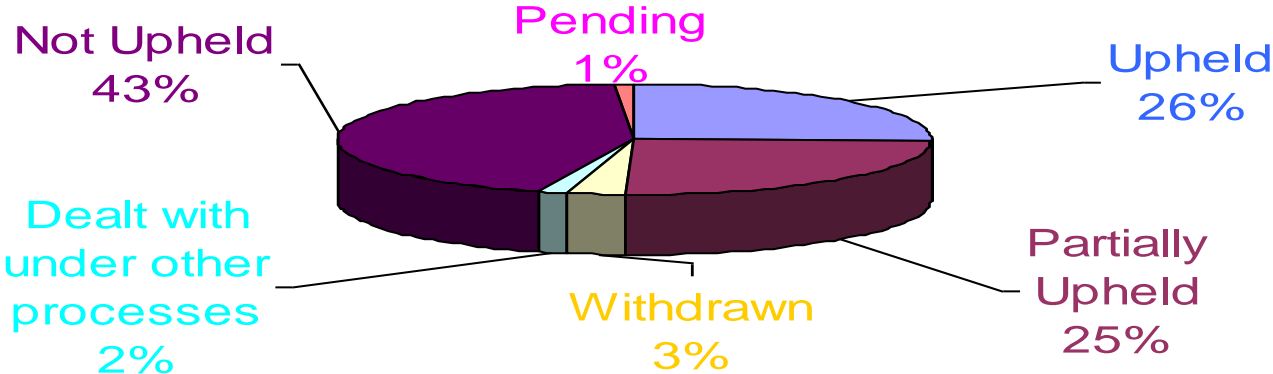
Complaint made by:

Service User	-	-	22	(40)	18	(69)	2	(18)	10	(59)	11	(35)	-	-	5	(20)	-	-	68	(40)
Relative (current carer)	-	-	13	(24)	7	(27)	8	(73)	2	(12)	9	(29)	1	(100)	8	(32)	-	-	48	(29)
Relative (not current carer)	1	(100)	16	(29)	1	(4)	1	(9)	3	(18)	9	(29)	-	-	9	(36)	-	-	40	(24)
Advocate/Solicitor	-	-	3	(5)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	(4)	-	-	4	(2)
Neighbour/Friend	-	-	1	(2)	-	-	-	-	2	(12)	2	(6)	-	-	2	(8)	-	-	7	(4)
Voluntary Group	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	(100)	1	(1)

Nature of Stage 1 complaints



Outcome of Stage 1 complaints



4 STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS.

4.1 There were 15 stage 2 complaints during the year. This compares with 13 in the previous year and 19 in 2005/6. Two complaints were subsequently withdrawn and one was considered following an investigation under the protection of vulnerable adults procedure (POVA). Seven complaints required detailed thorough investigation due to the nature and/or complexity of the concerns being raised. Such investigations are time-consuming and involve interviews with a number of people and consideration of a significant amount of documentation. External independent investigators undertook these investigations. Internal senior officers investigated the other five complaints.

Twelve of the stage 2 complaints related to the statutory social services complaints procedure and the other three came under the corporate complaints procedure. There were many and varied issues referred to in the complaints that were made. Of the thirteen complaints that required consideration and response, ten were dealt with in the required timescales.

Of the fifteen complaints, two were fully upheld; seven were partially upheld; four were not upheld and two were withdrawn.

4.2 The people making Stage 2 complaints:

Service User/s	7 (47%)
Relative (carer)	3 (20%)
Relative (non carer)	5 (33%)

4.3 Stage 2 Complaints - Equalities Information – Service Users

Service Unit	Contractor	Older Peoples Services	Physical Disability Services	Joint OPS and PD	Joint PD and Housing (PHS)	Joint PD and BMHS	Brent Learning Disability Partnership	Finance	OPS and Finance	TOTAL
No.	1	2	4	1	1	1	2	2	1	15

Racial Origin of Service User

White British	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	6
White Other	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Asian Indian	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
Asian Other	-	-	3	-	1	1	-	-	-	5
Group	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1

Gender of Service User

Male	-	1	2	1	1	1	-	1	-	7
Female	1	1	2	-	-	-	1	1	1	7
Group	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1

Disability (including mental health problems)

	1	2	4	1	1	1	2	2	1	15
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4.4 Stage 2 complaints by Service Unit, Response Times and Outcome

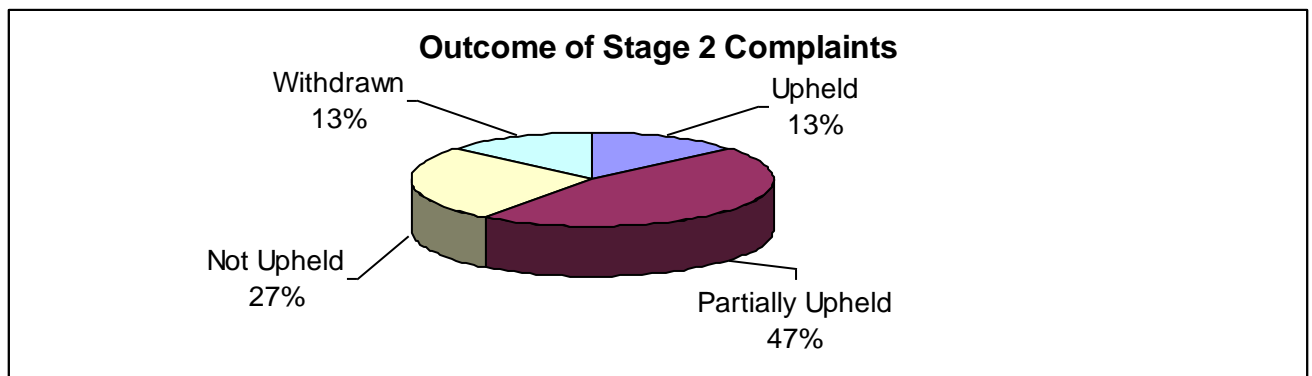
Service Unit	Contractor	Older Peoples Services	Physical Disability Services	Joint OPS and PD	Joint PD and Housing (PHS)	Joint PD and BMHS	Brent Learning Disability Partnership	Finance	OPS and Finance	TOTAL
No.	1	2	4	1	1	1	2	2	1	15

Response Times:

Within corporate time period	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Within initial statutory time period	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	2
Within allowed extended statutory timescale	1	-	2	-	-	1	1	1	-	6
Outside corporate timescale	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Outside allowed statutory timescale	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	3
Withdrawn	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	2

Outcome:

Upheld	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Partially Upheld	-	1	2	1	1	-	-	2	-	7
Not Upheld	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	4
Withdrawn	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	2



4.5 Stage 2 complaints by Service Unit and Nature of Complaint

Service Unit	Contractor	Older Peoples Services	Physical Disability Services	Joint OPS and PD	Joint PD and Housing (PHS)	Joint PD and BMHS	Brent Learning Disability Partnership	Finance	OPS and Finance	TOTAL
No.	1	2	4	1	1	1	2	2	1	15

Nature of Complaint: (n.b. multi-coding)

Staff Conduct	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	3
Level of service	-	-	1	1	1	1		-		4
Quality of service	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	4
Service request not agreed	-	2	2	-	1	1	-	-	-	6
Delays	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
Failure to communicate effectively	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Withdrawal of or Change in Service provision.	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Failure to carry out action	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2
Total	2	2	7	3	3	4	4	3	3	31

5 STAGE 3 COMPLAINTS

5.1 There were three stage 3 complaints this year. This compares with four last year. There was one Complaints Review Panels held. One statutory complaint was withdrawn as it was resolved following further consideration at the local level. One complaint was considered under the corporate complaints procedure.

There are various timescales relating to stage 3 complaints:

- A Panel should be established within 30 working days – the timescale was not met as the Panel hearing was delayed at the request of the complainant.
- Following the hearing, the Panel is required to produce a report within 5 working days detailing their recommendations – the timescale was met in this case.
- The local authority should send a response within 15 working days of the Panel's report – this did not happen; the response being sent after 16 working days.
- Under the corporate complaints procedure a response should be sent within 30 working days. This timescale was met

5.2 Stage 3 complaints by Status, Service Area, Timescales and Outcome.

STATUS	SERVICE UNIT	TO SET UP PANEL	PANEL REPORT PRODUCED	COUNCIL RESPONSE	OUTCOME
Statutory Social Services procedure	Joint Physical Disability Services and BMHS	58 working days	5 working days	16 working days	Partially Upheld
Statutory Social Services procedure	Physical Disability Services	Complaint Withdrawn			
Corporate complaints procedure	Older People's Services	N/A	N/A	30 working days	Not Upheld

6. OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS AND ENQUIRIES.

6.1 Complainants can refer their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman at any time, although the Ombudsman normally refers the complaint back to the Council if it has not been considered under our procedure. During the year, five complaints about Community Care Services were considered by the Local Government Ombudsman. The conclusions reached by the Ombudsman are detailed below.

Service Area	Older People's Services	Older People's Services & Finance Section	Brent Mental Health Services	Physical Disability Services	Finance	TOTAL
Outcome of Ombudsman Consideration						
No or insufficient evidence of maladministration	1	-	1	-	-	2
Ombudsman's Discretion	-	1	-	-	-	1
Local Settlement	-	-	-	1	-	1
Premature	-	-	-	-	1	1
Total	1	1	1	1	1	5

7. LEARNING THE LESSONS / PRACTICE IMPROVEMENTS

7.1 Complaints provide senior managers with useful information in respect of the way that services are delivered. The consideration of complaints has resulted in review and changes to procedures; guidance and training for staff and improvements being identified and made in relation to service delivery and practice. Some specific examples of service improvement issues arising from stage 2 and stage 3 complaints are detailed below.

7.2 Some service improvements arising from the consideration of complaints.

- Staff reminded about the importance of good customer care that recognises the customer's specific situation and circumstances and of the need to share detailed information on services and options of care during the assessment process and the importance of communication with families so that they are kept informed of the actions being taken and any decisions that are made.
- Review of the way in which cases are prioritised and allocated to individual workers to follow up. This included discussions and training with managers and staff on assessment of risk for the individual and their families.
- Instigation of a system of auditing and reviewing cases with the managers and the workers to ensure that the highest professional standards are maintained.
- Staff reminded of the importance of checking for duplicate case records and following the procedure for marking duplicate records at the earliest possible point. Review of process to improve practice regarding transferring records onto one file when duplicate records have been identified so that a full picture can be immediately seen by a worker or a manager when they are assessing the priority of each case.
- Home Care Agency reviewed their practices and re-devised their induction and ongoing training programmes for both their Carer Workers and Field Supervisors. Instated re-induction and refresher training around medical management, dementia awareness, moving and handling, roles and responsibilities, policy and procedures and health and safety along with enhanced supervision and regular unannounced spot checks introduced.
- Identified a need for home carers to be aware of what equipment is installed within service users' properties and how to use the equipment and to carry out monthly checks to ensure it works appropriately, and to notify the office when equipment is either not working properly or requires servicing to ensure that problems/servicing needs are identified and resolved. This practice then rolled out across all of Brent Council Homecare providers that work with Older People Services.
- Managers in the Older People's Services Unit and the Physical Disabilities Unit reviewed their practices to identify the service improvements required to ensure that hospital discharge cases are handled and transferred effectively between teams with a clarity about who was responsible for what.
- Review of procedures and liaison in respect of disabled people requiring respite care when adaptations/building works being undertaken.
- Improvements in assessment practice in respect of informing carers of their entitlement to request an assessment of their own needs, and effective recording of this. Also need for carers to be provided with a Brent Carers Centre Information Pack.
- Review of the way a carer's assessment handled to ensure that a carer's needs are graded according to the sustainability of the caring role, as distinct from the FACS grading for service users.
- More detailed information from the assessment to be given to individuals who are not being provided with services
- Revision of LD review format to make it more person centred and action taken to ensure that families receive a copy of the documentation where the person concerned agrees that the family should be involved and receive the information.
- College staff to have more detailed training in working with people with Autism.
- Changes in practice when a finance decision is being challenged so that consideration is given as to whether it is appropriate for a situation to be put "on hold" until such a time as a decision is made on the concerns, representations or complaint that has been presented.

8 COMPENSATION PAYMENTS

The Council has a compensation policy and payments are considered if, after a complaint has been investigated or as part of an Ombudsman's investigation, it is concluded that:

- the Ombudsman would find that there has been maladministration by the Council causing injustice to the complainant; and
- he would recommend that compensation should therefore be paid to the complainant.

During the year compensation totalling £17640 was paid following consideration of complaints. Payments related to the following service areas.

Service Unit	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Ombudsman	TOTAL
Older People's Services	1650				1650
Joint Older People's Services & Finance			500		500
Joint Older People's Services and Physical Disability Services	6865	500			7365
Finance		25			25
Physical Disability Services	1150	6050	500	250	7950
Joint Physical Disability Services & Brent Mental Health Services			150		150
TOTAL	9665	6575	1150	250	£17640

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