

Annual Complaints Report 2016 – 2017

Appendix C – Council Departments

Introduction

1. This report provides a summary of corporate complaints performance at a departmental level across the Council in 2016/17. Adults and Children's statutory complaints performance are reported separately in Appendices A and B respectively.

Complaints Framework

2. The Council's Complaints Framework sets out the stages and timescales for handling both corporate and statutory complaints:

Complaint Type	Stages	Timescales (Written Response)
Corporate	2 stages + Ombudsman	Stage 1 - 20 working days Stage 2 - 30 working days
Adults (Statutory)	1 stage (provision/final) + Ombudsman	Stage 1 - 20 working days (extension up to 6 months in complex cases)
Children (Statutory)	3 stages + Ombudsman	Stage 1 - 10 working days (extension to 20 working days in complex cases) Stage 2 - 25 days (extension to 65 working days in complex cases) Stage 3 - 45 working days
Service Requests	N/A	10 working days

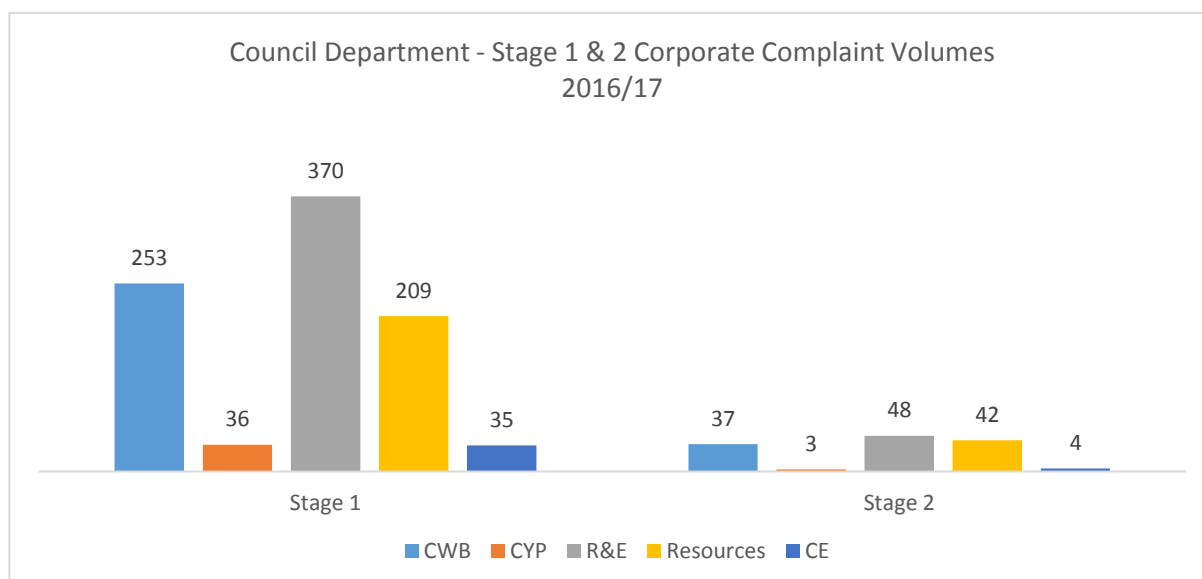
3. Initial acknowledgements should be sent within 5 working days for all of the complaint types shown above, with the exception of Stage 3 Children Statutory complaints where acknowledgements should be sent within 2 working days.
4. Service areas are responsible for the management and resolution of all corporate and statutory Stage 1 complaints. The corporate Complaints Service team manages final review/Stage 2 corporate complaints on behalf of the Chief Executive. Children's statutory complaints are reviewed by an independent investigator and independent person at Stage 2 and by an independent panel at Stage 3.

5. The outcome of a complaint is decided in one of these ways:
 - *“Upheld”* – this is where the Council has accepted responsibility for the matter arising. The complaint response will offer an apology, clarify what happened and the remedy to the problem. We will also identify actions to prevent this from happening again.
 - *“Partially Upheld”* – this is where the Council accepts some responsibility for part of the complaint. We will send a complaint response as above also highlighting our reason for not accepting the whole complaint.
 - *“Not Upheld”* – this means the investigation into the complaint has not found the Council at fault. The complaint response will explain our reasons for this decision.

6. It should be noted that departmental analysis provided for 2016/17 is based on the current departmental/service area structure, although the composition of departments has changed over recent months and years.

Complaints Received

7. The chart below shows the volume of first and second stage corporate complaints received by each department during 2016/17.



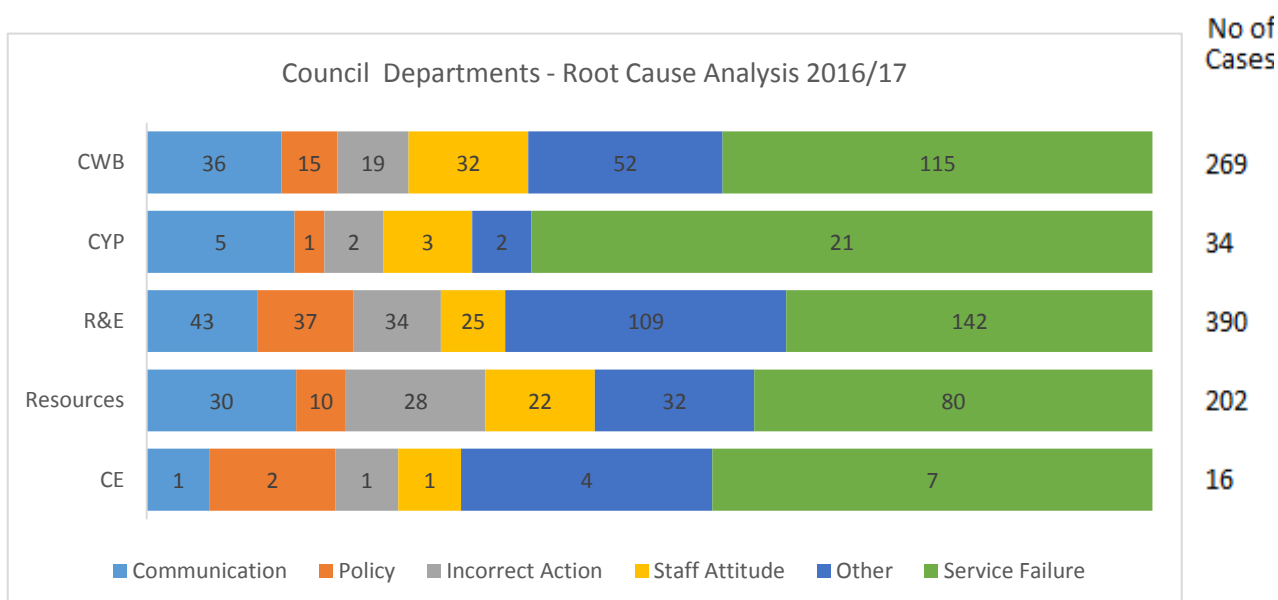
8. The breakdown of the 903 Council complaints received in 2016/17 was: 41% Regeneration & Environment (R&E) department, 28% Community Wellbeing (CWB) department, 23% Resources (Res) department, 4% Children & Young People (CYP) department and 4% Chief Executive’s (CE) department

9. Escalation rates for each department are shown in the table below:

Department	No. of Stage 1 Cases	2016/17 Escalation Rate
Regeneration & Environment	370	1 in 8
Community Wellbeing	253	1 in 7
Resources	209	1 in 5
Children & Young People	36	1 in 12
Chief Executive's	35	1 in 9
Council-wide	903	1 in 7

Nature/Type of Complaints

10. The chart below shows the root cause of complaints for each council department. Service delay/failure accounted for nearly half of all the corporate complaints received by the Council and was the primary cause of complaints in each department.



11. A further breakdown of the three service areas that received the highest number of complaints in each department is provided below:

Department	Top 3 Services	No of Stage 1 Cases	% of Total	Top 3 Root Causes
CWB	Housing	128	51%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation Services – Assessment Poor Communication Staff Conduct
	Culture	66	26%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Libraries – Computer Provision Libraries – Other Libraries – Events & Exhibitions
	PHS	38	15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Advice – Other Service Enforcement – Assessment / Housing Enforcement – Multiple Occupation - Safety

Department	Top 3 Services	No of Stage 1 Cases	% of Total	Top 3 Root Causes
CYP	Inclusion	10	28%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Workers • Contract Issues • Service not provided
	Localities	7	19%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support / Contact • Assessment • Child Protection
	LAC & Permanency	5	14%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Classifications
R&E	Environmental Improvement	90	24%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractor Conduct • Non Collection • Management Issues
	Highways & Infrastructure	64	17%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other Highways Issue • Other Pavement Issues • Highways Information and Advice
	Parking & Lighting	146	39%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCN Received • Payments / Parking Permits • On Street Enforcement – Not Taking Action
Resources	Benefits & Customer Facing	89	43%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits – Over Payments • Benefits – Change of Circumstances • Benefits – Other Service
	Revenues & Customer Contact Centre	53	25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Centre – Officer Behaviour • Council Tax – Recovery • Contact Centre – Enquiry Handling
	BCS Social Care Functions	17	8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Service Failure

12. Service areas have undertaken a range of activities to improve their operations as a result of complaints about service issues. The Adult and Children appendices include several examples of improvements from complaints, four more examples are provided here for other departments.

Regeneration & Environment department

- *Cause of complaint:* a mother whose daughter had passed away complained that it had not been made clear to her that the Cemeteries Service charged a fee in certain circumstances for installing a memorial plaque/headstone at the gravesite. The complaint highlighted the value of ensuring information about the fee is communicated to service users through all possible points of contact.
- *Service improvement example:* all Cemeteries Service officers were therefore reminded to mention this when discussing memorial plaques / headstones with service users. Information about the fee was added to the list of recommended memorial masons issued by the Cemeteries Service. All the memorial masons on this list were reminded of the need to inform families of a possible installation fee when customers purchase a memorial plaque / headstone. The Cemeteries Service also waived the installation fee for the complainant in this instance.

Resources department

- *Cause of complaint:* the complainant was unhappy with the administration of her Council Tax account and the customer service they received in response to previous queries they had made about it. The complaint was not upheld because there were no errors in the handling of their account.

- *Service improvement example:* the final review complaint investigation did however highlight two generic customer service issues that were fed back to relevant managers: the need for officers to put their names rather than just generic job titles on all correspondence; the need for officers to ensure that if they promise to confirm a telephone conversation in an email on the same day they should do so.

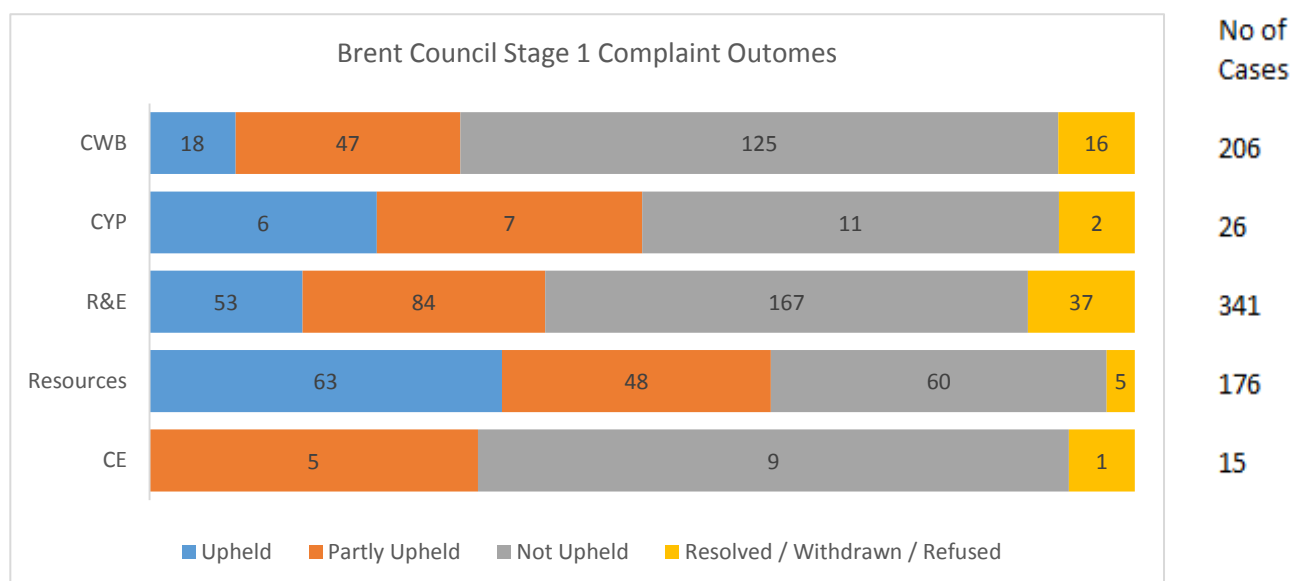
Community Wellbeing department – Housing Needs

- *Cause of complaint:* the complainant, a single person who would not qualify as homeless under homeless legislation, was assisted by the Housing Needs Care and Support team during his discharge from hospital. He was unhappy with what he considered to be unsuitable accommodation referrals.
- *Service improvement example:* the final review complaint investigation highlighted the need for relevant Care and Support officers to check all the available documentation relating to hospital discharge on Mosaic (the Adult Social Care database) before finalising hostel/bed and breakfast referrals to ensure a suitable referral is made. It also highlighted the usefulness of Care and Support officers referring available medical evidence to the District Medical Officer in order to assist their decision-making in similar situations in future.

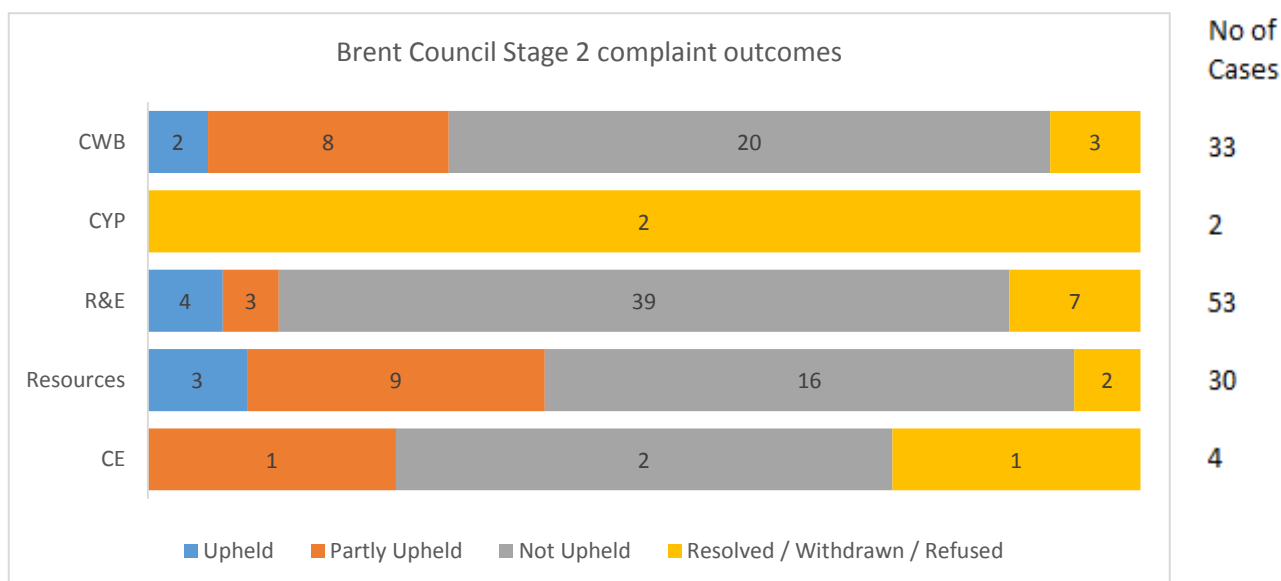
Community Wellbeing department – Libraries

- *Cause of complaint:* staff at one of Brent’s libraries failed to enforce the Council's Private Tuition Fair Use Policy by not asking fee-charging private tutors to stop using the library as their personal tutoring space. The Council's Private Tuition Fair Use Policy prohibits fee-charging private tutors from teaching within Brent libraries. The complainant was concerned about the level of noise this generated in the library and stated that where there is a rule in place, it should be followed by all.
- *Service improvement example:* the final review complaint investigation highlighted the need for library staff to keep the use of the library by private tutors under closer review and to address any observations or trends during the next periodic review of the Council's Private Tuition Fair Use Policy. Library staff were also reminded of the Council's Private Tuition Fair Use Policy and the need for enforcement where the rules are not being followed.

Outcome of Complaints



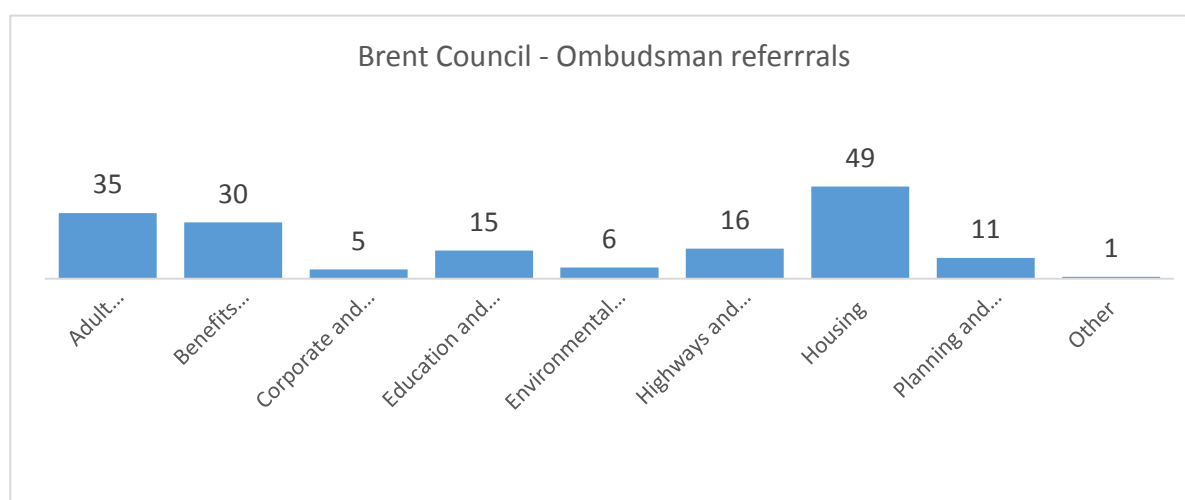
13. 43% of Stage 1 complaints were upheld/partly upheld council-wide in 2016/17. The Resources and CYP departments were above average with 63% and 50% of cases upheld/partly upheld respectively in 2016/17.



14. 27% of Stage 2 complaints were upheld/partly upheld council-wide in 2016/17. The Resources and CWB departments were above average with 40% and 30% of cases upheld/partly upheld respectively in 2016/17.

Local Government Ombudsman

15. There were 168 referrals to the Ombudsman; the LGO categorised these referrals under the services shown in the chart below:



16. The LGO upheld 17 cases against Brent in the following services:
- Housing – 8 cases.
 - Adult Care Services – 3 cases.
 - Education & Children’s Services – 3 cases.

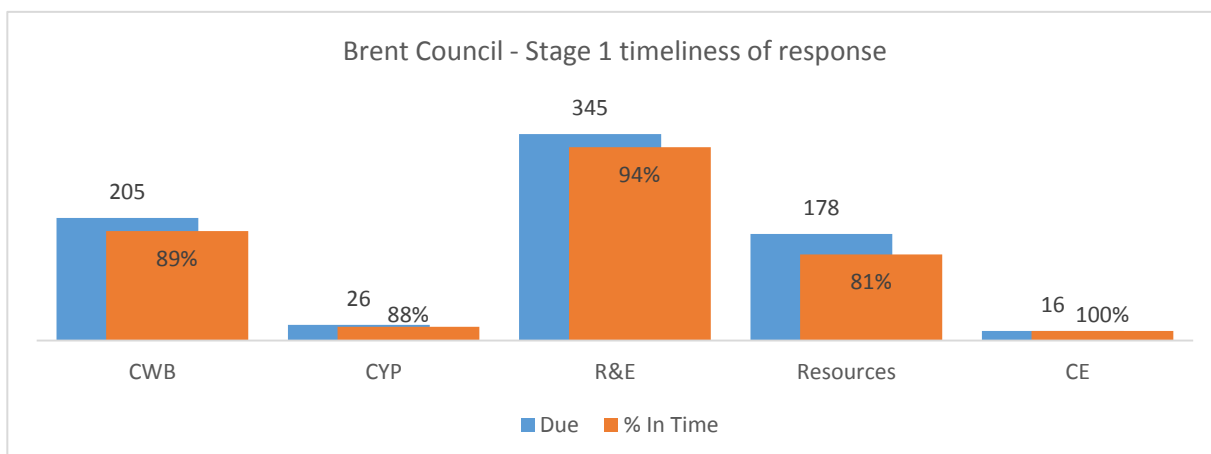
- Benefits & Tax – 2 cases.
- Highways & Transport – 1 case.

17. The breakdown of compensation paid by departments for corporate complaints in 2016/17 is shown below:

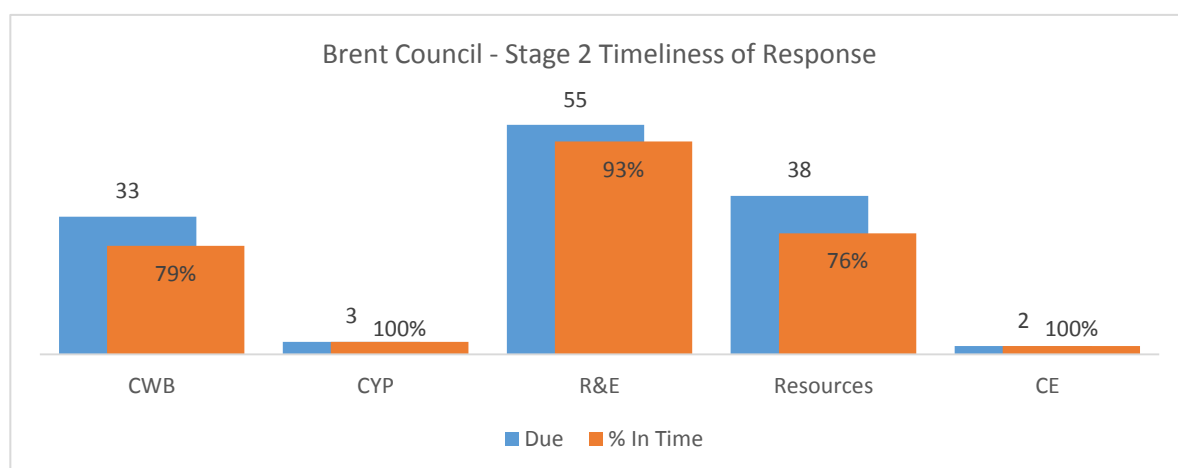
Department	Stages	2016/17		
		No of Cases	£ Cost	£ / Case
CWB	Stage 1 / Provisional	2	£580	£290
	Stage 2	7	£2,660	£380
	Ombudsman	5	£4,715	£943
CYP	Stage 1 / Provisional	0	£0	£0
	Stage 2	0	£0	£0
	Ombudsman	1	£500	£0
R&E	Stage 1 / Provisional	21	£1,902	£91
	Stage 2	8	£2,395	£299
	Ombudsman	0	£0	£0
Resources	Stage 1 / Provisional	9	£2,840	£316
	Stage 2	8	£7,350	£919
	Ombudsman	0	£0	£0
Council -wide	Stage 1 / Provisional	32	£5,322	£166
	Stage 2	23	£12,405	£539
	Ombudsman	6	£5,215	£869

18. Although the R&E department paid out compensation on the most number of cases at Stage 1, the average level of compensation paid was relatively low. The Resources department had the highest average amount of compensation paid at the final review stage and CWB had the highest average amount paid at the Ombudsman stage.

Timeliness of Complaints

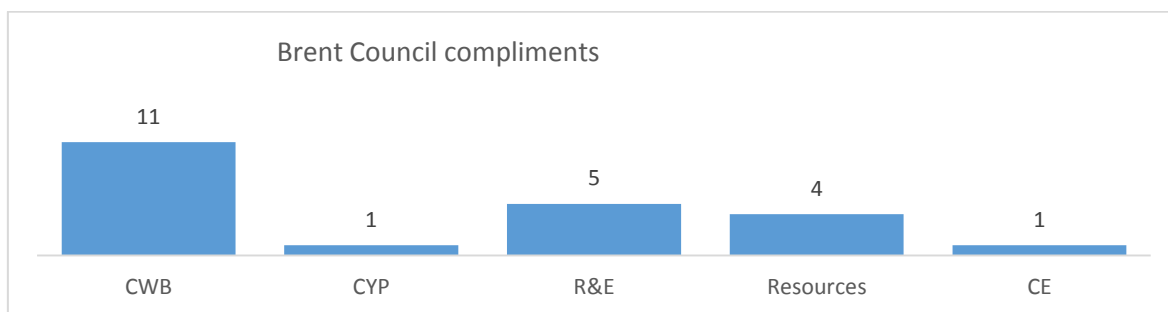


19. Overall timeliness in responding to complaints at Stage 1 in 2016/17 was 89%. R&E department not only had the highest volume of complaints but also achieved the highest levels of timeliness across the Council.



20. Overall timeliness at Stage 2 in 2016/17 was 85%. These cases are managed by the Complaints Service team (R&E department cases were the highest by volume across all departments and also had the best timeliness response rates).

Compliments



21. There has been an under-recording of compliments across the council, with 22 compliments recorded on the iCasework system during the year. Planned changes to the website will make it easier for the public to record their compliments directly online. A few examples of compliments received are listed below:

Parking

- *Thank you very much for the clarification and all the work you have put into solving this issue for us. It is much appreciated.*

Library Service

- *I wanted to write you a note to say how brilliant I, and so many others in the borough, think the Home Library Service is and how very much both the team and the volunteers are appreciated. Since my accident I've not been able to get to the library at all so the Home Library Service has become a real lifesaver and the delivery a monthly highlight. Not only is it an absolute joy to know that there will be great books, and films and music too, arriving each month but it is also always a real pleasure to deal with you all. I know you supply hundreds of people and yet you are all always so incredibly helpful, calm and reliable, I just don't know how you do it! The Service and the team really are exceptional and deserve every award going! Numerous thanks to you all!*

Benefits

- *Please note that during my claim assessment, Mr S has demonstrated a great degree of professionalism and understanding. He is very knowledgeable in his field. He has high level of customer awareness, and he has treated me with dignity and respect. I am writing to you because previously I have had several unpleasant episodes with the Housing Benefit department, up to the point when Mr S handled my claim, who then managed to resolve the issues satisfactorily. I wish him all the best in his job and recommend him for any future work promotion and appraisals.*

ASC Social Care and ASC Duty Team

- *Would like to thank all the staff at Brent social services who were so helpful with my brother's alarm. Especially a lady called S who kindly traced why all my brothers paperwork was missing. He has now got the alarm and it is peace of mind for me as he lives alone and is very vulnerable.*

CYP

- *Thank you for your report it's an excellent reflection of the issues and challenges I faced at the time of complaint. Also I think you argued my case very well. I was anxious at first wondering if I could trust you as an employee of Brent services, so I would like to thank you very much for the time and effort it has taken you to develop the report, and also for communicating with me in the meantime.*

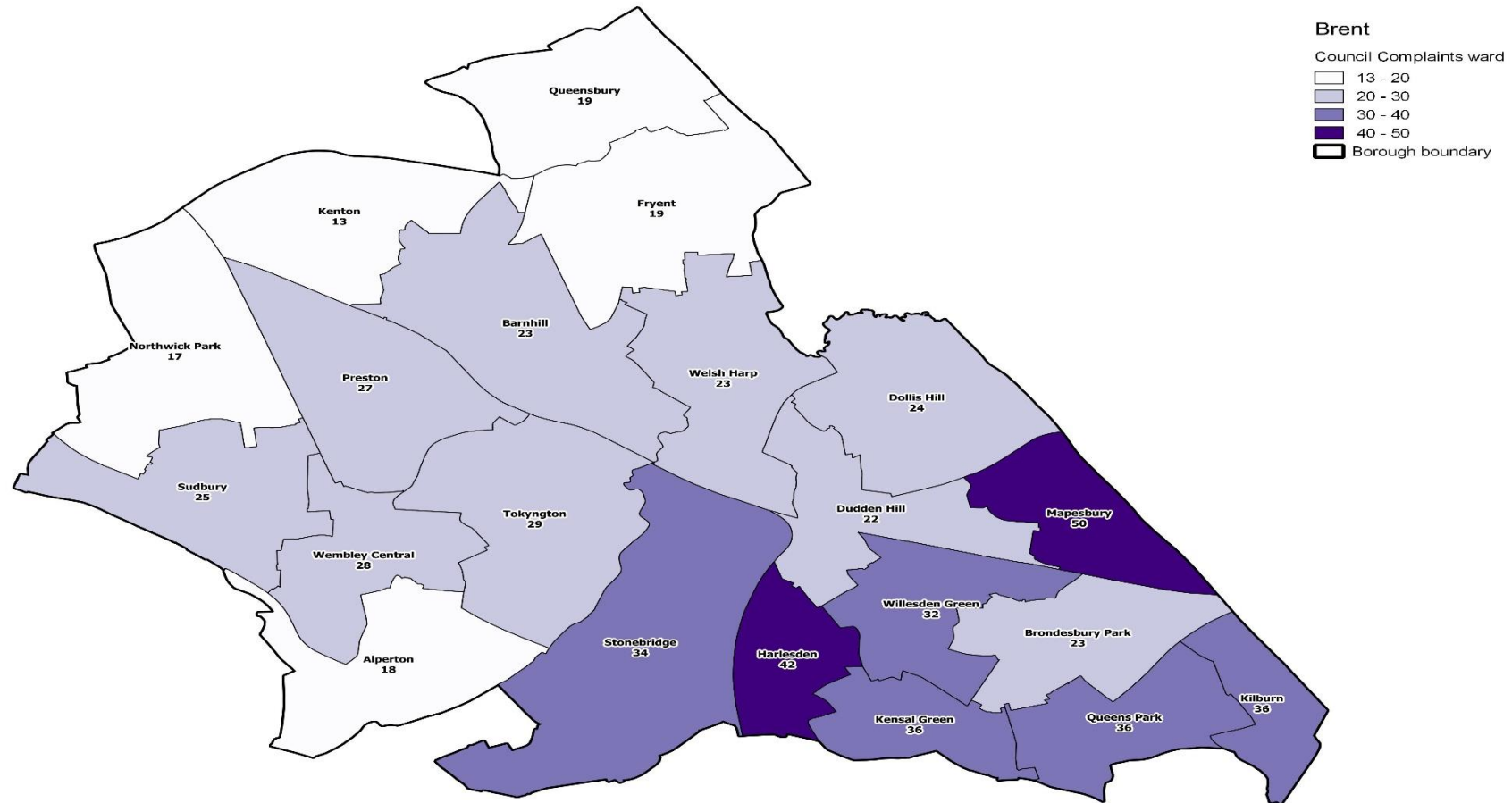
Diversity Data

22. The provision of diversity information by complainants is discretionary. The data shown below is the diversity information that was disclosed in 2016/17 and only gives us partial view of the diverse backgrounds of complainants. It cannot be considered to be representative off all complainants during the year.

Equality Characteristics	Sub-category	Count	% of Count
Gender	Male	172	45%
	Female	199	52%
	Prefer not say	12	3%
	Total	383	100%
Age	16-24	16	5%
	25-34	59	19%
	35-44	87	28%
	45-54	54	17%
	55-64	44	14%
	65+	31	10%
	Prefer not say	18	6%
	Total	309	100%
Ethnicity	African	21	8%
	Asian - Indian	40	16%
	Black	35	14%
	Asian - Non Indian	1	0%
	Mixed	20	8%
	White	87	35%
	Other	4	2%
	Prefer not say	40	16%
	Total	248	100%
Faith	Christian	83	33%
	Hindu	15	6%
	Jewish	2	1%
	Muslim	39	16%
	Other Religion	9	4%
	Agnostic	8	3%
	No Religious Belief	29	12%
	Prefer not to say	66	26%
	Total	251	100%

Map of Complaints by Ward

23. There were 579 postcodes supplied with Council complaints in 2016/17, the map below shows the distribution of these complaints by ward.



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