

	<b>Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee</b> 30 January 2019
	<b>Report from the Director of Performance, Policy &amp; Partnerships</b>
<b>Complaints Annual Report 2017 – 2018</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Key Decision
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	Four: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults Complaints Annual Report 2017/18</li> <li>• Children's Complaints Annual Report 2017/18</li> <li>• Overview of Complaints Performance in the Community Wellbeing and Children &amp; Young People Departments</li> <li>• 2017/18 Complaints Root Cause Summary &amp; Improvement Actions</li> </ul>
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Irene Bremang Head of Performance & Improvement Email: <a href="mailto:irene.bremang@brent.gov.uk">irene.bremang@brent.gov.uk</a> Tel: 020 8937 1822  Peter Gadsdon Director - Performance, Policy and Partnerships Email: <a href="mailto:peter.gadsdon@brent.gov.uk">peter.gadsdon@brent.gov.uk</a> Tel: 020 8937 1400

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The 2017/18 Complaints Annual Report was presented to Cabinet on 10 December 2018 and will also be presented to the Housing Scrutiny Committee and Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee in February 2019.

- 1.2 This version of the 2017/18 Complaints Annual report focuses on complaints performance in the Community Wellbeing (CWB) department - Adult Social Care (ASC) directorate and Culture service and complaints performance in the Children & Young People (CYP) department.
- 1.3 Complaints concerning social care in Adult and Children services come under separate statutory complaint procedures and separate summary reports have been provided in **Appendices A and B** respectively.
- 1.4 An overview report on complaints performance in the CWB department and CYP department is provided in **Appendix C**. The supplement covers the period from April 2017 to March 2018 and comparative data going back to 2014/15 has been provided where available.
- 1.5 A summary of the root cause of complaints and improvement actions in the CWB and CYP departments in 2017/18 is provided in **Appendix D**.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee is asked to note that Cabinet approved the 2017-18 Complaint Annual Report which included the progress update on the Improvement Action Plan. The Action Plan was developed from the eight recommendations in the 2016-17 Complaints Annual Report.
- 2.2 Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee is asked to note and consider the CWB department (ASC directorate and Culture services) and CYP department performance in managing and resolving complaints and to advise Cabinet of any further remedial action required.

## **3.0 Detail**

### ***Council's Complaint Framework***

- 3.1 The Council operates a 2-stage corporate complaints process, 2-part Adult statutory complaints process and a 3-stage Children's statutory complaints process. The stages and timescales for handling both corporate and statutory complaints is set out in Appendix C.

### ***Complaint Performance – Key Headlines***

- 3.2 The key headlines from the ASC directorate's complaints performance in 2017/18 were as follows:
  - **ASC – Corporate Complaints**
    - Volume of Stage 1 corporate cases compared to the rest of Brent is very low and less than 2% (✓)
    - 1 in 6 corporate case was escalated to Stage 2 (↑)
    - Stage 1 and Stage 2 upheld/partly upheld rate has been decreasing over the past 4 years (↓)
    - The timeliness of Stage 1 and Stage 2 corporate complaints has significantly improved over the past 4 years (↑)

- *ASC – Statutory Complaints*
  - The volume of ASC Stage 1 statutory complaints has fallen by 27% over the past 4 years (↓)
  - 1 in 4 cases was escalated to the second stage (↑)
  - Stage 1 and Stage 2 upheld/partly upheld rate has been decreasing over the past 4 years (↓)
- *ASC Complaints - General*
  - The top three complaint themes were service delivery, customer care and safeguarding
  - The number of Ombudsman referrals has been increasing but the number of cases upheld has remained broadly the same over the past 4 years (✓)
  - The number of cases awarded compensation is low, however the total amount awarded was significantly increased by a one-off exceptional case this year (↑)

3.3 The key headlines from the Culture service' corporate complaints performance in 2017/18 were as follows:

- Overall number of Stage 1 complaints is very low - less than 4% of all Brent cases (✓)
- Volume of Stage 1 cases has increased by about a third over the past 4 years (↑)
- Escalation rate to Stage 2 remains very low with only 1 in 17 cases escalated during the year (✓)
- The top three complaint themes were library premises, sports facilities and library customer services
- Stage 1 and Stage 2 upheld/partly upheld rate has been decreasing over the past 4 years (↓)
- Timeliness rate peaked at 98% for Stage 1 and 100% for Stage 3 cases during the year (↑)

3.4 The key headlines from the CYP department's complaints performance in 2017/18 are as follows:

- *CYP – Corporate Complaints*
  - Low volume of Stage 1 and Stage 2 cases compared to the rest of Brent i.e. 2% (✓)
  - Stage 1 and Stage 2 upheld/partly upheld rate has been gradually increasing over the past 4 years (↑)
  - Timeliness of Stage 1 and Stage 2 corporate complaints has significantly improved over the past 4 years (↑)
- *CYP – Statutory*
  - Notable reduction in the volume of statutory Stage 1 and Stage 2 cases over the past 4 years with very few cases progressed to Stage 3 (↓)
  - More cases are being upheld/partly upheld at Stage 1 and fewer cases are being upheld/partly upheld at Stage 2 (↓)
  - Noticeable improvement in the timeliness of Stage 1 cases, but the timeliness of Stage 2 complaints is below target (↓)

- *CYP Complaints – General*
  - The top three complaint themes were social workers, assessments and leaving care.
  - Number of Ombudsman referrals has been decreasing and the number of cases upheld has remained low (↓)
  - Overall number of cases awarded compensation and total amount paid has remained low over the last 4 years (↓)

### ***Improvements Resulting from Complaint Investigations***

- 3.5 Service-specific improvements resulting from the learning from complaints for CWB and CYP departments have been highlighted in Appendix D.
- 3.6 Cabinet agreed 8 recommendations in the 2016/17 Annual Complaints report which was developed into an action plan by the Complaints Service team. A progress update is provided below on the 8 recommendations

Recommendation/Action	Progress
1. Work with Service area and departmental management teams to review key service delay/failure hotspots and develop improvement plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly hotspots report introduced and discussed with the Corporate Management Team (CMT), departmental management teams (DMTs) and shared with senior managers</li> <li>• The Complaints Service team have focussed on supporting HMS with improving service delivery based on identified complaints hotspots.</li> </ul>
2. Develop a tailored training plan on communication and staff behaviours to be implemented for priority service areas across the Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hotspots analysis showed that HMS had received a significant amount of complaints regarding communication and staff behaviours. Other areas across the Council had low levels of this type of complaints.</li> <li>• HMS have introduced a number of measures to address staff and communication issues including: further analysis of customer care complaints to identify and address patterns; the rollout of Mary Guber customer service and feedback on learning points given to individuals and teams.</li> <li>• Other service areas have discussed the learning points from complaints with staff members and team meetings.</li> </ul>
3. Support new Housing Management Service during the redesign of the repairs process in order to feed in the lessons learned from complaints.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redesign of repairs process was part of the wider Housing Transformation Programme.</li> <li>• The Complaints Service team have also provided training and guidance to HMS staff and managers on effective complaints handling.</li> <li>• <b>Action closed</b></li> </ul>

Recommendation/Action	Progress
4. Review LGO referrals and identify any future opportunities for early resolution and to help minimise premature LGO referrals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Complaints Service team proactively works with complainants to minimise complaints being escalated to the Council's final review stage and to the Ombudsman stage. However, there are cases where the complainant chooses to bypass the Council's complaints process and lodges a complaint directly with the Ombudsman.</li> </ul>
5. Review our internal approach to complaint decisions, corrective actions and compensation in light of LGO outcomes in 2016/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All LGO upheld cases were reviewed by the Complaints Service team to identify learning points and service areas put in place the appropriate remedial actions.</li> </ul>
6. Continue to improve internal processes and working arrangements with service managers to increase the timeliness of Stage 2 responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weekly open case tracker sent to staff and managers and reminders sent by the Chief Executive and Complaints Service team to maintain the focus on timescales.</li> </ul>
7. Work closely with the Housing Management Service management team to establish a new and effective complaints process and implement improved working arrangements to manage Stage 2 complaints.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints Service team has been working closely with the HMS senior management team and staff to introduce improved complaints handling processes within the directorate. Regular feedback is provided on live issues and practical solutions agreed.</li> </ul>
8. Implement a weekly Corrective Actions Tracker for all departments to monitor the timely completion of agreed remedial actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Corrective Actions Tracker sent to relevant staff twice a month. Although completion of corrective actions has improved to some extent, this still needs ongoing attention to ensure that we can keep our promises as a council and follow through on remedial actions completely and in a timely manner.</li> </ul>

## 4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Instead, the details provided on compensation payments reflect the monetary impact of not getting things right first time as an organisation and the need to improve the customer experience and therefore minimise the financial penalties incurred by the Council.

## 5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 Complaints concerning the Adult Social Care and Children and Young People departments come under separate statutory complaint procedures. It is a

legal requirement to produce annual reports for these areas and these are included in appendices A and B with reference to the statutory frameworks for the management of these statutory complaints.

**6.0 Equality Implications**

6.1 None

**7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders**

7.1 None

**8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)**

8.1 None

**Report sign off:**

**PETER GADSDON**

Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships