



London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham | The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea | Westminster City Council

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Adult Social Care Annual Customer Feedback Report

1 April 2012 - 31 March 2013



Introduction

This report provides information about statutory complaints made between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013 under the Local Authority Social Services and NHS Complaints regulations, 2009.

This report highlights how various services within Adult Social Care (ASC) Services have performed in line with key principles outlined in the complain regulations. Learning and service improvements that have been made as a result of responding to complaints are also discussed, as are plans for further service developments.

The Tri-Borough Customer Feedback Team is responsible for recording, managing and analysing all statutory complaints and feedback in ASC as well as comments and compliments.

The Complaints Process

The Department of Health, defines a complaint as, “an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about the actions, decisions or apparent failings of a Local Authority’s adult social care provision which requires a response”. The Local Authority uses this definition.

Anyone can make a complaint where they receive a service from Adult Services or where they are affected, or likely to be affected, by the Department's actions. This includes a service provided by an external provider acting on behalf of the Local Authority. In such a case service users can either complain directly to the provider or to the Tri-Borough Customer Feedback Team.

Staff are encouraged to attempt to resolve problems at the first point of contact in line with good practice highlighted by the Local Government Ombudsman, but are equally advised to direct service users towards the Customer Feedback Team to access the procedure where an instant resolution is not possible or appropriate, or where the service user remains dissatisfied.

In accordance with procedures for handling complaints that came into effect on 1st April 2009, once a complaint is logged by the Customer Feedback Team, they will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 3 working days. A plan of how the complaint will be dealt with will be agreed with the complainant including the time-scales for providing a response. The Customer Feedback Team conducts a risk assessment for each complaint to determine how it should be handled. Complaints are graded into four categories: low risk, moderate risk, high risk and extreme risk. Complaints that fall between low and moderate risk are dealt with by the service manager concerned and the resolution method is usually through meeting with the complainant and a paper review or an internal investigation followed by a written response. Those that are deemed to be high or extreme risk are usually investigated by independent investigating officers who submit their findings to the local authority followed by a letter together with the report to the complainant from the Adjudicating Officer, usually a Director. Other such complaints may also need to be passed on to the Safeguarding Leads as appropriate and the complaints process may be suspended, if necessary, in order to allow the safeguarding process to be completed.

The Local Authority will always seek to resolve the complaint as soon as possible, and in the absence of a prescribed timescale it uses an internal timescale of 10 working days, in consultation with the complainant. However, if delays are expected the complainant is consulted and informed respectively. All responses, whether or not the timescale has been agreed with the complainant, must be made within 6 months of receiving the complaint. However, in exceptional circumstances, an investigation may take longer and this will be discussed with the complainant.

In cases of cross-organisational complaints, one organisation will act as the lead and a co-ordinated response will be provided so that the complainant receives one consolidated response to their complaints.

The Local Authority has one opportunity to provide a formal response to the complainant and this response must set out their right to approach the Local Government Ombudsman should they remain dissatisfied.

Summary of activity and demand

The total number of people that received a service from the London Borough of Hammersmith during the year was 4,203 and 2% of these service users, or someone on their behalf raised a complaint about a service that they received. The table below highlights key ASC activity

Table 1 – Breakdown in ASC activity

Category	Number
New referrals	4,394
New assessments	1,468
Reviews	1,428
Service users	4,203

Priorities

In 2012/13 the Adult Social Care Tri-Borough Service Customer Feedback Team has been busy handling complaints, compliments and enquiries from services users and/or their representatives. In doing so it has ensured that internal timescales are met and that the quality of the response has consistently improved. It has also contributed to ensuring that services make informed changes to the way they deliver improved services.

The Team will continue to fulfil this role and in addition it has set itself the following priorities for the rest of the year;

PROMOTE

- Continue to promote the Tri-Borough Customer Feedback Team across the Tri-Borough services and single Borough Adult Social Care Operational Teams, ensuring that staff are familiar with the procedures and are fully equipped with effective complaints handling skills.
- Helping staff and stakeholders understand the importance of forwarding complaints, understanding what a complaint is, making it easier for people to complain about a service they receive.
- Further improve the process of seeking support and making a complaint through a new complaints form for the three Local Authorities and wider use of the free phone number for the Customer Feedback Team.
- Improve the identification, recording and responding to compliments and positive feedback from service users and/or their representatives.

STAKEHOLDERS

- Strengthening links with corporate sections of all three Local Authorities and other partner agencies. Our aim is to build on existing working relationships with internal and external partners such as health, advocacy agencies and other important partners in the voluntary sector. Due to the upcoming integrated joint working arrangements between ASC and Central London Community Healthcare, the team will focus on agreeing robust working practices for the two organisations.
- The Team will arrange to meet with peers at Hammersmith and Fulham Advocacy Service and Healthwatch to understand their role and ensure that the two organisations work in a way that effectively supports the service user, in the event of a complaint.

QUALITY

- Continuing to ensure that all statutory complaints and feedback from service users across the three Local Authorities is recorded and handled effectively and a good standard of quality is maintained.
- Ensure good quality data is continued to be presented to the Management Team, Lead Councillors and staff in the form of internal Tri-Borough Quarterly reports to show emerging trends and valuable learning from complaints throughout the year.
- Consider speedy action plans for high profile or particularly complicated complaints to ensure that an independent investigation route is chosen as soon as possible if that is the best possible way forward.
- Widening and increasing the range and expertise of our pool of external investigating officers, to create greater efficiencies and satisfaction for both complainants and members of staff involved in investigations.
- Conduct customer satisfaction interviews, to improve practice and check accessibility to ensure people that report feedback to us have a good experience.

DEMOGRAPHIC CAPTURE

- Make arrangements for the recording of equality and diversity recording for all complaints and feedback. This will help us assess the demographics of those that engage with the Local Authority to complain and see if there are any issues around access for users and/or their representatives.

INTERNAL INFORMATION SHARING

- Ensure that we record case reference numbers from the respective ASC databases, on the complaints database, so that there is a common link between the two databases and data can be used in a proactive way to review the quality/satisfaction of particular service groups or specific service provisions.

FOCUS ON HOMECARE

- Continue to work with homecare agencies, The Procurement Team and The Safeguarding Team to monitor issues arising from complaints and ensuring that practice changes are made where appropriate.

- Provide the Homecare Board with essential information on complaints activity on a monthly basis so that any trends can be analysed and any problems in service delivery can be picked up and investigated with the agency. This is to ensure that services are being delivered effectively and in line with the provisions set out in the contract and the standards set by the Care Quality Commission.
- Continue to work on projects such as complainant satisfaction surveys, that can help capture information from service users to inform the decisions made by the Procurement and Commissioning Teams.

LEARNING

- Continue to push forward a learning culture throughout the organisation. We will do this by ensuring learning is followed up by simple action plans with the Service Manager at the time the complaint is closed and this information is appropriately recorded on the complaints system.

REVIEW

- The Team will also be reviewing the complaints handling database options to ensure that the best technical option is being utilised for this purpose.

Compliments

Service users and their representatives are encouraged to tell the Local Authority if they are receiving an exceptionally good service. People can complete the compliments, comments and complaints form as well as contact the relevant social care team or the Customer Feedback Team to express their praise. Although this number is slightly lower than the previous two periods and we will be reminding staff and managers to make sure that all compliments are passed to the Customer Feedback Team so they can be recorded and acknowledged.

Table 2 – Compliments over last three periods

Year	No of compliments
2010/11	20
2011/12	22
2012/13	18

Some examples of the compliments received this year are;

“Thank you for all your help with assisting my mother with her assessment, grant applications and other things. The SW was absolutely great and helped my mother in such a wonderful way that she feels less isolated and more confident to ask for any help if she needs it”.

“I appreciated all your help & support very much, as it is very important for me to be as independent as possible, & to be able to remain in my own home for as long as possible. With your support I felt this is currently possible, and would like to say Thank You”

“Thank you for delivering the white stick on time, it has already made a big difference to my life”.

Detailed complaints activity for 2012/13

The Customer Feedback Team recorded 77 formal complaints in 2012/13. This number shows a 12% increase on the previous year.

Graph 1 – Number of complaints received over 5 periods

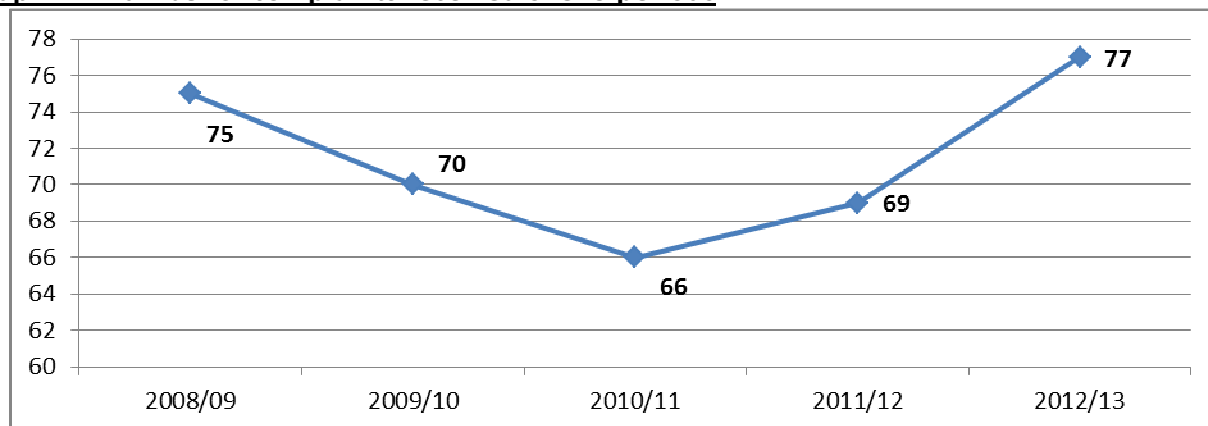
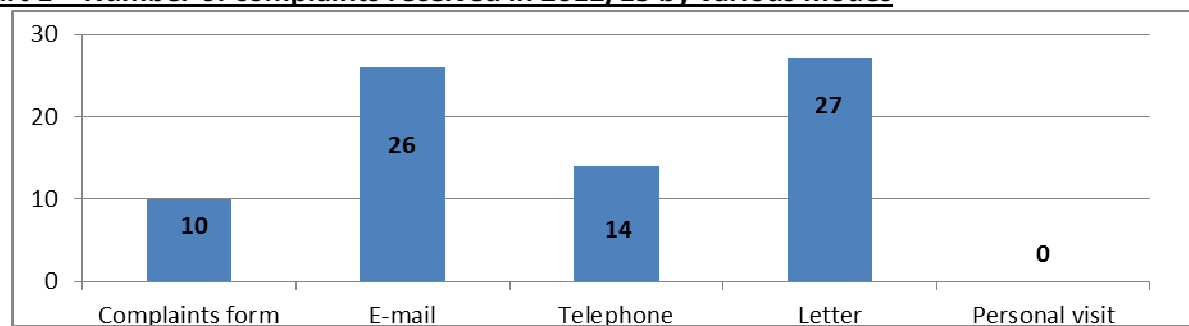


Chart 1 – Number of complaints received in 2012/13 by various modes



The largest percentage is from people who wrote to the team by email or letter. Of these the more complex cases are contacted by phone by a Customer Feedback Officer for further clarification and/or offered a personal visit to discuss their concerns in detail.

Only 7% of complaints were received by way of complaints forms, this number is increasing, especially as the complaints forms have been revised and reprinted. They are very useful leaflets which contain important information about the process and contact details. Telephone complaints should also see a rise, as the team has been advertising its free phone number to improve access to the service.

Nature of issue

Table 3 shows a breakdown of the complaint received by nature of issue. If you would like to see a detailed breakdown by team of this information, please see Appendix 1. As will be seen the majority of the complaints have been about the quality of the service or communication. Improvement in these areas is discussed in the learning from complaints chapter on page 11.

Table 3 – Complaints by nature of issue for 2012/13

Categories	No.
Charging/finance	2
Communication	17
Quality of service	22
Service failure	7
Service delay	9
Staff attitude/behaviour	11

Withdrawal, reduction or change	4
Object to eligibility or assessment decision	5
TOTAL	77

Complaints activity by team

The table below shows a detailed look in the complaints activity by all the teams within the Adult Social Care Services.

The most complaints, 25% received were against the external homecare providers. Figures show that, 47% of total service users receive homecare, out of those only 1% raised a complaint with the Local Authority. The Authority and the agencies work in partnership to handle these complaints and ensure that corrective action is taken to ensure complete resolution of the complaint, improvement in service and prevention of recurrence of the issue.

Table 4 – Complaints activity by team for 2012/13

Teams	Complaints received	Outcome				Ongoing
		Upheld	Not upheld	Partially upheld	w/drawn	
Community social work service	16	1	6	7	1	0
Community & hospital assessment svc	12	2	4	6	-	-
Client Affairs	0	-	-	-	-	-
Learning Disabilities Service	7	2	2	3	-	-
Mental Health Service	4	1	2	1	-	-
Re-ablement Service	5	1	1	2	1	-
Occupational Therapy	8	1	4	3	-	-
Homecare	19	5	6	7	1	1
Care line	1	-	-	1	-	-
Finance	0	-	-	-	-	-
Commissioning (LD)	5	-	5	-	-	-
TOTAL	77	13	30	30	3	1

The other teams with high number of complaints are the two main Assessment and Social Work Teams. The Community Social Work Team has 21% of the complaints whereas the Community and Hospital Team has received 16% of the total complaints. These figures are consistent with last years. These two teams see the most number of service users, therefore this should be considered when looking at the percentage distribution.

Outcomes

There are three main categories for classifying the outcome of a complaint;

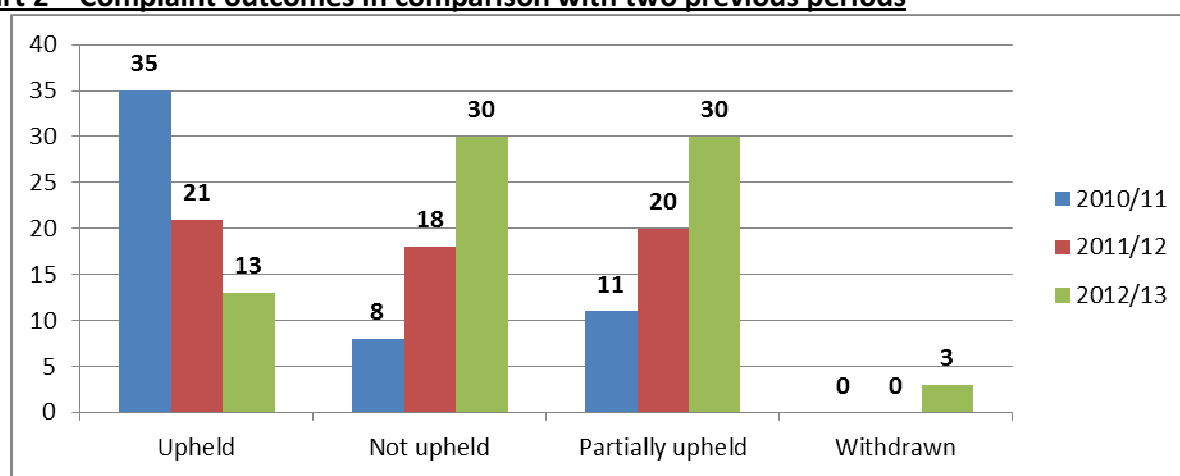
“Upheld” – This is where the Local Authority have accepted responsibility for the matter arising. We would follow this up with a detailed letter of apology and clarification with reasons and remedies for the matter. It would also include actions to ensure such a complaint does not recur.

“Partially Upheld” – The LA accepts some responsibility for part of the complaint. A response outlining the part that is upheld is sent, stating reasons and proposed corrective measures.

“Not Upheld” – This normally means that the complaint was investigated but no fault was found. We would explain carefully and thoroughly our reasons for our conclusion.

Chart 2 below reflects the outcome of all complaints that were made to Adult Social Care, and comparisons with previous two years. The number of complaints that are fully upheld has decreased as a percentage compared to previous years. In 2012/13 only 17% complaints were fully upheld compared to 65% that were upheld in 2010/11. Majority of the complaints that were upheld in 2012/13 were about the quality of service. The teams ensure that whatever the outcome of a complaint may be, they learn from the complaint to ensure that the problem does not recur with other service users.

Chart 2 – Complaint outcomes in comparison with two previous periods



If complainants remain dissatisfied with our response, they are advised to contact the Customer Feedback Team, to seek clarification and discuss their dissatisfaction, to see if further clarification can resolve the matter. However, if they continue to remain dissatisfied with the efforts of the Local Authority they are advised of their right to progress their concerns to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Local Government Ombudsman activity

Table 5 shows the number and type of correspondence the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham received from the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) in relation to the Adult Social Care services it provides.

Table 5 – LGO investigations and outcome for 2012/13

Type	No of complaints	Outcome		
		Upheld /Partial upheld	Not upheld	Still active
Premature complaints	1	n/a	n/a	n/a
Complaints investigated by the LGO	2	1	0	1
TOTAL	3	1	0	1

There was only one premature complaint. This is a complaint that the LGO receive from a service user but has not yet been put through the Local Authority's complaints process. This was successfully resolved under local complaints procedures.

The two complaints that were investigated by the LGO pertained to the Learning Disability (LD) Team. One was about integrated LD services with health, whereas the other was about a joint service delivered by LD Services and the residential care provider.

The outcome of one of these complaints is still being awaited, whereas the other has been closed. The outcome for this was to apologise for the delay in service provision and offer compensation for the time and trouble to be awarded by the health side of the service.

The number of complaints investigated by the LGO in 2012/13 has dropped compared to last year, where 7 cases were investigated. However, this is not a trend that can be analysed, as the number of complaints that are sent to a Local Authority may differ from year to year and are based on the LGO's discretion, as to whether or not they will be subject to a full investigation. All complainants continue to be referred to the LGO as per normal at the end of the Local Authority's complaints process.

Independent Investigations

One case has been escalated to an independent investigation. This case pertains to the Learning Disability Service and the residential provider. This investigation is being carried out by an Independent Investigator and is still ongoing, with adjudication expected by early June.

Members Enquiries

All member enquiries are managed and recorded by respective support staff. In 2012/13 the number of member enquiries for the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham was 46. The Customer Feedback Team continuously liaise with the Executive Support staff to ensure that if a Member enquiry raises concerns about an ongoing or new complaint the correct process can be applied and all parties are informed.

Corporate Complaints

The Borough recorded one case in Adult Social Care issues under the corporate complaints procedures. This is one of the cases that was then referred to the Local Government ombudsman and is currently under investigation.

Financial Recompense

No compensation payments were offered in this financial year.

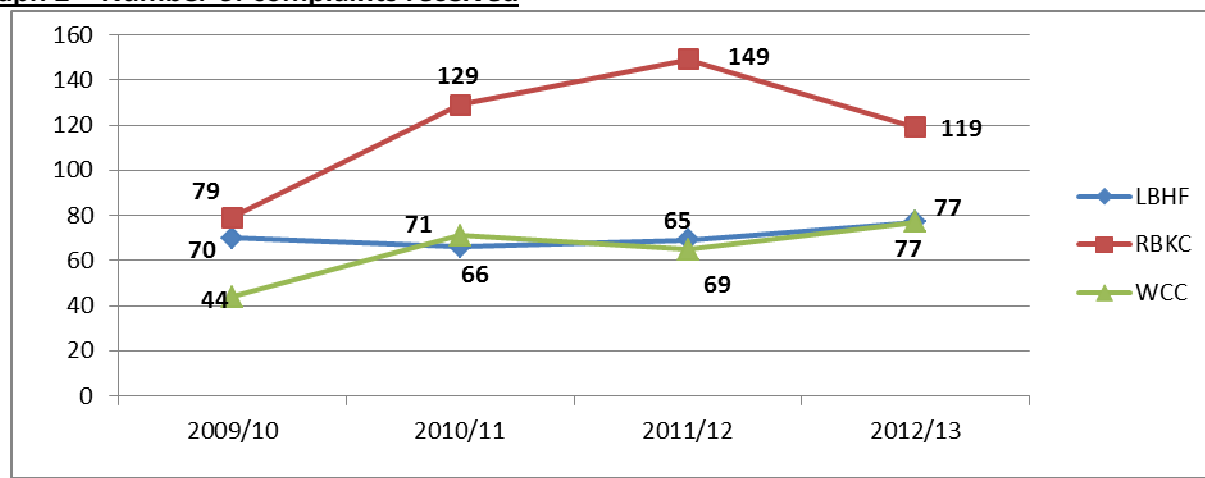
Tri-Borough Comparisons

With the formation of the Tri-Borough Adult Social Care Service, data on complaints for all three Local Authorities has been compared and analysed to demonstrate any key similarities or differences in volume, outcome and response times and take learning from good practice.

Graph 2 shows the number of complaints received by all three local authorities over the past 4 years. In 2012/13, the Royal Borough received the highest number of complaints at 119, The

London Borough of Hammersmith received 77 and Westminster City Council received 77 complaints.

Graph 2 – Number of complaints received



As can be seen the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has in the recent years received and recorded the highest number of complaints. Whereas, Hammersmith and Fulham and Westminster City Council received lower numbers, this year has seen a small increase for both Local Authorities, however remaining more or less consistent with previous periods.

Table 6 shows a comparison of outcomes recorded by the three local authorities for 2012/13. Almost two-third (63%) complaints against the Westminster City Council were upheld (fully or partially) compared to 53% of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and 56% of Hammersmith and Fulham complaints. There is a change in these figures compared to last year, where RBKC had the most upheld (fully or partially) complaints at 62% of total complaints received, LBHF 59% and WCC had the lowest at 37% complaints.

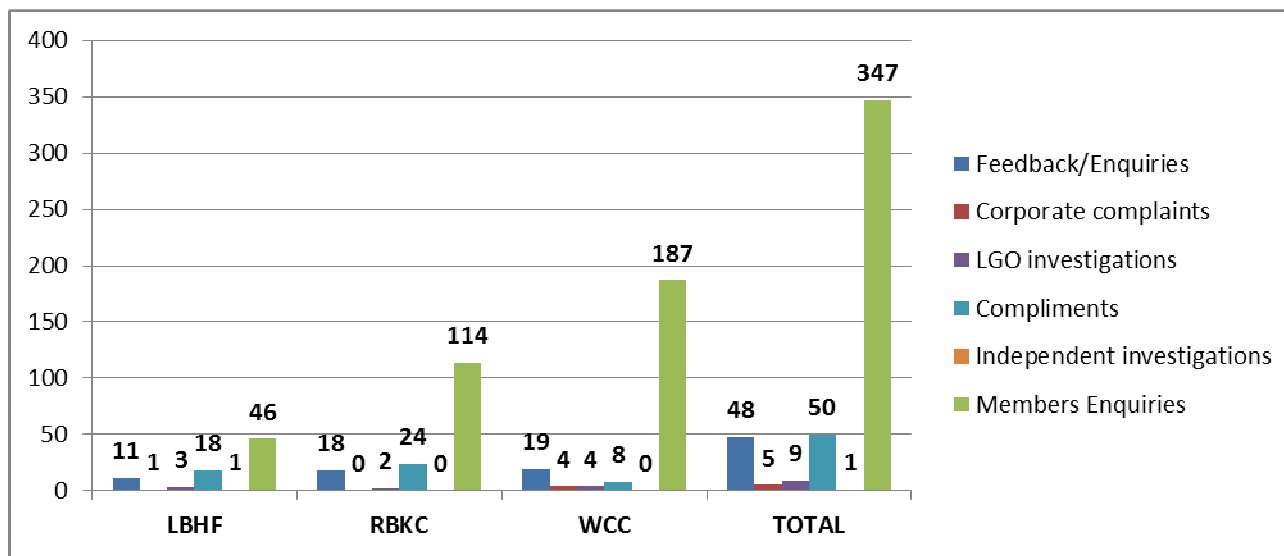
Table 6 – Outcome of complaints by LA and percentage

Local Authority	Upheld	Not upheld	Partially upheld	Withdrawn	Ongoing	Total
LBHF	13 (17%)	30 (39%)	30 (39%)	3 (4%)	1 (1%)	77
RBKC	32 (27%)	47 (39%)	31 (26%)	3 (2%)	6 (6%)	119
WCC	21 (27%)	24 (32%)	28 (36%)	3 (4%)	1 (1%)	77
TOTAL	66 (24%)	101 (37%)	89 (33%)	9 (3%)	8 (3%)	273

Other feedback

The Tri-Borough Correspondence Policy was issued to all staff in November 2012, and since then the role of the Customer Feedback Team extends to recording compliments, general enquiries, correspondence sent to the Leadership Team with regards to care and services offered by any one of the three Local Authorities. The Team also handle any corporate complaints that relate to Adult Social Care, however, may be outside the parameters of the Adult Social Care regulations. The Chart below shows a breakdown of different types of feedback. It also includes a Tri-Borough comparison of Members Enquiries that are recorded and handled by support staff for each Local Authority.

Chart 3 – Comparison of other types of feedback by LA



Learning from complaints

Complaints are an effective and essential tool for any business to identify and then learn from problems that are presented by users. They help an organisation improve the way they work and deliver services.

This chapter will demonstrate learning and service improvement, including changes to services that have been implemented. ‘Learning from complaints’ is an increasingly important part of the ethos within adult social care and managers responding to complaints/representations are encouraged to identify any shortcomings within the service and to inform the service user of any actions which will be taken to prevent a recurrence of the event which led to the complaint. The role of the Customer Feedback Team is to ensure that Service Managers transform learning from complaints into service improvements. Below are some examples of lessons that have been learnt and some service improvements that have been made as a result.

- A complaint in relation to case recording resulted in, the Service Manager sending a reminder to all staff to ensure the rules around record keeping were clear and well understood.
- In relation to a complaint a new corporate procedure for Subject Access Records was devised and is monitored by the Corporate Team. A new Tri-Borough recording guidance is also being devised to promote clear recording of decisions as well as guidance for printing SAR requests.
- Both the Community & Hospital Assessment Service and the Mental Health Team came together to jointly deal with a complaint and as a result of being required to work together developed an open dialogue in the form of monthly meetings focusing on areas of cross-over and agreeing case responsibility where there is unclarity. Also being developed is a transfer procedure which will identify service users ahead of time to be transferred in a planned manner between the service areas.

- With respect to a particular complaint, where a poorly worded letter was sent to a third party seeking information/intervention, the Service partially upheld this complaint and ensures that all letters addressed to a third party raising concerns about a person's welfare must be signed off by a senior manager. This message has been communicated to all staff via service meetings. The recording policy mentioned above will include further clear advice on this matter.
- As a result of a complaint about the Careline Service, the Manager will be reviewing the way the service is provided as well as the skill set of the staff answering calls and those that attend to home visits.
- There was further learning about customer care and communication standards which have been addressed by the Head of Service.
- As a result of a complaint investigation the Careline Service is making contact with all service users, their families if known to the service and where known to adult social care services allocated social care staff to ensure that they hold the most up to date health and care information for each of the 2,500 pendant alarm customers the service supports. It is hoped that updating this information will help improve the service delivery.

In addition to the learning identified by specific teams, the Customer Feedback Team also has some examples where it will be making changes to improve the quality of its work, especially when dealing with homecare complaints, as they constitute the majority of those received.

1. The Customer Feedback Team has been using Respond, as the designated database for recording Tri-Borough Complaints and Feedback. This has been working well and has successfully helped the service to produce the required data and analysis. The Team will continue to use this database for 2013/14 and will review the decision in December 2013.
2. Working closely with the Contracts Team and agencies to ensure that agencies deliver on complaints agenda and ensure good quality responses.
3. In recognition of a recent homecare survey carried out by the Customer Feedback Team, they will be working to produce better, clearer and simple information about the complaints process and procedure to be sent to the complainant if and when they make a complaint to the Authority or directly to a provider.
4. Look at current access routes for complainants and remind Social Workers to direct service users and their representatives to the Agency or the Customer Feedback Team if they wish to complain about the service they receive from an agency.
5. Ensure that complaints forms are supplied to service users when they are being assessed for services or sign up to receiving any services.
6. The Customer Feedback Team has written to all homecare agencies to remind them of the importance of good quality and thorough responses. A suggested template for responding has also been sent, as well as asking them to end all letters with a compulsory paragraph.
7. The Team will develop guidance on responding to complaints that are outside of timescale – i.e. what can be reasonably investigated.

Appendix 1 – Breakdown of complaints issues by team

Teams	Complaints categories	Charging/finance	Communication	Quality of service	Service failure	Service delay	Staff attitude/behaviour	Withdrawal, reduction or change in service	Policy objection	Object to eligibility or assessment decision	TOTAL
Community social work service		1	3	4	1	2	1	1	-	3	16
Community and hospital assessment service		-	3	3	1	-	2	1	-	2	12
Client Affairs		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Learning Disabilities Service		-	1	2	1	1	1	1	-	-	7
Mental Health Service		-	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	4
H&F Advice		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Meals Service		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Re-ablement Service		-	-	2	1	-	2	-	-	-	5
Occupational Therapy		-	3	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	8
Homecare		1	1	7	2	3	4	1	-	-	19
Care line		-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Finance		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Commissioning (LD)		-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
TOTAL		2	17	22	7	9	11	4	0	5	77

