

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy & Performance Board
DATE: 3rd January 2012
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Policy & Resources
PORTFOLIO: Resources
SUBJECT: Annual Report for Adult Social Care, Children and Young People and Corporate Complaints 2010/ 11
WARDS: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To report and provide an analysis on complaints processed under all three of the Council's Complaints Procedures during 2010/11.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

(1) **That the contents of the report be noted.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

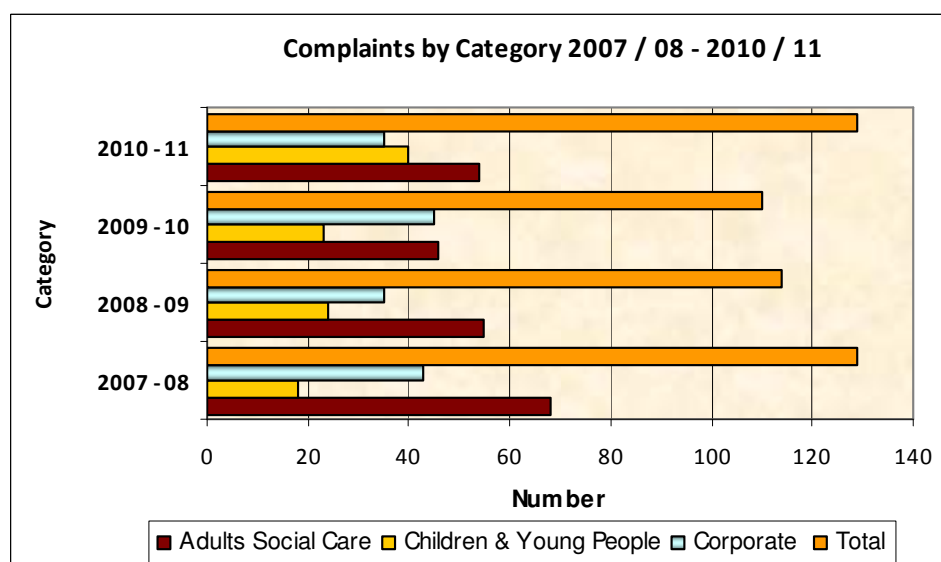
Context

- 3.1 The Council presently has a statutory responsibility to administer complaints in relation to Children and Young People and Adult Social Care. Additionally the Council also administers a procedure to deal with Corporate complaints whereby the public can seek redress if they believe Council departments have failed to deliver a satisfactory level of service.
- 3.2 Although the complaint procedures are administered separately Directorates do liaise with one another with regard to complaints which possess aspects that could possibly be considered by more than one of the procedures.
- 3.3 The procedures share a staged approach to complaint handling, target times for responses, and the aim of resolving all complaints swiftly, and wherever possible by the people who provide the service. When complaints are received that have not been raised previously, they are normally directed to the relevant department as an informal complaint to be investigated as a service improvement opportunity.
- 3.4 However, the procedures differ in the number of stages they have, Adult Social Care has two stages, whilst Corporate and Children and Young People both have three stages. If the Council cannot resolve complaints to the satisfaction of complainants they can be further considered by the Local Government Ombudsman. The stages of each of the procedures are documented in Appendix 1.

4.0 COMPLAINTS TREND ANALYSIS 2010/11.

Overview

4.1 The chart below provides a breakdown of the number of complaints received for each of the financial years from 2007/ 08 to 2010 /11.



4.2 Whilst falling slightly year on year the levels of complaints received during 2010/ 11 is at exactly the same as that during 2007/ 08. However, this relatively slight rise does not reflect a concentration of complaints upon a particular service area.

4.3 The table below shows the number of complaints received and resolved during 2010/11 by the three separate complaints procedures, and the success rate for replying to complainants within the target time for stage one complaints. The figures for complaints received in 2009/10 are shown in italics for comparison purposes.

Complaint Stage	Corporate Complaints	Adults Social Care	Children & Young People	Total
Number of complaints resolved at Stage 1.	31 <i>(41)</i>	50 <i>(46)</i>	40 <i>(23)</i>	129 <i>(110)</i>
Proportion replied to within target time	82% <i>(93%)</i>	72% <i>(80%)</i>	100 % <i>(100%)</i>	85% <i>(89)</i>
Complaints proceeding to Stage 2	4 <i>(3)</i>	4 <i>(3)</i>	0 <i>(0)</i>	8 <i>(6)</i>
Complaints proceeding to Stage 3	0 <i>(0)</i>	N/A	0 <i>(0)</i>	0 <i>(0)</i>
Complaints proceeding to the Ombudsman	0 <i>(1)</i>	0 <i>(2)</i>	0 <i>(0)</i>	0 <i>(3)</i>
Total	35	54	40	129

4.4 The table below shows the Corporate complaints received by Directorate and the target time response rate in 2010/11. The figures for 2009/10 are shown in brackets for comparison purposes. There were no complaints received during the year that that proceeded to stage three of the procedure or to the Local Government Ombudsman

Resolution Analysis	Adults Social Care	Children & Young People	Environment & Economy	Resources	Total
Number resolved at Stage 1	6 (4)	1 (0)	23 (21)	2 (16)	32 (41)
Replied within target time	72% (75)	100% (0)	57% (90)	100% (100)	82% (93)
Number resolved at Stage 2	0 (1)	1 (0)	2 (1)	0 (1)	3 (3)
Replied within target time	n / a (100%)	100% (0)	100% (100%)	n / a (100%)	100% (100%)

4.5 A significant proportion of stage 1, and all of stage 2, Corporate complaints were dealt with within target times. Whilst every effort is made to respond within existing timeframes the availability of staff may occasionally result in times scales becoming slightly extended and efforts are made to keep complainants fully informed of progress.

Further Analysis of Corporate Complaints

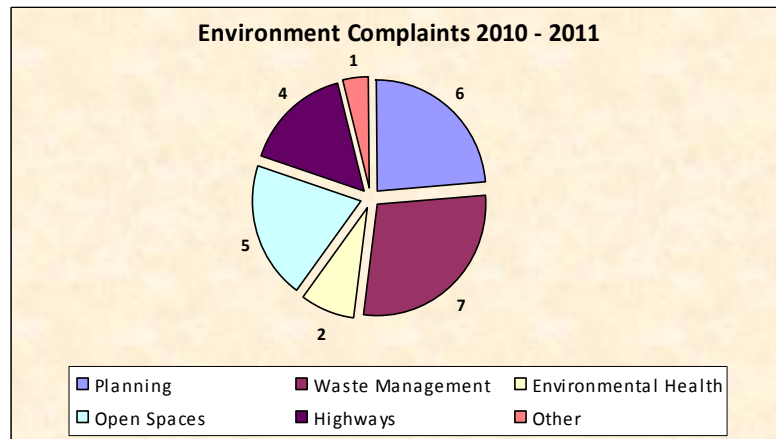
4.6 The following table provides an analysis of the number of Corporate complaints for each Directorate for the period 2007/2008 to 2010/2011.

Year	Adults & Community	Children & Young People	Environment & Economy	Resources	Total
07/08	7	2	13	21	43
08/09	2	1	21	11	35
09/10	6	0	22	17	45
10 / 11	6	2	25	2	35

4.7 As can be seen from the table above 2010/ 11 saw a significant fall in relation to complaints relating to the Resources Directorate upon the preceding year. In 2009/10 a notable number of complaints related to Halton Direct Link and new automated arrangements for cash collection and the overpayment / failure to pay in relation to Council Tax / Housing Benefit. A continuing increase in the number of residents paying by Direct Debit during 2010/11 may have been influential in this regard.

4.8 The greatest proportion of Corporate complaints in 2010/ 11 fell within the former Environment and Economy Directorate¹. This would be as expected as the majority of complaints relating to Adults and Communities and Children and Young People would be dealt with through their own procedures.

4.9 The following chart reflects the complaints received by service area.



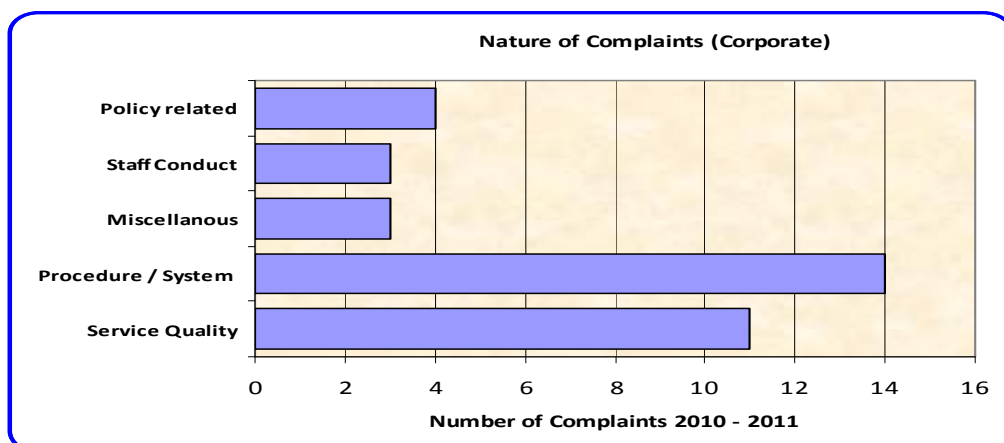
4.10 Of these 25 complaints 6 were planning related, four of which involved the same planning application, and 7 related to waste collection. Of the remaining complaints, no single issue was dominant with complaints including the gritting of footpaths, noise and odour pollution and landscape related issues.

4.11 Five of the six complaints within Adults and Communities related to the provision the homeless service with one relating to advice concerning an application for a Disabled Facilities Grant.

4.12 Both of the complaints relating to the Resources Directorate related to incorrect invoicing and apologies were provided and revised invoices produced.

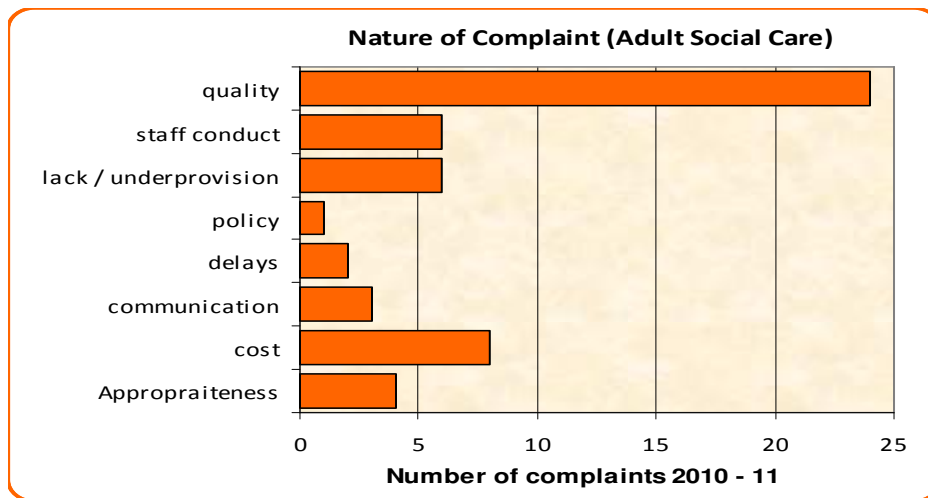
Nature of Complaints

4.13 The graph below shows the classification of the Corporate complaints received during 2010/ 11.

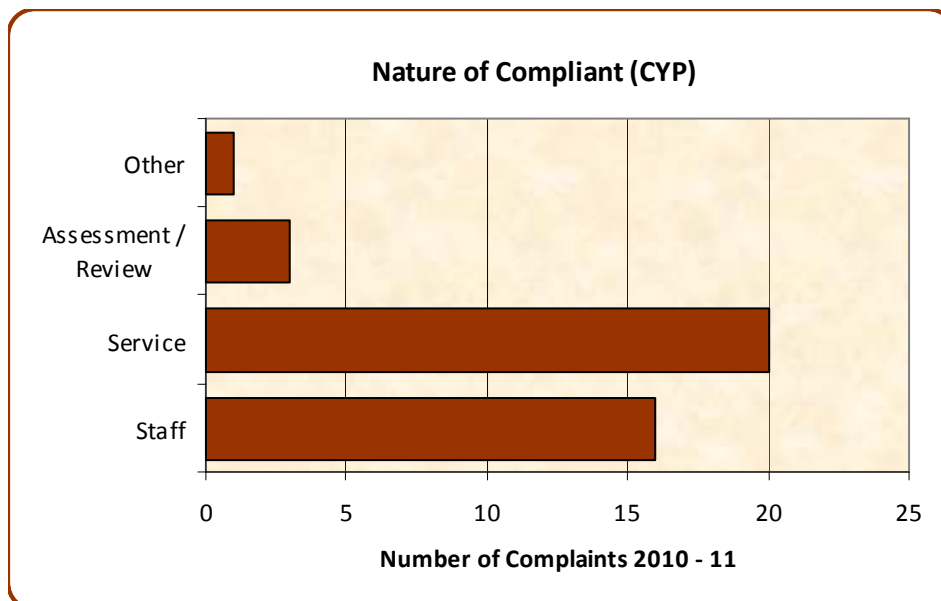


¹ From April 2011 the departments within the Environment Directorate was amalgamated into the remaining three Directorates of the Council following an organisational restructure.

4.14 The chart below shows the reason for each Adult Social Care complaint analysed by category for 2010/11. A more detailed analysis was reported to the Healthy Halton Policy and Performance Board.



4.15 The chart below shows the reason for each Children and Young People complaint analysed by category for 2010/11. A more detailed analysis was reported to the Children and Young People Policy and Performance Board.



5.0 THE OUTCOME OF COMPLAINTS

5.1 The following tables provide a breakdown of the numbers of complaints across each of the three complaints procedures that were upheld, partially upheld or not upheld during 2010/11. For comparison figures for 2009/10 have also been included in brackets for the purposes of comparison.

Outcomes of Corporate Complaints 2010/11

Outcome	Adults & Community	Children & Young People	Environment	Resources	Total	Percent
Upheld	2 (2)	1 (n/a)	9 (12)	2 (9)	14 (23)	40% (51%)
Partially Upheld	4 (2)	0 (n/a)	2 (3)	0 (3)	6 (8)	17% (18%)
Not Upheld	0 (2)	1 (n/a)	14 (7)	0 (5)	15 (14)	43% (31%)

Outcomes of Adult Social Care and Children & Young People Complaints 2010/11

Outcome	Adult Social Care		Children & Young People*	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Upheld	20 (14)	37% (29%)	3 (1)	10% (4.5%)
Partially Upheld	17 (25)	31.5% (55%)	3 (1)	10% (4.5%)
Not Upheld	17 (7)	31.5% (16%)	25 (21)	80% (91%)

* Of the original 40 complaints recorded there are a total of 9 complaints that were either withdrawn, extended beyond the financial year or passed for action outside of the complaints procedure.

6.0 WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM COMPLAINTS AND CHANGED AS A RESULT?

6.1 Analysis of the complaints and comments the Council receives provide essential information to help shape and develop services. They complement the wide range of consultation exercises that the Council undertakes (including postal and telephone surveys, open forums, consultation days etc).

6.2 Whilst complaints have resulted in changes for individuals, collectively the Council uses this information, to help improve the services we provide or commission.

6.3 Examples of improvements made as a result of complaints in the last year include:

- A new transport reporting system has been developed, that can be updated on a weekly basis to reduce the risk of overcharging.
- Clearer documentation was developed about charges for services which has helped reduce complaints of misunderstanding of this area,
- Introduction of a pilot electronic monitoring project of Provider staff care visits, to monitor for missed, late or short calls.
- Following complaints, a Care Agency was placed on intensive monitoring visits by the contracts team.
- Halving of complaints regarding the waiting time for an assessment for an adaptation, and the provision of those adaptations.
- Communication between the clients, their family/representative and services is a theme identified in complaints and cuts across all services. Issues involving individual workers are addressed via managers during the supervision process to inform individual learning.
- A joint complaints protocol has been agreed, with the 5 Borough Partnership, Halton & St Helen's NHS, Knowsley and St Helens councils and local hospital trusts, on how complaints that concern more than one of the organisations will be handled. Intermediate Care will follow the same principles.
- Development of regular assessment monitoring and role shadowing for all Housing Solutions Advice Officers to improve the quality of advice provided.
- A review of how the authority deals with any future name changes on the highway network and to ensure that the relevant messages are conveyed to the public.
- Ensuring that assisted waste collections for all registered properties are carried out.

7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Complaints provide essential information and inform the development of Halton Borough Council services and policies. The Corporate Complaints Procedure is regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to conform to best practice and remains fit for purpose.

8.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Improvement and quality assessment agendas increasingly consider the robustness of complaints procedures and how they are demonstrably used to inform and drive change.

9.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 9.1 It is important for the Council to have robust complaint procedures in place to improve service delivery and ultimately help the achievement of all of its six strategic priority areas.

10.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 10.1 A weak complaints process will fail individuals who want to use it and prevent the organisation from learning from complaints.

11.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 11.1 All complaint forms are issued with a separate form for monitoring diversity of complainants with regard to age, disability, ethnicity and gender. Unfortunately the majority of corporate complainants choose not to return the monitoring form with their complaint so information collected is extremely limited.

Council Complaint Procedures

