

REPORT TO: Healthy Halton Policy & Performance Board
DATE: 11 November 2008
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Health & Community
SUBJECT: Adult Social Care Comments, Compliments and Complaints
WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To report and provide an analysis on complaints processed under the statutory Social Services Complaints Procedure for Adults during 2007/08.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) the report be accepted; and**
- (2) the proposals for the development of the complaints procedures (nationally and locally) be noted.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Context

3.1 The aims of the Social Care complaints regulations are for people to have their complaints resolved swiftly, and wherever possible, by the people who provide the service.

3.2 “Making Experiences Count” is the new complaints procedure proposals due to come into operation in April 2009. Its aim is to create a common joint complaints procedure across health and social care.

3.2.1 Early adopter sites, within health organisations and local authority adult social care departments across the country; have been piloting the new procedures. This will result in guidance about how the scheme will operate. Whilst this guidance has not yet been published, it is expected to include:

- Less emphasis on prescribed timescales, with an agreed complaint action plan agreed individually with complainants through a “triage” type system
- Complaints to follow a less formal structured system, and Complaints Manager’s to use a “menu” of options tailored as appropriate for individual complaints, including a greater emphasis on mediation, conciliation and arbitration.
- The current social care Stage 3 Review Panel being deleted, and the final part of the complaint process being dealt with by the Ombudsman.

3.3 Current Complaint Stages and Timescales

The current complaints procedure has a process of up to 3 stages:

Stage 1: Aims to resolve the problem as quickly as possible (within 10 working days, or 20 if complex) at the point of service delivery.

Stage 2: If people are unhappy with the response at stage 1 they can ask for the complaint to be investigated by someone independent of the service area involved.

Stage 3: If still dissatisfied, people can ask for a Review Board to consider whether the local authority dealt with the complaint adequately. The Review Board is made up of 3 people. The chair must be independent of the local authority with at least one other independent person.

The table below shows the distribution of complaints received across the 3 stages:

ITEM	2006/07	2007/08
Activity in the year (no of complaints received)	63	68
Complaints completed at Stage 1 within 20 days (Local Resolution) ¹	65%	76%
Complaints proceeding to Stage 2 (Independent Investigation)	2	0
Complaints proceeding to Stage 3 (Review Board)	1	1
Ombudsman Enquiries	0	0

3.4 Comments, compliments and complaints – Improving the Process

3.4.1 Comments, compliments and complaints provide essential information to help shape and develop services, and complement the wide range of consultation exercises that the Directorate undertakes, (including postal and telephone surveys, open forums, consultation days, participation in service developments and representation of users and carers on strategic boards).

3.4.2 Analysis of the complaints we receive and record enables us to reflect upon the lessons that can be learned, and inform and develop the services we provide and commission. During the last year, improvements have been made to the complaints databases to help monitor, analyse and report comments, compliments and complaints:

- A traffic light system, alerts managers if targets are in danger of not being met and this continues to work well, demonstrated by the 14.5% improvement in Stage 1 targets being met, illustrated in the table above
- A recording and action-planning system is used to identify lessons learned, to plan and monitor remedial action and enables issues to be reported to senior managers to inform the service development process
- The Customer Care reporting process includes information from complaints, comments and compliments.
- Standards and guidance are used by people undertaking formal stage 2 investigations into complaints, to ensure a consistent approach and quality framework is used.
- In quarter 4 of 2007/08 a survey procedure to measure how satisfied people are with how their complaints were handled was introduced. This helps us to review the effectiveness of the complaints procedure and its future development.

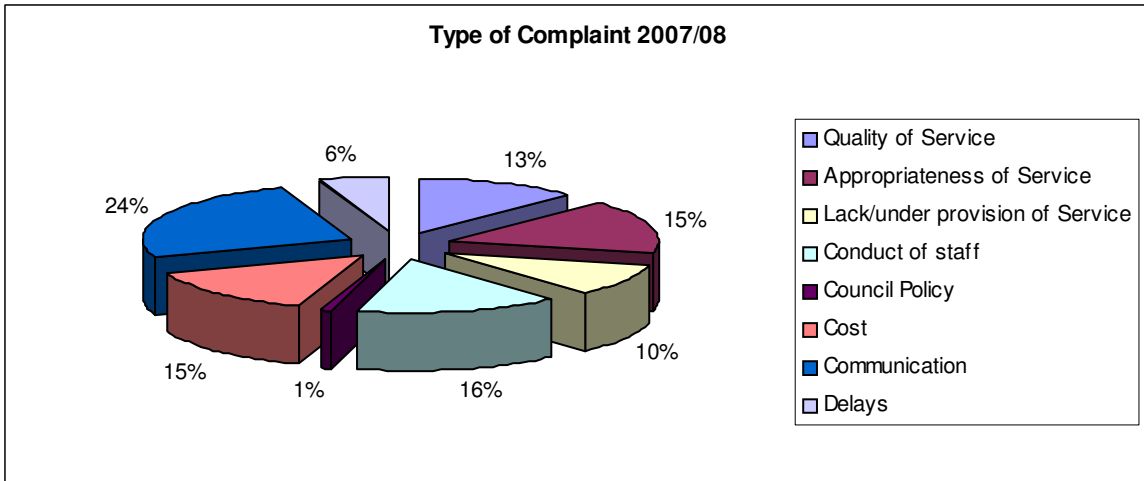
3.5 What we have learned from complaints and done as a result

3.5.1 Whilst complaints have resulted in changes for individuals, collectively they are a key source of information, to help inform us how we develop the services we provide or commission. Examples of actions that have resulted in response to complaints in the last year include:

- The establishment of a Stakeholder Quality Improvement Team (QIT), resulting from the modernisation of Halton Day Services for people with learning disabilities, made up of Service Users, Carers and Staff looking at any problems, and potential solutions. There is a rolling programme of inspections of community venues used following the closure of traditional day centres.
- Changes in various policies and procedures to prompt for appropriate action and information sharing with people. Plus guidance on what information should be shared with families.
- The signing up to the Care Services Efficiency Delivery (CSED) pilot to develop a process that provides people with information at the earliest possible point.

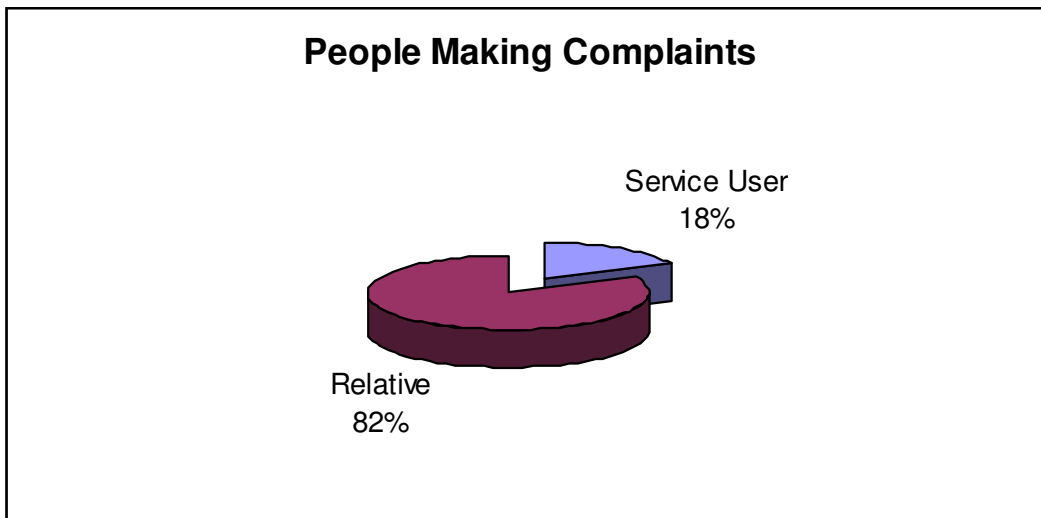
3.6 Types of Complaint

3.6.1 The information illustrated in the following graphs continues to be developed to enable us to identify trends and emerging issues. The resulting analysis is reported to the Directorate's Senior Management Team on a quarterly basis. The graph below analyses the types of complaint received for the period 1 April 07 – 31 March 08:



Early indications appear to suggest a shift in complaints away from those surrounding quality or under provision of services to those about communication issues. A series of Customer Care staff training sessions, commencing in November 2008, will help to emphasise how better communication can reduce dissatisfaction caused through misunderstanding.

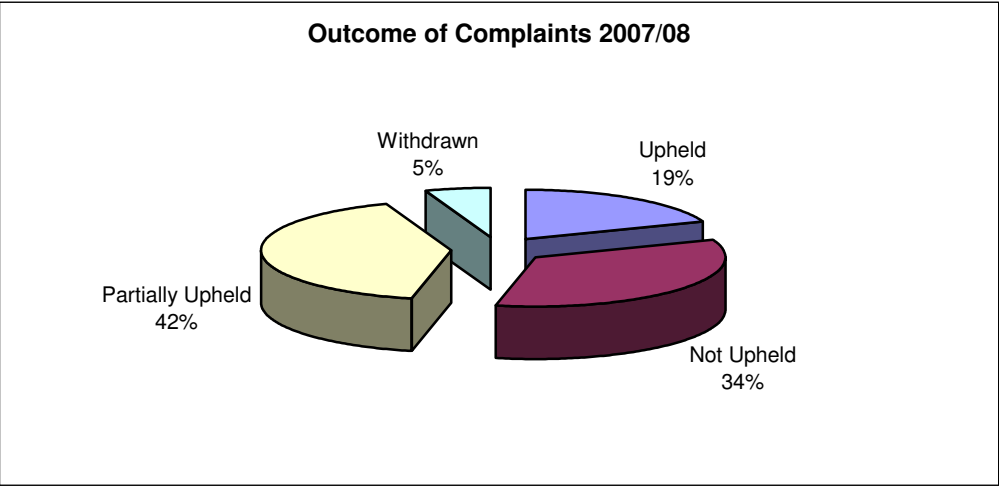
3.7 Category of people making complaints



The high proportion of complaints being initiated by a relative, rather than the individual may be due to the vulnerability of individuals who access adult social care services.

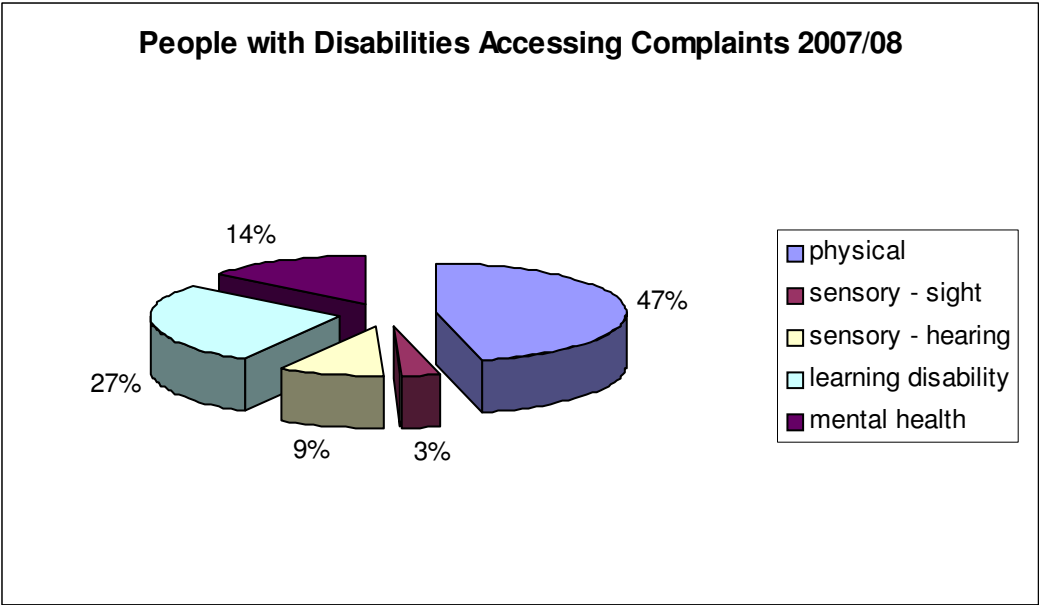
3.8 Outcome of Complaints

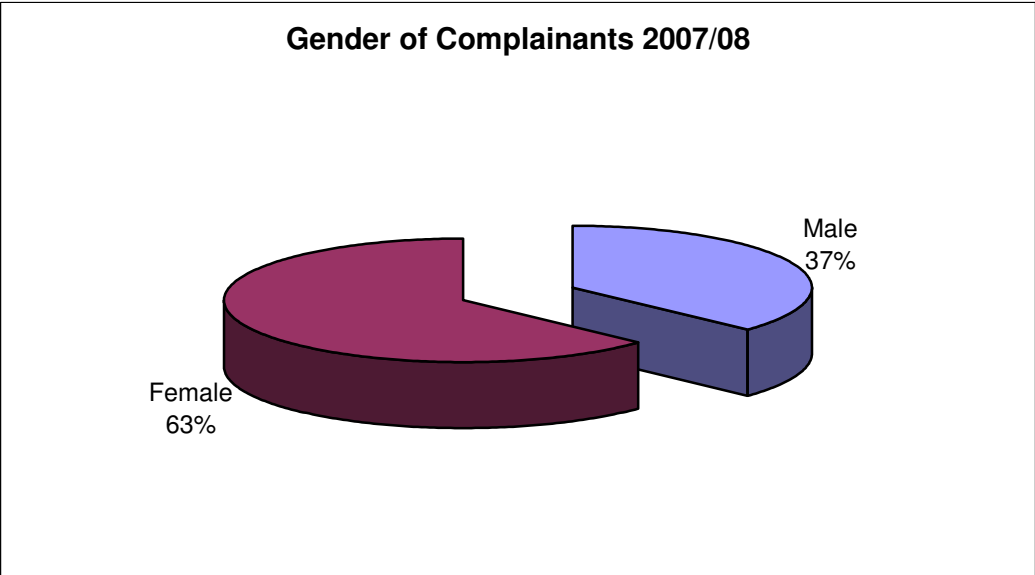
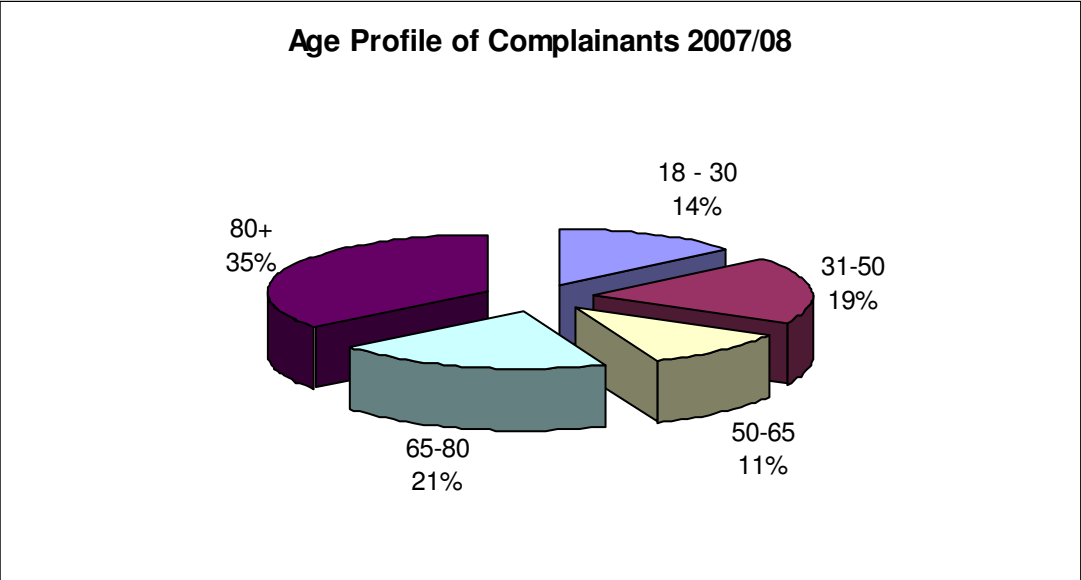
The following graph gives an indication of the outcome of the investigation of complaints for the period 1 April 07 – 31 March 08:



3.9 Monitoring Diversity

The graphs below give an indication of the data that is now being recorded and monitored by disability, age and gender for trend analysis:





4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Complaints, comments and compliments provide essential evidence to inform the development of Halton Borough Council policies.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

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

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton** – Adult Social Care has a close relationship with Children and Young Peoples social care services, particularly to support young people during transition from Children and Young Peoples services to Adult Social Services and we will continue to work closely with each other on relevant complaint issues.
- 6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton** – social care aims are often closely associated with these, to improve people's life chances and to be as independent as possible.
- 6.3 **A Healthy Halton** – another core aim in social care is to prevent or delay reliance on institutional care, enabling people to be as independent as possible.
- 6.4 **A Safer Halton** – adult social care has a close relationship with protection procedures for the vulnerable adults, the frail etc.
- 6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal** – many social care initiatives surround housing issues, enabling people to live as independently as possible in their community.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

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

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 Ethnicity of complainants is monitored. To date all complainants have been from the group where they described themselves as White British.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

- 9.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.