

**REPORT TO:** Healthy Halton Policy & Performance Board

**DATE:** 10 November 2009

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Health & Community

**SUBJECT:** Customer Care end of year report for  
**Adult Social Care**  
**Comments, Compliments and Complaints**  
**1 April 2008 – 31 March 2009**

**WARDS:** All

## **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 2008/09.

## **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 A New Complaint Process for 2009/10**

From 1 April 2009 a new Department of Health complaints process was introduced for dealing with complaints within both Health and Social Care services.

3.2.1 More emphasis is placed on getting the response to a complaint right first time by; understanding the complaint, selecting the most appropriate method of investigation and response, setting out a plan of how to respond to the complaint and keeping the complainant informed throughout.

### **3.3 Complaint Stages and Timescales for 2008/09**

3.3.1 For the purpose of this report the old 2008/09 complaints process applied. This complaints procedure had a process of up to 3 stages:

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

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

3.3.4 Stage 3: If still dissatisfied, people could ask for a Review Board to consider whether the local authority dealt with the complaint adequately.

### 3.4.0 Complaints Closed

ITEM	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
No of Stage 1 complaints closed	63	68	55
% of complaints completed at Stage 1 within 20 days <i>NB: 2008/09 reduction noted and being monitored *</i>	65%	76%	73% *
Complaints proceeding to Stage 2 (Independent Investigation)	2	0	5
Complaints proceeding to Stage 3 (Review Board)	1	1	1
Ombudsman Enquiries	0	0	0

3.4.1 The table above shows the number of complaints received over the last three years. 55 complaints were closed during 2008/09, 13 fewer complaints than last year. This reduction can be attributed to a drop in the number of finance related complaints, from 18 in 2007/08 to 4 in 2008/09.

### 3.50 Complaints, Comments and compliments – Improving the Process

3.5.1 Analysis of the complaints and comments we receive allows us to reflect on the lessons that can be learned, and we use this learning to inform and develop the services we provide and commission.

3.5.2 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).

3.5.3 During the last year, improvements have been made to the complaints database to help monitor, analyse and report comments, compliments and complaints including:

- Customer Care Training was given to staff to ensure they apply good practice when investigating and responding to complaints.

- The complaints database has been changed to make it easier to perform data analysis.
- Since December 2008, when complaints are closed, complainants are contacted by telephone to complete a short questionnaire to ascertain how satisfied they were with the way their complaint was dealt with. This has resulted in getting more questionnaires completed with 18 questionnaires have been completed.
- New standards and guidance for formal investigations were introduced to ensure good practice is applied to all investigations.

### **3.60 What have we learned from complaints and changed as a result?**

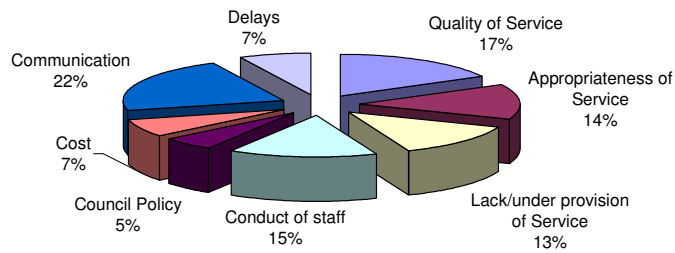
3.61 Whilst complaints have resulted in changes for individuals, collectively we can use this information to help us improve the services we provide or commission. Examples of improvements made as a result of complaints in the last year include:

- Changes to finance forms to help people to understand the charging policies better.
- Changes in various policies and procedures to prompt appropriate action and information sharing with people.
- Changes to the respite voucher scheme to allow greater flexibility of how respite can be taken.
- Prior to a complaint progressing to formal investigation, Divisional managers now provide a short report to Operational Directors outlining the complaint and resolution actions taken to ensure that all appropriate avenues for resolution have been considered.
- Operational Teams and Contract Team working in closer liaison to resolve complaints or ongoing concerns with new agency contracts.
- Halton continues to be a part of the Care Services Efficiency Delivery (CSED) pilot to develop a process that provides people with information at the earliest possible point.

### **3.70 Types of Complaint**

3.7.1 The information illustrated in the following graphs continues to be developed to enable us to identify trends and emerging issues. The graph below analyses the types of complaint received for the period 1 April 08 – 31 March 09.

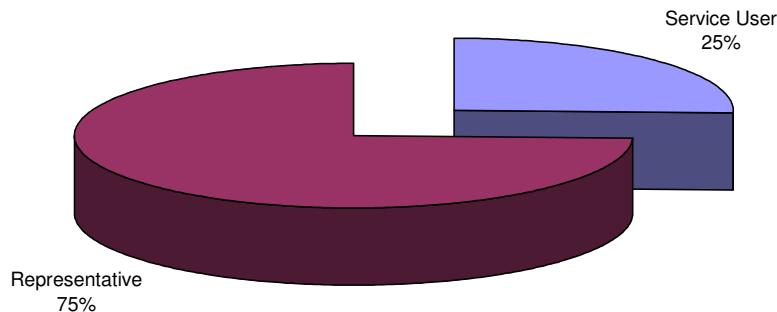
3.7.2



3.7.3 Analysis of complaints received show that in 22% of complaints an element of dissatisfaction could be attributed to a communications issue. A series of Customer Care staff training sessions were held in November 2008 emphasising how better communication can reduce dissatisfaction caused through misunderstanding.

3.80 Category of people making complaints

Person making the complaint 2008/09



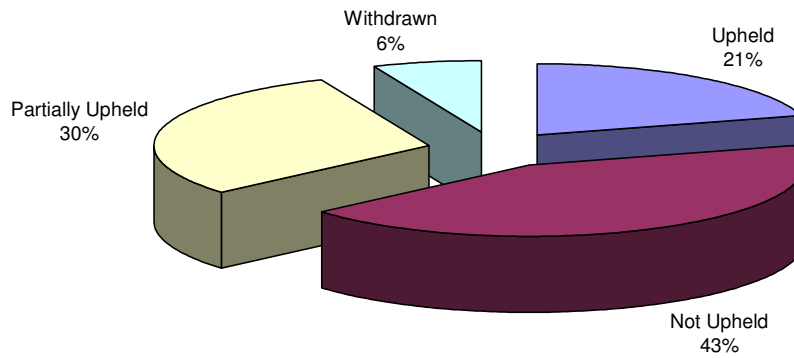
3.8.1 The high proportion of complaints being initiated by a relative or representative can be attributed to the vulnerability of individuals who access adult social care services.

3.90 Outcome of Complaints

3.9.1 The following graph gives an indication of the outcome of the investigation of complaints for the period 1 April 08 – 31 March 09.

### 3.9.2

#### Outcome of Complaints 2008/09

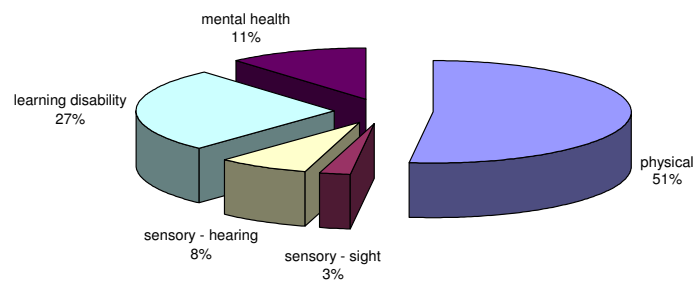


### 3.10 Monitoring Diversity

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

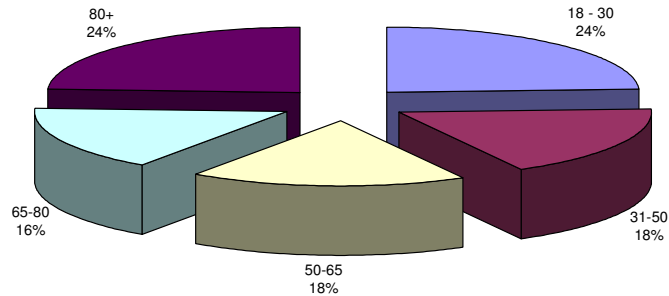
#### 3.10.2

#### People with Disabilities Accessing the Complaints Process 2008/09

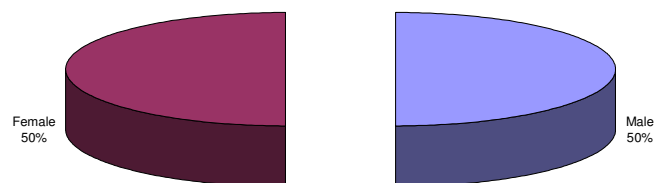


### 3.10.3

Age profile of complainants 2008/09



Gender of Complainants 2008/09



### 3.10.4 Ethnicity

All complainants were white British.

## 3.11 COMPLIMENTS

A total of **88** compliments were recorded between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2009 for Health and Community Directorate. It is encouraging to note that the number of compliments received **exceeded** the number of complaints (61).

## 4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Complaints, comments and compliments provide essential information and inform the development of Halton Borough Council services and 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.