



Adult Services

Customer care complaints and representations

Annual Report 2015-2016

Executive Summary



BLACKBURN
with
DARWEN
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Introduction

This is the Executive Summary of the eighteenth annual report on representations and complaints, covering the period from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. The report was presented to the Adult Services Policy team on the 17 October 2016. A separate report has been prepared for Children's Services Social Care.

Complaints, Compliments and Queries

All complaints, compliments and queries received by this department are logged into the 'Respond' database, which is the source of the graphs and trends analysis contained below.

Complaints: Review for the Year 2015/2016.

The overall number of complaints recorded for Adult Services has seen a slight increase from the previous year: 94 recorded in 2014/15 as opposed to 100 this year.

The services of an Independent Investigator have been purchased on just one occasion during this monitoring period. There has also been an independent case review.

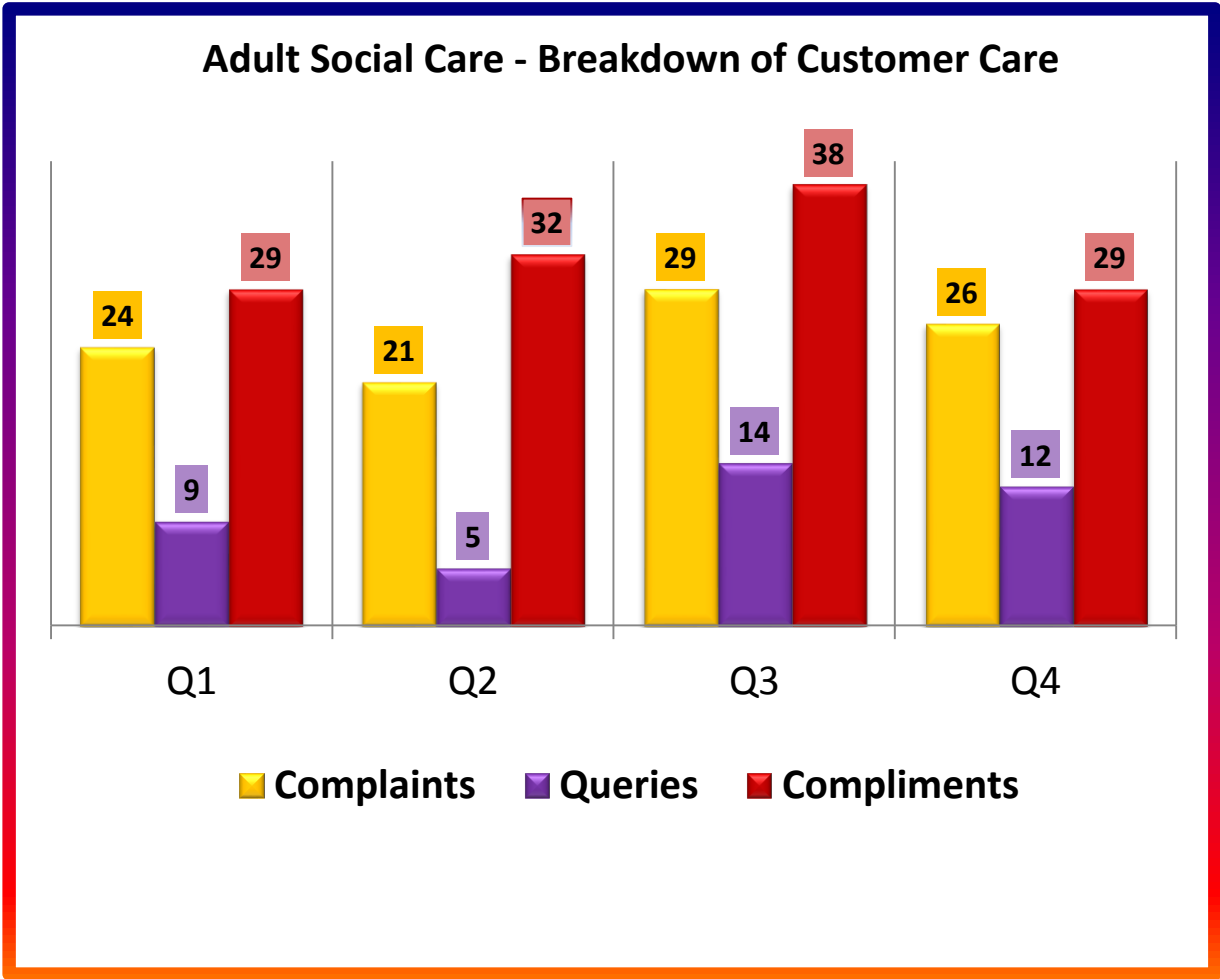
The percentage of complaints that are resolved at the first stage of the complaints procedures remains high at 98%, and social work managers should be commended for their efforts in working with complainants at an early stage with the aim of reaching a resolution.

There have been 40 formal queries dealt with in the Customer Care team during the monitoring period.

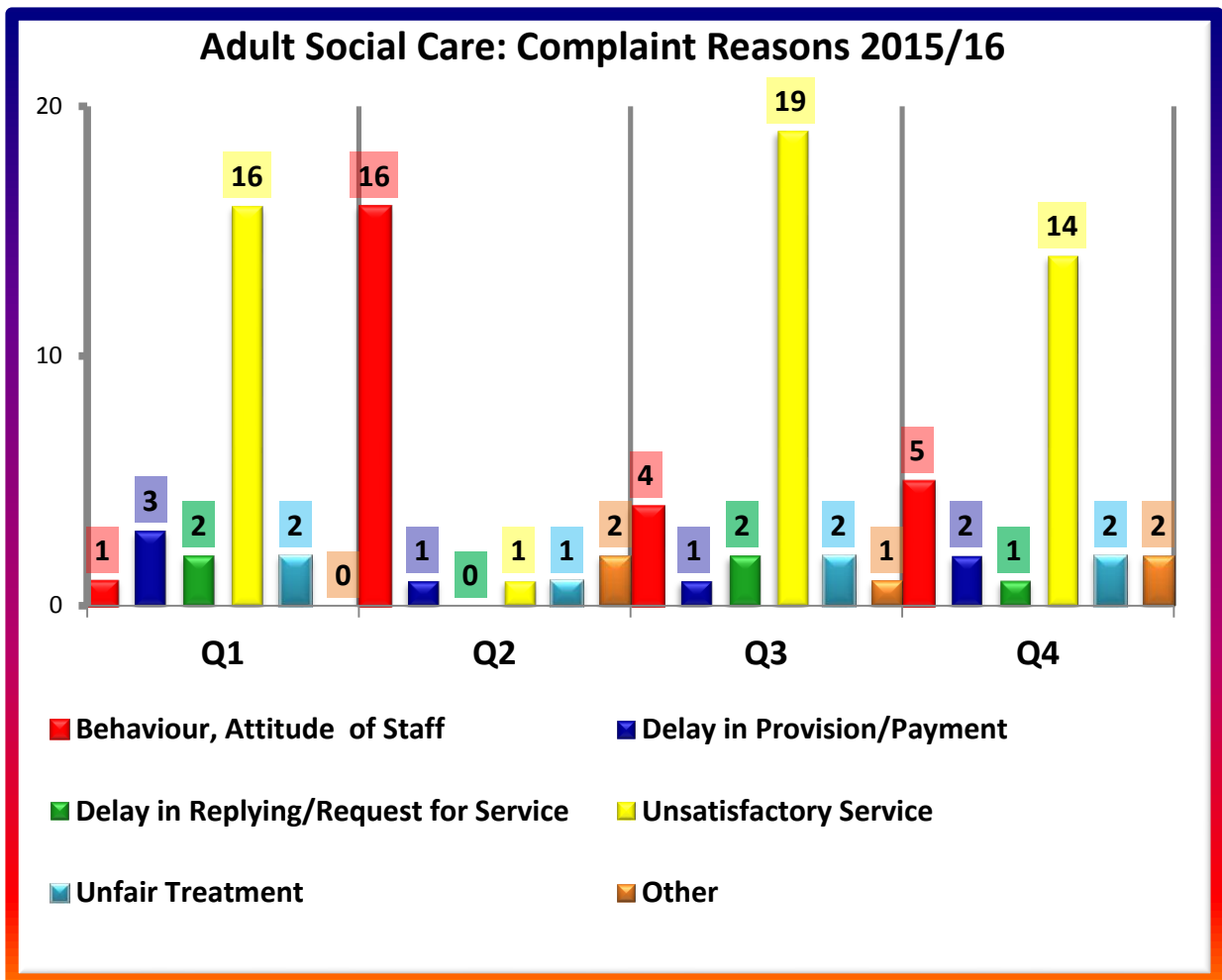
Compliments and Other Feedback

Compliments from whatever source are welcome. They are a sign of appreciation from the users and carers provided with support.

During the year 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, the total number of compliments received was 128. Whilst the number of compliments has fallen from previous years, this may be accounted for by the closure of some of Blackburn with Darwen's own establishments and compliments now going directly to the independent providers. However, the number of compliments received into this department far outweighed the number of complaints.



- The twelve month figures have seen a small increase in the number of complaints dealt with by the Customer Care team from 94 complaints in 2014/15 to 100 in 2015/16.

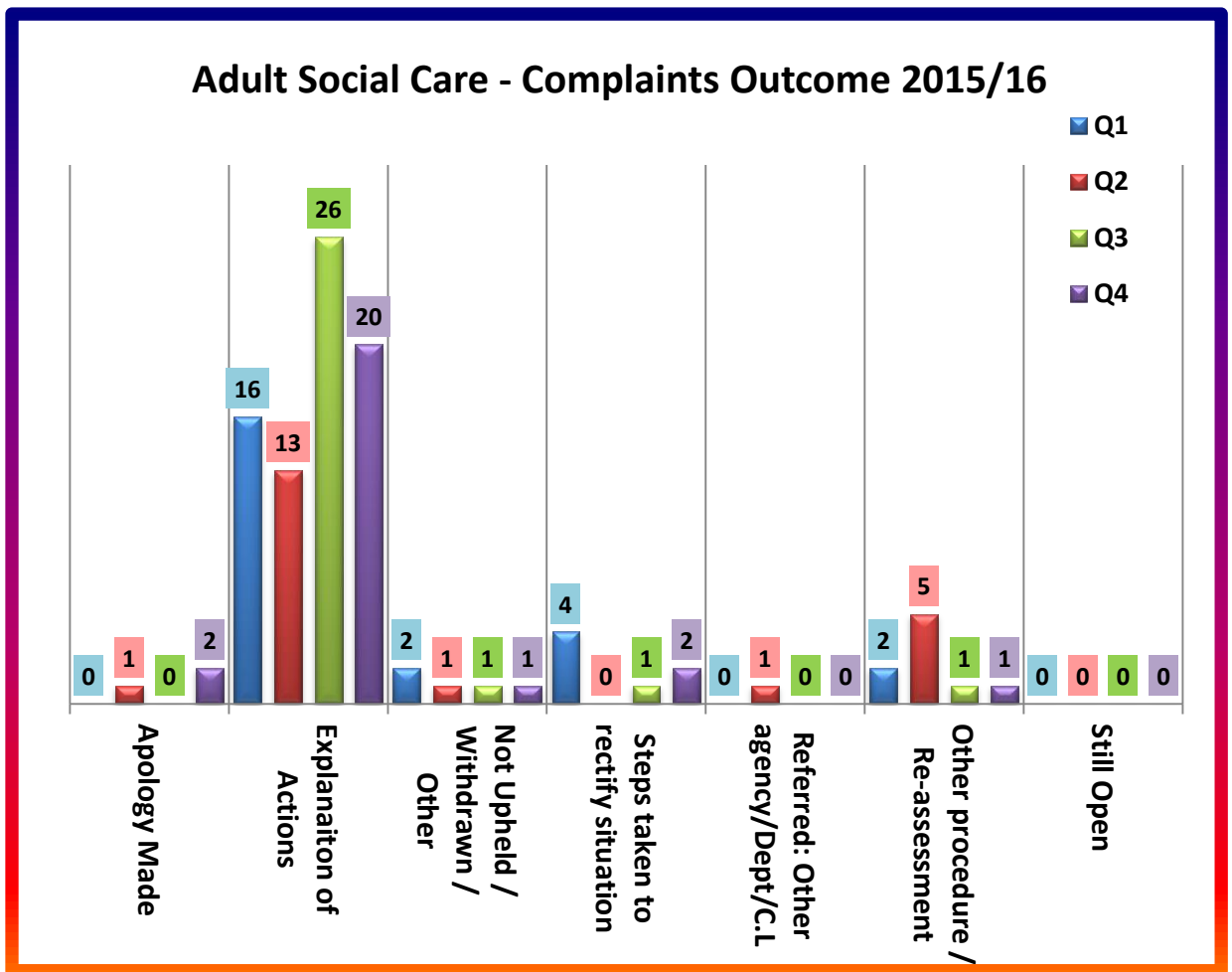


Complaint reasons – Adult Services 2015/16

Of the fifty complaints categorised as ‘Unsatisfactory Service’, following investigation forty three complainants received full explanations of the Authority’s actions. Three complaints received a full apology and steps were taken to rectify the situation in relation to four complaints.

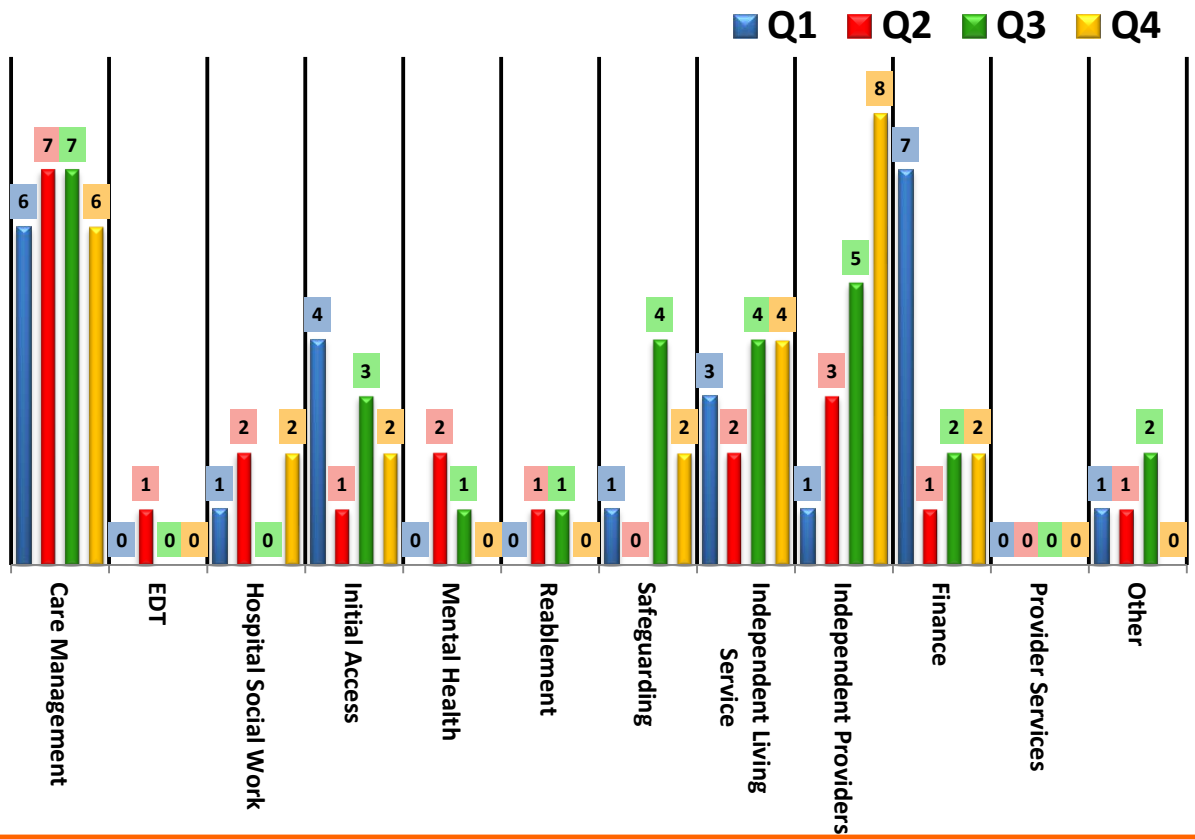
Of the twenty six complaints received for ‘Behaviour or Attitude of Staff’, following investigation none were upheld and a full explanation of the Authority’s actions has been provided to the complainants.

These complaints varied from service users being unhappy with the actions or attitudes of the social workers, carers and other professionals.

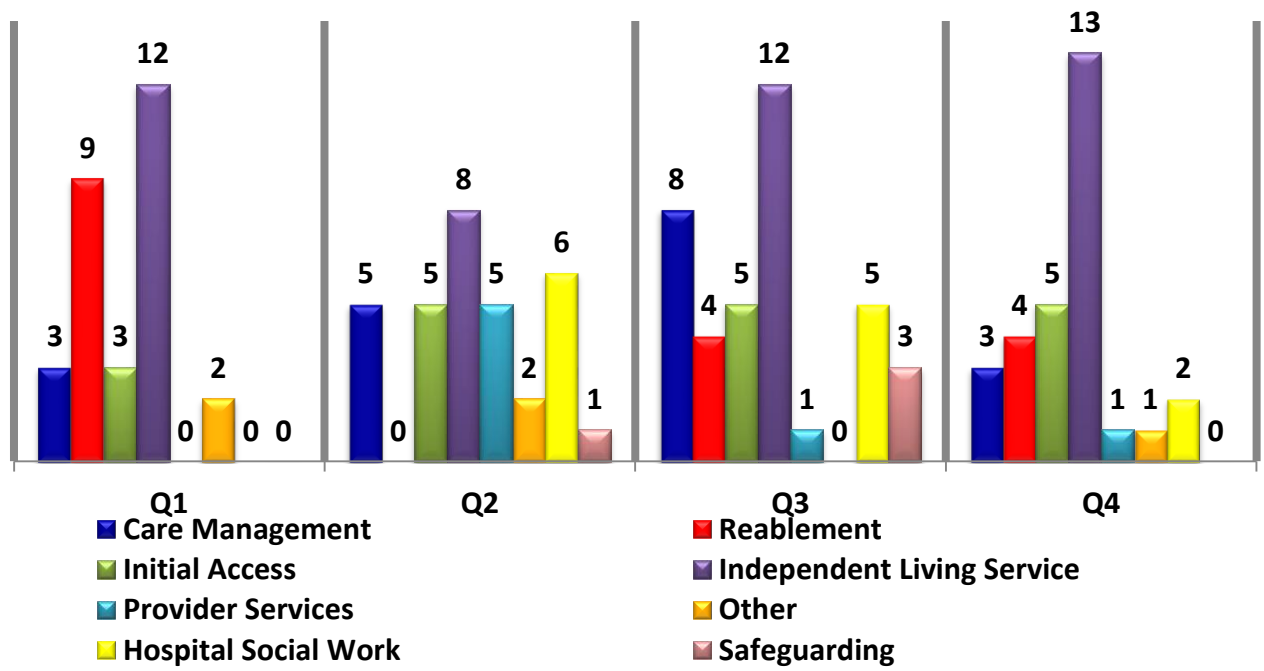


- Whilst almost half of the complaints in Adult Social Care were categorised as attributable to the social work teams (45 of the complaints received) these should be seen in context with the high number of contacts (16,361) and assessments/reviews (8440) undertaken. Therefore 45 complaints equates to 0.53% of the number of assessments/reviews, and when compared to the complaints that were upheld, four in total, this equates to only 0.047%.

Adults Social Care: Complaints by Service Area 2015/16



Adults Services: Compliments by Service Area 2015/16



Feedback Loops: Learning the Lessons from Complaints and other Comments

The department is committed to a process of continually improving its services to the public.

Outcomes of the complaints are used to assist in identifying where improvements and changes need to be made to policy, procedure and/or services.

Learning

It is a vital part of the process that services learn from the representations that are made about their provision. The process that addresses complaints will identify any areas for improvement or learning and will make suggestions for the action that will be taken. This will be addressed in the response. Where necessary action plans will be drawn up and responsibilities assigned.

Examples of the recommendations as a result of investigation and review panel outcomes

Recommendations for training or improvement activities:

Reason for Complaint	Recommendations for training or improvement activities	Action Taken
Complaint that the Authority had unreasonably refused to install a lift to enable Mr X to access the house from the street.	The Authority should minute the proceedings of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Panel to ensure the process is transparent and is in a position to provide individuals with clear information about decisions taken and the reasons for them.	Since this recommendation was made all meetings of this nature are now minuted.
Complaint that the Council should not have asked the family to pay a top up fee to enable the service user to remain living in the care home. The family advised they could no longer afford to pay the top up fee.	Revise its procedures to ensure that when a resident no longer has the resources needed to remain in a particular care home, the Council carries out an assessment to determine the risk a move will have to the resident's mental, emotional and physical health.	A full review of the Adult Services procedure re 'top ups' has taken place which puts steps in place to ensure family members are clear about the commitment they are taking on.

Customer Care

Customers Making Their Views Known

As Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is a compact local authority, customers have very easy access to the department. This can be either in person at offices, by phone, by e mail, or with the help of elected members, or other representatives. The information which is provided to users and carers following assessments, includes a user-friendly leaflet about how to make a comment, compliment or complaint about the service they have received. This leaflet is also available in all establishments, teams and contact points throughout the Authority.

Carers are sent a comments, complaints and compliments leaflet following assessment. They are a vital part of the process of informing the department of concerns and help ensure that concerns are dealt with at the point of access to our services.

People can make comments directly to the Customer Care Manager via the Council's website.

Customer Care – Feedback Surgeries

Informal 'drop in' sessions have continued to be held regularly over the last 12 months, giving service users the opportunity to share their experiences of the assessment process in both Adult and Children's Services (social care). The events are an opportunity to meet and talk to members of the customer care team and to offer their views on the services they received. The sessions are held at Blackburn Central Library and Darwen Town Hall as these have proved popular venues with service users because of their central locations and easy accessibility.

The Customer Care Team writes out to every individual who has been newly assessed over the previous three month period in Adult or Children's Services (approx 750 invites per three months). The sessions generate around 40 contacts with compliments, queries and one or two complaints but the majority just want to say thank you to those who have helped them and are pleased to have the opportunity to say so. They also value the fact that their views are being sought and welcome the opportunity to contribute by sharing their experiences.

Adults with Learning Disabilities

On a six monthly basis the Customer Care team write out to every service user with a learning disability to reinforce their right to make a complaint. The letter and the leaflet enclosed are both easy read and usually bring in some 8-10 contacts from our service users.

Safeguarding Adults/ Complaints/Contracts and Quality

Monitoring Complaints, Safeguarding and Contracts

A bi-monthly Combined Quality Meeting takes place between Complaints, Safeguarding & Contracts teams to discuss and bring together all ongoing issues and alleviate the risk of issues 'falling through the net'. This meeting is also attended by appropriate health care professionals to ensure a co-ordinated approach.

This meeting ensures that lessons learned are actioned and shared.

Consultation

The Customer Care Team is responsible for the administration of the yearly Department of Health Adult Social Care User Survey. In 2015/2016 this survey was undertaken with 716 service users who had received services on the 31 October 2015. The team received 306 responses from service users.

The Department of Health also require each Local Authority to undertake a survey of carers. This is a bi-annual survey and last took place in the summer of 2016. The outcome of the DOH Surveys is reported to the Department's Senior Leadership Team and Elected Members.

Advocacy

There is a commitment by the department to providing advocacy for vulnerable individuals and groups of service users who use the Complaints Procedure. The services aim to make the complaints process available to everyone.

Where adults required the services of an advocate in 2015/16 these were provided by the Advocacy Focus Service.

Complaints Referred to Ombudsman

Complaints can be referred to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) at any stage. However, if the Authority has not had the opportunity to address the complaint through the Complaints Procedure, the LGO will not investigate and will advise the complainant to contact the department.

During this monitoring period, five complainants approached the LGO. One of the complaints was not taken up for investigation by the LGO. Two complaints were investigated by the LGO but no fault was found. Of the other two complaints investigated: in both cases the issues raised by the complainants were not upheld but the LGO considered there to have been some delay in dealing with the complaint issue, therefore recommended the Department pay the complainant a small amount for the delay and also for their time and trouble of raising the complaints. No complaints were referred to the Health Service Commissioner.

The Independent Element : Investigating Officer

Complaints

The department has employed the services of External Complaint Investigators on a fee-paid basis in order to promote the independent element of its complaints process, when the issues have been complex or if the complainant remained unhappy following internal investigation.

Key Issues for Work Programme for 2016/2017

- The Customer Care Team to provide training to Managers on skills and knowledge required when undertaking investigations.
- The Customer Care Manager to review/revise the current Complaints and Representation Procedures