

Getting it Right!



Education, Care and Health Services

Compliments,
comments and complaints

Annual Report for April 2014 to March 2015

<http://bromley.mylifeportal.co.uk/gettingitright>

Contents



Introduction	3
<hr/>	
Adult Social Care Services	4
• What we did	4
• Our performance	5
• What this means	6
• Lessons we have learnt	6
<hr/>	
Children’s Social Care Services	7
• What we did	7
• Our performance	8
• What this means	9
• Lessons we have learnt	9
<hr/>	
Education Services	10
• What we did	10
• Our performance	11
• What this means	12
• Lessons we have learnt	12
<hr/>	
Housing Services	13
• What we did	13
• Our performance	14
• What this means	15
• Lessons we have learnt	15

Introduction



Each year, many thousands of residents contact Education, Care and Health Services at London Borough of Bromley. Although complaints are a very small proportion of the total interactions our department has with the local community, they provide us with an opportunity to understand what we can do better. Listening to the compliments we receive from service users is also important as they help us understand what we do well.

On behalf of all our residents, we need to make sure, particularly during these economically challenging times, that we make the best use of our resources. Our aim is for everyone to receive the right level of assistance whether that be information, advice or support appropriate to their need.

With more complaints received in the past year by most services but fewer proportionately upheld, we must continue to improve service information we provide for our staff, other organisations and most of all residents. Eligibility for services must be transparent, and so must our service standards so that residents have clear expectations of us from the outset.

Providing accessible information, advice and guidance so people can make their own informed choices about services that best suit their needs is increasingly important. This means we must keep pace with developments to improve the information we publish online, as well as ensuring people receive assistance by telephone and face to face contact when appropriate.

We have recently developed a range of information available through the MyLife web portal on the Council's website, including improved information for Foster Care, Adoption and Dementia. This year, we will be launching supported self-assessment for both adults and their carers who are in need of support. Giving people tailored information about their eligibility for support means they can make informed choices at the right time and place for them, whether

at home or elsewhere, day or night.

We will continue to listen carefully and learn when we receive complaints about our services and also to celebrate the success when people take the time to compliment us on our services

This report provides an overview of complaints and compliments dealt with by Education, Care and Health Services at the London Borough of Bromley from April 2014 to March 2015.

Anne Watts
Assistant Director
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Adult Social Care Services



Areas covered:

- Assessments of care needs for older people and adults with a disability
- Assessments of need for people with caring responsibilities
- Safeguarding vulnerable adults
- Supporting vulnerable people when they are discharged from hospital
- Services to support people to remain in their own home and to live within a care home and extra care housing

What we did

Between April 2014 and March 2015 we:



assessed the needs of

3624 *

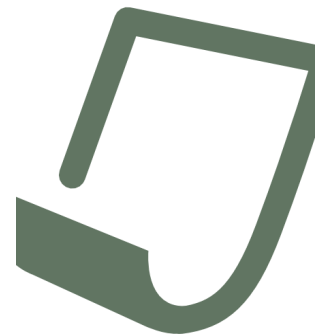
new clients



assessed the needs of

2776*

people with caring responsibilities



provided

4211*

adults with social care services

*These statistics have been compiled for 2014/5 for the first time using new statutory returns methodology set out by DoH (known as SALT).

“ We have been in situations recently where Carelink staff have been required and we are continually met with an overwhelming sense of kindness.”



Our performance



Compliments

2012-13

19

2013-14

27

2014-15

26



Complaints

2012-13

116

(28 partially or fully upheld)

2013-14

168

(60 partially or fully upheld)

2014-15

186

(64 partially or fully upheld)



Enquiries from Members of

2012-13

14

2013-14

18

2014-15

23



Enquiries from Ombudsman

2012-13

14

(6 partially or fully upheld)

2013-14

21

(2 partially or fully upheld)

2014-15

14

(5 partially or fully upheld)



71%

of complaints were responded
to in 20 working days

"I wanted to express my thanks to you
for everything you have done for my
Mum. You've always been very helpful
and caring."



What this means

We provided more than 4000 adults with social care services last year. In addition, we also dealt with many thousands of people who were requesting information or advice. Last year, some people highlighted that they were waiting too long on the telephone when trying to get advice about their own or a family member's care. In response, we developed a new 'front door' system. The new Early Intervention Service directs people more quickly to relevant information and advice via a bespoke telephone system. This means that people can make informed choices earlier about their support, which helps them to live independently at home for longer.

We also received a number of complaints last year, that challenged the assessment decisions by care managers. Although these concerns were mostly not upheld, it has highlighted for us that residents' knowledge about our services is patchy and expectations about what can be provided is sometimes unrealistic. This has helped us understand how important it is for us to provide good quality information about our services. Therefore we are continuing to improve the information guidance and advice offered.

The learning disability service supports many adults and young people with complex needs by assisting them to make decisions. Last year we received very few formal complaints (5), none of which were upheld.

Our Reablement assists our residents to regain their independence, often following a stay in hospital. We continue to receive many compliments from people and their families who use this popular service. We are looking at increasing the scope of this service so that more people could benefit from Reablement.

Mental health services are provided by Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust. Last year we received a few disputes in relation to funding and these resulted in a small number (6) of formal complaints, with none upheld.

We commission services from other organisations for more than 9000 residents. Most of the time, our providers demonstrate their commitment to resolving complaints by addressing any concerns very quickly. More details of these issues are available from the quality monitoring report, which is produced by Education, Care and Health Services.¹

"I am so grateful for your help in getting Mum back on her feet after her fall."



Lessons we have learnt

From April 2015 we will:

Be providing refresher training to staff in care legislation, safeguarding and customer services

Ensure our staff are routinely reminded of the importance of clear communication and information

Continue to develop clear information about our services to help residents resolve problems as early as possible

Children's Social Care Services



Areas covered:

- Keeping children safe from harm and abuse
- Supporting children in foster care families, care homes and other support settings
- Supporting children to move into stable adoptive families
- Services for young people who need support to the gain skills needed for adulthood
- Services for parents and carers of children who need extra support and advice

What we did

Between April 2014 and March 2015 we:



provided support to

566

children with disabilities



completed

1812

assessments



helped

410*

children in care to live in foster care and other accommodation



Supported

509*

children subject to a child protection plan

*Total number of children receiving these services during the year

“We have had such a great working relationship and you are amazing. You have helped me build my confidence again and smile and become a happier parent.”



Our performance



Compliments

2012-13

22

2013-14

24

2014-15

59



Complaints

2012-13

59

(18 partially or fully upheld)

2013-14

63

(18 partially or fully upheld)

2014-15

76

(16 partially or fully upheld)



Enquiries from Members of Parliament

2012-13

7

2013-14

12

2014-15

15



Enquiries from Ombudsman

2012-13

4

(none upheld)

2013-14

3

(none upheld)

2014-15

4

(1 upheld)



84%

of complaints were responded
to in 20 working days

"We'd like to say thank you so much
for your amazing help and equally
important guidance as we strive to
become better parents."



What this means

More than 9000 calls and emails are received each year relating to children's social care in Bromley. Thanks to the work of our teams, both in their day to day response but also in resolving issues early, only a very small proportion of these contacts, less than 1%, result in a complaint.

Child protection is an essential part of our work. It also can be a contentious area with disputes arising due to the sensitivities involved. Parents have raised issues relating to the quality of service they received and attitude of staff. Often these concerns are unfounded, according to these latest figures which showed that only 16 complaints in total were upheld. However, we understand the importance of minimising misunderstandings. Although it is inevitable we will continue to receive complaints in relation to child protection, our focus will be on keeping excellent records, families fully informed and by being courteous and professional. Naturally, we will also work to improve our communication with families when dealing with sensitive issues.

Referral and assessment teams continue to receive large numbers of referrals and on occasion have been unable to resolve informal complaints. Parents quite rightly expect important documentation to be with them in a timely way and managers will be addressing

these issues to make sure these expectations are met.

Contact arrangements managed between children and their parents are mostly well organised and managed. Sometimes professionals have learnt other options need to be explored to ensure children see their parents as planned.

Speaking with families and parents happens on a daily basis in all the teams but a number of complaints highlighted the issue of records not being up to date. This meant conflicting information being given to parents and carers.

Private fostering is very successful but for very few families precise details were not given when they were making enquiries. It is critical accurate information is given to assist families to make informed decisions.

“Saying thanks to you by email like this is much less than you deserve for all the support you have given us and the many ways in which you have always looked out for the children.”



Lessons we have learnt:

From April 2015 we will:

Identify specific barriers which prevent staff from communicating clearly and timely with families and addressing these issues through staff training

Remind (and monitor) staff to ensure meeting records are disseminated speedily to all relevant parties

Improve information about the implications of privately fostering relatives, via new pages on Bromley MyLife and local press information

Education Services



Areas covered:

- Requests for a Statutory Assessment of Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Admissions to primary, secondary and special schools
- Transport to school for children with a Special Educational Need
- Education Welfare
- Services for children who have challenging behaviour
- Adult learning through the Bromley Adult Education College
- School Standards

What we did

Between April 2014 and March 2015 we:



undertook

182

statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs



Managed

11993

applications for admission to Bromley schools



made

550

visits to school by the School Standards Team

“During a stressful time, the Admissions team have been really helpful Thanks.”



Our performance



Compliments

2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
34 [#]	21	12

October 2012 to March 2013



Complaints

2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
10 [#] (3 partially or fully upheld)	26 (8 partially or fully upheld)	23 (5 partially or fully upheld)

October 2012 to March 2013



Enquiries from Members of Parliament

2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
6 [#]	23	9

October 2012 to March 2013



Enquiries from Ombudsman

2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
1 [#] (None upheld)	8 (None upheld)	4 (None upheld)

October 2012 to March 2013



77%

of complaints were responded to in 20 working days

"I want to thank you and the panel very much for going that extra mile for our child."



What this means

Education Services provides services in admissions, early years, behaviour service, school standards and adult education.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) often have complex cases, which require regular monitoring and support from case workers. On occasion (8 complaints), parents have complained because of delays in the implementation of support needed for their child. Mostly these concerns are not upheld but investigations confirm the root of the complaint has been that communication has not been good enough. In response, we are developing new pages on Bromley MyLife about the 'Local Offer' of services that are available in Bromley, which will also include clearer information about eligibility criteria for services and support.

Just under 12, 000 school admissions were managed by the schools admissions service last year. We received 10 complaints, 1 was upheld.

Some parents are eligible for up to 15 hours of free early education per week (term time only) for their two year old, which is administered by London Borough of Bromley to nurseries, childminders, etc. A small number of

childminders who are out of borough received their payments late and we are addressing our process to ensure that all childcare providers receive their funding on time.

The number of Members of Parliament enquiries have reduced considerably this year. We have also seen a reduction in the number of complaints taken to the Ombudsman.

"..... it was a very stressful time, thank you for your patience and help. Much appreciated."



"..... thank you very much for all your help for our child."



Lessons we have learnt:

From April 2015 we will:

Be exploring the use of social media with the admissions service to get better information out to residents

Develop information on Bromley MyLife on the local support that is available for children with Special Educational Needs

Improve our processes to ensure childminders of two year olds , who are out of borough receive their funding without delay

Housing Services



Areas covered:

- Providing the Bromley Housing Register
- Supporting people to find appropriate homes through the Homeseekers service
- Preventing people from becoming homeless
- Supporting vulnerable adults and children with their housing needs
- Supporting people to find private rented accommodation

What we did

Between April 2014 and March 2015 we:



managed

3231

people on the
Housing Register



processed

1245

applications for
people who are
homeless



placed

1010

households in temporary
accommodation



helped

546

people to find private
rented accommodation

“Thank you for all the help you gave me. You have been excellent and eased my stress. “



Our performance



Compliments

2012-13

3

2013-14

21

2014-15

35



Complaints

2012-13

44

(10 partially or fully upheld)

2013-14

55

(5 partially or fully upheld)

2014-15

110

(22 partially or fully upheld)



Enquiries from
Members of
Parliament

2012-13

80

2013-14

60

2014-15

78



Enquiries from
Ombudsman

2012-13

10

(1 partially or fully upheld)

2013-14

6

(None upheld)

2014-15

13

(6 partially or fully upheld)



79%

of complaints were responded
to in 20 working days

"I just wanted to thank you for all your help. My family and I are really looking forward to moving into our new home."



What this means

In common with all other councils in London and the South East, requests for housing services across Bromley have increased.

Housing Options and Support have experienced more complaints than last year and most concerned issues relating to communication. A lack of information about where people will be housed has a significant impact on families organising their daily lives including children travelling to and from school. When families have made applications and these are being progressed, on occasion they have not been updated or given reasons for the delays. This can cause frustration. The teams recognise the need to keep applicants more informed and are improving this through leaflets and through a computerised work flow system, which ensures people get the right information at the right time.

Only a small number of complaints received by our Housing Allocations and Accommodation service were upheld. People who did complain however told us they were frustrated with waiting for a long time for a

property or felt they should have a higher banding. The team managing temporary housing experienced a high demand for emergency and temporary accommodation, this is exacerbated by the fall in quality of properties available. Some complaints received relate to the condition of properties. In response, we are drafting new service level agreements, which make clearer our expectations of both landlords and tenants.

The team has received more compliments this year and it is reassuring we receive positive feedback after what can be an extremely challenging time for an individual or a family.

“I just wanted to thank you for all your help. It’s much appreciated.

My family and I are really looking forward to moving into our new home!”



Lessons we have learnt:

From April 2015 we have:

Delivered customer services and data protection training to all staff who work in Housing

Introduced a new computerised workflow system to ensure all information is recorded accurately and that all the correct advice is provided at the right time

Moved some Housing Officers to our reception so that they are on hand to provide the relevant advice and expertise when dealing with customers

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THE LONDON BOROUGH