

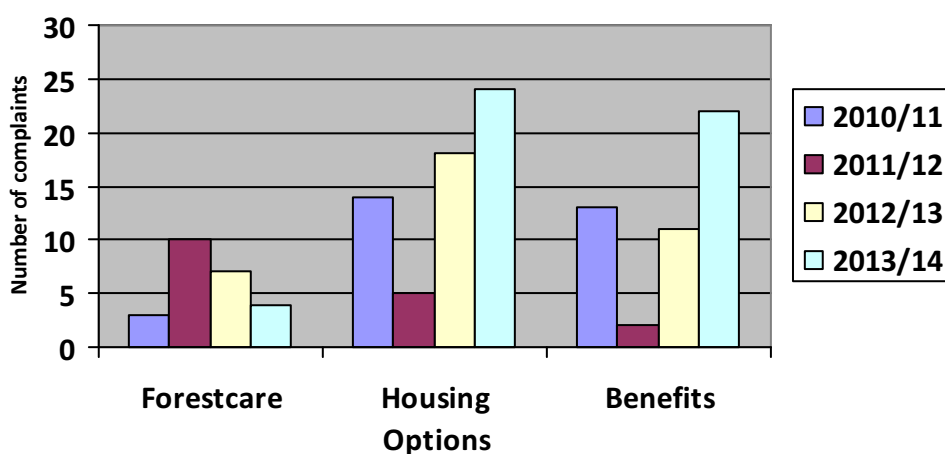
**Adult Social Care, Health & Housing  
Housing Service -  
Complaints and compliments  
2013-2014**

This is the annual complaints report for the Housing service for 2013/14. There is no statutory requirement guiding the management and reporting of complaints as is the case with Adult Social Care. The Housing Service follows the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy. Therefore, the Housing Service complaints are addressed and resolved within the corporate time scales.

Detail of complaints

There were a total of 49 complaints in 2013/14 compared to 32 in 2012/13. As can be seen from the graph below the largest increase in complaints were received by the Benefit service. The context of the last financial year should be recognised in that the benefit service was administering a number of welfare changes and customers made complaints about the impact of the welfare changes. The housing options service experienced a 10% increase in complaints, Forest care complaints remained the same as previous years and benefits experienced a 27% increase

**Housing Service Complaints 2010-2013**



The nature of the complaints across the three service areas is as follows,

|                            | Housing Options | Forestcare | Benefits |
|----------------------------|-----------------|------------|----------|
| <b>Access to services</b>  | 4               |            |          |
| <b>Communications</b>      | 4               | 1          | 8        |
| <b>Standard of service</b> | 16              | 2          | 14       |

The following table sets out the stages that each complaint reached

| <b>Stage 1</b> | <b>Stage 2</b> | <b>Stage 3</b> | <b>Stage 4</b> | <b>LGO</b> |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| 24             | 11             | 9              | 4              | 1          |

#### Distribution of complaints by equality strand

Please note that the opportunity of collecting further equality strand data such as disability is being reviewed; however it should also be highlighted that in some cases, it is not possible to collect this data.

The nature of the housing options complainants by equality strand is as follows:

| <b>Ethnicity</b>       | <b>Age</b>     |
|------------------------|----------------|
| White British total 13 | 18-34 total 4  |
| Black British 2        | 35 -49 total 9 |
| Not know 1             | 50-64 total 0  |
|                        | 65-90 total 1  |
|                        | Not known 2    |

The nature of the Forestcare complaints by equality strand is as follows:

| <b>Ethnicity</b>      | <b>Age</b>    |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| White British total 2 | 18-34 total   |
| Indian 1              | 35 -49 total  |
|                       | 50-64 total   |
|                       | 65-79 total   |
|                       | 65-90 total 3 |

The nature of the benefit complaints by equality strand is as follows:

| <b>Ethnicity</b>       | <b>Age</b>      |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| White British total 12 | 18-34 total 4   |
| Not known 10           | 35 -49 total 10 |
|                        | 50-64 total 6   |
|                        | 65-79 total 0   |
|                        | Not known 2     |

#### Outcomes from complaints

Of the 49 complaints received in 2013-14, 6 were upheld, 14 were partially upheld and 29 were not upheld.

#### Learning from complaints

In the previous year the majority of housing complaints related to the council's allocation policy and system. We reported at the time that a number of changes were intended which should address the complaints made. The majority of housing complaints in 2013/14 are related to housing advice and homelessness. Given the significant increase in homelessness demand over 2013/14 this is to be expected. The nature of the local housing market and private rented sector in particular may mean that customers will face hardship and may not be satisfied with the help the service can offer. Thus complaints are not always a reflection of the quality of the service.

Of the benefit complaints 25% related to decisions about benefit overpayments which customers disputed. Members will be aware that the Council has introduced fixed civil penalties where they have failed to inform of a change in circumstance which has resulted in an overpayment of housing benefit exceeding £ 250. This new scheme has been publicised and should raise customer awareness of the need to inform the service of changes in their circumstances in a timely manner.

There is no pattern to the Forest care complaints.

#### Compliments

There were 27 compliments in total in 2013-14. This was made up of 16 Housing/ Benefit compliments and 11 compliments for the Forestcare Service.

#### MP enquiries

The Housing service received 15 MP enquiries on behalf of Bracknell Forest constituents in 2013/14. This included 8 housing enquiries and 7 benefit enquiries.