

Annual Complaints & Compliments Report

Solihull Adults Social Care Services

1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Every Local Authority with a responsibility for Social Care Services is required to provide an annual report, outlining the workings of both their Adults and Children's complaints and representations procedures. This is the Annual Report of Solihull Council's Adults Social Care Complaints and Representations, covering the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- 1.2 The procedure for dealing with complaints and representations relating to Adults Social Care Services is determined by the following legislation:
 - The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009; and
 - The accompanying guidance 'Listening, Responding, Improving: A guide to better customer care' (DoH February 2009).
- 1.3 The Regulations cover complaints made in relation to NHS and Adult Social Care Services and/or any of its commissioned services and/or independent services.

The Regulations state that:

- a. Every organisation must have a Complaints Manager.
- b. Every organisation has a single stage system to deal with complaints.
- c. Complaints should be dealt with within a maximum of 6 months and that this can only be extended with the complainant's agreement.
- d. Following investigation of the complaint by the Council, if the complainant is still unhappy, the next stage is to approach the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.
- e. Every organisation should make the complainant aware of the response period that they work to and the way the response will be handled.
- f. Where complaints involve several organisations, these organisations should discuss and agree who will take the lead.
- g. The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman will consider complaints from those people who fund their own social care and will liaise directly with the relevant organisation.
- h. Complainants must approach the Council to highlight their complaint within twelve months of the incident happening, or within twelve months* of discovering the problem.

*Complaints outside of this timescale will be considered individually by the Council's Performance & Complaints Team and an assessment made regarding whether a fair and transparent investigation can still be carried out.

2. The Performance and Complaints Team

In Solihull, the responsibility for the management and day to day administration of complaints for Adults and Children's Services lies with the Performance and Complaints Team.

This team is part of the Business Improvement and Performance Division, within the Resources Directorate. The Performance and Complaints Team strive to ensure that:

- a. They achieve respectful dialogue with all complainants and work with investigating professionals to provide the best response in the most efficient timescales.
- b. Requests to raise complaints are acknowledged within 3 working days.
- c. Complaints are responded to within 30 working days (which is well within the six-month timescale set by the regulations)
- d. Complaints and compliments are accurately recorded, leading to the production of accurate performance data.
- e. When things have gone wrong, they work with other Council officers to put things right as quickly as possible.
- f. Both complainants and staff understand the complaints procedure, how it relates to them and their rights and responsibilities within it
- g. Any learning from complaints is acknowledged and appropriate changes are made to improve services provided.
- h. Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman requests are dealt with, within the requested timescales.

3. Statutory and Corporate Complaints

- 3.1 We may receive legitimate complaints that do not fall within the boundaries of the Statutory Social Care Complaints Process. These will usually fall within the remit of the Council's Corporate Complaint Process. It is the responsibility of the Complaints Team to record and monitor all complaints which relate directly to services provided across the Adults Social Care & Support Directorate.

4. A Summary of Complaints

- 4.1 During the 2022/23 financial year, Solihull's Adult Social Care Services received 46 new complaints. This is an increase in comparison with the 33 new complaints received in 2021/22; however, it is still less than the number of complaints being received on an annual basis prior to the COVID 19 pandemic.
- 4.2 Of these 46 new complaints, 26 (57%) were in relation to the Council's Adult Social Work teams (compared to 20 (61%) in 21/22), 17 (37%) were concerning the Council's commissioned providers and 3 (6%) were in relation to the Council's finance teams who deal with Adults Social Care Finance.
- 4.3 The 17 new complaints concerning Solihull's commissioned providers (which include residential and nursing homes and those providing care in the home) is a significant increase (70%) when compared to the 10 which were received in 2021/22.

This is almost certainly due to the gradual return to normal, following the COVID 19 pandemic and a rise in complaints towards where they were before

the national lockdown; however, the number of complaints in 2022/2023 is still lower than the numbers being received before the pandemic.

- 4.4 Fig 1 below shows the number of new complaints received in 2022/23 (46) split across each quarter. The lowest number was received in Quarter 2 (8). The highest number of new complaints were received in Quarter 4 (15). Again, this signifies that towards the end of 2022/23, there appears to be the start of a gradual return to normal, following the COVID 19 pandemic

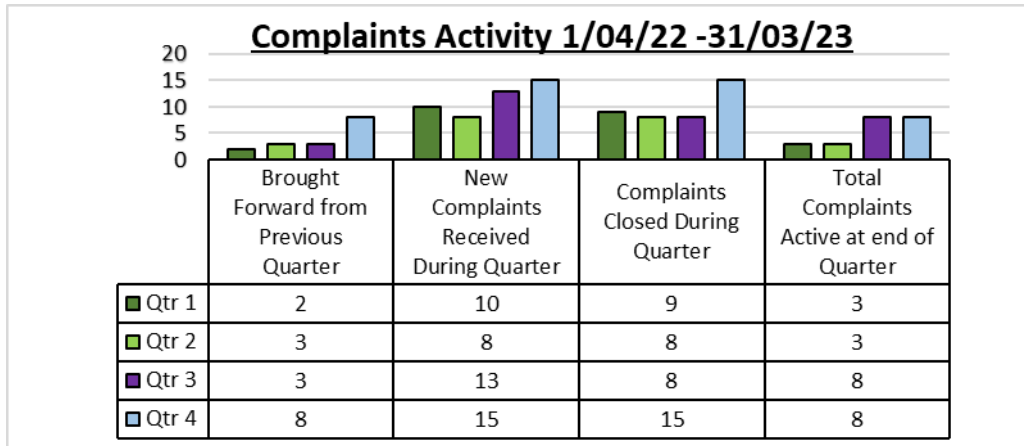


Fig. 1

5 How We Received Complaints

- 5.1 Clear information, advising service users about how they can make complaints regarding Adults Social Care Services, is provided on Solihull Council's website at <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Tell-us/Adult-social-care-complaints>. There are details outlining a range of ways in which service users can raise their concerns or request to raise a formal complaint. These include e-mail, telephone, completing a complaints leaflet (downloadable from the website) or writing to the Performance & Complaints Team at the address provided.

The Council does have a translation and interpreting service for users of Council services where their first language is not English or due to their disability or impairment, they require alternative formats such as British Sign Language, large print etc.

- 5.2 Figure 2 below shows that in 2022/23, initial contacts regarding Adult Social Care Services complaints were received in four different ways:

74% by e-mail, 22% by telephone and 2% each via letter and leaflet. The percentage of emails has increased significantly in comparison with 2021/2022 (61%) in favour of the telephone; communication via emails has continued to be the most common form of initial contact. The figures also show that 4% of contacts were made by either leaflet or letter.

| Method | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 |
|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Letter | 17% | 12% | 2% |
| Email | 66% | 61% | 74% |
| Complaints Leaflet | 8.5% | 3% | 2% |
| Telephone | 8.5% | 24% | 22% |

Fig. 2

- 5.3 The use of email has continued to assist the Complaints Team to agree and capture complaint issues more accurately and in a more efficient timescale. This is due to the specific detail outlined by the complainant at the first point of contact. Email contact also provides complainants with written evidence of the submission of their complaint and enables the Complaints Team to acknowledge the request to make a formal complaint quickly. This is something that is reassuring to complainants.

The Complaints Team continue to use a secure e-mail system to provide follow up communication to complainants wherever possible, and which allows them to send responses in a very confidential way. Where complainants do not have an email address and hence this is not possible, responses are sent via the post; however, as fig 1 above shows, the need for this form of response continues to decrease.

- 5.4 Follow up conversations, where necessary, between the Complaints Team and the complainant, give both parties the opportunity to discuss concerns and ask any further questions in respect to the progression of their complaint. Maintaining good communication with complainants, as outlined above, also assists the Complaints Team to accurately reflect the issues being raised and therefore obtain good quality responses from investigating managers.

If the person making the complaint is not the named service user, then the Complaints Team will always ascertain with the Social Worker whether the service user has capacity to consent to a complaint being made on their behalf. If they do have capacity, then consent is obtained from the service user before a complaint investigation is instigated.

Talking to complainants also ensures that where it is appropriate and possible, that concerns are resolved, without the need to progress to the formal complaints process. This can prove to be a quicker and more beneficial means of resolution for all concerned.

The Complaints Team have, in 2022/23, handled 63 such "duty" cases for Adults Social Care Services compared to 53 in 2021/22. These can range from assisting a liaison between the complainant and the correct team to quickly resolve concerns or providing a more in-depth mediation role between the complainant and the team(s) involved.

6. Who Made Complaints?

- 6.1 During 2022/23, Solihull Council's Adult Social Care Services provided a service to 8278 customers (including carers).

These are the number of people with whom Solihull Adults Social Care and Support have had some level of involvement. It includes both safeguarding

and DoLS (Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards) cases, clients and carers currently waiting to be assessed and also those who were assessed, but who did not go on to receive a service.

- 6.2 The 46 new formal complaints received were therefore, from only 0.6% of these people. Females made up 63% of these complainants, whilst 33% of complaints were received from males. 4% were made by both a male and a female.

7. Risk Assessment of Complaints

- 7.1 The Complaints Team risk assess each complaint received, in order to ascertain the seriousness of the issues raised and to ensure the appropriate course of action is taken.

- 7.2 Any complaint that they feel raises significant issues regarding the quality of care, safeguarding issues, denial of rights, or has clear quality assurance or risk management issues that may cause lasting problems for the organisation, or highlights the possibility of litigation/adverse local publicity, is highlighted immediately to senior managers and if appropriate, follows the Council's safeguarding procedures.

- 7.3 There is a clear process in place across Adults Social Care, which is used and relayed to customers when a safeguarding issue is/has already been identified and which is followed when a new complaint is received concerning the same issue(s). If a safeguarding investigation is already underway or is deemed necessary, in relation to the same concerns being raised by a complainant, then the Safeguarding Investigation needs to take precedence. The complainant is advised to return to the Complaints Team if they feel that the outcome of the Safeguarding Investigation has not resolved all of their concerns.

- 7.4 If any such issues are raised in relation to those people receiving a homecare service, or living in residential or nursing homes, then the Performance and Complaints Team will also notify the appropriate Care Quality Monitoring Officer immediately, who will then work closely with the relevant social care team to try and resolve any identified issues, as soon as possible. The CQC (Care Quality Commission) may also be notified.

8. An overview of new complaint issues for Adults Social Care by service area / team

- 8.1 Figure 3 (below) shows a comparison of both new complaints and the number of associated issues within these complaints for each service area/team, both in 2022/23 and 2021/22.

| Service Area | Number of Complaints 21/22 | Number of Issues 21/22 | Number of Complaints 22/23 | Number of Issues 22/23 |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| All Age Disability Team | 2 | 10 | 4 | 15 |
| Community Equipment and Wheelchair Team | 1 | 2 | 6 | 12 |
| First Point of Contact Team | 1 | 7 | 3 | 6 |
| Older Adults Community Team | 4 | 13 | 4 | 15 |
| Hospital SW Team | 5 | 20 | 3 | 16 |
| Mental Health & Autism Team | 5 | 16 | 2 | 2 |
| Occupational Therapy Team | 1 | 3 | 2 | 6 |
| Peripatetic Team | 0 | 0 | 2 | 11 |
| Reablement Team | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| ASC Social Work teams | 20 | 75 | 26 | 83 |
| Adult Social Care/ Income and Awards (Finance) | 3 | 9 | 3 | 15 |
| Brokerage / Commissioning Team * | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| Independent Providers | 10 | 60 | 17 | 135 |
| Grand Total | 33 | 145 | 46 | 234 |

*The commissioning issue was raised within a complaint to an independent provider

Fig. 3

8.2 Figure 3 shows confirms the 39% increase in the number of new complaints (46) received in 2022/23 compared to the 33 received in 2021/22. There is also an increase (61%) in the number of issues raised. It is to be noted however, that 99 of the complaint issues in 2022/23 were generated from just 7 of the new complaints received.

8.3 There were 6 new complaints received for the Community Equipment and Wheelchair Team. Three of these were particular to Wheelchair Services regarding staffing / resourcing, and the planned transfer to the NHS has now been completed.

Complaints for the First Point of Contact, All Age Disability and Peripatetic teams have increased slightly in 2022/23; however, complaints for the Mental Health & Autism Team, Hospital Social Work and Occupational Therapy teams have all decreased when compared to those in 2021/22. Detailed performance reporting to senior management ensures that numbers of complaints are highlighted, and any actions taken where required.

The fall in complaints for the teams highlighted above demonstrates that actions taken from detailed complaints reporting and the implementation of learning from previous complaints, assists team managers to improve practice and hence reduce the numbers of complaints they receive.

8.4 As outlined above at 4.3, the Council received 17 new complaints concerning commissioned providers in 2022/23 compared to the 10 received during 2021/22.

9. Categories of new issues raised within complaints

9.1 As shown in figs 4 and 5 below, there were a total of 234 separate issues defined within the 46 new complaints received in 2022/23.

Fig 4 confirms that there were 83 issues for the Adults Social Care teams, 15 for Income and Awards / Adult Social Care Finance and one issue for Commissioning (related to Funding of care - Financial Assessment / Charges).

| Type of Issues | Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 | Quarter 4 | Total |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| SOCIAL WORK TEAMS | | | | | |
| Attitude and Behaviour | 3 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 12 |
| Breach of confidentiality | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Correct process / procedure not followed | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 10 |
| Decision making | | 1 | 3 | | 4 |
| Delay in carrying out Financial Assessment | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Delay in providing support | 2 | | | 1 | 3 |
| Dissatisfaction with care plan / assessment / review process | 1 | 2 | | 1 | 4 |
| Failure to provide equipment | | 2 | | 2 | 4 |
| Frequent change of Social Worker | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Funding of care - Financial Assessment / Charges | | 2 | | 2 | 4 |
| Impact of LA policy on service user | | | 1 | | 1 |
| Lack of involvement of family member with POA | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Recording of Information | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Support not provided by Social Worker/ Family Support Worker / Personal Assistant | 1 | 2 | | 1 | 4 |
| Unsatisfactory Communication | 7 | 4 | 7 | 12 | 30 |
| Total | 19 | 17 | 19 | 28 | 83 |
| COMMISSIONING/BROKERAGE | | | | | |
| Dissatisfaction with Direct Payment / Process | | 1 | | | 1 |
| ADULT SOCIAL CARE FINANCE | | | | | |
| Attitude and Behaviour | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Delay in carrying out Financial Assessment | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Dissatisfaction with Direct Payment / Process | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Funding of care - Financial Assessment / Charges | | | | 4 | 4 |
| Unsatisfactory Communication | | 2 | | 6 | 8 |
| Total | 0 | 3 | | 12 | 15 |
| Grand Total | 19 | 21 | 19 | 40 | 99 |

Fig. 4

9.2 Fig 4 above, also shows that the main issue of complaint for the Adult Social Work teams was “*Unsatisfactory Communication*” (38 issues received). These issues were generated from 20 of the 26 complaints concerning the Adults Social Work teams. Unsatisfactory communication is a common root cause for complaints in any complaints arena and continual improvement in this area can have a very positive impact on a reduction in complaints.

The next most common issue of complaint was “*Attitude and behaviour (Inappropriate comments / actions)*” with 12 issues, although these issues spanned only 5 of the 26 new complaints for the social work teams.

The two issues named above give a combined total of 52% (51/99) of the total number of new Adult Social care issues received in 2022/2023.

9.3 58% of the total issues raised for Adults Social Care were in relation to commissioned providers. Fig. 5 below shows that during 2022/23, the main area of complaint regarding commissioned providers was “*Dissatisfaction with quality of care*” (36). This would not be unexpected when dealing with concerns regarding care providers. The number of these issues has increased by 38% in comparison to the 26 issues received in 2021/22.

9.4 The second highest issue is Dissatisfaction with Direct Payment / Process (33). All 33 issues were in respect to a commissioned service who assist people who receive social care funding to meet their care needs with arranging their finances.

Work has been undertaken with this provider to address the issues being raised and the number of new issues decreased quarter on quarter during 2022/23 as a result of the intervention taken.

| Type of Issues (Independent Provider) | Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 | Quarter 4 | Grand Total |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Attitude or behaviour of Staff | 4 | | | 5 | 9 |
| Breach of confidentiality | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Dissatisfaction with Direct Payment / Process | | 15 | 11 | 7 | 33 |
| Decision Making | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Dissatisfaction with quality of care | 17 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 36 |
| Funding of care - Financial Assessment / Charges | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Incorrect time of service call | | 1 | 6 | 3 | 10 |
| Incorrect use of PPE | 3 | | | | 3 |
| Missed medication / wrongly administered | 1 | | | | 1 |
| No policy / process in place | | | 1 | | 1 |
| Personal items gone missing | 4 | | | | 4 |
| Poor cleanliness in home | 4 | | | | 4 |
| Recording of information | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Service call not provided | | | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Unsatisfactory communication | | 14 | 8 | 5 | 27 |
| Visit cancelled at short notice | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Grand Total | 34 | 36 | 34 | 31 | 135 |

Fig. 5

9.5 The Performance and Complaints Team liaise with providers to ensure that all complaint issues raised have been responded to in detail and any

corresponding learning actions have been identified, via the completion of an Action Plan. The action plans are then forwarded to and monitored by the appropriate Care Quality Monitoring Officer.

- 9.6 Performance reports to senior managers include further detail concerning all types of issues, so that any emerging trends or themes can be highlighted and responded to appropriately.
- 9.7 As outlined at 3.1 above, all complaints are responded to via either the Statutory or Corporate complaints procedure.

Statutory complaints are those complaints made by or on behalf of a person using Adults Social Care Services about the impact of those services on them and the Corporate procedure is used to respond to complaints regarding the impact of services on someone other than the person using the service.

| Issues v Complaints procedure | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Types of new complaint issues | Qtr 1 | Qtr 2 | Qtr 3 | Qtr 4 | Grand Total |
| Corporate | 5 | 2 | 9 | 4 | 20 |
| Statutory | 48 | 55 | 44 | 67 | 214 |
| Grand Total | 53 | 57 | 53 | 71 | 234 |

Fig. 6

- 9.8 As show in fig 6 above, 91% (214) of the new complaint issues received in 2022/23 were progressed through the statutory complaints process and 9% via the corporate process as identified.
- 9.9 In line with the Council’s legal obligations under Part 7 of the Immigration Act 2016, the Council’s complaints procedure incorporates a measure in which a customer can make a formal complaint to the Council, should any member of the public feel that a customer-facing council officer has insufficient fluency in spoken English in the performance of their role. Since the implementation of the Act, we have received no complaints on this basis which is a positive indicator regarding the quality of staff employed in Adults Services.

10. Outcomes of complaint issues

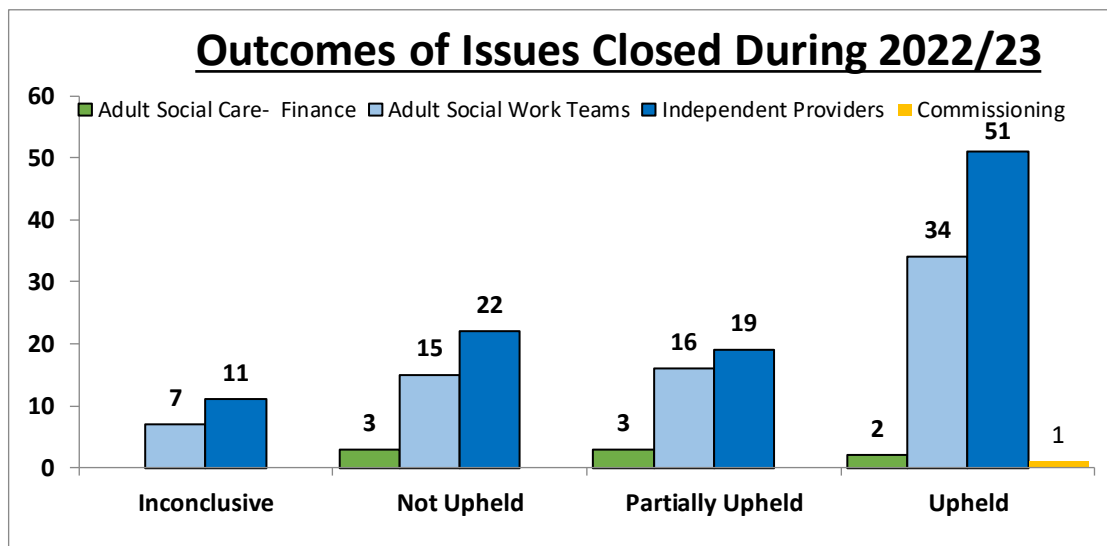


Fig. 7

10.1 There were 184 issues investigated and responded to during 2022/23.

These outcomes were identified from 40 complaint investigations which were completed and closed in 2022/23 (some of these issues relate to investigations that were ongoing and brought forward from 2021/22). 88 issues were upheld, 38 were partially upheld, 40 were not upheld and 18 were found to be inconclusive.

10.2 Fig 7 above shows that 68% of issues investigated during 2022/23 were upheld or partially upheld. As outlined at 12.4 below, the quality of complaint responses in Solihull is good and investigations are thorough, which appears to correlate with the low number of cases which are referred to the LGSCO (Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman) where fault is then found.

11. Timescales of complaint responses within Adult Services

11.1 The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, state in 14(3), that the Local Authority should respond to an Adult Social Services complaint within a period of six months.

11.2 Solihull Adult Social Care Services strive to address complaints in a much shorter and hence more efficient timescale for complainants and an internal 30 working day timescale was introduced in 2013/14.

The Performance and Complaints Team provide a quality checking service for all investigating managers who are required to provide complaint responses. The relevant Assistant Director (or the Director, where required) also work with the Performance and Complaints Team to monitor the quality of responses and to provide covering letters for each one.

| Complaints Handling Response Times | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|-----|-------------------------------------|-----|------------------------------|-----|
| Working Days to Respond | Adult Social Care (Social Work) 2022/23 | | Adult Social Care (Finance) 2022/23 | | Independent Provider 2019/20 | |
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| 0-30 | 21 | 95% | 1 | 50% | 7 | 44% |
| 31 - 40 | | | 1 | 50% | 6 | 38% |
| 41+ | 1 | 5% | | | 3 | 18% |

Fig. 8

11.3 95% (21/22) of complaints investigated in 2022/23 regarding Adults Social Care teams were closed within the Council's internal 30 working day timescale, which is an increase in comparison to 83% (19/23) in 2021/22. The complaint response which fell outside of the 30-working day timescale was completed well within the 6-month statutory timescale.

11.4 50% (1/2) Adult Social Care Finance complaints investigated in 2022/23 were closed within the 30-working day timescale. The complaint which exceeded the timescale was a complex complaint involving other services and the complainant was kept updated,

11.5 44% (7/16) of the commissioned provider complaints were responded to within 30 working days. The Complaints Team will continue to work with commissioned providers and their colleagues in Adults Social Care with an aim to increase the number of provider complaint investigations completed within the 30-working day timeframe.

11.6 The Assistant Directors in the Adult Care & Support Directorate read all responses and will raise questions where applicable, in order to ensure all of the responses are quality checked.

Upon completion of this process, the complaint response letter is provided to complainants with a covering letter, which comments on the response and also highlights learning, where appropriate, so that Social Work Team managers can work with their staff and the Commissioning Team can work with providers to improve their practice.

11.7 Where responses to complaints are delayed, the Complaints Team liaise with complainants, in order to ensure that they are kept fully updated regarding the progression of their complaint.

12. Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) complaints

12.1 During 2022/23 there were 3 new complaints referred to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) for Solihull Adults Social Care Services (a decrease of 4 compared to 2021/22). There were 2 live complaint investigations brought forward from 2021/22.

12.2 Of these 5 complaints:

The 2 complaints brought forward from 21/22 were both closed in 2022/23.

- Fault was found in one, however it was deemed that the response by the Local Authority was sufficient and therefore no further finding was made
- There was no fault found in the other complaint.

Of the 3 new complaints received in 2022/23:

- the LGSCO declined to investigate 2; and
- one complaint was still being investigated by the LGSCO at the end of 2022/23 and was carried forward to 2023/24.

12.4 The quality of complaint responses in Solihull is good and investigations are thorough, which appears to correlate with the low number of cases which are referred to the LGSCO where fault is then found.

13. Learning from Complaints

13.1 86% (24/28) of the learning forms sent to investigating managers following an investigation, were completed and returned in 2022/23. There were only 4 forms outstanding at the end of the year. 3 of the 4 outstanding forms were received in Quarter 1 (2023/2024). This is a very positive return rate and indicates that Adults Social Care take learning from complaints very seriously.

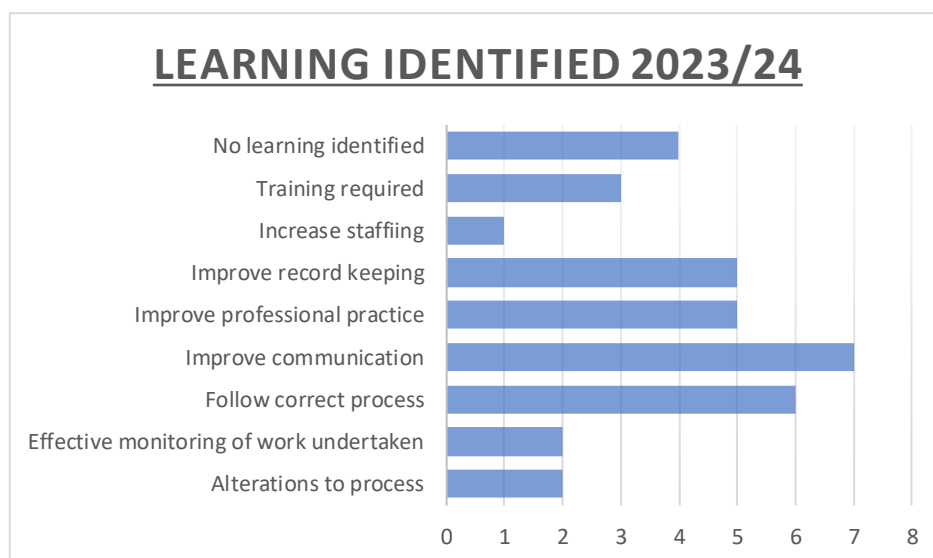


Fig. 10

13.2 As shown in Fig 10 above, the main area highlighted for improvement was to “*Improve Communication*” (7 issues) followed by “*Follow correct process*” (6 issues). This is in line with the information above at 9.2, regarding the number of new issues concerning communication.

Any learning issues raised are followed up by the Complaints Team until implementation is confirmed by the Investigating Manager.

Data regarding the implementation of learning is then formatted into individual spreadsheets for each team and distributed to senior staff and the

appropriate team managers, so that managers can comment on the differences that learning has made to practice. The evidence is then collated by the Complaints Team to demonstrate the impact of those improvements on services provided.

13.3 Below are some examples of the types of learning that have been put into place in Adults Social Care Services and have therefore been used to inform service improvements:

- **Following a complaint from a son of a service user, in relation to clarity regarding the arranging of his mother's care**

The Investigating Manager identified that a clearer explanation should have been provided to the service user's son, to help provide more clarity regarding changes to discharge plans, namely isolation periods no longer being needed for covid positive patients. When the isolation period has passed during hospital admission a detailed explanation should have been provided, so that the family were aware of delays in sourcing an appropriate Discharge to Assess bed.

- **Following a complaint from family who raised concerns about not being contacted by the Community Equipment Service in a timely manner**

The Investigating Manager identified improvements in communication and the arranging of administration staff to ensure calls are answered and responded to accordingly throughout the day wherever possible. The process was reviewed and amended appropriately to ensure that if voicemails are left, a rota is in place for the administration staff to listen to, record and respond to any voicemails. The rota has since been regularly reviewed to accommodate changes in demand.

- **A complaint was received from the family of a service user in relation to the delays the family experienced in respect to a review taking place and finding a suitable supported living placement.**

A review was arranged and due to take place, however it did not go ahead due to the Social Worker who arranged it, being out of the office for a long period due to unforeseen circumstances. There was a lack of progress until the Social Worker returned. The investigation identified that a manager's intervention was required at an earlier stage, which would have ensured that the scheduled review and actions were progressed accordingly.

The learning from this complaint was to ensure that through the supervision process, managers must identify issues of this nature at an early stage, enabling the relevant interventions to be put in place in a timely way, so that action plans are implemented to remediate this immediately. An apology was provided to the family and Adult Social Care worked with the family to explore supported living options and discuss the process as a priority.

13.4. The examples above all relate to the importance of following the correct processes and improving communication. The learning embedded within Adult Social Care in 2022/23 will have a positive impact in Adult Social Services providing services in 2023/24, as it has done in previous years.

Some examples of this are as follows:

- Refresher training has been carried out for the Hospital Social Work Team regarding the financial assessments process to ensure that they can support people to understand how they will be assessed for chargeable care, and the impacts of this if they do not engage in the process.
- There was also further learning for the Financial Assessment Team to recognise where a person may need signposting to additional support if they are reporting financial hardship. The Team have been briefed on available debt and budgeting support and reminded that repayment plans are considered by the Sundry Income Team.
- It was also identified that independent assessors do not have access to the same family contact details as Best Interest Assessors. The First Point of Contact and DoLS Team are now ensuring this information is made available and Independent Assessors have been briefed on how to find out who is involved in a person's network of support and how to request these details.

13.5 Findings from provider complaints are discussed with individual providers and the implementation of actions and any training is monitored by the Care Quality Team and any progress and learning is reported into contract meetings by the Care Quality Monitoring Officer. Key themes from the complaints are shared through the Social Care Provider Market and Quality Forum so that there is wider learning for all providers.

14. Compliments for Adults Social Care & Support

14.1 176 compliments were received for Adults Social Care in 2022/23.

Several the compliments that were received in 2022/23 involved services provided by two or more teams which demonstrates how teams working together can have a very positive outcome for the person receiving the service.

| Compliments received in 2022/23 | |
|---|------------|
| SMBC Care Homes | |
| 268 Creynolds Lane | 1 |
| 9 Hurst Green | 1 |
| 25/27/29 Stapleton Lane | 3 |
| 7/8/9 Downing Close | 5 |
| Bills Lane | 2 |
| Park View | 2 |
| Adults Social Care (internal) | |
| Commissioning and Brokerage | 6 |
| Adult Disability Transitions Team | 1 |
| Adult Exploitation Reduction Team | 2 |
| Adult Social Care (Generic) | 2 |
| Community Equipment and Wheelchair Team | 10 |
| DoLS Team | 7 |
| First Point of Contact Team | 4 |
| Hospital SW Team | 18 |
| Mental Health and Autism Team | 7 |
| Occupational Therapy | 9 |
| Older Adults Community Team | 27 |
| Peripatetic Team | 2 |
| Reablement | 40 |
| Independent providers | |
| Alexandra House | 1 |
| Care 2 Home | 1 |
| Elite Assistance | 3 |
| Nationwide | 14 |
| Tanworth Court | 1 |
| Universal | 6 |
| Upward Care | 1 |
| Grand Total | 176 |

Fig. 11

- 14.2 The Reablement Team received the highest number of Adult Social Care compliments in 2022/23 (40), followed by the Older Adult's Community Team (27) and the Hospital Social Work Team (18). Other teams also received a significant number of compliments as shown in fig 11 above.
- 14.3 During 2022/23, Solihull Adults Social Care Services received 27 compliments in respect of the services provided by its commissioned providers, of which 14 were for Nationwide.
- 14.4 Below are some examples of the feedback that was received.

14.5 **Compliments received from people accessing services provided by Solihull Adults Social Care by team**

25/27/29 Stapleton Drive (Day Centre)

"Thank you so much for all the support you have provided. I know the move was a bit sooner than planned, but Stapleton have done an extraordinary job preparing him for the move and making him feel so welcome."

First Point of Contact Team

"Thank you so much for your support and professionalism shown to my dad and myself over the last few weeks. You are a credit to your profession."

Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service

A service user rang to inform the team that an engineer had come to fix her recliner chair and the issue had been resolved. The call was initially made by the Team to the engineer the moment they became aware of the situation and the issue was resolved within the hour.

The service user thanked everyone for their help. She said she felt that she was in a crisis and did not know who to contact. She was very grateful for the help, she said that the team had done their "good deeds for the week".

Reablement

"I am phoning to say how delighted I have been with this wonderful service and the ladies who have been to see me. I have really, really moved on and I would just like to give my compliments for their kindness and for all the help and support. You have a wonderful team. I would just like to say a very, very big thank you. I felt so emotional when they left yesterday and felt I must get in touch and find out how I can pass on my appreciation for all they have done for me, all that has been arranged... it has been wonderful and thank you for listening to me."

Any questions I wanted to ask or things I wanted to find out, nothing was too much bother and they were absolutely lovely and if it wasn't for all the rules and regulations, I could have hug each one of them - please give them a virtual hug and a big thank you."

Older Adults Community Team

"Thank you so much for your sound advice, guidance and support, It has been invaluable to me. The pandemic has made life more difficult for us all and I am so glad you found mum a safe placement so quickly. Mum has remained settled and is doing very well. You have always been so bright and cheerful. It has been a pleasure to have known you even just via our telephone conversations"

Hospital Social Work Team

"As a family we would like to thank you enormously for all your assistance with my mom's care package. We all know it has been such a trying time and it is extremely difficult to organise the care package, but you have done an amazing job."

Thank you for your help the other day regarding the changes that were made without notification. This is a genuine thank you for all you do."

Nationwide (commissioned provider)

"We just wanted to thank you for the care you gave our father before he passed away. We appreciate what a hard job it is, and your patience and care was important to him and us in his last days. Also, thank you for calling the paramedics and recognising he needed help. We are extremely grateful for the care you provided."

Occupational Therapy

A service user sent a thank you card which stated "My bathroom is complete. It is wonderful. Thank you to your department. Your staff and workmen have given me new life and safe bathing. They have done an excellent job. Thank you so much."

Universal Home Care (Commissioned Provider)

"To All Universal Care Staff who have provided the excellent care given to my mum. Mum and family want to express our heartfelt gratitude for the compassion, love, and kindness you all gave her. Your dedication, professionalism and hard work is truly appreciated in what has been a very difficult time for you all"

14.6 **Compliments from professionals by team**

DoLS Team

"I just want to thank you for all the hard work and support you have provided this year to the systems team. You are always exceptionally helpful and very responsive when we ask for help. It has been noted by other colleagues within my team too."

Commissioning and Brokerage

"You have been very supportive to me and offered guidance and support to help me grow as a registered manager. You have always given me the very best advice and support especially throughout the pandemic. When we had a breakout in both my services, you were on hand to offer support and guidance. You have a very friendly approach and always willing to listen to any concerns or issues."

Mental Health and Autism Team

"I would like to express my appreciation for all the work and support that you have given me in respect to this complex case. I have found you to be a warm and friendly person who is very experienced and skilled, who has a wealth of initiatives to co-ordinate the needs that are required. You have been professional, amiable and approachable at all times. It is a pleasure working with you and i hope to work with you again."

Park View (Day Centre)

"He is a credit to you and Parkview. He is so committed and passionate to meet the service users needs, with an open mind to try new things supporting the service. This was very evident in the meeting today."

- 14.7 Areas of good practice highlighted through compliments can also be used by social work managers as learning opportunities for all staff.

15. Maintaining high standards in the processing of Adults Social Care complaints

15.1 During 2022/23, the Complaints Team and Adults Social Care have continued to work very well together, aiming to ensure that timescales were met and high-quality responses were provided for complainants, in order to ensure that we consistently deliver high standards in complaints processing.

The numbers of complainants who return dissatisfied with their response is low and the quality of responses provided by the Council has helped to maintain a low level of referral and investigation by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman over the last few years, as highlighted in Section 12 above.

15.2 Detailed and timely conversations with prospective complainants, both by telephone and e-mail, continue to ensure that customers feel listened to and reassured that their concerns will be dealt with. Wherever possible, concerns are resolved outside of the formal complaints process with the agreement of the complainant which often expedites resolution of these concerns.

15.3 The quality of complaint responses is high, aided by the quality checking process between the Complaints Team and Adults Social Care investigating managers, and reminders are sent to investigating managers regarding the due dates for responses.

15.4 Careful analysis of complaints made in relation to Adults Social Work Services continues to ensure that complaints are pursued through the correct complaint's procedure.

15.5 Following completion of the complaints process, the Complaints Team send learning forms to all investigating managers so that they can highlight any learning issues from each complaint, along with a date for implementation. All learning is monitored through to implementation and then, at a later date, managers are requested to highlight the impact on practice of this learning.

15.6 The Complaints Team use a well organised records management system which has proven to be a very efficient way of recording complaints detail and ensures swift responses to both complainants and the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman. It also ensures that any member of the Performance & Complaints Team can, at any time, establish the current status of a complaint along with the detail of any correspondence that has taken place in relation to that complaint. This ensures that an excellent level of customer service is maintained.

15.7 Within complaint response letters, complainants are directed to a post-complaint questionnaire so that if they wish, they can feedback their comments concerning their experience of the complaint's procedure. This in turn feeds into the learning and improvement process.

15.8 The Complaints Team have also received very positive feedback regarding the nature of their customer contact and their helpfulness when dealing with complaints as shown below.

15.9.1 Feedback from Complainants

- ... everything has been explained clearly to me in the letter and they sent it in time.
- Thank you for pursuing this complaint and keeping me informed. I accept the apology and hope this makes the team more aware of how their poor service impacts ordinary people. Thank you for ensuring that I and XX are being financed appropriately and in a timely manner.

15.9.2 Feedback from Internal Staff

- ... thank you for pulling this together, you and your team are always so helpful and supportive.
- ... thank you all for your service, you all do an amazing job...couldn't do it without you.
- ... you have been so supportive and patient explaining things in detail to help me understand the complaints process. Both you and XX have been truly supportive.

16. Reporting on Complaints

16.1 Live complaint reports for assistant directors and heads of service are produced monthly. These reports enable heads of service and the assistant directors for both the Adults Social Care teams and Commissioning, to track timescales and intervene if there is a risk that a complaint will not be dealt with within the desired time limit.

16.2 Quarterly complaint reports for the Directorate Leadership Team, detail activity and performance, including categories of complaint and outcomes by service area and team, along with any learning; data which highlights any emerging trends. This ensures that managers can again intervene early if a problem is detected. Reports also include percentages of complaints received under each process, along with related response timescales.

16.3 Ombudsman activity / responses are also reported to DLT and CLT (Corporate Leadership Team) on a monthly basis.

16.4 The reporting process to senior management is an established and very important part of the complaint's procedure. Where potential improvements to this process are identified, however minor, these are built into the process immediately by the Performance and Complaints Team.

Accurate recording on the Respond database enables one-off reports to be produced efficiently, as requested by managers, in order to establish whether there are issues that need attention in specific areas of Adults Social Care Services.

16.5 The Complaints Team also provides advice and guidance for investigating managers to compliment the formal procedures already in place and to assist staff further when responding to complaints.

17. Looking ahead to 2023/24

- 17.1 During 2023/24, the Performance and Complaints Team will continue to work closely with all staff involved in investigating complaints; aiming to ensure that as many complaints as possible are responded to within the Council's internal 30 working day response timescale and where possible, that concerns are resolved outside of this process.
- 17.2 The Performance and Complaints Team will continue to provide high quality support to staff investigating complaints and responding to any Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman investigations, as requested.

18. Conclusion

- 18.1 During 2022/23 the Performance and Complaints Team have, as always continued to work closely with Adults Social Care Services staff to ensure that despite the difficult situation concerning the pandemic, as many responses as possible met the appropriate timescales and that complaint responses are of a high quality.
- 18.2 The quality of complaint responses has continued to have a positive impact on the requests for escalation and hence the reduced numbers of complaints investigated by the LGSCO. In 2022/23, the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman has found fault only once in respect of Solihull Adults Social Care Services in Solihull.
- 18.3 Detailed and quality performance reporting to senior management has continued, ensuring that any concerns are highlighted, and subsequent actions taken. The detail provided, along with the breakdown of complaint issues, means that focussed learning has continued and hence, has had a direct impact on service improvement and reduced the number of complaint issues raised in certain areas.
- 18.4 During 2023/24, the Performance & Complaints Team will continue, as always to review its practice in accordance with feedback from complainants and then work with managers and staff in Solihull Adults Social Care Services to make any changes that are essential to enhance the experience of people using their services and complainants in Solihull.

June 2023