

Solihull Council Annual Complaints & Compliments Report 2023/24

Adult Social Care



Annual Complaints & Compliments Report Solihull's Adults Social Care Services

1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

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 2023 to 31 March 2024.
- 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 Complaints Team and an assessment made regarding whether a fair and transparent investigation can still be carried out.

2. The 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 Children's & Adults Complaints Team.

This team is part of the Business Improvement and Performance Division, within the Resources Directorate. The 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 2023/24 financial year, Solihull's Adult Social Care Services received 50 new complaints from individual service users/ their families. This is a slight increase in comparison with the 46 new complaints received in 2022/23.
- 4.2 Of these 50 new complaints, 27 (54%) were in relation to the Council's Adult Social Work teams (compared to 26 (57%) in 22/23), 15 (30%) were concerning the Council's commissioned providers and 8 (16%) were in relation to the Council's finance teams who deal with Adults Social Care Finance.
- 4.3 The 15 new complaints concerning Solihull's commissioned providers (which include residential and nursing homes and those providing care in the home) is a slight decrease when compared to the 17 which were received in 2022/23; however there were also 3 single issues included in 3 complaints which were mainly for social work teams, but that also involved commissioned providers.

4.4 Fig 1 below shows the number of new complaints received in 2023/24 (50) split across each quarter. The lowest number was received in Quarter 4 (11). The highest number of new complaints were received in Quarter 3 (14). The number of complaints across quarters however has been fairly consistent.

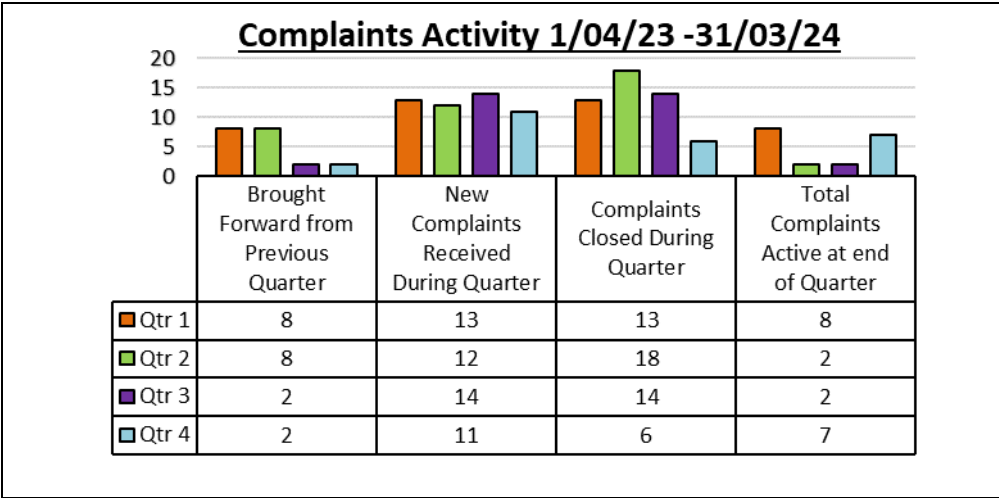


Fig. 1

5 How We Received Complaints

5.1 Solihull Adults Social Care Services have an open and responsive complaints and representations process and officers in Adults Social Care proactively signpost service users to this process.

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 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 2023/24, initial contacts regarding Adult Social Care Services complaints were received in four different ways:

72% by e-mail, 18% by telephone, 6% by letter and 4% by complaints leaflet. The majority of complainants have continued to choose to raise their initial concerns via email. It is noticeable that initial contact through telephone has continued to decrease. As referred to below, the other methods of contact have been via letter or complaints leaflet.

Method	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Letter	12%	2%	6%
Email	61%	74%	72%
Complaints Leaflet	3%	2%	4%
Telephone	24%	22%	18%

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.

- 5.4 Follow up conversations, where necessary, between the Complaints Team and the complainant, also 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.
- 5.5 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.

As outlined in The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 however, in addition to the service user, a complaint may also be made by *“a person who is affected, or likely to be affected, by the action, omission or decision of the responsible body which is the subject of the complaint.”*

- 5.6 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 2023/24, handled 74 such "duty" cases for Adults Social Care Services compared to 63 in 2022/23. 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 2023/24, Solihull Council's Adult Social Care Services provided a service to 8936 customers (including carers).

These are the number of people with whom Solihull Adults Social Care Services 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 50 new formal complaints received were therefore, from only 0.6% of these people. This is the same percentage of complainants as in 2022/23.

Females made up 64% of these complainants, whilst 36% of complaints were received from males.

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 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 2023/24.

There are some complaints which focus mainly on one particular Adults Social Care team, but that also involve a small no of issues for another team/teams and this is shown below in the total number of complaints against those teams.

Service Area	Number of Complaints 22/23	Number of Issues 22/23	Number of Complaints 23/24	Number of Issues 23/24
Adult Disability & Autism Team	4	15	13	40
Community Equipment Service	6	12	-	-
DoLS Team	-	-	1	9
First Point of Contact and DoLS Team	3	6	3	8
Hospital SW Team	3	16	10	39
Mental Health Team	2	2	4	22
Older Adults Community Team	4	15	3	3
One Front Door – ASC Connect Services	-	-	1	2
Occupational Therapist Team	2	6	1	1
Peripatetic Team	2	11	-	-
Reablement	-	-	1	1
ASC Social Care	26	83	37	125
Adult Social Care/ Income and Awards (Finance)	3	15	12	28
Brokerage / Commissioning Team	-	1	1	1
Independent Providers	17	135	18	96
Grand Total	46	234	**68	250

*** This number is greater than 50 as some complaints are split across multiple teams*

Fig. 3

- 8.2 There has been an 8% increase in the number of new complaints (50) received in 2023/24 compared to the 46 received in 2022/23, with a 7% increase in the total number of issues raised. It is to be noted however, that 104 of the complaint issues in 2023/24 were generated from just 8 of the new complaints received.
- 8.3 There has been a significant decline in new complaints for the Solihull Community Equipment Service who have not received any formal complaints in 2023/24. At least part of the reason for this is that the services previously provided by the Wheelchair Service part of the team have now been transferred to the NHS.
- 8.4 The increase in complaints for the Adult Disability & Autism Team is directly related to a significant increase in both demand (due to the transfer of autism cases from the Mental Health Team) and the complexity of the cases being handled by this team.

8.5 The Hospital Social Work Team has seen an increase in referrals and it was also found that some complaints were being generated by social work staff failing to advise people in writing and verbally about the cost of their services. Robust communications were however put in place to ensure that the proper process was being followed and a decrease in these types of complaint then followed.

8.6 Complaints for the Older Adults Community Team and the Occupational Therapy Team have decreased when compared to complaints received in 2022/23.

8.7 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.

9. Categories of new issues raised within complaints

9.1 Adults Social Work & Commissioning/Brokerage teams

As shown in fig 3 above and figs 4 and 5 below, there were a total of 250 separate issues defined within the 50 new complaints received in 2023/24.

Fig 4 confirms that there were 125 issues for the Adults Social Work teams, 28 for Income and Awards / Adult Social Care Finance and one issue for Commissioning/Brokerage.

Type of Issues	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Grand Total
ADULT SOCIAL WORK TEAMS					
Attitude and Behaviour	4	7	4	4	19
Consent not requested				1	1
Correct process / procedure not followed		3	2		5
Decision making		1	3	2	6
Delay in providing support	2		2	1	5
Dissatisfaction with Direct payment / process		1	4		5
Dissatisfaction with care plan / assessment / review process		1	1	2	4
Failure to complete agreed outcome	1		1		2
Falsifying of records		1			1
Frequent change of Social Worker			1	1	2
Funding of care - Financial Assessment / Charges			5	3	8
Incorrect cancellation of care	1			1	2
Recording of Information	2		2		4
Safety Issues (non-safeguarding)			1		1
Support not provided by Social Worker/ Family Support Worker / Personal Assistant	4	1	7	1	13
Unsatisfactory Communication	11	7	25	4	47
COMMISSIONING / BROKERAGE					
Delay in providing support		1			1
Totals	25	23	58	20	126
ADULT SOCIAL CARE FINANCE					
Decision Making	2				2
Delay in providing support	1				1
Dissatisfaction with Direct Payment / Process			5		5
Financial support not provided	1		1		2
Funding of care - Financial Assessment / Charges	2	1	3	1	7
Recording of information		1			1
Unsatisfactory Communication	1	1	7	1	10
Totals	7	3	16	2	28
Grand Total	32	26	74	22	154

Fig. 4

9.2 Fig 4 above, also shows that the main issue of complaint for the Adult Social Work teams was “*Unsatisfactory Communication*” (47 issues received). These issues were generated from 21 out of 27 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.

9.3 The next most common issue of complaint was “*Attitude and behaviour (Inappropriate comments / actions)*” with 19 issues, although these issues spanned only 9 of the 27 new complaints for the social work teams. This can also be a common root cause for complaints in any complaints arena.

The two issues outlined above give a combined total of 53% (66/125) of the total number of new Adult Social Work issues received in 2023/2024.

9.4 Commissioned providers

Type of Issues (Independent Provider)	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Grand Total
Attitude or behaviour of Staff	4	3		9	16
Decision Making		1			1
Dissatisfaction with quality of care	7	10	7	11	35
Failure to complete outcome		2			2
Funding of care - Financial Assessment / Charges		1	1		2
Incorrect time of service call	2	2		1	5
Personal items gone missing			1		1
Recording of information				1	1
Safety Issues (non-safeguarding)		2			2
Service call not provided	1	1			2
Unsatisfactory communication	5	10	2	12	29
Grand Total	19	32	11	34	96

Fig. 5

As shown in fig 5 above, 38% (96/250) of the total new issues raised in 2023/24 were in relation to commissioned providers.

Fig 5 shows that during 2023/24, the main area of complaint regarding commissioned providers was “*Dissatisfaction with quality of care*” (35). This would not be unexpected when dealing with concerns regarding care providers. The number of these issues has remained consistent in comparison to the 36 issues received in 2022/23; although the number of new complaints has decreased as outlined at 8.4 above.

9.5 The second highest issue is Unsatisfactory Communication (29). These 29 issues were generated from 12 of the 15 complaints received in respect of commissioned services. As outlined at 9.2 above, 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.

9.6 The 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. Each action plan is then forwarded to and monitored by the appropriate Care Quality Monitoring Officer.

9.7 Performance reports to senior managers include further detail concerning all types of issues raised across Adults Social Care, so that any emerging trends or themes can be highlighted and responded to appropriately.

9.8 Statutory & corporate complaints procedures

As outlined at 3.1 above, all complaints are responded to via either the Statutory or Corporate complaints procedure.

The statutory procedure is governed by The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 which state at 5 (1) that:

*A complaint may be made by—
 (a) a person who receives or has received services from a responsible body; or
 (b) a person who is affected, or likely to be affected, by the action, omission or decision of the responsible body which is the subject of the complaint.*

Most complaints raised in relation to Adults Social Care will fall under the statutory procedure.

One of the reasons the Corporate complaints procedure would be used as opposed to the statutory process, is to respond to a challenge from a complainant regarding the content of a policy being used by Adults Social Care.

Issues v Complaints procedure					
Types of new complaint issues	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Grand Total
Corporate	5	11			16
Statutory	46	47	85	56	234
Grand Total	51	58	85	56	250

Fig. 6

9.9 As shown in fig 6 above, 94% (234) of the new complaint issues received in 2023/24 were progressed through the statutory complaints process and 16 (6%) via the corporate process.

9.10 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 Social Care Services.

10. Outcome of complaint issues investigated

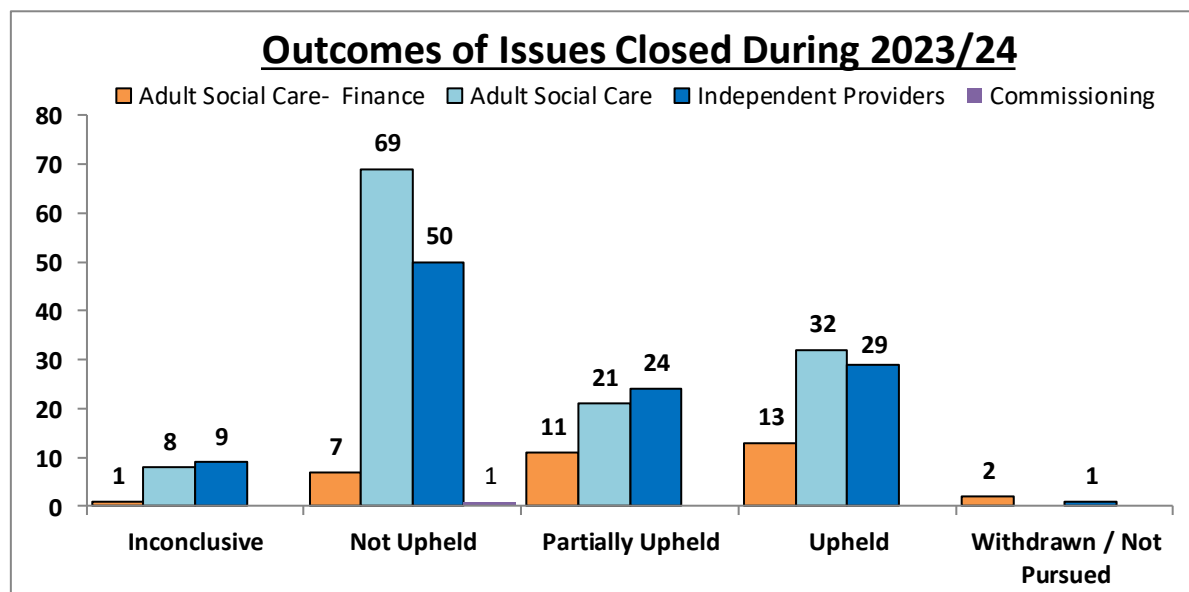


Fig. 7

10.1 There were 275 issues investigated and responded to during 2023/24.

Two of the 51 complaints closed in 2023/24 had been withdrawn and therefore were not investigated and hence the outcomes shown above were identified from 49 complaint investigations which were completed and closed in 2023/24.

Some of the issues in fig 7 above relate to investigations that were ongoing and brought forward from 2022/23. 74 issues were upheld, 56 were partially upheld, 127 were not upheld and 18 were found to be inconclusive.

10.2 Fig 7 shows that 47% of issues investigated during 2023/24 were upheld or partially upheld. This is a significant decrease in comparison to 68% of the issues upheld and partially upheld in 2022/23.

As outlined at 12.4 below, the quality of investigation and therefore complaint response in Solihull remains thorough and this 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 Complaints Team provide a quality checking service for all investigating managers who are required to provide complaint responses. The relevant Assistant Director (and the Director, where required) also work with the Complaints Team to monitor the quality of responses and to provide covering letters for each one.

Working Days to Respond	Adult Social Care (Social Work) 2023/24		Adult Social Care (Finance) 2023/24		Independent Provider 2023 / 24	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0-30	20	74%	5	71%	2	13%
31 - 40	5	25%	1	14.5%	7	47%
41+	2	1%	1	14.5%	6	40%
Withdrawn	-	-	1	-	1	-

Fig. 8

- 11.3 74% (20/27) of complaints investigated in 2023/24 regarding Adults Social Work teams were closed within the Council's internal 30 working day timescale.

As outlined at 8.2 above, 104 of the complaint issues in 2023/24 were generated from just 8 of the new complaints received. These were detailed complaints involving multiple areas of Adults Social Care and hence these investigations and responses, being thorough, took a little more time. These were however completed well within the 6-month statutory timescale.

- 11.4 71% (5/7) Adult Social Care Finance complaints investigated in 2023/24 were closed within the 30-working day timescale. One of the complaints which exceeded the timescale was completed within 31 working days and the other was a complex complaint which also involved another service area.
- 11.5 13% (2/15) of the commissioned provider complaints were responded to within 30 working days. The complaint responses which fell outside of the 30-working day timescale were completed well within the 6-month statutory timescale and would have been some of those complaints referred to at 11.3 above.

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 2023/24 there were 3 new complaints referred to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) for Solihull Adults Social Care Services, which is consistent with the 3 received in 2022/23.

12.2 Of these 3 complaints:

- two complaints were closed by LGSCO due to them being premature (referred to the Ombudsman before an investigation by the Council).
- one complaint was still being investigated by the LGSCO at the end of 2023/24 and was carried forward to 2024/25.

12.3 Complaint investigations in Solihull are thorough and therefore the quality of complaint response is good. This 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 71% (32/45) of the learning forms sent to investigating managers in 2023/24 following an investigation had been completed and returned by the end of the reporting period. There were therefore 13 forms outstanding at the end of the year.

Several of the outstanding 13 forms were issued for investigations completed close to year end with managers not having had chance to complete and return them by 31st March 2024. These will be tracked by the Complaints Team until they have all been returned.

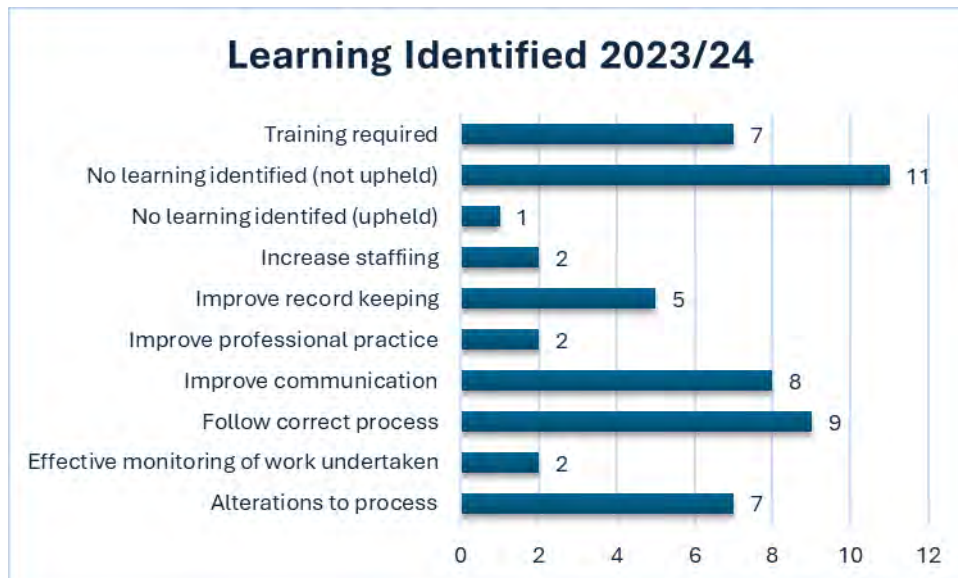


Fig. 10

- 13.2 As shown in Fig 10 above, the main area highlighted for improvement was to “Follow correct process” (9 issues) followed by “*Improve communication*” (8 issues). This is in line with the information above at 9.2.

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 spreadsheets and distributed to senior staff, so that this can be tracked by them and managers can comment on the differences that learning has made to practice.

- 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:

- **A complaint was received from a daughter of a service user, in relation to her mother’s discharge to a care home and not receiving information about long term social care support being chargeable.**

The Investigating Manager identified learning needs in relation to ensuring that charging notification documentation is provided to individuals and families and the importance of this action being clearly documented within case records before discharging service users into long term services.

The respective Team Manager arranged sessions with the Adult Social Care Team and a process map was also introduced to support the Team to incorporate this into practice. Since the response to this complaint we have seen a decrease in the number of issues being raised about this by complainants.

- **Another professional raised a complaint in reference to an Adult Social Care Team not responding to emails in a timely manner and not engaging in response to the issues that had been raised.**

The Investigating Manager identified that there was a lack of a timely response and poor communication. The findings of this complaint was shared with the respective members of staff for them to go through the learning and agree expectations for good communication moving forwards. The Manager apologised to the complainant for the lack of communication and the lack of response from the team.

- **A complaint was raised by a daughter in reference to services provided to her parent. Issues were raised about an assessment not being completed despite the family providing all the relevant financial information about the service users.**

It was identified that the complainant believed that an assessment was to be carried out in relation to the amount that her father would be charged. There had been an assumption that the complainant was aware of the full situation of their parents' case. The Manager identified that if workers had actually spoken to the service users' daughter, then we would have been able to provide a clear understanding of the situation and the Finance Team could have followed this up sooner with the relevant adult social care team to resolve the issue that had been raised.

The findings of this complaint were shared at the team meeting and staff were informed of the importance of not just responding to points raised in an email, but looking at the bigger picture, and not assuming the person has all the information they need.

- 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 2023/24 will have a positive impact on Adult Social Services providing services in 2024/25, as it has done in previous years.

Some examples of this are as follows:

- The Hospital Team were reminded of the importance of raising issues on behalf of an individual in circumstances where concerns had been raised about services provided by a commissioned care provider.

Workers were also informed to ensure they followed up any agreed actions/outcomes with the individual who raised the issues. This ensured that the care quality monitoring officers are be made aware of any such issues moving forwards and can act accordingly.

- Following the finding of a complaint investigation, members of staff within the Adults Disability & Autism Team were briefed in a team meeting about the Travel Assistance policy and ensuring that it is adhered to. This ensured that the Travel Assistance Policy was followed correctly and service users are advised accordingly.

- Further to an investigation carried out by the Mental Health Team it was identified that service users and their families were unsure of the Team’s role in respect to identifying placements.

Members of staff within the team were reminded about being clearer when discussing information about placements with individuals and their families. In a team meeting they were advised to share guidance with clients in respect to the Team’s role in finding placements. This ensures that clients are fully aware of the level of support the team can provide.

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. Any progress and learning is also 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 the Adults Social Care teams

14.1 322 compliments were received for Adults Social Care in 2023/24, this is a significant increase when compared with the 176 received in 2022/23.

Several of the compliments that were received in 2023/24 also involved services provided by two or more teams. This demonstrates how teams working together can have a very positive outcome for the person receiving the service. Fig 11 below shows a total of the individual compliments received for each service area.

Compliments received in 2023/24	
SMBC Care Home	25
Adult Social Work	235
Commissioning and Brokerage	11
Independent Providers	85
Grand Total	356

Fig. 11

- 14.2 The Hospital Social Work Team received the highest number of Adult Social Care compliments in 2023/24 (62), followed by the Occupational Therapy Team (52) and Reablement (39).
- 14.3 During 2023/24, Solihull Adults Social Care Services received 85 compliments in relation to the services provided by its commissioned providers, of which 24 were for Nationwide.
- 14.4 Below are some examples of the feedback that were received.

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

25/27/29 Stapleton Drive (Day Centre)

"I just wanted to pass on my sincere and heartfelt thanks to all the Stapleton team for the wonderful presents, fantastic buffet and the lovely get together they arranged for his birthday today. It was overwhelmingly emotional for me to see and feel all the love and support he has. Thank you all."

Older Adults Community Team

"We are writing to thank and commend the Social Worker for her hard work and support of our mum. She has been of invaluable assistance to our family at a difficult and distressing time, for which we are very grateful. She is a lovely caring person and a truly exemplary Social Worker; professional, knowledgeable and proficient, friendly, empathetic and dependable"

Reablement

"The support she has received has been amazing". She can't fault any of the girls, they have been so lovely, gentle, brilliant and have not got the cast wet and she was very grateful for all the help.

Occupational Therapy

"I just wanted to say big thank you for all your help with helping me get an application to Council to fit wet room. After 6 days work it is nearly all finished, by a very polite builder who has worked so hard. I am very pleased with the whole process. It looks absolutely brilliant."

Hospital Social Work Team

"As a family, we are on a difficult journey and my mums appointed Social Worker has been highly professional throughout, but more importantly he brought kindness, compassion and a great deal of common sense to a situation that presented a number of unexpected events. He was also very approachable and reliable in replying to messages. We feel that we were very lucky to have had him as our appointed Social Worker. We wish him well with his career."

First Point of Contact Team

"I would just like to thank you for all of your help and support towards him and myself. Without your intervention, we would still be struggling to find him support and you really have made a difference to his wellbeing"

Tanworth Court (commissioned provider)

"Thank you for the care and compassion shown to our mum during her time at Tanworth Court, in particular to the nurses and carers in her last few days, for showing warmth to us and our dad."

Adult Disability Team

"I cannot praise her enough, she has always been so easy to talk to, very supportive and listens to anything we want to discuss. She is very caring and made both myself and husband feel at ease from the first time we met her. She supported us for which we are thankful. I have met many social workers and she stands out as the best that we've had. I hope that she gets the recognition that she rightly deserves. "

Nationwide (Commissioned Provider)

"When doing my assessment the family expressed how satisfied and pleased they were with the care staff providing the HDS support. They expressed how professional and kind they have been, so much so that they want long term care with yourselves rather than returning to their previously self-funded provider"

14.6 Compliments from professionals by team

DoLS Team

"I wanted to say thank you so much for your input to the contract meeting yesterday and for taking the time to prepare, by contacting colleagues and team managers to get feedback. Your feedback is so valuable to help commissioning understand what is going on with providers on a day- to -day basis so thank you, I really appreciate it as does my manager."

Occupational Therapy

A trainer complimented OT staff in how they carried the training stating " They all showed a good understanding and contributed throughout. They also used their own personal experiences to relate to the training exercises"

Commissioning and Brokerage

She is an amazing and supportive person and is always responsive to any support and queries I have. She is always available to give advice and will do all she can to help, we are really grateful to have her as our Care Quality Monitoring Officer. She is always professional and we value and appreciate everything she does."

Hospital Social Work Team

"Thanks for all your support during this challenging discharge. I'm sending you strength and support as you continue with your role. You know where we are if you need us. I hope to work with you again in the future."

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 2023/24, the Complaints Team and Adults Social Care Services 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.

15.2 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.

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.

- 15.3 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.
- 15.4 Careful analysis of complaints made in relation to Adults Social Care 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 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 Customer feedback is sought following each complaint via an on-line questionnaire (also available on request in printed format) which has been developed and published on the Smart Survey website. Complainants/their representatives are invited to feedback their comments concerning their experience of the Complaints Procedure. This in turn, will feed into the learning and improvement process.

As part of this process the Council seeks to gather equality information from service users to help them check that we are treating people fairly and to identify any issues we might need to address. For the period of 2023/24 there were no equality issues identified.

- 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.

15.8.1 Feedback from Complainants

During 2023/24 the Complaints Team received the following feedback:

15.8.2 Feedback from Complainants

- Mrs X praised the notes made during a telephone conversation with the Complaints Team. Mrs X said that they were the most comprehensive and correct notes she had received since being involved with Social Care Services. She also complimented a member of staff for taking the time to listen to her and to trying to resolve the issues she had. She also said she knows that she talks a lot but at no point did she feel rushed or dismissed
- *“Thank you for taking the time to listen to me and allowing me to discuss my concerns. As I’m dyslexic, I find it difficult to put things in writing and being able to talk to someone has helped me feel that I’m not being dismissed and am being taken seriously.”*
- *“Thank you so much for all your help with this, this is an early Christmas present and mum will be relieved. Thank you so much I really appreciate it.”*

15.8.3 Feedback from professionals

- *“As with the previous set of minutes, your minutes are by far the best we have seen from any of the LA's and Trusts. Thank you so much, it makes our job easier and having the confidence that you will capture the conversations accurately means I can concentrate on chairing the meetings.”*
- *“thank you all for your service, you all do an amazing job...couldn't do it without you. I'll second that, 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 quarterly basis with the Chief Executive and Director being informed of all fault found outcomes, as they are received.

- 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 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 2024/25

- 17.1 During 2024/25, the 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 Complaints Team will also continue to provide high quality support to staff investigating complaints and those responding to any Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman investigations, as requested.
- 17.3 During 2024/25, the Smart Survey website which is used to collect information from complainants concerning the complaints procedure and equality information will be replaced by the corporate, "My Voice Solihull" system. The Complaints Team will, as part of this process, look at how they ask complainants about the accessibility of the complaints process and also revisit (in conjunction with the Council's Equality & Diversity Team) how they gather equality information from service users and we will use the insights to further improve the experiences for people accessing and utilising the complaints and compliments processes.

18. Conclusion

- 18.1 During 2023/24 the Complaints Team have, as always continued to work closely with Adults Social Care Services staff to ensure that 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 very low numbers of complaints investigated by the LGSCO. In 2023/24, there have been no fault found outcomes by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman 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 2024/25, the 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.