

Solihull Council Annual Complaints Report 2018/19

Adult Social Care



Annual Complaints & Compliments Report

Solihull's Adult Social Care Services

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 2018 to 31 March 2019.
- 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 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 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 Social Care 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 are put 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 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 Performance and Complaints Team's to record and monitor all complaints which relate directly to services provided across Adult Social Care.

4. A Summary of Complaints

- 4.1 During the 2018/19 financial year, Solihull's Adult Social Care Services received 58 new complaints. This is only one more than the 57 new complaints received in 2017/18.
- 4.2 Of these 58 new complaints, 36 were in relation to the Council's Adult Social Work teams, 16 were concerning commissioned providers, 5 were in relation to Adults Social Care Finance and 1 was for the Council's Commissioning Team.
- 4.3 The 16 new complaints concerning Solihull's commissioned providers (including residential and nursing homes and those providing care in the home), constitute a very slight decrease when compared to the 17 which were received in 2017/18. The number of commissioned provider complaints, as a percentage of the overall number of complaints received for Adults Social Care, has decreased from (17/57) 30% in 2017/18 to (16/58) 28% in 2018/19.

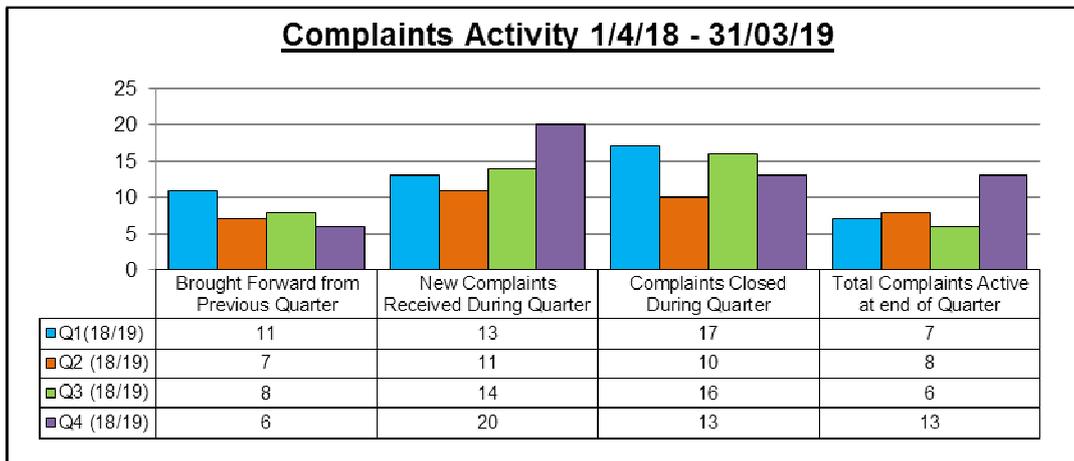


Fig. 1

4.4 Fig 1 above shows that the number of new complaints received in quarters 1, 2 and 3 were fairly consistent, however there was a significant increase in numbers during Quarter 4 (20); however as referred to in point 4.1, there was only 1 more complaint received during 2018/19 than the 57 received in 2017/18.

As a consequence of the higher number of complaints received in Quarter 4, there was a slight increase in the number of active complaints carried forward to 2018/19 (13) compared to those bought forward from 2017/18 (11).

How We Received Complaints

5.1 Clear information, advising service users about how they can make complaints, is provided on Solihull Council's website at www.solihull.gov.uk/About-the-Council/Complaints/adultcomplaints. There are details outlining a range of ways in which service users can raise their concerns or make a 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.

5.2 Figure 2 below shows that in 2018/19, the five methods by which Adult Social Care Services in Solihull received complaints were: e-mail 36%, telephone 26%, letter 24%, complaints leaflet 12% and 2% face - to - face. The number of initial contacts by email has slightly decreased in 2018/19; however this form of contact was still the most common. The figures also show that telephone contact was 26%, which is a significant decrease in comparison to 40% of contact in 2017/18.

Method	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Letter	20%	18%	24%
Email	46%	39%	36%
Complaints Leaflet	3%	4%	12%
Face to face/verbal	-	-	2%
Telephone	31%	40%	26%

Fig. 2

5.3 Complainants have continued to find it easier to use more direct and efficient methods, such as email to make their initial contact with the Performance and Complaints Team. This also provides complainants with written evidence of their

communication regarding their complaint; however follow up conversations between the team and the complainant give both parties the opportunity to discuss concerns and ask any questions, so that the Performance & Complaints Team can accurately reflect the issues being raised. This is also a good opportunity for the team to explain the complaints process directly to complainants.

- 5.4 The Performance and Complaints Team use a secure e-mail system to provide follow up communication to complainants wherever possible, which allows them to send confidential responses in a very efficient manner. Where complainants do not have an email address and hence this is not possible, complaint responses continue to be sent via the post; however this is a decreasing number.

6. Who Made Complaints?

- 6.1 During 2018/19, Solihull Council's Adult Social Care Services provided a service to 7464 service users (including carers) which is a slight decrease in comparison to 2017/18 (7604).

These are the number of people with whom Solihull Adults Social Care and Support have had some level of involvement. This includes safeguarding cases, DoLS (Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards) cases, clients and carers currently waiting to be assessed and also those assessed, who did not go on to receive a service.

- 6.2 As confirmed in 4.1, the new complaints received were from 58 (0.77%) of these service users. Females made up 64% of these complainants, whilst 36 % of complaints were received from males.

7. Risk Assessment of Complaints

- 7.1 The Performance and 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 Adult 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 has to take precedence. The complainant is then advised to return to the Performance and 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 service users receiving a homecare service, or living in residential or nursing homes, 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

to 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 Adult Social Care by Service Area/ Team

8.1 Figure 3 (below), shows a comparison of both new complaints and the number of accompanying issues for each service area/team, between 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Service Area	Number of Complaints 17-18	Number of Issues 17-18	Number of Complaints 18-19	Number of Issues 18-19
All Age Disability Team	2	7	4	27
Social Work Building Portfolio	1	1	-	-
Community Team - North	9	40	4	12
Community Team - South	5	16	7	17
Equipment and Wheelchair Services	1	1	1	1
One Front Door - Connect Services	2	3	1	1
One Front Door - Social Work Team	3	15	1	9
Hospital SW Team	5	33	13	38
Mental Health & Autism Team	3	7	2	7
Occupational Therapist Team	1	1	3	3
Reablement	1	1	-	-
Adult Social Care - Finance	6	33	5	21
Commissioning Team	1	1	1	1
Independent Providers	17	103	16	102
Grand Total	57	262	58	239

Fig. 3

8.2 Figure 3 shows that there was a small increase in the number of complaints; however there was a 9% decrease in the number of individual issues that were identified.

8.3 Complaints for the Hospital Team have significantly increased in 2018/19 and the appropriate learning aspects (16) have been identified from the respective complaints with the actions from the learning being implemented appropriately. This should help to ensure that where complaints have been upheld, the learning identified leads to an improvement in practice.

8.4 The numbers of new complaints for the Community Team - North has reduced significantly from 9 in 2017/18 to 4 in 2018/19; a 55% decrease. The number of issues has also significantly decreased from 40 in 2017/18 to 12 in 2018/19.

8.5 As identified in 4.3 above, commissioned provider complaints have very slightly decreased from 17 (2017/18) to 16 (2018/19). There has also been a minor decrease in the number of issues that have been raised.

8.6 The total number of complaints received in 2018/19 for Adults Social Work teams alone (36) has increased in comparison to the number of complaints received in 2017/18 (33); however the number of issues raised within these complaints have decreased from 125 (2017/18) to 115 (2018/19).

8.7 7 of the 58 new complaints received, included complaint issues which related to more than one service area.

8.8 4 of the new complaints received, included issues relating to both a Social Work Team and Adults Social Care Finance.

9. Categories of New Issues Raised within Complaints

9.1 As shown in figs 4 and 5 below, there were a total of 239 separate issues defined within the 58 new complaints received in 2018/19. There were 115 issues for the Adults Social Care teams and 21 for Adult Social Care Finance. The remaining individual issue was in relation to services provided by the Commissioning Team (shown in fig 4). 102 issues were raised for commissioned providers (as detailed in fig 5).

Type of Issues (Adult Social Care)	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
ADULT SOCIAL CARE					
Attitude or behaviour of Staff	1	2	3	0	6
Challenge to paying 3rd party top up			1		1
Correct staff not involved		2			2
Data Protection issue			1		1
Decision Making	2		6		8
Delayed assessment			1		1
Non delivery of expected / correct service	12	3	4	12	31
Dissatisfaction with care plan / assessment / review	3			2	5
Dissatisfaction with Direct Payment			1		1
Failure to respond / delay	1		1		2
Frequency / change / cost of service				1	1
Funding of care	1		1	6	8
Inappropriate /quality of service	3			1	4
Lack of involvement of family member with POA		2			2
Service declined / eligibility of criteria not met			1		1
Unsatisfactory communication	3	17	9	12	41
Total	26	26	29	34	115
ADULT SOCIAL CARE FINANCE					
Contesting Financial Assessment				2	2
Contesting invoice			1		1
Dissatisfaction with Direct Payment	1		3		4
Documentation / Confirmation not provided				1	1
Delivery / non delivery of service			3		3
Impact of LA policy / process on service user	1				1
Incorrect request for paperwork			1		1
Unsatisfactory communication			8		8
Total	2	0	16	3	21
COMMISSIONING TEAM					
Non delivery of expected / correct service				1	1
Total	0	1	0	1	1
Grand Total	28	27	45	38	137

Fig 4

9.2 Fig 4 above shows that the two main areas of complaint for the Adult Social Work teams were unsatisfactory communication (41), Non delivery of expected/ correct service (31).

9.3 Fig 5 below shows that during 2018/19, the two main areas of complaint for commissioned providers were poor quality of care and attitude/behaviour of staff. Poor quality of care issues (32) have significantly increased when compared to the number of issues received during 2017/18 (16). The number of issues concerning attitude & behaviour of staff has also slightly increased to 18 from 13 in 2017/18, although the number of both issues has declined at the end of the year. Due to the nature of the work carried out by commissioned providers, it is unsurprising that complaints for this area of work carry a high number of issues concerning poor quality of care.

Type of Issues (Independent Provider)	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Grand Total
Attitude or behaviour of staff	12	1	4	1	18
Change of carer		1	2		3
Data Protection issue	1				1
Non delivery of expected/ correct service				4	4
Dissatisfaction with service provision	3			4	7
Falsifying of records		1			1
Incorrect time of service call		5	3	5	13
Lack of staff	4				4
Missed medication / Wrongly administered		2		1	3
Poor communication	4	1	1	3	9
Poor quality of care	14	1	14	3	32
Poor security measures		1	2		3
Service call not provided		2		2	4
Grand Total	38	15	26	23	102

Fig. 5

9.4 The Performance & 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 by the completion of an Action Plan. The action plans are then monitored by the appropriate Care Quality Monitoring Officer. Poor Communication issues (9) have decreased in comparison to the 16 issues identified in 2017/18 which suggests that learning implemented in this area has had a positive impact

9.5 As outlined at 3.1 above all complaints are dealt with via either the Statutory or Corporate complaints procedure.

Types of new complaint issues	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Grand Total
Corporate	3	0	11	1	15
Statutory	63	41	60	60	224
Grand Total	66	41	71	61	239

Fig. 6

- 9.6 94% (224) of the new complaint issues received in 2018/19, were progressed through the Statutory Complaints process and 15 via the Corporate process as identified in fig 6, above.
- 9.7 In line with the Council’s legal obligations under Part 7 of the Immigration Act 2016, the Council’s complaint 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 on the quality of staff employed in Adults Services.

10. Outcomes of complaint issues

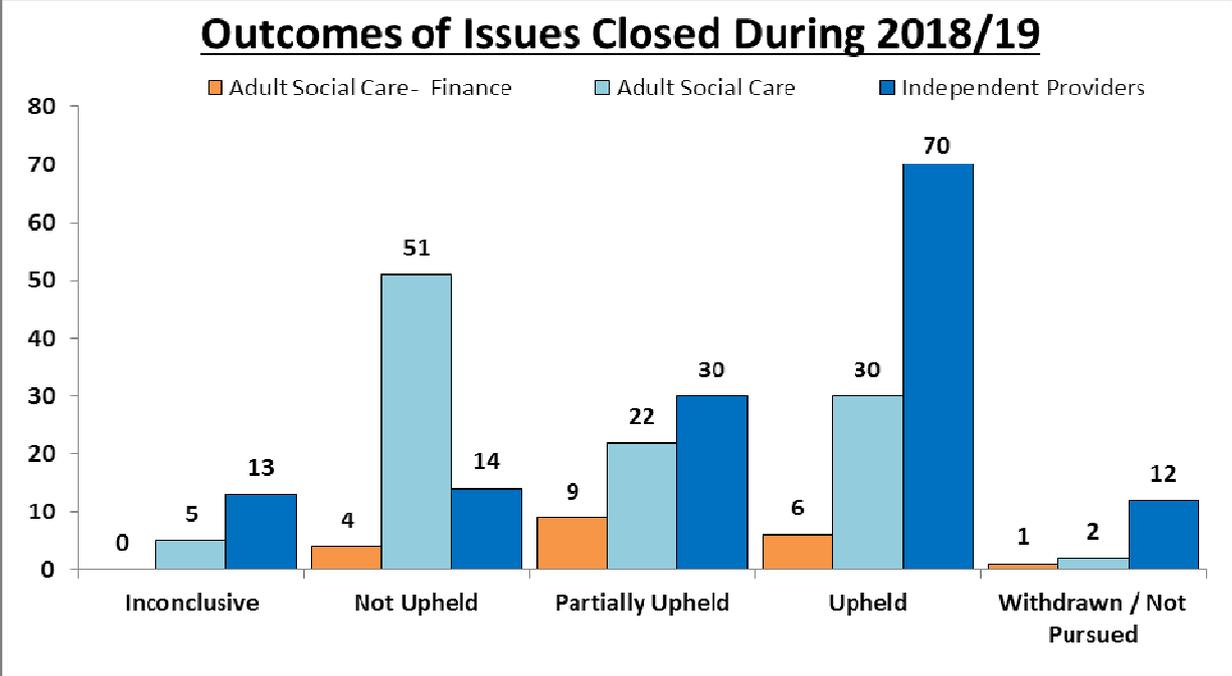


Fig. 7

- 10.1 As shown in Fig 7 above, there were 269 issues investigated and responded to during 2018/19. These outcomes were identified from 56 complaints that were investigated and closed in 2018/19. 106 issues were upheld, 61 were partially upheld, 69 were not upheld and 18 were found to be inconclusive. The remaining 15 issues were withdrawn (not pursued by the complainant).
- 10.2 Although the percentage of upheld or partially upheld issues has slightly increased in 2018/19, 66% (167/254); the actual number of issues upheld and partially upheld has decreased from 169 in 2018/19 to 167. These issues are spread across a number of different service areas. The respective learning has been identified in response to these issues and will continue to be monitored by the Performance and Complaints Team through to implementation, in order that service areas learn from their complaints and improve service delivery as a result of the concerns raised.

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 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 all responses.

Complaints Handling Response Times						
Working Days to Respond	Adult Social Care (Social Work) 2018/19		Adult Social Care (Finance) 2018/19		Independent Provider 2018/19	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0 - 30	29	91%	4	100%	4	22%
31 - 40	2	6%	-	-	6	33%
40+	1	3%	-	-	8	45%
Withdrawn	1	-	-	-	1	-

Fig. 8

11.3 91% (29/32) complaints regarding Adults Social Work teams, investigated in 2018/19 were closed within the Council's internal 30 working day timescale, compared to 77% in 2017/18.

11.4 100% (4/4) Adult Social Care Finance complaints investigated in 2018/19 were closed within the 30 working day timescale.

11.5 The number of commissioned provider complaints resolved within 30 working days has increased from 14% in 2017/18 to 22% in 2018/19. Some of the issues raised in 2018/19 have been complex and as commissioned provider staff are at "arm's length", rather than being internal Council staff, it can sometimes take the Complaints Team longer to liaise with them to ensure a quality response; however timescales are gradually improving.

11.6 The Assistant Director for Performance, Planning and Commissioning reads all responses in relation to commissioned providers and will raise questions where applicable, in order to ensure all provider 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 the Commissioning Team can work with providers to improve their practice.

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

11.8 The Performance and Complaints Team will continue to work with the Commissioning Team and providers in 2019/20, to do everything possible to improve response times, whilst maintaining the quality of responses.

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

12.1 During 2018/19, Adult Social Care Services received only 1 new contact from the Ombudsman, compared to 8 in 2017/18 and 5 in 2016/17.

12.2 Three Local Government Ombudsman complaints were brought forward from 2017/18 and were all completed in 2018/19. One of these complaints was in relation to a commissioned provider and was classed as premature referral to the LGSCO, one was in relation to a Social Work Review for which fault was found and the recommended remedy was an apology and the other was in relation to information regarding contributions to care, where fault was found and the recommended remedy was a partial waiver of fees and a time and trouble payment.

12.4 As outlined above, there was only one new complaint received from the LGSCO in 2018/19 and the outcome of this was as follows:

Outcome	Adults Social Care Team
1 new complaint was received in Qtr 1 and Closed in Qtr 3 - OUTCOME: Fault found - Reimburse £2326 plus £250 Time and Trouble	Support Plannig - North

Fig. 9

12.5 There were therefore no open complaints being investigated by the LGSCO at the end of 2018/19.

12.6 Over the last few years, the quality of complaint responses in Solihull has improved and the number of cases referred to the Ombudsman, where Solihull Council has been found at fault, has declined considerably. 2018/19 has been an excellent year with only one complaint being investigated by the LGSCO.

13. Learning from Complaints

13.1 79% of distributed learning forms were completed and returned in 2018/19. Data regarding the implementation of learning in 2018/19 has been formatted into spreadsheets 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 Performance and Complaints Team and is available to inform improvements to practice.

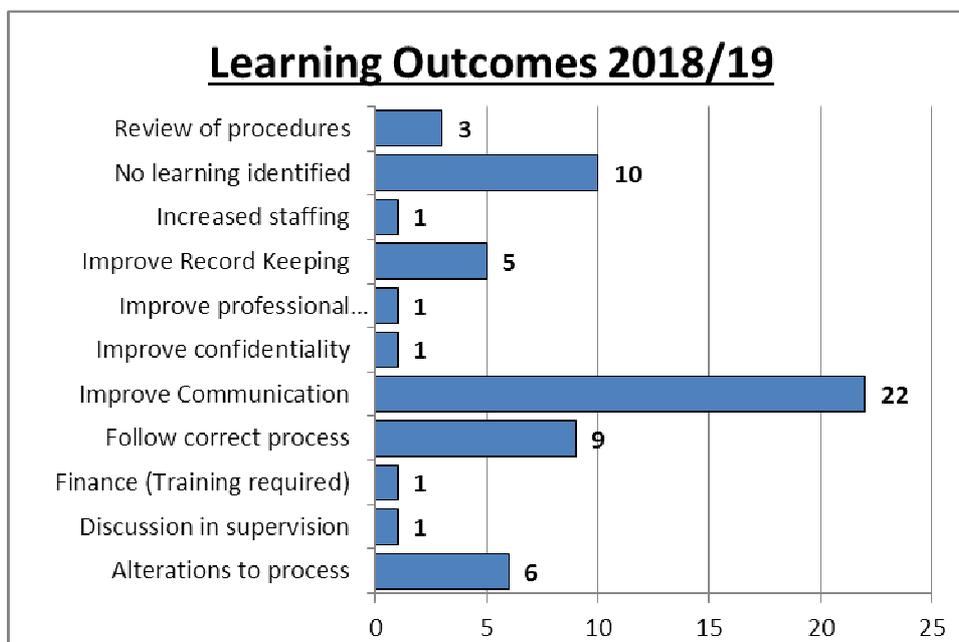


Fig. 10

13.1 As shown above in Fig 10, the main area highlighted for improvement was to improve communication (22 issues). This learning reflects that the highest number of complaint issues received in 2018/19 were in relation to unsatisfactory communication (see fig 4 above in section 9.1). Numbers in respect to this issue have however declined in 2018/19; showing the impact of learning. This is an area which Adults Social Care continues to focus on and strive to improve.

13.2 Other areas for improvement that have been highlighted include the need for the correct process to be followed and also for alterations to process to be made; although numbers of these are small.

13.3 Below are some examples of the types of learning that have been put into place and therefore used to inform service improvements. This demonstrates that Solihull Council learns from complaints:

- *A complaint was received from a wife on behalf of her husband. The complaint was raised about her and her husband not being provided with details in respect to how much her husband would be expected to pay towards the cost of his care*

Further to investigating the concerns raised, staff members were advised to attend a financial briefing. This ensured that staff were provided with the relevant financial information and they fully understood the specific financial information they should be providing to service users and their families.

- *A mother of a service user made a complaint about communication in respect to dealing with her son's Direct Payments. Concerns were raised about the family sending in relevant receipts and they did not receive any acknowledgment or an update in respect to the information they provided.*

In response to this complaint, this matter was discussed within a Team Meeting. Members of staff were advised and reminded of the importance to respond to service users and families in a timely manner and if for any reason they are not

able to respond, they must ensure that a member of the team responds on their behalf.

- *A complaint was received from the son of a service user regarding the timing of an assessment for his mother and the finances surrounding this.*

Further to the investigation, the assessment procedures for residential services for Adult Social Care charging were reviewed for the length of time taken to assess. Process improvements have been put in place.

14. Compliments for Adults Social Care & Support

14.1 158 compliments were received in 2018/19 compared to 107 in 2017/18. 3 of these compliments involved services provided by two different teams, which demonstrates how teams working together can have a very positive outcome for the person receiving the service.

Team	
137/222 Bills Lane	2
Adult Care & Support	1
All Age Disability Team	12
All ASC Services	1
Better Living Centre / Equipment and Wheelchair Services	9
Commissioning Team	1
Community Team - North	8
Community Team - South	4
CREST Team	1
DoLS Team	3
FPOC -Social Work	2
Greenacres Day Service	1
Hospital SW Team	13
Mental Health and Autism Team	1
Oak Trees Day Centre	3
Occupational Therapy Team	12
One Front Door - Social Work Team	6
Park View Day Services	1
Reablement Team	55
Round Mead Day Team	3
SEND 0-25 Team	2
Independent Providers	20
Grand Total	161

Fig. 11

14.2 The Reablement Team received the highest number of Adult Social Care compliments in 2018/19 (55), followed by the Hospital Social Work Team (13).

14.3 During 2018/19 we received 20 compliments in respect to services provided by independent providers

14.4 Below are some examples of the feedback received by Adult Services:

14.5.1 Service User compliments

Reablement Team

Mr x rang to say that his mother is going into respite for two weeks and could we put the service on hold. Mr x stated "Thank you to the carers for their amazing help and the excellent service they provided."

Occupational Therapy Team

" I would like to say thank you for the care and attention you gave to my husband over the past few years. My husband passed away on xx March 2019. The last two years with vascular dementia, I have nursed him till the end and was with him when he passed peacefully 3 weeks from his 91st birthday. You always helped me and I am very grateful, bless you"

Hospital Social Work Team

Mrs X wrote to a member of staff and stated "On behalf of my mother and her family I would like to thank you for everything you did to get mum into a nursing home. The home is ideal for mum, she is very happy there and looking better. Thank you once again"

All Age Disability Team

Mrs X stated to member of staff "Thank you for the support from you this year. You have been extremely supportive during this time. You have been firm and clear but also very fair. This provided the opportunity for everyone to be open about concerns whilst trying to maintain a relationship between ourselves and the provider, which isn't the easiest thing to do at a time of high anxiety on our part. We would not be in the position we are now without your skills and expertise.

One Front Door – SW Team

A husband of a service user stated "I very grateful to for all the support you provided to me when my wife was placed at the care home earlier in the year. You are very kind, good and helpful. You are a brilliant lady who helped me at a very difficult time."

DoLS Team

"I am very impressed with the DoLS Team. Right from my initial contact when I was in the middle of all the mess they have been nothing but helpful, clear and empathic. They kept me in the loop regarding the process including when they were arranging a visit to see my mum and also after the visit."

Community Team South

"I would like to place on record my thanks and appreciation for all the sterling work your department put in on behalf of my wife. Our allocated Social Worker, saw us through to the day when my wife was accepted into the care home, where she has settled nicely. The Social Worker's work was effective and I am very grateful for all her efforts. She is pleasant to work with and dealt with my

wife very sensitively. So a big 'Thank You'. I also wish to extend my thanks to all those whom I dealt with"

14.5.2 Professional compliments

Mental Health and Autism Team

"The team have been fantastic, your openness to discussion and support has been second to none. The willingness between us as a team has not only led to great working relationships, but for better care being provided. So to you all a big thank you"

Park View Day Services

A Care manager from a provider stated "you are the most supportive and person centred of all the day services we have worked with."

Community Team North

Mrs R thanked a Social Worker for the support she provided through the Safeguarding process. She said she was very impressed with her gentleness and her approach to supporting her through the process.

Equipment and Wheelchair Services

Mrs N passed on her compliment to the Equipment and Wheelchair Service. She said the service went above and beyond to help resolve a customer's problem. Mrs N said after receiving a call from a very distressed service user who had broken her tri walker, which she relies on to get out and about, she sought advice from the relevant Duty Team. A driver agreed to take a walker to the lady on his way home from work. Mrs N relayed this information to the service user. She was over the moon when she was told she would be receiving a replacement walker.

14.6 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 2018/19 the Performance and Complaints Team and Adult Social Care teams have continued to work very well together, aiming to ensure that timescales are met and high quality responses are provided for complainants, in order to ensure that we consistently deliver high standards in complaints processing.

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. Where at all possible, concerns are resolved outside of the formal complaints process with the agreement of the complainant which often expedites resolution for the complainant.

- 15.3 The quality of complaint responses is high, aided by the quality checking process between the Performance and Complaints Team and Adults Social Care teams and reminders are sent to investigating managers regarding the due dates for responses. The quality of responses provided by the Council has helped to maintain a low level of referrals to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman, as highlighted in Section 12 above.
- 15.4 Careful analysis of complaints made in relation to Adult's Social Work Services continues to ensure that complaints are pursued through the correct complaints procedure.
- 15.5 Following completion of the complaints process, the Performance and 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 Performance and Complaints Team use a well organised records management system which has proved to be a very efficient way of recording complaints detail and ensures swift responses to both complainants and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. It also ensures that any member of the Performance and 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 on the Survey Monkey website so that if they wish, they can feedback their comments concerning their experience of the Complaints Procedure. This in turn feeds 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 2018/2019 there were no equality issues identified
- 15.8 The Performance and Complaints Team have received compliments from customers and internal staff regarding the nature of their customer contact and their helpfulness when dealing with complaints as shown below.

15.9 Compliments from complainants

"My profound thanks to you for all your help and support you have given me over the past months... you are a credit to your profession and the empathy you have shown, priceless."

Ms x said that she was grateful that someone had taken the time to actually read her letter and to understand why she had concerns. She complimented a member of the Complaints Team on the way that the complaints had been captured. Ms x thanked the team member for the letter.

During her request to escalate her complaint, Ms x complimented a member of the Complaints Team on her patience and taking the time to speak with her. She said the team member was very patient and did a very good job

“Thank you for your comprehensive response to my complaint. I am encouraged that you will be taking up the issues raised in this complaint to enhance practice.”

15.10 Compliments from internal staff

I wanted to say an extra ‘thank you’ at the year-end for all the brilliant work you have done for us... and I’m sure will continue through 2019. As you heard from all DLT colleagues, your input and expertise is very valued indeed. Thank you, it’s a pleasure to continue working with you.

16. Reporting on Complaints

- 16.1 The reporting process to senior management continues to be an established and very important part of the complaints procedure. Where improvements 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.
- 16.2 Reports for assistant directors and individual heads of service are produced monthly. These live complaints reports enable heads of service and the assistant directors for both Adults Social Care 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.
- 16.3 Quarterly complaints reports for the Directorate Leadership Team, detail activity and performance, categories of complaint and learning and outcomes by service area and team, which highlight any emerging trends. This ensures that managers can identify trends and again intervene early if a problem is highlighted. Reports also include percentages of complaints received under each process, along with related response timescales.
- 16.4 Ombudsman activity / responses are also reported to DLT on a monthly basis.
- 16.5 Compliments and complaints data is also fed into quarterly, Quality Assurance Board meetings, which include the Assistant Director for Adults Social Care and heads of service and information from complaints and learning feed into these.
- 16.6 During 2018/19, the Performance and Complaints Team has provided 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 2019/20

- 17.1 During 2019/20 the Performance and Complaints Team will continue to work closely with all commissioned providers and the Commissioning Team, in order to continue to improve timescales for responding to their complaints and in order that more responses fall within the Council’s 30 working day response timescale.

18. Conclusion

- 18.1 During 2018/19 the Performance and Complaints Team have continued to work closely with Children's Services staff to ensure that as many responses as possible meet 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 numbers of complaints investigated by the LGSCO. In 2018/19 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 reporting to senior management has continued, so that any concerns are highlighted and subsequent actions taken. In 2018/19 the Performance & Complaints Team has provided more detail in the specific breakdown of complaint issues which means that learning is even more focussed and hence has a bigger impact on service improvement.
- 18.4 The Performance and Complaints Team will continue to work with commissioned providers and the Assistant Director for Commissioning to ensure that the quality of their complaint responses is high and that the Assistant Director is aware of the nature of the complaints being made. The Assistant Director continues to be proactive in asking further questions regarding these complaints, as necessary.
- 18.5 During 2019/20, the Performance and Complaints Team will continue, as always to review its practice in accordance with feedback from both complainants and Adults Social Care Services and then work with managers and staff to make any changes that are essential to enhance the experience of complainants in Solihull.

May 2019