

# Solihull Council Annual Complaints Report 2019/20

## Adult Social Care Services



# Annual Complaints & Compliments Report Solihull's Adult Social Care Services

1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020

## 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 2019 to 31 March 2020.
- 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 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.

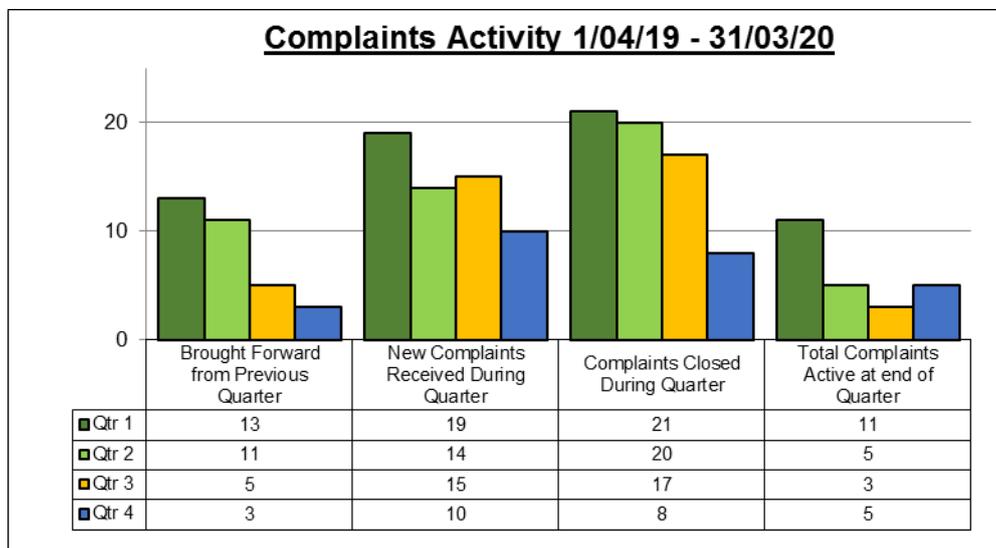
## **3. Statutory and Corporate Complaints**

- 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 Adults Social Care.

## **4. A Summary of Complaints**

- 4.1 During the 2019/20 financial year, Solihull's Adult Social Care Services received 58 new complaints. This is consistent with the 58 new complaints received in 2018/19.
- 4.2 Of these 58 new complaints, 29 were in relation to the Council's Adult Social Work teams (compared to 36 in 2018/19), 21 were concerning commissioned providers, 5 were in relation to Adults Social Care Finance and 3 were for the Council's ASC Commissioning Team.
- 4.3 The 21 new complaints concerning Solihull's commissioned providers (which include residential and nursing homes and those providing care in the home) is an increase of 31% when compared to the 16 which were received in 2018/19. The number of commissioned provider complaints, as a percentage of the overall number of complaints received for Adults Social Care, has increased from 28% (16/58) in 2018/19 to 36% (21/58) in 2019/20.

Although this type of complaint has increased, this may be viewed as a positive and an indication that the Council’s complaints process is being used appropriately by commissioned providers and people using their services. Having only 21 complaints from all people using these services would still indicate a high satisfaction rate overall.



**Fig. 1**

4.4 Fig 1 above shows the number of new complaints received in 2019/20 (58) per quarter. The highest number of new complaints were received in Quarter 1 (19) with the lowest in Quarter 4 (10) almost half the number of those received in Quarter 1.

4.5 The end of the reporting period covered by this report saw the beginnings of the COVID 19 pandemic and hence the issues associated with this for Solihull Adults Social Care. As at the 31 March 2020 there had been no concerns raised to the Performance & Complaints Team regarding shortfalls in service or formal complaints made as a result of this.

### **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](http://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.

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 2019/20, the five methods by which Adult Social Care Services in Solihull received complaints were: e-mail 58%, telephone 17%, letter 15% and complaints leaflet 10%. The number of initial contacts by email has increased significantly in 2019/20 and has continued to be the most common form of contact. The figures also show that only 15% of contacts made were by letter, which is a decrease in comparison to 24% in 2018/19. Complainants are continuing to switch to more modern and efficient methods of contact.

Method	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Email	39%	36%	58%
Telephone	40%	26%	17%
Letter	18%	24%	15%
Complaints Leaflet	4%	12%	10%
Face to face/verbal	-	2%	-

**Fig. 2**

5.3 The increase in email contact has helped the Complaints Team to capture complaint issues more accurately in a more efficient timescale, due to the specific detail outlined by the complainant at the first point of contact. Email contact also provides complainants with written evidence of their communication regarding their complaint which is something that appears to reassure them.

Follow up conversations, where necessary, between the 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 has also assisted the Performance & Complaints Team to accurately reflect the issues being raised and therefore obtain good quality responses from investigating managers.

5.4 The Performance & Complaints Team continue to 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 the need for this form of response continues to decrease.

**6. Who Made Complaints?**

6.1 During 2019/20, Solihull Council’s Adult Social Care Services provided a service to 7216 service users (including carers) which is a slight decrease in comparison to 2018/19 (7464).

These are the number of people with whom Solihull Adults Social Care and Support have had some level of involvement. This includes both safeguarding and 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 The new complaints received (58) were therefore from only 0.8% of these people. Females made up 61% of these complainants, whilst 39% of complaints were received from males.

## **7. Risk Assessment of Complaints**

- 7.1 The Performance & 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 & 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 Adult Social Care by Service Area/ Team**

- 8.1 Figure 3 (below) shows a comparison of both new complaints and the number of associated issues for each service area/team, in 2018/19 and 2019/20.

Service Area	Number of Complaints 18- 19	Number of Issues 18-19	Number of Complaints 19- 20	Number of Issues 19-20
All Age Disability Team	4	27	2	12
Community Team – North	4	12	1	3
Community Team – South	7	17	3	4
Equipment and Wheelchair Services	1	1	2	4
Older Adults Community Team			5	11
One Front Door - Connect Services	1	1	0	0
One Front Door - Social Work Team	1	9	3	3
Hospital SW Team	13	38	6	29
Mental Health & Autism Team	2	7	1	1
Occupational Therapist Team	3	3	3	7
Reablement Team	0	0	1	1
SEND 0-25 Team (Transitions)	0	0	2	10
Steps Team	0	0	1	3
<b>ADULT SOCIAL CARE TOTALS</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>30*</b>	<b>88</b>
Adult Social Care – Finance	5	21	5	20
Brokerage / Commissioning Team	1	1	3	15
<b>Independent Providers</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>21*</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>59*</b>	<b>238</b>

**Fig. 3**

\* One of the complaints received in 2019/20 raised issues for both a commissioned provider and a Social Work Team

- 8.2 Figure 3 shows a consistency between the total number of both complaints and issues received during 2018/19 and 2019/20, although numbers of complaints for each team have changed from year to year.
- 8.3 Complaints for the Hospital Team have more than halved from 13 (2018/19) to 6 (2019/20). This also coincides with a decrease of issues from 38 in 2018/19 to 29 in 2019/20
- 8.4 As outlined above at 4.3, the Council received 21 new complaints concerning commissioned providers in 2019/20 and this is a 31% increase in comparison to the 16 received during 2018/19; however this is still a relatively small number of complaints, when compared to the number of people accessing these services.
- 8.5 Complaints for the North and South Community Teams have reduced significantly; however a restructure within Adults Social Care Services during 2019/20, meant that the North and South Community teams were combined to form the Older Adults Community Team; itself which received 5 complaints during 2019/20.
- 8.6 The total number of complaints received in 2019/20 for the Adults Social Work teams alone (30) has decreased by 17% in comparison to the number of complaints received in 2018/19 (36). The number of issues have decreased significantly from 115 (2018/19) to 88 (2019/20).

## 9. Categories of New Issues Raised within Complaints

- 9.1 As shown in figs 4 and 5 below, there were a total of 238 separate issues defined within the 58 new complaints received in 2019/20. Fig 4 also shows that there were 88 issues for the Adults Social Care teams and 20 for Adult Social Care Finance. The remaining individual issue was in relation to services provided by the Brokerage and Commissioning Team (15). 115 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
<b>ADULT SOCIAL CARE</b>					
Attitude or behaviour of Staff	1	1	16	2	20
Decision Making	5	-	2	-	7
Delayed assessment	-	-	1	-	1
Non delivery of expected / correct service	5	3	11	3	22
Dissatisfaction with care plan/assessment/review	2	3	-	-	5
Dissatisfaction with Direct Payment	1	-	-	1	2
Failure to respond/delay	2	-	-	-	2
Funding of care	-	-	1	-	1
Funding of care not clarified	-	-	1	4	5
Inappropriate/quality of service	-	1	-	-	1
Lack of involvement of family member with POA	2	-	-	-	2
Unsatisfactory communication	10	1	6	3	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>ADULT SOCIAL CARE FINANCE</b>					
Attitude or behaviour of staff	-	2	-	-	2
Contesting Financial Assessment	-	3	-	2	5
Contesting debt collection action	-	2	-	-	2
Contesting invoice	-	1	-	-	1
Data Protection issue	-	1	-	-	1
Delay in carrying out assessment	1	-	-	-	1
Documentation/ Confirmation not provided	-	2	-	-	2
Funding of care	-	-	1	-	1
Quality of Invoice	-	1	-	-	1
Unsatisfactory communication	-	3	-	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>BROKERAGE AND COMMISSIONING TEAM</b>					
Attitude or behaviour of staff	3	-	-	-	3
Data Protection Issue	1	-	-	-	1
Non delivery of expected / correct service	2	-	2	-	4
Failure to respond/delay	1	-	-	-	1
Unsatisfactory Communication	5	-	1	-	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>123</b>

Fig. 4

9.2 Fig 4 above shows that the three main areas of complaint for the Adult Social Work teams were; non delivery of expected/ correct service (22 issues received) and unsatisfactory communication and attitude or behaviour of staff (both for which 20 issues were received). These issues combined total 70% (62/88) of the overall number of new issues received in 2019/20 and are the common cause of most complaints, not just those received in Adults Social Care.

The increase in numbers during Quarter 3 for attitude or behaviour of Staff and non-delivery of expected / correct service was due in particular to the receipt of 2 particular complaints which were broken down into several different issues.

Numbers of issues in the 3 categories discussed above then all significantly decreased in Quarter 4. It should be noted that these issues raised by complainants then need to be matched with their outcomes, i.e. upheld, not upheld etc. (see section 10 below) for an overall picture of the complaint.

Type of Issues ( Independent Provider)	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Grand Total
Attitude or behaviour of staff	8	9	5	12	34
Data Protection issue	-	-	1	4	5
Non delivery of expected / correct service	-	-	2	34	36
Delay in service being provided	3	1	-	-	4
Delayed Assessment	-	-	-	1	1
Dissatisfaction with Assessment process	-	-	1	-	1
Dissatisfaction with service provision	-	-	-	2	2
Failure to respond/delay	-	-	-	1	1
Falsifying of records	-	-	1	-	1
Incorrect time of service call	1	-	-	-	1
Issues with key safe	-	-	1	-	1
Missed medication/ Wrongly administered	-	-	2	-	2
Missed Service Call	-	-	1	-	1
Personal items gone missing	-	4	-	-	4
Poor communication	4	4	-	-	8
Poor quality of care	-	6	-	3	9
Service call not provided	1	3	-	-	4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>115</b>

**Fig. 5**

9.3 Fig 5 above shows that during 2019/20, the two main areas of complaint regarding commissioned providers were; non delivery of expected / correct service (36) and attitude or behaviour of staff (34). The increase in numbers during Quarter 4 for these areas of complaint was due in particular to 1 complaint rather than multiple complaints about the same concerns.

Performance reports to senior managers include further detail concerning these types of issues so that any emerging trends or themes can be highlighted and responded to appropriately.

9.4 It should be noted that complaints regarding delays in service, incorrect time of service call, poor communication and poor quality of service, which in previous years have been the main areas of complaint, are now very low.

Poor quality of care issues (9) have decreased considerably in comparison to the 32 issues identified in 2018/19. Incorrect time of service call issues have also decreased from 13 in 2018/19 to 1 in 2019/20.

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.

The positive improvements outlined at 9.4 above suggest that the learning identified by commissioned providers which has then been acted upon and implemented in these areas, has been very effective and has reduced the number of complaints issues raised in these areas.

<b>Issues v Complaints Procedure</b>					
<b>Types of new complaint issues</b>	<b>Qtr 1</b>	<b>Qtr 2</b>	<b>Qtr 3</b>	<b>Qtr 4</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
<b>Statutory</b>	51	51	54	70	226
<b>Corporate</b>	7	-	2	3	12
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>238</b>

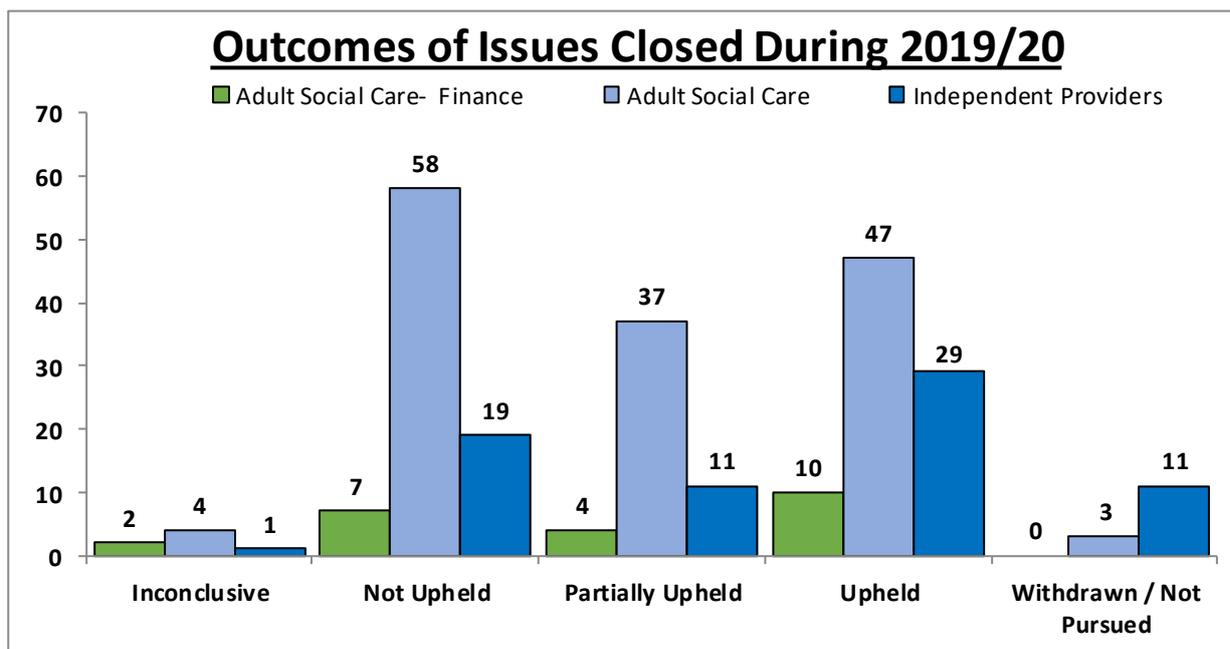
*Fig. 6*

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

9.7 As shown at fig 6 above, 95% (226) of the new complaint issues received in 2019/20 were progressed through the Statutory Complaints process and 5% via the Corporate process as identified.

9.8 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 regarding 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 229 issues investigated and responded to during 2019/20. These outcomes were identified from 62 complaint investigations which were completed and closed in 2019/20 (some of these are investigations that were ongoing and brought forward from 2018/19). 86 issues were upheld, 52 were partially upheld, 84 were not upheld and 7 were found to be inconclusive. The remaining 14 issues were withdrawn at some point (not pursued by the complainant).

10.2 The percentage of upheld or partially upheld issues has slightly decreased from 66% in 2018/19 to 60% in 2019/20. The actual number of issues upheld and partially upheld have also decreased from 167 in 2018/19 to 138. 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) 2019/20		Adult Social Care (Finance) 2019/20		Independent Provider 2019/20	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0-30	33	87%	7	100%	10	55%
31 - 40	3	8%	-	-	5	28%
41+	2	5%	-	-	3	17%
Withdrawn	1	-	-	-	2	-

**Fig. 8**

11.3 87% (33/38) complaints investigated in 2019/20 regarding Adults Social Work teams were closed within the Council's internal 30 working day timescale, compared to 91% (29/32) in 2018/19. Although the percentage of responses carried out within the 30 working day timescale has slightly decreased, the number of responses within this timescale has increased. 3 of the 5 responses falling outside of the 30 working day timescale were completed in under 40 working days and all were responded to within 53 working days, being well within the 6 month statutory response timescale.

11.4 100% (7/7) Adult Social Care Finance complaints investigated in 2019/20 were closed within the 30 working day timescale.

11.5 The number of commissioned provider complaints resolved within 30 working days has significantly increased from 22% in 2018/19 to 55% in 2019/20. This increase shows that in 2019/20, the Performance & Complaints Team, independent providers and Assistant Director for Commissioning have all worked together, endeavoured to ensure that more complaint responses have been carried out within 30 working days.

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 of these 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 & Complaints Team will continue to work with the Commissioning Team and providers in 2020/21, to do everything possible to ensure that response times continue to improve.

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

- 12.1 During 2019/20, Solihull Adult Social Care Services received 7 new referrals from the Local Government Ombudsman compared to 1 in 2018/19 and 8 in 2017/18.
- 12.2 There were no Local Government Ombudsman investigations brought forward from 2018/19.
- 12.3 Of the 7 new referrals received from the LGSCO in 2019/20, 3 were closed with no investigation deemed necessary by the Ombudsman. Investigations were open by the Ombudsman in relation to the other 4 referrals, with 1 being completed by the end of 2019/20. The outcome of this was as follows:

Outcome	Adults Social Care Team
1 new complaint was received in Qtr 2 and closed, following investigation, in Qtr 3 -  <u>OUTCOME: FAULT FOUND</u> - maladministration & service failure	Mental Health Team

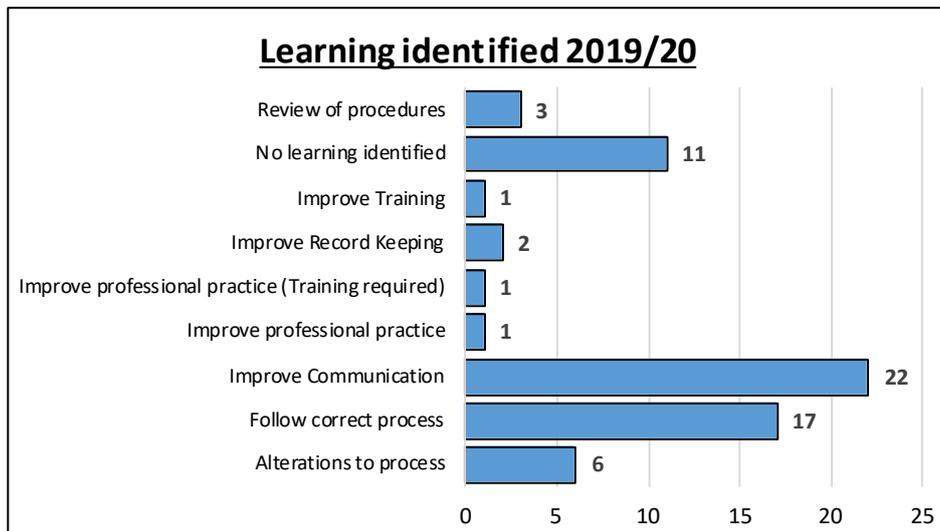
**Fig. 9**

- 12.4 There were therefore 3 complaints still being investigated by the LGSCO at the end of 2019/20 and which were carried forward to 2020/21.
- 12.5 The quality of complaint responses in Solihull has improved greatly over the last few years which appears to correlate with a decline in the number of cases referred to the Ombudsman, where Solihull Council has been found at fault.

## 13. Learning from Complaints

- 13.1 96% of the learning forms sent to investigating managers, following an investigation were completed and returned in 2019/20. There were only 3 forms outstanding at the end of the year (1 of which was sent out right at the end of 2019/20 and 2 of which have since been returned to the Performance & Complaints Team).

Data regarding the implementation of learning in 2019/20 is 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 Performance & Complaints Team and demonstrates the impact of those improvements on services provided.



**Fig. 10**

13.2 As shown above in Fig 10, the main area highlighted for improvement was to improve communication (22 issues). The number of complaint issues raised concerning communication has decreased significantly during 2019/20 and the learning highlighted this year should ensure that this continues.

Improving communication constituted 41% (22/53) of the learning issues that were identified and this is key to reducing the number of complaints raised in this area. Excellent communication by staff, aids understanding for people using services and will often (although not always) prevent the need for a complaint to be made.

13.3 The learning highlighted regarding following the correct process should have a positive impact on the number of concerns raised in 2020/21, regarding non delivery of expected/ correct service (see fig 4 above in section 9.1).

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

- **One complaint involved a service user raising issues about the delivery of equipment that had been ordered. The equipment was not delivered and there was no message to provide an explanation for the non-delivery or delay.**

In response to the issues raised, workshops were introduced for members of staff. This helped to improve customer service and to ensure that when there is a delay in providing equipment, updates regarding any potential delays/non-delivery is communicated to service users.

The introduction of workshops also identified ways to improve the service and to ensure good communication between the service area and people using their services.

- **A member of the public made a complaint in relation to seeking information for her son who has Autism. The Council's Internet pages gave outdated advice in respect to contacting a specific service even though it had closed. Leaflets were also still available, even though the service had closed.**

The issues that arose were discussed and actions were put into place to ensure that information is updated accordingly when there are significant service changes (e.g. closures). These actions also contributed to discussions and updates in respect to developing digital / website policies.

- **A complaint from a daughter raised issues about the handling of her mother's finances. The complaint was in relation to the lack of response when raising concerns about the revision of her mother's care charges.**

In response to the issues raised, discussions were held with the member of staff involved about not responding to a query in a timely manner. It was acknowledged that the query should have been responded to sooner and in a more professional way. The Team Manager used the complaint as a case study and highlighted the issues that the complaint raised to all staff regarding the importance of following the correct process.

- **A service user's partner complained about unwanted equipment (a bath chair) not being collected in a timely manner. The complainant raised concerns about numerous phone calls she had to make to the equipment department to ensure the chair would be collected.**

In response to the issues that were raised, processes were reviewed to ensure that when appointments are made/amended service users and their families are contacted at the earliest opportunity and provided with an update. The actions were made as part of the service improvement plan (specific action regarding deliveries and administration).

## **14. Compliments for Adults Social Care & Support**

14.1 158 compliments were received in 2019/20 which is the same no as in 2018/19.

7 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.

<b>Compliments Per Team 2019/20</b>	
137/222 Bills Lane	1
268 Creynolds Lane	1
All Age Disability Team	16
Community Older People's Team	10
Community Team – North	7
Community Team – South	2
DoLS Team	1
Downing Close	3
Equipment and Wheelchair Services	11
Hospital SW Team	21
Income and Awards Team	2
Longmore Nursing home	1
Mental Health and Autism Team	1
Nationwide	1
Occupational Therapy Team	17
One Front Door - Social Work Team	8
OP Day Services	1
Park View Day Services	2
Planning and Commissioning Team	1
Reablement Team	46
SEND 0-25 Team	4
Tanworth Court	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>158</b>

**Fig. 11**

- 14.2 The Reablement Team received the highest number of Adult Social Care compliments in 2019/20 (46), followed by the Hospital Social Work Team (21). Other teams also received a significant number of complaints as shown in fig 11 above.
- 14.3 During 2019/20, Solihull Adults Social Care Services received 3 compliments in respect of the services provided by its' commissioned providers.
- 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**

**- Older Adults Community Team**

*"I just wanted to say on behalf of mom, dad and the wider family, thank you so much for all you help in getting dad transferred. The care that you have shown goes above and beyond what is normal and certainly anything else that we have encountered.*

*Dad appears to be settling in quite nicely, although I think it will take a while to hopefully build back his strength. Thanks again for all your help"*

- **One Front Door – Social Work Team**

*"We would like to say a huge big 'Thank you' for all your hard work and support in helping us find our mum a new home. We were struggling as a family and really didn't know which way to turn. It has been a very difficult time for us as a family and you were able to give us guidance and support, as well as reassurance us in all that we asked and did. Thank you for your patience and most importantly, your time, and always being at the end of the phone. Mum has now settled in well at the care home. May myself and my family wish you all the very best for the future."*

- **Income and Awards Team**

*"This is such a welcome help towards my mum's care and I very much appreciate all the time and consideration you have given to her. I would also like to say thank you for the support of your department. Thank you"*

- **Equipment and Wheelchair Service**

*"Many thanks for the loan of the equipment for my husband. You made his final months so much easier. Thank you for delivery and collection. Best wishes to you all"*

- **Occupational Therapy Team**

*"I would like to thank you for your support, I think it was early last week, or the week before when i received the chair it is so comfortable to sit on. As you are aware my health is deteriorating, and this has helped my back and neck. I am now able to sit in comfort to watch TV and read information. Thank you."*

- **Reablement Team**

*"Please pass on our compliments to all the staff that attended to my wife's care. We can only say a big thank you for the dedication and professionalism shown. It was exceptional. Thank you all."*

- **All Age Disability Team**

The brother of a service user stated that he was highly complementary of a specific member of staff within the All Age Disability Team. He complimented her on the way she approached his sister's case. He said *"she is great, she is magic and she picked up all of my sister's outstanding issue's."* He also stated that due to the level of service provided, a robust Care and Support Plan could be completed and put in place for his sister.

- **Nationwide (commissioned provider)**

A service user's wife contacted Nationwide to say how good the members of staff were with supporting her husband. She stated that the member of staff always made arrangements for a technician to come out to fix her husband's bed, even though it was not his responsibility. She said the member of staff who helped will go far because he is always polite and courteous on the phone and he has the right attitude.

- **Longmore Nursing Home (commissioned provider)**

Mrs X said the home was "*wonderful*" to her auntie and they "*Genuinely cared*". Mrs X said when her auntie was admitted to hospital, a member of staff said to her aunt how "*wonderful*" she is. This was very thoughtful as at the time, changes caused by dementia had in fact sometimes overshadowed some of her aunt's original identity. The member of staff's comments meant such a lot to her. Mrs X also mentioned how well the member of staff used to encourage her aunt to allow her to style her hair for her.

Mrs X also complimented another member of staff in respect to the time when her aunt was first admitted to the home, when the hospital had decided to discharge her early. The reassurance provided by a member of staff, during a phone call meant a lot to her, as at the time she was worried that she had not been able to gather her aunt's belongings. The member of staff advised her not to worry and was reassuring. She explained how the home also purchased "Next pyjamas" for all the residents at Christmas time. Mrs X feels that she "*cannot thank them enough*" and that "*nothing was too much trouble*." Mrs X felt "*supported during the journey*" and described how staff genuinely cried after she passed.

- **Tanworth Court (commissioned provider)**

*"Now L has settled in Tanworth Court, I am writing to thank you for the trouble you have been through to get him accommodation in this lovely home. As the very first patient to enter there his observation was that it was like a hotel. Having been elsewhere since August, without the attention he is now getting, he was getting very depressed and suicidal and I was very worried for him. His current mental agility and interest is only thanks to the people who are now looking after him. I would say he has improved tenfold in his attitude. Many thanks for all the trouble you have gone to. It is very much appreciated."*

#### 4.6 Compliments from professionals by team

##### - Hospital Team

*"I just wanted to say that I am really pleased that we had the meeting this afternoon. It is humbling to work with a colleague who has the strength of their convictions and is clearly passionate about keeping their client as their focus. I will be writing a piece for my portfolio in which I will reflect on the benefits of having somebody "external" giving a view. Knowing a person and their family has many advantages...but also carries with it the risk of potential bias when it comes to decision making. And also it is good to be reminded about the reason why certain procedures are in place. I think you are a committed social worker with an excellent work ethic -and I know that the family we saw felt the same way when we were talking after the meeting and they were very pleased with your input. Thanks for making me think!"*

##### - Older Adults Community Team

Solihull Age UK complimented a member of staff for her support in providing a wheelchair to a service user. They stated *"Thank you. This is such good news, you have done a brilliant job."*

##### - 268 Creynolds Lane

*"It was so lovely to come into such a lovely happy environment such as Creynolds Lane. It was a beautiful location and such a lovely small home which felt like a home."* The Nurse involved was exceptionally happy with the care and support provided to her patient. She expressed that she felt the staff were clearly passionate and exceptionally knowledgeable about the service user and they were providing the highest quality of support. She stated *"It was a real treat to go to a home where everything was in place"*. She also commented on how lovely the rest of the staff were and that she was made to feel so welcome.

##### - Downing Close / 137/222 Bills Lane

Mrs X stated, *"I would like to pay a huge compliment to the staff I have worked with at Downing Close and Bills Lane since April 2019. In the settings I worked at all the service users received very good care. The adults are well cared for, stimulated and happy. Well done keep up the good work."*

- 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 2019/20, the Performance & Complaints Team and Adult Social Care teams 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 very low.
- 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 Performance & 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 referral/ investigation from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman over the last few years, as highlighted in Section 12 above.
- 15.4 Careful analysis of complaints made in relation to Adults 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 & 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 & 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 & 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 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 2019/2020 there were no equality issues identified

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

### **15.9 Feedback from complainants**

As outlined above at 15.7, complainants are directed to a post-complaint questionnaire so that if they wish, they can feed their comments back to the team concerning their experience of the complaints process. During 2019/20 100% of those providing feedback said that they were informed of the process and associated timescales, that their complaints were defined correctly and that their desired outcomes were requested by the Complaints Team.

### **15.10 Feedback from internal staff**

15.10.1 *“...the team always provide great advice and support to me personally and the Directorate, when often dealing with very difficult and complex issues.*

*Thank you for all your hard work and the positive contribution you make to Adult Care and Support.”*

15.10.2 *“Thank you all in the complaints dept for your support this year - you have been amazing.....”*

## **16. Reporting on Complaints**

16.1 Live complaints reports for assistant directors and individual heads of service are produced monthly. These 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.

16.2 Quarterly complaints 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 complaints 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. In 2019/20, work has started on an upgrade to a newer version of Respond.

- 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.
- 16.6 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 2020/21**

- 17.1 During 2020/21, 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 Ombudsman investigations, as requested.
- 17.3 The updated Respond database will be used for processing complaints and compliments and should help to streamline processes even more.

## **18. Conclusion**

- 18.1 During 2019/20 the Performance and Complaints Team have continued to work closely with Adults Social Care 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 2019/20, 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 has hence had a direct impact on service improvement and reduced the number of complaint issues raised in certain areas.

18.4 The relationship between the Performance & Complaints Team, commissioned providers, care quality monitoring officers and the Assistant Director for Commissioning has significantly improved response timescales in this area, whilst ensuring quality complaint responses.

18.5 During 2020/21, 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 2020**