

Solihull Council Annual Complaints Report 2020/21

Adult Social Care



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

1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021

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 2020 to 31 March 2021.
- 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 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 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 2020/21 financial year, Solihull's Adult Social Care Services received 35 new complaints. This is a significant decrease (40%) in comparison with the 58 new complaints received in 2019/20.
- 4.2 Of these 35 new complaints, 17 were in relation to the Council's Adult Social Work teams (compared to 30 in 19/20), 12 were concerning commissioned providers and 6 were in relation to Adults Social Care Finance.
- 4.3 The 12 new complaints concerning Solihull's commissioned providers (which include residential and nursing homes and those providing care in the home) represent a decrease of 40% when compared to the 20 which were received in 2019/20.

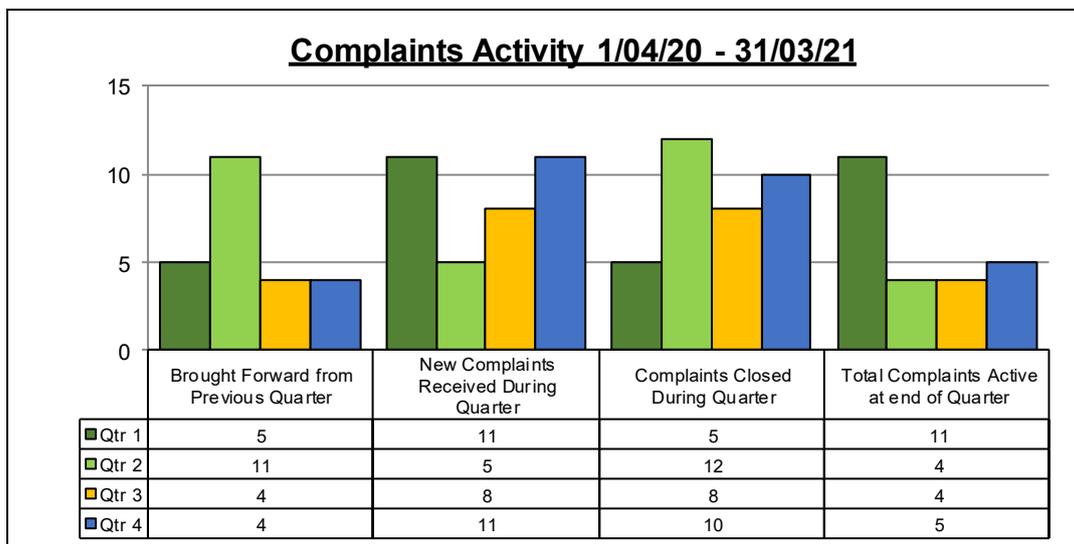


Fig. 1

- 4.4 Fig 1 above shows the number of new complaints received in 2020/21 (35) per quarter. The highest number of new complaints were received in Quarter 1 and Quarter 4, in which both quarters received 11. The lowest number was received in Quarter 2 (5)
- 4.5 The period covered by this report saw the commencement of the COVID19 pandemic and lockdown periods associated with this and hence the issues associated with this for Solihull Adults Social Care.

There were no significant concerns raised to the Complaints Team regarding shortfalls in service, nor any formal complaints made which were directly attributable to a change in service during the pandemic.

How We Received Complaints

- 5.1 Clear information, advising service users about how they can make complaints regarding Adults Social Care Services, is provided on Solihull Council's website at <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Tell-us/Adult-social-care-complaints>. There are details outlining a range of ways in which service users can raise their concerns or 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 2020/21 initial contacts regarding Adult Social Care Services complaints were received in four different ways:

by e-mail 66%, letter 17%, telephone 8.5% and leaflet 8.5%. Email therefore continued to be the most common form of initial contact. The figures also show that 17% of contacts were made by letter, which is a slight increase in comparison to 15% in 2019/20.

Method	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Email	36%	58%	66%
Telephone	26%	17%	8.5%
Complaints Leaflet	12%	10%	8.5%
Letter	24%	15%	17%
Face to face/verbal	2%	-	-

Fig. 2

- 5.3 Initial contact by email has continued to increase and has helped the Complaints Team to 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 also enables the Complaints Team to acknowledge this 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, complaint responses continue to be sent via the post; however the need for this form of response continues to decrease. This is something that has proven to be exceptionally helpful during the pandemic when home working has been required.

- 5.4 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 also assists the Complaints Team to accurately reflect the issues being raised and therefore obtain good quality responses from investigating managers.

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 2020/21 handled 42 such "duty" cases for Adults Social Care Services. 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 2020/21, Solihull Council's Adult Social Care Services provided a service to 8131 service users (including carers) which is a significant increase in comparison to 2019/20 (7216).

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

- 6.2 The new complaints received (35) were therefore from only 0.43% of these people. Females made up 71% of these complainants, whilst 20% of complaints were received from males. The remaining 9% were received jointly from both a female and a male.

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 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 needs to take precedence. The complainant is advised to return to the Complaints Team, if they feel that the outcome of the Safeguarding Investigation has not resolved all of their concerns.
- 7.4 If any such issues are raised in relation to those people receiving a homecare service, or living in residential or nursing homes, then the Performance and Complaints Team will also notify the appropriate Care Quality Monitoring Officer immediately, who will then work closely with the relevant social care team to try and resolve any identified issues, as soon as possible. The CQC (Care Quality Commission) may also be notified.

8. An overview of new complaint Issues for 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 within these complaints for each service area/team, both in 2020/21 and 2019/20.

Service Area	Number of Complaints 19- 20	Number of Issues 19-20	Number of Complaints 20-21	Number of Issues 20 - 21
All Age Disability Team	2	12	2	33
Community Team – North	1	3		
Community Team – South	3	4		
Emergency Duty Team	-	-	1	2
Equipment and Wheelchair Services	2	4	-	-
Older Adults Community Team	5	11	5	10
First Point of Contact and DoLS Team	3	3	4	9
Hospital SW Team	6	29	5	12
Mental Health & Autism Team	1	1	2	13
Occupational Therapist Team	3	7	1	1
Reablement Team	1	1	-	-
SEND 0-25 Team	2	10	1	2
Steps Team	1	3		
Total for ASC Social Care Teams	30	88	17	83
Adult Social Care – Finance	5	20	6	21
Brokerage / Commissioning Team	3	15	-	-
Independent Providers	20	115	12	73
Grand Total	58	238	35	177

Fig. 3

- 8.2 Figure 3 shows that during 2020/21 we have seen a significant decrease in the total number of both complaints (40% decrease) and issues (26% decrease) received.
- 8.3 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. During 2019/20, a total of 9 complaints were received for this area of Adults Social Care, however this has decreased to 5 in 2020/21.
- 8.4 The Equipment and Wheelchair Service did not receive any complaints in 2020/21, compared to 2 complaints received in 2019/20.
- 8.5 The total number of complaints received in 2020/21 for the Adults Social Work teams alone (17) has decreased by 43% in comparison to the number of complaints received in 2019/20 (30). Although the number of complaints have decreased significantly, the number of issues received in 2020/21 (88) have been consistent in comparison to 83 in 2019/20 which suggests that the complexity of some of the complaints received in 2020/21 has increased.
- 8.6 As outlined above at 4.3, the Council received 12 new complaints concerning commissioned providers in 2020//21 and this is a 40% decrease in comparison to the 20 received during 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 177 separate issues defined within the 35 new complaints received in 2020/21. Fig 4 also confirms that there were 83 issues for the Adults Social Care teams and 21 for Adult Social Care Finance.

Type of Issues (Adult Social Care)	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
ADULT SOCIAL CARE					
Attitude or behaviour of Staff	2	5	4	19	30
Breach of confidentiality				1	1
Correct process / procedure not followed			1	3	4
Decision making			2	1	3
Delay in providing support			1	1	2
Delay in undertaking assessment				1	1
Delivery / non delivery of service	1				1
Dissatisfactions with care plan / assessment / review process				1	1
Dissatisfaction with Direct Payment / Process		3		1	4
Failure to provide Equipment				1	1
Funding of care - Financial Assessment / Charges		1	4	1	6
Funding of care not clarified	4				4
Support not provided by Social Worker/ Family Support Worker / Personal Assistant		4	1		5
Unsatisfactory communication	4	4	4	8	20
Total	11	17	17	38	83
ADULT SOCIAL CARE FINANCE					
Attitude or behaviour of Staff	1	1			2
Authorisation of pre-paid card				2	2
Contesting Financial Assessment	3				3
Funding of care - Financial Assessment / Charges	1		2	6	9
Funding of care not clarified	2				2
Unsatisfactory communication			1	2	3
Total	7	1	3	10	21
Grand Total	18	18	20	48	104

Fig. 4

9.2 Fig 4 above shows that the main issue of complaint for the Adult Social Work teams was “Attitude and behaviour” (30 issues received). It is however to be noted that 17 of these issues were generated from 1 complaint received in Qtr 4.

The next most common issue of complaint was “Unsatisfactory Communication.” Twenty issues were received which spanned 7 complaints.

These two issues combined total 57% (50/83) of the overall number of new issues received in 2020/21.

The increase in number of issues during Quarter 4 was due to 1 complaint which was made up of 27 individual complaint issues.

Type of Issues (Independent Provider)	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Grand Total
Attitude or behaviour of Staff	6		1	3	10
Contact not made when requested			4		4
Data Protection issue	1				1
Care provider not allocated	1				1
Dissatisfaction with quality of care	14		1	11	25
Falsifying of records	2				2
Inconsistent carers	2				2
Incorrect time of service call	4				4
Incorrect use of PPE	2		4		6
Lack of knowledge of case			1		1
Missed service call	3				3
Personal items gone missing			1		1
Poor cleanliness in home			1	4	5
Unsatisfactory communication	4		1	3	8
Grand Total	38	0	14	21	73

Fig. 5

9.3 Fig 5 above shows that during 2020/21, the main area of complaint regarding commissioned providers was “Dissatisfaction with quality of care” (25). This would not be unexpected when dealing with concerns regarding care providers.

It should be noted that complaint issues regarding “Attitude and Behaviour”, which was one of the main areas of complaint, have decreased from 34 in 2019/20 to only 10 in 2020/21.

9.4 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.

9.5 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 learning identified by commissioned providers which has then been acted upon and implemented in this area, appears to have been very effective in reducing the number of issues raised, particularly in certain areas.

Issues v Complaints procedure					
Types of new complaint issues	QTR 1	QTR 2	QTR 3	QTR 4	Grand Total
Corporate	4	1		1	6
Statutory	52	17	34	68	171
Grand Total	56	18	34	69	177

Fig. 6

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

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

9.7 As show in fig 6 above, 97% (171) of the new complaint issues received in 2020/21 were progressed through the Statutory Complaints process and 3% 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

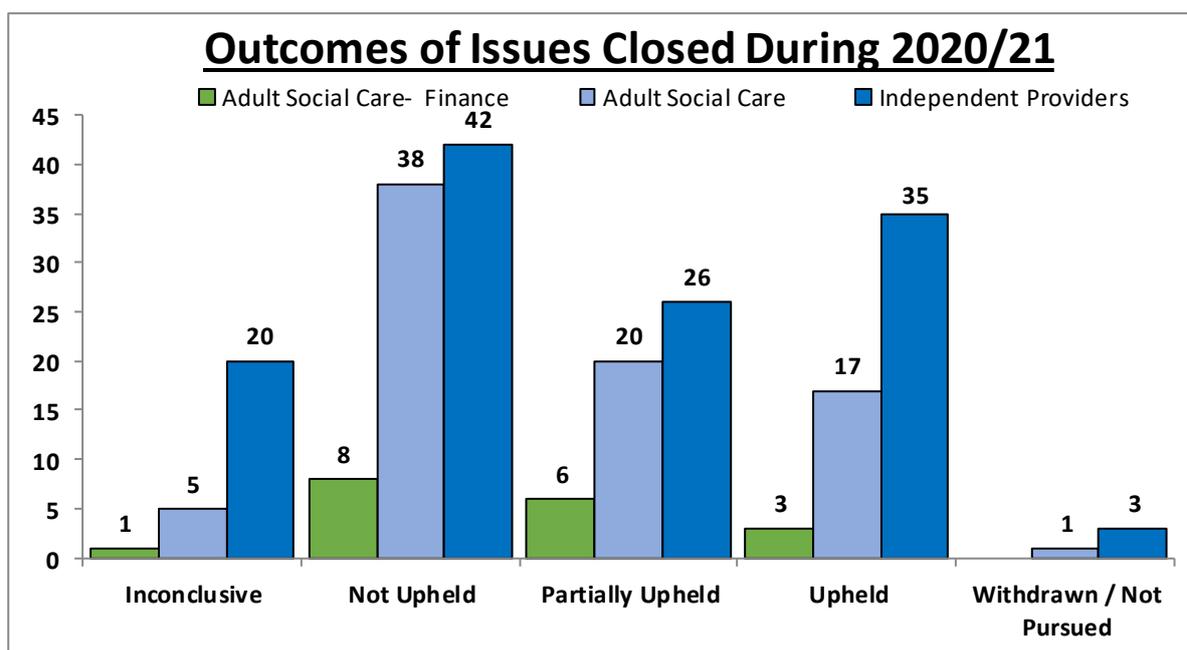


Fig. 7

10.1 As shown in Fig 7 above, there were 225 issues investigated and responded to during 2020/21. These outcomes were identified from 35 complaint investigations which were completed and closed in 2020/21 (some of these are investigations that were ongoing and brought forward from 2019/20). 55 issues were upheld, 52 were partially upheld, 88 were not upheld and 26 were found to be inconclusive. The remaining 4 issues were withdrawn at some point (not pursued by the complainant).

10.2 The percentage of upheld or partially upheld issues has decreased from 59% in 2019/20 to 48% in 2020/21. The reduction in upheld/partially upheld issues has not had a negative impact on the number of cases being progressed by complainants to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (see section 12 below). This may be attributed to the quality of complaint responses and the explanations within them.

11. Timescales of complaint responses within Adult Services

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

11.2 Solihull Adult Social Care Services strive to address complaints in a much shorter and hence more efficient timescale for complainants and an internal 30 working day timescale was introduced in 2013/14. The Performance and Complaints Team provide a quality checking service for all investigating managers who are required to provide complaint responses. The relevant Assistant Director (or the Director, where required) also work with the Performance and Complaints Team to monitor the quality of responses and to provide covering letters for each one.

Complaints Handling Response Times						
Working Days to Respond	Adult Social Care (Social Work teams) 2019/20		Adult Social Care (Finance) 2019/20		Independent Provider 2019/20	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0-30	12	90%	6	100%	2	15%
31 - 40	2	10%			4	31%
41+					7	54%
Withdrawn	1	N/A			1	N/A

Fig. 8

11.3 90% (12/14) complaints investigated in 2020/21 regarding Adults Social Care teams were closed within the Council's internal 30 working day timescale, compared to 87% (33/38) in 2019/20. The two complaint responses falling outside of the 30 working day timescale were completed in under 40 working days, being well within the 6 month statutory response timescale.

11.4 100% (6/6) Adult Social Care Finance complaints investigated in 2020/21 were closed within the 30 working day timescale.

11.5 The number of commissioned provider complaints responded to within 30 working days has significantly decreased from 55% in 2019/20, to 15% in 2020/21, but this is likely to be due to the impact of handling the COVID19 pandemic on commissioned providers.

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 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 2020/21, Solihull Adult Social Care Services received 2 new referrals from the Local Government Ombudsman compared to 7 in 2019/20.

12.2 There were also three Local Government Ombudsman investigations brought forward from 2019/20.

12.3 Of the 2 new referrals received from the LGSCO in 2020/21, 1 was closed with no investigation deemed necessary by the Ombudsman and therefore investigations were open to the Ombudsman in relation to a total of 4 referrals during 2020/21, with them all being completed by the end of 2020/21.

The outcomes were as follows:

Outcome	Adults Social Care Team
<p>1 complaint was received in Qtr 3 2019/20 and closed, following investigation, in Qtr 3 2020/21 -</p> <p><u>OUTCOME: NO FAULT FOUND</u></p>	<p>Community Team South</p>
<p>1 complaint was received in Qtr 4 2019/20 and closed, following investigation, in Qtr 3 2020/21 -</p> <p><u>OUTCOME: FAULT – LOCAL RESOLUTION</u> which indicates that the complaint had already been resolved satisfactorily by the Council before progression to the Ombudsman.</p>	<p>Older People’s Community Team</p>

<p>1 complaint was received in Qtr 2 2020/21 and closed, following investigation, in Qtr 3 2020/21 –</p> <p><u>OUTCOME: FAULT FOUND</u> - apology, reassessment & review of processes</p>	Older People’s Community Team
<p>1 complaint was received in Qtr 2 2019/20 and closed, following investigation, in Qtr 3 2020/21</p> <p><u>OUTCOME: FAULT – LOCAL RESOLUTION</u> which again indicates that the complaint had already been resolved satisfactorily by the Council before progression to the Ombudsman.</p>	Occupational Therapy

Fig. 9

12.4 There were therefore no complaints still being investigated by the LGSCO at the end of 2020/21 to be carried forward to 2021/22.

12.5 The quality of complaint responses in Solihull is good and investigation is thorough which appears to correlate with the decline in the number of cases being referred to the Ombudsman.

13. Learning from Complaints

13.1 87% (21/24) of the learning forms sent to investigating managers, following an investigation were completed and returned in 2020/21. There were only 3 forms outstanding at the end of the year (2 of which have now been received in 2021/22). This is a very positive return rate and indicates that Adults Social Care take learning from complaints very seriously.

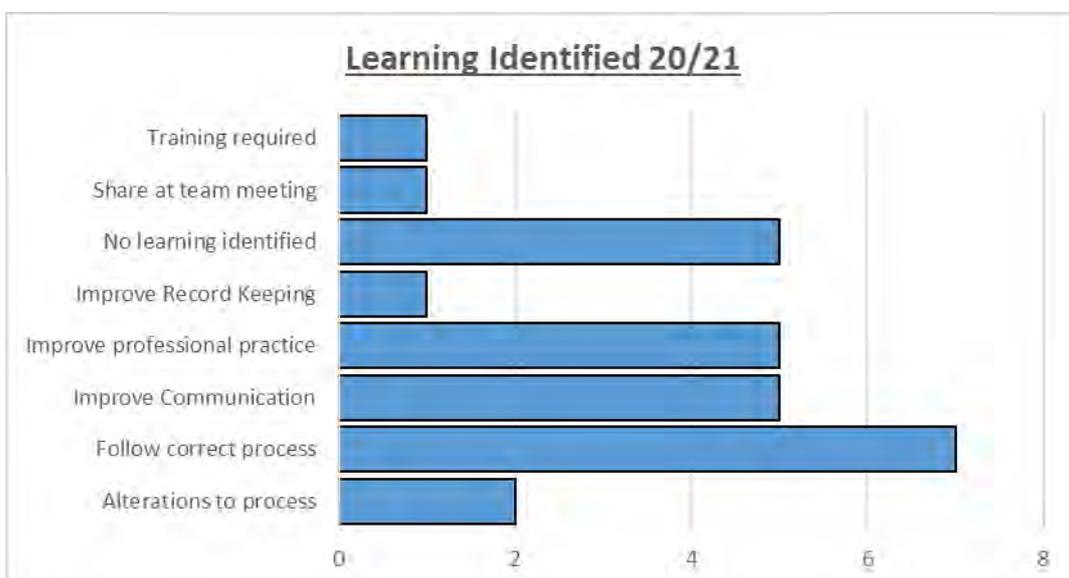


Fig. 10

13.2 As shown above in Fig 10 above, the main area highlighted for improvement was to “follow correct process” (8 issues). Any learning issues raised are followed up by the Complaints Team until implementation is confirmed by the Investigating Manager.

Data regarding the implementation of learning is then formatted into individual spreadsheets for each team and distributed to senior staff and the appropriate team managers, so that managers can comment on the differences that learning has made to practice. The evidence is then collated by the Complaints Team to demonstrate the impact of those improvements on services provided.

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

- **One complaint involved a service user raising issues about a Social Worker not providing additional care. The service user raised concerns about direct payments and that the Social Worker was not exploring alternative care arrangements.**

The learning from this complaint identified that team members did not have sufficient knowledge of the Exceptional Circumstances Policy. Briefings were arranged to take place at team meetings to ensure that staff had a better understanding of this policy.

- **A member of the public made a complaint in relation to the outcome of a financial assessment. The service user raised concerns that information that they had provided had not been taken into consideration.**

This complaint issue was investigated and it was found that some of the financial information that had been provided had been incorrectly disregarded. When this issue was identified a new Financial Assessment was then carried out.

The respective Assessor was advised of the error. The importance of calculating assessments correctly was reiterated to the team to ensure that members of staff quality check the information provided to ensure that all significant information is taken into consideration.

- **A service user raised concerns about not receiving a copy of minutes from a meeting they attended. Concerns were raised as they wanted a copy of the minutes to re-confirm the details that were discussed within the meeting.**

It was identified that minutes from this meeting were not recorded appropriately within the case recordings and were not provided to the service user. An apology was provided to the complainant for this oversight.

The respective Team Manager identified learning from this issue and this was discussed within a team meeting. The team were briefed on following correct process and the importance of taking minutes of all meetings and ensuring a copy of the minutes is shared in a timely manner with the participants.

13.4. The examples above all relate to the importance of following correct process and the learning implemented within Adult Social Care will have a positive impact regarding this issue in 2021/22

14. Compliments for Adults Social Care & Support

14.1 244 compliments were received in 2020/21 which is a 54% increase in comparison to the 158 received in 2019/20.

12 of these compliments involved services provided by two or more service areas which demonstrates how teams working together can have a very positive outcome for the person receiving the service.

Compliments per Team 2020/21	
222 Bills Lane	1
268 Creynolds Lane	5
7/8/9 Downing Close	2
Alexandra House	1
All Age Disability Team	13
Chelmunds Court	2
Commissioning and Brokerage	11
Community Equipment and Wheelchair Team	36
Day Opportunities - North	1
First Point of Contact and DoLS Team	8
Hospital SW Team	30
Lyndon Croft	1
Mental Health and Autism Team	3
Nationwide	19
Occupational Therapy Team	31
Older Adults Community Team	30
Peripatetic Team	2
Reablement Team	41
SEND 0-25 Team	1
Shielding Team	2
Sunrise	1
Tanworth Court	1
Universal	2
Grand Total	244

Fig. 11

14.2 The Reablement Team received the highest number of Adult Social Care compliments in 2020/21 (41), followed by the Community Equipment and Wheelchair Team (36), the Occupational Therapy Team (31) and the Hospital Social Work Team (30). Other teams also received a significant number of complaints as shown in fig 11 above.

14.3 During 2020/21, Solihull Adults Social Care Services received 23 compliments in respect of the services provided by its' commissioned providers, of which 19 were for Nationwide who provide homecare services.

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**

All Age Disability Team

"I would like to say a big thank you for all your help and support. We will both miss contact with you and we can't thank you enough for all the wonderful help you have given to both of us . We always felt positive and energised after are meetings with you ready to face the next challenge. We will both miss you. Take care"

First Point of Contact and DoLS Team

"She was a god send. She listened with patience to all of our concerns, and made suggestions on how we could manage the situation; putting us in touch with resources such as the Falls team, physio, and mental health. A few weeks on, and I'm delighted to say, that what we thought might have been early dementia (or similar), was the effects of the sepsis. My father is now receiving home physio and is so much brighter in himself.

Both my husband and I wanted to express our thanks. It can be overused, saying someone has gone 'above and beyond.' We can only imagine the stream of phone calls and cases you must be dealing with currently, but the member of staff made us feel as if we were the only clients she needed to focus on, such was her patience and understanding."

Hospital SW Team

"I was very pleased with my mum's Social Worker. She kept me informed several times. I was treated really well by her and she was a great support to me. I had the worry of finding a home for my mum taken out of my hands and I am extremely pleased where she was placed"

Occupational Therapy / Equipment and Wheelchair Services

"I would like to acknowledge the excellent care provided to my elderly mother following her recent accident. I would also like to express my family's appreciation for the supportive, caring and considerate way in which each person involved responded during a difficult time. In these days of constraints and reduced provision, I was extremely impressed with both the speed and efficiency of all those involved in enabling my mother to leave hospital promptly and cope within her own home whilst recovering from her fractured knee.

In addition and perhaps most important of all, staff demonstrated high levels of care and took time to establish exactly what my mother's needs would be.

A special mention too for the Occupational Therapy and Equipment Team. Both responded promptly to my request for equipment, which would help my mother to continue to live independently at home whilst she recovered. It was a difficult time as the country has just emerged from the lockdown but they took time to assess her needs and provide the right equipment.

My mother has now recovered from her fracture and although she has other health issues feels confident that should she in the future require care at home that she will be well supported by Solihull Council."

Older Adults Community Team

"We would like to pass our sincere thanks to Emma Stevenson who has been helping us to sort out a care package for J....., Emma has been so kind, helpful and understanding and has always been happy to listen to our concerns."

Reablement Team

Mrs A was extremely positive about the service she has had from the Reablement staff. Mrs A stated "I am very impressed with their caring attitude. I'm very pleased with what the girls have done for me, it was very worthwhile and I want to say a very big thank you to them, they have taught me a great deal.

I was a little shy in the hospital about it as I didn't know what to expect but it has gone exceptionally well"

Shielding Team

"We would like to say a huge thank you to the Shielding Team for looking after us so well during the Covid 19 Pandemic. Being in the vulnerable group we have really appreciated the help and support. Thank you"

Nationwide (commissioned provider)

Mrs F repeatedly stated how much she likes and trusts her regular morning carers. Mrs F stated "they are wonderful girls and they really take care of me"

Universal (commissioned provider)

Mr X wished to extend his gratitude and thank you to Universal Care Agency. Mr X stated "The carers were wonderful and most supportive in assisting me recover, following hospital discharge."

Sunrise (commissioned provider)

"I am writing to thank you and all your staff for the care you have given to my parents during these unprecedented times. While it has been a very distressing time for us not being able to visit and not being able to ascertain the severity of their illness, we have been impressed with the way the carers have filled us in with how they are when we have called and how they have reassured us. We understand that you are all working in very difficult conditions with constraints and that you are all having to go over and above to meet the needs of the residents."

14.6 Compliments from professionals by team

268 Creynolds Lane

A Diabetes Nurse stated, " The team were really responsive and proactive in supporting a service user with his diabetic management .They are always really helpful and provide her with clear information which has supported clinical decision making"

All Age Disability Team

An advocate contacted the All Age Disability Team and stated, "I have worked very closely with A this year in respect to a specific case. A has been a pleasure to work with and it has been so helpful to be able to bounce thoughts off each other whilst working on that particular case. A has worked so hard to get the best support in place for the service user and this is admirable."

Occupational Therapy / Community Equipment and Wheelchair Team

"I just want to thank you all for facilitating Mr N's safe discharge back to his care home, where he died peacefully this morning. Mr N had a few days of knowing he was in his own environment with carers who were familiar to him and most importantly contact with his friend and main care giver. Team work makes the dream work. Thank you for making Mr N's last days comfortable and relaxed."

Older Adults Community Team

"I am the Lead here at Birmingham Community Health Care NHS Foundation Trust. I would like to inform you of a dedicated, professional and caring member of staff you have in R. R and I worked collaboratively on a case and R always showed professionalism, patience and trust not only to me but to the citizen and family involved.

R's genuine hard work and dedication as well as her concern and caring attitude shone through and it has been an absolute pleasure and privilege to work with such a caring professional. I am sure you recognise what an asset to your team that R is but I wanted you to know that other people recognise and value R's attitude and willing disposition."

- 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 2020/21, the Complaints Team and Adult Social Care have continued to work very well together, aiming to ensure that timescales were met and high quality responses were provided for complainants, in order to ensure that we consistently deliver high standards in complaints processing.

The numbers of complainants who return dissatisfied with their response is very low and 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.

- 15.2 Detailed and timely conversations with prospective complainants, both by telephone and e-mail, continue to ensure that customers feel listened to and reassured that their concerns will be dealt with. Wherever possible, concerns are resolved outside of the formal complaints process with the agreement of the complainant which often expedites resolution of these concerns.
- 15.3 The quality of complaint responses is high, aided by the quality checking process between the Complaints Team and Adults Social Care investigating managers and reminders are sent to investigating managers regarding the due dates for responses.
- 15.4 Careful analysis of complaints made in relation to Adults Social Work Services continues to ensure that complaints are pursued through the correct complaints 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 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 2020/21 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.

15.9 Feedback from complainants

The following are examples of compliments received by the Complaints Team from complainants;

- *Thank you very much for putting closure on this now I feel like a great weight is lifted off my shoulders. Along with Birmingham taking the responsibility for our dear mums funding it has now put an end to our complaint.*

- *Thanks for dealing with this so promptly. I am happy with the resolution and will pay the invoice when it arrives.*

15.10 Feedback from internal staff

The Complaints Team also received positive feedback from internal staff and the following are some examples;

- *Many thanks. You are always so helpful*
- *There is really positive feedback for the complaints team:*
 - *Brilliant level of support.*
 - *Very helpful in giving advice, suggestions and proof reading.*
 - *Helpful in giving reminders of due by dates so we don't miss deadlines.*
 - *Excellent, proactive support.*
 - *Well organised.*
 - *Good quality reporting.*
 - *Responsive.*

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.

For the first quarter of 2020/21, the Complaints Team also produced weekly reporting on complaints and compliments for review meetings held by the Director of Adults Social Care in relation to the COVID pandemic. This then reduced to monthly for the remainder of 2020/21.

- 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 2020/21 a newer, upgraded version of Respond was installed which is the database used by the Complaints Team to record the processing of complaints. The Complaints Team contributed hugely towards the successful installation of the database which has helped to improve the recording of data and ensured that all generated reports that are created are effective and meet the needs of Adult 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 2021/22

- 17.1 During 2021/22, the Performance and Complaints Team will continue to work closely with all staff involved in investigating complaints; aiming to ensure that as many complaints as possible are responded to within the Council's internal 30 working day response timescale and where possible that concerns are resolved outside of this process.
- 17.2 The Performance and Complaints Team will continue to provide high quality support to staff investigating complaints and responding to any Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman investigations, as requested.

18. Conclusion

- 18.1 During 2019/20 the Performance and Complaints Team have, as always continued to work closely with Adults Social Care Services staff to ensure that despite the difficult situation concerning the pandemic, as many responses as possible met the appropriate timescales and that complaint responses are of a high quality.
- 18.2 The quality of complaint responses has continued to have a positive impact on the requests for escalation and hence the numbers of complaints investigated by the LGSCO. In 2020/21, the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman has found fault only once in respect of Solihull Adults Social Care Services in Solihull (in addition there were 2 investigations, where although it was noted the Council was at fault, the LGSCO also noted that adequate remedy had already be found by the Council during their own investigation).
- 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.
- 18.5 During 2021/22, 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.