

Solihull Council Annual Complaints Report 2021/22

Adults Social Care



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

1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022

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 2021 to 31 March 2022.
- 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 & Social Care Ombudsman requests are dealt with, within the requested timescales.

3. Statutory and Corporate Complaints

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

4. A Summary of Complaints

- 4.1 During the 2021/22 financial year, Solihull's Adult Social Care Services received 33 new complaints. This is slight decrease in comparison with the 35 new complaints received in 2020/21.
- 4.2 Of these 33 new complaints, 20 were in relation to the Council's Adult Social Work teams (compared to 17 in 20/21), 10 were concerning commissioned providers and 3 were in relation to the Income and Awards Team who carry out financial assessments for Adults Social Care.
- 4.3 The 10 new complaints concerning Solihull's commissioned providers (which include residential and nursing homes and those providing care in the home) is a slight decrease when compared to the 12 which were received in 2020/21.

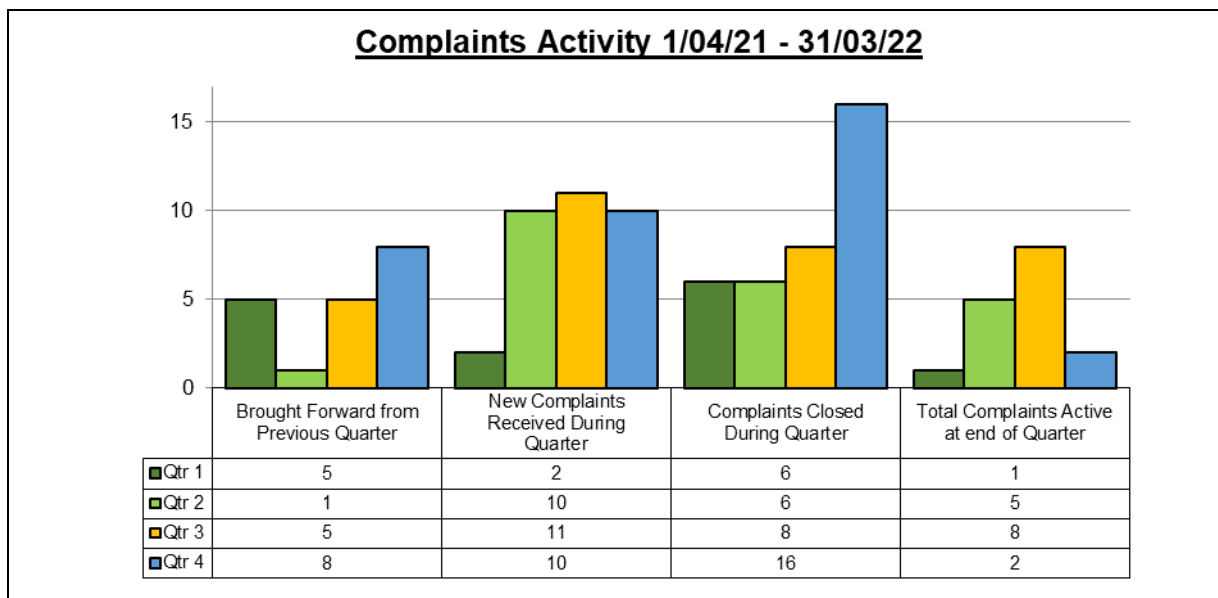


Fig. 1

4.4 Fig 1 above shows the number of new complaints received in 2021/22 (33) per quarter. The highest number of new complaints were received in Quarter 3 (11). The lowest number was received in Quarter 1 (2) which may have been due to the ongoing impact of the COVID19 lockdown.

4.5 Again, during 2021/22, 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 2021/22 initial contacts regarding Adult Social Care Services complaints were received in four different ways:

61% by e-mail, 12% by letter, 24% by telephone and 3% via a leaflet. The percentage of emails has reduced very slightly in comparison with 2020/2021 (66%) in favour of the telephone; however, communication via emails has continued to be the most common form of initial contact. The figures also show that 12% of contacts were made by letter, which is a slight decrease in comparison to 17% in 2020/22 and reflects the change to using modern technology.

Method	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Email	58%	66%	61%
Letter	15%	17%	12%
Telephone	17%	8.5%	24%
Complaints Leaflet	10%	8.5%	3%

Fig. 2

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

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

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, as outlined above, also assists the Complaints Team to accurately reflect the issues being raised and therefore obtain good quality responses from investigating managers.

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

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

The Complaints Team have, in 2021/22, handled 53 such "duty" cases for Adults Social Care Services compared to 42 in 2020/21. 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 2021/22, Solihull Council's Adult Social Care Services provided a service to 8245 service users (including carers) which is a slight increase in comparison to 2020/21 (8131).

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 formal complaints received (33) were therefore from only 0.40% of these people. Females made up 67% of these complainants, whilst 33% of complaints were received from males.

7. Risk Assessment of Complaints

- 7.1 The Complaints Team risk assess each complaint received, in order to ascertain the seriousness of the issues raised and to ensure the appropriate course of action is taken.
- 7.2 Any complaint that they feel raises significant issues regarding the quality of care, safeguarding issues, denial of rights, or has clear quality assurance or risk management issues that may cause lasting problems for the organisation, or highlights the possibility of litigation/adverse local publicity, is highlighted immediately to senior managers and if appropriate follows the Council's safeguarding procedures.
- 7.3 There is a clear process in place across Adults Social Care, which is used and relayed to customers when a Safeguarding issue is/has already been identified and which is followed when a new complaint is received concerning the same issue(s). If a Safeguarding investigation is already underway or is deemed necessary, in relation to the same concerns being raised by a complainant, then the Safeguarding Investigation needs to take precedence. The complainant is advised to return to the Complaints Team if they feel that the outcome of the Safeguarding Investigation has not resolved all of their concerns.
- 7.4 If any such issues are raised in relation to those people receiving a homecare service, or living in residential or nursing homes, then the Performance and Complaints Team will also notify the appropriate Care Quality Monitoring Officer immediately, who will then work closely with the relevant social care team to try and resolve any identified issues, as soon as possible. The CQC (Care Quality Commission) may also be notified.

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

8.1 Figure 3 (below) shows a comparison of both new complaints and the number of associated issues within these complaints for each service area/team, both in 2021/22 and 2020/21.

Service Area	Number of Complaints 20-21	Number of Issues 20/21	Number of Complaints 21-22	Number of Issues 21/22
All Age Disability Team	2	33	2	10
Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service			1	2
Emergency Duty Team	1	2		
First Point of Contact and DoLS Team	4	9	1	7
Older Adults Community Team	5	10	4	13
Hospital SW Team	5	12	5	20
Mental Health & Autism Team	2	13	5	16
Occupational Therapist Team	1	1	1	3
Reablement Team			1	4
SEND 0-25 Team	1	2		
ASC Social Care total	17	83	20	75
Adult Social Care/ Income and Awards (Finance)	6	21	3	9
Brokerage / Commissioning Team	-	-	-	1*
Independent Providers	12	73	10	60
Grand Total	35	177	33	145

*The commissioning issue was raised within a complaint to the Hospital SW Team

Fig. 3

8.2 Figure 3 shows that during 2021/22, despite seeing a slight decrease in the total number of complaints (6%), there has been a noticeable decrease in the number of issues that have been received (18%).

8.3 The First Point of Contact and DoLS Team received only 1 complaint in 2021/22, which is a significant decrease (75%) when compared to the 4 complaints received in 2020/21. There was however an increase in the number of complaints received by the Mental Health & Autism Team, from 2 in 2020/21 to 5 in 2021/22. Detailed performance reporting to senior management has ensured that this has been highlighted and any actions taken where required.

8.4 As outlined above at 4.3, the Council received 10 new complaints concerning commissioned providers in 2021//22 and this is a 17% decrease in comparison to the 12 received during 2020/21.

9. Categories of new issues raised within complaints

9.1 As shown in figs 4 and 5 below, there were a total of 145 separate issues defined within the 33 new complaints received in 2021/22.

Fig 4 confirms that there were 75 issues for the Adults Social Care teams, 9 for Income and Awards (Social Care Finance) and one issue for Commissioning (Funding of care - Financial Assessment / Charges).

Fig 5 outlines the remaining 60 issues in relation to commissioned providers.

Type of Issues (Adult Social Care)	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
ADULT SOCIAL CARE					
Attitude and Behaviour	3	4	1		8
Correct process / procedure not followed		1			1
Decision making			1		1
Delay in providing support			1	5	6
Dissatisfaction with care plan / assessment / review process		1	3	5	9
Failure to complete agreed outcome			2	1	3
Funding of care - Financial Assessment / Charges	4		2		6
Impact of LA policy on service user				2	2
Inappropriate type of worker allocated		1			1
Lack of involvement of family member with POA			3		3
Support not provided by Social Worker/ Family Support Worker / Personal Assistant		2	7	4	13
Unsatisfactory Communication	2	7	8	5	22
Grand Total	9	16	28	22	75
FINANCE/COMMISSIONING					
Correct process / procedure not followed				2	2
Funding of care - Financial Assessment / Charges	1			7	8
Grand Total	10	16	28	31	85

Fig. 4

9.2 Fig 4 above, shows that the main issue of complaint for the Adult Social Work teams was “Unsatisfactory Communication” (22 issues received). These issues were generated from 7 complaints. Unsatisfactory communication can be the root cause for many complaints and continual improvement in this area can have a very positive impact on a reduction in complaints. There has been a significant reduction in the number of issues received in this area for Adults Social Care Services over the last few years.

The next most common issue of complaint was “*Support not provided by Social Worker/ Family Support Worker / Personal Assistant.*” with 13 issues. These issues spanned 6 complaints.

The two issues named above and combined total 44% (33/75) of the total number of new Adult Social issues received in 2021/22.

Type of Issues (Independent Provider)	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Grand Total
Attitude and Behaviour	1	1		1	3
Breach of confidentiality	1				1
Correct process / procedure not followed	2			1	3
Dissatisfaction with quality of care	2	5	8	11	26
Failure to complete agreed outcome				1	1
Funding of care - Financial Assessment / Charges	2				2
Incorrect time of service call				1	1
Incorrect use of PPE			1		1
Issues with key safe				1	1
Missed medication / wrongly administered			1	2	3
Personal items gone missing			2	1	3
Service call not provided		1	3	1	5
Unsatisfactory Communication	4	5	1		10
Grand Total	12	12	16	20	60

Fig. 5

9.3 Fig. 5 above shows that during 2021/22, the main area of complaint regarding commissioned providers was “*Dissatisfaction with quality of care*” (26). This would not be unexpected when dealing with concerns regarding care providers. This number is almost identical to the 25 issues received in 2020/21.

In 2021/22 there has been a significant decrease in the number of complaints regarding “*Attitude and Behaviour*”. It should be noted that this is the third consecutive year that these issues have continued to decrease (10 during 2020/21 and 34 during 2019/20).

9.4 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.

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

Issues v Complaints procedure					
Types of new complaint issues	QTR 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Grand Total
Corporate			6		6
Statutory	22	28	38	51	139
Grand Total	22	28	44	51	145

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, 96% (139) of the new complaint issues received in 2021/22 were progressed through the Statutory Complaints process and 4% 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

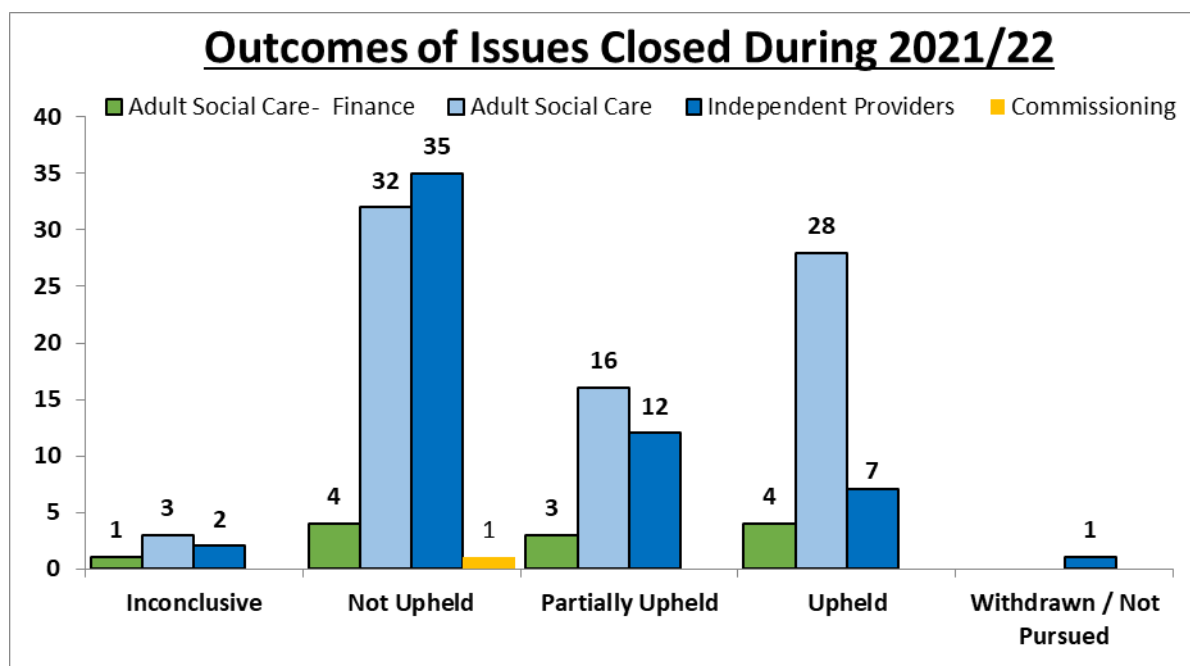


Fig. 7

10.1 As shown in Fig 7 above, there were 148 issues investigated and responded to during 2021/22 (one of the complaint issues raised in 2021/22 was withdrawn (not pursued by the complainant)).

These outcomes were identified from 33 complaint investigations which were completed and closed in 2021/22 (some of these issues relate to investigations that were ongoing and brought forward from 2020/21). 39 issues were upheld, 31 were partially upheld, 72 were not upheld and 6 were found to be inconclusive.

10.2 47% of issues investigated during 2021/22 were upheld or partially upheld, which is consistent and comparable to 48% in 2020/21. As outlined at 12.4 below, the quality of complaint responses in Solihull is good and investigation is thorough which appears to correlate with the low number of cases which are referred to the LGSCO where fault is then found.

11. Timescales of complaint responses within Adult Services

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

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

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

Complaints Handling Response Times						
Working Days to Respond	Adult Social Care (Social Work) 2021/22		Adult Social Care (Finance) 2021/22		Independent Provider 2021/22	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0-30	19	83%	3	100%	6	67%
31 – 40	2	8.5%				
41+	2	8.5%			3	33%
Withdrawn					1	

Fig. 8

11.3 83% (19/23) of complaints investigated in 2021/22 regarding Adults Social Care teams were closed within the Council’s internal 30 working day timescale, which is a decrease in comparison to 90% (12/14) in 20/21. 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% (3/3) Adult Social Care Finance complaints investigated in 2021/22 were closed within the 30-working day timescale.

11.5 The number of commissioned provider complaints responded to within 30 working days has significantly increased from 15% in 2020/21, to 67% in 2021/22.

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

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

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

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

12.1 During 2021/22 there were 7 new complaints referred to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) for Solihull Adults Social Care Services (an increase of 5 compared to 2020/21). There were no live complaints brought forward into 2021/22 from 2020/21.

12.2 Of these 7 complaints:

- the LGSCO declined to investigate 2,
- 2 were classed as premature complaints (a complaint which has not already been investigated by the Council),
- 1 complaint was received in Qtr 2 and closed in Qtr 4 (the outcome of which was fault found, an apology to be provided and payment a of £200 to the complainant) and
- 2 complaints were still being investigated by the LGO at the end of 2021/22 and were carried forward to 2022/23.

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

13. Learning from Complaints

13.1 79% (19/24) of the learning forms sent to investigating managers, following an investigation were completed and returned in 2021/22. There were only 5 forms outstanding at the end of the year and all 5 learning forms have since been received in 2022/23. This is a very positive return rate and indicates that Adults Social Care take learning from complaints very seriously.

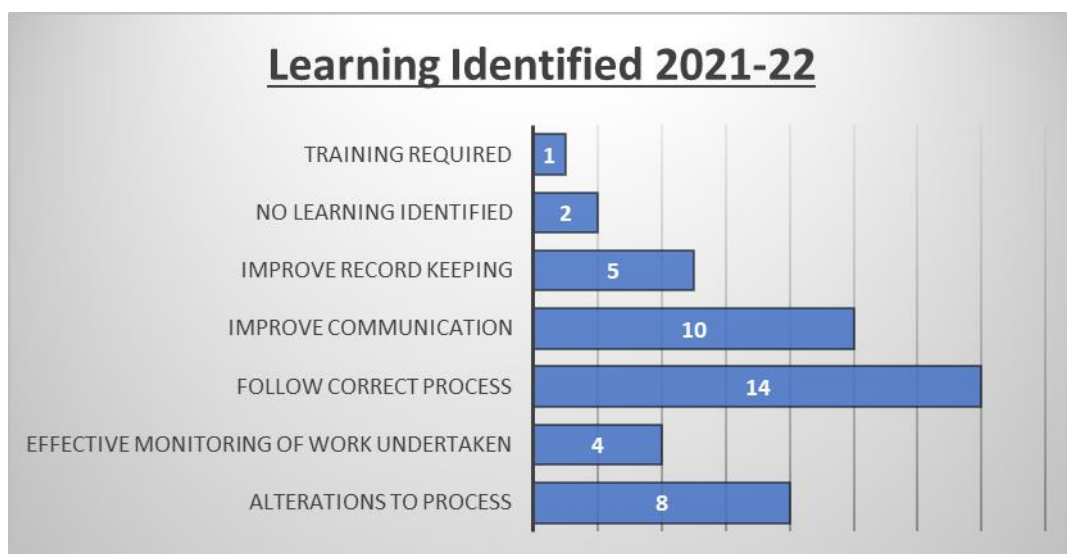


Fig. 10

13.2 As shown above in Fig 10 above, the main area highlighted for improvement was to “*follow correct process*” (14 issues) followed by “*improve communication*” (10). Any learning issues raised are followed up by the Complaints Team until implementation is confirmed by the Investigating Manager.

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

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

- **Following a complaint involving a service user who raised issues about the promptness and quality of a letter that was provided to the family in respect to the discontinuation of a top up contribution -**

The Investigating Manager identified that a clearer explanation should have been provided regarding the reasons for a third party top up contribution to cease.

It was also identified that due to some technical issues at that time, automatic alerts were not produced, therefore the family were not correctly notified that a top up contribution was no longer required.

As a result of the complainant raising their concerns, a review of processes was completed and all cases with a top up contribution were then manually checked for changes so they could ensure that prompt notification could be issued.

- **A complaint was raised about length of time it took for an external ramp to be installed. The family expressed their concerns and the effect this had on their mother.**

Having investigated this matter and in liaison with the relevant members of staff, the Manager identified that there was delay due to the layout of the property and the unique circumstances involved; however, he did believe that the delay in arriving at a clear feasible decision regarding the ramp could have been identified in a timelier manner.

The learning identified the importance of reaching a decision sooner regarding the ramping difficulties and monitoring the processes of the third parties involved and how this could help to ensure a decision was reached as soon as possible. Closer monitoring of where delays were evident can also ensure that the appropriate actions are taken forward as soon as possible.

- **A complaint was by a service user who was in the process of finding a care home. Adult Social Care were asked to provide supporting documentation regarding the service user's induction at the Care Home. The information provided to the Care home included a Care and Support Plan. The service user raised concerns about the specific wording that was referred to within the Care and Support Plan.**

This complaint was investigated and the wording that was used within the Care and Support Plan was reviewed. It was explained to the complainant that the wording was used to express the worker's views; however, the Investigating Manager fully understood the complainants' own views about this. A full apology was provided to the service user for this oversight and any offence this had caused.

From a learning perspective, managers within the team were reminded of the importance to check the wording of care and support plans when authorising them.

The learning from this complaint was also shared with the wider team, to ensure that all team members are reminded of the importance of using appropriate sensitive language and clearly distinguishing fact from opinion.

- 13.4. The examples above all relate to the importance of following the correct process and improving communication. The learning embedded within Adult Social Care in 2021/22 will have a positive impact in Adult Social Services providing services in 2022/23 as it has done in previous years.

14. Compliments for Adults Social Care & Support

- 14.1 205 compliments were received for Adults Social Care in 2021/22.

A number of the compliments that were received in 2021/22 involved services provided by two or more teams which demonstrates how teams working together can have a very positive outcome for the person receiving the service.

Compliments received in 2021/22	
SMBC Care Homes	
268 Creynolds Lane	1
28 Dassetts Road	1
7/8/9 Downing Close	1
Adult Social Care	
Commissioning and Brokerage	4
All Age Disability Team	2
Community Equipment and Wheelchair Team	15
Continuing Health Care and Project Team	1
Day Opportunities - South	1
First Point of Contact and DoLS Team	7
Hospital SW Team	24
Mental Health and Autism Team	1
Occupational Therapy	18
Older Adults Community Team	15
Peripatetic Team	1
Reablement	35
SEND 0-25	3
Independent providers	
Chelmunds Court	36
Elite Assistance	1
Knowlegate	5
Lyndon Croft Centre	1
Nationwide	18
Silver Birches	2
Sunrise	2
Tanworth Court	8
Universal	2
Grand Total	205

Fig. 11

14.2 The Reablement Team received the highest number of Adult Social Care compliments in 2021/22 (35), followed by the Hospital Social Work Team (24), the Occupational Therapy Team (18) and the Older Adults Community Team and the Community Equipment and Wheelchair Team who both received 15. Other teams also received a significant number of compliments as shown in fig 11 above.

- 14.3 During 2021/22, Solihull Adults Social Care Services received 78 compliments in respect of the services provided by its' commissioned providers, of which 36 were for Chelmunds Court.
- 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

A text message sent to the allocated social worker stated "Thank you for everything. You were very inspirational in my niece's case. We truly appreciated your input. Take care"

Chelmunds Court

" I just wanted to say thank you so much for helping our family through this change of lifestyle for our mom. The efforts you all went to in celebrating my mums birthday were overwhelming and I know she was secretly thrilled. Chelmunds Court and everyone it has given us all our lives back. Once again, a big thank you for looking after our family. Bless you all"

First Point of Contact and DoLS Team

"Mrs X contacted the team to say that her brother had sadly passed away but she wanted to thank a specific member of staff for trying to help him and for being so kind and patient with him. She said she "cannot thank him enough... "

Hospital SW Team

" I would like to thank a member of staff for her hard work and professionalism. My mother left hospital after breaking her hip and was very distressed from her experience there. My sister rang X and she explained how we needed help. X did her very best and organised the very best care for my mother. She was very understanding, sensitive and assertive. She was organised and communicated so well with me and my sister, who was desperate for help at the time. My mum is now back on her feet all thanks to X."

Older Adults Community Team, Dols, Hospital SW Team

"Unfortunately, Mum passed away on Friday afternoon in Hospital. I would like to thank you for everything that you personally did to support Mum and advise us. Please also pass on my thanks to the teams involved for the professional way in which they handled mum's hospital discharge. I would also be grateful if you would pass on my gratitude to the member of staff within the DoLS Team, for the way they dealt with the various DoLS applications."

Older Adults Community Team

" Please pass on our heartfelt thanks to X who answered our telephone call this morning and to the Team Manager, for all their help and support today. We feel that their Line Managers, should be aware of how outstanding their care and attention has been."

Occupational Therapy

Mr X contacted the team to inform them that his rise/recliner chair which he requested previously has now arrived. He said *"it's brilliant and I'm really pleased. I can get up from the chair so much easier now, thank you"*. He said that he was really impressed with Solihull Council and how much help he received.

Nationwide (commissioned provider)

"I just want to thank you very much indeed in supporting and looking out for my mum this last year. Everyone was kind and mum really took a liking to them. It was tough time for her and you really made a difference and helped her carry on as independently as possible. This gave me immense peace, as I live a long way from her. I would also like to praise the office staff. Every time I had a query you were fast to resolve it. I never had to wait to get through on the phone. You responded to my queries by looking at the information instantly and I valued the efficiency massively. Everyone I spoke to, without exception, was so nice. I would not hesitate in recommending your services to anyone. Thanks again"

9 Downing Close (care home)

"I would like to thank everyone at no. 9, for their dedication and thoughtfulness to all the residents through what has been a most difficult of times. We have entrusted the most precious things in our lives to them and are confident the good work will continue. My friend is happy to come back on Mondays and I am sure if she could talk, she would echo our sentiments."

Tanworth Court (commissioned provider)

"Although mum has been with yourselves for a short time, I wanted to express our appreciation for the support you provided to me, my sister and our mother. It has been very difficult in many ways but we are extremely grateful for what you have been able to facilitate us being with our mother. The staff who look after mum have been great and very respectful. You have supported us to get through this. Thank you"

Equipment and Wheelchair Service

Mrs x complimented the members of staff on the service they provided. She said they were very professional and gave her plenty of time to get to the door and they spoke to her regarding where she wanted each piece of equipment left. Mrs x stated, *"they are a credit to your service."*

14.6 Compliments from professionals by team

Equipment and Wheelchair Service

"Please can I thank you and your team for your swift work today with delivering a hoist and slings out to my rapid response patient. Through this provision we were able to prevent an unnecessary admission into hospital and it allowed our patient to remain safely at home with his family. Thank you again".

Reablement Team

" I just wanted to say that I recently had support from a member of staff with setting up reablement for a client. This was the first referral I have made to the service X was very helpful and made the process simple, I was very pleased with the quick response and set up of the reablement package from the time of referral. Communication and updates from the team and X were very good. I found that the support from the reablement service met the needs of the client. Thank you."

Mental Health and Autism Team

"Thank you for the very professional and efficient way that you have dealt with X's case. After years of stress for him, which you bore the brunt of at times, but was no fault of yours, we have a positive outcome which is primarily because of your excellent input. Keep up the good work"

Universal Home Care

"I have always been able to communicate with the office. I have never had to wait for a return call. I always have spoken with a member of staff and she has always been attentive and been able to direct my call to the appropriate persons (i.e., care co-ordinators). She has always called back if she has said she needs to make more enquiries and she has always been able to provide information and input to reviews.

I have not had any concerns raised re the provision of care when I have undertaken a review. It has always been positive. I have often been feedback that the relationship between carer and the cared for person has been positive."

- 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 2021/22, 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 low and the quality of responses provided by the Council has helped to maintain a low level of referral and investigation by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman over the last few years, as highlighted in Section 12 above.

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

- 15.3 The quality of complaint responses is high, aided by the quality checking process between the Complaints Team and Adults Social Care investigating managers, and reminders are sent to investigating managers regarding the due dates for responses.
- 15.4 Careful analysis of complaints made in relation to Adults Social Work Services continues to ensure that complaints are pursued through the correct complaint's procedure.
- 15.5 Following completion of the complaints process, the Complaints Team send learning forms to all investigating managers so that they can highlight any learning issues from each complaint, along with a date for implementation. All learning is monitored through to implementation and then, at a later date, managers are requested to highlight the impact on practice of this learning.
- 15.6 The Complaints Team use a well organised records management system which has 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.
- 15.8 The Complaints Team have also received very positive feedback regarding the nature of their customer contact and their helpfulness when dealing with complaints as shown below.

15.9.1 Feedback from complainants

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

- *... communication was made in writing throughout to advise of the processes*
- *The complaint was handled very professionally and my concerns were listened to and acknowledged and I received a reply and communication about the complaint within the time scale advised.*
- *I particularly appreciated the opportunity to discuss my concerns and the exact nature of my complaint with the lady who contacted me by telephone. She was most empathetic and objective. After that I felt quite comfortable that the issues raised were understood and would be dealt with in an appropriate and professional manner.*

15.9.2 Feedback from Internal Staff

- ... compliments for the “sterling” job done by the team and the support you provide to the Directorate in relation to complaints. It is much appreciated and please continue to do more of the same
- I have to say, I have learnt a lot from you. Your support with the complaints I have had to respond to has been very gratefully received and I think we’ve had fun along the way. Not sure what I will do without you when an LGO comes my way
- ... complimented the Complaints Team on the amazing job you do and a massive thank you for the support you provide, it is invaluable.

16. Reporting on Complaints

- 16.1 Live complaint reports for assistant directors and heads of service are produced monthly. These reports enable heads of service and the assistant directors for both the Adults Social Care teams and Commissioning, to track timescales and intervene if there is a risk that a complaint will not be dealt with within the desired time limit.
- 16.2 Quarterly complaint reports for the Directorate Leadership Team, detail activity and performance, including categories of complaint and outcomes by service area and team, along with any learning; data which highlights any emerging trends. This ensures that managers can again intervene early if a problem is detected. Reports also include percentages of complaints received under each process, along with related response timescales.
- 16.3 Ombudsman activity / responses are also reported to DLT and CLT (Corporate Leadership Team) on a monthly basis.
- 16.4 The reporting process to senior management is an established and very important part of the complaint’s procedure. Where potential improvements to this process are identified, however minor, these are built into the process immediately by the Performance and Complaints Team.

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

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

17. Looking ahead to 2022/23

- 17.1 During 2022/23, 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.
- 17.3 The Performance and Complaints Team will be working with a Head of Service in Adults Social Care to collate data and also consider learning arising from informal complaints, so that opportunities to improve practice are taken at all levels.

18. Conclusion

- 18.1 During 2020/21 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.
- 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 During 2022/23, 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 2022