

Solihull Adult Social Care

Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2024-2025



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

1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

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 2024 to 31 March 2025.
- 1.2 The procedure for dealing with complaints and representations relating to Adults Social Care Services is determined by the following legislation:
 - The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009; and
 - The accompanying guidance 'Listening, Responding, Improving: A guide to better customer care' (DoH February 2009).
- 1.3 The Regulations cover complaints made in relation to NHS and Adult Social Care Services and/or any of its commissioned services and/or independent services.

The Regulations state that:

- a. Every organisation must have a Complaints Manager.
- b. Every organisation has a single stage system to deal with complaints.
- c. Complaints should be dealt with within a maximum of 6 months and that this can only be extended with the complainant's agreement.
- d. Following investigation of the complaint by the Council, if the complainant is still unhappy, the next stage is to approach the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.
- e. Every organisation should make the complainant aware of the response period that they work to and the way the response will be handled.
- f. Where complaints involve several organisations, these organisations should discuss and agree who will take the lead.
- g. The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman will consider complaints from those people who fund their own social care and will liaise directly with the relevant organisation.
- h. Complainants must approach the Council to highlight their complaint within twelve months of the incident happening, or within twelve months* of discovering the problem.

*Complaints outside of this timescale will be considered individually by the Council's Complaints Team and an assessment made regarding whether a fair and transparent investigation can still be carried out.

2. The Complaints Team

In Solihull, the responsibility for the management and day to day administration of complaints for Adults and Children's Services lies with the Children's & Adults Complaints Team.

This team is part of the Business Improvement and Performance Division, within the Resources Directorate. The Complaints Team strive to ensure that:

- a. They achieve respectful dialogue with all complainants and work with investigating professionals to provide the best response in the most efficient timescales.
- b. Requests to raise complaints are acknowledged within 3 working days.
- c. Complaints are responded to within 60 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 2024/25 financial year, Solihull's Adult Social Care Services received 56 new complaints from individual service users/ their families. This is a slight increase (12%) in comparison with the 50 new complaints received in 2023/24.
- 4.2 Of these 56 new complaints, 37 (66%) named a Council's Adult Social Work team, 18 (32%) named a commissioned provider; and the Council's finance teams who deal with Adults Social Care Finance were named in 7 (12.5%) other complaints. The total number/percentage of complaints per area are greater than 56 and 100%, as some complaints are split across multiple teams (see figure 3 below).

When considering the numbers of new complaints, it is also important to consider the percentage of those complaints/ issues that following investigation, are upheld/partly upheld (see 10.2 below).

- 4.3 The 18 new complaints concerning Solihull's commissioned providers (which include residential and nursing homes and those providing care in the home)

is a very slight increase when compared to the 18 which were received in 2023/24.

- 4.4 Fig 1 below shows the number of new complaints received in 2024/25 (56) split across each quarter. The lowest number was received in Quarter 2 (10). The highest number of new complaints were received in Quarter 1 (18).

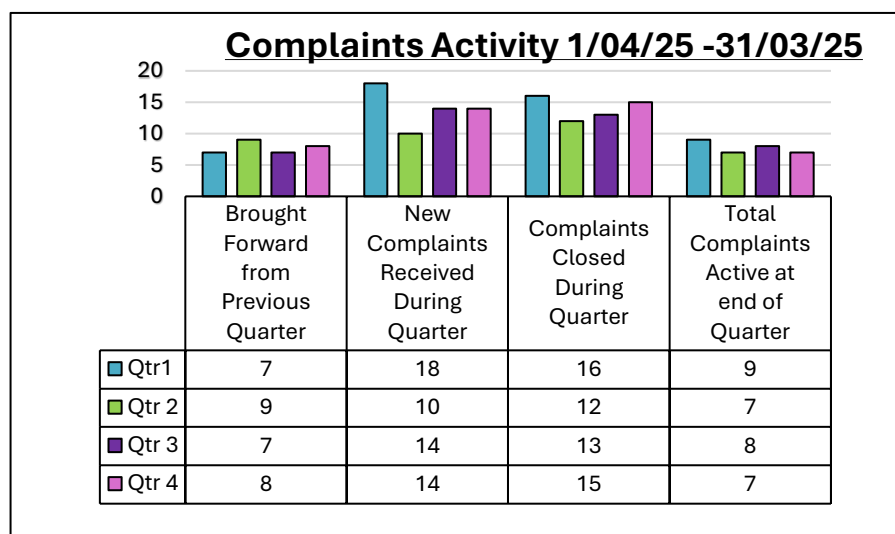


Fig. 1

5 How We Received Complaints

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

Clear information, advising service users about how they can make complaints regarding Adults Social Care Services, is provided on Solihull Council's website at <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Tell-us/Adult-social-care-complaints>. There are details outlining a range of ways in which service users can raise their concerns or request to raise a formal complaint. These include e-mail, telephone, completing a complaints leaflet (downloadable from the website) or writing to the Complaints Team at the address provided.

The Council does have a translation and interpreting service for users of Council services where their first language is not English or due to their disability or impairment, they require alternative formats such as British Sign Language, large print etc.

- 5.2 Figure 2 below shows that in 2024/25, initial contacts regarding Adult Social Care Services complaints were received in four different ways:

66% by e-mail, 30% by telephone, 2% complaint leaflets and 2% from meeting complainants in person. The majority of complainants have continued to choose to raise their initial concerns via email. It is noticeable that initial contact through telephone has increased in comparison to previous years.

Method	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Letter	2%	6%	-
Email	74%	72%	66%
Complaints Leaflet	2%	4%	2%
Telephone	22%	18%	30%
In Person	-	-	2%

Fig. 2

- 5.3 Email contact provides complainants with written evidence of the submission of their complaint, along with any follow up conversations and enables the Complaints Team to acknowledge the request to make a formal complaint quickly. This is something that is reassuring to complainants.

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

- 5.4 It is noticeable that initial contact by telephone has also increased this year, which outlines the importance to some complainants of having personal contact with the Complaints Team and which is something that some people from the older generations tend to prefer.

Telephone conversations, where necessary, between the Complaints Team and the complainant, also give both parties the opportunity to discuss concerns and ask any further questions in respect to the progression of their complaint. Maintaining good communication with complainants, as outlined above, also assists the Complaints Team to accurately reflect the issues being raised and therefore obtain good quality responses from investigating managers.

- 5.5 Talking to complainants can also mean 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 2024/25, handled 55 such "duty" cases for Adults Social Care Services compared to 74 in 2023/24. 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.

- 5.6.1 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.

- 5.6 2 In addition, and as outlined in The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, a complaint may also be made by “*a person who is affected, or likely to be affected, by the action, omission or decision of the responsible body which is the subject of the complaint.*” This person may not be the service user and hence consent, in these circumstances, would not be applicable.

6. Who Made Complaints?

- 6.1 During 2024/25, Solihull Council's Adult Social Care Services provided a service to 8896 customers (including carers).

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

- 6.2 The 56 new formal complaints received were therefore, from only 0.6% of these people. This is the same percentage of complaints as received in 2023/24.

Females made up 71% of these complainants, whilst 29% 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 for further advice, if they feel that the outcome of the safeguarding investigation has not resolved all of their concerns.
- 7.4 If any such issues are raised in relation to those people receiving a homecare service, or living in residential or nursing homes, then the Complaints Team

will also notify the appropriate Care Quality Monitoring Officer immediately, who will then work closely with the relevant social care team to try and resolve any identified issues, as soon as possible. The CQC (Care Quality Commission) may also be notified.

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

- 8.1 Figure 3 (below) shows a comparison of both new complaints and the number of associated issues within these complaints for each service area/team, both in 2023/24 and 2024/25.

There are some complaints which focus mainly on one particular area/team of Adults Social Care, but that also involve a number of issues for another team/teams, and this is shown below in the total number of complaints against those teams.

Service Area	Number of complaints 23/24	Number of issues 23/24	Number of complaints 24/25	Number of issues 24/25
Adults Disability Team	13	40	5	7
Adults Duty Team	3	8	3	13
ASC Connect	1	2	2	2
ASC in general (no specific team referred to)	-	-	2	2
DoLS Team	1	9	-	-
Emergency Duty Team (out of hours)	1	1	2	3
Hospital SW Team	10	39	10	56
Mental Health & Autism Team	4	22	3	13
Older Adults Community Team	3	3	11	56
Occupational Therapy Team	1	1	9	27
Solihull Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB)	-	-	1	4
Reablement	1	1	-	-
Adult Social Care teams	38	126	48	183
Adult Social Care Finance/Income and Awards teams	12	28	7	20
Independent Providers	18	96	17	198
Grand Total	68	250	*72	401

* This number is greater than 56 as some complaints are split across multiple teams/areas.

Fig. 3

- 8.2 There has been an 12% increase in the number of new complaints (56) received in 2024/25 compared to the 50 received in 2023/24, with a 60% increase in the total number of issues raised. It is to be noted however, that 138 of the complaint issues in 2024/25 were generated from just 4 of the new complaints received.

- 8.3 There has been a significant decrease in the number of new complaints for Solihull's Adult Disability Team who have seen a 62% decrease in complaints in comparison to 2023/24. This significant improvement reflects a stronger management position; specifically a stable and fully occupied management structure, which has enabled the team to respond and achieve resolution at an informal level more often.
- 8.4 There has been a significant increase in complaints and issues for the Older Adults Community Team; however after investigating these issues, 80% (45/56) were found to be not upheld or inconclusive and 25 of the 57 issues were generated from just 1 complaint. This indicates that the other 10 complaints contained only a small number of issues.
- 8.5 The number of complaints (10) received in reference to services provided by the Hospital Social Work Team has remained consistent in comparison to 2023/2024 (10).
- 8.6 The Occupational Therapy Team has also seen an increase in the numbers of complaints from one in 2023/24 to nine, along with the number of issues received. 52% (14/27) of the issues raised were found to be either not upheld, or inconclusive. One of the nine complaints received in 2024/25, one was later withdrawn.
- The increase in the number of complaints and issues received by the Occupational Therapy Team this year should be viewed in the context of the team's proactive work to reduce waiting lists and waiting times. As a result of these efforts, a greater number of people have been supported, which brings increased visibility and more opportunities for feedback.
- 8.7 Detailed performance reporting to senior management ensures that numbers of complaints are highlighted, and any actions taken where required.

9. Categories of new issues raised within complaints

9.1 Adults Social Work and Adult Social Care Finance

As shown in fig 3 above and figs 4 and 5 below, there were a total of 401 separate issues defined within the 56 new complaints received in 2024/25.

Fig 3 confirms that there were 183 issues for the Adults Social Work teams, 20 for Income and Awards / Adult Social Care Finance and 198 issues for Solihull's commissioned providers.

Type of issues	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Grand Total
ADULT SOCIAL CARE TEAMS					
Attitude and Behaviour of staff	15	4	7	7	33
Breach of confidentiality			1		1
Care provider not allocated			1		1
Consent not requested / provided				2	2
Correct process / procedure not followed	4		1		5
Decision making	4		1	1	6
Delay in providing support	4			2	5
Dissatisfaction with care plan / assessment / review process	27	1	4	1	33
Dissatisfaction with Direct Payment / Process				1	1
Failure to complete agreed outcome	2	1		1	4
Financial support not provided	1				1
Frequent change of Social Worker			1		1
Funding of care - Financial Assessment / Charges	4	4	3		11
Impact of LA policy on service user	1				1
Meetings not held on time			1	1	2
Recording of information		1	1		2
Support not provided by allocated worker	1	1	1		3
Unsatisfactory Communication	25	9	16	20	70
Grand Total	8	21	38	36	183
ADULT SOCIAL CARE FINANCE					
Consent not requested / provided	1				1
Correct process / procedure not followed				2	2
Dissatisfaction with Direct Payment / Process				3	3
Financial support not provided				1	1
Funding of care - Financial Assessment / Charges		1		2	3
Impact of LA policy on service user				1	1
Recording of information				1	1
Unsatisfactory Communication				8	8
Grand Total	1	1	0	18	20

Fig. 4

- 9.2 Figure 4 above, shows that the main issue of complaint for the Adult Social Work teams was “*Unsatisfactory Communication*” (70 issues received). These issues were generated from 16 of 36 complaints concerning the Adults social work teams. Unsatisfactory communication is a common root cause for complaints in any complaints arena and continual improvements in this area can have a very positive impact on a reduction in complaints.
- 9.3 The next most common issues of complaint were, “*Attitude and behaviour* and ‘*Dissatisfaction with care plan / assessment / review process*’, with 33 issues each. These complaint issues were generated from 12 of the 36 new complaints for the social work teams.

The three issues outlined above give a combined total of 79% (137/183) of the total number of new Adult Social Work issues received in 2024/2025.

9.4 Commissioned providers

Type of Issues (Independent Provider)	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Grand Total
Attitude and Behaviour of staff	9	16	8	2	35
Correct process / procedure not followed	1	1			2
Delay in service being allocated	1				1
Dissatisfaction with care plan / assessment / review process		2			2
Dissatisfaction with quality of care	48	30	6	4	88
Failure to complete agreed outcome	1	1			2
Falsifying of records	3				3
Funding of care - Financial Assessment / Charges	1				1
Inappropriate type of worker allocated				1	1
Incorrect time of service call	2	1	3	2	8
Missed medication / wrongly administered	4		1	1	6
Poor cleanliness in home				1	1
Poor record keeping	2				2
Recording of information			2		2
Safety Issues (non-safeguarding)	5				5
Service call not provided		1			1
Unsatisfactory Communication	8	24	3	3	38
Grand Total	85	76	23	14	198

Fig. 5

As shown in fig 5 above, 49% (198/401) of the total new issues raised in 2024/25 were in relation to commissioned providers.

Fig 5 shows that during 2024/25, the main area of complaint regarding commissioned providers was “*Dissatisfaction with quality of care*” (88). This is a significant increase in comparison to the 35 received in 2023/24; however, this type of issue would not be unexpected when dealing with concerns regarding care providers. This is supported by the fact that 10 of the 18 commissioned new provider complaints all raised concerns in regard to this issue.

- 9.5 The second highest issue is Unsatisfactory Communication (38). As outlined at 9.2 above, unsatisfactory communication is a common root cause for complaints in any complaints arena and continual improvements in this area can have a very positive impact on a reduction in complaints; however, it is important to note that these 38 issues were generated from just 2 of the 18 complaints received in respect of commissioned services.
- 9.6 The Complaints Team liaise with providers to ensure that all complaint issues raised have been responded to in detail and any corresponding learning actions have been identified, via the completion of an action plan. Each action plan is then forwarded to and monitored by the appropriate Care Quality Monitoring Officer.
- 9.7 Performance reports to senior managers include further detail concerning all types of issues raised across Adults Social Care, so that any emerging trends or themes can be highlighted and responded to appropriately.

9.8 Statutory & corporate complaints procedures

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

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

A complaint may be made by—

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

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

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

Issues v complaints procedure					
Types of new complaint issues	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Grand Total
Corporate	1	-	2	2	5
Statutory	173	98	59	66	396
Grand Total	174	98	61	68	401

Fig. 6

9.9 As shown in fig 6 above, 99% (396) of the new complaint issues received in 2024/25 were progressed through the statutory complaints process and only 1% (5) via the corporate process.

9.10 In line with the Council's legal obligations under Part 7 of the Immigration Act 2016, the Council's complaints procedure incorporates a measure in which a customer can make a formal complaint to the Council, should any member of the public feel that a customer-facing council officer has insufficient fluency in spoken English in the performance of their role.
Since the implementation of the Act, we have received no formal complaints on this basis. This is a positive indicator regarding the quality of staff employed in Adults Social Care Services.

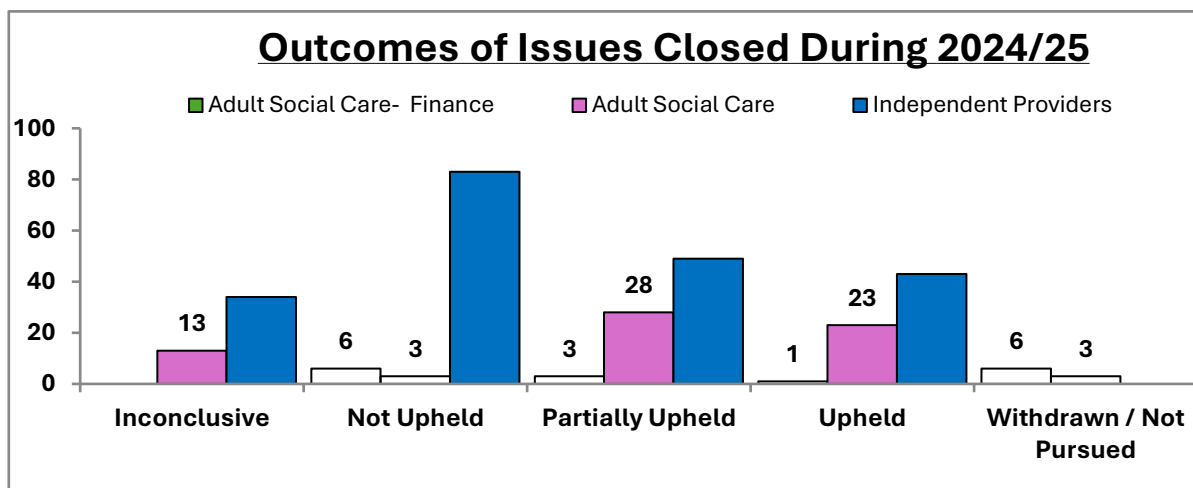


Fig. 7

10. Outcome of complaint issues investigated

- 10.1 There were 389 issues investigated and responded to during 2024/25. Some of the issues in fig 7 above relate to investigations that were ongoing and brought forward from 2023/24 and where outcomes were found in 2024/25.

2 of the 56 complaints closed in 2024/25 were withdrawn and therefore were not investigated and hence the outcomes shown above were identified from 54 complaint investigations completed in 2024/25.

67 issues were upheld, 80 were partially upheld, 195 were not upheld and 47 were found to be inconclusive.

- 10.2 Fig 7 shows that 38% (147/ 389) of issues investigated during 2024/25 were upheld or partially upheld. This is a decrease in comparison to the 47% of issues upheld and partially upheld in 2023/24. This decrease is significant when considering the number of new issues that were generated in 2024/25, in comparison to those in 2023/24.

As outlined at 12.4 below, the quality of investigation and therefore complaint response in Solihull remains thorough and this appears to correlate with the low number of cases which are referred to the LGSCO (Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman) which are investigated and where fault is then found by the Ombudsman.

11. Timescales of complaint responses within Adult Services

- 11.1 The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, state in 14(3), that the Local Authority should respond to an Adult Social Services complaint within a period of six months.
- 11.2 Solihull Adult Social Care Services strive to address complaints in a much shorter and hence more efficient timescale for complainants and an internal 30 working day timescale was introduced in 2013/14.

The Complaints Team provide a quality checking service for all investigating managers who are required to provide complaint responses. The relevant Assistant Director (and the Director, where required) also work with the

Complaints Team to monitor the quality of responses and to provide covering letters for each one.

Complaints Handling Response Times						
Working Days to Respond	Adult Social Care 2024/25		Adult Social Care (Finance) 2024/25		Independent Provider 2024 / 25	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0-30	25	73%	2	100%	3	18%
31 - 40	6	18%	-	-	1	5%
41+	3	9%	-	-	14	77%
Withdrawn	1	-	1	-	-	-

fig. 8

- 11.3 73% (25/34) of complaints responded to in 2024/25 regarding the Adults Social Care teams were completed within the Council's internal 30 working day timescale.
- 11.4 100% (2/2) Adult Social Care Finance complaints investigated in 2024/25 were closed within the 30-working day timescale (a further 1 complaint was withdrawn).
- 11.5 18% (3/18) of the commissioned provider complaints were responded to within 30 working days. As commissioned providers, these teams sit outside of the internal communication and first line leadership structures of Solihull Adults Social Care and this can lead to some delays in communication concerning the details of complaint responses. The Complaints Team will however continue to work with commissioned providers and their colleagues in Adults Social Care with an aim to increase the number of provider complaint investigations completed within the Council's internal timeframe in 2025/26.
- 11.6 As outlined at 8.2 above, there has been a significant increase in the number complaint issues in 2024/25. The increase of 151 issues involving both Adults Social Care and commissioned providers demonstrates the detail of complaints being made and the associated investigations and responses needing to be very thorough. This can mean that some complaint responses take slightly more time to respond to as demonstrated at figure 8 above.
- 11.7 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.

- 11.8 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 2024/25 the LGSCO classed 2 cases as upheld: however they confirmed that the Council had provided a satisfactory remedy before the

complaint reached the Ombudsman and therefore issued “*declined to investigate*” letters.

None of the Adult Social Care complaints that were referred to the LGSCO in 2024/25 were investigated by the Ombudsman and Solihull ASC continue to do well in a landscape where nationally numbers of upheld complaints are increasing.

- 12.2 A case brought forward from 23/24 was closed and the outcome identified as fault found.
- 12.3 Complaint investigations in Solihull are thorough and therefore the quality of complaint response is good. This appears to correlate with the low number of cases which are referred to the LGSCO where fault is then found.

13. Learning from Complaints

- 13.1 98% (49/50) of the learning forms sent to investigating managers in 2024/25, following an investigation, had been completed and returned by the end of the reporting period. Only one form was outstanding at the end of the year.

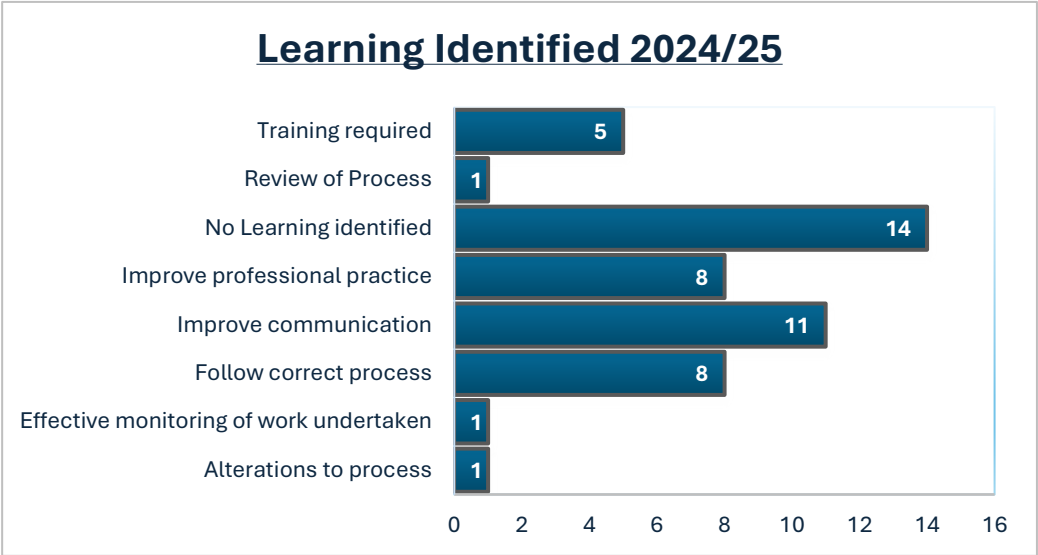


Fig. 10

- 13.2 Fig 10 shows the learning identified from the forms that were returned in 2024/25. From those 49 learning forms, 18 identified that ‘No Learning’ had been identified which would correlate with numbers of not upheld/partly upheld issues outlined at section 10 above.
- 13.3 The main area highlighted for improvement was to “Improve communication” (11 learning issues). This is in line with the information provided above at 9.2.

Any learning issues raised are followed up by the Complaints Team until implementation is confirmed by the Investigating Manager.

Data regarding the implementation of learning is then formatted into spreadsheets and distributed to senior staff, so that this can be tracked by them and managers can comment on the differences that learning has made to practice.

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

- **A complaint was received from a mother who raised issues on behalf of her son in respect to adaptations needed to her property. The mother was dissatisfied with the advice she had received from ASC in respect to adaptations needed to support her son who had learning disabilities. The complainant raised concerns about Solihull Local Authority disputing who should provide the necessary adaptations to their property.**

The complainant was informed that the Occupational Therapist (OT) involved and several members of staff, had all attempted to contact the other Local Authority involved, to follow up the referral that been made on behalf of the complainant's son, with recommendations from the OT who completed the initial assessment.

Due to complications around the ownership of the property, this case was complex and highlighted that there was a lack of clarity for people who live in Solihull, but their property is owned by another Local Authority.

Due to issues beyond Solihull Council's control, the team involved struggled to progress the matter. The complaint was partially upheld and an apology was provided to the complainant for the delays that the family had experienced. To assist and attempt to resolve the matter, a Head of Service contacted his peer in the other Local Authority involved, who agreed to progress the case based on the OT assessment and subject to them being in agreement with the outcome.

Amendments were made to internal processes, to ensure that when a resident's property is identified under a different Local Authority, the OT is fully aware that referrals are passed directly to the respective Local Authority for their undertaking of the recommended works.

Members of staff were also informed about the new internal processes, to ensure future residents needs are met and that this process is not delayed unnecessarily.

- **A complainant raised concerns on behalf of a service user in respect to the care being provided by an independent care agency and the lack of communication she had received from the agency. The complainant also raised concerns about the Social Worker not dealing with the complainant's concerns appropriately to improve the situation.**

It was explained to the complainant that the Social Worker had addressed these issues with staff at the care agency directly; however, it was also acknowledged that this approach had not been wholly successful, as the service user continued to experience issues.

The response to the complainant outlined that her concerns should also have been escalated to a different team who monitor the standard of services commissioned by the Council.

The complainant was offered assurances that there is a local process in place for practitioners within operational teams to escalate quality concerns to the appropriate team; however, this was not followed in this instance. An apology was provided to acknowledge that although the worker did attempt to deal with the issues by directly talking to the care agency, an escalation of the concerns raised did not happen.

This complaint was shared within team meetings and staff were reminded of the importance of practitioners escalating recurrent concerns about providers to the appropriate team which would avoid repeat instances of unaddressed concerns relating to commissioned providers.

- 13.5 The two examples above relate to *Alterations to Process* and *Following correct process*. The learning embedded within Solihull Adult Social Care in 2024/25 will have a positive impact on the services provided in 2025/26, as it has done in previous years.

Some further examples of this are as follows:

- **An Occupational Therapy complaint identified that a member of staff visited a service without having full awareness of the individuals specific disabilities.**

To ensure matters such as this can be prevented from happening in the future, all staff were encouraged to ensure they research conditions they are unfamiliar with, prior to carrying out visits. Staff were also encouraged to speak with service users and discuss their disability to ensure they can support them appropriately.

- **A finance complaint involved a service user contacting the Sundry Income Team to raise some issues, however the queries raised were not matters the Sundry Income Team could respond to. Although the person who took the call did contact and pass this query to a different team to look into, the service user was not correctly advised about their queries being passed on to a different team, leaving the service user confused.**

The learning identified the importance of communication and when service users queries are passed on, staff should inform them of what they are doing to ensure that the customer is fully aware that their concerns have been referred to another department.

- **A Mental Health complaint involved a service user not receiving a response to emails in a timely manner.**

The investigation identified that although that numerous response emails were provided to the service user, there were other emails that should have been responded to sooner. The manager who investigated the complaint spoke to the member of staff involved and the team about the importance of communication and responding to emails in a timely manner.

- 13.6 Findings from provider complaints are discussed with individual providers and the implementation of actions and any training is monitored by the Care Quality Team. Any progress and learning are also reported into contract

meetings by the appropriate Care Quality Monitoring Officer. Key themes from complaints are shared through the Social Care Provider Market and Quality Forum so that there is wider learning for all providers.

14. Compliments for the Adults Social Care teams

14.1 318 compliments were received for Adults Social Care in 2024/25.

Within the 318 compliments received, several of the compliments also involved services provided by two teams. This demonstrates how teams working together can have a very positive outcome for the person receiving the service.

Fig 11 below shows a total of the individual compliments received for each service area.

Compliments received in 2024/25	
Adult Social Care teams (internal staff)	198
Independent providers	110
SMBC Care Homes (internal staff)	16
Commissioning and Brokerage Team (internal staff)	8
Grand Total	332

Fig. 11

14.2 The Reablement Team received the highest number of Adult Social Care compliments in 2024/25 (48), followed by the Occupational Therapy Team (40) and Older Adults Community Team (34).

14.3 During 2024/25, Solihull Adults Social Care Services received 110 compliments in relation to the services provided by its commissioned providers, of which 51 were for Nationwide Homecare Services.

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

Reablement Team

"My mom & myself would like to thank you for all your support and guidance since you became our Case Manager. Any questions we had, you answered us and assisted with extra carers when we needed them. Both of us being new to the care side of things, we did not have a clue. We were assigned to you and you have been absolutely brilliant. We cannot thank you enough. All the very best in what you do and thank you again."

Mental Health Team

"I wanted to take a moment to express my gratitude for your encouragement and support during our recent conversation. Your positivity and inspiration have truly helped me stay motivated. Following your visit a few weeks ago, I

was feeling exhausted and discouraged, but you gave me the strength to keep moving forward. Thank you for being a source of encouragement and inspiration.”

Older Adults Community Team

“Thank you for helping me take a break from my caring role for a little while and allowing me to connect with friends and family. I appreciate all you have done for me and my mother and I’m sure for the many others you have on your case load.”

DoLS Team and Hospital SW Team

“I want to express my thanks for the work done to help my mother return home. I am very impressed with the DoL reports and can see a lot of work has gone into representing his mum’s needs and wishes. I would to thank X for his hard work in persevering with the provider, to ensure my mum gets the right care package.”

ASC Connect

“I am most grateful for all of the help i received from SMBC and the signposting information provided by to me. It was so helpful I passed it onto my own mother. The service I received from SMBC has been golden.”

Adult Disability and Autism Team

“ We have been lucky to have you at the end of a telephone or email for advice and support with however important or trivial my questions have been. I can’t lie, I am nervous at the prospect of not having you around, but I am confident with the foundations you have laid down for the next phase of his adult life, he will continue to thrive with the people you have introduced us to”

Universal (Commissioned provider)

"I would like to thank all the people who have helped my husband and myself since he was discharged home, every carer that came to help us came in so caring and kind always with a smile. We couldn't have hand picked our carers any better, they were all really special people. Can I thank each and everyone of them.”

Reablement Team

" Thank you for what you have done, it is really appreciated. The time and effort you have taken is amazing. It looks really nice and i have started prepping mum. Thanks for taking the time to help understand what is needed for mum and putting me in touch with the supporting organisations. Many Thanks again”

Nationwide (Commissioned Provider)

“During my visit, his daughter said how happy they are with the morning carer and that the carer has brought him out of his shell. She said they are very good and they would like Nationwide to be in touch as he will require a long term package of care”.

14.5 Compliments from professionals by team

Commissioning and Brokerage

"The support and the guidance provided by yourself has been very much appreciated and has helped us to understand and clarify what is required by us as a provider by Solihull Council."

We will continue to work to the standards that you have seen in the latest visit. I also feel if there was anything I was unsure of I could approach you for advice. Thank you for all your help."

Hospital Social Work Team

I have never transitioned a new client and had such good communication care for my client in my entire career. I felt like I knew her forever she was supportive, explained the process and when we did the care package she was realistic and came out to see that he was settled. She didn't rush the process. Every time I have had running's with the SW I will always state she was one of the best and Solihull is very lucky to have her."

Adult Disability Team

"I attended a DST meeting with the SW and I was really impressed with her exceptional advocacy skills and thorough preparation."

The SW clearly has a deep understanding of the challenges faced by Mr X and his family, due to his complex needs, as well as the significance of the meeting and the outcome for them. Her meticulous preparation, I believe, was crucial in influencing the assessment's positive outcome. Additionally, her warm rapport and compassion towards the family did not go unnoticed. It was a pleasure accompanying her at the meeting"

Older Adults Community Team

"He is very resistant to any care and support for his wife and has extreme views regarding pretty much everything. The workers involved have put a lot of extra time and effort into visits because the client would really benefit from a care package. They build a positive rapport with the husband and wife essentially to get a good outcome for client".

- 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 2024/25, the Complaints Team and Adults Social Care Services have continued to work very well together, aiming to ensure that timescales were met and high-quality responses were provided for complainants, in order to ensure that we consistently deliver high standards in processing complaints.

- 15.2 The quality of complaint responses is high, aided by the quality checking process between the Complaints Team and Adults Social Care investigating managers, and reminders are sent to investigating managers regarding the due dates for responses.

The numbers of complainants who return dissatisfied with their response is low and the quality of responses provided by the Council has helped to maintain a low level of referral and investigation by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman as highlighted in Section 12 above.

- 15.3 Detailed and timely conversations with prospective complainants, both by telephone and e-mail, continue to ensure that customers feel listened to and reassured that their concerns will be dealt with. Wherever possible, concerns are resolved outside of the formal complaints process with the agreement of the complainant which often expedites resolution of these concerns.
- 15.4 Careful analysis of complaints made in relation to Adults Social Care Services continues to ensure that complaints are pursued through the correct complaint's procedure.
- 15.5 Following completion of the complaints process, the Complaints Team send learning forms to all investigating managers so that they can highlight any learning issues from each complaint, along with a date for implementation. All learning is monitored through to implementation and then, at a later date, managers are requested to highlight the impact on practice of this learning.
- 15.6 The Complaints Team use a well organised records management system which has proven to be a very efficient way of recording complaints detail and ensures swift responses to both complainants and the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman. It also ensures that any member of the Complaints Team can, at any time, establish the current status of a complaint along with the detail of any correspondence that has taken place in relation to that complaint. This ensures that an excellent level of customer service is maintained.
- 15.7 Customer feedback is sought following each complaint via an on-line questionnaire (also available on request in printed format) which has been developed and published on the Smart Survey website. Complainants/their representatives are invited to feedback their comments concerning their experience of the complaints procedure and this in turn, will feed into the learning and improvement process.

As part of this process the Council seeks to gather equality information from service users to help them check that we are treating people fairly and to identify any issues we might need to address. For the period of 2024/25 there were no equality issues identified via this means.

- 15.8 The Complaints Team have also received very positive feedback regarding the nature of their customer contact and their helpfulness when dealing with complaints as shown below.

15.8.1 Feedback from Complainants

During 2024/25 the Complaints Team received the following feedback:

- *Everything has been explained clearly to me in the letter and they sent it in time. Thank you.*
- *XX from the department worked efficiently and kept me informed.*
- *Communication was made in writing throughout to advise of the processes.*
- *[They] kept me up to date with XX's consent status and did not brush it under the carpet.*

15.8.2 Feedback from professionals

- *“Thank you so much for your assistance, it made it so much easier to complete ... Thanks for progressing this so smoothly ... Even with the small number of questions – the general feel is very neat and compact ... You’re a star thank you for your help”*
- *“As with the previous set of minutes, your minutes are by far the best we have seen from any of the LA's and Trusts. Thank you so much, it makes our job easier and having the confidence that you will capture the conversations accurately means I can concentrate on chairing the meetings.”*

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, response timescales and any learning outcomes; data which highlights any emerging trends. This ensures that managers can again intervene early if a problem is detected.
- 16.3 Ombudsman activity / responses are also reported to DLT and CLT (Corporate Leadership Team) on a quarterly basis with the Chief Executive and Director being informed of all fault found outcomes as they are received.
- 16.4 The reporting process to senior management is an established and very important part of the complaint's procedure. Where potential improvements to this process are identified, however minor, these are built into the process immediately by the Complaints Team.

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

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

17. Looking ahead to 2025/26

- 17.1 During 2025/26, the Complaints Team will continue to work closely with all staff involved in investigating complaints; aiming to ensure that as many complaints as possible are responded to within the Council's internal day timescales and where possible, that concerns are resolved outside of this process.

- 17.2 The Complaints Team will also continue to provide high quality support to staff investigating complaints and those responding to any Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman investigations, as requested.
- 17.3 During 2025/26, the Complaints Team will continue to look at the accessibility of the complaints process and also revisit (in conjunction with the Council's Equality & Diversity Team) how they gather equality information from service users and we will use the insights to further improve the experiences for people accessing and utilising the complaints and compliments processes.

18. Conclusion

- 18.1 During 2024/25 the Complaints Team have, as always continued to work closely with Adults Social Care Services staff to ensure that as many responses as possible met the appropriate timescales and that complaint responses are of a high quality.
- 18.2 The quality of complaint responses has continued to have a positive impact on the requests for escalation and hence the very low numbers of complaints investigated by the LGSCO. In 2024/25, there was one fault found outcome following an investigation by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman in respect of Solihull Adults Social Care Services.
- 18.3 Detailed and quality performance reporting to senior management has continued, ensuring that any concerns are highlighted, and subsequent actions taken. The detail provided, along with the breakdown of complaint issues, means that focussed learning has continued and hence, has had a direct impact on service improvement and reduced the number of complaint issues raised in certain areas.
- 18.4 During 2025/26, the Complaints Team will continue, as always to review its practice in accordance with feedback from complainants and then work with managers and staff in Solihull Adults Social Care Services to make any changes that are essential to enhance the experience of people using their services and complainants in Solihull.

June 2025