

Enfield Council

Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints Annual Report 2022 - 2023

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023, Enfield Council supported nearly 4,800 clients to access long term care. We also undertook over 2,200 assessments and 3,000 reviews, supported nearly 3,200 carers and responded to over 3,500 safeguarding concerns. These statistics represent increased demand over the previous year.

Findings

During this period, the organisation received 30 complaints regarding Adult Social Care. The volume received decreased by 37.5% from 48 the previous year.

The significant decrease relates to Finance services due to changes in the Council's classification process following qualified advice on the remit of the statutory process received during 22/23. This results in financial assessment complaints now managed as corporate complaints.

The majority of complaints related to service quality and delays in assessment or provision.

14 complaints were referred by complainants to the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (a decrease compared to the previous year's figure of 17). Of these, 4 were investigated further by the Ombudsman with 4 decisions made (3 were upheld and 1 was not upheld).

Improvement Actions

Learning from complaints received identified two key themes; delays regarding assessment and provision, and individual case errors. Additionally, a theme from the complaint responses has also been identified specifically around response quality. The Council has identified improvement actions to address these areas, including the improvement of templates and officer training.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of complaints made about Enfield Council's Adult Social Care services during 2022-23, in accordance with the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.

The report provides information about all statutory complaints made between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023.

2. Overview of the Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints Process

The Department of Health defines a complaint as *“an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about the actions, decisions or apparent failings of a Council's adult social care provision which requires a response”*.

Anyone who has received, is currently receiving, or is seeking an adult social care service from Enfield Council can make a complaint. A family member, carer or formal representative may also complain on a service user's behalf.

Services provided by an external provider acting on the Council's behalf are also included. In such instances, complaints can be submitted directly to the provider or the Council.

The Adult Social Care statutory complaints process is comprised of one stage. The regulations stipulate that all complaints must be responded to, in writing, within six months of receiving the complaint. However, in Enfield we aim to complete our statutory complaint responses within 20 working days, which is similar to many local authorities.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the Council's response, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The LGSCO is an independent organisation empowered to review or investigate where it appears the Council's own investigations may not have resolved the complaint or handled it appropriately.

3. Adult Social Care Service Users

In order to provide some context in relation to the complaints submitted, Enfield Council's Adult Social Care Service received over 7,280 contacts and enquiries from residents in 2022-23, alongside supporting nearly 4,800 clients to access long term care during the year. We also undertook over 2,200 assessments and 3,000 reviews, supported nearly 3,200 carers and responded to over 3,500 safeguarding concerns.

During this period:

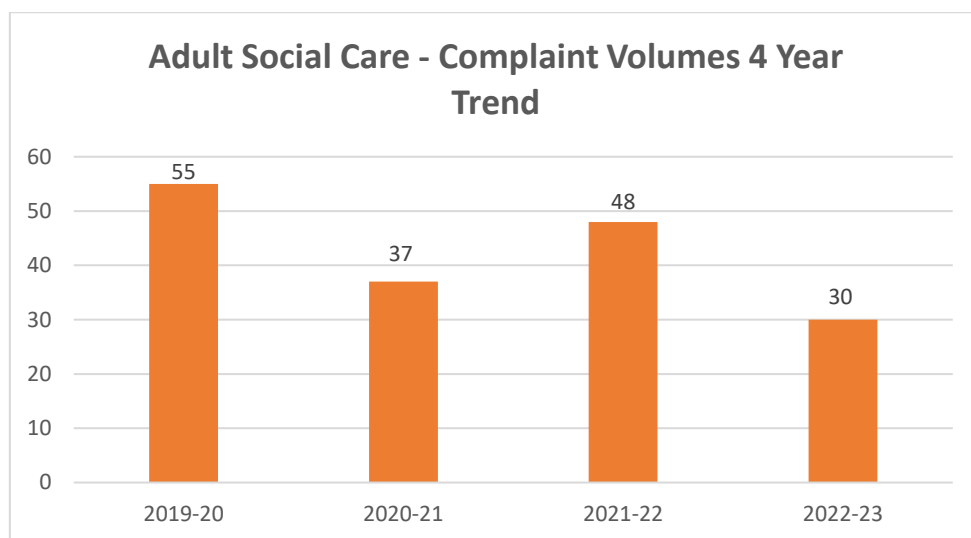
- 979 service users were assessed under the Care Act as being eligible for long term support.
- Over 10,100 pieces of equipment were provided to social care service users and over 3,680 home adaptations were undertaken.

These statistics represent increased demand over the previous year.

4. Complaints

4.1 Overview

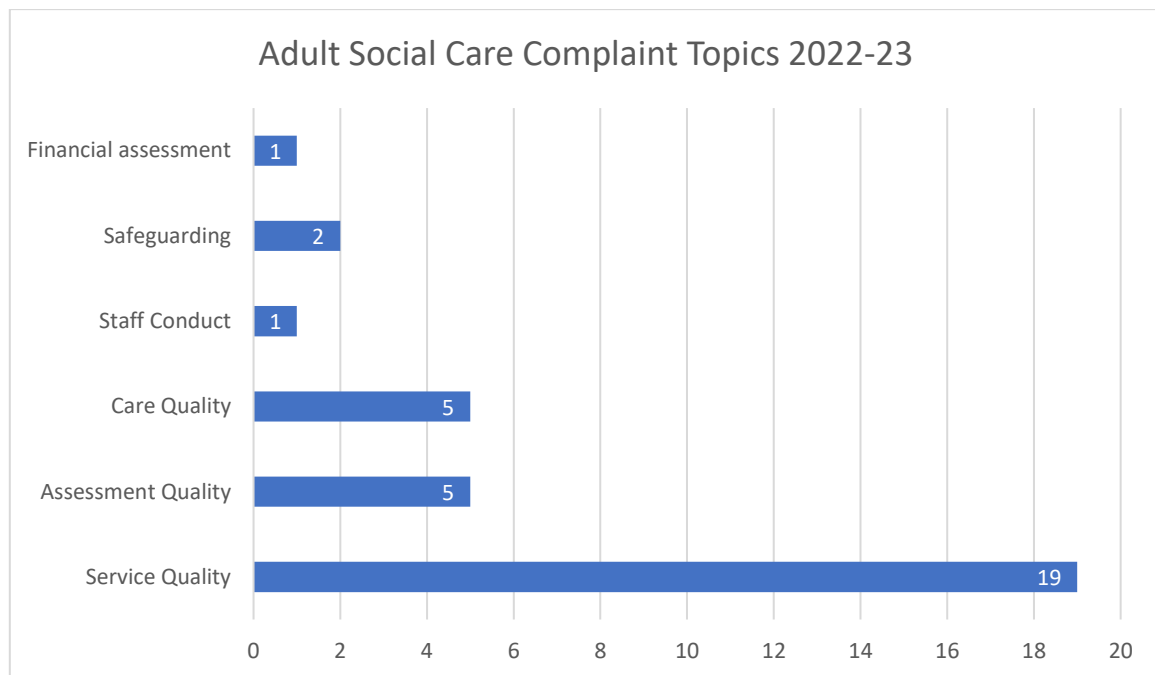
During 2022/23, Enfield Council received 30 Adult Social Care statutory complaints. This is the lowest figure across four years and represents 2% of the total number of complaints received by the Council across all corporate and statutory services during the year.



2022/23 complaints volume represents just 0.4% of the total number of contacts the service had with its customers during that year. The low complaint rate and decrease in complaints received is within the context of increased service pressures from resident demand and the ongoing staffing recruitment difficulties in adult social care.

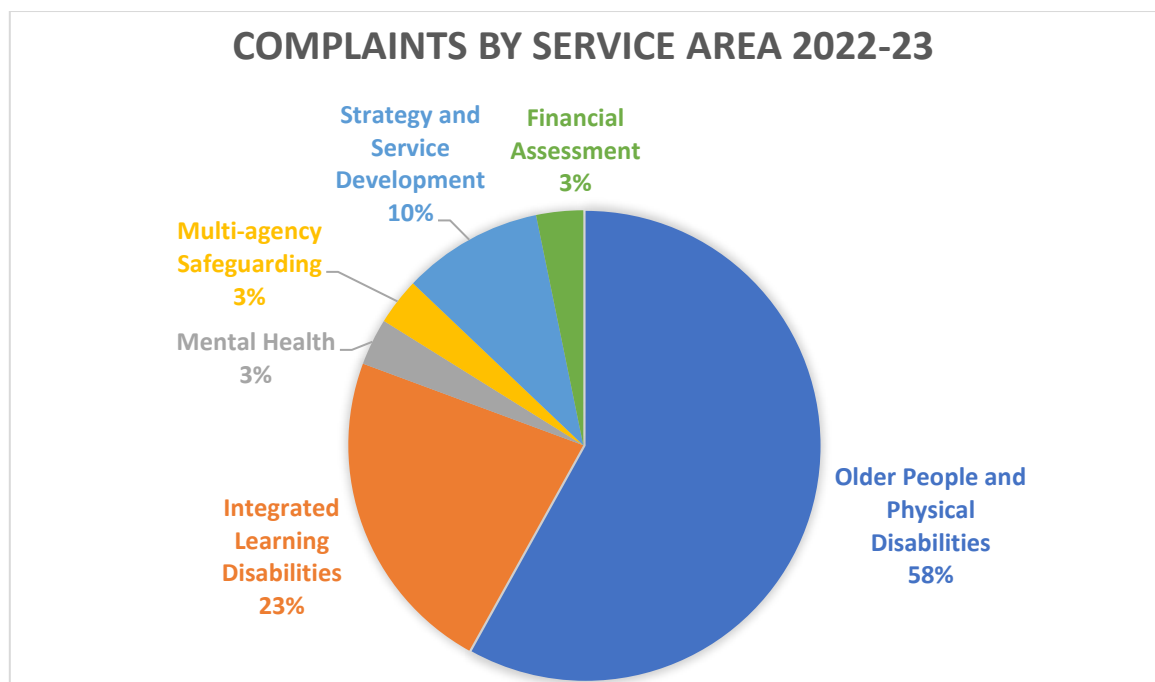
To give further context, there were 16 complaints about ASC finance activity last year as financial assessment complaints are only counted if there are other aspects of care involved in the complaint.

4.2 Nature of Complaints



The total number of topics does not match the number of complaints received, as complaints may cover more than one area. In terms of the types of complaints received during 22/23, the largest volumes related to dissatisfaction with service quality received.

4.3 Complaints by Service Area



Comparison to 21/22:

Service	2021-22	2022-23
Older People & Physical Disabilities	24	17
Integrated Learning Disabilities	3	7
Strategy and Service Development	4	3
Mental Health	0	1
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)*	0	1
Finance	n/a	1

*The (Adults) MASH is located within Older People and Physical Disabilities service; however, it represents a different type of service to standard social care and occupational therapy services and is therefore represented individually within this report.

The table shows that there has been a notable decrease in complaint volumes for Older People & Physical Disabilities, followed by a slight decrease for Strategy & Development service. The Integrated Learning Disability Service have increased with marginal increases for Mental Health and MASH (multi-agency support hub).

Service areas within Adult Social Care differ in size and their roles may differ. Therefore, comparing total complaint numbers for each service area provides limited insight. As such, this section provides further detail on the types of complaints received per service area.

The Older People and Physical Disabilities Service, as the largest service, receives the highest number of complaints. In 2022/23 complaints concerned:

- Service Quality: 10
- Assessment Quality: 2
- Care Quality: 3
- Staff Conduct: 1
- Safeguarding Issues: 1

The Integrated Learning Disability Service's complaints related to

- Service quality: 3
- Assessment quality: 3
- Care quality: 1

Actions to address these themes are detailed within section 5.

4.4 Complaint Response Timescales

All complaints were responded to on time, within the statutory 6 months target as stated within regulations. With regard to the Council's voluntary local 20 working day target, 23 of the 30 (77%) received complaints were responded to within 20-days. This is a decrease on the previous year, in which 87.5% of complaints were responded to on time. However, complaints that were late in 22-23 ranged between 2 working days and 16 working days overdue, an improvement on 21-22, in which the longest complaint was 26 working days late.

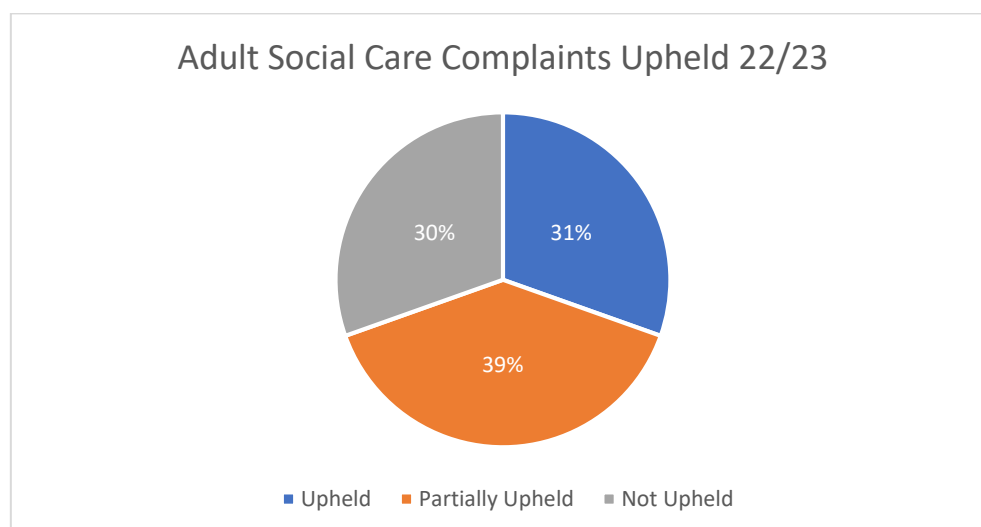
4.5 Upheld Rates

The introduction of a new case management system has allowed data capture of upheld rates, an improvement on previous years' reports. This covers complaints received since 22 June 2022, when the new case management system was introduced.

The Council has three categories:

- Upheld: all complaint points were upheld by the Council.
- Partially Upheld: some points of the complaint were upheld, but others were not.
- Not upheld: no aspect of the complaint was upheld.

The proportions of these were as follows:



This gives a fully upheld rate of 30% and a rate of complaints with at least one aspect upheld of 69%.

The upheld and partially upheld complaints occurred across services as follows:

Service	Upheld	Partially Upheld
Older People & Physical Disabilities	2	6
Integrated Learning Disabilities	3	3
Strategy & Service Development	2	0

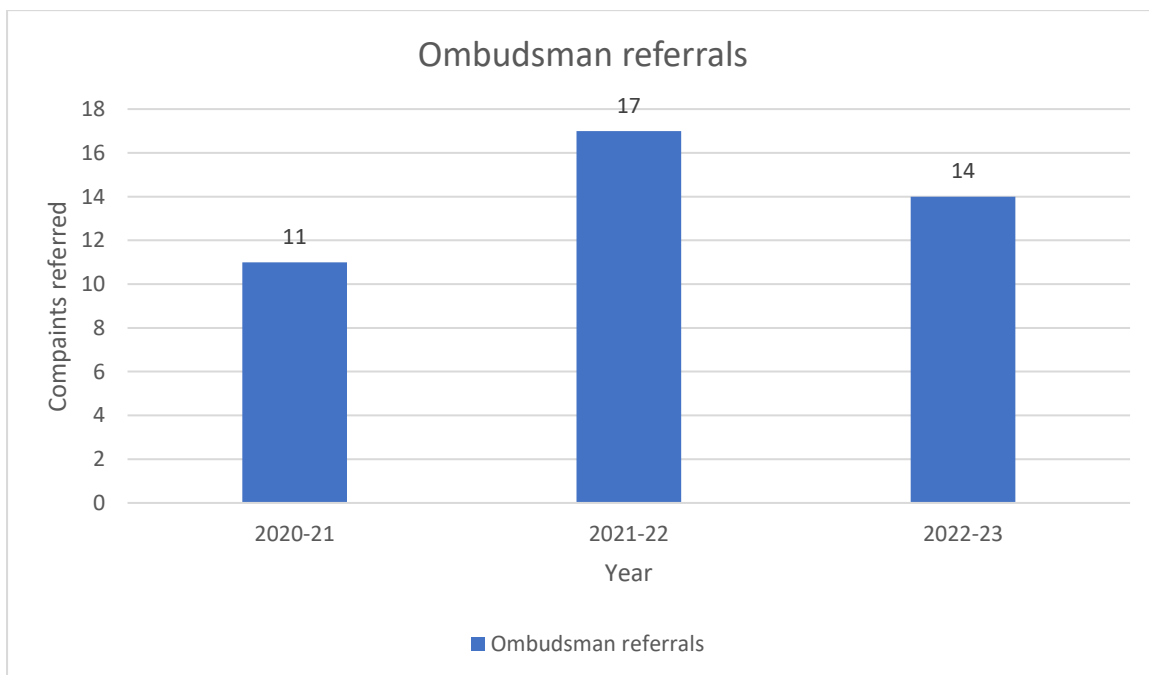
The key upheld aspects and trends observed within these complaints related to:

- Delays in assessment or service provision
- Individual errors made on cases
- Clarity of upheld complaint points

Actions to address these themes are detailed within section 5.

4.6 Ombudsman Complaints

In 2022/23, 14 complaints were referred to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). This is a reduction from the previous year.



Upon review, the Ombudsman elected to investigate 4 of these complaints. The LGSCO can choose not to investigate for a variety of reasons. Our remaining complaints were dismissed primarily because they had not completed the Council's

internal complaint handling process, or there was insufficient evidence of fault identified by the Ombudsman.

Of the 4 investigated, LGSCO made 4 decisions.

- 1 confirmed Enfield Council was not at fault.
- 3 identified that Enfield Council was at fault due to delays in service provision or assessment.

The remedies required by the LGSCO have been apologies and compensation for inconvenience and delay. In its decisions, the LGSCO did not request that Enfield reconsider its procedures, indicating that after investigation, they were satisfied with these.

5. Learning & Improvement Themes

Learning from complaints provides valuable opportunities to gain wider understanding and ensure improvements are realised. This section outlines the improvement actions identified during 2022/23.

Learning themes arising from 2022/23 complaints (from complaints received and responses sent) fall into three main categories:

- Delays to assessments and provision
- Individual case errors or remedial actions
- Clarity of upheld points in complaint responses

Examples of improvement actions being implemented to address these are summarised below:

Delays to assessment or service provision

This related to delays in either the assessment for care, or for the provision of the agreed care (in the latter case sometimes due to external factors such as availability of care locally)

- Apology to a complainant where complaints were upheld or partially upheld.
- Agreed a change of social worker.
- Offered a reassessment of either a care package or finances.

Individual errors made on cases

This concerned case errors resulting in inaccurate actions by the Council or delay/lack of service provision.

- There was no trend observable, these appeared to be one off errors. They were rectified as part of the complaint process.

Clarifying upheld complaints

Some complaint responses did not state as clearly as possible which aspects of the complaint were upheld. This reduces the quality of response for complainants, as they may be unclear what the Council's response to different aspects is and can cause confusion if complaints are escalated to the Ombudsman over whether the complaint points were upheld or not by the Council.

- The Complaints team will review templates and guidance to prompt services to clearly state which elements are upheld and will provide training sessions.

6. Compliments

Managers are encouraged to log the compliments they receive as learnings are derived from positive feedback, as well as negative.

During 2022-23, 66 compliments were logged centrally regarding Adult Social Care, an increase of 8 compared to 2021/22, and more than double the number of complaints received regarding statutory services. The majority of compliments related to members of staff.

Below are some examples of compliments received:

"More than anything, I feel like it's a safe place because you have my back and made me feel so welcome. I guess most of us feel we are imposing on others in the public outside world due to our conditions & needs but this switches that around. And that's so important! This will have such an impact in my quality of life I'm sure! My family are so happy because it means I have a safe space to be happy in and get better with different people. Can't wait to meet the other members like myself."

"Please can I take this opportunity to thank you, and your manager, for all your hard work and support with [X]. I cannot express how much of a difference you have made to [X] life, and for us as a family."

"Her return home and care package was dealt with by [X] and I cannot explain how truly grateful we all are with his help during this process. He made a very difficult time run very smoothly and explained everything to us so clearly and with such empathy and understanding of our needs."

"I would like to pass on my thanks to the two officers who came to do the delivery and installation – they were on time, very respectful of my dad's property, were very polite and informative, showed me how to use the kit perfectly – I don't know their names but they were a pleasure to be with."

"[X]'s communication was outstanding. Her emails were thoughtful and concise. She addressed each of my concerns and provided me with a clear idea of her next steps which was very helpful. [X] was always very quick to respond to my calls and emails. She understood the pressure the situation was causing and treated the circumstances with the urgency it deserved which I really appreciate."

“A quick note to reiterate my sincere thanks for all the support we have received from [X]. Following an adult assessment at Barnet Hospital, we were visited by [X] at home to discuss my husband’s needs. Quite simply [X]’s professionalism, understanding and care shone out. He managed to secure equipment for us to improve and future proof my husband’s care.”

With the closure of the adult care home at St Elizabeth’s, our daughter has now moved to Poppies Gardens, Ware. I cannot express how much my wife and I are pleased with this outcome we really believe she will benefit in all areas from this placement. We really are more than grateful to Enfield Council and your team for all your efforts in ensuring the move. Once again a sincere thanks to you, and every member of your team I just cannot put into words our thanks all the best to you all for the future.

“Thank you very much. I wish you all the best. You are very good with your work, and I appreciate your dedication and professionalism. Do keep it up. You are a good Advocate. Please pass on this message to your manager as a compliment.”

7. Conclusion

During 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023, over 4,800 people were supported by Adult Social Care to access long term care. Given the complex nature of this work, the number of complaints received remain low. There has been a decrease in volumes compared to the previous year both received by the Council and referred to the Ombudsman by complainants, while there has also been an increase in compliments received.

Whilst there were specific improvement actions taken at an individual level, learning from complaints demonstrates the need to ensure best practice is maintained, particularly in relation to assessment and provision delays, as well as improving the clarity of responses in stating what complaint points are upheld.