

# **Adult Social Care**

## **Statutory Complaints Annual Report 2019-20**

Author: Karen Wright, Complaints and Access to Information Manager



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## ***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

*Less complaints were resolved as part of early resolution; this year 37 concerns were resolved locally; a decrease from 56 concerns resolved locally last year. There has been an increase in formal complaints where 55 were completed during this period in comparison to 43 completed last year. While complaint volumes are increasing, more complaints are being upheld. During this reporting year 42% of complaints were upheld whilst last year 34% were upheld. There has been an increase in the number of formal complaints being completed within agreed timescales, of 96.3%, up from 91% last year. There were 22 enquiries from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman which has increased from 14 last year. There have also been 31 compliments received during this period which has praised adult social care services; this is a slight decrease on the year before, when 40 were logged.*

## **1. Introduction and Context**

This annual statutory complaint report covers complaints and compliments received by Adult's Social Care Services during the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. It highlights how the Directorate has performed against statutory timescales; organisational learning and service improvements that have been made from a result of listening and responding to complaints and plans for future development.

The Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints Procedures stipulate that an annual report must be produced for complaints made under the *Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 (the Regulations)*.

The regulations dictate that the report should cover:

- The number of complaints received
- The issues highlighted
- Whether the complaints have been upheld or not
- Response times
- The number of cases referred to the Ombudsman's service

There is also a corporate requirement that all complaints made against the Council are recorded, responded to and that, as an organisation, we learn from complaints.

Information relating to the statutory complaint procedure is published on the Council's website and those wishing to complain can do so online. The Council encourages complaints to be made online however where this is not possible, complaints can also be made by email, telephone, letter and by post, including using the complaints leaflet.

## **2. Overview of the Service**

There is a dedicated team that manages complaints concerning Adult Social Care. The Complaints Team works in partnership with the National Health Service and Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health Trust to ensure that a single response is provided to cross-boundary complaints. These complaints, along with complaints concerning Adult Social Care are managed under the *Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 (the Regulations)*.

Concerns relating to home care service providers are dealt with as service issues by the relevant social care teams and as such do not form part of this annual report. Complaints regarding concessionary travel are also dealt with outside of the statutory complaints process and therefore have not been included within this annual report.

## **3. Complaints Summary**

### **3.1 Complaints received**

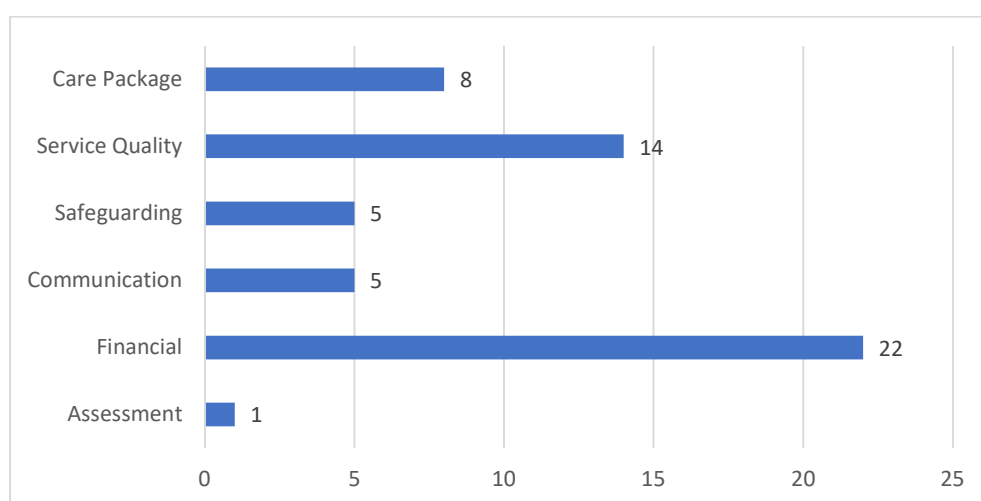
The complaints policy promotes early resolution of complaints, so we initially aim to address issues informally. If matters cannot be resolved locally with services, complainants may then progress matters through the formal complaint's procedure.

The Complaints and Access to Information Team supported operational teams to resolve 37 customer concerns before they became formal statutory complaints; this has reduced from the 56 resolved last year.

During this reporting year, there were 55 formal complaints about adult social care services which is a relatively low number in comparison to the number of contacts that the Council has. Between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020, 6836 people were in receipt of statutory Adult Social Care support services so complaints for this reporting period equates to only 0.8% of those receiving support. The volume of formal complaints has increased from last year where there were 43 formal complaints recorded.

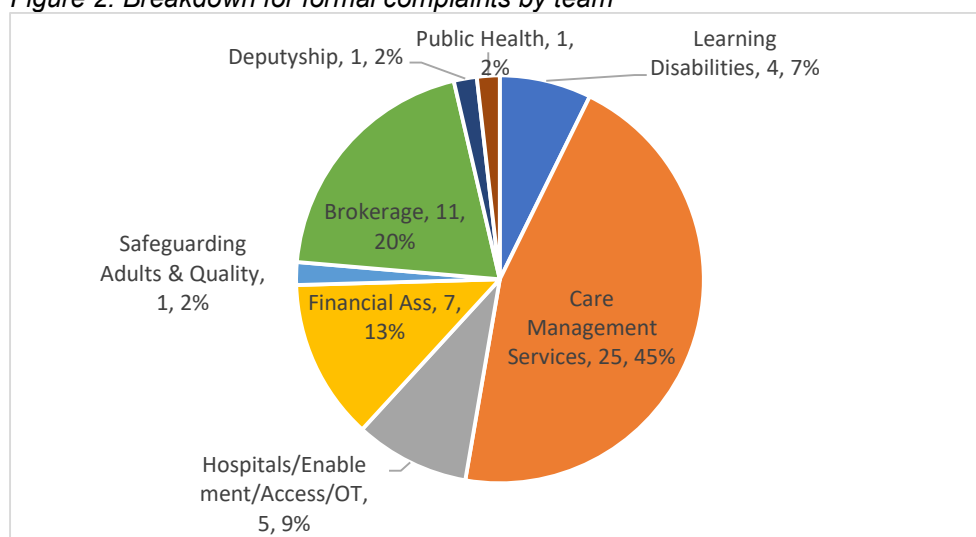
The following chart shows a breakdown of issues for the formal complaints; most matters continue to relate to financial and social care assessments which is expected due to the nature of social work.

*Figure 1: Breakdown of formal complaint issues*



The following table provides breakdown of formal complaints across team areas.

*Figure 2: Breakdown for formal complaints by team*



42% of the formal complaints investigated (23 of 55) were upheld. This upheld rate has increased in comparison to last year where 34% of complaints had been upheld. 23% of the formal complaints (13 of 55) were given a partial upheld, due to the complexity of many of the complaints covering a range of issues, often some parts of the complaint were upheld but other parts not.

### 3.2 Response times

The Adult Social Care regulations specify that complaints should be acknowledged within three working days, by telephone or in writing. Complaints were generally acknowledged within this timeframe.

The regulations do not stipulate timescales but recommend that matters should be addressed within a six-month period. All complaints were resolved within the six-month period; the same performance as last year.

The regulations also require agreed response times based on the complexity and seriousness of the complaint. Response times were agreed for all the formal complaints. Of the 55 formal complaints, 53 (96.3%) were completed within the agreed response timescale. Our aim is to resolve 90% of formal complaints within the agreed timescale. This has been achieved and is a consistent complaint response timescale percentage with last year.

## 4. Ombudsman Contact

If a complainant remains dissatisfied, they can ask for the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) to review the Council's final response.

During 2019/20, the LGSCO contacted the Council regarding 22 cases concerning adult care services. This has increased from last year when there was contact for 14 cases. Twelve cases resulted in a full investigation which is up on the previous year. 9 of the 12 investigations were upheld, equating to a 75% uphold rate. This uphold rate has reduced in comparison to last year where there was a 80% uphold rate. The following table shows breakdown of the cases.

*Figure 3: Breakdown of Ombudsman cases regarding Adult Social Care Services*

Number of cases	Decision
3	Not upheld
9	Upheld
5	Closed after initial enquiries
5	Referred to the Council to investigate
Total: 22	

Apologies were given and remedies agreed for all the upheld complaints. Learning from these nine cases resulted in the following action:

- Financial remedies
- Review of policies and procedures

## **5. Customer groups**

The complaint team encourages vulnerable adults to access independent advocacy to support them through the complaints process whenever appropriate to do so. During this reporting year, the customer groups who submitted complaints were as follows:

- 1 from advocate
- 35 from relatives including spouses and parents
- 3 from solicitors
- 16 from service users

## **6. Learning from complaints**

The Council welcomes feedback about its services as this provides valuable information about customers' experiences of the services that they use. We publicise details of how to complain on the Council's website and in areas where the public has access. We also provide information on how to comment or complain whenever a new service commences.

Complaints are taken seriously, investigated and responded to with appropriate redress. The Council can address complaints in several ways, and at times, it is appropriate for meetings to take place between the complainant and the relevant manager to facilitate resolution.

Feedback from complaints is used for organisational learning and reports on complaint themes and actions taken are regularly presented to senior managers. Complaint action points are identified and monitored to ensure that any practice or service improvements are implemented, and that information is shared across the Council.

### **6.1 Actions taken from complaints**

As shown earlier in this report, 42% of complaints were upheld. Apologies were given to all the complainants and learning from these 23 cases has resulted in the following summarised action points:

- Officers given feedback and reflected on customer experience and lessons learnt
- Amendments to internal processes
- Guidance clarified and issued to staff
- Officers reminded of importance to give accurate information; to share information with families in accessible and meaningful ways and to communicate in a clear and sensitive manner
- Waived charges / Recalculations of contributions / Accounts credited

## **7. Quality Assurance**

The Complaints Team have systems in place to ensure that response timescales are met. This includes sending reminders of the deadline for responses to the assigned managers; escalating to a senior manager if there is no response within the specified timeframe; reporting to Directors regularly and highlighting to staff the importance of

compliance in training programmes. The Complaints Team also monitor and assist with complaint responses to ensure that standards are met, and all aspects of the complaint are addressed. The support offered by the Complaints Team includes:

- Quality checking responses
- Arranging and chairing complaint meetings
- Liaising with complainants regarding timescales and desired outcomes
- Identifying key themes from complaints, devising action plans and ensuring organisational learning is implemented
- Regularly providing management and performance information
- Service development to improve how we respond to and learn from complaints

## 9. Compliments

The Council welcomes compliments from its users. Compliments help to highlight good quality service and give staff encouragement to continue delivering service of the highest standard. The following chart shows a breakdown of the 31 compliments received during 2019/20; a slight decrease of 9 compliments compared to 2018/19. The following chart shows breakdown of cases.

*Figure 4: Breakdown of Compliments for Adult Social Care Services*

