

Adult Social Care

Statutory Complaints Annual Report 2018-19

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Executive Summary

More complaints are being resolved as part of early resolution; this year 56 concerns were resolved locally; an increase from 36 concerns resolved locally last year. There has also been an increase in formal complaints where 53 were completed during this period in comparison to 43 completed last year. Although complaint volumes are increasing, less complaints are being upheld. During this reporting year 34% of complaints were upheld whilst last year 40% were upheld. 91% of formal complaints were completed within the agreed timescale which is an increase from the 73% achieved last year. There were 14 enquiries from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman which has slightly increased from 12 last year. There have also been 40 compliments received during this period which has praised adult social care services; this has increased from 14 compliments received last year.

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 2018 to 31 March 2019. 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. Statistical information

3.1 Adult Social Care

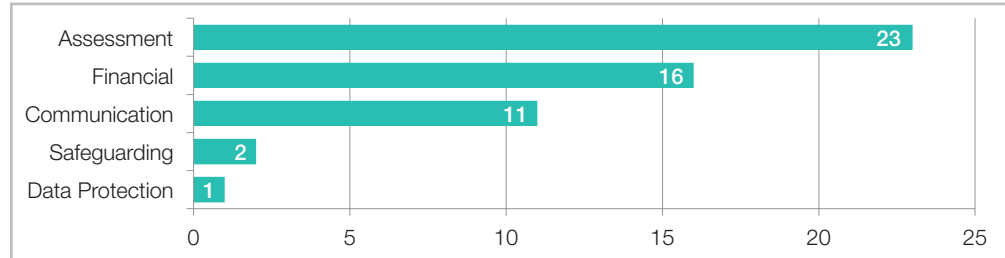
3.1.1 Complaints received

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 complaints procedure. The Complaints and Access to Information Team supported operational teams to resolve 56 customer concerns before they became formal statutory complaints; this has increased from the 36 resolved last year.

During this reporting year, there were 53 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 2018 and 31 March 2019, 7,045 people were in receipt of statutory Adult Social Care support services so complaints for this reporting period equates to only 0.75% 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 shows breakdown of formal complaint volume and performance for each team.

Table 1: Breakdown for formal complaints by team

Team	Number of complaints completed	Not upheld	Response times		
			< 20 days	< 6 mths	> 6 mths
Care Management Services	12	10	11	1	0
Safeguarding Adults & Quality	2	2	1	1	0
Financial Assessment	5	3	2	3	0
Brokerage	6	2	3	3	0
Learning Disabilities	2	2	2	0	0
Hospitals/Enablement/Access/OT	26	16	18	8	0
Total	53	35	37	16	0

34% of the formal complaints investigated (18 of 53) were upheld. This upheld rate has decreased in comparison to last year where 40% of complaints had been upheld.

3.1.2 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 53 formal complaints, 51 (96.2%) 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 also a significant improvement in comparison to last year where the agreed timescale was met for 73% of complaints.

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 2018/19, the LGSCO contacted the Council regarding 14 cases concerning adult care services. This has slightly increased from last year when there was contact for 12 cases. Five cases resulted in a full investigation which is the same as last year. 4 of the 5 investigations were upheld, equating to a 80% uphold rate. This uphold rate has increased in comparison to last year where there was a 60% uphold rate. The following table shows breakdown of the cases.

Table 2: Breakdown of Ombudsman cases regarding adult care services

Number of cases	Decision
1	Not upheld
4	Upheld
4	Closed after initial enquiries
5	Referred to the Council to investigate
Total: 14	

Apologies were given and remedies agreed for all the upheld complaints. Learning from these three 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
- 1 from spouse
- 2 from parents
- 6 from vulnerable adults (service users)
- 43 from relatives

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, 34% of complaints were upheld. Apologies were given to all the complainants and learning from these 18 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

8. 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 40 compliments received during 2018/19; an increase to the 14 compliments received in 2017/18. The following chart shows breakdown of cases.

Figure 2: Breakdown of Compliments for Adult Social Care Services



