

ADULT SOCIAL CARE ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT

2021-2022



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Volume
103 Statutory Complaints
Received



Complaints by nature of issue
13% of total complaints were
about Charging Matters
42% of total complaints were
about Service Quality



Complaints by Service Area
35% of total complaints
relate to Care & Assessment
Teams
29% of total complaints
relate to Home Care
Provision



Outcomes
17% Upheld
44% Not Upheld
35% Partially Upheld



Member Enquiries
We received 207 enquiries
this year.



Escalations
2 Local Government and
Social Care Ombudsman
Investigations Completed

About this report

This report provides an overview of complaints, compliments and investigations between April 2021 and March 2022. The report highlights how various services within Adult Social Care (ASC) have performed in line with key principles outlined in the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 and the complaints process.

About the process

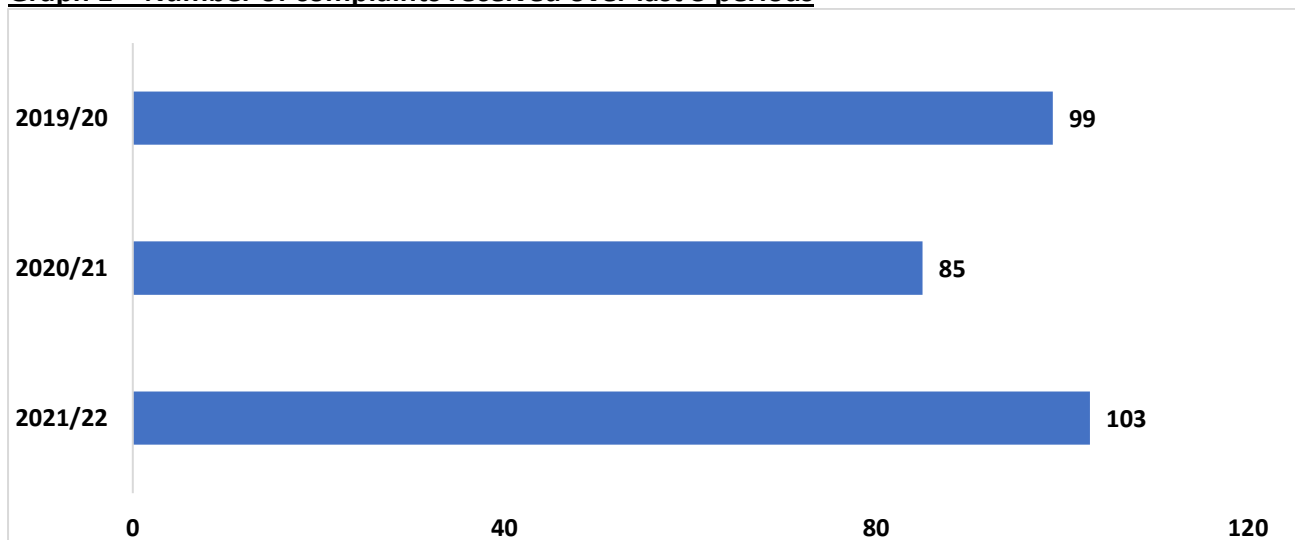
Our process for statutory complaints is in line with the Department of Health and Care's legislation and guidance. This is a one stage process. All complaints are logged and acknowledged by the Customer Engagement Team (CE Team) within 3 working days. The Council will try to resolve the complaint as soon as possible, and no later than within 10 working days. If more time is required, this is agreed with the complainant.

Anyone who has received a service, is currently receiving a service, or is seeking a service from us can make a statutory complaint. This includes anyone who is affected by decisions we may make about social care, including a service provided by an external provider acting on behalf of the Council. We will conduct a thorough and fair investigation into the concerns raised and provide a comprehensive written response with clear findings and recommendations. We will also set out the complainants right to escalate to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) should they remain dissatisfied with our response.

Volume of complaints

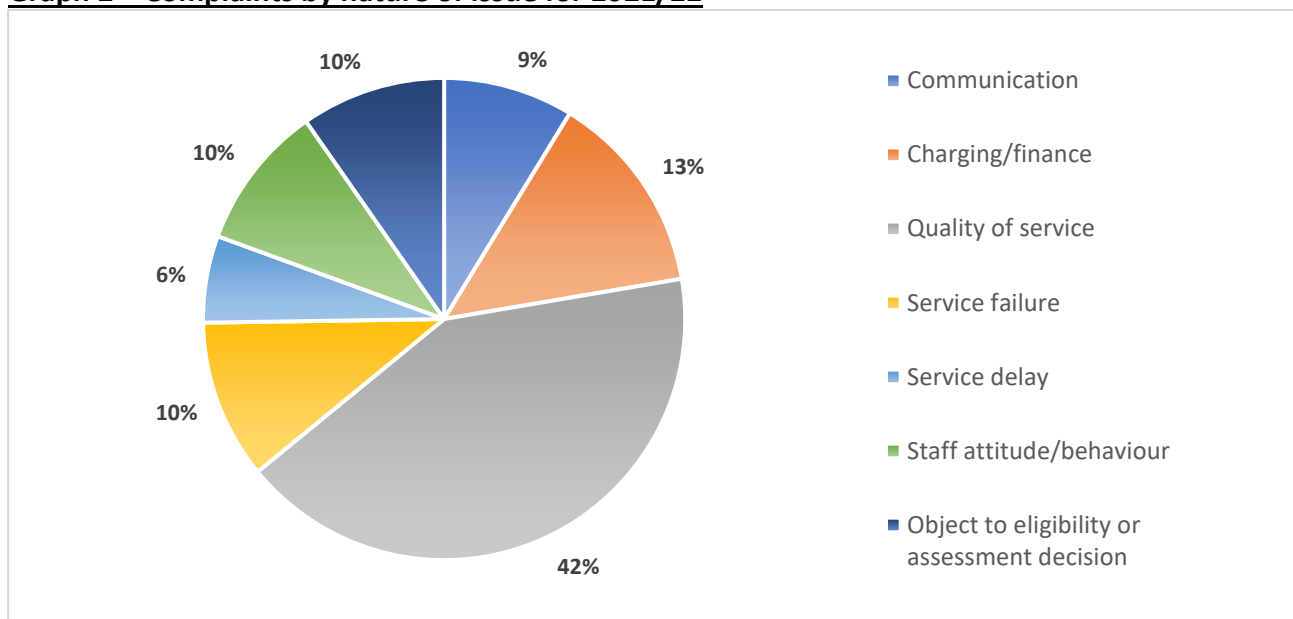
The CE Team recorded and investigated 103 complaints in 2021/22. This number is 12% higher than the complaints received last year. The reduction last year was down to the pandemic and numbers can be seen to be normalising now that there is better accessibility to making complaints with face to face contact having resumed.

Graph 1 – Number of complaints received over last 3 periods



Nature of issue

Graph 2 – Complaints by nature of issue for 2021/22



Quality of service can refer to many things, in terms of home care it can mean lack of cleanliness, inconsistency in carers, not completing care tasks and/or to a good standard, loss/breakage of items to name a few. Staff attitude are allegations about the way staff have dealt with an assessment or how homecare staff have conducted themselves whilst providing care. 10% of the complainants raised concerns about the assessment or its outcome not being implemented and 9% about the way we communicated with residents.

Complaints activity by team

Majority of the complaints (35%) in 2021/22 were about assessment and care services. The nature of these complaints relates to service failure, objection to eligibility or assessment decision or the quality of service that has been offered.

This year 29% of complaints in WCC were about homecare services. Most homecare complaints have been about the quality of service or service failure. We are committed to work with providers and the Contract Monitoring Team to ensure issues are identified and dealt with in line with contractual arrangements and the guidelines issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

The complaints that are made to the Council are investigated and resolved in line with statutory guidance. These are separate to the complaints received directly by the provider and resolved under a Care Quality Commission (CQC) compliant process directly by these organisations. The LGSCO advises that it is the responsibility of the Local Authority to ensure there is oversight on such complaints as well as those made directly to us. We work in partnership with the providers to investigate these complaints and ensure that action is taken to resolve the complaint and prevent recurrence of the issue.

In line with the LGSCO's categorisation we have tabulated all the complaints we have received in 2021/22 in the table on the next page.

Table 1 – Number complaints by the LGSCO breakdown in 2021/22

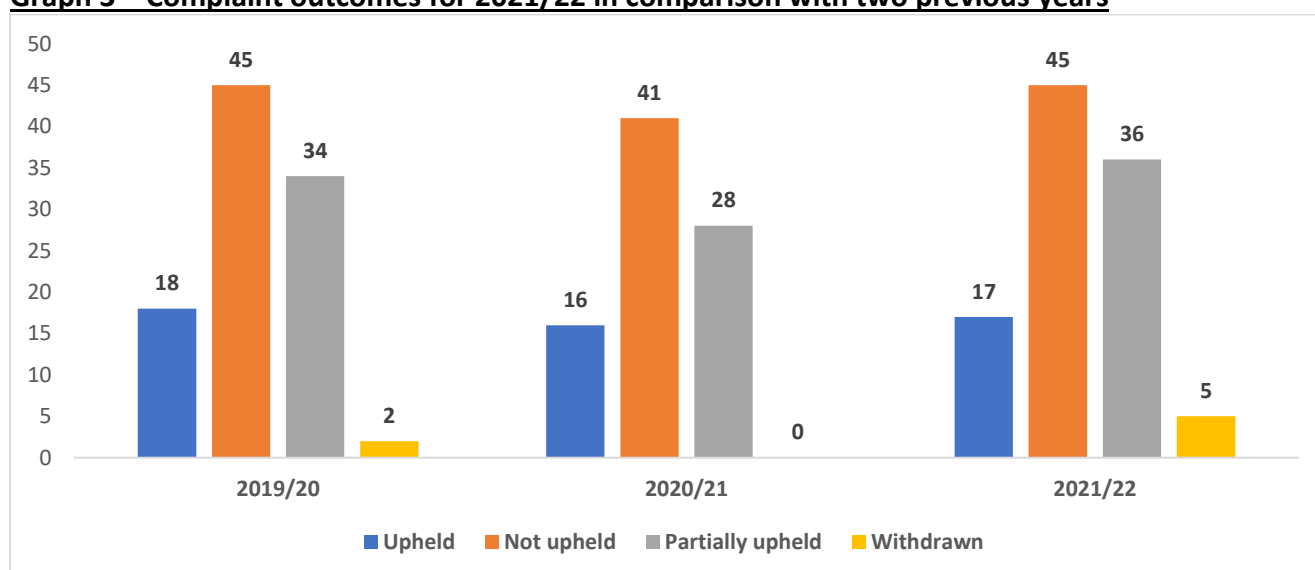
	Area	Total no of complaints	% of total complaints	% of cases Upheld*	LGSCO cases
Arranging Social Care	Assessment & care planning	36	35%	44%	0
	Charging/Finance	13	13%	38%	1
	Hospital SW Team	4	3%	50%	0
	Mental Health	4	3%	25%	0
	Older People’s MH	2	2%	50%	0
	OT	7	7%	57%	0
Providing Social Care	Residential Care	2	2%	50%	0
	Homecare	30	29%	70%	1
	Reablement & CIS	5	5%	40%	0

*cases fully or partly upheld.

Outcomes

The graph below shows the outcomes of all complaints made to ASC, and comparisons with the previous two years. Just over half of the complaints (51%) received have been either fully or partly upheld and more specifically only 17% were fully upheld. Most of the complaints that were upheld were in relation to the quality of service or staff attitude and were related to external providers commissioned by the Council. Where the complaint has been upheld, we (or our commissioned partners) have offered an apology for things that have gone wrong, with a commitment to improve the service, clearly explained reasons for delay and addressed ineffective communication if that was identified as an issue.

Graph 3 – Complaint outcomes for 2021/22 in comparison with two previous years



The Department of Health’s regulations on statutory complaints stipulate that the method and timeframe for responding must be commensurate to the seriousness of the complaint and completed within 6 months. We always seek to resolve the complaint as soon as possible, and in the absence of a prescribed timescale use an internal timescale of **10 working days**, in consultation with the

complainant. 67% of the complaints were responded to within 10 working days. A further 23% needed an additional 10 working days and only 10% took more than 20 working days to complete. This is in line with last year.

We always aim to investigate and resolve complaints as quickly as possible however, some delays are unavoidable and reasons for this include;

- Complexity of the case.
- Co-managed cases i.e. with health partners, commissioned providers etc.
- Provision of supplementary/additional response
- Availability of key staff to participate in the investigation.

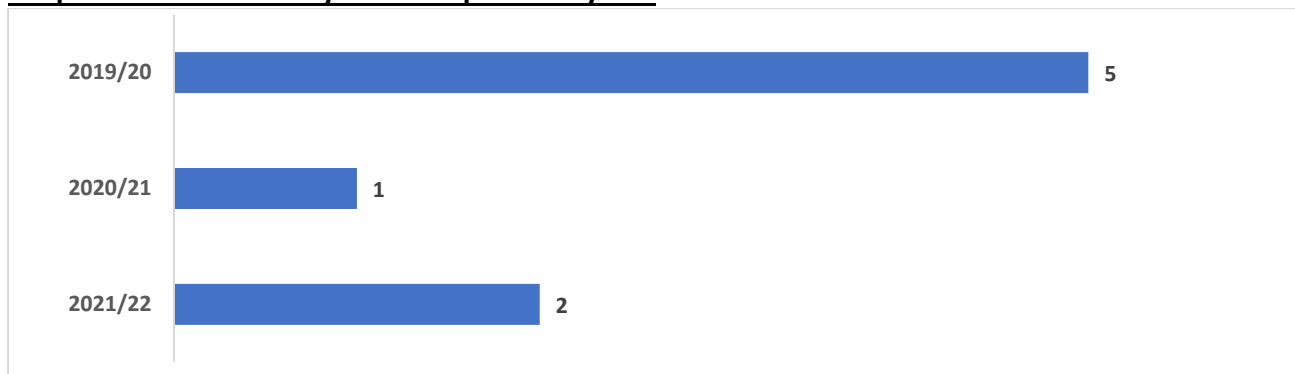
When it has not been possible to meet the timescale the complainant is kept up to date with the progress of the investigation and advised of revised timescales.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) activity

The LGSCO referred 5 enquiries in total to the Department, however, only 2 progressed to investigations and the others were closed due to satisfactory resolution by the department.

The investigations this year were about homecare provision and a financial assessment process. The complaint about the homecare provision was upheld with recommendations. These were completed. The other complaint against financial services was not upheld.

Graph 4 – LGSCO activity over the previous years

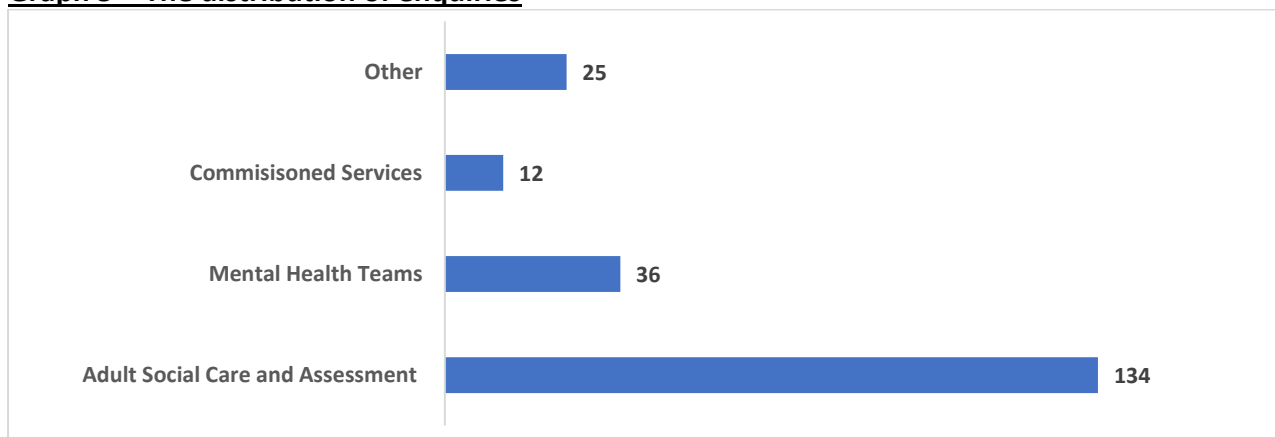


The number of cases sent to WCC for investigation continue to be low compared to previous years. All complainants are informed of their right to escalate their complaint if they remain dissatisfied and due to our proactive approach in trying to provide a resolution to complaints when they are with us, we believe the numbers continue to be low.

Member enquiries

Member enquiries are defined as enquiries received from Elected Members of the Council or Members of Parliament acting on behalf of their constituents. The CE Team facilitated 207 Member Enquiries in 2021/22. A significant proportion of the enquiries have been on behalf of constituents and in relation to either a request for care and support or about existing arrangements within Adult Social Care and Mental Health Teams. 22% of these were received from Members of Parliament. The graph on the next page shows these enquiries by service area.

Graph 5 – The distribution of enquiries

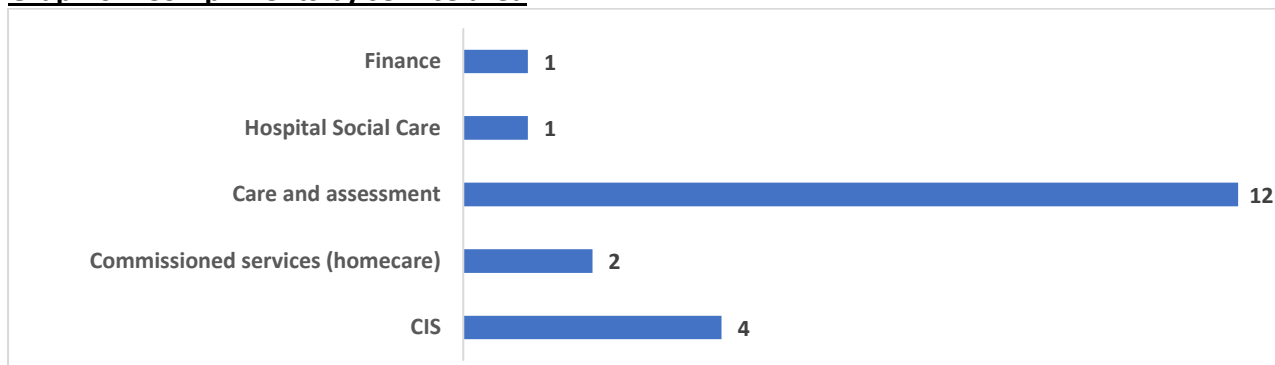


96% of enquiries were responded to within the agreed Council wide 5 working day timescale, which is in line with last year. In some cases, where the issue being raised is complex, requires consent or involves input from a different Department the response may take longer to complete. In such cases elected members are advised of the delay and provided an expected date for response. The teams are committed to working together to ensure that there is one cohesive response for the resident as well as providing updates where possible.

Compliments

Customers and their representatives are encouraged to tell the Council if they are happy with their care or to highlight a good service. They can complete a feedback form as well as contact the relevant social care team to express this. 20 compliments were recorded this year for WCC.

Graph 6 – Compliments by service area



Below are a few examples of what our service users and/or their relatives have shared with us in terms of their positive experience about the service they receive.

From a service user about a member of the WCC North Complex Team; “I have never in my whole life had someone so caring and supportive towards me – my social worker has supported me with my health and my care needs, she so professional at her job, I know she works super hard and the fact she's always checking in on me and given me the right advice and telling me my rights and how to go about achieving my goals! Its just been amazing! She is very kind professional and is the best by far”!

From a service user who received a service form the WCC South Complex Team; ‘Thank you so much for all your hard work. You have heled all of us so much and made our lives better. I hope the best for your future and that you are as happy as you have made us”.

From a service user about a member of the Hospital Social Work Team; ‘I just wanted to thank your department for the Social Worker who was assigned to my husband. She has been incredible. She has been supportive, kind and always clear about my husband’s rights. His case was quite complicated, and she was always there to advise and guide. Unfortunately, my husband passed away but the social worker was there to support me and I just wanted to tell you that she is a credit to your service and we are all very lucky to have her working in Social Care’.

Learning from complaints

Learning from complaints provides opportunities for services to be shaped by customer experience. Staff and managers responding to complaints are required to identify learning’s that can lead to service improvement and Learning Outcome Action plans are completed for the more complex complaints received. Lessons learnt, actions and the themes drawn from complaints are presented regularly for discussion and challenge at meetings with Heads of Service and Operational Teams to improve the quality of social care practice.

Some of the more generalised learning actions are as follows;

- The teams have been reminded that all complaints, especially those made verbally, must be logged with the Customer Engagement Team to ensure due processes are followed and complaints are not left to escalate as a result.
- Working with homecare providers to ensure all complaints handled under their own CQC compliant processes are also reported to the ASC Customer Engagement Team to ensure a satisfactory resolution is achieved and in line with the LGSCO’s directive that the Council is aware of what has been actioned in relation to their service users.
- Given the increase in complaints in the homecare service provision the team are focusing on this with partner agencies and commissioning colleagues to support the care providers in delivering good quality care in the home. Especially, preventing recurrence of issues and following up on the remedial actions promised as we have seen repetitive issues from the same service users.
- The Complaints lead has advised Heads of Service to ensure for complex multi-disciplinary complaints a meeting must take place early on to ensure a good investigation plan is implemented and we can also prevent escalation to Ombudsman investigations.

Some more specific instances are shared below;

You complained:

about the way charges for your relative’s care home fees were being pursued and wanted help with a request for health funding assessment.

We:

Investigated this carefully and found that there had been delays from the health side in expediting an assessment due to communication issues. We explained the charges and proactively helped you get in touch with the correct health body to accelerate your request for an assessment. This was done and you were provided with correspondence in relation to the outcomes and as a result some of the charges were adjusted.

You complained:

that you experienced delay in having support being put in place for your family member who has dementia and was having difficulty with daily living activities and had to make a complaint as a result.

We:

conducted an internal investigation and upheld your complaint because of the time it took us to contact you and your family member to assess their needs. The case had to be transferred to a different team and a package of care was put in place swiftly to support with every day activities and a social worker was allocated to your case to be the point of contact in case of any problems and monitor progress.

You complained:

that you were concerned about your relative's homecare and reported that carers were regularly turning up late to deliver care and the agency/carer were failing to update the service user in case of delay as well as sending different people which was unsettling for them.

We:

worked with the provider to establish the facts and explore why the care was not being delivered as expected. The agency advised that they had some rota issues and apologised to you that the carers were unable to keep time for their visits. These issues have been resolved and care was resumed effectively.

Future development work for 22/23

In 22/23 we will be making further developments in the following areas;

- Continuing to develop the work we do with all our partner providers via contract monitoring meetings and provider forums to ensure there is effective complaints handling in line with the Ombudsman's guidance on third party complaints.
- Continue to work with Social Care Managers and Market Managers to improve access to the complaints process, improve complaints investigations and responses as well as implementing learning outcomes consistently.
- Working with the new inhouse Contact Centre to handle service issues via local resolution processes and prevent them turning into complaints.
- Continue to undertake service user consultation activity on behalf of the Department where services are being transformed.
- Working with our Principal Social Worker and Learning and Development Team to develop and provide effective training on complaints resolution and dealing with difficult customers.

Final comments

We hope you have found our report informative. Please contact us if you have any further questions or suggestions about this report.

Adult Social Care Customer Engagement Team

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