

Adult social care complaints and representations annual report 2017/18



**COMMENTS
COMPLIMENTS
& COMPLAINTS**

Adult social care 20 17/ 18 complaints & representations key facts & figures

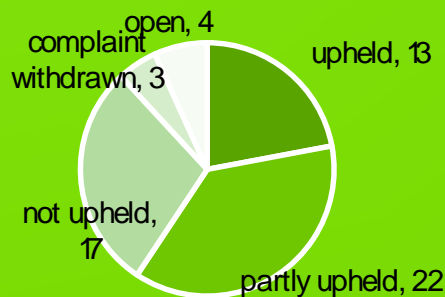


There were **3,230** adults in long-term support as of 31 March 2018.



In 2017/18, the Council received **59** complaints about adult social care, compared to 67 in 2016/17.

Of the 59 complaints, just over half were at least partially upheld:



The Council aims to resolve complaints within 20 working days. In 2017/18, **53%** were resolved within 20 working days, up from 48% in 2016/17 and from 28% in 2015/16.

The most common things people complained about were...



In 2017/18, we received **135** compliments; up from 66 last year. These were all about the standard of care provided at care homes for older people.

If a complainant remains unhappy after completing the Council's complaints process, they may take their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO). In 2017/18, the LGO received **8** adult social care complaints. They investigated (and upheld) **1** complaint.

Listening to service users' complaints helps services improve by helping managers identify changes that are required. Key learning points from 2017/18 include: communication between commissioning and providing bodies; responsibilities of providers in relation to service users making "unwise" decision; and delays / waiting time for assessment decisions.

Comments, compliments and complaints about adult social care

You have the right to receive a good level of service. Listening to your views helps adult social care services to put things right and improve things for the future, so your comments, compliments, complaints and suggestions are important and always welcome. You can contact the adult social care complaints officer by phone to **0800 269851** or online at www.coventry.gov.uk/form_speakup/ or by email to AdultSocialCareCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk

Introduction

Local authorities are required by law, via the National Health Services and Community Care Act 1990 and the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Services Complaints Regulations (England) 2009, to have a system for receiving representations by or on behalf of people in need of adult social care support who have a range of support needs due to a disability or frailty. Services cover assessment and case management, direct service provision or the arrangement of a range of services, including: support at home, day opportunities, supported housing, intermediate, residential and nursing care or provision of equipment. This report provides information about comments, compliments and complaints received in relation to adult social care services responded to under Coventry's complaints procedures, from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018. It makes reference to the range of representations received and any trends and issues that emerged.

Summary

There were 59 statutory complaints made within the year, compared to 67 in 2016/17. 60% of these complaints were fully or partially upheld, compared to 55% in 2016/17.

In addition to the figures above, 10 informal complaints were received during 2017/18, compared to 13 received in 2016/17. These are complaints resolved/handled at the point of delivery. In line with our complaints policy and in line with best practice, most concerns are dealt with on an informal basis, for example, by social care providers; and may not be reflected in the figures in this report.

Promoting access and responding to feedback

Representations from people who came into contact with adult social care and their families provide a useful source of information about quality of service delivery, professional practice and the outcome of decisions we make that affect their care and support. A key part of the complaints process is how the Council learns from negative experiences and use this to improve what we do. Adult social care services always welcomes feedback, whether this is positive or negative and there are a number of ways in which people can make their views known.

Ways in which people can provide feedback about adult social care include telephoning or emailing the contact centre; direct contact to the service area or team; or writing to AdultSocialCareCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk.

The Council's website also provides information on how to make a complaint, advocacy services and the statutory complaints process.

About the complaints

Where possible, issues/complaints are handled at the point of delivery. It is when a person feels that they are still not satisfied, then it is recorded as a formal complaint and investigated as such. The length of time to investigate and resolve complaints depends on their complexity. Where there are particular complexities that will require an elongated period of investigation, a timescale is agreed with the complainant.

The number of complaints has decreased from 67 in 2016/17 to 59 in 2017/18. There is no single identifiable reason for this decrease. The number of complaints and their outcomes are detailed below.

Complaints 2017/18 vs 2016/17

| Outcome | 2017/2018 | | 2016/2017 | |
|----------------------------|------------------|-----|------------------|-----|
| <i>Upheld</i> | 13 | 22% | 15 | 22% |
| <i>Partly Upheld</i> | 22 | 37% | 22 | 33% |
| <i>Not upheld</i> | 17 | 29% | 22 | 33% |
| <i>Complaint withdrawn</i> | 3 | 5% | 6 | 9% |
| <i>Open</i> | 4 | 7% | 2 | 3% |
| Total | 59 | | 67 | |

How people complained

| Method | 2017/2018 | 2016/2017 |
|------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <i>Email</i> | 32 | 53 |
| <i>In Person</i> | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Letter</i> | 5 | 8 |
| <i>Online form</i> | 20 | 6 |
| <i>Phone</i> | 1 | 0 |
| <i>Not categorised</i> | 1 | 0 |
| Total | 59 | 67 |

Summary of Complaints by Service Area:

| Service Area | 2017/18 | 2016/17 |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| <i>All Age Disability</i> | 16 | 13 |
| <i>Adult Commissioning</i> | 9 | 10 |
| <i>Older People</i> | 8 | 0 |
| <i>Community Services 65+</i> | 6 | 9 |
| <i>Mental Health</i> | 5 | 7 |
| <i>Not recorded</i> | 5 | 0 |
| <i>Occupational Therapy Service</i> | 4 | 2 |
| <i>Prevention & Health</i> | 1 | 0 |
| <i>Independent Living Team</i> | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Opal</i> | 1 | 3 |
| <i>START Team</i> | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Dementia & short term</i> | 1 | 0 |
| <i>Customer services</i> | 1 | 0 |
| <i>Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards</i> | 0 | 1 |
| <i>Elsie Jones House</i> | 0 | 1 |
| <i>Emergency Duty Team</i> | 0 | 1 |
| <i>Finance</i> | 0 | 1 |
| <i>Front Door & Intake</i> | 0 | 10 |
| <i>Hospital Social Care Service</i> | 0 | 3 |
| <i>Knightlow Lodge</i> | 0 | 1 |
| <i>Monitoring and Response Service (ESU)</i> | 0 | 1 |
| <i>Safeguarding</i> | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 59 | 67 |

Statutory complaints regarding external providers

There is a statutory responsibility for providers of residential and domiciliary care services to have a complaints procedure that complies with the Care Homes Regulations 2001, the Care Standards Act 2000 and the National Minimum Standards stipulated by the Care Quality Commission. There is an expectation that the client pursues a complaint with provider organisations through the providers own complaints procedures. However, if the client is dissatisfied with the response of the provider or, if they wish to pursue the complaint through the statutory adult social care complaints process, they have the right to do so. Where

possible, we encourage complainants to utilise the providers' complaints procedures in the first instance as this enables the complaint to be dealt with at source as opposed to through the Council.

Complaints regarding external providers are monitored through contract monitoring purposes and, where required, providers produce action plans to deliver service improvements.

In July 2018, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman set out a new statement which sets out best practice in receiving and dealing with comments, complaints and feedback about their services. Councils and care providers are being encouraged to adopt the new statement. This can be found at: <https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/news/2018/jul/adult-social-care-guides-launched-to-help-providers-deal-with-complaints-better>.

Timescales

There are no externally prescribed timescales for the resolution of complaints. The only stipulation within the regulations is that timescales should be reasonable and that the complaints process should be concluded within six months. It is acceptable to extend this deadline with the agreement of the complainant.

As there is no specific required, the approach taken is to agree a timescale with the complainant. It is normal practice to inform complaints should an extension be required. Most often, extensions are sought due to the complexity of particular complaints, including where the complainant supplies additional information/evidence part way through an investigation. In these instances the complainant is contacted with an explanation for the delay and the likely revised timescale.

As a benchmark for monitoring the timescale for completion of complaints, adult social care has an internal guideline that complaints should be completed within 20 working days. Performance on this standard is monitored by the Adult Social Care Management Team. This year's performance against the target is shown in the table below:

| Complaint Stage | Timescales | 2017/18 | 2016/17 |
|------------------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <i>Stage 1</i> | Within 20 working days | 31 (52.5%) | 32 (48%) |
| | Over 20 working days | 28 (47.5%) | 35 (52%) |
| TOTAL | | 59 | 67 |

Where the 20 working days timescale has been exceeded, this is generally in association with the more complex cases, a number of which include safeguarding issues across more than one agency.

Timeliness of complaints (within 20 working days) have improved with 52.5% of complaints resolved within 20 working days in 2017/18, compared to 48% in 2016/17.

A number of cases are expected to exceed timescales significantly as they are subject to court proceedings and therefore timescales are outside of the control of the local authority.

Ombudsman Enquiries

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) considered 8 complaints or enquiries to adult social care, of which one complaint was investigated and upheld. This is a reduction from 13 complaints or enquiries in 2016/17 of which 8 were investigated and 7 upheld.

Messages, learning points and service improvements

Adult social care services are committed to learning from customer feedback. Where complaints highlight that things have gone wrong, managers must identify any remedial and developmental action required to improve service delivery.

Compliments

Feedback from compliments provides an equally valuable message, clearly affirming when services make a difference and personal qualities have added value to the outcome for users and carers. 135 compliments were received in 2017/18. These were all related to the quality and standard of care provided at care homes for older people. Compliments came from service users and their family members, thanking individual members of staff and teams for the ongoing support and care provided by social workers, care teams and departments. Compliments are received by forms, thankyou cards, letters and emails.

Most common areas of feedback

A complaint will usually cut across multiple themes and will have more than one complaint category recorded. The themes of these complaints can be summarised as follows:

| Category | 2017/18 | | 2016/17 | |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-----|----------------|-----|
| <i>Standard of service</i> | 46 | 48% | 45 | 67% |
| <i>Communication</i> | 32 | 33% | 14 | 21% |
| <i>Financial issues</i> | 15 | 16% | 8 | 12% |
| <i>Environment/property</i> | 3 | 3% | 0 | - |

Standard of service

48% of complaints received were related to the standard of service. This is a reduction from 67% in 2016/17. This includes service delivery, assessment of eligibility for services and timeliness in receiving services. A challenging element of working in adult social care is notifying people that they are not eligible for support, or explaining to them that their needs can be met in other ways to support being provided by the Council. These are often emotive and challenging situations which can stimulate complaints where people do not agree with the social workers views or level of service received. Also, where people are eligible for support from the Council there can be a delay in support being put in place due to service availability. This again is an area that can stimulate complaints.

Communication

When users and their families are referred for support they require information on subjects they may have not encountered before. They also need to be kept informed of progress and decisions in processes that often appear confusing. Representations of this nature are categorised in terms of the provision, quality, method and timelessness of information as well as accuracy. The most common complaints are from users or family members who feel they have not been kept informed, when there has been a delay to information being provided, or feel officers are not getting back to them or they do not have a direct line of communication to the person they have been dealing with. 32% of complaints received were about communication and information, as compared to 21% in 2016/17.

Financial issues

The complaints received around financial issues were varied. These included continuation of payments being received when services had ceased and direct payments missed. Although varied, complaints commonly related to a breakdown in information flowing from one team to another and system errors which impacted on finance processing. Where this occurred matters were rectified and payments were amended accordingly.

Environment/property

2 complaints were received and were in relation to standards of work carried out regarding home renovations, and also a request for an amendment to bathroom facilities for a service user. One complaint was upheld and one not upheld.

Conclusions

The number of complaints has reduced from 67 in 2016/17 to 59 in 2017/18. Early indications show that this reduced level of complaints is continuing in 2018/19. It is important not to draw too many conclusions from the volume of complaints, as this is as much an indicator of people feeling more able to complain as it is of an overall declining standard of service.

Service improvements and learning for 2018/19

Compliments

The improvement initiative is continuing whereby compliments are captured by the complaints team and sent on a monthly basis to the principal social worker.

Responding to and learning from complaints

The learning elements from complaints are captured in service areas on a regular basis as part of the business management process and further evaluation of complaint data is to be reviewed for ongoing learning and improvements. Issuing social workers with business cards to be given to clients so there is a direct line of communication.

There is a need to implement a formal learning process from the outcome of complaints and a quality assurance framework for adult social care, to include complaints, in under development. A way to review this and have oversight has been introduced in the all age disability and mental health teams

There needs to be a consideration of an achievable and deliverable timescale for responses to complaints with monitoring of achievement against this, with the continuation of the RAG reporting process and quarterly data capturing. This is improving timeliness in 2018/19.

Adult commissioning

The key theme from the 7 complaints investigated by Adult Commissioning/Provider staff during 2017/18 and where elements of complaints were fully or partially upheld was communication between providers and customers and/or their families. Although small in number compared with the large number of people supported, there were some issues related to basic communication breakdowns. The main learning in this is around a relentless focus on getting the basics right for service users and their families. In all cases improved practice was prescribed and is monitored by the commissioning team.

A second theme that presented was in relation to the responsibilities of providers in relation to service users making “unwise” decisions, for example in relation to retaining food past its “best before” or “use by” date or failing to have clothes laundered appropriately or “vulnerable” adults living in supported living whose whereabouts was not always known. In such instances a very delicate balance has to be drawn between safeguarding adults and allowing people to take risk. Occasionally this balance has proved not have been appropriately struck with service users potentially left vulnerable. Commissioning staff have worked with providers to ensure appropriate positive risk taking is followed and that service users make choices with the benefit of appropriate staff support and advice

Community social care (65+), hospital social care and equipment and therapy services

Of the complaints in this area which were upheld, the most prevalent issues generating complaints were waiting time for assessments or delivery of services, and dissatisfaction with decisions made about financial matters, for example, the levels of support provided or queries about charges. Perceived difficulty in communication between staff and service users and family carers, and disagreements about the conclusions of assessment also featured in a number of complaints.

Outcomes arising from complaint investigations included

The most common outcome of complaints was work with individual staff to improve practice, through supervision or training activity.

On a number of occasions the conclusion of assessments or service decisions were changed to more accurately address needs of people being supported.

Training was delivered on specific topics to wider audiences where themes emerged, for example, to ensure compliance with Data Protection regulations.

In terms of waiting times, these were improved significantly by implementing system changes, for example, by introducing an online booking system. This provides appointments to people requiring assessment at times which suit them and their carers.

Other changes to systems and processes included the implementation of service standards to ensure quality of service and timeliness of response.

Improvements to information available to people accessing services were made following complaints, including information leaflets for recipients of "Discharge to Assess" services.

All age disability and mental health

The All Age Disability and Mental Health Services have continued to progress improvements in the management of complaints. Complaints are a regular feature of discussion in the General Managers meetings where themes are considered and timeliness in resolution monitored. Regular updates on progress are shared across services and reported as part of the quality monitoring for the ASC Directorate.

Mental Health Service complaints are progressed via the formal agreement in place with Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust. Complaints managed via ASC concern the professional practice or legislative responsibilities (including finance) that relate to the City Council functions. Complaints have related to professional practice, delays in assessment or resolving funding and Mental Act requirements. 50% of complaints relating to the All Age Disability Service were resolved to the complaints satisfaction and within informal process.

Key themes and outcomes in relation to all ages disability service complaints

Delay in response times for assessments or in relation to responding to requests for review were key factors in complaints. This has resulted in increased oversight and monitoring of awaiting times. Some additional staffing (3) being put in place to reduce delays for the period of a year. This will be monitored alongside referral and activity flows to identify activity needed to ensure good customer service and response times ongoing.

Complaints have also been in relation to not providing a service or reducing a service this has been significant in 4 cases and supports Adults Social Care's vision to promote independence and appropriate use of equipment and adaptations.

The most common outcome of complaints has been improvement in professional practices.

Direct payments

A review of the direct payments process has been undertaken to ensure the process itself is more straightforward and efficient. The Councils Direct Payments Policy has been reviewed alongside staff guidance, with refresher training provided to staff on the Direct Payment process. A steering group has been established to oversee and ensure continued development and improvements.

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