

Adult social care complaints and representations annual report

2018-19



**COMMENTS
& COMPLIMENTS
& COMPLAINTS**



Adult social care 2018/19 complaints & representations key facts & figures

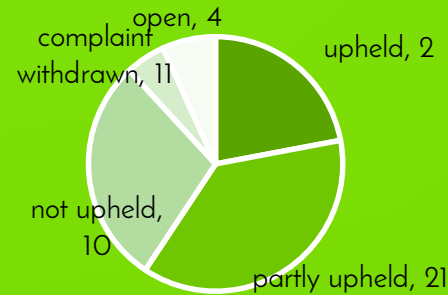


There were **3,287** adults in long-term support as of 31 March 2019



In 2018/19, the Council received **48** complaints about adult social care, compared to 59 in 2017/18.

Of the 48 complaints, just over half were at least partially upheld:



The Council aims to resolve complaints within 20 working days. In 2018/19, **55%** were resolved within 20 working days, up from 53% in 2017/18 and from 48% in 2016/17.

The most common things people complained about were...



In 2018/19, we received **238** compliments; up from 103 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 (LGSCO). In 2018/19, the LGSCO received **10** 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 2018/19 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.

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Welcome

Welcome to the 2018/19 complaints and representations annual report. As part of the Council's commitment to openness, quality assurance, service development and listening and learning from service users, this report provides summary information from comments, compliments and complaints received under the statutory procedures in relation to adult social care provided by or commissioned by Coventry City Council for the year 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

Background

Local authorities are required by law, via the Care Act 2014 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.

Representations are defined as comments, compliments and complaints.

Local authorities are required by law to appoint a complaints officer to oversee all aspects of the procedure.

Some complaints received do not meet the criteria to be dealt with under the statutory procedure. When this is the case, these are registered under the Council's corporate complaints procedure. The arrangements for handling these complaints are different from the statutory process in terms of timescales and the independence of the people who investigate and review the complaints.

The People Directorate has a nominated officer assigned to the management of representations for adult social care. This is the People Directorate Complaints Officer.

The purpose of the comments, compliments and complaints system is to ensure that:

- the views and experiences of people who use services are heard;
- positive feedback is used to develop services and acknowledge good practice;

- things that have gone wrong are put right;
- the organisation learns from both positive and negative feedback; and
- the organisation sustains its focus on service users / customers / citizens.

Particular reference is made to the range of representations received and responses to them and specific trends and issues that emerged in the reporting period.

Summary

In 2018/19, 48 statutory complaints made within the year, compared to 59 in 2017/18. 48% of these complaints were fully or partially upheld, compared to 60% in 2017/18.

In addition to the figures above, 3 informal complaints were received during 2018/19, compared to 10 in 2017/18. 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.

Feedback

Promoting 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 always welcome feedback, whether this is positive or negative and there are a number of ways in which people can make their views known.

Where possible, issues/complaints should be 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.

Providing feedback

People can provide feedback directly to the service or team; to customer services; or to the People Directorate Complaints Officer. Further information about how to make a complaint, access advocacy or support, and the complaints process is available on the Council's website at www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/.

It is vitally important that the comments, complaints and compliments system is easily accessible. This maximises the opportunities for individuals to make their views known. Complaints can be accepted through the contact centre via a visit to the centre, by letter, by an online form or by telephone. Complaints may also be made directly to the team that is providing them with a service. Sometimes, complaints are also made via elected members (councillors), the chief executive; or directly to senior managers. Complaints can also be referred to the Council from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). Complainants who contact the complaints team directly are encouraged to use the contact centre to ensure that their complaint can be processed efficiently.

In 2018/19, the majority of complainants chose to make a complaint via email or through the contact centre.

Complaints

The number of complaints has decreased from 59 in 2017/18 to 48 in 2018/19. There is no single identifiable reason for this decrease. 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.

The number of complaints and their outcomes are detailed below.

Complaints 2018/19 vs 2017/18

Outcome	2018/19		2017/18	
Upheld	2	4%	13	22%
Partly Upheld	21	44%	22	37%
Not upheld	10	21%	17	29%
Complaint withdrawn	11	23%	3	5%
Open	4	8%	4	7%
Total	48			

How people complained

Method	2018/19	2017/18
Email	29	32
In Person	0	0
Letter	7	5
Online form	10	20
Phone	0	1
Not categorised	2	1
Total	48	59

Complaints by service area

Service Area	2018/19	2017/18
Community Services 65+	27	23
All Age Disability	10	16
Mental Health	5	5
Adult Commissioning	5	9
Continuing Health Care	1	0
Customer services	0	1
Not recorded	0	5
Total	48	59

Complaints regarding external providers

Providers of residential and domiciliary care services must 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	2018/19	2017/18
Stage 1	Within 20 working days	26 (55.0%)	31 (52.5%)
	Over 20 working days	22 (45.0%)	28 (47.5%)
Total		48	59

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 55% of complaints resolved within 20 working days in 2018/19, compared to 52.5% in 2017/18.

A number of cases are expected to exceed timescales significantly as they are subject to involving other health care professional and therefore timescales are outside of the control of the local authority.

Ombudsman

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) may consider complaints that have exhausted the Council's process. The produced a review of adult social care complaints for 2018/19 at <https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/news/2019/sep/challenging-picture-of-care-complaints-played-out-in-ombudsman-s-annual-review>.

The LGSCO considered 10 complaints or enquiries to adult social care in Coventry, of which one complaint was investigated and upheld. A payment of £500.00 and a letter of apology was offered as the outcome. Note that this does not appear in the Ombudsman's annual review due to different categorisation of complaints.

In 2018/19 adult social care received 8 complaints or enquiries, of which 8 were investigated and 1 upheld. This year has seen an increase by 2 complaints or enquiries.

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. 238 compliments were received in 2018/19 compared to 135 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.

We wanted to contact the Social Worker to say thank you so much for all you have done for our mum it has changed her quality of life completely, our mum especially wanted to thank you for all your help & all the aids you have given her, she has just had the final thing fitted the stair lift, to say she is thrilled with this would be an understatement, although she is always in good spirits & never complains about anything, even though she does really struggle at times, the stair lift has visibly lifted her spirits even more, this has also given us as her daughters peace of mind that she is now safe going up & down stairs, She particularly wanted to say how very caring you have been & you have given her independence back and how much she & us appreciate all you have done.

Our heartfelt thanks to all the carers who looked after our beautiful mama.

We will always remember with gratitude your decision, perseverance, compassion, humor, kindness and professionalism.

We will be forever grateful to you all.

The Social Worker has had a great rapport with Dad, and it has been like this from the beginning.

In conversations (and when seeing them together), it is clear that the Social Worker clearly understands Dad. I know that Dad really likes working with him. The Social Worker has also shown empathy towards me, which is really appreciated, especially when things were not going well. In short, he is an extremely caring and professional person, and provides excellent support to Dad

Excellent service and support for my Dad. The Social Worker and the team went the extra mile.

Thank you for looking after Grandad these last six weeks and getting him back on his feet. After his assessment yesterday I know that he is now looking forward to coming home.

Mum stated she liked it in Cophorne Lodge. She said the staff are lovely and pleasant, they always greet her with a smile and encourage her to do things for herself. It is the best place she has been.

Service improvements and learning points

Adult social care is 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.

Most common areas of feedback

When complaints are recorded, it is not unusual for a complainant to raise more than one concern in the same complaint. For example, a complaint may make a complaint about communication and finance as issues experienced during the same incident and both concerns would be recorded accordingly.

The table below highlights the different types of concerns raised within these complaints and a total figure during 2018/19.

Currently our system does not capture an individual breakdown of the outcome of each concern – so the figures below reflect the alleged complaint, rather than whether a complaint was upheld or not.

Category	2018/19		2017/18	
Standard of service	61	51%	46	48%
Communication	54	45%	32	33%
Financial issues	4	3%	15	16%
Environment/property	1	1%	3	3%

Note: totals do not add up to the number of complaints because more than one concern can be raised in each complaint. Concerns raised does not necessarily reflect concerns/complaints upheld.

Standard of service

51% of complaints received in 2018/19 compared to 48% in 2017/18 were centred around standard of service. This has shown an increase of 3%. 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 worker's 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

45% of complaints received in 2018/19 compared to 33% in 2017/18 were centred around communication. This has shown an increase of 12%. 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.

Financial issues

3% of complaints received in 2018/19 compared to 16% in 2017/18 were around various financial issues. 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

1 complaint was received and in relation to standards of work carried out regarding home renovations, and also a request for home amendments for a service user. This complaint was partially upheld.

Compliments

The improvement initiative is continuing whereby compliments are captured by the complaints team and sent on a monthly basis to the Adults Principal Social Worker which are then published on a monthly basis on the Adult Social Care internal news bulletin.

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, is 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 2019/20.

Adult commissioning

Adult Commissioning received 5 complaints that required investigation by the Adult Commissioning Team, and one investigated by Dementia and Short Term Provisions under Adult Services. Of the complaints investigated, some of the examples and areas of improvement are as follows; one related to issues with a home support provider in relation to time keeping, training and quality control. Remedial action was put in place to ensure improvements were followed up by the Councils Quality Assurance Team. We have not been made aware to date of any subsequent issues with this provider. Another complaint related to a Housing with Care provider. The elements of this complaint that were upheld related to a potential data protection breach, deficits in communication with the family and some issues with care. The provider took on board learning from this complaint and periodic checks have been made regarding compliance. Finally, elements of a complaint about a care home were upheld. This was with regards to a lack of a quiet area within the home, and this has subsequently been addressed. There were also some issues regarding the personal care of a resident which were acknowledged as unacceptable and remedial action was taken by the provider and again followed up through routine monitoring by the Quality Assurance function.

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

Of the relatively small number of complaints in this area which were upheld, the most prevalent issues generating complaints were individual practice issues, most noticeably where staff did not communicate as effectively or as comprehensively with service users and family carers as would be best practice.

This year saw fewer complaints about waiting time for assessments or delivery of services compared with previous years. This may reflect the effort the service has put in to reducing waiting lists by the implementation of improved systems, particularly at the point of first contact with the service, and the extension of the scope of the appointment booking system.

There were fewer complaints made about decisions made about financial matters, for example, the levels of support provided or queries about charges, and this may also be a result of work done to improve the quality of assessments, and of charging and payment systems.

Outcomes arising from complaint investigations included

The most common outcome of complaints was to work with individual staff to improve practice, through supervision or training activity e.g. to improve communication and feedback skills.

As themes have emerged, training or group supervision has taken place on specific subject areas. For example, on best practice in assessing mental capacity.

There have been some delays in securing contractors to carry out Disabled Facilities Grant works for people who require environmental improvements to be made to improve the liveability of their homes. This has led to a review of the procurement process and designing a more streamlined approach which will speed up the process of identifying contractors to complete improvement work, whilst maintaining financial probity regarding the awarding of grants.

All Age Disability, Mental Health and Continuing Healthcare Services

The All Age Disability, Mental Health and Continuing Healthcare Teams have continued to progress improvements in the management of complaints and this year complaints all services have seen a small reduction. Complaints are a regular feature of discussion in the General Managers meetings where themes are considered and timeliness in resolution monitored. Timeliness in resolving the complaints has improved supported by the level of monitoring that takes place but in general the delays in resolution reflect the complexity of the casework undertaken and the legislative frameworks that support service delivery. There are interdependencies with other organisations given the focus on integrated working practices that also impact but 63% of complaints were resolved within 20 days.

Key themes

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 largely related to professional practice and application of the Mental Act requirements. Key themes and outcomes in relation to the complaints for Adult Disability Services have been in relation to the timeliness for assessment or in relation to responding to requests for review. There is increased oversight and monitoring of awaiting times and remedial actions taken that should impact positively on this 2019/2020 including agency support. This will be monitored alongside referral and activity flows to identify activity needed to ensure good customer service and response times ongoing. The most common outcome of complaints has been improvement in professional practices.

Further information

Further information about complaints and representations and a copy of the Council's complaints policy and [complaints handling guidance](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/) is available at www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/.

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