



Adult Social Care

Annual Complaints & Customer Feedback Report

2016-17

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides information about complaints, compliments and other feedback received by Adult Social Care for the period 1 April 2016 until 31 March 2017.
- 1.2 Under the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 it is a statutory requirement to produce an Annual Report which provides information on the quantity of the complaints received and the performance of the Complaints process.
- 1.3 This Report will be published on the Council Website.

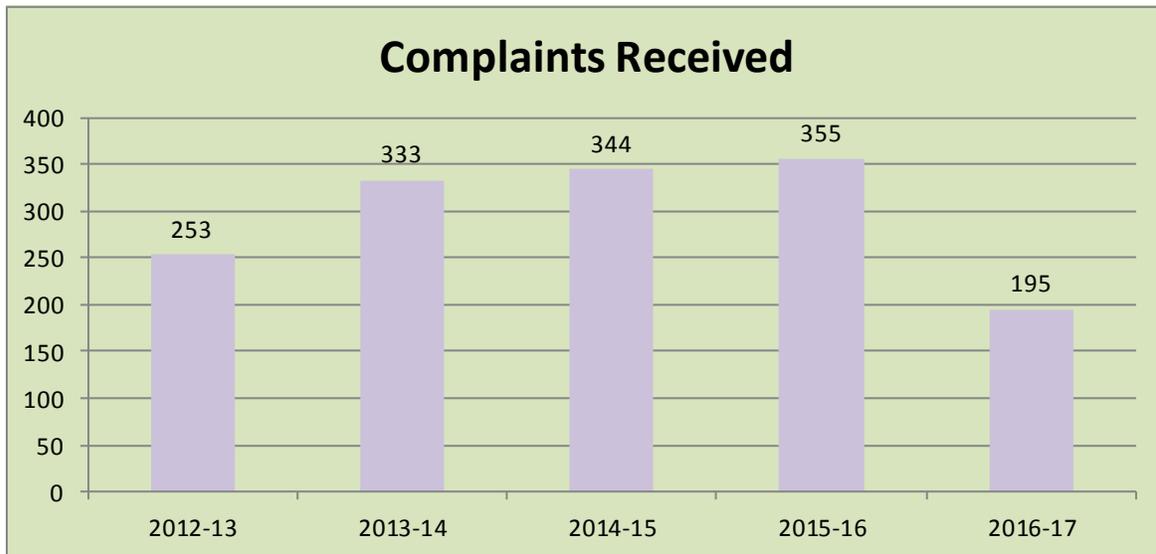
2 Definitions

- 2.1 A complaint is defined as “any expression of dissatisfaction about the exercise of Social Services functions which requires a response”. Complaints that are made orally and can be resolved on the same working day may be excluded from the procedures; all other complaints are dealt with through the complaints procedure.
- 2.2 To be considered, a complaint must be made by an eligible person. An eligible person is either (i) a person who receives services or may be eligible to receive services, (ii) a person who is affected, or likely to be affected by the action, omission or decision of the Department, or (iii) a person with sufficient interest or consent acting on behalf of a person described in (i) & (ii).
- 2.3 A complaint must be made within 12 months of the event complained about. This may be extended at the discretion of the Complaints Manager.
- 2.4 A compliment is defined as “an expression of thanks for providing excellent service above and beyond normal standards”. These will normally be unsolicited and written, and may be from members of the public, other professionals, or from within the Service
- 2.5 Commissioned services are provided by an external company or voluntary agency on behalf of the Council. Complaints about commissioned services can be made direct to the Council or to the Provider. Complaints made to the Provider can subsequently be referred to the Council for consideration if the complainant is not satisfied.

3 Complaints

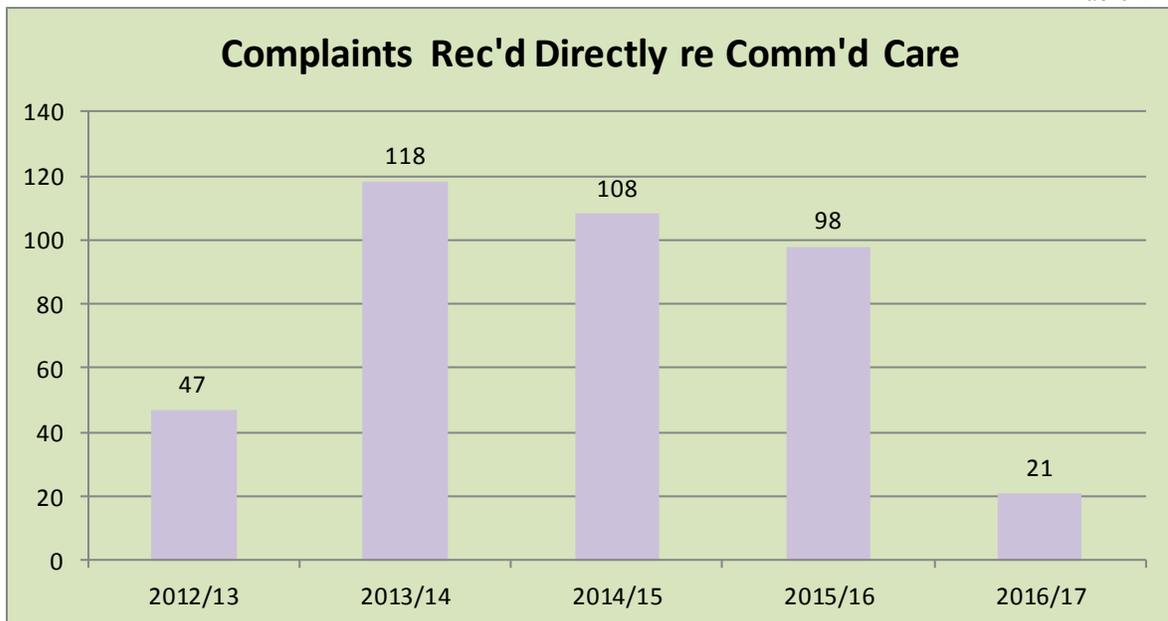
Complaints Received

- 3.1 The total number of complaints registered in 2016-17 was 195. This is lower than in previous years. There may be a number of reasons for this change, including improvements in the service and more complaints being dealt with by providers.



3.2 There has also been a reduction in complaints received directly about external providers; this may reflect factors as described above but additionally may be a consequence of changes in the domiciliary care providers used.

Table 2



3.3 Adult Social Care receives a wide range of issues across all teams, including the delivery and assessment sides of the process. A significant number of complaints have related to commissioned services. Encouragingly, despite the pressures upon teams, there have been relatively few (12) complaints about delay in the assessment process.

3.4 A more detailed analysis of the issues complained about, show that there are some common themes as shown below. This is not a complete list of the issues but illustrates issues that arise regularly

3.5

Table 3

Issues	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Late/Missed Visits (Domiciliary Care)	35	21	10
Quality of Care (Domiciliary Care)	20	11	5
Quality of Care (Residential)	16	14	3
Outcome of Assessment/Review	15	23	5
Problems with Discharge	6	13	6
Delayed/Incorrect Invoices	15	9	9
Lack of Information about Charges	13	15	7
Direct Payments	3	6	12

3.6 Given the budget constraints placed upon the Council at times difficult or sensitive decisions need to be made. We therefore see a number of complaints about financial matters including disputed invoices and a perceived lack of information about charges. We also saw an increase in complaints about Direct Payments linked to the provider, with action now having been taken to address the situation.

Complaints concerning External Providers

3.6 A number of services are commissioned by Adult Social Care. Users of these services can complain directly to the Council; however they may also make their complaint direct to the Provider. We now require the Commissioned Providers to submit a return detailing the complaints received and details of their response. 50% of Providers have met this requirement, an equivalent number to last year. However the Quality Assurance team will be visiting Providers this year that have not submitted returns to gather the required data and emphasise the importance of this expectation.

3.7 Of the 85 returns 35 Providers reported no complaints in the year. The remaining 50 reported a total of 183 complaints (compared to 21 made direct to the Council). The issue of Providers reporting no complaints requires further enquiry.

3.8 The issues complained about reflect those received directly by the Council. The number of complaints which were made in five key areas are shown below. The most common issues were 'Staff Conduct', or the 'Care Plan Not Being Followed'; there is a notable fall in complaints about 'Late or Missed Visits'.

Issue	2015-16	2016-17
Late / Missed Visits	49	10
Staff Conduct	48	38
Care Plan Not followed	49	30
Medication	10	9
Continuity /Staff Levels	17	4

Responding to Complaints

3.9 Timescales for responding to complaints are not statutorily prescribed, however they must be as short as reasonably possible to allow for effective consideration. Guidelines are in place to determine what a reasonable timeframe is in most circumstances. The target is to respond to 70% of complaints within 15 working days and an expectation that all complaints are fully responded to within 6 months.

3.10 The average time to respond to complaints has risen with only 22% responded to in the standard timescale. 41% of complaints were responded to within a 6 week period. There are a number of issues that may have affected performance, including the complaints team taking more responsibility in investigating complaints to assist operational managers during a year of significant transition. Staff have taken longer over working to address complaints, to take account of the 'one response' approach.

Table 4

Response	Performance					Target
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	
Average Days to Respond	37	36	37	47	65	30
Percent of complaints to be responded to within 15 days	47%	49%	55%	47%	22%	70%
Percentage complaints fully responded to within 6 months	95%	99%	98%	95%	91%	100%

Learning from Complaints

3.11 Complaints are valuable to the Service. As well as providing an efficient and effective way for users of public services to get their issues addressed, they also offer a chance to gain an accurate picture of the level and quality of service offered from the perspective of the user. They provide feedback on service delivery and provide a means for the user to have an input into the continuous improvement of Adult Social Care.

3.12 There were a number of key changes that were brought about as a result of the outcome of complaints:

- A Caseload Management tool was introduced to track the implementation of actions from safeguarding investigations
- Staff have been provided with guidance on the importance of concise and accurate contemporaneous record keeping with examples of best practice conveyed in an anonymous form.
- Training sessions were provided for all Minute takers in the department to ensure consistency in recording. There was good attendance at these sessions.

4. Local Government Ombudsman Complaints

4.1 We have received 16 enquiries from the Local Government Ombudsman in the past year. We have had no Public Reports issued against the Adult Social Care in the past year and only six complaints were upheld. The outcomes are shown below:

Table 5

Outcome	2014-15	2015-16	2016-7
Upheld, Maladministration, Injustice	9	3	5
Upheld, Maladministration, No Injustice	1	1	1
Upheld, No Further Action	0	1	0
Closed, No Further Action	1	1	6
Premature	3	4	1
Not Upheld, No Maladministration	4	1	1
Still Open	1	2	2
Total	19	13	16

- 4.2 Adult Social Care now operates a 'one response' approach to complaints in line with national guidance. This has led to a significant number of complaints subsequently being referred to the Ombudsman. The outcomes from the Ombudsman demonstrate that we have an effective complaints process. As referenced earlier in the report, this has contributed to the length of time taken to respond to complaints received by the Adult Social Care service.
- 4.3 Of those complaints that were found to be "Upheld, Maladministration and Injustice" a number had already been addressed through the complaints procedures, and steps taken to correct any mistakes. Consequently no further action was required by the Ombudsman as they were satisfied with this.
- 4.4 In accordance with good practice, each complainant is informed of the right to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman. The complaints team also seek to have a positive relationship with the Ombudsman and agree early resolution where possible.

5. Compliments

- 5.1 The Department regularly receives compliments from people who use our services and their families which demonstrate the professionalism and caring attitude of our staff, even in difficult circumstances. A sample of the comments we have received are included below:

I just wanted to write to praise [your Officer]. I have worked with many professionals over the years, but I cannot remember working with anyone who is as consistently responsive.

In the climate of austerity, devalued workforces and an unhelpful "them and us" culture existing between disabled people and professionals, [your Officer] is a breath of fresh air to the system. She is an asset to social work practice and will certainly be an ally to the local council as well as to those marginalised and oppressed within the Wirral. Hold onto her, we will need more like her in the years to come...

'Many thanks for all your support and time given to myself and family when we had to unfortunately place my mother into care

You conducted the fact finding interview with respect, dignity, and consideration for her health issues, which should help her regain her confidence and independence.

6 Looking Forward

- 6.1 In June 2017 a section of the operational Social Work service were transferred to the Wirral Community Health Foundation Trust. This will have an impact upon Complaints Management with a significant number of complaints now dealt with in the Community Trust rather than by the Council
- 6.2 We will look to enhance our mechanism for capturing dissatisfaction and recording complaints concerning adult social care services, whether they are directly provided or commissioned, so that we can act to put things right quickly
- 6.3 Further work will be undertaken to capture the action that has been taken to improve services as a consequence of complaints.

David Jones
Complaints Manager
July 2017