

# Adult social care complaints and representations annual report 2019-20



**COMMENTS  
COMPLIMENTS  
& COMPLAINTS**



# Adult Social Care 2019/20 Complaints & Representations key facts & figures

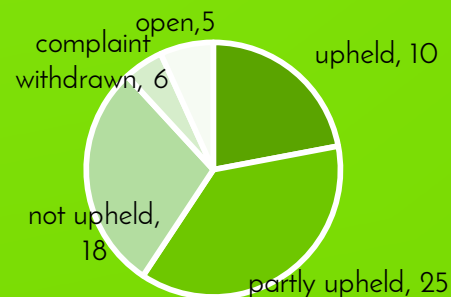


There were **3,405** adults in long-term support as of 31 March 2020



In 2019/20, the Council received **64** complaints about Adult Social Care, compared to 48 in 2018/19.

Of the 64 complaints, just over half were at least partially upheld:



The Council aims to resolve complaints within 20 working days. In 2019/20, **55%** were resolved within 20 working days, in 2018/19 55% and 53% in 2017/18

The most common things people complained about were...



In 2019/20, we received **547** compliments; up from 309 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 2019/20, the LGSCO received **12** Adult Social Care complaints/enquiries. They investigated (and upheld) **2** complaints.

Listening to service users' complaints helps services improve by helping Managers identify changes that are required. Key learning points from 2019/20 include: communication between adult services and service users: decisions: and delays/waiting time for assessment decisions. Managing service users expectations

## 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 **08085 834 333** or online at [www.coventry.gov.uk/form\\_speakup/](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/form_speakup/) or by email to [AdultSocialCareCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:AdultSocialCareCustomerRelations@coventry.gov.uk).

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## Welcome

Welcome to the 2019/20 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 2019 to 31 March 2020.

## 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 Local Authority has a nominated officer assigned to the management of representations for Adult Social Care.

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 2019/20 64 statutory complaints were made within the year, compared to 48 in 2018/19. 55% of these complaints were fully or partially upheld, compared to 48% in 2018/19.

In addition to the figures above, 7 informal complaints were received during 2019/20, compared to 3 in 2018/19 and 1 Corporate complaint received. 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. 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 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/](http://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 2019/20, the majority of complainants chose to make a complaint via email or through the contact centre.

# Complaints

The number of complaints has increased from 48 in 2018/19 to 64 in 2019/20. There is no single identifiable reason for this increase. It is important not to draw too many conclusions from the volume of complaints, 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 2019/20 vs 2018/19

Outcome	2019/20		2018/19	
Upheld	10	16%	2	4%
Partly Upheld	25	39%	21	44%
Not upheld	18	28%	10	21%
Complaint withdrawn	6	9%	11	23%
Open	5	8%	4	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>		<b>48</b>	

## How people complained

Method	2019/20	2018/19
Email	31	29
In Person	0	0
Letter	9	7
Online form	23	10
Phone	1	0
Not categorised	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>48</b>

## Complaints by service area

Service Area	2019/20	2018/19
Community Services 65+	19	27
All Age Disability	13	10
Adult Commissioning	14	5
Mental Health	3	5
Continuing Health Care	0	1
The Opal	3	0
Dementia & Short Term	2	0
Finance	2	0
Disabled Grants	1	0
Hospital Team	1	0
Independent Living	1	0
Occupational Therapy	2	0
Outreach Support	1	0
Physical Impairment	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>48</b>



# 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 individual pursues a complaint with provider organisations through the providers own complaints procedures. However, if the individual 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.

## 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 requirement, the approach taken is to agree a timescale with the complainant. It is normal practice to inform complainants 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 applies 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	2019/20	2018/19
Stage 1	Within 20 working days	35 (55%)	26 (55%)
	Over 20 working days	24 (37%)	22 (45%)
	Still Open	5 (8%)	
<b>Total</b>		<b>64</b>	<b>48</b>

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) has stayed at 55% of complaints resolved within 20 working days in 2019/20, which was the same in 2018/19.

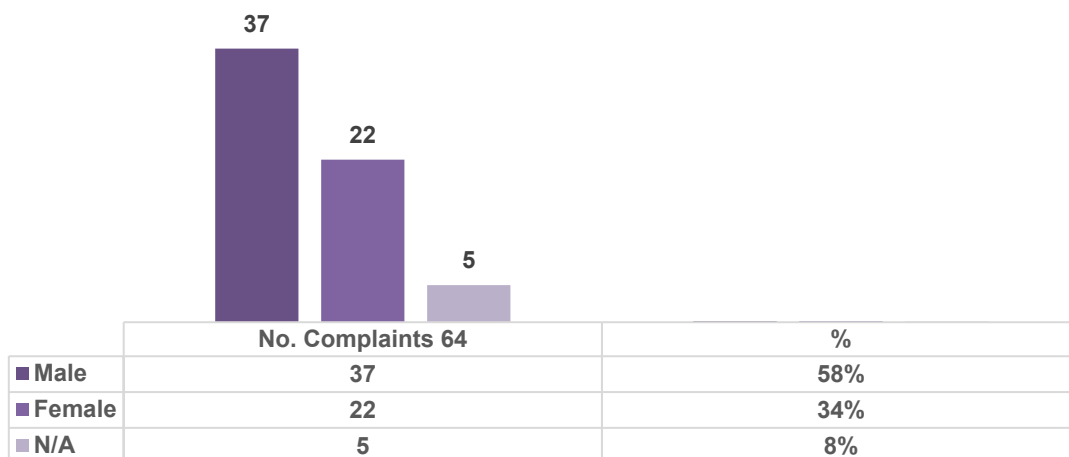
A number of cases are expected to exceed timescales significantly. These are subject to the involvement of other professionals including health care professionals in other organisations, therefore timescales are outside of the direct control of the Local Authority.

# Equality

The Local Authority has a system in place to capture the equality data required to support the complaints process. Information is only ever recorded in relation to who the service user. The below graphs illustrate the data captured but this does not include complaints submitted for the Ombudsman. Data was obtained from Adult Social Care case recording systems and, on that basis, it has not been possible to capture information pertaining to every complainant, only those with an existing case record. These are recorded as 'not available' (N/A).

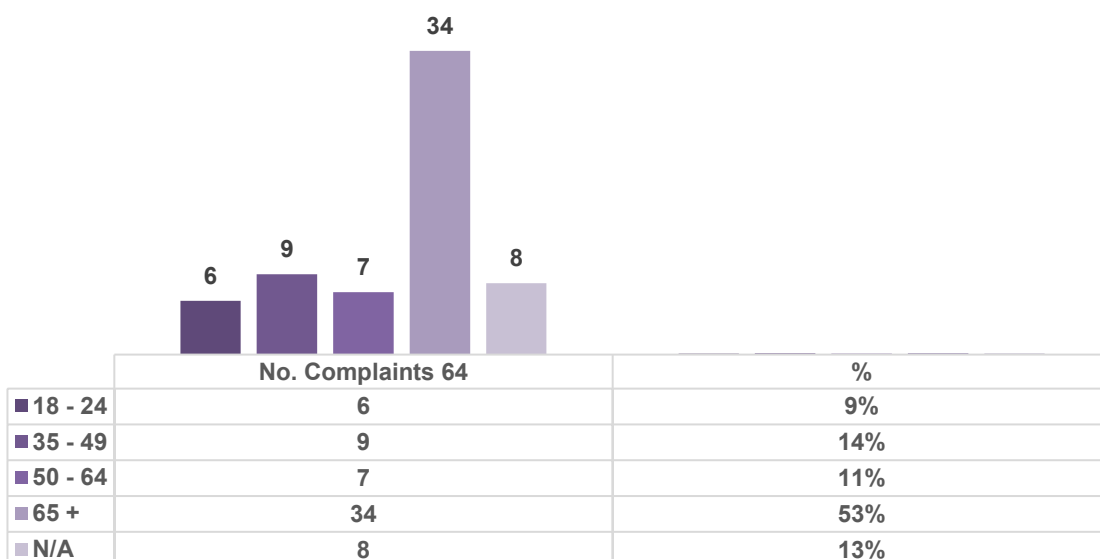
The below graph shows out of the 64 complaints received in 2019-20 (excluding Ombudsman), 58% were from male complainant's/service users, 34% female complainant's/service users and 8% were not available (N/A).

## Gender (Excluding Ombudsman)



The below graph shows the age range of the complainant or service user. 9% of the complaints received during 2019- 20 (excluding Ombudsman) were from or submitted on behalf of young people aged 18 – 24, 14% of complaints received were from or submitted on behalf of people between the ages of 35 – 49, 11% of complaints received were from or submitted on behalf of people aged 50 – 64, 53% of complaints received were from or submitted on behalf of people aged 65+ and in 13% information was not available (N/A).

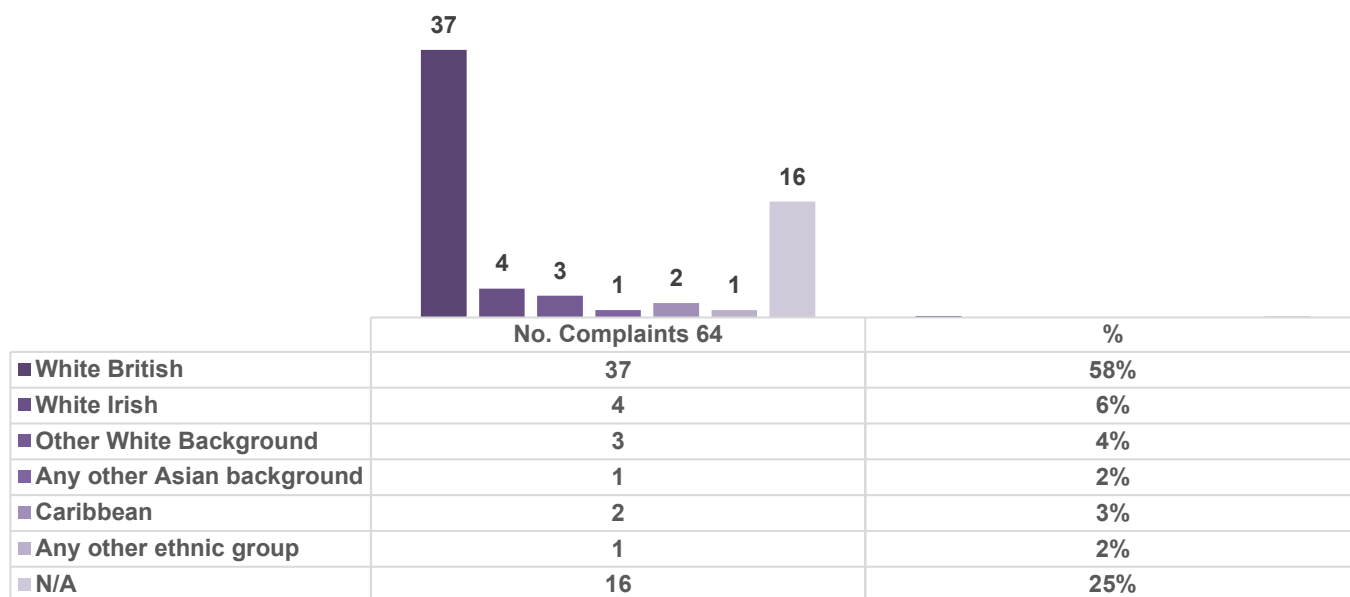
## Age (Excluding Ombudsman)





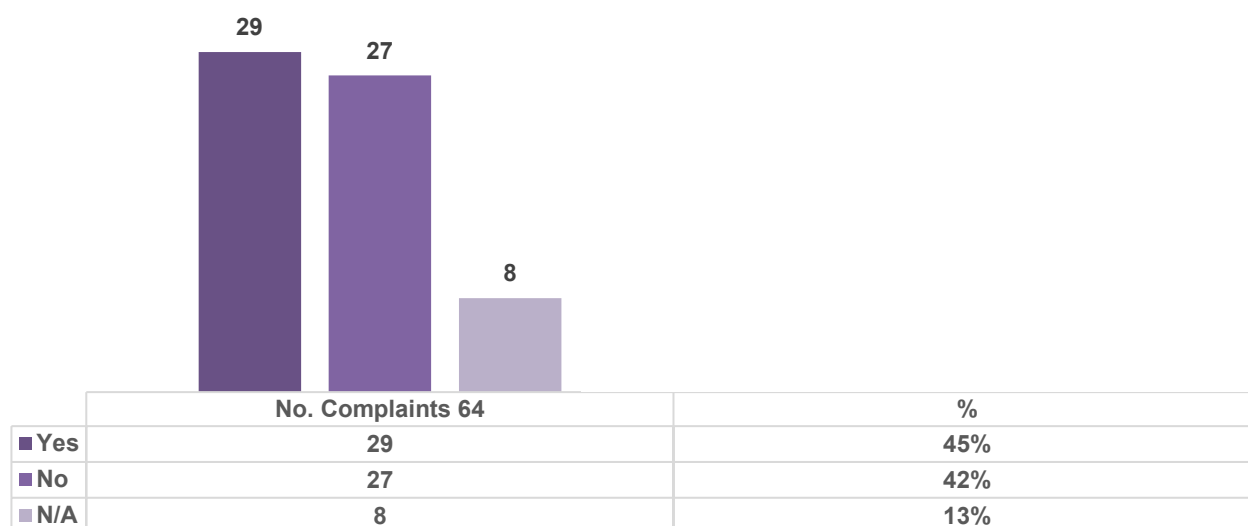
The majority of complainant's/service users in 2019-20 (excluding Ombudsman) were White British with a total of 58%, followed by White Irish at 6%, Other White background at 4%, Caribbean at 3% and Any other Asian background and Any other ethnic group both at 2%. In 25% of the complaints, the information was not available (N/A).

### Ethnicity (Excluding Ombudsman)



The data captured during 2019-20 showed that 45% of complainants had a disability and that 42% did not, information was not available for 13% (N/A).

### Disability (Excluding Ombudsman)



# Ombudsman

In 2019/20 Adult Social Care received 12 complaints or enquiries, of which 9 were investigated which included 2 to be upheld. This year has seen an increase by 2 complaints or enquiries, compared to 10 complaints or enquiries received in 2018/19 of which one complaint was investigated and upheld.

The first upheld complaint outcome required a letter of apology and a payment of £350.00. The concerns raised related to the standard of service of a provider falling below expectations and the council being held liable. Some of the matters raised were outside the direct control of the Local Authority.

The second upheld case required a written apology and a payment of £750.00.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) may consider complaints that have exhausted the Council's process. The LGSCO produced a review of adult social care complaints for 2019/20 at

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/news/2020/jul/more-systemic-problems-seen-in-ombudsman-complaints-lead-to-increased-wider-service-improvements>

# 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. 547 compliments were received in 2019/20 compared to 238 in 2018/19. These were all related to the quality and standard of care provided to 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, thank you cards, letters and emails.

**Yesterday I had the pleasure of meeting a member of your Occupational Therapist team to assess my 97-year-old mother.**

**The OT has expedited extra care visits for my mother within 12 hours of our meeting.**

**They put my mother at ease immediately, and her professional attitude during our meeting was excellent.**

**Thanks to the OT we have managed to keep my mother in familiar surroundings with her peace of mind restored.**

**What an absolute outstanding asset to your team.**

**Sent with heartfelt thanks**

Would like to pass on thanks to the social worker for guiding the customer through the minefield of sorting out his mother who has sadly had to go into care with Dementia related problems.

The social worker was very knowledgeable about the care system and always had the time to explain the complexities of it in plain terms. They have always kept the customer in touch regarding what was happening and without their help he doesn't think that his mother would be in as good a place as she is

**Well done to Knightlow Lodge for winning the Regional Team Award and being in the top 10 of the National Awards.**

**I would like to congratulate the management and staff upon winning the Regional Care Team award and finishing in the top 10 of the National Awards. This is a marvelous achievement and very**

**much deserved. Well done to all of you.**

**I honestly cannot tell you how wonderful all the staff at Knightlow Lodge have been to my mum who was a resident for 2 years up until 3 weeks ago as I have now moved my mum nearer to me at the seaside. All the staff (including the past manager) have gone above and beyond for my mum and myself to show kindness, humor and understanding. Even though I had to move my mum over the past 3 weeks the staff have still kept in touch to see how my mum is getting on in her new place. Please thank those lovely human beings again on my behalf. If only we could swap care workers' wages with that of footballers. Many thanks once more**

**Copthorne Lodge was very friendly and welcoming. Amazing level of care given to Mum. Really appreciate the care and time made which has made my Mum feel valued again**

**Just to say a massive thank you to Gilbert Richards Centre. When the service user comes home on a Tuesday and Thursday, they are so happy and full of what a brilliant day they have had. It is lovely to see. Keep up the good work**

**To all the Care Staff at Copthorne Lodge for the extra care they showed me recently, when I was not myself. Thank you**

**To the great staff at Eric Williams. Thank you for caring for my Mum so well.**

**I would just like to thank you to the Principal Home Improvement Officer for overseeing the wet room. My Mum and myself are over the moon with it.**

**It is lovely.**

**Thank you**



# Service improvements and learning points

Adult Social Care is committed to learning from service user and customer feedback. Where complaints highlight that matters have gone wrong, managers must identify any remedial and development action required to improve service delivery.

## Most common areas of feedback

When complaints are received, they are recorded on a database and each concern raised within the complaint is logged under a 'reason of complaint code'. These codes include main categories and subcategory subjects. An example of this would be Standard of Service which has the subcategory reason codes *service level/care plan dispute* *lack of/access to/eligibility for service and delay in receiving service*. It is not unusual for a complainant to raise more than one concern in the same complaint. For example, a complainant may submit a complaint about communication and finance issues experienced during the same incident, and both concerns along with any additional subcategories within the complaint codes would be recorded accordingly under that complaint.

The table below highlights the different types of concerns raised within the complaints received in 2019/20 compared to 2018/19 under the main category. This does not show the actual number of complaints received but only the main reasons of complaints data. Currently our system does not capture an individual complaint code breakdown of the outcome of each concern – so the figures below reflect the alleged complaint, rather than whether a complaint was upheld or not within those specific categories.

Category	2019/20		2018/19	
Communication	98	52%	54	45%
Standard of Service	65	34%	61	51%
Financial issues	16	8%	4	3%
Protection	10	5%	0	0%
Environment/property	1	1%	1	1%

The 3 main categories of concerns raised are, Standard of Service, Communication and Financial Issues

## Communication

52% of complaints received in 2019/20 (compared to 45% in 2018/19) were centered around communication an increase of 7%. When service 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 are complex and often appear confusing. These may be services directly provided by the Council or those delivered through independent sector provision and can include care and support delivered in care homes, housing with care support and a range of other community support services. 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/care providers are not getting back to them or they do not have a direct line of communication to the person they have been dealing with. 2019/20 has shown that concerns around communication within Adult Social Care has increased slightly.

## Standard of Service

A proportion of complaints received indicate that concerns around standard of services have increased, but a proportion of people complaining solely on the standard of service has decreased. 34% of complaints received in 2019/20 (as compared to 51% in 2018/19) were related to standard of service and reflect a decrease of 17%. Standard of Services includes service delivery, assessment of eligibility for services and timeliness in receiving services. Not all adults will be eligible for services from Adult Social Care following assessment. This can inevitably result in challenge and disagreement on how individual needs can be met. 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. Delays may also be incurred due to sourcing the right support, again leading to a complaint. In 2019/20 delay in assessments and re-assessments, managing service users' expectations and care homes not delivering services within agreed timeframes were the general themes.

## Financial Issues

A small proportion of the complaints received indicated additional concerns around financial issues such as financial assessment, financial error, non-payment and charges. In 2019/20 we received 8% of complaints regarding financial issues (compared to 3% in 2018/19) this is an increase of 5%.

Concerns raised in 2019/20 involved disputes on payment/invoicing for home and placement care, and charges for care not received. These matters have been reviewed and corrected as appropriate and a financial re-assessment was provided where necessary. Other issues raised involved application for Direct Payments and Disability Grants. Further concerns raised in complaints received were outstanding direct payment charges, the dispute on overdue payments of care and services and the re-adjustment amounts on invoicing provided.

## 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.

Compliments to date reflect well on the Older People Service provisions operationally and in the Council's direct provision. Further work is needed to capture this information for other areas of Adult Social Care.

## 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 reviewed for ongoing learning and improvements. Across Adult Social Care various processes to address learning and outcomes of quality and assurance are in place, and the learning of complaints is regularly discussed on an on-going basis with management teams and social care staff. There needs to be a consideration of an achievable and deliverable timescale for responses to complaints. We do monitor achievements against this, with the continuation of the RAG reporting process and quarterly data capturing. This is improving complaint timeliness in 2020. Upon completion of the complaint investigations, service improvements can be identified to change practice. Examples of these changes are:

- Financial Assessments where complaint has informed process that is now in place
- Commissioning where complaints have led to revisions to checks on providers on a more regular basis
- Operational teams where complaints have resulted in more focus on written recording that supports decision making

## Adult Commissioning

Adult Commissioning received 14 complaints that required investigation by the Adult Commissioning Team. Additional to this, 2 complaints have been investigated by Dementia and Short-Term Provisions and 1 complaint by the Outreach Support Team under Adult Services. Of the complaints investigated the main areas of improvement are in respect of Communication between professionals and service users and professionals and relatives, Staff recruitment and retention to ensure home support calls are not missed and individual complaints relating to staff conduct and attitude. Remedial action was put into place to ensure improvements were followed up by the Councils Quality Assurance team and regular monitoring to check on progress was put into place in all instances.

The most common outcome of complaints was to work with individual staff and external agencies 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 regarding following care plans and using the Electronic Care Monitoring system which captures information about care visits.

## Community Social Care (65+), Hospital Social Care and Equipment and Therapy Services

Charging for services and the financial Assessment process has been a significant theme in complaints for adult services (65yrs+). This relates to information provided at the assessment and support planning stage to support individual understanding of the financial assessment process and requirements for charging. Training, alongside individual and group supervisions, continue to support staff by ensuring they are up to date with relevant information and guidance, so that accurate information can be provided to service users and their families.

In addition, complaints relating to data protection and mental capacity reflect a general public misunderstanding over the access to someone's personal data and decision making. These can be areas of disagreement and reflect the need for greater understanding of the statutory position of the social worker. As with financial assessments, training and supervision support the practitioner to develop skills in handling this directly, but the complaints process enables challenge in a constructive way.

### 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. Complaints are discussed 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, and this is reflected in the number of joint complaints with a partner organisation.

### 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 are complex in nature and reflect lack of or delays in information sharing and reflect the need for improvement in joint investigation process
- As with Adults over 65yrs there are some complaints that reflect difficulty in the interpretation of Council statutory responsibilities and Council functions
- Complaints in relation to timeliness or waiting times have significantly improved and is reflective of focus on reducing the waits for Adult Disability Services that has taken place over the last 12 months

Themes from Ombudsman's enquiries are included in the complaint's response processes across services. A key theme has been in relation to sharing information across teams and with those receiving services. Whilst training and supervision is supported at a local level, further work is needed on developing key messages including leaflets and website information. This is an action being taken forward by the Head of Social Work for Mental Health.

### Independent Living

This area of service only received one complaint, and this was concerning the delivery of our Direct Payment scheme. This involved a change in someone's circumstances, including a move from the local area and that we needed to check that arrangements for managing Direct Payments remain the same so we can ensure we communicate with the correct person in a timely manner. We are ensuring we take this into account when dealing with any changes in circumstances in the future.

### Financial Assessments Team

The team received two formal complaints during the last year relating to incorrect amounts being charged on invoices sent to clients for their care service charge. One related to a fault within the recording system that was not identified within the checks that are completed before invoices are issued every four weeks. The fault was fixed by the system suppliers and the internal checks were amended to prevent a repeat. The second complaint related to a processing error by a team member. Additional training was provided.



# 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/](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/).

Ilius Ahmed  
Complaints Officer  
**Insight Team**  
Coventry City Council  
September 2020

John Stewart  
Complaints Administrator  
**Insight Team**  
Coventry City Council  
September 2020



Insight Team  
Coventry City Council

[www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/)