



ADULTS & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
– 7 SEPTEMBER 2026

ADULT SOCIAL CARE STATUTORY COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS
ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS & CULTURAL SERVICES

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Committee with a summary of the complaints and compliments received in respect of adult social care services commissioned or provided by the Adults and Cultural Services Department during 2025- 26. The Annual Report is appended.
- 2 The Committee is asked to note the report and are invited to make comments.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

- 3 The Committee last received a report on complaints and compliments on 2 September 2025. This report covered the year 2024-25.
- 4 Local authorities must, each financial year, publish an Annual Report (Regulation 13(3)).
- 5 The statutory report is considered at the Adults and Cultural Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September of each reporting year.

Background

- 6 The Department has a long-standing statutory duty to have a complaints process in place for adult social care. The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, effective from 1 April 2009, introduced a two-stage process with flexible investigation methods and timescales to suit the nature and complexity of the complaint. If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome after stage one, they can ask the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) to investigate.
- 7 The regulations provide a framework for those handling a complaint relating to a local authority's social care functions - this includes directly provided services and independent services provided through commissioning.

- 8 The actions, omissions, or decisions of the local authority in respect of social care functions are covered. The regulations do not, however, apply more generally to independent providers.
- 9 People who are paying for their own social care (self-funders) may complain to the local authority, for example, about assessment or failure to assess. Services people have arranged or purchased themselves are not covered but the local authority could be challenged if it commissions those services, for example, by a complaint that it has commissioned a sub-standard service or is not performance managing contracted services sufficiently.
- 10 The Adults and Cultural Services Department is contacted on a daily basis by service users, carers and other interested parties to share concerns, request information or seek clarity on care arrangements. These queries are dealt with and resolved at a local level within care teams or through the Directorate without recourse to the formal complaints process. The Complaints Team does, on occasion, also receive queries and concerns that suggest an adult requires immediate support or that raise safeguarding concerns. Such reports are best handled outside of the formal complaints procedure and are referred into the Customer Service Centre or allocated workers for urgent consideration as appropriate in accordance with relevant safeguarding protocols
- 11 Under the complaints' regulations, there is a further requirement to produce an annual report that reviews the effectiveness of the complaints and compliments procedures and provides a summary of statistical information. The appended Annual Report fulfils this requirement and presents a summary of the complaints handled in 2025-26.
- 12 Complaints and compliments about all other aspects of the Adult and Cultural Services Department are reported separately as part of the corporate complaints process.

Key Points

- 13 Complaint volumes increased during 2025-26 compared to the previous year (317 compared to 342) as did the number of service users from 11,035 (24/25) to 11,176 (25/26). This equates to 29 complaints per 1,000 users in 24/25 and 31 in 25/26. While the rate is relatively low, movement should continue to be monitored alongside complaint themes, causes and outcomes to understand whether it reflects changes in service demand, complexity of need, customer expectations, or areas where further service improvement may be required.
- 14 For complaints resolved during 2025-26, the proportion where fault was identified decreased from the previous year (134 complaints or 47%, compared to 143 or 45%). The principal factor affecting this was an increase where 'delay' was a primary cause.
- 15 Throughout 2025-2026, 88% of cases were responded to within the statutory maximum time allowed (65 working days).

- 16 During the year, 33 complaints were referred to a senior manager for review where the complainant remained dissatisfied with the initial response. This represents a decrease compared with 2024/25, when 38 complaints were referred. Timeliness at this stage also declined, with 57% of responses completed within 20 working days.
- 17 The most common complaint themes were around Charging, Assessment and Service Received.
- 18 There have been good examples this year of how systemic learning has been identified and implemented. In 134 cases where complaints were upheld, clear actions were highlighted by Investigating Managers to improve future performance.
- 19 Whilst the report understandably focuses on complaints, adult social care services did receive 442 compliments during 2025-26. This continues to add balance to the annual report and recognises the good work that is also taking place across the Department. The majority of compliments highlight the professionalism, support, and empathy shown by the service during difficult times, examples of which are included in the appended main report.
- 20 There is good evidence of learning from complaints at a local level with upheld complaints having clearly articulated actions to improve wider performance over and above resolving the individual issues.
- 21 During the year, the LGSCO assessed or investigated 33 new complaints. This figure compares with 20 investigations started in 2024-25.
- 22 The LGSCO published Final Decisions on 17 complaints during the year. Fault was found in eight instances.

Recommendations:

23 The Committee is asked to:

- a) Note the Adult Social Care Complaints Annual Report, covering the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026
- b) Provide comment and feedback on the content and analysis within the report

Circulation under the Local Alert Issues Procedure

24 None.

List of Appendices

Appendix – Adults Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments: Annual Report 2025-26

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