

Date: 25 October 2022

TITLE OF REPORT: Adult Social Care - Annual Report on Services Complaints, Compliments and Representations - April 2021 to March 2022.

REPORT OF: Steph Downey, Adult Social Care, Children's Adults and Families.

Summary

Cabinet considered the attached report on 21 June 2022.

Cabinet approved the referral of the report to a meeting of the Care, Health & Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in line with procedure.

It is a statutory requirement that the report is considered by a formal committee to ensure the Council has an effective complaints procedure that follows the legislation set out in The Local Authorities Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 and the The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012.

Background

1. The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints, (England) Regulations 2009 set down the procedures that Adult Social Care Services, and National Health Services must follow when complaints or representations are made. As part of the responsibilities set out in the acts, local authorities must produce an annual report on all complaints and representations received. This report fulfils Gateshead Council's obligations and provides information on all representations received about the Council's Adult Social Care Services between 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022.
2. Information contained in the report provides a summary of the statistical information of all representations received, together with a review of the effectiveness of the procedures. Some examples of service improvement are also included.

Annual Report Complaints and Representations

3. The report is consistent with the Sustainable Community Strategy – Vision 2030 and the Council's Corporate Plan. In particular the report supports the Corporate Priority for serving our customers by continuously improving services and targeting areas of under achievement.
4. The report focuses primarily on statutory complaints for Adults Social Care Services with information on complaint related queries and compliments that were received about staff or services. The report covers the period from 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022.

Operation of the Procedure

5. The Adults Care Complaints Process procedure has two stages:

- Local Resolution by a Team or Service Manager.
- External Consideration by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Statistical Analysis

6. In 2021/22 the number of complaints and representations dealt with was as follows:

- During 2021/22, 55 complaints were received regarding Adult Social Care Services.
- This is a 34% increase on complaints received during 2020/21, (41).
- The number of complaint related queries (CRQs) has also slightly increased compared to the number of low-level issues received during 2020/21, (16 from 15).
- Complaint related queries are low-level representations that must be resolved within one working day after receipt.
- The number of complaints assessed as Green (low risk to the Council or service user) accounted for 7% (4) of the total number of complaints received.
- Amber complaints, which are medium risk to the Council or the service user, accounted for almost 93% (51) of all complaints received.
- Amber complaints often include several issues which are deemed as moderate risk to either the service user or the Council.
- 31% (17) of all complaints received involved disputes to care charges levied for care and support. From this, 9 complaints were about lack of information given about charges.
- During 2021/22, four complaints were considered by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman, (LG&SCO). This is a 33% decrease from the number of complaints considered by the LG&SCO during 2020/21, (6).
- 74% (274) of representations made during 2021/22 were compliments and only 26% (97) were expressions of dissatisfaction.

Points of Interest

7. The following points may be of interest:

- During 2021/22, quality of service accounted for 38% (21) of all complaints received.
- Quality of service can include straightforward issues, such as,
 - Missed or delayed social work visits / appointments
 - Non-return of telephone calls
 - Poor communication
 - Poor or no response after a request for service.

However, quality of service can also include service failure issues for example, failure to safeguard the welfare or finances of a vulnerable adult.

- After investigation, 33% (6) of complaints about quality were partially upheld, 28% were upheld, 17% not upheld and 22% (4) were withdrawn or informally resolved by the service.
- All recommendations from upheld / partially upheld complaints are detailed within this report.

Learning from complaints and representations:

8. Learning from complaints is critical to prevent recurrence of the cause(s) of the original complaint. It is important that we make sure that people's experiences help us to improve services where we can. Changes can include policy, procedure or employee development.

Examples of improvements identified during 2021/22:

- Due to the number of complaints received about charging for care, Adult Social Care is carrying out a review of the information given to clients or their representatives. This review will include proposals to provide an information leaflet to clients or their representatives which details when charges for care will become applicable. Staff have also been reminded that any discussion where charging for care is discussed must be recorded on the client's case file.
- A complaint was received about the lack of financial information given in relation to an emergency short term placement by both EDT (out of hours emergency duty team) and subsequently the Locality Teams. Following this complaint, the Manager for the Locality Teams, and the Manager responsible for EDT reminded their staff that they must ensure that information about charges is clearly communicated to clients or to their representative. This information must then be recorded on the client's record
- Following a complaint where a client was missed off the weekend contact calls; the Care Call Service reviewed their current procedures and introduced a call audit. This call audit must be carried out by all operators who have responsibility for completing the "At Risk" calls each weekend. Staff will now have to ensure that they cross reference the calls they have made against the listed "at risk" records for each scheme and these will then be signed off.

A complaint was received about the quality of the care provided at a Council run respite Service. Following the complaint investigation, improvements to service were identified.

- As the investigation did find gaps in staff training, it was agreed to remind staff in their supervision sessions of the importance of reporting concerns to the Council's Safeguarding Team and CQC as soon as possible after they are highlighted.
- Additional guidance was given to staff on the use of daily notes, which will now have an additional section which details all personal support offered, along with the dates and time and the name of the staff member completing the notes.

The Service Managers, responsible for both Provider Services and Assessment & Personalisation have since ensured that all recommendations identified have been taken forward and implemented.

Future Objectives

9. Objectives for 2022/23 are to:
 - a. Continue to meet regularly with Managers from Adult Services to consider what further action needs to be taken to
 - i. Resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity and within local timescales.
 - ii. To continue to ensure all complaints responded to are signed off by Senior Management within Adult Social Care.
 - iii. Improve the number of complaints being investigated and resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.
 - iv. Ensure that the number of complaints progressing to the Local Government Ombudsman remain low.
 - v. Ensure that Adult Social Care continue to use the outcomes from complaints to drive service improvement.

- b. Ensure that staff members who receive compliments continue to pass the details on to Social Care Customer Services so that they or their team receive the recognition they deserve.

Recommendation

10. Committee is requested to:
 - I. Consider and comment on the annual report;
 - II. Indicate whether it is satisfied with the performance of Children, Adults and Families (now Integrated Adults and Social Care) in responding to complaints and ensuring that this results in continuous service improvement

TITLE:	Adult Social Care and Public Health - Annual Report on Services Complaints, Compliments and Representations - April 2021 to March 2022
REPORT OF:	Alison Routledge, Complaints Manager
SERVICE:	Quality Assurance and Commissioning (Gateshead System), Children, Adults and Families

SUMMARY

The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 came into force on 1 April 2009. This legislation sets down the procedures that Adult Social Care Services and National Health Services, (NHS), must follow when complaints or representations are made.

As part of the responsibilities set out in the Act, local authorities must produce an annual report on all complaints and representations received. This report fulfils Gateshead Council's obligations and provides information on all representations received about the Council's Adult Social Care Services from 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022.

1.0 The Statutory Complaints Process

1.1 There are two steps to the Statutory Complaints Process.

Step 1 - Informal (Local) resolution by the Council.

Step 2 - Independent consideration by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman, (LG&SCO).

1.2 Once received, all complaints are assessed and are graded. Categories of complaint are:

- Green, which are low-level or minimal risk for either the service user or the Council.
- Amber, which are assessed as a moderate or medium risk.
- Red, a serious complaint which are assessed as high risk.

1.3 There are no prescribed timescales for resolution of Adult Social Care complaints as the quality of the investigation and outcome is significantly more important than attempting to adhere to a strict timescale for response. However, it is very important that all investigation timescales negotiated with the complainant are proportionate to the issues raised and that the complainant is kept up to date on the progress of investigation.

2.0 Publicity and Information

2.1 Publicity on how to complain can be provided in several formats, encouraging, and facilitating easy access to the complaints process. All new service users receive a complaints leaflet in their information pack. A leaflet is also provided when a service user receives the outcome to an assessment / reassessment of need. Adult Social Care feedback cards are also provided to service users and their carers after an assessment or review of social care needs.

3.0 Independent Element

3.1 The Council operates an internal investigation procedure. Therefore, it is important that complaints administration is fully independent of any form of Adult Social Care service delivery to ensure fairness and impartiality and to prevent any conflicts of interest.

4.0 Advocacy and Special Needs

4.1 Vulnerable people receiving an Adult Social Care service are encouraged and supported to express their views and to access the complaints procedure if they wish. An easy read complaints leaflet is also available for people with a learning disability.

4.2 In all cases advocacy is offered if it is felt that the complainant would benefit from this service.

5.0 Training and Employee Development

5.1 Training for Investigating Officers is provided on a regular basis. All Adult Social Care Team Managers / Service Managers are expected to have undergone investigating skills training.

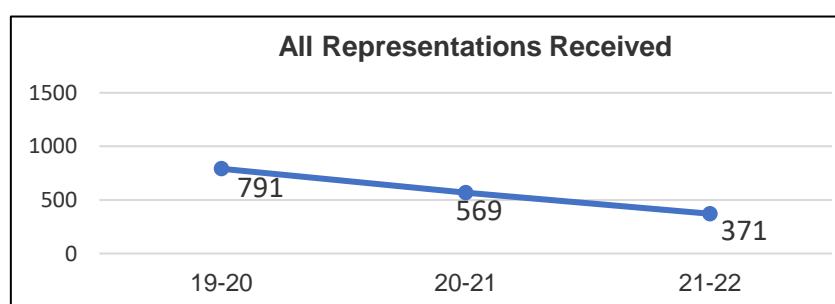
5.2 The Investigating Skills Training Course is facilitated by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman, (LG&SCO). The training concentrates on defining, investigating, and resolving complex complaints. It also emphasises the need to identify any improvements that may be necessary as a direct result of individual complaints.

5.3 A LG&SCO Investigating Skills Training Course was held in April 2022. However, all managers appointed to investigate complaints are offered one to one support when required.

6.0 Adults Services Complaints

6.1 All Representations Received over the Past Three Years

All Formal Contacts	2019 2020		2020 2021		2021 2022	
Statutory Adult Services Complaints	44.44%	80	47.13%	41	57.14%	55
ASC Comments	2.78%	5	4.60%	4	1.02%	1
Complaint Related Queries	15.00%	27	17.24%	15	16.33%	16
Commissioned Service Response	2.22%	4	0.00%	0	8.16%	8
Commissioned Services Issues	17.78%	32	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
Corporate Complaints	2.22%	4	2.30%	2	0.00%	0
Data Breach	1.11%	2	0.00%	0	1.02%	1
Insurance Claim	0.00%	0	1.15%	1	0.00%	0
Inter-Agency Concerns	2.22%	4	4.60%	4	2.04%	2
Joint Health & Social Care Complaints	2.78%	5	6.90%	6	3.06%	3
LG&SCO Referrals	4.44%	8	6.90%	6	4.08%	4
MCA/DoLs Responses	1.11%	2	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
MP / Councillor Responses	3.33%	6	8.05%	7	7.14%	7
Safeguarding Alerts	0.56%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
Whistle Blow	0.00%	0	1.15%	1	0.00%	0
All Dissatisfaction		180		87		97
Compliments		611		482		274
Total		791		569		371
Trend				-28.07%		-34.62%



6.2 Categories of all Statutory Complaints Received over the Past Three Years

Complaint Categories	2019 2020	2020 2021	2021 2022
Green	21	3	4
Amber	58	37	51
Red	1	1	0
All	80	41	55

6.3 Key Points of Interest

- During 2021/22, 55 complaints were received regarding Adult Social Care Services.
- This is a 34% increase on complaints received during 2020/21, (41).
- The number of complaint related queries (CRQs) has also slightly increased compared to the number of low-level issues received during 2020/21, (16 from 15).
- Complaint related queries are low-level representations that must be resolved within one working day after receipt.
- The number of complaints assessed as Green (low risk to the Council or service user) accounted for 7% (4) of the total number of complaints received.
- Amber complaints, which are medium risk to the Council or the service user, accounted for almost 93% (51) of all complaints received.
- Amber complaints often include several issues which are deemed as moderate risk to either the service user or the Council.
- 31% (17) of all complaints received involved disputes to care charges levied for care and support. From this, 9 complaints were about lack of information given about charges.
- 74% (274) of representations made during 2021/22 were compliments and only 26% (97) were expressions of dissatisfaction.

6.4 Specific Areas of Complaint

Service Area	2019 2020		2020 2021		2021 2022	
Assessment & Personalisation	76.25%	61	68.29%	28	67.27%	37
Care Call	2.50%	2	2.44%	1	7.27%	4
Commissioning	7.50%	6	7.32%	3	3.64%	2
Provider Services	12.50%	10	21.95%	9	21.82%	12
Other Services	1.25%	1	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
Total		80		41		55

- During 2021/22, 67% (37) of complaints were about the Assessment & Personalisation service.
- This is a 32% increase on the number received during 2020/21, (28).
- Assessment & Personalisation is often the first service to become involved with those requesting support from Adult Social Care, so dissatisfaction can often be anticipated.
- After investigation, 19% (6) of complaints about Assessment & Personalisation were found to be unjustified. However, almost 65% (20) were found to be either fully or partially upheld.
- The Care Call Service received four statutory complaint during 2021/22 of which 45% (3) were found to be partially upheld.
- Twelve complaints were received by the Council's Provider Services.
- After investigation, 80% (8) of provider complaints were either partially or fully upheld.

6.5 Issues linked to the complaint

Issues of Complaint	2019 2020		2020 2021		2021 2022	
Delay	26.25%	21	9.76%	4	3.64%	2
Lack of Service	12.50%	10	29.27%	12	40.00%	22
Quality of Service	51.25%	41	48.78%	20	38.18%	21
Refusal of Service	1.25%	1	4.88%	2	9.09%	5
Staff Issues	8.75%	7	7.32%	3	9.09%	5
Total		80		41		55

- During 2021/22, quality of service accounted for 38% (21) of all complaints received.
- Quality of service can include straightforward issues, such as,
 - Missed or delayed social work visits / appointments
 - Non-return of telephone calls
 - Poor communication
 - Poor or no response after a request for service.

However, quality of service can also include service failure issues for example, failure to safeguard the welfare or finances of a vulnerable adult.

- After investigation, 33% (6) of complaints about quality were partially upheld, 28% were upheld, 17% not upheld and 22% (4) were withdrawn or informally resolved by the service.
- All recommendations from upheld / partially upheld complaints are detailed within this report.
- 40% (22) of all complaints were regarding lack of service. Complaints about lack of service may often be linked to high expectations about what Adult Services can offer to a service user or their families. However, it was found that from the complaints received about lack of service, nine were about lack of information about care charges.
- After investigation, five complaints about charges were either fully or partially upheld. Three complaints about charges remain outstanding.
- 9% (5) of complaints received were regarding the conduct of individual workers. This is an increase of 67% (5) compared to the number of complaints received during 2020/21, (3).
- After investigation, 50% (2) of all complaints about staff behaviour were not upheld. 25% (1) was fully upheld and 25% (1) was partially upheld.
- In all cases, should there be repeated complaints regarding an individual worker, the Council will always undertake an internal review to ensure that any unmet professional development needs are addressed where appropriate.

6.6 Themes of Complaints Received

6.6.1 There were two main themes of complaints received during 2021/22:

6.6.2 Quality of Service

Quality of service remains one of the main themes of complaint received over the past three years. During 2021/22, quality of service accounted for 38% (21) of all complaints received.

From the complaints received there were two main areas of concern.

Quality of Support from Individual Workers

19% (4) complaints received about quality of service were in respect of the support offered by either individual workers or by the service. However, two of the complaints about staff support were subsequently resolved informally by the managers concerned.

One complaint about staff support was regarding a Care Call warden who it was alleged did not carry out essential tasks when attending a call out. After a full investigation, this complaint was found to be unjustified as the investigating officer found that the warden had acted appropriately.

One complaint about staff support was about the quality of care provided by staff within a Council run short break facility. The areas of complaint were subject to a detailed investigation and following this, the complaint was found to be partially upheld. The service did identify improvements to service as a result of the complaint, which are detailed within this report.

Dispute Care Costs

14% (3) of complaints were raising issues around disputes to charges levied for care and support.

One complainant was dissatisfied about the communication from the Social Worker, which led to delays in the Financial Assessment Process being concluded. This had impacted the timescales of when invoices were able to be shared with the client. This complaint was found to be partially upheld and as an outcome, the Council agreed to part waive the fees incurred.

One complaint was regarding the charging period for care within a commissioned care home. The investigation found that the allocated worker had not informed the care home that the client had been admitted to hospital. This had then resulted in the care home retaining the placement longer than necessary. The complaint was upheld, and the additional fees incurred were waived by the Council.

Another complaint about care charges was also found to be justified after investigation, as it was identified that there was a delay sending out the invoice for care due to an administrative error when authorising the care package on the client's case file. As a remedy to this complaint, the Council agreed to part waive the costs incurred.

All other complaints about quality of service were in respect of separate service areas. Two were about missed home care visits, which were both upheld and measures put in place by the PRIME Service to ensure no further visits were missed. One complaint was about the quality of the assessment process. This complaint was found to be partly upheld and the factually incorrect information within the assessment was corrected.

Two complaints were about the quality of care provided by commissioned care services. After investigation, one complaint was found to be partially upheld and as a result, the care provider carried out changes to the client's individual support plan. One complaint was found to be unjustified as the service had provided care in line with the client's care plan.

6.6.3 Lack of Service

40% (22) of complaints received were about lack of service from either the worker or the Service.

Lack of Information about Charges for Care

36% (8) complaints received were about lack of information given to the client or their representative about potential charges for care. During investigation, it was found that, in some cases, the Social Care worker did advise that they had informed the client / representative that there would be a charge, but further investigation found that this information had not been recorded on the case record.

Seven of the eight complaints about this issue have been responded to, with one remaining under investigation. Following this, three complaints were fully justified and charges either waived or part waived. Two complaints were not justified as workers had evidenced that information about charging for care had been shared with the client or their representative. One complaint was partly upheld as there was information available to evidence that information had been shared but due to the delays encountered sourcing a care package, the Council agreed to waive the charges for the short term stay in a Promoting Independence Centre.

Lack of Action after a Request for Service

3% (7) complaints received were regarding lack of action after individual requests for service.

Two complaints about lack of service were about the Council's Care Call Service. One complaint was about the lack of telephone checks to a client over a weekend. Although this complaint did include a number of other areas of concern, the issue about weekend checks was upheld and measures put in place by the Care Call Service to prevent any similar issues reoccurring. Another complaint about Care Call was partially upheld and again, the service reviewed their service support to the individual client and offered additional advice about the use of the Care Call Pendant.

All other complaints about lack of action after a request for service were about different service areas.

After investigation of all complaints about this issue, 43% (3) complaints were partially upheld, 29% (2) were fully upheld, 14% (1) complaint was unsubstantiated and 14% (1) was withdrawn by the complainant.

6.7 Outcomes

Outcomes of complaints	2019 2020		2020 2021		2021 2022	
Outstanding		2		6		8
Not upheld	34.62%	27	45.71%	16	17.02%	8
Partially upheld	23.08%	18	25.71%	9	34.04%	16
Upheld	30.77%	24	28.57%	10	34.04%	16
Other Resolution / Withdrawn	11.54%	9	0.00%	0	14.89%	7
Total Completed		78		41		55

- 17%, (8) of all complaints were not upheld after investigation.
- 34% (16) of complaints were found to be partially justified.
- 34% (16) of complaints were found to be fully justified.
- 15% (7) of complaints were either informally resolved by the service concerned or withdrawn by the complainant.
- All improvements identified a result of complaints that were either partially or fully justified are included within this report

6.8 Timescales

- When a complaint is passed to an Investigating Officer, the Investigating Officer is requested to consider the detail of the complaint along with the issues raised and to identify an achievable timescale for response. This timescale should then be discussed with the complainant and their agreement sought.
- This negotiation then ensures that investigations and timescales for response are proportionate to the issues raised.
- Adult Social Care complaints often include several areas of concern, some may also include issues about other agencies, such as health or housing. Any liaison with outside agencies that may be necessary to fully investigate the complaint should always be factored into any negotiated timescale for response.
- In all cases, the Investigating Officer is requested to keep the complainant updated on the progress of the investigation and to advise them of any delays that may be anticipated
- The Council consider that 20 working days is an achievable timescale to respond to most Adult Social Care complaints. However, this timescale does not consider the complexity of some complaints. Therefore, the investigation timescale should always be negotiated with the complainant.
- During 2021/22, 36 working days was the average time to investigate and respond to a complaint.

6.9 How complaints were received

Method of Complaint	2019 2020		2020 2021		2021 2022	
Service Feedback Form	1.25%	1	0.00%	0	1.82%	1
Complaints Form	3.75%	3	2.44%	1	0.00%	0
Email	30.00%	24	51.22%	21	63.64%	35
In Person	2.50%	2	0.00%	0	1.82%	1
Letter	38.75%	31	17.07%	7	14.55%	8
Telephone	23.75%	19	29.27%	12	18.18%	10
		80		41		

- Email is now the main method of referral accounting for almost 64%, (35), of all complaints received.
- Email is popular as it is accessible and allows the complainant to retain a copy of the complaint that has been submitted.
- Letters accounted for almost 15% (8) of complaint referrals.
- Personal visits accounted for almost 2% (1) of complaints received. This complaint was made direct to an Adult Social Care Worker.
- 18% (10) complaints were received via telephone.
- Complaints received by telephone are generally in response to immediate issues, such as missed care visits or disputes regarding invoices for care.
- Relatives continue to make the most representations, and accounted for 75%, (43) of complaints made.
- 16% (9) complaints were received direct from service users.
- Three complaints were referred to the Council by advocates acting on behalf of the service user and one was referred by a client's good friend (with permission).

7.0 Equalities Monitoring

- 7.1 Gateshead Council recognises that equality monitoring of service delivery is crucial for effective planning and scrutiny of the services that it provides. This monitoring can identify which groups are using services and gauge their level of satisfaction. The information can then be used to highlight possible inequalities, investigate their underlying causes, and address any unfairness or disadvantage. However, as complainants tend to be from relatives, it is not possible to collect this information with any accuracy as diversity forms sent out were not routinely returned.
- 7.2 Information about the complaints process can be made available in key languages and formats. Information for customers with sight, hearing or learning difficulties can also be provided.
- 7.3 During 2021/2022, there were no complaints where it was able to be identified that the complainant was a member of the BAME community.

8.0 Commissioned Care Services – All issues received

Commissioned Services	2019 2020	2020 2021	2021 2022
Formal Statutory Complaints	6	3	2
Commissioned Service - Own Response	4	0	8
Complaint Related Queries	6	2	5
Commissioned Services Issues	32	0	0
Data Issue	1	0	0
Local Government Ombudsman Referrals	0	0	0
MP/Councillor Referral	3	1	3
Whistle Blows	1	1	0
Total	56	10	18

- During 2021/22, representations highlighting dissatisfaction about commissioned services increased by 80%, (18 from 10).
- Two complaints were investigated by the Council and were in respect of support provided by home care services.
- In line with procedure, eight complaints were subsequently shared with the Commissioned Service direct with a request that they undertake a complaint investigation under their own complaints procedure.
- Four complaints investigated by Commissioned Providers were regarding care and support provided by individual care homes. One was about an extra care living facility and one complaint was about commissioned home care.
- Following investigation by a commissioned care provider, the complainant has the option to refer any dissatisfaction direct to the Council. However, only one complainant remained dissatisfied. The Council subsequently reviewed the investigation carried out and provided a further response to the complainant.
- Five CRQ's (Complaint related queries, which are low level issues) about commissioned services were received during 2021/22. Two were in relation to commissioned care homes and three were about home care provision. All CRQs were resolved informally by either the Contract Management Officer or the Commissioning Officer responsible for the service.
- Following any referral highlighting dissatisfaction, Contract Management or Commissioning Officers always ensure that any improvements to service are taken forward with the care service concerned and monitored in line with contractual obligations.

9.0. Health & Social Care Joint Investigations

- 9.1 The statutory complaints process covers NHS and Social Care Services. All complaints that are received which are about services provided by both Health and Social Care are co-ordinated by either the Council's Complaints Manager or the Complaints Manager responsible for the Health Service subject to the complaint. The organisation responsible for the largest area of the complaint will take the lead in the investigation and will ensure that a combined response letter is sent to the complainant within the agreed timescales.
- 9.2 During 2021/22, three complaints were jointly investigated by managers at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, with assistance from managers within the Council's Adult Social Care.
- 9.3 All three complaint investigations were led by colleagues at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and comments from Adult Social Care were invited. Issues relating to Adult Social Care mainly focused on involvement of the Hospital Social Work Discharge Team and the PRIME Service. Adult Social Care responded to all requests for information with timescales set out by Health.

10.0 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

- 10.1 During 2021/22, four complaints were considered by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman, (LG&SCO). This is a 33% decrease from the number of complaints considered by the LG&SCO during 2020/21, (6).
- 10.2 This means that 93% (51) of complaints were successfully resolved by the Council.
- 10.3 All complaints considered by the LG&SCO had been previously considered through the statutory adults complaints procedure.
- 10.4 Three LG&SCO referrals were about the Assessment & Personalisation Service and one referral was regarding the Council's Provider Services.

- 10.5 After consideration, two of the referrals were closed by the LG&SCO who considered that no further action was necessary. One referral was not upheld. However, the LG&SCO did suggest that there was a fault identifying a communication issue by the service, but that this fault did not impact on the services provided to the client or on the outcome of the complaint.

Provider Services have agreed that they will consider the LG&SCO's response to identify what measures should be implemented to address this matter.

One LG&SCO referral remains under investigation.

11.0 Learning from Complaints: Examples of Service Improvements

- 11.1 Learning from complaints is critical to prevent recurrence of the cause(s) of the original complaint. It is important that we make sure that people's experiences help the Council to improve services where possible. Changes can include policy, procedure, or employee development.
- 11.2 Complaints about individual practice or failure to follow procedures are dealt with by reinforcement of processes and reiterating customer care standards through service / team meetings or individual supervision sessions.
- 11.3 In all cases, any justified issues regarding attitude or conduct of staff are dealt with in line with the Council's internal employment procedures.

Improvements after a complaint include:

Assessment & Personalisation

- Due to the number of complaints received about charging for care, Adult Social Care is carrying out a review of the information given to clients or their representatives. This review will include proposals to provide an information leaflet to clients or their representatives which details when charges for care will become applicable. Staff have also been reminded that any discussion where charging for care is discussed must be recorded on the clients case file.
- After a complaint where a family member raised concerns about how she was spoken to by a member of staff, it was agreed by the Service that all Adult Social Care Workers should be mindful of their terminology when dealing with clients and families. Adult Social Care Workers should, where possible, avoid using terms of endearment which, in some cases, may appear patronising or over familiar.
- Due to concerns about misunderstandings around what S117 funding can cover, it was agreed by the Service to review the paperwork relating to an individual client to ensure that information had been communicated to family members in a clear and detailed way.
- A complaint was received about the lack of communication with a family member following the cancellation of a CHC meeting at short notice. This lack of communication had subsequently caused the family member to incur significant financial injustice. Therefore, as a remedy to this complaint, an apology was given along with a recommendation that the costs incurred were reimbursed.
- A complaint was received about the lack of financial information given in relation to an emergency short term placement by both EDT (out of hours emergency duty team) and subsequently the Locality Teams. Following this complaint, the Manager for the Locality Teams, and the Manager responsible for EDT reminded their staff that they must ensure that information about charges is clearly communicated to clients or to their representative. This information must then be recorded on the client's record.

- Following a complaint where a family member had requested an emergency short term package of care for a client via the EDT service, it was found that this request had not been actioned. This was due to the volume of EDT alerts received over the weekend.

As an outcome to the complaint, it was agreed that at the start of the working week, Adult Social Care Direct, (ASCD) will now triage all requests received about Adult Social Care and prioritise them to ensure the most urgent referrals are dealt with first. EDT Staff will also follow up with an email to the ASCD mailbox to highlight any alert that requires urgent attention.

Care Call

Following a complaint where a client was missed off the weekend contact calls; the Care Call Service reviewed their current procedures and introduced a call audit. This call audit must be carried out by all operators who have responsibility for completing the “At Risk” calls each weekend. Staff will now have to ensure that they cross reference the calls they have made against the listed “at risk” records for each scheme and these will then be signed off.

In response to a second complaint about Care Call, the service implemented necessary changes to an individual’s Care Call case record. In addition to this, an offer of an Easy Press Pendant was provided, which may prove easier for the client to use and activate.

Provider Services - Promoting Independence Centres, (PIC)

After two complaints which included concerns about the quality of information and communication from a PIC, the service outlined several changes to practice.

- The PICs will provide immediate notice to family carers (following a service user’s consent) of any emerging medical condition or medical treatment / intervention that has been provided to the service user. This notice will be incorporated within the service’s Quality Assurance system and be adhered to by all PIC staff.
- During periods, where specific requirements are required, for example, Covid-19 / D&V (diarrhoea & vomiting) outbreaks, where family carers are deprived from seeing their relatives, the service must (following service user’s consent) be conscious of providing regular updates to family members on the service user’s well-being and general progress made during their stay.
- The PICs have developed a Covid-19 fact sheet which is now provided to individuals and their family prior to admission or on admission. The fact sheet provides up to date information regarding the current restrictions in place to comply with Public Health England’s Covid guidance for care homes, and how this will affect the individuals stay and their family.
- The provision of iPads to staff has started taking place at Shadon House. The Management Team will continue to progress this and ensure that staff receive the appropriate training. This will then enable those in residence to have regular virtual contact with family and friends.

Provider Services – Short Break Respite Services

A complaint was received about the quality of the care provided at a Council run respite Service. Following the complaint investigation, improvements to service were identified.

- As the investigation did find gaps in staff training, it was agreed to remind staff in their supervision sessions of the importance of reporting concerns to the Council’s Safeguarding Team and CQC as soon as possible after they are highlighted.

- Additional guidance was given to staff on the use of daily notes, which will now have an additional section which details all personal support offered, along with the dates and time and the name of the staff member completing the notes.

The Service Manager, responsible for Provider Services has since ensured that these recommendations have been taken forward and implemented.

13.0 Compliments

13.1 Information about compliments is always fed into all Adult Social Care Services to highlight good practice and to identify opportunities for improvements to services.

13.2 During 2021/22, Adult Social Care received 274 compliments, which accounted for 74% of all representations received, (371).

- 52%, (142), of compliments were regarding Assessment & Personalisation.
- 41%, (111) of compliments were about Provider Services.
- 7% (19) of compliments were about the Care Call Service.
- 37%, (99) of all compliments were about the Single Point of Access Team.
- 9% (24) were about the Council's Shared Lives Service.
- 12% (33) were regarding the Council's PRIME Service.
- 6% (14) of compliments were about the Locality Teams.
- 5%, (14) were about the Promoting Independence Centres.
- 2% (6) of compliments were about the Council's ACT Team.

13.3 Examples of compliments received

ACT

"I would just like to thank you for all the advice and support you gave me and my Mother, MR. With your help you arranged a visit with her and quickly saw that she was at risk and the alarms etc that had been installed were no help to her with her level of dementia. She has settled into Hadrian House in Blaydon and is being well looked after by the caring friendly staff. I am now allowed to visit her and can see she is happy and safe. This is of great comfort to all the family. Kind regards SJ "

Adult Social Care Direct

"N wanted to pass on her thanks and appreciation to E and to the service in general for their support. N was in tears as she spoke. She said that E had been so kind and understanding on the telephone last night. She said the way she spoke to her was very caring, she didn't rush to get her off the phone at all and really helped to make her feel at ease as accessing social care is completely new to the family and they're going through a very anxious and stressful time. N said that E should be very proud and the way in which she showed compassion to the family was very special. N was very emotive when she spoke, and I could tell just how grateful she was."

'R said how caring friendly and understanding D was during their telephone call and couldn't be more helpful, first-class service.' - RC

Care Call

'Hi, G wanted to thank the staff, she said they were fantastic and was over the moon with the install today and kindness of U.. and the kindness on the phone from A..'

"S rang to update us on her father's progress in hospital and to thank all involved in responding to the fall, which her father suffered at home on 13/11/2021. S said this was the first time he had used the alarm system and that the family were very grateful for the assistance he received, especially from A."

Council Domiciliary Care

'Thank you to all the carers who looked after RR and myself. Worth your weight in gold! Not always given the recognition you deserve. You gave him dignity and respect you were always on time and

came in cheerfully. you were there when I needed an ear to listen to my rants!! You always used PPE to protect us. the care given to complete strangers was amazing. Thank you for all your help and care. 10 out of 10 for everything. Much appreciation, DR.'

'I would like to thank both your carers for helping me to gain my confidence, LH and ST were responsible for getting me back to nearly normal in the ten days they helped me, I cannot thank them enough, they were great. I was a wreck when I came out of the QE.' – RR

Day Services

'J has praised Blaydon Resource Centre on what they have achieved in weeks of reopening the service, His wife A had stopped communicating or eating independently. Within weeks of A returning to the service, she has now started to speak, and she also now feeds herself. J could not express how much he had missed the service A receives and is over the moon with the improvement of A since her return.' – JT

"When picking D up to bring to the Centre, Mrs L said that D's outreach is fantastic, and he goes to some fab places. She said that M and the other outreach staff go above and beyond to take D to some lovely places and gave me the thumbs up".

Independent support living

'Mr and Mrs R visited J on his birthday. Mrs R was looking through J's photographic evidence of all the things that he has achieved during lockdown and his time at Fell Close. Mrs R said she couldn't believe that J had evidenced so many new skills and tastes in and around his home, the file contained evidence of J taking the recycling out to the blue bin and making food. Mrs R said she was amazed at his progress.'

Locality Teams

'Good Afternoon L, I successfully got Mam into the Chester's yesterday, she was not sure, but I was able to go to her room and help unpack and she settled right in. Staff are lovely, mam said her 'rooms lovely, this will do!' I want to convey my thanks again; you have worked tirelessly with us and supported our family in this very difficult situation. You need a medal for dealing so sensitively and well with J and we will be forever grateful to you. Social workers sometimes get a bad press, but you could not have done anything more for Mam, you have listened to all parties and as sad as it is that Mam has to go into care, we are very glad you were able to support us. Many, many thanks again, we wish you all the best. Kind Regards, A and family.' – Al

"Hello, I have just taken a call from Mrs P. Mrs P wanted to express her thanks to worker KO. Mr P stated that K 'has changed my life'. Mrs P advised that she now has a stair lift installed after several years of downstairs living and this is thanks to K 'who came in arranged the OT Assessment' Mrs P wanted to pass on a big 'thank you' to K for everything she has done Thanks P."

Mental Health Team

'Hi J, you have an amazing social worker CR she has supported me and my sister I could not ask for anything more. In our time we've have social workers that haven't delivered as C has done for us. – FD"

Promoting Independence Centres

"From the bottom of my heart each of you are angels. You have cared for, loved, laughed, and treated my mam like she was you own family, and I really can't express how grateful I am for this. Thankyou".

"Dear sir, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for making me so happy after my few weeks stay. My recovery is due to the care and kindness of the staff - nothing was too much trouble for them, always smiling. Please excuse my writing my eyes are failing me. Sincerely PE."

Shared Lives Service

I would like to thank Shared Lives for arranging such good carers who took care of the service user and looked after him in his last days.

Short Breaks

'While L.. in Blaydon Lodge for his break, he asked if we could take him to an Indian Restaurant. As this is one of his favourite things, staff took him to South Shields to visit his favourite restaurant. They sent his Gran a photo of how much he was enjoying his experience. She expressed her delight and shared it on Facebook with the following comments' 'My Beautiful boy (little man) getting out and about thanks to his carers, been so hard for all of them the people trying to do their jobs and the special people they are looking after, love and thanks to you all x'

'Thank you so very much for the amazing effort you've all put into making L's birthday a real happy event. I adore and totally appreciate the photos you've sent -- fabulous memories. You lovely, lovely people - people like you are the salt of the earth THANK YOU X' – JG

"God love you all for thinking on your feet as to how to make R feel safe and relaxed enough to calm down and enjoy his outing. MARVELOUS MARVELOUS staff. I'm now able to unwind and enjoy a bath without being on "red alert" in case one of my boys need me. A photo of RG enjoying himself may restore his faith in all that's great with his service and just how much we parents APPRECIATE everything his fantastic service provides. XXX."

Single Point of Access Team

'All the people involved in helping me have been wonderful I would like to give a special mention for S... who is always so very helpful and kind to me. Also A... who rang me. God bless you all for your kindness.'

'I have no bad words how my assessment went; it was clear and speedily dealt with and SG explained all, very polite and patient due to me not hearing well. I thank you for the help and assistance in the staff making it easier around the house. 10/10. no need to improve.' – GB

Transitions Team

"I've been having a conversation with a service user I'm working with (RC) this evening whose son is open to the Transitions Team. R advised she had a conversation with G last week whilst she was on duty. R was very complimentary of the support she received from G. She stated that she was at a particularly low point and speaking with G and the practical support she provided picked her up from this. R stated that G was the first professional to listen to her and understand her situation for some time."

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