



TRAFFORD
COUNCIL

Annual Complaints Report

2021/22

(Adult Social Care)

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1. Introduction

The NHS and Community Care Act 1990 requires all Local Authorities with Social Services responsibilities in England and Wales to have a complaints procedure for dealing with social care services.

The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 dictate that social care complaints follow a one stage process for complaints to be resolved by the Council. If the complainant remains unhappy with the outcome of their investigation, they can then approach the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman to investigate the complaint; this would form stage 2.

Part of the statutory requirement is the production of an annual report on complaints which is available to members of the public, our staff, and elected members of the Council. This report contains information on social care complaints received by Adult Social services in the fiscal year 2021/22.

Complaints which contain an element of social care fall under the statutory social care guidelines. The Council also has a responsibility for processing complaints which relate to customers who may be dissatisfied with services which are not related directly to social care but are provided by the Directorate of Adults Services. These complaints would ordinarily follow the Council's Corporate complaints process.

The report also contains information on MP & Councillor Representations, Adult Social Care Funding Appeals and Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman enquiries that have been received by the Council in relation to Adult Social Care services.

A wider scope of responsibilities and duties for Local Authority Social Services is cited in the Care Act 2014 which came into force on in April 2015.

2. What is a Complaint

A complaint is defined as a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction about a service provided by the Council.

3. Overview of Adult Services Complaints

It is always the aim of Adult Services to try and resolve complaints operationally at the outset.

Where this is not achievable, the Council will follow one of the prescribed complaints procedures below dependent on what the complaint relates to:

a) Adult Statutory Complaints Procedure

There is an opportunity for complaints to be resolved locally by the service within 24 hours (under local resolution) of a complaint being raised. Where it has not been possible to resolve matters, the complaint will follow the statutory complaints process (as defined within the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009).

The statutory regulations do permit the Council to agree a response date with the Complainant once the scope of the investigation has been determined. The Council does however have its own indicative timescale in place of 20 working days for Investigating Officers to work to; this timescale is aligning with what would be expected of the Council to respond to an Ombudsman investigation.

There is a requirement, however, for statutory complaints to be resolved within 129 working days (6 months) of the complaint having been made.

b) Adults Corporate Complaints Procedure

This is the Council's internal formal complaints procedure. All complaints within this process are to be resolved within 20 days of receipt of complaint.

Facilitation of Complaint

Once a matter is accepted as a formal complaint (under either of the above processes) it is formally recorded, acknowledged, and monitored throughout its journey.

4. Summary of Activity 2021/22

The following pages provide an overview of Adults Statutory and Corporate complaint activity.

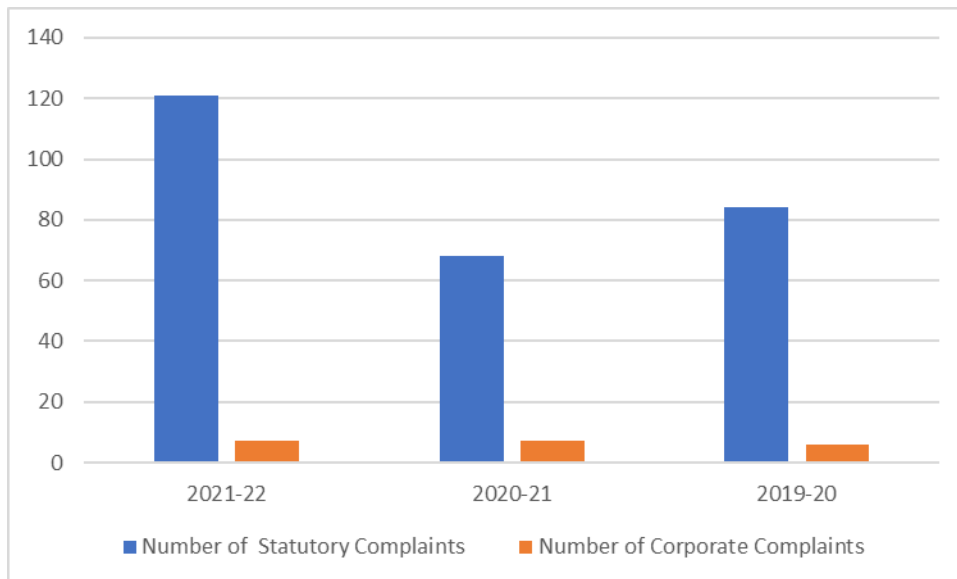
Statistics Year on Year

Type	Year 2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints	121	68	84
Adult Services Corporate Complaints	7	7	6

Year on Year there has been **76%** increase in the number of formal **ASC Statutory complaints** recorded in 2021/22 **(+53)** in comparison to previous year (2020/21). This is a significant increase to the previous year which we received 68 Statutory complaints.

Further Analysis

Complaint Activity – Snapshot of Activity (3 Years)

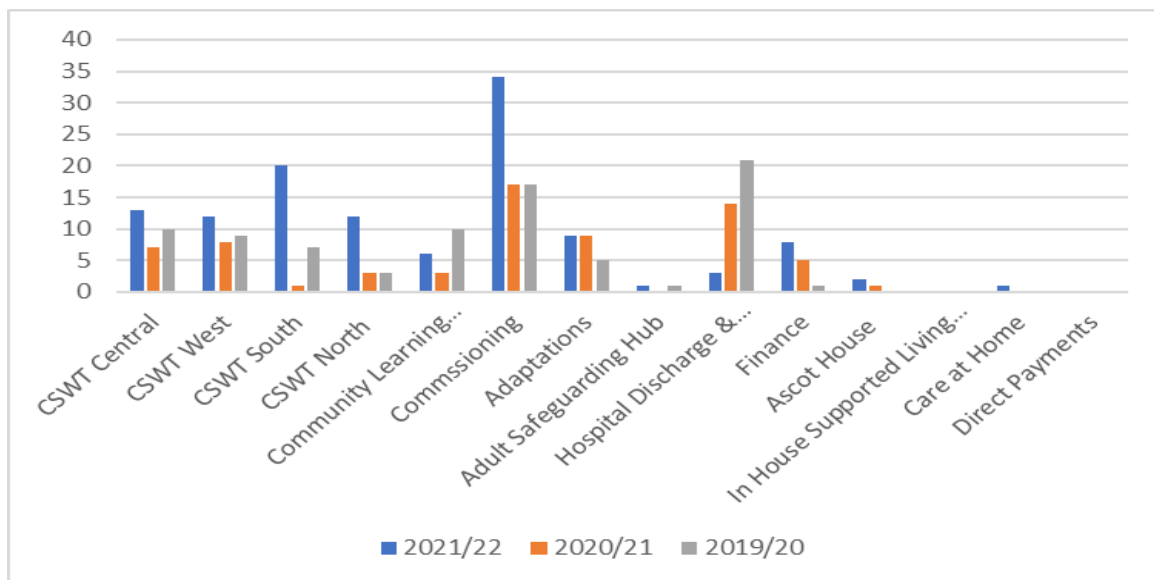


There has still been a significant increase in the number of Statutory complaints we received in 2021-22 compared to the previous two financial years (2019-2020 & 2021/20). The lower volume of recorded complaints in the year 2020-21 may be due to the COVID 19 Pandemic (which in that particular year we were at the height of the Pandemic). In the year 2019-20 (COVID19 Pandemic started in (Qtr.4) we received 84 Statutory complaints for that year.

There has been no difference in the number of **Adult Corporate Complaints** received in 2021/22 (7) in comparison to previous year (2020/21). In the year 2019-20 we received 6 Corporate complaints for the year. Corporate complaints are low in numbers and are usually linked to a corporate procedure which is undertaken by Adult Services.

Analysis by Service and Complaint Type

Fig.1 Statutory Complaints - 3 Year Activity - by Service



Overview

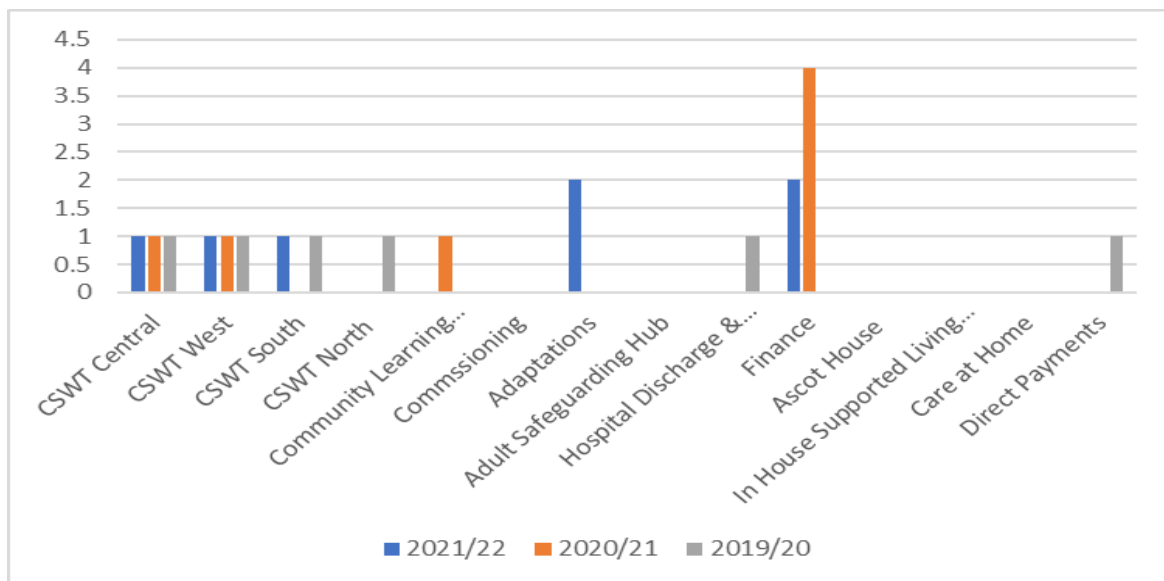
Commissioning Services continue to receive the highest volume of complaints (34) and seen a significant rise in complaints in the year 2021-22.

Increases in complaints were also seen in South (20), Central (13) and West (12) Neighbourhood Teams.

Adaptations (9) continue to a receive consistent numbers of complaints.

There was also an increase in Financial/Charging complaints (8) that required responses from Adult Social Care.

Fig.2 Corporate Complaints - 3 Year Activity - by Service



Overview

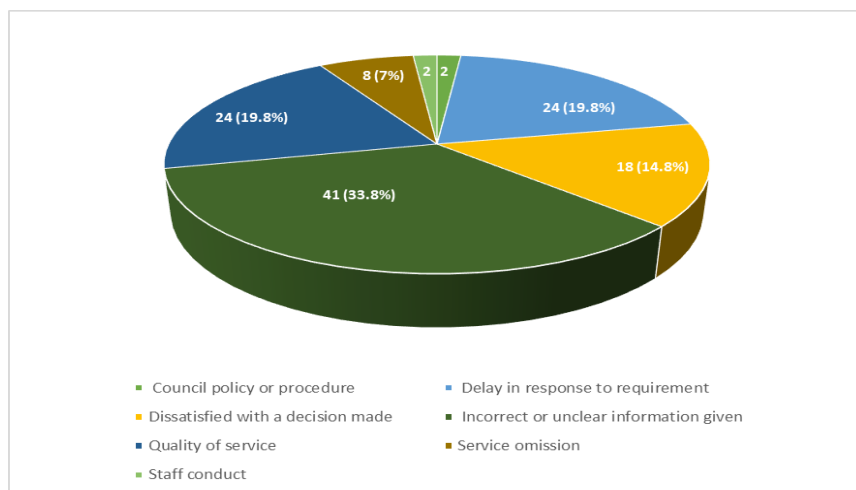
Adaptions Service received 2 corporate complaints in the year 2021-22 having not received any corporate complaints for the 2 previous years. Also, we received 2 finance related complaints however this is a reduction from the previous year where we received 5.

There is a sprinkling of Corporate complaints across the Neighbourhood Social Work Teams for the year 2021-22 which seems to be consistent for Central & West Neighbourhood Social Work Teams.

There were 0 Corporate complaints in 2021-22 for North Neighbourhood, Community Learning Disability Team, Commissioning, Hospital Discharge & Discharge to Assess, Supported Living, Ascot House, Care at Home and Direct Payments.

Breakdown by Complaint Reason – Adult Statutory Complaints

Below is a service wide breakdown of reasons for Adults Services Statutory complaints (by number) for year 2021/22.

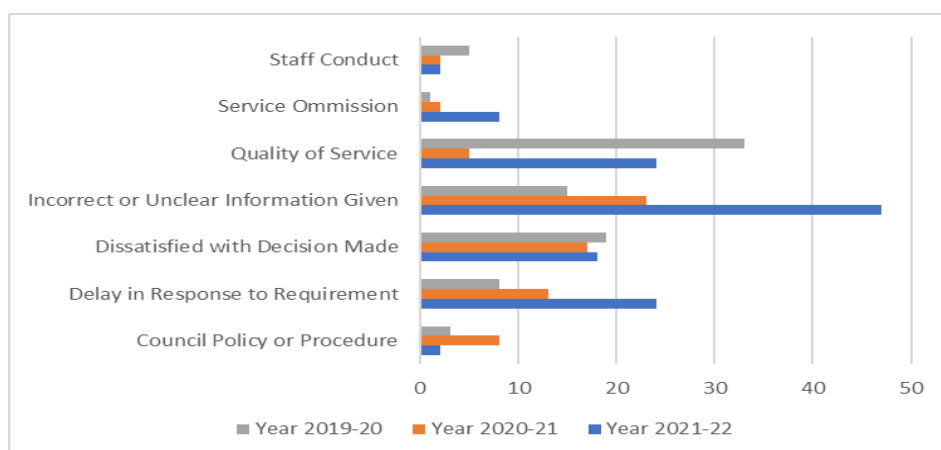


Overview

Unclear or Incorrect Information (41 complaints) was the predominant reason for Adult Social Care Statutory complaints in 2021/22. This was followed by Quality in Service (24) and Delay in response to requirement (24)

Analysis – 3 Year Complaint by Reason Comparison

An important part of analysis of complaints is to establish whether there are recurring reasons for complaints. The table below provides a comparison of the reasons for complaints which we recorded over the past 3 annual reporting periods.



There has been a steady rise over the last 3 years in complaints raised because the complainant felt incorrect or unclear information had been provided to them. This is

also the case for complaints raised due to a person experiencing a delay to a request or requirement.

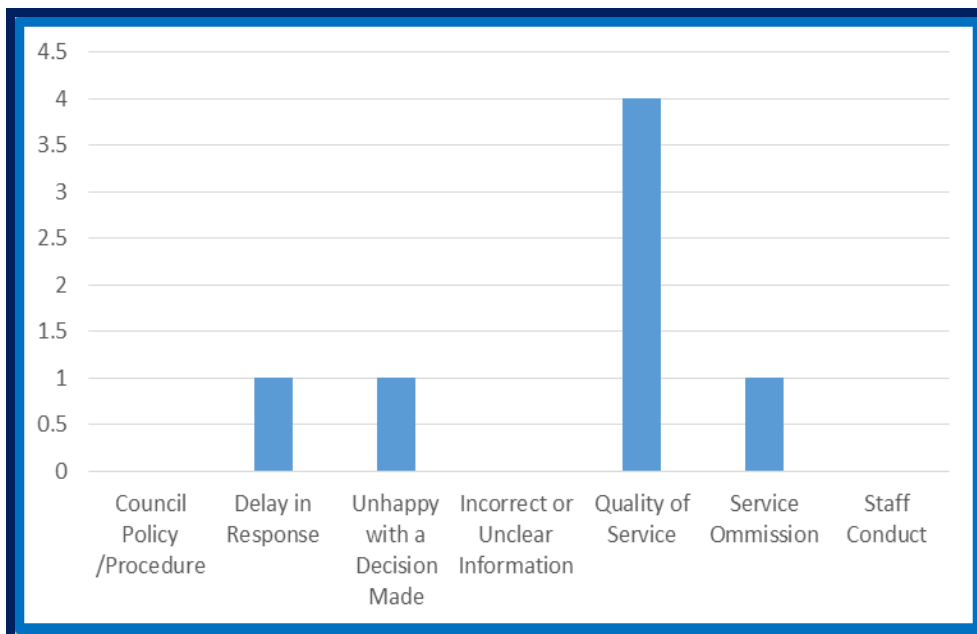
Complaints raised due to perceived quality of service also increased from last year although this remains lower than when these complaints peaked in year 2019-20.

The themes which emerged in 2021-22 was in relation to the assessment process, information provided at the time of assessment (around financial contributions towards care) and delivery of commissioned care packages.

Adult Corporate Complaints

Breakdown by Complaint Reason

Below is a breakdown of reasons for Adults Services Corporate complaints (by number) for year 2021/22.



Overview

Quality of Service (4) was the main reason for Corporate Complaints in the year **2021-21**. The other reasons delay in a response to request or requirement (1), unhappy with a decision made (1) and service omission (1). The theme that emerged related to changes in the way commissioned providers worked because of the COVID19 Pandemic.

5. Adult Social Care Complaint Performance

Timeliness of Response

The table below illustrates Adult Social Care response performance by complaint type:

Response issued /*Resolved within 20 Working Days	Response > 20 days but within extended agreed Timescale	Outside of Agreed Timescale
67(55%)	33 (27%)	21 (18%)

**This % relates to an indicative timescale of 20 working days which is the Council's own performance indicator and not a legislative requirement. The actual timescale is agreed with the complainant as part of the complaint plan. In a lot of Adult Social Care complaints, however, the issues are extremely complex, therefore a response date (beyond 20 working days) is usually agreed with the complainant to ensure that a thorough and detailed investigation can be completed.*

Adult Statutory Complaint Performance

Out of the 121 complaints received:

67 complaints (55%) were responded to/resolved to complainant's satisfaction within 20 working days.

33 complaints (27%) were responded to within a new agreed extended timescale.

21 complaints (18%) were not responded to within an agreed timescale and complainant not kept informed of the reason for delay by the Investigating Manager

In summary, most of our statutory recorded complaints were responded to within timescale which is a positive step forward. In addition to this, 26 complaints were withdrawn by complainant at the first point of contact (after 24 hours) because the issue/concern was resolved to their satisfaction without the need of any further investigation.

However, in view that timescales are agreed with the complainant and can be extended (in agreement with the complainant) the 18% of complaints that did not meet timescale is far higher than what we should expect. Complaints that do not meet an agreed response date should be exceptionally low (< than 5%) and

extremely exceptional in circumstances. This is an area we need to significantly improve on moving forward.

A large proportion of statutory complaints (40%) that took longer than 20 working days to resolve related to dispute over quality of care and care charges invoiced. These complaints required extensive 3rd party enquiries with of our Commissioned providers. Issue was with time required to liaise with commissioned provider services.

Adult Corporate Complaints Performance

Out of the 7 complaints received:

There were 6 complaints (86%) which were responded to within the 20-working day timescale. The 1 complaint which did not meet timescale was due to the Investigating Officer needing to seek information from a partnership organisation.

Outcomes of Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints

We determine and record complaint outcomes of Adult Social Care Statutory complaints as follows:

Upheld

Upheld findings in complaints are where we have made mistakes or provided a poor service that amounted to maladministration or service failure and our actions have had a negative impact on an individual which has not yet been put right.

Part Upheld

Part Upheld findings in complaints are when we could have done some things better but managed to rectify the position or any mistakes made, and it did not have a negative effect on anyone.

Not Upheld

There is no identified fault found in how we have dealt with a matter.

Our Approach

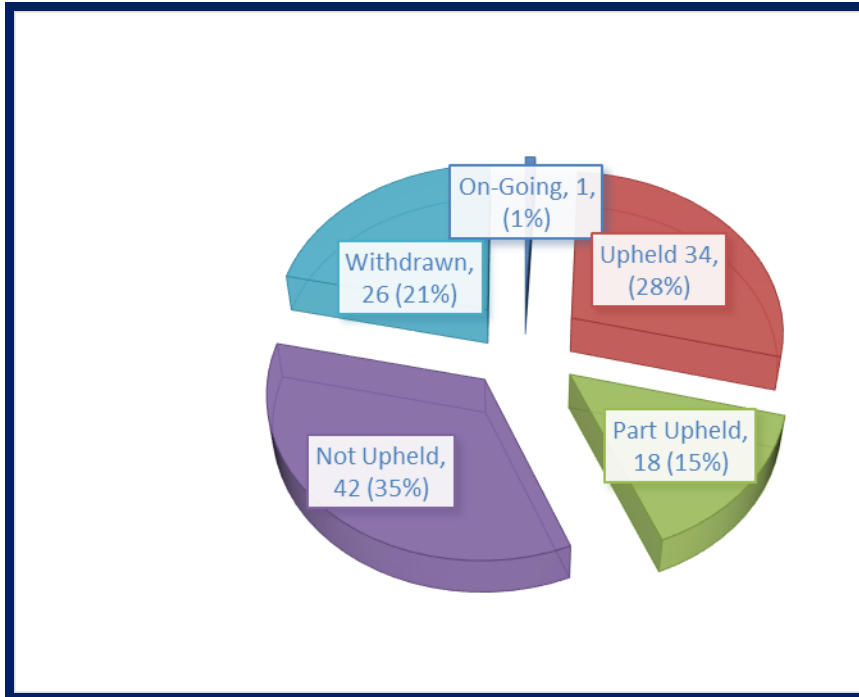
It is important to highlight that outcomes of complaints are instrumental to our learning from complaints. It is for this reason that all outcomes from complaints are considered not just those complaints that have been upheld.

Breakdown of Complaint Outcomes

All complaints that have been investigated will have an outcome recorded.

Adult Statutory Complaints

Below is a breakdown of complaint finding outcomes for Adult Statutory Complaints for 2021-22.



Out of 121 Statutory Complaints investigated:

34 – Upheld (28%)

18 - Part Upheld (15%)

32 - Not Upheld (35%)

26 – Withdrawn (21%) to the complainant’s satisfaction and they did not wish to pursue complaint further as anticipated already achieved at first point of contact

Upheld findings in Adult Complaints

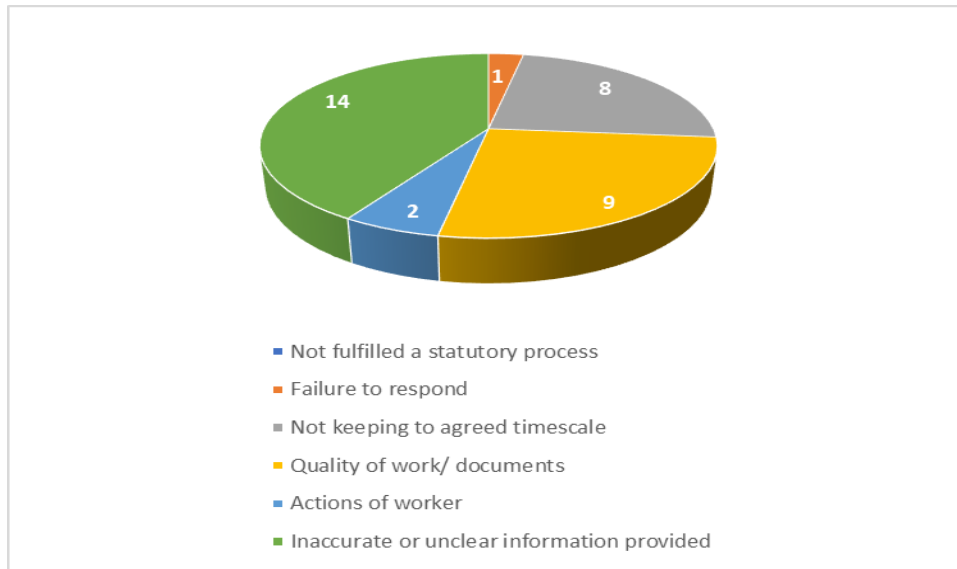
Where an upheld finding is determined we report on this and record this under one of the 5 key categories of fault below:

- a) Failure to appropriately respond in a timely manner.
- b) Unclear and/or inaccurate Information Provided
- c) Quality of Work/Documents
- d) Actions of Worker

e) Not keeping to agreed timescale.

Breakdown of Identified Fault by Category

Below is a breakdown of the reasons we identified fault from Upheld complaints in 2021-22:



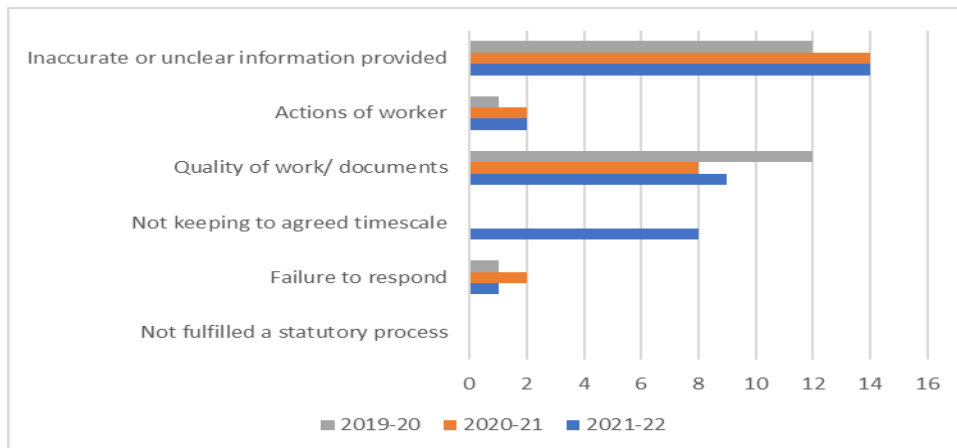
The predominant reason for upheld complaints in **2021-22** was due to **unclear or inaccurate** information provided to clients and/or their representatives; particularly relating to the assessment of need process, the Council's charging policy and the actual cost of care discussed with the person(s) involved.

The main theme emerging from these complaints was communication at the point of assessment and what information was provided to the person such as how the charging policy was applied, the period of assessment (which was non chargeable) and the date care charges would apply. This issue was common in Discharge to Assess cases.

Complaints were upheld as there was lack of evidence within the care records that the assessment process and associated charging for care had been appropriately explained to the person involved.

Communication has been a recurring theme of complaints with an unclear or inaccurate information finding steadily increasing over the past three years.

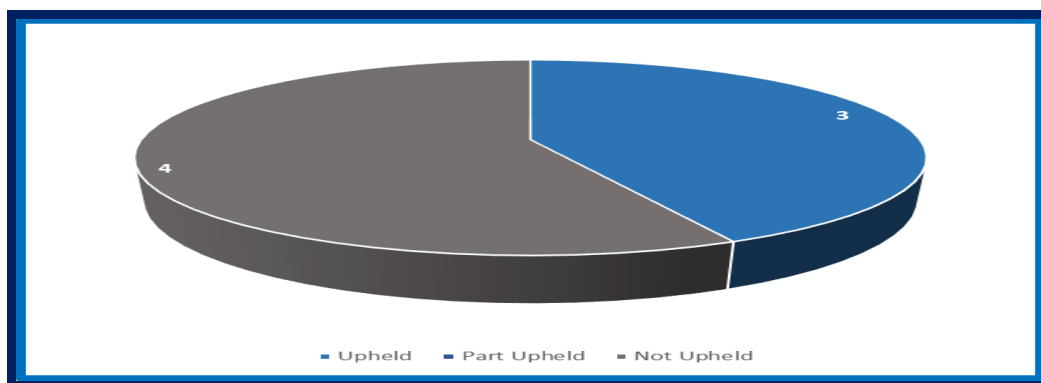
Upheld Complaints – 3 Year Comparison



Further analysis of 2021-22 upheld findings with previous years upheld findings reveal that many upheld complaints throughout this three-year period were as a direct result of the Assessment process and the unique operating procedures that were in place following the Coronavirus Act (2020) and the COVID19 Discharge Guidance used during the pandemic period. As a direct impact of this legislation, there was a change in the assessment process undertaken (from April 2020 – Apr 2022) where health services assessed a person, then the person was discharged into Social Care if care/support needs were identified. This procedure was not unique to Trafford Council and was a fundamental procedure followed nationally.

Adult Corporate Complaint Findings

Below is a breakdown of complaint outcomes for **Adult Corporate Complaints** year **2021-22**



Out of 7 Adult Corporate Complaints investigated:

3 complaints were **Upheld (43%)**

0 complaints were **Part Upheld (0%)**

4 Complaints were **Not Upheld (57%)**

6. Learning from Complaints

Complaints provide the Council with the opportunity to look at where things may have gone wrong and how we can put things right, not just for the individual concerned but for other people in the future. Learning from complaints provides an invaluable insight on how things could have been better for the customer; this helps us to bring service improvements to staff and procedures within Adult Social Care.

All “lessons learned” are recorded and shared with the Strategic Leads within the service on a quarterly basis to promote best practice. In addition to this the Integrated Customer Engagement Team produce focus reports to DASS which contains guidance on Best Practice, Customer Care Skills and Lessons Learned as well as delivering key messages and updates on service improvement from Senior Managers. Lessons learned and Case studies are also shared with staff on Training sessions.

The Council also shares compliments within the service as examples of good practice.

We still need to improve the way in which learning points are shared and influence service change. The Integrated Customer Engagement Team provides a monthly report of lessons learned to the Integrated All Age Strategic Leads as a mechanism to achieve improvement within the Directorate of Adult Social Care.

Below are 4 examples of key learning points that were taken from complaints in 2021/22

What we learned	What we did
Complaint related to the delay in a client moving into a Supported Living property. The family were also upset that their preferred choice of provider would not be providing the support. Investigations highlighted there were delays due to the proposed co-habitant’s suitability of sharing a property. Also, the original Provider was not successful in the bid for supporting the property therefore could not be used. Whilst processes followed were correct in line with frameworks; it was the families personal views and preferences which underpinned the complaint.	A co-ordinated approach was taken by senior managers within CLDT and Commissioning who revisited the proposals and mediated with the families involved. An alternative source of funding was identified and put into place to keep the original provider.

<p>Complaint was in relation to a lack of information relating to the arranged package of care following discharge. Investigations highlighted that although information was provided; both the Hospital Social Work Team and Community based Social Work Teams could have been much clearer in its communications with the family</p>	<p>All staff have been issued with guidance on expected communication at discharge and interlinking with all the relevant teams involved</p>
<p>The complaint related to care charges that had been invoiced to a client following a stay at Ascot House. Investigations found that there was no Discharge to Assess consent form uploaded onto the care record. Also, there was no records of conversations held between the client, members of her family or council employees relating to the financial assessment process. Also, there was no evidence that a particular discussion took place in relation to the charging policy and that charging would apply after a certain period (at Ascot House) if no further assessments were required or ongoing</p>	<p>Staff reminded that the discharge to assess consent form is uploaded and signed and that the person has read and understood the charging policy after a certain period at the point of referral to a discharge to assess bed.</p> <p>The council employee to clearly document on LAS that they have had this conversation, include the date, time and who was present during the discussion.</p>
<p>The complaint was in relation to a lack of information provided to the family regarding their mother's assessed contribution. The family were both shocked and upset when they received an invoice for a large sum of money. Investigations highlighted that the Social Worker had intended to share the assessed contribution total with family (once calculated). However, there was no note recorded on the electronic social care record to evidence this amount was confirmed to the family.</p>	<p>Staff reminded that if there is a potential delay in support plan processing due to the Controcc system; the family need to be informed that assessed charges will be incurred but invoicing could be delayed.</p>

Broader actions identified to learn from complaints from year 2021-22

As outlined earlier in the report, the main theme coming from complaints and their findings is unclear or inaccurate information that we have provided to our clients and their family. Unfortunately, this is a recurring theme, therefore we need to analyse this further and take the necessary action to minimise these complaints recurring. We also need to understand if there are some broader principals of learning that we can share across the workforce. An action plan has been developed for the forthcoming year and this is detailed in the Complaints Management and Service Improvement section (pages 23 & 24) of the report.

7. MP & Councillor Enquiries

MP's and Councillors make representations to the Corporate Director Adult Services raising issues on behalf of their constituents, regarding social care matters. The Corporate Director's response is sent directly to the MP or Councillor, and they then share this with their constituents. There are occasions, prior to receiving a representation from an MP or Councillor, where the constituent has already made a complaint to Adult Social Services which is being progressed and investigated under the Statutory Complaints Procedure. In such cases the MP or Councillor is made aware and is kept informed of the outcome of the investigation. This can have an impact on time and resource.

The target for a written response to an MP is within 20 working days or sooner.

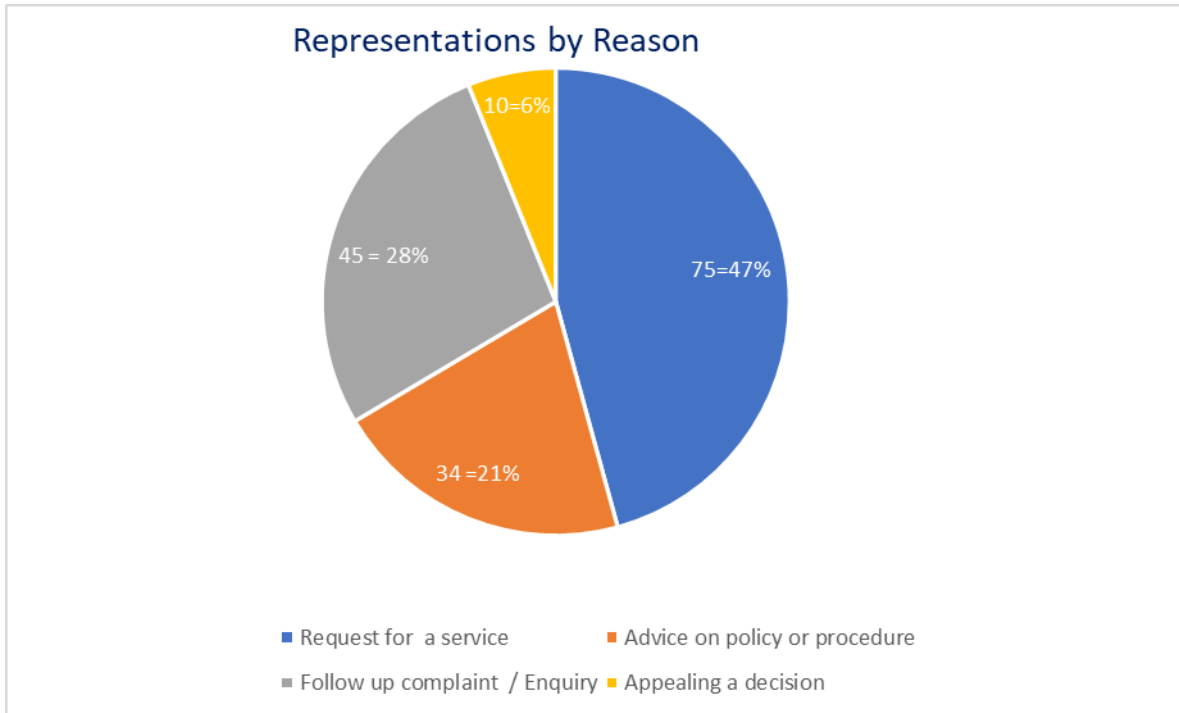
The target for an initial interim written response to a Councillor enquiry is within 3 working days of receiving the enquiry. This will outline the proposed actions the service intends to take and a proposed timescale.

It is important to note that some adult social care cases are more complex by nature, particularly where a customer disagrees with the outcome of an assessment or level of funding allocated (Appeal). These cases do take longer to reach a conclusion, therefore interim updates may be provided to the political representative until a substantive response can be provided.

No. of MP/Councillor Representations Received		
2021-22	2020-21	Variance
159	87	+72

There has been a significant increase in cases (+72) received for year 2021-22 compared to the previous year.

110 of these cases (**69%**) were responded to within 20 working days. This however is a stark decline in performance to the previous year (2020-21) which was **85%** of cases responded to within 20 days.



The main reason of MP/Councillor representations related to request a service for a constituent (**47%**) or follow up of a constituent’s complaint (**28%**).

There was a large volume of representations where the MP/Councillor asked for an update on a complaint that they had been cited into. These were in relation Adaptations or Commissioned Care enquiries which the Council required input from external organisations to provide a full response.

Where a concurrent statutory complaint is ongoing the MP or Councillor is kept updated, particularly where the matter is complex and may take time to resolve.

8. Adult Social Care (ASC) Funding Appeals

Adult Social Care funding appeals are directly linked to a funding decision following an assessment of need. Although these appeals do not follow the Statutory Complaints process (as no formal investigation is required) if the customer remains unhappy with the outcome to their appeal and the Appeals process has been exhausted; they still have the right to take the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman for adjudication.

There is no statutory deadline in place to respond to these requests and each case is considered on merit. It is the Council’s aim however to provide an outcome to the customer within **25** working days of it receiving the Appeal.

In **2021/22** there were **6** appeals made. This was slightly lower than the number of appeals received in in 2020/21 which was **7**.

Outcomes were as follows:

3 were upheld.

3 were not upheld.

0 Partially Upheld

Due to the complexity of the appeals considered in 2021/22 no appeals were concluded within 25 working days of receipt.

9. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Enquiries & Investigations

The Adult Social Care complaints procedure consists of two stages:

1. The Council investigates the complaint and responds to the complainant with its findings.
2. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the Council's investigation the person can take their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Therefore, the Council only has one stage to resolve a complaint unlike other complaint frameworks.

The Council does attempt to work with complainants to try and resolve issues satisfactorily at stage one and is open to further dialogue if the complainant considers this to be appropriate. When the Council has exhausted its complaints process, however, it will notify the complainant of this and provide the contact details of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

The LGSCO is the final stage for complaints relating to Councils, all adult social care providers (including care homes and home care agencies), and some other organisations providing local public services.

The Ombudsman is concerned with matters of public maladministration and whether any injustice has been caused and that procedures have been properly followed.

When the Council receives a complaint from the LGSCO on behalf of a resident, it is usually given 28 Calendar days to provide a response. The Council is also obliged to provide substantive evidenced based responses to the LGSCO to any questions they may ask. Often, due to the extensive enquiries the LGSCO raise, or matters involving third party organisations, or partnership involvement; the Council may have to seek an extension on the standard 28 Calendar days allocated for a response. In some instances, the Ombudsman may raise further enquiries or ask for further detailed evidence. This can also impact on time and resource.

The LGSCO has similar legal powers as the High Court. If the Council fails to respond to an Ombudsman enquiry, then the LGSCO can subpoena the Council to attend its offices in Coventry, in person, to respond.

Complaints involving the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman tend to be complex and require in depth input from a range of people or sources. Any recommendations that are made are implemented and progress is fed back to the LGSCO. Preliminary enquiries require a significant amount of work as sufficient information needs to be shared to allow the LGSCO to decide whether to proceed or not with the complaint.

Where the Ombudsman does investigate a referral made to them and finds fault in whole or in part against the Council, the Council must give serious weight and consideration to such findings. The LGSCO will also suggest to the Council what they consider to be an appropriate remedy where injustice has been caused because of maladministration.

LGSCO Activity

For the year **2021-22** the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) reported it received 19 enquiries /complaints concerning Trafford Council Adult Social Care. Out of the 19 enquiries/complaints the LGO received; 3 of these transpired into Full Ombudsman Investigations. This was an increase of LGO Investigations the Council received to the previous year (2020-21) where we received 0 LGO investigations.

Authority name	Assessments and care planning	Charging	Safeguarding	Transport (Inc. Blue Badges)	Direct payments	Disabled facilities grants	Residential care	Home care	Supported living	Other	Total
Trafford Council	4	7	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	4	19

Out of the full investigations **(3)** undertaken with the Council the Ombudsman upheld 2 complaints.

Below is a snapshot of the Adult Social Care complaints which were upheld:

Brief Complaint Details	LGSCO Findings	Action Taken by Council
The complainant felt the Council had not put in place adult care services for her or her son.	The Council did not support the complainant to access the services she wanted, and it will now do so. However, the Council appropriately supported the complainant's son	The Council will support the complainant to recruit a personal assistant.
The complainant felt the Council failed to assess his relative's	There was no fault in the way the Council supported her	The Council had already apologised to the family for this. It

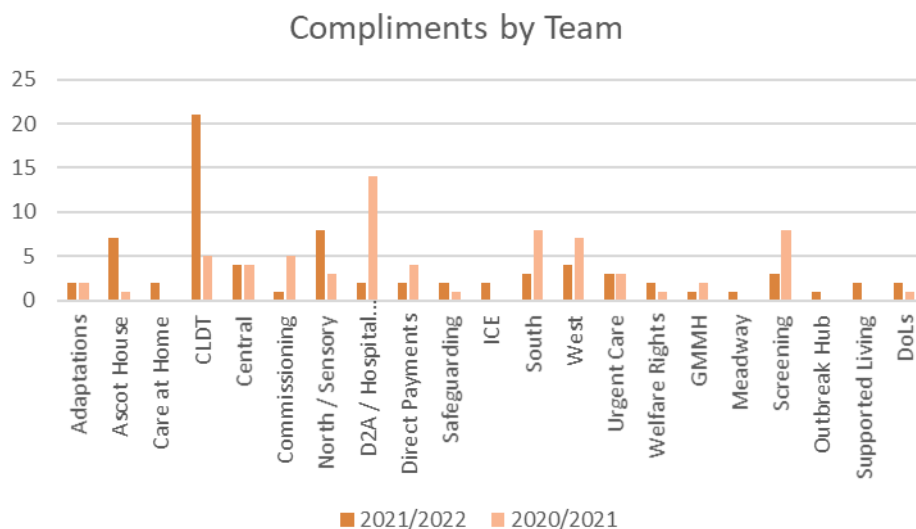
needs and delayed agreeing funding for her long-term residential care placement.	hospital discharge. The Council however failed to properly explain the financial assessment process, residential care funding and top ups and failed to keep proper records of conversations with relatives.	has agreed to take action to prevent a recurrence of the faults. Actions taken were a Principal Social Worker briefing to all staff.
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10. Compliments

Adult Social Care received **75** compliments for the year **2021/22**. This is slight increase from year **2020/21** where we were recorded **73**.

Year 2021-22	Year 2020-21	Variance
75	73	+2

The Complaints Manager collates details of the compliments received by services in the Directorate from appreciative users of services, their relatives, or carers. This information offers a valuable insight into our performance and balances and complements the more critical comments made by complainants.



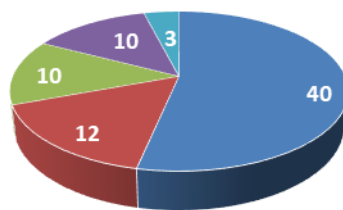
CLDT received the highest number of compliments within Adult Services followed by the North Neighbourhood Team. Discharge to Assess and Hospital Social Work Teams saw a reduction in compliments as did the South Neighbourhood and West Neighbourhood Teams.

Whilst many areas of the service do receive formal expressions of gratitude and appreciation about the quality of service provided, few sections forward such details

on a systematic basis. Information about unsolicited compliments tends to be significantly under reported. Efforts are continually made to improve this flow of information, and this is starting to show a slow increase in compliments being passed through for recording.

Compliments offered usually relate to the standard of care received or interactions with individual members of staff.

Compliments by Reason



- Compliment relating to an Individual Member of Staff
- Compliment relating to Multiple Staff/Team
- Compliment re: Support /Funding/POC
- Compliment re: Facility/Establishment i.e. Ascot House
- Compliment recognising Response i.e Prompt Intervention/Emergency Action

The most compliments received related to an individual member of staff.

11. Complaints Management and Service Improvement

Management and Service Improvement initiatives in place continued to be reviewed.

A review of these performance Management measures highlighted:

- The weekly Integrated Customer Engagement Team “Complaints Surgery” (where a member of staff can book some time in to discuss a complaint with a dedicated Integrated Customer Engagement Officer continues to work extremely well with a high intake of managers. Surgery time has now been extended by a further hour and half and is conducted online to accommodate increased demand.
- Redesigned Complaints Investigation Training packages to accommodate online and virtual training sessions.

Adult Social Care is keen to learn from all the feedback we receive on our services. Over the forthcoming year we will be exploring how we can gather more feedback outside of our routine Complaints, Comments and Compliments process. This will

enable us to reshape and improve our services ensuring they continue to be person centred and client focused.

The Action Plan below has been taken forward to work on throughout year 2022–23 as part of Adult Social Care’s Quality & Improvement initiative:

Action	Lead	Date progressed to be reviewed
The Integrated Customer Engagement Team is to review its current RAG Report to ensure a more robust tracking process is in place for Adult Social Care complaints where an extension on the response date has been agreed with the complainant for more complex investigations. This will monitor the number of interim holding responses that have been issued and ensure that the complainant is regularly kept informed throughout the progress of the investigation and that the complaint meets its mutually agreed timescale.	Nicola Jones Integrated Customer Engagement Team Manager	October 2022
Adult Social Care and Exchequer Services are to implement a Joint Working Complaint Service Improvement Group to deal with complaints that fall under both services to ensure there is a streamlined process in place.	Emma Brown, Louise Shaw, Commissioning Service, and the ICE Team	July 2022
The Integrated Customer Engagement Team to redesign and reintroduce its quarterly Newsletter with more emphasis on lessons learned and areas of excellent practice. Great emphasis will be on what we learned and what we did to improve.	Nicola Jones Integrated Customer Engagement Team Manager	October 2022
The Integrated Customer Engagement Team is to introduce regular focus reports on Adult Social Care complaint hot spots and the national position. These reports will feed into the Principle Social Worker and Strategic Lead for	Nicola Jones Integrated Customer Engagement Team Manager	October 2022

Quality and Assurance.		
The Integrated Customer Engagement Team will feed into the Quality Improvement Board to ensure any lessons learned have appropriate service improvement action plans in place that can be progressed, completed, and evidenced.	Nicola Jones Integrated Customer Engagement Manager	October 2022

12. Closing Statement

In the fiscal year 2021-22, we saw the start of the COVID19 ‘pandemic bubble’ eventually begin to burst as restrictions started to be permanently phased out and we moved into the “Living with Covid” era. As a result of this we saw higher numbers of complaints relating to assessment & charging, and information provided around the time of assessment. Also, as we entered more normal times our customer’s expectations about the quality of care became greater with far more emphasis of “their” preferred choice of Care Provider and timings of visits.

We also identified systematic issues with financial disputes, where our customers challenged the actual care received to what they had been charged for. The time taken to resolve these enquiries took far much longer than that of a formal complaint. These queries became a bottleneck stuck between Adult Services (ICE) & Exchequer Services with lack of definitive ownership of the enquiry. Often, these enquiries transpired into formal complaints being raised due to the length of time taken to respond to initial enquiry. As a result of this a working group between Adults and Exchequer Services has been set up to look at the issues and how both services could work together to improve how we manage these enquiries. This work has continued into the year 2022-23 and in July 2022 a formal process map (with SPOC’s) was set up with joint reporting mechanisms put in place. We will continue to monitor these enquiries by way of the live MS Financial Dispute Team link and Head of Exchequer Services Monthly Report.

We also need to be smarter in responding to complaints within a timescale. Unfortunately, 18% of complaints in year 2021-22 were responded to outside of timescale. The complaint regulations allow us to agree timescales with a complainant and re-negotiate the timescale if the investigation requires more time (up to 60 days). In the 18% of complaints that did not meet the timescale; there was lack of evidence that the Investigating Manager negotiated any further extension to the agreed timescale. As a result of this, these regrettably were recorded as lapsed out of timescale. The ICE Team will be delivering refresher Masterclass Training throughout 2022-23 with great emphasis on this area of the investigation process.