



Redcar & Cleveland
Adult Social Care

Complaints, Comments & Compliments

Annual Report

April 2022 to March 2023





ANNUAL COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT 2022/23

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1.0 Executive Summary

This is the Adult Social Care Annual Complaints, Comments and Compliments report for the financial year 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

Complaints, comments and compliments form a vital part of our overall engagement activity. By listening to the adults we support, along with their carers and family we can gain valuable insight into the unique experiences of adults who use our services.

Whilst our service works closely with adults and their families to ensure they understand what is happening or will happen when they receive care and support from us, there may be times where things go wrong. Our aim is to resolve and learn from complaints raised, identify when we are not getting things right and what we need to do to improve our services to ensure it does not happen again.

This report provides an overview and analysis of all complaints received and handled through the Council's statutory complaints procedure, in addition to the handling of feedback received in the form of comments and compliments about Adult Social Care services. Comparisons from the previous reporting period, i.e., from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022, have been included where available.

We aim to:

- To make it easy and accessible for adults and their relatives to make a complaint.
- To try and resolve a complaint or respond to a comment as efficiently as possible.
- To provide concise comparable data on feedback received about our services.
- To identify topics and trends which will inform service improvements to demonstrate learning to improve our practices and processes.
- To show our commitment to transparency and a positive approach to dealing with and learning from complaints.

Complaints received in the year concerning communication were related to issues about the quality, accuracy, and timeliness of information provided, and how a lack of information creates perceptions of adults feeling uninvolved in decisions affecting them.

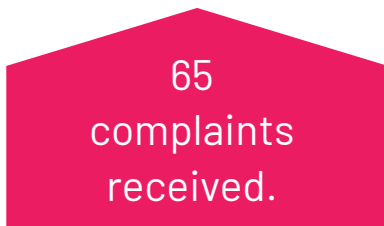
Complaints received about staff attitude and/or behaviour have been reviewed to gain a better understanding. A common theme was that adults felt unhappy with the way information had been given to them and the terminology or language used. It is important to note that complaints about staff attitude and behaviour were raised as part of a complaint about a practice decision or action by the member of staff.

It is common for a complaint to involve different services including, for example, the NHS, GP practices, and commissioned care providers. Each complaint is dealt with on an individual basis with Adult Social Care taking the lead and working with other services to ensure the complainant receives one coordinated response.

On occasion there are safeguarding concerns raised within a complaint. Those concerns are referred directly to our Adults Safeguarding Team to be considered as part of our statutory requirement to carry out enquiries to decide whether any further action should be taken.

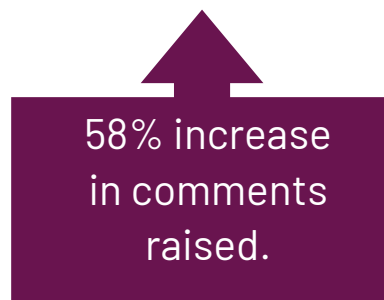
2.0 Complaints, Comments, and Compliments Activity

In 2022/23 we received more complaints, comments, and compliments than the previous year. The number of compliments we received increased from 197 in 21/22 to 343 in 22/23, comments increased from 51 in 21/22 to 81 in 22/23 and complaints slightly increased from 62 in 2021/22 to 65 in 2022/23.



We have seen an increase in comments this year. This is due to improved recording and inclusion of feedback from the Annual NHS Digital Social Care Survey and an increase in returned Satisfaction Questionnaires which form part of our engagement and assurance activities. In total, 17 were received from the Annual NHS Digital Social Care Survey and 11 from the Satisfaction Questionnaires, combining a total of 28, which is 35% of the comments received this calendar year.

We received 10 complaints in Q4, which was the lowest quarter of the reporting year. We also received 127 compliments in Q4, the most received within the reporting year.



3.0 Overview of the Statutory Adults Complaints Procedure

It is a statutory requirement for all local authorities who deliver a social care service to report annually on the number of complaints received. Such complaints are administered by the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.

In Adult Social Care, we have a one stage process for complaints about one of our services or any of our commissioned services. A commissioned service is a service provided by an external company or voluntary agency on behalf of the Council. A complaint made about a commissioned care provider can be referred to the Council if the complainant is dissatisfied or the relationship between the two parties has broken down.

Complaints can be made by anyone who has received a service, is currently receiving a service or by a representative acting on behalf of the adult with their consent. We will only investigate a complaint within 12 months of the incident which caused the complaint to be raised. Should a complaint be made after the 12-month timeframe, the Council will look at the circumstances to determine if there is merit in investigating the complaint outside of the timeframe.

At the conclusion of the complaint investigation, a lessons learnt meeting is held with key members of staff involved in the investigation, to capture any learning and improvements to be made. This is recorded and monitored to give assurance those improvements have been made and any agreed actions completed. Learning from complaints is shared in our Adults Practice Improvement Meetings on a bi-monthly basis to improve our service and practice quality.

Should a complaint not be resolved through our complaints process, a referral can be made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will independently review the complaint to determine if there is any fault and identify recommendations to remedy that fault. A complaint can only be referred to the Ombudsman after the Council has investigated the complaint and a final response has been issued by the Council.

4.0 Accessing the Adult Social Care complaints procedure

Adult Social Care encourages adults and their carers who use our services to provide their feedback to us about the care and support they have received.

Information on how to make a compliment, a comment or complaint is readily available on our dedicated Adult Social Care webpage on the Council website. There is also an Adult Social Care form which can be used to make a compliment, complaint or inform us of a comment about our services, which is given to adults and/or their relatives during our involvement with them.

We also have an easy read version of our complaints procedure to support adults with learning disabilities to make a complaint, and those adults who may find it easier to understand a simplified version.

The most used method to make a complaint in 2021/22 were by email (44), by letter (15) and telephone call (6).

Advocacy services are available upon request to support with raising a complaint and the ongoing process.



5.0 Role of the Complaints Officer

The Adult Social Care Complaints Officer facilitates the complaints process and referrals to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

6.0 Key Findings/Summary

- Adult Social Care supported 2912 adults and their carers between 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. This includes all direct and commissioned services for short-term, one-off services and longer-term support.
- 65 complaints were received in the same period. This represents 2.2% of the total adults supported in this year.
- The most common theme for complaints was poor service delivery (43%) and staff conduct (34%).
- A total of 25 (39%) complaints had an outcome of upheld or partially upheld.
- 16 (25%) complaints were not upheld. 6 (9%) complaints were resolved informally.
- Compliments have increased by 32% when compared to the previous year.

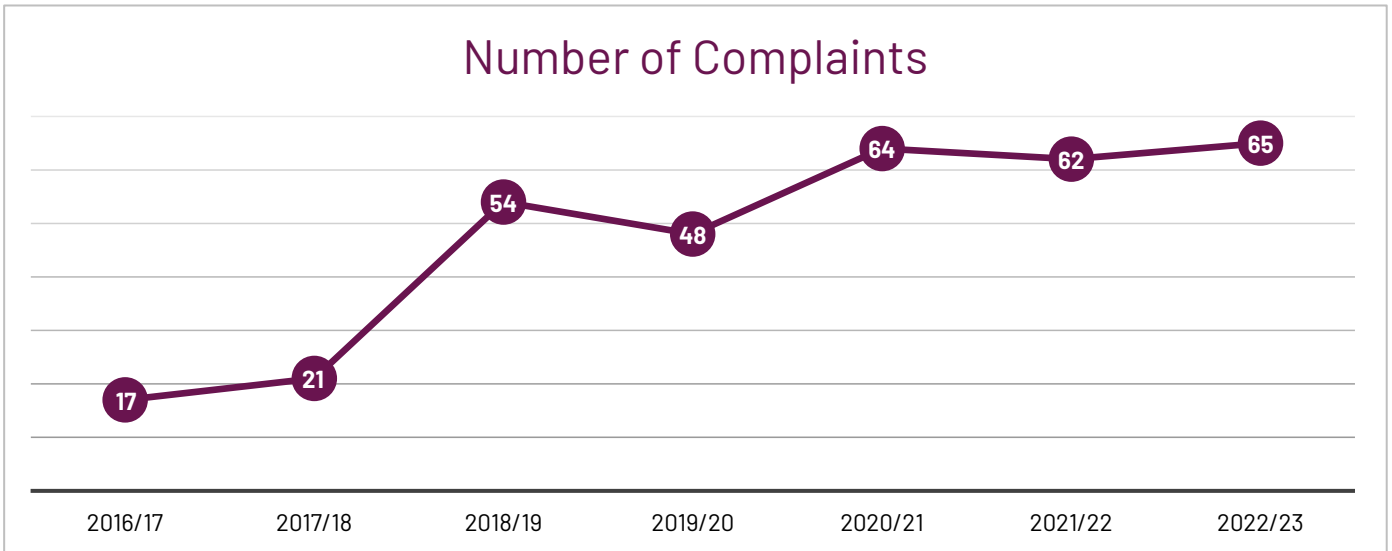
The complaint outcomes from this year highlighted there is still a need for staff to ensure that adults and their family members receive appropriate, relevant, and accurate information. We reminded staff across the service about the importance of clear, accurate and timely communication in team meetings, 1:1 supervision, as well as the importance of recording decisions and when information is provided and to whom. This has been reinforced in our Adult Social Care Practice Improvement Meeting (PIMs) which is held bi-monthly to review not only complaint outcomes but improvements to be made to social care practice standards.



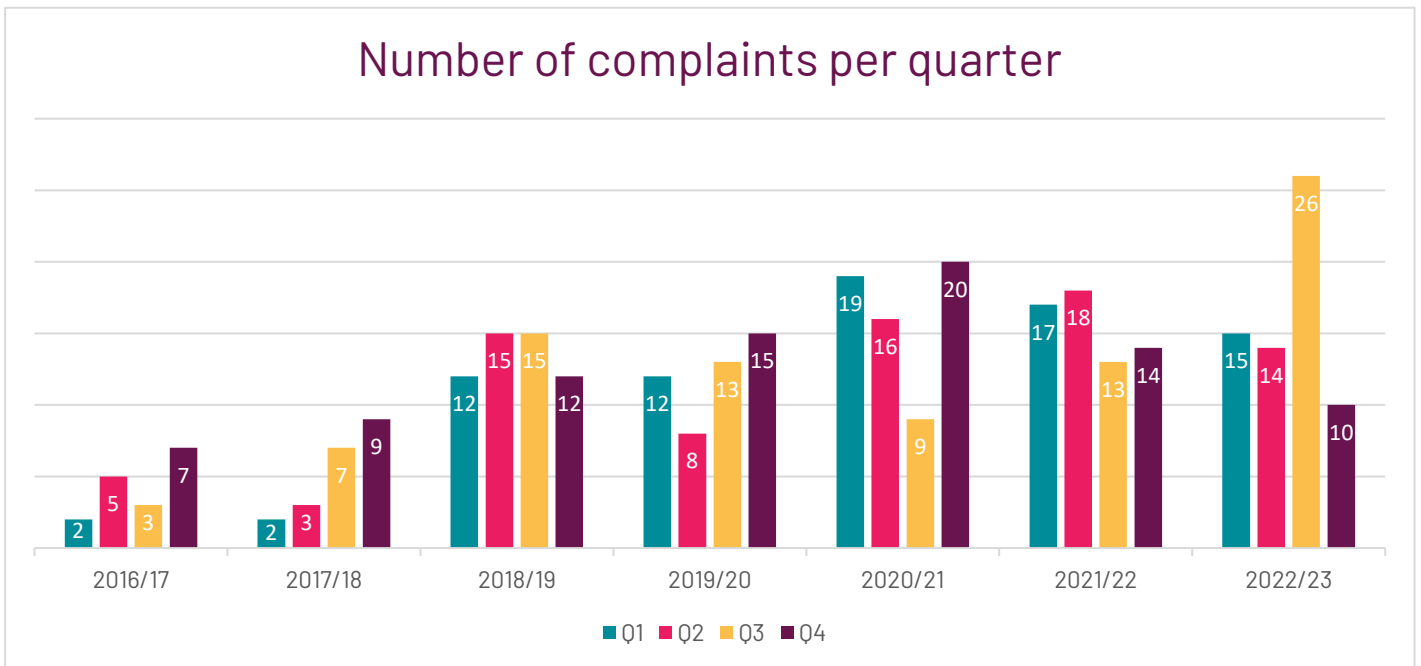
6.1 Number of Complaints

65 formal complaints were received during 2022/23. From the 65 complaints received, 6 were resolved informally, and 8 were withdrawn during the investigation at the complainant's request.

The graph below shows the number of complaints received between 2016/17 and 2022/23.



The chart below shows quarterly comparative data for complaints for the last 7 years.



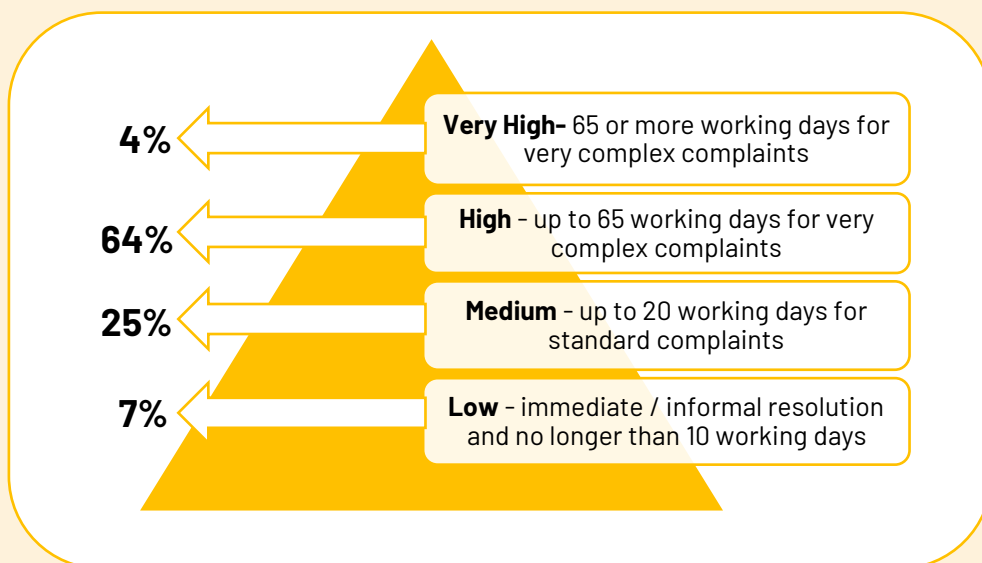
6.2 Time taken to respond to complaints in 2022/23

It is important to note that when something is wrong, we act quickly to remedy the issue to ensure adults and their carers are supported and safe; and we do not wait until the outcome of the investigation to put things right.

We have set a general timeframe of twenty working days to provide a full written response to a complaint. In addition to this, Adult Social Care has an internal process for categorising complaints as low, medium, or high depending on the urgency and complexity of the complaint received, which can be extended with the complainant's agreement. This is to ensure that each investigation can be tailored to allow for a thorough investigation and to try to achieve the desired outcome of the complainant, which at times can take longer than twenty working days.

We do our best to categorise each complaint correctly based on the information we receive from the complainant, however, when the investigation is underway there are times when other issues emerge that mean further time is required to investigate all relevant issues and reach a properly informed conclusion. The complainant is kept informed of the progress of their complaint and any causes for extension or delay. Other issues which can cause delay in meeting the allocated time frame for formal conclusion include absence of staff who need to be interviewed as part of the investigation and waiting for a third party to respond.

In 2022/23 the timescales to investigate and formally respond to low, medium, and high categories of complaints, and the percentage investigated in each complaint category, is illustrated below.

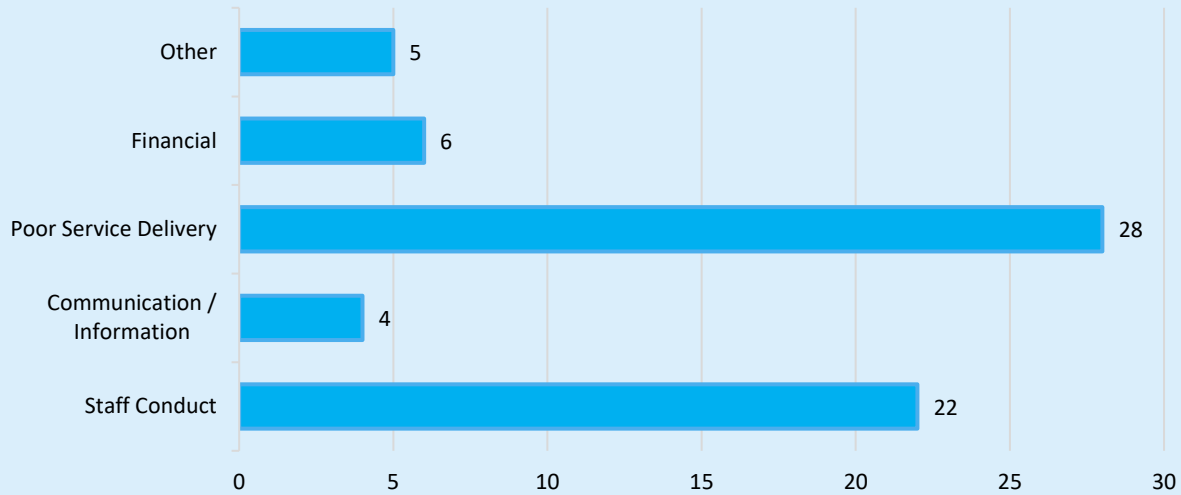


Although we categorised 64% of complaints as highly complex, the average length of time to conclude a complaint across all complaint categories was 30 days.

6.3 Nature of complaints in 2022/23

Due to the complex health and care needs of the adults we support, complaints received by Adult Social Care will often raise more than one issue. However, the complaint is recorded by the “primary” area of concern as shown in the table below:

Nature of complaints in 2022/23

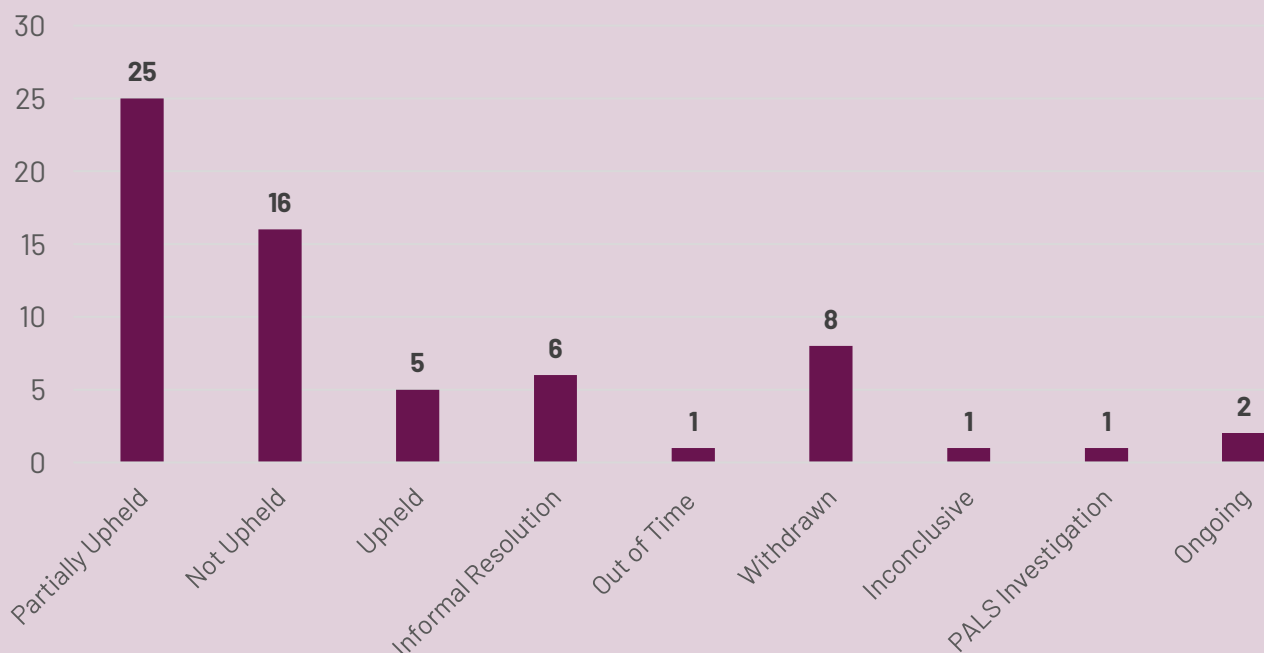


6.4 Complaint outcomes

When reaching a decision on the outcome of a complaint, we use one of the following definitions:

- Informal Resolution
- Not Upheld
- Partially Upheld
- Upheld

Adult Social Care complaints frequently include several elements with often multiple resolutions. It is therefore expected some of those complaints will conclude with a mix of outcomes. The below graphic shows the number of outcomes of complaints investigated in the reporting year.

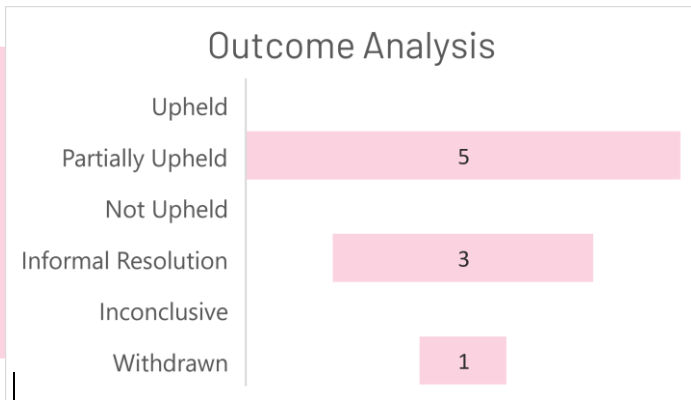


The percentage of 'upheld' complaints was 8%, 'partially upheld' 31% and 'not upheld' complaints were 25%.

- Withdrawn complaints (12%) were resolved informally to the complainant's satisfaction.
- One complaint decision (1%) was 'inconclusive' as no determination could be made based on differing version of events.
- Two complaints remain under investigation from last year which represents 11% of the overall figures.
- 9% of complaints were resolved informally and did not progress through the complaints process, they are still included within our overall figures as the themes are fed into organisational learning.
- One complaint (1%) exceeded the timeframes due to multi-agency involvement in the case which regrettably meant the complaint response was made outside the legislative parameters.
- One complaint (1%) was processed through PALS (NHS Patient Advice and Liaison Services).

6.5 Breakdown of complaints by service area

Detailed below is a breakdown of complaint outcomes by service area.

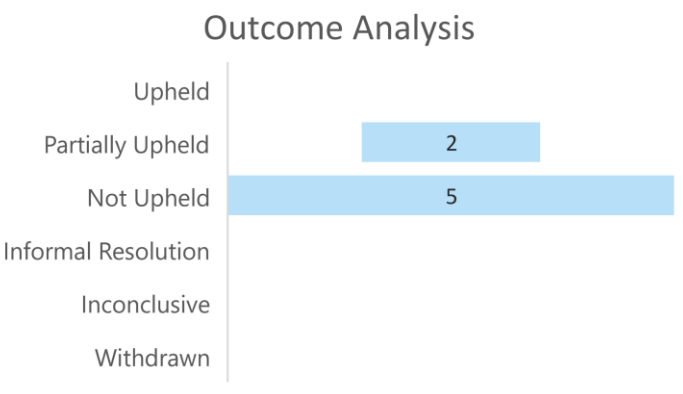
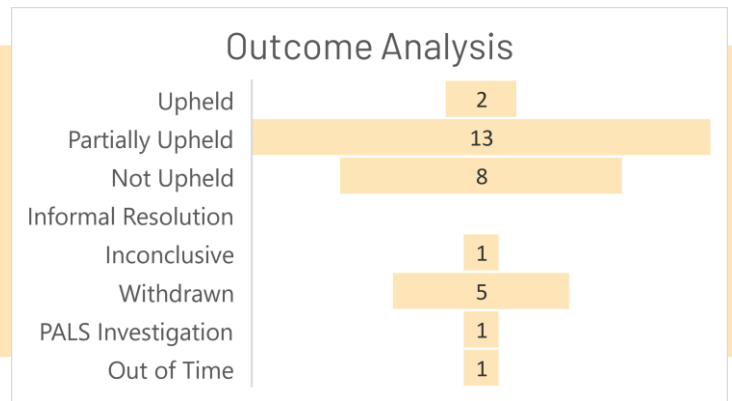


Learning Disabilities & Mental Health Social Work Services

The service area includes social work for Adult Mental Health, Older Persons Mental Health, Adults with Learning Disabilities, and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards.

Social Work & Safeguarding

The service area includes social work for Adult Access and Safeguarding, Community Locality Assessment, and Hospital Social Work.

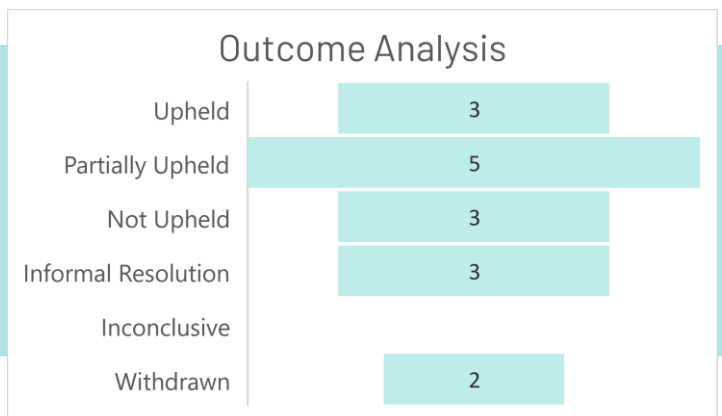


Occupational Therapy, Partnerships & Provider Services

The service area includes the Occupational Therapy service, Pathways to Independence and other In-house Provider Services.

Commissioning & Social Care Finance

The service area includes Commissioning, Brokerage, Social Care Income & Payments, and Property & Financial Affairs.



* At the time of writing 2 complaints were on going and therefore are not included in this outcomes analysis.

6.6 Complaints to the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman

The Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) investigates a complaint when it has not been resolved by the Council through our complaint's procedure. The Adult Social Care complaints procedure is a one stage process for all Adult Social Care complaints in Redcar and Cleveland. Complainants can refer their complaint to the Ombudsman should they remain dissatisfied with the response received from us.

7 complaints were referred to the Ombudsman during 2022/23. This represents 3% of the complaints received in this year.

4 complaints were upheld, 2 complaints were closed after initial enquiries and no further action was required and 1 complaint is an ongoing case.

The recommendations from the four upheld complaints were as follows:

1. The Council to issue an apology for delays in completing the annual review and arranging respite care and compensation for the distress caused.
2. The Council to apologise for the avoidable delays in carrying out housing adaptations and award compensation.
3. The Council to issue an apology and to financially reimburse the complainant for loss of respite and delays in undertaking a carers assessment. Additionally, the Council should undertake an urgent review of the Adults needs to ensure respite provision is appropriate.
4. Originally the Council were recommended to issue an apology but following further information provided by the Council, the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman removed the recommendation as evidence was provided that appropriate action was taken at the time. As a result of this decision, we are going to review our processes to make further improvements.

The final decisions resulted in the Council paying £3,700 to complainants in recognition of the upset and distress caused.

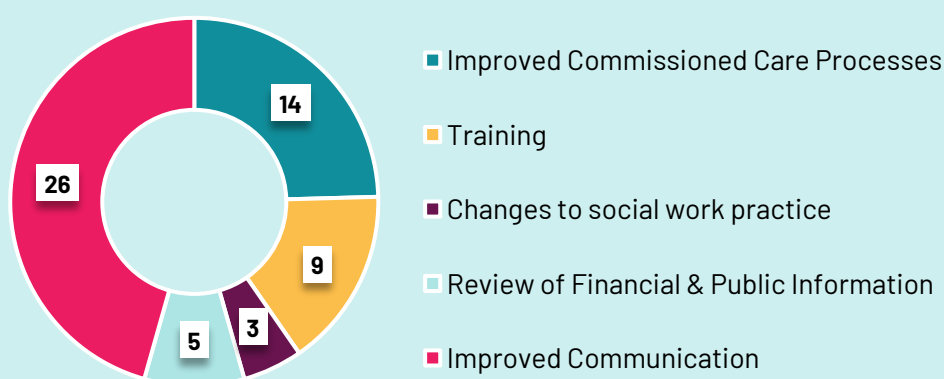
7.0 Lessons Learnt

The priority in dealing with all complaints is seeking a timely and satisfactory resolution, where lessons are learnt and where outcomes from complaints can inform service improvements. Learning from complaints gives us opportunities for improvements to be made, for issues to be prevented where possible going forward, and to inform our future plans for services delivery.

Through our engagement plan, we identify a set of commitments and actions we will take to fulfil our pledge to put people at the heart of everything we do. We achieve this by listening and involving the adults we support as they are best placed to tell us their lived experience, and how we can make positive changes to our services. By analysing trends in complaints, we can use this intelligence to inform our commissioning intentions and service delivery. We share new developments, changes in guidance and practice updates, through team meetings, our staff newsletter, and our quality assurance process. Individual issues and specific learning are addressed through training, reflection, and supervision.

Of the 65 complaints investigated last year, 22 investigations identified actions such as training for staff, improvements to our processes, changes to working practices and revision of our documentation to be implemented.

The chart below shows an overview of the actions taken as a result of learning from complaints.



Examples of learning from complaints for this reporting year are detailed below:

Theme	Recommendation for improvement
Improved Communication	<p>To fully document information provided at the start of social care involvement will be reinforced with all practitioners, to ensure we keep adults, their families and carers fully updated on the funding for care when adults move into a care home.</p> <p>To be clear with adults and their families about timeframes for an assessment, what happens next and who to contact in the absence of their allocated practitioner.</p>
Improved Social Work Practice	<p>Identified as a learning for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW's) around lasting power of attorney, capacity assessment and best interest decisions.</p> <p>Practitioners to ensure Adult Social Care recording procedures are followed.</p> <p>Practitioners to be reminded in their team meetings of their responsibility in reporting a safeguarding concern and following the Care Act section 42 guidance to protect an adult from suspected risk of abuse or neglect.</p>

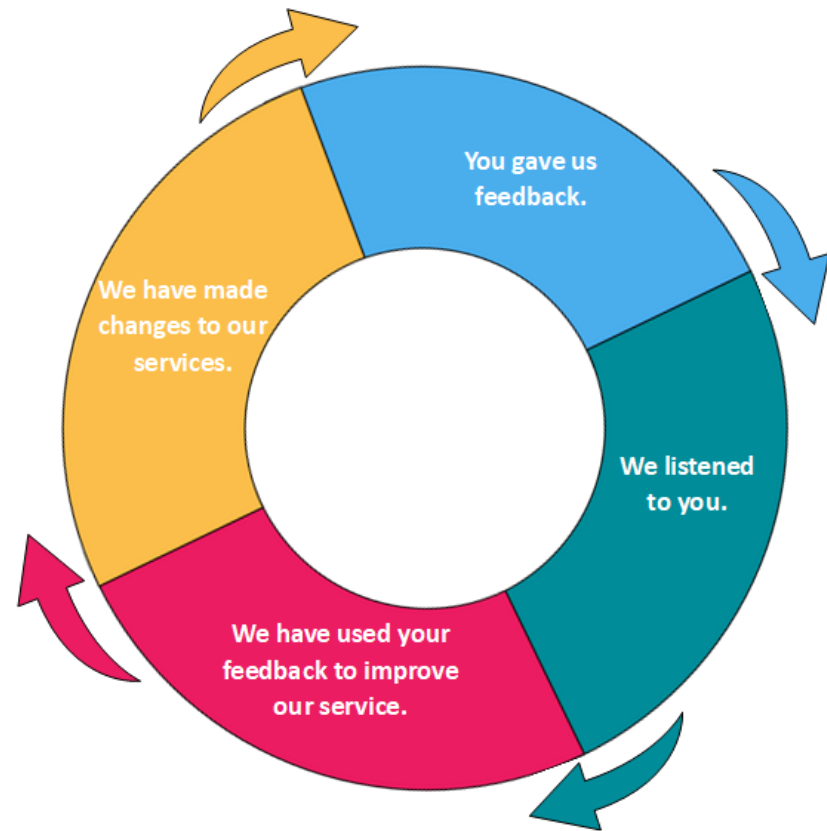
Theme	Recommendation for improvement
Training	<p>Training for practitioners on accurately recording relationships on electronic records, as well as consent, and any legal representation if the adult lacks capacity.</p> <p>Refresher training for practitioners on financial assessment process after discharge to assess funding has ended.</p>
Improved Care Provider Processes	<p>Meadowgate staff to clearly document health advice given and subsequent decision making. Additionally, refresher training on recording standards will be delivered to all staff to prevent this from happening again.</p> <p>Medical Administration Chart (MAR) should consistently be completed and be available within care files. Providers to ensure they reference hospital discharge documentation before implementing any care procedures or administration medication for residents.</p> <p>QR code system is explained to adults receiving care in the future and for written alternatives to be provided by care providers if the adult does not have access to a mobile phone.</p>
Financial & Public Information	<p>Property and Financial Affairs referral form to capture important information such as Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLs) and other key information required to manage the appointeeship.</p> <p>Review and implementation of new hospital discharge leaflet including the three Discharge to Assess (D2A) funding pathways.</p> <p>Implementation of new Adult Social Care leaflet on affected benefits when an adult is in hospital.</p>

Where a complaint involves a commissioned service, this is addressed through contract management procedures with lessons learned fed back to the service by Adult Social Care Commissioning. This shapes the work of the Commissioning service to review working practices, procedures, policies, and contract compliance with commissioned providers to improve the quality of care provision across the social care sector within the borough. The quality of care is monitored through those contract compliance mechanisms which includes quality assurance visits, working with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) where a provider is not meeting the standard of care or their regulated function, and following up on safeguarding concerns where appropriate.



8.0 Overview of Comments received in 2022 - 2023

Comments are received across a wide range of topics that range from social work and occupational therapy practice to housing adaptations and commissioned services. Outlined below are a range of examples.



What happened	What we did
Comment received regarding not being able to source a package of care for Mrs X. Has began to feel lonely due to not having family close by.	We started a package of care shortly after receiving this comment. We referred Mrs X to Community Therapies and provided information about Day Centres that Mrs X could attend.
"I sometimes get annoyed when my washing and drying gets left behind due to the facilities not working."	Our commissioners contacted the service and began monitoring the facilities to ensure they are working sufficiently.
"The waiting time to get things done could be a bit quicker. I have not yet had my rails put in to access my back garden but appreciate this might not be within your control."	Practitioner contacted the service to chase the adaptations. Service confirmed the adaptations have been fitted and the adult is happy with the installed grab rails.
Mrs X is unable to leave her bungalow due to the steps at the front and back of her home.	Practitioner spoke to Mrs X regarding the comment. Contact has been made with the Occupational Therapy team to work with Mrs X to assist her in leaving her home.
Mrs X raised a comment that her mother was placed in a Care Home with people with Dementia, when her mother has Delirium.	Team Manager has discussed the comment with the practitioner, Mrs X's mother returned home with her family shortly after the comment was investigated.
Comment raised about the adult feeling depressed because of their previous care provider.	The Duty worker contacted the adult to check all is okay with their new care provider. Adult confirmed all is well.

9.0 Compliments

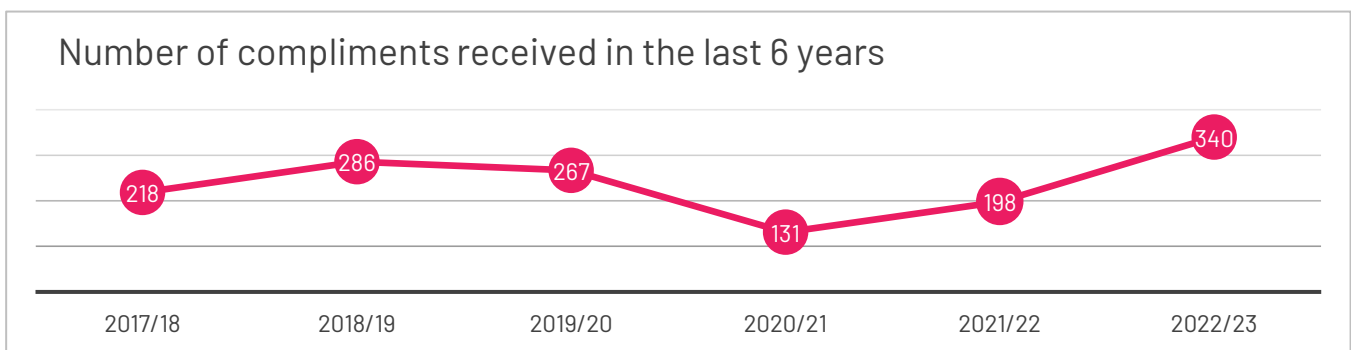
9.1 What is a compliment?

Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council's Adult Social Care Complaints and Compliments Policy states a compliment is: *"When someone is happy with the service they have received and wishes to express their thanks or appreciation."*

9.2 Number of compliments?

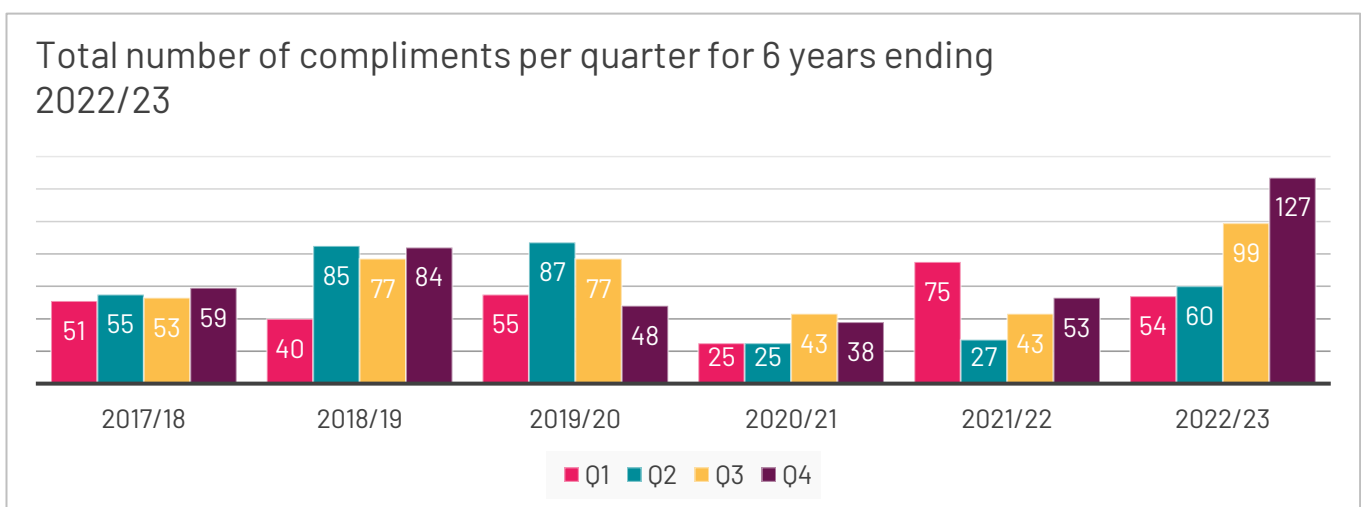
We received 340 compliments in 2022/23: compared to 198 in 2021/22. Compliments evidence how Adult Social Care is meeting the key qualities adults and their carers expect from a social care service such as being treated with dignity, respect, staff being caring, response to people's needs, being effective and well-led.

The table below shows the number of compliments received over the last 6 years.



Compliments are received by letter, email, thank you cards and feedback forms. They are recorded and the members of staff involved are congratulated by the senior management team on their good practice. We use feedback received from compliments to affirm when services are working well and have made a positive impact on adults accessing our service.

The chart below shows the quarterly breakdown of compliments over the last six years.



Across the Adult Social Care service, the Reablement and Independence Team within our in-house Provider Service continues to receive by far the highest number of compliments from external parties.

The next section shows 9 anonymised quotes from compliments we have received in the reporting year.

9.3 Adult Social Care 2022/23 Compliments

“Mrs X would like to pass on her thanks to the team and is very pleased with the works that she could cry. She advised that they were very friendly, they cleaned up after themselves and would welcome them back again anytime if she needed more works completing.”

“Very pleased with help and support given while completing forms, adult returned a Questionnaire Survey and stated the following Service and fitting for the stairlift, and shower was excellent. Staff were very helpful in shower fitting. Thank you X/X and X all very helpful in completing forms and advice. Thank you.”

“All staff members were friendly, approachable, and understanding of my dad's needs and wishes. They showed empathy and more importantly, a sense of humour which my dad appreciates during a difficult time.”

“My wife and I would like to let you know how much we have appreciated the help, support and understanding we have received from members of your Adult Services team about our son X.”

“Thank you. I would like this opportunity to express my gratitude for all your work and help given to me. You have treated me with dignity and respect for every member of staff to care worker.”

“Thank you for being our rock through all of this with our dad. You have always gone above and beyond for our dad and us. We are so grateful and love you for all you have done.”

“I wish to express my sincere gratitude to your team, who made my life so much easier. I am truly grateful for all of the time and care that has been put into my case. I feel valued and supported. My carers are excellent too, by the way, and make a significant difference to my life.”

“Thanks so much to HAT for removing the metal plate – that has got to be a record...I only sent the email about the metal plate in the morning & the work was done the same day – brilliant – thank you all!!”

“Thank you very much for making everything go as smoothly as possible. Thanks to X and the rest of the team from a very happy soon to be 92-year-old.”



10.0 Conclusion

Whilst there has been a slight increase in complaints this year compared with previous years, it is positive to see we have managed them more effectively and efficiently through informal resolution. This is particularly successful where we can achieve a resolution quickly to benefit the adult and their family.

We continue to remain effective in dealing with complaints, with a relatively small number referring the matter to the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman. This report demonstrates that Adult Social Care welcomes feedback from adults and their families to help support our culture of continuous learning from a mistake by acknowledging it, investigating, reviewing, apologising when we get things wrong, and implementing new processes and practices to avoid a similar mistake happening again in the future.

11.0 Future Developments 2022/23

1. Work with our commissioned care providers to ensure there is effective handling of complaints raised directly with them.
2. Continue to work with all staff to improve information shared about the complaints process, improve complaints investigations, and responses to implement effective and meaningful lessons learnt.
3. Work collaboratively with the Principal Social Worker to develop effective training about complaints resolution and handling comments, especially for new starters.
4. Continuous performance monitoring against statutory response times.
5. To routinely review at the Practice Improvement Meetings, the cycle of learning from complaints. Repeated complaint themes are being reviewed year on year.
6. To try and handle comment and resolve complaints on a more informal basis where possible.
7. To continue to use themes from complaints within our Adult Social Care Quality Framework to ensure practice is improved which will benefit the adults and carers who we support thus delivering a better service.

Our vision:

We will help you live safe and well, in the place you call home, with the people and things you love, connected to your community, doing the things that matter to you.

Our commitment to adults and unpaid carers:

Listen I am listened to and shape my own support

Advise I am given information and advice when I need it

Enable I am enabled to regain my wellbeing and independence

Support I am provided with quality care that is value for money.

