



# Customer Feedback Annual Report

## Adult Services

# Shropshire Council

2021/22

Feedback and Insight Team, Shropshire Council



# 1. Introduction

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This report considers the customer feedback Shropshire Council's Adult Services received between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022. The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 require local authorities with Social Services responsibilities to produce an Annual Report on the operation of their Complaints Procedure. Shropshire Council's Cabinet considered the annual report in October 2022. This report focuses more specifically on Adult Services linked to social care (Housing is excluded), with a breakdown of statutory and corporate complaint types, to allow more focused understanding of performance and any key issues requiring attention. A similar report is prepared for Children's Services.

In addition to the annual reports, Shropshire Council prepares quarterly customer feedback reports. These are designed for internal use in order to develop a clear understanding of customer experience and support Shropshire Council in its work to address concerns and implement service improvement. More regular reports are available for Adult Services managers to assist with day to day work to respond to complaints, and other reports are available on request.

Complaints containing an element of social care fall under the statutory guidelines. Some complaints we receive for adult services do not relate to social care services and these are handled as corporate complaints. Those complaints are included in this report in order to provide a comprehensive overview of all complaints. This annual report describes the compliments, comments and complaints Adult Services received in 2021/22 (note that previous years included Public Health services and due to organisational restructure, these are no longer included).

Shropshire Council is responsible for customer feedback and complaints relating to its own services and those provided on behalf of the Council. This report includes provider complaints where they are reported to, and considered/handled by, Shropshire Council. (Separate information is considered through contract monitoring and performance).

People who are paying for their own social care (self-funders) may complain to the local authority, (for example about assessments) but services people have arranged or purchased themselves are not covered by the local authority. To assist commissioned services Shropshire Council has made guidance on the effective handling of complaints available on its website.

## **Complaint**

We aim to make it as easy as possible to make a complaint. A complaint is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction about a service provided. Family members and advocates may also make a complaint on behalf of one of our customers. We will ask for consent to ensure that the complaint is not being made against the customer's wishes.

## **Compliment**

Many people get in touch with a compliment when the information or support they have received has exceeded their expectations. It is helpful to learn when a service has been provided well or when a member of staff has done a great job. We like to recognise compliments alongside any complaints. It is good for us to say 'thank you' to our teams and staff members too.

## **Comment**

Feedback about a service could be a suggestion to improve customer experience; a question about whether something could be changed; an idea for delivering a service differently.

## 2. Adult Statutory Complaints Process

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Adult statutory complaints follow a one stage complaints process. Statutory complaints are complaints relating to social care. Some complaints made to Adult Services are corporate complaints and these are handled under Shropshire Council's corporate complaints procedure (a two-stage process: 1) investigation 2) review then referral to the Ombudsman as a final stage.

### Feedback Received

Shropshire Council encourages users of our services, their family members and carers to give feedback and highlight any concerns so that they may be addressed as quickly as possible. If problems cannot be resolved and the customer wishes to make a complaint, staff members can offer advice on how to make a complaint. Support is also available from complaints officers based within Shropshire Council's Feedback and Insight Team.

**Telephone:** 0345 678 9000

**Email:** [customerfeedback@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerfeedback@shropshire.gov.uk)

**Website:** <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/feedback/>



### Acknowledgment

Complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days of being received and we let the complainant know how their complaint will be handled.



### STAGE 1

An appropriate Investigating Officer will be allocated to the case and asked to investigate the complaint. This is usually a manager within the service area the complaint relates to. The complainant will be provided with a written response within 65 working days. We aim to respond within 25 working days but for complex cases we may need the full timescale. We let the customer know if this extra time is needed and why. The Investigating Officer will write to explain the outcome of their investigation, any learning or actions and information outlining how to progress the complaint if the customer is not satisfied with the outcome.

Corporate complaints may progress to Stage 2 (a review) undertaken by Shropshire Council.



**Ombudsman** If a complaint cannot be resolved locally it can be investigated by the Ombudsman. The Council has a timescale of 28 calendar days to provide a response to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO). Responses are often complex, lengthy and require a large volume of appendices to be collated, catalogued and returned to the LGO. Complainants can request to go to the Ombudsman without a review if they choose to.

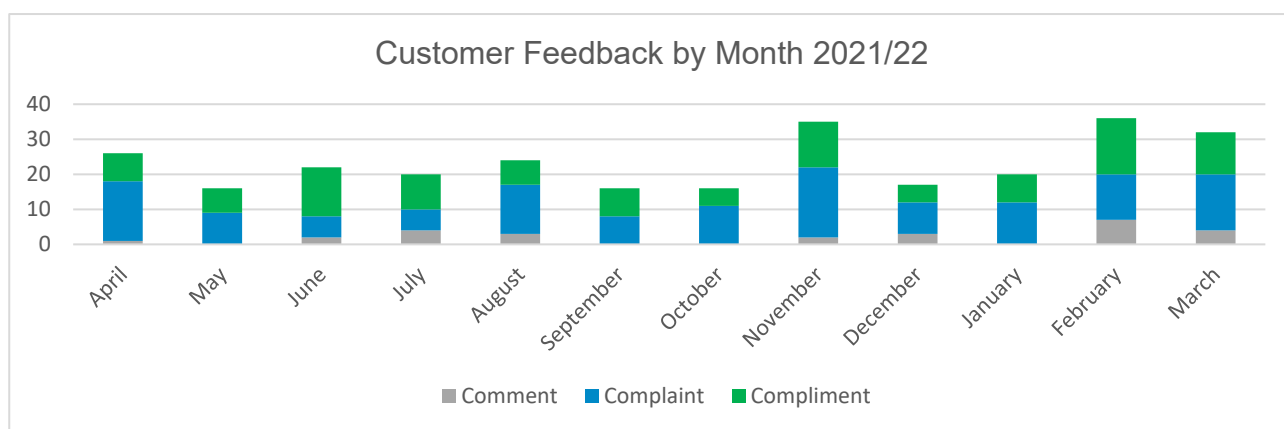
We cannot promise to get the result complainants want, but we do make sure that complaints are dealt with as quickly and as thoroughly as possible and we work to keep customers informed of what is happening and the progress being made.

### 3. Customer Feedback 2021/22

In 2021/22 Shropshire Council received 280 cases of customer feedback for Adult Services (social care):

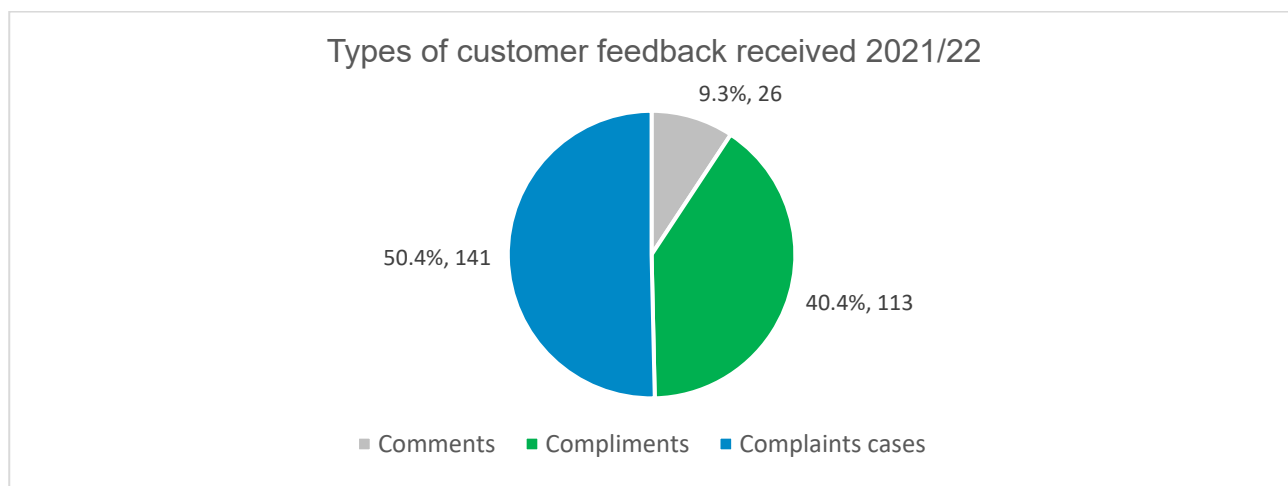
- 26 comments
- 113 compliments
- 141 complaint cases leading to 156 investigations:
  - 105 statutory adult complaint investigations
  - 18 statutory provider complaint investigations
  - 33 corporate complaint investigations

Later within this report change over time is considered but it should be noted that changes in structures mean some services previously included are no longer part of Adult Services (for example Public Health). In addition, Housing Services data has been excluded from this report to focus on social care.

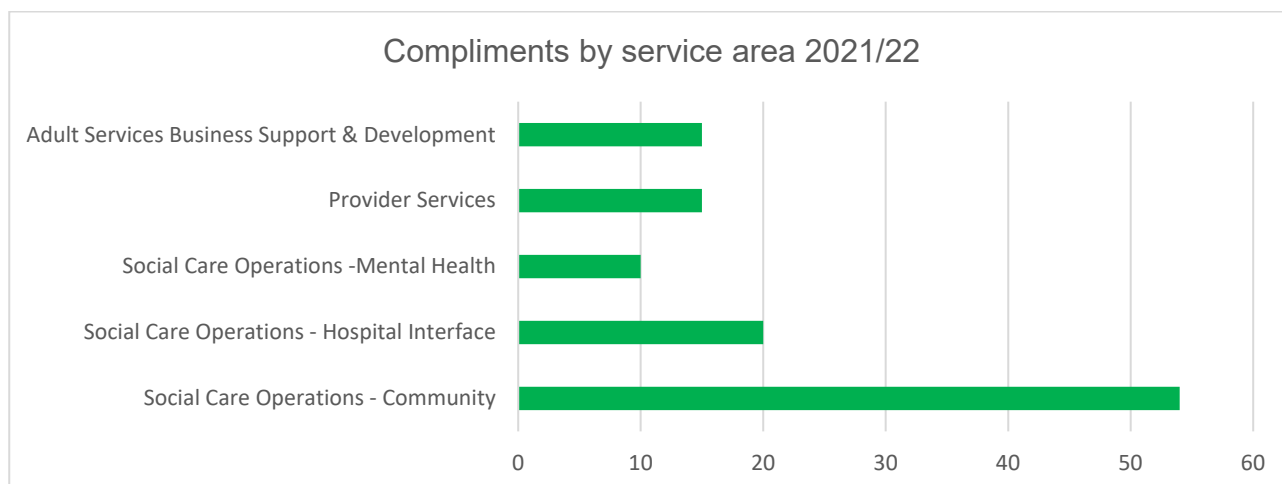


The average number of customer feedback cases recorded per month during 2021/22 was 23. November and February were the busiest months, with May, September and October seeing fewer cases. The patterns by month were quite different compared to the previous year and suggest there aren't any seasonal variations in data (with the exception that December is usually a month with fewer cases received and also had smaller numbers). Quarters 1 and 2 saw the smallest number of customer feedback cases (a similar pattern to the previous year).

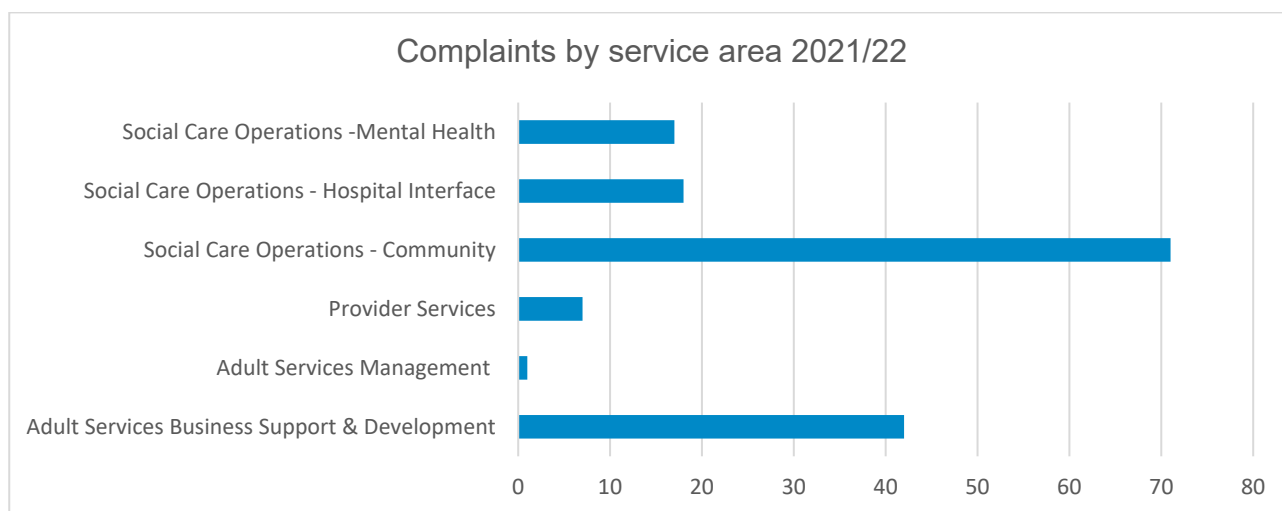
Complaints cases currently account for 50% of the customer feedback received and compliments 40%. This is a change compared to the previous year where complaints formed a lower proportion of feedback cases, but it is not out of line with average figures for previous years (2020/21 was not necessarily a usual year and influenced by pandemic related feedback).



Compliments are spread across teams and services with compliments for services shown in the chart below. Community Social Work Teams receive the largest number of compliments.



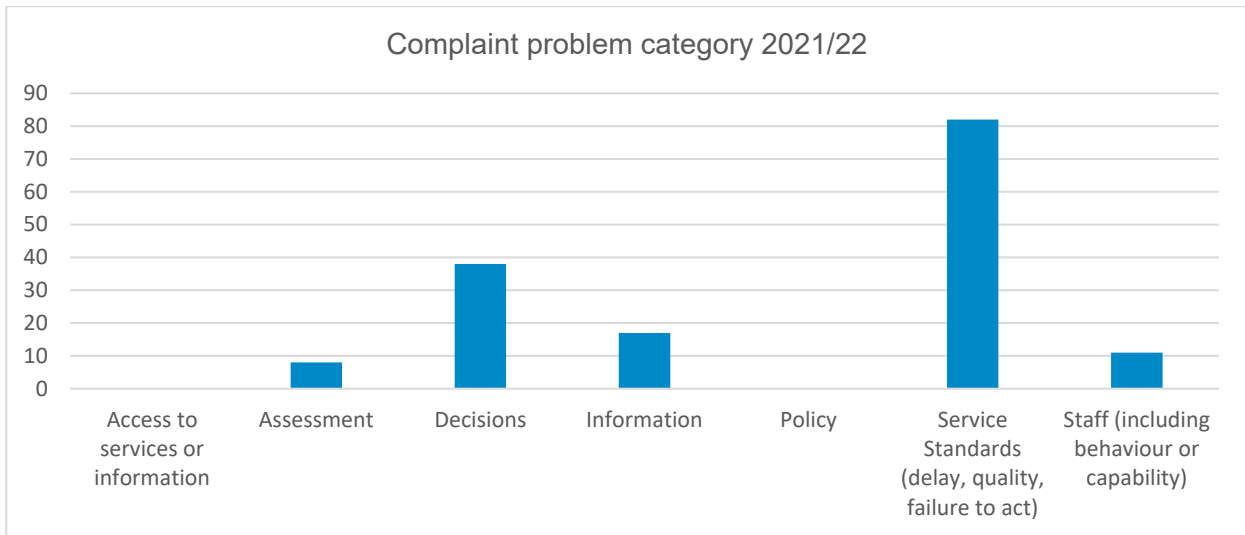
Of the 156 complaints investigations, 71 were received for Community Social Work Teams. The data suggests a reduction in complaints related to Hospital Interface in the last year, suggesting there may have been some improvements in this area over time.



An analysis of complaints by team highlights that 19% of all complaints were for the Community Social Work Team- Central, 11% were for the Community Social Work Team - South, 11% were for Commissioning (Residential, Nursing, Domiciliary Care). 9% of complaints related to Financial Assessments.

Some services and teams are more likely to receive complaints than others. For example, back office teams are less likely to receive customer feedback than customer facing teams. Shropshire Council monitors the distribution of complaints frequently to understand whether there are any changes in feedback, any common concerns and issues in need of attention.

Provider complaints accounted for 12% of all complaints. Shropshire Council is responsible for complaints made against the services it commissions and records these in a very similar way as complaints for its own services. Provider complaints information can be a useful part of contract management and there is a close working relationship in place between contract leads, commissioners and the Council's Feedback and Insight Team in the way provider complaints are managed and reported. Analysis of provider complaints highlights that 'service standards – poor quality of work/service' forms the main category of complaints received.



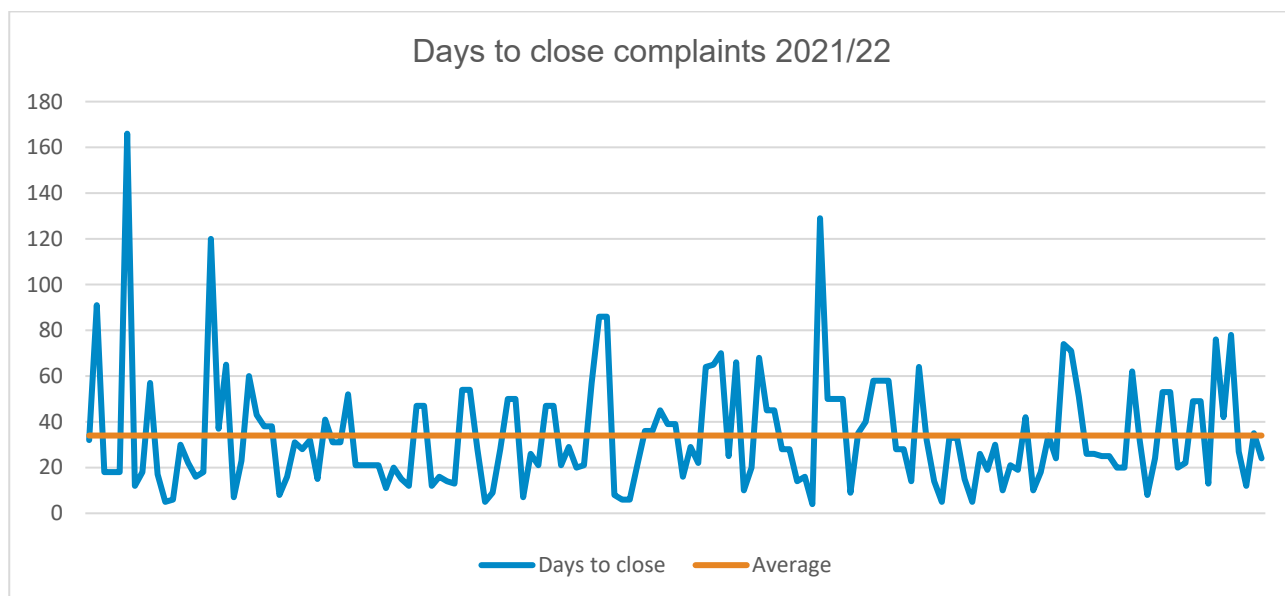
'Service Standards' is the main category under which complaints were made within the year (82 cases, 53% of all complaint investigations). Dominant sub-categories within 'Service Standards' were 'poor quality of work/service' and 'failure to provide a service/take action'. The second most dominant category was 'Decisions – Incorrect Decision'.

The chart below shows the themes recorded for each of the complaints made.

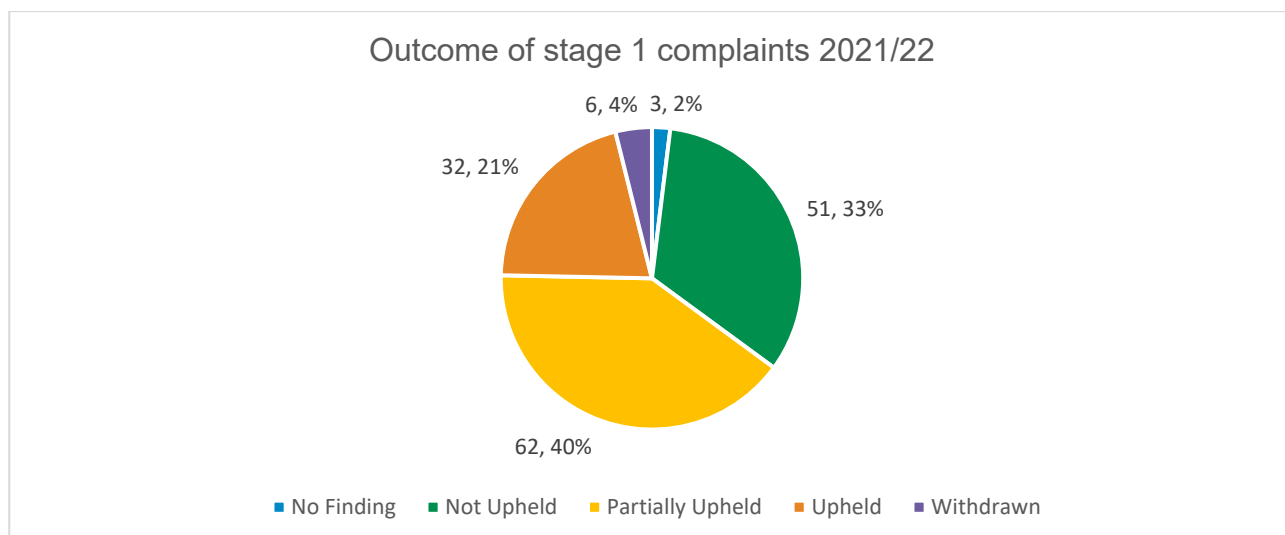


Assessment of needs, financial contributions and arrangement for care at home are currently the most common themes within the complaints received.

During 2021/22 Adult Services took an average of 37 working days to close stage 1 statutory complaints and 22 working days to close corporate complaints (there was some variation within the year but overall the average response timescales were within target). 65 working days is the maximum available for statutory complaints, with the initial timescale aimed for at 25 working days. Corporate stage 1 complaints must be responded to within 30 working days. Some complaint cases can be complex, requiring additional communication with external professionals or more comprehensive action to investigate issues in full.



153 complaints received within the year had an outcome recorded at stage 1 (one complaint remained open and 2 were recorded as 'no finding'). 21% of stage 1 complaints were upheld, 40% were partly upheld and 33% were not upheld (the remainder were withdrawn, considered outside of the Council's jurisdiction or were not complaints and were initial requests for a service).



Stage 1 complaint responses include information to ensure complainants understand how they can raise concerns if they do not feel their complaints has been adequately addressed and options for progressing their complaint to the next stage. Complainants can request to go to the LGO after the Council's response to a statutory complaint (the corporate complaints process has a second stage in the form of a review).

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman data for 2020/21 (this can include cases Shropshire Council considered the previous year) highlighted that the Ombudsman considered 79 cases for Shropshire Council as a whole. There were 12 Adult Social Care cases. Of the 12, 4 were upheld. 3 cases were referred back to Shropshire Council for local resolution and 2 were closed after initial enquiries.

A separate report is provided by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman of all analysis of wider data for Shropshire Council area for 2021/22. This report is not based on local authority complaints but all complaints for the area including those handled under other complaint processes. The table below highlights the following issues for Adult Social Care.

Theme	Number of Ombudsman cases
Assessments and care planning	4
Charging	3
Safeguarding	2
Transport (inc. Blue Badges)	0
Direct payments	2
Disabled facilities grants	0
Residential care	0
Home care	1
Supported living	0
Other	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has published an Annual Review of Adult Social Care Complaints. Michael King, Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, has said: *“The issues we are investigating are neither new nor surprising, but do indicate a system with a growing disconnect between the care to which people are entitled, and the ability of councils to meet those needs. Care assessments, care planning and charging for care have been key features of our cases this year...”* and *“we will continue to hold authorities to account for what they should be doing rather than what they can afford to do.”*

The Ombudsman is also concerned about reducing complaint numbers (questioning whether people have become disillusioned with the process) and as a result has asked local authorities to ensure local awareness of how to access complaints procedures and the services provided by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.



## 4. Annual Comparisons

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
<p><b>Number of compliments – decreased</b></p> <p>In 2020/1 Adult Services received 235 compliments. This was a significant increase on previous years and many compliments were directly linked to the actions taken by Shropshire Council to respond to the pandemic. Numbers of compliments have decreased but it is also important to note that this report covers fewer services compared to recent years due to restructures.</p>	180	235	113
	Numbers of compliments are as expected (a return to more normal levels) and in line with 2019/20 (taking into account service/scope changes).		
<p><b>Number of complaints investigations – similar</b></p> <p>The number of complaint investigations for Adult Services totalled 179 in 2020/21 and 156 in 2021/22 (with a change in report scope e.g. Housing Services not included). The data suggests performance has been maintained within Adult Services (both years seeing a reduction in complaints compared to 2019/20).</p>	238	179	156
	Performance has been maintained (change of report scope has to be taken into account).		
<p><b>Days to close – Average days to close similar</b></p> <p>The average number of working days taken to respond to a stage 1 complaint during 2020/21 was 26 working days but this was an unusual year with pandemic impacts affecting performance. The average days to close figure for 2021/22 is similar to 2019/20. In-year performance reporting identifies fluctuations quarter to quarter and this remains a focus of ongoing performance monitoring, ideally the average should be below 30 working days.</p>	36 working days	26 working days	34 working days
	Days to close is an important performance indicator. Performance fluctuates but 2021/22 remains similar to 2019/20.		
<p><b>Outcome of complaints – Greater proportion upheld</b></p> <p>Although it would be a concern if performance monitoring highlighted too few cases being upheld (that could indicate some bias in investigation and it is important that Shropshire Council accepts where things have gone wrong and strives for improvement) there has been an increase in the proportion of upheld and partially upheld complaints for 2021/22. This may be a sign of service pressures and perhaps reflects the comments made nationally by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (see page 7).</p>	17%	14%	21%
	More complaints are being upheld as a proportion of those with outcomes compared to previous years (partially upheld complaints data also supports this conclusion).		
<p><b>Complaints progressing to the Ombudsman – reduced</b></p> <p>In 2018/19 17 Adult Services cases progressed to the Local Government Ombudsman, and in 2019/20 the total was 18. The year 2020/21 saw 7 cases progress to the Ombudsman, but this included a 3-month suspension of case work by the Ombudsman as a result of the pandemic. 2021/22 suggests some reduction in escalated cases. (Note, report scope for Ombudsman cases has not changed).</p>	18	7	12
	Fewer complaints are progressing to the Ombudsman (note 2020/21 data cannot be used as an effective comparison).		

## 5. Example Compliments

Shropshire Council's Adult Services social care services received 113 compliments in 2021/22. Compliments are a great source of customer feedback and combined with complaints provide a better understanding of what is working well and areas for action. The compliments below include some change of wording to ensure individuals cannot be identified.

Compliment for Peripatetic Social Worker - Integrated Community Service North (Adult Social Care): *"I just wanted to say thank you for everything that you did for my mum. I truly appreciate the dedication and thought that you put into helping my mum. You really took the time to find out about her as a person, what is important to her and what actions would be in her best interests. You were always contactable, replied to my messages promptly and kept me informed, which was also much appreciated. Please know that you have had a positive impact on my mum and myself, for which I will always be grateful."*

Compliment for [name removed] Adult Social Care: *"Thank you so very much for your email, and for your all your time and kindness to me. You really were a much-needed port in a storm. As I said, just hearing your reassuring calm voice made a difference. Your patient listening and understanding were unbelievably helpful. I slept a little better last night."*

Compliment for Financial Assessment Team (Adult Social Care): *"Thank you for taking time out of your day to respond to my queries. [Name removed] dealt with the inquiry with patience and a great deal of respect given the level of exasperation I found myself feeling. You have trained her well and she is credit to the organisation."*

Compliment for Rehab Facilitators - Sensory Support Services (Adult Social Care): *"I can't thank you both enough you have made a wonderful, wonderful, difference I am truly grateful and thankful for all your help today you have made me the happiest person ever. It is so exciting to have my machine back working again now I can do so much more and read all my books on there and letters. I truly can't thank you enough. I hope your boss knows how much wonderful work you all do."*

Compliment for Admission Avoidance Team and START (Adult Social Care): *"Please accept my sincere gratitude for your team and the service they provided during a time of increasing difficulties in the care of X. Without exception, your team members excelled in their service delivery and it is no understatement that your intervention was a life changing event for both X and I. I have deliberately chosen not to mention any particular individual as I want to ensure that my appreciation for your service and staff is acknowledged across the board. It is apparent that your leadership has created an exceptional service."*

Compliment for the First Point of Contact team. *"[Name removed] has called to say that whenever she has called the FPOC team about her daughter's referral into adult social care she has always found the team friendly, helpful and very positive. She has asked if this can be passed on as a compliment for the FPOC team"*.

Compliment for Avalon Day Services (Adult Social Care). *"... You were all very inviting and friendly, and obviously very person centred...X really liked all the equipment on offer....a really nice homely and inclusive atmosphere..."*

Compliment for IPS Employment Specialist (Enable) from IAPT Therapist: *"A client of mine has secured a permanent position with the help of Enable, relating to his career aspirations and it has made a huge difference to his Mental Health and he and I are super grateful."*



## 6. Example Complaints

Shropshire Council's Adult Services undertook 156 complaint investigations during 2021/22. The analysis earlier in this report highlights the types of complaints received and how they were handled. The examples below have been reworded slightly to maintain confidentiality and anonymity and steps have been taken to ensure the meaning is not altered. It should be noted that perception of fault does not always lead to an upheld outcome once more information is available, and the issues better understood.

The customer's complaint is that she was offered support from (*provider name removed*) to take her husband out for 2 hours, 3 times per week, as a package for herself, as he has Dementia and at that time she was his full time carer (also working full time). The customer reports that she was not advised that this would be chargeable and was unaware of this until the first invoice was received. She was charged at £120 per week; an amount she finds unaffordable.

The customer wishes to complain about the failure to provide support to her daughter and herself, as her carer. She describes that she has had no confirmation of a support package for her severely disabled adult daughter. She believes that the social worker has been aware for 2 weeks that the care agency were withdrawing their support for her daughter. The customer says that despite her numerous calls and emails, she feels that she is "*met with a wall of silence*".

The customer's complaint relates to direct payments. She states that she has felt bullied and victimised by staff members when they have tried to discuss her payments and requested payments. The issues stem back over 8 years and the customer reports that the problems have occurred because she wasn't given any advice on how to spend the budget.

The customer's complaint is that she is unhappy that her husband is considered to be a self-funder. The self-funder status is linked to ownership of a second property they have. She comments that as her son lives in this second property, and has his own health needs and disabilities, it should not be taken into account.

The complaint is related to Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and reads "*I am deeply concerned that one of my residents has still not been assessed for a DoLS form I submitted using your online portal.*" The customer has followed up previously and understands that the case has been added to the system and that an assessment date has not yet been allocated. The complaint includes concern about the long timescale and about lack of contact/ response while waiting for an assessment.

The customer says that his mother's social worker is rude to him and does not understand his mother's illness enough to keep her safe. He also comments that the social worker refuses to listen to dangers mentioned: "*he does not listen or maybe he does not want to*". The customer explained that his mother missed her medications and "*she was unsettled by that and angry*". The customer and his brother also have concerns about decisions and plans the social worker has already made.

The customer's complaint is that he doesn't believe he has received a care assessment for two years. In addition, he has stated that he has not been given any support with regards to the cleaning of his flat.



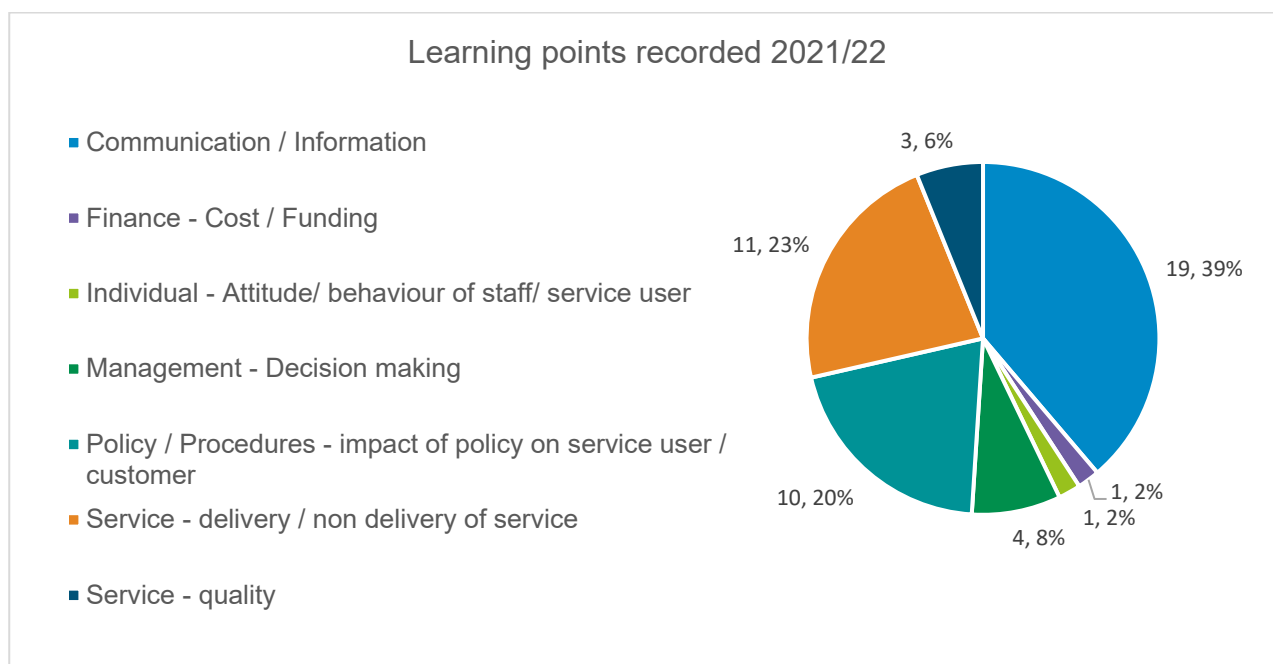
## 7. Learning and Actions

Shropshire Council's Adult Services social care services recorded learning and/or actions against 35% of complaints. This learning was recorded in cases where the outcome was partly upheld or upheld. For cases that are not upheld, learning or any action points will rarely be recorded.

Shropshire Council records the outcome of complaints alongside any learning points and follow up actions. Follow up actions may include an apology, work to amend a policy or procedure and work to arrange training or guidance for members of staff.

Learning points recorded during 2021/22 highlight the following:

- 39% of learning relates to communication. This is commonly a reflection that communication may have been inadequate, and that increased communication could have prevented a complaint from being made. Sometimes the learning is around increased communication with the service user and sometimes the family members. Occasionally learning about communication may be related to multi-agency working and the need to increase communication with other agencies and services.
- 23% of learning was around the service provided (delivery or non-delivery of a service). This may be because an action was not taken that should have been and learning has taken place to avoid similar complaints in future.
- 20% of learning was about how policy or procedure impacted on service users or customers.



In 2019/20 a more in-depth review of complaints and learning suggested that ongoing action was required concerning communication around charges for care and financial contributions. The last few years have seen noticeable improvement in this area but there remain a smaller number of cases where lack of clarity concerning charges for care continues to be an issue (it is an area hard to address in its entirety because financial contributions are likely to remain a significant issue particularly in the context of cost of living increases and national economic challenges).

Examples of learning are included in the following section.

## 8. Example Learning and Actions

Learning and actions can be recorded on any case where they can lead to an improvement and they can help avoid the risk of similar complaints in the future. The examples shown below may have been slightly re-worded to best illustrate the learning and actions agreed (learning and actions are often included in more detailed descriptions). Names and other details have been removed to ensure people and cases cannot be identified. The examples include some very robust responses to try to avoid potential problems and improve service experience in the future.

Learning from the complaint has led adult social care to put steps in place to review/consider the robustness of handover between live-in care providers, including the length of the handover and how this is conducted. This learning will support future handover and service improvements.

The complaint investigation highlighted some need for improvement. This will be fed back to the relevant senior staff members in all the teams involved. To assist learning, the complaint will be anonymised and turned into a case study example to help those involved in/ or linked to financial assessments with work on similar cases in future.

Following the complaint (and an awareness of capacity concerns generally) a review of the staffing structure has been undertaken to ensure that capacity across the team is increased (particularly to reduce waits for assessments). Since receipt of this complaint a review of the risk assessment process for cases awaiting allocation has been completed and actions are in place to mitigate any identified risks through an initial telephone assessment, provision of advice, guidance and signposting and provision of equipment. The Team now meet on a daily basis to ensure response to urgent cases. In addition, an extended meeting is held once a week to monitor the overall waiting list.

An apology has been made because the complaint investigation found that there had been a lack of support which had impacted on the family. Adult social care will be addressing procedures to ensure that in staff absences, families are communicated with and responded to in a timely manner. The concerns have been discussed with colleagues in the other teams involved, with the aim of improving internal communication.

The manager will ensure that specific training on good quality practice and recording, communication and working with families is included in all staff supervisions and appraisals, and that there is evidence of ongoing and continuous professional development for staff. Implementation of a new performance framework is being undertaken. This provides a mechanism to review practice and outcomes for adults and carers with care and support needs. It will be monitored on a weekly basis.

As a result of this complaint investigation the following steps have been implemented:

- Introduced a new procedure that will ensure the clients and/or next of kin are contacted prior to discharge.
- Introduced an audit and inspection programme of the care folders to ensure that the concerns raised regarding the START folders does not happen again.
- Reviewed the learning and training programme available to staff with a particular highlight on competencies around completing assessments, working with service users and their families, and staff communication with families.
- Ensured that staff are reminded in meetings regarding compliance to PPE guidance.

## 9. Progress Update

Progress over the last 12 months is summarised below:

	Action	Progress Made
1	Quality of complaint responses	Quality has been a big focus through the last year. Comprehensive responses at the first stage of complaints processes can ease concerns and offer significant reassurance that the issues raised have been fully understood and responded to, even if no fault is found. Managers responsible for investigating and responding to complaints are, and will continue to be, encouraged to work closely with the Feedback and Insight Team's complaints officers who can offer a less specialist and more independent view of complaints. Joint working and the early investment of time can prevent complaints cases from escalating or extending in their timescales, producing benefits for both complainants and complaint investigators.
2	Days to close performance	'Days to close' performance has been a focus across the council and will continue to be a main performance measure. As a result of this focus, Adult Services has achieved relatively stable performance through the last year, despite the greater complexity of many of the cases investigated. However, the statutory nature of social care cases means this focus must continue. Priority must be given to ensure maximum complaint timescales are not missed. Where delays are unavoidable there is a need for robust communication to ensure complainants understand the progress made and anticipated response date.
3	Progression of cases and compliance	Although performance remains steady with very few cases progressing to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, national compliance reporting by the Ombudsman has meant complaints actions have been a focus over the last 12 months. To complement changes in national reporting, greater reporting and evidencing of actions and completion dates has been taking place locally. This relies on joint working between complaint investigators/service managers and Feedback and Insight Team complaints officers. Although effective, due to the national concerns raised in the Ombudsman's annual review of Adult Social Care, it is recommended that this remains a focus for 2022/23.
4	Provider complaints	Provider complaints have formed an ongoing priority for the last few years. This focus has led to a robust way of working and effective management when concerns are raised. However, more recently it has been highlighted that greater investment in communication and training activity with providers would be beneficial. Such requests will need to be considered as an action for the coming year.
5	An ongoing recommendation is to ensure learning, and actions are recorded.	Progress has been made in the recording of learning and actions following complaints. There are some very robust examples showing how complaints can lead to service improvement. However, there remain some upheld and partly upheld complaints where learning and actions are not clearly identified and recorded so this should continue into the next year and be picked up through internal communications (see below).
6	Staff communications and training	Over the last year the focus has been on informal learning completed with new members of staff and one to one support (particularly for managers with less complaints experience). However, it is recognised that additional approaches be adopted to extend this support and, as a result, this forms a recommendation for 2022/23.

## 10. Recommendations

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Overall performance has been maintained in most areas of complaints handling and there is little change compared to the previous year. Although a greater proportion of complaints were upheld in 2021/22, the small numbers mean this could change again in the next report (quarterly reporting has not yet highlighted any ongoing trend). It is recognised that the impact of the pandemic, cost of living increases and other socio-economic and service pressures are a risk. Close performance monitoring will need to be maintained. The following recommendations are designed to prevent any downturn in performance and make further improvement where possible.

1. Regular data is made available to support complaints management. In addition to quarterly reporting, complaints data is provided more frequently to assist managers in their work to track response timescales and actions. Additional information can be provided as required and there are plans to improve the reporting of outstanding and long running cases in order to highlight where service pressures are in place. Complaints investigators are encouraged to work closely with the Feedback and Insight Team should questions, or new complaints data needs, arise.
2. It is recommended that 'days to close' remains a priority for the coming year. This performance measure is one of the best indicators of complaints handling performance. When complaints are responded to on time there is commonly a reduced risk of escalation and a more positive experience for complainants.
3. It is recommended that the themes from the 2021/22 data form a focus for the next year. It may be possible to identify improvements in information provision, or action, that could reduce similar complaints. The themes within complaints received by Shropshire Council are: care assessments, charging for care (often relating to communication) and arrangement for care at home. Although only 4 Shropshire Council complaints were upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman the investigations suggest that there may be a theme regarding communication during discharge planning.
4. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has reported that national complaints themes are care assessments, care planning and charging for care. The Ombudsman has highlighted concerns nationally around compliance and efficient and robust action following recommendations. Although Shropshire Council already works hard to report, monitor and complete actions, it is recommended that this remains a priority for 2022/23. It is also recommended that close attention is paid to Ombudsman findings from other local authorities and any learning considered locally.
5. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has raised concerns nationally regarding a reduction in the number of complaints that are made about adult social care. The Ombudsman considers this a sign that people may have lost confidence in complaints processes and asked local authorities across the country to work with them to address this issue. It is therefore recommended that Shropshire Council responds to this concern by issuing public communications and by working with commissioned providers.
6. Staff members are reporting an increase in more complex cases with examples of vulnerable customers, or people with particular needs who may find it more difficult to accept a complaint decision or reach a resolution. These cases can require a greater investment of time and become long running in nature (sometimes leading to persistent complainant behaviour). The issue is common across service areas but likely to have greater impact within social care. Staff members have suggested additional guidance may be helpful as an action for 2022/23.
7. Although resource dependent, the Feedback and Insight Team has plans to develop an online complaints training and guidance offer to assist staff and support people new to complaints investigation roles through induction. Work will begin in 2022/23.

Feedback and Insight Team,  
Communications and Engagement, Resources  
Shropshire Council

Email: [CustomerFeedback@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:CustomerFeedback@shropshire.gov.uk)



Shropshire  
Council