

Customer Feedback Annual Report Adult Services 2018/19

Feedback and Insight Team, Information, Intelligence and Insight
July 2019



1. Introduction

This report considers the customer feedback Shropshire Council's Adult Services received between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019. 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. The annual complaints report (Shropshire's annual customer feedback reports) must be made available to members of the public, council staff and elected councillors in order to fulfil the requirements. A customer feedback report is produced for all Shropshire Council services to provide an overview but this report focuses more specifically on Adult Services 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.

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 (including housing services) received in 2018/19.

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 really 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 it; a question as to whether something could be done differently; an idea for delivering a service differently.



2. The Complaints Process

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).

Shropshire Council encourages users of adult 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 offer advice on how to make a complaint.

Complaints, comments and compliments can be made by telephone, email, letter or by using our website based form. Support is also available from complaints officers based within Shropshire Council's Feedback and Insight Team see:

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/feedback/adult-social-care-complaints/>

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

The Statutory Complaints Officer will contact the appropriate Investigating Officer and ask them to investigate the complaint. The complainant will be provided with a written response within approximately 65 working days (for statutory complaints). In some complex cases it may take longer but 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.

STAGE 2 - Review

An Investigating Officer who is not part of the service the complaint is about, will investigate the complaint in more detail. They will decide if there is more the service can do to address the concerns raised. If the reviewing officer believes the service has done all they reasonably can do, the customer will be written to and advised of this. They will also be given information about the Local Government Ombudsman.

Ombudsman

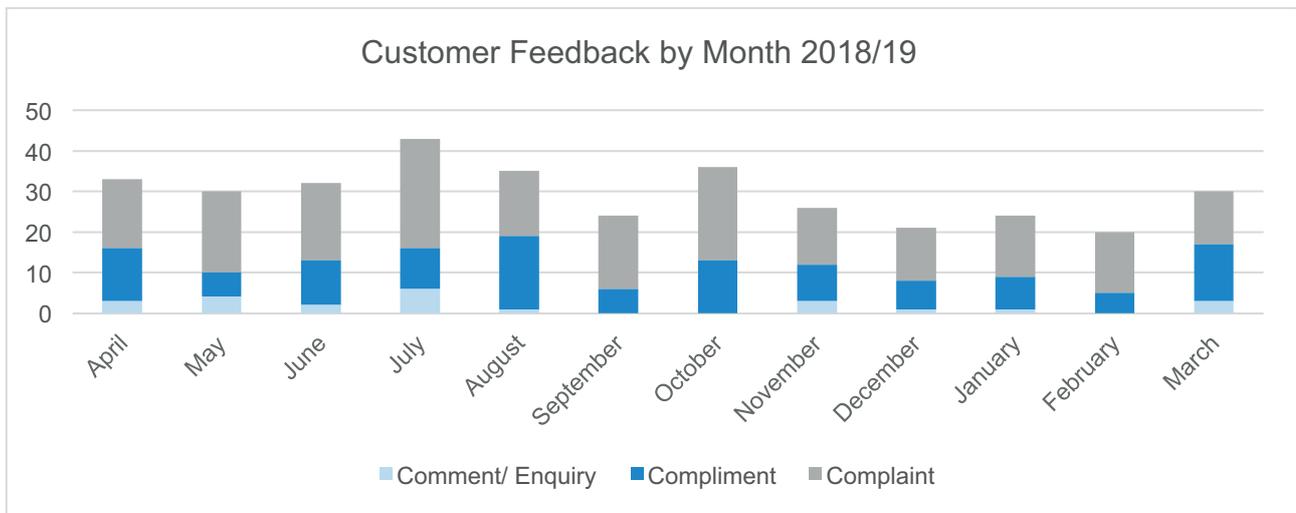
If a complaint cannot be resolved locally it can be investigated by the Ombudsman. The council has a timescale of 28 calendar days to provide a response to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). Complaint responses are often complex and it can be necessary to collate, catalogue and provide a large volume of information for the LGO's consideration. 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 2018/19

In 2018/19 there were 354 cases of customer feedback recorded for Adult Services. There were:

- 24 comments and other forms of enquiry
- 120 compliments
- 149 statutory adult complaints
- 2 statutory child complaints
- 59 corporate complaints

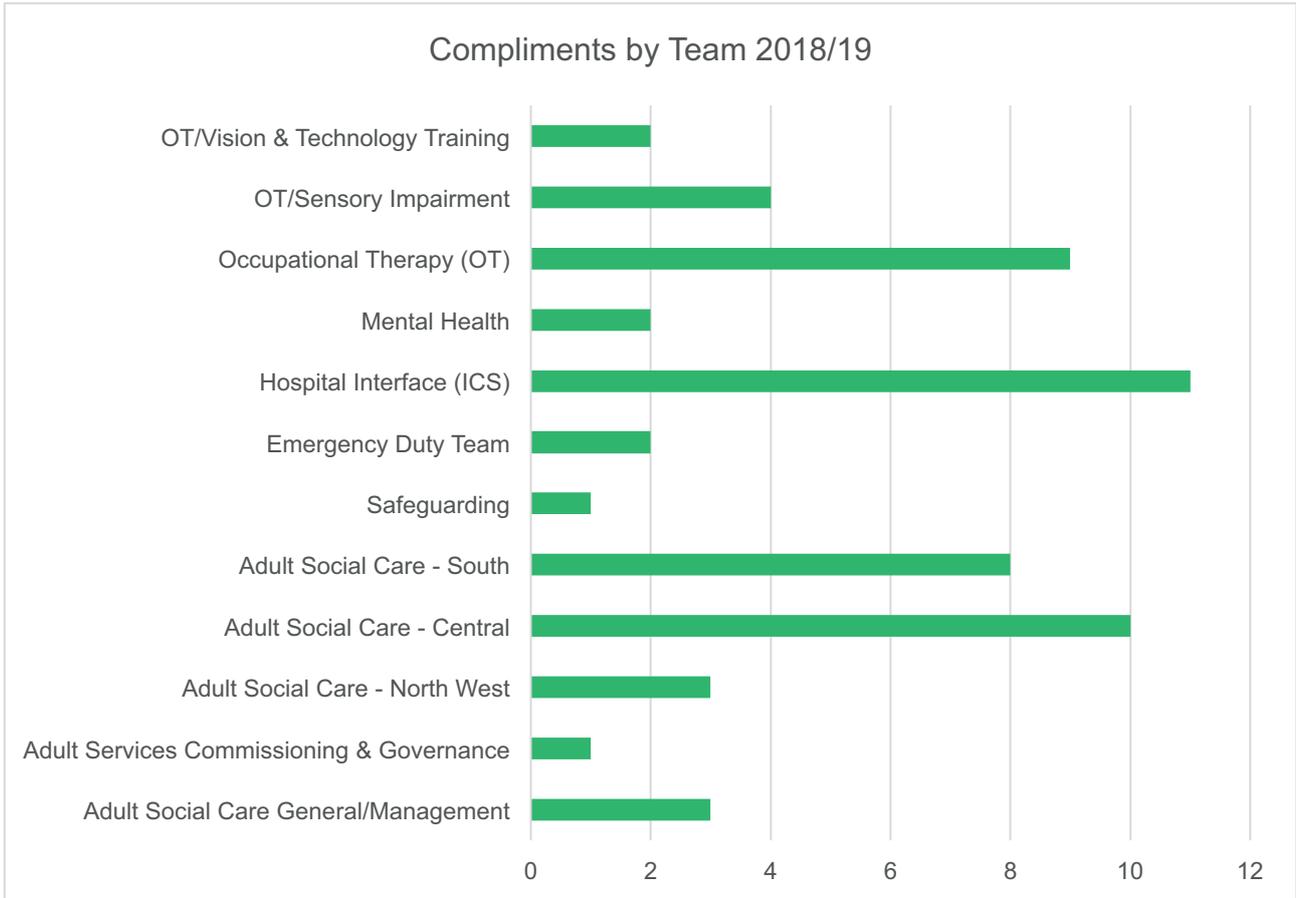


Later within this report change over time is considered but it should be noted that Housing and Housing Options complaints were included within the Adult Services report from 2017/18. This has contributed to a noticeable increase in corporate complaints.

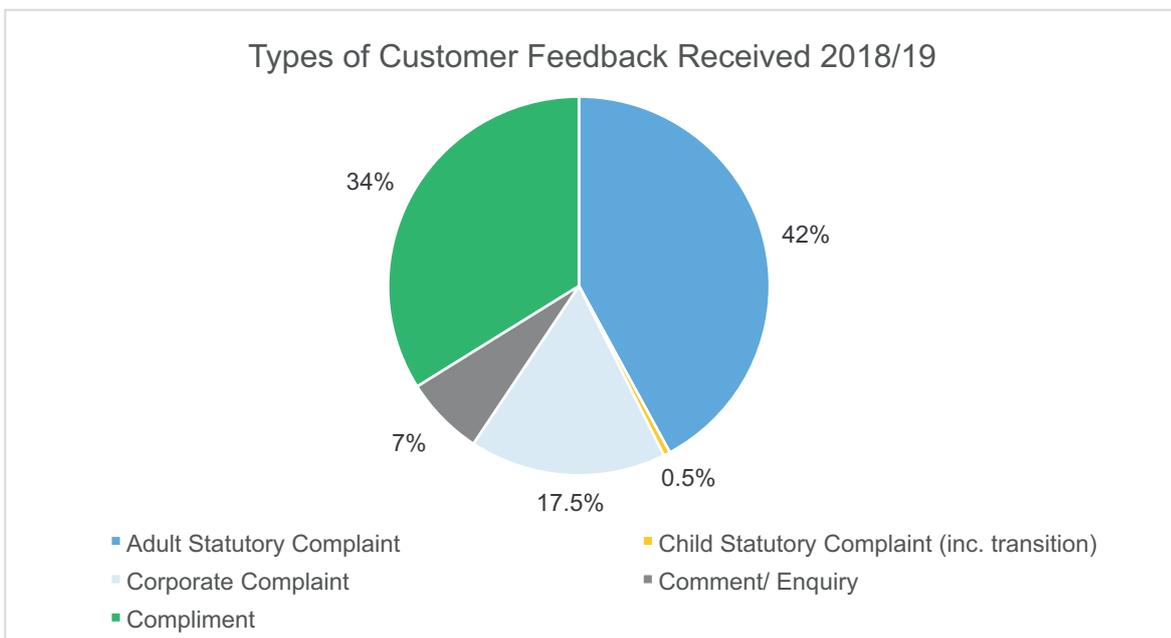
The average number of customer feedback cases recorded per month during 2018/19 was 30. July was the busiest month with December and February seeing fewer cases. Quarter 1 saw the highest number of customer feedback cases and quarter 4 the least.

Complaints account for 60% of the customer feedback received and compliments form 34% of all cases. This is, in part, due to recording practice with staff members much more likely to report a complaint than record a compliment.

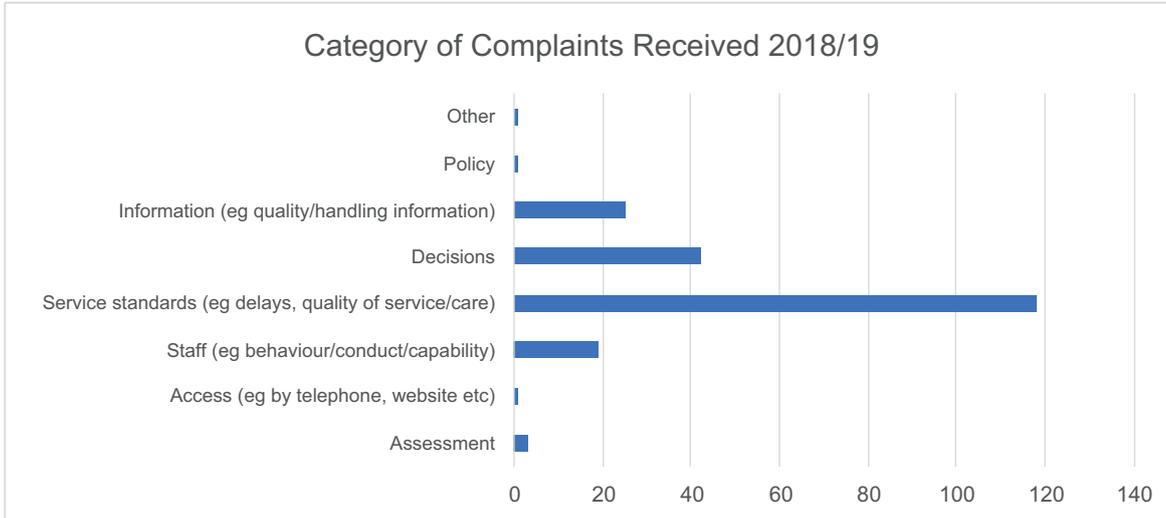
Compliments are spread across teams and services with more compliments for hospital interface, occupational therapy and the social care teams than for other types of service delivery.



Of the 210 complaints received by adult services in 2018/19, 149 were statutory complaints relating to social care and handled in line with the Adult Statutory Complaints Procedure (although two were handled under the children’s complaints procedure) and 59 were corporate complaints handled under the Council’s Corporate Complaints Procedure.

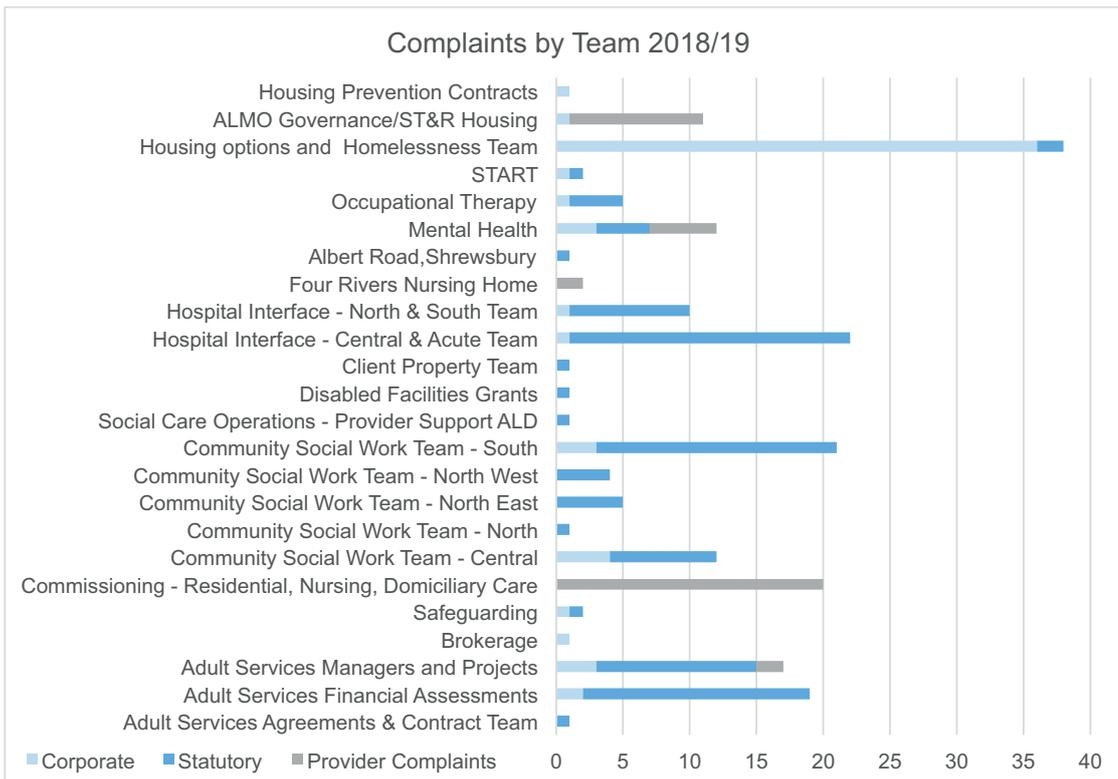


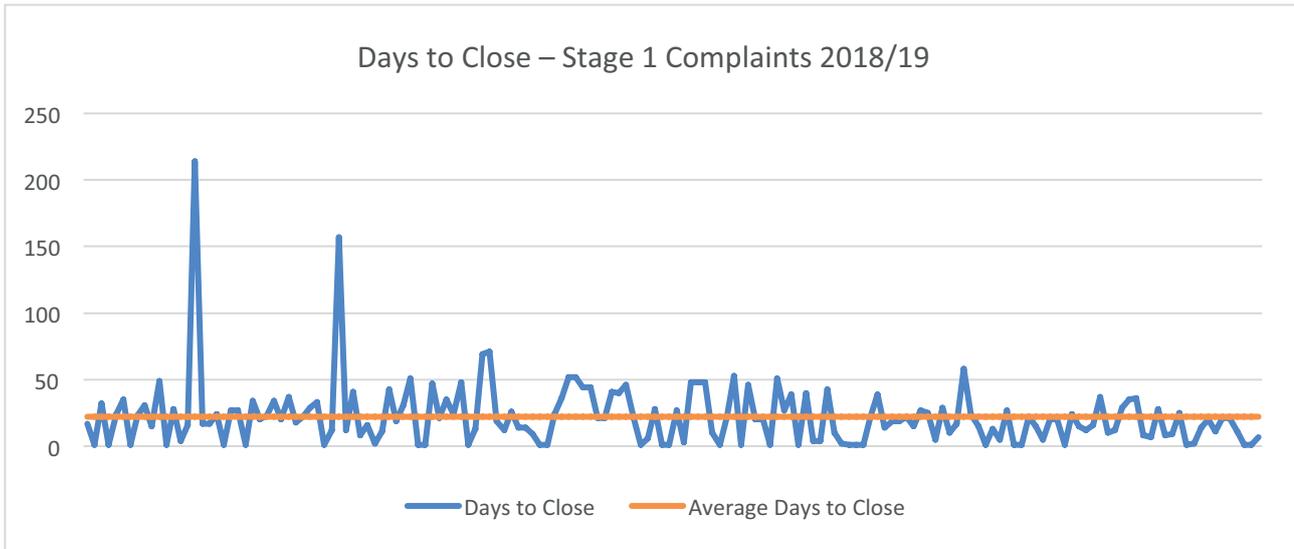
'Service Standards' was the main category under which complaints were made within the year (118 cases, 56% of all complaints). Dominant sub categories within 'Service Standards' were 'poor quality of work/service' and 'failure to provide a service/take action'. The second most dominant category was 'Decisions – Incorrect Decision'. Although many complaints contain multiple concerns and issues, the complaints system only records the dominant theme for analysis purposes.



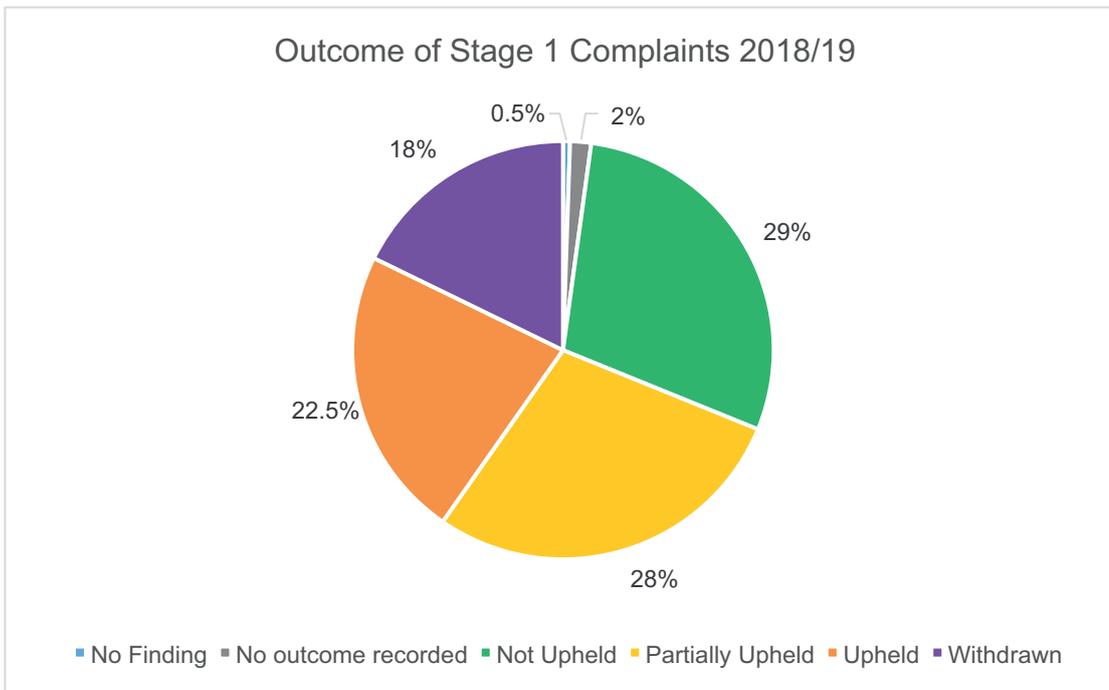
An analysis of complaints by team highlights that 20% of complaints in 2018/19 were for Social Work Teams, 18% were for the Housing Options and Homelessness Teams, 15% were for Hospital Interface and 16% were for Adult Services. It appears that there has been an increase in housing related complaints. This could be due to changes in requirements and services but it will be monitored closely to better understand the increase (see recommendations).

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 to attention.





186 of the 210 complaints received within the year have an outcome recorded at stage 1 (some recently received complaints remain open). 23% of stage 1 complaints were upheld, 28% were partly upheld and 29% were not upheld (the remainder were withdrawn, considered outside of the Council’s jurisdiction (and signposted to the appropriate organisation) or there was no finding (commonly with a ‘no finding’ action is agreed without the need for a formal finding for example more focused contract management is put in place).



Considering the outcome of complaints by team highlights that the areas of service where more complaints are upheld include Financial Assessments Team, Hospital Interface (ICS, Integrated Care Services) and Commissioning - Residential, Nursing, Domiciliary Care (provider complaints). To a slightly lesser degree Social Work Teams also see more partially upheld and upheld complaints.

During 2018/19 13 complaints progressed beyond stage 1, suggesting effective stage 1 complaint handling. Stage 1 complaint responses include information to ensure complainants understand how they can raise concerns if they do not feel their complaint has been adequately addressed and options for progressing their complaint to the next stage. It is best practice to review complaints under Shropshire Council's Adult Services Complaint's Procedure before LGO investigations are carried out.

Local Government Ombudsman data for 2018/19 (this can include cases Shropshire Council considered in 2017/18) highlighted that the LGO received 91 enquires (of which 88 were cases) for Shropshire Council as a whole. There were 18 Adult Social Care cases. The LGO made a decision on 12 cases and of those, 8 were upheld. The LGO considers housing complaints separately and that data highlights that only 3 housing complaints were considered by the LGO in 2018/19. Two cases have been returned to the Council to consider and the LGO decided not to investigate the 3rd.

In order to better understand how Adult Services have performed in relation to customer feedback cases an annual comparison is provided in the next section of the report.

4. Annual Comparison

Number of compliments – remains similar



Similar

- In 2016/17 there were 113 compliments recorded for Adult Services, in 2017/18 there were 132 compliments and in 2018/19 that figure decreased to 120 compliments. The small numbers of cases mean that these variations are not significant.
- Compliments averaged at just over 10 a month (compared to 11 a month in 2017/18).
- It should be noted that although Shropshire Council is responsible for provider complaints, the same does not apply for provider compliments. Steps are being taken to gather and record provider compliments in order to provide a balanced picture alongside complaints, but it is likely that these will be under reported due to their less formal nature.

Number of complaints – remains similar



Similar

- Complaint numbers have remained at a similar level to the previous year. In 2018/19 there were 210 complaints, in 2017/18 there were 218 complaints recorded and 152 complaints in 2016/17. Anecdotal evidence suggests little change in the volume or nature of complaints (it should be noted housing complaints were included in 2017/18 and are not counted in 2016/17).
- Although Adult Services has not experienced growth in complaint numbers complaints are more likely to be received for particular services (this is highlighted within the recommendations at the end of the report).
- In addition, work to promote the reporting of provider complaints should result in an increase in this area (this will remain a focus in 2019/20).

Nature of complaints – remains similar

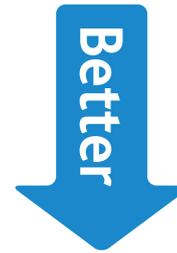


Similar

- Comparing the types of complaint recorded in 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 highlights the following key points:
 - Quality (or Service Standards) remains the main category of complaints with 118 cases in 2018/19, 142 cases in 2017/18 and 99 complaints in 2016/17. Although still the most dominant category it can be seen that the number of complaints has decreased overall. Unreasonable decision was the second most dominant sub category in 2017/18 and this is shown as the second highest category in 2018/19 also.
 - Staff conduct complaints have increased in number over the 3 years with 4 in 2016/17, 18 in 2017/18 and 19 in 2018/19.

Days to close – fewer days to close

- The average time taken to close Stage 1 complaints (corporate and statutory combined) was 22 working days in 2018/19. In 2017/18 the average was 35.5 working days compared to 36.2 working days in 2016/17. This evidences a 40% reduction in the average performance of days to close. However, it should be noted that just a small number of long running cases can significantly impact on average performance.
- Although average performance is good, it is important to note that some cases do exceed deadlines. Where cases are complex (for example joint complaints covering multiple services) and the customer is happy for extra time to be allowed this can be acceptable, but it is important to ensure that a focus is placed on complaints being responded to within the timescales.



Outcome of complaints – similar proportion of complaints upheld

- In 2015/16 20% were upheld and 38% partly upheld. In 2016/17 27% were upheld and 34% partly upheld. In 2017/18 18% were upheld, 30% were partly upheld and 28% were not upheld. In 2018/19 22.5% were upheld, 28% were partially upheld and 29% were not upheld.
- The proportion of upheld complaints in 2018/19 is broadly the same as 2017/18 data (the proportion of complaints upheld has slightly increased but the number partially upheld cases has decreased slightly). However, good performance is indicated by the balance of upheld and not upheld cases. If too few cases are upheld it would indicate Shropshire Council is not willing to accept responsibility for concerns raised, but if too many are upheld that could be an indicator that there are more widespread problems to address. Performance in this area, and a more detailed examination of complaints, suggests fair complaint handling.



Complaints progressing to the LGO – Proportion Upheld – Similar

- The LGO received a very similar number of cases in relation to Shropshire Council's Adult Services (excluding housing) in 2018/19 and 2017/18. (18 in 2018/19 and 19 in 2017/18). More cases considered by the LGO were upheld (8).
- The uphold rates recorded by the LGO for Adult Social Care cases are difficult to determine performance against because numbers of cases are so small but in 2016/17 the uphold rate was 56% compared to 33% in 2017/18 and 44% in 2018/19.



5. Example Compliments

Shropshire Council's Adult Services received 120 compliments in 2018/19. The compliments predominantly related to the work of individual members of staff and the compliments were sent in by customers who felt those members of staff had gone 'above and beyond' to support them and provide a high standard of care and support. In particular it should be noted that Occupational Therapy receives a high volume of compliments and very few complaints (volumes are more balanced for other services). Compliments are a great source of customer feedback and should not be forgotten in an effort to focus on more formal complaint handling. The wording has been changed slightly to ensure individuals cannot be identified.

Outstanding Service from Central Team Let's Talk Local: "I found the number on Shropshire Choices and had an appointment within two weeks. They listened and understood the urgency of my situation. The help and advice and support shown by the staff is excellent. So helpful and supportive.... Thank you."

Compliment for Shropshire Council Social Worker: "I would be grateful if you would pass on to [name removed] my best wishes and thanks for the kind, thoughtful and professional way she has been dealing with [name removed] since his illness and release from Shrewsbury Hospital."

Compliment for Shropshire Council Social Worker. "We, as a family over the years, have had many social workers but [name removed] stepped up to the plate and we feel went the extra mile for our son. She assessed him with care and dignity, taking note of his special qualities and got in touch with a care provider that suits him down to the ground. He has attended his new provider for three weeks now, two days per week, he just loves his days and is suitably placed and enjoying the friendships he is making. Many thanks [name removed] we really appreciate your hard work, finally [name removed] is challenged."

"I am grateful to Shropshire Council for helping me to overcome my difficulties regarding the stairs at my flat. I would like you to pass my appreciation onto the excellent care given to me by [name removed], Occupational Therapist Care Team, Craven Arms, for helping me to feel confident that this stair lift will help me enjoy a better lifestyle. The team you used to install this stair lift were most helpful and very polite. The men who installed the stair lift were excellent workers."

Compliment for [name removed], Occupational Therapist, Oswestry: "Thank you for all your time and effort in providing me with all the equipment, which on the whole is making my life so much easier."

"Thank you for being the competent safeguarding officer my mother needed. Without your help and that of West Mercia Police I feel a happy conclusion would still not have been reached. On behalf of mother and myself thank you."

Compliment for START Team (Much Wenlock): "Please re-name the START Team to become the STARS team as they are all brilliant and have lit up mum's life."

Compliment for Vision Technology & Training Shropshire Team: "The pleasure I get from using the computer has increased enormously, and it's a great aid to learning. Thank you so much for all the help you have given me, it makes me feel very fortunate. All good wishes to the team and thank you again."



6. Example Complaints

Shropshire Council's Adult Services received 210 complaints during 2018/19. The analysis earlier in this report highlights the types of complaints received and how they were handled. More information is included later in the report to highlight example learning from complaints. Example complaints can help to highlight typical types of issue customers raise with Adult Services. 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 many of the complaints below were not upheld.

Mr and Mrs [name removed] are very concerned over the way ICS and Social Services appear to be ignoring the recommendations of the ward staff, OT and Physios in respect of their mother-in-law's/mother's safety, by suggesting that she should be discharged home. "To be very clear, she will not be safe at home following her recent strokes, on top of all the other needs that she has".

Ms [name removed] wishes to make a formal complaint regarding the handling of the capital reduction case regarding her mother. She states that she is "unhappy that it has taken so long, and that the funding will only be picked up from March, when she tried to get the funding in place from February". She is very upset and is "under the Doctor" as a result.

"Customers are homeless and living on the streets. Housing Options has refused to help them further due to being asked to leave temporary accommodation due to [name removed] suffering from epilepsy and keeps having fits and [name removed] says he suffers from mental health issues". Neither have any fixed abode and cannot be contacted by post or email. Customer says they are "being discriminated against".

Customer has a business in Castle Street and wants to complain about the homeless people urinating on street near their business as well as rubbish and cigarette ends.

Customer complaint with regards to her mother's care package: "I completed the financial assessment forms as soon as I received them and returned them within the time period, but I have heard absolutely nothing from the Financial Assessment Team".

Customer's husband has received care visits from [provider name] and says it has since come to light that they have been charged for 3/4 hours a day for 7 days a week, even though since Oct 2017 the customer has received half an hour daily for 5 days a week.

The Customer complains about the lack of communication around his father's care and an unresolved debt.

Customer states that she has received another reminder for an invoice, in respect of her mother which is not owed. She has already contacted Sales Ledger in respect of the matter.

Complaint regarding Shropshire Homepoint. Customer says that she (and her partner) are "going to end up homeless soon if they are not careful because they can no longer afford to live in private accommodation". Customer's hours have been cut because of change in business and complains that there have been comments made to suggest "when you are homeless you can be moved up a band".



7. Learning and Actions

Shropshire Council's Adult Services recorded learning and/or actions against 42% of complaints where the outcome was partly upheld or upheld in 2018/19 (27% of all complaints with an outcome). In 2017/18 learning was recorded against 49% of complaints cases. For cases that are not upheld learning or any action points will rarely be recorded. Learning and actions are much more likely to be recorded when complaints are upheld or partly upheld.

Of the actions that were recorded against complaints closed in 2018/19:

- 53% of actions included to make an apology. (28% in 2017/18)
- 9% related to the need to change or review a policy or procedure. (25% in 2017/18)
- 22% were to arrange employee training or guidance. (21% in 2017/18)
- 6% were to change, review of provide a service. (12% 2017/18)

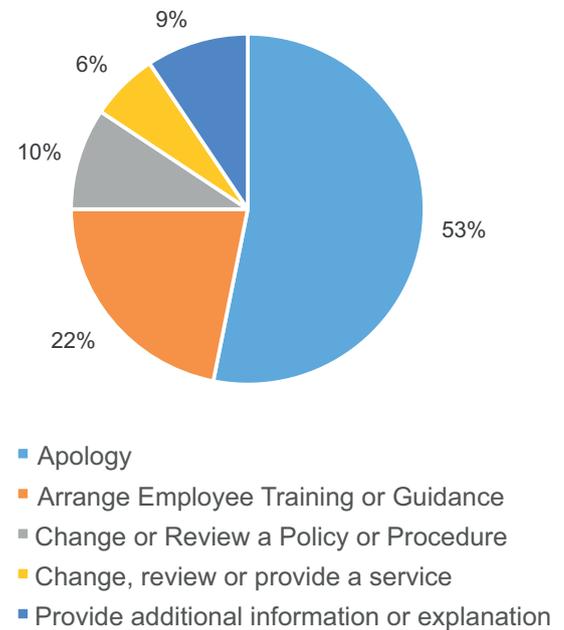
Learning points recorded during 2018/19 highlight the following:

- 35% of learning was around communication and information (communication is an underlying theme in a large proportion of complaints, so this learning is reflective of the wider and more detailed complaints information for the whole council). This is an improvement from 2017/18 when 50% of learning was identified as communication and information.
- 38% of learning points are around service delivery or lack of delivery of a service. This is an increase from 22% in 2017/18.
- 12% of learning falls under the category of 'service quality' down from 20% in the previous year.

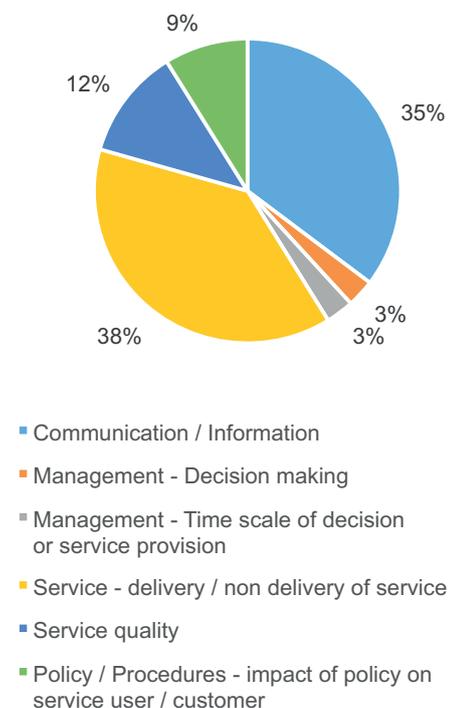
In previous years learning points were spread over a larger number of categories, but over the last two years learning is more focused on the three key areas highlighted above.

A closer review of complaints and learning suggests that ongoing action is required concerning communication around charges for care and financial contributions. A significant number of complainants believe they either have not been informed of charges for care or that the communication and information provided was not to a standard they would expect. Within the year 37 complaints included concerns on this theme.

Improvement Actions Recorded 2018/19



Learning Points Recorded 2018/19



8. Example Learning and Actions

Shropshire Council's Adult Services takes learning from complaints and records any actions required to make improvement and remedy a complaint. Learning and actions can be recorded on any case where they can lead to an improvement and although they do not necessarily need to be related to upheld or partly upheld cases, the majority will be where some fault has been identified. The examples shown below are re-worded to best illustrate the learning and actions agreed (learning and actions are often included in more detailed descriptions of the outcome of a case). Names and other details have been removed to ensure people and cases cannot be identified.

There has been a recognition that the work completed by a student social worker was inadequate and created a delay in response. There should have been greater transparency and better communication, with regards promises made by staff, if they are not achievable in realistic time frames. An apology was made to the customer for the delay with regards to assessment.

As a result of the complaint, it has been made clear again to all staff in the service that they need to ensure they provide the appropriate support until service users are allocated to another team or no longer require the service. The member of staff involved in the complaint is now fully aware of this process so that there won't be a repeat of the same situation.

Staff are to be reminded that when organising appointments with customers they ensure that the customer knows who they will be meeting with, and where staff are not available, then the appointment should be rearranged.

Following a change in financial rules, Shropshire Council's finance department organised workshops for staff to enable them to understand and explain to customers the implications of the new 12 week property disregard and deferred payment scheme.

The manager has asked all her team to ensure that they respond to queries in a timely way and to discuss with her if there are any issues that they are unable to resolve themselves, after a customer complained that no one was responding to his requests for information.

As a result of the complaint, a comprehensive improvement programme is underway with the provider. A senior manager had met with the Director of the company who has stated that she will ensure improvements are made across all services. An apology was offered to the customer.

The manager has met with senior staff in Adult Social Care and asked them to ensure when a member of staff goes off sick they check immediately if there are any cases that need reallocating (and that this is done as quickly as possible, or at least contact is made with families so that they are aware of a possible delay).

A customer contacted the council to make them aware that his father had not had a review of his care package. Adult Social Care confirmed that they are changing their ASC database in December and they are confident it will ensure that they do not miss any assessment or review activities in future.

All team members have been provided with training and information on services available in the community to better support customers.

An apology was provided to the customer and staff were reminded that all carers /family should be offered a carer's assessment as outlined in the Care Act. Senior social workers will continue to monitor this and ensure staff training in this area.

9. Progress Update

There have been a number of developments over the last 12 months as recommendations set out within the Adult Services Customer Feedback Annual Report 2017/18 have been implemented. Key achievements over the last 12 months are summarised below:

| | Action 2017/18 | Progress Made |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | There was an action to remind all teams to record compliments in addition to the recording of complaints | The number of compliments recorded each year fluctuates slightly but remains at a fairly steady rate. Compliments are a useful source of evidence and provide important learning, helping to highlight where things are working well and what customers value. This has been communicated to staff over the last 12 months. Although not a priority, ongoing reminders of the importance of recording compliments should continue. |
| 2 | The monitoring of complaint numbers and patterns was included within the recommendations from 2017/18. | Although regular performance monitoring has been in place for some time, new reporting has been introduced over the last 12 months to allow the tailoring of reports to team level and greater interrogation of the data by service managers. New reports allow users to drill down to specific time periods or themes to better understand the nature of complaints. |
| 3 | In the 2017/18 report there was an action to focus on timescales for responding to complaints. | The performance for average days to respond to complaints in 2018/19 is good. The focus on timescales recommended last year has resulted in improvement. |
| 4 | A recommendation was made to include an option to record multiple complaint problems against cases. | This feature has now been built into the new complaints system. Up to three problem categories can be recorded against a complaint. This is really helpful information and can be used to better understand the nature of complaints within quarterly reporting and more frequent team/service reporting. |
| 5 | 2017/18 recommendations included a focus on communication concerning charges for care and assessment of finances. | Communication and information about charges for care continued to be a common theme in 2018/19. Work undertaken within the year has not resulted in a reduction in complaint numbers as a result of communication and information. This recommendation will need to be continued into 2019/20. |
| 6 | Reporting of complaints progressing beyond Stage 1. | Since the recommendation made in the 2017/18 report changes have been made with the introduction of a new complaints system. Work has taken place to significantly improve Shropshire Council's ability to record and track complaints escalating to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (and stage 2 for corporate Adult Services complaints). |
| 7 | An ongoing recommendation is to ensure learning, and actions are recorded. | The Feedback and Insight Team regularly remind staff to focus on robust recording of information. "If it isn't recorded it didn't happen" is the message promoted in training. This messaging will continue but anecdotal evidence suggests there haven't been many problems in this area highlighted for Adult Services and key outcome information including learning and actions is regularly reported within quarterly reports (with more detailed evidence available when needed). |

| | Action 2017/18 | Progress Made |
|----|---|--|
| 8 | In the last annual report, it was highlighted that the identification of self-funding complaints was a challenge. | It was hoped that the Council's new IT systems for Adult Social Care and Complaints may help provide a solution to the challenge identifying whether or not complaints should be taken on by Shropshire Council or refused on the basis of self-funding arrangements. Unfortunately, the complexity of many cases and the need to understand in detail the involvement (or not) of Shropshire Council in the arrangement of care means that this assessment must be undertaken with the social worker leading the case and cannot rely on system records. The impact of this is that there is a risk of slight delays when social workers are not available. |
| 9 | A recommendation was made to focus on the implementation of robust arrangements for provider complaints. | Good progress has been made with the implementation of arrangements for the handling of provider complaints. Information resources and communications have been shared with residential and domiciliary care providers and joint working has taken place with Shropshire Partners In Care (SPIC). Ongoing communications and further work will be required to spread awareness of arrangements among all commissioned providers. This will need to stay in place as an ongoing recommendation. |
| 10 | Ongoing training and the provision of information for staff was a key recommendation. | Over the last year the provision of information for staff and staff training has been an area for action and progress has been made. The Council's internal communication tool Yammer has also been used to share information, and visits have been made to team meetings. In addition, a series of 4 training workshops for Adult Social Care Staff have really allowed for a focus on Adult Social Care complaints and the sharing of key information. |
| 11 | Complaints procedure communication. | An ongoing recommendation has been to focus on the provision of clear information for members of the public and people using council services so they understand how they can make a complaint. Over the last 12 months new complaints leaflets have been produced and the leaflet designed more specifically for Adult Services has been shared widely by staff members and included within information packs. |

10. Recommendations

Overall performance remains similar to the previous year and appears to be good overall. In 2017/18 there were 386 customer feedback cases and in 2018/19 there were 354 cases. There were 218 complaints in 2017/18 and 210 in 2018/19. The following recommendations are designed to prevent any downturn in performance and make further improvement where possible.

1. An ongoing recommendation is to highlight that compliments are a valuable source of information. Compliments illustrate what is working well and what customers value about a service. Compliments will be reviewed regularly, and learning taken from them alongside complaints. It is recommended that there is some recognition of teams receiving a high volume of compliments (in 2018/19 Occupational Therapy stood out as a service with significantly more compliments than complaints).
2. It is recommended that, over the coming year, a focus is placed on the four main areas of services within Adult Services receiving the most complaints (and handling some complex cases). These include Housing and Homelessness, Hospital Interface (Integrated Care Services), Social Work Teams and Provider Complaints (residential, nursing and domiciliary care). It may not be possible to determine any patterns within complaints and numbers of upheld complaints are low, but despite this there may be some actions that can be taken (for example managing expectations, providing information) to take learning from past complaints and minimise numbers of future complaints.

3. In addition to a focus on some areas of service, it is recommended that financial assessment and the provision of information concerning the cost of/ charges for care remains an area for attention. Although work has taken place over the last few years this remains a common concern within complaints.
4. A closer look at the 'problem category' recorded for complaints, highlights some more common themes. 'Service Standards' (or 'Quality') remains the top category used. Within that category there are complaints about lack of communication and delays. Other themes within complaints include quality of information recorded and concerns about decisions made. Complaints about members of staff appear to have increased slightly. Not all these complaints are upheld but it is recommended that these themes within complaints are communicated across Adult Services as areas for attention. If staff are conscious of the concerns raised concerning communication, quality of information and delays, they may be more able to take preventative action.
5. Average performance in relation to the length of time taken to investigate and close complaints has improved since the previous year. However, there remain a number of long running and complex cases and these can impact on average performance. It is recommended that a focus on this measure is retained and investigations should be completed as soon as possible following receipt of the complaint. It is recognised that there will be cases where timescales cannot be achieved (sometimes beyond the influence and control of Shropshire Council) but these are unusual. This emphasis on timescales will not only support good performance but also ensure that the customer experience of the complaints procedure is more positive.
6. Stage 1 complaints handling remains effective and few complaints progress beyond stage 1 (either resulting in additional enquiries following Stage 1 responses or in LGO referrals). The number of cases progressing to the Ombudsman remains steady. Despite this, learning from LGO cases should remain an area of focus as it has done in the last 12 months.
7. An ongoing action must be to ensure the recording of actions and learning against complaints, particularly when they have been upheld or partially upheld. This learning will help teams and services in their work to identify and implement service improvement.
8. Another ongoing recommendation is around the recording of information. There are two elements:
 - a. Staff should be reminded on an ongoing basis that complaints investigations are helped significantly when case records are of a high standard (and when complaints investigators with no previous knowledge of a complaint can read records and understand the case). Everything should be recorded and for complex issues additional information such as case chronologies can be very beneficial.
 - b. The recording of learning and actions must remain a focus. The new IT system allows for the more comprehensive recording of actions and learning and for actions to be followed up and reviewed more effectively.
9. It is recommended that ongoing work is completed to maintain progress towards the establishment of a comprehensive system for the management of provider complaints. Significant progress has been made in the last 12 months but through 2019/20 it is recommended that ongoing communications take place with commissioned providers.
10. It is recommended that Shropshire Council's Feedback and Insight Team's work to communicate with staff and offer staff guidance and training continues into 2019/20. Plans to develop training on the Council's 'Leap into Learning' system were delayed due to the implementation of a new complaints IT system. Once the system is fully implemented (some feedback processes are yet to be integrated into the system) it is recommended that this project is re-established.

Customer Feedback Annual Report

Adult Services

2018/19

For more information concerning Shropshire Council's customer feedback reporting contact:

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