



Redcar & Cleveland
Adult Social Care

Complaints, Service Requests & Compliments

Annual Report

April 2023 to March 2024





ANNUAL COMPLAINTS, SERVICE REQUESTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT 2023/24

1.0 Executive Summary 3

2.0 Complaints, Service Requests, and Compliments Activity 4

3.0 Overview of the Statutory Adults Complaints Procedure 5

4.0 Accessing the Adult Social Care complaints procedure 5

5.0 Role of the Complaints Officer 6

6.0 Key Findings/Summary..... 6

6.1 Number of Complaints..... 6

6.3 Nature of complaints in 2023/24 9

6.5 Breakdown of complaints by service area11

6.6 Complaints to the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman 12

7.0 Lessons Learnt 13

8.0 Overview of Service Requests received in 2023 - 2024 15

9.0 Compliments 16

9.1 What is a compliment? 16

9.2 Number of compliments?..... 16

9.3 Adult Social Care 2023/24 Compliments 17

11.0 Future Developments 2023/24 18

1.0 Executive Summary

This is the Adult Social Care Annual Complaints, Service Requests and Compliments report for the financial year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

Complaints, service requests 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 service requests and compliments about Adult Social Care services. Comparisons from the previous reporting period, i.e., from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023, 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 service request 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.

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, Service Requests, and Compliments Activity

In 2023/24 we received less complaints and service requests than the previous year. Service requests decreased from 82 in 22/23 to 52 in 23/24 and complaints decreased from 65 in 2022/23 to 41 in 2023/24. The number of compliments we received increased from 340 in 22/23 to 415 in 23/24.

41
Complaints
received.

52
Service Requests
received.

415
Compliments
received.

We have seen an increase in compliments this year. This is due to improved recording and inclusion of feedback from the Annual NHS Digital Social Care Survey and Satisfaction Questionnaires which form part of our engagement and assurance activities. There has also been an increased awareness amongst teams to ensure the compliments they receive are recorded.

There has been a reduction in the number of service requests received. This is a result of Teams working effectively to discuss concerns raised whilst supporting adults at the frontline, offering a solution straight away without the need for escalation.



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. When a complaint does not relate specifically to the care of an adult, the complaint may be handled under the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure.

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 service request 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 service request 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 2023/24 were by email (28), by letter (6) and telephone call (7).

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 838 carers and 7556 adults between 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024. This includes all direct and commissioned services for short-term, one-off services and longer-term support.
- 41 complaints were received in the same period. This represents 0.48% of the total adults supported in this year.
- The most common theme for complaints was poor service delivery (48%) and lack of communication/information (29%).
- A total of 24 (58%) complaints had an outcome of upheld or partially upheld.
- 4 (9%) complaints were not upheld. 5 (12%) complaints were resolved informally.
- Compliments have increased by 22% when compared to the previous year.

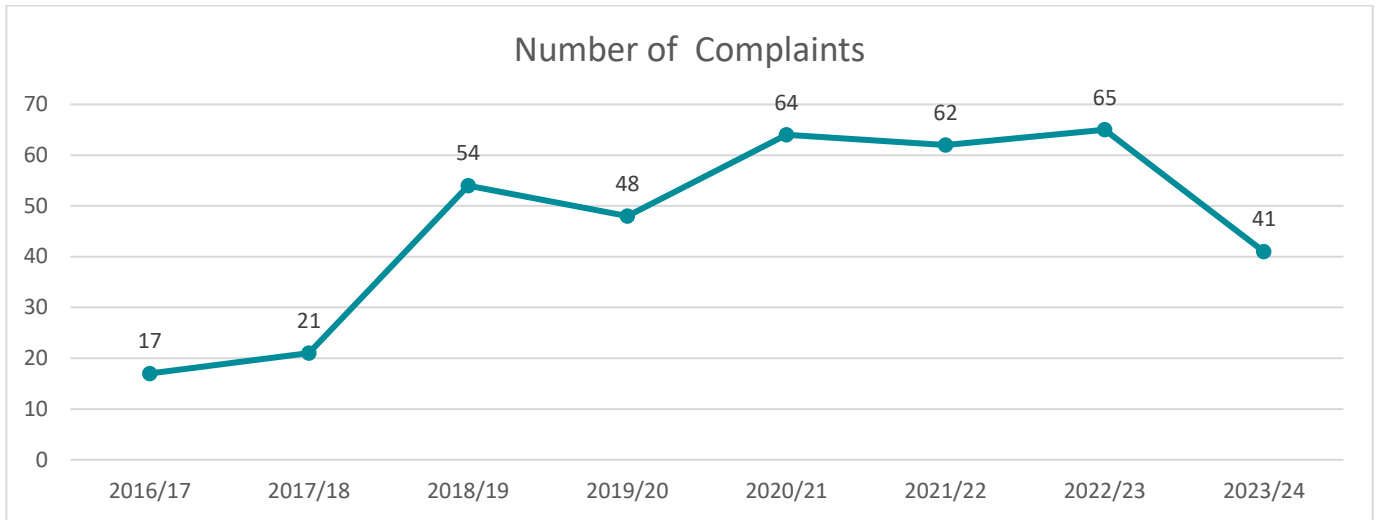
The complaint outcomes from this year highlighted there is still a need for staff to ensure that adults and their family members receive appropriate, relevant, and accurate information. We reminded staff across the service about the importance of clear, accurate and timely communication in team meetings, 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.



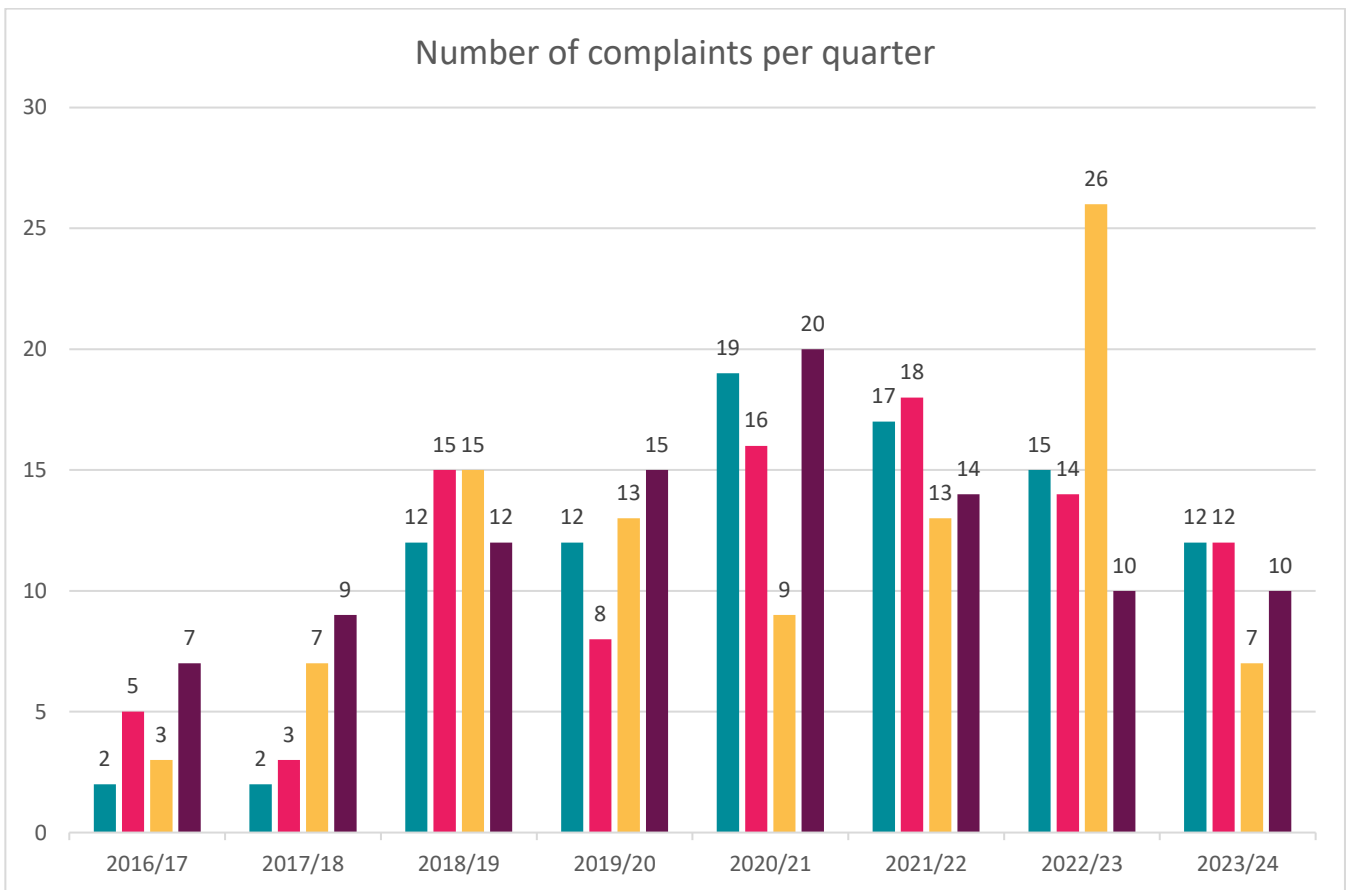
6.1 Number of Complaints

41 formal complaints were received during 2023/24. From the 41 complaints received, 5 were resolved informally and 3 were withdrawn.

The graph below shows the number of complaints received between 2016/17 and 2023/24.



The chart below shows quarterly comparative data for complaints for the last 8 years.



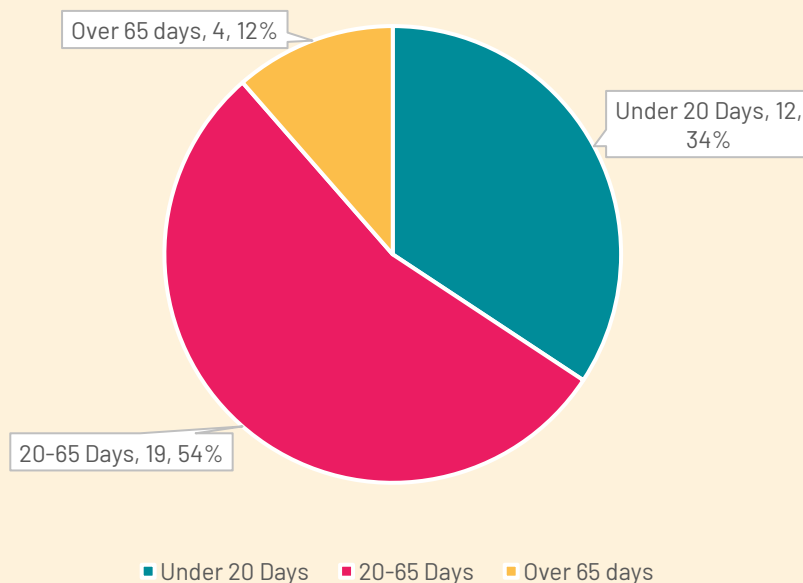
6.2 Time taken to respond to complaints in 2023/24

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 and we do our best to investigate and provide a written response within these timescales. 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. In this circumstance we will aim to provide a written response no later than 65 working days. 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 delays in allocating an investigating officer, absence of staff who need to be interviewed as part of the investigation, waiting for a third party to respond and conflicting work commitments exacerbated by staffing pressures.

In 2023/24 the timescales to investigate and formally respond to complaints is illustrated below.

Complaint response times



The average length of time to conclude a complaint in 2023/24 was 36 days. In comparison to 2022/23 the average length of time to conclude a complaint was 30 days.

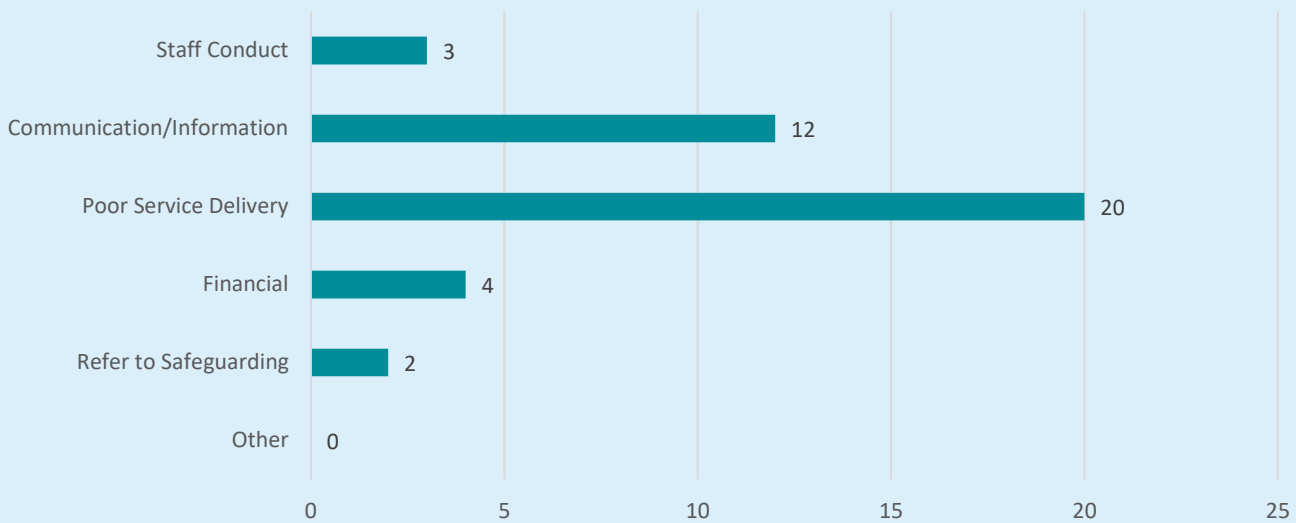
Service managers have been reminded to priorities reviewing concerns raised, to determine if the complaint process is the most appropriate next step and allocate Investigating Officers in a timely manner to avoid delays.

Complaints over 30 days are now escalated to Assistant Directors to aide improvement of response times.

6.3 Nature of complaints in 2023/24

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 2023/24

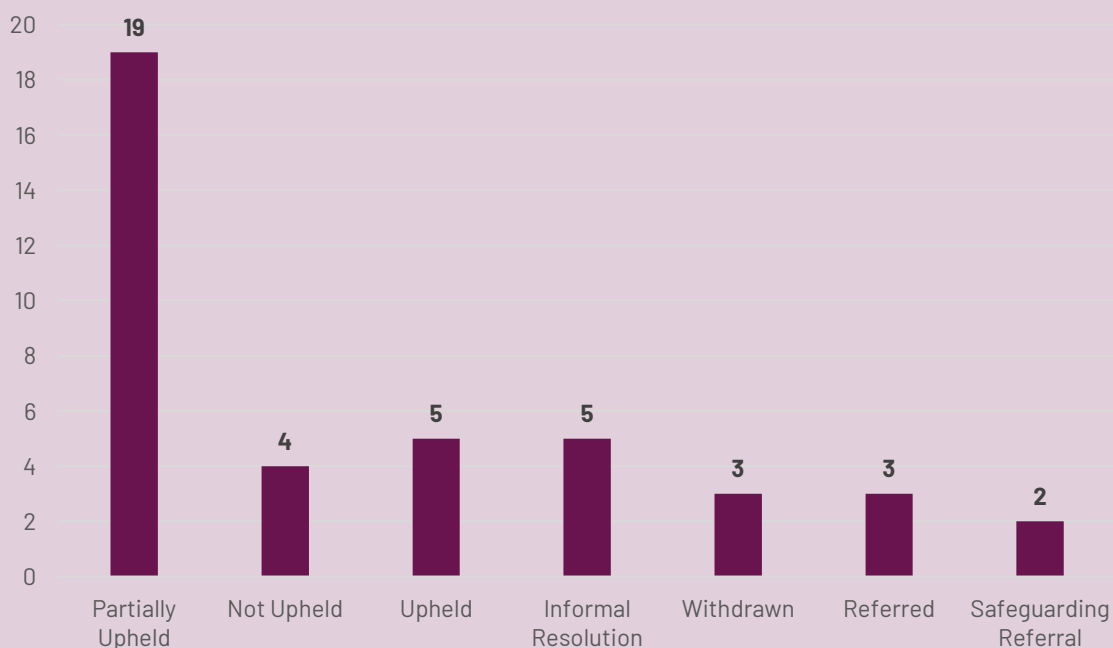


6.4 Complaint Outcomes

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.



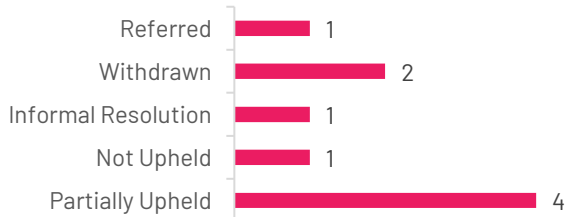
The percentage of 'upheld' complaints was 12%, 'partially upheld' 46% and 'not upheld' complaints were 9%.

- Withdrawn complaints (7%) were closed as no response was received from the complainant to be able to continue with an investigation.
- 12% 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.
- Four complaints (9%) exceeded the timeframes for a response within 65 days. One was due to multi-agency involvement in the case which regrettably meant the complaint response was made outside the legislative parameters. One was due to the lack of complainant availability, delaying the investigation, and two complaint responses were drafted late due to conflicting work commitments and staffing pressures.

6.5 Breakdown of complaints by service area

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

Outcome Analysis



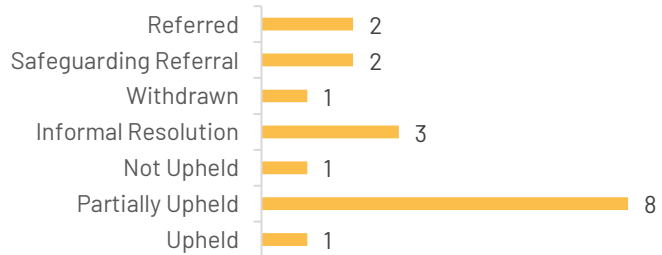
Learning Disabilities & Mental Health Social Work Services

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

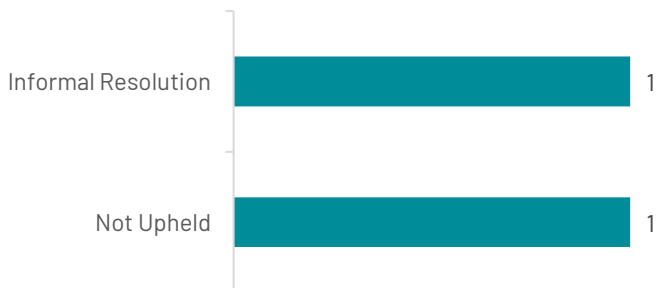
Social Work & Safeguarding

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

Outcome Analysis



Outcome Analysis



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.

Outcome 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.

The annual review letter from the Ombudsman is issued around 17th July 2024 which provides a full breakdown of the total amount of complainants who directed their complaint to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman do not make the Council aware of each case unless further information is required to assist with their investigation.

Adult Social Care are aware of 4 complaints that were referred to the Ombudsman during 2023/24, this may change upon receipt of the full annual review letter.

The 4 complaints referred to the Ombudsman represents 9.75% of the complaints received in this year.

Below is a summary of the 4 complaints:

1. Mr X complained about how the Council responded to his request for care and support. He says the Council were unhelpful and obstructive and he does not agree he should have to contribute to the cost of his care.

The LGO decided not to investigate Mr X's complaint about the Council's response to his request for care and support. This is because there is not enough evidence of fault in the Council's actions and further investigation would not lead to different outcome.

2. Mr X complained to the LGO however the LGO decided not to investigate as the representative was not a suitable representative.
3. Mrs X complained the Council had failed to properly assess her grandmother, Mrs Y's, care needs and plan her long-term care.

The LGO found the Council acknowledged some failings in the assessment of Mrs Y's care needs and made recommendations to address this before the complaint was referred to the LGO. The LGO deemed any further investigation could not achieve no more.

4. Mr X complained the Council failed to take safeguarding action after he contacted it about his General Practitioner (GP) in September 2021. He said the GP had failed to make reasonable adjustments for him therefore he could not access medical support. He said that made him at risk of neglect and abuse.

The LGO decided not to investigate the complaint further as there was not enough evidence of fault or that the Council's actions have caused a significant injustice.

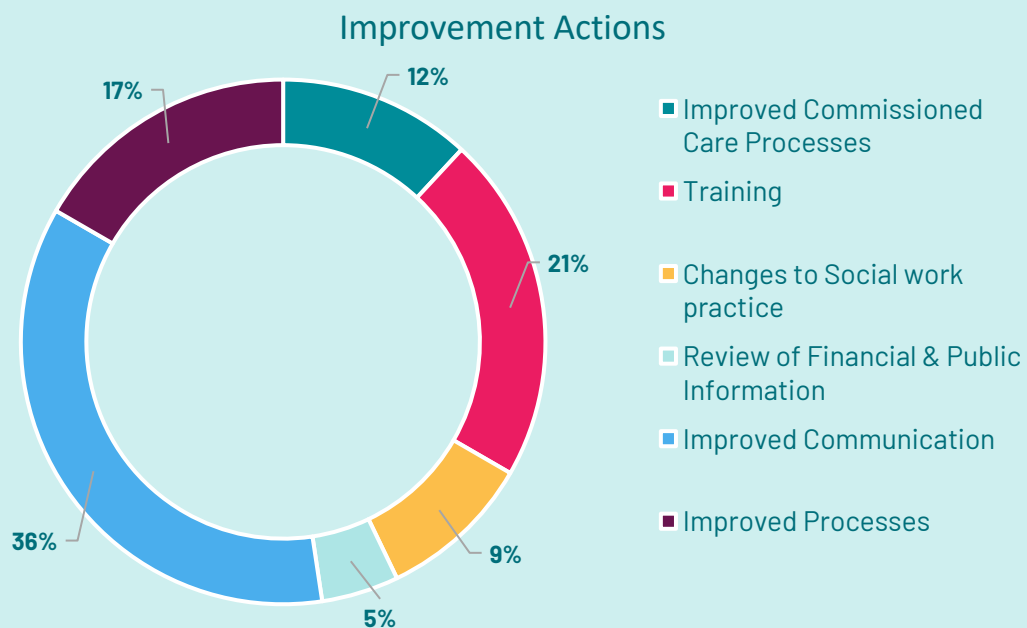
7.0 Lessons Learnt

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 41 complaints investigated last year, 15 investigations identified 42 actions such as training for staff, improvements to our processes and communication, 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 Processes	Develop a robust monitoring procedure to check the RCBC general fund for uncollected cash orders and complete re-allocations to individual's bank accounts on a monthly basis.

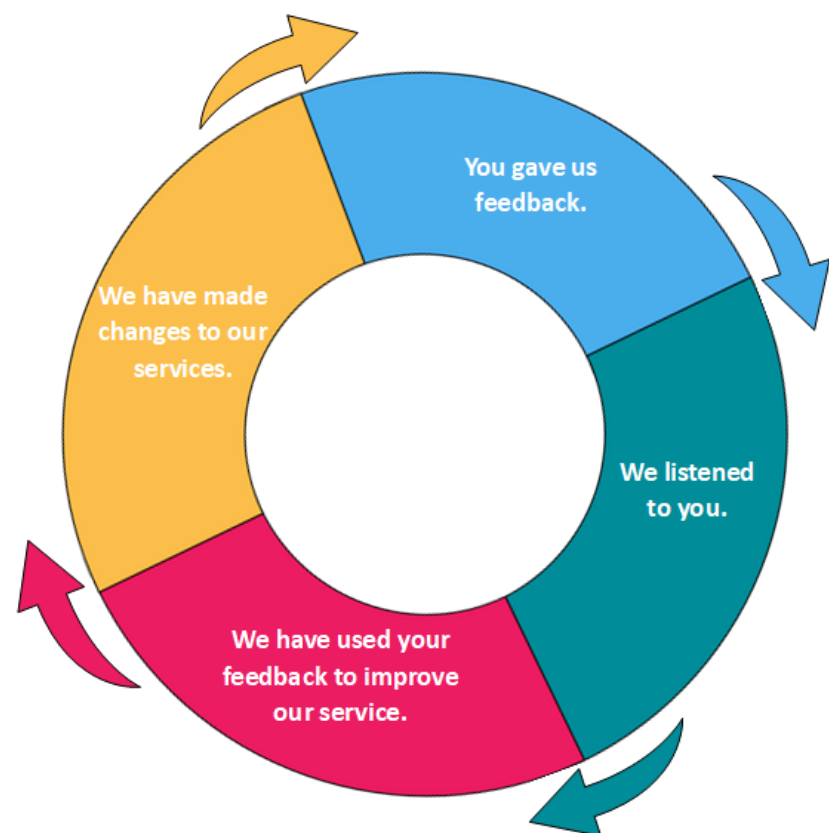
Theme	Recommendation for improvement
Changes to Social Work Practice	Practitioners to use transitions checklist as guidance when an adult transitions from Children & Families care to Adult Social Care, and address tasks earlier should individual cases justify this.
Improved Care Provider Processes	A new induction plan has been implemented for all staff, which incorporates a checklist for all residents' rooms.
Improved Communication	Clear rationale to be provided and recorded when Changing futures do not take on a case.

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 Service Requests received in 2023 - 2024

Service Requests are received across a wide range of topics that range from social work and occupational therapy practice to housing adaptations and commissioned services. Service requests decreased from 82 in 22/23 to 52 in 23/24. Outlined below are a range of examples.



What happened	What we did
Concerns raised regarding Mrs X's son's needs not being met under the current DFG as it was created 18 months ago.	Arrange for the housing adaptations team to visit family and for occupational therapy to reassess son's needs.
Feels there is a lack of support as no longer has an allocated social worker.	Organised a review of care and support needs.
Application for level access shower declined due to decline for DFG funding. Decision is based on solely financial, no consideration to physical condition.	Team manager empathised and explained DFG criteria is not set by RCBC, moving forward priority was to try and source alternative charitable funding that could assist Mr X in procuring a level access shower.
Expressed concern over quality of meals at extra care housing provider. Do not meet health requirements and of poor standard.	Spoke with housing provider who has discussion with chef. Will accommodate Mrs X's food preferences.
Confusion over funding situation for fathers' care at Care Home.	Team manager spoke with family, explained care home funding legalities and financial assessment. Additional top up payment now included in deferred payment agreement.
Frustration over outstanding purchase order/invoice.	Meeting scheduled with housing provider to discuss situation further. All outstanding invoices have now been credited.

9.0 Compliments

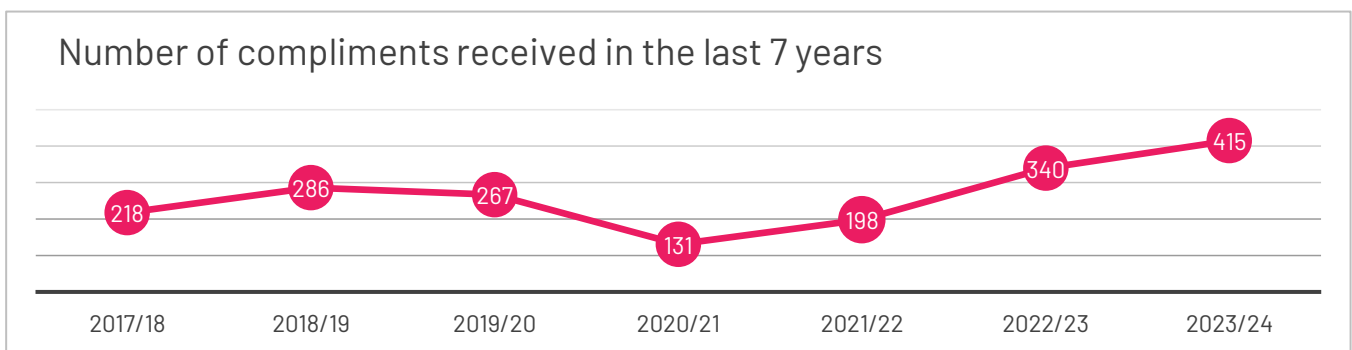
9.1 What is a compliment?

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?

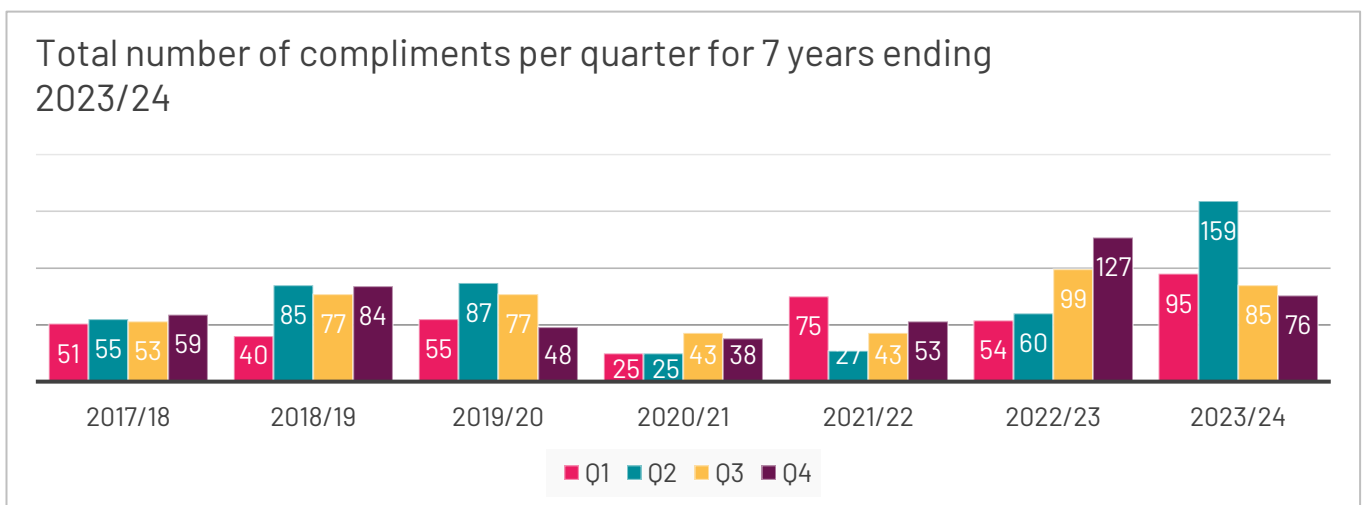
We received 415 compliments in 2023/24: compared to 340 in 2022/23. Compliments evidence how Adult Social Care is meeting the key qualities adults and their carers expect from a social care service such as being treated with dignity, respect, staff being caring, response to people's needs, being effective and well-led.

The table below shows the number of compliments received over the last 7 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 seven years.



Across the Adult Social Care service, the Operational Partnerships and Provider Service continues to receive by far the highest number of compliments from external parties.

The next section shows 10 anonymised quotes from compliments we have received in the reporting year.

9.3 Adult Social Care 2023/24 Compliments

“ The Social Worker is a friendly, approachable, warm, caring and understanding person who always takes the time and effort to engage with the adult. ”

“ All too often Social Services are given bad press and not enough is given to those who truly make a difference for good. The Social Worker is a consummate professional and at the same time caring, compassionate, and extremely knowledgeable. ”

“ Your empathy and kind understanding towards my parents has been outstanding. You kept me in touch throughout your involvement and sought my views, I have never once felt I was not listened to or not heard. ”

“ All staff showed great kindness, which touched our family, and we knew she was in safe hands when we were not there. We were always kept informed of every change. Staff showed real compassion. ”

“ The two men who did the work for me were absolutely brilliant. They were very efficient, friendly, and showed excellent craftsmanship and always clean and tidy. A well-earned 10 out of 10 from us ”

“ Thank you to everyone in the Financial Team. I wouldn't have achieved an outcome with care payments without your input. ”

“ Very helpful service for someone on their own. All very caring members of the team. Helped me to get back on my feet quicker than I expected. ”

“ Support above expectations. Identified resources to identify solutions, which made a difficult situation easier to navigate. ”

“ I can never thank you enough for everything you have done for me during my stay here. I am leaving a different person to the wreck that came in to how I feel now. Staff soon turned to seem more like friends and family. ”

“ Many Thanks. I was listened to, patiently, with genuine empathy and real understanding. I appreciated the ongoing support offered with information and practical help to provide a little respite. ”

10.0 Conclusion

This year has shown a reduction in the number of complaints and service requests that have been deemed by adults and staff to require escalation to the complaints team. This is a result of teams working effectively to discuss concerns raised at the outset, working to offer a quick resolution to benefit the adults and their families with an appropriate outcome. Teams are offering a solution straight away reducing the need for escalation to the complaints team which ultimately ensures adults feel listened too and supported.

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 2024/25

1. 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 learned.
2. Work collaboratively with the Corporate Complaints Manager and Children and Families Complaints Officer to develop effective training about complaints resolution and the handling of service requests, providing a consistent approach across the entire Council.
3. Continuous performance monitoring against statutory response times.
4. More effective record keeping of complaints. Complaint responses to be recorded on Casebook to aide transparency and effective complaint handling across Adult Social Care.
5. To try and handle service requests and resolve complaints on a more informal basis where possible to provide adults with an appropriate, timely outcome.

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.

