

Enfield Council

Adult Social Care
Statutory Complaints Annual Report
2021 - 2022

Contents

Executive Summary	p.3
1. Introduction	p.4
2. Overview of the Adult Social Care Complaints Procedure	p.4
3. Adult Social Care Service Users	p.4-5
4. Complaints	p.5-7
4.1 Overview	p.5
4.2 Nature of Complaints	p.5-6
4.3 Complaints by Service Area	p.6
4.4 Complaint Response Timescales	p.7
4.5 Ombudsman Complaints	p.7
5. Learning & Improvement Actions	p.7-8
6. Compliments	p.8-9
7. Conclusion	p.9

Executive Summary

Introduction

Between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022, Enfield Council supported over 4,500 clients to access long term care. We also undertook over 2,100 assessments and 2,500 reviews, supported over 3,300 carers and responded to over 3,600 safeguarding concerns.

Findings

During this period, the organisation received 48 complaints regarding Adult Social Care. The volume received increased slightly from the previous year, although remained lower when compared to 2019/20.

The majority of complaints related to disagreement regarding fees and dissatisfaction with service quality received.

17 complaints were referred by complainants to the Ombudsman (a marginal increase compared to the previous year). Of these, 7 were investigated further by the Ombudsman with 5 decisions made (3 were upheld and 2 were not upheld).

Improvement Actions

Learning from the complaints surfaced a number of improvement actions for the service areas as well as for individual cases. In terms of service improvements, actions are designed to improve social work practice through training and communications. The application of policies and procedures are also being reviewed regarding assessment waiting times and changes to financial charging.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of complaints made about Enfield Council's Adult Social Care services during 2021-22, in accordance with the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.

The report provides information about all statutory complaints made between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022.

2. Overview of the Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints Process

The Department of Health defines a complaint as “*an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about the actions, decisions or apparent failings of a Council's adult social care provision which requires a response*”.

Anyone who has received, is currently receiving, or is seeking an adult social care service from Enfield Council can make a complaint. A family member, carer or formal representative may also complain on a service user's behalf.

Services provided by an external provider acting on the Council's behalf are also included. In such instances, complaints can be submitted directly to the provider or the Council.

The Adult Social Care statutory complaints process is comprised of one stage. The regulations stipulate that all complaints must be responded to, in writing, within six months of receiving the complaint. However, in Enfield we aim to complete our complaint responses within 20 working days, which is similar to many local authorities.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the Council's response, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The LGSCO is an independent organisation empowered to review or investigate where it appears the Council's own investigations may not have resolved the complaint or handled it appropriately.

3. Adult Social Care Service Users

In order to provide some context in relation to the complaints submitted, Enfield Council's Adult Social Care received over 4,660 contacts and enquiries from residents in 2021-22, alongside supporting over 4,500 clients to access long term care during the year. We also undertook over 2,100 assessments and 2,500 reviews, supported over 3,300 carers and responded to over 3,600 safeguarding concerns.

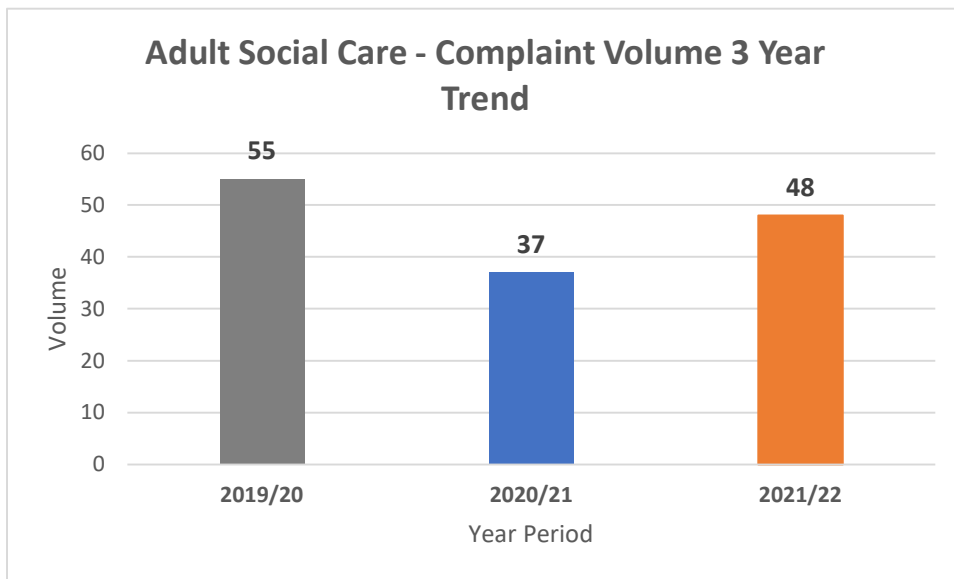
During this period:

- 1,131 service users were assessed as Care Act (2014) eligible for services of which 465 received community-based support and 196 went into a care home
- Over 9,000 pieces of equipment were provided to service users and over 2,800 received some form of adaptation to their home

4. Complaints

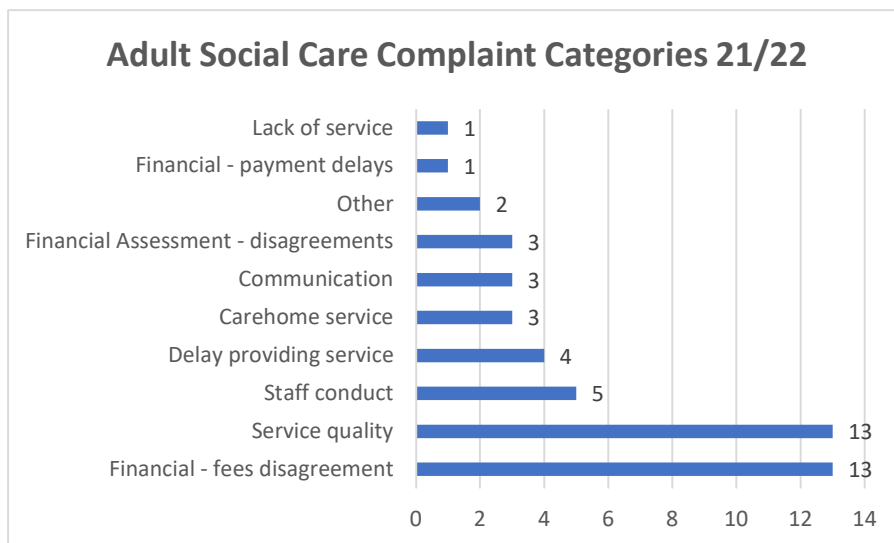
4.1 Overview

During 2021/22, Enfield Council received 48 Adult Social Care statutory complaints. This represents 1% of the total number of contacts during that year.



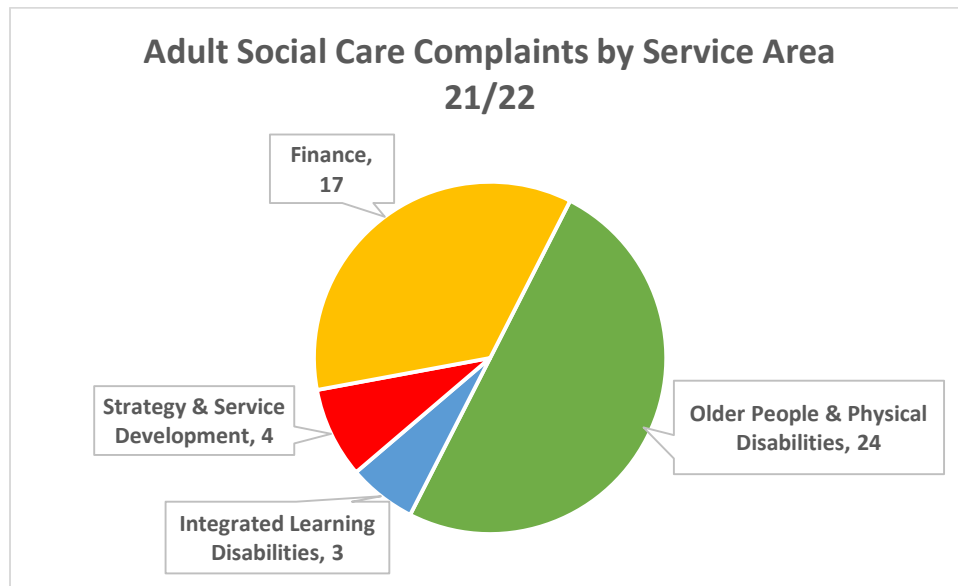
As per the graph above, there was a slight increase in complaints compared to the previous year, although still lower when compared to 2019/20. In terms of service contacts, 2021/22 was a busier year than 2020/21.

4.2 Nature of Complaints



In terms of the types of complaints received during 21/22, the largest volumes related to disagreement regarding fees and dissatisfaction with service quality received.

4.3 Complaints by Service Area



Service areas within Adult Social Care differ in size and their roles may differ. Therefore, comparing total complaint numbers for each service provides limited insight. As such, this section provides further detail on the types of complaints received per service area.

The Older People and Physical Disabilities Service, as the largest service, receives the highest number of complaints. In 2021/22 complaints including:

- Service quality: 10 complaints
- Delays in providing services: 4 complaints
- Staff conduct: 4 complaints

The Integrated Learning Disability Service's complaints related to

- Service quality
- Staff conduct
- Delays in financial payment

Strategy & Service Development complaints related to

- Service quality
- Communication

Finance Complaints consist of complaints about financial assessments, fees and payment delays for Adult Social Care Services. Complaints about finance consist of 35% of all complaints.

4.4 Complaint Response Timescales

All complaints were responded to on time within the regulations 6 months target. With regard to the local 20 working day target, 6 complaints took longer than 20 working days to respond to with the longest taking 26 days to complete.

4.5 Ombudsman Complaints

In 2021/22, 17 complaints were referred to the LGSCO (an increase of 6 compared to 2020/21). Upon review, the Ombudsman elected to investigate 7 of these complaints. The LGSCO can choose not to investigate for a variety of reasons. Our remaining complaints were dismissed primarily because they were premature or there was insufficient evidence of fault was identified by the Ombudsman.

Of the 7 investigated, LGSCO made 5 decisions.

- 2 confirmed Enfield Council was not at fault.
- 3 identified that Enfield Council was at fault due to delays in care and financial assessments.

In its decisions, the LGSCO did not request that Enfield reconsider its procedures, indicating that after investigation, they were satisfied with these.

5. Learning & Improvement Action

Learning from complaints provides valuable opportunities to gain wider understanding and ensure improvements are realised. This section outlines the improvement actions identified during 2021/22.

Improvement actions arising from 2021/22 complaints fall into three main categories:

- Remedial action for individual complaints
- Improving social work or occupational therapy practice and delivering training
- Establishing or changing existing processes and policies.

Examples of these improvement actions are summarised below:

Remedial action for individual complaints

- Apology to a complainant where complaints were upheld or partially upheld.
- Agreed a change of social worker.
- Offered a reassessment of either a care package or finances.

Improving social work practice and delivering training

- Ensuring that clearer information and advice is provided around paying for care and support packages.

- Addressing issues directly with social workers and/or managers in supervision. Themes included returning telephone calls promptly, or completing assessments accurately

Reflection on application of processes and policy

- Agreement to inform people about potential waiting times for assessments
- Alterations to financial charging information documents

6. Compliments

Managers are encouraged to log the compliments they receive as learnings are derived from positive feedback, as well as negative.

During 2021-22, 58 compliments were logged centrally regarding Adult Social Care, an increase of 14 compared to 2020/21. The majority of compliments related to members of staff.

Below are some examples of compliments received:

“I wanted to express my heartfelt gratitude and sincerest thanks for all the help, care and support we have received from X and the Occupation Therapy Services at Enfield Council. Thank you so much for the attention, care, compassion and hard work you have provided during this process. You were kind and understanding and assessed my mothers’ needs extremely well. The recommendations you made were things we would never have thought of on our own and will be life changing for her.”

“Thank you for the especially fast service and hard work delivering everything so quickly. X came for a home visit under difficult conditions during a pandemic in a matter of days and went above and beyond. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.”

“X arranged a suitable care home placement for my mother at really short notice and was reassuring and helpful. X took our preferences into account and kept us well informed throughout the process. The information provided on costs and funding options was clear and straightforward.”

“I am writing to you to let you know what a wonderful person you have working for you in Social Care assessment – X. X was so kind and compassionate and gave us good advice how to proceed.”

“Very helpful and quick, X did help a lot not just with the case but made me feel positive and fresh start to the day. Many thanks”

“I would like to thank you for all the help you have given my Mother. She was adamant that she did not need any help but now that she has the aids that you suggested she loves them and doesn’t know how she managed without them. Thank you again”

“Thank you so much for all your help, support & information. You have been amazingly prompt in everything and we as a family are so very grateful to you. I can’t begin to tell you the amount of stress it relieves from our end.”

“Thank you so much X for your help. It’s so nice being helped by professionals who really understand the system and how to help individuals. Keep up the great work.”

7. Conclusion

During 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022, over 4,500 people were supported by Adult Social Care. Given the complex nature of this work, the number of complaints received are relatively low. There has been a slight increase in volumes compared to the previous year both received by the Council and referred to the Ombudsman by complainants.

Whilst there were specific improvement actions taken at an individual level, learning from complaints demonstrates the need to ensure policies and processes are fully understood and enacted by staff. Addressing gaps in service provision through staff training and supervision is underway. Other improvement actions include ensuring that information regarding financial payments for care/support packages, as well as changes to financial charging, are clearly communicated to clients.