

Barnet Council

Adult Social Care

Annual Complaints Report

2020-2021

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1. Introduction

Barnet Council's adult social care service, part of the Adults and Health directorate, provides statutory social care services including individual care and support; safeguarding; information and advice; preventative services; assessments under the Mental Health Act (MHA 1983, amended 2007) and the Mental Capacity Act (MCA 2005). Social Care Direct acts as the front door for adult social care enquiries.

Comments, complaints and compliments are welcomed by the Service and are seen as a tool to help improve and develop services and practice. They provide the opportunity to learn from mistakes and to put things right for an individual when they have gone wrong.

Barnet Council is required, under statutory regulations, to report annually to the relevant Council Committee on adult social care complaints.

This report provides information about complaints for Barnet's Adult Social Care Service for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. The report considers complaints dealt with through both the Statutory Adult Social Care and Corporate Complaints Procedures where these relate to Adult Social Care.

2. Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints Procedure

The Council is required to operate a separate Statutory Complaints and Representations procedure for adult social care, in accordance with the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 and the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 (hereby referred to as 'the Regulations'). Any complaint which does not fall under these requirements is considered under the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure.

All complainants who have exhausted the Council's Statutory Complaints Procedure retain the right to approach the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The LGSCO is impartial and independent and act as the final stage for complaints about the Council, Social Care Providers, Care Homes and Home Care Agencies.

3. Accessing the complaints procedure

The service continually seeks to encourage people who use social care, and their carers, to provide feedback (positive or negative) on the services and customer care that they have received.

The process is publicised through the following means:

- The Comments, Compliments and Complaints booklets are widely distributed to public offices in the Borough.
- The Easy Read version of the booklet 'Comments, Compliments and Complaints' is also widely distributed. This is aimed at people with Learning Disabilities and others who would find a simplified version easier to understand.
- Information about making a comment, compliment or complaint in relation to Adult Social Care is published on the council website. This route became even more important during the pandemic. The information can be found at www.barnet.gov.uk/comments-and-complaints-adult-social-care.
- Individual staff and managers make residents, people who draw on social care support, their family carers and relevant organisations aware of the procedures during their interactions with them, as appropriate.
- Managers are asked to feature compliments and complaints as a standing item in their

team meetings and briefing sessions.

- Historic complaints reports are published on Open Barnet the council's data portal, an important tool in pushing forward Barnet's Transparency Agenda.
- Compliments are shared with staff and promoted internally through the staff newsletter, senior manager briefings and staff awards.
- Information about complaints and the learning from them is shared with the Management Team and with staff, to improve practice.

The council has commissioned Barnet Citizens' Advice Bureau as the local lead provider for specialist information, advice and advocacy support. This ensures that the Council has a dedicated support service in place for people who require access to independent information, advice and advocacy. Staff are trained in accordance with the Care Act 2014 and staff understand their statutory duties in relation to advocacy.

4. Overview

The following complaints and compliments were received into Adult Social Care from individuals, carers and/or their representatives:

- 224 compliments
- 51 statutory complaints
- 3 corporate complaints
- 12 Local Government Ombudsman enquiries

Of the 51 statutory complaints, 39 resulted in an outcome, 12 were withdrawn. Of the 39:

- 32 (82%) were not upheld
- 1 (3%) was upheld
- 6 (15%) were partially upheld

The main themes of the complaints were:

- Decision – disagreement with the outcome of a care assessment; or with the outcome of a financial assessment under the charging policy; or a decision made as a result of a statutory duty or national policy.
- Conduct – behaviour, communication or conduct of staff employed by care providers or by the council.
- Quality - relates to the quality of service from care homes, home care agencies or care assessments.

Common improvement themes were:

- Staff – formal reflection and training
- Care Providers – working with a provider to improve working practices, policies and contract compliance
- Procedures – updates and amendments to, or staff reiteration of procedures

5. Compliments

Compliments are just as useful as complaints in helping to improve service. By having people tell the Council when things are done well, the Council can make sure that it continues to recognise and build on its strengths. It is also important to recognise the good work that is being delivered by the directorate and provides balance within the complaints annual report.

The number of compliments received in 2020-21 are an improvement on 2019-20 figures.

224 compliments were received in 2020/21. The table below provides an overview of compliments by service area:

<i>Service Area</i>	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Localities (Older People & Physical Disabilities)	29	42	43
Integrated Care Learning Disabilities	23	7	6
Integrated Care Quality	13	7	19
Assessment & Prevention	23	37	66
Hospitals & Health	9	14	9
Mental Health	131	82	68
Other Teams: Performance & Systems, Argenti	17	10	13
	245	199	224

Many individuals who compliment staff and teams provide verbal feedback directly to individuals via face to face conversations or by phone; we do not reflect these in our annual figures.

The compliments received in the period were varied and ranged from individual messages of gratitude to specific members of staff and thank you cards to whole teams for their work.

The mental health service includes compliments received by the Network, the council's mental health enablement service. This service provides therapeutic group programmes and individual direct work for people experiencing mental health issues. The figures include compliments received via customer feedback/enablement group questionnaires. The reduction in compliments received is due to the impact of the pandemic, as the Network had to significantly reduce levels of activity.



Examples of compliments received in 2020-2021

“ As a family, please let it be noted we felt you played such an important role in making xxx final few months so much better than it could have been. You are a credit to the social work profession, but moreover a credit as a person. Thank you truly so very much” [Compliment regarding a member of MASH, Assessment and Prevention Service.](#)

“ Thank you so much for your unfailing kindness xxx. You have organised yyy’s care and needs package with sensitivity and understanding. All of my dealings with you and your department have been excellent” [Compliment regarding a member of the Hospitals Discharge Team](#)

“ I just want to say how grateful I am for your help and advice in supporting myself and my Mum whilst her ability to care for herself declines (with her dementia and decreasing physical abilities). You are so professional and thank you for listening to me. Thank you, Thank you” [Compliment regarding a member of the Urgent Response Team](#)

“ Very thankful for all the support that xxx has received, everybody has been wonderful - helpful and nice to speak with - "which makes such a difference". Now joining in with the Thursday national clapping for carers and frontline staff.” [Compliment regarding a member of the Care Quality Team](#)

“Thank you for all your help in sorting out funding for a home carer for my mother who suffers from Vascular Dementia. In particular to xxx for her genuine care, understanding & assistance on behalf of my 98 year old mother. A delightful person and extremely efficient in her job”. [Compliment regarding a member of Localities](#)

“how grateful we are to xxx for the empathic and professional care xxx has given yyy since she was accepted to the Learning Disability Team. xxx's care of yyy during Lockdown - phone calls checking how she is, together with yyy’s pleasure and looking forward to the contact, was also a great support to us as yyy’s parents. At the recent Review meeting xxx behaved with professional wisdom trying to keep yyy as the focus of the Review, to improve her care package and support plan”. [Compliment relating to the Learning Disabilities Service](#)

“Please pass on our appreciation to the staff at LBB social services for the excellent support they have given our 96 yrs. old dementia stricken mum during these difficult times Thanks to all at LBB.”. [Compliment relating to Mental Health Services](#)

“You gave me more than one thing, options, what was best for me, you listened, I felt listened to”. [Compliment for the Network](#)

“Thanks to such an amazing member of OT Team- Made a huge difference in mum's life - when I gave up hope she fought mum’s corner with support plans- she works unconditionally and selflessly” [Compliment for OT Team](#)

“I am extremely grateful for the support given. What would we do without you all dedicating yourselves to help us? You take care and be safe” [Compliment for Prevention and Wellbeing Team](#)

Benchmarking data

The following benchmarking data compares the number of compliments received in 2019-20 against a selection of our nearest statistical neighbours¹:

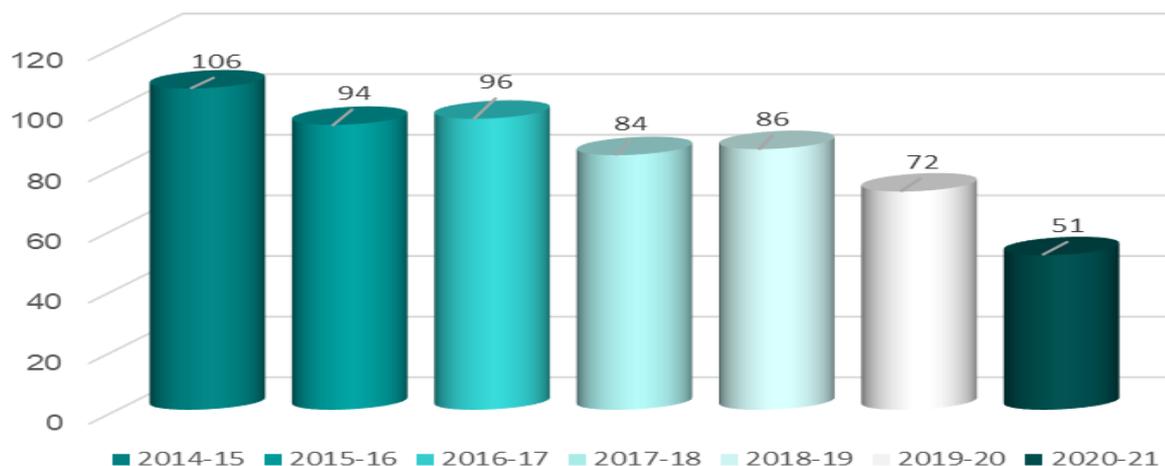
Borough	Compliments received	Per 100k population:²
Barnet	119	39.4
Bexley	56	29.3
Brent	33	13.1

6. Complaints

6.1 Overview of performance

The number of statutory complaints for ASC have steadily decreased, whilst the number of Corporate Complaints remains fairly consistent with between 1-3 complaints a year. In 2020/21 complaint numbers have fallen by 29% compared to the same period in 2019-20.

Statutory complaint figure comparison



From 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, Adult Social Care received a total of 54 complaints of which 51 were statutory complaints and 3 corporate complaint.

To give our complaint figures some context, there were 5,865 new requests for services in 2020/21 – 2,346 resulting from a Hospital discharge. 5,342 people were receiving a long-term service (4,037 receiving a community service & 1,305 receiving residential/nursing services).

The complaint numbers equate to 1% of ASC service users or someone acting on their behalf, raising a complaint in 2020-21. This percentage reduces to under 1% if we take into consideration all contacts into the service.

¹ Based on members of the group of nearest statistical neighbours identified by CIPFA

² Population data based on the 18+ population according to ONS mid-year estimates for 2019.

The chart above shows complaints received and dealt with under the statutory procedure and provides comparison over the years. For transparency purposes, it should be noted that the service also receives some initial complaints which are resolved within 24 hours to the resident/person's satisfaction. Under the statutory procedure guidelines, these do not require logging under the statutory procedure. 26 were received in 2019-20, 28 in 2020-21.

6.2 Complaints received by category

The 51 statutory complaints were managed in line with the Statutory Social Care Complaints Procedure. Three complaints were dealt with under the council's Corporate complaints procedure. These were all financial complaints received from companies.

Of the 51 Statutory Complaints received:

- 36 were considered as straightforward complaints
- 3 were considered as serious and/or complex complaints
- 12 were withdrawn

Category	2018 - 2019	%	2019 - 2020	%	2020-2021	%
Statutory Straightforward (Low/Moderate risk)	71	83%	50	69%	36	67%
Statutory Serious and/or Complex (High risk)	6	7%	12	17%	3	6%
Withdrawn	6	7%	9	13%	12	22%
Corporate	3	3%	1	1%	3	6%
Total complaints	86	100%	72	100%	54	100%

6.3 Statutory Complaint outcomes

Of the 39 complaints with an outcome:

- 32 were not upheld
- 6 were partially upheld
- 1 was upheld

6.4 Statutory Complaints by Service Area

The table below provides a breakdown of statutory complaints figures for complaints with an outcome:

Service Area	2019-20	2020-21	Number of complaints DOT	No. of cases upheld (2019-20)	No. of cases upheld (2020-21)	No. of cases partially upheld (2019-20)	No. of cases partially upheld (2020-21)
Localities (Older People & Physical Disabilities)	10	5	◀	2 (20%)	1 (20%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)
Assessment & Prevention	5	5	-	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	2 (40%)	0 (0%)
Integrated Learning Disabilities	17	4	◀	5 (29%)	0 (0%)	6 (35%)	1 (25%)
Mental Health	6	4	◀	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (25%)
Customer Financial Affairs	4	4	-	1 (25%)	0 (0%)	2 (50%)	0 (0%)
Integrated Care Quality	14	12	◀	6 (43%)	0 (0%)	1 (7%)	2 (15%)
Hospitals & Health Partnerships	6	5	◀	1 (17%)	0 (0%)	4 (67%)	2 (40%)

In 2019-20, 63 corporate and statutory investigations were conducted, this number decreased to 54 in 2020-21. It follows that 2020-21 also witnessed a reduction in the number of upheld or partially upheld cases in all service areas.

In Localities, three complaints were withdrawn which related to care assessment delays during the Covid-19 lockdowns. Improvements made included all care teams quickly embracing new ways of working with technology to conduct assessments utilising platforms such as MS Teams. Three cases related to assessment requests which were not upheld and the one upheld complaint related to an assessment for a service user placed outside of Barnet. The Localities complaints regarding care assessment disagreements were not upheld, this evidenced that the assessments being conducted met people's statutory needs and our duties under the Care Act.

In the Assessment & Prevention Service, two cases were withdrawn and cases investigated related to care assessment disagreements in relation to a decision resulting from a statutory duty in relation to national care legislation, regulations or policy.

In Learning Disabilities, three complaints related to supported living arrangements, one of these cases was partially upheld, due to constraints imposed by the pandemic. The fourth complaint, that related to the quality of service provided, resulted in a compliment from the complainant, who expressed a desire to acknowledge and thank all staff involved in resolving the concerns raised.

In Mental Health, two complaints related to assessment disagreements the other complaints received were diverse in content.

Complaint figures have remained static for Customer Financial Affairs. One case required legal advice, another case required confirmation back from the Court of Protection, one was a complex deputyship issue and the fourth was an assessment disagreement.

Eight of the complaints received into the Integrated Care Quality service concerned the quality of service received from care providers and care homes. As these relate to the service provided by an external organisation, these are passed to providers for initial investigation. If the outcome of their investigation is not satisfactory to the complainant or to the Care Quality Service, Adults Social Care may take further action.

In Hospitals and Health, two complaints related to the discharge process, both cases were not upheld: two related to a perceived/experienced lack of communication, alongside one complaint relating to a delay in the care assessment process.

6.5 Complaints by category

The table below identifies complaints by subject and the investigation outcome

	Category	Upheld	Partially upheld	Not upheld	Total
Decision	Care Assessment - Assessment disagreement (including unhappy with decision)	0	1	4	5
	Care Home - Assessment disagreement (including unhappy with decision)	0	0	1	1
	Finance - Assessment disagreement (including unhappy with decision)	0	0	4	4
	Total	0	1	9	10
Conduct	Staff Conduct - Conduct of council employed staff (attitude/behaviour)	0	0	0	0
	Care Agency - Conduct of staff (attitude/behaviour)	0	1	3	4
	Care Home - Conduct of staff (attitude/behaviour)	0	0	3	3
	Total	0	1	6	7
Quality	Care Agency - Quality of service	0	0	1	1
	Care Assessment - Quality of service	0	1	0	1
	Care Home - Quality of service	0	0	1	1
	Hospitals - Quality of service	0	0	0	0
	Care Assessment (process)	0	0	2	2
	Care agency - Assessment request (process)	0	0	1	1
	Finance - Quality of service	0	0	1	1
Total	0	1	6	7	
Timeliness & Delays	Care Assessment - Assessment delay (including delay in making a decision)	1	1	1	3
	Financial assessment/charging – Timeliness	0	0	0	0
	Total	1	1	1	3
Communication	Care Assessment - Lack of communication	0	1	0	1
	Finance - Lack of communication	0	0	0	0
	Care Home - Lack of communication	0	0	2	2
	Hospitals – Lack of Communication	0	0	1	1
	Total	0	1	3	4
	Hospitals – Discharge Process	0	0	2	2
	Other	0	1	5	6
	Total	1	6	32	39

Decisions

The largest number of complaints received were due to dissatisfaction with a decision reached by the Council, for example: the outcome of a care or financial assessment; disagreement in relation to a financial/charging decision; or policy decisions. Of these only two complaints were partially upheld as the complaint results from a statutory duty in relation to financial charging or national care legislation, regulations or policy, where the council cannot influence the outcome.

Where complainants are unhappy with the outcome of an assessment, the council can offer a reassessment or take into consideration changes of circumstances where relevant; these types of changes contribute to a number of the upheld and partially upheld complaints.

Conduct & Quality

These complaints are in regard to services provided directly from Barnet or relate to the quality or conduct of staff employed by providers. The partially upheld complaint regarding Barnet's services were addressed through the Learning from Complaints procedure and through line management, with resulting changes to policy or procedure monitored by senior management.

The partially upheld case was an issue concerning provider services. This was addressed through contract management procedures, with lessons learned fed into the work of the Integrated Care Quality team to shape the work it does with providers, thus improving the quality of provision across the social care market.

Delays & Timeliness

This category relates to the time taken to carry out an assessment or provide a service. Waiting times for assessments and financial reviews are the main cause of complaints relating to timeliness.

The Council always seeks to avoid delays in assessing or reviewing clients, but as social care is a demand led service and due to the impact of Covid this was not always possible. Adult Social Care targets resources to ensure the most urgent cases and people with the highest levels of need are prioritised. However, any delay may understandably still be dissatisfying for members of the public whose assessments have not been prioritised.

Communication

Four complaints relating to poor communication were received in 2020-21. One complaint was partially upheld, where the team in question failed to communicate to expected standards.

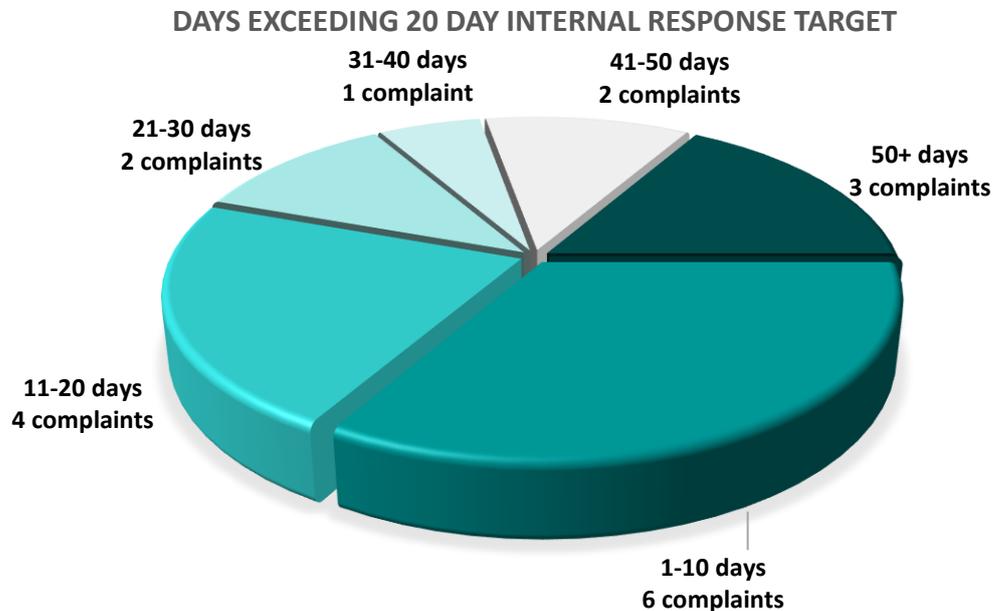
6.6 Timeliness of responses to statutory complaints within the internal 20 working day target

It is important to note that the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 Statutory Complaints guidance allows six months (commencing on the day on which the complaint was received, or such longer period allowed if agreed by all concerned) for the resolution of Social Care statutory complaints. Adult Social Care are committed to help resolve as many complaints as speedily and efficiently as possible.

The Service decided to maintain an internal target of 20 working days for straightforward complaints and 25 working days for more complex or serious complaints (or within an extended period of up to 65 working days) throughout the pandemic period. However, all complainants were advised in their acknowledgement that due to the pandemic (COVID-19) the council's response to their complaint may be delayed due to urgent operational matters

taking priority.

It is also important to note, that statutory complaints are managed through a single stage process, if the complainant is not satisfied with the initial response to their complaint, they have the opportunity to request further information or a further investigation which may prolong the overall outcome of a complaint.



The complaints process is intended to be resolution focused and offer complainants the option of discussing their concerns in face-to-face meetings, family meetings and mediation where appropriate.

When a complaint was likely to exceed our initial target response date, we endeavour to keep complainants informed of their complaint progress throughout the process.

The three cases in the 50+ days range were complex investigations where the depth of the investigation and the time needed to investigate were proportionate to the seriousness of the complaint; examples include where legal advice on a case was required, changes in circumstances/ongoing developments impacting an investigation and one case that was substantially delayed due to a response being required from a third party.

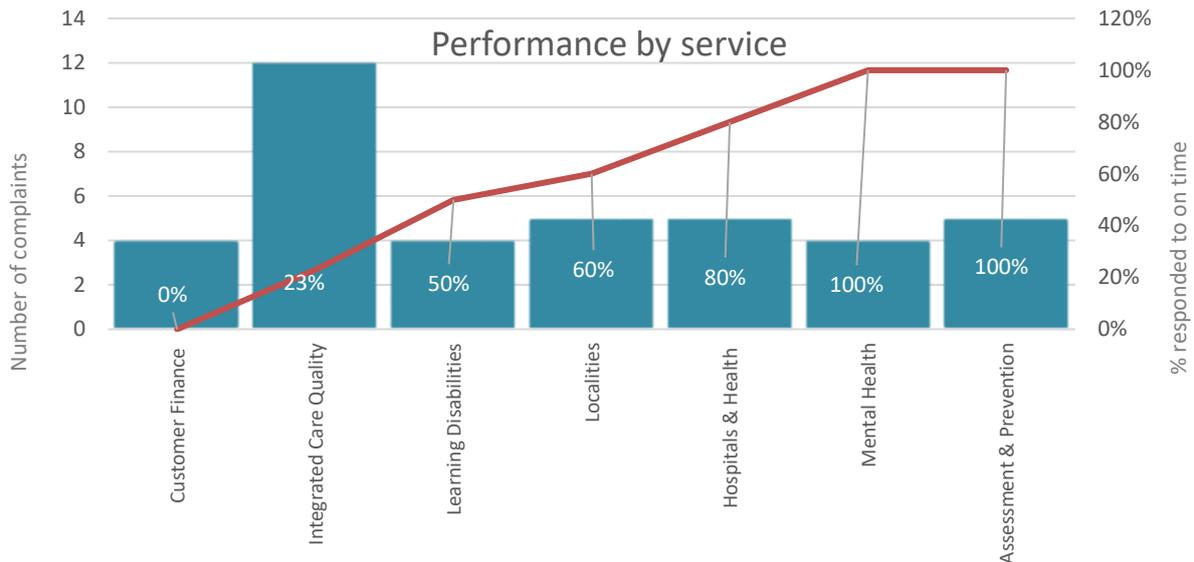
The five cases in the 21-51 day categories were cases requiring a joint investigation with either care providers or other organisations such as the NHS. Due to the pandemic, it was critical that operational priorities that ensured the wellbeing and safety of our residents took precedence, so a small number of responses were delayed due to either the council or providers.

Co-ordination of responses with the NHS means that the Council may be obliged to work to the Statutory Social Care and National Health Service timescales, which allows a six-month timeframe for complaints to be investigated and responded to.

Complaints about providers being received through the complaints process, must be either signposted to the provider's internal complaints process or managed through our internal procedures on behalf of the complainant. We do ask partner organisations to work within our timeframes, however this is a request and is not enforceable.

The below chart provides an overview of performance by service area.

Represented as % of cases responded to on time



The Complaints & Information Management Team continued to work closely with service areas to improve performance; by meeting with senior managers, producing weekly open case reports and providing complaint analysis reports on a monthly basis.

Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints – Benchmarking

The following benchmarking data has been collected to compare the number of statutory complaints received against figures for a selection of our nearest statistical neighbours in Population size.

Borough	Statutory complaints received in 2019-20	Per 100k population:
Barnet	39	12.9
Bexley	59	30.9
Brent	81	32.1
Bromley	117	45.5

7. Learning from Complaints

Learning from our complaints provides an opportunity to gain wider learning, to ensure opportunities for improvement are realised and that issues can be prevented, where possible, before they occur.

In some cases, outcomes to complaints are case specific and there are no general learning points that would influence policy or procedure. Individual issues and staff/team specific learning is addressed through training, reflection, supervision and team meetings.

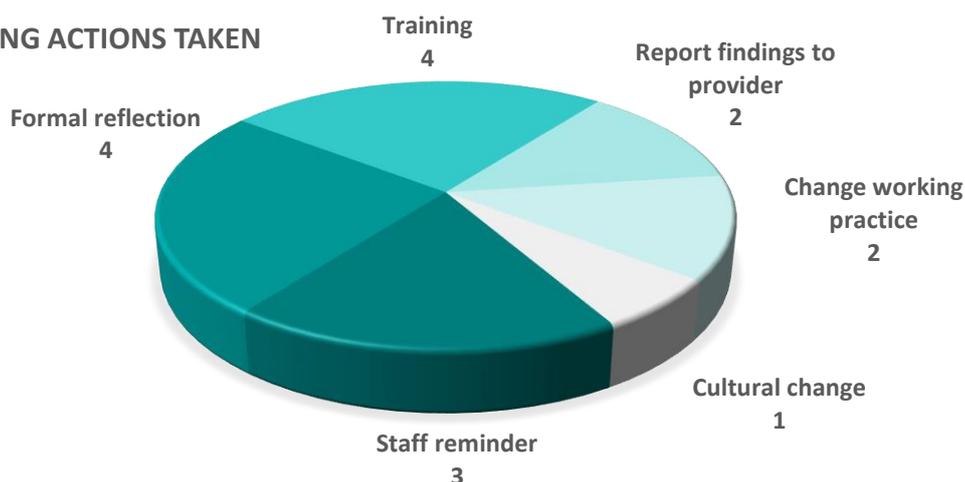
The table below categorises the learning themes and the number of lessons learnt that fell into each category. The table identifies the types of actions Adults Social Care's management team and our providers and partners have taken to try and mitigate any further

complaints of a similar nature. These are broad themes that enable us to monitor trends, however different actions will result from a theme.

Theme	No of lessons identified	Action
People Issues relating to the behaviour or conduct of a member of staff	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal reflection Training Staff reminder
Policy Review or amendment of a formal policy to reflect the need for change	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect Audit Amend policy
Systems Preventative updates /amendments to system/s, staff training on systems or applications	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amend system Change working practice
Procedure Changes to current procedures and working practice as a preventative measure	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change working practice Amend procedure Cultural change
Provider Work with a provider to review working practices, procedures, policies and contract compliance	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report findings to provider Review contract Suspend provider

The below chart provides an overview of the actions taken as a result of learning from our complaints. In a number of cases there were several actions identified that were addressed to mitigate further complaints of a similar nature. In 2020-21 seven of the 16 actions taken directly relate to measures carried out in response to a complaint to our providers or partners

LEARNING ACTIONS TAKEN



Examples of some of the learning from our complaint investigations:

Lesson Identified	Outcome
Training for Customer Support Group to improve awareness of ASC timescales.	Further guidance and training provided to the Coventry contact centre, regarding response times to ensure clients expectations are met.
Ensure staff were kept up to date with changes in PPE requirements.	Improved & regular up to date communication, training, reminders and disciplinary action by providers.
Excellent work was taking place in the background, but the client & family were not aware due to insufficient communication.	Case highlighted to staff as a reminder that clients/families need to be regularly updated of progress.

8. Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) is an external body that looks at complaints relating to councils and Adult Social Care providers. The LGSCO investigates matters where there is an alleged or apparent maladministration or service failure.

8.1 Complaints and enquiries dealt with by the LGSCO 2020-2021

A complainant has the right to raise a complaint with the Local Government Ombudsman at any time. However, the Ombudsman will usually refer back a complaint to the council if it has not previously been considered under the council's procedures. Such complaints are described as premature.

The table below shows the total number of new LGSCO enquiries received by Adult Social Care, for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

To allow authorities to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, the LGSCO did not accept new complaints and stopped investigating existing cases between March and June 2020. This reduced the number of complaints received and decided in the year. This needs to be considered when comparing data from previous years.

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Enquiries/Complaints	22	18	20	19	12

12 enquiries were received:

- 6 premature enquiries were signposted back for local resolution.
- 2 complaints were upheld.
- 1 complaint was not upheld.
- 3 cases were closed by the ombudsman after initial enquiries.

In 100% of cases the Ombudsman were satisfied that Adult Social Care had successfully implemented their recommendations.

8.2 LGSCO Benchmarking

Borough	Upheld social care complaints 2020-21	Per 100k population:
Barnet	2	0.7
Bexley	0	0.0
Brent	1	0.0
Bromley	4	1.6
Ealing	6	2.3

9. Responding to complaints and concerns about quality relating to external service providers

The Service is responsible for ensuring its contracted providers meet the high standards they have been set.

Adult Social Care requires all external providers of care and support services to operate a complaints procedure. For services regulated by the Care Quality Commission under the Care Standards Act 2000 (Homecare, Residential Care and Supported Living and Extra Care), this is a statutory requirement. For services that are not regulated, there is no statutory requirement but all new contracts for services commissioned by the council include a requirement to have a complaints procedure. This is also examined during the procurement process.

Where a person who used social care services or their representatives raises a concern about the quality of an external provider with the council, the Care Quality Service logs the matter and passes it to the provider to investigate, in line with their complaint's procedure. If the outcome of their investigation is not satisfactory to the complainant or to the Care Quality Service, Adult Social Care may take further action, through the complaints process if this is the most appropriate route.

The Service takes complaints about providers very seriously, both to ensure individuals and their carers receive high quality services and to learn lessons and make improvements more widely where necessary.

If it is found that a provider regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) does not meet the CQC's fundamental standards, the Service will inform the CQC, acting first and foremost to ensure the safety of individuals and, once this is established, working with the provider to improve their standards.

Monitoring Care Quality

The quality of care and support services is monitored by the Care Quality Service through a range of contract compliance mechanisms. These include:

- Quality Assurance visits, which include a review of complaints management by the provider.
- Quality alerts, which are written / telephone / electronic communications alerting us to a shortcoming in the delivery of a service.
- Working with the Care Quality Commission as appropriate when services do not meet the fundamental standards below which the provision of regulated activities and the care people receive must never fall.

Responding to any other events, including safeguarding incidents which indicate that the provider is not fully complying with contractual requirements.

The table below provides a breakdown of concerns about quality that were passed to providers to investigate

	2016 – 2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Complaints and quality alerts	123	94	85	73	117

Our analysis indicates that the increase in the number of complaints and quality alerts in 20/21 is related to the impact of the pandemic. In For example, the Council has seen a significant increase in the number of people receiving homecare services, so proportionately, the increases in complaints and quality alerts is not as large as would appear. However, the care market experienced an incredibly challenging year, which is likely to have led to some shortfalls in standards, in turn leading to an increase in quality alerts & complaints received.