

Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee 28th June 2023

Customer Feedback Annual Report 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

Recommendation

That the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers and comments on the content of the report

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This is the Annual Feedback Report for Adult Social Care (ASC) and Public Health covering the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- 1.2 The report summarises the compliments, complaints, questions and comments received by the two services including lessons learned. The data, trends and themes have been collated over the last 3 years.

2. Complaints Process

- 2.1 Every Local Authority with a responsibility for Social Care Services is required to provide an annual report, outlining the workings of both their Adults and Children's complaints and representations procedures.
- 2.2 The procedure for dealing with adult's statutory complaints (those that meet the criteria within legislation and are raised by or on behalf of adults) relating to our Social Care Services is determined by the following legislation;
 - The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 (the Regulations), and;
 - The accompanying guidance 'Listening, Responding, Improving: A guide to better customer care' (Department of Health February 2009) (the Guidance).
- 2.3 The Regulations cover complaints made in relation to NHS and Adult Social Care Services and/or any of its commissioned services and/or independent services. The Regulations state that:
 - i. Every organisation has a single stage system to deal with complaints
 - ii. Complaints should be dealt with within a maximum of 6 months and that this can only be extended with the complainant's agreement
 - iii. Following investigation of the complaint by the Council, if the complainant is still unhappy, the next stage is to approach the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)
 - iv. Every organisation should make the complainant aware of the response period that they work to and the way the response will be handled

- v. Where complaints involve several organisations, these organisations should discuss and agree who will take the lead
- vi. The LGSCO will consider complaints from those people who fund their own social care and will liaise directly with the relevant organisation
- vii. Complainants must approach the Council to highlight their complaint within twelve months of the incident happening, or within twelve months* of discovering the problem

*Complaints outside of this timescale will be considered individually by the Council's Customer Relations Team (CRT) and an assessment made regarding whether a fair and transparent investigation can still be carried out.

2.4 The Council may also receive complaints that connect to adults but that do not fall within the boundaries of the statutory Social Care Complaints Process. These will usually fall within the remit of the Council's Corporate Complaint Process.

2.5 Full details of the statutory Complaints Procedure is set out in Appendix 1.

3. Analysis of the Customer Feedback Received During 2022 and 2023

3.1 Feedback from members of the public is recorded on a customer relations software referred to as 'Contact Us.' Feedback can be shared through either an online portal, via telephone or email, and is recorded as a Complaint, Compliment, Comment or Question at the time it is loaded onto Contact Us. It is important to note that it is quite common for customers to confuse 'Compliment' and 'Complaint' when completing the online form and record a complaint as a compliment and vice versa. Depending on the type of contact, feedback will be processed through different internal procedures.

3.2 The County Council takes every submitted case seriously, especially complaints, as it wants to make sure its complainants are dealt with fairly, consistently and within timelines. It is essential that WCC is dealing effectively with all feedback to provide efficient services, learning and improvements, and procedures relating to how it deals with and responds to complaints is detailed in WCC's complaints policy¹. This policy has been developed in line with best practice recommendations and legislation that covers complaints about local authority services. This policy is also being reviewed and updated to ensure it covers all up to date legislations. In the policy, a complaint is defined as:

...any expression of dissatisfaction with a service that the Council (or one of its partners or contractors) has provided, and that requires a response.

3.3 This report provides a summary of all cases that were submitted to Contact Us during the financial year 2022/2023 and sets this in relation to cases received over the previous two years. This report focuses on cases allocated to the Adult Social Care and Public Health Services whilst Customer Feedback reports about the Communities Service, Resources and Fire Services and Children and Families and Education Services will be reported to the relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committees.

Methods of how the report has been collated

3.4 Data presented in this report was obtained directly from WCC's customer relations software referred to as 'Contact Us.' Some service areas also receive communications

¹ The Complaints Policy can be found here: <https://api.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC-550390340-762>

from customers directly which are not always logged on our Contact Us system, such as emails or postal letters, and therefore these communications cannot be formally reported on in the context of this report.

- 3.5 Data was extracted for the past three years, i.e., 2020/2021, 2021/2022 and 2022/2023. Where appropriate, data was summed over different time intervals, and percentage changes over time were calculated. In all sections, data is presented as percentage, with the number of cases this refers to in parentheses (n= number of cases).
- 3.6 The lessons learned that were presented at the end of this report were thematically coded into categories prior to their inclusion in this report. This means, that lessons learned that addressed similar topics were grouped together to enable the report to make statements about the frequency of how often specific recommendations were made.

Trends in received cases over time

- 3.7 In 2022/2023, Contact Us received 4,335 cases across all directorates of the council, a 13.6% decrease from the previous year (n= 5,017). 2021/2022 had more cases than 2020/2021, with 4,737 total cases.
- 3.8 There has been an overall decrease in cases from 2020/2021 to 2022/2023. However, when comparing the type of cases received, in 2021/2022 compared to 2022/2023, the volume of questions and compliments decreased. Comparing the years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, the number of questions and compliments stayed similar. During 2022/2023, the number of questions and compliments decreased by 13.3% and by 32.4% compared to the previous year (Figure 1).
- 3.9 Changes in processes, within WCC and the 5 District and Borough Councils, often result in a spike in questions or complaints. It is also worth noting that WCC receive many complaints and questions per year from customers where the service that is being referenced is not a WCC service, for example household waste collections and replacement bins, dumped cars, and illegal parking.

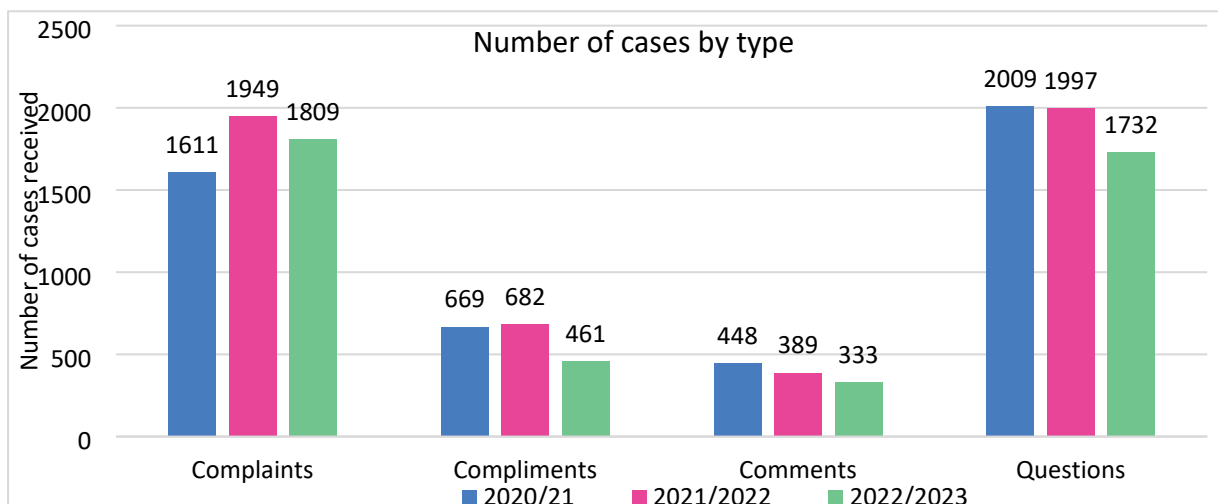


Figure 1: Number of cases received during the years 2020/2021, 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 across all directorates within the Council by type of case.

- 3.10 During 2022/2023, 1915 (44.2%) of cases were assigned to the CRT, which is an increase of 9.1% compared to the previous year. Compared to the year 2020/2021, cases assigned to the CRT have nearly doubled. It is important to note in terms of numbers assigned to CRT this reflects an escalation of the complaint in some way with

majority of the cases requiring the CRT to oversee the complaint on behalf of another operational service. This includes cases which have been assigned to a service team and assigned back to CRT. Of the remaining 2420 cases received during 2022/2023, 433 were assigned to Adult Social Care, and 3 to Public Health (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of cases assigned to Adult Social Care and Public Health by type over the last three years.

Service	Adult Social Care			Public Health		
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Complaints	133	189	138	12	16	0
Compliments	242	289	174	2	0	0
Comments	18	18	11	8	2	2
Questions	171	144	110	39	7	1
Total	564	640	433	61	25	3

3.11 In Adult Social Care, the number of cases received in 2022/2023 decreased by 32.3% compared to 2021/2022, and by 23.2% compared to 2020/2021. In 2022/2023, the type of cases was divided as 31.9% complaints, 40.2% compliments, 25.4% questions, and 2.5% comments. Since 2020/2021, the proportion of complaint cases increased from 23.6% to 31.9% in 2022/2023, while compliments decreased slightly from 42.9% to 40.1%. The proportion of comments has decreased from 3.2% in 2020/2021 to 2.5% in 2022/2023, while the proportion of questions decreased from 30.3% to 25.4% in 2022/2023.

3.12 For Public Health, the number of cases in 2022/2023 received was 88% lower compared to 2021/2022, and 95.1% lower compared to 2020/2021. During 2022/2023, Public Health received 0% complaints and compliments. However, the proportion of complaints had previously increased from 13.1% in 2020/2021 to 64% in 2021/2023, while questions decreased from 63.9% to 28% in 2022/2023.

Complaints received

3.13 When comparing the number of complaints received by Adult Social Care per month over the past three years, similarities between the years 2020/2021 and 2022/2023 are apparent. During 2022/2023 the highest number of complaints was received during April 2022 and March 2023 with 18 and 21 cases (Figure 2).

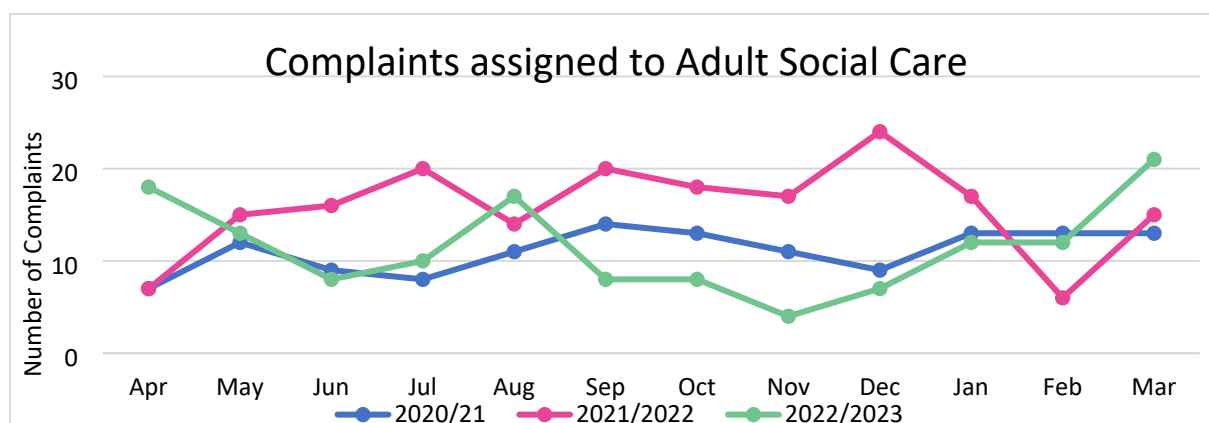


Figure 2: Number of complaints assigned to Adult Social Care over time.

3.14 The volumes of complaints received by Public Health per month over the last three years varied. The highest number of complaints was received in January each year, however for 2022/2023 there were no complaints raised on Contact Us throughout the entire year (Figure 3).

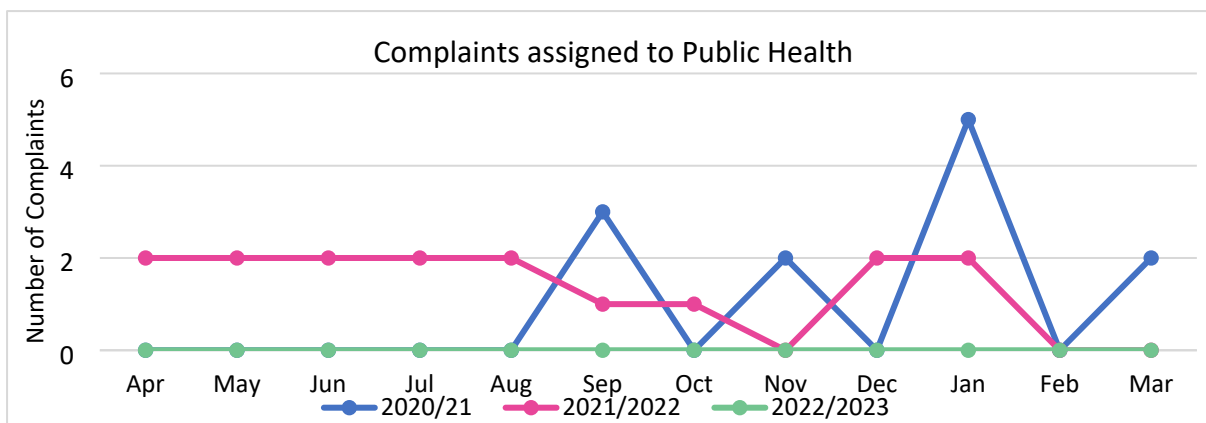


Figure 3: Number of complaints assigned to Public Health over time.

3.15 Within Adult Social Care, case volumes were influenced by several teams, of which Commissioning has made up the highest proportion since 2020/2021, with 25.4% (n=35) of complaints assigned to this team during 2022/2023. This was followed by the Adult Older People Northeast team with 14.5% (n=20) of cases and Adult Disabilities Physical with 9.4% (n=13). There is no team breakdown available for Public Health.

3.16 The Commissioning Team which is managed by the Commissioning Service Unit (CSU) get the cases where the issues relate to a commissioned provider of Adult Social Care. This explains the reason for most complaints being triaged under that heading. It is also worth noting that the North Older People Team covers a much larger area of Warwickshire than the other two Older People Teams, Stratford and Warwick. Relating to the stages of complaints over the last three years, for both Adult Social Care and Public Health, complaints are single stage process. There were no stages recorded for Public Health in 2022/2023, as there were no complaints received.

3.17 During 2022/2023, subject categories of complaints assigned to Adult Social Care most often related to Financial Issues and Protection of User, whereas there were no complaints assigned to Public Health (Table 2)

Table 2: Subject Categories of complaints assigned to Adult Social Care during 2022/2023.

Subject Categories	Adult Social Care	
	Number of cases	%
Protection of user	42	30.4%
Communication	29	21.0%
Staff conduct	6	4.3%
WCC Service standards	10	7.2%
Financial Issues	34	24.6%
Physical environment issues	1	0.7%
Discrimination	0	0.0%
Policy	0	0.0%
Commissioned Service Provision	13	9.4%
Outside contact us process	3	2.2%

3.18 While during 2020/2021 the proportion of complaints assigned to Adult Social Care that addressed financial issues was 9.8% (n=13), this escalated to 18.0% (n=34) during 2021/2022 and again to 24.6% (n=34) during 2022/2023. Complaints relating to the protection of users in 2020/2021 was 11.3% (n=15), this category proportion increased to 28.6% (n=54) during 2021/2022 and up to 30.4% (n=42) during 2022/2023.

3.19 Across the last three years, subject categories assigned to Public Health were split by issues in communication, with 83.3% (n=10) of complaints during 2020/2021, 62.5% (n=10) during 2021/2022, and 0% (n=0) during 2022/2023.

- Examples of Financial issues include problems with Direct Payment, issues with invoices, financial assessments, disputes over care charges.
- Examples of Protection of User usually relates to where a vulnerable adult is at risk of deterioration in their physical health or mental health because of a lack of care or poor service.
- Commissioned Service relates to any domestic care service, community service or residential care which has been provided by a third party, commissioned by WCC.

Complaints Closed

3.20 The number of complaints closed by Adult Social Care has fluctuated throughout the last three years. In 2020/2021, a total of 141 complaints received were closed, which increased to 191 complaints in the following year, 2021/2022. In the last year 2022/2023, the number of closed complaints decreased to 125 which was a 34.6% decrease.

3.21 Over the past three years, Public Health have experienced fluctuation in the number of complaints closed. In 2020/2021, 13 complaints were closed, which increased to 16 complaints in 2021/2022. In 2022/2023, the number of complaints closed was 0, given that there were no complaints received in respect of Public Health for 2022/2023.

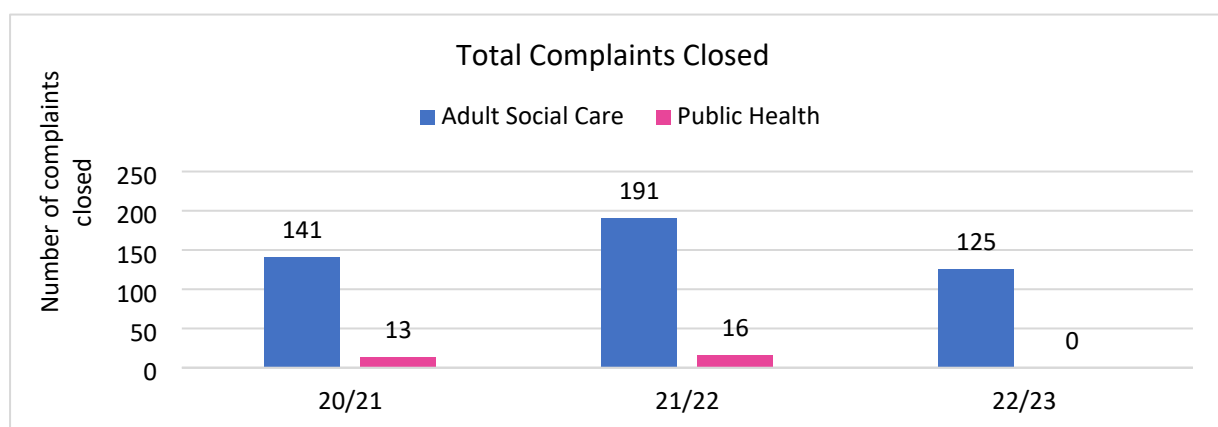


Figure 4: Total Complaints Closed for Adult Social Care & Public Health over time.

3.22 The number of closed complaints resolved within expected service standard has varied over the last three years for Adult Social Care. Within service standard, 62.4% (n=88) complaints were closed in 2020/2021, which increased to 78.0% (n=149) complaints in 2021/2022. Complaints resolved within service standard in 2022/2023 fell to 70.4% (n=88).

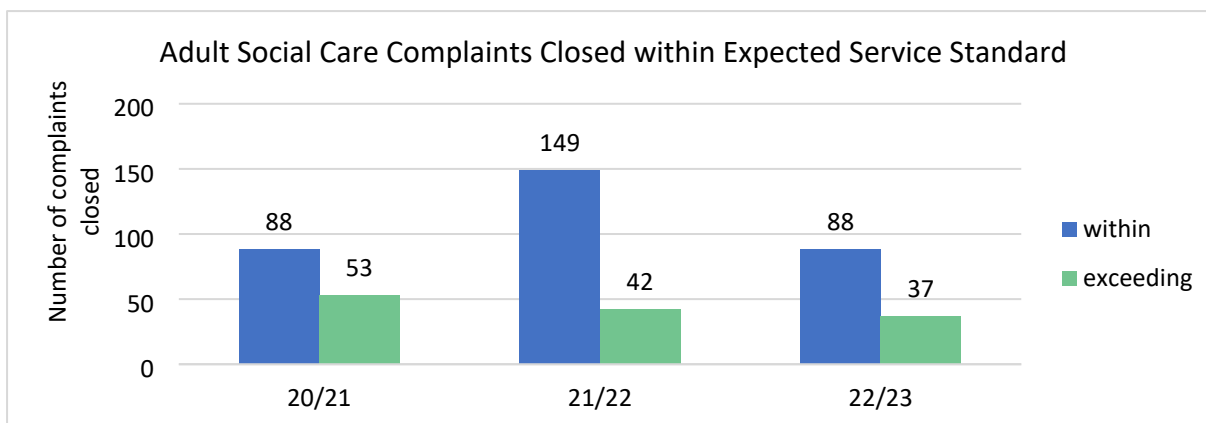


Figure 5: Total Complaints Closed for Adult Social Care within expected service standard over time

3.23 For Public Health, complaints closed within expected service standard has fluctuated over the last three years, with a slight increase from 92.3% (n=12) in 2020/2021 to 93.8% (n=15) in 2021/2022 (the number obviously reduced to 0.0% (n=0) in 2022/2023 as Public Health did not receive any complaints in that year). The number of closed complaints exceeding service standard has remained consistent over the past three years. In 2020/2021, a total of 7.7% (n=1) complaint exceeded service standard, which was 6.3% (n=1) complaint in the following year, 2021/2022. (In 2022/2023, the number of complaints exceeding service standard has decreased to 0.0% (n=0), in line with the number of complaints received for this year).

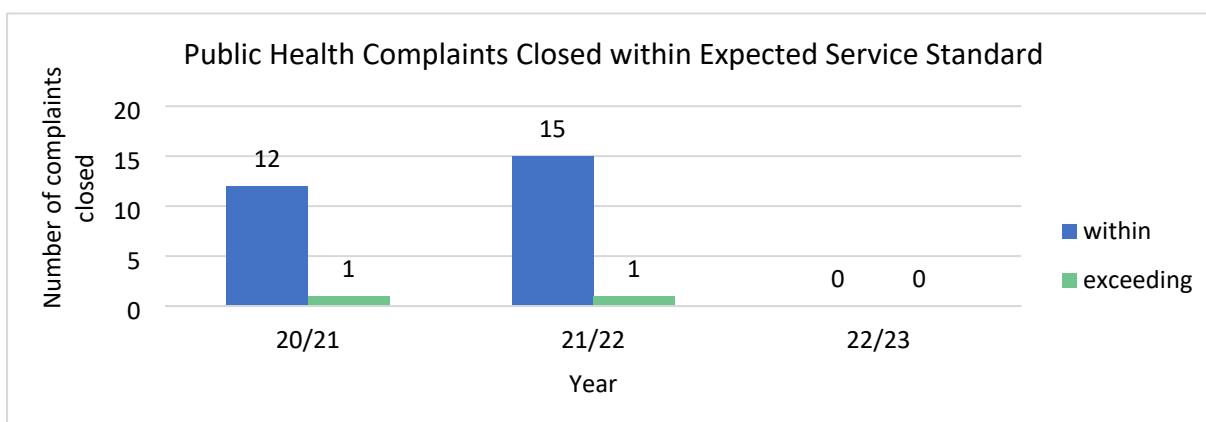


Figure 6: Total Complaints Closed for Public Health within expected service standard over time.

Remedy

3.24 When a member of staff closes a complaint, they complete additional data fields including information on how a case was resolved. This is referred to as remedy. More than one remedy can be selected for each case.

3.25 For Adult Social Care in 2020/2021, the most common method of complaint remedy was providing an 'Explanation', accounting for 75.2% (n=106) of all complaints resolved. 'Service Provided' and 'Apology' accounted for 22.7% (n=32) and 23.4% (n=33) respectively, with only a small number of complaints resulting in 'Changes in Process' 4.3% (n=6) or 'Financial remedies' 2.8% (n=4). In 2021/2022, the category 'Explanation Provided' decreased slightly to 68.6% (n=131) of all complaints resolved. 'Apology' increased to 30.4% (n=58) as well as service provided (24.6%; n=47), while 'Changes in Process' reduced to 1.1% (n=2), 'Financial Remedy' (2.1%; n=4) and 'Change of Policy'

(0.5%; n=1) remained relatively stable. In 2022/2023, 'Explanation Provided' remained the most common remedy at 68.8% (n=86). 'Apology' decreased to 20.8% (n=26) and 'Service Provided' increased to 26.4% (n=33). Less common remedies were 'Changes in Process' (1.6%; n=2) and 'Financial Remedies' (1.6%; n=2).

3.26 In 2020/2021, the most common complaint remedies for Public Health were 'service provided' and 'explanation provided', accounting for 76.9% (n=10) and 30.8% (n=4), respectively. 'Apology' accounted for 15.4% (n=2) of complaint remedies. In the following year, 2021/2022, 'Explanation Provided', and 'Service Provided' remained relatively stable, accounting for 75.0% (n=12) and 25% (n=4), respectively. 'Apology' decreased to 12.5% (n=2). In 2022/2023, due to no complaints being received by Public Health, there were no closed complaint remedies recorded.

Table 3: Closed Complaint Remedies for Adult Social Care and Public Health in 2022/23.

Complaint Remedies	Adult Social Care		Public Health	
	Number of cases	%	Number of cases	%
Explanation Provided	86	68.8%	0	0.0%
Service Provided	33	26.4%	0	0.0%
Apology	26	20.8%	0	0.0%
Change in Process	2	1.6%	0	0.0%
Financial Remedy	2	1.6%	0	0.0%

Outcome

3.27 Within Adult Social Care, complaint cases were closed with several outcomes, of which 'Question: Answered' has made up the highest proportion since 2020/2021, with 29.6% of complaints assigned to this outcome during 2022/2023. This was followed by 'Complaint: Partially Upheld' and cases where no outcome was recorded both with 16.0% in 2022/2023 (Figure 7).

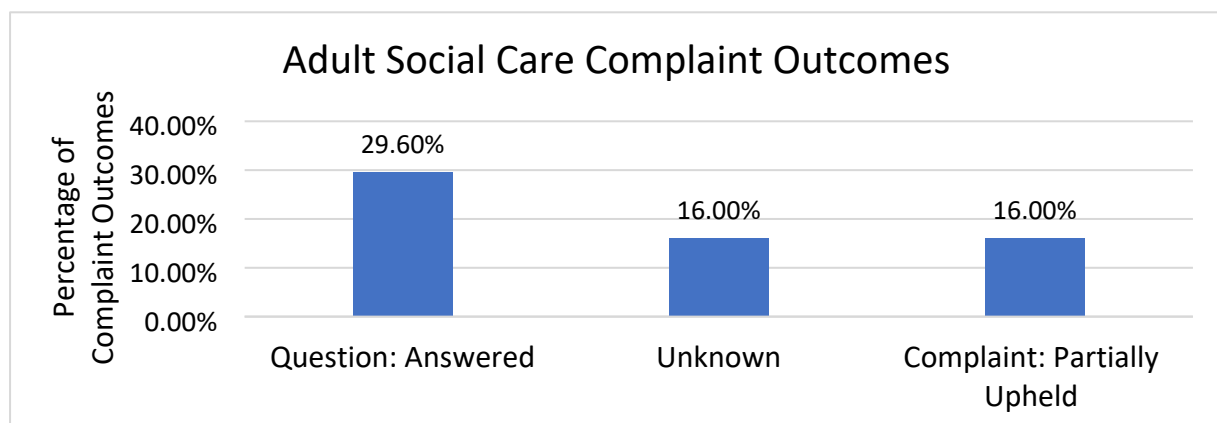


Figure 7: Complaint Outcomes for Adult Social Care in 2022/2023.

3.28 Within Public Health, complaint cases were closed with several outcomes, of which All: Transferred has made up the highest proportion in both 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, with 81.3% of complaints assigned to this outcome during 2021/2022. However due to no complaints received in 2022/2023, no outcomes were recorded for this year.

Lessons Learned

- 3.29 When a complaint, question, comment or compliment is completed and closed by a service, colleagues have some mandatory fields to complete. One of these fields is 'Lessons Learned.' This is an opportunity for staff to reflect on how that particular case could have been prevented or gone better (for complaints in particular) and where we, as a Council, can improve with future cases. This is then used for learning and training purposes for not only the team who have handled the case, but also for the wider Council. The Customer Relations team encourage colleagues to complete this section as in depth as they can, so that we can be more specific when reviewing how we can do better.
- 3.30 In 2022/2023, lessons learned were recorded for 43.2% (n=54) of closed complaints within Adult Social Care. Of those 54 lessons learned, 8.8% (n=11) related to organisation processes, 8.0% (n=10) were associated to additional training being delivered, and 4.8% (n=6) related to the theme of improving communication.
- 3.31 When a service sends a final response but does not close the case on Contact Us, this can mean the expected service standard is recorded as not achieved even though the customer may have received a response within the service standard. When CRT become aware that a case should have been closed by a service, CRT close it. However, the option to add learning and the complaint outcome is not available and is recorded as Unknown. Between December 2021 and February 2022, CRT undertook an exercise to work through each open case on Contact Us to try and close some of the older cases. It was found that numerous cases had had the final response sent by the service without the case being closed online so there was a short period of multiple closures by CRT. The onus is now on the services to close their own cases to ensure that the full closure details are captured.
- 3.32 In 2022/2023 CRT worked together with the Adult Social Care Services to offer training on Contact Us to any new staff who would be required to respond to complaints and also to more Business Support Officers to enable them to progress and to understand the system better.
- 3.33 For Public Health, none of the cases received were classed as complaints and therefore no lessons learned were recorded.
- 3.34 Examples of 'Lessons Learned' that we have had from past cases within ASC and Public Health include:
- To remind providers of the notice period they need to give when withdrawing services and that they service the full period. To remind social care to communicate with providers (withdrawing) and customer/family so customer is not left without care and support
 - Personal Expense Allowance (PEA) decisions need to be recorded accurately within financial assessments
 - Workers to maintain recording conversation and responding to queries as they come in
 - Assessment could have been offered earlier in the pathway - feedback given to staff involved
 - Reflective practice in Team Leader supervision on handling of complaints completed as it has been a long and drawn-out process

Compliments, Comments and Questions

3.35 For 2022/2023, compliments, comments and questions made up 59.0% (n=295) of the total cases assigned to Adult Social Care, this is a 34.6% decrease from 2021/2022. In 2022/2023, 59.0% (n=174) of the total compliments, comments and question cases received were compliments, 3.7% (n=11) were comments, and 37.3% (n=110) were related to questions.

3.36 For Public Health, 100% (n=3) of total cases were compliments, comments and questions, which was a 66.7% difference compared to 2021/2022. In 2022/2023, 33.3% (n=1) of the total compliments, comments and question cases received were questions. The remaining 66.7% (n=2) were comments (Figure 8).

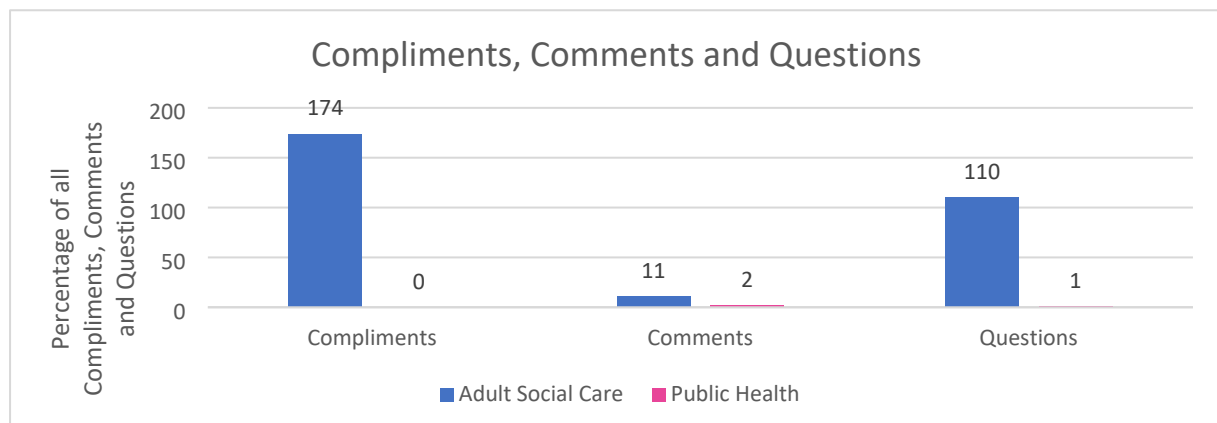


Figure 8: Compliments, Comments and Questions for Adult Social Care and Public Health in 2022/2023.

3.37 In 2020/2021, Adult Social Care received 431 comments, questions and compliments. Of that number, 90.3% (n=389) were closed within the expected service standard, while 9.7% (n=42) exceeded the service standard. In 2021/2022, the number of comments, questions and compliments increased to 451 and 93.6% (n=422) were closed within the expected service standard leaving 6.4% (n=29) exceeding. In 2022/2023, the total decreased to 295 comments, questions and compliments were received, with 87.8% (n=259) closed within the expected service standard, 11.2% (n=33) exceeded and 1.0% (n=3) were not closed.

3.38 For Public Health in 2020/2021, 49 comments, questions and compliments were received. Of that number, 89.8% (n=44) were closed within the expected service standard, while 10.2% (n=5) exceeded the service standard. In 2021/2022, the number of comments, questions and compliments decreased to 9 and 77.8% (n=7) were closed within the expected service standard leaving 22.2% (n=2) exceeding. In 2022/2023, further decreased with 3 comments, questions and compliments received. 66.7% (n=2) closed within the expected service standard, 33.3% (n=1) exceeded.

3.39 Although we receive a similar number of complaints and compliments. Many compliments go directly to the service or individual's emails, therefore a lot of these do not get logged on to Contact Us. This is an area we are working on with the teams as we would like to celebrate these compliments wider.

3.40 A few examples of compliments which have been sent directly to the teams and/or staff include the following:

i) *Compliment for XX Team, I would just like to show my appreciation, for all the excellent service and helpfulness, from your employee XX. They truly went over and above to help me*

when I was poorly and without a home to reside in. I know they are only doing their job, but it's nice to know that people like XX, are so compassionate about their work. I truly am very grateful.

ii.) Following my XX's recent Alzheimer's diagnosis, I would like to say a huge thank you to the various staff at WCC who have been assisting XX (and myself) with accessing care. I'm sure there have been lots of people behind the scenes that I'm not aware of but I would like to highlight the following staff whose professionalism and compassion are making a huge difference. Adult Social Care, Domiciliary Care Referral Team, Finance – Adult Social Care. I would be grateful if you could pass on my thanks and also make their managers aware of my comments

iii.) Card received. To everyone who helped XX. A big thank you to all of the Reablers who looked after XX, we would not be doing so well without their help, efficient, knowledgeable, caring and cheerful. They are now getting dressed and washing without any help. Well taught. XX is getting about now, often with a stick and we have been out a few times in the car. So far so good, we would not be here without your help. All missing you including XX.

iv.) Compliment for XX (PDSS practitioner). From XX of customer XX. XX thank you for today. You were brilliant in my eyes. I feel a lot more confident now that things will improve. No doubt you will be in touch soon. Thanks XX

Customer Platform

3.41 In January 2023 Cabinet agreed the Microsoft Technology Platform (Dynamics) would be used to replace the existing customer relationship management system solution. This is a significant change which will help to address some of the weaknesses in data, recording and insight about customer feedback set out in this report.

3.42 A single customer platform for the Council, allows:

- direct 1-to-1 communication with customers so they can view and easily understand where they are in any process with us;
- a single view of the customer;
- consistent and quality data collection and analytics accessible to our reporting tools; and
- simple and repeatable digitisation for those able to use it.

3.43 The first release of the customer platform, currently planned for August 2023, includes the modules for dealing with customer feedback and complaints. This will provide a single customer platform enabling officers to view the full history of the Council's interaction with a customer including actions taken previously. This will allow officers to access a fuller record of contact so as to provide a more joined up response. Further releases of the Customer Platform to modernise our digital services are planned throughout the financial year.

3.44 It is important that the Council has an effective and efficient customer feedback system in place which ensures that:

- we will actively listen and respond empathetically and professionally to concerns, complaints or queries from members of the public
- to allow us to work with colleagues to provide the best response within the timescales determined by the appropriate complaints procedure.;;
- complaints and compliments are accurately recorded, leading to accurate performance data being produced to drive improvement;

- when things have gone wrong, they are put right as quickly as possible;
- both complainants and staff understand the relevant complaints procedure, how it relates to them and their rights and responsibilities within it;
- any learning from complaints is acknowledged and that the Customer Relations Team, work with the appropriate service area to ensure that the necessary changes are made to improve services provided; and
- high quality and timely performance reporting is provided to management teams, to ensure that they are aware of issues arising and can work with the Customer Relations Team to resolve these and maintain a high-quality service.

3.45 Over time, the customer platform will provide a foundation for the careful application of automation and other technologies to enhance customer experience. This will help meet increasing demand, provide greater consistency and assurance about process, and support the Council's challenging financial position.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 Where customer feedback resulted in a service provided, process change or training, this was managed within services existing resources. The Customer Platform funding was approved by Cabinet on 27th January 2023.

5 Environmental Implications

5.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Complaints Procedure

Background Papers

	Name	Contact Information
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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Councillors Dahmash, Bell, Barker, Drew, Holland and Rolfe