

**HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

15 OCTOBER 2019

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE
ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT
1 APRIL 2018 TO 31 MARCH 2019**

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Summary

The report provides information on the number, type and other information on adult social care complaints received during the period April 2018 - March 2019. It also highlights some examples of the many positive things people have said about the provision of adult social care in Medway over the same period and the service improvements Medway Council has made because of lessons learnt from complaints.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, requires local authorities to have in place procedures for dealing with complaints relating to Adult Social Care.
- 1.2 There is a further statutory requirement to produce and publish an annual report specifying the number of complaints received, the number of complaints which the Council decided were well-founded, and the number of complaints that the Council has been informed have been referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).
- 1.3 In accordance with the council's constitution, paragraph 22.2 (c)(iii) of the Overview and Scrutiny rules, this committee is responsible for the review and scrutiny of all the functions and duties of the Council under relevant legislation in force, relating to residential and day care, domiciliary care, respite care and social work for older people, adults with physical

disabilities, adults with mental health problems and learning disabilities, homecare services.

2. Background

- 2.1 The aim of adult social care is to make sure that local people get the best possible care during the times in their lives when they need help. There may be occasions when things go wrong or when people are unhappy with the service they receive. When this happens people should, and have a right to, complain. The Council's complaints arrangements focus on dealing with problems quickly and effectively, putting things right and learning from complaints to improve services. This report explains how Medway Council is doing in this respect, providing information on the number, type and other information on adult social care complaints.
- 2.2 It is important to reflect on the compliments and thanks received, which provide a valuable insight into the provision of adult social care services. This report also highlights some examples of the positive things people have said about the provision of adult social care services, and the professionalism and commitment of staff.
- 2.3 The Council uses complaints and compliments as important learning opportunities to make changes and improvements to our services.

3. Complaints Process

- 3.1 The Local Authority Social Services and NHS Complaints Regulations 2009 introduced a single, more customer focused approach to complaint handling across health and social care. There is a single local resolution stage, in which Medway Council must be investigate and resolve the complaint as speedily as possible and in a manner that best meets the needs of the complainant. The legislation stipulates that complaints should be completed six months from the date the complaint was received. If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome of their complaint, they can make a referral to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- 3.2 Medway Council's complaint arrangements focus on achieving the best possible outcomes for those making a complaint. The aim is to give the service user answers or an explanation to help them to understand what happened and, where appropriate, an apology and a commitment to learn from mistakes made. The objective is to provide reassurance that when a complaint is upheld the errors made will not be replicated either to them, or to anyone else, and that the Council will take action to ensure this.

4. Managing Complaints

- 4.1 Complaints that are made verbally and are solved within 24 hours are not recorded as a formal complaint. An example is if a service user contacts her

social worker because she has not received minutes of a meeting and the social worker sends the minutes the next day, this is not a formal complaint.

- 4.2 A complainant can make a complaint verbally to any staff member, by telephone, by e-mail or in writing. The Social Care Complaints Manager (SCCM) assesses the complaint and the seriousness of the issues raised to establish the risk and actions needed to reduce that risk. The Social Care Complaints Manager acknowledges the receipt of the complaint within three working days. The social care complaints manager will determine the most appropriate course of action for resolving the complaint, which will usually be by staff at the point of delivery. Staff should discuss and address the complaint with the complainant as quickly as possible and respond in writing or by e-mail within 20 working days. In cases that are more complex the response may take longer.
- 4.3 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the Medway complaints process and the complainant feels that the complaint has not been resolved, the Social Care Complaints Manager will inform the complainant of their right to complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and provide the complainant with information on how to complain to the LGSCO. In dealing with any complaint, the LGSCO will consider how the Council has dealt with the complaint, including the reasonableness and appropriateness of the Council's decisions.
- 4.4 A service user may require assistance from an advocate or an interpreter. The social care complaints will arrange an interpreter and provide a list of organisations who can provide an advocacy service. These services will then help service users to make a complaint, to understand the process or speak for them if they wish and support them throughout the complaints process.
- 4.5 Medway Council is guided by the following principles of good complaint handling:
- Getting it right first time
 - Providing clear information about how to complain
 - Providing support to the complainant
 - Being customer focused
 - Listening to customers
 - Being open and accountable
 - Acting fairly and proportionately
 - Recording complaints
 - Responding in a timely way
 - Putting things right if a mistake was made
 - Learning from complaints and seeking continuous improvement.
- 4.6 Quarterly reports provide information on the number and type of complaints, and learning from complaints as well as recommendations to improve services if this was appropriate. The Manager for Social Care Complaints

presents the quarterly reports to the Adult Social Care Quality and Performance Meetings.

5. Role of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

- 5.1 The role of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) is to provide redress in cases of service failure, which has caused injustice to the public and seeks to resolve cases informally where it can, determining the reasonableness of decisions of bodies being complained about.
- 5.2 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's recommendations aim to put complainants back in the position they were in before the maladministration occurred.
- 5.3 The LGSCO will consider complaints from people whose social care is funded or partly funded by the Council and from people who 'self-fund' from their own resources. The LGSCO will ensure that everyone has access to the same independent Ombudsman Service, regardless of how the care service is funded.

6. Complaint Analysis: 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

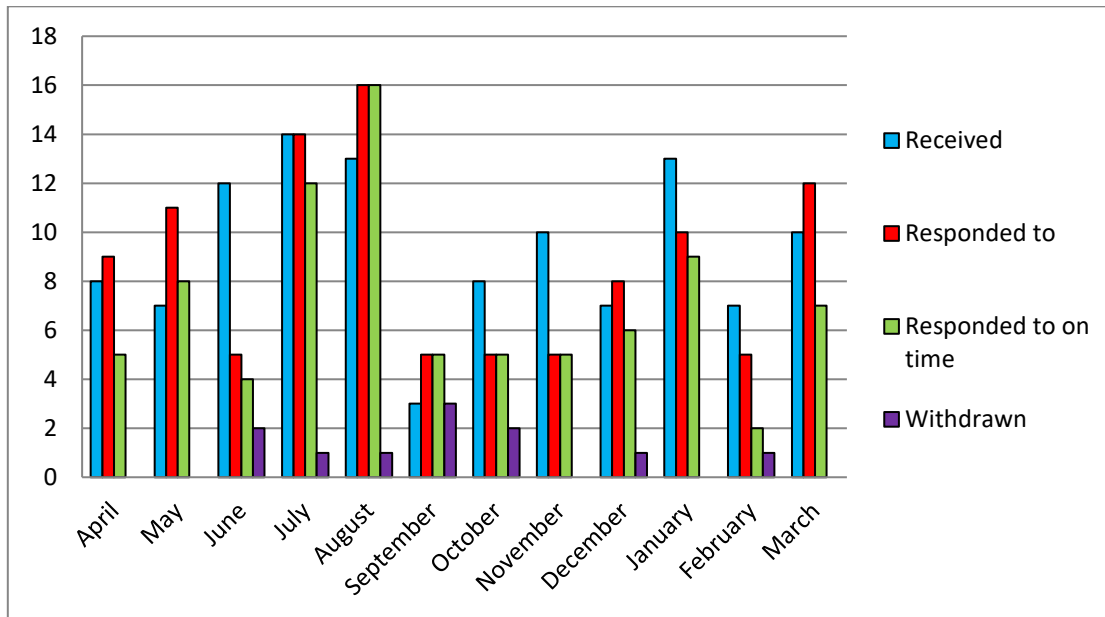
6.1 Complaints handled in 2018-2019

Brought forward from 2017-2018	13
New complaints received between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019	112
Complaints dealt with under safeguarding procedures	2
Complaints handled between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019	125
Complaints responded to between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019	105
Complaints withdrawn	11
Open complaints still waiting for a response at year-end	9

6.2 Breakdown of Stage 1 complaints, received from 01/04//18 to 31/03/19

	April	May	June	Q.1	July	Aug	Sep	Q.2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q.3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	Total
Complaints carried over from previous quarter	13				13				3				6				
Total complaints received	8	7	12	27	14	13	3	30	8	10	7	25	13	7	10	30	112
Total complaints responded to	9	11	5	25	14	16	5	35	5	5	8	18	10	5	12	27	105
Total number of complaints withdrawn	0	0	2	2	1	1	3	5	2	0	1	3	0	1	0	1	11
Total number of complaints responded to in 20 days.	5	8	4	17	12	16	5	35	5	5	6	16	9	2	7	18	86
% of complaints dealt with within 20 days*	55.5%	73%	80%	68%	85%	100%	100%	94%	100%	100%	75%	89%	90%	40%	58%	67%	82%
% of complaints acknowledged within 3 days	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total number of complaints not responded to at end of each quarter			13					3				6			9		

6.3 Stage 1 complaints received and responded to in 20 days between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019



6.4 Comparison of number of complaints received, by year

2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
112	83	82	95	98

6.5 Medway Council received 112 social care complaints in 2018-2019, compared with 83 in 2017-2018; a 26% increase.

6.6 Number of complaints carried over into next financial year

2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
8	13	15	14	20

6.7 Four people made more than one complaint in 2018-2019 compared with:

- three complainants in 2017-2018
- seven complainants in 2016-2017
- seven complainants in 2015-2016
- three complainants in 2014-2015

6.8 Number of stage one complaints, received in 2018-2019, by team.

Team	Total
Locality 1	23
Locality 2	20
Locality 3	24
Disability under 25	4
Disability +25	1
Integrated Discharge Team	6
Occupational Therapy	1
AMPH	1
Review Team	1
Shared Lives Team	2
Extra Care Housing	2
Commissioning and Partnership	16
Financial Assessment	13
Exchequer Services	0
SDS	1
Client Financial Services	10
Client Financial Affairs	1
Total	125*

***This is more than the 112 complaints received as several complaints involved more than one team.**

6.9 Comparison of numbers of complaints about the frontline teams in Adult Social Care (not including Partnership Commissioning Team and Client Financial Services).

2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015
79	66	63	69	63

6.10 Complainants accessed the complaints procedure in the following ways:

Method of contact	Number
All contacts involving E-mail	68 E-mail - 59 E-mail & letter - 6 E-mail & Lagan - 3
Letter	24
Telephone	12
Face to face at Gun Wharf to the Social Care Complaints Manager	7
Referred by the Local Ombudsman	1
Total	112

6.11 Complainant's ethnicity

White/British	104
White/Any Other White Background	2
Asian/British Indian	2
Asian/Bangladeshi	1
Information not held	1
Black/ Black British/Caribbean	0
Black/ African	1
Other Ethnic group	1
Total	112

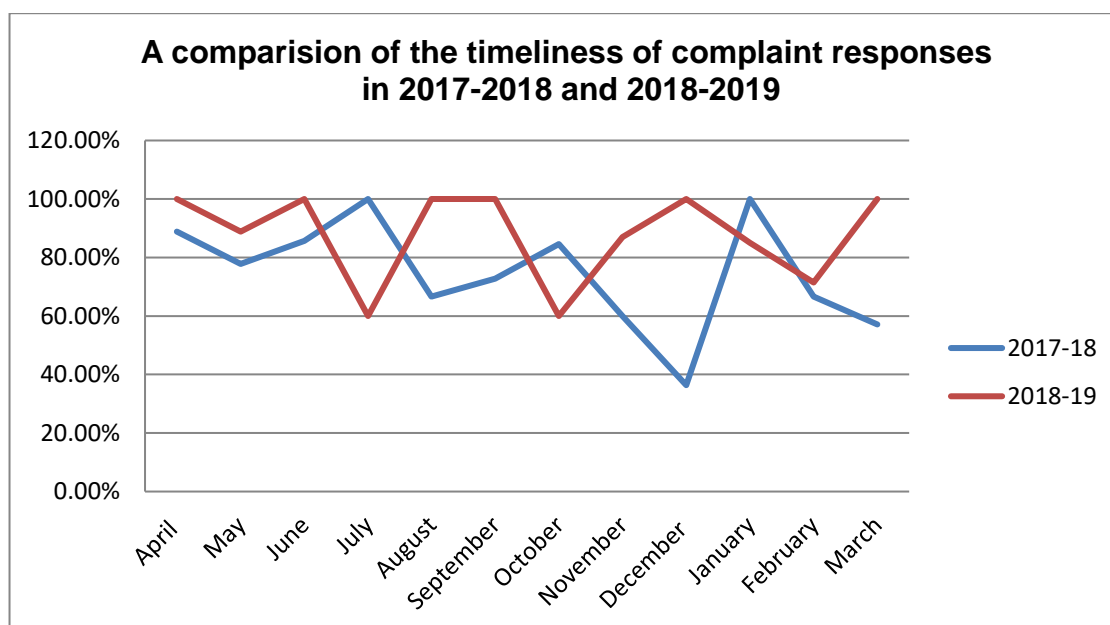
7. Timeliness of Responses

7.1 Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee made a recommendation, in June 2015, to change the timescale for a response to an adult social care complaint from 10 to 20 working days. Cabinet accepted this recommendation, commencing on 1 August 2015. Medway Council now aims to reply to social care complaints within 20 working days, although this may vary depending on the complexity of the case and the number of issues complained about. Some complaints can involve several teams and services, for example, client financial services, locality teams, commissioning, service providers and health services.

7.2 Time taken to respond to complaints between 01/04/18 to 31/03/19.

	20 days	21-25 days	26-64 days	65+ days	Total
Number of responses	86	10	7	2	105
% of complaints Answered	82%	10%	6%	2%	100%

7.3 Staff have made a great effort to improve the timeliness of responding to adult social care complaints. In 2018-2019, 86 (82%) of the responses sent out were within 20 working days, compared with 43% in 2017-2018, 45 % in 2016-17, 50% in 2015-2016 and 46% in 2014-2015.



7.4 Number of responses within 20 working days in each quarter

2017-18	Responses within 20 working days
Q1	9 (45 %)
Q2	10 (45 %)
Q3	7 (54 %)
Q4	6 (32 %)

8. Complaint Types and Outcomes

8.1 Types of issues raised and outcomes for complaints responded to between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019.

Complaint type	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	TOTAL
Financial	5	1	23	29
Lack of/ poor communication	1	0	25	26
Behaviour or attitude of staff	6	1	13	20
Service provided	4	1	10	15
Standard of home care	2	1	6	9
Disagreeing with a financial assessment/decision	7	0	0	7
Disagreeing with a decision re service provided	5	1	1	7
Lack of support	3	2	1	6
Disagreeing with an assessment	4	0	0	4
Standard of respite care	2	1	1	4
Inaccuracies in assessments	0	0	1	1
Not providing a service	0	0	1	1
Delays in providing a service	1	0	2	3
Discharge from hospital	1	1	0	2
Disagreeing with a decision	0	0	1	1
Standard of residential care	1	0	1	2
Delays in assessing needs	0	0	0	0
Delay in reviewing a care plan	0	0	1	1
Delays in allocating a social worker	1	0	2	3
Delays in providing a service	0	0	1	1
Meeting cancelled	0	1	0	1
Lack of information	0	0	0	0
Lack of service provision	0	0	0	0
Changes in social worker	0	0	0	0
Standard day care	0	0	0	0
Total	43	10	90	132*

***The total number of issues complained about is greater than 105 responses sent in 2018-2019 as one complaint can be about several issues.**

8.2 Analysis of issues complained about.

- The number of upheld complaints about lack of communication increased from one in 2017-2018 to 25 in 2018-2019. This is a significant increase.
- There were no upheld complaints about discharge from hospital compared with one in 2017-2018. The Integrated Discharge Team has sustained the reduction of complaints about the discharge from hospital process for two years.
- There was an increase in the overall number of complaints about services provided from 18 in 2018-2019, compared with 12 in 2017-2018 and 6 in 2016-2017.
- The number of upheld financial complaints decreased to 13 in 2018-2019 compared with 19 in 2017-2018 and 19 in 2016-2017.
- The number of upheld complaints about the behaviour and attitude of staff increased to 13, compared with 2 in 2017-2018 and 7 in 2016-2017.

8.3 24 (29%) of complainants were not satisfied with the initial response to their complaint compared with:

- 11 (15%) complainants in 2017-2018
- 7 (9.5%) complainants in 2016-2017
- 11 (11%) complainants in 2015-2016
- 11 (11%) complainants in 2014-2015

8.4 The outcomes for the complaints who were dissatisfied with their initial response to their complaint were as follows:

- Nine complainants received further responses.
- Six complaints were resolved with further actions
- Five complaints were resolved following a meeting with the complainant.
- Two complainants referred their complaint to the Local Ombudsman
- One complaint received financial compensation.
- One complaint remains unresolved and the invoices are still disputed

9. Decisions made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

9.1 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman received six complaints about adult social care in 2018-2019, as compared with 3 in 2017-2018, six complaints in 2016-2017 and 11 complaints in 2015-2016.

9.2 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman closed ten complaints in 2018-19. The LGSCO made the following decisions:

Decisions	Number of complaints
Upheld, maladministration and injustice	3
Upheld and maladministration, no injustice	1
Not upheld, no maladministration	1
Closed after initial enquires, no further action	2
Premature complaint sent back to LA	2
Decision not to investigate	1
Total	10

9.3 The LGSCO is still investigating one complaint.

9.4 The outcomes of the four upheld complaints are as follows:

- i. A mother complained that Medway Council failed to allocate a social worker to support her son, Mr J, when he signed a tenancy for a two-bedroom property. Medway Council assessed Mr J's needs in 2015 as needing 105 hours of support to live independently. Mr J accepted a tenancy for a two-bedroom property in 2016. The mother asked Medway Council to ask for 24-hour care for her son from their preferred service provider. The resources panel declined the care package due to the high cost and suggested suitable alternatives. The LGSCO concluded that the apology for the delay in allocating a worker was a suitable remedy and that Medway Council was not at fault, as a Local Authority can consider the efficient use of its resources for the provision of social care.
- ii. A daughter referred her complaint to the LGSCO and the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. They found that there was an unexplained delay of about a month between the Council being aware that Mr D needed a social care assessment in April 2015, and starting the assessment in May. This delay between April and May was a fault by Medway Council, which contributed to the overall delay in discharging Mr D from hospital. The

Ombudsman also found the care home at fault in not undertaking an adequate pre-admissions assessment.

- The LGSCO made the following recommendations:
 - Medway Council should review its current arrangements for dealing with hospital referrals for adult social care assessments and identify an action plan to resolve any problems identified in the review.
 - Review the current arrangements and ensure that residential providers carry out adequate pre-admission assessments.

Since 2015, Medway Council has reviewed the current hospital discharge arrangements and considered the likelihood of the delays experienced by Mr D occurring again. Medway Council has strengthened its hospital discharge arrangements, in partnership with Medway Foundation Trust and Medway Community Health. This is a continual process of improvement and arrangements are still evolving. The hospital social workers are now co-located with NHS staff, to form an Integrated Discharge Team, with robust, joined up systems in place to ensure effective communication. The team is staffed by social workers 7 days per week.

These improved arrangements have resulted in a reduction in Delayed Transfers of Care (DToC). During 2016-17, the national average number of DToCs per 100,000 attributable to councils was 6.3, compared to 3.3 in Medway. In 2018-19, this had improved to 1.8 in Medway, compared with 4.3 nationally.

Medway Council is confident that these improved arrangements will avoid unnecessary hospital discharge delays of the nature experienced by Mr D. Medway Council established the Access to Resources (ART) brokerage service to match service users assessed needs to providers that can meet them. ART work closely with local care homes, sending a summary of assessed needs relating to people for whom the Council is seeking to source a placement. If a provider believed they can meet the person's needs it is then standard practice for the home's manager to visit the person in question to undertake their own assessment.

- iii. A nephew, Mr Y, complained that Medway Council overcharged his aunt for her care. The LGSCO found that Medway Council charged Ms Y for more care than she received. This occurred because neither the care provider nor Mr Y informed Medway Council of any variations to the care package. Medway Council apologised to Mr Y. Medway Council paid him £100 for his time as compensation for his time and trouble and trouble to make a complaint. Medway Council has taken steps to ensure that Ms Y is invoiced the same amount as the care agency invoices Medway Council.

10. Learning from Complaints

- 10.1 The Manager for Social Care Complaints presents quarterly reports at performance and quality assurance meetings to ensure that teams learn

lessons from complaints and that performance is monitored in terms of timeliness of responses to complaints.

10.2 Financial complaints

Medway Council upheld twenty-three complaints about financial issues.

- Medway Council upheld twelve complaints about incorrect invoices. Medway Council overcharged for services not received while in the service user was hospital, on holiday, when the day centre was closed, no respite care was provided and calls were cancelled. Some mistakes occurred when the service provider or relatives did not inform the social worker about a variance to the care package. In two cases the service users had already been paid for the invoice. Medway Council corrected the mistakes in the invoices and the complainants received an apology.
- Four complainants complained about a lack of clarity about top-up fees. All staff should provide clear information as to when the service provision is enablement and when service users have to pay for the service. Services users need to understand they may have to pay for services before the six weeks period ends.
- Two people complained about the length of time it took to correct invoices.
- Two people complained that Medway Council delayed sending out an invoice.
- One service user complained that Medway Council did not inform him he had to pay for a helpline and he did not want a helpline. Medway Council agreed to waive the charge.

10.3 The learning from these complaints is that social workers should record all services on Framework-I, as well as any variations to services provided. Clear information about financial assessments should be given to service users and their relatives.

10.4 Complaints about a lack of communication

- There were several complaints about a lack of communication from staff, mainly about phone calls not returned and e-mails not answered. Many complainants initially tried to resolve their complaints informally but then complained about the lack of response to their queries or concerns. The complaints about a lack of communication are across the areas of finance and the social care teams.
- A sister complained that Medway Council did not provide clear and concise information about the amount of funding available from Medway Council for a residential placement for her brother or provide her with sufficient information when family members were trying to find a suitable residential placement for their brother. She received an apology.

- A daughter complained that Medway Council failed to inform her about Medway Council's application to the court of protection in respect of her father. She received an apology.
- A brother complained that the social worker told him about his sister's death by e-mail. Medway Council apologised that the social worker had been on leave when his sister died. The care home should have phoned him but they did not have his telephone number. Medway Council apologised that the social worker had not provided the care home with his telephone number.
- A complainant complained about the lack of communication during a safeguarding investigation.
- The family were unaware that Medway Council had closed their father's case as the NHS had agreed to Continuing Health Care.
- A daughter sent an e-mail "to complain about Medway Council's poor administration and lack of response to letters sent." Her mother self-funded her residential care until her money depleted. The daughter received confirmation that Medway Council would provide financial assistance from 31 January 2018. The daughter had already paid the full fees for February and March 2018. She received invoices from Medway Council for her contribution from 31 January. On 24 July 2018 after much chasing, Medway Council sent the top-up fees agreement, which she signed and returned on 26 July. On 31 August, she wrote to Medway Council asking when she would receive invoices for the top-up fees. She did not receive a reply. She sent another letter on 18 January 2019, but did not receive a reply. Medway Council apologised for distress caused by a lack of communication and for the delay in sending out invoices.

10.5 Behaviour of Staff

- Relatives and service users complained that social workers were rude during telephone conversations and in one case during a home visit. Medway Council apologised about the conduct of the staff members.
- Relatives complained about social workers not arriving for a meeting or arriving late. One service user complained that the social worker cancelled visits.
- A daughter complained about the lack of understanding or empathy when a staff member telephoned her while she was on the way to her father's funeral to discuss the services that her father had received. The social worker should have checked Framework-i. Medway Council offered condolences and a sincere apology. The team manager showed the staff member how to look up services on Framework-i and provided bereavement training for the staff member.

- A service user complained that a social worker did not listen to his request to go to a drop-in centre, she rushed his assessment which was completed in ten minutes. The social worker cancelled visits. He wanted another social worker. Medway Council apologised for the cancelled appointment and agreed to allocate a different social worker who would discuss his request to attend a drop in centre.
- A service user complained about the way a social worker conducted her annual review. She complained that the social worker did not ask what was working well and she did not refer to the last year's documents. The social worker did not make eye contact. The service user received an apology. Medway Council allocated a new social worker, who rearranged the review.
- A service user complained that the social worker had not made a referral to the direct payments team.
- A daughter complained that the DOLs assessor sent a letter to her two weeks after her father died. Her father's name was wrong and it was very upsetting to read about her father's failing health. She received an apology, as the staff member had not checked the electronic file before sending the letter out.
- A wife complained about the social worker's failure to send any paperwork to the residential care home, following her husband's discharge from hospital.
- A mother complained that she raised concerns about the home care her daughter was receiving, that the social worker did not take her concerns seriously.

10.6 Services Provided

Complaints about the home care commissioned by Medway Council were as follows:

- A number of service users complained about late calls. Medway Council would expect carers to let a client know if they are running late. Calls should be within 30 minutes of the times specified in the care plan.
- Complaints also included carers not leaving food or water for a service user, using the wrong wheelchair, one carer did not know the code for the key safe, a carer did not spend the whole time with the service user, and a carer failed to apply cream to service user's skin. Two relatives complained that the carer had not administered medication correctly. Medway Council will continue to monitor the service provider in respect of the medication errors.

10.7 Complaints about delays in providing a service:

- Several complainants complained about delays in reviewing care plans, undertaking assessments of need, undertaking a carer's assessment, a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS) assessment, an occupational assessment for adaptations, and in providing care packages.

- A son complained that Platters Farm Lodge could not provide gluten free food for his father, which added extra costs to his stay at Platters Farm Lodge. Medway Council refunded the father for the cost of the gluten free food.
- A complainant complained about the lack of support in finding a permanent residential home for her brother.
- A daughter complained about the delay in painting white lines on her mother's front steps.

11. Compliments

11.1 Compliments provide valuable information about the quality of our services and identify what is working well. The Adult social care Teams send compliments to the social care complaints manager for logging. Quotes from compliments are listed below.

- A relative complimented an assistant integrated practitioner: *"A HUGE thank you for all your hard work over the last few weeks, my hubby and I really appreciate it"*.
- A family told an occupational therapist that they were so impressed with a social worker for his dedication and professionalism.
- Parents were very appreciative of all the support and assistance given to their daughter, which enabled her to return to the community after six years in hospital or failed residential placements. Direct payments are in place and a PA supports their daughter. The 24-hour care package has made such a difference to their daughter's life.
- Grandchildren sent the social worker a thank you card and flowers to express their gratitude for the support offered when their grandmother needed to move into a residential home. The card reads 'we really appreciate you stepping in when we were going through such a difficult time. I do not think you will ever be able to appreciate the impact you had. The social worker was professional throughout, demonstrating exceptional ethics and displaying her willingness and care to the individual and their family.'
- *A relative e-mailed" I would just like to pass on my appreciation to the social worker and other staff. From start to finish, the service we received has been faultless. It was refreshing to deal with such a professional and caring team who carried out their duties to a high standard with a very positive outcome for my daughter. Thank you. All of you are an asset to your team."*
- *Positive feedback from another professional" I would like to compliment the social worker who has completed excellent work with the X family. The family stated the social worker was 'fabulous' and has been a 'good moral support'. I*

myself have found her professional collaborative skills excellent. She has a real passion for her role and is motivated to create a positive change”.

- A service user provided positive feedback about a social worker. Prior to the social worker's involvement the service user lacked confidence and was at particularly low point in her life, struggling with mental health difficulties. She thanked the social worker for all his support, which enabled her to consider a good future when things had not seemed good at all.
- Parents sent in photos to show the how the sparkle was back in their daughter's eyes since she moved into the community. They were very appreciative of all the support and assistance given to their daughter, which enabled her to return to the community after six years in hospital or failed residential placements.
- A daughter sent a letter to the manager stating: *My mother had a serious hip operation and was housebound. My sister and I had struggled to organise support and care for our mother. We contacted social services with the hope we could have support and guidance on how to make our mother more comfortable and for her to have enablement carers after her operation. The social worker has been outstanding with her support, empathy and guidance that we needed during this very difficult time. She has ensured that our mother had equipment delivered to help her with her immobility and always offered advice on how we could make her more comfortable. We honestly do not know we would have coped without her support. She was helpful and kind, she is a truly a credit to your services.*
- A service user e-mailed the following: *I just wanted to express my profound gratitude to you for taking the time, compassionate regard, patience and understanding and ensuring I have the correct equipment and disability aids, to continue to live as normal and comfortable life as is possible. I just needed to let you know that my level of mobility, comfort and safety around our home has greatly improved, thanks to you. Thank you so much for taking the time to help us”.*
- A husband and wife e-mailed Medway Council: *“We are so grateful to your department for the help you have given to us. The risks of falls decreased by you supplying bars and rails for us. Your representative was a great advertisement for your organisation. He arrived exactly on time and was so polite, professional and thorough in considering our problems. Now that the work has been done, we move both within and outside of the house with its various external doors and steps with so much more confidence. Please extend our thanks to this real gentleman for his help and courtesy. Our movements in the house are so much easier for us. Our thanks to you and your staff.”*

- A mother sent a thank you letter to the social worker *“This is actually a thank you letter to thank you for all your help in stabilising Z and helping to make his life have a meaning. I don't know what I would have done without you as I was at breaking point. You have made such a difference to both of our lives- I used to stay awake at night planning his funeral and now I sleep well.”*

The social worker worked with X following his attempt to end his life. She worked in partnership with Medway Council's housing department to obtain adequate housing for him.

She worked closely with health professionals and supported Mr X to attend health appointments until he was confident to attend on his own.

She accompanied him to attend AA meetings, which enhanced his peer support and has begun to address his alcohol intake.

She supported him to make contact with family members with whom he had lost contact, this was positive in regards to his mental and emotional wellbeing and these relationships have continued to be positive.

Mr Z no longer requires input from Adult Social Care as he can live independently in the community.

- A mother and daughter thanked the social worker for his patience and for taking time to listen to them. Both the mother and daughter said it was a long time since anyone had done this; this had a positive impact and given them some hope.

- A niece sent flowers and a thank you note to a social worker The niece wrote:

“thank you for your outstanding compassionate care for my Aunt at a time when she suffered significant health and mental health issues Your care enabled my aunt to continue to live independently .I have been particularly impressed with the assessments you have offered, review meetings during crisis episodes and most of all your prompt replies to my e-mails. It has been reassuring that you were able to respond within 24 hours. You have kept us informed of all the information we have needed. I really do not know how you found time for this with your workload, it was much appreciated. The care home has been life changing and my aunt looks the happiest she has been for a long time. She says she feels safe and at peace and enjoys her surroundings. You have been a fantastic social worker, always appearing to go an extra mile.

- A mother and father telephoned the manager of the Medway Community Support Outreach Team to express her extreme thanks and gratitude to all the professionals for the positive work and outcome for their son Q. The parents said the interventions made a positive and amazing difference for their son, they would never thought this would be the case again. Their son is

looking after his own personal care, going out into the community, driving again, engaging in conversation and even building up a relationship with a woman. He has returned to work.

- The mother of Q also e-mailed the manger to thank the team for engaging so positively with Q and providing him with the appropriate help.
- A senior community safety officer wanted to highlight *“the outstanding support that a social worker had kindly offered to a vulnerable man. Her professionalism and dedication to her role enabled us to move forward. Without her intervention I doubt the outcome would have been so positive”*.
- A mother thanked the social worker for the help she received to help develop her parenting skills, self-care, cooking skills, how to do housework and how to use public transport. Her son is now settled in school and doing well. Both parents are now in employment and are in stable accommodation. Adult Social Care worked holistically with the mother, the family and Children Services. This was a very intensive piece of work and working in partnership with all relevant agencies was paramount in her recovery.

11.2 Social Work is a difficult job, supporting individuals during what may be the most difficult time in their lives. These situations are emotionally charged and extremely complex. Good practice can make a real difference to people’s lives.

11.3 It is just as important to learn what works well and what service users’ value, as it is to learn from our mistakes.

12. Risk Management

12.1 Risk management is an integral part of good governance. The Council has a responsibility to identify and manage threats and risks to achieve its strategic objectives and enhance the value of services it provides to the community.

Risk	Not handling complaints properly and importantly not learning from complaints could put an adult at risk.
Description	Good complaint handing, including the identification of improvement opportunities from complaints received, helps ensure that Medway Council provides services in a complete and timely way, minimising the possibility of a vulnerable adult being put at risk.
Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Improved management and control of complaint procedures, learning from complaint analysis, helps to identify and minimise potential risk or impact of risk to adults.

13. Equalities Data

- 13.1 The Council is committed to achieving equality of opportunity, access and outcomes for all, through the delivery and commissioning of high-quality services that are accessible and fair and mainstreaming equality and diversity across all service delivery activities. All new services commissioned are subject to a diversity impact assessment that compels service providers to think carefully about how the services are for and demonstrate how it intends to serve their needs. This gives the Council a better measure of the impact the services are having on the community.
- 13.2 Service users come from many different ethnic backgrounds and many have disabilities. We will refer vulnerable adults to an advocacy service if they need assistance in making a complaint. We have made sure that a complainant who was visually impaired received letters in large print. If a complainant is not able to send in a written complaint, we will see the complainant at a venue that is convenient and assessable for them. We will organise a translator if required. We will continue to look at ways to make the complaints process more accessible to adults with disabilities by ensuring that information to about how to complain is published, in easy read, on the website.

14. Financial and Legal Implications

- 14.1 The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, requires local authorities to have in place procedures for dealing with complaints relating to Adult Social Care. There is a further statutory requirement to produce and publish an annual report specifying the number of complaints received, the number of complaints which the Council decided were well founded, and the number of complaints that the Council has been informed have been referred to the LGSCO. The Council must also summarise the subject matter of complaints received, any matters of general importance arising out of those complaints, or the way in which the complaints were handled and any matters where action has been or is to be taken to improve services as a consequence of those complaints.
- 14.2 There are no financial issues arising directly from this report. However, good practice is always more cost effective than poor performance.

15. Recommendations

- 15.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes and comments on the report.

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Appendices

None.

Background Papers

None.