

HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 OCTOBER 2023

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT 1 APRIL 2022 TO 31 MARCH 2023

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Summary

The annual report provides information on the number, type and other information on adult social care complaints received during the period April 2022 - March 2023. It also highlights some examples of the 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. Recommendation

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

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1 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.

2.2 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).

2.3 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, learning disabilities and homecare services.

2.4 Information about the complaints process and the role of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman can be read at [Appendix A](#) and [Appendix B](#).

3. Background

3.1 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.

3.2 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 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.

3.3 The Council uses complaints and compliments as important learning opportunities to make changes and improvements to our services.

4. Options

4.1 This report is for information.

5. Advice and analysis

5.1 **Complaint Analysis: 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023**

5.1.1 The following table provides a breakdown of complaints handled in 2022-2023

Brought forward from 2021-2022	7
New complaints received between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023	85
Complaints handled between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023	92
Complaints responded to between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023	82
Complaints withdrawn between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023	8
Open complaints still waiting for a response on 31 March 2023.	2

5.1.2 Breakdown of Stage One complaints, between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023

	April	May	June	Q.1	July	Aug	Sep	Q.2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q.3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q.4	Total
Complaints carried over from 2021-2022	7																
Total complaints received	9	9	5	23	5	11	7	23	7	11	3	21	9	7	2	18	85
Total complaints responded to	6	7	9	22	6	8	10	24	6	4	8	18	4	8	6	18	82
Total number of complaints withdrawn	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	4	0	0	1	1	8
Total number of complaints responded to in 20 days.	6	5	6	17	6	8	9	23	6	4	7	17	4	7	5	16	73
% of complaints dealt with within 20 days*	100%	71%	66%	77%	100%	100%	90%	96%	100%	100%	88%	94%	100%	76%	83%	89%	89%
% 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				6				4				3				2	

5.1.3 Comparison of number of complaints received, by year.

2022-2023	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019
85	84	99	117	112

5.1.4 Number of complaints, received in 2022-2023, by team.

Team	Total
Locality 1	24
Locality 2	10
Locality 3	10
Disability under 25	5
Integrated Discharge Team	2
Occupational Therapy	4
AMPH and DOLS	2
Transition Team	2
Commissioning and Partnership	11
Placement Team	2
Financial Assessment	7
SDS	3

Client Financial Services	7
Client Financial Affairs	0
CABS	1
Total	90*

*This is more than the 85 complaints received as several complaints involved more than one team.

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

2022-2023	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019
63	68	68	83	79

5.1.6 Complainants accessed the complaints procedure in the following ways.

Method of contact	No of complaints received
Emailed to sccm@medway.gov.uk	63
Telephone call	13
Letter	1
Email followed by letter	4
Online corporate complaint form	4
Total	85

5.1.7 The following table shows the ethnicity of the service users who made a complaint or services users who had a representative to make a complaint on their behalf.

Ethnicity	No. of complaints received in 22-23
White/British	75
White Other	5
Mixed Black/White background	2
Black other	1
Black/African	1
Asian/British Indian	1
Total	85

5.1.8 The following table shows the ethnicity of service users who accessed long term social care. In 2022-2023, 7.7% of people from ethnic minority groups were in receipt of long-term care, compared with 6.1% in 2021-2022, which although an increase on 2021-22 data is just over half the proportion of ethnic minorities reported in the 2021 census for Medway of 15.9%. The table does not consider service users who received short term care.

Ethnic group	Medway		Neighbour Group	National
	21-22	22-23	21-22	21-22
White	92.8%	89.7%	83.5%	82.5%
Ethnic minorities groups (total):	6.1%	7.7%	10.5%	12.4%
• Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	0.6%	1.1%	2.0%	1.4%
• Asian/Asian British	2.7%	3.0%	6.7%	5.3%
• Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	1.7%	2.5%	1.3%	4.6%
• Other Ethnic Group	1.1%	1.1%	0.5%	1.1%

No data	1.1%	2.8%	5.9%	5.2%
2021 census Ethnic minorities	15.9%		-	18.3%

5.2 Timeliness of Response

5.2.1 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.

5.2.2 Time taken to respond to complaints between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023.

	0-20 days	21-25 days	26-64 days	Total
Number of responses	73	5	4	82
% of responses	89%	6%	5%	100%

5.2.3 In, 2022-2023 89% of the responses were answered in 20 working days compared with

- 83% in 2021-2022
- 84% in 2020-2021
- 70% in 1920-2020
- 82% in 2018-2019
- 43% in 2017-2018

5.2.4 The following table describes the types of issues raised and outcomes for complaints responded to between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023.

Complaint type	Not Upheld	Upheld	Total
Lack of/ poor communication	0	20	20
Financial	15	3	18
Delay in providing a service/review	3	10	13
Service provided	10	2	12
Behaviour or attitude of staff	3	1	4
Disagreed with an assessment	4	0	4
Disagreed with a decision re service provided	3	0	3
Delay in allocating a social worker	1	1	2
Discharge from hospital	2	0	2
Changes in social worker.	2	0	2
Delay in providing equipment	0	1	1
Standard of residential care	0	1	1
Standard of home care	0	1	1
Not providing a service	1	0	1
Data Protection Breach	1	0	1
Total	45	40	85*

***The total number of issues complained about is greater than the 82 responses sent in 2022-2023 as one complaint can be about several issues.**

5.2.5 Analysis of issues complained about.

- The number of upheld complaints about lack of communication increased to 20 (24%) compared with 12 in 2021-2022, 17 in 2020-21, 28 in 2019-20 and 25 in 2018-19.
- The number of upheld financial complaints decreased to 3 compared with 10 in 2021-2022, 16 in 2020-21, 17 in 2019-20.
- One complaint was upheld about the behaviour and attitude of staff compared with 1 in 2021-2022, 1 in 2020-21, 6 in 2019-20 and 13 in 2018-19.

5.2.6 20 (23.5%) complainants were not satisfied with the initial response to their complaint compared with:

- 21 (27%) in 2021-22
- 13 (13.5%) in 2020-21
- 26 (23.0%) in 2019-20
- 26 (29.0%) in 2018-19

5.2.7 Eleven complainants were satisfied after receiving a further written response.

One complainant remained dissatisfied and was signposted to the LGSCO.

Eleven complainants referred their complaint to the LGSCO.

5.3 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

5.3.1 Eleven Adult Social Care complainants referred their complaint to the LGSCO compared with twelve in 2021-2022 and five in 2020-2021.

5.3.2 Four investigations were carried over to 2022-2023.

5.3.3 The LGSCO assessed or investigated and closed 17 Adult Social Care complaints in 2022-2023. Of these, the LGSCO decided to conduct a detailed investigation in 8 cases.

5.3.4 The table below shows the outcome of the LGSCO investigations.

Referred back for local resolution	4
Incomplete / invalid	1
Advice given	1
Closed after initial enquiries	3
Detailed investigations	8
	Not upheld 1
	Upheld 7
Total	17

The outcomes of the seven upheld complaints are as follows.

5.3.5 Mr D complained about how the Council handled his late father's care fees. He said the Council wrongly told him his late father's care fees would not increase when he moved into a care home. He also said the Council charged his late father for domiciliary care he did not receive, and it continued to charge him when he was in hospital and after he passed away. The LGSCO found the Council was at fault as gave Mr D the wrong information about his late father's care fees, and it failed to properly review the outstanding domiciliary care fees. Mr D received an apology and £200 as a financial remedy. **Final decision: Upheld: Fault and Injustice.**

5.3.6 Mrs C complained that Medway Council failed to provide suitable care support and supported accommodation to Mr X. There was a 14-month delay in finding suitable accommodation for Mr X. The LGSCO found the following faults:

- A five-month delay in assessing Mr X's care needs.
 - A long delay in completing a carer's assessment.
 - The Council's social workers caused some delays due to errors and failing to complete referrals to progress Mr X's case.
 - There was a lack of understanding within the Council as to which department would be responsible for ensuring Mr X were placed in an accommodation which met his needs. It was not until after the Housing, Sheltered Accommodations Team, and the Best Practice Panel all had declined to support Mr X that this was properly considered.
 - It took the Council from Spring 2021 when Mrs C told the Council she could no longer support Mr X until March 2022 to arrange for its Financial Affairs Team to support Mr X with managing his finances.
- Upheld: Fault and injustice.**

To remedy the injustice the caused to Mrs C and Mr X, Medway Council

- a) apologised in writing to Mrs C and Mr X.
- b) paid Mrs C £750 for the distress and uncertainty the unnecessary delays caused her, and the additional support she had to provide for Mr X until his care support and accommodation was put in place. In addition, Mrs C received £250 for the unnecessary time and trouble she had to pursue her complaint.

The LGSCO listed the following actions for Medway Council to

- ❖ remind its social workers to respond to reasonable communication from service users or their representatives without delay, complete agreed actions, and keep records up to date.
- ❖ remind its social workers to offer and complete carers assessments without delay where family members, or other persons, are providing care for a service user.
- ❖ remind its staff of the importance of ensuring Care Act Assessments are completed, and appropriate support to meet the needs identified are be put in place without delay,
- ❖ review how the Council supports service users who has been assessed to have eligible care needs and needs some form of supported accommodation, to ensure all staff understands the process and which service is responsible for meeting care and accommodation needs.

5.3.7 A daughter complained that Medway Council failed to effectively search for a suitable care placement for her mother, Mrs P. She says the family felt pressured to accept an unaffordable placement. The Council undertook a thorough search for a placement for Mrs P. However, ultimately, it was at fault for failing to provide a genuine choice of placement. This caused Mrs P an injustice as she felt she had to pay a top-up fee to place her mother in a suitable care home.

Upheld: Fault and Injustice

Agreed Actions

- Apologise to Mrs X for the fault identified in this decision.
- Arrange to refund the payments Mrs X has so far paid for top-up fees and to pay the top up fees in the future.

5.3.8 Mr K complained that the care provider failed to secure his late mother's possessions after she died, resulting in them being lost or destroyed. The care provider accepted it did not act carefully before disposing of the possessions, which had significant sentimental value and cannot be replaced. Mr K received an apology and £1,000 as a financial redress.

Upheld: Fault and Injustice.

5.3.9 Mrs Y complained to the LGSCO that Mr B's financial review was delayed which resulted in arrears accruing and that Medway Council did not properly consider whether Mr B could afford to pay the arrears. Medway Council apologised to Mrs Y for the identified faults and completed a proper assessment of what Mr B can afford to pay. Medway Council reviewed how it considers payment arrangements so that these are affordable and do not allow the person's available income to fall below the personal expenditure allowance.

Upheld: Fault and Injustice.

5.3.10 A daughter complained about the care received by her mother during her time in a care home. She says the care home could not manage her mother's needs, did not keep accurate records, and did not update the family appropriately. She also complains the council did not involve the family when it made best interest decisions for her mother.

Upheld: Fault and Injustice

Agreed actions

- Apologise and pay £300 for the distress, anxiety and uncertainty caused.

5.3.11 The Ombudsman upheld one further case despite not investigating it. This was because the council agreed to cancel fees after it told a complainant that his free period of enablement care would be extended for a further six weeks, but then continued to charge for it.

5.4 Learning from complaints.

5.4.1 A service user was not informed that Medway Council had changed her service provider. She was very afraid when two strange people came into her house without her permission as they were given the code for the key lock. She had a good relationship with her previous carers and was very upset about how these two new carers behaved. The service provider was given an apology. She should have been informed about the change of service provider and informed when the new carers were starting. It would have been good practice to allow her to say goodbye to her previous carers.

If services change or are closed i.e., a day centre or reduced the reasons for these changes should be explained to should be explained to the service user.

5.4.2 There is still a need to improve communication with service users and their families. Service users should be given information about who to contact if their social worker is unavailable and easier access to the duty teams and financial teams as well as making sure that phone calls are returned in a timely way. All staff should explain the assessment processes such as a care assessment, a carer's assessment, and the financial assessment process.

5.4.3 Delays were a major theme in complaints in 2022-2023. Some financial assessments as well as financial reviews were delayed. Two complainants complained about delays in the Deprivation of Liberty process. There were complaints about delays finding residential placements and supported accommodation.

5.5 Compliments

5.5.1 Compliments provide valuable information about the quality of our services and identify what is working well. Medway Council received 30 compliments about Adult Social Care compared with 20 in 2020-21 and 14 in 2019-20. Quotes from compliments are listed below.

- *"I just wanted to get in touch to let you know how impressed we are with the occupational therapist's hard work and attention to detail with our building adaptations. She is so knowledgeable and explains what we need and what benefits X with his disabilities. She recently visited us to check everything was as it should be. She is so lovely and friendly, and we just wanted to let you know so she received the praise she deserves."*
- An Advanced Community Practitioner emailed.
"I completed a home visit with one of your student social workers this morning. She was professional, giving a fantastic handover and had the service users' needs at heart. I was really impressed with her and her positive attitude - what a fab addition to Medway!"
- A sister thanked a social worker for her help and advice in respect of her brother, Q, who suffered a traumatic brain injury and is a vulnerable adult and was being taken advantage of and manipulated by a person who was controlling his life and misusing his finances. *"Thanks to your help, the abuser is no longer in touch with Q and controlling what he does. Q is safe for now"*

both financially and emotionally. Q is back to being his normal happy self and we are back being able to look after and protect him.”

- *A service user thanked a Self-Directed Payment Support Coordinator “Thank you for answering my questions so concisely and providing information. input. Your consistency of engagement and empathy in helping your client’s is invaluable. Finding someone prepared to listen, yet adhere to the rules, and to take time to understand, yet know the limitations of the service they are responsible to, is priceless.”*
- *A service user thanked a PA in Direct Payments. She emailed “Just wanted to say a massive thank you. You have always been such a support to both H and me, it is very much appreciated.”*
- *A service user wrote “I have been given your email from other service users who go to my group at 147 Nelson Road Gillingham. I go to the Mental Health Resource Centre 4 times a week. The groups have helped me to learn things and to stay out of hospital. I have benefited by the groups and helping others who are suffering sometimes has helped me feel better about myself. Since the meeting we had about closing the centre and my dad speaking up for me at the group it was great that the centre stayed open”.*
- *A service user thanked an OT from the bottom of his heart. He said she worked so hard to help people and understood people with disabilities, he said he was lucky to meet her.*
- *A private Occupational Therapist working with a client who needed a shower chair sent a compliment about the Medway Council Occupational Therapist “I contacted the Medway Council OT for a replacement chair. The client received the replacement shower chair in a very timely manner, and he was thrilled with the service he received. It really does demonstrate the effectiveness of joint working. Thank you so much for all your teams support, especially L, and I look forward to working with you in the future.”*
- *A service user contacted the Direct Support Team, “I just wanted to say a big thank you for all your efforts in the beginning of our VAT nightmare! It is finally coming to an end, and we have managed to get the issue resolved with the council. Out of all the people I have spoken to in trying to get the matter resolved (and it’s a LOT of people) you were the most compassionate and understanding to our situation, that empathy really made a difference to us.”*
- *A service user sent an email to an occupational therapist “It’s my birthday in a few days and I’ve just had very good news. I’ve been accepted for the place in X which is fully disabled. Happy days I’ve got a brand-new flat. I really thank you for all your help and God bless you for what you’ve done. I think you’re fantastic. I wish you all the best.”*

- A wife sent a thank you card to an Occupational Therapist – *“I can’t thank you enough for all you did for my husband, you went the extra mile to help him.”*
- A daughter withdrew her complaint and sent the following compliment to a social worker in the Integrated Discharge Team. *“Further to our recent correspondence as Mum has now been allocated a permanent place at X Care Home, I now wish to withdraw my formal complaint forthwith. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody involved, especially L, in resolving the matter of where Mum could be safely housed on leaving rehabilitation. L has worked tirelessly to ensure Mum has been properly assessed, and that all her mental and physical needs will be met by the Care Home. The family are very relieved to know that Mum will be settled in a safe environment and that she will not have to worry anymore. Once again please accept my thanks for the prompt action taken by you and Social Services.”*
- A daughter emailed the manager of an Occupational Therapist- *“I am writing to let you know how wonderful S has been in helping my dad while my mum has become increasingly ill/dependent and is now in hospital. Sophie is completely professional, but so caring, supportive, and understanding as well. She has been very clear and easy to understand which is amazing when you are going through a difficult time with lots to process. She told us what help could be available, what we should do and what we could expect during the process of preparing the house for mum’s return, and who would be able to provide what. I just can’t praise her enough, but I feel S has gone above and beyond with keeping me informed - what a lovely lady, you’re lucky to have her.”*
- A Homes for Ukraine social worker received a compliment – *“Good morning, E. We thank you for your efforts to help us. We moved to London; they gave us a house. And we are very happy. Once again, we express our gratitude. We were glad to meet you.”*
- A daughter emailed a compliment about an Occupational Therapist – *“S contacted us following my mum’s needs and package of care referral, I would like to share what working with H has been like. From the initial contact telephone call, she has been so helpful in her support, advice and guidance with my family and myself, my daughter and I have become my mum and dad’s full-time carers since dad had an accident that doesn’t allow him to currently care for my mum. H’s time and patience was so gratefully received and appreciated. She has been so kind, considerate, and professional working with mum to assess what her situation required, the respect she showed her and us and the proactive follow up’s that have happened since she met with us. We are very grateful for the care and consideration that has been provided by H.”*
- A son emailed the Client Financial Services Team- *“I just wanted to say that during this whole process Medway Council have been brilliant. My case/situation (the safeguarding issues, the finances, and the house) has been very difficult to manage from my side. Yet throughout this I have felt*

nothing but supported by Medway Council. The Income Team and Finance department have been extremely helpful, incredibly pragmatic and I felt that I was really dealing with people that listened and acted accordingly to get to the best outcome. I want to say thank you, the team have been outstanding flexibility, pragmatism, care, and professionalism. I genuinely have nothing to say but praise for your actions over the last 4 years, absolute praise. This all started with the brilliant way X helped in the beginning and anyone I have dealt with since have been equally brilliant.”

- A service user sent an email thanking an Occupational Therapist for completing the housing form so quickly. She stated *“the report was fantastic, and everything is highlighted. I really appreciate everything you're doing for me so I would like to say a big thank you to you. I've never had or seen any OTs or social workers looking at every angle for my needs like you have done today, so again thank you.”*
- A service user sent a thank you card to an occupational therapist stating *“You have no idea how much your help and support has meant to me. You are one of the kindest people I have ever meet.”*
- A stepdaughter complimented a social worker in an email: *“The social worker has done everything she can to ensure that that she communicates via email and phone from the minute that she took over my stepfather's case. Nothing is too much trouble, and she really has helped in all aspects of his care from when he was in the hospital to his care now at home. I always think that people are quick enough to criticise staff but not to give them credit where it is due.”*
- A daughter emailed: *“I wanted to write to say a big thank you to the social worker who helped me when my mums health deteriorated. Whenever I rang or messaged her, she would always reply very quickly and was very concerned about my mum and always asked how I was coping as at times it was very difficult. In the last few weeks mum has moved to a care home where she is settling in very well and getting much better because of the great care she is receiving. If it wasn't for the social worker and all her help, I'm not sure if my mum would be there now. She is very caring, kind, and supportive and great at her job. I just to say thank you.”*
- A daughter telephoned to thank a social worker for all her help in making the transition as smooth as possible and that she was very grateful.

5.6 Equalities Data

- 5.6.1 Medway 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 equity 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.
- 5.6.2 Service users come from many different ethnic backgrounds, and many have disabilities. The Customer Relations Team will make reasonable adjustments where this is needed, for example, refer vulnerable adults to an advocacy service if they need assistance in making a complaint and make sure that a complainant who is visually impaired receives letters in large print. If a complainant is not able to send in a written complaint, the team will meet the complainant at a venue that is convenient and accessible for them, and where English is not their first language a translator will be provided. The Customer Relations Team will continue to look at ways to make the complaints process more accessible to adults with disabilities by ensuring that information about how to complain is published, in easy read, on the website.

6. Risk management

- 6.1 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. Using the following table this section should therefore consider any significant risks arising from your report.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Not handling complaints properly and importantly not learning from complaints could put an adult at risk.	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.	Improved management and control of complaint procedures, learning from complaint analysis, helps to identify and minimise potential risk or impact of risk to adults.	Very low

For risk rating, please refer to the following table:

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very high B High C Significant D Low E Very low F Almost impossible	1 Catastrophic (Showstopper) 2 Critical 3 Marginal 4 Negligible

7. Consultation

7.1 Not applicable

8. Climate change implications

8.1 There are no climate change implications to Medway Council arising directly from the recommendations of this report.

9. Financial implications

9.1 There are no financial implications to Medway Council arising directly from the recommendations of this report.

10. Legal implications

10.1 There are no legal implications to Medway Council arising directly from the recommendations of this report.

Lead officer contact

Sandy Weaver, Manager for Social Care Complaints.
Customer Relations Team, Customer and Business Support (CABS)

Appendices

[Appendix A](#) - The complaints process

[Appendix B](#) - The role of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Background papers

None

The Complaints Process

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 investigate and resolve the complaint as speedily as possible and in a manner that best meets the needs of the complainant. The legislation stipulates those complaints should be completed within 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 LGSCO.

A complainant can make a complaint verbally to any staff member, by telephone, by e-mail or in writing. The Customer Relations Team acknowledges receipt of the complaint within three working days. The Social Care Complaints Manager (SCCM) will determine the most appropriate course of action for resolving the complaint.

For Adult Social Care complaints, there is a one stage process. At any stage of this process, there is encouragement to employ alternative dispute resolution (ADR) approaches to bring matters to a satisfactory conclusion and this option is increasingly used.

Statutory guidelines state that we must respond to Adult Social Care complaints within six months, however, for the purposes of reporting and monitoring, and to provide a satisfactory and reasonable timeline, Medway Council opted to respond to Adults Social Care complaints within 20 working days.

In general, many social care complaints are complex, involving more internal, and sometimes external, liaison.

Timeliness performance in adult services is regularly reported to the Children's and Adults Directorate Management Team (CADMT), to the individual Assistant Director Management teams and to other forums.

The Customer Relations Team issue weekly open case reminders which help Service Managers and complaint handlers to be aware of and manage their cases. Additionally, monthly data reports are shared with Assistant Directors.

Quarterly reports are presented to senior management forums and include case study examples for learning. These reports are compiled by the Social Care Complaints Manager, a post that the council must resource.

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 LGSCO and provide the complainant with information on how to complain to them. 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.

Role of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

The role of the 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.

The LGSCO's recommendations aim to put complainants back in the position they were in before the maladministration occurred.

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.