

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

14 October 2025

Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025

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Summary

This annual report sets out the position on complaints, comments, and compliments for Adult Social Care for the year, and where possible provides comparisons against previous years. 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.

1. Recommendations

1.1. The Committee are recommended to note 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. The report includes an analysis of:

- The number of complaints
- The timeliness of responses

- Details on cases escalated to the Local Government Ombudsman
- A breakdown of the complaints by type/subject and by the service area where the complaints arose.
- Comments and compliments received.
- A commentary on emerging learning from the complaints

3. Background

- 3.1. The Customer Relations Team, part of Customer and Business Support, provides a function which oversees how Medway Council handles compliments, comments and complaints about its services, ensuring that feedback is directed to the appropriate departments, that investigations are coordinated to provide a single thorough response to the customer and that fair remedies are applied where mistakes have been made.
- 3.2. The team gathers compliment and complaint data and provides regular management and performance information so that services can learn from feedback and make improvements where needed.
- 3.3. [Read about how Medway Council handles complaints about Adult Social Care.](#)

4. Summary of Adult Social Care complaint performance

- 4.1. This report reflects volumes of complaints received and responded to throughout 2024-25. Complaints may have been received in the previous period and carried over into the current period, and complaints received in this period may subsequently be carried forward and responded to in the next year. Therefore, volumes of complaints received and responded to will not necessarily be equal. The same applies for referrals received, and cases closed, by the Ombudsman.
- 4.2. A combined total of 111 new complaints were accepted into the statutory and non-statutory complaints procedures. Adult Social Care responded to a total of 81 complaints within 20 working days, meeting the council's performance target for both statutory and non-statutory complaints.

Complaint type	Volume
Statutory complaints received	106
Statutory complaints closed	91
Statutory complaints performance	85%
Non-statutory complaints received	5
Non-statutory complaints closed	4
Non-statutory complaint performance	100%

***This figure may be greater than the total complaints received as complainants may have withdrawn their complaint**

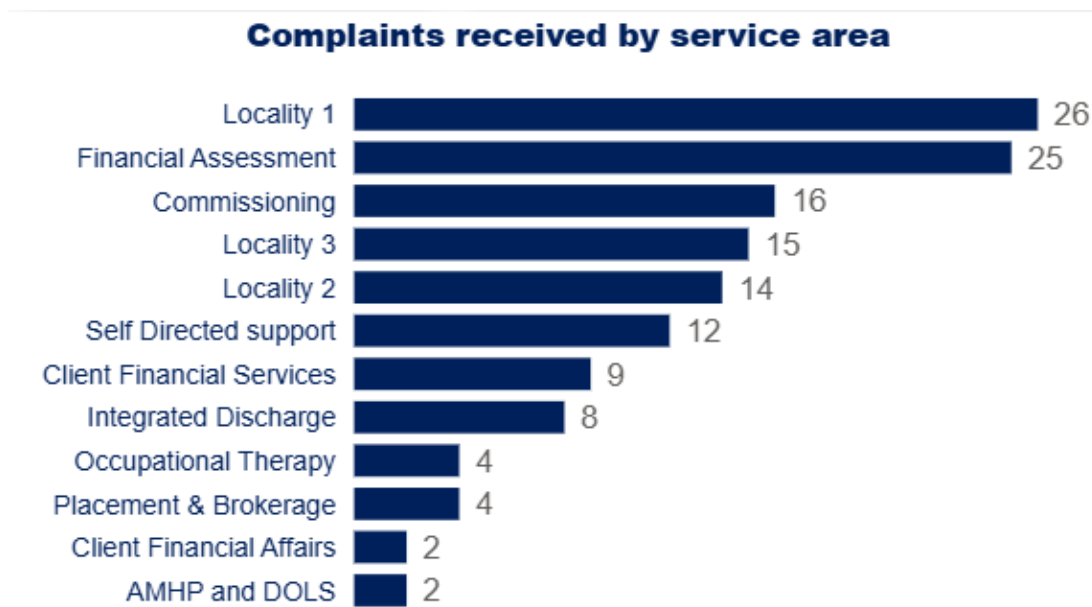
4.3. Comparison of volumes of statutory complaints received

Number of statutory complaints received		
2024-2025	2023-2024	2022-2023
106	98	85

4.4. 77 Statutory complaints were responded to within 20 working days, achieving a timeliness of 85%.

Annual overview of statutory Adult Social Care complaints																	
	April	May	June	Q1	July	Aug	Sep	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q4	Total
Complaints received	8	8	8	24	11	9	7	27	9	8	9	26	10	5	14	29	106
Complaints b/fwd	5	7	6	5	7	10	7	7	5	8	8	5	9	13	9	10	N/A
Complaints withdrawn	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	7
Complaints c/fwd	7	6	7	7	11	9	5	5	8	8	10	10	14	9	13	13	13
Responses issued	5	9	7	21	7	10	9	26	6	8	7	21	5	9	9	23	91
Responses within 20 days.	4	8	7	19	7	9	8	24	6	8	6	20	4	4	6	14	77
% responses within 20 days*	80%	89%	100%	90%	100%	90%	89%	92%	100%	100%	86%	95%	80%	44%	67%	61%	85%

4.5. Statutory Social Care complaints received by service



*Figures may be greater than the total complaints received as complaints may involve more than one team

Method of contact

- 4.6. Complainants can choose to raise their concerns electronically by email, in writing, by phone, or face to face.

Method of contact	
Email	86
Telephone call	9
Letter	4
Email and letter	4
Online corporate complaint form	2
Telephone call and email	1
Total	106

5. Adults Social Care statutory complaints performance

- 5.1. Medway Council aims to respond to Adult Social Care complaints within 20 working days where possible, although regulations allow up to six months for complex cases. Where delays occur beyond 20 working days, the Customer Relations Team apologise and keep complainants informed.
- 5.2. A total of 91 complaints were investigated and closed, 77 were issued within 20 working days, 2 were issued between 21-25 working days, 12 were issued after 26 days.

Working days	0-20	21-25	26+	Total
Volume	77	2	12	91
Performance	85%	2%	13%	100%

5.3. Comparison of volume of statutory complaints response performance

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Complaints answered in 20 working days	73	82	77
Percentage of complaints answered in 20 working days	89%	92%	85%

5.4. Response performance by team

Team	% within 20 wd	Working days (wd)			Total
		0-20	21-25	26+	
Locality 2	100%	13	0	0	13
Client Financial Services	90%	9	1	0	10
Locality 1	88%	22	0	3	25
Financial Assessment	86%	18	0	3	21
Integrated Discharge	86%	6	0	1	7
Placement and Brokerage	80%	4	0	1	5
Locality 3	79%	11	0	3	14
SDS	75%	6	0	2	8
Occupational Therapy	67%	2	1	0	3
Commissioning and partnership	50%	4	0	4	8
Total	85%	77	2	17	96*

* This figure may be greater than the total complaints responded to as complaints may involve more than one team

5.5. Summary of complaint issues and their outcomes.

Type of complaint	Not upheld	Upheld	Total
Lack of communication / information	9	22	31
Delay in providing a service	0	15	15
Lack of support	7	8	15
Financial	6	7	13
Disagreeing with a financial assessment	2	6	8
Incorrect invoice	2	6	8
Delay in referring to Direct Payments	0	5	5
Service provided	9	4	13
Attitude and behaviour of staff	1	4	5
Delayed in completing a carer's assessment.	0	4	4
Standard of home care	1	3	4
Disagreeing with a decision re service provided	4	2	6
Delay in hospital discharge	0	2	2
Standard of care in a care home	2	1	3
Delay in delivering equipment	0	1	1
Direct payments stopped	1	0	1
Safeguarding investigation	1	0	1
Total	45	90	135*

* This figure may be greater than the total complaints responded to as complaints may involve more than one team

- 5.6. 30 (28%) complainants expressed their dissatisfaction with our initial response to their complaint in comparison to 22 (22%) in 2023-24 and 20 (23%) in 2022-23. These complaints were all investigated further.

6. Non-statutory complaints

- 6.1. Where an issue cannot be accepted under the statutory complaint procedure, it is investigated as a Medway Council non-statutory social care complaint. If customers are still dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they could ask for a further response or refer their complaint to the Ombudsman.
- 6.2. There were five non-statutory complaints received for Adults services .

Non-statutory complaints	Volume
Complaints received	5
Complaints responded to	4
Complaints dealt with within 20 working days	4
% complaints responded to within 20 working days	100%

- 6.3. Non-Statutory complaints received by team.

Service Area	Total
Placement/Brokerage	2
Financial Assessment	1
Review and Transitions	1
Adults commissioning	1
Locality 1	1
Locality 3	1
Total*	7

* This figure may be greater than the total complaints received as complaints may involve more than one team

- 6.4. Response performance for non-statutory Adults Social Care complaints

Team	Total responses	Working days (wd)		% within 20 working days
		0-20	21+	
Commissioning	1	1	0	100%
Locality 1	1	1	0	100%
Locality 3	1	1	0	100%
Placement/Brokerage	2	2	0	100%
Review and Transitions	1	1	0	100%
Total	6	6	0	100%

* This figure may be greater than the total complaints responded to as complaints may involve more than one team

6.5. Four complaints were investigated and closed, all of those were sent within 20 working days achieving a timeliness performance of 100% against the Council's target of 75%.

6.6. Summary of complaint issues and their outcomes.

Complaint theme	Not upheld	Upheld	Total
Staff conduct	0	1	1
Delay in referring to Direct Payment team	0	1	1
Could not make a complaint online	0	1	1
Services provided	2	0	2
Disagreeing with a financial assessment.	1	0	1
Total*	3	3	6

*This figure may be greater than the total complaints responded to as complaints may relate to more than one issue

6.7. Nineteen complaints were rejected because they could not be considered under either the statutory or non-statutory complaints procedures.

Reason for rejection	Volume
Not in Medway Council's jurisdiction	9
Safeguarding issues	9
Complainant did not have consent	1
Total	19

7. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

7.1. Six complainants referred their case to the LGSCO compared with six in 2023-2024 and nine in 2022-23.

7.2. The LGSCO investigated and closed five complaints.

Outcome	Total
Closed - no further action	3
Upheld - fault and injustice	0
Not upheld - no fault	0
Premature	2
Total	5

7.3. All five cases were closed after initial enquiries, seeking no further action.

8. Learning from complaints

8.1. The Complaints Manager for Social Care discusses complaint performance and lessons learnt from complaints on a quarterly basis and during the investigation

and adjudication of escalated complaints with the Director of People, the Assistant Director, and the Heads of Service.

8.2. Analysis of issues complained about:

- The number of upheld complaints about service provided **decreased** to 4 (3%) compared with 8 (9%) in 2023-24, and 2 in 2022-23.
- The number of upheld lack of / poor communication complaints **increased** to 22 compared with 14 in 2023-24, and 20 in 2022-23.
- The number of complaints upheld about hospital discharges remained the same with 2, compared with 2 in 2023-24 and 0 in 2022-23.

8.3. There were several complaints about delays while waiting for a service:

- There were complaints about delays in sourcing residential placements and respite care and the lack of communication while trying to source these placements. Staff should ensure that the service user or relative is kept informed about the efforts to source a placement. One carer waited eight months for a carer's assessment and then for respite care.
- Further work is needed to reduce delays in providing care and direct payments.
- Where delays cannot be avoided, service users should be provided with updates about when they are likely to receive a service.

8.4. Communication failed in some areas:

- Complainants were frustrated because they were unable to contact Adult Social Care by phone, and their calls were not returned. One complainant suggested that part time staff should record the days they work on the 'out of office' recorded message.
- Several complainants were confused about the direct payments procedure and what the funding could be used for. It is important that all staff understand the purpose of Direct Payments and can explain the procedure to service users.
- Staff should always inform a service user if they cannot make an appointment.
- Staff should read the service user's records before they visit the service user.

8.5. There were some areas where training could be improved:

- Staff should have training in autism and learning disabilities to better support service users.

9. Compliments and comments.

9.1. Compliments provide feedback about what is working well, and which services are effective and valued.

9.2. There were 32 compliments about Adult Social Care. These are some examples of the compliments received.

- A care home provider emailed to compliment the ASC Brokerage Team: *"I just wanted to let you know that I will be collecting the keys to X's new flat on Friday and hopefully move her. I would like to thank you most sincerely for all your support. You truly are such a great asset to Medway Council and wished there were many more dedicated people like you. I hope this move will give X the support she needs. Just a gentle reminder to send through her new contract for signing. Thanks once again from the bottom of my heart."*
- A service user expressed her attitude for the Occupational Therapy Team: *"Y's been very helpful & done what she said she would do – grateful for everything – I feel a lot better – feel thankyou to have met Y and very very good at all aspects of her work and wish her all the best"*
- *"Good morning I would like to and take great pleasure in highlighting the great work and being vocal about the above and beyond attitude of two members of your social services team. first one is W she went out of her way for my son V on several occasions visiting past 5 o'clock she was never in a rush and made sure she covered all his needs doing her absolute best for him. the second is U she is very proactive checks in even if not at work if there is something that needs sorting and I know if I tell her I am having issues, she will sort it or at least try her hardest to rectify the problem"*
- A daughter whose mother is a service user stated: *"Thank you for being amazing and always going out your way for Mum. Glad to say that the GP finally confirmed everything in the wording what they wanted and Mum is now Band A with a high medical need – currently bidding on an anchor property in Gillingham which is the same HA she is with but you have to go through homechoice so keeping everything crossed that they get that and we can finally have a shower to help us. On another note- the elephant lift or whatever it's called got to be used last night as Mums legs just give way whilst she was transferring to the sofa, and we couldn't lift her up off her knee – amazing bit of kit – thank you so much!"*
- *"My mum has just told me the GREAT NEWS that funding has been sorted for my Dad, on behalf of myself and family I would like to say a BIG THANK-YOU, after thinking it's never going to happen as been told can have so much different help and never comes to anything again THANK-YOU X"*
- A Social Worker received positive feedback from a service user *"We cannot thank M enough she went above and beyond and is an asset to the council services. She made the awfully stressful process of getting dad to his happy home so much better for me and my mother also. M was so helpful and understanding, putting my mum, my dad and me and my sisters at ease through this difficult time. My mum said M is an angel sent to help her bless her. I just wanted to let you know how hard she worked to help us all and make this happen. M is one in a million and we will always be forever grateful to her and appreciate all her hard work, kindness and understanding."*
- *"T as a complete credit to Medway she was extremely attentive + helped us a lot with mum's condition very informative + understanding + prompt T was truly an amazing colleague. All questions answered + mum is more than happy with her new chair"*
- The Occupational Therapy team received this positive feedback *"I am writing to inform you of how pleased I am with the support given by D in ensuring a*

smooth transfer of one of our residents ... I contacted the OT duty team only on Friday ... to request for equipment to enable the planned move on ... to take place. The OT team were just brilliant but especially D who was very supportive and went over and above in ensuring the equipment was ordered and will be delivered on the 24th of July despite the very short notice. The family are appreciative of this support, and I am grateful to D and the team for this incredible support they gave the family and I in ensuring AP's move to Medway is smooth and stress-free."

- A service user passed on that *"C has been a godsend for me and sorted me out a lovely stair life she has been a constant source and point of contact. One of the best O.T. you have on your Team Thank you"*
- *"This is with great relief. I spoke to a wonderful lady last week named L, who is supporting TM (who is a vulnerable adult) L outlined TM's support strategy and explained this takes a while to put in place. L also stated we can phone her anytime. This is such a relief to me and particularly to her 95year old father that I cannot express in words just how much it's appreciated."*
- A daughter complimented the Social Care Team and said, *"she is a credit to her profession, and she exceeded his expectations as a war veteran, and she really helped when he needed it."*
- The Short Breaks Team received a compliment from a service user stating: *"I wanted to take this opportunity again to thank you for everything you have done for our family. I cannot find the words to honestly tell you how much this means to us. We feel overwhelmed and humbled by your kindness in offering this to us and look forward to the fun times ahead. Thank you again"*
- A son of a service user thanked the Occupational Therapist for support around his father: *"Thank you again S, for all you did for dad. I strongly believe the last 6 months of his life were made all the better by being able to get out of that flat. You getting that Sorrento chair for him changed his life. I watch the video of us getting him in it for the first time often! I'll never be able to thank you enough, but I hope what I learnt from you gives me a future helping others like dad."*

10. Equality implications

- 10.1. 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 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 who the services are for and demonstrate how they intend to serve their needs. This gives the Council a better measure of the impact the services are having on the community.
- 10.2. Our service users come from many different ethnic backgrounds, and many have disabilities. The Customer Relations Team will refer vulnerable adults to an advocacy service if they need assistance making a complaint, and will make reasonable adjustments, for example by ensuring that a complainant who is visually impaired receives letters in large print. If a complainant is not able to send in a written complaint, a team member will see the complainant at a venue

that is convenient and accessible for them and organise a translator if the complainants first language is not English, or an interpreter if they use BSL.

Ethnicity of Complainants

- 10.3. The following table shows the percentage of service users who made a complaint, by ethnicity.

Ethnicity	Statutory complaint	Non statutory complaint	Total	Adults using services	% service users making complaint.
Mixed / Any other mixed background	3	0	3	41	7%
Asian / Bangladeshi / Pakistani	5	0	5	127	4%
White / British	88	4	92	3331	3%
Black / Caribbean / African	2	0	2	113	2%
Black / Any other mixed background	1	0	1	-	-
White / Any other background	1	0	1	-	-
Other	1	0	1	37	3%
Information not held	5	2	7	104	7%

11. Risk management

- 11.1. 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	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 handling, 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.	D III

For risk rating, please refer to the following table:

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely	I Catastrophic
B Likely	II Major
C Unlikely	III Moderate
D Rare	IV Minor

12. Financial implications

- 12.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The cost of the Customer Relations Team who is responsible for processing corporate and social are complaints, is met within the existing Business Support Directorate budget.

13. Legal implications

- 13.1. The statutory framework for the handling of representations (including complaints) under the The Local Authority Social Services and NHS Complaints Regulations 2009 and Statutory Guidance is summarised in Appendix A. Local Authorities must publish an annual report of its consideration of representations under that framework.

Lead officer contact

Michele Pink, Customer Relations Manager
Customer Relations Team, Customer and Business Support (CABS)

Appendices

<u>Appendix A</u>	The Local Authority Social Services and NHS Complaints Regulations 2009
<u>Appendix B</u>	Managing Complaints
<u>Appendix C</u>	The Role of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

Background papers

None

Appendix A

The Local Authority Social Services and NHS Complaints Regulations 2009

[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.

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.

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.

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

Managing complaints

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 any mistakes.

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.

Appendix C

Role of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

The LGSCO's role is to independently and impartially investigate complaints from members of the public alleging they have suffered injustice as a result of maladministration and / or service failure, and where fault is found, provide recommendations to remedy injustice. It is a free service to the complainant.

The LGSCO can investigate individual complaints about councils, all adult social care providers including care homes and home care agencies) and some other public service organisations. If it decides to investigate, it looks at whether organisations have made decisions in the right way.

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, and it will ensure that everyone has access to the same independent Ombudsman Service, regardless of how the care service is funded.

The Local Government Ombudsman's recommendations aim to put complainants back into the position the complainant was in before the maladministration or injustice occurred.

The LGSCO additionally offers a range of guidance and focus reports to support complaint handling and to raise awareness and learning of national issues, including; [Principles of Good Administrative Practice](#), [Managing unreasonable actions by complainants](#), [Guidance on Remedies](#), [Focus Reports and Good Practice Guides](#), and [guidance for Councillors and MPs](#).