

Complaint Statistics

Adult Social Care

In June 2007 the Department of Health provided a set of proposals to unify and reform the current arrangements for making complaints across Health and Adult Social Care; 'Making Experiences Count.' As well as fulfilling the commitment in 'Our Health, Our Care, Our Say', it proposed a radical new approach to complaints handling which is more flexible and supports organisational learning.

The formalised guidance for the new arrangements was published on 25 February 2009; 'Listening, Responding, Improving' and the Regulations were laid before Parliament on 27 February 2009 for councils and health organisations to implement from 1 April 2009.

These Regulations enshrine a duty to co-operate with health partners in relation to complaints that cut across Health and Social Care Services.

The Council introduced a joint complaints process for dealing with Health and Adult social care complaints from 1 April 2009. It relates to concerns received from this date onwards and is in line with the Making Experiences Count initiative.

Where a complaint is received about Adult Social Care Services functions or functions of any party to the Joint Protocol (i.e. Health Partners) the organisation which receives the complaint handles the co-ordination of the complaint.

The process for dealing with Adult Social Care complaints is a one stage process. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint they may refer their concerns for consideration by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

Not all complaints received by Adult Care are eligible to be considered under the statutory procedure, and where a complaint does not meet the criteria, it will be considered under the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure. Details of Adult Care complaints considered under both procedures will be included in this report.

28 new complaints were received by Adult Care Services during the first half of 2020-21. Details of these complaints and their outcomes can be found below.

The types of complaints received

17 new complaints were received during the first quarter

1 complaint was upheld:

- Delay in invoice being issued for outstanding care home fees

8 complaints were partially upheld:

- Response to concerns re care provided by care home & disputed invoice
- Delay in assessment & lack of communication about allocated funding
- Arrangements for service user's discharge from hospital
- Miscommunication regarding hospital discharge arrangements & ongoing care needs
- Provision of support for service user and ongoing funding arrangements (joint complaint with Health)
- Concerns regarding the assessment process and lack of communication
- Standard of care provided by care home

- Lack of communication from care provider

8 complaints were not upheld.

11 new complaints were received during the second quarter

1 complaint was upheld:

- Adult Care involvement with service user whilst in hospital (joint with Health)

6 complaints were partially upheld:

- Standard of care provided to service user whilst in care home
- Level of care provided and delay in resolving charging issue
- Standard of service provided by care home, hospital & out of hours service (joint with Health)
- Information given and lack of communication regarding level of client contribution for care
- Lack of support and communication during home adaptations process
- Unresolved issues following adaptations to service user's property

1 complaint was not upheld.

3 complaints are still ongoing.

Examples of Action Taken and Lessons Learned

First Quarter

Following the upheld complaint regarding a delay in an invoice being issued for care home fees, an error inputting information was discussed with the worker in question and additional training and support was discussed as part of their supervision. The service also made changes to how managers have oversight of support plans and the services that are added to the system to reduce the risk of future errors occurring.

Further to the complaint relating to the response to concerns raised about care provided by a care home, changes have been made to develop how Rochdale Adult Care responds to safeguarding concerns and how quality of care is monitored within care homes. Each care home within the locality now has a link worker who visits and makes contact with care homes on a regular basis. This has promoted the communication between Rochdale Adult Care and the care homes in the locality and has allowed the service to identify and respond proactively to any areas of concern. Rochdale's safeguarding policy has been updated, emphasising individual outcomes and family involvement. The safeguarding closure process has also been developed, which highlights the importance of closure discussions and meetings that are followed up with a closure letter to all parties involved in the safeguarding enquiry.

As a result of the complaint regarding the standard of care provided by a care home, although the concerns were historic they were passed to the Commissioning Team to look into and to contact the home regarding their standard of care.

Second Quarter

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Following the upheld complaint regarding Adult Care's involvement in a service user's care whilst in hospital, a review of the case was conducted with the relevant practitioner to identify any learning opportunities and to potentially improve service user and families' experiences moving forward re clearer communication for discharge pathways, policies and procedures.

As a result of the complaint relating to the level of care provided to a service user and a delay in resolving a charging issue the following actions were taken:

- The terms of the contract are amended to require the provider to upload details of actual care provided to the 'Provider Portal' and that payment is made on the information received, not on what is prescribed. This will speed up any future reconciliations.
- That Commissioning staff should be required to case note conversations and interactions with service users / families / representatives, where appropriate, on the core service user database for clarity, transparency and continuity.
- The System Development Group prioritise the development of the Organisational Safeguarding Module of the case management system.
- Adult Care staff are reminded of the process for reconciliation for personal budget charges and that the Personal Budget Policy is reviewed to ensure the reconciliation process is clear.
- A full reconciliation of payments made to Comfort Call against the service actually provided is made. In turn this should be reconciled to the charges made to service users to identify if other residents have been overcharged for their care and support.

A number of recommendations were made following the complaint regarding a lack of support and communication during the home adaptations process:

- All correspondence in relation to an adaptation to be noted in the core case management system, ALLIS, up to the point the adaptation is approved to ensure that all people involved can access all the information, especially when working remotely.
- All staff involved in adaptations attend a mandatory training course in respect of understanding the responsibilities of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Policy.
- Clear service standards are developed, focussing on the process and communication for adaptations under the DFG programme to ensure people accessing the programme can be clear what they can expect and the likely timescales.
- The local DFG Policy is more widely publicised to members of the public with clear online links.
- There are regular random audits of case notes by Mangers in the Home Improvement Agency to try to ascertain where communication is poor and improvement plans put in place to rectify this.

Timescales

There is no statutory timescale for dealing with Adult Social Care complaints, and the timescale is agreed between the Investigator and the complainant in each case. However, the aim is to complete investigations within 25 working days. The average time taken to deal with Adult Care complaints closed during the first half of 2020-21 was 23 working days which was well within target.

Complaint Example

The following is an example of a how an Adult Social Care complaint has been dealt with from receipt to resolution.

Complaint

A complaint was received during the first quarter by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) who contacted the Customer Feedback Team as the issues raised in the complaint related to both Adult Social Care (ASC) and Health. The complaint related to provision of support for a service user and ongoing funding arrangements.

The complaint was passed to ASC and allocated to a Team Manager who liaised with Health. As the majority of the concerns raised related to ASC it was agreed that they would take the lead on the investigation with CCG investigating the issues relating to Health and contributing to a joint response.

The Team Manager contacted the complainant to discuss their concerns in more detail and agreed a timescale for response which was communicated to Health.

An investigation was undertaken into the issues raised, which included reviewing all Adult Care records including case recordings, assessments and documentation. The Investigating Officer also liaised with and gathered additional information from other relevant services including the Commissioning/Quality Assurance Team and the individual practitioners involved.

The investigation was completed within timescale and the overall finding was that the complaint was partially upheld. A joint response letter was sent to the complainant which explained the findings of the investigations from both organisations and included an apology for issues experienced in relation to communication which could have been clearer. Learning identified from the complaint was taken forward within the individual services concerned.

Compliments

Compliments received from service users are also recorded and shared with staff. A total of 32 compliments were recorded for Adult Care Services during this reporting period, a breakdown and examples of which can be found below.

Team/Service Area	No.	Compliment received from
STARS	19	Service User (14) Relative of Service User (5)
Assessment & Support Planning	4	Relative of Service User (3) Professional (1)
Home Improvement Agency, Occupational Therapy & West Locality Team	1	Service User
Home Improvement Agency & Middleton Locality Team	1	Service User
Occupational Therapy & Heywood	1	Relative of Service User

Neighbourhood Team		
Occupational Therapy	1	Relative of Service User
Sensory Intervention Team	1	Service User
West Locality Team	1	Relative of Service User
Middleton Locality Team	1	Service User
Financial Business Support Team	1	Professional
STARS Team & Locality Teams	1	Relative of Service User

“Thank you all so much for the care and kindness you showed to X. At this difficult time we have been so worried about her and as a family have not been able to see her. Phoning her every day she has been so positive and singing the praise of the team who have been visiting her. Once again thank you so much. Hope you all stay safe and well.”

Compliment for STARS Team

“Just a few words to sincerely thank you for your part in securing the installation of my stairlift. Every aspect of this work has been exceptional, as I said above, your work and the parts played by both Stannah and their sub-contractor (Electrician). Once again, thank you so much.... You have given me my comparative freedom back.”

Compliment for Occupational Therapy Team, Home Improvement Agency & West Locality Team.

After my dad was discharged from hospital a care plan was put into place to help my dad's needs. After a few weeks his needs grew and with an elderly mum I did all I could but many times didn't know which way to turn until I received a phone call from The Assessment & Support Planner. For the first time after talking with her I felt I was no longer alone. Since then her help, understanding, reassurance and hard work both on and behind the scenes was dealt with with friendliness while always remaining professional. Once again she was my 'go to' and I'm sure with a very busy work schedule she went above and beyond a 'paid job'. I have thanked her myself however wanted to let the department she works for just how grateful I am and will always be for her professionalism while always keeping the human touch. Please could you once again pass on my gratitude.”

Compliment for Assessment & Support Planning Team

“To all the carers who looked after my wife. We deeply appreciate all of your help and support at this difficult time. You all do a fantastic job.”

Compliment for STARS Team

“Just a little thank you for everything you have done to help us. We really appreciate the support you have given us and you are a credit to your profession.”

Compliment for West Locality Team

“I would just like you to know how helpful and kind the Occupational Therapist has been. She rang me several times regarding my mother and went to see her as soon

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as she could. On her visit she made my mother and sister feel very comfortable and was excellent in suggesting ways of helping my mother stay in her own home, grab rails, bath seat, perch stool etc. Thank you for all your help.”

Compliment for Occupational Therapy Team

Children's Social Care

Changes were made to the children's social services representations procedure as a result of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act 2003.

Complaints are dealt with in accordance with The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

The handling and consideration of complaints under this procedure consists of three stages:

Stage 1 - Local Resolution

Stage 2 - Investigation

Stage 3 - Review Panel

Local Resolution requires the local authority to resolve a complaint as close to the point of contact with the child or young person as possible (i.e. through front line management of the service). In doing so the local authority should consider the wishes of the complainant about how the complaint should be dealt with. In most circumstances complaints should be considered at Stage 1 in the first instance.

Consideration of complaints at Stage 2 is normally achieved through an investigation conducted by an investigating officer and an independent person. Stage 2 commences either when the complainant requests it after an investigation at Stage 1, or where the complainant and the local authority have agreed that Stage 1 is not appropriate.

Where Stage 2 of the complaints procedure has been concluded and the complainant is still dissatisfied, he/she will be eligible to request further consideration of the complaint by a Review Panel. It is not possible to review a complaint that has not yet been fully considered at Stage 2 (including providing the reports and adjudication to the complainant).

Following the conclusion of all three stages of the complaints process, if the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint they may refer their concerns for consideration by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

Information relating to Children's Social Care complaints is available on the Council's website, and leaflets providing full details of the complaints process and how to raise concerns are provided as required. The Children's Rights Service has also developed complaints leaflets specifically for children in care.

Not all complaints received by Children's Social Care are eligible to be considered under the statutory procedure, and where a complaint does not meet the criteria, it will be considered under the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure. Details of complaints considered under both procedures will be included in this report.

A total of 20 new complaints were received by Children's Services in the first half of 2020-21, 19 of which were dealt with under the statutory Children's Social Care complaints procedure and 1 complaint was dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

Where possible concerns are resolved by the service informally without progressing to a formal complaint, which is beneficial to the complainant and contributes to a reduction in the number of formal complaints being received.

Details of the complaints and their outcomes can be found below.

The types of complaints received

7 new complaints were received during the first quarter

7 new complaints were considered at stage one

6 complaints were partially upheld:

- Social Worker's handling of confidential information relating to service user
- Perceived lack of support from service during the Child Protection process
- Funding issue with looked after child's nursery placement
- Content of Section 7 report completed by Social Worker
- Lack of support for grandparent caring for their grandchild
- Information held on case file relating to complainant

1 complaint was not upheld.

13 new complaints were received during the second quarter

13 new complaints were considered at stage one

1 complaint was upheld:

- Concerns regarding the 'Letterbox' scheme for adopted child

7 complaints were partially upheld:

- Inaccurate information in report provided by Social Worker to fostering agency
- Actions of Social Worker when working with family
- Lack of financial support for looking after grandchildren as a family carer
- Lack of communication regarding child protection concerns raised
- Alleged comments by Social Worker & delayed response to concerns raised
- Delays in Special Guardianship Order (SGO) process
- Agreed amendments not applied to Education & Health Care Plan (EHCP) (Corporate complaint)

5 complaints were not upheld.

Examples of Action Taken and Lessons Learned

First Quarter

Following the complaint regarding a perceived lack of support during the child protection process, support was in place for a period of time through a child in need plan, and the Practice Manager implemented a plan to manage this appropriately moving forward which included:

- A Social Worker being co-allocated to the family to offer support to the children.

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- The Social Worker to contact the complainant to fully explain the Aims assessment.
- The Social Worker chased up counselling support.
- The Practice Manager will contact the complainant each month until the case moves over to the Child Protection team to check that they remain happy with the plan in place.

As a result of the complaint relating to funding issues for a looked after child's nursery placement, the Social Work Team identified the following issues:

- That the PEP policy is not clear, is difficult to understand and is open to different interpretation
- Social Workers are not always aware of the PEP process in terms of how money is paid and when
- It is important to involve the Virtual School team the moment any issues occur and ensure that a care planning meeting is held with all parties including education provision.

The issues and learning from the complaint were taken into whole service meetings and discussed with the Virtual School team to look at how to avoid the situation again in the future.

In response to the complaint regarding the content of a Section 7 report, the Practice Manager dealing with the complaint visited the complainant to discuss the concerns in more detail. Following the visit correspondence continued via email and telephone resulting in new and up to date information being considered which led to a review of the original recommendation.

Second Quarter

An apology was given in response to the complaint relating to the 'Letterbox' scheme as a letter from the complainant had been received but not acknowledged. The Business Support Team were asked to send acknowledgments should any further correspondence be received. An explanation of the current circumstances regarding the case was also provided.

Further to the complaint relating to a lack of communication regarding child protection concerns raised, the Practice Manager addressed the issue of good communication with families with the Social Worker concerned as an area of practice learning. Areas of learning and practice improvement were identified and plans were put in place to address these both on an individual and team basis.

Following the corporate complaint regarding an Education & Health Care Plan (EHCP) an apology was given as one amendment agreed during mediation had not been changed. Both the Mediation Service and the EHC Assessment and Review Team Manager reflected upon this and going forward will ensure that a copy of any working document created during mediation is copied and sent to all parties immediately after the meeting. By doing so, it will provide clarity on what has been recorded and any omissions or misunderstandings can be rectified in a timely manner.

Timescales

There are statutory timescales for dealing with Children's Social Care complaints at each stage of the process. Every attempt is made to resolve complaints within the

initial timescale; however, the regulations allow the timescale for each stage to be extended in consultation with the complainant.

Stage 1	10 working days (can be extended to up to a maximum of 20 working days)
Stage 2	25 working days (can be extended up to a maximum of 65 working days)
Stage 3	Acknowledgement within 2 working days, review to be held within 30 working days.

19 of the complaints received during the first and second quarters were dealt with under the statutory Social Care complaints procedure at stage one, 13 of which were responded to within the statutory timescale.

Complaint Example

The following is an example of a how a Children's Social Care complaint has been dealt with from receipt to resolution.

Stage one complaint

A complaint was received by the Customer Feedback Team via the online form on the Council website. The complaint was from a parent and related to the content of a Section 7 report completed by a Social Worker.

The complaint was registered at stage one of the statutory complaints procedure and was allocated to a Practice Manager for investigation. An acknowledgement was sent to the complainant.

The Practice Manager visited the complainant to discuss the concerns raised and the complainant provided a more detailed written version of the complaint. The Practice Manager spent some time with the family, and continued to liaise with the complainant regularly via telephone and email after the meeting.

A full investigation was undertaken including discussing the case with the Social Worker and the Head of Service. It was necessary to extend the timescale slightly to enable full consideration of the issues raised and the complainant was kept updated throughout the process.

The findings of the investigation were that the Section 7 report was balanced and impartial, however the wording of two paragraphs was changed slightly to reflect the full 'context' of the young person's current circumstances. The service considered new and up to date information which led to a review of the original recommendation.

The complaint was found to be partially upheld and was resolved at stage one.

Details of the action taken as a result of the complaint are also included under 'Lessons Learned' above.

Compliments

Compliments received from service users are also recorded and shared with staff. 38 compliments were recorded for Children's Social Care Services during the first half of 2020-21, a breakdown and examples of which can be found below.

Team/Service Area	No.	Compliment received from
Child Protection & Court Team	28	Professional (20) Parent/family (6) Young person (1) Foster carers (1)
Family Information Service	4	Parent (3) Professional (1)
Children & Young People with Additional Needs Service	3	Parent (2) Young person (1)
Fostering Team	1	Foster carer
Family Time Facilitator	1	Parent
Youth Service	1	Resident

"The adoption plan / process has not been without it's challenges but the Social Worker and Advanced Practitioner have been incredibly supportive and gone over and above to ensure X's transition to her adoptive family was successful. They have been in contact evenings and weekends and worked closely with ourselves to resolve any concerns that have been raised. They have been quick to pass on information, have highlighted concerns where necessary but have been equally balanced about the positives of the carers and the way in which they responded to X's plan in the final week. It has been a pleasure to work with them."

Compliment for Child Protection & Court Team

"You have done a really brilliant job throughout our time working together with X and her family, you are a real credit to your team and it is down to your efforts that the situation is moving forwards so quickly at this time. I have copied in your manager as I wanted to recognise the excellent work that you do under really difficult circumstances, both at the current time and also as a Social Worker for a Local Authority!"

Compliment for Child Protection & Court Team

"To X, thank you for supporting me and making my life better."

Compliment from young person for Children with Additional Needs Team

"Just to say thank you so much for your hard work with my family. Things are a lot better now. Thanks for all the professionals too and the support to deal with them. Thanks for making me engage with all when I didn't want to. When I did, I started to see so many changes. I learnt one thing, that even when we are tired, down with so many problems, to not give up, always fight as the end results are always going to be positive and I thank you for that. Thank you, we appreciate everything you've done."

You don't judge, you help. Wish you all the best, you make a difference to families."

Compliment for Child Protection & Court Team

"I just wanted to say how much I have appreciated all the hard work the Social Worker has done with our family. She has been a massive support to us during some very difficult times, keeping us on track with legislations and regulations and most of all moral support."

Compliment for Fostering Team

"We received the Life Story book and it's wonderful! Lots of pictures and great explanation. Great job! Well done and thank you very much from our bottom of our hearts! We are going to show it to X when he's a bit bigger and more mature to understand it. May God bless you for your lovely and passionate heart! Thank you very much!"

Compliment for Family Time Facilitator