



**HEALTH & CARE  
ADULT SOCIAL CARE  
ANNUAL REPORT  
APRIL 2021– MARCH 2022**

## Overview

This report provides information about complaints received by the Adult Social Care Service during 2021-22. Adult Social Care is part of the People Directorate at Cumbria County Council (CCC) and aims to arrange care and support services for adults aged 18 years and older. We work with adults who have physical disability, learning disability, sensory impairment, mental health needs and substance misuse issues, as well as people who care for others. We support the transition of young people who are transferring from Children's Services to Adult Social Care. When people have complaints we will listen to them, and, wherever possible, will negotiate and agree a course of action to resolve the complaint. We deal with complaints in a fair and transparent way, treating those who raise them with courtesy and respect. We encourage comments and compliments as well as complaints, as part of our commitment to a process of continuous learning and improvement.

### A personalised response to each complaint

The arrangements for complaint handling must comply with the statutory requirements as detailed in the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009. Our directorate procedure is in line with the statutory requirements and allows managers dealing with the complaints to take a flexible and personalised approach. The complainant is put at the centre of the process and is expected to contribute to a resolution plan which sets out the nature of the complaint, identifies how the complaint can be resolved, by whom and how long it will take. The overarching aim of the procedure is to resolve matters to the complainant's satisfaction. The specific aims are:

- To acknowledge every complaint within 3 working days identifying a Lead Manager in every case;
- For the Lead Manager to contact every complainant in person within 5 working days;
- To agree a resolution plan identifying the exact nature of the complaint, what the person complaining would like to happen, and how the complaint is to be dealt with;
- Encourage managers to take a flexible and creative approach to complaints;
- Have a second manager involved in every complaint, to oversee the complaint and any investigation or actions agreed; and to sign-off the complaint once everything possible has been done to resolve it;
- Offer excellent customer service to people who wish to make their views known;
- There is an expectation that the majority of the complaints will be resolved within 6 months.

### Key Headlines for 2021-22

- Throughout 2021-22 a total of **111 complaints** were received, an **increase** of 34 from **77** in the year 2020-21. We believe this to be as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 9% of complaints were **resolved** without the need to escalate to formal stage
- 9 complaints remained **outstanding (as of 31st March 2022)**, 6 of which were within the **6 month target**.
- 34 **compliments** were received
- 1 complaint was referred to the **Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman**
- The majority of the complaints received related to **social work support**; within social work support the key concerns related to **assessment, care management & review**; and **conduct or attitude of staff**

## **Complaints received**

Throughout 2021-22, a total of 111 complaints were received, this is an increase of 34 from 77 in the previous year (2020-21). Of those complaints which were received and signed off within the financial year, it took an average of 44 working days to process the complaint, a decrease of 13 days from an average of 57 days in the previous year.

It is important to note that the Adult Social Care service was still under immense pressure at this time due to the Covid-19 pandemic and resources were stretched. Capacity to undertake complaints investigations was limited but the teams worked hard to provide the best possible outcome for the customers.

## **Outstanding complaints**

As of 31st March 2022, 9 complaints remained outstanding from the 2021-2022 year, with the remaining 101 resolved. 2 outstanding complaints related to service users in the North of the county, while 7 were service users in the South.

## **What did we learn?**

Following the completion of the complaints process, Managers are asked to identify any possible learning from the complaint, either for their own staff or team or with implications across the directorate. This is recorded and passed to the Lessons Learned Group which agrees actions for the Directorate and identifies further learning and monitors the progress.

External training is also being sourced from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for later in the year on effective complaints handling and how best to support our customers.

## **The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman**

Service users have the right to approach the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LG&SCO) at any time to make a complaint. The LG&SCO will normally pass the complaint back to the Local Authority if the complainant has not yet given the Council an opportunity to resolve the complaint; the LG&SCO may also pass the complaint back to the Local Authority if they consider that there is more we can do to resolve the complaint.

Throughout 2021-22, 1 complaint was considered by the LG&SCO. Details of the case, which is ongoing, are shown below -

Complaint initially allocated to service in July 2021. As allocated officer was off sick at the time the complaint was reallocated to another officer within the service. No formal response/complaints resolution plan was completed and complaint was closed following advice from the officer, stating that they believed the complaint had been resolved via telephone contact and support offered to the complainant to resolve their issue.

Complainant has since referred the matter to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. After their initial assessment of the case, they have asked the local authority to complete the statutory complaints procedure and considered the complaint to the LGSCO as premature. As the complaint did not consider/resolve the issues faced by the complainant fully, the Ombudsman have requested we now progress the complaint.

## Monitoring and reporting of complaints

Throughout 2021-22 the Complaints Team have produced a monthly tracker showing open complaints which supports Adult Social Care teams in the monitoring and chasing of complaint responses in their areas. The tracker is shared with ASC Managers and Assistant Directors. Using the Liberty system, complaints are allocated directly to a service manager who then receives an automated email advising them that there is a complaint assigned to them for resolution. This process makes the monitoring and reporting of complaints much quicker and more efficient than in previous years. Liberty is also used to pull reports, detailing numbers of complaints and the relevant service manager and complaints officer who own that case.

## Planned Development 2021-22

As part of the Council's Customer Services Strategy 2018-22, which aims to put customers at the heart of everything we do and provide quality services at a reduced cost, Complaints as a priority service has been identified as one of the initial services to undergo a redesign. The table below sets out the proposed actions for 2021-22 as part of the redesign and the benefits the changes are expected to provide.

Overview	Key Deliverables
Continuing to implement improvements and learning to ensure making a complaint is as easy as possible, developing a learning culture to help ensure complaints inform service improvements, development of tools to support greater visibility and ownership of complaints and reasons for complaints, and provision of targeted support for services with high volumes of complaints such as Adult services.	Liberty complaints system implemented which now enables complaints officers to seamlessly log complaints, allocate them to service managers, follow up on complaints, record all communication and notes in a structured in efficient way, follow up on relevant learning from complaints with service managers, and easily run and distribute reports to service leads.  Learning log implemented, with ownership of learning given to service managers and automated reminders and trackers linked directly to cases.

## NWCMG MEMBERSHIP

Cumbria County Council is a member of the North West Complaints Managers Group (NWCMG). The aim of the regional group, which meets every two months, is to provide a forum in which peer professionals can discuss and learn about regional and national issues. Here there are opportunities to develop local practice standards, discuss performance and problem solve. The group also discuss proposed changes to legislation and procedures and prepare consultation responses where necessary.