

# Adult Social Care

## Comments, Compliments and Complaints

### Annual Report 2017 – 2018

**If you have any comments about the content of this report please contact us:**

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# Contents

| <b>Page</b> | <b>Heading</b>                                     |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 4           | Context                                            |
| 6           | The Complaints Process                             |
| 7           | Overview of Complaints                             |
| 10          | Complaints by Adult Social Care Services and Teams |
| 16          | Complaints about external providers                |
| 18          | What did the department learn from complaints?     |
| 19          | Local Government Ombudsman                         |
| 21          | Other Observations                                 |
| 22          | Compliments                                        |
| 28          | Conclusion                                         |

# 1. Context

This report provides information about complaints made during the twelve months between **1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018** under the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations, 2009.

Adult Social Care works with a large number of people throughout East Sussex. This year, the department supported over 18,000 people and provided services to over 7,400 carers. The department also has lead responsibility for safeguarding adults at risk of harm by others; receiving and responding to over 4,500 reports of concerns or allegations of adult abuse during the year.

Our aim is to work alongside people to develop a care and support plan that meets their needs, looking at a broad range of networks and services to do this. The East Sussex Better Together and Connecting 4 You programmes also enable us to continue to take positive steps toward a fully integrated health and care system for local people.

We want to provide high quality services that meet the needs and circumstances of individuals and their carers'. Given the personal and complex nature of our services however, sometimes things do go wrong. Our complaints process identifies problems and resolves issues if things do go wrong or fall below expectation, and we try to sort things out quickly and fairly. We want to learn from our mistakes and the concerns that arise, and make changes to improve our services.

Looking at the complaints received during 2017-18 has given us an opportunity to reflect on the quality of the services provided to both our clients and their carers'. We have also taken the opportunity to consider how well we listened and responded to people's individual needs and circumstances.

The compliments we received also provided us with rich and valuable insight about the quality of our services.

All timescales within this report are in working days.

### **1.1 What is a Complaint?**

The Department of Health Guidance 'Learning from Complaints' (2006) defines a complaint as:

*“An expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about the actions, decisions or apparent failings of a local authority’s adult social services provision which requires a response.”*

### **1.2 Who can make a complaint and how?**

A person is eligible to make a complaint where the local authority has a power or duty to provide, or to secure the provision of, a service for someone.

Another person can make a complaint on someone else’s behalf.

Adult Social Care publicises information about how to make a complaint in its leaflet 'How to make a complaint or give feedback about Adult Social Care services', and has a specific leaflet available for people with learning disabilities, "Are you unhappy about something?"

Complaints can be made in person, by telephone, in writing, by text or email. Complaints can be made directly to the relevant team or to the Complaints and Feedback Team; whichever is easiest.

All clients and carers, whatever their circumstances, should feel able to make a complaint and feel sure we are taking their views seriously.

## **2. The Complaints Process**

When someone contacts the department to make a complaint, we:

- acknowledge their complaint within 3 working days
- make sure that we understand their concerns
- find out what the person wants to happen because of their complaint

- get the right information to assess the seriousness of the complaint
- agree a plan with the complainant about who will look into the complaint and by when
- keep in regular contact with the complainant
- act quickly to resolve matters, where we can

Our aim is to sort out most complaints within 10–20 working days but it may take longer for complex complaints. We do let people know if it will take longer than usual.

The manager responsible for looking into the complaint will write a letter explaining what they have found and what they will do to put things right. Sometimes, our findings do not fully support people's view of their complaints. However, we always try to give clear reasons for our decisions, explain any misunderstandings and agree a way forward.

If a complainant is not happy with our final decision, or, how we have dealt with their complaint, they can refer the matter to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

We also have Appeals Processes for:

- Care and Support Assessments
- Financial Assessments
- Blue Badge Mobility Assessments

These appeals processes are a way for clients and their representatives to have the outcome of their assessment or review looked at again, without having to make a complaint. All three appeals processes provide an off-line review of decisions, where more information and views are considered. If people are unhappy with the outcomes of their Financial Assessment or Blue Badge appeal they can then refer the matter directly to the LGSCO.

## **The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)**

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) is the final stage for complaints about councils and all adult social care providers including care homes and home care agencies. The LGSCO is a free service and their role is to be fair and independent; they do not take sides.

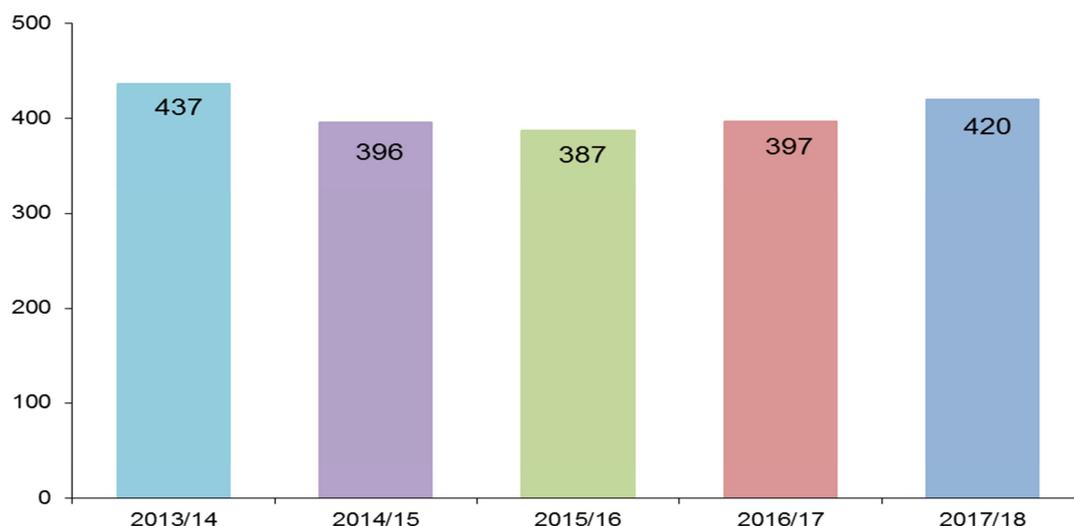
People can refer their complaint to the LGSCO at any time, although they will generally refer all complaints back to us, if it has not been through our process first. In exceptional circumstances, the LGSCO will look at things earlier; this is usually dependent on the degree of vulnerability of the person concerned.

### **3. Overview of Complaints**

This year the Complaints Unit recorded 420 complaints, compared with 397 last year.

Some of the complaints received during 2017/18 are still live; as they entered our monitoring system before 31 March 2018 and are not concluded yet. Any learning from these complaints will be included in next year's report.

#### **3.1 Number of complaints received over the past 5 years**



*Figures for 2015/16 and previous years include corporate related complaints*

### 3.2 Who Complained?

Of the 420 complaints recorded:

- 101 (24%) were reported by clients themselves
- 319 (76%) complaints were made on behalf of clients

Of the 319 complaints made on behalf of clients, 115 (36%) were made by the adult sons and daughters of clients. Others included spouses, parents, advocates, and other relations. Independent advocacy providers assisted 12 clients to make a complaint directly to the Complaints Unit; compared to 8 in 2016/17.

Informally, we are often told that people can fear making a complaint because they worry their service may be affected, it will not make any difference or they will not be taken seriously. We want people to feel confident about letting us know when something is not right. To do this, we need to make sure information is accessible and that we are always responsive to people's concerns.

### 3.3 Complaints received by service areas

Adult Social Care (ASC) has different service areas and these are broken down as follows:

- **Adult Social Care Operations** – all the teams that provide and deliver support, including the financial assessment team.
- **Strategy, Commissioning and Supply Management** –interprets national policy locally, commissions services and oversees the contracts and quality monitoring of purchased services.
- **Planning, Performance and Engagement** –provide support across the organisation including staff and public information, complaints, training, consultations, equality impact assessments and performance data.
- **External Independent Providers** – independent home care agencies, residential or nursing homes and other organisations that provide care.
- **Public Health** – plays a lead role in understanding local public health needs and working with stakeholders to meet them

| Service                                                                   | Number of complaints       | Upheld and partly upheld         | Average time to respond            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Adult Social Care Operations                                              | 341<br>(322)               | 156 = 46%<br>(47%)               | 18 days<br>(18 days)               |
| Strategy Commissioning and Supply Management                              | 50<br>(42)                 | 26 = 52%<br>(57%)                | 25 days<br>(24 days)               |
| Planning, Performance and Engagement                                      | 7<br>(5)                   | 1 = 14%<br>(20%)                 | 7 days<br>(10 days)                |
| Independent Providers – home care agencies, residential and nursing homes | 21<br>(25)                 | 13 = 62%<br>(64%)                | 12 days<br>(34 days)               |
| Public Health                                                             | 1<br>(3)                   | 0<br>(0%)                        | 13 days<br>(12 days)               |
| <b>Total</b>                                                              | <b>420</b><br><b>(397)</b> | <b>196 = 47%</b><br><b>(49%)</b> | <b>18 days</b><br><b>(19 days)</b> |

(Last year's figures are in brackets)

- **Corporate related complaints** – Accounts Receivable and Income Recovery are responsible for invoicing of ASC clients. Please also see section 6, page 20.

| Orbis – Corporate Services           | Number of complaints | Upheld and partly upheld | Average time to respond |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Income recovery, Accounts receivable | 16 (28)              | 11 = 69%<br>(79%)        | 15 days<br>(18 days)    |

### 3.4 Target response times for ASC

The target time for responding to complaints is 10 to 20 working days, where possible.

This year:

- 160 (40%) of complaints received a response within 10 working days
- 112 (28%) of complaints received a response within 20 working days
- This means 68% of complaints received a response within our target times
- 128 (32%) did not receive a response within the timescales. In these cases complainants were updated with progress

The majority of our responses achieved our target time, which is an indicator of the commitment of managers to try to resolve issues as soon as possible. Nearly a third of complaint responses were over our target however, reflecting perhaps the increasing complexity of complaints and the competing priorities for some services.

### **3.5 Comparison with the preceding year**

Overall, there has been a 6% increase in complaints received regarding Adult Social Care, including external independent providers, compared to last year. This represents an increase of 23 complaints.

Also noticeable, when compared to the previous year is that:

- Our Operational Services saw a 6% increase in complaints overall. This equated to 19 more complaints received than in 2016/17. This was due mainly to an increase in complaints about the financial assessments process, with 59 complaints recorded this year compared to 37 last year, equating to a rise of 59% (an additional 22)
- Strategy, Commissioning and Supply Management recorded a 61% increase. This equated to 16 more complaints received than last year. This was due mainly to an increase in complaints about the charges and the quality of support in extra care housing and how direct payment accounts were managed
- There has been a 16% decrease in the number of complaints recorded about independent home care and residential care providers. This equated to 4 less complaints received than last year

- 183 (46%) complaints were upheld in full or in part compared to last year when 194 (49%) complaints found some fault.
- It took us 18 days on average to respond to complaints, this is one working day less than the average of 19 working days achieved last year.
- The LGSCO recorded 48 complaints about East Sussex ASC, a 45% increase in the complaints received compared with 2016/17, when 33 complaints were recorded

At this point, it is important to acknowledge that resolving complaints involves time and effort, particularly as complaints are increasingly complex and sensitive. We believe strongly that the high level of input by managers and their staff to look at each complaint individually does pay off. We also ensure that people are aware of their right to go to the LGSCO. With only 10% of complaints being referred to the LGSCO and then only 2% of complaints being upheld by the LGSCO we can see that this approach results in far more satisfactory outcomes for the complainant and the department.

#### **4. Complaints by Adult Social Care Services and Teams**

The table on the next page sets out the number of complaints recorded for each service provided by Adult Social Care and the percentage of complaints upheld in full or part (these are in red )

The table does not include corporate departments or external contracted providers, details of these complaints can be found on pages 18 to 19 and details of corporate complaints can be found on pages 19 to 20.

| <b>Adult Social Care Services</b>                                                                     | <b>Number of complaints 2017-18</b> |            | <b>Number of complaints 2016-17</b> |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|------------|
| Blue Badge Team                                                                                       | 21                                  | 29%        | 28                                  | 18%        |
| Continuing Health Care Team                                                                           | 1                                   | 100%       | 1                                   | 0%         |
| County Wide Reviewing Team                                                                            | 1                                   | 100%       | 2                                   | 50%        |
| Emergency Duty Service                                                                                | 1                                   | 0%         | 0                                   | 0%         |
| Financial Assessment and Benefits Team                                                                | 59                                  | 56%        | 37                                  | 62%        |
| Health and Social Care Connect                                                                        | 22                                  | 45%        | 18                                  | 39%        |
| Hospital Assessment and Care Management Teams                                                         | 24                                  | 38%        | 25                                  | 24%        |
| Living at Home Service / Joint Community Rehabilitation Service                                       | 0                                   | 0%         | 4                                   | 50%        |
| Learning Disability - Assessment and Care Management                                                  | 24                                  | 50%        | 23                                  | 57%        |
| Learning Disability Directly Provided Services (Day Care, Community Support, Residential and Respite) | 1                                   | 0%         | 11                                  | 72%        |
| Mental Health Recovery Team (working age adults)                                                      | 20                                  | 30%        | 17                                  | 29%        |
| Mental Health Older Peoples Team (over 65 years)                                                      | 14                                  | 50%        | 16                                  | 37%        |
| Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Team                                                                | 3                                   | 33%        | 0                                   | 0%         |
| Integrated Locality Teams                                                                             | 106                                 | 45%        | 101                                 | 63%        |
| Occupational Therapy Reablement Services                                                              | 22                                  | 41%        | 24                                  | 54%        |
| Older Peoples Directly Provided Services (Day Care, Respite, Residential)                             | 6                                   | 0%         | 2                                   | 0%         |
| Planning, Performance and Engagement                                                                  | 7                                   | 14%        | 5                                   | 0%         |
| Public Health                                                                                         | 1                                   | 0%         | 3                                   | 100%       |
| Safeguarding Development Team                                                                         | 0                                   | 0%         | 0                                   | 0%         |
| Sensory Impairment Reablement Services                                                                | 1                                   | 100%       | 0                                   | 0%         |
| Service Procurement Team                                                                              | 4                                   | 75%        | 1                                   | 100%       |
| Service Placement Team – Supply Management                                                            | 3                                   | 66%        | 14                                  | 79%        |
| Strategic Commissioning                                                                               | 45                                  | 58%        | 26                                  | 35%        |
| Substance Misuse Service                                                                              | 2                                   | 0%         | 1                                   | 100%       |
| Supported Accommodation Team / SAILS                                                                  | 3                                   | 66%        | 1                                   | 100%       |
| Supporting People                                                                                     | 1                                   | 0%         | 2                                   | 0%         |
| Transition Team                                                                                       | 7                                   | 57%        | 10                                  | 50%        |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                                          | <b>399</b>                          | <b>46%</b> | <b>372</b>                          | <b>49%</b> |

% in red font is the percentage of complaints that were upheld either in full or in part

#### 4.1 What were the complaints about?

Complaints are categorised by the type of work complained about and then the problem. The table below highlights the number of complaints by type of work. Last year's figures are in brackets.

| Complaint Type               | Number of complaints | % of total           |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Advocacy                     | 1 (0)                | 0.3% (0.0%)          |
| Allocation of funding/grants | 16 (29)              | 4.0% (7.8%)          |
| <b>Assessment</b>            | <b>86 (89)</b>       | <b>21.6% (24.2%)</b> |
| Care Plan                    | 8 (15)               | 2.0% (4.0%)          |
| Carers Assessment            | 10 (1)               | 2.5% (0.3%)          |
| Carers Services              | 1 (2)                | 0.3% (0.5%)          |
| Contracts                    | 2 (4)                | 0.5% (1.1%)          |
| Data Protection              | 2 (2)                | 0.5% (0.5%)          |
| Direct Payments              | 16 (12)              | 4.0% (3.2%)          |
| Engagement                   | 1 (1)                | 0.3% (0.3%)          |
| Equipment - Adaptations      | 12 (8)               | 3.0% (2.2%)          |
| Equipment – Daily Living     | 10 (4)               | 2.5% (1.1%)          |
| Hospital Discharge           | 25 (21)              | 6.3% (5.6%)          |
| <b>Information Provision</b> | <b>41 (28)</b>       | <b>10.3% (7.5%)</b>  |
| Initial Contact              | 4 (9)                | 1.0% (2.4%)          |
| Invoicing                    | 34 (15)              | 8.5% (4.0%)          |
| Local Policy                 | 14 (11)              | 3.5% (3.0%)          |
| National Policy              | 3 (1)                | 0.8% (0.3%)          |
| Other                        | 2 (9)                | 0.5% (2.4%)          |
| <b>Provision of Service</b>  | <b>50 (62)</b>       | <b>12.5% (16.7%)</b> |
| Review                       | 4 (5)                | 1.0% (1.3%)          |
| Safeguarding                 | 19 (14)              | 4.8% (3.8%)          |
| Service Environment          | 1 (0)                | 0.3% (0.0%)          |
| Service User Behaviour       | 0 (5)                | 0.0% (1.3%)          |
| Staff Actions/Behaviour      | 34 (31)              | 8.5% (8.3%)          |
| Transition Assessment        | 2 (0)                | 0.5% (0.0%)          |
| Workmanship                  | 1 (2)                | 0.3% (0.5%)          |

## 4.2 Themes of complaints

### 4.2a Assessment

| Complaint Type           | Number of complaints | % of total    |
|--------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Assessment – Blue Badge  | 9 (13)               | 2.3% (3.5%)   |
| Assessment – Social Care | 60 (57)              | 15.0% (15.6%) |
| Assessment - Financial   | 17 (19)              | 4.3% (5.1%)   |

*(Last year's figures are in brackets)*

The biggest area of complaints related to assessment, which equated to 21.6% of all complaints received (86 complaints). Our assessment functions include eligibility assessments for social care support including the value of a personal budget and mobility assessments for the provision of a Blue Badge. Financial Assessments identify how much someone will pay towards their support.

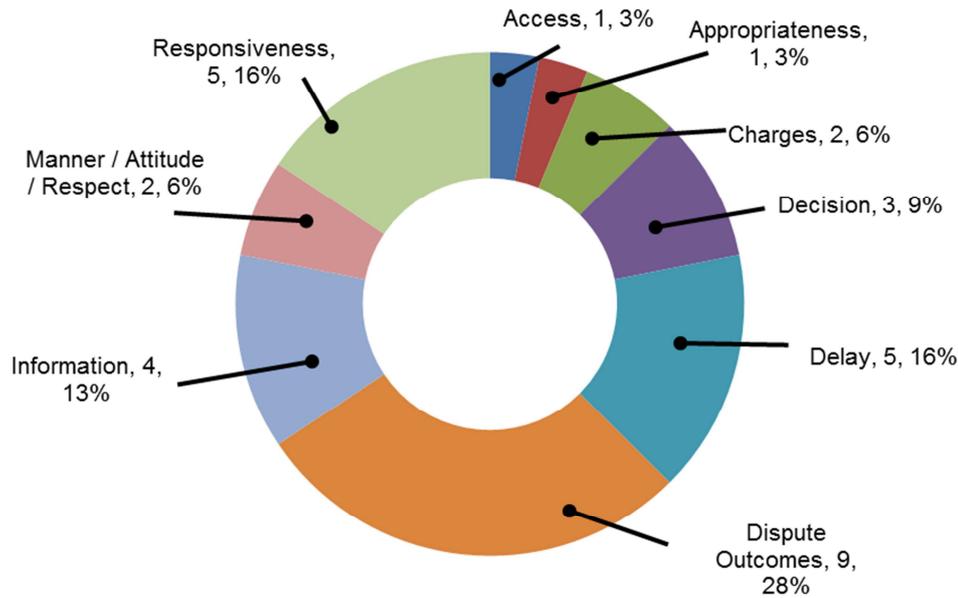
The total number of complaints relating to assessment has decreased very slightly by 3% (3 complaints) this is due to a 31% decrease in complaints relating to blue badge mobility assessments.

53 (62%) of complaints about assessments were disputing the decision or outcome of assessments. This has increased significantly from 2016/17 where 48% were disputing the decision or outcome. Rigorous application of the national eligibility criteria and financial guidance resulted in people feeling that their individual circumstances had not always been considered.

The next biggest category was in relation to a delay in the assessment process with 9 (10%) complaints recorded

41 complaints (48%) were upheld or partially upheld in relation to assessment. This was the highest percentage of complaints that had some basis.

The range of issues that were upheld is shown in the chart on the next page.



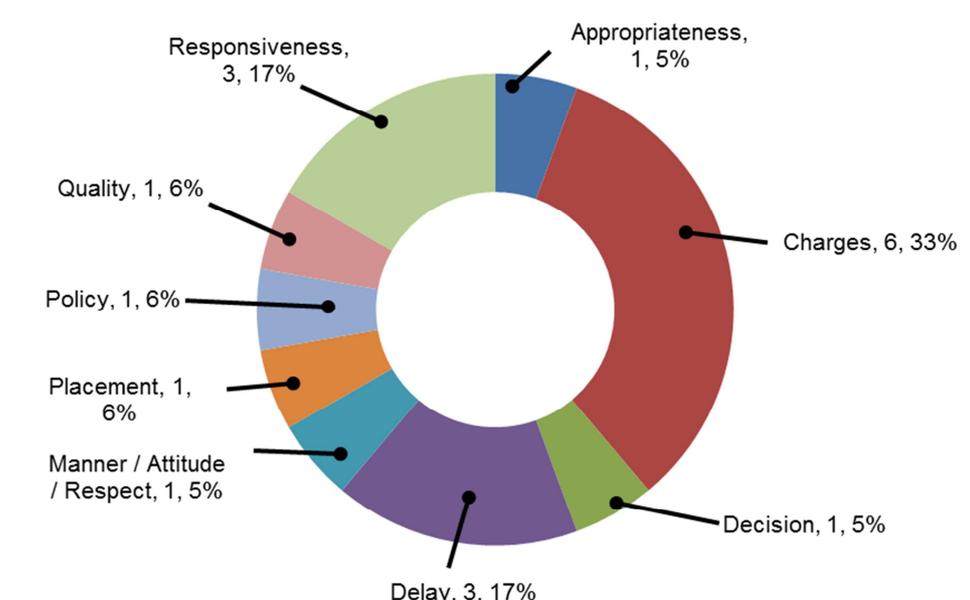
#### 4.2b Provision of service

| Complaint Type       | Number of complaints | % of total    |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Provision of Service | 50 (62)              | 12.5% (16.7%) |

The second biggest area of complaints related to provision of service, which equated to 12.5% of all complaints received (50 complaints). The highest numbers of complaints received were in relation to charges (9 complaints). The next biggest proportion was in relation to quality (8 complaints).

18 complaints (36%) were upheld or partially upheld in relation to provision of service. Of these, 6 (33%) were in relation to charges. These complaints varied from people feeling that they should not have to pay for the service because the quality of the service either fell below expectation or was not provided as specified in the care plan.

The full range of issues is set out in the pie chart over the page.



#### 4.2c Information Provision

| Complaint Type        | Number of complaints | % of total   |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Information Provision | 41 (28)              | 10.3% (7.5%) |

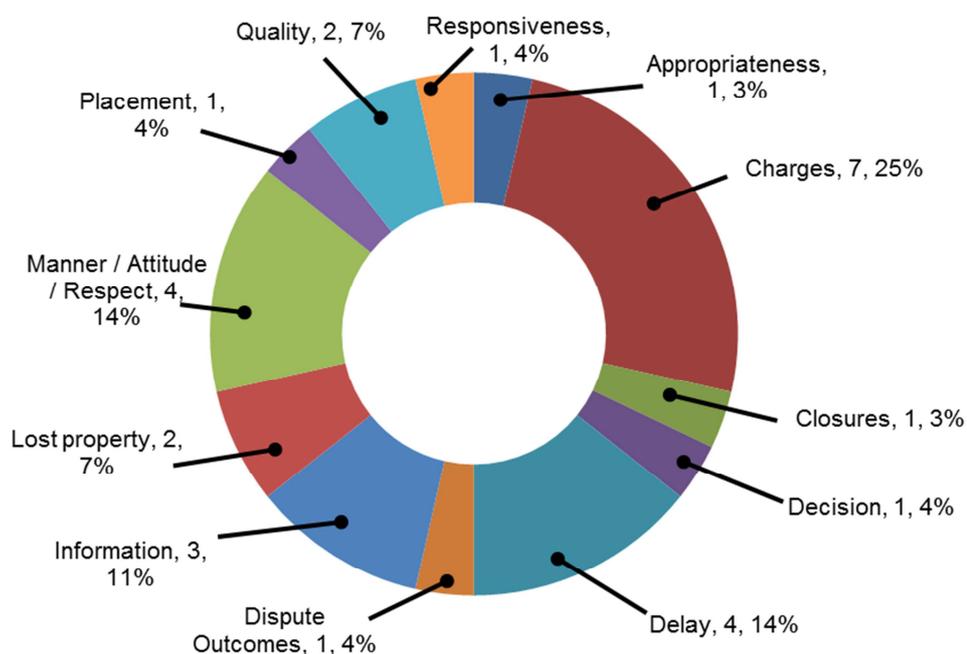
The third biggest area of complaints related to information provision, which equated to 10.3% of all complaints received (41 complaints). The highest numbers of complaints received were in relation to charges (11 complaints). The next biggest proportion was in relation to delays in the provision of information (6 complaints).

28 complaints (68%) were upheld or partially upheld in relation to Information Provision. This was the second highest percentage of complaints that had some basis.

Of the 28 complaints upheld in full or in part, 7 (25%) were in relation to charges. People felt they had not received sufficient information to inform them that they would be charged for services. Complaints are often from clients and their families/carers about not being advised of charges at the point of discharge from hospital. This is a stressful time for clients and their

families/carers and although information on charges may have been provided, it is quite often not understood or taken in.

The full range of issues is set out in the pie chart below.



#### 4.2d Other Observations

Often, issues relating to the quality and charges for social care services were presented to the department after receipt of an invoice. In all, 51 complaints were recorded about invoicing and these usually involved other concerns. There were 35 (69%) complaints upheld in full or in part. Complainants raised multiple issues about information, timeliness, quality, delay and/or poor communication about charges and the payment of charges. Limitations in recording multi-issue complaints meant it has not been possible to provide exact quantitative data about secondary areas of concerns. There were 17 (33%) complaints recorded for Orbis Accounts Receivable Team (Business Services Department) and although more complaints involved errors in invoicing, these are not recorded for Orbis and are included within the ASC return.

Issues about invoicing and charges were often compounded when there was a shortfall in communication. Learning was about how we presented and

delivered information and this was generally addressed at practitioner and team level.

## **5. Complaints about external providers**

Personal budgets are used to pay for support from a range of different external provider organisations, such as home care agencies, day services or for employing a personal assistant.

In recent years external care providers have been in the headlines with national concern about the quality of care services provided. In this climate, people need to feel confident about when and how to access the complaints process if an external contracted service falls below expectation. We work closely with both our community and residential providers to make sure the quality of their support meets our contractual standards and any complaints are handled quickly and positively.

In most cases, people made their complaint directly to the providers. Then, if they were still unhappy about how things were handled, they approached Adult Social Care for support. They did this through a range of avenues, including: their allocated worker, the review process, the Supply Management Team or directly to the Complaints and Feedback Team.

In some instances reports of concerns or issues are looked at under our safeguarding adults at risk procedures and the complaints process is suspended.

We have recorded 21 complaints this year about external providers, which is a 16% decrease compared to last year (25). Of the complaints recorded this year:

- 18 related to independent home care providers
- 3 were about residential care providers

The number of complaints recorded by the department is low compared with the actual services delivered. This could indicate that the providers'

complaints processes are generally strong and where appropriate issues are being looked at within the safeguarding adults at risk framework.

### **5.1 How many complaints about external providers were upheld?**

Out of the 21 complaints received for Independent Providers:

- 13 (62%) of the complaints were upheld in full and part
- 8 (38%) were not upheld

### **5.2 Response times**

- 13 (65%) of the complaints received a response within 10 working days
- 1 (5%) of the complaints received a response within 20 working days
- (30%) exceeded the 10-20 working day timescale, people were kept updated if there was a delay

The average time to respond has significantly improved from 34 days in 2016/17 to just 12 days.

### **5.3 Types of complaints about external providers**

Of the 13 complaints upheld or partially upheld, just over a quarter were about one or multiple issues to do with:

- the delivery of care falling below expectation
- competency and conduct of staff
- late or erratic calls
- timing of calls
- lack of communication

## **6. Corporate related complaints**

Complaints related to corporate services, involving invoice recovery and invoicing, relate to the charges people are required to pay towards their care and support services. These services are not provided by the Adult Social Care Department. We do however recognise that delays and errors in invoicing can be distressing and have an impact on our clients and their representatives. It is important therefore to understand why this is happening.

This year, a total of 16 corporate complaints were received where invoicing was the key concern. This is a 43% decrease compared with last year, when 28 complaints were received. It is apparent that errors in invoicing can often be a part of an overall complaint and, as mentioned previously, it is often getting an invoice that prompts contact with the department, where concerns about invoicing have sometimes been an element of complex multi-issue complaints. These have generally related to how well the whole system works and have required a detailed review to help reduce errors and become more customer focussed.

## **7. What did the department learn from complaints?**

Core to our process is learning from complaints, resulting in improved services and delivery, wherever possible. We have recorded 339 learning outcomes:

- 119 represented learning for individual staff members
- 137 represented learning for the team
- 93 informed organisational learning

Here are some examples of actions that were taken as a result of learning from complaints:

- To improve responsiveness, an Integrated Locality Team changed how priority cases were allocated
- An Integrated Locality Team identified and implemented actions to improve safeguarding partnership working. This included improving communication and how they work with providers when safeguarding issues are raised
- A Community Learning Disability Team improved their annual review booking system. This now includes ensuring parents/relatives/carers are invited to the review, in liaison with providers
- The Direct Payments Team improved their processes to provide more information to people about their payments to reduce arrears building up on their accounts

- A provider of Direct Payments changed their phone system. They now have three options and one of those options takes you directly through to the local office. With these options they no longer go through to an answerphone but have a queue system. This is better as all calls are answered and people have shorter waiting times
- The Blue Badge Team amended their guidance to clarify that people who have moved out of the area need to make a new application, rather than a renewal, and this process takes eight to ten weeks
- The Financial Assessment Team improved their processes and communication, introducing a review system for scanning of people's information, to ensure it is recorded and acted on
- Shared Lives, The Transitions Team and Children's Services are developing a formal structure for paying carers when young people, reaching 18 years of age, transfer from Foster Care to a Shared Lives Service.

## **8. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)**

The LGSCO look at complaints where there may have been an injustice caused by not following our policies or providing a poor service. This is often described as fault. The LGSCO cannot question whether a council's decision is right or wrong simply because the complainant disagrees with it. The Ombudsman must consider whether there was fault in the way the decision was reached.

*(Local Government Act 1974, section 34(3))*

The LGSCO writes to the local authority every year with an annual summary of statistics on the complaints made to them about East Sussex County Council. This year's annual letter reported that 96 enquiries and complaints were received about East Sussex County Council in total. Of these, 48 (50%) were about Adult Care Services.

The LGSCO recognise that the total number of complaints made to them will not in itself provide a clear picture of our response to complaints or the quality of services. Higher numbers of contacts can indicate good signposting within a transparent process. Our initial complaints response letters always let people know that they can go to the LGSCO if they continue to be unhappy with our views. We also advise this after our Blue Badge Appeal process and after Stage 2 of our Financial Assessment Appeals.

The table below sets out the findings for complaints about Adult Social Care for the last two years:

| Year    | Investigations |            | Not Investigated               |                    |               |              | Total |
|---------|----------------|------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------|-------|
|         | Upheld         | Not upheld | Closed after initial enquiries | Invalid/incomplete | Referred back | Advice given |       |
| 2017/18 | 9              | 13         | 6                              | 3                  | 11            | 0            | 42    |
| 2016/17 | 6              | 3          | 11                             | 1                  | 6             | 1            | 28    |

There was a significant shift in the complaints recorded and investigated, compared to last year:

- 50% increase in the number of complaints and enquiries received
- 20% increase in the complaints investigated
- 25% reduction in the complaints upheld

People took a range of issues to the LGSCO. The complaints were complex, and included concerns about:

- The adequacy of Assessment and Care and Support planning
- A Moving and Handling Plan
- Our application of the Charging for care and support policies and procedures for financial assessments, particularly in relation to:
  - Capital Disregard
  - Deprivation of Assets
  - Disability Related Expenditure
- Information about charges for support, particularly on discharge from hospital

- Eligibility for a Blue Badge
- Quality of external independent providers

There was a financial element in most of the complaints that went to investigation and were then upheld. The LGSCO identified fault where we had not:

- been clear there would be a charge for care services
- taken individual circumstances into account, according to the Care Act Regulations and Guidance (2014)
- provided sufficient funding to meet the care and support required

In some complaints, we had already identified how we could sort things out and no further remedy was required. In others, we were required to apologise, undertake another financial assessment and review how we applied our policy, including our application of discretion. In all cases, when fault was found, we made changes to improve our handling of matters to avoid the same thing happening to others.

The final decision for every investigation is published on the LGSCO website: [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

## **9. Compliments**

Compliments provide valuable information about the quality of our services and identify where they are working well. The sincere expressions of gratitude we have recorded show how much services are valued by the people who use them and their families and friends. The table on the next page shows the total number of compliments received by each service.

| <b>Service areas</b>                                                                                    | <b>Total 2017-18</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Blue Badges                                                                                             | 30                   |
| Carers Services                                                                                         | 210                  |
| Complaints and Feedback Team                                                                            | 11                   |
| Continuing Healthcare                                                                                   | 4                    |
| Countywide Reviewing Team                                                                               | 5                    |
| Discretionary East Sussex Support Scheme                                                                | 16                   |
| Emergency Duty Service                                                                                  | 1                    |
| Finance and Benefits Assessment Team                                                                    | 92                   |
| Hospital Assessment and Care Management Teams                                                           | 16                   |
| HSCC                                                                                                    | 55                   |
| Joint Community Rehabilitation Service                                                                  | 333                  |
| Learning Disability – Assessment and Care Management                                                    | 40                   |
| Learning Disability – Directly Provided Services (Day Care, Community Support, Residential and Respite) | 190                  |
| Mental Health Recovery                                                                                  | 24                   |
| Neighbourhood Support Teams                                                                             | 124                  |
| Occupational Therapy Reablement Services                                                                | 29                   |
| Older People - Directly Provided Services (Day Care, Respite, Residential)                              | 62                   |
| Older People’s Mental Health Team and DOLS                                                              | 9                    |
| Planning, Performance and Engagement                                                                    | 0                    |
| Quality Monitoring Team                                                                                 | 22                   |
| Safeguarding                                                                                            | 0                    |
| Sensory Impairment Reablement Services                                                                  | 18                   |
| Service Placement Team                                                                                  | 1                    |
| Strategy and Commissioning                                                                              | 15                   |
| Supported Accommodation Team/SAILS                                                                      | 53                   |
| Substance Misuse Service/AMHP                                                                           | 0                    |
| Transitions Team                                                                                        | 23                   |
| Other                                                                                                   | 0                    |
| External Contracted Providers – Community Services                                                      | 21                   |
| External Contracted Providers – Residential                                                             | 0                    |
| Accounts Receivable                                                                                     | 40                   |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                                            | <b>1444</b>          |

## 9.1 Examples of some of the compliments received

### Blue Badges

*“Many thanks for your hard work and support and the very professional way you have carried this forward.”*

**Carers Services**

*"I am writing to thank you so much for sending such wonderful support ladies"*

**Complaints and Feedback Team**

*"In a world of mediocre service, I would like to tell you of a level of exceptional professionalism that I experienced from a member of your staff. It is her level of efficiency and professionalism that impressed me. It is obviously a challenging role and she is an asset to your department."*

**Continuing Healthcare**

*"Thank you for the work you are doing on my behalf. So encouraging to have help at such a difficult time in our lives."*

**Countywide Reviewing Team**

*"We wish to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to the members of staff who have been instrumental in arranging the transfer of our Uncle. We have been most impressed by the compassionate & efficient manner of all involved.*

*Many grateful thanks to all concerned & to the staff who kept us informed all the way through, they all deserve the highest praise, thank you all."*

**Discretionary East Sussex Support Scheme**

*"Firstly I would thank you so much for your help and compassion, you were friendly non-judgmental while maintaining total professionalism. At a time full of stress and anxiety you probably have no idea of the impact you have made for my daughter and I."*

**Emergency Duty Service**

*"G called to express her thanks for all the care and attention that was given with regard to D. G thanks H for arranging a placement at such short notice. G stated thank you very very much."*

**Finance and Benefits Assessment Team**

*"Thank you for a professional, compassionate and very good service provided. She was happy it was left in "capable" hands. She also wanted to pass on a sincere thanks to the team for our help with her mother's finances."*

**Hospital Assessment and Care Management Teams**

*"I just wanted to pass on my thanks to you all for your assistance in moving my father home. P and C asked me to pass on their thanks and best wishes."*

**HSCC**

*"You guys have been really brilliant. On the ball. I'm really happy with the service we've received, which has exceeded expectations. I'd like to extend my grateful thanks"*

**Joint Community Rehabilitation Service**

*"Fantastic service, first class! was totally delighted with the service, all the carers were so attentive and caring, helping me to recover with such kindness."*

### **Learning Disability – Assessment and Care Management**

*“Just a little note to say thank you, I’m so pleased ,Gemma is in such a lovely routine now it’s great, and thank you for all your support this year, you have been wonderful.”*

### **Learning Disability – Directly Provided Service**

*“ I would like to thank you for your below feedback and more importantly all of your dedicated and professional support over nearly six years – we believe A has grown and benefitted greatly from all you and your colleagues inputs over this time so again many thanks.”*

### **Mental Health Recovery**

*“I would just like to commend everyone involved in this recent process, including the role of East Sussex County Council; there is always many unseen characters behind the scenes that play an important role in difficult and complex processes such as this particular case. The support of Pat and the process of her transfer have been a commendable collaborative team effort, and thankfully with what appears to be a positive outcome for her wellbeing. Pat still wears that smile of hers and so that alone reassures me that she continues to be content in her world but now in an environment that supports her care needs and safety.”*

### **Neighbourhood Support Teams**

*“The family are very, very grateful for the support we received which enabled mum to remain safely at home for as long as possible. The care package was a great support to my step father, taking a lot of pressure off him, but enabling him to keep his wife at home.”*

### **Occupational Therapy Reablement Services**

*“Service was excellent, the equipment was such a help, the bed lever, chair raise, toilet frame, walking frame was fantastic, also all the staff were very helpful. Thanks to everyone for the help I had.”*

### **Older People – Directly Provided Services**

*“I wanted to write you an email, to express my thanks, for my mother's recent 4 week stay at Milton Grange. The care and support she received from all the staff (OT, Physio, Nursing etc), was excellent. I am very pleased with her rehabilitation, after a fall.”*

### **Older People’s Mental Health Team and DOLS**

*“A very big thank you for all the efforts you have put in over the last ten years to help my sister, B. I really don't understand how you have the patience and sympathy to deal with people with problems like hers - I can only be extremely grateful that because of you she managed to have nearly five more years in her own home with a reasonable degree of independence.”*

### **Supply Management Team**

*"S arrived very promptly and was very professional in her manner; there was a lot of positive feedback from the staff that met her during the visit. S put me at ease and was very informative regarding support services available. S exhibited experience and knowledge and was very clear on expectations in relation to the visit. Overall a positive experience. It was also very nice to meet S and I know that should the need arise I would feel confident in contacting S for information, support and advice."*

### **Sensory Impairment Reablement Services**

*"I would just like to say what a fantastic job N has done in helping myself and M. Since N came and visited M he is in such a better place, M now has a new washing machine which he could never afford, M has the correct lighting for his eyesight, a white stick, glasses, hospital appointments and a diagnosis, his toilet finally repaired and M is in touch with the blind association so he now has a stereo and he can listen to talking books which he loves.*

*None of this would have happened without N and her help what an amazing woman.*

*M is nearly blind and doesn't go out much now with the right equipment he has so much more confidence as he is now recognised by the public as blind I can't thank N enough, her helps been outstanding"*

### **Service Placement Team**

*"Now settled here. Helping me indisputably in every way."*

### **Strategy and Commissioning**

*"S advised of how well the scheme was and the process was well done. She said it is great all the training is free and a great way to meet others and staff. S said it was great how everyone was nice and very encouraging throughout the process. For her it had been a good experience. It has put her more at ease of taking the step to become a self-employed PA and working alone. S said it was great how everyone was nice and very encouraging throughout the process. – thank you all."*

### **Supported Accommodation Team/SAILS**

*"May I take this opportunity to say how pleased we are with our SLO. We find her very easy to discuss any problems we may have knowing she would follow up on these and let us know back asap. She is very professional in her approach and we are always happy to see her at our support meetings."*

### **Transitions Team**

*"We just wanted to thank you so much for all the help & support you have shown J and us as a family over the last few years. We count ourselves so lucky to have had a very special Transitions worker for our very special son. Thank you for believing in him!"*

### **External Contracted Providers – Community Services**

*"Thank you for looking after M in his treatment, very kind and thank J and anyone else who helps him, you have been wonderful. All the very best for your professional work and care."*

## **Accounts Receivable**

*"I just wanted to let you know my Dad received a letter from E over the weekend. It was a lovely letter, very sensitive and hit the spot exactly. I just wanted to say thank you for your input and for dealing with all this, it is much appreciated."*

## **10. Conclusion**

We know it is crucial to have in place an effective, accessible and fair means for people's comments and complaints to be heard and resolved wherever possible. Our complaints process provides this opportunity and is a valued tool in the statutory function of the department.

Regrettably, things do go wrong and with fewer resources to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, complaints will be made. We are seeing a rise in the complexity of complaints. There is no easy solution, particularly given the financial challenges.

We do know however that in these times it becomes increasingly important to support and promote the customer service principles of being fair, open, and timely and to demonstrate clear and compassionate decision making. We are working closely with partners to make sure we handle complaints well and people feel confident to express their concerns. This year, it seems that in most instances, even when we have not been able to do exactly what the complainant wants, we have been able to provide a remedy and an explanation that resolves matters for them.

We will continue to review and monitor the process closely to ensure we are able to meet the opportunities and challenges going forward with the East Sussex Better Together, Connecting for You and Sustainable Transformation Partnerships and the ongoing pressures and demands resulting from national and local shortfalls in the availability of services within Adult Social Care.